

Post



Scott Farnsworth

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Double D Cups - April 10, 2023

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SUMMARY

Scott attended the monks vegan breakfast at 6:00 but we both chose sleep over 4:00 am morning worship and meditation. Bus to Gyeongju and some of the tombs (grass mounds) of former Korean kings. Continue our pursuit of Korea's Greatest Dishes with a bulgogi lunch followed by a tour and tasting at a small apple orchard. Stopped near Busan, Korea's second largest city for a visit to the beautiful Haedong Yonggungsa Temple on the coast (Strait of Korea) and viewed Haeundae Beach from above. Dinner at TGIFriday's for a break from Asian. - Karen

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DETAIL

Everyone, except Scott and Karen, pretty much, are up at 4:40 for a chilly meditation with the monk. At 5:45 Scott joins the group for a silent trudge over to the dining hall for a silent breakfast with the monks. Before long we're back in our normal clothes, the soiled TempleStay wear is in its basket... all the trash and recycling are where they should go. And we (and our luggage) are on the bus, waving goodbye to our monastery home for the night.

We stop for a coffee, the first for most of the group today (it isn't an option at breakfast at the monastery). I reach for my wallet and realize that I'd abandoned it, temporarily, for my 24 hours of monastic life. Now I must remember where I put it. It has an apple AirTag so (in theory) my phone would have warned me if I'd left it behind. And yet I didn't have it. After much digging I find it in my backpack. Whew.

The coffee place is amazing. The menu has dozens of choices. The only thing you couldn't get there? What's it called?? Oh, yeah, hot coffee! Not that anyone wanted that. Their two main beverage groupings were crushed ice beverages and soft ice-cream type drinks. Coffee, milk and sugar are in almost all of them. Mine is just that, like a 7-11 slushee, only for kid-at-heart business men who need a morning jolt. Karen gets something similar but with some chocolate and puffed rice on top. By the time she got towards the end you'd swear you were at the bottom of a yummy bowl is sweetened (now soggy) puffed cereal.

We do a quick detour. The group jointly invests 1000₩ (US\$0.70) to learn Nathalie's fortune (based on her being born in the year of the snake). The full page of fortune, is divided up by year. The paper is folded up and put in a clear plastic egg. Near by there's a rubber mallet, on a chain, to aid you in getting into your fortune while precluding you from stealing it or chasing your younger brother.

Where we are there are many many very tall mounds. They're perfectly formed and randomly placed. It turns out they're burial mounds for former Korean Emperors. For a long time everyone knew they were here but no one knew what they were. Eventually, maybe through new technology, they figured it out. They're now in a very pretty park with lots of flowering trees and bushes. The huge mounds are just scattered around and it would be easy to simply climb (walk) to the top of one. It would also cost you a cool 20 million Korean wan, or US\$15,000. Definitely not worth it.

For lunch we're having Bulgogi. Those who know Korean food are very excited. There's many food things/condiments already on the table when we sit down. Soon they bring more, including a wire rack with an 18" square ground beef, already cooked, on it. It's sitting on a small barbecue bowl with glowing coals underneath.

We take a leaf of lettuce (mmmm, lettuce) or some edible plant leaf, add some beef, some rice, some add-ons... roll it up, and eat it. It was really good. On the side of the table is a drawer. If you pull it out there's chop sticks (the metal Korean variety), spoons, and a napkin dispenser. Very civilized. On the walls are pictures of the owner with various dignitaries and famous people. Dennis convinces the owner I'm an older actor from the US and I get my picture taken with the owner. For beverage we have beer. Big bottles. They have two kinds, what do Karen and I want? One of each. They're 5,000₩ each so our total out of pocket is \$7.

Next stop is an apple orchard. The group has been asking if they'll have hard cider. Sadly, no. We arrive at "The Small and Cozy Apple Orchard" and clamber out of the bus. There are two chained sweet looking dogs. They're wagging their tails. They want attention, but we first turn ours to the 77-year old owner. He's strong and not too tall with a cute smile and the whitest eyebrows. We head into his orchard of 400 trees.

There's classical music playing. In answer to a question we learn the music is for both him and the trees. They're all less than nine feet tall, short enough that you can reach all of the branches, either just standing or with a short ladder. The trees aren't 'apple tree shaped', as we know it, but like tall, open columns, very deliberately pruned. There's dark plastic cloth protecting the roots, lots of support, and drip irrigation.

