

# Tourism meeting to focus on rural areas

Guizhou province continues with efforts to alleviate poverty in remote communities. **Zhao Shijun** reports.



Terraced paddies and old-style farmhouses in Jiabang, Congjiang county, provide a playful paradise for photographers and tourists alike. WU DEJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Rural tourism and poverty alleviation will be the highlights of the 13th Tourism Industry Development Meeting of Guizhou, to be held in Congjiang county in Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture on Monday, said the province's officials.

Wang Wenxue, deputy chief of the Guizhou Tourism Development Commission, told a news conference on Tuesday that the theme of the forthcoming meeting is "developing rural tourism to boost poverty alleviation?"

Guizhou is a province with a number of areas where poverty relief is still a pressing task.

Mountains and hills account for a large proportion of Guizhou's landscape, which have hindered the development of agriculture and other industries.

However, Wang said the mountainous landscapes and rich ethnic culture have proven to be a big draw for tourists in recent years.

"Tourism is one of the important measures for targeted poverty alleviation," said Wang, adding that he hoped the industry can involve the participation of more of the impoverished population, helping them to get rich.

Wang said one of the goals of the meeting is to attract investment from the rest of the country and the world to fuel tourism development in Congjiang county, Qiongdongnan prefecture and Guizhou province as a whole.

According to the official, 21 tourism projects for the purpose of poverty alleviation will be signed during the event, with investment totaling 68 billion yuan (\$10.2 billion).

The projects cover such areas as the development of tourist destinations and construction of roads, catering and shopping facilities.

Construction and renovation



of tourist destinations will be the focal point of these investment projects, including Jianhe Hot Spring Town, Danzhai Wanda Town, Xijiang Miao village, Langde Miao village and Luanli Dong village. Promotion of local attractions

will be another important part of the meeting, according to Wang, who said that representatives of travel agencies and the media will visit local destinations such as Xiasi ancient town in Kaili city, Basha Miao village in Cong-

jiang county and Zhaoxing Dong village in Liping county. Xiao Minglong, deputy chief of the government of Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, spoke highly of the meeting's role in promoting local attractions.

He said the third Tourism Industry Development Meeting of Guizhou, which was held in Qiongdongnan in 2008, successfully presented the Xijiang Miao village to the industry. The village in the northeast



Clockwise from top right: **Dancers** perform during a lotus festival in Congjiang. **Miao ethnic people** play the *lusheng*, a pipe instrument made of bamboo, in Nancen village in Congjiang. **Shui ethnic people** in Gaojiang village, Congjiang, make sticky rice cakes using traditional techniques. **A villager** dries peppers in Miaopeng village, Congjiang. **Basha village** is known as the home of the "last hunters' tribe" in China. WU DEJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

of Leishan county, Qiongdongnan prefecture, is referred to as a living museum of the Miao ethnic culture and is listed as one of the top 300 renowned villages in China.

Xiao said the 2008 meeting also marked a beginning for a new era of tourism development in the prefecture, featuring rapid growth, improving infrastructure and services, and involvement of more people and industries.

According to local statistics, Qiongdongnan has received 224 million tourists since 2016, generating 191.1 billion yuan in revenue and maintaining an average annual growth of more than 30 percent.

Xiao said rural tourism, which is now a dominant sector in the prefecture's tourism industry, has played an important role in rural development and poverty alleviation.

Since 2017, rural tourism in Qiongdongnan has created 21,800 new jobs for local residents, according to Xiao, who added that a total of 95,500 rural residents have increased their incomes through working for or operating tourism and related businesses.

The prefecture-level official said standardization of services, protection of ethnic cultures and use of the latest information technologies will be crucial for ensuring sustainable tourism growth in Qiongdongnan.

"Guizhou's tourism authority has recently issued three regulations to standardize the industry," Xiao said, noting "We will use these regulations to improve tourism services and facilities."

He also said that a number of smart tourism platforms will be established to make tours in Qiongdongnan more convenient.

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## Congjiang county touts vast ethnic diversity

By ZHAO SHIJUN

A county with rich ethnic culture and natural wonders, Congjiang in the southeast of Guizhou province provides tourists with a broad range of experiences.

Home to such ethnic groups as the Dong, Miao, Zhuang, Yao and Shui the county is a vibrant gallery of ethnic culture.

One of the area's renowned attractions is the "seven-star Dong village group", which includes the seven villages of Luanli, Yinliang, Pingqiu, Gaozeng, Bapa, Zhanli and Xiaohuang, all in the northeast of the county. Their collective name reflects their layout, which resembles the Big Dipper constellation.

