

NOTE: Twists which have appeared before in other versions of The Amazing Race or in the previous season are not mentioned as twists.

The Amazing Race: China Rush		CHINA	2
NEW MAJOR TWISTS			
China Vs. The World	<p>In the previous season, the cast consisted of ten teams of international contestants, most of whom lived in China fulltime. This season, the cast contains five teams of Chinese contestants, five teams of international contestants (again, most living in China fulltime), and a team with one Chinese member and one foreign member.</p> <p>Hmm. On the one hand, it's a clear attempt to help the show gain an audience in China while not inconveniencing those people watching online from overseas (which appears to have been the actual intended audience the whole time). On the other, the dual subtitles – in English when Chinese players talk and in Chinese when foreign players talk – make the episodes harder to follow. There's a lot that's good about it, but also a lot that's bad. 5/10</p>		
LEG 1: Zhejiang			
Route Info #1: Hongbao	<p>Teams must search the Xi Qing Tang Wedding Hall Museum for a red envelope traditionally given at Chinese weddings, then take it on foot to a nearby wedding procession and exchange it with the bride for their next clue.</p> <p>Original challenge. Deceptively simple idea, but one that in actuality one that requires observation, communication, navigation, and sheer old luck. Pretty good for a first challenge, don't you think? 7/10</p>		
Detour #1: Hang Out or Dig In	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two staples of the Wuzhen economy. Teams choosing HANG OUT must travel to the Foliage dyeing workshop, then search a large pile of dyed calico strips for four strips in different patterns and hang them from overhead bars for drying, using only a long bamboo pole. Teams choosing DIG IN must travel to the Syria Chang Sauces workshop, then search barehanded through 78 vats of bean sauce for a traditional coin matching the example shown. Decoy coins are also hidden.</p> <p>Hang Out is original, Dig In is based on a blooper from The Amazing Race Asia 2. I could do without how much Dig In is reliant on luck – picking the correct vat PLUS finding the correct coin – but Hang Out is deceptively tough and it makes the decision much more even than it appears. 6/10</p>		
Road Block #1: Fish	<p>In this Road Block, the chosen team member must sit in a small floating tub in a lake and catch five fish using only their hands.</p> <p>Based on a Detour from last season. The fact that this Road Block was edited out because only two of the chosen players could even complete it says it all, really. Or does it? Depending on how many fish there are in the lake, it could just be a case of bad casting, which certainly seems to be the unintentional theme during the early part of this race. 2/10</p>		
Route Info #2: Anagram	<p>Teams must search through 120 chemist drawers to find four different placards showing Chinese characters and their English pronunciations, then arrange them in order to spell the four-word name of this leg's Pit Stop.</p> <p>Original challenge. I could be missing something here, but this seems like an attempt to give the native Chinese contestants an advantage – I'm assuming the words have some logical order in Chinese, but to the English speakers it's pretty much a random order. Add in that it's another luck challenge and... well. It's not good. 3/10</p>		
LEG 2: Jiangxi			
Route Info #3: Tile Puzzle	<p>Teams must make their way through the narrow streets on foot to a specified address, then select a table on the rooftop and use a provided group of tiles to complete a red-and-white image of a teapicker. A completed version of the image is displayed on an adjacent facade for assistance.</p> <p>Taken from The Amazing Race: China Rush 1. It's hard to tell whether this version is easier or harder – last time, there was no display image but the picture was coloured. It's a nice tweak to an otherwise mundane challenge, and it's always nice to test the teams' mental abilities. It's nothing spectacular, but it doesn't need to be. 6/10</p>		

