

Stunning natural scenery, fascinating ethnic culture, patriotic red tourism and its convenient transport links are attracting a growing number of visitors to Libo county

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Cool air greets us when we visit Libo county in South-west China's Guizhou province in mid-July; a huge contrast from the smoldering heat we have left behind in the capital.

The county is covered in dense green woods, and its forest coverage means it has pleasant climate all year round, a local guide tells us.

"Many come here to get away from the sweltering summer heat or biting winter cold," the guide says.

Yellow or red brick houses are perched on the sides of the mountains, green rice paddies below them.

They make a pretty picture with patches of white clouds plastered onto the blue sky above.

Libo with its forests, caves, lakes and waterfalls is a microcosm of Guizhou's stunning landscape scenery.

The county was put on the tourist map when it was listed as part of the South China karst world heritage site in June 2007. Last year the county was host to 11.08 million visits, up 43.23 percent over the previous year, according to local government statistics.

The completion of a high-speed railway between Guiyang, the provincial capital, and Guangzhou, capital of South China's Guangdong province, has given the local tourism industry a shot in the arm. Travelers from Guangdong province accounted for 30 percent of the visitors to Libo last year.

The Daqikong and Xiaoqikong scenic spots, the Maolan National Nature Reserve, Huangjianghe National Wetland Park and Yaoshan ancient village are all popular attractions for visitors.

Daqikong and Xiaoqikong offer lush primitive forests and breathtaking serene lakes and cascading waterfalls. Some sections of the narrow paths that run through both scenic spots offer galloping rivers on one side and splashy waterfalls on the other. Exciting rafting experiences are a must-try.

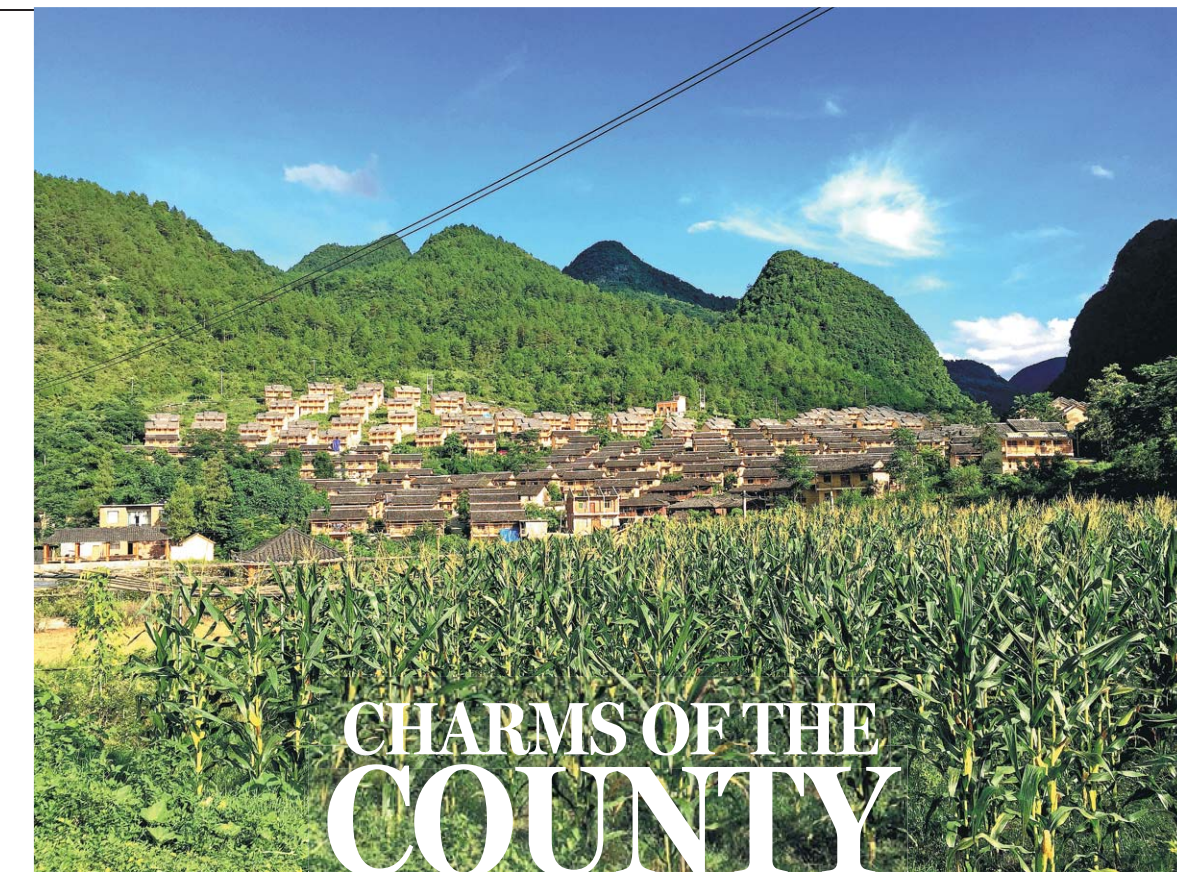
Moreover, the distinctive local ethnic culture is a big draw.

