

DIARY: 2003

JANUARY

1 Wednesday

Nadine back at about 9 am after no sleep last night. We left for the airport at 10 am. I returned at noon, while her flight left at 1:05 pm. On return, had a swim (water 17°C, 900 m).

2 - 3 Thursday - Friday

—

4 Saturday

Run not too bad; ran for four hours.

5 Sunday

—

6 Monday

Cooler. About 7°C when I went swimming - water was 16°C. Body parts [?from donated bodies] in a rubbish dump found to have come from HKU!!

7 Tuesday

—

8 Wednesday

CH Tung gives his annual policy address in the afternoon.

9 - 11 Thursday - Saturday

—

12 Sunday

Got Gavin's e-mails about "stop loss" until January 31st, 2003. Had dinner in a Vietnamese restaurant [in other building] in the evening.

13 Monday

Sunny. Water temperature up to 17°C. Another guy swimming while I was there. In the evening, watched a TV documentary on Stalag Luft 3 and The Great Escape.

Mum passes away at 7:50 pm HK time (12:50 am (?pm) 14/2 NZ time.

14 Tuesday

E-mails to and from Mum. Several from Gavin. But none from Leonie and Nadine.

15 - 16 Wednesday - Thursday

—

17 Friday

About 20°C. Water temperature must also have been as no cold, numb neck.

18 Saturday

Mum's funeral in NZ. Because of this, didn't go for a run; held my own remembrance 'service' here. Went to the gym later. An old, partly demented man, illegally returned to China, brought back to HK.

19 - 22 Sunday - Wednesday

—

23 Thursday

Went to Macmillan-New Asia's annual dinner at the Miramar Hotel in the evening; not too much food!

24 Friday

—

25 Saturday

Good run. Got mixed up with 10 km (?7 km) run at the start at the Plover Cove dam.

26 Sunday

First Taiwan aircraft in 50 years non-stop flies to China (to Shanghai, not via HK as they were flying in the past). A 24-hour border crossing opens at Lok Ma Chau.

27 - 30 Monday - Thursday

—

31 Friday

Holiday - Chinese New Year's eve. Last swim before the pool closes for maintenance. A chicken farm infected [?bird flu].

FEBRUARY

1 Saturday

Year of the Goat / Ram / Sheep commences. Run - tired at first, but very fast in the last stretch from lead mine pass to Tai Po Viaduct at about 23 minutes! Couldn't believe it!

2 Sunday

Learn from Gavin's e-mail about the Columbia Space Shuttle disaster last night (10 pm HK time).

3 - 6 Monday - Thursday

—

7 Friday

Osama bin Laden leaflets tossed from a flat near the Kowloon mosque.

8 Saturday

Difficult, slow run after a week off exercise.

9 - 10 Sunday - Monday

—

11 Tuesday

Outbreak of pneumonia in South China; some deaths.

12 - 14 Wednesday - Friday

—

15 Saturday

Cloudy. Good run; breathing cleared up. Had evening dinner at Sheung Wan open-air market.

16 Sunday

Spent all afternoon preparing notes for tomorrow's meeting with the publisher's sales team.

17 Monday

Meeting [in the lobby] with the team in the afternoon; lasted for three hours. Feeling ill with the flu (?); went to bed after cooking dinner but eating little of it. Watched a TV programme on the Bismark.

18 Tuesday

Started the teacher's resource book for Chem Quest. To the gym - OK. A subway fire resulting from an arson attack in Daegu, South Korea; over 100 (?) fatalities.

19 Wednesday

Young boy returns from China infected with the H5N1 virus.

20 Thursday

–

21 Friday

Civil service to receive a 6% salary *cut*. Saw a brief BBC TV news report on US forces in Djibouti.

22 - 28 Saturday - Friday

–

MARCH

1 Saturday

Warm (25°C) and very humid. The second half of the run was terrible! Had to sit and rest many times.

2 Sunday

–

3 Monday

A Securior guard hacked to death.

4 Tuesday

Some heavy rain in the morning. To the clinic for some medicine. Then spoke with the now Dr Yip for a while. Bomb blasts at Davao airport [southern Philippines, which I passed through twice]; about 31 killed.

5 Wednesday

The 50th anniversary of Stalin's death; about 30 million killed / died / starved to death from 1918 to 1956. In HK, the budget announced!

6 Thursday

Watched a replay on TV of the Canterbury Crusaders defeating the Queensland Reds 34-6.
Bomb strapped to a victim in an attempted bank robbery.

7 Friday

The police officer who snatched at Yuen Long given 10 years. My HK Chemistry book approved. Royalty received from the new publisher - well down! Bank robbers rounded up. Saw the last quarter of the Hurricanes vs Stormers; won by former.

8 - 9 Saturday - Sunday

—

10 Monday

Financial Secretary criticised for buying a new car before his budget was announced and saving himself the increased tax on new cars.

11 Tuesday

Outbreak of flu / pneumonia among staff at the Prince of Wales Hospital.

12 - 14 Wednesday - Friday

—

15 Saturday

Good run - 10 minutes faster than last year.

