

Amy Towi Mae Tang
President
Fremont's Inc
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

Mapping Trade Routes and Exploring Cultural Crossroads along the Silk Road

Back in May 1997, Albuquerque and Lanzhou celebrated their new Sister City cooperation with a 10-day tour of China. My family and I joined the primarily Chinese American delegation from New Mexico, and together introduced ourselves to the homeland of our parents and ancestors.

Fast-forward 21 years, and Lanzhou welcomed my return once again representing my hometown of Albuquerque and country of the United States of America. Naturally, I compared every experience of the past month to my last visit to China and the current business climate in the States. Since my last visit, the entire world changed with the new millennium and the exponential evolution of technology. My smartphone, international data plan, and WeChat made a world of difference with exploring Lanzhou, meeting people, and traveling along the Silk Road this time around. And to think, I almost missed this once in a lifetime opportunity.



Only four months ago, I chanced upon an email briefly mentioning a fellowship fully funded by Gansu Province with Lanzhou as the home base. I inquired for more information immediately. I learned the general mission of the fellowship and program and submitted my application. It was only upon my acceptance that I understood the comprehensive scope and enormous opportunity of the Gansu International Fellowship Program. The Sister City and Chinese American organizations are eager to hear all about my month abroad, the details of the program, and the potential for increased cooperation. Happily, I will go home and report all changes, advancements, and possibilities Lanzhou and Gansu Province have to offer.

Cultural tourism is a very tangible, immediate opportunity for the Sister Cities. In fact, Gansu Province and the State of New Mexico share commonalities like colorful mountains (Danxia and Jemez Mountains), sculpted sand dunes (Gobi Desert and White Sands National Park), and ancient holy sites carved into cliffs (Dunhuang and Bandelier). The different timelines and historical narratives would prove fascinating for the traveler, researcher, and historian. With the revival of the internationally known Silk Road, U.S. tourists, academics, and businesspeople will be very interested in my travels and new knowledge of this little-known province. Likewise, I invited those who have not experienced the United States to adventure to the Wild West and learn of our civilizations before colonization. Rich histories, fine arts, and thriving traditions along with an abundance of delicious foods and beverages create the ideal cultural exchange between Gansu Province and the State of New Mexico.



Additionally, New Mexico and Gansu would greatly benefit from agricultural exchanges discussing new research and best practices. My state is known for the high-desert and arid conditions for growing crops and raising livestock. Universities, researchers, non-profit organizations, and established businesses continually study and strive to increase crop yields and livestock production while sustaining our limited resources. Now with my visits to Lanzhou's agricultural university and Gansu's research academy, I have contact information to facilitate international agricultural research and business connections.

Even now as I meet locals and foreigners, everyone asks why I spent a month in Lanzhou and how I became immersed in all that Gansu Province has to offer. I can speak to any field including natural resources, global business, construction, education, poverty alleviation, and tourism. All this knowledge is all due to the Gansu International Fellowship Program. Not only am I extremely thankful to the Foreign Affairs Office of Gansu Province for hosting such an extraordinary business and cultural exchange, I hold deep appreciation for bringing together a global family of significant talent and diversity.





My Gansu Fellowship Family covers the world, representing 18 countries and 6 continents, with a vast network of expertise in every industry and interest. Even with my MBA and Silicon Valley background, this is the first truly global collaboration of business, academic, and governmental know-how. I am very honored and humbled to hear their stories, experiences, challenges, and opportunities. Bringing a group of strangers together to form a big family is a massive undertaking, and for doing just that, I give abundant praise and admiration to Mama Jenny. Along with the encouragement of Mr. Li and assistance from Miss Fan and Mr. Wong, Jenny's diligence and dedication proved crucial to the ultimate success of our time in Gansu.

Ideally in the near future, I will return to Gansu Province, visit all my favorite stops along the Silk Road, and witness the revival of the great trade route and cultural crossroads. Now that I am back in the United States, I am busy preparing presentations and evaluating business opportunities; however, my heart is filled with love for my Gansu Fellowship Family and my far away home of Lanzhou.

