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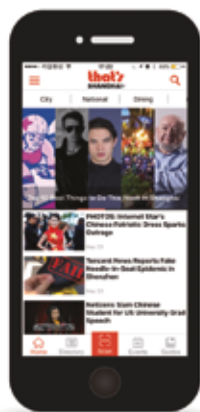
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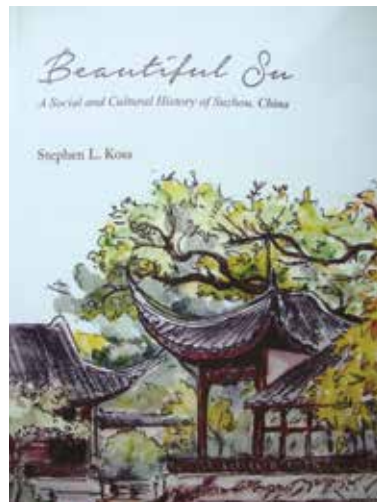
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STEVE KOSS

Suzhou Man of History

By Ned Kelly

Steve Koss first spent a day-and-a-half in Suzhou in 2000 as part of a multi-city tour of China. Charmed by the ancient gardens, tree-lined streets and locals who stopped on their bicycles to practice their English with him, he returned the following summer, met a *Suzhouren* who became his wife, and now splits his time between the city and Manhattan. He has written *Beautiful Su: A Social and Cultural History of Suzhou, China*, and does historical tours of the city, Walking with Steve.



Tell us about your book, *Beautiful Su*?

The more I learned about Suzhou, from living and sightseeing here between 2001 and 2006, the more I wanted to know about the city. I went looking for an English-language book that would tell me the story of Suzhou, but all I could find were two or three quite specialized, academic style books, and some similarly specialized journal articles. There was nothing that presented the end-to-end history of the city, and nothing for a general readership.

Looking through those books, however, I saw enough to give me the idea that such a book could be written, so I decided to tell the city's story. The book took more than six years to research, and two more to write, and finally came out in September 2015. The

first sentence in my book's preface says it all: "This is the book I wanted to buy but couldn't find." The rest, as they say, is history – pun intended.

How did Walking with Steve come about?

It was actually suggested to me last summer by a local newspaper reporter, who thought it might be an interesting way for expats and English-speaking locals to learn more about the city they live in. She was correct – it turned out to be quite popular.

Tell us about your different walks?

There have been nine different walks so far: five last summer; four so far this year. Each walk takes a different route and usually includes three or four places of historical or cultural interest. I generally avoid the typical tourist spots and focus on 'deep Suzhou' – the kinds of places that people don't know about, and that have interesting stories attached to them.

One walk, for example, starts at Suzhou's Twin Pagodas, or *Shuang Ta*, and includes a stop at *Tongdeli*, a small, dead-end alley where 'Big Ears' Du Yuesheng, the notorious head of the Shanghai Green Gang triad in the 1920s and 1930s, built himself a country residence in Suzhou. Big Ears Du had some other interesting connections to Suzhou that I talk about as part of the walk.

What is your favorite Suzhou site?

I love to walk the narrow lanes and alleys of the ancient city with my wife. Because she's a *Suzhouren*, and speaks *Suzhouhua*, my wife is able to (and really enjoys to) engage the elderly people who live in the older homes, so we have the opportunity to visit their homes and hear about their lives. It provides me a fascinating entrée as a foreigner into traditional Suzhou life.

If I had to pick an actual site, I would probably choose *Canglangting*, the Surging Waves Pavilion Garden. It is my favorite Suzhou garden for its unique design and clever space management. And it is rather more lightly visited than the famous, tourist-oriented ones.

How can people sign up for a walk?

This has all been more of a hobby – an enthusiasm to help people who live in Suzhou know more about their city rather than a business – so simply add me on WeChat thought my ID – mathman180 – and I will send you announcements for any upcoming walks.

// Order Steve Koss' *Beautiful Su: A Social and Cultural History of Suzhou, China* by scanning the QR code. Find out more about his walks by adding him on WeChat (ID: mathman180).





