



China's Great Train: Beijing's Drive West and the Campaign to Remake Tibet

Abraham Lustgarten

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A vivid account of China's unstoppable quest to build a railway into Tibet, and its obsession to transform its land and its people

In the summer of 2006, the Chinese government fulfilled a fifty-year plan to build a railway into Tibet. Since Mao Zedong first envisioned it, the line had grown into an imperative, a critical component of China's breakneck expansion and the final maneuver in strengthening China's grip over this remote and often mystical frontier, which promised rich resources and geographic supremacy over South Asia.

Through the lives of the Chinese and Tibetans swept up in the project, *Fortune* magazine writer Abrahm Lustgarten explores the "Wild West" atmosphere of the Chinese economy today. He follows innovative Chinese engineer Zhang Luxin as he makes the train's route over the treacherous mountains and permafrost possible (for now), and the tenacious Tibetan shopkeeper Rinzen, who struggles to hold on to his business in a boomtown that increasingly favors the Han Chinese. As the railway—the highest and steepest in the world—extends to Lhasa, and China's "Go West" campaign delivers waves of rural poor eager to make their fortunes, their lives and communities fundamentally change, sometimes for good, sometimes not.

Lustgarten's book is a timely, provocative, and absorbing first-hand account of the Chinese boom and the promise and costs of rapid development on the country's people.



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