

Traversing the Rising East

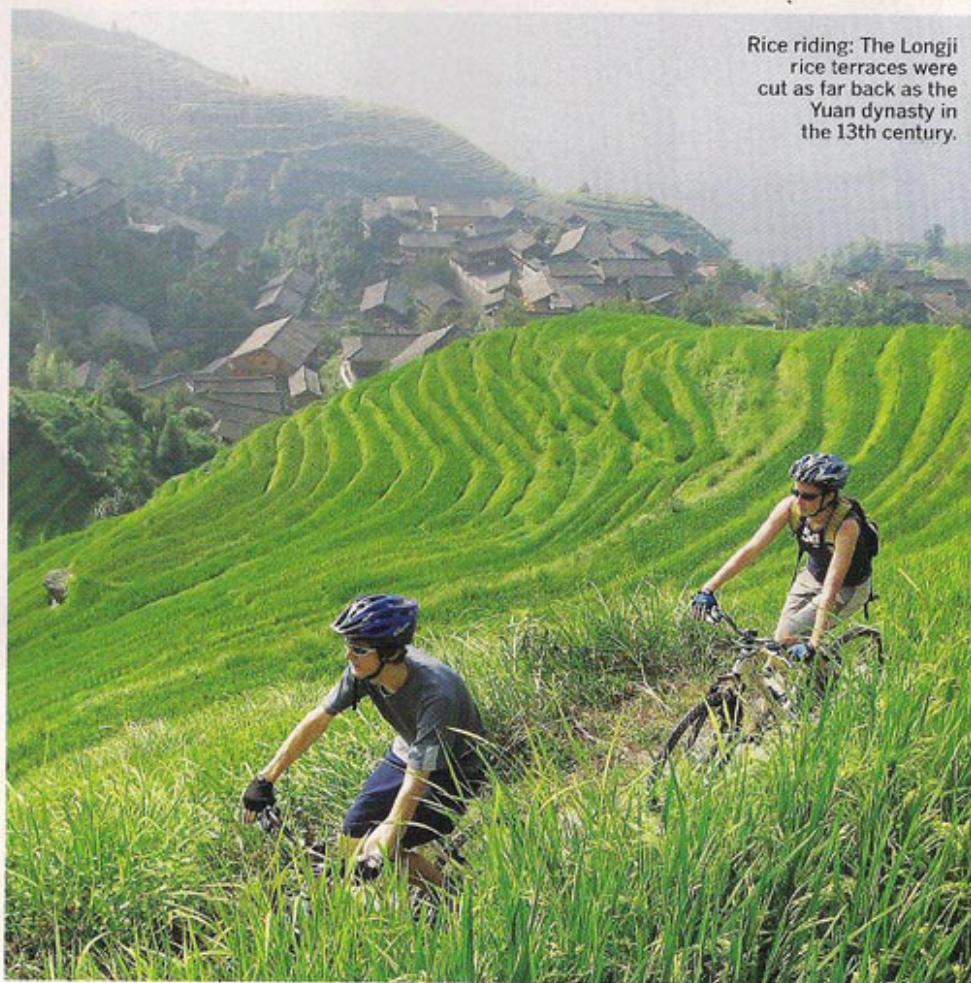
The recent political peace in Nepal and anticipation of the 2008 Beijing Olympics are among the reasons for a host of new **ADVENTURE TRIPS TO ASIA** this summer. *By Steve Mazzucchi*

Mountain Biking Through Small-Town China

WHY GO: Anyone can tool around China's big cities in a cab, but it takes true grit to explore the rural hinterlands on the seat of a bicycle. That's what Aussies Naomi Skinner and Scott Spencer, founders of Bike Asia, offer with their new "Guangxi and Guizhou: The Trail of the Dragon" trip through southern China. You'll pedal about 25-50 miles a day through 10 different cities, many of them rarely seen by foreigners. Highlights include a burly four-mile climb to the village of Pingan, situated among rice paddies cut into a mountainside, and a ride through Yangshuo's limestone karst mountains, an area that locals call "the finest scenery under heaven."

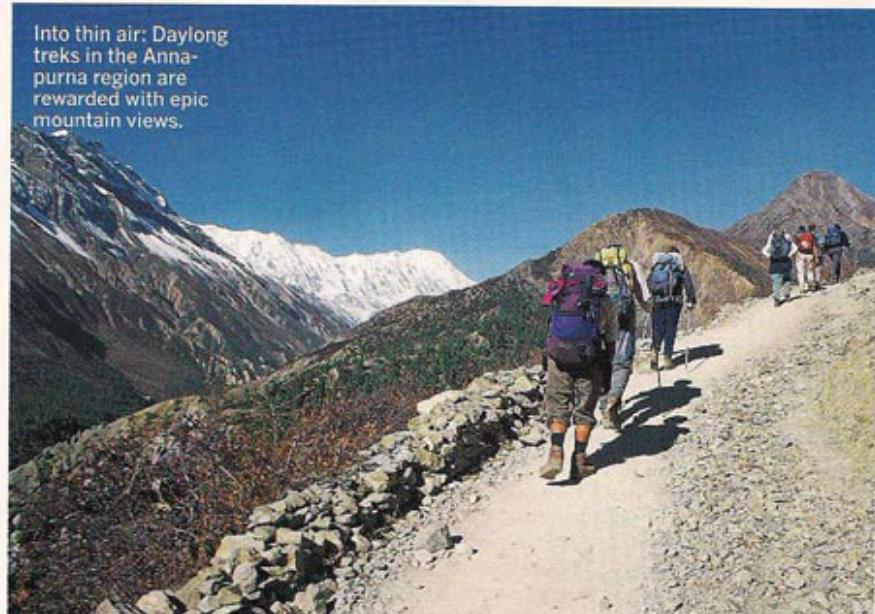
THE DEAL: \$1,650 for 14 nights, including lodging, meals, use of a mountain bike, and transportation (excluding international airfare). Departs from Guilin on August 30 and again in October.

CONTACT: Bike Asia, 86-0-773-882-6521, bikeasia.com



Rice riding: The Longji rice terraces were cut as far back as the Yuan dynasty in the 13th century.

Into thin air: Daylong treks in the Annapurna region are rewarded with epic mountain views.



Hiking the Himalayas in Nepal

WHY GO: On Mountain Travel Sobek's "Mustang: The Hidden Kingdom" tour you'll hike to Lo Manthang, the walled capital of the historical kingdom of Mustang, largely untouched by the outside world since the 14th century. This area has been open to trekking groups since just 1992, and only the recent easing of political tensions has allowed MTS to return there after a five-year hiatus. During eight days of rigorous trekking (up to nine hours a day) you'll tour Buddhist monasteries and the raja's palace.

THE DEAL: From \$3,455 for 14 nights, including lodging, meals, and transportation (excluding international airfare). Departs from Kathmandu on August 13.

CONTACT: Mountain Travel Sobek, 888-687-6235, mtsobek.com