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UMR PASSAGES

Les voyages (trans)forment la jeunesse

Exploration de la capacité (trans)formatrice des déplacements
touristiques à travers l'étude des voyages au long cours des
backpackers chinois

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ANNEXE 1 – RETRANSCRIPTION XIAPONG

XIAPONG

Marie: So you visited over 90 countries ?
Xiaopong: Yes
Marie: And, when... how old were you when you started to travel ?
Xiaopong: 24
Marie: 24. How old are you now?
Xiaopong: 39
Marie: 39, and how did you... how do you start, like, how did you know about backpacking?
Xiaopong: Actually, I started in university I have classmates who comes from Korean, South Korean and they have this kind of customs and I have no idea about backpacking
Marie: Yeah
Xiaopong: And he had a very big bag I borrow from him and I go
Marie: And so your first backpacking trip was where?
Xiaopong: Guilin
Marie: Oh, in Guilin, yeah, I know that place. And you, where are you from?
Xiaopong: Tianjin
Marie: Tianjin
Xiaopong: Near Beijing
Marie: Near Beijing, ok. And so you finished college ?
Xiaopong: No, yes I finished college and I work for one year then I studied in Holland for another one year then back home and I started to do this kind of travel since
Marie: So you traveled for ten years?
Xiaopong: Actually, now, more than fifteen years
Marie: But, like, when you started how did you make money to travel around
Xiaopong: I think ... (*incompréhension*)... four different parts. First part, I work, I got a job but only for three months and I got money and then I go so I am not good worker, I am not good every boss hate me. In the second place, the second part, I write article for magazines, for travel magazines, for many many, actually all the travel magazines in China, they have published my articles during the second place. After that part, I was well known by the foreign tourism office, hotels and airlines they invite me to their destination for free and I can enjoy the very high-end experience and (*incompréhension*) for backpackers because it was very expensive then I become a professional traveler I write articles for magazines and last one, I published many books and my books is well sell
Marie: I have seen that
Xiaopong: More than one million, in China
Marie: Is it translated?
Xiaopong: It's not like translated, it's published in Canton, Cantonese, in Taiwan, in different (*incompréhension*)
Marie: Oh yeah yeah
Xiaopong: But they kind of the same, so after 12 years I think, that's enough, I have been everywhere, I want to go. Then I stay here, to build this household
Marie: So yeah, after 12 years, you were like I need to setter, to settle somewhere

Xiaopong: Yes
Marie: And so, why Shuhe, why did you choose Shuhe, why not like, like, Guilin or Hainan?
Xiaopong: Because during this twelve year this is the place I been many many many times, like 12 times
Marie: Ok {*Il ne s'est pas non plus installé à Lijiang parce que les baux établis sur 20 ans pour construire un hôtel sont beaucoup plus chers qu'à Shuhe*}
Xiaopong: The reason is, the weather is very good in the dry season, the sky is very clear, more clear than now and in the winter it's not cold so I enjoy the weather and I have many friends here
Marie: Ok
Xiaopong: So it's the reason I stay here
Marie: Ok
Xiaopong: And also it's a very popular travel destination and it's better for business of course
Marie: Of course, and have you, have you ever been to Nepal ?
Xiaopong: Of course
Marie: And what have you done in Nepal?
Xiaopong: Just in the Katmandou and to Pokhara but I didn't trekking because wrong season I have been there in june so it's cloudy and that's all
Marie: Ok, so you just have been to Katmandou and Pokhara 'cause I'm working on the Chinese backpackers that go to Pokhara I am actually really interested in the Chinese people that quit their job and take time off just like they do in your hotel. Do you have many of these people in your hotel? Young Chinese that just, young people that are done with work and they just, don't want to...
Xiaopong: Someone they work here, like free-lancer, but some people just relax, as I know, they have nothing to do, just play here, we have many games, everyday we organize many small tour, big tour, they can enjoy here
Marie: Ok, ok, and hum, so what's hum, what's your philosophy of backpacking? Like for you what is a real backpacker?
Xiaopong: Sorry a didn't got it
Marie: For you, in your philosophy of traveling, sorry, I haven't read your book cause I don't read Chinese, what is a real, a true backpacker?
Xiaopong: A true backpacker.
Marie: Yeah
Xiaopong: I think a true traveler or backpacker have been to different world, (...) they have been to many countries, cities, see rainbows, see the desert, forest, another world is inside at first place, they purchase their dream and then maybe, feel some difficulties, it's... it's not easy thing to do in China many years ago, they have to overcome the difficulties and in the third place, maybe they get something, like me, my books sell well, like best selling and I can something big, and build my hostel and in the last part, they will get inner peace, they don't worry about the future, worry about something. So I think the true traveler should go to different world, real world and inside world
Marie: Ok, so it's about the outside and the inside. And hum
Xiaopong: Do I explain... very... ?
Marie: No, no, no, it's perfect ! It's very clear, it's very clear. Hum, so when they, for you it's also about having difficulties, having hard time. Being a backpackers is hard for you
Xiaopong: It's not about bearing backpacker, it's about the age problem, you know, in China we have, we all think that by thirty you have to build your career, very well, when you are 40 are so you have no trouble in your life, in your family when I was in 30, I have nothing so even I travel but I cannot see the future and I don't know where the road will go so I feel not good inside I have no idea about my future at the time

Marie: Hum hum
 Xiaopong: So that's what I mean. The difficulty
 Marie: So, so, so, was it a problem for you not to see a future?
 Xiaopong: Because you know, in China, even I read articles in the magazine about the salary, about the money I got is very very slow, very low and a I have spent a lot of money for travel and I have to use a little money to live in Beijing so you know when you have no money, when you have no job everytime you you you woke up to see you city, you think you are loser, that's a problem
 Marie: Yeah, and you think it's just in China or it's everywhere?
 Xiaopong: I think just in China because many years ago, professional traveler is not real thing, it's not real job
 Marie: Yeah, and now that's a real job
 Xiaopong: Hum, for me?
 Marie: Yeah
 Xiaopong: For me, it's not a real job actually. It's still something I do but I also I can earn money from it but now I have many things to do. Many things to earn money so this part of my job
 Marie: Yeah, it goes with the all things. Are you married?
 Xiaopong: No
 Marie: Are you, do you want to like, are you looking for somebody?
 Xiaopong: No, not yet, I have many things to do
 Marie: What do you have to do left?
 Xiaopong: This year I will published my sixth book and I will ah... construct my third household. Maybe in Chengdu, maybe in Kunming *{il a une autre auberge de jeunesse à Shangri La}*
 Marie: Oh, wo you are making like a chain?
 Xiaopong: I hope so, like generator in Europe.
 Marie: Like What?
 Xiaopong: Generator hostel, it's very big hostel in in Europe
 Marie: Okay, si it's like they have hotel in every cities
 Xiaopong: In Paris, in Amsterdam, in London
 Marie: And so you want to do the same with your...
 Xiaopong: Yes
 Marie: Okay, so that's interesting! So Chengdu
 Xiaopong: Kunming maybe after I finish the book, now I'm still writing after this in the middle of June I will go to do finding the location
 Marie: Okay,
 Xiaopong: Beside that I also make travel program, the video program that air on the website to episodes each week
 Marie: So that's your travel, everywhere in the world
 Xiaopong: Yes
 Marie: I didn't know you have a website, cause I seen the blog, sina, sina blog
 Xiaopong: Sina I not use very often, I use Weibo
 Marie: More?
 Xiaopong: Yeah, more. In that place you can see what I do, my career
 Marie: Okay, I'll look into it. So, now you are no longer really a backpacker, you are doing regular travel? Like in Paris for exemple, what did you do, did you stay in a hotel?
 Xiaopong: I stayed Athena hotel, it's very beautiful hotel you can see the Eiffel tower, I can show you the...
 Marie: Sure yeah
 Xiaopong: It's luxury, you know, I... sorry I with local home owner and the family make the food for us, it's very nice
 Marie: Oh, ok, so that's on your weibo
 Xiaopong: I can show you. We do the helicopter trip in Paris
 Marie: And so you report that on your blog
 Xiaopong: Yes, yes... and to the lido
 Marie: Oh yeah the Lido, I love the Lido
 Xiaopong: Went to see the show. Also to the, the, the,
 Marie: Oh yeah, motocycle side car... who did you travel with? Friends?

Xiaopong: They they invite four different people, KOL, the key opinion leaders
 Marie: Oh, okay
 Xiaopong: All of them are KOL
 Marie: Okay, when did you gain that title? Key Opinion Leader?
 Xiaopong: More than ten years
 Marie: More than ten years, okay, so... now, people invite you to come and visit?
 Xiaopong: Yes
 Marie: And you report on your blog. But then , those kind of travel, the clients in your hostel, they can't afford it can they? What you've did, what's you have done in Paris, the clients in your hotel they don't do that?
 Xiaopong: In the future they can
 Marie: Oh, that's for the future, okay. So the people that follow you as a KOL are mostly young people or in their 30's?
 Xiaopong: No young people, students because all my books, the target readers are young people
 Marie: Okay. Or the people that just finished college, okay, okay. So this travel, they will do it later when they have jobs and they can afford it
 Xiaopong: Maybe, maybe
 Marie: Yeah.
 Xiaopong: I influence them to pursue their dream
 Marie: To pursue their dream. Thank you so much for the time, it's an amazing place, I'm sure it will blossom in China and probably elsewhere, it's interesting it made me think, have you ever been to Club Med,
 Xiaopong: Yes of course.
 Marie: Yeah, it's interesting because with all the activities and like...
 Xiaopong: But it's really expensive
 Marie: But it's pretty much what you do in your hostel but high end but for older people or family. But there {I meant here} it's cheaper and for younger people. Is it how you thought it?
 Xiaopong: Actually, no, I just not follow them, I just create the idea myself because it's not where I learn about Club, I just do all activities one by one, sometimes someday I will get some ideas and I will Yeah
 Marie: And you live here?
 Xiaopong: Sometimes. Actually, when I didn't travel I here, Shangri La and Tianjin, so I fly everywhere
 Marie: So you fly everywhere, your parents are still in Tianjin?
 Xiaopong: Yes. But sometimes they stay here. Sometime they come and visit here.
 Marie: Alright. Okay, well, thank you so much for answering and it's really interesting to meet you I was really looking for that in my trip I am really interested in those young traveler that take gap year and just travel... Was it hard for you to stop traveling?
 Xiaopong: Start traveling?
 Marie: Stop
 Xiaopong: Oh Stop traveling? No because I think, there is no place I want to go after I finish my trip to Argentina to I follow the Chegualla, I follow the motorcycle barriers road about two month when I finish that trip I was yes, that's all
 Marie: You needed to go home?
 Xiaopong: Actually it's the name of not here, the fifth book name is "Take me home" I write something about it in South America.
 Marie: Okay, and to write take me home is to say you needed to be home?
 Marie: Yes, do... is there any other country you think you could have lived?
 Xiaopong: Many places, actually last week I was with my friends in France in a Monchamichel
 Marie: Yeah

Xiaopong: Not in the mountain but in the countryside, he built a small, let me see, he built a small house, his house, it's quite beautiful, in the morning, you see the horse

Marie: Nice

Xiaopong: But he told me the story he make friends with the local people. So I think, sometimes, this kind of life I want to live, but now no, because I have so many things to do

Marie: Going on here. Okay, thank you?

ANNEXE 2 – RETRANSCRIPTIONS DES ENTRETIENS AU NEPAL

BAI

Marie: Ok so... yesterday one of the first thing you told me was that Pokhara was... that Pokhara change your life, coming here changed your life...

Bai: Yeah...

Marie: How?

Bai: How? You know... before my world was totally different and here I learnt, I experienced many things and I learnt how to live... through the heart. You know... I feel like I had never been myself before. In those, you know... system. And uh... I was here, the first time I experience that... no plan, totally be myself and what I want to do and especially, I was inspired by many people.

Marie: You were inspired by many people that you met here?

Bai: Yeah, that I met here.

Marie: What kind of people?

Bai: Super great, super talented, creative people and you know just so... you know... they touch me a lot and uh... especially one person, one person called Miro who was also here with me in the same guest house. He is a very beautiful tattoo artist and creative, no matter where he stays, he will make the place beautiful and he will live it. This is what he is doing for this place

Marie: So he goes to a guest house and he improves it?

Bai: Yeah, yeah... no matter where he stays, he will build a bamboo roof top or he will make an art wall and no matter what... he will change the floor for the owner. I was very touch... And also people like very good photographer, DJs and they are just so nice to people, living by there core. And you can see it inspire them so much.

Marie: So when was the first time you came to Pokhara?

Bai: Last year, last march... uh... no, no, no. March I came to Nepal and I came here around last April

Marie: April

Bai: And then I choose to stay and stay and stay... Not many people also, I first time experience festivals, it's also first time I experience acid, mushroom or it has opened my senses to the world. So many things...

[166,5]Marie: First love?

Bai: Very important connexion, Nepal is just a magic place to make super connexion.

Marie: How did you choose to come to Nepal?

Bai: I didn't choose, it just happened to me !

Marie: Tell me the story!

Bai: I was in Japan for like, normal life for three years and I quit my job

Marie: What kind of work did you have?

Bai: Amazon, I was working for Amazon. And I quit my job, I left Japan and everything and my best friend I grew up in Inner Mongolia, we were together with my best friend. Twenty years and one day she called me, usually she wouldn't call me. One day she called me: "Sachira, now you are not busy, you promised me we were going to go traveling together and let's go to Nepal". That time I don't even know Kathmandu was the capital of Nepal, it never came into my

life. And I never thought to go to Nepal. And when Nepal... she said : "You are gonna love there" because she has been there a few times and when earthquake, she was over there. So she said : "let's go to Nepal, you are gonna love there, it's very cheap and we can have a good time". I say: "Ok, I think about it, actually, I didn't take it very seriously. And then, in the same day, my cousin took me to see a movie, it's doctor strange, have you seen that movie?"

Marie: Yes

Bai: And I was in the first two rows and Kathmandu was... (onomatopée). I was like "What the fuck, Kathmandu in my life twice in a day" And before I had never seen it. And this is so big signs and I feel like signs, so I check the ticket, it's so cheap, I don't need a visa, everything is easy. So I say "Let's go, I have got money and time, why not?" So we came to Nepal first with three Mongolian girls came. And she was here before so she has many friends and we were heading together in Kathmandu, she was more a party girl so here and there but I felt like it's not what I wanted you know. It's happen to me that we just played together here but I feel like... I shouldn't... I feel like Nepal shouldn't be like this. I think Nepal is very spiritual thing and I want to dig more things

Bai: So I booked two weeks in Nepal come and back. So in the last day... I say, no girls, I'm not coming for this. I have got to do Pokhara.

Marie: So you stay for two weeks in Kathmandu?

Bai: Kathmandu, yeah

Marie: Just partying?

Bai: And near Kathmandu, just little mountain and

Marie: Bhaktapur, Nagarkhot?

Bai: Yeah, yeah, yeah and that I was very shy, my English was not good not like traveler... so I say, I decide myself... I want to go to Pokhara. So I say : "Good bye girl", I cancel my ticket.

Marie: You didn't have a job to go back to, right?

Bai: Actually I had but I finished and... so I said: "Bye, girls". I came to Pokhara by myself and before I had met a group, we went to Bardiya (National Park), yeah...

Marie: You went to Bardiya?

Bai: I went to Bardiya and then I came back to Pokhara. And... This time last year I came here.

Marie: So did you go from Kathmandu to Bardiya and then Bardiya to Pokhara. Did you stop in Lumbini? Did you visit Lumbini?

Bai: No, no, not yet

Marie: You should, I'm just back from Lumbini, there is a good deal there, if you want to go to Lumbini, you should go inside the complexe to the Korean temple... you pay five hundred roupees a night and they give you, lunch breakfast and dinner. And you can attend all the ceremonies with the monks.

Bai: It's like vipassanna?

Marie: No, no, you can go to a Vipassana in Lumbini but staying in a Korean temple is like experiencing the temple life. Very nice

Bai: I need that, I need that.

Marie: You can also go to the Chinese temple, across the street

Bai: You went to the Korean temple?

Marie: Yes, because I can't go to the Chinese one

Bai: Why?

Marie: Because you can stay two days for free at the Chinese temple but only for Chinese. So I can't.

[469,3]Bai: How many countries temple there?

Marie: Twenty maybe?

Bai: really, wow...

Bai: How long did you stay there?

Marie: Three nights

Bai: Short... short... I'm gonna go there, after Begnas lake, I go there.

Marie: The bus ride is good from there

Bai: But I heard that now it's hot like forty degrees or something.

Marie: I thought it was ok, you can rent a bike and visit in the morning and read and write in the afternoon

Bai: Nice, I think I can stay for two weeks. They have a Japanese temple?

Marie: Yeah, but I don't know if you can stay. So I'm sorry I interrupted. So you went to Bardiya

Bai: I went to Bardiya...

Marie: Not Chitwan...

Bai: I also went to Chitwan, last year, I like... Pokhara was my base and I go here and there

Marie: Did you like Chitwan and Bardiya?

Bai: I love Bardiya!

Marie: Chitwan not so much?

Bai: Chitwan I stay only three days and I mostly stay in Hotel, guest house, not so much connect in the deep. So I went to the jungle trekking, to one day, other day... very touristy. But it's nice but I had the Bardiya jungle also was very nice. So I went to Chitwan because my group of friends I wanted to stay with them.

Marie: And Bardiya, did you go with anybody?

Bai: We went with one German guy, American guy and a Nepali guy. It was his family, so we went to his family. So we went to his homestay. And his family was so nice and we stayed there for two weeks... or one week I forgot. It was a long time.

Marie: It was last year?

Bai: Yeah, this year I basically just here.

Marie: How long have you been in Pokhara again, now?

Bai: Now, one month

Marie: And last year, how long did you stay in Nepal?

Bai: Five months

Marie: Oh! you came for two weeks and you stay five months?

Bai: Yeah, yeah exactly. Like my mom thought I was crazy. And this is how my solo traveling started. I have never been traveling like this before. So it's life changing for me a lot

Marie: So you went to Bardiya and then Chitwan and you stay in Pokhara three months?

Bai: Two and a half month also. And I also had a very good experience in Kathmandu. We were like a big family together. Very nice

Marie: With travelers?

Bai: All travelers like from seventeen countries people together and we experienced many birthdays, very good trip and we really like brother and sister together, really good friends in all lifetime. In here, you can make really good friends in all life time. I mean keep all life in short time, all life friends.

Marie: And... uh... how did you meet this people that your family friends in Kathmandu?

Marie: In the hostels?

Bai: Yeah, yeah, it was very... the guest was new at that time, it was Wander Thirst. The owner was... I was also one of the first guest... Our group was the first guests. So we were, so the owner was cooking breakfast for us. Because they were in an eco village doing some farming together before so all the group went to this guest house. And I was there to see my best friend before he went back to Canada, so that time I was in this guest house and I met this group of people and we became very good friend. And the owner was cooking breakfast for us every morning, it was so beautiful breakfast, healthy and he just charged, four fifty per nights including breakfast.

Marie: Yes, that's nice.

Bai: Amazing experience, yeah...

Marie: So... two and a half months in Pokhara last year and Kathmandu for a month maybe?

Bai: Maybe, yeah...

Marie: And two weeks in Bardiya

Bai: And I also went to the Annapurna circuit...

Marie: Have you ever... was it your first experience trekking?

Bai: Yeah, yeah... first experience.

Marie: How was it?

Bai: AMAZING! Just the best experience of your life with the nature! You know when you went by yourself because, three of us went together. Two of them was the big group to, we three going to trekking and the other two went to India, so we separate. And three of us also trekking together for the three four days and on the fourth day we were separated. We lost each other. They were faster. And I thought they were in the back so I was waiting for them, and looking for them. So we were apart for one week and we met together in Tilicho lake again. And it was really funny because they were like... signing their name on the rock, trying to find me to... trying to live the mark... very funny. And I was by myself trekking around one week and see all the... you go through so many kilometers and went to the big mountains and "oh! you can do this". And last year, was... I found out I can do many many things by myself

Marie: You never did trek in China or Inner Mongolia, is that something you can do there?

Bai: You can do... but where you are born, you never have so much interest than to explore Ladakh. It's like normal to be here, we were like driving but not so much trekking. Trekking in the mountain was the first time.

Marie: In Japan, don't they have nice trekking routes?

Bai: They have trekking mountains but just like, one two days. Not like eighteen days, two weeks...

Marie: Yeah

Bai: One day I trekked thirteen kilometers by myself and the music, walking at your pace, really into yourself and with the nature, very nice experience.

Marie: Have you done any trekking this year?

Bai: No, not yet. Oh... I, yeah... I did one in the mountain in Tiktonga, not long, one or two days. Waterfalls something.

Marie: Are you going to do any trekking?

Bai: I was, I bring my jacket, waiting for something

Marie: What... what are you planning?

Bai: I think I want to go to Lumbini the most. Lumbini experience is the most... I was like, these days I felt like mantra and stuff. I really need temple life.

Marie: So before coming to Nepal, did you read anything about Nepal?

Bai: No, no. I just know Sikamutti was born in Nepal

Marie: Who?

Bai: Sikamutti, the Buddha was born in Nepal. That's it. That's the only thing I knew about Nepal.

Marie: And was it... so...

Marie: So you were born in Mongolia, your parents moved to China when you were six and you went to Japan but have you had travel experience? Did you travel with your parents first of all?

Bai: Yeah, with my mom first in China, some areas when I was twelve. And uh... also with a bunch of groups

Marie: So like group traveling, do you like group traveling?

Bai: No, but I still like traveling outside to see many things, it's very different from solo traveling. Because that was also traveling it was nice for me, I like traveling a lot. And when I was young I never missed home. I just want to go out and explore more the world. Never miss home. And kind of that time

Marie: So you travel a little bit in China with your parents?

Bai: Yeah, also, after sixteen years old I left my family to go to a boarding school. To go by myself, on my own.

Marie: So you started traveling when you were sixteen?
 Bai: Not traveling, you study in another city. You can go long distance from your family. Study, see friends
 Marie: So that what was your choice to go to boarding school?
 Bai: It was always my dream to go out of my home. It was my choice.
 Marie: To go outside of Inner Mongolia or...
 Bai: Yeah, yeah
 Marie: So where did you go to boarding school? Inner Mongolia?
 Bai: Yeah, yeah, yeah. In college I went to the South Island called Hainan.
 Marie: You went to Hainan to study?
 Bai: Yeah, I went there.
 Marie: How many years did you do in Hainan?
 Bai: Four years
 Marie: And then four years in Japan?
 Bai: Yeah, four years in Japan. Yeah. And then, after Hainan, I was back in Beijing for work, like half year and then I went to Europe. For a business trip and then I decided to go to Japan to study master.
 Marie: You did your master's degree in Japan, on what?
 Bai: Children psychology
 Marie: So you have been to Europe?
 Bai: Yes, I have been to Europe
 Marie: Where have you been in Europe?
 Bai: Everywhere, but we were like forty-five days to go to many countries.
 Marie: Forty-five days! that's a long time.
 Bai: It's around forty-five days I don't remember. Over thirty days
 Marie: It was a group?
 Bai: Yes, it was a group of architects, I just followed them, I was the youngest one.
 Marie: And how was it a business trip? Did you have to do work there?
 Bai: No, we were just more visiting and studying, they were architects and many architects, also many CEO. Bunch of group people going here and there. And there is a Taiwanese guide, there were more Chinese people.
 Marie: It was mostly Chinese people?
 Bai: and also there was some professor to go there and visit
 Marie: Cool, that you could do that. Did you company paid for that?
 Bai: oh ! That was very interesting, like... my mom, it was my mom's position and she gave it to me.
 Marie: What does your mom do?
 Bai: My mom was in the... government. She was also doing about media stuff, meeting journalist many things.
 Marie: That's how she got the travel?
 Bai: Yeah, yeah, yeah
 Marie: Who paid for the trip?
 Bai: My mom's company. So... yeah... and I was with my auntie. We went with a group together. Why my mom wanted me to go to Europe? Because my mom doesn't want me to work with... in Beijing. I did documentary assistant; director assistant and my mom didn't want me to do that so she gave me. She really knows me a lot. So, she gave me this chance to let me stop doing that. So, I choose to go to Europe. And then ok, I really... I feel like this is what I wanted the abroad, exactly, I feel more myself
 Marie: Even there
 Bai: Even there I never been, people are closer, I can be more myself, it's like I'm a very western spirit put me in and Asian body. and Asian culture. Like from little I feel everything very distant. I went there and I feel everything is close. But that's maybe also why my English is getting so good so fast.

Marie: Your English is perfect. Ok... how... how... my question... you way you have a western mentality in an Asian body... why is Western mentality for you? What does it mean for you?
 Bai: You know I speak four languages.
 Marie: Mongolian...
 Bai: Chinese, English and Japanese. And different languages have different thinking, different way of thinking, different feelings, different vibration. So English I feel more free.
 Marie: When you speak English...
 Bai: I feel more free. I feel more myself and uh... explaining is more freely, I feel free. And uh... Mongolian I feel more with nature, more... how can I way... Mongolian is a very beautiful language, very... very earth, very can contain many things. Very earth language. and... uh... Japanese. And uh Japanese is more about polite. More about your... how... more about your position, your being, your state of being, you... when you speak Japanese, you more feel you have to watch out your... naturally you become very... very aware in your state of being.
 Marie: Like... how you are among other?
 Bai: Yeah, yeah, and uh... what else. Chinese, I like Asian Chinese, I like Chinese culture. It's very beautiful, very deep. Very deep, very nice. But in the casual, many Chinese lost their Asian wisdom...
 Marie: So you don't like modern China is a little off?
 Bai: Because modern China is also because Chinese people, their way of thinking is more like, they want to do something because of the self.
 Marie: Like selfish?
 Bai: I can connect with the selfish sometimes, their way of thinking...
 Marie: Don't you think Western mentality is selfish as well?
 Bai: They may be but you know, I... I know no more Chinese so maybe it's same, same... in this step. Because I'm not so educated in English or being a long time in a Western country, that's why I don't know, that's why I still like Western. But uh, English, I just feel like naturally close.
 Bai: I feel like when I speak English I'm more myself
 Marie: ok. Where did you go in Europe?
 Bai: Germany, Italy, France, Austria,
 Marie: England?
 Bai: no England because it was the Olympics and it was difficult... and a Switzerland...
 Marie: Spain?
 Bai: Not Spain.
 Marie: Czech Republic?
 Bai: More like... uh...
 Marie: Sweden?
 Bai: No not north. But Switzerland. More near around Germany, more near around German area.
 Marie: Poland?
 Bai: No, no Poland.
 Marie: So you had a long time to visit all of these countries. 40 days is a long time
 Bai: Yeah, yeah,
 Marie: And... uh... so how... which country did you arrived in?
 [1630,9]Bai: Francfort.
 Marie: How did...
 Bai: Very modern city very... it's just the biggest. (interruption for drinks)
 Marie: So... what did you think about Europe?
 Bai: I just feel so beautiful... I liked Germany and Austria a lot... I love Austria... oh my god! I went to Innsbruck and Vienna. It's like when I reading. I like reading when I was young. I read a lot of books. When I was very young, I read about the fairy tale. And it's like I'm living the fairy-tale... like that time it was so green. But Paris I felt solo. It's the

lovers' city. and uh... the people I went with is more like, they shopping bla bla bla... I didn't like that

Marie: Paris has more to... than shopping but of course if you are with a group following. You don't get to experience the real Paris.

Bai: I know but I still very appreciate that I get close to see all of this. And... first time I feel, "People walking in the street are smiling to me" It's so amazing.

Marie: They smile to you?

Bai: Yes they smile to me. I remember one time, I think it was Paris and one time in Austria, people smiled at me. People in Austria would smile... I like that.

Marie: So what was your favorite spot in Europe that you visited?

Bai: I have a few, not one favorite. I like Austria, I want to go back again. And somewhere near the Rhine river. In Germany. If I go to Europe, I definitely go back there again, by myself, to know more.

Marie: I think you would like Portugal. In a way it has the vibe of Pokhara. And uh...

Marie: So if you would sum up your experience in Nepal, how would you describe that country? From your traveling experience.

Bai: Oh my god... It's definitely something magic here, you know. Nepal, many things is similar with India. But Nepal give me more a feeling like a mother and father.

Marie: Who is the father?

Bai: I feel like Nepal is the father and India is the mother. India is too big... very very big...

Marie: Like China...

Bai: yes, China, is big but India also very, very big. But India is different from China. I feel like.

Marie: How?

Bai: I feel like India is more intense but it's more surface but if you go really deep into that India is amazing, magical place.

Marie: Where have you been in India?

Bai: Leh, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Manali, Himal, Delhi, Jaidpur... all that area...

Marie: So northern India?

Bai: And middle India, just Jaidhpur, Delhi and in the south, Goa.

Marie: You went to Goa, how did you like Goa?

Bai: Oh my god... so much energy there. It was very nice to go to see... all the music, something, many culture from there, I would like to see how everything comes here, so I saw... I saw, many great artists and musicians there, good music there but also, people are going there more like for enjoy... for party...

Marie: Did you do that?

Bai: I... I... just stay away from the party. I feel like this year I'm not for party... really not for party. This year I want to more concentrate on myself. So but I met many great people there too. I had good experience too but I have to say. Goa is a beautiful place but uh... if you... you have to know what you really want to do there.

Marie: How so...

Bai: This is... there is many things going on there. It can be very spiritual, can be very party, can be very commercial, different energy

Marie: Different Goas...

Bai: Yeah... yeah... You can relax vacation or very spiritual. Different energy...

Marie: a little bit like Pokhara? right?

Bai: More, the energy is more intense there. People... because people are different.

Marie: Did you experience drug there? in Goa?

Bai: Only once but I experience more drug in Nepal... more in Nepal. Drugs is very common in Goa but I feel like... don't have right time, right place to take drugs.

Marie: Here, you have done it?

Bai: My first mushroom here, my first... oh... yeah... that's why I like (Nepal). I started smocking in Nepal, I started acid experience in Nepal, mushroom in Nepal, everything in Nepal.

Marie: In Pokhara?

Bai: Mushroom, yeah, and also Changa (Ayahuasca/DMT)

Marie: Have you heard about that before coming here?

Bai: No... no... just you know, it opened the world.

Marie: How did you... who introduce you to that?

Bai: Just you meet friends, and friends do it and this is a part of their life and so you see. It's like before I don't know rolling joint because in China or Inner Mongolia, smocking... if you are smocking, they think it is cigarettes. It's not smocking like joint. So I started rolling by myself last year and... yeah, yeah, yeah. Like uh... it's a very big change in my life.

Marie: Yeah? Has it... the experience of drug enlighten you? Have you find answer in that?

Bai: Yes definitely... mushroom taught me how to love... Yeah... acid opened my music sensations. And uh... you know... actually, how can I ... why is it very life changing? Because, my life was very shape in a way before. The family... society, very blocking shape. You know, the system. And here, every day you can be... there is no right or wrong there is just a lifestyle that you want to be. There is not right or bad or better or worst. There is more ways, more possibilities. And you can embrace these possibilities. It's a very beautiful experience.

Marie: So you finally feel like you have a choice for yourself?

Bai: Yeah, yeah, yeah, closer to yourself. Because, before you have to wear a mask, you have to have some... something you have to do, something you have to have but there is no need.

Marie: Do you think you came out of materialism?

Bai: Yeah... kind of... but that was not my nature, how I wanted, that's why I was always in conflict. I came here, I found peace because I found people who are so like you, people also not materialist, people that can live in by their heart. That's who I want to be.

Marie: How long did you stay in India for?

Bai: Four months

Marie: Four months

Bai: I can only apply for a two months visa, so two months come back and two months

Marie: And so after Nepal, you go to India?

Bai: So, do you remember I told you in Kathmandu, the great group of people?

Marie: Yeah

Bai: Two of them went to India and I... if you want to listen to a little story

Marie: Yeah, yeah... I love to.

Bai: So, I have a little ashtray here. It's a little shoe. And a... that time I was in Kathmandu and we were in the guest house, very nice. And everyone knows there is a mongolian girl, very nice and uh... and she has acid... because before I was... had a bottle. So, one day, there is a young guy from Switzerland called Yann, and he was back from Vipassana. And that day was his first day. So, everyone gathered together and want to have something. So, I went back and it seems like everyone is waiting for me. so: "This is Yann and tonight we can have uh... acid something together". So, I gave the twelve people, each of them, acid. So, we have a trip together, very beautiful, and uh... there were very nice and I like this ashtray so much and we had such a great time together, even after the acid. So, like, after one week, or sometimes latter, me and the French guy and the Australia guys decided to go trekking. And two guys, one Belgian guy wanted to come with us but he did trekking before so... one day... this Yann was singing a

song for him so said ok, I go with you to India (with the guy from Belgium). So they bought... when they left... so hard leaving, so hard good-bye for us... both of us. So I said: "I give it to you" (the horseshoe astray), and he says, "don't give it to me". I take it in India to meet me, I will be in Leh. So "ok". So I don't know that time if I would go to India or not. India was not on my list. So they left and we went to Annapurna circuit. And the French guy had the tattoo...

Marie: Henna?

Bai: No, no, no, real tattoo machine on him. So we decide to get tattoo, on the peak. Somewhere, together. But we didn't because then we got separated and many things happen and we finally meet each other back to Kathmandu and we decided to go to Leh, together. And we applied visa... bla bla... And the last night, we were back to the guest house and more people came, a new German girl, called Carla, a girl from Malaysia. We become very good friends again. So we tattoo each other like this little mushroom. Because I have a magic notebook. This notebook I keep along with me... all the people I meet along the way and they write in their language. I have to find another person to translate it for me. And I tell them the translation to them latter. Now I have maybe twenty-two languages

Marie: Cool... do you have it with you?

Bai: No... I didn't bring it this time.

Bai: And then, remember this time... I actually give my notebook for all of them. And this guy talked in French and uh... Malaysian and English and he draw a little mushroom on top. And uh... before them, he was most important friend in my life before them. That guy was Canadian, that's how I told him I accompanied him to the airport and that was why I was in that guest house. So that guy was the most important beautiful thing happening in my life. He inspires me a lot a lot a lot. And that guy didn't write me anything. He just draw a big mushroom on me. And this shirt, he gave it to me. So... I think and I open that book, what should I tattoo? And I open my book and many, magic moment was with mushroom, so I choose mushroom. And then I bring this and we went to the ... oh... with the other girl... and oh... so excited and he saw me here have a mushroom and he draw and he was s... And he decided to tattoo this on his knee. So we were tattoo there and on his knee was drawn my ashtray. And, and, and there were tattooing each other like Leh. The Australia guy, before, he never tattooed, never experienced tattoo anything and now he is a tattoo artist because... like... tattooing these simple things, he tattooed everywhere, anyone, it's amazing! After I was, where was I? Yeah, this winter, it was my second time in India, so... uh... we separate, and they were back to Nepal and everyone separated after half year like... after like December. So yeah, around December, I met a girl from Germany. I met her in Delhi and she with Aaron Tattoo so this guest house tattoo and we... and we meet again in Delhi and we three together went to Taj Mahal and we together have the same tattoo artist. It's a coincidence. The world is very small... I had many stories like this. Too many.

[2576,6]Marie: Meeting people that know people that you know

Bai: Yes, that's cool. And I met this guy again in the winter. I was buying a ticket for Rishikesh actually and I was already on the bus with my luggage, everything, and I got a message, "I'm coming, don't go" from him. So I get off the bus and I was waiting for him all day in Delhi, we met together, he was on the way back to Switzerland. So we met again, very nice. And we went with the girl, the German girl to the Taj Mahal. And then I went to Goa. And also no... after that maybe Jaipur... yeah... yeah.

Marie: So when did you leave Nepal to go to India, last year?

Bai: July, end of July so around, July 29th, I left Nepal to go to India,

Marie: You stayed two months in India?

Bai: Two months in India

Marie: And then you went back to Inner Mongolia, for the winter?

Bai: Like, I went to... I stayed in Leh... is August September. And Last two... I had only last two weeks for Manali. Because I'm the kind of person it's so easy to get stuck somewhere and so deep connections with everything, everyone. So one month pass, I had crazy experience there so I have two months... two weeks left to go Manali and then. And then Manali finished I have to go back around September back in Inner Mongolia, stay with my family, two months... And then I decide. And this winter I have to go back to India again because I have many experiences. Because the day before I go to India, I lost my wallet, so I have no credit card, I don't have cash, no anything. So the first day, I have to transfer in Delhi and in Leh the next morning. So I have one afternoon to get cash in Delhi, I have never been to India, I have never been to Delhi, I have never been to there. So I have to get connection through my phone, you know WeChat can get the transfer. Because my card is gone but it's somehow connected to my phone. So I finally, in the little little small market, I have to take the train, the suburb and in the big market, so mass, so noise and little... and in the little jelly I find a little small phone shop to get the cash. I got one-month cash so I can go. And in the end, my money was running out and the owner of where I stay was so nice when I was in ... (nom d'une ville à côté de Leh) and the owner said, you can don't pay this time, you will go to Goa in the winter if you come back to India new time or you go somewhere in Goa, then you can pay me back. So he didn't made me pay.

Marie: He didn't let you pay

Bai: Oh... actually, I had to leave very in a rush because my friend booked the wrong ticket for me. So I had fifteen minutes to pack everything and go. And that time I didn't find the owner and the owner also knew my situation, I had to write him a long message that I have to go. And he said. "That's ok, you can pay me back when you come back". And the other things, those days I had another friend from Norway and he sees that I have no money and he gave me five thousand rupees. And I say, it's ok, I will pay you back; And the day when I went to pay him back, he said, "it's ok, give it to anyone who is necessary". And uh... just you know... not me and uh.. if you want to give me... he is so nice... so we were meet everywhere... very nice person.

Marie: So... when did you go back to India?

Bai: And... and he also go in Goa. Yeah, that's why in the winter I feel like I have to go back to Goa to see these persons, to appreciate by myself and to... That's how I connected with Goa

Marie: So you spent two months in China and you went back to... When did you arrived in India?

Bai: You mean the second time? December.

Marie: So when did you arrived in India this winter?

Bai: December, January and I had to live on February, 4th.

Marie: And what did you do on February 4th? Where did you go?

Bai: So Goa, I stayed one month. First it was December, I came with my best friend who called me to go to Nepal. We came in December in Delhi because her business is getting some problem so we stopped in Delhi for a week over. I booked the ticket to Rishikesh you know my friend came so I couldn't go, so we went to Taj Mahal... so maybe I went to Goa around Christmas and New Year, and uh... around January and I don't have so much time left, I bought a ticket from Goa to Mumbai, Mumbai to Varanasi, by train, thirty-six hours. And then I stopped two days in Varanasi and then

take the bus to come in Nepal. Oh... "today your visa is expired".

Marie: You had no problem?

Bai: No problem

Marie: And so you arrived in Kathmandu

Bai: Then it's almost Valentine so it's almost new year so I went back home because I promised my family to do New Year together.

Marie: Ok... for Spring festival

Bai: Yes, Spring festival and I came back here.

Marie: So you flew back to Kathmandu and you came back?

Bai: Yes, two weeks later I came back. And now I'm here...

Marie: Now you are here... for an unlimited period of time?

Bai: yes

Marie: So, this way of traveling... as a traveler or a backpacker, is that... you only travel like that now?

Bai: You know... I don't think I'm a backpacker or a traveler now... I think I'm a wanderer.

Marie: Ok

Bai: Like this year for me to see and seeing things coming... and then I just... uh... explore myself through this more...

Marie: A wanderer... what does it mean?

Bai: I think my life, my nature is a wanderer, you know, I never feel like I belong to anywhere in my life, I grew up in so many cultures, in many countries, I feel I don't belong anywhere. I naturally am a world people.

Marie: How did you find this word, wanderer?

Bai: My ex-boyfriend always say... you are a wanderlust (envie de voyager), wanderer or something. I like to... wander. So far, so far

Marie: And uh...

Bai: You know the travelers, they always have a destination, some plan, something they need to do, something they need to see, they want experience like that, but for me everything is nature. What comes to me I go at what comes to me. Like uh... this trip is come to me... I never plan to go to Thailand but Thailand it seems is coming to me

Marie: So you are going to go to Thailand next?

Bai: Yes. Next India or Thailand, I have to decide.

Marie: Can you get another visa for India?

Bai: Yes, I can get two e-visa in a year

Marie: Two visa, two months every year. And how... how do you choose the hotels you stay in?

Bai: Usually if I don't know anything, I will choose the cheapest on booking.com or hostelworld. Choose the cheapest and see the comment everything.

Marie: How do you... like for example, so you are telling me you are a wanderer so you don't have any places you want to specifically see or... experience... you wait for things to come to you. So how... so you never plan your trip.

Bai: somehow plan... because I found out plan never works.

Marie: It's kind of true

Bai: Yeah. So I just follow my feeling like if I will feel like I'm gonna go right, then I will go.

Marie: But then, you have to go... like how did you choose to go to Varanasi,

Bai: Because it's the closest route to Nepal; You take bus from Varanasi. And more about also you meet people and you are influenced by them.

Marie: So no guide books?

Bai: No, no guide books, I never read guide books but if I need, I read on the internet, Wikipedia or anything; I will read about culture stuff, I will read about what I'm interested in.

Marie: Do you have... uh... how do you... your parents do they financially support your travel... how do you go?

Bai: Yeah, financially. Last year I was using my savings, So I was... I work a lot in Japan so I got a little bit of savings and my parents they have no idea what I'm experiencing, they

have no idea what backpacker is, what traveler is so every time they calling, "What are you doing?" How can I say?

Marie: Do tell them you are in Nepal and India?

Bai: Yeah, yeah I have to say. They know that I'm going there and sometimes, video chat and what I'm doing...

Marie: I had interviews with a lot of Chinese, well you are not Chinese but a lot of Chinese don't tell their parents where they are, a lot of them don't even know their child is outside of China.

Bai: Really, wow!

Marie: This is why I'm asking the question

Bai: You know, the Chinese, the culture, there. There is so many... forbidden things... It's incredible.

Marie: I have another question since you are... you grew up in a Chinese society: most of the interviews I have done here are with women and there is... and I found it hard to find Chinese backpackers that are men. And I don't understand... Is it because I'm a woman so I talk more easily to another women or is it possible that maybe women are more free to travel in China than men and why?

Bai: It's about consciousness. In China, the more men have more responsibility, they give more dream to men, they have to have everything to contain, to full up their life. So that's why men, they only... their all interest is how to become successful, like that way.

Marie: So they have more pressure to succeed in life?

Bai: Yes, I think so...

Marie: That's why... So the fact that you are a woman is an asset to travel because nobody expect anything from you?

Bai: No, actually it's also... in the journey I met a guy from Sichuan, he is really nice Chinese guy. He is not a typical Chinese, he is really nice. He visits a many country by himself. Because in China, feminine power is more awakening now, they are more independent, they are more...uh... I feel more stronger than men now, in general.

Marie: And so the man has to provide car and house

Bai: Yeah, and different value, maybe...

Marie: Do you have siblings?

Bai: Siblings, yeah, yeh... Siblings, you mean?

Marie: Brother and sisters?

Bai: You mean, same mother?

Marie: Yes,

Bai: No.

Marie: and uh... I have a question, ok... so, one of the big question I'm asking myself in this PhD is : How do one learn how to travel? Because, in France or in Europe, from our early age we train how to travel because our parents take us to places, we take the train, we go abroad, other countries with our parents. In China, I found through my interviews that a lot of, in Asia in general the young generation never traveled as a kid. They never travel because the parents don't.

Bai: Yes, the parents don't.

Marie: So my question is: how did you learn how to travel. How do you... how do you

Bai: ...learn travel

Marie: Is that a process? does it take a long time? do you make mistake? Like... how do you do?

Bai: Just do it! You know, just by a ticket and just go see. Because sometimes my best friend, like this one guy, he just showed up. And then things coming to you, you know what you have to do.

Marie: You know how to behave?

Bai: Yes, you know how to behave. for me it's never a question for me how...

Marie: Yes, but trekking.. trekking was your first time... it's somehow need preparation... how did you prepare?

Bai: Trekking... how I prepared? It's ridiculous, the first day... the day before I bought everything, permit and the next day

I go trekking. And after the permit, I got all the things after one night.

Marie: You bought everything?

Bai: Not bought, my friend gives me... they know I'm going to travel... this like gloves and hat from this person. They gave me. And the trekking stick, it was the owner of this place that give me. And jacket, I had a jacket from home and uh... something keeping me warm. everything, very immediately.

Marie: so you just talked about it in the hostel and people gave you things?

Bai: Yeah, and I had friends before here and they gave me something and I don't know how I did it but I have two partners and two guys... and somehow, I didn't worry so much and uh... I never worry "Can I walk so long... I never" I just walk and whatever happen, happens, that's my personality.

Marie: So that's how you learn how to travel?

Bai: Actually, the more I travel, the more I think there is a better way to learn more through how you plan you travel.

Marie: How?

Bai: I don't know, you know, for me, I'm very easy to get stuck somewhere because I'm very easy to get connection with someone and then it depends on what I exactly want. Actually, I want to go yoga, I want to start yoga, I want to start connect with my body

Marie: When did you start doing yoga?

Bai: Actually, not yet so that's why I need to go back to India again

Marie: You want to learn to do yoga?

Bai: Yoga is not about position, I want to learn more deeper about that

Marie: Where are you going to go to do Yoga?

Bai: Sakuru... there is a body engineering, the book I read last year... so I'm interested in Yoga.

Marie: Why not Rishikesh?

Bai: Yeah, but Sakuru place is in the South, so I want to go there to visit first and I maybe go to Dharamshala

Marie: Where the Dalai Lama lives...

Bai: Yeah, yeah and that's what I want to do and I also want to do more temple stuff...

Marie: So like spirituality

Bai: Yeah... this year is not for partying or meeting a lot of people, it's experienced a lot for me last year so I need balance.

Marie: Nice, have you traveled in China?

Bai: Not so much... you know everywhere is people... I want to do but it's not travel; I have been to many places through some...

Marie: Like week-end trips?

Bai: No (disgusted), I'm not traveling like that, I'm not traveler like that. I just go somewhere like that. Like one time I went to Xi'an, the hidden mountain the Juan mountain has a five thousand hidden culture there. So I was in 2016, learn a body therapy there, in Juan mountain, there is actually a word, like whoever lives in the Juna mountain for one week, he or she has a lot of luck.... lot of luck, in past life he did so he had a lot of luck to stay there over one week. So we stay there twenty two days to... you know... the magnetic there is very special, very spiritual place and uh... I train by the enlightenment man who invented the healing therapy. It's not so well known in Western country, I don't even know how to translate it but it's very powerful. So I had that experience and the more I'm traveling the more I feel like the connection with people the magic happens so... I want to learn more and more about myself and I think the more I'm traveling the more I find myself the healing way. So that's what.

Marie: And so before you travel in China, before you went abroad right?

Bai: Yeah, I think so... actually, I really don't have so much... so much interest to go traveling around China but I want to go to Tibet and Dali maybe, in Yunnan.

Marie: Why Dali?

Bai: Dali... actually, last year, it has opened my life for this kind of lifestyle. More like half hippie, half free-spirit. Like Dali for me is more spirit... free spirit people, like that.

Marie: I actually met three girls from China that live in hippies community in Dali. They live on the farm... twenty-five, twenty-six years old... how old are you?

Bai: Twenty-eight

Marie: and they are not from Dali but they live in Dali. They told me that it has like a vibe like Pokhara

Bai: Yeah, yeah, that's why many people say that Chinese Goa is Dali. I heard from a Russian guy. And uh... of course the main part of my life is to go to Mongolia, to learn everything back. It's my big mission

Marie: Because you parents speak Mongolian?

Bai: Yes I speak Mongolian with my parents

Marie: Why did they choose to move to China?

Bai: Because my mom is from Inner Mongolia and mom's side is Inner Mongolian and uh... I live with my mom and uh... their job or somehow is also more connect with Chinese so... how I... I speak Mongolian but it's not really... I want to learn formal Mongolian. I never study or writing by training so... in the... watching TV, Mongolian TV, I don't understand the news.

Marie: So you are going to do that this summer?

Bai: yeah

Marie: You are gonna go to school?

Bai: No, I don't know how but I have to find a way. You know it's like find, find a lost path, lost path

Marie: ok, it's a good way of finding yourself

Bai: And also my family is shaman so... I need to find something about that. There is definitely something waiting for me

Marie: OK

Bai: You know, I'm not good at planning, not good at calculate, not good at plan, not good at organize but my intuition actually is very strong.

Marie: How... how did you choose to go to university in Hainan?

Bai: I just... you know... Chinese system is very bullshit... and uh... I was a good student when I was young but when I was sixteen, I found more myself I didn't like education system. I more studied by myself and somehow my mathematics is very bullshit and my other is very high and I got a chance to get financed to go to university, we can choose for all over China but I want to stay away from my home and Hainan is a good weather so... I didn't think it too much so I choose the furthest away.

Marie: Did you... Did you like Hainan?

Bai: No! Very material place, very material place. I don't like it at all.

Marie: I was gonna say because from what I have heard, Hainan is so... not... so superficial.

Bai: yes, no I don't like but, in the system, everywhere is the same. But that time, I didn't have a chance to go abroad or something, so I choose the more beautiful and most foreign place and I just working. I was also working in the hostel to get a chance to

Marie: So it was a way for you to kind of be abroad while still being in China.

Bai: Yeah, I mean... I just want to be free so I felt there I could enjoy more so I choose there

Marie: Did you learn, how to swim and surf in Hainan?

Bai: No, no. I think I learn a little bit to swim but I haven't swim so long time. What I learn there... no it was a waste of time

Marie: It was a waste of your time?

Bai: Yeah... but uh... I have so many things... and uh... all the people around me... so many rich people there so they always do their own business, so I and my friends opened a shop with Billabong and we made money through that. Play this, play that but it's uh... Before I was living like that but I didn't like it so much but I like the sea, the ocean. The most enjoyable time is when I was working at a guest house, I met all the foreign people, yeah... It was very nice.

Marie: Cool. So how do you see yourself in five years?

Bai: Wow... I never...

Marie: Still traveling?

Bai: You mean in the next five years? Yes, I think not traveling. I think traveling is going to be part of my life but not the main thing in my life. I want to start something, concentrate myself to express a better way through in this world.

Marie: So you want to build something?

Bai: Build... yeah

Marie: What Isha has done here, has it inspired you?

Bai: Yes, yes, of course but I don't know my future. Even a year ago I never thought I could be like this, I never expected this.

Marie: Your life has changed quite a bit?

Bai: Very much. And I'm so happy, I'm so happy with that. But...

Marie: But if you were likely to build something... do you consider doing it in China?

Bai: No, not China... I'm not going to go back there.

Marie: Mongolia?

Bai: Maybe Mongolia. I will see over this summer so I can have really conclusion about things because I'm still on the way. And it's more about my spiritual things awaken many years ago. Even I was in China or someplace I was reading a lot, studying a lot. I was in another world so. And this year... the traveling year was a time that I really connected with people all over the world. And really grounding things for me, connection for me. So everything start from here. And then it opens my mind that it's very interesting to see everyone talking about your country, your nation, about Mongolia. It was... It gave me much, much desire to go back to Mongolia. And thing.. I'm not so quite have an idea about what I'm going to do in the future but I have a feeling that I have to connect. I know how to express myself at least.

Marie: Connect your roots

Bai: yeah, and know more about healing and more about doing something to people. And I'm... I'm my life for sure is not for money

Marie: That's an understatement,

Bai: Let's see, let's see. You have been to Vipassana before?

Marie: I haven't done one, no... Are you going to do it?

Bai: I did six years ago

Marie: Where?

Bai: In China, in Fujian. That time I was assistant director and my director was doing interviews in the biggest spiritual monastery in the world. So like... interviewing Goinka, interviewing many big authors in the world. So like... doing that kind of documentary. That time... It's the first time I heard of vipassana so I have to do vipassana by myself and I have to translate everything doing the film things. I have to have the experience and my director really likes me because only me can understand her somehow. And that time I had the choice to go to Europe and she was so sad. And that time many things we can't product in China, I only can get.... I mean, our products can only get in Taiwan and Hong Kong. We had a gathering in Hong Kong.

Marie: Do you have... did you have any bad experience throughout your travels?

Bai: Yeah, yeah... of course. I learn more and more about the people, about the guys... you get hurt. It's not really hurt you know but some people's energy is really nice but their actions does not match their energies. And You found out it's fake people, it's just for... just for play... not truth. And then I feel like, you got hurt but I learn you still have to be opened your heart, open yourself because nothing hurt to close yourself up.

Marie: And in Nepal any bad experience?

Bai: No... not bad... all is good. Even if I have the ups and downs it's a really good experience. Deep experience, intense.

Marie: Well thank you very much for that, it's really interesting to listen to you

Bai: really? Thank you. It's very nice to talk to you too

Marie: I like to hear people story, that's why I love my job.

Bai: Very nice, very nice.

Bai: You know when I was a kid, I really had a hard childhood and all my... teenage years I had nine years pimples, all depressed, all my face was... you cannot see this person, you can only see pimples... Really really bad. And after I went to Japan it's started to be good because I really flower was blooming. And I had never really be myself before in the wrong environment. I never felt happy when I was back. So it's... that's why I felt like my soul was not so... so put myself in another place and have to grow up in this place.

Marie: That's exactly what happened to me in America and then in Jordan and Syria

Bai: Wow... I had so amazing Lebanese friend. We met in Delhi and we travel together in Jaipur. He was a National Geographic photographer and he also do interviews on Lebanon TV. About his traveling experience. And that time I really want to introduce you to him.

Marie: Is he here?

Bai: No he is back to Lebanon now and get more visa.

Marie: I felt like putting distance between me and my parents although I love them would help me become myself. And that's why I'm doing this PhD because I feel like I'm not one of a kind especially in Asia now, being a traveler, being a tourist... being able to move is very new

Bai: yeah, yeah,

Marie: not Japan and Korea but

Bai: China... yeah yeah yeah

Marie: And so I have discover that there is a hippie movement kind of starting in China now...

Bai: More India, no?

Marie: I guess, but India has the places where you go to be a hippie but... China has... the Chinese youth has like... the attraction for that kind of life because their parents want them to work, to have many and I have met a lot of people that graduate from university, a lot of girls actually. They have work, two three years in Shanghai, they are burn out and they are like... is that what I want for my life?

Bai: Exactly, exactly I felt same in Japan. You know I was in Tokyo and every day I slept less than five hours. And every day, you go into the train and when you are in Shibuya, you see so many people crossing... is that the life you want to have? Fuck no! It's just... I know it's an experience for me that's why, I even working in Amazon was a good company, I had the chance to go to America, Seattle but uh...

Marie: You went to Seattle?

Bai: I had a chance, I can go apply to go to America. (she didn't go in reality) My ex-boyfriend from America but I didn't have a chance to go there

Marie: Is it hard for you to get a visa to go?

Bai: Not too much, not too much it's not coming to me yet. I think one day I will have to go. And I learnt English when I was... After I really speak English, often a lot after I met my

ex-boyfriend. So the first year, we spoke Japanese to each other because my English was not good. He speaks Japanese, I also speak Japanese, we speak Japanese and later on, I think I need to study English properly so I study through South Park.

Marie: I guess this is the best way to learn English.

Bai: You know every South Park I saw, all the background culture, all the things, all the movie they mention, I learn everything. It's very cool with bad words but you learn a lot through that, the culture a lot. Yeah, I learn a lot through that.

Marie: Do you have an email address because I'm gathering emails

Bai: You know I have two passports. Now I mainly use Chinese passport but I went to India, the Ladakh, they have Pakistan, Ladakh, very sensitive area so the permit was not allowed open for Chinese people so the only possibility I go is to sneak in the night. Very crazy experience for me. Please don't tell any one

Marie: I won't, I won't.

Bai: Like... uh... I went there I didn't know that there was not... You know I met great people together and next day, they get a bike and we go to the agency to get a permit. We are so happy, we plan for seven days to get together and then the agency woman say... "It's not possible for her". And they were so upset and what happen so we try to make a fake permit but that time was very sensitive event the president was there so I have another group a friend they want to go to the Nubra valley and Pangong lake but I couldn't go. So a German girl gave me her passport and the we went to the photo shop to get the all of us, to make the copy of the passport. And then in the last moment I said. "No... I'm not going to take this risk" I ask many local people, many agencies, many people who had experience about the...

Marie: Was it in Jammu and Kashmir?

Bai: Jammu Kashmir. And then they say... not this time because this time was very sensitive even president, it's not worth to risk it like this. They are going to catch you as a spy so I didn't do it, and I say good bye to them. She Marii, Marii and her boyfriend's friend was taking something to the Pangong lake. And in the night "That's your last time to get in the Pangong lake". So that's the night, there is no check post, so we drive through there, we see the sunrise there, it was amazing, and we went back in the night as well. And I also pretend as a Ladakhi because I look like Ladakhi (laugh)

Marie: That's a chance to renew your Mongolian passport when you go there this summer. Because if you have two passeports you travel as a Chinese but for that kind of situation you just show your other passport.

Bai: But I can't get throughout from China, at first because that passport was expired.

Marie: No but you are going to go to Mongolia with your Chinese passport then make a new Mongolian passport

Bai: I think that's not going to happen. I tried last year but... didn't work that's why my dream is to get another passport in my life

Bai: I don't know, I really want to go to Canada

Marie: Canada is nice

Bai: If I root myself in this planet, I'll check Canada first I don't like cold but very cool people there, very positive vibe, very practical, very nice people

Marie: Sachira, thank you again

Marie: I don't have the number but they have like so much room, you just go, they have so much room, so much bed, there is always a place, it's always available and I met some great people there, some Chinese actually.

Bai: actually, you know, I know many Chinese spiritual world now... I know all of them; and I know very powerful awakening or arising of the conception, consciousness, very

high, very very high in China now. That kind of people, they are not traveler or hippie like this.

Marie: No, but that girl traveled for two years and a half, she said she was never going to go back.

Bai: interesting people

Marie: Yes, interesting people

LIMEI

Marie: So I'm a French PhD student and I'm doing my Phd on Asian backpacking so people from Asian country that do travel, have different lives and stuff

Limei: yeah, yeah, exactly

Marie: So I have come to know that you came here... so first, I would like to hear your story, like how does it happen to come from Shanghai and arrive in Pokhara? and open a business... because it's not usual right?

Limei: It's not usual... yes.

Marie: So when was your first time in Nepal?

Limei: That was seven years back

Marie: Was it a tourism travel?

Limei: Yes, basically, I was a backpacker

Marie: You were a backpacker?

Limei: Yeah, very grass root backpacker

Marie: What's is grass root?

Limei: Very budget traveler, very very budget uh... so...

Marie: So... how did you... how did you came into doing backpacking?

Limei: I... I... was born in China then I migrate to Australia when I was eighteen

Marie: When you were eighteen you moved to Australia?

Limei: I went to Australia, I studied there, worked there.

Marie: With your family?

Limei: Just by myself, then I actually didn't travel. I was traveling but I was a suit traveler.

Marie: You like travel with a group?

Limei: No, no, no I always travel individually but I don't like groupe

Marie: Why?

Limei: Uh... I had experience with group but I know I'm not fit because sometimes I want to go one way or stay in place for long. You know rushing everything, seeing every place of interest but for me traveling is more about local food, very important, local culture and uh... you stay with local people, really know their language, really know their culture. Like their family. I think it's very important for me so I tend to travel very slowly

Marie: Ok, so you are a slow. So group traveling is definitely not for you.

Limei: Definitely not for me and so... that's why I think I started backpacking very late. In my late twenties and the first country I actually went backpacking is India

2 - 02:53 > 04:08 [Voyages hors Nepal]

Marie: How long did you stay there?

Limei: Very long, everything the first time I went to India, I came continuously I think ten years over there, every year almost, two months, six months, three months

Marie: everywhere?

Limei: Everywhere, I know India much better than Nepal so that's how I love backpacking and after India, everywhere it became so easy. Then... I think, five years back I sort of finished my Indian story... so it's like, "ok I really know India so well" and also when you go there, you just go to see your friends.

Marie: It's to visit friends now?

Limei: Yeah and then most of my friends is actually people I have met during traveling, on the road, so we really formed

a very strong friendship then most of them are Europeans so they invited me to go to Europe, you know, stay with them
Marie: Did you go?

Limei: Yes of course (laugh) I had a great time there

Marie: How... who showed you how to be a backpacker?

Limei: Nobody, I think... more or less I think everybody has this hippie side inside themselves but some people happen to discover it and some people just not because I know my friend who is corporate girl and she started backpacking in South-east Asia and Europe. And the first email she sent to me, she said "Wow, I just discovered my hippie side".

Marie: She was from China?

Limei: No, it was my Indian girl. So it's actually I think it's in everybody, this spark, everybody wants free, everybody wants this freedom. And so...

Marie: So you associate backpacking with freedom?

Limei: Yeah... And also... there is a lot of... you feel... it's like a journey to discover yourself

Marie: Would you... would you say you needed that to discover who you are?

Limei: Yeah, and actually how strong you are because you always meet obstacles, nothing is ever certain on the road. You know, before, ok, I always buy return ticket, then after two years, three years of traveling, I said "ok, every time I just buy one-way ticket" I don't know where I'm staying or where I'm going to end up with and how long I will stay. Then time to go, time to buy a ticket back home. That's it

Marie: So you like, feel it in yourself that you need to go back?

Limei: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because I feel that... because Australia, compared to a lot of western country is still very relax. Very relax and beautiful. I also have a very strong family, like friend based in Australia for twenty years.

Marie: You lived in Australia for twenty years?

Limei: Yeah, but like on and off. When I need money, I go back to Australia to work there again on the road. But Yeah... I think... yeah this is basically the like I had for the past ten fifteen years I think.

Marie: That's interesting how did you choose to go to Australia?

Limei: Because I wanted to go to America, they didn't approved me, no university accepted my application and Australia is relatively Australia so I think "ok, I will go to Australia".

Marie: Were your parents were supportive?

Limei: That time, yes, a little bit but I think that time, China isn't that rich.

Marie: When was that?

Limei: It was eighty... ninety-two, ninety-three

Marie: Ninety three you went to Australia?

Limei: Yeah, they just opened the door of China I think and I had a very good... I didn't finish uni there actually I started working when I was seventeen then I work one year in a like a uh... how to say... uh... in a foreign company then after one year, actually I wanted to stay in China because I got very comfortable, the job is good, the pay is good and also I don't finish the degree but the company already promises me to send me to training. So I say ok, "you have work experiences, not necessarily the degree but then... so but my parents they are very traditional, they want me to get a degree in some sort so... then there is a chance came in they say "go to Australia".

Marie: So you went to college in Australia, what did you study?

Limei: I was in uh... like... uh... vacation study first, for one year and then I went to uni, that time I picked computer science but then major in artificial intelligence. Then after I finished I said "No, I'm not the material for that" because I studied really hard compare to all my colleagues but they always get higher marks than I do so I say "no, no, no I'm

not fit for that area". So I say "ok, I will try different things, different kind of subject". Eventually, I studied Sanskrit.

Marie: Ok, wow... is that why you went to India?

Limei: That was after India, because I was practicing yoga I was very interesting with the studies then, because Indian study is so vast, my supervisor ask me "What do you really want to do with this study?" I really wanted to go into research. Then is said: "This is so vast, which area?". And I said: "ok, I'm always interested in language". Even when I choose artificial intelligence, this is like a speech, it's a language and also lot of grammar we have to study like tagging and everything so I have a very solid base so I said ok, I choose Sanskrit. And It came so easily and everyone was struggling but for me so easy.

Marie: So you speak Sanskrit?

Limei: I do not speak, I can read and translate, that's all.

Marie: Wow... So was Australia, was the first country you went outside of China?

Limei: Outside of China, yes... Not really because I was sent to training in Singapore, like South-east Asia, like Thailand but it was mainly for work purpose that time then Australia is the first country I went by myself

Marie: For like freedom

Limei: Yeah, yeah...

Marie: I'm wondering... How was it for you when you went abroad for the first time, can you remember that?

Limei: Excitement I think because when I'm still young so you this uhhhhh, so I want to do everything, I can do everything, I want to chill so much. You have this passion in you. I remember. So I said ok, this is difficult because the language also...

Marie: Did you know English at the time?

Limei: I know English because Australia English is so hard to understand

Marie: I agree (laugh)

Limei: And that time I think it was... you know this... Again, it all these Asian immigrants and the White Australia. It was that time when I went so the whole nation was really against all the immigrants especially Asian faces and it's really difficult sometimes.

Marie: To have like a Chinese face...

Limei: Yeah, and some people, really literally... some people come to you in the street, out the blue to say "Go back to your country". Just like that...

Marie: Did you.... so sometimes you want to go back to China?

Limei: Yeah, the first year, I think I went back and I really want to stay back... but my parents say ok... already studied your studies so finished it. Then my plane is I just want to finish my studies and go back. I don't want to stay in Australia, we were always secondary... (citizens)

Marie: Where did you stay in Australia?

Limei: Sidney.

Marie: And then when you started traveling like in India, did you have the same experience?

Limei: No, I think, nowadays because there is so many Asian immigrants come to Australia so you actually in Sidney suburbia with Korean suburbs, Japanese suburbs so there is more Asian faces you see.

Marie: It's more mixed?

Limei: More like a melting pot so I don't have this kind of hostile feelings like twenty-years back. Now it's more comfortable but all I see is that racism can come in different forms. No necessarily verbally. Because I work in a corporate there also which is purely like a regional banking which is very.... it's not a very big banks where they have a lot of migrants and stuff but the regional bank only... so I have a bit of difficulties how to stood on my ground, very

diplomatically. It's very hard you know, that time I was very depressed. Very, very depressed.

Limei: So it was in your twenties.

Limei: No, it was in my late twenties when I finished my computer science degree. Then I was like afraid of not knowing what to do because I don't want to do programming and coding which I know I'm not good at. And neither I... That's why my friend said I should apply to this bank, there is an opening like... you know... and that time I was very low on my financial situation so I only had five hundred dollars in my bank account. So I said ok, ok. I applied to the job, then accepted it. And uh... I work with them for two years but actually I was very depressed; After the second year I said no, I couldn't do it anymore. And all my Chinese friends and Asian friends said... oh... it's a very stable job and my western friends say, why are you staying there. You are not happy, you are so depressed, just resign, just quit. Whatever. So it's so different in the Western view and the Chinese and Asian people's view

Marie: How so?

Limei: With the stability. I think. But I think, once I resign, and uh... and I just saved a little bit of money, so I said ok... I just go for traveling to figure out what to do in my life. Because I was so depressed also I just don't have any motivations to do anything also. That's why I went to India, you know... it has opened a new world for me. You know how actually flexible and strong you are and how life can be so different and you can be so happy without a stable job because you meet so many people that don't have a stable job and they are still happy and they are getting by. And uh... That's how I find... So I went back to Australia and find a coffee job... I think then I find I really like this industry, it's fast, it's fun, it's a lot of communicating with people

Marie: The coffee job?

Limei: And you are selling the product you believe in and you like. That I like. Although it's physically demanding, you don't feel it because every day is passing so fast and you meet different faces and your colleagues not so much diplomatic things going between your colleague, it's very straight forward people in this industry. Most the people are students, they are working, they go to school. So yeah...

Marie: So after your first trip in India, you came back and got involved in the coffee, restaurant industry?

Limei: Yeah, yeah.

Marie: how... how did you come to Nepal?

Limei: I was traveling again, since uh... six years back.

Marie: So you would... you would like make some money at the coffee in Australia and then save money and then go travel...

Limei: Normally my life is in Australia I study Sanskrit and somehow, I work out a plan was like... I study for half a semester and half semester I will be in India but continuously my sanskrit with different institutes or I would do yoga retreat or the things I really like to do in my life and in Australia I study also when I was doing full time job with part-time study so it's work really really well because you are financially stable also with income and part time you are intellectually challenge, you are not feeling bored because you are only this job. And when I had a little bit of money actually, I earn quite well in Australia so you have actually money to support you to travel and study full time when you are overseas with proper teachers and stuff. Then you come back again.

Marie: During that part of life, did you go back to China at all?

Limei: Not really, because no... I was...

Marie: Why?

Limei: Because my parents wouldn't approved my life style at the time

Marie: They didn't?

Limei: No they didn't. Even now they say... Oh... you wasted so much time with traveling

Marie: They don't understand your choice?

Limei: They don't understand. But now... I keep on telling them that without my traveling I wouldn't have a shop like this. I wouldn't have an idea like this, I wouldn't know what travelers really like because I have been one.

Marie: Yeah, So you created your shop out of the learning of what travelers expect?

Limei: Yeah. What they expect and what I actually expect when I am travelling. How the travelers like things.

Marie: Well, this is a pretty successful business, it's always full so good job.

Marie: So what was great about India, what was your first? Where did you go first in India?

Limei: I went to the first trip was in Rajasthan.

Marie: How did you choose to go to Rajasthan?

Limei: Why... because I had a yoga retreat in Rishikesh so it was sort of on the way so everybody was like oh... you should go to Rajasthan it's like... so colorful lalala... I said I would go to Rajasthan. But it's really I think picture this is so different but somehow... you... when you travel... I don't know, you have this familiar feeling about India, it's like, my childhood in China, sort of. But it's more like... it's a very strange feeling when in India. It's almost very romantic in a way, very sentimental in a way, very nostalgic in a way.

Marie: Really, does it remind you of China?

Limei: In a way because it's very... you know I have been outside of China for very long, I do not have a family in Australia also so many my social life with my friends. So when I went to India, there is... I see... oh, everybody has such a strong connection family-based. It's always a big family invite you for dinner. I think wow, it reminded me my childhood, every neighbor living in a compound and you see your neighbor eating, like this kind of feeling. It's very touchy in a way. And also Indian people are very warn, very warm.

Marie: I have never been to India, I don't know

Limei: Nowadays it has changed a bit, now it's nicer now but for me it's has lost is charm in a way, that's why nowadays I go to India... ok... I just go to Ayurvedic retreat, I go do yoga, or I go to my guru but outside, I don't do backpacking anymore.

Marie: Do you do backpack in other countries?

Limei: Thailand I did, South-east Asia mainly. But after India, every country came so easy, no surprises... everything is predicted not like India something always go wrong.

Marie: What does it mean for you to be a backpacker? How would you put a definition on that?

Limei: Wow... for me think it's the freedom to wander. and to... there is one sentence I read the other day it says like... "Not all the wanderers are lost" which I lived... It's through the wandering you find yourself

Marie: So like taking the time to loose time?

Limei: Yes.

Marie: Would you say... And I mean you have been away from China... One the question of my research is... are the Asian or the Chinese backpackers different than the Westerners?

Limei: Yes, very much...

Marie: How?

Limei: I think they slowly, slowly mingle with Western travelers... First time I met Chinese backpackers is after, it's India after I have been here for six years. So I met like a single traveler traveling and in Europe there is a lot of single backpackers there. And uh... but when I see them, they are just photographing, photographing, photographing. Even if I backpack in China, sometimes I just drive me crazy, because they have very nice equiped cameras and they are shooting

everything. One morning, I remember one morning I was in Shangri La

Marie: I have been to Shangri La

Limei: Ok, so you know Lugu Lake?

Marie: Yes

Limei: Then I was catching a bus to Lugu lake to somewhere... I can't remember, it was a very nice morning. I woke up very early and I was waiting at the bus stop, and it was so beautiful and I see the Lugu lake from down and very peaceful time, and... there was two jeeps coming, so then they pulled over, I think five or six Chinese jumped out of the jeep and they started to take thousands of pictures and I was like... oh my god!!! Please, just chill, take a moment to see with you eyes.

Marie: Were they backpackers?

Limei: Yeah... They have backpack. You know, everybody in China have a backpack with a camera. I called them "Pushpacker"

Marie: "pushpacker" that's funny I have never heard of that. And so... you have been doing backpacking in China as well? 7 - 26:39 > 29:59 [Backpacking in China]

Limei: In China as well, it was so different experiences

Marie: how?

Limei: Because I travel before going to China, I travel six months in India so I was very in an Indian mood, very Indian mood, very Indian mood and then I go to China and everything was so neat, you know buses always on time and (laugh). For me it's like, no challenging. You know it's like, metro from A to B. But from A to B... What is in-between? So I was like... after like two or three weeks I was like... ok, I can't do it. It's just for me...

Marie: You didn't like it?

Limei: Not really it's just from A to B. And then... I met a lot of people just clicking the cameras and it's just really too much... too much.

Marie: So you went to Yunnan?

Limei: To Yunnan, yeah, from Kolkata I took a plane to Yunnan, Kunming and from Kunming, Dali, Lijiang

Marie: Shangri-La?

Limei: Yeah, Shangri La.

Marie: Did you go to Chengdu?

Limei: Yes, I went to Chengdu

Marie: Don't you think Dali has the same vibe as Pokhara?

Limei: a little bit.

Marie: They have told me that, I didn't see. But they told me there is a big hippie vibe in Dali now.

Limei: uh... I don't know. Because I only stay there for three days then I moved on so I was basically trying to know my country better because I haven't been to that part of China. Because I only have one-month visa.

Marie: You had a one-month Chinese visa?

Limei: So I have to do everything quickly.

Marie: How do you have a Chinese visa?

Limei: Because I have an Australian passport.

Marie: So you... don't you have your Chinese passport?

Limei: No, you can't have double. With Chinese you can't, Australian you can have dual citizenship but China no, so I have to choose. But that time I thought, Australia passport can give me more freedom to travel because many countries we just get the visa when landing so I say, for the traveling, I'll just take the Australian visa.

Marie: Was it a hard choice to give up your Chinese citizenship?

Limei: Yeah a little bit because my parents are still in China and it's a hassle for me to apply Chinese visa to go back.

Marie: Do they ease things up because you were born in China?

Limei: It's just a matter of formality but it still, because sometimes I was in Thailand I have to go find the Chinese

embassy, go. But I'm always in the mountain and I have to take a day trip. In Chiang Mai, wait in line, in a place I don't like and...

Marie: So when you back pack you are mostly outside of the city?

Limei: Yeah, mostly outside of the city, mountains and stuff.

Limei: Even in Europe, I always... even in Europe I was in the mountain and people just laughing "Why don't you go to Rome", I said "I went to Rome, three days and then come back to the mountain"

Marie: Where did you go to Europe?

Limei: France I did like a very short trip and I stay in Italy for three and a half months

Marie: Did you like the food there?

Limei: Oh god... yeah, yeah, so nice, it was just because I stayed. I did Airbnb first I stayed with my friends and she said "There is a yoga actually guru there". So I went there, I stayed in his ashram for like three weeks because the guru they grow their own veggies, drinking their own wine. So it's a very nice lifestyle, very nice ashram then I did Airbnb in a farm house. So I stayed in the farm house for the rest of the trip, because they have a lot of festivals going on there, it's in Umbria, so they have Jazz festival, so I was ok, let's go to Perugia sometimes, sometimes Todi. So I stayed mostly in Umbria, it's a region I know a lot and they took me out also because I became one of their family so. They are very heart-warming people, Italians

Marie: And they know how to cook. There is a lot of common interest between Italy and China

Limei: Yeah! and they love their food and they like to talk about it. So if you like to cook a little bit they will get so excited.

Marie: Did you cook Chinese for them?

Limei: I cooked Italian (laugh) That's so funny. I cooked pasta and salad also. I got more ingredients there so I did more interesting salads and yeah, they grow their... because they have their land also so they grow their veggies, it's very nice.

Marie: When was your trip in Europe?

Limei: I went to Germany visiting my friend, I think each year I did something different.

Marie: So you did go to Europe more than one time?

Limei: And Scandinavia also a little bit, but I don't like there. It's expensive... yeah... I think that time, because that time Sweden is not that expensive, Australia is expensive... Sweden is cheaper than Australia so for me it's ok, it's sort of affordable and I have friends there but it's just for me it's a little bit too cold, even the summer is a little but too cold.

Marie: And so Nepal... how... how did you end up opening a restaurant here?

Limei: It's a very coincidence I think. Six years back when I first came to Nepal my ex-boyfriend was French. He knew Nepal very well because he was... because my heart is always with India and he said "you should go to Nepal with me and travel". I said ok then. I actually came to Nepal, we bought a bike so we cross Nepal several time from East to West and then... also from the border to India for the Himalayas. So I say. "Ok, let's follow the Himalayas". That's a long trip, three months by bike but... I know Nepal ok, not that well. But that time Pokhara, that time, I stayed one month, I really liked it, it's really chilled.

Marie: Did you stay here?

Limei: No I stay actually the other side because that time, they haven't got anything, there is no hotel, nothing, just small little guest house and freedom bar but it's small, much more smaller, lot of hippies, sometimes I would grab a drink

Marie: Six or seven years ago

Limei: Yeah. And I with a friend... Capre, you know Capre?

Marie: Who?

Limei: Karma flights

Marie: Ok

Limei: Yes, we were friends six years back. He had a small little coffee shop and I always go there to have breakfast and meet people there, talk about their lives. And yes... that's how... I was... that time I was thinking about opening a café, like a small café.

Marie: Did you think about opening it in Pokhara or anywhere in India...

Limei: India... I was thinking about Pokhara because it's more laid back in a way, it's very laid back and also it's very cheap there. And a couple years back I was actually interested in Thailand in a specific area where I want to open and I have a Thai friend also. We were actually discussing about opening there but well... it didn't happen eventually, it was that close but it didn't happen. So... then this time I come to Pokhara and I was struggling because it changed a lot, it really changed a lot and I was confused if I wanted to do it or not. Because before I came to Pokhara, I stayed in a farm for six months there, I would do farming in a village in India so when I came to Pokhara I thought, "wow, this is a city" (laugh). Then I was also ok... that's the time to do something with your life or to keep your lifestyle like this which is also ok. I'm also fine with that but I have this urge to open something of myself to apply something all my learning all these years, to do something I really like.

Marie: To materialize...

Limei: Yeah you know. I wanted something of myself to see it grow. So because I have so many ideas, and I also wanted materialize something. So I say "Just pick a spot and make it happen"

Marie: So when did you open it?

Limei: One year and a half back.

Marie: It took you a long time, between the first trip to Nepal to the opening..

Limei: Yes, because these five past years, I haven't been in Nepal. I was in Europe, I was in... I was in Thailand. I liked these two places so.

Marie: So during those five years, you just traveled?

Limei: Traveled, study, learning things I guess.

Marie: So you open this (The Juicery cafe) a year and a half ago?

Limei: Yeah

Marie: Why did you choose this place specifically?

Limei: You mean location wise?

Marie: Yeah

Limei: Well, it's coincidence, I think. When I first came a year and a half back, that's not have many shutter and for some reason I always knew I was going to open on this side of the road, not the other side

Marie: Open on the lake?

Limei: Yeah. Not specifically by the lake because in the lake sometime it's so hot that nobody is walking on the lake side. Morning, little bit people in the morning on the lake side but I just want to be on this side of the road rather than this side because it's very hot in the summer. So I say, ok, this side of the road. And this happen that this shop opened for rent and another one but somehow, when I see this place... uh... I visualize everything.

Marie: You knew

Limei: I just knew, I think, this can be done, this way, this way, this way. It is all making out. And the other place that I saw, I just can't my picture together so here I choose. So there is water, ok, not much renovation cost also so that's when I first started, it's only this (the shop and the front patio on the road). It was only six months after I got the back side.

Marie: Six months ok

Limei: This is also very nice when it first open. It took me six months to build the business and uh... after one season,

everybody knew. Just, I just have to people come and there is no seats and they come again and there is no seats. That's why I open a sitting area, so I open the right side and only two months back I open the floor sitting area. It's always step by step.

Marie: It's nice, it's always full

Limei: Yeah.

Marie: Your mostly come mostly in the morning or...

Limei: No... all the time. All the time.

Marie: How is... your customer they are mostly from Europe, America, China?

Limei: Europe, China a little bit not too much because the food is not for them I think, they like noodles, they like the rice so I don't have much to offer to them and uh... My main strength is café because I know what to sell, how to sell, and what people like. and so yeah, so my focus is just on this market and I'm doing vegetarian/vegan it is because my kitchen is too small. So I don't want to cross that kind food. That's it. I keep it simple but nice food but it is lots of... it's a huge running course for me because it's the first time I'm doing vegetarian and vegan food.

Marie: are you, yourself vegetarian?

Limei: I was vegetarian for five years but then when I was traveling. Sometimes I was traveling to very remoted area in India and there was no choice, no choice at all, I can tell you. So I eat what they gave to me. So that's ok.

Marie: And so all you menu, you have learn through.

Limei: Uh... some is the food I cook at my home. Like what I eat really in winter. This is how I cook in winter in my retreat when I was doing yoga. Five o'clock, I would cook then after I don't eat anything; So this is what I eat at home and there is like all the salads, some salads I was... it's all like from what I have learnt from other I put things on myself. Dressing is different, sometimes I have to think about dressing like what goes well. It's very fun because writing a menu is actually is more exhausting than building the place because you have to think... if I cook one batch of vegetables and not use for on dishes, I have to cook for five dishes. Especially since the kitchen is so small then you have to think so smartly. And then... not over stocking stuff or too complicated.

Marie: are you thinking about making a bigger kitchen?

Limei: Yes, yes, yes. This one and on the back side.

Marie: So you are planning on expanding?

Limei: Yeah, then I have more vegan dessert. Already I know how to make cake but I just don't have space. I just don't have space. If I have more space I can more focus on the baking area which is a lot of nice stuff we can bake.

Marie: But I have to say, your tofu salad is delicious

Limei: It's all about the dressing

Marie: Yeah, yeah

Marie: How... do you often now go back to China?

Limei: For the past two years yes. I think my parents are getting older so we were used on not being on very good terms but now both side mellow down and we sort of compromise each other.

Marie: Do you have siblings?

Limei: No, I'm the only one

Marie: Were you born in the eighties?

Limei: Yeah... on plan... one child policy. Not eighties, seventies. I think it was... 1973, I was born in 1973. So... that time they could have two kids but my parents choose to only have one. But then after that, when they really wanted to have a second one, they could have it. I think it was 78 or 79

Marie: Yes, 79. The one child policy. And do they come to visit you?

Limei: Yes, my mom is here

Marie: Is she the lady that picks up the pomegranate seeds every morning?

Limei: Yeah, yeah
 Marie: So she likes...
 Limei: She likes here, every, because now in China all the veggies and fruit are of mass production and they have absolutely not taste so when she comes here, she tastes the things... vegetables taste like vegetables and fruits taste like fruit. So she like coming here.
 Marie: What about you dad?
 Limei: My daddy likes it here also but his health is not allowed him to travel that frequently
 Marie: So you travel back and forth?
 Limei: Yeah. Off season I will go to
 Marie: Like summer?
 Limei: Yeah summer. It's all the dilemma, there is so many places I want to go when off season but it's just only have two or three months max so you have to plan very carefully.
 Marie: do you close your shop when you are not here?
 Limei: Probably not. That's why I will ask Sandip to step in in my role and be my manager. I got a very good staff. Two of them are with me ever since it's open, so it's really long for Nepali to stay in one job. Most of the staff goes.
 Marie: Why do you think they stay?
 Limei: It's a very different system as you can see, compare to other café. and I always tell them, we always know our customer by name, so if our customer comes three times, we should know their name and what kind of things they like. So... most of the staff knows our regular. So for the customer they want to associate, especially when they are traveling it's like a family, a community for them. They come and we already know what coffee they like or what food they like, dressing or no dressing... it's those small little touches that make a difference.
 Marie: Well you have, you life is really interesting. It's not that often that you see people completely drifting from a life they are supposed to live
 Limei: Yeah, yeah, because I met a lot of hippies on the road so then I was... I admire their courage to take the hippie road, it's not an easy road; But then I looked at myself, I'm not a hippie, I have a hippie spirit but I need some solid things to grow on me because especially when I'm lone road, I'm sort uneasy, always six months is the max time I can travel. After six months I always wonder, why am I traveling. So I want a stable kind of routine to settle me down
 Marie: Like a home?
 Limei: Like a home, yes, like a solid ground base. On Friday go with friends on specific cafes and have a cafe. You know it's the kind of routine that I like. So in the traveling, that's the kind of routine you don't have so that's why I tend to if I see my travel pattern when I grow older, I tend to travel really really slow. Now I travel just to meet friends (laugh)
 Marie: Are you going to new countries at all?
 Limei: Yes, I go to new countries. But I always tend to travel very slow, if I like the place, I stay. I stay, it's ok... I don't feel it's necessary to go every places in this country but if I went to places it's really click my heart then I had a group of friends or I have locals that I can connect with then I stay for a long time. Or sometimes I wait for my visa to finish and I say ok, this time next year I come back again but probably not. So it's very... sometimes it always I come back to another country but maybe after ten years, you still not able to set a foot back again. So I think every moment, you live every moment when you are traveling. That's what I came to realize.
 Marie: What's the next country on your list?
 Limei: I think Vietnam, I haven't been.
 Marie: This summer?
 Limei: Let's see, because it's monsoon also. But in a way it's good it's ok, it will be very easy, I just travel for food actually.

Limei: especially I think, if you stay long time in one place, you know people, you know everything because for me traveling is all about food cultures. Because I went to Italy and my friend said: "Have you been to this museum that museum". I have only been to... because Vatican museum, everybody wanted me to go to Vatican museum. I say "ok, I go to Vatican" and I so regret it. Because there is so many people I can't see anything properly. Everywhere, I was so exhausted at the end of the day, and I was like. After the Vatican I was like: "No more museum" And I went to Perrugia. And in Perrugia I enjoy there because I bought a ticket for a museum, but it's like three days you can go. Take three days (dogs are barking). So and then this museum there was nobody there, so Rome I didn't go to any museum, I went to the restaurants but no museum. That's it.
 Marie: This summer I was in Napoli... there was a pizza festival and it was mind blowing.
 14 - 52:58 > 54:08 [Pas de thématique]
 Marie: How do you think travel change you?
 Limei: You are more open I think, more open to I think more acceptable also to other cultures, and more open to other cultures. And also I think... although you have some difficulties when traveling and you meet some no nice people but I truly believe that the majority of people are good. The roots are good. You know but... I really believe in humanity in a way.
 Marie: Thank you so much for answering all of my questions. I'll be back tomorrow for breakfast for sure.

XIANG

Marie: How did you heard about this place? Is it your first Vipassana?
 Xiang: Yeah, my first
 Marie: How did you heard about it?
 Xiang: I can't remember actually. I know several years before, like two years before and at that time I was in a quite a struggle state. So I think I should try something to calm down myself and uh... but at that time I have some other things and I can come back to attend. So finally, I have time now so... I think, maybe it's the time.
 Marie: Were you on your own? Did you have friends with you?
 Xiang: No, No, I just came by myself. Yes, I stayed outside for three months by myself, of course a lot of people I have met on the way.
 Marie: of course. So. By outside, you mean outside of China?
 Xiang: No like I travel to Xinjiang, first for a month. (inaudible)
 Marie: What did you do in Xinjiang?
 Xiang: Just visiting, because I'm really curious. Because you know how Xinjiang... how to say that... you know there is some special political issues in Xinjiang.
 Marie: a little bit, is this about the Muslim population?
 Xiang: So I'm curious how real... What's the reality there. Because we hear a lot in Beijing about other places except Xinjiang. Like the people there "blablabla, don't go there they are dangerous"
 Marie: So they tell you not to go?
 Xiang: Everyone say "Don't go to Xinjiang, it's dangerous"
 Marie: So you go, you say "no, I'm going"?
 Xiang: Yeah, I just want to check, you won't know what's the reality unless you go there.
 Marie: So how was the reality compared to what you have heard?
 Xiang: Actually, like, every, when you go to enough places you found out that everywhere is the same. There is danger

and peace. But still, because I hear a lot of this kind of things and they are very strict censorship and like policy there

Marie: In Xinjiang

Xiang: Yeah, and like you don't 4G

Marie: You don't have 4G?

Xiang: Because we have 4G everywhere in China except Xinjiang and Tibet. uh... Tibet we have now.

Marie: Tibet you have 4G?

Xiang: Yeah.

Marie: Do you think 4G cuts is for censorship?

Xiang: uh... it's a part of and you have to take your ID card with you anytime, because you will be check with it

Marie: Like check-post.

Xiang: again and again and again

Marie: Really?

Xiang: Yeah and every time when you go out of the city you are going to be checked for one time and I even was checked eight times one day. It's almost on the border so... It's a very interesting experience.

Marie: Yeah? Did you like Xinjiang?

Xiang: Yeah, the view there is really really good.

Marie: And the people, the interaction with the Muslims... was it alright?

Xiang: Actually we don't interact a lot because they have their own community and you can't speak their language. The only people you can meet is most time some of the travel agents

Marie: So tour-guides and stuff. Are they nice?

Xiang: Yes, of course they are nice. I said people are always the same but I can't go deeper until at least now.

Marie: And what about Tibet?

Xiang: Tibet was really nice, really really nice. You know Tibetans can't go abroad.

Marie: really?

Xiang: Yeah, they can't, they don't have passport most of them. If they want to go abroad, you have to pass a lot of permission to ask for this, this, this, this.

Marie: I actually met a Tibetan guy he... he was living in Dharamshala

Xiang: Oh... where is that?

Marie: In India. It's where the Dalai Lama lives.

Xiang: But I think he can't go back

Marie: He can't.

Xiang: When you go to India it's really hard to go back.

Marie: He was born in Tibet and for some reason they let him go with his mother so they went to Dharamshala which is where the Tibetan community lives in India and the Dalai-Lama with the priests and monks. He lived there since but I don't think he can go back.

Xiang: That's really cool, I want to meet him

Marie: I think he left but I have his wechat. if you want.

Xiang: I live in a place where Korean gathering at Beijing

Marie: Cool, you live in the Korean area

Xiang: Yeah, a lot of Korean live there. A lot of them looks nice.

Marie: I took some anthropology course when I studied in America.

Marie: You studied in America?

Xiang: Just for a semester, exchange semester.

Marie: Cool, where?

Xiang: Berkeley

Marie: That's a really good university.

Xiang: I really like the place and the learning experience there. They have an anthropology library, really good.

Marie: They have really good... geographers there, the geography department is...

Xiang: I take the online geography course. It seems it's from university of California. Like on the... I can't remember exactly which university it is, but it's about something... like more cultural geography

Marie: Yes, I'm human geography because I work on... my PhD is on mobility, so movement of people and how you learn how to move and how you change when you move, what do you learn about yourself when you move about yourself, about your culture, about your country, about the world, the social interactions with people, where do you go, where do you sleep.

Xiang: this is very interesting

Marie: Thank you, now I'm focusing now on Chinese young backpackers because

Xiang: It's me !

Marie: It's you and that's one of the reasons we are having lunch today. But yeah, I think it's very interesting because you didn't not really travel with your parents I guess.

Xiang: I don't do that after my nineteen and twenty.

Marie: Because I grew up traveling with my parents so I have always known how to travel but I think that's interesting that in China, the young generation is just going wild for traveling, they love that, but they have never learn that, their parents have never shown then how to travel, and I think it's very interesting the processes that go from never traveling to going crazy in the world, never stop exploring. everything.. so I want to learn all of your stories of course.

Xiang: I can say a lot about that

Xiang: Actually what you said is a problem, I think, in my point of view because we have this kind of gap between the experience in school and the experience in real society. And in America or in foreign cities, the education system you have a lot of opportunity to try your learning. You have different camps, you have different...uh... maybe some like just this kind of opportunity where you can find different jobs to learn different things in different industries and of course like travel with parents. But in China, we have to pass the exam, the Gaokao. So all we do before that is stay in the school and learn and everything except this is not right and it's not proper, even when parents want to take their children to travel, it's just for relax and they won't teach them like how to do all the things... what you said about how to learn how to travel. But it's the same in other experience. They don't really learn how to get along with people in working or something like that and...

Marie: And, so they don't teach you to talk to other people that are not from China, like interact with local people, is that what you mean?

Xiang: Not exactly, what I mean is, we focus only on study and all the other skills...

Marie: Life skills?

Xiang: exactly, life skills and work skills... like some special skills... we don't work on that until we really intend the reality so this is a problem. But you know the children, we don't want to listen to parents. So what parents want us to do is not really what we want but we are really curious about the world outside, outside of China and also curious... we can read, we can watch documentaries, we can learn this kind of knowledge from different ways now. It's better than before. So that's why a lot of young people they begin to step out and learn from the real society. Like, When I first get out, like, begin to travel, I did a lot of stupid things. I would always lose something, I lost my identity card, my round trip ticket, because I don't really know what will happen but when you have experience, you can foresee, there might be some risk and they might be some situation so you maybe and you may know what to do, like what kind of time. But you have to learn it from failure.

Marie: Failure is ok, you always learn something... so... yeah... how old are you now?

Xiang: 24

Marie: You never traveled with your parents?

Xiang: Not never, because I traveled with my parents before eighteen, it was a kind of family travel.

Marie: Where did you go?

Xiang: We went to some tourist attraction in China. And live in hotels and we like, and even sometimes follow the tourist groups

Marie: Like group travel?

Xiang: Yeah, sometimes with group travel, sometimes with family only by ourselves and like... to... but most time it's in China because for them, they can't speak English well.

Marie: Your parents, what do they do?

Xiang: My mom is... I forgot the word... something about economy

Marie: Like a financial analysis? Banking?

Xiang: No, uh... in the... there is a word but I forgot... I can search it. Most of my family work in economic system; Like my father work in school but for their financial issues in an art school and... uh...

Marie: Like an accountant?

Xiang: My mom is an accountant

Marie: In Beijing?

Xiang: In Wuhan (Hubei) .

Marie: In Wuhan

Xiang: It's... nobody knows Wuhan when I go abroad

Marie: So did you go to university in Beijing?

Xiang: No, I went to Wuhan university

Marie: And how did you end up in Beijing?

Xiang: Well, this is a long life story. I... because I lived in Wuhan and I went to high school in Wuhan and I get a quite great score. Maybe higher than the average and I attend university, Wuhan university which is actually one of the top five in China. It's the greatest in the central part of China. And I learn mathematics. And but, when I attend school it's like... what I told you before like... uh... experience turn like the change because I only focus on study before but now, like I have the opportunity to experience different kind of things

Marie: In university?

Xiang: Yes, because I do something about... in... uh... like something like an NGO. To help left behind children in China's countryside

Marie: So like volunteer work.

Xiang: And we organize summer camp for them. A lot of student do it in China now because I focus on this kind of social problem. Even before I graduate from high school but I have no opportunity to do that.

Marie: How did you learn about this kind of problem?

Xiang: I... I read a lot of books and I watch movies and also, I don't know, maybe it's just my personal, my personality. Like I care about this kind of things because I feel responsible for the social, for the society. And uh... Also, maybe I can't because actually I will, like reflect about myself a lot. So, I will try to find some tracks for how I become that kind of person from my family. But I guess most influence come from the outside world for this part like... why I care about these social problems and why I want to do something, what kind of these desire come out; But actually, it came out very earlier in my heart. Even when I was young my first dream is to be a doctor because I think I can save a lot of people. So, it's hard to figure out where exactly it come from. Maybe because I read some stories for great people and I think they are good and I should follow. Like at least my family taught me to be a good person. So, I began to do a lot of this kind of things. And uh... actually why I selected mathematics is because my parents they learnt economy because I don't have a lot of knowledge about other fields before. Like I don't have opportunities to know. Like I only know the people around me, what they do is what I know, this kind of industry and how they work, so I really wanted

to learn... or actually attend the financial industry like before I attend university so that's why I choose mathematics. And also, I like it too. Because my high school teacher, math teacher was a really good guy, a really good guy. And uh... so... but... after I began to learn it. I found out that I don't really like finance. Because I study the models and they are really complex, and I don't understand the meaning. So, I began to think what I really want.

Marie: And what do you really want?

Xiang: It took me a long time to answer this question.

Marie: It's tough question

Xiang: It's a life question. And so I just focused on what I want to do at that time. So most of the time I focus on this issues, to do things to help the children. And it's easier to pass exams in China, in university

Marie: really?

Xiang: Yeah, because it's not like in America. In America, it's easy to attend a university but it's hard to pass the exam and graduate. It's totally different in China. It's really hard to get in, but once you get in it's whatever. That's what teacher told us in high school. "You will be free when you reach university". But that's not true, you difficulties just begin (Laugh). So it's the wrong way. So I pass exams only learn for one month to pass exam. And uh... also I ...I... I like art, even I never learn a little painting before and something about art but not much and after that, you know Chinese education system we have two part like in high school, one is science, and when you take science you don't learn history, geography and politics. Actually, especially in my high school, because it's a school really focused on science. And the other part is really weak. Except my own reading I have no systematic... I can't learn systematically, because I don't have time, I have to focus a lot of my energy on this part. So... then I have time in university so... maybe I think something about advertising and designing things. I'm interested in things with great creation. It made me feel, "Wow, it's really cool". And not something I followed. Like, in financial system, most of the time, you follow the rule, the game rule to make as much profit as you can... like it's a game. But I think something about art or design this kind of things, it's more like, what you want is something not that real... not that... I mean uh... like for real purpose, what you want is more spiritual. That can make you feel elevated. That kind of feeling so I like this kind of things so I began to learn a second major of advertising in my university and I also, I'm lucky I met a really good advertising teacher who did not follow the normal Chinese teaching style. He just gives cases and every class tell a small experience, a knowledge... we didn't have text books and also, he taught a lot about films because she liked it. And also, her own experience so... it's very interesting so I began to learn something about this field. Also, I attend some advertising camps in Taiwan.

Marie: You went to Taiwan?

Xiang: You know, we can apply to... it's twelve or eleven like province it's easy for us to apply to go to Taiwan. Like when you are Tibetan, Xinjiang or Inner Mongolia or some places, it's hard to go to Taiwan. But for us, it's ok, we can stay there for half a month.

Marie: Did you like Taiwan?

Xiang: I really like Taiwan, the people there is really nice.

Marie: The food...

Xiang: Yeah (laugh)

Marie: Where did you stay in Taiwan? Taipei?

Xiang: Yeah, I stay in Taiwan one week for that camp is something that you do some learning from companies there and they give us solutions and after that I just went around for another week to Kaohsiung, Ding and Balian. And uh... I really like that. And in that... uh... traveling and learning experience... like a new world open to me.

Marie: Really? Was it your first time abroad, outside of China?
Xiang: Yeah, this was my first time. I travel a lot before actually
Marie: In China?
Xiang: In China because it's a lot more easier to get. My first experience to travel by myself is my first year university, the winter vacation so I just attend university for half a year and I learn some like group traveling but only for young people, it's a startup company in North east China in Harbin, you know that? Very North part, very near to Russia
Marie: What the name of that company?
Xiang: uh... you want to know the English name? ok... I need wifi
Marie: So, you travel with this company?
Xiang: Yeah, I go there by myself and they organize this kind of...
Marie: what's the Chinese name? you can write it in here
Xiang: Like they have the WeChat platform
Xiang: So, this is their name now (she wrote me the name of the company that she traveled with for the first time). I traveled with them in 2012 by myself. I go to Harbin by myself. I took a train, twenty-seven hours train.
Marie: How was that?
Xiang: Well I'm young so I'm more stronger than, I won't try now. It's really... It's a challenge for my body. And in a seat!
Marie: You didn't have a bunk?
[2137,9]Xiang: Yes
Marie: So, what... so that was a company that would organize group travel but for young people?
Xiang: Only for people maybe between eighteen and twenty-eight (a little like what Contiki is doing in Europe).
Marie: Cool, did you meet a lot of people?
Xiang: Yes, of course and they are all different compared with my formal experience because, actually I was born in a family which is ok. Like in the middle
Marie: How long did you stay in Harbin for?
Xiang: uh... I was born in Harbin, in country.
Marie: This first trip that you take. You went back to Harbin. Where did you travel?
Xiang: Harbin...
Marie: Harbin, oh... sorry.
[R4]: It's hard to remember cities I know. Like uh... It's a trip actually in the mountain in the North-West part, North-east part, they have province there you know. And uh... so we go to different places, we rent a car and carry all of us in different places to the countryside even and to the Changbai mountain, you know that? No? It's a quiet famous mountain with very beautiful snow, snow view in the winter and also to the countryside it's was really deep snow, because in my hometown, it only snows very slightly. And plus, the weather is wet and so humid with higher humidity. So, the snow is not dry. You will melt at once. I really enjoy that trip and I tried to ski. Because they are all young people and we were really crazy so we take off their clothes in the snow and...
Marie: Was it your first time skiing?
Xiang: Yes, it was my first time, I actually skied twice. Because I became friends with the leader, the owner who started this company and because I'm quite good at talking and communicating with people so we became very good friends then. And he... you know I like thinking and... like... thinking about things so sometimes I can give some ideas so they really get some ideas from me and he ask me to be a tour-guide, one of the tour guide of them. So I... after that and the next summer vacation, I went to Harbin again to guide a group.
Marie: So you were nineteen at the time?
Xiang: Yes and all the group was older than me (laugh)
Marie: Wow, that's a great experience

Xiang: I love challenges you know, that's a big challenge for me at that time. I don't have a lot of life experience, I just face whatever difficulties come and by doing this, meet different people I began to know that there is a lot of way to live your life . Because before, my family, all they told me is to get good grades, to attend a good university and maybe learn more. Because they have plan or maybe I plan for myself following their advice, before of what I should do for each year of my university and I'm going to learn in America for a master's degree after that, and come back, it's very easy for me to find a job in this industry because my family work in this industry. One of my sister, not dad sister, not the... the daughter of my uncle
Marie: So your cousin
Xiang: My cousin, she is now starting economy PhD in Stanford and her husband in Yale. This kind of family (laugh). And after I meet this kind of people. Even some of them they don't attend university and they aren't born in very good family but they live in very... a kind of life that I admire. I think "oh, it's really cool and can they know that, how can they do that".
Marie: What kind of life did they live?
Xiang: Some of them... like a girl who don't attend university, she just started some... her own business to selling some things online and she can earn money and even pay back the debt. Because her family own some debts. I didn't ask for more details about that. And now she can have the freedom to travel and live a very good life and practice yoga and she is like really beautiful and charming and uh... also some of them... like my friend who start out this company, he attended the Heilongjiang university, it's a university in Harbin. And actually, if you follow like a route like me, if you attend that kind of university it's not the top. Than it's really hard for you to find a really good job and maybe it's just calmer life but he jump up to do his own business. And did really good. And yes so, they are really good I think.
Marie: So they inspired you to have a different kind of life?
Xiang: Yeah, to try some more things, not only like, follow the flow.
Marie: Yeah, follow what your parents have planned for you?
Xiang: It's not totally they decide, they gave me, like advice. Like whatever I do, I want to do it well. So... If I selected this that well. I could also do it well I think. So, it inspired me to find more possibilities. It's very important.
Marie: You said earlier that your trip in Taiwan, just open your mind.
Xiang: Oh, that's latter, that's the second year. I traveled each vacation.
Marie: Were your parents ok?
Xiang: Well, I struggle for one month for this trip (laugh). The first time I told them "I want to go", they were like "Why do you want to go, it's really cold?"
Marie: To Harbin?
Xiang: To Harbin. And it's really cold, I have been in this kind of cold and even by myself and of course they don't agree but I insist. "Whatever, I want to go"
Marie: So you went
Xiang: yeah.
Marie: Did they pay for it?
Xiang: Yes they pay for it; It's really hard for me to earn money at that time
Marie: Of course you are in university.
Xiang: And uh... this is my first travel experience and I grew up a lot.
Marie: You think you grew up a lot?
Xiang: Because it's not only travel. You are also facing challenges
Marie: What kind of challenges?

Xiang: And uh... you learn from people, and like I'm actually good at learning so... That kind of learning like passing exam learning and observing and learning from anybody, anything, and uh... very interesting story.

Xiang: I go ski and the guy, because they live in North part for long years so they really good at skiing, they don't really need the class, they do that in the forest something like that and at the first time, I learn how to keep balance, just to keep balance. And from not a very high high place I can ski down. Just this kind. I just know how to keep balance and how to stop. And the second time, they just carry me to the top, to the most highest place in that ski place and there is no way to come back so I have to ski down. Ok whatever because even if you fall down, it's nothing, so I just go down and the first second, I go out, I fall down (laugh). And until the bottom and...

Marie: You enjoy skiing, right?

Xiang: Yeah. And, I really think it's not some, I... I feel embarrassed because everyone skied very well there. So ok, I'll try again, I'll go again until the end of day I can keep balance from the top to down, but just keep balance.

Marie: So skiing was new for you, you never did that with you parents or anything?

Xiang: No, no

Marie: You liked it?

Xiang: I'm gonna go ski now, every winter

Marie: cool. Learning how to ski was challenging for you?

Xiang: The most challenging part is your fear inside, actually I fear. I'm little feared with heights. I'm not comfortable with, when I stay on the top but I really enjoy the moment when you do it, when you challenge yourself and you succeed. There you are really happy. That's the kind of happiness not you read some funny story and laugh, it's from deep in your mind in your so... I really enjoyed that process and when you challenge yourself, again, and again. When you step out of the comfort zone, you will grow up very quickly.

Marie: So it was like a body experience?

Xiang: Yes, and also the body is linked to the mental so if you did it. From the physical side, actually your mind become strong too. And that time, everything outside is brand new for me, it's new things. So this is the first time and after that, it's the summer vacation for the first year and I spend totally two months outside.

Marie: Were your parents ok again?

Xiang: Well, after the first time and they know you learn a lot, and you are safe. Always they worry at first but they will not stop me. And now they get used to it, especially my mom because I don't have a good relationship with my father so only my mom take care of me. Now she is stronger too. (laugh). Actually, this kind of experience is you are learning together.

Marie: Do you think you inspire her to travel?

Xiang: Yes, that's true, that's really true. And before I began to work, when I stay in Wuhan, I organize one or two times with my mom backpacking to Guanxi and so that she will know how I travel. We live in hostel in a mix six bedroom. And uh... she cooks very well, so she cooks for people we met in the hostel. and from then on, my mom enjoys traveling too. She will travel by herself. So that's why after that, when I want to go somewhere it's ok.

Marie: So what about this trip in Taiwan that you took. It was your first time abroad?

Xiang: Of course a lot of new experience. Like, you don't know how to pass the new... like, when you go abroad you have to pass the

Marie: Border and passport

Xiang: Yeah, a lot of new experience. But Taiwan is actually is very safe and not that uncomfortable place for us because

they speak Chinese and we have the same culture and I attend a camp their first so I have a week to feel the... the...

Marie: Get used to is

Xiang: Yeah. And also I meet some friends so after that we travel together. I think the people there is really nice, they are much more, like the average, like much nicer than in mainland, China. Because the education there is better than China but not... uh... because you know in China, it's not equal, somebody can get really good education like top internationally but somebody really poor so it's not average

Marie: Like a big gap

Xiang: Sometimes we can meet people with really good quality but sometimes really bad. In Taiwan, everybody is ok, they pass like standard line, that's why I feel really comfortable there. And another thing that really... another impression is... because, you know some political issues between China and Taiwan.

Marie: Everybody knows the political issues

Xiang: And uh... we heard different way in China, what we learn in our history book. They told us Taiwan is part of China, every day, anytime, anywhere, and uh... it's kind of brainwashing. It's what the communist party like to do. Because they have to control, not only physically, they have to control your mind. So you don't have different idea. But in Taiwan, they don't teach that way. So I talked to one of my friend, like, she is the kind to like to attend this kind of political issues, like they have a lot of this kind of shouting together.

Marie: Protests?

Xiang: Yeah, yeah, yeah... to try to fight for some rights.

Marie: They love to protests in Taiwan.

Xiang: Of course, they have their problems, at that time this is really new for me and he told me how Taiwanese really think. Like they don't, like they don't... what the government say... some of them hate, hate China

Marie: Maybe not China, the government I think.

Xiang: Yeah, but what we learn in China is... like they don't want to be a part of this but it is... it's hard to say... this is a kind of... like they make us feel that this is the right way, that this belong to us, only reasonable way but actually, you can have other ways, right?

Marie: Yes, there are options

Xiang: But, like the government won't give us this kind of thinking way so when I first heard what they think, they live their way, from their birth, they are born in this land, and lot of things are different from China, they are much more open, so it's not a kind of I don't want to be part of you, but the fact is I'm not a part of you, right? So this is a kind of different thinking style. You don't have to hate it, like why are you not a part of us. It's just a fact! And they, truly live a different kind of lives with us even if we have the same culture. So I began to understand a lot. So I can view this problem from my own thinking but actually in China, most people don't work this way.

Marie: But they don't have your experience as well...

Xiang: Yes, so it's why it's important to go out. Actually, this come to another in Chinese system, we lack reasonable thinking ability. Like our system is... kind of... you do what others tell you to do... like you don't really have your own... have to have your own ideas, you just do the right things and the right things what others tell you what is right. Actually, it's the wrong way. You have to think it yourself, that's why you are independent guy. But our teacher won't tell us like this.

Marie: I guess that would be dangerous for the communist party.

Xiang: I feel a lot of similarity between China and North Korea.

Marie: Really

Xiang: I I feel that because a lot of your kind, they think that we are free but there is a kind of potential, this kind of thing. Even it's not very apparently with North Korea but it's a kind of a deep thing, when you can't begin to think. This kind of not free. Is there a noun to describe "not free"? Unfreedom? (laugh) It's like a prison... we have wall, even on the internet, it's actually a prison.

Marie: It's actually getting worst with the internet right now?

Xiang: Way worst... we have to way to escape. That's how I can't live in China or I will (she mimics hanging herself). I feel really crappy when every time when I go out... I don't have to use the VPN. Like Google is much better then Baidu

Marie: Really?

Xiang: Baidu is stupid

Marie: Google has

Xiang: its own problem too

Marie: Yeah, Google is not perfect. You think it has the better results but you get the better results because somebody paid to get you these results.

Xiang: That's the same for Baidu but, this is economical system, you pay for something and you can get more. In China it's the government who decide who appears at the top.

Marie: I went on Wikipedia in China and... to prepare my class and I went on Wikipedia

Xiang: It's totally different between English and Chinese

Marie: Some articles are that long in France and in China it's like (small with my fingers)

Xiang: This is the censorship. That's why I always look for English material first.

Marie: and do you remember when your Taiwan friend told you they didn't think Taiwan was China, did you

Xiang: feel angry?

Marie: Or were you curious to know why?

Xiang: I don't feel angry, like... I think everything has a reason. So, I'm just curious, like why do they think like that and what is the reality is. And before I went outside, of course I could hear some things and I don't like our government actually. So, so, you say some bad things... so you are my friends. It's just uh... it's just open some new perspectives of thinking because I think you should think everything from different perspectives. So you can understand different people, different things.

Marie: And you don't always have to pick a side.

Xiang: uh...

Marie: You don't have to pick a side to have an opinion.

Xiang: Yeah, yeah, that's true I can think everything is right, it's your way.

Marie: Yeah, just understanding that everyone has its way of seeing the reality of a context whether it's political or social. Family or whatever. As long as you are able to take a step back and just look at things, to understand how or why everybody just goes this way. And you don't have to be like, oh... I'm on your side...

Xiang: And also, a very important thing is, Chinese people like to say, you are wrong or you are right. But actually, the right and the wrong is not like black and white. and lot of things is in the grey. And when you can understand both sides and like you will become totally different. You won't feel angry and you won't feel unhappy actually, when you defend other, actually yourself don't feel good. I can understand... I'm curious is there really somebody who always view this way they will feel peace or happy in their heart. So, this is what I learn from meeting different people, traveling and seeing different people and how they live their life. Before I go out of China, I thought that all the people that lived outside is so happy, their system is good. Actually when you go abroad, this is fuck up too.

Marie: Yeah. for sure, for sure, and then you just begin to... begin your own way. And during this week of vacation in Taiwan, did you just sight seeing or... did you just surf?

Xiang: Yeah, yeah, surf

Marie: You did?

Xiang: I like sport I travel like try this kind of new sport everywhere. It's exciting. You become really black after that. I just try a one day course, I learn how to stand on the board. I have a really cool picture on the sea

Marie: You liked it?

Xiang: Yeah, I want to learn if I have time someday.

Marie: You just told me you were really tanned?

Xiang: Yeah, but not now, haha.

Marie: Is it a problem for you to be tan? I know that in China you have to have whiter the skin is the better it is.

Xiang: It will become a problem but I don't care. I can't care during that period, I will feel so good. When I... during the time when I like surfing, I won't think about this problem at all. I will enjoy it. I can only focus on this. But after that... why am I so black? But luckily, I will become white, more white latter. Like after several months.

Marie: Do you think... because young Chinese are getting more and more interested in sports and outdoor and surfing and skiing, climbing, paragliding all that stuff. Do you think the body image of Chinese is going to change? Because, my question is, in France, seventy years ago, white was pretty. The whiter you were, the prettier and it changed in the nineteen fifties or sixties because people started going on vacation, beach, surf, mountain climbing all this fun stuff that you do outside and becoming dark became more important because it was beautiful. Synonymous of healthy, strong

Xiang: It changed your idea, your concept of beauty.

Marie: So I was wondering maybe, because of vacation, sports, adventure all of that, the image of your body...

Xiang: It might happen, I mean like... the things always work in the same way. It happens before in Europe and maybe fifty years it will happen in China, It might happen I guess. But until now... it's still white. Because we are influenced a lot by outside, especially, what lead the people to think about beauty is the fashion industry especially the stars, how stars look and yeah... We are influence a lot by Korean and so... maybe, we will follow them too latter. Because you know in China is around six or seven centuries like every, we consider fat beauty.

Marie: Yes, us too

Xiang: What?

Marie: Before around the sixteenth hundred, so 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th century, all these centuries, if you are fat, you are beautiful.

Xiang: Really? It's interested it's the same in the West and in the East. Yeah, white and fat

Marie: Because if you are fat, it means you are rich, you can eat a lot.

Xiang: Because I'm not familiar with France or Europe history. What period is that?

Marie: In France, it was... we had kings you know

Xiang: Yeah

Marie: So during that time 15th to 19th century, for five centuries, if you were skinny and burnt it means you work in the field, manual worker but if you are fat and white, it means you don't go outside

Xiang: And you are rich

Marie: and it changed because women started working after first and second world war and started having vacation in the nineteen thirties, paid vacation, people started going to the mountain to the beach and therefore, doing like more body stuff surf was invented during that time, kayaking became

popular leisure and of course if you stay outside and do sports you are going to get tan, thin. And because it was now Tag(s): Hainan America CouchSurfing

Xiang: And also maybe the change of idea of beauty like what happen in the twentieth century in Europe, because now we have globalization, everything is becoming merge with each other, quicker and quicker. Maybe after twenty years, we will change.

Marie: Your children maybe

Xiang: Oh my god... I can't think about my children.

Marie: So you surfed in Taiwan, what else did you do?

Xiang: Ride motorcycle because we can't ride it in my city. In some Chinese city it's forbidden to ride motorcycles, it creates a lot of problem for like traffic and there are a lot of car in China so it's really hard to, to regulate the traffic. And we rent a motorcycle and enjoy the sunshine. Because the sunshine is really good, over the sea it's really really beautiful, more beautiful than any sea in China because I seaside a lot and I relax.

Marie: Have you been to Hainan?

Xiang: Yeah

Marie: What did you think?

Xiang: Yeah but, now too commercial.

Marie: Everybody has told me don't go to Hainan.

Xiang: Don't, don't, don't

Marie: They have told me that the local there, they steal from you they overprice everything.

Xiang: I go to Hainan when I was in primary school, it's a school camp like a school travel. And we take... I forgot, we take jeep at that time. I can't I can't remember clearly the feeling on the boat and to view the sunrise was, that's the only thing I can remember. Really impressive. I guess that's almost the first time for me to see the sea, yeah, when I was in primary school. Grade five or six. I guess I imagine Hainan is not that commercial because it was more than ten years ago

Marie: Yeah, fifteen years ago. I have heard it's becoming really commercial.

Xiang: But still some places is good. Like my teacher who is a photography scholar, she will move to Hainan for three months every winter now. But she only stays in Haikou not Sanya because Sanya is too commercial and now there is a lot of art event and galleries and interesting spaces open there. When you become rich, you become see some mental or esthetical things.

Marie: What else did you do in Taiwan?

Xiang: uh...

Marie: You were with a friend from Taiwan

Xiang: Yeah, both Taiwan and china. The people who attended the same event with me. And uh... we travel with four people together to Taichung to meet some Taiwan friends and to do some tourism attractions.

Marie: Where did you go?

Xiang: uh...

Marie: Did you stay in hostel there?

Xiang: We stay on... they have something like Airbnb. This kind of things. Not Airbnb at that time but they have the same thing, and most of them design really well and look warm. Homestay

Marie: It was not couch surfing?

Xiang: It's, it's... what?

Marie: Couchsurfing, yeah... no

Xiang: Couchsurfing.. yeah, no, I don't know that at that time but I used it latter. Because we travel four people, for CouchSurfing... I have a really good experience of couch surfing in America.

Marie: In America.

Xiang: But it's in 2016, when I was learning there.

Marie: That's cool that you could go to America, how did you like America?

Xiang: I have a... because I really want to go there for the life but I can't go abroad, because I'm really want to learn abroad, I'm really looking forward to the outside world always so I feel very good imagination about it. Like everyone there, they are really nice but when I go there, I can find, it's just we speak different language and...

Marie: Was it hard?

Xiang: Uh... it's not that hard, like people is really nice there but of course not everybody. And, I enjoy how most people think. Because they feel much more open there than Chinese people

Marie: In what way?

Xiang: They have more tolerance sometimes. Most times. Because when you speak your own ideas they will think, "oh, it's cool, it's your ideas and I respect" and sometimes I say some good words to others but in China, not everyone works this way and most people they really like to contradict. And it can't be said that way, actually it's the same what I think now. Not that different but of course, some new experience because we have different culture.

Marie: Did you like the food there?

Xiang: In California you can have food from everyone and I have a lot of western food because I was living in an urban area and I don't know if I stay one year or longer, maybe I will feel different because a lot of my friends, they stay abroad for long time, they will really miss Chinese food but maybe it's different for me too. I don't know.

Marie: Did you travel in the US while you were there?

Xiang: Yes, I traveled to Arizona and also the seaside, the seaside of California, the road one.

Marie: I did too.

Xiang: Yeah, one of my friends, he was born in China but he spent most of his education period in America, from primary school to... so he is really like something like native, so he rent a car and we go together, and it's a carnival... something... you know the Mustang, the car.

Marie: Yeah

Xiang: And we rent that one and... road trip every day. It's really good, I really enjoyed it. And we lived in Airbnb, they are really a lot of Airbnb. One of them is... it's the architect is made by a very famous American architect who have an idea to live a more original life so it's the Cambria, the place's name and it's a... it's just sometimes words come out, I can't remember. It's a very small town in the seaside and they have forest, like it's the geography is like this

Marie: Like rolling hill

Xiang: Yeah, we lived in this kind of place in the forest and they have dears going around and, like one day when I get up, a dear just step very slowly from... pass away, I was mesmerized. It was so beautiful. And the architect is really good.

Marie: You met him?

Xiang: No, not the architect this is the house, the design. And now he belongs to a designer, it's her own work...uh... her own, home and also her work place, studio. And also one of the room was rented by us. Because I really like see how people live there, because everyone has a little house and have a little garden. I like that way but it can't be achieved in China because there is too much people unless you live in the country side.

Marie: Would you like to have your own house and a garden?

Xiang: Yeah, Yeah how that designer lived her life is my life goal. Live in in a beautiful place, be a designer, with good design house and also, I can do some work inside... This is my life goal.

Marie: It's probably mine too!

Xiang: You will enjoy Begnas, if you have time you must go there, it's much more quieter than here. I can show you some pictures latter.

Marie: Did you go to the East coast?

Xiang: East coast no, and Arizona I travel by myself, backpacking there, because I like the uh... I don't know how to say. That kind of geography world, Colorado Plateau.

Marie: Canyon?

Xiang: Yeah, but also the... plateau, the Colorado plateau. Canyon and also...and the view there is really nice. Just too much people in summer vacation. And uh... I started from Phoenix and take a bus to Flagstaff where there is an important place on route 66. And on the route you can see the real culture there everyone during the night is (laugh) , I attend some parties there, I just try but I don't really enjoy parties but to experience.

Marie: You didn't really like that though?

Xiang: I don't really like drinking, I like quiet place. But sometimes I can just change. And also the bar, the night places in Taiwan is really nice, it's famous for that.

Marie: Did you go to Vegas, Las Vegas?

Xiang: Las Vegas no, because there is nothing for me to go there. I don't have money.

Marie: There is a lot of group of Chinese old people gambling in Old Vegas

Xiang: They do that in Cambodia also

Marie: You have been to Cambodia?

Xiang: Yes

Marie: When did you go?

Xiang: Last year

Marie: How long did you stay?

Xiang: Half a month.

Marie: Backpacking as well?

Xiang: Yes, by myself, always

Marie: You always travel by yourself?

Xiang: I enjoy traveling by myself.

Marie: What do you enjoy about that?

Xiang: It's just that, I only have to get along with myself. And of course, sometimes I meet some new people but not always because when you travel with another guy, you have a lot of things to negotiate and to compromise, and even I don't mind that but that means you don't have to do something totally for your heart. But when I travel by myself, I do whatever I want. If I don't want to go out, I just lay out.

Marie: It's funny because when I met at the border, I thought you were with other friends, not traveling by yourself.

Xiang: It's because we take the same car. That's three Chinese girls we take the same car from Guangzhou.

Xiang: They just like to spend their vacation and go to some popular places. And another two girls we met latter, because we six girls take a car from the border to Kathmandu and you know a car with six girls is popular for drivers when we are waiting there for the road, and every driver come here to talk with us.

Marie: Were they also backpackers?

Xiang: The last two they came here by themselves and one is a girl who seems to make tourism as her lifestyle. Like she works in some hostel for several month then maybe travel to another place then maybe work.

Marie: Is she here right now?

Xiang: I can connect with them... I know you are curious about her. I lot of people ... you know Dali, did you go there?

Marie: I actually went to Lijiang but I have heard of it.

Marie: So... last.. you went to the United States then you come back... was it your fourth year of university, your third year?

Xiang: (Laugh), I'm going to tell you the time line. So the first winter vacation to Harbin is my first travel by myself and then, the summer vacation, I spent one month to go to

country side to organize camps for left behind children and the other month, we have two month, to go back to Harbin again and also to go to Inner Mongolia to be a tour guide; So this is my first year. And the second year, maybe I go to Xiamen, it seems like I visited Xia'men by myself it's just like a visiting. Yeah, just visiting I guess. Two weeks because the winter vacation is really short. Less than one month and it's during, and at that time I have to come back to spend my spring festival. Xia'men, you know? It's in Fujian province. It faced Taiwan so they have a lot in common and the Xia'men university is beautiful. There is a saying that Wuhan university is the most beautiful university in China, but there is also a saying that Xia'men university is the most beautiful. I want to go check...

Marie: So... what do you think?

Xiang: It's different kind, architecture is both really nice. And uh... after that, another winter and another summer, I go to Taiwan. So the second year, summer vacation I go to Taiwan, also attend an internship about advertising. But it's the summer vacation for ... because I'm thinking about changing my major so I like to know more about it. I don't want to make decision like before. I want to know as much as I can then make the decision. And after I come back, I had a gap year

Marie: You had a gap year?

Xiang: Because when I come back from Taiwan, I told you that, I changed a lot during those two years, and the answer is not clear, because I know more and so I have more ideas , more possibilities.

Marie: after coming back from Taiwan?

Xiang: Not only for Taiwan, because it's the all experience I had during those two years.

Xiang: Because they work together. But this is a high top and follow that... I like to think about my future and if I follow that way and after thirty years, I'm going to decide what I will do after I graduate. So if I don't decide at that time, I will miss a lot of opportunities to get a better job after I graduate... So to think about future, I have to decide. And actually, it's not enough to decide, I still have a lot of other questions. Because I'm interested in NGO, right? Like the volunteer things, like the welfare things but if I want to do this career, take that as my career, I'm not sure what it will be like and also advertising, it's an industry with not higher payment but, very hard, you have to work really hard, like, you are always work after your work hours.

Marie: Could you work for the UN like the United nations?

Xiang: At that time, my English is not good enough and if you want to get in you have to speak at least three languages. So I have to think about it. and uh... also I just feel, I don't know, I don't want to make a decision in a hurry. So...

Marie: You took a gap year. Was it difficult for you to take a gap year? Was it difficult? because everybody is telling me... a lot of Chinese backpackers have been telling me that it's hard to do that in China.

Xiang: Yeah, that too, some difficulties but for me I can always find some ways. But I don't like to think the difficulties are too big.

Marie: So what did you do during your gap year?

Xiang: Wait a minute I haven't finished that question

Marie: Sorry, sorry

Xiang: It's ok, I like interviews, I have a clear, I know what you want so I'm going to tell you all what you want...

Marie: No, no, no, tell you answer freely

Xiang: No, this is my thinking style. When you are going to do something, then you have to figure out what everyone need

Marie: Yeah, but don'... answer the question how you would answer to any friend?

Xiang: Yeah, ok... so, I uh... it's really... it's a little hard for us to have a gap year it's not because the policy doesn't allow it, it's the people, what people think about you because most parents they don't think this is the right way or this is something out of their expectations, they don't like it. They want you to be stable to the right thing. To do what the society wants you to do. They have a mainstream ideology of the ... what is good and what is bad. This is what I think is the most difficult part. Because they know these difficulties there, so they think it's a very difficult thing. Then, they will be blind to the possibilities, and opportunities if they don't find the solution. This is the problem. How can I search for the possibilities? Well... the founder of our volunteering group... Actually, I learn a lot from that too because there are a lot of interesting people. And the founder of this organization, she had a gap year for this organization. So I had examples before me, very close. What I should do is conquer my fear and the difficulties in my family and from my teachers. So I wrote a very long letter about why I want to have a gap year, I feel ... I don't know, what I want to do I'm confused, everything. And also, how I came to this idea and what I'm going to do and I promise I will come back to learn so I write this kind of letter to my mother, I posted it online and to my teachers. Because I have answered all the questions they could ask me. I knew what they were going to ask me. It's just like you want to say something, I have an answer for you. So what I say is just... yeah, I insist. And after that I need more than one week to convince everyone and then you have to go to different department to get a permission or something.

Marie: So and then for one year, you volunteer at this program for children?

Xiang: Not only, I did a lot of things because I still want to travel. First, I go to Beijing, because I feel like Wuhan, it's a city not that open. Even the economy there is ok, but it's the people there is not that open and interesting things are not enough. So, I went to Beijing first and I lived in an hostel to be a volunteer for accommodation so I could save money. And uh... I read books because I really wanted to read. Also I meet a lot of different people, like there is a lot of youth meeting and event in Beijing so during this time I found some activities and...uh... I met interesting people she learnt painting in France. And uh she wanted to do something about art education for people in Beijing. And we talked really well and we had the same ideas because I'm interested in art so... uh... we began to do something together like start a start up. Because he was good at painting, good at art but he was not good at operation and management. And I learn advertising and also, I'm good at learning from the different message online so we worked together and it's really happy, I lived in his studio which was also his home in a village near Beijing. And also, with two other guys who were his classmates and one girl studying theater, performance and theater.

Marie: An actor?

Xiang: Something like that. Performers. Acting but for stage. And she learnt that in France. And another is the director, they are all classmates. I always learnt a little bit. So it's very happy time, it's all new to me.

Marie: New scene.

Xiang: Totally new but I like to attend galleries before, museum and exhibition, I like it. I learnt a lot. This is the start before the start about my art life. And uh... this ran for most of this... most of my year and after that I came back and I began to learn English because I think that the English skill is very important and I learn English by performing. Like there is this kind of education center. We perform in English and we ran some show. Yeah, that's how I learnt English

Marie: Really?

Xiang: We imitate how like the standard pronunciation and uh... I attend that center during my it's uh... junior year I learnt English and also back to school to learn mathematics. But actually, it's a little... like the experience before both help and harm my learning of mathematics. I can consider the importance of it because the thinking style, I'm quite a logical person and it's because I learnt math. It's a good training for logic and also it's... it's miserable because I, like, I won't do finance anymore.

Marie: You are pretty clear about that.

Xiang: after, at that time, I'm pretty clear. I still don't know what I really want but I do know what I don't want.

Marie: It's a good start to know what you don't want.

Xiang: I was twenty-two. So, I tried my best to learn it and uh, pass exam and also I spent most of my energy in learn English and apply for summer school in America, in Berkeley so after that year and the summer vacation where I go for six or seven weeks.

Marie: So you stayed seven weeks in Berkeley?

Xiang: Yeah, two months

Marie: What did you train in? English?

Xiang: No, I learnt some course about language skills and also something about my major at the beginning but when I attended, I just quit because there was so many Chinese and I was so worry... The most Chinese selected this kind of things.

Marie: This is cliché, math program, Chinese.

Xiang: And, so I just quit, selected another which name is Global Health for Woman led by an anthropology teacher. And we talked about women issues like surrogacy, about the fast question problem, giving birth issues, health. Because my teacher is expert in medical anthropology so it was so interesting, I fell in love with anthropology.

Marie: Really?

Xiang: I really like the ideas of it. She could see every culture equally. They are just different but no hierarchy. So charming. Also the field work, this is how I travel... When I'm traveling I feel like I'm doing some fieldwork except that I don't have to write something. You know the moment I see you, I know, you must major in something about it.

Marie: So seven weeks in Berkeley... did you meet Americans? People from all over the world?

Xiang: Yeah, at that course we were twelve students and I was the only Chinese. It's definitely not a course Chinese would like.

Marie: Too hippie?

Xiang: And we read a lot, like books and communicate on the class and I guess it's a seminar and uh... I really... I want to try the Western education for a long time so now I do try it because I think it's good. But still, not any aspect. Just like you said it's not that interdisciplinary and actually a criticism about this form too. So... from what I view, now, I'm trying to figure out and create my own education to fit me. So I tried different... yeah. But it's much more better than China but not every discipline I guess, just what I learnt and both of the... like most Chin... like in China university, how professor earn only related to articles they give out, like they write. It's nothing about how they teach. So they don't have the motivation to teach well but focus on like they can publish, a lot of teacher they just like... want to publish. And the teachers are really important to have a good start. I'm lucky I met a lot of good teachers at very important point.

Marie: So then you finished university?

Xiang: No !

Marie: ok, that's another story...

Xiang: That's why I don't tell my story... a lot of changing. At last, I quit

Marie: really?

Xiang: Because I can't find, there are a lot of reason but finally I decided to quit it makes me feel more peaceful after this decision

Marie: When did you take that decision?

Xiang: After I come back from America, it was my last year and I can't select to come back, come back to study, it's not that hard to graduate but... (laugh) I still feel kind of anxiety about the future. I feel anxious and worried about future. So I keep struggling and the opportunity came from the leader of our volunteer organization. She is little older than me, she was born 1988, so she worked for several years but actually the thing she, what we do for left behind children is always what she wanted to do. And it's also what I want to do. And uh... this organization we have a strong spirit. So she wanted to come back to give this turning point because after years and years, there was a lot of problem, we don't really know a lot about how to do it in the right way even if we have good will.

Marie: Professionally.

Xiang: So I don't really want to miss this opportunity because to take this thing as a career I'm curious how it will be like. But, if I do it, I then begin to work, because it's a full time work. Because you don't have the energy to do both. There is a lot of things to do when you start this kind of startup but it's based on social entrepreneur. We try to earn money. Oh... I didn't told you that I had the opportunity to become a camp counselor. Some of the older students in our organization, they work in education, career and there is a... the camp industry in China, just started in 2012, so it's a new industry. And camp counselor is actually the soul of the camp, you lead groups, and people learn from building along with each other and you build this community. People are the soul of the community. Several of them work for this like... camp company and I was train by them and I attended some camps during vacation if they need. It was kind of a part time job at that time during my gap year.

