

2015 :4/1-5/13 - China Part 1

Tuesday, April 7, 2015

6:18 AM

NOTES

Apt in the **HaiZhu district**

Apt complex : **Bai He Fa Yuan**

Poly Hong mian garden

Bor li Hong mian fa yuan

Bus/subway card - ride is 2Y. After 16 trips the fares lowers to 1.2Y

Exchange rate: \$1 = 6.1Y

Kong name: **黎光强** Li2 Guang1 Qiang2 - Bright and Strong

Louise name- **梁雅珍** -Liang Ya3 Zhen1- elegant treasure

Cathi name: **黎翠萍** -Li2 Cui4 Ping - green vase

Michaels name - **黎国安** - Li2 Guo2 An1 - Peaceful country

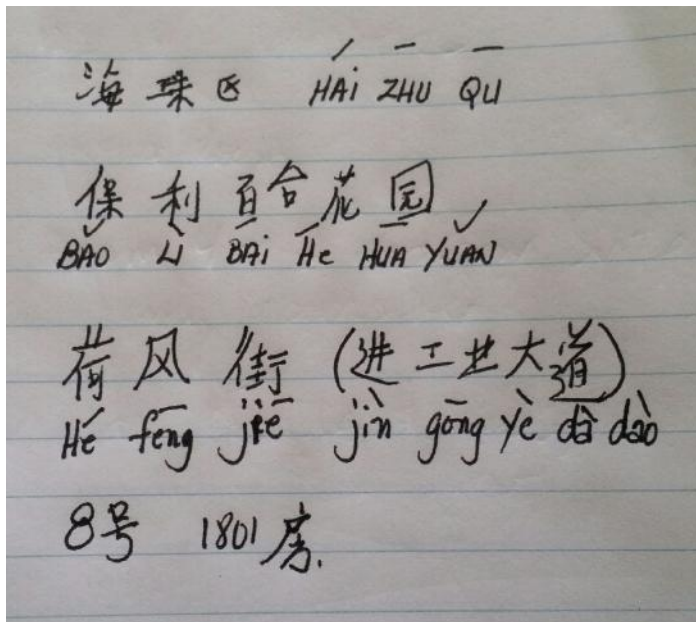
John name - **黎国胜** - Li2 Guo2 Sheng - victorious country

Contessa Lai- **黎詩仙** -Li2 Shi1 Xian1 - means - immortal poet

Michael Lai - **黎明志** - Li2 Ming2 Zhi4 - means one who shows high ideals.

Xing's name - **黄杏英** - Huang2 Xing4 Ying1 - apricot flower

How to tell taxi how to get home:



Mailing address:

广东省广州市海珠区
保利百合花园 荷风街 8号1801房
黎光强收 PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

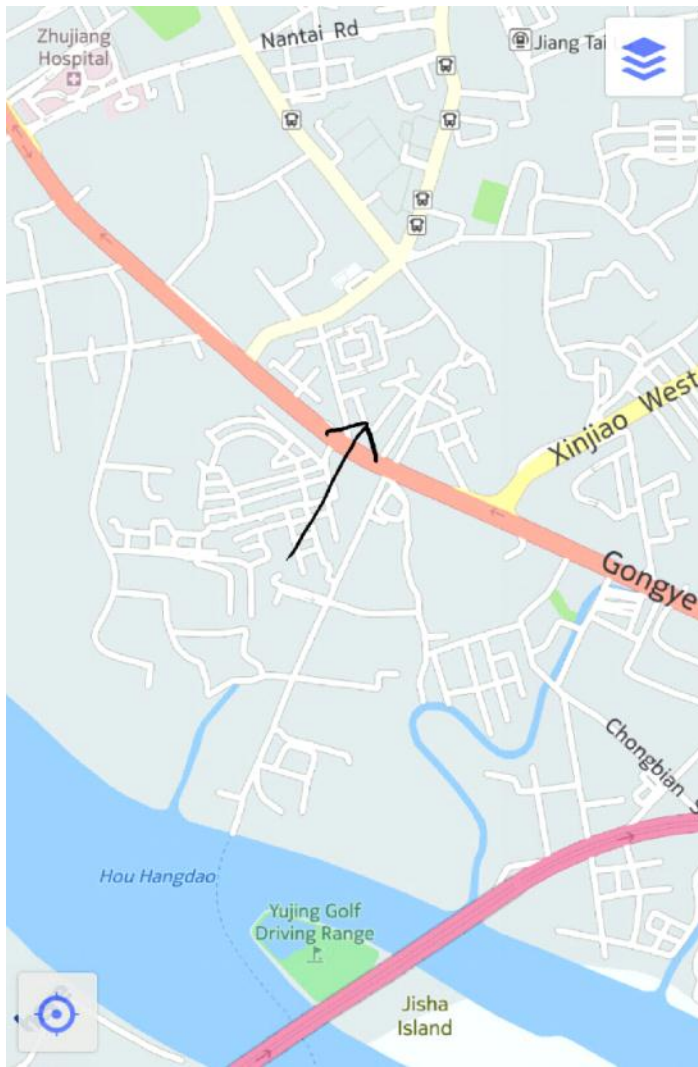
To airport: taxi to subway line #2 to end of line. Change to #3 line to airport.

