

# A few BIG CLIMBS

Passing judgement on the 'toughness' of some of the famous climbs in Europe is easy. But if you haven't actually ridden them you can only base your opinion on data and comments. At the same time what I find annoying is when riders turn their noses up at anything that is not European. Not very worldly in my opinion.

The list shows a handful of the famous climbs visited by the grand tours of Italy, France and Spain, three American climbs, a few local Australian climbs plus the Taiwan KOM route featured on page 98. Don't take any of the figures as super accurate - since when was a bicycle mounted GPS device perfect. What impresses me? Size matters. Length of the climb, height of the summit and the elevation gain.

		Average Gradient	Climb Length	Height at Start	Height at Summit	Elevation Gain
<b>FRA</b>	Col du Tourmalet (via Sainte Marie de Campan)	7.4%	17.2km	847m	2115m	1268m
<b>FRA</b>	Col du Lautaret (via Le Clapier)	3.8%	34.16km	745m	2057m	1312m
<b>FRA</b>	Alpe d'Huez (via Bourg d'Oisans)	8.1%	13.2km	744m	1815m	1071m
<b>FRA</b>	Col de l'Aubisque (via dal Soulor)	4.1%	30.1km	463m	1710m	1247m
<b>FRA</b>	Col de la Madaleine	6%	24.7km	493m	1971m	1478m
<b>FRA</b>	Col du Galibier (via Saint Jean)	4%	49.8km	542m	<b>2640m</b>	<b>2099m</b>
<b>ITA</b>	Passo Gavia	8%	16.1km	1299m	2599m	1300m
<b>ITA</b>	Passo San Pellegrino (via Cencenighe)	6.3%	18.2km	774m	1918m	1144m
<b>ITA</b>	Passo dello Stelvio (via Bormio)	7.1%	21.5km	1225m	<b>2758m</b>	<b>1533m</b>
<b>ITA</b>	Zoncolan	9%	12.9km	559m	1728m	1170m
<b>ESP</b>	Puerto de Ancares (via Robledo de Rayo)	7.6%	14.68km	517m	1644m	1127m
<b>ESP</b>	Estacion de Valdelinares (via Mora de Rubielos)	3.4%	27.4km	1040m	1984m	944m
<b>ESP</b>	La Farrapona (via La Malva)	5.5%	20km	661m	1761m	1100m
<b>VIC</b>	Mt Hotham	5%	28.7km	490m	<b>1848m</b>	<b>1358m</b>
<b>VIC</b>	Falls Creek (via Mt Beauty)	4%	28.6km	420m	1498m	1078m
<b>VIC</b>	Mt Donna Buang	6%	16.9km	166m	1250m	1084m
<b>NSW</b>	Gibraltar Range	6%	16km	105m	1054m	897m
<b>NSW</b>	Macquarie Pass	6%	10.5km	76m	718m	642m
<b>NSW</b>	Dead Horse Gap	6%	17.8km	534m	1591m	1058m
<b>QLD</b>	Mudgeeraba (To Springbrook Lookout)	3%	27.6km	26m	996m	970m
<b>QLD</b>	Paluma Climb	5%	16.8km	41m	896m	855m
<b>TAS</b>	Mt Wellington	6%	21.1km	18m	1269m	1250m
<b>TAS</b>	Ben Lomond	5%	23.3km	373m	1443m	1070m
<b>USA</b>	Independence Pass (Colorado)	4.1%	30.58km	2419m	3699m	1269m
<b>USA</b>	le Mauna Kea (Hawaii)	6%	68.6km	0m	<b>4015m</b>	<b>4015m</b>
<b>USA</b>	Mt Evans (Colorado)	4%	44.3km	2268m	<b>4252m</b>	<b>1984m</b>
<b>Taiwan KOM - without Neutral Zone</b>		<b>4%</b>	<b>87km</b>	<b>49m</b>	<b>3275m</b>	<b>3226m</b>

