

By train from Beijing to Lhasa.

China operates today the largest network of Very High Speed trains in the world while the quality of service provided onboard is quite remarkable. However, that is not what we are looking at today but to another feature of the Chinese Railway which is serving regions located more than 4000m above the sea level. One has to admit that it is not easy to compete with China on such ground for very few countries, if any, are facing such environment. As a result, China has acquired a unique experience of building and operating lines in that extreme environment, over the permafrost, and in a rarified atmosphere.

Beijing elevation is only 43.5m whereas Lhasa stands at 3656m and the distance between the two cities is 3767kms. While entering Tibet the railway line lies higher than 4000m.

To the eyes of the traveller the carriages present a classical appearance except for the internal oxygen outlets for use by the passengers who suffer of the low atmospheric pressure. The travel time Beijing to Lhasa is about 40 hours. Each sleeping compartment is designed for four passengers, the other carriages are equipped with standard railway chairs.

Foreign travellers can be counted on one hand's fingers except for some tourist groups who are boarding the train for a few hours ride to cover a short segment of the line, mostly on its lower part. Local customers are Chinese or Tibetan business men, civil servants, a high percentage of them are visiting family members, as well as a limited number of local tourists.

When leaving Beijing the wagon restaurant is well furnished and busy but later during the journey one can see many people preparing instant noodles, from their own supply, with the hot water provided on board.

This Beijing/Lhasa ride is not particularly attractive from a tourism point of view but it is interesting to experiment it because of its uniqueness and originality.

Here is the link to the video:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/56plg1yao0o082d/from%20Beijing%20to%20Lhasa.mp4?dl=0>

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