

Hong Meigui Tian Xing Expeditions

Information for Members

July 4, 2007

1 Summary - Read this if you read nothing else

- **Money** : Make sure you withdraw the RMB from a Bank of China ATM in Chongqing or Wulong. **YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET RMB AFTER YOU LEAVE WULONG.** Let me repeat that: it's definitely 100 % certian, no matter what you've read elsewhere, that you cannot use any foreign credit cards or atm cards or traveller's cheques or currency, etc. in Jiangkou, or Tianxing.
- **SRT kit** : Bring sufficient spares to replace 1 stop bobbin and 1 chest jammer every 3-4 weeks.
- **Budget** : 45-50 RMB per day for kitty (food, accommodation, cave food; beer is 2 RMB per bottle and is paid for separately according to how much you drink), 200-500 RMB for transport to/from Tianxing. 50 GBP for equipment fee.
- **Accommodation** : Bring a sleeping bag and roll mat for use in the bunk room.
- **Registering with PSB** : You can register with the PSB (police) in Tianxing.
- **Food** : The food is not good for vegetarians.
- **Visa** : Get a tourist visa. Don't mention caving. List Chongqing, Yangshuo, Kunming, Chengdu as destinations.
- **Medical** : You need innoculations, but no malaria tablets. We have a first aid kit. Tell us if you have food or drug allergies or any medical conditions.
- **Lights** : Bring electric lights. Carbide and flatpacks are not available. 220V and 110V mains is available for charging.
- **Clothing** : Caves are 13-16°C and wet. Wetsuits likely needed.
- **Other equipment** : Bring a camera, gps, or laptop (and any download cables) if you have one. Tell us what you're bringing.
- **Group equipment** : The expedition has drills, rope, survey instruments, etc.

2 Objectives

2.1 Surveying and Documentation

In all our exploration, we aim to document our exploration and the caves themselves. This includes writing up trips in the logbook, writing cave descriptions, drawing rigging diagrams, taking photographs (and cataloging them), and of course creating a good survey. All expedition members are expected to put in a fair share of effort towards this. As a general rule if you explore a passage, it's your responsibility to document it before you return home - past experience shows that even people with the best intentions rarely draw up surveys after they've gone home.

3 Overview of Tian Xing

Tian Xing is a small town in a mountainous region of Chongqing Municipality in south-western China. It essentially consists of one street about 200m long, and is surrounded by fields of tobacco, which is the main crop in the area. In previous years the expedition has based itself in cheap accommodation in Tian Xing, which has proved very convenient as most of the caves we're exploring are within 20 minutes walk.

3.1 Prices

Living in Tian Xing is cheap. Some example prices from last year:

- **Accommodation** : 4-5 Yuan/person/night
- **Cooked food** : 5 Yuan/person/meal
- **Beer** : 2 Yuan/bottle (about a pint)
- **Internet** : 3 Yuan/hour (may not be available)

Based on previous years' spending, you should expect to spend around 45-50 yuan per day on kitty expenses (see below).

3.2 Weather

The weather can be quite variable; in early September there ought to be some hot weather, and by late October it will probably be getting rather cold; last year it dropped to around 8 celcius by the end of the trip. It will rain from time to time. In other words, it's a bit like British weather, and you should bring clothes to cover any eventuality except for freezing cold or snow.

3.3 Food

We'll almost certainly be staying at Mrs. Wei's place, and she'll provide cheap food for us. The food is good, solid stuff. Marrow, turnip, potato and of course rice are the veg you'll most often see, and expect plenty of pork, bacon and pig fat. We can get food of just about any level of spiciness from hardly any up to lots.

Caving food provided as part of the expedition includes snickers bars, dried pineapple, peanuts, dried beef, compressed biscuits, and chocolate wafers. For underground camping we have dehydrated meals. For the surface we have coffee, tea, milk powder, and tang (orange, pineapple, grape, etc.) All of the above is included in kitty. Kitty will also include bottled water and 2 or 3 meals per day cooked by Mrs. Wei. You'll be able to buy local beer through the expedition for 2Y a bottle. If you want special food, you're best off buying it at the Carrefour in Chongqing which carries some western products. In Tianxing village you can buy grape juice drink, cola drink (not name-brand), and salty snacks.

