

China Narrow Gauge II Tour March-April 2019



Baishui, near Guangyuan - photo by Ichiro Junpu, used with permission

The Proposed itinerary

Day	Date	Activity	Overnight	Comment
-1	16/03/19	arrive in Chengdu ahead of tour if you can't arrive early on 17 March	nominated tour hotel near Chengdu Airport	extra charge for dinner and hotel room
1.	17/03/19 Part 1	tour starts, depart Chengdu for 4 hour drive north to Guangyuan	Guangyuan	if arriving in Chengdu 17/03/19 to start tour, your flight needs to arrive by 10 am otherwise come the day before
2.	18/03/19	Visit to Rongshan (the former prison mine railway)	Guangyuan	Rongshan sites include the station area with the sg and ng sheds, the mine halfway and at the end of the line, the closed and lifted line north to the third mine - still active when the line closed. http://rabylee.uk/chinareport11-14rongshan.html
3.	19/03/19	First day to explore the other 6 known coal mine railways in this area.	Guangyuan	Mines are at Baishuizen, Tangjiahe, Huangjiagou, Chuanfeng, Zhaojiaba & Daichiba
4.	20/03/19	Second day to explore	Guangyuan	https://tinyurl.com/ychwcwb7

		the other 6 known coal mine railways in this area.		https://tinyurl.com/y7fgb79q https://tinyurl.com/y9n7qxqx https://tinyurl.com/ybx8q5jm
5.	21/03/19	Third day to explore the other 6 known coal mine railways in this area.	Dazhou	https://tinyurl.com/y9flzjre https://tinyurl.com/y8jwfvzx
6.	22/03/19	Transfer to Yongchuan for the ng coal line at Honglu (4 hours). En route look at the two mine railways near to Dazhou.	Yongchuan	https://tinyurl.com/ycdjo56c https://tinyurl.com/yct2bz7c
7.	23/03/19	Explore the ng coal line at Honglu which is worked in two sections - mines to the washery at Honglu and Honglu to the mainline transfer point.	Yongchuan	http://rabylee.uk/sichuan.html http://rabylee.uk/shibanxi2012.html http://rabylee.uk/chinareport11-14honglu.html https://tinyurl.com/y9my9j4r
8.	24/03/19	Explore the ng coal line at Honglu which is worked in two sections - mines to the washery at Honglu and Honglu to the mainline transfer point.	Yongchuan	
9.	25/03/19 Part 2	transfer to Chongqing	on overnight train to Chenzhou	end of part 1 - option to leave the tour in Chongqing or join here for part 2
10.	26/03/19		Chenzhou or near Matian	arrive in Chenzhou
11.	27/03/19	Matian Coal Railway (1 hr from Chenzhou),	Chenzhou or near Matian	https://tinyurl.com/y9o5wxba
12.	28/03/19	Matian (or nearby Anping coal mine and Changtang lead mine)	Chenzhou	https://tinyurl.com/yddx6wcf https://tinyurl.com/y9gzdr26
13.	29/03/19	high speed train Chenzhou to Zhengzhou, transfer to Yujian	Zhengzhou or near Yujian	
14.	30/03/19	Steam or diesel charter at Yujian	Zhengzhou or near Yujian	https://tinyurl.com/y8j4sjjq
15.	31/03/19	Diesel or steam morning charter at Yujian, transfer to Zhengzhou, evening high speed train to Beijing	Beijing	
16.	01/04/19 Part 3	fly Beijing - Jiamusi and transfer to Hegang (1 hr 15 min from Jiamusi)	Hegang	end of part 2 - option to leave the tour in Beijing or join for part 3

17.	02/04/19	Hegang Coal Railway (sg) and coal mine ng lines	Hegang	http://rabylee.uk/nechina.html https://tinyurl.com/y7uvt3j4
18.	03/04/19	Hegang Coal Railway (sg) with electric and diesel locos in use	Jiamusi	
19.	04/04/19	Yichun North Cement Railway near Haolianghe (2 hr 25 min from Jiamusi)	Jiamusi	https://tinyurl.com/y6uzh7a3
20.	05/04/19	Hegang or Yichun Cement, transfer to Huanan	Huanan	
21.	06/04/19 Saturday	Huanan Narrow Gauge or Jixi electrics/ng coal mine railways	Huanan	weekend steam tourist operation expected at Huanan, if not Jixi electrics
22.	07/04/19 Sunday	Huanan Narrow Gauge, or Jixi electrics	Huanan or Jiamusi	http://rabylee.uk/nechina.html http://rabylee.uk/Huanan.html https://tinyurl.com/yc5k8ok2
23.	08/04/19	fly Jiamusi to Beijing	Beijing Airport	option to leave tour, fly home late evening
24.	09/04/19	end of tour, depart home		

