



Hua Shan Peak, South Face, Never Give Up

China, Shaanxi Province, Qin Mountains

Hua Shan is the West Mountain (Xi Yue) of the Five Great Mountains (Wu Yue, the holy Taoist mountains) in Chinese traditional and religious custom. Cable cars and impressive "via ferrata" pathways lead to the various tops. Hua Shan has five peaks, but the south and highest (2,154m) has the most climbing potential. It is a 600m granite cylinder that became better known to Western climbers after Leo Houlding (U.K.), Carlos Suarez (Spain), and Wang Zhi Ming (China) made the first ascent of the impressive west face via Northern Celestial Masters (600m, British E6 6b and a few points of aid) in 2009.

Despite being a well-known tourist attraction, there is little information on how to approach the various faces. Zhu Xiaofei and I took seven hours to get to the bottom of the south face from the town of Huayin, via a valley to the west.

We started up on July 8 with a portaledge and haulbag, and that day took six hours to climb two pitches. Dealing with mud and grass in the cracks was very time-consuming. The next two days it rained continuously, confining us to the ledge, but on the 11th we managed another four pitches. There was a terrible free climbing crux over grass and mud on a vertical face, where at one point I was lucky to catch a sloper foothold just as my foot slipped. The next day we climbed three more pitches, including an overhanging offwidth. We were now at mid-height and the wall above slightly less than vertical.

On the 13th we climbed another four pitches, of which the second had the most awful climbing I've done. A steep crack gave access to a 20m, 40cm-wide chimney leading to 10m overhanging offwidth. Running it out for 15m in the chimney made me feel quite ill. The fourth pitch that day featured a loose chimney, and Zhu was hit in the face. He was covered in blood and insisted on going to hospital, but eventually came around. In the last couple of days he had become worn down by the lack of food and water, jumaring, and dealing with the haulbag. I would have to take care of both the climbing and our emotions.

The next day we climbed to the bottom of a 60m static rope that a friend and climbing photographer had hung from the top. This section contained the second crux and also a human leg bone in a tree branch—a tourist had fallen from the top. We reached the rope at midnight, but as I was not sleepy, I decided to leave the haulbag and climb to the top without using the static. Zhu jumared. We named the route Never Give Up (600m, 20 pitches, 5.10+ R C2+). One bolt was placed at each of the campsites, and we used a small piton twice on pitch two; the rest was clean aid. Two days later we went back to collect the haulbag.

He Chuan, China

Images



High on the south face of Hua Shan's south tower.



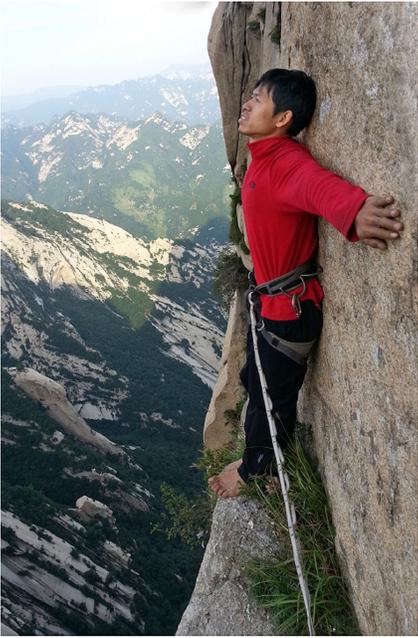
Approaching the granite towers of the Hua Shan.



Never Give Up on the 600m south face of Hua Shan's south tower.



Topo for Never Give Up.



He Chuan doing a bit of Honnolding.

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