

Shakes, rattles, and bends! (Day 11, 12th July)

Following some sleep at a location near Hanyuan we make yet another early start on the road. The night before was spent at the Golden Feather hotel which was less than impressive. Some of the team opted to sleep in the vehicles rather than share their rooms with the resident mosses and cockroaches (amongst other things). The day's objective is 700km but as always this is subject to the road conditions which so far have been mixed.

In many of the towns we travel through there appears to be plenty of construction. There is some evidence of earthquake damage but much of what we see could very easily be the result of neglect over time. However, the temporary tent shelters help us make the distinction. The obvious landslides with cleared pathways contribute to the ride. Everywhere we have been the Chinese people have shown great interest in the team and the vehicles with a friendly curiosity. The team wish all those affected by the recent earthquake a speedy return to a happy normality.

Our mid morning breakfast break consists of crisps, biscuits, and fizzy pop and is now our usual daily break from the local cuisine. Our route takes us through the mountains. The road winds through the valley and follows the course of the river with the mountains high above covered in mist. In parts the route consists of some of the worst roads that we have experienced to date. The lorries are constant companions on our journey and heavily smoking brakes a normal sight on those on a downward slope. The shakes, rattles and yet more curling bends from the road at times appear endless. The convoy driving training and the radios are invaluable to ensure quicker progress.

The favoured mode of local transport appears to be the horse and cart. These are not the only things that impede our progress. The locals don't seem to think twice about using the road for such things as walking cattle, ducks, and drying out vegetation (some of which may be tea leaves). Despite completed stretches of the Expressway bringing much needed relief we are unable to complete the day's objective and as the late night hours are well upon us we admit defeat and seek sanctuary off the road and sleep in the vehicles.



Although the day's objective was not achieved it has been another successful day for the team - working together in convoy, sharing the load and ensuring everyone's spirits remain high. We had planned to have a farewell meal with Mel but the remains of the biscuits and the first of our anti malaria tablets would have to do. Mel was recruited as the team medic for legs 3 and 4 but has become an integral and a very much loved part of the leg 3 family.