Carefree hotel is on the corner.

Map of Guangzhou



Detail of where they live.



Wasn't looking forward to the trip because of the long layover in LA. And beautiful weather in whitefish made me want to be home.

4/1 - travel easy till LA. Airport was confusing. Had to exit terminal 6 to get to international terminal. Had a 14 hour layover and ticketing didn't open until 3 hours before the flight. There was no place to get food. Felt anxiety and panic about leaving the airport and not knowing where I was and how to get around. I was scared. But the circumstances forced me to go otherwise I would have been miserable.

Took super shuttle to Venice Beach for \$19. Walked a bit then ate gyros in a Mediterranean restaurant. She gave a number to call a taxi.

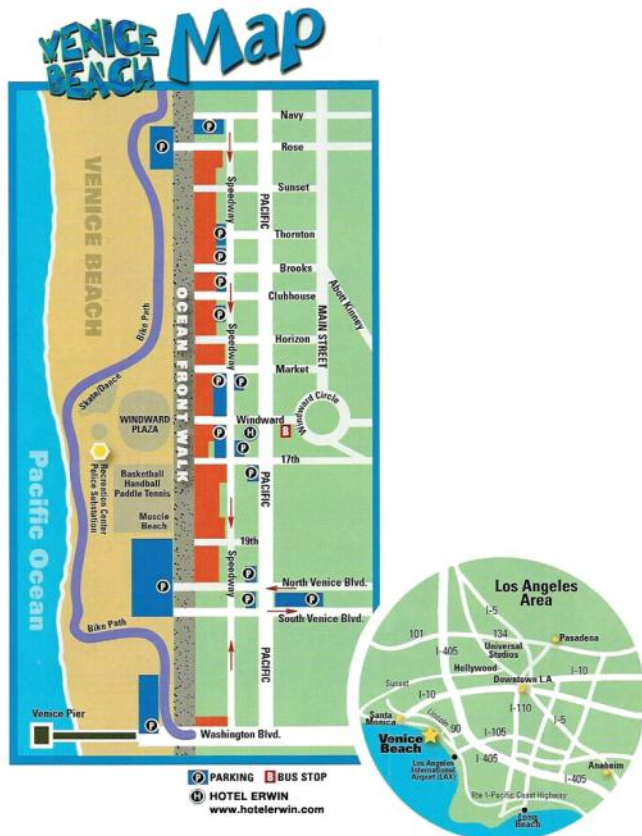
After walked north on the boardwalk and saw the shops and beach. Saw a great show of break dancers and acrobats on the street. Made me very glad about my decision to leave the airport.

Then sat at a skateboard area and watched them do their tricks.

Kids wear the pants half way down their ass. Seams ridiculous to me.

Ate dinner at extraordinary seafood. Had appetizers; clams and poke. Was delicious.

Had them call for a taxi back to airport. It was simple yet aware of how I held the fear and anxiety in my body all day. But also pleased that I had a pleasant day in the sun despite myself.



4/3 - arrived in Guangzhou. Noticed anxiety about filling out arrival card with location of Guangzhou only instead of hotel. Then while waiting for luggage, feeling anxiety about them getting lost. Both were non issues. I'm spending a lot of my life force worrying and being scared.