16 - 17 Sunday - Monday

—

18 Tuesday

Prince of Wales Hospital to close down temporarily due to a lack of staff because of pneumonia impact.

19 Wednesday

—

20 Thursday

First preliminary air attack begins on Baghdad; aimed at taking out some of the top leadership. Iraq fires Scud missiles into Kuwait.

21 Friday

–

22 Saturday

Cooler. To TST early for Chemistry book presentation at Hotel Mirimar; my talk lasted about 80 minutes. About 200 attendees. Back to Tin Shui Wai. Wrote e-mail letters in the afternoon. Then to TST again in the evening; ate at the YMCA. Had diarrhoea on returning!

23 Sunday

Went for a run in the morning. Then shopping and dim sum at the hotel restaurant.

24 Monday

Chest pains quite bad today. Used a hot-water bag on my chest in the evening, which helped.

25 Tuesday

–

26 Wednesday

The number of pneumonia cases now over 300. The KCR giving out face masks to passengers. Call from Gavin about 3 pm to say plans have changed [i.e. instead of returning to the US at the end of their float, they are to go to Iraq]. Late dinner!

27 Thursday

–

28 Friday

Schools closed yesterday for just over a week; universities closed today.

29 Saturday

A good run; 6 minutes faster than the same rout last year. Watch HK Rugby 7s in the afternoon on TV. To the airport in the evening [??].

30 Sunday

After writing letters, spent the afternoon watching the Rugby 7s on TV. USA won the Bowl, Canada the Plate and England the Cup (beating NZ 22 - 17 in the final).

31 Monday

Everybody in one block of Amoy Gardens quarantined inside their flats for 10 days.

APRIL

1 Tuesday

Run on supermarket foods based on a rumour that [all of] HK is about to be quarantined (not an April fool's prank!) Amoy Gardens residents to be moved to holiday camps for the quarantine period.

2 - 3 Wednesday - Thursday

—

4 Friday

US forces capture Baghdad International Airport. Fall-out from SARS in HK; A HK delegation refused participation in an exhibition in Basel. U-19s HK Rugby team not allowed to play in a tournament in France. United Christian Hospital staff infected. Fewer people crossing the border for Ching Ming festival. Schools closed till after Easter. Some expat families leave HK. HK students studying in the UK told not to return after the holidays (later withdrawn).

5 Saturday

Cooler. Good run, especially the last section to Sek Kong. Ching Ming holiday; many people cleaning graves along the Sek Kong to Tai Lam Chung Road.

6 - 7 Sunday - Monday

—

8 Tuesday

To the gym to do rowing instead of swimming as the pool is closed because of SARS. "Great Expectations" [book printed in original format] arrives in one package from Stanford.

9 Wednesday

Baghdad falls to US troops.

10 Thursday

"Hong Kong will take your breath away" tourist advertisement in the UK withdrawn.

11 Friday

—

12 Saturday

Gentler run. Rained for a while. Later, in the afternoon, the computer monitor [CRT] finally gave up. So, I went to the Golden Shopping Arcade to buy another [CRT] monitor [about \$600, from memory].

13 - 14 Sunday - Monday

—

15 Tuesday

Main hostilities cease in Iraq. In HK nine die today of SARS.

16 - 18 Wednesday - Friday

—

19 Saturday

“Clean HK” day; government ministers out doing their token bit! Hotter than expected at about 30°C so the run was hot and a bit difficult; calf injury on the last leg [of the run] in addition to two injured heels.

20 Sunday

—

21 Monday

Mayor of Beijing and the Health Minister sacked for covering up SARS figures in China.

22 Tuesday

Most schools re-open for Form 3+. Got the 'final' textbook and workbook of the Brunei Primary 4 book.

23 Wednesday

To the dentist and doctor in the morning; had an ECG. Had to stop eating after the evening dinner to go on a 12-hour fast before having a blood test tomorrow. E-mail from Gavin to say he is in Kuwait and will soon be on his way back [to the US].

24 Thursday

To CUHK clinic in the morning for the blood test.

25 Friday

ANZAC day. At Dunedin, the Highlanders beat the Brumbies 45 - 19. The game was preceded by ANZAC commemoration and both national anthems.

26 Saturday

No run [which would be the last run of the season]; the injured leg not recovered anyway. Worked all day. To Sheung Shui briefly in the afternoon.

27 Sunday

Call from Leonie and Nadine re Nadine's university choice [eventually chose North-eastern university].

28 Monday

To CUHK clinic to pick up the results of the ECG and blood test. Everything seems OK. Went for a swim at midday; first for the season and since the pool opened yesterday.

29 - 30 Tuesday - Wednesday

—

MAY

1 - 4 Thursday - Sunday

—

5 Monday

Very heavy rain overnight; about 100 mm in just a few hours. A lot of flooding. Pool closes so went to the gym for rowing.

6 Tuesday

—

7 Wednesday

Reply from CU Language School saying that VA application was rejected.

8 Thursday

Public holiday for Buddha's birthday. Also, the bun festival on Cheung Chau.

