

See how China builds highways across deserts despite sandstorms

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Taklimakan is the second largest shifting sand desert in the world, measuring 1,000km long and 400km wide. Building a highway in this desert is a huge challenge because 85% of the desert is made up of shifting sand dunes, with large temperature differences and adverse weather conditions.

Sand, the most abundant resource in the desert, was used to lay the foundation for the highway that runs through the Taklamakan Desert. Workers then laid several layers of gravel and finally asphalt.

To prevent sand from covering the road, workers planted trees along the road to create a green belt to help stabilize the sand. A giant solar-powered irrigation system was also built to pump water from the ground to water the trees. There are maintenance stations every 4km along the route.

Construction of this 150km-long highway across the desert began on February 26, 2022 and is expected to be completed in October 2023.

As the Taklamakan Trans-Desert Highway runs along the western part of Thamo County, connecting Tazhong Town in the middle of the desert with the G315 National Highway in the south, it is considered a mega-project. It is expected to become a branch of the Lunmin Trans-Desert Highway, and when completed and put into operation, it is expected to help promote the development of the region's economy and tourism.

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