Dad, Xing and aiyi picked me up. Xing gave a very sweet welcoming hug. Went on subway. Went directly to a restaurant for dim sum. Ate a ton of it.

Went out that afternoon to market. Got a 4 USB port charger for 25Y. Prices varied from 50Y to 45Y and Y25.

On the bus. The young folk will typically give up their seat for dad. Sometimes for me too.



Ate dinner at home

4/4- went to the Newgene place. My lack of comprehensive embarrasses me. Think the place is a hoax but will just go along.
Practiced flute

Tiger and Leslie came for dinner. *Note: family gathering are very small with the one child policy. Tiger said it was very lonely growing up this way. He was born in 1981. He's the first generation of one child policy. It went into effect in 1980.*



Family tree info:

Uncle -dads youngest brother - 黎光培 -Li2 Guang1
Pei2 - Bright earth

Aunt - 黄冠英 - Huang2 Guan1 Ying - top daughter

Son - 黎颂欣 - Li2 Song4 Xin1 - express
happiness

4/5- Sunday - went to the botanical gardens. Wanted to look at things but they had a different pace in mind so I went along with what was in front of me. Very hot and humid.

Botanical gardens was OK. Very crowded and a little dirty. Grounds were not kept in pristine conditions like US. Wouldn't necessarily go back. But glad to have gone. Very long tiring bus rides to and from.

Also today is Qing Ming - day to honor ancestors. And public holiday

Went out for roasted lamb leg. Was good but didn't like the atmosphere of the restaurant. Bad service, wait staff was smoking and loud unpleasant music. Probably geared for the younger genera. But food was good. Tiger treated. He was on phone a lot then went out with friends. Leslie wasn't feeling well.

Don't often get big hunks of meat like this in China. Had a dipping powder of cumin, coriander, salt, sesame seeds and rye seeds. Or something like that. It was good. I'll concoct something like that at home.





4/6- Monday- AC not working. Miserable from the humidity. Not sleeping well. Aiyi called and people came to fix it. Use ropes to hang out the window. Costs 450Y to fix. Made dad mad that he bears all the costs.

Walked to Dim sum place for breakfast.

Went to Newgene again.

Figuring out the characters on the menu

Found out dad's aunt and 2 daughters are coming over. They played mahjong. Xing told me to go shopping with her Erjie. She doesn't like them and was getting me out of the house. Walked to the big farmers market south of here. Found a booth that sold the bamboo car seats for 58Y. Got 2 for 100Y. Erjie bought it as a gift for me. She is very sweet.

Went for ice cream after. Killing time.

Back home then across the street for dinner. My cousin picked up the tab. Was surprised because last time dad was always paying for everyone.



Dad's 2nd elder sister. Li Pei Zhen (1922) -she is 94. She had 5 kids.

1st daughter (right) -Huang Yun Yen-1950. She takes care of her mother. Husband - Ni su gee
2nd - daughter- Ah Ping - met last year -in the US

3rd - son - **Tien Jou**-in the US



4th - daughter - Huang Li Yen (left)

She is married 30 yrs has 1 son who is 29. He lives in US. was sponsored by Jou. She has a green card. Her husband.



5th - son-Tien Wei



4/7- Tuesday - Xing going to the hospital for some test on her back. Will stay overnight because it's cheaper than just going for the tests.

Misc. Thoughts

- not liking the hustle and bustling of the city
- people are inconsiderate of others, cutting into the line, smoking in the restaurant, very loud/yelling. Hard energies to be around.
- very hard to connect with people.

-Xing went to hospital for tests. It's frustrating that I don't understand what's happening clearly.

Quiet day -walk in the gardens and explored. Some ground floor apartments have small yards. Very nice.

Dad hit a few golf balls. A young girl stood and watched him.



Went to the newgene again.

Practiced a lot. Tried the Telemann fantasies. really liked them. Made all the difference listening to them first. Took some of my brain anxiety away.

Ate dinner out at a restaurant know for their squab (gezi/yu gop). Also had pigeon rice.

4/8 - Wednesday -visited Xing in the hospital. Looked like a regular hospital. Lot of wood furniture. Doing tests on her kidney. Something is there and got bigger since last time. They are saying may remove a kidney. So much more serious than I thought.

Went out for dim sum.



These are deep fried melon flowers. Saw them on someone's table and wanted to try them. They were good, crunchy but a little greasy.

