escape from grey
CITY >>>
4> American Extreme Sports Park
+dry skiing, skateboarding, downhill biking, more
5> Jincheng Park
+a large swath of park, intersected by highway
28> Dialogue in the Dark
+simulation of the blind experience
34> Basi de Hen: New Cafés
+three styles for you to choose from

PEOPLE >>>
6> Zhilam Hostel
+americans in kangding
10> Mandarin Made Easier
+putting the fire in your chinese studies

TRAVEL >>>
8> Qingcheng Shan
+a strenuous hike up a mountain
29> Litang Horse Festival
+photos by dan sandoval
32> Shangli
+an off-the-beaten-path old town

CHENGDOO citylife Magazine is >>>
manager + ad sales
+ JESSE BRETT
editor
+ JANE VOODIKON
art direction
+ GALLO
photographers
+ LEON CHEN, MICHAL PACHNIEWSKI,
LAURA SCOTT, BRIAN WYTCHERLEY
columnists
+ DIANE FLICK, CATHERINE PLATT, TAN JUAN,
LUCY WANG
illustrations
+ JESSIE BRETT
classifieds compiler
+ LAUREN FREEMAN
cover
+ by DAN SANOVA

how to reach us >>>
+ mobile: 8008357426 (only call for ads)
+ e-mail: chengdu@gmail.com
+ online: www.Chengdu-Magazine.com
back issues available for download
office:
4 Jianguo Road
Chengdu Image Art Center-
New Times Cultural Institute
建设南支路4号 东郊记忆舞台东路 成都影象艺术中心

illustrations
+ JESSIE BRETT
classifieds compiler
+ LAUREN FREEMAN
cover
+ by DAN SANOVA

All content copyright © 2013 CHENGDOO citylife
CHENGDOO citylife is published 12 times per year.
We welcome unsolicited contributions.

Although the Jincheng Park (锦城公园) is currently Chengdu’s largest park, it’s remained relatively under the radar in local media perhaps in the shadow of the opening of the Global Center for which it, along with the American Extreme Sports Park, serves as a back yard of sorts. The park is laid out on a 2 kilometer by 1 kilometer patch of land bordered by Jincheng Road to the north and the Tianfu Yi Jie real estate project to the south. Each of its four connected parts has wide sidewalks wrapping around fish-filled lakes—a perfect place for a stroll or a jog, or even a bike ride during non-peak hours (that is, any time apart from evenings and weekends).

At the junction of Jiannan Dadao and Jincheng Dadao is a newly built large Tibetan Buddhist temple called Jinci Temple (近慈寺) whose history dates back four centuries. The attached monastery can be found in an older, rundown temple building two minutes’ walk south.

Some areas of the park are still in development, but for the moment it’s relaxing despite the highway cutting right through the middle and speakers blaring Chinese pop music. As there are no shops in the park or its immediate vicinity, park visitors are advised to bring their own snacks and drinks.

Directions
Take Metro Line 1 to the Incubation Park station (孵化园) or Jincheng Plaza (锦城广场)/Global Center. Walk west 10 minutes until you reach the northwestern entrance to the park, just behind the Global Center.

---

The American Extreme Sports Park

Although the Jincheng Park (锦城公园) is currently Chengdu’s largest park, it’s remained relatively under the radar in local media perhaps in the shadow of the opening of the Global Center for which it, along with the American Extreme Sports Park, serves as a back yard of sorts. The park is laid out on a 2 kilometer by 1 kilometer patch of land bordered by Jincheng Road to the north and the Tianfu Yi Jie real estate project to the south. Each of its four connected parts has wide sidewalks wrapping around fish-filled lakes—a perfect place for a stroll or a jog, or even a bike ride during non-peak hours (that is, any time apart from evenings and weekends).

The least extreme section and yet biggest business of the Extreme Sports Park is the Chengdu football park with several well-maintained fields of different sizes. Other parts of the park are currently in planning and development phases, including a go-kart track, an outdoor parkour court, and a climbing range.

Entrance & opening times
Chengdu Football Park
Open daily from 10 a.m. to midnight
RMB210-600 for 90 minutes depending on day/time; 10-20 percent discount for regulars
Tel. 86912686/1351316941

Four Seasons Dry Ski Slope
Open daily from 1 to 11 p.m. (dinner break 6-7 p.m.)
RMB120 (100 until 6 p.m. on weekdays); 20 percent discount if you bring your own equipment; 20-50 percent discount for members and regulars

Bike Park
Open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (weekends 7 p.m.)
RMB50 (members RMB40)

Indoor Skate Park
Closed at 6ish; later on weekends
RMB19 (members RMB29)

Directions
Jincheng Dadao (锦城大道) at Xinyuan Dadao (新园大道) (approximately 30 minutes on foot west of the Metro Line 1 Incubation Park Station/孵化园).