# 0-3275m • 105km



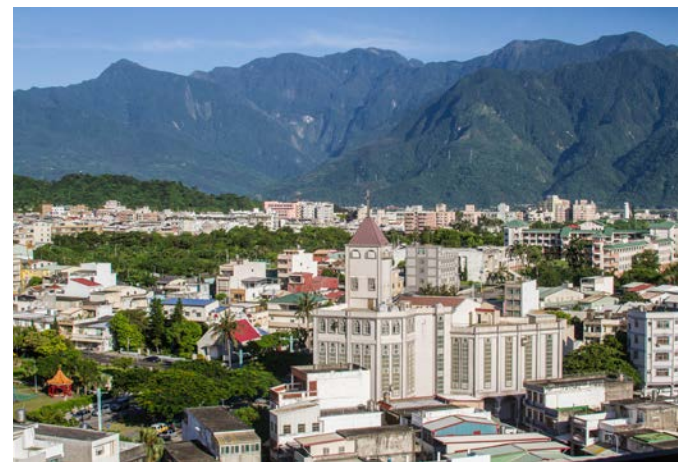
**Riding the Taiwan KOM race route**



Qixingtang, facing East

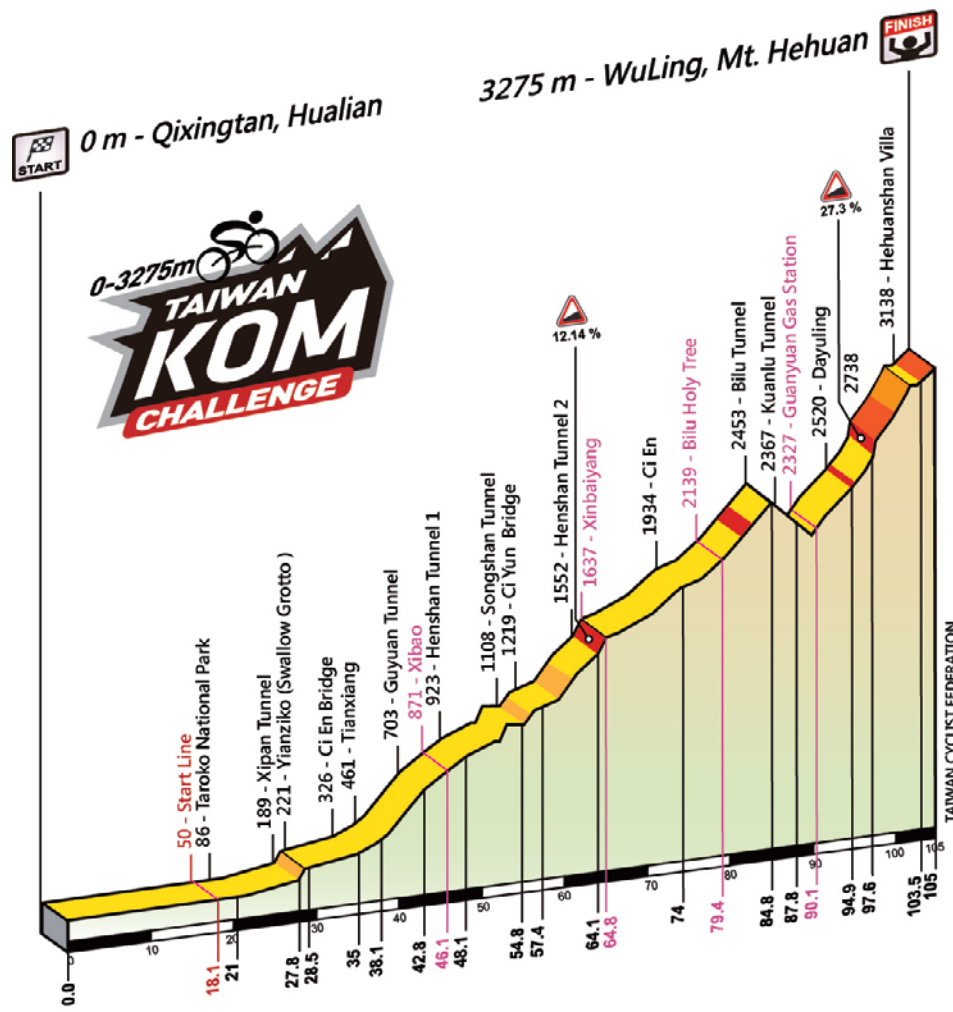


North



West





# Taiwan and the KOM

It's not often you get to go on a cycling 'famil' (familiarisation) trip. So when Tourism Taiwan offered the opportunity to cover the KOM Challenge route, how could you say no to visiting the island where many of world's bikes are made.