9 - 10 Friday - Saturday

—

11 Sunday

Staff here in the afternoon to clean the suite [??because of SARS] so I sunbathed at the pool (but no swim). Looked through a Vianni Cove show flat and walked over to the Vianni Cove construction site.

12 Monday

Most primary school re-start.

13 Tuesday

Female doctor, aged 35, at the Tuen Mun Hospital, dies of SARS.

13 Wednesday

32°C. Interesting TV documentary on the 1918-19 flu pandemic.

14 Wednesday

Yesterday's documentary followed up by one on SARS.

16 - 21 Thursday - Wednesday

—

22 Thursday

Funeral today for the 35-year old lady doctor from Tuen Mun Hospital. Gavin calls in the morning.

23 Friday

WHO lifts its travel advisory on HK.

24 - 25 Saturday - Sunday

—

26 Monday

Spanish peacekeeping team killed on the way back from Afghanistan when their Yak crashes while trying to land in Turkey. A 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Japan.

27 - 28 Tuesday - Wednesday

—

29 Thursday

The 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Mt Everest. Also, Bob Hope's 100th birthday. In the gym. Got back to 3 km in 12 minutes on the treadmill.

30 - 31 Friday - Saturday

—

JUNE

1 Sunday

Procession in HK to remember the June 4th massacre. The last Air France commercial Concorde flight. Sluice gates closed on the Three Gorges dam.

2 - 3 Monday - Tuesday

—

4 Wednesday

Public holiday - dragon boat festival. Got a rice dumpling from the hotel. June 4th commemoration at Victoria Park.

5 Thursday

Saw on TV about a NZer building a home-made ballistic missile in his garage!

6 - 10 Friday - Tuesday

—

11 Wednesday

The third straight day of wet stormy weather. No swims Monday or today; rowing instead. A 2-year old boy died of anthrax recently.

12 - 13 Thursday - Friday

—

14 Saturday

Return excess clothes hangers to the hotel. Watched live Rugby on TV. England beat NZ 15 - 13. Australia beat Wales and later SA beat Scotland.

15 Sunday

Played on the golf-putting course [3rd floor, other hotel] in the afternoon; had a \$10 + \$20 voucher. Saw on TV the last part of the Spanish Moto GP. Rossi, after being 1st, then 2nd then off the track to be 6th fought back to end 2nd.

16 Monday

–

17 Tuesday

Unemployment up from 7.8% to a record 8.3%. Government to create 3200 jobs.

18 Wednesday

Pop died this morning at 6:40 am (NZ time).

19 Thursday

–

20 Friday

Generally fine, but thunder when I was swimming! After 12 laps, was told to finish but squeezed in another 8 to give 1100 m as planned.

21 - 22 Saturday - Sunday

–

23 Monday

HK Taken off the WHO SARS advisory list at 3 pm, 20 days after the last SARS case.

24 - 27 Tuesday - Friday

–

28 Saturday

Watched live TV coverage of the NZ - France Rugby game. NZ won, unconvincingly, 31 - 23.

29 Sunday

The Premier arrives for a few days, mainly for the handover anniversary on Tuesday.

30 Monday

Short call from Gavin in the morning. The Premier makes an unscheduled visit to Amoy Gardens.

JULY

1 Tuesday

Public holiday - handover anniversary. The Premier leaves after official ceremonies. Protest and march against the Article 23 legislation - 500 000 or more attend!

2 - 5 Wednesday - Saturday

—

6 Sunday

The CE says some changes will be made to Article 23 legislation but that its passing will not be delayed.

7 Monday

James Tien, head of the Liberal Party, resigns from the Executive Council. Consequently the CE announces that the bill will be delayed.

8 Tuesday

The two Iranian conjoined 28-year old female twins dies in Singapore during an operation to separate them. Watched a TV documentary on Devil's Island.

9 Wednesday

An evening rally around the Legislative Council building against Article 23 and asking for ore democracy! Legislation is proceeding on soccer gambling legislation.

10 Thursday

Hot again. A KMB bus shunted off the elevated highway at Ting Kau 50 m to the ground; 22 killed. To Park Lane Hotel in the evening for dinner with Chua Hong Kuen; showed his photos of Gavin.

11 Friday

The Housing Authority found, in the lower court, to be undercharging public housing tenants. Ben Chan called but then his mobile malfunctioned and he couldn't hear me though I could hear him.

12 Saturday

More or less finished the Chem Quest book; just the teacher's books to do. Executive councillor Philip Wong to be investigated for giving the 'finger' to the crowds on Wednesday morning.

13 Sunday

–

14 Monday

Another protest rally.

15 Tuesday

Got a fax from Nadine to enrol and pay her first university tuition fee instalment today! Eastern Harbour Tunnel Co's application for a 33% toll increase rejected. Philip Wong not to be punished for his 'obscene gesture'.

16 Wednesday

Regina Yip [Minister responsible for Article 23] announces her resignation. “Cargate” investigation to proceed. Then later, Anthony Leung [financial secretary] resigns - good!!

17 Thursday

Unemployment up to about 8.6%.

18 Friday

Gavin's last day in the Marines!

