

A Photographic Diary of our 2016 July Special Cultural Expedition:
"Best of the Inner Mongolia"

by Yau-Sun Tong



《2016年七月内蒙古呼伦贝尔草原/巴丹吉林沙漠/西北六月法会 - 民俗风光文化摄影行》

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Preface

All following images within this “**Photo-diary**” were taken with a little *pocket-sized Leica D-Lux 5 point/shoot camera*, the rest with a *cellphone*.

These **snapshots** are only intended **to capture** and **to document** the **events, our travel routes**, the **joy and fun of our tour members** during this lifetime experience of a fantastic visit to another one of the western China regions; and for our memories.

A cellphone & the little “point & shoot” D-Lux 5 has many limitations in picture taking, little performance in terms of optical quality compared to the famed Leica R and M camera systems with slide-films I am so often used to and fond of using; but at the same time it poses a challenge to myself for still trying to create meaningful images with that...

High quality slide-film images taken from this tour are **not** shown in this **photo-diary**.

Some of the goals I am trying to achieve in my photography include:

- *True to the moments in nature and culture;*
- *Natural and candid;*
- *Compositionally challenging and unique;*
- *Meaningful in subjects and topics;*
- *Story telling with good impacts;*
- *Not to disturb or intrude into local human subjects' life.*

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2016 July "The Best of Inner Mongolia"

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Enjoy...

Brief intro

Gathered in *Beijing*, our tour group started the great experience of our
《*2016 July Special Cultural/Photographic Expedition*》
which was especially
designed for those who were interested in a real cultural experience
in some of the fascinating places for unusual and
rich topics of photography and travel.

The following images in chronological order are intend to share the enjoyments
from some of the events and highlights of our journey of this 15-day
journey – another successful one of our ongoing specially arranged
Western China Cultural/Photographic Series Expeditions.

My sincere appreciation & many thanks to all participants of this very special tour!

July 2016 - Our exclusive expedition journeyed through Genghis Khan's Hulunbuir grasslands, during the best season for this part of Mongolia, explore the wonders along China's extreme Northeastern borders with Mongolia & Russia...



Attend the fascinating 六月法会 ancient annual *Dharma Assembly festival* in Tongren; the attractive landscapes & unique minority people & their cultures in Qinghai & Gansu provinces, then north into the beautiful western Inner Mongolia's Badain Jaran Desert ... enjoy the wonders of nature & cultures in this part of the Northeastern China...



See itinerary map & info in the following pages:



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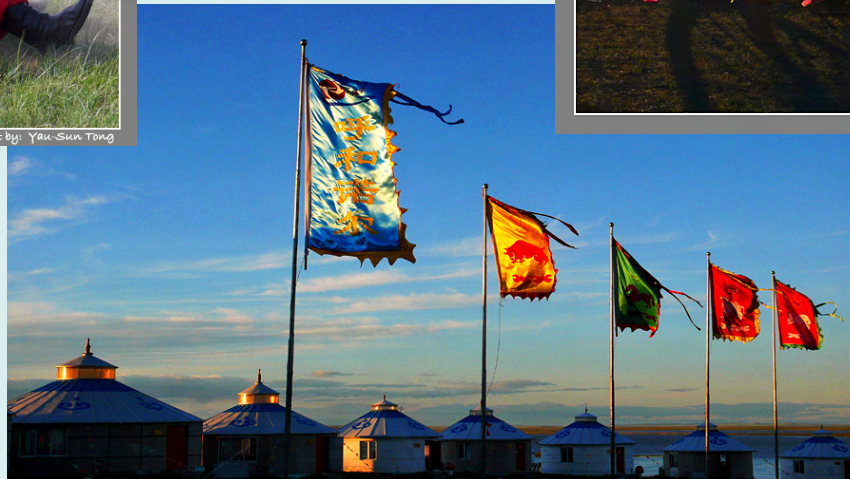
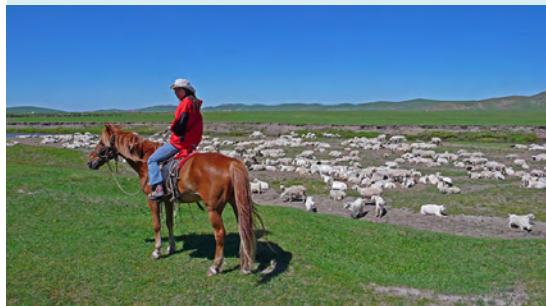


