

**Urbana
Sister Cities Program
Trip to China**

PART 2,
Shanghai, Xian, and Beijing
July 17 – 31, 2013



We arrived in Shanghai July 24. Shanghai has a modern skyline that rivals any city. The Huangpo River is a sister River to the Illinois River.



Shanghai is a city on the move. The main streets are limited access highways with cloverleaf connections. Over 15,000 buildings over 50 stories tall were built on the north side of the river in the last ten years, turning rice paddies into new mega-neighborhoods..



In the morning we visited the Shanghai City Museum, which holds a variety of art treasures.
The building is shaped like a Chinese bun tray.



Calligraphy, Chinese ink masterworks, jade carving, ceramics, and sculpture and among the treasures displayed at the Shanghai Art Museum.



Along the Shanghai waterfront near the Bund there was a wall of artistically arranged plantings on the vertical embankment, making a living wall.



We visited the 16th Century Yu Garden, a Ming estate said to be one of the four most famous gardens in all of China. The “zig-zag” bridge foiled evil spirits from entering the grounds.



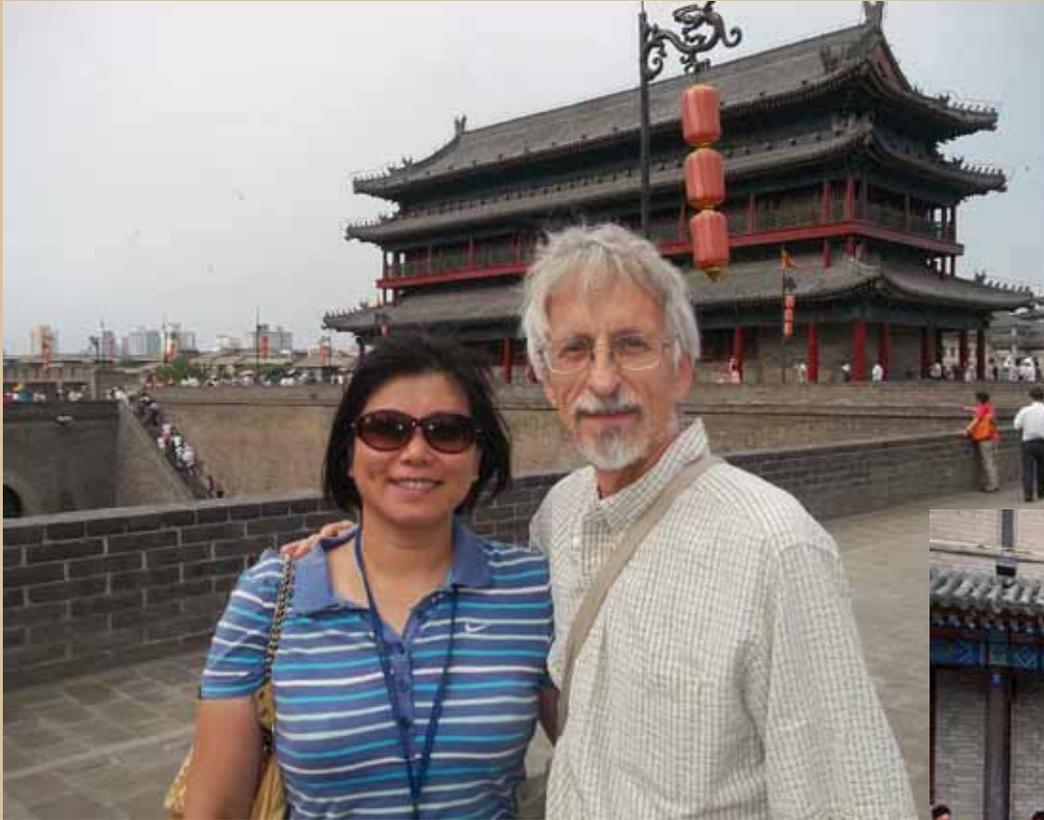
The classic Ming garden had four elements: water, rock, plants, and architecture.



We also visited the White Jade Buddha Temple



Buddhist priests chanted, people were burning offerings in large brazers in the courtyard.



July 26 found us in Xian. Our guide, Ms. Li, took us up onto the city wall. Xian has retained its original city walls, the four gates, and other central buildings. A group of kids had an outing to learn about their city's history.





The wall has enough room to hold a red dragon!



The Drum Tower is imposing. Large drums were used to beat the nighttime watch or to raise the alarm if the city came under attack.



At night the Drum Tower is even more beautiful, illuminated by hundreds of lights.



Below the Bell Tower vendors sell their wares during an evening market on the Street of the Muslims.





Outside the city lies the tomb of Qin Shi Huan, the First Emperor of China, creator of the famous terra cotta warrior army.





Begun in 210 B.C., the warriors stood to guard the Emperor in the afterlife. Arranged in battle formation in underground halls roofed with timbers, the tomb holds over 20,000 warriors and horses.



Composed of foot soldiers, archers, lance bearers, officers and generals, the figures were all once vividly painted.



No two soldier's faces are identical, each represents a unique individual!



In the evening we enjoyed a dumpling dinner and a Tang Dynasty show.



On July 28 we arrived in Beijing, a huge city with a population of 20.9 million. The greater Los Angeles Metro Area counts 18.2 million. Fittingly, Tiananmen Square is the largest square in the world.