<p>Detour #2: Hunters or Gatherers</p>	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two tasks related to tea, both taking place at a nearby teafield. Teams choosing HUNTERS must search a 10,000m² tea field for a tiny golden tea leaf. Teams choosing GATHERERS must work together to pick three liang (150 grams) of high-quality tea leaves, measuring the exact amount on a traditional scale.</p> <p>Hunters is adapted from a similar challenge with grapes in The Amazing Race 16; Gatherers is similar to a task from The Amazing Race: China Rush 1. Another over-the-top luck challenge, combined with a fairly bland task that seems like it can be blown through in about ten minutes. Taken on its own, Gatherers could have made for a good Road Block. But it isn't. 2/10</p>
<p>Route Info #4: Combination Lock</p>	<p>Teams must search the grounds of the Millennium Guzheng for a repeated numerical code, then use it to open a combination lock on a case containing the next clue. They are not told that the code is 9:28 (or 0928), the time shown on several stopped clocks.</p> <p>Original challenge. Such a wonderful, deceptively hard idea, made even better by the vain attempts from struggling teams to search in terrible locations. Brilliant television. 9/10</p>
<p>Road Block #2: Waterfall</p>	<p>In this Road Block, the chosen team member (who's ready for a rush) must put on traditional grass shoes and provided safety gear, then use a dangling rope to help them climb up a twelve-metre waterfall.</p> <p>Technically an original challenge, but... it's basically rock-climbing with an added cultural element. It's nice to see a purely physical Road Block – the other versions don't do it nearly enough. 7/10</p>
<p>LEG 3: Fujian</p>	
<p>Detour #3: Wheels or Peels</p>	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two tasks taking place on Niulanggang Beach. Teams choosing WHEELS must pedal an aquabike to a giant beach ball floating offshore and unhook it from its anchor, then transfer to a banana boat and ride it back to shore before climbing inside the ball to retrieve the clue. Teams choosing PEELS must ride a Segway along the beach to a marked search area, then dig to find six different types of fruit hidden beneath the sand.</p> <p>Wheels is original; Peels is a variation on a task from The Amazing Race 5. It's odd that a Detour clearly as lopsided as this – Peels is obviously suckerbait – wound up with an even split at the beginning (although they all ended up finishing Wheels). Neither task is great to begin with, and with the disparity there's depressingly little beachside fun to be had. 2/10</p>
<p>Route Info #5: Pedal Boats + Yield</p>	<p>Teams must travel to North Bank Park, then paddle a pedalboat around the shallow lake in search of one of nine floating clue envelopes. (There is a Yield in front of the pedalboats.)</p> <p>Original challenge. Pointless AND yet another blind luck challenge? Oh, dear. The Yield's addition here is even more pointless. 0/10</p>
<p>Road Block #4: Blood Clams</p>	<p>In this Road Block, the chosen team member must work barehanded to open a plate full of blood clams, then eat them all. They must also drink three glasses of baijiu. Once they've finished everything, they will be given the next clue.</p> <p>Original challenge. Yes, it's an eating challenge. But this one's unique in that the hardest part of the challenge is opening the clams rather than just the eating. It's a nice subversion of the "local delicacy challenge" trope, and it's a shame there aren't more like it. 8/10</p>
<p>LEG 4: Guangdong</p>	
<p>Route Info #6: Rice</p>	<p>Teams must travel to the Lao Shan Men Gate and collect a 35-kilogram sack of rice, then transport it up a steep hill to the Xuanjiyuan Taoist Temple using only a carrying pole and the sack's drawstrings for assistance.</p> <p>Based on a Detour from The Amazing Race Asia 3. It's a simple test of strength – a challenge type not often seen on other franchises any more but still common here – and it happens to be cultural. The culture helps, but the frequency of this sort of task here doesn't. 4/10</p>

