

2014

February to May

- China Backpacking
- Family in Hongkong
- Padi & Anh-Dao's Beach Wedding in Australia



All reports and picture galleries (incl. Padi's and Evi's) can be accessed via www.xelliant.ch

Background

When we booked our flights on British Airways to Hongkong on 12th January 2014 we had only one fixed target and date: Gobi's Wedding in Hongkong on 19th of March. We booked for a period of 6 weeks within which everything else was still open. We could have visited Patrick and family in Perth or do a round trip to Philippines, Malaysia or elsewhere.

Since Anh-Dao's mother had just visited them for several weeks and they themselves had plans to visit us in CH the coming summer, we chose finally to go once more backpacking in China. It was winter and so only the South would be a reasonable choice. Peggy had found out about the Hakka Tulou's in Fujian and we had never been in that region - so that was what we then did: a Tulou Walk for 1 week and a roundtrip further into Fujian.

While we were in China, Patrick and Anh-Dao decided to get married on a lonely beach in the Australian wilderness at around Easter. We only learned these news when Patrick surprisingly turned up in Hongkong with the kids to attend Gobi's wedding. At that time I was still mentally exhausted from the China trip and so, at first, I could not face another big journey. A week after we had returned home to CH, Peggy felt very sad with the idea to miss out and so we booked almost instantly our flights to Perth....

Summary of Visit in Hongkong and the Backpacking Trip to Fujian (for Details see Diary)

Hongkong - Part 1 (17th - 25th Feb)

Leaving Geneva on 17th by British Airways via London to Hongkong, arriving on the 18th February.

We stayed 1 week to wait for my China Visa from CTS. We stayed some time with Rocky at Tuen Mun and a couple nights with Toni at their new place in the KaiTak-Area (in a block with 1000 apartments).

One evening, we met Ah Yuen's sister. As she was in the process of moving out of her (very small) apartment in Cheungshawan she had the idea to have us taking over the lease for 2 weeks to the end after our return from China. We thought it a good idea and agreed.

Backpacking in China (25th Feb to 15th Mar)

Last year we had travelled 1 month to and along the South Western borders. This time we headed in the opposite direction to the easterly Province of Fujian which faces Taiwan. We had planned for about 3 weeks (25th Feb to 16th March), time for 2 targets:

- **Walking in the Hakka Tulou country** to enjoy simple country life and see some special traditional China. This pretty hilly area (300-1500m) with the size of about a quarter of CH is located about 400km from Hongkong and 100 km from the coast. The Tulou's are Earthhouses of almost any shape and size - the most attractive ones are the round ones which can measure up to 5 floors and up to 100m in diameter. We walked for 6 days about 150km and visited a few dozen Tulou's and saw a few hundred more of the 20'000 Tulou's in Fujian. We considered ourselves lucky with the weather although it tended to be dark and cool at times. We were very happy to be there off-season and also that the spoiling of the area had only just started and was still confined to a few hot spots. And so we were still received in most villages we passed as individual travellers and the locals were very kind and attentive. Although we have visited so many places in China - we will still consider this walking week as a highlight of our China experience!

- **Bus hopping along the coast-line** and witness the current evolution of China countryside in this area. After the end of walking the weather got far worse! It did not only rain very often but the temperature dropped well below 15° for much of the time. So we did not mind to sit the necessary hours in the mostly small buses from which one had a good sight if seated near the front. There was a day we took even 7 buses - this is only possible if you possess Peggy's skills to read, speak and understand Chinese. First we continued up the coast to Putian from where apparently Peggy's Lam-family originated. Then we bus-hopped slowly back to Hongkong, visiting this fishing town, that ancient bridge, walled town, rock formations - and of course, enjoying the local variety of food. Somewhere on the way I got an sms from Patrick telling us he will be arriving in Hongkong with the kids on the 18th March, well - now we had to keep moving to make sure that Ah Yuen's sister's apartment would be sufficiently cleared up on time! We got back on 15th !!!
- **Facts (Backpacking in China):**
 - 19 days, 18 nights in 13 different guest houses. Average 50 Yuan (8 CHF) / night
 - 6 consecutive days walking in Tulou Country - 150km
 - 38 buses - 43h. Mostly small regular buses or shuttle buses. Nearly 2000km.
 - Total cost: 3000 Yuan (500 CHF) of which 1200 Y transport, 900 Y overnight, 900Y food etc
 - Weather: mostly nice to fair and comfortable during the Tulou walk. Then it was mostly miserable and cold with a few better slots in between.
 - Luggage: 2 small backpacks under 5 kg and 2 light shoulder bags for things to be at hand.
 - Health: We were quite well but the last day I got swollen ankles from bus-hopping.
 - In 19 days I had no conversation with somebody else than Peggy - not easy for me (and for her:-).
- **Assessment**
After traveling China just 1 year before - it was a bit of 'China Again!' The Tulou walk was really worth-while. Traveling the coast of Fujian and Eastern Guangdong was a bit of routine and of course also spoilt by the weather. I am glad nevertheless that we have also seen this part of 'normal' China, even more so as I don't know if this was my last backpacking trip in China - I really felt getting older this time!
- **My thanks to Peggy** who during the backpacking did all the bus activity, finding rooms, ensuring food, laundry, packing.....I depended 100% on her to guide and lodge and feed me

Hongkong - Part 2 (15th Mar to 2nd April)

We got back one day earlier as Peggy wanted to make sure Ah Yuen's sister's apartment would be ready to also accommodate Patrick and the kids, arriving on the 18th April. We just about managed to make the necessary space. Of course we had a great 5 days with them! The kids loved Hongkong and bus riding on the upper floor from the word go! They (and we) also enjoyed **Gobi's** (Rocky's 1st daughter) **wedding party** - the kids knowing that their parents were going to get married soon (at that time we did not yet know!). The time of their visit was too short but they took the maximum out of it with a visit to Cheung Chau, 2 times Yamcha with aunties and a bbq at Old Coffe Bay with much of the Lam-family attending!

We were sad to let them go (we did not know at that time that we will see them very soon again).

After they left we just did this and that: a walk to the Peak, a turn to Saikung, dinner at 2nd brother's place, another few yamcha and the great **60th birthday party of Rocky**. The last 2 nights we stayed at Stenson and Dora's place and then on 1st April we had a smooth flight to London by A380 and then back to CH on 2nd April!

Home in Ipsach (2nd to 13th April)

After a week at home Peggy felt bad about missing out her son's wedding in Australia and so on Friday the 11th we booked our flights to Perth to leave on Sunday, 13th.

Surprise Trip to Australia - 13th April to 13th May

Flight: Routine - KLM via Amsterdam to Singapore - change to Jetstar to arrive before midnight 14th in Perth.

Get to the Wedding:

- Monday, 15th - Happy settling with our Dears and meeting Laura, the kids' aupair from CH!
- Tuesday, 16th - Breaking news: They just bought a house beside Herdsman Lake - right away had to organise a fund-transfer from CH by mail for the first downpayment.
- Wednesday, 17th - Evelyne and Rafa's arrival and a welcome- and farewell-dinner (for Laura).
- Thursday, 18th - Us, 6 adults and 2 kids, driving off in 2 cars for a camping trip up to the wild North! 1st stop at the Murchison River at 500km.
- Friday / Saturday, 19th / 20th - Drive up to Elle's Beach, at 1000km from Perth. There we stayed 1 day in the loneliness and enjoyed resting in the company of the family-friends Tom and Sandra, who looked after us while the others left for the day to do their scuba diving. Tom and Sandra had been here 1 week, waiting to join us for the wedding.
- Sunday (Easter), 20th - Driving another 300km to the final 'meeting destination', Kurrajong Beach - Ningaloo Reef near Exmouth, on the North-Western Cape. Here the rest of the wedding's attendants joined - Oscar and

his brother and 2 young French couples from Perth.

- Monday, 21st, Camping life amidst Kangaroos, hanging around - while the young ones went to dive again. It was Easter Monday and our twins were hunting kangaroo eggs. Then we had another night gathering before the wedding!

The Wedding - Tuesday, 22nd April

Beach-Wedding with 16 people barefoot at the lonely beach at Mesa Camp. The Celebrant, Janette Ellis and her assistant started the ceremony at 9.30 with the arrival of the bride with the kids. We all spent a beautiful day and it was a simple but magnificent party! The party at Mesa Camp ended at 4pm - but of course it continued deep into the night at our camp-site as everybody was present!

Return to Perth

- Wednesday, 23rd - Recovering day! Some went snorcling and others were hanging around doing whatever...
- Thursday 24th - Last day at Kurrajong - snorkling, kajak, hiking, surfing whatever. These are lonely areas without water supply and no telecom coverage.....Nevertheless the camping went well and everybody enjoyed. When I felt weak and helpless at times (e.g. dinner in the dark) - Peggy and the others helped me.
- Friday 25th - Time to go back. Patrick wanted to stay on for a while but Evelyne wanted to move on as it was a long way to Geraldton, where we were offered to stay in Tom and Sandra's house. In the end we were happy as it was already dark before we reached Geraldton but we still were early enough for a nice T-bone steak and happy beer in THE pub in the town center. Patrick and family left Kurrajong only an hour after us but were almost blocked by floodings caused by heavy rain on the way.
- Saturday 26th - Made a little turn at the beach at Geraldton then drove through bad weather back to Perth with one stop at the Lobster Shack in Cervantes (guess what we ate:-).