Xing's eldest brother was with us because he visited Xing in the hospital. Xing gave him a "Hong bao" red packet. I asked why, they said because he visited and brought her some things and brought soup. So it was a thank you gesture. I thought as her brother he should do these things. Culture I guess.



There are 5 in their family. Fu Tong is in the middle. They are all tiny, under 5 feet tall.

- 1- brother - Huang fu tong-1946, wife -He Bao Tien
- 2-Huang2 Guan Ying -1948, son - Li Song Xin 1981 (on the right)
- 3-brother-Huang fu sun-1950
- 4-Huang2 Lian2 Ying1 -黄联英-1955, has son (Chen Chung Chao)1984 (on the left)
- 5-Xing Ying -1959



Walking home saw a durian vendor



I always think of Andrew Zimmerman of "Bizarre Foods" who spit the durian out on camera. People either love them or hate them. They smell so bad to some people that they are banned in hotels. I'm one of the people who like them.

Went to Newgene again.

Home and practice the Telemann Fantasies some more.
Practicing puts me in my body and grounds me when I'm away from home. It's like bringing my home with me.



Aiyi cooking. The stove fire is very different then in the US. Don't know what it is but I think it is hotter than our stove. Perfect for Chinese food. Note the Chinese kitchen has no oven.

Funny when you can't speak and understand you either go into your head and get lost or you try to find out what is happening. but generally you have no control of the situation. I can feel myself trying to get in control then letting go. This is a process of just letting go of control and being in the moment. And remembering that I never really have control anyway.

Internet- interesting what you can't get here on the Internet. No Facebook, no YouTube, no netflix, no google thinks. Seems like china and Google are having a war. They are totally blocked.

4/9 - Thursday -

Went to Newgene again.

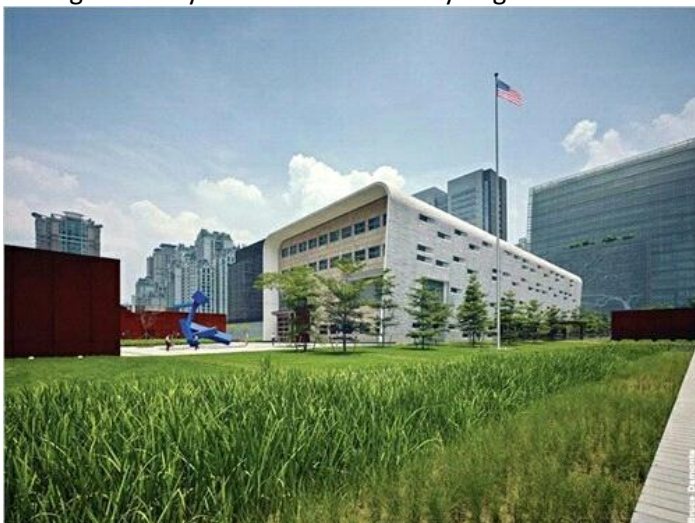
Walking through the courtyard. It's very serene there for being in the middle of the city.



The apartments here are 21 stories high.. It is a gated community. It's a gated community and need a card to get in.



Went to America Embassy to have Mr Wong's loan released notarized. Cost \$50/signature.
Had to make an appointment, show passport and go through security. Couldn't take in any bags.



The embassy is located in the modern part of the city. No traces of old China here.

Went to lunch in this fancy restaurant that was located on the 28th floor. The bill was 130Y. But they charged 12Y/person tea fee. That was the highest fee I've seen so far. Usually it's 5Y and sometimes it is as low as 3Y. The service fee is like the tip but it's automatically charged.



Amazing views from the restaurant but too bad it was overcast. Can see the museum (bo wu guan) on the right. Library (tu shu guan) on the left and the opera house in front.



This is Guangzhou Ta (Canton Tower). They must like these towers. There was one in Macau too, that was taller.

After visited Xing in the hospital. She's going to have surgery next week. Doesn't have cancer. But some kind of growth that needs to be removed.

Walking back to the apartment I bought Jack Fruit (da suan bor law). I really like it and don't think I ever saw it in the states.



4/10 - Friday

Susan Huang arrived from Shanghai. Went to dim sum.

After went to Newgene.



