

Crossing the Himalayas: Tibet to Nepal (9/22/2007-9/24/2007)

After living on instant noodle soup and going without a shower for 10 days, arriving in the town of Saga with a choice of restaurants and most importantly public pay hot showers, was a welcome sight despite its grubby Chinese buildings. We had no trouble with the authorities this time and arrived in time to enjoy both a good meal and a 30 minute hot shower. From Saga it was an incredibly scenic 7 hours along a road, which much of the time could be better described as a track, to the town of Nyalam. The white clad peaks of Himalayas getting closer and closer until they disappeared from view as we descended into the Sun Kosi River gorge. The final stretch of road along the gorge to the boarder town of Zhangmu is under construction. Traffic is only allowed on the road after 6:00 pm towards Nepal and after 11:00 pm towards Tibet. Under construction in Chinese terms means there is no road. Currently the “road” is little more than a muddy track that follows the canyon wall which is held up at times by bamboo scaffolding and wooden planks, with shear drops down to the river below and of course there are no guard rails. As I passed these precarious looking contraptions to keep the mountain side in place, I understood why the road had been closed for four days a couple weeks back due to a landslide. Descending into the gorge towards the border with Nepal the weather got progressively worse, and the landscape in turn got progressively greener. The border town of Zhangmu feels more like a Chinese Nepali town than Tibet in terms of architecture and landscape. Crossing the boarder into Nepal definitely feels like entering the Indian subcontinent. I was reminded of India constantly, with the dress the people, the trash, and the bus to Katmandu, which was very old and filled with as much cargo and people as could fit in the aisles, hanging off the sides, and sit on the roof. It felt good to be back on a real Asian bus again after the relatively nice buses of China, where the buses are actually some times full a concept unknown elsewhere in Asia, where there is always room for one more paying costumer. I sat next to a Nepali girl who interestingly introduced herself by telling me her name and informing me she was of the Brahman caste. I had her teach me some Nepali on the long 9 hour ride to Kathmandu, although I was a rather poor student, I did manage to get down the numbers 1-10, and “How much?” the phrases I was interested in learning, in addition to phrases she wanted to teach me, “I like you,” “I love you,” “I’m happy.” I think she was aiming for a green card because her face lit up when I said I was an unmarried American. As I’m not even buying souvenirs because I don’t want to carry them around for the next year, I don’t think I want to carry around a 19 year old Nepali wife who speaks limited English either.



Small lake on the road to Saga from Kailash.



View from a pass on the road from Saga to the border.



A shop in a small town in western Tibet with a huge pile of dried Yak dung (used for fuel) in front Kailash.



Reflected mountain near Saga.



**Mount Shishapangma
26,439 ft (8012 m), road
to the border from
Saga.**



Mountains along the road to the border from Saga.



Tibetan shepherd, road to the border.



Goats along the road to the border.



**Himalayan peak road
to the border.**



**The friendship highway
to Nepal.**



The friendship highway heading to Nepal.



Himalayan peaks.



Himalayan peaks at the pass before descending into the gorge.



Himalayan peak and prayer flags at the pass before descending into the gorge.



Valley near Nyalam.



Landcruisers passing under a waterfall and cliff-side held up by boards on the road from Nyalam to Zhangmu.



Girl who was teaching me Nepali on the bus to Kathmandu, and her older brother.