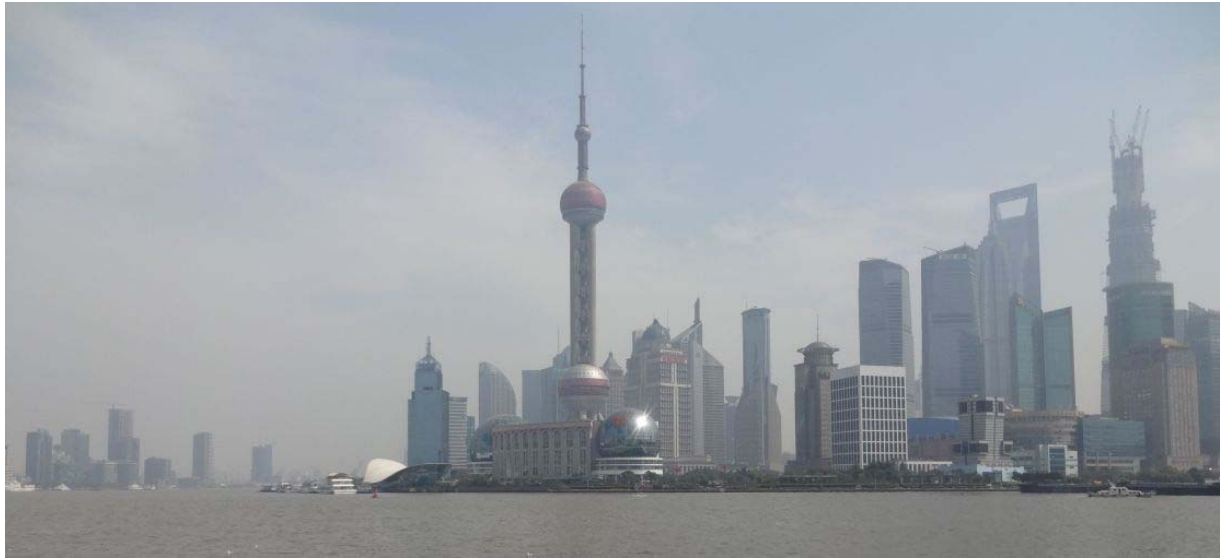


Journal - Around the World in 79 days - Spring 2013

Part 2: A weekend in Shanghai



Looking to the east side of the Huangpu river from the Bund

March 9, Saturday: A lady stopped by the hotel room this morning asking for any laundry -at least that what I understood from her rubbing hands together, etc - so I gave her things from the bathroom laundry basket, we filled in a hotel form, and in the evening, back came a series of “petit pacquets”, each containing underpants, socks or shirts, not since before Geb was born has that happened (to me) - amazing - just as efficient as at home! I suppose the 1% ers do it all the time - this was a genuine Chinese laundry.



“Petits pacquets” of clean clothes

Off to explore the city this morning, mainly to locate sights that Daniel, Anita and Brigid might be interested in next weekend: first to the metro station - line 10 runs from Fudan to downtown, about 10 stations away - buying an omnibus ticket seems the way to go: as in London, there are different fares to different stations, making the chinese language individual ticket machines quite difficult to use (although all the first few fares were each 4RMB=60 cents). First goal, “The Bund”, where the downtown shopping area meets the river: From the East



Nanjing road station to the Bund was about 500 m: the Bund turns out to be just a viewing area of the river (see above), with a few little shops, gardens and a wide boulevard; I was surprised at the large size of the river, and the large number of container ships going up and down; the river must be tidal since we are so close to the sea (the Shanghai area is totally flat - more so even than South Bend); the streetside behind the Bund is lined with fancy bank buildings, I suppose remaining from the old trading era. I traded taking pictures with a young chinese couple - in front of a flower-bed and statue of a “strong man” - no statues of “strong women” anywhere, even though it is apparently “international strong-women’s day” tomorrow. I suppose there are differing definitions of “strong” when comparing men and women: physical and mental, or both; are “strong” women (or men)

successful? do strong women marry weak men? Do they have weak fathers, as well as strong mothers? I think strong women raise strong sons (and probably strong daughters, but this latter is beyond my personal experience - I'll check with our sons and daughters-in-law...).

Next a leisurely walk back along Nanjing street which becomes a pedestrian mall, filled with shoppers, little trains running down the center, and modern stores galore on every side - it could be in America, a capitalist heaven of greedy consumption, but I am reminded more of the shopping frenzy of Singapore - here the weather is better and hence the stores are not in malls but just along the street, lots of streets side by side. I suppose London's Oxford street is a better comparison. Is Mao responsible for this? Or is he turning over in his grave? It will be interesting hearing from Daniel and Anita, with their wider experiences, how prevalent this is in China, or whether it is only for the millions who live in the cities...



At the western end is "Peoples Square" - a large park (a la New York's Central Park), with 2 museums (Art and General), a theatre, and other entertainments - eg a funfair, food sellers, a Hyde Park Corner type of place where people advertise seeking employment, gardens, wading pools and fishponds, etc...I sat in the shade eating some lunch - chicken on a stick, and a bowl of traditional chinese fare - a rice and vegetable mixture; it was too hot even in shirt sleeves to sit in the sun for long! Here are a few pics in the park..(I would put them up on Facebook, but neither the hotel cable nor the Fudan U. Sites seem to allow me to go to Facebook - or, more strangely, the New York Times - I will have to ask D and A about that)



Job seekers, job providers?



