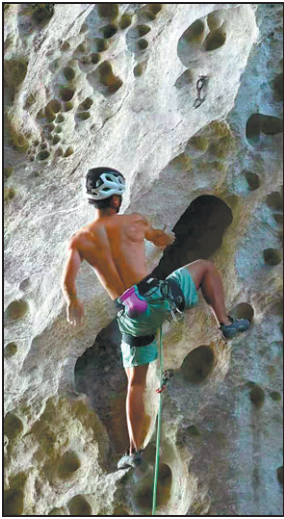


SPORTS



“This year, seven new routes were set in the cave, and two of them are still on my list to tackle. I hope to return and take on those next time,” said Song Xiao, a 29-year-old outdoor climbing enthusiast, standing at the entrance of Chuanshang Cave, which is located in Southwest China’s Guizhou province.

This marks Song’s second consecutive year climbing at the site, drawn to the unique natural features and technical demands of the routes.

Chuanshang Cave, part of the Getu River Scenic Area in Ziyun county, Anshun city of Guizhou province, is a massive natural cavern measuring 50 meters high, 70 meters wide and 137 meters long.

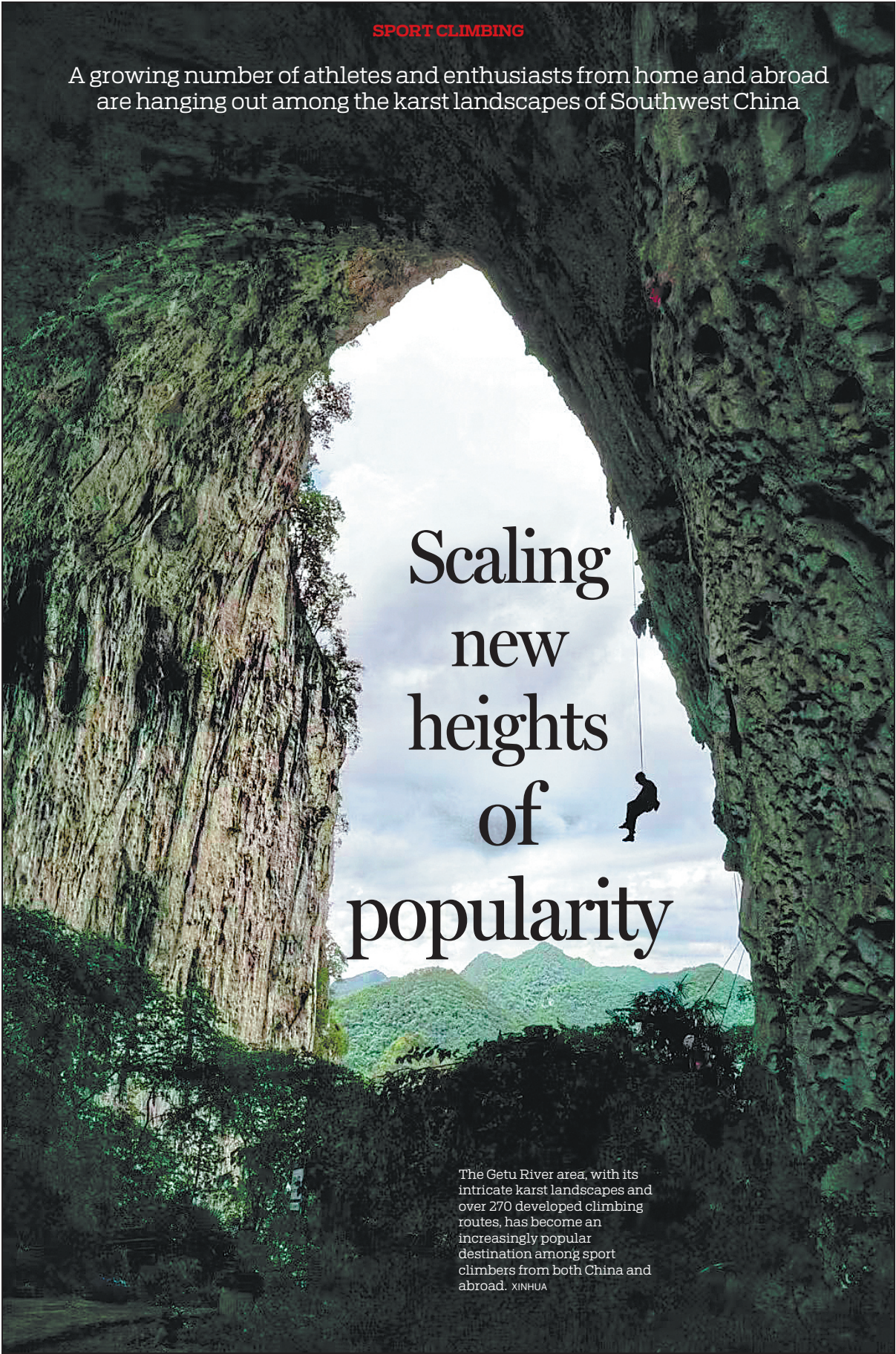
Perched high on a mountainside, the cave appears as a gaping hole, naturally bored into the rock over the course of millennia.