蒙古摔跤 Mongolian wrestling

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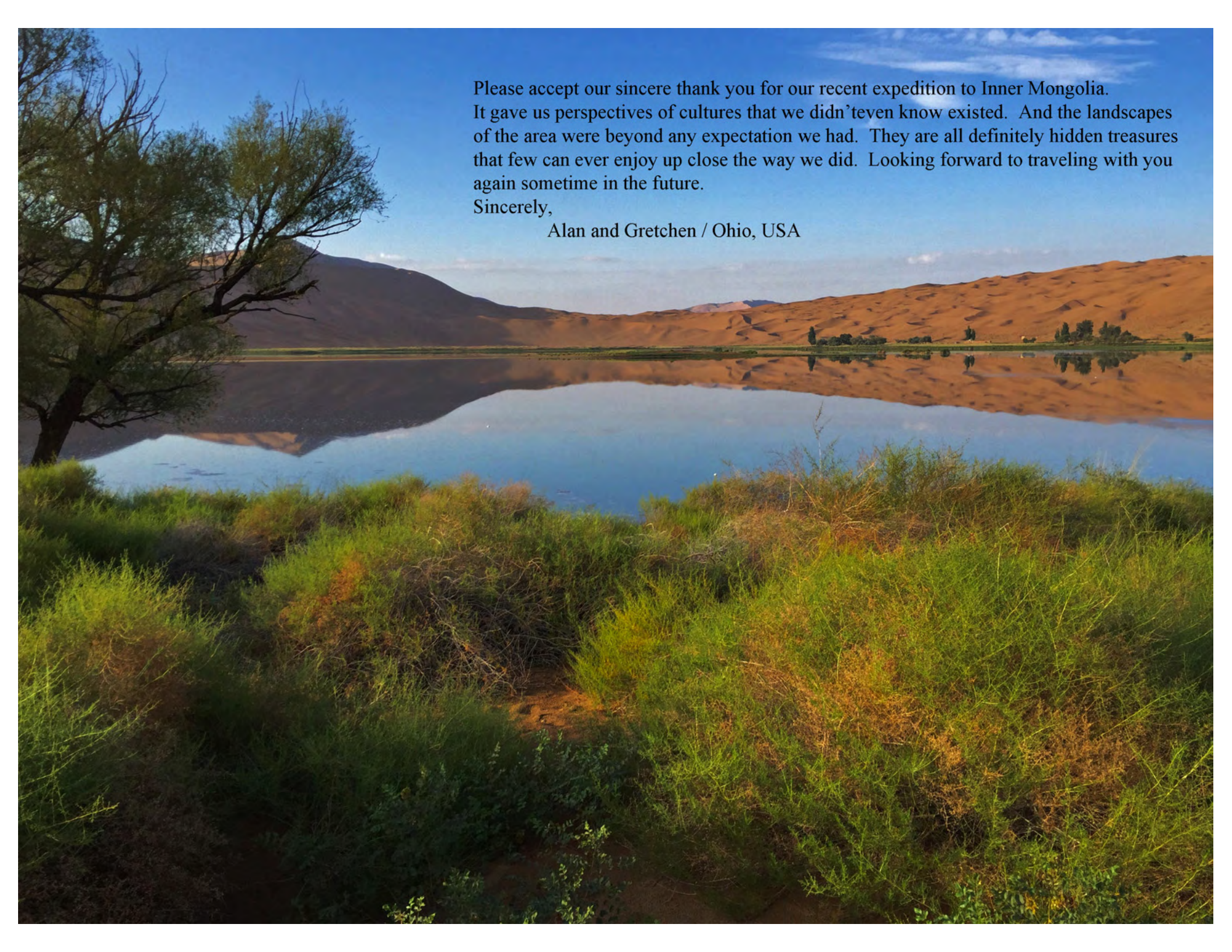
From our *eastern* portion of the itinerary...



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To our *western* portion of the expedition...



Please accept our sincere thank you for our recent expedition to Inner Mongolia. It gave us perspectives of cultures that we didn't even know existed. And the landscapes of the area were beyond any expectation we had. They are all definitely hidden treasures that few can ever enjoy up close the way we did. Looking forward to traveling with you again sometime in the future.

Sincerely,

Alan and Gretchen / Ohio, USA

Itinerary sketch

The Best of Inner Mongolia

(see itinerary indication *red line* on map)

July, 2016

A 15-day expedition starts from **Beijing** to the *eastern Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region*, following then to the northwest China's **Qinghai & Gansu** provinces, entering into the *western* region of **Inner Mongolia**...

It is impossible to describe the beauties of nature and culture along our way in few lines...

Timing selected in July is for the best weather season & a colorful traditional festival...



Eastern Inner Mongolia - "Wonders of the Northeastern Borders"... Genghis Khan's birth place and

Western Inner Mongolia - with Qinghai & Gansu regions... a fascinating festival and the most beautiful part of the Gobi Desert



Beijing Arrival

入境北京

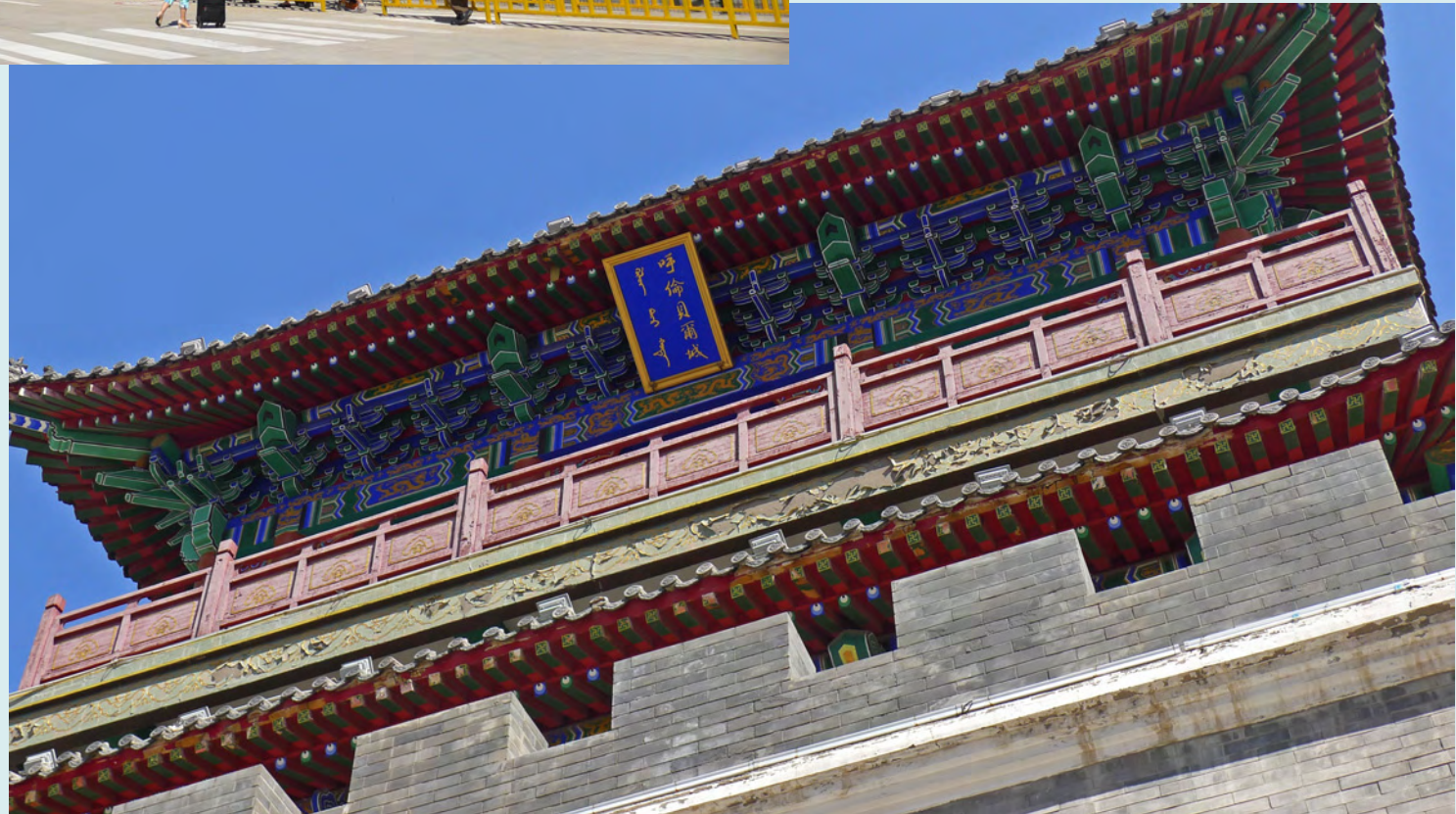
July, we arrived Beijing, as always our welcoming dinner was excellent; no Beijing arrival should be without a famous Peking-Duck dinner... 😊
(and our daily meals following were tastily nourishing too...)