Please note that this itinerary is still provisional and could change but I will try very hard to preserve the dates and the locations for the start and end of all 3 parts.

I have tried not to include any visits on transfer days to ensure that we can transfer smoothly. Should any visits be possible they will be considered once trains/flights are confirmed and probably on the spot when we are there. Transfer days are shown with a grey tint. Only 22 and 31 March have anything else included on a transfer day.

Overview

This, the second Linesiding with John Narrow Gauge tour will visit more lines than the first tour in Sichuan, Chongqing, Hunan, Henan and Helongjiang provinces. Many of the lines are short mine systems but along the way we will visit a number of longer lines that pass through public areas (Honglu, Matian, Yujian, Hegang, Yichun Cement, Huanan). The tour will also visit one or two industrial standard gauge operations primarily to see electric 'crocodile' locos in use. Steam is not the main focus but we hope to charter a narrow gauge C2 at Yujian and ride/photograph the new C2-hauled tourist train at Huanan.

The places to be visited are either lines I have visited or which have been visited recently by Keiichi Kii or Peter Haworth. I am in contact with them about lines, local guides and other useful information. Both of them document their trips on their websites:

http://www.kii762mm.com/modules/pico/index.php?cat_id=251
<http://www.chinesemodeltrains.com/webtrips.html>

as I do on mine:

<http://rabylee.uk/linesidingindex.html>



Dazu C&E ng coal line - photo by Ichiro Junpu, used with permission

Pricing & other important details

You can join the tour for one , two or all three parts. Those joining for all 3 parts will receive a discounted daily rate for the whole tour.

Part 1

Chengdu - Chongqing
17 March - 25 March
9 days Yuan 12,600

Part 2

Chongqing - Beijing
25 March - 1 April*
9 days Yuan 12,600

Part 3

Beijing - Beijing
1 April - 9 April*
9 days Yuan 12,600

All 3 parts

Chengdu - Beijing*
17 March - 9 April
24 days Yuan 31,200

*If you wish, you can choose to leave the tour one day early on arrival in Beijing with a

reduction of 1 day in the tour price.



Matian ng coal line - photo by Ichiro Junpu, used with permission

You can book a place on this tour with a deposit of £400. Deposits are refundable until the tour is declared 'go' after which they become partially refundable based on any costs already incurred. Two months prior to the tour (on 17 January), these deposits become non-refundable unless someone can be found to take your place on the tour. Please contact me if you are ready to make a deposit.

The tour will run with a minimum of 6 people for any part. It may also be able to run with fewer people although there may need to be changes to the tour itinerary.

The tour price includes transport (except high speed trains and flights), the services of a guide or guides, single hotel rooms, three meals including beer with lunch and dinner.

The tour does not include any expenses prior to joining the tour in Chengdu, Chongqing or Beijing nor internal flights and high speed trains which will be charged at cost (plus a proportion of the guide's flights and trains if less than 6 people). The overnight train Chongqing - Chenzhou is included in the tour price.

Items which need to be arranged and checked closer to the tour are a C2 and diesel charter at Yujian and the (new) steam tourist operation on Saturday and Sunday at Huanan. Depending on the cost of the charters at Yujian, this may

require an additional charge. If the normal tourist train is not running at Huanan, a charter may also require an additional charge. This information will not be known until closer to the tour start or perhaps during the tour.



Yujian ng tourist line (under construction) - photo by Ichiro Junpu, used with permission

At other locations where we expect to be able to observe normal operations of industrial railways, we may find the railway not operating, not much happening or that we are denied access. This will only be known at the time. In most cases, we expect to be able to observe from a public area or find a nearby alternative railway to observe. If you join this tour, it is on the basis that on a tour such as this, the unexpected is likely to happen. Your guides and tour leader will do their very best to provide the best possible experience in all possible circumstances.