The following morning we set out to view and possibly climb the Great Wall of China.



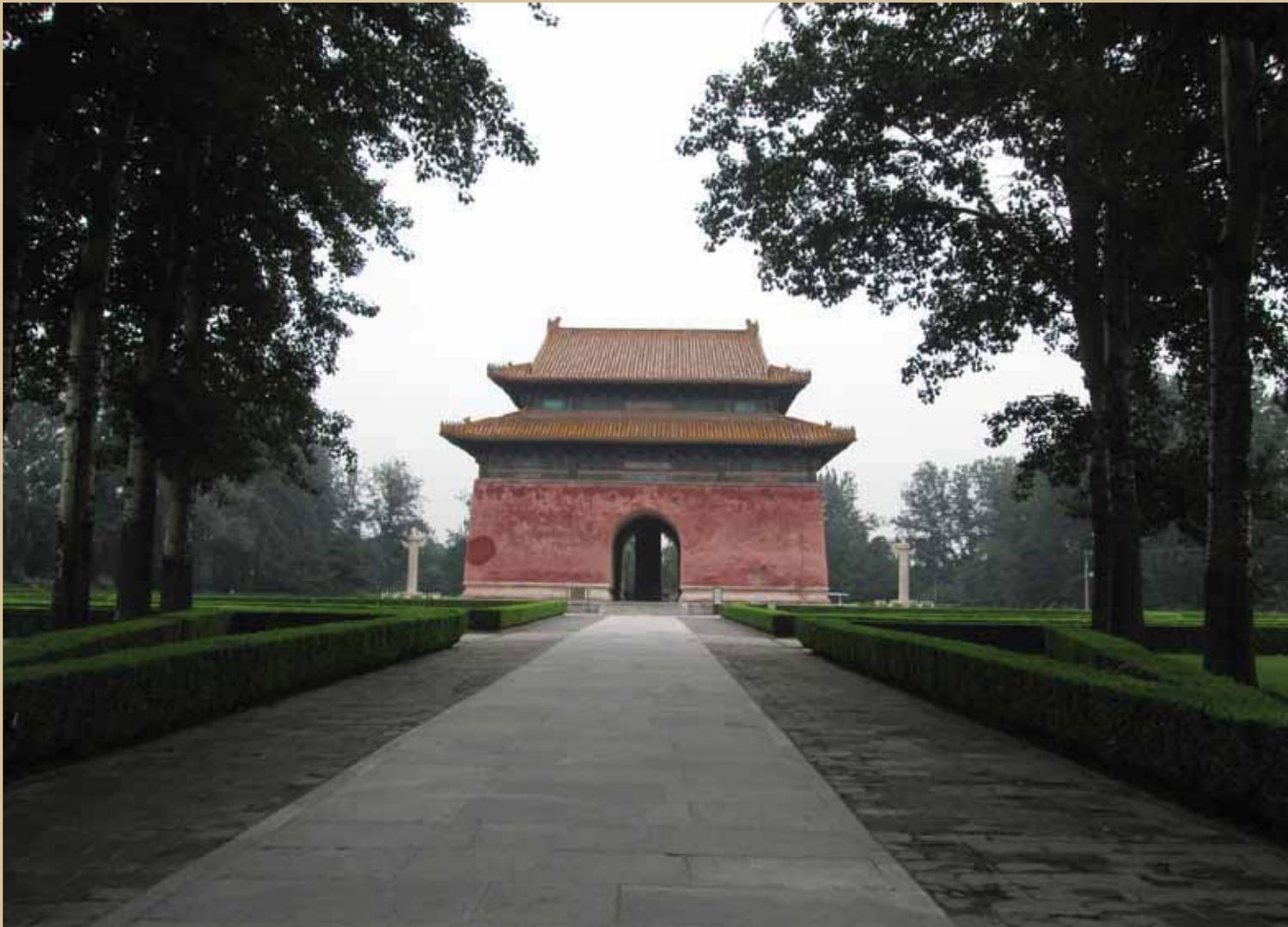
It is a steep climb up the steps to reach the various outposts and lookouts. Many people labor up the stairs, many Chinese as well as foreign visitors. We are determined to reach the top.



Diane Marlin climbs the Great Wall on her birthday. Happiest of birthdays, Diane! We all celebrate making the climb.



On July 30 we visited the Sacred Way, a processional avenue leading to the tombs of the Ming emperors. Huge guardian animals carved of limestone lines the way, the first kneeling, the second pair standing.



At the end of the avenue a ceremonial building houses the turtle of heaven, a great carved sculpture on whose back rises a great monolith of stone visible even at this distance.



It is considered good luck to rub the nose of the heavenly turtle, and to rid one of troubles, simply rub the turtle's tail. Red prayer ribbons are also tied to the railing.



One the secluded residence of the Emperor of China, the entrance of the Forbidden City is now a public square and parking lot. A portrait of Mao, the modern Father of China now looks out from above the door.



The inner courtyard is crowded with Chinese and foreign tourists.



These Chinese youth are as friendly as anyone and stop to say "hello." The city is not Forbidden any more.





We bid you "good bye" from the plaza leading to the Forbidden City.



The End
of our journey to China.