

Rick in Beijing

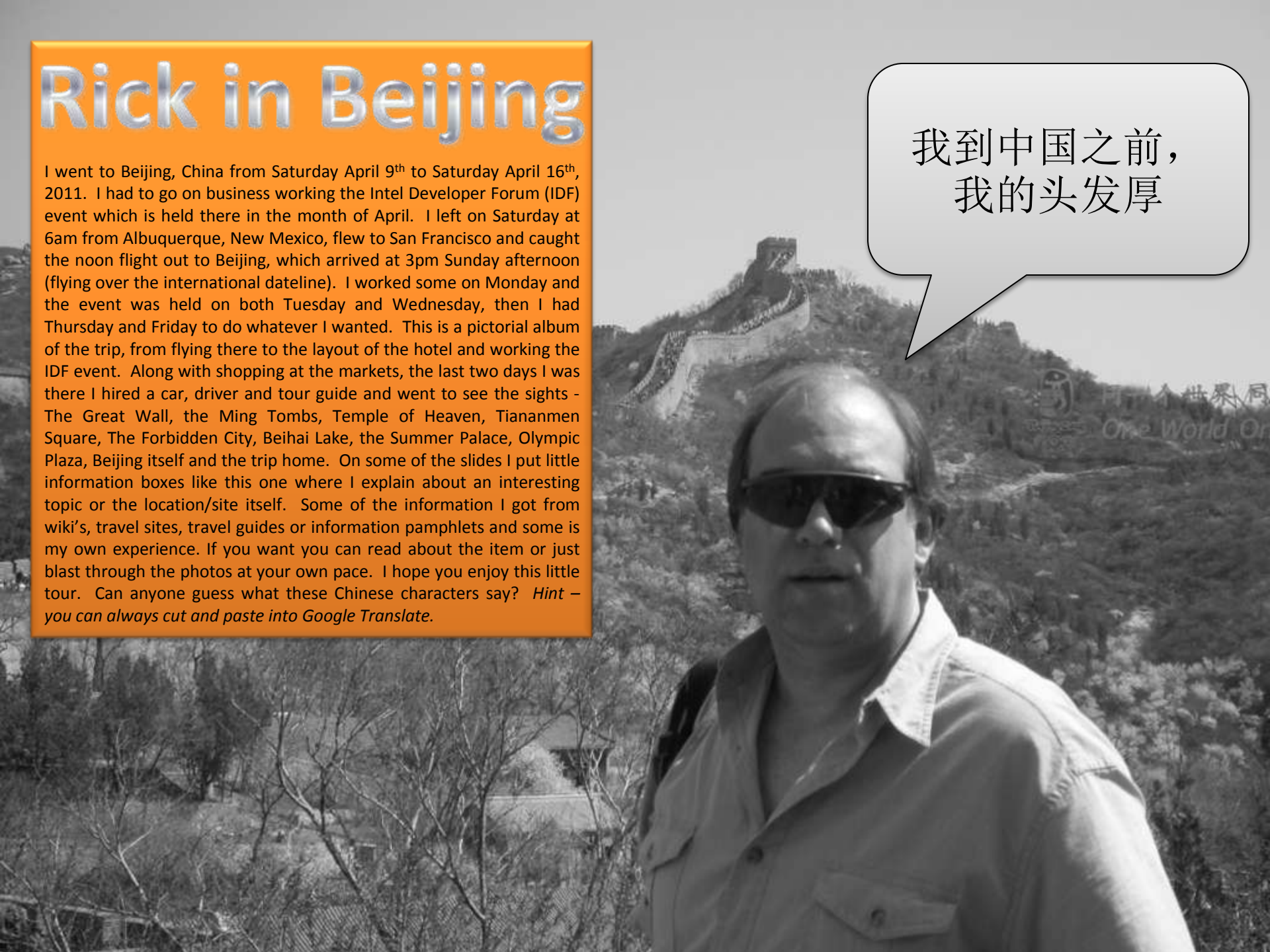
我到中国之前，
我的头发厚



Rick in Beijing

I went to Beijing, China from Saturday April 9th to Saturday April 16th, 2011. I had to go on business working the Intel Developer Forum (IDF) event which is held there in the month of April. I left on Saturday at 6am from Albuquerque, New Mexico, flew to San Francisco and caught the noon flight out to Beijing, which arrived at 3pm Sunday afternoon (flying over the international dateline). I worked some on Monday and the event was held on both Tuesday and Wednesday, then I had Thursday and Friday to do whatever I wanted. This is a pictorial album of the trip, from flying there to the layout of the hotel and working the IDF event. Along with shopping at the markets, the last two days I was there I hired a car, driver and tour guide and went to see the sights - The Great Wall, the Ming Tombs, Temple of Heaven, Tiananmen Square, The Forbidden City, Beihai Lake, the Summer Palace, Olympic Plaza, Beijing itself and the trip home. On some of the slides I put little information boxes like this one where I explain about an interesting topic or the location/site itself. Some of the information I got from wiki's, travel sites, travel guides or information pamphlets and some is my own experience. If you want you can read about the item or just blast through the photos at your own pace. I hope you enjoy this little tour. Can anyone guess what these Chinese characters say? Hint - *you can always cut and paste into Google Translate.*

我到中国之前，
我的头发厚





The 747 has six million parts, 171 miles of wiring, 16 main landing gear tires and two nose landing gear tires, measures 5,600 square feet and has a tail height of 63 feet 8 inches, equivalent to a six-story building. The 747 fleet has logged more than 42 billion nautical miles (101,500 trips from the Earth to the moon and back), has flown 3.5 billion people with a range of approximately 7,713 nautical miles and cruises at 565 mph (although can go past 700 mph with a strong tail wind). The plane can hold 63,500 gallons of fuel at about 5 miles per gallon. The flight from San Francisco to China takes 12 hours (6,000 miles at about 500 mph against a headwind), and 11.5 or so hours to fly back with a strong tail wind. Economy ticket price in the April month timeframe, roundtrip booked and paid well in advance is around \$1,200. Business Class runs \$5,000+ and First Class runs \$9,000+. And the First Class ticket if booked 1 month from now is over \$17,000 (dollars, not RMB/Yuan).

Boeing 747 in San Francisco before take off

Flying in Business Class

I flew economy class, which is basically the same seats you get in any airline to anywhere else – not much room to move, especially when the person in front of you decides to lay back. For an extra \$200 you could get Economy Plus to China, which gives you an extra 5" of space between your knees and the seat in front of you.

Someone's Personal Experience in Business Class – “It isn't often that you get a chance to visit China once in your life and fulfilling that dream has always been high on my personal bucket list! My wife Phyllis and I and a group of good friends went on for vacation, about 14hrs to Beijing. What I didn't know was that we would be flying by way of the North Pole! Shortest route to China from New York. We couldn't think of a better way to evaluate the whole experience than by flying business class. We were all placed together in the upper deck of the behemoth-like aircraft. There was only about thirty or so seats above the lower cabin just a few steps up a small stairway. “

“Riding high in the upper deck of the jumbo jet is quite the experience. With plenty of room to sit it was like having your own private space separated by stairs from the rest of the plane. Dinner would start soon after take-off and was ample in portion size - Sweet Crab Salad on Fresh Bok Choy was somewhat of a standout and this was followed by a main course of Shrimp and Scallops with Ginger, Spring Onions and Garlic. Dessert of Eli's Crème Caramel Cheesecake took the prize for the most outstanding selection. United offered eight wines, two champagnes and a number of aperitifs, cocktails, liqueurs and beers, including Tsing Tao on this flight. Before we departed United offered us access to the Red Carpet Club at JFK, we received priority baggage handling. UA's business class resulted in many hours of comfortable, restful sleep in the fully adjustable ergonomic seats with lumbar support and leg rest for us. I got a good solid eight hours lying almost flat with my own personal reading light and video screen. The individual video screen offered nine channels, plus XM™ Satellite Radio and noise-reducing headsets.”

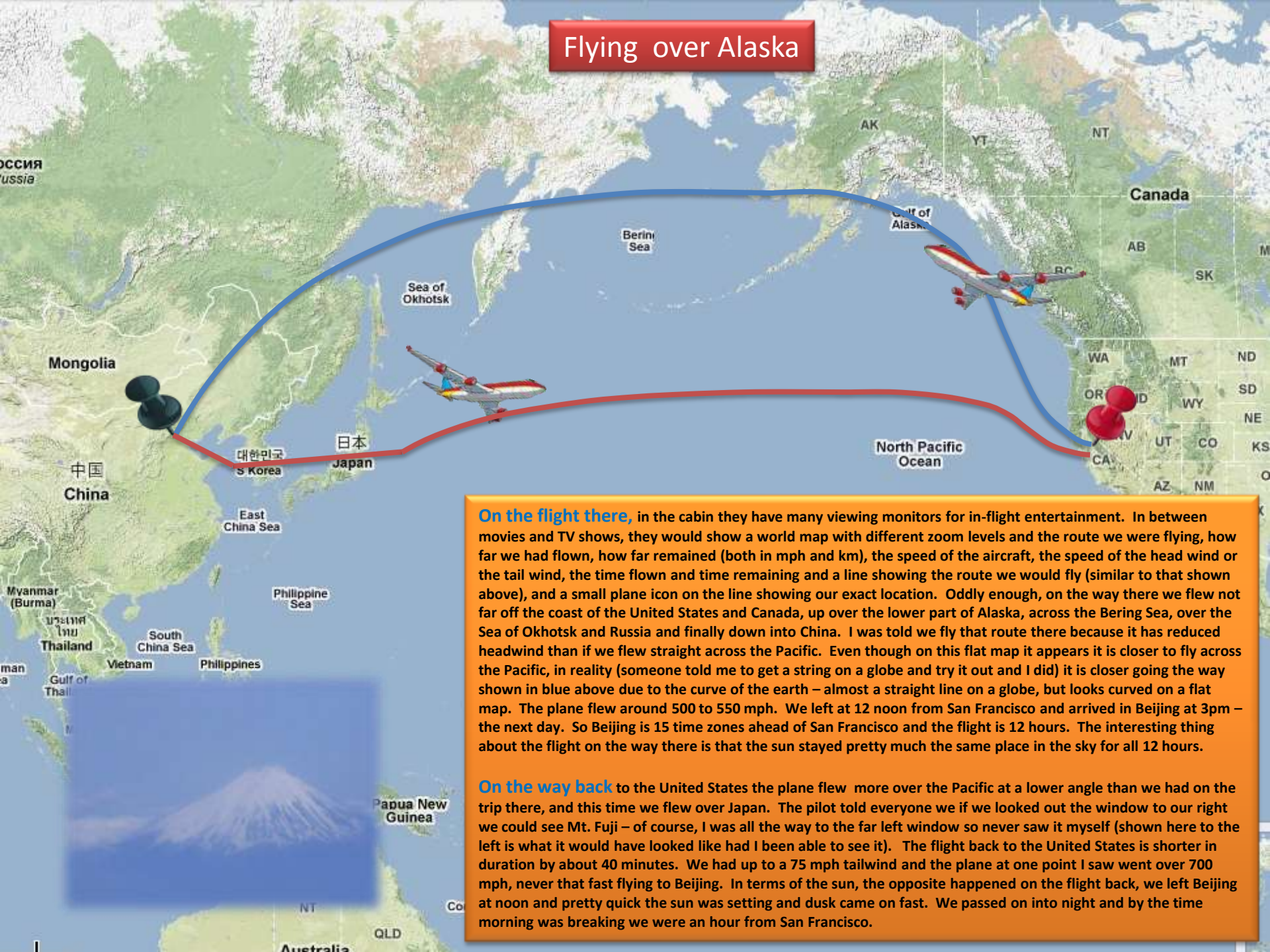


Flying in First Class

I didn't find a story for first class, but here's some screen shots. I figure it would be like business class, just more private and lush. There's different versions on First Class based on the airline, how often they upgrade, etc. These are the most common images for United Airlines First Class service. **First Class** features full flat suites, with Audio/Video On Demand, personal screens, and in-seat emPower jacks for personal electronics.

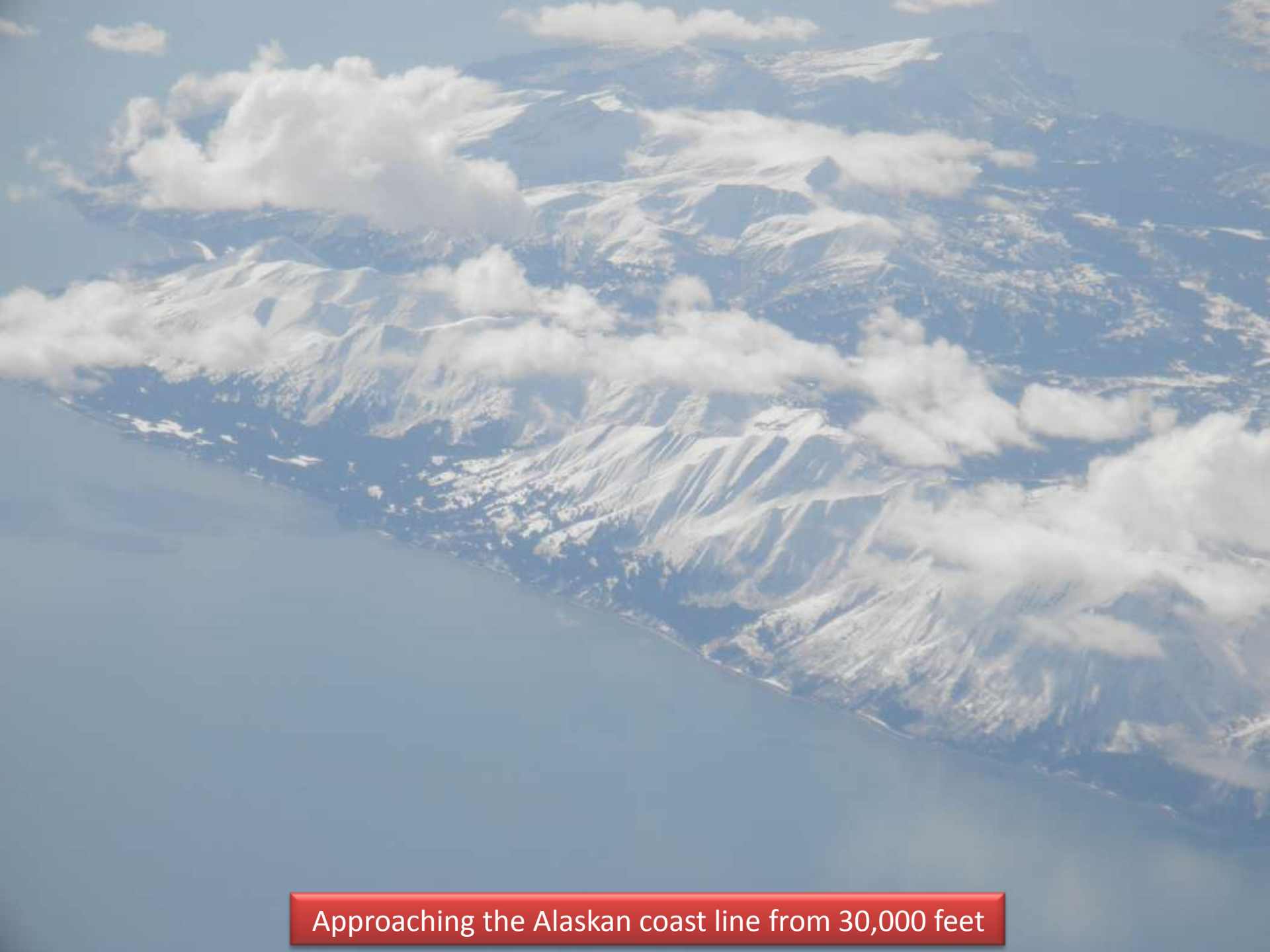


Flying over Alaska



On the flight there, in the cabin they have many viewing monitors for in-flight entertainment. In between movies and TV shows, they would show a world map with different zoom levels and the route we were flying, how far we had flown, how far remained (both in mph and km), the speed of the aircraft, the speed of the head wind or the tail wind, the time flown and time remaining and a line showing the route we would fly (similar to that shown above), and a small plane icon on the line showing our exact location. Oddly enough, on the way there we flew not far off the coast of the United States and Canada, up over the lower part of Alaska, across the Bering Sea, over the Sea of Okhotsk and Russia and finally down into China. I was told we fly that route there because it has reduced headwind than if we flew straight across the Pacific. Even though on this flat map it appears it is closer to fly across the Pacific, in reality (someone told me to get a string on a globe and try it out and I did) it is closer going the way shown in blue above due to the curve of the earth – almost a straight line on a globe, but looks curved on a flat map. The plane flew around 500 to 550 mph. We left at 12 noon from San Francisco and arrived in Beijing at 3pm – the next day. So Beijing is 15 time zones ahead of San Francisco and the flight is 12 hours. The interesting thing about the flight on the way there is that the sun stayed pretty much the same place in the sky for all 12 hours.

On the way back to the United States the plane flew more over the Pacific at a lower angle than we had on the trip there, and this time we flew over Japan. The pilot told everyone we if we looked out the window to our right we could see Mt. Fuji – of course, I was all the way to the far left window so never saw it myself (shown here to the left is what it would have looked like had I been able to see it). The flight back to the United States is shorter in duration by about 40 minutes. We had up to a 75 mph tailwind and the plane at one point I saw went over 700 mph, never that fast flying to Beijing. In terms of the sun, the opposite happened on the flight back, we left Beijing at noon and pretty quick the sun was setting and dusk came on fast. We passed on into night and by the time morning was breaking we were an hour from San Francisco.



