

# chengdu

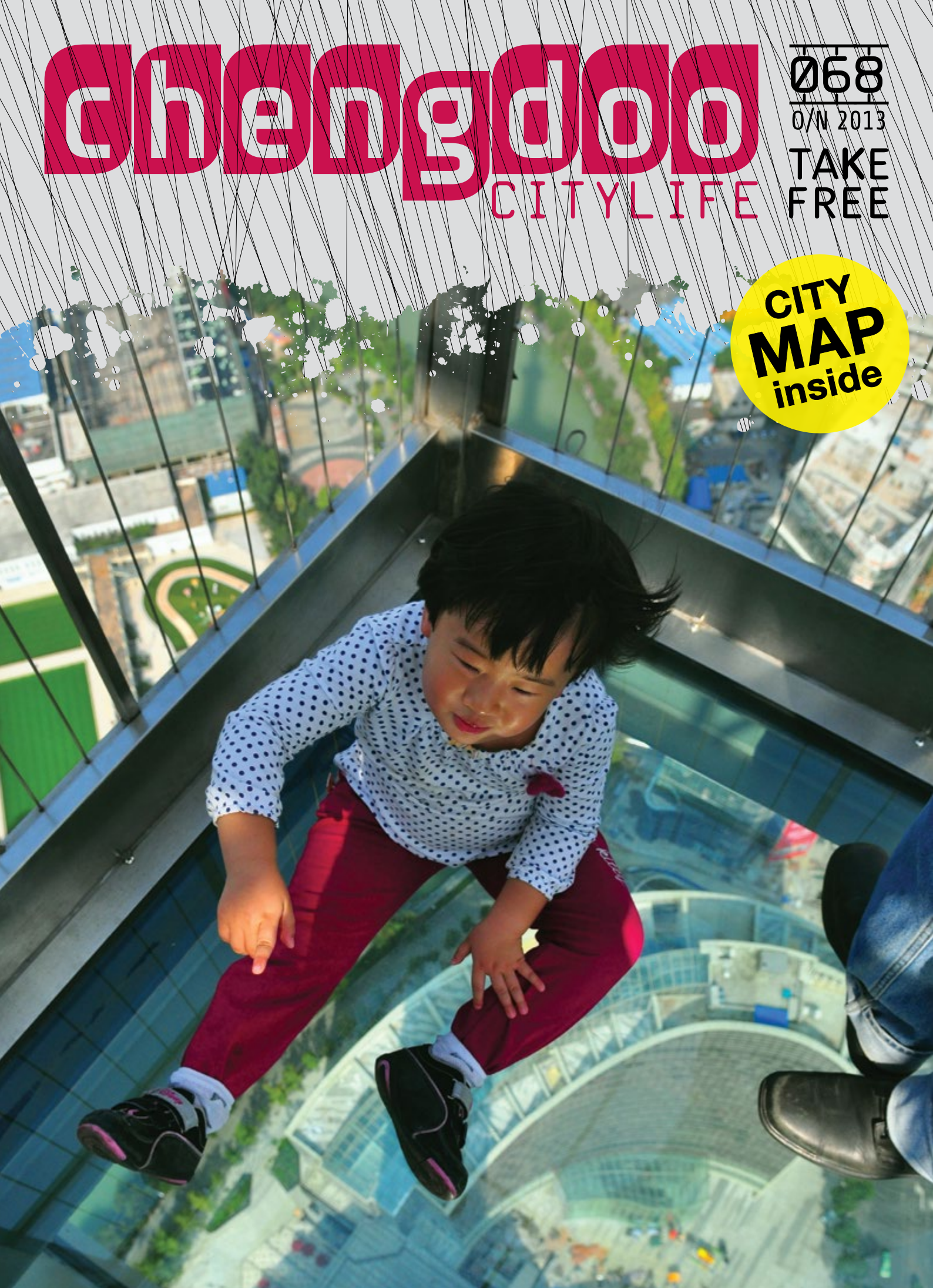
CITYLIFE

068

07/11 2013

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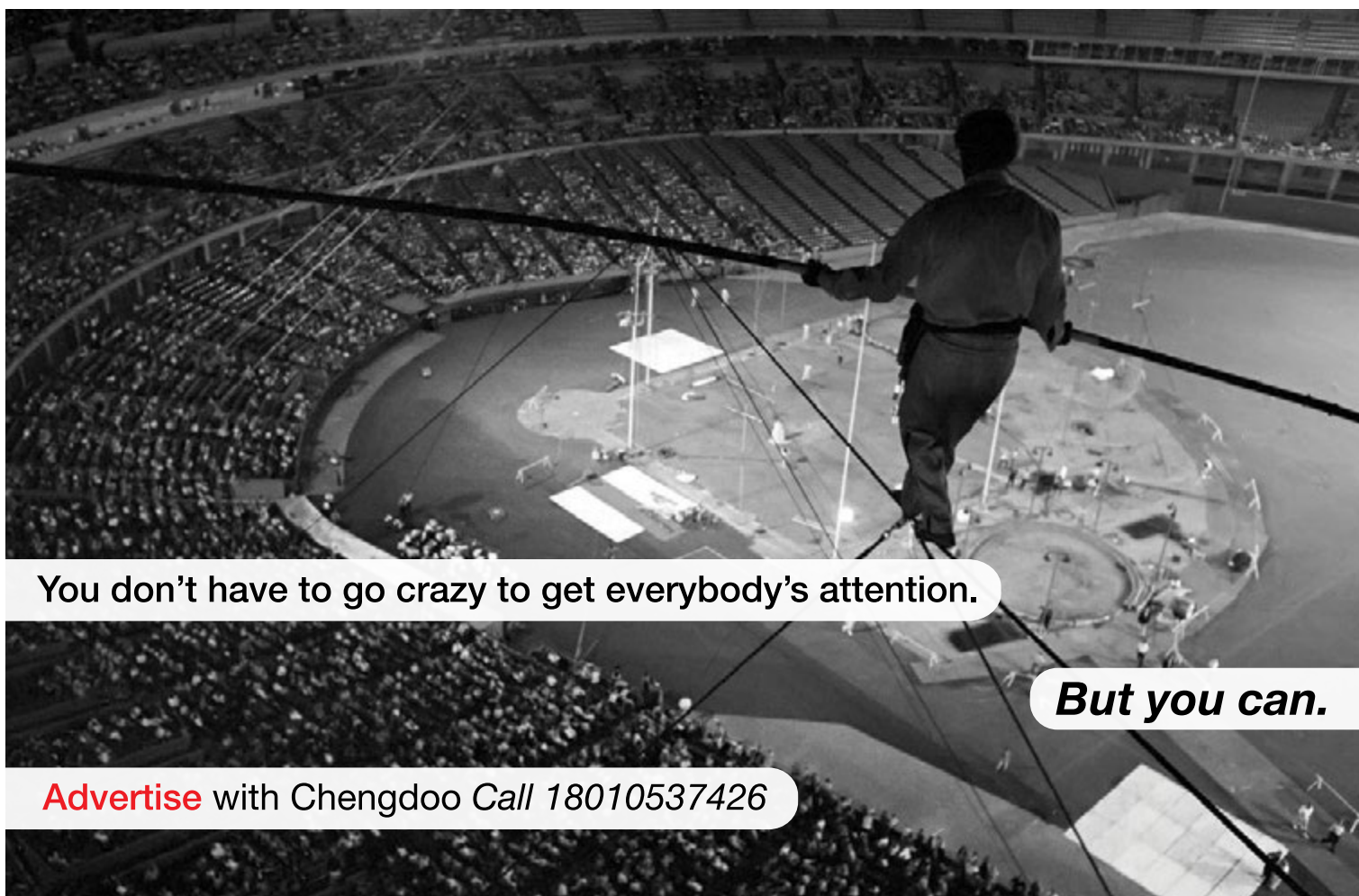
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# Fanmu Art Hall

Photos by Dan Sandoval and Xu Zhiming



Fanmu Art Hall, situated between the Dasha River and 2.5 Ring Road in southeast Chengdu, is a showcase project of Jinjiang District. The reported RMB50 million space is meant to foster the growth of creative industry. The space is pleasant enough, with variations on the city's usual architectural and landscape designs. Considering that the space once served as a garbage collection and recycling center, it has indeed undergone an amazing metamorphosis.

