

## **THE OVER 55 CYCLING CLUB ORIENTAL ODYSSEY**

It's all Don Buchanan's fault! For those of you who don't know Don that's him in the photo below



Yes, the lanky bloke in khaki trousers hanging like grim death onto the hand of the rather attractive young lady in the conical hat. Anyhow, I digress. Don came to me some months ago & said something along the lines of "Ay Stu I'm organising a cycling trip in China. Would you be interested?" Not wishing to appear too wimpish I responded in the affirmative thinking I probably wouldn't hear anything more on the subject. How wrong can you be? Before I knew where I was I was several thousand dollars lighter & had booked my passage through World Expeditions. Ah, the romance of it all. They'd even given it an official name: "Buchanan Cycle Yunnan & Tibet" & supplied an itinerary which included exotic topics like "cycle to Tiger Leaping Gorge" followed by – "cycling in the Gorge will be the highlight of the trip, a picturesque journey with its many overhangs, steep walls & waterfalls - - The entire gorge measuring 16km, is a staggering 3,900m deep from the river to the snow capped mountains." Given that this was only one day out of 21 for the trip & many more days were described in similarly titillating fashion you will probably

understand when I say that a vague feeling of excitement pervaded my being. A feeling which intensified as departure approached. My wife Kaye meanwhile had decided to opt for continued domesticity & left me in no doubt that cycling in China rated somewhere on a level with a holiday in Kabul on her scale of things she'd like to do. So I was on my own & left to my own devices (heh heh).

The whole thing was a goer! Everything paid for & cancellation not an option unless one felt like losing wads of cash for no return. Which was just as well because I then received an email from Richard which included a story from a member of a cycling group that had recently undertaken a trip in China almost identical to that which we proposed. An excerpt follows below:

" After our memorable night in the shadow of the mountains it was time to hit the road again. With the sun obscured by the towering peaks we set off in rather freezing conditions, but the initial steep climb out of town soon got our temperatures rising again. Each bend in the road revealed new wonders with serpentine roads that snaked their way around the hills (but somehow always seemed to be climbing upwards). By now I was starting to develop my mountain bike climbing skills by utilizing the wide range of low gears and climbing with a higher than normal cadence."

Up to this point I hadn't really thought much about the fact that there might be the odd mountain a touch higher, longer & steeper than Kalamunda hill where we were going. I mean I thought cadence was as defined in Wikipedia: "a melodic configuration or series of chords marking the end of a phrase, section, or piece of music" What that had to do with cycling I knew not. My education is now complete; Wikipedia also has another meaning for the term - "the number of revolutions of the crankset per minute". Just goes to show you can learn something new every day. Anyhow, I digress. The point is that I was now dimly aware that my cycling skills may not have been up to the challenge!!

By this time our group of adventurers numbered eleven (pictured below, & proceeding in a clockwise direction) being Eric Gard – in red, Bruce Robinson, Don Buchanan, myself (Stuart Hyde), Walter Lenz, Terry Manford, Yvonne Muller, Chris Muller, Trevor (the plumber) Raston, Richard Paterson & Ronnie Gard



A casual observer will have noticed by now that the group includes a number of gun cyclists & that Ronnie has either consumed one or two too many rice wines or just got one of Bruce's jokes!

Back to business. Bags packed with all sorts of useless junk including a quantity of clothing that would not look out of place on the upper slopes of Everest I presented at Perth International Airport on the due date & met up with the rest of the crew.

The flight to Kunming via Singapore was uneventful apart from the bloke who managed to spill his entire glass of water over me. I suppose I should be grateful it wasn't red wine!

### KUNMING

We arrived in Kunming at midday to be met by our Chinese guides Frank & Terry. The former was to be our guide for most of the trip up to the point at which we were to catch the train to Tibet while Terry was only our guide for Kunming.

Terry regaled us with various "facts" on our way to our accommodation of which I can only remember one that I'll share with you – girls are regarded as beautiful in one ethnic

group if they are short, have thick legs & big hips – all apparently attributes which mean they are good for carrying water! (I have to tell you that Kaye falls short on most of the above).

### LIJIANG

Next day it was back out to the airport for the flight to Lijiang. My window seat gave me a commanding view of the scene below which basically was one of mountains & more mountains unrelieved by any apparent flat bits that might just be suitable for cycling. This of course didn't do anything for my nervous dyspepsia as you can probably imagine.

