



Travels in Guangdong Province, Zhejiang Province and Taiwan
With Client
Travelogues

The temperature in Hong Kong is 35 C and with it we have very high humidity factor. Since we are only going to be in the city for one day, we did not want to lose any time sleeping the day away. After a quick cab ride up to Victoria Peak, we were able to witness the spectacular view of Hong Kong, the harbour and the neighbouring mountains. The rest of the day consisted of having lunch at a very nice Thai restaurant, where the food is a nice blend of fruit, spices and herbs, a tram ride down from the mountain, a ferry crossing from Hong Kong to Kowloon, dinner at a small local western style restaurant and an evening on the Avenue of Stars. The boardwalk on the Avenue was packed with people as they were all attending one of several free mini concerts being held by local performers.



The view of Hong Kong in a night setting is awe inspiring. The nighttime view of the skyline is one of the most architecturally appealing that I certainly have witnessed in my travels. The view has certainly been



the centre of many movies during the second half of the 20th Century and even though it appears to be changing due to massive construction project, it has not lost that romanticized view...

We did witness one of the most spectacular laser light shows ever put on by a city, in that most buildings on both sides of the bay (in Kowloon and Hong Kong) participated in a cavalcade of lights that moved with the music being played on the public speaker system. It was impressive as it was colourful, artfully choreographed and entertaining. The thousands of people who witnessed this from the Avenue of the Stars clapped and cheered

once the performance came to an end. I am certain that if we had been sitting down to watch this colourful light show, the performers would have gotten a standing ovation and would have been asked to perform and encore

On Sunday we left Hong Kong by ferry. The Shen Feng is an Australian built high speed catamaran that takes you into China in a very comfortable setting. The view from the windows throughout the trip is a mixture of old China and the ongoing construction of new apartment buildings, factories and bridges.

Dinner was a new experience for Barry, as it was his first opportunity to dine in a fine authentic Chinese restaurant.





Choosing from the menu was something new to him, and the first selection made was the Elephant Clam. This is a clamshell that is about 8 inches wide but has this long and large thing hanging from it that looks like a large appendage... Ha! Ha! Ha! It looks like an elephant's trunk and it is served sashimi style. MMM Good. I bet I had you thinking of something else. The meal consisted of a fish soup, various types of fish, prawns and many fresh vegetable dishes. All and all it was a very good and healthy dinner. Even Deeane, Barry's wife who is a Dietician would approve. All the food was fresh with something

from every food group and nothing was fried.

The following evening we went to a more exotic restaurant, which had a much larger selection on the menu. As we were the guests, Barry and I were expected to make the dinner selection from the different tanks filled with live something or others. Within the tanks, there were crocodile, large dew worms, snakes of every size and colour, prawns the size of my fist, lobsters that had to be at least 10 lbs or more (felt like I was the feed for the lobsters), a wide variety of hard and soft shell crab, lots of ugly (and I mean ugly) fish, birds, chickens and rabbits in cages and a whole lot of other seafood and road kill that we could not identify. Our dinner had at least eight courses, served with a local celebratory wine (Dragon & Tiger Wine) a derivative of the Mou Tai wine family. Anyone who has experienced this unique wine from China will understand what I mean.

Dinner was interesting. As this is Barry's first time travel experience in China, the local business people take on a keen interest in getting his impression of the surroundings and the meals. As in all dinners, a fish soup is served. Frank, a member of the management team from a supplier in Shun De asked Barry what he thought of the soup, and Barry's reply was that it tasted very good and he then asked what it was. Frank replied that it was a worm fish soup (not warm). Barry thought that this was OK, and continued to sip the soup. In watching Barry (as I expected something strange was about to happen), this look of surprise appeared. Now he CLEARLY understood that Frank meant WORM soup and not a WARM soup was what we were having as an appetizer. Barry looked at the sand worm in his spoon, deciding that this was not knowingly going anywhere near his mouth or stomach today or any other day. The worm was put back into the bowl and he worked his way around it.



