

Shanghai Journal 1-19-15

Ni Hao, Friends. Thanks to all of you who wrote back. It is so good to hear from you and to know you like hearing about life in Shanghai! Today we got VPN on our devices so we can actually get and send Gmail – a big advance! The government blocks Gmail as well as Facebook, the New York Times, etc. The VPN gives us the same access we would have at home.

Today was a big day – orientation to NYU Shanghai campus. Started out by trying to walk there using a not fully developed map – so it was definitely the long way to go. But the weather was glorious (it actually felt like spring) so it was lovely to be outside. Once we got there we had a full day of orientation meetings with Human Resources, Information Technology (IT), keys to Ravi's office, etc. All extremely well organized by lovely, friendly people.

After lunch in the cafeteria (not bad and very cheap), an intern took us to buy cell phones and then to get SIM cards so we can use them. Then she took us to the bank to help us set up a bank account. All of this took most of the day - but without all the help we received it might have taken a week to do any one of these things on our own, so we are very grateful. For example, we didn't realize we should negotiate the price of the cell phones. Our 20-year old guide showed us how and got us a very good deal!

The campus is in a high rise building in a lovely setting, with broad avenues and green spaces. Everything is brand new. Ravi's office is on the 11th floor and has great views of the area. The library is spacious and full of light so I can happily work there when Ravi is meeting with students and colleagues and I can't use his office. I also found out I will be able to use his phone for my conference calls on the book so that is very reassuring.

We will meet other colleagues on Wednesday when NYU is hosting a cocktail reception and banquet for faculty, as well as at a faculty luncheon on Thursday. Several other faculty members are staying in this residence so hopefully it will end up being a good community.

Yesterday we walked along a park not far from us (Century Park) that seems to be as long as Central Park. We saw lots of runners and people out enjoying the day. We met a man walking his small child to a play center. He asked if parents in the US and India are as crazed about getting all the right educational experiences for their children and the competitiveness of it all. We agreed that things are similar in both the US and India and wondered together about the loss of pleasure and discovery in learning.

We found another grocery store with organic vegetables. We ate at a Dim Sum place where we were able to point to pictures to get vegetarian dishes. Really delicious food everywhere we have eaten so far. And we've made some pretty good dishes at

home too! We are planning to buy a wok and learn how to cook Chinese dishes. Eager to try so many things!

Shanghai is the most populous city in China, and the most populous city proper in the world, with a population of over 20 million. It feels both very cosmopolitan and very local depending on where you are in the city. So far we have explored maybe three or four different areas of the city and each is a revelation. The metro is excellent – so well organized and spotlessly clean. It puts NYC to shame! Walking is easy as long as you keep an eye out for silent electric scooters that travel along the sidewalks with pedestrians. When the pollution is low, as it was today, it is really nice to be outside.

Tomorrow, however, it's time to get back to work! We are looking forward to settling into a routine. More to come! Lee

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