



Stage 4: 20 Sept – 12 Oct 2009

Low China

Chengdu - Kunming

£620

(NB discounts for longer trips, see the “dates and prices” pdf)

Climbing highlights:

Yangshuo
Kunming

Travel highlights:

Chengdu
Pandas
Mekong river
Buddhist temples

Read on for the full story...





We next go in search of the region's most famous creature: the Giant Panda. After a brief stop at the Giant Panda research and breeding base in Chengdu we'll get back on the road for the 2-day drive to one of the top destinations of the entire trip: scenic Yangshuo gorge in Guilin.

Guilin is where the Li River meanders through an abstract landscape of limestone karst peaks and pinnacles. There is a brief history of climbing in the area on some of the most spectacular formations such as Moon hill, a massive arch where Sam Lightner and Todd Skinner put up 'Micky Mao's' up the right hand

side of the arch, and more recently Neil Gresham pioneered a simply astonishing roof line straight under the arch from one side to the other.

Todd Skinner said of Guilin at the end of his trip, "One more day of pumping out at moon hill had already come to a close. So much rock, so little arms."

Leaving the area after running out of bolts and time, they enthused about the massive amount of unclimbed rock on the 20km stretch of river from Guilin town to Yangshuo where we will base ourselves. More and more climbers are likening the scene at Yangshuo to the early days at Thailand, and the potential is similar:

Alastair Lee, on PlanetFear.com, said "Running through the paddy fields the rock looks clean, sunbaked and hard. The setting is quite unbelievable, a precise ideal of climbing aesthetics; a hybrid of a Vietnam film set and Phranang Bay's Thai towers. The Yangshuo area has it all, roadside crags with a range of bolted routes, lines through bizarre karst shapes and stalactites with outlooks more surprising than Atlantis under the sea. It's the climbing tourist's nirvana. Easy approaches to an increasing number of well bolted 6a -7b routes on great rock, dualled with budget living in one of the world's most interesting cultures and an untapped potential that leave the doors open for Yangshuo to develop into Asia's no.1 climbing area."



On rest days we are spoilt for choice for what to do, we can take the canoe that is on the expedition vehicle or hire them to take a memorable trip up the winding Li River. Alternatively you can join the other billion Chinese people on bicycles to pedal around the region. As a bit of a travelers' Mecca there is also a good selection of cafes serving everything from pizza to boiled snake.



It'll be hard to tear ourselves away from Yangshuo but yet more top quality climbing is just around the corner, at the Kunming Stone Forest.

On the way to Kunming we will enter the colourful tribal areas near the Vietnam and Laos borders at the head of the Mekong River. Passing through low mountains covered by terraced rice paddies, we will stop at Huanguoshu falls, the highest in Asia, with the nearby rock village and massive dragon palace caves.

The first climbing area developed at Kunming was the unique Stone Forest - see the picture below - but this has now been superseded by development at the western hills and fumin canyon.

We will camp nearby and spend a few days exploring the mixed sandstone and limestone routes in this quiet, untouristy corner of china.

This is the final climbing destination in our epic 2 month circuit of China. From the roof of the world to desert oasis towns, and from the Terracotta Army to the otherworldly limestone of Yangshuo, China will be engraved on your memory as we pass through the bustling border into Laos.

But that is the subject of the next stage...



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That was Stage 4: China and Vietnam. From here, the Big Red Truck heads ever deeper into Southeast Asia.



For further information get in touch with Duncan or download further details:



www.climbhotrock.com dunc@climbhotrock.com +44 (0) 7812 086099