Marie: Where was the camp that you run?

Xiang: It was a place near Beijing. It's their place. Quiet well-designed place.

Marie: So children come during vacation time?

Xiang: Yeah, on vacation, they have week-end but it's not that much. Most time it's summer vacation and during the long vacation and children come

Marie: Any age?

Xiang: Yeah, no, they do most for... for primary and middle school. Because they have much more time. Because, high school students focus on their studies. So, uh...we organize camps for students in cities, they are rich, they can pay for it and we get money from them and we organize camps for country side children, use our knowledge and experience to make it organized.

Marie: So you would mix people from the city with people from the countryside so they can meet?

Xiang: No, no, no we organize for them but use the money from city kids to support program for countryside children so they can attend for free.

Marie: It would be interesting to mix both.

Xiang: We organize this kind of things, this is what we want to achieve so we began to do it. And there was an opportunity, we design experimental learning program, it also come from abroad for international students, international school students in high school. We design programs for them based on different things. And uh... they would pay for it. And this is how we would get money.

Marie: So foreign student?

Xiang: Not foreign, students in international schools. They have some international students but most are Chinese and they are going to apply to university abroad and they need this kind of experience. Because foreign schools they don't

like Chinese, they only care for scores. And they care for your ability, some other things. So I began to work full time in Beijing. Do education things and also the volunteering things. I did it for more than one year. Like I lead a program to Suzhou, you should try to go.

Marie: I have had a lot of Chinese friends who told me that Pokhara remind them a lot of Dali and there was strong hippie vibe, like Beat generation vibe in Dali.

Xiang: (laugh)

Marie: Do you know Beat generation?

Xiang: I know the...

Marie: Yeah, like Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsburg that have come up with Beat generation.

Xiang: On our language I guess it's the nineties, around nineties...

Marie: Yeah, eighties and nineties is like... the Balinghou and the Jiulinghou

Xiang: Yeah... you really know it.

Marie: Is that generation that has it... it seems to me from outside that your parents and yourself you grew up in a different China. They were born in a country that does not exist anymore, your generation has so much... therefore it's difficult for you to...

Xiang: There is a very big gap in every Chinese family

Marie: Most of the people I have talked to here they, uh... most of them haven't told their parents they are abroad. A volunteer from Guangdong is volunteering one year in Nepal and his parents don't know that he is volunteering, they think he is still in university.

Xiang: It's hard to... I'm actually quite lucky like my family I don't have two people to look at me. My mom is quite easy to talk, she is not that kind of guy with strong ideas. It's easy to influence here but it still a lot of conflicts and difficulties during this process, we have to continue to negotiate and to fight for it.

Marie: Even at 24?

Xiang: Yeah. Because like... I have heard a saying that it's very important for parents is too learn how to cut the link between you and your children and he can have an independent life. But in China, parents don't think this way. They think this is my children, I should take care of her no matter what happen and no matter what time. And actually it's a potential expect. He should follow my idea, respect me too. It just comes from an old traditional idea. Because in China, in the country side, why people want to give birth to more children in case they can't help themselves when they are old so then, like to give birth to children, the deep desire is for themselves. But actually parents don't know the... And they do the selfish things with the concept that they are giving. And it's hard for them to realize that. Because to realize it, you need to address criticism to yourself

Marie: Yeah,

Xiang: But in China, there is another idea that is, when you are getting old, you are more right. you older, you are wiser. Anyone can't say something bad of you, and they can't express ideas that are different. So this is how it works. Because I think about this problem for a long time. I really can't understand why. What is the key point?

Marie: I guess that's an interesting point but I guess your generation is going to turn China upside down.

Xiang: Yeah, and we are going to turn it gradually. I'm really curious about what would be that world like?

Marie: So you worked one year for this organization?

Xiang: yeah, I just quite several months before. And during this period, we operate with different architects and artists because we had to design the course based on education and also on different themes. Our... the program I lead to Suzhou is about architecture. So the architect designed this course and we negotiated and designed together something about

space and using space to tell story. We had a framework for every student and we use a kind of material, common material to design a framework. They would paint but paint in space. How they get idea, they get idea from the architect from Suzhou, Suzhou garden and the Chinese southern style. And also based on very little village, we walked in the village and... in there they make their living by fishing before so community culture. And now the young people become less and less so it's mostly old people. This is what happen in most Chinese countryside (desertification des campagnes). It's only young children and old people in the country side. The parents go out to earn money. So based on all of this, they worked in groups and each five frameworks, they will be together to tell the whole story, they have to connect with each other and the students' creation was just amazing. It seems like... when you work a lot with children, you will feel like you are younger, their energy and their creativity will inspire you a lot.

Xiang: you know, a lot of Chinese girls my age, it seems they are getting old, they think about house, earning money, about the rent, about how to

Marie: Clothes, make up?

Xiang: It's ok, but for me, that camp was so good. During the process I connected with the architect and to know how they work and become more and more interested in art and uh... also after that, I spent most of this year, last year, 2017, to organize a really good camp for left behind children. It's much better than five years ago. More professional, and everyone said this was fantastic. This camp, if I organize this in a city I can charge much money, a lot of money. And there was a lot of difficulties. Money, how to... lead more than sixty people's group, and a lot of difficulties. Every time I think about it, it's really hard. But finally, we made it, it's not my self, it's a group of people. We work all year, very hard, with no holidays. After that I felt like, this is a really good things but it's still I don't think for myself it's still not final answer but I got a lot of idea from it. I became aware that I can start from any age, any time for new things and also, the people I meet inspired me a lot. I realized I had talent for visual things. And I have been taking pictures for several years from after I graduate but I still can't determine to do it. But I'm not confident enough, "Am I talented?" But by staying along with this people, I found out they make a decision to do something, they do it and they become better and better at doing it.

Xiang: After that, the camp finished, I was determined to begin a new way, I convinced myself it's not about other, this is about me and I want to learn art now.

Marie: So did you go back to school to do that?

Xiang: Yeah, I'm planning to learn abroad, maybe in Europe and I'm trying to figure out how can I get an internship, no the scholarship, because...

[8425,3]Marie: Do you think you need to go back to school?

Xiang: Well now I'm an assistant to a photography scholar. She is an independent scholar and she has published several books and organize exhibitions in Beijing. I help her translate things to do exhibitions online. Also, if she needs me to do something in Beijing, I go there and if there is nothing, I can go anywhere. That's why I can travel around. But I still work.

Marie: You work from distance?

Xiang: Yeah, I keep working.

Marie: So that's how you start your trip in Xinjiang?

Xiang: Yeah, yeah, and also I started this trip for my portfolio and getting some ideas, I'm not in a hurry to attend a school but I will do that. It's just... but even if I don't go to school I still need to do something, to do my homework. Also I'm also finding some more opportunities to learn more.

Marie: So how long is your trip going to last now?

Xiang: I quit my job in October and I stayed two months in Beijing to read theory on photography and visual culture. My interest lies in between photography, visual art and anthropology. Because a lot of artist, their art work is similar to how anthropology is made. They really go deep in topics and communities. So I'm really interested about it and maybe I'm going to read to get more educated like if I want... I don't know, everything can happen. But in my imagination, I'm gonna learn something about anthropology latter, during a master or something.

Marie: It seems like you are curving your own path?

Xiang: Yeah, I have figured out what I want. When everything new come then I know how to react.

Marie: So you started traveling in December?

Xiang: Yes, I started in January in Xinjiang.

Marie: How did you move around, train, bus?

Xiang: I take the train to the Urumqi and meet two of my friends who learnt drama. One local and one is a social worker I met in Beijing. She was interested in how the society is there. So they were filming a documentary. So I went with them to do some photography. But I didn't follow the whole way. It's just the same way we are planning and say good bye and continue our own way. And so because I'm interested in culture and history, it's a really important part for the road of silk. And I follow the road. There is three parts: north, middle and south. The north is the grassland, so I went to the north and the middle and I didn't have enough time for the South part. It's also need more money because the traffic there is really hard.

Marie: So you went by bus...

Xiang: They have bus... it's better to rent a car and drive by yourself. And for some place, deep in the desert. You have to pay a big amount of money to pass in because it's some reservation and it's for archeologists. It's still interesting. It's a lot of tombs who died a thousand years ago in the museum. Their weather is really dry there so their body is well kept.

Marie: Mummified?

Xiang: Yeah, like in Egypt.

Marie: So you rented a car from Beijing.

Xiang: No, no, no, I just fly there and took a bus, but if I have time next time, I will rent a car.

Marie: And how did you like Lhasa?

Xiang: Lhasa, then I go to Lhasa because, actually I want to go to Nepal.

Marie: Why?

Xiang: Good question, you know how people know Nepal in China?

Marie: No,

Xiang: Because of a movie

Marie: Which movie?

Xiang: I can write it for you, you can watch it. A lot of people know Nepal and come to travel because of that movie. (The movie is a love story that happens in Nepal between two Chinese travelers, the name is "En attendant le vent", deng feng lai en pinyin, à retrouver sur Youku)

Marie: What is that movie about?

Xiang: It's just a trip to Nepal and they show a lot of this kind of things like, how in Pokhara they paraglide. It's a girl she finds herself here, something like that. She meets a man here but it's not a love story. It's just about self-discovery. And also, Chitwan is in that movie and playing with elephant so everyone may know these three places.

Marie: So you watch this movie and that's why you wanted to come to Nepal?

Xiang: Some Chinese people want but I don't think I want to come here... oh! I wanted to come for the Vipassana. But I don't want to do it in China, you know, because if you do this kind of things in Chinese, you will become so... it will become kind of religion and abstract thing and also it's the

Zen style, and it will become abstract so this kind of course is taught in English, you will be more accurate. It's easier to get the real meaning. But in Chinese, you can understand it in different way, this is because of the language so ...I want to do this abroad and finding place among the map.

Marie: So you found the real experience here?

Xiang: Uh... they have vipassana center around the world, you know? Do you know vipassana before?

Marie: Yeah

Xiang: How do you know?

Marie: People talk to me about this stuff

Xiang: Chinese people?

Marie: No, I haven't met anybody from China who has done Vipassana. Yeah, certain Chinese know

Xiang: I selected a country and I thought about Burma because this is where vipassana begin to appear and also India. But I don't know, I just think the one in Burma is too big. I don't want a place with too much people and I wanted one with a forest, a place far from city so what I care was where it was located and the final thing is Pokhara one, I heard that Pokhara is very quiet and, with good view place with mountain and I selected this one. And it's a very small one. And the comments they said this one is really good. So I say "ok, I'm going to gonna to Nepal". I will definitely travel around and "how can I get to Nepal? I don't want to fly here because I will miss a lot so there, I will go to Xinjiang and there Tibet is in the middle so I will just cross it".

Marie: How long did you stay in Tibet for?

Xiang: I stayed for a month. I worked in a hostel for accommodation so I can stay there for free and also I could meet a lot of people. So more than twenty days, I spent the new year there.

Marie: How did you like Lhasa?

Xiang: It's a really good spiritual place. I can feel the energy there is totally different from the hinterland and I like place with this kind of very strong culture and totally different. And people there is really nice.

Marie: Did you meet a lot of backpackers there?

Xiang: Yes, a lot of them drove there too.

Marie: And bike?

Xiang: Bike, not much because it's during the winter. So actually, the people is not much than in the summer but still a lot of people especially during the new year. And I cook for them. I work in the kitchen.

Marie: People have told me that in Lhasa there is a hippie vibe? Like a beat generation vibe.

Xiang: That's a problem I want dig out. Because I heard it when I arrive there. I never know that before some people have told me that the Lhasa young people they like this kind of hip-hop, street culture of America.

Marie: I was saying hippie, not hip-hop.

Xiang: Hippie, yeah but it's hard to find the track because the religion is too strong. Like when you don't stay there for a long time, when you first see is all about religion, the religious signs are everywhere and if you want to learn about that, you must get in there, like young people population and get along with them but in the winter, not a lot of people there. They travel around the world. When it becomes the tourism season, they will come back.

Marie: Ok...

Xiang: Because yeah, I want to do a project about people who are not native of Lhasa but they stay in Lhasa. I'm curious about this group of people, why they select this kind of place to settle.

Marie: That's an extremely interesting question. I wish I could go to Lhasa so I could meet them. I cannot really go to Lhasa, go around and ask questions, especially me

Xiang: Even for Chinese it's hard to do that. I went to do something in Xinjiang. It's really interesting, right. Not uh... either the past or now is really interesting.

Marie: It's hard?

Xiang: really.

Marie: That's why I'm going to do it in Dali.

Xiang: A friend of mine who traveled with me in Xinjiang. He made a documentary just about his hometown near Kazakhstan. He photographed some people and let them tell about his hometown. A really simple documentary. And... after he published it, he was in Beijing during daily time and she was called to go back to Xinjiang and caught inside and they asked her, why did you do that? and everyone related to these things they were asked questions, why did you say this, what was the purpose, is anyone she led you to do this. And that lasted for month. But actually, she is just an independent artist. There is no goal, right? She could finally get out.

Marie: God.

Xiang: When I heard, I was surprised too but it's the reality in Xinjiang. And it seems like you really feel unsafe in China. Same like you are being spied anytime so in China, we are not going to talk about this and...

Marie: Is it ok for you, do you know how to get around and still talk about things?

Xiang: I will talk about it! (Laugh) in some situation.

Marie: If, for example, we were to do that interview in China, would you talk to me as freely as right now?

Xiang: I would

Marie: you would.

Xiang: But other... most of them won't. Of course, I would do it in a place much more safe with people I trust but, I don't know... not with anyone. And I heard, I don't know whether it's the truth, that somebody who this kind of spying this.

Marie: They pretend they are your friend and...

Xiang: And they will tell somebody, I just can't figure out who they will tell.

Marie: And so how was vipassana? Was it a good experience, would you do it again?

Xiang: Yeah, Actually it's a kind of life style. It's just a kind of way of how you live your life. how you view the world. The key idea is to lead a life where you can't tell lies, you can't like be addicted to something and don't care more, too much about the material aspects and to try to keep a balance inside and look inside and uh... like the key, the main action to do is to observe your sensation, that means to connect with your own feelings and don't react, don't react to these sensations, just feel, observe, and accept the truth as it is. This is the key point to see the reality as it is. To accept it, don't claim it. I like the philosophy. Actually, we have this kind of similar ideas in Chinese traditions. We are also based on Buddhism, we have a lot of wiser people who wrote or speak about this kind of philosophy. But sometimes it's hard to do it. They have the essence to do meditation everyday and night, it's so hard. Maybe it's just, I'm still too young.

Marie: It could be, I don't know. I have never done it so...

[9606,7]Xiang: But I think At least those ten days to connect with the world, it's good enough. Even if you don't do anything, it's good enough. You have to settle down, to calm down.

Marie: So what's your plan after this vipassana, chill in Pokhara?

Xiang: I want to try paragliding, I really like it. And one of our persons in our vipassana course, he is a paragliding coach and he told me there is no teaching, it's just commercial flying. So... uh... I really want to learn it because I have tried sky-diving before.

Marie: Where?

Xiang: In America. And I really enjoy the time after I reach the ground.

Marie: The adrenalin

Xiang: Yeah, it's just flying and this is similar to paragliding.

Xiang: The coach told me that the teaching of paragliding is really good in China so if I have time later I can learn it in China.

Marie: Isn't it more expensive?

Xiang: It's more expensive to learn here. Like training course. And also it's good to learn in America.

Marie: I think America and Australia is the hardest. France is a little

Xiang: Yeah, Australia is a good choice

Marie: Do you want to learn paragliding?

Xiang: Yes, I'd like to. Maybe not time.

Marie: Are you going to go to Chitwan?

Xiang: uh... maybe. Because...

Marie: How long more do you have in Nepal?

Xiang: I don't have a deadline, because if my boss call me, I have to go back immediately. So maybe tomorrow. But if I have time, then I can go more, I don't really have this strong desire that I have to travel everywhere in Nepal, this time.

Marie: are you thinking about going to India?

Xiang: If I have more time I really want to because I want to do a subject about surrogacy because I learn that in America and I know a lot about it and this is a really big problem in India and I want to check... is it real?

Marie: Is that... because I thought, maybe a year ago, they started being more strict about it, paying attention to it.

Xiang: I don't know but I would like to check

Xiang: My roommate in Vipassana is an eighteen-year-old Nepali girl. she... I don't know how to say but, it seems like their education is a little similar to country side in China. They don't... how to say... they give strong very strong pressure to children right? And especially girls, right? And she wanted to study medicine. She read a lot of English books so her English is really good and uh... I don't know how to describe but she is the only person I met, and I can totally communicate. A lot of Nepal driver can't speak very good English, and on the way, from Kathmandu to here, I'm really surprised how they live their life on the mountain.

Marie: What surprised you?

Xiang: I don't know, this kind of feeling, like... the environment they live in is not that good, and the road is terrible and there is no hospital and the traffic is terrible so I'm just curious about their daily life.

Xiang: so I think, cross the border from Tibet was a good thing because I can see how people really live their life in this country. Or you just arrive in Kathmandu or in Pokhara and what you see, is very surface

Marie: uh... for you... this is one of my last question, not that it was really an interview but, what is it for you to be a backpacker, how would you define being a backpacker or a backpacking,

Xiang: Define?

Marie: Yeah, describe, what you feel? What is your definition?

Xiang: uh... Actually it changes during time. At first, it is out of curiosity, I want to see the world outside. And uh... I'm going to ... I'm interested in the views so I want to see, and things I see in books I want to check it so I travel to experience different kind of life and go to places and. I want to experience something exciting, like, you need something to make your life not as down, not as boring or how can you live a life. And gradually, when I learn more and then the thing that surprised me became less and less.

Marie: So like sightseeing?

Xiang: Yeah, yeah, so here the sightseeing is great and go another place it's great too but it's similar and most of the limited kind of views and even each time, I still feel it's good

but that kind of feeling, that can make you feel exciting, the degree will decrease.

Marie: The excitement decreases?

Xiang: Yeah, yeah, and you will become more calm. You have something that you can relate from your previous experience so, during this progress, the defining of traveling beginning to change. And also because I care about the culture, about some deeper things, why this people live this way? Why they think about it? How they deal with some problems to figure out more deep.

Marie: Like experience, not just visit. Do some experience whether it's sports or cultural.

Xiang: And also to observe and think more like from anthropology perspective and also from me now. I also for me now, I always think about how to use this kind of experience and transform into art creation. Not only photography. Because photograph is not only taking pictures, it's actually to create some images... express some things, not only about beauty. So how to create works that require that you have an experience. And you have the ability to transform that into images. This is what I care about.

Marie: That's interesting.

Xiang: Before I always travel, I don't want to waste time. When I arrive, her I want to go out immediately to see this to see that, to visit here. And now, I stay here and I just... I just stay here (laugh) Live the life of local, see how locals live. And also I will feel more excited to go somewhere where there is no attraction and I can really about community. Like, both... the real community. This area. also like the group of people

Marie: Do you know what workaway is?

44 - 2:54:54 > 3:00:39 [Pas de thématique]

Explanation of what workaway is

45 - 3:00:39 > 3:01:14 [On other travelers]

Xiang: This is how Western people live their life in Asia country. You can see all similar in South east Asia.

Marie: What do you think about that?

Xiang: Well, it's just not my style but it's ok. I have tried actually but I have tried to smoke but there is nothing special. I don't enjoy it, I don't know why they enjoy it

(Je viens de lui raconter l'histoire qui mets arrivée la veille avec MJ et son bad trip aux acides.

Xiang: A lot of people in China are under really heavy pressure.

Marie: Yes, probably

Xiang: Actually the definition of travel, so at the very first beginning it's uh... really... a door, it's a door, it opens something to you. But after you begin traveling and then, it seems its function become weaker and weaker.

Marie: Like the door opening.

Xiang: Yeah, after the door opening when you begin to do that. And uh... and when you keep doing it, when you pass the door. You step out of a stage and the whole world is before your eyes. And after that when you just keep traveling and there are not like the first beginning. So then the definition of travel maybe change to... I don't know if it's just for me or for the backpacker or for the people who like to attend the local life as deeper as we can. It's like to live a life in a different place. You know a book which name is uh... Live a life at another place, by Kundera, Milan Kundera. Because you said about long term traveling it means you take it to live it as a lifestyle. It's not like other like they escape from their life and they hide in traveling. They seek for traveling for a gap. but you keep it continuously, that means this is your life and it's not traveling and it's not that kind of traveling.

Marie: Do you picture yourself like that?

Xiang: Actually I feel like I'm traveling even in the place I'm familiar with because I

select this kind of lifestyle to move, to move to new things. It's not just geographical, it's mentally.

Marie: You don't see yourself having for ten years the same job.

Xiang: Never, actually I don't want to work so that's why I want to be an artist.

Marie: Is it hard in China to say: "I don't want to work"?

Xiang: They must think that you rely on your family but actually I can earn money even if I don't work.

Marie: I'm surprised you like Milan Kundera.

Xiang: And also the book "On the way". you know that?

Marie: Oh, uh.. Jack Kerouac, I just finished it

Xiang: Really, I like it. I want to read it in the English edition because the Chinese edition is strange sometimes.

Marie: What did you like about this book?

Xiang: It's hard to say. It's just a feeling, like the life style, the... the... you know the movement is an interesting topic. In ancient times, people who lived on the grassland, they always kept moving, that's what I want to look for in Xinjiang

Marie: Nomadic people?

Xiang: Because there, Because I have a trip to the Tibetan area whose lifestyle is like that before like they... they... how to say... Yak herder. They herd yack and they live in the house like to herd house with them. And uh... I feel like in their mind, there is a kind very easy to satisfied with everything, because they are living environment is really crucial. Because you have to fight with nature just for the living. So they are very easy to satisfy. It's not like us living in the city who always claim, we need this and that. Just clothes, I have this, I don't need more and they are really, really thinking in a very nice way. Like they don't want hurt other because they get along with nature and if you hurt nature, the nature ill hurt you more terribly. So they learn to be wise from nature and they use it in their daily life. and they are very welcoming with others because the population is so less, it's really hard to meet new people so when you meet, you feel good and come to my home. They are so nice.

Xiang: People trap themselves mentally, you know, nowadays, people live in countries, I don't know whether outside is. But in China, we move. I moved from my hometown to Beijing. A lot of people they move to Beijing, like they gather to the biggest cities and this is actually another kind of life, like, I said, just people live on the grassland, and people like me always moving. It's actually the same. It's just I don't live in the grassland

Marie: You are a new nomadic tribe?

Xiang: Yeah, yeah. And there is a girl I met in Vipassana, she did the same in Europe. She moved from Iceland and always moving and another guy said, you are a new gypsie. And this, this is uh, this brain has this kind of... it's a feeling of homeless, not homeless, we don't have like strong feeling that we should come back to home. Last generation, they always have this kind of feeling to go back home eventually. You should settle down where you were born, because it's your hometown. And we don't have this feeling of hometown

Marie: You don't have a feeling of home or hometown?

Xiang: This is interesting

Marie: Home maybe not so much about the place, it's more about the people you are with that give you a feeling of home

Xiang: I understand, but even that kind of feeling, I don't need that much.

Marie: You don't need the feeling of home?

Xiang: Yeah, because my mom, she wants to move to Chengdu but when she considered she wouldn't have friends there, there is no like the community she is used to, she feels fear and she won't do that. But for me I can move to anywhere if I need, even my friends are not there, I can make

new friends, Yeah, it's just why I don't have that kind of strong feeling that I should settle down.

Marie: Yeah, and you are still young

Xiang: Yeah, it's true. But except Chinese, everyone will say you are young. But Chinese will say, "you are twenty-four, why don't you get married?" (laugh). They will say... "you are twenty-four, you don't have boyfriend? You need a boyfriend". And when I come back home, during the new year, "find a boyfriend, get married or you will be too late".

Xiang: In Xinjiang and Tibet, I began to notice I'm an Han and they are Tibetan, how do you say, Uyghur

Marie: you began noticing you were Han?

Xiang: Uyghur, yeah, and I began to realize yeah, we are something different. But before I went there, I didn't realize.

Marie: It's what we call the mechanism of power, is that you are the dominant, the ethny, I don't know if you can call it that but, you put domination on people, like France did it really well in Africa when we show them how to live, the values... So We went thinking we were superior. That's interesting that you realized that. That's what travel does.

Xiang: Because there is so many, inequality even now. When I was in Xinjiang, because I'm Han so I can pass a lot of check post very quickly but if you are not, if you are a minority, they will check you, again, and again. And sometimes, the place stand on the road. And the car pass by and you have to roll down the window so that the police can check and what kind of people you are. And they can figure out the Hans, like we look a little different. So they they can notice... oh, this car is full of Hans so go. But if there is... well, they will... (stop the car)

Marie: So racism?

Xiang: Yeah, but not for... I guess it's... it's a little different the racism compares to America. There is because out of America, you are from Africa, you are not one of our culture. But, in China, they are originally part of our country. But you still treat them like that. But if I were them, I would feel so angry. I could do crazy things too. It's something that accumulate. When you put it strictly, more strict, they will have more the desire to do some bad things. So it's not a solution.

Marie: That's what I like about Nepal is that, they are so different, so many ethnies, Sherpa, Tamang... They don't have a main one and I feel like everybody is kind of getting along.

Xiang: It's like they belong to the same country.

2 - 03:30 > 05:00 [Pas de thématique]

Marie: I have a question, I'm meeting a lot more women than men from China that travel?

Xiang: Yeah... There is so many reasons. But I can think of one is that women, the status of women is becoming better and better in China and we have more choice now even still... it's better then before so we are seeking for to be independent, to... to know more and the men. It seems they care more about something.. something more reality to make money and to become successful at their career. So they don't have that much time to enjoy, yeah. And finally, society puts more pressure actually on men. Like "you need to..." parents have higher hope for men, more than women (laugh).

Marie: So that's a good thing that you are a woman?

Xiang: What they hope for woman is that you get married, like marry a good husband who is rich and has a good social status, something like that. So actually, sometimes you have more freedom, something like that, because of that.

Marie: So is it an advantage to be a woman?

Xiang: Yes... It depends on what you want, if you seek power, than it will be worse for you, if you want to be a leader, it's harder for you than men, especially in certain career like politics. If you want to be a politician, it must be harder but

if you want to be a teacher, it's easier... They still hope we are meant to be stable but it just sometimes young girls want to pick some adventures.

CHENG

Marie: How long have you been in Nepal for?
Cheng: From this January to next January, for one year
Marie: So you just arrived?
Cheng: Yes,
Marie: Two months ago
Cheng: Yes, for seven year.
Marie: Just for one year?
Cheng: Yes, because every year they have different long-term volunteer, it changes
Marie: So long term volunteering for you is one year?
Cheng: Yeah, yeah.
Marie: Because usually, how long is the volunteering program?
Cheng: Just one year, if you want to stay longer... it's...
Marie: How did you find this program?
Cheng: It's mostly one year uh... when I study in Malaysia... (speaking Chinese). She is the long-term volunteer also from last year.
Marie: So are you finished with volunteering now?
Niu Niu: No, no
Cheng: She is at half a year
Marie: Do you also train in agriculture?
Niu Niu: No my major is not agriculture, my major is journalism.
Marie: But what do you volunteer in?
Niu Niu: Before he came here, I did many things in school. I needed to do everything, yeah, everything. Like an employee, not like a volunteer.
Li: Have you tried this restaurant before?
Marie: Yeah, yeah, I have been here it's really good. I came with a girl from Vietnam and she was like... yeah, that's better in Vietnam.
Li: I'm already happy to have that.
Marie: It changes from dal Bhat?
Li: Actually here, there is not so many choices, this restaurant and the Java Coffee, Crazy Gecko, that's nearby our guest house, it's pass the freedom coffee, a little more further, near by the water front.
Marie: What do they cook?
Cheng: Momo, chowMein, fried rice. Pork ribs, barbecue and some... it's really nice
Cheng: They made a documentary movie
Marie: Who?
Cheng: Our organization association, they made a movie
Marie: What's the name of the association?
Cheng: Chinese Rock Leadership. (speaking Chinese)
Marie: So Chinese Rock Leadership Association
Niu Niu: And they always called C.R.L.A.
Marie: And where is it based?
Cheng: In Taiwan.
Marie: Do they have a lot of volunteers?
Cheng: No
Marie: And it's only in Nepal or it's everywhere in South east Asia?
Cheng: They have different station, one is in Nepal, one is in North Thailand and another one in India.
Marie: And you run a program according to your major in university?
Cheng: I studied business admin but of course because we are all Christians
Marie: It's a Christian organization?
Cheng: Yeah, they brought the... I knew it because of the founder of the organization CRLA, he went to Malaysia to

give some speech in church so that's how I know him. I want to meet him. So we discuss of after my graduation and I want to have a one year gap. So that's why I choose him.

Marie: Why did you choose Nepal?
Cheng: Because in Thailand it's teaching Chinese, mandarin, it's teaching mandarin in school and I love the nature most, India is not a good place for the nature, yeah.
Marie: It depends where you go.
Cheng: Yeah but the place there was city, I was more like a popular area. So I choose here because I love nature
Marie: That's cool
Cheng: And I quite love Nepalis
Marie: They have their very own sense of time which can get sometimes under your skin but...
Niu Niu: You mean Nepali, their time culture is not so good (laugh). Our local partner say, "oh we move at eight and I'm ready for him but maybe the real time actually is ten or twelve. He say: "no rushing, there is no rushing" "How no rushing, you wasted my time all day". So terrible!
Marie: It sometimes get under my skin as well.
Niu Niu: And their domestic airline also like that.
Marie: Yeah, that's why I take the bus.
Niu Niu: But the bus is so terrible right?
Marie: It's ok, it's cheap and a long time but...
Niu Niu: You know last time, my friend and me we went to Kathmandu. We just arrived in Kathmandu but we weren't close to Thamel. But we want to get off at Thamel. Just only let us out. We went for two hours in the traffic jam of Kathmandu.
Marie: It is bad
Niu Niu: We also say we want to carry our luggage and we want to walk.
Marie: They have taxi at the station but they ripe you out two hundred rupees when Thamel is just right there. (speaking Chinese)
Marie: So did you meet Nathan? The other volunteer from America.
Niu Niu: We just meet Gareth
Cheng: I haven't meet him yet
Li: I introduce Niu Niu to him and they talked about farming.
Marie: We knows his way around farming, he has been here for two years. It's his third year right now.
Li: And he finishes volunteering.
Marie: He is finished in fifteen days I think.
Li: Only fifteen days left?
Marie: I think he is staying here until June, I think they are going to go to China with Ai.
Li: uh... Ai
Marie: No, I don't think they are going to meet the parents of Ai. If they meet, it means wedding, and Ai was like... "not ready for that". I think if you meet the parents in China, it means wedding?
Li: No, she is from Sichuan, so the South part people maybe a little bit traditional but the North part people, we don't care. Ai is the same age as me and I'm already married almost two years.
Marie: You have been married two years?
Li: Yes. (Speaking Chinese)
Li: She met Ai before but she didn't meet Gareth
Marie: Yeah, he was in his village.
Li: he always go to his village.
Marie: Yeah, in West Nepal
Li: He goes by bicycle
Marie: In his village, really?
Li: Yeah, he goes by bicycle.
Marie: From here... wow.
Li: I always think, if you can take the bus, why do you go by bicycle... He just loves biking.

Marie: It also might be the best option in Nepal, to go by bike because the bus from here to the West, I think is twenty-four hours

Li: Last time he goes same village or different village. He goes by bicycle. I don't know exactly (speaking Chinese).

Li: Do you eat pork? uh... beef... You want to try?

Marie: Thank you but I had a big lunch already.

Marie: Where are you from in China?

Cheng: Xi'an

Marie: And you are from...

Niu Niu: Taiwan...

Marie: I went to Taipei last year

Cheng: My hometown is in Taipei.

Marie: I loved it so much there. I had the best time.

Marie: Is it common in China to take a gap year and volunteer like that?

Cheng: No it's not common. You have to find a job immediately after you graduate. Me... I didn't tell my parents I'm here

Niu Niu: Yeah... he is so ridiculous

Li: He is a really good liar

Cheng: They think I'm still in Malaysia working in Malaysia (laugh)

Marie: Really... Is it really not acceptable?

Cheng: uh... not really because my father is a missionary so he might think it's good to be here to help the people but thinking, the mind it's different.

Marie: But the job you are doing here is kind of what your father does, right?

Cheng: uh... yeah. Some kind of... but my father works in church more. But for me, they think... a lot of people in the church raise me up so they think, I will upset them when you are doing such a thing that you are not making any money. You cannot make a thing if you are doing it for free

Marie: You can't do it for free, you have to get paid?

Cheng: But now I'm doing it for free.

Marie: Of course, volunteering is for free

Cheng: Yeah, but for them, for the church... they make think... "Why are you doing this?" Because, they have been paying for my university

Marie: The church pays for university?

Cheng: Yes, one part is from church the other part is from my father.

Marie: From you parents, ok...

Cheng: No, no, no from the church.

Marie: So they sponsor you to go to Malaysia?

Cheng: Yeah... to help in university?

Marie: Your English is really really good right now.

Cheng: I study in China before in Phonics, do you know Phonetics

Marie: Phonetics?

Cheng: P H O N E T I C S. It's a way to learn English. It's from Australia, it's uh.... (speaking Chinese)

Marie: And so why did you go to Malaysia for your studies?

Cheng: ...

Marie: Why... why did you go there?

Cheng: I learnt English in China so it's an opportunity for me to go out for university.

Marie: That's something you wanted to do?

Cheng: I just don't want to stay in China, I want to get out from China because I get out of my parent's hand.

Marie: Ok.

Cheng: I'm a guy who wants to explore adventure, I don't want to stay in one place for a long time.

Marie: And your parents they want that for you? They want you to stay in Xi'an?

Cheng: Yes, they like Xi'an. And they ask me to come back and I say "No, I won't go back". I haven't been back for two years.

Marie: uh... troublemaker?

Cheng: Yeah, it's like a cage for me. Because, when I was young, they pray so they don't give a shit about me but when I go out, they want to control me. But it's impossible because when you raise a child that openly when you raise a child, once he grow up, you want to control him it's really hard. So I don't like to be control, I like to make my own decision.

Marie: So after you volunteer here, do you... do you have a plan or?

Cheng: I have three plans: the first plan is to go back to Malaysia to continue my master there because my principal, my university principal he offered me

Marie: Scholarship?

Cheng: Kind of a scholarship but for personal, it's not from the school side. He wanted to offer me support to pay for eighty percent of the fees, school fees and also offer me a job in the university also. So this is one option for me.

Marie: Still in business?

Cheng: Yes but it's for blue ocean strategy

Marie: What?

Cheng: Blue ocean strategy. It's actually sort of MBA but it's higher than a normal MBA. It's just in this few years, it's very popular. So he offered me... And another one is I want to go to Australia for working holidays... Earn some money, after one year I may go to Norway for another university.

Marie: To Norway?

Cheng: Yeah, because Norway... Because I heard about Norway government university is free.

Marie: Yeah, same in France.

Cheng: The government school?

Marie: Yeah. But if you like the nature, Norway is a good place to go

Cheng: Yes, I want to go to Norway for the nature. So that's why I plan another option is working holiday in Australia to make some money at least the air flight ticket (laugh) (speaking Chinese) . Yeah, because I have a friend in Australia, he can help me so I don't need to worry about the life there.

Marie: Yeah, and it's easy.

Cheng: Yes, so this is second option. The third option is stay here for another year. Maybe I can... maybe this year I haven't done any work so maybe next year I have to continue some of the work. Because pass to another one maybe take a long time to get familiar with the job. Maybe I'm not sure.

Marie: Was there somebody before you were... before you, was there a volunteer?

Cheng: It's her

Marie: So you are passing on

Cheng: Yeah, but this time is very special because two volunteers working together, it's the first time. Previously it's one year. So it's the first time, two volunteers.

Marie: So you don't consider going back to China?

Cheng: No, never!

Marie: Like never ever?

Cheng: Not never ever but of course I will go back to visit but I want go back to work to Kuala, have my life there.

Marie: So what are the things you don't like about the life in China?

Cheng: They force me to get married. Of course not for me! Niu Niu: They force him to marry someone and they also help him to find someone,

Li: Why don't you go see... maybe that's your true love

Cheng: No! No, no!

Marie: Lia, you know that does not happen like that (laugh) , don't be a princess.

Cheng: I f I have a child and a wife... come on. It's like a cage for me.

Marie: My husband lets me go wherever... you never know, my marriage isn't a cage.

Cheng: Chinese girls they don't like it. Last year, of course I fell in love with a Chinese girl from China but study English as well. But once we talked about the future I told her about my future what I will do and take a one-year gap in Nepal and maybe next year I will go back to Malaysia. But for the future it's going up but it's not fix thing for me. But for her, I want a stable life, I want to find a boyfriend always be with me and doesn't go to other places. She wanted security. So I said, "ok, let break out". We didn't get into... and she found another boyfriend, a local Malaysian.

Li: So she will stay in Malaysia

Cheng: Yeah, a Malaysia Chinese. (speaking Chinese)

Li: The Chinese girl found a boyfriend but he is not Christian

Marie: He is Muslim?

Cheng: No, Malaysian Chinese

Marie: And that's going to be a problem?

Cheng: Yeah... but it's her problem now.

Li: And he said that lady's parents really liked him

Marie: Yeah, business major and Christian, you are a good deal.

Cheng: It's hard to find a girl that actually supports me.

Marie: Yeah, it's good to feel supported

Niu Niu: So now your husband is in France?

Marie: Yes, he works there, he comes with me but my job now requires that a travel a little bit

Cheng: (Speaking Chinese)

Marie: I have a question though, since I have been in Pokhara, I have seen a lot more women from China that are here and doing their business and doing their life and a lot less men. Why is that? Do you have more family and social pressure on your back than women?

Cheng: Yes, of course. Yes.

Marie: Can you explain that to me because I'm not sure I understand.

Cheng: Explain about the pressure?

Marie: Like family pressure...

Cheng: The first thing is the... because in China there is the one child policy. Most of the people my age are from a one child family. So of course you have to care about your parents life. I mean when they are getting older and older, you have to take care of them. This is one of the pressure. The second pressure is if you have a wife and your wife is also from a one child family, the two families become your responsibility.

Marie: But it's not only one the man's shoulder, is it?

Cheng: For Chinese culture, it's like that, the man has to carry all the family. It's like... everything is one your shoulder it's not on the woman side. If I have a girl, maybe, it's like her marry the family of the man, and "you are the half son to me. I gave my daughter to you so you are a half son to me. You have to take care of us as well". So that's why for the man, he carries two families. If the parents have grandparents... then wow... the whole family... it's very much pressure. And most of the marriage they, they think it's the same level. If they don't have the same level, it's very hard to get married. So a lot of arranged marriage will come out.

Marie: You would have to get married to somebody...

Cheng: The same level, financial level, the education level. It's quite hard to find someone that your parents will accept. So this is also one of the problem. And another problem is the marriage problem. If you want to get married, you have to buy a house, have a car and of course from the girl side, she wants the house and the car to be under your name, not under your parents' name. So they want to property to be under you, the husband and wife. So you have to buy a new house. You cannot live with your parents. You have a new house, a new car. If no car, it's ok, but the house... you have to have a car. So lot of pressure.

Marie: So you are not going back to that?

Cheng: Of course... why would I? I won't have that kind of life. Of course for the freshman, you want to buy a house, even though your parents have money, it's just like you are taking loan to buy a house, you have to pay back every month so you have to work hard, find a fixed job, a stable job for yourself. And uh... that kind of life is everyday going on the same and you have to fight for the house, fight for the family and if you have a child, double trouble (laugh) (exemple de discours d'une classe moyenne educuée, option de vie)

Marie: I can't have imagine that

Cheng: So they force me to get married, I said "No, why do you want me to get married?"

Marie: How old are you?

Cheng: twenty-four, still young.

Cheng: They force me to go back, every time I call back, they force me to come back, I say : "NO! you send me out and I'm never coming back. It's your problem you send me out and now you want me to go back? Never!"

Marie: Could you imagine though, living in a different city in China?

Cheng: No way!

Marie: Why?

Cheng: No, no, no...

Li: It's a little bit relax in the South part. North part is really busy. In the North part, people don't know how to relax. The South part is better. Even some part of the North is good.

Marie: Yes but the North is cold

Li: Yes but we have heater.

Marie: I guess if you go to Norway, you are not scared of cold. There is that much snow in Norway, it's horrible

Cheng: But it's cool!

Marie: Do you ski?

Cheng: No, no... I have never tried before

Marie: In Norway, like, for six months that's all you do.

Li: You can buy a husky, husky.

Marie: yeah, and a sled.

Cheng: If I go to Norway, I will try it.

Marie: Have you plan on doing any trekking in Nepal?

Cheng: For now, no, because... maybe it's a bit expensive for me, uh... when I came here, my mentor from America gave me some money.

Marie: You have a mentor from America?

Cheng: Yeah

Marie: How did you get in touch?

Cheng: Christian

Marie: oh... Christian community

Cheng: He is actually a teacher in China, he teaches English, that's why we met in China. He gave me some money and also my university principal gave me some money so I have some money. So I have to save money.

Marie: And so this Christian organization, do they, kind of provide... do they give you food and housing for free?

Cheng: No, we have to pay, but the housing of course not because we live in the school for free. But for food we have to pay ourselves.

Niu Niu: But I can cook by myself wo I don't need to buy... I have a kitchen.... uh... We don't have to volunteer in one time in the same school because something happens in our organization maybe the leader has some problem I don't know. Just we can't understand some things. So now we have two volunteers here. Usually we only have one volunteer and step by step, usually come here and stay one month and I tell him about my work and after one month I left.

Marie: It has to be nice to be two, you can exchange and make bigger project I guess?

Cheng: We work in a different filed, she is taking care of the school.

Niu Niu: Now, we separate our job but before, I take all the job, take care of the school and also give the salary every

month and I also give the chicken farm worker and coffee farm workers and also our NGO secretary.

Marie: you know you should plant the tree where the little beads grow on

Niu Niu: Mala...

Marie: It's extremely popular.

Li: But this tree needs a long time to grow, same like coffee beans, three, four years.

Marie: What do they do with it?

Li: (speaking Chinese) I don't know how to explain

Marie: Is it a religious thing?

Li: Yeah, Buddhist, meditation and they count, clean the body and mind. They believe it has some special power.

Marie: growing that would make a lot of money in the village

Li: My friend, they go to the village and they bring good quality and send them to China. They go directly to the village but it's little dangerous but because this is really expensive. People will carry it so much cash, it's a little dangerous, it happens sometimes that people get robbed.

Marie: Do you like Pokhara? Do you like to come here?

Cheng: uh... not really

Marie: Why don't you like it?

Cheng: I will come to Pokhara, once a week or once a month just to send my report because there is wifi but I like the mountain more. Reading... I read books I just finished my third book and I'm going to start my fourth books.

Marie: What do you read?

Cheng: Narnia, I must finish it and ...

Marie: Desen...

Cheng: It's about a girl, she goes to Rome to meet some guy there... it's kind of a love story. And Narnia, I read Narnia.

Marie: Do you read in English?

Cheng: Yeah, the whole book is in English.

Marie: Yeah, I like to read in English to keep up with the language.

Cheng: Yes, with the words I don't understand the meaning I just make some notes to search for the meaning of it. I can learn new words as well. That's what I'm doing now.

Marie: And when you are in Pokhara, do you stay overnight or?

Cheng: Because we actually have a... we have a local mom.

Marie: A local what?

Cheng: Mom, in the mountain side and her brother is in Pokhara, so everytime we come down, we can stay at his apartment, her brother's house. And her brother is really taking care of us. He gave us food and a place to stay.

Marie: Do you go to restaurants when you are in Pokhara?

Cheng: Of course, go to some Chinese restaurant, Chinese food.

Marie: What's the best, best Chinese restaurant?

Cheng: Shaanxi restaurant, it's a noodle place. I'm from Shaanxi so the noodle is actually from my home town. Every time I go there oh... it's like my home. What I miss more about my home is the food. (laugh). I didn't celebrate Chinese New Year with my family for six years. This is the sixth year.

Marie: Are they ok with it?

Cheng: No choice. They don't have a choice. They ask me to go back I said... Because in Malaysia, we only have three days of holiday for Chinese New Year. So I didn't go back

Marie: do they still celebrate it?

Cheng: Yes they have three days, the last day, the first day and the second day. They only have that.

Marie: How did you choose Malaysia? Did you...

How did you choose Malaysia? Did you...

Cheng: By an agent

Marie: oh, through an agent?

Cheng: Yeah

Marie: Did you have other options?

Cheng: Korea and America and Philippines.

Marie: So why did you choose Malaysia?

Cheng: Uh... because Philippines is to study Bible, a bible college, and uh... America is quite expensive. I can go but for my family, it puts a lot of pressure on them.

Marie: Like financial pressure

Cheng: Of course. And Korea, because then, I have to learn Korean because it's not taught in English, it's taught in Korean, so I have to leave my English behind and learn a new language. For me, no, I don't want it so Malaysia was the best option for me. At that time...

Marie: Did you learn Malaysian language?

Cheng: In university yes, but after the class, after the subject, I pass the subject and I forget everything. Because, most of the people, Malay people, they speak English. The Chinese, India, they don't speak, English or their own language. So, it's not so much we can use Malay language to communicate so it's very easy to forget. So just some of the words I can understand, the basic words but it's not every word.

Marie: Did you always wanted to go abroad for your studies or was it something... When did you know you wanted to study abroad?

Cheng: After my high school, yeah, my high school is an English school and I met a lot of people there. It's actually a school with all Christians from different provinces (Lia, is leaving) . And because we have a lot of foreign teachers, from America, from Australia, Singapore. So it's kind of... they teach us more about foreign countries, I have... I thought, if I can go abroad, why not. I just want to explore new things and new country, new world. I just want to try. And uh... I have this kind of thinking, especially last year, Chinese New Year. I spent Chinese New Year alone, I used couch surfing, you know couch surfing?

Marie: Yeah

Cheng: And I travel to Penang, Malaysia, Penang. and I met a lot of European there and we celebrated Chinese New Year together and we drank in the bar and we talked a lot things. and I have... some of them are in gap year, some of them, they are just bored of the working life, they quite their job and travel around, do volunteer works, teaching English and lots of things. And just travel around. Some of them they travel around over ten years. So I was like: "oh ! This also can be a life choice", it's not always, you have a job and every day you have to take care for your job, this is not, this is called life but their life is also called life. Why can I not be one of them to have this kind of life? I can travel around to see the world and see the amazing world. I can do a lot of things it's not just do one job in one place. So actually, I was inspired by them.

Marie: You were inspired by them?

Cheng: A lot of European people, from Norway, from France, from Italy, from England, from Sweden, from Iceland, from Germany. They just enjoy their life and do lots of things.

Marie: There is a lot of these people in Pokhara as well, a lot of them.

Cheng: This also can be called life.

17 - 1:19:02 > 1:20:02 [On other travelers]

Marie: Was it easy easy to meet this people?

Cheng: It's actually through couch surfing.

Marie: Were they staying in the same....

Cheng: No, no, no... because couch surfing they have one meeting a week, every week and that time, the last day before Chinese New Year, they had the meeting. So, I attend the meeting and got to know a lot of people there.

Marie: Ok. How did you learn about couch surfing? In China or in Malaysia?

Cheng: In Malaysia, I heard about it in Malaysia

Marie: Do you use that now when you travel?

Cheng: No, because I don't travel a lot, but when I was in Taiwan, I used CouchSurfing.

18 - 1:20:02 > 1:22:02 [About China]

Marie: Did you like Taiwan?

Cheng: Yes, I like Taiwan, so much!

Niu Niu: Don't come to Taiwan! I don't want him to come to Taiwan.

Marie: Why?

Niu Niu: I don't know, there is a gap...

Cheng: Political thing

Marie: oh....

Niu Niu: (Speaking Chinese)

Marie: I have heard a little bit about the problem.

Niu Niu: Yeah, it sometimes he speaks some Chinese but I don't understand. He said, "oh, we usually called that" and I say "It's a different culture you know"... He say, "Taiwanese is a wonderful part of Chinese" so I'm so angry!

Marie: Do you think Taiwan is a part of China?

Cheng: (laugh)

Marie: No it's ok...

Cheng: Yeah, no... we are all Chinese, she always says "I'm Taiwanese", well Taiwanese is also Chinese.

Marie: Well the local population isn't Chinese, is it? The aboriginal... Are they?

Cheng: Yes of course

Niu Niu: No they are not.

Marie: Don't they have their own language?

Niu Niu: Yeah, and now they are in the low. They have like fourteen groups in aboriginal, they have their own costume, their language, alcohol and food.

Cheng: In China we have fifty-six... but when they go out, they are Chinese.

Marie: Because they have a Chinese passport?

Niu Niu: No, we are different.

Cheng: You know before I go to Taiwan, in Malaysia, people say, Taiwanese don't like Chinese people, but when I was there, they talk to me especially in the South of Taiwan they hate China people most.

Marie: Why?

Cheng: But when I was there, they like Chinese people and they like people from mainland China, and they love to talk about history things, to share the history things and they love Chinese people, they don't hate.

Marie: Maybe it's the government they don't like

Cheng: Yeah, it's actually the government, from the government side.

Cheng: The people don't care about the political thing (arguing in Chinese), I mean the local people, especially the old people, they love China (arguing in Chinese)

Marie: They might be scared of what they could lose if the government took over. Because of the example set by Hong-Kong and Macao.

Niu Niu: Yes, the situation is bad

Marie: Maybe Taiwan doesn't that.

Niu Niu: But we have our own president

Marie: Yes, it's a woman! Cool!

Niu Niu: Yes, it's the first one in Asia

Cheng: China would treat Taiwan different from Hong-Kong and Macao

Marie: Why?

Cheng: Because Hong-Kong and Macao is actually two, it's England and Portugal which took over and then return it back. But for Taiwan it's a different case. For Hong-Kong, they cannot have... it's actually one country, but different policies.

Niu Niu: They are a special district in China.

Cheng: Yes, it's different policies, they cannot have their own army but for Taiwan, give the policy is you can have your

own government, your own army but for a world, it's one country.

Marie: But do you think...

Cheng: It's a different treatment

Marie: But Xi Jinping is quite strong.. he is tough and so... I don't know if China... if the government, the government is to take over Taiwan, I think, it would be pretty bad, they would just, newspaper, elections... just pfff... done, finish...

Cheng: They already have influenced...

Marie: Yeah?

Cheng: Yeah, of course.

Niu Niu: I'm so proud because I'm Taiwanese, I don't want to be a Chinese.

Cheng: Chinese doesn't mean from China, Chinese means... Chinese looking, Chinese talking... it's called Chinese.

Niu Niu: I'm so proud because I can write.

Cheng: Yes, I can't, I didn't learn it. But it's ok, I love traditional Chinese because some traditional Chinese is actually from the Bible

>Marie: oh really?

Cheng: Some of the words is created is because of the god.

Marie: oh...

Cheng: They have lots of pinyin in traditional Chinese but now it's change to simplify Chinese, they cannot see the path. But when you see traditional Chinese part, there is a lot of part is like actually link to the Bible. Like, word righteousness in traditional Chinese is the "lamb died for me", it's the righteousness in traditional Chinese. But in simplify Chinese, you cannot see that, only in traditional Chinese.

Marie: Why can't you not see that? Because it was too hard to understand?

Cheng: No, simplified is very simple life so you cannot see the meaning. But traditional Chinese you can.

Marie: Is it difficult in China to be Christian?

Cheng: Not now but the first time, yeah. Now Xi Jinping is more open unless you don't make any trouble, it's fine for me. Yeah, you can have your own fellowship, you can have your private fellowship, you don't need to attend your government fellowship. Now it's ok but previous time, it's very...

Marie: When, what does previous time mean?

Cheng: I think it's before 2000. Before 2006.

Marie: In 2006 it changed.

Cheng: More open, more open-minded unless you make trouble.

Marie: I didn't... I mean I knew about Christians in China, but I don't know much about it.

Cheng: Lot of Christians maybe because I'm from Christian family so I meet a lot of Christians so they I know there are a lot of Christians in China. Because all the people around me is Christians.

Marie: Is there like places in China where there is more Christians?

Cheng: South part I think is more Christian than the North part. Because there is a lot of missionaries from other country they are actually from the South.

Marie: Have you been to Italy?

Cheng: No, of course no

Marie: Have you been?

Niu Niu: I have been to UK and France before when I was eleven and twelve years old.

Niu Niu: Because that time I join a chorus and we had a contest in UK and also we had a performance in a French church

Marie: Where in France?

Niu Niu: we went to Paris, I saw many tourist places there: the Paris tower, we went to the museum, Le Louvre and also another famous museum

Cheng: The Palace

Marie: Versailles

Niu Niu: And we also went to Chinese church for performance. We also went to Disney, we always make a line for waiting like to play. But we stay there all day and we went out for dinner, we also went there to see the fireworks.

Marie: I think they just open a Disney in Shanghai and you can only, there is so many people, so many every day that if you go you can only do one thing or two because you wait whole day. In Paris it's pretty alright

Niu Niu: I would like to go back to Europe again because I was in elementary school. That time I saw many things but I didn't know it was the most famous tourist place in the world. But when I go back Taiwan, I started reading a lesson and I saw... this is so famous... oh I saw it. But that time I don't know, and my mom cut my hair and I'm so ugly I don't want to take photo anymore, I hate that photo, so terrible.

Marie: Both of you, so far, your best experience in Nepal? What's the thing you have preferred? (They speak Chinese, just like they can't decide) or the worst?

Niu Niu: The worst? Many!

Cheng: When she came, she had a lot of troubles

Niu Niu: He knows. I can tell you: she told me about the trouble she had when she flew in Kathmandu because her supervisor hadn't arrived yet and didn't tell her anything about where they should meet in Thamel, there was no electricity in the airport so she couldn't find her luggage, but then they realize her luggage didn't come through and stay in Singapore. Then she got really sick in September during Dasein

Marie: So Nepal is your first travel abroad solo?

Niu Niu: I also went to Japan, alone by myself but my cousin study there so... And it's so safe and my arrive time is afternoon, so it's easy for me. But usually my arrive time in Nepal is ten, ten thirty although the original time is ten five but always delay! You know taxi man like the devil, they always call you come, come...

Marie: You have the fixed price taxi, the one that cost seven hundred rupees

Niu Niu: Yeah but that time, I didn't know. Last Sunday, before I come back, I asked my friend if I could stay with him for on night and he said he could come to pick me up.

Marie: Nice

Niu Niu: (non interesting stories about her stay in Nepal) She tells about how she is becoming independent.

Niu Niu: I think just like the way of life, I can, I can... I know how to save the water in the mountain, I also cook by myself because in Taiwan I never cook because my parents can cook for me and I can get food easy outside. I say I need to cook but after I come here, because I don't like to eat Dal Bhat every day, so I should know how to cook.

Marie: So you became more independent, clearly.

Niu Niu: Before I was also independent in Taiwan, I can take care of my life but I stay in my house, I never left my house, it's my first time I left my house and it's also a big challenge for my parents because I'm the daughter and I never left the house and sometimes they miss me but they can't called me immediately because the signal is so week in the mountain. And I think this time when I go back to Taiwan, I told my family, "you see, the distance between us is so nice because you won't see me every day and you will miss me every day" Before we argue everyday with my mom because we have the same personality. We don't fight but always argue.

Marie: Why did you choose Nepal?

Niu Niu: Because five years ago I came here and I was a short-term volunteer and I join a service and only for sixteen days. That time I was the photographer of the group. And that time, it's my first service experience in my life. I didn't choose the place in Taiwan. That time, for this service, I saved money by myself. I told my parents, I want to come

here. They say, "If you want to go there, you need to earn money by yourself". But that time I was just seventeen years old, I had graduated from high school. I don't have any money in my bank account. Just like, if I want to get something, I need to get a scholarship, so that time, I worked in the market, I mean like the traditional market, we sell something from morning to night, every day, only two months. And it was summer vacation, it was really hot in Taiwan.

Marie: How did you meet Lia by the way?

Niu Niu: Because my last volunteer she knows her and before I come here, my last volunteer introduces me to her. Because she says, "we are Taiwanese and we don't have friends in Lakeside and sometimes if you come to Pokhara Lakeside, someone can take care of you". And we are girls, we can take care of each other, we can talk and have coffee together.

Niu Niu: Sometimes I feel so lonely in the mountain also.

Marie: How often do you come here? In Pokhara Lakeside

Niu Niu: Once a week or once every two weeks. Because I usually come here and buy vegetables to cook. And the local people press me that I'm good at cooking Taiwanese food, I'm so happy.

Marie: Yeah, Lakeside is fun, there is a lot of things to do.

Niu Niu: I like Pokhara better than Kathmandu. Kathmandu is so much dust. They should call it Kathmandust, not Kathmandu.

Marie: So you know I'm doing this interview because I'm doing a PhD on travels. So, if you guys, I can get your emails and whenever I'm done I can send you my PhD

Niu Niu: What's your topic?

Marie: (I tell them the encounter in Solukhumbu)

Explanation about how my PhD started

Cheng: But nowadays, there are a lot of travelers from China, you can see that

Marie: I know, but there is not much information about them
Cheng: But... the thing, is they want to go out to travel but it's only for the famous place. They don't travel like in Europe to enjoy the life.

Marie: What do you mean?

Cheng: They want travel somewhere is because of the famous place, it's not because of the culture or the people, because of the local culture. It's just because there is something famous. Everyone go so I should know.

Marie: Well, for the Chinese backpackers as well?

Cheng: Backpackers no...

Marie: But I'm not interested in group travel, I don't study group travel.

Cheng: So you are studying backpackers

Marie: I'm interested in the Balinghou and the Jiulinghou. Because a lot of things have been written on them because it's a very specific generation. You are very different from your parents

Cheng: yeah, yeah, true

Marie: They grew up in a different China, it's almost like two different countries

Cheng: Yeah, yeah

Marie: (talking about my PhD) and I thought that traveling is a way to becoming yourself, finding who you are. And finding what you want to do with your life when your parents they are just, you are going to do that, no questions asked, through travel, you are open to different influences (talking more)

Cheng: There can be financial problem (to be able to travel)

Marie: Yeah but the thing is I have seen people here who don't have money but they create things, like clothes and stuff, they sell it on Tao Bao...

Cheng: Yes, they have more opportunities, they can have different business strategies they can use. But you can see lots of people travel around the world. They just travel, they

don't do any business, they just travel. Actually their family finance is good.

Marie: I have actually not met a lot of people financially supported by their family. Just like most of them don't tell their parents they are even abroad. They don't tell them they are outside of China.

Cheng: (Laugh), that's great, that's great!

Marie: That tells you how big is the gap between parents and children.

Niu Niu: But I think it's different from Taiwan because there are many youth people they want to travel, some of my friends they like to travel on some occasion doing the backpacking and went to Australia

Marie: But Taiwan is a different situation than China regarding the traveling (PhD talking)

Cheng: Because their parents control them since they were born, yeah, that's true. But for me, it's not like that.

Marie: But maybe you studied abroad

Cheng: I mean, since I was young, I made my choice, my own choice. My father of course didn't care about me, he cared about the church, the sisters and brothers in the church, but my mother is "Ok, you can make choice for yourself". So, a lot of the choice I made myself. I was very independent since I was young

Marie: It may be due to the "One child policy"

Cheng: Yeah, of course

Marie: (PhD talking)

Cheng: Based on my experience, when they go out only for study, the parents say "Focus on study, the other thing you don't focus on, we will take care of the rest, only study, you don't do anything else". So this is what they face when they are young

Marie: They need the steam to go off.

Cheng: Because I met a lot of Chinese travelers, it's good travelers, maybe they have money so bad experience when I saw Chinese people, I pretend I'm not Chinese

Marie: you pretend you are Korean?

Cheng: Yeah! I was like, I don't know that

Niu Niu: Yeah! When I was in coffee shop

Cheng: Loud, they speak loud, they just don't care about other, "this my world". I was like come on... show some respect please

Niu Niu: Yeah, they are so rude... in a coffee shop, one older woman just talk Chinese to the staff, but you know the staff doesn't know about the Chinese. So my friend and I we just used our laptop and we didn't say anything, and we know we understand Chinese and what she is talking about. She say "I want to order one green tea, green tea, who can help me? who can help me?" And because she is so loud and my friend... says I know Chinese and I can help you. So we helped her. And latter, she called the staff to exchange money to her because she wants to pay in RMB but they only have in rupees and the staff told me, the exchange is near by our shop, so she can go there by herself. But she still say : "I want him to exchange for me" I can't say anything because she always called the staff and after he left I say to the woman : "this is not his duty to help you exchange the money". She is so selfish.

Marie: You know, there is a lot of European groups that can be like that as well and plus, it's normal because they are learning how to travel and you know maybe they don't know how to behave

Cheng: They lost the culture actually, sometimes they just go out... They have money, they can do anything, this is what they are thinking so it's I feel offended in some places, the shop and everything, there is sign saying "No Chinese", yeah, it's true...

Marie: Here?

Cheng: Not here but in Malaysia in some places. "No Chinese people" in some of the places

Marie: Really?

Cheng: Because I study in Malaysia and there is a lot of people from Malaysia that study there so some of the house for rent says "No China people"

Marie: And you don't know why?

Cheng: I know why... They study abroad, they have money they actually just here for the certificate, it's not for the study there. They just goof around, only with Chinese people and they drink wine, they play mahjong and they play, make loud, make noise and of course it influences local people but when I see it, it's very offensive "No China people"

Marie: of course

Niu Niu: Just like Isis and for the Muslim

Marie: Yes

Cheng: Europeans they sometimes are loud the thing is, if you talk to them, they will understand, they will stop, but for the Chinese people, if you talk to them... "No, why should I do it?" The thinking, the mind... it's the mind problem, it's like, why I should listen to you, why do you ask me to stop? If you ask the European people "Ok sorry, we understand". The Chinese people, no, they won't. Most of them, so that's why now the Chinese travelers is very famous in the world. They just go around and bad for everything and just go back. They are so rich they can buy the shop .

FEN

Marie: So you are going back tomorrow flying to Kunming...

Fen: Kunming to Kathmandu. I have to transfer twice...

Marie: Twice? Kathmandu-Kunming and

Fen: And... Jining, it's like a small city that belong to Shandong province

Marie: Ok

Fen: No transfer... just pass there... land there for one hour and fly to Beijing. Long journey. I don't know why there is any airline can make directly flight from Beijing to Kathmandu... I don't know why.

Marie: Yeah... I feel like there would be a lot of business

Fen: Do you want any food?

Marie: No thank you, are you?

Fen: Yeah, I was just waiting for you... (she orders in Chinese a dish of Chow Mein) here, the chef can make really good Chinese food. Very nice.

Marie: What are you doing tonight?

Fen: I have dinner with other friends. Already have breakfast with friends... yeah...

Marie: Where are you going for dinner?

Fen: I'm not sure they are... they wanted to go to the French... French restaurant but we have already eaten there a lot... I don't know maybe...

Marie: You have been eating a lot at this French place?

Fen: Yeah.

Marie: Are your friends all French?

Fen: They are from Venezuela... a big group.

Marie: How did you met them? Paragliding?

Fen: Paragliding yeah and my instructor also is Venezuelan.

Marie: How did you meet your instructor?

Fen: Last year, he works in China, yes... I learn paragliding from Shandong.

Marie: How did you get into paragliding? How did you learn about that?

Fen: I think I told you but you forgot... My first time I came here in Pokhara, around 2015, I came here.

Marie: Just to travel?

Fen: Just traveling yeah and I tried to fly paragliding in tandem...

Marie: Yeah

Fen: Yeah... And I thought, it's so nice, I have a good feeling for the paragliding, I enjoyed flying in the sky. So I make plan, someday I can fly the paragliding by myself. Actually, I ask the local pilot if I want to learn how to fly the paragliding, how can I do it? And they say... you can learn here but it's more expensive...

Marie: To learn in Nepal?

Fen: Actually the... just the course is not expensive but you have to buy the glider equipment and oh ! it's expensive. I have not enough money to do it at that moment. I always kept this idea in mind. Last year, I quit my job and I had enough time to do what I want to do.

Marie: When did you buy the paraglider?

Fen: Like...uh... in September

Marie: September... so it's really new?

Fen: Yeah, really new and uh... I'm a new pilot. I just practice half year, from then to now.

Marie: From September to now you have been practicing?

Fen: I got a good experience for paragliding. I just took off twenty time in China and I came here directly but I... when I just come here the third day I flew by myself... not by myself... to an American friend and one of the pilots he had a good experience for paragliding and he guide me and another guy to fly. But I did a mistake, like... I turn wrong and I fly to the lake side and I got sink fast... I lost my altitude fast and I could turn right so I go directly to the tree. Crashed in the tree

Marie: You crashed on the third day you were here?

Fen: Not third day, around six days or seven days but it's my third take off here. My back was... injured but now it's ok, I'm so lucky you know.

Marie: How long did it take you to recover from the injury?

Fen: I just lay in my bed, have rest...

Marie: How long?

Fen: How long... at the beginning I cannot move any more... just lay in bed... around one week I could move... go downstairs. At the beginning I ordered food by phone... I couldn't move out from my bed. After one week I can move and after like ten days, I can go out again.

Marie: Did your friends help you?

Fen: Yeah, yeah... when I got the injury, all of my friends come by my hotel every day, I'm so lucky to have met many friends here. They were all so nice to take care of me. After twenty days, I think I can fly again

Marie: Did you crash or no more crash?

Fen: I don't want no more crash, that was a big warning for me when I crashed. My instructor got so angry

Marie: your what? oh... your instructor.

Fen: Yeah... first he go scared and he was afraid I was...

Marie: That you couldn't walk?

Fen: Yeah... And uh... and then, that moment when he heard on the mic... Because when I crashed in the tree, there is a local lady and she was just passing there and she saw me, she came to me and ask "how are you?" She helped me go pick my glider from the tree and with car, people came to help me and my instructor he has a good friend, he also an acropilot but he is already gone. And he hiked to the top and just passed there and he want to have a look and he saw this was me. Immediately, he called my instructor, when he learnt I crashed he came here to help me and send me to the hospital. Take an x-ray but it was ok. all the bones were no problem. Just the skin and muscle were sour.

Marie: Good, good, check it out in China... Why did you come in Nepal in the first place? What were you doing in Nepal in 2015?

2 - 10:55 > 15:05 [Voyages hors Nepal]

Fen: Actually, I went to Tibet... uh... I like traveling you know. Tibet is a famous place in China so I went to Tibet and I

know... I forgot how I know Nepal... I forgot... Actually, when I went to Tibet, I think before I went to Tibet, I planned for Tibet, like... uh... ten days after, Tibet I go to Kathmandu directly but I forgot I know Nepal and why I want to go to Nepal from Tibet.

Marie: Was it the first time you went abroad? Was it the first time you went to another country?

Fen: Let me think... maybe 2012... I went to Thailand

Marie: You went to Thailand before. How long did you stay?

Fen: Half, half months

Marie: Just like short vacation?

Fen: Yeah... just short vacations with my two best girlfriends.

Marie: Did you go solo or group travel?

Fen: Solo, I don't like the... uh... agency. Yes, just solo, we made good memory, good... I was happy there

Marie: Did you go diving, scuba diving there?

Fen: uh... let me think... no... We just go to Bangkok, Chiang Mai, yeah, That's all. There is a small town in Chiang Mai called uh... Pai, it's a famous place, I went there, that's my first time outside of China

Marie: Did you like it?

Fen: For sure, I really enjoy with my two girlfriends, we grew up together so...

Marie: What did you do in Thailand? Just relax...

Fen: Yeah...relax, and uh... like uh... Go to the forest to see the elephant, and uh... ride a motorbike around the mountain.

Marie: Do you do motorbike in China?

Fen: Yeah

Marie: You have a motor bike in China...

Fen: When I was younger my family have the motorbike but now I don't have. But I like motorbike I can ride.

Marie: It gives you a sense of freedom... I don't ride a motorbike though because I'm really on the moon you know and I don't look at the road... My husband forbids me to drive a motorcycle

Fen: hahaha, it's funny and scary. I have a question... you are already married?

Marie: Yeah

Fen: I didn't know that... Where is you husband?

Marie: He is in France right now...

Marie: Do you have a boyfriend?

Fen: I do not

Marie: You don't know, it's complicated. Is he in Beijing?

Fen: I have a kind of boyfriend before but we broke up, yeah... He was a doctor in Qinghua (a district of Beijing) . This last year... so... I don't think he will stay in China for long maybe after this year he has to go back to Canada.

Marie: Oh... he is from Canada

Fen: Yeah, he is from Canada.

Marie: He speaks Chinese?

Fen: Very good because he has been in China for... this is his sixteenth year.

Marie: He has been in China for sixteen years?

Fen: He live in Taiwan for five years, Shanghai, five years... Beijing six years...

Marie: With his parents?

Fen: No, alone

Marie: How old is he?

Fen: He is sixty-seven... uh... sorry, thirty seven...sorry (laugh)

Marie: How did you meet?

Fen: uh... when I was studying in university... uh... no, no, no. Actually, we meet in a music concert, we have friends together...so... but now we already broke up. I like freedom, I'm not sure... uh...I... I... I don't think I'm a good girl because I like freedom and I always travel out, I cannot stay in one place for long.

[160,0]Marie: Well you just need to find a guy that wants the same things

Fen: Yes, so... I think, why I say you have a nice husband, he can bare

Marie: Yeah, he understands, he understands why I need to do that... and I'm pretty sure they are a lot of men that can understand your need for freedom.

Fen: But... for... I think (her dish is served at this moment), this understanding for foreigner men is like normal, is common but in Chinese... in China... even some guy, he can understand you but the last time we talk about the whole family, his parents cannot understand if you get married, you don't live in your family, in your family and you always go out... it's not possible

Marie: Yes, we talked about that last time. It's a difficult topic. I mean, you know, there is a lot of people also in France that do not uh... that do not really understand how I... and young people too

Fen: Just a minute (she asks for spices)

Marie: I think some people in France don't understand... You just have to find someone that understand your needs... You should just date a paraglider

Fen: Actually, I have a really really good... he can understand... as a friend but not boyfriend, just...

Marie: like a good connection because... if you... if you are... I mean... if you like that kind of freedom and you practice these sports as a paraglider, if you get a boyfriend in that, then he understand your need to travel to paraglide.

Fen: Maybe but... I haven't met anyone so far...

Marie: Not so far?

Fen: Yeah, yeah... (they bring her a sauce)

Marie: What's that?

Fen: It's vinegar... I like this...

Marie: It looks so spicy...

Fen: He can understand how I like the spicy food.

Marie: Is there some Chinese men that paraglide? do you know any?

Fen: They already went back but most of the man are like... uh... older because if you want to fly paragliding you have to have enough money to support flying so I think most of the paragliders are older than me.

Marie: There is a lot of women that do paragliding and you are not old, at all, and Min is not old.

Fen: Because we are different girls

Marie: Indeed

Fen: It's true, it's true really... uh... I think most of my friends, my age, they cannot understand my life.

Marie: I can see that

Fen: Most Chinese girls like my age, they want money and get married and have a baby and...

Marie: Do you want babies?

Fen: I like baby but, uh... spicy...)

Marie: But later I guess... baby later

Fen: After I'm married... for sure... but I don't want to get married early

Marie: You are young too...yeah... you are what, twenty-five, twenty-four?

Fen: Twenty-eight... Who knows? Here I can meet some guy who understands me and I can...

Marie: For sure, you should really not compromise on the person you choose to be your husband

Fen: But you got married early on.

[Marie]: I did... yeah... but for sure I got married young but I think... I don't know, I found the right person to do it so there were no hesitation on my side.

Fen: I think even you got married... you are not like disturbed... it's good. I like this life, even if you are married and you have a husband and you can still enjoy yourself, enjoy your life

Marie: You just need to talk about the life you want... it's all about communication and expressing what you want. How did you like the yoga class yesterday?

Fen: uh... I like yoga but... the teacher she is really nice but because I have a lot of experience for yoga in China, I have yoga class so I made a good professional yoga teacher.

Marie: Yeah, she is young twenty-four so she is doing... started teaching yoga so and then she started teaching so she is probably...

Fen: it's ok... it's ok... in Pokhara you can get some class... it's good enough. I think when you like... when you go traveling and you have like this experience, you can try some new things... like yoga class, I think it's good...

Marie: Have you done anything else apart from paragliding in Pokhara or just paragliding?

Fen: I don't want to leave tomorrow

Marie: I know...Why are you leaving?

Fen: My ex-boss he called me... he wants me to go back and I can get a good salary there

Marie: Yeah, you need money to go to France, right? (she is going to France in September in Annecy to fly)

Fen: Yeah, I need money, a lot of money to support my gliding. I want to learn more about paragliding so I need to earn money to pay paragliding class.

Marie: Sure, are you going to take some more class of paragliding?

Fen: Yeah... I'm going to Turkey in May. I will do the SIV course there (course for safety in Oludeniz)

Marie: Ok... cool... how long are you going to stay in Turkey for?

Fen: Maybe around ten days.

Marie: Is it gonna be your first time in Europe?

Fen: Yeah... for sure

Marie: You are going to love it there, the food is really good

Fen: I saw many photo for Turkey... oh!

Marie: You must be excited!

Fen: I'm going to fly a lot there and when I fly down I can just wear my bikini and lie down on the beach...

Marie: You don't care about being tan?

Fen: I don't care

Marie: Because I think in China it's nice to have a... like a white skin, for you it's not a problem

Fen: I like that, I like this face, not black, not dark... some just talk with me : "are you Chinese? No, no way... you look so dark than other and your skin looks like Nepali girl, Pilipino, you are not Chinese!" Sometimes I say... "I'm really Chinese". I don't care

Marie: It's just that in China, it was really surprising how people avoid the sun. So when you do outdoors activity like paragliding or scuba diving... off course your body is going to be tan...

Fen: When I go back to China, I just got a little... like... my skin recovers and becomes white again and I go out again so I can't keep it white.

[1054,4]Marie: In the west, in Europe and stuff, it's the opposite, the more tan you are the more beautiful you are.

Fen: I know, foreigner... most of foreigner they are like... they don't like white.

Marie: Were you like that before you started traveling? Did you like to be white before... did it change?

Fen: Sometimes I have a different mind... I'm Chinese... I'm a Chinese girl I have to get my skin dark because when I go home in my family... they always say: "Why are you dark and dark... black and black?" Especially my mother... she always says: "You are a girl, you cannot be blacker"

Marie: And plus your mother has a salon, a beauty parlor... of course she wants you to be white...

Fen: But I don't care

Marie: you don't care. Even before paragliding... did you care or like... where you ever like a girly girl?

Fen: When I live in Beijing, sometimes I will make my skin white because yeah... I live in Beijing! (laugh), that's why. My friends always laugh at me... "you cannot get more black!"

Marie: That's alright

Fen: Sometimes they say: "From now, I can only see your teeth, that's it"

5 - 20:19 > 27:29 [On body and sports]

Marie: And have you been flying in India?

Fen: No...

Marie: not yet?

Fen: I want to... because I think when I sometimes come here, in Pokhara, because it's very near India, so I want to go from here directly to India... What's the cost... let me forget this plane.

Marie: You wanted to go to India during this trip

Fen: Yeah, yeah

Marie: And you like it so much in Pokhara that you stayed... Is that what happened?

Fen: I forgot... maybe I didn't have enough money to support me to India so I cancelled it... maybe... But I also want to go to India to have a look.

Marie: Sure, I don't know... I have never been but I heard it's nice. A lot of paragliders say... they have good flight...

Fen: I think you heard this news from Maya...

Marie: Maybe from Maya, she has been to India to fly?

Fen: Yeah... they went to India to take the competition.

Marie: Yeah... true true

Marie: Do you know Maya? Yes, of course...

Fen: But I haven't seen her recently

Marie: I saw her yesterday on the street with her glider and she is like "hey Maya, what's up?", we had diner the other night. She told me all about the kilometers she did today, I went up and down... Telling me all her paragliding stories.

Fen: She is a little different I think, sometimes she has like strange manners... different with others.

Marie: She is so passionate about paragliding it's crazy... she is... she has this passion for it and it's just like... she talks to her instructor everyday... she tells him what she has done...

Fen: All the pilots think when we mention her... "oh!! Crazy girl!"... But sometimes Maya flies in the Sky, if someone takes off before she comes and sometimes... "Maya is coming... ouh! Take off fast".

Marie: Really?

Fen: But she is nice for paragliding, for fly. Sometimes, she has strange manner. Like that guy... do you remember, last time, we met in the Spanish restaurant, Colin he is also different.

Marie: He wants to take me flying "I need to take you on a paraglide" and I was like yes... ok

Fen: He also is different.

Marie: I thought he was into you. Do you think he is? I think he is

Fen: Yeah... yeah... I know that.

Marie: Maybe I'm stepping out here but... When we were at the restaurant he was eating you with his eyes.

Fen: Yes, I know that (laugh)

Marie: Are you meeting tonight, are you going to say bye to him?

Fen: I have to say good bye to him but, I don't know how can I say it because... uh.. when I came here, when I got the crash and during my injury... he took care of me, a lot, you know and uh... he also a nice guy. He is really nice. I want to try to like, to have a date with him but finally I change my mind. I can... I can't stay for long with him... he has many crazy mind.

Marie: Yes... and plus... he has a crazy life... six months in Nepal, six months in Europe, definitely really different.

6 - 27:29 > 31:03 [About China] [ID]

Marie: How did you pick your major in university? You are a fitness and physical activity right?

Fen: Yeah, my major actually is about sports and about... but I also learn, uh... how can I say, just like I have a second... like uh... uh... like...uh... second major.

Marie: ok you had a second major

Fen: Like, I learn...uh...

Marie: Business?

Fen: Like uh... economics

Marie: Ok, economics, accounting. How did you pick? You always liked sports?

Fen: I think I was born... I... (laugh) . I cannot keep quiet, I cannot... (laugh) , I don't know... I also want to go outside, I also want do some nice work. When I was younger, when I was a child... all my teacher can't understand me: "you are not a girl, you are like a boy"

Marie: So it makes sense what you are doing?

Fen: So... now... yeah... because I am Chinese, the traditional one not very like... independent, sometimes, we have to listen to parents' advice so, it's no easy life. Even if you want to... you can enjoy your life but sometimes you have to earn a lot of money and bla bla bla.

Marie: You are getting out of it aren't you?

Fen: Yeah, but for me it's okay, I can earn money, I can spend money then finish then I can earn again and finish again.

Marie: You told me your parents were not too strict about the fact that they want you to get married or anything?

Fen: Yeah, I think my mother has an open mind, yeah... and she doesn't... she doesn't care. Even if you don't get married but you live happy, you can do what you want.

Marie: That's good. So this Nepal trip into 2015 really change your life didn't it?

Fen: Before that I was traveling a lot in China

Marie: Like Backpacker?

Fen: Yeah backpacking. Actually, from the... yeah... I think when I go to... uh... my life changed from the time I went to Thailand... and from that time

Marie: From going out to Thailand it changed your life?

Fen: Yeah, yeah. It turned my mind

Marie: Why?

Fen: I can't... I got more interested about traveling and from there I... uh... if I don't have a long time to go abroad... I... I... I have no enough money to go abroad I can just travel in China like... uh... traveling in Yunnan, you know: Dali, Lijiang. Every year I would go there. I like that feeling, I like the traveling, I enjoy during the way, on the way I meet different friends and uh... I can do... uh... enjoy ... uh... I have to prepare for traveling, I can have my mind focus on what I want to do and uh... when I get to the new place, the view and the people and the local get me excited.

Marie: It makes you excited yeah. So you started travel in china first or in Thailand? It was Thailand your first travel ever or did you travel a little bit in China?

Fen: I think before Thailand I also went to different city but it's cannot be called traveling because sometimes I just had a look... uh... you know... the different feeling.. I think the real traveling is from that moment, the adventure in Thailand.

Marie: So that gave you a real sense of traveling... Because you were outside of China? Or was it because you were solo traveling?

Fen: I think at that moment, my English is not good, I cannot even like... uh... now... I can have a conversation with you. That moment I couldn't speak English but one of my friends, she can speak a good English so... when we go to Thailand... sometimes I was very silent but I enjoy the differences... the view and the local people... I have never seen before there so, they are like another country... all sites are very different with my life, with Beijing and other cities so... why not I do more

traveling in my life so that moment I had that in mind... yeah... I will keep that idea in mind, every time in my life I want to go traveling more and more.

Marie: See different landscapes and stuff. It's interested that traveling abroad got you thinking in your own life in Beijing.

Fen: Yeah... (she is expressing a thought she had in Thailand when experience the different city) "oh my life here, in the small city and the friend circle just right here" I want to...

Marie: experience. I feel you have achieved it? You are doing pretty good right now.

Fen: I just make my plan... I think to go to Turkey is no problem... because it is for sure... but Europe, I have to get the visa you know. I think now... I also bought a house in China, an apartment

Marie: You bought a house...oh...

Fen: Yes, so I have enough proof that...

Marie: You are going to go back...

Fen: I have to pay the bank rate so... And this time when I go back I have to work... I have a job and my company is also a super company in China so they can help me to...uh... offer some proff

Marie: That you are going to come back. Are they flexible on vacation, can you get as much vacation as you want?

Fen: Because this time they want... I don't want to go back anymore but they say... if you can come back to help us you can... uh... do what you want. So I said "ok, I can go back" but first I already book Turkey flight so I have to do something. So I asked them "If you can answer... promise this, I can go back to work"

Marie: You must be really really good if they really want you and they are going to have vacation. It's unusual among the other people I have had interviews with.

Fen: My work always keeps me busy but if I can do what I want to do... I'm like an important man leader in that company, if I'm gone, the most of the membership in the gym... they will complain

Marie: They are asking for you... that's good.

Fen: It makes me, sometimes... it's easy for me to do whatever I want because the members support me... they say: "you should go, you should do whatever you want"

Marie: Paragliding. I bet you didn't expect ten years ago to be here today. Ten years ago, when you were out of high school, you didn't imagine your life would be like that, right?

Fen: I NEVER imagine! (Laugh) I never imagine my life like now. Yeah... when you...uh... like uh... when you make your first step, when you go out for the first step and you want to go two step and again three steps... When I went to Thailand, I know it's a different country from China and I don't want to look for a small country, different with China... and I go some some some some.... Yeah. When you know a lot and you want to know more.

Marie: So Thailand was like the first trip... And you decided you needed to see the world? "I need to look at it".

Fen: I think, because, in my mind, just like this... I want to look around outside more. I think, I hope I can do like this... always... Always keep going

Marie: If you go with your guts nothing can go wrong

Fen: Sometimes I talk to my friends because they are always like uh... complaining about their life that you cannot do what you want, I cannot...bla bla bla. I just say: "If you really want, you can do, nobody can stop you"

Marie: Yeah... good. Do you have to go?

Fen: Yeah...

Marie: no, no, no problem... thank you so much.

HUA & HAORAN

Hua: So you live near the umbrella you said...

Marie: yes...

Hua: In a guest house?

Marie: Yes, in a guest house, the one that is just near Li's guest house...

Hua: So is Ai the same one? No? The yoga teacher

Marie: uh... no, Ai lives one down. One guest house down. You don't live in a guest house do you?

Hua: No, I rent a house, now... before when you send me a message I thought I needed to some cleaning and stuff. It's ok, I'll do it later. So you are staying at a guest house

Marie: Yeah, it's called the Moon Valley, I pay 400 rupies a night, it's not too bad

Hua: But you live for a long time... 2/3 months, maybe you can ask some discount...

Marie: I already did, it's ok, 400 rupies is my budget...

Hua: And you say, you study somewhere?

Marie: Yeah, well I'm doing my PhD now between France... In Bordeaux

Hua: Yeah... I know from the wine.

Marie: So yeah, I'm doing a PhD on how people in China are learning to travel on their own, like backpackers style. How they learn to do it because they are not used to travel with their parents. I mean, I don't know.. did you travel with your parents when you were little?

Hua: Yes, but not like now, I didn't travel like that, with this kind of things. Just family travel, short time 7 days or something and we never went abroad. We just go to another city in China.

Marie: That's what you did?

Hua: Yes, this is common, but we have never been to another country. My parents cannot speak any English... and they don't... I think still now my parents don't have passport. Because they don't think they will ever go to another country. My mom has been to Taiwan but she doesn't think it's another country because they speak the same language.

Marie: How, like why... would they be interested in going in another country...

Hua: Yes, yes, but they think, the problem, is they are becoming older and they think they are going to need somebody to help them. Because they can't speak English so they go with a group or with me.

Marie: Ok, so, have they been outside of China?

Hua: no, no... But they want to come to Nepal one day.

Marie: To visit you

Hua: I always tell my mom to make a passport and come visit me. And my mom is like "yes, slowly, slowly". But the other thing they are getting older, it's difficult for them and they don't have too much interests to explore the world. Maybe, I guess are like this.

Marie: Where are you from in China?

Hua: Beijing, but it's my parents... I mean, my auntie, my uncle... they do travel to other countries a lot.

Marie: They travel with group?

Hua: With group, yes...

Marie: Have you ever travel with a group?

Hua: No

Marie: No? Would you like to do that?

Hua: No... Maybe, maybe with my parents I will do that but for myself, maybe... I don't know... I see the package has to be really great at a really good price. I'm not sure.

Marie: So you have never done that kind of travel?

Hua: The group travel... no...

Marie: No... ok... what do you like about traveling?

Hua: For, for... to see new things and culture things... I'm really interested about other cultures. And when I was young... because I lived in Beijing I saw a lot of people move

from other cities to come to Beijing and I used to think it was really cool they could live in another city by themselves at my age. So I just think it was so cool and I also wanted to have this kind of experience. Independence. And also, I had some friends, they travel and they told me the story about India, about where they had been, and I feel like I want to see what it looks like.

Marie: So how old were you when you started traveling?

Hua: The first time, I go to another country was after graduation, after that, after graduation, I work, then I quit my job, I go to Thailand, I was 25 years old.

Marie: So you were 25 and you went to Thailand... you quit your job...

Hua: I quit my job

Marie: wow, was it ok to quit your job, it was like whatever... were your parents worried that you quit your job?

Hua: I was already back from Thailand, and moved to another city when I told my parents... But before I traveled to Thailand, I travel to other cities in China alone. So like... around 18 years old, I had money, I keep the money my parents gave me for university and I went to Shanghai. And yeah... solo..

Marie: So you would save the money your parents gave you for uni to go travel in different cities in China?

Hua: Yeah... but before, first travel was with my parents when I was young...

Marie: Ok... how did it felt to be like a solo traveler in China... was it exciting? Was it...

Hua: Yes! I think... did you interview Ai and Li? I think they are younger than me a lot...

Marie: Ai is 24 or 25 I think, Li is 24

Hua: Yes Li was born in 1994... they have similar age. And I was born in 1984, so at that age... now, for them, it's really common to travel, at their age, for the young generation to travel, even when they are really young, they can go travel abroad in different countries. But for my generation, at that time, me... I'm a little bit proud of this... my classmates, and just among my friends not many people had a lot of experience about this... they had some people doing this but very few.

Marie: You were born in 1984 so you are a balinghou? Balinghou?

Hua: Balinghou, balinghou... yeah, yeah.

Marie: So you were one of the first to travel?

Hua: Not first, but... no, no, no, no... I had some friends doing it but very few friends, few... not too many... Maybe over 100 people, maybe 3 or 4 people were doing this.

Marie: So you start traveling abroad you were 24, 25?

Hua: yeah Yes, that's pretty young.

Marie: What was your job in Beijing?

Hua: I worked in a clinic in cosmetic and plastic surgery. I was an executive assistant for the manager. It was a small company, 20 people or something

Marie: And that was a good job?

Hua: Not bad, but I didn't like it, I didn't like my boss, and uh... I don't like that job. I worked there for 3 years and I felt I didn't have space to grow, to learn more...

Marie: You got bored?

Hua: And also, they had a doctor, she told me to go to Thailand, it's a good place, you will like it. So I just went there. I should thank the doctor for telling me this

Marie: And how long did you stay in Thailand for?

R2 : Short time, 2 or 3 weeks and then I went to Chengdu and some other cities to travel and then back to Beijing.

Marie: So you went from Thailand to Chengdu?

Hua: From Beijing I went to Thailand for a short time and then I went to Chengdu to travel, Chengdu and Wuhan.

Marie: I heard Chengdu has different kind of vibe from other Chinese cities, is that why you went?

Hua: Hippie and relax city. The people... and also, the price there is not high and the salary is ok. The people, the salary is enough for them to live, not like in Beijing. Beijing, is too high now. For exemple, a normal worker, the salary is about 5000 RMB, for a normal job and a coffee is already 30 RMB.

Marie: So you stay in Chengdu for a while, did you work there?

Hua: No I stay just for travel. It was my first time in Chengdu, I stayed there only 4/5 days.

Marie: And after Chengdu, did you go back to Beijing?

Hua: Yeah... uh.. Chengdu then Wuhan somewhere and then I just work. Actually, when I was in university, I had a Tao Bao Shop, you know Tao Bao?

Marie: Yes

Hua: So when I work in the office, at the same time, I just take care of my online shop and when I quit my job, at this time, my TaoBao shop is going great, so this is why I left my job because I got enough money from the shop.

Marie: ok, what do you do, what do you sell?

Hua: From the start, I would just sell girls clothes, girls things... sun glasses... jewellery... fashion stuff but not nepali style.

Marie: Now you sell things from Nepal?

Hua: Half of the shop are things from Nepal.

Marie: Ok

Hua: Another half is from China. And then... I just... I was back in China to collect money again and travel, again. So the second I kind of forgot, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao, these 3 countries... Hong Kong...

Marie: How long did you stay?

Hua: Totally, I traveled for 3 months. 3 or 4 months.

Marie: On your own?

Hua: Yes but then, I sent some a post on a site and a Chinese girl contacted me, and she said she wanted to join me to go to Laos, Cambodia together. So I went to Thailand first, I met her... uh... I forgot, maybe in Cambodia or in Laos. We traveled together for a month and then, she... then I was back in Thailand again and she went back to her city.

Marie: So you traveled together?

Hua: for one month and then 2 other months I traveled on my own. But first, when I was in Thailand, I met some people, there was a Chinese Hong-Kong guy who had opened a guest house in Chiang Mai and we became good friends, so every time I go to Chiang Mai, I go to visit him. So I went back to Thailand, spend a lot of time there with my new friend.

Marie: Was it hard to travel alone, did you meet other solo travelers, from China... from elsewhere?

Hua: Everywhere, but firstly, I think I met more people from China, because at that time... actually my major in university is English but I could speak, I can only write. I'm not good, in the clinic I can speak English but only for my work, I didn't have good communication skills... But slowly slowly, I met people of other country. Especially Chinese people, they are very shy, my English was better, I had more choices.

Marie: What did you like more... Thailand, Cambodia, Lao?

Hua: Uh... I like all of them...

Marie: What kind of experience do you have there? did you just travel to see or do you like more sports, adventure... What did you do?

Hua: Uh... I traveled to see the famous things... and also, I try to do some small trip, one day trip, some sports like rafting, kayak... oh... I like to think about it it's been a really long time. I prefer to live in a place, if I like here there, then I stay a little longer and relax there... I remember a place I stayed longer in Laos, there was a place called Dong Dhet, the 4 000 islands. There were the river and the jungle, and the bungalow... it's like a village, I stayed there a little bit

long... how long I forgot. I think I enjoy relaxing more in the travel.

Marie: Especially if you are from Beijing... life...

Hua: Yes... I never seen these things for a long time so I enjoyed it very much. And other things... in Cambodia, when I started traveling, I would search in the Lonely Planet. At that time, the Lonely Planet book is very popular in China, it's like... not too many internet or information on Chinese website, Lonely Planet is the only option. So I see in the book, they say : "this place is very beautiful, it's a five star destination" so I followed them in my travel. I listen to them a lot

Marie: And now?

Hua: no, no... not too much, trip advisor and internet or friends who share. And I also like to meet the local people

Hua: Also make friend with them. The first time you go abroad to travel alone, in your country, what is the age?

Marie: For my first travel alone abroad, I was 18, I went to New York and Boston for 3 weeks

Hua: Alone?

Marie: With 2 girl friends, but not with my parents. I was also and exchange student when I was in school, they sent me another school in Canada. First real travel, I was 21, I went to Jamaica...

Hua: Ouh... I really want to go there.

Marie: Yeah, the Caribbean is expensive, it's expensive but it's really great.

Hua: Ok, ok, I'll save up money... there is a lot of places I really want to go. Do you think when you go to another near country in Europe, do you have the feeling that you are traveling in another country?

Marie: Yes, yes.

Hua: Or you think you are just in Europe?

Marie: No, I have a feeling that... because in Europe we have different languages, the food is really, really different from One country to another. The architecture is also quite different

Another friend of Kiva is coming up... his name is Cashew.

HaoranSo yesterday, Kiva told me about your interview...

Hua: Yes I told him about you and your interview, so if you want he can help. You can talk together. She has also been here for one and a half month.

Marie: Yes

HaoranWhat I heard is that Dali has changed... They change the rules

Marie: I heard that too...

HaoranYeah, the government...

Hua: And Beijing has also changed a lot because the government is more controlling to make the city more beautiful, more... more... standard... no street food anymore

Marie: Really?

Hua: Not too much... and uh...

Marie: Chinese street food is the best

Hua: But in Beijing you cannot find much. He is from Henan...

HaoranMy hometown is the same because it has been 3 or 4 years that I haven't been back. I'm staying here. When I left my hometown, I mean, 4 years ago... there was no subway, but now there is maybe, 2 or 3 subway lines in Zhengzhou.

Marie: Yes they have put a few subway lines in Ningbo as well...

HaoranMy province is not so rich as Zhejiang, it's at the center of China, you know the Shaoling temple, my home is really near the temple, 19 kilometers away. My hometown used to not be so rich but now it's ok.

Hua: Also Zhengzhou is the capital of Henan province. But Zhejiang is a very rich province

HaoranEven from old time Zhejiang was very rich, from 300 or 400 years ago

Hua: Ask him... when did you first start traveling?

HaoranTravel?

Marie: Yeah, did you travel with your parents?

HaoranYes, yes... so not just Nepal but everywhere

Marie: Ok, ok... but when did you start?

HaoranIn my memory, in my memory, when I was 15 years old, that year, I graduated from secondary school, so I have a holiday son my uncle, he invited our family, my mother, my younger sister and me, we went to Shanghai because he was staying in Shanghai, he was married with a Shanghai local. So I wanted to see something... do you know some culture about Shanghai local people?

Marie: No, I do not know

HaoranSo, that means, Shanghai local people are very rich but, also, they think are citizens, only them are citizens of the city. Other people, they are all villagers in China... But, you know, from 1920 so about 100 years ago, Shanghai has developed greatly, all over the world.

Marie: Before it was just a little village.

HaoranThey developed more than Hong-Kong or Tokyo, that's why they are like that.

Hua: But Beijing people are also like this.

HaoranMy uncle wasn't born in Shanghai but my uncle's wife was, local lady. My uncle was a very very good student in university. At the time, it was the old national companies, not private companies so he entered a national factory to become an engineer and 20 years later and after, during the reform and opening 30 years ago. At that time some smart people, some rich people came and run their own business. So that time, he opened his own factory of the things he used to do for the country. That's why, he used to have a little bit of money so.

Marie: How did you go to Shanghai then?

Hua: A little bit by train and by ship. From Shanghai to Shandong, Weihai, Weihai is a city of Shandong near the sea. So from Shanghai by ship on the sea to go up to Shandong. You know, for young people, 15 years, that is the first time that I saw the sea, it was wow... You know, my hometown is inland so it's good for me I think, that trip, that's what I remember. But actually, you can say that, it was my first trip, you can say it was not my first trip because, when I was young, when I was 2 I went to live in Hubei with my father's parent. But 1 (is the most important, it's the first time I sea the sea.

Marie: Do you travel with group or do you solo travel?

HaoranI hate group travel

Marie: Why? Have you done it?

HaoranWhat is the meaning of group travel like with friends?

Marie: With agency...

HaoranNo! I hate

Hua: I have a question, maybe we don't hate, maybe we didn't do it because I don't know for other country but in China, the group are not really well, but I don't know about other countries

Marie: Uh... I don't like so much group travel for the schedule... the restaurant

HaoranYes! You have to wake up so early, and always take more and more money...

HaoranI tell you something interesting... Chinese saying about group travel. People say : "Group travel means getting out of the bus to go to the toilets and take picture... Another thing is that most of them cannot speak English... It's a really big problem... Another thing is also because my parents they didn't meet too much foreigners so they will fear... firstly the language thing and secondly they don't... they will feel shy about the different culture and another thing, I don't know about other parents but they were taught by Maoism and they think... I honestly think that... a lot of the older people

will think that people from other country are capitalists so in their mind it's very bad and their mind is not so open.

Marie: But isn't China is a capitalist country?

Haoran No, no, no! It's... but you know... the party is a communist party but they say... you know... "we are communists" but in reality we are already a capitalist country...

Hua: but the ideas of the book and the news on television, they don't tell...

Haoran The idea, it's just the idea...

Hua: This old people just think that our government is good

Marie: But the young generation isn't like that?

Haoran No, it's different... too much different, they love Europe and America... they all want to go there...

Marie: Have you been?

Haoran No

Hua: No, not yet, I really want to

Marie: So the younger generation is different you were saying?

Hua: Very different. Li and Ai... they are younger, they are more... I think the Balinghou, Jiulinghou, the people from these generation, we are a mix in between the older generation and the next generation.

Marie: Is it hard for your parents to understand your lifestyle in Nepal? Do they understand why you don't live in China? Why your are...

Haoran You first, lady first...

Hua: From the start they don't like... And also some of my friends when I am back in Beijing they tell me... "Come on, you are from Beijing, you are from the capital, why do you go to other places to live?" Because they are local people and they think Beijing is the best...

Marie: Do they travel?

Hua: They travel but... they are just this kind of people. My parents before they are ok but now they respect a lot more what I want, they don't ask to much, they don't push me or get married. Because at my age, most Chinese girl should be married and have baby already... but they are ok now. They respect me more...

Marie: Ok, and what about you?

Haoran So, at first I should tell you some truth, I should tell you my age, because different age, difference in people, I'm already 45 years old. So that's why, you know, my parents. I'm divorced already, I have an ex-wife in China. But now I'm with a Nepali lady... you know this kind of things, my parents, they can't understand... but they avoid living style. They said, ok, if you like, ok... Because my parents they are already more than 70 years old. Because since I was one and a half year, I didn't live with my parents, I was raised by my grand-parents and then join the army so... you know... actually...

Hua: You study in the army?

Marie: You were in the army?

Haoran Yeah, yeah, yeah, I stayed in the army for 7 years

Marie: Is it difficult?

Hua: Well I should tell you the truth. At first, I enter the army when I was 15 years old, after that trip in Shanghai, I entered the military academy. I graduated 3 years later then join the army. So I am a officer, my rank is less than Lieutenant. But I hated it, I hated that kind of life, I didn't mean I hate the army but I hated that kind of life... it's a fix life. And so my job was to be a morse code officer, that was my job

Marie: So you were in communication?

Haoran It's very boring. It's ok for me but that's why I just stay in a short time, 7 years is not a long time for the army. You know when my left the army, almost of my fellow, they all stay in the army, only me... just a little bit of the classmates left.

Marie: What did you do after that?

Haoran I entered a national company, export and import company, but national company, because at that time... I went back to my hometown and because it's an inland city, import and export is not so good job. If my company was in Zhejiang, Jiangsu... it would be better. So I just stay there, I have a job but I have got nothing to do... just everyday, I would go to the office, read newspaper, drink tea. At that time I was only 22 or 23 years old. This job is not good for young people so around 2 or 3 years later, I quit, just quit...

Haoran That's another person who quit his job!

Haoran I just quit, quit that! At first I was looking at the news paper, I want to find a good job, I don't care about a private company, I just want money. It's ok so... I found a private company, that company was selling video camera, something like that, most of them were made in Japan, not in China

Marie: Like Nikon, Sony...

Haoran Good camera, at that time, the video cameras were not so popular it was 1996. I enter the private sector. That company was at the time a very small company, but I'm lucky, the boss was a great man and it developed, developed, developed so big... and around 10 years later, that company went on the stock market. And around that time... I quit, I quit again. I had worked for about 12 years for this company. But do you know why I quit again? Because at that time my marriage fell, so I had problems with my job and with my couple.

Marie: Was it like a depression?

Haoran YES! that's it. So

Hua: You wanted to go travel...

Haoran I want a change... I want to change my life...

Hua: When I travel, I meet a lot of people they have just break up with their boyfriend and girlfriend and so they go travel because they really need the change.

Haoran So I quit, at first, I just traveled in China because my major is English but when I left the army I didn't use my English. For more than 10 years, I forgot all of my English. So first I just traveled in China... different places and provinces, I have been to almost all China.

Marie: Do you travel as a backpacker?

Haoran Yes, sure, I was a backpacker. Because that time I was single, I don't have a wife, I don't have anything to think about. I'm free, I'm a free man. So... around 1 or 2 years, I had an opportunity, my younger sister told me... I remember exactly where I was, I was in a bus... she called me and she asked me : "Do you want to go to Africa?" I was surprised, you know Africa, are you kidding me? She told me her husband ran a company in Africa, East Africa... In Kenya... Kenya has a nickname, I mean not Kenya but Nairobi, it is called the "Paris of Africa".

Marie: So going to Kenya was your first time outside China...

Haoran Yes

Marie: Did you like it?

Haoran Very much... every first time... That time, my city in Zhengzhou is inland city and the population is too big, too much pollution and so, the smoke it's horrible... but Kenya... WOW... the sky is blue, the clouds are white... it's so beautiful. Nairobi is very similar to Pokhara... 4 seasons, different flowers, not so warm, not so cold, it was perfect. Even the altitude is different, Nairobi's altitude is about 2000m, Pokhara is about 700m. Beside this... just the people are a little black.

Marie: I wonder... because it's always strange to be in a different country... I wonder how... it changes...

Hua: I'm ok, because I only go to Asian country so it's not too different.

Haoran This is a good question, I should tell you something, different people have different feelings and different characters... so when I was so young, one and a half years I was used to move all the time and, in Kenya, I had no wife

and no job so... I just want to see the world... I want to throw away all the old things of my life and see new things.

Hua: Start a new life kind of.

HaoranI didn't care where I'd go...

Marie: How long did you stay?

HaoranNot so long, a year.

Marie: And then what did you do after you went back to China?

HaoranI had a back problem, I want to have a rest, I don't want to work any longer, so I just came back and went to Qinghai province a small village school and work as a volunteer teacher there. It was a very small village, at 3000m of altitude... it was of for me, I stayed there for a year. They gave me accommodation. So, for a year I taught English, Chinese literature and physical education. I was the only volunteer there, but there were 30 or 40 professional teachers. I became friends with these teachers. Because we are all the same age. But they looked at me weird. We were the same age people, they wonder why I didn't want money.... "What about when you become old? How are you going to do? What about your wife? How are you going to pay?" I don't have a house. But they are all good people.

Hua: I have one question : in your country or in Europe do people think that the people who have lost their job or that travel are weird?

Marie: I guess it's more acceptable.

Hua: Yes, I think like this. People young do that

HaoranIt's a gap travel, gap travel...

Hua: But after that, if they keep traveling and they don't have normal people life, will they get some judgment?

Marie: I think not really if they can afford it... It might become like that in China, what do you think?

Hua: True, true

Marie: It's not so weird to have a different life...People accept it more

Hua: The thing in Europe is I feel like they accept more people, like people like me. I mean, if you are in China, I mean now it's better but in a small city, you dress really different, and you dress different, talk different, you will be judge. Like in Europe I feel like if you have tattoo, you can't get a job. In China, it's becoming more open, in small city, still is problem.

Marie: How did you come to Nepal? Why did you come? How long have you been staying in Nepal?

HaoranAround 6 or 7 years. 2012.

Marie: How... Why Nepal?

Hua: I just came from India and I wanted to go to Tibet so I had to come to Nepal by bus. So the first time I came here, I didn't have any idea about Nepal and I just travel and I came back again and again, 2 times I was coming from India.

Marie: How did you chose to go to India? Why did you go?

Hua: Just for travel... me and my friends travel in India together and she spent 19 days and had to go back to Beijing to work and I stayed a month longer and came back. So... twice I came to Nepal from India. So I met my boyfriend here in Pokhara and decided to stay longer. He also married here

Marie: And how did you come here?

HaoranSo after my volunteer job teacher was over, you know the Qinghai province is very near Tibet so I had never been to Tibet so I thought, I should go, have a look. Because I was so close and I wasn't sure if in the future I would be able to travel to this area of the world... the world is so big. So I go to Lhasa, there is so many Chinese travelers staying in Lhasa. And there next destination is Nepal... did you know that? Because the route.

Hua: It's easy to come here, it's fast.

HaoranSo I just follow this route, I arrived in Nepal. But you know, I like water I like swimming and I look at the Nepal

map, I see Kathmandu, not, I don't like and I see a lake, it's near the city of Pokhara so I decide to go there instead. I stayed a couple days in Kathmandu and I came here. I thought it was like Nairobi... there was robbery, like in Nairobi it's a little bit dangerous. So I decide to stay here for a long time but I didn't want to do business because, yeah, I worked as a business man for a long time, around 20 years... I know now, I know, I'm not a business man, I hated it. I need money so... if I don't want to do business... how can I stay here for a long time? Ok I should marry a girl... But I love this place also. I found friends to help me meet a girl.

Marie: And now, what do you do... do you work?

HaoranI teach Chinese language and English sometimes. I can teach a little bit of Nepali. But tuition fees is not so much... but I do that for fun.

Hua: And also he bets on the stock market.

HaoranI have been trading on the stock market for a little bit too. I don't have too much money but it's enough for me. Because my Nepali wife, she is very simple... she is happy I'm happy.

Marie: Does she work here?

HaoranNo, she is a farmer in the village. Her mother is more 70 years old so she takes care of her.

Marie: Was it expected for you to settle in Nepal?

Hua: Before I never think about it... just suddenly... I followed the flow... I followed the river. The life points you here and you just stop here.

Marie: It's interesting how your life completely changed because of you traveling?

Hua: Yes

HaoranYes.

YA

Ya: Some parents in China are very traditional. This is a problem, I think I don't know other country, even families don't have so much communication with each other. We all have our own free view but to... parents: "You shouldn't do this, you shouldn't do that"... There are so many should. So people are so... so... limited by their family rule or the rule from the society... if they want to do something they have to hide themselves.

Marie: You think it's a problem you have to hide?

Ya: This is a problem, I think the key is they should communicate. It's very easy but some young people they are so afraid to break the rules... to say something true... I think this is the root of the problem. (We are served a coconut) ... This is very fresh. That's the key.

Marie: yeah... I mean, I have been to China and I read a little bit about family relations but I don't know, for the new generation, they want to travel free and, experience freedom. A lot of them ask me how they... how do... because they have heard about gap year.

Ya: Yeah! And they all want to do that but it's kind of difficult to do it... and they are like... dreaming... dreaming about having a gap year but in university I think it's not possible. Not possible, it's so traditional, after graduation, you have to find a decent job and yeah... and get married and give birth to a child. This is like that... so routine... you living like a robot.

Marie: But you didn't do that?

Ya: I'm not! Yeah... I don't like that, I... I... even now... my friends they are changing, yeah... but I think they are still a lot of people they are suffering the rules of the society and their parents. Maybe the karma, I don't know. They need to change, they need to communicate.

Marie: How did you... how come your traveling.. yourself... how come you are traveling so much?

Ya: First I work in a travel agency, I got a lot of... chance to travel in European countries and America but for... gradually when I open myself a little more, I think I should go to some poor countries like India or Nepal and... my friends and my parents they understand me

Marie: Your parents they are...

Ya: Yes, they can see I totally change after some trip, I met some amazing friends and my new job is still in traveling, still in tourism... I need to travel to get more experiences and they are so supportive

Marie: Cool

Ya: But at first, my husband

Marie: oh... that's right you are married

Ya: Yes, I'm married... My husband is very worried about my safety problem, you know... a single woman traveling alone but you know I have been in Burning Man... it's so amazing and after Burning Man I told him... Gradually I think he wants to be me but he cannot... he isn't brave enough to do something different really. Then, this year, he quit his job and he had a lot of holidays, you know, normally people don't have so much holidays like me. Because for that... I work in tourism so I have a lot of chance to travel in tourism. But... for a normal working man in China, only five days per year.

Marie: Oh... awful

Ya: This is awful yeah... and the people... we all talk about French people got twenty days per year

Marie: No, twenty... more than that. We get, around five weeks, five, six weeks of vacation every year. Most people get six weeks off.

Ya: That's normal... I think it's normal

Marie: For sure... for sure... What was your husband doing before?

Ya: Before, he was doing international trade, import and export some machines for hospital. Now what he started...

Marie: You told me yeah... cooking!

Ya: Yeah... cooking in a French school and uh... he maybe changes... he wants to change... His colleagues were so afraid to travel abroad alone,

Marie: Your husband, yeah

Ya: I'm thirty-three years old yeah... at my age... there is nothing about the age... people are so afraid of traveling alone...

Marie: In China?

Ya: Yes... they have fear...

Marie: What kind of fear?

Ya: Like... fear of losing money, fear of facing some robbery, things like that?

Marie: But who says that? It's because they have no experience or is it because there are stories in newspaper?

Ya: They watch the television and the media doesn't talk about good things they only talk about some robbery in Paris and people... robbing money... So they are so afraid of traveling.

Marie: What got you into travel? Like yourself. I'm thirty by the way, we are pretty much the same age

Ya: (laugh) ... oh...

Marie: Yeah... so... same generation

Ya: Yeah... same generation. Are you married?

Marie: Yes...yes...

Ya: really? oh...

Marie: Three years...

Ya: Your husband is...

Marie: : Par... Bordeaux, Bordeaux

Ya: Bordeaux.

Marie: He is a little worried about my safety but I don't... I'm going anyway

Ya: He is supportive mostly?

Marie: Very, very supportive

Ya: That's good.

Marie: It's really good. But did you like... when you... you grew up with your parents? Would you go on travels outside of the country or...?

Ya: No, when I was...a... before graduation from college I never travel.

Marie: Before college I never travel abroad... you know China is so big and...

Marie: So much diversity...

Ya: Yeah... diversity so... I didn't see every city in China, I just see so little and so little of China.

Marie: Where have you been?

Ya: Shanghai, always tourism place: Yunnan, Tibet and uh... Tianjing, near Beijing, have you been?

Marie: I have been to Yunnan, Zhejiang,

Ya: Shenzhen

Marie: no, Ningbo, Shanghai.

Ya: Hangzhou?

Marie: Hangzhou, and it doesn't count as China but I went to Taiwan as well

Ya: oh... I haven't been there

Marie: This is so nice, I loved Taiwan, the food there is just... crazy good

Ya: You love chinese food?

Marie: I love it but it's interesting because in Taiwan, the food is like a mix of Taiwan, Japan. So the food is like fusion and it's just delicious!

Ya: They took the good part of everything... yeah...

Marie: I love Taiwan, really

Ya: Me too, me too... I have many friends in Taiwan.

Marie: But anyway... you travel... so that's... I haven't seen China much but did you travel as a backpacker?

Ya: When I was... before graduation I travel with my parents, you know junior school, for graduation they took me to Shanghai, Hangzhou, Ningbo, cities like that and after high school graduation they took me too Hong Kong and other cities but never traveling abroad.

Marie: Why?

Ya: You know tourism is getting more and more popular in recent year in China, maybe... eight years so not too much people can travel abroad when I was in college before that. The visa was an issue and uh... even passport is an issue for certain career.

Marie: Like what?

Ya: Like if you are working for the government you cannot travel, in a bank, for police... you cannot

Marie: Still now?

Ya: Now I think not... but they don't have their own passport... the company can collect the passport. You have... every people have five days holidays and if you want to spend your holidays, you need to apply for application for holidays.

Marie: Oh god

Ya: (exasperated) Yes ! it's like that... people we don't have freedom in China

Marie: Is it really that bad?

Ya: It's the truth I work in tourism

Marie: Yeah, but is it really that bad? Like...

Ya: For certain career it's that bad. It's very... but... now the embassy from other countries for the visa get more and more loose policy. Before that we have to show our propriety certificate to the embassy, now it's ok but it's still a lot of documents to apply.

Marie: It's the same the other way around yeah... I have to show a lot of document as well

Ya: Same same yeah. Now I think it can... the policemen they don't have freedom, they need to apply. My friend told me they wanted to spend their honeymoon in France but they have to apply at least half a year early and things like that. But now people can manage that. They need communication with their boss. Things like that.

Marie: But so the backpackers, the young people with no money... they just travel in free countries like Nepal or Thailand?

Ya: Nepal and Thailand is easy because they don't need a visa, it's free...uh... these backpackers countries are easy for them.

Marie: So, what was your first trip abroad?

Ya: I think Germany.

Marie: Really?

Ya: Yes, yes, I started big.

Marie: What did you do in Germany?

Ya: I... First, I stayed in Munich and uh... you have been in Germany many times I bet?

Marie: Well, I have been to Koln, Frankfurt, Bonn. Close to France.

Ya: oh... and uh... I have been to Munich, around Munich is so beautiful Bavaria. And we travel by train and my husband... It was actually our honeymoon, I have been married for ten years. So Sad!

Marie: Why sad?

Ya: oh... no freedom. After graduation and my first job I met him. First man I think.

Marie: So, you got married?

Ya: Yeah

Marie: And your honeymoon was Germany?

Ya: Germany, Holland and Italy, three countries...

Marie: Just the two of you, how long?

Ya: Twenty days, because marriage holiday is twenty days

Marie: Nice.

Ya: Well, no no no... ten... a fifteen days your year holidays is twenty days. So I visit three countries.

Marie: Did you travel with a group?

Ya: No, no, no... backpack

Marie: You went backpack?

Ya: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So I think, it's my destiny to do something in tourism, I was never afraid.

Marie: How did it feel to be in Europe, how did you... do you remember how you felt?

Ya: I loved the atmosphere, the freedom and the people don't judge you apparently, at least apparently. No judgement.

Marie: You had good communications with Europeans?

Ya: Yeah, but some tourist place you know is the same... just business... they just do business but I really enjoy some places where people just don't only do business. They do something they like and I enjoy that part when I was backpacking. I can learn something from them. You can feel it... so...

Marie: Did you speak good English at the time?

Ya: Same with... not so good but enough to communicate... not deep communication like us but.

Marie: Did you travel in hostels or hotels?

Ya: Both... depend on our budget and...

Marie: How did you manage cause ten years ago there was no really internet or anything on the phone and stuff?

Ya: Internet in China is really developed

Marie: Ten years ago, also?

Ya: Yes, we have booking.com and booking.com

Marie: So you used that for your honeymoon?

Ya: Yeah... even now in China, you can check ctrip.com

Marie: Yeah, that's what I used (stories about using booking in Yunnan)

Ya: So now I think the gap year is really hard in China, but now I think it will be more and more, generation by generation will be easier because there are many articles talk about how... the need to go abroad to see the world

Marie: But you think... I don't know but I have heard a lot of things about Xi Jinping, do you think... cause traveling abroad is also dangerous for a country because you get open to new ideas?

Ya: He didn't mention much about traveling, recently, he gave certain speeches in China about people talk about

always about some medicine or some housing issue, things like that not so much about traveling...yeah. But.. but... yeah he pushing the tourism in china in certain places like Yunnan...

Marie: Yeah, but abroad?

Ya: Didn't hear much... didn't say much

Marie: Because I think traveling can be dangerous for a country because when you travel, you meet people, you are going to talk about your country, you are going to talk about your country. For example, yesterday I was with a girl from Shanghai, she is an architect in Shanghai and she does a lot of climbing but in China it's difficult because they have a lot of regulations on climbing, they can't climb everywhere and she realized that in Nepal and all these places you can do whatever you want and she was pissed that in China it was not possible. And you know these little ideas like... uh... we should get more freedom or whatever...

Ya: Because we don't have that type of facilities, good facilities and local people in China, even in Yunnan don't really like traveling, they just do business, that's the reason.

Marie: But the young generation really wants to travel abroad, Ya: people now, we still got that concept that traveling abroad would be bad

Marie: Where else have you traveled in the world, America?

Ya: Yes, many times... and uh... Colorado, New York City, California, Hawaii. Many states of America, I love America. And uh I love Japan also

Marie: What's your favorite favorite country in the world?

Ya: India. I don't know it just came to my mind

Marie: It just pop in your head?

Ya: I don't know, India is just...

Marie: What do you do in India?

Ya: Volunteer job and uh maybe I live in Beijing, it's a big city, people need to have a really fast pace to do everything and anything you have to be fast, you have to compete with each other in India you don't need to be like that... it's very slow, slow pace that you heart is going slow. It's very comfortable, it's the normal, it's the normal pace of your heart. People are just so poor in India and Nepal. They don't expect from you so much. They just look at you and smile at you. That's enough. I think I have traveled a lot in the world now and I have to say to you, India is my favorite country and one of the biggest reasons is Ama. She is my guru. I changed a lot since I met her two years ago in Japan. You know Ama did her as the government think... she can't,

Marie: she can't go to China?

Ya: She can't, you know it's China... And I fly to Tokyo to meet her and first time I didn't trust her, you now. At first, I just need her help, I think people always say "Ama will change you, Ama will help you" then I said "I will go". I need help for sure. I meet many difficulties, in my life, in my marriage everything... so I need Ama's help. I just need her help again and again. After one year, little by little, I can say, Ama is my guru, I learn. now I still need her help but in a different way.

Marie: How did you learn about her?

Ya: uh... my friend he studied in Columbia university and uh... he... uh... passed me his friends talked about Amma many times and then he met Amma on her US tour and then gradually... yeah... we all knew Amma. He is a healer in China and I read tarot sometimes

Marie: Tarot... ok

Ya: Yeah, yeah, so we got the same interest yeah... so... my tarot teacher he is from Paris, he started this ritual practice in Amma's ashram for twenty-five years so... then he never met me... meet me before and he can say many things of me. He... You know some spiritual practice can heal your mind and then he got really good intuition and when he talked to me I would always cried because of his pure thinking.

Marie: He is French? He lives in Beijing?
Ya: No, he lives in India and Paris.
Marie: How often have you been to Amma's ashram?
Ya: Me?
Marie: You?
Ya: Once a year at least.
Marie: Since two years?
Ya: Since two years I have been there four times
Marie: Wow, how long do you stay?
Ya: uh... it depends, usually it's two weeks but last may I stayed one month to do the Ayurveda treatment.
Marie: The Panchakarma?
Ya: Yeah, yeah, the Panchakarma, at least you need one month
Marie: Do you want to sit in the shadow?
Ya: Yeah, yeah, so hot here
Marie: Better here
Ya: Yes, so cool
Marie: And you get vacation to do that or?
Ya: Since last year I quit my job from the travel agency, yeah... and I do some free-lancer work from time to time. And from this year I open my own travel studio so I... I don't need to ask for holidays...
Marie: That's good.
Ya: That's good yeah... my friends they are so jealous... so jealous. I think that everybody can live like me, just need some courage
Marie: You are an inspiration for them?
Ya: Inspiration also. It takes me year to know what I should do in the future, you know I love traveling but I don't want to do it as my job. I think job should be job. Interest, hobby it's my interest, it's my passion but how to combine the two together. I always confused about this problem but after years I think I should do it. It's kind of my mission. I should... I should try to... like people to see the beauty of the nature... to see the real travel can give you the real thing. It's not just "oh, tourist place, you have been there". Take one place off the list. No! It's not like that
Marie: Is it more the experience?
Ya: Yes, the experience
Marie: I guess so... staying in a place a experiencing the life?
Ya: Yes, I think some backpackers are more mature than tourist in China... everywhere because they experience more. They not just living luxury hotel or do some comfortable... make them so comfortable. They maybe meet some difficulties but it's good... people learn from this stuff.
Marie: What was your worst experience during traveling?
Ya: Last week (laugh)
Marie: Really?
Ya: In Lumbini, oh, Lumbini is I think, the worst... maybe the worst, no... this was so poor, far way worst than here, yeah. I... just... the dust... it's just like in Burning Man and the road is... you have the... and the monkeys everywhere. I am afraid of animals since I was born, I don't know why. Monkeys everywhere that can bite you.
Marie: Really, they can bite you?
Ya: maybe just ask you for some food... I don't know and everywhere monkeys and there is no, even good restaurant... nothing like restaurant. Oh... the food is terrible and...
Marie: So you really didn't like Lumbini?
Ya: But... like... uh... I think I just need sometimes to adjust myself and my friends they are so... my friend, he is a monk and uh... yeah... he is really great
Marie: He is from Nepal or India?
Ya: He is from Spain and he start ... and he talks to me about, always talk with me and gradually I think something changed inside me... My... I'm so attached to my way of life... I used to drink coconut in a cooler place and good view and fresh air and maybe music on... And I would think... oh that's the

life I like but when you arrive in Lumbini, it's terrible but I think I should be... uh... how to say... not the... this is attachment to me
Marie: To Materiality?
Ya: Yes, attachment, I cannot let it go... Yes so I learn something during these three days of suffering. So I think there is no worst place I have to say. If... if... let me think tourist place in China... then... (laugh) You know, people are so crowded, they shout at each other. They complain about every single thing and last time I travel in Chengdu... I have been to Chengdu
Marie: I haven't been to Chengdu
Ya: Have you heard about Chengdu?
Marie: Yeah
Ya: So there was a man hit a woman maybe because the woman jump the queue. Things like that... he is hitting her so badly... oh... I'm so angry about that things and people they don't... they... no... no... no people
Marie: Nobody reacted?
Ya: Yeah reacted, help her... oh... and after I cried... I said oh... I'm living in this kind of country... oh... I'm so sad about that and that nobody can help her and that the man is so rude.
Marie: Yeah
Ya: In China, people don't dare to help... don't dare because some person don't dare to interrupt...
Marie: Intervene
Ya: Yeah... it's... I don't like things like that.
Marie: That's not just in China.
Ya: I can understand that there are many wars in the world but just many tourists... like a crowd, when you see things like that, you should help. I shout a lot... I'm so... I'm very weak... I should protect myself first but I... I think some men should say something. Nobody say anything they are so afraid of that.
Marie: And in Lumbini... Why did you... is it your first time in Nepal?
Ya: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah
Marie: Why did you want to come here?
Ya: My friend, the Spanish guy, we plan to meet in the ashram and we three, this is a Spanish guy and the Nepali and we... we make a Nepali trip.
Marie: In the ashram you decided to come here?
Ya: Yeah, yeah, because the Spanish guy he is a yoga teacher and he plans to do some tour in... Nepal in the future he can teach yoga here and I send Chinese customer here. So this was our original plan.
Marie: So you want to create a yoga retreat here?
Ya: Yeah, yeah... I think so
Marie: I should introduce you to Ai
Ya: Ai?
Marie: She is Chinese girl, she is twenty-two, twenty-three years old
Ya: Oh... young
Marie: She trained in a good school in India and now she teaches Yoga in Pokhara
Ya: Really?
Marie: Do you want to do yoga tomorrow?
Ya: Yeah, yeah
Marie: She is really nice teacher, her class is very good
Ya: In the town?
Marie: Yeah, at the umbrella café, I can take you there. We can go tomorrow morning if you want, it's at 9:30, five hundred rroupies. I will text you the location on wechat.
Marie: So you want to do teaching? You want to send Chinese to yoga retreat in Pokhara?
Ya: Yeah. I want to do some tourist thing which should be body, mind. the body should be the first thing
Marie: So yeah... Nepal... What did you think Nepal was going to be like when you came first?

Ya: Yeah... it's outdoor activity, always said... it's all to the Lonely Planet but I think Nepal is like India, the same as India

Marie: Very chill

Ya: Yeah, very chill, I heard that my Chinese friend say Nepal is so... Nepali is so... how to say... so humble and innocent heart and you don't need to think more before you talk. They don't treat you bad... no... They don't think bad of you. This is really good.

Marie: You had friends come here before?

Ya: Yeah, I have lot of friends. They hike the K2, this

Marie: The K2?

Ya: Yeah, I don't?

Marie: K2 is in Pakistan

Ya: Pakistan ok....

Marie: Annapurna, here

Ya: Yeah, they also uh... come to Nepal and K2 I thought not here

Marie: K2 is in Pakistan yeah

Ya: I never try to long way hiking. Camino will be my first

Marie: Are you going to trek?

Ya: Yeah, Camino de Santiago will be my first

Marie: Yeah, yeah, yeah but here in Nepal? Do you think you are going to trek?

Ya: I think so maybe after my two friends coming I think will do some things like that.

Marie: What are you going to do: Poonhill, Mahdi Himal?

Ya: I don't know, I didn't do some homework before. I just follow the flow

Marie: How do you do homework usually?

Ya: Usually is uh...

Marie: You read books or blogs?

Ya: No, no, no we have some websites like Ctrip. It is where all people share their trips

Marie: Like Weibo?

Ya: Yeah... Weibo, people share their stories and their experiences overseas so we can select certain messages.

Marie: Do you know Xiaopong?

Ya: Oh! You know Xiaopong? Really

Marie: Yeah, I have met him

Ya: He is famous in China!

Marie: I know, I know

Ya: How did you know that (she is astonished) ?

Marie: How did I meet... how did I know he was famous? Because I read

Ya: Yeah, yeah, yeah, even some Chinese people don't know him

Marie: No, but he is famous among the young... well the people that are like thirty... the young people, they are like... yeah... he is old.

Ya: You met him in Yunnan?

Marie: In Shuhe because he has a hostel there

Ya: Yes

Marie: So I knew that, somebody told me and so I went and he was there so I got to do a small interview with him.

Ya: But he... I never met him, I don't know.

Marie: He has an ego, he thinks he paved the way

Ya: Sometimes reputation can push you to darkness

Marie: He is nice, he is really nice but now he is more like business man, he for sure... he has cool clothes, he said I'm relax and laid back but he knows he... He is opening... he is trying to create... you know what generator hostel is? Generator hostel. (bla bla about Xiapong)

Ya: Some people are renting tours they are like opinion tours but people always complain about everything.

Marie: That's what he say he is: "I'm an opinion leader"

Ya: It's a new terMarie: I'm an opinion leader.

Marie: That's how he introduces himself: "I'm an opinion leader".

Ya: I don't think I like him, he shows too much on everything, on everywhere, shows too much. He backpacked that's why he... he... he made some difference at his age and at that age, people don't backpack so following his footsteps, people go outside.

Ya: During that time (people of Xiaopong's generation), Chinese people want to go abroad but they don't dare to. So they see... people they are backpacking. "oh... so cool, you are a hero", just during one, two years, they are so famous... suddenly... boom some opinion leader and now, no... I don't think. A lot of travelers they stay in hostels

Marie: Yeah,

Ya: Some young generation

Marie: Yeah because it was like a safe haven, it was a safe place, you could meet a lot of people, it was easy... they could organize, like, if you want to get into the mountains...

Ya: But every hostel in Yunnan, in Shuhe, you can do the same, no difference. I never read Xiaopong's book but sometimes I follow his Weibo but I don't like. In Chinese there is a saying like, there is no nutrition. The... The reading there is no nutrition, just... like junk food. My friend, they don't... my friend circle we don't follow Xiaopong. I don't know, maybe some young generation.

Marie: He has followers but I don't know who follows him.

Ya: If he acts this way, fewer and fewer people will follow him.

Marie: I don't know because, I don't know how he... but he definitely... because he was just back from a trip in Paris and like the tourism French board pay him

Ya: I know! Paid him

Marie: To come with other bloggers, he was not the only one, there was like, five or six of them come and take pictures so... and they showed me the picture and so... they showed me the picture and I was like, this is not how you backpack like... this was an expensive trip, he was in a fancy hotel... fancy restaurant... So I said: "This is not really backpacking"... and he was "Yeah... but I'm a trend setter". And I was like, yeah but you, you... you talk to people that are backpackers but... backpackers don't have the money to go there.

Ya: That's the problem you know, I work in tourism for one year, just, for one year, I thought it would be different but now, the local fancy restaurant, the local fancy hotels, they have the budget to pay the tourism in China, in the Chinese office, in this way, they only show their restaurant to Chinese travelers, they only say the good part of their hotels and restaurants they don't... doesn't much more other place and they will hide other place, so just I think I don't like... I don't like...

Marie: For sure.

Ya: I have also been invited by some tourism to take photos because I have been photographer for some years and take photos but I don't like the people other opinion leaders, they just, taking photos by themselves... please give me... like selfie

Marie: Yeah, yeah

Ya: And block themselves... I don't like that. Very boring...

Marie: Like shallow?

Ya: Shallow, shallow... yeah.

Marie: I'm surprised that here, young people don't take that much selfie because in France, we have that cliché image of Chinese people taking pictures of like everything and taking themselves... and I have seen that a lot in China, I have actually seen a lot of people taking selfies, but the people, the Chinese I have seen abroad... like the backpackers, they don't do that

Ya: No, they don't do that... They don't need to do that

Marie: Exactly, they are like... what for? They don't care about pictures, they want the experience more. Anyway... but tell me more about your project in Nepal... I'm curious...

Ya: I don't know, I just came here, a few... for two days and I'm thinking about building a wellness center, maybe uh... a community and uh... maybe far away from the town but I need some land to rent with some organic garden.

Marie: You should check out Begnas Lake.

Ya: I ask the hostel where I stay. Our guest house is really nice.

Marie: Which guest house do you stay in?

Ya: Yeti, you know? so good... this is this organic garden, they have their own organic garden, they have their own organic garden, they have really beautiful yard... really quiet. Yeah, just... don't like in Pokhara... It's in like in the whole nature, yeah... I enjoy a lot. And she says she got rebuild the building in like a hotel. She wants to be different, she wants to outstand all the other hotel here. And... uh... I just talk with her this morning. I said "Luxury hotels...uh... some boutique hotels will not be outstanding, if you do some different things, for example, you got center... your own yoga center, you can offer some, maybe some knowledge to people, some spirituals practice or some cleansing process... It's like a community where people come not only for outdoorsy things but people can enjoy their inner body.

Marie: It exists already in Pokhara, you have a lot of retreat center, scattered around.

Ya: I think so...

Marie: You can do Yoga, Ayurveda. Meditation, Vipassana if you want... there is a lot of places like that around... It's just I don't know if Chinese are aware or not. If you want to do that specifically for Chinese clients...

Ya: I will introduce step by step

Marie: For sure... But I don't think the Chinese know about it yet because I see a lot a foreigner... Europe, America, they know very well that this places you can do that but I haven't seen many Chinese doing it. But it's probably because they don't know it exists... and sometimes they are shy because their English is... it's not bad but they think their English is bad.

Ya: But I want to ask you... how do you interview with Chinese travelers? If they speak English... or?

Marie: Yes, I only choose the one that speak English, of course... I'm learning Chinese but it's so difficult...

(Previously, I presented to her the questions my PhD raises and particularly the questions surrounding the processes of learning how to travel)

Ya: I think you must learn through practicing. You must go! You must go outside, this is the first step. There is a saying that the first is important step is you decide to go. The rest is nothing... this is a famous moto in Chinese tourism.

Marie: The first step is the hardest...

