The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about travelling

路 (radical 足 zhu = foot) = 道路 (dao lu = way/path-road). In Chinese philosophy, 道 (dao = way/path) = “Tao” (“the Way”) in “Taoism”.

路線 (lu xian = road-thread/line) means route or political line. 路程 (lu cheng = road-duration) = length of journey. 走路 (zou lu = walk-road) means travelling or going on foot. 鐵路 (tie lu = iron-road) means railway. 公路網 (gong lu wang = public-road-net) = highway network. 馬路 (ma lu = horse-road) means autoway. 行人道 (xing ren dao = walk-persons-road) means pavement.

The Silk Road is 綠綢之路 (si chou zhi lu = silk-satin-road). “路遙知馬力” (lu yao zhi ma li = road-far-know-horse-strength) praises someone who can bear prolonged hardship.

Pronunciation: lu (Putonghua, 4th tone), lo (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: road

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