Currently the spacious, castle-like compound houses a state-of-the-art 3D print shop, a major woodworking factory, various art workshops, and countless exhibition halls for contemporary art and photography exhibitions, and several artist studios. Fanmu's official opening in May passed unnoticed to most Chengduers, apart from the youth who stormed it over National Holiday, when the two-day Cookin' Chengdu

music festival was held. That collaborative effort of Hemp House, Lan Town, Morning Bar, Xiongmao, and Orange featured several floors with electronic and live music, serving as a small revival of Chengdu's once-vibrant live-music gatherings.

After closing its gates in the East Music Park, Xiongmao temporarily finds shelter on Fanmu's grounds, at least until spring, at which time the new real estate projects in the surroundings may impose constraints on noise levels.

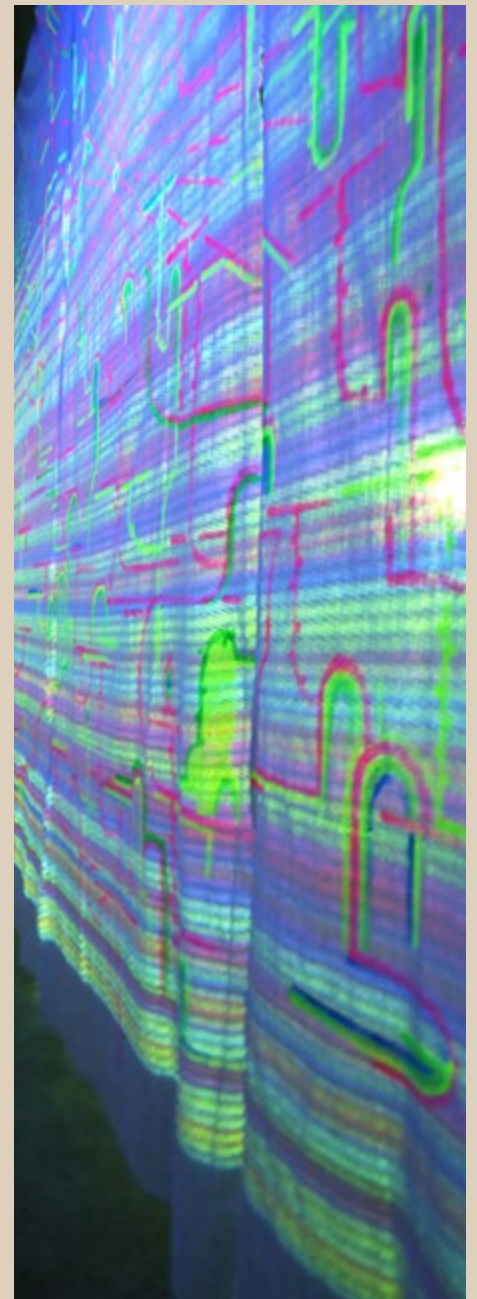
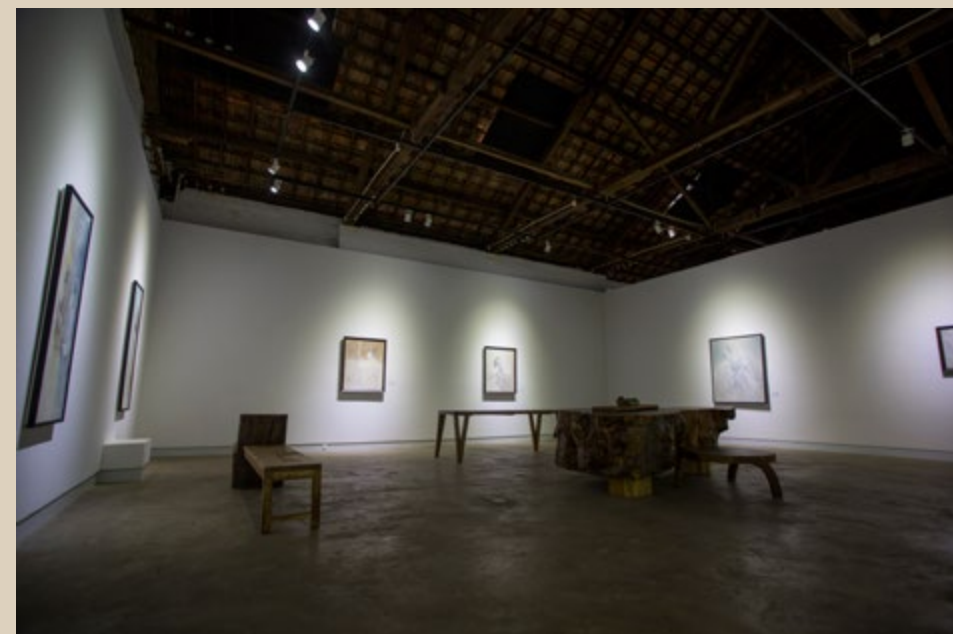
## Fanmu Art Hall