Approaching the Alaskan coast line from 30,000 feet



Alaskan coast line from 30,000 feet



Four different
shots of Alaska





Zoom 1

Zoom 3

Zoom 2

Zoom 4



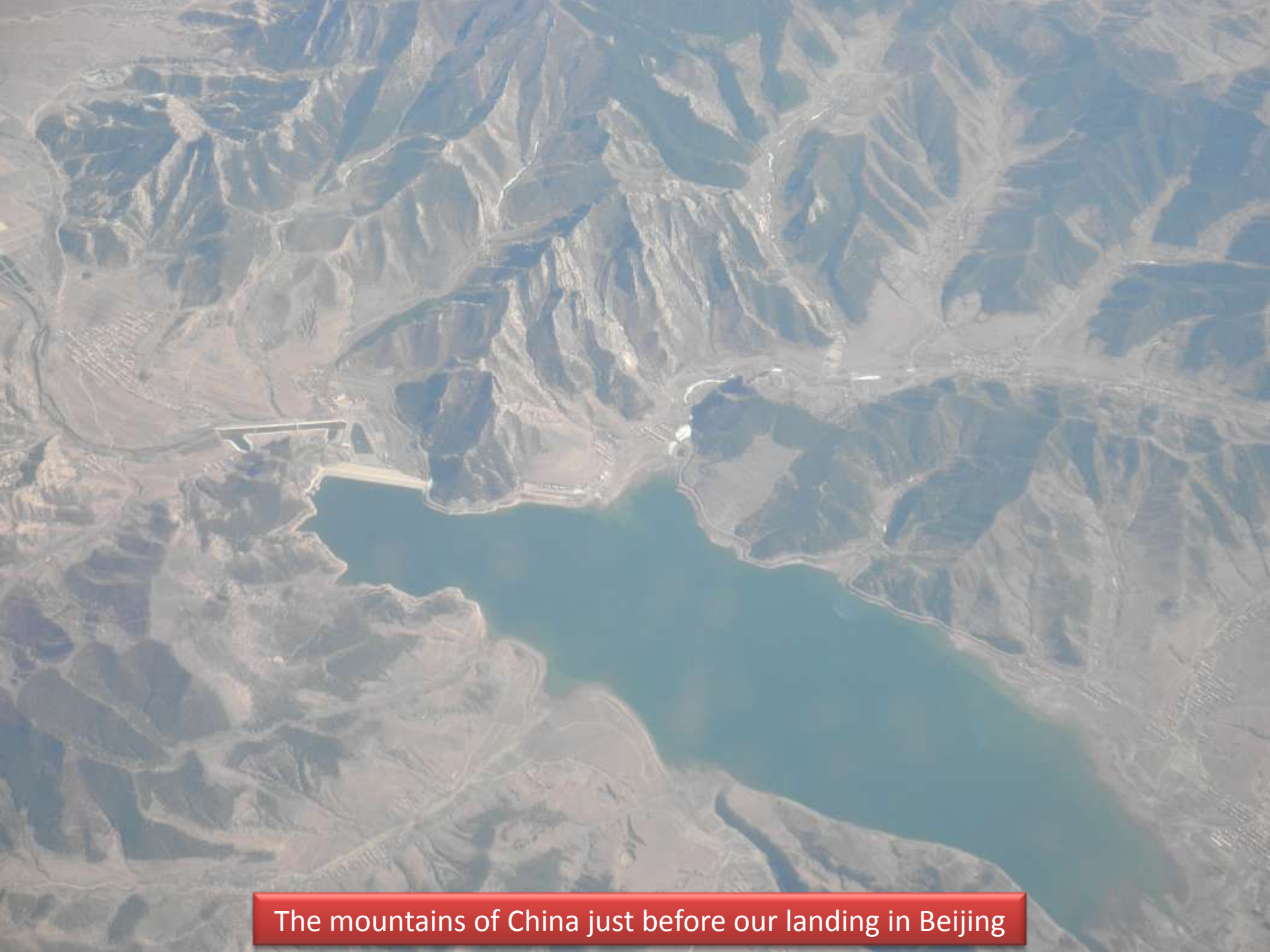


Snow covered mountains over Alaska

Spring in Beijing

The terrain to Beijing looked very brown and dry. Throughout the spring months (April to May) temperatures in Beijing rise quickly day to day. They also vary greatly between day and night; but when I was there the temperatures ran from 68°F to 75°F during the day, with the lows at night in the low 50's. Spring is a windy, dry season, frequented by heavy sandstorms. Cold winds are also frequent throughout spring months. In early spring, the temperature may drop abruptly. Sandstorms hit Beijing frequently in spring and may delay trips. I'm not sure if the haze I show later in the slides are sand storms or just pollution – the city of Beijing has an estimated 22 million people, and that was as of 2009. The terrain shown here is also very different from the United States – there's no patch work quilt type shapes of circles and squares that I would typically see flying over New Mexico and Texas.

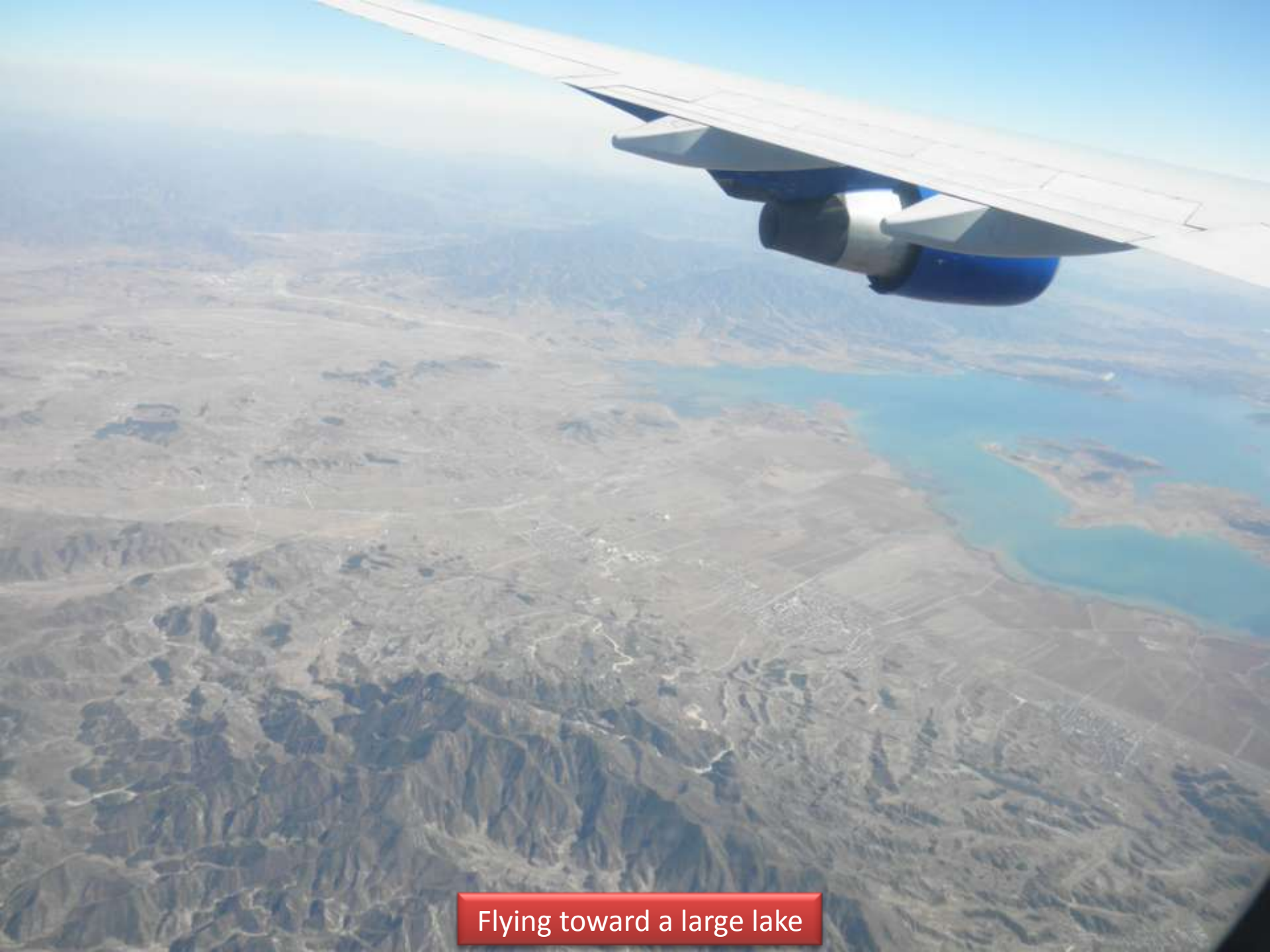
Flying over China – this appears to be the dry season



The mountains of China just before our landing in Beijing



Fire down below in the mountains of China just outside of Beijing



Flying toward a large lake





Shot of community outside of Beijing – many buildings had red or blue roofs



InterContinental Beijing Beichen stands out for its scenic location next to the National Olympic Stadium and the dramatic Water Cube. Located at the edge of the Olympic Forest Park, the hotel is interconnected with the China National Convention Center (CNCC), one of Asia's largest convention centers.

InterContinental Beijing Beichen Hotel



View of the Lobby Lounge from the spiral staircase



Spiral staircase in the hotel



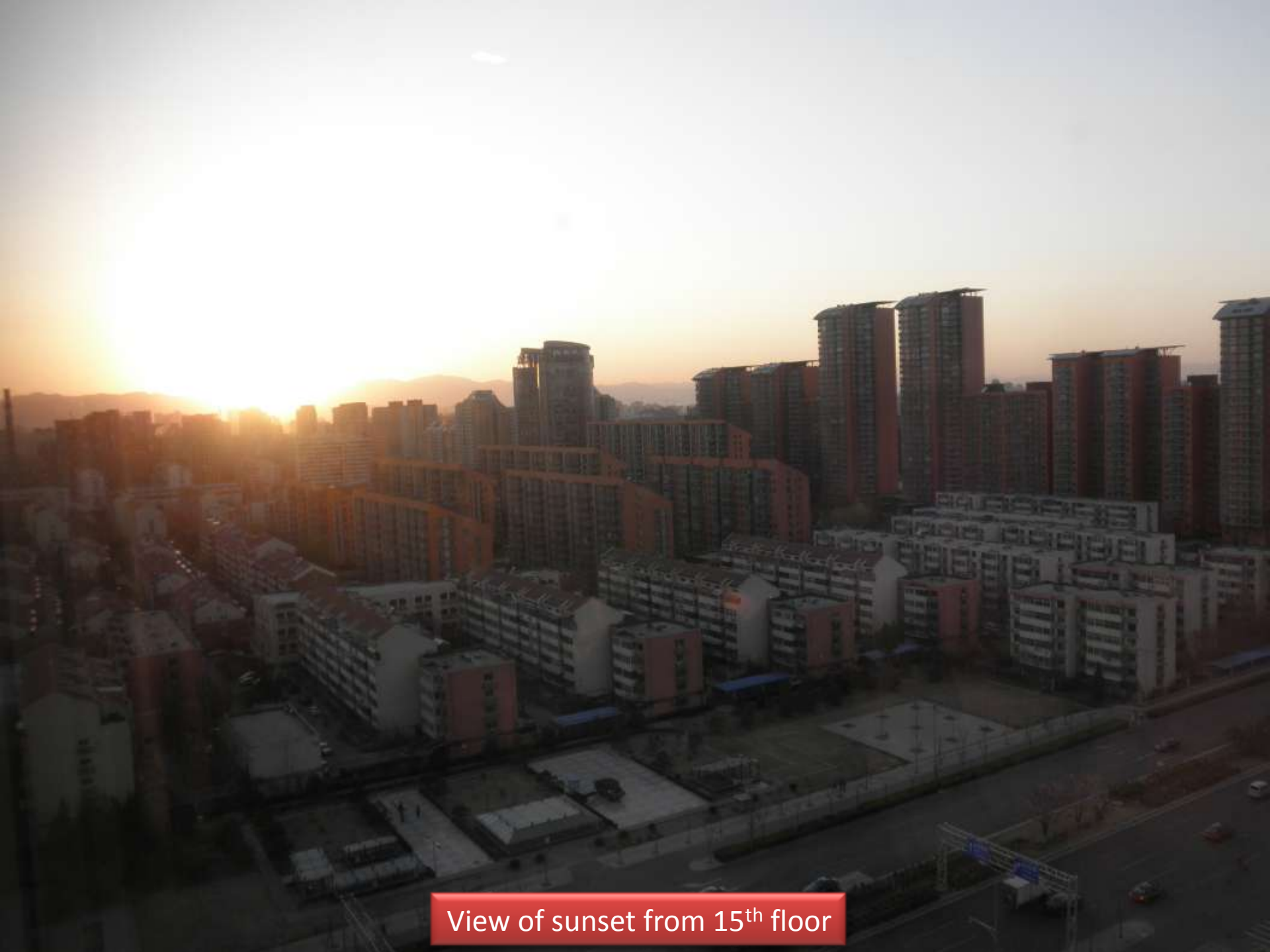
Inside the hotel room



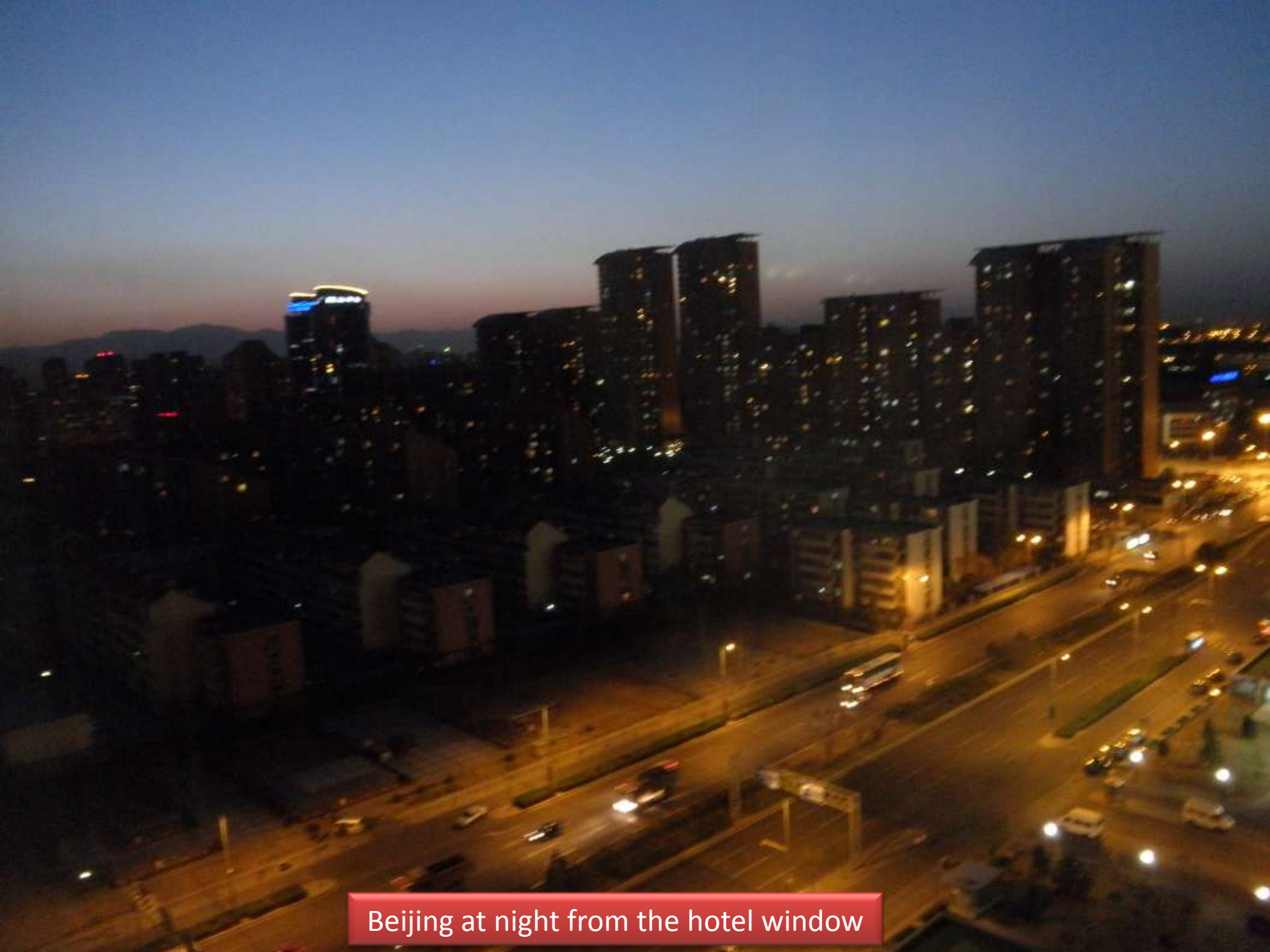
Shot of the marble bathroom and lighted mirror



