



# Non-Fiction

Group 1

# The Best Mountain—Huangshan.

*Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Primary School, Kam, Yin Chit – 8*

Huangshan is both a heritage of world culture and nature. A global geopark is located in Huangshan city, which is in the southern Anhui Province. There is a legend that Emperor Xuanyuan once made alchemy there and was renamed Huangshan in the Qin Dynasty. There are 72 large and small peaks. The main peak Lianhua peak is 1864 meters above sea level. Together with Guangmingding Peak and Tianna Peak are the three main peaks of Huangshan. Standing on top of the clouds and mist lingers is as if you are in a fairyland.

The growth of the pines in Huangshan is affected by the geographical environment and the climate such as sunlight, clouds, fog, wind and frost. The trees are of different shapes, just like welcoming the visitors.

Mount Huangshan is wet with plenty of rainfall. The climate there is cool in summer and autumn, which is suitable for the growth of animals and plants. There are more than 1500 kinds of animals and plants in Huangshan, with over 170 species of birds and 300 species of vertebrates. It has four distinct seasons with pleasant scenery. That's why Huangshan is truly a paradise for animals, and it is dubbed as "East China Animal and Plant Treasure House".

I once saw the magnificent peaks and rocks of Huangshan, the vast sea of clouds, the waterfalls and the endless hot springs. It is exactly as what the poem is written: the return of the five sacred mountains does not look at the mountains, the return of Huangshan does not at the mountains.

# Tales of China's Magical Mountains

*Po Leung Kuk Choi Kai Yau School, Yim, Claris – 8*

The Huangshan Mountain is a mountain range in southern Anhui Province in Eastern China. The Huangshan mountain range consists of 72 high and steep peaks. It covers a core area of 154 square kilometres with an extended range of 142 square kilometres.

The three highest and best-known peaks are Celestial Peak with a height of 1,829 meters, Bright Peak with a height of 1,860 meters and Lotus Peak with a height of 1,864 meters. The Lotus Peak is named after its shape, which resembles a lotus blossom. The 'blossom' is over ten feet in width with a small pool in the middle of it, called the Moon Pool.

The Huangshan Mountain is a remarkable mountain range, and it has three very distinct features. The special pines, beautiful rocks, and ocean of clouds make up the "3 Wonders of Nature" of Huangshan mountain. The beautiful landscape of the mountain range is also extremely well-known, with its brilliant sunsets and impressive mountains tourists can view. From the summit, many smaller peaks and numerous ravines can be seen in the misty clouds, but the sea of clouds is most spectacular when viewed after the rain.

The temperature of the Huangshan mountain peaks is very cold, with an average temperature of 15.4 degrees Celsius. The freezing peaks may drop to about -10 degrees Celsius. Visitors in January will often pack heavy winter coats to face the icy winds.

A famous poet from China, Li Bai, has written about the enchanting landscape of the Huangshan mountain before. His poem, titled "Dawn Vista on Huangshan" talks about the tall peaks that glow when the morning sun hits the peak. Other poets, including Du Fu and Han Yu, also based multiple poems on the amazing view of the Huangshan mountains.

The Huangshan mountain range is an AAAAA scenic area by the China National Tourism Administration, and it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Many tourists visit the Huangshan mountains regularly, with 20,000 tourists visiting daily. It must be the great views of the Huangshan mountains that capture the attention of many visitors.

Most visitors visit the Huangshan mountain range in spring. The mountains are covered in wildflowers and sprouting plants during that time. Fresh greenery dots the marvellous peaks, welcoming all the tourists to visit. The pleasant sound of birdsong echoes through the quiet chatter of the tourists, harmonizing with the running streams. Springtime is when the Huangshan mountain is the loveliest, causing an increase in visitors during that time of the year.

The Huangshan mountain range is one of the most important and best-maintained tourist attractions in China. We must visit the terrific Huangshan mountains as soon as we can, so we will not miss the chance to see the awesome scenery of the Huangshan mountains.

# Huangshan

*Regents Primary School of Shenzhen, Tan, Yu Xuan – 7*

Huangshan is very beautiful! It is famous all over the world. It is a world cultural heritage, and it is the best mountain in the world!

Huangshan is very beautiful! Beautiful is the welcoming pine. It opens its arms, to welcome all the tourists. It symbolizes our motherland: tolerance, openness, tenacity, reaching upwards and uprightness!

Huangshan is very beautiful, beautiful in the sea of clouds. You can experience the real fairyland in the sea of cloud, when you read “the journey to the west”.

I love Huangshan! Love its strange stones. Some crawl, others are as quiet as a rock. It seems to imply: I welcome you; but you have to take care of me, too.

I love the waterfall in Huangshan. Although it is not as spectacular as Huangoushu waterfall, it is also beautiful because it is falling down on the strange mountains and rocks.

If you feel a little tired, you can enjoy Huangshan Hot Springs. After washing the dust off, you will feel refreshed all of a sudden. It is really worthy of being called the magic medicine of Lingtang!

Huangshan Mountain is very steep, it is almost vertical; you could fall into the abyss, if you are not paying attention. Huangshan is so beautiful, so magical, so fascinating!

You do not look at the other mountains when you come back from Huangshan!

# Huangshan

*St. Paul's Co-educational College Primary School, Yip, Cheuk Ka Tiffany – 6*

In Eastern China, there is a mountain called Huangshan, you can also call it the Yellow Mountains. It is a fascinating national park with breathtaking views. The mountains are huge and super tall, there are stairs on the mountain for you to walk to the top of the mountains. It is so tall that if you hike up by the stairs you would get really tired.

There are funny shaped rocks all over the mountains. Some look like animals and some look like towers; and they have funny names like the Flying-Over Rock, Immortal Pointing the Way, and Monkey Watching the Sea. These rocks get their names from their shapes and historical stories. Apart from the famous rocks, there are oddly-shaped pine trees that grow through hard rocks. They are the homes of the squirrels too.

The stunning scenery of Huangshan has been attracting travellers from all over the world. On cloudy days, the peaks will be covered by a sea of clouds, making the peaks look like islands floating in the sea. When changing seasons, the leaves will change colours too! In Autumn, there are yellow leaves, and in Winter there are no leaves but only white snow. The mountains look different in different season and weathers and times of day.

Huangshan not only attracts tourists and hikers to visit since many years ago, it has also attracts poets, writers, painters and artists coming to get inspirations for their literature and art works. Even film makers love to have the mountains to be part of their movies. For example, Huangshan is featured in a famous movie called the Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.

I wish I can visit Huangshan on my next family trip because I really want to see the sea of clouds and the Monkey Watching the Sea rock with my own eyes.

# Mount Huangshan: Heritage for Everyone

*St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Cheung, Nga Ting Annette – 8*

Once China eased coronavirus lockdown in 2020, numerous people crowded Mount Huangshan and the number of visitors soon reached its daily limit. Mr. Xu Xiake, a famous traveller in Ming Dynasty, opined that after visiting the Five Sacred Mountains, ordinary mountains are nothing. After his visit to Mount Huangshan, he believed that the Five Sacred Mountains are nothing. Why is Mount Huangshan so famous and attractive?

Mount Huangshan situates at Anhui Province, Southeast China. Its altitude ranges from 600 meters to 1,864 meters and the highest peak is Lotus Flower Peak. In 1990, Mount Huangshan was inscribed on the World Heritage List as a mixed natural and cultural world heritage site.

Every natural scenery, such as the legendary peaks, seas of cloud, beautifully shaped rocks, ancient pine trees, waterfalls, justifies Mount Huangshan as a natural world heritage site. It offers a dream habitat for thousands of wild animals and conserves many precious endemic plant species. I wonder if I could discover a unicorn there!

Mount Huangshan is also renowned throughout Chinese history for its cultural heritage, especially since Tang Dynasty. It attracts many visitors and inspires writers, poets and painters for famous poems, paintings (such as Chinese Shan Shui painting) and articles. Lots of temples were built on Mount Huangshan and facilitate the development of Taoism and Buddhism. My favourite poet, Mr. Li Bai, also visited Huangshan. There was a story about a peak, " Miàobǐ shēnghuā " which refers to fine essays, and him -- When Mr. Li Bai wrote a poem for a monk, he was drunk and excited so that he threw away his Chinese brush which turned into the peak.

I plan to visit the Mount Huangshan to explore the scene, the culture and the heritage. How can I protect it so that more people can visit it?

In addition to the basic measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, namely, wearing masks during the visit to Mount Huangshan and paying special attention to personal hygiene, I also read the Mount Huangshan – 2020 Conservation Outlook Assessment by the IUCN World Heritage Outlook to understand the threats to Mount Huangshan so that I could help as follows:

The huge amount of visits to Mount Huangshan has various impacts on it. I must not litter, create unnecessary waste and disturb lovely wildlife. To treasure all species is a respect to the nature and life. The shortage of water during dry season makes it difficult for forest fire fighting. I would pay special attention to see if there is anyone smoke and report any fire danger to the management staff there.

Mount Huangshan is as beautiful and magical as Disneyland. After so many years, I google and, hopefully, soon stand right at the same place to enjoy the same scenery visited by Mr. Li Bai. He left us with all the beautiful poems and I would also like to protect and leave everything treasurable of Mount Huangshan for other people now and in future.



# Non-Fiction

Group 2

# China's Magical Mountains

*St. Stephen's College Preparatory School, Yeung, Ashton – 8*

China's magical mountains are extraordinary. There were hundreds of dinosaur bones discovered there, and this is why people who live there, tell stories of dragons living in the mountain caves. It is also windy, very windy there. The freezing breeze among those mountains are more than 1500 meters above! The villagers who live there have to redesign their houses lots of times since with so much wind, it is hard to get the shape right so it does not fall. China's magical mountains are also interesting because scientists usually find new species of animals there. Some of the pine trees are said to be 1500 years old. The view of the beautiful mountains is enchantingly beautiful. Some of the people who live there are "Beat Poets". It was also used for Lord of the Rings and the Avatar movie. People still wonder, why did Poets choose to live here? Why does it feel magical? Who would live in the tiny village houses that look like they are sitting on the clouds? People also call China's magical mountains "The Mountains Of The Yellow Emperor". It is in eastern China, but it is now known as HuangShan. HuangShan is yellow mountains in Chinese. Even today China's magical mountains are huge and mysterious even for scientists! But there are secrets in the magical mountains that the world does not know. We will have to wait to discover what is inside China's magical mountains.

## A Magical Mountain in China

*The Independent Schools Foundation Academy, Li, Mark – 6*

There is a mountain in Xiamen, Fujian, China. It is called Mount Putuo and it is a beautiful and magical mountain.

Mount Putuo sits by the turbulent South China Sea. There are over twenty typhoons every year in the area. In the past years, many typhoons have approached Mount Putuo, but whenever they did, they magically turned to another direction. None of the typhoons hit or passed over Mount Putuo directly, though its height is only 291.3 meters above the sea level. Local people call Mount Putuo the protector of the area. It protects the local fishermen from typhoon damages. It also attracts many tourists around the world to come and experience its magic.

Where did the Mount Putuo's magic come from? Some people say that in mid Tang Dynasty, a monk from Japan visited another famous mountain in China, called Wutai. He worshiped Buddha at Mount Wutai and then wanted to carry a life-sized statue of Buddha back to Japan. On his way to Japan, he stopped over in Mount Putuo because a major typhoon was approaching. It took three days for the typhoon to settle down. On the last night, he dreamed Buddha came to him and said, "I do not want to go to Japan with you. This is the place I want to stay!" Accordingly, the monk stayed in Mount Putuo, collected donations, and raised a huge statue of Buddha on top of the mountain. Since then, whenever typhoon comes to the area, Buddha always redirects the typhoon to another direction.

Many scientists from all over the world have come to study the Mount Putuo "magic". They believe it is the nearby subtropical high-pressure belt that blows the air away from Mount Putuo, and saves the area from typhoon damages.

Do you believe in the myth or science? Hopefully you can come to Mount Putuo to decide for yourself. The best time to witness the magic is the typhoon season from July to December in a year. See you there!



# Huangshan

*Yaumati Catholic Primary School (Hoi Wang Road), Leung, Lok Hei – 7*

Huangshan is very beautiful. It has floating clouds, peaks, pine trees, stone steps and villages. The air is less polluted. It is an ancient mountain that looks unearthly and magical to visitors. It is even more beautiful in winter. With a little imagination, you can paint in the villages.

The peaks are made from granite and they are carved by water. The peaks and stones look like people and animals. The pine trees create a steep slope surrounded by mist. Some of the pine trees are 1500 years old and the most famous plant in Huangshan is the Welcoming Pine.

In Huangshan, there are many villages. Some villages are shaped like parts of an ox. They are also made from stone and built by wealthy merchant families. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Li Bai and Du Fu lived in Huangshan.

If you want to go to the peak, you can take the cable cars or go on foot. The cable car station is far from the entrance. You need to take the bus for 15 minutes to get to the cable car station. The cable cars are very high from the ground. When you take a ride, you can pass through the clouds. It takes you 8 minutes to arrive at the peak.

There are 44 wonders in Huangshan. The mist surrounds the peaks and looks like a sea. The “sea of clouds” is divided into the East Sea, Sky Sea, West Sea, North Sea and South Sea.

So many people go to Huangshan to see the snow and the sunrise at the mountain top. There are 60,000 stone steps and all are made from stone. If you want to hike in Huangshan, bring a hiking stick. If you are lazy or tired, you can hire a sedan chair to carry you up the mountain. Sometimes, you see the porters carry 50 kilograms of luggage up the mountain. They bring foods and necessities for people who live at the peak. There are tour guides everywhere. They tell you the stories about Huangshan.

There is a great hotel named Bai Yun Hotel at the top of Huangshan. If you want to see the galaxy at night, you can camp outside the hotel.

If I have a chance to go to Huangshan, I will go in winter. I will bring gloves, a scarf, food, water, a camera, a coat and a pair of hiking sticks. I will go with my family and friends. I will go by airplane so that I can get there in 5 hours. It is a lot shorter than a 10-hour train ride. I will hike up the mountain to see the snow, the sunrise and the stars in the night sky. If you go to Huangshan on snowy days, do not stand for too long, or your feet will get stuck to the snow!



# Non-Fiction

Group 3

# Reasons to Visit Huangshan

*British International School, Shanghai, Puxi Campus, Fong, Wingyin Clara – 13*

The Mountain of the Yellow Emperor, better known as Huangshan Mountain, is one of the most popular tourist attractions in China and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Obscured by mist within the clouds, it is famous for its breath-taking scenery. Individuals from around the world yearn to go there, hoping to get just a glimpse of the incomparable landscape. Most come to climb the sacred mountain – it is known for its stone steps, of which there are around 60,000 in the area. They are carved into the side of the mountains and it is said for them to be around 1500 years old. The sturdiness and the texture of the stone is what makes it unique, and attractive to visitors.

Huangshan Mountain, which translates to Yellow Mountain(s), is a mountain range in Anhui Province which lies in eastern China. It is one of the many things that symbolize the Chinese nation. It is often mentioned in folk stories, and has even inspired fictional locations in stories such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Avatar*. Being an area once inhabited by many legendary Chinese poets, including Li Bai and Du fu, it is also frequently mentioned in traditional Chinese literature and artwork, such as *山中问答* (shan zhong wen da), a poem written by Li Bai, and *因公檄按游黄山* (yin gong xi an you huang shan) by Wu An.

From crimson sunsets to pine trees and views of the clouds, many features make this mountain range inspirational to poets and people alike. Truly one of a kind, its specialty is quaint granite peaks and high mountains straight out of traditional Chinese paintings.

The mountains were formed when what used to be an ancient sea disappeared due to uplift back in the Mesozoic era, which is approximately around 100 million years ago. Later on, during the Quaternary Period, the landscape was heavily influenced by glaciers, hence, they take a similar shape to them. The peaks are around 1000 meters high, the three tallest peaks are Lotus Peak (Lianhua Feng), Bright Peak (Guangming Ding), and Celestial Peak (Tiandu Feng). And what a view is spread before you if you can climb to the top of these peaks.

Mesic forests cover the area below 1100, where the vegetation is thickest, deciduous forest ranges from 1,100 meters up to the tree line at 1,800 meters, and above that, the vegetation consists of alpine grasslands. The area is blanketed with flowers; one-third of China's bryophyte families and more than half of its fern families grow here. Huangshan Mountain pine trees are famous and distinctive. They grow in all kinds of shapes and sizes. You may not believe it, but people think the most crooked are the most attractive! The trees are more than a hundred years old and a lot of them have their own names. The pines symbolize physical strength and good health as they flourish even though they grow straight out of the rocks. Huangshan is officially designated "one of China's premier green tea-growing mountains" as the mountain's moist climate helps the process of growing tea leaves. Mao Feng Cha ("Fur Peak Tea") is a well-known local type of green tea, taking its name from the droopy tips of the leaves.

Huangshan is isolated from the rest of Anhui; it's colder and wetter, with 384.4mm as the highest average of precipitation in June and -5.2 celsius as the average low temperature in January.

However, that doesn't stop tourists from visiting to experience the lovely scenery.

Tourism is big in Huangshan. The whole area is bound to attract huge numbers as it has at least 140 sections open to visitors and more than 50 kilometers of footpaths leading to different sightseeing areas. Not only that but restaurants, accommodation, hotels, guest houses, and other facilities provide the luxuries you need to enjoy the incredible journey into the mountains. Adventurous tourists prefer to stay the night on the summit of the mountain to view the sunrise and descend by a different route. Accessibility within China is good. For example, it is linked by rail and air to Shanghai, and buses from the mountain whisk sightseers to and from Huangshan city. Many other cities including Hangzhou, Zhejiang, Wuhu and Anhui are also within striking distance of Huangshan Mountain. Did you know that Huangshan mountain was formerly known as Tunxi, and that the reason for the name change was to promote tourism? Well – the decision worked!

