

LIFE



From left: A foreign content creator in Wanfenglin Scenic Area, Guizhou province. Paragliders over Longyin Mountain. International friends enjoy water activities on Wanfeng Lake in Runlong Bay. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Scaling the heights of beauty

Guizhou offers stunning scenery, adventures and guarantees memories to last a lifetime, reports **Nathan Williams**.

“Colorful Guizhou” is a phrase that resonated with me throughout my enchanting tour of Xingyi city and Anlong county. However, it hardly does justice to the breathtaking firsthand experience of witnessing the vibrant tapestry of lush mountains, crystal-clear rivers and mesmerizing sunsets that this region has to offer. My journey commenced in the Wanfenglin Scenic Area, often referred to as the “forest with 10,000 peaks”. As we explored the park, we encountered remarkable man-made treasures, such as a marriage registration center, resembling a colossal love heart embedded in the landscape.

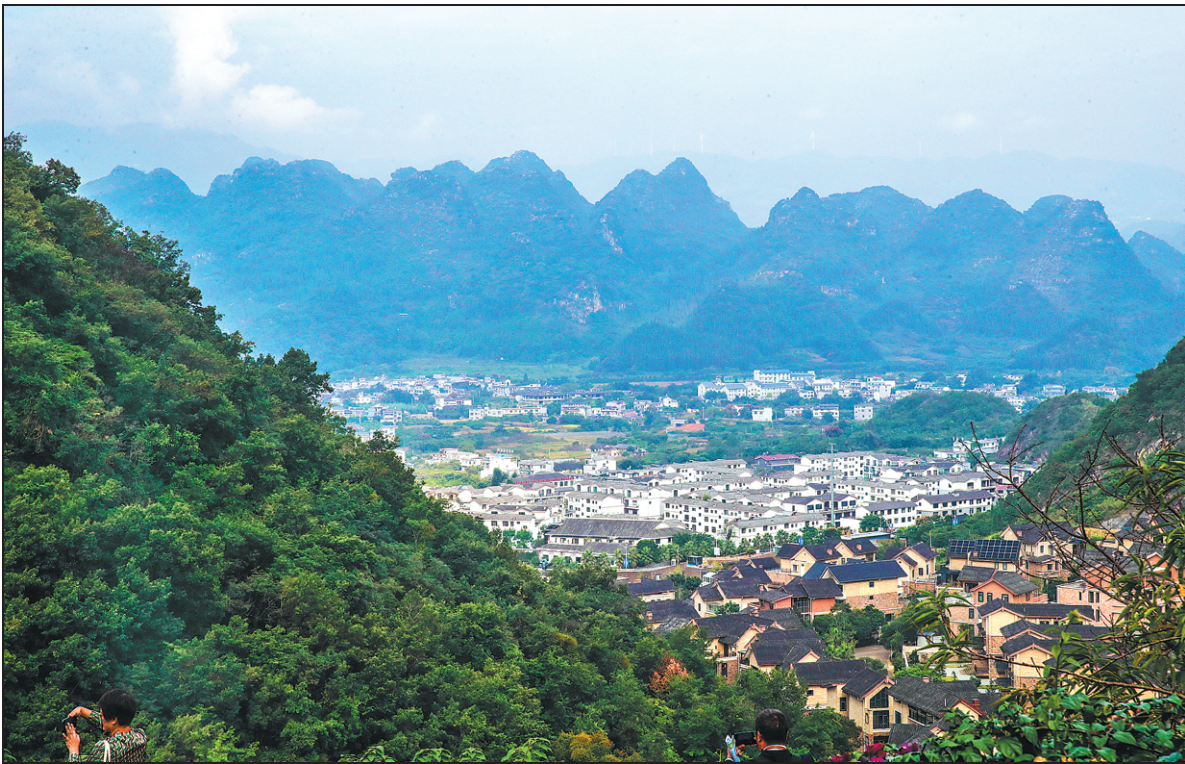
This center, located within a AAAA-level National Park, opened its doors on Chinese Valentine’s Day, or Qixi festival, which falls on Aug 22 this year, and has since become a cherished destination for couples embarking on their matrimonial journey.

While strolling through the park, I was drawn to the river by the entrancing melodies of a man playing traditional Chinese music on an electric recorder.

This is just one example of the seamless integration of modernity with Mother Nature’s playground. “I come here every day to enjoy myself, to stay young. I cherish this spot, gazing at the rainbow bridge and the distant peaks,” 59-year-old retired English teacher Liu Yong-feng told me.

After this delightful serenade, I rejoined my tour group to explore another hidden gem — a village built in the style of the Bouyei ethnic group. Here, I marveled at beautifully woven clothes and handicrafts on display and available for purchase. A highlight of the exhibition was an elegant array of tie-dye clothing, showcasing one of the numerous cottage industries that are part of a broader rural vitalization initiative in the area.

Our next adventure led us to Wanfeng Lake in Runlong Bay,



Above: Guizhou province is a vibrant tapestry of lush mountains, crystal-clear rivers, and is made even more appealing by the warmth of its people. Below: A foreigner joins the local performers at the International Mountain Tourism and Outdoor Sports Conference last month. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

where we embarked on kayaks to immerse ourselves in the serenity of the surrounding valley. Wanfeng Lake boasts a unique distinction as the home of the current Guinness World Record for the world’s longest wild fishing platform.

