

Su Rongqin on the summit of Peak 5,370m. Jon Otto

Our climb started in the ShangHaiZi parking lot of Bipeng valley. We made camp 1 on a grassy field on April 25 at 4,450m. The next day we walked up through deep, wet snow and made camp on the glacier at 5,050m. On April 27, we walked up the glacier to the saddle between Peak 5,414 (to the west) and Half Ridge Peak (to the northeast, 5,430m). From the saddle, we followed the ridgeline west to the summit of Peak 5,370. The last 50m involved climbing up a 50°-60° slope of loose snow on rock near the ridge and a small section of thin ridgeline to the summit, which can only stand one person at a time.

JON OTTO, AAC

*Bipeng Valley Nature Preserve, background information.* Bipeng Valley has at least 40 (maybe over 60) unclimbed 5,000+ meter peaks. In 2003 a paved access road was completed into the valley. This makes accessing this cluster of mountains easy and fast. The road ends in the heart of the valley at the ShangHaiZi parking lot (3,560m). There are two buildings, one a welcome center and restaurant, the other

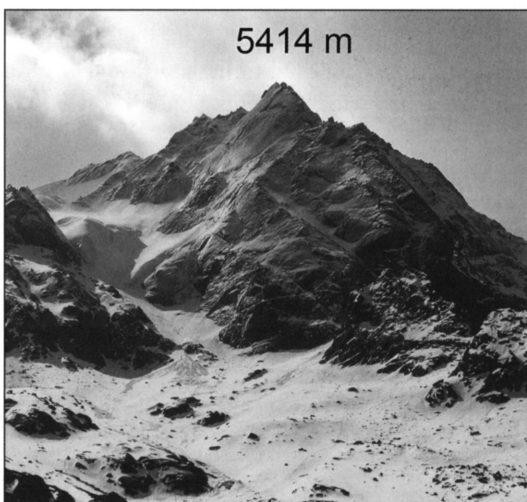
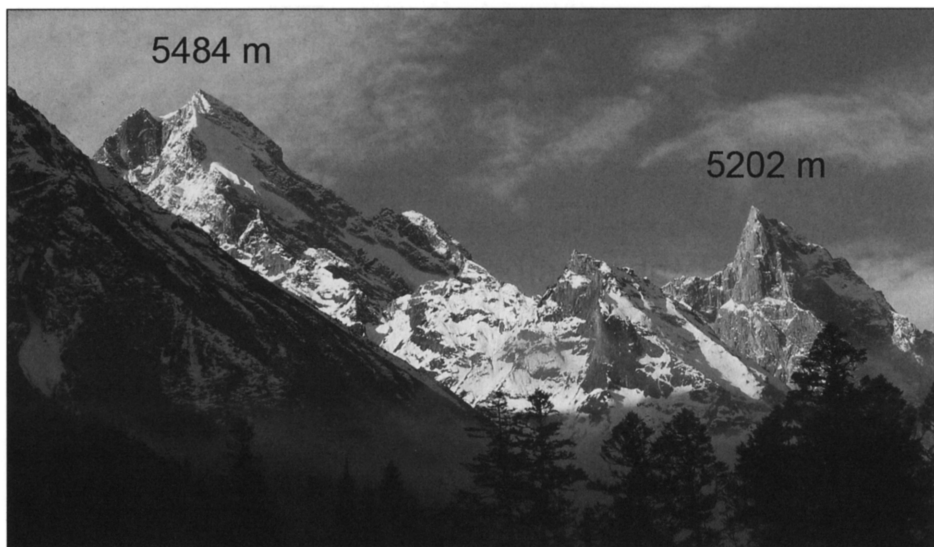


Photo taken from the ShangHaiZi parking lot in the Bipeng Valley; this is the prominent peak on the southeast side of the valley. Unclimbed. Jon Otto