19 Saturday

CE to Beijing for the day to report to and consult leaders. NZ beat SA 52 - 16 in Pretoria.

20 Sunday

–

21 Monday

Number 1 signal up all day for the first time this year. Sperm whale beached in Sai Kung; unable to re-float it so it was put down.

22 Tuesday

–

23 Wednesday

Tony Blair in HK but leaves early because of the approach of another typhoon. Uday and Kussay Hussain [Saddam Hussain's sons] killed in a US assault. Phone call from Gavin and Nadine.

24 Thursday

—

25 Friday

Group of IIs heading for the US arrested at Kwai Chung [container terminal].

26 Saturday

—

27 Sunday

Anniversary of: the Korean War armistice (50 years), birth of Louise Brown, the world's first 'test-tube' baby (25 years). Liverpool FC play HK winning 6 - 0.

28 Monday

Bob Hope dies at just over 100. Started exercise again with swimming.

29 - 31 Tuesday - Thursday

—

AUGUST

1 - 3 Friday - Sunday

—

4 Monday

Leonie's birthday.

5 Tuesday

—

6 Wednesday

Thunderstorm warning therefore no swim. Did rowing; in 25 minutes, managed 6005 m (2.049 min/500 m). Real Madrid arrive from Japan. HKCEE results out today.

7 Thursday

—

8 Friday

Went to Hang Seng bank to apply for a credit card. Later, did a good 20-lap swim. Watched part of a soccer game between Real Madrid and HK, the former winning 4 - 2.

9 Saturday

ABs beat SA 19-11, but only got one try and made to struggle/fight for the win.

10 - 13 Sunday - Wednesday

—

14 Thursday

Massive power failure in New York up to Canada affecting about 50 million people.

15 Friday

—

16 Saturday

Idi Amin dies! [exiled in Saudi Arabia] Aged about 80. Watched NZ beat Australia 21 - 17 in Auckland in the final Tri-Nations test, which was also for the Bledisloe Cup.

17 Sunday

Remembrance day for the end of WWII against the Japanese. Kelvin [Wendy's husband] dies in a car accident; Wendy in hospital.

18 Monday

—

19 Tuesday

Huge suicide bomb blast in Baghdad destroys part of a hotel and kills many UN workers.

20 - 21 Wednesday - Thursday

—

22 Friday

Gavin arrives early in the morning. He is one day early but his plane arrives very late so he stays overnight with a friend. Midday to the gym together (pool closed). Rowing - 6006 m in 25 minutes @ 2:04.5 per 500 m. A 7.2 magnitude earthquake in the south of NZ.

23 - 26 Saturday - Tuesday

—

27 Wednesday

Last night, a government helicopter crashes on Lantau, killing the crew of two. Collected the credit card today.

28 - 31 Thursday - Sunday

—

SEPTEMBER

1 Monday

—

2 Tuesday

Strong, fast typhoon passes just south of HK. Signal #9 up for a while, but the typhoon then fizzled quickly.

3 - 4 Wednesday - Thursday

—

5 Friday

The government withdraws its Article 23 bill.

6 Saturday

Gavin back in the afternoon then off again. Back again at 10:30 pm with Sian to pack his things and head off to her [parents] place.

7 Sunday

Call from Gavin at 7 am to say he had checked in OK. His flight leaves about 9:15 am.

8 Monday

—

9 Tuesday

SARS case identified in Singapore. Citybus drivers work to rule to protest wage and bonus cuts. Watched the second half of the England v France Rugby test. Two letters to Gavin in June returned! An LRV derailed down below [my window].

10 Wednesday

Seemed to have tickets to Spain worked out. In the evening, the poolside buffet for hotel residents was held. Good.

11 Thursday

To town to get the air tickets. Tired in the gym; did less and didn't finish my schedule. In the evening, saw on a TV advertisement how birds formed the Air NZ logo [done using computer manipulation].

12 Friday

Public holiday for mid-autumn festival.

13 Saturday

In the morning, looking at train travel in Spain on the web. In the afternoon, to the History Museum to look at 75 years of R(T)HK and history of HK. Tired. Bought a travel book on Spain. Got an early morning call from Gavin.

14 Sunday

–

15 Monday

Got travellers' cheques and cash. Also cashed my very old HK travellers' cheques [most never used; at first HSBC would not accept them even though they had issued them].

Thunderstorm; pool closed so rowing instead.

16 Tuesday

To CU to get more medicine. Early lunch with Dr Yip.

[Trip to Spain September 20 - October 11]

Trip to Spain

September 21 Sunday

Left Hong Kong just before midnight on the Swiss Airlines MD-11. Flight was uneventful. Had an aisle seat and flight completely booked out. Dinner not too bad but breakfast (continental) not very good; many people left lots of food.

Got to Zurich soon after 6 am. Eventually found a transfer desk at Terminal A (having arrived at Terminal E) to try to get an earlier Iberia flight but all the Swiss Airlines allotment booked out. Back to the new Terminal E to wait for the 9.30 am flight to Madrid. Only about half full. Took less than 3 hours. On arrival, tummy pains and diarrhoea hit and had to go to the terminal toilet immediately after disembarking from the bus from the plane. Through immigration and baggage collection quickly. Noticed a casualness by some people, smoking even though not allowed at baggage collection area.

