



Travelling leaves you speechless,
then turns you into a story teller.
- Ibn Battuta

PART 3



Bullet Train from Beijing 1131.1 km

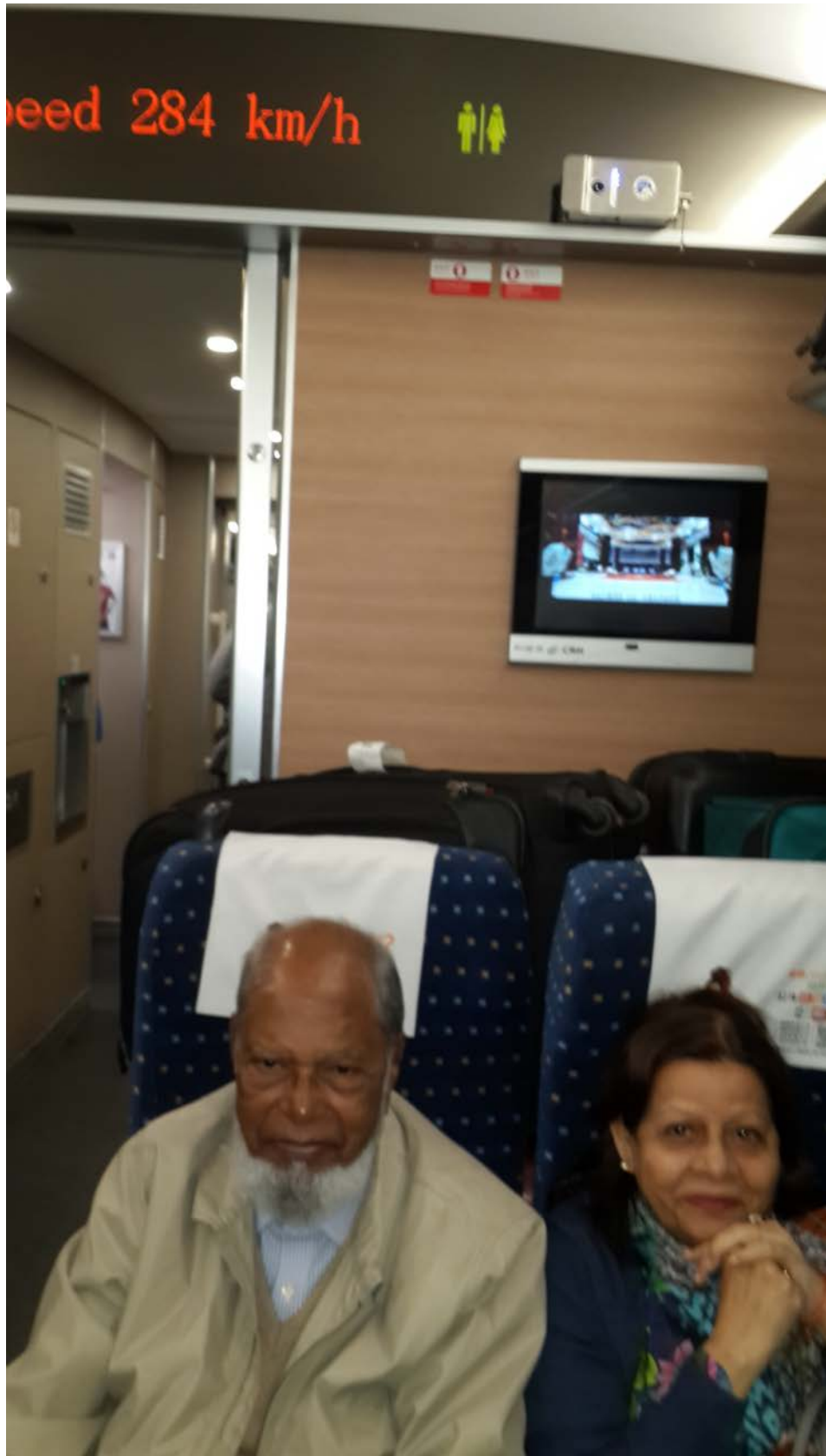


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxhfgNr9up8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88wqZPTcyr8>











Mrs. Rukhsana Ahsan

Having often heard and read about the Bullet Train I found myself travelling in one. As we flew across the plains R L Stevenson's poem, *From a Railway Carriage* came to mind:

***FASTER than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;
And charging along like troops in a battle,
All through the meadows the horses and cattle:
All of the sights of the hill and the plain 5
Fly as thick as driving rain;
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,
Painted stations whistle by.***

We travelled through a vast plain – stretches upon stretches of farmland as far as the eye could see with distant hills in the background. Was this the bread basket of China that fed its millions? But where were the farmers and workers on the fields. Surely all this work wasn't done by magic? I imagined the men and women in conical straw hats toiling hard tilling the land, planting rice, carrying baskets of produce on their shoulders. But that was a memory of the past... this was a modern China I was looking at – mechanized and modern with small solar panels on every roof top be it be an abode or warehouse.