Talked a lot. She wants to write a book about the Chinese acrobat experience. So asked dad a lot about his life.

The bus system is very good here. But I don't know if I'll be able to use it unaccompanied. I understand how it works but without being able to read the schedules, I think I'd get lost.



4/11- Saturday

Susan called Fed Ex for me. They will come to pick up package to send to NJ. Cost = 377Y

Went to Newgene today. Was entertaining. Different people were singing songs. Then they made me stand and sing. Experience from my old IBM days came back. I sand the kid song to Frère_Jacques:

Liang zhe lao Hu
 Liang zhe lao Hu
 Pao de kuai
 Pao de kuai
 Yiga meiyou yenjing
 Yiga meiyou weiba
 Gen qiguai
 Gen qiguai

We all took off to get some lunch in a small noodle shop. Total was 77Y.



After Susan and I went off to the district that sells all kinds of cloth. Didn't find anything that would work in the TV room.

Then taxi to the jade area. Bought jade front 2 different vendors.



The price for the jade ranged from a couple hundred to 100,000 plus, even with vendors selling on the street.

This is what I bought:



Went to the TianHu district for dinner. Big fancy restaurant with mediocre service. Had squab, oysters, kidney, chicken feet, and fried rice. Took a bus home. Got off at a stop and then got turned around and got lost so hopped a cab to find we were 2 blocks away from home. But still saved an expensive cab ride.

4/12 - Sunday

Went out looking for a ukulele. Aiyi took us to a music store. I asked her how she knew about it. She said she saw it when she was riding the bus.



Found a beautiful mid priced one for 400Y. They wouldn't bargain much here. They sold western as well as traditional Chinese stringed instruments here.



Walked around the streets /shops. Found bamboo coasters- 3 for 5Y. But 15 for 25Y.

Stopped for lunch at a bo jai fan (rice pot) stall.
I love the crunchy bits on the bottom.



On the way home we stopped off at a mall/outlet center. Stores like : Nike, adidas, Levi - big brand names. The prices were very comparable to outlet centers in the US, which surprised me.

The Chinese middle class apparently has a lot of expendable income. It certainly has changed a lot in the 30 years since I lived in Beijing. In those days there wasn't really a middle class. There were the cadres and the working class. Now in the cities there is a big, well off middle class. Just like Americans, they have cars, apartments, electronic devices and lots of things to pleasure themselves with. I think good for them! This wealth hasn't really trickled down to the country side. Eventually it will.

When wealth is shared to everyone in the world, maybe then there will be peace in this world. But there will never be peace as long as there is oppression, or haves and have not's.

4/14 - Tuesday

On the way to visit Xing, stopped at a material place. There were booth after booth of material.



I was just about to give up when I found this material. It was 13Y/meter. I bought 3 meters for 35Y. So for \$5 I can try some new curtain and pillows.



After we stopped for some soup. I had wonton noodle soup. It was a little dive but food was good.



Along the way I saw a roasted pig being cut up on the street. Not very sanitary. But it did look good. The knife was extraordinarily sharp.



At the bus stop we ran into second sisters son and my cousin (dad's 2nd sister's 4th child)



Chen Chung Chao and Huang2 Lian2 Ying1
(mother)

Well I'm convinced I'm in an alternate universe. We were in the hospital today and the doctor said before they could do the surgery on Xing we would have to certify that we had enough blood. Apparently they don't have much blood. But they told us the day before the surgery. Everyone was extremely frustrated.

So me and Xing 2nd sister's son (Chen Chung Chao) volunteered to donate blood. Meanwhile remember I hate needles.

I thought it was in the hospital but they take me in a bus and we have to go across town to the blood donation place. Apparently you can't do it in the hospital.

They were going to take 2 units from each of us. We needed a total of 4 units.

When we got there they said I was too old to give blood. Have to be 55 or younger. I felt a little annoyed to say the least. No one ever told me I had old blood before.

Now we were going to be 2 units short. So the son gave 4 units. Don't know if that was dangerous or not. He felt cloudy headed after.

To make myself feel better, on the way back I got an ice cream cone at McDonald's. I got vanilla with chocolate edges, but they gave black sesame that is a blackish gray color. Doesn't look appetizing but I should try it just because.

4/15 - Wednesday

Left house at 7am. Ended up in rush hour. Bus was unpleasantly crowd. Grateful I don't have to commute here every day.

