

Shanghai Journal 9-17-17

Ni Hao,

I found a lovely place to walk just one block from our apartment. It is an oval track that goes along a tree-lined canal and around a park. I had been missing the walk to the university we had in our old place, so I'm happy to have found this one.



There aren't that many NYU-SH folks staying in Lanson Place – 17 or so (as opposed to 60 in Grand Pujian). There are also some grade school teachers staying here who are from UK and teaching at a school nearby called Harrow! Today in the elevator we met a French guy who is here for two months with Cirque de Soleil, and this evening Ravi saw a bunch more of them moving in. Interesting mix of people!

On Saturday last, we went to dinner at Leo and Ana's apartment – they are here full time for three years and have gotten their own apartment in a very nice complex near the university. Both of them have become pretty fluent in Mandarin and most of their neighbors are Chinese. Their daughters, Taiz and Brena, both speak Mandarin and have really grown since last year. It seems Taiz, the older one, goes to a Zumba class and has decided she wants to be a Zumba teacher when she grows up! Below are Brena and Leo, Taiz and Marcello.



Marcello, who lives in the apartment next door to us, is from Leo's home place in Minas Gerais in Brazil. (We drove there a few years ago with Katia and Leo when we were visiting them in Rio.) We had a lot of fun and interesting conversation about politics in the U.S., Brazil and Argentina (where Ana is from and where Leo has a post at the university he will return to when he finishes with NYU-SH). It's actually pretty depressing to see how feckless politicians are and how polarized political debate is among the population in all three countries. Ana works for a social service agency in Buenos Aires and said that the politicians in charge of various government agencies there all believe that what is needed is a business model that translates into gutting social services. Sound familiar?

We are slowly getting used to the long metro rides, but not loving it as you can see below. Although to be honest, we are pretty relaxed since we are returning from our first massage at Happy Feet near our old place. Notice everyone glued to cell phones, just like the New York subway!



On my morning walk the other day I took this photo of employees at one of the businesses across the street from our residence. They were outside doing a kind of line dance to music and chanting in unison. We actually see this a lot. I think it is a team building exercise. The other photo, taken from our living-room window, shows the massage place across the street. There are actually three places within a two-block radius. Very tempting though we feel pretty loyal to our old place.



The IFC Mall where I sometimes go to buy groceries used to have a really good French bakery. That is now gone and has been replaced by Lady M, a patisserie which I guess is famous in New York and Hong Kong. The first day we passed by, there were literally hundreds of young people lined up to enter. I took this photo on a weekday when it wasn't as crowded but still there was a long line. I read that

people start lining up before the place opens in the morning! In the same mall I also noticed a huge ad promoting “custom-blended re-white formulas” for women, so colorism is alive and well in Shanghai.



Today, Ravi and I went to the Imperial Examination Museum. It is not easy to get to by metro so we got a car through Didi (the Chinese version of Uber). It is really great since we don't speak Mandarin well enough to order a cab on our own. Our home address is plugged in and we can go and come easily because both driver and we can follow GPS to find each other for pickup and trace route along the way.

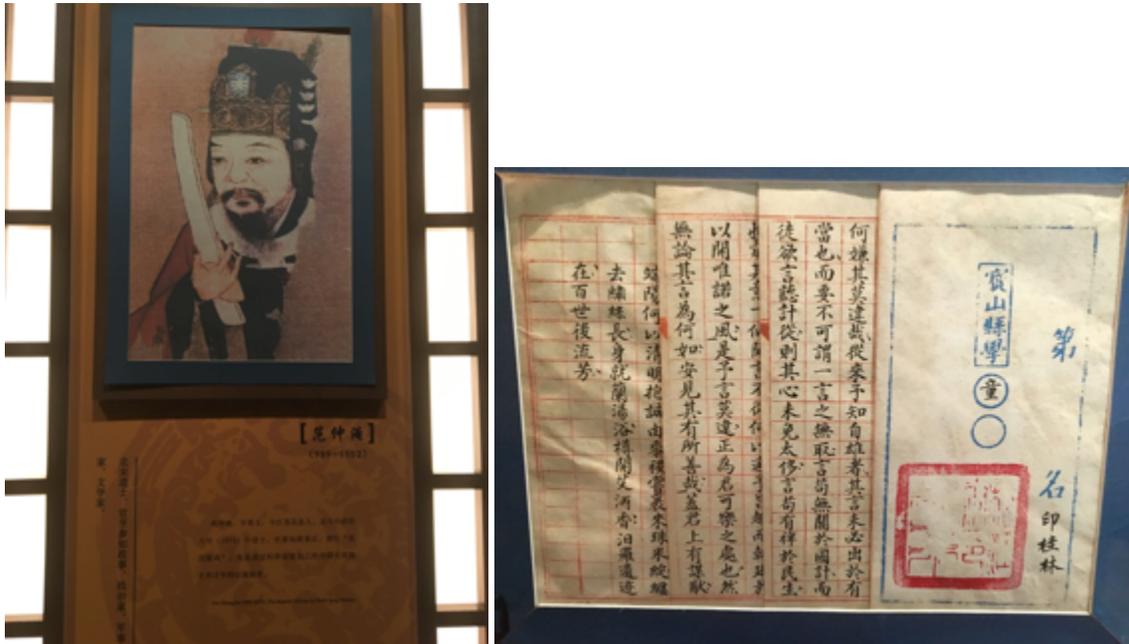
The museum is in a little town on the edge of Shanghai called Jiading. We basically took a ring road around the outskirts from Pudong to Puxi. Even there, high rises and new ones going up spread out as far as the eye can see. I guess they have to do this if they are going to house 25 million people. It makes one feel quite small and insignificant.

Jiading is a lovely town and the museum is in a Confucian Temple in the center.



The museum displays artifacts from the imperial examinations for civil service positions that have been given in China for 1300 years starting in 605 (ending in 1905). It was really fascinating. Below is an image the top scorer from the Song Dynasty, and a failed exam from the Qing Dynasty. It seems this did create a merit

system and there are many examples of people from poor families who rose through the system. One item on display was a long letter from a noble person who failed the exam exhorting an official to find a way for him. Apparently that didn't work.



One exhibit showed all the ways students tried to cheat, including having “ghosts” take the exam for them and sneaking in crib notes on jackets, silk cloth and paper. Below is an image of ghost test takers who were caught and paraded in public during the Qing Dynasty, and another of a jacket with crib notes written all over it. Very ingenious!



The veneration for study and learning was evident, as can be seen in this silk pouch with the characters “honorary return to home town” and a series of photos (not shown here) illustrating those who passed the examination being paraded through town and attending a feast hosted by the emperor. Kind of reminds you of the way we learning is venerated today, right?



I have been eager to see this museum since our first trip here but I could never find a way that wasn't two hours by metro and bus. So I'm glad Didi finally enabled us to get there.

My knees have not improved but I keep walking in the mornings and riding the stationary bike. This past Thursday I had my first acupuncture treatment and it seemed to help some. I'll be going once a week for a while to see if that works but I also plan to see the orthopedist. Luckily, both the acupuncture doctor and orthopedist work in the same clinic so maybe there will be some coordination.

Thanks to all who have kept in touch. Your email means a lot. I get lonely while Ravi is away all day so it is always wonderful to hear from you.

Zaijian, Lee