AIRLIO

Well-presented Western Food

By Tess Humphrys

THE PLACE

Airlio is one of a number of restaurants in the newly opened HLCC Mall. We were intrigued by European café-style décor and staff dressed all in black, complete with trendy floppy hats.

THE FOOD

Leaning heavily towards French and Italian, the English menu with pictures makes it easy to order. A nice touch was the basket of freshly baked bread that comes with a side of real butter.

We ordered the French meal set



(RMB299) with sirloin steak and two accompanying dishes, plus a plate of onsen tamago (Japanese slow-cooked egg) and ham pasta (RMB79). The spinach, pear and avocado salad and the truffle mushroom soup from the set menu were served first, and both were very well-presented. The addition of walnuts and feta cheese added interesting textures to the greens, while the balsamic dressing tied everything together nicely. The soup, on the other hand, was earthy, rich and velvety, and the highlight of the meal.

There was an unexpectedly long wait until the wrong pasta dish was brought out. While the mistake was quickly rectified, the incident dampened our impression of their service.

The pasta, when it arrived, was beautiful to look at, but it was our least favorite dish due to an overwhelming amount of sauce and black pepper, while the noodles were too chewy.

The sirloin steak was well cooked, tender and juicy, but too fatty. Fresh pink Sichuan

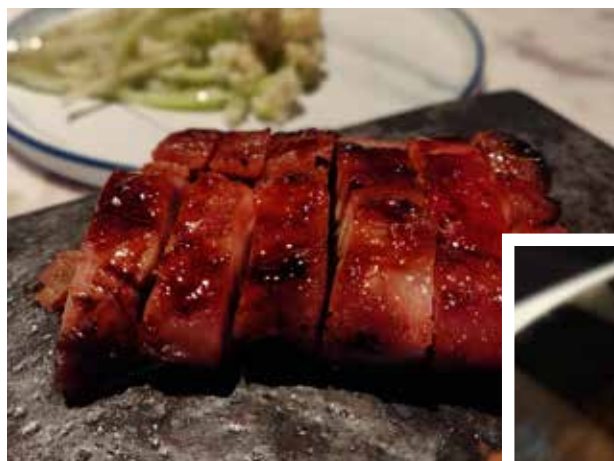


peppercorns looked great and added a delightful flavor to the meat, while the roasted tomatoes made a simple and refreshing accompaniment.

THE VIBE

With Audrey Hepburn films projected onto the walls, Airlio is going for a nostalgic, romantic ambiance. During our visit, however, the voices of a few loud diners reverberated throughout the spacious dining room and completely ruined the mood.

Airlio, Zone B, unit 116, HLCC Mall, 788 Zhong Yuan Road, SIP. 爱由引力西餐厅 钟园路788号丰隆城市中心B区裙楼116. (512 6999 8910)



HONG LOUNGE & RESTAURANT

Upscale Cantonese Delights by Jinji Lake

By Tess Humphrys

THE PLACE

Serving upscale Cantonese cuisine, HONG Lounge & Restaurant is just one of the trendy new places along the Rainbow Walk area by Jinji Lake, which has been given a much-needed makeover since Suzhou Center opened up.

THE FOOD

The organic cauliflower with black truffle sauce (RMB48), which was served as a cold

appetizer, was perfectly cooked and crunchy and flecks of truffle added a pleasant earthiness. While the portion was pretty small, the signature barbequed pork (RMB68) was cooked to perfection – extremely succulent, sweet, but not overwhelmingly so. The fried eggplant with chili and fried garlic (RMB68) came with a choice of three spice levels. We chose the least spicy, but the flavor turned out to be too subtle. The dish, however, was a pleasant and unusual way to enjoy the vegetable, thanks to a light batter that complemented the slightly sweet, cara-

melized eggplant well.

Our favorite dish was the fried rice noodles with wagyu beef (RMB88), which transported us straight back to the streets of Hong Kong. Featuring a generous amount of tender, delicious beef and the crunchy bean sprouts contrasted nicely with the soft noodles.