In actual fact, the mountain has been renamed more than once and it has a long and important history. During the time of the Qin dynasty, Huangshan was known as Yi Shan (Mount Yi) and in 747 AD, its name was changed to Huangshan Mountain by imperial decree. Legend states the Chinese Emperor Xuanyuan once practiced alchemy there. The name was coined in honor of fabled emperor Huang Di (The Yellow Emperor) who was the mythological forebearer of the Han Chinese. It has been said that the Yellow Emperor ascended to the heavens from Huangshan Mountain itself. He spent time on the mountain to 'cultivate moral character' and refined 'pills of immortality' in the mountains. The name "Huangshan" has also been tied to the traditional Chinese poet Li Bai, who, as mentioned before, wrote various poems inspired by his time here. In ancient times, the mountain was inaccessible but, since its change of name, it has been gaining more attention and popularity.

A unique feature is the Sea of Clouds (Yun hai) or "Huangshan Sea" as it resembles the ocean. Normally when you visit the mountains you'd pray for clear weather. But at Huangshan, cloudy days can be just as spectacular. Many writers have viewed the clouds from the mountain, and one writer remarked on the view with the following words: *'To enjoy the magnificence of a mountain, you have to look upwards in most cases. To enjoy Mount Huangshan, however, you've got to look downward.'* Photographers and artists are especially attracted to Huangshan because of the spectacular light effects in the region, especially around sunrise and sunset. A phenomenon known as "Buddha's light" (fo guang) only appears a couple of times per month and casts its mystical spell on the area. Natural water stays at 42 °C (107.6 °F) all year round and has a high concentration of carbonates. It is said that the waters help prevent illnesses and weary climbers can soothe away their aches in hot springs located at the foot of Purple Cloud Peak.

Although beautiful to behold, there's always more than what meets the eye. In fact, it's a place full of flora and wildlife, where new species of animals have been found along with dinosaur bones. These discoveries led many people to believe that dragons used to live deep in the secret mountain caves. Nowadays, geology and vegetation were the main subjects of study. In the late twentieth century, a team of researchers from round the globe visited the area to study a local species of monkey known as Tibetan Macaques. Of course, many more mysteries await for humanity to discover.

As the years went by, stories have changed, passed from mouth to mouth, visitor to visitor. Names changed too, but whatever places are called all of the names have a narrative or a symbolic reasoning behind it. An example is when a man who didn't believe in the beauty of Huangshan mountain went to visit Shi Xin peak – a name which means "start to believe". When he saw the scenery with his own eyes, it is said that he changed his perspective on the beautiful and enchanting Huangshan Mountain. In 1982, Huangshan was officially declared a "site of scenic beauty and historic interest" by the State Council of China and in 1990 it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its fascinating scenery and for its role as a habitat for rare and threatened species. Following that, in 2002, Huangshan was named the "sister mountain" of Jungfrau in the Swiss Alps.

Huangshan is a place full of wonders of the world that no one has ever seen before. Most tourists turn a blind eye to these mysteries, and instead go to places that are in the spotlight. Whatever reason you have to go, one thing I can say for sure is: you won't regret visiting Huangshan.

# The Artistry of Nature

*Diocesan Girls' School, Tsang, Pok Hei – 14*

A cool breeze blowing on your face, pine trees emerging out of the mist, pinnacles being shrouded by clouds... you may wonder, does this place even exist? Undoubtedly, the Yellow Mountain is what you are looking for. The Yellow Mountain, a mountain range in southern Anhui province, was initially named 'Yishan' owing to its physical appearance. Subsequently, a legend was spread that the Yellow Emperor once discovered the elixir of immortality nearby. As a result, the mountain was called Yellow Mountain or Huangshan from Tang Dynasty dated from year 747. This also attracted generations of poets to create outstanding cultural achievements and visitors to unearth the unknown.

## Discovery of the magnificent natural scenery

Because of orogenesis, the granite was continuously uplifted during the Early Cretaceous (about 140Ma ago and 65Ma ago) and has been exfoliated due to weathering and fluvial erosion. Consequently, it produced joints in various directions and formed 3 levels of erosion surfaces where they differ in many aspects, including the capability of resistance to weathering, mineral composition and particle size of minerals.

The core, central and outer areas are diverse in altitude, which transpires waterfalls at the transition to the metamorphic rock area lithologically-controlled knickpoints, creating a precipitous and convoluted landscape of the Yellow Mountain.

The foundation of the Yellow Mountain scenery layout is based on the Lotus Peak, Bright Peak and the Celestial Peak, while the sea of clouds viewed from the Lotus Peak is most illusory as myriads of peaks and ravines are floated above the misty clouds like islands arising from the sea. Such imposing peaks have fascinated and inspired the greatest creations of Chinese painting, poetry and temple architecture.

Additionally, hot springs are recorded as one of the 'four wonders of Huangshan', alongside the strange pines, grotesque rocks and the sea of clouds. They have been well-protected and captivate travellers to rest at the foot of Purple Rock Peak.

What is interesting about the hot springs is that they have been called the Tang Springs and Vermillion Springs in antiquity. Nowadays, they are well-known for the name Springs of Youth as Huangdi, bathed here and the water smoothed away his sprinkles and senescence.

As for pine trees, they are generally scattered about the cliffs and alpine apex, in which their robustness and vigour are being applauded by poets as they manage to thrive in harsh circumstances. Moreover, pine trees have pervaded into folklore relating to immortality, steadiness and their longevity in nature. Prospecting branches of crooked pine trees entwining under the aurora with irregular rocks rising above the brume, a charismatic and dazzling panorama can be perceived. This might be the reason why adepts are trying to live here to take a glimpse of the divine.

## The Productivity of the Yellow Mountains

Being located in a humid subtropical monsoon climate zone in eastern China, the Yellow Mountain remains a stable-balanced ecosystem with botanical richness and endemic fauna species. Approximately 600 rivers along with the comfortable climate engender one-third of China's bryophytes and over half of its pteridophytes. Over 300 species of animals can be found at the Yellow Mountain, while more than 20 species of them are under protection, for instance, golden monkeys, rhesus macaque and masked palm civet. This propels a more vivid rural landscape.

## Correlation between the Yellow Mountain and artworks

Given the marvellous views of nature, the Yellow Mountain was seen as a utopia to different artists including Jian Jiang, Xugu and Zha Shibao. The gnarled, aged pine trees and freakish rocks inspired the Shanshui school of painting during the Ming Dynasty. The backwardness of Anhui also successfully reserved the traditional village architecture which captured every poets' heart and they became desperate for confession. Masters were also influenced by the ethereal beauty of the Yellow Mountain, then expressed their enthusiasm and believed they are a part of nature, composing creations full of feverish forms and perfectly presenting the unique beauty of China. For example, a

famous Chinese poet Li Bai who lived during the Tang Dynasty, composed a poem about imagining the immortality of nature and eulogizing the glamorous beauty of Huangshan; a Chinese travel writer and geographer of Ming dynasty named Xu Hongzu, recorded his experience of climbing the Yellow Mountain and being fascinated by the divine of the landscape. His documentary also recognized his humility and courage in travelling in solitude; some poets even left rock inscriptions to question the relationship between man and nature.

The mystical topography of the Yellow Mountain also becomes an iconic landscape in traditional Chinese art, such as Lotus Peak, a painting drawn by Liu Haisu, depicting the highest peak in the Yellow Mountain and using different techniques to create an effect of the sun and shadow, which indeed gives us more insights of the Huangshan.

### **Local cultures in Huangshan**

As visitors, we usually focus on the ravishing vista and neglect of the cultures beneath that breathtaking topography. Tea culture, including tea production and tea ceremony, is prominent for Huangshan people. One of the best—three high aroma teas in the world, Huangshan Maofeng originated from Huangshan. It is named attributable to the fact that the small white hairs covering the leaves and the shape of the processed leaves are like the peak that arose from the mist. As the saying goes ‘one could live without food, but not morning tea’, drinking tea has become one of their habits and favourably inherits China’s traditional drink.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the Yellow Mountain is among one of the most visited destinations in China that enchant masters to leave their inspired artworks and influence others. The name of the mountain solely consists of two words but has already envisioned the picturesqueness of a utopia. In the Yellow Mountain, you can gaze at the abundance of life, goggle at the scenery that Aiguilles ride like whales through a sea of clouds, behold the traditional culture that the ancestors brought in the past and hearken to the myths of history. Through the Yellow Mountain, we start to appreciate the tremendous effort of nature and the traditional cultures that are passed down through generations successfully.

# My Huangshan Experience

*ESF Sha Tin College, Lai, Justin – 13*

It is said that every person visiting China should visit Huangshan. While this may be a compliment to Huangshan's beauty, it seems that tourists take this as a challenge. On the day that I arrived to visit Huangshan, it felt like the world's 7.594 billion people had all come to visit Huangshan at once. However, I was determined not to let the crowds ruin my trip, having spent a lot of energy to convince my mother to let me visit Anhui, as well as using all the excuses I had been saving up day by day. Luckily, my mother knew of my interest in Huangshan, as well as knowing how loud I can be, and agreed to let the whole family visit Anhui with me after a few days of me disrupting her peace.

My interest in Huangshan in Anhui started when I was eight. My art teacher had just shown me a beautiful painting of Huangshan, and I was stunned by the amount of detail and the breathtaking colors. The teacher must have seen me peak up (I was usually very bored and unenthusiastic in her class), because she smiled and started showing me more paintings and pictures of Huangshan. I was instantly absorbed in them. I looked at them for a good few minutes, trying to take in all the beauty. From that day on, I was always interested in Huangshan, as well as other mountains.

While I had been warned about the crowds, I was not ready for what awaited me on Huangshan. Every inch of the mountain seemed to be covered with tourists, and it was a struggle to even queue up to ride the cable car. However, this didn't dampen my mood, instead making me even more determined to get to the top of Huangshan to take some photos. After about half an hour of queuing, I was almost dragging my entire family with me to board a cable car, impatient to get to the top. My family, on the other hand, was obviously not enjoying the trip so far as much as I was. My mother was grumbling about the entrance fee being too expensive ("190 Chinese yuan per person. ONE NINETY!"), while my father was complaining about people cutting the line, telling me that there were less expensive and popular mountains to explore. Their mood brightened up when we finally saw the mountain, however, clearly impressed by the height and size of Mount Huangshan. My sister glared at me, daring me to give her a smug "I told you so" look, which I didn't, partly because I was too excited, and partly because my sister can be scary when she wanted to be.

As we gained height, my family seemed to finally appreciate Huangshan, oohing and aahing the whole ride. We began seeing the beautiful natural scenery Huangshan offered, such as massive granite boulders and ancient pine trees, most of them enhanced by a mist effect created by the clouds. On the cable car, my family decided to hike up to the Bright Summit Peak first, then start going down. However, when we reached the summit, the place was covered with people, gathering around like ants to food. Despite the crowds, though, we could still appreciate the beautiful sceneries Bright Summit Peak offered, enjoying a bird's eye view of all the other peaks on Huangshan. We spent some time on the peak, taking pictures and relaxing. As we began to walk down, the tourists seem to be stopping to take pictures of every tree and every pool they could find. This was starting to feel more like Disneyland than a mountain, crowds gathering at every point and snapping pictures of everything they could find that would look nice on their Instagrams. We continued our descent from the peak at snail speed, my family becoming increasingly frustrated every time the crowd decides to rest or stop to take a photo of a tree that looked exactly like every other tree on this mountain. Nonetheless, we had to keep going, unless we wanted to fling ourselves off the mountain, which would be both painful and messy (on the bright side, we don't have to pay for the cable car ride down!).

After a moment of rest, we continued our hike down, and finally reached the famous welcome pine tree, where we had another delay when about 10,000 people went to take photos of it. It is undoubtedly the most eye catching wind contorted tree on Huangshan, resembling a human, with a branch stretching out like an arm welcoming guests to the mountain. At this point, we were all frustrated by the speed we had been walking in. I overheard someone say, "I could have sent my newborn to college by now, and I don't even have a newborn yet." to his companion, which in my opinion, made the whole trip worth it.

Despite the joke, though, all my excitement from the beginning of the trip had vanished, leaving only a single drop of hope that this trip would be worth the money and the exhaustion. After hours of shuffling from the summit, we finally reached the cable car stop, and my father decided to go to Huangshan's "Grand Canyon" as an effort to cheer the family up.

Along the way, we (purposely) got lost, wandering around aimlessly, and for a while we were able to avoid the crowds to take in all the breathtaking scenery. The path through Huangshan's "Grand Canyon" was very beautiful, if you could ignore the fact that you could die from falling off. There were noticeably less crowds as the path became steeper, and the views were making up for the energy we wasted when we hiked down from the summit. The energy and enthusiasm from our little group had been refilled by the scenes we saw.

At this point, our legs were like jelly, and our brains felt like mush, confused from the mix of frustration, exhaustion, and satisfaction. We were ready to leave and go back to our hotel. However, I insisted we stayed at the Grand Canyon for a while and wait a few minutes for a sunset. My family agreed, with my sister threatening to throw me off if the sunset wasn't satisfying. Since the sun had no intention to set yet, we started playing with our phones, until I got bored and decided to close my eyes for a bit. Waken by my family oohing and aahing, I looked up and saw the "sea of clouds" that Huangshan was so famous for, mixing with the golden rays of the sunset. I finally saw the paintings of Huangshan come into life.

After that very brief sunset, we walked back to the cable car stop. Paying another couple hundred Chinese yuan for the cable car down, we agreed that we would never financially recover from this and looked back at Mount Huangshan. And although all of us could agree that the scenes from the mountain are irreplaceable, I think I can safely assume that we can bid Huangshan a farewell, and look for fortune elsewhere.



# Pilgrimage of Wonder: My Personal Huangshan Discovery

*French International School, Fung, Sum Yi Emily – 12*

Memories of last year's magical and thrilling expedition to China's Huangshan (also known as Yellow Mountain) flash before my eyes as I contemplate Jiang Zhu's "*Placard of the Immortals*," an ink-wash painting of the ancient landmark in the Beijing Palace Museum. Those memories serve as my window of understanding as to why Xu Xiake (1587–1641), the acclaimed Ming Dynasty travel writer and geologist, described the mountain as one inspired when he wrote:

*"Trips to China's five great mountains render trips to other mountains unnecessary, and a trip to Huangshan renders the trip to the five great mountains unnecessary."*

Those words were echoed by the legendary Chinese poet Li Bai, who ventured to the mountain five times, discovering his artistic muses in this mystical and remote wonderland.

It was six o'clock one cool September morning when I arrived at Yungu Station, a key waypoint on the journey to Huangshan. Even at such an early hour, the station was vibrant with tourists milling about, looking ahead to a day of wonder and discovery. This stately peak, soaring majestically above southern China's Anhui Province, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of China's top-rated scenic destinations.

During the cable-car ride to White Goose Ridge (Bai e Ling) New Station, I listened intently as tour guides enlightened us about Huangshan's history and major attractions. Legend tells us that the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi), was our mythical ancestor and a Taoist advocate. Inspired by the region's mystical allure, he believed Huangshan to be ideal for cultivating his body-spirit relationship, and refining his elixir -- a magical medicine to prolong one's lifespan. He later became immortal after taking the potion.

This sacred area, formerly known as Yishan, became fodder for legend after it was renamed Huangshan by imperial decree in 747 A.D. Since then, it has evolved into a mecca for Taoists, poets, trekkers, and landscape artists drawn by its "four wonders": grotesque rocks, peculiar pines, phantasmagoric cloud oceans, and soothing hot springs. In 1979, Deng Xiaoping, then China's party leader, climbed the mountain, declaring that Huangshan could be one of China's top tourist destinations. "We must boast about it," he insisted, "and make it known to the world."

The cable car juddered to a sudden halt, announcing our arrival at Beginning-to-Believe Peak (Shixin Feng).

The view was stunning! Carpets of fragrant grass together with chatter of magpies swooping around the ridges seemed to be Huangshan's way of welcoming us. The pinnacles of the precipitous mountain were swathed in veils of ethereal mist.

I took a few tentative steps to the edge of an overhanging rock face, which ended abruptly in a sheer drop of 1,700 meters, a silent yet visually striking testament to Huangshan's complex geological history. Around 800 million years ago, Huangshan and its environs were submerged beneath the waves of a vast, Precambrian sea. It was the confluence of centuries of tectonic shifts, magma from volcanic eruptions and glacial movements that carved the 72 peaks over time periods spanning hundreds of human lifetimes, eventually revealing its spellbinding landscape.

I made it clear of the rocky peaks altogether, finding myself on a long, cobbled trail leading to a thatched cottage known as Yunshan Teahouse.

The sight of the teahouse -- straight out of a fairy tale, it seemed -- transported my imagination back a thousand or more years. Taoists once came here to learn, to seek inspiration, and to pursue enlightenment. They held discussions in dualism (yin-yang), alchemy, feng shui and astrology. Innumerable latticed windows with various patterns -- peaches symbolizing longevity, fish for wealth, and bats for luck -- encapsulated many Taoist beliefs.

The rumbling of my stomach snapped me out of my reverie! A cup of silky, fragrant Maofeng green tea brewed in Huangshan spring water, paired with a traditional Chinese bun known as Mantou, gave my body and soul refreshment and new energy.

Following an arduous hike, I arrived at Refreshing Terrace (Qingliang Tai), where hundreds of verdant islands were scattered like leafy emeralds in an enchanting ocean of mist. Rays of golden sunlight shone through infinite velvety clouds, little seas of white magic in a vast expanse of blue. Sometimes the lacy white-edged clouds scudded across the busy sky as the wind passed, skimming and billowing as if they were chariots for fairies. Sometimes, they rippled around the mountains like silver skeins of silk. It was simply breathtaking!

Once at Stone Monkey Watching the Sea (Shihou Guanhai), I spotted the monkey-shaped boulder, with its own legend and folklore, perched on the mesa overlooking the North Cloud Sea.

There exists a Chinese folk tale of a clever monkey who possessed the power to shape-shift himself into thirty-six different objects. Having fallen in love with a girl named Zhangzhu, he transformed himself into a dashing young man and proposed to her. Zhangzhu gladly accepted.

On their wedding day, after imbibing a bit too much, the monkey revealed himself. Alarmed and frightened, his new wife fled, plunging him into shame and regret. Days of frantic searching for the girl failed to turn her up. From that moment forward, the monkey kept mournful vigil on a rock facing northeast, waiting for his wife's return. Over time, legend holds, he calcified into the rock that now bears his form, forever alone, forever waiting.

