

Week Eight (July 31st -August 5th) Report

Updated August 8, 2016

Week eight began on Sunday, July 31st with the students preparing to start their 7,000-mile journey from Beijing, China, back home to Houston, Texas. The students woke up early to check out and pay for their hotel rooms, asking the hotel to call three taxis as only two students would fit per car due to the large amount of luggage. Three comfortable black cars pulled up at the main entrance and the students piled in and were on their way to the Beijing International Capitol Airport (PEK). The group was later reunited at the airport after a 25-minute taxi ride. Following a bit of confusion, the group eventually found the correct line to get boarding passes and to check in luggage. A couple of the team members' luggage were overweight, which required these students to go to another counter to pay the extra \$200 fee. The students then went through immigration where the guards checked their passports and asked them questions such as "What is your name?", "Are you a student?", and "How many people are in your group?". Next was the security check. The security

check took longer than it does in the United States as it is more restrictive. Students finally made it to their gate about twenty minutes before boarding began. In this time, one student decided to get a massage, a few students went to go grab some breakfast, and the rest of the students relaxed at the gate, watching luggage and waiting to board the plane. Once the group was seated on the plane, they were pleased to see that their seats had a decent amount of leg room and that every seat had its own screen where one could watch TV, shop on sky mall, or play games such



Mt. Fuji sighted from the flight to Tokyo

as: Tetris, Solitaire, and Sudoku. This plane appeared newer and more updated than the plane that had initially borne the group to Beijing, showcasing a light controlled shade for the window among other features. Unfortunately, the flight was delayed because the groups' plane was tenth in line to take off. It took about one hour for the plane to depart after the students boarded. Half way through the flight, a tasty lunch was offered which consisted of rice noodles with ham in sauce, either chicken or fish in tomato sauce, rice, and assorted snacks and cookies. The students were originally scheduled to have a



ANA Airlines will keep you fed during your flight



Roub, Wanda, and Janice enjoy their meal on ANA Airlines

two-hour layover in the Tokyo Narita Airport, but due to the delays, they had little time to sightsee and instead rushed to their gate. Once boarded, some students took melatonin in order to sleep, while others watched an assortment of movies on their individual monitors. Once the students arrived in Houston, they again went through immigration, obtained their checked luggage, and then went through customs. Jacob got two of his bags, but never recovered the third. A couple of students were required to go through additional searches due to some food they had brought back from China. Once the students cleared all the security checks, they were met with friends and family members for an emotional reunion back home. For the rest of day, students spent quality time with loved ones. Several students went out to eat in order to satisfy all their biggest cravings which consisted of: fajitas, pancakes, bacon, margaritas, Japanese food, ice cold Dr. Peppers, or long awaited home cooked meals. Once home, students passed out souvenirs, unpacked, told their family about their time in China, and relaxed. Some students had trouble with jet lag and could not sleep, while others crashed and slept throughout the night.

On the morning of Monday, August 1st, students were still trying to adjust to the time difference and still satisfy those long awaited cravings. Some students had coffee and breakfast sandwiches from McDonalds, some had homemade biscuits or pancakes, eggs and sausage while others had breakfast tacos. All of the students used today to relax, readjust, and spend quality time with loved ones and their pets. Students engaged in various activities such as: playing



Valerie welcomes everyone home to Houston Texas.

trombone, going to the Natural Science museum, catching up with friends, and embracing being home. For some students, it was an odd feeling to be driving again after not driving for six weeks. They remarked on how orderly the roads were in Houston compared to China. A couple of students were still unpacking and handing out souvenirs, as well as doing chores such as laundry. Jennifer had to do her laundry at a family members house because her washer was leaking and dryer was broken when she arrived back home. She decided to buy new machines online so she could once again enjoy the efficiency of doing laundry in a washer and dryer, a luxury that was often lacking on the students' trip in China. For dinner, students again had foods they sorely missed while they were on their trip such as: hot dogs, Greek salads, and meals at their favorite restaurants. A few students worked on their daily journals today, Jennifer could not sleep and was up editing weekly reports and sending emails. All the students attempted to get the best night sleep they could, but were still adjusting to the time difference. Many of the students took naps throughout the day or woke up at odd times during the night.

Tuesday, August 2nd, students received an email containing a post-program survey to rate the overall course and offer possible suggestions. Students were also notified that the last program meeting would be on Friday, August 5th at 11 AM. All students were required to attend except Katherine, who made her return flight home to Massachusetts. Jacob was notified that his third bag had never left China and would be arriving later in the week. Students were still adjusting

to being back home and taking care of business such as grocery shopping. When students made it to the grocery store, they had a mild case of reverse culture shock. Once they entered the grocery store, they were met with a large selection of different foods and a very clean, organized, and air conditioned building, quite unlike their experiences in China. Most students spent a large part of the day editing their journals and filling out the post program survey. Many members of the group also spent some time today playing a game called PokemonGO that was released while they were in China and is currently sweeping the United States. Jet lag still lingered with some of the students, and they had to try and stay awake until a decent hour when they could go to sleep.