We were staying in the ancient heart of Lijiang which is a very beautiful part of the city. The streets are paved with large stone blocks and are spotlessly clean. The town is



renowned for its silverware which is sold in the myriad stalls that line the streets & sell in addition to silver goods clothing, tea, polished stalactites, musical instruments, food & just about anything you could imagine. The whole place is vibrant with life from the noisy Karaoke bars where patrons belt the tables with wooden blocks in time with the music to the shopping, the restaurants & the people themselves. We picked up our mountain bikes the next day & whilst they weren't bad, they could have been a lot better in terms of maintenance with some bikes needing work on brakes, gears, tyres, seats etc. Anyhow we

had to make do and Chris & Bruce were invaluable with their 'can do' attitudes & mechanical ability.

Yours truly had conned his wife into allowing him to take her brand new sheep wool seat cover to lessen the effect of rough roads on his tender posterior & I must say it was quite effective even though it did look a bit 'poofy'. Although they only made derogatory comments I'm sure the others were jealous! Bikes sorted we walked them for part of the way through the busy town & then rode to Lashi Lake which, we were assured was to be a gentle introduction to our cycling odyssey.



(Note poofy seat cover on my bike in the foreground).

The unpaved track around the lake was in fact relatively flat which enabled all of us to get used to our bikes. We also toured the Zhi Yun Buddhist temple & saw for the first time the many prayer wheels that play a dominant part in this religion.

### DA JU

Today was a long hard ride of 105km to Daju which was originally meant to be much shorter but had to be changed as the authorities had decided to close a road we were going to use. The first part was flat(ish) but soon changed into uphill mode which went on & on without respite until we reached Baisha temple where we were relieved to get off the bikes & tour the temple on foot. The scenery was dramatic with Jade Dragon Snow Mountain as a backdrop to our panting ascent.

The temple tour proved to be a brief respite as we once again continued the climb. Finally, after a couple of small descents & more climbing we reached the top at 3,300m where we took a well earned rest. Then came the good bit – a 34km downhill run where all you had to do apart from steer was hope that your brakes worked! After an exhilarating ride we finally reached our destination had our evening meal & dragged our exhausted bodies to bed.

### VIEW FROM THE TOP



### VIEW TO THE BOTTOM



### HABA

The first part of the day's ride was a bumpy, unmade track downhill to the upper reaches of the mighty Yangtze River. Having arrived at the gorge we were pleasantly surprised to

find that we had the services of a number of porters who carried our bikes down to the bottom of the gorge, onto the barge & thence to the other side where the procedure was reversed & the bikes carried up the steep incline to the top. I felt a bit guilty about all this until I had to emulate the porters (sans bike) & found the going hard enough without having to carry a heavy bike.

That the river was flowing very rapidly was obvious from the ripples & occasional white water. It was in my opinion doubtful that the barge, which was quite old & blessed with a single cylinder diesel motor of great antiquity, would actually make it across & it was with some trepidation that we all boarded. Much to everyone's relief we gained the opposite bank without incident.



The trip notes describe the ride to Haba as "short but challenging due to a 610m climb". Yes well, I can tell you it was too challenging for me & I wound up getting into the support bus 7km from the top (& I wasn't the only one). By-the-way, the 610m is the change in height above sea level from the start of the ride to the finish (just in case you are in any doubt).

There was then yet another exciting ride down to the village where we had more great Chinese food & very comfortable lodging.

### TIGER LEAPING GORGE

The owner of the B & B in Haba is a petite little dynamo who comes across as all sweetness & light. It was she who had the task of leading us on a tour of "the villages"

this morning & it was with pleasant anticipation of non energetic stroll through the streets that our little group trailed along chatting idly about nothing in particular. Had we read our trip notes which said "- - hike into the Yi & Hui villages **located on the slopes of Haba Mountain** above the guesthouse" we would have realised the danger we were in. Our guide whom I'll call Madam Lash due to her propensity for whipping our tired old bodies to undertake feats Sir Edmund Hillary would have found difficult; started off at a brisk pace. Soon we found ourselves climbing an almost vertical, stone strewn goat path. The only sounds were of air whistling through tortured lungs & the occasional curse as someone avoided a fractured tibia by the slimmest of margins. Madam meanwhile trotted on ahead & if she hadn't been having a long conversation on her mobile I'm sure she would have burst into song!

What seemed like hours later we finally entered village number one & had the privilege of seeing inside the local primary



School which despite its sparse furnishings contained some happy kids.

At village number two (further up the mountain) we were shown inside a residence consisting of two rooms. The living room had a fire burning in the middle of the floor without the benefit of a chimney & there was virtually no furniture to be seen. The contrast to our own, Perth lifestyle could not be greater especially when you think what the situation would be like in winter at sub zero temperatures!