VEGGIES : It's pretty much impossible to get totally vegetarian food in Tian Xing as the locals really can't comprehend the idea. It should be possible to get dishes cooked without meat in them (rather than meat dishes with the meat picked out), but due to local cooking methods small scraps of meat may be present from dishes previously prepared in the same wok. Vegetarians are advised to bring dietary supplements.

3.4 Accommodation

Staying at Mrs. Wei's we'll have use of three large rooms with a balcony and a toilet. These are rather basic, with concrete floors and bare walls. There will probably also be a limited number of nicer rooms upstairs, which can only be used by people deemed clean enough by Yang Li, who's flat the rooms are in. Yang Li also has a **hot shower** that we can use so long as we leave the shower room clean (Note: showers may be limited/unavailable if the current drought continues.) Last year we divided the downstairs room into tackle store, common room, and bunk-room. Personal space in the bunk room is limited, so please be considerate to others. Mrs. Wei can provide lumpy beds, but you'll need your own sleeping bag and a foam roll-mat is recommended.

We have **mains electricity** (220v) which is fairly reliable, and we have a voltage regulator which outputs both **220v and 110v**. We have blocks of **sockets** which will accept just about any shape plug you can imagine - no-one has yet managed to bring a plug that doesn't fit. We hope to have dial-up **internet access** (3 yuan/hour). We have a large collection of **music**, but please bring your own to add to the collection. We can play a wide variety of formats (mp3, ogg, m4a, flac and wma certainly work, and probably several others) Bring headphones if you'll want to listen to music in the bunk room.

4 Caving Kit

4.1 Lights

It is **NOT POSSIBLE TO BUY CARBIDE IN WULONG**, so leave your carbide lights at home. Bring an **ELECTRIC LIGHT**. Caving trips may be fairly long (last year's longest day-trip was 22-and-a-half hours long). Some leads may require camping underground. You'll need reliable and long-lasting electric lights. I use an array

of LEDs which I can run from a variety of different sorts of battery, with a Princeton-tec Impact torch bungied to the side of my helmet as a backup. You will also need a separate light for reading instruments and setting stations while surveying.

Hong Meigui has plenty of **rechargeable AA and AAA batteries** which may be borrowed, as well as AA primary cells which may be bought at cost. We don't have any flatpacks, C-cells, D-cells, or 9V batteries and they're not available in China. Contact if you will need large numbers of AA cells and we will make sure there are sufficient available.

Charging lights: the voltage regulator outputs reliable 200V and 110V suitable for charging most battery packs.

4.2 Survey Kit

We have several sets of survey instruments and tape measures. The compasses are mostly Silva Type 80s, which we have found to be almost indestructable. They are prismatic instruments, which take a little getting used to and some people do not like them. If you would prefer to use your own instruments, please bring them.

We sketch to scale on metric-gridded paper. If you are particularly attached to a certain style of survey paper, feel free to bring your own as long as it is metric and can be hole-punched and filed with the rest of the survey notes.

It's useful to have a small light to hold on survey stations to aid sighting and sketching - in awkward spots it's much easier than trying to get your helmet light on station.

4.3 Clothes

The caves are 13-16 degrees Celsius (a bit warmer than in the UK, but not much). Some leads are wet. I find that I'm OK wearing a thin polartec fleece under a lightweight cordura oversuit, but I know that at least one person prefers to wear a TSA suit with a thick fleece suit underneath - I would roast in that. If you want to bring lots of thermals, I suggest bringing several thin layers so that you can take layers off if you find the caves too warm.

WETSUITS will be needed for the swimming and deep wading sections of Qikeng Dong. I picked up a cheap 3mm wetsuit in Hong Kong that seems to do the job.

Hong Meigui has buoyancy aids, so you don't need to bring your own.