199 Jinxiang Silu

梵木艺术馆

金像寺路199号

From Jinghua Lu, turn onto Cuihua Lu and follow it to the end. Make a right and then the first left. The entrance is approx. 200 meters up the hill.







# Chengdu Bike Park

## 锦江绿道

Photos by Michal Pachniewski

As sustainable transportation becomes more of a hot topic among citizens, media, and officials worldwide, Chengdu has jumped on the bandwagon with its 198 LOHAS Bike Park, a 6.7km track dedicated to recreational biking that is part of the greater network of “green” paths (that are actually red in color) known as the Jinjiang Greenbelt (锦江绿道) that link Chengdu to Wenjiang, Pixian, and Shuangliu.

LOHAS is a not-so-clever acronym for the awkward phrase “lifestyles of health and sustainability.” Nobody who’s anybody (which, in this case, means taxi drivers) seems to use that name, anyway, so you might as well just get used to calling it “the bike park.”

Just east of the Chengdu Racetrack (because wheeled things on tracks go together), the park offers visitors bikes for rent and the opportunity to ride them on narrow paths that a) are sometimes broken off by intersecting roads and b) are sometimes jammed with pedestrians, including small ones who dart out unpredictably. If you dare to pedal faster than you might at the intersection of First Ring Road and Renmin Nan Lu, be prepared to hear calls from the general public to slow down.

Midway along the paths is a mini fun fair with a very small circular dirt track for scary looking go karts. At the south end of the paths, beyond the Chengdu Raocheng (Fourth Ring) is a small guard gate, and as it turns out, there is a separate entrance fee of RMB20 per person to pass through, unless you pedal quickly. These back paths encircle the 锦江白鹭湾生态公园 Jinjiang Egret Wetland Park, which opened in May. The 2 square kilometer area boasts 200 kinds of wetland plants, a flower-and-ribbon-adorned bridge, under which a small ferry passes, and far fewer people than the free front section, making it a potential picnic hotspot.

Bike rentals are RMB20 per hour but a deposit of either a passport or Chinese ID card or RMB400 is required. The bikes are not maintained particularly well, which is an understatement; they’re not maintained at all, and if you try to be selective about your rental, you will be informed that “they’re all the same”—which is, in a way, true: They differ in degree, but the general principle of suckiness holds. By suckiness we mean brakes and gears that do not function whatsoever. At least the seats are easily adjusted, and most of the tires seem to be inflated. All of the rentals are Giant-brand mountain bikes of the same size, which is uncomfortably small for anybody taller than 165cm. If that review is off-putting, don’t worry: You may also bring your own bike to ride.

