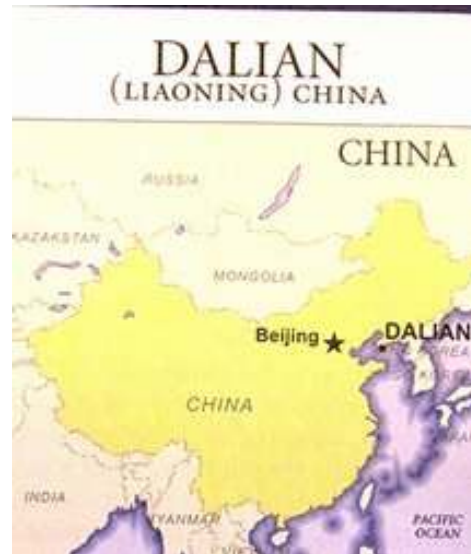


Dalian, China – Day 17 Oct. 14:

We arrived in the harbor of Dalian, China about 7am with calm sea and overcast sky. Rain had been predicted but so far all was dry. Dalian is one of China's largest ports in the extreme northeast of the country, as shown in the map on the right. Chinese officials had come on board in Incheon, Korea and they had been working to speed up our entry into China. A copy of our passport picture page was delivered to our cabin overnight. The passport page had an official red stamp of the immigration department and we had to take it with us when we went ashore in Dalian.



Ira had organized a Cruise Critic tour of Dalian through a Chinese tour company and we had signed up for that. The original price had been \$230 for two people but because so many signed up the price had happily dropped to \$150 for two people. At 8am we met in the Ocean

Bar with Ira and the other people going on the tour. The ship had not yet been cleared for passengers to go ashore so we took a few pictures of our fellow tourists while we waited. We had two busses to carry us. Ira was the shepherd on bus #1 and Bruce had volunteered to be the shepherd on bus #2. This picture on the left shows Bruce on the extreme right. Shepherds are important because they recognize who should be with the group and bring up the rear making sure



stragglers don't get lost in the crowds we pass through.

This picture on the right shows Barbara and Cathy eagerly waiting to start the tour.



Nearby were Judy and Phil shown in the picture on the right.



About 8:30 we got the announcement that we could leave so we filed through the officials at the gangway and went to our waiting buses. In the picture below Ira is discussing initial plans with our tour guide, Lois, before boarding her bus #1.



We had about 10 people on our bus which was a small, relatively tight knit group

We boarded the bus and as we proceeded to the first stop Lois introduced herself and gave some background on Dalian. It turns out that Dalian has been claimed by both Russia and Japan at various times in the past but is

now firmly established as a thriving and important Chinese city. This large sphere in Youhao Circle was a notable landmark that passed by.



After passing through crowded city streets for about 20 minutes we got out of the bus at People's Square. Kite vendors were at the square demonstrating and selling their colorful wares. Some in our group were interested in these souvenirs shown on the right.



The People's Square was a broad open area surrounded by large buildings as shown in the photo below.



After a brief stop at People's Square we drove on to the site of the Modern Museum which is part of the cultural complex in Xinghai Square.

At the Modern Museum we were greeted by an unusual sidewalk sale of apartments and condos. Smartly dressed, mostly young business men had taped sales brochures to the sidewalk and were attempting to lure passing people into signing up for 70 year leases on this real estate located in nearby high rise buildings. It looked like a miniature real estate bubble taking place before our eyes as shown in the following pictures.



Here's how the scene looked from a higher vantage point in the Modern Museum, as shown below.



There were plenty of brochures being handed out but none mentioned a price. Lois said that the price had to be negotiated for each sale and the various sized apartments and condos were selling for about 10,000 Chinese yuan (~\$1500 USD) per square meter. That's about \$170 USD per square foot. The real estate wasn't being sold outright but the buyer was really getting only a 70 year lease. Why the sidewalk sale was limited to this specific site wasn't clear but there was some indication that the property may have been located nearby.

