

Shanghai Journal 1-31-15

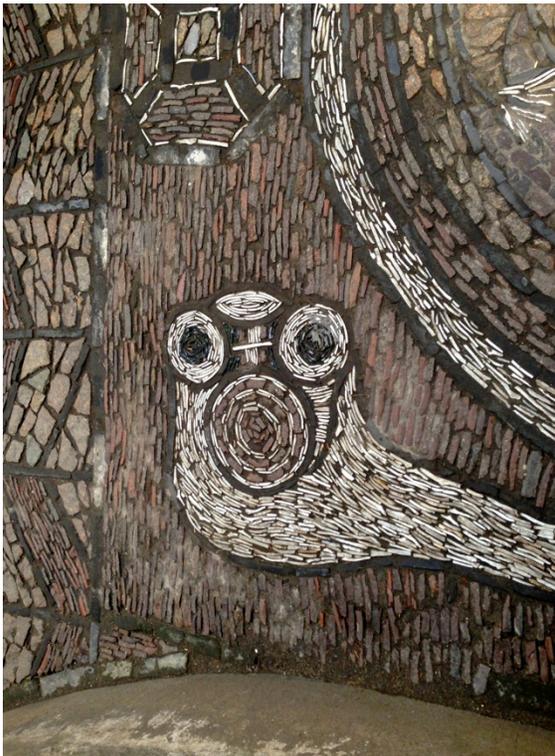
After two days of being “smogged in” (equivalent to snowed in) we were happy to get out this afternoon after the AQI went down. When we left, the weather was sunny and cold (mid-30s), but by the time we headed home it was cloudy, windy and much colder. Maybe the weather here is changing in sympathy with the suffering all of you on the East coast of the US are experiencing!

We went to see Yuyuan Gardens – built 400 years ago during the Ming dynasty by Pan Yunduan for the recreation of his aging parents. A lovely and unusual gesture since such things seem to typically be created for lovers or warriors!

To enter the gardens you have to run a gauntlet through a market with “3000 shops and nearly 10,000 vendors” and where “nearly 60,000 tourists visit every day” (says our written guide). We can believe it – the place was mobbed! Tourists from all over Asia as well as a few Westerners from various countries – we heard Spanish, French, English, Japanese, Arabic – quite a variety.



After the crush in the bazaar it was a relief to pay 30 yuan (\$5) with our senior discount to enter the garden. It weaves through a labyrinth of structures, ponds, stone bridges and sculptures - lovely traditional architecture and settings more typical of Western depictions of China.



We noticed an interesting phenomenon – apparently you can hire a guide with a camera on a pole to take “selfies” of you and your friends as you wander through the

gardens. I'm serious! At first I thought someone was filming a movie but then we realized there were several such groups. You can also buy your own "selfie stick" – as we saw from vendors when we exited the garden.

Then we stopped at a tea room and had some lovely Oolong Ginseng tea and Jasmine tea (see health benefits of each!) It was warm and cozy in the tearoom and really welcome after walking through the garden - really more of a stone maze than a garden.



We planned to be home in time to watch the women's finals of the Australian Open – advertised all week and much anticipated by us – only to find that it is not showing on the channels we have. What a bummer! We had planned to go out for dinner but it is so cold we decided to stay in and order pizza (for the first time). Will let you know how that turns out.

We had nice Skype chats today with our friend Linda on vacation in Hawaii and Dipti, Dennis and Sumita hunkered down in NYC. It's really nice to be able to talk/see friends from home – for free! I'm a big fan of Skype now.

Hope all are healthy and warm. Zaijian, Lee

P.S. Pizza not that great when you don't have an oven to warm it up –microwave just doesn't cut it for pizza! We should have thought of that ahead of time!

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