

Jessica Farmery (HSPS) – Beijing, Summer 2015

In 2015 I was lucky enough to be awarded a scholarship by the Kirkwood Family Foundation and CRCC Asia to participate in the CRCC Asia Summer Internship Programme. I chose Beijing as the location for my internship, as I was attracted by the rich culture and history offered by the city, as well as the chance to experience the clash between 'traditional' and 'modernising' China. During my month-long internship I stayed in an apartment in the up-and-coming 798 Art District, along with over 50 other interns participating in the programme. This provided me with an incredible opportunity to meet students from all over the UK, America, Australia, and Europe, and the social side of my stay was much enhanced by having such a diverse and friendly group of people to spend my 'off' time with. I was working with Asia Pacific Access, a consultancy company run by an Australian couple with over 40 years' experience in China. The small office team were extremely welcoming, and taught me a great deal about Chinese life and business culture. I predominantly carried out research tasks and worked on the company's social media, and I feel that I developed a great many transferable skills and useful experience. Having the weekends and some evenings free to explore Beijing was an fantastic opportunity. I wasted no time in visiting every corner of the city, mainly via the extensive the metro system. Highlights included the National Museum, Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Olympic Park, the Temple of Heaven, and numerous markets and parks. CRCC Asia organised a number of fun cultural events for the interns, including a karaoke night ('KTV'), noodle-making, Mandarin classes, and an acrobatics show.

After a month my internship with CRCC was over, and I left Beijing to travel to the ancient walled town of Pingyao. I spent a number of days visiting the numerous mini-museums hidden within the maze-like streets, and even undertook a cycle ride along truck-choked roads to reach two preserved Buddhist temples. Next I travelled by high-speed train to Xi'an, one of the largest cities in China, and home to the famous Terracotta Warriors. I stayed with friendly local students and enjoyed visting the site of the excavated warriors, the city's Muslim Quarter, and cycling the city walls. I returned to Beijing on an overnight sleeper train, and during my last week I had an unforgettable trip to the Great Wall of China- hiking two different stretches and spending a night in a local village.

My stay in China was one of the most exciting, educational and challenging experiences of my life! I have returned with a vastly improved understanding of the culture, politics, society and history of the country, and I met so many new and interesting people. I would like to thank CRCC Asia, the Kirkwood Family Foundation, and Pembroke College for enabling me to undertake this trip.