Perth - Part 2 - 27th April to 11th May

- Sunday, 27th was Evi and Rafa's last day in Perth and we all had nice time together first having Yamcha at Northbridge then strolling through the city and the Kings Park offering a nice view over the Swan Lake and the skyline of the city. Later the young ones went for a jog/bike around Herdsman Lake. Then had a lovely bbq!
- On Monday very early Padi took Evi and Rafa to the airport. While we were hanging around, suddenly, Tom and Sandra popped-in and Padi came back from work and we had another gettogether.
- The rest of the time we enjoyed everyday life taking the kids to and from the school. We did this and that around the house, walking to Subiaco and once visiting 'Smaland' at Ikea with the kids on their bikes. In the end we also took a day off to walk to the the city and back again. The kids were really fun to be with and they enjoyed going with Yeye for a bicycle ride a couple of times, eg. around Herdsman Lake. Patrick and Anh-Dao were busy with their work but we still had time for each other once in a while. One day we were also allowed to visit their new home in Churchland.
- The last day was Mother Day. Right in the morning Patrick packed all that was necessary for a Motherday Brunch at the beach and off we all went to Watermans Bay. We had a very nice last day together. The weather and the sea were beautiful and after brunch we walked along the sea to Hillary. In the evening it was time to part and Patrick took us to the Airport. **See you guys in August again!**

Trip home via Singapore

We arrived in Singapore at 5am. As our onward flight would leave late in the night, we decided to take a bus to the city and make a turn walking to Little India (we had been there before). At some food quarters we enjoyed this and that. In the end we were very tired and at 5pm we took the bus back to the airport. At the check-in we were told that our flight to Amsterdam was overbooked - ohoh - hahaha - they put us on a flight directly to Zürich by Singapore Airlines! So we arrived home earlier than expected at about lunch-time on the 13th May.

Outlook...

- We stayed at home for a short 2 weeks - then moved to our house at Ste Marie Plage on 29th Mai. We returned home the 3rd Juli after spending a night on the way (in the Vercors) in our Caddy Hotel.
- Patrick and Family will be in CH from 16th August to 2nd September.
- At the 22nd September we will go back to Ste Marie where we will receive Andrew from Hongkong for a couple of days. We plan to stay 3 to 4 weeks.
- We have booked a package tour to Egypt leaving on 30th Nov - 1 week Nile Cruise Luxor - Assuan return and 1 week Hurghada 'all inclusive'! The question is if it will happen due to safety issues.

Maps of China Backpacking are at End of the Document

Ipsach to Hongkong

17/18 February	Start: Ipsach (Home)	End: Hongkong	
<p>It was a nice winter day and as our plane to London would only leave in the evening, we used our day card for a lovely train ride via Bern, Zweisimmen, Gstaad, Montreux to Geneva-Airport. Easy flight to London. Routine overnight-flight to Hongkong in a rather antiquated plane (probably to be replaced soon by an A380). Arriving in Hongkong at 5pm. Then we took a bus to Rocky and Yat Wah in Tuen Mun and arrived just on time for dinner (thanks:-).</p>			Montreux-Oberland

Hongkong - Part 1 (To apply and wait for China Visa for me)

19. -25. February			
<p>19th/21st - Early morning we went to Hongkong-Side to apply for my China visa at CTS. Then met Toni and Ah Yuen at the former airport (KaiTak) area to stay for a night in their new apartment in a new settlement of 15 40-storey blocks with 1000(!) apartments each! The next morning we visited the Kowloon City area reminding Peggy and Toni of their college days. Peggy and I then walked to Apliu Street, then took bus back to Rocky to enjoy another dinner. Next day we just stayed with Rocky, shopping and hanging around.</p>		<p>22nd - Peggy and I walked the whole way from Tuen Mun to Tsuen Wan (nice walk along the sea) to have yamcha with Stemson and Dora. Nearly bought a tablet for 400 HK\$! Then went back to Rocky .. then Jesus asked us up for beer...very nice... but I also got a cold from his open window!</p>	
<p>23rd - We met Toni's at Cheung Sha Wan to inspect Ah Yuen's sister's apartment. She was about to move out and suggested to us that we could stay there for 2 weeks after our return from China. After settling the deal we moved to Toni again to stay the night.</p>			
<p>24th - Went to Mongkok to meet our good old friend Margret from Sydney who happened to be on visit in HK. After 2h happy talk we split and went to meet Toni in Jordan Rd and then made a tour to HK-side to get my CN-visa. Then walked to Wanchai along the new pier to take the ferry back to Tsim Sha Tsui. Had lovely outdoor dinner in Mongkok (clams, yayue, oysters in eggs and a rice pot). Toni enjoyed being alone with us being allowed to eat what he likes. Later we returned to Rocky for the night and had a good time over a beer.</p>			<p>Margret from Sydney</p> <p>Outdoor dinner with Toni</p>

South East China - Back Packing (25th Feb to 15th March)

25. Feb.	Start: Tuen Mun (Hongkong)	End: Meizhou (梅州)	Shuttle to border: 20', shuttle to Shekou 20', bus to Meizhou: 6h (I do not remember which way we drove!)
<p>Left at 9.30. Rocky walked us to Tuen Mun Center to take the bus across Shenzhen Bay to the border. All went smoothly but on the other side we could not find a bus in our intended direction! So Peggy decided to take a shuttle to the Bus Terminal in Shekou - 1 h later, at 13.30 we left for Meizhou - great! We had expected to arrive in day-time but we were 1.5 h late and it was dark at 19.45. Peggy quickly found a room for 40 Y and half hour later we already sat in a small eating place and had nice soup, fried rice, vegies and beer... now have to get used again to back-packing life in CN. PS On arrival in Meizhou we drove through the whole illuminated city - it was quite spectacular, especially riversides and bridges - the next day we did not feel to visit as the weather was too soggy.</p>			
.... backpacking life again....			

26. Feb	Start: Meizhou	End: Xiayang (下洋)	bus to Xiayang: 2h
<p>Got up late and after coffee in the room we went to look for a bus to Yongding (or Xiayang even better). Got a bus for 12.45 and so had plenty of time for b'fast noodles. After a nice drive in a small bus along river and over hills we reached Xiayang at 15h - when the sun appeared to make the world look better. Peggy soon found a nice room for 2 nights (2x40) as she had planned to start walking from this place. In the room someone had left a little map of the Tulou country and it proved to be very useful showing distances to the various sites. An old man (owner?) from the guest house was very helpfull and gave us an idea for tomorrow's roundwalk to the Chuxi Tulou Group. As I still felt bad from my cold we took it easy today and just enjoyed hanging around. At 17.30 we went to eat delicious local noodles - at 7pm we returned to the room to rest. PS We wondered about the terrible littering in this town.....</p>			
The little map and a Tulou Ashtray			

27. Feb	Start: Xiayang	End: Xiayang	round-walk: 30km / 6h
<p>After good b'fast noodles we left at 8.45. As it was foggy we changed our mind and started the round walk to the Chuxi (初溪)Tulou group on the main road instead of the hill road. After 3km we already reached a huge, square Tulou where a local resident invited us in to make a turn. In the end we had visited dozens of Tulous, most of them normal housing with inhabitants being very friendly and helpful. Within the next hours we realised that there are Tulous everywhere - any kind: round, square, rectangular, horse-shoe, larger, smaller, newer, older, well maintained, falling apart, with more or less common parts in their center..... always a thick (1m) clay-bricks wall around. Eventually we reached the intersection from where we had to walk into a valley for 3km to the Chuxi Tulou's. As we got closer we realised that this Tulou Group had already been turned into a tourist trap and a few 100m before, at the entrance to the village, we were stopped at a gate to pay 70 Y each.....hahaha, not with us!</p>			 

..... so we turned back to the intersection to take the small hill-road back to Xiayang. Very nice walk now as the sun had come out. The little road was winding through a narrow valley with small traditional villages and 'live' Tulou's and then over a mountain range. On the top we understood the litter problem in town: We saw a huge clandestine rubbish dump which had obviously been closed just recently! We then still enjoyed the walk back down to Xiayang arriving at 4.30pm. Hungry, thirsty and tired (from walking on concrete only) we sat down in town and had a nice meal - noodles, beef intestine soup and gluttonous 'ravioli'. When we reached our guest house, the old man was very surprised that we were back already and then he insisted that we should go to the public thermal bath nearby. After a lot of convincing us, we gave in and went. That was folklore..... all these naked men and boys taking a wash in a small pool (Peggy's side had only a basin). The water was a bit murky but pretty warm and my cold got better after that..... back to the room at 18.45 - now writing diary. Closed the eyes at 20.30 - boring TV.



....the inside of a Tulou



nice walk through Villages & Hills

28. Feb.	Start: Xiayang	End: Hukeng (湖坑)	walk to Hukeng: 20km / 4h
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Long night and only got up at 7.45.....coffee and slow packing, then local beef-noodles again before starting the walk at 9.50 along a large main road (203). We had obviously misunderstood the instructions as the maps did not show recently built roads..... It took a while to accept but then we just continued on this busy road for 10km to eventually turn towards the right direction and 5km later we were back on track. It was still an entertaining walk through lovely country-side and although the sky was lightly covered it was friendly and the temperature was comfortable.



on the way: mini Tulou...



...mini brick factory

After yesterday's continuous 8h on the feet and now over 4h non-stop, my neck was hurting badly and so we decided to stop at the first opportunity when we reached Hukeng after 2pm. Peggy found a good room and took it for 2 nights. After a short rest we strolled around town and eventually found a good place to have vegies with beef, delicious mushrooms and fried rice. Returned to room at 6pm. Had a lovely shower (room for 30 Y / night - 5 CHF!). Barely 7pm - now ...watched boring tv till 9 pm

1. March	Start: Hukeng	End: Hukeng	round-walk: 20km / 4h (whole day on feet)
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Long night - I woke up at 4am - dosed till 8am with fire-crackers bursting the silence every few minutes (opening of a shop!). Got up at 8am with coffee and then out for dumpling soup. Left at 10am for another Tulou tour. We took our time and visited over a dozen of Tulou's of all shapes spread over a small distance. The weather was very comfortable, the country-side very nice and we enjoyed the day, Peggy having a chat with local people here and there. The most remarkable Tulou was the Zhenfulou 振福楼 and we also enjoyed the village Xuewu(?) with several Tulou's beside a small river and an old bridge-crossing.



Zhenfulou 振福楼.....



....with maintained inner Circle



River crossings at Xuewu.....