Photos by Michal Pachniewski
Why did you choose Kangding?
Stephanie: We knew for us to make a business we had to be close to a big city to catch the expats who want to have vacations. Another reason is that to transport goods to our restaurant we can’t be too far out. If we moved to a little Tibetan town like Litang or Tenggong, we would take all the business from the locals, and we don’t want to do that. We want it to be a big enough town where we can fit in the business infrastructure without taking away from one particular group.
Stephanie: We could feel free to compete in the environment and still help out.
Kristopher: We’re in a very good place. Other hostels in the area can come to learn new ideas, learn to make their own chocolate cakes. So we help them with their businesses, and it feels very cooperative rather than competitive.
We love it.
Stephanie: Our main thing is to help locals develop tourism in a way they can benefit and also protect the environment.

But most travelers don’t seem to fancy staying in Kangding longer than overnight.
Stephanie: Actually there’s a whole section of traveling that the Chinese do, but the foreigners don’t do yet, because it’s not published in the guidebooks. The whole Gongga Shan mountain area is very lightly travelled, it’s really amazingly beautiful. Climbing, hiking, nobody goes there.
Kristopher: More and more of our guests end up staying in Kangding longer. In Kangding longer, there is a lot of stuff to do.

So what’s the best thing to do in Kangding?
Kristopher: Eat some pizza in our hostel and watch a good movie.
Stephanie: [Laughs.] No. The city itself is not that pretty. There are some monasteries.
Kristopher: And like every Tibetan town, Kangding has town dances at night and a few nice bars.

What must-eats in the city?
Kristopher: You know the Are [Tibetan] restaurant? There’s one with the same owner [like the one in Chengdu], there’s really nice hotpot and a vegetarian restaurant, and a nice café just opened by foreigners—Himalayan Coffee and Trading Company.
Stephanie: They are the only other foreigners in town—they have a bill at our hostel, and we have a bill at their café.

What are the surroundings of the hostel?
Kristopher: We’re surrounded by three mountains. Each one is a different level of [climbing] difficulty. Paoma Mountain, which is the famous love mountain in China, has cable cars going up and a park on the top and a museum at the bottom. It’s quite nice for older guests, people with disabilities who can’t really walk but want to have some beautiful views. And the second mountain is the one behind our hostel. You walk one-and-a-half hours through some beautiful forest, to get to some grassland with yaks, and see some snow mountains. You can go farther and come to a pristine valley on the other side, and be all by yourself, all day in beautiful nature. The third mountain is called Buddha Mountain. It’s quite steep, but there is a trick to it. You can take an old mining road way up the mountain, walk through a mine to the other side of the ridge, and from the top look up to Gongga Mountain. It’s beautiful, especially if you get to drive up, not walk up. It’s also quite extreme, most climbers end up in the hospital.

Gongga Shan is the 41st-highest mountain, and outside the Himalayas, it’s among the top five in the world. On average one or two foreign climbers die a year. It’s such a draw for the climbers to come, but it’s also quite dangerous. Three weeks ago, we had 30 Swiss mountaineers over to climb Mount Gongga from different sides. We help the climbers get the permit, but we don’t take them up. We also rent tents and equipment. There are beautiful areas for a city family to go out—there are hill-excursions 15 kilometers from here, by a beautiful riverside. You can set up a big tent, have hot chocolate by the fire.

What kind of guests do you meet at the hostel?
Kristopher: We meet people from all over the world. We’ve met some of the world’s leading mountaineers, archaeologists, biologists collecting butterflies have been out there, you name it.
We like Chengdu families coming up. It gives our kids someone to play with, and they get away from the big city. I think our favorite guests are the ones we have personal connections to, maybe we happened to go on a family picnic and invited them to come with us. There are some really precious guests, nice people who are looking for a home experience. When travelling, often that’s the most difficult thing to get. The best compliment a guest can give us is “It feels like home.”

Have you had any strange guests?
Kristopher: [There was a guest] from Japan, he took the bus 12 hours from Chengdu to Kangding.
Stephanie: He arrived at 5 p.m. or something like that, and he went right to bed. He didn’t see the next day at noon he woke up and came upstairs: What time is it? 12. Oh, I gotta catch my bus to Chengdu!
Kristopher: He didn’t see anything.