4.4 SRT Kit

Expect to do a lot of abseiling and prusiking! The ropes will be muddy and abrasive, so the average caver will need to replace a stop bobbin and a chest jammer every 3-4 weeks of expedition. Bring spares.

4.5 Rigging Kit

We have a large stock of rigging kit, including drills, hangers, thru-bolts, spits, spit drivers, Roc-Peckers, hammers, tape slings, krabs and rope protectors. You should not need to bring any of those things yourself, unless you particularly want to use your own bolt driver or hammer, for example. If you have etriers or skyhooks, it might be useful to bring them.

4.6 Underground Camping Kit

We've got some sleeping bags for underground camp so you shouldn't need to take your own sleeping bag caving. Bring lightweight thermals for wearing at underground camp, and probably a headtorch so you don't have to use your helmet and main caving light in camp.

We have several Ortlieb heavy-duty drybags for transporting kit which needs to be kept dry. To maximise the life of drybags, they must be transported inside tacklesacks, and care should be taken not to put anything pointed (like drill bits or pencils) or with sharp corners into the drybag without careful padding. If you have your own drybag, or other preferred container for keeping your kit dry, please bring it.

5 Money

You can NOT get money out in Tian Xing, and it is not possible to change money in Wulong. You will need to get Chinese currency in Chongqing or from the ATM in Wulong.

Travellers' Cheques in China can be a pain in the backside, and are not recommended.

If you've got a cirrus (ATM) card or similar, you can get money from cash points belonging to the Bank of China in Chongqing. Usually you get a reasonably good exchange rate doing this, but you need to watch out for transaction charges - ask your bank what they charge. **YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET RMB AFTER YOU LEAVE CHONGQING/WULONG.**

Kitty will most likely be around 45-50 Yuan per day, which covers accommodation in Tian Xing, food, transportation of club equipment, and a few other bits and pieces. Some of this will be covered by grant income the expedition has received. You will also need money for your personal transport to and from Wulong (200-500Y) and any luxury items you wish to buy (Dove chocolate, cola, etc.)

Beer is **not** a kitty expense. The expedition buys crates of beer and you'll be charged for the number of bottles you drink.

You will also need to make a contribution of £50 towards equipment, payable as 750 Yuan in China.

6 Getting to Tian Xing

See [travel-chongqing-tianxing.pdf](#) for travel details from Chongqing to Tianxing.

7 Miscellaneous stuff

7.1 Rescue

There is no cave rescue service in China, and any rescue from depth in Tian Xing is likely to be extremely slow if possible at all. The best course of action is to try very hard not to need rescuing!

In case of the worst eventuality, please enter details of your next-of-kin in the log-book when you arrive in Tian Xing.

7.2 Phrasebooks

Get hold of a phrasebook and bring it along; it will help no-end on your journey, especially if things don't go smoothly, and it will also help you to be self-sufficient in Tian Xing so you can do your own thing and not always have to bother people to translate for you.

There is a phrasesheet available for download. (Note - this phrasesheet could be improved, so if you have any suggestions email us.)

7.3 Library

We have a small library of paperbacks of varying merit; it would be appreciated if you brought a couple of books of your own to add to the collection. If you prefer to read in a language other than english, you'll need to bring your own books to read. This will help stop people from going insane in between caving trips - other than caving there's not much to do in Tian Xing.

7.4 GPS

Due to the new mapping law, we will not be using GPS units this year.

7.5 Laptops

If you have your own laptop, please bring it along. It is useful to have at least 3-4 laptops so we can stay on top of the data entry. The expedition will use survex for data processing and a html form/spreadsheet for entering cave and photo information. We will have a printer and scanner, so contact Erin for details of the drivers.

7.6 Cameras

If you have a digital camera, please bring the download cable and any drivers required. If your camera stores its images in a proprietary format, please bring software than can convert the images to jpegs. We will download the photos to a laptop on a regular basis and then burn photo dvd's for everyone to share at the end of the expedition. Let Erin know if you're bringing a camera for underground use. If there aren't enough cameras, we'll look into getting disposable cameras for documentation purposes.