Then it was back down the mountain & on the bikes to retrace our route of yesterday. Sweet revenge flying down the road we'd fought so hard to climb such a short time ago. Then, at the bottom we turned onto the road through Tiger Leaping Gorge. With such a big build-up the reality to me was a little disappointing. Certainly the scenery was rugged in the extreme with vertical drops to the wildly flowing river below & craggy mountains above a back drop to our progress along the road. Unfortunately the road was being prepared for surfacing & as a result was rough & dusty in the extreme. Great clouds of dust thrown up in the main by road working machinery tended to make cycling difficult & interfered greatly with the sightseeing. There was ever present danger from falling rocks & the possibility of being hit was too awful to contemplate. On top of all this the promise that "during May the hills are afire with plant & flower life" proved to be empty as the area was suffering from its worst drought in 60 years.



We made it half way along the gorge to our guesthouse (which had the unlikely name of Tina's) in one piece & settled down to a couple of well earned beers & an early night.

### SHIGU

The other half of the gorge was our first riding task for the day & to be fair there was less dust & some spectacular views as a glance at the following photo will attest.



Safely through the gorge we pedaled on through a number of villages & observed the locals going about their daily lives. Rural life is hard but people appear happy with their lot. The community works together in the fields, the old are respected & the young respectful. We saw workers planting rice & tending to their land. Seldom do you see a weed in the paddocks & crops are grown in neat rows. Most of the work is done by hand with shovels & hoes & plows are (in the main) pulled by bullocks.



There are however some engine driven machines & vehicles which are mostly propelled by the ubiquitous single cylinder diesel engine you see on everything from three & four wheel trucks to pumps & agricultural equipment.



Some humor was provided when we stopped by a roadside market & Trevor found himself the centre of attention from an ancient female stall holder who saw in him her opportunity to make the sale of the day. “No” wasn’t a word included in her English language repertoire & poor old Trevor couldn’t convince her to leave him alone which she only did when we cycled on.

We then toured a clay tile manufacturing factory which used primitive hand operated spinning wheels to churn out thousands of clay pipes which were then cut in half lengthways leaving two curved tiles which were then fired.



Finally we arrived at Shigu which has many old courtyard houses, cobblestone streets & temples all of which remain as they have been for centuries.

### SHAXI

Today was a long, long day with about 90km of cycling & much of that uphill. Once again we passed through a number of villages &

saw outdoor markets selling all sorts of things including meat which was not refrigerated & only covered by umbrellas.

It was interesting to see that, in order to separate the barley grain from the head the sheaves of barley were simply laid on the road where the wheels of passing traffic effectively did the threshing! The result was then winnowed either by the wind or (in at least one case) by an industrial strength fan.



Along the way we passed the district tombstone manufacturing centre which was spread alongside the road for hundreds of metres. The tombstones are carved from the local granite & were artistically covered in bass relief by dragons & other mythical beasts.

Finally we arrived in Shaxi which we found to be a very clean & attractive town with tree lined streets & pretty old buildings which was once a hub on the tea route.

### ER YUAN

Another big (84km) day which started with a long uphill section.

Saw some interesting sights including a rice paddy plough (I assume that is what it was) driven as per usual by the single pot diesel.



And then a really bucolic scene with a farmer driving his pigs up the road.



Lunch was had in a town at a roadside restaurant which, unusually from our experience to date, looked pretty ordinary. Dishes being washed on the steps outside, the whole front façade covered in oil & grease – I'm sure you get the picture.

Inside where we were to eat fortunately looked a little better & the food tasted ok except for what is known as 'smelly tofu' which is tofu that is matured like cheese & smells awful. Eric didn't help matters much when he commented that the smell made him want to vomit. Particularly unhelpful as I was tasting some at the time.

After lunch it was decided we'd all put our bikes on the support truck for the next part of the journey & that we ourselves would ride in the bus. This rare event was caused by a change from the original route. Now there was an 800m increase in height above sea level over a very short distance which whilst

not impossible to conquer would prove extremely difficult.

So we rode in comfort!

By the time we reached the highest point Frank, our guide, was vomiting from altitude sickness & Walter, one of our group was feeling most unwell.

We were then faced with a 34km downhill run around many hairpin bends to the bottom where the remaining few kilometres were relatively straight & flat to our guesthouse. Here we were greeted with the possibility of having a wonderfully therapeutic dip in the guest house's thermal hot water pool. I can tell you from personal experience that it was great feeling your aches & pains slowly dissipating.