How did you get started with the hostel?
Kristopher: We started studying Tibetan at the Minyak Konka, the tallest of these mountains and within 60 kilometers of the city, there as natural scenery; it sits at an altitude of 2,500 meters and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilometers of the city, there is a Tibetan name, Minyak Konka), the tallest of these mountains, and within 60 kilo
Qingcheng Shan: Sacred Mountain
Part 1: The Back Mountain

The Way that can be told of is not an Unvarying Way
The names that can be named are not the unvarying names

If these famous lines have been puzzling you since your first lecture on the Tao Te Ching, chances are a visit to Qingcheng Mountain will not bring you closer to clarity. But feeling the serenity in your legs the day after your pilgrimage may fill you with regret.

Indeed, Qingcheng Shan can be experienced differently depending which path you chose, the “back mountain”—the closer and commonly recognized as easier of the two—offers a shorter hike and more Taoist sites of importance. It’s also more crowded with tourists and more expensive, but most likely your choice if you’re only out for a day trip or generally not a hiking fanatic.

To the left of the back mountain’s main gate is the ticket toll booth and to the right is the Tang dynasty that nowadays functions as a ticket office. From the back mountain’s main gate, next to a deified Laozi, is said to have started the gingko trees are a living fossil of that area, a dispute so delicate that the emperor had to intervene and ruled out the Buddhist missionaries for dominance in the area, a dispute so delicate that the emperor had to intervene and ruled out the Buddhist missionaries for dominance in the area.

On the right-hand side downhill from the entrance. For RMB40 you can light a big candle, or you could have your name engraved on a lock or your fortune told in Chinese. Hikers pass you on their way down with sweat-soaked T-shirts glued to their bodies. There are just a few more last steps away from the peak and the Laozi Pavilion (lit. Lao’s Hall). Its rooftop, once accessible to hikers, is now closed off, so all there is are the peaks another look down the valleys from 1,260 meters up, but you won’t see too far as the subtropical forests constant evaporation surounds the summit even on Chengdu’s rarer sunny days.

Once you descend from the peak you can choose to make a right turn to take the same way down, skipping all the other temples and pavilions by short-cutting with the cable car, or you can turn left and engage in a longer hike downhill, which doesn’t go straight down but gently undulates up and down. Along the way you’ll cross paths with fat squirrels and various birds as well as the abundance of grasshoppers, beetles, mantis, millipedes, butterflies, and other insects that live on the mountain.

You’ll be well advised to make a right turn and experience the mountain hike counterclockwise. That way, the cable car can take you halfway up the mountain as opposed to down, as on the clockwise hike. Along the way, you’ll pass the unspectacular Yucheng Lake (the short ferry ride isn’t worth the RMB5). At first sight hopping into one of the six-person cable cars dangling from the cable by a bent arm attached to two small rollers seems a frightful proposition, but in the worst case, there are indeed security hooks, and after all the design is based on time-tested Swiss technology. The couple-hundred-meter ride provides an overview of the lake and the first forest-covered mountains.

Next it’s another hour-long hike up past more temples and pavilions until you reach the Donghua Hall, which offers scenic views or a look at the impressive mountains of cash donations that are counted in the room next door. For RMB50 per person.

Bring your passport to reserve the RMB15 ticket, you could eat in one of the few hotel restaurants on the mountain. Alternatively, you could take Metro Line 2 to Chadianzi Bus Station or Xiup and transfer to a bus to Qingcheng Shan. If you’re lucky, taxis back to Chengdu can be RMB10 per person.

Health note: Way of the Five Pecks of Rice here. His movement gained momentum, and for a short while, he even managed to gain power in north Sichuan but was absorbed into the Wei Kingdom after a military defeat by Three Kingdoms “villain” Cao Cao. This event marked the first time Boism was exposed to a broad society, initiating its rise to a major religion in China and neighboring countries.

After the Tianshi Cave there are more pavilions and temples, some of which offer proper cuisine and accommodation. Apart from these, there are few culinary options on the mountain—mainly instant noodles or cold noodle dishes, but if you’re patient, you could eat one of the few hotel restaurants on the mountain.

In 2000, UNESCO named two sites in Sichuan—the Dujiangyan irrigation system and Qingcheng Mountain—world heritage sites. The latter was recognized as the birthplace of religious Boism, which led to the foundation of a short-lived theocratic state in west Sichuan.

It’s rumored that Qingcheng Shan was originally named Tienzang Shan (lit. “heaven”) but changed its name after a struggle with Buddhist missionaries for dominance in the area, a dispute so delicate that the emperor had to intervene and ruled out the Buddhist missionaries from the mountain. To signify the “clarity” of the Taoist mountain, the name would have started with the character 純 (“pure”), but a mistaken change to the homophonous 純 (“green”) was made in the documents.