Libo, part of Qiannan Buyei and Miao autonomous prefecture, is home to 180,000 people, with 92.7 percent of the population ethnic groups, such as the Buyi, Shui, Yao and Miao peoples.

Yaoshan ancient village is just three kilometers away from Xiaoqikong and is home to the Baiku (White Pants) clan of the Miao ethnic group.

The village preserves various folk customs, and visitors can enjoy distinctive architecture, ethnic dancing and acrobatics, and buy souvenirs, including handmade purses and bracelets with Miao characteristics.

In addition to existing tourist attractions, the local authority is planning to develop approximately 30 scenic spots to cater to different tastes. The plan is for the average travelling time among local tourist



Libo, part of Qiannan Buyei and Miao autonomous prefecture, was put on the tourist map when it was listed as part of the South China karst world heritage site in June 2007. PHOTOS BY YANG FEIYUE / CHINA DAILY

attractions to be 30 minutes.

Among them, a new exhibition hall commemorating a local martyr of the Chinese Revolution and showcasing local history and culture opened to the public during our visit, giving local tourism patriotic appeal.

Various events are being hosted in the county to spice up the visitor experience, says Yin Dejun, Party secretary of Libo.

The second International Children's Animation Festival began on

Friday. The three-day event integrated animation, science and travel. The activity has helped Libo to build connections with artists from more than 30 countries and regions, including the United States, France, Brazil, Spain, Iran, Mexico, Russia and South Africa.

In addition, a rock festival is to be staged during the National Day holiday, with international bands invited to perform.

The local government is expand-

ing or optimizing the daily quota of visitors to scenic spots to 50,000 visitors a day, with the aim of attracting more than 20 million visitors each year in future. It hopes to increase to increase the revenue from tourism to 20 billion yuan (\$2.96 billion) a year.

"The ultimate goal is to turn the county into a leading travel and leisure destination, and so enable local residents enjoy a well-off life," Yin says.

Flights connecting Libo with Gui-

yang, Nanning and Changsha are available now, and direct flights to Guangzhou, Tianjin and Wuhan are to be launched, says Yin. And in three to five years, the Guiyang-Nanning high-speed rail is due to stop in Libo.

Locals residents are already benefiting from the growing number of tourists.

#### Tapping the potential

Xie Renli could only just make ends meet for her family when she

was running a small clothes business from home.

But she saw the potential of local tourism back in 2005, and decided she would like to get in on the action.

"I saw a great number of tourists come here, and some restaurants and hotels were doing a brisk business," she recalls. "I was itching to start my own business, but I didn't have any money".

She made the hard decision to leave home and work as a migrant worker for several years, so she could save some money.

She returned to the county in 2011, and with her savings and a government loan of 600,000 yuan she bought some land and built a three-story inn.

The inn features a restaurant that can cater to 150 people, and 21 rooms.

Business has been good. Her inn has enjoyed a profitable booking rate and is usually fully booked during major holidays.

She said she makes 600,000-700,000 yuan in profit each year at the moment.

"I paid off the loan the next year," she says.

The success of the inn has enabled Xie to help other locals to improve their lives.

She has hired about 30 local residents to help her run the business, including catering, room service and a washing service.

Her employees make about 36,000 yuan a year.

But Xie wasn't content with what she had and she recently took out a loan of more than 5 million yuan so she could purchase another plot of land, this one covering an area of more than 800 square meters.

She is currently building another inn with 80 rooms, which she expects to be open in time for the upcoming National Day holiday.