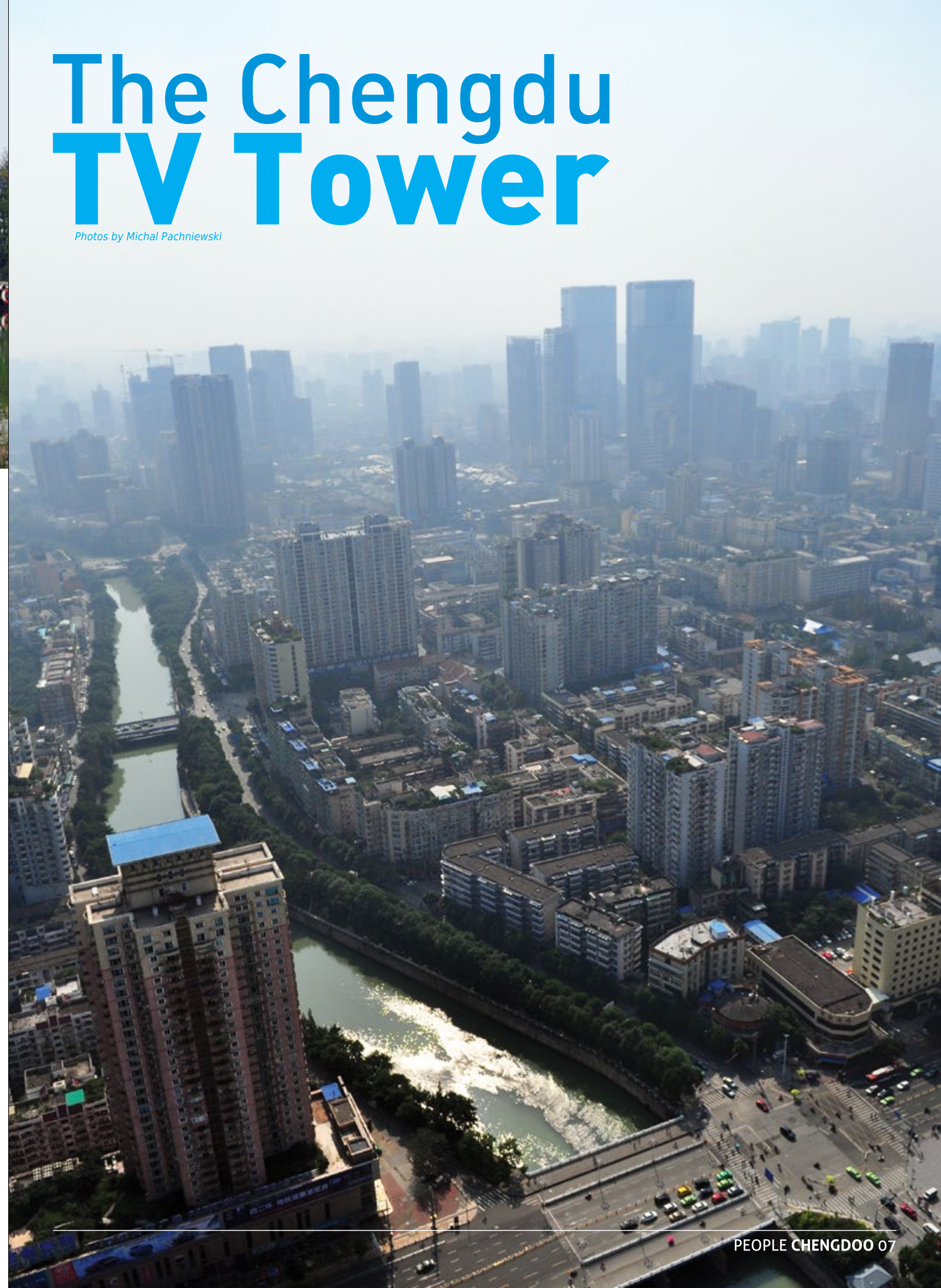


### Shiling Forest Park

An alternative park, with almost no people (and no bikes) is the Shiling Forest Park (十陵森林公园) in east Chengdu. An overgrown hillside overlooking a heavily trafficked boulevard, the park’s maze-like pathways are good for a quick getaway to the “wilderness.” The area is home to an ancient tomb that seems to be generally closed (unless you can persuade the gatekeeper to unlock it—we couldn’t, but we didn’t try that hard), a small grove, numerous plant species and a water reservoir that attracts various birds. Entrance is free. Enter from the north gate on Jinjiang Dadao/Shishang Lu 锦江大道/石胜路.

