We Begin Our Cruise On The Yangtze River.

The Yangtze River is the longest river in Asia, and the third longest in the world. It flows for 6,418 kilometers (3,988 mi) from the glaciers on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau in Qinghai eastward across southwest, central and eastern China before emptying into the East China Sea at Shanghai. It is also one of the biggest rivers by discharge volume in the world. The Yangtze drains one-fifth of the land area of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and its river basin is home to one-third of the PRC's population.

Along with the Yellow River, the Yangtze is the most important river in the history, culture and economy of China. The prosperous Yangtze River Delta generates as much as 20% of the PRC's GDP. The Yangtze River flows through a wide array of ecosystems and is itself habitat to several endemic and endangered species including the Chinese alligator and the Yangtze sturgeon. For thousands of years, people have used the river for water, irrigation, sanitation, transportation, industry, boundary-marking and war. The Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River is the largest hydro-electric power station in the world.

In recent years, the river has suffered from industrial pollution, agricultural run-off, siltation, and loss of wetland and lakes, which exacerbates seasonal flooding. Some sections of the river are now protected as nature reserves. A stretch of the Yangtze flowing through deep gorges in western Yunnan is part of the Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

(I believe it is important to give you this factual information in order for you to better understand the voyage > our voyage. Many of us had read about the relocation of people as a result of the construction of the Hydro Electric Project and accordingly the dam was of special interest.

As well as producing electricity, the dam is intended to increase the Yangtze River's shipping capacity and reduce the potential for floods downstream by providing flood storage space. The Chinese government regards the project as an historic engineering, social and economic success, with the design of state-of-the-art large turbines, and a move toward limiting greenhouse gas emissions. However; the dam flooded archaeological and cultural sites and displaced some 1.3 million people, and is causing significant ecological changes, including an increased risk of landslides. The dam has been a controversial topic both domestically and abroad.

Following from Wikipedia: The Three Gorges Dam is a hydroelectric dam that spans the Yangtze River by the town of Sandouping, * located in Yiling District, Yichang, Hubei province, China. The Three Gorges Dam is the world's largest power station in terms of
installed capacity (22,500 MW) but is second to Itaipu Dam with regard to the generation of electricity annually.

Except for a ship lift,** the dam project was completed and fully functional as of July 4, 2012, when the last of the main turbines in the underground plant began production. Each main turbine has a capacity of 700 MW. The dam body was completed in 2006. Coupling the dam’s 32 main turbines with two smaller generators (50 MW each) to power the plant itself, the total electric generating capacity of the dam is 22,500 MW.

* It was at Sandouping where we first docked on Friday, Sep 07th and took a bus in order to get to the Three Gorges Dam. ** Note the reference to a “ship lift”. This was brought to our attention as a significant breakthrough. In fact “shift lift” is simply another name for a lift lock. Here is a wonderful pic of Canada’s Lift Lock: In 1904 the Peterborough, ON Lift Lock designed by Richard Birdsall Rogers opened in Canada. The lift system is operated by gravity alone, with the upper bay of the two bay system loaded with an additional 30 cm of water as to give it greater weight.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:PeterboroughLiftLock23.jpg  The highest lift lock in the world is in Belgium; the first was in Germany AND THE LARGEST, when finished will be in China!!! (The most attractive is in Peterborough, ON > lol) It is in constant use during the summers.

Was I impressed with the dam?? You bet!! How could one not be??

Pic on left is the ascent; pic on right is the top of the project. Now I will insert one of their graphics which depicts the entire project. The pic will be on the top of page 3. I have a reasonable sequence of dam pix which you can view on the Slide Show. Co-located with the dam are the first of the locks, the first of the Three Gorges. Comfortable walks, escalators, c/w spacious wonderfully kept landings, display theatres, all make it enjoyable and informative as you make your way from one superlative to the other.
This pic, to the right taken by Michael or Katrina, gives you an excellent appreciation of just how massive, how high the gates are within this particular lock. We are now on board when this pic was taken. You do appreciate that we are now going to sail through the system, through the Three Gorges.

The Slide Show will have a number of pix prior to the dam. These are shots taken from the ship as we sailed from our point of departure AND include photos of those who took the optional tour on the same day > Day 9, Sep 07th.

Tonight we are the Captain’s guest at a cocktail reception in our lounge. The wine and champagne flowed freely, all associated with suitable finger food. We went to dinner and then returned to the lounge for some first class entertainment by the ship’s crew. The Slide Show is in sequence and you will be able to view shots of the Captain’s Cocktail party AS WELL AS the Performance by the Crew. Here is your Show: [http://photopeach.com/album/17t9hm0](http://photopeach.com/album/17t9hm0)

Stan McCormack, 2012 10 01.