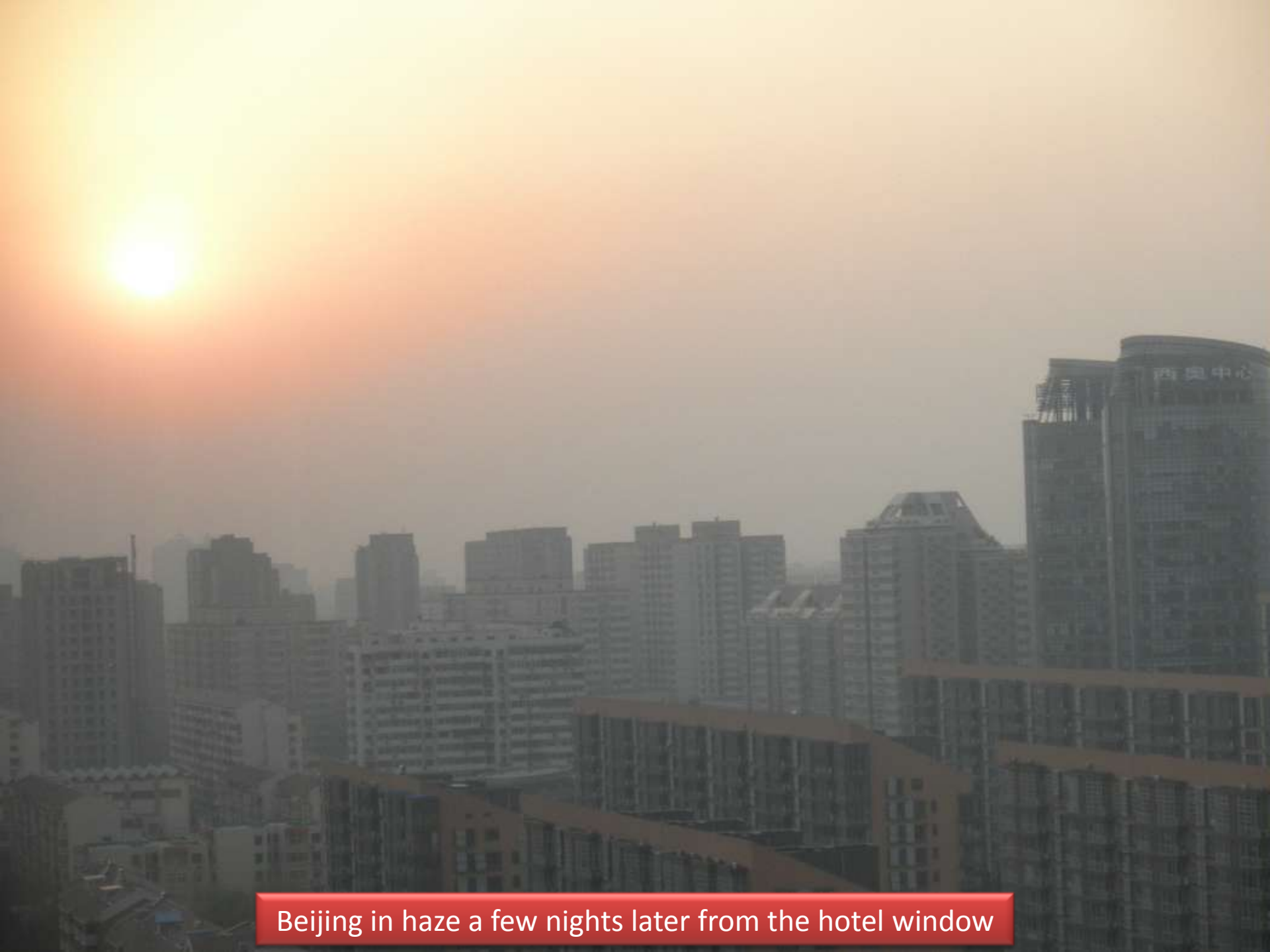
Looking out from 15th floor



View of sunset from 15th floor



Beijing at night from the hotel window



Beijing in haze a few nights later from the hotel window



Outside shot of the convention center where IDF was held



马上行动，
再创未来

It's time to
change the
future. Again.



举手之间，际会未来
Shake hands with the futu



IDF 2011
Beijing

Intel Developer Forum (IDF) is the premier technology event drawing professionals and companies who are actively directing where technology is going. At IDF you get insight into the dramatic benefits of efficient and powerful new Intel® processor technologies that can help make your next technology perform at higher levels.

Day one of Intel IDF in Beijing looking out over registration



Hear the latest technology announcements firsthand at the IDF Keynotes, attend IDF to learn details on the latest processor technologies, expand skills and knowledge by taking part in a wide variety of technical sessions or participate in demonstrations of the latest technology in the Technology Showcase. Does this sound like an advertisement? It's because it is.

More IDF views of Advanced Technology Zone

3D TV without the glasses



This is the place for hands-on demonstrations of the latest breakthroughs throughout the technology industry. This is a unique opportunity to interact, share ideas, and collaborate with technology leaders and innovators. Technology Communities are also represented throughout the Technology Showcase.

IDF Technology Showcase where vendors show their wares





IDF sign and Beijing in a haze outside onto Olympic Plaza



Street with several Chinese restaurants and shops



View of the Chinese restaurant

Having lunch with someone from the IDF event. Cindy lives in Beijing and knows all the right places to go and how to get around. Apparently they love coke in China (or at least Beijing) because it is everywhere. Here on the table is Beijing Duck, Kung Pao Chicken, rice and green beans. This Chinese Food tasted different from the American variety I was used to; this was more spicy and tart tasting.



Cindy at an authentic Chinese restaurant having me sample what they have

In February 2009, a 30-storey building, which was to have housed a theatre, studios and a five-star Mandarin Oriental Hotel to open later in '09 was almost completely destroyed by the blaze, which took six hours to extinguish (it was one of the Beijing Olympics' signature buildings, designed by the leading Dutch architect, Rem Koolhaas, and engineered by the British firm Arup). China Central Television itself hosted a fireworks display for staff on site for the Lantern Festival, which marks the first full moon of the Chinese New Year. The fire was the most dramatic seen in Beijing for years. The fireworks used were stronger than those normally on sale. Owners of the property ignored policemen's warnings that such fireworks were not allowed. No-one was inside the building at the time but one fireman died and six others were injured. The main building, known locally as "Big Pants" because its two leaning, upside down 'L's are said to resemble a man hitching his trousers, was undamaged.



Building burned by fire during Chinese New Year next to odd architecture

Ring Roads – As can be seen in the street sign, Beijing has Ring Roads. Beijing is one of the very few cities to possess multiple ring roads (or beltways). The 1st Ring Road no longer exists under that name. Actually Beijing's first ring road, the 2nd Ring Road was built in the 1980s and expanded in the 1990s. It now forms a rectangular loop around central Beijing, an area that is roughly equivalent to the old city. The 3rd Ring Road was built in the 1980s and completed in the 1990s. It also is central, as it passes through Beijing's CBD and diplomatic communities. It is the ring road closest to the city to be directly interlinked with expressways. The 4th Ring Road was completed in 2001, around 5 miles from the center of Beijing. The 5th ring road is further distant (around 6.2 miles) from central Beijing, and links the suburban areas. It navigates through very barren land in the south before heading west. Due to its proximity to Olympic venues, it has been nicknamed the "Olympic Avenue". At present the most remote ring road from central Beijing (around 10 to 11 miles), the 6th Ring Road was built in the 2000s and has just recently been completed. The 7th Ring Road plan exist only in the minds of urban projectors, it is likely that Beijing's 7th Ring Road will be built as the city's first expressway ring road which transcends the boundaries of Beijing municipality.

English Names – you will notice on the road signs they have Chinese and English. If you were in China well before the 2008 Olympics you would have seen only Chinese; in preparation for the Olympics, English was added to the road signs.



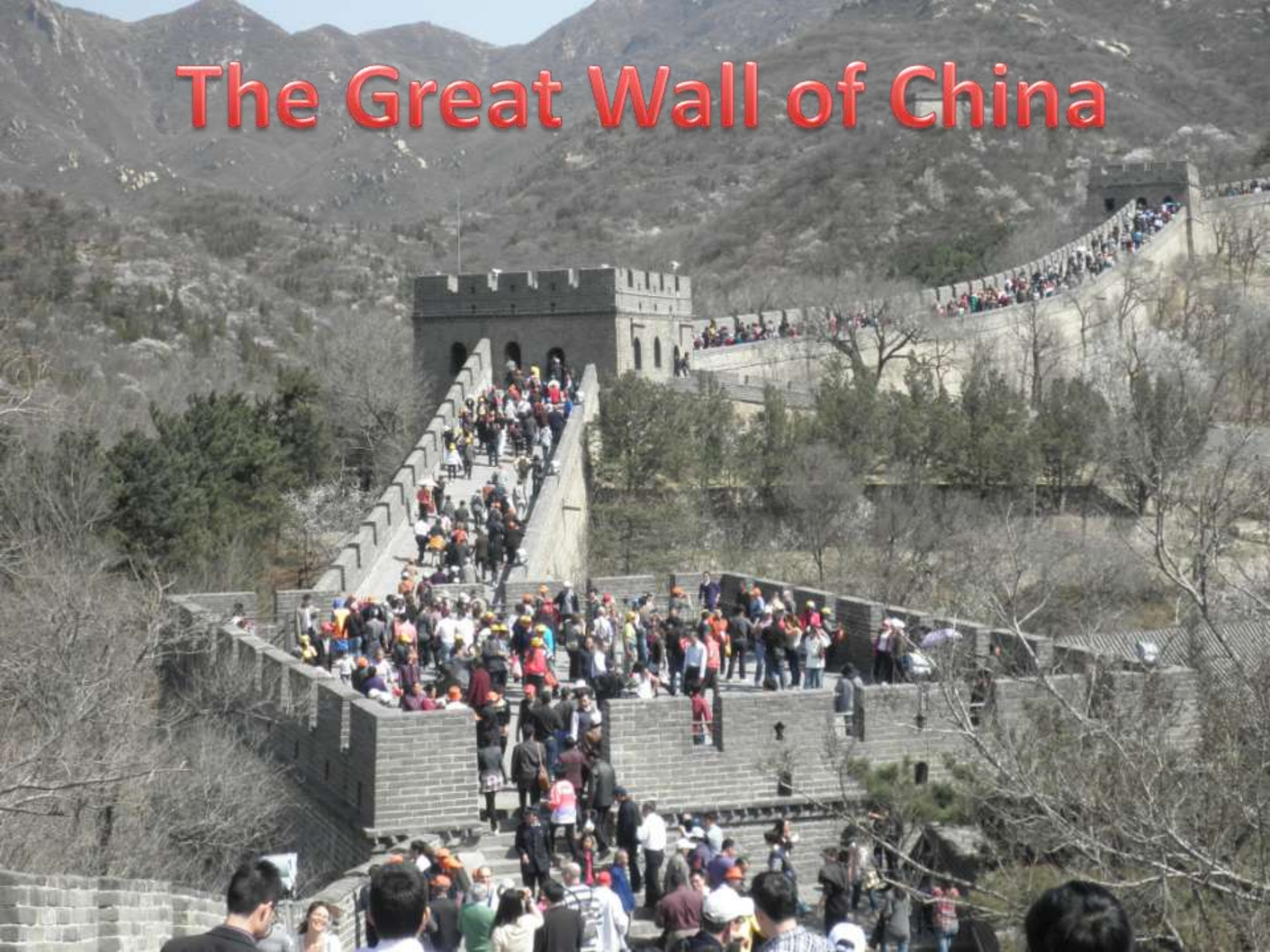
Road signs on Beijing freeway

Silk Market (or Silk Street) is a shopping center in Beijing that accommodates over 1,700 retail vendors, notorious among international tourists for their wide selection of counterfeit designer brand apparels. It attracts approximately 20,000 visitors daily (from 9am to 9pm) on weekdays and between 50,000 and 60,000 on weekends. This 35,000-square-meter complex houses 1,700 retail vendors and over 3,000 salespeople spread over seven floors with three levels of basements. Many of the stalls have, over the years, gained local and international reputation for selling counterfeit luxury designer brands at relatively-low prices. In addition to selling fashion apparels and accessories such as hats, handbags, shoes, belts, sportswear and silk fabrics like their predecessor, the new Silk Street has introduced traditional Chinese handicrafts, antiques, calligraphy, carpets, table cloths, bed coverings, paintings, hand-knit dresses, toys, electronic gadgets, trinkets, and fine jewelry. Don't ever take there offer for the first price they give you on anything. You go down by at the very least half and often cut down by 80% of what they first asked. So if they ask 100 RMB, you say 10 and move up to about 20 to 40 RMB (rule of thumb). When you start to walk off, they grab you and cut the price further; they will keep doing this. They don't want to let you get away. Most natives do not shop here as they are able to obtain cheaper goods elsewhere. Their favorite saying is "*special price...just for you.*" And if you buy electronics, don't expect them to work, or if they do work, not to work for very long. I bought a 16GB USB Memory Stick that said "Kingston" on the side for a mere \$7. When I tried it out for the first time it took over 3 minutes to copy a small 100kb file.



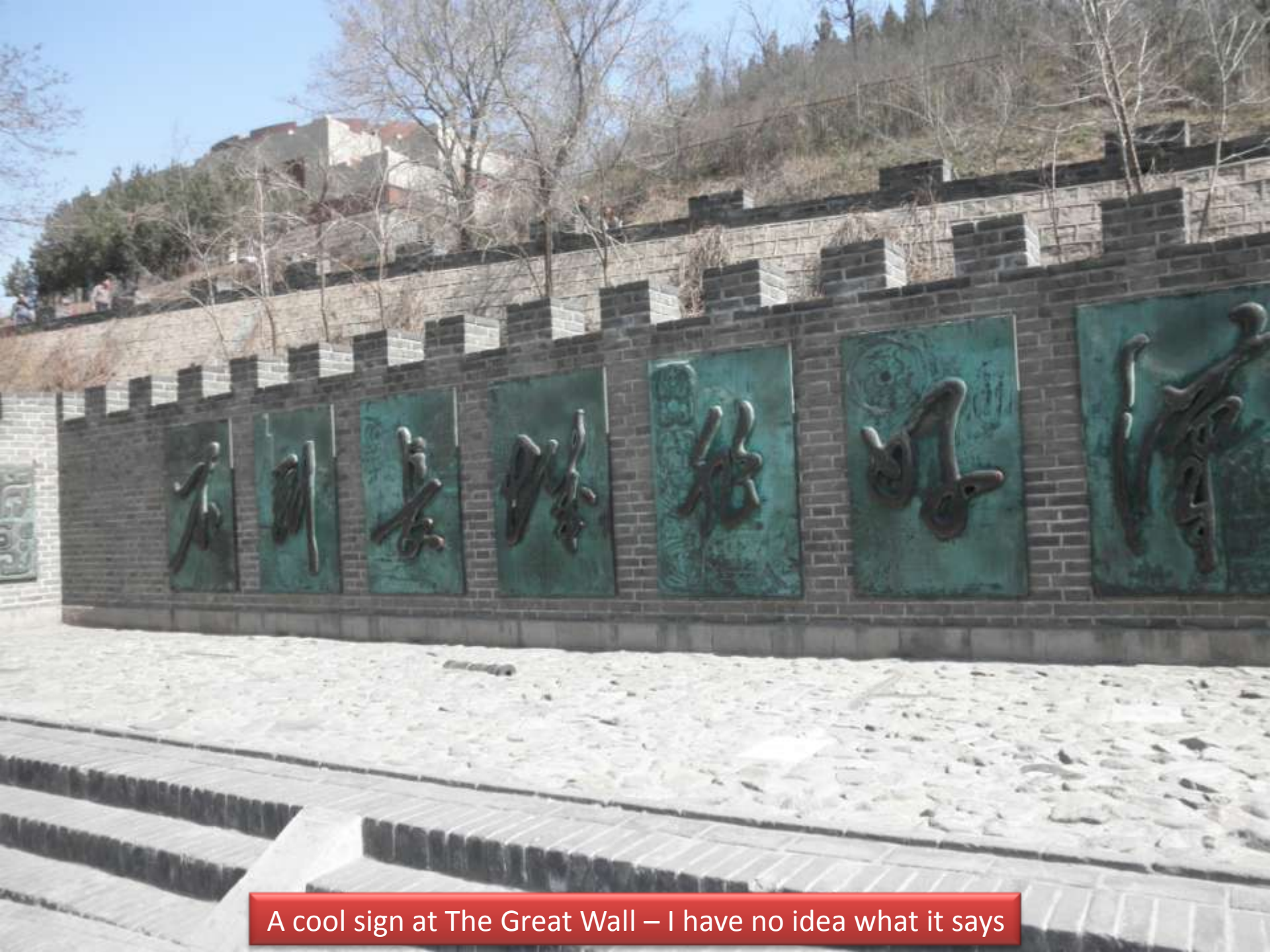
Inside the Silk Market in downtown Beijing