<p>Road Block #4: Rescue Ladder</p>	<p>For this Road Block, teams must walk up a steep path to the Xuanjitai Platform. There, the chosen team member (who feels rock solid) must put on provided safety gear and climb down a cable rescue ladder hanging over a cliff to collect a clue from the treetops below. They must then climb back up to return to their partner before opening.</p> <p>Original challenge. Great simple idea – a “fear of heights” challenge where the player isn’t ballast – but putting this challenge so soon after the above rice challenge was a recipe for disaster. 5/10</p>
<p>Detour #4: Chasing Chickens or Dancing Lions + U-Turn</p>	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two tasks requiring “animal instincts”. Teams choosing CHASING CHICKENS must travel to a nearby free range chicken farm, then work together to catch ten live chickens and place them in traditional woven baskets. Teams choosing DANCING LIONS must enter Xiafu Village and choose a colour-coded head for a two-person lion dancing costume, then search the village for marked homes containing the corresponding bodies. Once they find their body, they must put on the costume, return to the village square, and work together to “eat” a piece of lettuce hanging overhead.</p> <p>Original challenges, albeit very generic. The two tasks are much more balanced than they sound – the chicken task seems easier but is in a different location, while the lion task seem like it would take longer but is right there in front of you. Travel time hasn’t been a factor in Detour choices for so long, it’s about time it was brought back. And even the presence of the U-Turn makes sense – chickens are fucking hilarious. Shame one of them is another glorified luck challenge. 6/10</p>
<p>LEG 5: Hunan Non-Elimination</p>	
<p>Route Info #7: Bamboo</p>	<p>Teams must travel to Xiang Xi Farmhouse and use a hacksaw-like tool to cut open a bamboo pole, then pour the baijiu stored within for ageing into an urn. They must cut the pole into four pieces and fill the urn in order to be given the next clue.</p> <p>Original challenge. A good test of teamwork, slightly physical but also requiring skill, tightly related to the local culture... it’s a great challenge. 8/10</p>
<p>Detour #5: Name That View or Name That Tune</p>	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two tasks based around their perception and the local landscapes. Teams choosing NAME THAT VIEW (written in the clue as LOOK) must travel to the Sand Painting Gallery and attempt to correctly match photos of local mountains to their names. There are ten names to match, but more than ten photographs provided. Once all ten matches are correct, they will be given the next clue. Teams choosing NAME THAT TUNE (written in the clue as LISTEN) must travel to Baofeng Lake, then ride a boat to a small performance boat where a female singer will perform four traditional Tujia songs, as their titles are displayed one at a time on placards. They must then continue to a cave and listen to a male singer performing one of the four songs, attempting to correctly identify the song. If they are correct, they will be given the next clue. If they fail, they must return to the performance boat before trying again.</p> <p>Name That View is based on a task from last season’s finale; Name That Tune is original. As it is, the tasks look very lopsided, although the inbuilt penalty system in Name That Tune helps to make the decision tougher. It’s a shame Name That View was in such a hard location to find, though – if that was done in a more mainstream location and they told players how many they had right after each attempt (it seems like the one time it was done wasn’t planned), I think the “giant game of Mastermind” versus “simple challenge with time consuming penalty” decision would have been tougher. 9/10</p>
<p>Road Block #6: Spices + Yield</p>	<p>For this Road Block, teams must travel to Tujia Village. There, the chosen team member (who is the spice lover) must use a provided cleaver to finely chop three-and-a-half kilograms of onions, garlic, and hot chillies, placing the chopped mixture into jars for storage.</p> <p>Original challenge. For a Road Block with so much spice, it’s remarkably bland. It’s known that the previous leg was planned as a non-elimination with an Intersection this leg, but a team quitting resulted in producers having to change the plans. It seems plausible the original Road Block was part of the Intersection (especially given there’s an Intersection Road Block later in the season), and rather than invent a whole new task they simply repurposed the planned Speed Bump for all teams. 5/10, by default mostly.</p>

