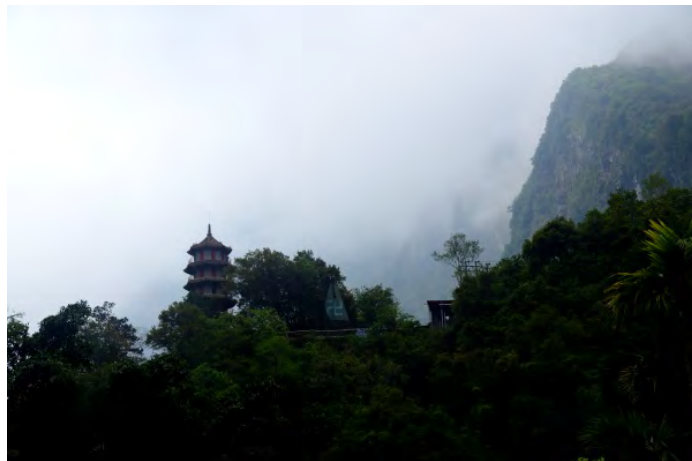
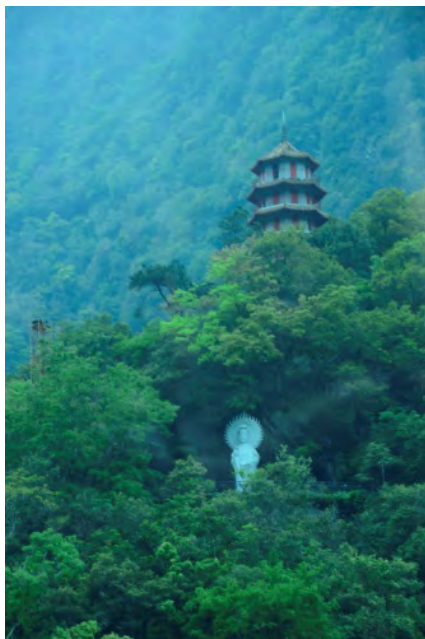


Tuesday (con't)

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.

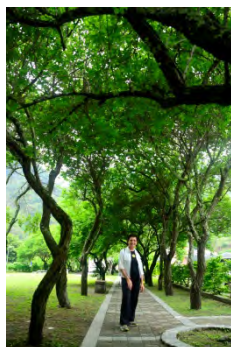




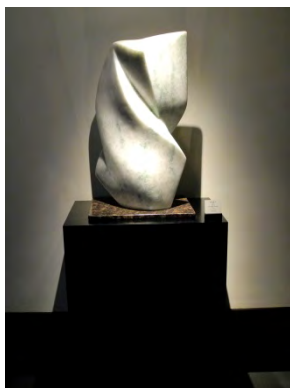
While Andy hiked up the mountain, I walked around the two-block town. There were a few shops with one selling fresh corn and roasted eggs.



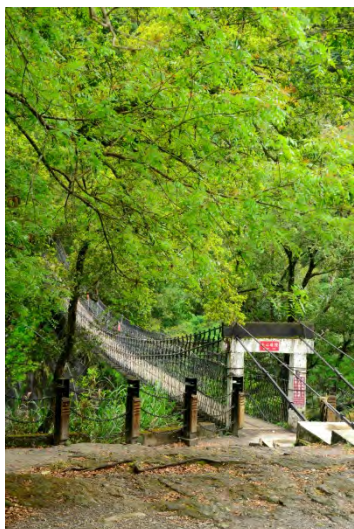
Right next to the parking lot was a plum garden, filled with beautiful trees full of – you guessed it – plums. As I walked around I noticed a group of students donning caps and gowns. I walked over to them to ask what about their graduation. And in their broken English, they told me they were graduating 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).



According to the itinerary, after lunch we had only two stops left, the beach to see the Pacific Ocean and a marble factory. But Josephina had other plans. Instead, she took us to see and cross a suspension bridge. The bridge was over a large gully, with beautiful views on either side. There was a pavilion on one end with a low doorway with a big sign that said: Watch Out. Even I had to bend down to avoid hitting my head.









And still we did not head to our last two destinations as promised. We had another surprise stop, this time at a bridge that was still being built. The road was literally closed, but we pushed on anyway. Andy and I had fun taking pictures through the different shapes of the bridge.



And then it was back through the tunnels, backtracking back to town.







Finally it was time to hit the marble factory. Those of you that have traveled with us, or even talked to Andy about our trips, know how much he detests stopping at factories. Josephina told us we had to as part of the tourist requirement of tours, but that we would not stay long. And she was true to her word. We walked in. Did a once through walk around, and walked out.

Our last stop was the beach, located in Beipu Village in Hualien County. Chihsingtan, as it is called, is one of the most popular beaches in Hualien. It lies at the tip of a crescent bay with extensive views of the Pacific Ocean. While for many tourists this was a big deal, for us viewing the Pacific just reminded us of home.

And then the trip with Josephina was over. She took us to the train station and sent us back to Taipei. The lovely thing about the train ride, other than a clean, comfortable, modern train, was getting to see the scenery along the way. We passed rice field after rice field with the setting sun reflecting in the pools. We saw people on their way home from work. We witnessed just a bit of the everyday life of Taiwan.