Unfortunately little of this history is spelled out on the many signs along the way. Mostly, the signs remind you that the post-Wenchuan earthquake reconstruction of the mountain is financially supported by Macao, although, to be fair, Shanghai and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage also chipped in. Alongside those are badly translated descriptions and fairy tales for tourists.

Tickets
Tickets to the back mountain are RMB90, and there is an option for RMB13 insurance (beeware of quakes and landslides). The posterior mountain is another 17 kilometers away, but entrance is only RMB20. The hike itself should take around five hours, and you’ll likely need the following day to recover. Bring sufficient water and picnic foods. If you’re looking for a lighter hike, nearby Dujiangyan is an option. As usual, avoid the weekend crowds if you have a choice.

Transport
Although high-speed trains from the North Train Station in Chengdu reach up to 200kmp, the 70-kilometer ride may take up to 50 minutes due to numerous stops on the way. Bring your passport to reserve the RMB15 tickets (extra RMB5 if you purchase outside the train station). Trains leave roughly every hour, and advanced booking of return tickets is highly recommended. Alternatively, you could take Metro Line 2 to Chadianzi Bus Station or Xiup and transfer to a bus to Qingcheng Shan.
Burger King Final Verdict

Our impression of cleanliness didn’t extend to the toilets, and the Avril Lavigne loop felt like a Gitmo technique to get customers out of there in 15 minutes or less, but Burger King seating is comfy and the coloring and interior design isn’t screaming “fast food” as much as “café that happens to have a grill.”

**Components:** chicken, breading, barbecue sauce

---

**Test subject #3. Chicken Filet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flavor</th>
<th>Texture</th>
<th>Apparent nutrition</th>
<th>Greasiness factor</th>
<th>Would you eat it again?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>●●●○○○○○○○</td>
<td>●●●●●●○○○○</td>
<td>●●○○○○○○○○</td>
<td>●●○○○○○○○○</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Test subject #2. Double BBQ Western Bacon Cheeseburger**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flavor</th>
<th>Texture</th>
<th>Apparent nutrition</th>
<th>Greasiness factor</th>
<th>Would you eat it again?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>●●●●●●●●○○</td>
<td>●●●●●●●●○○</td>
<td>●●○○○○○○○○</td>
<td>●●○○○○○○○○</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Test subject #1. Spicy Whopper**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flavor</th>
<th>Texture</th>
<th>Apparent nutrition</th>
<th>Greasiness factor</th>
<th>Would you eat it again?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>●●●○○○○○○○</td>
<td>●●●●●●○○○○</td>
<td>●●○○○○○○○○</td>
<td>●●○○○○○○○○</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Burger King**　漢堡王

Dandoval completed his pseudo-scientific mission after sampling the nasty of 20-something fast food chains in Chengdu. But the highly anticipated recent opening of Burger King at Chun Fu Lu prompted Dandoval’s sudden lapse into fast-food junkiehood—and he wasn’t the only one. The tide swept locals and foreigners alike through the doors of the king’s domain, throwing a strange light on general culinary expectations in Chengdu. So, do or don’t believe the hype? As we entered the kingdom, we were immediately and pleasantly surprised by the cleanliness and comfort, the English-speaking service and the zero-queue time. Someone is finally trying.

---

By Lucy Wang

learning Chinese characters with radicals

As we’ve discussed, the part of the character known as the radical (or 八 (bùshǎo) in Chinese) can aid Mandarin learners in deciphering a character’s meaning or pronunciation. In paper dictionaries, they are also used to arrange the order of the characters, so being able to recognize radicals is an important part of knowing the language.

This month, I’m going to introduce the "火" (huǒ) radical, so being able to recognize radicals is an important part of knowing the language.

火

cling a lamp or lantern

extinguish, put out, turn off. This is a very pictographic word: it looks like putting something on the fire to extinguish it.

slagnificent, splendid, bright. Fire is certainly bright, so it’s no wonder the fire radical appears (twice) in this phrase.