Ya: Yeah, the first step is the hardest. Now, we don't need to mention the rest...yeah... you need... people can imagine that just order some menu and uh... some form problem, all the message can be found through internet. Easy, very easy. So... I cannot think of any problem, people meet in their traveling

Marie: Money sometimes...

Ya: Money?

Marie: Yes, because they travel really cheap... so sometimes they have money issue. I don't know... it's just... how do you one day say... just, like go out of China. Actually, I talk to a guy, from Shanghai he was... he earned good money but he was a trekker, he told me that I was the first non Chinese person he talked in his life, he has never talked to a foreigner before.

Ya: Wouah.

Marie: Yeah, the first person. So it's interesting to hear... to hear... like to hear their stories, how they learn how to travel and especially what it changes for them. Because for a lot of them, they travel for long time and it's because they have lost why... they have lost a sense of meaning in life. "I don't want

the life in a big city being a banker or an accountant, I don't want to work eighty hours a week" and they don't want this life but they don't know what kind of life they can get so they are making a little money and traveling and sometimes they just looking... they are mostly looking for themselves

Ya: That's good trving, meditation for certain people.

Marie: Thinking about themselves, their body their mind.

Ya: and uh... when they meet different people and... different part of themselves are open... yeah... they can find other opportunities... other possibilities of themselves. I think this... in this way travel can change people.

Marie: I met a girl from Dali and she became vegetarian in India during her three months stay there.

Ya: That's good... India, incredible! India has this kind of magic! This kind of magic! I don't know I, every trip changed me a lot

Marie: Traveling change you, how?

Ya: Oh, a lot! I'm not a stable... I'm always changing, I... I... you know I'm a kind of person that I want to... I need to change, I need to grow day by day so that's why I have my guru. I don't... it's... I don't expect enlightenment someday but I want to be happier and happier. So every day I... every day in the traveling I change a lot and uh... I don't know how to say that... it's really hard to express in word especially English...I'm so sure of that.

Marie: Ok, growing up, what did you wanted to do? Are you the person you expected to be were just graduating from high school?

Ya: oh! Far from that! when I was just graduating from college, from high school, I got nothing, I got no dream. My dream is: I go to nice, good reputation college. This is the only dream. When I was... after graduation, my dream was... find a decent job and uh... I can travel and live a very good life... oh... Then, after years I realize my dream and uh... before... you know you cannot get enough, people cannot get enough when I have everything I want to be changed. So... I'm in the process now.

Marie: So you had everything and now... and you achieve your dream of having with a good life, with a good job and now it's not your dream anymore?

Ya: Uh... years ago, when I have a really good job and high-level position I dream... oh someday I have a lot of free time and I travel more time, I can have my own company. It's not kind of dream... I think...uh...I think, now, I realize my dream but I think... dream is that can of thing... if you can think, it's not a dream, dream is a kind of thing you cannot think of... you cannot think out... it's out of your (interruption by the waiter)

Marie: So, you are in the process of changing?

Ya: Yeah... and I have no expectations in the future. And, you know... in Buddhism... there is a saying: "Wu chan" it's just like uh... unstable... everything is unstable. Today you are happy, tomorrow you will feel sorrow or grief. Everything is Wu chan. (interruption by waiter).

Ya: It's my area, sometimes I translate Amma's book, yeah... I really love to translate the good things so that more people now.

Marie: but... if she... would, you say it's not possible for her to go to China, is it possible to publish?

Ya: It's a good question. So, we can only share this translation through our own channel (she means private friends and family network), through our own blog or WeChat.

Marie: oh that's...

Ya: We do it secretly, like uh... we are doing like uh... but we cannot publish, in the content there must be no god, god things, no god, only uh... we only choose certain sentences about how to live a happy life, how to deal with relationship. This is very important but many Chinese people don't know, they like... like of some psychology knowledge and people

focus on the mind but not on the heart things so I think it's crucial for them to read something, it's very easy to read. It's limited only through our personal channel, it shouldn't be public, no public in China

Marie: It remind me of a girl I met in January, she was homosexual and she had a hard time coming out and living in the open although she had a girlfriend and stuff. Living her sexuality was hard for her.

Ya: In France, is that easy to say?

Marie: Yes, you can get married to your girlfriend or boyfriend

Ya: wow...

Marie: In Taiwan you can get married too, they passed the law I think few months ago

Marie: I think there is a famous Chinese author that lived in Rabat... San Mao?

Ya: San Mao is my favorite author when I was young

Marie: She lived in Morocco

Ya: Yes... she is special, she is very special.

XIU

Xiu: I have some memory when I trek in the EBC so I tried it for myself and I want to make it the jewelry and I can keep the memory for me. It's my design (she shows me a piece of jewelry). It's my memory on the trek.

Marie: Helicopter, did you take a helicopter?

[>R5]: No, but there was plenty of helicopter

Xiu: Yes, I take it

[>R5]: To the base camp.

Marie: You went with a helicopter?

Xiu: I stand about six days to climb the mountain and I have not enough clothes, it's very cold, and so... why...I can't, I never take it, so I fly down, it's very easy just thirty minutes.

[>R5]: I thought about doing it I was not feeling not so good.

Xiu: When you coming down, it's easy to climb up but it's very hard to go down. So many steps and it's very hard for the knee.

Marie: are you trekking on your own? Alone?

Xiu: I'm alone and I tried to challenge, if I can take my bag about twenty... kilos, it's heavy.

Marie: Do you carry it?

Xiu: I carry it and maybe next time I can throw some staff.

Marie: Twenty kilos, that's a lot

[>R5]: Yeah, very heavy

Xiu: The bag heavy, very heavy

Marie: Did you take a lot of staff?

Xiu: No

[>R5]: Mine was maybe six or seven, no more than ten for sure.

Marie: Was it your first trek? Do you trek in China?

Xiu: No, I always trek in China but never in the Himalaya. It's like very big heavy bag. So, I'm so...

Marie: Next time you'll...

Xiu: If I take these warm clothes, maybe I will die suddenly.

Marie: Ouh... the weather is changing

Xiu: The view is very nice but I take it very slowly, I want to enjoy this, not so quick, so... Maybe... even now, I don't know why I go there.

Marie: Where do you trek in China? Where do you go in China to trek?

Xiu: Not so famous place, just uh interesting, and not so many people. You know China have so many people everywhere so I found somewhere with my club and they will take me to some place, quiet place with interesting climb and trek

Marie: Do you climb?

Xiu: I climb in Guilin

[>R5]: I climbed there as well

Xiu: It's good place, right?

[>R5]: And in Getu

Xiu: Getu?

[>R5]: The village was called Getu. Guilin, it was called uh... Yangshu

Xiu: Yangshu, yeah.

[>R5]: Then I flew to somewhere else but I flew in Yangshu for two weeks climbing.

Xiu: Yeah, I go to Guilin last year, and also alone. It's a good place yeah

[>R5]: It's a good place, you find people to climb very easily. And then I flew somewhere else, one hour flying and I got to another region that it's very good for climbing and it was amazing, Getu, it's called Getu, with big cave.

Xiu: Yes, I know, I maybe show you

[>R5]: And in the cave, it's not so good for climbing, the cave, because it's white, it's very dirty

Xiu: yeah, dirty, it slips, use your hand.

[>R5]: It's beautiful but the routes are very strange, very difficult.

Xiu: But it's not very high?

Marie: Where did you learn how to climb?

Xiu: ...

Marie: In Shanghai?

Xiu: No, I always trek and maybe learn from the nature.

Marie: Do you climb in Shanghai? Do you go climbing?

Xiu: Not so... just for fun

[>R5]: There is one climbing area in Shanghai

Xiu: No...

[>R5]: On top of the mountain?

Xiu: No, no, no it's just indoor climbing

[>R5]: I thought there was like a town here...

Marie: But do you have indoor climbing, do you do indoor climbing in Shanghai?

Xiu: No often, I'm busy.

[>R5]: You can go easy, it is fun

Xiu: It's in Guilin, it's very safe (she is showing me pictures). Even if it's raining.

Marie: Is there a lot of Chinese climber in Guilin?

Xiu: No, no...

Marie: you are like, the first to climb in China?

Xiu: (laugh). What are you doing this afternoon?

Marie: We were thinking about going to the climbing wall.

Xiu: I want to make my "checknet" this afternoon.

Marie: What is that?

Xiu: You know the piece of jewelry, I found a store maybe he can teach me.

Marie: Where is the store?

Xiu: Close to here but I don't know if today he will be open because today is Sunday

Marie: Here is Saturday it's close.

Xiu: ok, ok, I found this store, it's not far from here. You can do everything and you go if you want to make it yourself.

Marie: Is it your first time in Nepal?

Xiu: Yeah, my first time. And uh... I don't want to stay in Kathmandu, so when I arrived to Kathmandu airport, I just fly to there. So much time if you wait for the bus.

Marie: Yes, it's a whole day

Xiu: And I don't have enough time, so I fly.

Marie: In China, you create jewelry?

Xiu: Yeah, five years

Marie: You have a shop?

Xiu: No,

Marie: Tao Bao?

Xiu: No, not Tao Bao, I only buy, buy, buy in Tao Bao. Do you want to learn the hand drum?

Marie: The what what?

Xiu: Hand Drum?
 Marie: Are you learning hand drum?
 Xiu: I want to, I ask Ai, she said it's very near from the Yoga class, I want to find it, it's very near, the shop
 Marie: after the Yoga class?
 Xiu: Maybe tomorrow after yoga I can learn
 Marie: You are going to yoga again tomorrow?
 Xiu: Yeah!
 Marie: You like yoga?
 Xiu: I like yoga very much but my body is like a stone. Even if I learn yoga for two or three years.
 Marie: You have been doing yoga in Shanghai for two years?
 Xiu: Yes, but my body is always like a stone
 Marie: I used to dance when I was little so, my body it's ok, I'm flexible. Not strong but flexible
 Xiu: It's good. When I was in the trek, my bag was heavy and always walk for half or six hours every day and in the morning, I do some little yoga and it made me feel more comfortable.
 Marie: To stretch
 Xiu: Yeah, stretch is good.
 Marie: Ai is good teacher, we were talking about that, she is a good teacher.
 Xiu: Yeah, yeah
 [>R5]: She is very good. If you do yoga and you start doing vinyasa, it's always the same. What I like today because from the beginning, we start doing something that I have never done. Clean the nose. Also, after all, it was special. The Vinyasa is the part that I like a little bit less. But it's also nice because you, you get to know the movement very well, very slowly
 Xiu: Yeah, slowly, and she doesn't want you to do some pose, you don't do it, she just let you follow your body. It's good
 [>R5]: So, you took the helicopter from up there but you didn't arrange that, you just went there and ask if you could go down and they say it's possible?
 Xiu: Yeah
 Marie: How much was it? To ride the helicopter?
 Xiu: To ride five hundred
 [>R5]: USD?
 Xiu: Not dollars... it's not dollars, it's RMB
 Marie: So, you divide it by seven
 [>R5]: It's not five hundred rupees. So, it might be 60 or 70 euros. It's not bad.
 Marie: It's not bad
 [>R5]: And you experience helicopter if you have never done it.
 Xiu: I stay very near from the yoga classroom. The taxi take me there, it was only four hundred rupees, it's very near.
 Marie: Where do you stay?
 Xiu: I stay in the... very close to the yoga class, in a guest house
 Marie: Me too, I'm at the moon valley. Do you see the 1986 Inn?
 Xiu: I'm in there.
 Marie: The guest house just... The owner of the 1986 inn is Chinese right?
 Xiu: Yes, you she helped me by tickets, it's really nice girl. Really good.
 Marie: So how do you like Nepal?
 Xiu: I don't have feeling in Nepal, I have feeling in Pokhara. I just stayed in Pokhara, it's a good place.
 Marie: Will you come back?
 Xiu: Yeah, I will come back, next time, I make enough time to enjoy the trek, maybe ten days.
 Marie: Is it difficult for you to have vacation?
 Xiu: It's difficult but I can handle it

Marie: You know, there is a lot of Chinese girls, they are from China and they are learning how to fly paraglide. They stay in Pokhara for four months and they fly.
 Xiu: Yeah, I ask the guide how long if I want to learn this. He told he had learn it and doing it for two years and she can handle it himself.
 Marie: For tandem?
 Xiu: Yeah, for tandem flight.
 Xiu: But this is very expensive here, it's easy, maybe it's easy how to handle yet but if you want to have you may spend so much money.
 Marie: Maybe in China it's cheaper?
 Xiu: No, no, I ask her. Different kind, different price but it still very expensive. It's a good place I think. I don't do something you have to do, you just do something you want.
 Marie: Is there some place like that in China?
 Xiu: No... no...
 Marie: The island of Hainan?
 Xiu: Hainan... I don't suggest you to go to Hainan
 Marie: Why?
 Xiu: Two things: too hot and uh... in my view I feel people are not very kind. They are always nervous on how to make money from the visitors. And there are so many people come to this small place. In the beach, you can't see somebody enjoy the sunshine, have a bikini, lie down. There are always so many people, so many tourists take picture, too much. But, I go there before four years ago, maybe it has changed. I don't know.
 Marie: What did you do in Hainan?
 Xiu: I go to Hainan only for one week but feeling not very good.
 Marie: Did you go to for the beach?
 Xiu: I go for the beach, just in the hotel. My hotel had own beach so there was not so many people to shy me. And it had a nice sunset and I don't go to the famous place so it's good for me.
 Marie: How old are you now?
 Xiu: What?
 Marie: How old are you?
 Xiu: You can guess... I'm thirty-five
 Marie: I'm thirty
 Xiu: What about you?
 [>R5]: I'm forty-one
 Xiu: Wow, you are the biggest. I want to go there in my forty and I want to try to walk the ABC again and don't take fly down then I walk through the circuit.
 Xiu: I hope I can do it in my forty.
 [>R5]: You can do it no problem
 Xiu: And again, maybe take so many times but...
 Marie: Do you think about doing Everest base camp? It's a nice trek
 Xiu: Uh, yeah. In ... there is many kinds of way to go to the trek. If we go there for summer, we can follow the river and have a nice view also.
 Marie: But in the summer you have monsoon, lots of rain.
 Xiu: Yeah, Ma Hua; kind of like this.
 Marie: You should check out Taiwan as well.
 Xiu: I have never been to Taiwan.
 Marie: And what other countries have you visited?
 Xiu: In Asia, I always go trekking in Asia, I never go to Europe, I don't know where to go to Europe. Singapore, yeah, and Thailand and
 Marie: Vietnam? Cambodia
 Xiu: Cambodia maybe
 Marie: Close to Thailand...
 Xiu: Yeah... and Saipan.
 Marie: Japan?
 Xiu: Japan, yeah and Saipan...It's an American island. It's the nearest American island with China.

Marie: There is a lot of resort?
 Xiu: Yeah, and I always go to Japan, Japan is good.
 Marie: Like, for the weekend?
 Xiu: No weekend... I... I go to there just to listen my favorite stars...
 Marie: To concert, you go to concert?
 Xiu: Concert yeah and maybe I got the cheap, cheap ticket by flying, I go there to fish... you can fish yourself and cook it. It's really good.
 Marie: So, you fish, and you cook it
 Xiu: You can cook the fish in Japan, it's really good. It's very fresh. And you can spend all day in the sea, Dongjing Hai, Tokyo sea. Only for food, I like Japanese food very much, Shanghai is the best place to have the best Japanese food.
 Marie: I didn't find any in Shanghai, in June.
 Xiu: There is so many good place, I can show you.
 Marie: How long have you lived in Shanghai for? Were you born in Shanghai?
 Xiu: Yeah, I work in Shanghai and I live there.
 Marie: But were you born in Shanghai? Did you grow up in Shanghai?
 Xiu: Yeah, I grew up in Shanghai. So many kind of food in Shanghai. You can find everywhere, everyplace, every country.
 Marie: I didn't find any...
 Xiu: You can check on the internet.
 Marie: I did but... the weibo was only in Chinese and I don't... I'm learning Chinese but... I didn't know.
 Xiu: In Shanghai, you just say, I want to eat... wasabi, I want to eat... you just say I want to go to the Japanese restaurant. and you can ask somebody, they will show you.
 Xiu: This morning was Yoga class and this afternoon is lakeside. And oh, I found good place to have desert. (some people in the street are saying to me)
 Marie: And uh... so yeah, yoga in the morning, did you have like a beer in the afternoon?
 Xiu: No! Beer is good but I don't drink when I'm outside, I only drink in Shanghai.
 Marie: Why?
 Xiu: If I drink I can't stop myself
 Marie: No way...
 Xiu: It's so terrible if I drink... I send a picture to my friend she went to Russia. I want to see a movie, I really want to have a drink but I have got to stop myself.
 Marie: We can go have a beer later if you want and I'll stop you.
 Xiu: Yeah but I will say why?
 Marie: Have you done some shopping?
 Xiu: No, I don't, what about you?
 Marie: Yes, I bought that in Woven, right there, I like what they have. Are you going to do some shopping for friends and family?
 Xiu: uh... blanket. really nice, so many people told me the blanket is really nice. But...uh... they told me I can buy the blanket in Kathmandu. And uh... I want to buy some Nepal tea. It's good, I like this, did you try this?
 Marie: I have, the... I like Chinese tea better, the nu'er.
 Xiu: Pu'er
 Marie: Pu'er tea yeah. Nu'er is women...
 Xiu: Ah, I suggest you go to Fujian, they have a local tea, so like Pu'er but I think it's very better than Pu'er. Marie: I tried some when I was in Yunnan... It's was good, very good
 Xiu: Yunnan, it has the same ... in Pokhara
 Marie: yeah
 Xiu: Yunnan, there is so many arts like this
 Marie: Yes, very nice, the artifact is really nice. So, do you plan on going to Europe? Maybe?

Xiu: After my forty? Before my forty I don't want to go to Europe? I don't know where I want to go. I don't want shopping city, because in Shanghai you can buy everything.
 Marie: What do you like to do when you travel?
 Xiu: Like to do? I don't know, every time I have different kind, different mind. When I decide to go someplace, it mostly because I have some feeling in there and I want to do this, right time, and then I beg my boss to give me time, "I want to relax"
 Marie: and he gives you time... it's a nice boss.
 Xiu: Yes, he is a nice boss
 Marie: And how do you go on the internet and check on the internet?
 Xiu: I don't take so many pictures, I don't take so many pictures
 Marie: No?
 Xiu: I don't want pictures, by phone by camera, I want to use my body to remember
 Marie: You want to use your body to remember
 Xiu: Yeah, remember what I was feeling and when I will be so old and when I will see some place I will tell somebody, "I know this feeling, I have a moment to remember and that's ok". And really, it's enough
 Marie: But it seems like you are doing a lot of sports?
 Xiu: Yeah, yeah
 Marie: You are doing sports, big time
 Xiu: I spend so much time in sports
 Marie: yeah?
 Xiu: Yeah, I like it, running, boxing.. yeah, boxing is very good. I always eat so much, if I want to keep my weight, I use the sports.
 [468,8]Marie: Have you done stand up paddle on the lake?
 Xiu: No, no, not yet, maybe tomorrow, I will change my clothes and at sunset, not so many people
 Marie: Have you ever done it?
 Xiu: No
 Marie: Look wait (I show her what stand up paddle is)
 Xiu: Oh... I know this, stand up paddle, I do it China... it's very difficult to keep the balance.
 Marie: On the lake it's easy
 Xiu: Yeah? Do you want to try it?
 Marie: Yeah, tomorrow, let's do it.
 Xiu: I have a friend to help me do it. But I don't know if I can do this, my balance is not very good, if I don't focus on my body, so I do yoga, when you do the yoga, you need the focus your body and you don't think too much, if you think about something else, you fail.
 Marie: And how did you learn all this sport? Did you learn by yourself or at school?
 Xiu: No... uh... If I have an interest, I learn it at school, not for a very long time and I talk to somebody who did it before and I try it first, I don't want to learn so many things when I try and I can try it first and later I ask some people and take some class and I try again, maybe feel another thing.
 Marie: Is there a lot of sports place in Shanghai?
 Xiu: Yeah, but the feelings is not very good
 Marie: Why?
 Xiu: Busy people, quick timing, so I enjoy this place, slow time
 Marie: Slow life, yeah. Relaxing. This is there.
 Xiu: This is a nice place.
 Marie: Yeah, a lot of people, do you do that in Shanghai?
 Xiu: Yeah, I have a place. It's good
 Xiu: It's a different time
 Marie: Yes, it's a very chill place.
 Xiu: That's good.
 Marie: When did you start traveling outside of China?

[863,6]Xiu: In my... uh... senior high school, I... it's my first time I traveled by myself and not long journeys, just for two days and I don't tell my parents I'm alone.
 Marie: When you were in high school?
 Xiu: Yeah,
 Marie: Where did you go?
 Xiu: It's a small town near Shanghai. And I felt "wow". Long traveling made me excited... And it suited me I didn't feel lonely. And I join... enjoy the long way so I like here but you know sometimes, some places need friends.
 Marie: Interesting
 Xiu: Yeah, everywhere, not every place is suited for alone.
 Marie: Where do you go with friends?
 Xiu: Hainan
 Marie: Of course
 Xiu: If you want to drink, if you want to have some party, you need friends. And people always think that a single woman like Chinese, it's not very safe so they always tell me "you need a friend with you"
 Marie: They tell you it's not safe for you to travel?
 Xiu: Yeah, and so my friends they need too many people to go together and it's hard I think to have a choice
 Marie: But you still travel alone no problem?
 Xiu: No problem yeah.
 Marie: Do you tell your parents now?
 Xiu: This time, no.
 Marie: Still not, and you are thirty-four
 Xiu: I'm thirty-four but I haven't married, for my parents I'm still a baby you know
 Xiu: Chinese parents you know so I told them I'm with my friends in a big group to go here and enjoy my holiday. I just stay, eat, sleep, eating, sleep, eating.
 Marie: And drink?
 Xiu: No drinking, if I drink my dad will kill me.
 Marie: Your parents are in Shanghai, right?
 Xiu: Yeah, in Shanghai. But... they are very kind with me, they don't tell me what to do but they are very worried about me?
 Marie: Because you are not married?
 Xiu: Yeah, and I enjoy a long life, they think it's wrong, it's not the right way. I have time, I enjoy this, maybe when I feel lonely, it's easy to marry, do you think?
 Marie: ... Do you feel lonely right now?
 Xiu: No! I enjoy my time a lot! In my dream I want to meet some guy in my fifties
 Marie: In your fifty?
 Xiu: Yes, It's the good time, I have more experience, and I can, I can handle everything maybe. And in that time, you don't need to work, you have some money and we can play together, travel. Not just work. This may be good.
 Marie: For sure.
 Xiu: What about you? Single?
 Marie: No, I'm married actually
 Xiu: Wow
 Marie: But no babies, I like traveling.
 Xiu: You like babies or not?
 Marie: uh... I don't know... uh... It's not an easy answer.
 Xiu: I don't want to have babies. I think I don't know how to teach a baby.
 Marie: So, you parents don't know that you are in Nepal now?
 Xiu: They know I'm in Nepal, they don't know I'm traveling alone and then I went trekking.
 Marie: Do you send them pictures
 Xiu: Yeah, but with some guys.
 Marie: You take fake pictures with some guys?
 Xiu: Yes
 Marie: this is closed (the instrument shop, she wants to take a drum class like you can see in Lijiang)
 Xiu: I want to play this, I want to learn this

Marie: are you going to buy one?
 Xiu: I don't want to buy one but... the store can teach us how to play this. It's maybe interesting.
 Marie: Sure. Do you play an instrument back in China?
 Xiu: Yeah, I play the drum, I'm just learning (the owner comes) Hi it's open?
 [>R5]: yes
 Marie: You are trying to learn as much as possible?
 Xiu: If I have an interest why not, I don't want to learn so much, just a little (of everything)
 Marie: What time do you want to the stand-up paddle tomorrow?
 Xiu: Maybe after the yoga
 Marie: Ok let's meet tomorrow, see you later
 Marie: What was your experience with Nepali people? Did you have only good communications and stuff like that?
 Xiu: Not very many, yeah
 Marie: Not very many?
 Xiu: Yeah.
 Marie: You never eat Chinese food when you travel?
 Xiu: No
 Marie: Why?
 Xiu: I don't want to eat... you know I live with my parents and they always give me Chinese food and if I can a choice, I don't want.
 Marie: Really?
 Xiu: Yes
 Marie: What's your favorite food?
 Xiu: Sushi! Sushi is very good and it's cooked very easy
 Marie: You live with your parents?
 Xiu: Yeah
 Marie: Can you get an apartment?
 Xiu: No, no, it's too bad
 Marie: It is that bad in Shanghai (the market)?
 Xiu: Yes
 Marie: So, I bet that every time you have vacation you go?
 Xiu: Yes, every time, I'm going...
 Marie: I think it's in this street. This is here, yes
 Xiu: You found this way...
 Marie: You came from this way?
 Xiu: No, I think, how can you find this way?
 Marie: I don't know, I have been here for a long time
 Xiu: I know this place. It's for the bag, you can make it yourself (we are close to a tailor shop for women empowerment). If you buy it, you can also help the woman. This place I know. I don't know, paragliding sounds very interesting to me.
 Marie: You would like to get more involved in that?
 Xiu: I don't know, time, money
 Marie: : It seems like more people are going into this business. Yes this is right there
 Xiu: (Scream of excitement, we are at the paddle board shop, we are going for a ride)

MIN

Min: So... well. 2005 when I went to university.
 Marie: Me too!
 Min: Really?
 Marie: Yes, I started university in 2005. You are thirty?
 Min: Yes
 Marie: Me too
 Min: Good to know
 Marie: Yes 1987
 Min: I was thinking maybe you went to university. I was like, for which degree because you have many degrees; I was thinking maybe you repeat, you repeat again.

Marie: No, I just like try everything. (Fen, a Chinese paraglider friend with Min joins us, she introduces us.)
 Min: She is younger than, she is younger...
 Marie: Ok... how did you two meet?
 Min: She is our paragliding student from China.
 Fen: and you... you are also paraglider?
 Marie: No, I'm not. Right now, I'm doing my PhD.
 Min: But if you keep hanging out around this pilots' friends probably you will give it a try.
 Marie: I'll try a tandem... tandem flight of course.
 Min: You try it first and you think how would it be if I try myself.
 Marie: How long have you been flying for?
 Fen: Six month ago, I have started
 Marie: Did you start in Pokhara or did you start in China?
 Min: I just get your French accent sorry.
 Marie: Yes... "Pokhara" (laugh)
 Fen: I start in China, I take a course in China because, his husband...
 Min: Boyfriend...
 Fen: went to China last year, boyfriend I'm sorry... (laugh). He went to China and he taught us paragliding.
 Marie: Where?
 Min: It's a flying site... one of the airfields, national airfield, it's between Beijing and Shanghai. It's in Shandong province.
 Marie: Yeah, I know, I was in China last year, in Ningbo Zhejiang
 Fen: I have many foreigners friends in Beijing because I work in Beijing.
 Marie: Where do you work?
 Fen: Beijing..
 Marie: No but what do you do?
 Fen: I was personal trainer before but I quit my job a year ago, so now I'm free
 Min: She is still super fit. (laugh)
 Fen: I like many... I like many sports... and paragliding
 Min: She is also diving
 Marie: You dive? where do you dive? In a... the island... what is the name?
 Fen: I usually go to...
 Marie: What's the big island in south China
 Fen: Hainan...
 Marie: Hainan. Do you dive there?
 Fen: No... I don't like there...
 Min: I don't know I have never been there... it sounds too touristic for me. There is so many so beautiful islands, quiet beaches that I can go. I don't want to go there. That's how I feel about Hainan
 Fen: Yeah... me too. The water, the sea is not clear.
 Min: Yeah, it's not so clean.
 Marie: Where do you dive then?
 Fen: I went to the Philippines and Indonesia. Some small islands.
 Marie: Cool... so what's the plan, are you going to become paraglider?
 Fen: I have no plan, I don't know.
 Min: She is thinking about staying in Pokhara more...
 Fen: Yes, so far, I just did this plan... I don't know what's happen next.
 Min: And she will meet friend who does sky diving, wind suiting and... I don't know. Ice climbing... whatever. You will meet those friends here and they will get you into new sports.
 Marie: So... so... wait... because... you came... how did you learn about paragliding? You came here in Pokhara as a backpacker?
 Min: Yeah... tourist first time and ok... this are called paraglider, I have never done it before, maybe it's safe because many people are doing it so I just fly.
 Marie: How long ago was that?

Min: It was 2012.
 Marie: 2012... so that was a long time ago. So how long did you stay that first trip in Nepal?
 Min: That trip was twenty days
 Marie: Was it for Spring festival?
 Min: No, no, it was in October.
 Fen: And for me I was met the paragliding during the Spring festival 2015. it was my first time here, yeah.
 Marie: Did you come for paragliding? Did you come just for paragliding?
 Fen: No, I just try first time here.
 Min: Actually, many people, they don't just come to Nepal for paragliding unless they are pilots. They are doing a trip in Nepal and they see the place and it's where most people get their knowledge about paragliding.
 Marie: So... you came... did you... was Nepal your first trip abroad? Did you travel as a kid?
 Min: No... no... but not so much... before Nepal I just went to Thailand, Indonesia for some island holidays.
 Marie: What are island holidays for you?
 Min: Beach and sunshine, water.
 Marie: How long did you stay in Thailand for?
 Min: Thailand trip is typical Chinese holiday. Maybe one week. Because I was working, we don't have much time.
 Marie: Where did you work?
 Min: In Shanghai.
 Marie: What did you do?
 Min: I was working in a consulting firm... management consulting firm. So, you work a lot, all the time... a lot.
 Marie: Then you went to Indonesia. Same... one week?
 Min: Probably yeah.
 Marie: And when did you decide to come to Nepal?
 Min: uh...
 Marie: The first time you came to Nepal in 2012, you stayed twenty days.
 Min: The difference is, when I went to Thailand or Indonesia, it was just a holiday break from my work. So actually, my friend and I we just pay for the package. It's not completely everything is organized but you pay for a package, you have the transportation, the hotels, necessary things and you are there, you can decide what you want to do with your time there. That kind of holiday, I wouldn't call that backpack because that is quite luxury. And then for Nepal, it was I came to Nepal from Tibet. And before Nepal trip I was in Tibet for one month, traveling around.
 Marie: Ok, so you told your boss in Shanghai that you stopped... did you quit your job or?
 Min: When I came to Nepal I quit my job already but there was a phase before that when you want to take longer and longer and longer holidays from your work.
 Marie: They let you go? like... your office in China?
 Min: The company, actually what I like about my previous job is... you work a lot over time on the week-end when you are on a project and then when one project is finished, before you get on another one. This is the time to ask your boss for a holiday. "Look I have saved up fifteen days and I want to take them once, one time, because I plan to go somewhere, it's far away it takes long time". Actually, I was the first one in my company to ask my boss. Here twenty-two days plus the legal week-end. So, I got one months off. And my co-worker they were surprised. They were like "You know we have so many days... but we don't take them all at once because we feel... shy". They think the boss is going to have a second thought. They are just too shy or it's... culturally they think it's impossible. Even the company rules make it very clear you can do that.
 Marie: You can't?
 Min: You can, you just need, one, two, three bosses to sign this so the process is longer you just ask three days off.

Marie: And how... how did they react?

Min: Well, this kind of company culture is also what about it. If you work good with you work and when you take holiday, your boss is not going to say anything. But if you are already worried about losing your job, maybe next one I'm going to get fired and you go to your boss to ask this kind of thing, maybe they are not going to be happy. I like that. It's more about your work ability.

Marie: So, during your month of... you went to Lhasa, Tibet?

Min: No, I think it was 2010... or 2011, I spent one month traveling with a couple, they are my friends that I met on previous trips. So, we did a trip driving a jeep from north east part of China. Dongbei.

Marie: So, you... you went to Donbei?

Min: Almost like, the border with Russia so... the Inner Mongolia but more north and you go other way to the... the... Gansu, Xinjiang and then north Xinjiang, south Xinjiang. Then one pass from Xinjiang to Tibet and then up. And then this alley area in Tibet. And then when we make it to Lhasa, it was already like... and then my friend they wanted to keep going to Yunnan, going down from Tibet. And then I was like... I ask one month off. I'm not sure if... because it's possible at my work... it's possible that if I go back on time like I promise and then I'm just waiting in my office every day before my next project start. So actually, the company don't need you to be there. Uh... but I didn't get any news or message from my boss, from anyone. But for me I think actually it's nice to keep my promise to go back on time. So, I book one ticket from Lhasa to Shanghai. And then I realize I made a mistake, I should stay one more week on my trip. So, I would have booked a ticket probably from Kunming to Shanghai. Yeah and that trip meant a lot to me. I mean that's the traveling I like. You take your time, you make friends, you meet different people. It's not about going to the sightseeing and then have to have a photo here. It's about to have experience on the way. It's like they are a couple and sometimes the three of us share one room. Very good friend and like one night we arrived in the most... this biggest lake in Xinjiang and we drove seventy kilometers and we couldn't find one hotel so in the end we decide we are just going to stay, sleep inside the car and open one window for air and the star view. It was quite cold. That night the three of us, sleeping in one car by the lake. It was beautiful the next morning.

Marie: I bet it was.

Min: The lake, the snow mountain, swans. My friend was a professional photographer so he had all this huge lens. He one time that trip to... to... that was actually his target to do that trip. He wants to... to make some photos of the swans with an eight hundred millimeters lens. It's just like a big gun, you now (laugh). It was the first big trip.

Marie: Kind of backpacking trip?

Min: Yeah... because you are driving.

(Telephone break)

Min: Now I have to go back to the time where I define the first backpacking trip? So... maybe the first time I actually buy a very good backpack...

Marie: Yeah... when was that?

Min: uh... maybe I can check my blog

Marie: You have a blog? What's the name of the blog?

Min: The Weibo, I started using it from 2010 and I just... I write it for myself. So... if I search... backpack in my blog... Yes, I think it has something to do with the two trips that I made to Hulunbuir in Inner Mongolia. In the north part of Inner Mongolia. The first time I wanted to go there because... when I started working I try to make all the possible holidays on trips.

Marie: All your holidays you try to go somewhere new. And it was mostly in China?

Min: Yeah, I think the first two years I was just visiting around different places in China. I think I manage to cover maybe eighty percent of the provinces.

Marie: Nice.

Min: I mean my target is not to be everywhere, I keep going back to places that I like. So the first trip to Hulunbuir, it was just like one of my regular, you know, break from work trip and then I was searching on the internet because that place it's better to travel with your private car so many people... because it's a huge grassland area... so many people they find a driver and then pay a price per day for car and driver and they can go anywhere they want. And when I was doing that research, I find that travel agency and actually that's what they offer. They offer you one day until many, many days. According to the website, they are the expert of the area. I think, nice... I like this people, they offer you service with enough knowledge of that place I like it and the price is ok. So, I just book but the minimum is for two persons so there was a girl, she was a university student, I was second year working already and so... she wanted to come with me... I paid everything in advance. And then, the day before her trip... her mom called me... "Hey you know that place can be dangerous, you two girls, we are worried... what do you think if you just... just fly to Harbin and we have an auntie there and she will take care of you girls and show you around nice place". And then I told her mom, "You know, she is your daughter and maybe you can decide for her but this is my trip, my holiday, I'm going to do it anyway". So really, it's kind of ironic you know because I booked the tickets, her air tickets, of course she paid me afterwards, the flight was from Shanghai to Harbin and then from Harbin I take one slipper train and arrived in Hulunbuir, in that place in the morning and my driver will pick me up. And so, we were on the same flight to Harbin and from Harbin airport, she went to the auntie who was supposed to show her around. So, I went by myself and the driver, this travel agency, the couple I was traveling with one year later, they were the boss of this agency. No, they were the boss of this travel agency and they send me a driver and they told me on the email. "Ok, don't worry we will send you our most funny guy to show you around, you will have a nice holiday". But when I first saw this driver... first, he is Mongolian, he is big and he is bold. It's like... he is like... if he is violent... I'm going to be dead.

Marie: That's a travel agency... the driver cannot be violent with you.

Min: You never know... he might be working for this travel agency but we are alone inside the car, in the middle of nowhere. Ok, so when we first met... you know what... my parents they need your information because they know we are going to stay like... almost ten days together. Do you mind to give me your ID card?

Marie: You photographed it and send it to your parents?

Min: Yes... so we started our trip but on the first trip, we started directly from the train station, start on the road. And actually, after a couple of hours, we started to talk and...

Marie: and you realize he is nice. (laugh) it takes a couple of hours.

Min: Actually this, the photographer, who is the owner of the travel agency, he caught us up. He... like... somewhere. So, the first day, it was two local guys, and two guys and me. I was like... "This is the trip I want". Because when that girl decided to cancel the trip... I called them and they say... you know what... because of the mom, she is not going to come but I don't mind, I can pay the price for two persons because for me the experience and my time it's the most important so I can pay double, I can pay for her part and you can still take me on this trip. I know you need that minimum to cover your cost or whatever... like the hotel rooms. So actually, the boss, now my very good friend, he got interested in me

because of this. he was "ah... this girl thinks differently, I would like to meet her". So, he caught us up on the first day, half way somewhere and then shows me around, taking some very nice photos and then after we did a circle. At the end of my trip I send him a message. "Ok, we are at this place, it's a beautiful mountain, would you like to come to watch sunset together? And it was like, uh... four hundred kilometers from the city. He writes "no, no, no I'm not going to come... the road, the condition is really bad and it's four hundred kilometers". But then he made it, he missed the sunset, he made it around ten o'clock in the evening. So, the three of us, including the driver he had very good alcohol together (laugh) yeah and then he told me... you know what... when you talk to me on the phone... "Don't worry I'm going to pay for two persons. I trust you guys make it very nice, going to have a good time. When you told me that on the phone, and I have already decided this is the person I want to be friend with". And then I told him later, after my trip... "When you drove, four hundred kilometers, I decided I'm gonna be your friend too". And he had a flat tire on the way. To fix that's why he is a little bit late.

Marie: When was that trip?

Min: 2010

Marie: You did a lot of trip in 2010.

Min: Yeah... of course the trip was nice because you don't have any bosses or rules to tell you what you have to do or not to do on the way. I just... it's more like spontaneous. I just tell my driver. "Do you have any friends?" because he is showing me very local, very tradition... because according to the contract, I'm supposed to pay for his meals on the way. And... after a couple of days, I just realize... whenever we are going to have this kind of meals, we are eating in local small restaurant, like dumplings or noodles. And all the big diner, big parties, actually he invited me. Because he has friends on the way... every town... each stop... he has friend. So, he is just bringing me... not a group of tourists... so he is just telling people... this is my sister you know. So, this bound... this relationship starts to really think... ok... this is the people I want to meet when I travel. So... I told him "You know I wouldn't mind if I can try to ride a horse on the grassland, Mongolian feeling"; and he didn't bring me to the touristic place where you have poor horses working. He... ok... he is like... I have this in mind. So, one day we are in the middle of nowhere, so... Sherpa... local... do you call that Sherpa?

Marie: Like a porter?

Min: No, like the people who take care of the sheep, the cow..

Marie: Yeah, yeah I know what you mean.

Min: And then, he talked with that guy... a very old guy, a Mongolian in their language and so... after the talk, he got off the horse and gave the horse to me... "Ok you can try". This horse is very nice... So I got to try in a different way. And later I ask him... "do you think it's possible because I have never milk... uh... never try milking a cow." I would like to try... Of course he took me to his friends farm, I try... I couldn't do it...

Marie: I know... it's so hard. It's so hard to milk a cow

Min: Because I don't know how much I should squeeze. If I squeeze too much the cow can feel hurt. It can kick me so I didn't do it. But somehow we get some very fresh milk and he boiled it for me and I just had one big bowl. But I had a bad time in the middle of the night... from that milk. In one word... that trip was full of experiences. Full of surprised.

Marie: So that trip in Inner Mongolia and the trip from Inner Mongolia to Xinjiang were the first...

Min: Yeah...

Marie: And how did you arrive in Nepal? How did you come here?

Min: Actually that was... I went to Tibet many times that I don't remember now.

Marie: You have been to Tibet many times?

Min: Yeah, but the trip that I remember is from Xinjiang to Tibet and then another time... I went there with some people from internet... somehow they find me

Marie: In Tibet?

Min: No

Marie: In Nepal, wait... I'm confused.

Min: Some people on internet they are looking for people to join as a team so they can share the transportation to go to more remote area in Tibet. So I join one of this trips, it was like three weeks really deep down in Tibet and at the end of that trip, actually one girl from this group, she was working for the English embassy in China I think and she recommended me... you know there is a school in Lhasa for blind children and it was funded by a German girl... you can go have a look and just for experience and see what you can do for them. So... at the end of the trip, everyone is back in Lhasa, I went to this school but before I go, I was... I was... we were one week away from arriving back in Lhasa so I posted on my blog... I said "Guys, I'm going to visit this school, so I'm not sure what I can do for them but if you have any money you want to donate, I can bring to them." So in one week, I collected like nine thousand yuan which is like one thousand two hundred euros.

Marie: Yeah... that's a lot of money

Min: Yeah, in one week. And then... because I'm the one who is lucky to find that so many people actually trust me. So I went there to talk to the manager of the school and... uh... the manager was a Tibetan guy... he was blind himself but I see... the character. (A pilot friend Colin Popa of Fen and Minjoins us at dinner table. He have small talk) . And they told me... actually I told them I have collected this money so I would like to... because this is from many friends... so I'm gonna give it to you. And they say "Yes, it's actually good because it was... I think it's the fifteenth of October is the International day from blind people" They say they are going to do a little ceremony for this day and the kids can buy some drinks some food to have a little party on that day. So they can use that money for that. But I couldn't stay until that day. So I mean, that's also something new that I get to do for the first time on my trip. It's inspiring for myself. I realize... it's not about you helping people... you are getting more. It's not about... "ok, you feel good about yourself" it's about be close with this people, talk to them and then after that... did I quit that job at that time?

Marie: It was 2010.

Min: Yeah?

Marie: And you quit your job in 2010?

Min: No, this Tibetan trip is in 2012 after I quit my job. But it was right before I came to Nepal.

Marie: Ok

Min: Well, many young people in Lhasa and they are like well this is easy to go to Nepal from here you can just take a bus and then go.

Marie: That's what you did?

Min: Yeah, the first time because you can get the visa from Lhasa easily... so that's why I think ok I have time... and let's go.

Fen: But I think the Tibet for foreigner is not easier

Marie: Right, you can't go unless we are a group tourist but solo travelers, no, we can't go.

Min: Being a group and being... taking care of by a travel agent... you can't go anywhere you want. (Addressing to Colin) Marie is doing her PhD about Asian backpackers so...

Marie: Indeed (Short break of chit chat with everybody around the table)

Marie: When did you quit you job, I can't remember, 2010?

Min: You see I graduated in 2009 and I worked three years then I quit.

Marie: You didn't like your life in Shanghai or was it just the need for something else?

Min: I like it but I think I just need to take a break. I didn't know that this break would last until now.

Marie: So you started traveling in 2012 and Nepal was the first country you went to?

Min: After I quit my job, yes. Actually I was planning to travel around, maybe in south Asian countries a little bit more but then... you never know, you get stuck with Nepal.

Marie: So you came to Nepal, you wanted to travel more and then you got stuck here?

Min: I finish my first trip of twenty days here and then I went back to Shanghai, I think about it for three weeks and I came back here.

[>R6]: (This is Colin) Wait a second, when was the time that you fell in love between?

Marie: With Nando?

[>R6]: When did you met Nando?

Min: The first time I actually remember his face and his name was the competition party in March 2013.

[>R6]: So you fell in love with Nepal before Nando, two separate things.

Min: It has nothing to do with him... I decided to learn paragliding and it has nothing to do with him.

Marie: So in 2012 you came here for twenty days, you tried paragliding, you went back to Shanghai and you were like I'm gonna do that... I'm gonna paraglide?

Min: No... no... (Conversation on whether or not I'm gonna do paragliding.. I tell them I have to go to the border with China) I don't know how is the border right now because after the earthquake

Marie: Thato Pani is closed now but the Rasuwa...

Min: It's difficult because we have different names.

Marie: It's further than Thato Pani from Lhasa by bus but uh... it's still open... you can get buses. I met uh...

Min: The oldest one is probably still closed yeah... that's why before, more than half of the Chinese tourists, they can here through land because the air ticket were expensive. And now, not so many come by the road. (Small conversation chit chat Marie: So you tried paragliding on your first trip to Nepal?

Min: Twice

Marie: Twice, yeah, you told me that... first day and then second day you booked day.

Min: No... on the first landing I booked. (laugh)

Fen: I think first time you come here, you try...

Marie: And after that you went back to Shanghai and then you came back here?

Min: Yes because you know I quit my job in Shanghai already... it's boring to stay in the city and I plan to travel... but then I think, the winter is nice in Pokhara, I can just go back and stay a few months there. And I came back. And then my neighbors are these pilots and I listen to them talking about flying from breakfast to diner and actually... I didn't think that I wanted to... to... become a pilot... it's not like that.

Marie: How did it happen?

Min: I'm hanging out with this pilot and get to know more and more about the sports and the risk, the accident and their stories how they become who they are. And my pilot, the one that took me the first two flights. He was already like about fifteen years flying at that time and then he was practicing accro. So after everyday carrying tourist he would go for solo, and record and evening compare the videos with their good accro pilots is progressing on that and then I was like... oh my god... there must be something magic about paragliding then. You are fifteen years flying already and you are still so much into it every day. And this, not just him... everyone

because when we are sitting by the lake for breakfast, they start to analyze the weather and then in the afternoon when everyone is back from the landing, you meet again and you start talking about it.

Marie: And when did you get into it then?

Min: Probably after one month listening

Marie: So did you borrow a glide from somebody?

Min: No... I mean... after one month, I made my mind that I want to try, I want to fly myself. It's like... ok... it looks like it's something every pilot is so passionate about around here and I would like to have something that's makes me so passionate in my life. To start I have to fly myself to try it, maybe after I try I think... oh it's not for me.

Marie: So what have your life been this past five year? Just traveling and paragliding?

Min: I take whatever life gives to me

Marie: So what has this been? what did you do?

Min: No plan !

Marie: So from 2012 to now you came to Nepal and then...

Min: And then I spent first winter here, like half a year... and in the summer, I go back to China. Visit parents and friends and later I...

Marie: Your parents are they ok with you doing that life?

Min: No. Actually... let me think. In the summer in 2013, so I have in... you know... I have been out of job for almost one year and my parents they start to pressure me... "What do you want to do? You are not in a relationship, you are not looking for a job... what do you want to do?" And I was like, "You know what... I have been always wanted to go take my master degree just to study and live abroad. So maybe now it's time I can start the application for schools in..." I was checking US or Canada because I wanted to go to North America. And that what was probably because it's easier to stay there after graduation, after you get a degree or something.

Marie: You wanted to move over there?

Min: Yeah... it's easier compared to European countries. And then, that summer I spent some time at home, studying, preparing, I took the exam and I have all the exam ready and actually at the end of 2013, I came back here again for holiday and then... that was when I started to go out with Nando... so you know... he made actually it clear in the spring time of 2013 that he was not interested and then later he just got interested... the electricity, the chemicals.

Marie: Chemistry was there.

Min: Yeah, but I told him... right there, you know I only have forty-five days in Pokhara and then I will go back home and spring time I will go to US or Canada, so no pressure ok. So that's how it started, we didn't have much pressure. We think ok, we are just gonna hang out a little bit during one and a half month. You don't know if you are going to become boyfriend or girlfriend. You don't know... But after those one and a half month, I was like... well... my exams are going to be valid for five years, the results... maybe I can postpone one more year, and until now my exams results expired. (The paella is arriving on the table)

Marie: So you have been spending every winter in Pokhara ever since? And in the summer China? Europe a little bit to visit Nando? How did you like Europe?

Min: Actually... so... we have been together since the end of 2013, and then 2014, I think I stayed most of the time here. I only went maybe two, three months in the summer because it's monsoon here. Where did I go in 2014? I went back to China and fly a little bit and then the next year... because Nando he was working in the winter time... he was working here so the winter of 2014, we were here and in 2015 summer, he went to China with me for the first time... so we did some paragliding trips in China and then the same year in September I went to Europe.

Marie: Was it your first time?
 Min: Yeah... but I made a ten days stop in Turkey by myself...
 Marie: To fly?
 Min: Yeah. Actually I stayed... I spend two days in Istanbul doing a little sight-seeing and then I flew to Oludeniz, and fly everyday here. I already have Turkish pilot friends they took very good care of me and then I went to Europe. A little bit two, three days in Madrid and then we start driving our van to France, to Switzerland so basically flying sites and friends. uh... and winter 2015 we came back here together but I went back to China after one month. He worked a few months more here. I went back to China because someone invited me to be a partner or whatever to start a paragliding team together and then I went back so in 2016 I was working on my project in China so... I had... I was a partner in a school... actually...
 Marie: A paragliding school?
 Min: Yeah... We invited European instructor to come and teach in China so I was in charge of promotion, getting students and organized the courses translation, helping.
 Marie: So it was your friend from Europe who came to teach or?
 Min: Yeah, yeah... The first one is French instructor... And that's how I ended with them in the winter of 2016...
 Marie: You finished your job?
 Min: Again, when I was back here, the last time, for one month. And actually, we split it up over messages... so that was when I realized: "Oh my god, so this is the dark side of paragliding world"... because this... business... it's not about you know... clear, bright business
 Marie: It's always kind of...
 Min: For example, for me, I got... I accept the invitation because I believe... ok I have known a lot of things and knowledge from the European community so if you invite me and telling me that let's make the best school in China... That's my goal! I want to make everything nice... and after... just you know, after one summer a few courses, maybe forty something students... and then the boss, the big partner, and his interest finally showed you know...
 Marie: What was his interest? Money?
 Min: Yes... I mean when you are doing something right, the money will follow but it's not when you follow money and the things will be right... so actually I ended with that and at the same time... another offer from another Chinese company. Right now it's where she learnt (She referring Fen)
 Marie: The place between Beijing and Shanghai?
 Fen: You know Qingdao?
 Marie: Qingdao...
 Min: The Boss if this company he invited me again and... it's a different concept because they are the authorized development company for the national airfield.
 Marie: So they have like state approval?
 Min: Yeah... first they have money support and then the... (a cat wails in the back and we decide to give him so food to shut it up). In the past, so three years... sixteen, seventeen... I went to Europe a few times.
 Marie: How did you learn how to travel if you didn't learn with your parents? You didn't travel with your parents, right? How did you learn?
 Fen: It's easy... you don't need to learn.
 Fen: You can learn it from online
 Marie: Online? which sites?
 Min: I can say that because my parents they don't travel... or at least they don't think about traveling in the first fifty years of their lives.
 Marie: They travel now?
 Min: Now a little bit yeah
 Fen: My mother already traveled but my father never
 Marie: Why? Are they scared are they?

Fen: No, I don't know
 Min: No one really know the reason... they will think it's a waste of money
 Marie: But the young Chinese generation they really want to travel, right?
 Min: Yes!
 Marie: Everybody wants to travel?
 Min: Probably... yeah...
 Fen: I think everyone wants to travel but many... like money, work... like uh... yeah... maybe just like you said... they got scared.
 Min: I remember when I was uh... in middle school... so between twelve and fifteen there was a some kind of ... a school trip offer by the school but it's not mandatory so we can choose to join or not join... it's just like two days to a site seeing place near by the city
 Marie: You grew up in Beijing right? near Beijing? No.
 Min: In Chongqing.
 Marie: In Chongqing...ok
 Min: And my friends... my friends from school, they are going but this is because I studied very good so I'm always in the best class, the best school and usually in the best school in this best classes you can find the kids from either rich families or powerful families...
 Marie: Your family is rich and powerful?
 Min: No... no... or the really hard studying kids... so these are the backgrounds. Euh... so when this kind of trip comes... they are going for sure and then my parents wouldn't let me go... because... when you are teenager and you miss this kind of chance... your friends are going and you cannot go because your parents would let you...
 Marie: Why they didn't let you?
 Min: Again, they think it's a waste of money. They would think it's a good education or experience... So... I guess since then... well I traveled in books
 Fen: And in China, I think not many girls like us... uh... our parents I think are just like... she said... is... with money and for your safety you can't do that. My mother also like traveling but she has never traveled by herself, always with agency... she books some journey and go...
 Min: With a guy telling you where is the toilet. Actually, after she is fifty... she has more money, more time and then she started to travel a little bit but always in this kind of groups...
 Marie: Maybe she doesn't speak English?
 Min: Travel in China you don't need English
 Fen: yeah, yeah
 Marie: True... oh... she only travels in China
 Fen: Even they...
 Min: Imagine how many winters that I was here, I ask her to come and she never came... I said... "Come on, you just need to go to the airport". And now, she is like... "Well, if you are pregnant, I know that I'm going to have grand-baby I can come and see you in Spain and then we can buy a little house there".
 Marie: That's a big step... are you trying to get pregnant?
 Min: No... no... Maybe for her... this is not a waste of money because ok... I'm going to Spain to see my grandkids... and then I'm going to buy a property there for them... That's not a waste of money. But if I say... just come and have fun... travel around European countries in a motor home... that's nice... Well that's a waste of money.
 Marie: Your parents... what do they do for a living?
 Min: They have been taxi driver for years.
 Marie: Both of them?
 Min: Yeah... Now they are more like... they hire drivers to drive and they... they bought the car, they permission.
 Marie: Fen what does your parents... what do they do?
 Min: (speaking Chinese) Beauty salon...

Fen: Yeah... my mother got a beauty salon shop. My father... yeah... do nothing.

Marie: He does nothing

Fen: They are divorced

Marie: Mine too. And what... where did you grew up? Like which city are you from?

Fen: My hometown is in Jiangsu province, near Ningbo but uh...

Marie: Where did you go to university?

Fen: Beijing... so... I think when I go to university I never... It's rare when I go back to Jiangsu because my mother is living... she lives in Guangdong

Marie: ah... Guangdong, south of China.

Fen: Now my father also live there but in a different city. And I have an older brother who lives in Xiamen...

Min: The city that faces Taiwan. The coastal city facing Taiwan.

Fen: So I rarely go back to Jiangsu.

Marie: It's funny because... well maybe I'm wrong but... so far all the people from China I have interviewed are women... why do you think they are more women doing backpacking than men? (laugh from Fen and Yan)

Min: Maybe this is part of the answer that why we are... not so much attracted by Chinese men

Marie: How... but me I think... it seems to me that here in Pokhara and Nepal I only meet women backpackers, not men... where are the men? Are they staying in China? Can they travel?

Fen: I think...

Min: They have the money and they have the time compare with girl but probably they are staying at home playing computer games... yeah... and then grow later... less mature than girl the same age and it's typical that for a boy it's very difficult for him to break away from the parents than girls

Marie: Is it? Why? Why is it easier for a girl in China?

Fen: It is a big problem in China...Not only traveling... not only... as in many things the girl is stronger than boys now... yeah... because I think the boy can... bigger pressure like uh... he has to save money to buy a house, he has to save money to... to take care of his parents... well... in my opinion.

Min: Probably for guys more pressure. Well first of all, the society is expecting the guys to provide the house or an apartment. Whenever a couple gets married... so... I feel somehow the guy are using it as an excuse...

Marie: For what?

Min: For not being adventurous. "I have to work, I have pressure ! I have to save money !" But I think so many girls now are "We don't need to buy you anything"

Marie: Oh... the girls now are "whatever" and the guys are like... "no I have to work"

Min: It's just that people are very different... I mean there are girls that don't care and who can buy anything they want from our own pocket. Even if we get married, we don't pressure our future husband that you have to buy this, this is a love a money... We are in love and I don't mind to work and we pay together... but of course there are some girls... it's like "I'm a princess... if you want to marry me you have to offer me that"....

Fen: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah... most of Chinese girls like this... like a princess.

Marie: Not like you...

Fen: Yeah... not like us.

Min: And then... again... most guys, even it doesn't matter if they have the money or whatever to support this kind of married contract... they would think, those girls are easier to handle... all they want is just a house, a car and money that they are yours. They are not gonna do something crazy... they are expected... and... yeah... it's this kind of expectations and those girls it's more usually predictable... you know that they

want a nice apartment, they want nice car, nice dressed, nice purses and then they are going the mom of your kids. So most Chinese guys probably this is what they are looking for yeah then they have to work really hard. And then... right now... many young people, if you get married in your twenties... somehow you always get help from your parents to buy this kind of stuff...

Marie: Was it hard for you to escape that... or to just... it was easy for you go your own way decide for yourself like you didn't want that like?

Min: Because I come from the generation of the one child policy... I believe that ok... if I think most of our parents they have worked hard and you all have an apartment already... you don't need to work to buy... you can rent. Or if you really want a new place to buy... you can wait until you are in a marriage and you buy together. But I mean... this is not typical... many people think different. They think of marriage more like a contract... you have to buy it before we get married otherwise if we get divorce then this is yours and this is mine... they already think about the property...

Marie: (To Fen) Do you agree with that?

Fen: I think yeah... because most of my life... I depend on myself... my mother gave an advice to me "You should do... something but rely on yourself. If you have money, you can look for a good guy". I think it all depends on your family education so my mother

Min: Her mother taught her to be independent

Marie: Oh... your mother taught you to be independent?

Fen: Yeah... independent.

Min: Don't expect or don't count on men to come to your life with everything that's not life.

Marie: Yeah... prince charming is not coming.

Fen: So yeah... and it depends on your family education, like some girls want to be... maybe their parents taught her to... "you don't need to work, just stay home and take care of your children and your elder..." Parents are different so... but I like my life... I like my mother education anyway.

Marie: Of course, it's great that she raised you as an independent woman... it's the best... for sure. So how did you... when did you arrive in Nepal again?

Fen: First time?

Marie: Yeah

Fen: 2015, yeah... I have been to Tibet and from Tibet I got here

Marie: Backpacking?

Fen: Yeah... backpacking

Min: I was thinking that probably for a guy that if they are the well-educated with skills or good profession, just capabilities to achieve something nice that they would just give up... you know... something called career or a success in a social things... the ladder. They wouldn't give up that to live this kind of lifestyle. If they do... they can live the way they live well... they can be free... they can also uh... be successful in some other way and they wouldn't do it. And they guys, without this... I mean the guy having trouble finding jobs... the guys who want their parents to support them forever. These guys for sure they are not going to... they cannot live this kind of lifestyle. Yes... so I think it's the social expectations that for a man that you have to be successful in this society... for woman, I would say... Fen, me, if we do a work or whatever... what we do, we can do it very well, we are not the crying princess asking parents for money or a boyfriend... so we can give up the social ladder to enjoy life... that's just a small percentage though.

Marie: That makes sense though, you have less pressure?

Min: Because I feel that many guys that I have met during traveling, Chinese guys... they think "ok... now I like to do this lifestyle but first I have to be successful, I have to run a

successful company or I have to be promoted by next year and maybe at some point when I'm forty or fifty...

Marie: ... I can do that

Min: And then I finally finished my task... yeah... then I can live this way. But... it's just I think it's too hard for them or for everyone in... in China, right now. Because what I see in Europe or even in Nepal... people are respected whatever they do... If they work, they make a living... if they enjoy their work, their lives then it's none of your business... you are nobody to judge them. But now, the Chinese society is super judgmental... they will say... if you quit your job and you just want to do some volunteer work... be careful... you might be a loser. So judgmental you know... but that's also extra pressure for everyone. And then maybe in... deeper meaning another level that the relationship between kids and parents are also something that just put everyone in on place, in one place... that's the Chinese traditional culture which is called "qiao" I think I mention to you the other day. qiao is Chinese tradition, I guess probably it was made up by the Chinese government (speaking Chinese)

Marie: So the Xiao was invented by the Chinese government?

Min: Probably thousand year ago?

Marie: And what does it mean?

Min: It has something like... for example... if your parents are still alive...uh... you cannot go far.

Marie: From them?

Min: You have to be around... as long as they are alive or another thing is... if you... if you don't have kids by the age of thirty you are not qiao.

Marie: Ok, so you are not "qiao" (laughs)

Min: So all these typical rules, is to put all the young people in a box, okay... you have to do this to your parents, you have to have kids, so you are fixe... you have kids and you have parents... what else can you do... you have to work, that's it.

Marie: But it is changing right?

Min: Yes... especially the interesting book... psychological book that I read half a year ago... it was ban... It was ban by the Chinese authorities because the name of the book is called "Huge baby country"...

Marie: That's a funny name...

Min: So you are in your body you are an adult... you have grown but in your mind, you are somehow... you are still a baby.

Marie: It was written by a Chinese?

Min: Yes... uh... and he studied psychology. I read about it and I was like: "YES!". this is so right... this is the description of so many Chinese. So many baby behavior (laugh). So first of all, this book in general, it's the writer he is against this "Qiao"... and he gives reason like... It's not that... it's not that the young people or the next generation... it's not that you shouldn't be nice or grateful, respectful, love them but this love shouldn't be a pressure like "whatever they do is right" or you have to do whatever they tell you to do. That's what "Qiao" is trying to tell people. That is you don't follow your parents you are not "Qiao".

Marie: And before... before like going abroad and traveling outside of China... where you aware of that "Qiao was?"

Min: Not really, not so strongly, yeah...

Marie: You got that from being abroad and seeing people live differently kind of?

Min: Of course, it's your life experience and you start to think about these things. When you are younger... you just think... there is so much that I want to do, I want to go out, I want to see new things... you don't really have much to think, re-think and this...uh... so... this book is interesting because it also describes, you know, why in every Chinese, typical Chinese family the character of a dad is always missing and later on... the... grand-father is missing. I mean... they are not missing in the family event and meeting but they are not part

of the family matters. It's very typical in my family and in many family of my friend and if you watch the Chinese TV you will see many TV, the soap it's about the problems between the wife and the mother

Marie: Ok

Min: Because they have a huge problem. Basically from the who controls the guys... the wife or the mom... ok... so and so... it's because the boundaries between the parents and kids are not clear, when the kids are grown up, ok "bye-bye" they can live their own life.

Marie: Yes, it's my life...

Min: But then... most of the parents they try as much as they can... as hard as they can to control the kids life. so even who are you going to marry and what do you do in your marriage in your married life... what do you do with your kids. As long as I'm alive, I have the power to decide for you.

Marie: That's why it's a baby country?

Min: Yes... that's why actually many guys, they... they have this miserable life because they feel, what can I do when my mom and my wife... and what I can do is talk with my wife and teach her to be "Qiao" with my mom.

Fen: That's a big problem and uh...

Min: And then the wife especially the wife will think... I'm married to you, I'm not married to your parents, I'm not married to your parents, start to have these new ideas. In my mom generation, my mom had big problem with my grandma because she doesn't think that she is only married to my father. She tried really hard to be "Qiao" to be nice to be friendly to my grandma but my grandma was just mean. She was just "I'm the queen", you do whatever to please me. So this is the structure of a typical Chinese family... that's why the young people, they just... inside this... many of them, they lose the creation they lose the energy you know. They are just like... "ok now I'm just... I'm supposed to get married"

Marie: The fact that you got into traveling and stuff was kind of an escape... to like escape from that system of "Qiao" and like getting married?

Fen: Yeah...

Min: That was not the reason

Marie: No... but you... looking back at it...

Min: Yeah... because you see so many different lives and then... actually, only when you experience different lives you start to think... what's going on in China? What we have this kind of mind? Where are these ideas from? And I like to meet different people who are parents and they can be the age of my parents or they can be a little bit younger... they are like from the seventies... and now they are parents... when they meet me especially the parents from the seventies they will be more open minded and then if they know my experience... many of them they will say... "Wow, I hope my kids can someday have a life like you right now"...

Marie: In China? or..

Min: If I meet some Chinese here

Marie: They want their kid to be like you?

Min: Now they are more open minded, they realize that the kids are not property... I have a kid because I want to experience how to be a parent, I want to make my life better... not better but richer... more colorful. It's not because I want someone to take care of me when I'm old. That's a bad reason to have kids but that's the biggest reason from "Qiao". In "Qiao" culture, to have someone take care of you when you are old is the reason you have to have babies.

Marie: Okay, but anymore right?

Min: Still, it's still the main...

Fen: I think that's very different between China and other country. Like... in China there are many parents that want to live with their kids, always but uh... I know in West country,

you when you guys are over the age of majority you have to move away... like "Move out, move out... go away" (laughs)

Marie: Yeah... my father almost kicked out my brother from home (laughs) ...

Fen: It's true... go spend your life in a different... In China, it's very different... all the parents... if you don't live with your parents it's "Bu Qiao" so... that's funny... so I think we can escape from the traditional system.

Min: Between "Qiao" and "Bu Qiao"...

Marie: "bu qiao" is "not qiao"

Min: Yeah... so between "qiao or bu qiao" the question is : do you follow your parents?

Fen: It depends also on our parents. My mother has a really open mind, she wants me to be independent, she wants me to go traveling to like... uh... to ... open my mind, got many points of view, you can make different friends. That's the parent is a big problem for the people who can't go traveling.

Marie: But more and more people are going?

Min: As the extreme one... not like my parents they are just worried, and they argue with me many times... maybe my mom was crying a couple time... but that's it. They are not super extreme. The extreme parents, if the kids is doing something they think of as "Bu qiao", they can threat their kids with suicide. If you don't this I'm going to kill myself

Fen: Yes...

Min: It's a huge drama when it happens and it happens every day... I think oh my god... this traditional thing has ruled... has been ruling for so many years...

Marie: But the thing is... I don't know but the fact that China is opening up, with the economy and even like... now... it's not been a long time, maybe twenty years since Chinese borders are open for tourism... you actually are allowed to go out of the country... don't you think that... because exactly because you... you see foreign lives... you see how people live abroad and you are like "I'm not taking this bullshit anymore" (laugh)

Fen: Yeah (laugh)

Marie: Don't you think that... it's also... everything is gonna change fast in China because the people are less likely to accept that?

Min: These new ideas... I think it was completely different from people my generation the eighties and the nineties, after year thousand. When they are the middle age people, when they are the parents, when they are the grand-parents, it will be very different

Fen: Sometimes I feel like it's a circle... a bad circle like... if you.... if in your family your parents like traveling, they got... they like traveling maybe you can do something you like. But if your parents don't like traveling and just stay home and do nothing, yes... I think it shuts your mind and... the kids they just don't do it

Marie: But then you have the internet... so the internet helps open eyes on new experience and new ways to travel. So even if your parents didn't travel, you can still get information... just like both of you... you got information on the internet on your own...

Min: When I was traveling in books as a teenager and at the same time I was learning English it's more than a language or an exam in school... when I was learning English, I was learning the culture

Fen: Yeah...

Min: So at that time I always know in my mind... when I get to university or like, start working... I'm going to be independent, I am not going to be control by my parents, I want to go far away from then I had that idea as a teenager

Fen: Yeah... I think we can be there because we both studied in Beijing far away from our hometown and far away from our parents

Min: Actually, when I went to work in Shanghai after Beijing, my mom is like... she is like... I regret that I let you go in University in Beijing... if only you went to university in our city, probably you would have gotten a job in our city and you still

Marie: be around, "Qiao style"...

Min: Probably you can get married in the same city, so your life is just perfect, settle here.

Marie: Same old place. (Silence) Pff... I mean... what you are doing is quite amazing... you have to...

Min: I just guess that some people just have to realize the situation and to realize each one of us you only have one life time. If you don't have the guts to go against this... you are stuck there all your life

Marie: The thing is... for me traveling. my parents always tell me... "go.. just go... go for it, go for the world"...

Min: Oh... you have the understanding

Marie: Yes... and it's difficult for me to imagine a world where you don't go, "Stay with us"...

Fen: Yeah...

Marie: Has it been hard for you to just go against what everybody tells you to do?

Min: Exactly... the difficult part is not that you go because you just need money and you go... you can work and make money and go. The difficult part is... they just never support or understand you... Even if you try to tell them that "I'm super happy with where I am now, I see this and I see that... it's amazing" It's just like... come through... They don't get it... They are like "You think your happy. You just think you are happy... Actually, you are not happy" How can someone tell you if you are not happy or if you are happy. "You are not happy because you don't have a job" It's not because you are having fun in Pokhara... That's not called happy you know.

Fen: Sometimes when I go on social media and I post some pictures of our friends back say "I'm so jealous of you"... "you are so happy you can go traveling" and I think "Why don't you... go you can go". Yeah... they are always... I'm busy with work... I have no money, I have no time

Min: Pff... I don't have more money than you...

Fen: I have no time.... always yeah... If you want to do you can

Min: And what I get from those trips with this photographer friend he was uh... he is probably like... six or seven years older than me and he was quite a writer at his time and when the internet just started to be popular in China he was writing a lot on the internet and he has had many readers and followers.

Marie: That's not Xiaopong right?

Min: No... basically, his idea is more advanced at that time... so he get it... actually after we did this trips together... At that time, I still have a boyfriend in Shanghai and then... he is like... I don't think you guys are going to be together for long because you guys are very different. And then after like... almost five years together after university, we ended because we realize that ok, we are at this age when we... we already had idea of what we want for life. So, you want to have a stable job, preferably a job from nine to five in the city and get a nice apartment, get a mortgage, get a car... and then have kids... that's the very clear path... I'm the... I like adventure. I don't like to see it through

Marie: You don't know where you want to die?

Min: I could have plan for one month or one year but... I don't want to know where I'm going to be when I'm forty or fifty... I don't want to know. So that's why we ended it, because we realize that we want different thing. And what I was telling you about this friend

Marie: Yeah... you are not going to last.

Min: and then he was making jokes about me... he is like... you are so pathetic... why don't you realize that this is your

life you are entitled to have the time of your life... it's not decided by your boss. "I want to do this but I don't have time... I want to do this but I don't have the time" And then he gave me some example: "I know a girl" because he is traveling a lot... He just started traveling abroad, he is done everywhere for the past ten years because he cannot get a passport because of his army background. So, he just got his passport last year and he went on a big trip to Russia. Now the world is open.

Marie: Can't you go abroad when you are army?

Min: It depends on your position in the army or some other government jobs... even if you quit you have few years that you cannot be free. He gave me some examples of the other young people: "I know a girl that she also graduated from a very good school but she doesn't need to be in the famous company to work for other boss. She can start something by herself and then your time is more free and you can also make enough money... maybe you are not going to be super rich but that's completely a different life choice. And then of course I met a couple running a little cafe or hotel in the Tibetan area in Gansu. They... they are quite cool because they both decided that they don't want kid, they run their hotel and some horse riding business for half a year and then the other half a year they just travel themselves... yes so... when I travel I get to meet people setting me examples of how to live a life in your control, not control by the boss, by the company, by the insurance... and then I think... well... I have done that for three years. Imagine if I have eighty, ninety years to live... that's enough....

Fen: (laugh) Yeah, I think so too!

Min: And especially... the more I read, the more I travel, my idea about life is that it's... it really doesn't matter to anyone else... you just have to be honest with yourself... and if you cannot admit, accept what you really want... you are just faking your life to please other people and then you know... kind of my motto is the only success in life is to live the way you want and don't give other people burden... extra demand on other people. I think okay... if we put a definition of success in life, this could be the success. If you are born, you are given the gift and you should be able to live a life that you want and you don't give extra demand to other people. So that's what I tried to do with my life. It's like... "I don't care what you think". Oh! And another typical Chinese culture is, Chinese people care too much about other people... about what other people think.

Marie: I think it's everybody like that... in the world.

Min: No! I think in Europe it's much better.

Marie: Do you think?

Min: If you want to do something you do it, if people are judgmental or pointing fingers you are like... "who are you? I don't care! You are not my friend, bye-bye... I don't have to be around to listen to your judgements". But in China it's just uh... I try to tell my mom to stop listening to her friends. "Your friends", I say "they don't really care about you, they pretend they care about you just to make them feel better"

Marie: Yeah... just because of politeness.

Min: Maybe, but they don't really care... they are not genuine about the other.

Min: Yeah... so... but my mom is not getting it. Every time I go back home... she will still tell me about other people kids... other people's daughter who just had baby, who is working in the bank (laugh). So I can imagine the conversation she is having with her friends. They are secretly competing on this. On something that they cannot control.

Marie: It has to be hard for you?

Min: You just have to learn to deal with it and let it go. And if you can talk with Nando I would like to know what he thinks about me or what he thinks about Chinese people.

Marie: really? I could do an interview in Spain....

Min: I remember we were both in Lijiang and he was working there with some Chinese people, trying to start a paragliding business and then one day we were driving back and he just cannot stop complaining about these Chinese motherfuckers... And because the Chinese guys... really they don't have much ground rules, they do whatever they want, they play dirty they play tricks to... they lie, you know they cheat. They do whatever to make the business happen. And so... he was complaining and then after a while, I felt... I think this is too much... "Are you hating China now?" And then I stopped him I said... "I'm also from China, I'm Chinese so... if you hate China that much... I'm also from here"

Fen: And what Nando say?

Min: And without thinking, without thinking he said... "You are not Chinese" (laugh). You look like Chinese but you are not Chinese

Fen: And sometimes my friends also tell me like this...

Marie: That you look Chinese but you are not Chinese?

Min: When you get this kind of comments from foreigners, you are not sure if it's a compliment or if it's something weird, like what typical impression do you have about China, or about Chinese people. So you cannot say thank you...

Marie: Well... I don't know because it's... to me it's more... it's like... it's more like. Because China has been closed for a long time too... To everybody, to every other culture was not really welcome in China for a long time and... I think human beings... apart from culture we are all looking kind of for the same thing but it's like exchanging idea... and it's what my PhD is about... being... being mobile... being able to move everywhere and see how people live everywhere makes you more like... like... uh people from earth than a person from a certain place, a certain country with a certain culture. And so I think maybe he said that because most Chinese haven't been abroad and they don't know any better... for example when I go to China, people take my picture all the time... probably because they have literally never seen a Caucasian.

Min: You are like a monkey in a zoo...

Marie: Exactly. But then they are also super curious about what I'm doing here... why I'm here... and what am I doing in China so I talk to them... we exchange and they think maybe they could go... and it's a long process but I'm pretty sure it's going to get better, and that's probably what Nando was saying... it's a compliment. I'm French but I don't feel like a French person... I feel like a person... but I don't feel like I'm a French person... Being French doesn't mean much to me

Min: When this kind of compliment happens, I feel that I cannot say thank you, I just say I think you will meet more and more Chinese people like me. And actually, right now, the again back to the rich and powerful families... they send their kids abroad... they want their kids to... to live more western lifestyle and... yes... so the idea... the lifestyle... everything changes

Fen: Yeah... right now many like this is changing like uh... I think maybe they are more and more people that like traveling in the future.

Min: And I realize a long time ago the Nepali people that I have met... they are more international than many Chinese people, even if they are in Nepal and they don't travel, but they get the chance to meet international tourist.

Fen: yeah... I think so...

Marie: But that's the thing. China is so big that you can live all your life and never meet anybody from outside of China. I don't if I told you but two days ago I got an interview with a Chinese trekker... He was doing the Annapurna circuit, he only had fifteen days off work, he was thirty two. So I got to talk to him and at the end of the conversation he told me "You know you are the first foreign person I talked to, I have a conversation with". He told me he sometimes exchange

words with waiter to order beer or pizza but it's not conversation. "You are the first person that is non-Chinese that I talk to"

Min: And he speaks English? Why he never had a chance to talk to a foreigner?

Marie: He learnt English from book but he never got the chance to talk to...

Min: Probably because of China is big or probably because of history or right now we are calling ourselves "developing country" and the western is "developed country"

Marie: Is it still developing though?

Min: Some part are already developed... even over developed... And then uh... we have this certain actually it's not rarer, it's quite common that people are, they think too much about to high, they think too high about foreigners, even if they are from under developed countries. Just because they are foreigners, we treat them nicely, you know... you think "you are a foreigner, everything is better from your culture from your perspective". especially if you are white people, they think like that. And of course, some people they have also something against black people.

Fen: As a Nepali people told me, he really like China I way why, he say "Oh, Chinese are so friendly even if I'm not European, I'm not white people, Chinese always treat me so friendly and invite me for diner in home"

Min: Then the more extreme one, we will also mention this character from the war. The Chinese guys who were working for the Japanese during the war, when Japan was invading China. But this kind of Chinese guys working for Japan, imagine, the rest of Chinese hating these guys, so now some people are... you are like a god, because you are white. We think... come on... it's too much... and we have in person, we know some people that it's like... we can see how he or she behave differently in front of other people. With us or with Chinese guys or with Europeans guys.

Marie: They adapt their behavior.

Min: It's like why you to "suck other people" I feel that, actually, it's about... it's also about your mind. If you have seen thing... and you realize, we are all the same, we are just human beings, then you feel more like, I'm one of them, I'm just a person on this planet. Yes... And it doesn't matter if you look whiter or darker. Are richer country or poorer country. It doesn't matter.

Marie: So when are you going to Spain?

Min: End of the month, I have one more week.

Marie: Excited?

Min: Yes, yes, I want to go back and I hope we can get a motor home.

Min: Our first official home together, because when we are here, we are renting a place, when we are in China, we are renting a place, when we are in Spain I'm staying in his apartment and that's already a guy apartment. I don't feel like much the woman in the house (laugh). If we buy a motor home together we can plan everything together.

Marie: What about you Fen? Are you staying here in Pokhara for a long time?

Fen: I'm not sure

Min: She doesn't have a ticket... At least you can stay until the end of May. Five months per year for the tourist visa. But if we go back and change for another passport you can come for another back five months.

Fen: Yeah but I already left my job more than one year I have to work... I have to earn money.

Min: You can work here, there is many Chinese tourists for you to work with.

Fen: So I have to make a plan. I don't know.

Marie: Maybe we can meet, I have to go for a week but I'll be back, we can have a chat.

Fen: Yeah... let's meet

Marie: Well thank you so much girls... it was so interesting talking to you. I hope we can meet sometimes in Bordeaux.

Fen: Where is your home?

Marie: Bordeaux

Min: It it's me and Nando motor home and he is working in one place, I don't think I can just take it and drive away. I think if I want to move around when he is working I will get a minivan

Min: About backpackers, I think we miss one part, sorry (speaking mandarin) and there is a special rule of backpackers.

Marie: In China?

Min: In general, they can be from anywhere... they do backpacking but they are just trying to take advantage of everyone, from everywhere they go...

Marie: the backpackers? money wise?

[>R4]:

Fen: Yeah

Min: Yeah, if you meet with them, they try to let you pay for their bills and it's uh... it's uh phenomenon...

Marie: So if I ask them question they are going to ask for money?

Min: Maybe

Fen: Maybe

Min: Maybe not that directly

Marie: Okay, I'll see.

Min: Even like they try to travel with really small budget and then they have to ... I mean they have... they don't have respect for other people and local people anymore. It's like you are supposed to buy a ticket but you try really hard to avoid the ticket... those kind of backpackers... I don't know. That kind of experience it's difficult for me to understand, because I think, at least you should travel with self-respect... You can travel with low budget but you should respect yourself and respect other people's work or the rules in different country. And I can give you one example because I was... when those first winters that I was here I was booking paragliding for many tourists. There was a group of five Chinese people, they book and they flew and one of them... because it was monsoon, the landing was under water. Even the little piece of land there were a few water ponds. One of them, landed in that water and somehow the phone or the camera gets wet and then the company, it was a good company, the company offer to take care of this thing... of we send that to repair and then they pay... Actually that time, everyone is paying like ten thousand for one flight and the company spent like seven or eight to repair the camera for that passenger but the phone something... cheap Chinese brand, very, very cheap phone anyway it couldn't be repair. They apologized to the customer, "sorry we cannot repair it". And actually, this is not the responsibility of the company because before the flight I told them, don't take your valuable things, it's an adventurous sport, you can crash a little bit, maybe you smash or scratch... just leave things in the office. They will be safe in the office. This is a safe reminder. And then they got reminded again by the office staff. That it's at your own risk. On the take off the pilot told them he had a dry bag to keep everything safe "Do you want to keep your phone in it?" and they say no. And then the company is already spending money to keep the camera but that should be the end of the story and then they left, the five people they left. And I don't know what got into their head... maybe they talk to other people, maybe they talk to their family in China. They realize, "let's go back to the office and make a mess" and then we can ask for more money back. So they just went back and and say "You have to pay my money back, if you don't pay my money back, I'm staying here in your shop". So, these people there are like... they even send someone to order food and they are eating in the paragliding

office, smocking, spitting. Really bad behavior. And the boss was sending message to me in China... "There is nothing we can do, we are service, we have to be polite to this people, and we explain over and over again" and in the end, the tourist police came because, I don't know what's the problem%. Maybe they saw there was a problem. And the police told them. "Okay now this shop, they have to close... you spent so many hours here, and if you don't want to go... you can come with me to jail tonight". and then they are like "uh... so we are not getting anything by getting a mess". And this time they ask the boss... can you give me some money back... some of our flying money back because we don't have money for the hotel!". It's unbelievable...
Fen: Anything is possible.

AI

Ai: They have more a... money, good money and they want to try to go different place and some people especially young people when they graduated they want to try to work in different countries but they don't know what happen in this country... so... In China they have the YouTube the interview is about the schools they go to another one country to study. Every different school, Columbia.

Marie: In France we have a lot

Ai: so, I think very good idea

Marie: Well, thank you thank you so much.

Ai: I like to share... anything you ask.

Marie: Cool, Perfect. I think I'm a good listener so I think I'm gonna listen to you talk about your life.

Marie: So... so... my first question is... where... where are you from in China?

Ai: Yeah... I'm from China, Sichuan Province, but actually my... my... hometown is very small city name is JiangMingguan. It's very beautiful there have a lot of... lot of mountain, trees, more natural place. Yeah

Marie: ok, how old are you know?

Ai: I'm twenty-three, next... but next month I will be twenty-four

Marie: Good... good age twenty-four. And so...uh... what's... how did you... how did you arrive in Nepal? Like... how... like...when did you start traveling?

Ai: Uh... I think my first journey travelling as a backpacker, when I was nineteen years old but not like nineteen keep traveling now. So, nineteen years old I travel only three months but that time I don't have too much money but very poor backpacker. I go to like uh... uh... Yunnan, Kunming to like... uh... Hanoi... Hanoi... like Vietnam

Marie: Hanoi

Ai: Hanoi, yeah... then from Viet-Nam north, to the south... by bus because I don't have too much money go to the Cambodia, and go to Thailand, then go to Indonesia. Then after Indonesia my money is running off... finish

Marie: Finish money, yeah

Ai: I don't have too much money so I have to go back. After back, I have to work again. So... I... because my English is not so good

Marie: It's good... it's really good

Ai: Thanks, but you know actually, before I was in nurse school

Marie: You were in a nursing school, so you started nursing school, did you finish?

Ai: Yes, but it's not a really high degree like that. Nursing school around five years, yeah, but I like nurse's job but...uh... I want... exp... more, have more experience in my life because in China, if you choose nurse, we will have work hard every year and then maybe you have a chance to get a more higher level, you have a good salary but every day you do the job is

about nurse so... I'm more... like... try to explore different things in my life. I choose to... That time I kind of give up the idea of becoming a nurse

Marie: You studied in Sichuan, nursing?

Ai: Yes, in Chengdu

Marie: In Chengdu, I have heard about it, I really want to go.

Ai: Yes, it's a nice place...

Marie: So, how did you... how did you learn about this backpacking way of traveling. How did you got to know about that?

Ai: Wow, it's a really good question, nobody ever asks me that question. So actually... uh... in China, that time I'm nineteen years old, around...maybe four years ago, the backpacker is very peak season... like more... many young people they try... they try to the backpacker but actually as I know backpacker from the UK somewhere, Europe or America. China, it's not so popular, but that time, like four years back, they... they... teenagers, young persons, they try to...uh... try to be backpackers, it's very high season that time.

Marie: It was really fashionable to do that kind of travel

Ai: Exactly, so... we can...I know it by the book, some news, some book of Chinese so that time is kind of fashion thing and for me I like more active to try the different new things, different culture so I say "Ok, this is my way..." so I just try

Marie: So, you learn it from Europe and America but did you go there, Europe or America?

Ai: Uh... no... actually... because after I graduated I stopped to ask money to my family... so Europe and America, I would like to go but because of...uh... money, I didn't go. Yes, it's on my list, now... yeah...it's not a problem.

Marie: What's on your list?

Ai: Europe!

Marie: Ok, so it's like... top first or you want to explore other countries?

Ai: uh... it's very kind of difficult you know, strange, because, before when I start backpacking, my dream is to explore countries all over the world. I want to try all over the world but after I keep... keeping... keeping chance in this dream; After like three years, and I finish just last year I feeling that my mind is change. Like especially when I start to learn Yoga. I realize, if you want a chance, if you want look for something, it's not anywhere else, it's just inside. So now it's like, OK, if I want to know the American or Europe culture I like to go, but it's not meaning I have to go there, it's like... it's like, my top of the list... no

Marie: Not anymore

Ai: But it's on my list

Marie: So, about your background... family Background... did you travel as a child?

Ai: Actually, uh... no, not too much, because my family is very normal with from the small town, small town, small place, so my parents and my father work very hard in a different province which name is Xinjiang.

Marie: Xinjiang, in Xinjiang province... yeah. He went to Xinjiang to work... you father

Ai: Yes, exactly, every year he goes there and so I have a long time didn't meet with my father but my mother stays with me and my brother. I have older brother

Marie: You have an older brother

Ai: Yeah... but...uh... after my mother... the parents always want to get more money to make the family better life so my mother decided to go together with my father so... uh... my brother that time is already in high school and uh... I just stay in uh... my family members' family which is in Chengdu. But actually, when I was young. It's kind of... mixed... difficult... confused you see; When I was younger my parents, they always try to go another city and try to earn more money so I have three, four times experience separate with my family. I stay in family members' house. So, kind of... it's... when I

was young my... environment of my grow up, the environment always changes so. It's like kind of travel Marie: You compare it with traveling a little bit? Yeah?

Ai: Yeah. Because my heart is just like ok. It was... during my childhood, the experience so let my body and my mind... don't want to settle down one place for a long time, but now after yoga, I just realize ok, maybe before I just try to find a place which were very comfortable and safety for my body and my mind because the parents not be with me so I always feeling suffering and feeling lonely. I want to change the environment so I always thinking some place is better than here. And I will have a better life in other places... so... yeah... I always keeping in chance to go different place but now yeah... it's much better.

Marie: It's much better... and so what do your parents do for a living?

Ai: My father he is like... kind of engineer and my mother just like to help my father... do some small jobs and take care of me and my brother... cook.

Marie: And so... your parents do they... are they supportive of this life style that you have? How long have you been traveling... how long have you been away from China now?

Ai: Uh... so... You know... uh... two years back, I was in China most time and sometimes travel, two, three months and then back to China but two years back I left China to go to Dubai as a tour guide. And mostly work there and then back to China stay like two months and then go to India to study the yoga and in India I stay like half year... six months Marie: Where? In Rishikesh?

Ai: uh... sorry... I think it's... yeah... six months...

Marie: Six months you studied yoga?

Ai: Mumbai, in Mumbai after I back to China, stay one month again and I left again... I come to Nepal

Marie: How did you... You have done so many things...

Ai: I always keep... tututututu (she means busy)

Marie: Yeah, always moving everywhere ... your parents... are they supportive of this kind of lifestyle, they think it's good for you?

Ai: uh... you know... actually in China it's not so very popular... especially I'm a girl, they always try to give opinion like uh: "you are a girl... just, it's also marriage time, just try to find some guy is good"

Marie: Now you are marriage time?

Ai: My parents think... you know in China we have a sentence like: "a girl, you just try your best" but uh... it's... a not... I mean you find your good husband you will get a better life. They think that's truth so whatever the girl... how hard for the life. They think it's nothing... only you find a good heart husband have a good family... that's more important

Marie: And your parents they think like that?

Ai: uh... I think my parents think about that but most... you know I think I am bad child you know like I'm not... I try to give my opinion to them also... I just try to explain what I want but uh... think I'm lucky anyway because sometimes they try to give the older Chinese very old culture but they think whatever I'm happy to do and they just say ok, ok

Marie: so, if you are happy it's more important for them. And how... that's interesting what you say about being a girl in China and how they expect you to be married at twenty-five, have a good husband...

Ai: I know that's crazy

Marie: That's change for you... your like... like not looking for a husband or anything like. What's your opinion on that, do you think it's stupid or like

Ai: Uh... not stupid but I understand them because you know in China is big country if everybody say that we will lose our mind but...uh... for me I think husband is important for sure. Good husband, good family but... uh... for the things you give up I think life is a kind of circle and inside the circle

maybe twenty percent friendship, twenty percent job, twenty percent love

Marie: So, it's like a balance of...

Ai: so... only part of our life... you cannot, your marriage is only twenty percent of your life, then you will keep your life very simple and more I think boring. But for me... I think my life have many different things, different path. I know how to ...something. Not only one thing

Marie: so, I want to go a little deeper on your travel now. So, you the first time you went abroad, like you left China for traveling... you were nineteen, right?

Ai: Yeah

Marie: Before that you were just in China

Ai: Yes exactly

Marie: Do you remember how it felt to be away from your country? Do you remember how you felt and what you thought? Like... you know... how it change things a little? Do you remember that?

Ai: You know... I just try my best... I think for the start, it's around four five years back. For the very start, I remember it's actually is correct for the spring festival. So, the spring festival time in China is very important time and biggest festival to celebrate and it's best time to get in together with the family. But that time I just realize, I just chose to left family that time. I just wanted to travel alone because I afraid my parents worry about me I just lie to them. I say « I have friend, a girl, very strong, brave and smart and she is a photograph". Actually, I have a girl like that but she is not planning to go travel with me I just lied like that. And my parents are like "ok, ok..." they trust me. Because most time when I... sometimes when I... Most time I don't lie to them... only white lies... so... I told them and I say good bye next plane it's my airplane time. I'm feeling very excited actually. I can feel... I can feel it's a big time for me, in life. I just feeling: "Oh wow, it's my dream". Because that plan I be planning like one year already.

Marie: So, you plan this trip for one year?

Ai: yeah, actually my plan is not about schedule or which hotel I stay or which country I go... it's planning about my feet. Like, I should start, where I should start, because before I have never been to anyone country and now I will go to a new country and totally English country and most important is I don't have too much money. So, it's like too much pressure... pressure in my mind. I planning one year for breath, to give myself some breathe, strength. But it's kind of crazy travel. Until now, I think about it because I didn't book any hotel, and didn't think about where is my next station; It's like that.

Marie: So... it came along. You take a bus to a place, you arrive and you look for a hotel... then you go, if the price is right then you stay. So, you didn't plan anything...

Ai: Exactly

Marie: So, you went from Sichuan to Yunnan?

Ai: Yes

Marie: Yunnan to...

Ai: ...Kunming

Marie: And Kunming you took a plane?

Ai: Hanoi

Marie: You took a plane to Hanoi?

Ai: Actually, because I want to save money from I take a flight from Chengdu to Kunming then from Kunming to He...He... small, small city... it's ... He...(Border city of Hekou)

Ai: A Chinese place... So you took a plane from Kunming to that city because

Ai: Yeah... it's near Hanoi but Chinese small city then by bus Marie: And you cross the land by bus?

Ai: Kunming to that city by bus and then from that city to Hanoi also by bus.

Marie: How did you... what was it like to... with the bus... do you remember the time when you cross the border for the first time?

Ai: Yes uh... very excited... and actually a little bit worried but most I'm proud of myself. I said "uhm" because actually I'm the... that time I'm the only one in a biggest family, the only one which to other country. So, I was "Yeah... I did it and I'm alive!» Not so hard

Marie: Yeah, you realize it's not so hard? It's so easy

Ai: Exactly yes.

Marie: Did you had like... So, you went to Hanoi and then you take the bus to south Vietnam.

Ai: No, no... oh yeah Hanoi I go train and bus

Marie: Train, bus, did you, did you visit? What did you do during your trip?

Ai: So... you know, actually for my travel I'm not really interested about building or the history... I'm most important interest is people, the culture. How the people accept the Chinese and how the people accept me, how many friends I meet, how many interesting people I meet. I think, I think that's my style I like. So... but that time, it's not so lucky because that time Vietnam has a fight with China. Not really fight but tension and the problem with island Huang Hai... you know I think that time... so Vietnam even they right paper and big billboard to say how Chinese is bullshit...bla bla bla but I don't understand some people told me that and sometimes when I eating the food there I remember one time I really love corn and I buy corn barbecue and a little girl comes and a "Hello"... she talked with me by English, very little maybe ten years old. And she says "where are you from", I say, "I'm from China" and she say "do you have Chinese money now because I'm trying to collect Chinese money?" And I think is not really, she just wants money. I say "ok just give her five yuan", not too big to her. And so, she tries to talk with me... like you know sometimes the Vietnam people they put poison on your food for the tourist. Just last week I have a four Chinese. They got poisoned with the food. They go to hospital... very bad. I just look at the corn... I just don't know if I eat or not. Yeah, that time is a little hard for me because also I realize my country sometimes you go other country, they will ask you where are you from, your country, good or not, is it raining, is a kind of you know... important... I realize I'm from China so my country is strong...so... so... maybe we get more good thing but if my country is very weak, intense relationship with other country... Chinese travel in places also not so happy.

Marie: It's interesting, did you have the same feeling in Cambodia?

Ai: In Cambodia much better because, you know, it's very interesting, Vietnam...most of the country near China they always have a big or small problem with China, maybe except the Nepal, maybe it's better with China but like... uh... India, and the Vietnam, and the Philippines, Korea, Japan always have a big or small problem with China, but Cambodia, because they are not direct close to China, so Cambodia close to Vietnam so Cambodia don't like Vietnam too much so it's like, my enemy, enemy is my friend.

Marie: So, it was good in Cambodia?

Ai: Exactly, People were "Oh, you from China, my friend", I feel totally different with Vietnam. In Vietnam I'm feeling intense, very nervous. But in Cambodia, more relax

Marie: So... would you go back to Vietnam?

Ai: No, I just "oh, you can live abroad, I just travel from Vietnam, the country from north to south, maybe four days, I keep just take the train and bus, train and bus, train and bus, train and bus and go and I think, this place: no! This place: no!

Marie: Oh... so you just, you just stayed 4 days in Vietnam?

Ai: Yes, four five days

Marie: Four, five days, it was a three months travels. Cambodia how long did you stay?

Ai: Cambodia I stay like two weeks. I have been to the, oh my god, I forgot... the...

Marie: Angkor?

Ai: Angkor, yeah...

Marie: Angkor, did you like that?

Ai: Uh... I like it, I really like it but you know I didn't prepare anything, I even didn't check what Angkor talk about I just go, I just stay in hostel and they said "Tomorrow, we are going, we need one person to share our tuk-tuk, the small bus". And I check, it's cheap and... I don't have money, I say, ok let's go». I think I travel I should go there, very famous place, but like there I don't know. I just know its old, very old building.

Marie: And so... you met the people in the hostel you were staying in?

Ai: Yeah

Marie: Ok, and you went with them?

Ai: Yeah

Marie: Were there Chinese as well?

Ai: Uh... Actually, some from Germany, Australia, maybe Norway... it's Europe, Europe and Australia.

Marie: Was it your first time like... meeting Europeans?

Ai: Actually, before I go travel, I want to practice my English, I be volunteer in hostel, Chinese hostel. They have many backpackers from all over the world so I can practice my English. After I did this I go travel.

Marie: In Chengdu you did that?

Ai: Yeah, yea, exactly

Marie: And so... did you... it was like, so it was your first time as being a backpacker, like that. How was that experience? Was it fun? Did they accept you like anybody? Like, you didn't have any problem like you had in Vietnam for being Chinese? With them it was perfectly fine?

Ai: No... actually, I think its very challenge... I never met that challenge after my journey, my travel you know. One time I remember, I just fight hostel reception in Vietnam, in Ho Chi Minh, Ho Chi Minh. So usually I change to next station, I get off the train station or bus station and just try to find a motorcycle, I said "ok I want to go hostel for backpacker". But some people they have not good English and they want a guest and money, "ok, ok no problem". I remember one uncle. He takes me to just like one hour on the motorcycle and didn't find hostel. I just realize he don't know any backpacker hostel, so I say ok, one is there is say ok, just take me to there. I check, the reception, it's very early, like five o'clock, reception is sleepy like, then I ask her, uh... free room, he say yes but I can feel his attitude is really bad and uh...

Marie: Towards you?

Ai: Yes, after he sees my passport, so and the uncle he already go... the motorcycle guy, I pay money. Then the receptionist is not happy with me, and I can feel that but I because most time, the people do that I say... ok... ok... just I'm in another country, just actually I'm not very soft, very gentle lady, I'm very crazy lady so if somebody troubles me I want to ten times trouble back. I'm that kind of lady... so I say ok this is my travel, I should learn to accept and everything is an experience but that time is already, after I travel many days and I already get so many this kind of energy and in my heart I need to put it out, you know... that time the receptionist not very polite to me and I give the money, I keep try to polite : "ok, thank you very much". But...ok...uh... but in my heart I think no good, so I take the elevator and I try to go to my room, but inside the elevator I feel so sad and so tired, I feel very bad and I cry... cry and cry and I want to pull some fire out. So, I just put my bag down and I just kick the door and I think "this is bullshit and nobody try help me, nobody accepts me or like me... this is my first journey" so... the

excitement and the freedom... all is gone. So, I just cry and then the reception... they have a camera, so he sees that, so he come quickly, very exciting. He looks at me and he say "sop, stop, stop, come, come, come, we cannot accept you... sorry, sorry, sorry". I say "what!?!?" and I just realize because I'm very emotional and he think I'm very rude, he doesn't want to me checking anymore and I say "ok sorry, I'm very tired", I just cry, I just tell him... I say very tired, "I just feel very tired and very sad". He says "No, no, no, no, don't tell me that... just leave now... just leave now" and I'm just very angry... and you know he just take my bag pack, it's a small bag pack... I say "Bullshit, fuck you !?!" I just get very angry.... uh... I take for the flower, the bowl I say... "Give me bag pack, give me bag pack otherwise I'll destroy it" I totally, totally lose my mind. Very big fight with him... and he look at me like a crazy and he take my bag pack and many people, in the morning, check... "What's going on outside?" that time, I forgot who I was, where I come from... I just want to put it out, I think you have no reason to do that to me. I shout at him... very bad words to him and then: "Give me passport back, give me money back, I go... I don't want to stay here." So, I just fight with him... After I just go outside and I think "Oh my god, I'm the big mistake, I'm not a human, I'm not a lady, just mistake... I shouldn't be here... that time I feel so helpless" I just walking and crying but uh... After I'm tired, I try to find another hostel, then... that's my... oh my god... until now I remember it because... but... uh... yeah

Marie: So... but.... that was an interaction with a Vietnamese... but with like... other backpackers from other nationalities? Like backpackers Europeans or Americans... How... how does it go like... do they accept you?

Ai: I go it... you know... like, Europe is a totally fine... I think they like Europe... but you know... one thing... because you know... Americans, no good relationship with Americans, some old person especially they hate America so one time I stay hostel in Vietnam... I forgot... It's Ho Chi Minh also... Ho Chi Minh always (laugh), because Hanoi, the north they are closer to China, even Chinese have bad thing happen because Hanoi, the culture is most close to China. Sometimes I cannot separate here is China or Vietnam... But Ho Chi Minh is more south, more far to China so they don't think China is anything good for them. So, Ho Chi Minh is worst against China. So, I remember one time, I have, I think his name is Dave or something, he is from America, both of us we stay in old uncle hostel... not so good but cheap, so we have a happy time together but every time when we back, when we come back, the uncle is... the uncle looks at us... stare at us and very HATE! Like bullshit, Chinese and American. And I think "What the fuck!" Ok, I say ok... I talk to Dave, we cannot stay in this bullshit place, let's go... move" Why do we have to stay here? And we just move and then in the evening time, we drink together on the roof top, and we eat some food and we spit on the street and we say... "we hate Vietnam, we hate Vietnam". And like that... it's very young person to do that... Like... ok "You don't like me... I don't like you either". So ok, we plan... "oh maybe we go to"... because we don't... you go to someone family and they don't accept you they just don't like you, you are just feeling very sad. Yeah... so... But most person, young person they are ok but old person, (not understandable). That's why I have this experience.

Marie: But the young person, they don't have so much...

Ai: Yeah, they don't have so much.

Marie: So, you went to Cambodia... and when you were staying at hostel, was there a lot of Chinese or... were you often the only Chinese backpacker?

Ai: Most, most... not too much Chinese, because that time is spring festival. Most Chinese they are back home, staying together with their family.

Marie: So, you were often the only Chinese person in the hostel.

Ai: uh... on the way I meet some Chinese but we are different way... we take pictures...maybe spend two and a half hour... and then we say good bye. No one is really getting together with me.

Marie: Ok... cool. And so, you travel on your own but did you sometimes meet with like...Europeans or Australian backpackers and travel a little bit with them? Would you do that?

Ai: Yes... so... before I experience the thing in Vietnam so I think my emotions is too strong. Sometimes I'm not really open my heart, my mind to accept other... I just try to keep space. Also, it's my first-time travel so sometimes... I think... yeah... Europe and Americans they try very friendly and I also reply back but I'm not really want to find a partner. Because that time, for the start... I didn't plan any hostel, any schedule...so for the start I just want to have a lonely travel, actually. But in Cambodia, I met three person they are from Australia. One I remember the name is John so we take bus... minibus together from Cambodia to Thailand. The Bangkok, but after Bangkok we separated.

Marie: So sometimes you would like meet with...

Ai: a few times yes.

Marie: And this interaction with you and this people were fine?

Ai: Yes... they were fine... Australia, America, Europe, always friendly... most

Marie: And so, you went to Thailand. How long did you stay in Thailand for?

Ai: Thailand... I remember I stay two weeks there... so two weeks...uh... First, I been to Bangkok and I stay there like one week. Then I go to Chiang Mai but on the way, I lost like two three days so then I spent only one night in Chiang Mai and then I'm back to Bangkok.

Marie: Only one night in Chiang Mai... why did you have to go back to Bangkok?

Ai: Because I book a ticket from Bangkok to Bali, Indonesia.

Marie: oh... ok... and what did you do in Bangkok?

Ai: Bangkok... so most time I just walking without any... you know... any

Marie: Goal... just wandering in the street?

Ai: Yeah...yeah, somebody... say I... I... I remember one time I walk somewhere but I forgot and I go to the temple, but I don't really like temple and uh... so I just... so I just walking in the street... try to make new friends or I try to talk with strange person (laugh) uh... strangers... I remember one time... I really meet strange one... I walk on the Khao San road of Bangkok. Very famous road, Khao San road.

Marie: Oh... Khao San road, the backpacker district

Ai: Yes... also business district. So, I was there. I always look for, I'm very curious because it's the first time I go outside country... I see every shop and every people they talk... every restaurant, I feel curious... I just look at them... very busy. And I see, have one person a little aside and is from India, he dresses like all white dress and white hat. Like Hindu religion... so on the head, very big beard... like sixty years old, he looks very... like in the movie, the person who has knowledge and wisdom. So, he sits there and he looks at me, I look at him... and he say: "Oh... my dear friend, you are worry about something from your eyes... I read that". I say: "Wouah, he is magic", I'm thinking because I worry and yes exactly I worry something... I don't have too much money... I worry how can I earn money on my way" I say "Wouah... he knows". And then, I very excited I sit beside him I say "Wouah, you can read something"... He says: "yes, show me your hand..." And I say ok... I show him my hand. He says "Wouah... Wouah... your hand is very special but you know if you want to know it takes time I have an office, come,

come with me..." I just... Wouah I met something good and oh... he looks so good maybe we can... I can get some information about my hand for free... ok... I just follow him. But After I follow him, I just thinking because I read some news... like some girls they go travel to other country and the people cut their hands their feet, make them very weird or get their kidneys. I just feeling... I just feeling... and because I travel alone I have to try to protect myself. So, I thinking "Wouah, if he is bad person what should I do". Then I tell myself... because my curiosity is stronger "let's just do it, if he is dangerous I'll bite him very bad, I will fight with him". Yeah... I just think that so I just follow him... then "oh my god" I'm wondering... confused... should I stay or should I go? But my feet are following still. So, I walk, walk and suddenly... I don't know... it's very important, one girl she walks from outside and come to me and she use her shoulder to have a bump. Oh... oh... she is a sign... he is not good person. I realize, I just though it's a sign... I don't know if it's a sign or not because that road is not very crowded. And she... maybe she just do this... maybe it's...

Marie: To warn you...

Ai: Maybe warn, maybe not. But that time I decide, ok, I cannot ignore it... I don't follow him anymore. So... I say oh... "uncle, uncle, I want to see that shop, I'll come by later". He says: "where do you go?" I say "there". He says: "don't go! Don't!" And then I realize he is a bad person. And I just run away. If after, if it's really bad person, I imagine in the room have four or five man... what can I do? If they have knife or gun... oh my god

Marie: Yeah....

Ai: Very bad died...

Marie: You learnt to be safe after that, right?

Ai: After that? Oh yeah, I'm never talk with some stranger person. If I talk with them, it's ok but I'm not follow them go anywhere

Marie: Yeah... but in public places it's fine. So, you took your flight to go to Bali? What did you do in Bali?

Ai: Oh... because I met Dave the American... American guy in Vietnam... but actually he went to Vietnam because his visa need extend... he had to get out of Indonesia then go back... so he just chose Vietnam because this is cheap. So, he just told me you should go to Indonesia ... the (not understandable) ... uh... heaven... it's heaven. You have to go... you will meet a lot a person, not like here like bullshit Vietnam... everybody accepts you, and accept me... ok, ok I will go. After Thailand, I have no choice to go anywhere. That time I decide to go India or where... so Dave send me email and say "Oh... where you come... we miss you bla bla bla" and I say, Ok, I go Bali. So, I buy that ticket. But you know on the Bangkok airplane, oh I'm so stupid... on the airplane and I sit there and see two Chinese. I'm so excited... long time didn't see Chinese... and my bag... I'm very poor... I maybe take... two hundred dollars. Two hundred dollars out from ATM and I have my passport, phone anything in a little bag. Because my bag is a little tight I put bag in the safe, like here. And the Chinese girl they see my bag... so I meet them, I'm very excited I talk with them and then I forgot my bag... because very heavy... After I come... oh shit... where is my bag? I just lost my bag and I'm very worried because I'm very poor already... Somebody stole my bag... what should I do... So, I go to the airport police station. I say: " Oh, my god... excuse me... I lost my bag and money, please help"... People in Thailand are very good... most person they are very friendly to Chinese, so they say: "No problem, don't worry, come. And you eat something? We'll give you sandwich". They give me food. They say ok, tell me what happen, I tell them and they say they will check the video. And uh... because they don't speak very good... they speak English but they want more understand what happen and they have

translator who can speak very good Chinese. So that girl... she is my friend also now... she comes and she talk with me Chinese, and very friendly girl and I told her... she says "ok, I will transfer you to police don't worry". And after, she told me, you try to go to police to go to look... police... somebody look and find (she means lost and found)

Marie: Yeah... lost and found

Ai: So, look and find, so I go there, and uh... I ask if there any bag, he say no. After one hour I go and I see my bag... I'm so excited... Oh my god, thank you god, my bag is back. They give me my bag, I check nothing inside, only a bag oh... and inside there is my passport but phone and money is gone...oh...and... uh... card... Bank card. I think... this thief is not so bad... he gives me my passport back, otherwise it's big trouble for me. So, I think "Wow" I'm just kind of happy. He said "ok don't worry, where you go now?" I say: "Next station I will go to Bali" They say give you email here, we keep looking for and after we will email you. I say ok but I'm sad because lost my money. So... uh... then... but I didn't have hope for this... because you know... so many people and my phone is not so good, and money not so much to them. How the police can help to find it... I said thank you very much... left my email... I fly to Bali then I meet my friend David and then...uh... we have a very nice time to spend... and... uh... But Bali because very expensive I spent only two nights. Then I go to the...

Marie: Bali is expensive?

Ai: Yeah... it's more expensive than Indonesia, other place because tourism is very developed, so the food, something is not so cheap, so I choice to go to the... let me think what place...uh... uh... Yajadha, Yajadha, but it's not capital... it's big island because Indonesia the whole country is islands, so that one is very big island and there, I checking many temples, temples are most famous and I meet many interesting person, I stay in a hostel... it's kind of a guest house actually. Very nice and very cheap also. They have a piano in the lobby even I cannot play the piano but uh... The guest house it's kind of a charity station, very luxury but very cheap. So, we stay upstairs

Marie: With David?

Ai: No, David stayed in Bali because he loves Bali but for me it's expensive so I choice another place. And uh... we just friends uh... nothing happens... So, I stay in the dormitory, another room is big bed... there I meet two very good person, they are from Germany and they are lesbian... they are couple. My first time: «OH my god... I have lesbian friends". And I can... sometimes I just cannot believe they are lesbian I just thought they are curious about the lesbian and maybe... because in China it's very very... uh... less... not popular about lesbian.

Marie: Well you know... two or three weeks ago I just interview a girl, a Chinese girl, and she was backpacking and yeah... she had a girlfriend in China.

Ai: Maybe now it's better after four years...

Marie: Yeah but she is not really happy because in China it's difficult to be... She was really like... she wants things to change in China for her to be more herself.

Ai: Yeah... I think China now it's hard but people mind they start to change. I believe that. One day...

Marie: So, you met these German girls... couple and so did you stay with them a little. Did you talk about that?

Ai: Yeah, yeah... we talked, about the lesbian thing... I didn't talk, I just observe I feeling they are like couple but sometimes I'm confused because I never met this kind of person... so, I just confused, they are really nice people, they are friendly and they sleep together to explore something... so yeah, I think they are... they told me they are and... uh... also, they are vegetarian... before I eat meat, so start that...

now I'm vegetarian also but after I meet them, I also thinking about vegetarian... so after I just reduced to eat meat also.

Marie: You reduced... now you are vegetarian...

Ai: Yeah now I am. So... yes... sometimes, you know they jealous each other, like you talk with somebody or sometimes they are jealous about man. Like which man talk with the girlfriend, close. Too much close, so the other one girl will be... they will fight and why you do that... bla bla bla. And I ask how guys meet together and they say: "So... so... when they were seventeen years old, they just look at each other and then slowly slowly they have been together". Very interesting for me but they are both very ... person. And one... one is... I forgot her name, she is very cool, she has a very, very heavy camera... she also interviewed about the other country, like the organic. Like the... the... like the rice, and the tree...

Marie: Oh... like agriculture.

Ai: Yeah, yeah

Marie: She was doing interview on agriculture?

Ai: Yeah, yeah, she was a really cool girl. and looks very soft, not too strong but inside she is very strong

Marie: and so, after that trip in Bali you went back to China?

Ai: Yeah, I stay there long time. One and a half month, almost two months, I back to China.

Marie: Oh... in this place? What did you do?

Ai: Euh... most time I stay in the hostel and I visit one friend's family. Before I was in China volunteering in a hostel. There I meet one Indonesia family, they are very nice person and the man, which one is working government of Indonesia and I think is kind of a little high stage... Because I have been in the family and nobody needs work only his work, he has two car, very good villa. I go to the family visit I stay with the family actually for one week. They very welcome me and the wife she has a half blood from China so they have one girl and two boys. Three kids and everyone is really cute and very friendly to me also and they cook Indonesia food and I share Chinese food to them, and very happy time and after I decide back to China and I told them. They say: "Ok". Because they think I don't have too much money, they say "Ok, if you don't mind we would like to buy the ticket back to China". I say "Thank you very much, but I don't want, I don't want, I already bother your family so much". So, I... but... euh... yeah... I just take money by myself. Ok this money enough, only enough for my bag so I should go back. And then yeah... back.

Marie: So, you stayed one week with this family but in Bali... did you go to the beach... did you... did you trek? What did you do? Your day was like what?

Ai: Euh... so... most time, you know, I didn't really... I just rent a motorcycle before with David we travel around the beach, very happy and evening I remember, one evening, the waves come too much and waves go back... many fish on the beach, very soft and I really want to eat that fish but don't know how to cook it. So, I told David... "ok let's put them back..." So, we pick up the fish and we throw them back in the ocean. We don't know even if it's good for fish or not maybe they got bad after we throw. We did that.

Marie: Did you surf in Bali?

Ai: Surfing? No...

Marie: Did you go to the beach?

Ai: I go beach yes, they have a lot of beach so I go Bali, the beach I watch sunrise. Most time I searching which restaurant we eat which one is cheap and good. And sometimes we talk and go to the beach see sunset. And... euh... I didn't really uh... I don't have too much experience, I don't know how to spend my travel time. But most I just there, ok talking to new people come to the hostel and work with people. And go to restaurant and yes... like that... it's kind of boring. But, yeah...

Marie: No, no. it's everyday life, it's everyday life. Would you like to try surfing or?

Ai: Uh... you... I don't... that time I'm not... I'm not really want to try because I don't know how to surfing... no, I don't know how to swim actually. So, I'm afraid a little bit.

Marie: Have you learn now, to swim?

Ai: Now...yeah... I learnt in Dubai but half now I swim only my head under the water. I cannot take my head up.

Marie: (laugh), it's really interesting...uh... Ok so you went back to China and your next trip abroad was where, after these three months amazing trip? Where did you go after? Which country did you go to?

Ai: euh... I back to China and I work around... almost one year. Then... I... during one year I keep working and I travel in Sichuan and Chinese place.

10 - 51:09 > 51:59 [Backpacking in China] [Voyages hors Nepal]

Marie: So, you did back pack in China?

Ai: Yes... because Sichuan is near Tibet, there has also very amazing place to see. So yeah... almost one year I decide I want to work in another one country. I want more exciting in my life. So, I have a friend, she is English tour guide... and she told me by chance, she said... Dubai, some tourism they need tour guide but I never try tour guide but I'll try my best, if I can pass interview. So, I try it... I go to library every day, I read about tour guide book and how to be a good tour guide. After I go to the office, to pass, pass the interview... waiting for visa, two months or three months... kind of long time and Dubai give me visa then I fly to Dubai in a Chinese tourism company

Marie: How long did you stay in Dubai for?

Ai: Almost one year...uh... two year.

Marie: So, it was after nursing school? It was after you finish your studies?

Ai: After nurse I work in the hostel, hostel one year, then I do to travel, 3 months, then I back to another hostel again... almost one year then I interview the tour guide job, then I go to Dubai

Marie: And so, you stayed in Dubai for two years?

Ai: Almost... I think it's one year and ten months

Marie: Did you like Dubai?

Ai: I really there for sure...euh... but you know... why I didn't choose to stay because...uh... first of all the company I don't really like. My boss is Chinese, so... first I go there... I really like freedom so that's why I travel different place.

Marie: You like the freedom?

Ai: Freedom about the...you know...uh... nobody to give me the big rule... you know... you have to do this. But when I go to Dubai the first day, they just take my passport, passport so... after

Marie: They took your passport?

Ai: Yeah, they said we will make more idea and insurance for you but after I check with the other work maids... they say, they don't give you passport back until you leave. My contract... work contract is three years so I have to stay in Dubai three years but uh... first one year I can't go back home only two years I can go back home, for one spring festival and third year I can go back, finish... I can go back festival again.

Marie: ... (speechless) And... well... and did you like that?

Ai: No! I hate that... so... so... that time I just very angry about it. I just said ok... maybe... I... I just thinking about what should I go because first of all I hate somebody who just like "you have to stay, passport I take". But also, I want to stay there to explore because I just come and I try so hard to get this job so... I say, "ok let's see". I take one year; half year and I'll see. And actually, the company for the tourism, they only open, only open, so they have many systems and they let me

waiting other tour guides from China, like wait them three months, four months. So, the first half year I didn't do any job about tour guide but I prepare for me ID card and insurance. And they tour guide license

Marie: So, for six months, you were in Dubai but you didn't do anything?

Ai: I did job but it was office job. but not tour guide job

Marie: So, six months you did that, where did you live in Dubai? Like, did you have an apartment, they... they provide like euh... an apartment for you?

Ai: Yeah... for a start they have a small apartment, the boss... actually it's illegal. In the small apartment they have euh... one, two...four bedrooms. But for our staff, only two room. So, one room... that time is the tourism only open... so one room they stay four, five people. One room stay two persons. I stay with the baby-sitter but that room is big space. I have one bed and baby-sitter one bed. uh... two baby-sitter, three beds... so three beds here... so but after... because more and more staff come from China they rent a house in the old city... old city it's kind of like uh... small apartment. Also, we stay like four people, one room. Like dormitory, up to down like that.

Marie: Did you like that?

Ai: I think it's ok, no problem. And because, that's not problem for me

Marie: That's no problem for you.

Ai: But... after I got a group, so the company, they try to get more money, they just keep... because before we already sign a contract in China, after we come they let us sign Different contract!

Marie: It was a different contract?

Ai: Yes, the rule is worse than Chinese, that China. I say "Why we need to sign again?" And the boss says "if you want to stay, you have to sign otherwise I send you back to China". That time, I feeling very shame, I feeling very bad. I want to go to the uh..., you know... to the... like... uh... the office, kind of police office... like immigration. I want to complain, but uh... that time I'm thinking, because uh... I realize the boss they not care about our... what's our feeling, they just thought we come here, we just want to stay anything there and also, we don't have a passport. And also, that time, you know I worry too much. My... that time my boss is very big... powerful... not very, but better powerful than me and they know many people about the Dubai. They know police, they know government, they know lawyer, they have their own lawyer. SO that time, I just thinking, I very suffering inside but I don't... It's like they are a stone and I'm an egg so I don't know what to say. So, I say... ok, ok, just relax and let's see what will happen, just give yourself some time because I don't want to just come and fight and leave. So...

Marie: So, you sign the contract?

Ai: I sign, and everybody else also sign. But I keep working... So, when I start working, I was very working hard. I work hard and both very happy because when I working hard, I get money to the company, good money, the boss really happy. Always: "Ai is good, see what she did" but inside me I want to check what's going on. But it was good experience for me. I learnt how to be a very good tour guide. Because I think I have problem sometimes... Sometimes I feel my ego is really strong when somebody doesn't listen to me. I just very angry... I say "Why you don't listen to me, just go with me" But a tour guide, first all you have power to let other to listen to, because only you are a professional, you know where is where. But also, you have to consider tourist feelings. You don't understand them you don't make them comfortable... then you... you will get the company bad... so it's like a kind of relationship between the human beings. So, I think it's very good exercise for me and I think... oh... this job, not so bad, even because Dubai is very hot season,

especially June and July and it's like forty degrees outside, sometimes fifty degrees. It's horrible you know. So... but... I think it's a good experience for me and I got a better money salary than China. One month I almost can make uh... Ten thousand Chinese money... about...uh... (1400€)

Marie: Yes... that's good money. And you were... did you pay for the apartment or was just...

Ai: No

Marie: oh... so that was just money in your pocket.

Ai: I just kind of..wow enjoy it but after a half year, the company just had a NEW kind of contract... they give a more rule and more rules not good for me but for them. So, I just feeling, "oh shit!", They just... they are very "degree" you know they are very "degree" because usually the freedom... the free lancing some tour guide, they don't belong to the company, they pay their own apartment but they got salary is better. For example, my group, anything I should give the company, I only got the permission... maybe one person three dollars, but the freedom the one person can get five dollars and they don't need to get too much share to the company. So, they are much better than us. But the company keep to degree on our professional...on freelancer. So, I feeling very, very bad... they don't want us to keep money. They just want us to work, and work and uh... keep a little bit of money. I feeling I'm a work machine at that time. I'm feeling very sad. Because sometimes my group is good... I take group good. One month, I take group good. One month, one group is four days, five days, six days. So, one month, I take five groups, six groups so I only have one two days relax, but

Marie: And your salary would change if...the more group you have the better salary you have or it was just five salary every month?

Ai: So... because they give me new contract, they see... First... where the company can get money, the tour guide signs the top... the burj Khalifa... the tickets, so the company get a commission from inside and they share a little bit with us. And we take the guest to Burj al Arab, Atlantis or the Emirates palace. We get to more places, they get more money. But last place we get... But sometimes, the people the group, they don't like to spend too much money, sometimes, they like to spend a lot of money. So, the company thinking... we can judge it. So, the company contract, every group have two totally thirty choice of places to go then our tour guide can get three dollars back commission. Otherwise we cannot get nothing. So, it's kind of a cut salary. They give you this things (list), you have to finish it but sometimes people they don't like to spend money... You cannot give a life... give your money... you cannot force them to give you money... you cannot do that. And I hate doing that also. I hate...

Marie: You hate pushing people to do

Ai: Yes, exactly so... they come and push how to do it so... I feeling "oh my god" I'm more pressure. In my forehead, many people... so that time it's why I'm single always also... so... I can't get a good boyfriend. But after I... I... I said ok, after maybe one year... after how much money I got, I have to say leave. So, after two years, I decide to quit this job. Because the company, after two, three months they get new contract, always... After half year... I just telling the boss they have too much ruling, they don't have really rule for us... we don't have... we cannot say yes or no... we just finish...you know... it's like... like uh... how to say... before the Black person... they work to America... like slave

Marie: Slaves... yeah... you felt like a slave?

Ai: Yes, yes. We don't have any passport, we cannot travel... Even we go to uh... the... we cannot go to Iran... we cannot go to any country to explore but my favorite is travel but I cannot have this choice, we can only work, work, work. So... after two years I just decided to go back. But I really like the

country... the country no problem but only the I don't like company. But the country is very beautiful and hot, many mosque... mosque and every time you walk ten minutes, you can find a new mosque... very clean and everyone, almost everyone is different... style is different and uh the local person very handsome, especially the men, and their scarf on the head and the moustache is very perfect and uh... nose and eyes, eyes lash very long and beg eyes, very polite, slowly, you never can see some white local person they do something exciting. When they walk, "oh my god", they shoulder... the chest like this. And the women, also very beautiful, with the black dress... we call it... uh...

Marie: Abaya... Abaya

Ai: Abaya yes. And the men, what do you call?

Marie: Dish-dash?

Ai: Dish-dash... I think no... I forgot...

Marie: That's the keffiyeh

Ai: Keffiyeh... but the clothes I forget but the abaya... right... abaya ladies, abaya is black

Marie: Yes... I bought one

Ai: Yes, I bought one too. So, you know, they have a scarf and sometimes they hide their eyes uh... their face... only... show eyes, sometimes don't show the eyes. So, first of all, some people... because uh... some people uh... first they are very hot, so when they take scarf off, oh my god the face... is white, actually, very beautiful, the skin, very good, eyes big it's like the star and the moon. So, and also, depends husband, if the husband is more traditional, they don't want to show off the wife. The wife has to cover all of the face. If the husband is "ok whatever you want", you can show your face, even sometimes you can take off your abaya you can wear whatever you want. It depends on your husband... most of the Muslim woman they don't work in Dubai but now because the country is developing they get more educate by Europe, especially UK, they have a really good relationship with UK. Because in nineteen forty-nine something, the UK, they... you know... they kind of control the, EAI, so they have strong relationship, yes.

Marie: What did you think about this Muslim thing. What did you feeling about it?

Ai: I think...uh... I cannot accept it... especially the man, they can have four wives. Most they have one wife only but uh... some... some more powerful they want to marriage, get more thing they have more wives, two, three wives. For me, the man is more like...uh... in the family... the woman is to take care the babies and the man to work. It's close to India I think. But for me no...

Marie: You didn't like that. And... uh... you left Dubai, you went back to China for one month... visit the family I guess?

Ai: Yeah... uh... actually, I guess... one month... sorry four months, I miss...

Marie: Four months? And then you went to India.

Ai: Yes

Marie: How did you... how...like... why did you want to go to India? Why did you choose to go there?

Ai: Yes, so after Dubai I back to China, spend spring festival with my family and also my grand-mother is dead. So, But I feeling no regret because I experience that. Even after Dubai I go to grand-mother's house, spend two weeks with her. After I back to my family spend with my parents and after festival I feeling very depressed... depressed because that time I feeling... in China if I find a better one job... like same salary with Dubai but the job should be very hard and I have to some special technics but I don't have any, only tour guide but I don't want to. So that time I'm very confused

Marie: And nurse no?

Ai: Nurse can only get a very low salary, so nurse no. And also, I have two three years I don't attend nursing school and

some things I forgot already. So, I just think... what should I do.

Ai: That time I tell myself, think about what I do then I do. Don't just like before direct go do, waste my time and energy but it's not what I want

Marie: So, plan ahead...

Ai: Yes, yes, so that time... I just, I just try to think about I really like. So before... I... most the point is I want to earn money. But after I go there, I realize, money I earn but my health not so good, body not so good. So, I just take time to think about it. Every day, I eat and then relax and my parents are like: "Go out, why you don't go out?" Before they are like: "Come back, come back", now they I ask me why I don't go out. So, I said... yes... I'm planning, I love animals... so I just check

Marie: You love what?

Ai: Animals, animals... so... I... maybe I try to protect the animals in organization maybe I can get too much salary but the thing is which one I like but sometimes I think I'm more pratique. I really can surround myself to give out myself and all my love to share with the animals maybe for the most one month, two months I'm happy with them, maybe after I'm also got a void like I was in Dubai. So, I really think about it. So, After I watch my WeChat, my friend, one, she teaching yoga in Chengdu. But we are not so close but we keep in touch, yes? I say... "Yoga" so before, when I was young I like to dance but I had no chance to really study dance and I see yoga, and I google what's yoga and "Oh! Yoga is this" oh my god... some inside, what's inside. Sometimes I like to ask myself some psychology things, so I think, maybe I should try this. So, I didn't think it too much about this. I said, ok, after if I practice good I can be a Yoga teacher, it's better than tour guide. So... I just decide, I check which school is good, ok... it's in Mumbai, in the Yoga Institute... how much I should pay. Three months is... three months is ten thousand Chinese money include food and stay. I think it's good so I check it's very old school like one hundred years.

Marie: So, it's good.

Ai: So...

Marie: So, you went to India... And you stayed six months? Three months of school in Mumbai and did you travel after that?

Ai: Uh... actually, I met a friend, she is a very awesome girl, she is from Jaipur of India...

Marie: She is from where?

Ai: Jaipur also in India, so I go with her to her family, hometown and... I spent there almost three months, two... yes... almost three months.

Marie: And you stayed with her family?

Ai: Yes

Marie: And what did you do during these three months?

Ai: Her family owned a school

Marie: A Yoga school?

Ai: School three months but her family almost three months. So, we are...

Marie: Ok, so what did you do in her family?

Ai: So, when I go there... she has a very big family... when I go... because she is very open opinion and very... many opinions a totally accept. And uh. also made me change a lot, ok, this one so I just very accept her... and after I just very curious about any love, relationship, family and educate and philosophy she gives. And I really think... oh my god, how does she got it? Which kind of educate she got. So, I want to know her family, her parents because she didn't like India, she liked Europe or America. I like to know and she said, yes, welcome and just, she also invited me and I think, yes, I should... I want to go...

Marie: Yes, you want to see that.

Ai: So, I go to her family, and she... also say, come, we are gonna have a lot of fun, we are gonna go to the jungle and wake-boarding, I will take you everywhere (mumble of excitement). She made a lot of promises to me. So I say, let's go, let's go and I trust her, totally. So, we go... and her family also is very nice, everybody treats me as a family. It's very good. And also, I learn a lot from her family. And uh... big family. She had one older brother, one younger sister and a cousin. But the cousin which one is when he was very young the parents was died so stay together with them. And then they have a... a... parents and grand-parents. So, it's family, India you know, if the family they have... if the family not so bad they have people to help them cleaning, cooking, yeah. Her family is good and they do. especially the oldest brother. He does the laundry business like laundry for the company somewhere. It's very good... so. I go there and every day, we try to... because study yoga, we try to teach yoga and practice yoga together and... uh. we spend time with her cousin... and because that time I'm single and her cousin is very nice person, I just fall in love with her cousin but after two, three months I left them and uh... I back to Chengdu because... I... slowly

Marie: Why did you leave India?

Ai: Visa.

Marie: So, you went back, are you still with this guy?

Ai: Actually no, we been like two months after I just realize we are very big different so I always like to, you know... travel different place and he like to me to stay together with him... in India but it's not my choice so... We were separated long time and also, the family hope he gets married as soon as possible, so for me, it's not really... so culture is different so then I decide, ok, we should separate.

Marie: So, you went back to Chengdu and then how did you, finally, end up in Pokhara?

Ai: I'm sorry about it... I... (she mimics a circle to tell me she has tell a story not on point).

Marie: No, no, no, I'm super interested in that. It's awesome. But then... ok... how did you arrive here?

Ai: So, after I learn yoga I went back to Chengdu, because I think is an amazing culture, amazing things for Chinese also. Because before I study yoga I realize a lot of my friends, they work in the computer. The back muscle, shoulder, arm, legs have a lot of problem still they are very young. So, I just think yoga can help them also. I back to Chengdu I think I will share that things with Chinese... That time I have big plan... uh?

Marie: For like a yoga class business?

Ai: Yeah but uh... I didn't have a class I just first I should know what is the Chinese style because Chinese also in Chengdu have a lot of Yoga center. I went to one... Which one is kind of famous. But after few classes I realize they never tell you to meditation but actually meditation as I know, as I studied is the most important part of yoga so they are more thinking... most important is the Asanas. Asanas is important also like Hatha yoga, they help you to balance or Asana yoga help you to stretch your body. But all your postures after, it helps your body get more stretch but also enter meditation. Then you required to feeling your inworld and out world... so you are not only balance with your body and mind but also your out world and your in world. So... but in China, they are more in Asana, if I talk like meditation they will thinking I'm like a kind of weird religion. So, I said... it's not my way, it's not my way. So, I also feeling very bad about this. After one month, I have a friend Diana, she is here.

Marie: A friend was already here in Pokhara?

Ai: And she taught a lot of beautiful pictures and videos. I see the snow mountain I decide ok I should come here

Marie: To Pokhara?

Ai: Yes. I just went here?

Marie: Did you arrive by plane from China or did you take the bus from Tibet?

Ai: From Chengdu they have a direct airplane to Kathmandu and from Kathmandu to her by bus. I love here, it's my place come on. So yeah, I really love here and for the very start, I try to have a kind of business. I try to do something. For the first I rent a place in Sarangkot and you know the top of the point. They have uh... four rooms, I say...well people come, they practice yoga and here is near the sunrise place and also, they can stay I can rent the room and teach yoga, it's good. But after I realize that water is big problem so, also, I meet a new guy which was... his name is Gareth, he is from the US and he working in Peace Corps... so I know the peace corps and because I know him by a Chinese friend and so... I just...I always want to such a guy, such a man working for WHO or some organization like a charity, like, working for other. So, I meet him here so after I talk with him and... and... he love to cook. He has been to China, Chengdu before five years back. And he cooks very good, and we have a talk. I realize he has very good heart, really good person. And we spend more time after... I like, I love him a lot and then we have been together slowly and he has been downstairs in the city, I'm up, sometimes he loves ride bicycle so he takes bicycle to come up and look for me. Then next day he went down and then I think, I love him more! You know I just feeling very good, very romantic... And then after I think... I should go down I want more to spend more time with him. That time we decide we are together. So, then I just tell the landlord... sorry but your water big problem I can't rent a long time. I cannot start my business. So, I go down rent the house up to Umbrella café. The landlord she is Chinese but her husband is local.

Marie: Oh... the 1986 Inn, I interviewed her.

Ai: Wow...

Marie: Lia...

Ai: She is also very cool. She is younger than me actually, by a few months. So, I stay there and I stay I want to teach yoga and she say my place is good but I check... it's good but... for yoga class it's not so perfect. And one day she sees this one Umbrella Café and she told me... I say ok, I come with her and I say... ask Lama, he is also an awesome boss. He said, yes... welcome always.

