

PROVINCE PROMOTES QILU CULTURAL HERITAGE

Provincial govt ramps up spending by \$15.18m to support ancient tradition



An annual Confucius memorial ceremony at the Confucius Temple in Qufu, Shandong province. PHOTOS BY WANG QIAN / CHINA DAILY

By TANG ZHIHAO and WANG QIAN

Shandong province has introduced 31 cultural innovation projects across seven regions this year to spread awareness of Qilu culture.

Qilu refers to the kingdoms of the Qi and Lu, in what is now Shandong, before the founding of the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC). It is sometimes used as a name for Shandong province, one of the birthplaces of Chinese culture and civilization.

Qufu, a historical city in southwest Shandong, is the hometown of Confucius.

"Qilu culture and Confucianism originate from the province. Shandong should take more responsibility in promoting traditional Chinese cultures," said Xu Xianghong, head of the Shandong provincial department of culture.

Xu said investments by the Shandong government in supporting the development of Qilu culture increased by 100 million yuan (\$15.18 million) year-on-year in 2015 and will continue to strengthen its promotion of Qilu culture during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20).

"Many concepts in our traditional culture can be used to support social and economic development," Xu said.

Xu stressed that it is important to create new tools to promote traditional cultures.

"The promotional style has to fit the demands and preference of younger generations. I am confident that we can achieve better results if we apply more ideas to promoting culture."

Shandong is long committed to developing different exchanges and communication programs to introduce traditional Chinese culture to a broad range of audiences. It has established various platforms including the Nishan Academy Network and Confucianism-based training classes to expand an awareness of ancient Chinese cultures.

Local authorities have encouraged public libraries to partner with the



Children attend a reading activity of Confucius' works in Qufu.



Wang Lingling, an inheritor of Shandong Lyu Opera, teaches the art to primary school students. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Nishan Academy, an institute founded during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and dedicated to Confucius and his philosophies to offer younger generations opportunities to read Chinese classic texts. The Nishan Academy offers free classes to the public on weekends.

"The academy plays a significant role in promoting ancient Chinese cultural learning. We hope children can better understand Chinese culture at the academy and help pass down cultural heritages through the generations," said Yan Li, a volunteer at the

Nishan Academy in Shandong Library. Nishan Academy has developed over 130 branches in Shandong. Almost every library in the region has a Nishan Academy inside it, according to the local government. The academy has hosted over 3,200 cultural events that attracted over 400,000 participants in recent years.

Shandong launched Confucianism-based training classes in 2013 to encourage communities and rural areas to learn more about Chinese culture. The province has established 8,300 physical classes and organized 33,200 lectures over the years.

Qufu will be a national demonstration zone to support the development of traditional cultures during the 13th Five-Year Plan.

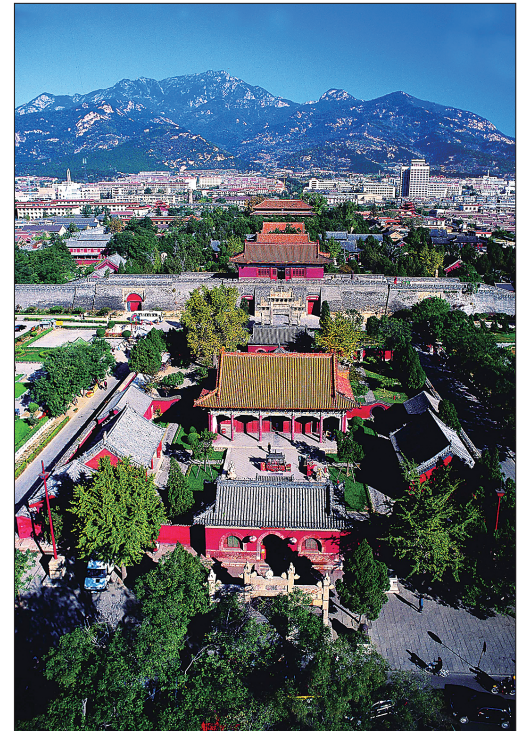
Xu said the cities of Qufu, Zoucheng and Sishui, which have a combined area of 3,631 square kilometers, will form the core area of the demonstration zone. Some key projects in the zone, including the Nishan Resort, have reported progress, Xu said.

The Nishan Forum on World Civilizations and The World Confucian Conference, organized by Shandong province, strongly support cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries.

The Nishan Forum on World Civilizations was launched in 2010 at Nishan Mountain, the exact location where Confucius was born, to serve as a platform for enhancing cultural communications and to promote the building of a harmonious world. More than 100 dialogue and exchange events were organized over the last six years.

Shandong has been promoting its traditional cultures to overseas audiences. Since 2011, it arranged over 600 performances and over 300 arts exhibitions abroad. There are 15 Nishan Academies in countries like Australia, Russia and New Zealand.

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A bird's-eye view of Daimiao Temple, located at the foot of Mount Taishan. WANG DEQUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Growth in tourism rooted in mountain

By WANG QIAN wangqian2@chinadaily.com.cn

Tai'an, a city in Shandong province that is centered on Mount Taishan, is tapping into its historical and cultural resources to become an international tourist destination.

"Over the years, Tai'an has combined its natural landscape and cultural aspects to develop its tourism industry, which has become the city's pillar industry," said Tai'an Mayor Wang Yunpeng.

