

Jan 5, 2016 and Jan 17-22, 2016
Singapore

Today began our next adventure. We are off to Myanmar for 9 days to vacation and experience a new place, and then to Singapore for 5 days of work (with some play thrown in).

We flew in the pouring rain to LAX where after midnight, on Jan 6, we left for Hong Kong on a 14.5 hour flight. The flight was uneventful. We slept. We ate. We watched movies. We ate some more. In Hong Kong we stumbled to the first class lounge and what did we do but eat some more. Then we found out they had free massage. You could have a foot massage (not my favorite) or a neck/shoulder/head massage. Now that is the way to spend a layover.



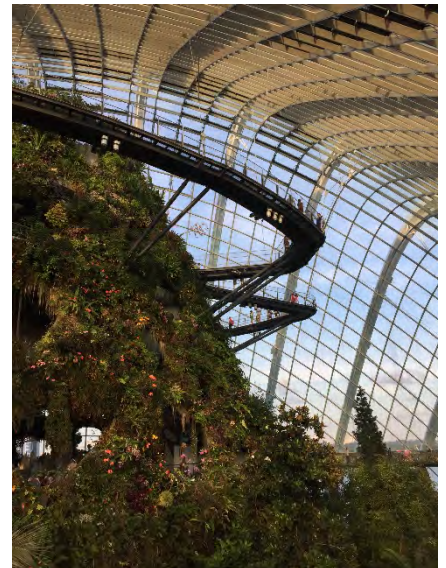
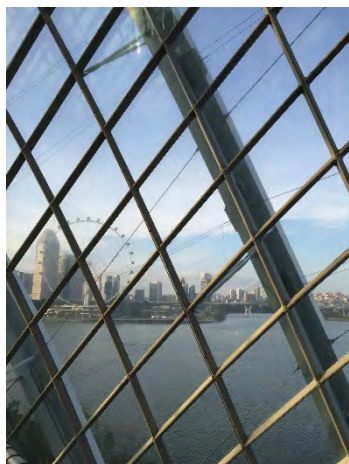
Although we thought it was supposed to rain our entire time in Singapore, as we approached the sun was shining and the view of the skyline was beautiful. That one night, we stayed at the Crowne Plaza Airport hotel at the Singapore airport where we got to meet with my former student, Mei. It was lovely to see her. Also we get to leave all our Singapore clothes with her and not schlep them to Myanmar. Everything works out.

Mei took us to the Gardens by the Bay. Gardens by the Bay is a nature park spanning 250 acres of reclaimed land. The aim of having this garden was to raise the quality of life in Singapore by enhancing greenery and flora in the city. In addition to the gardens there are two domes, a Flower Dome and a Rain Cloud Dome. Each is beautifully displayed.

The Flower Dome replicates a mild, dry climate and features plants found in the Mediterranean and other semi-arid tropical regions (e.g. parts of California, Australia, South America, South Africa). It features 7 different gardens as well as an olive grove. While we have seen many of these plants in their native environment, it was still very nicely displayed.

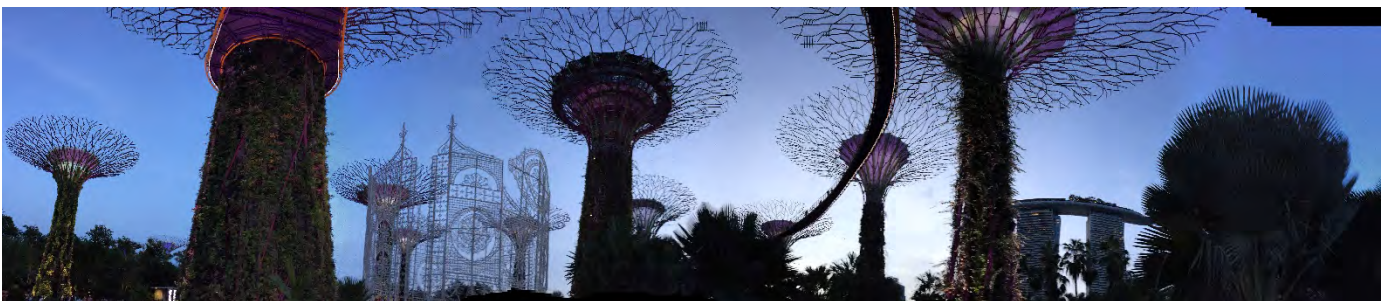
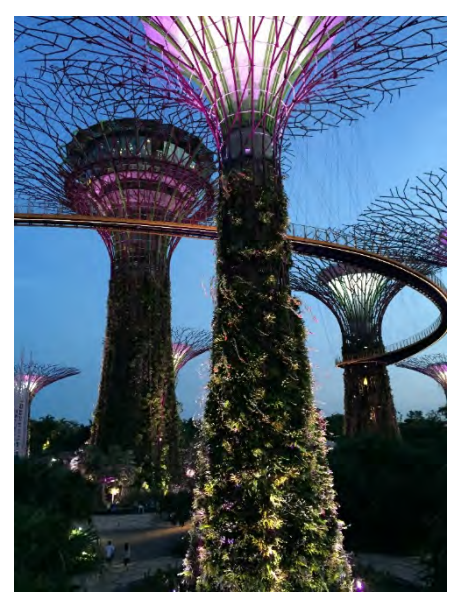
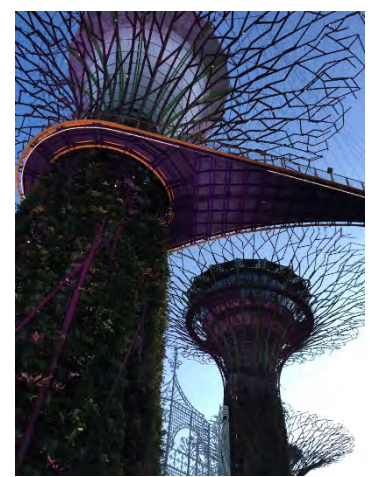


