This report is two train segments on the similar type of train. The CRH380B is a derivative of the CRH3C, which in turn is a derivative from the ICE3 in Germany (hence Siemens Velaro). The CRH380BL is the long version of the CRH380B (it has 16 carriages, the CRH380B has 8), but other than the length of the train, the technology and shape is mostly similar.

Suzhou Station is relatively small compared to the many large stations. I found it easy to navigate.

For my trip to Wuxi, I booked second class (because I did not need to get comfortable) and I booked these tickets in person at Suzhou Station the evening before.

**Make sure you know where your train is leaving from!** If entering from street level, the floor is for trains departing from that particular platform (eastbound D- and G- head trains), so if your train is not listed on that particular board, go upstairs to the second level.

**Also important, make sure you know where the train is stopping at the platform or else you will run for it!** Like I had to when I was at Wuxi and forgot to look at the LCD screen at the bottom of the escalators at the platform. I had to run to catch up… not fun.

As far as I’m aware, passengers arriving from the subway will initially end up at the arrivals level, so you’ll need to take some escalators to go upstairs. The same goes for Wuxi.

There was a lot of people in the station – I noticed a lot of people lined up before boarding and some had trouble. Using paper tickets, I got my tickets checked manually. They were scanned.

Both times that I boarded, someone lit up a cigarette and smoked a little bit right in front of the “No Smoking” signs. I did see half finished cigarettes and I figured it was because a lot of people could not resist lighting up at the chance (smoking is never allowed on High – Speed trains).

There were signs (that no one paid attention to) telling you where to line up to board – the trains were not there at the time tickets were checked and they pulled up and stopped for two minutes before closing the doors.

The CRH380 series can reach 380 km/h in theory (and have topped over 480 km/h during testing), however, you’ll be hard pressed to see them above 350 km/h (except on some lines such as Beijing – Shanghai). In general, you’ll see them going at 300 km/h.

I took the CRH380B trains (two trains coupled together) to Wuxi. The train number is G7080 (wholly operated in Shanghai Railway Bureau), which originated in Shanghai, going to Anqing.

The time from Suzhou to Wuxi is a little less than 15 minutes. It helps when you travel at 300 km/h for a good portion of the segment. The regular – speed trains (K, T, Z head trains) take around double the time. You can get a standing ticket if you really need to because all seats will be full. I don’t recommend this because it’s the same price for a second class seat, why get it if there are some seats left? It’s a short ride in any case, so I guess it doesn’t matter.

Second class seats are more comfortable than Economy Class seats on most planes (except for the armrests. They are just as bad if not a tad worse). I was seated in a window seat (I did not have a choice when they booked me at the station, however, if you book on the 12306 website, you can get your preferred seating if it’s available) and I was able to see the Beijing – Shanghai Railway (the normal – speed trains and freight route that runs parallel to the Shanghai – Nanjing Intercity Railway (the HSR)). I could see a D- head sleeper (Green – Skin Fuxing) heading to Shanghai.

We were a tad bit late into Wuxi (three minutes late, actually). This was probably a rare occurrence here seeing that there were no delays with any other trains I saw (including back in Shanghai and Beijing), and I did see an early train into Wuxi on the arrivals level, where I would be taken into the wonders and the heat of the city. Worth a visit if you’re in Shanghai/Suzhou, the travel between Shanghai/Suzhou on HSR is 45 minutes at most.

The day after my day trip to Wuxi, I took the 16 – car version of this train to Shanghai Hongqiao for my long – distance train. This time, having purchased these tickets in advance, I was seated in a decent window seat in First Class.

The train number is G7109 from Nanjing to Shanghai Hongqiao. It’s operated by Shanghai Railway Bureau, and it being in the higher numbers, it’s operated exclusively in the area regulated by Shanghai Railway Bureau.

The seats are actually very comfortable and I measured them. In Second Class, the pitch is 35 inches, the width is 18 inches, and the armrests are 1.5 inches wide. I did not measure the recline, but it’s supposedly deep. In First Class, the pitch is 39 inches, the width is 18.5 inches, and the armrests are 1.5 inches on the sides and 3 inches in the middle. The recline is 8 inches. I like the red seats.

The headrest is not too easy to use. I accidently took off the strap as I tried to position it higher, but I finally understood how it works.

The Hexie trains are fixed to a standard, which I mentioned above. Fuxing trains are said to have larger seats (we’ll test them later).

We stopped for five minutes at Kunshan South. You could see quite a few trains pass by, some on the Beijing – Shanghai HSR because some trains on this route also stop here. I went out for a minute.

I counted at least 10 people smoking. I’m sure there are more near the end. They must be getting their addiction fix. You can see half – smoked cigarettes littered on the ground near the trash bins and maybe near the train. Smoking is never allowed on High – Speed trains, so this might explain why.

I also did not see a trolley wheeled out. I definitely didn’t need it for a short journey like this, however, this is something to note because some do need it. I would’ve appreciated a bottle of water (that I still need to purchase on the train, but nevertheless, is nice).

On arrival, I followed the signs for transit to the departures level to take the train to Beijing.

Overall, I find First Class to be comfortable. It’s worth the money if it’s a really long ride, but if it’s short, I’d stick with Second Class. A ride below 5 hours is nice.

This brings me to the next point. If you’re really large, I’d ride in First Class because the second class seats aren’t too big.