

We boarded the cruise ship there and it was really a problem for one of the ladies from Florida, who had bad knees. It was down about 50 or 60 stone steps from the street to the water. I had to help her and a little Chinese porter they call bum bum boys took her other side. We got her there, and all the time she is saying, "I can do it", which was sort of a watchword for us for the rest of the trip.

YANGTZE

We set sail down the river, and I got up on deck with my latest toy- a GPS receiver.. After I locked on to the satellites it gave me my position on a moving map, my heading and the speed of the ship!

Our first stops was at he Shibozhai Pagoda, which will have a dam built around it to protect it from the rising water when the dam is complete.

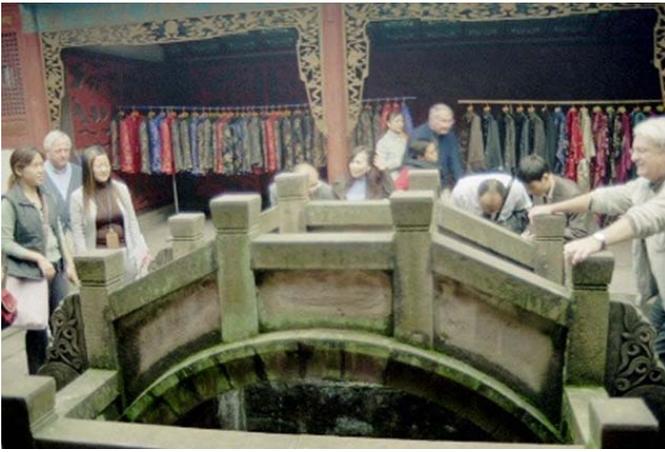
There are some 270 steps to the top, so some of the folks opted not to go up. The way it was built, there are separate ways up and down, so once you start up, it is very difficult to go back down the way you went up.



When we got to the top, there was a room with representations of various gods and goddesses that were quite beautiful.



Also at the top, there was a small bridge with a large salamander living below it. You have to try to cross the bridge in 3 steps to bring luck. I tried it, and was able to cross it in the required 3 steps. I also noticed that on the top of the pagoda, there were dragons on each corner to fight the evil spirits.



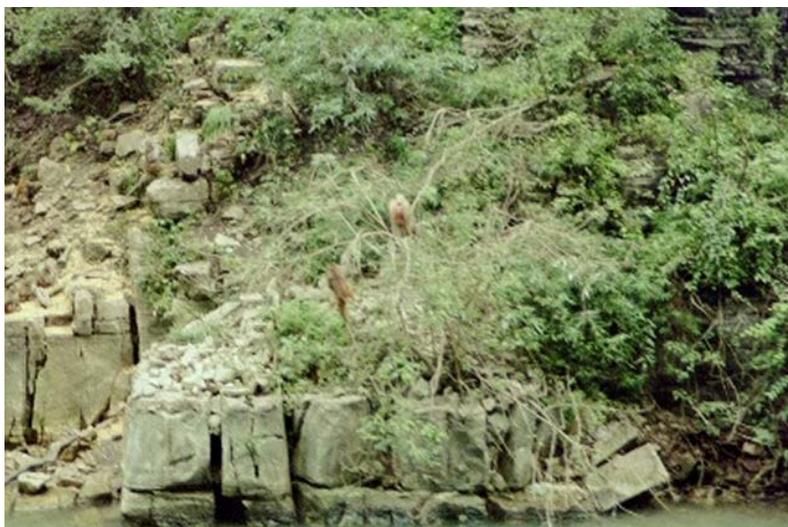
We continued down through the first of the Three Gorges until we got to the Daning River, which was one of the smaller Gorges. We were transferred to a smaller day cruiser to negotiate the shallower waters. We sailed by a house that had cultivated a series of terraces to grow crops on our way to the Dragon's Mouth Bridge, which was the entrance to the smaller gorge.



Unfortunately, it was very foggy, so I could not get any really good pictures. We wound our way up river with many twists and turns. There were people stationed on the shore as lifeguards in case someone fell in. And right in the middle of the gorge, a small hotel appeared! It was apparently there for people on another escorted tour.