炒

gently stir-fry

chāo

cook a meal, meal. In ancient times, fire was absolutely indispensable if you want to cook.

chú

cooking, heat, hot, burning. (so hot that the character contains not one but two huǒs.)
It's rather unusual to ask museum visitors to leave behind their bags, cameras, mobiles, watches, glasses, keys, and anything that may be lost on a tour through darkness. But as visitors to Dialogue in the Dark find out shortly after complying with the request, it's a reasonable one. After we climbed up to the second floor we were handed a cane and received a short briefing on how to hold and use it. Shortly thereafter we entered a pitch black room, huddling around to try to find our bearings without the aid of our vision. It was a relief to figure out how to coordinate with the help of the others in our group and most importantly, our blind guide—in our case, a bilingual named Jerry, who for the following 60 to 90 minutes became our “eye” through the black on a tour of everyday life situations in Chengdu. Without the help of vision we relied on our other senses, slowly learning to “see” with our hands by touching everything, our ears absorbing sounds while we made hesitant steps, each one a painstaking effort. Simultaneously we began to acknowledge and trust our guide’s capabilities more than our own senses, our admiration growing with every track. This clever switch of roles was the idea behind the exhibition concept—rehabilitating a colleague who had lost his eyesight in an accident. Heinecke was able to understand his colleague’s daily challenges only after he started to put himself in the position of a visually impaired person. It’s remarkable how the exhibition concepts transform a personal experience to a mutual understanding, while never pointing fingers or calling for pity. Finally it’s rare for an exhibition to leave the visitor with such an extremely strong unforgettable personal impression (in Chengdu anyway) and that one could recommend it blindly to anyone. Dialogue in the Dark is one.

Opening Hours
Tuesdays to Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Fridays and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Sundays, 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Closed Mondays)

Entrance
RMB100 (Tuesday to Friday), RMB120 (Weekend)

Address
Chengdu Dialogue in the Dark Service Center
232 Jinjiang Dong Lu (diagonally opposite river from Xinanmen Bus Station)
成都锦江区黑暗中对话服务中心滨江东路232号
Tel. 62103889 (advance reservation for groups, companies, and non-Chinese speakers recommended)
www.dialogue-in-the-dark.org.cn
www.dialogue-in-the-dark.com

Every summer people gather in the far western reaches of Sichuan to watch the Litang horse festivals. Steeped in tradition, these horse festivals are an event where nomadic Tibetan families gather for a bit of friendly competition and bonding. About 14.5 kilometers outside Litang are the grassy fields of Benge, which hosted the second of Litang’s horse festivals this year. The event itself is somewhat unorganized, with the three days of horse events starting at seemingly random times, and no clear judges or winners for anything except the grand opening race. Activities range from racing to mounted archery, and include a good bit of trick riding in all categories. After the three days of races there are another three days of traditional song and dance, with participants dress in full traditional wardrobe. Days go from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., give or take. Before you embark on a journey to Litang, try contacting a local hotel or hostel to find out the approximate dates of the festival (allot for spare time, though, as the schedules tend not to be set in stone). Staying out in the field is not necessary, as you can hire a taxi or car to take you the short distance back and forth from Litang, but it does add to the experience. Many families are happy to accommodate open-minded guests, and it is possible to buy some food and fruit from vendors during the festival. The mountain and clear blue skies make for an excellent getaway from Chengdu’s humid heat, it can get fairly cold at night, so take warm clothes for the evenings.

Dialogue in the Dark: 黑暗中对话

We began to acknowledge and trust our guide’s capabilities more than our own senses.
Shangli Old Town 上里古镇

If you’re like most China outsiders, before you arrived you had the stereotypical mélange of positive China images stuck in your head—quaint gardens, kung fu masters around every corner, quiet teahouses. This fantasy, is, of course, stamped away the moment you cross the immigration line and the longer you stay on the mainland the harder it is to conjure up those illusive visions again. That is, until you come to places like Shangli, the kind of Chinese old town that brings to life all of those imagined positive stereotypes—the kind of China you always hoped to see—in miniature format. Just like Huanglongxi, it serves as a backdrop for domestic movies and TV productions, but offers two distinct advantages to the visitor: it’s not overrun and it doesn’t look fake.

Your journey from Chengdu starts with a bus ride up a tortuous, porous mountainside road from Ya’an alongside rivers and waterfalls. Once you’re 1,000 meters up, the minibus splits you out in front of a stone bridge that leads you to an arrangement of traditional wooden houses. Once the pride of the five big family dynasties, who divided all trading and crafting in the town among them, and from which the town’s former name, Wujiajiu, derived, the houses now serve as snack shops and bars catering to tourists.

A walk around the old town first takes you to a plaza with another bridge that shows wooden Ming and Qing dynasty houses hanging over the river on one side and the Han Court on the other. At the court’s main entrance, an old man is waiting to charge you RMB3, but if you have booked a room inside or just move 50 meters to your left and enter the court through another gate you may skip the fee. The court itself is laid out in a north China style. Some old residents still live here, but more and more guesthouses and hotels have taken over the rooms to let them out to travelers. Still it’s a fine example of a Chinese Qing dynasty courtyard that reveals amazing still life in every corner.