# The Chengdu TV Tower

Photos by Michal Pachniewski





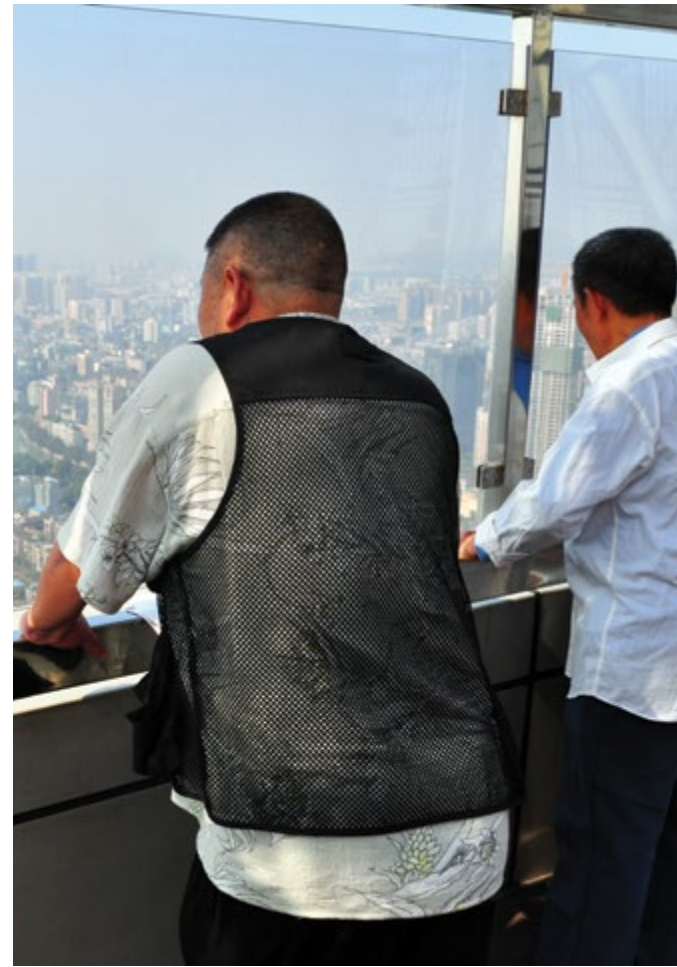
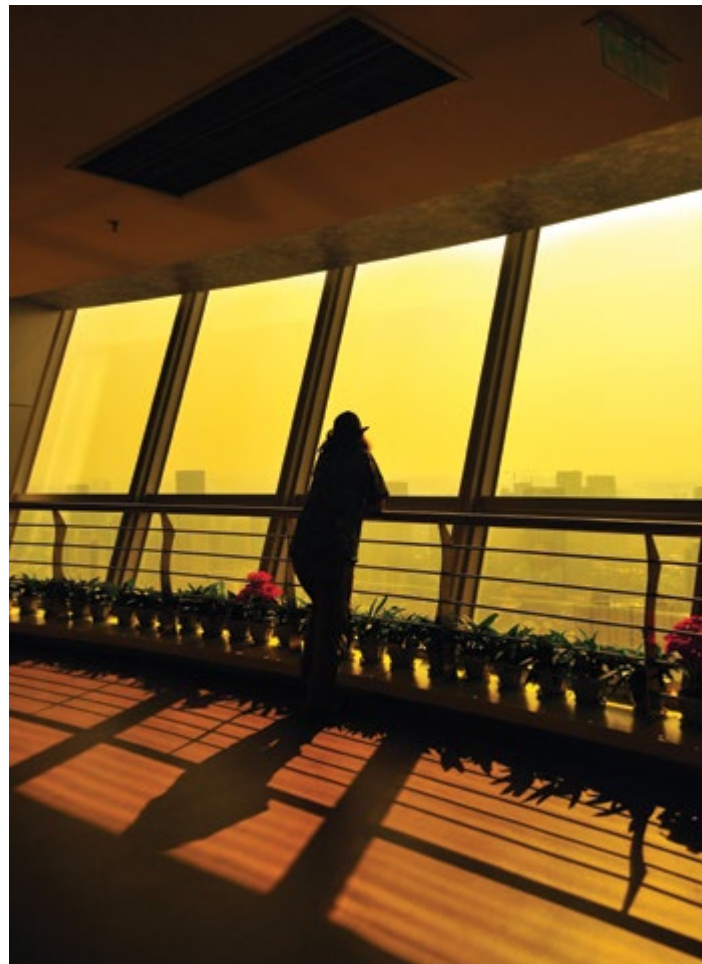
## “When does the TV tower open?” “Next year.”

This question-and-answer game has been the annual running gag for anyone who’s been around Chengdu in the past decade. But finally, this September the TV tower (四川广播电视塔) finally opened to the public amid little fanfare. The project dates back to the early 1980s, when studies and plans were made. Construction started in 1992, but was delayed numerous times due to financial and other reasons and wasn’t completed until 2004. Since that time it has been used for broadcasting, mobile antennas, and CB radio.

Standing next to the Fu River at a maximum height of 339 meters, the tower is currently the tallest structure in west China and seventh tallest in mainland China. At the base of the tower are 245,000 square meters of broadcasting and filming bureaus, including Sichuan TV’s, as well as a five-star hotel and—surprise!—a partly opened shopping complex.

Design-wise, the tower is nothing extraordinary, and the empty plaza is reminiscent of Berlin’s Alexanderplatz in the 1980s, a vibe intensified by the purple and yellow windows of the tower.

There are two ways to the top of the tower—the scenic route on the slower glass elevator and the internal express elevator. Visitors are required to pass through a security inspection, and drinks and lighters are temporarily confiscated (you can request that they be returned after your descent, and at least some of the guards comply). The elevators take you to a closed platform at 208 meters, and a climb up a flight of stairs will take you to a restaurant that makes a full revolution around the tower every 40 minutes. The highest altitude visitors are allowed to go to is the outdoor platform at 213 meters. There, four glass-floored platforms enclosed in metal bars offer you the chance to look directly down on the city in each of the four compass directions—the winds blowing between the bars and the glass flooring is enough to deter most heights-fearing folks. A little café serves the usual at the usual Chengdu prices.



On a good day you can see the hills in the far northwest, the high-speed railroad to the north and the BRT to the east, the west, and south is scattered by higher buildings without specific outstanding landmarks. Unfortunately there are no binoculars and no maps to explain what you’re looking at, unless you go downstairs to the indoor platform again where you can see some description and can zoom around with various cameras.

If the TV tower doesn’t satisfy your desire for altitude, you could try to get to the top floor of Chengdu’s current tallest building, the 206m Minyoun Finance Plaza on Dong Da Jie, or wait a couple months for the opening of the 248m Chengdu IFS Tower, or, if you’re willing to wait a few years, the 333m Mandarin Hotel is due to open in 2017, and the 468m Greenland Tower in 2018.

Even on sunny days the towers seems to receive few visitors, but it’s worth checking out, especially if you are new to town or have guests, and it’s always a great spot to experiment with your cameras and lenses, and if you stay long enough to obswelonger you see the changing light make the city look different.

### Tickets

RMB100 (scenic elevator)

RMB80 (express elevator)

Discounts for seniors and children

Daily 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. (tickets sales stop at 9:30 p.m.)

### Directions

四川广播电视塔

猛追湾街98号

98 Mengduiwan Jie

[www.sctower.com.cn](http://www.sctower.com.cn)

Take bus 20, 61, 76, or 180 or Metro Line 2 to Dong Da Jie. Walk north along the river for approximately 15 minutes (in 2014, Line 4’s Yushuanglu Station will be closer).





