

Guide to visitors

Beautiful scenery of Huanglong

Huanglong is located between $103^{\circ}44'$ – $104^{\circ}3'$ Lon. W. of Greenwich, and $32^{\circ}41'$ – $32^{\circ}54'$ Lat. N. of the Equator, in Sichuan Province, China. It is a neighbor of world-famous Jiuzhaigou, with an area of 40,000 hectares. The karst landscape of Huanglong is spectacular, with over 3,400 multicolored pools reflecting surrounding peaks, trees and waterfalls in an unending scroll. The 3.5-kilometer yellow-sand road is like a golden dragon flying up the snowy mountain, and from a distance the colored pools look like dragon scales. So, it is called Huanglong that means yellow dragon in Chinese.

The Huanglong Valley, a wide valley, is 7 km long. Its scenic part has a length of 4.7 km, and goes from 3575m down to 3145m above sea level. The karst landscape grows here, with beautiful scenery of Wucaichi (The Five Color Ponds), Jinshapudi (The Ground Covered with Golden Sand), and Zhengyancaichi (The Competing for Beauty Color Pond) and so on.

The Wucaichi Pools lie at the foot of Yucui Peak. Here melting snow from Minshan Mountains and water saturated with calcium carbonate from the limestone surface gather into widening streams and flow downhill. The water is checked here and there by dead tree branches and rocks ridged with pale limestone formations. These zigzag calc-sinter ridges, like carved agate and jasper, divide the water into pools of varied sizes, the smallest less than 1 foot across and the largest about a sixth of an acre. The beds of the pools are composed of minerals that, reflected in the light, give the water a variety of colours. At the bottom of the pools lie fascinating configurations of stones and plants.

Water overflows the ponds at Wucaichi and rolls down a slope shaped like the back of a dragon, forming the sight of great drama-Jinshapudi. The terrain is precipitous. The mineral-rich water flows too swiftly to allow karst formations; instead travertine settles on the river bed, and small calc-sinter clusters, golden or milky yellow, appear under the water like dragon scales. The water is not deep, the shallowest point being less than 1 inch. Here waves rise and fall, as if the dragon were thrashing with a sound like the dragon's roar.

Deep in the quiet woods to the right of Jinshapudi is Zhengyancaichi, the largest group of colour ponds at Huanglong known locally as one of the two most beautiful groups of pools in the area, with Wucaichi. These bright pools lie in step formations, each with one side delicately raised. Behind the ridges between large ponds, a number of exquisitely shaped small pools are hidden, so goes the saying, like "delicate beauties in the boudoir." The visitors can understand their girlish tenderness only by approaching them.

The most stunning sights at Huanglong are calc-sinter ridges (with the colour ponds), the

travertine slope (at Jinshapudi), and the limestone caves (such as the Huanglong Cave). There is one more: the travertine falls. The best-known are the Feipuliuhui (Sparkling) and the Xishengdong (Bathing Cave) falls. Feipuliuhui has its source in a large pond, from which the water overflows at a 60-meter-wide jigsaw ridge and cascades 10 meters in a fall like hanging screens or sheets of silk. The Xishengdong falls are the end of Jinshapudi. The water, white and yellow, rushes down 7 meters like pearls and jade, adding another bit of mystery to the cave in the cliff behind.

Zhaga Cataract, another travertine fall, is in a deep forest southwest of Huanglong. This 35-meter-wide travertine fall with a 93.2-meter drop rushes downhill in tiers. A lake surrounded by greenery lies peacefully near the summit. The voice of Zhaga Cataract sounds like a fierce symphony, which goes to several miles away.

From Songpan to Huanglong, there is a snow mountain called Xuebaoding (Snow-covered Peak), the main peak of the Minshan Mountains, towers like a pyramid 5588 meters high. Snow-capped the year round and riddled with steep precipices, it is a virgin peak yet to be ascended. It would be an ideal spot from which to watch tinted clouds floating across the sky and vapor curling slowly into the air.

East of the Fuyuan Bridge, below Yingbincaichi (The Welcoming the Guest Colour Ponds), stretches the Danyun Gorge. Like a painting, the 30-odd kilometer portion of the Fujiang River winding through the gorge like a dragon, passes exotic hills, waterfalls, green trees, and lingering mist. In autumn, the red leaves and yellow grasses in the gorge contrast with dark pines and cypresses. Sometimes a visitor may be lucky enough to encounter a giant panda strolling in the woods or drinking at the river.

The scenery of Huanglong is so spectacular that a visitor from the United States of America praises it in excitement, here there are white snow mountains like in Canada, beautiful virgin forest in Colorado, America, gorges in Wyoming, and colourful karst ponds in the Yellow Stone Park. It is rare in the world that so many beautiful scenes come together in one place. Huanglong is not only a valuable possession of Chinese people, but also of people in the world. Huanglong is really a natural "Geological Museum".

(by The Huanglong Administration Bureau, Sichuan Province, China)