Below it lies an even larger cave, Dachuan Cave, that reaches 116m in height, 25m in width and stretches for 270m.

The two are connected by a tunnel, forming a unique “cave-within-a-cave” structure.

The Getu River area, with its intricate karst landscape, offers over 270 developed climbing routes ranging in difficulty from 5A to 9A+. This region is also known for its generations of Miao ethnic “spidermen” or *goro* in the Miao dialect, who traditionally practiced free solo climbing to collect swallow nests and fertilizer from cliff faces. This centuries-old skill, once essential for survival, has now evolved into a cultural performance at the scenic area.

As Song and other climbers scaled Chuanshang Cave with safety equipment, Wang Mingde, the 35-year-old son of a renowned local spiderman, performed unprotected solo climbs in Dachuan Cave below. While the *goro* tradition faces challenges in inheritance, the growing popularity of modern sport climbing offers a new pathway for preserving these skills.



A growing number of athletes and enthusiasts from home and abroad are hanging out among the karst landscapes of Southwest China

Scaling new heights of popularity

The Getu River area, with its intricate karst landscapes and over 270 developed climbing routes, has become an increasingly popular destination among sport climbers from both China and abroad. XINHUA



Song, a champion in natural wall climbing from Sichuan province, was first captivated by outdoor climbing at age 20. Over the past eight years, he has competed across China and now works as a coach at five climbing gyms in Chengdu.

“The number of climbers has surged in the last two years,” he noted, adding that the sport attracts people of all ages and professions who start in gyms before venturing outdoors.

The rise of climbing events has also boosted the sport’s profile. In September 2024, Song returned to Getu River for a series of climbing competitions, where he met young athletes from over 20 countries and regions, including the United States, Australia and Chile, for the 2024 IFSC Climbing Youth World Championships.

An American climber named Juliet, who attempted multiple routes with her mother and coach Tiffany, described the cave as “diverse, challenging and ideal for improving skills”, while praising the stunning scenery.

As one of China’s most typical karst regions, Guizhou has actively promoted itself as a hub for mountain sports, hosting international climbing events like last month’s 2025 IFSC Asian Youth Championships and the upcoming Guiyang leg of the 2025 IFSC Climbing World Cup on Sept 12-13.

“At a climbing base in the city of Liupanshui, I even saw groups of enthusiasts in their 50s and 60s from South Korea waiting in line to climb,” Song said. “The competition-driven momentum in Guizhou is undeniable.”

Having also participated in the recently concluded 2025 “Climbing Week” event, Song emphasized that such activities provide more opportunities for climbers and play a key role in popularizing the sport.

“The allure of natural wall climbing lies in the dialogue between humans and nature, and in continually pushing one’s limits,” he said.