The Great Wall of China





Driving to The Great Wall



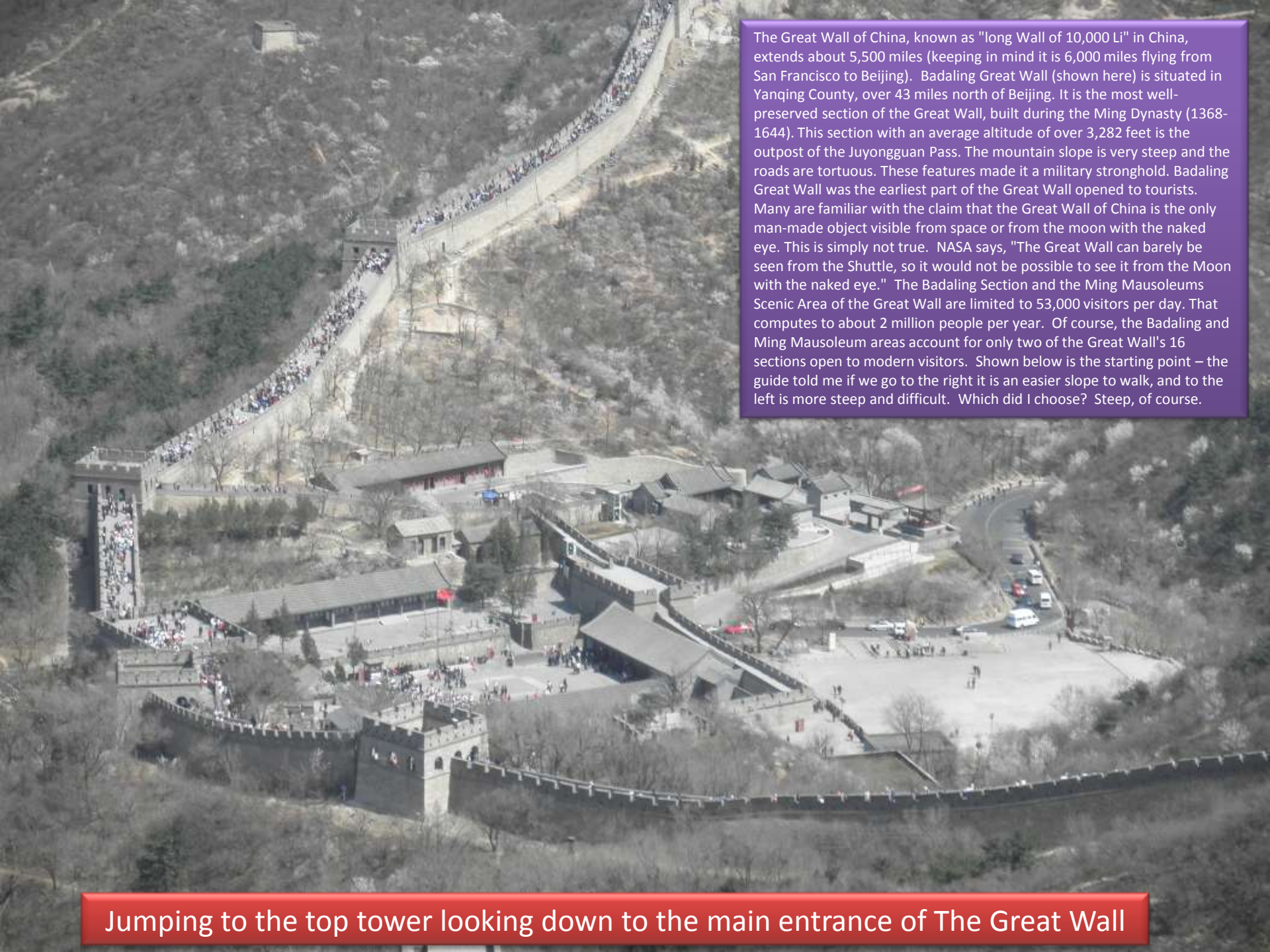
A cool sign at The Great Wall – I have no idea what it says



Walking up to the entrance to The Great Wall – there's a Subway Restaurant up to the left



Buying a ticket to walk The Great Wall



The Great Wall of China, known as "long Wall of 10,000 Li" in China, extends about 5,500 miles (keeping in mind it is 6,000 miles flying from San Francisco to Beijing). Badaling Great Wall (shown here) is situated in Yanqing County, over 43 miles north of Beijing. It is the most well-preserved section of the Great Wall, built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). This section with an average altitude of over 3,282 feet is the outpost of the Juyongguan Pass. The mountain slope is very steep and the roads are tortuous. These features made it a military stronghold. Badaling Great Wall was the earliest part of the Great Wall opened to tourists. Many are familiar with the claim that the Great Wall of China is the only man-made object visible from space or from the moon with the naked eye. This is simply not true. NASA says, "The Great Wall can barely be seen from the Shuttle, so it would not be possible to see it from the Moon with the naked eye." The Badaling Section and the Ming Mausoleums Scenic Area of the Great Wall are limited to 53,000 visitors per day. That computes to about 2 million people per year. Of course, the Badaling and Ming Mausoleum areas account for only two of the Great Wall's 16 sections open to modern visitors. Shown below is the starting point – the guide told me if we go to the right it is an easier slope to walk, and to the left is more steep and difficult. Which did I choose? Steep, of course.

Jumping to the top tower looking down to the main entrance of The Great Wall



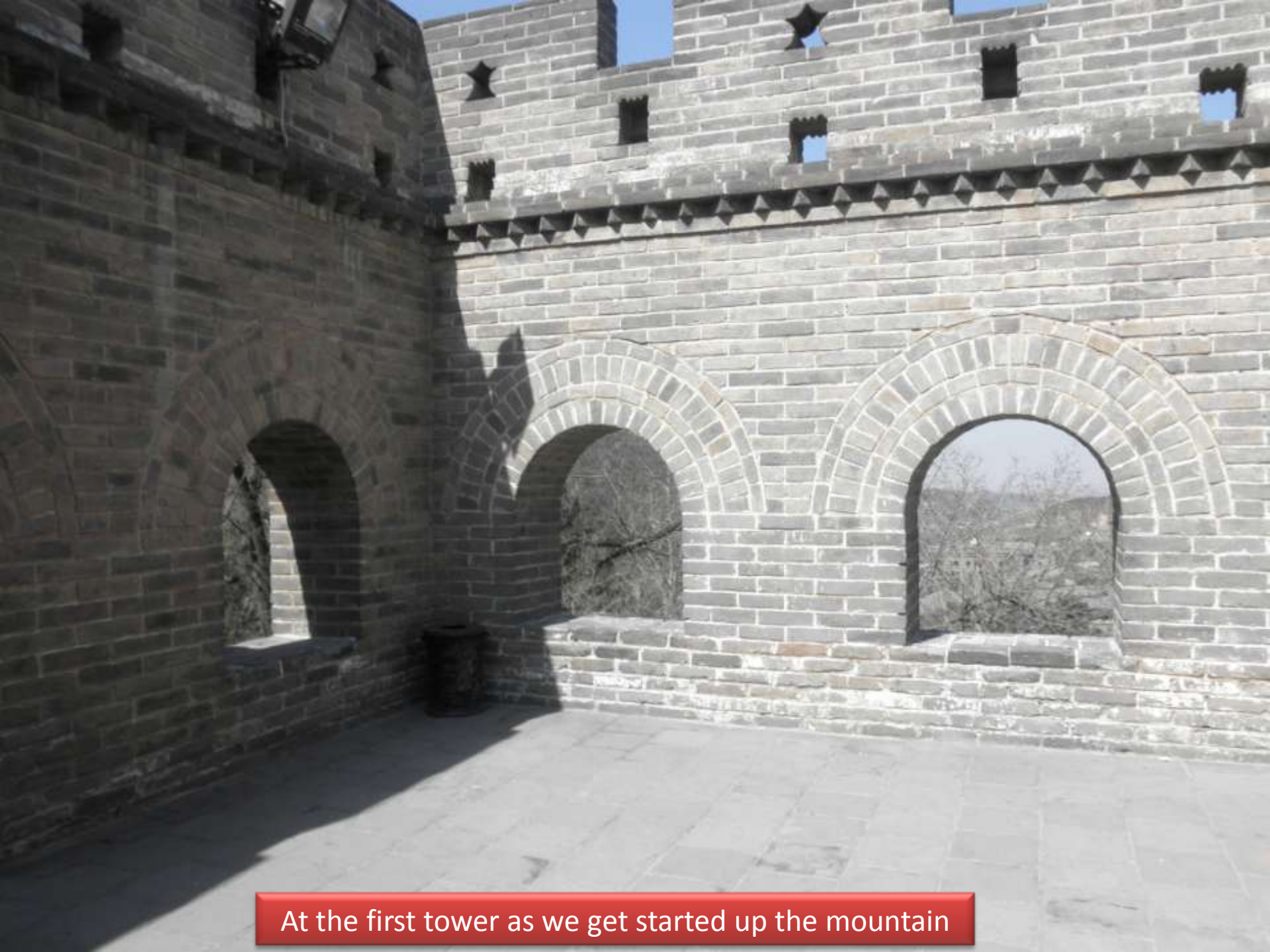
View of the Great Wall



You can see here that I'm visiting China in the dry season. To the left is a photo of what the terrain looks like during the wet season.



More Great Wall from a tall tower



At the first tower as we get started up the mountain



The steps and slope climbing the great wall



The slope can get pretty steep



Looking back over to the other “easy” side of the wall



Hand rails to make it easier – but were designed for people shorter than me



The valley on the other side of the wall



Looking back behind me from where I came



Zooming to the far wall







Looking out from the tower



Tourists inside the top tower

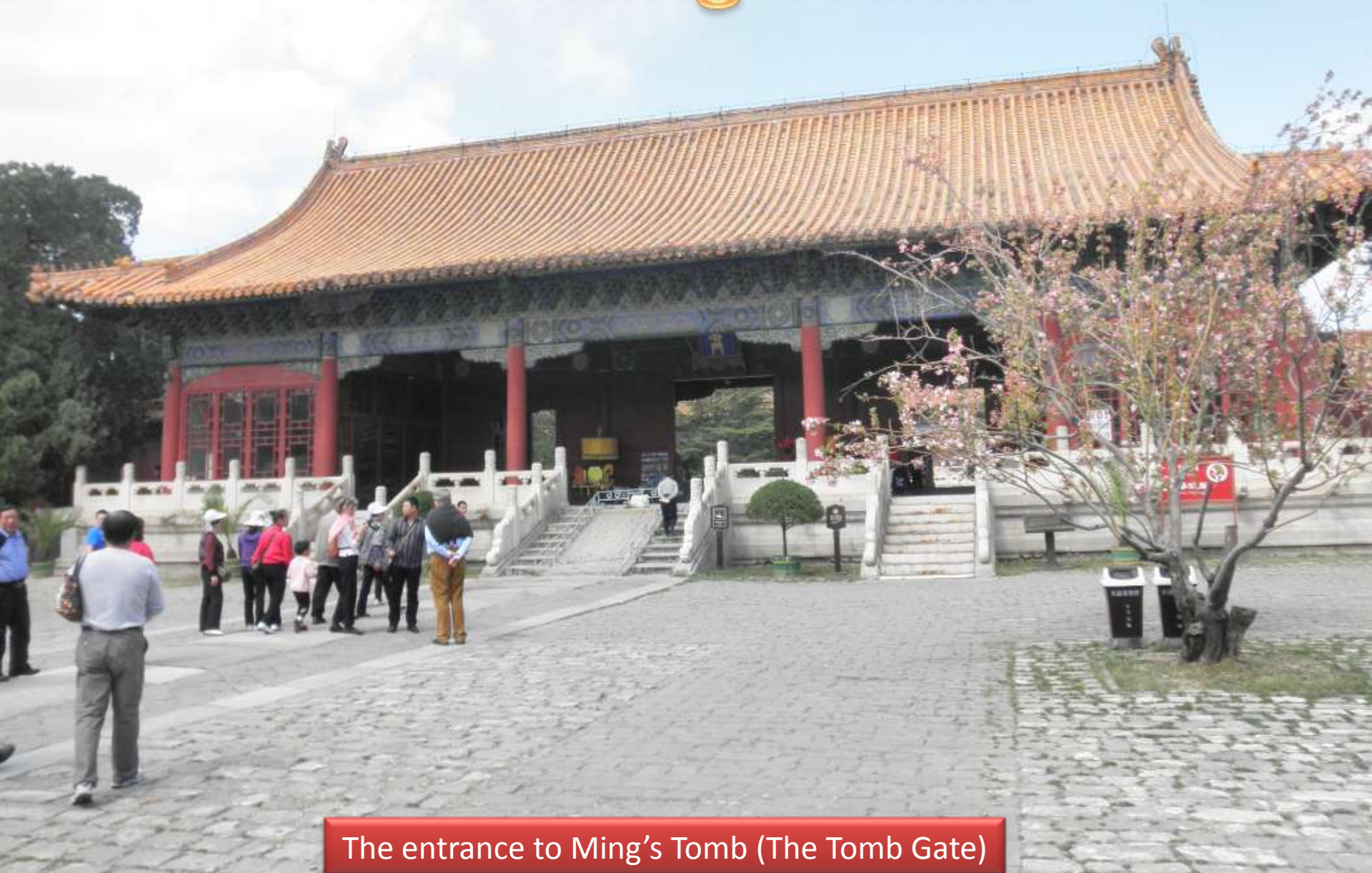


Looking out over the landscape from a high tower





The Ming Tombs



The entrance to Ming's Tomb (The Tomb Gate)



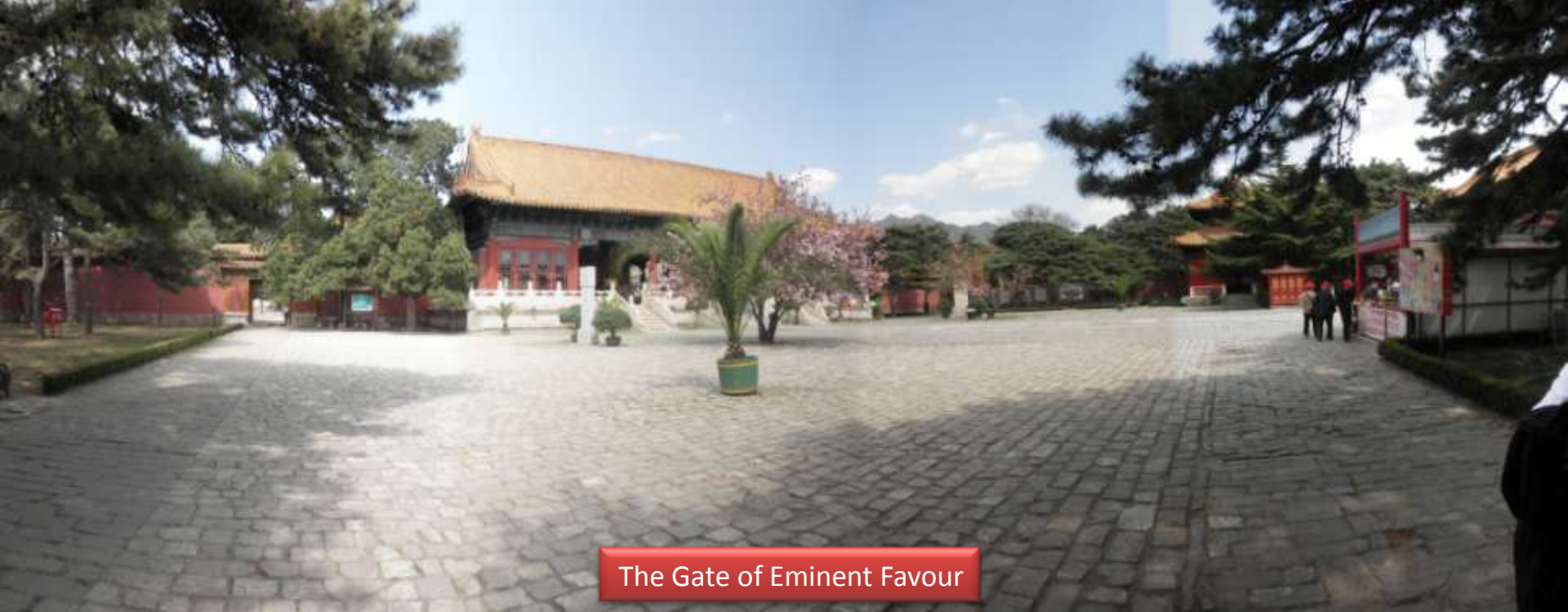
十三陵分布图

THE PICTURE OF MING TOMBS

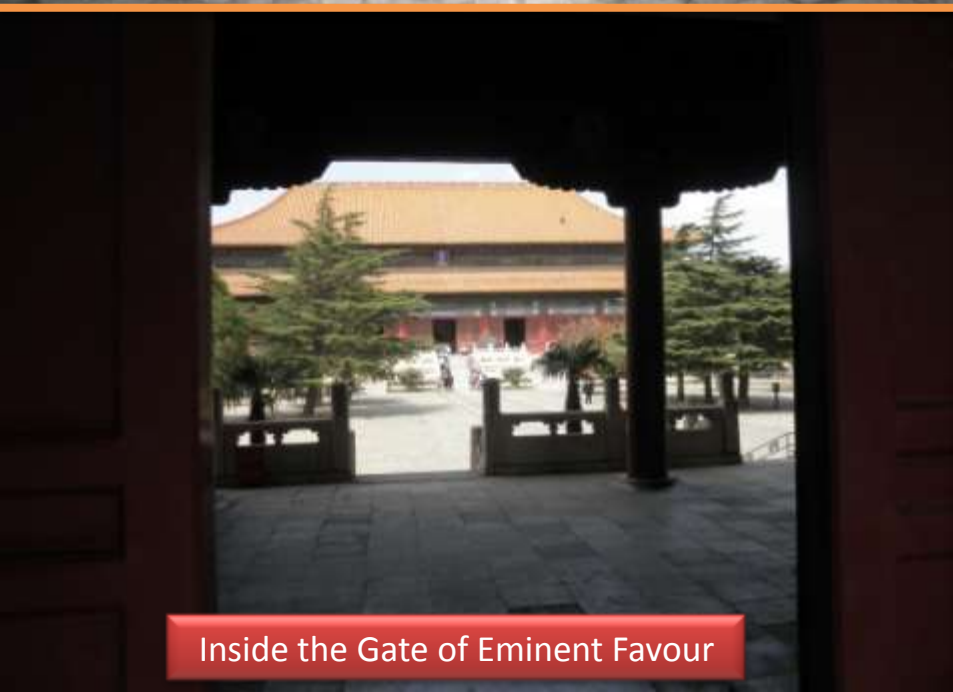


Pictured here is my tour guide who not only knows Chinese but knows all the details of every place we visit. The Ming Tombs are located about 31 miles from Beijing, with 13 emperors buried in a complex that spreads some 15 square miles. Visitors approach the tombs through The Great Red Gate. After passing through the ceremonial entrance gates, visitors walk through the spirit avenue, guarded by 36 statues. Carved baluster caps adorn the terraces surrounding tomb buildings. A series of gates and courtyards form the approach to the tomb burial mound.