### DALI

The trip to Dali was by bus as our guides decided the traffic was just too heavy for cycling to be a safe proposition. On the way we stopped to photograph villagers working in a rice paddy.



We then toured a local market that sold everything from mushrooms to tomatoes, shellfish to live fish & numerous things I didn't recognise.

What did look vaguely familiar was one of the "sellers" at one stall who did look a little out of place & didn't seem to be making any sales or winning any friends.

Good try Don!



The following morning we toured the famous “Three Pagoda” site, home of the Chongsheng Monastery where we were told that the pagodas are over 1200 years old & amazingly have withstood earthquakes which razed most other buildings.



Dali is built alongside a huge lake & some of our group decided they would cycle on the other side of the lake opposite the town. I can't really comment on this ride as I, along with Eric & Ronnie decided we'd do a bus tour of the old town instead. I did hear later that the cyclists came upon the aftermath of an accident where the body of the victim was still there, partially covered by a cloth. As you can imagine this was a tragic experience for all.

The bus tour was great & gave us an insight into this fascinating city which was capital of the Nanzhao kingdom during the 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> centuries & at its height conquered much of Burma, Vietnam, Thailand & Sichuan province.

Today was the day we finally parted with our bikes with the remaining cycling in Tibet to be on bikes supplied in Lhasa.

Given there was to be no more cycling for a while a small celebration was held that night with certain members who shall remain nameless getting a little tipsy on “fruit wine” which was rumored to be about 43% proof! You'll no doubt be pleased to know yours truly stuck with beer at 3.3% & around 50 cents for 600ml (which is about all it is worth).

## CHENGDU

Most of the day was taken up with travelling & waiting at airports as we flew to Chengdu via Kunming. The flights were smooth & Eric (a pilot of long experience) gave the last landing 91/2 out of 10.

From the airport there was a long drive through horrendous traffic to our hotel in the centre of the city after which we repaired to a restaurant across the road for our evening meal. Unfortunately this was a bad choice as one of our group collapsed at the table & four others including myself suffered with diarrhoea &/or vomiting for the whole of the next day. This was the only bad experience any of us had for the duration of the trip. Fortunately we were staying in Chengdu for a couple of days so were able to spend most of the next day recovering.

We all said goodbye to Walter who had been feeling unwell for some time & being unable to pin it down to anything in particular had made the assumption he was reacting to the altitude. This being the case there was no sense in travelling to Lhasa as it is considerably higher than what we had experienced to date. Walter had therefore decided to fly home from Chengdu.

After this some of us decided to go for a walk in a park just down the road which proved to be quite fascinating. Lots of activities were being enjoyed by large numbers of people including singing, line dancing, painting, waltzing, badminton, & kite flying to name a few. Amongst some of the more interesting sights was that of long rows of paper sheets hanging from ropes or wires. Each of these sheets was covered in writing & my curiosity having got the better of me I discovered that

the sheets were hung there by parents to extol the virtues of their unmarried & eligible daughters! That is details like physical characteristics, character, working ability etc all designed to appeal to a likely suitor. So people wandered along checking out what was on offer.



Next day we visited Chengdu Panda Breeding Research Centre, a facility which currently covers an area of 92 acres but which it is proposed to extend by another 500 acres.

The Chinese go ga ga over pandas & regard them as a national treasure. Tourists (mainly Chinese) invade the property in their thousands & seem to spend most of their time taking hundreds of photos.

Personally I reckon they're cute but if you've seen one panda you've seen 'em all & I defy anyone other than another panda to tell one from another. They're a bit like koalas in that all they do all day is sit on their rear ends & eat except they eat bamboo & not gum leaves



Anyway it didn't take long before I was 'panda'd out' so to speak.

So it was with some relief I got back on the bus for the trip back to the hotel where we had a late 6pm checkout ready for our trip to the train station & the train to Lhasa in Tibet. At this point we said goodbye to Richard who still hadn't recovered after the meal the other night & had decided to fly home rather than risking his health in the rarefied atmosphere of Tibet.

We arrived at the train station & joined the huge crowds milling around both outside & inside the building. Thank goodness for our guide; the ever helpful Frank who got us through the crowd to the 'soft seat' lounge where we were able to sit down & await boarding. There are several grades of seating with 'soft seating' referring to those cabins with four sleeping bunks. Next is 'hard seating' which is cabins with six bunks & last is where you sit up in a seat night & day which considering our trip was for two nights & two days would not have been a good option.