I made it to the last stop of the day, Bright Summit (Guangming Ding) for the most alluring moment before dusk! As the sun cast its rays onto a tableau of distant hills and valleys, the sky's saffron glow turned a bright tangerine orange, stretching far and wide. In seconds, the sky was streaked with red hues, discernible through clouds that resembled enormous wings of gold and blush pink. In silence I sat, enthralled by the beauty. Darkness fell, and the sun passed its baton to the pale sickle moon, as if a fairy had dropped a curtain onto the gorgeous landscape.

"Drrriinnng!" went my alarm clock. It was nine o'clock the next morning. I dragged my feet to the next destination, Hundred-Step Ladder (Baibu Yunti).

The ladder, in a rocky crevice, was flanked by two granite guards -- a turtle, and a snake -- at the entrance. It is a steep path carved into a rock face descending into the abyss, by far Huangshan's most treacherous section.

As I stood at the bottom of the towering ladder with its rough steps, I was overcome with fear. My legs gave way, my heart was hammering, and a sense of nausea undulated in my stomach. Other hikers occasionally sent rocks tumbling down the steep slope, making me tremble from head to foot. I slowly began my ascent.

After what seemed like years rather than minutes, I made it to the top! I marvelled at the workers' tenacity, skill and courage to carve a long ladder on such a craggy rock face. This fascinating piece of art is undeniably one of the most notable examples of perseverance, daring, and sheer bloody-minded determination in all of human achievement!

Enroute to the Yuping Hotel for the night, I passed the foot of Lotus Peak (Lianhua Feng), along the way. At an elevation of 1,864 meters, this imposing peak is the highest among the three major peaks: Bright Summit, Lotus Peak and Celestial Capital (Tiandu Feng).

During the final day of my tour, I paid a visit to Piaoxue hot spring by cable car. Along the way, I caught sight of the Greeting Pine -- Yingbin Song -- silhouetted in the distance. Pines on Huangshan are the product of the mountain's climate and its landscape. The pines' sinuous quality adds to their mystique, as the mountainous terrain prevents them from growing upright.

To the Chinese people, these peculiar plants symbolize longevity, resilience and perseverance. The over 800-year-old Greeting Pine is around 10 meters tall, with two horizontal branches growing forward, like a cordial host stretching out his arms in welcome. This pine epitomizes the spirit of hospitality and warmth. To me, it was more of a “fond farewell” pine, as my trip was drawing to a close.

Spring bathing is a terrific way to relax and unwind after days of vigorous exercise. Piaoxue Hot Spring, one of the most popular springs in Huangshan, is well-known for its rich source of different minerals, which help increase metabolism and exfoliate the skin. Prior to becoming immortal, according to legend, Huangdi was believed to have purified himself in this spring for 49 days and lifted by the steamy vapor to heaven! Bathing in the crystal-clear spring, I took in the charming scenery -- lush greenery and rocky cliffs -- in a tired-happy exhilaration.

The adventure to Huangshan was an exuberant, demanding, yet phenomenal experience, like a fantasy in a land of otherworldly beauty. After the trip, I have truly experienced and appreciated Xu Xiake's praise of Huangshan after walking in his shoes, seeing what his eyes saw, and coming away with a new appreciation for its majesty and capacity to inspire.

# Tales from China's Magical Mountains

*Harrow Beijing International School, Shen, Jessica – 13*

It's the first day of 2021. Sadly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to stay home in Beijing for this holiday. Looking at the blue sky outside the window, I seem to hear the New Year's horn from the Songzanlin Monastery far away in Shangri-La.

My parents have been taking me on many trips since I was a child, especially to those famous mountains and rivers. Mother nature was fascinating. The beautiful scenery, the bird songs... It was a completely new experience for a young child.

I have also climbed the glaciers in Banff, hiked on Mt. Rainer, visited the volcanoes in Bali, looked for the water monster while climbing on the mountains above the Kanas Lake, and searched for unique rocks at the foot of Mount Tai. In recent years during holidays, my mother and I almost spent all our time in The Hengduan Mountains in Southwest China, which was so beautiful that it made us go back again and again. It is not just a single mountain, but a vast area consisting of seven mountain ranges and six long and wide rivers.

The Hengduan Mountains ranges from the south, the Gaoligong Mountain, Xishuangbanna, Yunnan; To the north, Diebu and Goluo regions in Qinghai and the south of Gansu; From the west, over the Que-er Mountain, to the Dege Printing Institute, where we can admire the handprinted "Kangyur", and to the east, across the Dadu river gorge, to have some delicious yak hotpot. Half of the most beautiful snow mountains in China lies here. There are countless glaciers, rivers, canyons, forests, meadows, and lakes, as well as delicious food, wine, rare animals, like giant pandas and Yunnan snub-nosed monkeys. It's such a paradise.

I still remember once, during the Christmas holidays, my mother took me on a journey to the Southwest of China. We traveled through Tengchong, the Gaoligong Mountain, and the Nujiang Grand Canyon to visit the cities of Dali and Lijiang. The ancient city of Lijiang is bustling with tourists. The region is multiethnic, with the Na-khi, Tibetan, and Han peoples living in the city. Lijiang used to be an important transfer station of the famous ancient Tea-Horse road. In the city, you can see the Yulong Snowmountain in the distance. At that time, Joseph Rock, an Austrian-American Explorer, lived in China for 27 years. He started from Lijiang and traveled almost everywhere in the great Hengduan Mountains. He once said in a book: "In the pages of this work, I describe the Na-khi region as it passed in review before my eyes: a wealth of scenic beauty, marvellous forest, flowers and friendly tribes. Those years of travel and the fellowship of the tribal people who accompanied me on my many journeys will remain forever among the happiest memories of my life." According to the articles and photos that Rock wrote for National Geographic magazine in his early years, the British author James Hilton wrote a famous novel "The lost horizon." It portrays a true paradise hidden in Southwest China, a place filled with peace, tranquility, eternity, and mystery for the Tibetans. The name "Shangri-La" itself in Tibetan means "the sun and moon in heart", representing harmony, serenity, and happiness. It is the home of the human spirit and a true Utopia. From then on, countless people began to look for their own Shangri-La, a peaceful, serene, and harmonious home for all human beings.

Following Mr. Rock's steps, I went into the depths of the Hengduan Mountains, to find my own Shangri-La. I have walked on the Baima Snow Mountain, witnessed the golden sunlight fall on the Meili Snow Mountain, drifted excitedly along the Jinsha River, seen the wild Yunnan snub-nosed monkeys in forests, learned the ancient Dongba culture, painted the Tibetan intangible cultural heritage wood bowls, tried some hot buttered tea with a polygamy Tibetan family, eaten a boiling yak hot pot in a snowy night, and have hanged my handmade Tibetan flags on a Lama temple. Those were my most precious memories, and I shall never forget them in many, many years.

Then, again and again, my mother and I flew from Beijing to different cities, and back into the Hengduan Mountain area again. There was the magnificent snow mountain and the solemn and sacred Lama Temple. There were also devout Buddhists and kind and honest Tibetans. Looking at a gorgeous snow-mountain from the hinterland of Hengduan Mountains at the west of Sichuan, in Shangri-La town, I recognized the snow-mountain, Yangmaiyong, as Karakal – the dazzling and immaculate pyramid featured in "The lost horizon". It stood gracefully at the end of the Yading village valley, out against the sky with a simple but beautiful outline. It is, to me, the most fascinating mountain in the world.

The mysterious Hengduan Mountains are totally different from the scenery and culture of the busy big cities. Despite the harsh environment, the high latitude, the burning hot sun, the unpredictable weather, and the cold climate, my heart is warm and happy. I slowly, gradually felt Mr.Rock's affection towards the great Hengduan Mountains, and also gradually understood the power and charm of nature.

It's another new year's day, my mother and I sat beneath the Songzanlin Temple, in a restaurant named "The Lost Horizon", in Shangri-La city, Diqing autonomous prefecture. It's yet another "Shangri-La." Under the blue sky, there are yaks grazing on the vast grassland. The Tibetans worshipping the Buddha blew their horns, and the deep sound spread out into the mountains and lasted in my heart. It seems like it's a completely different world here. Is this the legendary Shangri-La, the utopia I seek for?

And today, staring out of the window on the morning of new year's day after the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, I seem to hear the low but gentle sounds of the blowing horns again. Making a wish along with the blowing horns, I hope that, in the upcoming year, everyone can be healthy and happy, and I wish for them to find the Shangri-La in the deepest of their hearts.

I would like to end this with a Buddhism phrase: In the upcoming year, may the whole universe be in peace, and may all sensational beings be happy and healthy.

# Quaint Nature – The Huangshan Mountains

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Ho, Valerie – 13*

An introduction:

Welcome to the wonders of Huangshan, that will take you on a journey beyond the pages of this article. You will be able to learn all about the majestic mountains of Huangshan, to the ancient history of these mountains, and not to mention, tourism and how it has impacted this rural area. So sit back, relax, and let these words take you on a once in a lifetime journey. I present to you, Huangshan.

The Way of Water – Topsy-Turvy Geography of Huangshan:

There are countless, eternal mountains in Huangshan, that can range from 1,000 meters and counting. These massive mountains can be described as stone pillars holding up the heavens. The three tallest and best-known peaks are the Lotus Peak, Bright Peak and Celestial Peak, which are 1,864 meters, 1,860 meters and 1,829 meters, respectively. The mountains were formed in the Mesozoic period, which is about 100 million years ago, just before the Jurassic Period. These mysterious mountains were then shaped by glaciers in the Quaternary Period. Ever since then, the Huangshan mountains have hooked the 2.74 million people that travel there every year.

The mountaintops allow tourists and citizens alike to see the splendours of the sky, the wispy clouds that Huangshan are so well-known for. These special clouds are known as the Sea of Clouds (雲海) or “Huangshan Sea” because of the clouds’ resemblance to the churning ocean waves. Huangshan is also popular for its renowned sunrises and it is considered mandatory to see when visiting the area. A natural and sought-out phenomenon known as Buddha's Light is also a must see and only appears a couple of times per month.

Mesic forests cover the landscape below 1,100 meters. Deciduous forests range from 1,100 meters up to the tree line, at 1,800 meters, covering these enormous mountains in a luscious blanket of green. The area also has a variety of flamboyant flowers. You can find more than one-third of China's bryophyte families and more than half of its fern families here in these mountains, hidden away in the undergrowth. Many of the massive pine trees in the area are more than a hundred years old and have been given their own names. Furthermore, Huangshan's moist climate is perfect for growing tea leaves. Mao Feng Cha also known as Fur Peak Tea, is a popular and well-known local variety of green tea, which takes its name from the downy tips of the tea leaves found in the Huangshan area.

The Way of the Wind – A Wisp of the Past:

Going back in time, during the Qin Dynasty, Huangshan was known as Yishan, which is Mount Yi . But, in 747 AD, the mountain was renamed Huangshan (Mount Huang) which was thought to be coined in honour of Huang Di or the Yellow emperor. He was known as a legendary Chinese emperor and was so important, only royals could wear the colour yellow in his honour. There are many legends about the Yellow Emperor and Huangshan, these include myths of the Yellow Emperor ascending to heaven in Huangshan. Not only that, there are legends of the Yellow emperor taking Pills of Immortality and spending his life in the mountains, giving these mysterious mountains his name. Well believe it or not, but these are only a few of the many tales of Huangshan.

Due to the geography of Huangshan, it was fairly inaccessible and little-known in ancient times. But because of its change of name in 747 AD, it has brought this small area it's well deserved attention; from then on, the area was frequently visited and many shrines and temples were built there. Stone steps were carved into the side of the mountain to allow easier access for the many traders and citizens which passed by. There may even be more than 60,000 of these ancient steps throughout the area. No one knows the exact date at which these steps were first carved, but they have been said to be more than 1,500 years old.

The area is also a sought-out location for botanists and biologists due its wide diversity of flora and wildlife. In the early part of the twentieth century, the wondrous geology and vibrant vegetation of Huangshan were the subjects of multiple studies by both Chinese and foreign scientists. Till today, the mountain is still a subject of research. For example, a team of researchers used the area for a field study of Tibetan macaques, a local species of monkey whose population is steadily decreasing. It was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1990 for its scenery and for its important role as a secluded and safe habitat for rare and threatened species.

#### The Way of Strokes – Art of Now and Before:

Huangshan's reputation is renowned for its significance in inspiring Chinese literature, as well as being the centre piece in many famous Chinese paintings. The mountains have not only shaped the poems of many well-known writers such as Li Bai, but the scenery has been the frequent subject of artwork, especially Chinese ink painting and, more recently, photography.

More than 20,000 poems were written about Huangshan, from the Tang Dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty. But the mystical magic mountains of Huangshan haven't only inspired old works of art, but also a few modern films. For example the famous 2009 film, Avatar, was largely based on the geography of Huangshan. The director, James Cameron, included the towering mountains into the film, and creating one of the many different landscapes in the Avatar films. Not only that, but a Chinese animated series Stitch & Ai, a spin-off of Disney's Lilo & Stitch franchise, is also set in the Huangshan mountains.

Throughout the time of many generations, dozens of scenic spots and physical features on the mountain have been named; many of the names have hidden stories behind them. For example, one legend tells of a man who questioned the tales of Huangshan's beauty and was persuaded to see these mountains for himself. After one look at these mountains, he steadily agreed that these were the most exquisite mountains in all of China. One of the peaks he visited during his trip was named Shixin (始信) which means "start to believe."

#### The Way of Steps – The Tranquillity in Tourism:

Huangshan is a major tourist destination in China; increasing 22.9% in the past 2 years. If you thought the only name change in Huangshan was the change of name of the mountain, well you're wrong. Huangshan City changed its name from Tunxi (屯溪) in 1987 in order to promote the tourism there. In 2007 more than 1.5 million tourists visited the mountain, and from then on, the amount of visitors has become a steady flow. To further promote tourism in this small city, they built an airport in Tunxi in 1958, which allows citizens from all across the world to visit the magisterial mountains. The city is also linked by rail to Shanghai, which creates more accessibility for those living in cities such as Hangzhou, Zhejiang and Wuhu, Anhui. There are many ways to reach the base of the mountain from Huangshan City. Most people take the bus and then take a cable car or hike to the summit.

There are more than 50 kilometres of footpaths providing access to scenic areas for visitors and staffers of the facilities. All throughout the area, there are hotels and guest houses that accommodate overnight visitors. Porters that carry resources around the mountain on foot are the reasons why various facilities in Huangshan are running smoothly and efficiently. They hang their cargo from long dangly bamboo poles balanced over their shoulders or backs. Many tourists enjoy hiking up the mountains and then spending the night at one of the peaks to view the sunrise, and finish this short trip by descending these giant mountains by a different route the next day.

#### A Final Few Words:

There is so much more than meets the eye about this mystical magical place called Huangshan. I urge you to go visit these mountains for yourselves and embark on an unforgettable journey, embracing all that these ancient powerful mountains have to offer. Learn and explore more about the topsy-turvy geography of Huangshan. Or recollect your thoughts on the legendary and almost unbelievable tales. Even, look back at some of the modern and ancient art, inspired by the one and only Huangshan. And of course, indulge yourself in the popularity of Huangshan and make sure that you also allow yourself a chance to look at these beguiling mountains in person.

# My Great–Great Grandmother’s Journeys to China’s Sacred Mountains

*Harrow International School Hong Kong, Joseph–Hui, Alexandra – 14*

“Of the Chinese alive today few, if any, can have set foot on all of the nine holy mountains of China. For a foreigner to have visited as many as two or three would be considered a notable achievement even under the most favourable circumstances...”, Sir Lionel Lamb KCMG OBE wrote this as a preface for the book “The Nine Sacred Mountains of China” in 1965.

China has 9 sacred mountains. Five are Taoist, and 4 are Buddhist.

The 5 Taoist mountains are:

- 1) Tai Shan, East Shandong Province;
- 2) Hua Shan (The Flower Mountain), West Shaanxi Province;
- 3) Heng Shan Bei, North Shaanxi Province;
- 4) Heng Shan Nan, South Hunan Province;
- 5) Son Shan, centre Henan Province.

The 4 Buddhist mountains are:

- 1) Emei Shan, West Sichuan Province;
- 2) Wutai Shan (the Five Terrace Mountain) North Shaanxi Province;
- 3) Jihua Shan (the Nine Lotus Flower Mountain) South Anhui Province;
- 4) Putuo Shan (the East Mountain Island) Southeast Zhejiang Province.

Probably unknown to Sir Lionel, a Hong Kong woman had visited quite a few of China’s sacred mountains some 40 years before he wrote the above preface. What is more, some might say that this woman managed to bring some of the magic of these sacred mountains to Hong Kong – permanently.

Clara Hotung, my great–great–grandmother, was a Buddhist like her mother before her. She was born in Hong Kong in 1875. Immensely devout, she never failed to engage in daily prayer and worship – so dedicated that whenever she travelled she carried incense, as well as a small silver box to serve as an incense stand so she was able to perform her daily obeisances and say her prayers. Clara had one lifelong dream: going on pilgrimage to the renowned Buddhist temples built on China’s sacred mountains.

In 1916, she finally found a fantastic opportunity to admire the sacred mountains, and envelop herself in the calm surroundings of lakes, rivers, fascinating wildlife and nature. She set off from Tai Ping Shan (nowadays known as The Peak) on Hong Kong Island and travelled to Putuo Shan by steamship.

This journey was taking place in the middle of WWI. German submarines were reported to operate in the South China Seas and as a result, when sailing at night, the Captain ordered that the whole ship had to be “blacked out”. This meant that at most, Clara was only allowed to use candles in her cabin.

Upon arrival at Putuo Shan, Clara felt that the natural and serene scenery was the magical medicine to cure all her ailments. She noted that she was able to meditate beyond her normal boundaries. A High Priest became tutor to



Clara. She stayed 3 months there, also visiting the famous districts. She reaped the full benefit of what nature had to offer.

In 1919, Clara took 3 of her daughters – Victoria (my great-grandmother), Eva, and Irene to Tai Shan, the mountain regarded most important by Taoists. In Irene's book *Clara Ho Tung: A Hong Kong Lady, Her Family and Her Times*, she describes the mountain as seeming high and majestic. The mother and 3 daughters were carried up the mountain in mountain chairs, which each required 3 bearers.