Walked - quite a long way - to the airport Madrid station, bought tickets and took the train to Calloo station; took just over 30 minutes. Then a short walk to the hotel (included in ticket) where checked in. Had another 'dai bin' and a rest.

Walk down to Puerto del Sol - the 'heart' of Madrid and then to Plaza Mayor to the tourist office which was closed. Quite hot but dry. Then bought a little to eat and had a look at a possible hostel (Spanish spelling for 'hostel') for other nights stay in Madrid. Noticed that food was expensive and budget hostels not cheap either.

Back to the hotel for rest and finished off airline food (yoghurt and drinks) and then to bed. Had to turn the air-conditioner off (as felt too cold at its minimum of 20°C).

22 Monday

Good sleep. Down to breakfast at about 8 am. Waiter tended to ignore people arriving and waiting for tables. Breakfast consisted of croissant, bread roll, biscuits, jam, orange juice and milk. To the Plaza Calloo at 10 am but the travel agency I had found on the Internet had closed for reconstruction. So, down to Place Mayor to the tourist office, but it deals only with local tourism. To a travel agent in a department store but not much help. Then to another travel agent but didn't deal with buses and cheaper hostals. After a long wait, got tickets to Granada but nothing else! On to another travel agency but no use either as only dealt with selective trains.

Next to try to find a place to stay in for tomorrow. Eventually got one on Paeso del Prado; lady there very nice - the first nice person met today! Down to Atocha railway station to see where to pick up train for Granada. Not easy to find information for other trains, e.g. to Segovia.

Then to look for a bus station, only to discover it had moved; learnt this from a bus driver (?) - the second nice person met! Discovered two supermarkets - by following a supermarket bag trail!

Soon after, had a buffet dinner at a pub/restaurant. Eventually, back to the hotel. Tired, lay down and slept for a couple of hours.

So, rather a dead loss of a day with not much sightseeing.

23 Tuesday

Breakfast at 8 am and checkout by 9.30 am. Set off for the hostel. Cool at this time of day. Check in about 10 am. At 10.30 am off to look at sites. Walked back to Puerto del Sol to an old convent but did not go in (€5!). Down to the Royal Palace area, through Park Sabatini - then through the Royal Palace - old apartments, palace pharmacy and armoury. Spent about two hours there. Along to the Rastro district where there are supposed to be many street markets but saw only a few. Thence to Atocha station (to get times for trains to outlying cities), supermarket and back to the hostel. Shower and rest and then out for a while for something to eat.

24 Wednesday

Up earlier (about 7.30 am) and off to the Atocha railway station to catch the 8.25 am train to Granada. It left about 10 minutes late! Quite an enjoyable journey though rather slow, arriving in Granada at about 2.15 pm. A German girl helped. Went with her in a bus to the centre of town and information office. (Found that it is only half the fare by *bus* from Madrid to Granada - and faster!) From there to the hostel where she was staying. No rooms for tonight so to another hostel close by. Checked in for one night only, then back to the first hostel to reserve a room for nights two and three. After that, around to the cathedral and bought a pass of sites including Al Alhambra (time of visit stamped on pass to obviate need to queue up). Back to the hostel for a rest then out for a walk around the town. Couldn't find a supermarket!

PS: At Madrid station, talked to two people from North Carolina who saw the NC on the cap I was wearing. At a plaza in Granada, spoke to a chap wearing a black rugby jersey with an New Zealand flag and who was a fan of Jonah Lomu. However, he played soccer and not rugby. Gave him the web address for planet rugby.

25 Thursday

Not such a good sleep. Some crashing noises from rubbish trucks et. al. and also people. Up just before 9 am; had fruit, bread and lettuce for breakfast. Then went round to the other hostel and left the large backpack there. Then walked up to the Alhambra arriving well before 11 am which was the entry time stamped on the card. Good to have the card as all the morning tickets were sold out while waiting. Entered at about 10.45 am and spent nearly four hours there. A very interesting place. Fine day, hot and dry.

Took a bus (using Granada card) from Al Alhambra to the base of the hill. Had a fast-food snack. Bought some nectarines. Went to the #3 bus stop to take the bus to the bus terminus. A chap at the bus stop was helpful. Bought bus tickets to Cordoba.

Returned to town and visited the Royal Chapel then the cathedral. Then back to the hotel, arriving at 6 pm. Got the room, had a shower and a rest. Later, went out looking for a supermarket, eventually finding one, then had a snack at Burger King (in a very old palatial building).

26 Friday

Good sleep, with air-conditioning. Up about 9.30 am. Had a simple breakfast (yoghurt, nectarine, juice) then off. Called in at a bank to change €200 notes into lower denominations, which are more readily acceptable. Took #8 bus to the Caruja monastery - not very interesting. Then back to town to the San Jeronimo monastery - a little more interesting; the chapel has a two-storey seating. Then sat in the little square and ate lunch of sandwiches. Decided to go to the Science Park as still had plenty of time. Took bus #4, but on arrival found it was closed from 15th - 30th - September (except weekends)! Took #5 bus back but it went another route and by the time I realised it, it was at the University Science faculty. Not too far back though. To an Internet shop for an hour, then a supermarket. On the way back to the hostel, had a bread roll and ice-cream.