The race route is nothing but challenging. The neutral zone for the first 18km is flat, then a left turn into famous Taroko Gorge. For the non-climber, the next 20km will be the most amazing cycling you will ever do. EVER. And when you discover how the roads were built

Photographing this 20km could take a month. To do it in a few hours doesn't show off the scale of the rock walls or the raging rivers below.

At Tianxiang (461m) jump in a car as this is where the relentless climbing really starts. The valley opens out and the sheer size of the mountain range is exposed. For the climbers, just keep going. And going.

When you get above 2500m on a good day you might see the Taiwanese 'Sea of Clouds' move in

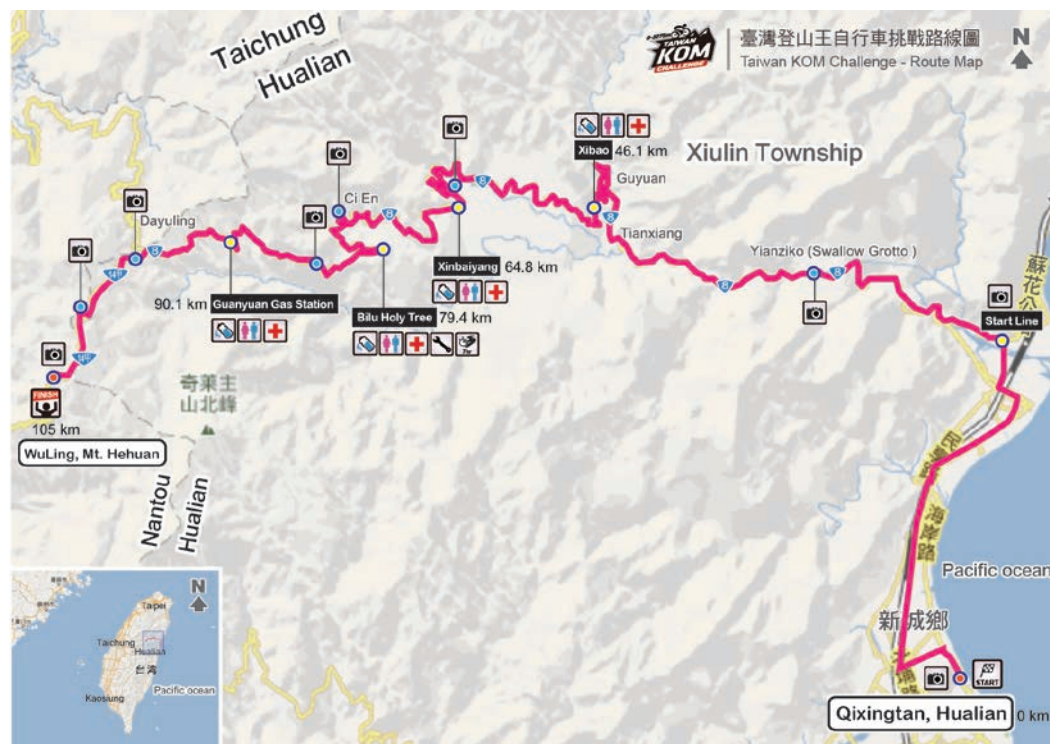
under you. One of those freaks of nature that is truly spectacular - the clouds in the valleys are trapped as they form and move in below you.