Arriving Eastern Inner Mongolia Region

*Eastern Inner Mongolia & the
borders with outer Mongolia
and Russia*



And started our truly
interesting & highly
enjoyable journey...





While in this border town city of Ergun...



In this far flung region of northeastern China... our meal is still awesomely tasty and healthy too...



Martin - one of our excellent travelers is framing the Argun River, one of the China/Russia border rivers...



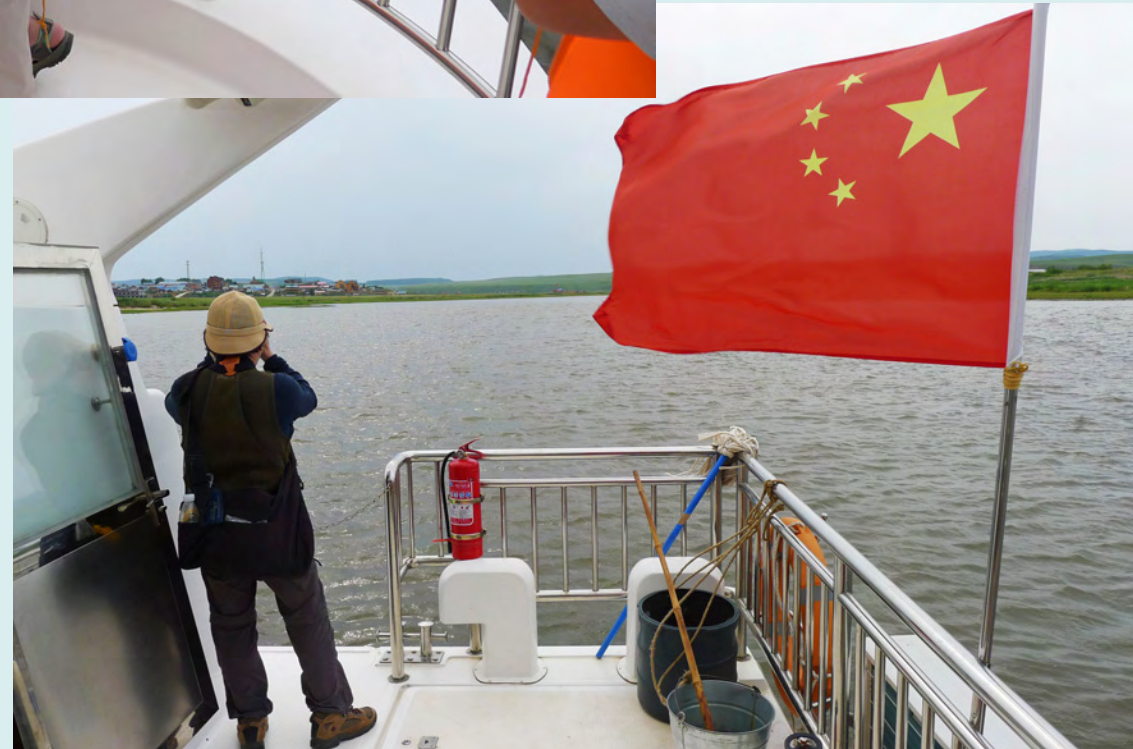




*Cruising on the
Russia-China
border river...*

Hey Lesley, this is not the Titanic... while Heather looks like a convincing evangelical preacher... then Gretchen would be a smiling politician waving to the crowds...

Hello Danny, don't take photos of the Russian military installation now... 😊





Alan and Gretchen patrolling the street of Shiwei - a little town borders with Russia...

Dinner was fantastic, fish was fresh from the river...





In a forest park...





Our foods continue to be fresh, healthy & tasty...

Relaxing and to celebrate a good day of sightseeing and good friendship...











The Mongolian traditional
roasted-whole-lamb...



While in Ergun...



An Ergun street scene...



An Ergun residence block...





We are here for a true sense of local family visit...