LEG 6: Chongqing

Route Info #8: Restaurant	<p>Teams must travel to Zhang's Lamb Hot Pot Restaurant and search a table loaded with 600 bottles of product-placed beer for one of a limited number with a small race flag on the bottom. Once they find one, they must take a seat at a table and work together to eat ten plates of lamb, cooked in an extremely spicy traditional Chongqing hotpot. Once they finish eating, they will be given the next clue and a departure time for the morning. Teams will leave in ten-minute intervals, starting at 8:50am.</p> <p>The first part is based on a Detour option from The Amazing Race 9, the second part is based on a Detour from last season. Volume eating of an uncomfortably spicy local food, combined with product placement, a needle in a haystack challenge, AND it's almost useless because of an overnight wait? Cut me a slice of that. 1/10, only because of the time split after the task.</p>
Speed Bump #1: Irrigation	<p>Before completing the below task, the affected team must use a traditional scoop to irrigate a nearby cabbage patch by hand. Once they've completely emptied two buckets of water onto the cabbages, they can continue with the race.</p> <p>Original challenge. The fact that you can't tell it's a last-minute replacement challenge is incredible, but the task itself is nothing spectacular. 5/10</p>
Route Info #9: Pig Feed	<p>Teams must travel to Shuanghe Town Highland Vegetable Farm, then prepare a batch of pig feed by removing dried corn from their cobs and combining it in a traditional grinder with chopped vegetables. Once the feed is ready, they must place it in a pig pen and wait for the pigs to eat it. When the pigs eat it all, they will be given the next clue.</p> <p>Original challenge. Again, it's nothing spectacular, but showcasing an element of the local culture many people wouldn't have heard about is the entire point of this show. 6/10</p>
Detour #6: Roll It or Ride It	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between tasks based around Wulong County's role as China's extreme sports hub. Teams choosing ROLL IT must count a large number of tyres stacked as a barricade on a hill. Once they do so correctly, they will both be strapped into a zorb and must ride back down the hill before being given the clue. Teams choosing RIDE IT must work in relay to complete a lap each of a 1200-metre go-kart course. If they finish within a combined time of seven-and-a-half minutes (including the driver changeover), they will be given the next clue; otherwise, they must use hoses to clean their go-kart's tyres before trying again.</p> <p>Original challenges. Neither of them are earth-shatteringly unique, but an extreme sports challenge with a twist to stop the Ballast Effect is always welcome, and both of these accomplish that. 7/10</p>
Road Block #6: Abseil	<p>In this Road Block, the chosen team member (who likes to hang out) must put on provided safety gear and abseil 90 metres from a cliff. When they return to steady ground, they will be given the next clue.</p> <p>Taken from The Amazing Race 2. Unlike the Detour, this one falls victim to the Ballast Effect, but... you know, abseiling is the sort of thing that doesn't really feel like it's a colossal wank, unlike skydiving and bungee jumping and whatever else. Still not great though. 4/10</p>