With about ten courses to consume, it takes many hours to finish a traditional meal in China. The variety of dishes and flavours teasing the pallet always proves to be interesting. As the evening went on and Barry being the trouper he is, consumed the traditional Dragon & Tiger wine. Near the end of the meal, another surprise in the menu appeared. A small covered dish appeared, and each of us was provided with a special plate. The young lady serving our table removed the cover and so ever delicately placed on our dish a small hatchling (a one day old bird) that had been what appeared as baked – head, bones and all. We had to put the creature in

our mouth whole and eat it as it is. So you can just imagine, the crunching of the skull, the chewing of the soft skeleton bones and finally the swallowing of this calcium matter along with what little meat the

bird had to begin with, provided everyone with a culinary taste experience that is unique and probably a one time occurrence.

Tuesday night's dinner proved to once again be a one time experience. We drove into the city of Guangzhou (Capital City of Guangdong Province) to have dinner at the city's largest restaurant. It seats 5,000 (yes, thousand) people and it is not a restaurant that offers buffet style. It is a restaurant that serves from a menu that is a live menu. Imagine being greeted at one of the many entry doors by a live five or six foot long crocodile wandering around on the floor on its own.

Again Barry was in charge of the menu. He walked around the enormous tanks, pool, tubs, boxes and cages that housed the world's largest selection of animals (road kill), worms of all shapes and sizes, birds, and BUGS – yes bugs. There were water beetles ranging in size from ½ inch to the larger ones in the two to three in length. Let me assure you now, we did not knowingly have any live or cooked bugs. We started with the fish soup (sans worms) and salmon sashimi on ice. This was then followed by a broad selection well cooked vegetables and creatures, but the most exotic selection was the shrimp dish. We each got a shrimp that was at least one pound in size. Eating it proved challenging as the shell very hard to break. The meat was very tender and tasty, until one had to consume the soft yellow substance - the brain. The taste certainly was certainly unique, as it was a cross between a strong fishy taste and that of a soft boiled egg. Gulping down a mouthful of beer helped to rid your taste buds of the flavour left behind.



On our way out of the restaurant we took a tour of the owner's collection of exotic cars. He stores all of his cars in the restaurant on a stage for all to see, and at the end of the night he gets into one and takes it home. The vehicles on display consisted of very late model Ferrari, Lamborghini, Rolls Royce and an Aston Martin Vanquish. To top off the collection, the restaurant had on display a Rolls Royce from the 20's and a Ford Model T, both of which were in mint condition. I do not believe that these two vehicles were used to commute back and forth to work.

Thursday morning and all is well in Shang Yu, the next destination on our tour of Asia. This is an industrial zone in Zhejiang Province which is located 4 hours west of Shanghai by car. It is a rapidly growing city with a combined population between Yuyao and Shang Yu of over 6 million people. Our first dinner here last night was uneventful as our hostess, Lisa was very tame by any standard for our dinner selection and it was the most tame dinner selection encountered in China to date. Lisa ordered dishes that we are closer to the westernized Chinese food experienced in Canada, except it is much spicier.

At one of the factories visited today, Barry did witness the washroom system. In this particular plant, the individual stalls were interconnected by a trough (much like the old Maple Leaf Gardens). As a user you made you deposit and walked away, leaving yesterday's food consumption behind, as there is no way to flush. Shortly thereafter, while we were washing our hands, a loud noise came upon us. It was water discharge from a pipe that was 6 inches in diameter and it released water at a very high pressure to flush the 10 or 12 stalls at the same time. I certainly would not have wanted to be in the stall when this happened as there would have been a whole new definition for backslash.

In China there is a lack of real world reporting in English. Most news channels and newspapers are reported in the notional language however, in order to provide western travellers with some sense of what is happening in the world around them, the government published an English language newspaper called the China Daily. For your entertainment I have recreated these articles word for word, comma for comma and expression for expression.

**Articles taken from page 5 of the "China Daily" Newspaper
Published on Tuesday September the 26th, 2006**

Man killed by pig falling from crushed motorcycle

A man who used his motorcycle to transport a pig was killed after being knocked down and pinned by the pig in the wake of his motorcycle turning over to a ditch in Maoming, a city in western Guangdong, over the weekend. But the pig, which was put into an iron cage, was still alive when police arrived on the scene after the accident was reported. The accident took place in a local highway roadside at about 8 pm. The man, in his 30s, had died by the time the police moved away the pig, which weighed more than 150 kilograms. Police said that the man has yet to be identified. The excessive load and speedy driving were determined to have caused the accident.

