



Travels with Partner Throughout Asia – Part 2

Travelogues

Richard and I arrived in Hong Kong on 2 separate flights, departing and arriving within minutes of each other. It was grey, overcast, and drizzly, but still very humid. Since Hong Kong is such a crowded piece of land on the corner of China, they are always looking for new land. They built the airport on “reclaimed land”, meaning they scooped dirt from the mainland and tossed it in the water until it got built up to be more land. They do this in the big harbour too.

Hong Kong has a very colourful history. We went to the Hong Kong Museum of History yesterday for a couple of hours and learned all about it. Back in the 1700's Britain was going through the Industrial Revolution and was able to make a lot of stuff more cheaply. They needed to sell it, and thought that China would like to have their stuff. When the British came to sell to the Chinese, the Chinese said “no thanks we don't need any of your stuff”. So, to make a long story short, the British declared war on the Chinese, eventually won, and forced them to trade with them. The British also claimed a little corner of China to use as a base, and Hong Kong was born. There were some more wars and the British always won, but in the last war they agreed to a 100 year lease on Hong Kong. In 1997 the lease was over, and Hong Kong went back to being owned by the Chinese.



Over the years Hong Kong has become a very important trade port in Asia, and it grew and grew and grew. I have never seen such a busy harbour. I have never seen such busy streets or spectacular skyscrapers. It really is a happenin', happenin' place.

After we arrived at the airport, we took a train to downtown, transferred to a bus that links to the business hotels and dropped off our bags. We then (around 11 am) started to walk around the downtown. Hong Kong speaks both English and Chinese. The stores have both languages. The first thing I noticed walking around is that this is a shopper's paradise. Everybody wants to do business with you. At least a dozen times during our 1.5 hr walk around we were asked by people on the sidewalks if we wanted a custom-made suit tailored for us ... cheap and ready in 1 day. They aren't too much of a nuisance, and we just say “no” and keep walking. No harm done. If I stayed longer, I'd consider a custom-made shirt for \$30 though.

One of the things that I was looking forward to was to go up Victoria Peak on Hong Kong Island. We took a taxi up long winding roads. The driver was Chinese and spoke some English. “Hong Kong pee-pel have too much money. That penthouse suite was sold for \$1.5 billion HK Dollars (about C\$250 million). The farther you go up, the richer the houses are. The view is normally spectacular of the city, and would give an appreciation for the extent of the high rises and harbour activity. But we couldn't see too much. We had a Thai lunch at the top but everywhere (absolutely everywhere) has



construction underway, so it wasn't without the occasional construction noises. The most amazing thing about the construction that is going on everywhere is that the scaffolding is all latched-together bamboo. Even the skyscrapers going up 40 stories have bamboo scaffolding. Bizarre.

We took another taxi back down and walked along the harbour boardwalk where there is a Chinese Hollywood-style walk of fame. We saw Bruce Lee's star, Jet Li and Jackie Chan's too, but all the other names we didn't recognize. Then we went to the HK Museum of History for a couple of hours.

Really interesting.

When we came out it was really humid even though it was still raining a tiny bit. We went for a swim in the pool but the pool temperature was so warm it was hardly refreshing. It probably made me more tired. I was already zonked due to the early start we had that day. Richard promised me a good western meal before we went into mainland China, and we had a steak in the hotel restaurant overlooking Hong Kong harbour. At night, the view is spectacular. The buildings are all different, and there are some monster neon signs advertising famous names like Hitachi, Canon, Siemens, etc. I sent you one of these pictures but it just doesn't tell the story very well. That view goes for 180 degrees from the left to the right, that's how many skyscrapers there are.



Added to Travelogues with permission from Peter K.