Only one visit is to a place where nothing may be happening - Rongshan. Even here, we may find a mine railway independent of the 762mm main line still in operation. Our visit here is to answer the question, 'What happened at Rongshan.' The Linesiding with John group in 2014 was the last documented visit with a mixture of real and charter trains. Before we left, the locos were locked in their compound and the fires dropped. Have they moved since?

Balance of tour price

You can pay the balance of the tour cost either by bank transfer to Jun (Liu Xue Jun) in China prior to the tour or by taking Yuan cash with you for the start of the tour. The balance will be fixed on 17 January when your deposit will be converted to Chinese Yuan using the rates on Oanda.com and the balance due in Yuan can be confirmed.

Terms & Conditions

This is essentially the small print but I encourage you to read this to understand the thoughts behind these plans.



Yichun North ng cement line - photo by Ichiro Junpu, used with permission

This tour will be up to the normal 'Linesiding with John' standards and will include single rooms, 3 meals a day, free beer, transport except flights and high-speed trains, the services of national and local guides along with my own participation as tour leader.

Joining the tour

We will collect you from the designated airport or other central location, guide you throughout and then make sure you are in position to catch your flight home from a major international airport at the end of the trip. If joining for part 2 of the tour, you may need to make some internal flights unaccompanied to join up with the group.

Before & After the Tour

Our local guides can make local arrangements such as hotels and train reservations for you for prior to and after the end of the trip on request. Support will be given and paperwork will be provided to obtain your Chinese visa.

Internal Flights & High Speed Trains

Internal flights and high speed trains are extra on this tour because it is more difficult to absorb these than overnight sleeper trains in the daily tour budget. If any leg of the tour runs with less than 6 people, those flying or taking a high

sped train may be asked to pay a contribution to the guide's flight costs.

If you join this tour, you accept that:



Hegang sg coal line - photo by Peter Haworth, used with permission

This tour has been planned based on recent first-hand observations of these lines by me (John Raby), Jun (Liu Xue Jun), Keiichi Kii or Peter Haworth. We (expected to be Jun or his colleague Alan and me) will take you to the lines listed above in the anticipation that they will be working and that there will be interesting operations to see from areas accessible to the public. However, you accept that at the time of our visit, the line may not be operating or there may be little to see from public areas.

A note on Deposits and Refunds

Your deposit is a guarantee both of your place on the tour and also of your commitment to participate in the tour and to pay the balance of the price of your tour. Should you need to cancel your participation, it's reasonable for you to expect a deposit refund if that decision is made early enough. However, especially if a tour has been declared go with small numbers, one person withdrawing from a tour close to the tour start can push the tour from profit to loss. For that reason, there has to be a point when your deposit becomes non-refundable. I have chosen 2 months out from the start of the tour as that point - 17 January. If you cancel before that point but after the tour has been declared go, your deposit is partially refundable and the level of the refund will depend on any expenses that may have been incurred in China on your behalf. In most cases, you can expect a full refund. In the unlikely event that I have to cancel a tour, your deposit is fully refundable but that, along with any additional money remitted to Jun or me, that will be the limit of my liability.

Travel Insurance

You should have travel insurance for this trip and you are strongly recommended to take this out starting from the day you book your place on

the tour and certainly by the time you book your flights. If you only take out travel insurance to start from the date the tour starts, you will not be covered in case you need to cancel the tour - say on medical grounds - for expenses incurred before the date your travel insurance starts which could include your deposit payment, flights, cost of visa, etc. If you need a formal letter from me to make a claim on travel insurance in case of cancellation, I can provide that.



Honglu on the Yongchuan ng line - photo by Zebedee, used with permission

Payment methods

Participants from the UK can pay the deposit by bank transfer which is free. Those who live outside the UK can make a bank transfer or use PayPal. Both have advantages and disadvantages. International bank transfers are not reversible without the payment of additional fees. Should you withdraw from the tour and need to ask for a refund, there will be bank charges involved (at your expense). The advantage is the possibility of lower costs than PayPal to transfer money based on a service charge not a percentage. PayPal payments are fully refundable/reversible for 60 days. However, the charge for transferring (for example) £400 is based on a percentage not a flat fee and could be £20-£30. Some people have managed to make a PayPal money transfer for which I am not charged a fee. The rules for this are complicated but worth pursuing. I recommend that you discuss the best method for you with me before you go ahead.