Run away where the nights are gay

My heart is down, my head is turnin around

I had to leave a little girl in Kingston Town.

With Harry Belafonte's famous song *Jamaican Farewell*, we bid goodbye to Xian and headed towards Shanghai.



Nostalgia

As I picked up my notebook, something fell out from the pages. Two dry leaves picked up from the pavement in..... Beijing, Xian or Shanghai?

A memento of a wonderfully fabulous trip gifted to me by a tree somewhere in China.





Terracotta Army

The **Terracotta Army** literally: "Soldier-and-horse funerary statues" is a collection of terracotta sculptures depicting the armies of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China. It is a form of funerary art buried with the emperor in 210–209 BCE and whose purpose was to protect the emperor in his afterlife.

The figures, dating from approximately the late third century BCE,^[1] were discovered in 1974 by local farmers in Lintong District, Xi'an, Shaanxi province. The figures vary in height according to their roles, with the tallest being the generals. The figures include warriors, chariots and horses. Estimates from 2007 were that the three pits containing the Terracotta Army held more than 8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses and 150 cavalry horses, the majority of which remained buried in the pits nearby Qin Shi Huang's mausoleum.^[2] Other terracotta non-military figures were found in other pits, including officials, acrobats, strongmen and musicians.









Ms Rashida Faheem

The visit to X'ian are a great addition to the itinerary. A lot was b quizzed into a day and half. The Tera- cotta army Museum, the Muslim quarters and the visit to the pagoda were definitely the high point of this trip. I wish we had more time to spend at the stalls on the walk-way towards the Pagoda in X'ian.



Fond Memories
OF
Lhasa /China Visit 10 Oct - 24 Oct - 2017



Drum Tower square, Beiyuanmen Muslim Quarter

Muslim Quarter, Xian

Just as its name implies, the Muslim Quarter is the hub of the Muslim community in Xian City, Shaanxi Province. Located to the north of the West Street in the city center, the quarter covers several blocks inhabited by over 20,000 Muslims. There are about ten mosques in the area of the Muslim Quarter, among which the Great Mosque in the Huajue Lane is the most famous and popular.

Muslim food and souvenir market is another feature of the area. The Beiyuanmen Muslim Market located just to the north of the Drum Tower is a great choice after the sightseeing in the city center. About 500 meters (about 547 yards) in length from south to north, the street can be reached through the archway under the Drum Tower. This street is paved with dark colored stone with green trees providing heavy shade during summer; the buildings on both sides of the street are modeled on the styles of both the Ming (1368-1644) and the Qing Dynasties (1644-1911). Some of the constructions are restaurants; while others are stores. But here there is one thing in common: the owners are all Muslims.

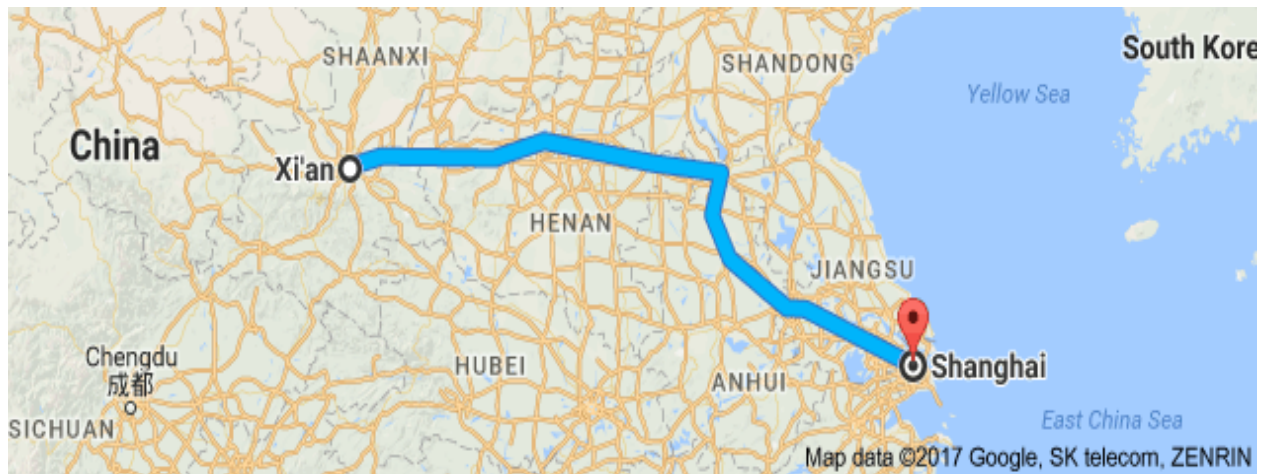








Bullet train Xian to Shanghai



Ms Rashida Faheem

The train journeys of this trip were an enjoyable experience. My **apologies to all those who wanted to rest and we would not let them**. Thank you to Irfana, Shahida, Arif Bhai and Salam Bhai for their constant supply of sandwiches. The younger lot, Erum, Toor and Noor kept a constant supply of hot water coming for us to enjoy our cup of tea. We will forever keep you in our prayers of this.

