



Qiantang Bore, China

With its huge tapering estuary on the eastern coast of China, the Qiantang Jiang is host to the world's largest tidal bore. Between its initiation and demise, it travels more than 100 km inland, to and through the city of Hangzhou. The incoming tide evolves into a series of waves where constrained by the shallow water of the outer estuary. After 30 km of travel, these combine into a single wave that can reach nearly 10 m in height with a breaking front of surf as it advances into the narrowing estuary, before declining in power as the river channel rises above the tidal range. Size of the bore varies with the lunar cycle, reaching its maximum on the spring tides around the autumnal equinox. This photo shows a lesser event at Yanguan, some 40 km downstream of Hangzhou, when the bore barely reached 5 m tall. It was still an impressive sight sweeping up the full width of the channel 3 km wide at around 25 km/h; its dull roar could be heard for half an hour before it appeared, first as a white line in the distance and then as this long, almost straight, wall of surf with its edge crashing along the stonework. Occasional September bores occurring in the aftermath of typhoons have been high enough to sweep over the masonry wall, injuring and killing onlookers. This image has some historical value as it dates from 1992, before the onset of mass tourism in China. The river defences have been built up over more than a hundred years, and this popular viewing site at Yanguan now has an additional wall and railings along its edge, in front of terraced gardens and some critically located grandstands, all to cater for tourist numbers. The highest September bore is known as the Silver Dragon, and the famous viewing sites have drawn more than half a million watchers in recent years.

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