This summer I travelled to China to attend a two-week summer school in Beijing followed by ten days of independent travelling.

In Beijing I took part in an “Experiencing China” course at Tsinghua University with fellow students from universities all around the world. As part of the course, we visited many sites of cultural interest around Beijing, including the Great Wall, Forbidden City and Summer Palace. To complete the course, we had to produce a final presentation on the three foundations of Chinese culture: Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.

After the summer school, I travelled by train south from Beijing, stopping first at the small, well-preserved old city of Pingyao and then at the ancient capital Xi’an, where I visited the Terracotta Warriors. I then flew down to the south of China to visit the karst landscape of Guilin and Yangshuo, before finishing my journey in the modern and fast-paced megacity of Hong Kong. Along the way, I stayed in hostels and met other travellers also trying to get to grips with a country where English is little spoken and levels of humidity in summer are intense.

Although I found many aspects of the trip challenging – particularly the language barrier, the heat and the culture shock – I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and would highly recommend it to anyone interested in meeting new people and broadening their understanding of the world.