LEG 7: Yunnan

Non-Elimination

Road Block #7: Zipline Memory	<p>In this Road Block, the chosen team member (who wants to take a trip to remember) must ride the longest zipline in China to the far side of a canyon, where two locals are performing a song in traditional dress. They must memorise the details of these outfits and ride a second zipline back across the gorge, then select the correct eight patterns seen on the outfits from a board showing twenty different possibilities. Players can repeat the zip line as many times as necessary.</p> <p>Original challenge. Again, another attempt to eliminate the Ballast Effect pays off. Yes, the setup means players would rather keep randomly guessing than actually taking a second ride along the ziplines, but it's still better than having a zipline task with no chance for positions to change. 8/10</p>
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<p>Route Info #10: Baba</p>	<p>Teams must travel to a Naxi restaurant in downtown Lijiang, then use provided supplies to make four pieces of baba, a pancake-like flatbread, using an ongoing demonstration for assistance. Once a Naxi elder has approved their cooking, they will be given the next clue.</p> <p>Original challenge. Up until Norway's version overdid it with such a task every couple of weeks, seeing a cooking challenge was still enough of a novelty to be fun. And here it really works, with no leniency on the part of the judge. So many "please the judge" tasks basically amount to nothing when the judges pass any attempt, so a hardass judge is a much-needed breath of fresh air. 9/10</p>
<p>Detour #7: Renovate or Communicate + Double U-Turn</p>	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two aspects of local history. Teams choosing RENOVATE must walk to a nearby square, then use provided supplies to repair a "dilapidated" horsecart to match the example shown. Teams choosing COMMUNICATE must walk to a nearby theatre, where one team member must use verbal commands to describe four symbols from a Naxi pictographic language to their partner, who must draw them on a blackboard without seeing them. Once all four symbols are correctly matched, they will be given the next clue.</p> <p>Renovate is original; Communicate is taken from last season. I should be upset that they copied a task from last season, but I'm really not, and I would have been surprised if they didn't try this – the task was THAT good. They're going to be guilty of making too many trips to the well if they keep using the task, but for now it hasn't worn out its welcome. And Renovate was good too. 8/10</p>
<p>LEG 8: Yunnan</p>	
<p>Route Info #11: 4506</p>	<p>Teams are only given the clue "4506" and must work out for themselves that their next destination is the 4506-metre elevation marker on Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.</p> <p>Original challenge. Cryptic but not esoteric hint? Yes, please. 7/10</p>
<p>Road Block #8: Mountain Climb</p>	<p>In this Road Block, the chosen team member (who wants to get high) must carry their own backpack and a flag to the top of a nearby glacial field at high altitude. When they reach the summit and plant their flag, they will be given the next clue.</p> <p>Original challenge. Simple to explain but clearly exhausting, it's the sort of task this show was designed for. 8/10</p>
<p>Speed Bump #2: Pastry</p>	<p>In this Speed Bump, the affected team must walk to a nearby house and use traditional methods and provided ingredients to make twenty rice pastries commonly eaten by the Ta Liu, a minority group in this region. Once their pastries have been approved, they can continue with the race.</p> <p>Remember just last episode how I talked about both cooking challenges and making too many trips to the well? Yeah. 4/10</p>
<p>Detour #8: Through The Park or On The Mark</p>	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two aspects of local life. Teams choosing THROUGH THE PARK must transport a pile of firewood, two ceramic wine urns, and two large drums from a compound on one side of the village to a second compound on the other, without breaking anything. Teams choosing ON THE MARK must use traditional Naxi archery equipment to shoot arrows at a bullseye target divided into different scoring areas. Once they score a cumulative total of 100 points, they will be given the next clue.</p> <p>Original challenges. It's a brilliant idea to counter a delivery challenge that will require several trips with a weapon accuracy challenge that requires repeated success – neither task is that desirable, and yet they both seem like they'd take the same amount of time for an average person to complete, so it really does come down to personal preference. As it should. 8/10</p>
<p>LEGS 9 AND 10: Qinghai</p>	
<p>Two-Part</p>	
<p>Route Info #12: Hats</p>	<p>Teams must travel to Yijia Minority Products and select 40 matching Islamic hats from a pile, then work together to trim the loose threads from the hats. Once the hats are ready, they must fold and package them for delivery, then take them and a full sack of hats to the factory boss to be given the next clue and a morning departure time.</p> <p>Original challenge. It does seem ironic that the one task so far this season that would normally require the usage of the word "minority" in its description is one of only a few culture-specific tasks where it isn't used. Still, it's a minor quibble for now, and it doesn't impact on how effective this task is. 7/10</p>

