

Friday, March 28, 2014

This morning we got up, were lazy reading and writing for a while, and then went to breakfast. After breakfast we decided to take a walk around the grounds of the hotel, but there wasn't really much to see. We kept walking and found ourselves in a park that is right next door to the hotel. There were some great views from there. But our first sight was a woman selling vegetables, next to a man using a cleaver to cut up bones parts of an animal with hooves, probably a cow or pig (the local butcher shop). We kept walking up the trail, running into large groups of people hiking around. We heard music and lots of voices and laughter. We kept walking up, up, up many, many stairs. We found a temple, quiet, small in the mountains, where the hiker can stop to pray. It was serene, peaceful and beautiful. We kept going, running into little makeshift stalls, women selling clothes or more vegetables. We kept going up, up, up the stairs through the mountains and through the trees. We passed people exercising.. We passed a group of people playing badminton. And another group having breakfast on a little terrace or landing. They waved to us and invited us to join them. We smiled and bowed but said no and kept on going.







Up a few more stairs was another group having tea. They invited us to join them and we did.

This has to have been the highlight of the trip. We sat down again on the small concrete landing, with a concrete table and concrete stools covered in mosaic. They explained that they all lived in Taipei, but would come via motors scooter to hike and visit and socialize in the mountains. These were all people probably in their 60s, probably retired, who spent the days exercising, in the light, socializing and having fun, rather than staying home and watching TV. They were singing karaoke - that's the music we had heard while walking. They served us tea, we chatted about where we were from conversing with them in their broken English. They sang for us and one of them (with the red kerchief), had a beautiful voice. I video taped her singing and will likely post it on FB for those of you who partake. And then insisted that we sing as well and although I wanted to refuse, I felt we shouldn't be rude. So I got up to sing Moon River, and one of my new friends, Laura, joined me. We sang and we laughed and we sang some more. It was actually a lot of fun and we laughed a lot. Luckily that was not video taped, but you can see us laughing in the still pictures. We had some more tea, chatted some more, took pictures and then went on our way.





This is what travel is about. Meeting the people, learning about their customs and culture. And maybe taking away something that will help make our lives better. Today's memory will always bring a smile to my face.



On the way back there were a group of nuns chanting and praying while playing musical instruments at the temple. And a great view of the hotel.





We decided to grab lunch before our afternoon adventures. We took the shuttle down towards the train station as we had noticed several little restaurants. Everything was in Chinese. But we peeked in to see what people were eating and chose one of the little tiny places serving vermicelli noodles and soup. A simple but filling lunch.



We walked around a bit checking out the neighborhood and then made our way to the shuttle back to the hotel where we ran into a bridal party. I took a few pictures and the bride asked if I'd like to have a picture with her. Given how I was dressed I said no. But she posed for me with the biggest smile.

