

## Blog 42 Longji Terraced Fields



In the midst of spring break, our whole family took a trip to Guilin, a city that basically sums up the essence of Eastern beauty. Out of all the tourist sites we visited within that week, my favorite has to be the Longji Terraced Fields. There, I met new people of different ethnic minorities, viewed breathtaking scenery of the many layered mountains and spent two fairly memorable nights in a small guest house in the belly of the valley.

It took us three hours to drive from Guilin to the foot of the terraced mountain fields. As we groggily stepped out of the car, we encountered a sixty year old petite woman named A Po dressed in traditional Yao minority apparel, carrying a large bamboo basket on her back. With a kind smile worn across her face, she offered to carry our luggage for us in her big basket up to the top of the mountain and could meanwhile be our guide for a small price. At first, we were pretty uncomfortable to have a senior bare the thirty or so pounds of luggage for

us, but she insisted upon us helping her gain some business. In the end, we were reluctantly persuaded to give her a couple of bags up and we were off to our hike in the mountains. Halfway up the mountains, our family looked like we were running a marathon, soaked with sweat and pleading for breaks. I was so tired that even the scarf around my neck became a burden. But A Po's still kept smiling at us and she didn't even seem to break a sweat. When we were finally nearing our hotel, we ran into a one hundred year old man squatting on the side of the walkway. He greeted every tourist with a warm smile. As a senior from the Yao minority, it's pretty shocking that he speaks and understands mandarin.





As we hiked higher and deeper into the mountain ranges of the Longji Terraced Fields, the view grew vaster. Everywhere you looked could be a classic Chinese landscape painting all by itself. Layers and layers of mountains covered with thousand year old terraced fields peaked out behind clouds as if playing a game of hide and seek. If you've never seen wonderland before, I'm guessing that view basically sums it up. Towards the afternoon, we made our way up to a big rock settled in the middle of a mountain that was definitely the finest spot for the best view. Puffy white clouds rolled into view and swirled all around the peaks of mountains hiding and revealing themselves every now and then. They say that the weather on the Longji Terraced Fields is like a toddler's emotions, they can be sunny and cheerful one minute, but gloomy and sad another. As you are beginning to enjoy a clear blue sky, a sea of silky white fog seem to appear from nowhere and engulf the village, strolling into all of the open windows and doors without warning, then the rain showers take their turn. On

the second day of our stay, my dad had to leave early so my mom and I decided to walk down the mountain with him. It only took us forty five minutes to hike to the bottom of the mountain and by the time my mom and I hiked back up to the hotel, we felt like the local residents climbing quickly up the rocky steps within an hour. We moved swiftly from one step to the other, avoiding piles of sticky mud or horse poop without problem.



We stayed up on the mountains for two nights in a guest house with only twenty rooms and nineteen of them were completely empty. Yep, we were the only guests. We've never been the only family in an entire hotel. If you counted the total number of people in the four story building, there were only five of us: my family and the owner. That night, the owner made us a big meal of veggies and meat. Every vegetable was picked in his own fields and all the meat was also from his own farm. They've never heard of take-out or going to the grocery store since each family has their own "fresh food market" right outside their door.

That night, each member of my family had a very good appetite and ate three bowls of rice. After we filled our stomachs, we wanted to sit down and watch some TV. The entire lobby was ours. Gusts of cold wind blew in from the opened doors and the only sound was the robotic buzz coming from the flickering TV. So we gave up the idea of watching TV and wanted to check the internet for news. Unfortunately, there was no signal. We finally decided to live like a local – go to bed early. The bed was extremely hard! The bedspread and the blankets were all damp with moisture making it even colder than it already was. I didn't bother changing out of my warm clothes and slipped into bed. Despite the uncomfortable conditions, I quickly fell asleep. The next morning, I was awakened by an unfamiliar sound coming from the distance. As I listened closer, I realized it was a rooster; Calling us up for another beautiful and active day.

