



# SNOWLANDS Part 2 1/08/14 - 7/08/14



Blue sky perfection, fresh mornings and sun filled afternoons. Snow caps on the highest granite peaks now but generally snowbound for the greater part of the year. These days spent visiting local nunneries. Cheryl and Max have lugged half way across the world, special gifts for all the nuns from NJP and sponsors. I'm overwhelmed and bordering on tears seeing the gratitude and joy of these most beautiful

nuns. The monetary gift will feed each nun for 6 months.



The nunneries are over 1000 years old and each home to about 100 nuns. Gyawanta, Nyimo and Baroona are the first visited. We are welcomed and fed well through the day with butter tea, dried yak, vegetables, chili potato, capsicum, pork, peanut milk and the best momos I've eaten. We are bursting. Therese lifts some yak bones for Shoyang's dog who lives on next door's roof. Correct motivation.

At breakfast Namgyal brings out herbs for lowering blood pressure. Not sure what's on his mind. He is a broker of certain medicines including Chinese caterpillar fungus, in huge demand by the Chinese.



To Yarti nunnery we negotiate a laneway up the mountain, (a plummeting drop adjacent) to the gateway. Greeted and taken further to the top to find a traditional tent with an array of more food. This is "The hills are alive with the sound of music stuff". As well as carrying our belongings the nuns erect a huge marquee for the welcoming and presentation (on top of the mountain), while we are fed again with scones, nuts, momos and tea. I cannot think of anywhere I've been like this. Nomad tents with their herds in the distance.

The ascent to Yarti and Gaden Choeling nunneries is breathtaking. Steep and winding, our little bus struggles in first gear as a run up is required. 128 nuns are here and we go through the routine of welcoming food, tashi delek (hello) prayers for the visitors, short speech and gifts and mug shots. Some years have passed, so each visit is used to update information for sponsors.



An arduous task with the language barrier and many nuns having the same name. We are given dashi which is traditional medicine that cures all. I've yet to try, but they swear by it. The nuns are beside themselves having us there. I climb further up the hill to where a string of Prayer Flags fly between the mountains. Yaks graze taking no notice of me at all. This is a peaceful place to be. I try to imagine the lives of the nuns, no



possessions and a basic existence. Some are in their 90's and I find it difficult to let go when holding their hands. They have given us everything and we've given them so little. This has been a humbling time.

Incense wafting through the window from the street below. The workmen start early, forming the new high rise across the street. It's Sunday. They were pouring concrete to the wee hours. Progress! On the other side of our residence is the

gleaming golden roof of The Temple of The Hans. (Gompa). The old and new spanning over 1000 years. A day off to stretch the legs, destination The 1st Temple of Huoer, a complex of 13 Temples. I dawdle at every prayer wheel. Reckon I need as much merit as I can get.



At Yibaka I say hi to a family building their home along the roadside, kids and all. I climb with an older couple who don't mind my puffing. Each crest reveals another, complete with flags spread from each stupa. Even the Zeng Qu River looks clean from here. I'm so close to the glaciers I feel like I can reach and touch them. Cows with bells join me for a plum but not enough to go round. They're not silly, they find shade in this treeless place beneath the masses of prayer flags. I hear two dudes with umbrellas sitting. Just sitting. The trek down takes me through ancient homes of mud brick and logs. The roofs of old Ganzi in red, blue, orange and white. I sleep well.

We prepare ourselves on a rooftop with steep narrow stair access. Umbrella, paperwork, cameras, pencils and fingers crossed. Three hundred students attend for schooling sponsorship gift and photos. The weather turns on a hot one. The students vary from very young to teenage and with an array of family. So many smiles and they are well behaved. Some of the girls in traditional dress. 7 hours to process and clean up. An exhaustive day and feels a worthwhile contribution.

It's brought to my attention that we've been photographed by local authorities. Been expected and we keep fingers crossed that no action will be taken.



The previous night's plan to leave for Manigango at 7am proceeds without fuss. We squeeze in the bus loaded with picnic supplies and eager intentions. We have no interpreter and wild expectations for the day. We know it's that a way and mention of some mountain top lake. Cool! We pickup two ladies hitchhiking, probably mum and daughter, and drop them 60 Kms along our way. They would have walked it over a few days. Smiley faces all round.

The temperature is plummeting and glad we prepared. We are dropped at a gate and offered horses, but decide they look colder and more tired than us. We walk.



Following intuition, I reckon there must be a lake that a way, and low and behold it is found. Xin Lu Lake. Oh my goodness! We are stunned. Surrounded by Que Er Mountains at 6300M we jump around gaily.



Lucky again to be with a fun group we eat bread and jam, yoghurt and plums with coffee. Doesn't get better. There are 12 nomad tents at one end and monks camping at the other. One leaving on a bike complete with doof doof music. We find a couple of mountain Tibetans praying at the overlooking stupa. They are as old as time itself and adorable. He explains that he walks the mountains, charade style. We give them what's left of the picnic and pay our respects to this naturally beautiful place. Everyone is quiet on the way home except Max who is pretending to be a car horn. Sharon and Therese ready to clip him one.

Cheryl, (the only worker) joins us for dinner across the road for mushrooms, assorted greens, peas and corn, rice, Snow beers and snickers. What a top day!



Namgyal pulls on insulated gloves, lifts a slab of marble and breaks the exposed knife switch on the floor. Ah

so that's the burning smell. He isolates the site when it rains. Classic stuff! Time for tools and to purchase some electrical gear. Surprisingly I find everything needed and a multimeter. I trace the dodgy wiring back to where roof dog resides. He is within millimetres of the exposed aerial supply. There's a plastic bag to keep the rain off. Rewire illegally the already illegal unmetered wiring. No Certificate of Safety issued for this one. A few other fix ups and the days done. No more burning smells competing with the incense. Cooking class tonight and family dinner.