

40 YEARS ON | BIJIE, GUIZHOU

Rural tourism helps Bijie bloom

City famed for its sea of azaleas fosters industry to lift incomes

By **YANG JUN** in Bijie, Guizhou, and **LI YANG** in Beijing

Named for its sea of azalea flowers, the Baili Azalea Administrative Zone, comprising 68 villages across some 700 square kilometers of hilly land in Bijie, Guizhou province, is an experimental zone in a core poverty alleviation area.

The zone has struck a balance between ecological preservation and economic growth by boosting sightseeing and cultural experience tourism.

Rural tourism has created 46,000 jobs for residents, most of whom would otherwise work far from home as migrant laborers, according to the local government.

Last year, tourists from home and abroad made 798,000 visits to the zone — which has 16 characteristic villages, more than 20 scenic spots, 391 restaurants and homestays and 6,700 beds for travelers — generating revenue of 585 million yuan (\$84.3 million) and helping increase average household income by 10,600 yuan a year.

The zone's administrative committee is working with travel companies and farming cooperatives to manage tourism resources.

The committee focuses on improving infrastructure facilities and public services, while the companies and cooperatives run and promote scenic spots.

All stakeholders have attached great importance to raising environmental awareness and encouraging residents to protect the local ecology.

Companies and cooperatives evaluate and rate the zone's restaurants and homestays in terms of their facilities, management and services, pushing businesses to rectify any problems.

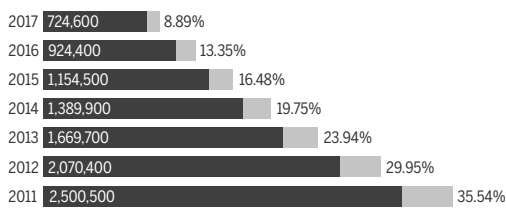
Farmers have also planted about 3,000 hectares of flowers, fruits, mushrooms, herbs and other plants that are more profitable than corn,



A tourist and her daughter dressed in traditional clothes pose for a photo in the Baili Azalea Administrative Zone in Bijie, Guizhou province. QU HONGLUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Changes in Bijie's impoverished population and poverty rate, 2011-17



Note: The poverty line is annual personal income of 2,300 yuan (\$330).

Source: Bijie government data

CHINA DAILY

which locals have grown for generations, and have created packages for tourists to experience the planting and harvest seasons firsthand.

The city government has resettled poor residents from remote, high-altitude areas to the foot of the mountains, where transportation is more convenient.

"The living environment is much better. I didn't expect that my family could move into a new three-story house, equipped with running water and electricity, without paying a thing," said Zhao Anyou, one of 116 people relocated from Yuanyan village to government-subsidized homes in the town of Pudi.

Cooperatives organize at least five training sessions a

year for farmers like Zhao, to equip them with the skills they need for their new lifestyles, and are constantly improving management and services.

Xiao Tianyao, 92, from Luzhou, Sichuan province, stayed with her daughter in the Baili zone from more than a month over the summer. She told Bijie Daily, "I didn't anticipate finding a perfect combination of cool weather, fresh air, beautiful scenery, modern facilities, considerate services and hospitable people in such a remote, inland, mountainous area as Bijie."

She added that she hopes to return to the area every summer.

During a recent inspection of the zone, Zhou Jiankun, Bijie's Party secretary, called

on local officials to further improve public services, particularly in healthcare, education, infrastructure and hygiene.

Experts said the seamless convergence of management experience, capital, land and labor resources are the key factor that has helped increase farmers' incomes and raised agricultural output efficiency.

Companies and cooperatives are making joint efforts to extend the industrial chain of rural tourism by building workshops to process and produce agricultural products and tourist commodities, such as silk azaleas, traditional outfits and specialty foods.

Authorities have paid special attention to protecting

and industrializing local culture. Fuyuan village, for example, was one of the first to be distinguished for its ethnic characteristics, while the Yi ethnic group's floral sacrifice ceremony has been recognized as Bijie's intangible cultural heritage, and traditional torch festival has become a major tourist draw.

Thanks to effects of rural tourism on poverty relief, the Baili zone was named one of China's 280 tourism poverty alleviation demonstration projects.

The zone is only one example of Bijie's poverty alleviation endeavors. Since 1988, when the State Council earmarked the city as a national poverty alleviation experimental area, Bijie's impoverished population has shrunk by 5.94 million (about 700,000 people still live below the poverty line), and the poverty rate has dropped from 65.1 percent to 8.89 percent.

In Bijie, the average personal disposable income in rural areas has risen from 182 yuan per year in 1987 to 8,473 yuan per year in 2017. Meanwhile, GDP has increased by 103 times.

Contact the writers at liyong@chinadaily.com.cn

Experts help farmers in Guizhou get more out of land

By **YANG JUN** in Bijie, Guizhou and **LI YANG** in Beijing

Luhua township in Bijie, Guizhou province, provides a good example on how to kill two birds with one stone — poverty alleviation and stopping desertification.

The township government organized agricultural technicians to help the farmers plant economically viable crops, such as plums, pumpkins, peppers, oilseed rape and soybeans, that are suitable for local soil and water conditions in the comparatively infertile mountain farmland. The new crops are replacing corn, which farmers have cultivated extensively for generations.

New reservoirs have been built in the mountains to collect water for use in irrigation during dry seasons, and government-funded soil enhancement and afforestation help improve the regional ecology and environment.

Moreover, the government provides startup capital to buy saplings, seeds and fertilizers for the farmers, as well as subsidies to planters of the economic crops, depending on the size of their farm.

