

**Hot springs**, tea fields and natural scenery define Liyang's beauty.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



**H**igh-speed train route that opened on April 9 makes Liyang's hot springs, celebrated fish soup and bamboo forests more accessible to visitors from Shanghai and other cities.

The city in Jiangsu province is near the border with Zhejiang and Anhui provinces. Liyang's high-speed train station opened in 2013, making the city accessible from any of these provinces' capitals.

Visitors from Shanghai used to transfer between trains at Nanjing South or Hangzhou East stations. This would usually take about three hours. Driving from Shanghai to Liyang takes about three

and a half hours.

But the new G7395/7397 train route enables tourists to travel directly between Shanghai and Liyang in two hours and 40 minutes.

The new route was launched around the opening of the annual Liyang tea festival and tourism mart that ran from April 10 to May 10.

"Fine jade artifacts unearthed in Liyang date back over 5,000 years," says Zhu Hongxin, head of the city's tourism administration.

"The county of Liyang was established in 221 BC. We are one of the 57 counties and cities in China that have kept their original names."

The contemporary city is

famous for the 18-square-kilometer Tianmu Lake, its 2,330 hectares of bamboo forest and its hot springs, which have been named among the top 10 in China.

The white tea harvested in the spring is arguably the most celebrated local specialty.

The buds are picked just as they're sprouting and are fried in an iron wok.

The brews are light and aromatic. But the flavor dissipates after about two pours.

"It contains less caffeine and more polyphenols than green tea, and offers many health benefits," says a tour guide with the Qiancaixun White Tea Garden.

Liyang is known for its population's longevity. Locals attribute

this to their tea-drinking habits and the area's forested landscape.

The settlement's main tea garden is located on a small island in Tianmu Lake, about 7 kilometers from downtown.

Visitors often take a 40-minute scenic boat ride to the island. They disembark to stroll around the rows of tea trees and pick fresh leaves.

A 300-square-kilometer ecological-protection zone surrounds the water body.

The excellent natural environment produces the bighead carp that are a local delicacy.

The fish are too large for a single person to eat in a sitting. People previously threw away the

heads, since they didn't contain much meat.

But in the 1970s, a local cook developed a recipe in which the head is boiled for over three hours until the broth appears milky, and the meat is tender and purged of its earthy flavor.

Fish-soup casserole is the primary specialty of most eateries and can cost up to 800 yuan (\$127) at top-end restaurants.

Many visitors enjoy the dish and then soak in Liyang's hot springs.

The five-star Yushui Hot Spring resort and hotel is located near the Nanshan Bamboo Forest.

The forest's moso bamboo can grow as tall as 20 meters within five months.

It has to be cut every five or six years to preserve the forest, local tourism bureau representative Huang Ludong explains.

Farmers dig shoots every other year as a seasonal delicacy often cooked with fatty pork. They leave them alone every other year in order to allow the forest to flourish.

Indeed, it seems likely the bamboo groves are set to receive a growing number of visitors since the new train route adds new convenience to Liyang's natural appeal. That's not to mention the city's hot springs, tea fields and Tianmu Lake — and much more.

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# RIDE THE RAILS TO LIYANG

A new line connecting the city in Jiangsu province to Shanghai makes it easier to enjoy its natural wonders. **Zhang Kun** writes.



## Six Guizhou students to carry flags at 2018 FIFA World Cup

By YANG JUN in Guiyang  
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Whether they were dancing elegantly like a peacock, demonstrating their English skills or playing the reed-pipes like professionals, hundreds of students showed off their talent to try and earn the chance to travel abroad and broaden their horizons.

The FIFA World Cup in Russia this summer provided the opportunity for six talented students from China's southwest Guizhou province to realize their lifelong dream of going abroad.

About a month ago, a talent competition to find young flag carriers for the 2018 FIFA World Cup was held in Danzhai, a county in the province's Qiandongnan Miao and Dong



**Zhou Lulu** a competitor from Danzhai shows ethnic dancing.

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autonomous prefecture. More than 3,800 local students took part in the event, which saw 150 qualify for the final stages in a bid to win six air tickets to Russia and the chance to take part in a global event.

Mo Qiu, who plays football for her school team, along with five other local students, were finally selected and named as the flag carriers for the opening game of the World Cup this June.

"I have been dreaming about how I could one day go out and show the world the beauty of my hometown. It's a dream come true to be selected," says Mo Qiu during her acceptance speech.

Mo's speech reflects the aspirations of many teenagers living in the remote areas of Guizhou. The six students from Danzhai have been picked by Chinese real estate giant Dalian Wanda Group.

As a major partner and one of the top sponsors of this year's World Cup, Wanda was granted the exclusive rights to select the young flag carriers from around the world to attend the world's most famous football tournament. And it decided to hold the competition in Danzhai to find the six most talented local students.

In 2014, Wanda Group started a poverty-relief project in Danzhai, with the aim of helping the county build schools and improve its tourism infrastructure, and provided an investment of nearly 1.5 billion yuan (\$235 million).

Now the county has been transformed into a popular tourist attraction, with more than 5 million people having already chosen it as their holiday destination.

The incomes of 15,000 poor local families have seen a dramatic increase, and more opportunities to see the outside world have arisen for some of the local kids with big dreams.

*Xi He contributed to the story.*



**Application of augmented reality** is expected to stimulate young mainland tourists' desire to explore ways to have fun in Hong Kong. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## AR book a new guide to Hong Kong

By YANG FEIYUE  
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Hong Kong Special Administrative Region tourism officials are tapping into the application of augmented reality technology to attract young people from the mainland to visit the city.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board has teamed up with Hong Kong-born and South Korea-based rapper Jackson Wang to create an AR "magic book" that features 3-D animation, video clips and AR interactivity.

The online book presents a vivid picture of what tourists can expect to do in the city when it comes to entertainment, sport, gourmet food and art experiences.

"The AR book is a bold attempt by the Hong Kong tourism board in brand communications," says Becky Ip, the deputy executive director of the tourism board.

"Those born in the 1980s and '90s have become the main force behind mainland consumption, and we need to cater to their preferences as much as possible," she adds.

This new form of tourism promotion aims to stimulate

young people's desire to explore interesting ways to have fun in Hong Kong.

"Take art as an example. Hong Kong has a lot of galleries worth visiting," Ip says.

Many of the world's most renowned art exhibitions, such as Art Basel, as well as various film festivals, would make for an artsy experience for any visitor to the city, in addition to its highly developed retail experience, she says.

Using the AR approach, travelers can enjoy the vicarious experience of seeing Hong Kong from a local perspective, following in rapper Wang's footsteps as he encounters the unique thrills and spills that the city has to offer, according to the tourism board.

The phone app allows people to interact with Wang through AR games and take virtual photos with the celebrity.

"Jackson Wang is one of the most influential figures among Hong Kong's new generation, and his growing experience and familiarity with various scenes of the city will offer up the most authentic experience of Hong Kong to mainland consumers," Ip says.

Travelers can access the AR book via mainstream social

media, including their WeChat or Sina Weibo accounts from May 10 to 31. Interactions with Wang are made possible through scanning themed posters in the online book via Alipay.

The tourism board is also working with China's biggest online travel agency Ctrip, Hong Kong Ocean Park, Cathay Pacific Airways and Hong Kong Disneyland to send Sina Weibo users gifts to help promote tourism.

Hong Kong has witnessed a steady increase in the number of mainland visitors in recent years. Last year, the city unveiled a series of favorable travel deals, from air tickets and accommodation to shopping and eating, as part of its plans to mark the 20th anniversary of its return to China.

The city received 44 million visits from the Chinese mainland last year, an increase of 4 percent over the previous year.

During the first three months of this year, visit numbers grew 12.7 percent year-on-year to 12 million. Travelers aged between 26 and 35 make up the biggest group of visitors to Hong Kong, according to Ali Baba's travel platform Fliggy.

Parent-child experiences featuring museums, Disneyland,

Noah's Ark and child-themed restaurants have also been included in travel packages to cater to the needs of young couples with children, which have also been a force to be reckoned with in Hong Kong's tourism market.

To spice up the visitor experience, Hong Kong is also planning to develop new scenic spots in 18 districts for travelers. Sham Shui Po will be the first one to be rolled out later this year. Locals will lead tourists deep into local communities, exploring its many out-of-the-ordinary sights, Ip says.

With the opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong high-speed rail link, Ip is optimistic about the future of Hong Kong's tourism market.

She expects the number of global visits to the city would soon break the 60 million mark, with 75-80 percent of these coming from the mainland.

To date, Hong Kong has offered 11 tourism new experiences for visitors to choose from, and the new AR approach offers them a new way to choose which one may be closest to their heart, Ip says.

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