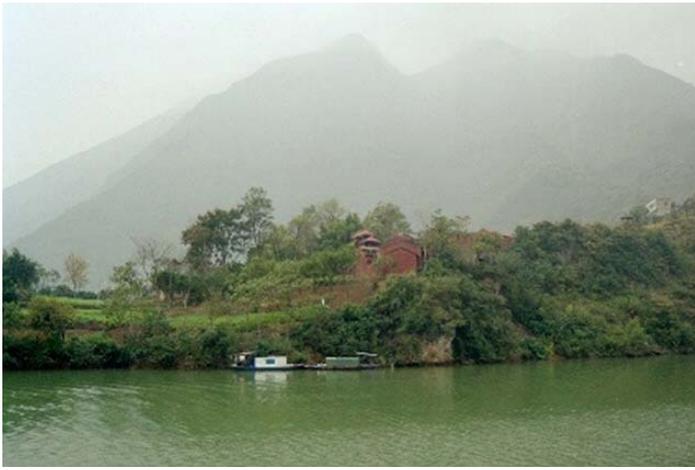
We passed one spot, and saw monkeys climbing in the trees next to the water-on closer inspection, they apparently have food left for them down there –sort of like chum in fishing! We sailed further up river and came to a landing where there were sampans waiting for us. We had to transfer to them because the river got narrower and shallower.



We climbed into the sampans and were issued life jackets, and there were enough that we could sit on them instead of the bare wood. We headed further up stream, then turned around and headed back to the dock to get back on the larger boat.



On the way back we saw an interesting set of buildings, and we were told it is a mausoleum for the Chinese. We then sailed back under the Dragon's mouth bridge and reboarded our ship for the downriver trip



We sailed down river and entered the locks for the 3 Gorges dam. There was another ship in the lock with us and we were both moving forward at the same time! There was very little clearance between the two ships!



That evening, the ship put on a show featuring some of the crew in their native costumes.



The next day we docked below the dam and took a tour of it. It was so foggy again that it was impossible to get any decent pictures. We were taken to a museum that had a model of the dam and its surroundings. The place was laid out like a park with an interesting structure in the middle. The structure was basically an observation site to look at the dam, but it was so foggy it was useless.



We sailed further downriver through the old locks and debarked the ship in Yichang to catch a flight to Shanghai. When we got to the airport, it was socked in, and the flight we were going to catch was a turnaround flight from Shanghai. It was obvious that we were not leaving from that airport. It was at this point that Joy swung into action. She got on her cell phone, and when she was done, she had booked us on an early flight out the next morning from a city 4 hrs away and also booked us all into the Holiday Inn there. We had to drive to the city over Chinese roads that were not that great, all the time Joy was giving coffee to the bus driver to keep him awake! She was absolutely fantastic!

We caught an early flight out for Shanghai, and did some sightseeing before we checked into our hotel. We went to the peaceful Yu Yan gardens, a traditional Chinese garden whose plantings, courtyards, and pavilions create the illusion of mountains, caverns, and lakes.



Later that day, we visited the Children's Palace, which was a primary school. At that age the kids are still cute. There were quite a few classes going on, including music, calligraphy, painting, and dance.



Our last stop was at the Shanghai Museum. The rooms were divided according to subject. There were rooms of bronzes, ceramics, calligraphy, painting and furniture. There were also models of native clothing of some of the minority tribes.





We had our farewell dinner that night, and headed for the airport the next. At the airport something happened that really showed the inner working of the bureaucratic mind. As we checked in, there was a big sign in English and Chinese saying that for safety reasons, no alcohol was allowed in carryon bags. So I go through immigration and X-ray, and go out into the gate area.

Well in the gate area there are about 100 yards of shops selling everything including-you guessed it-alcohol! Armed with my trusty price list, I selected 2 bottles and put them in my backpack.. I also met 2 ladies that were buying scotch for their husbands and since the exact ones were not available, I told them which ones were similar, then turned to the saleslady and asked if I got a commission.

We got on the plane, and I asked Thelma to sit with me, which was nicer than having a stranger. After we were aloft, they came around with the drink cart. The only had wine and beer, so I asked for some wine. Well, they served it in a little plastic cup that held about 2 ounces if that! So, after the cart and cabin attendants passed by, I opened my backpack and poured Thelma and myself a real drink!

We arrived in Los Angeles, and my bag was one of the last ones off. I looked for the two ladies and did not see them, so I headed out to call for my ride. As I am waiting, one of them came by and said that Thelma was still there waiting for me! I did not know what to do, as you cannot go back in that area once you leave it. Just about that time my car showed up and I had to leave. I was really worried that Thelma might miss her plane, so I contacted her the next day and she said there was no problem.

I am now home for a while- other than 2 small west coast train trips. My next adventure is next year on the Trans-Siberian Railroad from Moscow to Vladivostok!

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