

My First Trip to China

Continued...

Allen took us to our hotel, an upscale Marriott. From there he took us to dinner. I had been very apprehensive about the food since I am a picky eater with a basic diet of meat and potatoes. I had packed lots of snack food as a backup but that proved unnecessary. The hotel had a buffet breakfast which included an omelette bar, pancakes, waffles, breads and pastries, fruit juices, cereal, yogurt ... as well as assorted Chinese dishes. Despite my best efforts prior to my trip, I never mastered the use of chop sticks; however, restaurants usually had forks available upon request. I had brought along plastic forks as a backup. Dinner was normally with a large group of 25-30 which included the judges and assorted show personnel. Dinners were served family style with large platters of food on a large lazy susan. I was always able to find plenty that I could eat including beef, chicken, pork, and duck. While I dislike seafood, I did try a recommended fish dish that I loved. It did not taste fishy and had a wonderful sauce. As many know from photos on Facebook, I even tried jellyfish which I enjoyed. I expected it to be slimy but it was actually crispy.



Since this was the first weekend of the new show season, just as is the case in CFA around the world, the show was relatively small with 100 total entries. There were four rings each day plus an Education Ring handled by Cindy Byrd from Southern California. The club provided cages for the judging rings but the exhibitors provided their own, usually a Sturdi or similar enclosure. Interestingly, the exhibitors tore down their cages Saturday night and set them back up

Sunday morning. The show was surrounded by a waist-high wall and the spectators were kept on the outside where they had a good view of the judging rings. Inside the wall was reserved for the exhibitors, their cats, and the judging rings. I was told that is the norm for Chinese shows. Larry Adkison's ring was live-streamed on the internet all day Saturday and I was told 150,000 people had logged on to watch, many from outlying areas. At the completion of judging in his ring, I was interviewed for ten minutes or so. It turned out that having the CFA President attending his first show in China was a big deal there. Just as is the case in the USA, exhibitors and judges took advantage of my presence to share with me their concerns and to ask questions.



Judge Suki Lee



Show Manager Allen Shi and his wife Charlene

At the close of the show there was a Best In Show presentation based on our CFA International Cat Show. The two highest scoring kittens, championship cats, and premiership cats were called to a ring. Three of the judges' names had been pulled out of a hat and they each ranked these six cats Best through Sixth Best, the results were mathematically computed and the winners were announced. All six received a large rosette and the top three received money. Best received 5000 RMB which is approximately \$725. Best in Show was GC Cat Life Moonface, a silver tabby & white American Shorthair who is the Best Cat in China for the show season that just wrapped up.



A large banner across the back of the showhall



A familiar booth at the Pet Fair



I found the trip fascinating. The club was generous in providing us with someone who spoke English to serve as a guide who took us to assorted sites such as museums, temples, gardens, etc. I never saw anyone use cash or a credit card. They use an app on their phone which is similar to a debit card. Due to traffic congestion in Shanghai, the government recently reduced the number of taxis. Uber and similar services are now a popular means of transportation. Most cars are limited on the streets to certain days of the week, hours of the day, and/or parts of town. License plate numbers include a code which tells you when that vehicle is permitted on the road. Today the people in this city have returned to a heavy reliance on bicycles. There are dozens for rent on almost every street corner. They rent in 15-minute increments and the fee is less than a penny for 15 minutes. You can pick them up where convenient and drop them off at your destination.

Rental Bikes

Every street sign had the name of the street in both Chinese and in English. I'm not sure if this is because Shanghai is such an international city or left over from the 2008 Olympics held there. I saw many familiar store names such as Gucci, Michael Kors, Ralph Loren as well as familiar food establishments like McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut and Haegen-Dazs. I avoided these establishments in an effort to immerse myself in the Chinese experience.



An old Chinese boat contrasts with the modern skyline of Shanghai

I admit I was very apprehensive prior to making this trip. I am soon to reach my 70th birthday. I have never flown outside the USA and I was not sure what I would encounter. While many people have a bucket list of places they want to visit, I have never had such desires. I doubt that I would have made the trip except that my friend Wain Harding was judging the show and he offered to help me. Allen Shi made sure I was well-cared for and I sincerely appreciate that. I found the Chinese to be a very warm people who smiled a lot, were very quick to lay a hand on your arm or shoulder when they talked to you, and were gracious and welcoming. I am grateful to everyone who made my visit such a success.

Upon our return to the USA, Wain asked if I wanted him to buy my Chinese money in exchange for USA dollars. He was sure that I'd not need it again. He is often in China so he could use it. I responded that I'd just hold onto it for my next trip. That answer took him by surprise.



Our friendly & efficient guide Joe