

American expat impressions on China – 1

I have been trying to tell people that China is not what they think it is. I have been trying to explain that the American government propaganda machine is large, dangerous and paints a seriously distorted view of the rest of the world. And... well, it falls on deaf ears. So, here instead, is the impressions of a person visiting China for the first time in over a decade. His impressions are pristine, real, and worth the read. Check it out.

This is from the article "Intelligent Design: Two Weeks in Chengdu and Environs" by Fred Reed written on November 12, 2018. All credit to the author.

Intelligent Design: Two Weeks in Chengdu and Environs



Chengdu is a Tier #2 city within China. It is not as modern as other Chinese cities, being in the “heartland”.

Vi and I have just returned from Chengdu, a Chinese village of seventeen million and the gateway to Tibet. Since China is of some interest to the US these days, I thought a description of sorts, actually more in the nature of a disordered travelogue, might be of interest. I hadn't been to the country for twelve years and, before that, not since living in Taiwan in the mid-Seventies.

Each time, the changes were astonishing.

Herewith some notes:

A
caveat: we never got more than three hundred miles from the city and do

not pretend to describe the country beyond what we saw.

Despite Trump's trade war we had no problems in getting visas in Guadalajara or getting through customs in Chengdu. Nobody showed us the slightest hostility.



Chengdu parkway.

Although China is assuredly a dictatorship and vigorously represses dissent, we saw virtually no police.

A friend who lived in Chengdu for several years until recently asserts that there is close to zero street crime. (White collar crime is a very different matter, he said, and seems built into Chinese culture. There are books on this.)

China is often described as a developing country.

Well, sort of.

Chengdu is decidedly of the First World, modern, muscular, appearing to have been recently built because it was.

The downtown is beautiful, at least as cities go, and livable. In many hours of walking aimlessly we encountered everything from elegant high-end stores selling upscale Western bands to noodle shops.

It is not a poor city.



The downtown is beautiful, at least as cities go, and livable.

A considerable number of people wear worn clothes and clearly are not overly prosperous, but nobody looked hungry and most appeared middle class.

We saw no beggars or homeless people of the sort common in the US. Whether this is because there aren't any, or because the government doesn't allow them on the streets, I do not know.

For anyone who knows what China was before Deng Xiaoping took over in 1978, after Mao made his greatest contribution to his country...

... he died...

... the growth of prosperity astounds.

Many criticisms may be made of the Chinese government, some of them valid, but no other government has lifted so many people out of poverty so fast.



Downtown tower in the enormous downtown city center.

When I

lived in Taiwan, I wondered why the Chinese, especially the mainlanders, were so backward. They seemed to have been so almost forever, certainly since well before Legation days. At the time Taiwan had a Five Year Plan for development, but so did all sorts of dirtball counties, mostly consisting of a patch of jungle, a colonel, and a torture chamber.

I noted, though, if the reader will forgive me a digression: Taiwan was actually meeting its Plan. In the Third World of the time, this was a novel idea. The Jin Shan reactors were going in, the new port, the steel mill, the highway. I interviewed the head of the nuclear program for the *Far Eastern Economic Review*—Harvard guy. Other officials were from MIT.

Idi Amin they were not.

Young and dumb as I was...

...the two being barely distinguishable...

...I thought Hong Kong looked like Manhattan with slanted eyes, hardball financial turf, and I knew Taiwanese students in America were excelling in science courses.

I concluded that Mousy Dung was the greatest American patriot who ever lived since, if he ever stopped holding these people back, what has happened might.