Shanghai

Shanghai is one of the four municipalities of China and the most populous city proper in the world with a population of more than 24 million as of 2014. It is a global financial centre and transport hub, with the world's busiest container port. Located in the Yangtze River Delta, it sits on the south edge of the estuary of the Yangtze in the middle portion of the East Chinacoast. The municipality borders the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang to the north, south and west, and is bounded to the east by the East China Sea.

As a major administrative, shipping and trading city, Shanghai grew in importance in the 19th century due to trade and recognition of its favourable port location and economic potential. The city was one of five treaty ports forced open to



foreign trade following the British victory over China in the First Opium War. The subsequent 1842 Treaty of Nanking and 1844 Treaty of Whampoa allowed the establishment of the Shanghai International Settlement and the French Concession. The city then flourished as a centre of commerce between China and other parts of the world (predominantly Western countries), and became the primary financial hub of the Asia-Pacific region in the 1930s.[17] However, with the Communist Party takeover of the mainland in 1949, trade was limited to other socialist countries, and the city's global influence declined. In the 1990s, the economic reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping resulted in an intense re-development of the city, aiding the return of finance and foreign investment to the city.

Shanghai has been described as the "showpiece" of the booming economy of mainland China; renowned for its Lujiazui skyline, and museums and historic buildings, such as those along The Bund, as well as the City God Temple and the Yu Garden.





MS. RASHIDA FAHEEM

Shanghai... With all its glamour and shining skyline, gave us hope that to transform a city or country, all it takes is a visionary and honest leadership and the dedication, hard work and ownership by the people. The Pearl Tower, enjoying its clear, see through deck. I honestly think that most of us, shed years of worries, with the child-like excitement we felt there by lying on the floor to take pictures. The visit to the YU Gardens was phenomenal.... A true manifestation of a person's love for his parents. It was this thought behind the park that made it so special.



Visit Pearl TV Tower

The **Oriental Pearl Radio & TV Tower** in the [Pudong New Area](#) by the side of [Huangpu River](#), opposite [The Bund](#), makes it a distinct landmark in the area. Its principal designers were Jiang Huan Chen, Lin Benlin, and Zhang Xiulin. Construction began in 1991, and the tower was completed in 1994.

At 468 m (1,535 feet) high, it was the [tallest structure in China](#) from 1994–2007, when it was surpassed by the [Shanghai World Financial Center](#). It is classified as an [scenic area](#) by the [China National Tourism Administration](#).^[5] The tower is brightly lit in different [LED](#) sequences at night. On 7 July 2007, Oriental Pearl Tower was host to the [Chinese Live Earth concert](#).

The tower features 11 spheres, big and small. The two largest spheres, along the length of the tower, have diameters of 50 m (164 ft) for the lower and 45 m (148 ft) for the upper. They are linked by three columns, each 9 m (30 ft) in diameter. The highest sphere is 14 m (46 ft) in diameter.

The entire tower is supported by three enormous [columns](#) that start underground.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oriental_Pearl_Tower

















Rukhsana Siddiqi

"FALLING THROUGH THE SKY ". (Oriental Pearl TV and Radio Tower. Shanghai.)

Wow!! Fantastic!! this is what I was waiting for, so eagerly .The very famous Oriental Pearl TV and Radio Tower , Shanghai's landmark, with its marvelous observation deck, so talked about for its transparent glass floors . Our guide hurriedly bought the tickets. We passed through the 2 tight security checks and then to those humongous elevators waiting for our disposal. . My first step out of the enormous elevator, that could carry 50 people (all jammed pack) brought me to land on this super futuristic world of science today. I was literally dumb folded for a while. Am I dreaming? Am I really standing as high as 342 Meters? Am I actually present in person on the icon of Shanghai that I had read about just recently? I had to shake myself to help me believe this. Yes, it was all real and live. I was practically standing on this amazing tower that holds its importance for being the sixth highest in the world and the second in China, with a full 360 degrees panoramic view of the city, with floor to ceiling see through glass. The glass floor gave the effect of open air above the beautiful greenery below, along with brightly colored flower beds, some important landmarks and not the least to mention the beautiful River Yangtze with boats and even ships are an added beauty to the eyes. What a view. Breathtaking!