Map of all the Ming Tombs along with my guide



The Gate of Eminent Favour



Inside the Gate of Eminent Favour



The Hall of Eminent Favour



Close Up of The Hall of Eminent Favour



Ming himself, but this is not the tomb – it is somewhere in the mountain



Temple Artifacts

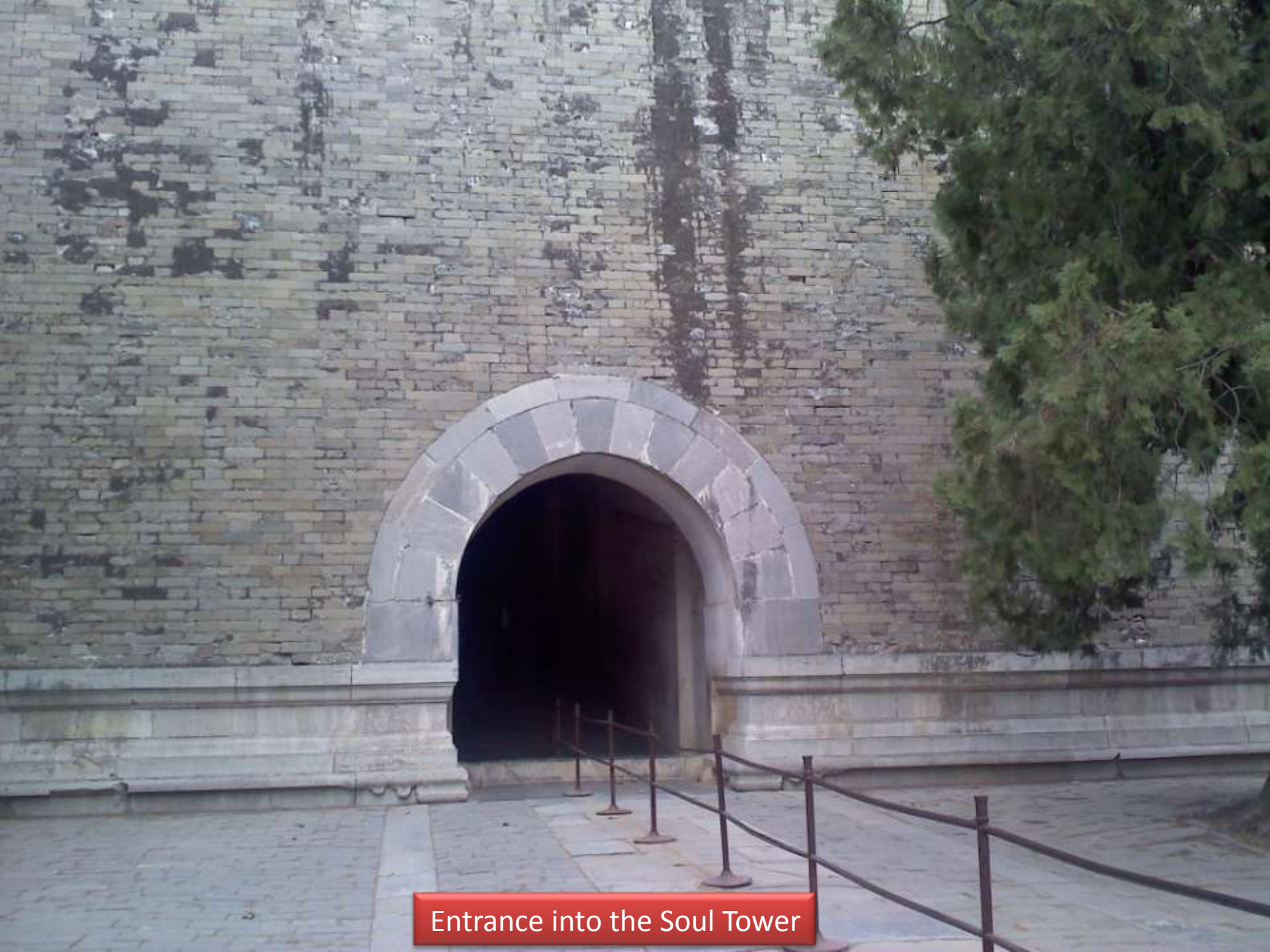




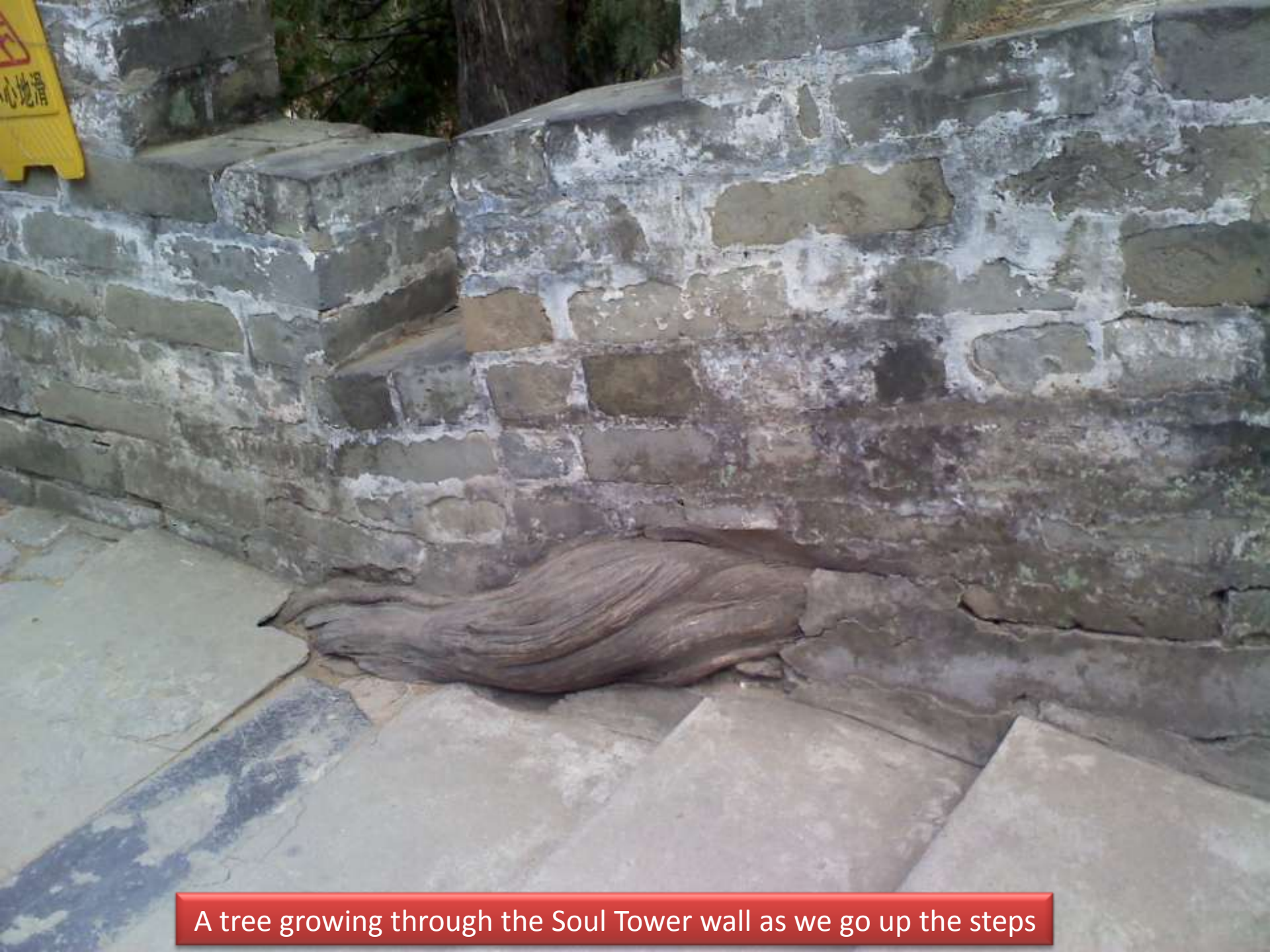
Leaving the hall and going toward Ling Xing Gate



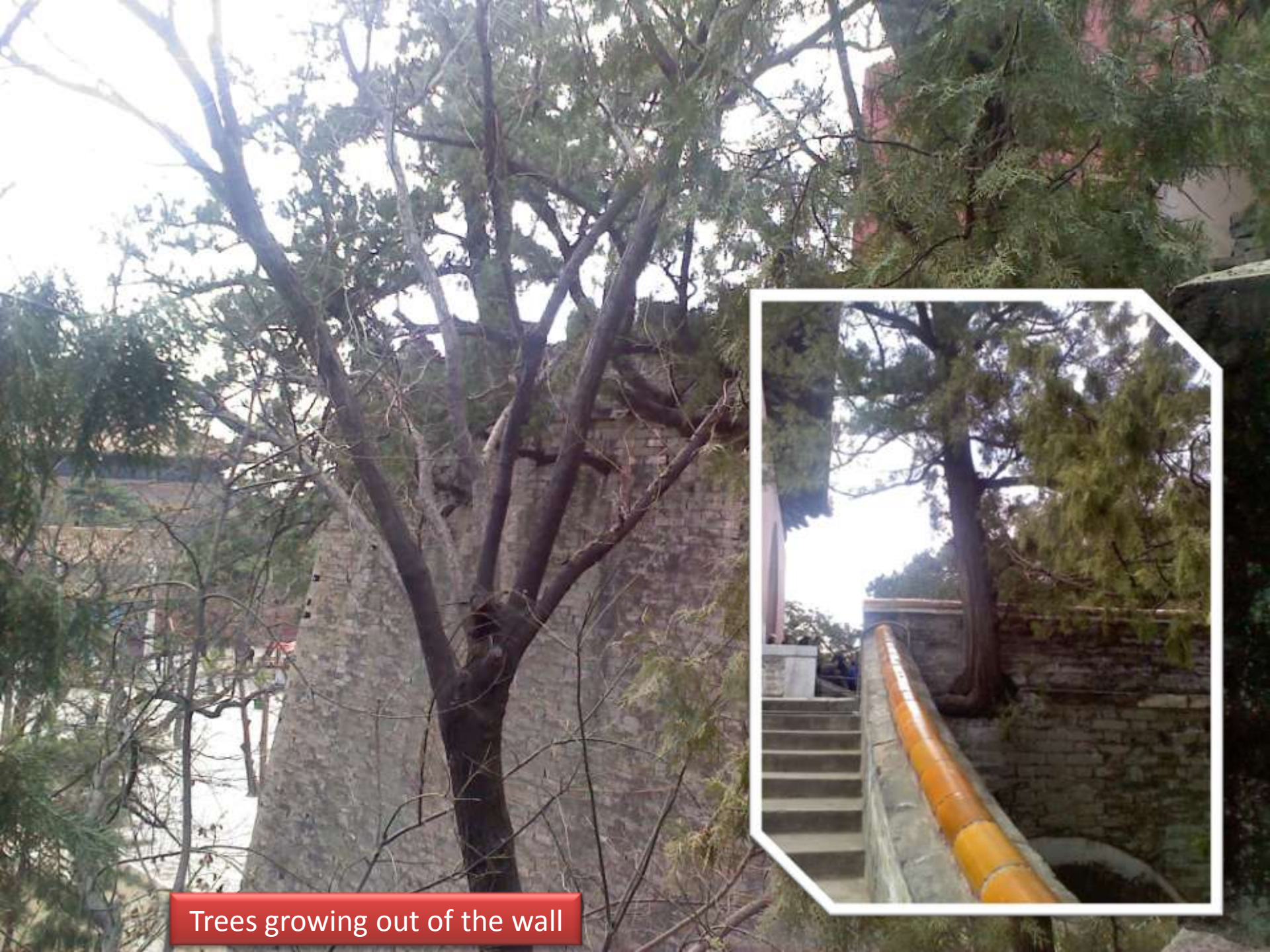
Looking up at the Soul Tower



Entrance into the Soul Tower



A tree growing through the Soul Tower wall as we go up the steps



Trees growing out of the wall



Looking back at The Hall of Eminent Favour & Ling Xing Gate



Inside the tower is a huge stone tablet inscribed in regular script "The Mausoleum of Emperor Shenzong (posthumous title) of the Great Ming." The top of the tablet has an intertwined dragon design. The base is square, carved with designs of sea waves, mountain cliffs and dragon amidst clouds. The carving is exquisitely done and better than that of other tombs.

Stone Tablet in the Soul Tower



THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN

(Tiantan 天坛)





The Temple of Heaven (the Altar of Heaven) is a complex of Taoist buildings situated in the southeastern part of central Beijing - although Chinese Heaven worship pre-dates Taoism. The temple complex was constructed from 1406 to 1420 during the reign of the Yongle Emperor, who was also responsible for the construction of the Forbidden City in Beijing. The complex was extended and renamed Temple of Heaven during the reign of the Jiajing Emperor in the 16th century, who also built three other prominent temples in Beijing - the Temple of Sun in the east, Temple of Earth in the north and the Temple of Moon in the west. In 1918 the temple was turned into a park and for the first time open to the public.



This is a typical scene at the Temple of Heaven. Most of the people performing the exercises are middle-aged or elderly. Many of those people are performing Taijiquan (a traditional form of Chinese shadow boxing), which has become a typical Chinese morning exercise. The participants' graceful movements somewhat resemble the movements — in slow motion — of ballet performers. Taijiquan requires a concentrated effort, but it produces little sweat. In the garden in the south of the park, some people perform a special exercise: They ask and answer questions loudly, and they clap their hands from time to time. Many foreigners like to watch Chinese people perform their morning exercises, and the foreigners wonder how elderly Chinese, with their slim figures, flexible bodies and smooth skin, manage to look younger with each passing year. In fact, the secret is in the morning exercises they perform to stay fit (and the food they eat).



Chinese school children on a trip



Going to The Circular Mound Altar

The Circular Mound Altar is the altar proper, located south of the Imperial Vault of Heaven. It is an empty circular platform on three levels of marble stones, each decorated by lavishly carved dragons. The numbers of various elements of the Altar, including its balusters and steps, are either the sacred number nine or its nonuples. The center of the altar is a round slate called the Heart of Heaven or the Supreme Yang, where the Emperor prayed for favorable weather. Thanks to the design of the altar, the sound of the prayer will be reflected by the guardrail, creating significant resonance, which supposed to help the prayer communicate with the Heaven. The Altar was built in 1530 by the Jiajing Emperor and rebuilt in 1740.





The Heart of Heaven

To better symbolize heaven and earth, the northern part of the Temple is circular while the southern part is square. The whole compound is enclosed by two walls, a square wall outside a round one.



