

It wasn't until I went back in time, was I able to think of this rhyme:  
The further we dig into the hole, the more we have to learn from the ancient souls.



The highlight of my cultural exposure so far was visiting the Museum of the Mausoleum of the Nanyue King. The tomb, dating to about BC 122, was discovered accidentally in the early 80s by a hotel construction crew. The tomb rests near the top of a hill, in an area of town that today is one of the most international. The museum is conveniently only a couple hundred foot walk from the Yuexiu Park metro station, next to the China Hotel, a proud Marriot property, and several other parks, famous statues, and other bits of culture. I would assume that discovering the tomb in this spot of international culture was more of a coincidence than part of the master plan, but the convenience is great.

Much of the splendor of this tomb lies in the fact that it was never found by tomb robbers, or anyone else for that matter, until its discovery in 1983. In many ways, this is like the discovery of King Tut to the Egyptians. The only damage done to the museum came from floods that filled the tomb at various times over the years causing to the destruction of most organic materials. The museum is incredible, proudly displaying most of the jade, bronze, and gold relics found in the tomb, including the jade costume prepared for the emperor to wear into the eternities.

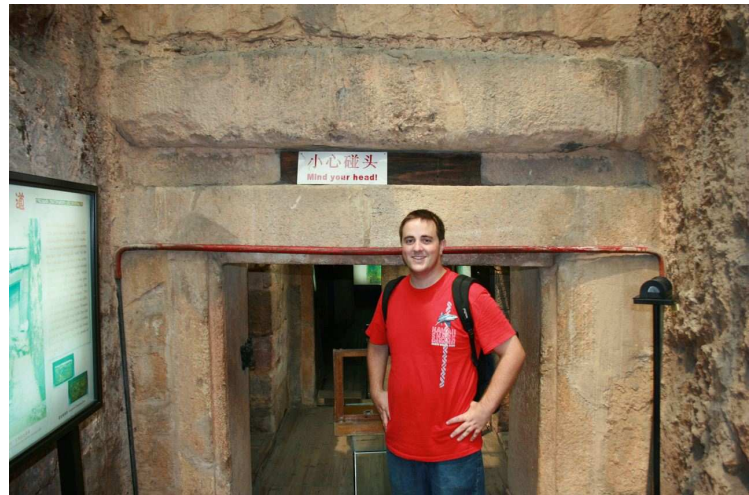


Going down into the mausoleum

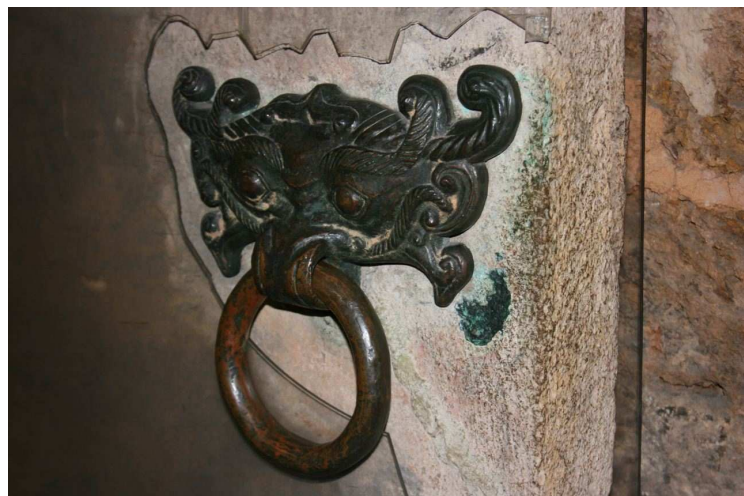
is the highlight of the experience. The entrance is under a glass roof at the top of the hill. First, I was able to walk around the top of the tomb, where signs had been placed above the various rooms, giving a sense of the layout. There are 5 main sections of the tomb. The entryway, the central area, where the emperor was laid, and three rooms to store the goods he would need for the afterlife; to the west, north, and east. Also discovered in the tomb were the remains of at least 15 other people including servants and at least 4 concubines.



Going down into the tomb, is the reminder that the Chinese people of over 2100 years ago were not very tall. The ceilings were tall enough for me, but all of the doorways required me to duck.



The original doors, including the original door handles are still kept with the tomb, providing for one of the most interesting finds of the mausoleum. It is not every day that I am able to knock a 2100 year old stone door with a 2100 year old bronze and wood door handle. Very cool!



Most of the artifacts have been removed from the tomb and are displayed in the museum, leaving things quite empty inside. Inspecting the walls, however, we found some original paintings that looked like hieroglyphics in many respects.

This photograph shows me making my way into the west storage room, where the king had once stored pots and pans, weapons, musical instruments, and other things needed to support his lifestyle in the eternities. This doorway was probably the lowest for me to make my way through. The doorway is about 4 ft thick, indicating the thickness of the walls throughout the tomb and the craftsmanship and hard work required of the builders to construct it. One of the comments I made to Jeremie was the fact that the hole needed to bury walls this thick and leave as much room as was for the tomb needed must have been quite large. The walls are constructed of large sandstone bricks and mortar. The ceiling is made of large stone slabs spanning the walls.



This final photograph shows the view leaving the tomb, with one of the door handles in the foreground and the staircase leading down into the tomb.

The tomb was an incredible visit. It was like living my own Discovery Channel special. Egyptian culture seems to have a stronger place in American culture, and my studies as a history major often focused on the Egyptians, so my familiarity with that culture caused me to compare the sights of my eyes in the Nanyue tomb with my knowledge of Egypt. The similarities between the burial practices of each, although developing independently, are one of the most fascinating aspects of history. To be able to go down into the tomb and explore it, and see the grandeur of the artifacts was amazing. I learned a great deal about Chinese culture and was truly impressed with the sophistication of their technology. Things like saws and fishhooks discovered in the tomb haven't needed an upgrade in 2100 years. We are using equipment that is of the same design today.