It was here we had to bid farewell to Frank which was quite emotional as we had built a rapport over the period & I think I speak for all of us when I say that Frank is a guide par excellence. His perfect English, his constant good humour through sometimes trying times, his willingness to help, his knowledge of the country & the customs of its peoples, the fact that he was available at all times, all of these things made him a delight to be with. With Frank's help we found our carriage (no mean feat on a train carrying 2,000 passengers), boarded & found our individual cabins & settled in for what was to prove a trip highlight.

It is interesting to note that all cabins are supplied with oxygen outlets which, on request, can be pressed into action for those having difficulty handling the extreme altitudes to be experienced on the journey. The train line is actually the highest in the world and in places the altitude is 5,000m above sea level.

Distance to Lhasa is about 3,360km over a track which is an engineering marvel. Many,

many tunnels & bridges, vast quantities of ballast, many thousands of square metres of snow & ice preventative measures, steel fences all the way on both sides of the track to keep out domestic & wild animals; the logistics are mind boggling. There is a dining car & food trolleys that pass by now & then although most of us had brought food at the supermarket for consumption during the trip. Hot water for drinks was available through a dispensing machine in any quantity, night & day.

Toilet facilities were ok, with a western toilet at one end of the carriage & a 'drop' toilet (hole in the floor) at the other.

Unfortunately during the brief period before nightfall it rained heavily which made it difficult to see the scenery.

By the time we awoke next morning & the cloud & fog dissipated we were travelling the Tibetan plateau which is a vast, mostly flat, treeless plain that seemingly goes on forever. The train made a couple of stops seemingly in the middle of nowhere & people both boarded & disembarked.

Occasionally one could see a nomad's tent on its own with not another habitation in sight & had time to reflect on what a hardy race the Tibetans (& the Chinese) are. These nomads are yak herders who move their animals to fresher "pastures" when they have eaten out what little food there is on their current patch of plain.



As we approached Lhasa the flat plain gradually gave way to the mountains



We arrived at Lhasa station at about 5pm & were impressed to see what was obviously a brand new station where we met our Tibetan guide Lhakpa Dorjee (literal translation: wind strong).

Having checked into our hotel we then walked to the Muslim quarter through the meat stalls & veggie markets to a restaurant which served (would you believe) Western food.

Next day we rode in our tour bus to the Potala Palace. Perched upon Marpo Ri hill, 130 meters above the Lhasa valley, the Potala Palace rises a further 170 meters and is the greatest monumental structure in all of Tibet. In 637ad Songtsen Gampo built a palace on the hill. This structure stood until the seventeenth century, when it was incorporated into the foundations of the greater buildings still standing today. Construction of the present palace began in 1645 during the reign of the fifth Dalai Lama and by 1648 the Potrang Karpo, or White Palace, was completed. The Potrang Marpo, or Red Palace, was added between 1690 and 1694; its construction required the labors of more than 7000 workers and 1500 artists and craftsmen. In 1922 the 13th Dalai Lama renovated many chapels and assembly halls in the White Palace and added two stories to the Red Palace. The Potala Palace was only slightly damaged during the Tibetan uprising

against the invading Chinese in 1959. Unlike most other Tibetan religious structures, it was not sacked by the Red Guards during the 1960s and 1970s, apparently through the personal intervention of Chou En Lai. As a result, all the chapels and their artifacts are very well preserved.



There are huge numbers of pilgrims & tourists who visit the palace each day. Most of the former are constantly spinning hand held prayer wheels as they circumnavigate the grounds & the building. Many of them prostrate themselves every couple of meters to show their dedication & wear wooden boards on their hands, knee pads & pads to protect their toes. We were told that some have travelled up to 2,000km over 18 months, prostrating themselves all the way!!



Suffice to say the building is huge, with over 1,000 rooms containing 10,000 shrines & over

200,000 statues. Many of the statues are heavy with gold & one in particular contained 3.7 tonnes of the precious metal! And yet the pilgrims continue to shower paper money in all directions. It seemed as if every available nook & cranny had its share of notes stuffed within which when you think about the poverty of the people making the donations is just amazing. Even more amazing when you remember the current Dalai Lama is not in residence as he has been exiled to India by the Chinese.

The smell of incense is overpowering & it seems there are incense sticks burning in almost every room. The rooms themselves are lit by yak butter lamps, some of which contain many flames but are largely ineffective at actually lighting up the room. All in all a very interesting & educational experience & one which serves to underline the power of religion.

