

Geography Field Camp to Yunnan Province, China (19-29 May 2012)

Every year, the Geography Department organises a field camp for its second-year students. This year, the field camp (organized by Dr. Claudio Delang, with the assistance of Dr. Xiaojiang Yu, Mr. Benson Choi, and Ms. Tracey Yiu) took the students to the Yunnan Province, China, from the 19th to the 29th of May 2012. A total of 57 students took part.

Yunnan is a province with incredible diversity, from both environmental and socio-economic points of view. The students had the chance to experience some of that diversity. The trip started in Kunming, where we visited the city and had very informative lectures by two professors of the Yunnan Institute of Geography (Yunnan University). The first, by Prof. Wang Xiao-chun covered the human geography of the province, in particular the ethnic minorities. The second, by Prof. Huang Xiao-xia, introduced the physical geography of the province. Near Kunming, we visited the Dianchi Lake and had a very enlightening presentation by Dr. Wenling Wang.



Group photo at the Lamasery at Songzanlin Lamasery (Shangri La)

After Kunming, we headed north. The first stop was in Dali, where we visited the ancient city (the former capital of the Bai Kingdom), and the Three Pagodas. We then had an excursion to the Cangshan Mountain, guided by Prof. Fan Peng Fei of the Department of Biology of Dali University. In Dali, the students did the first of the two assignments they had during the field camp, interviewing locals about their livelihood, and the link between tourism, farming, and forestry in the local economy. They presented the results of their research in the evening, drawing from both the information obtained through interviews, and that gathered during the visit of the Cangshan Mountain. Near Dali, we also visited Xizhou ancient town, which is being developed to compete for the tourists that visit Dali. Comparing the sites allowed us to gain insights of the tourism development strategies of the provincial government.

On May 23 we travelled north to Lijiang, and visited the Yulong (“Jade Dragon”) Snow Mountain and Shuhe Ancient Town. In Lijiang itself, the students carried out a field exercise, mapping the changes in the tourism landscape over the last 15 years. The findings were discussed during the last evening. On the way to Shangri La we visited the Tiger Leaping Gorge, one of the world's deepest river canyons.



Lecture at the Cangshan Mountain



At the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain



Group exercise in Lijiang

On May 27 we arrived in Shangri La, where we visited the old town (Zhongdian), and the Songzanlin Lamasery, as well as the Napa Lake and Pudacuo National Park. We were fortunate to have a very informative lecture on the threat to the Napa Lake by Mr. Min Long of the Napahai Wetland Conservation Authority, and to be able to visit the houses of the local Zen community, appreciating their way of life and hearing their viewpoint on the conservation of the lake. In Zhongdian, the students made the last presentation, with a lively discussion of the environmental problems of Yunnan.



Learning Naxi script in Lijiang



Lecture at the Napa Lake



Visit of the Pudacuo National Park

Apart from spectacular landscapes, which offered students invaluable learning experiences, the students benefited from interacting with a variety of people, including farmers, tourism operators, minority people, and government officers, and had the chance to visit cultural landscapes and sites of historic importance.

The Department would like to thank the Drs. Richard Charles & Esther Yewpick Lee Charitable Foundation for their kind donation towards the costs of the students' field camp. Thanks are also given to Prof. Larry Chow who, through the Hong Kong Energy Studies Centre, kindly donated funds to help support the field camp.