Here's the hospital. It's on ersha island.



Here's the hospital room. Not exactly modern. Although it has a balcony with palm trees outside and a view of the modern part of the city. There are no monitors. The bed doesn't lift. Don't know if this is a good hospital or not, or why thus hospital was selected.



At 8am they came to wheel Xing off to surgery.



The doctor came out at 11:50 am and showed us the tumor that they took out. It was very big. But they tested it and there was no cancer. They didn't have to take out the kidney. At 1:20pm she was rolled back to the room.



4/16 - Thursday

Going to the hospital. I know which bus stop to get off because the trees are wearing clothing.



Along the way, under the highway underpass, people were taking dancing lessons.



When we arrived , Xing's 2 brothers were here and older brothers wife.

Xing is awake today. She ate some congee.

4/17 -Friday

Meeting cousin at Rosedale Hotel. Took bus 221.
Here I am with my first cousins. Do we look alike?



Yun Yen with her husband.



After went to hospital. Too many people there for Xing so we left.

Went to Li Yen's home. Had a nice apartment near shopping district.

Then walked around.



Went to show me where grandfather use to live. Here is the building in an alley. It's old and dilapidated looking.



Across the alley is where Liang Ying (Xing 2nd sister) lives.



We walked through the alleys (hutongs). This is what old China looks like. Eventually it all will be gone and replaced with high rises. I love walking through these places. I haven't been inside of any of these buildings so don't know if they are very pleasant to live in. My guess is not to much. But still fascinating to see. They are dark and narrow but I've never felt that it was dangerous. But I do feel like I would get lost in them because they are winding and twisting.





After went to dinner. Restaurants are usually enormous and very brightly lit. Maybe that is why I don't like dimly lit restaurants in the US. And this is just an average sized restaurant.



Yun Yen with her granddaughter (7) who wouldn't come

near me. But I did make her laugh.



Magdalene and her daughter Yvonne came up from Hong Kong by bus. Takes about 4 hours.



Dad's youngest sister had 2 kids:

- Magdalene Leung (1959)- Ah Bing, Husband is Wing, Daughter is Yvonne



- Dixon Leung - lives in NY. wife is Ah Ping, Daughter - Iris, son -

4/18 - Saturday

When I close my eyes and meditate I'm reminded how noisy urban living is. I can hear TV, people talking, playing, laughing, traffic, noise from the upstairs apartment, birds. I miss the quiet of home.

Feeling generally exhausted today.

Had lunch with family. Song (Tony) showed up. Song is dad's oldest brother's son. 3 in his family. He has 2 sisters. Song is the same age as me. Born October 1956. He has a son and daughter. He's living in Guangzhou as an expat. Lives behind US embassy in the expensive area of town. Good for him!



Song's mother



4/19 - Sunday

Visit Xing. Have to cross HaiYin bridge to get to ER Sha Island .

Today she can get out of bed, walk to the bathroom and she is peeing and pooping. Big progress.

4/20 - Monday

At the hospital again killing time. So a good time to have discussion about Chinese toilets. I wonder what people do who can't squat. But I have to say the toilets are infinity better than they were 30 years ago. In those days, sometimes they were just holes in the ground or troughs that you stood over. There were no stalls and no privacy. Now they are much better. And they are much better than the Mexican toilets I encountered. Just remember toilet paper or you'll be very sad.



Research

Green card holders can stay out of the country for up to a year. The 6 months rule that I heard about is a myth. The issue is where is the intent to have your home.

