

DAYTRIPPER

Wutong Mountain

Riding the bus out to Wutong Village, it's incredible how quickly Shenzhen turns from cityscape to overgrowth. Wide-leafed plants droop over road barriers; vines hang overhead.

One of three places you can access 943-meter-tall Wutong Mountain, the hamlet spans a dozen or so streets and packs in cafes, restaurants and shops – basically everything you may need before climbing the green mass that dominates the horizon.

Wutong Mountain has 12 popular trails that range in difficulty from 'walking up a driveway' to 'this might kill you.' Other routes exist, but are only marked by well-trod grass and signs reminding hikers going off-trail to bring a partner, sound advice given a 22-year-old college student died last year after getting lost during a solo trek.

The Taishan Stream Footpath is a happy medium: physically challenging and unlikely to end in a fatality. Pass under Wutong's massive main gate and head left.

"The footpath sometimes twists like bending willow branches, leaps and falls like a dragon flying, and sometimes drops into fog and clouds, attracting tourists to experience the feeling of being deeply intoxicated all



the time!" a sign proclaims at the base of the path. A more apt description: stairs, stairs, stairs, some stairs and more stairs... then mountain top.

That may sound bleak, but it's not. The route avoids tedium with views of waterfalls, two rope bridges and one area with signage warning hikers not to enter brooks, before leading directly into a brook.

After about 45 minutes of climbing the Taishan Stream Footpath, high-heeled women are replaced by sporty-looking lads and ladies with walking sticks and hiking shoes. From there it just gets tougher. There are stairs, yes, but around the two-hour mark, they begin winding wildly up the side of the mountain, and the temperature drops as the air thins.

Surprisingly, commerce continues along the entire route, with vendors waiting on the flat areas of the trail and selling water for about RMB5. Bring cash – owing to poor reception on the mountain, it might be the last place in Shenzhen where you can't use WeChat to buy some H2O.

After three hours of climbing, we summit – sore calved and sweat soaked – the tallest point in Shenzhen, surrounded by cloud. We had read about the incredible view of Shenzhen and the ocean from the vantage, but are denied it by a beautiful and other-

worldly scene: wind strong enough to lean into ruffles an undulating grey-white that hides the horizon.

Outside the large rock that tops the mountain, nothing else is visible, something an experienced hiker says happens 80 percent of the time.

After the challenging ascent, the Hao Han Slope is an easier way down. It follows a ridge and is bracketed by railing made to look like tree roots. Some parts of the route are exposed rock with concrete footholds added, offering a moderate challenge. The slope ends in a large pavilion where cows graze and seem bizarrely compelled to lick sweaty hikers.

From there, it's about an hour and a half walk down a wide, paved road to Wutong's main gate, where a Didi driver will whisk you back to the city proper. **STG**

HOW TO GET THERE

Take line three of the Shenzhen metro to the Cuizhu stop, then go to Liuyi Bu bus stop and take bus 211 towards Wutong Shan, the last stop.

> Daytripper is a monthly column that aims to help people get the most out of their PRD experience by proposing fun excursions that can be made in a single day to explore the local culture and nature of the region.