..... old bridge



Yammie peanuts and tough intestines

We got back at 3pm and then asked people to put beer in deep freezer to be cold when we had early dinner at the same place: Roasted peanuts to wait for beer to cool - then taufu with mushrooms, (tough) intestines 'flambé' with vegies and rice. Returned to room at 6.30pm and had a coffee and biscuit to pass time (I was then unpopular because I ate a 2nd biscuit). PS Although Hukeng still looks very traditional - there is a big modern Tulou-style hotel - things may change soon here too!

2. March	Start: Hukeng	End: Meilin (梅林)	walk: 25km / 5h (7h on feet)
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It was a long night again but I started to get used. Bad weather forecast: gray with rain and colder for an interminable period! I feel now too old for adventure in bad weather..... but today was not too bad - just very dull and at times a little drizzle. We left at 9.30am after breakfast - yammie dumplings & noodle soup.

First stop after 3km at a tourist visitor centre - 90Y fee to visit the Hongkeng Tulou-Gruppe (洪坑土楼群).... instead we visited a few normal Tulou's in the village and then we still had access to the official ones from the rear of the village.... hahaha! A few km later we turned into a side-road leading up to a small village with off the road Tulou's and a nice small temple..... 1h later we were back on the main road again. This day we saw so many Tulou's, I even got tired to make pictures. After the road intersection to Meilin we came across another tourist center at the Hekeng Tulou-Group (河坑土楼群) which we skipped again - the drizzle had become uncomfortable now - but we decided to press on the 6km along a little river towards Meilin. We still made a detour to a village with a huge Tulou. Pretty tired, we reached Meilin at 5pm, That's why we stayed although there was only 1 grotty guesthouse and Peggy had to use all her skills to put the rate down from 100 to 50Y. At least the beds looked clean. There was only one other place to eat but there we had good fried taufu and choi sam vegies. Got back to the room at 6.30 and I closed the eyes at 8pm for a long night again!



How tourists....



..... visit Tulou's



....our hard way....

3. March	Start: Meilin	End: Shuyang (书洋)	walk: 17km /3h, 3km stroll /2h
<p>The night passed ok.... after coffee we made a turn around this ancient village. There was a lot to see and although we felt cold it was quite exciting. Before leaving at 10.30 we had a bowl of tasteless soup-noodles. Walking fast and wearing all our clothes including the rain jackets we did not feel too cold..... after 3km we came across the Huaiyuanlou (怀远楼) Tulou group and 5km further, the Heguilou (和贵楼) Tulou group close to a small old town, both beside a sparkling river and linked with a promenade....wow! Must be very busy in season! The old town had quite nice streets and beautiful huge trees and also many restaurants and guest houses - of course we did not stay here and continued to Shuyang which we hoped to be a 'normal' place - which it still was! The day had been gray and pretty cool but at least it did not rain, so we not only enjoyed the Tulou's but also the hilly Cong Cha tea plantations on the hills' slopes!</p>			
			
Morning stroll in Meilin	Mobile Butcher	Tulou and Tea Country	Cong Cha Tea
			
.....Tulou's everywhere	Touristic Promenade		
<p>We stopped here as Peggy had planned to make a long round walk from here. Peggy found a very good room for 2 nights - a bit more expensive (60Y/night) but brand-new. It was afternoon and we were frozen, so at 16.30 already, we sat down in a side-street and had excellent, very tasty fried rice! Soon we were shivering again and so we returned to the guest house where the owners asked us into their lounge for tea..... that was nice and they could also give some info about tomorrow's round walk, which, they guessed, would be over 35km. They laughed at first when they heard that we want to do it on foot.....we'll see! Now it is 7pm and Peggy will just start to get a hot shower and I can't wait to get one too!</p>			

4. March	Start: Shuyang	End: Shuyang	Round-walk: 36+ km /7h net (9h on feet)
<p>This was intended to be our last and memorable Tulou-walking-day! Got up early and it was cold. Had our daily coffee quickly and left at 8.30. Lucky morning: just beside the guest house there were street stalls selling yau jia guai, bao ze and man tau! What a start to a challenging walk! We chose to do the loop clock-wise (starting southerly over the mountains) since the main attraction, Tianluokeng (田螺坑土楼群) would be quicker to reach. The road was quite steep and so we quickly got into the first layer of fog and later into a 2nd layer. But we still enjoyed as there was little traffic and quite many things (such as Tulou's:-)) to see on the way. Somewhere Peggy picked up a fresh pomelo from the soil - it was hard to open but very nice to eat (cold).</p>			
<p>After 13km we reached the top entrance to the Tianluokeng compound. Of course one has to pay a hefty entrance fee.... well - we were the only back-packers walking and Peggy told them that we are old people - 'the old man over 70 and she 62'. So we were just let through....hahaha! Tianluokeng is probably the nicest Tulou-group-setting as it is geometrically unique and perched on a terrace of a big mountain slope so one can see it from top and bottom. The Tulou's themselves are immersed in tourism set-ups and seemed individually not any more special than many of the Tulou's we had seen on the way.</p>			
			
<p>Soon we continued down the valley passing-by an 800 year old Tulou before visiting Yuchanglou (裕昌楼) and later the very touristic village, Taxia (塔下), with promenades along the river and an old temple devoted to the original family Zhang. The pillars are dragons devoted to honoured ancestors. I don't know how many Tulou's we have seen so far. We had done over 20km and it was already 2pm but we decided to complete the round-walk..... 4km on a small road along a sparkling creek until after Quijiang we reached and crossed the 1km long Hekeng (河坑) road tunnel.</p>			
			
<p>Here we saw that we still had 11km to go on a big concrete road. It was quite hard but the mountainous scenery while crossing over a pass distracted us from tiredness. The clou was, as we approached the end of our tour, that we passed-by a brand-new enormous tourist visitor center: 1km of empty car/bus parkings and terminals! It must be a horror in the seasons to come!</p>			
<p>It was 5pm and we went straight to last night's nice lady to have dinner.... spaghetti-type fried noodles, Chefe (sugar-peas) and hollow vegetable.....all delicious and Peggy debriefing with the lady:-). Then bought some rice schnaps from the barrel for the night cap. At the room we had a good shower and a coffee with a cup of schnaps! Now it is 9pm - the last Tulou-day was the culmination, the weather today had been ok and so we can leave tomorrow in heavy rain with no regrets! Today I felt my age not only my feet were hurting from fast concrete-walking but when at about half-way, I had to empty stones from my shoes, I contracted a bad back and hip.....some more was to come.....</p>			
			Nice Lady cooking very well!

5. March	Start: Shuyang	End: Changtai (长泰县)	bus to Nanjing 1h, bus to Zhangzhou: 40', bus to Changtai: 30'
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Note This morning it rained and rained and the next few days it will rain even more and be even much colder to sum it up - we had been lucky!
 2nd morning that we wake up with the morning routine of the school's loudspeakers - starting with chimes at 6am - a few minutes later a beautiful trumpet solo! Once in a while there are announcements until after 8 am the children are assembled in the school-yard and do their exercises with music (some of course military music). In the meantime we had our breakfast in the room (yaujiaguai, bao and mantau again) and then Peggy packed.
 There was no bus station but a road-side desk at the bus-stop.



We participated in morning routine at school

We easily got the bus to Nanjing (南靖) and changed to the city of Zhangzhou. Here Peggy had some hesitations as there was no direct bus to Putian, our ultimate target. So we took a bus to Changtai, a smaller town in the right direction, as we did not want to stop for the night in huge cities like Xiamen. When we got off in Changtai, it looked like a dead-end for today as there was an onward bus only next morning. It was only 2pm but we decided to take it easy and Peggy quickly found a good, huge room for 50Y. Went out for a stroll at 3.30pm ... it was cold, gray and drizzling a bit ... soon we saw this man in the doorway of a small eating place making - mini-ravioli - we could not resist and had a lovely ravioli soup.



Bike with gloves



Hand-made mini-ravioli soup

After a turn in a temple we continued and bumped into this kebab stall nice smell, 5Y - I could not resist and had one of the juiciest kebabs ever! Dilemma: we were half full ... too full for a meal as we wondered what to do we passed a stall selling ready-to eat intestines etc. We decided for picnic in our huge room and bought pig-tongue, tripes, lobat (white raddish) and a few beers. At 6pm all that yammie was already over!
 Now Peggy is cutting her trousers to make a pijama while I am waiting for a warm coffee. The evening of this lazy day ended with a tv-serie about a father, his allied son-in-law against the incredibly nasty daughter (so obviously nasty - that even I could follow).



Succulent yammie Kebab



Road-side intestine stall

6. March	Start: Changtai	End: Putian (莆田)	bus to Quanzhou: 3h, bus to Putian: 2h
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I had left the phone on because of alarm at 6am. At 4.50 the phone made noise and Peggy got up and started..... but it was a 'historical' sms from Evi letting us know that she got the new job at ZH-Tourism..... so we went back to sleep. When we got to the bus station at 7am, we were told that the bus to Putian was cancelled as the driver was ill..... but there would be an alternative bus at 8am to Quanzhou (泉州) half-way. Just as well as we now had time for super yaujiaguai and then a little stroll over the big river. The 3h bus-ride was smooth and offered interesting things to see, such as, driving 15km with nothing than dozens of stone processing factories before passing ceramics companies for another 5km... just awesome.



Quiet early morning stroll

In Quanzhou we got a bus to Putian right away and arrived at 2pm about 2km outside the city center. It was cold (max 12°) and very windy and unpleasantly drizzling. Walking to town then erring around for quite a long time (had a small oyster cake from a road-side stall) until Peggy found a guest house with a just bearable room at 15.15. A cup of warm tea and off we went to look for a place to eat. Now it was even colder and it rained heavily which limited our search to a nearby side street. We settled at a rather poor looking place as it had doors to protect us from cold - the spicey small snails were delicious and also the vegies with pork and bacon were very nice. I just had to get up every 10 minutes to close the door again!