<p>Route Info #13: Raft</p>	<p>Teams must travel to the edge of the Yellow River, manually inflate twelve lambhides functioning as floats attached to a traditional raft, and paddle across the river to the other side. When they land, they must walk to a nearby footbridge to collect the next clue.</p> <p>Based on a Detour from The Amazing Race 6. There, it seemed like a pointless timewaster when the other task (scoring one water polo goal) was infinitely preferable, but here the combination of no alternative and added cultural relevance really makes the task seem significantly better, although still not brilliant. 8/10</p>
<p>Detour #9: Sun or Bun</p>	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two local staples. Both tasks first require teams to travel to the nearby San Lan Ba Hai village. Teams choosing SUN must use provided tools and materials to correctly assemble a solar cooking panel, using only a finished model for reference. Teams choosing BUN must locate a specified address and watch an ongoing demonstration, then use the techniques shown to prepare twenty flower-shaped dumplings to the satisfaction of the waiting homeowner.</p> <p>Original challenges. Another week, another food preparation challenge. Spice mixture, pig feed, baba, rice pastries... the last leg not to have such a task was five whole legs ago. Yes, it's nice to directly compare the tasks and prove they're getting harder and harder as the race continues. But MY GOD FIND A NEW IDEA ALREADY. A generous 6/10, because the Detour choice is so evenly balanced and assembly challenges are almost always fun.</p>
<p>Road Block #9: Monastery</p>	<p>In this Road Block, the chosen team member (who can pull their own weight) must load a basket of supplies into a crate attached to a cable stretched over a river, then get in and pull themselves to the other side of the river and delivering the supplies to a nearby monastery. After delivering their supplies and receiving the clue, they must pull themselves back across the cable to return to their partner.</p> <p>Original challenge. High concept, difficult but achievable, showcasing a unique aspect of everyday life... I should love this. But something just isn't there, and I can't quite put my finger on it. 6/10</p>
<p>Road Block #10: Shadow Puppets</p>	<p>For this Road Block, teams must first travel to Yao Zi Gou. There, the chosen team member (who is the "piecemaker") must select a workstation with a case containing pieces for six traditional Ming dynasty shadow puppets, then cut out the pieces and correctly assemble them.</p> <p>Original challenge. Yay, puzzle! It's automatically getting an inflated score just by virtue of being the sort of challenge we haven't really seen this season, but even then it's just an inexplicably cool idea. 9/10</p>
<p>Route Info #14: Tea Tasting</p>	<p>Teams must travel to Dong Xia Zhen Market and find a marked storefront, where they will taste a batch of Babao (Eight Treasures) Tea, a local delicacy. They must then enter the store and attempt to find the eight ingredients they believe were used to make the tea. If they guess all eight ingredients correctly, they will be given their next clue. After three incorrect guesses, they will receive an immediate 15-minute time penalty before having to make another attempt.</p> <p>Original challenge. I suppose this is technically another "food preparation" challenge, but at the same time it's also a devilish puzzle. Do the positives outweigh the negatives? Only slightly. 6/10, although in a season where this challenge was less repetitive, it would have scored a perfect ten.</p>
<p>Detour #10: Spin It or Stack It</p>	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two common local farming practices, both taking place in Duo Long Village. Teams choosing SPIN IT must travel to the village apiary, where (after putting on provided safety gear) one team member must remove two honeycomb plates from a beehive while their partner scrubs away the bees. They must then place the plates into a plate spinner and spin it to extract the honey. Teams choosing STACK IT must travel to a local farm and tie up five thick bundles of hay, then carry them across a river and stack them like a five-cornered pyramid.</p> <p>Original challenges. Beekeeping's been on the American franchise before (as a Detour in The Amazing Race 5), but the two tasks are about as similar as tangrams and Sudoku. Were it not for some of the dreadful earlier Detours this would be the most lopsided of the season – stacking five bundles of hay is always going to be easier than harvesting honey from a beehive, regardless of the technology used – but as it is it's still underwhelming. 4/10</p>

LEG 11: Shandong

Route Info #15: Sea Cucumbers	<p>Teams must walk to the Hai Xian Ju restaurant, then each eat two raw sea cucumbers. When they finish, they will receive their next clue and a departure time for the morning.</p> <p>Original challenge. It's extremely rare to have an eating challenge that players can't avoid on this show – counting the two this season, at the time of airing there had only been five in total – but given the histrionics the producers generally get it's a surprise it doesn't happen more. Still, watching people retch isn't exactly fun. 4/10</p>
Road Block #11: Fishing Nets + Intersection	<p>In this Road Block, the chosen team members (one from each half of the intersected group) must board a fishing boat and ride to a group of buoys offshore, then work together to lift up the attached fishing nets in search of a pair of clues. Once they find the clues, they can return to dry land and split up.</p> <p>Based on a Detour from The Amazing Race 4. So let me get this straight. It's an exhaustingly physical random-luck challenge that causes bunching and could just have easily been a standard Route Info instead of an Intersection Road Block. Why am I supposed to like this task? 1/10</p>
Detour #11: Count The Vines or Find The Wine	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two tasks related to wine. Teams choosing COUNT THE VINES must walk to a marked five-acre section of the vineyard and correctly count the grapevines. Teams choosing FIND THE WINE must walk to the wine cellar and crack a numerical code represented by pairs of wine glasses (shown the codes for 0, 1, 6, and 9 for assistance), then translate a second group of glasses into a five-digit number. Once they have the correct number, they must find the corresponding wine barrel in the cellar and roll it outside in order to receive the next clue.</p> <p>Count The Vines is technically original but very generic; Find The Wine is original (although possibly based on a Detour from The Amazing Race 13). This is an odd Detour where they both sound like they'd take the same amount of time – length of task descriptions notwithstanding – but Find The Wine turns out to be clearly quicker. Sure, there's a puzzle followed by navigation followed by a strength element, but it doesn't actually look all that time-consuming in practice. Impressive. 7/10</p>
Route Info #16: Bells	<p>Teams must travel to the theatre at San Xian Shan Park and watch a musical performance involving many instruments. They will be given fifteen minutes to practice the bells portion, then must perform it correctly in order to receive the next clue. If they fail, they will receive an immediate fifteen-minute time penalty before being allowed to try again.</p> <p>Original challenge. In theory, the challenge sounds simple. In practice, while it's definitely possible calling it Nintendo Hard would be an understatement. It's great that the race isn't petering out towards the end, but the problem is the finalists are essentially determined by penalty. Kind of a downer. 5/10</p>

