

CHINA

Seniors take big strides in world of travel

Adult children give packages as gifts to help their elders get well-deserved rest

By CHENG SI
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Interest in travel for those over 60 years old grew in 2018, and their passion for trips is expected to continue to increase this year, travel agencies said.

Lvmama, an online travel agency headquartered in Shanghai, said trips by seniors saw a year-on-year increase of 50 percent last year.

Senior travelers, on average, spent five days and 3,600 yuan (\$530) on each trip.

The agency said that purchasing tour packages for seniors has become a popular choice for younger generations to show their care and love for parents.

About 60 percent of packages reserved for seniors on its platform were ordered by adult children who viewed them as gifts or bonuses for their elderly parents, the agency said.

Ctrip, another online travel agency, added: "Retired people and those seniors who are unemployed at home have abundant free time. Traveling is a good way to spend their time and is also good news for their children, who are busy with their own lives."

Senior travelers, according to Ctrip, favor group tour packages over the self-guided ones popular among with younger people. More than 80 percent of the agency's senior users purchased group tour packages over the past year.

Zhang Qi, a project director at Ctrip, said, "The group tours can make them more secure. Safety and being comfortable are always stressed by seniors, as well as the quality of the tour. They've recognized the defects of so-called low-priced packages. Now they also emphasize the social interaction and spiritual experiences of the trip."

Domestically, the most popular destinations for seniors last year were Beijing; Guilin in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region; Xiamen in Fujian province; Gui-

Senior favorites

Top 10 tourist destinations on the Chinese mainland for older people in 2018

1. Beijing
2. Guilin, Guangxi
3. Xiamen, Fujian
4. Guiyang, Guizhou
5. Urumqi, Xinjiang
6. Kunming, Yunnan
7. Chongqing
8. Zhangjiajie, Hunan
9. Yichang, Hubei
10. Sanya, Hainan

SOURCE: CTRIP

yang in Guizhou province; and Urumqi in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, Ctrip said.

Senior travelers reached 858 overseas destinations in 74 countries and regions in 2018, with Thailand, Japan and Vietnam being their top choices, it said.

Cheng Lu, a 30-year-old from Beijing, ordered a package for her parents to visit Japan during the recent New Year holiday.

"The most important issue is definitely safety, so I chose a medium-priced package tour that cost about 10,000 yuan per person," she said. "My mother and father helped take care of my newborn daughter the last few months. It was a good chance for them to relax."

The number of seniors in China is expected to reach 255 million by 2020 with their spending expected to exceed 7 trillion yuan, which will help unleash the potential of a tourism market focusing on seniors, according to a blue book by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism released a guideline in October to encourage travel agencies to develop more packages tailored for seniors, as well as insurance products.

Uniforms with GPS trackers keep kids under surveillance

By YANG JUN in Guiyang and ZOU SHUO in Beijing

Schools in Guizhou province and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region are using "smart uniforms" embedded with GPS trackers to make sure students do not skip class and to assure parents of their children's attendance and safety.

Nine schools in Guizhou and two in Guangxi have introduced the uniforms, which were developed by Guiyang-based tech firm Guizhou Guanyu Technology.

The company said in a statement that when students enter the school, the time and date is recorded along with a short video that parents can access via a mobile app.

Facial recognition further ensures that each uniform is worn by its rightful owner to prevent students from cheating the system. Skipping classes triggers an alarm to inform teachers and parents of the truancy, while an automatic voice alarm activates if a student walks out of school without permission, it said.

Wang Ping, head of the labor union at Xiuwen High School at Xiuwen county in Guizhou, said more than 1,000 first-grade students in the school have begun to wear the uniform for more than a month.

Each student has four uniforms, two for summer and two for winter. The uniforms cost 320 yuan (\$47) in total, about the same price as common uniforms, Wang told China Daily in a phone interview.

When students enter the school, classrooms or dormitories, the sys-

tem can showcase the students' information, including name, photo and class to the school staff and send the time and date to parents' mobile phones, he said.

Zhao Shengyong, father of a first-grade student in Xiuwen High School, said he is happy with the uniform's monitoring function.

"The school is a boarding school, so it is hard for me to parent my son at home. This uniform can put some pressure on him and let him know that I will be notified if he skips classes," he said. "It is hard to parent a teenager, and I need all the help I can get."

Li Daguo, the company's legal representative, said only parents and teachers can access the information recorded by the uniforms. He added that the company is committed to protecting students' privacy. "The smart uniform does not track students' every single move all the time," he said.

But Chu Zhaohui, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Education Sciences, said monitoring students' behavior at young age may harm their psychological health.

"When one feels monitored, they will behave differently and act against their own will, which may induce more rebellious behavior," he said.

When parents put their own wishes before their children's, the children will lose the ability to make decisions for themselves, he added.

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Robotic wonder



A child is attracted by robot Xiaotu at a public service center in the Xiaoshan district of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Wednesday. The robot can issue numbers for waiting, provide simple public service guidance and recharge a mobile device. The center opened on Wednesday, enabling residents and companies to complete administrative procedures in one run by integrating government resources. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Frenetic delivery pace isn't slowing down

By HE QI in Shanghai
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China's booming on-demand services market has created millions of delivery job opportunities for migrant workers from rural areas, whose quick work has become indispensable in urban life.

