

AN OUTPOST MAKES INROADS

Yunfeng Tunpu's ancient fortified villages were built to protect against incursions but today make for great excursions. Xu Lin explores the settlements.

The Yunfeng Tunpu Culture Tourism Area is an ancient military outpost that today attracts armies of tourists.

Nearly 540,000 travelers visited the cluster of eight ancient *tunpu* villages about 20 kilometers outside of Guizhou province's Anshun city in 2016. *Tunpu* were military outposts where soldiers guarded the region and cultivated the land.

Each of the villages nestled inside a stone wall has watchtowers. The settlements were designed to not only ward off attacks individually but also to support one another in times of need.

The first Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) emperor Zhu Yuanzhang defeated the last Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) troops in today's Yunnan province to unify the country. He then stationed a huge force in Anshun — a strategic military position — to ensure regional peace. The garrison grew grain and also engaged in trade.

Villagers are the descendents of ethnic Han soldiers originally from south of the Yangtze River, including Jiangsu and Anhui provinces.

Their dialect, attire, diet and customs have changed little over the centuries.

Benzhai village is one of the best-preserved settlements.

Elderly women wear their hair in buns beneath headscarves and silver adornments. They wear blue dresses with large sleeves and intricate patterns on the collars and cuffs.

The village's arched gate was closed at night in the past. A small emergency exit, only large enough

for one person to pass through at a time, has since been sealed with bricks.

Benzhai is densely packed with interconnected courtyards and houses with attics, and nine watchtowers with slots for shooting arrows at enemies below.

The settlement of 2,000 inhabitants is essentially designed for ancient urban warfare.

One alley hosts an old opium shop. Buyers would stand in the street and the vender would hand purchases over a counter. There was a hole in the wall behind where the buyer would stand, through which an armed person would supposedly use weapons to force the buyer to pay if they refused.

Nearby Yunshan village is built in a valley.

It was not only a defense outpost but also a trade hub for military supplies.

Today, the tourism area attracts young artists from near and far, who paint its views.

An Anshun University instructor surnamed Zhou says he brings his students to the area to paint for about two weeks every year.

"We come for the spectacular architecture and local customs. It's not crowded with visitors. We enjoy the tranquility."

Benzhai's Party chief, Mei De'an, says the challenge is to attract more tourists who stay longer.

Yunfeng Tunpu is a national AAAA site. (AAAAA is the highest ranking.)

"Infrastructure, service and management are vital. That's what we're working on," he says.

Mei initiated protection of the



ancient houses in the 1980s, despite some locals' objections.

The government there built a new village for inhabitants in 2007, and many people moved into modern homes.

Mei says people can use modern methods like art to showcase local customs.

For instance, tourists can weave cloth using traditional methods and buy the finished products, he says.

"Vacant buildings can be renovated into homestays," he says.

"And one day, we hope to see people patrolling around in armor to show our military heritage."

Beijing Shanhai Tourism Co Ltd deputy general manager Jia Ke

says: "It's important to promote the site's uniqueness."

He adds that Yunfeng Tunpu is located near other popular sites. So the company is planning to develop itineraries that include the villages and such celebrated attractions as the Huangguoshu Waterfall.

The company is building a commercial area named 1381 Town next to the settlements, with boutique hotels, restaurants and stores.

Indeed, Yunfeng Tunpu's ancient military outposts seem set to be besieged by even larger legions of modern visitors in the years to come.

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Top and above right: Yunshan village in Guizhou province's Anshun is a well-preserved military outpost that attracts tourists and young artists with its unique architecture and local customs. Above left and center: A young woman and a child paint wood masks for Dixi Opera performances. Dixi Opera, called a "living fossil of Chinese operas", is a traditional opera from the eight ancient fortified villages in Anshun. PHOTOS BY XU LIN / CHINA DAILY AND YUAN QINSHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shidu heats up in summer

By YANG FEIYUE
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Extreme sports. Tranquil hikes. Spectacular scenery.

