

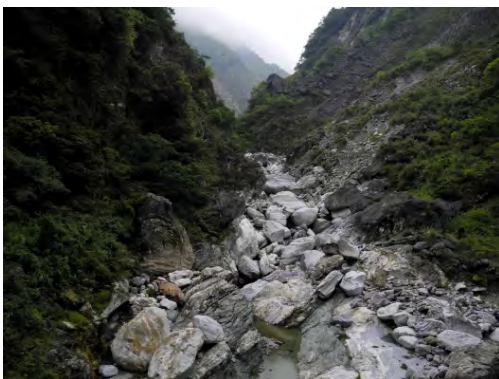
We continued driving. We passed the Eternal Spring Shrine where many people stop, but we only saw it from the road. Changchun (Eternal Spring) Shrine commemorates the 226 personnel (military veterans) who died during the construction of the Central Cross-Island Highway (1956~1960). Adjacent to the shrine is a year-round waterfall, Changchun Falls.



On our way to the next stop, Swallows Grotto (Yanzikou; the walls were filled with "potholes" where the swallows would nest, thus Swallows Grotto), Josafina handed us each a paper



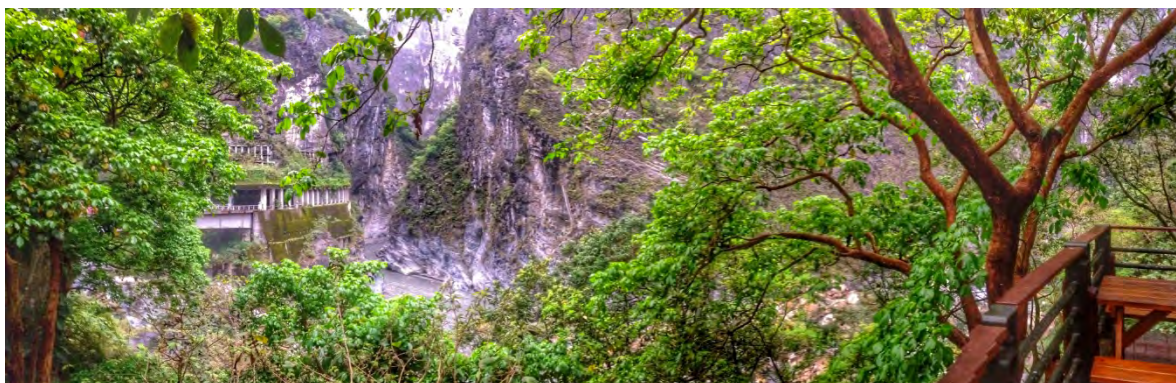
towel – we had no idea why. We then stopped at what looked like a check point, and she was handed a large pink bag. We still had no idea why. When we arrived at Swallows Grotto and stepped out of the van, she opened the pink bag and handed each of us a hard hat. The hard hat was to protect us in case of falling rocks. The paper towel was to put inside the hard hat to keep our heads clean.



This section of the highway, some of which we were walking, runs through tunnels carved into the vertical marble sides of the gorge with the Liwu River below. This first tunnel, the Jiuqudong tunnel, was carved out in 1996 to allow pedestrians to walk and see the beauty of the rocks and faults of the marble cliffs. The rock cliffs of the gorge are incredibly high (described as reaching to heaven) and at some points, the distance between the gorge walls is so narrow that they almost seem to touch each

other. This section of the road is called "Nine Turns of the Coiled Dragon," and was formed by tens of thousands of years of river erosion. The number nine in Chinese represents "many." Throughout the day, Josefina pointed out rocks that were in the shape of something – a lion, a bear (in one direction that looked like a turtle in the other), an alligator. The one at the Swallow Grotto looked like a profile of an Indian Chief.

We walked all the way to a view point to see the Jinheng Bridge, which spans the Ludan River, a tributary of the Liwu River. There was a small restaurant and gift shop and a memorial with fruit and candles in front of it, to Jin Hen, the chief engineer of the bridge, who, while inspecting the damage done by an earthquake that struck at 2:00am in 1957, was killed in an avalanche at 6:00am. In his memory, the name of the bridge was changed from Bailong Bridge to Jinheng Bridge.