Every time the 4 of them came to a little temple or tea house, the bearers set them down. They all had tea (nobody carried plastic bottled water then!). Along the way there were many inscriptions carved in stone, of poems and other writings. Throughout the route, there were devout worshippers walking up the mountain as on a pilgrimage. At the very top, they reached a Taoist monastery.

I believe it was 1920 that Clara found an opportunity to visit Jihua Shan. In 1924, she fulfilled one of her biggest hopes and went on pilgrimage to Wutai Shan.

Touring Wutai Shan was one of Clara's fondest aspirations. She detailed an aspect of the trip that made her particularly happy: Sir Robert Hotung (her husband) travelled with her in spite of the anticipation of a strenuous journey. At the time of their visit, a particular bridge was damaged, so the motor road was impassable and they travelled part of the way by mule cart.

As China was Warlord-torn, the provincial Warlord, Marshal Yen Hsi Shan, provided them with a bodyguard of 6 mounted soldiers. Travelling many hours by mule cart every day, Clara admired the majestic scenery: the winding roads, the steep cliffs, and the feeling of being in the clouds. This was the pilgrimage she had looked forward to for many decades.

Upon returning home, Clara felt that Hong Kong was the gateway for China to communicate with the outside world. She knew that the city and everything within it was thriving, so she was saddened by the fact that there was no establishment, at that time, that served the fundamental purpose of popularising Buddhism. Extremely devoted to Buddhist principles, she deeply believed that the catastrophes of the future could be averted by its popularisation. Having been inspired by the teachings and culture in the Chinese mountains, Clara was determined to bring a piece of the magical mountains and temples back with her to Hong Kong. Thereupon, she urgently sought to establish a permanent institution to serve the fundamental purpose of popularising Buddhist culture and providing education for the public. She could not let the idea go.

Uncompromisingly, Clara wanted everything under one roof – a Buddhist temple, a free school for girls, and a seminary.

Clara knew that women, when equipped with proper knowledge, could form decent families, and could be the driving force in society. In Clara's mind, there were sufficient schools for boys. The girls' need for education had to be equal to that of boys. She wanted her school to be an all-girls one, and kept this target in her heart.

However, there were just 2 problems when it came to building her dreams: a) it had never been done in Hong Kong, and b) she did not have sufficient funds.

The value of land in Hong Kong was exceptionally high and suitable locations were limited (even in the 1930s!). Clara's vision appeared all but impossible to realise.

Fortunately, in 1931, Sir Robert and Lady Hotung celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. Sir Robert generously presented a gift of HK\$100,000 to Lady Hotung, as well as HK\$100,000 to Mrs Clara Hotung. Clara was ecstatic.

After a relentless 2 year search, Clara found a suitable plot of land in Happy Valley in 1933. She acquired the land (12,000 square feet) for HK\$17,000. Clara optimistically budgeted HK\$63,000 for the cost of construction,

furnishing, and the purchase of books. She hoped that the whole project would be completed by the end of 1934. She would name the completed institution “Tung Lin Kok Yuen”.

I have asked my grandmother, Vera (Victoria’s daughter), about the completion of Tung Lin Kok Yuen. According to Vera’s memory and her many years serving on the board of directors, the institution was likely completed in 1935, with pupils admitted in 1936, and the Buddhist scriptures along with the final touches installed in 1937.

I visited Tung Lin Kok Yuen in 2017. I remember strolling up the scenic hill and approaching the intricate brick temple. Curved ceramic tiles in different shades of red lined the roof. Walking in, the main hall was striking. I remember the beautiful stained glass windows, the aroma of incense, all the portraits and the grand Chinese lanterns hanging from the high ceiling adorned with dragons and calligraphy. My imagination transported me thousands of miles away from the cacophony of city sounds, to a quiet mountaintop stretching above the clouds, to an endlessly vast temple, where I wandered through the mezzanine in awe of a high wooden ceiling, the warm colours of the walls seeping into me, enchanted by the calmness of the restful aura that followed me wherever I went. It felt surreal. Tung Lin Kok Yuen was the first Buddhist temple I had ever been to, and already I could envision the ones that Clara had visited, high up in China’s mountains, in the same shade of mahogany.

Clara undoubtedly visited no fewer than 4 of the sacred mountains under circumstances that can hardly be described as “most favourable” under Sir Lionel Lamb’s contemplation. Clara’s first pilgrimage to Putuo Shan involved sailing through enemy submarine infested waters during WWI. Her later travel to Wutai Shan in Warlord–torn China merited an armed cavalry guard for protection. My guess is that Clara could not have cared less whether her travels to the sacred mountains had amounted to any “notable achievement”. Her aim was to bring some of the serenity and magic of the sacred mountains to Hong Kong.

Clara Hotung died on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1938, in her home on The Peak, the mountain from which she started her travels, envisioned the creation of Tung Lin Kok Yuen, and lived. Fittingly, less than 60 years after her death, it too became one of China’s magical mountains.

China’s mountains have also established a magical connection between Clara and me. Because of them, I have been able to recount here a tale of how a great–great grandchild learned about her great–great–grandmother’s life, visions, and captivating journeys to the sacred mountains of China.

# Huangshan Mountains

*Hong Kong International School, Zhou, Emily – 14*

After years of collecting herbs on the foggy Yishan mountains, The Yellow Emperor had finally found the solution. As he watched the black pill, memories of his life came flooding back to him. He hadn't thought about it in years. Was he genuinely willing to give up mortality for immortality? He packed his belongings and headed out of his cave. Outside, the brumal day had dawned crisp and clear with a bitterness that hinted at the end of the winter. The fresh, brisk wind of winter pierced through his body. It was quite unlike the warm, misty, summers that he had gotten accustomed to over the years. He looked back at his cave and savoured it, for he knew it would be the last look. Heading up the frozen stone steps of the Lotus Peak, he admired the blanket of snow that covered the precipitous granite peaks and the snow that had fallen on the verdant trees, making them seem as if they were from a winter paradise. Somehow, the mountains seemed more peaceful, more beautiful during the winter. He remembered the moment he fell in love with the place, and he felt a sharp pang of regret. Was he leaving all this behind? A gift from the world, all for him. Nature seemed as if it were begging him to stay, showing him all the mystical panoramas it could forge. He reached the summit, and the snow crunched beneath his feet. The relentless sun stared brightly at him, and it burned his eyes. Even so, he stared back, refusing to avert his eyes from what could be his last view of the sun. He held out his pill to the sunlight. Something told him that he had finished his time on earth as a mortal. He had spent the last few years of his life contentedly; there was nothing left for him. He had no idea what would happen once he took the pill, but he knew this was it. The Emperor held put the pill into his mouth, then swallowed.

The Yellow Emperor (Huangdi), whose real name was Xuanyuan, is a supposedly mythical figure who once ruled China from 2698–2598 BCE. People recognise him as a cultural hero. We also believe that all Han Chinese descend from him. Ancient Chinese scholars wrote of him in texts as a real historical figure who became a legend, but modern scholars argue that he was a mythical figure recorded into historical texts as a real man. Emperor Xuanyuan is depicted as a divine progenitor, a deity, and a Taoist cultivator. Which one is the truth? He may have been some of everything. While many theories may arise concerning the Yellow Emperor's real identity, it is essential to know that the mountains are named after him, Huangshan. Before, the mountains were called "Yishan", and after Emperor Xuanyuan did alchemy there, it was renamed to Huangshan. After taking the pill, Xuanyuan either died or became immortal. It is said that he left behind only his cap and clothing to be buried. Did he die? Or did he finally succeed in his endeavours and become immortal? Only nature can tell us the answer.

To have Huangshan on this earth is indeed a vast gift from nature, to whom we should give our thanks. The mountains were formed in the Mesozoic Era, approximately one-hundred million years ago when the world did not yet know what humans were. The landscape was shaped by the glaciers in the Quaternary Period, resulting in the creation of the seventy-two paradisiacal mountains of Huangshan. Of these seventy-two, three unique peaks stand out for being the most captivating. The first of the three is Celestial Peak, considered the most beautiful because of its empyrean view. It stands at 1,829 metres above sea level. The scenery there is so fictitious that it is believed to be the immortals' capital and heaven's city. Lotus Peak is the tallest mountain among the diverse peaks. The soaring mountain stands at 1,864 metres. Inscriptions have been found on the cliffs that date back to ancient times. Bright Top is the second tallest peak, known for its breathtaking scenery of rolling clouds and sunsets. It stands at 1,860 metres. There are about 60,000 granite steps carved into the mountains' sides. It is said that these steps are more than 1,500 years old. Many scenic sites and physical features on the mountains have been named, and these names have narratives behind them. One such legend tells of a man who did not believe the tales of Huangshan's beauty and went to the mountains to see for himself. He immediately realised why people talked so passionately of its beauty. One of the peaks he is said to have visited was named Shixin, which means "start to believe". Standing atop the mountains, above the clouds, one can feel the soft gusts of wind flowing, and the calmness and elegance of the ethereal panorama. At sunrise, we can see the light peeking through the trees, and at sunset, it blends in with the rare phenomena called the Buddha's Light.

A place like Huangshan can't be the way it is perceived without its myths and legends. Generation after generation, dozens of stories have been told about Huangshan. Although they include magic and supernatural themes, the stories are what makes Huangshan what it is. A legend states that the Eight Immortals would gather there annually. One year, however, seven of them arrived on time, while the last one, Xiangzi, was late. An immortal named Guolao suggested that Xiangzi must have been captured by the scenery of Huangshan mountains on his way. Guolao flew into the sky to look for Xiangzi. Just as he had expected, Xiangzi was sightseeing on Huangshan Mountain. He was enjoying himself so much that he had forgotten about the gathering. Guolao tried every possible way to persuade Xiangzi to leave. Xiangzi was reluctant to go, and eventually created a stone replica of himself, setting it in the place he stayed, in case he ever forgot the way to Huangshan mountain. The stone became known as the Immortal Showing the Way. Another famous myth said that there lived an intelligent monkey who had been learning and practising magic arts in the mountains for three-thousand six-hundred years. This monkey had the power to transform himself into thirty-six different objects, including a human being. While exploring Taiping County, he met a lovely girl called Zhangzhu and fell in love with her. He turned himself into a handsome, talented young man and went to Zhangzhu's home, calling himself Sun Junwu. After expressing his sincerity and willingness to marry Zhangzhu, she and her parents accepted the proposal. But on their wedding day, Junwu got too drunk and showed his true form as a monkey in his sleep. Upon discovering this, Zhangzhu was deeply shocked and fled. When he woke up, he realised what had happened and felt guilty and regretful. He looked all over for Zhangzhu, but she was nowhere to be found. The monkey missed her, but there was nothing he could do. Since then, he spent days and nights watching the home of Zhangzhu. Centuries after centuries, he finally became the stone monkey we see today. This famous site is called Stone Monkey Watching the Sea. He watches over the sea of clouds, hoping that Zhangzhu would come back to him one day.

The Huangshan mountains' unworldly view has enchanted many people, ranging from mythical immortals to ancient Chinese poets, calligraphers, and artists. It was ideal for ancient Chinese literati to visit these mountains. Of these literati were two famous poets named Li Bai and Du Fu, who lived during the Tang dynasty. Li Bai was born on May 19, 701 AD, and is known as one of China's best Romantic poets and a poetic genius. He led a remarkable life, travelling all around China while inebriated. Du Fu, born February 12, 712 AD, is known as China's Shakespeare and the Chinese Virgil. His life was filled with unrest and turmoil, due to the breakout of the An Lu-shan rebellion in 755 AD. He spent nine years of his life building his career in poetry. Together, Li Bai and Du Fu travelled to Huangshan, and upon seeing the magnificent spectacle, they wrote poems of what they saw. "Dawn Vista on the Huangshan" is Li Bai's poem. After so many poets and artists have revealed Huangshan's loveliness, we cannot help but admire what nature has given to us. Because of the mountains' mystifying view and mytho-historic ties, they seem so unearthly and out of this world. But the mysterious mist and cryptic mountains reveal so little that we are left to create our figments of imagination and fictional legends, but one thing that we know for sure is that the tales and descriptions of Huangshan will go down in history.

# A Scenery Place for Relaxation

*Immaculate Heart of Mary College, Chau, Hyatt – 14*

Living in a city, sometimes, is demanding. It is not easy to have a break from the daily busy routine. Last year, I was lucky enough to win the plane tickets to go to China to visit Huangshan. Huangshan is a famous place which is also called the Yellow Mountain, it is a mountain located at southern Anhui Province in eastern China. In the past, Yellow Mountain was once called Yishan, simply meaning black mountain, being one of the highest mountains in the world which is higher than 1800m, the dark shape of the mountain gives a monstrous image to tourists, and it was a mysterious place. Yishan was changed into Huangshan due to the legend about Huangdi. Huangdi, known as Yellow Emperor, is a legendary man and a great king. He is considered as the father of all Chinese people. There is a legend about Huangdi heard that the present of Yellow Mountain is an ideal place for making elixir. Therefore, he went there undoubtedly and spent years on the mountain for collecting necessary herbs and making elixir. His efforts finally paid off and he became immortal after taking the pill. Therefore, to commemorate Huangdi, Yishan was renamed Huangshan.

Huangshan, being acclaimed as one of the greatest mountains in China, is a popular UNESCO World Heritage Site as well as one of the most visited scenic destinations.

The four wonders of the fantastic mountain that show the power of natural beauty, which are Imaginatively-Named Pine, Flying-Over Rock, Seas of cloud and the Spring of Youth. Nowadays the Yellow Mountain has attracted thousands of travellers to enjoy its spectacular brew and the heavenly feeling of every there.

The pines in Huangshan grow over an altitude of 800 m. Among the thousands of pines, they are named according to their legends that passed from traditions. Guest-Greeting Pine which is the symbol of Mt. Huangshan, the high tree grows like a man standing by the path and stretching out his hand to welcome others. It now becomes a well-known symbol of the hospitality and peace loving character of the Chinese nation. Farewell Pine is also famous for its shape which is like saying farewell to the guests. Huangshan consists of 72 peaks too, and most of them are individually named according to their shapes or stories. The name of Huangshan Mountain itself is from a legend, which have already written about.

The famous sight, Stone Monkey Watching the Sea, is about a legend. "Sea" here refers to the cloud sea, Taiping is a county right at the direction the monkey is staring at. It is said that an intelligent monkey in Huangshan Mountain has been learning and practicing magic arts for 3600 years. According to book he had the power to transform himself into 36 different objects, including human being. One day, he met a pretty girl called Zhangzhu and fell in love with her, so he turned into a handsome and talented young man, approaching to Zhangzhu's home and claiming himself as Sun Junwu.

After dating with Zhangzhu, he expressed his desire of marrying Zhangzhu. Zhangzhu and her parents accepted the proposal. But on their wedding day, Sun got too drunk and showed his true form as a monkey in sleep. After that, Zhangzhu was terribly shocked and annoyed so she slipped away. When Sun woke up, he realized what had happened and was in deep regret. The monkey missed Zhangzhu so much but there was nothing he could do. Since then, he spent days and nights watching the home of her. Day after day, year after year, he finally became a stone monkey that we can see today. Is it a story of romance and tragedy?

In Yellow Mountain, the peaks are very popular among tourists. The tallest and best-known peaks are Bright Summit Peak and Celestial Capital Peak. People visit Yellow Mountain for the most famous rock, Immortal Pointing the Way as well. Immortal Pointing the Way is a pointy standing rock by the old Cloud Valley path. It looks like a man in a cloak holding up a hand in a didactic stance. In the old days, there was a brilliant child failed an imperial exam, he felt so depressed about it and he went to Yellow Mountain to find immortals for inspiration, and this is the story for this famous spot.

The most wonderful of the wonders in Huangshan, definitely is the seas of clouds. It is a splendid view to which nothing can compare. When the Seas of Cloud rises to a suitable height, the mountains nearby seem to drift and rise and fall in the sea. It's just like some fantastic view in Heaven. This looks like numerous islands in the sea, appearing in the waves. The Fairy Walking On Stilts in West Sea Scenic Area appears to be walking on the clouds. On the cloud sea to the southwest of Bright Top, a huge of " turtles " swimming amongst steep ridges and peaks. At sunrise or sunset, when rosy clouds may appear, radiant golden light glitters in the sky and mountains are covered with the dazzling coats of many colors. The oddly-shaped rocks of Huangshan can appear more complicated and mystical with the flowing of the clouds.

The hot springs of Huangshan are listed as one of the Four Wonders of the Yellow Mountains, The springs have restorative properties and ideally positioned to minister to tired mountain climbers. They are well-developed, with villas surrounding the whole area. The hot springs are called the Tang Springs in ancient times. According to Song Shengyou's Huangshan Map, Huangdi, the earliest ancestor of the Chinese nation, bathed there. The spring water smoothed away his wrinkles and Huangdi became younger again. The hot springs are famous for this and called the Springs of Youth.

Apart from the Yellow Mountain, there are distinctive Huizhou styled ancient villages scattered at the foot of the mountain. Those villages themselves are precious historic and cultural heritages, and a good symbol of local traditional culture and history. As the remarkable example of Huizhou ancient villages, Xidi ancient village which was listed as World Cultural Heritage with nearby Hongcun Village. With two rivers flowing through, Xidi is a time-honored pristine village with about 1,000 year's history. It has over 200 ancient residences of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and important ancestral halls, archway, all decorated with exquisite brick, wooden and precious stone carvings. Xidi ancient village is a time-honored village with a history of 960 years.

The rise of Xidi Village was closely tied to the fortunes of the Hu Family, who was the offspring of the Emperor Li Ye in the Tang Dynasty. By 1465, during the Ming Dynasty, Hu family had made great fortune in business as merchants, and they began to build many compound villages houses, ancestral halls, pathways, and bridges there. In the middle of the 17th century, some members in Hu Family sought for official careers and boosted the development of the village. From the 18th century to 19th century, Xidi reached its highest glory with 600 prosperous households at that time. Those villages can show excellent models of Huizhou architecture, and we can enjoy the stunning natural sightseeing at the same time.

Last but not least, apart from feasting on nature beauties, there were more than 20000 poems created by poets in the past. Huangshan has been held in high esteem in China's history, especially since the Tang Dynasty. Mountain in their poems, paintings, and articles. It has been an important source of inspiration for Chinese writers and artists ever since. In ancient times, the poet Li Ba and the Buddhist monk Pumen climbed the mountain. Poet Li Bai combined the outstanding natural beauty of Huangshan in his poetry named Dawn Vista On Huangshan.