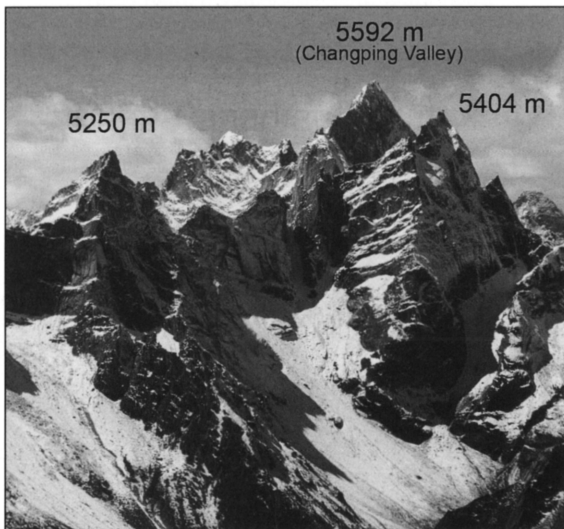


View of south-side peaks in the Bipeng Valley from near the parking lot. Unclimbed. *Jon Otto*

a guesthouse (at present you must pitch your tent on the guesthouse floor). The mountains range in difficulty from walk-ups to glacier climbs to world class vertical walls of rock and ice. The rock is good quality granite or a hard conglomerate.

Bipeng Valley is a Nature Preserve and you must buy an entrance ticket. Climbing is allowed and supported by the Valley's management company, although there are some bureaucratic details. There are certain regulations for climbing in China. My company AAIC works together with the Bipeng Valley's management and the Sichuan Mountaineering Association to encourage favorable policies and trouble-free access into these mountains. AAIC offers information to climbers, guided ascents to the mountains of Sichuan, and can assist with organizing any aspect of your climb into these mountains.

**Access:** The drive from Chengdu to Bipeng Valley is normally 6-7 hours. A highway will be completed in 2006 that will shorten the driving time by 1-2 hours. The route from Chengdu goes past Dujiangyan, Wenchuan, and Lixian County. If taking the public bus, buy a ticket to Lixian. From Lixian hire a mini-van to drive you up the valley, which takes just over an hour.



Unclimbed peaks at the head of the Bipeng Valley on the south side. Photo taken from summit camp (5,026m) on Half Ridge Peak. *Jon Otto*

Rental vehicles in Chengdu are also convenient and reasonably priced.

Seasonal climbing conditions: It is difficult to say what is the best time to climb in Bipeng Valley. Sichuan is semi-tropical and the weather changes rapidly. During the summer months you get longer stretches of alternating good and bad weather. There is little snow and the glacier is mostly ice. April is general nice but the heavy spring snows do not melt off until June, so snowshoes are recommended. Autumn is generally clear weather, but colder, and there is normally only moderate snow accumulation at the higher elevations.

At the higher elevations snow starts to accumulate in November and by the end of February there can be permanent snow at an elevation of 3,000m. There is a higher risk from avalanches during this period and potentially through May. By the end of winter there is a thick, heavy snowpack. By May the temperatures start to warm rapidly causing the snow to become thick and wet. During this time the snow line varies greatly depending on aspect. On north-facing slopes deep snow can start at 4,000m, while on south facing slopes it may not start until 4,600m.

Thus, there is snow at camp 1 (4,454m) on Half Ridge Peak into May, and the walk to camp 2 (summit camp) requires a lot of postholing. Over the next month or so most of this snow melts and in August this section of the climb is mostly dirt and rock, making the walk to camp 2 much easier and more straightforward. In October, camp 2, again, starts to get a permanent blanket of snow.

JON OTTO, AAC

*Mt. Siguniang (6,249m), southeast ridge, second ascent.* Mt. Siguniang was first summited in August 1981 by a Japanese team via the southeast ridge (AAJ 1982). We made the second successful ascent of this route, with six members summiting on November 17 and 18. The approach to this route is via Changping Valley from Rilong town, then up a side valley named GanHaizi to basecamp. The route follows the glacier to a 600m long (450m altitude gain) couloir up the west face of the southeast ridge. The route then continues along the southeast ridge to the summit.

We had attempted this same route in August of 2003. At that time, there was constant rockfall from all sides of the mountain, raining down pillow-size chunks of rock from several hundred meters above. The mountain has two obvious rock strata. The lower layer seems to be granite or a hard conglomerate of excellent quality, while the upper layer is a brownish, fragmenting, at places almost shale-like rock of poor quality. The dividing line between these two rock types is around 5,200m.

After almost being killed by this rockfall below the couloir, we went around the backside to the glacier between Siguniang's main peak and 3rd peak, climbing up 14 pitches on the southeast side of the southeast ridge to an altitude of 5,600m.



The "Pearl Necklace" stretch of Siguniang's southeast ridge, with high camp visible below. Jon Otto