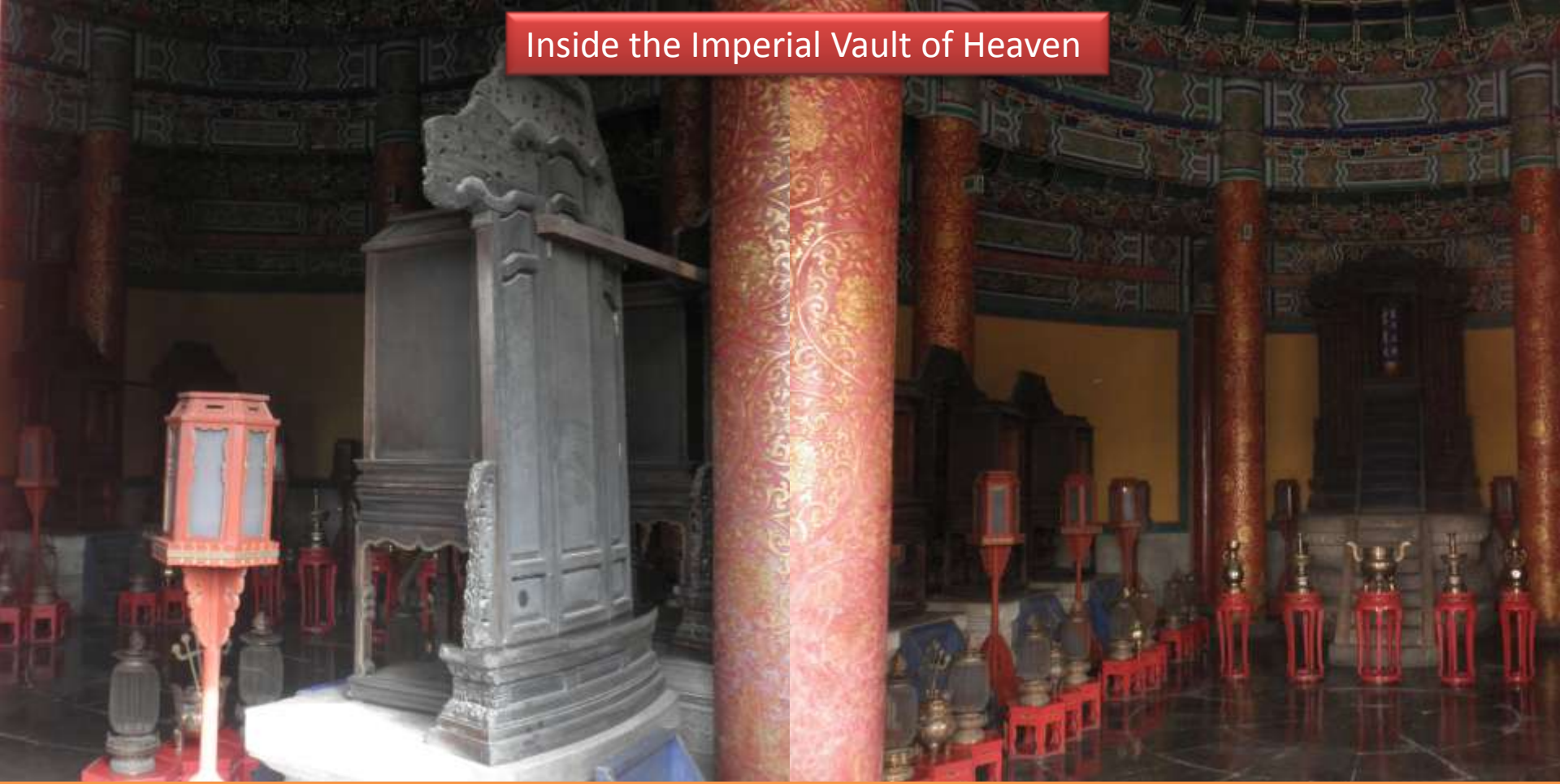
The Imperial Vault of Heaven is a single-gabled circular building, built on a single level of marble stone base. It is located south of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests and resembles it, but is smaller. It is surrounded by a smooth circular wall, the Echo Wall, that can transmit sounds over large distances. The Imperial Vault is connected to the Hall of Prayer by the Vermilion Steps Bridge, almost 1,200 feet long raised walkway that slowly ascends from the Vault to the Hall of Prayer.







Inside the Imperial Vault of Heaven





This was a great close-up shot of the architecture. One of the most modern elements seen here is the lightning rod attached to the building. One of the main buildings that will be seen later was struck by lightning and burned to the ground but was later rebuilt. Considering most of the architecture is made of wood, sounds like a good idea.





The Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests is a magnificent triple-gabled circular building, 118 feet in diameter and 125 feet tall, built on three levels of marble stone base, where the Emperor prayed for good harvests. The building is completely wooden, with no nails. The original building was burned down by a fire caused by lightning in 1889. The current building was re-built several years after the incident. You will see in the next slide that a lightning rod was added to protect it from future strikes.











Tiananmen Square





"Nine Million Bicycles" is a song written and produced by Mike Batt for the singer Katie Melua's second album, *Piece by Piece*. It was released as the album's first single in September 2005 and reached number five on the UK Singles Chart, becoming Melua's first top five hit as a solo artist. According to Melua, the inspiration for the song came from when her interpreter during her time in Beijing, China, was showing her and her manager, Mike Batt, around the city. The interpreter gave them information about Beijing, including that there are supposedly nine million bicycles in the city. My tour guide did the same thing, mentioning the bikes but he also mentioned the song that was written about it.

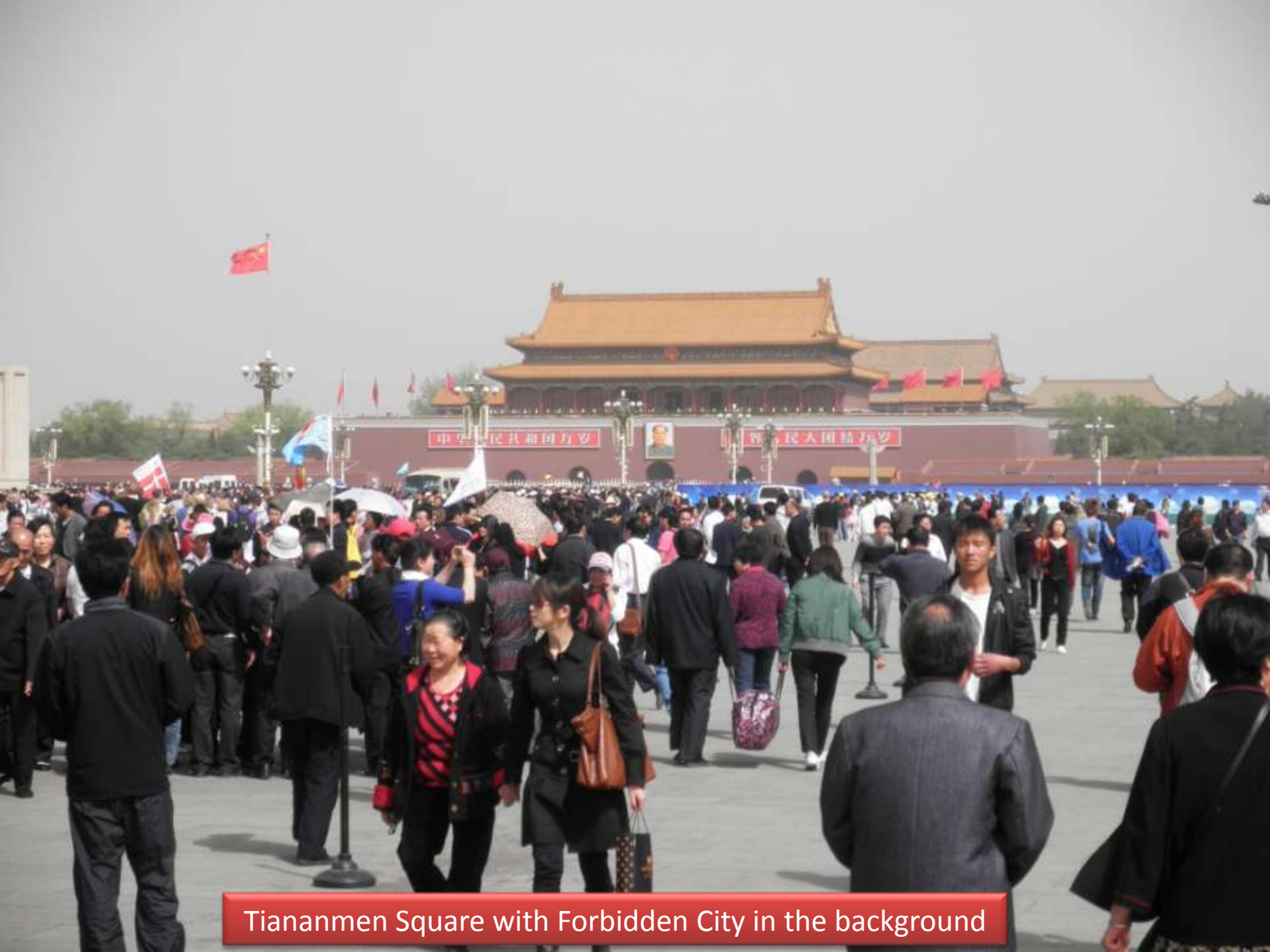


Tiananmen Square is a large city square in the centre of Beijing, China, named after the Tiananmen Gate (literally, Gate of Heaven's Pacification) located to its North, separating it from the Forbidden City. Tiananmen Square is the largest city square in the world and is capable of holding one million people. The Tiananmen Gate to the Forbidden City was built in 1415 during the Ming Dynasty. The square was the center of the 4 June 1989 protests, where soldiers opened fire on protesters, killing 400–800, and perhaps many more.

The Great Hall of the People (in the background) is located at the western edge of Tiananmen Square and is used for legislative and ceremonial activities by the People's Republic of China and the Communist Party of China. It functions as the People's Republic of China's parliament building.

The Monument to the People's Heroes (foreground) is a ten-story obelisk that was erected as a national monument of the People's Republic of China. The Monument was built in memory of the martyrs who laid down their lives for the revolutionary struggles of the Chinese people during the 19th and 20th centuries. The monument weighs over 10,000 metric tons and contains about 17,000 pieces of marble and granite. On the pedestal of the tablet there are eight huge bas-reliefs carved out of white marble covering the revolutionary episodes, which are depictions of Chinese struggle from the First Opium War in 1840 to the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. On the front of the monument there is an inscription in Mao Zedong's handwriting, which reads "Eternal glory to the people's heroes!" Below I have included a close up of one of the carvings.





Tiananmen Square with Forbidden City in the background



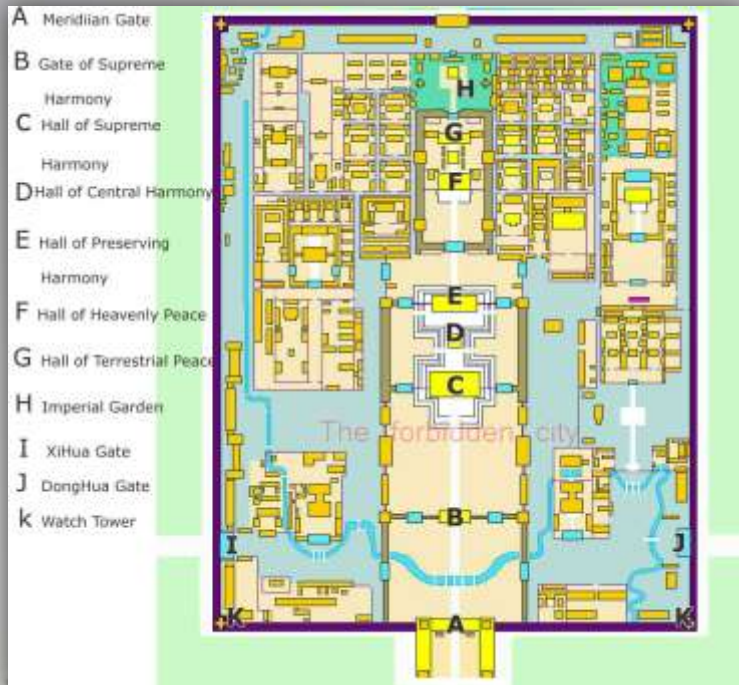
The National Museum of China flanks the eastern side of Tiananmen Square. The mission of the museum is to educate about the arts and history of China. The museum was re-organized in 2003 out of two separate museums that already occupied the building: the Museum of the Chinese Revolution in the northern wing and the National Museum of Chinese History in the southern wing. After four years of renovation, the museum reopened on March 17th, 2011 with 28 new exhibition halls.

The Forbidden City





Upon entering The Forbidden City for the first time through the Gate of Heavenly Peace









The place you go (behind the red X) to buy your tickets to get inside the city

The Wu Men (Meridian Gate), the City's front gate, is the highest structure in the palace, with the maximum height of 125 feet. The base takes a type of horse shoe shape on which five skirt-roof towers covered with yellow glazed tiles are built. These five towers together are called Wu Feng Lou (Five-Phoenix Tower). Some major events such as the promulgation of imperial decree, the receiving of the captives of war, the ceremony of issuing the official lunar calendar were held here.



The Wu Men Gate (Meridian Gate)



The Golden Stream with the Gate of Supreme Harmony in the background



Going through the Gate of Supreme Harmony



Sea of Flagstones (Court of the Imperial Palace), Hall of Supreme Harmony in background



Hall of Supreme Harmony



Close up of Hall of Supreme Harmony sign written in Chinese Traditional

Shui gang, or water bowls, can be found around the Forbidden City. The city is built with wood and prone to fire, therefore every building would have at least two water bowls like this in case of a fire. I didn't happen to see any water in them, so not sure what they would do in case of a fire now.



Water Bowl

Gate of Heavenly Purity

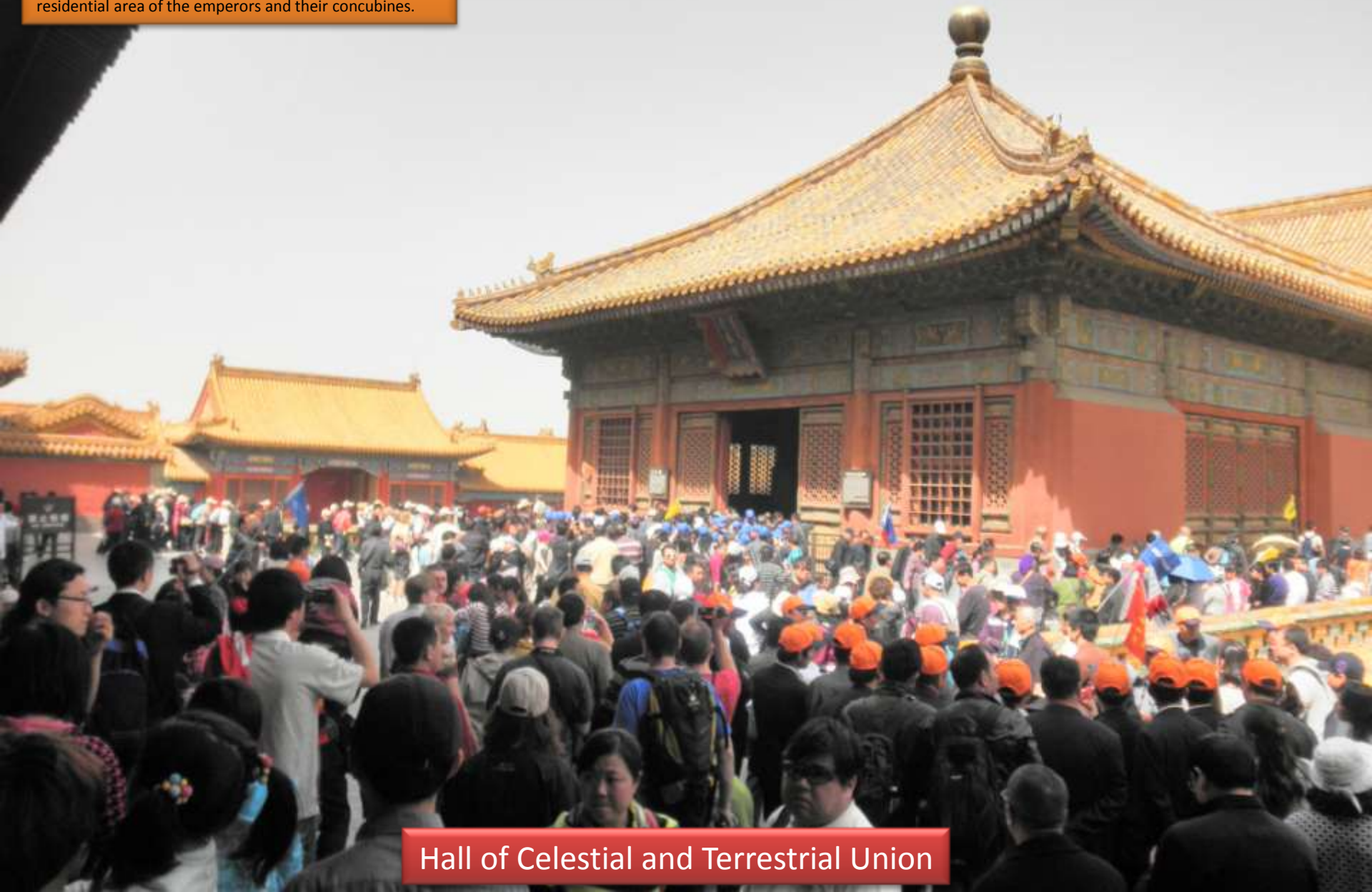




Palace of Heavenly Purity



The section north of the Gate of Celestial Purity is known as 'Inner Court' including Palace of Celestial Purity (Qian Qing Gong), Hall of Celestial and Terrestrial Union (Jiao Tai Dian, pictured here to the right) and Palace of Terrestrial Tranquility (Kun Ning Gong). These halls form the residential area of the emperors and their concubines.



Hall of Celestial and Terrestrial Union




Palace of Earthly Peace (or Tranquility) is straight ahead where everyone is walking



A peek inside the palace – the guide said this was the living room



Gate of Terrestrial Tranquility leading out to the Imperial Gardens

A large crowd of people is walking along a path in the Imperial Gardens. The path is flanked by tall, ancient trees with thick, gnarled trunks and dense green foliage. The people are dressed in casual clothing, and many are wearing hats. The scene is bright and sunny, with shadows cast on the path. In the background, a traditional Chinese gate with a tiled roof is visible through the trees.

The Forbidden City is surrounded on three sides by imperial gardens. To the north is Jingshan Park, also known as Prospect Hill, an artificial hill created from the soil excavated to build the moat and from nearby lakes. Outside of the Gate of Terrestrial Tranquility is Yuhuayuan, the Imperial Garden which was constructed during the Ming dynasty in 1417. This was a private retreat for the imperial family and is the most typical of the Chinese imperial garden design. There are some twenty structures, each of a different style, and the ways in which they harmonize with the trees, rockeries, flower beds and sculptural objects such as the bronze incense burners.