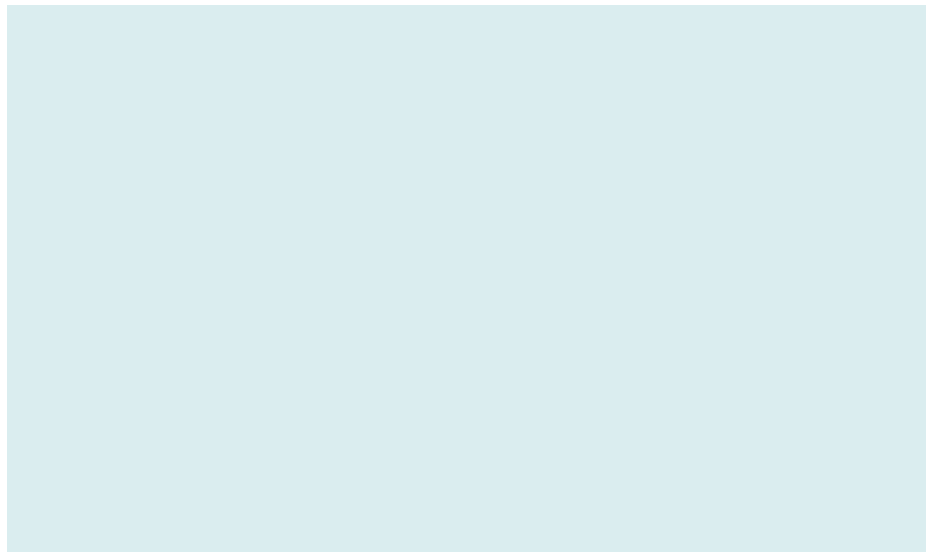








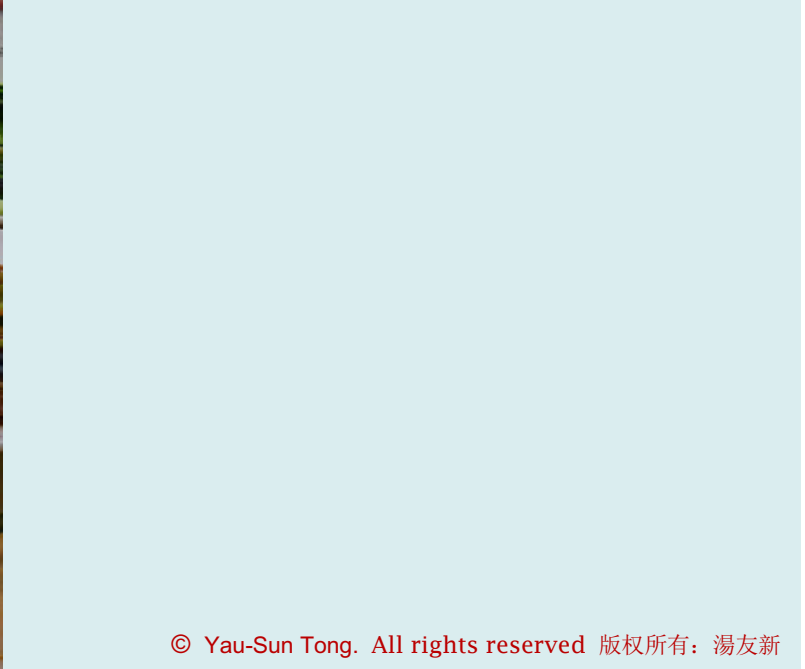
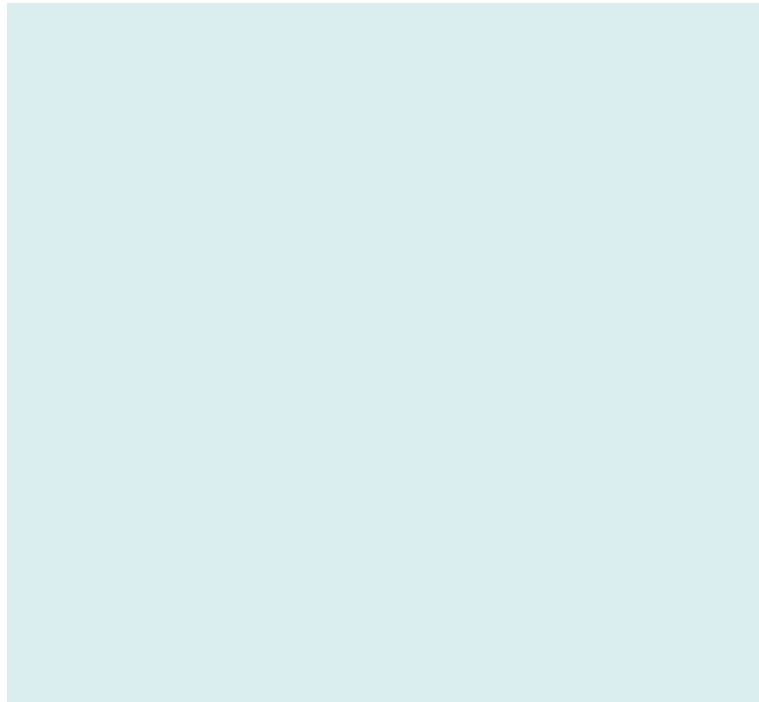
The Mongolian sacrificing ritual structures - Aobao...