Once you’re done wondering around Han’s, you can head over to the riverside restaurants and teahouses, which offer decent Sichuanese food, the kind you rarely find in the city anymore. There are also some more distinct local dishes with wild mushrooms, wild herbs and fish, and drinks like fruit wines and rosewood tea made of the bark of Dalbergia dyeriana, which you’ll see laid out to dry all over town like a carpet.

You can follow the river on stone pathways, pass the old station of the Tea Horse Road, which was in ancient times the last stop of the Southern Silk Road route before traders left the Sichuan basin and entered either the Tibetan or Yunnan Plateau. These days, the horses are gone, and instead of stocking up on provisions, you can take photos with huge dogs, peacocks, all kinds of birds, snakes, and other animals. Additional walking takes you up to an old mill, and if you cross one of the many uniquely designed bridges, you will find yourself in the countryside.

Going up the mountains can take to you to heights of 1,700 meters all the way to Mengding Shan, or you could follow the river and check out the Red Army’s stone carvings from when they passed by in 1935. Within (strenuous) walking or biking distance are also the Tang dynasty Baima Spring and the Bellingsfa Panda Reserve.

Shangli is a good enough place to stroll around, especially for those with an appreciation for visual details like the intricate wood and stone carvings that cover the doors, roofs, and walls, and it’s equally suited to lazy hours next to the river watching the tea drinkers and mahjong players, the roaming town kids, the silent painters and villagers from the mountains. It’s quiet but still lively with a fresh breeze of air from the surrounding evergreen forests.

The old town saw a small tourism boom a decade ago, when it was poised to become a Sichuanese Lijiang, but it lost momentum along the way. The 2008 Wenchuan and 2013 Lushan quakes impacted visitor numbers. Luckily, the wooden structures resisted the shocks, and the only buildings severely damaged in the shaking were the stone structures. The low tourism numbers in part mean that prices at Shangli have yet to inflate.

Shangli falls just outside the two-hour bus trip radar for Chengdu residents and thus is not a usual target for daytrippers, but the extra half-hour on the bus is well worth it—and perhaps you’ll be so attached to the rural magic that you’ll want to stay overnight in one of the many 60-kuai rooms. Then again, maybe you’ll find yourself not wanting to leave at all, but in any case when you do leave, it’s most likely be with a promise to yourself to return.

Transport

Buses leave from Xinnanmen Bus Station (新南门汽车站) to Ya’an (雅安) regularly, approx. 2 hours, RMB48. Alternatively, buses run from the Shiyangchang Bus Station (石羊场汽车站) in the south of Chengdu, which shortens the trip slightly. From the Ya’an bus station, minibuses depart for Shangli as they fill up, the 30-kilometer trip takes approx. 30 minutes and costs RMB6.5.
Dear Editor:

We are writing with regard to the photo stories in the “Animals” issue of Chengduo City Life (Issue 65, May/June 2013). We have been working with animals in China and with the people who are responsible for their care and conservation for nearly two decades, and would like provide your readers with an ethical perspective.

The photographs in issue capture the abject conditions, illness and misery under which the animals in the Xinkai Jie pet market live. Every single one of the animals in the images is unwell. They are not a cute puppy, a pretty bird, a soft chinchilla. They are a puppy suffering the profound stressors of social isolation and physical illness; a highly intelligent bird who is chained, restricted to the chance to spread disease that they acquired in the wild and exotic tastes. The large majority die shortly after purchase, and before they do so will have had the chance to spread disease that they acquired in these markets to people and to other animals.

We understand that your magazine attempts to educate the public about the suffering of sentient beings, one might be aware that wet markets such as this one are a principle source of emerging infectious diseases; the pandemics that terrify the public, health officials and government leaders internationally, and which may well be the end of our species if we continue to do this with animals.

We invite visitors to walk through the pet and wet markets with an eye to the well-being of the animals, with sensitivity to the overwhelming stressors that the animals suffer every single day, and the many signs of depression and the struggle to cope physically and psychologically with the horrors that describe their lives. These animals suffer badly. Those who survive long enough to be sold from the pet market are purchased as a toy or when it comes to wildlife species and large dogs—a consumer item to be shown off as a mark of wealth and exotic tastes. The large majority die shortly after purchase, and before they do so will have had the chance to spread disease that they acquired in these markets to people and to other animals.