# 花 食 目

## Mandarin Made Easier

*learning Chinese characters with radicals*

By Lucy Wang

English seems to have no shortage of words to describe beauty—attractive, pretty, good-looking, charming, adorable, graceful, stunning, gorgeous, and so forth. Mandarin likewise abounds in words and idioms that describe beauty, many of which are derived from ancient poems and were coined thousand years ago. Here, I introduce some well-known idioms that describe beauty. Most are still used in Mandarin today—in newspapers, books, and though not often, in daily conversations. These beautiful idioms are pleasing not only to the eye and ear but also to the soul. If your aim is to flatter and impress, you could do much worse than to deliver one of the compliments below to the object of your affection.

倾国倾城 (qīng guó qīng chéng) - beauty powerful enough to overthrow cities and ruin states  
倾 (qīng) can mean bend, lean or collapse; 国 (guó) means country, and 城 (chéng) means city.

闭月羞花 (bì yuè xiū huā) - a girl who is so beautiful that the moon hides her face and

the flowers blush at the sight of her—that is, a girl's beauty outshines that of the moon and flower.

闭 (bì) means to close or shut; 月 (yuè) means moon; 羞 (xiū) means to feel shy or ashamed; 花 (huā) means flowers.

国色天香 (guósè tiānxiāng) - national beauty and heavenly grace  
Some of you may have noticed that this is the name of the big amusement park in Wenjiang.

沉鱼落雁 (chényú luòyàn) - beauty that makes the fish dive down and the wild geese fall, i.e., stunning.  
This may sound amusing to some of you, but it is one the most widely used idioms to describe beauty.

美若天仙 (měiruò tiānxiān) - as pretty as a fairy  
美 (měi) means beauty or beautiful; 若 (ruò) means as if, seem, resemble; 天仙 (tiānxiān) refers to a fairy.

花容月貌 (huāróng yuèmào) - as beautiful as flowers and the moon  
You might have noticed that flowers and the moon are often used as similes for beauty—the ancients emphasized the beauty of nature. Both 容 (róng) and 貌 (mào) mean appearance;

花 (huā) means flower, and 月 (yuè) means moon.

眉目如画 (méimù rú huà) - as charming as a picture (a beautiful one, of course)  
眉 (méi) means eyebrow, and 目 (mù) means eye. Put together in 眉目 (méimù), they refer to a) looks, features, appearances or b) a sequence of ideas, logic.

秀色可餐 (xiùsè kě cān) - a feast for the eyes; so beautiful that one would want to eat it up  
秀色 (xiùsè) means charming in appearance; 可 (kě) means can, may, could; 餐 (cān) is a complicated character meaning eating, dining, or to eat. (If you look carefully, you may notice the character 食 (shí) on the bottom half of 餐 (cān)—食 (shí) means food or to eat.)

月里嫦娥 (yuè lǐ cháng'é) - as beautiful as the goddess of the moon  
嫦娥 (cháng'é) is the goddess of the moon renowned for her beauty and elegance.

## Larung Gar Buddhist Academy, Seda

Text and photos by Dan Sandoval



Within the mountains of northwestern Sichuan is Larung Gar, home to the largest Buddhist academy in the world and tens of thousands of monks and nuns, as well as the approximately 10,000 students of the academy. Five hours away via a long and winding (and sometimes unfinished road) from the nearest major town of Ganzi, the town sees relatively few tourists.

Besides the academy, Larung Gar is one of the few places where you can regularly witness sky burials, but it is the housing—a spread of cube-like wooden houses crowded on the hillsides—that makes perhaps the most visual impact. These haphazardly placed clusters of homes give Larung Gar a shanty town vibe. There is order to the madness, though: The settlement is divided into different sections, with the academy itself in the center, and respective sections for monks and nuns to live in, separated by roads and walls to prevent intermingling between the groups.

Visitors should prepare for the high altitude. Nights can be cold, even during the summer, and accommodation can be unreliable at Larung Gar. Travelers might opt to stay below Larung Gar in the town of Seda and take a taxi up every day. From Chengdu, travelers can arrive at Ganzi town (via Kanding), and then continue on from there, as the road is usually more reliable from that direction.



# 仙 画 闭







# Liujiang Old Town 柳江古镇

Photos by Michal Pachniewski



In a seemingly forgotten and isolated part of Hongya County, around 130 kilometers southwest of Chengdu, is Liujiang Old Town, one of Sichuan's 10 largest old towns.

The 800-year-old town today is a showcase for the typical old-town wooden structures shared by some of the more well-known old towns in Sichuan, such as Ping'le. From the swaths of art students from the city sitting in front of easels to the elderly hawking their wares along the narrow lanes to the lazy teahouses and restaurants, there's not much to distinguish Liujiang from other old towns.

It is nonetheless, a quiet getaway from the city, and the wide river running along the town in front of evergreen hills makes for a picturesque setting. The area is home to an abundance of wild fish, mushrooms, and kiwifruits, and some of the trees have been dated to 1,000 years ago.

It's not a place to go for action or excitement, although crossing the river—at your choice of crossings, either the widely spaced, slippery stone blocks rising up from the water, or the

wood-slatted bridge, neither with railings of any sort—is enough to get some people's hearts pumping quickly.

An afternoon can easily be spent here, but considering the amount of time it takes to travel from Chengdu (around 3 hours total), those looking for true leisure might opt to spend the night in one of the inexpensive, simple lodgings in the town. Single, double, and four-person bikes are available for rent as well. Alternatively, the trip could be combined with a visit to nearby hot springs or to E'mei Shan, Le Shan, Meihan, or Wawu Shan, all of which are in relatively close proximity.