Marie: And so... so... how long have you been in Pokhara for?

Ai: I come here last month October... the 20th... around.

Marie: Last October. And so, you have a permanent visa here?

Ai: Chinese is allowed to stay 5 months like that for free.

Marie: Ok... so do you need to go back?

Ai: uh... yes actually the end of May I need to leave.

Marie: Ok. And then will you come back?

Ai: Uh... now I didn't have completely the plan because my boyfriend he already, he has contract with peace corps for three years and which this year, also may, he will finish. He wants to try something new also, but he has not decided where he go. I'd like to follow him a lot but uh... let's see. Always hard time for me. I hope we be together also, like in the same place

Marie: I hope so too. So he is not gonna go back to the United States?

Ai: Oh... after May he is planning... his mom will come and he will go back China. He will go to China, travel with me, spend some time. After he will go to Germany visit his friends then he will go back to America. Cause almost three years he didn't meet his family. So... after then... he will decide.

Marie: He will meet you back in China?

Ai: That we don't have plan. Because... uh...

Marie: There is the Peace corps in China, right? I had a friend who did Peace Corps in China. She is teaching English somewhere...

Ai: Yes, some people teach English some people they help different...

Marie: And so you work here as at the Umbrella cafe?

Ai: Yeah, I'm teaching yoga here.

Ai: I wanted to do yoga class here

Ai: Always welcome.

Marie: So, you have been in Pokhara since October and you are going to leave in Pokhara. Where do you live in Pokhara? Where do you stay?

Ai: Now I also rent a place is... uh...is a big garden.

Marie: With your boyfriend?

Ai: I rent by myself, my boyfriend most time he also spent time with me here. Because now the Peace Corps they rent apartment for them one is his office, one is his bedroom.

Marie: Do you go out in Pokhara? Do you stay mostly in like Northside or sometimes do you go over there (I show the direction of Center point and Damside.

Ai: I planning travel on the April but I just came back from Kathmandu. Because it's his birthday, I spent three days with him

Marie: In Kathmandu?

Ai: Yeah, I like here more... but because...

Marie: Why?

Ai: Dust, Kathmandu...

Marie: Oh yes, oh god! the dust is bad (laugh) it's really bad

Ai: I even you know Gareth has a friend in Kathmandu.... I asked him. How can you stand to stay in this city? You don't know Pokhara... welcome in Pokhara! I don't understand why the foreigners stay in Kathmandu, it's too much dust...oh...

Marie: And in Pokhara... you live there. Do you often go to the touristic area...?

Ai: Like ABC Annapurna?

Marie: Yeah...

Ai: Not yet I want to maybe, when warmer, maybe April (she didn't go in April)

Marie: And here, do you go to restaurant or do you just...

Ai: Oh, yeah, yeah... usual time... if I choose most I cook myself and my boyfriend also and we cook over here, here have a very perfect kitchen and also my place and sometimes we eat outside, like the Chinese restaurant.

Marie: Which one do you go to?

Ai: Sichuan Hue Da.

Marie: Where is it?

Ai: You know the Hallen Chowk... Hallen Chowk you cross the road and keep going, then next one separate the left, then turn left. Butterfly hotel.

Marie: Butterfly hotel... is it like a famous place?

Ai: It's kind of famous but very good taste about Sichuan food. Because the chef is from Sichuan.

Marie: But do you go over there, in the fancy part of Pokhara sometimes? You know, like, near to Damside where there is a lot of fancy hotels and restaurants. Do you go there sometimes?

Ai: Hotels no, but restaurant sometimes. I have a secret garden, and Korea restaurant. Local restaurant sometimes I just try with Lama to very good one Dal Bhat. Sometimes we eat here also. Here also have very good food. And sometimes birding we go more the North side. We bicycle. We try the bicycle. They have beautiful bird, and we take like this (she mimics binocular), we see the bird is different.

Marie: Oh... you go bird watching with binocular?

Ai: Yeah...birding. It's amazing place for birding and for sunset also very cool. Sometimes we go birding also and we go outside to go to the Peace Corps uh... Peace Pagoda also. Birding very good.

Marie: Would you... I don't know but like. After you go back to China, would you consider living back in China now? Or do you think... you don't know?

Ai: Actually... no... I... because before after India I back to China, now I like yoga more I want to find some place it's correct with my yoga life. So, China right now is not my choice

Marie: Why?

Ai: Because China...uh... I thinking.. because first for me... I didn't uh... I think you know, I like to travel but now I'm not like keep travelling different place I'm more like staying different place. Like half year, one year...

Marie: Oh... like not travelling everyday but just like... living the life.

Ai: Exactly yes. Because I really enjoying. Until now my boyfriend he speaks perfect Nepalis but for me, sometimes I... don't want to study because I like to enjoy different place the language I don't understand I feeling I'm observer. So actually, I want to tell myself in my life I'm just an observer... don't too much possess like that is mine, that is mine...

Marie: Like more experience than having things. Do you work in other places or only here?

Ai: Right now, only here, because I think I'm kind of lazy now to teaching class.

Marie: Do you still live on your Dubai money?

Ai: Yes...most.

Marie: You have savings.

Ai: You know everything...

Marie: Did you, what was your favorite country?

Ai: Oh my god... it's difficult. India is good... here also good... I like here right now...

Marie: I have another question. So, you consider yourself as a traveler, kind of? Backpacker, traveler?

Ai: Before yes, but now I feeling I don't like to give any tag or name to myself.

Marie: Ok

Ai: Yes

Marie: This is super interesting talking to you

Ai: Me too... it's a chance to let me memory about my past experience.

(Small interruption where we exchange email and contact

Marie: Do you want to give me your email so that I can update you on my studies

Ai: Yes yes sure, it's a MEI account.

LI

MARIE: Alright so... were you from exactly

LI: Nearby Beijing

MARIE: Nearby Beijing

LI: Yeah, it's like two hours from my home town to Beijing by highway is two hours

MARIE: What's the name?

LI: Hebei, Tangshan, big earthquake, eight point something

MARIE: Like in Nepal

LI: Yeah about earthquake that time I also there

MARIE: You were here, so like earthquake everywhere you go

(Laughs)

MARIE: How old are you now?

LI: I am twenty-four

MARIE: Twenty-four, ok. And... like... how... how did you arrive in Nepal?

LI: Basically, from start... it's my like college holiday. You know every winter... every Chinese New Year time, we got holiday. No, it's like one month, around one and a half month. And then that time... it's too boring to stay in home because that time it's cold in Beijing so I move... I searching

for volunteering and no need to spend so much money and I can travel

MARIE: So, volunteering to travel

LI: It's a city name Qinghai

MARIE: Qinghai

LI: Actually, Tibet is here, Lhasa, Tibet is here and this is the way, they have the highway

MARIE: Yeah Yeah

LI: This is the road to go there. So, I do volunteer one month

MARIE: In Qinghai?

LI: In Qinghai. Then after I go by like, you know by this (she shows the sign for hitch-hiking)

MARIE: Hitch-hiking

LI: Yeah, yeah. To... to... Lhasa

(Laugh)

LI: And then, luckily, I take my passport, and I think: "Ok, Nepal is near and I have quite... Quite enough money to travel in Nepal so..." I take... I go Lhasa they have one immigration... how to call this...

MARIE: Like visa office?

LI: Visa office for Nepal and I go there... I apply and next, after two days... we take van... like morning time eight something...

MARIE: You take a bus?

LI: Kind of bus, like van

MARIE: oh, a van

LI: Yeah fifteen people something

MARIE: Ok... it's was kind of a group travel?

LI: No group, like a... outside of that visa office they have some cars and they collect people... and you talk the price something and ok... tomorrow for how many people they go and ok... the collect to the border side. And that time... it's really terrible, the road... you know they drive from morning time... actually they told us like afternoon time like eight pm we will arrive to border side and next morning we can cross the border to come to Nepal. Actually, the next morning two am we arrive at border. And then we rush to find hotel and next day morning we go to border and CHECK, and come inside. And the funny thing is... that time... I think because of raining something, the landslide... and the road is block. So, we walk around three hours. First, we take jeep... like jeep. We go there and this road cannot and then we walk two three hours cross this landslide area. And then again take a bus.

MARIE: What... what... which... when was that?

LI: Maybe two thousand fourteen.

MARIE: Two thousand fourteen

LI: Or two thousand fifteen

MARIE: So, it was the old border, the one they closed

LI: Yeah, the old one... it's still closed now that one

MARIE: Cause now... it's rasu... Rasuwa

LI: Now it's a new one... more long way, before the one is shorter but uh... yeah.

MARIE: And so, you arrived in Nepal

LI: Yeah, finally (laugh). We take another bus to arrive Kathmandu and that time, I have a... I come with my three friends. Two is a couple... they are couple and another one is like my high school classmates and she comes here for Vipassana

MARIE: Vipassana oh.

LI: After she goes to Kathmandu to Vipassana, and me and another friend... the couple come to Pokhara. And the... this is the... eh... it's the magic thing because normally the tourist bus they stop in the bus station but my bus is... they come to the lake side and the big... you know this fishtail park, they have a big tree. They stop there. And they I get out and check the hotel thing and last... eh... we stay in one simple hotel and after we come outside I found jewelry shop because I love the handmaid thing. I make macramé before. And they...

you know the handmaid thing... this jewelry similar. And I'm so interested in this thing, hand maid thing. I start talk with them, every day I go there and try to learn something. That time have one French lady. She was there she made amazing things

MARIE: Ok

LI: Like, the wire... how to... W.R.A.P...

MARIE: Wrap?

LI: Like this stone one

MARIE: Oh yeah, yeah, it's called macramé... wired macramé.

LI: I learn that one with string... like string macramé. She did amazing jewelries, amazing jewelries. So, I think, maybe I also can. Slowly, Slowly I learn. I meet my husband in this shop. He is a friend of my teacher.

MARIE: Ok

LI: And after...

MARIE: So... because, you were on ... on... winter break from your university... you came to Nepal and you never went back?

LI: For the holiday I came back

MARIE: Mostly

LI: yea... basically I live in Pokhara nowadays.

MARIE: But you went back to Beijing to finish university

LI: Yeah, finish... that time... China, Chinese people is four years college, three years in class and fourth year we go outside for work and luckily that time my father had a small company they need some paper thing to prove that time you work, that you had some experience. So, I had like one-year holiday

MARIE: And so, you came back to Nepal

LI: Yeah, I go back to finish my college thing and then I come back again

MARIE: So how old were you the first time you came to Nepal?

LI: Maybe twenty?

MARIE: Twenty

LI: It's my third year of my college. eighteen, nineteen, twenty... yeah.

MARIE: And so, you met your husband in your first trip here?

LI: Yeah

MARIE: So, you went back and forth to visit him?

LI: Actually, I stay here long time... Like euh... maybe I go back China three times in these four years, including I finish college that time. Most year I stay here. In China, I stay around five or six months. Like... like... that

MARIE: So... when you came to Nepal, was it the first time you were abroad?

LI: No, my first time... my first year of college, winter or summer holiday I have... I go Lao...

MARIE: Lao

LI: oh! oh! First time I go Thailand...

MARIE: So, the first trip abroad was Thailand?

LI: Yeah

MARIE: With your parents?

LI: No, with a friend. That time I go... my first trip I go Kunming... Kunming

MARIE: Oh... Kunming in Yunnan...

LI: Yeah and then... in Dali I meet some long traveler... long term travellers... And I think "It's safe to travel with them together". That was my first time. And then we went to Nanning near by the... nearby Thailand and then we go Lao

MARIE: So, you went with them

LI: Yeah... this time I went with them together. I went Lao and then I... I go by... By road we go Thailand... and uh... after they left

MARIE: They went back to China?

LI: Yeah, and I go back by myself from the Thailand go back Lao again from this road, like by this. I would never do this again! (laugh)
 MARIE: Why?
 LI: cause' it's dangerous nowadays...
 MARIE: It's dangerous?
 LI: If you go single. If you partner it's ok.
 MARIE: How long was this trip for?
 LI: Like two months
 MARIE: Two month? During summer?
 LI: Yes summer...July, august...
 MARIE: So that was your first trip abroad?
 LI: Yes

MARIE: Did you... As a child, did you travel with your parents?
 LI: No... maybe nearby my city but no long... not far away fly to somewhere like this no.
 MARIE: Your parents they don't travel?
 LI: They don't travel because they are busy in work you know...Job, they are so busy. In China it's like this... parents are always busy... Children are free
 MARIE: Children are free (laugh). So how... you... you... you never learn to travel with your parents...
 LI: No

MARIE: Do you know how you learn to travel?
 LI: I think with the website. You know like, for the Chinese people use not Facebook but like Weibo, like this, because so many people, travelers they post somethings from... on the Weibo... Yeah so, I read them story... I bought the books.
 MARIE: Do you know Xiaopong?
 LI: Xiaopong?
 MARIE: Xiaopong
 LI: What's his story?
 MARIE: He is a backpacker and Chinese backpacker. He also has a hostel in Shuhe
 LI: From the start, we read all about this biking people. This is... through the Lhasa or somewhere... Go from here to the London.
 MARIE: By Bike?
 LI: Yeah... by bicycle. That time have three people. Two boy one girl they go by bicycle to London. I forget at last they did or not but that's so popular.
 MARIE: So, you read a lot online and you decided to just buy a ticket and go?
 LI: Yeah... I think I can just try. try it. Because when I was high school, that time... the holiday time I go music festival, music festival as a sales lady. Sales. They have some like... they sell sometimes like sunglass... something like handmaid things... I have one friend his has a company they make they own brand of sunglass. So, I go there and I also see so many people they travel and then here their story and I really want to go. That I... go this music festival... I sell these things I have salary... and euh...
 MARIE: Where was the music festival?
 LI: So many...
 MARIE: Oh! you went everywhere?
 LI: Yeah, yeah... it was like Qingdao...
 MARIE: Qingdao
 LI: Qingdao, Beijing euh... so many because they pay transportation fee also. And we got basic salary and the tips and they pay the food and room also
 MARIE: Ok, so you could travel in China and working
 LI: Just few days but I can go... get some small salary...
 MARIE: Okay... so that was when you were like... sixteen, seventeen?
 LI: Eighteen something... when I go to college. That time. I finish my high school and that time I start to go with those

people. To... To do the music festival business. (laugh). And part time job also.
 MARIE: And so... so... in this festival, you met long time travelers?
 LI: Yeah
 MARIE: From China?
 LI: Yeah.
 MARIE: And you were like...
 LI: So... so...want the same life
 MARIE: You want the same life
 LI: Yeah, the same life.
 MARIE: And when you went to Kunming, you... what's the plan at the time? You went to Kunming... you read online, what was the original plan from Kunming?
 LI: No plan...
 MARIE: No plan
 LI: I just I bought one-way ticket bus... euh... no... train. And that train, around forty-five hours... I sit like this.
 MARIE: How long was this?
 LI: Forty-five hours.
 MARIE: How my god.
 LI: Sit like this. And really hard... so hard. At this age, I cannot do it... When I was eighteen... it was ok... now, no I can't do it...
 MARIE: You are only twenty-four.
 LI: No but... the situation is different... that time I am young, I am so excited to do something. To travel to try. And now this is... maybe the easy way fly... also not expensive, have a little bit money and save the time. Now I think different.
 MARIE: Now you think different... So, you went to Kunming you had no plan?
 LI: No, that time, I go, I bought the bus ticket to go Lijiang. Yeah that time...
 MARIE: I love Lijiang
 LI: Yeah, Lijiang is so nice! Dali is nice too, they have really nice food. That part is amazing. That time, before I was on the train I book one guest house in... in... Lijiang. So first I take a train from Kunming to Lijiang. And then from Lijiang I stay two three nights and then I go Dali
 MARIE: You go to Dali.
 LI: Yeah, I go to the Dali. And that time I stayed around three for days the I met the people I travel with. I met three...
 MARIE: Three people.
 LI: Three people include me. We start travel together.
 MARIE: So, you start travelling in Yunnan and then you got to the border of Lao. You had your passport and you want to Lao
 LI: Yeah
 MARIE: And it was your first trip abroad.
 LI: Yeah
 MARIE: And had you read anything on Lao?
 LI: Nothing. Now I feel like if that time I read something I would go some funny place. That time I just go there and I... this country is so poor. Like the road is really bad. First, I'm like... the road is only this much and the next is forest... like little mistake and then boom (she mimics a car crashing)
 MARIE: Yeah yeah yeah, you fall
 LI: Yeah
 MARIE: But did you like it?
 LI: Lao, I don't have actually so much memory of Lao. But Thailand is really my favorite.

MARIE: Your favorite. How did you feel about being abroad like not in China? Was it exciting? Like do you remember how you felt being in a different country?
 LI: I feel is really nice because before, I have never been outside. Also, because my city is not so big. Even if nearby Beijing, people's mind is block, it's like I'm in the jail and now when I go outside, it's the... free to see the different things to

see the international people, to think... maybe little change the mind also change a little bit...

MARIE: How... how... can you explain how your mind change.

LI: Because before, maybe if I don't come outside... travel maybe I have the same life as my parents. Just finish college, work, find a job and work and married... bla bla bla... buy the house and pay the loan for the bank. Like this kind of life... same like them. But after, maybe I can choose my different life. As my parents... they don't open mind after... after... after when I start go outside to travel... My parents mind also change a little bit

MARIE: Really... how?

LI: Because they can't control me (laugh) and and and I'm safe... and no any bad things happen, I didn't get accident or any bad things happen on me. I'm safe, healthy, happy... This is the thing they also want. so...

MARIE: So... were your parents supportive of your travels? Or were they... noooo, you should stay and study?

LI: They want I study but if I say no, they are ok because if I say no, they know I will not to do this, nicely... if they push me to go to the master class, I'm "no, I don't want, I'm not happy" and I last, I don't... nicely. It's a waste of money and a waste of time. So, they are...

MARIE: Did you meet during this trip in Thailand and Lao, did you meet like any foreign... like foreign backpackers.

LI: Foreigners... but that time I don't speak nice English. Like that time, it's hard to communicate with them so I just say "Hello" and "hi" and cheers... that kind of...

MARIE: Yeah, but you met foreigners, right? How did it feel like how did you feel about that?

LI: In Lao is not that much but in Thailand so many... and in Thailand I feel I know the this you go outside single you need to be careful so much

MARIE: In Thailand... why?

LI: There are so many foreigners, you know some people they euh... like euh... artist, they chit chat and like this kind of people... and that time I know, you travel it's no problem but don't too much talk with these people.

MARIE: Like the hippies?

LI: Yeah, they are doing... (she mimics smoking weed)

MARIE: Drugs?

LI: Here it's ok but that time in China we think it's drugs. We don't do drugs that time.

MARIE: No, no

LI: I meet some people but they are just want to give you the drugs and then smoke with you

MARIE: But in Pokhara there is drugs everywhere...

LI: Same, same but now I am grow up, I know...

MARIE: So, you are more tolerant? Like

LI: More mature. These things are no problem, my friend they can have... how to say...

MARIE: Yourself you don't...

LI: Only festival...

MARIE: Only festival

LI: Only Shiva festival... You know I put lighter on and then after... I don't know. This quite funny... but inside I am still a little traditional Chinese.

MARIE: (Laugh) no it's ok it's ok...

LI: But I know this thing is not only just drugs... if you use the right way. I see so many, like video they are some people with disease, and they bring something they cannot control like shaking and they bring pure drop and they can control

MARIE: Yeah like medical

LI: Yeah, medical way, relax also ok but not morning to evening

MARIE: Uh...I don't... about your trip in Nepal... So, you...So you were 20, you want to Xinjiang to volunteering

LI: Qinghai

MARIE: Qinghai, you didn't expect to go to Nepal, right?

LI: Yeah... no plan

MARIE: No plan... You went to Lhasa and then you were like... let's go to Nepal. Have you

LI: I don't know. That time I should meet my high school class mate I already plan with her... we meet in Lhasa, she is in Lhasa and "Ok, I come" because she is based in Lhasa, she is doing volunteering in Lhasa, in guest house volunteer or something

M: Alright

LI: Then we meet and around and after, like I see this couple post in Lhasa..." I'm also in Lhasa", ok let's meet and then we plan.

MARIE: Is volunteering really popular in China?

LI: It's kind of since a few years, five years, it's really popular but from my experience I don't want to do volunteering...

MARIE: Why?

LI: For like the guest house...

MARIE: Yeah

LI: Because... you cannot get experience like... to learn something... It's just you are people to clean... just clean jobs

MARIE: It's not like really...

LI: It's boring... in school... it's maybe more... you can learn some things... like to get more... uh... how do you call... I don't know but... I don't like the guest house and volunteer job

MARIE: Like... is volunteering an excuse to travel?

LI: Uh... no. Kind of also... I think maybe

MARIE: Kind of.

LI: Yeah. Because you can get cheap, at least they pay you. In guest house they pay you food but they pay you the room but you cannot really get the food you want, the place you want to sleep. You lock there... so me, from my side, I prefer work hard first and save enough money and around, be free... just travel.

MARIE: So... you went to Nepal... what was your first impression of Nepal, when you arrived

LI: In Nepal it's all so dirty

MARIE: Dirty?

LI: SO dirty. This is like, why I come here! And then after, I don't know about Pokhara. Because in China, have one very popular rock band... they have song about Pokhara. So, I think ok it's nearby, I should...

MARIE: Oh... really, what's the name of the band?

LI: I can't... (she is referring to the band Miserable Faith)

MARIE: They sing about Pokhara?

LI: Yeah, Yeah, the singer they come travel here, they really like this place, they have a song for Pokhara

MARIE: So, they sing about how beautiful is Pokhara and...

LI: No.

MARIE: No? (Laugh)

LI: This is really popular this... It's like "I'm walking on my way, I'm walking on my way, Pokhara, Pokhara come here... ta da da da da". I know... because we got the music festival, we know this song, this is a really popular band. So... This music is really simple... This song is really simple: "Come here, come here, Pokhara"

MARIE: That's how you decided to come to Pokhara?

LI: Yeah... otherwise I don't know, I don't have any plan things, that time.

MARIE: Oh... you didn't have any plan?

LI: Yeah, I don't have any plan.

MARIE: So, your first impressions were dirty and then how long did you stay in Nepal the first time you came here?

LI: Uh... two, three months.

MARIE: You stayed two months something...

LI: Two months something yes. Because that time I learn to make jewelry

MARIE: Yeah

LI: Also, I meet my husband so... and after I need to go back China because of I need to finish my college, something... need to take some photos... and this is why I go back... otherwise I think I would not go back so fast... Maybe stay five months because we have tourist visa. The next I come... same year December and again next year I have five months visa

MARIE: Yeah... nice

LI: Yeah... good plan. Like... if July, August you come to Nepal... you have five month and then for new year again you have five months so total you can stay ten months.

MARIE: Yeah... but now it's not a problem for you because you married...

LI: Yeah, I have a marriage visa

MARIE: A marriage visa...

LI: Yeah, every year I need to go to immigration, one time alright. You can choose six month or 12 months.

MARIE: do you still have to pay?

LI: One month 10 dollars

MARIE: Uh... that's ok.

LI: Yeah, it's cheap, one thousand rupees. And then, they have two different visas. One is you can... One is you cannot go out of Nepal, one is you can go and come back

MARIE: Like multi-entry

LI: Yeah, multi-entry visa. The two is a different price. Like, for... if you want to make one year... like single visa it costs hundred and twenty dollars if you want to make multi-entry visa you need to pay one hundred eighty.

MARIE: So, you stayed two months in Pokhara, what did you do? Just learn jewelry or did you go trekking?

LI: No, I go just one day, just go to Panchase, if you have time you really... really

MARIE: Where?

LI: Panchase, you can go there, it's really nice, you don't need to make the permit these things, you don't need a guide. It's a nice place to see the mountain and not so many tourist people. It's quite quiet and cheap, the room around five hundred rupees. The food is four hundred maybe for the Dal Bhat. And it's cheap because you don't to pay four thousand for the permit.

MARIE: Okay... did you do paragliding?

LI: No... (whispering), no... I'm afraid... of heights. Because my husband they have so many friends they are pilot they say... if you want... I take you free. I say "No! I'm afraid"

MARIE: Well, this morning I met a girl, Yan, she is from China

LI: Oh Yeah! Yeah!

MARIE: Yeah... you know her?

LI: Yeah, she is really popular in Pokhara because she can fly... not a pilot... not take people but she is single flyer...

MARIE: Yeah, she is with Spanish guy

LI: Yeah Fernando.

MARIE: Fernando... you know her?

LI: I know, we are WeChat friend but no meet often. You can interview her... she has really nice stories. If you want... she has WeChat... I can

MARIE: Yeah, Yeah, I have, I have we exchange our WeChat

LI: Asian people and WeChat... Haha, it's better than WhatsApp.

MARIE: Yes, it is

LI: I'm Chinese WhatsApp is little hard for me!

MARIE: Yeah, WeChat is convenient. So then, during those two months in Nepal... you just learn jewelry, you met your husband and... started dating and then went back to... came back in December and you stayed and settle here?

LI: And I make my own jewelry studio, and I hire a worker and help me make my design and started to sell my things from online and from the WeChat

MARIE: Ok, was it, was it difficult to settle in a different country, like how do you feel?

LI: A little bit but I have my husband, he... he knows everything so I just need to ask him

MARIE: Did you... have you imagine... when you were little girl, like, did you imagine ever that you would not live in China?

LI: Yeah... I think... that... from... uh... I'm young I think... I want... I try my... the... uh... I try to go abroad study also. I tried to go at that time it's... after it's really expensive... then I cancel. That time I want to go France, to learn. To study how to make dessert. Like the sweet things.

MARIE: Like a pastry chef, oh...

LI: After I think I'm better to cook Chinese, at that time it's quite hard, it's expensive, really expensive as my family is medium, if I ask them they can offer but it's like all the money goes to me, too much pressure, I don't

MARIE: You didn't want that; do you have siblings?

LI: Sister? No. Single, I'm only one, I'm only child at home.

MARIE: So that's a lot of pressure I guess?

LI: And now it's like I'm free and they are also free, they work there...

MARIE: Are you parents happy that you live in Nepal and stuff?

LI: Yeah... my mother is little bit not like... she says... why do you stay this poor country? It's like... she doesn't know... she has never been here... like the cities is poor, people don't have so much money... I'm like "you don't know how much they have..." They are this kind of people.

MARIE: Would you consider going back to China with your husband?

LI: Right now, no... maybe in the future because... uh... it's easy for my husband to find a job in China because he can speak English he can become an English teacher. Like... he can teach like, children. We can talk with them, play with them and then get a nice salary.

MARIE: Yeah... what does he do now?

LI: He is a kind of land agency... land

MARIE: Like a real estate, like he sells, he rents he manages

LI: No like, somebody wants to buy land and somebody wants to sell land he is the medium people, like commissioner.

MARIE: Ok, commissioner.

LI: It's ok... quite nice because the land is quite expensive so the commission is also nice.

MARIE: He does that only in Pokhara?

LI: Kathmandu, no. Maybe Chitwan a little bit. But mostly here in Pokhara.

MARIE: Do you still make jewelry?

LI: I just kick out my worker because he is lazy, he cheats sometimes so I kick him out... I still have some rest of piece of jewelry I sell from online and I can give to another people also. I don't need to open my own studio. Also, a little bit pressure for me. If I make my own. Because every day I need to give him order but you know... not that much active every day. It's like "yeah... I need to give design today, I need to make tomorrow's design it's like oh"... and then I send the design to the different worker and make nice I sell from online and this is better. So, I don't need to keep one worker with me, the worker salary also, not so cheap but... a little expensive. Before I make macramé... macramé is amazing but people cannot offer so much money for the macramé

but macramé you spend more time than the silver jewelry and it's like the value is like, two years... after string loose and color change. The silver thing is for a long time... next...

MARIE: Next generation you can pass on. And so, you... you... in your life you have been a backpacker, right?

LI: Yeah

MARIE: How would you... how would you define what is a backpacker? For you... how would you define what is a backpacker... travel as a backpacker?

LI: Uh... Uh... travel as backpacker is maybe... no take expensive room, spend more money to go more place... see more... like, for example, if I have a thousand dollars, maybe only go three cities, but a backpacker maybe goes thirty cities. Maybe more long time... and they closer with the local. Maybe it's gone there and some nice food, and then we eat and then we go... spend more high money... They are closer to the local. Local people.

MARIE: Well, you met you husband so I guess that's getting really close to the local

(laugh)

MARIE: Did you like this way of travelling?

LI: The way?

MARIE: Backpacking way of traveling?

LI: I like but I... I can't... for me now, I want to save enough money to enjoy the travel, not budget. I cannot... We want... finally we have the holiday we can go out outside together we went to relax not think too much about... no this room is twelve dollars; this room is ten... because of these two dollars and think too much. These twelve dollars maybe this is good. It not means these ten dollars is bad but sometimes...

MARIE: Indeed... what's your next trip?

LI: Maybe Thailand

MARIE: Thailand again? Don't you want to explore another country?

LI: He never been Thailand, I want to show him... He only been India

MARIE: Okay, have you been to India?

LI: No... We want to go India but now, this guest house is stuck us a little bit. Luckily, he has a brother, his brother come to take care of the guest house, I need to do the online works. Like Airbnb and sell the package.

MARIE: So, your... your hotel is on Airbnb, that's it? And do you have another like Ctrip or...

LI: Booking, no...

MARIE: Just Airbnb is enough.

LI: Airbnb is good because, the... the guest pay directly to Airbnb and when the guest arrive the guest house, next day they send the money to my own bank account. I don't have any cash deal.

MARIE: Do you get sometimes, like solo travelers?

LI: Yeah... yeah... they come also sometimes... And most you see so many guest houses. So...

MARIE: Yeah, I never check Airbnb in Pokhara.

LI: In Pokhara they are really few nice apartments, now this is really popular in Pokhara... apartment system. They have their own kitchen, own... bathroom. Now I rent another apartment, single, like single one... one room, one kitchen, one toilet and with big balcony near the Jalpa Road, I'm going to post on Airbnb also.

MARIE: Oh ok, so you rent it to a Nepali owner and you put it on Airbnb. ok

LI: I also trying to do this because this is good business also. Trying to do some business.

MARIE: Well I'm gonna ask a stupid question but I'm still gonna ask it: How did your Nepal trip change your life?

LI: I live here now. And I find my career... like jewelry... I feel it's really relax in Nepal. Like... like...actually... actually... live in Nepal is a little expensive. But you get nice air, not like in China. In my hometown, there is really terrible weather,

like winter time... it's... the clouds, your lungs cannot breathe that things... you... like... cancer... so... I really happy to stay here. And uh... uh... what was the question again?

MARIE: No, it was how did your trips change your life.

LI: No, I feel it's like relax... and uh... if I go back China I can get a job easily, no hard

MARIE: What did you study in university...

LI: Business... but the thing is I cannot relax like this... the life is going to the office at 6pm and come back, and go with friends eat and drink... and boring life. Here you have so many different chances to do so many things. If you want jewelry you learn jewelry, if you want to learn paragliding you can also learn paragliding, if you want to learn.

MARIE: In China that would be possible?

LI: Yeah you need to go another city... I feel here it's much more relax... most important is relax. And it makes me feel happy. Last time I go back China, this part is really pain and during my two months trip in China...

MARIE: How... what did you... because one of mine... my... my thing... because I travel a lot as well... and you know when I... I... I travel, I see France differently... my country... I just see different things like positive things, negative things... what have you learn about China by being abroad?

LI: ...

MARIE: Did you realize stuff? like... did you you look at China differently now that you are not living there... cause... I don't know... it's just that when I go abroad... I realize a lot of things on my country that I didn't see when I was living in there.

LI: When I here... I miss... China has really easy life actually... like twenty-four hours everything. Twenty-four hours market, twenty-four hours restaurant, twenty-four hours karaoke and you don't need to have cash to go outside, you just phone and Alipay is enough. it's everything. But here, it's back like thirty, forty years China. It's like this. People are more nature, pure. In China it's like, people are thinking too much, when you go walk, you need to think how to make good relation with people around. Here when we do the business, we just directly... directly, no like... this way.

MARIE: It's more straightforward

LI: Yeah, straightforward... mostly we do the deal... with the Nepali and my English is not so good so all the time we speak straightly. "What do you want? You want: Yes/no". I don't need to make social with people... just speak friendly and that's all.

MARIE: Just like... straight up business

LI: Business is business, friendship is friendship.

MARIE: In China it is

LI: It's always so complicated (sigh)

MARIE: It is like a problem with the face?

LI: Yeah... They... they... they (exasperated) under the face they are so many things running... like... so, it is the most reason I don't want to go back to China, because I cannot handle these things. I cannot speak the things and think a different thing. What I think I want to speak out but...

MARIE: You can't say what you think really.

LI: You need to do a lot of social work with your boss, like this thing. They play so many games. And also, if I stay here, I don't need to work for somebody... I work for myself... I don't like... I don't like... I have choice to do some business with other people. Like? I'm going to open a travel agency from online and I can do the deal with this guest house, hotel, different choice and I don't need... if they are not good or it's too complicated... I'll just choose another one, so I decide... I have my own choice. In China, it's...

MARIE: Not like that?

LI: If you quit this job, is nice job... maybe easy... maybe hard... and uh... relatives' gossip

MARIE: Yeah gossip... gossiping

LI: I don't like this. Here it's simple because I am a foreigner, I don't understand so much Nepali language so I don't care... I don't care... and my Chinese friends I only have a few and they are not doing like... really for the money, they also want to basic here, they want to relax and get some cash and to live like this.

MARIE: Could I meet them?

LI: Yeah, maybe we can go her place, Jalpa road. She speaks professional English... easy

MARIE: Thank you so much for answering all these questions...

LI: Thank you for interviewing me, now I remember my story.

MARIE: Your story is so interesting...

LI: I'm lazy, because I'm lazy people so I want an easy life...No complicated. I make my own choice, maybe I lost my chance to become more successful but...

MARIE: For who?

LI: For family (burst out of laughter) but I don't care. I quit these things, this is not important anymore. I'm happy and healthy.

MEI

MARIE: Hum, so can you, well, first of all, can you tell me again, hum, where you from in China?

MEI: I grow up in Fujian

MARIE: Fujian

MEI: Yes

MARIE: Okay

MEI: In this few years I live in Yunnan

MARIE: Okay, why did you live in Yunnan for this few years?

MEI: Because that's the place I found in China makes me feel free. Only place kind of

MARIE: Okay

MEI: For me

MARIE: Now, how old are you?

MEI: Now I am twenty-seven

MARIE: You are twenty-seven, and so, so you studied in Fujian?

MEI: no, I study in Jiangsu, Suzhou

MARIE: hu hu

MEI: You know there?

M : hu hu

MEI: okay cool, and then after that I graduated I... I... went to Guangzhou,

MARIE: Okay

MEI: Because for me it's a great place for my career

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: (Laugh)

MARIE: What... What was your studies?

MEI: I studied fashion design

MARIE: Okay

MEI: And the fabric design

MARIE: Okay

MEI: This kind of things, and I feel Guangzhou is a place very very practical

MARIE: hu hu

MEI: if I can make that kind of situation I will learn more and faster

MARIE: okay

MEI: That's the reason I went to another city. You know my hometown here, and I have been there and I come back to there and even not my home

MARIE: okay

MEI: and my parents are very unhappy with my decisions

MARIE: Really, why?

MEI: Because they... they just want me, me with them

MARIE: Oh Okay

MEI: Like okay now you go to university, now you finish, now you can finally come back with us. No! I don't. So, for them, it's like: "Oh my god, what happen to you my daughter?" Like this... so... like I always this pressure

MARIE: Okay

MEI: My parents give me a lot of this and that and even they prepare few jokes in my hometown they need to choose. Like in Chinese "Fanhuan"... Like... like the iron bowl

MARIE: Yeah

MEI : Like it never break

M : Yeah

MEI : Something like this

M : Yeah

MEI: Like it give you a very stable life, something like this... But no, no, it's not for me. No what I want so I go away...

M : So... you went to Guangzhou, you worked

MEI : Yes

M : ...in Guangzhou for a few years?

MEI : For one and a half year

MARIE: On and a half year... and then what makes you... what made you go to Yunnan, after that

MEI: hum. In the beginning, I was looking for job, and I didn't feel like... how to call that word? Sacrifice

M : Yeah

MEI : about the things I can find. And then I convince myself to just, just get a job, you need food, you need a place to live, you just need money

M : Yeah

MEI : You just need it. Okay then I found a place. It's a small studio of like, uhh design clothes

M : hu hu

MEI : It does not the thing I like. I mean the way they understand the beauty, the way they create, create the things it's not so beautiful.

M : hu hu

MEI : But what to do, is really... In this job I was assistant of two designers

M : Hu hu

MEI : And I work for some days, more I work, more I find problems more I feel I can't stay with this

M : hu hu

MEI : And then I, I went to another company...

M : Yeah

MEI: That's really selfish decision because I need more money. I know problem would be same same, but only one thing change and I will get a higher salary

M : Okay

MEI : So I change there. I was only there for a few month

M : hu hu

MEI : Finally I really feel... "NOOOO"

M : Yeah

MEI : I can't, if you also living in the city is sooo.. hum... Guangzhou is really big

M : Yeah

MEI: It's a really dirty city for me

M : Yeah

MEI : Because a lot of... how to say... like hum... rat

MARIE: Oh... oh... okay

MEI : And like.. and different, a lot of dirty things and a people.. hum... the river in this city, only big river in this city is stinky

MARIE: Okay

MEI: And hum... Hum... Many people trade their life, is just sick. For me it was like that.

M : Okay

MEI: Yeah, I went so early to work, and in the morning, and I just wake up and need to... how to say... join the crowd...

MARIE: To work

MEI : To work and people so cold to each other, only fight for things...

M : Yeah

MEI: I... Also environment... anyway... everything just make me feel bad. And then I decide to go away, and then...

M : When was.. when did you decide to go away

MEI: I forgot... It's like... I... I quit from the second place... hum.. small company, and then... I stayed at home for a few days... and hat few days were really terrible because as same time I feel free same time I feel but same time, I fell I could do something better... I could have... I deserve better life.

M : Yeah

MEI: And hum.. so.. I just stay and being lazy and then one day... I just... I was reading something online then just one idea come, like "Go and travel"

M : Were you reading online something about traveling?

MEI : Hum... not really... something I used to read

M : Okay

MEI: Like hum... like hum about fashion design

MARIE: Okay

MEI : Also like about travel... also about music, those kind of things like art. Those kind of things.

M : hum hum

MEI: And then decided just come... okay then I check how much money I have and I think Yes, I will go somewhere... Then second day I went to.. I went to buy ticket and then I bought bag pack and just prepare the things and then I left...

MARIE: Like that... in three days...

MEI: Yes and also, actually I had a roommate and she couldn't.... Like we were really good together but... she... she is a person that is really special. And she work every single day, really slowly. She like whole life for enjoying life

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: Something like this. So she didn't work hard, didn't like to move to face the reality

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: At least the first time. So she was.. if I left she is alone, she is gonna become alone... so no money, something like this, so I give her some money. I say "This is for rent"

M : uh uh

MEI : And hum... if I come back I don't have a lot of money... I didn't have a lot of money so... if I will come back I will... before I finish the money I will come back. Like one... two month... but if I don't come back it means I will never come back.. And I tell her and she says ok. And she send with me to the train station together... just like this

MARIE: Then you left

MEI: Then I started a different life

MARIE: How long ago was that?

MEI: I forgot the time exactly... like... just... I think over three years ago

M : Three years ago... you left... three years ago

MEI: Maybe three years and a half ago

MARIE: Okay

MEI: I forgot the time, sorry. Maybe for years ago

MARIE: (laugh) so you left for Yunnan

MEI: hum hum

MARIE: You took the train to Yunnan?

MEI: Yes

M : And you stayed in Dali?

MEI: Yes

MARIE: For how long did you stay in Dali

MEI: When I just arrived, I was thinking to go around more

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: and then I just stayed day by day just searching this old town to see people living here. Which kind of new people I

will meet in my life and then, day by day I check money, I find "no, I don't have enough money to go further" so I need to find and job here and also, because everything is so good here, like the climate, the food also, the people around me make me feel more free. And I think it's okay if I take a few months and I work here, make some money and then continue my travel. Okay so I go to find a job and this job is like in... also in studio design jewelries, like silver things with stones

M : Okay

MEI: And a.. a.. because of this... owner of this studio... Actually in the beginning we are very good friends and she give me a lot of contact... to me... Like this is that kind of person that is my friend, and this, this. She gave me a lot of this. Amazing

M : Okay

MEI: in life. So I made a lot of new friends

MARIE: uh uh, cool

MEI: like this... and then one month pass, two month pass.. then I feel... actually, this is my home. It's the first time in my life I feel I'm being myself

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: and I just... I just can't think about I go away from this place so okay... here is my home. This is like home. Just like this I stayed

MARIE: Okay, how long did you stay in Dali?

MEI: Uh. It's like before I start travel?

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: It stayed all this time.

MARIE: So like three years?

MEI : Yeah three years at least... and then at the same time... because I meet a lot of people, travellers...

MARIE: Oh yeah, in Dali there is a lot of travellers...

MEI: so, for me it's like it's very natural... I make...I give a label a label for myself... I am a traveller so I try to travel, I try... so sometimes I go somewhere and I come back here again so.. So basically Dali is my home

M : So Dali is your home and from Dali you travel around

MEI: Hum hum

M : And, uh, so... where did you travel when you were in Dali?

MEI: Uhhhh... I travel like... uhhh... like how do you say. In the beginning, in Dali, the experience itself for me was travel... and then... I feel I need new way to look at the life, to live Dali... so I go away for a while. Then I have been in Laos

MARIE: Laos, okay... yeah

MEI: Then I come back again. Continue work... euh... make money, everything and then I went away to France...

M : Okay

MEI: That was a big thing for me because I didn't have enough money... even... I even borrow money from family

MARIE: Ok

MEI: And then I come back, and then a lot of things happen again... I had a boyfriend and we were long together then I stayed in there again. I really feel life in Dali itself is travel

M : Ok

MEI: And also life in Yunnan, so big place... and then before I start my travelling, finally I really want to have a long long travel until... not because of no money I come back... no because I feel lonely I come back... NO, it's like travel is a real challenge for myself

MARIE: Okay

MEI: Just go as far as you can... to learn, to know yourself more and more. I just want to know myself so go and travel...

MARIE: Okay

MEI: Then I start

MARIE: So when did you start your long travel?

MEI: It's like... I think... hum... August of last year

MARIE: August 2017...
 MEI: Yes
 MARIE: Okay, so in Laos how long did you stay? Laos was your first abroad country
 MEI: Yes, yes
 M : You never travel with your parents?
 MEI: No never... oh! when I was a kid, a tourist inside China.
 M : Did you like this experience of tourism with your parents?
 MEI: I didn't really like that but it was fun, like we had fun
 MARIE: Yeah, but your parents... they didn't travel much?
 MEI: Hum... my father more than my mother... he also goes out of China a few times...
 M : Okay, your mother she doesn't?
 MEI: She lives, I know she likes it but she don't... I don't know... this is the things between my parents... I don't know why every time my father go but my father don't go... I feel so strange... and I ask my mother and she didn't really give me an answer so I don't know why
 MARIE: yeah
 MEI: But I know my mother like that. In the future I will try to travel with her
 MARIE: Cool... So... so are they... before going on your travel are they supportive of your...
 MEI: No! They even don't know
 MARIE: No way...they don't know that you are here
MEI: Now they know... now we have a... like a more harmony... relationship. Before it's not like this. Before... like... in university little bit far from hometown and then I have been in Guanzhou and I just... the always doubt me: "Why do you make this decision? Why you want to work such bad place? like that. huge huge huge city. complicated society... and need a lot of money. All you earn, you spend every month... and for Chinese people save money is really important.
 MARIE: Okay
 MEI: so for them it's kind of meaningless... so I told them because I am learning... I want to learn in this city how to survive in a big city by myself. And sometimes they support me because the salary was not enough for living; And one more they start to complain "come back, come back... you are doing wrong thing there... bla bla bla... you are hurting yourself". And then I say ok, don't support me I don't ask you money anymore... please... I just want to be myself... be clean... at least be clean to do the thing I want to do. So then... they... I never ask them money... then I continue to be more independant... and hum... yeah... and then I went to Dali... I didn't tell them... I pretend I was still in Guanzhou for half year when I was in dali.
 M : Okay
 MEI: I tell them "I still in the city"
 MARIE: Okay
 MEI: And then... new year I went back and then after new year, spring festival. And then I went back to Dali... after that I feel, one day, I need to tell them the truth no matter what they think... And then of course they went like : "WHAT!?! You change your change your mind again. You change your idea... What are your doing?" Like Ohhhhhh.... "So stupid girl, you can lost all your life... oh my god"
 MARIE: (laugh)
 MEI: Just like that
 MARIE: Ok, ok... so... So... Laos, how long did you stay in Laos?
 MEI: I made a one month visa
 MARIE: You stayed one month ?
 MEI: Just one month
 MARIE: How was it to be in a foreign country?
 MEI: hum... actually... like I been there with like the boyfriend that time... and hum... I just feel like that time I

was a kid... I don't know how to face the things I met...I don't know what happening exactly. I just not aware about that I just been like a kid, a baby need some good around me... it it's not good I get really bad reaction... Like this
 MARIE: Ok
 MEI: So I.. I was really enjoying but sometimes I had many times like get really angry...
 MARIE: At what for example? Angry because it was different from China, angry because...
 MEI: No... like, we start from Yunnan this one border MengLa and then from there... get into Laos and then from there we just get into another side in Laos, we just get a bus and then we go to Luang Prabang... Luang Prabang... I don't know how to prononce...
 MARIE: That's ok
 MEI: Anyway... so the bus, the road was sooo like... the road was really really bad
 M : Bad... Bumpy... yeah Bumpy
 MEI: Yeah... sometimes... Buh !
 MARIE: Yeah
 MEI: And... And...uh... I feel angry but I feel I want to puck all the time... And I feel so dizzy... I feel just suffering... why I make this decision... so stupid. And I feel like during this time, like it's short road but a long time in the bus. I couldn't do anything like I loose my freedom, like that time, it was the way I understand freedom... Like I am so stupid, I can blame myself and I same time, my boyfriend that time is really curious about everything... He is like much much high level way to understand life than me... So he is like, no matter who sits around him, he always try to chatting and to know to appen in their life and the interests and a lot. And then I feel like... why? "I am your girlfriend you don't talk with me, but you talk to the people around you" That time the way I understand the life is
 M : Okay, okay.
 MEI: very funny. So I feel angry because of jealous also. An then ok, we arrive in the city. It was the middle of the night and then all the people you know that were in the car... so many people together and then we get down and it's only me and my boyfriend all the other people disappear because everybody go to their own place.
 MARIE: Yeah
 MEI: And then we are kind of tourist or traveller. And we carry very big bag and we hungry, we are tired... And I was jealous so we just walk, walk, walk and then dogs... DOGS! so crazy... barking... What.. why I come here? I mean... I'm a guest in this country... why dogs?? Because my body and mind say like this... I just get angry. Like I'm hungry, I'm angry... I just want to find a place. If you don't... I finish my travel right now... so stupid. Ok, then I get angry.
 M : And... so... you stayed for month so after it got better?
 MEI: Yeah...more and more I enjoy...
 MARIE: Yeah
 MEI: Then we went to like... place like this... like away from the city... like a build bungalow, like bamboo... but build on the river... um, like a volunteer...
 MARIE: Oh... ok
 MEI: Yes like uh... nine or ten days... everyday same food... exactly same food. In lunch... sticky rice with vegetables... what's the name around? Leaves like this... and in the night exactly same food
 MARIE: Like spinach?
 MEI: No, other one... Like same same for so many days... Now I look back it was like meditation.
 MARIE: (Laugh)
 MEI: And then I feel happy, enjoying so much
 MARIE: And then Vietnam... How long did you stay in Vietnam?

MEI: Vietnam, I think also one month even less.. like twenty few days...

MARIE: and it was also like a good experience?

MEI: Uhh. I feel good I get out of the country... very fresh in the beginning few days and then my mind going back to the old situation so the things around me were not fresh anymore. And also because vietnam people... I met so many people they cheat on me... a lot

MARIE: In Vietnam?

MEI: Yes... so this thing make me feel very annoying... really really annoying I could trust anyone. It makes me feel really bad. So for me it was like you are a country like this you don't want to live uh... more better person to live your life. Even a girl who just... nine/ten years old... I feel like... "Oh my god this country is hopeless"... something like that. I feel so bad that time. Yeah. And then just money finish... go back home. Even he tried to go back.

MARIE: You hitch-hiked back?

MEI: Yes because there is no money !

M : What... no money... And France...

MEI: France because the boyfriend is not my 100% independent decision...

MARIE: ok... he wanted to go to France

MEI: uhhh... we really miss each other... and we can... we could travel together to somewhere or he can go to China or I go to France.

MARIE: Cause he was French??

MEI: Yes, he is French

MARIE: oh... your boyfriend was French...

MEI: Yes

MARIE: Oh, oh, I didn't know that

MEI: Yes I didn't tell you this... so for going to another country... I don't know why that time I say no... about this idea

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: I forgot the reason... maybe I just don't know. And about come to China, we were in China together for like few months we live together...

MARIE: What was he doing in China?

MEI: That time he was like... he tried to find a job... and...

MARIE: In Dali?

MEI: Yes... and I was little bit crazy because I kind of become like a hippie life... that kind of thing, and he kind of jump in this kind of atmosphere. So nobody really cared if I got a job or not... so we just try to make a living on the street, selling food or like I'm continue make clothes and hum...

MARIE: Selling on the street

MEI: And I have few very good friends who were doing their things together and he easily find musician and have short basket in the street and a lot of tourists give... not a lot of money but no problem

M:Ok

MEI: But actually... we were really poor

MARIE: So you were like living in a hippie community?

MEI: Yeah

MARIE: In Dali

MEI: Yes, and then after, his visa problem, his visa finish and also he really really want back home to meet his family and so he left

MARIE: Ok

MEI: he went back. I feel like I get addiction about being with someone always. Especially man, I fel really bad... very hard to.. to accept the situation like this... "you need to be alone kid..." No! I just feel so hard... so hard... and then I always stay with friends... And so happy we worked together... we make clothes, and cook and dance and music, this kind of things. And so enjoying... I totally forgot. Actually, everyone should be alone sometimes...

M : Yeah Yeah Yeah... Being alone is good... is so good

MEI: Yeah... so that time is supposed to learn, but no... I don't learn... but no... I want to, I want to I just want to... I just don't see the truths that time. So, and then okay I just want to be with him... so the second idea not possible also... the third idea is I go to france then I started thinking about this. Yes... possible why not... In China, everybody say "you got a visa go to Europe is really hard thing" but why not, I just try... why not...I just want to try... so I start trying and make all the complicated papers and also he help me a lot and money and take care everything and I went to Chengdu in Sichuan and I convince for two times for

MARIE: For interview...

MEI: Yeah, get the thing, all the thing for the visa. And in the end after almost two months I got the visa.

MARIE: Ok

MEI: and I spent a lot of energy on this.

MARIE: I bet you did

MEI: I felt... okay... so good, finally I could go. and then I fly away to France

MARIE: Where did you go?

MEI: In bo... In ex-boyfriend parents' house.

M : Ok, and where was this in France?

MEI: In Paris

M : Oh in Paris

MEI: Not inside Paris... like

MARIE: Like Suburb

MEI: Yes, yes. So... That was winter... Also we spent uh... We spent Christmas with his family together and uh... Like this

M : How long did you stay in France?

MEI: I got forty days visa but I was stupid because I was not so experience how to making that kind of things how to make schedule perfect so I apply my visa, I bought ticket before I get my visa so I thought I would get 30 days visa but I got 40 days. So my ticket was like for 30 days and come back... so I just stayed one month.

MARIE: Okay

MEI: Yeah... I lost ten days

MARIE: What did you visit in France? What did you do?

MEI: Hum... Like in the beginning was like crazily make love...

MARIE: (Laugh)

MEI: Go to visit Paris... the city... hum... and ah ! I remember this one time before Christmas, like how do you say... "vélo" means bicycle?

MARIE: Yeah, yeah

MEI: Revolution... Yeah... it is something like this...

MARIE: Velo révolution

MEI: It's like bicycle people... like hum... hum... how do you say. It's an organisation... it's like in this one place a shop, the people who, who make this shop together organise this place together they always want to go to different place in the city to search on bicycle that people throw away.

MARIE: Ok

MEI: so they collect everything and make it new

MARIE: They repair and fix it

MEI: They make so people can use and also they have all the tools, very good technic to repair bicycle and caring people come here and they do this kind of things. And then it was voting in Paris... I didn't read anything because I was like.. I feel tired about everyday new things... I was lazy...I didn't even don't know about that time was voting happening.

MARIE: Ok... elections and stuff

MEI: So... this in the.. in the like... in the like few days of this election happen this movement on the street... all this kind of people, bicycle, they are from different city, different place of France gathering together in Paris, in like a movement together

MARIE: You went there?

MEI: We went together... I feel it's really good but that day I was really in a bad mood because I feel really cold and I feel really aggressive with the people around me because language... because... how to say... like for Chinese people... we have mind setting.. it's like... for me now it's ok... I already open it but for most people... like uh... white people are from higher level society...

MARIE: Okay

MEI: Because they rich, you are like good education, you don't face money problem in my imagination... Just different... People always think that white people are WOOW like this... High level... something like this. For me I have that kind of feeling and I already in the situation... and I feel not good I feel I was not confident...

MARIE: Okay you felt like you didn't belong in that crowd.

MEI: Yes... exactly. And I feel so alone... even people they give me good sign "I'm friendly... I want to be your friend no matter who you are" but I still no... I don't believe

MARIE: So did you feel like you were... So at that time you... you felt... you felt like you were not like.

MEI: Alone

MARIE: Yeah... like under the people in France? or something like that

MEI: I feel first I'm alone and second I feel like people you could do whatever you want to do but I can't because I'm in new place... I tried to... like... how to say... For example, inside the house of my boyfriend's parents they speaking French normally they also speak English but the normally speak French and hum... we talk about prepare Christmas together and supposedly making food... see what I can do... which job belongs to me but they make schedule by talking... not wrting and the talking is French. And I'm still in this group but I don't get the point... what I'm supposed to do? Where I'm supposed to go? Yes so... I was like totally lost... I felt angry a few times with that.

M : Yes with that... with not understanding the talking. Okay. Yeah I understand it's frustrating when people talk another language and we don't understand.

MEI: And his family is really a strange family... So it's like very funny but at the same small problem... but really funny.

MARIE: Okay, Okay

MEI: So... hum... I didn't have a thing before when I because... hot to say... when I preparing the visa I need few papers from France and this paper my ex=boyfriend he couldn't give so he ask one of his very good friend help me make the paper. So this girl, or woman she made the two papers for me and send from France to... to China and during this time she spent some money for me and ask her how... like how much I need to give to you and she say... don't give me me... if you like, you design clothes for me. Because she is... how to say... the people who professionally massage

MARIE: oh... a massage therapist.

MEI: Massage therapist... she is therapist

MARIE: Okay

MEI: so she say... for my uniform I want I saw clothes online, if it's possible you make it for me in France... And I was like : "Wow, it's a really good idea" I want to do it...

MARIE: Like trade: a service for a service

MEI: Yes... and like I don't give money but I give this. Wow... so great. So, then, she gave me... like I ask her her size, everything and she showed me the picture online, like the links and I just look everything then I design everything and then me and my boyfriend we went to few... hum... fabric market... Wooow... that was great for me. I feel so happy

M : In Paris?

MEI: Yeah... To see different... so different market... so many different fabrics and it just so good... so good... And then I bought some fabrics and then I spent few days at

home because...hum... my ex-boyfriend, his mother she is really... like... real hobby about making clothes. But she has no time to spend on it but she bought everything. Big tools, small tools, machine... so it was perfect for me.

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: And then I make the clothes and even I made the crochet for...hum... hum for my ex-boyfriend's friend's baby. She has a baby like that time, 6 months old so then... yeah, I did this thing

M : It's really cool

MEI: I feel happy, that time. And also to Normandy

MARIE: Oh... you went to Normandy?

MEI: In... a...

MARIE: Mont Saint Michel?

MEI: Hum... hum... I don't remember the name... sorry. I was real lazy.

MARIE: Was it like... hum... like the church on the rock?

MEI: Near to the sea... yes... Near to the sea... Kind of a farm... we did kind of woofing for... for... for some days

MARIE: ok...

MEI: Maybe one week... make apple juice everyday, really cold but really nice

MARIE: (laugh)

MEI: (laugh)

(Silence)

MEI: Yeah it was really cold. And in there I really taste the french food because in Paris is like more how to say... fast food or... food from different countries and it's like

M : Yeah, it's multicultural so you can have everything but Normandy is real French food (laugh)

MEI: Inside... is really deep French.

M : (laugh), you know my mother is from Normandy... she is actually, she... she is not far from Mont Saint Michel.

MEI: And I feel wow... because in France... a really really good life because for example... hum... the farm I stayed, this farmer, she is lesbian. She has a car but her car is electric one and so no pollution... it's really cool. And the house we stay... she got old house in her farm... it's like over 100 years old and she build new one for... for volunteers by her hands.

MARIE: Really?

MEI: and it's wood and it's really beautiful and the toilets is like... you...

MARIE: Dry?

MEI: Yeah, dry toilet.

MARIE: Dry toilet

MEI: And hum... like hum... for the apple juice she study about apple trees and things and she grows sixteen different type of apple trees by herself and then she... in the season... harvest and mix together and you get the best juice in the world. And they exchange these things with another farm. Like, you got apple juice, you got wine or you got how to say different kind of things, you just exchange, you don't need to buy.

MARIE: oh... you exchange goods like you did with the service for the clothes for the therapist

MEI: You got the best... like the cheese, everything is like... you can't say it... I give you price but NO! it's like a system of so big organization. So cool... everything is so beautiful for me. I can't believe that... no... you don't know Chinese people how they live life. Like so different

MARIE: Was it inspiring? Like... would you like to do that in China? What she did... or in China or abroad

MEI: This kind of things?

MARIE: Like a farm like that

MEI: For me, it's like the best thing people could do. Like one type of the best about agriculture. I think if it's like hum...

but it's really hard make it happen in China or in this country I don't know I haven't been researching...

MARIE: I think it's difficult to buy land in Nepal... I don't know though some places you can buy but... I don't know... I don't know how it works... but that's wow... so interesting... interesting...

MEI: I want to be a farmer

MARIE: You want to be a farmer?

MEI: Yeah... one day

MARIE: (laugh) I bet your parents they don't agree with that... they send you to college and now "I want to be a farmer, mom and dad... sorry..." (laugh)

MEI: (laugh) I also wanna be a person who build house... I also wanna be a person, just cook for people...

MARIE: Oh... I love cooking for people... at my house it's just my husband and I and always cook tons of food just like I had a family of ten people with me... cause I just cook so much food, I just... I love cooking cooking

MEI: Me too... me too

M : (laugh)

MEI: That's one of the reason I live in community. Because always so many people there... always hungry... (laugh)

M : (Laugh)

MEI: Yes so good

M : This is so nice. You had a quite an extraordinary life. You are only twenty-seven and you have done so many things...

MEI: Yeah?

M : Yeah!

MEI: Okay

MARIE: Yeah... trust me... You are living the life... that's good

MEI: Thank you.

M : So you... you want back to China... you still live in Dali?

MEI: Hum hum

MARIE: and then you left for Nepal... so how... Like... how... so what... Like... how did you come to Nepal? How did you arrive here?

MEI: It's a long story

MARIE: do you want to tell me?

MEI: If you like to listen...

MARIE: I'd like to listen to that...

MEI: Okay... let me just tell you... Hum... it's like around seven or eight months ago my ex-boyfriend he left me... like a break up. As you know I told you before I have kind of addiction... I need someone always... so I felt really really bad... I don't know how to continue my life. I thought about... like... euh... like kill myself...

MARIE: Wow...

MEI: like many times. During days... really hard time

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: Because that time I move to another community and in there, it's like in the mountain, in the top of village like this village is in mountain, like this village mountain... So down is village and go up is mountain and a few neighbors around they all from different countries... Everywhere from China... kind of travelers but they settle down here. So me live in one of this house but around there, families something. But only this house is only open to the whole world. All the people that know this place can come and stay here.

MARIE: so people from everywhere in the world...

MEI: Yes, everywhere. And hum... that time, exactly time my ex-boyfriend want to break up with me... was the time was this house kind of cold. Like people thinking to go away and then the other friend want to go away and then I become alone. So... I need to ... first... I need to manage this place... make it alive again. And I need to face the real things... I need to be alone... and

hum... there is one dog... I'm not 100% alone, his name is Michka, awesome dog. And hum... so... what to say... like hum... hum... the real thing really happen to me... I have no choice... I don't want to go home... I don't want to runaway from the situation. I feel it's really time I need to face it. So I stay. And hum... I went to the... I... It took me like one week. I went to mountain. Not... not very far.

MARIE: With Michka...

MEI: No. Me alone... I... I ask a friend to look after him. I was in a temple of... hum... stay for few days because I don't know how to face this things like boyfriend thing. I like... that... After that I got connection with the bouddhism thing then I was back to my yard and try to make it more alive and I just face my life everyday. Just work... cleaning house. Do whatever the things you are supposed to do... and then... day by day... friends come and I need them with more and more peace in mind. Not like before... I was more aggressive... more jealous people. Hum... always charge myself with that and problems. And, when I learn to be with myself, I actually know more and more... the knowledge... more knowledge what to do with people. So this is more the life. So I start to make some money but not for me... for the owner of this place. The owner of this place is a musician, he is a Russian. He is... he is... in the country side of his country and he needed money. And we are friends, I want to help him. If I really can make this place alive... he will make money... so I did it. I really made it happen... I feel really happy

MARIE: So you felt good about yourself for the first time in in a long time

MEI: Yes, yes... really really. I feel like... I feel like I am ME ! I AM ME! Not because of someone or from a special reason from outside... NO! It's from inside. And then I feel ok... I start to think... maybe it's time I go to travel a long... for long time and then some new friends they come and they inspire me a lot because this new friends... most of them are girls... they are more like experience than me about travel and... hum... also some friends they have... like a... money issue like me... I always have the things... need to manage. I don't save money I don't make a lot of money so I always have this kind of situation. So... hum... they inspire me... like even without all lot of money in your pocket you can still travel far far far... it depends a lot and you'll meet a lot of different kind of situation. It all depends on you... how your mind, how you face it and how you make the things change, how you turn yourself. So I really feel, it's really it's a big possibility, I do it. So, after... hum...

MARIE: Those girls they were from China or... from...

MEI: China or like, another girl from Chili another girl from France, different countries... also travellers. And then I feel I need to go so I manage this yard better better... Even I met a couple. This couple is Canadian chinese, they are musician. They are looking for a place in Dali and then I tried to like make like kind of sell the house. They rent this place for one year... One time can give a lot of money Piotr and I feel so happy. I did my job, I did my best and make the place alive and more, more, more people come here.

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: And Michka so happy everyday and I feel okay, I'm ready to go... Like a mother.

MARIE: Your time has been done in this place

MEI: Yes... exactly! Exactly! And also make party a lot of thing. I feel enough. Time to go. And then I left. Just like this

MARIE: And you left for...

MEI: First I went back to my hometown to meet with my parents... and few days. Then I fly to Inner Mongolia as a beginning, I don't want to just get out of China. Actually, I kind of curious about the north part of China. Then I have been to Inner Mongolia. It was hard for me...

MARIE: Why?

MEI: Because I have the... the kind of expectations of making money there but I didn't so it's like... hum... I don't get to work in what I want and what I need, and I give really work hard for some days but I just don't get it. This one day... I was working alone to a restaurant... La Mien. I like that... I went to Russian, then after that I went back working slowly, slowly and suddenly I got a feeling about life. It's no matter what, no matter how... the basic truth is everybody, every life are suffering. This is what I feel, what I really know. So I think ok... now things become easy, become simple... if everybody every life is suffering so what I need to do, what we need to do is... is like get out of this suffering or you just change your mind of find a way to change the feeling, the thinking to make this suffering like your are swimming in a bitter sea... so you need to change the sea or to change yourself. Just change it ! So basically getting more positive because of that.

M : Because you knew you had to deal with...

MEI: HAVE TO! Nowhere to run away

M : Yeah... Have to deal with that

Q: You face it. More and more I get the point about to be with myself and be with life. Just accept it. And then after that, I went to Qinghai. It's a place... I have a really really good friend. She became a nun over half year ago. That time I went to visit her. Actually, I just want to meet her for like one day and then I go to Tibet. But the day, exactly the day I arrive in there, big raining and then start snow fall.

MARIE: Wow...

MEI: Yes

M : This is magical

MEI: Yes; It's a little bit crazy because one of this reason I miss my train. And also I calculate too tightly. Anyway... I lost train, I lost money. And I feel okay... I am supposed to stay with my friend. So I went back with her living this like... how to say... monastery life for like a half month.

M : Half month

MEI : Yes

MARIE: And in Inner Mongolia, how long did you stay?

MEI: I think it was like one month... But that one month for me was like one year. Everyday very hard. Really really hard. Because of this... Because I went to this place, I got connection again with bouddhism, yes. So more and more into this. Somehow it saved my life also.

M : Ok, wow.

MEI: And this is the gift from this Nun friend (she shows me a mala, the tibetan prayer necklace). You carry it with you all the time. And she also teach me the chanting.

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: You have like different sutra, I don't know if you...

MARIE: Yeah the sutra

MEI: Anyway there is many for different situation, different sound. For example the one on the way, travel, moving, if it's possible, I say "Om Om Bacha Pur oma citi Om". And after that I really really wish all the being in the world, all the being be happy. I really really wish everyone be good, be happy in your life to just like this. And it's really help. Everytime I do this or any moment I be aware about my thinking my motivation of doing something. If I am aware I ll know if my motivation is bad, is not correct, is selfish, the answer, the results will be the same, so when I cleaning this part of me, the world really is getting more beautiful

MARIE: Ok

MEI: Yes, something like this. So it's help me a lot...

MARIE: Nice, nice. So... that was Qinghai. Then you manage your way to Tibet?

MEI: HUm hum, it's actually easy, I buy train ticket...

MARIE: How long did you stay in Tibet ?

MEI: A little bit more than one month...

MARIE: How did you like Tibet? Where did you stay in Tibet?

MEI: It was winter so my... I actually during that time, my body condition was really bad. I start to have a stomach ache. And I have a headache easily and I feel very very cold always... always. It makes me feel it's impossible I go around so I just stayed in Lhasa.

M : In Lhasa... where did you stay in Lhasa?

MEI: I stay in friend's friend's place, like couch surfer, like this

MARIE: oh Couchsurfing...

MEI: But it's a little bit crazy because I stayed for so long time in this place...

MARIE: It was ok with the people?

MEI: No problem but I just feel why so long time I don't move, something like this. I just myself lazy...

MARIE: Oh... again. And, and in Tibet... did you meet people like you?

MEI: No one,

MARIE: No one...

MEI: no one...In beginning, first the thing I need to face is hum... the how to say. I have been so high altitude. Dali is like one 1500 and here is 3000 something, 4000. It was really a big thing for me. Like for ten days, I don't have good appetite; I eat really small, little food and I could move a lot. I couldn't be like laughing hard or anyway, just need to be very careful. Anything about oxygen need to be careful. I'm like half alive

MARIE: (laugh)... half alive.... that's good (laugh)

MEI: And at the same time, hum... people come and they are like real Tibetans. And the way they live in the winter is like... okay, someone come and sit in the house, and they smoke, cigarettes and weed... everything and hum... no everything... just this two things. They start talk, listen to music, eat something when they are hungry. Just like this, very basic things. They can sit like this for few hours, don't do anything.

M : Okay

MEI: For me it's like WHAT?!?

M : (laugh)

MEI: How can people live like this?

MARIE: You didn't like that?

MEI: I didn't enjoy in the beginning, I feel like I got to do something, I got to do something, I have to do something too. Make money or make people happy or make myself happy, I just want to do... But... no... No possibility. Just like that...

MARIE: Did you smoke weed there?

MEI: Yeah... little bit

MARIE: Little bit... did you smoke before or did you...

MEI: I smoke before when I hum... start my travel

MARIE: Ok

MEI: They were like one year quite a lot and then I quit because another reason... I have a teacher, he teaches me flute, he always tells me please stop that. It's like an alert for me. I try and I observe myself and I'm like ok, I don't need so much.

MARIE: Alright

MEI: So in there, because I'm in there, so I smoke a little bit when when I feel like ok it's fine...

MARIE: Ok, just a little bit is fine

MEI: Because for me, smoke weed make me euh.... nervous easily, because I'm used to be nervous...

MARIE: So you stayed one month in Lhasa? Did you get into Buddhist stuff there or... cause it's... it's

MEI: One of things is all the Tibetans, most of Tibetans they born as Buddhists... Buddhists, so everyone around me they are Buddhists, but different level but kind of... they inspire me... and a... I read this book. Tibetan book... it's like really change me, my mind understands a lot. What is living? What

is death? What is life? how you face it? How you understand something? It's really give me a lot of new way to understand life. New ideas about how to live. And people who around me. Yes! I used to be a little bit busy... do something... hum... to try to do something but they just been lazy like that but they never complain itself... they never say like... hum... I'm not good enough, I'm guilty...

MARIE: I should do something

MEI: Yes... to have like compare with someone. They never, never say that kind of thing! Sometime I wake up and someone say: "Hey Mei, zamien, zamien, the noodle"... always like no matter... like always sometimes I wake up really late because I feel so bad, I don't want to face anything around me. But finally I get up and somebody notice me like: "Hey Mei", and then they got noodle for me, oh my god... it is... wow... they are so nice... they never complain anything

MARIE: uh uh

MEI: It was the really good part of them...

MARIE: So it was... they w... they were Tibetan, not Chinese?

MEI: No, no, and most people I met, they had a long-time experience live in India and Nepal

M : Ok

MEI: Like ten years... they are tibetan... 100% tibetan...

MARIE: And they had experience in India and stuff like that

MEI: So most the time we speak English than Chinese... they don't really speak Chinese

MARIE: Ok

MEI: So good...

MARIE: Okay, and so... did... was... was it them who inspired you to come to Nepal and India?

MEI: Yeah... like... uh... uh... at the beginning, I thought... my first heart about travel I supposed to go far away but that time I feel kind of I spend few days really dark... I feel I want to give, I want to go run away, I want to go back to Dali, like very safety place... I feel I'm a baby again... Then I call one friend, after this calling, I really feel I shouldn't give up. Because, uh...

MARIE: What did he tell you?

MEI: Uh... she ... she say like "just go... you already here... so near to Nepal. If you think the biggest problem is money, I give you money. If you think... uh... other problem... please solve the other problems" Like this. And I say ok... then I stay alone... one day, two days to make decision. And then I check the information about making Nepla visa and I calculate basically how much money I can reach Nepal, everything. And I even check the information if I have any friend in Nepal, everything is perfect for me if someone wanna support me money and because in that one month, I didn't make any coins...(laughs).. And someone in Nepal I... I... If I can go alone that's perfect but ok... Except I am not so strong right now but you can still travel... I accept then I continue.

MARIE: Did you get to Nepal by bus?

MEI: Yes. From Lhasa to the almost border then we change another car then come to the border. And from the border we get jeep and come to Kathmandu.

MARIE: So you went through Kathmandu. So the border has open again? It's open the border.

MEI: Actually, there is two borders... and one is closed and the other one is always open.

M : So it's north of Kathmandu the border...

MEI: Uh... (unfold a map, she shows me on the map)

MARIE: Rasuwagadhi, so you went through this way...

MEI: I supposed

MARIE: Okay, how long did it take you to go from Lhasa to...

MEI: two days.

MARIE: Two days

MEI: Like almost three days. It's a little bit crazy because in China, in Lhasa the Tibet the road is really really good but you need get down and give your Id card all your information for like over ten times

MARIE: like check pass

MEI: Yes! It was really cold, very high, in the middle of night... many many many times...

MARIE: Were there a lot of people in the bus?

MEI: Yes, full... Yes Chinese, Tibetan not allowed to go out so... they are just drivers... 2 drivers.

MARIE: And the Chinese that were in the bus were they like you... like travellers?

MEI: I don't meet anyone like me...

MARIE: So what were they doing here... do you know? Did you talk to them?

MEI: Like, they want to... I feel like they are the tourist at the same time they want to be traveller... this kind of people.

MARIE: Like fake

MEI: They have the money, Yeah... they have money... they have very perfect plan about everything and they want to try their best to meet people on the way who are Chinese and they make a group on the way and then travel together but the way they behave is like tourist.

MARIE: Okay

MEI: So they are beginners...

MARIE: So... so just to be clear... what is a traveler for... How would you define a traveler? If a traveler is not a tourist, what is a travelers... for you?

MEI: Uhhh...

MARIE: Very own definition of what a traveller is

MEI: (laugh and embarasemnt) A travellers for me, is at least you are... you are awake about yourself if you are being yourself you are aware about this. It's the first condition. And if you... okay... so first... and then you go around... even you just stay at home all the but you feel like you are travelling, like you have for example, today you take your lunch and you really feel this meal is different from last meal, even if it's the same thing. If you travel freely. For like... you have... you experience right now, you taste food, you can connect to the different value... different climate like today who bring the food to market... and then Lalalalala. When you do this thing, you know this world... You have connection with the thing out of you... Uh... it feel new every moment, like some moment you always reach this point like for the new, fresh of life but for me... most of tourists they just following... they always try there best to get... uh... informations to feel safety. And follow most of the thing people do. Like I go to restaurant people try to choose restaurant beautiful and safety and big and many people there and good food but also it's possible you.. if you open options, you have a lot of choices you could also just stay on the street... people like you see... local people they choose their food. You can try different things for you... even it's kind of follow but it's totally different experience. Ok in China you choose that kind of restaurant in here same same... Even in here a lot of Chinese they open restaurant... in that kind of hotel... for what do you get out of China... for what... I don't know... I just don't understand that... so I don't call them travellers... they are not travellers.

MARIE: Okay

MEI: They are not travelling

MARIE: You try to avoid the places that are kind of built for Chinese? Like

MEI: Kind of...

MARIE: you try to stay away from that...

MEI: Yes

MARIE: ok, ok it's... it's...

MEI: And I think that's why we could meet in travel.
 MARIE: Yeah
 MEI: Yeah
 MARIE: It's super difficult... I have been to Chinese restaurant and they won't talk to you
 MEI: They don't speak English...
 MARIE: Yeah, the English is definitely a problem
 MEI: And they.. for sure if... they feel happy that someone like out of his mind of customer... because when they open this restaurant, they have very clean mind... my customer, my money is from Chinese so if someone out of that part get in they feel happy for sure. They friendly but they just don't know how to show it. They don't know the... because they don't know how to communicate with another culture.
 MARIE: Okay
 MEI: so little bit "triste" the atmosphere but they have good heart.
 MARIE: I'm sure they do... I'm sur they do...This is funny how you put that... How long have you been in Nepal then, now?
 MEI: Uh... Today is... The eleventh... Twelveth... Two months over ten days
 MARIE: What have you done in Nepal?
 MEI: uh... Uhh, Kathamdu... I spent awesome two days...Then I come here to POKhara... I come here because a friend, he is working... he tell me just in two or three days, we gonna go to trekking if you want to join us... come. Ok! I make decision immediately to come to Pokhara... and I meet him I had one day to prepare everything... permission, the things for trekking and I didn't actually had a good rest... to hurry... and then we go. For people... my friend is from Hong-Kong and me and Anna a girl from Australia. She is quite young... like 19 years old and another girl a little bit younger than me... her name is Eli... from Italy. For people one group then we do trekking for like 9/10 days.
 MARIE: Where did you go?
 MEI : From Thato Pani to ABC
 MARIE: Did you like it?
 MEI: Yeah, I like it
 MARIE: Was it your first time trekking?
 MEI: First time trekking was for so long time and it feels so good...
 MARIE: It felt good...
 MEI: Yes, and on the way, when trekking like second day my mother... she contact me I was in a lodge and I got the wifi and catch he information and I tell her I'm trekking in the mountain... so basically for her it's so strange... why you go to mountain for so many days... In China... no trekking culture. So... for her it's like... I don't understand you and my father say "you like mountain, in China so many mountains so why you go to Nepal
 (laughs)
 MEI: Something like this... really funny
 MARIE: And uh... just to from Kathmandu to Pokhara did you take tourist bus or local bus?
 MEI: Local bus... yeah... and in bus station I was waiting for a kid... because this kid we met in last night and she says, he say, "I like you so much my sister I wanna go with you to Pokhara... no matter what you do I wanna follow you". And I say "Ok if you want, you just come" and then second day, I supposed to go... uh... uh... I left my hotel really early to station and I supposed to go and I supposed to go but I was waiting for him until 1 o'clock and I say ok, it's enough... it's a kid... it's really a kid I didn't my best, my duty to you. So I left and because this waiting time I met a guy, he is.. he is... he says his name is Lama... some guys say respect so they called Lama. they call Lama so this Lama brother, he tell me... you go from here to... He is the person who make people get the bus, so you get this bus, this is how much you pay, this

bus... how much. I say I want this one and then he brings me to this bus. He even give me fifty roupees discount...
 MARIE: Nice...
 MEI: He give me his contact, he say : "if you come back Kathmandu, if you want to meet me or if you need help... just call me."
 MARIE: Nice...
 MEI: Really nice person. So I think, even like... uh... like... after few days, he called me... "hey Mei, are you in Pokhara, you arrive, you ok". And I say yes... everything is really good... I am going to trekking soon" then "wow... so good, have a good day". Just like this. For... just to know if I'm good, I'm fine, I'm safety.
 MARIE: Nice
 MEI: And then I arrive in Pokhara. When I arrive I feel like I'm doing because I don't sleep for few days...
 (laugh)
 MARIE: And you had awesome day in Kathmandu... What did you do?
 MEI: uh... Ok... the first, during the time from the border to the Kathmandu we got six people including me... 6 Chinese. We were in same jeep together. So for them... they never experience this bad road... but for me it's fine... I experience from...
 MARIE: yeah, in Laos
 MEI: And also I know just be at the moment, enjoying the things that are happening to you. If you complaining, it's just make the suffering more suffering.
 MARIE: Yeah
 MEI: If you just accept, if you jump so you feel better. And then because this... they.. this, they... in the beginning I didn't feel bad. I don't feel bad on the way. But they.. first few hours they notice..." oh my god... I'm just getting poor country... now the road is so bad... what is happening next". They can't enjoying, you know. They start worry about the next. "Oh my god, for sure I can't enjoy in this country because so bad condition, maybe no toilet, maybe no good food, maybe this, that". They just (grumpy sound) like this.
 MARIE: Yeah
 MEI: And then, they found me sitting there, just...
 MARIE: ...accepting your fate
 MEI: Yes, yes... and I don't talk, I don't talk anything...I just "oh, look at this, so beautiful, look at this river, bla bla bla". So different in China then kind of getting kind of inspired and they kind of notice me they start to ask me question and it's interesting when I give them my answer I make them happy
 MARIE: Okay so you change their mind
 MEI: Yes, they really, so really, very happy trip on the road, like 17 hours... even longer when we arrive in our hotel because the driver he has some connections, someone in family open a hotel so directly bring us to there... so ok, if like this we stay here for one or two days at least. Like Helping you. So we stayed together in same hotel and uh... so... Chinese people like to stay in same group... like always... in chinese. And a... uh... we... we check in the hotel and went out for diner. But I really really feel so hard to stay with them because they BLA BLA BLA BLA so much, talking all the time and so loud... and uh... totally few I'm out... of this like... like... no connection with Now, with Present, like you arrive in new country and people around you they have different language, they have a different view to look at the life, they just different... try to not, to connect or something. No, they are just staying together. Exactly talking like ... what's next you are gonna eat, like the food, talking about the place they are gonna go all Chinese. Everything Chinese so actually they are in China
 MARIE: Yeah... like they are in Nepal but they are in China

MEI: And so loud talking and the food they choosing is like barbecue... it's like... oh my god, for me it's like a disaster... I can't, I can't deal with them. So I say... "sorry guys I feel... uh... I like you guys... and thanks for being all the way together but now I really need a rest, I want to be in quiet place". And they say "really?!? No, no go" and I say "Yes!" and then I left. On the way I was back to my hotel. I found... I saw a very small bar, very very quiet. This bar a very small bar. Just like very quiet only few guys inside and I feel yeah and it looks not expensive, for me it can be good place and I order like...uh... like... uh Dal... like the local food and then I just sit down and the next table, three guys, they ask me "where are you from?" and they very polite. "Excuse me, lady, where are you from?" and I say "I'm from China" and they say "Wow! you from China" and I say "Yes", and I was a little bit not polite because I just uh... have mind setting that for sure they were "nepalis". And I say... where are you from? And they say India.... (laugh) So... India... it's also a place I really want to go so... so... I feel a little bit interested, I want to talk a little bit more... so there is three guys so they say "here is one more seat, would you like to sit down", so when I waiting food, we are sitting and talking they just ask me a lot of question, then in the end, before the food come, they say "you are really a good girl... In Asia culture, uh... especially in our society, it's really really hard to find a girl like you. Like you are"... how to say... even you don't have a lot of money, you don't have money... you travel alone, you try to make business on the way to do something to survive and uh... they say "I'm brave and confident, really a good girl, with good heart... la la la like this". And they even secretly pay my bill.

MARIE: Oh my god, this is sooo nice

MEI: And they leave this contact

MARIE: Ok cool

MEI: They say they are from south India, they come here for business trip... they are computer programmers, they work for big companies and they work for some reason and tomorrow, they leave but they even say, if one day I travel to there... near their hometown I just need to contact and they will give me free living and they will give me what I need.

MARIE: My god, this is so nice

MEI: And these three guys... one is my father age, one is like older brother age and one is like my age.

MARIE: Okay

MEI: and they are really good.. like educated, good background. And it's like the first gift I got in Nepal...

MARIE: That's a good one, good gift

MEI: Yes... Maybe the second gift, the first gift was that I stayed with Chinese and I make them happy. (Laughs) So... and then... and then, I finish my dinner, I say goodbye to them, I went back to my hotel and then I find my group, they already went back so they sit like.. like... in the very big table for free public space and actually I really want to go back, take a shower and sleep. But they are sitting outside and they call me... "Come, come Mei", and then I sit down and I found 3 nepalis sitting there... musicians... there is instrument, they are ready to have fun, they have beer, they have weed. Like this. And me I'm the only one who speaks English there. They other they speak it but real communication, this kind of English, only me. So I don't know why... they start to ask me question... And I start again... and they say "wow... so good, you inspire me, this and that" so with this three guys I feel happy, like first time I meet similar people I lived before in Dali. This is the first time and we had a long long long talking. Just having fun, playing music, singing, just like this and in the end one I really feel exhausted. One of the guy want me to give him my Facebook, WeChat, phone number everything and he ask me "would you like to be my girlfriend?"

MARIE: (Laugh)

MEI: (laugh) So it's happen just like this, and I kind of make friend with them but no contacting later. Until now we don't have any contact.

MARIE: Ok

MEI: And then I stayed one more day. In the day time I forgot what I did.

MARIE: Visit, did you visit

MEI: I forgot what I did.

MARIE: That's ok.

MEI: So this night, I didn't sleep, when I just arrive, the second night, we went, in... uh... I really forgot...

MARIE: Durbar Square

MEI: No... I didn't go to any place. Anyway, in a like... sunset time, I went back hotel and meet the group again and... uh.. then... they say they want to go to bar, they say it's really cool bar. And I say Ok, but that's their standard, a lot of people means good. So I say ok, let's go what's gonna happen. So we went to the bar and then... because so many people, it's crowded, for them, it's they don't use to be in bar like this, it's so good. I mean like, even no sits... people performing, you can just be there, listening music, enjoying alcohol and people around you. But for them... even no sit is bad.

MARIE: So for them it's crowded but too crowded.

MEI: Yes, for them... so they left... so I become alone, just like this. So okay, I think I'm there... and I meet more people, like Nepalis young people, I don't know why they are so interested in me and ask me questions again and say... I want to be your friend. And then they ask me... where you want to go know... I say "I want to go to my hotel" and sleep. And they say... no no no please don't. And actually that time, I feel my my my emotion get high I really want to dance but this music too... is not for dance, so I say "If you can find electronic bar, with really good music I would like to go with you guys". They say yes, then we walk to another bar, this bar is really good music, and just.. uh... dance... I just start to dance and I don't know why, one of the guy who like most interesting me this gay boy... he ask me, do you want to leave, and then he show : "do you want to leave, do you want to leave... just let's go" So strange... then I say ok let's go. We leave phone number to each other. I didn't have a phone, card at that time. So I tell him, you just need to use WeChat then you can contact me or Facebook. Then we have the contact. And we want to come to POKhara so he keeps in contact with me until now, just yesterday I receive a message. And then, I finish with day in the second bar I went back to my hotel. My hotel is like a dormitory, and a girl, she stays with me, actually she is a mother and she work in Lhasa but her family is in Chengdu, Sichuan. So... she ... not really a problem but she feels like I could really inspire her... so she starts to ask me question again...

MARIE: So everybody asks you question... I ask you question... Everybody asks you questions

MEI: And so I start answer... more I answer, more she feels excited and sometimes, she sometimes jump out of bed... And she even tell me her job with her husband, her kids, her family... the stories when she was a kid and the stories with her mother and she has a really complicated experience about family thing cause she changed her family because the one like... uh.. parents they divorce... different... different... a lot of complicated things. But when she tell me, I don't feel it's a problem. I just tell her a more positive way to... to... face, to understand it... And she really feels so so so happy, and the second morning, euh.. they also want to change the hotel so we check out together and she says... I really want to pay for you, really really I want to pay for you for the hotel. And then I say ok... maybe I send you money later, I don't know why you have to pay for me... And I say thank you then I left. So... I don't sleep again but I spend awesome days.

MARIE: Good

MEI: Yeah

MARIE: What an adventure.

MEI: And then, the second day I arrived in Pokhara in like 8 o'clock and my friend he is waiting for me... I was so late and I didn't have a card so I didn't have connection... and uh... so he decided to go out to his friend in a restaurant. So... so... when I finally arrive from the restaurant to pick up me then go to the restaurant together, we had pizza. And then suddenly, the people around sitting are exactly the same people I met in my life. Like... I feel like my people, that feel so good. At the same time I couldn't talk... because so so tired. And then trekking...

M: Were you worried... that trekking was gonna be hard?

MEI: No... because uh... uh... the place I live before, the second community I live was in mountain... so I used to walk a lot. In the beginning I move there I really feel tired, I even go to town for shopping and come back it makes me feel exhausted because I carry... uh..., I don't know if you know that kind of thing, made from bamboo...

MARIE: Yeah Yeah yeah (she is referring to Doko)

MEI: You use like bag to carry that kind of thing because we living like the local people, trying, like that. So I use that thing. You go to the old town, then you get all the food, it's really heavy and then you carry it to take a bus and get down, and walk walk walk walk walk walk. Go back to home. (she mimics a person out of breath)

MARIE: Yeah... so trekking was just like usual

MEI: Yes, after half year, I get really used to living life in the mountain. And uh... we sometimes we go camping and uh... Uh... yeah

MARIE: So yeah... it was usual. And... so that was trekking... and you told me you want to a retreat centre. You went to

MEI: oh yeah... Vipassana

MARIE: Vipassana

MEI: Yes...

MARIE: Was it after the trekking in ABC?

MEI: No... after that I feel like I finally arrive in a place I can do my business. Ok. So I went to... I went around where I can find my fabrics...

MARIE: In Pokhara

MEI: Yes, like... the first day... I came back, I have a rest and then I start to walk around to get my information like the way I will find a local market, where I can find good fabrics and make more nepali things... and there I got the information, the second day go check... and here, here, here. And after all the trekking and finally find something I need, I bought fabric and make design and a. I found a taylor shop, I found 2 taylor shops that make different kind of clothes. And also at the same time I also hand sewing by myself... So I made some clother and then I send back to China. And at the same time, this days... I fall in love with a guy... yes... in the same hotel

MARIE: Okay, a guy from Nepal?

MEI: France

MARIE: another guy from France

MEI: Yes, and a... his name is Thibault and I really like "Fuck... what happen, just fall in love"... And he says the same... Because that days... we spent a few days in festival here... Straight festival... like always crowded, a lot of people in this street... a lot of people... everyday. And the big big biggest day, we went out together, also with another guy, he has friend together, he has company. They are skatter, they are surfers... they are doing this kind of this also they design skatepark and made by themselves. It's like really close to my energy. Also I love this kind of things. Also they have very good connection with nature, and we hike together one day to the tukpa (stupa); So we just like to spend days together. Really feels good... like three people become a small universe.

And the day we went to this festival and they say, also we spend new year and Christmas together... so it's like so special our time together. And then... one the street so many people, we are a little drunk and I was sitting there have a rest a look at people go around and he just come and start to kiss me and it feels so good. And need it, I want it, and we start like that. And now... it's complicated.

MARIE: Where is he now...

MEI: He is supposed in the mountain... near to east of Kathmandu.

MARIE: Langtang?

MEI: I don't know... because he lost his wallet so he needs to wait a few days in Kathmandu to get a credit card. Something like this. After that he go trekking. Actually, he and uh... another friend they could trek together... They did half around Nepal, and because of some reason, they come back to Pokhara, and that time I went to Lumbini and I made actually I supposed to Lumbini to India but exactly that time I made decision during Vipassana I want to go back to Pokhara for another business. Without meeting, talking, chatting, we both come back... we all come back here at the same time... so we meet again. Then they decide want to be alone in the Nature to trek... uh... so... Jasper left first and then Thibault... uh... They want.. euh.. they were in the nature trekking for ten days and come to some day they will meet again. Maybe someone go back home. Money running out anyway.

(Laughs)

MEI: So it's like this.

M: Wow. How was the vipassana?

MEI: Vipassana in Lumbini... uh... it's so good, I want to do it again...

MARIE: Do it again... In India?

MEI: Uh... maybe Myanmar... uh... how to say... it's ten days course but the first day, one day before it's for you to preparing ready to noble silence. No talking, no any contacting, like this

MARIE: for ten days?

MEI: Yes, and then one day also preparing for get out of the noble silence, talk again to have connection with society, so like eleven days. And uh... uh... during this stay, like... uh... like in the morning you wake up early... like 4 or 4:30 and then meditate, and then breakfast, and then meditate, and then lunch and then meditate and then breakfast, then tea time, then breakfast, and then discourse and then meditate and then go back and sleep. Ten days like this, everyday. So the first two days was like... (long silence)... really hard... I sit... my leg painful my back, my everywhere painful and I start to doubt... "why I come this place again". Like, this doubting again come. Like why do this thing. I do this thing, I feel so hard, I want to give up. And then after the discourse, they explain you why you do this thing, how you could observe yourself by this... How you could accept the situation and then after explaining I feel I want to continue. And then... everyday just different. It's like a cleaning, like you are... you are... a person wear a lot of clothes. Always wearing clothes even you forget you wearing so many clothes and then day by day, you take off one, take off one, take off one. and you are living a group together, so many people meditate but at the same time you are living alone because not allowed to talking. Not allowed to look at each other. Not allowed to have cell phones, reading, writing; drawing... no... nothing

M: Was it Nepali people ... or...?

MEI: Uh... few nepali girls and the others are from different countries.

MARIE: Wow

MEI: And I even meet a girl who was, we met before in a community I stayed with. A Russian girl, but we couldn't talk. (laughs)

MEI: And I meet a Chinese girl there. She is really near to my hometown... really near, near, near. But she works in Hong Kong, she is like of a very high, you know... not PhD...

MARIE: Yeah like high

MEI: And she works in bank and good salary, good life in city, and beautiful future that kind of situation... maybe like you... I don't know... Anyway, we had a really talking the day after we finished because she... uh... she missed her flight... Not she missed... the flight delayed or cancelled of something. She stayed and I decided to go to take my bus to come back to Pokhara so we had together one day in the day time. So we just walk in the park of this, like... everywhere there is monastery, so beautiful and just so good together. And we spent one day... and we become... I really feel like we know each other previous life. Something like this. And then she just flight back to Hong-Kong. It's also crazy, just come for Vipassana and go back to the work again. I feel so happy to meet her

MARIE: This is awesome... this is great. What a life you are living.

(Laugh)

MEI: I don't know it's travel... Everyday like travelling. Life is a long journey...

MARIE: Life is indeed a long journey. So now... have you had... have you heard about your Indian visa?

MEI: I'm waiting because last few days was off days for embassy so... today continue again normally need five days. If they reject me... I don't know... maybe I will go to Myanmar or maybe go back China to Yunnan of maybe I will go to Africa... it depends because... this few days I will receive the new money of last month... If the money is enough for do something... You know it depends on that. Or I will find some other way to do something. Anyway. 20% I want to go to Yunnan, other I want to go the rest... India, Myanmar, Africa... we will see. Egypt

M: Egypt is beautiful but it's a little dangerous right now...

MEI: Okay.

MARIE: Yeah... It's a little dangerous

MEI: This is this one thing I really need to learn... is to know more about... like... some area... some relationship between other countries... what happen there. Some basic kind of things because I never, never care about this kind of news.

MARIE: Okay

MEI: Totally out of that so...I'm like an idiot about that kind of thing

MARIE: Nepal is... Nepal and India is pretty safe... I'd say it's safe. Well if you need a list of country that are safe to travel and that are beautiful and you find beautiful people, and great thing. I can give you a list

MEI: Cool

MARIE: So how long do you think you are gonna keep travelling? You don't know you have no...

MEI: Because these days, I stay in Pokhara for business and uh... uh... it's... it's... really really possible I... I... with them have a deeper deeper cooperation so they are from Cachemire... so it's possible I go to there

MARIE: Oh to Cachemire

MEI: Yes to know deeper into the technical and the material to know all the process on how they make all the things

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: And I could do something it's learning first and study for myself

MARIE: Yeah

MEI: And then second I could design something new because they... there is the things.. like you know Cachemiri they are selling the things always same same. I mean it's new

everytime but it's same same the traditionnal way... the way to think to make things so it's it's really... possible I could do something

MARIE: So go there to learn the fabric of Cachemire

MEI: Everything to know the fabrics and the... maybe I could design something better or more like... have connection with modern life and different society for fashion for China, like... yeah... for them to have better life

MARIE: to make connection with China with the people in Cachemire

MEI: They... They have shops in China already, it's a good condition but they selling very original design, original traditional things so like it's different culture if... only people who like this kind of things or they love to experience huM... exotic culture... the beauty they will buy this things for good quality. But I want something more into like connect... the... the ... the design, to the people's life

MARIE: So they can sell more?

MEI: Yes

MARIE: They make better business

MEI/ And also I heard something, these days... uh...uh... I make new design so I need taylor... so the guy in the store his name is Asif, he introduce me to a tailor I could go to his place I could use the machine, everything and if I need help on sewing he could help me so I was few days every day go there. Actually today I will go to place again

MARIE: I'll be curious to go with you

MEI: But Uh... this ... this tailor his name is Manju he is not here this day he went to Kathmandu but I could go to his place... but... so... I... I... I see that there is culture is like woman never work for... for earn money only men do it but I see man they really some people under pressure. And some people they have good income but have some problems like... they are... they belong to the India part

MARIE: Yes

MEI: So they have really really intense relationship with the government, they... uh... uh...how to say, like really complicated, like at the same time... for me I make friend with them, we also make business together, we help each other and uh... uh... I feel they are my family. In the beginning I see like Ok we come for business and then day by day I feel it become friends and now I even feel they are my family

MARIE: So you want to help, so they teach you and you teach them

MEI: Yes... I would like to go into more but I same time I still feel like I don't know... I'm not sure because I have something else I want to do... something else is calling me like music or like... spiritual... how to say practice... language culture... more things so couldn't make decision now. It's impossible. And... uh... uh... and actually I teach them Chinese these days because now most of the customers are from China and the sellers in shop... young guys, they don't speak a lot of Chinese we got an idea when I just arrive in here second day. Say you come here teach for one hour Chinese everyday for students and then in the end, everyone pay you one thousand five hundred, and I think cool, I think at least I can make money and we help each other. It's so good. and I did... and I finish some few days ago and yesterday they pay me ten thousands. They supposed to pay me six thousands but they pay me more. And then... I feel like WHAT?!? Anyway let's have a talk. "Why you give me more money? If I don't accept the reason I'll give back the four thousands". So and I design three... I wanted to design more like a small collection but the time not enough and a lot of conditions support me to do this so I only made three. I give to him and if it's... if he will produce the clothes and selling, and then I get my profit from the selling

MARIE: Ok...

MEI: Just like this.
 MARIE: You are doing very good for yourself... It's nice to hear about your experience. Have you done any paddling on the lake, paragliding or anything in Pokhara that tourists usually do?
 MEI: No, just trekking, business, make friends with local people and people like you like travelers... uh... just like this
 MARIE: And a little bit of climbing yesterday
 MEI: Oh... YES! this kind of things
 MARIE: Did you like it?
 MEI: I like it so much
 MARIE: Yeah, yeah
 MEI: I want to do more... I feel happy meet you... Yesterday, you know like I kind of everyday when the day finish I always think back like... wow... I meet this person or I made this kind of things so what I am supposed to learn from this things or what... why I am here I find a reason because I meet you or I... something like this. I always find to look back and do this kind of things...

(interruption)

MARIE: And do you... and do you ever like think going back to China and work there?
 MEI: Recently I had a long talking with a friend... she is like... in the beginning I am in Dali, we became best friends, really similar to me... same situation, similar background and we both love design, we both love cloth, we both like love like music, arts. We both love travel we both trying to get more and more open minded people. Everything same, same. She married one and a half year ago with a guy which is also a very good friend so she moved to Taiwan for one and a half year and now she moved back to Dali and she kind of separate with her husband because they marry not really for building a family, they marry just for trying in living together in Taiwan as a project so she get visa, everything... they marry.
 MARIE: He was from Taiwan
 MEI: Yeah... he is Taiwanese and now she is in China, we have same same idea about future. About career path. I want to have my own studio to really living a common life but really work on the design. So... and the place I can choose will be... can be anywhere... but at this moment I will say in Yunnan. It's the only place I really... in China... I enjoy so much. So it will be there. But exactly she tell me she will... she.. at this moment same same and she is there right now. So... like... if I am alone, I would choose the place... if I have such friends there... of course I will go back but in the future. I don't know when I finish my travel.
 MARIE: Well especially if you go to Cachemire and you learn new ways of making clothes and fabrics and stuff like... You can totally start your own line and be successful with a line that is... I would say... cosmopolitan
 MEI: I don't know this word
 MARIE: Cosmopolitan
 MEI: It's like fusion...

ZHAO

Marie: Where are you from?
 Zhao: Chengdong, do you know?
 Marie: No, I have been to Ningbo and Yunnan, only. So how long have you been traveling?
 Zhao: Two months
 Marie: Two months
 Zhao: yeah
 Marie: Where did you start you travels?

Zhao: In Myanmar, Sri Lanka and India and then Nepal
 Marie: And after you are going back to China?
 Zhao: Yeah
 Marie: Are you on a break now? Is it a gap year? Are you working or studying?
 Zhao: Maybe working... I don't have money left.
 Marie: Is it your first time traveling outside of China?
 Zhao: No.
 Marie: When was the first time? First travel?
 Zhao: First? uh... abroad or in China?
 Marie: First trip in China
 Zhao: It was Tibet
 Marie: How long did you stay in Tibet?
 Zhao: One month
 Marie: How did you go in Tibet?
 Zhao: By train
 Marie: From Chengdong.
 Zhao: Yes
 Marie: And what did you do in Tibet?
 Zhao: Traveling, it's very very beautiful, I like the lakes, yeah, very very good.
 Marie: Did you go to Mount Kailash?
 Zhao: ...
 Marie: The sacred mountain for Buddhist...
 [>R5]: What's the mountain's name?
 Marie: Kailash? That's ok, no problem. So, you went to Lhasa?
 Zhao: Yeah, yeah.
 Marie: Did you visit everything?
 Zhao: Lhasa, Lhasa is not good.
 Marie: No, why?
 Zhao: It's just a city...
 Marie: You like, you don't like city?
 Zhao: I like mountains, lakes...
 Marie: In Tibet, did you travel, buses, car?
 Zhao: By car
 Marie: Like jeep
 Zhao: And I ride a bicycle
 Marie: Cool
 Zhao: Just in the city
 Marie: And so that was your first trip?
 Zhao: First yeah
 Marie: In Tibet?
 Zhao: Tibet?
 Marie: Xinjiang
 Zhao: Xinjiang?
 Marie: no, no, no Tibet
 Zhao: Yeah
 Marie: How old were you?
 Zhao: Twenty-five
 Marie: No but how old were you for this first trip?
 Zhao: Oh, twenty
 Marie: And now you are twenty-five?
 Zhao: yes.
 Marie: And so, after your trip in Tibet, what other travel have you done?
 Zhao: Other? Yunnan
 Marie: Where did you go in Yunnan?
 Zhao: Dali, Lijiang, Kunming, Shangri La, Deqen. and in the South, Xishuangbanna. Just South of Yunnan
 Marie: Where there is the tea?
 Zhao: Yeah, the tea area. And Hekou, it's a small city, near the Yunnan (it's the closest border from Kunming to Hanoi)
 Marie: How long was this trip in Yunnan?
 Zhao: From north to South, from Kunming to Ho Chi Minh.
 Marie: You went to Ho Chi Minh?
 Zhao: Yeah
 Marie: This time, so you visited Yunnan
 Zhao: Yeah
 Marie: and then after you went home?

Zhao: No
 Marie: What did you do?
 Zhao: I went to Cambodia
 Marie: So from Yunnan to Cambodia. Did you go through Viet-Nam?
 Zhao: From Kunming to ... Cambodia
 [>R5]: (this is Wang Lili) It's the same way I took (Kunming, Lao Cai, Hanoi)
 Marie: And so, Viet-Nam was your first country, first country abroad?
 Zhao: Yeah, it's my first country abroad.
 Marie: Was it nice?
 Zhao: Yes, very nice, I like!
 Marie: Good experiences?
 Zhao: Yeah
 Marie: And then you went to Cambodia?
 Zhao: Cambodia, yeah
 Marie: And you went back to China?
 Zhao: No, I went to Malaysia and then back to China
 Marie: What did you do during this trip? Do you go trekking? Bicycle?
 Zhao: I flew back to China.
 Marie: But you take the bus in this trip?
 Zhao: No I fly.
 Marie: So now it's your second big trip?
 Zhao: No.
 Marie: What did you do after?
 Zhao: Laos, yeah.
 Marie: How long
 Zhao: Ten days and Thailand twenty days. And Indonesia ten days.
 Marie: What was your favorite country?
 Zhao: I like them all, they are all very different
 Marie: Yeah, and did you, do you go to the beach?
 Zhao: Yeah, I have been to the beach.
 Marie: What do you do at the beach?
 Zhao: I can't swim (laugh)
 Marie: (laugh) And so now your trip is Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal. Do you fly also?
 Zhao: Fly
 Marie: Myanmar to Lao? To Sri Lanka?
 Zhao: Yes, fly and from Sri Lanka I flew to India, from New Delhi I flew to Nepal.
 Marie: And so, what did you visit in India?
 2 - 10:37 > 15:37 [Voyages hors Nepal]
 Zhao: A lot of places...
 Marie: How long did you stay in India?
 Zhao: One month.
 Marie: Did you like India?
 Zhao: I like India
 Marie: Was it hard?
 Zhao: Hot?
 Marie: Hot
 Zhao: Very hot
 Marie: But was it hard?
 Zhao: A little
 Marie: Why?
 Zhao: The traffic is very bad and India, its very dirty.
 Marie: Do you think Nepal is like India?
 Zhao: No, Nepal is good (laugh) . But Indian people are very good, like Indian people. They are good.
 Marie: Do you feel welcome in India?
 Zhao: Yeah, yeah, very welcome
 Marie: Can you name the place where you have been?
 Zhao: Bangalore, Chennai, Goa, Mumbai, Udaipur, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, New Delhi, Amritsar, Dharamsala, Varanasi, Agra
 Marie: You did that in one month? Oh my god? This is so much. Did you take the train?

Zhao: Train, train, train, yeah
 Marie: Which one was your favorite?
 Zhao: Favorite? I like them all
 Marie: What was Goa like?
 Zhao: I feel like... Varanasi
 Marie: Why?
 Zhao: I just like it I don't know
 Marie: Ok, did you meet the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala?
 Zhao: Yes, he is very old
 Marie: Did you talk to him?
 Zhao: No I just see him
 Marie: Are you Buddhist? you are Buddhist?
 Zhao: No.
 Marie: But I like buddhist things, I like Buddha but I'm not buddhist.
 3 - 15:37 > 19:57 [Travel in Nepal]
 Marie: And in Nepal, how many days?
 Zhao: Maybe one month more
 Marie: So where have you been in Nepal so far?
 Zhao: Kathmandu
 Marie: How many days did you stay in Kathmandu?
 Zhao: Two days, I don't like Kathmandu
 Marie: Why?
 Zhao: It's very dirty, like in India.
 Marie: And after Kathmandu? Where did you go?
 Zhao: Gorkha, Gorkha
 Marie: How long in Gorkha?
 Zhao: Two days
 Marie: And after that?
 Zhao: Lake nath
 Marie: Nice,
 Zhao: Yes, very very nice ! Very beautiful
 Marie: Did you go to Pokhara?
 Zhao: Yes
 Marie: Do you like Pokhara?
 Zhao: I don't like Pokhara. I just stayed in Pokhara one day then go.
 Marie: After Pokhara, Lumbini. How long are you going to stay here?
 Zhao: Five days, until today.
 Marie: Oh, you have been here five days, you think you are going to stay more?
 Zhao: Maybe, I will stay here for ten days
 Marie: Really? What do you do in Lumbini?
 Zhao: Just sleep and eat (laugh)
 Marie: Did you visit the temples?
 Zhao: yeah, yeah. It's one day, one temple (laugh)
 Marie: It's a good pace. Do you want to go to Chitwan?
 Zhao: No, I don't want to go to Chitwan.
 Marie: Why?
 Zhao: A lot of people in Chitwan
 Marie: And what about Bardia? Bardia National Park? Like Chitwan but no people
 Zhao: uhhhh... (he absolutely wants to see where this is)
 Marie: It's there
 Zhao: Is there a bus to Bardiya.
 Marie: I think you can go to Butwal and probably get a bus to Bardiya
 Zhao: oh. I want to go there

YUXI

Marie: So you are from Yunnan?
 Yuxi: Yeah
 Marie: And you have been traveling for two months?
 Yuxi: yeah
 Marie: So where have you been traveling?

Yuxi: I go to... first... this travel I just traveled with my friend. Before she traveled in Yunnan... when she arrived... Nujiang. It's near by the Tibet. Nujiang, it's long way it's like Dali. And so, from my home I take the train to Kunming then take the bus to... to Liuku (Préfecture autonome lisu de Nujiang, chef-lieu, Liuku). She stayed in Laomudeng (village north of Liuku). They have... charge... so they... it's small town, and even no bus go there. So, they just go... the bus just goes. This is Liuku, first I come to here then just get going, the bus just go this way... no bus go there. So I have some maybe... some people go there so I take the bus to go there.

Marie: You took like a small bus to go there?

Yuxi: Yes, a small bus but it's not easy

Marie: And so how long did you stay in this place?

Yuxi: I think uh... maybe four days... Three days or four days yeah. We stayed in a guest house. They are Nu (ethnic group)

Marie: Nuzhu?

Yuxi: Yeah, so we are staying there and then we had... the kitchen is free ... very old style with the fire. It's very good and they have some special alcohol, it's different, it's called... Xiala

Marie: It's like an alcohol?

Yuxi: Alcohol, it's a different alcohol... very different

Marie: Like local made

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They put some oil, it's tea oil with some... sometimes with chicken or sometimes with... I don't know how to say. And almost... when the chicken is dry, then they put the alcohol. Oh! first time they give me... then "NO! I'm drunk! I cannot drink, that". But when I drink, ok, it's ok, it's not very strong. It's good, it's good for the women (laugh). It's very interesting and they always drink. They are happy I think, very happy... yeah, yeah, yeah

Marie: And after that where did you go?

Yuxi: After that, we go to... to... Bingzhongluo. Also, in the Chinese bus again because it's not always good and they have a river, the Nujiang, yeah. We just followed the river. And we go to Bingzhongluo. It's near by the Tibet, almost.

Marie: What did you do there?

Yuxi: We stay in Bingzhongluo around, maybe one week because no bus to Tibet. Also, it was new year, Chinese New Year so we just stayed in Bingzhongluo.

Marie: You just stayed there, cook, sleep?

Yuxi: yeah yeah

Marie: Did you visit around?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah and also before, they had a movie it's Dalamu... I think they also have an English name

Marie: The movie?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but it changed a lot. Because of the movie we go there (she looks into her travel diary for the name). They name maybe the English name, Dalamu.

Marie: That's the movie you wanted to...

Yuxi: I always do that... watching movies

Marie: You watched this movie during your trip? Or this is the place you want to go?

Yuxi: No, no I watched this before then I go.

Marie: Have you... The Darjeeling Limited it's a really good movie (I saw she wrote it on her book). This is a French movie...

Marie: Yeah, yeah I think

Yuxi: L'amant d'un jour

Marie: Yeah yeah.

Yuxi: I already watch these movies

Marie: Your hand writing is beautiful.

Yuxi: Thank you.

Marie: So, you went to this place because of the movie Dalamu?

Yuxi: Yes, yes. Also, it's another way to Tibet.

Marie: So, after that place you went to Tibet?

Yuxi: Yes, it's not easy, no bus, no car, even in Tibet. But the first time we arrived in Tibet... (happy) "We are here" but it's also Chinese New Year, in Tibet also they have the new year so... on the street, nobody... for me I think. It's always no big city. Every city and every town had just one street so when we went there, no shops were open, just maybe one or two, or one of two restaurants open. On the street, Tibetan people they just sit down on the street and they have very new coats because it's new year but no anything. Also, there is the police...

Marie: The police and that's it.

Yuxi: Yeah

Marie: So, you were in very remote area, very... just far away...

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, yeah... so we couldn't even find a bus, because no bus go anywhere. So, we just find some place and say "Oh, maybe we stay here". And also, we met a guy, he just... he hitch-hiked with... his dog and he was staying in that place for one week.

Marie: He was hitch-hiking?

Yuxi: He was hitch-hiking, yeah

Marie: Did you try to hitch hiked before?

Yuxi: Before yes...

Marie: It works well?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, in Tibet and also in Xinjiang, it works very well. But in the city, I'm not sure, I think no. Because in Tibet, always... they say if you walk in the road, they will stop and ask "Where are you going, what happen?" And they will take you to...

Marie: Nice. And uh... you stayed in the village for how long?

Yuxi: No, no, no, we just find a place then we go the restaurant to eat some food and before we just ask the Tibetan people... "Oh, we want to go to the next place «Do you have a bus or if there is some bus just let us know". And then when we finished, then we come back, one guy come to say "oh, now there is a bus but they go that place maybe you can go together". Then we got in the bus.

Marie: Bus

Yuxi: Car, car... it was a car.

Marie: You had no idea where they were going?

Yuxi: no, no, we knew where we were going so get in the car and go but... if... the car go to the top, it's very dangerous because de snow is high and they had two car and it's kind of very dangerous, it took us two hours to do two hundred meters because of the snow (she is looking for a picture in her phone of her jeep stuck in the snow). Even my friend said she was very scared and she thought maybe I don't need to go this way but... So, they have two cars, two men and two women and one driver in the car, we all went outside and the car go this way but... so... so... we pushed the car with our bodies.

Marie: And where did you go with this car?

Yuxi: uh... that place is called Bituwo and then we go to Zo Gong, it's a city in Tibet, it' a big city.

Marie: It's a big city

Yuxi: Yeah, it's a big city. Before when I go to Tibet, it's just one street, now they have a lot of street... there is more street.

Marie: So, you have been to Tibet more than one time?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, this time is my third time going

Marie: So, you really like Tibet?

Yuxi: Yes, yes, every time I go there it's different.

Marie: So, from Zo Gong? Where did you go after that?

Yuxi: First, the city, wait I also don't remember. First, it's Bingzhongluo in Yunnan... the city is Chawarong, they have the road. Then we take the car... it's kind of hitch-hike I think... kind of and Chawarong then we want to go to Bituwo, it's a bigger town... maybe it's a town not a village... but, but, but... but for the car also, after, because on the mountain, on the top, they have snow, after that, even, after that it's not good

Marie: The road is closed?

Yuxi: Yeah! Yeah, yeah... and the road is not good and one of the travelers says he is kind of scared because of the strong wind and also on the top, just, you don't know, sometimes we can't even see the road. It's difficult so they change for another guy, he is older so he has more experience on this driving.

Marie: Were you scared?

Yuxi: It's ok, maybe for me it's ok. So... but... because it's dark so we just arrived in a small village so we think, maybe it's too dark... we don't want to stop here but maybe we have still forty kilometers but we say... "no, we don't go"... So, we just ask the people "where can we sleep?" And because this is not... no tourist, no guest house, people are just... young lady, she just takes us to her home and also, we stay... because it's new year and, when we go to her place, we stay, it's "Lamatin" I don't know how to say but people are dancing

Marie: Like a festival in their home

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, yeah. After that we just go to her home because we don't have dinner, we eat some food from her home and stay. Her home is very big but she says they don't have electricity, no water, nothing, even no toilet

Marie: really?

Yuxi: Yeah, always when you go to Tibet or some... normally they don't have the toilet, just near by the house. They always... outside the house

Marie: Like in Nepal?

Yuxi: Nepal it's ok... they have toilets

Marie: In the mountain it's outside. So, you like traveling in the country side, did you go to Lhasa?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah sure, after that. We go to... Because it's new year, the holiday so they don't have the time to go to Lhasa so they go back to Kunming, they are from Kunming. Me and my friend, we just take a bus... I think and the driver is from Lingzhi. We take the car the driver is very good, his name is Tashi. Before many... we find Zho Gong to Bayi. I don't know how much but after that, he says: "If you want to go to the next place, I have to go back home" so he didn't charge us. Just free to go there. he is very nice. We take his car around two days because it's a long way.

Marie: How long did you stay in Lhasa?

Yuxi: No, after... before, we also go to a very small village, small town because one of my friends, she works for the government so we go there to visit her.

Marie: What does she do?

Yuxi: She works for the government for five years. It's good, we eat some food, he cooked for us, after that we took the bus to Shannan it's the bus is ninety yuan but, on the road, you see very beautiful, it's very... and my friend say "it's just ninety yuan, it's very good". Also, we go to "Samye", it's the first temple in Tibet, yeah, yeah, we stay there maybe two days after that we go to Lhasa. When we go there, my friend says: "Ok, it's very..." So, when we go to Lhasa, because she has also been there three times so, when we go there, my body remember this place. We know where we should go. It's almost like is hasn't change a lot.

Marie: Your body remembers all the good places to go?

Yuxi: yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah... We stayed in Lhasa maybe seven days, I think, maybe seven days.

Marie: Did you like Lhasa?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, yeah...

Marie: What do you do when you are in Lhasa?

Yuxi: Lhasa... every day when we wake up, we just go to maybe... Dazhao Si (Jokhang Temple), it's a temple very important in Lhasa. Every day, people walk around. We go there to... maybe to... just, they have a lot of small street and go to eat. And don't know what we do... But if... the time in Lhasa is... is, I don't know how to say?

Marie: Slow?

Yuxi: Very slow... if you stay in a place, you just do nothing, just walk around, you will feel... "ok... what should I do? I should do something... I cannot do that, I cannot do that." But in Lhasa, it's ok...b

Marie: Where do you stay in Lhasa, do you stay in guest houses or hotels?

Yuxi: Guest house, yeah, yeah

Marie: Is there a particular area in Lhasa that you like... for where you have a lot of young travelers or... is there a special area?

Yuxi: Special area?

Marie: Like for backpackers?

Yuxi: Yes, I think. There are some, but not like Thamel, not like Khao San... no! It's everywhere... yeah...

Marie: Is there a lot of young travelers in Lhasa?

Yuxi: I think, maybe during some holidays, it is more crowded... so far for the winter not too much but for the summer holidays, it's a lot. But, but, for the winter, because... uh... for another place, the people... in Tibet, they just come to Lhasa to...

Marie: For... uh... uh... religion?

Yuxi: religion?

Marie: For like, pilgrimage, going to the temple and...

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah... a lot of that... it's quite different in Lhasa...

Marie: So, it's your third time in Lhasa? I want to go but I can't

Yuxi: Yeah, for foreigners it's also difficult, foreigners cannot go to Tibet. But before, we see sometimes there were from Nepal to Lhasa.... But just Lhasa

Marie: Yeah, it's not possible to visit.

Yuxi: Now, it's changed a lot, I think Tibet for the village because government gave people a lot of money to make the house similar... because the government pay. And the road, they gave people a lot of money...

Marie: And you don't like it?

Yuxi: I think it's not a good idea, yeah, yeah... they just give people the money and the people do nothing.. drink a lot

Marie: They drink a lot...

Yuxi: yeah...

Marie: So, after Lhasa, what did you do? So, you stay seven days in Lhasa

Yuxi: Yes, around that. Then we take the bus... the bar to Jilong (Gyirong, frontière népalaise) and then we come to Kathmandu.

Marie: Was it your first time in Nepal?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, for me it was the first time

Marie: Was it the first time you go outside of China?

Yuxi: No, no

Marie: What other countries have you visited?

Yuxi: Before... I went to Thailand, yeah... and also Indonesia. Yes, I think this... now it's my third country I think.

Marie: And in Thailand and Indonesia did you go as a group travel or did you go as a solo traveler?

Yuxi: No, always by myself...

Marie: Do you like traveling by yourself?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah

Marie: Do you like group travel?

Yuxi: I don't know, I'm not sure, maybe, maybe I don't like. But for this travel, this time I always travel with my friends, different friends. I think... before I just travel with one friend. She... she is older... she has the same age as my mom so sometimes I don't like her... always... I think "oh! you are too... too..." I don't know maybe for me. But after that I think maybe... I think maybe next time... I can travel with my mom... I think...before I would think "of course I cannot travel with my mom", we are very different, I always work, you maybe "oh... too hard! Too tan!" But maybe next time I will travel with my mom, if she wants...

Marie: When you were little, did you travel with your parents?

Yuxi: Not too much I think, not too much. Just two or three days... I think it's not travel

Marie: Why? Your parents they didn't want to travel or... they didn't like traveling?

Yuxi: I... I don't know for them because when I travel outside she always asks me, now where are you? So, I say, Nepal, and she says "What are you doing in Nepal? Why you go there? Where is Nepal?". Even in China when I go to Tibet or when I go to Xinjiang. She says: "Why do you go to Xinjiang? Why?". And I say... I don't know... ok... she also... didn't travel a lot. I think she even has never traveled...

Marie: So how did you... how did you learn to travel?

Yuxi: euh... ok... I think... I don't know... before maybe watching TV... maybe from there.

Marie: Watching movies...

Yuxi: TV... TV shows... some people they travel a lot then you see the world is quite different. Also, for my first travel by myself is from Yunnan to Tibet to Lhasa, hitch-hike

Marie: Hitch-hike

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah... because before I watched a TV Show. Its name... It's a guy, two guys, they just hitch-hike from Beijing to Berlin, in Germany. Just hitch-hike so... I think it's from there.

Marie: And so you were like... I can do it.

Yuxi: Not sure... actually not sure! (laugh) The first time I was on the road I was not sure someone would take me. But after that it's ok.

Marie: How old were you for the first trip?

Yuxi: Nineteen...

Marie: How old are you now?

Yuxi: Twenty-six.

Marie: And so what was your first trip abroad?

Marie: Like outside of China?

Yuxi: uh... I think, maybe twenty-one...

Marie: You were twenty-one and it was where?

Yuxi: Thailand, Thailand.

Marie: How long did you stay in Thailand?

Yuxi: About two months

Marie: Hitch-hike?

Yuxi: No, no, in Thailand no...

Marie: So, was it summer?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, summer holiday, of course

Marie: So, every summer holidays, do you travel?

Yuxi: Yes, kind of...

Marie: And how was Thailand?

Yuxi: Yeah...

Marie: Do you like it?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, I like Thailand. It's amazing, it's good. But the first time when I do to Thailand, my English is not good so, I'm always lost, I just get lost, always. Even, sometimes around one a.m. I'm still outside, lost... I always. So ... yeah

Marie: When did you learn English, if your English wasn't good?

Yuxi: When I was in school but it was just writing.

Marie: Your English is good now.

Yuxi: But in school, it's just writing, we learn English for a long time but we never speak

Marie: So, did you learn English while you were traveling?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah...

Marie: like meeting foreigners...

Yuxi: Yeah

Marie: And how do you remember, it was maybe a long time ago but do you remember how you felt when you arrived in Thailand, to be in a different country... How did you feel inside? To not be in your country?

Yuxi: (laugh)

Marie: Was it like exciting?

Yuxi: Yeah, of course exciting

Marie: Like different, scary?

Yuxi: Yeah, but for me, I think... not really scary, just exciting... yeah, everything was wow!

Marie: So different... Was it weird not to hear people speaking Chinese around?

Yuxi: (Laugh), yeah.

Marie: And then in Thailand... did you travel... did you go to the beach?

Yuxi: Yeah, the beach... the North, yeah... yeah...

Marie: What did you like most in Thailand?

Yuxi: Most thing I like in Thailand? I think... I like it but most... I don't know... the beach is good also but I think the North is more similar with my hometown... I think that. Some part.

Marie: So not that different...

Yuxi: Still different, but similar, I can find some things just similar

Marie: And uh... so it was the landscape that was similar? Trees... and

Yuxi: Yeah

Marie: And what did you do at the beach... did you go swimming?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah... because before I don't... I don't care for swimming... I don't even know how to swim but when I see the beach, it's oh! (expression of marvel). It's the first time I see the beach... yeah... yeah... Because in Yunnan, we don't have the beach and also, I have never been to outside a lot so... it's the first time I see the beach

Marie: And the sea...

Yuxi: Yeah... and it's very beautiful... so... ok... but just no swimming, just stay on the shore

Marie: Did you learn how to swim?

Yuxi: No, no... but now I know. I don't have plan to go there but when I see it, it's so amazing... so I played in the water.

Marie: Did you go watch in the snorkeling?

Yuxi: No, no...

Marie: And were you... cause... you know in China, people don't like to be tan? So, did you?

Yuxi: Yeah... no... for me no... I don't care so... It's kind like, when I'm in Thailand, they also think I'm local. Always, always (laugh) ... It's like that. I never do that so sometimes when I go to the shopping or swimming... when I pay the money, they always speak Thai to me... so I always freeze and they speak English with me. It's work... sometimes when I go buy some food... they tell me how much and I just give them the money.

Marie: And Indonesia, what did you do? How long did you stay in Indonesia?

Yuxi: Indonesia, not too many, just twenty days because I have one month of holidays so I go to Indonesia

Marie: Was it winter festival?

Yuxi: no, no, just one-month holiday.

Marie: Did you go to the beach?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah... of course

Marie: Was Indonesia very different from Thailand?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, very different. When I first I arrived in Jakarta. It's different, just everywhere lot of motor-bike, motor bike, and even moto-taxi, it's... it's... different and they have a lot of Muslim. Yeah... it's... and it's very hot... and they dress a lot... and I think... "are you not hot?" Too hot...

Marie: So, did you do... beach in Indonesia?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, yeah... to Bali, in Bali also and another island nearby... very small

Marie: Like an island?

Yuxi: Yeah, very small island and it was an island they don't have the bus or the car even... just a bicycle. And every... it's very good I think.

Marie: Then did you know how to swim?

Yuxi: Yes, of course because before...

Marie: Where did you learn how to swim?

Yuxi: Before I work... I work in Guanxi, I think Yangzhou, near Kunming, before I work in a guest house so we have a small swimming pool but we would always go to the river and then I learn how to swim. And then, one day, I can swim, I swim a lot so I know. Maybe it's not good but I float.

Marie: I don't swim very well as well...

Yuxi: yes, most of Chinese they cannot swim

Marie: Really?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, a lot some people they can but most people can't.

Marie: Maybe if you live in the coast maybe you learn. In France, you learn it at school I reckon.

Yuxi: It's also like that in Japan. But for us... not required.

Marie: So, in Bali and in Thailand, did you stay in hostel or youth hostels or hotels?

Yuxi: Guest house... Also guest house.

Marie: Like sharing rooms, in dorms?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah... also in the dorms and I remember one day, in the dorm I'm in the upper bed and in the morning time, we are asleep, I hear some people say the ... earthquake, I hear some people say... earthquake then everybody gets up and go outside. Now when we go outside, it stopped and ok come back to bed.

Marie: It was in Indonesia?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, in Bali.

Marie: It was fine?

Yuxi: Yeah, it's fine.

Marie: And so, in the hostel you stay it was like international tourists, people from all over the world?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, sure.

Marie: How do you choose the guest houses? Internet, guide books?

Yuxi: Yeah, before in Thailand, I just go there to find a guest house but in Indonesia, because it was last year, I know some app, Agoda or Booking, I can search which one I want.

Marie: And Nepal?

Yuxi: Nepal

Marie: It's your first trip in Nepal?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah

Marie: How do you like Nepal? What's your impression in Nepal?

Yuxi: Always, when you are on the street, it's just smiles, Namaste, smile Namaste... always nice, the people is very good.

Marie: Did you like Kathmandu?

Yuxi: Yeah, for me I think I like Kathmandu but we... for me I think it's ok, people are just busy...

Marie: How long did you stay in Kathmandu?

Yuxi: Uh... because, I think in total, maybe... maybe more than ten days.

Marie: What did you do?

Yuxi: Before we just arrived Kathmandu, we were around in Thamel, go to some temples then we went to Pokhara. But next time when we come back to Kathmandu we will stay in Buddha stupa area... it's so nice. So, we think that we, even we don't want to come back in Thamel.

Marie: So, you stay in Pokhara, how long did you stay in Pokhara?

Yuxi: Pokhara, not sure... maybe one week and she go trekking, I met her in Pokhara (Fang Huan) before we know each other and then in Nepal she is also in Nepal and we met in Pokhara.

Marie: With the internet?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah... with WeChat. We got in touch by WeChat.

Marie: So, she went trekking, you didn't go trekking?

Yuxi: She was with another friend, younger than me, almost like her mom so they went trekking.

Marie: So, you stayed in Pokhara?

Yuxi: Yeah,

Marie: Where did you stay in Pokhara?

Yuxi: Lakeside

Marie: Do you know which area you go to?

Yuxi: Lakeside... Harvest guest house. Very clean guest house, they had hot water, very nice.

Marie: Was it in center point?

Yuxi: I think, it's also... It's also lakeside but if you walk to the lake, maybe around ten minutes, we couldn't see the lake but we could see the mountain.

Marie: How much did you pay for your room in Pokhara?

Yuxi: Room fee, because we are two people it's one thousand two hundred rupees.

Marie: Yeah, not bad... and what did you do in Pokhara?

Yuxi: In Pokhara, I think, for me... just... ok... I didn't do some special things

Marie: Just relax

Yuxi: Just relax... but we go to the Peace pagoda

Marie: Did you do paragliding?

Yuxi: No, for me no...

Marie: And uh... after you came here for

Yuxi: Yes, I came to Lumbini

Marie: How long ago did you come to Lumbini?

Yuxi: I came to Lumbini... For me it's the second time I come to Lumbini, before when they went trekking I came to Lumbini and I also stayed at the Korean temple. Around six days, then I just... I found another friend, we went to Tibet together. She just finished meditation, Vipassana.

Marie: Did you do Vipassana?

Yuxi: No, no, I think one day I will do it but not now... no

Marie: And so, you went back to Pokhara?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, we went back to Pokhara. We took the night bus... and it's local bus... and it's very interesting

Marie: How... why?

Yuxi: They tell us... maybe we will arrive in Pokhara maybe around next day at five a.m. but we arrive here at four a.m.

Marie: You arrived at four a.m. in Pokhara

Yuxi: Wow, it's too early. We say: "You say five a.m., it's four a.m.", The driver laughed at us. The driver drive very good and they always have a lot of people, just come and go... But it's ok.

Marie: So, you like Lumbini a lot?

Yuxi: I don't know, maybe I like...

Marie: You have been twice, you have been twice in Lumbini in the same trip.

Yuxi: oh... yes... also I have been to Pokhara, also twice...

Marie: Are you going to go to Chitwan?

Yuxi: No...

Marie: After that you are going back to Kathmandu. How long... do you have to go back to China?

Yuxi: Maybe I go back to China, before, maybe I think I want to do some volunteer in Nepal but now maybe I think I should go home.

Marie: Do you have work to do at home?

Yuxi: No, I just finished my last work.

Marie: So... after you go home are you... do you think you are going to keep traveling?

Yuxi: I don't know, I need to go home

Marie: Do you make some money on your trip; do you sell stuff on WeChat?

Yuxi: No, no. Yeah, some people they do that. Yes, yes, also they make a lot of money to pay for the trip. It's a good idea. For me... I just think I have... I think for me maybe not... I don't want to do that.

Marie: You have enough money?

Yuxi: no, no, enough but I think for me I cannot do that.

Marie: What's your job in China?

Yuxi: From my last, last job, I worked in a guest house, it's, it's... in Guanxi province, oh... you know, if you come back to China and you go to Guilin, so I think maybe you will go

to Yangshuo... you can go to the guest house, it means Yangshuo Sudder Street guest house because in India, in Calcutta, there is a street, it means Sudder street, they have a lot of backpackers because before the owner is a couple, the husband is from Jap... is from China and his wife is from Japan and they met in Sudder street, so that's why the name of the guest house is Sudder street. They had a very small, small swimming pool. Also, we also have the ... Welcome there. If you go to Yangshuo, you need to go there. It's quite different because... the owner is from Japan so sometimes the things are different from China so I like it a lot.

Marie: So, do you consider that... do you see yourself as a backpacker? Do you think you are a backpacker?

Yuxi: Yes, I think maybe... yeah

Marie: What does it mean for you to be a backpacker?

Yuxi: uh... I think, for me, just a bag and uh you travel a lot... and uh... not too expensive, not I think, just cheap. Very cheap, less money to travel a lot. I think it's quite different. Because for my friends, when they go traveling, they cannot take one backpack they are always with big suitcase... it's quite different... it's more local, close to the local people and... uh...

Marie: And so, have you had... like why do you like this type of travel, like traveling as a backpacker?

Yuxi: Why?

Marie: Yeah?

Yuxi: I think... why do I like? I think... it's... ok... I don't know

Marie: It's ok, it's ok... and uh... Is it important for you to travel outside of China?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah... also it's very important, very different!

Marie: Why?

Yuxi: Even before when I went to Thailand, I think because... in China I also travel, I also travel in China and also, it's also maybe one or two months, always like that. So, I think, I'm not a traveler a lot... I think for me I'm not a big traveler. But when I go to Thailand, it's different, everything is different. Different with China so I think, yeah... I need to travel.

Marie: Do you meet a lot of foreigners? Other travelers from other countries?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah...

Marie: Have you made friends with some of them?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah

Marie: And finally my last question.... Do you think traveling has change your life? Do you think your life has changed since you have started traveling?

Yuxi: Yeah... yeah.

Marie: When you go home, is your everyday life changing or because of an experience?

Yuxi: Yeah, yeah, I think

Marie: Thank you so much...

Yuxi: You are welcome

JIAHUI

Jiahui: So, I'm on record?

