



GETTING TO THE TOP

For city-dwellers longing for fresh air, Fanjing Mountain with its vast forests is a natural oxygen bar. **Xu Wei** reports from Tongren, Guizhou province.

For anyone who wants to see the best of China's southwest, Fanjing Mountain (Fanjingshan) is a must-visit. But watch out, the best is not for the faint-hearted.

For city-dwellers longing for fresh air, the mountain, with its vast forests, is a natural oxygen bar. For adventure seekers, the mountain peak, with its almost vertical and slippery steps, offers a challenge guaranteed to quicken the heartbeat.

As you approach, you see the well-preserved mountain surrounded by dense forests and creeks with their almost crystal clear water.

The mountain also provides a habitat for the gray snub-nosed monkey, or Guizhou snub-nosed monkey, and *Abies fanjingshanensis*, a species of conifer found only in the mountain area.

As you ascend the mountain by cable car, you find yourself surrounded by thick clouds and dense canopies below you.

As you are halfway up the mountain, the evergreen forests, dotted with stunning wildflowers, offer you a spectacular view of the landscape.

On the horizon, valleys, rocks, cliffs and peaks start to reveal themselves.

The isolated stone peaks, which are barely visible from the foot of the mountain, now appear in a way that seems to defy gravity.

I was told by a guide that I had hit the jackpot as I was welcomed by warm sunshine on the top of the mountain.

If you want to go further up the mountain to the top of the stone peaks, you walk, and this marks the start of the most thrilling part of the trip.

Along the snaking road up the mountain, there are occasional reminders for you to watch out for deadly snakes. There are six species of venomous snakes in the area, so make sure you avoid the bushes.

The best way to appreciate the beauty of the mountain is by heading to the top — the Hongyunjin peak.

If you take the north path to the top, which is steeper and more dangerous, it offers a spectacular view.

As you climb, you find that the way up has become so steep that you are forced to use both hands and feet to climb.

The path then becomes so narrow and steep that it only allows one person to move.

I had to overcome my fear to continue ascending. The final few steps are a bit of an anticlimax. And then there you are: a whole world of forests, clouds and more peaks on the horizon.

Amazingly, two Buddhist temples sit atop the peak, which also partly explains why the mountain is a holy place for Buddhists.

You cannot help but wonder how anyone managed to build a temple there.

The guide told me the experience is heightened by constantly changing weather, including seasonal and daily variations.

The mountain, already a National Nature Reserve of China, has also been nominated as a World Natural Heritage Site, and local authorities are making efforts to improve the facilities in the area.

The mountain offers different views during different seasons, but you might want to avoid the national holidays as the scenic area will be crowded. Think twice before you bring your young children atop the peaks.

Contact the writer at xuwei@chinadaily.com.cn
Yang Jun contributed to the story.



Tourists who want to ascend to the peak of Fanjing Mountain in Guizhou province need to be strong both physically and mentally, but the spectacular view with two Buddhist temples sitting atop makes the trip worthwhile.
PHOTOS BY YANG JUN / CHINA DAILY AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Canyoning becomes popular in Nepal

NUWAKOT, Nepal — Bulbule Waterfall located in Nuwakot district, about 35 kilometers away from Nepal's capital Kathmandu, was once known as a place for taking cool baths during the summer.

But as soon as the Nepal Canyoning Association explored the 40-meter high waterfall, the place turned into a canyoning destination.

On a recent weekend, over 150 Nepalese and foreign visitors were in Bulbule as part of the 3rd National Canyoning Rendezvous 2017.

The canyoning fiesta was not just about sliding down a rope through a waterfall to a pool below, but included hiking, scrambling, abseiling, jumping and swimming.

"Nepal is blessed with thousands of rivers and waterfalls, but we have not been able to utilize them fully. We want to develop and promote canyoning destinations and make Nepal the best spot for adventure tourism," says Rajendra Lama, the president of the Nepal Canyoning Association.

Though canyoning has been gaining in popularity in Nepal since 2002, it gained official recognition and an organizational structure only in 2007 after the setting up of the Nepal Canyoning Association.

Today, there are more than 70 travel agencies under the association, and more than 30 canyons have been explored across the country.

Travel agencies provide canyoning packages in mountainous districts like Sindhupalchowk, Kavre, Nuwakot, Lamjung and Syangja.

Within Kathmandu valley, canyoning activities are available in Sundarimal, in the lap of Shivapuri National Park.

The Himalayan nation is regarded as the second-richest country after Brazil in water resources as it has more than 6,000 rivers, lakes, ponds, waterfalls and springs. But despite such resources, adventurers complain that the adventure activities available are mostly limited to boating and rafting.

Karna Bahadur Lama, the general secretary of the Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal, says: "Nepal has a unique geography and richness in natural resources. And since tourism is the backbone of the country's economy, we need to tap into the opportunities to attract more foreign tourists."

In 2016, earthquake-ravaged Nepal attracted 729,550 foreign tourists, which is 24 per cent more than 2015, the year of the devastating earthquake.

With tourism gradually recovering, entrepreneurs say that activities like canyoning can be a great way to attract and engage foreign tourists.

Canyoning is equally popular with Nepali youngsters. One of the major reasons for its growing popularity is social media, says the Nepal Canyoning Association.

"When we put out posts about the canyoning festival on social media, we received a huge amount of feedback and response from youngsters. Social media is a powerful tool for tourism promotion," the canyoning association president Lama says.

Nepal's canyoning follows international standards. There are more than 30 professional instructors in the country who have received training from American and French professionals, and who are familiar with the country's streams.

During the recent canyoning festival, more than a dozen instructors and volunteers handled the navigation and facilitated the outdoor activities.

While it was the first canyoning experience for most of the participants, they say that it is an unforgettable experience.

"It is the experience of a lifetime. I was scared initially but with proper instructions I got down safely. I would like to do it again," says 22-year-old student Sarose Chaudhary.

XINHUA



A woman rappels down a waterfall during a canyoning excursion in Nepal, blessed with rich resources of rivers and waterfalls. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY