



# CHRONICLES OF AN ADVENTURE, TRIP, AND BIKE RACE IN CHINA

## – PART IV

by Adam Farabaugh

This is the fourth part of a sort of short book that I will post into blog posts for easier sharing. It is not a quick read so a PDF download is also available. Upon completion, I will post it in its entirety. Also, check out the site that this is listed on for peer-to-peer, locally guided cycling trips. A good friend of mine and I have just launched it and are trying to make it a big deal. Thanks for reading and your support!

*October 17, 2014*

*Race Day # 6 - Wuyuan, Shangrao*

This race definitely has variety in well everything but particularly in where we are now and the terrain it features. We were in smaller cities in the mountains with transfers through

them with not a whole lot around. The past few days, and especially today, our transfers were through the flat lands with endless rice fields. With that was also the crossing of what I think was portions of Poyang Lake. You never know where you are except for a crappy map of the whole race in the tech guide. I've never done a race over this distance. We've already had multiple transfers over 200 kilometers long leaving for a lot of area to be covered. The funny part is that we're traveling around for two weeks straight but we are still in the same part of China. Imagine doing a Tour of China going to Tibet and everywhere else. That would be epic.



Today's race was in a small city by Chinese standards but got out of town quick after a few short criterium style laps. It was rolling terrain with climbs that weren't too long or steep. We passed a number of small lakes that the road crept around while staying out of the hills that surrounded. Attacks kept coming and from GC threats, so it was a constant covering of attacks. Good thing I'm strong and fit. We had a bit of an issue mid stage with our team leader flatting at a bad time before the biggest climb of the race thus far. For some reason here in China, they don't let you use the cars and caravan to get back to the field even after a mishap. They're almost like, well that stinks, have fun chasing. We sent two teammates back to help but it still took ten k for him to get back on. In the meantime at the front of the race, everyone was attacking hard with the climbs. I managed to go across to a large dangerous move and then continued following attacks and tried to slow everything down until the leaders jersey came back. Unfortunately the last thirty k or so back to town was on a wide fast highway so even though the attacks kept coming, nothing stayed away.

With about three k to go after some fast racing, everyone slowed seemingly waiting for a field sprint. I had in my head to attack at a k to go but saw an opportunity and went. I had a good gap but some Australian caught and sat on my wheel and wasn't going to pull through. I

started riding a bit easier and another guy came up who was willing to ride but at that point it was too late and we were caught. I jumped into the front of the field to try and help some of our sprinters but mass chaos followed. There were almost two large crashes that I just managed to avoid, one being so close that I was somehow side-ways into a guy going through a corner as I locked up my rear wheel. Somehow I managed to keep it upright. That followed by another close call and a seemingly three lane abrupt lane change to avoid another crash, caused me to sit up, thus avoiding any potential crashes in the sprint that I wasn't going to do anything in anyway with attacking a few k prior. I can get up there when it gets crazy but more only when I can be there and go to the front for a lead-out or sprint myself. I don't like to take big risks particularly here in China. One of these days I'll get across the line solo; knock on wood.

One thing we don't really realize in our travels around here, especially with all the new construction, is how old things are. In the States, things that are considered "old" are maybe fifty to a hundred years old, and a bit more depending on where you're at. In Europe; maybe a couple hundred years old. Today in the race we crossed this bridge that was said to be 2,000 years old. I don't know if it was true or not but it very well could have been. It was unlike any bridge I had seen before. It had covered wooden walk-ways on the side with the Chinese Pagoda style roof. The podium the other day was this centuries old wooden sort of giant pagoda/gazebo style thing but with wooden carvings with gold paintings. They couldn't pop champagne on it because they didn't want to damage the wood. Truly some incredible stuff that knowing the actually history of would be pretty fascinating.