We threaded our way through this thriving outdoor real estate market and entered the spacious museum where we tourists were the primary viewers today. Lois quickly walked us by the displays on 4 floors of the very modern building. The displays were primarily of common household items that were used about 100 years ago. Many of us remembered similar utensils still in the homes of our parents when we were children. A portion of the museum was dedicated to really ancient artifacts. For example there was a collection of terracotta servants and animals that were recovered from the grave of a prominent person as shown in the picture below.



Lois explained that powerful emperors might make full sized terracotta warriors by the hundreds for their graves, like in Xian China but there was a tradition among common people to just decorate their graves with these miniature (~6 inch high) servants and animals.

Barbara took a detour to a museum restroom but after viewing the facilities, shown on the right, decided to look around for a more “western” version of a toilet which she found in another part of the building.



As we were leaving the Dalian Modern Museum there was an opportunity to document the visit of Barbara's library card to Dalian and the Museum as shown on the right.



We got back on the bus and drove a short distance to another cultural exhibit in Xinghai Square. This display consisted of a 100 yard long bronze pathway with the footprints of 10,000 Dalian citizens deeply imprinted into the bronze. The photos below attempt to illustrate what we saw. The monument was created a few years ago to celebrate the centennial of Dalian's founding. Citizens could have their footprints imbedded by making a donation of 5000 Chinese Yuan (~\$750 USD).



Lois pointed out that some of the oldest citizens came from an era when some young girls would have their feet bound tightly to keep them from growing. This essentially disabled the person but was considered a sign of beauty and prestige. The imprint of these disfigured feet was among the first that were put into the pathway. A picture of the imprint made by some of these distorted feet is shown on the left, compared with the imprint of normal baby feet

After the bronze pathway exhibit we got back in our bus and drove for about 30 minutes along a twisting two lane road to a popular aquarium called Ocean Park located on the outskirts of Dalian.

They had a wonderful display of large and small ocean creatures. The white beluga whales, shown below, were probably the most dramatic.



The main event we were here to see was a dolphin show. The place was really crowded but Lois and Ira successfully herded us into a large arena that was already packed with people

waiting for the show to start, as shown on the right.



There appeared to be no seats available for our group but Lois pulled off a small miracle by eventually finding seats for all of us. Barbara ended up seated a few rows above Orlin. We got this picture of her along with the happy school kids seated next to her.



The announcer for the show, of course, conducted the whole thing in Chinese but it was similar to what we have seen at similar parks in the US so we could follow what was going on. It was a first class presentation of dolphins coordinating jumping acts and interacting with trainers. This photo of a jumping dolphin is the best picture we got with our little camera.





Part of the show involved a little girl volunteering to become part of the act. She came out of the audience and was put into a yellow inflatable boat that was towed around the pool at high speed by a dolphin. A fuzzy picture of the scene is shown in the picture on the left.

What we thought was remarkable about this act was that as the boat was being towed they played the lively American folk tune of “Skip to My Lou”. With the rest of the show being

entirely in Chinese this was a pleasant surprise.

After the conclusion of the show we took a 20 minute bus ride into Dalian where we stopped at an excellent restaurant for lunch. Here is a picture of our table. There was a huge lazy Susan in center of our table that was soon set with a wide selection of seafood delicacies, vegetables and soup. It was a great opportunity to sample some fine Chinese food.



When we drove up to the restaurant we had noticed a group of men huddled around a traditional Chinese Mah Jongg game on the sidewalk



across the street. Near the end of our meal Pauline and Orlin took a break to go over and take a picture of the Mah Jongg proceedings, as shown in the picture on the left. Pauline, being the diplomat, had arranged to have one of our guides go with us to make sure we were welcomed by the players and would not create an international incident.

After a very fine meal we were taken back to the harbor where we arrived at the Amsterdam with no time to spare for check in a preparation for sail-away. There were some smartly dressed young Chinese military people standing at the entrance to our gangway. Here on the right is picture of one of them.

The Amsterdam got underway about 3:30pm. During the night we sailed across the large bay between Dalian and our next port of call at Tianjin, China. The cruise terminal where we dock is actually in a suburb of Tianjin called Xingang.

While docked in Tianjin we will take an overnight tour to Beijing to see the Great Wall of China and other famous sites in that city.