Delicious spicey Snails

Got back to the room half frozen. Peggy bothered to take a shower and I went straight to bed at 6pm! after having done my plumber job to fix the shower! Change of mind - have a warm coffee and a bikky first!

7. March	Start: Putian	End: Putian	Walk round town
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Note: Peggy had chosen to visit this side of the chinese coast and had selected Putian as the ultimate target because apparently her earlier Lam-family ancestors had moved to the Guangzhou region from the Putian region. In fact we did not really know what to expect here as Putian was not even mentioned in the Lonely Planet. It was to be an as-you-go-and-survival-day. The morning started very cold, gray and below 10° and the room did not look more inviting than yesterday.

We left at 10am and of course we first walked to the older part of the city-center and soon reached a large traditional mansion, now a (free) museum. To our surprise there was an orchestra (amateur) playing traditional music. It would have been fine to sit and listen for a while but there was a cold draught spoiling the fun. So we continued to walk the lovely small streets with small shops and stalls and then entered an obscure breakfast place serving cheungfan soup (which Peggy adored) and yaojiaguai.



Trad'l music at museum



Cosy little streets



Cheungfan soup

Then we just followed the nose and passed a large temple compound with an antics market, uncouneted historical stone exhibits and a library where Peggy did some research while I froze to death! Eventually we reached another large interesting temple compound with huge Buddha statues and Arhats. The top terrace was on a slope overlooking town from where one had a nice view. It was 12.30 - Peggy intended to board a shuttle to the Guanghua temple (广化寺).



Temple entrance...



.... view from terrace....



....and Arhats all over...

But now heavy rain started.... so we just went into a large shopping compound (with a Carrefour - well, for us it was fun to compare the Chinese version) to let the rain ease off here we were stuck until after 15.00. Out in the rain again we realised that there was another shopping mall in a former public bomb-shelter, deep (at least 20m) under the main street, extending for about 500m - very awkward but relatively warm! Here we spent another hour to kill time. As it still rained we just visited one more temple with very rich decorations devoted to the Tin Hau Goddess where many (also young) people did their rituals for their good luck!



Now it was 16.30 and we did not know what else to do than going to have dinner. Peggy pushed me to say what I want to eat but as I did not know what local specialities would suit I just could not answer (I did not want KFC!) and so we ended up at the same place as last night. The food was quite good again but Peggy would have preferred another place (me too, if we had found one), mainly she complained about the people smoking. We got back to the room at 6pm. Peggy went under the shower and was horrified when the water turned ice-cold just as she was washing her hair - when I had fixed the shower last night I had accidentally turned off the boiler.... I was not very praised for that!

I was also not in a sparkling mood as my back kept hurting badly in certain positions and when getting up from low seats. As I complete above report it is 7.30pm.... Peggy fell asleep at 8pm and I watched old tennis matches. The water had not warmed up much and I did not feel like fighting with leaking tubes.....

8. March	Start: Putian	End: Chongwu (崇武)	4 buses. 1) to Xiuyu 1h40', then back to Hushi 20' 2) to Fengting 30', 3) Hui'an 30', 4) to Chongwu 30'
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After a reasonable sleep - it was still cold and raining. Then at 9am we took a small bus to the end of a peninsula of Meizhou Bay (湄洲湾) at Xiuyu (秀屿) hoping we would get a ferry to continue as the weather was bad we could not face walking the 2km to the pier and so we returned with the same bus to Hushi (笏石) for changing bus 'homewards' to Fengting (枫亭), another bus to Hui'an (惠安) for a last bus to turn off towards the shore at Chongwu which we reached at around 13.00. The bus rides were very entertaining and it was amazing again how easy it was for Peggy to get the next bus each time with short or no waiting time. It was very cold and windy and so we first went for a beef noodle soup - and then while I waited, Peggy went to look for a room. After 45' she came back wet and shivering. She had found a room for 20Y and booked for 2 nights. It turned out to be so grotty and had not even a tv to take the eyes off the dirty walls! I could just have cried I was then very grateful that Peggy had realised my distress and so we went to take a better room in a small hotel for 70Y.

Now, at 14.30 I was ready for sightseeing a small harbour with fishing boats lying on the ground at low tide, a big sculptures park (too touristic for us) ... then we found the small entrance in the old city wall and entered the ancient town with a labyrinth of small paved lanes. Quickly we lost our orientation until we reached a temple with nuns singing nicely. Here was a stair up to the city wall from where we could locate ourselves again. We walked on the crown of the wall for 1km with great view to the sculptures in the adjacent park and over the sea to another old town in the distance: Dazhuo (大岞). At the main city gate (at Half-Moon Bay) we could re-enter the old city and enjoy strolling back through the busy lanes to the harbour and the new city.

Rain had been on and off and I could not understand why Peggy wanted to have cold picknick in the cold room (Peggy wanted to wash her hair - but then didn't). We bought yammie bbq'd duck etc and 3 beers (2.9%)..... in the end we felt so freezing cold we could not even face to drink the 3rd bottle. So we took a hot shower and then had coffee and tea in bed at 7.30 pm. I had a good sleep after watching Wawrinka - Nadal in 3rd and 4th sets in the Melbourne Final (replay) on CCTV-5.



9. March	Start: Chongwu	End: Shuitou (水头)	Walk to Dazhuo and back: 10+km and 4 Buses 1) to Luoyang Bridge 30', 2) shuttle 13 to Quanzhou 20', 3) shuttle 802 to Jinjiang, 4) bus to Shuitou 50'
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The morning started brighter and so we decided to walk to the old town, Dazuo (大岞村). First we crossed and enjoyed the old Chongwu city again to Half Moon Bay. Then nice walk following the shore to the harbour of Dazhuo which we reached after 1h. This area is renowned for the ladies wearing traditional head-scarfs and we saw them everywhere. Walking through town we had lunch in a simple place (fried rice and wonton soup). Then walked up on small paths and stairs to the temple on top of the hill with breathtaking viewswe were lucky to have a bright sunny sky! Easy walk down, this time on proper paths and then back the same way to Chongwu and the guest-house we reached at 13.30.



We got a bus back to the main road leading to Quanzhou but we got off beforehand to visit the 1000 year old Luoyang Bridge (洛阳桥), over 800m long. We enjoyed the walk on the bridge crossing the estuary of a big river while admiring the huge stone works. Back to the mainroad we hopped on a shuttle to Quanzhou. Peggy had asked where to get off to get a bus onwards to Jinjiang (晋江). Lucky or not but the next shuttle 802 was unexpectedly the right one.... It was late afternoon and I would have liked to stay in Jinjiang, this bustling suburb with many street food-stalls.



I stood around in the cold for a long while until Peggy came back totally frustrated from her room hunt. In this town no guest house would take foreigners (not even Hongkongese). Very upsetting, but from experience no point to dwell on it - we just hopped on a bus again for 1h to the next town, Shuitou, where we arrived at 17.45. Peggy found a good room easily by 18.00! At 18.30 we already started our dinner in a small Szechuan restaurant (5 tables) and enjoyed one of the best meals so far - the local food, chiu Chow cuisine, is not very tasty. Got back to the room at 8pm. It had been a busy day - the first sunny day and not too cold since a long time - THANKS! In the end it was good we stopped here as we would be able to visit another ancient bridge in the morning on foot, leaving the backpacks in the care of the guesthouse.....



... a nice Szechuan Meal

10. March	Start: Shuitou	End: Zhangpu (漳浦)	3 buses, 1) to Zhangzhou, 2.5h, 2) to Zhangpu 1h, 3) shuttle to center 15'
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Got up at 8am after a good night. At 9.30 we left to walk to the Anping Bridge (安平桥), the longest stone bridge in China: 2255m - built around 1150. On the way, as we crossed a lively market, we had a sort of onion-storch pizza and yaujiaguai. Although there was a strong cool wind we enjoyed the walk over the entire length of the bridge and back again. Then picked up our backpacks and got money from the ATM of the Bank of China (other banks did not like my cash-card from the Swiss Post).



Anping Bridge - 2250m

Then had to wait 40' on the roadside for hopping on a bus to Zhangzhou at 12.50. It was not a nice ride as the bus' windows were covered with darkblue foils. Then got a connection to Zhangpu immediately at 15.15 and arrived 1h later at the bus stop outside town. A shuttle took us to the center. Peggy then went to look for a room. While I was waiting outside a 'design center', feeling cold, a young 'nosy' lady asked me in and when Peggy came back after 30' we were served hot tea inside the shop. Peggy had found a very good room (5th floor, no lift) and, oh wonder, **a sitting-toilet!**



The Invitation for hot Tea was very welcome!

After settling we went to look for a place to eat.... opposite there was a self-service canteen - the food looked unappetising.... Peggy asked me if I mind - I had interpreted this as she would not like to walk further in the soggy/cold weather - and said 'I don't mind' intending to please her. The food was most unexciting and almost cold. Unsatisfied we left and still went for a short walk when Peggy suddenly insisted that it was me pushing 'to eat there!' Ohoh - the evening was then 'loaded'. So I bought a flask of a chinese 35% liquor (I had seen people enjoying) - it turned out to taste like Appenzeller - not bad, really - but it did not improve our moods.

11. March	Start: Zhangpu	End: Zhangpu	stayed in warm bed till after 4pm!
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It rained and rained and it was cold! So we stayed in bed except for coffee and instant noodles at lunch - Peggy booked this comfortable room for 2 more nights! At 4pm, after 2 tv-series, the rain stopped and so we walked out and looked for a place to have a nice meal..... nothing attracting us! Then in a market Peggy saw this nice roast duck! Half duck for 15Y plus a flask of 'Appenzeller', then heading for a nice noodle place. Bingo! A huge serving of fried noodles and a huge serving of fried rice-noodles with the roast duck! This put us back on the feet! Back to the room at 7pm - usual evening with tv etc. Tomorrow we will visit the peninsula we missed out today.



Today's Rain-View!

