

## **The Danxia Mountain**

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### **【Introduction】**

The Danxia Mountain is situated 45 kilometers to the northeast of Shaoguan City. Geological studies show that twenty five million years ago, this place was a vast expanse of a low-lying lake. Later, movements of the earth's crust made it rise above the ground and the water receded away, thus turning it into a mountain and the former sediment at the bottom of the lake gradually oxidized and became red rocks. These red rocks and red precipices, being relieved against the green woods and the blue sky, look just like rosy clouds, hence the name “Danxia”, meaning “red clouds” in English.

In the 1930s, Professor Chen Guoda of the Sun Yat-sen University made an intensive investigation and study of the geomorphic features of the Danxia Mountain and other red-rock mountains in South China. He denominated this kind of red-rock land configuration the “Danxia Landform”, which was soon approved and universally adopted by the academic circles, thus making the Landform can be found in all continents of the world except Antarctica, such as the Great Canyon of the United States and some areas in Saxony of Germany. But, the Danxia Mountain is the largest and the most beautiful and typical of its kind.

The Danxia Mountain covers an area of 319 square kilometers, in which over 600 red-rock peaks stand out well against the woods of green, a sight that reminds one of a large garden with many ruby sculptures; therefore it is also named China Ruby Park or literally China Red Stone Park. In 1995, the Chinese State Council approved of its being a geological nature reserve and,

in 2000; it was rated by the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) as the world's geological park.

### **【The Entrance to the Mountain】**

Now we have arrived at the entrance to the Danxia Mountain. The gate structure here is constructed of red sand rocks. These Chinese characters are the name of the park, meaning "China Ruby Park". The three big Chinese characters up on the horizontal beam, "Dan Xia Shan", meaning Danxia Mountain, were written by Guan Shanyue, who was a famous painter in China. We'll follow the mountain road to climb the Zhanglao Peak, which is the main peak of the Danxia Mountain, 408 meters above sea level.

### **【The Elephants Crossing the River and the Beautiful Girl Blocking the River】**

Now we have come to the central area of the Danxia Mountain. The Danxia Mountain is rated first among the four famous mountains in Guangdong Province and its unique natural scenery gives free play to one's fancy. Please look at the hill in the distance beyond the coming up to us. Their trunks, tusks, ears and eyes are all lifelike. So this sight is named 'The Elephants Crossing the River'.

(On the Yangyuan Bridge) Please look to your right at the hill in the distance. It looks as if a young girl is lying down to sleep: From right to left, the outlines of her head, her neck, her chest and her belly are all clearly discernible. So, this sight is called "The Sleeping Belle" or "The Beautiful Girl Blocking the River".

### **【The Yangyuan Column】**

This hill is called Yangyuan Hill, meaning "The Hill of Male Sex ". It is so named because the stone column here, 28 meters tall and 7 meters in diameter, is the very image of man's external genitals. According to geological studies, this stone column was a part of the cliff and it is over three hundred thousand

years since Mother Nature severed it from the mountain body and carved it into this shape. In the old days, men were regarded as superior to women and people often prayed for having highly worshiped by the pilgrims.

### 【The Yinyuan Cliff】

This steep face of rock is called Yinyuan Cliff, meaning Stone Cliff of Female Sex in English, because it is a strong resemblance of woman's external genitals. It was found some one hundred thousand years ago. Just as God had sculptured the first man and his wife, Adam and Eve, in the Garden Danxia Mountain. What a wonderful world this is!

### 【The Jinshi Cave】

This cave is called Jinshi Cave, meaning Colorful Rock Cave in English. The inside of this cave is a Buddhist monastery consisting of the Thousand Buddha Hall, the Guanyin Hall and the Sakyamuni Hall etc. Among these halls, the Guanyin Hall for the Goddess of Mercy is the largest, 30 meters deep and 4meters high with adequate space to accommodate a hundred pilgrims at the same time. In this hall there are many images of the Goddess of Mercy in her different incarnations, 32 in all, which are all made to be lifelike of rock that shapes like a dragon. It is called “Bian Se Long ”, meaning “color-changing dragon” or chameleon, because its color changes according to its background. It is light green in spring, dark green in summer, yellowish green in autumn and brownish yellow in winter. Why is that? It is because on the surface of the rock is growing a kind of alga that is highly water-absorbing. The alga is lush and green when water is adequate in rainy seasons while in dry seasons, when water is insufficient, it turns yellow or brown. On the cliff outside the cave, there are two big Chinese characters “jin yan”, meaning “colorful rock cave”. They were written by Zhao Rulai, a man of letters of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127—1279AD), and are the earliest engravings on cliffs in the Danxia Mountain.

### 【The Biechuan Temple】

This is a Buddhist monastery called Biechuan Temple. Built in 1662, i. e. the first year in the reign of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty, it was frequented by a large number of pilgrims and is one of the three largest Buddhist monasteries in Northern Guangdong (The other two being the Famen Temple in Ruyuan Country and the Nanhua Temple in Qujiang Country). Up on the main gate of the temple, there are four Chinese characters: Bie chuan Chan Si, meaning Biechuan Chan Buddhist Monastery. They were written by Li Hanhun, who was then the gate, we can see many engravings on the red cliff. Among them the two big Chinese characters Dan Xia, 5-6 square feet each, are the most beautiful. They were written by an official of the Qing Dynasty.

The Biechuan Temple is constructed in more or less the same layout as other Buddhist monasteries. It consists of the Hall of the Heavenly Kings, the bell and drum towers, the Sakyamuni Hall and the Hall of the Goddess of Mercy and so on. Now you can look around on your own –hill, by the same way as where we came up, to the pier to take a boat-ride on the Jinjiang River so that you may feast your eyes on the beautiful scenery along the river.