Marie: Yes

Jiahui: It's ok I don't mind

Marie: It's just so I can remember and talk to you more easily. So how long have you been in Nepal now?

Jiahui: How long?

Marie: How many days?

Jiahui: More than twenty days

Marie: What have you been doing here?

Jiahui: First I hike in the Everest Base Camp for fourteen days

Marie: Did you do that on your own?

Jiahui: Yes, no guide, no company

Marie: Wow, congratulations, so EBC, did you like it?

Jiahui: Yes, very much because I visit China, you know the Everest has three side, so two side in China and one side in Nepal so I went to the two sides in China and this was my last side in Nepal

Marie: Ok, cool. And then after Everest what did you do?

Jiahui: I went to Pokhara, I travel to Pokhara for three days and then here

Marie: Are you going to Chitwan?

Jiahui: No, no, because my interest is just, you know hiking, I don't know but the culture... just Buddha

Marie: so, like religion

Jiahui: Because I'm interested in this.

Marie: Are you a Buddhist?

Jiahui: No, but I really think some, it's interesting for tourist here. For tourist

Marie: Do you like Lumbini?

Jiahui: Yeah, yeah, yeah

Marie: Did you visit all the temples?

Jiahui: Not all, but most of the temple, just, not everyone, just to see, to feel something, take pictures. Every morning, it's very peaceful.

[>R5]: Is there a ceremony? (a third person comes to ask us about the ceremony)

Marie: I think the chanting ceremony is after dinner at six thirty.

Jiahui: Yeah, around five o'clock

Marie: You can go ask the guy. And so, you went to Pokhara as well

Jiahui: Yeah

Marie: What did you do in Pokhara?

Jiahui: Mostly, just relax, walk along the lake. I wanted to paragliding but the weather was bad, cloud so I give up because I plan to come again in November. But I think it's ok because I will be back again in November, some year, not this year. In November I will come again because I know that in November the weather is very very good.

Marie: You want to do trekking again?

Jiahui: Yes, for ACT hiking, just another

Marie: The Annapurna circuit? It's long right? Twenty days?

Jiahui: Uh... you can be shorter or longer, it's easy to...

Marie: Do you trek a lot in China?

Jiahui: Yeah...uh, I like trek but not very much... I think normal, I go every year twice.

Marie: You trek twice every year? So, you like trekking

Jiahui: Yeah, yeah

Marie: Do you trek a lot in China?

Jiahui: uh... not much, just uh... a little bit. You know, some places I like very much in the west of China, Tibet, Sichuan, Yunnan

Marie: So, you go trekking over there?

Jiahui: Yeah, yeah

Marie: Is it like Nepal or is it different?

Jiahui: Different because in Nepal such as EBC or... you can... have two or three hours you can have place to rest and stay but in China there is no such places of life. Sometimes you need to pack everything by myself

Marie: To be sure, yeah.

Jiahui: So, it's harder but for such kind of place may be wilder, more nature

Marie: In China

Jiahui: Some place is still

Marie: Do often travel on your own?

Jiahui: As a team, just a group

Marie: Do you do group travel?

Jiahui: Yes, yes, of course

3 - 06:41 > 08:21 [Backpacking/travelling]

Jiahui: Group travel is not just you know business, only business, we, we organize on the internet just ourselves. We just, you know, same package, same time and we go together

Marie: Is it an agency that you pay to?
 Jiahui: No, no, no, we are
 Marie: organizing as a group...
 Jiahui: Maybe one is very explorer in something and maybe when you same time, so we go.
 Marie: What is the website you organize that? Do you have a special website for that? What is the name?
 Jiahui: Muofan, do you know?
 Marie: I think I have heard of it
 Jiahui: It's very famous in China
 Marie: And with this website, do you only travel in China or also outside?
 Jiahui: China everywhere also. It's very wide, such as diving, just very little, I'm certified. I want to go... every time I want to go but I have no time. But I really like the Philippines. Really nice place
 4 - 08:21 > 13:27 [Voyages hors Nepal]
 Marie: So what countries have you visited before this time?
 Jiahui: this time?
 Marie: No like, what other countries have you visited outside of China?
 Jiahui: Just South east Asia because the visa is easy for Chinese people. I'd rather go to South America but it's very difficult for visa you know. It's a lot of trouble, not so easy and also traffic is not so convenient
 Marie: The plane?
 Jiahui: Yeah, so I'm just looking for time.
 Marie: So, you want to go to South America?
 Jiahui: Yeah, yeah
 Marie: which country do you want to go?
 Jiahui: Just... uh... Chili
 Marie: Chile?
 Jiahui: Yeah, Argentina and the South point, port? or what is the name? South, south, south
 Marie: Oh, so like, Ushuaia. The South part of Argentina.
 Jiahui: Yes, the South
 Marie: Near the Antarctica, near
 Jiahui: Just, ok...
 Marie: So, what other countries have you visited? In South-East Asia?
 Jiahui: uh... Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines and Laos.
 Marie: Have you been to India?
 Jiahui: No. Because I was... something they say it's very difficult to find a toilet.
 Marie: really?
 Jiahui: Yes, (laugh) so... I'm not ready to try... (laugh) but maybe after I'm ready, I will go.
 Marie: Uh... so what did you do in these countries?
 Jiahui: what?
 Jiahui: In Thailand, Lao, did you go as a solo traveler or did you go as a group as well?
 Jiahui: uh... almost as a some with the company of my friends, friends not group, some alone, because if the time is the wrong time for traveling usually it's difficult to find someone with you. So maybe when you travel you can find some friend to go together for a while and maybe separate and find new friends, it's very interesting
 Marie: Do you meet friends from China or from anywhere?
 Jiahui: Mostly China because I'm not good at you know...
 Marie: English? Your English is pretty good
 Jiahui: Maybe on one to one is much easier for me. I remember when I was in Vietnam. First, I met an English girl and we just pass the border from China to Vietnam but after Vietnam, she met her friends, they are four, when I join them for many people talking to each other and I could catch the meaning. Because... maybe...
 Marie: They spoke too fast?

Jiahui: Maybe speak too fast and some maybe local so it's difficult.
 Marie: And in Vietnam and in... would you say you are traveling on a budget... with a little money?
 Jiahui: Uh... very little money? like not spend too much?
 Marie: Yeah
 Jiahui: I haven't tried this, I always, not too much but for the basic living and for eating... just normal.
 Marie: Is it you first time in Nepal?
 Jiahui: Yes
 Marie: Did have any good stories about your travel?
 Jiahui: Good stories?
 Marie: Like what do you think about Nepal? Do you like it?
 Jiahui: uh... not so much special, because just uh... in... when I was in EBC, three dogs made a joke on me. When I was taking pictures of some very beautiful sunrise, sunset, I left my bag behind and three dogs came, I didn't know they took my bag very far away
 Marie: oh no...
 Jiahui: And so, when I finished the sunrise, I started looking for my bag... "My bag, my bag, where is my bag?" Most of my important things were in there, passport, money and my just something that I needed... small things and then, far away I see three dogs playing with something and I look and it's my bag's color so I ran there and uh everything is everywhere and just the money and the passport they didn't touch so you know... people and dogs are interested in different things.
 Marie: And so why did you choose to come to Nepal? Specifically. Have you read books, saw movies?
 Jiahui: No book, no movies, just the Everest and here (Lumbini). Just because the Buddha was born here so over the year I was very interested in these things
 Marie: Yeah,
 Jiahui: It's a part of culture and something about here is...
 Marie: thinking?
 Jiahui: Yeah, thinking... they teach you the thinking things in different ways. So yeah, I just feel it's a very good way and uh... so...
 Marie: So, you read about it in China, Lumbini and Buddha, about Buddha you read books in China?
 Jiahui: Yeah, yeah, I read books, just what he saying. Because you know it's modern, thousand years ago, yeah... something was chosen some things have been, just misunderstood by many many people and passed on generation from generation. So, these wrong things, you need to separate what's true from what is wrong.
 Marie: And uh... what is your general impression of Nepal? Your impression about this country?
 Jiahui: uh... People in very different level, some is very poor, some maybe still... uh... a little... not very rich but can be have a more relax life. Mostly I think uh... Nepali people is very warm and uh... Very calm, not in competition, in China, just as in China, because in China, people are very nervous, always nervous and in competition. Here, it's relaxed. even the poor people, they can accept the poverty.
 Marie: ok
 Jiahui: But people in business, I can also feel they are very, you know... angry money.
 Marie: In here too?
 Jiahui: Yeah... still in business, they always try to talk to you, they want to earn money.
 Marie: So, you don't like that
 Jiahui: No, that's not it, it's just, you know normal, people when they it's something they need it's normal. Everyone have needs, it's just I have a different feeling
 Marie: And, when did you start to travel?
 Jiahui: Start to travel?
 Marie: Did you travel as a kid?

Jiahui: Yeah... maybe just when I was five or four years old, my father took me to Shanghai, Hangzhou. This is in my memory, my first traveling, then when I was in school, I didn't have much time, then after I graduated. After I was working, I had my own money, it's just I'm proud, I'm proud.

Marie: So, you didn't do much traveling with you parents?

Jiahui: No, because my mother didn't want, she doesn't like to take the bus. So, my father, he liked but he doesn't have much time, so when I was a child, he also told... said he wants to go the river, Chang Jiang. My father always said he wanted to take a boat on the Chang Jiang river. But still now he hasn't done it. But this year, earlier, I went there before I stayed at home, my father told he wanted to do it.

Marie: So, you didn't

Jiahui: Actually, I'm different in my family, all my family, they don't travel much, just me.

Marie: And so how did you do it when was your first travel on your own?

Jiahui: In... uh... in 2010, it's very interesting because I'm doing international trade, my client from a country I forgot, we were talking, he said to me "Maybe it's not common in China but maybe it's common in foreign western countries to travel alone". He told me "people need to be traveling alone, at least once in his life, a long travel more than ten days". So, I was thinking about this then next... just in Christmas days, all foreigners are on holidays, so I had a relax time. So that time I take fifteen days traveling in Yunnan, alone

Marie: So that was your first big travel?

Jiahui: yeah, yeah, yeah. That travel is very... I felt very great and easy so I never stopped.

Marie: You never stopped? So interesting... was it hard to learn to travel?

Jiahui: No, no

Marie: it was perfect?

Jiahui: Also, in Yunnan, I met you know in Dali, I met a Korean girl, we travel together to Tian Shan and uh... after in Lijiang, Wu Tao Xia, you will go I think this time, will you? Hu Tao Xia, it's very famous hiking place in Yunnan...

Marie: The Tiger leaping gorge?

Jiahui: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Marie: I did it I think, three days.

Jiahui: I met two... because it's uh... it's Christmas time, almost only foreigner, one was German or one is American, just with them and finished (another girl from Germany comes to talk - R6)

[>R5]: Sorry is this yours... do you mind?

Marie: Oh yeah, yeah... no problem,

Jiahui: Who is your friend?

Marie: We just met today, she was staying at another monastery. She was staying at the Chinese temple. She moved, because you can only stay two days

[>R5]: Really?

Marie: Yeah

[>R5]: How was it in the Chinese temple?

Jiahui: I think it's ok, the hot water was very very comfortable (laugh), hot shower.

[>R5]: You have hot shower there?

Jiahui: Here no?

Marie: No, it's bucket shower

Jiahui: And hot water no?

[>R5]: No, no

Jiahui: In the Chinese temple, there is hot water, it's my favorite thing

Marie: So that was your first experience of traveling... and so what was your first travel abroad?

Jiahui: To Viet-Nam.

Marie: How long did you stay in Vietnam for?

Jiahui: Uh... because that time I... I travel to Viet-Nam and also Cambodia so, so... maybe ten days in Viet-Nam and uh... one week in Cambodia

Marie: Was it nice?

Jiahui: Yeah, very nice, in Viet-Nam maybe not because I'm not very... because the food, the food maybe... I don't like very much but in Cambodia, it's... I found something interesting in painting because the way to the... just many many paintings shop, I always go to visit and I wanted to learn and uh... after I was back, I learnt for some times, but not for a very long time. I will try for maybe when I have more free time, more relax. I like painting very much. I... even here I... uh... in Pokhara there is some painting shop. I would always stay for a long time.

Marie: Where did you stay in Pokhara what was the name of your hotel?

Jiahui: It was not on lakeside, it's uh... just near the lake and also, in a place there was many lodges so I was living here.

Marie: How did you choose your hotel in Pokhara? Online?

Jiahui: No, I just... I didn't search any information, I took the bus and take my bag and walk for a while and uh... I just feel, this hotel seems nice, I like, I go in, first one out of four and I choose the second one.

Marie: Ok, about that trip outside of China... do you remember

Jiahui: Yeah

Marie: How did it feel? Do you remember how you felt?

Jiahui: Yes, this feeling, I quite remember very much because in Hanoi, Viet-Nam capital, I feel very ... because I had just separated with the new friend and also, I wanted to go still... still go south to travel because this city is very crowded, many many people, bicycles everywhere

Marie: Where, which city?

Jiahui: Hanoi, Hanoi

Marie: Ho Chi Minh?

Jiahui: No, it's in the South, in the North

Marie: Yeah, it's it's Saigon

Jiahui: No, no, no Saigon is a beautiful city, just the capital, very big city, bicycles everywhere. In the street all there is, is bicycles and uh... just the... I don't know, I always feel more... if there is more people I feel more lonely. If it's just me, I don't feel lonely and everywhere it's the same feeling. So just in Kathmandu, the first day I arrived in Kathmandu, my friend in China asked me... "What's your feeling?" Actually, at that time I had the same feeling as I had in Viet-Nam... Lonely. Just I don't know, just feel the same... this is the same in cities so I have this kind of feeling.

Marie: How it feels to be outside of your country? How did you?

Jiahui: Exciting! Very exciting.

Marie: Was it very different?

Jiahui: Different?

Marie: From your country?

Jiahui: Uh... maybe just a little, not so much, not so much... still... I like to find some differences. And I want to travel in different cities just so you can feel the difference but it's difficult to find some difference. I always find that some familiar things. Maybe just in China, if you go west of China, in Tibet, there are big differences but if you go to Viet-Nam, there are much more, like I said yesterday, it's like China in the eighties. Twenty or thirty years back. Still in Kathmandu, I had the same feelings.

Marie: Same feelings, it's China, thirty years back.

Jiahui: Yeah,

Marie: Do you like to see that?

Jiahui: Not very much, just... maybe just me or it's a personal feeling, I don't like to let myself in very crowded city, with many people around and you don't know them.

Marie: Is that why you like Ningbo?

Jiahui: (Laugh) Yeah, yeah, I always tell my mother, oh... Ningbo is still too big, I want to move to more countryside.

Jiahui: Maybe I like more country and nature

Marie: Your parents, what do they think about all of your travel?

Jiahui: My mother cannot understand, they... she always thinks why I don't stay at home, where it's very comfortable, you can eat anything you want to eat, very comfortable life, yeah. She can't understand. Now maybe, when I... if I want to ask money from her when I was still a student, maybe it's difficult, now it's my money so... Now she just let me go but she can't understand

Marie: ok

Jiahui: My father maybe, he wants... sometimes I'm surprised, he will ask who are you going with, how many people

Marie: Is he concerned about your safety?

Jiahui: Yeah, this time I told him I was going abroad and I told him, "If I want somebody to go with me, on the way, everywhere there is people". So, he was surprised.

Marie: Do you tell them all your stories about traveling?

Jiahui: Sometimes, if they want to listen I will. Sometimes, they don't because it's a different...

Marie: Different... uh... what year were you born in?

Jiahui: Guess

Marie: Eighty-nine, eighty-seven? Nineties? In the eighties?

Jiahui: Yeah.

Marie: Eighty-six?

Jiahui: No

Marie: Eighty-four

Jiahui: no

Marie: Three?

Jiahui: no

Marie: In eighty

Jiahui: Yes.

Marie: So, are you what they call a Balinghou?

Jiahui: Yes.

Marie: What does it mean?

Jiahui: Balinghou, what it means?

Marie: Yeah

Jiahui: Just born from eighty to eighty-nine.

Marie: it feels like it's a special group of people?

Jiahui: Yeah, Balinghou, julinghou...

Marie: Jiulinghou is nineties, right?

Jiahui: Jiulinghou in seventies

Jiahui: You know maybe, every ten years, people have specific things.

Marie: So... do you think traveling has changed you?

Jiahui: Yes, much

Marie: how?

Jiahui: Just, uh... meet different people, yeah, they will change you a lot.

Marie: What have you learn about other people?

Jiahui: It's a sad story, you want to listen?

Marie: Yeah

Jiahui: I met a... like a big brother is... eight years older than me, we are in the same bus in Tibet, it's very... it was a very special time and special place, yeah and uh... we are similar in many things and some things we were very different. uh... and... he taught me many things, he changes my thinking in a lot of different ways. Because you are in... when you are the same, you can just be friend... or... when I called his name, I must call him "Brother", then you are the same, maybe you are doing interesting things and doing the same things but even if you do the same, the results can be different. You know. Just, so... something... in some way we are different. So, if you are not the same, you will think about it but when you are so much similar, some results are so far apart that it makes you think about it. So, he taught me much much, really! So, things always change.

Marie: So, you met him during your travel, on a bus in Tibet?

Jiahui: In Tibet, when we were... we were traveling from Tibet to Xinjiang.

Marie: It's a long bus, right?

Jiahui: Not bus, we rented a jeep. Four people as a group, we just organized because we need a jeep to travel so we rented one. That's why we met.

Marie: And do you want to do more traveling?

Jiahui: Yeah. I think I will not stop, yeah, there is many interesting places, just one by one, if I have an interest, if it's possible to go, yes, I think I will go. It's a life.

Marie: Is it possible in China to take a gap year?

Jiahui: Oh, gap year? Gap year, I read a book about that many years ago but in China, it's not common, many many people don't know about it.

Marie: Do you think you can do it?

Jiahui: Yeah... uh... I think I have taken it

Marie: Your gap year? You have done a gap year?

Jiahui: I think I will... in my mind I will regard this as my gap year, not one year because... you know between change. Because my gap year is maybe not... between graduation and work, my gap year is I got a job and uh... I always no it's not my interest and it was just to make some money and after some years I will stop. So, after three years, I'm looking for a new direction

Marie: Are you now looking for a new direction?

Jiahui: I found it!

Marie: What is it?

Jiahui: I don't know how to say in English, I just first tell you, I can find the word!

Marie: Is it still trade? Is it painting?

Jiahui: No, no, this is just a hobby.

Marie: Ok... well thank you, thank you very much for sharing your travel experience, it was very interesting

Jiahui: My pleasure

LINA & MING

Marie: The boss is Chinese, is that why you picked it? Because it's Chinese own business?

Lina: uh... yes. What time is your bus tomorrow?

Marie: Seven, it's early, I know. Are you going back to China?

Lina: No... (laugh), we don't go back to China, we are staying here.

Marie: You are staying here? How long?

Lina: Maybe two months, three months maybe

Marie: In Kathmandu?

Lina: Yes

Marie: Why?

Lina: We do some business here.

Marie: What do you do?

Lina: Selling many many things. Like bag and ring, and you know some stone and this, many many... You can see many Chinese people here.

Marie: Yes, I have, I heard the visa is free for you guys.

Lina: Yes, free, because one hundred fifty a day, free.

Ming: It's the same for you...

Lina: It's not free for you?

Marie: No, it's not free for ninety days it's a hundred dollars.

Ming: One day, maybe two dollars, about two dollars.

Marie: It's not that expensive, it's alright. Chinese visa is expensive for me

Lina: How much.

Marie: Last time I paid, three weeks I paid two hundred euros so like two hundred and forty dollars

Lina: oh!

Ming: oh! So expensive (laugh), to go to China, you just can stay three weeks.

Marie: I think you can stay two months but I had to go back. It's two months for tourism visa I taught in Ningbo

Ming: Ningbo Zhejiang

Marie: Yes, and then I went to Yunnan and then Taiwan for the week-end.

Lina: Are you a teacher?

Marie: Well, I'm a PhD student

Lina: PhD student?

Marie: Yes, so what have you done in Nepal? Where have you been, did you visit?

Lina: Yes

Marie: where...

Lina: Last time: Pokhara, Lumbini

Marie: Did you like that; did you go to Chitwan?

Lina: Chitwan no, but now I think it's very hot I think. And Lumbini, I think it's very very hot.

Marie: Where are you from in China?

Lina: Near Beijing

Marie: Near Beijing

Lina: Her city is near Hong Kong, In Guangdong

Marie: In Guangdong, ok. Did you meet there?

Lina: No, just here,

Marie: You met in Kathmandu, she also does business?

Lina: Yes

Marie: Cool, cool. Do you go back to China sometimes or you just stay here?

Lina: Yes, I will go back to China, we stayed here already one month. This end of month I will go to India.

Marie: What to do?

Lina: Business, medicine

Ming: Yeah first time we travel then we have to do business to get money and go on travel because we go out with a little money then we have to get more money for business like this mad, some handmaid things, some special things from Nepal and then we mail it to China and then to get money to support the next station.

Marie: So, you are like backpackers?

Ming: Yeah, backpackers

Lina: Yeah, backpackers (laugh)

Ming: Really poor, even we are really poor.

Marie: You don't have like a job in China?

Lina: Job, no

Ming: China, we have finish jobs, now, we go out

Marie: What, what did you say?

Ming: We have finish travel in China,

Lina: All China, finish, we have travel

Marie: You have finish traveling all over China, ok, ok. But you don't want to get a job in China?

Lina: No! Because if I have a job, I cannot travel

Marie: True. What's your name?

Lina: Liu Hang, yeah Chinese name

Marie: I'm Marie

Lina: Yeah, nice to meet you. The Bali boy gave me an English name: Rachel

Marie: I like Liu Hang, it's nice. Are you going to stay in this hostel?

Lina: Yeah, because it's cheap

Marie: I think you may find cheaper

Lina: Yes, next to if you come back, come here, no booking. Is it your first time come here?

Marie: No, it's my third. I was working in the Everest before, in Solukhumbu, you know the Chomolungma, Chomolungma.

Ming: Chomolungma... huge, big mountain, you were trekking?

Marie: No, I'm geographer... geographer

Ming: When you were here?

Marie: So, you want to go to Serbia?

Ming: No, it's very very small country but it's very very beautiful and the price is so low. Oman we always by air, and in Oman to change flight (speaking Chinese)

Marie: So where are you going in India next month?

Lina: I will go from Kathmandu to Delhi, New Delhi, first because the flight ticket is cheap. And after, I'm not sure because it's my third time go to India. I have been here there many many ways.

Marie: Where?

Lina: New Delhi, Jaipur

Marie: Just north of India

Lina: No, south India Chennai and Goa, Mumbai.

Marie: What did you do there?

Lina: Travel, travel, travel

Marie: Did you meet a lot of people there?

Lina: Yes, you know, Chinese people and Japanese, Korean, when we travel in India, many, many people look at us, I don't know why.

Marie: really?

Lina: I think maybe because we look different. their face look is very... how to say... their eyes are big and Indian people also looks like but our face is different (laugh). Our eyes are like this (she mimics the Chinese eyes) and eyes is small. Like the Nepali people say "your eyes look like a line" (laugh)

Marie: Your English is really good, I have to say

Lina: But we didn't go to the English class for a long time, in the morning I should go.

Marie: Don't you meet tourists from other countries or you just stay with Chinese people?

Lina: Yeah, Chinese people, you know many many Chinese people here. Even the workers, even the boss always speak Chinese. They want to speak Chinese.

Marie: But if you go to another hostel where dormitory with people from all over the world, you can practice

Lina: But, but, we stay here, we can meet more Chinese people and I can do "what business you do? What business she does?" And we can do business together

Marie: So, it's a place for business. Because everybody does business here? Even the boys?

Lina: Yes.

Marie: But then when you travel in India, you meet other backpackers from other countries?

Lina: India is... not so many Chinese people

Marie: So, do you practice your English?

Lina: Yes, I have to speak English in India and it's very hard to learn. Indian people speak English, is... how to say. It's so cute.

Ming: You know, you know, English speaking is three kind. One is American English, one is UK English, one is India English. India English you don't understand. I have been there before we learn English in class. It's not true English because you can't, you can't... you almost can't understand it's very, very, very fast.

Lina: Very, very "Sorry" (with Indian accent)

Ming: "Pardon" (with Indian accent). It's the most... "Pardon" always "pardon".

Lina: They cannot understand me and I cannot understand them.

Marie: So, wait I'm thirty but how old are you guys?

Lina: What?

Marie: How old are you?

Lina: 26

Marie: And you are?

Ming: 26, she is one month older than me. I just finished my birthday

Marie: Really? Happy birthday.

Ming: One week before.

Marie: Oh, oh. Did you do Cambei?
Ming: PARTY!
Marie: Where did you party, here?
Lina: At the bar, OMG!
Ming: You ever go there?
Marie: I have been, I have been at the OMG.
Ming: OMG is so high, maybe we can go there (laugh) The music band finishes in twelve o'clock?
Marie: The band finishes at twelve of clock?
Ming: uh... no, twelve pm. We can go there.
Lina: So, can you speak Chinese?
Marie: No, I know a few things "Wo shi faguo ren", "bu xihuan ladze" spices
Ming: oh... "ladze", pepper, spicy. Next time you can say "la jiao jia".
Lina: You don't like spicy
Marie: No, I don't. Well I like spices but in China it's very strong spices.
Marie: And all the boys there they do business also?
Lina: Yeah, yeah, everybody here does business. Because everything here is cheap. In China, it's expensive.
Marie: You can make money out of that?
Marie: Are you parents ok with you traveling?
Lina: Yeah, it's ok.
Marie: Do you smoke?
Ming: Yes
Marie: Do you want a cigarette?
Ming: I just finished Chinese cigarettes
Marie: I have Nepali, do you want Nepali cigarettes.
Ming: Nepali cigarettes? No! Every day I find a Chinese to buy the... to buy the cigarettes
Lina: What's this?
Marie: Candy
Lina: Oh.... thank you
Ming: CANDY!!! What's your name?
Marie: Marie
Ming: It's French candy?
Marie: No this is German, Haribo is German candy.
Ming: So, you will stay here for a long time, maybe one month, two months?
Marie: I have been here and I'm going back to Pokhara
Ming: To the school?
Marie: No, I have more interviews to do there. You are going to laugh, I'm actually doing my PhD on young Chinese tourists.
Ming: Your PhD is young Chinese tourists?
Marie: Yeah. So, you guys.
Ming: No, no, which age is for young? (laugh) Because we think we are young.
Marie: Well I have done interviews with Chinese tourists that are thirty-five.
Ming: Less than thirty-five,
Marie: around thirty-five and they are like you, like... no job, just traveling the world, making some money and then keep traveling, traveling as much as they can.
Ming: We do too.
Marie: I know that's why I'm doing interview with you because I think it's interesting
Ming: When do you come back?
Marie: April 18th
Ming: Maybe, we are not here, we are here. Because April 8th, we go to Lumbini
Marie: ok, how long are you going to stay in Lumbini?
Ming: Maybe one week, maybe ten days, maybe half months...
Lina: Not sure because right now it's really hot and the mosquitoes
Ming: It's just seven kilometers from India so it's really hot
Lina: But it's ok because I will go to India.

Ming: If you, if you want to know the young Chinese young tourists, no job, just for traveling, here is many. You, you come here because three days later, we had three friends here.
Ming: One went to India, one went back yesterday to Tibet. They have no job, the same as us.
Lina: We do same business, every day, we four girls, we go outside.
Ming: I can show you our business
Lina: Sometimes we buy some knives
Ming: Gorkha knife and jeweler and bag. Yesterday I sent on WeChat, (she shows me) this is jewelry diamond. I send this picture; all the thing is hand maid and it's very special because in China all is made by machine.
Marie: They like hand maid product.
Ming: And this, for the face (she sells Himalaya beauty product).
Lina: This is Himalaya
Ming: Himalaya, not medicine... just
Marie: Beauty products
Ming: This Himalaya product is from India but it's really popular in Nepal. So, I sell a lot on WeChat and someone...
Marie: Where do you sent it? In...
Ming: Post, post, post. We have the Chinese company that come here, just for Chinese... for the Chinese to post.
Marie: And you send everywhere in China
Ming: Not everything... some special things
Marie: Yeah, but you sell everywhere in China?
Ming: Yeah, everywhere. Because this app is for China, this is my friend right and one month before, she wanted to make a diamond ring, yeah? and then, to decide like this... so I talk to her and I made the business and now the business is finished and I sent the ring and she send the money to me. It's always like that, not matter jewelry, bag. They want to see the things so we go to the shop to take pictures for them and they say ok, they send money to us and then we post to China
Marie: Ok, you are business women?
Ming: No...
Lina: Not so good,
Ming: Not so good, because... you... if you want to have a good business, you have to get more and more people on WeChat and then you have to find a way to get people to add your WeChat and then. Because to build the business, we have traveled for one year.
Marie: You have been traveling for one year?
Ming: Yeah... so we have to get more people on my WeChat... because if I have more people, I have more business
Marie: Can't you sell on Tao Bao? Wouldn't it be better?
Ming: Tao Bao? No! Tao Bao... many things on Tao Bao is not true. You know.
Lina: Tao Bao is very cheap
Ming: Because the seller... you don't know the seller, who is it. But in my WeChat, you can know it's me. I can make sure my things are true. If it's not true, you can find me. But on Alibaba, some things aren't true and you can't find the seller. Because Chinese is one very market, if one product sells well, Chinese can copy, they can copy anything. In Zhejiang, you go to Ningbo, another city Yiwu, is the biggest market in the world, it can make everything. (speaking Chinese). One day, there was two million foreigners in Yiwu in the Zhejiang province. Foreigners, not Chinese. To buy things for their country. It's the biggest market, everything you can find. It's really fantastic (laugh)
Lina: This is crazy
Ming: This is crazy. They can copy anything
Marie: For sure but how is the quality though because it matters.
Ming: Sure, not good and some things from here is from Yiwu. So, you have to know these things, before you sell your product, you have to know who makes it. We have to know

the maker is from Nepal. Cachemire... cachemire, you have to know. We sell scarves, some handmaid but some are from China. They will make it there and sell it in Nepal. It's... you can't control but we have to know. But we...

Lina: Crazy Chinese! (laugh)

Ming: But some people sell the same things from Nepal on Alibaba. Some seller is here and they sell on Alibaba. Some buyer tells me... "oh... you price is too high and Alibaba is more cheap" so I say... "Just go to Alibaba". You go... no problem.

Marie: So, what are you going to do in Lumbini?

Ming: We go to the Chinese temple.

Lina: Nothing to do

Marie: Nothing to do? Just do nothing?

Lina: Because Lumbini is a very big temple and many countries have built temple there: Chinese, Japanese, Korean. These are Buddhist temples

Marie: Are you Buddhists?

Lina: I'm not Buddhist

Marie: So, what are you going to do there?

Ming: Well religion

Marie: But she is not Buddhist.

Lina: Nothing to do

Marie: Just relax

Lina: Yeah, there is nothing to do.

Marie: And you go to Pokhara?

Lina: Yeah

Marie: What did you do in Pokhara?

Ming: Buddhist, Buddhist

Lina: We just stayed near the lake and how to say...

Marie: Paragliding you did paraglide?

Lina: Yes, but...

Marie: Where did you stay in Pokhara? Did you stay in a hostel as well?

Lina: No, it's a small hotel, Chinese

Marie: Chinese as well?

Lina: Yes, yes, there is many Chinese people there. You know if I walk on the street, I say hello, hello, hello.

Marie: Well there is a place I don't see many

Lina: In Pokhara? Many Chinese.

Marie: I know but there is some place where it is more mixed. Like young Chinese people staying with young Americans and everybody mix up. Did you book the hotel online, how do you know about this hotel?

Ming: No, we always reach a place and we find a place to stay because on booking, some information is not true. If you see a picture it's very beautiful but when you reach the hostel it's not good so...

Marie: You just go with your bag and see?

Ming: We just, on booking check out the address, and we go see. We travel the style of Buddha. The style of buddha for everything

Lina: This is Chinese English

Marie: No, I understand the meaning. We will see tomorrow how it goes.

Ming: I like this thing.. I go... I don't like this thing.. no! It's the style of Buddha. Everything from heart and eye. I like these things no matter if it's good or not... I like, I do.

Marie: Maybe I'll go to Lumbini with you, I'm curious.

Ming: I'm not Buddhist still.

Lina: You can live in the Korean temple

Marie: In Chinese temple I can't?

Lina: No, you can't, only for Chinese.

Ming: You can go and see but you can't live, only for Chinese

Lina: You can eat and you can visit but you cannot sleep there

Ming: Korean you can, Korean is for everybody.

Marie: Why, is the Chinese only for Chinese?

Lina: I don't know

Ming: But I suggest you don't know... you don't need to know because Chinese is not open... not so open.

Marie: You are very open

Ming: The temple.

Lina: We have to go in the class in the morning at six o'clock, every morning

Marie: What for? What do you do?

Lina: I don't know. I always stay there

Ming: They have morning class and evening class, everyday

Marie: And you have to do

Ming: Have to do, have to do.

Lina: The Korean temple, you also have that but you cannot go, it's ok. It's up to you

Ming: In the Chinese temple we have the morning class and the evening class but when you... but for the Chinese temple for the Chinese you can sleep two nights for free but you have to join... you have to have the morning class and the evening class. You have to do it.

Marie: What do they teach you?

Lina: No teach you, they give you one book and you read and speak (they chant the sacred book) about Buddha.

Lina: Actually, I don't know

Ming: But it makes your heart calm down.

Marie: Quiet down

Ming: Yes, quiet down.

Ming: Talking to foreigners is really hard

Marie: Is it?

Lina: Yes, it's very hard because, you can guess what I say

Marie: I cannot guess what you are going to say.

Ming: You speak one long sentence for us and then we just half understand, half guess and then we connect. It's perfect.

Marie: It's how you learn, it's baby step

Ming: Yes, you learn littler by little. Some Chinese, maybe in... in... our mother and father, the older, they don't learn English so they speak body language. They just say: hello, bye, thank you, sorry.

Marie: Yes, I met a Chinese on the trek of Annapurna and he only said "ABC, ABC" and rush to the top.

Ming: Because you can say "Annapurna", you?

Marie: Yes

Ming: He can't only say "ABC ABC". They find a way...

Marie: It's really cute

Ming: Really cute yeah. They are very brave because they don't know anything, they don't know English but they go. They are very brave.

Marie: Yes, they are brave

Ming: We have never been to ABC.

Lina: Because I'm lazy

Marie: It's a really hard trek.

Ming: I want to go there.

Marie: It's so hard on the leg

Ming: ABC is the easy, the most easy because it's very step, step, step

Marie: I found the Everest is easier...

Ming: No, Everest is... easy... ABC is. Everest is the hardest

Marie: Everest? No, it's not, it was not so hard for me

Ming: You fly to Lukla?

Marie: Yes

Ming: The most dangerous airport in the world. I have read one year Everest two to three crash. And you know, one job for the people is... maybe this year maybe two or three crash, so then after... after you can go there

Lina: You know before a few days, a plane crashed in Kathmandu.

Marie: Yes

Lina: That day we were at the airport

Ming: We heard the sound

Lina: We see the...

Ming: Our friend went back to China so we went to the airport to say good-bye and then we wanted to go to the Temple near in Pashupati.

Lina: We just want outside and the big door to let the car slow down and we think it's their voice but when we go fifty meter we can see not so far from there, the smoke, lot of smoke. But first it was just, just smoke. But when we reach

Lina: after ten minutes, the news

Ming: Not the news, we were in the street, the ambulance and the police car... but it's... and then we go to Pashupati and we see the news and then we leave, we walk in the street, more and more ambulance go in the direction of the airport.

Marie: I have heard there is only four survivors, it's bad, it was pretty bad.

Ming: And two days before, we go say good-bye to our friend, we are afraid

Marie: Did you fly from China or did you go through Lhasa by bus?

Lina: Fly... fly...

Marie: did you already take the bus...

Ming: You know...

Lina: First time was by bus.

Ming: You know... Ledda... you know it's very, very... now I think I'm afraid.

Lina: This time I came by flight but it's how to say... it's late... it was late about two hours.

Marie: Like two in the morning.

Lina: No in the afternoon. The flight in Kathmandu was up in the sky circling around, it cannot land

Marie: My plane too

Lina: It was for two hours, it couldn't land.

Ming: Radar, radar. you know last months, last year, December thirty, I went back to China, to my home and when I reached my home, maybe three days later, the news said that the radar of Kathmandu is broken and it was broken for almost fifteen days but there was no one to fix it. And uh... plane fly without radar... so dangerous.

Marie: So, it's not your first time in Nepal?

Ming: No, its third, third

Lina: Yes, and it's my second.

Ming: Before... the first I came from Tibet come here by bus.

Marie: When was that? When was you first time in Nepal?

Ming: Last year, September.

Marie: So, you went through the land border, Rasuwagadhi? The border with Tibet

Lina: Yeah.

Marie: I have been there, the road is very bad

Ming: So bad!

Lina: You know?

Marie: Yes, I wanted to check out with the buses with Chinese traveler

Ming: Yes, yes, yes. You take the SUV and then you go, you almost hit the roof and you can't almost live... you know... we come from Lhasa to the border and for almost one day, we can't sleep because maybe about two days... three pm, we start to go to check in to get the visa. From three pm to another day at eight am.

Marie: So, you leave Lhasa at three pm

Ming: Yeah and the day after, at eight, you reach Rasuwagadhi. And we eat breakfast, take a rest. And after in the afternoon, we start and then we reach Kathmandu at twelve pm. It's almost three days without sleep. Two days you can't sleep. It's three crazy days. And very hot, very hot. The temperature is so high, there is no AC. It's almost thirty. When you reach here, it's midnight, take a shower and you go sleep. It's like a dream. And second time, from Nepal to India, I fly but I took the bus from India to Nepal. In Varanasi I took the bus at six pm and we reach Sanauli at 4am and you know, you can't sleep because there is no hotel.

After you have to wait 6am to make the visa and you have to take a bus three cars to reach Lumbini. oh! It' really cheap, it's just from Varanasi to Lumbini, it's just forty RMB. Seven dollars. If you fly here, it's very very expensive

Marie: You have been everywhere.

Ming: Fly there is one hundred dollars you know, so crazy. I can't sleep, almost can't sleep, you take to local bus, it's very very cheap. When I reach the Chinese temple, I slept the whole day

Marie: I bet

Ming: it's very funny (laugh) so now, I want to get more money, I can fly. I want to fly. So, you can see, this is the young tourist to travel. It's very crazy. Because if you want to fly from Lhasa to Nepal, it's very very expensive. Because from Lhasa, it doesn't matter if you fly where. It's very expensive.

Marie: Yes, I tried to fly to Lhasa but it was expensive and the authorities wouldn't let me

Ming: Because you have to make some tour. So many things you need to make tour because Lhasa and Xinjiang are sensitive area

Marie: Restricted area?

Lina: I don't know how to say... it's special.

Ming: So, it's the most sensitive in China, they are not open for the foreigner.

Lina: You can go but you need guide

Marie: Yes, I need a guide and a driver and that would cost me a lot of money.

Ming: You have to have someone to tour you

Marie: That would cost me a lot of money.

Lina: You can't go to Cachemire, this part of Pakistan cachemire, it's same as Tibet.

Marie: Yes, but I wanted to see Lhasa, Potala, all these areas.

Ming: It's very hard to go. You have to find someone that guarantee you and then you have to make some, some certificate because we have some area around Tibet and Xinjiang it's beautiful like Yunnan, Sichuan

Marie: Yeah, but Yunnan and Sichuan are not Tibet, it's just not

Ming: You can... I met two people from America in Yunnan and I ask them "you go to Tibet?", They say "no we can't go there", I say "Why?" they say "When we go there, we have to make some certificate, this and that" It's very hard to make. So, they go around because around Tibet and Xinjiang, some part is control by... there are some areas, the culture is same same and around the foreigner can see. Xinghai, Sichuan, Sichuan is around, you can try this

Ming: I think Lhasa is not the most beautiful.

Marie: But it's just that Lhasa is emblematic, Lhasa is myth, it's such like an old city, so important in the Buddhism.

Lina: It's like Jerusalem

Marie: Yes, exactly so I want to see Lhasa

Lina: Try!

Marie: I'll try

Ming: you can find a guy and yeah

Marie: I know I know but, in a tour, it's never the same. I like to travel on my own and meet people

Lina: Yeah! Yeah!

Marie: Traveling in group is not the same, like the experience

Ming: You are not free, no freedom.

Marie: It's like work.

Ming: It's no free. I never ever follow the group, I always, always sometimes, sometimes with friends, sometimes just me but no group

Lina: If I want to go to France, the group is easy to get the visa

Marie: Yeah.

Lina: With a group, you can easy get the visa

Ming: But you pay... you have to pay more money

Lina: Yes, because, they will take us to some shopping mall. You know Chinese people like shopping mall (laugh)

Ming: Some shopping is no ...

Marie: In France it's quite expensive like LV and Dior

Lina: But Chinese people like

Ming: They have two prices, one for French, one for Chinese

Lina: France is a little easy to get the visa

Marie: If you get the Schengen visa you can go to twenty-six country in Europe

13 - 53:14 > 55:37 [Pas de thématique]

Talking about where they can go in Europe with a Schengen visa

Ming: Because when you go to Iran, you can't make a visa to America

Marie: In Ireland?

Lina: No, no, not Ireland, Iran.

Marie: Yeah. You have to change your passport

Ming: Not only change passport, not only change passport

Lina: And this country also you have problem, how do you say?

Marie: Israel

Lina: Israel, also you can't go to America

Marie: No, no, no you can go to America after Israel, they are really good friends Israel and America

Lina: Sure?

Marie: Yeah. If you go to Israel you can't go to Lebanon, Malaysia and Indonesia I think.

Lina: Malaysia it's ok

Marie: I don't think I'm not sure, because it's a Muslim country so they don't recognize. It's like Taiwan and China, they are not friends

Lina: No! not like that!

Ming: Taiwan is one part of China ok?

Lina: Yes

Marie: Well, it's not what the Taiwanese say, the people from Taiwan they don't think like that

Lina: These are bad person.

Marie: Ok

Ming: Not good. China in international, Taiwan is a part of China

Lina: It's a very small province

Ming: But before they were control by UK

Marie: Taiwan?

Lina: No, no, no, no. Taiwan, Hong-Kong and Macao are China

Marie: That's not what the Taiwanese say

Lina: The people in Taiwan they always say "we are Taiwanese, we are not Chinese" but actually (They close the door)

Ming: Like Tibet before some, some... you know before. In India, in Delhi, there is one small piece is call Tibetan area (She talks about the Tibetan enclave of Manju-Ka-Tilla)

Marie: In Dharamshala?

Ming: No, not Dharamshala, Dharamshala is in Cashmere, it's almost Tibetan. But in Delhi, there is one small area

Marie: Like a land

Ming: yeah like a land

Lina: You know the relation is like India and Cashmere. People in Cashmere always say they are from Cashmere, not from India but actually now, Cashmere belong to India, a part of Cashmere belong to India and a small part belongs to Pakistan.

Marie: They want their own country?

Ming: So... when...

Lina: They also want to be a country but it's not possible

Ming: Not possible.

Marie: Why?

Ming: Because the international not allowed

Marie: Why?

Ming: No why...

Lina: It's only... but it's different to other cities in China. The government is different

Marie: For sure.

Lina: And the people, the culture, is very different many many things is different (she talks about the Tibetan).

Ming: We say that before Tibet, Tibet, many, many, many years ago, Tibet is a country but China... but Dalai-Lama... Dalai-Lama, before, they they so many Tibetan follow the Dalai-Lama to India, because Indian welcome so now you see in India some Tibetan there, some in Dharamshala, they will say that... I ask them. Because someone before from Qinghai, Sichuan, Tibet to there, they will speak Chinese, very traditional Chinese. And I asked the Marie: "Where are you from?", they say "Tibet". And I don't know before, I say "Tibet in Chinese" and they say "No, Tibet is Tibet! Not a part of China". So, I ask them "You have identity", they say "Yeah", I say, "Do you have the passport?" They say "yeah". I ask "Which country?" they say "India". But, but, but, in fact they didn't have the identity, they just have the passport.

Ming: Because in international you get which country passport, which people of the country but they, they... the Indian government gave them passport so they can go to other countries, that's all. But they don't get the identity of India

Marie: (I tell them about my friend whose parents are from Guangdong but she grew up in France)

Ming: So, she gets two passports?

Marie: no, in China, you cannot have two passports. In France you can have a dual nationality but some countries like South Africa or China they don't allow you to have dual citizenship. So, if you take the French passport, you have to give up your Chinese nationality.

Ming: But you know, in China, I always say, some Chinese they forget.... they give up the Chinese passport, they choose the American passport, I don't know why... Some artist gives up the Chinese passport, they choose the American passport. Maybe, I think the American welfare is good, I don't know why

Marie: Maybe because you can travel to more country

Ming: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You get to go to... Because if you take the American passport, you go to another place it's very easy. Because you can make the American the visa

Lina: Because America is a strong country!

Marie: Isn't China as well?

Ming: Because if you if you get American visa, you can go everywhere. It's very easy to go and you can go... (speaking Chinese). If you get the American visa you can get more than twenty visas for free, there is no need to pay like Japan, Korea. Some country finally, no need visa

Lina: Right now, for Chinese people it's like...

Marie: It's getting better, right?

Lina: It's very hard to get American visa and Europe, Schengen visa and Japanese

Marie: Is it because of illegal immigration? It's usually what they have visa for, to avoid people coming and working illegally.

Ming: Yeah, yeah, yeah working and staying there and not going back.

Lina: Yes! (Laugh)

Marie: The richer China is going to be, the easiest

Lina: If I'm rich I can do anything

Ming: So, so, so before, you know before some Chinese get married to American to get the green card and then before the American government said if you stay in... if you live in America for five years you can get a green card but now it's cancelled

Marie: Really?

Ming: So now, so many Chinese girl, they found American to get married, to get a green card is the first way to get American passport (laugh) So now, getting the American visa is more and more difficult

Lina: It's of, before I traveled in Thailand and I talked with an American boy, he spoke very very fast, I don't know what he said.

Marie: Ok, I'll be slow, slower

Ming: Your English is very good. English is the world second language. English is my third language because my mother language is Cantonese, my second language is mandarin, the third is English

Marie: How do you say Hello in Cantonese?

Ming: Lei ho. If you reach Guangdong province, Macao and Hong-Kong, they speak Cantonese. She lives in the North part, they speak English different than us because we are... our English is like Hong-Kong English because Hong-Kong is before controlled by UK so they speak English, is very British

Lina: (She gets pissed off at Safina in Chinese)

Ming: We learn the... have to... you would say "have, have". We learn to speak like in UK. But when you reach, when you are in India, India English is different (laugh), so now we translate English, they have two way to speak, one is American one is UK.

Lina: She always laugh at my English

Marie: Why? Your English is really good

Ming: No, no (laugh)

Lina: She always laugh

Ming: How do you say "thank you thank you"? Ask her...

Lina: "Thank you"

Ming: Say "something", "something"

Lina: (she gets pissed off again)

Marie: You have tattoos?

Ming: Yeah (laugh) I cut my hair in India, all my hair!

Marie: You shaved it?

Ming: Yeah...

Marie: In Varanasi?

Ming: Yeah (laugh)

Marie: Why did you do it?

Ming: I don't know, because I wanted to cut all my hair before I can't find a salon to cut all my hair in Delhi, in Jaipur and when I reach Varanasi I find a place to cut it

Marie: Was your hair very long?

Ming: Before here. (mid-arm), I cut by myself here (above shoulders), so long.

Marie: Why did you cut your hair?

Ming: I wanted to let it grow again

Marie: ok (we walk in the street to see the cat but she can't find it)

Ming: Because when...

Marie: Where did you get your tattoo?

Ming: This is peace (She has a peace and love sign in the neck). Syria. You know Syria.

Marie: Syria? In China? Cambodia?

Ming: No, it's a war of Syria

Marie: Syria, you went to Syria?

Ming: No, no, no, I saw the news because before I wanted to make this tattoo because, I can't find the people to make the tattoo, good people to make the tattoo before my friend made a tattoo and I see the news from Syria and I made this tattoo piece.

Marie: So, you made this in China?

Ming: Yes, in China. I don't want to make tattoo here because here it's so dirty, I think it's not good for tattoo. Here tattoo is very famous but the air is so dirty and the water is so dirty, yeah

Marie: I was here 2015 and 2016 for two or three months for my work.

Ming: PhD

Lina: PhD

Marie: Yes, wait let me google that.

Lina: French is that the Schengen visa?

Marie: Yes, Schengen visa, how much is the Schengen visa?

Lina: Really hard to get it you know Schengen, it's very hard to get the Schengen visa.

Marie: I think you have to go through an interview.

Lina: It's not so expensive but it's very hard for us because we don't have jobs

Marie: (laugh), I don't know, we will see. So, what other countries have you visited?

Lina: Only Asia, Vietnam

Marie: Vietnam

Lina: Yeah, Vietnam, I always forget how to say... Cambodia, Lao

Marie: And you didn't do business there?

Lina: No just travel

Marie: Why?

Lina: That time, I had a job so it's a very short time for travel. And go to Thailand, Thailand, India. that's all.

Marie: And when did you decide to travel, like quit your job.

Lina: A year ago

Marie: A year ago and why, why did you quit your job?

Lina: (laugh) I don't like... that time I work in Beijing before, you know it's a very big city, same like Shanghai, Hong-Kong, how to say, I don't know how to say. You know every day work from morning to evening. It's very boring.

Marie: What kind of job did you have?

Lina: To sell house, work in office

Marie: You sold houses?

Lina: The job, how to say, if you work hard, you can get more money

Marie: Money isn't everything

Lina: Yeah, I don't like.

Marie: So, you travel in China for one year?

Lina: No, no. That time I always... I already finish.

Marie: Are you just the two of you? Are there other people sleeping here?

Lina: No, just two (speaking Chinese)

Marie: You sell stuff on Tao Bao?

Lina: What?

Marie: You sell you jewelry on Tao Bao?

Lina: Not Tao Bao... WeChat. Tao Bao, you know Tao Bao?

Marie: Yes, I know, I have WeChat, I have been to China, you have to have WeChat

Lina: Yes, yes... because we cannot use Facebook, Instagram and stuff. I don't want to use WeChat, and we can pay in WeChat

Marie: That's convenient.

Lina: (Speaking Chinese)

Ming: yeah! today I have finished my business today.

Marie: I see that you are learning English...

Lina: Yes (laugh)

Marie: I saw that. Since I have been here, I have seen three or four people from China with the same book all the time

Lina: Yes, RTC but this is not good because when the teacher speaks English, we cannot understand

Marie: Really?

Lina: Yes, we cannot understand and we talk talk in the class.

Marie: Where is the teacher from?

Lina: uh... Chile

Marie: Chile?

Lina: South Africa, uh... no, no, no South America

Marie: Ok

Lina: Yeah, Chile, the country.

Marie: What's his name?

Ming: America, this is South America!

Lina: Because, she was married to a Nepali man.

Marie: So, she lives here, yeah. Your English is really good.
 Lina: No, not good.
 Marie: I have met a lot of Chinese since I have been here, a lot of them cannot say a word in English so your English is really good
 Lina: It's because we travel for a long time. It's my first time, first time I went to Vietnam
 Lina: The first time I went to Viet-Nam, I cannot speak English, oh my god...
 Marie: You don't learn it at school?
 Lina: Yes, we learn, but we don't speak, yeah (speaking Chinese) In France, everyone can speak English?
 Marie: Everyone can manage English, I speak better English than average because I studied in the United States
 Lina: Oh...
 Ming: Your mother language is French, yeah?
 Marie: Yes
 Ming: But your second language is English, yeah?
 Marie: English and Spanish
 Ming: (speaking Chinese) Why is the second language is Spanish?
 Marie: You know in Europe it's a lot of little countries, right?
 Lina: Yeah
 Ming: Yeah
 Marie: So, in school, we have to learn three languages
 Ming: Three languages... so maybe, some, some, another... not the three language is French, English or Spanish. You can choose
 Marie: Yes, well English is... you have to learn, have to! It's a good thing because you can communicate with everybody.
 Ming: English is international language
 Marie: And then... then you start a third language so you can choose from Spanish to Chinese to German
 [>R5] : And Japonese ?
 [>Marie] : Japanese maybe. Usually people, because we are so close from Germany, Spain or Italy, they usually pick one of those but more and more pick Chinese. And I had a fourth language, I learnt Arabic
 Ming: Arabic? Arab?
 Marie: Arab... like uh... Syria, Lebanon, Middle east language
 Ming: Sa... Arabia. (speaking Chinese)
 Marie: You know Egypt? With the Pyramid?
 Lina: Yeah, I know
 Marie: That's the language
 Ming: I want to go this year, in Iran, Egypt
 Lina: In the Middle East
 Ming: Yes, the Middle East, I want to go to the Middle East.
 Marie: I speak the Middle East language
 Lina: Oh my god!
 Ming: Because we always, we always want the way from Nepal to India, to Dubai and go to the Middle-East, to the Turkey, Iran, Egypt and...
 Marie: Morocco
 Ming: Morocco is the in the Africa, we don't go there.
 Marie: Egypt is in Africa
 Lina: Yeah
 Ming: (speaking Chinese) Africa and... Colugo
 Marie: Collugia?
 Lina: Near, Yemen
 Marie: Near Yemen?
 Lina: Oman ?
 Marie: Oman
 Ming: Because in the... the first country for Chinese is no need to pay visa, no need to pay for the visa
 Marie: Jordan?
 Ming: Bushi, the name is very long in Chinese (on recherche le nom)
 Marie: Well, do you know the writer San Mao?
 Lina: Yeah, yeah,

Ming: Yeah!
 Marie: She lived in Morocco.
 Ming: Sahara chronicles
 Lina: Sahara Desert
 Ming: Because, first I have read the book the stories of Sahara.
 Marie: She lived in Morocco.
 Ming: The... the style of Morocco is very famous, very popular in China
 Marie: Yes, and the food is really good (still looking for the name of the country without visa for Chinese)
 Marie: IS there other people living there?
 Lina: This is the boy's room. And here is the girl's room. So here is Iraq
 Ming: Serbia
 [>Marie] : Saudia ?
 Ming: Serbia.
 Marie: Why Armenia?
 Marie: What are you doing tomorrow?
 Ming: Business
 Marie: Business
 Ming: Yes (laugh) everyday. Because, one Chinese friend here has a jewelry shop and just open, so every day we go to her shop to see her shop and take pictures and send it to the WeChat. And everyone to choose.
 Lina: Does she speak good English?
 Marie: So, you are going tomorrow? To your Chinese friend's shop. What time are you going?
 Lina: We go there early
 Marie: Everyday?
 Lina: Yeah,
 Marie: In the morning
 Ming: Maybe afternoon, maybe morning.
 Lina: Not... how to say... when we wake up, we finish breakfast and lunch eat together how to say?
 Marie: Brunch. You eat brunch.
 Lina: Yes, every day and after we go.
 Marie: What time do you brunch?
 Lina: Sometimes Chinese food, sometimes Nepali food.
 Marie: I bought that today, do you know that brand, "Biotique"?
 Lina: I don't know.
 Ming: In Himalaya shop?
 Lina: Is it good?
 Marie: I don't know
 Ming: (Speaking Chinese) Yeah, this for shampoo, it's new, new.
 Marie: What's your plan after Nepal? Where are you going?
 Ming: Maybe I will go back to China because I have something to do and after four months I go out. Because I have something to do in ... from June to, from May to August...
 Marie: What do you have to do?
 Ming: I have to go back to help my sister. My sister has one shop and because the world cup, football, and I need to go back home to help my sister.
 Marie: Because of
 Ming: Restaurant, it's a restaurant. It's really busy in the night. I have no idea
 Lina: The first time I go out of my country is when I Vietnam, Vietnam and Cambodia and Lao. I don't have friends in that country, because only travel for a very short time, but I travel in India for a long time so I have friends.
 Marie: How long did you stay?
 Lina: Two months, and I have been there twice.
 Marie: And why do you want to go to Armenia?
 Lina: I don't know, nothing to do. It's only a plan, I think I have to go. Only do business in Nepal and India.

Marie: You make money and you keep traveling. (long silence). When you were growing up, did you travel with your parents?

Lina: No, never, because my mom and my father they break up. And I live with my mother and my sister and my grand pa and grand ma. And my sister now, she is high school so my mother has no time for travel. But maybe next year, next year my sister will go to college so ...

Marie: She has more time.

Lina: I want to take her to Thailand. I like Thailand.

Marie: How did you... knew you wanted to travel? Did you always wanted to travel when you were growing up?

Lina: Travel?

Marie: Yeah, did you always wanted to travel when you were growing up?

Lina: Yeah... yeah

Marie: Was it hard, the first travel?

Lina: Yeah, it's a little hard, but it's fun. That time I was young, only twenty-three years old maybe in China, I forgot.

Marie: I'll be curious to hear about that. Maybe if we meet in Lumbini.

Lina: You are going to Lumbini?

Marie: I might, I never been. Join you there from Pokhara

Lina: Yeah, Pokhara to Lumbini, it will take you about, six... maybe eight hours. The road is very bad

Marie: I know, the road is bad everywhere in Nepal

Lina: And now is how to say, it's rainy season, so it's more bad

Marie: You don't like to wear a bikini?

Lina: No, I don't like because I'm fat, I don't like the sun, because it's, I don't know how to say... it hurt

Marie: Sun burn, when you get red. Do you go to the ocean? Do you swim?

Lina: No, I cannot swim, yeah.

Marie: Do you want to learn?

Lina: Yes, I want to learn

Marie: Do you swim?

Ming: I swim since five years like many people in my hometown.

Marie: You are close to the sea in Guangdong?

Ming: In my hometown, it is called the river city. So many small rivers. It's like a...

Marie: Like Venice, canals?

Ming: I don't know, the river is all connected and we have to learn swimming.

Marie: Like this city in Italy... Venice?

Lina: yeah

Ming: Yeah, yeah! They live in the river, they are just on boat, we live near the river, the river you almost can see the boat, just the water.

Marie: So that's in Guangdong

Ming: Yeah, but just in my city, because my city is in the countryside, not a city. In the city there is just the big river, there is almost no small river; and the water, you can, you can... water in the countryside. So, we have to learn swimming. If not... very dangerous because when I was young my classmates, when I was six or seven years old die in the river so...

Marie: Yeah, same in France, in school they teach you

Ming: My father teaches me, he threw me in the river. He just put me this side to this side and his hand hold me, just hold me and I just went. And I come around and ok, finish and he threw me in the middle of the river. Not long, in two days it was finished

Marie: It takes a few days

Lina: I'm afraid of water

Marie: Maybe if you learn how to swim you won't be afraid of water

Lina: I'm afraid of water but I like snorkeling

Marie: You like snorkeling? so you know how to swim.

Lina: I have a coach

Marie: oh, ok... (Deux autres filles chinoises arrivent, nous nous sommes déjà vu auparavant, elles me connaissent et pose des questions sur moi et sur ce que je fais ici)

Ming: You come here to work right?

Marie: Yeah, yeah, PhD you know

2 - 05:40 > 07:55 [Voyages hors Nepal] [Impression on other countries]

Marie: So, when you are in Thailand, you go to the sea snorkeling?

Lina: No, Phuket, around Phuket there is many islands to go

Marie: You get the sun in Thailand?

Lina: Yes, the sun is very big and Sri Lanka

Marie: You have been to Sri Lanka?

Lina: Yeah

Marie: When?

Lina: Last year

Marie: You didn't like it?

Lina: No

Marie: Why?

Lina: People were not nice

Marie: really?

Lina: I think it's not nice, it's ok but.

Marie: Where did you go in Sri Lanka?

Lina: Many cities, Columbo, Kandy, Mirissa, Galle, like this tour this city. People are the same like Indian

Marie: You don't like Indian?

Lina: Indian and like here, Nepali, same, same. They like Asian girls you know

Marie: Asian girls

Lina: Yeah. I don't know why, maybe we look different. And many people, they believe Hindu and you cannot wear short shorts but that time I didn't know so one day, with my friend we were walking down from the mountain, it's day time, afternoon, about three or six pm and two boys touched us

Marie: Did you just traveled in Sri Lanka?

Lina: I stayed in Sri Lanka more than twenty days.

Marie: Was there a lot of Chinese?

Lina: No, not so many Chinese

Marie: Is there a lot of friends from back home that do what you do?

Lina: No

Marie: No... (laugh)

3 - 07:55 > 15:55 [Backpacking/travelling] [Backpacking in China]

Marie: Why did you start traveling like that...

Lina: I don't know why... Just like...

Marie: For me for example, I started when I was twenty

Ming: Almost ten years ago

Marie: Yes, because I didn't like my studies and I stopped and I moved to figure out what I want to do with my life

Lina: Not so much story. First time I travel was four years ago

Marie: You started traveling four years ago?

Lina: Just stay at home, I had nothing to do, so I go outside

Marie: Did you study in university?

Lina: No, no that time, I had no job. I just finished a job and stay at home with nothing to do so... nothing... She always laughs at my English

Marie: Your English is good, I'm telling you. And so, what was your first trip? Alone

Lina: In China

Marie: Where did you go?

Lina: Gansu province

Marie: What did you do?

Lina: How do you say? I saw the stone oh Buddha (she refers to the Maijishan Grottoes near Tianshui) and uh... and I went

to the South West of China, in Sichuan, Guizhou... yeah... that. for one month.

Marie: Alone?

Lina: Yes, alone

Marie: Did your mother paid for it or you had money?

Lina: No, I paid for it, I had money

Marie: And why did you choose to go there?

Lina: When I was a child, I was young, I saw the Buddha, the temple, I wanted to go there, and you know the place is like when there is water, the town... in China we also have, south of China

Marie: Like Venice?

Lina: Yeah,

Marie: What's the name?

Lina: Wuzhen, in Zhejiang. It's not very far from Ningbo, it's a very very old town. I also wanted to go there so I finished my first travel. After half a year, I work in this city

Marie: What did you do?

Lina: Selling houses

Lina: yeah, with my boyfriend. And we go there. (she showed me picture)

Marie: I'd like to see

Lina: If you want to go there, it's not so good I think

Marie: Why?

Ming: Because we also see this

Marie: Because there is a lot of tourists?

Lina: Yeah, yeah, yeah

Ming: It's very famous in China

Lina: It's very very touristy and the ticket is expensive

Marie: How much is it?

Lina: 180 RMB, it's about thirty dollars.

Marie: So, after your month of travel...

Lina: I found a job, near, near and I start to work and we have long holiday in May and October so we went there with my boyfriend, only for two days, to travel, it's very small this old town

Marie: You work there for how long?

Lina: For about one year and uh... After one year, I went back to Beijing

Marie: Why?

Lina: Near my city, my mom doesn't want me to far

Marie: So, she asked you to come back.

Lina: So, I went back to Beijing and found a job but it was the same job.

Marie: How long did you have this other job?

Lina: Four years, from twenty-one to twenty-four, in Beijing

Marie: You made some money and go back traveling?

Lina: Yes

Marie: So, this is during this time that you went to Vietnam...

Lina: No, no, that time I had a job but selling was not so good so I had holiday, so I went to Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao, all by bus

Marie: All by bus from Beijing?

Lina: No, no, from Beijing to Nanning, Guanxi province, by train to see my friend and after from... from Nanning Guanxi to Vietnam and all by bus.

Marie: So, it was you first time outside of China, how did you like it?

Lina: Uh... I don't know how to say for the first time. I'm also afraid, I didn't know how to speak to English at that time.

Marie: At that time, you don't know.

Lina: I can understand you but I don't know how to say. Because you know Chinese English we always write write for the exam.

Marie: But you don't practice speaking

Lina: Yes, we don't talk. I buy the bus ticket. I ask her: "Give me a paper" and I write. I can write

Ming: If I can't communicate I use my body language. In, in, the, in India, I went to the hospital, I was sick so (she mimics coughing and being in pain) and they say "ok", it's enough, it's enough. You have to tell the hotel (she mimics somebody sleeping)

Marie: It's a good way to communicate

Lina: We go to the medicine shop, we don't know how to say... Because in India, the food is not so clean, so always... sick and lay down.

Marie: So, of all the travel that you did... what was your favorite country to visit?

Lina: Thailand

Marie: What about you?

Lina: Thailand and India

Ming: Nepal and India, I like India

Lina: India

Ming: India

Marie: Why is Thailand is your favorite?

Ming: No why!

Lina: Thailand is very relax country, you see many many foreigners in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, it's very very relax, the food is good, everything is cheap and people is good.

Marie: And in Vietnam or Cambodia, it was not the same?

Lina: Vietnam is also good but this time I stayed only one week in Vietnam and the people in Vietnam is not very friendly to Chinese. We have some history problem. And I remember, the first night I went to Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City, I booked already online and I pay already but they don't let me check in because... my passport... you know Chinese passport have old and new...

Marie: You have an old one?

Lina: No, I have new passport and the... a part of China, we write the line that is part of China but Vietnam think it's a part of Philippines maybe in the South ocean somewhere.

Marie: So, there is an island that is Chinese but they

Lina: But that's a problem and they don't let me check in.

Marie: You went to another hotel?

Lina: Yes, but that time is about eight pm at night.

Ming: Ok let's go to the jewelry shop?

Marie: Ok

ZIMO

Marie: So yeah... I don't know, I think it's really interesting that you have traveled a lot.

Marie: I just want to know about your travels, in general. When did you start traveling?

Zimo: Eight years ago

Marie: eighteen?

Zimo: No, eight years ago

Marie: After university?

Zimo: No... after university, I worked for two years

Marie: You worked for two years?

Zimo: Yeah, I worked two years, I made a lot of money...

Marie: Where did you work?

Zimo: At first, I worked in Xinjiang province, not a province, Xinjiang city, then I came to the Qinghai province, I show you pictures. (He shows me the picture) I loved that job, it was really nice.

Marie: What did you do?

Zimo: When I show you, you will know... (he shows me). More than a thousand sheeps...

Marie: You were a sheep shepherd... that's so nice! So, you were like keeping them together?

Zimo: Yeah... but not together they were free to go.

Marie: this is nice, I love this picture. What do you study in university?

Zimo: Engineer to make top buildings.

Marie: And how did you... why did you arrive in...
 Zimo: Yes... They just needed a person to collect this sheep.
 Marie: But it doesn't have to do anything with your studies?
 Zimo: Yeah... nothing... I like the job, I think I got this job five thousand Chinese money for one month, it's good, good money. And this is... and yes... uh... eight years ago.
 Marie: Ok, I really love the picture, really cool. And then you did that for two years?
 Zimo: No... only for two months or three months I think. And this is Egypt, Dhahab. I had no money
 Marie: When did you go to... Egypt... like... what was your first... did you travel a lot in China?
 Zimo: Yes, around China, yeah... except Hainan island
 Marie: Ok, but you have been everywhere in China?
 Zimo: Yes, everywhere!
 Marie: As a backpacker?
 Zimo: yeah backpacker.
 Marie: And so... when was that, eight years ago?
 Zimo: no... no, I live in Yunnan province for one year and Tibet... Tibet... for two years and traveling around China.
 Marie: Do you like to... to... stay in different places?
 Zimo: When I like the place, I stay... stay for a long time, three months, five months.
 Marie: And... when was your first trip outside of China?
 Zimo: I think it's Qinghai province.
 Marie: But Qinghai is China
 Zimo: Yeah, Qinghai is one... (he means his first trip)
 Marie: Yes, but outside of China? like your first country outside of China?
 Zimo: It's 2012...uh... first is Nepal... Nepal I think... then I go to Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Viet-Nam.
 Marie: It was the same trip?
 Zimo: Yes, it was the same trip.
 Marie: How long did it last? How many months?
 Zimo: Months? uh... six months, then I was back in China, worked for money, then I had money and I went to Egypt and I stayed in Egypt...
 Marie: Did you go alone?
 Zimo: Yeah and when I go alone but I meet three Chinese people in Egypt... uh... in Jordan and then...
 Marie: You went to Jordan?
 Zimo: Yeah!
 Marie: I lived in Jordan
 Zimo: You lived in Jordan... which place?
 Marie: Amman
 Zimo: Yeah, it's the capital of Jordan
 Marie: I studied arabic there
 Zimo: oh... you studied Arabic... so you can speak Arabic?
 Salam!
 Marie: Salam Aleikum !
 Zimo: I can speak a little Arabic, Arabic is really hard...
 Marie: Well Chinese is really hard too!
 Zimo: (Laugh) no, same, same... How many languages can you speak?
 Marie: Four, French, English, Spanish and Arabic
 Zimo: I want to speak Spanish because I want to go to South America
 Marie: You want to go to South America?
 Zimo: Yeah, because I like football, I want to go to Brazil
 Marie: Ok, well... but in Brazil they speak Portuguese but it's really close
 Zimo: Yeah... really close.
 Marie: So... you did that trip in South East Asia for six months as a backpacker?
 Zimo: Yeah, six months
 Marie: and you went back to China for... work... and then what did you do after? Egypt
 Zimo: No next trip, was... I think, at first... first station is Nepal.

Marie: Ten times you have been to Nepal?
 Zimo: More than ten times, I'm not sure.
 Marie: How long do you stay when you come to Nepal?
 Marie: Usually like, ten days?
 Zimo: Ten days, one month or three months, I'm not sure.
 Marie: And what do you do in Nepal?
 Zimo: In Nepal... I teach.
 Marie: A teacher? Like a Chinese teacher?
 Zimo: No... English teacher, I teach students. So, when I have no money, I go back to the sheep (laughs) ... sometimes I'm really poor. This is one of my best job.
 Marie: It looks like a really cool job
 Zimo: Yeah... good job with a good salary.

Marie: So, you have been to Egypt. How long did you stay in Egypt for?
 Zimo: Oh... it's a long time... I think more than three months
 Marie: More than three months
 Zimo: Yes
 Marie: Egypt and Jordan?
 Zimo: Oh... Jordan only one month because I only have a one-month visa... it's not possible to extend.
 Marie: So, you visit Petra?
 Zimo: Yeah... Petra and the Dead Sea and... I think the city's name is Aqaba, Petra and Aqaba and Amman
 Marie: Did you go to Israel?
 Zimo: No, because I can't get a visa...
 Marie: You can't get a visa?
 Zimo: No... for that time I can't get a visa, now I think it's easy to get a visa.
 Marie: And uh... so you went to Egypt, Jordan, and what other country? Did you go to Africa?
 Zimo: Yeah, that name is Eritrea...Eritrea
 Marie: Eritrea?
 Zimo: Yeah, Eritrea.
 Marie: What did you do in Eritrea?
 Zimo: uh... just traveling.
 Marie: Just like visiting, traveling..
 Zimo: But I stay there only for ten days because money is run out. uh... I think when I finished Egypt I go to Turkey.
 Marie: You went to Turkey?
 Zimo: Yes, then Turkey to Eritrea.
 Marie: And Turkey to? Where?
 Zimo: Uh... when I finished Turkey traveling, I go to that country: Azerbaijan.
 Marie: Azerbaijan?
 Zimo: Yes.
 Marie: What did you visit in Turkey?
 Zimo: Izmir and Istanbul and Cappadocia and I think that city's name is Saffronburo
 Marie: That's amazing how much you have traveled.
 Zimo: Yeah, because I have time but money is limited. I have a lot of friends when I go to their country, I stay in their home to save some money.
 Marie: And do you always travel alone?
 Zimo: Yes, always alone... when I meet these people (the ones we are sitting with at the table), we met in Lhasa. because not a lot of people can speak English so we make a group and I'm a team leader
 Marie: Yes, you are a team leader (laugh). But are you not... because you choose a hotel where, you say, it's mostly for Chinese (I'm referring to the Phoenix Hotel where I met them earlier)
 Zimo: No! I'm not living in that hotel. They are living in that hotel. I live in another hotel, it's outside of this restaurant, it's very cheap.
 Marie: It's cheaper
 Zimo: You know, Chinese hotel for the Chinese people is really expensive.

Marie: Really?
 Zimo: A little bit.
 Marie: So how do you... how do you choose the hotel you stay in when you travel?
 Zimo: I choose from the app or lonely planet I think.
 Marie: Do you often like meet... like foreigners, like do you make friends with other backpackers or do you stay with Chinese people? Do you meet like... people like me or like other backpackers?
 Zimo: Yes, I meet a lot of... because for the other Chinese people, they want to make friends with foreigners but they can't speak English, their English is not good.
 Marie: Your English is really good
 Zimo: Not really good but... Enough for use
 Marie: Yes, enough for traveling, indeed.
 Zimo: Yes, but now I think you should finish this because, when it's getting cold it's not good (he is talking about my noodles)
 Marie: Did you travel a lot with your parents?
 Zimo: Sorry?
 Marie: Did you travel a lot with your parents when you were a kid?
 Zimo: No
 Marie: They don't travel?
 Zimo: No, my mom, she is a teacher, she never travels
 Marie: Why? She doesn't like it?
 Zimo: No, she thinks outside is dangerous, not safe. Why is dangerous...
 Marie: Is she ok with you traveling?
 Zimo: Yeah, great, but she doesn't like. Once I buy her the train ticket... not train ticket, plane ticket to go to Thailand but she said... no, you can sell this ticket, I don't want to go. It's a big problem for me.
 Marie: That she is not traveling.
 Zimo: No, never...
 Marie: Why is it a big problem?
 Zimo: You know, I think if she is traveling, she will know me... If she doesn't travel, we will never know... communicate. It's a big problem

Marie: Was it scary the first time you left your country?
 Zimo: No, because... I think most people are kind, right? And some dangerous place, go there... If you don't go to dangerous place, then you are safe.
 Marie: especially if your first country was Nepal, Nepal is pretty safe.
 Zimo: And there are a lot of Chinese people and Chinese restaurants so it's good for me.
 Marie: Do you go a lot to Chinese restaurants when you are outside of China...
 Zimo: No... I want to try the other kind of food. I like curry, in Egypt, I like the sea food, lots of food.
 Marie: So, after Nepal, you are going to India, next?
 Zimo: Yes
 Marie: How long are you gonna stay?
 Zimo: More than two months
 Marie: More than two months?
 Zimo: Yes
 Marie: North or South?
 Zimo: North, yeah. I like that place, yes... Darjeeling.
 Marie: In the mountain then.
 Zimo: Yes, in the mountain
 Marie: Yes... you are gonna do some climbing there?
 Zimo: Yes, some climbing, lots of things... I will be teacher I think. For the homeless
 Marie: So, you do volunteering work?
 Zimo: Yes, volunteering work.
 Marie: How do you find... how do you find the NGO?

Zimo: Yes, NGO... well I have a friend who works for an NGO, if I want to work he will give me but the salary is...
 Marie: really low?
 Zimo: Yes, and uh... one month, I think two hundred dollars.
 Marie: It's not much... but in India it's ok I guess...
 Zimo: Yeah, India... in Darjeeling it's really cheap.
 Marie: Have you been to Darjeeling before?
 Zimo: Yes, it's really beautiful. There is tea garden... it's a tea area... Have you been there before?
 Marie: No, I have never been
 Zimo: You should try, it's one of the best places in the area. I have been to Goa and Chiang Mai and lots of places but I prefer Darjeeling..
 Marie: In the mountains, you like the mountain?
 Zimo: Yes! I like the mountain
 Marie: You are a mountain guy
 Zimo: Yes! I'm a mountain guy.
 Marie: Have you been in the Alps? the French Alps?
 Zimo: French Alps? no... no... I have been only to the one country in Europe, Greece...
 Marie: They have little mountain there.
 Zimo: Yeah, in China we also have a lot of mountains, the Sichuan province, Tibet and the Xinjiang province.
 Marie: Yeah, Switzerland is really different but it's expensive... so expensive
 Zimo: Yeah... really, really expensive. Switzerland, France, Europe, is really expensive.
 Marie: Do you do couch surfing?
 Zimo: Yes!
 Marie: You could do couch surfing in Europe... Easy...
 Zimo: Two, three, four, five years ago I couch surf everywhere. I have lot of friends in France but...uh... I can't... the... that visa is not easy for us. That is big problem
 Marie: Schengen visa?
 Zimo: Yes, Schengen visa.
 Marie: How would you define being a backpacker? What be your definition of being a backpacker?
 Zimo: I can find the meaning of my life. One, two, three... five years ago I want to collect... collect all the stories... all the stories I want to make a book... I want to write a book... of my life, of China...
 Marie: About China, you know, China has a big change... yes... big change, lots of the Chinese young people but I want to write about what they think about...
 Marie: Like the Balinghou
 Zimo: Yeah... balinghou...yeah balinghou
 Marie: You are balinghou?
 Zimo: Yes, I am balinghou... So, what do they think about humans' life? What do they think about China? It's...
 Marie: is it difficult to be a balinghou in China right now?
 Zimo: Really difficult
 Marie: Why?
 Zimo: uh... because, you know, the balinghou, they are... it's really difficult
 Marie: Because you are more open to the world?
 Zimo: Yes... and a lot of things... everything, the prices are going up, the...
 Marie: Salary, also growing up?
 Zimo: No... the salary is low... And that uh... if you want to buy a house... not a house an apartment, it's really difficult. One square meter in Shanghai... you know how much?
 Marie: No
 Zimo: Like... one square meter in Shanghai maybe, one hundred thousand Chinese money, only one square meter...
 Marie: God! Like Paris!
 Zimo: Paris, I think the Chinese people think that it's more expensive than Paris
 Marie: Yes, because the salary is not the same...
 Zimo: yes.

Marie: How do you make... how do you...
 Zimo: No! Most people they can't buy
 Marie: But then... I thought in China you have the hukou and you can only buy...
 Zimo: Hukou? oh... hukou... you can buy?
 Marie: You can still buy like the hukou is no problem?
 Zimo: (they speak Chinese together) You know, if you are not born in Shanghai, you can't buy an apartment in Shanghai... this is the hukou.
 Marie: Ok, so the hukou... so if you want to buy an apartment in Shanghai... you can't?
 Zimo: Yeah... I can't but I should spend more time and more money I think.
 Marie: Ok... What if you have a job there?
 Zimo: Yes, if you have job you should pay tax and after three or five years you can buy an apartment but you can't get that hukou.
 Marie: But you can't get the hukou. It's better to get hukou. But... I don't understand the hukou system... so... you... you... you can't live wherever you want, can you?
 Zimo: Yes, you can live everywhere you want BUT, you can't get the... you know... if you children want to go to public school, the government school, you should spend more money.
 Marie: But why is that? Where does it come from?
 Zimo: It comes from different place, if you live in Shanghai you should spend more money... but the Shanghai hukou, if your spouse is from Shanghai, then you spend less money. This is China, this is China...
 Marie: Is it going to stay, the hukou? Because now people move, all the time. You get a job there, you get another job in another city... you move all the time
 Zimo: Yes, yes... yes, people move but you can't get the local hukou, you only have your own hukou...
 Marie: You can't change it?
 Zimo: You can't... yes, you can change it but it's really really difficult.
 Marie: But it's not fair for the people who were...
 Zimo: Yes... not fair. It's not fair, I think it's not fair. You know... when you want to go to university, like Ningbo university... like, it may ask for five hundred or five hundred fifty points and it's ok... but for me, I'm from another province, I need six... six hundred points because they ask for the Zhejiang hukou and I don't have it. It's not fair.
 Marie: Are they going to change it?
 Zimo: Yes... our country need change but... (he looks at the other and stops talking)
 Marie: It's ok, we don't have to talk about that... I was just wondering
 Zimo: It's no problem, we talk about it every time but, we want to change, it's really difficult but we don't know how to change. Because we are small person. Yes, China is a big country and we only have one party. But my mom, she is teacher, she is really angry about this... you know we called this "Zuzhi". It's a system...
 Marie: A teaching system?
 Zimo: No, no, no, she is a teacher but she is angry about this system. "Zuzhi" (组织) means the government, the country, the people is like this (he closes his hands together). She doesn't like this, she is always talking about this. She says, China is going to change, but how to change? and where should China go? She doesn't know. So, if China change, lots of Chinese people want to write a book about, about our life, our balinghou life...

Marie: That's what you wanted to do?
 Zimo: Yes... I also have a lot of friends, they live in Tibet, the Tibet, every day you should spend less money and nice things

and they think about life, the country's life... they think about a lot of things.
 Marie: Your friends that live in Tibet...
 Zimo: Yes... if you don't work enough, it's not a problem, some people will give you food (relate that to the experience Mei had in Lhasa where she was fed.) ... not money but food. So... in our country, Tibet is a holy place.
 Marie: People like you like, kind of free spirit...
 Zimo: Yeah... people like me... you know Kerouac, he wrote a book... Kerouac.
 Marie: Kerouac?
 Zimo: Kerouac, he wrote a book... On the Road
 Marie: Yes! I'm reading it right now!
 Zimo: I read it many times...
 Marie: This is crazy, I'm currently reading it... Jack Kerouac...
 Zimo: Yes, Jack Kerouac, On the road. Because, yes... another book... I show you the English name.
 Marie: So, you have read this book?
 Zimo: Yes, I read this book lots of time...
 Marie: What do you like about this book?
 10 - 44:54 > 1:07:59 [About China] [ID] [Hippies]
 Zimo: Because of confusion I think... Because I think the... the book is confused...
 Marie: He was confused...
 Zimo: Yes
 Marie: Yes, he is kind of lost.
 Zimo: Yes... lost... kind of lost. Because the balinghou is the Beat generation...
 Marie: You think the Balinghou is the beat generation... It's so interesting... Because you are like in between...
 Zimo: The one book that is very famous in China is ...
 Marie: Which one?
 Zimo: Catcher in the rye... C.A.T.C.H.E.R
 Marie: Catcher in the sun? in the rain? So, the balinghou is the beat generation. Have you read this book? (I'm asking the question to another guest who is looking at the cover while the interviewee is looking for the book he is telling me about). The catcher in the rye (L'attrape-coeur en français)
 Zimo: It's an American book...
 Marie: Is it also about the beat generation?
 Zimo: Yes!
 Marie: Who wrote it?
 Zimo: Salinger... JD Salinger I think. So, I think the balinghou is the same like this beat generation.
 Marie: And it's... this travel and... and... an answer for that kind of... confusion
 Zimo: We are confused about everything... we don't have any religions. I'm coming from Tibet and I come from a Christian family but I do not believe in this... I think Buddha is a lot of things but inside, I do not think I'm a Buddhist. For me, I do not believe in money... inside I have nothing...
 Marie: Have you been to Lumbini?
 Zimo: Yes
 Marie: Have you tried Vipassana?
 Zimo: Yeah, Vipassana, meditation a lot of time in Tamachuinke but I got nothing... that is a big problem for us. Some people are feeling really good, because they believe in money...
 Marie: And you think it's good?
 Zimo: Not good! uh... not good... but they have something
 Marie: They have something... but you have your travel...
 Zimo: Yes, I have my travel...
 Marie: How much better it is to spend your life traveling than being locked in a bank in Shanghai, just working to make money and don't even have time to spend it?
 Zimo: Yes... you know... you work all your life to pay for an apartment. It doesn't make sense but you have no choice... that is it.

Marie: You had the choice and you choose not to do that... didn't you?

Zimo: Yes, I think so... lots of people, when you live in a circle you have no choice...

Marie: How did you get out of that?

Zimo: Get out? I'm not sure, because I think, traveling is the only way... because when you see the world, it's really big so... you will jump out of this circle.

Marie: Would you consider living outside of China? Having your life outside of China? Settling somewhere and...

Zimo: but the root... you know in China we have the root. ... you know the root? ROOT

Marie: Root, ok

Zimo: You are born in a place and we die in this place. That means root... so I do not think I will live in other countries. That's is why.

Marie: Can you grow roots in another country? New roots?

Zimo: Maybe, maybe...

Marie: You know when you break a tree...

Zimo: Yes, I understand but you know... we have memories... memories of your birthplace, of your life as a child... That means roots. You can ask any Chinese person... they will live in their country.

Marie: But there is a lot of Chinese in France

Zimo: Yeah. we have a lot of population abroad... moving in other country. I have a lot of friends, now they move to Canada. They say, the Chinese people they have some problem and China and revolution or something and they don't come back but for me, I like my country, the culture... The Chinese culture is long and old. Very good

Marie: Did you read Xu Xiake?

Zimo: Who?

Marie: Xu Xiake, the Chinese traveler

Zimo: Oh! Yeah! Xu Xiake! (laugh) His stories are really good.

Marie: He said: It's better to travel a thousand Li than to read a thousand books.

Zimo: Yes... a thousand books... not his saying. It's thousand years ago, our like... like... Jesus, that's his words. To travel a thousand miles is better than reading a thousand books. I read a lot of book because my mom is a teacher, Chinese teacher but in China.

Marie: She teaches Chinese literature?

Zimo: Yes. And her and me read a lot of foreign books like I don't know to say... like Hugo

Marie: Victor Hugo?

Zimo: Yes, Victor Hugo and Thomas... euh... not Thomas, he is very famous for... his, ok I search... I really like this book, I read it more than seven times.

Marie: Did you like Victor Hugo?

Zimo: Yes...

Marie: Oh... Alexandre Dumas... The count of Monte-Christo... Really good book

Zimo: I read this book a lot... when I was fifteen years old, I read this book, it's really really nice. When I was traveling, one, two, three, four years ago, I bring this book and when I was confused, I read that book and now, I bring that book. This book's name is... you it's an Indian writer

Marie: The white tiger? Rabindranath Tagore. You like this book right now?

Zimo: Yes, and now I read that book name: To kill a mockingbird

Marie: I read that book a long time ago, such a good book.

Zimo: Yes, when I was a child, my mother told me stories. Twenty years ago, I read On the road and now I read it again

Marie: Yes, me too, I'm reading it again, because, when I read it first, I was fifteen and I think I didn't understand it very well at the time...

Zimo: Yes! (emphases)

Marie: I'm more able to understand it now.

Zimo: You should read it again, and again and again. So, you understand a lot of things. You know in China we use this word: "confused". A lot of things, the lives in our country, you know for young people lives, China must change! But how to change? We don't know... That means confused. Some they are traveling around the world to see other countries, other lives. You know in China we only have one life that means, you study... when you are born, you study, study, study hard and when you... after when you finish your student career... you work hard, work hard, work hard. Make money, make a high building, make a beautiful house then you die.

Marie: So, you choose to live your life?

Zimo: Live with my heart... follow my heart.

Marie: Have you met a lot of people like you?

Zimo: Yes, in Lhasa, a lot of, only in Lhasa

Marie: Do they come to Nepal often?

Zimo: No...

Marie: And, do you have to go through Nepal to go to India or can cross from China to India by land.

Zimo: You know... you can't, you can't go from China to India by land, it's not allowed, so you have to go through Nepal

Marie: Why?

Zimo: It's a long story... I don't know. You know him (he shows me a picture from a friend that he has in Lhasa). He is, I think, forty-three or forty-five years old. He writes novels... no, not novels... poetries to sell. In six months, he only earned 300 yuan. But he lived in Tibet, he writes everyday so he is different, I want to know his story, his life.

Marie: Do you travel with his poetry?

Zimo: No... This, I leave it Tibet... because this is my home.

Marie: What do you... Where do you work in Lhasa?

Zimo: I work in my friends' hotel. It's a little salary

Marie: Yeah, but if it allows you to move and travel. If the freedom is the most important thing for you then...

Zimo: Yeah, but you need money for freedom

Marie: You don't need that much money

Zimo: Sure, but still a little money. You know in Lhasa, there is a place, the people pray every day... only pray so a lot of people see them, watch them and think about what are they praying for? For another life? So... with this place, I can think about my life, think about a lot of things. It's great, I think you should come to Lhasa and have a look.

Marie: I can't go... I'd love to

Zimo: Oh ok... I take this picture, this picture of woman

Marie: Very nice pictures, you should sell it on Taobao to travel

Zimo: Yeah, maybe but Tao Bao is not good for this, Tao Bao is good for everything but not for arts

Marie: You should show your pictures they are really pretty

Zimo: I wrote this part about confusion... and about what I really want.

Marie: It seems like you are welcoming life.

Zimo: Yes, I make this life for myself but I don't know what it means

Marie: Find your way?

Zimo: Yes, I believe everything but I don't believe everything. Yes confused

Marie: You are trying to find sense in like?

Zimo: YES! I'm trying to find a sense in my life but...

Marie: You are not the only one

Zimo: There is a famous movie in China... not famous but... I really like this movie... yeah, yeah, I have seen more than fifty times. And I also like this movie... its name is Into the wild... I really like this movie. Anyway, I work in Lhasa for two months. Good salary, Lhasa is good for salary. One month is ten thousand yuan.

Marie: It's good
 Zimo: Yeah, really good and me
 Marie: It's better than my salary!
 Zimo: Really?!? You know, I think if you work in France you get fifty thousand yuan...
 Marie: No...
 Zimo: Surviving in China is not easy.
 Marie: Is it not?
 Zimo: Yes, it's not...
 Marie: Do you think life is easier outside of China?
 Zimo: No... But you can, you know, you can choose, you have the right to choose. You can choose a life, like my friends in the super city or you can choose the life in smaller city, easier life.
 Marie: Smaller city is an easier life?
 Zimo: No, I'm not sure. I don't know what I want but I really know, what I don't want
 Marie: It's a good start
 Zimo: Yes, I want a lot of things like I want to learn Spanish, and I want to how to draw. I want to learn a lot of things

YUXUAN

Yuxuan: They don't have enough money
 Marie: The money is not an excuse
 [>R5]: But your parents they don't allow (your travels), why?
 Yuxuan: Because they are worried for my safety
 Marie: Safety?
 Yuxuan: Yeah, safety
 Marie: But your parents they know trav... Have they travel your parents?
 Yuxuan: I didn't tell my mother... (laugh) I don't want her to be worried, yeah... so I didn't tell her. When she will call me, I will tell her: "I'm in Shanghai".
 Marie: Really?
 Yuxuan: Really.
 Marie: She doesn't know you are in Nepal?
 Yuxuan: Yeah... (Laugh) If I tell my mother I went outside... abroad in Nepal, I think...
 [>R5]: You cannot tell her but when you go to her, after Nepal, you cannot tell her about your experience in Nepal?
 Yuxuan: Yeah... in China...
 [>R5]: What if she finds out?
 Yuxuan: What?
 Marie: What if she knows... that you are in Nepal?
 Yuxuan: If she knows I'm in Nepal...uh... I must go home
 Marie: You are thirty years old?
 Yuxuan: Twenty-nine. But in my mother's eyes, we are a baby.
 Marie: You bought her a bracelet, are you going to tell her where it's from... I'm going to tell her I bought it in Shanghai.
 Yuxuan: I can't say, I'll say: "my friend buy it for me in Nepal". But in China, we have to do that.
 Marie: Your parents have they ever left China? Your parents, have they traveled?
 Yuxuan: No, no, no, our parents have no chance to travel. My home, my family does a little business they sell vegetables, but wholesale.
 [>R5]: Like farmers?
 Yuxuan: No, no, no, we have a wholesale for the shop. They are very busy, they have no time to phone me.
 Marie: His grand-father was actually in the Long March with Mao?
 Yuxuan: Yeah, yeah... My name is Long March
 Marie: Yeah, literally in Chinese
 2 - 03:58 > 06:57 [Pas de thématique]
 We talk about the Historical episode of the Long March
 3 - 06:57 > 08:54 [Impression on Nepal]
 Marie: So Nepal is the first country you go to?

[425,1]Yuxuan: Yeah, my first time...
 Marie: Is it your first time outside of China?
 Yuxuan: Yeah...
 Marie: How do you like it?
 Yuxuan: It's... what?
 Marie: Do you like it?
 Yuxuan: I like it very much. Even though it's very very not clean everywhere, the streets are narrow. In our country it's uh... uh... all the roads are very very wide.
 Marie: And uh... how does it... like how does it feel in a different country from China?
 Yuxuan: I feel freedom... more freedom than in China because our country has many rules. You don't do this or that, you can't do it! But in foreign countries, we can do things I want to do.
 Marie: Like what?
 Yuxuan: Go to bar... talk with foreigners, and have a good mind... open my mind. In China, because there are many many rules... I don't like it.
 4 - 08:54 > 10:28 [About China]
 [>R5]: What did your friends say about you going to Nepal? They appreciate that or not?
 Marie: Your friends in Shanghai, what do they think about you going to Nepal...
 Yuxuan: They like it... my English is not enough... because we go to college and somewhat we don't think the English is important so I had to study other things very hard but English. But English... We can read but... we think it's not good... Well... you know... because you are a teacher. If the Chinese students had good teacher, it's very easy but
 [>R5]: But you should learn English, it's so important to travel
 Yuxuan: I already watch English movies
 Marie: Yes, English film, English songs
 5 - 10 :28 > 11:32 [Pas de thématique]
 Yuxuan: My friends envy me.
 Marie: Oh... your friends envy you?
 Yuxuan: yeah ! Someone, I think, in... because Shanghai... in Shanghai the people have many money but they have no time
 Marie: We was telling me yesterday that when he was young he had the time but not the money and now that he is twenty-nine he had the money but he doesn't have the time. So, this is the first time in his life that he had the time and money... so he was like, "I'm going".
 Yuxuan: In Europe, you are young and you travel to so many countries
 [>R5]: yes
 Marie: Yes
 [>R5]: It's normal to travel
 6 - 11:32 > 12:10 [Pas de thématique]
 Chit Chat
 7 - 12:10 > 12:29 [Pas de thématique]
 Yuxuan: But Nepal, when I first came to Nepal, but the more I stay long time, the more I like this place.
 8 - 12:29 > 13:09 [Pas de thématique]
 Marie: And so, you flew... you take the plane from Lhasa to Kathmandu?
 Yuxuan: Nepal, yeah...
 Marie: and so, after Holi, what are you going to do? What's your plan...?
 Yuxuan: I don't have a ticket for plane... because I don't know when I go back to China. So, I didn't book a plane.
 Marie: You didn't book a plane. So, you are just going to email your boss and say, "I'm not coming back?"
 Yuxuan: Because my work, we work on the internet and with a telephone so I can work here
 Marie: With a computer and a telephone
 Yuxuan: Yeah, yeah, I can work. And I can earn money too
 Marie: He works in finance and money, he buys money.

Yuxuan: (Laughs), I sell money, I sell money.
 Marie: And uh... after you are going to Pokhara?
 Yuxuan: I will stay some days because I like this place and my friends wants me to buy somethings for them... so... I can earn money from that... a little. My friend wants me... I have eight thousand in my WeChat
 Marie: Eight thousand?
 Yuxuan: Yeah, I have two WeChat... So, they are giving me money so I buy what they want. It's very famous because if you want to buy these things in Shanghai, it's more expensive... it's not cheap. And plane ticket is not cheap... so... yeah. The Chinese have many ideas about business. business.
 Marie: He was really surprised yesterday because I told him we can't go to Tibet
 Marie: So, after Kathmandu you are going to Pokhara?
 Yuxuan: Yeah, Pokhara. Yeah, yeah
 [>R5]: On your way to Pokhara, you have to stop in Dumre to go to Bandipur for a day, it's important.
 Marie: You said it was not good
 [>R5]: Yeah, because it was cloudy
 Yuxuan: Here take it (he gives me a bracelet he bought in Tibet)
 Marie: oh... no no no no no...
 Yuxuan: Because I can go to Tibet, I can... no no no no
 Marie: No no no, we can't accept... keep it, keep it... it's not... just... no no no. I don't wear jewelry
 Yuxuan: Because I think you are interested in Tibet and it's made in Tibet.
 Marie: I want to go to Tibet but. Today, there is holiday... about thirteen thousand Chinese people coming to Nepal. They came to Nepal, about thirteen thousand Chinese, just Chinese people.
 Marie: Now?
 Yuxuan: For Holi
 Marie: Oh... just for Holi, how do you know?
 Yuxuan: My friend told me...
 Marie: Cool
 Yuxuan: But I think in our country, more and more people like to travel
 [>R5]: The younger generation
 Marie: Yes, the Balinghou
 Yuxuan: yeah, yeah... Balinghou
 Marie: It's eighties generation? We are balinghou
 Yuxuan: Yeah, yeah, we are balinghou so... so...
 Marie: What... what does it mean to be a balinghou?
 Yuxuan: Balinghou... to me or... To me it's I don't know how to say, I think balinghou is a better then jiulinghou in China... In China... In China, jiulinghou, they use WeChat all the time, all day
 Marie: The jiulinghou.
 [>R4]: They don't do things, they follow other people, they don't think or reflect by themselves. So... so... I think balinghou is better than. We have our own thinking, we read, we know how to read. I have a kindle but uh... jiulinghou, they watch TV, go to bar, do everything except reading. So, I think in China, I feel very bad about jiulinghou. If China control would be controlled by the Balinghou, it would be better and better
 Marie: Yes, he was telling me yesterday he was surprised about how much we read because I have a big book and he met another guy who was also reading a big book and he was really...
 12 - 22:33 > 25:19 [Pas de thématique]
 Chit chat about book.
 13 - 25:19 > 26:27 [About China]
 Yuxuan: Most of Chinese people don't know reading is good for them. They think it's a waste of time
 [>R5]: I don't read that much but for my age I read a lot

Yuxuan: What are you reading about? I like thrillers, I like romance
 Marie: I like sci fi. You know sci? Science fiction
 Yuxuan: I don't know
 [>R5]: Like Star Wars
 14 - 26:27 > 31:44 [Pas de thématique]
 Phone break. Small talk about the TV show he likes: Game of Thrones
 15 - 31:44 > 38:54 [About China]
 Yuxuan: But in China, we have to pay money to watch this serie
 Marie: How much do you pay?
 Yuxuan: Twenty, no thirty dollars a year but the TV come to China, our government delete some scenes in the films. Our country is, because our country doesn't want us to know the better things so they delete some scenes in the film. (interlude)
 Yuxuan: In China, the TV is not... because the government doesn't want us to know the better things to them, so they delete, delete so your films come to China and they become half hour films so because they say no to everything.
 [>R5]: Why?
 Marie: It's called censorship
 [>R4] : Because it's dangerous, because our country's government don't allow us to know the better things outside China, they want us to know the good things in China. They are worry they put wish. If you... you... if the film is not good for our government, they don't allow you to watch.
 Marie: Where is your translating app? From English to Chinese? It's called...uh..., it's called uh... that in English, censorship
 Yuxuan: Yeah... yeah yeah... Everywhere, if they think the film is bad for government, they don't allow to watch. you can't watch it so... so... so... our government I think now make some bad rule. Maybe if Balinghou control China, maybe, the country would be good. Because I... the top of... the top of our government, the one that manage the government they are about fifty, sixty years old. in thirty years for us...
 Marie: It's gonna be interesting to see how China evolves... your generation is starting to travel a lot
 Yuxuan: But I want to know the true things, not what they tell me. The truth. Because in China, some of the history is not true. It's... it's... the history is written by the government so... so... I think... I want to know to know the true things.
 Marie: Traveling is a good way to do that, you learn a lot about yourself and about your country
 Yuxuan: Even though Chinese government do some bad things, I think the Chinese will become better and better. Yeah, yeah, yeah... Because more like travel and because balinghou, there is many balinghou like reading, travel, do things... they study in Europe, in America, they want to study the good things... so I want and I like to travel
 16 - 38:54 > 41:48 [Pas de thématique]
 Yuxuan: So... when I came from Nepal to... uh... come to Nepal from Tibet. We are checked, you know in the plane, they checked very much
 [>R5]: Have you seen Marijuana?
 Yuxuan: What?
 Marie: Have you seen marijuana?
 [>R5]: I'll show him, this is it... (he displays it). It's the oil
 Yuxuan: It's very rare in China. In China, even though you... Dali, Lijiang, Laos... Do you know Laos... is a country nearby China...? They grow this so... so many people in Yunnan...
 Marie: oh... many people smoke?
 Yuxuan: Smocking, the government don't care but if you sell it... they kill you.
 Marie: Have you tried?
 Yuxuan: No... no, no... because I think uh... if I try this I'll miss it everyday

Marie: Yeah... maybe not if you do it once...
[>R5]: It's like drinking a beer... you don't get addicted after you had one
Yuxuan: Our government tell us every day, it's bad for our health, it's very bad for our health
Marie: It's not good for your health of course
Yuxuan: On paper, on radio, on everything, they put the people killed, on TV but... but... but... not... not because they sell this. How much is one?
[>R5]: Nothing, it costs nothing
Yuxuan: How much? a dollar?
Marie: How much does it cost?
[>R5]: Maybe, fifteen, thirty rupees...
Marie: Thirty rupees...
Yuxuan: ouch, it's cheap! In China it's expensive!
[>R5]: Over here it's very cheap. If I take it I'll be... they will check in our bag... so...
Marie: You know, when I was in Rasuwa, you know, I was there two days ago and between the border of Tibet and the end... the beginning of Kathmandu, our bag was checked five times... they open our bag, five times at five different check points, they took all our stuff out to check everything and then we had to put it back
18 - 48:09 > 50:46 [Pas de thématique]
Yuxuan: Even though our government hate Japanese, I don't hate them, because that's history, if we live in history we can't live up
Marie: Chinese and Japanese government hate each other because Japan came to China... when was the war between China and Japan?
Yuxuan: The war?
Marie: Yes
Yuxuan: The war... Ninety years ago. we had many wars with Japan
Marie: They still hate each other and fight for little island but it's interesting because the young Chinese generation they love Japan, right?
Yuxuan: Yeah! The Japan girls. (laugh) I wish I meet... I will meet a Japanese girl in my journey but...
Marie: It's funny how the young Chinese generation is obsessed with Japanese food and culture and governments hate each other.
Yuxuan: (Laugh) yeah, we buy, we buy something. The people in Shanghai, the most are... they like traveling in Japan, the plane ticket is very cheap, even though, even though the... even though we buy (he showed us the translation but we don't get it) ... you will laugh. Even though this... we buy toilet lid in Japan even though it's better in China... so we buy a lot from Japanese because in our country is bad (laugh)
Marie: (I then show then a photograph of a Chinese restroom in Yunnan that choked me)
Yuxuan: When people travel to Japan, they will take many toilet lid... they love to buy that. Chinese people love German things (he addresses the German guy)
Marie: (going back to the picture), there is no door in the toilet
Yuxuan: Where is this
Marie: This is in Yunnan
Yuxuan: Oh... in bigger city, not like that.
20 - 58:41 > 1:05:01 [On body and sports] [Travel in Nepal]
Marie: You are doing the Annapurna trek right?
Yuxuan: What?
Marie: After... after... After Kathmandu, you are doing Annapurna trek?
Yuxuan: Yeah! ACT (Annapurna Circuit Trek) this time I wanted to EBC. EBC trek, because my friend went to EBC so we are four people going to do ACT. I think next year I will come back to EBC
[>R5]: I think both is pretty.

Marie: Which one...
[>R5]: I said both are pretty awesome
Marie: ABC and the other one is?
[>R5]: EBC... Everest Base Camp
Marie: Oh, Everest Base camp
[>R5]: He wants to do Everest Base Camp
Marie: You want to do Annapurna base camp or Everest Base camp?
[>R5]: He will do, Annapurna Circuit but he wants to do Everest more...But his friends are going to ACT so he is going there.
Yuxuan: I want to work away... everywhere. Every day the city...
Marie: What's ACT?
Yuxuan: I don't know... but... just... my friend knows... I don't know, he told me... we can see many local people and culture... many cultures in ACT. Because ABC, you can see many snow mountains, you will feel very tired, every day, snow, snow mountain, no other things so... he wants to go ACT.
Marie: What's ACT?
Yuxuan: But EBC is the hardest...
[>Marie] : EBC... Everest Base Camp ?
[>R5]: I didn't think it was that hard
Yuxuan: Because you are strong. Because, you people, American people are much stronger than Chinese...
Marie: American?
Yuxuan: American, Europe people are more... are stronger than Chinese.
Marie: Why?
Yuxuan: You are taller,
[>R5]: Body wise
Yuxuan: Because I know, I know how to say but I don't know that word... sometimes I will study some English word I will... Your English is so good.
Marie: (I show him a photo of a paragliding) ... I know some Chinese girls in Pokhara who do that all year long
Yuxuan: But usually, Chinese girls, they are afraid because you know our parents don't allow us to go abroad... so... This is why... but this is one... only one...
Marie: No... three, I know three girls. They stay in Pokhara all year and they train for paragliding
Yuxuan: They maybe come from Tibet...
Marie: No
Yuxuan: The Tibet girls are stronger
Marie: No, they are from... Two are from Beijing and one is from Hangzhou
Yuxuan: You see, the girls from the big city in China, not from little city. So... the people you meet, the Chinese people you meet during your trip, most of them live in big city because in small cities they have no chance to travel... My family came to Shanghai from Shandong. Because the city is bigger and the bigger the city the more open minded you can be. You know, the Chinese people, they think that Nepal is like China ninety or eighty years ago. The Chinese people think Nepal is like China, Eighty or ninety years back
21 - 1:05:01 > 1:08:01 [Pas de thématique]
(interruption for ordering more drinks, we realize he has paid for our breakfast. We say thank you and we wonder why he has done that. He replies that it is his pleasure and that in China, you often pay for your friends' drinks and meal... he says it's in their culture to do that)
22 - 1:08:01 > 1:26:21 [Pas de thématique]
Yuxuan: Even though our government is not so good, but I think most Chinese people is nice.
Marie: It was really nice to be in China, people were very nice despite the little problem with English
[>R5]: I always thought the English in China was pretty good, I had the image of that.

Yuxuan: You can go to Shanghai, Beijing for French school, for the people who come from France, only for French. So, I meet people who come from Marseille, he teaches French in Shanghai. His name is Thomas.

Marie: Yeah, you can teach French or English, better in China, even if you are not from England or America. They need some English teacher in China.

Yuxuan: Yes, you can go to Shanghai, Beijing or Guangzhou. The big city if you want to earn money, don't go to small city, I mean, you can build a... (We see people passing by in the street with color on them... today is holy)

Yuxuan: You know the Chinese people think Nepal is China in the 1980's. We... we are.... Now Nepal is like... is more like... Nepal now, is like

Marie: China in the 1980's... oh... ok...

Yuxuan: So, they want to see Nepal... for this reason (we are served beverages)

Marie: So, Nepal is like China thirty years ago...ok...

YAN

Marie: Alright so... I'm doing my PhD, on Asian tourism and solo travelers... long term travelers you know, the people from Asia, especially from China when travels for a long time and on their own. So exactly you.

Marie: so... I want to know; can you tell me about this trip you took to India? You so... you told me yesterday that you studied Cambodian in University. How old are you now?

Yan: twenty-four.

Marie: Twenty-four. Then you want to Cambodia for one year?

Yan: Yes

Marie: To work?

Yan: To study language

Marie: To study language. Then, what year was that? When was that?

Yan: Uh... Phnom Penh? Capital...

Marie: Then you went back to China?

Yan: uh.... back to China, before last year in May.

Marie: Ok, and when did you go. What did you do... when did you go to India?

Yan: In January.

Marie: In January. What did you do in China during these 6 months from June to January?

Yan: Sometimes I study and go to the shop to sell some hand maid and make some money, sometimes sell on Chinese Tao Bao.

Marie: So... you make stuff and you sell it on Tao Bao. Cool... cool... And so why did you choose to travel in India?

Yan: Because, last night I already tell you, with my best friend, we meet on Phnom Penh, yeah, before my English is not good, he taught me a lot, how to speak and more practice like this. So now, he is heaven so I think I need to visit the place... I have never been before... I need to see.

Marie: Was it you first long trip outside of China?

Yan: uh... long trip?

Marie: Long travel?

Yan: Before just short visit Laos, the first time. But long travel maybe Phnom Penh.

Marie: For the exchange studies. So... so... Your first country outside of China that you visited was Laos?

Yan: Yes

Marie: How long did you stay?

Yan: Laos, short visit... around two weeks.

Marie: With your parents?

Yan: No, by myself.

Marie: Did you like it?

Yuxuan: So, we want to see, we can see and kind of comeback thirty years back... so many people come for that. Because I was born in 1988 so I want to see... it's... I think better than this time. That time we have car too but motor bike too but not so much. China is... I don't like motor bike, there is too much... too crowded. The car is more. In China, a car is about five thousand dollars.

23 - 1:26:21 > 1:30:34 [Pas de thématique]

Yuxuan: Why did I travel to this place? Because I have friend whose work is to take photo. He came here last year and he take many photos so when I saw his pictures, I make plan to travel to here.

Marie: He has a camera, he wants to take pictures but for Holi, he put it in a plastic bag.

Yuxuan: hih.

[>R5]: Good idea.

Yuxuan: It's made in Japan

Marie: Maybe we can ask for tapes... tape...

Yan: Yes, but that time I cannot speak English so I feel I little worried but now it's ok. I enjoy.

Marie: Yes, you speak really good English. When you were little, did you travel with your parents?

Yan: Not traveling a lot with my parents.

Yan: Not traveling a lot with my parents but uh... sometimes when I go back to my home I usually go to... with my parents to the trekking

Marie: With your parents you do trekking?

Yan: Yeah, but they don't go to other countries. Just in China.

Marie: Just in China, what did you visit in China?

Yan: In China, before, I just visit Shanghai, and... uh... Guizhou. Not too many places because China is so big and uh... lot around Yunnan place, some like uh... Lijiang and uh... Lijiang, Shangri La.

Marie: Yes, I went there, I loved it, so nice, Shuhe also is very nice.

Yan: Yeah, Shuhe.

Marie: And...uh... the first time you went to Laos was it... you were scared?

Yan: Yeah, yeah a little.

Marie: Did you have any memorable adventure there? Did you meet people? Did you meet people from China, from Laos?

Yan: Yeah, yeah... I meet Chinese guy before, we are traveling together but sometimes, the guy like pop music and I feel wow... maybe I should travel by myself is better so... so... that time, I went to the mountain, I met some local people and I stay there close to the nature. I feel it's better stay with the people. There was elephant... (laugh), yeah. The place is elephant camp. Very nice

Marie: And were you a backpacker at the time?

Yan: Yeah, with bag... yeah. That time I travel by bus from Kunming to Luang Prabang. It took maybe around thirty hours. It's a long trip.

Marie: And so what do you remember... how did you feel to be outside of China for the first time? Being abroad? being outside of your country? Was it exciting? Was it scary?

Yan: I feel a little scary because I travelling the first time outside and I can't speak English... But also exciting because the road trip is so beautiful. You can connect with nature, you can see difference and how to say... "Always follow the sun".

Marie: Follow the sun...

Yan: But it'... uh... I really like Indonesia last year

Marie: You went to Indonesia?

Yan: Yes, last year, I was there. It's the rainbow gallery? That time I stay with friends in there, we went to some place enjoying the ceremony. It's an amazing experience.

Marie: Where were you in Indonesia?

Yan: Hubu
 Marie: Hubu. How long did you stay?
 Yan: Around one month
 Marie: One month... ok, it was like vacation? Was it vacation from university?
 Yan: No... just traveling, yeah, just traveling.
 Marie: With friends?
 Yan: Yeah, but I go there just by myself and then I meet my friends in there and we just travel together.
 Marie: and your parents, they are ok with you traveling?
 Yan: Yeah, it's ok because when I was young, I was already traveling but just traveling some small ort close to my home town. so, my parents were ok. Just I need to send message to my parents and say "I'm ok". Just tell me it's ok. Before I also, my travel money I make by myself, I make money so my parents are ok.
 Marie: Your parent are ok because you make your own money?
 Yan: By myself
 Marie: So they are really... they really are... are they excited for you that you are traveling?
 Yan: Yeah...yeah... I really like traveling but I don't like just the visit. I like nomad traveling. I can stay at farmers' I can stay at communities.
 Yan: I can connect with the people, I feel it's better. I don't like just short visit.
 Marie: So do you connect with people from all over the world or do you sometimes, just stay... Is it sometimes easier to stay within you own... like Chinese?
 Yan: No I can stay with different people. I feel it's better. Before in Cambodia I also stay with.... friends from all over the world. From different countries where you can see different culture. And we become good friend so this time also, before I stay with friend in Phnom Penh, but this time also meet again in family. I feel like it's a very nice family. Yeah... very nice. I don't like to just stay with same language with people... I want to see more.
 Marie: So, do you speak Cambodian fluently now?
 Yan: Not really, just a little because it's really hard. But this time I think more about learning Spanish language because I want to go to Spain.
 Marie: You want to go to Spain?
 Yan: I already book the ticket.
 Marie: you already book the ticket. Do you have the Schengen visa?
 Yan: No visa but this time I go back to my home and I need to apply visa, I have enough time maybe.
 Marie: Yeah, it should be ok. How long do you plan on staying in Europe?
 Yan: uh.... I still no plan. I think maybe I choose workaway. And until use all of my money.
 Marie: You can still sell your handmaid things on Taobao and still makes some money?
 Yan: Sometimes I can make but this time I'm traveling traveling, traveling... so... I can send it to the people... so ... yeah.
 Marie: And uh... So... uh... in India. Can you describe me your trip in India? So where did you arrive, in January, beginning of January?
 Yan: Yeah, I arrived in, I chose to arrive straight to the south part. So I flew in Chennai, then I went from Chennai to Goa. Because I have friends that are also from Dali and they are living in Goa. Also traveling but they live there around one month. I think I need to meet my friends because before we lived together in Dali. They are also artists that do some hand maid things. So I chose to go to Goa, first. Goa...wow... Goa how to say ... Goa like a hippie community but also now so many tourists...
 Marie: Did you like it? Did you like Goa?

Yan: Yeah, I liked it. But... if I stay long time it's too much for me. Sometimes, I like some quieter place. Before I already stayed in Gokarna, it's shanti shanti place. So you can stay with different people and you can see some different culture. There I met a meditation teacher from Germany, yes... very nice... she was my neighbor. She shows me a lot.
 Marie: Of meditation... so you meditate now?
 Yan: Yeah, yeah... sometimes I ... but uh... they stay in Nepal to meditate. Before, every morning we meditate. But today, because I stay this hotel, it's new, how to say... environment for me, so I don't do.
 Marie: Ok, ok... it's difficult to... do you think you are going to still meditate in China, in Dali.
 Yan: No... I said just in India. Because I meet some people, they tell me a lot of... I think that, maybe it's the perfect time to do that.
 Marie: did you do a Vipassana?
 Yan: No, but I want to try. Maybe go back to my hometown and then try. Many friends before tell me it's very nice. I need to try.
 Marie: Very nice. So how long did you stay in Goa for?
 Yan: The first time I stay in Goa, I stayed around ten days but I go outside to the Gokarna and Hampi and then I went back to Goa. I travel different place to Anjuna. Uh... so I stay in Goa around twenty days.
 Marie: Twenty days... ok... so you went from Goa to Hampi?
 Yan: Yes... Before I went from Goa to Hampi but finally I go back to the Goa again. But I stayed in different places. Because in Goa, just stay with my friend. But my friend is leaving to another place so after I go to the Anjuna. How to say... the Goa is very interesting. You know the Alombor party is very shanti shanti. You can meet some musician but the Anjuna parties, very crazy, every day is psychedelic music. This is a party place.
 Marie: Did you take drugs there?
 Yan: Yeah, yeah... I tried.
 Marie: Was it you first time?
 Yan: Yeah... yeah.
 Marie: Did you like it?
 Yan: Yeah, I like it. Because it's different. I like some adventure... yeah. But I love Hampi more. It was a wonderful place. I don't know how to say. But I think if you travel in India, you need to see the place, you'll like it.
 Marie: How long did you stay in Hampi for?
 Yan: Around one week.
 Marie: In a hostel? You travel in hostel, right?
 Yan: Yeah, yeah... to the hostel and after with my friend we motor bike to go to some places, very beautiful. You need to see.
 Marie: When traveled in India... or when you travel... you go to hostel right? You don't go to hotels?
 Yan: No... we went to the place and also have some single room. Not just hostel I also choose shanti shanti quieter and nice place. This time... shorter visit here so I chose this hostel. (she is in Kathmandu waiting to go back to Dali, she is just transferring in Nepal). Sometimes I like this shanti shanti place.
 Marie: What does it mean shanti shanti?
 Yan: How to... I don't know how to say...
 Marie: Like relax... peaceful...
 Yan: Yeah... relax peaceful and enjoying and yoga spirit. Relax... yeah.
 Marie: Did you do yoga?
 Yan: No... just a little, very little, but I think next season I want to go back to Rishikesh...
 Marie: ...and learn about Yoga?
 Yan: Yeah... ok... this time my visa is very short. So I need to go outside so I choose here. And meet here... very small

world, we have a common friend (We both happen to know Mei).

Marie: Yes, we a common friend, that's crazy... I can't believe we know Mei. She is really cool. And... uh... so you went... you went to Hampi and then back to Goa?

Yan: Yeah then I went to Kerala, south India, very south. And the place is very local and very cheap. Not so many tourists. I was there and I met my Cambodian friend, we stay together in there. The place is very quiet, not so many tourists. It's very nice and the fruits are also very cheap.

Marie: It's very cheap. (As we speak, we are served a bowl of fruit that we share)

Yan: The first time I use my hand and eat food in Allepi, it's crazy "Wow!" but very nice. Beautiful experience like "Wow". Not like this, I don't know how to say in English. But the food was put on a leaf and you use your hand. The food name is Thali. If you finish it, you can ask and they add more.

Marie: It's like refill.

Yan: Yeah... very nice and very cheap. Around... one dollar.

Marie: That's really cheap. oh my god

Yan: Crazy India!

Marie: So... Rishikesh, next time, uh?

Yan: Yeah... I want to go north part but as visa was finishing, I needed to go.

Marie: You went to Rajasthan though, right?

Yan: Yeah

Marie: Rajasthan is in the North, right?

Yan: Yeah, but not really north. A little dangerous this place if you travel by yourself sometimes. You can meet some people they are not really nice. You need to be careful.

Marie: Did you meet people that were not really nice to you?

Yan: I'm ok, but my friend told me you need to be careful. But Pushkar it's also very nice, it's uh... how to say. It's a small, small, shanti shanti place and the place similar like Varanasi. God's place.

Marie: Did you go to Varanasi?

Yan: No this is place I want to go but I check the flight, if I go, so... after the flight is not cheap to go there so...

Marie: Oh... so you didn't go.

Yan: Yeah. So I think I need go there maybe next time. Because I need go back to my home my grand-pa got sick. Maybe next time. I want to apply six months visa, this time I only had two months.

Marie: Is your life is just going to be traveling? You want to travel as much as possible? Do you want to... so now... are you considering getting a real job in China or do you just want to keep traveling?

Yan: I think now, I just want to keep traveling. So... maybe one day, I feel "Wow", I want to find some place to live, I think I want to go back to Dali and find a good place and stay there. Make a studio do some hand maid and I also want to try to learn to make music like this sound (jazz music playing in the background). Maybe one day I go back to home, I want to do like this.

Marie: Nice. How do you... and how do you travel practically? Do you use Trip Advisor? Do you use your telephone? Do you book in advance?

Yan: I don't... sometimes with my phone I check someplace and google maps if I need to check some place but... booking... sometimes I don't like bookings. Maybe booking like just one day I like to explore and find by myself. The place is good I want to stay there.

Marie: Do you... do you read travel blogs?

Yan: No

Marie: You just go.

Yan: Yeah... just go... I don't want to make so many plans. Because, the plan ruins the moment, yeah... every time is

different, yourself also. now like this and after maybe not like this. So I don't like to make too many plans.

Blank moment where we are eating food at the Phat Khat.

Yan: Can you tell me some tip about traveling in Europe, because I have never been in Europe.

Marie: What do you want to do in Europe?

Yan: This time I just visit... some... I want to go some festivals because I want to see some different scene. Some more artistic work like this.

Marie: There is a lot of festival in the summer in Europe.

Yan: I already book the festival in ... but uh... festival I want to visit some place...

Marie: Which festival did you book?

Yan: Boom festival, it's in Portugal

Marie: In Barcelona?

Yan: No in Portugal... in Lisbon. I want visit here but uh... After finish the festival, I want to stay some place and sometimes... the hostel is very expensive in Europe I want to find some way. Maybe I can share some skills to people and the people can help me get me a place to live in.

Marie: yes, what you can do is uh... is Couchsurfing. Cause it's free...

Yan: So easy to do in Europe?

Marie: Yes, couch surfing is big in Europe.

Yan: I want to go France and uh... Paris

Marie: Paris? Yeah, Paris is nice

Yan: Not Paris... Berlin... Berlin

Marie: Oh... Berlin! Yeah... Berlin is cheap. and it's really something else, it's crazy. You might want to do in summer in Europe. All the big cities... people don't work as much so they go to the beach, so... do you surf, surfing?

Yan: Yeah, you mean couch surfing?

Marie: Surfing... like surfing?

Yan: Oh, no... no...

Marie: You might want to try that.

Laraine : I already worried... scared of the water because when I was young I went to some place and I drown in the water...

Marie: oh, ok... yeah.

Yan: I want to try but... will see

Marie: Do you like festivals?

Yan: Yeah, but I like some small gathering. Like family gathering, not like this. Big... I can show you Boom festival. B.O.O.M. Boom festival... It's very nice in Portugal. (she shows me the website of the festival) I'm going to there.

Marie: Sweet... are you going on your own?

Yan: Yeah but I think maybe I can connection with some friends... Before I traveling meet some guys. I tell him "I'm going to Europe in the summer" so maybe we can meet.

Marie: That's really cool. um... yeah...

Yan: This one is kind of hippie gathering

Marie: What?

Yan: Boom same like a hippie gathering.

Marie: You like hippies?

Yan: Yeah because Dali is a hippie community so I like...

Marie: What does it mean to be hippie in China? Or in general

Yan: In General? I think the hippie they don't want use more lot of money to buy clothes... bla bla bla something. Do you something, always by ourselves. They are living very simple life, they can feel happy and stay with nature. This. Also do some small gathering and uh... connect and learning and practice more. Simple and happy life. For me that's the hippie life.

Marie: And you want this hippie life for you?

Yan: Yeah.

Marie: Are your parents hippies?

Yan: No, not really (laugh)

Marie: What do they do?

Yan: My father is an engineer and my mother just stay home and do some things. Clean and cooking... like this.

Marie: What do they think about your hippie mood?

Yan: Sometimes I don't... this time I stay India, I learn to live in the moment. So I don't want to stay too much things, I just want to stay in the moment. And uh... maybe it's better for me, stay in the moment and can feel better for me and I can feel happy.

Marie: When did you ... when did you become involved in this uh... like hippie communities in Dali? How long? Were you like that in high school for example?

Yan: Before, in high school I just study and go out to hippie community but maybe around nineteen, twenty years old... I meet some artist so they show me some this life, these community and their work so... I say "Wow", so beautiful. Some people stay in city just work, work, work. Every day, work. and just make money. I think it's not really life but I meet these artists. They spend time with (incomprehensible). They do something. I say "Wow, simple life". They just...uh... simple and happy life. And can do something. The people can do hand maid, play guitar and also can do flowers. I think "Wow, what a nice life" Why, why I think maybe I need to try something like this. And my friend also told me, "you need to go traveling, you can see some different things, it's amazing, you need to try". So, when I'm around nineteen, twenty years old... I started traveling by myself.

Marie: You started travelling around this time.

Yan: Yeah... I keep travelling and I feel it's better.

Marie: That's interesting that there is a hippie... like... from my point of view... I don't see hippies from China, I never know it was a thing.

Yan: You need to go Dali to see more. You can also see in Chengdong.

Marie: Oh, yeah? Is it the capital of hippie in Dali?

Yan: No but if you go to the main street market you can also see more the hippie living in the country side. Live around Dali not in the main town... so sometimes if you want to go... you need to go visit. They just spend simple life...yeah.

Marie: Are there hippies from all over the world or just Chinese hippie?

Yan: Some hippies also from Europe country and married in there and uh... yeah... spend a simple life. I think Dali is very interesting, Dali is very small like uh ... Have you been to Thailand?

Marie: Yes

Yan: By... a by... north part. It's like very simple life. But Dali, many people can speak English in Dali.

Marie: I was in Lijiang, I don't know why I didn't choose to go to Dali but I'll probably go next September I think.

Yan: If you come to Dali, I can probably show you some things.

Marie: Cool... thanks, I'd love too.

Yan: I can take you to some local place and some traditional culture.

Marie: I'd love to. I have you and Mei to show me around now. (Laugh). Uh... would you say that your trip and especially your travels in India is like a life changing experience for you?

Yan: Yeah

Marie: How?

Yan: So... because last night I already tell you... always delay, delay, delay. Before I was really... I do something very fast, very worried... but now I'm ok... I changed a lot. I also I become vegetarian

Marie: You became vegetarian on the trip?

Yan: Yeah.

Marie: It has to be hard to become vegetarian in China, because there is a lot of meat in Chinese food.

Yan: But uh... you can choose if you don't need it. You cannot eat.

Marie: Where did it happen, where did you choose to become a vegetarian?

Yan: Because I always meet some vegetarian friend. They show me a lot... I said to myself "Maybe I don't need meat" I can try... so now... I don't eat meet.

Marie: In Hampi and Goa, you met people like that?

Yan: Not really but before, my friend stayed Cambodia, Cambodia's friend, they are not vegetarian they are vegan, no egg, no milk. They showed me a lot... "You can try" that's what they said. So now I think I can do. In China also have some vegetarian website so you can see more.

Marie: Oh... so we can learn more about that.

Yan: So... I think I can do so I don't eat meet.

Marie: You became vegetarian in India?

Yan: Yeah.

Marie: Was it hard?

Yan: No... I enjoy it because I love India food, most people say... India food is terrible, always, always curry but I think it's good, every day with Dosa and chai. And my name is Lu... Alu Gobi is same with potato. I really like potato so I enjoy Indian food. I don't need meat.

Marie: Who said Indian food was not good?

Yan: Before, some Chinese guy said to me. "it's terrible" but for me... it's good. I enjoying the simple life.

Marie: So that was a trip that changed your life. So you just... you are pretty much in Nepal... you are transferring in Nepal? Yan: Yeah... yeah...

Marie: You come to take your flight to go to Kunming?

Yan: Yes, because I need to go see my grand-mother

Marie: And then you are gonna stay until the summer in Dali and then fly to Europe?

Yan: Yeah

Marie: And uh... you know... my PhD is a little bit about that, uh... cause... when I was twenty-one I took a trip to the US and I went to the Middle East... you know the Middle East, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan. Just before the war... and uh... it really changed my perspective on my country... like... it really changed the way I look at France and things that I love and things that I don't like. And you... now that you have been travelling... like what's the thinking, the thoughts you had on China, and on being... outside China. Do you see China differently, do you see life differently in China... do you have think about that?

Yan: Uh... sorry once again...

Marie: uh... no problem... you know when you are away from your daily life... From your life, your routine, your life every day in your country, you think about it, you learn, you realize things that maybe you didn't know before about your country, about your life. Has it happened to you during this trip?

Yan: Yeah, yeah... how to say... before in my... I think... my... my... my life is good because just one baby, in my parents so they take care of me a lot, gave me a lot but travelling is different, you can see the local people, some the people spend a simple life they just live in wooden house. And you think "How is it possible?". And uh... before I was in Goa I was in... a bus... a local. A very simple bus and the day is very hot... hot I think the girl is very thirsty and uh... the health is not good. (she mimics someone fainting)

Marie: Oh... she fainted...

Yan: Yeah... so I'm like "oh my god", in India, you see many different things, the people in Mumbai and in the big city, people is very rich. When you arrive at Mumbai airport... oh my god... how possible, very rich, very different... But you go some local place like Kerala and Hampi. Before I meet some nomad, they live just in the grass, with cows. Yeah... so... how to say it's very different.

Marie: There is a contrast... big contrast between very very rich and very very poor.

Yan: Yes, yes...

Marie: In China, there is nothing like that?

Yan: Actually, I didn't visit so many places in China. I just visit few places. Not travelling a lot. I went to Guanzhou, Shanghai, Guizhou. Just few places. But I stay in Yunnan, stay in Dali. I feel, yeah... it's good because the tourist place, they can make money and...

Marie: Yeah... people are not poor in Yunnan. And you have the tea too.

Yan: So I can feel a lot... maybe this time... when I go back to my country I need to see more.

Marie: You want to travel more in China?

Yan: Yes, to see more local place. I want to help some poor child, show some of my travelling experience.

Marie: Share your experience.

Yan: Because... China... Yunnan very close to South East Asia so I can easily travel. If I travel to some big city, it will be very expensive. Before I was in Shanghai... I feel... wow... very expensive.

Marie: And during your trip, did you encounter any racism toward you?

Yan: What?

Marie: Racism... like oh... your Chinese... uh... Did you meet people that were like...oh...? Chinese...

Yan: No, but I meet some Chinese but no so many Chinese because I travelling some hippies' places, not tourists' part. Also, not so many Chinese.

Marie: In Goa, not many Chinese?

Yan: I meet some Chinese... also artist living in Goa, we connect and it was very good. Not just take photo Chinese kind of people

Marie: Not many tourist Chinese in India?

Yan: No, maybe because for them very hard to travelling in India, maybe Chinese people more like travelling in Thailand, it's easier and how to say... cheaper and the transport very good.

Marie: What was the best experience you had experience...

Yan: Experience for me. I went to a ceremony, but just open ceremony, very simple... but wow... first time see... every people in a circle and then we all sat down and the place have chillum, but here and people sit here and there is meditation. The place does sun healing... I don't know how to say in English the instrument.

Marie: They ring the gong...

Yan: Yeah, yeah. And the people do meditation in there and the guy guide during the trip and the healing process. Sun healing trip... so nice. And after the people jammed together, drum jammed. I don't know how to say but for me it's special experience... I like to see different ceremony. I don't like just travelling and take photo. Sometimes I don't... when I travelling... I don't like to take so many photos. I like to feel.

Marie: You like to feel more than take pictures. Do you take pictures though? Just a little bit, for WeChat?

Yan: This time, just a little... for WeChat, I take only one photo. Only one photo I take in India. Just one to send to my mom and dad to say that I'm good. But uh... I use my camera but I just take a little

Marie: oh... not your phone. You have a camera. But my phone is not good... I cannot take so many photo. But my camera is very old camera. You can see... you need to go back home and choose film... Very old camera. Not digital camera.

Marie: Film camera.

Yan: Yeah, film camera

Marie: Do you like that... film camera?

Yan: Because it will be a surprised when you go back home and get the photo. You should try.

Marie: And have you met... because it's kind of weird... I'm gonna tell you... since I have been here I have interviewing a lot of Chinese travelers and all the people I have interviewed are girls... are women... I haven't met a man who is a Chinese long-term travelers. Do you... have you... Have you seen Chinese backpackers in your trip?

Yan: You mean men... Not too much

Marie: Where are they?

Yan: Actually, I don't know why...

Marie: it's weird right? I'm only interviewing girls... I cannot find a backpacker man from China.

Yan: Yeah... this time I also travelling I meet girl, Chinese girls

Marie: Me too

Yan: I don't know why.

Marie: This is weird right... They don't travel maybe?

Yan: They also travelling but my friend, he stayed in Goa. Also have some hippie and nomad travelling but not travelling so much, just short visit... Maybe you go Thailand you can meet more...

Marie: Maybe. Do you like this place?

Yan: Yeah, it's a good place but last day I want to go other side. Very quiet to the monkey temple. Very very nice.

Marie: Yeah... tomorrow it's gonna be crazy for Holi, you know... color festival

Yan: Actually I don't like crazy festival. I like the festival same like workshop, you can share with other people and other people can show you. Same like workshop because you can connect with different people. You can get more and other people can also get more. Can I have you Facebook, can we exchange? (She mostly uses Facebook to communicate unlike most of the interviewee I had).

