

000211 Bye Bye Shanghai

Ni hao! Today we are leaving Shanghai to fly up to Yantai. Shanghai is unlike any city that I have ever seen before. We went up to the top of the Pearle TV tower which is in the special development region. All around were the skeletons of new sky scraper that were being built. The towers stretched off into the haze, making the city seem like an endless expanse of rising towers. I am amazed by just the sheer amount of building going on here. Shanghai overall is not quite what I expected. If you were to change the signs from characters to roman letters, you could be in New York or London, only bigger and more energetic.

I am constantly struck by how different this is from India which was my only other big international experience. In India everything was a scam and you always had to be on your guard. Not that the people were not nice, they were amazing. I mean that the cabbies were out to get you and you just had to be more aware. However, last night I took a cab by myself from the French Concession to the university that we are staying at. I paid with a 100 note and he gave me change. However, the change was 36 and neither of us had anything smaller than a 10. He refused to accept my broken Mandarin explanations that I did not have anything smaller and that he could keep it. He wanted to drive me closer to my door in an attempt to earn the extra money and was very upset about the situation.

The people here are nice and several English speakers have been eager to converse on the street. I like this city, but I am also eager to get to Yantai which will be home for the year. We fly out the afternoon. This morning we are all separating to explore on our own which will be good. I really enjoy wandering on my own to prove to myself that I can do it. However, I think that I will take it easy before the flight. I have been sick for the past few days as my body gets used to all of the new images, smells and tastes that are besieging it. Nothing serious, just a headache, chills and aches. I expected this and it is no big deal, but I hope that it goes away soon!

Last night the group went to the French concession for dim sum. Afterwards we went to Shanghai Sally's which is a bar nearby. The group is very cool and I am glad to be here with them. Everyone has traveled all over, so everyone is eager to get out to explore. Between the 6 of us we have been to every continent but Antarctica. I fell like a novice compared to some, but I am no longer nervous about it.

Take care,
Jeff

p.s. I apologize for the spelling and capitalization errors. This computer has a few stuck keys and is too slow to run spell check.

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