Back at the hostel for some more “dinner” and a rest and then around the town for the evening. Very enjoyable. Looked at the floodlit Al Alhambra. On the way back, came across an orchestral (mainly brass) concert outside the cathedral, which ended appropriately with “Granada”.

27 Saturday

Up at 8 am to depart from Granada. Left the hostel at about 8.30 am. Cool but pleasant. Got a #3 bus and arrived at the bus terminus at 9 am. Walked around the camping ground next to the station. Bus left soon after 10 am, taking about 2 ½ hours to get to Cordoba. Countryside very uniform - dry, rolling hills and olive trees. Just a few small towns along the route.

At Cordoba, compared rail/bus ticket prices to Seville then bought the (slightly more expensive) bus tickets. Walked down to the older part of town to find a hostel. Checked in at the first one seen. After that, walked around looking for an information office - unsuccessful. A lot of people at a church programme in the Mesquita. Very hot!! Walked across the old bridge then around the old town. Very tired, so back to the hostel for a shower and long rest. In the evening, went looking for a supermarket; found one in a department store. Bought a whole chicken and sat in a park and ate it. Then back to the hostel. Hot - still about 31°C.

28 Sunday

Brief sleep-in. After breakfast (in room), visited the nearby Alcazar (palace/fortress/castle) - entrance fee, though free on Fridays!. Then around to the information office to get a map. The Mesquita closed to tourists because of church services. Walked around the old quarter, to

the Synagogue again, then back to the hostel for a long siesta and lunch as it was very hot outside. Visited the Mesquita (free on *Mondays!!*) for over two hours, then walked around the old / new quarter. Back to the hostel for a shower, “dinner” and rest.

In the evening, went out to look at buildings and bridge that are lit up. Bought some chips on the opposite side of the river. While crossing back, saw a brief fireworks display in the distance.

29 Monday

Not a particularly interesting day. Got up later. Left shortly after 10 am and walked slowly to the bus station. Met a Señor Currito who was travelling on the same bus. Bus stopped many times and took 2 ½ hours to reach Seville. And then the difficulties started. The lady at the (bust terminus) window would not provide information. Had to work out where the bus station was located. Then walked down to a city information office - closed for renovation!! So, had to walk down the river-side to the other information office. Hot, but only about 30°C. Got a map. Then spent a long time walking around trying to find a hostel at a reasonable price. About three hours after arriving, found one! After a time, walked along to a supermarket. Bought the stuff back to the hostel and went out to find somewhere to eat, eventually ending up at a Hangzhou restaurant near the cathedral.

30 Tuesday

Wet all day and rain became heavy in the early evening. Set out for the centre of town about 11 am and decided not to go into the Alcazar. Walked down to the bus station to buy tickets to Merida. Then along the riverbank and to a tower - didn't go in as although free on Tuesdays, I thought that was tomorrow!! Then across the river and past the place where Magellan's ship left for its round-the-world voyage. Bought some chips at McDonald's (and ate them with own lunch). To the large Parque de Maria Luisa and the building in the Plaza Espana. Down to the Port of Seville; watched a railway drawbridge being lowered for a train to cross. Back to the cathedral and saw the coffin, allegedly of Christopher Columbus, but actually his son. Climbed the cathedral spire for a view of the city. Very overcast. Wanted to eat at the same Chinese restaurant but it was not open. So, bought some things at a supermarket, then came back to the hostel, after getting lost in the maze of small alleys. PS: Also visited a small exhibition of planes connected with Seville. Also, on leaving the cathedral the 'NC' cap attracted the attention of a man from Raleigh. Went to the Chinese restaurant but not yet open for the evening session (~5.30 pm) so came back to the hostel and had a sandwich dinner and then earlier to bed.

October 1 Wednesday

Up a little later. Some rain showers during the day but generally fine. After breakfast, walked

to the Alcazar (a royal palace) but didn't go in. Then around to the "Pilate's house" but again did not go in - did not seem worth €5 for the G/F of €8 for both floors (equal to the entry price for Al Alhambra!). Walked along to the "El Corte Ingles" department store for a look, then lunch in the square outside. Then walked along towards the river and a look at the old railway station; bought large of potato chips at a McDonald's there. Across to the information office then saw a look at a replica of Magellan's ship the "Santa Maria" located on the other side of the river . Back to the department store for food then to American Express to cash travellers' cheques (after getting lost in the small alleys again). From there, back to the Alcazar but closed. To the hostel for a shower and dinner at the Chinese restaurant. Finally, a walk around part of the town.