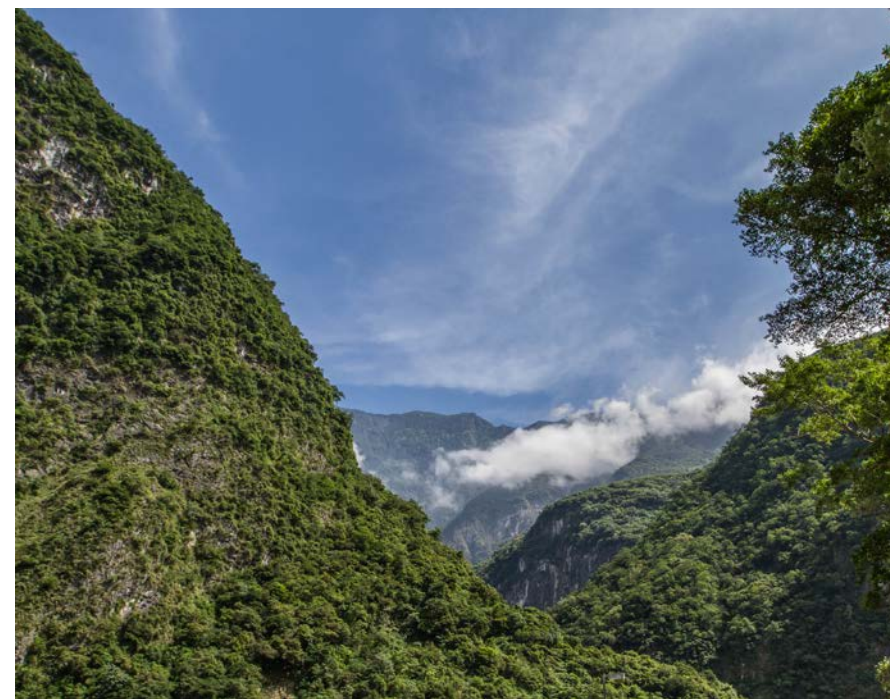
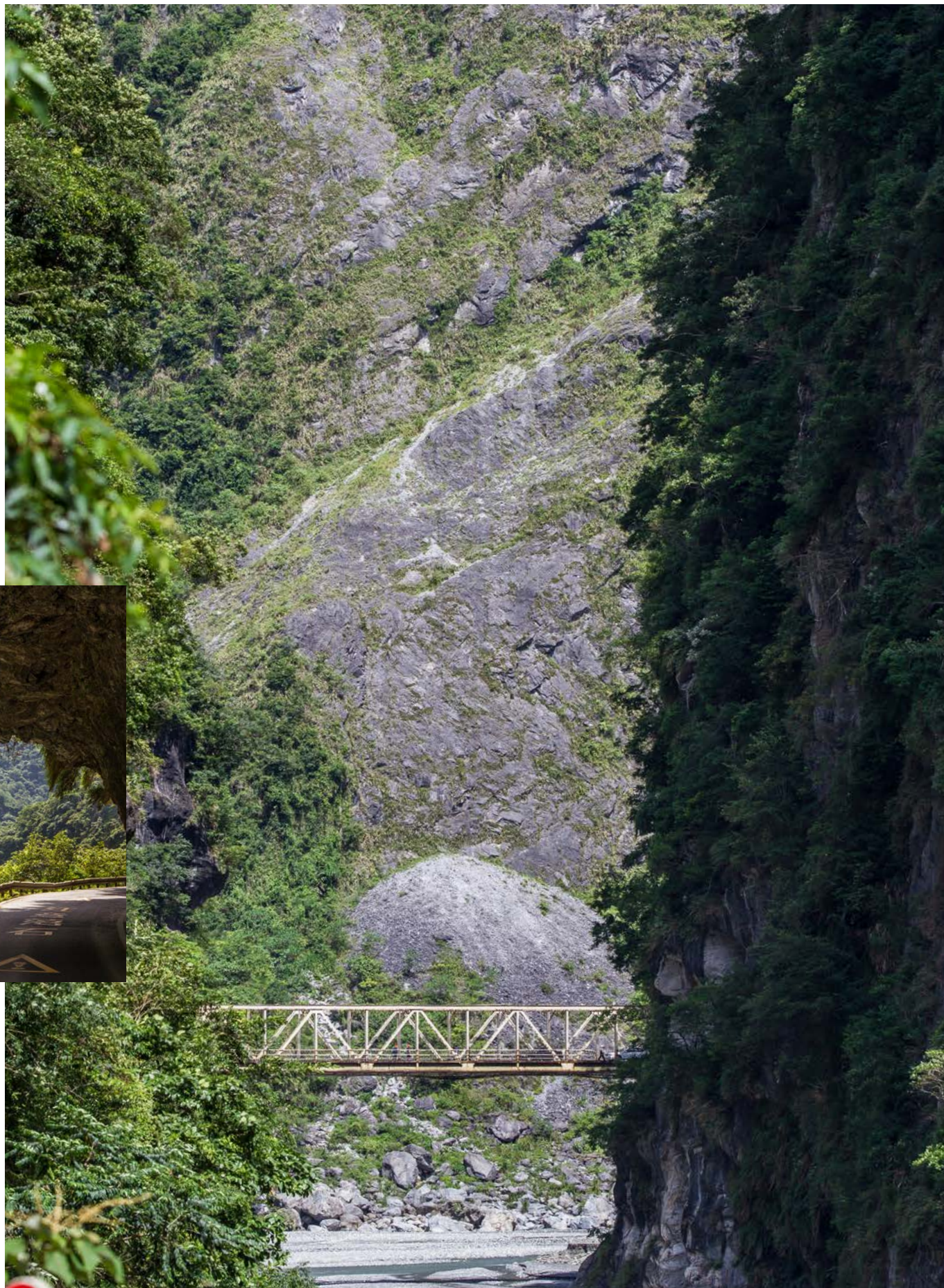
For the climbers, the last 10km are super challenging. The air is thinning, you face gradients regularly ranging from 10-12%, with one hitting 27.3%. And with a few kilometres to go you can see top and the final wall to climb over.

