

Shanghai Journal: 1-22-15

Ni Hao, Quiyou (Hello friends and family).

We have spent the past few days getting to know the ropes at NYU Shanghai. Wednesday evening there was a cocktail party and banquet where we met a lot of people from the administration and faculty. When we arrived, a very pleasant looking man walked up to Ravi and they started chatting. I said hello and asked what he did at the institution and it turned out he is the Chancellor! I said to Ravi later it might have been better for him to introduce me since he knew who the guy was. Anyway, the Chancellor seems like a really nice person – from Shanghai and formerly President of East China University, with which NYU is linked. We were asked to sit with people we did not know and I liked that we met different people that way. Dinner buffet was nice, with enough vegetarian options for us (and signs so we knew what was in each dish).

Today was a long day for Ravi – meetings all day for faculty orientation. I joined him at noon for a luncheon followed by a panel where people shared experiences living in Shanghai and gave advice about all kinds of things – restaurants, food shopping, local sights, travel, bookstores, etc. It was very helpful and now we know who to talk to further about various things. I'm eager to find a good massage place nearby and received some good recommendations. Also found out there will be Chinese language classes we can take two nights a week, and yoga classes for Ravi. We have a small gym in the residence where I do weights and I get plenty of walking in each day to round out the aerobic exercise!

Today we got masks to wear when the pollution index is high. We have an app that tells us what the levels are. These masks have little filters in them so I guess they truly work. They constantly filter the air at the NYU building and in our residence and that is reassuring. It really makes a difference to be away from the traffic. We can walk from the subway through a neighborhood with parks and trees and that helps a lot.

We spent one whole afternoon shopping for an espresso maker for Ravi since the one he brought from New Paltz had a faulty gasket. The same intern who took us to get cell phones, Viola, took us to a mall where she thought we could get the coffee maker.

Ravi wanted a stove top Italian cafeteria - that are actually made in China – but we could not find one anywhere. Everything is electric and huge and expensive. We finally found one similar to what Ravi wanted, but made in Germany, and electric to boot. But it makes decent coffee and he is happy. We also looked for a rice cooker – again like the very simple one we have at home. There must be 30 brands of rice cookers here and all are very fancy with a million options and also expensive. We had to search and search for a simple one and finally found one at a reasonable price.

We went out to dinner at a vegetarian restaurant recommended by the front desk people and it was excellent. Luckily the menu was in both Mandarin and English so we could sort of figure out what we were ordering. The yummiest was a vegetable dish with lotus roots - so delicious! Also great pot stickers, a Szechuan dish, and noodles. Enough to bring home for lunch the next day. The restaurant uses all organic ingredients and no MSG. I'd like to go back with a bigger group so we can try more dishes.

Now we are trying to figure out where we can go during the spring break Feb. 15-21. That is also Chinese New Year so apparently everyone in the country is traveling home and it can be quite difficult to get around - especially by train. We are going to talk with a travel agent tomorrow. I'm hoping we can go to Yunnan in the south - called a photographer's paradise! We'll see. New Year events in Shanghai are supposed to be quite something too. Anything we decide to do will be a new adventure so I'm open to whatever we can figure out.

I have started working on the book again and slowly getting into work mode. I'm still not quite used to the time change but that is slowly getting better. It is kind of amazing that my co-editors and I can work through GoogleDocs, sometimes we are doing so at the same time. We are trying to get all four editors on Skype so we can have our conference call at hours when we won't be at our various institutions.

If any of you are on Skype, please send me your Skype name and we can talk sometime.

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