



Fall Moon Festival Celebration



*St Paul's Episcopal Church
21 Hackett Blvd.
Albany, NY
5:00 – 8:00 pm
contact MaryHelen Donnelly
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NYC Chinatown Trip

On Saturday May 26 a bunch of FCA families took a bus trip to New York City's Chinatown. We left on a Yankee Trails bus from Rensselaer at ~7 AM. The kids staked out their seats and sat with their friends while enjoying movies on the trip down. In about 3 hours we arrived at the corner of Canal St. and Bowery. After getting off the bus it took a few minutes to get used to the crowds, tall buildings, and city noise, but we quickly adapted and were thrilled to see and hear all the sights and sounds that Chinatown has to offer.

We headed down Canal St. and then spent a good amount of time exploring the shops on Mott St. If you stood outside the shop for too long, the shopkeepers would encourage you to go inside. Most of the shops were packed head to toe with various Chinese knickknacks. Bargaining is expected, and they didn't mind giving you items for a couple of bucks off, especially if you bought more than one item. In one store a couple daughters of the storekeepers were drawing on a table. Holly believed this was a public drawing table, so she sat down with them and started drawing away. Outside one of the stores Holly

started playing with a toy, and the elder woman told Holly “No 5 dollars”. I was chuckling at the fact that you can’t even test the toys out until you paid for it. Luckily most stores had no problem with what the kids touched.

Next we headed to the Museum of Chinese in America, where a bunch of families took part in a tour that focused on Customs and Traditions for grades K-6. The recently designed museum was full of history outlining the early efforts and struggles of Chinese Americans. Some adults spent time reading the history timelines while the kids went on a scavenger hunt.

Next most of us were getting quite hungry so the families scattered out of the museum to find place to eat. Us and the Griswald family headed down Elizabeth St. and found a small non-descript restaurant that looked interesting. We checked out the menu posted outside, when the host came out us and told us something like “Come in and enjoy the best food in Chinatown”. Well that was good enough for us so we headed inside and sat at 2 tables since they couldn’t accommodate all 8 of us at one table. Our orders included eggplant in garlic sauce, vegetable fried rice, sweet and sour chicken, noodles and dumplings. They brought the food out like they do on the mainland China, meaning as the dish was finished it was brought to the table instead of all at once. The food was absolutely fantastic. Hands down it was the best vegetable fried rice I’ve ever had. The price was reasonable too, and with tip added up to about \$10 a head.

Next we headed to shady ColumbusPark. Upon walking into the park you felt a bit like you were in park back in mainland China. Just about everybody in the park was Asian. Several bands were entertaining the crowds with traditional Chinese music. Throughout the park groups were gathering and playing various games such as chess and cards. In the good size sports fields, kids were playing volleyball and practicing soccer. Younger kids were playing on a playground. The park was well worth the visit.

We then spent a good chunk of time shopping and

exploring the streets in the heart of Chinatown, before we headed to the Pearl River shop. The three stories of the Pearl River shop were a delight, and it was nice not having to worry about bargaining. In fact we found a number of items that were cheaper in this store than the tourist traps around Mott Street. The 3rd floor looked like a museum, with lots of higher end furniture and art, including full size replicas of terracotta warriors.

Time was just flying by and we realized we needed to make it over to Little Italy if wanted to grab an Italian meal before we had to leave. We wandered the streets of little Italy and were delighted to see some of the streets closed off to traffic. In fact it turns out between the day of our visit, May 26, to the San Gennaro Feast in September, several streets are closed off to promote Little Italy in what they call the Little Italy Mall. We found a place that served pizza and they told us they could serve us within the 45 minutes we had. We were lucky that we missed a downpour as shortly after we sat down the skies opened up. After our quick meal the rain had weakened to a drizzle. Finally we dashed into Little Italy’s Ferrara’s bakery and grabbed some pastries for desert.

Next we made it to the Bus pickup spot where at ~7 PM the bus departed for home. Sometime after 10 the bus arrived in the parking lot and our long adventure was over. It truly was a great day. Before going we were worried that the day may have been too long, but we were enjoying ourselves so much we almost felt like we could have used a few more hours there. It was great for the kids to see that in their home state, that such a large Asian community existed. Thanks you MaryHelen for organizing this terrific event.

---Greg Neugebauer

Spam Alert!

Please beware of immigration sites other than the official <http://www.uscis.gov> site. I found

immigrationdirect.org while searching on Google. I thought initially as I imagine others have that it was legit. After starting the on-line application process which seemed a pleasant breeze I came across the payment page which got me a little suspicious as I started to take my wallet out. I looked at the URL address and something like xxx.org instead of xxx.gov put up a red flag in my head. A search on immigration direct on Google directed me to some spam information and a list of complaints about money being taken with no service performed. I quickly logged out of the site and went instead to the official government US Citizenship and Immigration Service site and started things rolling there.

I was maybe a half hour after I logged off the immigrationdirect site that I got a phone call from there. I let the answering machine take it and it was immigrationdirect.com trying to help me out. I phoned back and got into a heated exchange with the "telemarketer" who happened to have a - surprise! - an Indian accent. I asked about his credentials and even asked to speak to his supervisor. I got no where with him and eventually hung up. I have to admit though that I immensely enjoyed that conversation but felt sorry for the guy as he was simply doing his job.

CONSUMER BEWARE!!

---Richard Neimeyer

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