

Saturday March 29, 2014 (con't)

Taipei 101 was formally known as the Taipei world financial center and as I mentioned, is a landmark skyscraper. It was the world's tallest building until 2010 when the largest building in Dubai was built. It has 101 floors and the first five are the shopping mall which is filled with, and only with, high end designer shops. Since we had a bit of time, we walked around the shopping mall. When I say designer shops, think every high end designer from Fendi, Prada, Gucci, Versace, Tiffany, etc etc.



There was a food court (next to the dumpling restaurant where we ate the previous night) and we walked around looking for a place for lunch. We decided on a sit-down restaurant rather than fast food, figuring we could understand more of the menu. Wrong. But the waiter tried to explain it to us with hand signals. I ordered sushi and Andy ordered salmon. This is what he got:

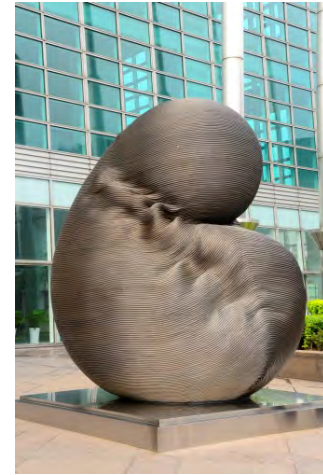
He wasn't hungry for a long time after that.

As with much of Asia there is symbolism to the design of the tower. The hundred and one floors commemorate the renewal of time, the new century that arrived as the tower was built and all the new years that follow. It symbolizes high ideals by going one better on 100, the traditional number of perfection. At night the building is beautifully lit with neon colors with the bright yellow gleam from its pinnacle representing a candle or torch upholding the ideal of liberty and welcome. From 6 to 10 each evening the tower lights display one of seven colors in the spectrum with each color coinciding with the day of the week. The cycle through the spectrum connects the tower with the symbolism of rainbows that in this culture are meant to symbolize connection and new beginnings. The observatory is on the 91st and 89th floors and is reached by the fastest elevator in the world, taking only 45 seconds from the bottom to the top. I posted some nighttime shots in Friday's blog, but here are some day time shots.

Taipei 101 is designed to withstand the typhoon winds and earthquakes that are common in this area and can withstand gale winds of 60 miles an hour. This is done with a tuned mass damper which we got to see. This is a structure mounted in the center of the building which reduces the amplitude of the vibrations.



Around the perimeter of the tower are many works of art including the Love sculpture by Robert Indiana. There's also a sculpture made of the steel cables from the original elevator. There is 500km of cable which would stretch along the coast of Taiwan from the north to the south. The cables were formed into a human form called Infinite Life by Kang Muxiant. It was the kind of statue you couldn't help but touch, as a group of students was doing, and I couldn't help but put in several shots for you to see. I found it quite beautiful. Too big for our backyard, unfortunately (and not for sale).



But before heading to the observatory we were meeting Rayleigh and his wife to attend a cocktail party for a new medical facility called 101 Royal Healthcare. This was essentially a concierge practice covering all aspects of medical care. The rooms were filled with large bouquets of flowers, mostly orchids, sent by well-wishers, was beautifully decorated, and, being on the 56th floor, had fabulous views. There was a news crew there from the LA Chinese new station and they interviewed both Andy and me (the man on the left is Rayleigh). So perhaps we will be on the California Chinese station.

From there we made our way up to the observatory. It took about 45 minutes before we got into the elevator and made our way to the top. The elevator is the fastest in the world and takes only 45 sec to reach the top. We didn't have a lot of time left as we were being picked up at six that evening for the meeting banquet. But we did manage to walk around and see the views. Looking out over the city one can get a feel for how dense living space is here. It was quite overcast, and we were in an enclosed part of the observatory, so it was hard to get good clear pictures. Only later did I learn that there was also an outside floor where the pictures could be taken without the reflection of the glass. We finished looking around and then it took another half hour to walk down one floor, make our way through displays of coral carvings and jewelry, and then stand on line to get take the 45-second elevator back downstairs.





We made it back in time to quickly change and headed out for the banquet. As we got into the car that was picking us up, the skies literally opened and it began to pour. Luckily by the time we arrived at the restaurant 45 minutes later, it had diminished to a drizzle. The banquet was lovely, with courses and courses of food, only some of which we could eat. In addition to the traditional pork, there was a whole fish, shark fin soup, duck, jellyfish, sea cucumbers, and luckily some vegetables. There were speeches of course and karaoke, but this time I refused to sing.