

New Zealand China Friendship Society Inc. – Nelson Branch

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No. 11 – November 2022



November meeting

Shared lunch



To end the year we have decided to reach out to the community and have a shared meal with the Chinese Association and other guests including Chinese students. This will be a family-friendly event that will replace our usual monthly meeting and you are invited to bring family or friends. Please bring a plate of food to share – hot or cold (but not needing further cooking or heating), Chinese or just your favourite dish that you think others may enjoy. If you do not want to bring a dish, let us know and we can arrange one for you for our normal meal charge of \$15.

Place NMIT Library – entry from side door on Alton Street. Look for the red balloons.

When Sunday 27 November at 12:30 – 2:30pm

Bring A plate of food (or let us know if you prefer us to arrange this for you)

A plate or bowl, cup and utensils for you and your guests

Family and friends are welcome.

This will be a lot of fun. Please remember to let Barbara know by **Wednesday 23 November** that you will be coming along so that we have accurate numbers for the meal and enough seating available.



To arrange catering, please contact Barbara Markland
by Wednesday, November 23.

ph. (03)544 4712 text: 021 447 180 e-mail: erm@xtra.co.nz

Please make sure she knows you are coming!

Lister Luyou : Travels around China's border regions

Our guest speakers at the October meeting were Ian and Jane Lister. Their pictorial talk covered their travels in the border regions of China between 2014 and 2017.

The first journey was an adventure across the Qinghai – Tibetan Plateau by train and onto Nepal in 2014. This railway is a marvellous feat of Chinese engineering with much of the railway above 4000 metres and laid over permafrost. Train carriages had piped oxygen to help avoid health problems from altitude sickness. This 22 hour train trip took Ian and Jane from the Muslim city of Xining to the Buddhist Tibetan capital city. After exploring Lhasa, they were taken as a “tour party” of two (to meet Tibetan visa requirements) driving over high mountain passes and down a narrow gorge to Zhangmu, then (but no longer) a thriving trading town on the border with Nepal.



Buddhist kora around Potala Palace in Lhasa



Driving on the Friendship Highway



From the Friendship Bridge. China/Tibet on the left, Nepal on the right.

Their guide, Rooney, was a Tibetan Buddhist who had spent his early years training to be a Buddhist monk until the practice of young boys training as monks was stopped by the Chinese government. In his later teens he escaped by walking across mountains to India to the residence of the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. Rooney provided them with a fascinating viewpoint of Buddhist history in Tibet, including the systematic dismantling of Buddhist temples and culture since the annexation of Tibet in the 1950's.

A side trip took them to Qomolangma / Everest base camp at a challenging altitude of 5,200 metres where they slept the night in a tent-hotel. It snowed overnight but luckily the clouds cleared in the morning to give them a brief view of the summit of Qomolangma.



Ian and Jane at Qomolangma Base Camp

The next journey in 2015 took them by bus from Kunming to Xinjie in southern Yunnan and then local transport to village Duoyishu. This is the place of huge, hand-hewn rice terraces still planted and harvested by hand. This area is home to ethnic minorities of Hani, Muosho and Miao peoples who still live in traditional ways. From here Ian and Jane travelled by bus down the Red River to the border crossing at Hekou in China to Lao Cai in Vietnam. An hour's taxi ride took them to the town of Sapa with its French-colonial architecture. However, the dominant features of the area are the rice terraces being worked traditionally by Hmong, Dao (Yao), Giáy, Xa Pho, and Tay cultures. These people had similarities in looks, dress and lifestyle to those in Yunnan but are across the border in a different country.

The last journey they talked about was to the far west of China to Xinjiang in 2017. They found Urumqi a melting pot of predominantly Muslim culture but also a major trading centre with a strong Russian influence. Signs were often written in Mandarin, Arabic, Russian, English, and on several occasions they were taken as being Russian. A visit to Turpan highlighted the ancient Buddhist history of the area before the Muslim culture arrived 1,000 years ago. They then flew further west to Kashgar near the Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan borders. After flying for over 7 hours from Hangzhou in total, it seemed unreal to still be on Beijing time with the sun rising at 9 am.



Duoyishu Village in Southern Yunnan

Here they saw the intensely Muslim lifestyle being countered by equally intense Chinese security. The wailing of sirens and presence of Chinese security forces was a constant background that they found quite disturbing. One highlight of the trip was a bus trip along the Karakoram Highway to Lake Karakul. This also is a very impressive piece of recent Chinese engineering. This was a long, slow trip through numerous security checkpoints. Finally emerging from a long tunnel into a clear sky they came to beautiful Lake Karakul mirroring the surrounding Pamir mountains, some over 7,500 metres high and the even more beautiful and amazing Lake Bulongkol or White Sand Lake.



Old Town, Kashgar

Some members present had done similar trips in earlier years, and it was fascinating to hear their stories, noting the differences in travel and transportation and challenges endured. Clearly the increased security has changed the ease and comfort of travel, particularly in Xinjiang.

Political borders so often cut through geographical and cultural borders creating geo-political conflicts, but people just get on living their lives. Chinese technology and engineering are bringing new opportunities to these far-flung regions. This is bringing with it an increase in the standard of living but also a large influx of Han. It can only be hoped that the colourful and regal cultures of the ethnic minorities are able to survive.

High Bridges!

China has clearly been doing a lot of bridge engineering, mostly associated with expressways and railways. If you define the height of a bridge as the distance of the bridge deck above what the bridge crosses or the clearance below the bridge, then China has the highest bridge in the world; the road surface of the Duge bridge is 565 m above the river. But there is more; China has the 6 highest bridges in the world. Of the current 112 bridges world-wide where the surface is more than 200 m high above the ground, China has 71! These high bridges are often in Yunnan and Guizhou.



Duge bridge on the border between Yunnan and Guizhou