

*Monday, April 3rd - Friday, April 7th*

Shanghai really is an incredible city, and Trip Planner Extraordinaire Wittmer had booked us another couple of days there. A last chance to hang out, drink milk cheese tea and explore a massive city.



*Shanghai*

Tuesday ended up being a holiday; we wandered over to People's Square to check out the art museum and were startled to see lines hundreds of feet long. So we hung out at the fountain and meandered about instead.



*Art Museum in People's Square*



Back to Shanghai



*China*



*Alas, no fun allowed here, either.*



Back to Shanghai



We wandered towards the Yu Gardens but there were absolute hoards of people headed that way. So instead we just wandered around a bit and took in the advertisements for ... something.

Back to Shanghai



*I never did go inside but loved the chain JOYMAX which sells alcohol and tobacco products.*





*At the Sculpture Center*

We did end up at the Sculpture Center, hoping to see some of the museums in Red Town. Pretty much everything was closed, but it was a nice place to hang out and enjoy some beverages. The Sculpture Center itself was open.



*Clearly I had to take a picture of this one. Labels were all in mandarin; my apologies for the lack of attribution.*



Back to Shanghai



*At the Sculpture Center; really liked this one.*



*More fun prevention in the elevator.*

The next day we decided to take the subway down to the Long Museum which was hosting an exhibit by James Turrell. It was expensive to get in and totally worth it.



*"Greenland Being Funny" – sculpture outside the subway stop near the Long Museum. I have no idea.*



Back to Shanghai



*The Long Museum is an amazing space.*



*Chutes*



*The Long Museum*





*Art by James Turrell*

We stayed in this room for at least half an hour, likely more. The entire place gently shifts color and is a completely amazing to experience. It is fascinating how being totally immersed in color plays with your perception. Blinking is a crazy experience, positive and negatives all shift around, it is fantastic.



*Entrance into the room.*



*There is a museum staff member stationed inside at all times to stop people from wandering off the ledge (easy to do, it's very disorienting) and to take pictures of guests. This guy was great, snapping a bunch at different photos and angles. We'd been in here long enough for reality to have firmly become unmoored; this photo is perfect.*



The whole exhibit was neat and it was huge. Light paintings are hard to photograph and very cool to experience. We had a awesome time, and stayed far too long leaving exhausted and starving.



*Christy with milk cheese tea while noting one of her favorite chains. Our favorites are based purely upon their names, not actually going inside them.*

My flight left Thursday afternoon, so in the morning we headed out to see Yu Gardens!



*Yuyuan Tourist Mart*

The gardens are nestled right next to this giant maze of shops. I can't imagine what this place must have been like on Tuesday or on other holidays; it was bustling when we visited.





*Yuyuan Garden*



*Some random tourist.*





*Deer in the Garden of Happiness*





*Something for everyone!*



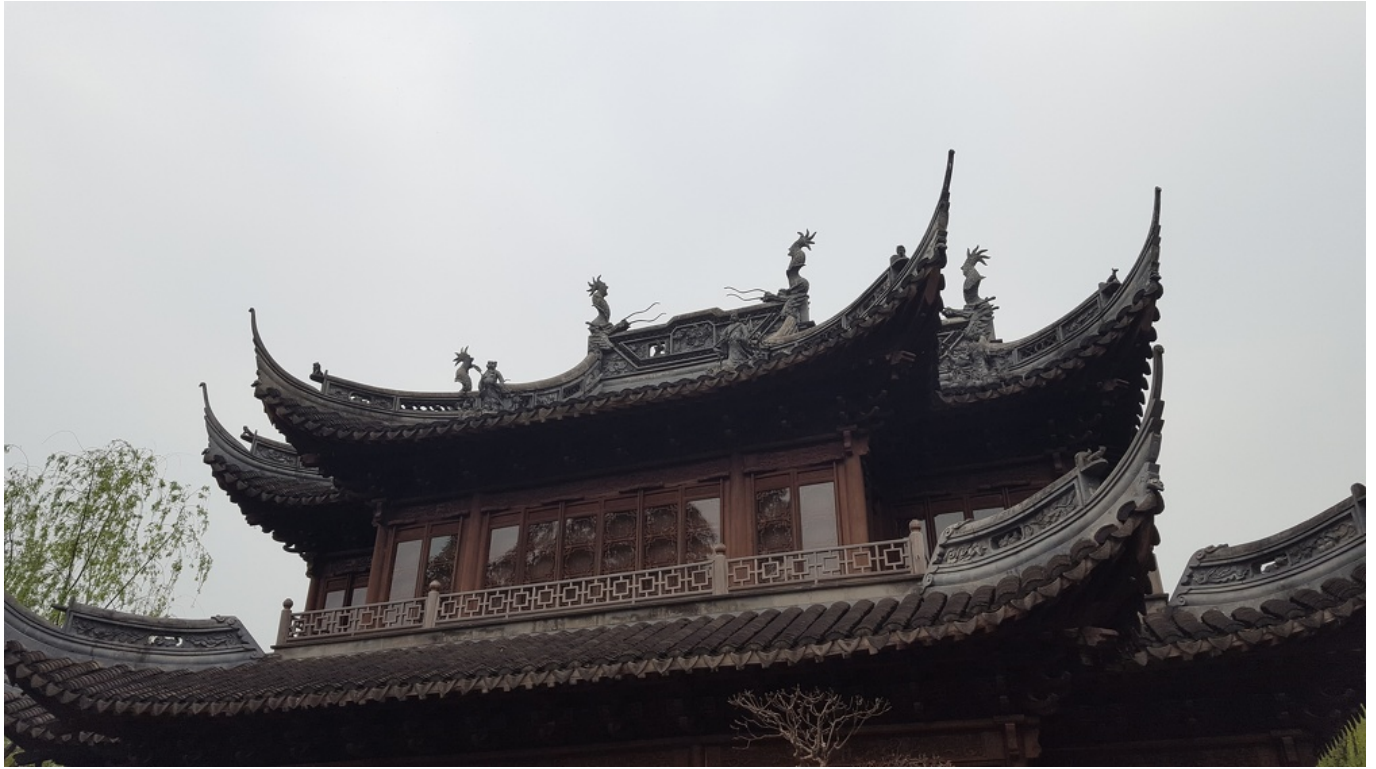
*We do stuff together! Once a year or so.*