12. March	Start: Zhangpu	End: Zhangpu	walk 14km - 3h Shuttle to bus station, bus to LiuAo Rocks return 2 x 1h
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Thunder and heavy rain at night - rain had stopped at 8am! So we decided to visit the Liu Ao Rocks (六鳌) and surroundings on a small peninsula. Peggy got a bus quite easily and we had a nice drive on small roads through countryside and villages. Got off 6 km before Liu'aozhen (六鳌镇) to walk to the Liu Ao Rocks. First we passed a big shipyard and then we suddenly entered a small 'moon-landscape'. Really interesting formations and phantasy-rocks. Visited for 1h and then walked back to the main road which we followed to Liu'aozhen.



Liu Ao: the main gap...



.... inspiring rocks....such as



the Earth Stone

The walk was entertaining as there was a lot going on in the fields we also passed-by a harvest of my favourite white radish (白萝卜) popular in Germany with beer and in China (&Hongkong) for Loba'go (Radish-Roeschti). Then walked through the old parts of Liu'aozhen and on to the sea shore. Enjoyed to see and watch traditional fishing-life and the particular shore atmosphere on the dam overseeing an armada of fishing boats.



White radish



Making fishing nets



On the shore

As we did not come across any yammie-looking eating place here, we decided to take the bus back at 15.50 not having eaten anything today. This time we did not mess around and went straight back to our nice lady at last night's noodle place. Warm reception - then she prepared yammie oyster cake (specially for us), fried rice and rice noodles! In the meantime it rained again and we were soaked when we reached the room at 18.30. Now was time for some 'Appenzeller' and bisquits then a warm shower. Although we had not seen the sun today, it was not cold at least. The gray and wet however will persist until we reach Hongkong.



Warm welcome!

PS Earlier on the trip Padi had informed us by sms that he would come to see us in Hongkong - Great News! Today he let us know that he would come with the kids....ohoh. Now Peggy got concerned about Ah Yuens sister's apartment not being ready! So we decided to go back on saturday instead of sunday..... today is wednesday! Better move on then - hopping on small local buses!

13th March	Start: Zhangpu	End: Chenghai (澄海)	Bus hopping - 6 buses (between 9am and 3pm) 1) Shuttle (15'), 2) to Duxun (40'), 3) to Yunciao (45'), 4) Zhao'an (1h) 5) Raoping (30'), 6) Chenghai (1h)
<p>Today was quite nice and comfortable weather and we did bus-hopping most of the day. At 9am we took the shuttle to the ringroad and then a first short drive to Duxun (杜浚), then to Yunciao (云霄) which was quite a city and from the bus I had seen a big covered market. There we went to have 'brunch' at 11am - noodles, fish-ball soup and some kind of frikadel rolls and on the way out I could not refuse a little cake. Easily got buses on to Zhao'an (诏安) and Raoping (饶平) which had been our target for today.</p>			  
<p>As it was still quite early and no suitable guesthouse in sight we did one more hop to Chenghai, a busy and industrial suburb of Shantou. A bit shabby impression but Peggy found a room on the 10th floor (with lift) with view to the surrounding factories (mostly toys - look for 'Chenghai Toys' in Google!). Then we walked around town for 2h, looking for a fine if not exciting place to have dinner - no way! So we went to eat at the little shed just around the corner - with stirfried dishes - they were ok too! We got back to the room before 7pm and had a beer as there was not even a tv - and the toilet flush did not work - I even had the staff to come up to give them a demo for them to give us a bucket!</p>			
<p>As we have time and there is no tv, Peggy and I disagree on the number of buses we took today - Peggy with a chinese map and me with an alphabetic (pinyin) map - almost like peace-talks between Israeli and Palestians.... Now I will have a coffee and a mouth of 'Cn-Appenzeller' and then will feel bored - nothing to talk about, nothing to read..... I am now counting the hours to get back to Hongkong and there are 11h to go till next morning.</p>			

14. March	Start: Chenghai	End: Haifeng (海丰)	Bus hopping - 3 buses 1) to Puning (2.5h), 2) to Lufeng (2h),) to Haifeng (1h)
<p>Indeed, the night was long I had awkward dreams, possibly because of loud industrial noises every 15'! We got up at 7am and had a few 'sa lun bao' near the bus terminal. We had absolutely no mind for going to visit Shantou (or any big city) so we looked for a destination after Shantou, such as Puning (普宁) - we left at 9.30 - we had the best seats and as the bus crossed Shantou we got a little idea of the city - and we also had a 'Zugabe' as the bus made a north-ward detour via Jieyang (揭阳). There we had an immediate connection to Lufeng (陆丰) with best seats again - there hopped on a already departing bus to Haifeng where we arrived at 15.15. Peggy got a room easily for 50Y in this busy small half-million city!</p>			
<p>We turned around in very dull weather for over 1h but found no place of our liking to eat. In the end we settled for pre-cooked beef on rice and spare ribs on rice but then also had a 'sesame pizza' to enjoy something*..... then bought some beer and returned to the room at 6pm - so early again - at least we have tv this last night in China! Looking forward to see Padi and the kids soon! Note*: In the eastern part of Guangdong (around Shantou) Chiuchow cooking (潮州 - Chaozhou in Mandarin) is predominant. For our liking it is rather tasteless but it is very appreciated by chinese people on the 'health trip' (also in Hongkong).</p>			

15. March	Start: Haifeng	End: Tuen Mun (Hongkong)	Bus hopping - 7 buses - 1) to Huidong (1h), 2) to Huiyang (1h), 3) Shuttle in Huiyang, 4) bus to Bao'an (1.5h), 5) shuttle to Shekou (1.5h), 6) shuttle to border (15'), 7) shuttle to Tuen Mun (20')
<p>Long but reasonable night. As there was no direct bus to Shenzhen we started step-by-step bus-hopping again. Only Peggy can do that efficiently! Took first bus with good seats to Huidong (惠东) at 8.20. Got a bus to Huiyang (惠东) immediately - luxury bus - no view! Got off on the road and had to take shuttle to bus station - immediate bus to Bao'an. It was an express bus and it cost 40Y each* and Peggy got mad at me because apparently I pushed her to take it (I just did not want to miss it!). As Shenzhen is very big it was just as well that we took the smooth ride on the Shenhai motorway for the 80km to the other end of Shezhen at Bao'an (宝安). The shuttle to Shekou was easy but very slow due to heavy traffic. We changed once more at the Shekou terminal to the border which we reached at 3pm. Smoothly through the immigration - then long waiting for the bus to Tuen Mun. Yammie Wonton noodles before walking back to Rocky's home - ready for a beer at 5pm - nice evening with Rocky's then sleep.</p>			
<p>End of China Trip - probably the last for me - Btw - I had a very swollen ankle from bus hopping!</p>			

Hongkong - Part 2 (Padi and Twins in Hongkong & Gobi's Wedding)

Sat 15th March - Mon 17 th March	Getting ready for Padi and Kids
<p>Right after arrival at Rocky, Peggy called Ah Yuen's sister to arrange a meeting at her apartment to make sure we can use it with Padi and the kids.....arriving from Oz on Tuesday! When we got there on sunday morning - I nearly panicked: the small flat was still in a total mess! Now Peggy started to get things moving - by the evening there was just enough space for Peggy and me to stay the night with promesses for another few things to go on Monday before Padi's and the kids' arrival. In the end Ah Yuen's sister even thanked Peggy for the help as she would have been overwhelmed to handle the moving on her own.</p>	
Tue 18 th March - 22 nd March	Padi and Kids arrive

We were early at the airport ok - but then we waited for 2 hours until they finally appeared. Their suitcase had not arrived - and was traced to be stuck in Kuala Lumpur. Got to the bus at 12am only. First to the apartment and then it was 2.30pm when we had yamcha nearby in Cheung Sha Wan. Then had to rush to go shopping to replace missing items and things needed to attend Gobi's wedding tomorrow. The kids enjoyed the shopping and everything else ... Hongkong was their thing right away!



at last they arrived...



egg tart...mmm

Wed 19th March

Get to Airport to collect lost Suitcase / **Gobi & Wai's Wedding**

Voilà - Patrick got news that the suitcase can be collected around 11am so I joined Patrick with the bus to the airport ... it was not lost time as we had the chance to update - Patrick told me that he wishes to come back to Switzerland but that at the same time they intend to buy a house in Perth.... ohoh!?! (He also told me the news from their visit to Detlef (it turned out to be the last visit). After we returned by 2pm - preparations for joining the wedding party started and we left at 3.30pm to make a nice turn at the waterfront in Tsim Sha Tsui before turning up at the party at 5.30pm. The kids loved the bus-drive through Kowloon in front of the upper deck.



Tsimshatsui...



... Ocean takes picture!

It was a nice wedding party with many people but a long wait until the actual ceremony started with the tea serving. Strange was that the 2 families did not mix at all. The twins loved to get attention by all the younger and older aunties.... At last, at 9pm, the dinner was served. The first 6 courses of the 12-course meal were delicious but then, as usually the rush started in order to finish on time and go home at 10pm - what a pity! We got home at 10.30pm.



Tea serving



...ceremony

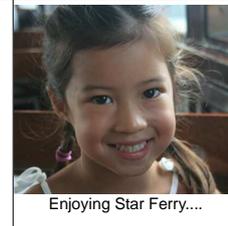


.... photo shooting - no end

Thu 20th March

Wanchai for Photo-Shooting at Central Plaza, **62nd Floor** - Visit & Dinner on **Chengchau Island**

Padi and the kids had passed Sydney on the way to Hongkong to apply for Swiss passports for the kids. Since the photo gear in the consulate was out of service they had been permitted to shoot the photos at the consulate in Hongkong. The day was to be busy because we also had arranged for an outing to Cheungchau Island. Nice bus ride on upper floor to Tsim Sha Tsui to take Star Ferry across to Wanchai in nice weather again. Go up (ears-popping) to 62nd floor - very kind welcome at consulate and nice view - the kids said 'look at the toy cars down there!' Photo session also on the 360° intermediate lift-exchange Sky-Deck on 46th.



Enjoying Star Ferry....