Huangshan City has its power to boast its tremendous tourism resources. Two sites are listed as world heritages; Huangshan has been honored as a "National Treasure". As the old tells, "When one has visited the five mountains in central China, he will not be tempted to see any other mountains, but once he has seen the views of Huangshan, the five mountains seem attractive no longer." Apart from the extraordinary Huangshan, there are also many other places of interest cultural relics inside the city. Like stars twinkling in the sky by the moon, they make a good match with the natural landscapes in the Huangshan. If you have time, remember to visit such a wonder, and you find peace and joy in your journey.

The fantastic scenery of Huangshan reminds us we are the off springs of the Dragon. During these times of difficulties, we can look up at the sky and remember the heaven that gives us hope and encourages us to do our best wherever what will come up in our life with uncertainties. However, we still have hope and our strengths, we can get the energy from such a beautiful world of our Mother Earth.

# Huangshan—— A Paradise Near Us

*Immaculate Heart of Mary College, Chou, Cheuk Yan Ambrose – 14*

Have you ever watched the famous award-winning science fiction movie, *Avatar*? What do you feel when you see the astonishing and magnificent background? Many fans of *Avatar* only thought that such a paradise is imaginative and non-existing. However, the surprising fact is that such a fabulous and wondrous place does not only exist in our home planet, but also in our homeland, China. It is Huangshan.

Huangshan, the Yellow Mountain, is a mountain range in southern Anhui Province in eastern China. The vegetation on the range is the thickest, and it is below 1,100 meters (3,600 ft), with trees growing up to the tree line at 1,800 meters (5,900 ft.). The view of the mountains attracted millions of visitors to go there to embrace the incredible natural view.

The area is well-known for its scenery, sunset, peculiarly shaped granite peaks, Huangshan pine trees, hot springs, winter snow and the views of the clouds from above. Huangshan, with its heavenly scenery, is one of the most popular themes in traditional Chinese paintings and literature, as well as modern photography. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of China's major tourist destinations.

During the Qin Dynasty, Huangshan was known as Yishan. In 747 AD, its name was changed to Huangshan; the name is considered to be in honor of the Yellow Emperor, a legendary Chinese emperor. According to some stories, when the Yellow Emperor was the king, people's life was peaceful and prosperous. Therefore, the Emperor was highly respected. The Yellow Emperor in his later years tried to focus on his belief, Tao. When he was old, he followed Chengzi and Fuqiu to practise Taoism.

For Taoists, the most important thing is to make the invaluable pills, Dans. They believed that by taking them pill, they can increase their strength and their everlasting life. One day, Fuqiu suggested that they had to find a place for making Dans. So the three men, including the Yellow Emperor, set out to find a quiet mountain and finally came to Yishan. The scenic paradise urged them to stay, so the three decided to stay on the mountain and started their secluded life for making Dans.

After settling at their ideal place, Fuqiu set up a refining platform, and Chengzi set up the refining furnace. However, the process of making Dans was never easy or painless, as it required only ten kinds of herbs but for each kind of herb, they required ninety-nine pieces of them, and it was extremely taxing and demanding to find them all in such a big place.

The Yellow Emperor was very much determined to get the Dans done, so he did not go down the hill at all. They worked hard, exploring every inch of Huangshan to find all ingredients. However, they are still short of dew which is necessary for making Dans. One day, the Yellow Emperor went alone to the mountains to search for dew. After walking for a long time, he felt very tired and took a rest. Suddenly, some pleasant music came out from the forest. He looked at the forest and saw an old man riding a deer, leading two cranes. Realizing the old man was an extraordinary person, the Yellow Emperor greeted him with courtesy. The old man knew the Emperor's desire and smiled to him kindly, then he dropped a handkerchief on the ground intentionally. After that, the words, 'The Well of Dan' appeared. Then, he woke up, overwhelmed with joy, went to the mountain to find the magic handkerchief.

No one would have imagined that the dream was the very clue for finding the dew, and the Emperor found the place eventually. When he found the dew, they started a fire and to refine the Dans. In order to refine it, they needed to cut plenty of wood as fuels. However, after some time, the trees nearby were all cut away, so they needed to go further to find more wood. One day, when the Yellow Emperor was watching the fire, Chengzi and Fuqiu were gone. As the last piece of wood about to finish, the Yellow Emperor had no choice but to put his leg into the fire as fuel. Meanwhile, the Dan was made finally. At the same time, the two came back. They all took the Dans and became beautiful fairies that blessed the whole China.

From the unbelievable legends in Huangshan, we know that it is a paradise in the world and a great tourist spot because of its five magical scenery: tall peaks, strangely-shaped pines, grotesque rocks, clouds, sea, and hot spring. Firstly, the tallest and most famous three peaks of Huangshan are Lotus Peak, Bright Peak and Celestial Peak. Apart from them, there are numerous famous pine trees on Huangshan as well, and the Welcoming Pine is an example.

Some people like Huangshan because of the different strange-shaped rocks, and their names are mainly derived from their shapes, such as the Celestial Peach Stone, which looks like a Celestial Peach. Other tourists like to see the sea of clouds surrounding the mountain, and this offers a mystic and heavenly scene, and people find it amazing and relaxing to be there. Lastly, the hot springs on Huangshan are also part of the great experience for tourists, and Cinnabar Spring and Zui Spa are one of the famous ones there.

The fascinating scenery inspires lots of mysterious stories and imagination, so Huangshan is also called the birthplace of the art. Much of Huangshan's reputation is derived from its significance in Chinese arts and literature. In addition to inspiring poets such as Li Bai, Huangshan and the scenery therein has been the theme of poetry and artwork, especially Chinese ink paintings and, more recently, photography. From the Tang Dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty, more than 20,000 poems were written about Huangshan, and a school of painting was even named after it. The mountains also appeared in modern works; Director James Cameron cited Huangshan as one of his inspiration for making the film, *Avatar*. Also, in the Chinese animated series, *Stitch & Ai*, a spin-off of Disney's *Lilo & Stitch* franchise, was set in Huangshan as well.

However, the surprising fact is that this ancient Huangshan is a great place for scientific researches as well. Due to its diversity of flora and wildlife, many scientists visited there for their studies. In the late twentieth century, a team of researchers went there for the local species of monkeys.

Because of these mysteries and the stunning scenery, Huangshan nowadays is a major and popular tourist destination in China. In 2007, more than 1.5 million tourists visited the mountain, which is a record-breaking number. The mountain is also classified as a AAAAA scenic area by the China National Tourism Administration. The area is highly protected and carefully preserved by the local authority. According to some legends, the Yellow Emperor became immortal there, and it is now a signature of Chinese history and culture. On the other hand, in foreigners' eyes, Huangshan represents China, as it has the peaceful and sublime beauty in its character.

Everyone, who studies or admires the view of Huangshan, wants to know more about this amazing and mystic place. Huangshan does not only offer us a breathtaking scenery, but also the interesting myths and stories. Jack Hanna once said, "The most important thing is to preserve the world we live in. Unless people understand and learn about our world, habitats, and animals, they won't understand that if we don't protect those habitats, we'll eventually destroy ourselves." Therefore, we should cherish these wonderful places and their stories. For me, Huangshan is the treasure for all Chinese people, and it is a must for us to learn more about this extraordinary and stunning place. Being an immortal is no longer important but having the chance to be there will be the very dream of mine to be fulfilled.



# Huangshan, the Place, the Myth and the Nature

*Immaculate Heart of Mary College, Wong, Man Hei – 13*

In China, there are many famous places for sightseeing. Huangshan is one of them. My dad told me that it was a mysterious place that I should never go to. I really wanted to know more about it. Finally, I went there with my schoolmates a few years ago. Now, let me tell you more about his amazing place.

The original name of Huangshan is Lushan. However, why was its name suddenly changed? According to Chinese History, Tang Xuan Jiong believed in Buddhism and changed the name to “Huangshan” in 747 BC. Also, there were a lot of painters in the past who painted the beautiful pictures of Huangshan, so its beauty and stunning view was manifested in tons of various styles of drawing, such as landscape painting. It also appeared on some paintings' background. There were also a lot of poems using Huangshan as title. For example, a poem called, “A good mountain tour in a lifetime” was written by the famous poet, Li Bai. The poem tells us the beauty of Huangshan and the breathtaking scenery of the trees, flowers, grasses and rocks. Readers of this poem would never forget about this masterpiece and the great scenery.

Huangshan is also well-known for the strange pine, strange stone, cloud seas, and hot springs. It is called “4 bests” by contemporary painters, and the strange view is unique in the world. The wonderful pine and stones even enhance the beauty of the area, and with the clouds flying around Huangshan, it is like a paradise and hence people also call it “Si Hai” or “Tin Hai”.

Strange pine is undoubtedly part of the stunning view. In the past, farmers and villagers in that area admired the scenery, and they even made up stories about the place. Though some stories are obviously made up with mythical colours, it is a tradition for the elderly to pass on these myths from one generation to another. Some pine trees are named as “Pines of welcome”, “Pines of black tigers”, “Pines of dragon’s claws” and more. In different places in Huangshan, these pine trees give different postures which are like humans or animals, and each of them represents someone or something with a persona or a character. Maybe we can have more stories about the whole place when we visit there, and it is worthy to see such a spectacular wonder which is not just beautiful to our eyes but is refreshing to our minds and bodies.

Moreover, there are some stories about Huangshan that you should never miss. According to some legends, a stonemason called Shan Fu in the Song Dynasty, built many stone bridges throughout his life. He also wanted to build one at the gate of his hometown, but he lacked helpers. There was only one girl named Xiaojiao under his knee, who was smart and beautiful. Knowing what his father was thinking, Xiao Jiao volunteered to help his father build a stone bridge. Even though this little girl knew the hardship she would have in transporting stones for hundreds of miles, she did not hesitate to offer her help. Little and small was she that could not stop her from taking up this big task. Shan Fu, as a man and as a father, knew what it might take to finish this job, had no choice but refused her help. Xiao Jiao begged her father to let her help. Being touched by his daughter’s determination and love, Shan Fu also called three apprentices to help, so they started their work right away. Because of the hardship and exhaustion of moving the rocks and walking up and down in the mountain, the first and the second apprentice went away. Only Shan Fu and his daughter stayed behind, and they were determined to repair the bridge and continued to work hard even though they had to brave the wind and rain.

Many years later, only a small pile of stones were eventually transported to the riverside, but still, the bridge was too difficult and even quite impossible to build. Xiaojiao, who had no idea of how to write, asked someone to write a sign to ask for some help from the villagers. Then, countless people came to have a look at the sign out of curiosity but they went away without offering any help. One day, a cripple man suddenly came with a fan and asked Xiaojiao if he would like to have a walk with him, Xiaojiao replied: "I hope that some of the stones in the mountains can be transported here to build a bridge. Only then, I'll have a walk with you." Unexpectedly, this cripple turned out to be Tieguai Li from the Eight Immortals. He used his magical power, pointing to the sky and the stones for a

while. Unbelievably, the stones were all flying and fell on the riverside on their own. With such a stunning and breathtaking magical demonstration, all people were shocked to see a wonderful bridge was then built perfectly.

No one knows if this story is true or not but one may imagine this story is trying to tell us how this attractive and fantastic scenery was formed. Though the story about Huangshan is very much like a fairy tale, it is indeed a very beautiful and long lasting story which touches the hearts of all of us. This reminds us of the extraordinary scenery we have, and we should try our very best to protect our precious world. When we are facing numerous threats from the extreme weather conditions, Huangshan, a great place for natural appreciation, reminds us of our nature, we are also part of the world's creatures. Instead of only taking the resources from Mother Earth, can we give more to contribute to the conservation of the environment?

# Tales from China's Magical Mountains

*Ling Liang Church E Wun Secondary School, Alvi, Safa Noor – 12*

Mountain is a large area of land which is higher than the surrounding area. Mountains can be found in all the continents around the world. They are like hills but are higher and steeper. All mountains and hills around the world are formed of hard rock. Mountains have had a huge importance in all the civilisations and cultures. They were also the symbol of strength and success.

If we talk about Chinese culture, these mountains are considered abodes of immortals. People also consider it sacred to climb the mountains and during free time or holidays they go out for a hike with family and friends. Mountain hiking is a popular activity in Asia. All form a group and start the ascend. It is also a very healthy activity to go out on mountains and get the fresh and unpolluted air. The mountains have a great deal to do with keeping the air circulation, and renewing its purity. So, the mountains are one of the biggest and most special gift of mother nature. These days when we talk about preservation of the environment, including wildlife, forests, oceans, rivers and mountains, ultimately the decision to act must come from our hearts that we need to preserve them all to protect our mother nature. Today I'm going to pick one of the very significant part of our mother nature called "mountains".

Let's not waste more time as I also cannot wait to take you on a tour of one of our enchanted mountains which are placed in China by mother nature. China's Magical Mountains are also known as Yellow Mountains. Located in southern Anhui Province in eastern China, the yellow mountains are also UNESCO World heritage site and they have a very huge importance. Each year millions of tourists from around the world come to visit these majestic mountains in China. These mountains are misty and give picturesque views of the whole landscape. They are covered with rugs of trees, tightly woven and sophisticatedly placed. Each view is a unique piece of beauty. There are also many pine trees in the area which are more than a hundred years old. One of the mountains is called "China's premier green tea-growing mountain". These Mountains look so beautiful like a painting, standing with confidence and letting nature sit with its paints and brushes to paint them with its colours.

The Magical mountains have a lot of peaks. The names of the tallest peaks are Lotus Peak, Bright Peak and Celestial Peak. The height of the Bright Peak is 1873 meters. I wonder why one of the peaks is called the Lotus peak and I then came to the point that lotus symbolizes the purity of heart and mind. I believe that for whoever will visit the lotus peak, his or her heart and mind will get pure by watching at nature's creativity and remarkable beauty which always gives peace and tranquillity to us. So why not we be like a lotus that brings honour and serenity in our lives, untouched by impurity?

The second tallest peak is the Bright Peak. The word 'bright' means giving out or reflecting much glow and shine. So, this mountain must be bright and majestic. This mountain is 1,860 meters high and is the second tallest mountain. When I wonder about it, it gives me a sense that how the sun, moon and stars use to shine on the mountain's face. I'm pretty sure that whoever will visit Bright peak of the Magical Mountains will definitely think that how can we become a star, moon or a sun of one's life and brighten up our lives and our beautiful world.

Last but not least, the third tallest peak is called Celestial Peak. It is 1829 meters high. I will take the word 'celestial' as out of the world somewhere in outer space, that's what it means too. I can imagine one standing on this peak feeling out of the world! Something that one's brain can't imagine, must be said out of thought and unapproachable. Something of divine majesty and strength. Just imagine the beauty of heaven. Unique and supremely good. Let's reflect how can we play a supremely good role in our lives. How magical it is, isn't it? Magical mountains are magical because they bring all those magical vibes in our minds.

These mountains often offer views of the clouds from above, known as The Sea of Clouds. There are many ways to travel around in these mountains. Some people hike, some take steps and few opt for a cable car which takes tourists from one place to another offering splendid views.

The magical mountains have a beauty in all four seasons. In summer season there is an increase in rainfall, numerous streams, waterfalls and vivid rainbow flying over the peak. Everything looks splendid as the whole world has taken on a brilliant glow. Sunsets and sunrises are exotic. To me it seems like a paradise on earth.

In autumn, here comes a time of magical fall season. It would be an honour to appreciate the colours and sceneries of autumn. On The Mountains, colour changing trees such as green pine trees, red maple trees as well as other various trees turning their leaves golden during autumn remind me of The Autumn Fairies Story which my mother used to tell me when I was little. The autumn fairy changes colour of the leaves in fall. She hides between her wings, which look like leaves when frightened. I wonder how fast fairies change the shades of autumn leaves such as from green to yellow, gold, orange, red, scarlet and purple as dawn approaches. What an amazing job they have done. On the other hand, supernatural-looking clouds give a glimpse of misty smoke which floats around the mountains, spreading out for miles.

The fallen leaves on the path make you feel like one is taking stroll in the gardens of Eden. This is the best time of the year to go for a hike as the air feels fresher and pleasant.

We all know that it's truly charismatic to visit the magical mountains in any season but winters has its own quality. The mountains look spectacular in the wreath of a snow. Winter scenery at its best shows sparkling diamonds like frosted pine trees and silver icy peaks give a feel of a proudly standing palace, embedded with sparkling diamonds of frost. Truly a crystal wonderland!

The clouds look like white sheet of cotton balls which changes colour into purple, pink, and orange outlined with gold. This happens with each move of the sun whether it is dawn or dusk. That magnificent sight will take you on a horse ride running over clouds as far as your eyes could see, as fast as a cool breeze. "What a land of wonder is the Magical Mountains of China might!".

Now let's talk about spring. During spring, the magical mountains looks like a bride all is new, fresh and tender. Everything looks so delightful and lively. You may imagine a magical aroma. Aroma of pines, lush green grass, green-tea leaves and rich soil. All newly bloomed wild flowers, as well as sprouting plants that are fragile. I could also imagine the sound of birds singing is melodious song of the day to our ear. One should just get lost in these beautiful songs which express their joy as well as their natures communications with nature. Birds must be tweeting about God's Grace and mother nature. Everything seems to be pleasant in the quietness of the mountains, while one is enchanted by a great show of vitality.

What a show! Let's imagine the greatest show of nature in the yellow Mountains which was but not named not because of its colour but after an emperor. It seems like a mile of happiness in a form of seating where audience can sit and enjoy its show as a gift. Where the rainfalls take everything in its arms and its water reflects the colour of each and every season. The face of a show man which expresses peace. Midnight sky is filled with a magical silver glitter as vast as any eye could see or wonder. The moon shines like a white precious gem hiding beneath the blanket of clouds. Mist dancing all night on the magical mountains.

Suddenly all starts to pack up. The early morning mist gets sleepy and tired of dancing all night and decides to rest on the bed of green grass, wild flowers and rich soil. The sunrise wants nothing more than to warm up all the blues of night into gold. Prepare for one more new day and head towards one more show night.

