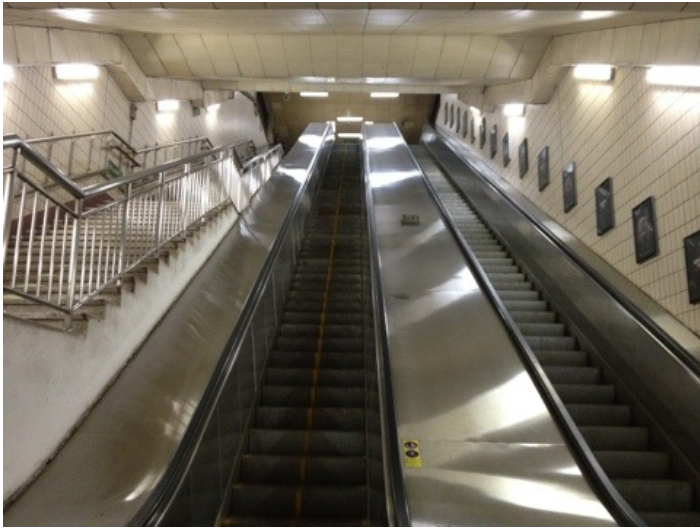


I know this place!

So what do you do when you wake up constantly because the hotel room is too warm and it's difficult to get back to sleep and you're 6000 miles from home in a country whose language you can neither read nor speak?

Obviously you get up, try to be quiet because your wife isn't into this sort of adventure, grab your stuff and head out to see the flag-raising ceremony with about 50,000 of your closest friends, not one of whom appears to be non-Asian (seriously, to say I stand out is an understatement) and whom, thankfully, are all pretty short. Is it still a stereotype when it's true?



At 5:30am, there aren't many people on the Beijing subway



I'm not a morning person, by any stretch of the imagination, but have to admit that the streets of Beijing were quite beautiful at 6am (and the iPhone4S camera captures it quite well)



Chinese Army soldiers keeping the crowd at bay prior to the flag raising ceremony



Creating blog entries from an iPhone has some challenges; this was supposed to be the same size as the others, and show the soldiers beginning their march across the plaza to raise the flag.

Oh, right, how do I know this place? By seeing it countless times during the cold war, when they would parade the huge nuclear missiles and 100,000 troops in front of the world, similar to Red Square in Moscow.

Funny to think how scared we were of China back then, with missiles pointed at us and fiery rhetoric about the Capitalist world. Funny because people seem incredibly friendly and curious here in Beijing, with an immense desire to know what it's like in the United States.