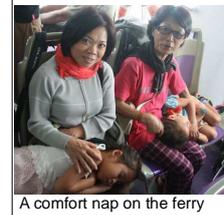


... Sky Deck...



Tram Riding too!

Then we went for yammie wonton noodle soup in the ever-crowded Wanchai market, then boarded over-crowded tram and rode on the upperdeck to Central. Now we had 30' left to go up half of the mid-level travelator before joining Ella, Edwin and Jessica at the Cheungchau ferry pier at 1pm. Of course not only the kids enjoyed the cruise, first along the harbour and then in the open sea to the Island (on the way the kids took a quickie). We arrived at 2.30pm and then we strolled through the small streets at first .. the kids enjoyed to see all sorts of strange things (for them) and we all had some tidbits here and there.



A comfort nap on the ferry



... strange things - dried fish

After about an hour we moved over to the beach-side and the kids played in the sand for a while before we continued to do the Rock Walk to admire some phantasy rock formations. On the way we saw a green snake (they are called 'Greater Green Snakes' and according to Wikipedia '....when encountered, they are mild-mannered and rarely bite'). **Note:** Cheungchau was already one of my favourite places before I met Peggy in 1972....



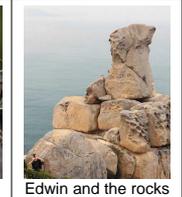
enjoy another beach



Rock Walk en famille



... a bit frightening...



Edwin and the rocks

It has become tradition over the years that we complete a visit to Chengchau with a seafood dinner, always at the same place.... again we all had fun and a good mood before taking the ferry back. Sailing into Hongkong harbour at night is always a great experience. Then riding a bus on upper deck through the illuminated streets all the way to Cheungshawan is another experience which I enjoy every time I am in Hongkong - the kids loved it too - obviously!.



...happy dinner....



...etc



.. bus to home..

Fri 21st March

Final Shopping in Tsimshatsui and BBQ Party with Family in Tuen Mun



Kowloon Park



Trolley full....



Tsimshatsui Taipaitong under Flyover

Another busy day... after breakfast we took a bus again to Tsimshatsui for clothes shopping but first we made a turn in Kowloon Park where we admired the Flamingos. After shopping a full trolley-load of fashion we deserved lunch in a taipaitong under a flyover. 2 varieties of fried noodles and fried rice. Now they wanted to do some more shopping so we continued in Tsimshatsui East endlessly (it seemed.....)

Fortunately shopping took an end when we had to go back in time to continue by bus to Old Coffee Beach in Tuen Mun for a lovely BBQ with the family. So nice and everybody happy to resume from the wedding party **5 of the 7 top Lam's** (Toni, Peggy, Ella, Rocky, Stemson) and most of their families (3 generations) were there! We started at 5pm and finished after 10pm. At 1am was bed-time for the last night of Padi & kids.



Chinese BBQ - Old Coffee Bay



Rocky took the Picture



Gobi - just married & Twins

Sat 22nd March

Last Yamm Cha for Padi and Kids with Grand Aunties and Aunties



The Twins all over Auntie Dora



Océane on AhYi's Lap

The last day we had very nice 4 generation Yam Cha with Great Grand Auntie Ah Yee on top of the hierarchy. The kids stuck like glue to Auntie Dora, but Auntie Ella and Uncle Stemson were very popular too - of course!
Then came departure time and after a last chance for a turn in a shoe shop we took the bus to the airport together with Auntie Dora and Stemson and then had to let them go....



Bye till next time!

.... at that moment we did not yet intend to join Patrick and An-Dao's beach-wedding at Ningaloo Reef in only 4 weeks time! We had only been told about the wedding yesterday - and Peggy had right away bought wedding-rings for them!

Sun, 23rd March

Relaxing for the rest of the stay in Hongkong

Today we stayed alone and took it easy - walking to and around Shamshuipo, buying a large supply of batteries for my hearing aids and having lunch at a simple Indian Restaurant. Then went over to Mongkok for the usual turn at women street.

Mon, 24th March

Another relaxing but active day to **the Peak** and dinner with **Andrew and the ladies**

Enjoyed the bus and Star Ferry rides to Central and then took the 800m long escalator up 135m to the top-end at Conduit Road along small steep lanes between high-rise buildings and then followed the very steep Old Peak Rd through the forest to the Peak Tram Station. Then took the circle path clockwise, as usually first on the sea-side overlooking Aberdeen and the islands and then walking back on the harbour-side with splendid views! We had done that many times but we still are overwhelmed each time. Today we even had clear weather!



Up on the Travelators



View from Peak

We had plenty of time and enjoyed strolling to the various view points. Then, as my ankle was still swollen, I took the bus down to Central while Peggy walked back down. This is always a very spectacular bus drive.
We met at Star Ferry again to cross over to Kowloon-Side to meet Andrew and 2 of his lady-friends in Canton Rd for Sushi dinner. The food and the sake were great and plenty and we had a very enjoyable evening. Thanks Andrew ... see you in France later this September!



... just enjoying



Reflections



Sushi w Andrew

Tue, 25th March

Yamm Cha with the other Great Grand Aunties at **Kowloon Bai** (East of former airport)

Took the bus with Ella to Kowloon Bay to have Yam Cha with Toni, Ah Yuen and Theater Auntie. Kowloon Bay has become a huge shopping compound and one cannot see any bay there anymore! I am not sure but think after yamcha we hung around the shopping center for a while and then went to Toni's home for a moment before returning to Cheungshawan where we had a simple bite near the apartment..



Wed, 26th March

Dinner at 2nd Brother - Shopping at Laichikok Outlets

I seem to remember that we went to see some factory shops at Laichikok and bought this and that (e.g. sports shoes). In the afternoon we took the bus to Kwai Chung and walked to the 2 elder Lam-Brothers' home at Shek Yam for dinner. We had a good time with them and the wives made a sumptuous meal in very traditional home cooking way - you have to be used to it to enjoy certain things. After dinner and much laughing Man Wah took us down to the bus while she still had laughing attacks.



Traditional Home Cooking



Ladies' Fun

Thu, 27th March

Excursion to Saikung

Nice wheather and free time.... so we decided to visit Saikung, a popular fishing harbour at the eastern side of Kowloon. Bus to Kowloon Bay first and then over nice hills and along the shore to Saikung. Just enjoyed being there for a few hours having picknick and watching the scenery, tourists, boats, birds etc. A few years ago, we had walked from Hung Hom to Saikung passing Leiyuemun and crossing hill-tops and then the last 10km down to Hebe Haven and on to Saikung in complete dark.... at that time we just returned back home.



Saikung ... hanging around...



... 'floating market'

Fri, 28th March

Yam Cha with Rocky (Cheungshawan) - Toni comes to collect a cupboard



Tonking Mansion ... still..



Yamcha with Rocky

Another easy day ...starting with my soya noodles / Yaujiaguai (passing by Tonking Mansion). Then I only remember that we had a nice yamcha with Rocky at lunchtime and that in the evening Toni came to collect a cupboard at our place (Ah Yuen's sister's apartment). Later I helped him to take it home. In the dark I did not find the right bus stop to get back directly and so I interchanged in Mongkok enjoying the night atmosphere around Argyle Street / Nathan Rd. Pity we did not go more often out for that.....



'Our apartment'

Sat, 29th March

Shopping turn in Tsimshatsui (buying Ocean's Suitcase) and Afternoon Tea with Peggy's School-friends



Queen Elisabeth & Ocean's case



Peggy's Hairdressing stuff

Another shopping turn in Tsimshatsui before having Yamcha with Peggy's old school-friends in Nathan Rd. Here we found the suitcase Ocean wanted, then Peggy went to her usual shop beside Temple Street to buy her hair-dressing products. I then went to take the suitcase back and forgot the key to the apartment but in the end we were on time back in Nathan Rd to meet Peggy's friends. As usually it was a happy crowd and the food was delicious. They got me Singapore noodles for desert!



with Peggy's school-friends



Jewellery for wedding ring

On the way back, in Castle Peak Rd, we passed-by the shop where Peggy had bought the wedding rings for Patrick and Anh-Dao last week. In the evening Stemson came by to help me moving our luggage to his place as we would have to return the apartment very early tomorrow morning.

Sun, 30th March

Yamm Cha (again) with the 2 Aunties in Causeway Bay - Dinner with Piano Cousin in Cheung Wan



Wanchai Skyline with New Mercury House

After clearing up we left early. We very much enjoyed the walk from Star Ferry to Wanchai, first along the new waterfront and then through Suzie Wong's world in downtown Wanchai (passing 'The Old China Hand' etc) to Times Square in Causeway Bay to have Yamcha with the Aunties, Ella and Manwah. As we were far too early - we killed time taking the Tram to Shaukeiwan and back (1.5h). When we met the Aunties at the restaurant they had been sitting here for over 2 hours to reserve the table...ohoh! As usually we had a long session of good dimsum and at some time we were joined by the TV-Star daughter of Little Auntie.



Once more the old Lam-side Aunties... the one with Hat was our witness 1972!



Times Square - Rado at the back

Later we hung around in the busy area and marvelled at how this site had developed in the last 42 years! There is a Rado sign just above Peggy's head - by the time I write these lines, Rado has already become history for us! The day was not finished and we took the Tram to Cheung Wan to visit the Piano Cousin in her Piano School premises. Here we had an improvised take away dinner until late, before taking the MTR to Tsuen Wan. In the meantime a heavy thunderstorm had developed and it was quite an adventure to reach Stemson's home under extreme rainfall. We then enjoyed a little time with them, calming down before going to sleep.



With 'Piano Cousin'

Mon, 31st March

Rocky's big 60th Birthday Party - The night at Stemson

Tonight will be another event - Rocky's 60th birthday-party - well, he probably shifted it a bit to enable all 7 Lam brothers and sisters to be together! When we got up in the morning, all of Stemson's family had gone out already. We had an appointment at the dentist in the late morning in Tsuen Wan - then strolled around Tsuen Wan before walking to the Restaurant in Shek Yam again. It was a very nice family gathering and a great dinner!