**Transport**  
Buses leave from Xinnanmen bus station (新南门汽车站) to Hongya (洪雅) roughly every 40 minutes between 7:40 a.m. and 5:40 p.m. (RMB41, 2 to 3 hours). At Hongya station, transfer to a bus (50 minutes) or take a taxi (30 minutes, RMB80 without meter) for the 30km journey to Liujiang Old Town (柳江古镇). The last bus to Chengdu from Hongya leaves just after 5 p.m. and arrives at Shiyangchang Bus Station (石羊场客运站-公交车站).





# The John Dkar Show

Photo courtesy John Cardenas



John Cardenas, aka John Dkar, 50, grew up in the jungles of Peru, eventually following in his father’s footsteps to become a traveler. A job as a language teacher landed him at a university in Chengdu a decade ago, and since then John has ridden his motorbike up and down the city and province countless times, his camera on, filming everything he sees. In his home country he’s filmed breaking news for TV, and his footage of the 2008 Wenchuan quake was featured worldwide on CNN. We’ve been following him for a long time and have been itching to interview him for a while. After the Cookin’ Chengdu party where John was—you guessed it—filming, we finally got our chance.

**How did you get into videoblogging?**  
I have a beautiful daughter in Peru, but I don’t have a stable way of living, I live like a gypsy, so it’s better for her to stay with her mother. As I couldn’t see my daughter for a long time, I started making very short funny videos for her—I turned out to be a cyberdaddy. I started teaching my daughter how to make videos and we exchanged videos. I used to send the videos via e-mail and I started to look for video sites, and then on these sites the videobloggers started contacting me and John Dkar became a brand name and others started asking for more videos.

**And you are making money with it?**  
I spend years and all of the sudden it changed from being a hobby—I got into ways of making earnings. For a lot of pioneers the dream of making money with videoblogging came true, even for me. Generally bloggers make money with advertising, and the more the clicks you have the more money you make. The other way is requests from publishers, but you have to be visible. Being visible means you have to post in a daily routine. Something will come up.

Maybe you are not interested in cats, but there are hundreds and thousands of guys interested in cats.

In Peru I started working with media much more. I lived three years off photo and video blogging. But I love teaching and it’s my main source of income. I’m a disciplined teacher, that’s my career. Videoblogging allows me to perhaps explore a bit of my artistic side, attachment to music and art.

**Did you ever get into troubles with filming?**  
Yeah, especially the small towns, when you’re the only foreigner. My camera or footage never got confiscated. I just by accident got into restricted areas. I’ve been to police stations, but I have nothing to hide. My life is public. I don’t cheat. If you are honest you don’t have to be afraid of anything.

**It looks like you take your camera with you all the time.**  
Everywhere, all the time. Things just happen. My life is so intense and colorful every fricking day. Sometimes I don’t want to leave my house because I know something will happen especially to me. Wherever I go whatever I do there are details that others cannot see. The trees, the plants, the insects, the birds are talking to me: Hey I have a story to tell. It’s crazy.

**Do you know other videobloggers in town?**  
Sometimes I’m so isolated, I’m like in a bubble. Very few people can get into my bubble. I’m not really that much of a social person. I just do my own stuff. As a cameraman, as a photographer you don’t have time for that,

because you keep recording. Some people ask when do you get a life? What does life mean? If my life is this way, I’m happy with what I do, with my life, my bubble.

**But you are notorious for your attachment to Chengdu’s nightlife.**  
Many people want to know about Chengdu’s nightlife scene. They got some snapshots from travelers, but they didn’t see the evolution. The other thing that geared me to nightlife is I like the music. I come from a family of musicians, my uncle played guitar and my grandpa, violin. In Peru I know all the famous singers and bands and they grant me access to their concerts, I grew up that way. I like to see live shows, people performing, not just music. I like to see a DJ, whatever he’s playing, he’s into his thing. And also the bands. A lot of people say, “Oh they play like shit.” I say they just started, they put in lots of effort, how many hours has he practiced day and night for this? I’m usually the guy who’s the only one applauding. I’m always looking for shows.

**Do you remember your first nightlife experiences in Chengdu a decade ago?**  
The cage girls in an infamous disco on the First Ring Road—Kakadoo. It was amazing. In those cages, there were like four, five girls dancing. Wow. Sometimes they allowed me to go behind the scenes where they change. It was close to my college, and I met a crazy guy who brought me around the discos. When I came here from the U.S., I was fat, and I remember in three months I lost more than 20kg, dancing and sweating. And this guy would go out every single night. That’s why we didn’t have money, because we were spending all the money there. It was the time of beepers. You must have your beeper and your notebook. Our

beepers were really busy with dates and so on. And when you come here, if you like girls and nightlife, there’s plenty of them. You’re like a little kid in the candy shop, you don’t know what to pick up.

And the first rock party was one of the first performances of Proximity Butterfly on a big truck on Second Ring Road. That really impressed me. I was checking the videos last night. People around and neighbors looked scared. In those times I played with the zooms a lot. Like crazy.

**Are you aware of your zooming and editing critics?**  
I usually don’t read my haters’ comments or when they quit following me or whatever because I don’t care. You do your things because you believe in the things you’re doing and you’re not doing it to please others. I do it because mainly I feel there is a way to communicate with each other in one way or another. Even if you get negative points you’re still on the scene. What should worry you is when nobody talks about you. If they talk good or bad you’re still visible.

**What’s your favorite local band?**  
Many of them, Ashura, I like Tongdang, Mosaic, Standing Pee Dog. Proximity Butterfly from the mixed foreign bands, Armissan and Red Water—they play a lot of covers but they have a lot of energy. I’ve been a bit out [of the scene] since I came back [from Peru]. I’m stuck to the old ones. I haven’t seen promising new ones. I’m looking for a sponsor to pay my expenses for me to go to the Little Bar and film. The Little Bar is the window to China rock ‘n’ roll bands. They got nice lights, you can record without any trouble.