FANG

Marie: So... how long have you been traveling for?

Fang: Until now, two years and one month

Marie: Two years and one month... ok... so where did you study? Beijing

Fang: Yeah yeah, all in Beijing from primary to university

Marie: And then, did you work after?

Fang: Yeah, I work actually half year, yeah, then I quit my job

Marie: Why, you didn't like?

Fang: Yeah, I didn't like because the job is like sit down in office and then, no some technology job. I only did accounting.

Marie: Accounting

Fang: Yeah, I think I don't like it

Marie: And then, what did you do? You started traveling?

Fang: You know working holiday?

Marie: Yeah

Fang: I went to Australia I did one year working holiday there

Marie: Nice, where?

Fang: uh... Australia

Marie: Yes, but where in Australia?

Fang: Sidney, Melbourne, Alice Spring, Darwin, Cairns

Marie: Everywhere

Fang: Still Perth, I haven't been

Marie: To Perth?

Fang: Yeah, I haven't been there

Marie: What kind of job did you do there?

Fang: Mostly farm job

Marie: Did you like it?

Fang: uh... some of... some of them I like but it's hard than maybe I quit, maybe they fired me. And I would change to another job. And last job in Alice spring it was a mango farm.

It was a nice job because after mango season, I still could work in a shop, operating the shop

Marie: Ok, nice. And then after Australia, you got some money?

Fang: Yeah, I saved some money and I started traveling

Marie: So where have you been after Australia?

Fang: After Australia, I went to Bali, Indonesia and then back to China, my mom said, "I miss you, come back home". Then I think I should go back, then I went back for a week, my mom was just playing her phone every day. Even she didn't talk a lot with me. I think "ok, maybe she doesn't miss me..." and I left. I went to South of China: Guanxi. I was a volunteer there for a month. There I met her (Yang Xia) and after one month I went to South East Asia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand then, actually I met some friends in Thailand.

Marie: From Australia?

Fang: No, no, no in Thailand, I met a friend. And she tells me, there is a job to be a translator in Africa, then I think... maybe I can try, then I flew to India. India after twenty days I went to Kenya and then fly back to China

Marie: You have been to places. How did it go in Africa, did the job work?

Fang: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

Marie: Are you gonna go back?

Fang: Yes, I think I want to go back but actually, I have been thinking because the leader, he told me I just be a translator but when I was there, he told me you are the translator and the tour guide... and you know it was the first time I went to Kenya.

Marie: A tour guide for tourists?

Fang: Yeah (laugh). Anyway, I was a tour guide also

Marie: For group of tourists from China?

Fang: Yes

Marie: Ok

Fang: Yes, and I think it's nice so I'm thinking maybe I can try to be a tour guide there

Marie: How did you meet in Nepal, did she come with you in India or?

Fang: no, no, no, because, she told you she come with another friend from Yunnan to Lhasa and that time I was just back from... I went to Australia three times, so I just came back from the third time and I said. In China I don't know why everyone say "I have to go to Lhasa in your life" So I think I should go there to have a look then...

Marie: So, you have been to Lhasa?

Fang: Yes

Marie: And you met her in... you... you...

Fang: No, actually, she was in Lhasa and I said, ok I come and then when I reach Lhasa, the first night I ask... "where are you?" And she said, "I'm in Kirung, tomorrow I'm gonna go to Nepal" (laugh). Then she left. Then I stayed in Lhasa for a few days.

Marie: Yeah, did you like Lhasa?

Fang: Not really, because, too crowded and uh... you know with this high altitude if it's too crowded I can't breathe, but it's still nice because compared on the road, easier coming in... Because all business people there, you can have whatever you want.

Marie: So how do you pay for your travel? Do you save some money and travel for cheap?

Fang: Yeah, I save some money

Marie: So, you are a backpacker?

Fang: Yes, I'm a backpacker

Marie: What does it mean for you to be a backpacker?

Fang: For me, the meaning backpacker?

Marie: Yeah

Fang: I think just...uh... kind of like decide where you can go in a moment...

Marie: In a moment you can decide whether you go?

Fang: I mean I just decide where I can go, pack my stuff then go... this is backpacking for me I think

Marie: Ok, so you don't have plan?

Fang: Actually, I don't have any plan

Marie: ok... you see whatever happens, ok... And uh... before going to Australia, did you travel in China?

Fang: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Before going to Australia. Actually, before going to Australia I work in an office for half year. I don't know, I think I'm so lucky because the company bring me to... uh... Sri Lanka, Maldives and Philippines.

Marie: Like business trip?

Fang: No, just travel

Marie: With the company?

Fang: kind of like... group

Marie: ok, did you like these travels?

Fang: Yeah, yeah... I think, that's why I think I'm lucky again. Because all the group is very good. I feel comfortable.

Marie: Would you travel again with a group travel?

Fang: Yes, I did because when I came back from Australia, inside China, I traveled with a tour, in Sichuan because it was cheaper.

Marie: It was cheaper to travel with a group in Sichuan?

Fang: Yeah... so I think why not... and the group is nice so. And I met some good friends there.

Marie: Ok, how do you... is it like... in the group... within the group is there only young persons?

Fang: No different... all different. Some people maybe forty, fifty... like some... some had my age and they bring their parents.

Marie: It's interesting because a lot of Chinese backpackers and they don't like group travel because of all the activities and bad restaurants. You are the first one who thinks it's ok.

Fang: yeah... I think so... Maybe I came with a group that is nice, and the food is not bad and the people is nice, especially... I think the tour-guide is very important. Yeah, I think it's good.

Marie: And uh... before that traveling experience with your company in Maldives, Sri Lanka and Philippines, did you do any travel with your parents as a kid?

Fang: Actually no, but I think before I was born (laugh) Before I was born I think my mom and my dad they travel but after I was born, actually I didn't travel with them and they only bring me to... because I was born in Beijing, they only bring me to like the Forbidden City

Marie: More like a day trip.

Fang: Yeah.

Marie: And so, your first travel was with your company?

Fang: But inside China I traveled with my friends

Marie: Oh... you traveled with your friends inside China before going abroad?

Fang: Yeah.

Marie: So, what was your first country abroad?

Fang: First country?

Marie: Outside China that you visited?

Fang: The Maldives

Marie: The Maldives, what did you do?

Fang: I think, at that moment, I didn't know how to swim but I got the life jacket and I stayed in the ocean all afternoon by myself. Only to see the fish...

Marie: You were snorkeling?

Fang: yes, snorkeling, only to see the fish there...

Marie: Did you get burn?

Fang: No because I wore the suit, the suit, so I didn't get burn, I wore even the shoes.

Marie: Do you like to be tan?

Fang: Actually, I was tan so I think I don't mind but I think it's not good for my skin, so I try to be... to wear sunscreen protection.

Marie: So, when did you learn how to swim?
 Fang: uh... when I was in Australia because I did...uh... exchange accommodation-food. Like a helper. When I just reach there, I did one-month helper. Almost every family, they have a swimming pool so if I'm free, I would jump in the swimming pool
 Marie: So, they taught you how to swim?
 Fang: Yeah, kind off. My friends still there.
 Marie: Your Australian friend?
 Fang: No, no, she is... we go together to Australia.
 Marie: Did you meet a lot of locals?
 Fang: Yeah, yeah, yeah and the third time when I was in Australia, the local people, we traveled together because he had a car... then we did a road trip for twenty days but... because uh... he is... tent... you know tent?
 Marie: Yeah
 Fang: So everyday tent so a little bit tired, every day, setting the tent. But it's nice.
 Marie: Is it possible to do that in China? Like a road trip with a tent?
 Fang: I think not really, yeah, because when I just came back, I try to find but most parks say no. There are signs that say: no tent.
 Marie: You have been to Pokhara?
 Fang: Pokhara? yeah, yeah, yeah
 Marie: Have you been to the Juicery cafe?
 Fang: no
 Marie: The lady that has this café, she is Chinese and she went to Australia and now she is Australian because they offer the citizenship. So, Australia... did you learn how to surf in Australia?
 Fang: I learn it in Bali
 Marie: In Bali? Do you like it?
 Fang: Yeah but I don't know how to surf...
 Marie: You don't know
 Fang: Even if I learn because the teacher only taught me one hour then after you need to practice but... uh... I just learn one hour and the next day I came again and I feel my hand all burn because of the, you know the surfing board because of the wrong..
 Marie: wax?
 Fang: Yeah, maybe the wrong wax and I didn't learn anymore. Very big burn like something burnt you
 Marie: Did you... did you surf in Sri Lanka?
 Fang: No
 Marie: Because it was with your company?
 Fang: Yeah.
 Marie: So... a question: what was it like to be outside of China for the first? When you went to the Maldives for example...
 Marie: Was it exciting how did you...
 Fang: Yeah, actually it was exciting because I live in Beijing and there is no ocean and I think I like ocean a lot
 Marie: Was it the first time you saw the ocean?
 Fang: Yeah, yeah, I think the first time. Blue, wild, you couldn't see the far away (horizon). And I came there the night time and the local people told me... can you see the dolphins there? It was dark, I couldn't see anything. They tell me "Can you see the big fish?". Where is it? (laugh) So I think I like the first time... excited...
 Marie: Was it at that time that you started thinking about maybe... traveling a lot... like... changing maybe... because, you studied to be an accountant, so where you are today is very different from what you are supposed to be which: an accountant in Beijing. When did you start thinking about changing your life for something rather different?
 Fang: I think when I decide to go to Australia. But the reason, not because I want to start traveling but because I wanted to quit my job.
 Marie: To quit...

Fang: Yeah, and uh, I think it's a chance because I know the boss and the boss was in our school, we knew each other and he invited me, actually when I finished college, he invited me to his company to help, yeah... then I think I don't like the job but I couldn't say I didn't like it and I got the visa at that moment. I thought it is a time for change.
 Marie: So, you started traveling more because you didn't like the job more than because you wanted to travel?
 Fang: Yes, I think so. And... yeah...
 Marie: And so, when did traveling become like a part of your life? When do you think it became your life to travel?
 Fang: From Australia because it is kind of, you cannot stop. I don't know. When I was in Laos I think I should go further, further, further. Than you can't stop. If you... if I stop like I go home for a week, I still want to go outside and move... keep moving. I want to see more.
 Marie: Do you see yourself maybe one day living back in Beijing?
 Fang: uh... yeah... no... I'm not sure (laugh).
 Marie: And during your travels... in general, what... what is the... I know there is no typical day, every day is different
 Fang: Yeah, every day is different
 Marie: But what do you usually do? Do you like to swim, do you do sports? Visit museum or temples? Anything.
 Fang: I think every country has a different... like typical thing. Like in Nepal, most of the temples... and also there is the view, the landscape... yeah... I just ... some popular, lots of people go to these places and if I meet some locals, they will bring me to some beautiful place
 Marie: So, you like to visit beautiful places
 Fang: Yes, yes...
 Marie: What kind of experience do you try to do?
 Fang: Pardon?
 Marie: Like experience: like live with a family, or try new sports like surfing, or... learning how to swim.
 Fang: Yes, I think I like to try new... try new things...
 Marie: Did you do paraglide in Pokhara?
 Fang: No, I didn't, I think I did the sky diving... I think it's similar. I don't know, I think it's similar. You know I did fishing in Pokhara because of a local friend. He wants to do fishing and he invited me
 Marie: Cool
 Fang: But we only got a shell (laugh) The whole morning and we just got a shell. And there is a fishing guy and he told me "a lot of people, cause the paragliding dive in the water"
 Marie: Yeah, yeah
 Fang: That's why I though I'm lucky I didn't go!
 Marie: So... what... can you tell me... if you can... can you tell me one of your most memorable travel experience?
 Fang: Most memorable?
 Marie: Like one of them... one of the best experience you had.
 Fang: Now, I'm thinking maybe close one is recently I went to Pokhara to do the ABC trekking, I think it was the most memorable for me
 Marie: Why?
 Fang: Because... it is a long time walking and it's my first-time trekking... Yeah, it's my first time trekking and in China we have a word: "You don't know and you don't fail, you don't know the thing and you don't fail". It's like... I don't know, the trekking is maybe dangerous and I just go without porters, without guide, without like a map... yeah... just follow the people and just keep going and... yeah... The first time I realize I could stop I like walking. I think it's the first time I realize I can start something, the real stuff. Like... I... after seven hours of walking, I settled down in a hostel and when I see people cross us, in my heart I still want to keep going. In my heart, some voice tells me "I want to walk, I don't want to sit here".

Marie: Keep moving... would you... would you consider doing a walking travel?

Fang: Walking travel? I don't think so... I don't know just I that moment, like I really wanted to walk, I don't want to sit here. Maybe I don't want to sleep the whole night I just want to walk.

Marie: Go to the top...

Fang: Yes, just like that.

Marie: You had never done trekking before?

Fang: Only short one. Like I have done hitch-hiking from Chengdu to Lhasa but the first day we walk fifteen kilometers. But I didn't want to walk anymore at that moment. Because it was hot, dusty... so Yes, it's different

Marie: Walking in the mountain is definitely different, yeah.

Fang: And especially I enjoy when I walk alone.

Marie: Because...

Fang: I don't know why, just the feeling

Marie: Did you still meet people on the trek?

Fang: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I go there with a friend, yeah. Three... three and another Chinese lady. One lady is a little bit older but we told her maybe you should go back. Because, one day we waited for her for three hours in the end of the station and I think maybe she is a little bit older, she couldn't finish.

Marie: And two other girls from China as well?

Fang: Another girl, she went to the ABC with me.

Marie: Did you meet anybody from other countries?

Fang: Yeah, yeah, the first day, I met a German, a girl from Germany and after three days, we all walk together but she only came here for four days. She did a small circle. Now she went back and we kept going. Yes, it's nice.

Marie: How... do you like to meet other travelers from other countries?

Fang: Yes, I like, I don't know because I... just me feeling like when I speak English it's not me. It's not like in Chinese, it's different. It's a different feeling like I am a different person

Marie: I have the exact same feeling

Fang: Yes, I feel like I'm more different, different from I'm a Chinese person.

Marie: Dual personality

Fang: Yeah, yeah, yeah

Marie: Yes, I feel more outgoing

Fang: Yes, exactly, kind of more open.

Marie: Yeah!

Fang: Yeah! But I don't know why I feel it's not me I can do whatever I want but actually it's you

Marie: Yes, but it still not you, kind of. I completely understand what you are saying.

Marie: So how long have you been in Nepal for?

Fang: Twenty, twenty-five days, around twenty-five days.

Marie: How long do you have still?

Fang: uh... I don't know...

Marie: You visa is...

Fang: I did extend

Marie: For like three months?

Fang: One month... every time only one month. But I think I'm going back soon

Marie: To... Beijing?

Fang: To Xinjiang

Marie: Next trip is Xinjiang?

Fang: Yes, because I met a girl from Xinjiang in Laos... in uh Vietnam, yes, last year and she ask me to go to Xinjiang to visit her. And she said to me "I have been waiting for you for a long time, when do you come back? When are you coming?"

Marie: So, you have to go?

Fang: yes

Marie: Are you going to fly?

Fang: No, take bus

Marie: To the border

Fang: Yes, to the border then Lhasa then I take the train I think to Xining, yes...

Marie: It's a hell of a trip. How many days?

Fang: Maybe I stay in Lhasa for one or two nights. It's not far because today, if I take the bus from Kathmandu to Kirung, in the afternoon I arrive tomorrow morning and then I can take another train back to Lhasa. Maybe three days to Lhasa. And maybe two days to Xining.

Marie: And so, in Nepal, you have done... Pokhara?

Fang: Pokhara, Kathmandu

Marie: ABC

Fang: ABC, yeah

Marie: And Lumbini

Fang: Lumbini, yes...

Marie: Have you been to Chitwan?

Fang: Chitwan, no not yet... they tell me there is some animal safari there.

Marie: Yes

Fang: Do you know Masai Mara?

Marie: Yes

Fang: It's why I think Masai Mara is really good, it's enough for me

Marie: I bet, Masai Mara is so beautiful.

Fang: But you know, I was in Masai Mara and almost got lost because the driver, the driver I don't know maybe he was too old, I saw the map, we drive... we drive on our way back at five a clock, at five pm and the driver just drive another way and I say, ok maybe we can see that... another view, different from the other days. And just follow the driver and after few minutes... I think it's wrong because there is no animals there and all the field is flat... and ok, I check the map... Google map, I didn't have a sim card but still I can use it. And I check the map and it's the wrong way you know, it was the way to Uganda. And I talk to the driver... "I think it's the wrong way, the way to Uganda" and the driver say "I have been a driver for fourteen years, how can I be wrong" so I say "ok maybe you are right" because I don't have a sim card maybe the map is wrong. After twenty minutes, I still thinks it's the wrong way and I was angry, yelling to him "Now you must stop, you got the wrong way!" And I think he realized he got the wrong way because it has been a long time since we saw the main road. And I say, "now you follow me". And I just look at the map, around... five o'clock almost dark and we have to go outside at six pm and it's already dark, and I'm also angry because all the tourists are in the car.

Marie: Of course, you are responsible for them

Fang: Yes, and I ask him... if they couldn't go outside what can we do? And he says "Maybe we can just sleep in the car." "No food... no food"... and he says: "oh, the petrol is... almost no petrol". He made me scared that's why I'm so angry and follow the map, I stand on my chair, turn left, turn right, turn left. Anyway, around eight we found the main road and another two cars and we go to the big uh... hotel.

Marie: The lodges

Fang: Yes, the lodges and ask them the main way. Then we go back. Yeah, I think the driver is a little bit back because I say to him maybe we ask them to get some petrol because if no petrol, it's like... you are just like the food waiting for animals. Yeah! (laugh) and he said, no it's enough. So yes, I think a little bad. Anyway, around eight thirty, we reached our lodge. Another angry because the leader is drinking there. No one called us, you know, we have a group... we are a group and they are celebrating with the other three or four cars and no one called, no one messages us. And the leader is drinking there and he was almost drunk. I was so angry. It's a sad story. But you know... yeah.

Marie: And when you travel, how do you choose the places where you stayed? Do you book online previous or do you in place and you pick a hotel?

Fang: Most time I book on booking then I choose the better one then if I met friends, and they tell me a good place to stay, yeah, then I join them

Marie: So, if you have friends in advance you join them, otherwise, you book on booking. Have you... what are your impressions on Nepal, on this country?

Fang: Impression?

Marie: Yes, impression like, how do you feel about Nepal?

Fang: Outside the mountain? or the people? I think I like here because people like me

Marie: really?

Fang: Because, I don't know, people are saying... yeah, people are saying, you are beautiful every day. Not every day but when you meet people, they will say

Marie: You are beautiful?

Fang: yes

Marie: So, you like that?

Fang: Yes.

Marie: Of course. And why did you choose to come to Lumbini?

Fang: Because I was supposed to home, go back to China and she told me Lumbini... This is her second time here and she said, maybe I should go have a look of Lumbini, all the temple there. And she was staying in the Korean temple there, it' nice there... yeah...

Marie: Did you stay at all in the Chinese temple at all or not?

Fang: No, I didn't... I just went there for dinner... uh... for lunch

Marie: ok, you didn't want to stay in the Chinese temple?

Fang: Yes, I think they are a little bit rude to me. And to my friend.

Marie: Really?

Fang: Like yesterday, you went to chanting? and before there was an Australian guy? and we went there all together and they only let Chinese go inside. And yeah, the Australian, the friend he was waiting outside. Kind of like, foreigners have to stay outside. Even for chanting. Actually, when I went to the lunch, they were saying to me: "Ok you can come now, now is the lunch time, and like... no way... no talking... and you can't wear shoes, like everyone is without shoes and we can't wear shoes to go outside. I don't know it's a feeling you know. I think everyone should be treated the same there. Kind of like "fake" temple.

Marie: Really

Fang: I don't maybe I just felt like there were rude.

Marie: If you are not Chinese, you mean, they are a little rude or even if they are Chinese they are rude.

Fang: Even with Chinese they are rude. Maybe temple would be seriously. Maybe they are rude.

Marie: They have a lot of rooms, they could have a lot of people staying there.

Fang: Yeah, yeah, there are still many Chinese staying there. They told me because the people that are staying there, they said maybe around ten guests.

Marie: ok... and how do you like Lumbini? Do you like it?

Fang: Yes, I think I enjoy the Korean temple here, more freedom.

Marie: And have you visited the complex? the temples and stuff?

Fang: yes, almost all temples

Marie: And what do you think of it?

Fang: Actually, I don't have a religion, I just know the buildings are beautiful other, I don't know anymore. Like the Buddhist, even I went to the Mahadevi temple, where the Buddha was born. I don't know, I just went there. So maybe I couldn't feel anymore feeling

Marie: This Korean temple is so relax

Fang: Peaceful, relax, beautiful and flower smelling. It's clean and the room is is tall, no pressure, you have food. I'm just lazy

Marie: So... to go back to your travel experiences... what do your parents think about your life? or your travel?

Fang: My parents? I think for them, because I'm outside, they have no choice. I'm already here and, they have no choice but they want me to go back because my mom always talks to me about going back: "When are you coming back?" They want me to go back but I think they want me to go back to the same kind of normal life, like working, married, you have babies. Then the baby growing then you die.

Marie: Is that the life you want?

Fang: Yes, I think I want

Marie: You want this life?

Fang: I don't know (laugh), I want the life and the travel.

Marie: Life and traveling.

Fang: Travel all together, it's normal life... I don't know.

Marie: How do you think you... because if you didn't travel with you parents, do you... do you think you learn how to travel?

Fang: Learnt?

Marie: Yeah

Fang: uh...

Marie: Do you think human beings learn how to travel?

Fang: I think maybe human beings they know how to travel. Like they are living. Even like at home...

Marie: Your parents they never traveled?

Fang: they travel... yes, they never traveled but it's like. You met people, just another place. Same like you meet people at home, I think...

Marie: They tell you about their stories and you move to the next.

Fang: Through communication... you communicate

Marie: And uh... is it important for you to travel abroad?

Fang: Travel abroad? What does that mean, abroad?

Marie: Outside of China

Fang: Yes! I told you when I speak English I'm like another one!

Marie: But is it good? Do you like it?

Fang: Yes, I like it, I like it, I think it's nicer than when I speak Chinese. Sometimes I think maybe people think I'm strange. When I just came back from Kenya, I did braiding... all my hair. I try to communicate with other people. I try to know the way where I can go and, in a hurry, I just say "Excuse me" and people were scared of me.

Marie: Where?

Fang: In China.

Marie: So, people in China were scared of you because you had bread?

Fang: And I was tan

Marie: oh... ok

Fang: So maybe it made them scared. But I ask another guy and he was good. He told me take a taxi and I got on the ferry.

Marie: How... would you say traveling was... changed your life?

Fang: Yeah, I think it changed me... yes, changed me a lot because I speak English, that changes a lot... you know. Yeah, even some opinion, yeah...

Marie: like what kind of opinion?

Fang: Like I want to keep traveling, nothing can stop me. I think like before I was thinking maybe my mom saying it's right I should go back and now I think I'm more independent...

Marie: Independent?

Fang: Independent, yes, yes...

Marie: More independent, you know you want to make your choice for yourself?

Fang: Yes, yes. And I know what I want now because like, before I think... I just had no interest in anything and I didn't know what I want, I was just like zombie.

Marie: You were a zombie? Nice way of putting things.

Fang: I think it's much better than before. Like I know today I want to eat this food. I just want to eat, no reason. Maybe to simple, this is an example.

Marie: It's interesting that it doesn't change your life it changes you

Fang: It changed me then maybe it changed my life to be more of quality.

Fang: I think I meet people and I know a lot about their life. I met... because everyone is different, if I know them, it's kind of like I know another life... I know all of them, now I know which one I should choose

Marie: Because you have more options?

Fang: Yeah, yeah, if I only know... I didn't meet any people, I only know this, I have no choice.

Marie: Well... Have you had any unusual experience in Nepal? Something that surprised you. This is my last question.

Fang: ok... Nepal people is too patient... too welcoming for me. That's unusual for me. Especially the boy

Marie: How

Fang: Just like I'm at the... the guy maybe like only fifteen minutes, then they will say I love you, kind of like that. I think it's unusual

Marie: It is a little unusual I have to say.

Fang: And you know we use WeChat and they... he asked me WeChat and he just talks to me and he says "when you are coming, I love you, I want to live with you forever" like that

Marie: Nepal is the perfect place to find a husband.

Fang: But, but I like people with...shoes...

Marie: with what?

Fang: With shoes (laugh)

Marie: Ok, well thank you so much. It was really interesting listening to you

Fang: Yeah, that's another thing I wanted to say. Like my mom, she is scared of everything. You know evolution. What is it called? Lift... you know lift

Marie: Lift, yeah...

Fang: Even she is scared... so I want to bring her travel too.

Marie: Is it a project to bring your mom in your travel?

Fang: Yeah yeah... I always ask her. When do you want to come? She always says: "When you come back, you bring me". (laugh) You bring me

Marie: Where would you take her?

Fang: Maybe ocean, to the ocean... Thailand

Marie: She has never seen the ocean?

Fang: Only the one close to China. The ocean is Bohai. But the ocean is not like the blue, beautiful... I want to show her the beautiful

Marie: Thailand is an easy country to go?

Fang: Yeah, it's very easy to go, very easy to be there...

Fang: I think so

Marie: You are going to be the mother and she is going to be the child

Fang: Always... you know at home always, you have to take care of her... so busy.

ANNEXE 3 :

RETRANSCRIPTIONS

DES ENTRETIENS EN

CHINE

FANG

R1: ...
R2: Actually the first trip is to Dalian, I try to remember maybe it's Dalian, by the train. When I was in university. I think the second class.
R1: Second class of university?
R2: Yes, I went to Dalian
R1: Can they turn down the music?
R2: I ask... From Beijing, here Beijing. But I don't know which way on the map
R1: That's ok, just like, you take the train?
R2: Yeah I take the train... I just do...
R1: no just follow the... not the road... but just follow the
R2: the train...I'm not really sure.
R1: That's ok, just...
[149,3]R2: With my university class... we went to there
R1: With your university class?
R2: Classmates
R1: What did you do in Dalian?
R2: We just travel. Because at that moment, we were all students, we got the discount, half price
R1: Oh, so that was cheap. What is there to do in Dalian?
R2: There is the ocean. You know it's close to the ocean. We just stayed there two days. And my classmates come from Zhejiang, and she... her... her high school friend is in Dalian. Kind of visit. Another... I go to Qingdao... it's here...
R1: In train?
R2: Yes, still in train... still in train, I go with my mom, I went with my mom. We just go to spend time there, still see the ocean and... my mom rent a motorcycle on the sea...
R1: Like jetski?
R2: Jet ski?
R1: It's a motorcycle but on the sea
R2: Jetski yeah. On the water yeah... But someone take her.
R1: How long did you stay in Qingdao?
R2: We spend four days there. Four days... and I went to Taishan
R1: Taishan?
R2: You know Shandong... Taishan... Also by train, when I was in... when I was in University, I go with my high school classmates. We were five people and we go to climb the mountain overnight
R1: No... really?
R2: From 10pm to the morning 5 am and we see the sunset, the new sunset... but only cloud
R1: Only clouds... and is it popular to do that?
R2: Yes it's popular, a lot of people do that... At night time they climb the mountain.
R1: Ok.
R2: And also with the same classmates we went to Tianjin, just for... nothing... just spent two days there for eating, or spent time together
R1: To see the eye of Tianjin?

R2: Yes, but no one went there. We just see that, just look. Eat some Tianjin traditional food. And when I was working for a company, the company tell me to go to Inner Mongolia, this kind of travel... do you think I ?
R1: Yeah, yeah, yeah, sure... did you work there?
R2: You mean in Mongolia? Yeah
R1: Maybe change the color... Like a different color
R2: So we still take the train to Mongolia. west Mongolia... Mongolia is so big. Not too far, just... this is Inner Mongolia...
R1: Which city?
R2: Oh... Duosi... it's close to this area, so I just stop there. Yeah... there was the desert and there is a city, they built the house, the real house, not apartment but there is no one there. We said it's a ghost city because no one is living there (She is referring to Ordos-Kangbashi) . Nothing there, only the desert.
R1: Why? Because nothing grows?
R2: Yeah, there is nothing there and the people come to the big city to earn money, so all the people move out...
R1: Uh... so it's like a ghost town
R2: yeah.. a ghost town. It's a town but no one is there. I pass through there.. I saw the city, I saw the house there... So beautiful... beautiful house but no one there but it's so dark
R1: It might be a strange feeling
R2: They say it's ghost city. Maybe I'm not close...
R1: Why did you go for your company work?
R2: For... I work an accountant agency, so thereto check on the staff... is it enough in quality... if any problem, I have got to tell the company.
[572,0]R1: Did you go in the north?
R2: No, that's all. Then I went to Ningbo... still by train. Because one of my friend come from Zhejiang... both... they are two, so we went to Ningbo together. And Hangzhou.
R1: Hangzhou... yes... of course...
R2: And Hangzhou...
R1: I think Hangzhou is here, it's really close... It's between Ningbo and Shanghai. And there was like... week-end or a week?
R2: A week. Or maybe four or five days. You know we had international festival in October first... we have around four or five days. But it's totally different from the north. I mean the food... because they eat see food there. Everyday. Everyday they have sea food and they got soup. But in the north, we not really have soup at dinner. And the last year of my university. I went to Xiamen, still by train, I think it took me forty hours on a seat... thirty-two hours on a seat.
R1: Oh my god.
R2: It's a little bit crazy...
R1: What did you do in Xiamen?
R2: I went to Xiamen with a university classmate, we just visit there... actually we took the decision of going in two days. We were doing a part job in Beijing then we said... before we start class again, maybe... we decided to go to Xiamen, it's very south... we had never been there
R1: What did you do? How long did you stay?
R2: Five days probably. It was cheap, it only cost around 300 yuans, it's very cheap.
R1: And so in Xiamen... you... you eat...
R2: Yeah, we just visited the city
R1: Is it really different from Beijing?
R2: Yeah... it's more like... the weather is different at that time... it's March, around March and it's not cold there. In Beijing, it's cold and you know... there is an island... There is an island that is very popular and we took the boat to the island and we go back.
R1: Would you go to the beach there?
R2: The beach?
R1: Yeah, on the island

R2: The island is called Gulanyu (a 5A scenic spot)
R1: Gulanyu... but do you go to the beach or...
R2: No we didn't go to the beach... it's like a small city on an island. Then we spent some time there and then we go to Zhazhou by bus, we take a bus to Zhazhou, there is a very old culture, all the people live in round building
R1: ok
R2: There the building is like a circle and the family is living in the first, the second or the third. I'm not really sure how many families but they live in there. In the round house, like the whole family.
R1: So like traditional living
R2: Yeah
R1: Cool.
R2: And then... I didn't go other places.
R1: That is when you had vacations... you were not in university anymore?
R2: It is when I had vacation in university.
R1: But this last one is when you worked?
R2: Actually, it was in the fourth year of university.
R1: Like an internship.
R2: Only this one, Qingdao is last month. Qingdao... I went with my mom. And then I flew from Guangzhou to go back.
R1: By plane.
R2: oh... and another one... sorry I forgot this one. uh... Guilin... Guanxi... Guangzhou
R1: Guilin... there.. so you have been to Guilin?
R2: Yes
R1: By plane?
R2: By train. It was last year. I went to Australia then I came back but I flew back to Beijing, then I thought I spent time with my mom and then I went to Guilin to be a volunteer there. There is a very popular hostel and they want somebody to book for them and they want a volunteer. So... Yeah... I said, maybe I go there, maybe I will be a volunteer for one month there cause it's an easy job.
R1: That was after Australia?
R2: Yeah, after my first year in Australia but...
R1: And you said you went to Guangdong?
R2: Yeah. It's the... when I was back from Kenya. It was last year. From Kenya to Guangdong?
R1: You stayed in Guangdong?
R2: Yeah... And I take the train to...
R1: from Guilin?
R2: I take the train to... you know we can take the bus... we can take the train to Nanning... let me see
R1: So you had a stop in Guilin then... Just make a stop there so I know that you stoped in Guilin... how long did you stay in Guilin?
R2: One month
R1: One month, volunteering and cooking.
R2: Yes, then, I met a friend in Guilin?
R1: Isn't Suxi? eh... Yang Chu?
R2: Yang Chu
R1: Yang Chu... you met her in Guilin right?
R2: Suxing, Suxing because she worked there.
R1: I remember you met there... she was also volunteering in...
R2: No, she was staff... I was volunteer, she was staff.
R1: What is the difference?
R2: She worked there, I just volunteer for a month. She worked there for two years. That's the difference
R1: So as a volunteer, you are not paid?
R2: Yes, they don't pay me.
R1: But you get food and accomodation
R2: Yeah, yeah. And then I met another friend, a boy, he is from Sichuan and then we take the train to Nanning and then we took the bus. We took the bus to Hanoi. We stopped in

Hanoi four or five days. Then he goes to the south... He went South, I went north... We separated.
R2: You went to the North of Vietnam
R2: Yes... I went to North Vietnam, I went to Sapa with a Xinjiang girl. I met a Xinjiang girl in Hanoi. In Sapa, the we met another French guy there. So we took a short motorcycle around there. The French guy back to Korea, he studied there and we... the Xinjiang girl with me, we go to Laos from Vietnam.
2 - 20:41 > 40:38 [Travel in Asia]
R1: From Vietnam?
R2: Yes from Vietnam through the borderline. And then we take the bus, the sleeping bus to go to... There is another city there. Then we go to Louang-Prabang. Then... I just write down... Then we met another Chinese couple. They are so different because the boy is my age but the girl is 40 years older. The boy is now 28, the 42 or 43 years old. So it's very different. But they are really lovely. I met the boy in Beijing and I ask a lot of questions... why do you stay with her, why don't you choose other? And... but they are fully in love I think. And we went to Ventiane together then we go down Cambodia.
R1: So Louang-Prabang to Ventiane... That was by bus right?
R2: Yeah, bus then we go to there.
R1: So you go down on the Mekong river
R2: Yes, the Mekong river... there is a place... I forgot the name, a lot of rivers there. (4000 island, South Lao) Then we go down to Cambodia then we visited Cambodia... I mean... what is the... Angkor temple... we visited it and we went down to Phnom Penh... In a Island... is there an island there?
R1: An island? On the coast?
R2: Yeah, then we spent time there... like three days and I met an Italian couple there. They are very old but they spent time there. They set up five tents, one tent costs 10\$ and in the morning you can go to the ocean swimming... it was very good time there.
R1: So you stay with them?
R2: Yes but only one night because I was cold, it was raining. And then with the Xinjiang girl, she was going back to China, I'm going to Thailand, by bus. By bus to Thailand to Bangkok. I spent 7 days... 10 in the same hostel, there.
R1: Where? Is it Khao San?
R2: No, not Kao San... it's a little far, even now it's still the cheapest hostel. Anyway, I spent ten days there, met a lot of Russians.
R1: Russian hostel?
R2: The hostel but a lot of Russians in there, they just drink vodka...
R1: Really
R2: Every night they sit at the table and drink alcohol, they wanted to borrow money from me, I said no. I said I don't have money. And one boy from... looked like a Japanese, he looked like Asian but he came from Russia hitch-hiking. Only real small bag with a tent. Normally he would sleep in tent but in Bangkok, there is nowhere to set up a tent
R1: no, probably not
R2: That's why... and we doesn't have cash... only a card.
R1: A card?
R2: Yes... you have cash and card... I mean... credit card. He only spent money from the credit card. No cash. And he did hitch-hinking from Russia through China and come to Thailand but he didn't speak good English so I didn't talk a lot to him. We live in the same room.
R1: So it was mixed dorms?
R2: Yes, mixed dorm. And there is a... I think a guy from England looks like very strict. He had a serious face for two days, and after two days... one night he got drunk and I met a Chinese girl in the same hostel, and we talked... talked, talked, talked. Then the boy came in and he was so happy...

and he said he talked to a Canada girl and he was going to her hotel tonight. Because everyday he was serious and no talking, no smile

R1: The English guy?

R2: And the last night he was like a girlish boy. Totally different. Then... I just spent 10 days and I went to...

R1: You flew to...

R2: Yes... I flew to Chennai... Chennai is this area...

R1: Yes...

[1700,2]R2: And... Chennai... the first night because I didn't book a hotel so... the first night... actually... the customs... is it customs. When I entered the country, the customs said that... because I didn't book the hotel... because they ask me if I have accomodation they are not going to let me in. So... fortunately I talked to other... traveler beside my seat in the plane. I talked to him and he waited for me there, so I said... tonight I live into my friend's home. So I write his adress and I could get in. But you know it's India, so I'm a little bit worried.

R1: Why?

R2: Maybe he was a good person, maybe he was not a good person. I couldn't go home with him because I just talk to him, I don't know who he is. Yeah... when I passed the customs, I just said good-bye to him and then I used the wif to book a hostel, the closest one. But it was closed.

R1: It was closed... no!

R2: Yes, at 11, I arrived at night and there is a family, a big family they are talking there, there is 4/5 kids. They talked to me... where do you come from? What are you doing here? And they help me to knock on the door but the hostel was still closed. So, a policeman come to ask me where am I going to stay. I just tell him that I want to stay here but they are closed and the policeman brought me to another hostel.

R1: Another one?

R2: Not like hostel, it's like... the Indian people they live there... Indian people from other cities who work here. They rent house... like a rent house. I spent one night there but I couldn't sleep because it was dirty. Really dirty... the mattress was really gross. But I think I was lucky because... even I didn't fall asleep

R1: You got lucky to not be in the street. But you were on your own.

R2: Yeah... I'm on my own. It's a little bit dangerous because the police man is fake

R1: Sure

R2: You know there is fake police men and they bribe you. And the second day, I couldn't stand it. I said, I want to go.

R1: Of course

R2: And the owner, the owner told the police to come and the policeman took me to the bus station and I took the bus to the hostel and I spent time there.

R1: In Chennai? Did you like it? Is it nice? Would you recommend it?

R2: uh... no! Maybe spend one day there, it's enough! Then I met a Chinese girl from Guangzhou. I met her there and we went together. We took the sleeping... we took the bus to Bangalore. And we spent time there in Bangalore. I recommend you spend time there.

R1: You liked it?

R2: Yes.

R1: Why did you like it?

R2: The weather, it's in June so the weather is nice. The streets are more clean, the road because in Chennai, it's dirt road

R1: It's not like proper road

R2: And Chennai is very crowded, maybe it's because it's by the ocean so a lot of people there. I think Indian population is bigger than China

R1: I think, yes...

R2: It's crowded, it's overcrowded, yeah... Bangalore we went to a hostel really nice. If you go there I'll tell you. And we went to a place with all the lama there. It's like, you know, some Tibetan, they move from China to India but a long time ago. So I went there with a guy from Slovenia but he told me Tibetan is independant country but when we went to... his friend is the monk, we visited a monk that was his friend. And we talked, talked, the monk couldn't speak Chinese even if he was Chinese because... He wanted to go back to China, so he want to get a passport from Italy

R1: From Italy? So he can go back to China?

R2: From Delhi, New Delhi.

R1: From New Delhi... But where was he from in China?

R2: He said he was from Qinghai... He only speak one sentence in Chinese... "I come from Qinghai". He couldn't remember his age. Maybe around seventy years and he walk from Tibet to Nepal to India. Long distance.

R1: Indeed

R2: But he study in China because his family is Chinese, but they got their own dialect. They talk by Wechat. That's why he knows his mom got sick and he wanted to go back. But I don't think he can get the Chinese passport. Because he already seventy years old, he doesn't know who he is... yeah. Then we went back to Bangalore, and then I went to Mumbai... no Goa

R1: Goa? oh, I think it's right there.

R2: Yeah... then, ok

R1: By bus?

R2: Yes, by bus... I went to Goa, night bus, and alone, I was a little afraid because, you know they said, in the bus, they can do something

R1: Yes, I know

R2: But I still... Because I...

R1: Transfer

R2: Transfer yes, I didn't know they didn't go straight, they just let me down to take another bus... So I still see the young single lady there waiting for the bus so I'm not too worried. In Goa, I was in Bangalore, my friend from India and I talk to him and he said he wanted to go to Mumbai and I want to go by train. You know the Indian trains are very popular. So I took the train

R1: You took the train? Is it different from Chinese train?

R2: You mean different?

R1: Yeah

R2: It's more old but it didn't look like all the people holding on to the train outside.

R1: It's not like that?

R2: Because, I'm still a little bit afraid so he told me... you can come with me. So I go... I went to Mumbai by train with him. So... we took the train to Mumbai but there was not a lot of people, not very crowded. I ask him: "Is it really that people sit on the top?" He told me that spring new year, when every one goes back hometown, it's going to be like this but... But it's ld normal train, so the train stops on the way and the stop is for the there two to cross. And we stopped on the rail and people would jump off t relax and still a lot of monkeys on the mountain, so they feed the monkeys. And so we stayed in Mumbai with his friends. His friend is a girl and in the Indian culture, it's a little bit weird, the girl always have very long hair but this girl is a little special because she cut her hair.

R1: She cut her hair?

R2: Yes, short hair... It's so special in India I mean. In China it's normal but in India...

R1: So she was more modern.

R2: Yes... she wore shorts. She showed her legs

R2: Yes. But we met the lady in a monastery... Korean monastery... do you remember?

R1: Yes, the Indian girl, yes, she shaved her hair.

R2: Brave
R1: She was definitely a modern girl.
R2: And then, I flew to Kenya.
R1: From Mumbai?
R2: Yeah, from Mumbai, because I only spend... two weeks in India, I didn't...
R1: Only two weeks?
R2: Yeah
R1: And so from Mumbai to Kenya.
R2: Yeah.
R1: How long did you stay in Kenya?
R2: Two months.
R1: I remember your funny story about getting lost in Kenya because of the driver
R2: yeah, yeah. He took us to Uganda. One month... one and a half month I still volunteer there. Because there is a website called HelpX
R1: HelpX,
R2: HelpX, so actually I'm looking for... if I just stayed there it cost me money, so if I do an accomodation exchange and food it's going to be cheaper for me.
3 - 40:38 > 1:06:01 [Voyage monde]
R1: So I logged on the app and the lady emailed me and she said, if you want to come, you can come, you get the key and, she is a mother, a single mother, and I want to there. I was a little scared, I still think it's a little bit dangerous.
R1: In Kenya
R2: Yes, you know because, they send me an email, I didn't send them and...
R1: So you were a little worried
R2: Little worried but I think it should be fine... I stayed in the capital first
R1: Nairobi?
R2: Yes, I stayed in Nairobi but they are in the neighborhood city
R1: Mombasa?
R2: No Mombasa is close to the ocean. Nakuru, Nakuru, they are in Nakuru.
R1: Nakuru, ok.
R2: So I was a little bit worried because you know, why did they send a message to me? I don't know why. But I still went there to check if they are bad people... You know Kenya is little bit dangerous, even in Africa, Kenya is a safe area but it is still dangerous because security is holding gun.
R1: Who?
R2: The security they are holding guns, real guns, with real bullets. So I'm afraid if they want my kidney...
R1: Ok, where did you see they could take your kidneys?
R2: Because Nepal is a very popular country to sell... the kidney... They want organs... I'm a little worry but I went there... because...
R1: Why?
R2: But I think I will be fine. I think it should be fine and I read the reviews. 2/3 reviews so
R1: It said safe.
R2: The didn't say safe but they said it's a class there and...
R1: The review were like Chinese review or was it international?
R2: No, it was international. So I went there and the manager come to pick me up and I went to a house so I stayed there for a month and I met a single mom, a single lady and actually there were two girls pregnant and one lady gave birth to a baby in the house, no yelling, without yelling just... breathing... and the baby come. So actually I gave the baby clothes to her. And she was crying, she told me, no one gave her any gift, ever.
R1: She was Kenyan?
R2: Yes, all the ladies were.
R1: So you help her with the house?

R2: Yes, actually, they already got keys... So the mother was already learning new skills, like learning the bees, or like make clothes, se I help take care of the baby, cooking or other things, yeah. And I stayed there one month and and guy from Italy stayed there a week but he bring a lot of clothes and something to study... pencils, or some toys for the kids.
R1: So you were together with the Italian boy?
R2: Yeah... When he left, there was a couple from Brasil came, we do the same things, they record... they take video... they took video and they put it on internet and help people give donation for them. I think it's very good. Then, they left, and then I left there.
R1: So you find a job in Kenya you told me... the Chinese tourists
R2: Yeah, yeah, the job was... before when I was in Bangkok I told you I met a Chinese girl there and she introduced me to the Chinese company. So the first month, I did something for them, I found a bus for the group, I found a tour agency actually.
R1: So it was a Chinese tour agency?
R2: Yes, he went to Kenya alone and he organised tours for Chinese. No, we came there to find accomodations and bus, tour bus.
R1: And you tour Kenya with Chinese tourists?
R2: Yes, yes. Actually, I went with them only for the first tour, the second tour I didn't go with them because the first tour made me so angry.
R1: I remember the day you got lost, the leader got completely drunk at the hotel.
R2: Yes, and the Masai Mara park closes at 6. They say the people have to get out because the wild animals hunt. And the driver drove to another way. We came back at around 8:30 and no one called us. It's like there was no much signal inside but no one messaged us. So and then I saw the leader is drunk. He didn't care, because you know... I ask him "you didn't worry? They won't come back with you?" And he told me : "I don't care, I got 500 wechat groups, it doesn't matter, if they don't come back, other will come".
R1: So irresponsible, people will know he is a bad tour leader.
R2: But they only come once. He doesn't care. That's what he says. And you know, he didn't pay me any salary. So he said, he is going to give me accomodation and food.
R1: You trade work for accomodation and food...
R2: During the negociation, I just need accomodation and food but when I went to the park I ask him, "where am I sleeping tonight?" because every tourists are going to the hotel. So I ask him, and he said "I think you can solve it by yourself"
R1: Son of a bitch
R2: I am so... I don't know how to say. So I got a lot of bad emotions. So the last day I said I didn't want to do it. Why do this? He didn't pay me and I did a lot of things for you. I found a local agency and doesn't speak English, so you went for him... it's like... I was the leader. I did everything. But I met people... very kind lady there, she gave me 200\$ when she left.
R1: A Chinese lady?
R2: Yes, and I met her in Guangzhou. She was living in Guangzhou. And in the group, I think they are all rich people, I think they are.
[3045,5]R1: It's expensive.
R2: I think they are very rich because there is a man, he was working for European... I think Por...
R1: Portugal
R2: Portugal, I think he worked there... maybe he did immigration in Portugal but he died, it's so sad.
R1: I guess it's rich people
R2: Yes, really rich, same in China, you have to spend maybe 3000 yuan to go there

R1: That's a lot of money
R2: Compared to Thailand... it's at least two times more. So yes, I spend 2 months and after I flew back to Guangzhou. So I transferred in Egypt
R1: Egypt?
R2: Yes, I stayed in Egypt for 1 day. Yes, I really want to stay... The customs are really great because they gave me the visa to stay in Egypt
R1: They did? For free?
R2: They gave me one day, and the accommodation, only because when I had to transfer, and so they gave me accommodation.
R1: In Egypt?
R2: Yes
R1: In Luxor? In Cairo?
FANG: Cairo, Cairo
MARIE: And so... from Cairo to...
FANG: Guangzhou.
MARIE: What a trip... and so, doing that... you had been to Australia before?
FANG: Yes...
MARIE: And so... Australia was the first country you visited abroad, outside of China?
FANG: No, it was the Maldives, because remember I told you that I was working for a company that took me to the Maldives. A very top... for me it was very top
MARIE: Write it down.
FANG: Ok, and we stayed in Didhland... it's the Island name. All the Chinese there.
MARIE: Really?
FANG: Yeah, this island, the owner is from England but only open for Chinese. And... yeah... it's a small island, maybe, only few... 20 houses.
MARIE: I remember you told me that... that was the first time for you to scuba dive.
FANG: Yeah
MARIE: I think you told me it was a very very special experience for you...
FANG: Yeah, because I never see the ocean like... blue like there... so I spent half day, in the water just to do the diving. I was enjoying myself a lot there.
MARIE: What did you like there?
FANG: Just see the fish, for half day. Anyway we did the crab...
MARIE: Crab? You wish crab?
FANG: Yes, we went to fish crab because there was only one restaurant there so yeah, we fished crab. at night time, everyone hold a torch and when I saw like a snake fish in the ocean and we were so excited. So we went there, it was night time, we took a small boat to this island and I stand up on top of the boat, only me... the other stayed in the bottom, they all got sick. Only me still happy. So it's nice... and then my English wasn't really like right now so they were talking in English, then, they told me, look there is some big fish but I didn't understand and I only knew fish and and couldn't reply. I only spend four days then we go back because it's very expensive there, for China.
MARIE: Even for me it's expensive
FANG: But my boss paid for everyone, he has got a card to get cheap cheap... the card is very useful. I know it wasn't very expensive. Because my boss doesn't want the trip to cost a lot. Yeah.
MARIE: I bet it has to be so different from China, I have never been.
FANG: The water is so blue, the sand is so white and soft.
MARIE: So it's your first trip abroad.
FANG: Yes, the second... the second probably the...
MARIE: Philipins?
FANG: Yes

MARIE: With your boss?
FANG: Yes, with my company. So we went to an island Baliangao, do you know?
MARIE: No. No I don't know...
FANG: very popular.
MARIE: Is that usual for company in China to pay for the holiday of the people?
FANG: I don't know, I just work for one company. But I think it's not really normal because they said only one year, two times to travel. One travel is oversea, one travel is in China. So...
MARIE: And you have to choose or you took both group?
FANG: Yes, you go to both trips. In the company, only six people including the boss.
MARIE: Oh, it's a small company.
FANG: Yes. So what did you do in the Philipines?
FANG: Still the ocean... ocean.
MARIE: So your boss he liked the ocean?
FANG: I don't know... maybe he it's because of the season or maybe it's because he got cheap discount.
MARIE: Why do you think your boss was doing that?
FANG: Doing what?
MARIE: Paying holidays?
FANG: Because it's like profit. Profit... because everyone... all the staff we all go together.
MARIE: Is it like team building?
FANG: Yeah... team building. But sometimes his wife and family member came.
MARIE: So Philipines, and then you quit your job, and then you went to Australia.
FANG: No third it was Sri Lanka
MARIE: With your company again?
FANG: No, I went to Sri Lanka alone with a tour but when I came back, my company went there.
MARIE: Your company.
FANG: Yeah
MARIE: So that was an organised group... for a vacation.
FANG: Actually, only half year, I travel to all of these places.
MARIE: Really?
FANG: Maybe one year. Maximum one year. Because when I was at the end of the first class I went to Sri Lanka.
MARIE: And how long did you stay in Sri Lanka?
FANG: Around 7 days.
MARIE: Tour around or just the beach?
FANG: Tour around
MARIE: So you paid for this trip?
FANG: No my company did
MARIE: They pay you to go in the group but it was not your company group... why?
FANG: Because not a lot of people in our company, we want to go together but we could all go together so they let me go first and when I went back they went next. I'm so lucky (laugh) . Then after I went to Australia.
MARIE: It was a working-holiday?
FANG: Yeah.
MARIE: How did you learn about working-holiday?
FANG: From... the first year in university, I learn about working-holiday in New-Zealand.
MARIE: When?
FANG: The first year. 2011. But I didn't really care about the first two year but when I was finish with university, Australia opened the working-holiday in 2015. So I got the chance and I got the English test and then...
MARIE: You did well enough in the test
FANG: For Australia it's enough... actually I got so lucky, everything just came right at that moment, I got the test, and I already graduated and the visa just opened, so I applied, I got it and I went. But I applied in September and I went to Australia the year after in February.

MARIE: Why did it take so long?
 FANG: I... actually October I got the visa and the Spring new Year, I wanted to spend with my mother. Then I went to Australia. And the lucky day, 28 of February. I choose a good day. And I spent one year in Australia.
 MARIE: Yes, you told me the mango farm.
 FANG: Did I tell you...the farm... the grand-son died... did I tell you?
 MARIE: No... you didn't... when?
 FANG: February first... February this year.
 MARIE: I'm so sorry. Where you friend with him?
 FANG: Yes, because he was talking to me. He suicided.
 Interruption
 MARIE: sleeping and surfing and eating... it sounds like...
 FANG: Vacation you know
 MARIE: Vacation yeah, real vacation
 FANG: Then I went to an island. It's called Labuhanbajo
 MARIE: Labuhanbajo.
 FANG: Yeah, I went to Labuhanbajo and what is it called... the dragon... the dragon...
 MARIE: Oh, yeah... the... yeah...
 FANG: Komodo dragon there. So I went to the Komodo dragon island... I spent some time there, two days tour and then I went back to Bali. Actually I was so stupid because I left my bag in a hostel there and I had to go back to get my luggage.
 MARIE: Then back to Australia?
 FANG: Then I flew to Jakarta because it's the capital and I was thinking that I should go to the capital.
 MARIE: Was it nice?
 FANG: It's a lot of Chinese there. I heard about the... killing of Chinese people in 1999. (it was in 1998)
 MARIE: They killed Chinese people?
 FANG: Yes, they killed a lot of Chinese
 MARIE: Why?
 FANG: They don't like Chinese or maybe it's other reason. I'm not really sure. And then my mom said she missed me so I flew back to Beijing. And then, I spent time with my mom and then I went to Yangshuou, in Guilin, Guanxi.
 MARIE: Oh, you went to visit Guanxi. And that's the trip to Kenya.
 FANG: Yeah, yeah...
 MARIE: What about Nepal... how did you get to Nepal?
 FANG: Nepal is... let me think. Yes, this time I came back. I went to Guangzhou, then... oh yeah, I went to Guangzhou, Guangdong and then, I met the friend and then we go back to Australia, because I got a tourist visa to Australia, so, we go together from Guangdong we took the boat to Hong-Kong. And from Hong-Kong we flew to Australia. To Brisbane. Then we travel from Brisbane to go down to the Gold coast. We visited Sidney, Camberra, Melbourne. Then the island of Tasmania.
 MARIE: It was just traveling, you didn't make money there.
 FANG: Yeah, just traveling, the lady, she paid for me, the traveling.
 MARIE: Why, how? She had a lot of money to spare?
 FANG: This is one of the reason, another I think I was kind of a tour guide for her. Because we... I texted people to pick us up, then we could go down and we share the bill. Like petrol or food.
 MARIE: How old was this lady? Nearly 40, not married. Rich... like if you want to open a company, I'll give you the paper.
 MARIE: Anyway, she paid for everything, that's cool, really really cool.
 FANG: Then, yeah, we went back from Melbourne to Sidney and she flew back from Sidney to Shenzhen. And I met another friend and we went to Bali.
 MARIE: Again?

FANG: Again, yeah because she told me she wanted to go to Bali. Then we went to Bali again. Then after Bali, she studies in Australia and I know another friend in Australia, he is also Australian so I went back to Australia again because I have a one year visa. I can go whenever I want. So I was back in Australia, my friend had a car so he drove me around Australia, in Alice Springs to Darwin and down to Cairn, we did a road trip together.
 MARIE: Ok
 FANG: So from Bali to Australia. And then... this year, I went back to Shenzhen. Then, I think maybe I want to travel a little bit in China
 MARIE: Why?
 FANG: Because I haven't visit a lot China. So I booked a bus ticket but it cost me around 700 yuan to go to Chengdu...so expensive
 MARIE: It is expensive
 FANG: But it is far away, you need to drive two days
 MARIE: There is no train?
 2 - 07:40 > 22:54 [Travel in China]
 FANG: Because it's Spring New Year festival so all the train are booked. Then I met another boy from America and he was staying in a hostel and he was teaching English in Chengdu and he stayed that maybe we could go together and we could share the cost of a car. He was going back to Sichuan. We shared the bill to go.
 MARIE: The car, an English boy.
 FANG: No we found a Chinese who was going to Chengdu by car. Then I refund the ticket
 MARIE: So it was kind of your first hitch-hike experience?
 FANG: It's not really hitch-hike, it's share a cost from Shenzhen to Chengdu. So... we spent two days, yeah... it was just a straight drive, we didn't stop.
 MARIE: Did you drive?
 FANG: No I tried, but... I... I didn't find the brake so they were, ok, let me drive. Then to Chengdu, I spent two days. Then I went to Bazhong is part of... the north of Sichuan. I took the bus, actually, my high school classmate's hometown.
 MARIE: ok
 FANG: he is... his family
 MARIE: You just went to visit him
 FANG: Yes, because it was Spring New Year. That's when I change my mind because I saw that in Sichuan they eat all spicy food but in Bazhong they don't cook spicy, not any dish was spicy, only the hotpot was spicy so I spent ten days there then I was back in Chengdu. I took a tour
 MARIE: a tour?
 FANG: Yes, a tour to Seda, I show the place, a lot of red house (Seda Bouddhist Temple in Larung Gar, Xian de Sertar)
 MARIE: Oh yes, close to Ganze.
 FANG: Good memory. Actually I want to
 MARIE: Leshan?
 FANG: Leshan
 MARIE: To visit your friend?
 FANG: No I didn't visit him I just went to see the big buddha.
 MARIE: That's in Leshan? The big Bouddha?
 FANG: Yes, and I take this one back and when I came back I met a boy, same as me from Beijing, then I ask him, because we transfer to another bus. I had a four days tour. I ask him, he was sitting behind me, I asked him: "Do you want to go to Lhasa?". He said I will think about it. Actually, two days later, we were on the way to Lhasa.
 MARIE: So you went back to Chengdu from Ganze and went to...

FANG: Yes, then from Chengdu actually we took the bus to Litang. Is this the border... yeah, we took the bus to Litang then we started hitch-hiking

MARIE: From Litang?

FANG: Actually we went a little bit further and then we started hitch-hiking.

MARIE: Did you go to Qamdo?

FANG: Qamdo? I don't know... no I think we followed the road. But I don't know the Chinese name. I think we go this way. So wait, we didn't go back to Chengdu, we go this way to Litang. Both of us had never done hitch-hike before so...

MARIE: You wanted to try?

FANG: Yes, but the boy is a little bit, how can I say... he didn't want to do hitch-hike.

MARIE: Why?

FANG: He was a little shy, or maybe... but so I do the hitch-hike in front and he stand in the back, smoking, I was so angry. Why do you smoke there and behind me. I think that I was angry. Sometimes, I was so angry because it's too cold, super cold. And I stand there, shaking. But I got lucky everytime I just stand there ten minutes and a car would stop. We hitch-hiked with Tibetan people, people from Chengdu, from Chongqing, from Yunnan. There is a couple from Yunnan and then we hitch-hike from...

MARIE: This road here, to Lhasa

FANG: yeah

MARIE: Is the road good?

FANG: Yeah, the road is not so good. Even when we walk 14km,

MARIE: On the first day right?

FANG: Yeah, we just walked, actually, there was a big truck who stopped for us but we just walk, we were so stupid. And yeah, we arrived in Lhasa.

MARIE: You told me that when you arrived in Lhasa you, you called Yuxing and she was already in...

FANG: Actually when I was in Chengdu, she was already on the way to Lhasa but when I was in Lhasa, she was in already in Nepal

MARIE: Yeah, in Gyirong... you told me that.

FANG: Yeah

MARIE: So you stayed 2 days in Lhasa?

FANG: 2 more days...

MARIE: I think you said two days. You told me you didn't like Lhasa the first time.

FANG: Because you know they burn coal so there is a lot of CO2. But for me it's... anyway I just spend two-three days and went to the embassy to get my visa to Nepal and I met the others... they were in Lhasa, they also wanted to go to Nepal. We went to Nepal together. And I went to Nepal.

MARIE: Did you take the bus then?

FANG: Yes, I took the bus.

MARIE: Is that? Is that a popular route?

FANG: You mean? No, that's a new road, before, there was another road, through Jangmu

MARIE: Yeah, but it closed because of the earthquake.

FANG: Yes, so that's a new road.

MARIE: But is this road popular among the Chinese youth to do this route from Lhasa to Nepal?

FANG: Yes, I think so. Because Jangmu is more like a trade border

MARIE: Trade border... not so much tourist. There is more tourists at the Vietnam border?

FANG: Yes, because there is a train.

MARIE: At Lao Cai?

FANG: Lao Cai... it's on the top. From Yunnan to the border. And I forgot the name of the other one (the border near Nanning)

MARIE: I forgot the name (Lang Son border). Anyway... so there is much more people there (in Lang Son) than there.

FANG: Yes

MARIE: So here in the bus, it's only like, young travelers?

FANG: Here (at Gyirong), it's more for trade. But there is still travelers.

MARIE: In the bus that goes to Nepal?

FANG: When I was there, people go there for trade.

MARIE: Not many travelers?

FANG: Some people, they don't go to Nepal. Because the bus just goes to the border. So to the border, there is some companies there, they are building something around the border. (she saw workers in the bus I assume)

MARIE: I think a hydro-power plant.

FANG: I don't know, some people build buildings and a school.

MARIE: So in the bus it was workers?

FANG: Workers and travelers. I don't know because we were five people all together to go there.

MARIE: In the bus? That's it?

FANG: Not that's it because we met at the embassy in Lhasa and we said we would go together. So we five were together. Actually, only us five crossed the border to Nepal. The other were working around the area. The other were living there.

MARIE: Ok. When did you cross the border?

FANG: In the morning...

MARIE: No, no, no but what day? April? March?

FANG: I spent 2 months in Nepal, April.

MARIE: Yeah, we met at the beginning of April

FANG: We met at the beginning of April?

MARIE: Yeah. Maybe you crossed a little bit before because you told me you did the Annapurna trail.

FANG: Maybe March?

MARIE: End of March

FANG: Mid-March, yeah. I remember, only with the people we met in Lhasa, another 2... a couple there was waiting for us. Because you know the jeep car, they are 6 people so they are only 2 people waiting for us.

MARIE: Altogether you rode the jeep to Kathmandu

FANG: Yeah.

MARIE: You can keep this map it's better for Nepal.

FANG: Then we went to Kathmandu, then Pokhara... trek 3 - 22:54 > 39:49 [Travel in Asia]

FANG: Trek, then I met Suxi there, yeah, because she spent a lot of time there and she went to Lumbini. She had already been to Lumbini and then she went to Pokhara. Then we met in Pokhara. Then we went back to Kathmandu and then we went to Lumbini.

MARIE: Ok, yes, it's around here.

FANG: We spent 2 months there.

MARIE: That's cool what you did in Lumbini, the shaving and stuff

FANG: We are so lucky. I really like the monks there...

MARIE: At the Japanese temple?

FANG: Yeah. It's not like normal monks. The normal monks you couldn't touch them.... But I mean it's true, you could touch them. I mean their faces said... don't talk to me. But the monks in the Japanese temple were so kind. They always smile, he didn't tell us anything about... do you want to be a monk. Just every time he did the things.... he does his things and ask us to swipe leaves. He didn't try to push us to be monk.

MARIE: That's good

FANG: Or push us to do something. He told me a peaceful life is good.

MARIE: He was Japanese right?

FANG: Yeah, he was. So I think it was really nice to stay there.

MARIE: I wish I had stayed longer.

FANG: Yeah, if you go there, you can. But he is so funny because, you know, he had been a monk for 9 years but he has lived in Lumbini for 7 years. He still thinks he is not a real monk. He think he still need to do hard work.

MARIE: And you told me you did a vipassana.

FANG: Yeah

MARIE: In Lumbini?

FANG: Yeah

MARIE: Why?

FANG: Because actually, I don't know what is the Vipassana. It's because Suxing told me about the Vipassana and said to me... let's go to try, then from inside the body we are going to get better. Suxi's friend, we called her Xiaolu. She also does Vipassana and she went to India to do it. It was her second time. Actually, we met in Pokhara, she told me something, I don't understand what she was talking about: "What is in one?"

MARIE: In one?

FANG: Yeah, I don't know what she is talking about. You know, she is speaking Chinese and I don't know what is it. So, I was kind of curious when we went to Lumbini. And Suxing, I told her, come with me, come with me. Suxing said: "No, no, no, no, no". And I think just, we had to apply before maybe ten days. Twenty days and so I ask Suxing to come with me... Suxing said "No, no, no, no". But the last ten days, Suxing finally applied and she didn't tell me

MARIE: Really?

FANG: Yeah. And when we were in Lumbini, she told me I come with you. I don't know how to say...

MARIE: It's a surprise

FANG: Not a surprise but I begged her: "we can go together"

MARIE: And did you like it?

FANG: Me? Actually... I think I need to do it again because there is a girl from Nepal and, you know the rules in a Vipassana center is very strict, no talking, no any communication. And the girl talk to me... she was always talking to me. Everyone in the sleeping time... she came to my room and talked to me.

MARIE: Ok

FANG: I always shush her but I said I want to be quiet but she kept talking, maybe I'm not really strict.

MARIE: Ok, yeah... she wanted to talk to you. Did she talked to Suxing?

FANG: No because we were living upstairs.

MARIE: But you were alone in your room?

FANG: Everyone was alone, it was very...

MARIE: Was it hard to meditate all day?

FANG: For me it was very hard. When you wake up, at 4, you start meditation, actually it's like, you sit in a meditation house for 10 hours per day. Just sit there, do nothing for ten hours. It sounds easy?

MARIE: It doesn't sound easy!

FANG: ok... anyway so hard because you couldn't concentrate, you always think about other things.

MARIE: Yeah

FANG: But, the teacher, "just think about your body, from your hair, your head, through your face, your body, think about that". But you always think about other things... like what am I going to eat today? What should I eat tomorrow? What does my boyfriend do?

MARIE: You always think about stuff and now you need to focus,

FANG: you have to focus and it's difficult to control.

MARIE: Did you succeed?

FANG: I think the first four or five days it's difficult, after the five days, you can control. And you always want to sleep. Always sleepy there and some were snoring.

MARIE: Where were the people from?

FANG: From everywhere, from Europe, Australia, Japan, China or Nepal. Most of them from... the face from European country. But they told me a lot of people from Nepal do this

MARIE: And so, did somebody talked to you about that and you wanted to do it?

FANG: You mean somebody talked to me about vipassana?

FANG: Yeah, just out of curiosity. It's really hard

MARIE: Would you do it again?

FANG: Yes I think so because it's like I didn't do it right the first time.

MARIE: Ok.

FANG: The girl that always talk to me, she was so cool, she went to Kashmir. But she is Nepali, Kashmir is the... (showing on the map) . Her father is in the army there. She told me this story

MARIE: Ok, very well. And so you join the Japanese temple after the Vipassana?

FANG: Yeah. And I was lucky because the monk, the Japanese monk he was going to go to Kathmandu for the new peace pagoda. They build a new peace pagoda there. So the monk were waiting for us there

MARIE: Nice

FANG: So when we went back, he told us, you know Japanese like the bus.

MARIE: Japanese bus?

FANG: Japanese they like to bath, after a whole day of hard work... you know that?

MARIE: No

FANG: You know, in the tube

MARIE: Oh... ok... They like to have a bath

FANG: And the monk would prepare the bath for me and Suxing. And cook Japanese food for us. Before that day, because we know when we have to go back. So before that day, we went to the market to buy the cabbage, buy the flower to cook the Japanese food. So sweet. Really, because the ten days were too hard. I was thankful for him, he was like family. And then, he braided a bracelet for us, as a gift.

MARIE: It really sounds like a trip.

FANG: The nuns, they work so hard. You know, during the day, they wake up at 3:30 and she works all day until 8 or 9... I don't know. A lot of this.

MARIE: There were nuns in the Japanese temple?

FANG: Yes, one nun and one monk. And the master worked for the the Peace pagoda in Lumbini. And the new one, the master always went to the new.

MARIE: The new peace pagoda. I have seen it I think.

FANG: We went there, the peace pagoda is not build yet, they built the temple only. In this year, november

MARIE: They are going to be finished?

FANG: They are going to finish the temple. The peace pagoda maybe five more years. They told me that the peace pagoda in Lumbini, they spent ten years... over ten years to build the peace pagoda. And it cost a lot of money, 100... I forget...

MARIE: Do you think you are going to go back to Lumbini to do a vipassana again?

FANG: Maybe not Lumbini because Japan has vipassana. China doesn't have vipassana, Australia has vipassana center. Somewhere else.

MARIE: So you went back from Kathmandu to Gyirong and then from Gyirong you hitch-hiked?

FANG: No I took the bus because actually, there is a lot of bus they can take you back to Lhasa, they have to earn money.

MARIE: It was in the bus... there was travelers?

FANG: Travelers and some workers

MARIE: Some workers and Chinese travelers. They were going back to Lhasa?

FANG: Yes
 MARIE: How long did you stay in Lhasa, this time?
 FANG: I only stayed there around five days.
 MARIE: You told me the first time we met you didn't like Lhasa.
 FANG: Yeah... because it's more like a city. I think I have change, maybe I didn't talk a lot to the locals. But the second time when I came back it was better than the first time because two months later, the weather was better. Not really cold.
 MARIE: So the problem was the weather?
 FANG: I think it's getting better and the altitude is fine. And, and I had a new friend there. I told you the guy back to Beijing was back in Lhasa and I was back in Lhasa.
 MARIE: Why was he back to Lhasa?
 FANG: Actually I asked him and he said... he made a bet with a girl if you would go to Lhasa... then he was back in Lhasa.
 MARIE: Just a bet.
 FANG: But I don't think so... that's weird. Maybe. Then we were back in Lhasa.
 MARIE: So Lhasa sorry. Before I left Lhasa to Nepal, I met someone from Tianjin, in the hostel and he started to work in Lhasa, 2 months when I left Lhasa and he rented a house there, so all of us lived in his house
 MARIE: Cool
 FANG: Yes, it's nice, I stayed 4 nights there and in the day time, we would go to the temple and then back. And then, it's a romantic story, the boy, the Tianjin boy, he knew a girl from Shenzhen and the girl came to Lhasa in May. Then now, they are together and they prepare to get married
 MARIE: nice
 FANG: And this year, I think October, they said they were coming back from Shenzhen, now, they are in Shenzhen, they are going to come to Tianjin to see his family. This is romantic, she come to Lhasa to find love, but I think there was too many people there so I went to Shenan
 MARIE: Shenan?
 FANG: Yeah
 FANG: I went to Samye first, it's around this area. It's Tibet first temple they say. Then Back to Lhasa. We made the decision to... another girl, she is in Lhasa working there and she has her parents and family there so her, the by from Beijing and the girl from Lhasa we decide to hitch-hike to...
 MARIE: Mount Kailash? Manasovar? I don't know where it is!
 FANG: Perhaps here...
 MARIE: It's around here... wait... Manasovar
 FANG: But 3 people hitch-hiking is not easy
 MARIE: Too many?
 FANG: Normally the car, if they are n their way to Xinjiang there is already 2 people in the car. Because if there is danger or you are tired, you can switch.
 MARIE: Yeah. So that would be here, near Barga.
 FANG: This is the lake
 MARIE: Yes, and that's Nepal.
 FANG: The mountain... the mountain perhaps... We went this way 219... this is the only road.
 MARIE: So you hitch-hike
 FANG: and there is a lady from Chongqing, she was alone, she went to Ali, she worked there, she was alone.
 MARIE: How old was she?
 FANG: Maybe the same as me... 28. Yeah. Then she took the 3 of us and drove an SUV
 MARIE: Nice. Is it popular? It's not dangerous to do hitch-hiking in China?
 FANG: No, it is dangerous that's why I asked the boy to go with me. It's just robbery and some, actually one driver told me that they don't like to pick people up because the people

can rob them, ask money, yeah, so it's dangerous for the driver sometimes.
 MARIE: So here.
 FANG: Yeah, we stayed in Taxian for 3 days, go around the the mountain. Then we kept going?
 MARIE: Is there a lot of travelers on this road?
 FANG: Actually not really but still some.
 MARIE: You met oter travelers like you?
 FANG: Yeah, yeah, yeah, most of travelers they were driving car. Actually only us 3 were hitch-hikers, and another group of three 2 girls one boy. The road is to part. Because there is a place like totally, we passed the road around here, because the altitude is too high, it's too cold so you can't have the road like... it was only a dirt road. The road is arund a cliff and you can see a lot of cars down the cliff. And because we hitch-hike with big truck, so it's bad. And it's like a just... he is the side just close your eyes.
 MARIE: That sounds scary.
 FANG: So that's why they say it's the most dangerous road. The driver told me because other tourists went to this road and maybe the wheel is broken so they go down. The man is gone because of the wolves and the lady just stayed in the car so she stayed fine but... I don't know... the lady went to check for the man and the lady was gone too. I actually didn't see any dead people, the boy was in front and he told me he saw a person in the car already dead. On the road.
 MARIE: Horrible
 FANG: I didn't see it. And actually I met other travelers, they saw a lot of wild animals, I didn't see any... I saw because they posted it on wechat. We reach then Yecheng... it is Xinjiang. And then we stoped hitch-hiking, we stoped there. Because from Lhasa to Yecheng... Yecheng is very...
 MARIE: It took 7 days?
 FANG: Yeah, seven days and during 3 days we walked around the mountain. Then we arrived in Yecheng. Yecheng is so what... so... unsafe.
 MARIE: Why?
 FANG: Because you know, right now, all the cafés... I didn't see any cafés... all the store are coffee shop and other are normal open but in Yecheng they are like jail.
 MARIE: Like on the window
 FANG: Yeah, yeah, but it's like jail.
 MARIE: Why?
 FANG: Because it's for security. So it's for safety because it's strange
 MARIE: For you it was strange.
 FANG: Yeah... also at 12 o'clock, all shops have to close... or maybe 10... they have to close so the next day we left Yecheng.
 MARIE: Bad feeling...
 FANG: Yes, on the road, all the police car, "bebobebobebo"
 MARIE: There is only police car?
 FANG: Yeah.
 MARIE: Did you have to stop at check-point?
 FANG: A lot... Yecheng... it's every 200 or 100 meter they have check point. But they it's just for look... some they really check, you have to... we have to scan the ID, so I have to hold my ID with me all the time, scan the ID. I mean every 200 meter you have security. They didn't check but it's in case something happen, we can. Do I talk too much?
 MARIE: No, no, no, please keep going. You have so many stories.
 FANG: It's good that I remember. Then I took a train to Kashi. The Lhasa girl went back in Kashi.
 MARIE: To Lhasa?
 FANG: Yeah, because she missed her family. She flew home.
 MARIE: Did you think about going there?
 FANG: Yeah, from Kashi I went to the Indian border.
 MARIE: You went to India's border?

FANG: I went to Pakistan's border.
 MARIE: By train?
 FANG: By hitch-hiking
 MARIE: From Kashi?
 FANG: Yes, from Kashi.
 MARIE: Why did you go to the Indian border?
 FANG: It's Pakistan border
 MARIE: Oh, yes, sorry... why did you? Can you cross?
 FANG: I didn't have visa and Pakistan visa is difficult to get.
 I want to go to Pakistan but...
 MARIE: Why do you want to go?
 FANG: Pakistan is our good friend you know.
 MARIE: No, I didn't know... why is that your good friend?
 FANG: Pakistan, because the border line is only a fence to stop but they talk, they are talking the Chinese and the Pakistani. So... for me Pakistan... for Chinese... is good friend, we have a... we help them a lot.
 MARIE: But you can't cross the border?
 FANG: No I can't.
 MARIE: So why did you go?
 FANG: I wanted to go to the border
 MARIE: Why? Why do you go to the border if you can not cross it?
 FANG: Because there is still a famous place Tashian, it's called the Kunsila, a very popular traveler place and there the people are look different from us they are Tadjiki.
 MARIE: So it's like a cultural....
 FANG: Yes, it's a cultural place. They are not really an ethnic, they speak Chinese but they look like you.
 MARIE: They look like me?
 FANG: Yes, and they speak Chinese.
 FANG: Like we talked about the different culture and we went to a wedding there.
 MARIE: You went to a wedding?
 FANG: Yes, everyone was going there it's like a tourist place but there are real wedding. They are very welcoming.
 MARIE: Was it weird for you to see that?
 FANG: It wasn't weird... because... no it's weird.
 MARIE: Would you say it's exotic... it's like... never mind. It's like... it's very different but it's attractive.
 FANG: It's different...
 MARIE: But it's weird to...
 FANG: You know it's like... They look like European people but they speak Chinese, they don't speak English. Maybe for you... I look similar to you but I speak... I don't know how to explain.
 MARIE: You wanted to see... not the border... Did you go to the border?
 FANG: Yes I went to the border.
 MARIE: Did you try to negotiate a visa?
 FANG: No, because the visa is difficult, I know the visa is difficult, you have to go to Beijing to get the visa. We just went to the border and another ... Actually I have a friend that I met in Viet-nam, the Xinjiang girl. We went to the border together, she also wanted to go to the border.
 MARIE: And Tadjikistan and Kirghizistan, can you go?
 FANG: Yes, we went to Tadjikistan
 MARIE: You went, you crossed the border?
 FANG: Yeah, but it's with... it's a kind of tour but they said we passed in Tadjikistan but don't think we crossed the border, but they say we are in Tadjikistan.
 MARIE: So it's like a tour you pay?
 FANG: Like a one day Tadjikistan tour
 MARIE: But you don't have a stamp on your passport?
 FANG: No, so I don't think we crossed the border.
 MARIE: So it's like a scam, a tourist scam?
 FANG: Yeah.
 MARIE: And Kirghizistan... could you go?

FANG: No, I didn't. We took the train to there. Actually when we went back...
 MARIE: How long was the Pakistan border?
 FANG: 4 days, yes 4 days. Yeah. and one day we go to the border line to... we drive about forty kilometers. And you know you have to get invited to go to the border line.
 MARIE: You have to what?
 FANG: Invited or someone allowed you to go there. But like... here is the border line and you have a lot of army there. Chinese army and they allow you to go, if they say no... you can't go. So a lot of people want to go, they ask someone they know and they gave the list of who can go. But we didn't have that then I talk to my friend... maybe we should go back... because we were hitch-hiking in 2 different cars. I told her : "maybe we go back" and she said: "I have to go, we are already here". She asked the soldier: "let me go". And then the soldier let us go. And then we went to the border
 MARIE: You ask the army guy?
 FANG: Yes, we were kind of begging. Another army guy first ask us to turn around.
 MARIE: And so here (at the Pakistani border) , there is a lot of solo traveler?
 FANG: Tourist
 MARIE: Not traveler? Like solo traveler like you?
 FANG: I'm not sure because most of them had their car there, some with a big bus. So I'm not sure, maybe tourist, maybe traveler. Traveler, might be. Then we go back to Kashi because we think the boy like the girl, so the boy took the girl to the airport and I stayed with the Xinjiang girl. We went to the borderline, we came back to Kashi and we took the train. We stayed in Kashi train station for one night.
 MARIE: You slept in the train station?
 FANG: Yeah, new morning, at maybe 5 am, we took the first train to Hotan, for one night. So there is a road to Aksu or to... There is 2. Yes, this is a road a desert road, then we chose the new one to go to Asku but we hitch-hiked. On the way, we asked the boy if he wants to come so he flew to Hotan. There is a little town for... I forgot the name. We stayed there one night and then we took a bus to...
 MARIE: Korla?
 FANG: Korla was where the girl come from, my friend. So we took the bus to this city (Kuqa) . Then the girl went back to Kurla. Then we flew to Yining. Because if we took the train it's has to go all the way around. So I flew to Yining, I spent time there, I went to the border there
 MARIE: Of Kazakhstan
 FANG: Yes
 MARIE: Did you go to Kazakhstan?
 FANG: I think, I remember the wrong way. We went to the border of Kazakhstan there (up north near Altay)
 MARIE: Ok, not the Tadjikistan. So the border trip was in fact in Kazakhstan?
 FANG: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Actually, we wanted to go to Kazakhstan but they didn't gave us the visa
 MARIE: Why?
 FANG: I think all the "Stans" the visa is difficult to get. Especially Pakistan. They told me if I went to India, it's going to be even harder to get the visa.
 MARIE: Yes, they hate each other. So you took the bus...
 FANG: Yes, some kind of bus tour. Then we hitch-hiked to...
 MARIE: Tacheng?
 FANG: Actually there is...
 MARIE: Like a mountain
 FANG: Yes, it's very famous, we hitch-hiked to Salimu Hu, there is a lake
 MARIE: Salimu Hu? (It's one of the four great lake of Xinjiang - also called Sayram)

FANG: Yes, it's very beautiful, if you go to Xinjiang, you have to go there. And the road is very high. Then we hitch-hiked to Shihezi

MARIE: You hitch-hiked to Shihezi?

FANG: Closed to, and we go this way and took the train. We spent almost 2 nights there. And we took the train to go to Altay.

MARIE: Why?

FANG: Because Altay is famous tourist place.

MARIE: What is there to do?

FANG: The mountain and the lake there. And we found a monster in the lake but it is not real.

MARIE: It's a legend like the Loch Ness?

FANG: Yes. And Altay has beautiful mountain. Around Burqin. Actually the mountain around this area is beautiful. Then we go back and we stayed in Burqin

MARIE: So you went in train?

FANG: Yeah, from Shihezi to Altai.

FANG: Yes, sorry. And here we took the bus to Burqin. And we had a one day trip to the mountain. Then we took the train back to Korla. We spent time there.

MARIE: Your friend from Korla she is... she is Han?

FANG: Yes, she is Han. There is a lot of Han living in Xinjiang. We maybe spent a week there.

MARIE: When did they come in Xinjiang?

[3969,1]FANG: When... you know before they have war because they said they bring army there. I think, when the war stopped but I don't know which century. Maybe I should know more histoire.

MARIE: It's fine, it's fine.

FANG: Then we went to Turpan. We took the train to Turpa. And we spent maybe two days there but it's too hot

MARIE: Is it too hot?

FANG: Yes, it's too hot. It was like 55°. Because there is a big, big... there is a large sign board to show you. And we are below the level 0. We are under it

MARIE: Uh... you are below sea level. So it's like an oven

FANG: That day...

MARIE: Oh, yeah, it's -154m of altitude.

FANG: So yeah, it's too hot so we moved to Urumqi. Still better; And we spent there, maybe, 2/3 days and I have a university classmates from Urumqi. So I met her, she is still han but she look like ethnic. Because her mom... her dad is local.

MARIE: And you flew?

FANG: No, we took the train from Urumqi back to Beijing.

MARIE: And then Beijing. And there you are...

FANG: Yeah. And yesterday, I came back from Beibahe.

MARIE: It seems like you follow the border of China...

FANG: Yes

MARIE: Is it a popular trip?

FANG: Not really popular. Because normally, people, they just go to Tibet or they just go to Xinjiang but they don't do the tour. Because, you know, I don't have work, I got the whole time and I hitch-hiked so...

MARIE: That's is so incredible.

FANG: But hist-hiking this way is popular. From Chengdu to Lhassa is very popular.

MARIE: And from Yunnan to Lhassa... I think Suxing...

FANG: Yes, Suxing... from Yunnan.

MARIE: From Baoshan to Deqen.

FANG: I didn't ask her. I miss my last two and a half year

MARIE: So what's next? Are you going to keep traveling?

FANG: Yes, I want to save up a lot of money and I want to go to Europe. You know, Europe cost a lot.

MARIE: I do know that.

FANG: I still want to go to Egypt. Because I just spend one day there, I saw the biggest moon in Egypt. I don't know

why the Egypt moon was so beautiful. It was huge. Egypt is cheap too.

[4302,9]MARIE: You read San Mao, right? Was it you who told me about San Mao?

[4307,3]FANG: San Mao, its' not me but I know that she is a backpacker in Marocco, famous desert

MARIE: Did you read it?

FANG: I don't know her story, I just know she falled in love with someone.

MARIE: So, who... when you travel, who is influence. Do you have movie about traveling that you saw?

FANG: I just want to travel... that's why I don't know much about history or...

MARIE: Just moving is important?

FANG: Sometimes it's just the traveler that influence me. Like Suxing told me... if you want to come to Nepal from Lhassa, I'm there already. And this time, I still wanted to go to India because I haven't been to the north and they say it's totally different from the south. They say the south is more rich and clean and North is totally different, dirty more culture, more poor.

MARIE: Other travelers... and I was wondering. Is it... if you want to get a job in Beijing or in China... a trip like that... can you put it on your resume? Could you tell your employer, I have taken the trip so it means I'm independant.

FANG: Actually, when I was looking for job I was thinking, maybe I should make a review (resume?) , maybe in case I want to find a job. But I don't think I can put this in a resume.

MARIE: Why?

FANG: Because I think it's just for travel, not for work. I mean, if I'm looking for a marketing job, I put this... it's not really working... If I'm looking for a job like a tour-guide, maybe it could work.

MARIE: So it depends on the job you want to get.

FANG: But now I'm thinking, why didn't I stay in Beijing? Why? I'm confused. Why didn't I stay in Beijing and work?

MARIE: Why didn't you do it?

FANG: I Don't know, I don't know.

MARIE: Do you remember why you left?

MARIE: Just because my work was boring, I stayed in the small company. I did normal things. Actually, I was doing everything in the company. I cleaned in the morning. In the lunch time I was cookong, in the morning, I do everything; So I didn't want to do this. But now... I'm thinking why... And another reason is the salary wasn't too high. But now I'm thinking, maybe I should have stayed at home.

MARIE: Do you regret your travel?

FANG: Yes, a little bit

MARIE: Really?

FANG: I'm thinking, I just ask me recently... why do this? For two years, I stay at home I earn money, I stay with family, I stay with friends. Maybe it's good.

MARIE: But didn't you make new friends?

FANG: Yeah. But I lost some friends in Beijing. I lost some friends because we didn't keep in contact. You can't always keep in contact and if they got something they want to talk to you, face to face, you are not there. And actually, my friends, they talked to me and said, they said you missed 2 years and when I go back, the feeling between us is already changed. It's...

MARIE: You think it has changed because you haven't seen each other for a long time.

FANG: For me, it hasn't change... I went to travel and I came back. They are still my best friends but for them... it has changed.

MARIE: Do they... do they think you have changed?

FANG: I didn't ask them

MARIE: But they think you are not...

FANG: Yes, I think so... so...

MARIE: But it's weird because you are thinking about going to travel more...

FANG: Yeah

MARIE: So you regret going on travel but you want to travel more?

FANG: Yes, I want to travel more

MARIE: So...

FANG: That's why I ask the question to myself... Why did I startd traveling? I... like... around May, my friends my classmate they all got job, or maybe they are still learning. Just do the normal things or get married, or get babies. For me it's different.

MARIE: Confusing

FANG: Yes, you know... I am the different one. So I think maybe they are right, they are on the right way. Or I am on the wrong way. I am the single one here, I think they are right and I am wrong.

MARIE: So you think you are wrong... maybe?

FANG: I am just asking myself the question. Am I wrong or right?

MARIE: Are you happy?

FANG: When I travel I am happy. Then... when I stay here, no... not really. I still want to keep going. I don't know. My mom ask me... "you better stay at home and find a job". I am not sure.

MARIE: What if you go to Australia and find a job? (She applied for a second working-holiday visa and she got it) .

FANG: Yes, I tried to talk to her about that. She said it was ok. I told her that I can earn a lot of money there and she said ok.

MARIE: So as long as you earn money, she is fine.

FANG: I don't know... actually, she wants me to stay with her. And she told me, sometimes she wants to talk to someone and she has no one to talk to.

MARIE: I don't know

FANG: So I think recently a lot of questions around me... do I stay in Beijing? I can just hang out with my friends, not after two years, even for me, I feel that they are my friends and I have to do like... I stopped when we were in class. They already passed that time. They have got new colleagues, new friends. I stopped in university.

MARIE: Yes, you cannot go back in time. It's indeed a big dilemma. But... I have no answer for you.

[4825,6]FANG: I still have... but...

MARIE: These are the true friends.

FANG: But sometimes, I think when I travel I meet different... like you, I think sometimes it may be better.

MARIE: Like the friends you meet on travel are better friends?

FANG: Yes, kind of better, kind of trust.

MARIE: Better connection

FANG: Sometimes... I don't know why.

MARIE: So you don't tell about your travels to your friends in Beijing

FANG: No, I didn't, I just post on wechat. So maybe they comment.

MARIE: But when you come back you don't tell...

FANG: No, I tell them, we come... but some friends, I don't know them a lot, actually they don't know me also but they tell me, "you are just so brave, you went to all those places".

MARIE: Do they think you are lucky to do that?

FANG: Yes, especially the friends who are married.

MARIE: See, then, you have got the happy life

FANG: I don't think they are not happy.

MARIE: If they think you are lucky to do that, they are married and they don't move maybe they are... they want to do the same thing as you but they can't.

FANG: Yes, they want to do the same things as me. And a lot of people they like... Maybe because no one around them

has done like me... because my university roommate, her boyfriend ask me to come out... I actually don't know him well and they were already broken off and they are just friends. Everyone is working, working and I showed him where I was through wechat.

MARIE: So this guy has a normal job and he sees on wechat that you are traveling everywhere and so he wants to date you?

FANG: Date me? No, no, no. I am... we have a friends group, and I was the only one of his friends to post where I was at, all the others work work work.

MARIE: So he invited you for dinner?

FANG: Yeah...

MARIE: Because he wanted to know

FANG: I don't know because it's weird he invited me. They were already broken up. Even my roommate, you know... I ask her where she was and if she wanted to come. She didn't say anything.

MARIE: Are you going to say yes?

FANG: Say what?

MARIE: To dinner, with the guy.

FANG: I already had

MARIE: And he was asking questions about your travel?

FANG: Yes. Because for me, I think... maybe he wants to go back with a girl but she said she will never go back.

MARIE: I have a question. When I was in Nepal, I met on the road... travelers, I met mostly woman. Mostly Chinese women... Like I didn't meet many guys.

FANG: Mostly girls?

MARIE: Yes, why... do you have an idea why?

FANG: Actually this question, when I was in Australia, I also had the same questions... all the girls came

MARIE: In the working holiday?

FANG: Yes, only the Chinese girls came, boys, only few maybe one or two I met during one year. One or tw, very few. So I was thinking, maybe for the Chinese man, he has to afford more responsibility. I think I guess.

MARIE: It would be the responsibility of what?

FANG: For like... family. For girl, we just get married and the boy has to afford the family.

MARIE: His family and her family

FANG: Yes, I think so. I think most of the family, I think the girl still work but the main is the mean...

MARIE: Financial support of the family

FANG: Yes.

MARIE: Because in Nepal, I maybe have 25 interviews with people, 21 with girls, 3 with boys. And I was wondering if it was because I am a girl is this because there is more boys than boys that travel.

FANG: More girls than boys.

MARIE: So you noticed that as well?

FANG: Yes, yes. I guess maybe... or the boys just want to stay

MARIE: Maybe... less adventurous. I have read the word Qiong You... Qiong You

FANG: Qiong you, yeah...

MARIE: Is that backpacking?

FANG: Yeah... kind of backpacker for oversea travel.

MARIE: Oversea?

FANG: Yes it's a website for oversea... Qiong means poor and you, travel. But it's kind of like... backpacker... it kind of ... to travel

MARIE: Would you say you are a Qiong You?

FANG: Me?

FANG: Yes... I think.

MARIE: Is Qiong you different definitino of backpackers or no?

FANG: I think different because the website...

MARIE: No, no, no... you.

FANG: Maybe I am a little bit different because backpacker you spend little money and you enjoy. Qiong You, it's just about spending less and less.

MARIE: It's just about spending less money.

FANG: I think I am a backpacker.

MARIE: Because you like to enjoy.

FANG: Yeah, sometimes, I spend money. If it's worth it, I spend money. Because I take train, it's cheaper, but fly is more easy.

MARIE: Qiong you would be a Chinese way of doing tourism?

FANG: Special way? I think I met people inside China, most people are a little older so not a lot of young people. The older people they are not really Qiong You. For the younger people, I think we are Qiong You.

MARIE: And do you think there is a different between you style of backpacking, between Western backpacking and Chinese backpacking? Would you say there is a difference?

FANG: uh.... I don't know because I didn't meet a lot of Western backpacker.

MARIE: You met the Slovenian.

FANG: Yes, yes... I think the backpackers they have some places they have to go but for me... I don't know about the other but... for me... I just want to cross here.

MARIE: You don't have places you absolutely want to see. You go if you want to go.

FANG: Yes.

MARIE: Like Nepal for example?

FANG: Yes, yes.

MARIE: You didn't know that you were going to go

FANG: Yes.

MARIE: So you meet somebody who is going somewhere and you go?

FANG: Yes

MARIE: You have never been to Yunnan?

FANG: Yunnan? No I have never been to there because... I don't know... It's not really interesting to me

MARIE: Why? Everybody goes to Yunnan in China

FANG: I don't know. You know traveling in China costs a lot.

MARIE: It's expensive?

FANG: Yes, for me it's expensive. Actually... the entrance ticket for parks... And some people told me that Lijiang is like for people who are broken up go there for one night love.

MARIE: Yeah?

FANG: Lijiang is very famous for one night love.

MARIE: Really? One night stand?

FANG: Everyone knows. And Kunming is more like, you know in China, a lot of people go there and here it's going to be more business, not real travel more business.

MARIE: So you are not interested in going to Yunnan?

FANG: Yes. Not really but now I want to go to Yunnan. Because I told you the couple, the older girl with the boy. They opened a coffee shop in Yunnan. In Honghe. In the South.

MARIE: Ok.

FANG: It's the same place where Suxing is from.

MARIE: So you might go? Do you think you are a different person? when you are in the city than when you are a traveler?

FANG: yeah.

MARIE: How?

FANG: Now I'm in Beijing, I think I'm... like... I didn't... like I'm older...

MARIE: Like mature?

FANG: Mature... Mature... BUT I have always been mature since I was young. Overmature. A little bit overdate? No

overdate. It's like I'm not living at this moment of time... like a hundred of years ago.

MARIE: Ok... you feel like detached from the society? From cell-phones, make-up?

FANG: You know, because I don't do make up... I'm always like this... It's not really common because in Beijing, everyone put make up on. But I think I should do if I am going to work.

MARIE: You are pretty like that

FANG: oh... maybe I need. To go to work, out of respect you have to. I think I'm a little bit different from travel. I don't know. When I travel, I'm more brave, I don't care but when I am in Beijing, I think I have to do some make up, be careful

MARIE: About the body and the way you dress?

FANG: Yes. Yes... And the other... I don't know... I think so.

MARIE: I have a few more questions. Your lifestyle in China is... is it a little bit rebellious?

FANG: What does rebellious mean?

MARIE: Like, not common, like not a lot of people do it. Is it hard... well... you kind of told me that it is hard for you with your friend... that people accept your travel and stuff. Like... like... Rebellious is like... people in China they. What you do... traveling is not acceptable... Not settling and having a husband and a job is not acceptable. It's like... not really... they don't like your lifestyle.

FANG: No I think they like... I think they like. That's why... you know... my university classmates invited me to dinner... I think they want to know. I guess but I'm not sure. But still people saying I'm... I should settle down.

MARIE: Do you...

FANG: No... questions

MARIE: And uh... if you prefer any landscapes... would it be the sea or the mountain... what was the landscape you prefer during you trip?

FANG: The sea...

MARIE: The sea... that was not sea land.

FANG: Yes, but I prefer the sea, I like the ocean. I want to know how to do diving.

MARIE: You know how to swim right?

FANG: Yes, I learnt in Australia. I want... now I want to learn how to dive.

MARIE: What was the most difficult thing to do during your travel?

FANG: The most difficult? uh... I don't know... Take a decision on where to go. I don't know. I don't think I have found any difficulties. Like what? Can you give me an example... Like you what are you thinking?

MARIE: Sometimes it's hard to live in a suitcase.

FANG: Suitcase?

MARIE: Like to always move from one place to another... I think sometimes it's tiring. Sometimes... I'm like... I want to.. sometimes I'm so tired to be in different places that I don't know... I don't know the culture, the code of the place. And sometimes I wish I would just be in a place that is familiar to me.

FANG: I think for me it's not travel... I didn't find any trouble. Or maybe the people because when you said the thing... I think it's fine for me. Because when I reach Chennai, India, even if I was walking alone at night, I didn't lose my nerve... I walked around... maybe all night. I was never really worried. But when I was in the mountain Kailash. When We walked there... the three of us. I told them, we walk together then the boy and girl left me there, I felt a little bit hard "Why did they just left me there?"

MARIE: Really?

FANG: Yeah, they go back... I was feeling a little sad because I got mistreated... I mean I didn't know where to go.

MARIE: You got lost?
 FANG: Yes, I got lost. That time I felt not good. And it was already 10 pm. Actually, in Lhasa 10pm is still bright.
 MARIE: Yes, because it's the same time zone.
 FANG: But in the mountain, it was already dark. So I was a little worried, I was worried I could get back. My battery was dead. And Lucky I still remembered the hostel name.
 MARIE: So you have crossed a lot of border by land.
 FANG: Yes...
 MARIE: You think it's easy to cross land border or is it a bit stressful?
 FANG: I think it's easy, you give them your passport, they give you the visa and it's done.
 MARIE: It's not a big deal for you to cross the border...
 FANG: Because I choose the easy one.
 MARIE: There (in the West) you didn't cross.
 FANG: I didn't have a visa... I couldn't get it... They told me... Actually I want to go but they told me I have to go to Beijing and then come back to cross. I think I just kept relaxing on the trip.
 MARIE: Being cool?
 FANG: Yeah, pretend cool. And I think I'm lucky. Because no one hold a gun against me. No one threaten me. And no one stole my stuff. And you said the bag... actually before I'm with the suitcase and when I came back to Beijing... I changed for a bag. A bag is more easy.
 MARIE: When did you change your...
 FANG: The first time I was in Australia and when I went back, I changed my back... maybe because I saw the others... using backpack and it's true, it's more easy.
 MARIE: You became more and more experience throughout your trips?
 FANG: Yeah... but I think I'm not really smart.
 MARIE: Why?
 FANG: Because I take time to understand. Not... I think I'm taking longer.
 MARIE: So when you look back at you... do you think that you made a lot of mistakes 3 years ago when you started traveling?
 FANG: Maybe I should... I have gotten better, I'm better.
 MARIE:
 MARIE: I found out that I got better at packing with experience. I have got a 10kg bag.
 FANG: It's more heavy than me.
 MARIE: How much is your?
 FANG: 8kg.
 MARIE: That's very small.
 FANG: I have 2... I have a laptop bag and it's heavy. Altogether maybe 11.
 MARIE: It's not heavy at all.
 FANG: And on the way, you can exchange some stuff, give some stuff. Like in Kenya, I gave a lot of clothes, make up stuff. Even if I don't put make up on... I brought everything.
 MARIE: So you left that in Kenya?
 FANG: Yeah. I left it in Kenya, in Nakuru. I was happy because they send me photo and they were wearing the clothes I gave them.
]MARIE: So you got ridd of everything in Kenya?
 FANG: Not everything. Most of the thing I didn't need. But you know I came back in Guangzhou... There it's not too cold so I left the warm clothes and when I came back in China, I just keep the summer clothes and the warm clothes, I left it there. I left the warm clothes there.
 MARIE: Ok... I So I will make a travel map on the computer and you can show it to your friends.
 FANG: oh... that's great. Did I write clearly?
 MARIE: Yes, it's perfect. So that was more like week-end trip (I show the area on the coast) and this was more like long trip (in the west) .

FANG: yes
 MARIE: Would you take a long trip along the coast... like a backpacking trip along the coast?
 FANG: I don't know
 MARIE: Is it something that would cross your mind?
 FANG: No
 MARIE: Why?
 FANG: I don't know but I know someone you did it. Because I have a highschool classmates, he was studying in Jiangsu... Jianshi... there is a college there and he rode his bicycle through... from his school to his home.
 MARIE: Ok... wow... so interesting
 FANG: I think for me it's more like... uh.. most of the places I sleep in hostel but you know when I was on this trip... (The 412 road in Tibet and Xinjiang) most of the time I slept in hotels
 MARIE: Because it's cheap?
 FANG: Maybe cheap because we are three. And the boy didn't want to sleep in hostel. I think... I don't, I didn't ask him. He said he didn't want to sleep with others. But I like to stay with others.
 MARIE: Ok... so there you stayed in hotels.
 FANG: Yeah. But this trip was still a little expensive, because I stayed in Nepal, it cost me around 5000 yuans for two months. So cheap.
 MARIE: So cheap
 FANG: Maybe this is because I stayed in Lumbini for a month but I left... 100 USD to the Japanese temple so that's why it's so cheap.
 MARIE: Maybe Pokhara would have been more expensive.
 FANG: Yes, I spent most of my money in Pokhara, especially on the trek, they charge you so much. You have no where to go... you have to pay. And you know, on this way (around China) , I spent maybe 25 000 yuan even if I was hitch-hiking (around 3200€).
 MARIE: How long... so you left Lhasa in June? May?
 FANG: June.
 MARIE: So it take you like a month this trip around China?
 FANG: Yeah, yeah...
 MARIE: That's a lot of money.
 FANG: I think it's a lot, especially compared to Nepal. Two months versus one month. And I chose the cheaper way, hitch-hiking or train. Only the food and the accomodation I had to pay.
 MARIE: Do you know couch-surfing?
 FANG: Yes, I did couchsurfing in Guangzhou.
 MARIE: In Guangzhou?
 FANG: Did I tell you I slept in an American guy's apartment who was teaching English. I ask Chinese people, they were traveling or they only accept foreigners. But the American accepted me. It's a little bit sad
 MARIE: Why?
 FANG: Because foreigners accept... maybe accept because they speak the same language... Chinese accept only foreigners. The first time I did couch surfing was in Kenya. Because I think it's too expensive to live in Kenya. You have to spend 30 USD in Nairobi.
 MARIE: Yes, that's expensive.
 FANG: Kenya is very expensive because they charge the foreigners. So I did couch surfing with two families. It was nice. I did couch surfing in Australia... but I don't think it's safe.
 MARIE: No?
 FANG: No, because the guys are not really good. We were talking and the guy, he was Australian in Cairns and he told us something that he was good at dating Asian girls, something like that. So...
 MARIE: But you know you have reviews of people

FANG: Yes, we looked at the reviews and they weren't too bad. In Kenya, the first time I found the couch surfing place, there was 2 French doing the same thing, in the same family, a couple.

MARIE: Chinese?

FANG: No they were French, they were on holiday, still student.

MARIE: How did you learn about couchsurfing?

FANG: It's a girl I met in Thailand who introduce me to Kenya... the Chinese girl. She told me I could use the couch surfing. She did couch surfing I think in New Zealand. She is also a brave girl. Because she is traveling alone in New Zealand. She was driving a car around and she got into a car accident. She said she walked half an hour to look for people and no one was there. She is lucky, she didn't get injured. She went to Australia also but just for travel.

MARIE: Australia is pretty expensive.

FANG: Now... she is England, learning there. Master degree.

MARIE: Do you consider doing that?

FANG: Yes, I'm thinking, maybe I can go to do interpreter. I try, because I don't know, I have to take the GPA. I'm not sure if I'm good enough. (Talk about the value of gap year in France)

FANG: I guess... this is what I feel I need something like that was different from right now, I was not really confident. Because I didn't... if I... I mean... if I'm looking for a job, I don't feel confident because I just travel, I don't have experience or I don't have resources around this... so...

MARIE: You don't have a job experience but you have a different experience.

FANG: Now I feel more confident because when I came back I feel like the others are working and I... I... want to search for work but I don't have the experience... I feel upset.

MARIE: Like what?

FANG: Upset

MARIE: You felt a little depressed coming back?

FANG: Yeah.

MARIE: How do you feel now,

FANG: It's better, much better.

MARIE: Why did you feel depressed?

FANG: Why? Because you know... they have got job, they earn money but if I want to look for a job, I just have no experience, I graduated two years ago and they prefer new students.

MARIE: Can you say you have been traveling for 2 years?

FANG: Yeah... I couldn't say that. Maybe they think you just travel.

MARIE: They don't see the value of traveling?

FANG: Yeah.

MARIE: You have to tell them, explain to them

FANG: I have to tell myself...

MARIE: So now you have a lack of confidence?

FANG: Yeah...

MARIE: You don't feel confident in yourself?

FANG: Yeah... I don't feel confident. I don't know, it's difficult to say.

MARIE: No I understand especially if people don't understand what you have lived.

FANG: So sometimes I ask myself... why did I do this trip? They always questions me. Other questions me so I question myself. Why I did this?

MARIE: Who is they?

FANG: My friends.

MARIE: I don't think they can imagine what you have lived.

FANG: Yes, probably.

[7466,4]MARIE: Maybe the people from your old life can't understand but people like Suxing, she can understand you.

[7491,7]FANG: What I am aiming at now is learning English. Earlier I was in the library trying to improve English.

MARIE: It's very very good already

FANG: I want to improve my competence.

FANG: Now he is 36, backpacker

MARIE: No but, you are not that far... for example, your parents, they couldn't do that.

FANG: My parents... yeah

MARIE: They couldn't travel.

FANG: Yeah... yeah

MARIE: So you really are the first generation to be able to do that

FANG: Yeah... yeah... maybe we are the same generation with the... And he went to India and he stayed in a place... there is a place with... a mother...

MARIE: Ama? Mother Teresa?

FANG: No, his job was to take dead people. (...)

FANG: Maybe in China there is a lot of backpacker

MARIE: More and more

FANG: Because I met another boy in Tibet... clause to Tibet. In the YHA hostel... it's very famous hostel internationally.

MARIE: YHA

FANG: yes, he was working there. He has been traveling for seven years.

MARIE: Wow

FANG: He was from Mongolia. He hasn't gone home for seven years.

MARIE: God... and he only traveled in China?

FANG: I didn't ask him. He likes to climb mountain around. A lot of brave persons.

FEN

FEN: First time, I just rode train...

MARIE: By train?

FEN: Yes and I spent around forty hours. I go to...Xi'an and Lanzhou and then Qinghai... yes... this way. And to Lhasa.

MARIE: Like that?

FEN: Yes, yes.

MARIE: 40 hours?

FEN: Yes, I think more than forty hours.

MARIE: I'm also taking the train to go to Lhasa

FEN: It's very interesting, I think it is better than the train.

MARIE: Why is it interesting?

FEN: Because you know Tibet altitude is high... you can get altitude sickness. So by train it's good. And all along the road you can see the view... it's the best by train. If you are flying you don't see much.

MARIE: I think I'm gonna do train and back with train. The plane is really expensive.

FEN: But I think you are going to Yunnan and you are traveling Kunming and Dali and Lijiang. And if you go to Lijiang, you can also go to Shangri La. It's north of...

MARIE: It's near Deqen right?

FEN: Yeah. You can go by bus, it's not very comfortable but... This way (from Shanghai) it's a good way. But uh...

MARIE: I think I'll go from Shanghai.

FEN: Where is your agency?

MARIE: My agency is in Chengdu but they will pick me up in Lhasa.

FEN: Ok, so you can go by train to Lhasa. It's good. The rest of the route (from Xi'an) is probably similar. It's just different in the beginning (from Beijing) .

MARIE: So that was your trip? And from there you went to Nepal?

FEN: Yeah. And I went along the road 318. There is just... the main road, called 318.

MARIE: Did you take a train or a bus?

FEN: I was hitch-hiking. Just do this.

MARIE: Were you alone?

FEN: Actually I met some people in Lhasa so we went together. Like uh... at the beginning I was alone and then 2 people, 3 people... and in Nepal, we were 5 person but, just there were 8 people and just go travel along this main road and there is... these guys went there. We went to Zhangmu and this is were we passed the customs and go to Nepal.

MARIE: Is it Gyirong border?

FEN: No it's not Gyirong border. It's the customs.

MARIE: So you went this road and then, here to Kathmandu.

FEN: We spent 2 days on the way. So maybe like... so like... this way... this way.

MARIE: I wish I could go back, but I have no time.

FEN: Maybe I took this short road there to Kathmandu

MARIE: And you hitch-hiked there?

FEN: Yes, yes. This Jangmu.

MARIE: Did you see the Everest

FEN: Yes, I saw it.

MARIE: So you went there.

FEN: Yes but... I went to the base camp, just below... the Qomolungma. Maybe this is this way. It only takes 2 days from Lhasa to the border by car.

MARIE: And then you took the jeep to Kathmandu?

FEN: Yes

MARIE: And then Pokhara

FEN: Pokhara and Chitwan

MARIE: You never told me... how did you decide to go to Nepal?

FEN: When I go to Lhasa... at the beginning, I didn't make any plan to go to Nepal but I met some guy in Lhasa and they said that it's... Nepal is very interesting and very nice place and I also had holidays and I though : "ok, why not? Let's go".

MARIE: And then it changed your life a little bit.

FEN: I think so. Yeah... it changed me. Yeah... I'm not a ... girl, I like traveling. I think that even if I didn't go to Nepal... I still like traveling...

MARIE: I remember you telling me that you are not a good worker you like traveling and holiday

FEN: Yeah (laugh) . I like this life you know, I like this life but my work... it has been hard, I spent all my life here so I cannot do... yeah.

MARIE: I understand

FEN: Yeah... I will do hard work and then go. Hopefully I can get the Australian Working-holiday visa

MARIE: And go there... I hope so. Do you have other plan? Other than Australia? Maybe New Zealand

FEN: Yes, for sure

FEN: I think so because there it's very close...

MARIE: Do you think about trying?

FEN: I think so because... I love New Zealand more than Australia but first I want to Australia for the first year because, Australia is bigger than New Zealand and uh... I want to save up more and make more interesting experience for my life and maybe after Australia I can get new visa for New Zealand and see what will happen. Maybe I will meet a local guy, get married and live there. (laugh)

MARIE: So I assume you don't have a boyfriend here

FEN: I don't know, actually, I don't know maybe that's what will happen. Chinese guy are good but it's not like very suited for me

MARIE: We talked about that remember? The fact that you should have your freedom even if you are in a relationship.

FEN: The Chinese men, even the Chinese men can accept this life but it's always a bit...

MARIE: Yes, with the Qiao?

FEN: Yes, we talked about this.

MARIE: What about you friends, are they happy that you are back?

FEN: Not really they are jealous... but they are also happy... when you share your pictures of you... they say "oh! it's amazing". But they are jealous. Some of my friends support me and tell me to enjoy myself... I also have some people telling me... "Oh... you are old age, you have to get married". Like... uh... "You have to be a kind girl, you have to be a wife and a mother... blablabla"

MARIE: Maybe they are not your real friends.

FEN: You know, the Chinese traditionnal mind cannot understand this life. It's ok... anyway, last time I went to Guizhou, last August.

MARIE: Last month you went to Guizhou... you fly there?

FEN: Yes, there was a paragliding competition there

MARIE: In Guizhou?

FEN: Yes, last month

MARIE: You flew there

FEN: Yes. Actually... you know my mother lives in Guangdong and her hometown is in Guizhou in Xinyi. And like... The south west of Guizhou... Near Anshun. Oh... it's here Liuzhou. The competition was there. So I met a lot my foreigner pilot friends there.

MARIE: You fly from Beijing to Xinyi.

FEN: Actually I flew to Guiyang. At first I met my mom and her family in Guiyang. And there was an organized dinner for the paragliders. So the bus picked us, the pilots, up in Guiyang and I get to the bus and I saw a lot of the old friends already sitting on the bus. I was so surprised.

MARIE: Was Yan there?

FEN: No she was already back in Spain. And another Spanish friends was sitting. I sit close to her and surprised her. (Cheering sounds) . I met a Turkish friend, a French friend...

MARIE: They were there for the competition?

FEN: Yes

MARIE: Did you participate in the competition?

FEN: You know I'm a new pilot... so...

MARIE: Well, did you get to fly... you flew right?

FEN: Yes, but I was a little bit nervous for the weather... but there were a lot of friends who help me to landing and take out. It was good... I was really safe.

MARIE: How long did you stay?

FEN: Just 4 days I had and the competition was 6 days, but I just spend 4 days including the plane time and the ride. And on the second day my mother drove the car from Xinyi to Liuzhou and we met there and she discover the paragliding and what I am doing with my life and my friends

MARIE: So you mother saw what you do?

FEN: Yes

MARIE: she liked it?

FEN: She was a little bit nervous but She knows it's what I want to do and that it makes me happy so I think she already accept.

MARIE: Was she proud of you?

FEN: I think so. Yes I think so. And my uncle, my auntie, my mother, my little brother, they drove the car to there and there it's like the big grass land...

MARIE: The grass land

FEN: Huge grassland

MARIE: Not like Beijing

FEN: Yes, not like Beijing, it's a very nice place and I think my mom also like the freedom, she enjoys traveling I think.

MARIE: You told me she likes traveling more and more

FEN: But anyway she travels through agency.

MARIE: She never travels alone?
 FEN: Yes... even if she doesn't follow the agency, she has friends to come with her, for sure. And anyway... she liked it there, it's good. I called her to come at the site to watch what I am doing. It's a way to let her know a little bit about my life. It's good.
 MARIE: It's good.
 FEN: You know Chinese parents, they don't say... "Oh... I'm so proud of you" or "I love you" but I can tell from her appearance that... she was happy.
 MARIE: That's so good
 FEN: But she also said that I should stay safe.
 MARIE: The next step is going to be in Russia?
 FEN: I'm not sure yet, my instructor will tell me if we can go to Russia to try sky-diving... maybe we go if he doesn't go, I don't go... I just follow him to... Turkey again.
 MARIE: How did you like Turkey?
 FEN: I didn't really travel around.
 MARIE: It was like a school paragliding.
 FEN: Yes, I just stayed in Oludeniz. Have you been there?
 MARIE: No never.
 FEN: It's amazing. The sea is very beautiful... like blue and... anyway... it's a nice place. The best is the weather is amazing... very very good combination for paragliding. And the accomodation, the pick up, the altitude is good.
 MARIE: And so there is all the infrastructures like hotels everything is for paragliding?
 FEN: No not all but most... it's a big spot for paragliding. Most of the hotels are just ordinary for tourist, not for pilots
 MARIE: So you met some Chinese travelers?
 FEN: Most of the people there I met are from China. I met them and they were like... "oh, you fly solo... Amazing"
 MARIE: Like in Pokhara... most clients are Chinese.
 FEN: (...) I transfered in Russia because it's cheaper than direct flights.
 MARIE: Did you meet some Turikish people?
 FEN: Yeah, yeah... most of them were pilots. BUt they are very friendly with me. They spent like... We had dinner in the local pilots and doing barbecue and cooking some stuff.
 MARIE: You liked it? You liked the food.
 FEN: Yes... it's totally different from Chinese... if you meet a Chinese person, and you meet the family and you are a guest in their home and they will cook the food, you will be a little bit nervous and you cannot really enjoy but in Turkey they are dancing, talking...
 MARIE: In Turkey?
 FEN: Yeah.
 MARIE: Very warm?
 FEN: Yes, it's like a party. It's very... When you meet family, like a reunion, it's not a party, it's not relax, it's totally different.
 MARIE: It is. Did you like the food?
 FEN: It's ok, but the local pilots, his brother cooked chicken with bread and spices and it's... L... I didn't like. But I ate the best homemade bread in Turkey
 MARIE: The best bread?
 FEN: Homemade still... so good. But Turkey, doesn't have dishes like China. Except for the food... I thought everything was good.
 MARIE: Good
 FEN: Yes because I have a Chinese stomach.
 MARIE: You posted a lot of pictures on facebook.
 FEN: Yes
 MARIE: You were with a group of girl? In Turkey?
 FEN: Yeah
 MARIE: You were with a group of Chinese girl?
 FEN: Yes... Actually... they are all my paragliding classmates.
 MARIE: You practice in Shandong right?
 FEN: Yeah, yeah.

MARIE: So it's like a class you went with... why is it only girl? No boys?
 FEN: Actually only girls joined the paragliding school. Last september, these girls joined at the same time so we know each other very well. So... at that moment there is less guy who joined the paragliding. Only four guys joined but I'm not sure if you met some in Nepal?
 MARIE: I met one guy in Nepal. Let me see... I don't have his card but I didn't meet any boy pilot from China.
 FEN: I know a lot of Chinese pilot but they are older than us. But we have the girls... when we go to Nepal, we go to Turkey or even when we stay in China, we have paragliding meeting and go for paragliding tour, they are always laughing and make some jokes. All the girls are so smily and happy.
 MARIE: Do they have the same mind as you? Do they want to get out of work, travel and paraglide?
 FEN: Yeah, one of the girl is from Chongqing and like she is already 32 years old and she is also not married and she is always like... she says she wants my life but I think that we have the same life. But... she also enjoys freedom, have fun outside. I think most of Chinese girls love the paragliding... like we travel... how to say...
 MARIE: Escape?
 FEN: One of my best paragliding friend, she works for Microsoft and she is very nice, she already got married and she also like paragliding trip. Anyway, when we talk with each other, she also says she wants to go out and go fly... she also has to work, she cannot take long vacation, but normally she said flying here is enough she has to give her work some place... but it's also a good kind of life.
 MARIE: But do you think she feels frustration so she wants to do but she cannot really do... like there is a tension?
 FEN: For sure, most of us feel that. Because we have a lot of girl on the wechat and if someone post some thing about a paragliding show in the group... they are like... "oh... I'm jealous"... so yeah... we want to go out, but you know, we have to earn money and we have keep my life like... to support that.
 MARIE: Yes but you are planning to change a little bit your life.
 FEN: Yes, my life is a little different than other. But that girl, working at Microsoft, she also has a good life. I think... she got married and she doesn't want a baby, she wants to enjoy herself. I think it's good. Her husband is never angry with her... like "why do you leave me alone?" No, I think her husband can understand what she wants to do. He is a good guy. I have never met him but I can imagine.
 MARIE: Cool
 FEN: Sometimes, we talk about that and she tells me her husband also have his time off and she doesn't get angry with him like Chinese traditional wife. They can understand each other. That's what I want.
 MARIE: There is a question I didn't ask you but... when do you think you... because you were in high school, you didn't do all this paragliding... I mean you did sports but you...
 FEN: Actually I was athlete in the running team.
 MARIE: You were an athlete for running but you didn't do all this adventure sport...
 FEN: NO
 MARIE: When did that changed? When... do you have a moment in your life when you knew that your life was going to be different from regular Chinese life.
 FEN: Maybe the first time is when I went to Dali.
 MARIE: To Dali
 FEN: To Lijiang.
 MARIE: When did you go?
 FEN: Five years ago.
 MARIE: You flew there?

FEN: Maybe 6 years ago. First I went to Dali. I go alone and I met a lot of people there and we like by bike and traveling to Lijiang.

MARIE: By bike?

FEN: There is a... Dali... there is a lake

MARIE: Erhai

FEN: Yes and we biked around the lake we hiked to the mountain, we visited a lot of places in Dali, I liked it a lot and all the people from the different city... Beijing, Hangzhou... we met there and I like... the people were interesting and we talked... happy time, everything was good. Maybe... since that trip I really like traveling.

MARIE: Why did you choose Dali?

FEN: Actually... I had graduated at college, I was already working and uh... uh... like now, I have to spend time... all of my time at work... it didn't make me happy so I wanted to go out and have look. This is why I chose Dali. It's popular and people told me it was beautiful place. I search online and though it must be good so it's famous, it's fashionable in China so I go.

MARIE: So is it like kind of when your life started changing?

FEN: Yes. For sure, it started changing a little bit. And uh... like my mom said, you know, when I was younger she could tell that I was maybe go around the world... she told me you cannot stay in one place... you cannot spend your life in just your home. So even when I was young... because... when I was a child, I... I was a student I change... I was in different school. From my hometown to the city... to big city. Maybe it's like... when I was born, it makes the kind of people you are.

MARIE: And have you been to this region?

FEN: I have been to Harbin, most of these places I have been. Harbin, Changchun, Dalian, Tianjin

MARIE: Like, week-end trip or vacation?

FEN: No, just for vacation. I spent almost one month in the 3 cities because they are close. I went first to CHangchun by plane and I go to Harbin by bus. That time I went there with my travel friends, we met in Nepal

MARIE: In 2015

FEN: Yes and, last year we went to Harbin.

MARIE: Daqing also?

FEN: No, just around, not so far. But I think if I had time in my life, I should go around there.

MARIE: To Russia?

FEN: Yes, I heard a lot of stories about how beautiful. But it's very very cold. I want to try the cold weather.

MARIE: Really? Skiing... Have you ever done skiing?

FEN: No. I think it's a little hard to sky but...

MARIE: There is places around here to go ski

FEN: In Beijing also

MARIE: I think you would like it.

FEN: I like it but I'm not very good at skating. And there is like... I just visited some famous place like Hardin, there is a town there... the mountain called Changbaishan... I visited there and Dalian, Shenyang. In this city I just went alone, for a trail competition, in Dalian. First I went to Shenyang and just go down with the high speed train.

MARIE: Look at all your travel

FEN: Yes, only this part I haven't visited.

MARIE: Chengdu have you been?

FEN: Yes, not long, I think I should go spend time again in Chengdu.

MARIE: How long did you spend?

FEN: I just transfered for three days... not a lot, but I also have... they have some ancient buildings. Have you been?

MARIE: No, maybe this time I will go.

FEN: Its good. If you go to Chengdu again, go to Daoxiong Yading. All the house are red.

MARIE: Oh... yeah... the big monastery town. It might be difficult for foreigners... I don't know.

FEN: Maybe... it's an amazing place.

MARIE: And here, along the coast, have you been?

FEN: My home town is here so Shandong I go a lot, for paragliding, to visit Qingdao. When I was young I also went to Shandong for competition and race.

MARIE: You went by plane?

FEN: No the first time I took the plane was to go to Guangdong visit family when I was in college

MARIE: Shanghai, you have been?

FEN: Yes... By train it's cheaper...

MARIE: And these places... Fujian, Zhejiang.

FEN: Yes... My auntie lives here so I go sometimes... but...

MARIE: Your brother lives in Xiamen right?

FEN: Yes, he lives there. And my mother is in Maoming.

MARIE: And so, you have been to Thailand you have told me

FEN: Yes.

MARIE: So you took the plane from Beijing?

FEN: I take... now first I take plane to Wuhan and from Wuhan, I went to Thailand, to Bangkok.

MARIE: You told me that was your first country abroad with my best friend. We were 3 persons... close sisters. What did you do in Thailand.

FEN: We spent half month there and I went shopping, do a lot of massage there and bought a lot of fruit and we make... i show you. So... I went to Bangkok, Chiang Mai. Several famous places, we research from online but not very popular places... not a lot of people knew about this place. Like here... we could find... the water market... we could buy something water.

MARIE: In Bangkok?

FEN: It's near Bangkok, it's not in Bangkok. It's another place, we have to go by train and from Bangkok, we got there. A lot of fruit and a lot of birds. And we live here... in a small town we found online

MARIE: Like Airbnb?

FEN: Yes, like Airbnb. It was near... it's called Kappa water market. Anyway, we lived the life everyday... oh... so this one

MARIE: Amphawa floating market

FEN: Have you been there?

MARIE: No. it's nice?

FEN: This is another famous place. It's called the train market. Before it's like this (vendors on the railway) when the train comes, it's like this (they take the products out = It's the Maeklong Train Market) . They collect of the products out.

MARIE: Wow... how did you know about this place?

FEN: Maybe one of my friend heard it from her friend.

MARIE: It's not a fast train is it?

FEN: No it's very slow. But it's very interesting. And we went to another place, a small place, it's a local train.

MARIE: Did you take the train to go to the north?

FEN: We went to Chiang Mai but first, maybe we go to ... I forgot it, but for sure we stoped arund here. And by train we went ... we did the scooter to go traveling. There is a mountain called... in Chiang Mai.

MARIE: Is it Pai?

FEN: It is not Pai, we also went to Pai but this is another mountain called Sowti. Oh... this is an amazing thing that happen. This is a girl and a guy that we met on the mountain. But we know each other in China before and when we got to the mountain, in the middle of the mountain we thought, this guy... oh... it's you. We know each other from Beijing. We are friend but we met in Thailand.

MARIE: Incredibile.

FEN: Because... before that I know he lived in Thailand but I didn't tell him that I was coming. I knew he was living in

Chiang Mai and he was in the mountain also. We met the same day

MARIE: What are the odds.

FEN: Crazy. Yeah, it's a nice place. We also went to Pai

MARIE: In Pai you went?

FEN: Yeah

MARIE: You liked Pai?

FEN: Really! I show you. You can tell we are together, we have the same t-shirt (she is showing me photographs of her trip). That's so funny, this... you can tell we bought this from China and we took it to Pai. I...

(she shows photo of Thailand)

MARIE: Where are you? In the photo

FEN: This is me... very girly...

MARIE: You look so different!

FEN: I had short hair.

MARIE: And your friends? They knew Thailand or all of you went for the first time?

FEN: First time all of us.

MARIE: You are very beautiful in this picture.

FEN: We are like... you know I want to tell you a little bit about my friend story. She also have... actually she is working on boat, on the big ship, like cruise and she always follow the ship, traveling abroad. At the beginning she could speak any English and when she met her boyfriend who is from Italy and she begin to try to speak English with him over email. I could help her, to translate to write to her boyfriend. But after, I think she stayed with this boyfriend five years and after they broke up, now my friend got married with a Chinese man but her life... I want to tell you the things. Now her life is totally different with her mind. At the beginning, she had the same life as I have. And she liked freedom, she liked amazing things : challenge, go around, try everything. But for now, she got married and she has a baby and she is like a housewife. Sometimes, she called me to talk and she cries. It's a really hard life for her but she cannot choose because she has a baby. And... it totally changed her life.

MARIE: WHY did she get married?

FEN: uh... When she met this guy, her husband, at another friends wedding, and just... I think they just speed one year and they got married. It is so fast... I told her... before her wedding, me and another friend talk about this marriage is shit, you cannot do this. We said a lot things and she... at the beginning, she also thought it was maybe a little crazy. But like she go abroad and traveling a lot and she thinks she want to have a rest a little bit maybe... like have a family, want to get married but I think she is very much too young and not serious. When she got married and she had her baby. It's not like married... you know if you get married and you are not suited for each other, you can have a divorce. But with the baby...

MARIE: Do you think she got scared? Because the kind of life you have, it's difficult for your friends to understand?

FEN: Yeah

MARIE: You know, like... it's difficult to say "it's my life and I like it!" Maybe it's a life that you are not sure... if you are going to have a job. You are never sure about the future. Maybe some people need security. Like they need to marry... do you think she got scared of the freedom life?

FEN: Yes a little bit, I think so. A little bit scared from her family, and her mother is a little bit like... always pushing her... not as open as my mother. And now the best things that makes her happy is her baby. Actually her husband is a good guy. He is a soldier but he cannot stay too long at home, he lives a lot of time in Guangzhou because he is a soldier. My friend, she lives with his parents... that you can imagine how horrible.

MARIE: Do you see her still?

FEN: uh... last time we see each other... I don't know... I go back less. When she got the baby, that moment, I went back to see her but it has been long since we saw each other.

MARIE: So... was it in Thailand that you try scuba diving.

FEN: In Pattaya, our last stop

MARIE: You went from Chiang Mai to Pattaya

FEN: Yes, from Chiang Mai to Pattaya. It was the first time I try scuba diving.

MARIE: Did you know how to swim?

FEN: At that moment, no, I didn't know. But now, yes. Exactly, at that time, it was not my first time... let see. Yes, it's first time.

MARIE: And you didn't know how to swim... your friends also that did it with you?

FEN: Only one. But she didn't like it.

MARIE: You went scuba diving with bottles?

FEN: Yes, with bottles. After it I realised it was not a good experience for scuba diving, the sea is not clear, it's not very good. Not a lot of fish but at that moment I liked it... When you go down under water, it is so amazing but after I did a lot of scuba-diving I realized it is not so good.

MARIE: Where did you do scuba diving?

FEN: In the Philippines and Malaysia.

MARIE: For vacation

FEN: Philippines, Malaysia, Cambodia... uh... no Cambodia, Indonesia... and uh... Vietnam.

MARIE: North or South?

FEN: South... called... how is it called... uh... there is a mountain over there.

MARIE: Is it Halong bay? Right here

FEN: Yes, yes

MARIE: And then Philippines...

FEN: and we go first to Nanning... and we go straight by bus down to Vietnam.

MARIE: Like that to Hanoi and then here. Do you remember in the Philippines which island you went to?

FEN: A lot of island, like uh... It is small small islands. I cannot remember the name. First I went to Manila. And uh... transfer the plane to go to...

MARIE: And you went to different island.

FEN: Actually, I got my scuba-diving licence in Piji island, south of the Philippines

MARIE: Like around here.

FEN: It's long journey, I went alone... I spent almost 24 hours on the way. And I had to take the plane, the bus, and the taxi and boat. You cannot imagine what happened... I was exhausted from the trip. Because it is a very very small island. So you transfer, transfer, transfer.

MARIE: And you got your licence there

FEN: Yeah, before I got my licence, I had already done a lot of scuba diving. And I follow the instructor, after then... I follow the guide. And I try almost fifteen bottles of air. Before I got the licence.

MARIE: Did you learn how to swim in between?

FEN: Yes, I learn here, the coach taught me how to swim. And I can do it well. Yeah, after I learn how to swim, I went to... I'm confused. First I went to Philippines and then I went to Malaysia. Actually, before I go to Philippines I went to Malaysia, a place called... I don't know

MARIE: It's ok, it's a place by the sea.

FEN: Yes, a small island famous for scuba diving. Sipadan, Sipadan, yeah. And we lived in the hostel. And also, I had to spend long time the boat to reach the island. But it's ok, I enjoyed it even if this was a hard way to get there. When I got to the island, I can go scuba-diving I though I had freedom now. Everything... is...

MARIE: You were working here when you went there?

FEN: Yes, I was working there

MARIE: So you take vacation?

FEN: Yeah. I was working here and go to Malaysia and Philippines once. And after I quit my job, I went there again. And I think, last year, only last year I go to Philippines 3 times just for scuba diving.

MARIE: Really? In 2017?

FEN: Yeah.

MARIE: Now that you paraglide, do you still scuba dive?

FEN: I think now I paraglide more. But I miss scuba diving. If someone tells me : "Come on, let's go scuba diving", I'll go. But now, I don't have a lot of vacation so that's why I want to go to Australia because it's a good place for scuba-diving and paragliding.

MARIE: Yes, Australia have everything you want.

FEN: That's why... But there is Bali... Also a good place and it's cheaper.

MARIE: But you can also make a lot of money in Australia.

FEN: Yes, yes, for sure... Australia is good for work but Bali... Maybe I want to learn surfing also so Australia... I think it's a good country for me. My friend think I'm a crazy girl... So most of the Chinese guys, they can't accept me, so... that's why... even if I'm alone, I am so happy.

MARIE: And your boss, he likes that you are traveling that much?

FEN: No... exactly.

MARIE: But he likes...

FEN: But, you know my boss say... you cannot get out of work for long... but next month maybe I can go out. I will manage some time. Because I'm a good staff, I work a lot and normally, I have no free time

MARIE: You work seven days a week.

FEN: Yes, really. and uh... from ten to ten, that's my work. But I can get good business for the company. And the other things is that if he let me go, no people can make a business as good

MARIE: Yes, in Nepal, I remember that your boss called you because he wanted you back.

FEN: Last month, I went to Guizhou, only 3/4 days and he called me twice. It's not...

MARIE: So they understand what you do?

FEN: Yes, he likes this life, maybe but... he likes money more.

MARIE: I remember that last year, you wanted to... maybe in September you will go to France for the Coupe Icare.

FEN: Yes, I couldn't get off work, we had a lot of plan for the opening of a new gym. We had work to do on this gym, a lot of things.

MARIE: So you couldn't go.

FEN: Two of my classmates went to Annecy and there is another one... Totally, only 3 persons went to France. But for sure, next year I will go. Nothing can stop me next year. Maybe after this year, I will do a lot of practice of paragliding and I can join the competition. If I can go to Australia, I'm gonna get so good.

