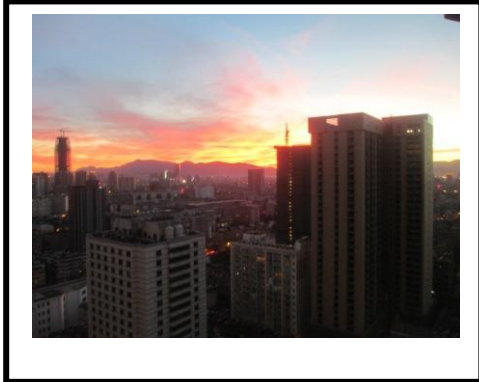


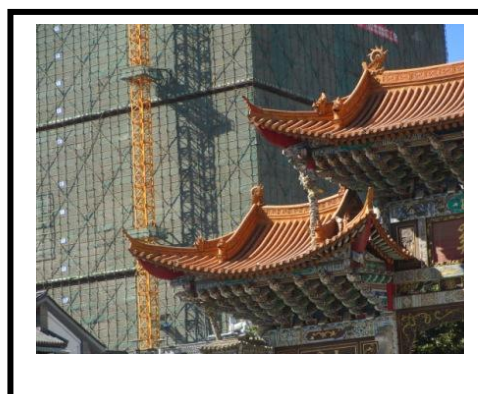
Hi all,

Well it is time for the sun to set for us in Kunming. Lee has been with us for the last 3 weeks and it has been such a special time for us all to be together in Kunming. I am now in Xian for the next leg of my journey to study for a few weeks, and Lee and the kids have headed back to Darwin.

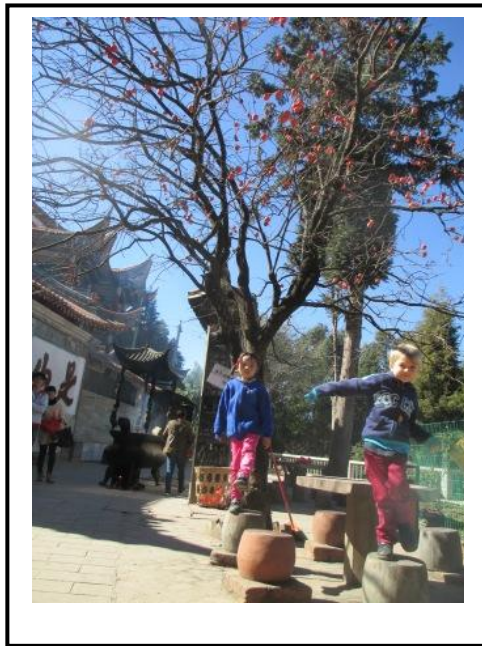
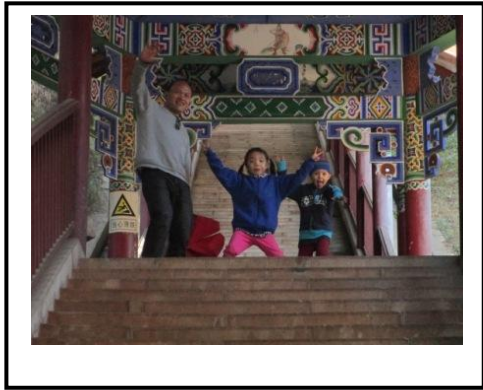


Each day has been embraced by the kids, and we are all sad to leave a special place in China, and our special friends Cheng and Gang who although they have busy lives to lead, have spent the little free time they have on the weekends taking us to beautiful places.

It has been a place of seeing traditional Chinese culture amongst the rise of many new buildings.



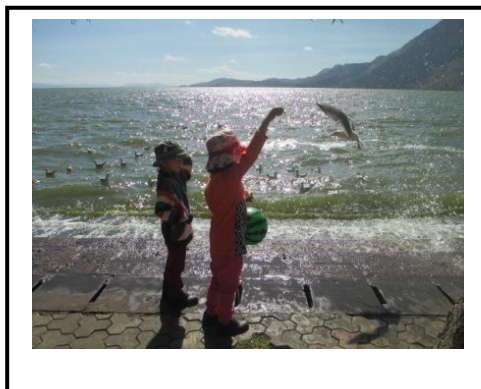
From... climbing a mountain of temples (**Panlong Temple**) – this was a series of temples up a mountain, fortunately with Cheng and Gang we knew which papers and how many incense sticks to burn at which temple – we are now going to be extremely lucky, wealthy, happy and healthy!...

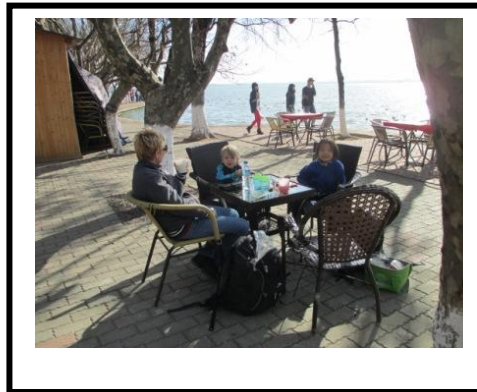


...to **Hot Pot Dinner** – this was a special dinner with Cheng and Gang, and even Zongmin and Paul from Charles Darwin Uni were in Kunming for a few days, so Cheng's friends together in Kunming was so special for them...