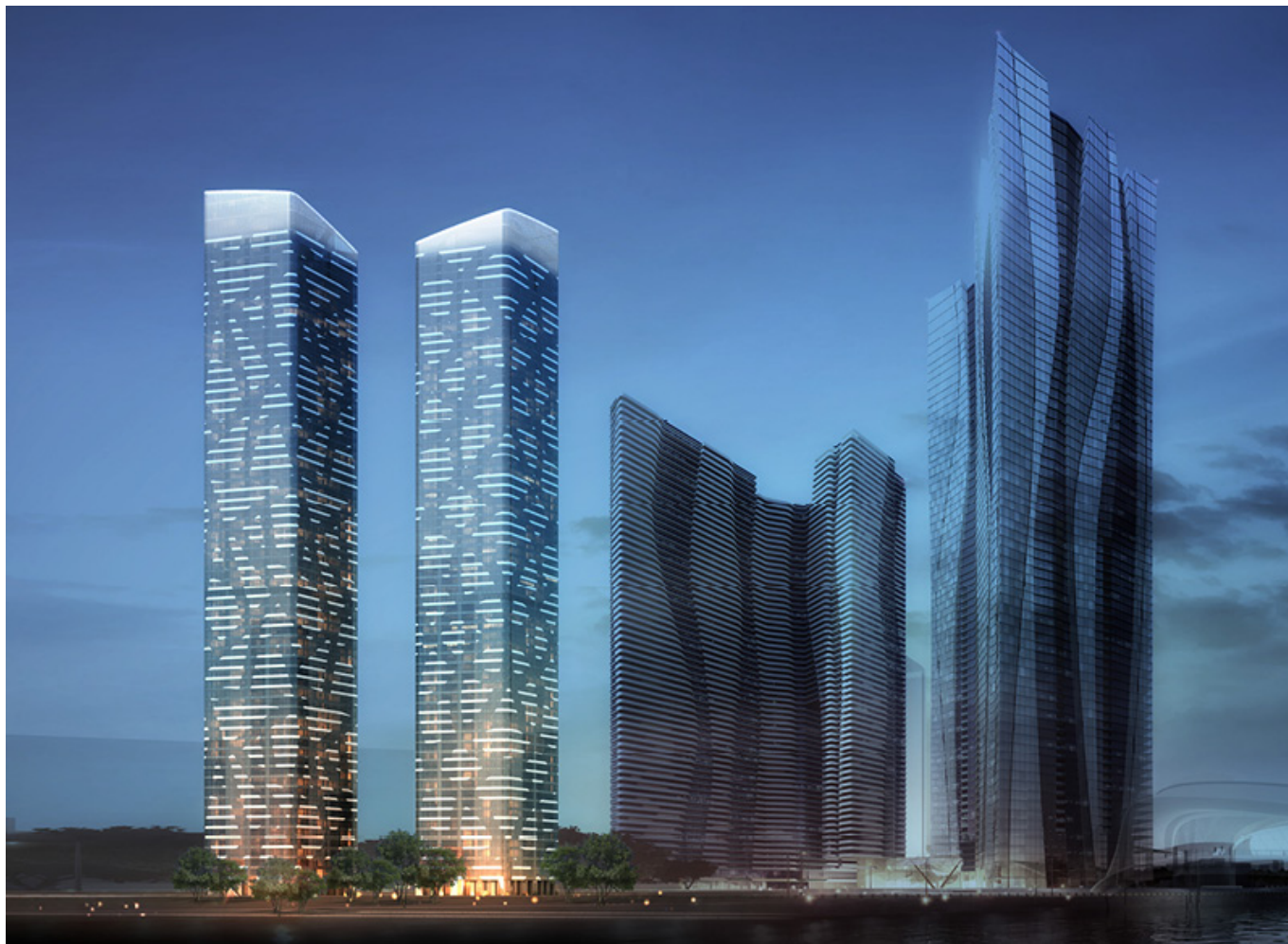
But back to Chengdu.



Chengdu Apartment buildings.

A perfectly stunning number of clusters of apartment buildings like these swarm on the horizon. The only round-eye I met who lived in one said that her apartment was quite nice.

The first thing we noticed in the city was the enormous scale of everything. Buildings downtown were huge. The elevated highways everywhere were huge. The numbers of people were huge. There were literally hundreds of hugely tall apartment buildings. The principle seemed to be that if you have too many people to spread them out, stack them up. Said a Chinese guide we hired, they weren't there twenty years ago.



Chengdu skyline.

Conspicuous to both Violeta and me was evidence of Intelligent Design.

Chengdu clearly did not evolve randomly as cities do in the West. Somebody thought about things beforehand.

The overhead highways kept heavy traffic flowing.

Very wide sidewalks downtown made pedestrianism pleasant. The subway was nothing special but well designed to be easy to use even if you don't know how. (Well, it does have sliding glass doors to keep you away from the tracks until the train comes. This way, you can't throw things onto the tracks, such as your mother-in-law.)



Chengdu nature integrated apartments.

A characteristic of the Chinese is that there are lots of them.

In a country that thinks it is communist, or pretends it is to save face in case you notice that it isn't, you might expect horrible architecture. You know, like the awful Stalin Gothic of Moscow.

Or Franco's mausoleum that looks to have been designed by someone channeling Albert Speer.

Actually no.

