

Greetings to all in this informal network of Individual UUs! I haven't heard from any of you this month (although maybe – I hope – you're corresponding with one another), and I'm wondering if that may be related to the switch to posting the newsletter on the CUC website, http://www.cuc.ca/programs/individual_members.htm. I know how easy it is to say to myself, "Ah yes, I'll go to the website and look at that later" whereas if it all comes attached to a personal email, you may read it sooner. This month, I'll try sending the text only as an email attachment, with the "full edition" on the website so you can enjoy the photos at your leisure.

If any of you were at the CUC ACM in Thunder Bay last month, please share your thoughts and impressions. We can't all get there, and giving the rest of us a taste of your experience there would be a great use of this network.

Guessing again that **Scott and Becky's** blog (<http://goingeast.ca/blog/2009/>) might be one of those sites you mean to visit but don't get around to very often – here's a taste of their latest adventures in China and Korea – with two photos awaiting your viewing in the "full edition" and more text and photos on the blog:

Onward to the coast

Saturday, May 23rd, 2009

We got packed up quite quickly this morning, and the front desk guy helped us to figure out the correct bus station to get to Tianjin. The staff at the New Dragon Hostel have been very helpful whenever we've asked them for something, even when it has been strange requests like phoning a travel agent to figure out about the Incheon ferry. We suppose we shouldn't be too surprised, but the reviews on [TripAdvisor](#) had us expecting the worst.

We made it down to the bus terminal after a longer ride than planned, and initially we were afraid that we would not be allowed to bring bikes on the bus with us. Unlike the bus stations in Yunnan province, here we found a separate Baggage Check area, different from the waiting room for the buses. Fortunately, with the help of the baggage staff, and a friendly woman who spoke fluent English, we ended up with tickets to TangGu (the Tianjin port city) for ourselves and our bikes, and were quickly on a bus. So quickly in fact that we didn't get a chance to get lunch. Oh well - Oreos and water it was. We had thought we would have to take a bus to Tianjin and then ride 45 km to Tanggu, so we were lucky to have found the helpful staff and friendly English translator.

The baggage check had a drive on scale so Becky tried it out while Scott was buying tickets. Becky's loaded bike 50 kg, Scott's unloaded bike plus panniers, 58 kg. Guess Becky isn't carrying that much less than Scott after all! She thinks we may need to do something about that Scott thinks that since Becky's bike was loaded, and his had the panniers scattered around the scale, they read differently. Certainly when we push them up an incline or over some steps, Scott's feels much heavier!

After arriving in Tanggu our first stop was for lunch – we were starving. We spotted a sit down restaurant and pulled up. As Scott was preparing to bring his bike up the stairs, three staff from the restaurant came running outside to assist him. They helped both of us get our bikes up the steps and ushered us into the restaurant. Ordering food posed a challenge, but they had some samples out so we could point. After pointing and struggling a bit with the phrasebook, we discovered that one woman spoke a bit of English. We ordered what she called “Garlic chicken” which turned out to actually be curry chicken – yummy and something totally different.

The people in Tianjin are much more interested in our bikes than those in Beijing. We guess that in the smaller town, they do not see many cycle tourists.

We found the Tianjin Passenger Terminal without difficulty, and confirmed with a woman sitting outside that the Incheon ferry is scheduled to leave at 11am tomorrow. With that sorted out, we went searching for a hotel. We found the Today International Hotel, only 2 km from the port with several restaurants across the street. One of our thoughts was that an International Hotel would be able to help us find an ATM or be able to change money.

Our initial search for cash was a complete failure. The two Bank of China branches nearest the port lacked ATMs, and the offices were closed before we arrived, so there is no place to exchange Euro or USD. There were 6 or 7 other ATMs along the street, but none of them accepted foreign bank cards. Becky checked at the desk for either currency exchange or an advance on the Visa, and the hotel could do neither. An Internet search told us that the ferry would only accept Chinese Yuan or Korean Won, so we had to get some cash or we would get very hungry on the boat!

After some more Internet research we had a potential answer. An HSBC ATM at the Marriott Renaissance hotel, only 4 km away as the crow flies. Scott left Becky at the hotel, and headed out. Looking at the map, he saw a railway line between us and the centre of town where the Renaissance was. There were a couple of ways to cross, so “no problem” he thought. He soon proved himself wrong. Shortly after turning north, the street lights vanished, and he found himself on a large dark avenue, among many partially-complete apartment buildings. The road soon filled with throngs of people, and he found himself in the middle of a night market. A few oncoming cars advanced slowly through the crowd, and even laying about with their horns they couldn’t move very fast. He was able to sneak between crowds mostly unscathed.

Once through the market, there were pockets of people everywhere around the sites. He wondered if they were construction workers and their families, living in a semi-legal slum near the construction. He travelled along the railway for a bit, then noticed people entering the road. He turned off, and found an unofficial path across the tracks. Carefully placed stones and piles of dirt made an easy pedestrian path, but he carried his bike.

When he arrived at the Renaissance, his first observation was the contrast between the port area where we are staying and the typical plush Marriott interior with more Western businesspeople than we’ve seen since Singapore. There were lots of tall modern buildings and huge sculptures in the centre of the roundabouts. It is like this was “expat” China and we are staying in “local” China.

On the way back, he decided to take a different route, again crossing the tracks at an unofficial crossing and carrying his bike. Heading south again, he passed many more partially-complete apartment buildings, then found a lady kneeling in the middle of an intersection tending a small fire. It looked like a bunch of papers, and all the traffic drove around her without a second glance. He wonders if she was burning “ghost money” to send to a recently dead ancestor? Note to self – bring a camera when going out on little jaunts like this!



every mouthful is a different taste sensation!



on the Great Wall

A restful day in Gyeongju Saturday, May 30th, 2009

We mostly took today off to relax. We had considered doing a day ride around town, but in the end neither of us was feeling up for it. We both felt colds coming on, and we don't want to be sick when getting on the boat – there is a risk that we may need to go through departure screening for Swine flu like we did in China

In search of a place for lunch, we did ride around town a bit. We saw many of the Tumuli (grass-covered burial mounds which are often equated to underground pyramids). So far, we are finding the streets much less chaotic [than China] – with the occasional bike path too. We are looking forward to tomorrow riding on much quieter roads.

For dinner we went back to the same BBQ restaurant we visited last night, so it must have been good! (Actually it was, although the fatty pork wasn't terribly healthy). BBQ with lots of vegetables, mushrooms and little bits of pork for flavouring is really yummy. We may have to look for a Korean-style BBQ stone when we get back to Ottawa.

Read (and see) more!! at <http://goingeast.ca/blog/2009/>

Warm good wishes from the Editor, who is again looking forward to hearing from as many of you as possible – with photos, ideas, thoughts to share, questions, suggestions

“only connect”!

Anne Treadwell treadwell@ns.sympatico.ca

902 762-0274