Jade Lions that our friends at Tongji agreed to ship home to us, along with a lovely gift from our hosts: a piece of crystal enclosing a single flower and engraved with the name and logo of the University. It now sits in our kitchen bay window, catching the afternoon sunlight and separating it into lovely rays of colors flung around the room in various directions.

From Shanghai, we flew to Chongqing, where we wandered on our own for two days before meeting with our Wuhan host, Xu Yixian, and his graduate student, Zhang San Zong, who was to be our companion and guide on the Yangtze. That tour turned out to be the journey of a lifetime! Before even leaving Chongqing, we started out with a day trip to Dazu, the center of Buddhist culture in earlier times. We wandered among rock walls with carved Buddhist images, featuring one lying Buddha, 100 feet long, a wall of 3 Buddhas, each about 50 feet high, towering over the path, hundreds of other statues carved in the soft limestone—a truly stunning site.

We started down the river and made impromptu stops to visit another temple, Shibaozhai, and a two thousand year old warlord’s retreat, Baidi Cheng, that commands the first of the Three Gorges from high above. The Gorges themselves were truly spectacular. We could see traces of the paths that the trackers used to haul the boats over the worst of the rapids on the river. We could also see markings on the hillsides and cliff walls of the height of the water when the height of the dam downriver reaches 50 meters, 135 meters and finally 175 meters—truly awesome! We stopped at Wushan for a day to take a boat ride up the Daning River through the Little Three Gorges. We went 25 kilometers or more, most of it to be lost to the rising waters behind the dam. We sat on the prow of the boat in close proximity to the pole man who was needed to force the small tour boat over the shallows on the river. A dramatic beauty will be lost here, but there are clearly gorges further upriver that are likely to spawn a new tour route once the water behind the dam has reached its final level. We continued on to see the new dam and then to visit Jingzhou, another walled city with a wonderful art colony.