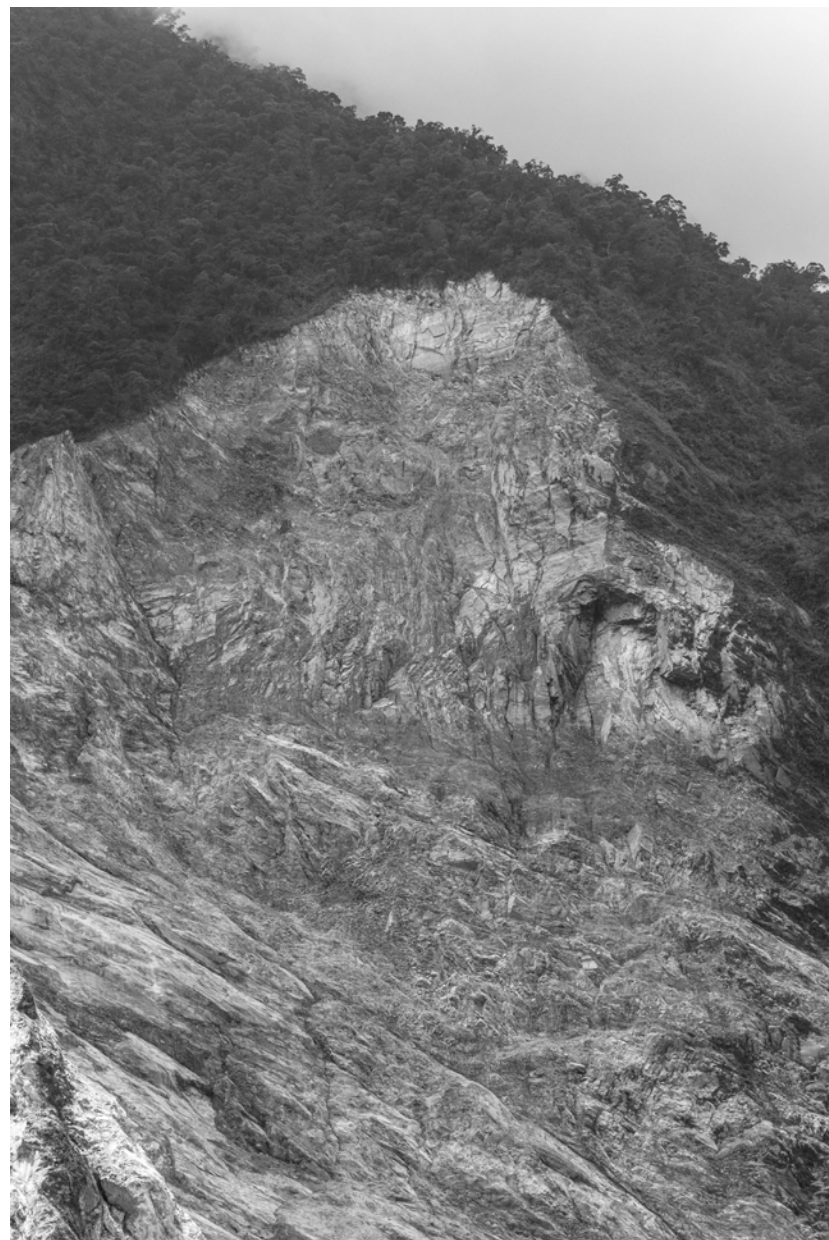
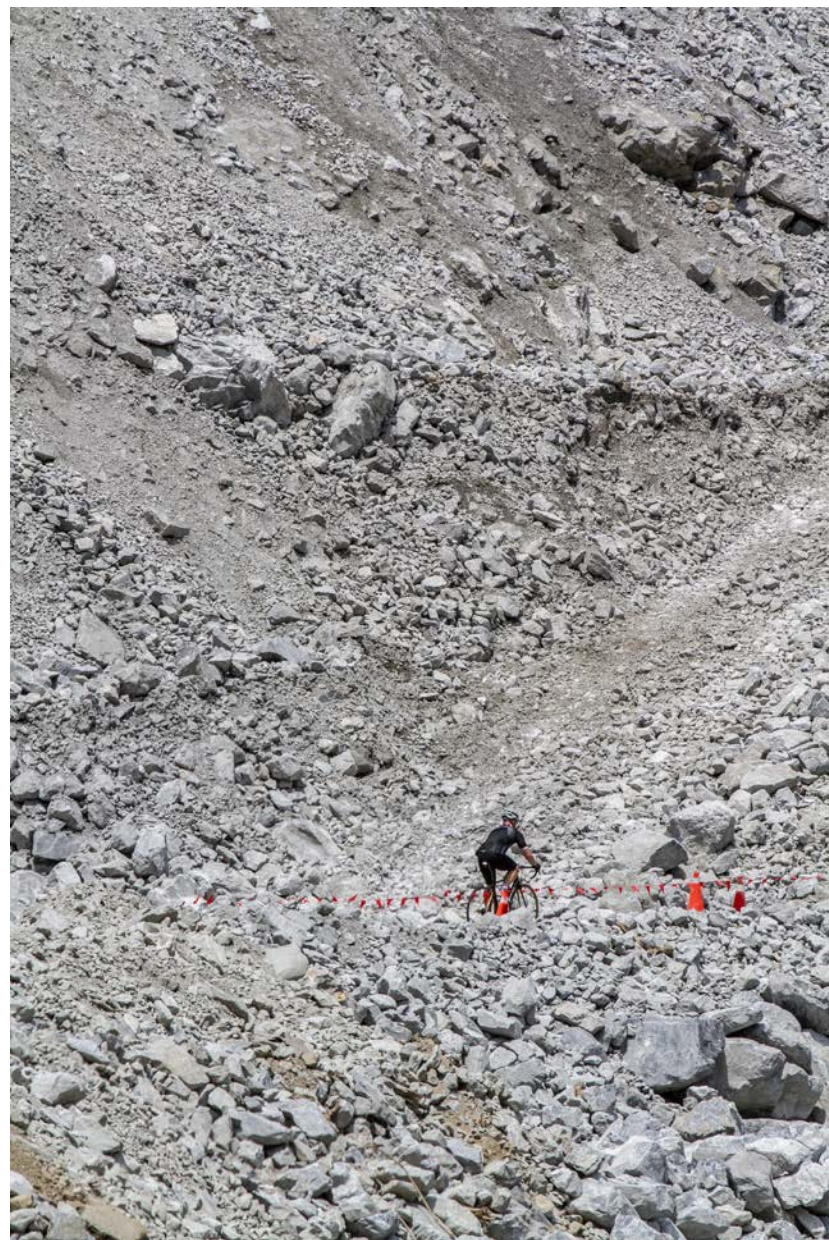
Reach the summit and the ride down the other side is just as amazing.