Big Family Lam - only a few missing

Thank You Rocky!



The 7 Top Lam Brothers and Sisters!



.....



.....



....all that was left!



.... and some Black Label

Tue, 1st April

Shopping in Tsuen Wan - then Airport and Departure

Had another nice sit-together with Stemson's last night saying good-bye. Then went to a last shopping and snack turn in Tsuen Wan before going to airport early. All went smoothly and around mid-night we boarded BA's brand-new A380 for a comfortable flight. All went well in London too and we reached home in the early afternoon of the 2nd April.

Note I have been a bit detailed about our stay in Hongong this time ... 1st it was memorable for Padi's and the kids' visit but then I cannot stop thinking each time by now that it could be the last for me.... so I try to live and re-live each time as intensively as possible.



Ocean's suitcase inside....

Australia - Padi and Anh-Dao's Wedding and staying on in Perth (13. April - 13.May)

2nd April to 13th April - At Home changing our Mind

As noted in Part 2 - Hongkong, we had only in Hongkong been told of the forthcoming wedding of Padi and Anh-Dao to take place on 22nd of April up at Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia. So when we returned to CH on 2nd April we really intended to stay home and forget about travelling to Australia so soon again. It was mainly my condition which prevented me from being enthusiastic - I felt still emotionally exhausted and physically diminished (e.g. my swollen and sore ankle from bus-hopping in China) to even think of booking flights again to be in Perth on time by latest 15th April (less than 2 weeks at home).

So it went until tuesday morning, 8th April, at breakfast, when Peggy suddenly weeped and said that she would never forgive herself for not having attended to her son's wedding.....!!!!

So we checked the whole internet for a good flight to Perth. On wednesday I made my first attempt to book a flight - which failed because I kept entering a wrong pin code..... well ... give up then.... In the evening I applied for Oz-visa which was granted almost immediately..... thursday we looked again and friday we saw this KLM flight - Singapore return which we managed to connect to cheap flights of Jetstar to Perth and back! Bingo - depart Zürich on Sunday, 13th. afternoon to Amsterdam!

To and in Perth - Sun, 13th April to Wed, 16th April

Sunday afternoon we had a smooth flight to Amsterdam. While flying over Hoek van Holland at the estuary of the Maas, we saw the site where we camped 2 nights during our bicycle trip to NL in 2006. Smooth flight with plenty of leg room to Singapore. Arrived quite fit on Monday in the afternoon. Easy interchange to Jetstar. On the way nearing Australia we flew over a beautiful but awesome eye of a cyclone. We landed in Perth before mid-night where Patrick collected us with a tight hug ...same with the others when we arrived at Leeder Street. Then bed-time of course.



Next day, Tuesday, we just stayed around and recovered while enjoying the kids and Laura's company, the Swiss au-pair, who had been looking after them for the last 6 months. In the evening, during dinner, Patrick brought the news that a house offer they made had just now been awarded to them.....wow.... a first down payment would have to be made within a very short period - that meant action before leaving on Thursday! I sent a mail immediately to our young BeKB-man asking him for help telling him we will leave within 2 days to the outback without any communication coverage. The next morning the answer had arrived and then all went smoothly (on that side at least)!



Kids singing with Laura

Next morning, Wednesday, we wanted to see that house of course and so Peggy and I walked there to the shore of Herdsman Lake in Churchlands. The house made us a good impression and we knew this area well already! In the evening Patrick went to pick up Evelyne and Rafa at the airport and then we had a nice welcome family dinner (farewell for Laura). First time all 4 of us were together in Australia! The next morning we will leave to the North already.....



...on sale



.. road-side



... Herdsman Lake-side

Thu, 17th - Up to the Ningaloo Reef and gathering before the Wedding happening on Tue, 22nd April

We, the 6 adults and the twins, left on 17th with 2 cars before 11am. One tent on top Patrick's 4WD Toyota Prado and one big tent in the boot. We tried to get as far as possible and so drove well past Geraldton and after sunset - having done 500km we stopped for the night at a free parking beside the Murchison River - Putting up Tents and cooking while it was getting dark - eating in the dark and the rise of the almost full moon - wow! The moon-picture was shot by Tom that evening at Elle's Beach.....



Full Moon at Elle's

18th, nice early morning, lovely breakfast - packing and on the road again.... After 350km, at Carnarvon, we stopped at the lovely port and had our picnic-lunch and a little rest with the kids enjoying the playground with Evelyne. Then continued for another 200km on the North-West Coast Hwy and the Minilya-Exmouth Rd before turning off into 4WD track to Elle's Beach near Waroora Station. At this lonely beach with no facilities and space for just about a dozen campers we met Patrick and Anh-Dao's Swiss friends, Tom and Sandra.



B'fast at Murchison River ...



then... sunrise



...at Elle's Beach

In the night we heard a pump and a short crying - Océane had fallen from the roof-tent - no apparent damage - oufff!

Today, 19th, Padi, Anh-Dao, Evelyne and Rafa drove to Coral Bay to do some scuba diving. So we were alone with Tom and Sandra who took care of us 4. We spent a very nice day together ... a lot to tell (they know China too) and they love the kids and played with them. After the 'divers' returned, we had nice dinner also with Tom's freshly caught fish. Then fun deep into the night...



... shade and cool drinks



Lonely Elle's Beach



..like home



Sandra ...good night story

Easter 20th, we continued to our final destination near the wedding site to be. Nice breakfast and while the others were packing, Peggy and I walked back through the bush towards the Waroora Station meeting Kangaroos and passing by termites hills. Eventually we were caught up and then made a little detour to Wedding Point with a nice view. Then drove on 200km to Exmouth

and stopped at the visitor center for a good shower before meeting Tom and Sandra at the Fish and Chips Pub (yammie). Satisfied, we continued to the tip of the North-West Cape which we overlooked from the light tower. Here we turned South along the Ningaloo Reef through the Cape Range Park to settle at Kurrajong Beach in a simple but nice campsite (no water). Everybody was happy to arrive except perhaps Rafa and Yeye who got sore hands running hooks into the hard ground with only half success (one important hook just did not want to). BTW: I had not even realised that it was Easter today!



Now some went swimming while others had a beer. Then the 2 French couples, friends of Anh-Dao from Perth, arrived and soon the apero resumed. I do not remember all details but eventually we started dinner in complete dark - most of us wearing glearing head lights, blinding me - until at last the moon came up again!



21st was Easter Monday, **the last day before the wedding**. When we woke up with strong winds early in the morning our tent was partially collapsing. Patrick, Anh-Dao, Evelyne and Rafa left again early to go diving at some place else and so it was again up to Tom and Sandra to take care of us. Tom quickly moved his car such that we could tie our tent to his car. Only now I realised that the children had started their Easter Egg Hunt - and that the Kangaroos had hidden chocky eggs all around. So we passed the day in the camp, hiding from the wind at first and then from the burning sun. Watching and taking pictures of kangaroos lingering and hopping around and making poohs!



Also played with the kids on the beach..... or just enjoyed sitting on the little platform above and watch. Towards the evening when the youngsters had returned from diving they went to surf, kajak and swim and/or joined for a beer.



Before dinner the old friend Oscar and his brother arrived from Broome. Oscar is a family friend from Sydney-time! As one can see he has also finished a 100km race! But he and his brother are also very good cooks and the let us taste their fish tonight! Of course it was complete night when dinner started under blinding head-lights and the moon was 1 hour later again.

22nd April 2014 - Patrick and Anh-Dao's Beach Wedding at Mesa Camp

After breakfast we all - 16 people - drove about 1h to a lonely beach at Mesa Camp. When we arrived at 8.45 am, the Celebrant Lady, Janette Ellis, and her assistant welcomed us - they had already set up the ceremony table. It took a long while for setting up some 'esoteric elements' such that the ceremony could start at 9.30 with the **arrival of the bride with the kids**. The ceremony lasted for over half hour. First the celebrant brought to attention the pertinent Oz-Rules, then pointed out all the good things of a lasting marriage for which it is worthwhile to put all efforts. Patrick and Anh-Dao then expressed mutually their overwhelming feelings followed by Patrick telling his story to today's happiness. Now - where are the rings? - the kids fortunately found them somewhere in the sand (Easter Tuesday) - and the rings even fitted - the final promises and kisses and then the signing sealed the marriage and ended the ceremony after half an hour at 10am.



The congratulations and the first photograph session lasted till 10.45



Then the first champagne arrived! After the cheers had been exchanged the crowd dispersed a bit - some went to the water to play ball, someone had put a slide on the dune and especially the kids loved it, some walked along the beach. Idling around the

table (under the umbrellas) having prawns followed by bomboloni and continuing with whatever refreshments was also a good option. The party was over after 4pm and the kids took their nap on the way back. Then the party continued at the camp at Kurrajong Beach - of course in the dark!



... the Party starts

....proud!

.... happy!

... hungry!

... lazy!

..dreams

...looking to the Future...

... tired!

Wed 23rd to Sat 26th April - Resting, then returning to Perth

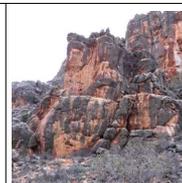
23rd was 'the day after' (I had a little hangover) - it was very hot, my ankle was pretty swollen and Patrick and most others went to some bay to do snorkling. The rest of us just hung around, watching Kangaroos, talking or just doing nūüt!

I was a bit frustrated as I had wished to go for a walk to a nearby gorge..... Eventually Patrick rushed back and wanted to take me to the gorge ... but I was told that it would be foolish to go with my swollen ankle..... Whatever, we then also had some time at the water and later followed by the usual dark night dinner where I let myself be served again, playing my deserved old man's role as a grandfather:-)



Anh-Dao & Ocean or Leti

24th April. Anh-Dao took pity on me and proposed to walk to the gorge with me later on the way Patrick caught us up and so we went together. The gorge was of course very dry and run between very rough red rocks. What was most enjoyable were the Mini-Wallabies watching us from secure distance above. When we got back to the camp after 10am - Peggy set off alone for a walk. The others also left to go snorkling again Anh-Dao and I had a bite with Oscar and his brother who had prepared a yammie cold fish plate....



