

## **My trip to China**

Coming to China was an incredible journey filled with wonderful moments and experiences. Every day brought adventures and surprises. During this trip, we learned a few phrases and words in Mandarin, traveled to various places, and met incredible people along the way. We also had the opportunity to conduct our research with great mentors who guided us throughout our project. During our trip, we were able to learn a little of the language through a class. Although we had limited time to study Mandarin, one of the hardest languages to learn, our teachers were truly amazing and taught us a lot. We learned some basic phrases and words that helped us greatly, such as how to speak with a driver, how to order something to eat or drink, and how to ask if we could try on a piece of clothing. I wish I could have learned more words and phrases, but even so, it's challenging to learn a language in just a few weeks. We were also able to travel around China, visiting various cities such as Suzhou, Shanghai, Jinan, Beijing, and more. We explored tourist sites such as the Oriental Pearl TV Tower and the Bund. I was able to buy traditional clothing and jewelry for my family. We also had the opportunity to immerse ourselves in their culture and try different foods. It was truly amazing to travel and meet new people. We were always welcomed and encouraged to feel at home. Before going to China, I was nervous about the project since I didn't have much experience in that specific field of chemistry. Thankfully, our professor provided us with literature that greatly helped in understanding the overall process, setup, and reactions involved in the experiments. In the lab, our initial focus was on the product of biomass pyrolysis: syngas, bio-oil, and biochar. After a few weeks, we each focused on different aspects of the project. My specific project involved microwave graphitization of biochar through biomass pyrolysis. We conducted three experiments using different powers: 350W, 420W, and 450W. Our experiment aimed to obtain a higher degree of graphitization. We obtained promising results demonstrating a higher degree of graphitization with higher power. Analyzing and interpreting the results was a little easier than expected. It was my first time analyzing data from Raman Spectroscopy, so I was initially nervous, however, thankfully I was able to get the gist of it. This experience will greatly help me in my future chemistry courses. I'm grateful to my mentors for their support and dedication through this project. They were amazing at guiding us through the experiments. During the last week, we presented our project and said our farewells over dinner with our mentors. The trip to China was filled with beautiful and memorable memories. We were shown great kindness and hospitality. It was a wonderful experience, infused with adventures and surprises. I met incredible people along the way and I'm truly grateful to them. They helped me in so many ways. I'm heartbroken that my trip ended so soon. Hopefully, one day I will be able to return to China and explore the culture more.