

Rural Healthcare in South and West China

July 20 – Aug 20. 2011.



Me at a medicine garden in Shaxi, Yunnan



Monks lounging, Rebkong, Qinghai

Objectives

To volunteer for rural healthcare projects helping ethnic minorities in Southwest China

To meet and establish links with health NGOs

To learn some traditional Chinese medicine and see how it is applied in a rural context.

To visit Tibetan areas of China and see what healthcare is available to them

Outline of the Travel



- Flight from London to Beijing
- Flight from Beijing to Lanzhou
- Bus from Lanzhou to Xining
- 10 days traveling in Qinghai province (bus)
- Flight from Xining to Kunming
- Travel around Yunnan province
- Flight from Yunnan to Beijing
- Beijing to London

Qinghai Province



Melting ice on Amnye Machen Mountain range - A sacred Buddhist mountain.

The initial plan had been to head to the rural Tibetan regions of Yunnan province such as Deqen. However at the time of travel it was clear that many of the areas I had planned on going to were inaccessible to travelers and many of the routes were closed down.

Traditional Tibetan culture can still be found in the “historical Tibet” area: Qinghai province (Amdo), Western Gansu, Northern Sichuan (Kham), Northern Yunnan Province. Many Tibetans live outside Tibet. Even though travel was permitted in Qinghai I was still limited by the fluctuating regulations in place. The official Chinese ‘Panchen Lama’ was visiting one of the towns I visited and I was asked to leave two towns I arrived in. There was also a heavy police presence in several towns I visited. Tensions within the Tibetan communities have been rising since 2008.



Tibetan Buddhism festival near Rebkong



Surgical Tools used in Traditional Tibetan Medicine.



A monk in a school destroyed in the 2010 Yushu earthquake

Yunnan

I spent 10 days shadowing doctors at Yunnan Provincial Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) 云南省中医院. As a medical student, I wanted to go to see how a TCM hospital works and how it compared with a more ‘Western’ concept of healthcare. At the hospital I attended clinics every morning and witnessed acupuncture, practiced Tuina massage and was allowed to go into the pharmacy.



Dr Dong a Tuina expert looks at an X- Ray. Me and Dr Lu in Paediatrics department



Deng, A famous ‘barefoot’ doctor was studying at the hospital at the same time as me.



The oldest pharmacy in Yunnan

“Moxibustion”

The experience in the TCM hospital was invaluable as it was completely different to any western hospital I had been to. The private consultation rooms were full of people and there was no sense of patient privacy that we are used to in western healthcare. People wanting to discuss their most private health issues had to do so in front of the line of other patients. Surprisingly, the TCM doctors prescribed both Chinese and Western drugs. One doctor prescribed a patient a concoction involving donkey skin. He also prescribed antibiotics when needed.



Experimentations with acupuncture!



Two farmers eager to discuss the London riots, Yunnan