Basha in the southwest of the county is a Miao ethnic village with an intact traditional culture. The locals revere the gods of the trees, rivers, mountains, sun and moon. The men carry knives and guns to hunt in the surrounding forests. They are called "the last hunters' tribe" in the county.

Congjiang is a hilly county, with mountains and hills accounting for the largest part of its land.

Farming is not easy there, but over hundreds of years locals have constructed terraced fields to solve the problem.

Jiabang village, at the heart of the Yueliang Mountains in the west of the county, is said to have the best terraced rice paddies in China. Extending some 25 kilometers, the terraced fields are a harmonious combination of human effort and natural beauty.

The farms present various pictures in different seasons: the silhouette of farmhouses in the foggy mornings of spring, reflections of clouds on the water in summer, golden rice grains in autumn and white snow in winter. The scenery changes with each season to make it a paradise for photographers and tourists alike.

Zengchong village in the northwest of the county is famous for Dong ethnic buildings, such as roofed bridges, drum towers and traditional houses.

The locals call the roofed bridges wind and rain bridges, as they offer protection from the wind and rain. The Zengchong Drum Tower is said to be the earliest Dong drum tower in China.

The county features typical karst landforms, with the Douliu River and other smaller streams weaving through the numerous beautiful mountains and caves.

The local authorities recommend three travel routes designed to enhance tourists' visits. The first is the Douliu River line, connecting a great number of ethnic villages. The second is the line circling the Yueliang Mountains, where terraced fields are the major attraction. The third is the line linking "the seven-star villages".

Congjiang is located in the southeast of Guizhou province, about 450 kilometers from Guiyang, 252 km from Kaili and about 280 km from the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region cities of Guilin and Liuzhou.



People in Congjiang still keep fish in paddy fields, as an ecological farming tradition. WU DEJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Social welfare key in developing, improving economic conditions

By HAO NAN

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A mountainous county in Southwest China's Guizhou province has placed tourism development at the top of its agenda in recent years, launching a series of large-scale projects supported by government policies to increase social welfare in the area.

Earlier this year, Congjiang county poured 500 million yuan (\$76 million) in investment into the development of several tourism projects, including the building of terraced fields in Jiabang township and scenic spots in Xiaohuang and Zhanli villages.

The county also added 50 tourist information signs along the Xiamen-Chengdu Expressway and main roads in popular tourist areas, and built new public service facilities, including six public toilets, a tourist service center in Jiabang and a parking lot in Basha village.

The local government has



Members of the Dong ethnic group sing Grand Song.

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nurtured a group of rural cooperatives to combine tourism with local agriculture and ethnic culture. It now has about 86 such cooperatives, with nearly 14,000 impoverished residents from 3,440 households working there.

Congjiang has been listed as a protection site of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, an initiative run by the United Nations Food

and Agriculture Organization, since 2011. People in Congjiang still keep fish and ducks in paddy fields, an ecological farming tradition which dates back hundreds of years.

In May, the Macao Special Administrative Region signed nine cooperation agreements with the Congjiang government, covering education, healthcare, tourism and labor services, in a bid to help the county to alleviate poverty.



According to the agreement related to tourism, routes from Macao to Congjiang will be developed in future, and the Macao Chinese Enterprises Association will take charge of organizing 2,000 tourists to visit Congjiang annually as well as to promote the county's agricultural products.

The county established a partnership with the tourism bureau of Xiaoshan district in the city of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, to support each

other in promoting tourism and organizing related personnel training.

The newly built Xiamen-Chengdu Expressway, which opened last October, has attracted more State-owned companies to invest in tourism projects in Congjiang.

An intangible cultural heritage park in Luanli village, for example, is under construction and scheduled to be completed before the opening of the 13th Guizhou Tourism Industry Development Conference in the county on July 16.

Tourists can experience and enjoy intangible cultural heritage items in the park, including farming and traditional medical treatment popular among local ethnic communities.

In 2017, Congjiang received 2.72 million visitors, an increase of 32 percent year-on-year, and generated 2 billion yuan in revenue from tourism, up 50 percent year-on-year.

The Congjiang government's efforts to develop rural tourism have benefited many local residents, most of whom have earned significant incomes by opening *nongjiale*, or farm homestays, where tourists eat locally produced food and experience a more rural lifestyle.

Jia Meilan, a woman of the Dong ethnic group from Xiaohuang village, now operates a homestay featuring food and Dong ethnic singing performances. From 2014 to 2017, Jia earned more than 200,000 yuan through the business.

The 36-year-old learned Grand Song singing from her parents and grandfather when she was a child, and became a famous singer in the village by the age of 10. The ethnic songs feature multipart singing performed without instrumental accompaniment and act as a channel for passing on the Dong culture from generation to generation.