Tai'an's tourism sector has maintained rapid growth during the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015). In 2015, the city received 57.9 million visitors, up 9 percent from 2014. Tourist spending totaled 58.23 billion yuan (\$8.84 billion), equivalent to 18.4 percent of its GDP, according to local government statistics.

"We have introduced a number of culture-oriented travel projects to attract more visitors," said Wang. "In previous years, most visitors traveled to Tai'an to climb Mount Taishan, but now they can have different traveling routes and they tend to stay in the city for a few days."

After the development of the traditional Fengshan ceremonies in Mount Taishan, also called the emperors' sacrificial ceremonies, a number of culture-oriented travel projects have been established in Tai'an over the past five years, including Fantawild, Taishan Colorful Time Scenic Spot, Sun Tribes Scenic Spot, Baotailong Tourism of Taishan and the Old Town of the Water Margin.

The Fengshan ceremonies, through its 200 live performances each year, have spurred the popularity of Mount Taishan and its unique culture.

Over 3,000 years, Chinese emperors have made pilgrimages to Mount Taishan to pray

to the gods. Twelve emperors, beginning with Qin Shihuang, the first emperor to unify China in 221 BC, have paid homage in a ritual called "Fengshan Sacrifices" at the mountain.

During this year's three-day May 1 holiday, Tai'an received 670,700 visitors, bringing in 71.64 million yuan.

The May 1 holiday saw the Old Town of the Water Margin reap 14.4 million yuan in ticket proceeds, the Sun Tribes Scenic Spot gain 12.48 million yuan, Baotailong Tourism of Taishan 9.23 million yuan and Fantawild 6.67 million yuan.

Rural tourism is a new growth point for the city. It brought in 1.36 million yuan in revenue during the May 1 holiday, up 10.5 percent from the same period in 2015.

Daiyue district's Liyu village, with some 200 households, drew around 40,000 tourists annually, generating over 2 million yuan. The number of visitors to Pingwa village in Xintai, known for its folk customs and historic villages, topped 5,000 during the spring season. The city has also developed culture-related tourism products and souvenirs, such as carvings of Taishan jade, which is found in deposits around the mountain, said scholar Zhou Ying.

"Taishan jade is a cultural symbol of Mount Taishan. It appreciates rapidly, with an annual appreciation rate of about 200 percent," Zhou said.

The Tai'an government has determined that there are 5.07 million metric tons of ore and 2.71 million tons of jade within a 3.64-square-kilometer area around the mountain. Currently, annual turnover of Taishan jade in Tai'an is 500 million yuan.

The local government is currently building a Taishan jade trading, processing and tourism base.

Port, Guinea open path to bauxite shipments

By JU CHUANJIANG juchuanjiang@chinadaily.com.cn

Yantai Port in Shandong province welcomes an 180,000-metric-ton bauxite ship from West Africa's Guinea every week from a route jointly developed by four companies across three countries.

"We can realize freight volume of 10 million tons this year, and 30 million tons of capacity will be achieved in 2018," said Sun Siyuan, the assistant to the chairman, Sun Xiushun, of Winning International Group, a developer of the route.

China imports more than 50 million tons of bauxite annually from countries such as India, Australia, Indone-

sia and Malaysia. Guinea has rich bauxite resources, with its storage volume accounting for one-third of the world's proven reserves.

In early 2014, an alliance was established by Singapore's Winning International Group, Guinea's USM, China's Yantai Port Group and the Shandong Weiqiao Pioneering Group Co to build a sea route to annually transport 10 to 30 million tons of bauxite between Yantai and Guinea.

This initiative, which lowered costs from an original construction plans for the deepwater pier from more than 10 billion yuan (\$1.52 billion) to 1 billion yuan and the construction time from three years to four months, has allowed Guinea to dou-



A Chinese technician from Shandong province trains a worker in Guinea. JU CHUANJIANG / CHINA DAILY

ble its export of bauxite to become the world's most important bauxite exporter.

The coalition has also built two hospitals for residents and mine workers in Guinea. Nearly 5,000 residents are

employed in the mining area and at Guinea's Katougouma Port.

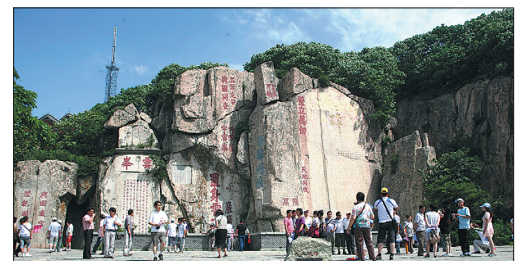
On March 15, the alliance announced the opening of the weekly direct sea route from Yantai Port to Africa's

western coast. An empty transport ship for bulk cargo now takes 45 days from China to Guinea. Next year there will be two sea transports a week.

The second phase of the construction of Katougouma Port is underway. Located by the side of the port, a 10-square-kilometer logistics industry park has been approved by the government of Guinea. It is also stepping up construction, and attracting domestic and foreign investments. It will become an important trade and logistics distribution center between China and Africa's western coast. It is expected to become a strong and convenient logistics and trade passage for more than 10 countries in West Africa.



A Taishan jade artwork in the shape of a cabbage. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Chinese characters written on walls at Mount Taishan. WANG QIAN / CHINA DAILY