Shidu's activities, leisure and landscapes are drawing a growing number of visitors, especially from downtown Beijing.

The town in the capital's suburban Fangshan district has long been a hot spot for rafting during the warmest time of the year, especially along the Juma River.

Many visitors have already made bookings during the period, says Wei Yonghao, deputy general manager of Shidu's Juma Park.

The park has recently upgraded to offer such experiences as bungee jumping and rock climbing. Visitors can also use yachts, water bikes and bumper boats.

Daredevils can attempt the spiraling 2-kilometer rafting course that spills down from the park's Qilin Mountain.

The park has also developed hiking routes through karst forests and valleys.

Shidu received over 3.6 million travelers last year, and Wei expects a 15 percent increase this year.

"We've enhanced not only facilities but also services and Wi-Fi, and have opened a new tourism center," Wei says.

Donghugang, which is about 10 kilometers from the park, has also added new rafting experiences and built a cliff-side glass-bottom skywalk.

"Visitors can enjoy recreation in



The scenic area of Shidu in Beijing's Fangshan district offers such new travel experiences as bungee jumping, rock climbing, water bikes and bumper boats. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

nature," says Ma Changru, a local tourism official.

Donghugang hosts a vast canyon, a large waterfall and a skyline sliced by mountain peaks.

A polychromatic-glass rafting chute that resembles a rainbow spans the canyon.

Inquiries from travelers and agencies have increased since the new facilities opened, Ma says.

Donghugang received over 400,000 visitors last year.

It has proposed to the local government a package-ticket policy that'd provide access to several Shidu attractions, Ma says.

Roughly 900 private rural households offer catering, boarding and farming activities.

Shidu plans to bring table tennis, skiing and boating experiences to its major scenic spots and villages, Beijing folk tourism association head Liu Zenghui says.

And a nearly 26-km leisure corridor through forests, farmlands and rivers will be built at the end of this year.

It seems likely that, given Shidu's expanding allure, it will become an even hotter spot for visitors this summer.

Multimedia project shows attractions in a different light

By YANG FEIYUE

A multimedia project highlighting China's culture, history and development kicked off in Beijing in June.

New Era, New Home uses videos, live broadcasts, photos and articles to explore various dimensions of 100 domestic destinations.

It was initiated by the video-streaming website Youku, China Youth Tour Service and Peopledigital Co, a Beijing-based digital communication company under People's Daily.

"We hope to pay tribute to the new era and the achievements made over the 40 years of reform and opening-up," Peopledigital Co's president Xu Tao says.

The project will go beyond merely showing scenery, customs and cultures but also will reveal urban development and rural revitalization, Xu says.

The videos can be viewed on Youku via smartphone and will also be shown on the 20,000 public screens People's Daily operates nationwide.

Projects released so far on Youku show the changes in Qinghai province's Yushu Tibetan autonomous prefecture since the 2010 earthquake, the allure of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region's prairies and a road-trip route through Heilongjiang province.

"It's a good platform to promote



Tourists reach an ancient post house while traveling through a road-trip route in Heilongjiang province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

our province's tourism," Heilongjiang tourism development commission deputy director Hou Wei says.

The Heilongjiang video shows rivers, forests and wetlands along the 2,200-kilometer drive from China's easternmost point, Fuyuan, to its northernmost county, Mohe. Adjacent articles provide travel tips.

The project has come at an opportune time, since Heilongjiang is currently promoting summer tourism, Hou says.

Heilongjiang joined the project via China Youth Tour Service, which cooperates with various lev-

els of government to portray local development, the travel agency's president Kang Guoming says.

The project is part of the cooperation between the media lab jointly developed by Youku and Alibaba Digital Media and Entertainment Group.

It strives to create a multidimensional, detailed and interactive experience, Xu says.

For example, visitors to the Heilongjiang multimedia package can click on a video to tour of the birch forests hosted by China Youth Tour Service, Xu explains.