

Wednesday, October 6, 2004

Today we begin our whirlwind tour of Beijing. We started out the morning with a visit to a jade factory. I saw a pair of axes, with the character for happiness on them. I thought it was strange but later, my mother explained that the word for ax sounds like the word for happiness so it was a play on words. Next, we climbed the Great Wall. So many people had climbed it that some of the steps were sunken-cool! The view was magnificent and was well worth the climb. After lunch, we toured the cloisonné factory. It was amazing to see all the different pots of paint stacked on top of each other-there are so many colors in one picture! We also visited the Summer Palace, residence of the Empress Dowager Tze Chi. I've heard stories about her wealth but seeing it was completely different. We saw a ship made out of marble. I thought it was a house on water at first. Later, we went to a pearl factory and I learned that there can be many pearls inside a single oyster. The restaurant we went to for dinner had periodic blackouts so we got to eat dinner in candlelight, which was fun. Tomorrow, we leave for America.