Zhao Shaoxiang, a physically challenged farmer from Wanqing village who farms 0.5 hectares of mountain land, said his annual return per mu — a Chinese measurement equal to one-15th of a hectare — increased from less than 2,000 yuan (\$290) to about 5,000 yuan after planting new crops under the guidance of expert technicians.

"I never expected the mountain farmland held such economic value," Zhao said. "The government's tailor-made plan for our village has made a big difference in our lives over a short period of time."

Chen Biao, director of the Wanqing village committee, said, "The engagement of the

professional agricultural agents is the key factor."

Only professional pruning and using thread to pull the small branches in certain ways — to ensure the leaves of the plum trees can enjoy as much sunshine as possible — guarantee that the plums will develop fully, he added.

Peng Yong, a resident of nearby Shitong community,

said the plum trees, which take only two years to bear fruit, instantly increase residents' incomes.

"The change in my hometown is apparent and has been virtually instant. Rocky desert areas have shrunk and given way to flourishing orchards," Peng said.

Li Xian, director of Qianxi county's desertification control center, said: "We take care

of natural forests, and pay attention to planting forest and helping farmers cultivate economic crops. We attach great importance to preserving the ecology and environment to ensure the model is sustainable in the long run."

In the past three years, Qianxi has turned 50.27 square kilometers of rocky desert into forests, farmlands or orchards, Li said.

40 YEARS ON | PEOPLE

Ex-hunter preserves ethnic skills in Tibet

By **PALDEN NYIMA** and **DAQIONG** in Manling, Tibet

Dawa is an ethnic Lhopa man living in the Tibet autonomous region's Manling, a county with a long history in growing medicinal plants and developing Tibetan medicinal science.

Surrounded by the snow-capped mountains of Nyingchi and with dense forests in the center — a lush, green land filled with fruit trees — the county is home to the small ethnic group of which Dawa is a part.

The Lhopas have been living in the Himalayan region since ancient times. Today it is home to more than 3,000.

"We used to live on the mountain and in the forest. We had no livestock and only limited fields for planting corn. We had a miserable life suffering from hunger and difficulties," said Dawa, who is in his early 50s.

Like his ancestors, Dawa was a hunter's son. He lived on the mountain before the 1980s.

At that time, life was hard. Having lived in simple wooden shack, his family often suffered from hunger.

In 1985, the Lhopas were relocated to the valley with the support of the government, and they were provided new houses, fields and livestock. According to Dawa, 80 people in 18 households were relocated from remote mountain areas to Tsedro village in 1985.

Since then, the number of households has increased to 41, with more than 190 people.

Dawa is one of the Lhopas who benefited from the change. He worked as a village official for many years and now is a respected maker of Lhopa costumes.

"Thanks to the relocation, our livelihoods improved dramatically," he said. "We had a fair opportunity to benefit from modern conveniences and technology, and our peo-



Dawa is dedicated to making the traditional costumes of the Lhopa ethnic group. PALDEN NYIMA / CHINA DAILY

ple have been benefiting from roads, education, living conditions, hygiene and food."

For instance, in their days on the mountain, the Lhopas had only one doctor who lived in a distant village and was capable of treating only minor diseases.

Midwives assisted in births at home, frequently resulting in infant injuries and deaths, he recalled.

Now, in Manling, the Lhopas have a village clinic. With insurance, their medical spending is also partly covered, Dawa said. His family now has a reasonable income.

An increasing number of tourists inspired Dawa to start his own Lhopa costume business in 2008.

It contributes to his family's income, but for him it expresses how much he values culture and history.

"Few people can still make our costumes. Our culture needs to catch up with changes," Dawa said, noting that the Lhopa clothing is listed as a regional intangible culture heritage.

Dawa learned the skills from elders while living on the mountain. Nowadays, however, obtaining genuine materials — animal skins and fur — is a challenge.

Instead of hunting, artificial materials available in the market are purchased. Some people use stored animal skins and furs that they hunted decades ago while living on the mountain.

In addition to costume-making and collecting herbs, Dawa's family raises Tibetan pigs. Last year, his family's income was more than 60,000 yuan (\$8,650).

According to the Manling government, GDP reached 1.4 billion yuan last year, 321 times that of 1978. Revenues in 2017 were 123 million yuan, dramatically up from 175,000 yuan in 1978.

Dawa said costume-making is important work. For him and his people, the traditional Lhopa dress is beautiful, and the younger generations can read their history in the clothing.

As the sky was darkening one afternoon, Dawa was making a costume but found it hard to see what he was doing, so he turned on an electric light. Instantly, the room was filled with brightness and warmth.

"I hope to pass on the tradition of Lhopa costume-making to my children and others in the village," he said. "Next, I want to conduct a workshop to pass along the skills."

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Ningbo Maritime Court Auction Notice

The "FIVE STARS BEIJING" ship will be auctioned on the Taobao Judicial Auction Platform from Dec 6 to 7. For details, please refer to auction announcements, auction notices, and shipping samples on Taobao's judicial auction platform (website: <http://sf.taobao.com>).

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The deadline for submission of an expression of interest is 5 p.m. (Hong Kong time) on 23 November, 2018. Interested parties who wish to submit an expression of interest or obtain further information, please contact Ms Karly Chuang on +852 3768 4603 (email: karly.chuang@fticonsulting.com), Mr Joe Tam on +852 3768 4635 (email: joe.tam@fticonsulting.com) or Mr Edmund Lo on +852 3768 4648 (email: edmund.lo@fticonsulting.com).

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