I could write a great deal about the mountains but the words cannot describe or do justice to their grandeur. There are some places which can only be experienced and called upon you to explore the surreal. The Magical Mountains of China gives a rich experience of nature and the wonderful aroma of flowers waking up one's senses and sending the sweet smell to the nostrils. One must experience landscapes, mountain mists as far as your eyes could wander, see the birds flying and tweeting, see the natures spa, you should feel calm and relax. The sparkling stars and moon seems to follow you on the heights of the mountains, It's very bright and luminescent like a white orb in the night. One thing you should never forget that if you will be able to get thousands and millions of beautiful sights in all of the four incredible seasons, summer, autumn, winter and spring, it will be magical on The Magical Mountains of China!

# Huangshan

*Pui Kiu College, Cheng, Lok Yan – 13*

Huangshan, a majestic mountain range with its well-known sceneries, sunsets, and many more, is one of China's most stunning tourist attractions. What makes Huangshan such a lure for travelers, and what makes Huangshan so spectacular?

To start with, let us acknowledge some basic information about Huangshan. Huangshan, literally meaning "the yellow mountain(s)" is, in fact, not yellow in color, but it got its name after the legendary Yellow Emperor. This splendid mountain range is located in the southern part of Anhui Province, in the eastern region of China. Huangshan is renowned for its amazing landscapes, sunsets, oddly-shaped pines, awe-inspiring peaks, and exquisite views of clouds from above, which have fascinated people over generations. It has a good reputation recognized both locally and abroad and it has owned several honorable titles as well.

The Yellow Mountains' classic attractions are its strange pines, absurd rocks, seas of clouds, and hot springs, also known as its "Four Natural Wonders".

Huangshan Mountain is home to particularly hardy pines that can be found anywhere. They seem to grow straight out of crevices, twisting left and right or even downwards due to the uneven terrain. Owing to the fact that the soil and the climatic conditions are poor there, many of the trees have branches growing out of them only on a single side. Each of the pines is unique, and they never cease to amaze travelers with their strength and vitality.

Not unlike the pines, the oddly-shaped rocks of Huangshan Mountain are also undeniably spectacular. Huangshan owns a natural collection of rocks, with granite stone forests, rock pillars, small boulders etc. These jagged rocks in grotesque shapes are widely distributed at the mountain tops and peaks.

The boundless seas of clouds and mists are breathtakingly mystical and envelop the forest of peaks at Huangshan. At the top of the peaks, you will find yourself way above the level of the clouds, where heavenly views unfold as seas of clouds appear beneath you. At sunrise or sunset, the sky becomes covered with beautiful shades of colors, from red to purple, and enhances the marvelous beauty of Huangshan.

The warm springs of Huangshan gush endlessly in the forests of calmness and relaxation. They are located on the lower front slopes of Huangshan, and travelers can ease their tiredness there after descending from the mountains.

Huangshan has greatly influenced Chinese art and literature. Since China's ancient times, especially since the Tang Dynasty, Huangshan has been frequented by uncountable visitors, most among whom were hermits, poets, or painters. Famous poets, like Li Bai, Du Fu, and Jia Dao, wrote numerous poems about the unique views of the mountains and produced amazing works. During the Ming Dynasty, this unique landscape inspired and impacted the establishment of the Shanshui ("Mountain and Water") school of landscape painting. Both Chinese writers and painters alike have been drawn to the mystique and beauty of the mountains. The natural and breathtaking scenery of the mountains has been sure to provide sources of inspiration for poems, travel journals, and paintings. Even today, it continues to fascinate and attract visitors, poets, painters, and photographers.

With its awe-inspiring and imposing natural scenery, Huangshan has attracted countless tourists, travelers, poets, and more and impacted Chinese art and literature culture.

# The Wonders of the Yellow Mountain

*Pui Kiu College, Tam, Siu Hoi Dominic – 13*

The Mountains of the Yellow Emperor in eastern China, now known as Huangshan, is a mountain range in southern Anhui Province in eastern China. It is best known for its sharp peaks, raised villages and floating clouds. It is also a frequently featured subject in many Chinese paintings and poems, making it one of the most iconic mountains in China.

There has been many tales, myths and stories about this mysterious mountain. One of the most famous ones explains how the mountain got its name “Yellow Emperor”. Yellow Emperor, also known as Huangdi is a tribal leader in the 27<sup>th</sup> century BC who is believed to become immortal and a celestial being in Huangshan. The story talks about how he had a war with another leader, Ciyou, and found that Ciyou had great weapons that were made from an extremely high quality copper. He tried to find this material and got to Huangshan where they found the copper. In addition, they found the raw material for a pill that will make Huangdi immortal and a celestial being. He and 2 of his ministers worked hard to find and make the medicine. After 480 years, they had finally finished it so they took the pill and flew up into the skies.

As you can tell, the story is fake and is just a myth. However, there are still some truths in the story. Huangshan does have an abundant copper and nickel deposits in Huangshan. It is an important copper–nickel metallogenic belt of the eastern Tianshan Mountains. In addition, there are many other minerals such as iron, magnesium, limestone, granite, gold, lead, molybdenum, tungsten, tantalum and uranium. Although there isn’t a way to make a pill that will make you immortal, there are still some medicinal plants growing on Huangshan. For example, the plant *Clerodendrum cyrtophyllum* Turcz

(野地骨), it is used for a very big variety of diseases such as fever, headaches, intestinal infections, jaundice, rashes, tonsillitis, gum bleeding. Other flora include pine trees, which are extremely common and also have a species after named after Huangshan. There are more than 1483 species of seeded plants.

The next story is about one of the more special peaks in Huangshan. Its name is "The sea watching monkey". It is named because at the top of this peak, there is a monkey shaped rock. It is believed that this monkey once turned into a man, a married someone. However, on the night of the wedding, the monkey became drunk and showed his real body to the bride. The bride was terrified and ran away and never came back. So this monkey would climb up to the top of this peak to wait and look for his bride, wishing she would come back. He eventually became a rock after years of waiting.

Even though monkeys can’t turn into stone, this doesn’t mean that Huangshan doesn’t have interesting animals. The most common animals are monkeys, especially stumped tail macaques, just like the one in the story. These macaques are much different from other places as they contain an internal sack in their throats to store the special fruits. Other common animals include hamsters, masked palm civets, and woodpeckers. There are a total of 26 species of fish, 21 species of amphibians, 48 species of reptiles, and 176 types of birds. Huangshan is also home to some endangered species that are extremely rare. Such examples are clouded leopards, with less than 10,000 populations, and also Elliot’s Pheasants, again with less than 10,000 populations in China. In March 2019, scientists found a new species of *Crocicidura* in Huangshan that has never been seen anywhere around the globe.

The final story is about the way one of the famous peaks was formed. The peak is called “The flower from a dream pen” where the peak has the shape of a pen while the top has some majestic looking flowers and it is believed that it was formed when the famous poet Li Bai when he visited Huangshan. He was amazed at the beautiful scenery and created a poem. When he read it out loud, another man came out of nowhere and it was the poet Li Han. They drank and talked to each other about poems and had a very good time. To thank the poet, Li Bai wrote another

poem just to appreciate them. After Writing the poem Li Bai threw the pen away and formed a pointed mountain, where the top had a bush of flowers and a single pine tree.

Again, this is obviously not true, however, the way these peaks are formed are quite interesting. The Huangshan area was originally a whole ocean 400 million years ago. After the erosion of seawater and the plate tectonics 200 million years ago, the area started to become spiky. After all the sea water had drained out, these magnificent peaks were left.

In conclusion, many tales about Huangshan are fake but they do express some really interesting features about this place. It is mythical and one of the most amazing mountains in China, and the world.

# The Magical Yellow Mountain

*Pui Kiu College, Wong, Shun Hei*

## The Mysterious Mountain – Yellow Mountain

Located in Anhui Province in Eastern China, the Yellow Mountain, also known as Huangshan and ‘the loveliest mountain of China’, is one of the most famous peaks around the world. Being a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation) World Heritage Site and one of China’s major tourist destinations, it possesses breathtakingly beautiful sceneries. With the help of sharp peaks, raised villages, floating clouds, as well as the summit elevation of 1864 metres, the place becomes more mysterious.

Where does its name, ‘Yellow Mountain’, come from?

Is Yellow Mountain really yellow? Of course not! It was known as Mount Yi and was renamed to Yellow Mountain after the Yellow Emperor by imperial decree during the Qin Dynasty. A myth suggests that the name, ‘Yellow Mountain’, is coined in honour of the Yellow Emperor, who is a legendary Chinese emperor and the mythological ancestor of the Chinese people. Another legend suggests that the mountain was the location where the Yellow Emperor ascended to Heaven. Moreover, one also states that the Yellow Emperor refined the ‘Immortality Pills’ in the Yellow Mountain. He collected the necessary herbs and brewed the elixir in the mountain and became immortal after taking the elixir since then.

## The Four Wonders of Yellow Mountain

### Strange Pines

Strange pines can be seen in every corner of Huangshan Mountain. The uneven terrain causes them to come in different and unique shapes and they are named after them. The most famous one is the Guest–Greeting Pine. It looks like a gentle old man stretching one of his arms out to welcome the honoured guests. Their vitality and strength are also amazing. Due to the infertile soil and unfavourable climatic conditions on Mount Huangshan, the pine trees grow very slowly. A tree less than three metres high may have grown for more than a hundred years or even several hundred years. As a result, the root of a pine is several times or even several dozen times longer than the trunk, making the ability of the root to stand firmly, withstanding strong winds and heavy rains.

### Absurd Stones

Rocks on Yellow Mountain are unique and many of them have a story behind their shapes. Some look like human beings, birds, or animals, etc. And what makes it more fascinating is that their shapes vary when seen from different angles. Over one hundred rocks have been named, such as Flying–Over Rock and Stone Monkey Watching the Sea.

### Sea of Clouds

Clouds and mists can be easily captured on Yellow Mountain, especially on rainy or snowy days, sunrise and sunset, and in winter time. Peaks will be embraced by a sea of clouds, making them look like islands within the sea which have a fairy tale beauty. The islands are never the same with its oddly shaped rocks and ancient pines. The peaks, large and small, hide and reappear in the boundless waves of clouds, making this world above the clouds more majestic.

### Hot Springs

Having hot springs after the tiring journey of visiting the Yellow Mountains to ease your fatigue is the best choice. People will be able to refresh themselves and enjoy the beautiful sceneries there. Running out of the Purple Peak with an elevation of eight hundred and fifty metres, it is the first stop following the entrance. Legend has it that the



Yellow Emperor (Huang Di), who was the ancestor of the Chinese nation, bathed there for forty nine days before he ascended to heaven and became immortal.

Why do Poets and Painters Like to Go to Yellow Mountain?

With more than twenty thousand poems related to Huangshan, it definitely plays an important role in Chinese literature. Poets and scholars have been attracted to and inspired by the gorgeous sceneries and picturesque views of the mountain for years. Poems about the region dated from the High Tang era (713–765) to the late Qing Period (1901–1911) and numerous poets wrote poems about the region, including two famous poets in Chinese history – Li Bai and Du Fu. They were friends and lived on the mountains in the eighth century. Being the two most prominent figures in the ‘Golden Age of Chinese Poetry’, which is the flourishing period of Chinese poetry in the Tang Dynasty, their poems, including the ones about Yellow Mountain, are well-known until now. The poem ‘Dawn Vista on Huangshan’, explained the natural beauty of Yellow Mountain. ‘Thirty six strange peaks, Immortals with black top knots. Morning sun strikes the tree tops, Here in this sky mountain world.’ It illustrated the stunning scenery and landscape of the mountain, also the magnificent views of it when it is daybreak. This explained that the beautiful scenery of the mountain inspires poets, so they would love to go there to let their imagination run wild. Writers also created travel journals about the Yellow Mountains, which flourished during the Song (960–1127), Yuan (1271–1368) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties when the culture and economy of the region developed significantly.

Many famous painters in China were also devoted to Yellow Mountain’s Beauty. From the Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, painters created masterpieces featuring the mountain in order to capture the essence of its beauty in their art. Among all the painters, the most famous ones were the ‘Three Great Men of the Huangshan School’ during the late Ming to Early Qing period (mid-seventeenth century), they include Jian Jiang, Mei Qing and Shi Tao. Mei was a landscape painter who was active during the Qing Dynasty and his landscape paintings were based on his countless travels to the Yellow Mountain, such as Tiandu Peak of Mount Huangshan. Shi Tao was another Chinese landscape painter in the early Qing Dynasty. His paintings were also related to Yellow Mountains, such as the Mount Huangshan (painted by Shi Tao). Their paintings were vivid and realistic, and they expressed the marvellous landscape of Mount Huangshan in detail. They are inspired and impressed by the spectacular scenery of the mountain.

To conclude, the Yellow Mountain is a famous tourist attraction in China and even the world. It is called the ‘Yellow Mountain’ because it is named after the ‘Yellow Emperor’, who is the ancestor of the Chinese people. The Four Wonders of Yellow Mountain, including pines, stones, sea of clouds, and hot springs, make the region more beautiful, magical and mysterious. Poets and painters liked to go there since it is a source of inspiration and it plays an important role in Chinese arts and literature. Would you like to make a visit to the Yellow Mountain?

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# Huang Shan

*Pui Kiu College, Wu, Jianhua – 12*

The legend of Huang Shan could be traced hundreds of years ago. It was related to the legends, the myths of ancient China. Although there is a question unsolved: Why is Huang Shan so Popular?

First and foremost, Huang Shan is well known for its pine trees and the gorgeous cloud sea. The most famous pine tree is the Ying Ke Song, also known as the Welcoming Guest Pine. The Welcoming Guest Pine has been the symbolic for Huang Shan's pines for a long time. The Pine got the name by its shape of welcoming the guests to Huang Shan. Ying Ke Song has over a thousand years of history! It is an extremely valuable historical relic. The cloud sea is another great sight to see in Huang Shan. The cloud sea is one of the most famous sight in Huang Shan. When its sunrise or sunset, the cloud will change its color to golden, making the granite peaks of Huang Shan even more pleasant to see. If you climb up the peak this moment, you can observe the peaks are looming in the shining golden clouds. The clouds also come with different shapes. Sometimes they are amusing animals' shapes, and other times they are different objects. The clouds of Huang Shan do not come up with a particular shape. There is no limit for your imagination of the clouds! This is also a reason for why most of the artists and poet likes to use Huang Shan as an object to spread their imagination on.

Additionally, the granite rocks of Huang Shan are another great sight to see while visiting Huang Shan as well. The granite rocks come with different shapes as well! If you found a lion-shaped thing, do not worry, those are the gifts of nature! After millions and millions of years passed, the rain and the wind has eroded the rocks of Huang Shan, making their shapes differently from the original rocks. The rocks are the extraordinary gifts from mother nature! Also, Huang Shan has some granite peaks to climb and look at charming sight of Huang Shan. The top 3 peaks to climb are Lotus **Peak**, Bright **Peak** and Celestial **Peak**. They are the tallest and the most well-known peaks of Huang Shan. Many visitors came to Huang Shan just to visit those peaks of Huang Shan for the amazing sight on top of them.

Also, the Huang Shan is also a home to animals and plants. The Huang Shan also contains a lot of endangered species. Such as the metasequoia, metasequoia is a national protected plant in the first class, it has almost been extinct since its habitat has been destroyed by humans. There are also 28 species of plants firstly discovered in Huang Shan. The Huang Shan is a huge eco garden for Earth, since 58% of its land is covered with forest and vegetation coverage reaches 83%. The Huang Shan surely has been a valuable place to visit – no matter if you are a human or not.

Last but not least, the arts and poems based on Huang Shan are uncountable. Huang Shan has always been a place for the poets and artists be inspired by the beautiful sight of Huang Shan. Li Bai has written over 60 poems of Huang Shan for its sight. The Chinese artists had also been drawing the sight of Huang Shan. Until today, there are still a lot of poets and artists who got their inspiration of art and poems. Huang Shan has always been a place for artists and poets to make their own creation.

In conclusion, Huang Shan is a gorgeous place to visit since the gorgeous sights of it. Huang Shan has always been a place for the plants and animals to rest because of the destroy of habitats. The Huang Shan has always been a valuable place no matter if you are a human or not!

# Huangshan China's Magical Mountains

*St Joseph's College, Poon, Tsz Yu – 12*

The first time I saw Huangshan was in a Chinese art gallery. The awe-inspiring scenery on rice paper (Xuan Paper) resembled the descriptions of the epitomic setting in my all-time favourite Jin Yong martial art series. However, my mother, who is a Chinese teacher, said it was a pity that none of the martial arts schools in that famous series were named after Huangshan because the mountain was given its current name at a later time. She then told me an interesting legend about the naming of this well-known UNESCO World Heritage Site, located in the south of Anhui province of China.

Huangshan was originally named “Yishan”, which literally means a “black and shiny mountain”, referring to the colour of its peculiar granite rocks. Legend has it that Huangdi (also known as the Yellow Emperor) was attracted by the breathtaking grandeur of the mountain and decided to concoct his Elixir of Immortality there. Centuries later, Emperor Ming of Tang decided to rename Yishan “Huangshan”, in honour of this first ancient Chinese emperor, as well as a god from the Chinese folk legend. From then on, the place has become a magnet for artists and poets. Highly acclaimed in Chinese art and literature, Huangshan embodies an unmatched cultural heritage that stretches back over millennia and continues to this day.

The enchanting scenery of Huangshan has attracted millions of visitors flocking to climb to the peak every year. Surrounded by massive peaks, Huangshan is a seemingly endless mountain range. Some of the more remarkable ones include Lotus Peak (Lianhua Feng) which is 1,864 m high, Bright Peak (Guangming Ding) at 1,860 m, and Celestial Peak (Tiandu Feng) which is 1,829 m high. Geologists explained that approximately 100 million years ago, Huangshan emerged from an ancient sea that disappeared in the Quaternary Period due to crustal movements and was later shaped by the glaciers into its form today.

One summer, I finally stepped foot on this magical gem of China. I was first stunned by the gnarled pine trees standing out from the multitudinous flora and fauna atop of the mountain, visible even from a distance. My dad said that it is a rare species of pine that can only be found at high altitude like the Huangshan peaks. They outgrow the other plants by hanging from the rocky cliffs, giving the rocks a quirky look, as if vines were clipped to them. As we reached the peak, I was amazed by how these pine trees stuck out from the cracks in the rocks: a beautiful natural accessory for the legendary mountain.

