

Post



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Something fishy in Seoul - April 11, 2023

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SUMMARY

Tourist sightseeing hop-on-hop-off train along the coast with much stair climbing and view viewing during the hop-off portions. Gale force winds not helping with the abysmal air quality! Lunch in the Grilled Clam City area but we have scallops. Water, sound and light show in the atrium of Lotte department store followed by more view viewing from their rooftop observation deck and a LONG walk through the fish market and the everything-under-the-sun market. - Karen

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DETAIL

We're (mostly) all accounted for at 8am in the lobby. I have my brand new teeshirt that I'd bought from the Cambodian dancers (just to support them). It's a cute shirt, but not my style and so I try, and succeed, in giving it away. Nathalie is happy to have it and promises to wear it tomorrow. Our breakfast place is Egg Drop. No, not the soup, it's breakfast sandwiches. Like so much over here the menu is extensive. The sandwiches, though, are all roughly the same height and width.

The depth, of course, depends on which one you get. The breakfast is included in our tour, so we place our orders (with Dennis) and head off to the coffee shop (Mega MGC Coffee) down the street. It, too, has a big variety of choices on the menu. Only one size, but with coffee or tea, with milk, sugar, Oreos, breakfast cereal, citrus slices, etc. etc. in all possible combinations.

When our sandwiches arrive we sit on a bench, on the sidewalk. It's obviously where the smokers sit, and they, unlike most other Koreans, don't give a hoot about littering. The sandwiches are in cute paper carriers, with the sandwich perfectly inside, wrapped in more paper with a sticker to identify which menu item it is. They're good, with egg, bacon, ham, avocado, etc. Sadly the white bread is quite sweet. We eat (most of) it anyway.

Regrouped, we head out again, this time towards the subway and then the bus. Your "TMoney" card works on both. You tap your card against a reader on your way in and out, for both. A nice, young Korean lady's voice thanks you each time (or tells you, in Korean, that you card wasn't read, or is out of money). We're headed back to the water.

The subway is fairly full and one of us (not me) makes a joking comment about the young Korean mother with an empty stroller. Did she realize she'd forgotten her baby somewhere? She wasn't supposed to overhear but does. She smiles and points behind her, to her husband who is holding the child. Off the subway we regroup and the mother-father-child demonstrate for us that they do, in fact, have a baby now in the stroller and we all smile and wave at each other. Cute kid, great fun.

Onto a bus and soon off the bus where we hike up a gentle incline, past flowering trees and bushes. A group of uniformed soldiers decline to have their picture taken with Karen, much to my dismay. We gather these guys did something wrong and thus are being punished. Picking up the full garbage cans is their punishment and having fun with cute tourists goes against the overall goal of punishment.

At the top of the hill is a small tourist train, with an engine that looks like a bee (but sadly smells like a Diesel engine). A sign explains what's not allowed on the tourist train. This includes drunks. I have another coffee and so ask Dennis if they really mean Drunks or are all drinks also precluded. I'm OK and board.

At the second stop we get off and go into a viewing building/cafe/gift shop. We still can't see Japan, but we do buy some 'dried plum' treats. We're high above the rocks, at the seashore. There are crashing waves down below and a statue of a mother with her young son and daughter. The statue is intended to dissuade visitors contemplating suicide from launching themselves over the cliff onto the rocks below. Thankfully this doesn't include any of us.

There are other view points and statues dedicated to this or that, or to discourage any neighboring country from invading. Back on the diesel smelly tourist train we complete our circuit and head off again on foot. For lunch we're promised grilled shellfish. The locale is good for a gritty detective novel and the area is known for having the strongest winds in the country. We're nearly blown over walking to lunch.

At each table there's lots of stuff (condiments) ready for us, as always. Each table has a hole in the center for the charcoal grill. Next to each four-top table there's a huge platter with ready-to-grill scallops on the half-shell. There are twenty smaller and two much larger half-shells. We're taught how to grill, and add cheese, and turn, and flip (just the scallop, not the shell) and eat. So good.

To support the local economy Peter and I split a trio of large beers. Karen helps and soon is asking to eat a silkworm (being the only one in the group who didn't do yesterday) and a small squiggly looking sea cucumber. Four beautiful shrimp (one for each) barbecued and eaten and we're ready to head back into the wind.

Next stop is the 13 story Lotte department store. In the atrium is a many story fountain/waterfall. On the hour there's a very impressive light and water show. It's choreographed with music and is great fun. From the very high-up ceiling there is a smaller (10 feet across) circle of water sources and a larger (30 foot across) circle of water sources. Each point on each of the two circles is controllable and they can make patterns, or pictures (Star Wars Storm Troopers), or words ("LOTTE!"). It was great fun.

Next, to the roof, to the observation area. You can see 360 degrees, to the Busan harbor, up into the hills, and out to the sea. It's windy but fun and a great view. Then off to more shopping, this time closer to the ground. Close to the harbor we see where they're selling lots of dried seafood and crustacea and seaweed. Next we go through a very long hall with hundreds of tanks of live fish, mussels, squid, octopi, eels, crabs, lobster, etc. etc. It goes on forever. It's impressive, but somewhat sad, knowing how smart some of these creatures are. Most just have tanks they're in. The clear plastic tanks for the octopi have lids to keep the creatures from wandering off.

From the seafood emporium we head inland, up hill, to where they sell everything else known to man. They have sit down restaurants where they'll take the fish we just saw and cook them up, real time. There's snack food and we stop to buy some. More mung bean cake with gooey, cinnamony, center, cut open and stuffed with a yummy seed mix.

More shopping. Each booth/store has one theme. Light bulbs, soap, rope, netting, fishing floats, hinges, cleaning supplies, power tools, clothing, cloth, hooks, towels, on and on and on. Next came to various food stuff — raw materials and cooked — which went on forever.

Partway through all of this, our smart watches told us we'd walked and hiked and climbed enough stairs to get our daily quota of exercise. We are pooped. Getting home is more walking/bus/metro but we finally make it. Others head out in various sized groups for dinner. Karen and I stay in, grabbing two (quite good) panini from the coffee shop off the hotel lobby. Tomorrow? The last day of the tour. Whaaaa.

Photos



Queuing for breakfast. Sandwiches, not the soup



Artfully crafted and packaged, each one was. Sadly also a bit too sweet. (Work with us, people!)



Morning latte mustaches. Mmmm.



One of our many modes of transportation for the day. A bee themed diesel tourist train.



Japan sometimes visible in the background behind tour guide Dennis and the lighthouse.



The omnipresent Kpop boy bands



The railing in the background is an ideal place to commit suicide and the statue in front designed to dissuade you from the same.



Either a pointer to Japan, or a threat to neighbors not to invade, or maybe just public art.



Reminiscent of California coast. So windy!



Lunch for four. Cooking HIGHLY recommended.



Cooking our own lunch. Scallops. (Already added the cheese.) Yum!



Afterwards got to see the live versions of what we ate, including these sea cucumber animals. Karen ate a very small one. Ewww.



Awaiting the bus in the wind.



The aqua show at the Lotte department store.



So much dried seafood



And so much live seafood. Here a crab is making a break for it.



A store (single room booth) for everything. One item, or theme, per 'store'. The road goes on forever.



Did someone say Snack?? A mung bean cake filled with caramel cinnamon goodness, and filled with yummy bird seed at the end. Yum!

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