

**Date:** Sat, 2 Aug 2008 17:34:27 -0500

**Subject:** Now in Beijing.

Wow, what an amazing place!

Right from the moment we landed in Beijing and had people meet us at the plane to take us to the most organized customs and accreditation I have ever seen, this place has been amazing!

The city is so clean. There are beautiful flower gardens all over the place and lots of amazing flower displays. There are people constantly cleaning the streets and the venues.

The hotel that we live in is a palace, it is about a 1k walk to dinner from the room because it's so huge. The lobby is amazing. There are so many staff at the hotel, about 10 people watch you eat and ensure you do not take food from the dining hall, there is someone always at the elevator checking to see if you are coming so they can push the button for you so there is no waiting involved. It's crazy! Maybe that happens at home too, but not in my life.

The security surrounding our hotel is unbelievable. There are police patrols in every corner of the property and around the building. They come on the bus and check accreditation and do a head count every time we leave the gates or come home. There are bag scanners and metal detectors at every entrance (hotel and venue).

The air quality is fine...it looked foggy (which is actually pollution) on day one, but it has been sunny with blue sky since then and we even found out that there are mountains surrounding the rowing course. It's beautiful. I have had no problems with breathing or anything. No one has that I know of.

The heat is ok, similar to London with the humidity. It might be an adjustment for the rowers from Victoria, but we'll see when they get here. We just have to ensure we are drinking enough and there is water everywhere so they help to make that easy.

We got our gear and it is great. It's true at first glance people were shocked, but it's pretty sharp looking and distinct. It looks great with other countries around. I'm a fan. We are supposed to wear at least one piece all the time and that's easy because I love it! I even wore the tapestry pants, they are so comfortable and fit great. Everyone says they are growing on them.

We had the afternoon off yesterday and took the tour bus into the city. We saw the Birds Nest (National Stadium where the opening ceremony will be held) Wow...that's a sight! So amazing. To get to the city we got to take the "Olympic Lane" marked with the rings which made travel faster, but the roads were bare. It's was only the people with even numbered licence plates that could drive yesterday and there is so little traffic. It was great.

We went to tackle the "silk market" where they pull you into their stall and want to barter with you. I was glad we were told to be prepared...even still it was a shock to the system.

The meals are good. Although I would rather eat 5 little meals each day (like I do at home) instead of 3 big meals, but the nutritionist and the hotel did a good job of working together.

Not sure what else there is. Things are great and I am loving it here. It doesn't quite feel like the Games yet, just feels like another race. We are out of town staying with only other rowers

(US and Italy) so it's just like any other rowing race. That's ideal for racing at your best. Not making it a big deal and just racing it like any other race.

I still can't get my sleep figured out. I was up at 3:30 this morning, I have 6 days to have my body work that out.

Off to breakfast!

-Janine