

Taiwan

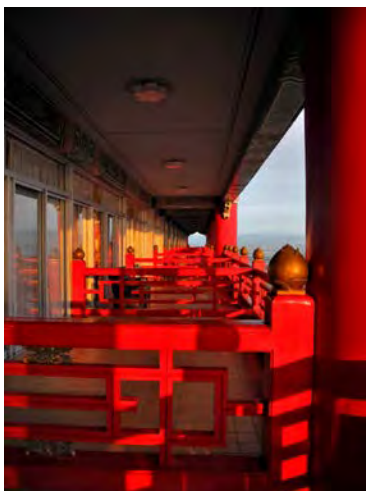
March 25-April 2, 2014

We left Los Angeles on March 25 at noon and arrived, via Narita (Tokyo) in Taipei, Taiwan (for those of you who remember some history, Taiwan was once called Formosa) at 10 at night on March 26. One very long day. Customs line was long, but moved somewhat quickly. By the time we made it through our bags were circling on the carousel waiting for us (yes, we sent our bags through). Our driver was waiting for us, with a sign with my name. That does make life so much easier as there were throngs and throngs of people (a theme to be repeated).

It is always difficult to arrive in a new city at night, because you can't get oriented, you can't tell what you are looking at and you have no idea where you are. We did see some young men playing basketball in a lit, outdoor court (note – it was 11:30 at night!). And lots and lots of motorcycles parked one next to the other (another theme to be repeated). After about a 30 min drive, we arrived at the Grand Hotel. The first sight is a large Chinese Gate (Paifang) at the entrance, followed by a long driveway lined with flowers up to the massive Chinese building.

The Grand Hotel is in the north part of the city and sits halfway up the Yuanshan mountain, facing the Keelung River, the Songshan district (on the east) and the Danshui district (on the west). It was built in 1952, was modeled after the imperial style of a Chinese palace and was owned by Madam Chiang Kai-shek who gave it to the city. It stands 14 stories high with 490 rooms and is supported by red columns with a golden tiled roof. The roof is the largest Chinese style roof in the world. It is a Taipei landmark, and once you see it – both inside and out – you understand why.

We checked in after gaping at the lobby – maybe because we were so jetlagged and exhausted, but the large sweeping staircase and the humungous vase with purple orchids literally took our breath away. Our room is large, with a very large terrace overlooking the front gate of the hotel, the city and the river. Since we are here for seven nights, it is nice to have a good room.





These pictures are of our view at sunrise and at night.