The Cloud Forest was the most impressive of the two. It replicates the cool moist conditions found in tropical mountain regions found in South-East Asia, Middle- and South America. It features a 138 ft "Cloud Mountain", which you can go the top and then make your way down a circular path. There is a 115 ft waterfall which cools the entire dome and also adds to the beauty. The mountain itself is covered in orchids, ferns, bromeliads and anthuriums.



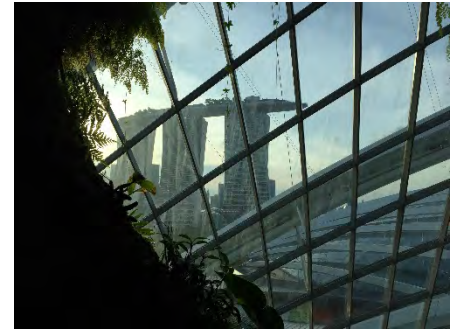
But the highlight for me was the Supertrees. These are tree-like structures that dominate the Gardens' landscape with heights that range between 82 ft and 160 ft. They are vertical gardens that perform a multitude of functions, which include planting, shading and working as environmental engines for the gardens. For me they were just works of art.

And please note, I was so jetlagged that I forgot my camera in the room. These pics are all from my phone.





And right next door is the Marina Bay Sands, a hotel and casino with the most incredible architecture. (If Andy looks exhausted in the photo it is because we had just traveled for more than 24 hours and indeed were exhausted). The resort is designed by Moshe Safdie who says it was initially inspired by card decks. The resort's architecture and major design changes along the way were also approved by feng shui consultants.



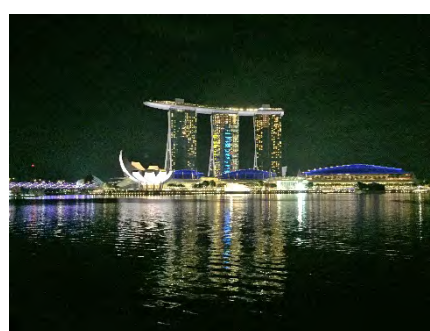
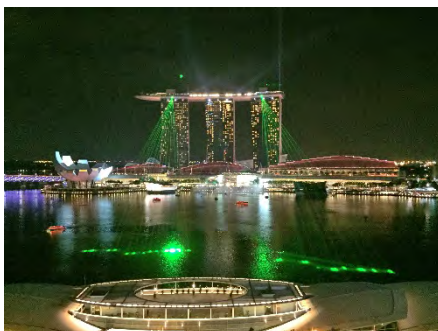
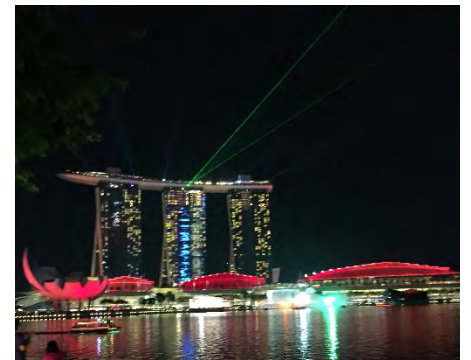
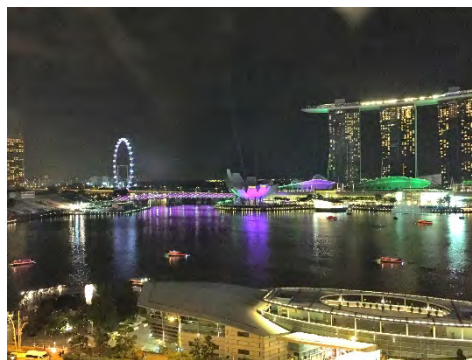
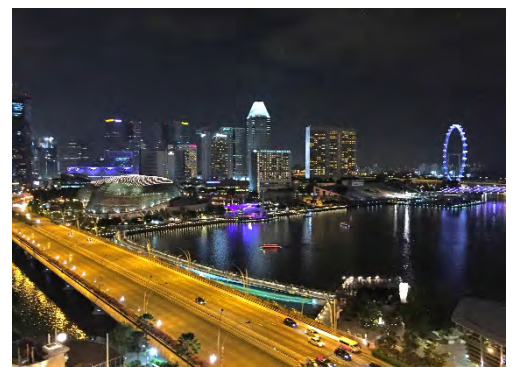
On our way back from Myanmar, Andy and I spent 5 more days in Singapore where I had been invited by Dr. Michael Chee and Dr. Mei Sien Chong to give a series of talks on sleep and aging, meet with post-docs and residents and with other faculty for potential collaborations. Mike, and his wife Helen, and Mei both took great care of us.