**Where do you usually go to hang out?**  
I really like to have fun, relax. Carol’s—I know these guys for years and they proved to be good friends, kind of like a brotherhood, when I have troubles, any kind of troubles. That’s great. I like to play pool, I can spend hours playing pool in the bar, I usually go Tuesdays and Thursday for the salsa. I’m very fond of my Latino roots. Even if I don’t go dancing very often listening to that music makes me feel close to South America.

Before I come back home from the salsa I pass by the Jah Bar for an hour. I don’t want to meet anyone, I just grab a beer and listen to the guys. Some say it sounds like shit, but in one way or the other it’s a kind of music factory. Why? When they are jamming, maybe 1 percent is new music, and when you record it you can find the start of a new good song. Sometimes if the vibe is good, I grab my camera and upload to Facebook. The beer is 10 kuai so you have no excuse not to stick around. Of course sometimes they don’t play well, but I like the energy, the natural flow of someone who really likes music. There are memorable nights, sometimes the jams last ‘til 4 a.m. I also like to go to Shamrock—they usually have live events—and the Hemp House.

**How do you see the development of the music and nightlife scene?**  
I don’t know. There are circles now, the Chinese customers, now you have the amazing huge complex Lan Kwai Fong. You can find anything there, you name it. In the expat music scene I haven’t experienced a lot, I felt it went down a bit. I remember the old Café Paname days with [former owners] Chloe and David— we regulars were like a pack, running wild parties. And from there, many different parties came up. It’s

like the community is gone. There are isolated groups. My opinion is it’s going down, but the Chinese scene is growing.

**You’re big into gadgets. What’s your latest?**  
Eye massage mask. I used to have another mask, but they last like five years. Since I work a lot with camera and I’m usually in front of the computer my eyes get tired. If your eyes are tired or you get a bit irritated you should stop doing whatever you’re doing and turn off, power off.

**And the next?**  
I’m planning to buy a helmet massage. Maybe in the future we’ll have a [massage] jacket. Maybe I’ll get the chance to buy the Google glass. I have a prototype, but you cannot see what you’re recording and usually it films up because of the shape of my nose.

*Photos provided by John Dkar. To view his video footage of Chengdu scenes, language-learning lessons, and more, search John Dkar.*



# Sauerkraut – DIY



Nutritionists say it's rich in antioxidants, enzymes, and vitamins, that it helps treat canker sores and even cancer, some studies indicate—but those are just the positive side effects, most importantly and the reason we're here to tell you how to make it yourself: It's yummy.

Spanning the reaches of history, all the way to ancient Greek and Roman times, sauerkraut exists in numerous cuisines around the world in some shape or form—as tsukemono in Japanese, as suancai in northeast Chinese cuisine (and every Harbin Jiaozi restaurant should have it), as kimchi in Korean—but it's still mainly associated with Germany. The association is so strong that during the world wars, "sauerkraut" became an ethnic slur used by American soldiers. In the post-war era, it has been adopted as a self-ironic genre name for German progressive rock—krautrock.

As with DIY gherkins (issue 41), DIY sauerkraut is superior in taste and texture, without additives and comes at a fraction of the price of the commercial shelf product. Your single biggest investment and primary obstacle may be the right jar or pot. For a trial and direct comparison you could use the well-cleaned glass left over from a commercial sauerkraut (or any food jar as long as the lid is resealable). Ikea also sells sealable glasses that can be used, and local kitchenware shops (such as those adjacent to the produce markets) sell bigger and cheaper paocai jars, which might be even better as the ideal pot has a little round channel with water on top on which the lid sits and allows internal gas to escape without letting air in.

It's an essential part of national Polish, Hungarian, and Russian dishes, particularly stews. In Germany it is usually served as a side accompanying pork knuckle or ribs, grilled sausages, or roast meat in combination with gravy or mustard and potatoes and dumplings, but it could also be used as filling for meat dishes, or in casserole or lasagna, cold as a salad, or in a rather unusual combination with fish or sautéed with fried noodles. Some even drink the leftover juice. Depending on the dish, regional or personal preference one could add diced carrots and bacon, caramelized onions or apples, (beef) broth, beer, or, for a French touch, dry white wine or even champagne. It tastes even better reheated.

## Sauerkraut

Enough to fill 2 to 4 jars

## Ingredients

One small white cabbage  
Salt (1 Tbsp per kg of cabbage)  
Black peppercorn  
Bay leaves  
Dill  
Cumin seeds  
Optional:  
Juniper berries  
Cloves  
Estragon  
Savory  
Fennel seeds  
Sugar

## Directions

1. Remove the two outermost layers of the cabbage (throw them away or wash them and use them for soup).
2. Slice the cabbage into strips 1cm wide.
3. Add salt and mash the cabbage with your hands until the cabbage surfaces are juicy (you're breaking down the cell walls; the salt absorbs the juice and starts the fermentation process).
4. Place cabbage slices in freshly washed glass jars. Cover the opening of the jars with plastic wrap and place the lids on top of that, sealed tightly.
5. Store them protected from the Chengdu sunlight in a cold place for a week or two if you prefer it sour (as few as three days may be enough for some tastes). The sauerkraut is ready when it's sour, with a touch of sweetness, but still crunchy.

## Notes

If the cabbage turns brown and dry, too much air has found its way in, and you'll have to restart. A moldy film just on the surface, however, can be skimmed off.

# DIY

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