MARIE: Do you know Australian pilots?

FEN: Do you know a pilot guy name Shayne? He is from Australia, last year, he was also in Pokhara.

MARIE: Yes... Dennis...

FEN: Yes, Dennis I know... And this time I also... I also met him in Guizhou.

FEN: Dennis?

FEN: No no, Shayne, the other Australian guy. And last year, he was living... I think it's very close to your place. Up in the mountain

MARIE: Yes, I t'hink I know.

FEN: I think you met him. He is a really good pilot. He does a lot of accro... so good. I have a photo. I met him in the competition in Guizhou. He got in fifth place. There was almost 100 foreigner pilots. Hopefully I can join the competition next year.

MARIE: Is it different for boys and girls?

FEN: Yes, it is.

MARIE: HOW do you practice here if you work seven days of the week?

FEN: I cannot practice here in Beijing. So if I got any chance, I just go out to practice in other city : Shandong, Chongqing and Hangzhou.

MARIE: In Hangzhou you can practice?

FEN: Yeah. It's a good place. Ok...

MARIE: I have to back to work?

FEN: It's ok... Are you hungry?

MARIE: Yeah, sure, let's go!

XIANG

MARIE: so...

XIANG: She is doing a research on me...

MARIE: Hi, nice to meet you... We met in Nepal

XIANG: She is a scholar...

MARIE: Not yet.

XIANG: Yeah...Research on people like me... Chinese young backpackers

MARIE: Rebellious... those who don't work for a bank or in accounting. Shift from accounting to art... you hippie. Why?

XIANG: Why? That's a good question... I just follow the... there is something like a calling there.

MARIE: Yeah calling...

XIANG: Yes, I'm following the calling.

MARIE: So... you remember... you... Nepal... in Nepal you told me all about your travel...

XIANG: The only place I haven't been is like... this part.

MARIE: There we go... so what I would like you to do is, from the beginning... is to draw me your travels...

XIANG: Draw?

MARIE: Yes, so like... where did you start? Do you remember the complicated...

XIANG: Conversation?

MARIE: No, we had a very nice conversation but we shifted a bit from your travels and the online form that I send you, you told me it was very long and to describe... so what I would like you to do now, together... is by using any color, tell me where you have been, how did you go there... like bus, hitch-hike, train... so you can use different form of... Tell me where you have been, what places really had an impact on you whether it's positive or negative. um... I remember you tell me you went to Taiwan... so... pretty much anything you want to tell me about your travels and.

XIANG: So... hard task...

MARIE: You don't have to tell me all. Like the week-end is maybe not necessary unless there where so important that you need to tell it to me? I remember you telling me that your trip to Harbin was somehow important.

XIANG: Yes. Where is Beijing. I should make maybe a demonstration first. Have you done it before with some else?

MARIE: Yes, do you want to see it?

XIANG: Let me think about it.

MARIE: It's up to you.

XIANG: Do you need like, detailed information? or just marks?

MARIE: Just marks and as you marked it you can talk to me.

XIANG: Ok

MARIE: Discuss it.. anything, any thoughts.

XIANG: This is suitable for flight. So here is the start point... (Wuhan) , it's always from here to other places. First one.

MARIE: If you want to start over, I have more so don't be afraid to smash it.

XIANG: I can do a draft.

MARIE: I'm sorry the names are not in Chinese, I had problem to find it.

XIANG: uh... Here is the important places... at the border

MARIE: Why?

XIANG: It's like.. the first sight to the multicultural places because in the city it's very easy to see Russian people, and it's very cool places like Russian people speaking Chinese in a local accent. Super cool. Yes, I travel here... along the border a lot. It's like..

MARIE: In a car?

XIANG: Yeah, in group

MARIE: With your camp?

XIANG: Yeah... camp... it's the first time. It's like, around this.

MARIE: What is so fascinating about the border to you?

XIANG: Good question. I think about it a lot. I kept thinking after I came back because I want to do some programs about it. So... it's about like, just what I refer right now... we always have the desire to step a little bit aside to touch the border to see where the limitation is or where is what does the world next to you look like. And when you keep moving, this is like how American people gradually go West, right?

MARIE: Yes

XIANG: This is the same desire. The reason I go West. Or why I go to the border. It is to explore the border of yourself... but in a physical way... so graphically, when you keep separate two different places actually means to lead you into this process, and you gradually go to the borders... it always means different cultural and different things combined together. Because this is the border's definition... It's is a line between two different things. Or a line to separate something so it means that you will be influence by both area.

MARIE: But don't you think... because it's just an administration border... China is multicultural

XIANG: So actually it's not only this border, when I go here, it's a kind of border. It's here, and when I keep moving, the border keep moving with me... gradually... it's like a drop in the water that keeps expanding in all directions

MARIE: So you say there was a border between Wuhan and Beijing...

XIANG: There used to be but now they are together, this is my all world. So if I draw this line from here to here. Where is the Changbai mountain? I'm trying to find it.

MARIE: I don't think it's on the map but somebody told me it was around there... like... here. But you never cross the border?

XIANG: Not here because I need a visa. This is what physically stopped me.

MARIE: Your mind wanted to go but...

XIANG: ... stopped me

MARIE: And did you feel frustrated?

XIANG: Well... at that time not really because this trip was exciting enough for me t that point but now I'm prepared to go to Russia for a long time. I bought the Lonely Planet for Russia 3 years ago. Still haven't been. uh... okay so. North... there is some other but it's not in the time line. This is where I went later...

MARIE: To Baotou?

XIANG: Yeah...

MARIE: What for?

XIANG: One of my best friend lives there. And also here

MARIE: In Dalian? But then... you go by land because there was no plane? You take the plane to go there?

XIANG: No...uh... I can't remember. It's hard to remember.

MARIE: And so you would go there for the weekend? or week?

XIANG: For several.. uh... It's like this sorry. Because they are a couple, and they are in Australia now. I introduce them to each other. So I'm waiting for them to get married so I can travel to Australia for free. I recently went here to work... just for work. And here... (Taiwan)

MARIE: It was your marketing camp?

XIANG: Yeah...

MARIE: From Wuhan?

XIANG: Yeah, from Wuhan to Fuzhou to Taipei

MARIE: So you stayed fifteen days right?

XIANG: Yeah

MARIE: First time abroad?

XIANG: Yeah. And so after that I went to Shenzhen because I have a lot of friends that live around this coast.

MARIE: I think the first time you said that the sea in Taiwan is really pretty much better than... because it's not that far...

XIANG: oh but I see on this side is the Pacific Ocean so here is very good. On the straight it's ok but here (the East coast) it's very good. Blue... very deep blue.

MARIE: Ok

XIANG: Shenzhen... yeah

MARIE: What did you do?

XIANG: I visited a friend, yeah... because I also wanted to check the universities...

MARIE: Why you didn't go to these universities?

XIANG: I think it's not... I thought about it for a time but I think it's not fascinating enough

MARIE: You needed like a big change? Like a migration project

XIANG: A totally different place and far away.

MARIE: Why? Why far away...Is India far away?

XIANG: It's the same desire... I want to cross the border... to see how big the world is. oh... it's horrible how many places, I went

MARIE: That's ok... just write the important ones, the one that really had an impact

XIANG: June that year, do some like traveling to... Have you traveled here?

MARIE: I have been to Dali... no to Kunming and Lijiang.

XIANG: This part... this part.

MARIE: Is that where the Pu'er tea is?

XIANG: The rice fields like... in there.

MARIE: So you went there?

XIANG: I went there with my mom and we were both backpacking and we stayed in hostels

MARIE: I remember you told me she cooked for everybody.

XIANG: Yeah, and i drink too much. I got drunk one night because one of our roommate was selling red wine there so when my mom cooked for everyone, we were drinking the wine that he brought. So I drunk too much... I just kept trying... it was crazy.

MARIE: When was that?

XIANG: Second year of my university. Spring 2017. Kunming is superb in spring... I flew there. For this, I should change color

MARIE: I'm sorry I'm very limited in color

XIANG: It's ok, I just want to keep them in suite... put there a logic. You see the line is always darker...

MARIE: Why?

XIANG: Visually, it looks good. I remember one time but I can't remember when it is

MARIE: Doesn't need to have a time... what did you do in Guangxi...

XIANG: I went to different places and Guilin, Yangshuo, Beihai...

MARIE: That was the same trip?

XIANG: No, different, another trip. There is a little island there, it's good!

MARIE: Is it why?

XIANG: Just good...
 MARIE: What did you do there?
 XIANG: Just relaxing... it's...
 MARIE: Just sleeping and eating..
 XIANG: Enjoying the sea. Here is good. I went to a lot of places during working.
 MARIE: When you were working?
 XIANG: Yes in camps. So here... Ningbo, very beautiful city. One of my ex-boyfried comes from there too. And oh... Suzhou fly again... super trip, big family trip but plan by my mom so...
 MARIE: How do you... I never heard this story... what did you do?
 XIANG: It was around this time... because this time, if you go there, you can have very good sea food. There is an island there. It is said to be the home of the Guanyin Buddha. And my grand-mother believes in Chinese Buddhism so... They have a... when you have some desire, you go to the temple and ask the Buddha for something. And if it happens you have to go back to thank him. So... very early, my mom and my grand-ma asked for some kind of things and after I got into the university, they say I should go to thank.
 MARIE: Is that where XU Xiake went...
 XIANG: It's a Guanyin Daoshan.
 MARIE: The traveler XU Xiake, he didn't go there? No?
 XIANG: This one is Putuo Shan. It's an island and there is a mountain and there is a very big... some kind of Buddha. A very big... along the sea.
 MARIE: You go by boat from Ningbo?
 XIANG: Yes, by boat. I remember when we went there we took the plane. And the island here is very good, beautiful and local.
 MARIE: Did you go to the beach in Cambodia?
 XIANG: oh yeah. Near Kampong.
 MARIE: How did you like Cambodia?
 XIANG: Oh, it's really good. I want to mark 5 stars.
 MARIE: It's a five stars trip?
 XIANG: Yeah, I write a big heart. I prefer rather than Thailand
 MARIE: You preferred Cambodia over Thailand?
 XIANG: Because I love architecture and there is a lot of temples. Really great.
 MARIE: Visiting temples is what you liked?
 XIANG: Yes, a also... yeah... but it's a place which suffered... not suffer but like they were always colonised by Western people.
 MARIE: Not by Western, by French.
 XIANG: A little bit Germany, you can see some like institute in French and Germany to protect the architecture. I'd like to go to France to see some things you took from there because, there is some kind of brilliant sculpture in the temple that were taken for your museum. Anyway, the only way I can see it is in France.
 MARIE: Where do I hide now?
 XIANG: No! And also their history is super interesting because of the... region...
 MARIE: Thailand, you told me you went to Thailand?
 XIANG: I didn't go but I saw a lot of so I'm not that interested. This place is too popular and commercial. Actually I'm planning to Iran or Turkey, the middle-east.
 MARIE: Yeah? Iran... why?
 XIANG: It's also for culture and yeah... it's so different.
 MARIE: Is it hard to get there?
 XIANG: I have heard it is not that difficult, at least I have two or three friends that have been there. I think the countries around are a little bit difficult. And sometimes, you will get some troubles if you go there. And if you want to go to America, it's not possible.

MARIE: Yes, for sure if you have an Iran visa in your passport, you cannot go to the United States anymore.
 XIANG: So...
 3 - 30:20 > 59:05 [Travel in China]
 XIANG: Oh... there is a very very important trip, from here, we drove from Beijing... along this street, we drove.
 MARIE: You drove to Urumqi?
 XIANG: To Qinghai. Then, Gansu province. I think it's like this. Chengdu. Yes, it's like this. Chengdu. Yes, it's like this. Here to Chengdu.
 MARIE: So you started from Beijing this time
 XIANG: Yes, it took one month. We visited a lot of places near by. Like there is... it's a research trip for a program, a Tibetan program. Because all this area (West Sichuan) ... But, just like this. This here, there is an institute for environment preservation for local animals and the ground.
 MARIE: What kind of landscape is it here?
 XIANG: It's like, some point there will be very high altitude, higher than 4000. It's like, this is a plateau and high mountain.
 MARIE: It's not flat
 XIANG: And there is grass land. Most of the time it is mountain, mountain part and super good and this is more like grassland.
 MARIE: Ok
 XIANG: And lower altitude, so... so it gradually goes down to Chengdu because this is a basin. This all area is a basin and this is a plateau. This is very low, lowlands and because it is grassland because it goes to Mongolia.
 MARIE: So it was your first big trip west?
 XIANG: It was half for working, half for myself. And the guy who came with us is our co-operator who runs a Tibetan yoga company in Beijing. He has done a lot of things to empower people in Tibetan community because he believes in Tibetan Buddhism so he wants to bring that kind of lifestyle in the city because in this area the people have a very good relationship with nature. They... people and nature live together. Of course, because of the modernization they keep changing, but still, a lot of people live in a very traditional way. It was really an amazing trip... a lot of cultural shocks too
 MARIE: It was a cultural shock for you?
 XIANG: Yeah, because it's a whole different minority groups. And they have a totally different language, different lifestyles, yeah.
 MARIE: Would you say this is more different than Taiwan?
 XIANG: Yeah... because in Taiwan we are all Hans, except the minorities group in Taiwan. And there, it is not, this is another minority group. And they have beliefs system, and their religion... like... you can see how religion has an important role in their daily life. It's not like in the mainland. The Buddhism in our place is like some kind of tool.
 MARIE: A tool? For what
 XIANG: For most people, you want something they go to temple and they ask for it.
 MARIE: So like... material things
 XIANG: Yeah, material, yeah. But for them, even if they don't even ask, they donate, they serve.
 MARIE: Did you notice that they want the same life as you have?
 XIANG: Of course, they have but it's like, they don't think... ah, it's different, because they are born with their religion.
 MARIE: It's like a lifestyle
 XIANG: yeah, and don't think they like the way we treat us...
 MARIE: They don't like how you treat Buddhism?
 XIANG: They don't like. I think they don't really know but... for people when they go to Tibet, they will stop by how they... things how they choose their religion. So this can approve or see how people here aren't that sincere or...

MARIE: And do you think this is the reason why a lot of the youth goes to...

XIANG: I think it is the reason why so many Western people come to Asia, the same reason.

MARIE: So yeah, so Western people go to Asia...

XIANG: mental... to search for some meanings. It's the same because it is just like Western people. Like, we don't really have their religion.

MARIE: So you are looking for a meaning of some kind?

XIANG: Yeah, a lot of people are...

MARIE: And you would find it...

XIANG: You know because, some people they went there and they are influence by the culture and they choose to attend of select a religion, but for me I can't. So... I guess I get some ideas from them. How they deal... How they consider the world, how they think of nature, like, human is equal to nature and men and animals are equal and it's just your friend. Before, when you are born in a city, you can't have this connection to animals, you cannot have a life close to them. But at that place, they grow with yaks, so they can tell the name of every yaks. There are 400 yaks and they can tell the difference, this is amazing for me. In my eyes, there is no difference. So we will be shocked by this kind of details, this is the most amazing part. It's not like oh... they go to temple or something. Very shallow, but the deep influence comes from this kind of details... immersing in the environment. Because during this trip, I lived with them. I went to... everyday they would... everyday they let the yaks out and every afternoon they would get them back. I follow them, rode a horse to mountain to do that. And you can see how they live a really good life, that's amazing. This is so different kind of shock.

MARIE: Do you think by going to Europe you are going to have a different kind of shock?

XIANG: Of course, everytime I go to new place, I will.

MARIE: But you say also that... first you travel out of curiosity

XIANG: yeah

MARIE: Then there is excitement and then it's about... the curiosity and the excitement kind goes down and then the learning aspects kind of spur

XIANG: Yeah

MARIE: Do you still thinks like that?

XIANG: Yeah... if I go to that area again, of course the shock will go down, because I know what is there. But I will begin to think deeper and find out what I can do for them... something like that. So if I go to Europe for the first year of something, I will experience the same, everything is new, or buildings are very beautiful but when I begin to get used to it, then, there will be some deeper thinking. So it takes time... you can't have a quick lens, that's just for... that's how now a lot of people are traveling they take ten days for ten countries... it's the same as watching videos or something

MARIE: Yeah, yeah... that's something I meant to ask you.

You can see pretty much any landscapes on the internet and yet we keep moving... so... we keep moving because we want to keep experiencing... that's what you said the first time. Could you define experience?

XIANG: wow... difficult question

MARIE: Like... what is a travel experience for you?

XIANG: I think it's a series of moment that you feel... shaked... how to say... like you can... you connect with something at specific sites. You are really there and you make connection. And feel... and how a feeling of resonance, like a mental resonance, of synchronisation. It invades the space. MARIE: And how do you connect? Like what senses do you use to connect?

XIANG: It's just when that moment come you know... it's like art work... it's hard to describe.

MARIE: But would you say you connect with your sight?

XIANG: No, it's not according to one sense. It's a combination because if you experience something, all of your 5 or 6 senses are opened to that thing and make that connection. And then you can fulfill that resonance.

MARIE: I have another question about sensation because they are some culture in the world that have more than 5 senses, they have more, some have less. In France usually, we say we have 5 senses : touch, taste, smell, sight, and ear. Is it the same in China? Do you have the same 5 senses?

XIANG: It's a good question but I was taught in the Western system too but I don't know about if these 5 senses are traditional. But I think we have 6 senses, I think Buddhism is different but I don't know a lot about it. Do you know the 6th sense?

MARIE: No...

[>R3]: It's not a physical sensation, something more like... like it's not really existing... like for example, there is two roads, you may get a feeling that ok... I will go down this road... it is intuition

MARIE: Intuition?

XIANG: Is it from Chinese traditional idea?

[>R3]: I don't think so... in Europe you have something like this

MARIE: We have intuition but we don't call it a sense.

XIANG: Because we use the same character for this word... to describe the sixth one.

MARIE: And did you do travel around Sichuan?

XIANG: A lot. I almost like. Crazy... that's why you are formed before it's too hard... Also in the video, he is going to show tomorrow so it may be super strange feeling. um... because I think I graduated from high school, my mom and I travelled from Wuhan to Chengdu one time and we go to the... Anyway, it's like this place. Chengdu is like a spot, I visited there a lot. Because it's a traffic centre in this part of China. Because all of this around is mountains. If you want to visit one of these mountains, you have to arrive to Chengdu first.

MARIE: It's like a door for mountain areas.

XIANG: Yeah, and for me, like... the summer camp last year was around there. I stayed there one month.

MARIE: Draw a triangle maybe... of there we go... a tent, perfect.

XIANG: When you stay in a place one month, it's totally different

MARIE: Why?

XIANG: You will get familiar to a place

MARIE: Like living there?

XIANG: Yeah. It's different than when you traveling all the time.

MARIE: This area, you have been? (Kunlun Shan)

XIANG: Oh, this is the area I haven't been.

MARIE: No chance of going?

XIANG: Yeah... because I always wanted to live related to this... the road of silk. Because, this, there is a name like... it's a hole... it's a pathway at the west of the river and this pathway relates Xinjiang to the main... He Shi Zho Lan (the Zho Lan Pathway) .

MARIE: But you have never been there...

XIANG: I flew here...

MARIE: I remember... that was your trip when we met right?

XIANG: well...

MARIE: You flew from Wuhan, you didn't flew from Beijing?

XIANG: Yes I flew from Wuhan. To Urumqi. Then it was a long trip.

MARIE: In car or train?

XIANG: This... train... first the train to Yining. then Karamay where is it?

MARIE: So again you went to the border?
 XIANG: Yes... very border, I keep going to the border and come back and here...
 MARIE: You couldn't go to Kazakhstan right?
 XIANG: I can't, I need a visa but I want to, yeah. I always want to cross the wall. And here there are some little towns super interesting. So I stayed a little bit here. And I go back again. And I go here : Kashi.
 MARIE: In train?
 XIANG: Yes and stop by stop. And here is the desert.
 MARIE: I remember you told me you had a lot of check point and you were surprised by it.
 XIANG: Yes, and this is a long story. But I definitely will go back again
 MARIE: Were you on your own during that trip?
 XIANG: There is two of my friends. One is local, an actor and the other is a social worker. And when... but also I met some people on the way.
 [3183,6]MARIE: Were they travellers?
 XIANG: I think they were travellers. And, I flew here back to Wuhan because I had some emergency at home.
 MARIE: So you went back to Wuhan and then
 XIANG: I flew to Lhassa... oh, no... I took the train... I flew to Gansu or Xining and took a train... I think it's Xining. So I took the train from here and cross... only way... it's a 24 hours train.
 MARIE: How long did you stay in Lhassa for?
 XIANG: A month before I go to Nepal. I just traveled a little bit around.
 MARIE: I remember you were a volunteer in a hostel...
 XIANG: I was a cook there, I'm cooking everyday. And from Lhassa I took a bus, long bus... crazy bus... then we meet here...
 MARIE: Yes
 XIANG: Big heart!
 MARIE: I think Pokhara is there although it's not on the map.
 XIANG: Yes, because the traffic is crazy so I had to fly there to be on time for the vipassana.
 MARIE: You flew to Pokhara.
 XIANG: And also because I drink too much, I missed the time for the bus so I bought a plane ticket. It was not that expensive, just 600 hundred.
 MARIE: So you are not really a Qiong you?
 XIANG: A qiong you... because I'm not that poor. I was before... I... on this train, this trip (the one in Heilongjiang) , I spent 27 hours... more than one day... slow train to Harbin, because I go there twice.
 MARIE: So and then back to Kathmandu and back to Beijing?
 XIANG: Yes
 MARIE: Since then... have you done any traveling?
 XIANG: I visited my relatives in Nanjing. It's very interesting except for my... there is some... this is what I have been researching. So there is some... like some train I travel a lot... like double... keep keep going. back and forth between Beijing, Wuhan and Nanjing. Because this is the hometown of my grand-pa. So I went there more than ten times or more.
 MARIE: But would you say that the center of your life is Beijing?
 XIANG: I moved to Beijing, yes
 MARIE: Do you go back to Wuhan?
 XIANG: Only if there is something I need to do there. So... It's a nice map.
 MARIE: What's your favorite kind of landscape?
 XIANG: Oh, it's hard to say favorite. I love diversity... I like sea and mountain.
 MARIE: And the....

XIANG: oh... I have been to Hainan!
 MARIE: Do you still think about Nepal?
 XIANG: Not that. Not like Xinjiang and Xizang because it's like not that big. But I keep thinking about the institute helping women.
 MARIE: The one I showed you?
 XIANG: Yeah... I keep thinking about that. I still want to know more about it.
 MARIE: Have you exchange contact?
 XIANG: No, because I can't promise I will do something.
 MARIE: You know where it is.
 XIANG: Yes, I can come back anytime.
 MARIE: Do you remember that girl (Marie-Jane) that I introduce you to?
 XIANG: The one that worked there?
 MARIE: No the Chinese girl with the dreadlocks, from Chengdu.
 XIANG: Oh, yeah... I met her one time when you were not there. We had pizza or something.
 MARIE: Was it nice?
 XIANG: Yes... she is... she is better than you told me. She was feeling better.
 MARIE: Well that was pretty shocking the day we met because she had this LSD bad trip
 XIANG: Yeah, yeah, I think she was just like to stressed, she let go of this pressure and she gets better
 MARIE: Yeah, what do you think of her?
 XIANG: Because I know a lot of different people, so I'm not surprised about the lifestyle she had. A lot of people who like rap music or rock music, they live different kind of lifestyle.
 MARIE: She is really confusing to me... because...
 XIANG: She is westernized.
 MARIE: But sometimes her ideas don't match what she put out in the world for me to see. Do you know what I mean?
 XIANG: For she...
 MARIE: Like she shows stuff to me but sometimes it doesn't quite fit the idea she expressed. Like there is a gap between what she shows and what she says. So I was wondering if you had the same...
 XIANG: It's like performing. She is performing the lifestyle she wants or just opposite of what she can do in China.
 MARIE: I think she is a pretty wealthy person... I think she has a lot of money
 XIANG: I agree. She represents like a group of people now that is quite rich. Sometimes in China you have to fit in a community.
 MARIE: What was the place where you felt the most foreign?
 XIANG: Foreign?
 MARIE: Like you felt you were not from here. Like people were so different that you felt like you were not... that you didn't belong.
 XIANG: Definitely here
 MARIE: In Xinjiang?
 XIANG: Definitely, it's very obvious, especially here
 MARIE: In Kaski?
 XIANG: Yes, because very few Han are living in this place during the winter time, it's almost everyone who goes so it's quite like if you are going to a foreign city.
 MARIE: It was not Nepal or Taiwan or Cambodia?
 XIANG: No, because, like Nepal is more like Western world and there is a lot Western people in China so it's not that obvious.
 MARIE: And how did you manage the difference. I remember you telling me that it was the first time that you realised you were Han.
 XIANG: Yeah, yeah, yeah, in Xinjiang. I don't think I have already deal with it... because it's a very recent trip and, it's

very stressful when you feel you are a minority. So that you can have empathy

MARIE: Stressful?

XIANG: Like everyone around you, they look different, they look at you strangely because it's not the traveling season, it is winter, it's super cold and almost nobody is traveling. You are an invader or a stranger for them so everyone, not everyone but a lot of people are looking at you. A little bit, especially if you go deeper in the local market. Because I like to do that and I always hold a camera which is more a proof that I am an invader. It's quite interesting. So I'm more like careful when I was traveling there. I'm normally not that careful, I just do whatever I want but in Xinjiang, it was the first time that I felt stressed out.

MARIE: You were self-conscious not to do the wrong thing?

XIANG: True.

MARIE: And for example, if you move to Europe, you are going to feel like a minority?

XIANG: But it's always different because last thing I quite know what is Western culture, I keep operating and getting along with French, Germany, with English people, I quite know how they work, how they think and how to communicate and get along. In this area (Western China), the most provinces are uh... both religiously and politically... I have never have a deep connexion and communication with them before. Even if in our school some people but they are trying to fit in the Han culture, the mainstream culture, so they try to fit our lifestyle, our ideas. But when we go to their place, it totally changes, this experience is interesting.

MARIE: I would like to go deep on that. So you felt like an invader because of what you represent?

XIANG: Invader... or... it's hard to say invader, because I am the one who faced the danger. The invader is always something you give some... to other right?

MARIE: Yes, but the fact that, because I think they want their independence right? The Ouighurs?

XIANG: Yes... (moment of embarrassment) ... Yes,

MARIE: They are not really happy to be...

XIANG: Yes, it depends... there are different groups inside too, so... so this kind of risks exist. They don't like us... our ethnic group. They are in conflict. It's like, when Indian people go to Pakistan something.

MARIE: Maybe it's what you represent as a Han...

XIANG: Going to there place, and they don't know why I'm coming for. Maybe just tourism, maybe not.

MARIE: But you felt...

XIANG: It's also because all these areas, all the minority groups are under the control of the government, more under control, so it's a higher pressure from the government that is dominated by Han people.

MARIE: Did you feel like you were... dominating... like bodily, like... when I travel in Africa, because I'm white, it's all the more meaningful.

XIANG: Yeah, yeah, yeah...

MARIE: So I know that the fact that I am here conveys sorts of signals or representations, domination and power and I cannot do anything but carrying it with me.

XIANG: I think some people might have... but because I... it's a little bit different because... it's not Chi... it's... it's the same country still. From first beginning it's the same country and there was a time in that area, these minority group, they take control, they take power of their own land. But of course... at first in the beginning, there were three periods in the relationship between Hans and Uighurs. Like at the very first beginning of the foundation of China, because the government wanted them to be loyal to the main government and they don't have the energy to take control of them. So they put more Uighur people into the government system to control and govern their own land.

But, of course, they can just take control of this part of land (their own province) .

MARIE: So if I follow you... they put Han here to control the people or they took Uighur in the local government to control the Uighurs.

XIANG: Yes, in the early time and also, they moved a lot of Hans to their land, just common people there. They follow the army, a lot of family of the army. Why is there so many Hans is because a lot of families moved there with the army. And also there is a lot of opportunities to earn money. So the government give people some benefits if they moved to Xinjiang to settle down. So it's why a lot of Hans moved there. And there is a lot of country like Xigaze, like.. there are a lot of Hans... like there is a lot of Hans because during this time it was encourage to go there. And so as the Hans are growing up, gradually, of the Uighur wants to take more control of their land, so they gradually put more Hans in the government. So we are in a time where it is half half in the whole system and, it's also because... it's complicated because it's also about like multi-border relations, political and this kind of international relationship. And there is like east. There is a rising idea of like east... like all this... because they actually belong to... they are related more to the countries in the West

MARIE: Like Turkistan

XIANG: Yes, Turkistan... they want to build their...

MARIE: Yes, like an area of cultural influence

XIANG: Based on anthropology, they are most closed to each other. And they influence their international force so some people... because they are getting less control of their own land, their resources are taken by Hans, more and more, so they kind of idea.

MARIE: Did you feel that tension?

XIANG: Oh, really. Because I read a lot before I went there so...

MARIE: No but like... from what you read and what you experience... was there...

XIANG: I think they hate each other... because I know this process... so maybe I can more understand why they don't like Hans. It's because I know, so I'm a little afraid. Because I'm the minority there now.

MARIE: You are the majority here and the minority there

XIANG: Yes, so this is a really good reverse identity experience.

MARIE: How did it feel? To be the minority?

XIANG: Well... it's not good... well it's interesting not everyone is not friendly... it depends on people. They have so many different ideas.

MARIE: For example did you feel the same thing in Tibet?

XIANG: No!

MARIE: Why?

XIANG: They are more tender.

MARIE: More gentle?

XIANG: Yes

MARIE: Are there also tension there?

XIANG: Tibetan are closer to Hans according to history.

MARIE: Like culturally?

XIANG: Yes

MARIE: For sure, the Himalayas is a highway of ideas and religion.

XIANG: This line is another highway... how do you say this?

MARIE: The highway? The silk road?

XIANG: No but this?

MARIE: Like a corridor or a path.

XIANG: A pathway, there is another pathway here and it has another name but I can't know... the Mekong river... is it the three rivers... this all area (the blue circle on the map), the name is the Ming Zhu Zhou La. The Ethnic group

MARIE: Catholic?

XIANG: Ethnic groups, minority ethnic. They are located around there. A lot of minorities are located around here, and it's between... the Tibetan is the main culture so it's so interesting. They keep getting benefits from balance which is Qinghai here is famous for that. Also, this is Tibetan. And because they share the same religion, similar at least or like Buddhism. Only this is Muslim.

MARIE: But in Ningxia Hui, the Hui they are muslim too right?

XIANG: Hui, they don't have their own characters. They are more in between. But according to what they look like. They are more close to Han. I don't much about them but when I meet Hui, they are always very friendly. They live mostly between this strange... more like here. I think they are a combination. It's so interesting. I want to learn more about anthropology. But I don't want to learn it in China.

MARIE: Why?

XIANG: That is too according to what government wants, we don't really have anthropology, we call it more ethnicity. So the only thing we can do is investigate this kind of minority based on the idea that all the 55 ethnic groups are one big group.

MARIE: In the interview we had together, the theme close and open... you use this word a lot, close versus open. It seems like there is a tension there. You kind...

XIANG: It's because it comes from... the idea comes from history. Because there is a time like Chinese locked the door and say no to any communication with the Western world

MARIE: Yeah... but regarding you.

XIANG: So this like of basic idea, open/close... this like of dialectic. Because if I had lived at that time, everything would have been closed to me, it's almost the same now... we have this kind of invisible firewall.

MARIE: For the internet?

XIANG: Yes, it's almost invisible wall at the border of China, you can feel it's very obvious when you physically cross the border, on one side you can't use google and on the other side you can use google. This is something that you can experience. It makes people annoyed. Well at least it makes me.

MARIE: It makes you annoyed?

XIANG: Really annoyed... I mean, I can use the VPN but it is different. Maybe if you open everything, I don't really need to use, but because you close, it means I can't use it so I can't accept. It's not because I need to use, it's just that I can't accept... I should have the right to use it.

MARIE: You should have the right to do everything, you wouldn't necessarily do it but you should have the right to do it.

XIANG: Yes, it's very important.

MARIE: Like, if you were to transfer that theme of close and open to your own life, not about China. uh...

XIANG: Well, I think because there is a wall, and invisible wall with the world, I can't grow up... if everything is just open there is no idea about closing. But because there is a wall, which distinguishes in and out, then there is close and open. And also it's about information now.

MARIE: But don't you think there is always an in and out?

XIANG: It depends if it's naturally there or if it is constructed.

MARIE: Because it seems like, with the history you told me out slowly being close in school, and then you go to university and then the doors slightly opened and some ray of lights are coming in.

XIANG: Yeah, yeah... I always think this way, it's very interesting. I also think there is two ways to develop yourself. One is in toward yourself and one is toward outside.

MARIE: Which way did you choose?

XIANG: It's like, what's my identity, how like... what I really like, or what's my talent. This kind of question... it's like "in", and this is like out...

MARIE: Is this connected?

XIANG: Connected?

MARIE: The in and out?

XIANG: Of course, the outside, what you experience outside will influence the way... it's like two parallel with each other.

MARIE: So next what is your plan.

XIANG: Europe, I'm also interesting in land in between, the Middle-East.

MARIE: Have you ever read San Mao?

XIANG: A lot of people say I'm like her... like it feels her. My high school classmates say that. Yes, I read a lot.

MARIE: What did you like about San Mao.

XIANG: It's long time ago, I was in middle school.

MARIE: Is she an inspiration for you?

XIANG: A little bit. Like... especially her lifestyle. At that time, I was thinking about that I wanted to keep moving. Like I want to live in different cities, each year. I begun at first... yes... very early to come up with this idea. Yes.

MARIE: Is there other books like San Mao, like other travelers book or movies?

XIANG: She is not a traveler, she is a writer in my mind, she is an artist.

MARIE: But that way of... mouvement in the litterature... do you have ... is there like other books, you talked about "On the road" that has been an influence on you?

XIANG: Yes, a little bit, not as strong because I don't like the translation. It's hard to come up with ideas without my book shelf.

[5247,8]MARIE: You had, read books about travels?

XIANG: I don't read a lot about the other experience of travel. I only get informations. And very first I would read some but I gradually find that they are all the same. So... and I don't like second hand experience.

MARIE: Last question. Can you, in China, you talked about your classmates or family, that trip you took in Nepal, Xianjiang or Campbodia, can you... can you tell the stories of your travel? Are people interested in listening? Because that trip in Nepal and Xinjiang had an impact on you, can you... do people understand?

XIANG: Here they understand. But my hometown

MARIE: In this place?

XIANG: No, like, my friends and community in Beijing, they almost have the same horizon but if I go back to Wuhan, it's hard.

MARIE: People don't understand?

XIANG: They can understand, they know it exists but they don't have the same exciting or empathy feeling with me.

MARIE: They look at you as a bizarre?

XIANG: Some are yes, little bit like not mainstream people, like San Mao. She is quite, even if she has literal achievement is higher and also because she suicided and time passed

MARIE: Why do you think she killed herself?

XIANG: Good question... but only people around her. I just can understand, suicide is normal

MARIE: You think suicide is normal?

XIANG: Yes, I think people should have the right to select whether they want to live or die.

MARIE: She was quite young when she committed suicide.

MARIE: I think it's her husband died and she always had a strong feeling of loneliness. And I think her husband saved her and get her back into the daily life. So when her husband passed away, nobody did that.

XIANG: She is a little bit like one of my friend who is now in depression too. She is too much pressure and thinking too much.

MARIE: I met a couple of girls who were traveling to escape some kind of emptiness. yeah... trying to feel something with traveling. But yeah. In Wuhan you cannot really talk about your travel experiences. People listen or not even?

XIANG: I don't do that because I haven't been back in a long time now. But I guess they will listen but they will say... oh cool, but it is not their life. It's just different. Most of my friends in high school they have now graduated, they have work, stable work and...

MARIE: Are they happy?

XIANG: I think in their environment, of course they have some happiness, but it's just another lifestyle, I can understand that too. It's just not my style, I can't stand that.

MARIE: Are you anxious or scared of not having a stable life?

XIANG: A little bit before. During this trip...

MARIE: Which one? The one to Chengdu?

XIANG: No, this one, the long drive (From Beijing to Chengdu (in Pink) ... that is during a time when I was facing a very important point because I dropped university that year, I was really struggling with that, because they were trying to convince me that if I was putting a little more effort and time I could get a degree but I just feel something was not right, out of place. I think it was not right, you put a little bit effort and you can get something for the face or on the surface. I don't think I should have. So I struggle, I really struggle doing that. And I feel like everything was unstable and should I really live this kind of lifestyle. It's really a trip... when I began to immerse in the local life there, I felt really peaceful because it's like what I experienced in the vipassana, it's like if you desire, more, you will be more painful. But if you consider, you don't have anything, anyhow, then it's ok.

MARIE: Like if you don't desire anything, you don't have to won't get hurt?

XIANG: Yeah, you won't lose anything. So you follow the train and then experience.

MARIE: Who took you on that trip?

XIANG: The founder of the tibetan yoga.

MARIE: How did you meet him?

XIANG: It was for the designing of a camp.

MARIE: So that was after the Harbin trip.

XIANG: Harbin to the country side

MARIE: To design children's camp

XIANG: Yeah, we want more people to experience that. That we believe that this experience program works. This is also an experiential learning program for me. So that's why I believe it works. They influence me. They gave me another perspective at seeing the world. And also the founder of that was into social enterprises, he also dropped out of school the second year so he encouraged me a lot. He kept asking me, what is the meaning.

MARIE: Do you know if a lot of people drop out of university?

XIANG: A lot. People who look alike always gather together So I think it's really normal

MARIE: Is it becoming more and more normal to drop out of university?

XIANG: For me it is, some people still think it's not.

MARIE: Do you meet this people on the road or?

XIANG: Like according to the quantity, still most people think it is not normal, it's not routine, but when I travel outside China, everytime I meet people from Europe they think, "oh it's ok" I can meet this kind of people everywhere. That's why I think I will feel comfortable living in Europe. Because when I want to America it was different. They are really like, their education quality is higher, somehow than China but it is still.

(We are talking about the map she just draw)

MARIE: this is how people began to draw pictures, uh... to draw map... from an original spot and from different directions.

MARIE: You have to have a center

XIANG: Of course. I heard... now, because the map is eurocentered and the... and I heard that it's not really true on the map what we see. And they began to have different maps.

MOCHOU

MARIE: So before we start the map and stuff, did you, when you were a child, did you travel with your mother, grandmother, did you travel with you family?

MOCHOU: Yes I travel with my mom when I was a child.

MARIE: Where did you go?

MOCHOU: Hangzhou, and Tiantai. My mother was on the... she was on the company traveling, with her colleagues. So when I was a kid, she took me on one of the trips. I think in Hangzhou and in Tiantai. I mean, we have a neighborhood county famous for the waterfall, so like this.

MARIE: So it was all... you didn't... it was like group travel?

MOCHOU: It was the colleague.

MARIE: But like, would you take week off to travel to Hainan?

MOCHOU: I did it with my aunt family when I was 18 years old before going to university

MARIE: You went to Hainan

MOCHOU: Yes with my family

MARIE: What did you do there?

MOCHOU: Scuba diving, tourist places.

MARIE: Did you like it?

MOCHOU: This is ok, but I don't feel, it's not so much... it's not individual traveling, because you travel with a group, so you have to always follow what they are going to do. You don't have your own... it's boring... you don't have your free time.

MARIE: Did you... was it the first time you went to the sea, first vacation?

MOCHOU: Yes

MARIE: How... did you know how to swim back then?

MOCHOU: We did scuba-diving witha guy, it's not swimming, it's just very, not deep...

MARIE: Just mask. And how did you feel? Was it really strange for you?

MOCHOU: I don't remember, I just follow my sister, what she was doing, doing the same. And uh... I don't feel much individually... it's more family and group.

MARIE: And so when was your first travel solo...just...

MOCHOU: uh... after university. I graduated and I felt like I didn't want to live in the same life. Most people, somehow I wanted to change, I wanted to learn more in deep. I wanted my life more like an adventure so I went backpacking to Laos... uh.... Vietnam, Laos and Thailand, first time in my life.

MARIE: So you graduated from university... during university time did you... oh... I first graduated from college and then I took... I was studying in Ningbo university but during this time I asked for a year break.

MARIE: What year of university, first, second, third?

MOCHOU: after college, we have a 3 years college, so between 3d and 4th.

MARIE: And what did you do during this year?

MOCHOU: I went to backpack by myself. With my... I bought, I had an English dictionary so I studied English during my travel. I would ask any foreigner to practice my pronunciation, practice my vocabulary. In the beginning I couldn't speak a complete sentence so I speak Chenglish so

I think, I think it's the best way for me to study English so that's why I carry my dictionary. And so I was... I thought my mind was opening because so many backpackers on the travel.. so I would always go with the backpackers to travel.

MARIE: What did you do during this trip? Where did you go?

MOCHOU: Vietnam, countries outside of China, more than 12 years ago.

MARIE: So you can draw here your first trip.

MOCHOU: I flew to Guangxi, Nanning.

MARIE: Here take some colors.

MOCHOU: I flew from Hangzhou to Nanning, I have a friend in Guangxi. So I met them in the border of Vietnam. I went to the embassy to get my visa, before that I had done a passport. So the first country I go out to is Vietnam. So I went to Hanoi.

MARIE: By bus, from Nanning?

MOCHOU: Yes, across the border and then Huihan, near Hué. And uh... Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City.

MARIE: And all of that you did by bus?

MOCHOU: Yes... and uh... what was the name of the... a beautiful place on the beach... it was called Muin Ne, Mui Ne Beach... Have you been to Vietnam?

MARIE: No, I haven't

MOCHOU: The reason I wanted to go to Vietnam is because of the French Movie "L'amant"

MARIE: Yes you told me.

MOCHOU: Yes, this is why I went there and also I was interested because Vietnam used to be a French colonial country so there is still a lot of French culture, French baguette. And... the first to see all the guest houses, they are blue house and their windows are blue. Uh... like there they paint their window blue, in China, I have never saw that before.

MARIE: It was surprising for yeah.

MOCHOU: Yes, there was a lot of backpacker around the beach, we rode bicycle.

MARIE: Lot of Chinese backpackers?

MOCHOU: No, I didn't notice Chinese backpackers during that time, only groups Chinese tourists. They thought I was crazy. Anyway. So after Saigon, I went to an island. And then from there I crossed the border to Laos.

MARIE: Did you go to Cambodia?

MOCHOU: No, not this time, but I crossed the border to Laos

MARIE: Ok.

MOCHOU: I went to Luang Prabang. There I met my Spanish boy-friend. There, and after half a year, he came to China and we hiked together to Tibet. Then from there (Lao), I went to Thailand.

MARIE: Where did you go, Chiang Mai?

MOCHOU: Yes, I went to Chiang Mai. Where is Bangkok?

MARIE: There.

MOCHOU: And from there I went back to Yunnan. So I stopped to Kunming and Dali, Lijiang, Dali. So I stopped in Dali. I loved this place.

MARIE: Lijiang is up there but it's not on this map. It's just above.

MOCHOU: I fell in love with Dali so I have stayed here since.

MARIE: But you told me it was a gap year so did you go back to Ningbo?

MOCHOU: Yes, I think I went back to Ningbo, and then I study... and then again, I didn't really finish this university... so I came back.

MARIE: But did you graduate?

MOCHOU: Yes, then I came back to...uh... I went on another trip to Sichuan, I did... There is Chengdu, there is... So I went to...

MARIE: You can draw or circle on the map.

MOCHOU: I'm thinking, there is a mountain 5000m where you can go climb and hike. I did my first hiking there.

MARIE: Were you with your Spanish boyfriend then?

MOCHOU: No, I was traveling alone

MARIE: But during your gap year, was that during your gap year that you went to Tibet

MOCHOU: No, it was after. I did... the Four girls mountain (Siguniang Shan) ... it is somewhere near Ganze (It's in the Xian of Xiaojin or Aba) . Beautiful mountain and I climbed there. That's my second traveling. And uh...

MARIE: Your second traveling? How long did it last?

MOCHOU: I don't remember exactly

MARIE: So you graduated from university and then you went to Ningbo to Chengdu, and then from Chengdu to their.

MOCHOU: And then I stopped in Shangri La.

MARIE: So you went to Garze to Shangri La?

MOCHOU: oh no... I think... from Ningbo, I went back to Yunnan and then Chengdu.

MARIE: You flew?

MOCHOU: By train. I took the train and then I go to Shangri La. You don't have Shangri La here?

MARIE: There is Deqen but no Shangri La

MOCHOU: Oh, so it's before Deqen.

MARIE: So Kunming and then Kunming to Shangri La?

MOCHOU: Yes

MARIE: By bus?

MOCHOU: Yes.

MARIE: And from there you went to Chengdu?

MOCHOU: From Shangri La to Garze, passing through Litang. And then Chengdu

MARIE: And... for this trip, you had graduated from university?

MOCHOU: To be honest, I don't remember if it was before or after.

MARIE: And... so during your first trip in Vietnam and Laos and Thailand. You fell in love with Dali?

MOCHOU: After I came back I fell in love with Dali. And uh...

MARIE: And when did you move from Ningbo to Dali.

MOCHOU: I think after the second trip I moved to Dali

MARIE: You settled in Dali?

MOCHOU: Not settle, but I stayed around this area. After, the Spanish boyfriend came along. And then we go together to Tibet.

MARIE: And you went together...

MOCHOU: We bought a donkey... we bought a donkey and we went to Nujiang. Somewhere near Baoshan, we crossed the Mekong, the Lancang Jiang (the Chinese name of the Mekong) .

MARIE: You went up the...

MOCHOU: Yes, we did together... of course we stopped one month in Kunming because I was studying to get a licence to become a guide. He was with me during this month. After one month we went together to the Lancang Jiang Valley

MARIE: He couldn't go to Lhasa?

MOCHOU: We didn't go to Lhasa, we just went to the border. Only the border area. Nujiang, you don't have Nujiang?

MARIE: I don't know, no, I don't think so.

MOCHOU: Is the Mekong the Lancang?

MARIE: I'm not sure, I don't know,

MOCHOU: Mekong... and uh... Lancang Jiang and maybe Mekong is I don't know...

MARIE: So that was a trip with a donkey. And then after that trip with the donkey, where did you go?

MOCHOU: I went to Chengdu. I stayed few months in Chengdu, I was working in Chengdu. I wasn't settle in Dali I was still... not ready for Dali. So first I settled in Chengdu. I stayed 6 months in Chengdu.

MARIE: Where did you work in Chengdu?

MOCHOU: I was teaching English and I... I was. There was an earthquake in 2008 and I was there. I did many thing. I was working in a Spanish restaurant and I was helping in a shelter.

MARIE: You were there for the earthquake?

MOCHOU: Yes, yes

MARIE: Did you get hurt?

MOCHOU: No, no, I didn't feel scared because I was used to being in the mountain. All the people went camping in the park but I was still living in my house on the second floor. Not very high. And I had... I met a friend and she came to stay at my home. And we were helping to set up tent in the earthquake area. Because the shop I was working in was selling tent to people. So during the earthquake we set up tent. I belong to the logistics support during the earthquake.

MARIE: Ok. And about, I want to take you back to the donkey trip in the Lancang valley, We have been together two days now and you have talked about this trip a lot. It seems like it's an important trip to you.

MOCHOU: It Kind of change all my life.

MARIE: Why?

MOCHOU: Because it is the first time that I learnt to live in the wild. It is the first time I didn't feel scared about nature because he taught me to live in the nature. I feel a kind of healing... before I think in my hometown, most of women we don't... we follow the society we don't really do know... what we really want. And after this trip... I feel like you don't have to be the same, your life can be so much different than ... and you can choose to what is inside your heart, and uh... you don't have to be scared.

MARIE: Ok

MOCHOU: That's what you learn on this trip?

MOCHOU: Yes, because, my mom, my family always tell me that I have to follow the society, I have to do this I have, I have to behave the same like others and my Spanish boyfriend told me I was kind of brainwash, what my mother taught me before. I didn't realise that what was brainwashing. And then after this, many years after that I realise, everytime when I go home I feel this very funny, this very strange energy between my mom and, she is always scared and worried and kind of close-minded and I realised that what we done during this trip really encourage me like... you have to be... to do... you have this kind of incentive to do different... you don't have to follow what your parents teach you before. Like this.

MARIE: Okay... so, so you have completely change you life from what you were supposed to...

MOCHOU: After that my Spanish boyfriend left China. He didn't feel, he find that there was too much construction in China and people are not... how do you say, he was living in New Zealand so in China... he didn't feel much uh... I don't know how to say but for me it's also a kind of big chance. He asked me to go with him but I wasn't ready. I think... my life... I wanted to explore my own life first and uh... he also not really got used to being in China. Because he didn't speak Chinese and he felt kind of limited, like uh... . In the West maybe, people are more I think more... more how do you say... more... uh... you have like a lot of I don't know how t say... more security maybe, more security. If you are in China, he was frustrated and I also felt frustrated when I communicate with him because he is thinking and the Chinese thinking is completely different. So I realised that sometimes I loose myself because i always follow him. I'm just following him (learning autonomy) and I don't know

what is... our relationship isn't not the equal... he is a grown man and I'm just a little girl, I just... for everything we did I listened to him, I can't make any desicion.

MARIE: You were discovering

MOCHOU: He helped to discover but I didn't make choices.

MARIE: It was his choices and you were following. And that made you frustrated

MOCHOU: We communicated sometimes with frustration. He was also very frustrated with the Chinese governement system and environment. And we went to this village, we were supposed to sell the donkey there but after that we discover that the people of the village are very poor. He was very surprised, me I feel like the governement and the local... In China, ethnic people are not treated equally. Han people are not considering them as equal... this is something I feel very sad about. Even now, I think in my hometown, people think that this place is also very poor, they are less educated, they are not so aware, this is how Han people see...

MARIE: Picture the minorities

MOCHOU: But for Western people, because in other country there is more equality or there is more freedom, maybe... because in Thailand, there is some poor people in some area but most of the minorities, I think they have their... they have their lifestyle and they have their own way to make money, they don't have to follow like the Han people's style. So this was surprising to me. And at the beginning I also don't think we were equal but then I realise it's all judgment, so... uh... after that trip, it give me a kind of thinking of what is the kind of, how we have to behave and how we have to communicate or treat them equally. So it's very... after many years, I still think it's a very very big subject.

MARIE: And... so... is it... like the same thing that you showed me on the school wall, that there are signs to say leave the mountain village and go to the city to make money.

MOCHOU: Yes, yes, the government want today to change their lifestyle... kind of... to be... be... it's like the government... I mean the Chinese Han people think they are poor and they think this is not the right way of life. I think it's very strange because it's happening a lot in the West of China, mostly Han government and the government think like this... it's different from the Western people's view. I mean, I learn from the Spanish guy, so he always think different way and when I was traveling, backpacking so many countries I found that this different in China and outside China.

MARIE: Yeah, but don't you think you have a very idealized image of the West because we have colonized, we have tried to teach...

MOCHOU: Yes, no... after some year gonna change and think like American did some mistakes, the same way and Australian did some mistakes. And so Chinese are doing the same mistakes now and so generation after generation and in the spiritual and healing side we found that is very value what they respect nature, respect this kind of tribal, it's very important. So it's one karma, it's not just the CHinese karma.

MARIE: So is that why you are trying to make a living in Wen Hai?

MOCHOU: In Wen Hai?

MARIE: Yes, is that why you are living here, you are trying to be closer to minority people...

MOCHOU: I have been living in Yunnan for many years, not only Wen Hai, I have been living in Dali, Lijiang, Shangri La, Kunming, everywhere.

MARIE: When you say you lived in Lijiang, Shangri La, do you mean you... do you live in houses like that or in communities?

MOCHOU: I used to rent an apartment when I start my work, so like this...

MARIE: where did you work, what did you do?

MOCHOU: Doing tours with tourists and community, after Dali I found this community. And then it made me learn more about this kind of lifestyle.

MARIE: In the communities in Dali?

MOCHOU: Yes

MARIE: When did you start living in the communities in Dali? How long ago?

MOCHOU: 2012, when I came back from the Indian trip. I lived in Dali, I rented a house and I met this community.

MARIE: About your Indian Trip, can you tell me more about it

MOCHOU: It is the second change of my life. So this was the first change of my life after I set up my business in tourism. So second trip... I found that I still have some questions about life, I want to learn more about the secret of life and the universe. SO I decided to go to India.

MARIE: How did you go? Did you start from Yunnan,

MOCHOU: Kunming fly to Kathmandu

MARIE: So you flew, you didn't go through Tibet?

MOCHOU: No, it's a different trip, I went to Tibet on another trip, but for India, I didn't go through Tibet.

MARIE: So you want to Kathmandu... Why didn't you go straight to India?

MOCHOU: Because I got a visa from Kathmandu to India and I also wanted to explore Nepal.

MARIE: So you bought the visa for India in Nepal?

MOCHOU: Yes,

MARIE: Why not in China?

MOCHOU: Because it's not easy to apply for an India visa in China for Chinese. Because at that time, China and India didn't have good relationship I think. That's why a lot of people go to Nepal or India to apply for an Indian visa.

MARIE: Ok, I didn't know that. So you explore Nepal, how long did you stay?

MOCHOU: One month, and then from Nepal, we went to India to cross the border overland.

MARIE: TO Varanasi?

MOCHOU: Yes, but we first went to the border of India. I don't remember the name of the border.

MARIE: That's ok. In Nepal, you went to Pokhara?

MOCHOU: Yes, Pokhara, Kathmandu

MARIE: Lumbini?

MOCHOU: Yes, from Lumbini across the border, yes, we did that.

MARIE: Did you go to... what's the name... the park... uh... the Chitwan park?

MOCHOU: I don't remember what is Chitwan.

MARIE: You can see animals and safari

MOCHOU: Oh... no no. in Chinese we called it Chiwan... no, I didn't go.

MARIE: Just Pokhara, Lumbini and you crossed the border there.

MOCHOU: Yes, to Varanasi.

MARIE: And then where else?

MOCHOU: And then we go to the North, to Delhi.

MARIE: By train?

MOCHOU: Yeah, we did the train and the bus. Varanasi, Delhi and I was studying in Rishikesh,

MARIE: I don't know where it is

MOCHOU: It's near Delhi in the mountain. And then... I stayed 2 months in Rishikesh, and then after Rishikesh I went to Dharamsala, the Dalai-Lama's temple. I don't know where it's in the map but it's a long trip. I took the bus from Delhi to Dharamsala, I took the bus, 10 hours, something like that. I went there alone, by myself. In the beginning I go with my British boyfriend and an American guy, a yoga teacher. The 3 of us we traveled together, we took a train together and study in Rishikesh and then he didn't want to go to Dharamsala so I went there by myself.

MARIE: Ok,

MOCHOU: 2 weeks. It's beautiful, I loved Dharamsala.

MARIE: Did people... in Dharamsala it's a lot of Tibetan community.

MOCHOU: Yes, I met a lot of Tibetan people

MARIE: How did they welcome you? Considering that you are a Chinese Han? Did you feel...

MOCHOU: I don't think they thought I was Chinese because I went there... there is many Chinese people that go to Dharamsala. This is Dalai-Lama temple, they visit... the... what is this called... Gampass temple... it's very popular.

MARIE: Yes but if there is a lot... if there is a big Tibetan community there it's because you know, the political problems in Tibet so I was wondering how are you welcome there?

MOCHOU: I think I went there with some westerners and some young Chinese tourists, we are not in a big group so it's not very obvious... we are not dangerous for them. Because we are a just a few people. It's not a lot of people unless they are in a group and we are not in a group.

MARIE: Ok

MOCHOU: And uh... I didn't really go into any Tibetan family, we just met on the street. And I saw a lot of Tibetan is free and something like that

MARIE: What did you think about that?

MOCHOU: Yes, I think it's good. Ok, I'm sorry I'm not a typical Han but after I studied all the history about Tibet and Yunnan when I was doing tours, I understand the political problems

MARIE: Ok

MOCHOU: I'm not a Chinese Han typically so I understand. Tibetan, they are not happy to be, like changed by the Chinese because this my... it's not officially because I cannot talk like this in the public. I don't to say that publicly

MARIE: I know, I know.

MOCHOU: But uh... because I was with so many Western travelers so I understand what is the situation there and right now, even now... last it was changing so much because of Chinese Han.

MARIE: Is it good changes or bad changes?

MOCHOU: The Tibetan area became smaller and smaller and the Han city, Han people are going there to build bigger city than the old town like Shangrila. Much bigger. And it's so much... it's not like Tibetan area it has become a big Chinese town. If you go to Shangrila, you also see a lot of Chinese Han. But in Lhasa maybe it's more. So many army people go there. When I was in Sichuan and Chengdu trip, I saw a lot of army cars go from Sichuan to Tibet. And during that time, maybe there was some political problems so the governments send a lot of army there. In Lhasa you see a lot of police. I was in Lhasa in 2009, there was not so much police but after that, it became more and more police and the Han people, their cultural influence. My friend went there recently and they told me... the Tibetan town, the temples are not so kind of like... not so much...

MARIE: Like open?

MOCHOU: No, they are still open but not in the big city, they are more buildings and the old town is not well preserved

MARIE: It's not well preserved?

MOCHOU: Yes, you haven't been to Lhasa?

MARIE: No, no, I haven't.

MOCHOU: Because of this permit?

MARIE: Yeah.

MOCHOU: So, I think in Dharamsala I saw Tibetan people and they are more like in the Tibetan area more preserved and in Nepal also there is a lot of Tibetan. They also live, not like Chinese city, but they live more in their Tibetan style... this is what I see there.

MARIE: When was this trip in Nepal and India?
MOCHOU: 2011
MARIE: And so Dharamsala and where else? Did you go to like... Mumbai or Goa?
MOCHOU: No I didn't go to the South, just the North. And then my visa finished and I came back to...
MARIE: How long was your visa?
MOCHOU: Only 3 months, for tourism and then you have to go out of India. To another country and maybe after another few months, you can apply again, you cannot get extensions. Only one time,
MARIE: So you stayed mostly in the North part. Did you go to Leh? to the mountains?
MOCHOU: I went to the border of Pakistan.
MARIE: Where? around here in Lahore? Why did you go to the border ?
MOCHOU: Because my boyfriend and the American guy went there so I went with them. I didn't know anything about this before.
MARIE: They went to Pakistan?
MOCHOU: No, to the border. Because the border is very interesting, have you been to the border?
MARIE: No, I have never been
MOCHOU: There is only one border, the Indian army and the Pakistan army are... they have like good relationship so you see they are dancing together in this place, they are not fighting so we went there.
MARIE: You saw that?
MOCHOU: Yes, dancing and yeah... and there is also another religion like they have this blue scarf...
MARIE: So you read the Lonely Planet?
MOCHOU: I went to India with the India's lonely plant, the English one it's is that thick. It's very heavy to carry this all the time. After I came back, I gave it to somebody else.
MARIE: Do you still travel now with the Lonely planet?
MOCHOU: Not now, not anymore. uh... because now you have a lot of website, with Google and uh... Trip advisor, there is many choice. And that time, my British boyfriend would use apps so he didn't use the Lonely Planet. I had the Lonely Planet because I want to learn a lot of culture. I think the Chinese Lonely Planet and the Chinese Lonely Planet is very different.
MARIE: Why?
MOCHOU: Because they talk different... uh... (awkward laugh)
MARIE: They give out different informations?
MOCHOU: Yes, that's why I bought the English Lonely Planet
MARIE: Do you trust the Chinese Lonely Planet?
MOCHOU: I trust it, but they, they... talk about different topics. People are interested in different things, Western are interested about that, Chinese are interested about something else. That's why they talk about different things. It doesn't mean that they are... not honest. It's just that they talk about different informations.
MARIE: But like...
MOCHOU: It all recording (laugh) I'm going to go to jail! (laugh)
MARIE: No, no, no, it's between us, they will never know who you are, you are safe, don't worry. I will put that on my computer and I will delete it from the machine.
MOCHOU: But yeah, this was my second spiritual trip. After that I went to Thailand to study in Koh Phan Gan.
MARIE: Wait, how, so... did you fly from...
MOCHOU: I flew from Dali to Bangkok. And then I went to CHIANG MAI and I met my boyfriend in Chiang Mai again.
MARIE: By train? By bus?

MOCHOU: Bus, by bus... a 10 hours bus. And then we stayed one month in Chiang Mai and then I went to Kh Phan Gan. When...
MARIE: By bus also?
MOCHOU: Yes... Suvarthani... somewhere there. Bus and boat. Another ten hours, it was horrible. Oh... uh... then I think I was... sorry first, I went from Bangkok to there and then I went to Chiang Mai.
MARIE: So from there to Chiang Mai straight. So you went from Bangkok to Koh Phan Gan
MOCHOU: And then I go to Laos
MARIE: And then you went to Laos.
MOCHOU: Where is Laos? There. I took a boat from Chiang Mai to Luang Prabang. It took 2 days. You first take a bus to the river to take the boat. It's beautiful, you can see the Mekong river, it's very nice. And then, from Luang Prabang I took a bus all the way back to Dali. Where is Dali?
MARIE: It's right there I think
MOCHOU: And it was very long... more than 10 hours. It was beautiful, because on the way I met... I travel alone because my boyfriend after Thailand, he could stay longer than me and then he was going to Taiwan and I came back to Dali by myself. And...
MARIE: Have you been to Taiwan?
MOCHOU: Because in the first time, we cannot go to Taiwan independantly, we had to join a group. And then we start, only in the capital city you can apply for individual traveler. If I'm from Hangzhou or Ningbo, big cities. In the small cities, we are not allowed to travel, to get a visa, individual visa. So I came back to Dali. I stayed in Dali and I started my Yoga retreat.
MARIE: Jolie adventures?
MOCHOU: Yes
MARIE: So it was in 2012?
MOCHOU: Yes, this trip was for me more than one year, it lasted almost 2 years. Because I also went to Malaysia.
MARIE: Oh, you went to Malaysia... from where?
MOCHOU: I flew from Kunming to Kuala Lumpur.
MARIE: When? After this trip ?
MOCHOU: After Thailand. And then another 6 months I went to Malaysia.
MARIE: During 6 months you went to Malaysia?
MOCHOU: Yes, after 6 months I go to Malaysia. I flew to Kuala Lumpur. I met French cow-boy there. We went to Malak together. I don't know... where is Malak... somewhere along the border. I...
MARIE: Did you go to this part of Indonesia?
MOCHOU: No, I did hiking in... somewhere in the mountain here.
MARIE: Singapore you went?
MOCHOU: I stayed ont month in Malaysia... I went to a Vipassana meditation center in Malaysia, all by myself. Because he only had a week of holiday but I stayed one month. So I can study everywhere. I stayed one week in Kuala Lumpur and then I went to the meditation center in Eastern Malaysia for 10 days. Like meditate 10 hours a day. Very intense
MARIE: Oh, god! You only stayed 7 days...
MOCHOU: Yes, I only stayed 7 days and I run away... so intense. Before I also did a vipassana in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. There is a temple so I was there
MARIE: In those vipassana, did you stay the whole ten days?
MOCHOU: No Bangkok, it's not a vipassana, it's just a temple, I stayed 7 days.
MARIE: And so you went back from Malaysia to Kunming?
MOCHOU: And then back to Dali.
MARIE: Yes, this is my... and also... part of this 2 years of traveling.

MARIE: And so in Dali, when did you enter the hippie community, after those trips?

MOCHOU: Yeah... before Malaysia trips, I stayed 6 months in Dali and I met this hippie community.

MARIE: How... is it a big community?

MOCHOU: Not, big... it's more Western people, at the beginning, no like Chinese. Very few.

MARIE: Do you know how long there has been a hippie community in Dali?

MOCHOU: ... is founder of the hippie community in Dali, maybe before I came to live in Dali he had already been living in Dali for many years. And in 2012 to 2015 maybe and then he left to get back to Italy.

MARIE: He was the founder of the hippie community?

MOCHOU: He had students... art students, Richie lab... the idea of Richie lab in the beginning was people are going to share, he was doing couch surfing, he create our own art studio like this, sharing like this and altogether. He is a scientist of brain kind of... but in Dali he became a community... visual artist, he made... he also made tattoo...

MARIE: He made tattoo... do you have tattoo?

MOCHOU: No, I don't have tattoo. And he had Tibetan hair, I'm not... I was just everyday dancing with them.

MARIE: You said to me yesterday, I think, that living in Dali you were... the clothes... like everything you were looking like a hippie, but now you have a heart of hippie but...

MOCHOU: I wasn't understanding hippie at the time because the smocking ganja weed make you want to...

MARIE: Did you do that?

MOCHOU: I tried but I don't take... I don't... I mean... it's not that I don't like it, but I don't need it. I tried but I'm not attach to that... I'm just very curious at the time.

MARIE: Do you know if there is other hippie communities in China other than in Dali?

MOCHOU: It's not called hippie community but it's maybe called other name.

MARIE: How do you say Hippie in Chinese?

MOCHOU: Hippie. Back then we had a rainbow gathering... have you heard about rainbow gathering?

MARIE: no.

MOCHOU: I think before Dali 2012, before we had... in 2009, they had a rainbow gathering, it's a famous movement in the world... every country had this kind of gathering for... like a Shambala festival... do you know about Shambala festival?

MARIE: No

MOCHOU: And after 2012, many people left China, left Dali because of the Chinese government...

MARIE: When?

MOCHOU: After 2012

MARIE: After 2012 many foreigners they left?

MOCHOU: Yes, the Chinese government did not welcome them so they left.

MARIE: So now, it's mostly Chinese hippie?

MOCHOU: No there is still some foreigners.

MARIE: But would you think there is more and more Chinese hippie?

MOCHOU: Yes

MARIE: Why?

MOCHOU: Because, in this kind of culture and uh generation by generation people are more interested. When he was young, Steve Jobs , he went to India, when he came back he became a businessman. So I think a lot of.... when we were young, we... we... "killed us" so many people would try. Maybe after 10 years, maybe they change but still keep it. I used to look for ... in Shanghai...

MARIE: For what, for what?

MOCHOU: .Trip for work in Hangzhou... And... You can check on internet this is a very famous business company

from South Africa. They bring this kind of resort and eco village in China. It interested me a lot... now, they have a big business, different from before... it's more a luxury style. When I was wrking there, it as more eco-lodge eco tours. SO i was working for them

MARIE: Did you like your job?

MOCHOU: Yeah, I loved my job I was the only Chinese, except the local... I was the only Chinese in there, because it used to be small... so it was not a lot of Chinese, just Westerners worked there. I loved a lot this job because my boss was doing a lot of summer camps, they had international schools, exchange programs with local school. He taught me a lot of things and I picked up a lot about eco tours. It was really the beginning of China eco tourism.

MARIE: What year was that?

MOCHOU: After 2012. I went back to Shanghai around that time and I was working there

MARIE: Why do you think you got hired for this job? You did this job, you tell me you were the only Chinese, why do you think they...

MOCHOU: Because maybe I was living in Yunnan and I understand cultural difference. Before I was living in Dali and uh... I came back there because my French cow-boy said he wanted to come to Shanghai for work. So I went to Shanghai and I was looking for a job. I found this post on the internet and I applied for it. This work interested me a lot, even now they set up a coworking space. You understand coworking space?

MARIE: Yeah.

MOCHOU: In the West you have the "WeWork", so they set up stuff like that, like "WeWork" in China, they have big business in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong-Kong

MARIE: So plateform for coworking.

MOCHOU: They also have it in Europe. In London I think and in London, Australia, Viet-nam. But, it's fro Chinese young generation and the Western business people who wants to do business in China.

MARIE: So how long did you stay in Shanghai?

MOCHOU: About 6 months

MARIE: And then back to Yunnan

MOCHOU: Yeah, after I missed Yunnan so, yeah, I came back.

MARIE: And so you have been... this past 5 years, you have been living in Yunnan and Thailand?

MOCHOU: 5 years? No, no, no, I have been going to Shanghai and Beijing sometimes

MARIE: You go there sometimes?

MOCHOU: uh... the last 3 years I have stayed in Beijing and Shanghai

MARIE: Why?

MOCHOU: Because in Beijing I studied Contemporare dance, it's very interesting.

MARIE: What?

MOCHOU: Contemporary dance, I was working for a dance company... I was studying psychology stuff. Kind of dance therapy so I went to Beijing. It is my third kind of subject, workshop and kind of other healing therapy. So that's why I went to Beijing.

MARIE: Is it hard to go to Shanghai and Beijing when you don't have the local hukou?

MOCHOU: No, no, I'm not buying houses so it's ok... and we were not going to work... no problem, the hukou is just when you want to buy a house or if the kids want to go to local school.

MARIE: For you it's not a problem

MOCHOU: Yes it's not so difficult... In Beijing, Shanghai is expensive for me, the cost is too much. And then I found, somehow I was still thinking that I could go back to Chinese mainstream society, so that's why I tried that also, and then

I found... it's not something smart because everybody wants to come here so why would I want to go there.

MARIE: Who wants to come here?

MOCHOU: The city people wants to go into the West... so why would I want to go to the city? It's kind of stupid?

MARIE: Wait, so the city people want to go West.

MOCHOU: Yes a lot of city people. In Dali a lot of city people come from Beijing and Shanghai and they come to Dali

MARIE: Is it because life there is to hard?

MOCHOU: No, they want to... they want freedom, they want to have education system, different lifestyle and different... house is too expensive in the city and the relationship... so a lot of people move to Dali to have a different life in the last 3 years.

MARIE: Young people?

MOCHOU: Also people ith kids and a family.

MARIE: Also family?

MOCHOU: In Dali, there are famous home school

MARIE: Home school? People home schoo their children?

MOCHOU: Yeah... they make their own home school. Now there is many in Dali. I teach in home school sometimes... I teach the kids and parents and they make summer camp. They charge some very expensive price for the city people traveling there for the summer, for their kids. It's crazy. It's a profitable business.

MARIE: And you tell me that you went to Tibet also?

MOCHOU: In 2009. I went to Lhasa

MARIE: From Kunming?

MOCHOU: From Dali, then Shangri-La and all the way from Shangri La to Lhasa.

MARIE: You took the bus?

MOCHOU: Yes, I took the bus, I stopped on the way in Linji because I went hinking in Lhunze...

MARIE: Ok, where is that?

MOCHOU: no, it's a big gorge, very beautiful place, most beautiful place in Tibet... so beautiful

MARIE: Did you go to Chamdo? Did you take this road?

MOCHOU: uh... Chamdo is the Sichuan part I went to the Yunnan part.

MARIE: So you went on the road?

MOCHOU: Yeah, yeah, to Lhasa. I came back by train to Chengdu.

MARIE: And you went back...

MOCHOU: I went to Qinghai... I went up there.

MARIE: So you went to Qinghai by train?

MOCHOU: Yes... and then...

MARIE: To what Golmud?

MOCHOU: Yes I think I stoped in Golmud. There is a train from Lhasa to Chengdu that passes in Golmud.

MARIE: And then Xining?

MOCHOU: Yes to Xining, and then Xining back to Chengdu. This way. Yinyang... where is... Minyan... Minyang is the earthquake place.

MARIE: Have you ever been to Xinjiang?

MOCHOU: No I have never been.

MARIE: And Inner Mongolia?

MOCHOU: No, my mother was in Inner Monglia for 10 years.

MARIE: What did she do?

MOCHOU: She was... in a ... she was in the army there... with the Chinese army

MARIE: And have you ever been to Heilongjiang?

MOCHOU: NO, I have only been to Beijing and around

MARIE: Ok

MOCHOU: no, I have never been there, I would like to go to Xinjiang and Longhuang...

MARIE: uh... this is Urumqi...

MOCHOU: No, Longhuang is in Gansu... somewhere

MARIE: oh... here....

MOCHOU: Somewhere near Lanzhou... or... it was a women kingdom before and uh... During the Tang dynasty there is a Chinese "tantra center"... because I studied Tantra, tantra yoga and I learn about Indian, Tibet and uh... taoism style and because it's near the border, there is a lot of influence because of this women kingdom tantra culture. There is paintings, buddha painting, they have a lot of dancing painting, this kind of things... yeah, this was during the Tang dynasty.

MARIE: It seems like you are really interested in women's kingdom.

MOCHOU: Yeah... because most... yes... Sichuan trip and Yunnan, a lot of minority are women agro society. In Thailand, I studied Tantra and we talk about this Tantra relationship and uh... I have a tantra book in English from Thailand, I can show you. They talk about uh... uh... It's a high practice for spiritual people... a lot of women's energy...

MARIE: I have another question because, since I have started this PhD, it seems like... I don't know maybe I'm wrong but it seems like I'm meeting a lot more women like you or women travelers...

MOCHOU: Chinese women?

MARIE: Chinese, chinese, I'm focusing on Chinese.

MOCHOU: OKay.

MARIE: And there is a lot of women doing like adventure, and trekking... More women than men...

MOCHOU: It's not only in China, it's all over the world.

MARIE: You think... it's more women than men?

MOCHOU: Yes

MARIE: Why?

MOCHOU: You talk about adventure traveling or you talk about cultural?

MARIE: No if you talk about traveling and going abroad and being a backpackers and traveling... like all the travel that you did... for me in Nepal when I interviewed Chinese backpackers... It was mostly women. Do you know why? I don't understand

MOCHOU: I never met a backpacker woman in Nepal. I met women backpacker...

MARIE: from China?

MOCHOU: In Thailand I met some and in India I met some... And the rest... also China, I don't remember but, because a lot... of Indian culture attract women more than men I think.

MARIE: Why?

MOCHOU: It's a secret country, it's more... women... I think it's more... In Tantra... do you know Tantra?

MARIE: Not much

MOCHOU: In Tantra, they talk a lot about women, more then men I think. Because everybody has the Ying and the Yang energy there, so women also have men inside, so that's why we... how can we be complete and independant... and uh... this... I think in India a lot of culture about women and... in south-east Asia and Western China it's more women oriented so it's more women culture...

MARIE: And, for your first trip in Viet-nam, your first big trip, you said you went to Vietn-nam because of the movie Indochine and the Lover

MOCHOU: Yeah

MARIE: How did you learn to travel like that? Did you see movies? Did you read blogs? How did one day you wake up and... you are like, I need to go traveling?

MOCHOU: I was working for a magazine at that time in Hangzhou... ok... I was studying in Ingbo university and I was doing an intership at that time, I was working for a magazine. It was not a very good experience, I made some mistakes, I met my... colleague, a teacher, he is the one who was writing travel books. He was the first travel books about

Viet-nam. He was an independant traveler, he had this kind life. He got me interested and he encouraged me to do... I discover that life could be different... He encouraged me so I go.

MARIE: This guy... he was Chinese?

MOCHOU: Yes he is Chinese, he was from Guangzhou but he was working in Hangzhou for this kind of traveling magazine. He is the first one writing about traveling story and traveling magazine in Viet-nam.

MARIE: But... uh... you before taking this internship... first of all why did you choose this intership?

MOCHOU: I just wanted to explore about life, I was interested about this

MARIE: But... before that did you read about like I don't know San mao?

MOCHOU: I heard about San Mao, but I didn't read her book a lot. And uh... I heard about San Mao, yes, she is very famous in China

MARIE: You said to me... was it you who told me that you friend back home compare you to San Mao?

MOCHOU: My friend? Not back home but...uh... In Dali some friends... I mean, in Dali there is a lot of people like San Mao. A lot of women like that... not very typical, there is another famous writer, she writes travel books and she is goes everywhere, she has been to Sri Lanka, Russia and she is really like San Mao, she is very brave...

MARIE: Do you think you are not brave?

MOCHOU: Compared to them, I never traveled in the whole world...

MARIE: Yes but you went to countries where you can go...

[4247,1]MOCHOU: Yes, at that time, I didn't have much money so the most convenient is South-East Asia and also I can learn a lot from there. Yeah.

MARIE: And you never thought of going to South Korea or Japan.

MOCHOU: First, it is expensive for me and I don't really like to go to the big city... I like to go to more remote area

MARIE: Why?

MOCHOU: The culture is similar, I want to go to place where the culture is very different from my culture. For Chinese I think, Japan and Korea is similar to Han culture. I have a good Japanese lover before, he was a painter, he would paint buddha everyday. He was a great guy. But for me Japanese people are... I like them, they are crazy but another side of Japanese people a strict... too strict. Not... I think I'm not so... so... I think their standard is very high for me. Yeah.

MARIE: And so... let's talk about your life here now.

MOCHOU: ok...

MARIE: You said to me that what you liked about living here is that you can give back to the local people

MOCHOU: Really, I came back to Yunnan because I wanted to find this feeling that I had when I was trekking with Pablo to Tibet. Because we were living around here in the local village in the Tibetan area. So here, for me it's similar to there. And I wanted heal and to find this energy of when I was into the wild with Pablo. And another thing is... I find, before I think I got a lot of ethnic people and now I found... It's not only that I received love I like... I also like to give in love back. It's to... how to be... hwo to say. After so many years in Yunnan, and so many years traveling, you learn a lot from travelers, from local from community and it's time... now I think I'm more mature than before, and I don't only want to receive love I want to do something, I want to help some things so it's kind of... you begin to express this kind of love you are not looking for love. It's a way for you to look for yourself.

MARIE: You think you can achieve that in Wen Hai?

MOCHOU: Not only in Wen Hai, but Wen Hai has this kind of feeling.

MARIE: So you see yourselves partly living here and... other places... do you see yourselves living in one place?

MOCHOU: You mean forever? I don't think I can live in one place forever, I like to travel and uh... I don't think... nothing is forever, love never last for ever, and places are never the same forever. It's just uh... for a period.

MARIE: Do you feel welcome here by the local people, have you had any people saying : go home, don't come here?

MOCHOU: No, uh... so far, I had some kind of communication problems with local but uh...

MARIE: DO they understand who you are or...

MOCHOU: I think, slowly, slolwy because I communicate with landlord, with the school master, with the coy-boy. It takes time

MARIE: But you want to get in this community?

MOCHOU: It's not uh... how to say... it's uh... It's not that I want to get in this community, it's just the nature brought me here and how I live here and nature the time I have to go.

It's not L... I want to belong here. It's... everything has its own

MARIE: Like cycle

MOCHOU: Their karma, their cycle or their time. It's kind of part of the life. Maybe if I... if I tried... became part of the community, if I tried to do something like, set out some more business or whatever, like a retreat but... for me it's... I'm not in this kind of hurry... I want to see what is the universe wants to give to me or... because my... The thing I did with my Tibetan musician, he helped a lot of country kids with disaster, so... I learn also from him.

MARIE: And all this travel in your life, can you talk about it... like... do you still have friends in Ningbo? Your friend from university...

MOCHOU: We are not in contact, I have a friend in my hometwon, not in Ningbo

MARIE: In your hometown, do they understand the way you are living.

MOCHOU: My mom of course, she has difficulties to understand what I am living but she sometimes... she is like a kid now... uh... she is not a big problem for me and but the local Chinese, I found that somehow it's little bit difficult but I also make friend with who runs the shops in my hometown... we have tourists place too. I communicate with them... somehow, most people don't understand me but some women they are interested about me. They are always reading my wechat, my stories, my photos and they always very, feel very jealous about me

MARIE: Really?

MOCHOU: Yeah, about me, my life.

MARIE: Is that why you post things on wechat to give update on your life.

MOCHOU: I just like, I write a diary on wechat and sometimes, most of the time, I do this for myself, and sometimes the friends or the other people they are interested about this. It's not for business but it's just... for me it's a kind of diary.

MARIE: Why do put it publicly out on wechat... why don't you just write...

MOCHOU: I like to share it with other people. And especially some people like me before I had so many troubles in my life before because of my family, because of my... before I traveled, I mean

MARIE: You had troubles?

MOCHOU: I had big troubles with my family, with my mom, with my parents

MARIE: Why?

MOCHOU: Because they don't understand why I am doing this and I also feel like, in the beginning I am a very stupid girl, I made a lot of mistake and now I...

MARIE: Like what?

MOCHOU: I am not happy with my school, I'm not happy with myself, I'm not happy with parents, my family. My mom gave me a lot of negative headache in the beginning. My parents are divorced, I never met my dad. After traveling I learn to connect with myself so I think there is a lot of people like me in my hometown that had a similar experience and they want to see picture of my life because they are looking for answer... so I can show them my experience, this is why I publish on my wechat and I'm sharing it with a lot of women. I'm interested about women because the women are very different from men... because... in China especially, for 1000 of years we have no freedom because we are controlled by men... the society, everything. And the relationship and work and... we don't really understand how to love ourself. Like my mom, she never knew about what is love and what really is life because she is kind... she doesn't know herself, she is just put all of her energy to my grand-mother, to me and she doesn't have a lot for herself. She doesn't know how to love herself, and there is a lot of women in China that are like this. Especially the one staying in the mainstream society.

MARIE: Is that why you want her to travel?

MOCHOU: I tried but it's not so easy, because she is kind of old and she is used to, she doesn't have security for her mind, she is scared for security all the time. In her mind, she thinks she wants to be safe and stable, feeling safe and it's not only her, it's most of the mainstream city women in China, in the traditional way, they are like this. I tried... in the first beginning, I'm kind of lost, I don't know who I am, I... don't know if I don't want to be my mom, then who I am. That's why I go to travel to experience yourself. Traveling is a kind of way to communicate with yourself. It's a kind of healing or connecting with yourself. So I think it's good to show or share this experience with other women in China.

MARIE: I understand

MOCHOU: This is our generation, so different from thousand years ago and not many women are doing this but still... women, generation after generation are looking for themselves, looking for their life, not same like what the society told us to do. That's why always... I found I also sometimes like city people compare to here but then I feel like, maybe it's wrong, maybe this is what the society told us to do but naturally, maybe it's different. I'm also learning a lot from the local I think. Naturally we don't have this kind judgement, only the society give us this kind of judgement. SO naturally I think all the minority or the country people, they love each other, maybe the society makes us feel like we are different. Like the French cow-boy said, I'm French but it's only the society which... give him that... maybe naturally, it's not like this.

MARIE: But here they live in a form of society, it's just a different society.

MOCHOU: Yeah, I mean the Han society, the mainstream society.

MARIE: Is that why you wanted to go abroad?

MOCHOU: Yes, because if you only live in one country, you cannot update your... sometimes you have to go out to check what is real... discover what is real, the nature. Any country is like this, having their own problem, but if one is only staying in one place for ever, they never really understand what is the nature, what is...

MARIE: They cannot look at their problems from afar.

MOCHOU: Of course, Naxi are also influenced now by Han people. They are losing their culture in the meantime, because business and the commercial civilization but, still they... I'm trying to find a balance between my clients, between hippie people, between mainstream people. I'm... in the future I'd like to be a channel, I'm just uh... How do you say?

MARIE: Like a link or a connection?

MOCHOU: A link, I'm a connection.

MARIE: So interesting... What's your next country to visit?

MOCHOU: Indonesia because my girl friend lives there. She is on a big travel but I'm interested by the, lot of shaman culture, they have their own, like Yi village. Oh, I should take you to the Yi village they have their kind of a shaman in the Yi village like uh... like a shaman, In Indonesia, most people are very... compared to China, they are more, have this kind of belief, I mean, they keep their culture better than in China. Here they are losing their culture. In Indonesia, they have a lot of this kind of culture that's why I'm interested. And Maybe then I want to see Burma, maybe one day. I think... I want to complete my Asia, Asia kind of tour... Asia tour, cultural women. In Indonesia there is a woman shaman and I want to meet her. I believe there is a woman kingdom, you know in China during the Tang dynasty, there is a women kingdom between Sichuan and Yunnan, they could have 5 husbands, one wife. And at the beginning I didn't understand how, how valuable was this kind of discovery but after I study in Thailand, I learn about Tantra and Tantra is about... we are warriors. So I think, during that time, we had this kind of tradition already, sharing everything. There was no... separation, we were all connected. Everybody is a mirror of inside out. If you have problems with other, it means you have problem with yourself. So this energy is like this... giving and receiving. And all the human suffering is because we are not connected, that's why we suffer, we are sick, we have wars. In tantra we study that, but maybe it's my idealism, because the... most country still are not connected, they are always fighting... but maybe in the Hippie and Tantra, they understand about this... our spiritual community. So what I am doing is, try to make the links between somehow... ethnic travelers. I think during my previous life, I was from there

MARIE: From India?

MOCHOU: That's why I wrote a script... I feel like I'm from there

MARIE: Would you say you are buddhist? I'm not a religious person but I believe in this reincarnation. So many unknow, I'm discovering everyday. I'm never finish, I need another life, more life.

MARIE: So do you think the julinghou are changing but in a different way than the balinghou? How?

MOCHOU: Interview them and you will understand. I think you interviewed Qiu Qiu, she is a julinghou

MARIE: Yes but she is old julinghou, she was born in the 1990.

MOCHOU: Qiu Qiu...

MARIE: No, Qiu Qiu was born in 1989.

MOCHOU: Qiu Qiu is 1992

MARIE: No, I think she is 28. Anyway, do you see a difference? Yourself between the balinghou and the julinghou?

MOCHOU: Me?

MARIE: Yes

MOCHOU: I think they are lucky, they have more opportunity than us, and uh... yeah... they are luckier. What do you think?

MARIE: I don't know. They are maybe more connected

MOCHOU: They have more choices than us for themselves. The cow-boy was born in 1979, the gap between qilinghou and the balinghou. You can see he is also accord, more than me. I think somehow I'm more like a julinghou, somehow I'm like balinghou, somehow I'm like lilinghou... Somehow I'm everything that existed. My generation is very accord
Mochou: You know everywhere in China, the young generation work in the city. Only the kids and older people are left. My hometown is same. It happens all the time. It's not me who change them. It's already like this. So what we

can do is helping them to remember their culture and spirit and they can also see outside world but compare to their population, we are very small.

Marie : No but I mean what you are doing in this village maybe somebody else is doing it in another village

Mochou: Some people are already doing it in other village. It is not only me, in the Tiger leaping Gorge, a lot of Naxi people speak English, they are tour guides, they make guest houses, they make money

Marie : and do you think this is a lost of culture or no?

Mochou: No I think they introduce their culture and they also see outside, they make money, it's good for them. I mean because Han people, they can't understand Naxi culture compared to Western people. The Han people, they, kind of loose their culture so they don't appreciated the local culture

Marie : Ok

Mochou: But the Chinese tourist are different from Western tourists

Marie : How

Mochou: You don't understand, Han people they like luxury style. They like to destroy everything. But Western people, we don't travel in big group, we are individual travelers, we are not changing the environment. But Han people, if they are traveling in a group, they destroy everything, you don't understand.

Marie : No I don't

Mochou: You have never seen Han group traveled?

Marie : I have seen them in Paris

Mochou: They always coming and they want luxury things, they don't care about the environment, they destroy it with rubbish. They are the one who is destroying, not us. Backpackers, they understand what is a sustainable environment, the cultural, so... they are not going to destroy the place or to change the place either. But the problem is China is that most people are Han and they the majority group traveling. They are not independent and they have no idea about what is local culture.

Marie : Ok, I get it.

Mochou: In traditional, like my mom's generation, they never travel individual. They always travel with the company or group...

Marie : Probably because they don't know.

Mochou: That's difficult because they don't get into the local culture and they just do what they want to do and they are just changing local life. (...) Of course, I have difficult time communicating with the local because they think it's not... I'm not the first person, I'm not the last person... lots of Han people, with money, rich people already came here, already make them see the difference so sometimes they ask me for money they think that I'm rich. And uh... it's a... It's not easy...

Marie : Make them understand who you are and what you want to

Mochou: A lot of my local Naxi tour guide, we have the same idea. We think that Chinese tourists, they don't really appreciate the local because they are kind of Han people they look down on local people. Many society I mean...

Marie : Make them understand who you are and what you want to do?

Mochou: Yeah, yeah... It takes time to build the relationship...Of course, I'll see what I can do and not change everything. You cannot change anything... you are part of the universe

Marie : Yeah, yeah but, every time you come into a place, no matter who you are or what you are you kind of change it. Because the fact that you are here changes the dynamics. For example I, when I come to China and I do interview, I don't change you but I ask you questions that make you think and

make your thinking change a little bit and the questions I am asking are maybe weird or a little strange and you are wondering why I am here. And I don't know. I think, no matter what, whenever we come into a place, no matter our intention, we change it. And it's not about good or bad changing, it's just that we change it a little bit. But now in the world today, with all the communications, she has a cell-phone, they have access to internet. Everything, the society changes, and I don't think it's a bad thing, it just changes. And so I was wondering how do you, how do you perceive the changes that you are making by being here.

Mochou: Seeing the change?

Marie : Like seeing the change that you make by being there with them. The fact that you are staying here with them for a long time, probably some of them are asking questions: what is she doing here, what's her life, what's her lifestyle?

Mochou: they know, they know what I am doing here. I always bring my students or the Western people tours, they know that.

Marie: Ok

Jolie: Maybe I'm a bit idealistic as you said, but... maybe they want money or something in the past but if one day they really can't understand and we cannot work together, then that's ok, I move to another place.

YINGYUE

MARIE: So this is recorded but this interview will be anonymized. I'll take some pictures during the interview but if you don't want to be in you just let me know. Everything you tell me is anonymized, only me will know. I will use of course what you tell to... to... to write about travel and traveling and what does it mean nowadays. So... If anything makes you uncomfortable, just let me know and you don't have to answer.

MARIE: So where were you born ?

YINGYUE: In Anhui province. A small, small town, actually in a village, a small village.

MARIE: How long did you stay in this village for?

YINGYUE: uh... after high school because I had to go to study in university which is in another city

MARIE: In Anhui too?

YINGYUE: Yes, in Anhui.

MARIE: Before going to university, did you travel at all? with your parents or anybody?

YINGYUE: I did travel a little bit but not far, not out of Anhui province... always small cities close by.

MARIE: What was it? It was with your parents or friends?

YINGYUE: With my granpa

MARIE: He took you there to visit?

YINGYUE: He works in other cities and his friends and also my second uncle also live there. So I basically visit.

MARIE: So you got in university in Anhui?

YINGYUE: Yes

MARIE: uh... so... can you mark down on the map, not specifically the place you were born but indicate that it's the place that you are from with any color

YINGYUE: Ill choose purple

MARIE: Not all the names are on it but approximately?

YINGYUE: Probably here.

MARIE: And so you went to university in Anhui as well. Where was it?

YINGYUE: It's called Anqing, Anqing... maybe somewhere here

MARIE: And what did you study?

YINGYUE: Art design.

MARIE: What did you want to do at the time... what did you think you were going to do with your life?

YINGYUE: I wasn't sure because I was studying art design I was thinking maybe I could get a job in design... but, I don't, I sort of... because to me... because I was from a very small village, it was important to explore, to know things more, so any kind of job could make me so high at the beginning and then I would slowly figure out what I want to do. So... before I graduated, my last year of university, I went to Shanghai. Because it's a big city, it's international, there is so many things to see to explore. I took an intern job in a gallery doing sales... selling paintings in a gallery and then I get to know, before that I also travel a little bit when I was still studying, I traveled to visit my friend

MARIE: Ok... so what kind of traveling was?

MARIE: Where did you go?

YINGYUE: In Jiangxi, Jiangxi. To visit friends. I took the train, long time train...

MARIE: How long

YINGYUE: I don't know, like 20 hours

MARIE: Was it your first time like...

YINGYUE: Traveling myself for like a long time

MARIE: And how did it feel, do you remember?

YINGYUE: Yeah, I remember everything... you know, it was kind of... I wasn't feeling scared, no, no, I was traveling light, I had a small bag to go see my friends. On the way, meeting people on the train, read my books, write something. At that time I was writing a blog and my teacher find out I was traveling because she was a fan of my blog. She said, how come you are not in school? I got caught.

MARIE: It was not vacation, you didn't...

YINGYUE: Not really, I skipped class to travel and visit my friends. And uh... she wasn't studying at that time so... which is like, it was her life, she was the same age and she didn't study. Getting job, falling in love with some people and I see some different trees, some festivals food, it was all new to me

MARIE: It was the first province outside Anhui that you visited?

YINGYUE: Yes,

MARIE: And it was really different?

YINGYUE: Yes, to me it was quite different because they speak different, the food was different, the weather is also a bit different. So yes, it was very interesting to me. I met friends on the way so it made me feel like in one trip, I can learn so much because in school you learn things basically you know from the books. But when you get on the road, you learn things... like stories, what people experience and you get like... life experience and I got inspired a lot

MARIE: How long did you stay?

YINGYUE: a week...

MARIE: And you mention that you learn a lot... would you be able to qualify what you learn, what did you learn, did you learn about the world, yourself, China?

YINGYUE: I think I learn about society. In university, if you don't work, wherever you hang out it's your classmates, your teacher. They tell you about the outside world, the society, what you need and you know... to prepare to the society, world, life, but when you get outside it's of course something different... something probably you are very naive because... because the outside world is complicated. And some people when they learn about my friends... I saw my friend fall in love with a guy and she fight, sometimes you get... you know they went violent... it's like... wow. You trust a person after sometimes and you learn that this person is totally different, how can you be safe? How to protect yourself. People always tell you, don't trust a stranger. I mean you get out, people approach to talk to you, is it safe? Especially for a small lady

like me, you know... it's like.. ok, ok... So... yes, it was very interesting. But...

MARIE: You said something, a minute ago... (Bailing enters)

MARIE: The university prepares you for the society? Like what did you expect from your life when you were in university? What was... did you imagine your life whatsoever... for example when you in university, you had never move from Anhui; did you ever imagine you were going to be a tattoo artist? Working in Shuhe?

YINGYUE: Never, no way...

MARIE: What did imagine for your life back then?

YINGYUE: I think you know, get to like... get a job, just working in an office, making some design... maybe sell some paintings but I could never expect that much. At that time I... I couldn't imagine how it was outside... it's pretty small dreams like... you know... stay in a company, you know... computer or maybe you know... at this time I could speak quite good English and I was thinking: "ok, maybe I'll do something, something about English you know".

MARIE: You couldn't speak English at the time?

YINGYUE: I could, I could... but no plan for the future, I just... just to try... there was no: "I'm going to do this I'm going to do this with my life" no! impossible! Or I want to live in this city... but, after this trip and I also read... you know I love reading books when I study... and I still remember I was in university, with a friend... and he was ... so... "Imagine 10 years, where are we going to be? And I was joking but I was... oh... maybe in 10 years, I'll be in a small town in America or somewhere, you know..."

MARIE: In America?

YINGYUE: Yeah (laugh)

MARIE: Why America?

YINGYUE: Oh, it was just an example. At that time, foreign countries are so new and I don't know?

MARIE: Why new?

YINGYUE: Because I never travel, the first time I met a foreigner in person, I was already in university and so I was over 20 years old. Before that, I only see foreigners on TV, you know... and so it was strange because I was learning English, I was basically practicing by myself by listening to English song. And in high school I got some tapes... I was listening to tapes, yeah, I would bought a tape player, a good one and I was like: "Learn English so I got some Pink Floyd tape" And it was so cool but I didn't really get the... you know... what exactly is a band like what kind of music they are playing so I tried to read something about it but it still very hard for me picture it... and the art... the cultural thing you know, to me it's just ok... this is country music and this is called rock, so I listened to different musician and at that time... I liked one of the song called: "Just another brick in the wall". I was really moved by this song, it's very interesting.

MARIE: Did you understand what it said?

YINGYUE: Well I only could read the introduction about the education and all this and that... but I couldn't get very deep, I was very pure and simple.. I understood the surface of it. And the first time I talk, really talk about a foreigner was a family dinner, my aunt has a very successful family business in the city, they had a... also... they had a doctor of chemistry from Germany. So it was dinner time and I saw the foreigner and I was pretty excited. My aunt said: "everyone say your English is quite ok so why don't you talk to the person". And you know, I was so shy, I could... I didn't want to say anything. The guy was very nice, he approach me: "so what's your name?" and I actually practice a lot and a could, I could actually speak quite fluently but I didn't have enough words... vocabulary wasn't very good, I had a translator and... he was quite amazed: "this is the first time you meet a foreigner and you can actually speak quite

fluently". I was surprised too and I was even shy in the beginning but after a few drinks I was ok, talking about university. So... this time I was very interested by foreign cultures, that was for sure.

MARIE: What kind of books did you read to have access to foreign culture?

YINGYUE: Some books about music...

MARIE: through arts?

YINGYUE: Through arts! And also some novels, stories...

MARIE: Chinese novels or foreign...

YINGYUE: But at that time I read most of my books in Chinese...

MARIE: She Chinese books in Chinese or foreign books translated in Chinese?

YINGYUE: Foreign books... some foreign books are translated in Chinese.

MARIE: Like what? Do you remember?

YINGYUE: I don't remember exactly... at that time, in university, one of my favourite book was "The little prince"

MARIE: Antoine de Saint Exupéry.

YINGYUE: And I even wrote an article about the book after I read it and it was published in the newspaper of our university. It was... that book really touched me and I realized that it doesn't matter the nationality because that book, to me is all about you and I are human beings and you meet people doing different kind of job but what you like is probably very important.

[>R3]: (Bailing) I'll make some tea

MARIE: We can keep going after, actually, one question to both of you, have you read San Mao?

[>R3]: San Mao?

MARIE: Yes

[>R3]: Yes, in the school

MARIE: You read San Mao in school?

[>R3]: Some of it in high school;

MARIE: The chronicles of the Sahara?

[>R3]: I read some of it but I don't remember, but she is like... an amazing woman.

YINGYUE: Yes, she was one of the influential writers to me too. I got very inspired by her because she studied abroad, she traveled a lot, she was speaking different languages when she was living in different country and it was very strange, maybe she did it on purpose and uh... also... with José, the Spanish guy she loved... he was a diver and he died under the water and I was so sad for her. She was so brave because she just like... she was a woman, she went to so many places and to me it was like... wow... I think I was... maybe in university really... I was so... so... moved and I was... "I want to be like her, I never seen the desert, I have never seen the sea, I never wow, that would be so nice, that would be so cool" And, and I liked her words, even in the end, she suicides, was pretty sad... but still, she was... she was very powerful to me

[>R3]: To be honest, I didn't... I only read some sentences, classic sentences but I never really read about her story. I heard about her story maybe last year or 2 years ago. But I just new she was from Taiwan and Africa but I forgot who told me. But, "Oh my god! She is so amazing"

MARIE: Yes, I'm reading her right now in Spanish because her work is not translated in French yet.

[>R3]: You can understand them more

MARIE: And, I don't know how you feel when you speak in English but to me, when I speak in English, I feel like I'm a different person

YINGYUE: Yeah! we have different mindset when you use different language. Especially when you use a second language, we are a little bit more rational, I mean to me I'm a bit more rational. If I speak English, I feel like I'm more rational but if I speak my native language, I get more emotions.

[>R3]: It's so interesting I don't know to say that... but I don't feel, I'm just so happy I can speak another language. When I'm speaking, I don't think if it's my language or not. I don't feel that way because also my English, I think my grammar isn't really good. When I speak a second language I just... I'm trying to communicate what I feel, It's not my language but they can understand me and then I feel, "Ok, great"... And sometimes, when I was in India, I tried to understand each other but we didn't. We don't understand our language but we do understand each other... so...

MARIE: Yes, to me, I feel like I have a harder time to be emotional in English because the intellectual process takes energy not to speak your mother language and so it takes more time and so you are more smooth. Like oh.. But at the same time I feel like cursing English makes more sense... French language is too sweet for cursing... in English I feel like it's stronger.

[>R3]: In Chinese I don't really speak... bad words

MARIE: How did you hear about Dali?

YINGYUE: I had a friend, a Polish guy, he had a guest house in Dali at that time and he was visiting Shanghai. At that time, Lukas and I had a bar in Shanghai. He came and he began to tell me about Yunnan, about Dali.

MARIE: You had never been to Yunnan before?

YINGYUE: No, and he was like, "this is a place you would like". Really ok. And after we gave up the bar, so I... I... just got a chance, I'm free now, I want to go. and the first time I went, I took the train, it took maybe 40 hours, at that time it was slow train, you would spend few nights in the train. I read the book, big book... And 19... 19...

MARIE: 1984

YINGYUE: Not Georges Orwell's... a Japanese guy... Q194... he is a Japanese writer. Anyway... it was a long travel; luckily I enjoyed it and I came to Dali and I was like... wow... this is so nice, food is cheap, people are nice, strangers would say "hi" to you in the street. And you would meet very interesting people, like... probably that you only hear in the media or something. Folk musician and you could bump to them on the street you know. Nobody was really fan, at that time, everyone chilled you know... just... and uh... I liked the culture because you would always get invited for dinner somewhere or for a drink, or coffee, everyone was just so sweet. And uh... we go to the nature, ride the bicycle around the lake. In Chinese they call it Erhai, but it's not the sea. But we called it the sea.

MARIE: So last time when we stopped the interview, where were we? I think you were telling me... I think you were at the end of your studies

YINGYUE: Yeah

MARIE: So What did you do at the end of your study? Yeah, you went to Shanghai to work in a gallery...

YINGYUE: Yes, and then ... I went to work... I stayed in Shanghai. I worked in a youth hostel, so I meet travelers everyday, and uh...

MARIE: Is it a popular job to work in youth hostel in China?

YINGYUE: I think now is pretty normal and quite popular among young people, because there were not many hostels. In the beginning it was just in big cities and then... but I guess youth hostel in China is more like business mode

MARIE: So, you, you were born here

YINGYUE: yes,

MARIE: somewhere here, you went to study there in university, and then to... to Shanghai after your studies.

YINGYUE: It was my last year in... and then I traveled to Jiangxi.

MARIE: Yes, you told me about your trip in Jiangxi, it was the first time you took the train?

YINGYUE: Not the first time to take the train... I took the train when I was little with my grandpa.

MARIE: First time alone
 YINGYUE: The first time I take the train for a long journey and I... yeah... also because we are students so we have to first of all... to... when you have to go to other city to kind of like reasearch or study so we were like teacher and all the classmates and that time was more 80 people because we have a big class. Maybe 80 students and a few teachers.
 MARIE: And you go where?
 YINGYUE: Beijing, we went to Beijing. So we took the green train, a whole wagon
 MARIE: The whole wagon was just you ?
 YINGYUE: Just us... yeah! In the beginning we were so excited... we are going to Beijing, we are going crazy and then the exhaustion because we only have seats, no bunk beds because it was cheap.
 MARIE: So... train to Jiangxi and then train to Beijing with you class. What did you do in Beijing?
 YINGYUE: uh...we went to see some Beijing there is an area Qijiuba (798) . It is an area, before it was a factory for millitary weapons I think and after, you know, people put a lot of artist over there and artist were very good at making the whole place very nice and very artsy, so there is gallery, handmaid shops, really nice. And then... it's more like, people go there and take nice photos so the architecture and the whole art scene and all the artist build it. It makes the whole area very special, very artsy. We did some art gallery shows and taking pictures of buildings. We also went ot the Great wall. Try some Beijing duck... you know... very touristy style, taking pictures, shopping malls, take some idea about the design. And also, all of us, we didn't only go in Beijing, we also went to Anhui, Anhui... Huangshan
 MARIE: The Yellow mountain?
 YINGYUE: Yes, but it's called, Xidi and Hongcun (two traditional villages near Huangshan) .
 MARIE: It's around Huangshan?
 YINGYUE: Yes, it's closed to Huangshan... it's somewhere probably here.
 MARIE: You can mark it down, it's alright, it's your map.
 YINGYUE: Because that is... it's old building, you know like Chinese painting kind of style, all the architecture is very many many years old. It's a tourist town, it's somewhere around here. It's more like, yeah... so over there is architecture and nature, so we went there to paint the landscape with the students and teachers.
 MARIE: Cool. And in Huangshan as well? It's the mountain where a lot of Chinese travelers went... like Xu Xiake...
 YINGYUE: Huangshan is one of the most famous mountain in China. And Huangshan is very close to my hometown, it's beautiful. But to... the village is a little bit under Huangshan so, First time I went to walk in Huangshan was later. That was with some foreign friends, with Lukas. uh...
 MARIE: So that was university... Would you... like... because in university, I know that you have quite... quite a lot of vacation in summer and for Chinese new year, during those time, you didn't travel?
 YINGYUE: No, no. I stayed with my family, with my grandpa. I was taking care of my grandpa.
 MARIE: And so after university you moved to Beijing?
 YINGYUE: No...
 MARIE: To Shanghai sorry...
 YINGYUE: I went to Shanghai before graduation because I had some kind of intership, so I did an internship in a gallery and then, during the graduation, I change job I went to youth hostel to work. So after graduation I went back to work in the youth hostel.
 MARIE: Why did you change from the art to the... which is closer to what you did in university?

YINGYUE: The sales was... to me a little bit... because the political rule changed, they start to stop people... uh... how do I say. At that time, they are... in a gallery, you had sometimes, you have to... it would sell the paintings to the foreigners so, and then you go on the streets like under our building and you would have to invite them to show the paintings, but then... at the time, a tricky thing happen in China and they stop people from doing business like that, so you could only stay in the gallery. And also I guess youth hostel sound so much fun because, because they are more young people, people from everywhere... it sounded so much fun to me. And I start to learn how to make coffee and stuff... and I can really practice English, everyday so... I went to the hostel. Because first time I stayed in a youth hostel it was with my first boyfriend, a German guy. (laugh)
 MARIE: How did you meet that German guy?
 YINGYUE: When I was selling paintings in the gallery... Like that, we met. And then, we hang out a few times, he was a little... he was working at that time.
 MARIE: And you stayed with him in uh... hostel...
 YINGYUE: Uh... we travelled, we traveled together as a couple so I was like... oh... I didn't know such things existed, like youth hostels
 MARIE: He showed you
 YINGYUE: Yeah, I though it was very intresting and I should learn more about this, like YHA. And, this is pretty cool. And then I changed job, I went... like I want to work there... it's called Blue Mountain youth hostel en Shanghai.
 MARIE: And where did you travel with this German boy?
 YINGYUE: We went to Hangzhou
 MARIE: Hangzhou?
 YINGYUE: yes
 MARIE: You took the train?
 YINGYUE: Yeah.
 MARIE: You stayed in a hostel in Hangzhou?
 YINGYUE: Yes.
 MARIE: Did you stay in separate rooms?
 YINGYUE: No, we stayed in the same room. And uh... yeah, and then, after the graduation, I just work in a Youth hostel. And then my boyfriend had to leave to do his PhD in the Netherlands, so we separate. I was in China and I was his first girl friend as well. So we were crying, it was so sad. And then I was ok... "I need to save money" so I took another part-time job at the same time to try to save money. So I wark in another bar
 MARIE: So you took a part-time job in a bar, you were working all the time?
 YINGYUE: Yeah, so tiring but at that time, I was separated from my boy-friend, it made me a little bit sad so I had one goal, "I want to go travel" so I have to make money, so I take a second job. But over there, it's more like a sports bar, a pub and the manager was a guy from the Netherlands and uh... yeah... and I met Lukas over there.
 MARIE: Did you... it seems like, in you... how old were you at that time? 24 or something
 YINGYUE: I was 22.
 MARIE: And it seems like you would pick the places were you work according to if it was manage by a foreigner or a work place where you could meet foreigners, were you aware of that? Did you know you were picking places were you could interact with foreigners?
 YINGYUE: I didn't plan that, I got those jobs all because the English skills I had. At that time, I mean, 10 years ago, even big cities, you don't really find young Chinese people, like my age that could speak quite fluent English. And especially the English major students. They are probably very good at reading, listening, writing but the spoken English wasn't really good so I was pretty... people appreciated that because in Shanghai there are more foreigners and they need

Chinese young people to have this language skills so you do have more opportunity to meet people and then once some foreigners or manager meet you : "I need people like that". And also, I was young, no experience but they don't care. So, yeah... so it just happened like that.

MARIE: And that's where you met Lukas.

YINGYUE: Yes

MARIE: Was he working there?

YINGYUE: He was still studying in Shanghai Financial university. No, he was working already. And he could actually speak Chinese at the time so it was very interesting. And then, uh... yeah... I work too hard and then he was... you are supposed to do art, maybe you just quit the job and we do something together. During one year, I took a year off trying to do some art, trying to study language

MARIE: In Shanghai?

YINGYUE: Yes, we also traveled a little bit.

MARIE: Where did you go?

YINGYUE: We went to Beijing by train and we meet many friends again. We were probably 10 people. We were like more, yeah, 10 people, we were from, I think I was the only Chinese. All the friends were international students or working in Shanghai. So, quite an international group. And then, we also traveled to Qingdao. by train

MARIE: What did you do in Qingdao? What was the point of the visit?

YINGYUE: We were just visiting, just travel to see the city. Also with friends, beer museum. And then...

MARIE: During that year off, you went back doing art and stuff.

YINGYUE: I study language and I paint some paintings.

MARIE: How could you afford the life in Shanghai without...

YINGYUE: Because of Lukas... so I didn't feel very well, I felt like.. I... I... I don't know what to express, I don't know to paint, I just like... everyday, I'm going crazy. So, not even one year, just some month after, I could take it and then we had an idea to have a small business like a bar. So I was very interested in... in... learning how to make coffee and stuff, so I start... I can't just be like this so I work. So I went to a restaurant and café to learn everything, make coffee, make cocktails, serve, get the suppliers and the products, managing, everything. So I spent half a year to learn. I learnt important things and I have a Chinese friends who is my colleague in a coffee. I said to him I wanted to open a coffee, he also wanted to so we said we could open it together. Lukas said, "let's just do it together, the 3 of us". And we made a bar in Shanghai close to Shanghai foreign language university. And for a year, it was a tough year.

MARIE: Was it successful?

YINGYUE: To me it was successful, the only problem we had was the relationship with the Chinese partner. We couldn't trust him, or he was just... in the beginning, because he was young and didn't know much stuff except to make some Western food which he learnt from before. In the beginning, he trusted me and Lukas very much so he... the money would be half, half and then you manage. Lukas was still busy on working and stuff. Mainly I have to go and manage everything and uh... in the beginning he trusted us but then latter, he just... just... so many things and we didn't have a clear contract. In the end I decided to quit. I had a chance to leave Shanghai.

MARIE: Were you eager to live Shanghai?

YINGYUE: Because in Shanghai. I mean I traveled and I like other places. But living there... because I lived there for more than 4 years, so... I didn't have the chance to compare with other places, and then I came to Yunnan, I saw it and wow, Shanghai life was too much stress.

MARIE: You left, you visit Yunnan right after quitting this bar job

YINGYUE: Yeah.

MARIE: You took the train there.

YINGYUE: Yeah. To Kunming and then...

MARIE: Did you go with Lukas?

YINGYUE: No, myself...

YINGYUE: just yourself? He was in Shanghai. I was, "ok, I go travel, finally, I'm free"

MARIE: Did you have anytime schedule or you went there not knowing when you would be back?

YINGYUE: uh... the plan was to stay one month

YINGYUE: The plan was to say one month

MARIE: ok

YINGYUE: In Yunnan, if I wanted to go somewhere else it's ok but first to Dali

MARIE: Ok, Dali was your plan. How did you hear about Dali?

YINGYUE: From a Polish friend, he was

MARIE: oh yeah...

YINGYUE: Yes, he lived and... so from Kunming, and from Kunming, I took a bus to Dali. Dali I stayed one week and I was already like : "THIS IS MY PLACE, THIS IS MY PLACE". The weather, especially the weather, the blue sky, the mountain the lake, the slow life... One very nice hospitality.

MARIE: What month did you go? It was not in Summer right?

YINGYUE: It was around October. So... yes, yes, very good season. I could see the plants grow in the wild and... so, so, the second week, I actually had a plan, I talk to Lukas, I'm moving here, I'm not going to live in Shanghai anymore. And he was was like : "Maybe you should calm down a little bit, you have been here for 2 weeks" Actually only one week, "You are making all these big decision". "I know, I know but I don't want to live in Shanghai anymore. I want to be here, I want to be here, I don't know what i'm going to do but I want to be here". So he was "You are too excited, no, no". So, So... uh... Dali and I also came to Shuhe

MARIE: This is around here. Up there yeah

YINGYUE: Ok, so, so... for like 2 days I met some Chinese hippie friends so we both came to Shuhe, 3 of us... and it was so cold, I was like, it's so cold, no I miss the sunshine of Dali so after 2 days we thought it was too cold so I came back to Dali. I stayed one month in Dali.

MARIE: What did you do during one month?

YINGYUE: For one month, everyday I tried to hang out with locals or people who live there, and the we do some activities like go to the mountain and do hikes, around the lake.

MARIE: Was it the first time you do that, like hiking?

YINGYUE: No, before hiking, I grew up in the mountain so I did hiking. uh... even before when I was younger I needed to hike to go to school. Everyday I walk to school, so, so it was really nice because I met really interesting Chinese friends and this people are from different place and...

MARIE: Did you meet Machek at the time?

YINGYUE: No, I didn't know him.

MARIE: Was it Chinese hippie or like community in Shanghai like international people, foreigners?

YINGYUE: I met some foreigners, some... uh... yes I met some foreigners because in the Polish house, I met some foreigners. Uh... it's just the place, I like the art, making the flowers, everything so cheap, the flowers here is so cheap. It was like... oh, this is so nice and you can grow so many things. It's just, it's a really slow life, you don't need to hurry to do... you know, very simple, they don't really... Shanghai is very posh you know. So, I didn't like very much this

environment. Also because I grew up in a small village and I feel comfortable in the country side. When I see the fields... it's oh... peace. So after the one month, I went back to Shanghai. It was... uh... and then during Chinese new year, so I stayed in Shanghai for a few months and like... I'm serious, I'm going there, I told Lukas : "Im' going there, I want to live there, so... you should come to see the place, then you will understand". So he said : "yes, ok, let's go". So that Chinese new year, we took a train together from Shanghai to Kunming.

MARIE: So agina

YINGYUE: We spent new year's eve on the train and I was carrying all the things that I needed

MARIE: To not go back to Shanghai?

YINGYUE: Not in a short time, no. I carry everything with me and Lukas is just carrying a little bit of stuff for me. He is only staying for 2 weeks, see what is magical in this place. So we arrived in Dali, he stayed for 2 weeks, of course he liked it a lot and now understand but at that time he had a study or a job or something, he could leave so, so... after 2 weeks he went back to Shanghai and I just stayed, I didn't know what to do, I was in a small hotel room and uh... I met some hippie friends and especially 2 Canadians, very tall, dreadlocks and there are really nice, we hang out a lot and were kind of studying the business of making dreadlocks for the people, and I was kind of helping them to buy some materials on TaoBao like wool and we make colorful things and we do... and to me they were... I was like... I wanted to do something but I didn't know what and then I thought about henna because no one was doing Henna in town. And actually... I went to Thailand before that...

MARIE: Oh ok...

YINGYUE: Oh... I think it was... From Shanghai, I was living in Shanghai...

MARIE: so here... Shanghai is here, do you want to use another color? Who did you go in Thailand with?

YINGYUE: Lukas.

MARIE: How long did you stay?

YINGYUE: It was a couple's trip, we went to Phuket, I think we went directly to Phuket

MARIE: So that was your first time abroad?

YINGYUE: Yeah

MARIE: How did you like it?

YINGYUE: And after we land and we go... I was just very strange because it was late at night... I was like : "Am I already out of China?" I didn't know what to expect to feel... I was like..Ok. But it was a very strange feeling, I was just : "ok, I'm already out of China, ok... but it truly looks similar". And then, and then, it was maybe the next day, because I had a sleep and the next day I'm like : "wow, ok, I'm a foreigner, you know". People are speaking "fanyannyangnyag" (imitating Thai Language", I was like... "ok..."

MARIE: So you are realizing you are in a different country

YINGYUE: Yes, I was like, ok... I'm actually a foreigner

MARIE: New status

YINGYUE: But I did like it a lot

MARIE: Yeah?

YINGYUE: Yeah, because of course... the.. the... first time to see... I went to Phi Phi island so the sea, the beautiful sea it was the first time to see, in Qingdao it was more like river water... over there "oh... the sea" and I didn't know how to swim at that time, I'm still not very good. And I'm like... wow, it's very different. I liked the Thailand people because they talk very gentle... for me it seems they are very gentle. In China we are like "Wow, wow" (imitating yelling) . Over there, they talk very low and because this is a more bouddhism country they are very polite. I think "Oh, this is very nice and I liked it". And then... so then, it's like... Ok,

new country and the food and the language and the color and all the clothes, I was fascinated.

MARIE: really?

YINGYUE: For sure?

MARIE: Were you in a hotel or something?

YINGYUE: We stayed...

MARIE: It was a beach vacation,

YINGYUE: Yeah, we stayed in a holiday inn, not really hippie style but it's nice, we saw trees and all kind of animals and you know... yeah.. we went to see these crazy shows... the ping-pong shows

MARIE: The ping-pong show?

YINGYUE: You don't know?

MARIE: Is it like the lady boys?

YINGYUE: No... you don't know the ping-pong shows? You don't know... this we can talk later

MARIE: It that, is that... you went to see that?

YINGYUE: Yeah, crazy... Who came out with this idea? And it's just, once in my life time. Because when you go in the street, people just come to you, "Ping-Pong", and I wonder what is that? Of course we were curious about it so we go see it

MARIE: So you didn't know what it was.

YINGYUE: I didn't know, I thought it was just a striping club and taking clothes off and dance. And then I realize..

MARIE: Did you see everything?

YINGYUE: Yes, they do that naked, and they don't only play with ping-pong balls, little birds, turtle, they even smoke a cigar with their vagina?

MARIE: Did you stay the whole show... yes, we were just watching?

YINGYUE: Yes

MARIE: You were not disturb?

YINGYUE: It was weird of course, it was so weird, but you know it's just like, It's Thailand, it was Bangkok. And I thought it was crazy, you know... it made me think

MARIE: So you stayed in Phuket, did Lukas taught you how to swim?

YINGYUE: Yes, in the swimming pool first and then a little bit, really... yeah

MARIE: How long did you stay in Thailand?

YINGYUE: Maybe a week.

MARIE: That's short

YINGYUE: Yes, this is very short.

MARIE: And then to Bangkok

YINGYUE: Yeah

MARIE: What did you think about Bangkok?

YINGYUE: It was really a modern city to me

MARIE: Not that interesting?

YINGYUE: For shopping it's crazy, because there was a lot of interesting things to buy, to collect in the market because you know, people from everywhere are selling interesting things. It was the first time I had a henna on my hand was in Thailand. I didn't even know what was henna and I had one and I was like, this is pretty cool.

MARIE: You didn't have tattoo at the time?

YINGYUE: No, and then I had henna first time on an island. And in Phuket, we traveled to some island. And then we went to Bankok

MARIE: You took a place to Bangkok.

YINGYUE: Bus or plane? Yes plane and then to Bangkok, and then from Bangkok we fly back to Shanghai. So it was my first time travel abroad. And I felt like... "uh... I should go see more". Anyway

MARIE: So then after, after that trip in Thailand, you went to Dali to kind of move there and that's when you had the idea of doing henna. I think, I think I went to Thailand before I opened the bar or during the bar opening. So, yeah and then, my friends were like, "Ling, why don't you do

henna?". So I bought some henna paint and I tried to practice on myself for a week and study some patterns, some this and that, and one day I carry my little basket and I was like : "ok, go to work on the street!" I will be a street artist. Then actually, it was on the street but more like in front of a bar, it was called Tang dynasty bar and my 2 Canadian friends were making dreadlocks and I helped them make a sign. It was the 3 of us we were like smocking, and I hadn't put the street sign yet and people were like "Can you paint me a ring". On the first day I had customers and I meet people from everywhere. I thought this is fun; I meet people from everywhere. Tourists, chinese, foreigner, they come, I do henna for them and I make money. So, like that, the life in Dali was almost... most of the time I was just a street artist, do henna, sometimes in front of bar, sometimes in my friends shops, sometimes I just put a sign outside and they'll give me a call. "I'm in a coffee shop getting coffee, come do henna to me" I had the book with me and I do the henna, buy them coffee, they like that. I was also helping my friends paint this kind old style Chinese shoes, paint the shoes, paint the clothes, selling ok.

MARIE: How long did you do that for?

YINGYUE: More than a year

MARIE: And so, in Dali, there is a big hippie community, how would you associate with them? Would you say you were a hippie at the time, did you do drugs? Did you like... did you do any like any experience within this community?

YINGYUE: Well, at that time I do see people, I do know people more, people smocking weeds that's for sure, they are people smocking weed because you go to the local village and the grandpa are all smocking weed. And in the small convenience store you can find seeds and grow it, here it's everywhere and they make... they make hemp oil, the shampoo, all natural stuff... basically it's amazing plants. They make amazing use of it. And of course the people smoke weed. For chemicals, because I was never interesting in using chemical drugs so I, I don't. I did smoke weed at that time, because it's natural and not really crazy. I know people, I heard something about mushrooms but I never tried it. And, so... yeah.. but there was like 2012, it was already quite clean and organized because the first time Dali got famous worldwide it was a couple years before which was... I think... I heard there was a foreign journalist wrote an article called : "Dali, the Chinese Amsterdam" (she is refering to a Newsweek article written by Melinda Liu on July 17th, 2011) . So the government didn't like it and started to clean and organised those local ladies selling ganja on the street and close some bars and stuff. And, even encourage the local to take out the plants. If you get a plant to the police, you get 2 kuai or something... so they were just trying to get ridd of it.

MARIE: Before 2012

YINGYUE: Yes, before that, because when I go there, it's wasn't crazy like that. Yeah... so One year... So during one year, I lived in Dali with my 2 hippie friends. We also traveled to Shanghai for a music festival. We were doing dreadlocks and henna, doing some festival to make money, see some shows, that was in Shanghai.

MARIE: Did you meet with Lukas?

YINGYUE: uh... yeah, that time I also visit Lukas. And uh... Yeah... after, I think after, I think one year, I want to go... after this Shanghai trip I came back to Yunnan and I want to go travel, myself. So, my, my 2 other friends they want also traveling somewhere. I was alone and I went to Kunming. From Dali to Kunming, I got a visa to Laos, so I took a bus from Kunming to... Luang Prabang

MARIE: uh... wait, take the other one... I think they have it there... Luang Prabang, here it is.

YINGYUE: So bus to Luang Prabang and then I took... I stayed maybe one or two nights... two nights and then I took a bus to Ventiane here and then to Ventiane also by bus... so maybe...

MARIE: I think it's like right there. Did you go down to the south of Laos?

YINGYUE: Yeah, so, so, Luang Prabang to Ventiane by bus and then to the South of Laos, 4000 Islands... oh yeah! and then at the 4000 island I met a couple of friends and my 2 Canadian friends were also there so we traveled together from across the border to Cambodia.

MARIE: You had a visa?

YINGYUE: I had the visa for Laos before I leave China and Cambodia I can just get a visa at the border. So Cambodia, we stayed more than 20 days so we also tried... I was also trying to do henna on the beach like that.

MARIE: Where did you go?

YINGYUE: We just bus to Phnom Penh and then from Phnom Penh, bus to Sihanoukville... it's somewhere here. And...

MARIE: What was it called?

YINGYUE: The city?

MARIE: Yeah

YINGYUE: Sihanoukville. So, over there we stayed quite long and then, after 20 days

YINGYUE: and so we made some friends, we were also making some kind of leather shoes, you know... we did some like, crystal necklaces, jewellery and stuff... very hippie style and then we actually took a bus to Thailand?

MARIE: Because you couldn't stay more than 20 days?

YINGYUE: You could stay 1 month but then we were thinking let's head to Thailand so, we just went to Thailand, to Bangkok actually. Because we didn't want to... Bangkok. From then we flew to Shanghai again.

MARIE: You went back to Shanghai again? So how long was this trip total? 2 months? a month and a half?

YINGYUE: Two and a half month

MARIE: Why didn't you go back to Kunming?

YINGYUE: We wanted to visit Shanghai and this guy were thinking to finish the hippie life and get a job in Shanghai. To me it was, we go together, I visit my friends in Shanghai, Lukas and everyone. So I'm back to Shanghai. And then, from Shanghai I went to Kunming, and then to Dali again. And after few month, I was working, I got a contact with a friend in Cambodia, and he said, there is a job opportunity on a island, do you want to come? And I was like, "this is winter, I don't like winter I miss this tropicals"; "so if you want, you know, there is an opportunity. I was like, "yeah, why not?" I just carried all my stuff.

MARIE: You went by bus? Did you fly?

YINGYUE: I flew from Lijiang...

MARIE: So from Lijiang to Phnom Penh and then you went to an island (Koh Rong Sanloen) for... how long did you stay? This job opportunity... like, what did you do?

YINGYUE: uh... first help him to manage the guest house, so I... in doing the... you know, when the people come I register them, prepare the room for them and later calculate the bill. Sometimes also organised the kitchen, the dinner and for like almost 2 months, and then I really like the other one, just like... there were 2 resorts on the island. The other one, 2 French really lovely people... the

MARIE: The managers?

YINGYUE: No, the owners, they open... they were still building the resorts, starting digging the wall, but after they had the canteen and the few bungalows ready and this was really nice, beautiful you know and it's called Huba-huba, it's from the French comic books "Looking for the Marsupilami" I love it ! Because, they made it more like fairy tale style you know, we had a big tree in the toilet, so there

was no ceiling, so we take the shower looking at the stars and the leaves and the tree inside the toilet. and all of these trees you know... it looks like... they paint like yellow and black spots. The walls all had this color style... it was a fairy tale. In the beginning when I was there, I had a relationship with this guy and I say, "business is business, I don't want to work in your place I want to work there". I ask to work there. So, in the beginning I was finishing the bungalows, painting the bed for them, and it was very busy so i started cooking for them. They loved my food so I was, "Ok, we have to have this thing on our menu when we have a menu". So we started to do the menu together and I started working mostly in the kitchen. So... for more than 9 months I would just... more than half a year, I started working in the kitchen, everyday.

MARIE: you liked it?

YINGYUE: Yeah! Yeah! Because i have a passion at that time... People like my food I was so happy; I invented some of my own dishes. That's how I learn how to make crêpe and some... and so over there, people came from all over the world, not many Asian but it was ok. I was usually the only Chinese on the island you know. No Chinese...

MARIE: Was it hard?

YINGYUE: No, I liked it...

MARIE: You liked it.

YINGYUE: Yeah, I did because, because you feel like you are free, you more free. Because in China I think in the society, we do have our own culture and if we stay in a group we get too blended in and... to me over there, because you know, I don't really care where someone is from, we just people and people of course sometimes they thought I am local. After I got really tan... you know, I do look local, I go to the bar and there is a lot of prostitutes and stuff and white guys, old white guys taking young Asian chicks. You go to the bar and I mean usually, there are sometimes people thinking that I'm like local girl and their impression is that I'm easy to get or something so there was not enough respect; When it happened I get so pissed off

MARIE: I Bet!

YINGYUE: "Get off you know" and and sometimes I look so local that the local people don't believe I'm not local so... yeah... this one time I was...

MARIE: Did you speak Cambodian?

YINGYUE: A little bit and and... better I don't speak, they just start speaking fast, I couldn't follow. They always think I'm local. I don't understand. I like people, local people. They are interesting, if you treat them nicely they are good. But there was sometimes if I go to a bar... it's just like.

MARIE: And... so.

YINGYUE: They like Chinese people.

MARIE: And so, the first time... the first day we met you told me about that experience that you got detached from material things when you were in Cambodia, yeah, on the island. Because I couldn't bring much stuff, so I brought whatever I thought was necessary. When you live on the island, and, life just became very simple, you don't watch TV, you don't use wifi, once a month I go to the mainland, I tried to login with some account and just forgot the password. And, and and all my Chinese college friends, because everyone were like... after 5 years of graduation, we need to get together, you know, something like that. And some tried to find me and I had totally disappear, because I was on the island, no wifi, I wasn't looging on whatsapp or whatever so everyone is looking for me. On the computer I saw the email and I thought maybe I should answer. It was that internet café and they don't have Chinese tipping and I only spent few hours, at most in the café because I have to buy staff, I was tipping in english, replying in English to my friends.... "Hey it's Ling I'm sorry, I only have the computer, I can't type Chinese, I'm on an island, I don't know when I can go

back to China. Anyway, enjoy the party, see you next time". So yeah... quite disconnected with the world.

MARIE: And you felt more free?

YINGYUE: Because it was simple, you don't really get distracted by reading too many things, I mean, nowadays... we live. And before, we need informations, you know, and now, the information is chasing us. As long as we have a little screen with us, all kind of informations is chasing us. You don't really get freedom. Over there, those time over there... I mean, I love ice-cream, on the island I couldn't get an ice-cream, so everytime I go to the main land, first thing, I find the ice-cream car singing and eat an ice-cream. It cost 2 dollars or something and there is... no... everyday, I only make few dollars probably. But it was just this feeling, when you don't have something and once you have it, you are just "Oh, this is so amazing" So I would get ice-cream and I kicked the scoop on the ground, so I was broken... I went back... it was fun

MARIE: So you were free from technology and Chinese society on this island?

YINGYUE: yeah, yeah... and I just don't hear many things, what I hear is stories from people, people from everywhere. I met some people doing some you know, jobs I have never heard of, they are living a lifestyle which I could never imagine if I don't meet them, you know it's just people... I met people first time I get to know about mindfulness meditation is because I met someone over there and she was a teacher in Bali and she brought text books and materials of this meditation thing. So before she left I copy and read and take notes, I exchange books with people. In a way, what I get and what I hear... Shoes, clothes, I don't need many things because I wear bikinis when I cook, so... in the beginning I was shy, I was really shy, and... I was really shy, I get nervous when I cook if there is people around me. I was very scared of snakes, but on the island is kind of a challenge for me. So I decide I could see snake anytime even during my sleep. So what can I do, just accept... and... and... I read more than usual so my english reading got better because you don't... usualley when people travel, there is more English books than Chinese

MARIE: Sure

YINGYUE: So... and I draw, I do Yoga, I meet people who are yoga teacher so after that I start to teach some people, things like that. And of course, get comfortable with water... jump in the water... you can walk naked under the moonlight, there is no one there. So, more time, just you and the nature... so just... spend more time with myself, I think spiritually, very treasure experience for me.

MARIE: Why did you leave?

YINGYUE: I think... I thought it was enough. Lukas also came to visit me on the island. I couldn't believe it... I was just like a wild monkey. Because I was so tan... usually I was running in the jungle in bare feet, not scared of animals anymore. In the beginning, in the first few days, he could walk bare feet, it hurt him too much. I was like " your body will adapt sooner than your mind will". After a few days, he felt comfortable too, he hiked a lot. In the beginning he slept in a bungalow with open window and he was a little bit scared because anything could climb in the window. Many times, when I wake up there was little a lezard in front of my eyes, just like that... this is normal. And uh... so I get very comfortable with nature and uh... of course I felt like... we didn't really need much, we don't have a supermarket or a convenient store, we ate simple food. And we don't waste. so... I painted a lot of things on the wood. I found some sea shells and make jewellery out of it. I glue the sea shells on the wall and painted some signs. Do whatever. Sometimes, we didn't have electricity so we used candles which is alright. It was really nice, simple, but you know, I knew if I stayed

longer I would be problem for me to get connected again so it was like, more than 9 months is enough, I should probably get out of there.

MARIE: Your parents, where they worried about you?

YINGYUE: My aunt and uncle were worried, my parents all passed away when I was younger... so ... I have a younger brother, 3 years younger. He is taking care of himself. They were concerned, they were like... are you carzy? But you know, how can they imagine like the little girl who grew up in a small village... My hometown, most people have never seen a foreigner in their life. I took some foreign friends when I was living in Shanghai, I brought some foreign friends to spend Chinese new year and stuff with them. They were all very excited, first time seeing foreigners... they were like : "wow" it's just interesting for them. So latter on, they know they can't control me or expecting too much from me. They are concerned, they want me to be stable. In China, " it's all about stable. get a stable job, get married...

