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En Route For Tibet

By Steven Cronin

North of the Himalayas, in western China, lies the self-governing land of Tibet. The Tibetan Plateau is the highest populated region on the planet and stands at an average elevation of 16,000 feet. To the north lie the imposing Kunlun Shan mountains, providing a natural border.

At one of the last great outposts is the isolated Argin Shan Reserve, the largest nature reserve in China. The large herds of hooved animals present in this wilderness have led to its nickname 'Serengeti of Asia'. The snow leopard is a frequent visitor to the reserve but unfortunately excessive hunting means it is now an endangered species.

Such imposing platformed territory offers source to some of the most powerful rivers in Asia including the Indus, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Salween and Mekong. The Yangtze twists and turns through the broad green valleys flowing eastwards across China and ultimately the East China Sea.

Many folk of Tibet are nomads and move their entire families around the country. Skin tents are popular living domains allowing easy departure should circumstances dictate. Rural life reigns in Tibet and starkly contradicts many westerners lifestyles. Religion is practised passionately with many a young boy aspiring to become a Buddhist monk.

Eager to preserve their nomadic way of life, summer chores must be completed by fall before the severe winter weather prevents passage through the mountains. The mountain trails are fundamental to trading and pattern a working myriad of paths during the more clement months of the year.

Much of Tibet is barren land scattered with modest neighbourhoods labouring arduously to earn a livelihood from the land. This is compensated some part however by the beautiful scenery in which these nomadic folk live. Soaring peaks bathe in cloud as colossal mountains command the horizon throughout this noble ground. In this pollution-free atmosphere the pure, brisk air permits unhindered panorama for miles on every side.

The brief spring and summer months bring an explosion of colour. Greenery is rife as efflorescence emerge almost overnight to complement the vivid territory. The outbreak of bloom however is short

lived. The onset of winter blankets all in a sheet of white, as snow and ice mask the landscape.

Uncompromising winter months bring much Tibetan activity to a pause, as the elements seize a grip of the environment. The brief term of mild weather is crucial to the livelihood of the farmers. Livestock must be put to pasture and fattened up in time for winter.

Steven Cronin writes articles, poetry and short stories predominantly concerning travel as well as issues that influence the world in which we live. For further literature visit

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New Asia Travel Attraction, Go Tibet By Rail

By Subert Kiing

Tibet projects mystic thoughts to many western travelers. And indeed Tibet never fail to impress. Tibetan mountain ranges and landscapes are home to an immense diversity of species of rare plants and birds. Tibetan forests are also famous for its tremendous spectrum of herbs for Chinese medicines. But due to the freezing temperatures and geographical altitudes, China's tourist access to Tibet region has been very limited until recently. On July 1, 2006 Qinghai–Tibet Railroad commenced its passenger service, marking a remarkable milestone in China's infrastructure building. This opens up a way for adventurous tourists to travel from Beijing to the remote Tibet by train with a low budget.

An estimated 90% of tourists would use the railroad to reach Lhasa, Tibet. It is a unique ground expedition across clear cascading streams, spectacular mountain ranges, and the colorful landscapes almost untouched by modern civilization. It would be the dream of urban travelers to experience nature with such a panoramic vision, indulging and rejuvenating for a true getaway from the hectic city–life.

A Centennial Dream Comes True

>From its initial conception in the early 1950s, the construction of Qinghai–Tibet Railroad went through a lengthy 50 years to build. The first section of 814 km, from Xining, capital of Qinghai Province, to Golmud began operation in 1984. The Golmud–Lhasa section commenced construction in June 2001. On July 1, 2006, the 1,956–Km Qinghai–Tibet Railroad started its full–length operation. Its 2 inaugural trains, "Qing 1" and "Tibet 2", started service from Golmud and Lhasa separately. China President Hu Jintao labeled the project as an unbelievable achievement both in China and the World's railway construction. This completed mission also realized a centennial dream of Dr. Sun Yat–sen, the pioneer of China's democratic revolution.

The Physical Deterrents

Geographical conditions from Golmod to Lhasa are especially harsh. Perennial icy soil as hard as steel, thick blankets of Winter snow and the high altitudes deterred and slowed down project progress through the many years of site execution. An American, Paul Theroux, prophesized that Kunlun Range was a definite impossible geographical barrier for railroad to get to Lhasa. But the inauguration of

En Route For Tibet

Qinghai–Tibet Railroad, now the world's highest railroad terminating in Lhasa, has proven Theroux's prophesy untrue.

Key Facts of Qinghai–Tibet Railroad

1. Qinghai–Tibet Railroad is the world's highest. 2. 960 kms of its tracks are located 4,000 m above sea level. 3. The highest point is 5,072 m above sea level or 200 meters higher than the 2nd highest Peruvian railroad in the Andes. 4. 550 kms of the route run on frozen soil 5. Tanggula Railway Station is the highest railway station in the world (5,068m above sea level) 6. Fenghuoshan Tunnel is the world's highest tunnel on frozen soil (4,905 m above sea level) 7. It is the world's longest plateau railroad, extending 1,956 kms from Xining, Qinghai to Lhasa, Tibet. 8. The Golmud–Lhasa section zigzags 1,142 kms across the Tanggula and Kunlun Ranges. 9. Kunlun Mountain Tunnel is the world's longest plateau tunnel built on frozen soil(1,686 m) 10. The maximum design train speeds are 100 km/h in frozen zones and 120 km/h on non–frozen areas.

Environmental Friendly

Chinese authority responded actively to international call for environmental friendly and sustainable development. 8% of the total development cost was set aside for conservation of environment. Recommendations by the Academy of Environment Protection were taken seriously by the Chinese government before construction. Qinghai–Tibet Railroad was credited with the honor of being the first environmental friendly railroad in the world.

Train Schedule for Tibet

Tourists can join in this rail route from several different cities in China.

1. Western Beijing Train Station to Lhasa, the whole journey is 4,064Km and takes 47 hours and 28 minutes. The ticket fee is RMB389 (USD48) for a hard seat, RMB813 (USD102) for a hard sleeper and RMB1262 (USD160) for a soft sleeper. It leaves Beijing at 21:30 every night and arrives in Lhasa at 20:58 on the third day. Another train leaves Lhasa for Beijing at 8:00 each morning and arrives in Beijing at 8:00 the third day, via Xian, Lanzhou, Xining, Golmod and Nacku.

2. Chengdu Train Station to Lhasa, the whole journey is 3,360km. The ticket fee is RMB331 for a hard seat, RMB712 for a hard sleeper and RMB1104 (USD140) for a soft sleeper. It leaves Chengdu at 18:18 on the odd days and arrives in Lhasa at 18:28 on the third day. It leaves Lhasa for Chengdu at 9:05 and arrives in Chengdu at 9:55 the third day, Via Guangyuan, Baoji, Lanzhou, Xining, Golmod and Nacku

3. Chongqing Train Station to Lhasa. The whole journey is 3,654Km The ticket fee is RMB355 for a hard seat, RMB754 for a hard sleeper and RMB1168 for a soft sleeper. It leaves Chongqing at 19:20 on the even days and arrives in Lhasa at 18:28 on the third day. It leaves Lhasa for Chongqing at 09:05 and arrives in Chongqing at 09:55 the third day, Via Guangan, Dazhou, Xian, Baoji, Lanzhou, Xining, Golmod and Nacku.

Enjoy your Tibet trip and write to share with others your memorable adventures in this rugged part of China!

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