Balance of tour price

The balance of the tour price can be paid in cash at the start of the tour or by bank transfer to the local tour organiser or guide.

Should you transfer money to pay the balance of the tour cost, you accept that returning money from tour destinations (rather than the UK) is not an easy matter and someone may have to collect the money in person during the tour to make a repayment should you cancel.

Tour Focus

This is a tour for those interested in still and video lineside photography of real railway operations especially of trains in attractive or unusual scenery. They are not for those primarily interested in riding (although there will be a chance to ride steam-hauled charter or tourist trains at Yujian and Huanan) nor for those who like to see re-creations of how things used to be.

Minimum and maximum numbers

Minimum 6 people and (ideally) no more than 10 people maximum. However, we are flexible on this and tours with only 3 participants have run and also slightly more than 10 on occasion. When tours are offered in several parts, it's important that the main part of the tour - in this case Part 2 - the middle part, has enough people. Fewer people are acceptable for Parts 1 and 3.

The reality of going to see industrial railway operations

We will be visiting real industrial operations. As with any real operation, we could experience days when things don't operate as we would like.

Derailments, loco failures, shut downs, safety inspections are just the most obvious examples of things we hope will not happen while we are there (but just might). There is also the chance that we will be denied access to private areas and only able to observe the operation from public areas. In signing up for this tour, you accept these possibilities. Should any changes to the itinerary be necessary, we will create the best alternative programme after consultation with the participants.

We could find hotels that have promised single rooms do not have enough rooms for the group or that hard rather than soft class sleepers on overnight trains are all that are available for some or all of the group or that we need to travel by different trains to obtain sleeper berths. We will do what we can to ensure that frustrations and minor discomforts such as these do not happen but we depend on the cooperation of others to ensure that everything goes totally to plan. You sign up for these tours in full knowledge that things don't always go right all the time and accepting that flexibility and compromise may be required by you at times.

If single rooms are not available then the decision on sharing arrangements will be made by the organisers. You agree to accept our decision on this. A refund equal to half the price of a single room per night will be paid to anyone who has to share.

You should have travel/medical insurance to cover you in the event that you are hospitalized or if you should need to be medically evacuated back home.

You may also want to cover yourself for missed flights, lost luggage, etc. but medical emergency is the most important item to insure against. The tour organisers will not be able to support you financially should you have a medical emergency and will only be able to support you in other ways so far as successfully running the tour allows.



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Yichun North Cement Railway, Haolianghe - photo by Peter Haworth, used with permission

If you have any existing medical issues that could affect your ability to join or participate fully in the tour, please let me know. Also let me know if you need to consult your doctor before the tour for his/her approval to join the tour. This does not mean that you cannot join the tour but it's something that I need to know about as I plan the tour.

Participants are responsible for moving their own luggage. While our guides are normally willing to help, we don't offer a porter service! This can be especially important at railway stations where there may be a reasonable walk including stairs, rough surfaces and narrow carriage corridors. A key element to this is not to bring a case that is too big nor pack things you don't need. For comfort, I suggest limiting yourself to 3 bags including a camera case and making one of these a backpack.

To get the best shots, participants should have no problem walking some distance over rough ground or along railway tracks sometimes on the ballast. Our transport will normally park near the railway giving a shot of sorts nearby but the best shots could be some walk away. If you do not feel able to walk (say) 3-5 km at a medium pace, please let me know before or when you sign up.

The hotels will vary from luxury to 1 star but all should provide hot water for baths/showers (although hours for this may be limited) and heating or cooling in the rooms as required by the season.

Wi-fi is generally available in most hotels in China these days but may be restricted to the lobby and restaurant areas. Please be aware that a number of common internet sites and services are normally blocked in China. These include Google search and maps, Gmail and Facebook. To get around the gmail problem, I suggest you have an alternative email address. To get around all these problems, you will need a VPN which has not itself been blocked in China. However, most visitors can live with these restrictions for the relatively short period that they are in China.

John Raby□

7 November 2018