THE VIBE

A trendy place, with cool, mirror-clad interiors, attentive servers and funky music playing at a good level for dining, it's easy to understand why HONG's attracting a well-heeled crowd. The outdoor seating area is lovely for a few drinks and cocktails, while the food on offer may be a little pricey and the portions too dainty, they're all of high-quality and quite delicious.

1/F, Lakeside Building, Rainbow Walk, 158 Xinggang Jie 星港街158号湖滨新天地 湖滨楼1楼 (512 6762 8777).



EVENTS



● Parallels: Lu Junzhou

This solo exhibition for calligrapher Lu Junzhou combines his longstanding love for the craft and places an emphasis on the release of emotion, rhythm and the expression of individuality.
// Through Sunday, Oct 21. Suzhou Museum, 204 Dongbei Jie 东北街204号 (szmuseum.com)



● Zhong Jinde's Wood Carving Art Exhibition

Born in the old town of Guangfu in Suzhou, Zhong Jinde follows the path of many famous wood-carving artisans from the area that came before him, and has been honing his craft for more than 40 years. This exhibition features works that showcase his wide range of techniques, including the pieces 'Ode to Tea' and 'Holiness,' which will be donated to the Suzhou Museum as part of its collection.
// Through Wednesday, Oct 10. Suzhou Museum, 204 Dongbei Jie 东北街204号 (szmuseum.com)

● Masters of Bamboo

A collection of Japanese baskets from the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco will be on display at the Suzhou Museum. Comprised of nearly 900 items acquired by philanthropist Lloyd Cotsen since the 1950s, these pieces reflect his unique insight into art, as well as the dynamic interplay of Eastern and Western aesthetics.
// Through Sunday, Oct 21. Suzhou Museum, 204 Dongbei Jie 东北街204号 (szmuseum.com)



● Sense and Sensibility by Chapterhouse Theatre Company

Adapted from the famous 1811 Jane Austen novel, Chapterhouse Theatre Company dives into the romantic lives of sisters Elinor and Marianne while they deal with major changes in their family.
// Sat, Oct 28, 7.30pm. RMB80-300. Suzhou Culture & Arts Center, 1 Guanfeng Jie, SIP 苏州工业园区观枫街1号 (sscac.com.cn)



● InterNations October Event

Join InterNations' longstanding monthly networking event at Carumba Bar at the InterContinental Suzhou, and meet fellow expats in the city over drinks and canapés, while celebrating InterNations' 11th birthday.
// Friday, Oct 19, 7.30pm. RMB160 for albatross members / RMB210 for basic members / RMB230 at the door. 288 Wangdun Lu, SIP 苏州工业园区旺墩路288号 (internations.org)



● Camel Pub Quiz

Every Tuesday, the Hardest Working Man in Show Quiz-ness, challenges with 10 rounds testing a wide variety of subjects ranging from general knowledge, film and current affairs questions. A total of RMB800 in Camel vouchers are up for grabs, plus plenty of shots to keep the atmosphere lively and competitive.
// Every Tuesday, 8pm, free entry. The Camel, B1, Hengyu Plaza, 188 Xinghai Lu 苏州园区星海街188号恒宇广场一期地下一楼



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● **FortePiano Trio**

Consisting of three young Italian musicians, Tommaso Benciolini (flute), Leonora Armellini (piano) and Ludovico Armellini (cello), FortePiano Trio have been performing together since 2012 on stages across Europe, Asia and North America. Besides classical music, their repertoire also includes pop music.

// Fri, Oct 20, 7.30pm. RMB50-180. Suzhou Culture & Arts Center, 1 Guanfeng Jie, SIP 苏州工业园区观枫街1号 (sscac.com.cn)



● **Renaud Capucon and Camerata Salzburg**

Having worked with some of the best European musical troupes in the past, award-winning French violinist Renaud Capucon teams up with Austrian chamber orchestra Camerata Salzburg for a night of classical music, reciting masterpieces by Mozart and Haydn for fans in Suzhou.

// Sat, Oct 28, 7.30pm. RMB100-880. Suzhou Culture & Arts Center, 1 Guanfeng Jie, SIP 苏州工业园区观枫街1号 (www.sscac.com.cn)

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