We understand that your magazine attempts to keep observations about local idiosyncrasies light-hearted and with an air to cultural exploration. However, the abuse of animals and the multi-billion dollar wildlife trade are not mere cultural curiosities to be enjoyed by tourists, any more than are child abuse and human trafficking.

Animal abuse is not a cultural diversion. Animal abuse is universally unethical.

Sincerely,
Kari Loeffler, DVM, PhD
Sarah Bexell, PhD

Disgusted? Perturbed? Annoyed? Delighted?
Send your rants and raves to chengdoo@gmail.com
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

We are writing with regard to the photo stories in the “Animals” issue of Chengduo City Life (Issue 65, May/June 2013). We have been working with animals in China and with the people who are responsible for their care and conservation for nearly two decades, and would like provide your readers with an ethical perspective.

The photographs in issue capture the abject conditions, illness and misery under which the animals in the Xinkai Jie pet market live. Every single one of the animals in the images is unwell. They are not a cute puppy, a pretty bird, a soft chinchilla. They are a puppy suffering the profound stressors of social isolation and physical illness; a highly intelligent bird who is chained, restricted to the chance to spread disease that they acquired in the wild and exotic tastes. The large majority die shortly after purchase, and before they do so will have had the chance to spread disease that they acquired in these markets to people and to other animals.

We understand that your magazine attempts to educate the public about the suffering of sentient beings, one might be aware that wet markets such as this one are a principle source of emerging infectious diseases; the pandemics that terrify the public, health officials and government leaders internationally, and which may well be the end of our species if we continue to do this with animals.

We invite visitors to walk through the pet and wet markets with an eye to the well-being of the animals, with sensitivity to the overwhelming stressors that the animals suffer every single day, and the many signs of depression and the struggle to cope physically and psychologically with the horrors that describe their lives. These animals suffer badly. Those who survive long enough to be sold from the pet market are purchased as a toy or when it comes to wildlife species and large dogs—a consumer item to be shown off as a mark of wealth and exotic tastes. The large majority die shortly after purchase, and before they do so will have had the chance to spread disease that they acquired in these markets to people and to other animals.

We understand that your magazine attempts to keep observations about local idiosyncrasies light-hearted and with an air to cultural exploration. However, the abuse of animals and the multi-billion dollar wildlife trade are not mere cultural curiosities to be enjoyed by tourists, any more than are child abuse and human trafficking.

Animal abuse is not a cultural diversion. Animal abuse is universally unethical.

Sincerely,
Kari Loeffler, DVM, PhD
Sarah Bexell, PhD

Disgusted? Perturbed? Annoyed? Delighted?
Send your rants and raves to chengdoo@gmail.com
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

We are writing with regard to the photo stories in the “Animals” issue of Chengduo City Life (Issue 65, May/June 2013). We have been working with animals in China and with the people who are responsible for their care and conservation for nearly two decades, and would like provide your readers with an ethical perspective.

The photographs in issue capture the abject conditions, illness and misery under which the animals in the Xinkai Jie pet market live. Every single one of the animals in the images is unwell. They are not a cute puppy, a pretty bird, a soft chinchilla. They are a puppy suffering the profound stressors of social isolation and physical illness; a highly intelligent bird who is chained, restricted to the chance to spread disease that they acquired in the wild and exotic tastes. The large majority die shortly after purchase, and before they do so will have had the chance to spread disease that they acquired in these markets to people and to other animals.

We understand that your magazine attempts to educate the public about the suffering of sentient beings, one might be aware that wet markets such as this one are a principle source of emerging infectious diseases; the pandemics that terrify the public, health officials and government leaders internationally, and which may well be the end of our species if we continue to do this with animals.

We invite visitors to walk through the pet and wet markets with an eye to the well-being of the animals, with sensitivity to the overwhelming stressors that the animals suffer every single day, and the many signs of depression and the struggle to cope physically and psychologically with the horrors that describe their lives. These animals suffer badly. Those who survive long enough to be sold from the pet market are purchased as a toy or when it comes to wildlife species and large dogs—a consumer item to be shown off as a mark of wealth and exotic tastes. The large majority die shortly after purchase, and before they do so will have had the chance to spread disease that they acquired in these markets to people and to other animals.

We understand that your magazine attempts to keep observations about local idiosyncrasies light-hearted and with an air to cultural exploration. However, the abuse of animals and the multi-billion dollar wildlife trade are not mere cultural curiosities to be enjoyed by tourists, any more than are child abuse and human trafficking.

Animal abuse is not a cultural diversion. Animal abuse is universally unethical.

