



CHINA

Most of the time we were inland on this trip to China. Cities included Yichang, Chongqing, Xian, Guangzhou and Guilin. We landed in Beijing- the

only city on the top ten most populated in the world. But never to think any other city in China isn't brimming with people, especially in tourist places. We went on vacation in late September perfect weather almost every day but for us, this was a difficult trip. Since we didn't have a full guided tour itinerary, nothing was easy. I'll start with the traffic. It took us 2 1/2 hours just to get from the airport to our hotel. The tours we had scheduled were always late (traffic excuse). No phone calls to let us know what was happening or even if they were coming. We stayed at smaller, more local hotels. Beautiful upscale rooms but where no one spoke English. I mean NO ONE. they had no ability to help in what they couldn't readily understand. They couldn't even help us with the written local phone numbers so we could call the tourist agency. Same with taxis. They didn't seem to want to deal with "foreigners". They stared and even took pictures of ME, like they've never before seen a Caucasian. And the squat toilets are absolutely archaic. They still put a majority of them even at the modern Beijing airport. Nothing was easy from the endless steps to every tourist site to using the squat toilets.....it was a physical workout. China is definitely NOT ready for Western tourists. As I looked around, I was often struck by what I thought was their lack of situational awareness. I found the contrasts very odd. To me.....China was all about Chaos and Contradictions. Everyone seems to think that throwing litter is okay. Even though there are nice signs about nature and beauty, no one seems to consider the litter they throw in any direction. It's an automatic solution to what they don't want at in their hands at the time. No one wears a seat belt. Not even the tourists in the back seats of taxis- we can't wear them because the seats are always covered and you can't find the belt buckle. Even in the airplanes, the Chinese have to be individually told they have to fasten their seat belt. When they do, it's usually so loose that they are worthless for safety. I know these are educated people. I know they learn English in school because it's a Universal language needed for advancement in the world. And I know they learn about the environment and technology....but.....the skies are forevermore grey. You can't drink the water, children can't play outside at school and almost everyone wears a mask all day long because of chronic air pollution. They just don't seem to connect their education to the effect of their actions. Interesting. Other contradictions are that a lot of people dress extremely well while surrounded by trash in the streets. Ladies wear super high heels and fashionable attire even for outdoor activities. Most everyone is glued to their cell phones, even though most just have a simple phone. Very few have television or options for expanding their world vision. Google and FB are still not allowed and the internet is minimal in many places. The past glory of Emperors have left treasures for the world to see. The Great Wall is awesome to see, awesome to learn of its history and even more China Updated awesome to actually climb on top of its towers. The Terracotta Army.....same thing. Unimaginable to think of the time, labor and the extreme desire to build such a legacy that is now a gift for the world to see. And the Three Gorges Dam is the largest dam in the world. The weight of water distribution is said to have literally tilted the axis of the earth. But already, there is a barrier floating nearby to stop the litter from getting too close to the inlets. The Yangtze River is a garbage dump for every passing vehicle on its waterway. And it shows. I have pictures of the scum and debris that floated by while we were traveling on our cruise. More and more people are living more and more skyscrapers that take up more and more land.....everywhere. Throughout history the Chinese have been extremely determined



and capable of completing their visions. Their major cities put out to shame in architecture, infrastructure and advanced technology. And whether by political domination of its people or sheer brains, they have the power to zoom ahead in the world. But as I saw it, the majority of the society seems to be still living in the past.

