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# Shanghai Time



## Special Interest Articles:

- Awfully chocolate
- Shopping Frenzy
- Getting Around

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## World Expo



We have never been to a World's Fair or Expo so when we learned that there was one going on in Shanghai we definitely had to go and check it out. The Expo is made up of pavilions from every country in the world and also some pavilions that showcase different technologies and industry. Each country's pavilion is a showcase of the best parts of the country displaying local culture, tourism, industry and even local foods that you could try.

We had heard that the day before we went over 1 million people attended the event in a single day. Upon entering the place you realize this is much bigger than places like Disneyland or a state fair. We would later learn over

the course of the 2 days we spent there that we could only see about 10% of the event in a single day.

Most of the crowds were made up of Chinese nationals that were willing to stand in line for up to 5 hours just to get into a single pavilion. Luckily for us we had received prior intelligence that if you are a westerner and if you have a little girl that we would be able to walk through the VIP line. Well the first time we entered a VIP line we were denied but we kept trying and surprisingly it worked. It is a lot of fun to walk straight into a place next to people that have been waiting for hours and the best thing is the people in line are happy to let you by and want to take your photo. I

do not know if they think you are famous or what but who was I to complain.

In the expo there are stores where you can purchase what looks like a fake passport. Then somewhere within each country's pavilion there was a person with a stamp that you could go and get to mark your passport that you were there, they called this a chop. For Maddie and Lisa this became more of a challenge to see how many chops they could get in the time we were there. In fact quite a few of the pavilions all we got to see was the stamp person because they were in such a frenzy to get the chop.



## Old Shanghai



*Some people get crazy when I take their picture.*

China and Shanghai in particular are seeing an explosion of new high end malls being built all over. These places are nice with fine architecture and stores like Prada and Gucci but they all lack some important stuff like character and personality.

If you want to get in touch with the people you need to go to the old parts of town where the locals live right next to where they work and are not just commuting on a subway to some cubical in a building. Places where the children are running around in front of the store and the family dog is walking around while the neighbor is looking at it like dinner.

These places are where we seem to have the best experiences and spend

most of our time just ending up talking with the locals about everyday stuff. Where people are just happy to be alive and enjoy eating a plate of plain noodles with their friend or family.

Food seems to be a very important part of daily life with the family meal taken very seriously. You will not find any supermarkets around and you definitely

will never find a freezer except at the local 7-11 to chill the ice cream bars. Around here everything is found fresh on the streets in stalls and small shops selling fresh meats, fruits and veggies. And if you do not have time to buy your supplies and cook a fresh meal then there are more than enough food stalls with everything from stir fry to pork buns.



## Awfully Chocolate



We found this small shop in Shanghai call Awfully Chocolate that was in the business of selling just 2 items. The first item is chocolate ice cream and the second chocolate cake. Now you might think how a store can stay in business with only two choices but then you try the cake and the ice

cream and it all makes perfect sense.

We are not talking about your run of the mill ice cream here but the most incredible explosion of choco bliss to land on your taste buds like coco rain drops falling on your tongue. And do not get me started with the cake.....



## Shopping Frenzy



We were staying a block from one of the wholesale spots in China where people come from far away to buy the latest of what I would label as “junk” but others such as my wife and child would call “treasures”. Shops so densely packed with goodies that you can get completely disorientated and lost within the rows and rows of injection molded, blister packed, screen printed trinkets.

The shops are usually found within a 5 to 6 story building with each floor containing hundreds of vendors each having a stall about 15 by 15 feet. Usually each floor will be dedicated to particular product groups like electronic, clothing or crafts. Then you will find

each stall specializing in a particular item in 100 different styles and colors.

For the girls this is brain overload and entirely too much to handle. Walking into a shop that has nothing but hair clips might seem simple enough but when there are 500 different hairclips each coming in 20 different colors then you end up with thousands



and thousands of possible decisions to make. And we are only talking about one shop out of thousands in a 4 block radius. This allowed for a full day of bargain hunting and negotiating getting the best possible deal. Maddie in particular was all too happy to try her newly found skills of negotiation knocking the price down as much as 80%. I'm going to have to take her to the car lot and unleash her on the sales people the next time we go.

At the end of the day the girls had bags and bags of treasures and now it was time to head over to China Post and arrange the shipping back to the United States. In all the places we go the post office is always the best bet only costing a fraction of what UPS or FedEx charge.



*“Lisa trying on a hat.”*



*"Maddie at the map."*

## Getting Around

Usually I'm always in charge of figuring out the navigation and logistics of getting from point A to point B. This includes trying to decipher the mess of buses, subways, taxis and then the knowhow of being able to communicate or by a ticket in a foreign language. It might be as simple as changing one letter in the name of a city and you are headed in the wrong direction.

It was a lot of fun in Shanghai because for the first time Maddie was helping me by being the navigator. She started showing a definite interest in helping me plan and research on the internet and read the maps.

In a place like China which is the size of the continental United States and with most of the infrastructure new there is a great deal of learning to be done in order to know all your options. Just in the few years before we arrived they have built over 5,000 miles of high

speed rail line and most airports in the major cities are either new or remodeled. But what makes it the most interesting is that without being able to use Chinese you have to work harder and look further to find all the options and get the correct pricing.



*"High Tech Karaoke control station."*

## Karaoke

In most Asian countries the Karaoke bar is the mainstay of entertainment for the local young crowds who go there in large groups. They like to make

fools of themselves in private room full of high tech stereo equipment and plush couches with waiters coming buy to serve cocktails. China is

no exception with more high end karaoke bars popping up then Starbucks coffee houses.

We had a lot of fun singing for a few hours at a local place to some good old American music. But we were very surprised to find out just how many Chinese artist there are with thousands of titles to choose from.

