

1-16-15: First Day in Shanghai

A very long trip (15 hours) but infinitely easier with flat bed service in business class! A very nice Chinese student named Kevin picked us up at airport. Instantly aware of pollution – eyes smarting, harder to breathe. Kevin said this was a yellow day - medium on air pollution rating scale! Can't imagine what red day will be like.

A Chinese person from NYU-Shanghai Human Resources, Jun, met us at the residence for orientation – maps, business cards in Chinese to show cab drivers where to bring us home, to hospital, campus, etc., campus info and how to get there...

First thing this morning we had to go for physicals – Chinese woman who met us at hospital to guide through process was named Yuki (a Japanese name). A lot of Chinese people who interact with westerners seem to adopt Anglicized names. She chose that name because she deals with a lot of Japanese as well as western folks. Her Chinese name (pronounced Ting) does not seem difficult to say. Embarrassing to think how westerners require others to adapt to us rather than learning new names, as they must when they come to the west.

Hospital processed large group of people very efficiently – first blood pressure, on to next cubicle for eye exam, then blood test, chest x-ray, ultrasound, all like a conveyor belt. Met a Taiwanese guy named Colin and a Spaniard named Manuel as we moved along the line. They work for businesses here and have to get exam every year. Apparently we will have to do the same. They gave us some good restaurants to try and places to see while we are here.

Returned to residence 4 hours later and finally able to have coffee and something to eat. Then went to grocery store for some basic supplies. Friday afternoon does not seem like best time to shop. Mobbed with people. Have to guess what we are buying – almost all packaging in Chinese (of course). Some brands we can tell but not always. For example, hard to find yogurt without sugar or to know what is vegetarian. I started thinking about what it must be like for people who come to US not speaking English. All made harder when you are hungry but don't know where/how to get food you can eat!

Apartment is very nice. Comfortable beds and cleaning service twice a week including laundering towels and sheets. So we only have to wash clothes. Front desk people are very nice, providing local information, translation services, etc. Really helpful since we literally know nothing!

Air pollution is very bad. Hoping weekend will be better. Plan to go exploring tomorrow. Good to have weekend to get settled in and get oriented. Monday morning we walk to campus and get orientation there including VPN so we can use Internet. Not sure I can send this until then.

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