The Imperial Gardens





A gilt bronze guardian

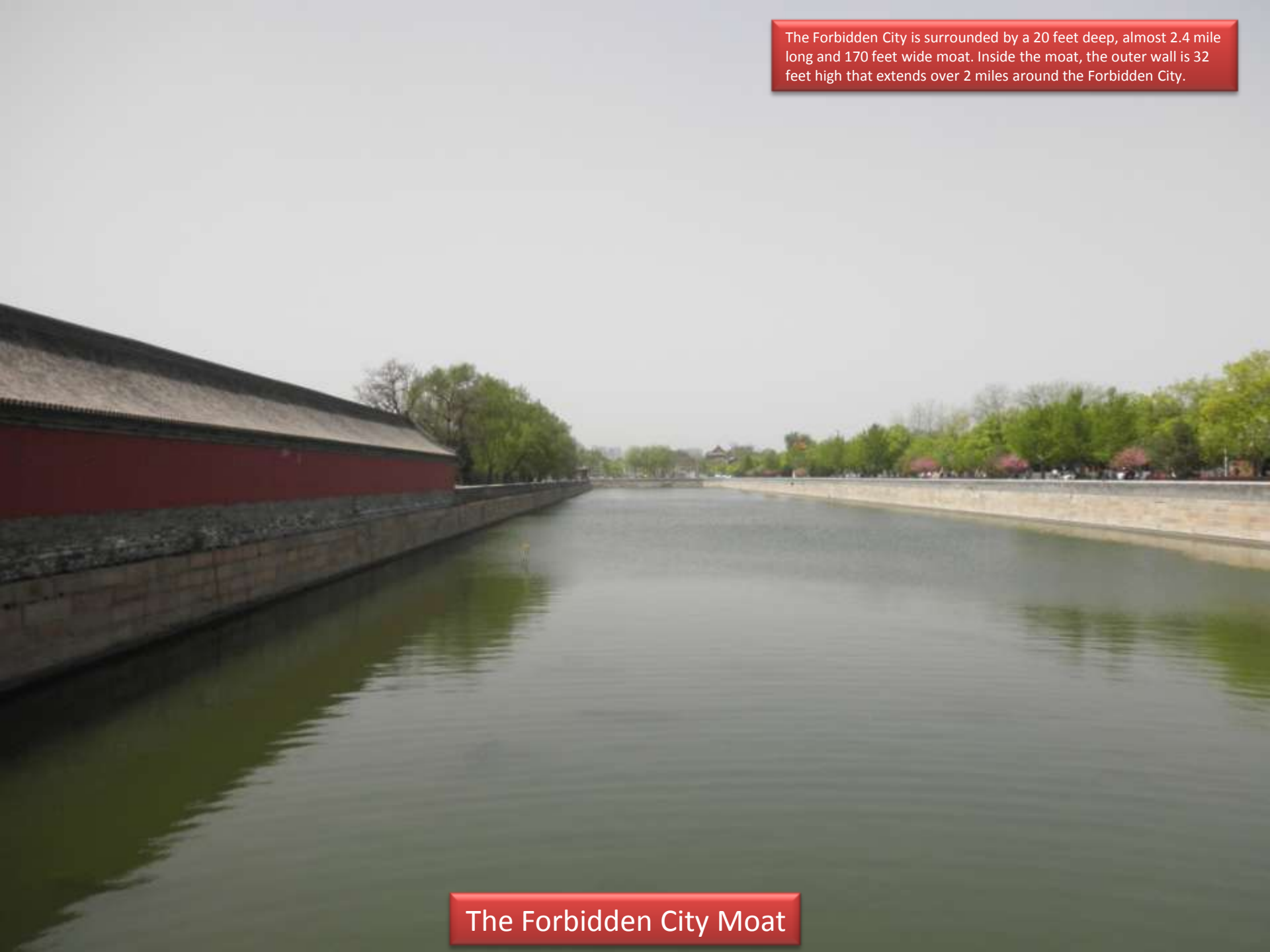


Incense burner in the garden





The Forbidden City is surrounded by a 20 feet deep, almost 2.4 mile long and 170 feet wide moat. Inside the moat, the outer wall is 32 feet high that extends over 2 miles around the Forbidden City.



The Forbidden City Moat

Beihai Lake



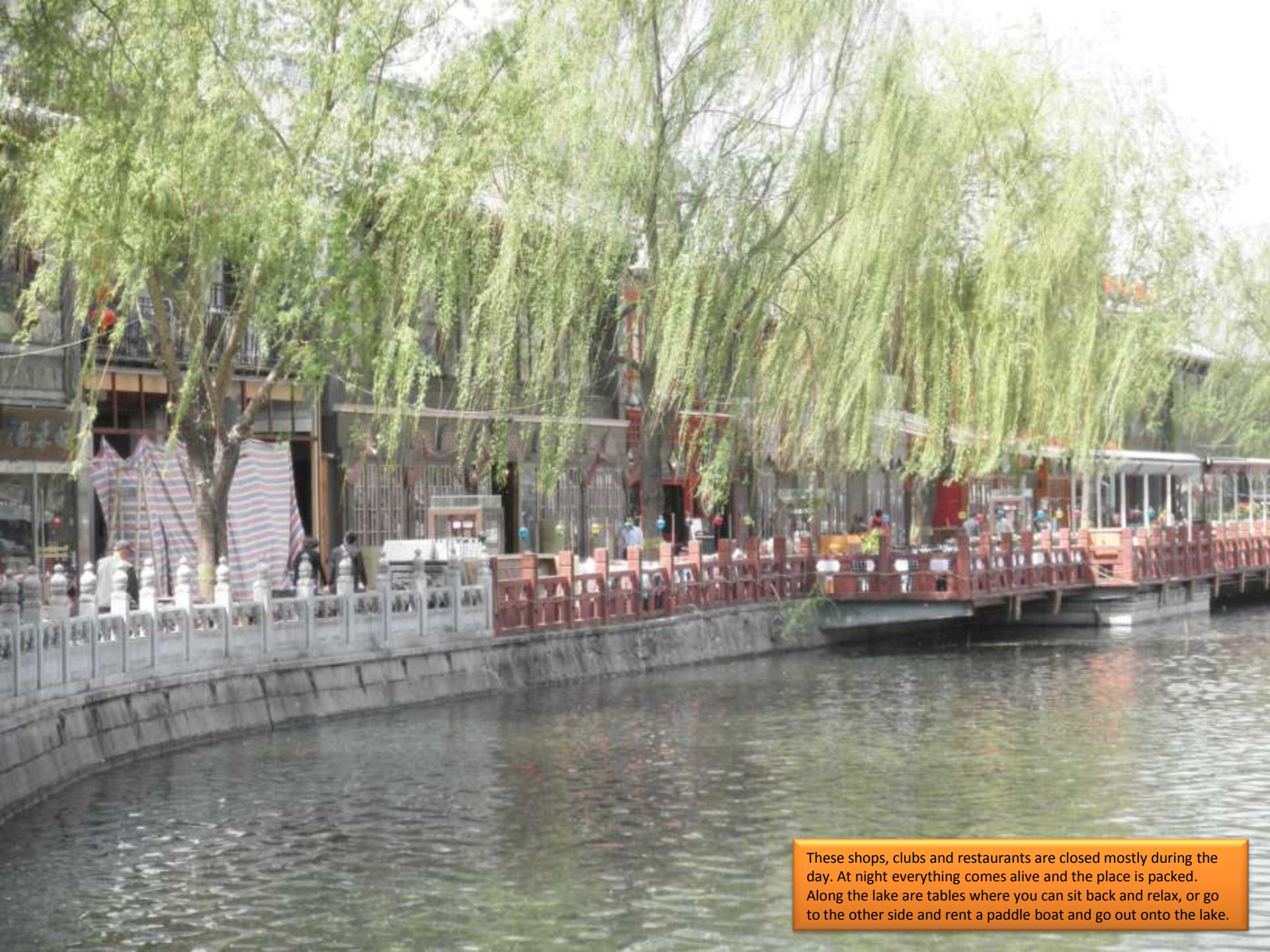


Although we didn't have time to go through Beihai Park, this is a large Lake in the park (pictured above). Near the lake was a small Chinese Restaurant where me and the guide stopped for lunch.





Beihai Park is an imperial garden to the northwest of the Forbidden City in Beijing. Built in the 10th century, it is amongst the largest of Chinese gardens, and contains numerous historically important structures, palaces and temples. Prior to the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 this area was connected to the Forbidden City, but since 1925 it has been open to the public.



These shops, clubs and restaurants are closed mostly during the day. At night everything comes alive and the place is packed. Along the lake are tables where you can sit back and relax, or go to the other side and rent a paddle boat and go out onto the lake.



The Park has an area of more than 69 hectares, with a lake that covers more than half of the entire Park. At the center of the Park is an island called Qiónghuá Island with a highest point of 105 feet. In the north of the park there is a large pool called the Taiye Pool connecting the two other pools, which are called the Middle Sea and the South Sea respectively. Therefore the Taiye Pool is also called the Beihai.



The Summer Palace



颐和园导游图



Kunming Lake

The Summer Palace was my final and favorite destination, even though I only got to see very little of it. It was so beautiful and peaceful, more so than the other places I'd been before. The Summer Palace is mainly dominated by Longevity Hill (almost 200 feet high) and the Kunming Lake - three quarters of Summer Palace is water. The central Kunming Lake was entirely man made and the excavated soil was used to build Longevity Hill. In the Summer Palace, one finds a variety of palaces, gardens, and other classical-style architectural structures. The Summer Palace started out life as the Garden of Clear Ripples in 1750. Artisans reproduced the garden architecture styles of various palaces in China.

Map of the Summer Palace





One of the many shops in the Summer Palace. The only thing is you can't negotiate the price of items in these shops, although they are marked quite a bit less than those at both the Pearl and Silk Markets.

Yuyuantan Park is famous for its Cherry Garden, which is home to 2,000 trees of 20 species. Yuyuantan Park hosts an annual cherry blossom festival in April to show off the trees, many of which are gifts from Japan, when the two countries re-opened diplomatic relations in the 1970s. Summer Palace also had many Cherry Blossoms in full bloom.



Cherry Blossoms in Summer Palace





Zhichun Pavilion











南湖岛

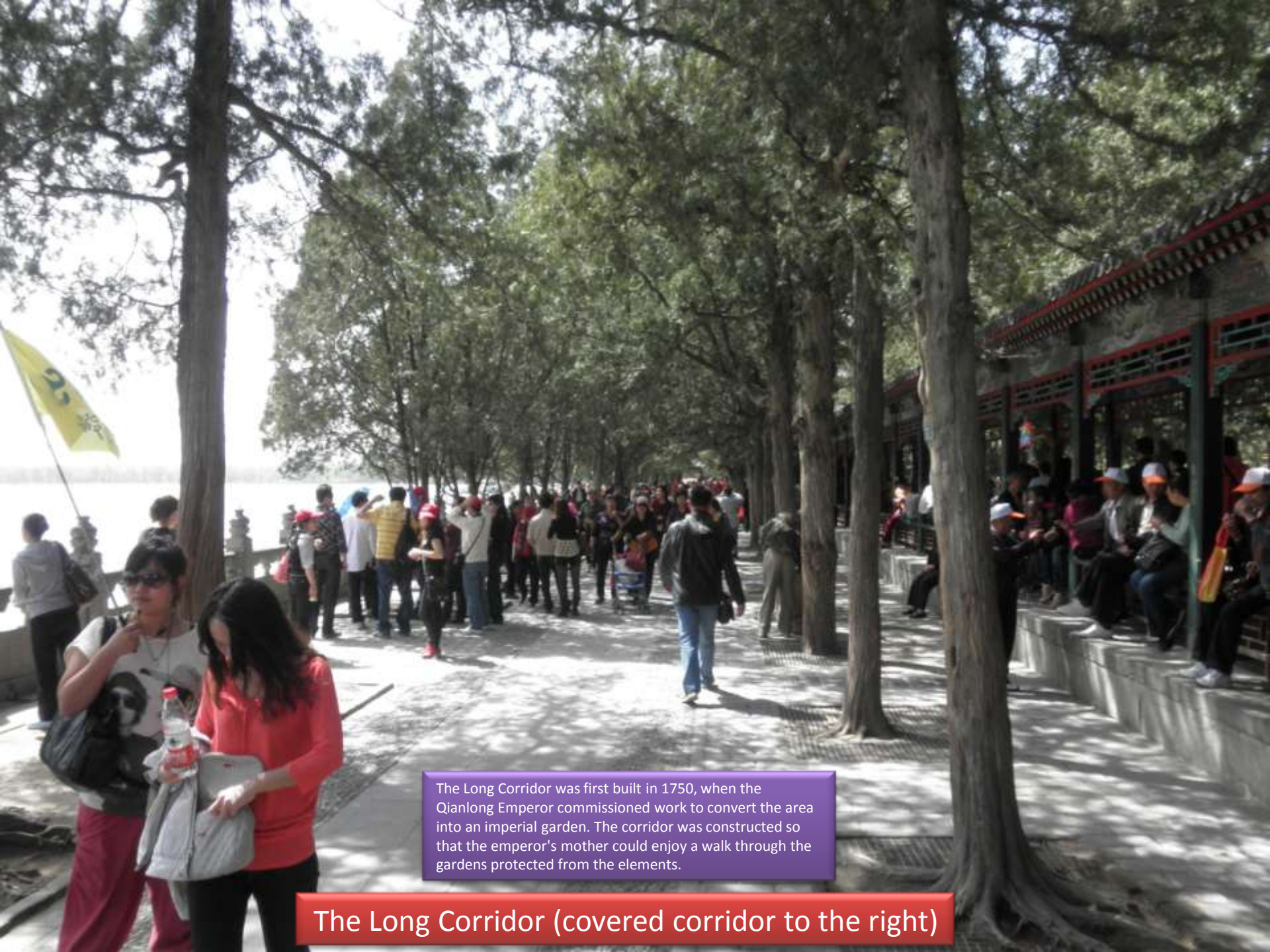
位于昆明湖前湖中央，向东通过十七孔桥与东堤上的廓如亭相连，岛、桥、亭结合成为一个完整的构图，与万寿山遥相对应。岛上现存有涵虚堂，广润灵雨祠，鉴远堂、月波楼、滄会轩等景点建筑。

Nanhu Dao (South Lake Island)

Situated in the center of the lake, the island is connected to the Spacious Pavilion on the east bank by the Seventeen-Arch Bridge. The island, the bridge and the pavilion combine to form an integrated architecture that echoes the Longevity Hill from a distance. The scenic spots which stand on the island include the Hall of Embracing the Universe, the Dragon King Temple, the Hall of Foresight, the Tower of Moonlit Ripples and the Chamber of Heartfelt Contentment.

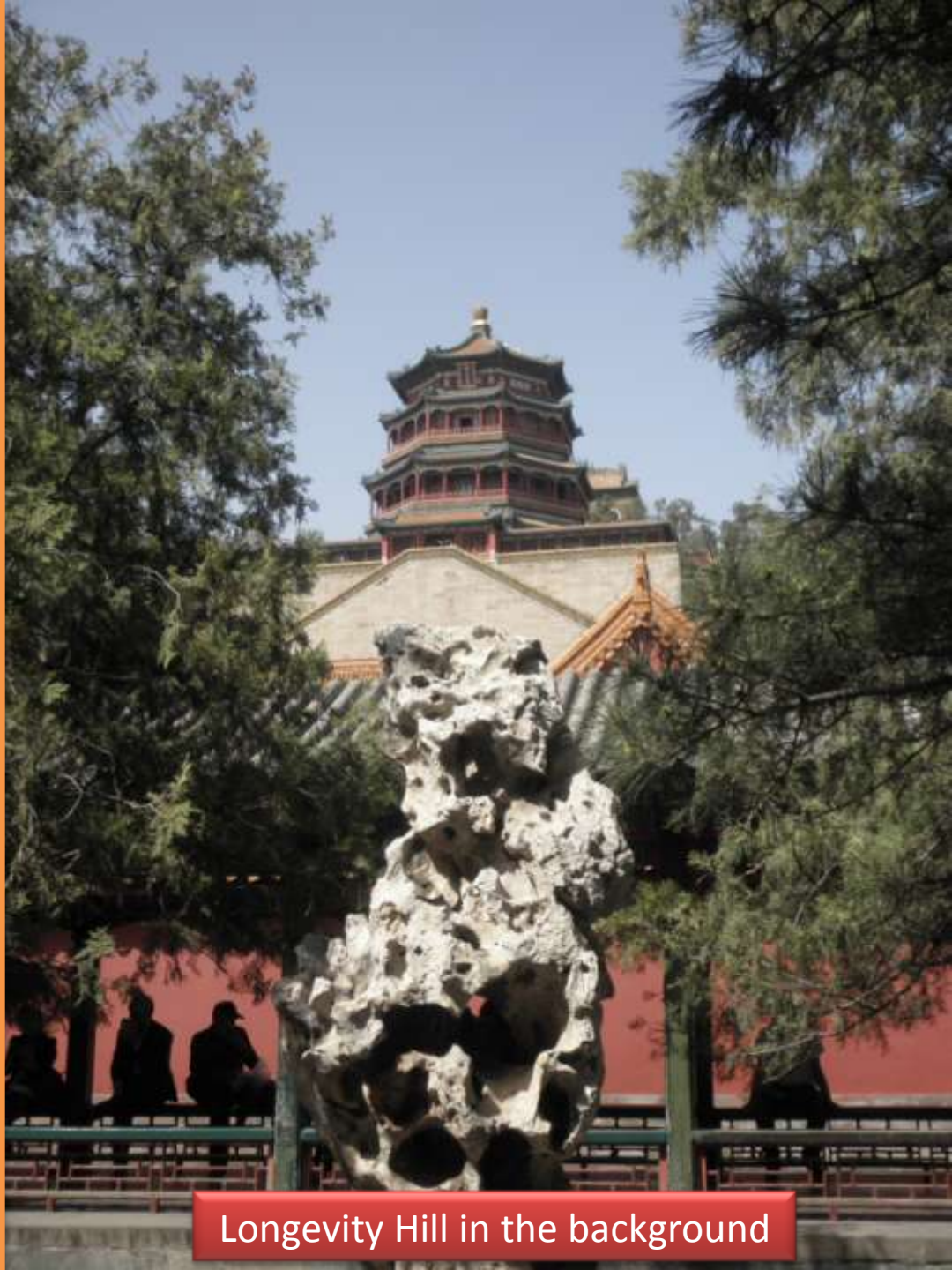


The Tower of Literary Prosperity, largest among the six gateway buildings



The Long Corridor was first built in 1750, when the Qianlong Emperor commissioned work to convert the area into an imperial garden. The corridor was constructed so that the emperor's mother could enjoy a walk through the gardens protected from the elements.

