

Tibetan Tourism Boosted by Railway



According to official government statistics, Tibet has been visited by over 2.25 million people in the first 10 months of this year. This signifies a 31.8% increase on last year. The growth in the number of visitors has occurred on the domestic and international fronts. Domestic tourism accounts for 93.5% of the total, up 23% on last year. The foreign input has seen a 28% increase with more and more visitors from abroad coming to see the “roof of the world”. This increased influx has brought so far over \$300 million to the region. The reason for the boost in Tibetan tourism has been put down to the new railway between the Chinese Northern Province Qinghai and the Tibetan capital Lhasa.

The world’s highest railway was officially opened on July 1, providing an easy, comfortable and exciting way to reach Tibet. The track stretches over 1,956km, reaching its peak at just over 12,000 feet where passengers are provided with oxygen. It is the first railway to link Tibet with the rest of China. Beforehand, tourists could only get to the region using the motorway or arriving by air. Now, thousands of people take advantage of this new opportunity to get to Tibet and enjoy the immense Himalayas.

The increase in the number of visitors has enabled many Tibetan businesses to develop. Local hotels, catering companies and shops have flourished since the opening of the railway. Wu Wingjie, the vice chairman of the Tibetan tourist board, has stated that Tibetan hotels are generally 80% full during the high season anyway, yet the new route to the area has meant that they are even fuller. He added that the aim in building the railway was to increase state development and lower the price of commodities brought to the region.

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