MARIE: So, you were telling me that China is about stability?

YINGYUE: Yes... people want me to be stable, because the family, they always want you to have a stable job, which is true, like before, before, you work for the government, unless you make a very serious mistake. Usually you have your whole life insurance company.

MARIE: Would you like that though?

YINGYUE: I don't want to do the same things for, for... I mean sometimes I cannot even do the same things for 3 months, so for the whole life, do the same things... not for me... People are different. So of course I had a fight with my family, aunt and uncle. Not really fight but one time I was alone, abroad, of course I have to face lot of things because it was only me... and sometimes, things don't go very smooth. So when you call them, you are expecting some comfort words from them but then instead of that, you are family is like: "You are crazy, just come back again and get a job, I don't understand what you are doing"

MARIE: That's not what you want to hear but that's what they tell you.

YINGYUE: and then, I get so sad, for one year I didn't contact them and they kind of felt like this was serious so they gave me space again... uh... but yeah, that's how it is. After 9 months I wanted to change, so I left the island

MARIE: What was the name of the island?

YINGYUE: Koh Rong Sanleam. So, after the island I went to Sihanookville, see some friends and then Phnom Penh, I met friends of friends and, so I start to look for a jobs... telling my friends I was looking for a job. So I have few jobs offers

MARIE: In Phnom Penh?

YINGYUE: Yes...

MARIE: You were not thinking of going back to China after the island?

YINGYUE: no.

MARIE: Why?

YINGYUE: I... I... think at that time there wasn't anything attractive for me in China at that time... I just... to me... being abroad was still something I liked. I need... like... I want to live in a new environment. So... I wanted to look for a job and I start to meet people throughout this connection. I find some jobs offers but... actually at that time I wanted to learn tattoo... already because when I moved to the island I brought a tattoo machines, but then, I got a job, the machine didn't work very well so I kind of left it behing and I went to cooking. So, I visited, there was a well-known tattoo artist in the city, I tried to see if there was any chance, at that time, we didn't know each other very well. So, he said no... so maybe I do something else. So my friend was opening a new company, a website and also a magazine in Chinese actually. So in the beginning I said yes to him, just for writing few

articles, writing some columns and... but then, he heard that, I didn't have a job at that time so he was like, maybe you can like, work here as a full time. So I start partly building the magazine. The website I didn't need to take care of it... so, so my title was "chief editor and art director"; I was doing a lot of things, designing the logo, name the magazine, not only me but basically, I have just to... to... for the whole direction I think... I go to the factory, interview people, try to do the sales of advertisement, that's how we made money. The gap was a little bit to extreme because from the island running in the jungle with bare feet and suddenly you are meeting CEO or general manager of 5 stars hotel and you have to wear more like serious clothes, shake hand.. That way it was too extreme, and I had to do a lot of things, I had kind of nervous breakdown so I was, maybe I shouldn't just go back... it's too much, too extreme, I'm pushing myself too much. After... so before the first edition was out, right before that, I had to leave, so I came back to Yunnan, Lijiang.

MARIE: Why Lijiang and not Dali?

YINGYUE: Dali was enough, because that time when I leave I already see most of my good friends all left Dali. That's the moment I decided I should move out from here because that is enough. And so... at that time, I had friends in Lijiang and Lukas was also here... so I came back, start to do henna business again. And after few months, henna business was running low, I ran the bar... Stonecross, for a couple months. After few months I had to leave for tattoo.

MARIE: You decided to go on with the tattoo project?

YINGYUE: I went to Shanghai to learn tattoo and do an intership in a tattoo studio. To study, seriously study tattoo in Shanghai for a few month and in Xi'an to still in a tattoo studio, same boss, doing tattoo over there. And after the tattoo, yeah... after the tattoo, I came back to Yunnan again because, at that time, I felt I could work as a freelancer already, I had my machine and everything with me.

YINGYUE: I came back to Yunnan, think I can maybe stay here for a few months or forever maybe... just like... do tattoo things. But then I had the opportunity to work in a tattoo studio in Phnom Penh. This tattoo artist, he contacted me and we kept in touch again. He said "Why don't you come to work with us". At that time I don't know, I felt like, it's more personal because before he didn't know me and now, you know, I think we had feeling for each others, I don't know. Anyway I went there, I did henna stuff and tattoo in Phnom Penh in his studio and we also tried to decorate the second floor so I have my own space and henna thing. But then we had a problem, we were fighting a lot, so... I was like "fuck it, no, I can't". So I left... I came back to China, visited my family after 3 or 4 years... I stayed a couple months at home with my aunt and uncle, my brother, cousin. I showed them the photo of me living here and there.

MARIE: What did they say?

YINGYUE: For the first time my aunt was... one moment she was like : "You know, I know you are crazy and your life is a little bit crazy but you know, you still crazy but your life is interesting, you are having fun, you have been here and there, meeting this and that"

MARIE: Your brother doesn't travel?

YINGYUE: no

MARIE: Why?

YINGYUE: He felt more comfortable with his own buddy around, you know, his friends in the same town, he feels more comfortable. Because I... I... tried to help him, to live in... no, he didn't like it, he was, no, I miss home, I want to go home.

MARIE: Ok

YINGYUE: He traveled a little bit but not much.

MARIE: Home for a little while and that's when you moved to Kunming for this studio that you worked in?

YINGYUE: Home for a couple of months and I felt I needed, I know I like traveling but I felt like I should probably have a base, not really seriously like get married or something but I felt like I should have a base for something, I can always go outside to travel and then come back. So I wanted to have a studio. At that time, I had a few cities in my mind. There is one city close to my hometown, one in Kunming, one in Lijiang, one in Suzhou. I had a few options. So I talk to Lukas and he help me to think. In the end I decided for Kunming. Because I think Kunming is not really like Bangkok but it's quite something like Bangkok in the future, I think. Because from Kunming you can go travel in South-East Asia. It's so convenient, so many flights. And for the weather, it's called the Spring city. So you know flowers all season you know and the weather is nice. Also it's not like Beijing, Shanghai, you know that was too much for me. So, I was like, "Kunming is nice". And Kunming I am close to Lijiang Dali, Shangri-La...

MARIE: the Hukou is not a problem?

YINGYUE: So, yeah, from hometown I took a train to Shanghai to visit Lukas and then I took a train to Kunming. I went to Kunming to find an apartment, I start to build my studio there, start to work there, I was working on airbnb, I was doing henna tattoo, airbnb... yeah... It was good.

MARIE: When was that?

YINGYUE: 2 or 3 years ago because I stayed there for more than 2 years, and why... why this shop and why Shuhe. I mean you remember you telling me that you didn't like the tattoo shop because there were not really... like it was more about money than anything else.

YINGYUE: Yeah

MARIE: Yes, you told me you didn't like the way to do business in this shop

YINGYUE: Because I maybe take art to seriously, I just cannot, honestly I cannot betray my own heart, this stays forever. So that's something I need to be comfortable with... I would feel guilty. Also, in Kunming, it was good, I liked the life there, I had my plenty of my own time, I am a bit nerdy because if I get an interest in something, I check everything, I read, I get something like an interest in an Asian character I got way back to cave time and study this character, symbols... If I have an interest I want to know, so... I don't know. I had a nervous breakdown before, many times but I didn't know what was the problem until when I was studying tattoo in Shanghai, it was a serious time and this was the first time I went to see a therapist. They diagnosed me as a very serious kind of bipolar disorder. So in the beginning... of course everyone is in denial, denial and then of course you accept it. It was a good step I guess, because they are problem with me for many years, I didn't know what was wrong. My mom committed a suicide because of depression and you know, the people from the village, they don't care about that, especially in China, not many people care about mental illness, they don't really know anything about it. So, once you have this kind of problem, you do need support and understanding from families and close friends. But usually in China, as I know, people are very lonely with this and that's how, like, mindfulness meditation helped me a lot. I tried medication but it just masked the problem, travels help me a lot because you go with the flow, enjoy here and now, and also the balance with the nature, so people go to nature and they feel peaceful. Nature is a medicine to people, you find peace there. There are so many people on earth with this kind of mental problems so, we all have this kind of problem. We get anxious, get lost, it's just... anyway I had... probably I was being too much with myself, not feeling myself, just reading stuff, for weeks I wasn't really eating, just fruits, and reading all these books and the internet and... thinking and it was a bit too much. So... I was like, ok, maybe

I get to a new environment. Before when I was moving a lot, actually, I was feeling ok but when I stay in a place for too long, I don't know, I don't feel good. So, I came here to Lijiang with Lukas, he helped me carrying some stuff. In the beginning, we just stay here for some time and see what happens, and now after a while, this is a good place to live a life because it's close to nature. If I have a problem I just go to nature and already I feel better. In the city, is still the city, the noise, everything... sometimes it doesn't feel right so... so... now I'm thinking you know, just go some place here, I can have a studio here and then I can go travel and come back here (she seems to have found home) .

MARIE: So like a home base and then moving around

YINGYUE: And here, this is also a tourist place, living in a tourist town is nice because you are kind of traveling without moving, you meet people from everywhere, you share stories with each other. You know you tell me your traveling stories and I get inspired and this is also, traveling is about the experience, I mean, the whole life journey is about experience. We learn things from books, from streets, whatever. But all of these things, we need to take them and practice them in reality, and build you own life experience you get something you think,... you know it's real, you know it's important and it suits yourself. Living here is quite nice, it's not in the city and the environment kind of shapes you. In Shanghai... in Shanghai, people are posh, you go to clubs people are posh, you have to dress very fashionable, and it's really tiring. Seriously... and you talk about... you hang out with friends and what they talk about is about what do you do? how much money do you make? Do you have a car? How much you spent. That is... I lived on an island and when I go to big city I feel that this is not necessary, this is... I don't want to live like that. I don't want. Of course no one can be totally free... but you have to find a path you like.

MARIE: True, Do you think you found it today?

YINGYUE: Yeah... I mean, yeah... we talk about this a lot with Lukas, he helped me a lot because I am a very emotional person, very sensitive, without signals, I get lost and I do art. He is more a scientific person, he is the one always reminding me to find a balance by using critical thinking also, he knows me, we have been best-friends for 10 years so we know each other very well?

MARIE: Are you in a relationship?

YINGYUE: We... it's like... we are not sleeping together for some years, but we are like family, we were together for 4 or 5 years and we lived together for 3 years. We have total trust. He help... what I get from him is more rational thinking, so he helped me keep the balance. To him... he gets more the art... I feel like I want to go back on the road again especially because recently especially, living here, even if we have small room, because we are girl, I started to do shopping you know... "I want to buy this, I want to buy that". A week ago I thought I should get on the road to travel again... I don't know, I think everyone should travel a little bit, I mean... my family my cousins and like my friends from my childhood, most of them, they stayed, some of them, they never left Anhui province

MARIE: Does that make you depressed? or sad?

YINGYUE: I think it's a pity, if you have a chance to go try something different, your life could be more interesting, there is more possibilities. But there are people like that in my hometown... I mean, maybe that's for them you know... if they like it, that's fine, that's for them. To me, because I already go out, I already see lots of possibilities, I tried many things. I was thinking, you know, develop your potential is really important thing for everyone because we could do so many things if we tried to do it. But most of them, they live in their own mind frame. They think they can't, they don't want to sacrifice these for greater things, and that's it. But I

was the first one to go study in the university from my village. So I had the chance to live differently, I mean I know a lot of friends, old friends, everyone is like "oh, I want to live like you, I want to live like you" So free... go here and there, live different. I don't know if they really envy that. Maybe you all kind of envy something other people have but... what I tell them is that there is nothing to envy, this is your own choices, this is your life. You think everyone else is living a fancy life but the part we have to take the pressure from, the sacrifice you have to make, you probably don't see it. When I travel I meet rich people or celebrities or, you know... great mind in different fields. But whatever they do, how much money they have, they all have their own problem so then I think I just you know... focus on your own life and explore it. And, don't blame other... this is your own chance. To me I think I'm lucky. Many times I think if I die, I won't feel regret. Because most of my little dream when I was little all became true. Even things I couldn't imagine. Imagine when I was reading San Mao story in high school and I was like, "Wow, I want to live like her, speak different language, go here and there, being influential an inspiration for people" and I did travel ! I didn't go to the desert but I lived on an island... I had a boy-friend who was a diver as well... so kind of like, similar story... it was something... when I was in the village, I couldn't have even the idea that this could happen to me. And when I was little, I last parents, it was really hard for us. In the village, we were farmers, we don't have money, and I have to make all of it myself, no one was taking care of me!

MARIE: How old were you?

YINGYUE: I lost my father when I was 10 and he was digging the coal and the mine exploded and he was buried down. And then my brother was 3 years younger. My mom, she always had depression and after that it shocked her, it was so hard for her, taking care of 2 kids and uh... my step-father, they were not legally married but he moved with us... And I was a teenager, not easy to cope with me and to go along. We fought a lot; after my mom died, of course he moved away, which was good. And... we never heard of each other until second year of my university I heard he died too in construction building. You know... it's... I guess, when I was teenager... at the time I guess you know, still pretty young to face the fact that someone, really close to you just leave and then the many moments when you think "What a life", you can really... you cannot really count on anyone else. It was tough at the time but I think, you know... that's good to me because I could start learning how to take care of myself at a young age... and be free. You know I see my friends : "no, my mom would never let me go here, my mom wouldn't let me be with this guy, no my mom wouldn't let choose this job". So, to me, it's my own decision. So I work hard, I get what I deserve. Now it's ok, I think I'm living a quite fantastic life, you know...

MARIE: You have and you are still young.

YINGYUE: And for artist, 30 years it's just a beginning of career. Because, when you are younger, you don't know, you don't have much to say. I probably copied something but I don't know what is my thing... Well, artist is about what you want to say. It has something to do with your life experience... You have to know more, experience more, so to me... I'm not really like a big fame of power and fame because I think it has a price. I just want to do something I like, I mean of course when i was younger, in a naive way I wanted to make the world a better place. But then I realize, I'm not taking fucking good care of myself, you know... so fuck it. Like before, I do care about people struggling with mental illness, I see so many people, I learn a lot about it, how hard... in China, we need to pay attention, actually, the whole world really need to... because it doesn't happen to you

but your close friends, your family... and I don't know what is the way to make them feel better. So far it's medicine... really not really helping, it's not enough. And then I was kind of, through my own experience, is when I started to do great art, that is my own thing I guess, it made me feel more at peace; The way I do my art is also... it's all about going with the flow, here and now, you follow each step and then you put your mind at peace and this is something hard for a lot of people to get... so also the environment we build. To have a sustainable relationship with yourself, to have your own balance, if you want to heal, heal yourself first... that's what I'm trying to do. I am not using any medicine, I just want to find my own balance and wonder how did I make it... and maybe there will be some useful technics to share latter on that I can share with people who need it

MARIE: yeah, have you heard about art therapy?

YINGYUE: I heard...

MARIE: I have a friend in training in France... So on the road again, where do you think you are going to go?

YINGYUE: South America I guess, sooner or latter I must go. But I think it's more about ime because if I go, I want to have time, and... but if financially or with the time schedule... if I can only go close by... my next trip I want to go probably Indonesia. To Bali... I heard the art over there is quite interesting, a lot of artists there, many galleries, and the temples... yeah... I miss the tropical season...

MARIE: Ok...well, thank you for sharing that... so interesting. You have moved quite a bit

YINGYUE: And it's just the beginning.

MARIE: Would you go explore more China or do you want to go abroad specifically?

YINGYUE: All is good because China, you know... uh... Xinjiang, Tibet I haven't been, Inner Mongolia...

MARIE: Why, why, why those provinces? Why do you want to go to these provinces?

YINGYUE: You know, if I have a chance I want to go to all the places. It's already very different. China is big...

MARIE: You have had quite a life...

YINGYUE: I mean, if I compare with when I was little, that's is something nice. You know my friends, they just get married and stay, and... yeah... but yeah... I need to keep dreaming, to dream bigger.

MARIE: Do you plan on visiting Poland with Lukas?

YINGYUE: Yeah, sure... I'm really interested in their architecture, the buildings there are very much like fairy tales. I want to go anywhere because this is something you have to... you read about it, you hear about it it's nothing compared by being there. Because I found difference... you know... people are different, even the writers, they have their own point of view... I meet some Chinese, they have been to Cambodia : "uh, dirty, messy, bad". That's their impression... I'm like... ok... so... to me, I was like, then I have to go myself to see and... yeah... most of my dreams came true but there is one big thing... when I was little, maybe high school... high school I start to... because in high school, there was a time I was really into writing and reading so I wrote a lot of poems and uh... at that time I wanted to make children's book, to write children's book, I was sketching things... Little books for kids but not only for kids, I wanted to... doesn't matter the age or where are you from... if you read the book you get it. So it's almost like the little Prince, this is like... you know, for everyone. Yeah...so... that's something I always wanted to do... I even started to do my own book on the island... I never finished... so...

MARIE: What was the story about?

YINGYUE: A girl who wakes up in a dream and then in the beginning she was fine, oh it's a dream, since she knows it's a dream it's fine, she is fearless... she sees many crazy things, she doesn't understand the language, onmy few people she

can communicate with, and then the people have the shapes of ears, and then she starts to read the wrinkle on the leaves and get to know how wise they are. And she was cooking, she is a cook. And this people, if they get hungry they are really angry and so they have to eat leaves and so they are happy. uh... I mean it's quite symbolic, eating leaves is like reading books... something like that. And then, and then... yeah... so she finds herself. It's almost like you know... if you have no ears it's almost... a life without fears makes such a big difference. Because fear is one of the most powerful tools the media use, to manipulate us, right? But I mean this is true... I mean what are we afraid of. If you go deep there, it's like you know the movie with... I think he is French... You know the guy who walk on the high rope...

MARIE: Yeah, yeah...

YINGYUE: So what he said, it sounded beautiful to me : The beauty of living a life is working on the rope, on the edge of death. It's true... we always think we are going to live a long life or, or... we are always in control, trying to dominate our own life but why... like... you don't even know what happens the next day... you should treasure each moment... maybe we don't die... what is death... people are scared of death because materialism... They are scared of death because of all the things they are loosing, everything they have, the family, the friends... It's all something you get from your memory.

LIN

LIN: Ok, so first trip is my... no first trip... but my best trip in my country happen in 2015... yeah, and I travel with my boy friend and you know that girl "Red", that went to Nepal with me... we were 3 people and we took a rode trip with my boyfriend car, a shitty car... we just... they both came from Xi'an to Chengdu to visit me... We went from Chengdu to Lhasa. I think it took us 7 days just driving...

MARIE: To Lhasa or to Ya'an?

LIN: Ya'an... oh... Sichuan... and... yeah... yes, we went this way... Ya'an... Chamdo... Gansé. We took the road 318... it's really famous and popular among travelers... There is so many beautiful mountain sight on the way, ice mountain... I think it's... beautiful.

MARIE: So you took this road?

LIN: Yes, we went through this road... normally, people take 3 or 4 days, we took a week because we don't drive at night... it's dangerous. This way passes through Litang... This is where the limit is between Sichuan and Xizang. When you pass Litang, you are in Xizang

MARIE: That's the border in Litang

LIN: Yes, when you pass the border you are in Xizang.

MARIE: Did you go to Garzé

LIN: Yes, yes but it was not during this trip, it was another one. ... Litang... Deqen... Yes, I think the G318 is this road... Lingjiu... In Lingjiu, people broke our car... They broke into the car and took away our bags with our Chinese ID... if you are in Xizang without Chinese ID, you can't go everywhere.

MARIE: They took all of you ID

LIN: Yes, but we found them... Because the thief throw away our bags and because there was food inside, pigs, wild pigs found it and were trying to eat the food... So they took the money but not the bags. I think... I can't remember...

MARIE: You said for you first trip you didn't go to Garzé?

LIN: Yeah, yeah... It's this way, we went this way. And so... to go back... we went back through Qinghai... We passed Namtso... it's a big lake... Like a God like, it's meaningful for some people. Then Qinghai... We stay on this lake for like maybe 2 days or 3 days. At that time it was so cold than no

customers and it was just us. It was really interesting, I can show you some pictures before I finished this. And then we went to Golmud, Xining, Lanzhou and finally Xi'an.

MARIE: So that was with your friend from Nepal, your boyfriend and one of his friend?

LIN: No, three people. A lot I can I see... It was really amazing... It think it was truly the first time I opened my mind to a new unknown world. It was not my first trip but this was the first time I opened my mind.

MARIE: How?

LIN: It was the first time I saw a completely different lifestyle... I almost went to Yunnan but I thought it's probably the same thing as what I knew because I stay in the city all the time, I don't go to nature before... I don't think it's really traveling... you know with my parents, I traveled to some places, stay in the city... but this one was just by myself and my friend... we were together. It was just a free trip, a free dumb trip...

MARIE: Did you have anything plan?

LIN: No! we don't have anything plan! Just... when the Chinese celebrate new year, when it's new year, my... my... when i was a teenager, 18 years old, I was really young, my boyfriend ask me if I wanted to go take a long trip, maybe like Yunnan or Dali... a short trip, not too far. I think... maybe we can try some crazier thing... and we just took money, we didn't have a plan and we went to Kaifeng

MARIE: Cool, How long was this trip...

LIN: I think one month and uh... I go to a lot... wait, I need other color... Xi'an.. Xi'an is my hometown...This city, Ankang is my hometown... There is a river, a mountain but we have been living in the city... My parents, from time to time still go back to the village.

MARIE: Wait, how long did you live in this city?

LIN: uh... Until I was 15 I lived in Ankang... Then my family and me, we moved to Xi'an.

MARIE: Why?

LIN: Because of the business, we wanted to change... Also, I told you before, I had 3 uncles and all they did was drinking and heroin. And I traveled a lot with my middle school... I finished... I had a long long vacations. At that time, my parents gave me some money and I go found a travel company and they take me to go to Hainan.

MARIE: They took you to Hainan?

LIN: Yes, it was my first travel actually. I was just by myself and a bunch of other people from other places... all of then Chinese.

MARIE: all Chinese, ok. What did you do in Hainan?

LIN: It's so, so, so many memories, with my new friends, you meet a bunch of people and we just follow together, saw some... same... all the time same square, bullshit pretty much but it's the first time I saw the ocean... Yeah... the first time I was standing on the beach I thought "Fuck". Because before that I read about "On the road" Kerouac, so it's really just... you know, I remember few part of my trip... details... because it's the first time.

MARIE: Did you go swim?

LIN: No, I can't swim...

MARIE: Even now?

LIN: Even now. I just float... If I have a life jacket, I'm alright. So yeah... it's my first time.

MARIE: You were fifteen?

LIN: Yeah.. I think...

MARIE: Did you like that? Traveling?

LIN: Actually I didn't like the team traveling... it was a big bus, like you know... the guide screaming... "On the side, there is a Buddha, you go out, take some pictures and then will move on". I was thinking : "What the fuck this is a vacation, now!" It was like work, there is a lot of places that we need to go, you have to go see this place because you pay,

you pay for this... And it's... it's the only time I went group travel... the only time"

MARIE: The only time?

LIN: I hated it... and uh... After I just did it alone or with my friends. And Then Xi'an, Chongqing, my granpa was in this hospital boss of a government hospital. At that time, the government gave you money and you could travel... So at the time, everybody knew that if you belong to a government company, the government will give you money to travel, a lot of money. So when I was a child, I travel a lot but I can't remember because my grand pa and grand ma took me. My first airplane, train travel.

MARIE: Ok, so you traveled with your grand-parents. And it was government vacation...

LIN: Yeah... you know, during my childhood, I had so many memories but I can't remember much... I can remember one time, Shanghai...

MARIE: You liked Shanghai?

LIN: I really loved Shanghai... It's so beautiful... I liked Shanghai. ok... Why I liked Shanghai?

MARIE: Yeah

LIN: First of all, I met one guy on the internet, that guy is a computer game boss... He was smocking weed... you know among the teenagers in China, not many smoke weed, so I needed to find the same people as me but it's hard... I wanted to find people same as me... I was about 17...

MARIE: Yeah

LIN: So we met on the internet and he told me he liked me, and wanted me to come to Shanghai to meet. We smoked together... I just went... I didn't feel afraid because people will think that he is a freak or a murderer... I just didn't listen to that. Together... he was 10 years older than me... He was a real gentleman. So I stayed 7 days

MARIE: With him? Were you together?

LIN: Yes, we were. In Shanghai.

MARIE: Ok, you took the plane?

LIN: Yes, he bought my plane ticket for me.

MARIE: So he paid for your trip...

LIN: yes, back and forth. And he gave me about 1000 money, I don't know why, because I was young... Actually I don't know why he did that because at that time, I was just a regular classic Chinese girl... I think... Chinese girl are just wasting money... Of course... you want me to come, so you pay for me to come, buy me clothes in Shanghai... He gave me money and I took it. That guy, when I was back in Xi'an, maybe after a week, the guy just disappear. Totally disappear... But we have wechat together but he told me I was a good girl, but it was not a good time for him and he needed to focus on his business more. But it's good memory I think. And second time I went to Shanghai, because my friend worked in Hangzhou, yes, and I go, that time I worked for a designer company already, I moved to Chengdu...

MARIE: You moved to Chengdu after the Gaokao?

LIN: Yes, because I went to college in Chengdu... Chinese medicine college where I learnt biology...

MARIE: How long did you study in college?

LIN: Four years but actually 3 because the last year it was an internship in the hospital. And so, I think...

MARIE: So you went again to Shanghai to visit your friends

LIN: No, the second time I really went to Hangzhou. But I was staying in Chengdu. Together, we went to Nanjing. And uh, during Christmas, we have 4 friends, all of us study together and we ate barbecue and drank a lot. We didn't have a lot of money at the time so we just booked one room and 4 people, 1 boy, 3 girls... together... it's a good memory. And we went to Suzhou. We took the train and we went to Suzhou and Shanghai and last... I went back to Shanghai. It's really interesting because that time, I wasn't smocking weed,

I don't need alcohol to make me happy, I was just happy, you know if I see people, I'm happy. And uh... I think...

MARIE: That was when you were in university?

LIN: No, just when I started working in the designer company after my studies. I also went to Tianjin to meet a friend, Xiao Xiao, just for 3 days last year because my grand-uncle works there so I want to see my uncle and my friend so I just went there for the weekend, I flew from Chengdu. I don't think it's travel really.. it's not a travel... I'd rather share some travel memories.

(She is showing me pictures of her boyfriend and her during their trip to Tibet... She was a bigger girl at the time)

LIN: You know, he wanted to marry me at the time but I thought I was too young, he was from Shaan'xi west. Not west, Bei

MARIE: North?

LIN: Yes, north. And you know, it's so low place and boy and girl there it's like Henan, girls need to get married very early and you need to get married to move out. I didn't want to get married but he said he would wait for me... he was such a tiny boy.

MARIE: Do you know what he is doing now?

LIN: He is married to a girl looking just like me. The same. (We are back looking at the photo) .

MARIE: So these people (there is some backpackers on the photo)

LIN: These are backpackers from Beijing. This is our car, a totally old car, we drove it in the mountain, it was crazy. I love that picture. I was totally clean on that photo, no drinking or weed... I had friends, I had a job in the hospital... I had a completely normal life.

MARIE: But when did that change? You know like... when you started... when did this girl disappear? What happen? Why did you start drinking and smocking?

LIN: I start smocking when I was 15, because I know that because of the internet... I saw the hippies and I really liked the spirit. So I found a dealer on the internet, he sent me some weed, so I started smocking really shitty weed... not wild weed, some ice... like cocaine style... it really hurt the brain so I think this is the reason I have now some depression problem. I think this drugs caused me some problems

MARIE: That was when you were fifteen

LIN: Yes, but you know, on the weekend or just sometimes, I smoke a little bit a little bit, that's why I broke up with this guy, because this guy...

MARIE: You lost him?

LIN: Yes, because I lost my head way too far. I don't think he cheated on me you know because I said I wanted to break up, because we were together for a year and a half, it's so long for me and that time, I'm staying in Chengdu, he is living in Xi'an and I say we should break up... A month after, I was back in Xi'an and I came back to him to say that I had make mistake, I don't want to break up with him, I just want... I'm important to him, I don't want really to break up but he had find somebody else already. That girl he got married to... this girl is really different from me and he told her about the fact that I smoke weed and drink too much alcohol. Because, the last time we fought, we were just screaming at each other, all the time... it's really bad so I wanted to break up. I still loved him. When I came back to Chengdu, I was really upset. So I did some bad things, I tried to break them off... But now I feel good and so I was back in Chengdu. He was really my first love... I loved him with my whole heart. I didn't care about money, about anything but relationships, you can't control... But his family was really fucked up too, they just wanted us to get married and have a baby. They didn't want me to work, just child and that's it. They say "You are not

important in the family, you are just a girl". Some place still have this kind of problems, you know that right?

MARIE: So you took that trip with him, went back to Chengdu, broke up with him...

LIN: Yeah...

MARIE: And what was your next travel after that?

LIN: I think I can remember, I went to Shanghai and Chongqing... and... this time it was also with Red, (her friends that went to Nepal with her) .

MARIE: So this blue trip was after the pink trip

LIN: Pff... I'm trying to remember but I have bad memory.

MARIE: But... wait, you told me you also took another car trip with your boyfriend? Was it your only car trip?

LIN: No...

MARIE: You only went once in Lhasa?

LIN: Yes

MARIE: What did you like in Lhasa?

LIN: What I like?

MARIE: Yeah

LIN: I don't know, actually, I don't like Lhasa, I loved Xizang because how... Lhasa is just another city and there is a lot of building... At that time I was very ... I'm with my boyfriend, I was happy so I loved that trip. Because of the people I'm with and the relationship I have.

MARIE: So it's more about the people you go with than the trip itself that is important for you?

R2Yeah... in that time it was true but now it's different.

MARIE: How?

LIN: Now, I don't need a friend to go anywhere...

MARIE: Why?

LIN: I want to go by myself because if, same people... like, we both like to drink, we both like to smoke, like this I will go but I think to travel with someone you need... sometimes you don't want to go somewhere, but you need 4 people to do it... I don't like that... I want to be totally free... not have to do anything I don't want to do... totally free. You know, I have have lot of trips that I have been to...

MARIE: You have been to Yunnan?

LIN: Yes, Kunming, I have a friend there her name is Little Fish

MARIE: Xiao Yu?

LIN: Yes Xiao Yu, he met a guy in Lijiang, had a one night stand but the guy went to America and found a girlfriend there.

MARIE: A girlfriend?

LIN: The girl quit everything, job, family, she just went straight to Yunnan.

MARIE: So you fly to visit her in Kunming?

LIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah... And together we went to... This time I just stayed in Kunming, around the city. I can remember this one time

LIN: Another reason I moved to Chengdu is that drugs are easy to find here.

MARIE: really

LIN: It's so fucking easy, really

MARIE: And Nepal? How did you choose to go to Nepal? I think... before I go to Nepal, half a year before I already bought the plane ticket, because that time, I'm lost in reality, because I think I see it all : rich people, poor people, working hard people, hippie people. I think I saw everything I need a change... so, because I think I saw a lot in China and everywhere it is just the same, cities are always the same so I thought I needed to open my mind for a change in a foreign place, not my country. And uh... I wanted to go to India actually, but I'm scared of getting rape or something so I chose Nepal. I just, half a year, I plan this trip because at that time it was really cheap. So half a year... So every time I'm sad because of my mother (she has cancer) because of my

family want to change my life I tell myself that I need to go out for 6 months and forget everything about China.

MARIE: You said that to yourself?

LIN: Yes, Everyday for six months, when I woke up, I wanted to kill myself, everyday, when i was working in the bar, at 2 o'clock, I was driving back home, drunk, in my car, I tell myself, three months left and then you can quit everything in China and you can runaway.

MARIE: That help you survive?

LIN: Survive? I think Nepal is Nirvana... I think Nepal is the true Nirvana, and before, I... I just stayed in my country, I'm totally different than who I was in Nepal, totally different... so when I needed a plan to get, I saw Nepal, it was cheap because it's so messy... So the first time I was in Nepal I was like... wow... this is so messy but I fell in love the first afternoon. I think during my last life, I was Nepali or Indian, I'm just... staying in the wrong state.

MARIE: I remember you told me that you met the taxi driver who took you to get your dreadlocks.

LIN: Yeah, yeah... it's just you know, I go out from the airport, I took some bus... I... I... I saw a dreadlock boy and I wanted his picture so I asked the guy to take me to shop. It's good memory you know...The dreadlock shop's boss and I are still messaging. He asks me when I will be back to Nepal? We can meet again. He has another new shop, sharing new things with me. That's the reason I love traveling because there is people you can keep in touch with and they remind me everyone is different from one another and money is nothing. You need to make money but you can't never forget that money doesn't hold a truth, it's nothing.

MARIE: For sure.

LIN: But in China, it's very difficult to have that kind of value because everyone want to make more more more money, hurry up to make money and... oh... it's... oh...

MARIE: It's not possible for you anymore

LIN: Yes, and sometimes you know I work for a short time, in a shit job, make some money and quit. I can make some money in my family business. I earn more, because it's my family, they give me a little bit more.

MARIE: What's your family business?

LIN: Ok, it's a big company in China, it's uh... Mobile company, they have a lot of people working here, they pretty much catter the employees of big firm.

MARIE: They prepare meals for companies

LIN: We own firm's restaurant. They are leader in the market, we provide food and also cheaper vegetables than in the supermarket. But I hate working for them (I can't say the reason here) . But now I live in Chengdu, far away, I don't need a lot of money.

MARIE: That's your father's company?

LIN: That's my mother's, my father fixes cars

LIN: But anyway, I worked very hard, in the day I worked in the company, at night I worked in my bar... it's really really hard, everytime I go back my home at night, I cried, I was wondering why I needed to do this, clean tables everyday, clean tables everyday... I have a car, I have a house, I have a bunch of friends... why did I need to endure that. So I plan that trip... I thought I need to go. But I need, you know... I made a lot of money, fix my credit card problem. And uh... when I had enough money.

MARIE: How long did you stay in Nepal? 6 weeks? 2 months?

LIN: no... uh... 40 days. I think... first I went to Kathmandu for 7 days, we just stayed for Holi, yeah... and then we went to Pokhara.

MARIE: When we met in Pokhara, how long had you been in Pokhara?

LIN: I think already 5 days to 1 week. Red was gone trekking and I don't want to go because there was another people and I didn't like there style.

MARIE: Yes, I remember when I met Red, she was with another girl from China

LIN: Yes, it's that girl

MARIE: You didn't like that girl

LIN: She is a classic fake woman, fake smile. Red is totally helpless... she knows I'm broken you know, she left for the mountain straight away, she said she wanted to go, she felt really bored or some stuff. So I told her "Just go". We kind of lost contact since we have been back. We are totally different with red

MARIE: And do you think your trip in Nepal changed you?

LIN: Too much... it changed my whole life. When I saw this world it totally change, it blew me away. Before Nepal I was thinking about my mother, my family, my work, I need to help my family... I need to have my family, I'm thinking about a non-existing husband and children... I think all of that is important. When I came back from Nepal in China, I thought... I need to do something for myself. Have another job, a different choice a job, something that is mine.

MARIE: Not you family business

LIN: No, I don't want that, I want to... but my mother you know won't let me go. Because my mother is sick so I had to go back from Chengdu

MARIE: And so... do you think it was because you had all these experience in Nepal because it was outside of China? Do you think you could have a travel could be as life changing if it was in China? Or do you think you had it because it was in China?

LIN: I think, before this trip, I just stayed in China, I had an interest in the world... I just saw movies... I don't have international friend before, I just knew a Serbian brother teaching English to me and I think, I don't know, Nepal I think has some... I don't know, I found myself in there... I met them and they were not like... girl, you need to be skinny you need to get your shit together. You know you are beautiful, my mother never told me that, my friend never told me that. People tell me "you are fat", this thing, self love they teach me. Because I think a lot of things happen in Nepal, that crazy night were I had troubles with the police... I remember that night... So, sometimes, before, I could see that I had problems, I had a dark side. I don't think... I am... I am... bad and good... So I think Nepal was a good change and uh... I want more of that... I want heart, find something that I like doing... that I put my heart in.

MARIE: And I think one of the first thing you told me when I arrive in Chengdu 2 days ago is that you are at peace with China now.

LIN: Yeah... yes... before I think so many problems, like my mother's cancer is because of the government because people poison food that make my mother sick and working hard at the restaurant, mean customers, really mean customers because you are a young girl, and she wants to give you some troubles. And the fact that we need to kiss, kiss, kiss, people's ass, all the time... so I am very angry for Chinese, for China and also against my mother. And sometimes I want to be an international girl, not just Chinese.

MARIE: But don't you think that with your travel you are becoming more and more international? You don't listen to Chinese music, you watch foreign films, you have friends that are not Chinese... don't you think... you are more international without being shy...

LIN: Yes, yes I guess, I think everytime... I'm a lucky girl I think because everytime... 5 years ago I picture having a bunch of international friends... I dream of that... actually... and 10 years ago, I was in Xi'an, I wanted to go to Chengdu, have a house, my car... And I already have that. Everytime

you know I imagine something, I get closer closer closer to that point. So now... 5 years ago, I watched movie and thought that would be awesome to have international friends, know how to enjoy, smoking weed isn't a big deal, I can see that in movies but... Chinese don't like that. I saw a lot of American stone movies... Pineapple express, James Franco movie, I saw a lot of these movie...

MARIE: He loves smocking

LIN: I love James Franco... he is kind of gay, but he is not gay. Handsome... and sometimes people will think, I want to be different, more international, and people will think... oh... you are like a white man, but no! My point is I want to be here with interesting people, no matter where you are from... Chinese is boring, it's so fucking boring, just you know same taste all the time. No punk, no jazz...

[4759,6]MARIE: I have a question, when you go back to China, you didn't talk Red, but when you came back to Xi'an, could you... was it like... could you tell your friends the story of your travel in Nepal?

LIN: Yes, it's weird, I want to tell you a something that will shake you. First I want to say that when I passed my friends bar in Xi'an, he was sitting inside, he saw me pass through and didn't say hi, I don't know why. One of my friends in the street greet me but when I came into the bar, he was gone. I don't know fucking why? Did I hurt you or something? I don't know anything... He just choose... I don't know why. And the second thing I want to tell you is, when I came back to Chengdu, before I left, I had a bunch of rich people children, rappers, I told them about my stories in Nepal and these guys thought I was crazy.

MARIE: Just because of your bad trip on acid?

LIN: No, before that he was thinking I was a bit crazy. They thought I was cool because I join them, I could roll a joint, make jokes and stuff but they also thought I was crazy, they were afraid of me, thinking I was weird. They were making fun of me. When I told them I was going to Nepal they were asking if I was sleeping with foreign guys

MARIE: that's really what they are asking you?

LIN: This is really not a respectful question. And I was mad, so mad. You know... I hate Chinese boys, I really want to make good friends with them, we were smocking together, have a lot of good memory but... they just laugh at me. I showed them the picture of Nepal and the first thing they think is that I don't have money because we don't stay in big houses, they think we are not happy, we are just poor. So everytime I make a choice now, I try to avoid Chinese rich people, but there is some good personn.

MARIE: Is Nepal, and all like, turning your life around has to do with to go to Chongqing? Is Nepal... is all of what is going on after Nepal, changing your friends, changing your relations a part of that?

LIN: Yeah

MARIE: Is that why you are also moving to Chongqing?

LIN: I need a big change, maybe in 2 or 3 years I will change again, because, I like you because you know everything about me but you forgive everything, you can understand what I'm going through so you can forgive me.

MARIE: But it's also not your responsibility to change people, but it's not...

LIN: I'm not into that...

LIN: When I tell them about this story you know, like I saw the reality, they just think I'm crazy or something, they look to me like I am an animal show... I don't like that... they are all local guy. I don't understand them, they don't understand me

MARIE: And you think it's more like that since you are back from Nepal?

LIN: Yes, I think there is a break. It's a spirit revolution to me. I change a lot with Nepal and he is just a stupid college boy with no experience.

MEI

MEI: I just do the place, the places where I have been and I lived. I don't need to write, how long...

MARIE: No, so you have lived... so you were born...

MEI: How about, where I lived I used this one, if I just stay for a short time, I used this one... like if just stay for a short time, like visiting or traveling, I do this one.

MARIE: ok, perfect. So you lived in Nanping?

MEI: Yes, this is my hometown.

MARIE: You were born there?

MEI: Yes, I'll mark a star to indicate.

[120,5]MARIE: And this is where you lived with your parents?

MEI: No, I was always in this town. uh Suzhou.. is where I go to university.

[155,7]MARIE: If you want you can use different color.

MEI: Ok, this is the places that I lived and this is the places that I travel.

MARIE: With your parents?

MEI: Yes

MARIE: All these places that you went travel alone... was it during university or before?

MEI: Some during university some after, before university, I never travel really

MARIE: And what would you do there, just like travel for the weekend?

MEI: Sometimes it's like I come from here to there or from somewhere to where that I passed by and I just decide to spend a few days alone, go alone by myself

MARIE: But in university, it was short trip, right?

MEI: Yes, yes, yes... like a few days. Most of it is a few day.

MARIE: Would you say that it is around those places (during university) that you learn how to travel alone?

MEI: Yes, I can say that.

MARIE: And in these places where you learnt how to travel alone, did you stay in Youth hostels?

MEI: I stay in hostel yeah

MARIE: Would you meet a lot of people in this hostel like you did in Nepal and India?

MEI: uh... no, it's the vibra... how to say... the culture is different, I actually felt quite alone...

MARIE: Even in the youth hostel you stayed in?

MEI: I didn't really find somebody I can talk with that make me feel like it's interesting, find someone I want to spend few days together to go around... I didn't find many people to do that with, that kind of people.

MARIE: So you lived there or you traveled?

MEI: Travel.

MARIE: What were you doing in Chengdu?

MEI: I was preparing visa paper to go to France. And also I spent a couple days with friends there, I go around to find shops to sell my clothes.

MEI: So Laos, I mostly visited the North.

MARIE: So Louang Prabang, Ventiane, did you go to Ventiane?

MEI: No, and somewhere around... Actually I haven't travel to many places.

MARIE: So you... to go to Inner Mongolia... that was your big travel, you started in Inner Mongolia?

MEI: Yeah... I change color

MARIE: Even you can link the dots so I can see the routes that you went on.

MEI: I was in... Dali, Then I flew... I went home to visit my sister and then I go back here to visit my parents and...

MARIE: How did you travel? Train, bus?

MEI: I flew from Nanping to Inner Mongolia. And then... I don't see these place...

MARIE: What is it called?

MEI: It's in Mongolia, it's called Alashan.

MARIE: What did you do there?

MEI: One of my friends was there, she wanted me to join a to run a market together and also, we visited the mountain around, very country side place, living like local people for a short town. Then we went back to town to run the business. And have a trip together.

MARIE: And then, where, Xining?

MEI: I was in a monastery with one of my very good friend and then she became a nun so I decided to visit her. And in there I learn some very local ... there.

MARIE: I remember you telling me you miss your train because of the snow, you thought that you should stay here because it was some kind of sign that you should stay.

MEI: Yes, yes, yes... I felt quite good when I was there. I stay 20 days or more and then I go to Lhasa. And Lhasa, I basically stayed in the city...

MARIE: One month, right?

3 - 13:02 > 23:15 [Voyage Asie]

MARIE: And then Nepal

MEI: yes, and Kathmandu. and Pokhara...

MARIE: Yes, it's not on this map, it's too little.

MARIE: You have been to Lumbini?

MEI: Yes, for the Vipassanna

MARIE: yes, right...

MEI: And then from Kathmandu to Varanasi and then to Rishikesh. On the river... So Rishikesh and then from here, also I went to somewhere in the North in Kasol (in Himachal Pradesh, hippie town, the "Amsterdam of India). And from here, I went back to Kathmandu...

MARIE: By bus?

MEI: By bus, yes... And from here, it's a big journey because I hitch-hiked by myself back to Dali.

MARIE: You hitch-hike... oh...

MEI: Because I feel I... I... was traveling alone, but I didn't feel alone enough... so I decided to try really only me... so I made that decision. So I go... I took the same way back... somewhere here, Lhasa, Shangri-La and then Dali.

MARIE: When did you get back?

MEI: uh... I have to remember...

MARIE: How long did it take you to go back to Dali?

MEI: Less than... I started on the 26th of June and until Dali, I arrived on the 8th of July. 13 days to hitch-hike back.

MARIE: Did you have days where you didn't find any ride?

MEI: Yes, I would find a place next to the road to spend the night. I was with my yoga mat and a sleeping bag, so all I needed is a place with a roof so I can sleep. So I found... the first night... the first day, I arrived in the border inside Nepal. So... that area I didn't like very much...

MARIE: Yes, it's horrible... you didn't like this place?

MEI: No... but, but you know... when I got down from the bus, I hitch-hike and then I felt like this place was so terrible, I feel so annoy and a little bit angry. I was with a heavy bag so very fast, I wanted to cross the border today. But all the people tell me no! It's too late, because the China time is 2 hours ahead. So it was 5pm in China and 3pm in Nepal. I felt so bad because I didn't have any money left. So one officer from the army started to follow me and ask me questions. I found that I was going up to cross the border, he help me because, he went to the hotel and ask if I can stay, so I stayed one night in the kitchen, I slept on the floor with the staff of this hotel. And I met the guys that 2 groups, both groups wanted to go see the Kailash, one group was from Nepal and

the other from India. They invited me to dinner and to breakfast and then I got to go. And then I just get in China, the Tibetan area. The first news, is : "Please don't go, you have to stay at the border because there was a big rain last night, and the road is broken by the flood". So I feel like... no matter how, I actually want to go by myself because, no car can go in or out. So I just go by myself with myself. It was funny because... from that place at the border probably to there, this road was all flooded with the mud... I only climb on the road sign... And then... on the side, there were cars, waiting for the road to re-open. People were just looking at me, nobody come to help. And finally, in the last 20 meters, it was a quite hard path, 2 young guys came to help me, they started talking English to me, that was strange. I ask : "Are you guys Nepali?", they said : "yes". It's funny how I go back to China and the first 2 people who help me are from Nepal. And yeah... on the way, I just start my trekking and I met a black bus, they just send away their customers and they came back with an empty bus. One driver was also a guide so, I ask them wherever you want to go you can let me down whenever. But I don't have any money to pay; They said yes, then they start... So yeah... that's my first time hitch-hiking in China.

MARIE: They were going back to Lhasa?

MEI: Yes...

MARIE: oh! So lucky!

MEI: But I feel it's very dangerous also, they invited me to sleep together. I mean, they would like to book a room for me and they pay for it... For the hotel. And I said no, so I found... so I found... an army empty space for the training of the army and I found a guy, he is quite nice, he is managing this place, he is on duty and he just dropped me the key. Within 2 minutes he explained the rules, told me I can just sit there, gave me the key and disappear. So I slept there during the night and I felt quite good because I'm alone, it's super dusty, nobody, I don't feel scare at all, I feel I'm doing something I want to do... I have reach somewhere I want to reach somehow with my travels. So the next day, I went to ask the bus again if they let me go with them to Lhasa. They tell me "oh... oh... ok"... On the second day, they were not so nice to me...

MARIE: Why?

MEI: I don't know, maybe they expected something from me... They wanted to sleep with me and I didn't? Anyway, I spend a very long day to arrive in Lhasa. And I found I got some problem on my skin, like it's super itchy, red and stuff... Very crazy... and I found a hostel, I stayed 3 days to relax. And what is funny... a girl find me on the street, I was looking for a bus to go to the hostel the most popular ones and then just when I was looking for the bus, a girl talk to me... probably because I look like a little bit like exotic. So she came to ask me, like... are you looking for an hostel... And then, we had a really good conversation and she said, ok, let's go together because I'm staying in a hostel and the room I'm staying, the dorm I stay is only me. And she invited me to dinner, we had a good conversation... had fun for few days. She asked me for simple English class. Like useful things for the way, on the travel...

MARIE: She was going to Nepal?

MEI: Yes, yes...

MARIE: So she wanted your insight?

MEI: Yes... plus she was with like a group, not a tourist group but a backpacker group, but the way was not a travelers' way. It's more like they do also the visiting, they do the same thing as tourist but on their own... and then I started my again hitch-hike to go to Dali...

MARIE: Why do you think this is... why do you think you have to be alone... I mean, a lot of Chinese backpacker in Nepal traveling in group...

MEI: Yes...

MARIE: Do you think the only problem is the English or do you think... it's a very "Chinese" thing to do? Like they prefer to stay together rather than to mingle with other? What do you think?

MEI: I think, somehow the individual... how to say, the individual consciousness is not so... so developed. And also... since I was young, much younger, what I wanted to do is to see my courage, see my determination, like how I could deal with the things really my mind chooses. This is only MY way, I keep myself as a testimony... for other people, I think courage is a big thing and also maybe, people don't think that it's so important...

MARIE: To meet...

MEI: They care more about my status, my ability on how I can fit in the society about business and stuff... it's more about this style.

MARIE: Even in the backpacker community?

MEI: I think so... You see, some backpacker, maybe older than me, they travel alone for some days and then, next, what do they do? They use this part (she shows her telephone) to show in the society, the stand out, to have a status.

MARIE: Have you seen that kind of behavior among backpacker nationality?

MEI: Yes, I see a lot... Not a lot, I see some

MARIE: Even in non-Chinese?

MEI: Non chinese, I didn't notice... I know that some people like to share on Facebook but some people don't like... it's more like... In India, I met a girl, she is Chinese, her name is Coco. She...

MARIE: I know Coco! I met her, I didn't know you knew her!

MEI: Yes, she was in Pokhara, maybe we talked about her... Like... uh... she also pay a compliment to me. She say : "you are very like... uh... powerful on your way, your courage is quite... amazing". I say : "yes it's my way but at this moment, I have my problem also" and she told : "you can do your business on the way, you can show online your stories, people start to follow you, you get famous, you get money". But yeah... that's true it's a quite good way to do that. But I don't feel like I should do that, so I mean... the first suggestion she came up with was this one so if she wanted to do the same way as I did, she would probably found a way to earn money. I think just people have different plan and dream for their life. Like, my life, what I want to do is not... but of course, the career is one part but I don't want to miss out too much on the experience... it's just not my way. And also in India, I met a Chinese group...

MARIE: Backpackers?

MEI: Yeah, yeah, they stayed in hostel... I met them in Delhi... they were kind of showing off on the wechat... saying that... they don't say they are doing cool things but the way they are showing, they are selling things online. It is kind of weird when I have conversation with this people, 6 people, I only talked with one girl... They way they behave, it's just like the normal Chinese people, like most of young people, just like in the city, same, same. They even look for the Chinese restaurant. Mostly they go the Chinese restaurant. It's like, they wear clothes so people can't see, but take out the clothes and it's the same (fake people).

MARIE: Like a costume

MEI: But the tricky part is that when we are talking together, I use the same that she is similar like me on doing the lonely journey...

MARIE: She wants to do that?

MEI: She doesn't want to do that but she thinks we are the same in doing what we do. In this way... but it made me feel really weird...

MARIE: You don't relate to her kind of traveling?

MEI: Yes, yes but that's different, I'm looking for some answer but they are looking for a way of living by making money, by showing off... it's different. And also, I met a group in Rishikesh. They are like Yoga teachers in China, so they wanted to have the training and get the licence, getting more, good reputation in the yoga circle in China, to get more money. And so one girl, she was a yoga teacher and also, she is the guide for a school, she organised everything for... the group. And so, She found me on the street, and she ask me : "you look quite exotic, to me" So she thinks I somehow, I went somewhere deeper in me than her in herself. So she asked me if I could do some... maybe next time, she takes me with the group and I could be her translator for the yoga class.

MARIE: She was Chinese?

MEI: They were all Chinese.

MARIE: Why did she need you to be a translator?

MEI: I don't know, she had a translator but I think somehow she feel my vibe is more link to yoga... the one she wants. And then... At least I need to know how you give the class. So I went to her class once and I found, oh my god, I feel so sad, because those girls only cared about what is Asana, they don't care about the spirit, the core of yogo. They just care about the posture, how to make money or how beautiful, a deep they can do it. So... it would be a nice job but I feel like no... I can't...

MARIE: Did you see them mingle with foreigner yoga teacher ?

MEI: You know... that's also the part terrible... you ask a good question. I went to their place, the classroom is inside the hotel, and this hotel, they rent it for the groups there. So they stay inside the house, everything is included. Even the teacher come here to teach the class... you don't have to go to school. The teacher go to them! That's crazy! And uh... I met them few times on the street, it's 4 or 5 of them together, they only speak Chinese... I don't see them try to connect with the local culture... nothing, nothing... really... nothing !

MARIE: That's interesting that you use the word exotic...

MEI: For them, I am... and you know when I just came back to Dali. I walked on the street and I met more than, more than like teenagers or even younger. They came to me and ask where I come from. They don't think I'm Chinese, they don't think I'm Chinese, they thought I was from a different country. I say... I say I'm chinese and they wouldn't believe so I had to answer in Chinese. So they were... oh... wow. A few times, more than few times.

MARIE: What does it mean exotic to you?

MEI: For me... for me... it's like a lifestyle, also the view at which you look at the world, the way you behave with people.

MARIE: It's not just a way at looking at people, it's also behave

MEI: Yes, behave is more important.

MARIE: And this is you exotically, they see you as an exotic person. But do you think they look down on you?

MEI: No, they look at me equally, not high, not low. I feel people who like to come and talk to me, they are interested in me and people who are not come to me, they just see me as a weird person. Like... yeah... they don't understand.

MARIE: It's just that, here I'm an exotic person,

MEI: Yes your face...

MARIE: Yes, people take pictures with me, I feel like I'm an animal in a zoo. But now, even now, we have been talking together, people have been passing by and they are looking at us. I feel very exotic here, it's interesting that people see you as an exotic person in your own country...

MEI: That's quite funny yes, also when I was in Nepal, some people ask me if I was from India, from Tibet. Or when I was in India, in the ashram, 2 Chinese girls and a girl from

Thailand thought that I was Nepali. It just happen like this, I don't know why...

MARIE: Because of the clothes you wear?

MEI: If I look back, I was quite enjoying behaving like the local people, so I think maybe I imitate quite well so they thought I am Nepali or from other places. But when I come back in China, I didn't mean to live like that... I was behaving like I live in Dali, I'm Chinese.

MARIE: Yes but still people see you as a different person.

MEI: These days it's less because I wear... I'm like this, more like here. More blending in.

MARIE: And uh... remind me, how long were you in Rishikesh for?

5 - 36:55 > 46:22 [Voyage Asie]

MEI: Rishikesh, one and a half month.

MARIE: You had a 3 months visa?

MEI: Only 2 months.

MARIE: So, uh... oh in a half month in Rishikesh... and then Kasol...

MEI: Kasol... 12 days.

MARIE: 12 days, what did you do there?

MEI: The story is about relationship part... you want to know?

MARIE: Sure yeah...

MEI: When I was in Nepal, at the end, I was thinking about going to go back to China or to go to India

MARIE: I remember you were torn, if you should go back to China or... you didn't know what to do...

MEI: Yes, yes. I was... this problem was continuously in my mind in Kathmandu. And then I was talking with my boyfriend

MARIE: The French guy?

MEI: Because he... he invited me a few months ago telling me he was still in China, it's open to you all the time, you can come at any moment. So after few months, I told I wanted to go, I feel tired about our relationship because I don't know what is me... I don't know, I'm so confused about this part... and I felt so lonely, at that time my "frequency" was quite low. I'm very confused... so actually, I was offering me his help, like please take me... sounds like this... if you want I come. And then do you know what happen? He told me he was living with a girl... and we had been talking like in a kind of negotiation for a few days and finally, I said, "please, we can talk together". It's quite complicated, because he didn't want to stay with this girl, and she was going to America to study, and before that, she wanted... she had to prepare a lot of things including studying and her parents don't support her, on a like... not like on the material part but more like "I don't understand you", They gave her a lot of pressure. As he said, she was a lonely girl, not many friends, she needs him. She had been helping him for a few years, so he wanted to help her also. In this special moment, things were really difficult for everyone, so in the end, end, end, he gave up on me, he really needed to help her first, because it would be like a ghost following him for a long time. If he helped her, she could move on, at least for him, he wouldn't feel guilty. So I was... I feel I was in a low moment and this kind of things happen. So, for me... it was too crazy, my life is I don't know what is going on with my life, I'm just a piece of shit... I felt so terrible at that time. I was staying at the secret garden in Kathmandu. So at this moment, I was thinking... ok... At least, I can continue to stay in Kathmandu. So I like to wait to see what's going to happen. And then, this one day... first I start to make friends around. For me... I feel like I was so popular, so many friends... Actually I met so many French girls, we became friends, like spend time together, I met a girl, she was a dancer, and the other girl, it was her first time outside of Europe traveling. And I met other guys... so many people... I had fun... I completely forgot about that. And

Then, this moment, I was talking with this French dancer friend and something about traveling, the confusing things we encounter when we travel, and then... I saw a Spanish artist coming... he came with a bag, and then he disappeared. And then the next day... the next morning, I saw him again, he started talking about the vipassana. And that moment, it's the first time I can talk about the vipassana so deeply with someone. I was waiting for someone to share the experience, to exchange. Then he came. And then I was thinking, ok... anyway... I want to, don't know what I want to do... I want to wait in Kathmandu until the visa comes for India. So I say... ok... I want to wait here, and he is an artist, he also makes tattoo... and he is also friend one very cool tattoo artist in a studio. So he say, I can make tattoo here and I say I can make clothes here. I ask... would you like to exchange, I make one things for you, you make this tattoo for me.

MARIE: You made this tattoo in Kathmandu?

MEI: Yes, he made it for me... so he just said yes, I said "for sure?" he said "yes", and then we start... And actually, the first day we speak, the first day we really talk, was his birthday. We spent a week-end together, so and I... it kind of reminded me back to my boyfriend, I feel like, this person in front of me, maybe, why not, so we became intimate, we spent some days together near Pokhara, like kind of in a honeymoon. Like, he have just met each other but it's like we have been together for a very long time. Very deep connection. And then we decided to go to India together.

MARIE: Ok

MEI: So... and then... uh... actually, I go to India for yoga... but anyway, if I go, I go for yoga. And for sure, he goes for yoga because he already book like uh...

MARIE: Course

MEI: It's was kind of a match, but would stay in a different ashram for a month. So this guy, his name is Elis, so we went to Rishikesh then to Kasol and we separated from there. So then I was back on my way and I think later he went back to Spain.

MARIE: Do you still have contact with him?

MEI: Uh... no, I don't know

MARIE: Not sure?

MEI: Yeah, uh, because, I we can only contact on the facebook, but I don't want to contact, until this moment, I don't want to get in touch.

MARIE: Alright...

MEI: And the yoga time was quite good for me... I was really happy.

MARIE: Could I see your tattoo?

MEI: Yes, ok,

MARIE: Nirvana... Cool, nice. Is that your first tattoo?

MEI: Actually, this is a small tattoo... The first one I got when I was much younger, and then the friend you are maybe going to visit in Chengdu, this links... did this one for me, I just want Elis to complete it for me so he did the rest... It's a small tattoo but 3 people participated.

MARIE: Yes... And also because, because... I went to India with someone, so it makes me feel I want to travel more alone, that's why I did the trek, the hitch-hiking.

MARIE: Ok...

MARIE: And what about now that you have like... you are back in Dali... what's your... what's your project, your plan? Stay here?

MEI: Yes, I think now is the time that I concentrate on my living more, and also, recently I met different person that do the energy healing, spiritual friends...

MARIE: Like the Iranian guy that stay with you?

MEI: No, actually I don't like him, actually, the evening before, the five of us, living together, we had a talking circle... it was not so easy, I told everyone that I dislike this guy, "I dislike you, sorry but we live in a community, what can I do,

I am myself, we are living together". For me, he is not the one... he is not honest enough, he uses his brain quite a lot, not his heart, he is too smart, and different generation also... it's a little bit too different.

MARIE: Do you think he is going to move out?

MEI: I wish, but anyway, we are living in this kind of space and it's a challenge in life. Even if I dislike the person, but we live together, how I am going to face it, manage it or just... it's my challenge.

MARIE: Of course

MEI: I found something more I can do on the map. (She is completing the map)

MARIE: But Dali you lived in so it's also should be a triangle. And can you... this trip that you took in this very very long trip that lasted for about what... a year?

MEI: One year yes

MARIE: Can you... people around you.. how do they feel about it? Do you think it's a positive thing.. can you value this trip in your group of friendship.

MEI: For the friends I make these last few years, it's quite positive for them, they think. For me, also... my parents, they don't judge anything, they just feel nervous a lot. For my sister also, she is more open than my parents. For my friends from the past, they got the news that I was traveling alone and they just say... "you are crazy", or they say "you are doing a great job, you are living your life like this". They don't really understand me but in this way... basically like this. But the friends I really connect with, because they also do this kind of things so...

MARIE: Have you change... do you think you have change with this trip?

MEI: Quite a lot. But it's more an inner transformation...

MARIE: I remember you telling me how much you needed to be alone and not depend on somebody...

MEI: Yeah

MARIE: Have you achieve that?

MEI: I think yes, yes... And also the way I take the things happening in my life, I get more relax, if I'm also the way at looking at the people. For example, before I see someone this way, it means you are super cool, but now I see that you are also a real person in reality... you are cool but at the same time, you can be shit, you have different sides of you. Before, I never understood someone you was only doing his business and not care about other things... Now I take more... how to say... I can understand.

MARIE: You are more understanding of life choices...

MEI: Yeah, yeah... I... I... know that everything is half the value, but before I only have one view, one perspective, now can understand things from looking at a different angle. And also me, I'm getting a little more flexible in life. And I'm quite happy with this. And since I'm back, I focus on working, also I focus on practicing yoga, and I focus on studying astrology on my own. And then, it's one way I could go deeper and longer... that's it.

MARIE: That's a lot. And do you have any plan of traveling in the future?

MEI: Since I feel, at this stage I'm stable enough about the living and especially after the "grand depart", I connected with my life. I will travel again.

MARIE: Right now you are just...

MEI: Right now, I'm in Dali. In few days I'm gonna go with friends to a contact improvisation workshop in Kunming, like 2 or 3 days. And from there, I'll go visit my parents at home, and then I go around to visit some friends and then come back to Dali. More or less 20 days

MARIE: Well... thank you again for letting me reach out to you.

MEI: Thank you for asking me those questions, because some friends, tell me, I'm waiting for you to tell me about

your exciting stories about your traveling and I feel like... what... I don't know what to say... Sometimes, I feel like I have nothing to say about that...

MARIE: You don't tell your traveling stories?

MEI: I don't like to repeat and repeat.

MARIE: So I got the exclusive traveling stories...

MEI: But this is the interesting part. But people, friends ask me, but I couldn't answer... maybe because, the way ask me is not working, but when you ask me I could "blablabla" for all afternoon. This is interesting.

MARIE: I mean I'm trying to ask... I'm trying to ask questions

MEI: You ask good questions

MARIE: Yes, if I started by "so tell me about your traveling" you'll be probably looking at me like : "specifically, what do you want to know..." Anyway, thank you again so much, I have a special bond with you because you were the first person I interviewed

MEI: really... thanks

MARIE: Yeah, that day in Pokhara was quite good, you were the first interviewee and we had a special connection

MEI: And you are special to me, you are the first person to do such and study quite deep and wide... anyway thank you also, that's my new experience.

MARIE: You are being researched

MEI: Oh, yeah, it's the first time I'm being researched by a woman writing a PhD. On culture...

MARIE: I'm really trying to get an insight.

JIAHUI

MARIE: So what are you studying?

JIAHUI: Something about psychology, I'm very interested in that. So... maybe my whole life I'm gonna be studying this. It's very interesting, very useful and good for you so...

MARIE: Do you want to become a psychologist?

JIAHUI: I have no target in doing that. I'm studying to improve myself.

MARIE: How long have you been doing that?

JIAHUI: I started studying it 2 years ago. And euh... I can see some changes in me si I think it's very good, just like unbelievable what's going on, the change in myself.

MARIE: Ok

JIAHUI: But I think this change is very good but I don't know what is changing. I can't make it happen in other people, like, I don't know the way but on me... I can... so I'm starting to learn how this change happens.

MARIE: Well, you told me back in April that your travels change you a lot.

JIAHUI: Yes, yes, yes, it changed me a lot! Plus, 2008, euh... after I graduated from university, I worked for about 9 years in international trade but maybe I'm good at it but I don't like it... I just did it for the money. So... [445,0] in 2011, I met a client from Australia, his company gave me a big order and it was a lot a lot of trouble. Yeah... the plan was to supposed to deal with this contract in half a year but many many troubles, almost every trouble possible, it was never ending. Troubles you can't even think about. So this project took about two years to set up. Very hard work. Sometimes I would work until 11 at night, sometimes no week-end for 2 years. Finally, the result was very good, they got what they wanted, I got paid. And at that moment, I knew I needed to finish with this job, because I don't want my life to be like this, I want out, I don't want all my life to be like this.

MARIE: Who wants that?

JIAHUI: Because in the past few years, everytime, I was like "I need a change, I need a change, I need a change", I wanted

to stop but I never tried, after each project I would go back to a new one, day after day after day.

MARIE: So after this business was finished, you like "bye"

JIAHUI: Yes, "Bye-bye"...

MARIE: Is that when you go to Yunnan?

JIAHUI: No, I went to Sichuan, my first travel is in September, I went to the North of China "Neimanhou", very close to the border, and so the first day I arrived, my telephone was stolen. Some people stole it. So I go back and after october, I traveled again, to Sichuan, I go from Yading, I went North to Jiudao for 1 month then I want to go to Tibet but I feel a little cold so I change and went South to Yunnan

MARIE: Because it was cold

JIAHUI: Yes, but at the time, I thought it was going to be cold, but actually, as I know it now, I know it's cold. It's still okay, but maybe... so I go to the South, Yunnan, Cambodia, Thailand, for about 3 months.

MARIE: In 2011?

JIAHUI: No, in 2013. In 2011, I started the project, in 2013, I got out. That time, nothing changed much, just the view... At that time, if I wanted to go somewhere, I just go, no plan.

MARIE: You were alone?

JIAHUI: Yes, alone. And then... for Chinese New Year, I went back home. And in 2014, I went to Tibet. But I still start from Sichuan, from Chengdu, I met 2 people, that I met the year before when I was in Sichuan and. We drove from Chengdu to Xining. Because from Xining to Lhasa by train is one day, so from Xining to Lhasa we took the train and in Lhasa, I met another person, we found on the internet

MARIE: On Muofan

JIAHUI: Yes, yes, on Muofan. That time I met a person, a "big brother" (gege) because he took the team, we rented a... MARIE: a jeep right?

JIAHUI: Yes, and we have the same birthday, he was just a bit older than me. He was a very interesting and I learnt many things from him because he had... I think he is thinking much about how he wanted to live. Because his father was a... Like if you tell him you birthday, he can tell you what is going to happen to you...

MARIE: Astrologist?

JIAHUI: I don't know but he can tell you what happens next and he was good at it. When he was a child, he was confronted to it so he thought a lot about life and stuff.

MARIE: He was like teaching you how to live?

JIAHUI: Not teaching but our conversation made me think a lot and after the traveling, we also did trekking on the way and sometimes I would... because at that time I had some troubles with my parents at that time.

MARIE: About what?

JIAHUI: Because, they also... what I think, the plan I had, they don't agree with me. They want me to do things the way they want but I couldn't do it, I don't like their idea?

MARIE: Is that what you called the xiao in Chinese?

JIAHUI: Xiao... yes, the xiao. It's something also... you know... it's totally different you know. In my family you know, I'm different. And also, I can't agree with some of their ideas and they also can't understand me.

MARIE: What did you parents wanted you to do?

JIAHUI: They want me to have a job in a bigger company or in the government and when we are in high school, when we choose which university you want to study, my mother hoped that I will take the same job as her, but I don't like it. She wanted me to go in accounting.

MARIE: accounting... yes, that 's hard.

JIAHUI: And, you know, and uh... they just want me to do just as what everybody does, follow all the steps, just one by one, to build success and a life, just like this. But I don't know, I don't like it.

MARIE: It doesn't make you happy.

JIAHUI: I bet they didn't like that you quit your job to go traveling.

JIAHUI: So it's really... and they want you to get married... just... uh... have a very stable work and life, no change, not much change... but I really don't like that...

MARIE: So you talked about that with the guy on the jeep?

JIAHUI: Yeah, yeah,

MARIE: What did he tell you? To change your life?

JIAHUI: Just, you know, he helped me accept, just accept it (like embrace it) . Mostly, at that time, I didn't take his word, I... I... just... He would say : "if you are weak, just be weak". And uh...

MARIE: So at this time you didn't listen to him?

MARIE: Why you didn't listened to him? You didn't think he was right?

JIAHUI: Yes, at that time, because you know, we met for a few days and a few months later, we met again for another travel in Jingdezhen. At that time, I just feel I have so much, you know... difference with my parents and I was questioning how they can accept my choice and how can I accept and maybe the long distance and not much talking, our relation will be a little better. At that time, I like painting, so in Jingdezhen, I found a teacher to teach me painting. And I just plan to stay there for a long time, maybe living there. But at that time... so... I talk to him about this and he didn't agree, he told me I'm doing it wrong...

MARIE: Why did he tell you that?

JIAHUI: He just, you know, he didn't let me just... don't keep the distance, he told me. And uh... he told me, even if your mother doesn't agree with you and my things, you have to make them understand because, you know me and my parents we were growing up in different time, so just... don't care too much, but you still love your parents and they need to know. But at that time I still wanted to keep a distance because I can't talk with them. it makes me very uncomfortable. I can't be living in the home so... But maybe there are something, I'm just very... I don't want to talk to him, so I just...

MARIE: Go. And uh... them... I didn't told him, I cancel him because he make me tense and I was very relax and well for 3 month, I don't want him to break that. And uh... so I though, maybe if I cancel him and we found out, he will give me a call. And uh... same... not much talking but I also in many places, we are similar but in some place we are totally different. We also talk about traveling, he thinks that traveling alone is dangerous

MARIE: ok

JIAHUI: I also think that he goes to some places because, I think I'm alone so I'm only dangerous for myself, he has a family, a daughter and a son so I think, he always go traveling for a long time, sometimes 2 or 3 weeks and so I think, if people have family, they probably should be together, not separate. This is what I think at the time. But I feel he was happy, when he was going out, he is very happy, I just can agree to live a life like this, but I know I can accept, but at the time I don't think it's a good way or the right way. He told me when he is at home, he is totally at home. . With his children, with his wife. But when he still needs his time for himself, he always feel when he is going out, when he is camping or just him around, he feels free. So... and he also says, you didn't know when you will die, so you don't need to wait, or you should live for other people, even if they are your children or your wife or your family.

MARIE: I understand I think

JIAHUI: But he loves them very much, because, when he traveled, he sent books to his children, so I think, this relationship is very good, so... just... you know, he always changed my mind, because, before him, I had a very clear

idea of what life should be like : life should be like this, life should be like that but I think also that everything can't be perfect and you can't control everything. So, maybe he was thinking about this things. He said he learnt psychology for 6 years so...

MARIE: Interesting

JIAHUI: But uh... you know... I just want to go back to what made me change and it's not his words but most of it was because of himself, the life he had, not what he said. What he said made me want more to be myself. And during this travel, just uh... you know... I think people always change in various ways and uh.. even if you don't know what we are changing for.

MARIE: True

JIAHUI: I met one person this past year and when...

MARIE: When did you go travel? Was your last life travel Nepal?

JIAHUI: No, I just came back a week ago from Chengdu and I went to Gonkao.

MARIE: Is it in Sichuan?

JIAHUI: Yes, in Sichuan.

MARIE: ok

JIAHUI: In one place, in a camping place, there is a special place for taking photos, and uh... he told me, he just change last night when he stayed there he saw some fog and uh... he could see far and suddenly, he felt very relax and free because before he would always think he was stronger than other people and but suddenly, he didn't feel like competition was important anymore, like feeling very humble. He didn't need other people to feel like he was very strong and like we wanted equals...Even he said he was very very good. He said that I was very lucky because if we had met the day before, he would not be like that.

MARIE: So you met that guy during your last trip.

JIAHUI: Just met

MARIE: How long did you stay in Sichuan?

JIAHUI: 1 month. Just traveling. And I also went to a school, Buddha, it' a very very big school, one of the best for Tibetan students. And uh...

MARIE: Is it in like the West of Sichuan?

JIAHUI: Yes.

MARIE: What's the name?

JIAHUI: Yating

MARIE: Yating?

JIAHUI: You know this place?

MARIE: I heard of it but I have never been. It's a big big school

JIAHUI: Yeah, when I was there, I also met... at first I met some student in Tibet and I can understand then... I met another guy from Guangdong so we can talk. And uh... it's very amazing. He stayed there for 3 years, 3 years in the school, learning. And uh... because of a teacher, he just follow a teacher. And uh... what shaked me is because, he so believed his teacher, he said, now, if his teacher asked him to die, he would die.

MARIE: Wow

JIAHUI: And...

MARIE: This guy is from Guangdong?

JIAHUI: Yes, yes. You know, what Buddha teaches?

JIAHUI: I'm not really good with buddhism, I'm sure you are better.

MARIE: I don't think Buddha teaches you how to die.

JIAHUI: He told me that to demonstrate how much he believes his teacher. Just this, he was sure his teacher would never ask that. I'm also sure.

MARIE: So are, you, are you... because, we met in Lumbini, so you were already pretty interested in buddhism. What about it? You are studying psychology, you are studying buddhism...

JIAHUI: yes, I want them to be together, because, if you want to learn, you need first to believe in it.

MARIE: So you are trying to combine Buddha and psychology.

JIAHUI: Yes because buddha, isn't limited in space and time, no space, no time but psychology advocates for living this life. I'm going a little far.

MARIE: And so... the fact that you didn't go back to work, are you ok with your parents?

JIAHUI: No it's ok... sometimes, they will say or ask me to find a job... I just say... no. Because also, I don't ask them for money so I can live my life, myself, I don't need them to give me money, I have money.

MARIE: You are not depending on them. You can afford your travel.

MARIE: You told me you are thinking of going back to Nepal in November?

JIAHUI: Yes, not this November, the 2019 one.

JIAHUI: So you like your job

MARIE: Oh yeah... I do.

MARIE: Do you want to move to Yunnan?

JIAHUI: Yes, I have this idea

MARIE: Do you think it's going to happen?

JIAHUI: Well, before, this kind of things was very important for me, but now, I don't think it's very important

MARIE: to what? to move to Yunnan?

JIAHUI: Yes

MARIE: Why?

JIAHUI: Because, it's not important the place you live in, what is more important, maybe because I'm very interested in psychology, and I think that knowledge and reading doesn't attract people. I'm finding a way, well I'm trying to find a way, my right way for my heart. It's just about doing something, one must do something

MARIE: So you are not thinking about moving to Yunnan anymore?

JIAHUI: Maybe sometimes, I will travel back to Yunnan. But it must have a relation with what I'm studying. The other things are not so important. I'm think about, maybe next year, I will go and stay a long time in Yating.

MARIE: yes

JIAHUI: In the school, the big school. In Sichuan... I'm thinking about staying a long time there. Because... most of the thing, talking or reading isn't working but in that school... there is many ways, if i don't try it myself, I won't know how it really works. So I want to try it the full way.

MARIE: Are you going to try to be a nun?

JIAHUI: what?

MARIE: Like a monk, a nun?

JIAHUI: No, no, no... I think, this is just... I don't think this is important to become that. I think what is important is to decide what to do, one thing and put all of your heart in achieving it, your heart totally in this thing.

MARIE: Do you remember when we were in Lumbini, there was 2 girls, they shaved their head, they stayed at the Japanese temple, they were funny girls, I saw one in Beijing, she couldn't go back to work.

JIAHUI: Well, if life is a game, you need to try different game, not just one game.

MARIE: Is it easy in China to play a different game than what you are expected to?

JIAHUI: I think it's changing now

MARIE: How did you friends at home reacted to your travel.

JIAHUI: They can follow my trend, they always thought I was the person... you know I have changed a lot. But they always follow my lead. Sometimes we talk about something usual and they still think I'm interested in that old think... but they don't see my new interest, they don't see how I have change. Some friends that I used to have 5 or some years ago

have things to talk about but now, they get married, they have children, they are always talking about their family, their children, that kind of things and not much interest to me.

MARIE: so is there a distance growing?

JIAHUI: Yes, we are still friend and our relationship is good but it's not as in the past, we don't have much things to talk about anymore. But it's ok, because I make new friends because of travels, and we have something similar in the conversation . With my old friends, we still talk but not that much.

MARIE: But do you think that... you don't feel like you are judged for having a different a different life? Like they have a judgement on you?

JIAHUI: Actually, I don't like to go out to make many friends, no. I just... I don't have much much friends, I just have close friends and I even don't like parties or... I don't like. So for me it's ok. It doesn't matter if you don't like my lifestyle.

MARIE: But tell me, where do you study psychology? Do you go to university?

JIAHUI: No, I just study for a certification but it's not very important for me to get the certification because I'm not aiming at a job. I'm not ready to use it for a job.

MARIE: Could you become a psychologist?

JIAHUI: yes

MARIE: I met a girl in Yunnan that felt very depressed in Shanghai, she could get away from the depression..

JIAHUI: She just needs to get out... you know out... this is the first step, to get out of your normal way. Because it's a very good hope and way that we find in moving.

MARIE: Just the fact that she left Shanghai, a good job... she was feeling so unhappy. She told me like : "I'm done, I'm done" She had to get out first of the environnement.

JIAHUI: But you know, when you are traveling, you know, because when I was unhappy with something in my life. I go out and I always find people, good people that make me feel warm. I think, they know much and when you travel, most of the people you meet is good, helpful...

MARIE: So traveling is about meeting people
And also meeting... and even if you don't develop a very close relationship with these people, you can see these people being happy with their life, they are happy in different way it inspires you and give you hope. Some people find this warm things in very cold places, like Tibet.

MARIE: So you are not going to go back to work for a trade company?

JIAHUI: No, I don't think... maybe I don't know

MARIE: You are thinking you should go back?

JIAHUI: No, not go back to the same company because now, I don't think, even if I'm doing this kind of job... you can do it from everywhere. Sometimes I think I can do any job, the possibilities are wide open, even if I'm ask to do a special job, I don't think I'm interested in that anymore.

MARIE: So you are... what is you life now? You spent 6 months in Ningbo and then 6 month traveling?

JIAHUI: No, if there is a place I want to go... I just go. Otherwise, I stay in Ningbo but you know, staying in Ningbo is very boring.

MARIE: ok

JIAHUI: In Ningbo, I just read books, go to the library, and I don't have much to do, so I'm thinking about after new year, go to Yading, stay there for long time

MARIE: What is a long time?

JIAHUI: Maybe 6 months

MARIE: ok, a life change. And so wait, you didn't tell me about the end of your trip in Nepal, what did you do after Lumbini?

JIAHUI: I just went back.

MARIE: Did you go to the national park? Did you go to Chitwan at all?
JIAHUI: I just went back to Kathmandu because, I just had a one month visa
MARIE: Could you not extend it?
JIAHUI: no, yes, but I didn't but I have been ... I feel it's too dusty. And uh... I had finished my hiking and uh.. some... I wasn't sure where to go so, I went back.

ZHIRUO

MARIE: So my first question is : where are you from?
ZHIRUO: Here, I'm from Chongqing, this is my hometown.
MARIE: So what I'm going to ask you to do is to draw your...
ZHIRUO: route?
MARIE: Yes, you can pick any color, use any draw... any type of line. If a place is more important,, you draw bigger or smaller circles. However you like it. So you are from Chongqing?
ZHIRUO: Yes, but I'm not a typical Chongqing person
MARIE: Why?
ZHIRUO: Because Chongqing people are famous for being able to eat super spicy hot pot, but I can't... And also I can speak very good the local language. Everytime I speak it, they don't understand... It's like my pronunciation is different from how they say it.
MARIE: Can you write it down on the map?
ZHIRUO: here, yes...
MARIE: And you lived, all your children... your youth in Chongqing?
ZHIRUO: uh... yes, I grew up there and spent most of my life there. I went to university in Chongqing as well.
MARIE: What did you study?
ZHIRUO: History, that's why I love traveling. I also have a lot of interest in geography too....
MARIE: Did you study Chinese history, world history, a bit of everything?
ZHIRUO: Yes, about everything. Broad range.
MARIE: And during your youth, did you travel with your parents?
ZHIRUO: Very few times
MARIE: What did you do with them?
ZHIRUO: With my parents?
ZHIRUO: I didn't spend too much time with my parents because you know Chinese children, we go to school, study very hard and for holidays, like every week-end, we have time to go home, but I would choose to go out, go around, get with my friends, to go to other cities or whatever. So I have been soon very independant.
MARIE: You were raised independantly? Do you have siblings?
ZHIRUO: I have one sister, she is the opposite of me.
MARIE: Like what?
ZHIRUO: She already got married and uh... doesn't like traveling, she is close, she likes shopping...
MARIE: And so... on the week-ends, during school, you would go to your friends house?
ZHIRUO: No, not exactly friends, I like outdoors activities : climbing the mountain, hiking, trekking, I bring a tent, camping outside... this stuff.
MARIE: You could do that as a teenager?
ZHIRUO: Like, teenager... like 15 or 16, but it was never far away from home.
MARIE: So you would spend the week-end in the nature?
ZHIRUO: yeah, I prefer the nature.
MARIE: How did you learn about all this trekking stuff? Your parents didn't show you did they?

ZHIRUO: Yeah, they don't have the time
MARIE: So how did you?
ZHIRUO: Websites. On websites. First there is group in my school and I had 1 or 2 friends from that group. I knew a little bit of stuff about it and I research on the internet, join a group and yeah...
MARIE: Did you go with a group?
ZHIRUO: Sometimes but most of the time is I say "This holiday or this summer holiday I'll go there" and my friends are like "ok, bring me" ...
MARIE: You stayed around the Sichuan province?
ZHIRUO: Yes, around Chongqing and Sichuan, Actually, it used to be the same province 20 years ago.
MARIE: and uh... ok... so when did you start traveling a little further? for vacation? Like, what was your first travel?
ZHIRUO: First travel ever? I think it was after high school graduation, first time I got time, I was done with homework, so then I start traveling to further, more remote places
MARIE: in Sichuan?
ZHIRUO: Yes, Sichuan, because I love this Tibetan culture and also the nature there is so splendid. I choose to go to Sichuan because it's the most easy then to go to Tibet. It's easier than Tibet and you get a similar experience.
MARIE: So you went to the West of Sichuan,
ZHIRUO: like Ganze, Chengdu... it's so many years ago, I can't even remember it. Then I head to North, crossed to Qinghai, then Gansu and back to Sichuan
MARIE: So that was your summer, can you mark down your route?
ZHIRUO: I don't remember exactly.
MARIE: So that was your summer after the Gaokao?
ZHIRUO: Yes, like... it took around 50 days, 2 friends came along and we bring our tents... When we visited near here, in Ganzé there is a buddhist school... Seda, we visited there and
ZHIRUO: And in that time, it's still it wasn't very famous...
MARIE: How long ago was that trip?
ZHIRUO: Almost ten years ago, I'm 28 now
MARIE: So 50 days with 2 friends, and did you travel with train, with bus...
ZHIRUO: Train, bus, car, everything... when there is a train, we catch the train, when there is bus, we catch the bus, when there is nothing, we just hitch-hike.
MARIE: You hitch-hike?
ZHIRUO: Yeah
MARIE: Your parents, were they worried about you?
ZHIRUO: No, there were fine.
MARIE: Did you plan ahead the route?
ZHIRUO: Yeah, yeah, the first time, we were cautious, I made a very detail itinerary, where we should visit, and how long we should stay but no... I realised it doesn't work but we follow the route but not the tempo. And during that time, we could still use google earth in China, I used it to do the route, but later... Google was ban...
MARIE: yeah yeah... and you said you were interested... you are not Tibetan?
ZHIRUO: No...
MARIE: So you said you were interested in Tibetan culture...
ZHIRUO: Kind of... yeah... I think it holds an attraction for me but...
MARIE: Why?
ZHIRUO: Because the medium... the medium... they just... you know the youth is very easily affected by the internet, they have propanga or whatever to promote tourism in Tibet... They say it's like a paradise life, it's unique, it will purify your heart or whatever...
MARIE: On the internet?
ZHIRUO: Yes, so that's the place you should go. Internet, every child, every kid dreams to go to Tibet... even now, I still haven't been there....

MARIE: You haven't been?
 ZHIRUO: Yes! That's true... all these areas around here, I haven't been...
 MARIE: But you said propaganda, this is a strong word...
 ZHIRUO: Not propaganda... it's like a strong promotion of Tibet because I did some volunteer job in India, in Dharamsala and there they describe tourism is kind of curious because, business in Tibet is propaganda, they way to... the way to... to exploit Tibetan people
 MARIE: We will go back to Dharamsala. So you did that trip and then you went to university...
 ZHIRUO: Yes
 MARIE: During your university years, did you travel at all?
 ZHIRUO: Yes, every summer holiday.
 MARIE: Describe me... where did you go?
 ZHIRUO: I can quite exactly remember
 MARIE: it's fine
 ZHIRUO: One summer holiday, we went to Guizhou, Once we went to Yunnan, Xishuangbanna... Xishuangbanna is really the most south part of China at the border with Myanmar. The border of Myanmar... famous for their drugs and smugglers everywhere there.
 MARIE: Did you... did you do that there?
 ZHIRUO: No! not at all...
 MARIE: You went to Dali also?
 ZHIRUO: Yes I passed by, but it's not my thing... so I just...
 MARIE: You didn't like it? Why?
 ZHIRUO: It's too commercial, shopping, it's not my thing
 MARIE: Even 10 years ago? It was already very commercial?
 ZHIRUO: Yes, they were more people than now... during the time that I visited. You know 2 or 3 years ago, because the government wanted to protect Erhai... they checked all the buildings constructed around the lake and so... it decreased the customers coming here... so and uh... I went to Lijiang and then Lugu and then I went back to Sichuan, Yading on the 318, the famous road to Tibet
 MARIE: you took the 318.
 ZHIRUO: Yes, to go back to Chongqing.
 MARIE: So you did Guizhou, Yunnan, what else?
 ZHIRUO: And another trip to like this area... (Shanghai) , but I can't really remember because it's all famous tourist places, I want to see classic architecture but yeah... like Suzhou, Hangzhou. Jiangxi also... Jiangxi province also I went, one trip... I took the train... it was like take picture and go... not my thing really, it's too easy... too relaxing, I like nature...
 MARIE: So that was one summer that you did that?
 ZHIRUO: Yeah, yeah... like, uh... Suzhou and Hangzhou...
 MARIE: Did you go to Shanghai?
 ZHIRUO: Yeah, of course but it's big cities some I'm just like... (not interested)
 MARIE: not your thing?
 ZHIRUO: not my thing! And then I went to uhuen and several other small towns around but I can't remember.
 MARIE: So is that it?
 ZHIRUO: Not anymore... After graduation...
 MARIE: What did you do? Where did you work?
 ZHIRUO: I worked as a history teacher, teaching at a high school... I worked for 3 years then I quit my job
 MARIE: Why?
 ZHIRUO: I love kids but, just, I'm young... maybe... uh... I'm not satisfied, I'm seeking for more, more opportunities, more chance in life... I don't want to stick to one option... if I regret, if I want to go back... I can go back anytime. So, yeah... why not?
 MARIE: So you quit, what did your parents think about that?
 ZHIRUO: My parents?
 MARIE: yes

MARIE: They were of course against it. Without any questions... haha... it's an easy job and the pay is quit good but... for a girl... what are looking for? why are you looking for more? Yes... you should do this... But they are... I'm so... Maybe... I'm... I lived too independantly... anyway, I don't depend on them so... uh... they respected my choice even if they don't agree. They were not too strongly against it...
 MARIE: They were not fighting you
 ZHIRUO: They were against it.
 MARIE: So you quit your job and then what do you do?
 ZHIRUO: I quit my job... actually it's not like the plan to quit my job... it just... do I really going to spend my life like this... my whole life here... the answers is no... then I quit.. I didn't really have a plan of where to go... so... after I quit... a bunch of people were discussing
 MARIE: online?
 ZHIRUO: No, not online... actually I stayed in a hostel, there are some people coming back from Turkey, they were discussing about their experience in these countries. I don't even plan to go these places... But I always have felt a very strong attraction to this place...
 MARIE: Yeah
 ZHIRUO: Because of history : Egypt, Persia, India, Turkey... these places are paradise to me because they have very glorious empires... glorious history but now they are struggling, they are facing the choice between the traditon and modernity... So I wanted to see how these people make their life... how they manage between this, how they choose. SO! We discussed these places together with some other friends but... finally... nobody went there... and I did. They said... we should go together, I said yes, we should. We checked the passeport, the visa, the flights and finally, they said... I'm busy.. so just me booked the flight... and got all the visa done.
 ZHIRUO: So first I went to Iran from Chongqing, I took the flight to Kuala Lumpur and then to Teheran...
 MARIE: So your first travel outside of China, was Iran
 ZHIRUO: Yes...
 MARIE: I'm speechless... how did you feel? Like... how was it to be outside of China, what was your first impression?
 ZHIRUO: First impression...
 MARIE: Do you remember how it felt to be outside of your country?
 ZHIRUO: Not a very strong impression... because I take everything... I'm always very numb, it's not easy to get me excited. But That's why I love extreme sport...
 MARIE: You need your adrenalin?
 ZHIRUO: I got an impression... we arrived there in, like in the morning at 4 or 5 am, we wait at the airport for 1 or 2 hours to catch a bus to go downtown but we didn't find it so someone came and we ask someone to drive us to downtown...
 MARIE: nice
 ZHIRUO: it happens all the time, these people are fabulous... I like them all the way.. I don't know. People say a girl, like us, traveling around is dangerous, I don't think so... I never felt threaten, any time. The people around me were super nice. If there is someone sitting behind me, well... not behind, besides me, I feel I'm safe...
 MARIE: So you traveled all alone.
 ZHIRUO: yeah...
 MARIE: Did you meet travelers?
 ZHIRUO: Yeah, we met travelers on the road and we accompany each other like for 1 or 2 cities and split... I travel to some very remote place where there is not really tourists and I change my plans so often so...
 MARIE: So where did you go in Iran. First we go to Qom and then Qushan and then we went to...Shiraz, Isphahan and another small town. First place where Zoroastranism was

born... they have the money, tongue... this was the first time I saw something like this, as a teacher it's disneyland inside. But I don't spend too much time in Iran.

MARIE: How many days did you spend?

ZHIRUO: Like 20 days... it's too short... And Shiraz, actually, my... roughly my plan was to go to Armenia but we met some guy from Turkey during that time when we traveled in Iran... there is terrorists in Turkey, it's kind of a very intense situation in Turkey, and many people advised me not to go to Turkey because it's dangerous to go. But I met several guys from Turkey, just from Turkey in Shiraz and they told me, "yes, it's so funny to travel in Turkey now"... of course, after the bombings, the government... because no more people coming... the government had some kind of feed back... I don't know, anyway, they told me it was funny and I should go take a look... And then... just after Shiraz, I took a train back direct to Teheran and then... at the station, I catch a taxi, tell him to take me straight to wherever there is internet and I want to apply for a visa... so at last, he take me to a copy place, so I sit there for 20 minutes, apply for a visa, after I printed out, then I took the taxi to the bus station and ask the guy at the reception counter which bus should I get in to go to Turkey... He explained, I bought a ticket to...

MARIE: You took the bus to Turkey

ZHIRUO: Actually, the normal way is to go to Tabriz, but I go to another city near Irak, at the border... somewhere here... it's a small town, I forgot. It's kind of a big town, but not a tourist one, it's modern, very modern...

MARIE: you were surprised

ZHIRUO: Yes, very surprised, when I was traveling in Iran, Teheran and Ispahan are quite exotic for me...

MARIE: It's exotic?

ZHIRUO: Yes, it's quite exotic, they have very traditional architecture and the people there, they are different from us. You can see the way, the shops... but there... what's the name... I can't remember... maybe because it's a trading port between Irak and Turkey... so there, you could see very modern architecture and the goods there... there are selling are more familiar to me...

MARIE: So you were feeling more familiar here than in Teheran

ZHIRUO: Yeah... maybe because it's near Turkey... so from here, I went to Turkey...

MARIE: I'm sorry I don't have a map of Turkey.

ZHIRUO: It's ok... anyway... I caught a bus, I ask everyone for the way... for I went to Van (in Turkey) ... There is a lake here (Van Golu) ... It's a very old and ancient city and it has had a bombing few days before I arrived

MARIE: It was bombed?

ZHIRUO: Yes

MARIE: Were you scared?

ZHIRUO: No it's a quite tranquil and serene town, hahaha... And it was opening season for the student, for the school, so... I stayed there 4 days and uh... I wanted to catch a bus to further east to the city I wanted to visit. But I missed the bus so I stay there a bit longer, but it was super cold there

MARIE: You had a visa for Turkey, how long was your visa?

ZHIRUO: A month... I just followed the border of Turkey and uh...

MARIE: The South border... Irak, Syria...

ZHIRUO: Yes, there was a lot of tanks and armed forces...

MARIE: You were never scared?

ZHIRUO: Why... they are not making war against me...

MARIE: Yes but it's a bit of a war zone...

ZHIRUO: I'm a civilian... and uh... I traveled to the West and on the bus I met a girl... a Kurdish girl. I like the same kind of music.

MARIE: What kind of music?

ZHIRUO: Jazz and folks... So we go to the same interested Greece... I don't know how to pronounce it... we shared the music together and uh... when we got out of the bus, she invited me to her home... Like in Iran, everyday, several people invited you to their home but I never tried once... I was still a bit cautious... I'm alone, I have more place to visit so, everytime I refuse. But this time, I didn't even hesitate. I go... I go with her and she introduced me to all of her friends, when I need to take a shower, she can't speak very good English, very little... she worried that I was worried for my safety... so she took me to another friend... he could speak good English and he translated like : don't be worry, you can take a shower no problem. Their hospitality was just so amazing. So good to me. I spent some time their, in Mardin, that's a kurdish city. I spent several days there and then later I wanted to go visit other places and she was like... I have got a brother there, I got a sister there.

MARIE: She sent you to her family members?

ZHIRUO: She accompany me to visit. You know, she say... she ask me how many sisters and brothers I have, I said only 1... She was so surprised... she said she has like 100.

MARIE: But it's like cousin

ZHIRUO: yeah, cousin... it's because his grandpa had 8 wives.

MARIE: ok...

ZHIRUO: She showed me a picture to me... I don't even saw her... so many people. I didn't recognize her because they all look so similar. So then I went to... I don't remember, but until today, I can't remember the name of the places but I still remember the people

MARIE: So you went to Mardin and then here...

ZHIRUO: Here, everyone goes there, it's a very famous place

MARIE: Capadoce?

ZHIRUO: Capadoce !

MARIE: You went to Mardin there and then

ZHIRUO: And then i made a circle from the border of Iran, to the middle of Turkey in Capadoce and then to the East. Like Antalya, Izmir... I followed the coast up to Istambul. oh...

MARIE: How did you like it?

ZHIRUO: Istambul... wow! I have no word for it... this church is... not churches but this combination of Mosque and church... Saint Sofia... it's amazing... But I didn't have too much time there for I spent too much time on the way...

MARIE: So you had to...

ZHIRUO: So I just spent 2 days in Istambul...

MARIE: That's it?

ZHIRUO: Yeah... Then I follow the border to the north to go to Georgia

MARIE: So you followed the northern border.

ZHIRUO: Yes... I go to Safranbolu (near Karabuk) , it's on the road and then from there to Trabzon. And from there, I went to Batumi in Georgia and then from there I went to the border

MARIE: How long did you stay in Georgia?

ZHIRUO: Only 2 weeks

MARIE: Did you like it?

ZHIRUO: Super liked it because you know, when you are traveling for a long time, you see just architecture, history things and I missed nature a lot... I arrived there in autumn time, in october... it was so beautiful, the mountain view, the snow moutain with colourful leaves, all over, everywhere... it was like Tibetan moutain almost... yeah... all the small monasteries, stone churches... oh... I took a lot of photos of these snow mountain and colourful leaves... wow... Amazing views... super awesome... yeah... we went trekking and hiking finally after several months.

MARIE: Did you meet anybody, like travelers on the road?

ZHIRUO: Yeah, yeah I met euh... in Turkey, I even met several people from Chongqing. It was funny, they could even speak English, they were traveling together like "We are Chongqing people". They were really nice to me. They cooked for me, I helped them find a hotel, they gave me food.

MARIE: But they meet travelers?

ZHIRUO: Yes, I met another Chinese girl. She was like me... wandering around after her graduation. He traveled like... 4 days together. Foreigner people, yes also... From safranbolu to Trabzon. From France.

MARIE: Did you travel together?

ZHIRUO: Not for very long. I was in a rush to go to Georgia. But actually, when I stay in one place, it's very easy to find somebody to go around with. Like in hostel and if you visit like a church, you find somebody to tag along and discuss. But when I go to a new city, most case I go alone, because I don't want to wait for somebody, we got different plans so...

MARIE: Ok

ZHIRUO: When I arrived to a new hostel then I get company.

MARIE: So Georgia for 2 weeks and then you went trekking on your own?

ZHIRUO: Actually, in Georgia, with a group of people, we went to a remote village, like the highest village in Europe or whatever... The name is Mestia but we went further up in the mountain to Ushguli...

MARIE: Like a group of tourist, trekking?

ZHIRUO: Not a group of tourist... we were just a bunch of friends, we rented a car and uh...

MARIE: How did you meet?

ZHIRUO: Well, it was a very small town, it was easy to meet. After we came back, I wanted to spend more time there, so after they live, I stayed there but there was not much to do, just hanging out so I went to the tourist center to get a map and trekking on my own. So I go there, I find some people, with backpack from Israel and yeah... When You are trekking you always find 2 nationalities : Germany or Israël. hahaha. These people love trekking. So I just follow them, so I don't need to do my work. I ask if I could join. They say why not, so I go with them. I follow them for one day. We went to a camping site at the sunset and we were supposed to head back but it started to rain in the afternoon... but the view was... wow... amazing. Super good. But it's not easy trekking

MARIE: But you like it when it's not easy.

ZHIRUO: Yeah, that's why I can't remember now. Hahaha. So uh...

MARIE: So then after Georgia.

ZHIRUO: After Georgia, I went to Kaishi. A very old town and then Tbilissi. And then, from Tbilissi, I took a flight to India.

MARIE: Ok... alright... You arrived in Mumbai?

ZHIRUO: Yes, I arrived in Mumbai and at that time, I only got one month visa.

MARIE: That's short...

ZHIRUO: India is totally shocking.

MARIE: How, why? Describe me...

ZHIRUO: Because the very first time I open my eyes, I was at the airport, I caught a bus... I got out of the bus... you see all of these buildings and tours, that is... it's like the home of victorian... you can't... you never imagine you can see that in the Chinese cities. Never... You know in Mumbai, there is a lot of building built in a Victorian style. There are splendid and very old... and uh... a lot of wild animals, cow, birds, monkeys... a lot... of cows... everything is just roaming over... it's chaotic but so lovely...

MARIE: you didn't got scared by India?

ZHIRUO: No, it was wow... so that's super shocking. And then from Mumbai, I went to this place in Rajasthan

MARIE: So you went to the North of India?

ZHIRUO: Yeah, the first time I went to the tourist places. So I went to 4 cities of Rajasthan : Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Jaipur, Ajmer. And then from Jaipur, Pushkar and then New Delhi but I didn't get to Agra.

MARIE: So that was a month trip?

ZHIRUO: No, no, no, from Jaidpur, I went to Amristar, there and Dharamsala... Because, at first, I planned to go to Kashmir, but it's a little late and winter is coming so the road was closed.

MARIE: Why did you want to go... how did you hear about Kashmir?

ZHIRUO: Kashmir?

MARIE: Is it coming from history class?

ZHIRUO: This is not coming from history class!

MARIE: no?

ZHIRUO: This is from a BBC documentary, I watch a lot of BBC documentary so that's why I wanted to visit that place... do you know "Planet Earth documentary". They filmed a school in Zanskar, so I wanted to go there to trek. And also here, in the south... North East... is route bridge, in a rain forest... I forgot the name, next time... but the road was closed, so first I wanted to go to Srinagar because I read the book of V.S. Naipaul, I love this book so first Srinagar because it's so interesting stories happening there. And also, he wrote several interesting stories about Srinagar.

MARIE: So you read Naipaul, and that's what made you want to go to Srinagar?

ZHIRUO: Yes... Actually I went to Iran not only because of architecture and history but also because of a film

MARIE: The movies of Asghar Farhani?

ZHIRUO: Yes, and also the movie... "The wind will carry us"... (By Abbas Kiarostami) . And uh... another movie about shoes... Children of Heaven by Majid Majidi. There is so many good movies about Iran. And here in India too.

MARIE: So Amristar, you went to Amristar...

ZHIRUO: And so Kashmir was a no go and then I went to Dharamsala. Because of other travelers... I knew nothing about this place. I just follow people. You have conversation with them and where they are going and then you go. No plan!

MARIE: I have a question, you went to Dharamsala, so you met the Tibetan community there?

ZHIRUO: Yes, yes.

MARIE: Did they talk to you about Tibet and all of that?

ZHIRUO: But this is my first time there so I was just a passenger, I went to see the Dalai Lama, I took a picture.

MARIE: Really?

ZHIRUO: And I also went to his course too. Just 2 days there because I only had a one month visa. Then I head down south to Dharamsala to a small place called Bir (in Himachal Pradesh) , just street there, it's not even in the Lonely Planet.

MARIE: Do you use the lonely planet when you travel?

ZHIRUO: No, no, no, I use nothing

ZHIRUO: Just other travelers recommendation?

ZHIRUO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. From there, when I was staying in Dharamsala, there was a friend of friend who was in Bir. It's famous for paragliding.

MARIE: Yes, yes...Did you try?

ZHIRUO: Yes, so from there, we head south to this small village, to meet her friends, and it was the first time I tried paragliding. I though... uh... when you are taken by someone it's not as surprising as I thought. . Then I say, I want to take control, I want to know... next time. So, when uh... I thought, yes, one day I'm coming back. But I had to go.

MARIE: Did you... you have never been to Nepal?

ZHIRUO: I plan to go
 MARIE: In Pokhara, a lot of people are doing paragliding.
 ZHIRUO: I plan to go to Nepal, but at first, it was not my plan, then.
 MARIE: So from Bir you want to...
 ZHIRUO: South, in Rishikesh, because I want to try Yoga.
 MARIE: Was it the first time you tried yoga?
 ZHIRUO: No, but it's not really my thing...
 MARIE: Too slow?
 ZHIRUO: You know me very well know. But there it's really nice, maybe it's the way they teach is not good... I didn't really have time to get involve in yoga so I just checked it out. And after rishikesh, I went back to Delhi and flew to Kuala Lumpur. And then from Kuala Lumpur, I flew to Medan on Sumatra. Actually, first, I planned to visit Java. And uh... Bali and this islands in the south but then no, no time...
 MARIE: Why don't you have time?
 ZHIRUO: I arrived in Medan at midnight, they can't speak English, it's not a tourist place... so I just found a bus and get on it... I had no idea where I was going. I just say, I want to go down town and I can't find a bus, no one speak English, I'm so confused and I see people sitting in a bus and then I go there, I take a sit. Funny is someone comes to me, he told me it's a staff bus, for the airport bus. But anyway, it goes downtown. And uh... they help me find an hostel in Medan.
 MARIE: it's hard?
 ZHIRUO: Quite hard, there is only 2...
 MARIE: Really?
 ZHIRUO: Really, at midnight, I wait at the airport for 2 hours. And uh... yeah... But they recommend me a place to go. So... after Medan, I go to a place like...uh...
 ZHIRUO: uh... this is a place Orang-utang (In Bohorok) . Actually I met 2 people, from Slovaquia, Czech, from Czech. This is people we have been to the same place. We spent more than a week there to do trekking and see the wild animals, the Orang-Outangs.
 MARIE: Very nice?
 ZHIRUO: Super, super nice, it's so... yeah... so different from all the places that I have been. And, uh... but the conditions there is uh... a bit harsh. It's the jungle, the mosquitoes and the weather... you feel wet all day long. From there, we went to a volcano. But the traffic there... oh...
 MARIE: It's worst than India?
 ZHIRUO: Much worst!
 MARIE: really?
 ZHIRUO: If you travel on Sumatra, if you go somewhere, if you want to go somewhere else, you need to go to Medan. Always have to go back to Medan. Actually, they say when you travel in Indonesia, airplane should be your first choice. There is no train and the bus is terrible! So we went to see the volcano and then we head down to... From the volcano, I didn't see any tourist or traveler again. First I lost my phone... I completely lost contact with everyone
 MARIE: Your parents were not worried about you?
 ZHIRUO: Actually, I didn't lost my phone, I dropped it in the water. So... I can only remember my mom's number so I borrowed a phone and I told my mom, "yeah, maybe I can't contact you within the next 2 months, but don't worry". I went to several places. I head south. I stayed a while in Lake Toba, it's famous for cannibalism
 MARIE: ok... but it's a tourist place, the view is super nice, and the first time the Westerners came to Indonesia, during the Great Voyage, the first time they came to Indonesia, they found this place where there was cannibalism. But I didn't see any! And then again south to Bukittinggi, just passing by for one or 2 days, passing by. Never met a tourist, but the trip is wow... I booked a ticket in a bus, but it's a tourist bus that can take me directly from Lake Toba to Bukittinggi. So then I wait, I wait, I thought it was a tourist bus but not at

all. Like I wait until 9 in the evening, then comes a private car, they can't speak English, they tell me to follow then... they drive out of the small town, out in the darkness, there is no light at all... and then... I realized... it's heading back to the North, not to the South. At 10 or 11 in the evening. And then, you can only see the light, there is no people, so I tried to go to them. So I ask the driver to give me the phone, I tried to call the guy who sold me the ticket, I kept his number. When he answered his phone, he didn't even explain anything to me... I don't even know where I am going... I just tell him that I will get out of the car. If you don't show me, the place I want to go... Fortunately, on the next stop, there is restaurant. Only one restaurant. It's midnight... but I'm not so worried, there is a couple and a baby, he is a muslim wo I think : "No problem", he got a baby. So I'm not so worried. It's midnight. I'm in the middle of nowhere, I have no place to sleep. So they take me to the restaurant, finally comes a bus, I say finally, this is my bus. This people are so relax, they stoped their bus, and they have a lot of, they are enjoying, they are used to it. The bus stoped there, for an hour.. no problem, very relax... I'm like : "Whaaat? " And then we go to the bus, it's super crowded bus. And the road is terrible, so bumpy... like 6 or 7 hours later... I guess it's not so far, Then they dropped me on the side of the road in Bukittinggy... I had to change the bus again... They told me to wait for another bus. I waited 2 or 3 hours... But this people are so nice, they use their phone to translate. I charged my phone, but I forgot phone at the first restaurant, so someone in the motorcycle, brought back my charger to me.
 MARIE: That's so nice.
 ZHIRUO: So nice. Actually that's funny because when I first arrived there, they think I'm the only foreigner, and they charge me for the food so expensive, twice the price... but I didn't want to pay that... I said... yeah, that's not the price, I give them the money I should pay. I pay this... all the people in the restaurant laugh. Even though they want to make money out of me, but they are nice people. And you start talking with them... they want to take advantage but they return my phone back even drive their motorcycle. And then yeah, finally, the third bus... I think... this time, it will take me to the right place. And then no... I have to change another time. The bus is supposed to take 10 hours, it took 28 hours... you see how terrible that is.
 MARIE: You must have gone crazy. But where did you wanted to go?
 ZHIRUO: Like from Lake Toba to Bukittinggy, here. But this people are so nice, I don't get angry or anything. They often would offer me a place to nap. Gosh! And from Bukittinggy I went to Padang and from Padang, I just get lucky I guess... I didn't have any resservation for a ferry and I don't even aware of the island I want to go to. I just know a name of an island, and there is a lot of islands... Like... at first, I arrived their, actually, the port is by the seaside and the city is a little bit far away from there... I don't have the information, they don't speak too much English. Very few people speak English. So I go there. Yeah... it's hard. I checked if there is a ferry going to this island and they say yes, tomorrow... I'm super lucky, there is only one ferry every week. So I don't want to miss it so I ask them again, and again, and again... the time... and they tell me wrong
 MARIE: You missed it?
 ZHIRUO: No! They say tomorrow at 8 am... I confirm... am, am? Really... he says... yes, am... but the next day... when I get there at 8 am, no boat is here. No boat is here... Then they tell me... it's in the evening!
 MARIE: Hahaha
 ZHIRUO: Hahaha... so I take the ferry to this island. It take one night and I arrived to the island the day after at 4 o'clock

in the morning. There is no one, no one... just a very small street. Except this people coming back from the big city, no one in the street, and I want to find a hotel... no! none! An wandered in the street for about half an hour. There is very few people, they are getting out for the business of breakfast. So I just carry my luggage to them and ask if they can keep it before I go find a hotel. They say ok even if they don't speak English. I go check for the hotel, I don't find any... maybe it's too early. So I take a break, I go by the seaside, the sun is rising and by the seaside, you know, the island in Indonesia is super amazing... it's the first time I see it... the ocean.

MARIE: It was the first time you saw the ocean?

ZHIRUO: No actually, the first time I saw the ocean was in Padang but, it was the city... it was not like it... I forgot everything I was doing... I was just "wow!!!" ... An hour later, actually the seashore... is very closed to the street and for an hour, I completely forgot the hotel. So maybe at 6, or 6 and a half, I start searching, people are coming out... And so I ask, everyone I met, do you know any hotels or hostels near by... ? "no, no, no, no" is all I hear, finally I realised I'm in the wrong place, it's not a tourist place, it's a local island, no hotels on the island. No hotel...

MARIE: Were you happy about that? Because it's very local, it's what you are looking for?

ZHIRUO: No, well... I'm not even aware of that. So I kept walking a little bit outside of the town, I see a fancy red house and 2 people are sitting in front of the door chatting, so I try again to ask them about if they know a hotel. They ask me... why do you want to stay in a hotel? There is no hotel on the island. It's a teacher, a church teacher. He is just back from another island, to celebrate Christmas. Actually, the fancy house is a church. He tells me... if you want some place to stay, you can stay with us.

MARIE: nice!

ZHIRUO: Yeah, so I stayed there, with his family for a week

MARIE: so cool

ZHIRUO: yes, so cool. They cook... they are not muslim you know, I think they are immigrant from the Ming or Qing dynasty. Because they have very similar food habits as Chinese do. And they eat pig.

MARIE: So, wait, what did you do during this week on this island?

ZHIRUO: uh... I go to the beach, actually, they are very Christians, these islands are very Christians, during... actually, before my travel, I didn't have any interest in religion, but after that, much more...

MARIE: all of religions?

ZHIRUO: Yes, yes... these Chinese people, well... they don't speak Chinese anymore because it has been several hundred years. But I stayed there within the church and in the morning, the first day I slept there, I heard an amazing sound. A guitar and a local instrument and a chorus too so I rushed into the church, I saw the rehearsal for Christmas, and finally, I can't resist, I can't hold it up... It's such a puzzle in my head, so at first, I don't want to interrupt because they are practicing in the morning. But... uh... I have to go... they are doing their morning prayers, every morning. Wow... it's incredible, their voices is amazing, they are using their local language to sing, I don't understand but it's so beautiful... it's paradise. So I ask if I can join every morning. So that week, everyday, I got up with them, they find me an English bible. And after the prayer, at 5 or 6 o'clock, When the sun rises, it's facing the shore, I just sit in front of the door, like they did the day I met them, I chat with them, at 7 i go with the lady, we go to the market, buy fishes, food... we cook breakfast... then I go hang around.

MARIE: Did you go to the beach?

ZHIRUO: Yeah, all the time

MARIE: Do you know how to swim?

ZHIRUO: No, they are surfing, that's a best place in the world for surfing!

MARIE: Did you learn to surf?

ZHIRUO: No, no, no... it's not the right time to do it.. no one is there. I go to this place in the wrong time and uh... And for 2 or 3 days, I helped them prepare Christmas.

MARIE: You celebrated Christmas with them?

ZHIRUO: Yeah, yeah. And also, another amazing thing is 2 people from Padang, a Chinese couple, they immigrated to Indonesia less than a 100 years ago, but they can't speak Chinese, but they came to visit this church for Christmas and this couple, they patronize this church. They were surprised to see me and they saw me as a missionary because I tell them my story, we had a great time with them.

MARIE: Did you consider becoming a christian?

ZHIRUO: No, no, no... just interesting to see. I prefer India, I would love to know more about indian religion but not yet to become one of them. So, after one week here... it was so amazing. And oh... I forgot, the teacher I met, I wanted to see his school, it was on the remote island and we had to take a canal just a canal to go to his school. At first I thought it was close but no, it took about 3 or 4 hours on the boat, the waves were huge, 2 meters... We underwent some kind of storms... we were in the cloud, so heavy rain... I was totally soaked. And then, 3 minutes later... there... big sunshine.

MARIE: Did you get scared?

ZHIRUO: No, because this people knew what they were doing so no. So I went to his school and stayed 2 days there, very traditional people, they are male, I'm female, when we arrived on the island he told me not to talk to him too much. The island was without electricity. So I spent the night with another family, a local family. They use kerosene. The next day when I woke up, they all laugh because my nose was full of black thing. I head back after the week, they ask me to visit their home, this Padang Chinese couple. You know Chinese in Indonesia, they have super big businesses, and so this couple, the mother of the guy had a super big house in Padang. The lady, the mother of the man was already 90.

MARIE: Did she speak Chinese?

ZHIRUO: No. She can't speak English too. Her son translated it for me. He was so nice. They cooked me great food, and they even bought me shoes, to go to a party. I stayed there... I had plan to stay 2 days, because it's a city and there is not too much to see. But they ask me to stay with them, because they were going to fly to Jakarta soon, so we could go together... so we stay 5 or 6 days, they drive me everywhere to go see these islands, private islands too. So I stayed about a month in Indonesia. I didn't even get to Bali. MARIE: You had a one month visa?

ZHIRUO: actually, a lot of Chinese go to Indonesia, we don't need to do the visa in advance, it's very easy for us to visit. So I went to Jakarta, then Kuala Lumpur, and then KL to Thailand...

MARIE: you fly?

ZHIRUO: I went to this island in Malaysia.

MARIE: Did you go by bus?

ZHIRUO: Yes, by bus... I visited an island but not much to say... I was then back in KL then I go to Thailand. First I had plan to visit this islands in the south of Thailand. But when I arrived in Thailand, I was in a very nice hostel. With a yard, plants, flower... and a lot of food corners near us so I spent 2 weeks there.

MARIE: In this hostel?

ZHIRUO: yeah! I would just wake up everyday, at 9 or 10. I would go buy some snacks, food that I have never tried before. I would bring it back to the hostels to share it with others and then, we would talk, reading, go out...

MARIE: But in Thailand, what did... because, you visited hostels in Iran, Turkey, but you never happened like that that you like the place so much...

ZHIRUO: No, I didn't like the place that much because Thailand... is very relax for me, I didn't have any interest to see the lady boys or the temples...

MARIE: What did you want to see in Thailand?

ZHIRUO: Nothing, I was passing through... I had already had a very intense journey, I wanted to relax and Thailand is the perfect place to relax. Actually, at first I didn't want to go to Thailand.

MARIE: Why?

ZHIRUO: There is nothing for me to do there. And it's full of tourists... yeah... but then, when I went there I was like... wow, this is so nice. The people are so nice, even you are not doing anything, just walking in the street, you feel happy.

MARIE: But it's a big city... you told me you don't like big cities.

ZHIRUO: No, no, you know, big cities is nothing for me, I can live in any big cities like it's a village, I'm from Chongqing. I just went to visit a few places, I was just wandering aimlessly. Actually, my main purpose to go to Thailand is to get the visa to go to Myanmar to get the India one, a 6 months visa.

MARIE: ok...

ZHIRUO: so, so, so I just eating, eating, reading books, talking with people. So you got your visa to Myanmar. Yes, I got my visa. So I flew from Thailand to Rangoon. I spent 3 days there and then I headed to, a place with a lot of buddhist temple.

MARIE: By the lake?

ZHIRUO: Not by the lake, it's here, in Bagan. The sunset there is amazing. Gosh... I plan to visit again. It's super impressing in Myanmar because it's a newly opened country and uh... so many crowded place of tourist but it's down to very few places so if you follow tourist it's people from all over the world. I stayed in a hostel in Yangoon, I'm the only one from China, everyone is from a different country, China, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Norway... 8 people, 8 different country. So we hang out together in the street... we don't call each others by our name, we call each other by our country... They call me "China". It's super fun... and the kids on the street in Myanmar, they are crazy about football. They play it with barefoot, they are so happy. Few of us join them. And uh... from Yangoon, I go to this places, I met with 2 of them later, we don't know, but we were in Bagan and we met randomly at sunset. It's super funny, she was studying anthropology. Uh... then I went to Mandalay, and then I go back to Yangoon, for my visa.

MARIE: you got it?

ZHIRUO: I got it even if it was not easy, but I wanted 6 months because I want to know more about India. So I found a library, go to read the books. I spent another week in Rangoon, in the library and they gave me the 6 months visa because I ended up knowing the people very well. It was not easy! They used to offer the 6 months visa for Chinese, but... it's hard.. it depends... they are not giving it easily. And uh... in Myanmar it's so easy to know people, because you meet them everywhere. You meet them in a place and then encounter them in another place. When I went to the embassy to apply for a visa, I met other 2 people that I had met before, we took the taxi together... I flew back to India again... I fly back to KL again and I flew to a very small city called... I don't remember... it has very sacred Indian temple, hindou temple... not like the north... they keep the very strict tradition. Oh, it was Tiruchirappalli.

MARIE: You flew to Tiruchirappalli.

ZHIRUO: From there, I went to several places around, plenty, about 10 places because I always wanted to visit the South part of India. It's quite different from the North.

MARIE: How long did you stay?

ZHIRUO: I think I spent around 40 or 50 days in the South. There are 2 provinces, here Tamil Nadu... all about hindouism in this province. And then I go there to Pondichery and to Auroville...

MARIE: Auroville yes, how long did you stay in Auroville?

ZHIRUO: More than 10 days because I wanted to... There is an organic farm and you can do volunteer work there too.

MARIE: How did you like Auroville?

ZHIRUO: It's kind of ...

MARIE: Do think it's still an utopia?

ZHIRUO: No, not anymore but it's still very pioneer, like, for their way of life, you can still learn a lot from them... maybe I don't know

MARIE: Why do you think it's not an utopia anymore?

ZHIRUO: Because there is too much tourist, too much tourists, utopia shouldn't be like that. But still, still, it's quite interesting, I want to first, I want know how too... I want to do a few period of volunteering so... But I don't know where to go, so I just explore on Google maps to see what kind of community they got... then I go in. So the first I'm in, there is a horse, they are raising horse there so kids and people can experience how to get along with these animals, but I go see there and the horses are not good. No one there is taking care of them. And also, the horses, the conditions are not good, I'm here to learn something. So I go to another farm, the use natural fibers to create fabrics... I called them and go there to learn something. But there, they don't need volunteer... because they need skilled people and I can do nothing for them. But they can offer me another job, they are doing a website and sending products on their website. So I can take pictures, and uh... organise

MARIE: Yeah, the shipping.

ZHIRUO: Shipping, yeah... to all places

MARIE: Did you do it?

ZHIRUO: Yes, yes, and they don't pay me, they teach me something. I just did it for one week

MARIE: That was near Auroville

ZHIRUO: Yes that was near Auroville. Actually, transportation to get there is not good so I just hitch-hiked there. At first, when I was in India, I didn't even dare to go out during the night time because everyone just tell you: "don't go outside! Don't go outside! Dangerous! Dangerous everywhere!" Just after 2 weeks, I realised it's just normal people, everyone is the same, they have their happiness, their desire, their sorrows, it's all the same. So yeah everyone I met is super super nice... If I can't find my way, these guys take me to their homes, I don't even get worried. No problem. And from Auroville on, I went to these places...

MARIE: Kerala.

ZHIRUO: Kerala

MARIE: How did you like Kerala?

ZHIRUO: Oh! It's good, it's good. I waterboat on the backwaters of Kerala. Among the coconut trees. And I met an English lady, she had a community to support... like an orphanage and school kids... a kid school. I did volunteer work there again.

MARIE: How long?

ZHIRUO: About 15 days there... I stayed in the same homestay with this old lady. I got interested with an artist who was teaching the kids, so I joined them to the school. She took me there and I did volunteer work for them. There was about 40 kids there... I taught them English, and we were doing artefacts also... very nice stay; And we cook food together. The English lady cooked me macaronis. I cooked a little bit of Chinese food. And in the evening time... the

owner was an Indian guy. He cooked for us as well. And at night, we would listened to Johnny Cash together. It's super funny. Actually, I didn't stay in the homestay first, I booked another hostel but it was full... They forgot to tell me so the owner drove me across the whole city to his friends homestay and I stayed there. And uh... from there, yeah... so many cities I visited, everywhere I went, really everywhere. But at that point in the trip, I slowed down a little bit
MARIE: The travel.

ZHIRUO: Before that I felt a little bit like in a rush, visit here, visit here.

MARIE: Why did you think you were in a rush?

ZHIRUO: First I consider I had to see all of these things but from there I just slow down. Because at first, I didn't even plan to travel for this long.

MARIE: How long has it been when you were in Kerala?

ZHIRUO: Maybe around 6 months or something... not 6 months, more than that? More than six months

MARIE: So wait, 20 days in Iran, 1 month in Turkey, 15 days in Georgia, 1 month in India, 1 month in Indonesia, 10 days in Malaysia, Bangkok 15 days, 20 days in Myanmar.

ZHIRUO: So yeah, maybe a little more than 6 months.

MARIE: So you slow yourself down.

ZHIRUO: Slow... yes... Here there is some kind of stone temple... Erala, their is history relics around there so I went to 2 of them. And I go back to Mumbai again. I want to join a meditation course.

MARIE: A vipassanna?

ZHIRUO: Yes, a vipassanna. I applied for a class 2 months before, for several time. Finally I gave up because I want to do things and I thought it may be not so special. I just feel that maybe, I'm doing it because it's popular and not because I really want to do it. So I head north again to... oh... no, no... Goa, Goa

MARIE: Goa? How did you like Goa?

ZHIRUO: Goa, it's ok, I met some interesting people there.

MARIE: Did you try drugs?

ZHIRUO: No! it's strange things... I'm traveling in India already for quite a while and I met all of the travelers... you know... and no one comes to me to sell me drugs. No one, not even one... That's so funny! I just don't know why

MARIE: Did you want to try?

ZHIRUO: I tried, I tried once.

MARIE: Marijuana?

ZHIRUO: Marijuana yes

MARIE: Like joint?

ZHIRUO: Yes, joint.

MARIE: Did you like it?

ZHIRUO: Actually, I think that sometimes it feels good, but euh... just like... whatever. And from there, I went to Varanasi and then this places, very famous temple for sculpture Krajapur, I stayed there for about, more than a week. There is a temple... I loved their sculpture, all the patterns on the ceiling. The delicacy of it was super sophisticated so... so I stayed one week there, just to stare at the building... nothing to do.

MARIE: Did you manage this time to go to Kashmir?

ZHIRUO: Yes, Yes, Varanasi, Garajhur and there is another place quite good, then I went to Delhi and then to Rishikesh, I stayed one month there.

MARIE: So you did try yoga again?

ZHIRUO: Yes

MARIE: Did you liked it this time?

ZHIRUO: No, still not... But uh... I love to torture myself, I had a fantastic time there, even though I'm not that into yoga course, but I met sweet people in the yoga class, and uh... yoga it's not my thing, but uh... maybe I need to try again. But the time there was super nice, I went to Yoga class and join teacher, go trekking with other people. And uh... yeah...

there was Russian people, a lot of Russian people... They are really good at going out... So I just hanged with these guys in our hostel. So one month there and then go to Amrsitar and Dharamsala again, I did a month of volunteer work there.

[6544,6]MARIE: So then you had time to talk to...

ZHIRUO: Yes, I had plenty of time to talk to this local people about Tibet.

MARIE: They were refugees from Tibet, where they... like welcoming to you?

ZHIRUO: No, no, you know, they are super nice people, actually, I'm not going to interview them, I just stayed there in the street, and uh... buy something and have chat with them.

MARIE: Did you ever talk about the situation in Tibet...

ZHIRUO: No... they don't mention it too much. I don't... I don't... I never ask them the situation how they see the situation in Tibet... I ask them about their stories... how you came here and what they are doing now... things like that...

So yes, just strangers on the street, in shops and there was an old momo lady selling momo in the street in the street. I went to her home to help her doing momo. That was also the first time I had Chinese food... for so long. I'm so happy. So the momo lady, I also met another 2 guys for Germany and a girl from Italy, she was a journalist. And later, I went with her to do the volunteer work, so we bacame very good friends, we share the love a food. Everyday, after volunteering, we go back to restaurant and order a huge amount of food. Everytime we would order, it was like a mission impossible... but vertyme we finished, it was mission accomplished. That's a really nice time because we did volunteer work at an education center so we planned so kind of workshops to gather people to discuss the conditions of Tibetan people, to make people more aware of the non-violence ideal. We get a bunch a friends, it was such a nice time spent together. This people are really idealistic people, they can argue about things and get emotional about it... crying and stuff. In the morning, they read you palms line.

MARIE: It was Tibetan people?

ZHIRUO: No, it was more people from all over the world. Grandma from Germany, and Italian girl, and a gay from America. One month there and then I went down to Bir, paragliding the rest of my time in India was dedicated to Paragliding. I had planned to go to Kashmir but in the end... no.

MARIE: How long did you stay in Bir?

ZHIRUO: Almost 2 months, all the time left on my visa

MARIE: And you learnt how to paraglide?

ZHIRUO: Yeah, yeah... So I planned to go back... next February, I go back

MARIE: To Bir?

ZHIRUO: Yeah

MARIE: Do you planned to go to Pokhara?

ZHIRUO: No, not yet... Bir, nobody knows it yet.

MARIE: Do you have a paraglider?

ZHIRUO: Yes, I bought one. I love it...

MARIE: Are you involved in the paragliding community in China?

ZHIRUO: No, I don't even know one before I came here... here I met a few.

MARIE: Do you know a girl name Yan? She is from Beijing...

ZHIRUO: I know her, she is also from Chongqing... Yan...

MARIE: Yes, her boyfriend is...

ZHIRUO: Spanish, yes, Nando...

MARIE: This is crazy...

ZHIRUO: Actually I don't know her because I do paragliding when I went back to China I... want to know more... more things about paragliding in China, and I seach her blog and read it.

MARIE: Ok, I met her in Pokhara... but she is in Europe now.

ZHIRUO: She is also from Chongqing.

MARIE: Have you ever talk to her?

ZHIRUO: no, no, no, actually, I don't know her, i have never met her...

MARIE: I think she will be in Pokhara this winter...

ZHIRUO: Yes, she flies in Pokhara, I fly in Bir. Actually, I plan to go to Pokhara in Nepal, for the... also because I worked in Dharamsala, doing some volunteer work so I know a lot about Tibetan people and their history so I want to know Tibetan from different places, so I have got a plan, maybe, one day I will travel through Kashmir, India, and Nepal and Tibet and Sichuan because this Tibetan influence by different cultures, Eastern, India, Nepal and Chinese culture. That would be a totally different trip. So that's my plan.

MARIE: And from Bir? What did you do after Bir?

ZHIRUO: uh... I went back to Delhi, also my very best friend was getting married so I need to go back to attend her wedding. So I went to Kunming and then I was back in China and I... pay a visit to my parents, I spend almost one months and then I started again. Traveling around China

MARIE: Around China... where did you go?

6 - 1:56:11 > 2:06:04 [Voyage en Chine]

ZHIRUO: In China, like, first Beijing, actually I had been to Beijing and heading down south... I don't remember too much... I went South : Shandong, Shaanxi and then I went to here, Nanjing, Shanghai and then heading South Zhejiang, Fujian, Shenzhen, Guangdong and then to Guanxi... Actually, the boy who works here had a volunteer... I met him in a Guanxi hostel... I was reading books in a roof top all day long and he saw me once and when he came here he was like.. what!!

MARIE: Why did you take that coastal trip and how long?

ZHIRUO: Actually, it's random... 4 months, around 4 months.

MARIE: Was it for discovering China? or...

ZHIRUO: No, it was just to relax, visit friend, hanging around, something like that. And then... from Guanxi to Guizhou and fly back to Shangai again. From there an advertisement about a paragliding company here and also the boss runs a hostel and i wa thinking that I want to open one on my own too... so I made a call to see if I could do anything for him... They didn't need anybody but a day later, I called another hostel here... similar owner... later I get the boss of the hostel in Yunnan... He invited me here. So I took a flight...

MARIE: How long have you been working here?

ZHIRUO: 4 months

MARIE: Are you saving money to go travel more?

ZHIRUO: I'm not saving too much and the payment here is very low. I came here to learn all of these things, manage a hostel... First I came for paragliding

MARIE: You can paraglide in Dali?

ZHIRUO: Near Dali, an hour of driving. But the site isn't really good. So, but I get a few months more, I stay here until next february, then Bir

MARIE: How many month of visa do you have?

ZHIRUO: I don't know, in China, we can only apply to 3 months visa.

MARIE: In Nepal I think you can get up to 5 or 6 months visa

ZHIRUO: Yes, but in India, I can get advance course in India, and I know them very well. Every club, all the instructor there, the pilot, it's like my second hometown. I know people like the aunties who sell fruits and vegetables, yeah... it's a very small town.

MARIE: How is the community there? international?

ZHIRUO: uh... yeah... pilots from all over the world. I think it's as good as it is in Pokhara. Just Pokhara is more famous. But if you are a pilots, you know both because it's a worldwide international community. But I planned to visit Pokhara, it's much easier than Bir...

[7253,4]MARIE: Do you think you got better at traveling? Because you started in Iran...

ZHIRUO: I always think that I get better and uh but travel is more direct... more easy way to become aware, and uh... to know yourself better... it's the easiest way...

MARIE: Yeah? What did you learn about yourself on the way?

ZHIRUO: Much of things... I just discover who I was... I don't know, I become more likely believe in people. You know I read history and it's always so very pessimistic about society in the world...

MARIE: In general?

ZHIRUO: In general, but now I have a more positive view on the world.

MARIE: You trust people more?

ZHIRUO: Yes, yes... and it's more easy to enjoy my life. I used to be considered as a very serious person, but now I'm more easy...

MARIE: Do you... because you thought you were going to be a history teacher and then...

ZHIRUO: Life is pretty different from what I thought... 2 years ago I couldn't even speak English.

MARIE: And do you see yourself living somewhere and not moving anymore?

ZHIRUO: No difference for me...

MARIE: Are you thinking about settling somewhere?

ZHIRUO: Yeah... it depends, I have no plan

MARIE: Are your parents worried about your life? Do they understand?

ZHIRUO: They don't understand but I don't expect them to understand it either. I just need them to not feel worry about me. And that's ok... I can take care of me.

MARIE: Do they visit you?

ZHIRUO: No, I always visit them. Because I haven't settled.

MARIE: Ok, well thank you so very much, it was such a pleasure listining to you stories...