The Shanghai Museum



Warm people in the park

Coming out at the other end of the park, I walked back towards the river to locate the Natural Sciences museum, next to the Westin Hotel - another noteworthy skyline tower, the top looking like an open lotus leaf. After needed liquid refreshment, I took to the nearest metro station, and back to Fudan - a hot tiring day on the west bank of downtown.

March 10, Sunday: The breakfast dining hall was almost empty yesterday, but not so today - there must be a new group of conferees (but not carrying green bags). Also a huge change in temperature outside - down to the high 40s, apparently more normal for this time of year, and definitely better for a new walking tour - today's plan is to explore the riverbank and high rises of the east bank.

Took line 10 to East Nanjing interchange to line 2, under the river to Lujiazui, the heart of the highrise district, next to the Pearl Tower. An incredible panorama of tall buildings, all built in the past 15 years (and still building). The pictures really do not do them justice. Next to the station is a large traffic interchange with a circular walkway all round it above the traffic - a great idea which allows one to see all the buildings from different perspectives. I walked down past "The Pearl" to the riverbank which is lined with (mostly expensive) riverview restaurants; unlike the Bund, it is a little difficult to get to the riverbank, and once there, much of the river



The Pearl - an elevator goes to the top

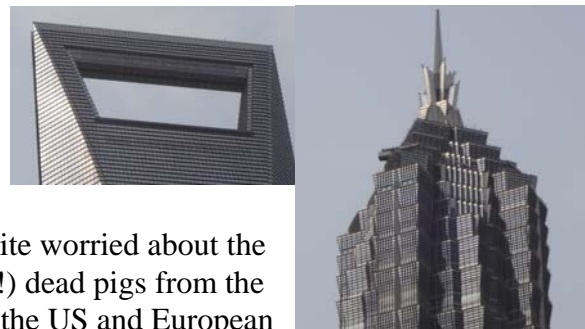


Map of the Eastside



"The big three"

walkway is under water. Going upriver was easier as it opened out into some rivergardens, and most of the pathways were high enough to be water-free; apparently the river is higher than usual this year, but such flooding occurs every year, generally in the late summer: the Huangpu river is only about 200 km long, beginning in a large lake to the west of Shanghai. The river provides the drinking water for Shanghai - hence people were quite worried about the retrieval of several thousand (5916 up till yesterday!) dead pigs from the river in the last few days - it was well-publicized in the US and European papers: the local theory is that upriver farmers discovered their pigs had swineflu, and were told by local officials just to dump them in the river so that they would not have to deal with the problem - the truth will appear eventually...People tend to drink only bottled water and beer anyway.



Looking west from the eastside

The riverside park ended after about a mile at a cross-river ferry: it was about to leave, so I quickly bought the 2 RMB token (about 30 cents) and jumped on. It looked like an easy way to cross the river, which it did, but unfortunately, it went at a diagonal much further up the river than I had really planned: so turning lemons into lemonade, I just stayed on the boat and returned to the original embarkation point (a 2 for 1 deal, but with great views of the skyscrapers as we returned). Then I could wander around the east side some more, going the other side of most of the skyscrapers, finding a row of little shops (time to have some lunch), and then on to another metro stop, passing by a public library (not just the automatic self-service one shown), and another highrise shopping center. I took line 9 under the river, switched to 8 and then to 10, aiming for the Yuyuan garden.



*Self-service books
(full library was just behind)*

I thought I was headed for some beautiful chinese gardens, but all I found there were lots of narrow streets and mostly trinket traders, with a few jewelry stores and eating places. A tourist trap superieure; but a beautifully constructed place, with pagoda-like buildings hanging over the narrow pedestrian streets, and it was indeed filled with tourists, almost all chinese. The only real "garden" part was a restaurant in the middle of a little lake (see below), as pictured in



Yuyuan garden restaurant

all the literature about it. I soon had enough of all that, not even tempted by the “Dairy Queen in a pagoda”, and headed for home. Back at the home metro station, I walked down a little old shopping street in the opposite direction, and

sampled one of the many restaurants there for supper. Despite the triple-mall of stores at the end of the block, these little stores and restaurants still seem to do good business, and I suspect their prices are quite a bit lower.

That’s the end of the first weekend: my impression is that I would much rather live here than in dirty Delhi or sparkling clean Singapore; I am surprised how few people understand English, even most of the young people away from the immediate Fudan University area; the restaurants sometimes have menu items also in English, but rarely do any waiters speak any. The food is fascinating - every meal is an experiment of wandering into the unknown. I have not had a bad meal yet, although the vegetable dishes are easily a favorite with lots of original ways to cook, to mix, and to present them; the meat dishes are often in some kind of broth or seaweedy stew, but always with bones, little ones and big ones - as Roger says: “ the chinese like their bones”, making such dishes a challenge to eat with chopsticks; of course, when eating, the chinese are hunched over their dishes, sometimes slurping away, but it definitely gives the food less time to slip off the chopstick on its way to one’s mouth...



Yuyuan - buy, buy, bye



From the east riverbank



Goldfish in the park



East-side from the ferry