Despite long working hours and intense deadlines, delivery jobs have allowed many to settle in cities and earn a decent salary to support their families, according to two recent reports released by the country's two leading services.

In its 2018 Insight Report on Deliverymen released on Friday, Fengniao Delivery — which is owned by internet giant Alibaba Group and is responsible for its online-to-offline, or O2O, delivery services, including its food catering arm Ele.me — said 84 percent of its 3 million registered delivery drivers come from rural areas.

Meituan, which accounted for 41 percent of China's food delivery market in the first quarter of 2018, compared with Ele.me's 55 percent, released a similar report in May. The report, based on a survey on Meituan's more than 38,000 registered delivery drivers, said more than three-quarters of the company's nearly 2.3 million registered delivery riders have rural origins.

While Anhui province tops the hometown list of couriers registered with both companies, Henan



Food couriers gather to advocate better traffic safety in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in November. LIAN GUOQING / FOR CHINA DAILY

and Sichuan provinces are also major sources of the delivery workforce at Meituan.

The report from Fengniao shows the average driver to be 29 years old; the report from Meituan said that more than 80 percent of its riders were born in the 1980s and 1990s. Each driver, or rider, delivers 48 orders per day on average, racking up a total distance of 150 kilometers, the reports said.

Despite long working hours and intense deadlines at peak hours, the couriers are attracted to the city by the flexible working hours, low entry requirements and relatively high pay.

Both reports said most delivery drivers earn 4,000 to 8,000 yuan (\$584 to \$1,168) per month, outstripping the 2017 average monthly salary of employees in the domestic private sector, which was 3,813 yuan.

While males still dominate in the delivery service, more females — accounting for around 10 percent — are joining in as a part-time job, the reports said.

The work attracts well-educated people, too, with both companies saying 16 to 20 percent of their registered deliverymen have a bachelor or associate degree.

Unlike the previous generation

of migrant workers, these deliverymen tend to settle in a city for many years partly because their service has become embedded in urban life. More than half of Meituan's drivers said they have been living in the city where they currently work for more than nine years.

According to Chinese research firm iiMedia Research, instant delivery in the first three quarters of 2018 exceeded 15.3 billion orders, more than double the 6.3 billion in the same period of 2017. Analysts from iiMedia Research believe the demand for instant delivery services will continue to expand.

Chen Longjun, from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, has been a deliveryman in Shanghai for more than three years. He's been dubbed "order delivery king" for delivering an average of 100 orders per day. He earns 30,000 yuan per month.

Chen, 31, said he works 15 hours per day but still appreciates the job since it helps him afford an 80-square-meter apartment in Jiashan, Zhejiang province.

"Good traffic facilities and conditions are the reasons for me to deliver in Shanghai," Chen said.

"We bear a lot of burdens when we have fewer orders, especially in harsh weather conditions or during emergencies, but the job allows me to make friends and, more importantly, to improve my economic condition."

In urban jungle gym, Kashgar's young athletes play

By WANG KEJU in Kashgar, Xinjiang
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Tucked into a corner of Kashgar's old city, near the busy and bustling hat bazaar, is a cluster of narrow alleys and a range of high and low houses, one sitting slightly uphill from the other. To Mardan Alip, the buildings and dead ends looked like an opportunity: a chance for fun, something to jump on.

The 18-year-old high school student in the oasis city of 500,000 people in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, was always jumping, vaulting and flipping in the air, using whatever structures he could find — ranging from park benches to rooftops.

In many cities of Xinjiang, the latest outdoor craze for the young is parkour — a training regimen that started in France and has gone viral worldwide.

The first time Mardan saw a parkour video online three years ago, he fell in love with this sport. He began by learning how to jump precisely from the ground to stairs, landing on his feet again and not breaking anything in the process. For him this was somewhat difficult at first.



Mardan Alip performs the parkour move "moonstep" in the old town of Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"I had practiced for two years and fell onto the ground very hard countless times before I learned to backflip. It felt so cool when I finally made it," he said.

Mardan didn't have professional coaches, relying solely on videos online for examples to imitate. He has been injured many times in recent years because of a lack of expert guidance. He had a sprained ankle, which prevented him from

walking for three months, and an injury to his collarbone after practicing a 360-degree backflip. Yet his passion for parkour has never diminished.

Mardan eventually made friends with a bunch of like-minded parkour lovers and they established their own team. They share the new spots they find that are perfect for parkour and take care of each other when injuries crop up.

They have been paying attention to professional competitions, either domestic or international, and waited to watch the live broadcast on the internet. They repeatedly watched the technical moves and felt that they could do those themselves.

Their biggest obstacle? Their parents. From the older generation's point of view it's not only damaging their health but also ruining their future.

"When I made two backflips on the roof of an old house two years ago, I lost my balance and fell to the ground. Not far away, my mother saw it happen. She was so frightened at the time that she locked me up at home," he said.

But his persistence in practice and determination to go to a college in Beijing — where there are more opportunities for parkour — showed a bright side, and he persuaded his parents to support him.

"It is not a race or any kind of competition to me," Mardan said. "Rather it is a way for you to compete against the world around you, showing that you can conquer obstacles and take a more efficient route than the one society dictates," he said.