After lunch (yak stew in my case) we went back to the hotel to check out our bikes. Just as well as most, if not all suffered some deficiency from seat posts being too short to gears not changing, tyres soft etc etc. This resulted in the bike supplier being called in to rectify the situation with new seat posts & various other bits & pieces.

Dinner was held at a special Tibetan restaurant which proved to be very nice indeed.

### DREPONG NECHAY MONASTERY

Next day we rode our new bikes to the monastery, a distance of about 26km (return). This was quite an education in Tibetan road rules which are 'challenging' to say the least. This is especially so when executing a left hand turn across the flow of traffic. Basically you just sort of shut your eyes & go & hope you don't get hit while all the while dodging trucks, cars, three wheel bikes, people etc. The last part of the ride was a very steep climb which left most of us out of breath due mainly to the altitude & lack of oxygen. The monastery, built in 1416 itself used to house some 12,000 monks but now only about 900 after limitations were introduced by the Chinese. Interesting that photographs

were't allowed unless you paid the prescribed fee in each area of the monastery. It was interesting to actually experience the monks chanting. Impossible to describe but a deep sound which seemed to resonate to your very soul.

Even more interesting was the sight outside the monastery of women getting loaded with large rocks (note the men were doing the loading).



That night we went to a show held in the hotel where we were staying which proved to be very worthwhile entertainment. In fact the photo of Don clutching the young lady's hand at the beginning of this article was taken this night.

### GANDEN MONASTERY

Next day was earmarked for a 75km ride to (yet another) monastery. Unfortunately I had by this stage come down with a lousy cold so I decided along with Eric & Ronnie to take the bus rather than riding.

The first 50 or 60km or so was along a flat road mostly alongside water & despite the fact that we were obviously travelling a lot faster than the bikes they (the riders) took a short cut & ended up in front. After this the bus would stop & let the bikes get a fair way down the road then catch up again & so on. Interestingly although we were a fair way out in the country we came across a group of four or five men who were doing the prostrating pilgrimage bit all the way from heaven knows where.

Also interesting were the mounds of yak dung which were artistically assembled to be used as fuel at some later time.



We finally got to the bottom of the hill/mountain on which the monastery was built (near the top of course) & some hardy souls decided they would ride their bikes up to the top. This seemed to me to be akin to a death wish given the extreme altitude & the equally extreme gradient over relatively few kilometres. I believe the change in altitude was somewhere around 500m.

Anyhow, Chris, Don & Bruce were the brave ones & off they set to tackle the daunting task.



Some while later there they were at the top looking like they did that sort of thing every day.



Interestingly even though the truck had brought all the other bikes up to the top there were only four of the group who braved the ride back downhill given its steepness & the many hairpin bends.

We all met at the bottom & consumed a sumptuous picnic lunch on the grass under a canvas shelter. Then back to the hotel by bus & another lovely Tibetan meal.

### HOME – FOR SOME.

So the time had caught up with us at last & our group was no more, with people heading home, others going to Shanghai some going to Xian & Beijing before flying back to Perth. What a fantastic trip! The sights, the sounds, the experiences, the people whose company was so enjoyable. It is something that will remain in our memories forever & who knows, maybe Don will get some company on his proposed trip from Lhasa to Kathmandu!

### EPILOGUE

Some of the more observant of you may have noticed that on page two of this document where a list of the participants is noted that Trevor Raston has been re-christened Trevor ‘The Plumber’ Raston. No this is not a Freudian slip; he has been given this moniker for a very good reason.

At one of the guest houses at which we stayed Trevor (observant as always) noted that the toilet cistern wasn’t filling properly. Analysing the situation with care our resourceful traveller decided the fault lay with the cistern tap. Obviously all it needed was a minor adjustment so in his wisdom Trevor decided to apply a little farming ingenuity, gave it a sharpish twist &, off it came! Lock, stock & tap. This of course resulted in a powerful jet of water which had it been left unattended would have shortly left the room (& probably the one below it) uninhabitable. Undeterred by this the ever resourceful & by now quite wet Trevor shoved his (as I understand it) finger in the dike & was reduced to repeated & pitiful calls for help. This eventually arrived in the form of the guest house handyman who after telling Trevor to hang on & with not inconsiderable difficulty finally found out how to turn off the water & fix said tap.

## **LIJIANG TO DA JU PROFILE – CHANGES IN HEIGHT ABOVE SEA LEVEL**

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## **SHAXI TO ER YUAN PROFILE – CHANGES IN HEIGHT ABOVE SEA LEVEL**

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