Sincerely,
Kari Loeffler, DVM, PhD
Sarah Bexell, PhD

Disgusted? Perturbed? Annoyed? Delighted?
Send your rants and raves to chengdoo@gmail.com
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

We are writing with regard to the photo stories in the “Animals” issue of Chengduo City Life (Issue 65, May/June 2013). We have been working with animals in China and with the people who are responsible for their care and conservation for nearly two decades, and would like provide your readers with an ethical perspective.

The photographs in issue capture the abject conditions, illness and misery under which the animals in the Xinkai Jie pet market live. Every single one of the animals in the images is unwell. They are not a cute puppy, a pretty bird, a soft chinchilla. They are a puppy suffering the profound stressors of social isolation and physical illness; a highly intelligent bird who is chained, restricted to the chance to spread disease that they acquired in the wild and exotic tastes. The large majority die shortly after purchase, and before they do so will have had the chance to spread disease that they acquired in these markets to people and to other animals.

We understand that your magazine attempts to educate the public about the suffering of sentient beings, one might be aware that wet markets such as this one are a principle source of emerging infectious diseases; the pandemics that terrify the public, health officials and government leaders internationally, and which may well be the end of our species if we continue to do this with animals.

We invite visitors to walk through the pet and wet markets with an eye to the well-being of the animals, with sensitivity to the overwhelming stressors that the animals suffer every single day, and the many signs of depression and the struggle to cope physically and psychologically with the horrors that describe their lives. These animals suffer badly. Those who survive long enough to be sold from the pet market are purchased as a toy or when it comes to wildlife species and large dogs—a consumer item to be shown off as a mark of wealth and exotic tastes. The large majority die shortly after purchase, and before they do so will have had the chance to spread disease that they acquired in these markets to people and to other animals.

We understand that your magazine attempts to keep observations about local idiosyncrasies light-hearted and with an air to cultural exploration. However, the abuse of animals and the multi-billion dollar wildlife trade are not mere cultural curiosities to be enjoyed by tourists, any more than are child abuse and human trafficking.

Animal abuse is not a cultural diversion. Animal abuse is universally unethical.

Sincerely,
Kari Loeffler, DVM, PhD
Sarah Bexell, PhD

Disgusted? Perturbed? Annoyed? Delighted?
Send your rants and raves to chengdoo@gmail.com
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

We are writing with regard to the photo stories in the “Animals” issue of Chengduo City Life (Issue 65, May/June 2013). We have been working with animals in China and with the people who are responsible for their care and conservation for nearly two decades, and would like provide your readers with an ethical perspective.

The photographs in issue capture the abject conditions, illness and misery under which the animals in the Xinkai Jie pet market live. Every single one of the animals in the images is unwell. They are not a cute puppy, a pretty bird, a soft chinchilla. They are a puppy suffering the profound stressors of social isolation and physical illness; a highly intelligent bird who is chained, restricted to the chance to spread disease that they acquired in the wild and exotic tastes. The large majority die shortly after purchase, and before they do so will have had the chance to spread disease that they acquired in these markets to people and to other animals.

We understand that your magazine attempts to educate the public about the suffering of sentient beings, one might be aware that wet markets such as this one are a principle source of emerging infectious diseases; the pandemics that terrify the public, health officials and government leaders internationally, and which may well be the end of our species if we continue to do this with animals.

We invite visitors to walk through the pet and wet markets with an eye to the well-being of the animals, with sensitivity to the overwhelming stressors that the animals suffer every single day, and the many signs of depression and the struggle to cope physically and psychologically with the horrors that describe their lives. These animals suffer badly. Those who survive long enough to be sold from the pet market are purchased as a toy or when it comes to wildlife species and large dogs—a consumer item to be shown off as a mark of wealth and exotic tastes. The large majority die shortly after purchase, and before they do so will have had the chance to spread disease that they acquired in these markets to people and to other animals.

We understand that your magazine attempts to keep observations about local idiosyncrasies light-hearted and with an air to cultural exploration. However, the abuse of animals and the multi-billion dollar wildlife trade are not mere cultural curiosities to be enjoyed by tourists, any more than are child abuse and human trafficking.

Animal abuse is not a cultural diversion. Animal abuse is universally unethical.

Sincerely,
Kari Loeffler, DVM, PhD
Sarah Bexell, PhD

Disgusted? Perturbed? Annoyed? Delighted?
Send your rants and raves to chengdoo@gmail.com
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity.
TrueCOLOR MUSIC CLUB

BECAUSE OF YOUR PRESENCE, WE ARE WONDERFUL!

因为有您，本色必将更精彩！