



# THE *Great Rice Bowl*

Rice planting is back-breaking work, but in Yuanyang in Yunnan, China, it takes on a whole other meaning. The ethnic Hani and Yi people who inhabit the region have made the most of a tough, rugged environment, using 2000-year-old local techniques to grow and irrigate terraced rice fields in the mountains of Yunnan. The Ailao Mountain features dramatic tiered rice terraces, which are especially beautiful in the winter months, when the paddies get flooded and reflect the clouds and colours of the sunrise and sunset.

As the work is demanding, the Hani and Yi have every reason to celebrate after a successful planting or harvest. The annual Long Dragon Festival, known locally as Amatu, is a chance for the entire community to feast, drink, and give thanks for another year of good crops. During this time, the village of Habo strings together hundreds of tables to create massive banquets, and Hani and Yi farmers come in from all over the region to eat, drink, socialise and dance.

WORDS AND PHOTOS DAVE STAMBOULIS



Opening spread: Hani women come together to sift rice during the harvest festival in Yuanyang

Facing page, clockwise from top left: A woman pauses for a breather in a field of rice harvest; even the kids chip in with the sifting; rice is the heart and soul of this mountainous remote region

This page: The men muscle in to move bundles of rice straw in the terraced rice fields



A young girl in traditional wear enjoying cotton candy at the festival



Hani elders having a pipe smoke at a long table filled with a lavish banquet

Local Hani celebrating a year of bounty with rice wine, toasts and singing



The amazing rice terraces at Duoyishu, lit up by sunrise. The gorgeous area is part of Yuanyang, which covers more than 2,000sqkm and is one of China's top World Heritage Sites



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