

Inner Mongolia Trip, 20 to 22 July, 2017

In Golden, Colorado, in early January I met Qian Yin, a graduate student at Colorado School of Mines, and her mother. They came to our home several times for dinner. I took them on a trip into Rocky Mountain National Park. In May Qian graduated with a Master's Degree in geophysics and returned to China, anticipating starting a Ph.D. program in October at Kyoto, Japan, stressing volcanology.

For the evening of June 30 in Beijing, Qian and both of her parents invited me to a local restaurant and then a drive around the Olympic buildings area. We discussed the possibility of another visit. I suggested visiting Qian's home in Inner Mongolia, expecting that the trip to be delightful for my interests, and getting out of the big city of Beijing to a much more rural area. That idea appealed to all of us, and we arranged it. Unfortunately, Qian's father who wanted to see me again was called away on business during the time of that visit.



Qian, left, and her mother in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado



Qian gave me the details for arranging the airline travel to the Bayan Nur airport in Inner Mongolia, from Beijing and return. Such flights were rare, and a Sunday return was not practical. What worked was a late Thursday afternoon flight out of the small Nanyuan airport on the south side of Beijing, and a return in the middle of Saturday to Beijing International Airport. After I figured out how to get to Nanyuan by subway and bus-or-taxi, and to return to Peking University from Beijing International by subway, I booked the flights using two different airlines. Flight time durations were expected to be nearly two hours each way.

Thursday afternoon, 20 July, was hot and humid in Beijing. After I finished teaching at Peking University and had lunch at the student cafeteria, I took subway line 4 to near the city center, arriving at the stop for the bus to Nanyuan airport. The bus was not there, and I was told that the wait would be about 1.5 hours for the next bus. A lady talked me into a ride. It turned out to be in her air conditioned car, and for a larger price than a taxi. But we both enjoyed the air conditioned comfort and I was pleased with that trip.

We left the Nanyuan terminal on time and taxied out to the end of the runway. There we sat for 2 to 3 hours waiting, engines running, for air traffic control permission to fly. It got hot inside the plane even though the sky was overcast and the sun was blocked. So it was dark when we arrived very late at the Bayan Nur airport. Qian arranged for me to stay alone in her parent's apartment while she and her mother stayed at her grandmother's home. Friday morning we had breakfast at a restaurant and started our journey around that part of Inner Mongolia.