XINHUA

BASKETBALL

Cave basketball tournament courts widespread interest

GUIYANG — Cars lined up in long queues, as thousands of spectators from across China flocked to watch a unique basketball tournament held deep inside a cave in Southwest China’s Guizhou province.

The inaugural Yanhe Cave Basketball Invitational Tournament was staged in Fengming Cave in Cuantang village, Yanhe Tujia autonomous county, Tongren city.

Situated near the junction of Guizhou, Hunan, Chongqing and Hubei, the event brought together 12 grassroots teams.

Banners along the road to Cuantang village from Guanzhou town proclaimed the event “a must-visit destination for basketball fans”.

Cars traveling along the winding mountain road leading into the village displayed license plates from provinces as far away as Zhejiang.

From above, Cuantang village, located 17 kilometers from the county seat, is surrounded by rolling mountains.

At its heart sits Fengming Cave, transformed into a tournament venue with a standard basketball court, bright lights and bleachers packed with fans.

Chants of encouragement from commentators and supporters echoed as players ran onto the court. The cave ceiling was decorated with ornaments, and the roar of the



Fans from all over China gather in Fengming Cave in Cuantang village, Yanhe Tujia autonomous county, Tongren city, Guizhou province, to watch local grassroots teams compete in the inaugural Yanhe Cave Basketball Invitational Tournament. XINHUA



crowd filled the cavernous space. Cuantang village Party chief Wang Chunnian said the cave’s seating capacity of 2,500 to 3,000 was far exceeded during the event.

More than 5,000 attended the Aug 25 opening ceremony, and over 6,000 came for the Aug 30 finals.

“The cave basketball tournament has paved a new path for integrating culture, sports and tourism in Cuantang village,” Wang said.

The village, home to about 1,500 residents, has long relied on rice and corn farming, with locals seeking

new opportunities for growth.

Guizhou, known for its karst landforms, has, in recent years, promoted outdoor mountain sports such as marathons, trail running, mountain biking, climbing and paragliding.

“Caves are a hallmark of karst topography. Counties like Ziyun and Libo have successfully developed climbing, concerts and other cultural and sports activities, gaining market traction,” Wang said.

Inspired by those successes, Cuantang villagers began pooling funds in 2023 to convert Fengming

Cave into a basketball venue. Progress stalled due to lack of financing, but momentum returned after nearby Yangnan village unveiled a 5,000-square-meter cave court in July 2024 that attracted national attention.

With new funding and government approval, construction of the Fengming Cave court began in April 2025 and was completed in August.

Once a cool refuge in summer, the cave now combines the natural landscape with modern sporting facilities.

“The temperature inside remains between 15 and 25 C all year round,” Wang said.

“Coupled with its shelter from wind and rain, this cave court, compared to modern venues, has become a must-visit destination for tourists from near and far.”

Players and fans alike embraced the novelty.

“It was my first time playing in a cave — the cool temperature, enthusiastic crowd and amazing atmosphere made it unforgettable!” Exclaimed Peng Hongmiao, leader

of the Hunan Yongshun team.

“I didn’t miss a single match from the opening day to the finals. Watching basketball in a cave was truly an eye-opening experience,” said fan Tian Xiangyu, who traveled from Hunan by bus.

To enhance the experience, organizers included interactive performances featuring Tujia ethnic dances and songs.

“These performances deepened my understanding of my hometown’s culture,” said Chen Xiyang, a 13-year-old student.

The most direct benefit the nearby villagers got was increased income. Around 30 to 40 stalls and snack shops inside and outside the cave saw brisk business. Zhang Zheng, a vendor from a nearby village, earned around 5,000 yuan (\$700) selling popcorn, sausages and soft drinks.

“The inaugural cave basketball tournament has brought economic benefits to the villagers,” Wang said.

Cuantang plans to host regular basketball events in the future, using them to link sports, culture and tourism and to create a sustainable path for locals to stay healthy, entertained and economically empowered.

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