(Except maybe sorta for the huge apartment buildings, mentioned above, that cluster together in sometimes groups of twelve that could hold the population of Guatemala).

Thing is, the Chinese have a well-developed aesthetic sense, at least in the visual realm (not so hot musically, and Beijing opera is a crime against humanity).

Somebody, which means the government, said that considerable green space would be left, and it was.



Plants are everywhere. It's a green revolution that began two decades ago.

Planters with (unsurprisingly) plants in them are everywhere, and patches of what look like manicured forest. The result is curious. You can sit in cool shady woods a few yards from an enormous overhead highway.



Like most Chinese cities, except the Westernized cities, plants are everywhere. Not only planted, but maintained by an army of caretakers.

Communism, which China once had, pretty much forbids religion, so I wondered what we would find in the faith line.

Buddhists.

We visited Buddhist temples, meticulously maintained, with worshipers, mostly women, obviously worshipping.

How was this, I asked my round-eyed friend.

Well, he said, Christianity was strongly disapproved as being Western, but the government was nervous about public reaction to a crackdown on Budd-

hism. So they decided that Buddhism wasn't a religion, see, but Chinese culture, and thus OK.

I don't know whether this is true, but thought it a nicely practical waffle.



Living in an apartment within the Chengdu city.

Huge.

Here we go again. Chengdu has what it says is the world's largest building, 1.5 million square meters.

This is the Global Center.

It is the damndest thing I have ever seen, maybe.



The Chengdu Global Center.

I suspect it was built to overcome an international short-man's complex.

I bet it did, too.

It was like going into the VAB at Canaveral, unlimited space, with hotels, stores, offices, wide open space. But—the aesthetic thing again—it was wonderfully colorful and just—"gorgeous" comes to mind.

It was not designed by corporate in New Jersey.



Inside of the Chengdu Global Center. There is more than just a mall here. There is a complete Disney-land style park, and water park, and amusement park as well.

To prove that China has reached American levels of mild lunacy: we passed an Alienware store—high-end gaming computers—with a crowd of Chinese looking at a screen on which, somewhere, a video game was being played. The announcer sounded as excited as a Latin American covering a hotly contested soccer match:

"Womenhau...
wangjile!..*wangjile!*
mijyou!MIJYOU!
woshrhenhau!..*YANGGWEIDZE...*"

in a rising shriek.

I couldn't understand a word of it, but the involvement reminded me of when Mexico beat Germany in the World Cup.

More traditional, in the suburbs. Good food, nice people. Shamelessly showing off, I dredged up the decaying corpse of my ancient Mandarin, “Ching ni, geiwo liang ping pijyou, hau bu hou.”

Ordering beer is the main purpose of any language.

Conclusion

Check out the site at the link above. Give them some visitor hits, ok? Great stuff, don't ya all think?

I went to Chengdu back in 2013, and yeah. That's what it's like. Pretty much. But for me, I have become accustomed to all this stuff, and like most Chinese, I don't really think too much about it.

But, to someone who hasn't a clue as to what a “working-class” City in China looks like, it's pretty much a surprise. Most Americans get the picture of Detroit, or Baltimore, or a Kerr-McGee plant in Trona, California.



Home for sale in Trona.

You see, while America was squandering trillions of dollars blowing up mud huts, and shooting goat herders with ultra-expensive weapons systems, the rest of the world was spending the money on domestic needs. China has taken that money and invested it in people, families, culture and society.

And you can see the result.

Sure beats a smouldering hole in the desert floor!

All you need to do is turn of the American propaganda box, and get an airline ticket and visit for yourself. Use your own two eyes. Check it all out, and come to your own conclusions.

Fred has other posts on his impressions. I will include them in this series.

I hope that you enjoyed this post. If you want to see others of a similar nature, please check out my Happiness Index. Here...

Life & Happiness

Articles & Links

You'll not find

any big banners or popups here talking about cookies and privacy notices. There are no ads on this site (aside from the hosting ads – a necessary evil). Functionally and fundamentally, I just don't make money off of this blog. It is NOT monetized. Finally, I don't track you because I just don't care to.

- You can start reading the articles by going [HERE](#).
- You can visit the Index Page [HERE](#) to explore by article subject.
- You can also ask the author some questions. You can go [HERE](#) to find out how to go about this.
- You can find out more about the author [HERE](#).
- If you have concerns or complaints, you can go [HERE](#).
- If you want to make a donation, you can go [HERE](#).

