

Chinese convoy travels over 13,000 miles to drive new post-Brexit relations with UK as part of President Xi's 'Belt and Road' initiative

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- A group of Chinese business leaders are driving all the way from China to London to promote post-Brexit trade and cultural relations with UK and European neighbours
- The group of 40 TV executives are driving a fleet of 14 cars over 13,500 miles across the ancient 'Silk Road' – a trade passage that dates back over 2,000 years through Russia, Central Asia and in to Europe.
- Visit will mark the 5th anniversary of the Chinese Government's 'Belt and Road' Initiative to create a modern Silk Road with road, rail and maritime trade and logistics routes, launched by President Xi Jinping in October 2013.

Hi resolution images: <https://we.tl/t-NQ5F0aCADr> and <https://we.tl/t-wctOkiRbmD>

LONDON, XI'AN, 1 November 2018 -- An intrepid group of Chinese TV executives have started an ambitious journey to promote trade links with Europe by driving all the way from the ancient Chinese city of Xi'an to London in a period of 65 days, following the ancient trade route, the Silk Road.

Xi'an is a symbolic place for the journey to begin – which started in late August – as it marks the Silk Road's Eastern end and is home to the Terracotta Army.

The TV executives, whose channels together reach an audience of 150 million people, will drive over 13,500 miles, across 17 countries, in a fleet of specially commissioned rally cars that have been sponsored by the Shanghai Automobile Corporation.

The tour will take in 16 different countries stopping in Tashkent, Baku, Moscow, Minsk and Warsaw, before a whistle-stop tour of Western Europe including Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels, Geneva, Milan, Madrid, Lisbon and Paris before arriving in London on 1 November.

Mr Geng Zheng-Hao, Chairman of the China Cultural Investment Group Co., who is part of the travelling group, said:

"It has been an honour to visit so many countries on the way to London. We hope that by demonstrating that such journeys are possible, we will pave the way for far greater co-operation between the UK and China, with the UK opening up to a global trading future. The opportunities are immense: the total annual value of U.K.-China trade is about USD84 billion, much less than the USD211 billion in trade between Germany and China."

A special welcome ceremony on Thursday 1st November was held in Guildhall Yard of the City of London, where the fleet of cars arrived at the heart of the City, and a seal of the route map was unveiled and signed by the Lord Mayor Alderman Charles Bowman and Sheriff Liz Green, which is organised by the Allied-China Europe Society.

The Lord Mayor of London Charles Bowman said:

“These vehicles have made an epic journey of more than 13,000 miles from President Xi’s home province to the City of London, the natural western hub of the Belt and Road Initiative.

“Their arrival in Guildhall yard is hugely symbolic, and shows the potential of increasing links from East to West.

“It’s also testament to the importance China places on its relations with firms in the Square Mile.”

A Finale celebration on 2nd November at the Painter’s Hall in the City will mark the 5th Anniversary of Belt & Road Initiatives and the accomplishment of Silk Road Rally European Cultural Tour 2018.

UK-China relations have been in a ‘Golden Era’ since President Xi Jinping’s state visit to the UK in 2015, and Prime Minister May’s visit to China earlier this year. While trade and investment relations have increased steadily in the last two decades, there is plenty of room for growth. Britain, the world’s sixth largest economy, sends just 3% of its exports of goods and services to China. Meanwhile, just 7% of its imports are from China.

The visit marks the fifth anniversary of the start of President Xi’s ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ which he announced in October 2013. The programme, which consists of both maritime and land based trade and infrastructure programmes, has been supported by a USD40 billion Silk Road Fund established in 2014. As of July 2018, more than 100 countries and international organizations had signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with China.

In the first half of 2018, Chinese companies raised investment in 54 countries along the Belt and Road. The USD8.5 bn newly added investment represented an 11.8 percent increase year on year.

China’s trade with Belt and Road countries has exceeded USD5 trillion and outward direct investment has amounted to over USD60 bn, creating over 200,000 local jobs.

A key part of the trade links has been the expansion of the China-Europe freight rail service network, a crucial part of the BRI, has expanded rapidly. In January 2017, the first direct train service from China to London arrived in the UK completing a 7,400 mile journey.

For more information or interview requests, please contact:

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Images of the trip can be downloaded here: <https://we.tl/t-NQ5F0aCADr> (wetransfer)

Images of the welcome ceremony with the Lord Mayor:

<https://we.tl/t-wctOkiRbmD>