

China Essay

By Youth Ambassador Evan Taylor (Full Scholarship Awardee)

China is incredible. From the second I stepped out of the airplane until the moment I left, I was in constant wonder and awe at everything I saw. The first thing I noticed was the architecture; from the enormous ceiling in the Beijing airport to the sharp contrasts of modern and traditional buildings side by side, everything caught me off guard by instilling its majesty in me. Then came the people. I had been warned with tales of rudeness and dishonesty by people I know, but they couldn't have been farther from the truth. The people I met and interacted with were courteous and kind, and they were always willing to provide assistance. Finally, there was the food. Almost everywhere we went, I ate as much as I physically could because of what was served: incredible dishes of new and exciting foods, each more delicious than the last.

Staying in Jinan with my host family was my favorite part of the trip. I was able to get a more personal view of China through my host and his every-day life. We visited parks, ate at hidden-away culinary treasures, and even went to a community band rehearsal. While in Jinan, we also visited two schools, each very unique and different from schools in the U.S. I was able to sit in on a geometry class, and while I couldn't understand what the instructor was saying (he was speaking too fast), I could follow along with what he wrote on the board. It was a special thing to experience such a cultural difference while realizing that we are so fundamentally similar.

I am glad that I was able to represent Sacramento in such a culturally unique part of the world, and I'm glad that I was able to learn so much about another nation's people with traditions and customs so different from my own. It was a truly humbling experience, and for that, I am forever grateful.