As I glanced around this deck, the whole floor seemed to be hustling and bustling with people of all ages. Families accompanied by small children, students on school trips and some very important visitors from Navy League, Pakistan as well. Yes, that's us, off course. Everyone seemed to be thoroughly enjoying. For few minutes I kept myself amused by watching other tourists taking selfies and posing at different angles. You could see some literally having fear of height syndrome and could barely walk on this floor. Some were just freaking out and screaming in fear. They seem to be afraid even to touch the floor. Although, not good manners permits this, I could not help myself laughing .Actually the whole atmosphere was entwined with both fear and desire to be on that invisible floor surface that created the illusion of walking in the air. Nothing to hold down.



Surely it appeared quite scary even to imagine.

Now slowly and steadily, along with some of our friends, I too stepped on this glass floor . Gathered up some courage and tried walking hesitantly. My initial reaction was, that I was definitely going to drop straight down . My whole body was literally trembling but after few minutes, got somewhat comfortable with it. Then there was no stopping. Aftab also joined in to have this wonderful experience along with Mohammad Ali Bhai and Tasneem. Then Lubna and Shafi Bhai also dared to go through this fearful experience with us. They both held each other tightly only to make sure they don't let any one of them slip and fall. We were all pretending to be brave, hiding our inner fears. Ego also comes into action at these times. Each one of us was trying to prove ourselves. Now Aftab chose to be photographed while comfortably lying down. Did I say 'Comfortably '? Ha-ha!! What a joke.! He did manage that pose but in his effort to sit up, kept slipping and flipping over in that one small portion only, for some good few minutes. Fear was so obvious on his face. Funny enough, he made it to his safe territory only by crawling out. More reasons for us to laugh now .By now I could see all our friends trying their best to have their photos taken on this floor in different poses. Some opted for sitting , few were barely standing without looking down, many were holding the window handles, some tried to lay down as if dropping from the sky, others merely stood there in fear, only to be clicked once. Professional photographers were surely making good business, as I saw. Some couple opted to go together for photo shoot, while others wanted it solo. Selfie sticks were at their highest performances. I could see even Irfan Bhai enjoying in his highest spirits while being clicked along with his beautiful Toor and Noor. Irfana and Arif Bhai could be seen slipping and sitting , slipping and grabbing each other's arm for support ,again slipping and so on until they had their pictures taken. Those multiple falling over, gripping, slipping again and again , crawling and reaching for safety created quite an atmosphere. Even Rizwana and Harekar Bhai , I saw them in hanging position. So Hilarious ! Miraculously the age factor had disappeared in that air. Fun was the name of the game. Giggles, laughter, freaks, hoo and ha-ha were the only language your ears could hear.

Seeing everybody enjoying themselves was so much fun. All of a sudden, I



decided to go for a flying pose. How could I not have one ? Hurriedly, positioned myself on this floor with excitement. By this time I had somewhat mastered the art of using this place. I was all fit for funny actions and poses now. There I was , looking at right , then left , then looking outside with my elbow resting on the floor, etc. etc. Finally I lay on my back with my hands and feet stretching high up to give a falling effect .Seeing the sky above and nothing to hold me back, gave me the feeling of falling through the sky only to drop flat on the earth below. Then after a second , I felt like floating above the earth. Oh my God ! what a nondescriptive sensation went on inside me. Phenomenal experience! At this moment my dear husband made a joking comment, but it literally scared me briefly. He wittily said "what if one of the glass panels open loose behind you". Him saying this made me rush back to the safe area, thinking, what if it really opens loose and gives way! There was this consolation though, that if God forbid I do fall down , I will definitely end up upon some beautiful flower beds below. Positive thinking has always been my tool of survival.





Having all the photo done, we opted to stroll around the deck. There were telescopes installed at regular distances for viewing. The scenic beauty outside was mesmerizing .The gardens below could be seen decorated in terms of themes. It was very fascinating to the eyes due to its location and multiple landmarks nearby. Among other numerous landmarks the famous Bottle Opener building was the most prominent and could be seen so clearly and so near. So much to add to the already picturesque skyline of Shanghai .The view of the city from here fills you with wonders at the beauty that surrounds you. It gives you the perfect view of the whole city. The best time to enjoy and appreciate its peak of beauty is at night when the whole tower is all lit up. This tower portrays the shinning pearls falling on the magnificent green jade plate. The observation deck with the glass floor represents one of those seven pearls. What an unique blend of culture and modern technology exhibited. What an experience of a lifetime. Absolutely fascinating!