*October 18, 2014*

## *Race Day # 7 - Nanchang-Aixi Lake*

With the variety of locations and hotels, we landed in another posh hotel that makes us feel spoiled when we come from the other hotels that are still good but not five-star. Some of the qualities that make for a good Chinese Hotel is first the food. We've definitely had variety as we go from smaller cities in different regions to bigger ones with more extensive meals. The smaller hotels have more variety in the authentic Chinese food. Things like chicken foot soup, donkey, rabbit, duck, dumplings, squid, lots of varying fish, pork stew with cuts still including the skin and a healthy dose of fat beneath the skin, and perhaps the most authentic was a pan of chicken that was seemingly roasted in the oven but included pretty much the whole chicken. First I saw some chicken feet and was like, I don't know about this. Then I saw a whole head of a chicken in it. No thanks. Isn't bird flu from chicken brain or something? Either way, no thanks. The nice hotel that we were at though was in the biggest city in the province, Nanchang, so a couple million plus people, so huge, and also of which had a lot of manufacturing, specifically auto as well as probably hosts of others so received more international travelers. Either way the hotel tried to cater more to a western palate which was nice and a bit of a change but at the same time when you're traveling someplace far you don't want the food you can have every day at home. You want their authentic cuisine which they know how to make good. Their attempt at Western food, although not bad, wasn't great. They had pizza although I don't know that it could have been called that. More like dough with toppings. Still tasty though. Then they had a french fries which I specially avoided. Then they had a dish that was like what you could get in the states; a sort of General Tsao's Chicken, tasty and a bit more authentic than what you would have down the street. For breakfast, they had waffles and doughnuts both of which I fully indulged in.

Perhaps though it was good that we got a taste of home as the hotel we're at now for the rest day is in the middle of nowhere with huge mountains around in virtually every direction. Super sweet and right up my alley. This more remote town had a smaller hotel which had perhaps the most authentic Chinese food of the trip. They had some tasty dishes but also a lot of "I don't know what that is and it looks gnarly", and often tasted similar. They had a lot of veggie sort of dishes that are made with peppers, and really hot ones, which is signature to this area. Too bad I'm not a fan of spicy food so a lot of those dishes get passed by. A number of the meat dishes are like that chicken head one where everything looks to be thrown in and you don't really know what it is. And then I'm avoiding the beef as it almost definitely has clenbuterol in it along with probably loads of other growth hormones that people should probably not be consuming. I've tried most of the stuff we've been served but as the race goes on and the food gets more sketchy, I tend to go with what I think is safe as well as tasty.

Today was seemingly the flattest race ever. We did ten laps of a 12.5k loop on the shores of a large man-made lake. It was pretty neat though as it was a park the whole way around. On the one side it was a fairly narrow road, by Chinese standards, that wound through a wooded area with fields and smaller ponds and on the road on the opposite side there was a bike lane that took half the road. Good place for the after work spin I suppose.



From: Upsala CK @ Tour of Poyang Lake 2014 – Video  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuYIYLXhmbQ&feature=youtu.be>

With the flat course and only four corners it was going to be a fast race. As per the norm here attacks kept coming, really regardless of how big the break up the road was. We did good to cover these but at about half-way through a group of nine got away with one of our riders in it. It was a bit big but no GC riders were in it so we were ok until a Dutch rider close on GC bridged across. I was at the front and went to go with him but two riders seeming on purpose, squeezed closed the gap I was going through leaving me with only being able to slam on the brakes. By the time I was able to get through it was too late. I should have just went anyway as I was going to be regretting that later when I was on the front crushing it to bring them back.

The gap went up to a minute and we played a bit of poker to see if any other teams wanted to chase as a big break before was brought back by a team who missed it. It was not to be so we had a tall order of bringing the group of ten back. I was only four seconds off on GC but we only had two other guys to chase and they weren't quite as strong as me so for the next forty k or so

I was on the front for a good portion to not lose the race as had they stayed at the gap they were, it would have been the top ten GC.

Luckily another team was willing to chase closer to the finish and without them we might not have been able to bring it back. With all that and the uncertainty if we were going to bring them back, it came down to a bunch sprint with the field catching the break right on the line with the top three on the stage coming out of the break. Perfectly executed for us, minus the fact that I had to ride pretty hard on the front for a considerable amount. Good thing tomorrow's a rest day.