

## Yangtze

This is a very preliminary writeup 11/07; to be edited and expanded.

(Don here) We left Chongqing in the evening on a fine cruise boat, four passenger levels with maybe 150 – 200 passengers, with individual balconies for the staterooms. There was a spectacular light show (see the movies) from the city's lights and illuminated strips along the waterfront. It did bother me how much coal must be burned for this show (like Las Vegas) but it was rather exuberant... a confident, growing city. I suppose it's good advertising. We stopped for much of the night and the next morning continued down the mostly flooded Yangtze. In many places there were signs showing the 175 m (above sea level) eventual height of the water, perhaps 20 m (?) higher than now. Nearly everywhere we saw evidence of relocation, new buildings and the construction of new bridges and highways. In some places we saw concrete grids on the banks filled with rocks to prevent landslides and bank slumps but we hear this continues to be a serious problem as the soil becomes waterlogged. The scenery was quite craggy and steep, but probably looked more scenic with the lower river and nearly complete “vees” of the surrounding steep banks. The weather was also very misty, it even made relatively close banks look dim. Perhaps the weather is sometimes sunny, but not this trip. It could be weather, there might be a pollution contribution I suppose with 30 million people upwind in the Chongqing region.

Although I was looking for it I'm not sure I was able to identify Fuling, the city where a very good author, Peter Hessler, spent two years teaching. He wrote “River Town” about his experiences. A lot of what we saw was like his descriptions in the book. It was interesting to see ancient pagodas on hills overlooking modern bridges under construction.

We had a diversion from the Yangtze in a side trip in small boats up a tributary, with a relatively narrow “mini-three gorges” now also flooded. It was much more jungle-like but also reminded me a little of the Morrow reservoir near Gunnison which is also a narrow but quiet body of water between towering cliffs and mountains. This was much more of a jungle, even with monkeys (I didn't see them) and ancient “hanging coffins” of the Bo people which you might have seen in National Geographic... I included a couple of pictures of one. I was surprised by how many boats (compared to just one on Morrow!) but it was at the start of a national holiday with many Chinese tourists.

In the evening of the next day we approached the Three Gorges Dam, and went through the gigantic locks. I took some pictures in the first lock, the additional lock stages were done while we ate dinner and watched a colorful “fashion show” put on by the rather versatile ship's crew! The next morning we toured the downstream side of the dam; it's truly stupendous at about five Hoover dam width and similar height. In the mist one couldn't quite see the opposite side! There were again throngs of visitors and a big parking lot full of buses. The Chinese truly moved mountains for this project. It will be a great triumph, a great disaster, or both. At least it's 22,500 megawatts (10-20 big coal or nuclear plant equivalent) not generated by coal. Other not quite as large projects are in the works. But to put it in perspective, the \$20 billion cost (including relocation) is exceeded by just one recent disastrous flood of the Yangtze which of

course the dam will now prevent.

We then continued down the river to Yichang, where we took a bus to the airport to fly to Shanghai. Along the way we saw interesting river front industrial development, and later (on a very bumpy shortcut road) some characteristic small-scale farms.