2 Thursday

Heavy rain during the night (apparently over most of Spain). Left in the rain at about 10 am for the bus station (to Merida). Got shoes, socks, shorts and some of the T-shirt soaked due in the torrential rain. After arriving at the station, tried to dry out. And guess what? - the rain stopped! Left for Merida at 11.10 am. First stop for the bus was a 'snack' stop at about 12.30 pm. A number of stops after that (for passengers). In one town, passed an A & P show in progress. Arrived in Merida at 2.30 pm. Fine, 18~20°C. Walked across the bridge into town and then looked for a hostel. Eventually checked in at the only one on the town side of the river. Very few people around as siesta time, even though it was not hot. Later, bought a combined ticket to view several sites. Walked over the old Roman bridge. Bought bus tickets then back to the hostel for 'dinner'.

3 Friday

Up a little earlier to be at the Roman amphitheatre at its opening time of 9.30 am. Looked around it and the adjacent Casa Amphitheatre. Walked down to the Roman Circus (hippodrome) and the nearby aqueduct. Then back up to the Colombria (sp?) and the Casa Mittres (?). Past the Plaza de Toros (bullfighting arena) and along to the Alezaba and then to the archaeological dig under a public building. Back through town past the arch, through a wet market and the Temple of Diana (with direction from an elderly man). Lunch in the hostel room and a siesta. At 4 pm, went across the road to the ruins under the Santa Eulalia Basicila. Then down to the other aqueduct and Roman bridge over the smaller river. Then stood outside a house listening to piano music. On clapping, a lady looked out the window and invited me into the house to listen to more music by her husband. Thence, down to the ruins of an early Christian hospital near the Basilica and back to the hostel. In the evening, went to the railway station to buy tickets (from Madrid to Toledo), then a snack and walk around. Fine all day.

4 Saturday

Fine and warm all day. Left for the Merida bus station at 9.10 am. The bus for Trujillo left later than scheduled at 9.45 am, due its late arrival. Arrived just a few minutes late at about 11.15 am. Walked to the town square and called in at the tourist office. Then checked in at a hostel nearby after being approached by an old lady. Bought a Trujillo card - no price saving but a nice booklet came with the ticket. Visited three of the four sites on the card then back to the hostel at about 2.30 pm for a two-hour siesta. Down to a supermarket and back. A bridal couple had just come out of the Church of St Martin and were to ride away in a horse-drawn coach plus escort. But they took so long so gave up waiting. Good shower later in the hostel.

5 Sunday

Had a sleep-in. After breakfast in the room, left the hostel about 11 am and sat in the square for a while. Then down to the bus station for the 12 noon express bus to Madrid. "Leather" seats and only three across. Not much of interest on the way, though saw a nuclear power station. Arrived in Madrid late because of traffic jams on the Autovia (Motorway). Walked from the bus station (after working out which direction to head in) to the Alocha station area and found a hostel. Had a sleep for a while then to a supermarket and a dinner (at a restaurant?). Had a 'bath' in the large copper container at the room at the hostel.

6 Monday

Up earlier to catch the train to Toledo. Nice seats! Final leg to Toledo was by bus. From the bus station, walked across the old pedestrian bridge up to the town. Alcazar (castle) closed on Mondays! Walked to the cathedral and then to the other side of the town. Visited an old synagogue since converted into a church, but no longer in use. Down past the Monastery la Reys. Sat outside a secondary school and ate lunch. Then walked alongside the town walls, up an escalator and, after getting lost!, back to the main square. To McDonald's for a pee. Then to a town cultural museum (free) which included paintings by El Greco and ceramic wall tiles. Eventually back to the station and to Madrid. Later in the evening, out for dinner - the waitress got the order wrong!

7 Tuesday

A better sleep last night. Up at 6.30 am to have breakfast and to get to Atocha station in plenty of time to get tickets to Segovia. Turned out to be a local/slow train. Late leaving and took about 2 ¼ hours to get there. On the way, saw a large monument that may be the cross for the civil war cemetery (see Thursday below).

Arrived in Segovia at about 10.30 am. Walked from the station into the town, seeing first the Roman aqueduct. Then along the main street through the town past the cathedral and to the Alcazar (fortress/palace). Spent nearly 1 ½ hours inside. Then sat outside to eat lunch.

Tired and not much else to see, so decided to take the 3 pm train back to Madrid, two hours earlier than planned. (Fortunately, the ticket was an open one and valid for any time.) Faster back, taking less than 2 hours. To a supermarket and then back to the hostel. Tried unsuccessfully to contact Swiss Airlines, even walking round and finding an Iberian Airlines to get the telephone number.

8 Wednesday

Sleep in. Thought this would be the last night in this hostel but on turning up at Hostal Casanova, found they had not kept the room. So, back to this hostel for another two nights. Then to town to try to confirm flights. Went to the "El Corte Ingles" travel section who gave the (same) phone number of Swiss Airlines and the office address. Went there but found the office had moved! Back to Puerto del Sol, called the airline and confirmed the flights. Then walked around 'shopping'. Sat in a McDonald's restaurant and ate lunch and watched the traffic chaos outside.

Very tired. Eventually back to the hostel for a rest. Then to the station to check on trains to El Escorial. Then a walk through the large nearby park, dinner at Burger King and back.

