

Team Arrival

We Team Leaders and Assistants have had good training and planning sessions. The rest of the teachers arrived on Thursday in two large busses. Four of them are for our team in Tianjin, of which three are new to our program.



Days in Beijing with blue skies are rare. This is the street in front of our hotel on Friday morning, taken from inside our bus before we went to the Great Wall. Notice the far trees are greatly obscured by the smog, so the visibility is likely only a mile or kilometer. Last year we had visibility in Tianjin that was usually similar.



When we arrived at the Great Wall (after a 1.5 hour trip) we discovered that our leaders had forgotten to bring the money for admission and cable car rides to the wall. 11,000 Yuan was mentioned (about \$200?). Fortunately enough of us, plus the bus drivers, were able to pool what money we brought so that the team could get to the wall. (We were reimbursed back at the hotel when we returned.)



The air there was foggy with a very light breeze and a comfortable temperature. So we could not see very far, but it was enough. I walked down from the wall in order to listen for birds and enjoy the quiet and the forest environment. Many others used a toboggan slide to go down. (My wife and I did that in 2004.) I saw 9 species at and near the Great Wall area (Mutainyu).

This Daurian Redstart has a pretty song.



Saturday was spent in classes and planning most of the day. Our team of 6 often met separately from the others because we will be teaching a different program: university students rather than Chinese teachers of English.

On Sunday we left the hotel at 6 AM to go to the Chong Wen Men Church for their first service, 7 AM to 8:15 AM. This year our group was able to sit on the main floor rather than in the basement because of our early arrival. During the half hour before it started there was practice of singing. The tunes were mostly familiar, or else easy. I was able to recognize about a tenth of the Chinese characters. The main message was based on Gal. 5: 13-26.



The visibility was poor, about a half kilometer, because of the air pollution. We could not see the tops of some tall towers unless we were close to them. As we passed on the south side of Tiananmen Square we could not see the entrance to the Forbidden City on its north side.

We will have a few hours of meetings Sunday afternoon. Monday through Wednesday are busy with meetings, training and practice, all day. On Thursday we can visit tourist sites in the Beijing area, with a banquet dinner afterwards. Friday we go to our assigned cities, Tianjin in our case.

Ed Holroyd
30 June 2013, mid-morning