There were suspension bridges everywhere. People were crossing them, but it wasn't on our one-day schedule – or so we thought....more on that later.

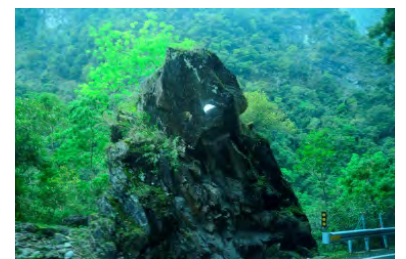
As we emerged from the tunnel of Nine Turns, we arrived at the Chimu Bridge (Motherly Devotion Bridge), which is an H-Shape hanging bridge with marble stone lions on each end and with marble lotus stones on two sides.

Just south of the bridge is a large white marble boulder known as Frog Rock. Its top of green schist and its white underbelly make it look just like a white-breasted frog. The Orchid Pavilion built in honor of the mother of Chang Ching-Kuo, the former president of Taiwan, sits on top and looks just like a crown on top of the frog's head. On the east side of the bridge is the Chimu pavilion, built by President Chiang Kai-shek in memory of his



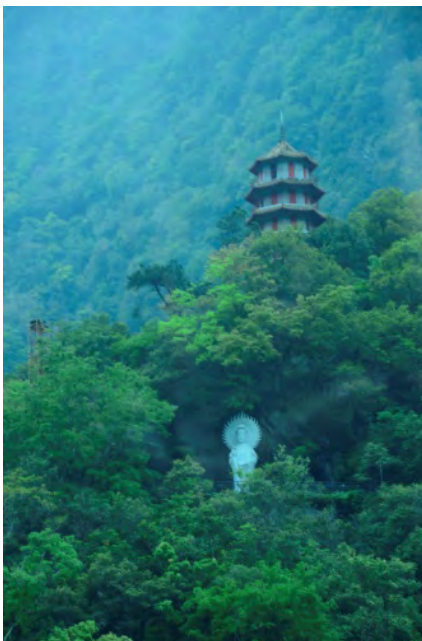
We hit the road again on our way to a place by the river where we stopped for a snack.

On the road we saw a “bear” (rock formation) and then, at the river, we appropriately saw another rock formation, this time of an alligator. The menu for snacks was in a “broken English” (you wonder who does the translations on these things). I ordered “milk tea” thinking it would be tea with milk. Well, it was actually milk with tea (the name should have been clue); in other words, a pot of hot milk with a small bit of tea (and a wonderful cookie). It reminded me of a gogle mogle (some of you will know what I'm talking about).



Tiansiang, our destination for lunch, is one of the landmarks within Taroko National Park. Originally called Tupido, it was renamed Tiansiang to commemorate Wen Tian-Xiang, who was a scholar-general in the last

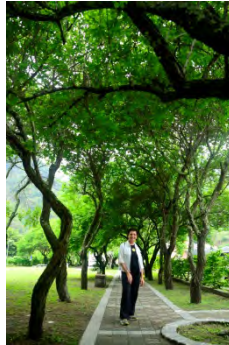
years of the Southern Song Dynasty. There was a little time before the restaurant at the 5-star Silks Palace Hotel would open, so Andy went hiking up the hill to see the Xiangde Temple with a large white-robed statue of Guanyin and a great statue of Ksitigarbha (also called Giant Statue of Bodhisattva; the tallest in the world) and the 7-story high Tiangfeng Pagoda. He had a wonderful view of the valley and of the hotel itself (the one with the pool on the roof). And while Andy shot pictures from above, I shot them from below.



While Andy hiked up the mountain, I walked around the two-block town. There were a few shops with one selling fresh corn and roasted eggs.



Right next to the parking lot was a plum garden, filled with beautiful trees full of – you guessed it – plums. As I walked around I noticed a group of students donning caps and gowns. I walked over to them to ask what about their graduation. And in their broken English, they told me they were graduating as psychologists. I congratulated them and told them I too was a psychologist. Well, they couldn't get over it and insisted on taking pictures with me. We chatted for a bit. As I keep saying, this is what traveling the world is all about.



The Silks Hotel was beautiful and is the only 5-star hotel in this area. The lobby was filled with art and flowers. And the food was fabulous; a real Chinese meal, shared by all of us (at the least the parts I could eat).