The nearby Gorge...



..Mini Wallabi



Oscar's great Fish Plate

After lunch Padi tried to take me out to the reef to snorkel ... but somehow I suddenly had a backache and had to return I then snorkelled a bit just along the rocky shore-side....and Patrick went back to join the others. Now I was alone and I really started to get concerned about Peggy's whereabouts as she had not taken any water with her....Finally, close to 3pm, I panicked and went to look for her after walking about half hour along the dunes I felt a bit foolish as there really seemed no dangers to face and when I got back to the camp - Peggy was there. On the way I had passed a still creek with many kangaroos around and nice plants - Océane offered to come with me and so we had a very nice hour together before the usual ritual for dark-dinner started.



.... a walk with Océane!

Rafa outdid himself as a bbq-master and even served me twice personally! Now I had recovered!

25th April. Time to go back to Perth. Tom and Sandra had offered us to stay at their place in Geraldton as they were expected to attend an event in Perth. We accepted thankfully as it would save us the hassle of camping for just one night somewhere. Evelyne and Rafa were keen on quick departure as they wanted to make sure to get back to Perth on time for returning to CH. The morning looked gray but Patrick still suggested some snorkeling before leaving. So we split after breakfast and Evelyne, Rafa, Peggy and I left with them in the small car and Patrick and family stayed behind. When we reached Exmouth the sky darkened and 1 h later we were caught in heavy rain which followed us on and off until the evening. We had a lunch stop at a road station before Carnarvon - where I could call the Swiss Bank to find out about the cash transfer for the house - all under control!

We then reached Geraldton in deep dark around 7pm - but did not find the key to get into the house. We then sent a text to Padi to contact Tom. In the meantime we drove to the town-center to look for somewhere to eat properlyafter a while - bingo - we found a pub not only with good beer but magnificent T-bone steaks. Surprise - after the meal we were allowed to enjoy watching a session of local dancing to a rock'n roll band..... the real rough stuff! Patrick and family arrived at Tom's place later but not very late as they had sped up their departure, seeing the weather change.



..Pub in Geraldton



the End of the T-Bones!

First shower in a week and then was bed time.....but now we got news from one of the French couples that they had lost contact with the other couple..... and also that the road from Exmouth to the South was flooded and blocked.... ohoh. Patrick & co had passed a couple of hours before the blocking!

26th April. After sleeping well on proper beds we had nice breakfast and of course the subject was around the lost couple who then managed to send info about them being stuck on the highway because of a problem with the car which was made worse because their trailer. Today Patrick insisted that we should make a little walk along the shore - which was nice indeed. At around 11am we left for Perth with the idea of a stopover at the Lobster Shack in Cervantes where we then had a small bite of lobster. As rain had caught up again we then drove directly to Perth and had an Asian fast food dinner near home.

Enjoying the Family for 2 more weeks in Perth - then Return to CH - Sun, 27th April to Tue, 13th May

Sun, 27th. The last day for Evelyne and Rafa in Perth. We all went for Yamcha in Northbridge, then strolled around the center of Perth. Padi and Anh-Dao saw Prince William and Kate passing by them inkognito. Later we made a short turn in Kingspark over-looking the city. Then, before dinner, the young ones went for a jog/bike around Herdsmen Lake. Later we had a nice bbq and great fun with an on-request concert from Youtube (e.g. Gigolo, Ice Cream, Tutti Frutti..).



Yamm Cha...



.. with yammie Yauyue



last being together



bye Perth...

Mon, 28th. Very early Padi took Evi and Rafa to the airport. In the later morning, suddenly, while we were hanging around at home, Tom and Sandra popped-in and Padi came back from work and we had another get-together.

Tue, 29th April to Sat, 10th May. Enjoyed everyday life taking the kids to and from school. Did this and that around the house or walking to Subiaco a few times and once to Ikea with the kids - enjoying Smoland and once to the city and back. The kids were really fun to be with (most of the time;-) and they enjoyed going with Yeye for a bicycle ride a couple of times. Patrick and Anh-Dao were busy with their work but we still had time for each other once in a while. One day we were also allowed to go to visit their new home in Churchland which appeared to be in a very good shape and although quite small seemed designed in a practical way, with enough space around the house for storage of all kinds. There is also a swimming pool.



Self-made Vietnam Spring Rolls

Sun, 11th May - Motherday. Right in the morning Patrick packed all that was necessary for a Motherday Brunch at the beach and off we all went to Watermans Bay. There we had a very nice last day together. The weather and the sea were beautiful and after brunch we walked along the sea to Hillary where Anh-Dao picked us up again.

Last packing and then **the big hugs**. Patrick took us to the airport to catch the Jetstar flight to Singapore departing at 00.15. We left them knowing that we would see each other again in August in Switzerland - **'See You Soon and good move to the new home!!!!'**



Motherday Brunch - last day



fun drinking water

Mon, 12th May - Very early we arrived in **Singapore**. As our flight would leave late in the night we decided to take a bus to the city and make a turn walking to Little India (we had been there before). At some food quarters we tried and enjoyed this and that. In the end we were very tired and at 5pm we took the bus back to the airport. At very early check-in we were told that our flight to Amsterdam was overbooked - ohoh - hahaha - they put us on a flight directly to Zürich by Singapore Airlines! So we arrived home earlier than expected at about lunchtime on the 13th May.



Huge Food-Quarters



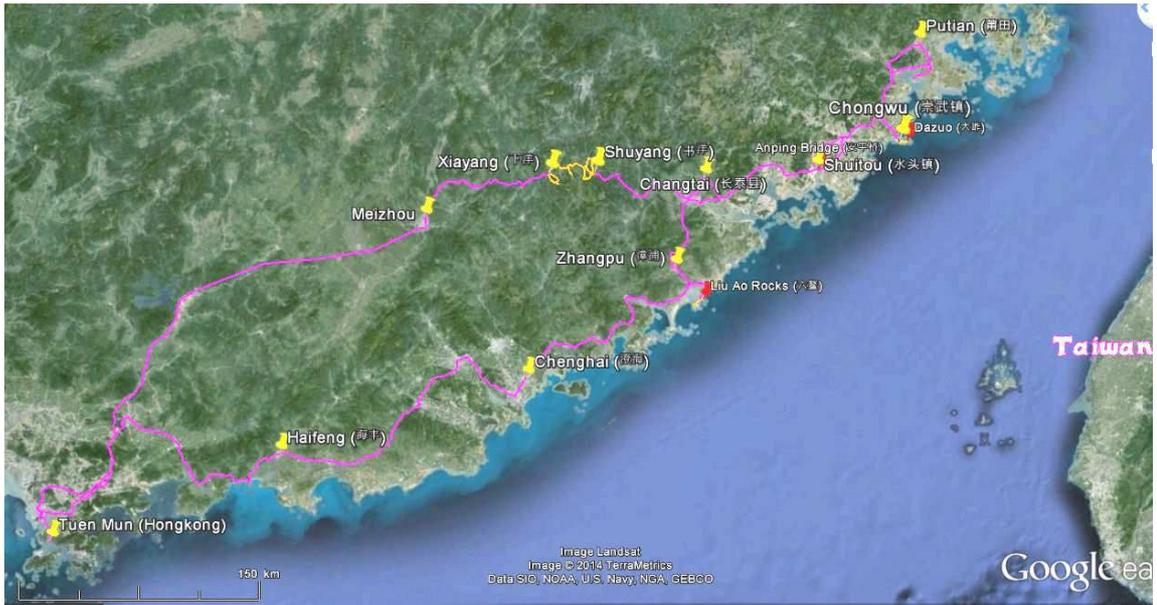
Small Shopping Streets....



.... at Little India

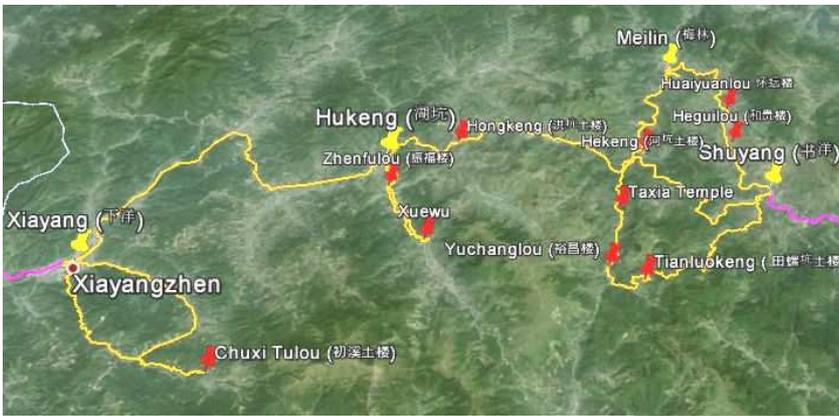
This report was written between Mid June and Mid August

Maps (Snapshots from Google Earth)



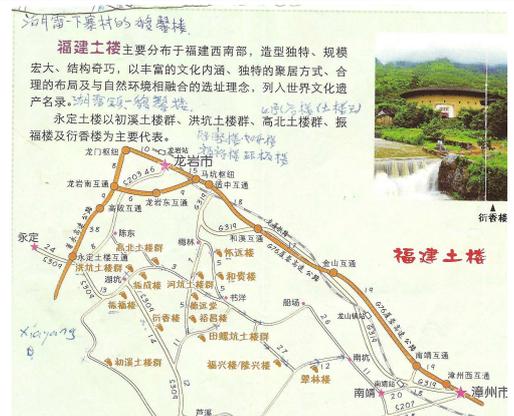
China Trip: Hongkong - Putian (Fujian Province) - Hongkong

bus walk night visit



China Trip: Tulou Walk (Fujian Province)

bus walk night visit



Tulou Walk (the map we found the 1st night)



Fujian - Peggy's Map