Another feature that attracted my eye was the bewildering array of bizarre boulders scattered around the mountain tops. Through hundreds and thousands of years of weathering, even the most common rocks on the mountain have been crafted into unique artifacts by the nimble fingers of Mother Nature. Looking over the forest of grotesque rocks, I wondered if some were actually petrified mystic creatures. There was a moment I even had a heated debate with my dad on whether a piece of rock we saw was a bird's egg or just a mischievous stone. No wonder my dad said these rocks were masters of disguise. Surely, they could easily deceive our eyes into thinking that they were secretive creatures living on the freezing mountain top.

Apart from the strangely-shaped vegetation and rocks, Huangshan is also renowned for its picturesque cloudscape, especially during sunrise. Dragging my sleepy body up Bright Peak at dawn, my jaw dropped as I looked up to the sky and saw the kaleidoscopic colour of clouds swirling above me. Lingered over the horizon afar, the slow-rising sun gently cast a pinkish orange trail on the panoramic sea of clouds. I took a deep breath of crisp, cool air and revelled in the peaceful moment of tranquility. From magenta to peach, rose to amber, the radiance of the sun gradually broke through the cloudy blanket and warmed up the morning air. Squinting through the glimmering rays, I waved goodbye to the most extraordinary vista of Huangshan and started to descend the endless stone stairs spiralling down the mountain.

On the way down, my walking-wikipedia dad was tirelessly telling me about the rich biodiversity of Huangshan. It may be no surprise to learn that Huangshan, occupying over 1,200 square kilometres, is home to several hundred

special animal species, including 24 species of fish, 170 bird species, 38 amphibian species and 300 other vertebrate species. However, what is truly amazing is that many species are yet to be discovered. For instance, two species of shrew were newly identified by biologists in March of 2020. These two species take the appearance of a mouse but with exceedingly long and pointy noses, and were respectively named *Crocidura anhuiensis* and *Crocidura hwangshanensis*, in honour of the place where they were discovered. Other interesting species include white neck ravens, clouded leopards, and silver pheasants. Huangshan is really a mount of unlimited treasures!

When we finally hit the base of the mountain and returned to civilization, the last surprise awaiting was the Cinnabar Spring at the foot of Purple Rock Peak. Relaxing our sore feet and aching muscles from the gruelling mountain climb in the mineral-rich, geothermal water, we minded not the pungent sulfuric smell permeating our noses and steam clouding our glasses at all. My mum told us that it was recorded in Song Shengyou's Huangshan Map and Record that even Huangdi had taken a dip in the same pool. Unofficial records have it that the pool had magically made him appear younger, so the pool was then called the Pool of Youth. I was not sure if my dad was telling the truth or just pulling my leg but he said the spring water was so limpid that it might be drinkable and could even cure certain illnesses! Yet, the thought of drinking the same pool of water that we were soaking in was rather unimaginable.

From my first encounter with Huangshan in the Chinese gallery to my expedition to Bright Peak, I have put into practice the Chinese saying, "It is better to travel ten thousand miles than read ten thousand books." Now I understand why Huangshan is always listed as one of the bucket-list destinations by both Chinese and Western nature lovers. Its fabulous pines, spectacular rocks, astonishing cloudscape, and curative hot springs certainly warrant multiple visits. I believe everyone who has been there would agree that Huangshan is a feast for the eyes. So if you have not paid a visit to this majestic wonderland yet, then why not take a trip to witness the magic of this enchanting mountain?

# Kunlun Mountain Range – A Forever Legend

*St. Paul's Convent School, Chan, Wing Yan Dorothy – 13*

Humans have always felt connected with soaring high mountains. In this rapidly developing society, we tend to find inner peace in absolute silence and the tranquil mountains are definitely preferable spots. In the wilderness, the environment is peaceful and calm where nothing can be heard but birds chirping and symphonizing to rivers' bickering. Not only are we captivated by the majestic panoramic view accompanied with soothing breeze, but also fascinated by their beautiful tales.

China has profound cultural heritage and mythological knowledge developed over 5,000 years of history. With well-known myths, legends and tales, Kunlun Mountain Range, being named as the Holy Mountains, has attracted imaginative writers or novelists to add in magical and mysterious elements, making it the cradle of Chinese mythology. Allow me to explain how its background, environment and history gradually form its colourful stories.

Kunlun Mountain Range, located in the junction of Xinjiang, Tibet and Qinghai, is as gigantic as a behemoth with a total length of 2,000 kilometers and the highest peak of elevation of 7,120 meters. At the edge of the Takla Makan Desert, this snowy range appears stupendously gorgeous due to the strong contrast against the soft golden sand. It is so colossal that it stretches out and branches off into several other mountain ranges, which earns the nickname 'Forefather of Mountains'. Tales are formed due to its thin layer of midst mystifying generations.

Its name involves the word 'kun', which literally means insects. Though much of its area consists of rock deserts with occasional stagnant pools of water, which is not the most favourable habitat, it answers to its name as rare plants and peculiar animal species like Tibetan gazelle, antelope and wild yak manage to settle down in this barren land. The western part of the range is a relatively humid and hospitable area, where argali sheep can be found grazing on the high grasslands while blue sheep and ibex inhabit upper crags. On top of that, brown bears, wolves and snow leopard find their perfect habitat near willow thickets.

Moreover, the word 'Kunlun' often refers to remote, mysterious and exotic places in which bizarre events occur. It is an iconic symbol of divinity where origins and acts of deities are explained. The range is referred to as a place outside time, pain, suffering or death, allowing all sorts of pleasure and arts to thrive: vibrant music, vigorous dancing, romantic poetry and sumptuous feasts. Fabled plants as well as mythical creatures are created, for example, Bai Ze, an extremely knowledgeable animal which represents luck, security and merriment.

Since Kunlun Mountain Range is such a magnificent place, it has certainly been in the eyes of the supreme deities and become the dwelling place of gods and goddesses. The most well-known legend is, undoubtedly, Xi Wangmu (Hsi Wang Mu), also known as the Queen Mother of the West. The first record of her presence in Kunlun Mountain Range was about the adventures of King Mu from the Zhou Dynasty. He first discovered the Jade Palace of the Yellow Emperor on the sanctified mountain where he met Xi Wangmu. She is shown in literary works as the immortal goddess of marriage, fertility and the patron saint of women who takes residence in the mountains in the far west, the margin of heaven and earth. Served by two blue birds, Xi Wangmu takes the form of a human with tiger's teeth with leopard's tail. She ordains life and death, illness and recovery, occurrences of calamities and has total control over the life spans of all living things with her sacred powers of creation and destruction. Immortals and spirits travel to Kunlun Mountain Range to join Xi Wangmu. In the 'Journey to the West', one of the four greatest Chinese novels of all time, the rebellious Monkey King, Sun Wukong, who repeatedly defies the authority of the Jade Emperor, is put in charge of Kunlun Mountains' Garden of Immortality to tend to the peaches of immortality. This is considered a noteworthy task as the peaches will only blossom once every 3,000 years on a colossal Tree. Instead, he purloins all of them in an act of defiance, creating a great nuisance and disturbance in heaven, thus being punished by pinning him under the Five-finger Mountain.

Furthermore, the novel 'Heavenly Sword and Dragon Slaying Sabre' by Jin Rong introduces the merge of martial arts and historical records of mountains, creating unique tales which people can immediately associate with Kunlun Mountain Range. The exhilarating plot is driven by conflicts of interest between two sects located in the same mountain range, namely Kunlun and Mingjiao. In the martial arts world, wulin consists of six main sects, who all have grudges with Mingjiao, thus are determined to seek vengeance despite the fact that Mingjiao's general alter, Guangmingding, is situated in the far west of the range. The gruelling distance of the mountains from the sects' origins delivers the strong sense of hatred among them. Likewise, it shows the greatness of the legendary master, Zhang Wuji, who harnesses the wugong of 'Jiuyang shengong' in the same mountain range, to be able to eliminate the accumulated grievances among the sects and unify them to defend their homeland. Throughout the wuxia novel, Mr. Jin Rong's deliberate arrangement of Kunlun Mountain Range has reached perfection not only in the perspective of artistic effect but the connections of the storyline as well.

The unexpected marriage of ancient Chinese mythology and modernity has left not only Chinese nationals, but also researchers in awe. Since the beginning of civilization, people have gathered together to share stories of irate gods, tormenting journeys of exploration and magical beasts. Mythology, being the collective wisdom of mankind, has allowed these fascinating stories to spring to life for centuries and millenniums, passing its legacy from generation to generation. These compelling tales and beliefs have taken a significant role in shaping the Chinese modern society since they give comprehensive and valuable insights of how people perceive the world surrounding them. Even though scientific research has overthrown myths' explanations, these stories still serve as receptacles of crucial cultural values. Tales are relevant to us nowadays as they establish a foundation of our intellectual improvements, a basis of moral boundaries and basic guidelines of our lifestyles.

As an illustration, the mysterious Kunlun Mountain Range gives mortals hope that by leading a virtuous life, we can earn the opportunity to meet deities and attain eternal life. Xi Wangmu's extraordinary powers help explain the natural phenomena as exasperated acts of gods rather than erratic laws of nature. Additionally, the banishment of the Monkey King serves as warnings of wrongful acts: immoral deeds comes with a cost. Besides, the Kungfu master, Zhang Wuji, sets a positive model for aspiring teenagers that determination defines their fate. Although cultures may differ drastically as time passes by, oral traditions have striking similarities, it is just an issue of reinterpretation. As a matter of fact, legends are continuations of history, linking ancient times with the modern, molding the present society, country and world.

In conclusion, the charm of Kunlun Mountain Range is irresistible due to its breathtaking scenery as well as its fabulous tales of supreme beings and martial arts. Myths have taken an essential role in the modern society and that we should continue to appreciate the beauty within.



# Non-Fiction

Group 4

# Huangshan—The Mystical Paradise on Earth

*Inmaculate Heart of Mary College, Ou, Shu Hua – 19*

*Over seventy summits, standing in the clouds, reaching the high heavens,  
Many climb to the top of Huangshan, dreaming to be like birds that can fly,  
Let your bodies and souls be immortals that live and never die.*

In China, there is a legend about a mysterious place where you can possess the magical power to be immortal and to live forever. Though how strange it might be to most of us, it is worthy to see such a numinous and occult place by paying Huangshan a visit.

Many people come here as tourists, and some of them, may be, dreamers who look for immortal life. They come here to feel what it is like being in Heaven, and usually, they end up finding their life more meaningful and energetic after seeing such a magnificent and remarkable view of Huangshan.

Huangshan is also called the Yellow Mountain, which is a mountain range in southern Anhui Province in eastern China. It was originally called “Yishan”, and it was renamed because of a legend—Emperor Xuanyuan (The Yellow Emperor). He once conducted alchemy at this mystical place, hoping to attain immortal life. Nobody knows if Emperor Xuanyuan had truly been here. According to some writers, the Xuanyuan clan was the leader of the tribal alliance. He was an intelligent man who taught our ancestors how to raise silkworms and make boats and carts.

As time flew, and the Yellow Emperor had reached old age but he still had countless things that he wanted to accomplish: rivers needed to be fixed, land needed to be cultivated, animals needed to be domesticated, and there was probably a long list to do. The Emperor’s wish to live forever was never something out of the blue or selfishness. He was a hero who only wanted to do more for his people. To fulfill his dream of serving his people continuously, he wanted to be immortal, so he sent Lord Fuqiu to find a place for him to conduct his alchemy for attaining immortal life.

Lord Fuqiu came back after three years and told the Emperor, "There is a group of high mountains in the south of the Yangtze River, and the mountains are mostly black rocks called Yishan. There, you can try to conduct your alchemy." Therefore, Huangdi led Fuqiu Gong, Rong Chengzi and some servants to go to Yishan. They then built houses and alchemy furnaces. After that, they paid a lot of effort to gather the herbs for alchemy. As there are 72 steep peaks in Yishan, and in some places, it was difficult for him to go up, but Xuanyuan Huangdi stepped on every inch of the cliff. Later, when the food they prepared was finished, they could only rely on picking wild fruits to feed themselves. Many people couldn't bear the hardship and ran away secretly. In the end, only Huangdi, Fuqiu Gong and Rong Chengzi stayed.

After nine years of endless hard work, they collected the herbs they needed, and their alchemy process started. Three years passed quickly. The firewood they had was about to be used up. The elixir had not yet been made. The trees nearby were all cut down by them. Fuqiu Gong and Rong Chengzi had to cut the firewood from a more distant place. Meanwhile, the Emperor Huang filled the last piece of pine wood into the hearth to survive but his counterparts had not returned yet. With almost no hope of success as the fire was getting smaller, Huangdi had no way but to put one of his legs into the furnace as firewood, and finally an elixir was made. At this time, Lord Fuqiu and Rong Chengzi also rushed back, and rescued Huangdi's leg from the fire. The three of them ate the elixir. Then, their dream came true, and they became immortals.

Though some may argue about the validity of the story, yet many people came to see this mystic place and its magic. Huangshan was formed approximately 100 million years ago and gained its unique rock formations in the Quaternary Glaciation. During the Qin Dynasty, Huangshan was known as Yishan (Mount Yi). In 747 AD, its name was changed to Huangshan (Mount Huang) in honor of Huang Di (the Yellow Emperor), a legendary Chinese emperor and the mythological ancestor of the Chinese.



One legend records that Huangshan was formed at the location where the Yellow Emperor ascended into Heaven. Another legend states that the Yellow Emperor "cultivated moral character and refined Pills of Immortality in the mountains, and that is the origin of the name of Huangshan (Yellow Mountains)".

The name "Huangshan" was first used by the famous Chinese poet, Li Bai. Huangshan was not well-known in ancient times, but its change of name in 747 AD drew more attention from the public. Since then, the area has been visited frequently and many temples were built by the faithful there. Huangshan is also best known for its stone steps, carved into the side of the mountain, of which there are probably more than 60,000 throughout the area. Over the years, many scenic spots and physical features on the mountain have been named, and each of them has quite a story to tell. For example, one legend is about a man who did not believe the tales of Huangshan's beauty and went to the mountain to see it; and immediately, he was shocked, speechless and overwhelmed.

In 1982, Huangshan was declared a "site of scenic beauty and historic interest" by the State Council of China. It was even named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1990 for its scenery and for its role as a habitat for rare and threatened species. In 2002, Huangshan was named the "sister mountain" of Jungfrau in Swiss Alps.

The area is enormously popular for its scenery, sunsets, peculiarly-shaped granite peaks, Huangshan pine trees, hot springs, winter snow and views of the clouds from above. The beauty of Huangshan also draws the attention of artists, and it is a frequent subject of traditional Chinese paintings and literature, as well as modern photography.

Huangshan straddles the four counties of Taiping (now Huangshan District), Shexian, Yixian and Xiuning. Its beauty consists of a large area with various natural landscapes such as peaks, rocks, pine, clouds and springs. The scenic spots are magnificent, strange, fantastic, dangerous and secluded, and each of its various poses exhibits its particular characteristics.

Huangshan offers us an amazing scenery with peaks as its body, with 36 large peaks and 36 small peaks. Lianhua Peak, Guangmingding Peak and Tiandu Peak are collectively called the three main peaks of Huangshan. Three peaks stand together, forming a beautiful frame encircling the wonder of Huangshan scenery. Among the countless scenic spots in Huangshan, the most unique ones are the strange pine, strange rocks, sea of clouds and hot springs, which are called the "Four Wonders of Huangshan."

First, Huangshan Pine trees are tenacious, peculiar and stunning. The trees are distributed in high mountains above 800 meters above sea, they are in fact stones and giant rock fissures. Huangshan pine needles are stubby, green and dense, possessing dry curly branches and various shapes. The pine shows different postures, and some are leaning against the bank, or standing alone, or hanging upside down on a cliff, or crown as flat as a cover, or as sharp as a sword.

Though Huangshan pine has a tough, arrogant but beautiful posture, its growing rate is very slow. A tall pine is often hundreds or even hundreds of years old; the roots are often several times longer than the trunk. The deep roots of Huangshan pine allow them to stand firmly on the rock, and the trees remain standing despite strong wind, frost and rain. In the past, someone compiled the "Famous Pine Tree", and many Huangshan pine trees are on the list. There are hundreds of pine trees with names on record, and each tree demonstrates its own remarkable and elegant style.

Second, one of Huangshan's "Four Wonders" is rocks, which are famous for their oddness and shapes. The shapes of rocks resemble people and things, birds and beasts. At different locations and weather, the Huangshan Rocks have very different but stunning appearances. Some people think that if the rocks are viewed horizontally, they are like ridges and peaks with different distances and heights. Huangshan is surrounded by thousands of rocks, and almost every peak has many magical and strange rocks.

The ravishing mountain was formed in ancient times. It was formed about 1 million years ago during the Quaternary Glacial Period. When you see the Huangshan from different angles, you can find different shapes. If you are standing in front of Banshan Temple, Huangshan stones and rocks look fantastic from different views. In front of Banshan Temple, a large rock on Wang Tiandu Peak is like a rooster spreading its wings and crowing, so people called it "Golden Rooster". The view would be definitely different but amazing if you climb Long Papo and look back, as you will find this rooster is like five elderly people in fluttering robes, holding their shoulders hand in hand, and the other image the "Five Old Men in Heaven" is formed. In Huangshan, strange pine and strange stones, often in contrast to each other, are located in Beihai. There are more than 1,200 stones in that area, and all of them give different images like demonstrating various thoughts or movements of man. All these images are so charming that no tourist wants to leave this wonderland.

Third, since ancient times, Huangshan has become a sea of clouds and the hometown of clouds and mists. Its magnificent "cloud sea" is famous for its beauty, victory, wonder and fantasy. It can be seen throughout the year, especially in winter.

Flowing clouds plays a crucial role to contribute to such a fantastic natural world in Huangshan. When the wind is surging, the waves of clouds will then be rolling and rushing like tidal waves. When the breeze is blowing, the clouds in all directions are moving slowly and trickling, passing through the gaps between the peaks. People can imagine that they are fairies, enjoying such a spectacular and celestial scenery.