Family Tree information

Dad's 3 elder sisters

1. Oldest (middle)
2. 2nd (left) (1921)
3. 3rd (right)



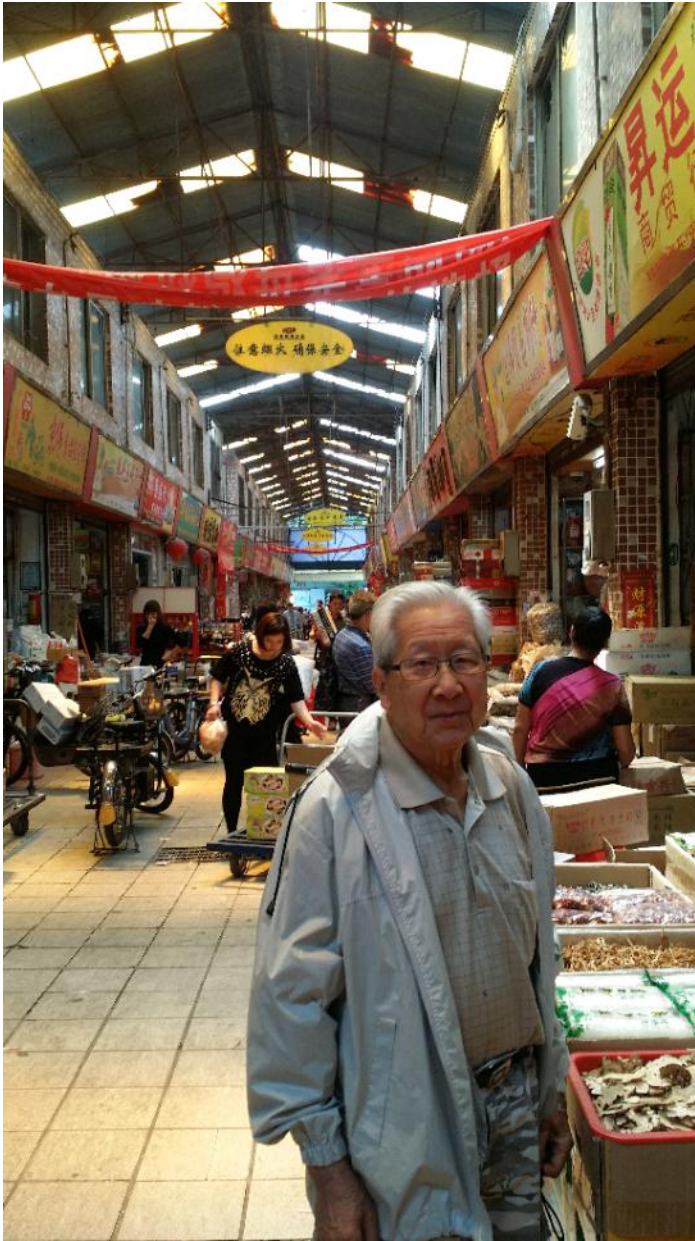
One of my favorite foods is dan tat. They make them at this bakery. 6 for 5Y.



On the street next to the apartment, a branch fell because it's gonna rain and it was windy. It missed hitting us by a foot. Could have knocked us out. A reminder of how things could change in a blink of an eye.

4/21 - Tuesday

Didn't go to the hospital. Auntie went with us. So dad and I walked to the wholesale restaurant supply market. Got a little lost but found my way. It's just so big.



Xing is coming home tomorrow. She will have been in the hospital for 16 days with a major surgery. The cost is a little more than 18,000 yuan. Which is about \$3000. If she had this done in the USA it would have bankrupted my father. This is exactly what my father was afraid of. So we were lucky they were here.

4/22 - Wednesday

Brought Xing home from the hospital.

Then went to the railroad station to buy a train ticket.

There are 2 railway station.

- 1) Guangzhou railway station and
- 2) Guangzhou East Station.

We went to east station. Took bus #551. Last stop is the train station.

Ticket costs 151Y about \$25.

Can't buy round trip tickets in China. Hasn't changed in 30 years.



4/24 - Thursday

Went to buy glasses today. Took bus #31.

Bought a pair of music glasses for 230Y and a pair of prescription swimming goggles for 130Y. Total 360Y = \$60.



The salesman -John, was funny. He wouldn't bargain with my aunt, but he gave me a 20Y discount.

Went to a hospital. Xing needed a checkup. Then Guan wanted to see a doctor. We waited 3 plus hours. Sigh, in hospitals a lot.

On the way home bought a durian for 40Y. I really like them.



4/24 - Friday

Took bus 551. It was taking over 2 hours to get to the Train station. We got off and switched to the subway #1. It's the last stop. Ran up and down stairs with my luggage. Of course there are no down escalators. Or more correctly they have the down escalators turned off. Almost died. But made it with just 5 minutes to spare. Certainly a good way to restimulate me about traveling by myself.

On the China side had to go through customs and return my departure card. I thought it would be upon arrival.

H O N G . K O N G - see separate page