*Yu Garden*





*Ornamentation*

We didn't end up liking Yu Garden as much as the gardens in Suzhou but it was still fun to check out. After that it was time to head back and take the Maglev(!) to Pudong airport. You can take the subway and that's cheaper (and you have to take the subway out a bit just to get to the Maglev), but hello: magnetic levitation train! I think it only got up to 300kmh (185mph) on the one we were on, at different times of the day it can get up to 430kmh (over 260mph!). Given the relatively brief distance it travels, the speed is more stunt than anything, but it's very cool.



*Pudong International Airport is large.*



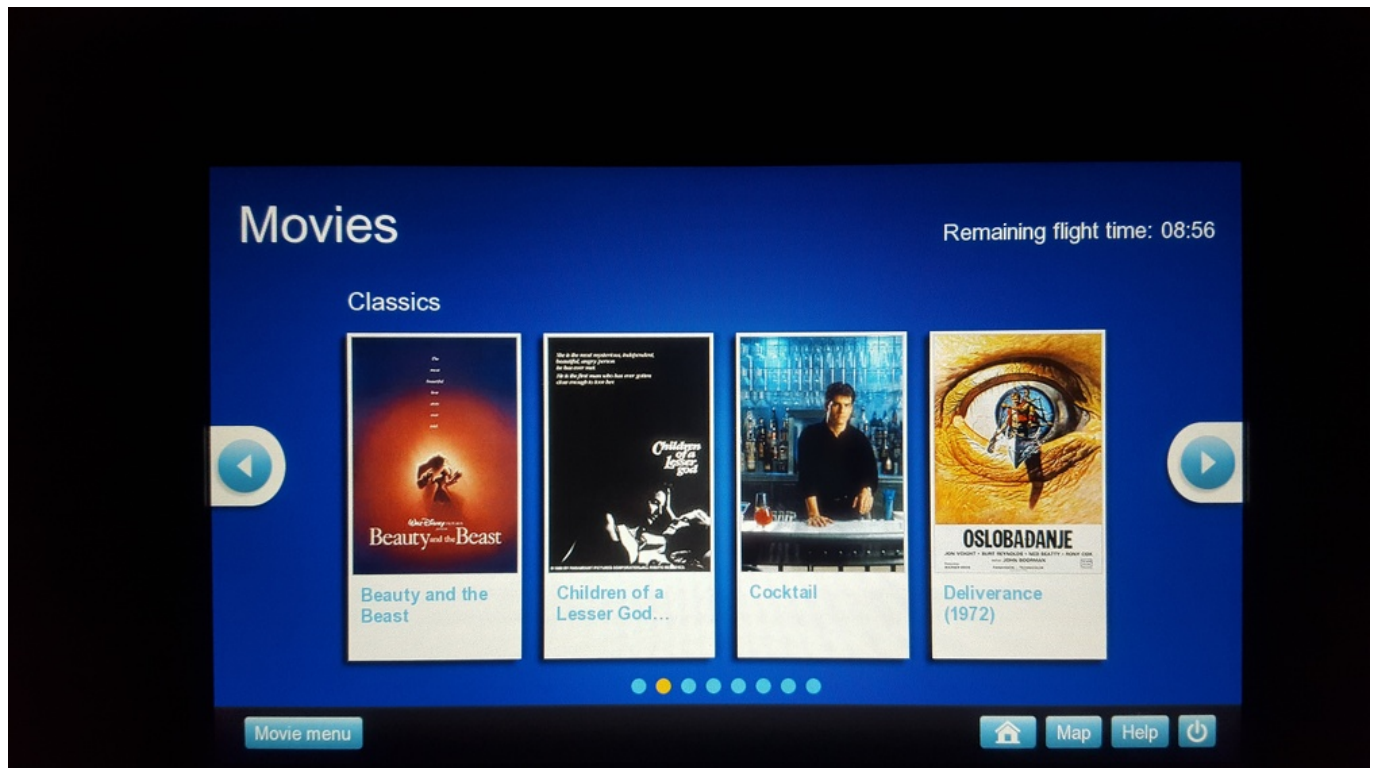
Fire Escape Masks



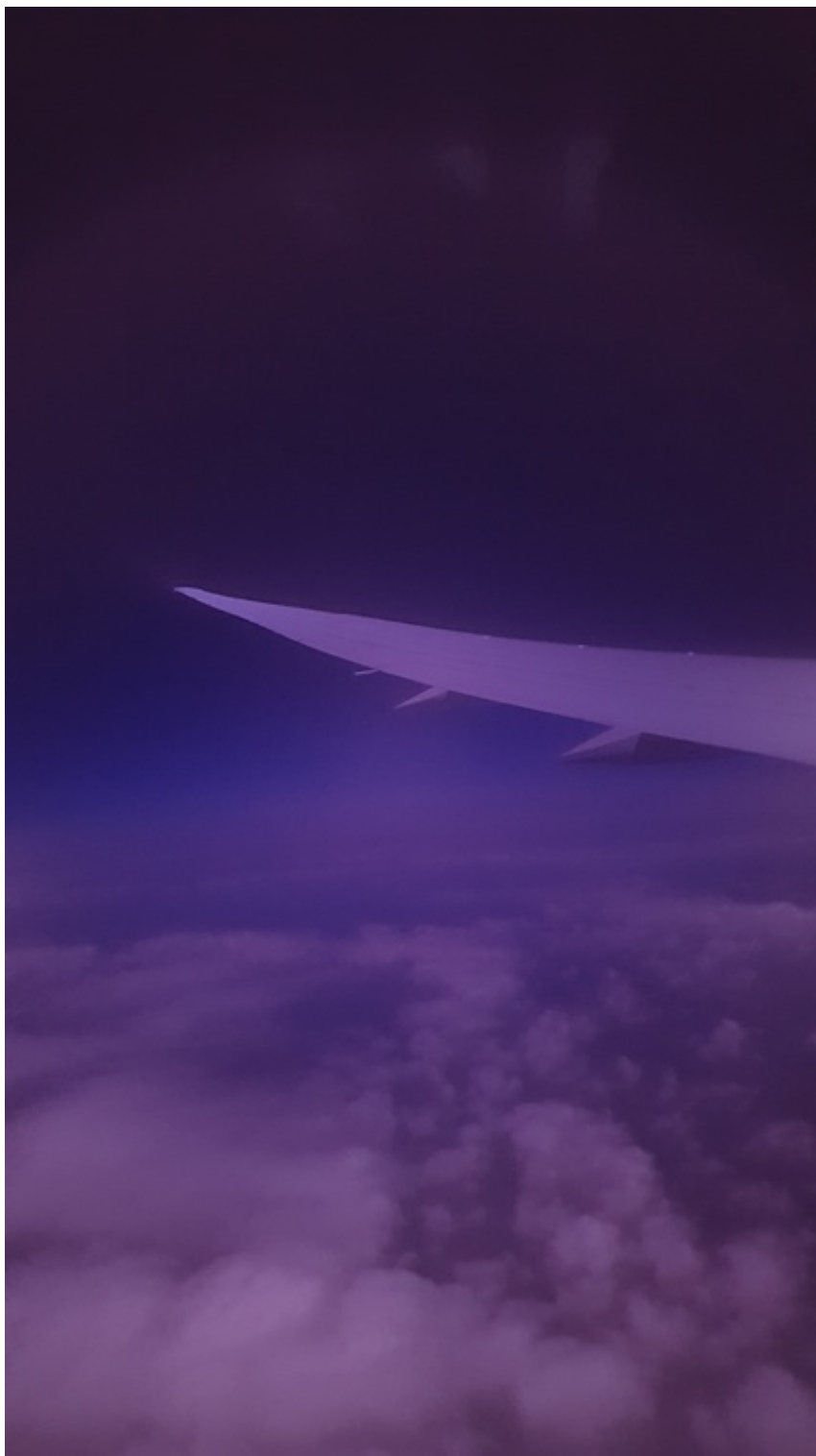


*Saying goodbye to a country full of really high quality signage.*

I won't talk about leaving Christy again other than to say it was hard. Surprisingly harder than seeing her off in August when everything seemed a bit unreal. I was headed back to the US and she was headed back to Jingdezhen until the end of October at the earliest.



*The long flight home. I am super interested to find out what nutcase put Deliverance on United's in-flight movie options.*



*Dawn through electronically tinted windows. Which flight attendants love because they can shade the plane and try to get*



*everyone to go to sleep and shut-up already.*

It was a long flight back, exhausting but not as excruciating as the flight over (it's a couple of hours shorter heading East, although that was extended when we sat on Shanghai's tarmac for an hour with the pilot repeatedly noting, "sorry folks, I have no idea why they're not letting us go or when we'll get to leave").

And then I went through US immigration (highly automated now, lots of kiosks), picked up my baggage and stumbled, blinking and confused, back into a Los Angeles afternoon. I was back in my home country with vague plans, a scooter down in San Diego, and a heart full of ache.