

China launches longest east-west high-speed railway –



Shangri-La lies along the rail line between Shanghai and Kunming. — AFP pic

SHANGHAI, Dec 31 — One of the world's longest bullet trains began operations in China this week, connecting the east coast to the country's southwest and cutting travel times by as much as 23 hours.

The Shanghai-Kunming line spans 2,252km in length and traverses five provinces — Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hunan, Guizhou and Yunnan.

As the longest east-west high-speed railway in China, the bullet train can travel at speeds of up to 330km/hr, cutting travel time between Shanghai in the east to Kunming in the southwest by nearly a full day, from 34 to 11 hours, reported state news agency Xinhua.

A longer north-south rail line, stretching 2,298km, began connecting travellers from Beijing to Guangzhou in 2012.

Meanwhile, *People's Daily Online* compiled a list of some must-see sites along the Shanghai-Kunming line, which they call the most beautiful high-speed rail route in China.

They include Dongchuan Red Land, also known as “God's palette” for its striking red terraced fields and land formations which extend for nearly 50km.

The Jiuxiang karst caves, a network of 100 caves, mountains, rivers and valleys, also fall on the Shanghai-Kunming line's route.

The rail line also crosses through Shangri-La, the capital of the Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Diqing, a region recognizable by its snow-capped mountains, lakes, pastures, flora and fauna.

The Shanghai-Kunming line is the latest major rail development to come out of China.

Earlier this fall, the *People's Daily* reported that China is planning to build the world's deepest and largest high-speed railway station at the most visited section of the Great Wall, in advance of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing.

The Badaling station will be built 102m below the surface, and span three floors, including separate levels for arrivals and departures, much like airports.

Two escalators will rise up to 62m to become the highest in the country.

The construction area alone measures 36,000 square meters, equal to five football fields. —
AFP-Relaxnews

See more at: <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/travel/article/china-launches-longest-east-west-high-speed-railway#sthash.8W2D4WL2.dpuf>