



Travelers drive themselves to see the autumn scene in the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang, which has long been popular with travelers for its remarkable landscapes and ethnic culture. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Road trips a route to prosperity

The growing number of travelers who drive through Xinjiang is providing new poverty-alleviation opportunities to villagers. **Yang Feiyue** reports.

The trend in which more Chinese travelers are driving to their destinations is paving the way for poverty alleviation in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Two road-trip routes in the region were recently listed among western China's top-10 driving itineraries by the China National Tourism Administration and the State Council's Poverty Relief Office.

The list is intended to encourage travelers to explore off-the-beaten-path destinations and create livelihood opportunities along the way.

Xinjiang has long been popular with travelers who take the wheel themselves. They enjoy its remarkable landscapes and ethnic culture.

One of the listed Xinjiang routes runs 1,800 kilometers through Korla, Aksu, Kashgar and Hotan.

Drivers visit the Kuqa Grand Canyon, Kizil Grottoes and the Taklimakan Desert.

The other covers part of the Hexi Silk Road corridor between Gansu province and Xinjiang's far west. It spans over 2,000 km, covering Turpan, Urumqi, Narat and Hor-

gos. Highlights include Tianchi Lake, Urumqi's Grand Bazaar and the Narat Grassland.

More travelers in Xinjiang are driving themselves, says the Xinjiang road-trip association's secretary-general Li Xiaohu.

Hundreds have driven across the Taklimakan Desert through bookings with CYTS Xinjiang International Travel Agency since 2010.

The company claims to have been the first to offer driving tours through the autonomous region.

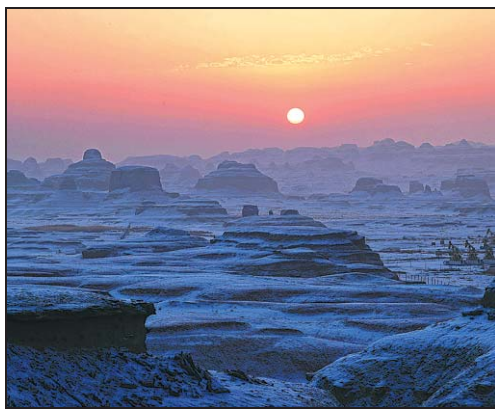
All but 5 percent of drivers who booked trips in Xinjiang last year were from outside the region, Ma Li, a manager with the agency, tells local news portal ts.cn.

Drivers from outside Xinjiang were previously a minority, he says.

The local government has been constructing such infrastructure as camping sites.

Plans call for the establishment of a tourism-product association to work with the regional government to launch more driving routes.

The concept is to lead travelers to villages among major attractions. Rural residents



From top: Sunrise in Karamay, the oil-rich city in Xinjiang known for its unique Yardang landform; nomads inhabit the mountains of Altay celebrate their annual snow festival.

can offer such services as dining and local specialties, which in turn offer them new income opportunities.

Chujiawan village resident Liu Jun runs a rural guesthouse near Tianchi Lake.

"We've had business year-round since Tianchi opened a ski resort," he tells China Tourism News.

"Many skiers who drive here eat at our restaurant." Business was brisk for Liu

in January, which was previously a slow month for local tourism because of the cold.

His place is located along the "golden travel belt" around the Tianshan Mountains.

"Many tourists buy our chickens and eggs after enjoying our *dapanji* (sauteed spicy chicken)," says Liu.

He earned a meager income from crops seven years ago, he says.

Visitors also buy the flat peaches his neighbors grow in the summer.

Tourists who drive themselves have also boosted sales of agricultural and forest products in Xinjiang's Bayingolin Mongol autonomous prefecture, Hami and Turpan.

Xinjiang's tourism development commission and poverty-alleviation authorities have selected over 600 villages that are suitable for tourism development since 2016.

Most are near major roads or cities and are easily accessible to drivers. Many drivers consume local farmers' chickens, mutton, eggs and fruit, a tourism development commission official says. They also enjoy seeing how locals live.

Bayanbulak's Baxilike village previously fell under the local government's official poverty line.

The settlement is only an hour's drive from the Dushanzi-Korla Highway, which is known for its beautiful scenery.

Baxilike became more prosperous after several local government departments launched products near highway driving routes in August 2017.

Many drivers visit to enjoy local fare and milk tea.

To date, 17 households have opened dining businesses. Some rake in 50,000 yuan (\$7,940) a year.

Xinjiang will set up special teams to promote tourism-based poverty alleviation.

Agritourism, online sales of rural products, skiing and handicrafts are means to improve residents' livelihoods, the region's poverty-alleviation authority says.

Xinjiang welcomed a record 107 million tourists last year, a year-on-year increase of a third, Xinjiang regional government chairman Shohrat Zakir says.

Tourism spending increased by 30 percent to 182 billion yuan.

Local governments have deemed tourism as a pillar industry offering the greatest growth potential among sectors, a recent government work report says.

The report sets 30 percent growth as the goal for 2018.

Many of those who arrive in these locations and accelerate rural travel, indeed, will be drivers who seek adventure behind the wheel.

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Guizhou's snow is a reason to visit

By YANG JUN

Drought-prone Guizhou province, known for its cutting karst formations, doesn't naturally sire snowy slopes for skiing.

It's dry. Its peaks tend to be sheer.

You'd fall off, rather than glide down, most inclines.

Yet the Yushe Snow Resort, or the Yushe National Forest Park, in Liupanshui city has created a winter wonderland where there was none.

The resort has purchased 60 snow machines to transform a swathe of a national forest park into a place to go to enjoy snow in Guizhou.

The mountains, which average around 2,250 meters, seldom experience snowfall but are coated with freezing rain in winter.