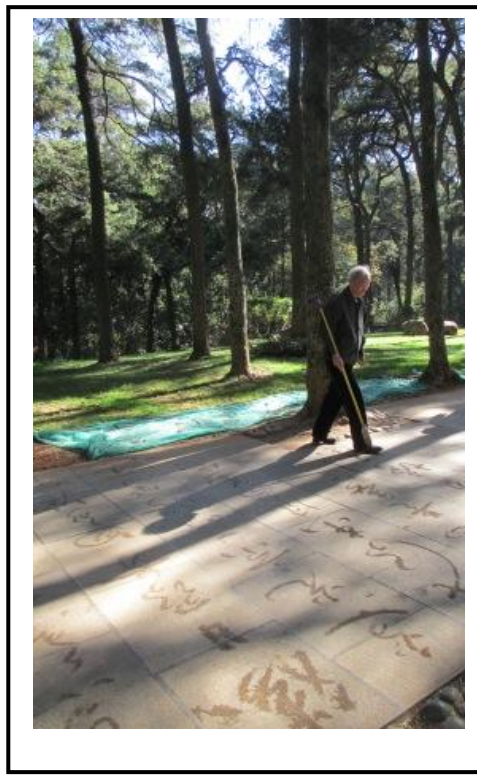
...to walking around **DianChi Lake** – Haigeng Park is a place for locals and tourists to take in the beautiful vistas of the mountains and lake, abit surreal as this lake is one of the most polluted lakes in the world, before 1990, 90 percent of Kunming's wastewater was pumped untreated into the lake. The lake water is now undrinkable despite several billion dollars having been spent trying to clean it up. Some experts predict that over 55% of the lake's fish population has been killed off by this disease ridden type of pollution. The water in the lake is rated grade V (the worst grade) which makes the water unfit for agricultural or industrial uses. But on the surface, it is a great place to visit for a picnic with friends or a cuppa taking in the view! We could easily get there by bus.





...to climbing up a mountain to **Jin Dian** (Golden Palace), a fine palace made in 1602 made of bronze, then tobogganing down on a weird mountain kind of roller coaster! But not only is there a palace, it is a beautiful day out up a mountain, with lovely gardens for our snacks and cuppas, which we could also get to easily by bus...





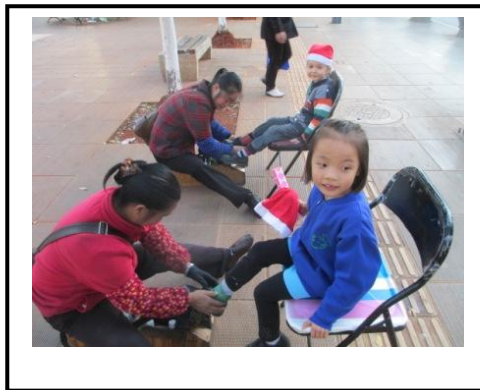
...to having dumplings for Xmas dinner at Cheng's Mum's place, XiaoXiao and Lucas helped make them and we all helped eat them! They were delicious, and the kids got to stay up late and got a little excited...



...to many other great memories...riding the cool contraptions here for the kids...



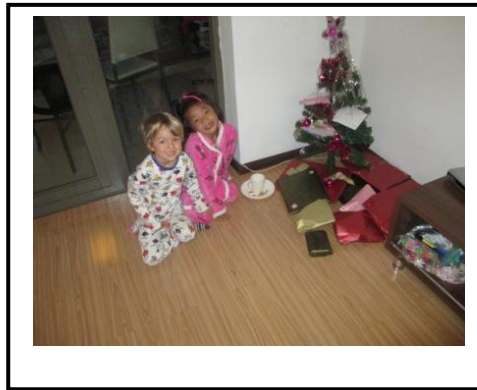
...to getting shoes shined...



...to feeling proud in a peacock dress...



...to Santa Claus even coming up 24 floors in the elevator to drop his pressies off, and he must have brought his reindeer with him cos they ate the 13 sticks of carrot we left by the tree!



Kunming is now a special place in our hearts. If we do get a chance to live in China longer, Kunming will definitely be on our radar! Listening to the kids using their Chinese to ask children's names in playgrounds, and to initiate play with them, like hearing Xiao Xiao and Lucas shout 'Come on lets go on the slide together' in Chinese, I am so glad that we have taken this trip to immerse ourselves in the language and culture. It is our second trip to China together, and our first steps to learning this culture together have paved a great foundation.

Just getting used to the huge temperature drop here in Xian, was minus 3 degrees when I landed Saturday (that was at lunch time!), but driving towards the old city yesterday seeing a town still within city walls was awesome! Got a pretty hectic study schedule ahead of me, and lots of revision for that exam! But I will try and send some news from Xian soon!

Hope everyone has had a nice Xmas break, and HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!!!

Cheers,

Donna



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