

# February 2018



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**SALES PRICE** - The median sales price of existing homes sold in the United States in December 2017 was \$246,800, down from an all-time peak median sales price of \$263,300 from June 2017. The low point for this statistic during the 2008-12 real estate crisis: \$154,600 in January 2012 (source: National Association of Realtors).

**WHY GO?** - Just 36% of 32,585 currently enrolled college students are “confident” that they will graduate from college “with knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the workplace” (source: Strada-Gallup Survey).

Every year, I have clients and friends tell me about goals they’d like to accomplish, challenges they intend to conquer, or places they plan on visiting. I love hearing about their fondest hopes and dreams, because *my* goal is to help people achieve theirs.

There are two types of goals that seem very popular. The first involves travel. Most of my clients want to “see the world.” They want to visit and experience the different cultures, landmarks, and sights that make our planet the lovely jewel that it is.

The second type of goal involves mankind’s capacity to create. By this I mean that many people feel the urge to build or make something with their own two hands. It could be anything from a treehouse for the grandkids to an oil painting to hang on the wall. Some people even dream of restoring a classic car or building their own cabin.

Recently, I came across a story that involves both these two goals. It’s the story of the *Guoliang Tunnel*; a place that combines both unparalleled natural scenery and the amazing capacity mankind has to create. The tunnel is so interesting; I thought I’d share the story of it with you.

The village of Guoliang lies in the Taihang Mountains in central China. For most of its history, it could only be reached by a very rugged path carved into the mountainside. In many respects, the village was isolated from the rest of China. As the rest of the country began to grow and modernize around them, Guoliang was effectively left stuck in the past.

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## **MOSTLY SHORT -**

The 3-day government shutdown that ended on 1/22/18 was the nation's 13th shutdown since 1980, i.e., an average of 1 shutdown every 3 years. 10 of the 13 shutdowns lasted 3 days or less, another lasted 5 days, another lasted 16 days and the longest lasted 21 days (source: Congress).

**REALLY RICH -** When measured in November 2017, the 3 wealthiest Americans (Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos and Warrant Buffett) were worth \$249 billion, more than the combined net worth of the bottom half of the US population, i.e., 160 million Americans (source: The Guardian).

**HIGH MARK -** Total outstanding credit card debt of Americans reached \$1.023 trillion in November 2017, a record high, exceeding the previous record high of \$1.021 trillion from April 2008 (source: Federal Reserve).

This wasn't a situation anyone in the village wanted to be in. For years, the villagers lobbied the government to build a modern road that could connect Guoliang with the lands below, but to no effect. That left the people with two options: abandon Guoliang, or build the road themselves.

They chose the latter.

Building a road themselves, however, was a monumental task. For one thing, it required them to actually tunnel *through* the side of a mountain. Second, because they had no access to modern construction equipment, the job had to be done *by hand*. Third, to afford the supplies they would need, the town had to sell off many of their animals and other provisions.

But necessity is the mother of invention, and will-power the father of creation. With that in mind, thirteen of Guoliang's citizens worked for over five years to hollow a road out of the rock; scraping, chiseling and carving, measuring the work in feet, inches, and centimeters.

When they finished, the outside world realized that the people of Guoliang had not only created a road, but a work of art. The tunnel they had fashioned was held up by natural rock pillars, creating a series of "windows" in the side of the mountain. It's a sight that no one who has seen it could ever forget.

The result was the perfect melding of lovely scenery with human drive and ingenuity. The road not only connected Guoliang with the outside world, but ushered in a new era of unprecedented tourism for the entire area.

Not every story has to have a lesson, but if there's a lesson here, it's that no matter who you are or what your circumstances, you can achieve whatever goal you set your mind to. Whether that goal is to visit the natural wonders of our planet, build something with your own two hands, or combine the two together, nothing is out of reach. If the people of Guoliang can do it, you and I can as well.

To see pictures of the Guoliang Tunnel, visit this website:  
<http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/guoliang-tunnel>.

I wish you the best as you work toward your own goals in life. Please let me know if there's ever anything I can do to help!

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