Fourth, one of the "Four Wonders" of Huangshan is hot springs. They are originated under the Ziyun Peak at an altitude of more than 850 meters. The wonderful landscape produces fresh and clean water. The water quality is pure and you can drink it or use it for a bath.

Legend tells us the Emperor Xuanyuan Huangdi bathed here for seven or forty-nine days to rejuvenate and rise, so it is also known as the "Lingquan". Also, the high mountain hot spring, Huangshan Hot Spring, has certain medical effects on some diseases related to digestion, nerve, cardiovascular, metabolism and skin.

No one could have imagined that there are actually 15 hot springs in Huangshan Mountain. The average temperature of the main spring of the hot spring is 42.5°C. The water temperature also changes with the changes of temperature and precipitation. It is truly a paradise for tourists, as they can enjoy a nice bath in the hot spring with one of the most fantastic view in the world.

The three famous waterfalls of Huangshan can elevate you to the next level of natural beauty. When it rains heavily, the waterfalls are like two giant dragons flying under the rock, giving us a breathtaking and extraordinary picture. One of the waterfalls is called Baizhangquan Falls. It runs vertically along the cliff of Baizhang, and the waterfall is flying horizontally above the waterfall with the waves splashing under the waterfall. Another waterfall, The Jiulong Waterfall, follows the broken rocks, when it folds down nine times, it is like nine white dragons descending from the sky, giving us an extremely spectacular view. If it is sunny and not raining for a long time, the waterfalls of Baizhang and Jiulong are like gossamer belts and trickling streams.

The peaks and forests of Huangshan are good habitats for animals and plants. The mountains are like the sea with abundant water due to rainfall. There are more than 1,500 kinds of plants in Huangshan, of which trees account for one-third, and there are more than 500 kinds of animals. Therefore, Huangshan is considered as an important place for the researches in Biology, and it is also known as the "Treasure House of East China's Animals and Plants."

The wonder of Huangshan is not just historical but incredible in many aspects. Its spectacular features stand out from other mountains and gives inner joy and peace to every tourist. With its stunning view, more than 20,000 poems were written about Huangshan from the Tang Dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty. Its beauty also transcends time limit, and the mountains also appear in modern works. Director James Cameron once said that Huangshan inspired him in making the film, Avatar, in 2009. The Chinese animated series *Stitch & Ai*, a spin-off of Disney's *Lilo & Stitch* franchise, is also set in the Huangshan mountains.

Huangshan Mountain occupies an important position in Chinese culture, and it is undoubtedly one of the most famous places for paintings. The strange but fantastic and stunning landscape impresses everyone. Huangshan enjoys such a high reputation, thanks to the masters of the Huangshan School of Painting founded in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. These art masters opened up the treasure of Huangshan and showed to world its mystical and spectacular wonder.

Huangshan is a place where you can refresh your body and soul. It is also our source of solace, inspiration and delight. We, Chinese people, are truly blessed with all these ravishing and celestial views. We should remember the precious resources we have and be a more responsible user in our daily life, so we can preserve all these incredible natural resources for the next generation. Being thankful to what the Mother Earth offers us, we should be kind to Her in return.

# Huangshan—The Mystical Paradise on Earth

*Immaculate Heart of Mary College, Ou, Shu Hua – 19*

A common Chinese saying, which originated from the words of famed travel writer and geographer Xu Xiake, goes, “One who has returned from Huangshan thinks nothing of other high mountains.” Located in the south of Anhui Province, it is a renowned attraction and has charmed many around the world due to its scenic landscape and unparalleled history.

Huangshan has had a strong influence on China’s literary and artistic scene. Its painting-like scenery exemplifies the qualities that cause ancient figures to be exceedingly attracted to nature. In “Principles of Chinese Paintings”, the author George Rowley dives into the historical background of China in order to gain a better understanding of what constitutes the foundations of traditional ink-based paintings, which focus on conveying a certain state of mind. He mentions that in general, locations which represent the quintessential and untrammelled form of landscape with some degree of seclusion beckoned to poets and painters in ancient dynasties. Such can also be applied to the many artistic interpretations of the scenery of Huangshan. When compared to the Western artistic style, Chinese landscape paintings emphasise expressiveness over artistic techniques, so a more abstract approach is commonly used as the goal is never to exactly recreate a scene. As the authenticity of the emotion portrayed in works of art is predominantly stressed on, artists generally dwelled in places that fueled their artistic expression. A majority of figures wanted to convey their life philosophy of someone who yearns to be away from the corrupt imperial civilisation and reside in nature, where they can pursue a lifestyle of simplicity with peace of mind. Besides, it is a common belief in Buddhism that nature helps bring out the empty-mind state during meditation, which facilitates one's imagination. Since the Huangshan scenic area embodies both of these qualities, its popularity among ancient literati and scholars such as Wu Long Han and Qian Qianyi from the Song and Qing Dynasty respectively comes as no surprise as it sparks their desire to create.

Huangshan also stands out among the many wonders of the world due to its distinctive geographic features. Its name directly translates into “Yellow Mountain”, which is believed to be derived from the civilisation of China’s first widely recognised tribe leader Huangdi. The name change symbolises that the natural landscape of Huangshan has become a site of national pride after it began its ascent to fame. In addition, it is known for its scenic landscape that resembles the fantastical and imaginary world due to its jagged rock peaks and peculiarly-shaped pine trees. Along with hot springs and seas of clouds that give off the illusion of floating, the four factors mentioned constitute the “Four Wonders”. Though its scenery may seem odd upon first glance, it is the epitome of the atypical but attractive aesthetic that holds a profusion of cultural significance in China. Another feature that contributes to Huangshan’s diverse beauty is its ever-changing nature, as it goes through drastic changes throughout the seasons, which adds a sense of temporality to the site.

Huangshan also has an extensive connection with religion that could be dated as far as the establishment of the nation. Written records can be traced back to old Taoist literary materials from the Tang to Ming Dynasties. It also went under the influence of Buddhism during the Liu and Song civilisation, and more than a hundred temples have been built in successive generations. Huangshan has also been mentioned to be where some have helped emperors develop alchemies in hopes of achieving eternal life and hence maintaining absolute power over the country for a prolonged period of time. The idea of such an elixir, also known as “Waidan”, stems from the religious belief of the ancient Chinese towards medical science by combining doctrines and psychological practices to achieve body-spirit cultivation. In addition, there has been wide speculation that historical figures such as Huangdi and Fuqiu Gong had cultivated there to ascend to immortality, and peaks have been named after such folk stories to honour such legendary Chinese sovereigns and culture heroes who contributed to the rise of China.

There are a number of myths and legends surrounding the wondrous sights of Huangshan, which adds to its mystery. Some of these folk stories aim to explain the origins behind exotic plant species. For instance, Huangshan is home to a kind of "Dragon Beard Grass", which is believed to bear connections with Emperor Xuan Yuan Huangdi. Once upon a time, Huangdi consumed the elixir that he had successfully formulated and was ready to rise to immortality. He felt conflicted as he would miss his people, who adored and respected him as a leader. However, the time soon came when it was inevitable for him to part with them in order to ascend to heaven. He bid them farewell while they shouted in unison in an attempt to follow him. Some even took extreme measures and rushed up to tug Huangdi's beard while his feet gradually left the ground, causing his beard to part. It was blown to lands miles away by the gale, landing on the mountain peaks and cliffs of Huangshan. Places where his beard landed grew long poles of green grass and the species was directly named after such a tale, as the Yellow Emperor was recognised by the Chinese as the Dragon Son of God.

The "Drunken Rock" also is associated with the famed poet Li Bai, who has visited Huangshan several times in his lifetime. It was reported that when he came across the Spring of Mingxing, he witnessed the wondrous sight of the gentle waterfall caressing the strings of a stone lute. The sound was melodic and mellow, which fascinated him. Li Bai took a seat on a massive rock under the spring, singing wildly while drinking wine. Before he left, he poured the leftover wine on the stone, which also ended up in a drunken state. To this day, the story still stands and the characters "Drunken Immortal Spring" are engraved on the stone wall near the Mingxing spring. Some visitors have even said that if one observes closely, the fragrance of wine can be distinguished.

In conclusion, Huangshan has earned the title of "China's Magical Mountains" and has become an inspiration to many ancient artistic figures and holds the same fascination till today due to its timeless picturesque landscape.



# Non-Fiction

Group 5

# Huangshan: A Land of Ancient Culture and History

*ESF King George V School, Shah, Rishi – 17*

With mountains over a thousand meters tall, two major waterfalls, home to over one thousand five hundred species of plants and animals and various geographic landscapes, the mountainous range of Huangshan is one of the most captivating wonders present in China. Throughout the last several centuries, the “Mountains of the Yellow Emperor” have played a key role in Chinese literature and art: with over 200,000 poems written about the mountain and schools of art dedicated to the mountain range, inspiring artwork internationally. As of 1990, it was declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO due to its long history, embedded culture, and unprecedented beauty. It attracts thousands of tourists every year and is ranked as one of the most recommended places to visit in China, among the Great Wall and the Terracotta Army. Despite its cultural significance, few are aware of the importance the mountain range has played in our understanding and appreciation of ancient Chinese history and culture.

Often described as the “loveliest mountain of China”, one of the most appealing features of Huangshan is its magnificent natural beauty. The natural hot springs, indigenous pine, emerging granite peaks and the sea of clouds form the four wonders of this region, creating a mysterious, phosphorescent, and serene landscape. The great Chinese geologist and philosopher, Xu Xiake, from the Ming dynasty, mentioned that “you do not need to see any more mountains after seeing *the Five Mountains*, and you do not need to see the other four mountains after seeing Huangshan”, insinuating that the beauty of these mountains is unparalleled.

The mountains have a deeply embedded history that has made the region a place of extreme importance. Our story of these mountains begins over a hundred million years ago when steaming magma rose to the Earth's crust and solidified over time to form the material that comprises the mountains. A combination of weathering and erosion formed the serene rock formations we see today. Originally named Yishan, the mountain was renamed to Huangshan in 729 AD out of honour for emperor Shi Huangdi (also known as ‘the Yellow Emperor’). Hence, a large proportion of the history of Huangshan is associated with Emperor Huangdi. Legends have stated that the mountain range was the place in which the emperor sought the elixir of immortality using the indigenous herbs of the mountains. The hot springs of the mountains are also said to have made the emperor younger as he bathed in them; hence the name of ‘The Springs of Youth’. The cultural connection these mountains have to the first emperor that unified China illustrates the significance of the mountains in Chinese history.

The various travel accounts over the last millennium have further exemplified that immortality and heaven are associated with the mountain. Over the past hundred years, there have been several geologists and historians who have visited the mountain and presented their stories to the world. In 1268, an account by a local historian, from the Anhui province, climbed the mountain with two of his friends and spent three days there without any social contact. The historian described that he felt “immortal”, especially when he “peered over the sea of clouds and saw the vast abyss that followed”. Another famous travel account from 1340 infers Huangshan as the “home of gods and immortals”. It mentions monks stating that the most monumental peak was only accessible to herb gatherers, with the climb to the “Heavenly capital” lasting over three days. The continuous symbolism of immortality associated with the mountains thereby presents how paramount the conservation of this natural wonder is and how deeply rooted the mountain is to Chinese culture.

The mountain was not very well known until it was mentioned in Li Bai's poetry. Li Bai was one of the great poets of the Tang Dynasty. His work was heavily based on the various places he had travelled to and specialised in the descriptions of nature and adventure. Li Bai's poetry, in conjunction with the belief that the elixir of immortality was produced by the herbs in Huangshan, has resulted in a large influx of people visiting the mountain. Now, it is almost like a magnet to hermits, poets, landscape artists, painters, photographers and even directors across the globe. During the Ming dynasty (16th Century), the mountain quickly rose to become one of the favourite locations for artists specialised in landscape painting (known as *Shanshui* in Chinese culture), leading to the opening of the *Shanshui* (translating to mountain and water) school of paintings, which has inspired generations of poets, writers, and artists to continue to capture the mountain's allure.

Huangshan is home to many villages, the two that represent the history and culture best are the Hongcun and Xidi villages. Built during the Song dynasty (1131 AD), the Hongcun village contains over 130 residencies that have maintained their architectural design and structure since the Ming dynasty. The ox-shaped community layout, half-moon pond and blossoming lotuses (in the summer) highlight the unique design of the village, attracting poets, photographers and even directors across the globe. Conversely, the Xidi village is home to 200 residencies, consisting of two rivers and a thousand years of history. The village is designed like a labyrinth that presents the story of the village since it was formed in the Song dynasty to how it is currently. As one walks through the narrow walls of the village, they can see the ancestral halls and archways decorated with the quintessential wooden and stone carvings. The Xidi village is similar to Hongcun in the sense that both originated during the same period and maintain the architectural design and customs derived from the Ming dynasty, making them one of the few places that retain the ancestry of Chinese civilisation.

One of the most integral parts of the lives of the villagers situated in Huangshan is the importance of tea. One of the best high aroma teas, Huangshan Mao Feng (also known as the "Queen of Fragrance") tea originates from this mountain. Tea is essential to the residents, with some locals going as far as stating, "one can live without food, but not without tea." Tea is consumed repeatedly in the everyday lives of the locals. Each time of the day serves a separate purpose for drinking tea; in the morning as a staple, in the afternoon it is consumed for better digestion and in the evening for relieving the sense of enervation after a hard day's work. Particularly in the winter, locals would often sit in front of a fire drinking tea with loved ones. It is believed among locals that tea provides a sense of peace which has supposedly contributed to the artistic talent in the region. The importance of tea in the district portrays how unique the culture of Huangshan is and expands our knowledge of the complex, yet dazzling phenomenon that is Chinese culture.

Customs play a huge part in the lives of the villagers, each with versatile procedures and symbolism. The eighth of the twelfth day of the lunar month, in particular, has a significant cultural impact on those in the region. Residents of the mountain boil and smash eggs as a sacrifice to the gods to ask for protection. Laba Tofu, exclusive to Huangshan, is eaten on this day as a deed to 'eat' misfortune. Additionally, this is believed to be the ideal day for marriage in the year; one can see the vast number of young couples celebrating the happiest day of their lives. On the first day of the Lunar new year, alongside the traditional customs involved with this festival, the locals perform a ceremony of "calling in the year", which involves the residents forming a long line and paying a new year call from door to door. For the last several centuries, customs similar to the ones mentioned have been upheld by the people of Huangshan as they are reminiscent in funerals, weddings, celebrations of the birth of babies, festivities, and religious events, illustrating the diversity of the customs and their importance in the daily lives of individuals.



Huangshan has a diverse range of delicacies and plays a large role in dictating the ingredients and cooking methods used in the Anhui cuisine overall. The history of this cuisine is almost as ancient as the mountain itself, originating from the Qin and Han dynasties. The various styles of Hui cuisine are dependent on its geographical location, with the Yellow Mountains behind the inspiration of Hui cuisine in the southern Anhui region. Many of the ingredients and methods used to cook Hui cuisine originate from Huangshan itself. Most of the vegetables and fungi used in Hui Cuisine are farmed from the mountains itself whereas fish is farmed from the Yangtze River. Some famous dishes include Mao tofu, Yellow crab shell cake and Luzhou Roast Duck.

Huangshan plays an important role in Chinese culture as it known as the land of the four treasures: paintbrush, ink, inkstone and paper. The four treasures of study in Chinese culture which have been used throughout the course of history. This can be seen throughout traditional Chinese paintings, as some of the best artwork in the country originates from Huangshan itself. Workshops and even schools of art have been inspired by the elegance and cultural significance of the mountains and continue to pass these ancient teachings from generation to generation, which can be seen in the art of the current day.

As discussed earlier, the art of landscape painting (*Shanshui*) is paramount to deepening our cultural understanding of these mountains. Considered to be at the upper end of the hierarchy of Chinese painting styles, landscape painting is very popular and is rooted with a refined scholarly taste. *Shanshui* is linked heavily to Taoist philosophy, which emphasizes harmony with the natural world and maintaining a balance (represented by the symbol of the Yin and Yang). The school has produced 'masters' of the art including Jian Jiang, Zha Shibiao, Mei Oing, Xugu, and Xue Zhuang. Because of the association with mountains and the pathway to heaven, landscape painting does not involve painting an accurate depiction of landscapes but rather imagined and idealised versions of them, hence, presenting the religious importance of Huangshan in Chinese culture.

Aside from Shanshui, the natural wonder of the mountains has had a global influence on art. In Chinese popular culture, the Yellow Mountains were the place where a large proportion of the blockbuster, *Crouching Tiger* was shot. The film was a major success in both foreign and domestic box offices and resulted in a large spike in tourism of these mountains. Some of the locations at which these scenes were shot were JiuLong Waterfall and Feixun Valley. Moreover, the film *Avatar* from 2009, the second highest-grossing movie of all time had some of the fictional locations inspired by Mount Huangshan. The fictional "Hallelujah Mountains" resemble Mount Huangshan the most. The use of the Yellow Mountains in hyper-realistic scenarios further elucidate how sensational the mountain is, almost unreal. Ultimately, promoting the concept of heaven and immortality associated with the mountain.

Huangshan plays an important role in developing our understanding of Chinese religion and culture. There is evidence to support the claim of Huangshan becoming a Taoist sanctuary shortly after the change of the mountain's name by the imperial order of the Song dynasty. The *Huangshan Tujing* is the last piece of text and evidence to support the Taoist background of the mountains; entailing descriptions of dragon sightings, medicinal herbs, alchemy sites and auspicious healing as well as geomantic placing of each of the thirty-six peaks present on the mountain range. During the Yuan Dynasty (from 1271-1368), over sixty-four temples were built on the mountains and in 1606, the renowned monk Pumen came to Huangshan and built the Fahai Meditation temple. The heavy presence of religious structures on the mountains delineates the importance of the mountain to locals and those who visit the mountain.

In conclusion, the unequivocal geographical landscape, ancient history, and cultural heritage have allowed Huangshan to become the guide to heaven and the home of immortals. Its unique natural features are unlike anywhere on the planet, managing to surprise anyone fortunate enough to visit this area. Its impact on art, literature and even global popular culture has allowed it to remain as one of the most influential places on the planet. Its unique customs, lifestyle and religious significance have allowed us to better understand how varied Chinese culture is and enrich our appreciation of the world around it.