## Taiwan as a cycling destination

Taiwan is not Europe. But, if you have limited time, you can be on a 10pm flight (Sydney) and arrive 6am the next morning and be riding a few hours later. Transport and guides are first class (and in-expensive), the roads are well maintained. If you require 5-star accommodation it's available. For mountain bikers - it's even more spectacular. Ride all your last day, pack up, have a meal and depart late.











Swallow Grotto





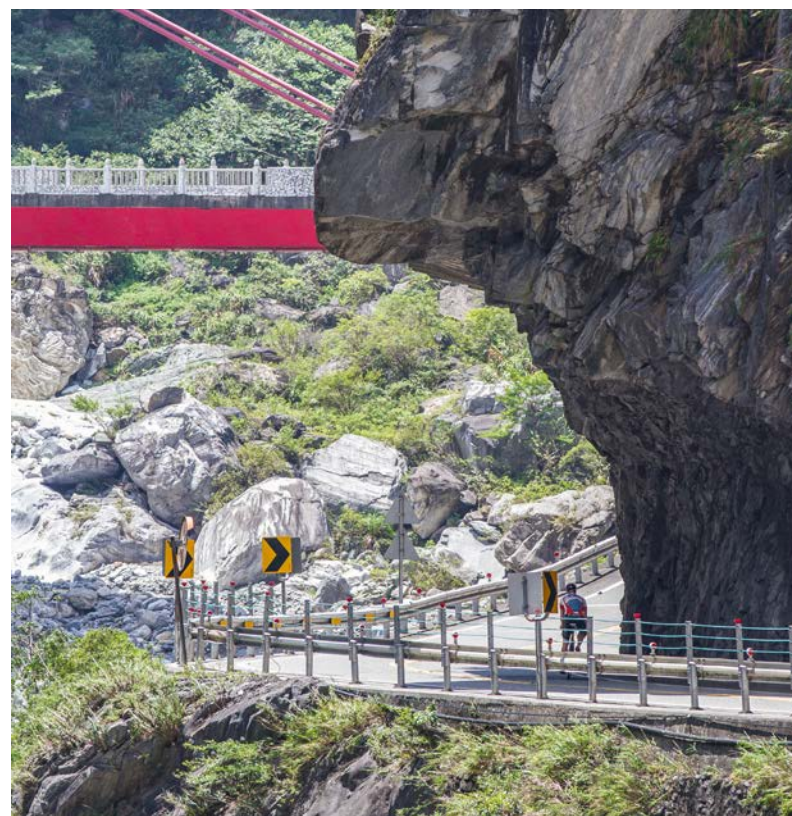








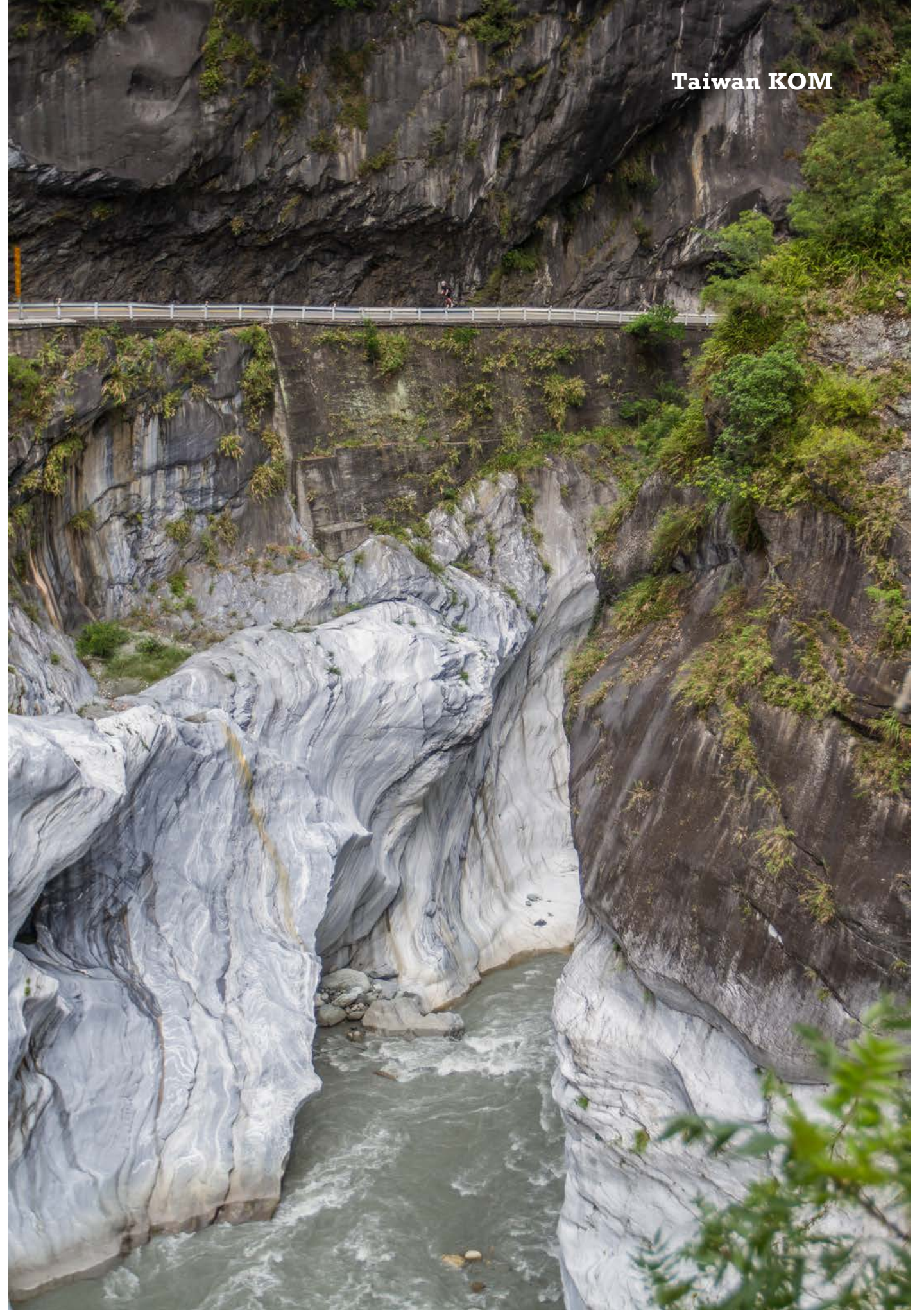
Ci En Bridge



Ci En Bridge



Taiwan KOM



## Tianxiang.

Approximately 20km from the base of the climb, the elevation is just over 400m. Now the real climbing starts.





Looking down from (approx) 1600m.







**In a frequent occurrence, the valley below fills with clouds forming the famous Taiwanese 'Sea of Clouds'**



'Sea of Clouds' moving in below 2500m





The final few kilometers - leg and lung busting





Wuling Summit - looking south.



Wuling Summit, looking north



Wuling 3275m



**Wuling summit - looking south. The climb from this side is equally tough.**

**The descent is not bad either!**