Tumour found to crawl up man's leg

A man in his 30's from the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region was recently diagnosed with a moving tumour on his right leg in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province. Wang, who used to eat raw seafood, found that his walnut-sized tumour has moved from his shank to his thigh within a week. Wang said that the tumour began appearing on his lower leg a week ago after he ate uncooked crabs. A local hospital later found that Wang had contracted a parasitic disease, leading to the tumour on his leg. Local doctors said Wang's disease could be cured and Wang would recover if he received timely, proper treatment.

I hope that you found these articles entertaining. I certainly did, especially the phrase in the first article that stipulated that the cause of the accident was an excessive load and speedy driving. Hello!!!! What's a 150 kilogram pig doing on a motorcycle in the first place!!!! It's not like he can wrap his front hooves around the driver and hold on for dear life, nor could the pig ride side-saddle like the women do here in China or better yet, why is the pig riding a crushed motorcycle??????

Today we took a drive out in the country to visit a small factory in a remote small village. The view of the country side is very similar to Canada's that is, lots of wide open field with farmers tending to crops such as corn and a broad range of fruit trees. This factory was in the middle of farm country and it was showing its age. Production was spread out between a numbers of buildings, all of which had been built at different times to accommodate the growth of sales within the company. All activities and processes in the plastic tube making factory were manual processes, so as you can imagine there were people everywhere doing minute, mundane and boring work. They all seemed to be happy, and from my understanding they are as all staff originated from local farms where the annual earning per person was less than \$125 US. Now they are earning more than 10 times that and to some this has created wealth and happiness.

One of the strangest observations at this factory has to do with the washroom. Now I know, you must think that I obsessed with water closets in Asia. In such a place it is difficult not to take notice of bathroom organization that is so very different than the one we are used to in North America. I had heard of this type of bathroom organization but had never seen one in person. What I did witness was the first communal pooping station. You read right, six holes in the floor with footmarks for positioning



your feet, next you would comfortably squat to do your business and there only short walls for privacy. From what I have been told is that some people like to go and relieve themselves with others and discuss the politics of the day. Certainly would put a different expectation in North America when several women excuse themselves at a public function to go to the powder room. Or better still, if a single man can spend the better part of a day reading the paper in a bathroom, should there be an open communal series of toilets in a bathroom, he may never surface again, as they would be there trying to solve the troubles of the world.

Today is Saturday September 30th, the day before the beginning of the China's second National holiday. Twice a year the Chinese population is in perpetual motion. The first time it happens is in February with the Chinese New Year. The second is the first week of October for a celebration related to Labour Day. The only difference to the Canadian Labour Day celebration is that in China it last one full week rather than one day. As a result the population in China is on the move. This is a time were all the factory workers can return home to their families in smaller villages and in farm communities. The highways are packed with buses full of people with their luggage and valuable possessions strapped to the roof of the bus using a tarp as the only protection against the rain that will inevitably arrive.

Our commute from Shang Yu to Hangzhou would normally have taken an hour; bur because of the shifting population this weekend, our trip took almost two and half hours. Most of this time was consumed travelling from the outskirts of Hangzhou to the downtown area. Another experience encountered on the streets of Hangzhou is the large number of people that approach your car with maps offering their services to guide you through the best routes to get to your destination. It was like having the squeegee kids in Toronto accosting you for money when they cleaned your windshield with dirty murky water. It was non stop, as they pushed themselves upon your car in groups all competing for the opportunity to be your guide. In all my travels throughout Asia over the years I have never witnessed having so many people around me on the streets or on the highways.

Were at the airport leaving for Hong Kong where we hope to experience some sense of normalcy over the weekend. In fact we are hoping that the weather will be favourable enough for us to get on the 45 minute sky rail ride to the top of a mountain in mainland China to visit one of the many spiritual Buddha's, the Ngong Ping Buddha. I have visited several of them over the years, but this specific Buddha became accessible because of a sky tram that was built and opened this past spring from Hong Kong to the tiny village of Ngong Ping.