The owner is 77 and he got the orchard from his parents who lived during the Korean War. His dad died in the war. The owner has kids but none want to take over the business. We're given samples of the apples (we're told the variety translates as "red red"), they're delicious. And more samples, and more. Only one variety. Then we're given apples to go, which we gladly take. And apple juice. We finally give the dogs a generous dose of affection, which they give back. And we're off to our next stop, Busan and a temple on the water.

The temple really is pretty, with a stunning view of the water. On a clear day you can see one of the islands of Japan. Today is clear but not clear enough. We find a bathroom (whew!) and try to land our 500₩ coins in a big stone bowl below a bridge (so close!) and take a picture with the Happy Buddha (not the real Buddha). On the way back to the bus we pass by many merchants, selling stuff (mostly food) to the tourists, mostly Korean.

Karen and I get a stick of strawberries dipped in hard sugar. It comes straight from the freezer and stays frozen much too long for our tastes. Dennis gets a cup of cooked silk worms and offers some to any fans of cooked silkworms. We (most of us) give them a try and invariably give them a thumbs down. Dennis snacks on the rest all the way back to the bus. We also get a mung bean pancake with seeds. Heaven.

The bus presses on a bit further. We're now really in Busan, the second most populated city in South Korea. We're headed to Haeundae Beach (the richest part of Busan). We're told that if we're on a dating app and we have the option to date someone from around here, we should. They're invariably loaded. Off the bus we head past the tsunami warning/instructional sign and head uphill towards camellia island. Some of the many healthy bushes here still have some beautiful camellias on them.

We cross the suspension pedestrian bridge and head for the statue of the mermaid on the rock out in the water. In the background is the actual Haeundae Beach with a clutch of tall, handsome residential towers behind.

On the drive to our hotel, the Busan Business Hotel, we pass many more beautiful wharfs and waterfronts. We're definitely in a wealthy area (though where our hotel is it's more down to earth). Car horns aren't used here as much as in South East Asia, but when needed they are.

In our hotel room we unpack and do a bunch of sock and underwear laundry. We gather shirts and pants to have the hotel launder. We split an overly sweet small bottle of soju (rice wine)? It's sweeter than we would like (I thought it was the dry pink wine we like) but it helped to wash down the yummy wasabi peanuts I'd also bought.

For the first time in a while we're on our own for dinner. We decide we're to the ABK stage (anything but Korean). We learn there's a TGIFridays across the street in a huge department store (Lotte). We go there and head up to the 9th floor where all of the restaurants are. We have Fish and Chips and a chicken quesadilla. Karen has a glass of wine (OK two glasses of wine) and I have a beer (OK two beers). We used to go to TGIFridays in Austin but we think they're all gone. It was OK.

We stroll the long, wide, busy, neon-lit boulevard near our hotel. There are businesses, restaurants and bars everywhere. It's fun and thrilling. It's just a tad cooler than perfect, but it feels wonderful. Eventually we head back to our room. We'll be here for two nights. Tomorrow we can join Dennis for breakfast at 6:15, which we plan to do. A bit of reading, a soak in the bathtub and off to sleepy-land.

Photos



Up at 5 am, before dawn, for meditation
(for some), just breakfast, for me



Filing into the dining room



Now THAT'S a breakfast. Lots of sugar, caffeine, and who cares what else!



The whole gang in front of an Emperor's burial ground. Only US\$15,000 to climb to the top!



So many azaleas!



So much costume play!



More cherry blossoms! (Or are those apples?)



Bulgogi. One big hamburger, for ripping apart, greens to hold it, and rice and other stuff to complement it. ("Bulgogi you look very nice today.")



We fell in love with the hidden drawer for silver, chop sticks, and napkins!



The super sweet 77 year-old farmer who owns/runs the "Sweet and Cozy Apple Orchard"



FARNSNIENTE

The self-proclaimed 'Prettiest Temple in South Korea'



Scott, Karen, and the Happy Buddha (not the real Buddha)





So many colorful lanterns!



I ate a silk worm and didn't really care for it.



The richest part of Busan. Very pretty around these parts.



It even has its own mermaid.



Such fun walking forever in neon light.

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