Mighty Tyrannosaurus at the Houston Museum of Natural

On Wednesday, August 3rd, students performed a wide variety of chores and later at night worked on their reports. Jennifer's washer and dryer were delivered, so she started on the laundry she had left from the trip and also went to H-E-B in order to get ingredients for a pot roast that she would make for dinner. She later worked on editing the week seven report and took a nap. Ben went to a pool store in order to get his pool water tested, then worked out at the gym before settling down at home to work on completing his daily journal. Wanda went to IKEA to buy



Jacob finds Green Tea Kit Kat

furniture, ate at an Indian restaurant, assembled the furniture after arriving back home and ended the night working on her daily journal. Valerie spent time with close friends, took her dog to the dog park and went out to eat before also settling down and working on the week eight report. Rob got to reconnect and catch up with his best friend from high school, later in the evening he went with his family to a Mexican restaurant where he got to see his two brothers; they exchanged gifts and stories over a fantastic meal. Janice spent today playing PokemonGO and later went to eat chicken wings. She was still getting reacquainted with all the diverse foods Houston has to offer. Students, again, noted how orderly the stores were and how there were single file lines with no pushing or cutting. Being back in Houston also reminded the students of the multicultural nature in the city as compared to China. Students had missed having many types of food options and the fact that having a different ethnicity did not necessarily make you a foreigner. Since there are so many ethnicities and

cultures in Houston, no particular one sticks out as being out of place.

Thursday, August 4th was an overall quiet day for most members of the team. They spent the day relaxing and catching up on their journals. Valerie went to Starbucks with a couple of her best friends for a good portion of the day to finish her daily journal, then spent some time with her family. Jennifer took care of some household chores like hanging curtain rods, before she settled down, ordered pizza, and watched a movie. Today, she finished editing the week seven report. Rob spent today with his girlfriend, taking care of her newly rescued kitten, Hunter. Katherine started packing today preparing to visit her sister and later at night went out for ice cream with her family. Ben spent the day working on his daily journal and lastly, Janice spent today grocery shopping and bought a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables. She remarked on how big the grocery store was and how it was much more convenient when she could read all the labels and ingredients. Later that night, Janice spent the night watching Netflix, a luxury that none of the students were able to enjoy in China. Today, students reflected on some things they missed about being in China, such as being able to walk to many places, having subway access, and the many yummy foods. They also missed the friendly old ladies that were eager the help them buy fruit and other supplies, along with all the helpful employees in China.



Janice, Valerie, Ro, and Ben all play the new PokemonGO game

Friday, August 5th marks the last day of the program. Everyone, with the exception of Katherine, met at University of Houston for their final program meeting. The seven UH students met with Dr. Wang and Rachel, a writer for the Natural Science and Mathematics (NSM) department at University of Houston. Rachel interviewed the students for an article she will be publishing about the as a follow up to this program. She asked students questions along the lines



Jennifer takes her children and niece and nephew to Jumping World

of what they learned in the field, how the trip and field work helped the students further their study in geology, and how their perspective on field work has changed while working on this trip. Students talked about seeing all the destruction as a result of a landslide. While the landslide itself is slow moving, the threat it poses to property and lives resulted in the government ordering the demolition and relocation of the entire city currently located directly above the landslide. The students also discussed their experiences of using different methods to acquire data, ranging from the traditional reflector, GPS, and scanner setup used in Freeport, to the method used in Badong county sans GPS, of

overlaying scans using tie points in the form of common objects. Following the interview, Dr. Wang and the students held a meeting where they discussed any future plans and dates that all of the reports, biographies, and videos for the trip should be finished, as well as an opportunity to learn some additional processing with Lin, after he returns from China in the middle of August. After this meeting, the students said their bittersweet goodbyes to the people they had just spent the last six weeks getting to know, becoming friends with and living alongside in this eventful experience. Jennifer, after finishing up finalizing the week seven report, headed to the theater to watch 'Suicide Squad' with her family. Rob headed home to finish up the two remaining videos of the trip and also watch some classic movies on Netflix. Jacob drove to Galveston to meet with a few friends. Janice went out with her mom and aunt to get their nails done, ate pizza at a pizza buffet, and finally went out to a karaoke bar. Ben went home to work on his journal and then went out to eat at a sushi restaurant with his parents for a birthday dinner, as it was his birthday the next day. Valerie went home to work on the last weekly report before going out to eat with her family and settling down for the night. Meanwhile, Katherine had a bad cold and spent the day mostly resting. And so concludes the bitter-sweet final day of the US-China Collaboration on Landslide Research and Student Training Program.



Students enjoy a traditional Mexican food dinner of fajitas for dinner.