

MY EXPO | YU ZHENGMING

A journey through time

Exhibits at some Expo pavilions teach us about these countries' fascinating histories

Expo brings the world to the Chinese people. When thousands of visitors from all parts of the country leave the Expo site tired and hungry every evening, they surely know more about the world than they did that morning. And I am one of them.

I have spent a lot of time reading about human history and culture, wondering how ancient people in different countries lived; and how these ancient civilizations, such as the Egyptian, Persian, Greek, Indian and Chinese, developed and influenced each other. Things that happened 2,000 or 3,000 years ago fascinate me very much and I have learned a lot about these periods, both from books and from the Internet.

I am very happy to have the chance to visit Expo 2010 Shanghai to see whether the pavilions presented by so many countries can tell me more about their respective histories. I did find a lot of things, including photos, copies and models to support what the books told me.

In the Iran Pavilion, there is a replica of the Bihistun Inscription, which was originally engraved around 500 BC in three languages — Persian, Elamite and Akkadian — on a cliff in the name of Persian King Darius the Great. It reminds us of his glorious achievements in expanding his empire. Old maps in the pavilion show the territory of the Persian Empire at that time, confirming the success of the great king.

In the Mongolia Pavilion, an exhibit of an ancient wooden wagon made me wonder whether it was the same type that carried Genghis Khan and his successors as they swept across Asia and Europe.

The Italy Pavilion pays more attention to its art, fashion and technology, from manmade shoes, high-fashion garments and super-luxury cars. However, the magnificent entrance to the pavilion, which imitates the Olympic Theater in Vicenza, and a model of the famous dome of the Florence Cathedral overhanging in the main hall, more or less satisfied my curiosity as a history lover.

However, I am really disappointed with the Greek Pavilion. As a country whose ancient civilization has influenced the rest of the world so profoundly, and one that owns an abundant historical heritage, the pavilion



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History buff Yu Zhengming poses in front of the 'Oriental Crown'.

decided to display its future instead of the beauty of its antiquity. The only thing that reminded me of its glorious past was a picture of Acropolis in Athens.

What I missed in the Greek Pavilion was remedied in the Turkey Pavilion. Over the past 3,000 years, Turkey was home to the Hittite, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires. Each empire brought a different culture, religion and language. Turkey has much to say about its long and colorful history. I saw the remains of a treaty between the Hittite King Muwatalli II and Egypt's King Ramesses II, dating back to 1258 BC. The Aqueduct of Valens, as well as the Basilica Cistern, represent the unbelievably complex water system built by the Roman Empire around 2,000 years ago. And the library of Celsus in Ephesus, completed in AD 135, is very beautiful with its delicate sculptures, even though what I saw was only an imitation.

The theme of Expo 2010 is "Better City, Better Life", but I am not sure whether it will have a direct effect on people's daily lives. What I am sure of is that the Expo, when seen by millions of visitors — many from the countryside, and many of them children — will bring them a better, more knowledgeable life.

The author is a businessman from Wenzhou in Zhejiang province who is fond of ancient history.

newsbites

Women's conference

The International Forum on Women in Urban Development and Commemoration of the 15th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Shanghai from Sept 16 to 18. With the theme of "Women in Urban Development", the forum attracted more than 300 women from 50 countries and regions, all of whom have made significant achievements in the fields of politics, social affairs or international women's organizations or NGOs. The forum discussed various subjects concerning the growth of female talent, women's comprehensive development and responsibility, and women's role in urban development.

Seven days in Tibet

Lhasa Week got under way at the Expo on Sept 17 with the capital of the Tibet autonomous region showcasing its distinctive snow-capped plateau and flowers. One of the highlights of the week's activities, a floral parade, attracted more than 700,000 visitors, officials said. Actors native to Lhasa performed in traditional Tibetan dress to promote the area's culture. Meanwhile, the respective tourism boards of Lhasa and Shanghai signed a memorandum of cooperation to promote exchanges between the two cities, based on their tourism resources, and boost the growth of the domestic tourism industry.

Vanke talks garbage

A forum named "Ecological Recycling and Dwelling Environment" was held inside the corporate Vanke Pavilion on Sept 20 to mark its special pavilion day at Expo 2010. Wang Shi, chairman of China Vanke Co Ltd, gave a keynote speech and initiated an action plan aimed at promoting better ways of sorting refuse in China. A sculpture made from oxygen cylinders discarded at Mt Qomolangma was unveiled at the forum.

Cellphone with a sense of hygiene

Morph, the concept phone produced by Nokia, was recently put on display inside the Finland Pavilion. Morph uses nano-technology to clean itself and can be recharged automatically using solar power. Meanwhile, visitors can interact with one of the pavilion's digital walls using the photography function of another Nokia model, the N810.

Abruzzo promotes its assets

The Abruzzo Regional Exhibition, co-organized by the Italian Pavilion and the Shanghai Yishang Wine Business Consulting Company, was held on Sept 19. The exhibition presented the unique charms of the central-southern Italian region, and showcased efforts to rebuild the area following a devastating earthquake there in 2009. Mauro Febbo, Abruzzo's councilor for agriculture and environment, attended the inauguration of the exhibition and led a discussion on sustainable urban development.

Djuric the face of Montenegrin art

An exhibition of the painter Dado Djuric is being held in the Montenegro Pavilion from Sept 15 to Oct 31. Djuric, a Montenegrin painter of 20th century contemporary art, is one of the most prominent representatives of contemporary figurative art. Predrag Nenezic, Montenegro's tourism minister, attended the opening ceremony.



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