



**Insectarium Valley Walk in the Rain**

Behind the insectarium was a wonderful walk, nearly a quarter mile round, up a valley past streams and through the forest. There were many insects. I saw some more nice dragonflies, and lots of hoppers on the elephant ears, not to mention butterflies and beetles.



**Dragon at the Zoo**



**Hoppers under a leaf**

After the Insectarium it was time for lunch. We walked to the food court which was, at the time, populated by thousands of children all attempting to form lines with various rates of success and failure. While food was being procured I wandered around the corner to check out the vending machines. They have many more products available, and while attempting an explanatory photograph, one young lady stuck her ice cream bowl in my



**Attempting Lines**

lense. Little did she know, I'm wide angle! We packed up the lunches, walked past the sleepy koala exhibit and boarded the tractor driven zoo train. Each bench seat seats two or three, so they have little short lines for you to stand in which correlate to each seat.



**Vending Variety**



We took a nice ride and ended up near the reptile house (0.7 miles away!) and attempted an outdoor lunch. However the rain proved too hard, so we squeezed into a little shelter near a snack bar.

**Lunch Stop**

The reptile house was huge, with large comfortable exhibits for most of the beasts. They had tortoises and turtles of all kinds, including some that are native to the island. Matt and Chris were especially interested in the snakes, as both are snake lovers. Whenever we saw a *Boa* Chris would say, "Mine's bigger". They had a cute display on how reptiles get hurt, and why not to hurt them. The best, most amazing



**The Native Box Turtle**

display they had was of a Chinese Giant Salamander. I've heard that these get to over 5 feet long, but always figured it would be some sort of long, skinny disappointing beast. Little



**Riding the Tortoise Statue**

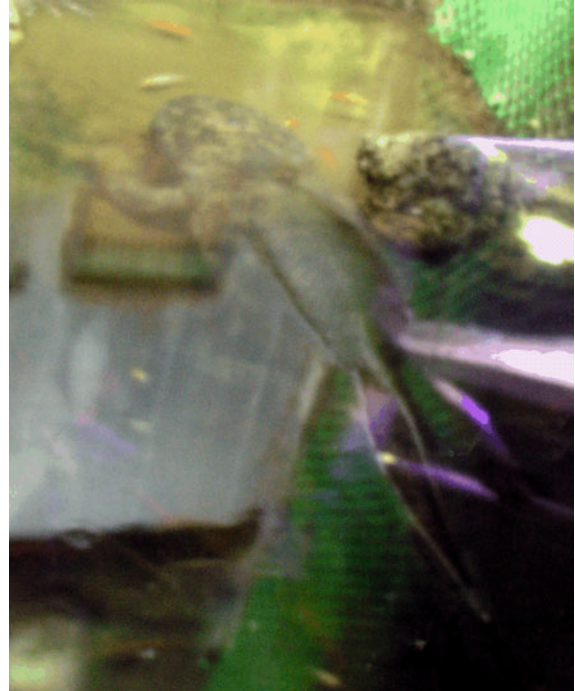
Rouge.) I got one disappointing photograph, poor lighting and fog on the cage's glass. This



**Sad Turtle**

hooded cobras (the native species), turtles, giant monitor lizards, huge chameleons, even a crocodile. It was amazing. Room after room of beautiful wonderful beasts. After regaining our cameras I took a picture of the workstations of some of reptile workers. Each was a collector of gads of animal related toys and trinkets.

did I realize, they are huge!!! Its powerfully built, and looks really heavy. Big enough to take down a small cat in a single gulp. (We certainly need some of these in Baton



**Fog, low light, and reflection equal a horrible picture of a HUGE salamander.**

is certainly an amazing beast and a "before I die" goal is to see one in the wild.

After walking through the reptile house proper, we had to abandon our cameras, walk through a trough of chemically treated water, and we were allowed into the netherworld of the reptile house. This is where they breed, care for, and hold non-display reptiles and amphibians. They had



**Full of Stuff**

We walked through a number of bird sections for Victoria, the official trip Ornithologist. We entered one aviary that had to be larger than a football field, with entire ponds, streams, and extensive walkways winding throughout. We visited the Nocturnal House, which housed those animals that are normally out at night. The menagerie included a Bobcat and a Raccoon.



**Entrance to the Big Aviary**



**This is IN the aviary, after a long hike!!!**

After the zoo we went back to the hotel for showers and a bit of rest. We loaded up in the vans and headed to Taiwan National University for dinner with Dr. Wen-ger Wu. My first real Chinese dinner! All the tables were round each with a giant lazy Susan in the middle, leaving you with about 12 inches of non-rotatory space for your small bowl of rice, and short water glass. Six of seven dishes all meticulously prepared



### **Beware, Hippos!**

burning three or four times more calories per input calorie than if you were eating American style where it's all right there and you can shovel it in as fast as you like. The food was not bad at all, although I shy away from the whole fish, as the bones annoy me. I'm a lazy eater, if I have to expend too much energy to get at the eatable bits I usually pass it by.

Beer and whiskey were around and they have a tradition of toasting everything. *Gan Pei* is their "Bottoms Up", and it's rude not to follow suit. I don't drink, and Matt's not much of a drinker either, so Victoria real quick says, Mike and Matt don't drink. They thought it was a joke! When it finally got around that we didn't really drink, I explained that I let Chris have all of mine. That got another good laugh.

The rain had let up a bit. There is a typhoon (tropical storm) coming in soon. We walked back to the hotel, fell into our soft warm beds (the AC is as low as it can go) and fortified ourselves for the breakfast to come.

were placed on the Susan all with their own "serving chopsticks". You get your own eating chopsticks, which are not to be used to get food off the communal trays. You pick a little bit of food off a tray, eat it with rice, then get some more. All in all, you're



**A plant at the Zoo that gets you coming and going.**