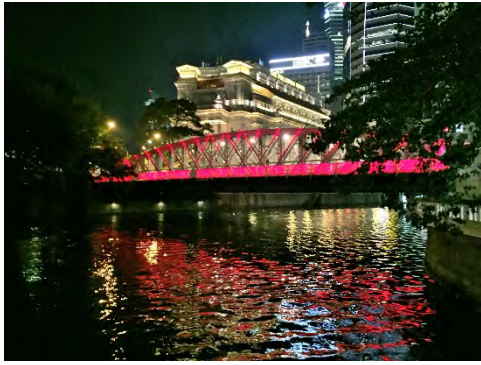
Our first night back, Mike and Helen took us for dinner at the Lighthouse at the Fullerton Hotel, an old very classic hotel. We began with cocktails at the roof-top bar overlooking the Marina Bay Sands. What to drink if not a Singapore Sling!



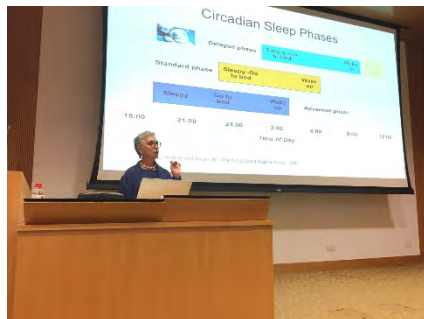
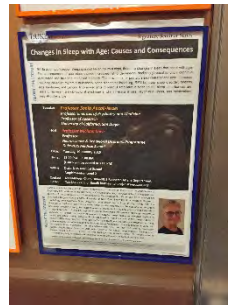
The view was fantastic as was the sunset, which was followed by a laser show. Dinner was also fabulous, as was the company.



After dinner we went for a walk around the water to see more of the beautiful views.



The next day my visits at Duke NUS began. I walked into the elevator and there were two posters with my picture, announcing my two talks. Felt a bit weird! I am including some pictures of me lecturing just to prove to all of you that I really do work on these trips! The lunch is at Ka-Soh with all Mike Chee's post-docs.

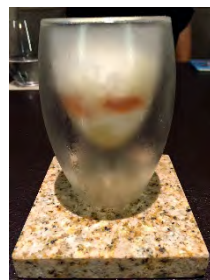




On one of the days, I spoke at Mei's hospital, Tan Tonk Seng. Once again I appeared in the elevator (that's me in the elevator with the poster). I gave my talk, was honored with a gift, but the most fun was meeting with the medical residents and discussing cases with them. Unfortunately we forgot to get a picture with them.



That night Mei took us to the Corner House. Corner House is the former Governor's Mansion inside the Botanical Garden. Dinner was a choice of 3 fixed price menus created by Chef Jason Tan. His menu is described as a "union of the primal bounty of Earth and the human art of the kitchen." We chose the smallest of the three which was already 4 courses plus two more thrown in by the Chef. Just as an example, before we even began, they brought out two tastes of somethings I can't even describe. My appetizer was 3 types of artichoke with hazelnuts and black truffle (not truffle oil, actual truffle). My starter was three preparations of onion. Heavenly! And after our main course, there was a frozen pear intermezzo to cleanse our palates. And my dessert was a variation of a classic Singaporean dessert, My kaya toast. And as we were leaving, we were given a box of cookies to take home. I have already reviewed this restaurant on TripAdvisor. I will not post all the food pictures here, but suffice it to say that this was one of the more spectacular meals I have had both in beauty and in flavor.



The only other food comment I will make is that the next night Helen and Mike took us to their club where we enjoyed all sorts of typical Singaporean food, including a classic dessert of ices, but not li

ke any ices I have ever had before!