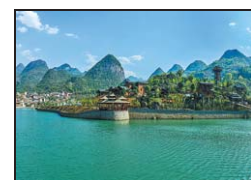
This, in every sense, put a chill on tourism during the season.

It was a great disparity throughout the year for a place that's hailed as a summer hot spot.

"Few travelers visit the conventional sites in winter," the resort's manager Gao Song says.

"So, we developed new opportunities."

It has hosted such competitions and events as the 2017 Summer International Marathon and World Snow Day.



The Yushe Snow Resort, also known as the Yushe National Forest Park in Guizhou's Liupanshui city, has transformed the summer hot spot into a winter wonderland. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The resort receives 20,000 visitors daily on average during the winter season, Gao says.

Yushe invested 200 million yuan (\$31.8 million) to expand its snowfields from 500 to 100,000 square meters in the past few years.

It offers ski ranges of various difficulty levels and snowmobiling.

"It's wonderful to ski here, even though the snow isn't deep enough," says veteran skier Luo Yongming, who was visiting from Chongqing.

"The scenery is stunning."

Nearly a third of visitors come from outside the province.

Yushe received 180,000 winter tourists in 2016 and 2017, compared with 65,000 in 2015.

It generated 30 million yuan in the 2015-16 period.

Liupanshui received 300 million visits that generated 20 billion yuan in 2017. That's more than a 60 percent increase in revenue and a nearly 58 percent increase in visits year-on-year.

Tourism has assisted poverty alleviation.

Relocated villager Nie Sanwen works as a driver of the tourism electric cart. The 46-year-old earns 4,000 yuan a month. And his family has moved into a new modern apartment provided by the government.

"I'm happy," he says.

"I'm fairly well off."

Snow may be a new ingredient that extends the allure of Guizhou's tourism charm year-round.

Chen Zhuo contributed to the story.

Bali beckons again, following volcanic eruptions

By XU LIN

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The dust — more precisely, ash — has settled around Mount Agung.

And Indonesia's Bali Island is ready to greet Chinese visitors during the upcoming Spring Festival, following the volcanic peak's eruptions at the end of last year.

The area around Mount Agung experienced earthquakes and eruptions from September through December. Residents and tourists were forced to evacuate in November.

"In spite of Mount Agung's earlier eruptions, Bali Island's safety for travel is under control and we welcome Chinese tourists," Indonesian Tourism Minister Arief Yahya recently told a news conference in Beijing.

The consulate general of China in Denpasar announced in early January that Chinese travelers should carefully plan their itineraries and monitor the volcano's status and consulate notices. It

advised against visiting dangerous locations near Mount Agung.

Indonesian authorities have been taking action to prepare for such events as new eruptions and promise to take precautions to ensure Chinese visitors' safety.

Bali's government has announced it's safe to visit, Chinese media platform New Ljvie reported recently. Only the area within 6 kilometers around Mount Agung is closed to the public.

Ngurah Rai International Airport was only closed for two and a half days at the end of November due to ash and has since operated normally, Bali's government says. Even if it's temporarily closed in the future, tourists can use other international airports in Surabaya or Banyuwangi.

The government promises to offer a free night of accommodation and transport to Surabaya or Banyuwangi if Ngurah Rai closes in the near future.

Mount Agung is still active but is about 70 kilometers



Ulun Danu Bratan Temple is a beautiful landmark located on the western side of the Beratan Lake in Bali. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

from Ngurah Rai International Airport and the main tourism area, so it shouldn't affect normal travel, Yahya says.

Some Chinese tourists have been traveling to the island since the eruptions.

Yang Fan, director of Beijing-based bespoke online travel agency 6renyou.com's short-itinerary business, recently visited the island.

She noticed many five-star hotels provided updated information about the volca-

no in the lobby every day.

"Most airlines between Chinese cities and Bali have reopened since January, and Chinese travel agencies have started to send travel groups to Bali," Yang says.

"However, it will take time for Bali's tourism to return to normal."

Few group travelers visit Mount Agung because it's far from the main tourism area.

"Those who want to enjoy magnificent volcano views

can visit other volcanoes on the island, such as Mount Batur," she says.

Many of 6renyou.com's customers are middle-class families who prefer to stay in five-star hotels and visit such sites as Bali Safari and Marine Park, and Waterbom Park. They also enjoy snorkeling, buying local folk arts and appreciating such experiences as learning how to cook local food.

About 2 million Chinese visited Indonesia last year, accounting for about 15 percent of inbound tourists, Xinhua News Agency reports. Nearly 1.4 million Chinese visited Bali in 2017, accounting for the biggest inbound group.

Chinese visitors especially enjoy Indonesia's coastlines, islands, beaches and diving, Yahya says.

The country is planning to train more Chinese-speaking guides and open a tourism-information center that offers Chinese-language services.

Indonesia's tourism ministry is also developing 10 prior-

ity destinations including Toba Lake and Tanjung Lesung Peninsula, through its "New Bali" plan.

It's constructing such infrastructure as roads and airports to place these destinations higher on visitors' itineraries. New direct flights will open to these emerging attractions.

Jakarta and Palembang will host the 18th Asian Games from Aug 18 to Sept 2. Indonesia views this as an opportunity to attract Chinese sports enthusiasts and for them to travel around the country.

"It's convenient for Chinese to fly to Jakarta to witness the excellent performances of Chinese athletes," Yahya says.

"They can also enjoy picturesque views and the cultural heritage of Indonesia."

Tourism authorities have developed travel packages from Jakarta and Palembang to other destinations in anticipation on the visitor influx, he adds.

It seems likely many Chinese will be visiting Bali then — and before and after.