Here we are still eating healthily... 🍌





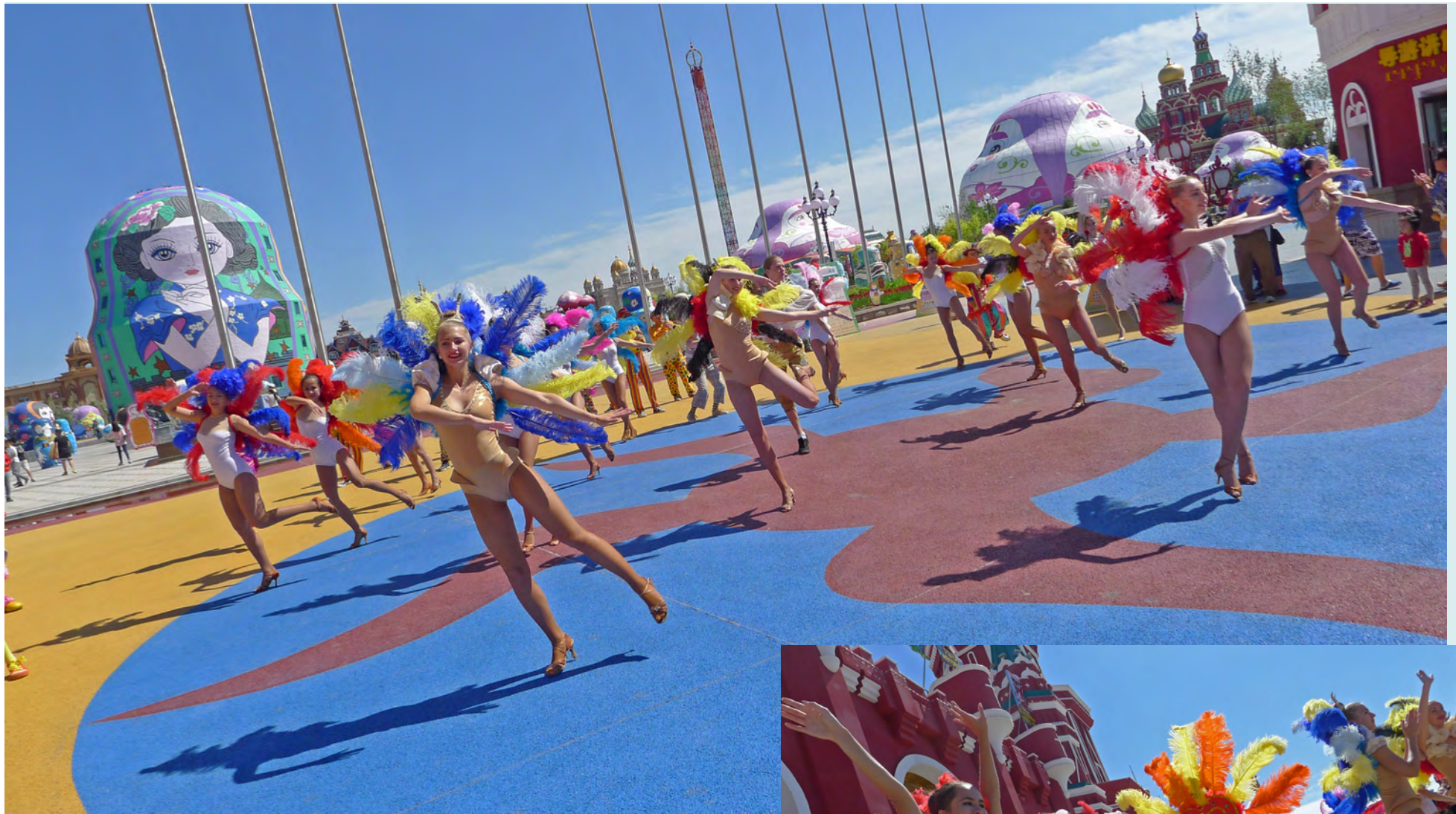


Russian flock in from nearby Russia regions to shop in this Chinese township, strong men professionally packing passengers' purchased goods on top of their tour bus... when done it would look like a small mountain on top... 🤔