Covering an area of 176 square kilometers, this awe-inspiring body of water offers visitors the opportunity to jet-ski, paddleboard, canoe, kayak and go tubing. However, as we floated on the lake, with only the gentle sound of waves caressing our kayaks, we found peace more precious than any thrill.



headed to Longyin Mountain to witness paragliding over the valley below. The view was nothing short of exquisite. As I sat on the grass, basking in the warmth of the sun, lost in reverie, my newfound friends joined me. For a brief but special moment, we exchanged stories of past adventures and mis-spent youth.

Lounging on the hillside of the mountain, the view evoked cherished memories, as if they were being painted in the clouds against the piercing blue sky.

Our final adventure took us to Anlong county and the Anlong Limestone Resort. Wu Bin, the executive director and owner of the hotel, graciously allowed us to experience a taste of luxury, if only for an afternoon.

From his picture-perfect hotel, we gazed over the valley and explored some of the most opulent rooms I have ever seen. To cap off this lavish experience, Wu took us down into the valley to enjoy adrenaline-fueled action on his quad bikes.

The last time I drove a quad bike was when I was 10, but even after 26 years, I felt like a child again. The bike roared to life, dirt flew, and the wind rushed past as I zoomed around the dirt track, feeling like a daredevil. My inner child reveled in the moment.

This year, Guizhou hosted the International Mountain Tourism and Outdoor Sports Conference, and I can’t imagine a more fitting location for such a celebration. My experience in Guizhou mirrors the province itself — a treasure that will remain with me for years to come.

Perhaps one day, as I find myself atop a mountain peak or gliding across a pristine lake, the memories of this remarkable journey will play out in the clouds, just like that beautiful sunny day on Longyin Mountain.

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An enlightening cultural and natural odyssey

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In southwestern China, there is a province shrouded in mystery and natural beauty waiting to be discovered by adventurous travelers. Today, I invite you to join me on a captivating journey through Guizhou, with a focus on the city of Xingyi and the Qianxinan Bouyei and Miao autonomous prefecture.

As someone who has had the privilege of exploring this hidden gem, I am excited to share the profound impact it has had on me, and how it can inspire international friends to embark on their own Guizhou adventure.

Allow me to set the stage with a verse from Luo Xianbing, a Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) poet, which beautifully encapsulates the splendor of Guizhou’s natural beauty: “The horse’s head hangs upside down over a thousand rocky peaks, while the tiger descends diagonally through a forest of ten thousand trees in the clouds.”

This poem resonates with

Guizhou because of its rich cultural tapestry. The Qianxinan autonomous prefecture is home to a multitude of ethnic groups, each with its own distinct traditions, languages and customs.

During my travels, I had chances to immerse myself in their daily lives, conducting interviews and gaining profound insights into their lifestyles, attitudes and living philosophy. These interactions illuminated the vibrant mosaic that is China, and emphasized the harmonious coexistence of cultures in this region.

The individuals I encountered in Guizhou left an indelible mark on my heart. Their warmth, hospitality and unwavering sense of community were inspiring. Through meaningful conversations with people I now call friends, I scratched the surface of the age-old agricultural practices, exquisite traditional crafts and the unbreakable bonds that unite their communities. These interviews were more than mere exchanges of words; they served as windows into the hearts of the people of Guizhou.

But let’s not overlook the province’s natural splendor. With landscapes that include lush green mountains, serene lakes and cascading waterfalls, it is a veritable paradise for nature enthusiasts. I learned that the people of Guizhou maintained a profound connection to the land and their commitment to preserving it had been unwavering for generations.

Guizhou can inspire international friends outside China to explore its remarkable bounty.

First, by sharing the stories and insights from my interactions with people on social media, I’ve piqued the interest of countless friends abroad. Learning about the lives, attitudes and values of Guizhou’s inhabitants has ignited a spark of curiosity among the online community, motivating them to consider it as a destination for cultural immersion and understanding.

Furthermore, I’ve witnessed how Guizhou’s dedication to preserving its cultural heritage and environment resonates with travelers seeking authentic and responsible experiences.

Encouraging international friends to explore Guizhou fosters cultural understanding and promotes sustainable tourism. It allows them to connect with the rich traditions of China’s ethnic groups and glean wisdom from the profound respect local residents have for the environment, while also grasping the authentic narrative of China and Guizhou.

In conclusion, my journey through Guizhou provided me with a deeper appreciation for its cultural richness, natural splendor, and the unwavering spirit of its communities.

I firmly believe that by sharing these memorable experiences with each international visitor to come and exploring this extraordinary province, we can enrich our lives and strengthen the bonds of friendship and understanding.

Let’s open our hearts and inspire others to embark on a voyage of discovery to this remarkable part of the world.

Guizhou awaits with open arms, ready to reveal its hidden treasures to all who dare to explore its wonders.



Top: Ethnic groups wear distinct traditional clothing during a performance last month in Guizhou province. Above: International friends pose for a group photo for the China Storyteller Partnership tour in Guizhou. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY