

Reports From Around the World

By Richard Seale

Pine Knoll Shores residents Linda and Richard Seale have been enjoying a round-the-world cruise. Using only his cell phone, Richard filed the following reports to share some of their adventures.

History, culture and musings on world economics

We were unable to stop at Jeju Island, Korea, due to a docking snafu. I was very disappointed since this stop was to be on my birthday. The island is also known as Grandfather Island and has temples and statues honoring grandfathers, one of which I am blessed to be. Thus the stop would have made for a very special double memory. Fortunately, Japan's ports of Osaka, Kagoshima and Nagasaki did not disappoint. Our ship was welcomed into port with colored water fire boat displays and people waving flags. In these ports we got to visit the ancient cities of Kyoto and Nara, beautiful gardens, castles and temples, and the atomic bomb site and memorial museum. Our departures featured musical band performances, which were unusual and gave a nice friendly feeling as we headed out to other destinations.

We ran along the west coast of Korea in the East China Sea to Seoul. Here we again got to drink in this country's long history and rich culture. We learned that Korean written language could supposedly be a world language candidate.

We then entered the Yellow Sea. The suspended silt indeed makes the water yellow. We ran northwest to Xingang, which is the port for Beijing—yet a 3.5-hour bus ride is required to get to the city. The Yellow Sea ship traffic was huge and the shipping lanes were a veritable maze of fishing gear.

Our visit to the Badaling section of the Great Wall was special since Linda and I had been there before, but this time we got to see it after a snowfall and with some sun and blue sky. It was beautiful, even if it was below freezing with the howling wind blowing snow. We somehow managed to hike five towers. It is a remarkable thing to experience.

Beijing itself is a bustling metropolis that contains the Forbidden City, gardens, museums and lots of people. I did manage to locate and visit a very interesting railroad museum there.

We then cruised down to Shanghai. This incredible city is quite far up the Yangtze River delta and actually is on the Pu River. The trip up the river takes five to seven hours, and the boat traffic is incredible. I did two counts of boats I could see around our ship at one time; one tally was 84 boats, the other 60. Shanghai is a must-see experience. Oh yes, the history is great, the traffic impossible, the crush of humanity awesome, but it is the towering buildings which put on light shows as evening falls that will take your breath away.

At this writing as February comes to a close, we are on our way to Hong Kong. From lectures, museums and personal observations, what has jumped out at me is that we of the West somehow never were educated to the uncomfortable fact that for all but the last 200 years, Eastern cultures led the world in almost everything, from written language to metal making, coinage and even organized governance. China's 2.4 billion people are 22% of the world's population. They are smart, productive and proud of their long and sophisticated history. They feel they can, and should, take over the leadership positions they held prior to 200 years ago.



The Peace Statute at Nagasaki Peace Park. The park is located near the hypocenter of the August 9, 1945, atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Japan. Among the words of sculptor Seibo Kitamura engraved on the statute: "The right hand points to the atomic bomb, / the left hand points to peace, / and the face prays deeply for the victims of war . . ." The Seales also visited the Atomic Bomb Museum and heard a presentation by a bomb survivor.—Photo by Linda Seale

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The Great Wall. Richard and Linda Seale visited the Great Wall on a cold and windy day with a backdrop of snow, but braved the elements to make the most of their visit.—Photo courtesy of the Seales

It was China's self-sufficiency, the West's desire for tea, silk and spices from China, and China's not finding anything of value from the West except silver and gold that no doubt triggered the ascendancy of the West over the East. As the West's treasures dwindled since China demanded cash for any trading, the West had to find a product to trade. Britain found it in opium, and that led to the Opium Wars, strange twists of history and the decline of China.

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