9 Thursday

Turned out to be a very clear, warm day. Up earlier to get the 8.30 am Avila train as far as El Escorial, taking just over an hour. Walked up from the station through part of the town to the monastery. Took just over two hours to look through. Then again met Salvador from Caracas / Buenos Aires, whom had first met at the station bus stop. Shared lunch with him in the garden of the monastery.

Learnt that there was only one bus a day to the Valle do Los Caidos ("Valley of the Fallen") which left at 3 pm so went for a walk around the village. Then the 20-minute bus ride to the Valle. Looked through the Basilica. The funicular to the large cross was not operating and by the time we worked out how to walk there, it was too late to do so. The bus returned to El Escorial at 5.15 pm. Walked to the train station with Salvador and others (two from Ecuador working in Australia) and got there just in time for the 6.15 pm train back

Salvador's e-mail address:

Alvare

eltuco2@yahoo.com

Out later for final dinner in Spain.

10 Friday

Sleep in then packed and left the backpack in the hostel then down to Atocha station for a while. Then a little shopping in the Atocha area and to the 'Bangladesh' restaurant for a final meal. Picked up the backpack and off to the airport by Metro. Checked in for the Iberia flight

to Zurich and Swiss Airlines flight to Hong Kong.

OCTOBER

15 Wednesday

China puts its first man in space. Watched the RWC match between Samoa and Uruguay.

16 Thursday

—

17 Friday

Watched NZ beat a second-string Canadian team at the RWC but the ABs were not that impressive.

18 - 23 Saturday - Thursday

—

24 Friday

NZ beat Tonga 91 - 7 in RWC pool match. Last flight for British Airways Concorde.
Madam Chang Kai-shek dies, aged 106.

25 Saturday

Visited the Gold Coast in the afternoon to check out flats. However, they are not serviced apartments.

26 - 30 Sunday - Thursday

—

31 Friday

Mahatir, the PM of Malaysia, retires. The first Chinese astronauts arrive in HK together with their capsule. I talk with Gavin for over an hour at midday.

NOVEMBER

1 - 2 Saturday - Sunday

—

3 Monday

Crocodile on the loose in a Yuen Long river. Authorities having trouble catching it. There is a shoot-out in Mecca. HK chosen to host the 2009 East Asian games.

4 - 5 Tuesday - Wednesday

—

6 Thursday

Equal Opportunities Committee chairman resigns.

7 Friday

Swam one mile today. Bill Clinton in HK; he plays at a Rolling Stones concert in the evening.

[To LA to be with Gavin following his helicopter mid-air collision with another helicopter.]

22 Saturday

Back from LA in the early morning. Most of the day spent on the computer writing and replying to e-mails. England beats Australia in extra time to win the Rugby World Cup.

23 Sunday

District Council elections; larger turnout than expected. The crocodile still not caught; it is becoming a tourist attraction.

24 - 30 Monday - Sunday

—

DECEMBER

1 - 12 Monday - Saturday

—

13 Saturday [?]

Announced that Saddam Hussein captured.

14 Sunday

—

15 Monday

Department of Justice not to prosecute Anthony Leung for misconduct in public office.

16 Tuesday

Off to Los Angeles for three months to help Gavin with his rehabilitation. Took an Asiana flight via Seoul.

[In Los Angeles. Return on 13/03/04]

Hikes: 2003 - 2004

Late 2003 - none because of Gavin's accident.

2004

1	20/3	21°C	Tai Tong → reservoir → Ho Pui reservoir → Y-junction → tunnel bus	(3:45)
2	27/3	18°C	Tai Tong village bus stop → reservoir (29?) → Tai Lam Chung trail → tunnel bus	(2:03)
3	3/4	21°C	Tai Po V → lead mine pass (42) → loop to Grassy Hill → road (1.40) → forest → Tai Po	(2:37)
4	10/4	23°C	Tai Tong village → reservoir (40) → Stage 10 track → road (1.??) → small reservoir → Tai Tong bus terminus	(2:30)
5	17/4	24°C	Tai Po V → lead mine pass (37) → Tai Mo Shan (1.42) → Twisk (2.05) → Kap Lung trail → Sek Kong	2:43
6	24/4	26°C	Tai Tong village → reservoir (32) → forest → road (1.03) → Stage 10 road (1.15) → top of reservoir (1.34) → tunnel bus	(2:20)
7	1/5	29°C	Tai Tong → road/steps/trail → reservoir (34) → Stage 10 track → road (1.14) → t.o. (1.30) → Tai Tong Rd → Tai Tong	2:10
8	8/5	25°C	TT village → reservoir (27) → forest track → road (?54) → road + shortcut track loop (1.28) → reservoir (1.39) → tunnel bus	2:10
9	15/5	30°C	TT village → reservoir (27) → Yuen Tun trail → shortcut (1.00) → road (1.05) → reservoir (1.13) → Tai Lam Chung trail → tunnel bus	2:33
10	22/5	26°C	Tai Wo → Cloudy Hill (46) → first reservoir (1.12) → Cloudy Hill (2.00) → park	2:32

Average time (4 runs) ~2 hours 24 minutes [forgot to include run # 10]