

Friendship Highway - Lhasa to Kathmandu

Written by Administrator

Friday, 12 February 2010 13:20 - Last Updated Monday, 15 March 2010 03:18



The Friendship Highway is the aspirationally-named trade route connecting Kathmandu in Nepal and Lhasa in Tibet. Not so long ago to travel its length was considered a serious challenge of forded rivers and washed out tracks, however as part of the Chinese Government's modernization programme the road has received a new lease of tarmac. As a result trucks and expensively chartered Land Cruisers regularly run up and down its length and it feels a million miles from the areas of Tibet off the tourist radar.

We had not gone far down the highway before we passed two Scotsmen that we had met in Lhasa. They seemed to have a healthy approach to cycle touring – they had enjoyed Lhasa so much they had found it hard to leave so now could only hope to reach Kathmandu in good time by accepting lifts from passing Samaritans. They were cycling with trailers rather than panniers, artfully covered in old rice sacks in an attempt to “blend in”. Other than the trailers, essential cycling gear acquired for Tibetan autumn included motor-cycle style mitts and an immense thermos flask called something like “Bertha”. All of this we managed to load onto the roof rack along with our own possessions and two bikes, and with 5 of us in the car we made our way to Gyantse, dropping the cyclists just outside the town to avoid possible encounters with the police that might have made life difficult for our guide.

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