Here in the city, building structures often resemble “Russian styles”...







Including our hotel...



At far that's Russia...



Top quality Mongolian lamb is quite famous...



Our servers do not see western foreigners often, and are very happy to have photos taken with...



During our after dinner walk...



People's lives seem to be happy & contented...



Time for us move to the western portion of our “Best of the Inner Mongolia” itinerary...



Arrival Qinghai

on route visiting Qinghai region at Dharma Assembly Festival, in northwestern China...



Hey Danny, taking more secret photos...? 😏

One of our main mandates in our expedition is about exploring local cultures...



And the itinerary-date selected was based on special local festivals, celebrations etc.
Here we are at the special “*Dharma Assembly Ritual*” ...



Mysteriously look & feel but still not lack of gayety with truly traditional local cultural sense...







following two pages: 1. the Shaman is getting high, ready for leading the ritual...
2. temple elders gathering chanting...

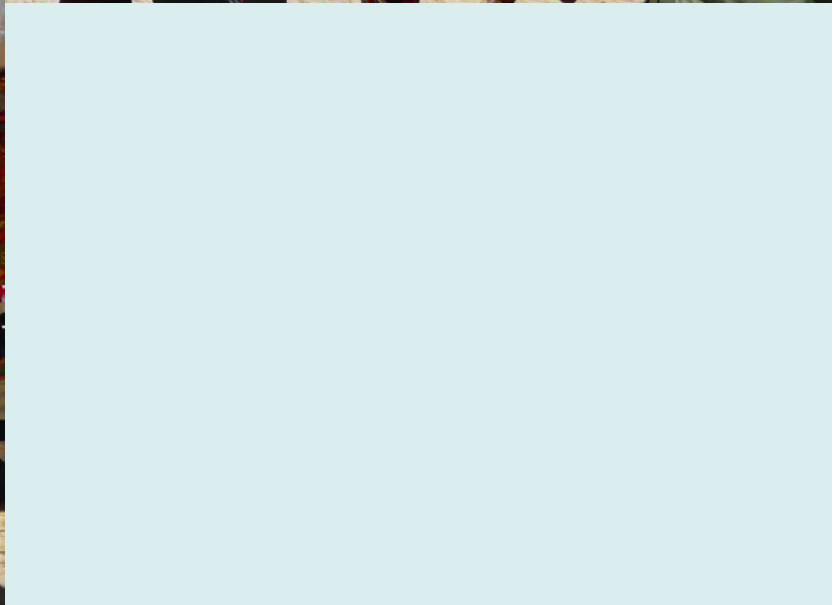
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Making of the Thangka...





Monks debating....











Village kids...









Continue on route to north through MenYuan...
we are having another good lunch here...





© Yau-Sun To



Here the Yellow River is quite clear...





Not far from this curvy new highway, this local Muslim woman inviting us to visit her garden, and to taste the fresh fruits...

Next page: a Muslim young boy helping in his family's restaurant...





13:14:58

米

飲料 3元

涼菜 3元

筷子已消毒
请放心使用

菜单

宝库乡

VIVO VIVO

阿甸蔬菜瓜果水

综合批





We are on route crossing from Qinghai to Gansu, then into western Inner Mongolian...

Alan inspects the farm field... 😊







We were on the top...



Stepping into Western Inner Mongolia

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Western Inner Mongolia's Badain Jaran Desert region visits...





We like to have some random local visits,
for the most organic feel of the local life...

Inside a Mongolian yurt, we were again being tortured...





Arrived Badain Jaran - a desert covers 49,000 square kilometers...



Our fleet of four Landcruisers are ready to take us into the desert unknown...



Lesley reaches the top of this huge sand dome celebrates with those Chinese girls...