LEG 12: Shanghai

Route Info #17: Hotel Room	<p>Teams must enter the Hilton Hongqiao and spend three minutes examining a deluxe suite, memorising all the minor details. Taking notes is permitted. They must then move to a separate suite and dress it to match the deluxe suit shown. If they fail, they can either attempt to fix their mistakes or return to the sample room for another three-minute period before trying again.</p> <p>Original challenge. It's shameless product placement, but unlike much of the product placement challenges on other franchises, this one is actually challenging. It's much easier to forgive product placement if it doesn't come across as an ad, and even ignoring all the Hilton references “make a hotel room match the example shown” would work as a challenge on its own merits. 7/10</p>
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<p>Detour #12: Spin It or Snap It</p>	<p>In this Detour, teams must choose between two inventions popular in the area, one Chinese and one foreign. Teams choosing SPIN IT must walk to a nearby courtyard, then watch an ongoing kongju (diabolo) demonstration and each complete two laps of a marked course while keeping their kongju spinning. Teams choosing SNAP IT must walk to a nearby fountain to pick up an instant camera and one of three tourist photos, then find both the tourist and location in the surrounding area and recreate the photo.</p> <p>Original challenges. This really is kind of the perfect Detour – both tasks seem quick and easy but are deceptively difficult, and they're tied into the culture of the surrounding area. It's probably one of the best "inner-city" Detours we've ever seen. 9/10, with a point taken off for the dreadful "photo finish" sight gag during Allan's explanations. (Oh, please. The scores are arbitrary anyway.)</p>
<p>Route Info #18: Forklift</p>	<p>Teams must drive themselves to the Snow Beer Factory and undertake a brief training session, then work together to transfer six pallets of beer cartons to a marked area using a forklift. Each player must transfer three pallets. If any cartons fall during transfer, the team will receive an immediate fifteen-minute penalty before having to start the task again. After finishing their transfers, they must park the forklift to be given the next clue.</p> <p>Original challenge. Another simple concept that's tough to execute. And again, you could ignore the Snow Beer product placement and still have a decent task. But the need to add contrived penalties – especially with this being the season finale and the race's second last task – means this just isn't as impressive as the hotel task. 6/10</p>
<p>Road Block #12: Race Legs</p>	<p>For this Road Block, teams must abandon their cars and walk to Red Town Sculpture Park. There, the chosen team member (who's ready for a trip down memory lane) must collect twenty-two placards – eleven photos of locations visited, and eleven labels listing the matching towns (with two photos and labels for the two-part leg) from a group of giant leg sculptures. Once they have all twenty-two, they must correctly match the labels and photos, and place them in chronological order.</p> <p>Based on a challenge from The Amazing Race en Discovery Channel 1. The variation here seems much harder – matching random locations from the leg versus matching the greeter outfits – but to compromise there are no decoy names and photos. And much like the original version was one of the best challenges of the season, this is certainly one of the best challenges this season. 9/10</p>