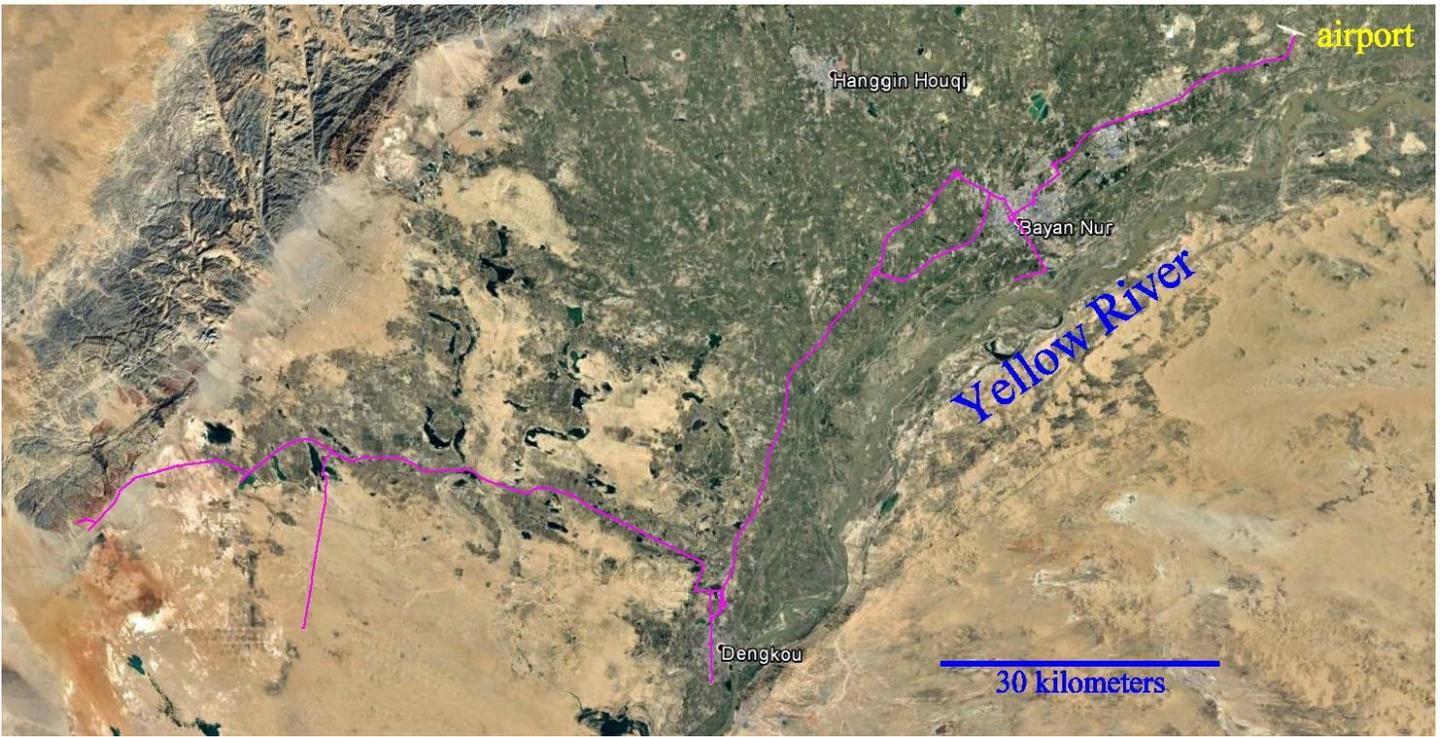


Great Crested Grebe young Little Grebe

Barn Swallow and Red-crested Pochard duck

Red-crested Pochard

The first stop was near a pond beside the large Yellow River, whose water irrigates that large region. I photographed some of the birds there.



This is a satellite view of the Inner Mongolia region around Bayan Nur (gray, upper right, and airport). Noting the scale in the lower right, this is a large territory. The major Yellow River passes from the bottom center to the upper right. Its water irrigates (green area) what would otherwise be desert land. The dark spots on the left side are small lakes. A mountain range is in the upper left. All tan areas are parts of the Gobi Desert with sand dunes. The magenta line shows our approximate routes of travel as I remembered them and interpreted GPS locations measured directly and by my camera. We first went to the city in the south center of this view to pick up a family friend who would then guide us to a geological mountain park at the west side of this view. Coming back we took that long straight route into the sand dunes and returned. At the end of the day we visited an old Catholic church in the friend's city labeled Dengkou and stayed at her apartment overnight. Saturday morning we returned early to Bayan Nur and the airport.



All road signs are in Mongolian and Mandarin, so foreigners need guides. The crops are corn, melons, sunflowers. Sunflowers in bloom. Mountains in rear.

This very large irrigated valley produces a large variety of vegetable crops, reminding me of similar types in various areas of Colorado. I likely saw tomatoes, beans, squash, and others but did not photograph them.

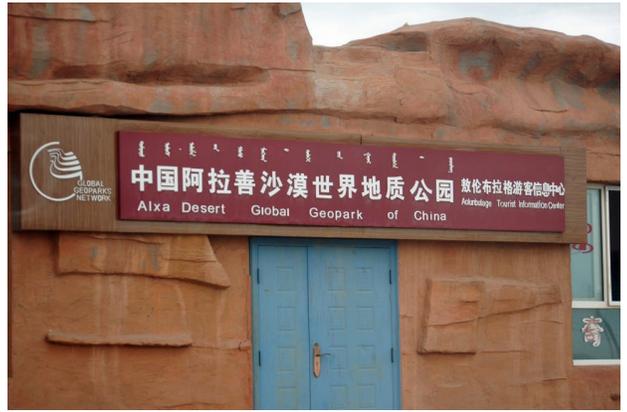




These apparently wild Bactrian camels were at the base of the mountains.

Mountain edges in 3 previous photos.

We explored some tall and narrow canyons in a reddish sandstone with large boulders.



Eastern entrance to Alxa Desert Global Geopark



canyon entrance



conglomerate boulder, rapid deposition



Ed and Qian in canyon



colors



religiously stacked stone monuments



stone monument of Tibetan Buddhism



Crested Lark



Isabelline Wheatear



female Pied Wheatear



Eurasian Crag-Martin



These canyon birds eat mostly insects.



In the lake district we enjoyed wild berries.

Common Tern:





Qian, our driver, dirty car from dunes

dirty rear window, from inside

plants among sand dunes



exterior of Catholic church compound

original worship building - Belgian built

Red log pillars were floated from Xining.



Colored windows are gone but Chinese letters remain in stone.

Historical photos displayed inside.

Another church in city, not visited.



Bayan Nur airport



mother, grandmother, Qian, Ed

Dr. Ed Holroyd, 15 August 2017

We passengers sat on this plane for 2 hours for maintenance and air traffic delays, then half hour back in terminal before we could fly to Beijing. But this visit to Qian's family in Inner Mongolia was the best part of my 2017 trip to China.

