

The Ling Canal is one of Guilin's hidden gems. The most unfortunate aspect about the Ling Canal is that it is situated about 70km north of Guilin City in an area that does not attract many foreign tourists because of its isolation from other tourist destinations. The other tourist attraction in this area is Merryland Theme Park and Golf Resort but by its nature it attracts a different kind of tourist.

The Canal is a wonderful example of the engineering and architectural skill that existed in Chinese society more than 2000 years ago. The Canal was built in the year 214BC by Qinshihuang, first Emperor of the Qin Dynasty. The canal system connects two rivers, Guilin's Li River and the Xiang River but as these rivers are tributaries of the Pearl and Yangtze Rivers the connection linked two of the largest river systems in China thereby opening a huge area to allow travel and commerce to flourish. It was also an important political move as it unified north and south and allowed the Emperor to consolidate his power.

The complexity of the project is more easily understood when we see the difference in water levels between the two rivers which in some places is around 6 meters. The project required a complex system of locks and dams to allow the two water systems to merge. At one point the two rivers are only separated by about 20 meters. It is fascinating to watch as the rivers flow in different directions.

It is possible to take a boat ride down the south canal to Xing'an Town which is well worth the money. The wooden punt is poled along the canal by two boatmen who are happy to point out the points of interest and answer questions if you have someone along who speaks Chinese. They are happy to stop at the most significant spots on the canal for photos or to allow you to get a better look. The ride finishes in the town. The canal continues through Xing'an. The walk along the waterway is very interesting. It is lined with old traditional style buildings where the residents go about their daily life. I do believe that it would be very crowded with domestic tourists at holiday time.

A Chinese guide or Chinese speaker is almost a necessity to get the most out of the experience. The ticket office at the entrance advertises a boat ride but this is just across a small lagoon and is not worth the RMB 20 per person for a 50 meter ride. The boat ride down the canal is purchased from the boat operators at the start of the south canal. You can't miss it. The park that surrounds the start of the canal also contains a small museum displaying the wreckage of one of the legendary "flying tigers" squadron that operated in the area during WW 2. We found it interesting but not riveting.

Admission Fee

50RMB

Opening Hours

06:00-20:00

Period

2h

Add

Xing'an county

Bus

Suburban distant bus from bus station