"I dared to borrow so much, because I am confident the tourism industry will continue to grow here," she says.

Hot springs, a plaza, and a flower park will all be constructed in the neighborhood.

"Those facilities will entice travelers to stay here longer," Xie says.

Her new inn is roughly a 20-minute drive to the east gate of Xiaoqikong and Daqikong and five-minute drive to the west gate, which will open soon.

She says she has made deals with several travel agencies and should have guests arriving as soon as the new inn is finished.

Commenting on the possible competition she faces from other hotels, Xie says the more, the merrier.

"I can only house so many people, if a very big group comes unless there is somewhere else to stay, they'll leave," she says.

"But if we have enough accommodation, more will come and stay. I will benefit from that."

## Visiting NYC this summer? Do like the locals: Hit the beach

Visiting New York City this summer? Take a break from Times Square, shopping and museums and do like the locals: Hop a train or ferry to the beach.

The beach at Coney Island, at the tip of Brooklyn and reachable by four subway lines from Manhattan, is bordered by a famous strip of amusement park rides.

You can also go by subway to Rockaway Beach, Queens, but a new ferry service now departs from the Rockaways from Wall Street's Pier 11 on the East River in Lower Manhattan, with one stop in Sunset Park, Brooklyn.

Here are some tips for a beach day in the Big Apple.

#### Coney Island

Take the D, F, N or Q subway train to the end of the line in Brooklyn (\$2.75 each way). Several small



**Tourists should know that they can spend a great time there, with having fun in the amusement park, ... having a walk at the beach and enjoying nice food."**

Daniela Prankl, tourist

amusement parks sit side by side across from the station, with the boardwalk and the Atlantic Ocean just beyond.

The famous Cyclone ride is to your left when you get off the train. It's a wooden rollercoaster that will rattle your bones. And it's easy to spot Deno's Wonder Wheel amid the colorful jumble of attractions. It's a towering Ferris wheel with two types of cars. One car slides out to the edge and back in as the wheel turns; the other car is stationary. You'll be asked which car you prefer when you board.

Have a hot dog from Nathan's and wander down to the water to dip your toes or take a swim. To your right as you face the ocean, there's a pier where you'll find fishermen chatting in various languages — Russian, Spanish, Chinese — while tending to their catch.

Just remember: This isn't Disney World. It's a place with old-fashioned charm — the seaside park dates to the 19th century — as well as a big dose of urban grit. You may see litter on the beach and on a hot day, smell garbage in the alleys between the rides. Welcome to New York, folks!

Don't worry about water safety, though: Water quality is monitored by city health officials and lifeguards watch the swimmers. But don't leave your belongings unattended. Have one person in your group stay with them on the sand while others get wet.

Daniela Prankl, visiting with her sister from Austria, said the long subway ride from Manhattan to Coney Island "was absolutely worth it." She enjoyed seeing New Yorkers relaxing at the beach, in contrast to "busy Manhattan."

"Tourists should know that they

can spend a great time there, with having fun in the amusement park, watching fisherman, having a walk at the beach and enjoying nice food," she said.

#### Rockaway

The trip by ferry from Wall Street in Manhattan to Beach 108th Street in the Rockaways is only an hour on the water. But hundreds of people have been lining up for the boat at times, so the wait to board can be long, though extra departures have been added to the one-boat-per-hour schedule (\$2.75 each way, tickets sold on-site or online). The ferry offers spectacular views of One World Trade and the skyscrapers of Lower Manhattan.

Rockaway is famous for big waves and even has designated surfing areas. Elsewhere body-boarding and bodysurfing rule. Just watch

out for strong currents and churning water that can dislodge sand beneath your feet as you wade in.

After the ferry arrives, you can hop a free shuttle bus to various beaches, or walk the few blocks from the bay side of the Rockaway peninsula where the boat drops you off, to the ocean side where the beaches are. You'll pass shops and eateries along 108th Street as you walk from the ferry to the ocean side, or look for concession stands at Beach 106th Street, Beach 97th Street and Beach 86th Street. Favorite local foodie spots include Tacoway Beach, at 302 Beach 87th St., and Caracas Arepa Bar, 106-01 Shore Front Parkway.

Rockaway was hit hard by flooding from Superstorm Sandy in 2012. Restoration included beach grass plantings and a new concrete boardwalk.

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