

SNOWLANDS Part 3 8/08/14 - 14/08/14

Always look on the bright side of life. When life seems jolly rotten, there's something you've forgotten. (Eric Idle)



Late start to Ganzi Monastery where 400 monks reside. The Gompa impressive from all angles. We are shown the new facilities including, ultrasound equipment, 2 bed sick bay, consulting room and pharmacy. Two resident doctors, (monks) attend to the elderly and sick of Ganzi. Traditional medicine from Lhasa and modern Chinese medicine is used. We procure glucose vials required by some of the nuns at Yarti. The Chinese government has allowed the facility but will contribute no further.

To Shinyay to visit Shoyang's childhood home and family. The house has a yak barn underneath the main floor. One might say a close family. We are served food fresh from the garden, again. The river outside is diverted via a prayer wheel and further downstream to a barley mill. We watch the women feed the grain and collect the fine flour. Brilliant and old and powered by renewable energy. The village has a corner shop too. A red tin shed stocked with lollies, bread, beer and is home for mum, dad and 5 little ones. You have to wonder. Home before the lighting strikes. Been threatening all arvo. Ganzi in darkness as the skies open. Gotta hit the sack and let nature do its thing.

It's so noisy but I sleep well. I dream I'm eating a hamburger 300mm in diameter. I have a drooled upon pillow. A wedding party has assembled. Black utes with white ribbons line the street. Then Whack! Bang! No more like a BOOM! The sub-station explodes under my window. The HV fuse links are no more and everyone stands gawking. Me too. This will take some time to fix. The used candles everywhere now make sense.



The road to Trarka nunnery is in good nick despite the storm. Pay no mind to the sheer drop. The nuns happily offer their hospitality. We happily accept. I resort to photos and picture books for communication regarding this evening's menu. They deliver, spot on. We are put up for the night above the Gompa, an area reserved for dignitaries, The Ordained and us. An exceptional room, everything immaculate and Tibetan. We are given doonas, pillows and benches to get comfortable. I'm tucked in by a nun. Mind struggling with the past, when was I last tucked in? The wind sings, the full moon flies. Magical. I feel I'm in a fairytale.



I wake snug as a bug in a rug and am served breakfast in bed by smiling nuns. One could get healthy here. No noise, fresh food and air, waited on by hand and foot and, no sense of time. Stop off to Buchung's home, (Namgyal's brother) to attempt a horse ride across the mountains. The horse is recently a mum and the foal is agitated and clearly upset. Abandon that idea and set off on foot, with Ai-la as guide.

We pass caves where many have spent their days in meditation. Can you imagine?

High on green mountain tops, horses roam with tails platted in red ribbons and new foals skip and dance. It is quite, still and the light is soft. Only the occasional cow bell can be heard. I'm happy as a pig in "the proverbial".



Me and Max getting a work out and a hammering in the back of the bus. The road is smashed with glacial melt competing for the upper hand. It's gone real cold. We have a 3 hour journey to reach Thang Kang nunnery, a new home for about 25 Nuns who are still building on Mt Yushepamagangun. (4950M). Pictures of Home, (Deep Purple) ringing in my ears and I couldn't be higher.

There's no one home when we arrive, so we spread out to peek around. The nuns are digging and collecting stone for the works. I pitch in swinging a mattock. Thin air here so I'm pooped after 3 hits. We shift a boulder together exposing termites which they quickly cover with turf, carefully causing no harm. We've much to learn, us "know it alls". While I'm climbing, generally stuffing around, Cheryl somehow gets locked in a room above for over an hour. Not a problem except nature was calling, and when finally released, she manages to land face first in goat poo. Not a happy Cheryl, but sort of funny. No it was.

The trip home could have been uneventful, except the driver takes a short cut. In no time we're lost, surrounded by landslides, perched high and there's the onset of panic. Mmm. If only we took the other road, only no one can remember where. I'm thinking which window I can kick out to escape the crumpled wreck at the bottom of the river when it happens. We are forced to retreat as there is an abandoned front end loader blocking the track. We do make it home and everyone makes a beeline for the bottle shop in silence. Top day.



Woken to a loud growling noise, room shaking. By the time I get to the window, I see the newly repaired sub-station burning and splattering across the road. Fireworks. Huh. Never a dull moment. Back to bed.

Feel like I'm getting way too comfortable here. Time to get moving.

There's a two day bus ride back to Chengdu, and then tears and fair ye well. It's like another planet. The departure card asks "Are You Alien?" Of course "YES" I answer, gladly. Home seems a long way..... You know, China's so blocked up, it's constipated. Stand back when it finally lets go.