The Long Corridor (covered corridor to the right)



Longevity Hill in the background





Shot of Kunming Lake





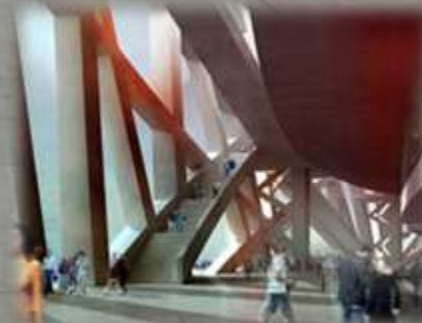
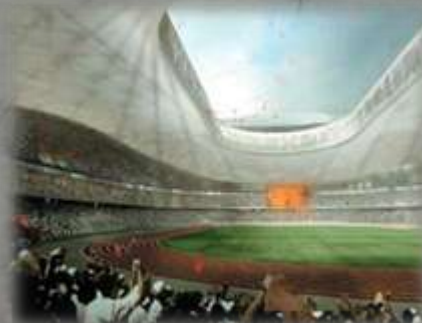
The Marble Boat, also known as the Boat of Purity and Ease is a lakeside pavilion on the grounds of the Summer Palace. It was first erected in 1755 during the reign of the Qianlong Emperor. In 1860, during the Second Opium War, the pavilion was destroyed by Anglo-French forces. It was restored in 1893 on order of the Empress Dowager Cixi. A new two-story superstructure was designed which incorporated elements of European architecture. Like its predecessor, the new superstructure is made out of wood but it was painted to imitate marble.







Beijing





平安
北京交通
Safe Traffic For Beijing



微笑
北京交警
Smiling Beijing Traffic Police

国家体育场北路
GUOJIATYUCHANG North Rd
(天辰东路)
↑

天辰西路
TIANCHEN West Rd
(规划西)
↑

This was the road sign by my hotel (to the left) and Olympic Square across the street to the right. It was interesting that the sign says "Safe Traffic for Beijing" and "Smiling Beijing Traffic Police" with two cute little cartoon figures smiling and waving. I saw a lot of military standing around, not many smiling. And as far as traffic – it was anything but safe. Riding in every cab I took, they would weave in and out of traffic barely inches from another car or bus. They would continually cut one another off and honk their horns, but no one seemed to get mad about it – in the USA, if anyone did that, there would be road rage.



A panoramic shot of Olympic Square



Olympic Stadium (the Bird's Nest)



View from top floor of the Pearl Market



Located in the Olympic Green, the Beijing National Stadium (BNS) cost US \$423 million. The design was awarded to a submission from the Swiss architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron in April 2003. The design, which originated from the study of Chinese ceramics, implemented steel beams in order to hide supports for the retractable roof; giving the stadium the appearance of a "Bird's nest".



Beijing National Aquatics Center to the left in Olympic Square as the sun is setting



Pangu Plaza - shaped like a dragon with the IBM logo at the very top — and stretching the length of seven football fields — is a colossal row of stone buildings that boast a high-rise office tower, shopping mall, seven-star hotel and what the developer insists is the world's first traditional Chinese "courtyard in the sky." The intrigue surrounding the plaza is being bolstered by reports that during the Olympic Games legions of corporate elites and celebrities visited the complex, whose 45-story office tower is shaped at the top like a giant wave or dragon head; four other 23-story connecting buildings seem to serve as the body and tail of the dragon, according to the developer.



Pangu Plaza



Olympic Tower

McDonalds in China is NOT the same as McDonalds in the US. Chicken McNugge (they don't put the 'ts' on the end) looks almost like the one's in America, and almost tastes like them, but the batter is different. The fries DO taste like those in the USA – the one's in the USA that have sat one or two days in a parked car (at least the one's I got). The brown dipping sauce was not BBQ sauce - it was Garlic Chilli Sauce (spelled just like that). You will see the price of \$38.50 on the menu - that's almost \$6.



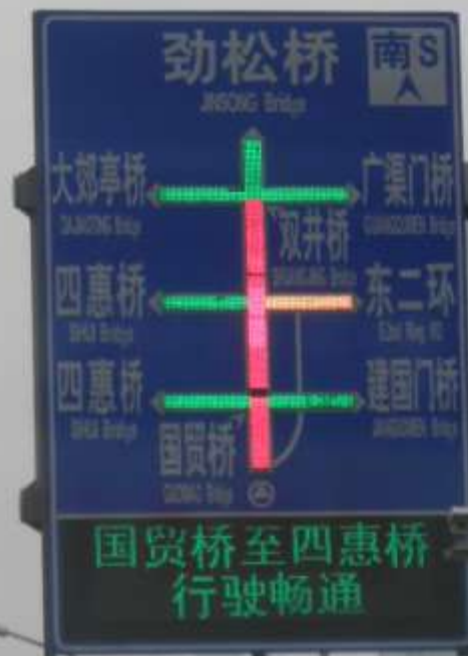
Yes – McDonalds!



A bizarre photo on the side of a building others in my group wanted

In 2010, more than 700,000 new cars were sold in Beijing, bringing the city's total number of automobiles to more than 4.7 million. In December 2010, Beijing municipal government said it will limit 2011 issuance of new car license plates to 240,000 and implement harsh traffic control measures to ease the city's traffic congestion. A Beijing driver will be permitted to own only one car in his or her name. Beijing car buyers will have to draw lots before obtaining a car license plate. Private car buyers receive 88 percent, or 17,600 plates per month on average, of the city's new license plates, with the rest being commercial and government. Government agencies and public institutions cannot increase the size of their motor vehicle fleets during the next five years. Parking fees inside the 5th Ring Road will be charged per 15 minutes rather than per 30 minutes and parking fees in the city will be from 2 Yuan to 10 Yuan per hour (10 Yuan = about \$1.50 at this time). Cars registered outside of Beijing will be banned from being driven inside the 5th Ring Road on work days during the rush hours of 7 to 9 am and 5 to 8 pm. Beijing also launched a license plate number system where if your license plate ends with a particular number, there's a specific day you cannot drive. Some car dealerships were forced out of the market, as sales plunged from about 800,000 annually to 240,000. When these measures were announced in December 2010, car ownership in the city increased by 30,000 that week.





Traffic congestion sign for upcoming roads



This is the typical cab in Beijing- you can see the license plate. It has the Chinese symbol for Beijing on the very left, followed by a letter which indicates the type of license it is. B is for cab (can't figure that one out), P is for private car, and they have more for government cars and other designations. Never get into "Black Taxis" – private vehicles illegally carrying passengers for money. They look sporty and high end, but they are not valid cab drivers and you will typically (according to several sources I met in Beijing) get charged quite a bit more and a couple of people said you maybe taken to a location not of your choosing and robbed. Black Taxis are common – in May of 2010 Beijing had 66,000 registered taxis and 70,000 black taxis. Most black taxis are found in tourist areas, rural-urban fringe zones and suburban areas – they don't register with any government department and passengers have no rights, or are not covered by insurance, should there be any problems. The same is true for unlicensed three-wheel taxis as they are cheaper and are more convenient, but have to worry about safety. Since May of 2010 the government has concentrated on getting black taxis and three-wheeled motorcycles off the roads, which seems to have worked – they didn't appear as common as regular Taxis.



Typical cab in Beijing



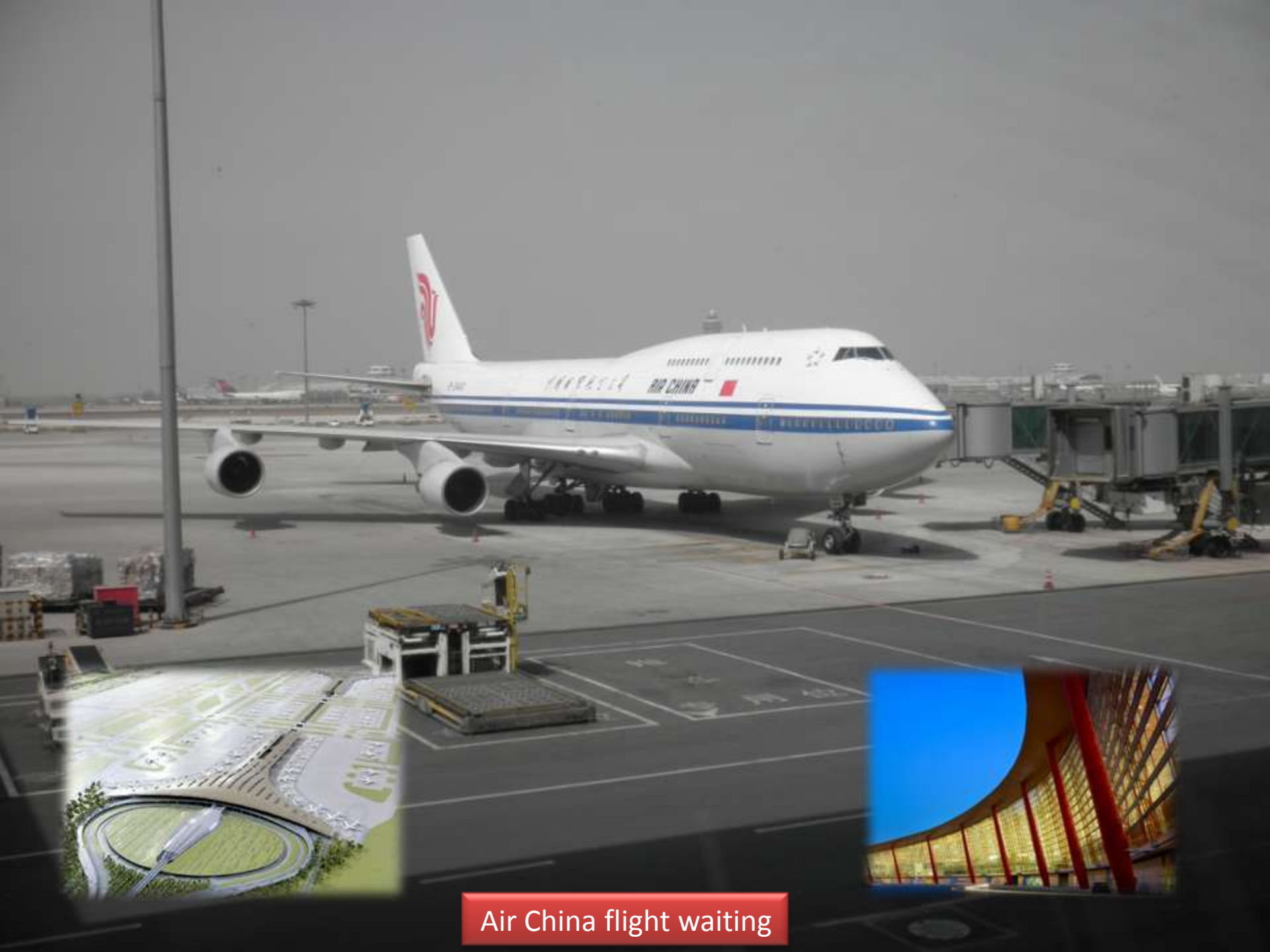




The Silk Market



Waiting at the Beijing Capital International Airport for the flight to leave



Air China flight waiting



Beijing Capital International Airport is the main international airport of Beijing located 20 miles northeast of Beijing's city center in an enclave of Chaoyang District that is surrounded by rural Shunyi District. Beijing Capital has rapidly ascended in rankings of the world's busiest airports in the past decade. It had become the busiest airport in Asia in terms of passenger traffic and total traffic movements by 2009. It's currently the 2nd busiest airport in the world in terms of passenger throughput behind Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. The Condé Nast Traveler magazine named the Beijing Capital International as the World's Best Airport in 2009, based on its multi-criteria satisfaction survey, including factors such as cleanliness, speed of security/immigration clearance, clarity of signs, luggage handling, etc





Two ships at sea as we fly over the ocean





TV monitor of the map showing our flight over Tokyo – the flight was bumpy

The flight at night – okay, I could actually see outside with the moonlight



Dawn breaking as we approach San Francisco

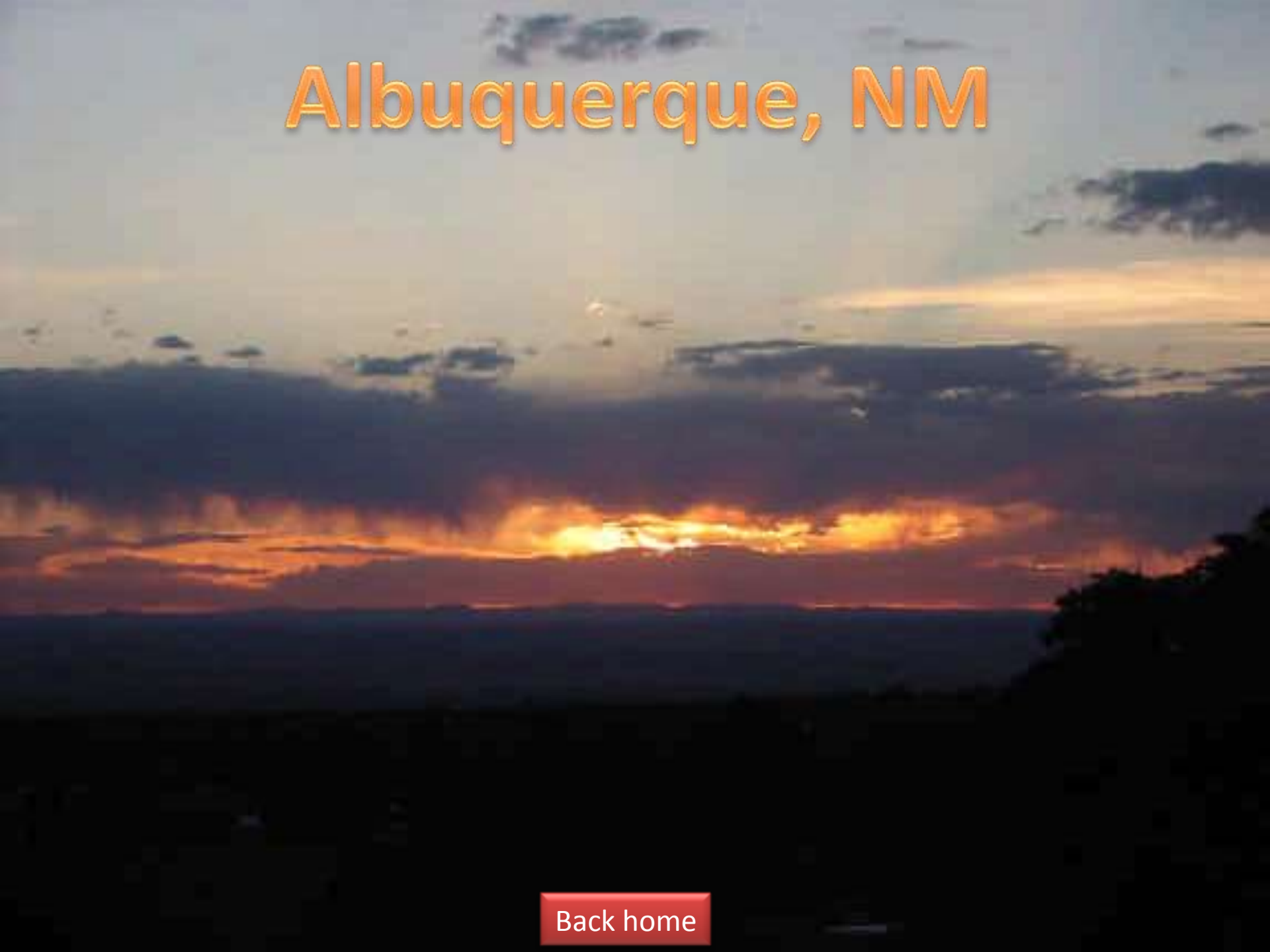


Not Alaska mountains below



I think these are the Colorado mountains below...I was pretty tired

Albuquerque, NM

A wide-angle photograph of a sunset or sunrise. The sun is partially obscured by a thick layer of clouds, creating a bright, glowing orange and yellow light that spreads across the horizon. The sky above is a mix of light blue and white, with scattered clouds. The foreground is dark and mostly black, with the silhouettes of trees and bushes visible on the right side. The overall mood is serene and dramatic.

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