Time for a good lunch before we venture much further into this third largest desert of China...



Known as the most beautiful desert in China,
it has a lot more than the name of “desert” ...





Two of our Mongolian drivers were cutting a watermelon, while under the desert sun Laurie was eagerly looking on...



Beauty of the desert dusk...



Elevation at 1,617m, these few reached the summit of this sand-mountain with vertical high close to 500m ...



At our camp of
the night...

Our meal is still
healthily tasty...





I like best is the tranquil beauty of the desert morning...
Oh, not really that quiet... there were some lovely birdsongs too...



Up (and down) for exploring...









The other side of the lake is an ancient temple - built in Qing dynasty around 1755...









Time for us to depart from
the desert...
(not by camels though 😊)



Arrive Zhangye

Passing by Gansu province's Zhangye area...

we visited the very western stretch of the ancient Great-wall...





A celebration of our Badain Jaran
desert experience...

And a celebration of our successful
“Best of the Inner Mongolia”
journey...



In the city of Zhangye... here in this part of the great northwest, life is more relaxed...

The dedicated good morning
Taiji practitioners...



Taking the high-speed train to Gansu province's capital city
Lanzhou for our return flight to Beijing...





This joyful fellow passenger girl wants to post photos with our western travelers...



Before the flight, one more taste of the northwestern region style noodles...





Beijing Exit

We are back in Beijing, preparing for our home return journey...



As summary... again I'd like to quote Alan and Gretchen's words:

*"Please accept our sincere **thank you** for our recent expedition to Inner Mongolia. It gave us perspectives of cultures that we didn't even know existed. And the landscapes of the area were beyond any expectation we had. They are all definitely hidden treasures that few can ever enjoy up close the way we did. Looking forward to traveling with you again sometime in the future. Sincerely, Alan and Gretchen"*

And to wish us many of the unique good travels to come... 😊



Beijing international flights for exit ...

Home return international flights...

a grand completion of our another worthy expedition... 😊 🙌

What a totally enjoyable journey!

从北京回程北美，旅程完满结束...

Welcome to partake our upcoming non-commercial, alluring new expeditions:

For 2018 November:

*“From Southwestern China’s Traditional Miao ethnic minority’s
New-year festival to the new Seventh-World-Wonders of the
55km long ocean-crossing bridge to Hong Kong”*

For 2019 April:

*“From Southwestern China to the wonderlands of Eastern Tibet through
southwestern Tibet region’s Gyirong valley, then cross into Nepal”*

For 2019 June:

*“From Northwestern China’s XinJiang to Kyrgyzstan –
experience the amazing lands of Central Asia”*

See itinerary sketch maps in the next pages:

For 2018 November: From the “Traditional Ethnic Miao people’s New-Year” to the “New Seventh World-Wonders” !

This 11-days short duration expedition takes advantage the annual colorful *Miao ethnic New-Year celebration* in the land-locked *Guizhou* province during mid November this year... Then by *high-speed train* from *Guizhou to Guangdong* province, visiting *Xinhui & Zhuhai* those two worthy places... Then from *Zhuhai* we’ll go by coach all the way to *Hong Kong* airport via the just completed “*Zhuhai-Macao-HongKong Ocean-Crossing Bridge*” of 55km in length - known to be the “*new seventh world-wonders*” ...



For 2019 early April: *“From Southwestern China to the wonderlands of Eastern Tibet through southwestern Tibet region’s Gyirong valley, then cross into Nepal”*

This **expedition** takes advantage of the best weather season for the intended spots that we will visit, from outside Chengdu region, to flowering **Eastern Tibet**, then to the **Southwestern Tibet** region of **Gyirong** area... all enchanted with beautiful nature and culture during that time of year. **Gyirong** will be first time open to foreign visitors next year to cross over to **Nepal** by land...

(The ever important & necessary “Tibet Entry Permit” will be specially arranged for our participants)



Epilog

The snapshots in this Photo-diary are in no way able to represent the richness of culture and nature scenes we've seen, the fun and joy we've experienced during our group's
2016 July "The Best of Inner Mongolia Expedition..."

for Yau-Sun Tong's special "Western China Cultural/Photographic Series"
non-commercial upcoming expeditions

e.g. *the 2019 Expeditions:*

<http://photoart.chebucto.org/photonews.html>

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or my previous inviting photo-diaries:

<http://photoart.chebucto.org/gallery5.htm>

Good-bye for now...