

The Hoffman Institute/Cave Research Foundation China Karst Scientific Program

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Abstract

Among the world's finest karst regions is that of Guianxi Province in southern China. The province's capital, the 2,200-year-old city of Guilin lies along the Li River, whose route through a deep gorge just downstream from the city is one of the world's most spectacular river trips. The region has been the subject of intense study by scientists interested in karst landscape development as far back as the legendary Chinese geographer Xu Xiake in the 1630s. Today Guilin is home to the Institute of Karst Geology of the Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences, the premier karst research center of the nation. A cooperative scientific program between Western Kentucky University's Hoffman Institute, the Cave Research Foundation, and the Karst Institute is in its sixth year. This paper summarizes recent activities, which in 2000 and 2001 include four trips by Western Kentucky University/Cave Research Foundation scientists to China, and two visits of Chinese scientists to Kentucky. Two trips by Western Kentucky University/Cave Research Foundation scientists and students in 2000 focussed on (1) presenting a three-day, karst related GIS course to Chinese scientists and graduate students, (2) continuing study of CO₂ landscape/atmosphere interactions, (3) new isotopic methods for karst landscape evolution studies, and (4) comparative studies between south central Kentucky and south China karst-related economic development. Western Kentucky University/Cave Research Foundation scientists and students will travel to Guianxi and Guizhou Provinces of China in September and December of 2001. Two trips were also made to the U.S. during 2000 and 2001 by Chinese scientists and karst tourism officials, which resulted in significant technology transfer in both tourism-based economic development and solutions to common karst environmental problems.