

LOCAL GOVT SETS ITS FUTURE PLANS IN STONE



Stone craftworks created by artists from Anshun and across China are displayed at the first Guizhou International Stone Exposition. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By YANG JUN and DONG XIANWU

Anshun, a city in Southwest China's Guizhou province, has a long history of using stones as building materials.

During the early years of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang sent a 300,000-strong army to quash a rebellion in the southwestern part of China.

Later, when the army was stationed in Anshun, many of the rank and file soldiers and officers settled in the region to start families and work on the reclaimed farmland while still serving as active members of the army.

They left a number of precious legacies including the Tunbao ancient villages which are scattered throughout Anshun. Tunbao means "fortress", and the people that lived in the villages are called the "Tunbao People".

The Tunbao villages are a real kingdom of stones that feature cobbled roads and numerous stone constructions.

In Anshun, the widespread use of stones as building materials continues to this day.

Marble is an abundant resource in counties such as Zhenning, Ziyun, Guanling and Puding. It is widely used as an ornamental item for furnishing the interior of buildings and is also used by artists for sculptures and carvings.

The modern stone processing industry in Anshun began in the early 1980s, however the development of the sector was somewhat ponderous until the Guizhou provincial government proposed an industry-specific plan in 2010.

Seeing its rich resources and market potential, businesses from outside Guizhou began to invest in Anshun's stone industry. Local firms including Chenchun, Zhongzhang and Boji have since displayed strong growth momentum.

Global exposure

To help launch the industry on a global scale, Anshun hosted the first Guizhou International Stone Exposition from Oct 29 to 31 last year.

The first National Stone Carving and Design Competition was held concurrently

If you go

The second Guizhou International Stone Exposition will be held in the Duocai Wanxiang Tourism City in the Anshun Economic and Technological Development Zone.

The site is 4.5 kilometers west of Anshun city center and about 99 km southwest of Guiyang, the provincial capital of Guizhou.

Those arriving in Guizhou by plane should transfer to Anshun at the Jinyang Bus Terminal.

Numerous buses run from Anshun to the Duocai Wanxiang Tourism City, and you can also take a coach from the Guizhou Provincial Stadium Coach Station. Coaches are available from 7 am and run every 30 minutes.

If you plan to take a self-drive tour, the site can be reached via the Guiyang-Huangguoshu Expressway or 320 National Highway.



city now has 12 large and medium-sized stone processing enterprises, which can produce 34.5 million square meters of stone products per year.

Industry park plan

Last December, the Anshun city government released a plan for establishing a Belt and Road Stone Industry Park.

The park is located in Dingqi township in Zhenning county, some 27 kilometers from Anshun city center.

According to the plan, the park will be home to some 300 stone processing and trading enterprises by 2020, and they will produce 60 million square meters of stone products and generate annual sales volume of 5 billion yuan.

The plan said the park will produce 70 million square meters of stone building materials and up to 2 million pieces of stone craftwork annually by 2025, with yearly sales revenue of 30 billion yuan.

It is predicted that the park will create up to 25,000 jobs for local people, giving a strong boost to the local economy.

In addition, the park will promote the development of a number of related industries including construction, logistics, financial, catering and advertising, with an estimated annual output value of up to 8 billion yuan.

Building on the success of the first Guizhou International Stone Exposition, Anshun will host the second edition of the expo from Aug 26 to 29. According to the event's organizers, 240 companies, including 30 from overseas, will exhibit their products, technologies and services at the expo.

In addition to the second National Stone Carving and Design Competition, a national congress for stone quarries and mines and a series of business promotional fairs will be held during the expo.

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rently as an important part of the expo.

The first stone expo had attracted about 110,000 visitors, including 15,000 industry professionals.

Agreements on 24.3 billion yuan (\$3.66 billion) worth of investment deals and 32.25 billion yuan worth of trade deals were signed during the expo.

Marco Maher Laila, deputy chairman of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in South China, described the expo as "a gala that gathers the best stone products from China and the world", and expressed his hope that the event would promote the development of Guizhou's stone industry.

Local entrepreneurs

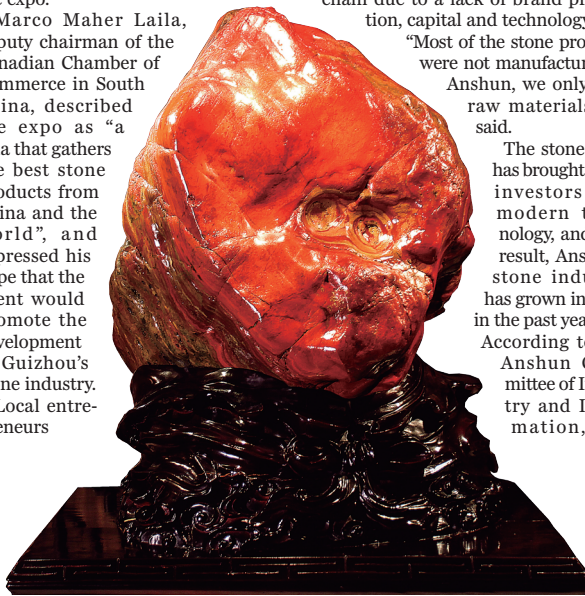
are optimistic that the expo will help upgrade the stone industry in Anshun by attracting more investors and modern technologies.

Li Chenchun, chairman of Chenchun Stone Industry Co Ltd, said that previously, local companies had only been engaged in the lower end of the value chain due to a lack of brand promotion, capital and technology.

"Most of the stone products were not manufactured in Anshun, we only sold raw materials," Li said.

The stone expo has brought more investors and modern technology, and as a result, Anshun's stone industry has grown in scale in the past year.

According to the Anshun Committee of Industry and Information, the



Eyes of Wisdom: The stone that was featured at last year's stone expo is a gold-award winner at an exhibition in Anshun in 2007. Industry insiders estimate its value at 270 million yuan (\$40.7 million). PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Exposition showcases region's natural treasures

By ZHUAN TI
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The annual Guizhou International Stone Exposition held in Anshun is both a stage for businesspeople and investors and a gala that will draw fans of precious and unusual stones and rocks including fossils, gems, mineral crystals and other ornamental stones.

Enthusiasts planning to visit this year's expo, which will take place from Aug 26 to 29, are recommended

to visit the Singe Stone Expo Garden in Anshun Economic and Technological Development Zone, which is the largest exhibition venue in China for precious and unusual stones.

The garden was established in 2004, with a total investment of 3 billion yuan (\$451 million). With a floor space of nearly 40,000 square meters, the facility has 28 exhibition halls that house about 40,000 collections.

The facility consists of a museum for paleontological fossils and 10 exhibition halls.

Exhibits in the fossil museum include fossils of ancient fish, dinosaurs and other ancient organisms. Perhaps the most eye-catching item on display is the "New China Dragon", a 17-meter-long dinosaur fossil discovered in Guanling county. It was so named because it resembles the legendary Chinese animal.

A number of locally produced precious stones are displayed in the 10 exhibitions halls, with those produced in Machang township, Puding county, featuring a great variety of colors and patterns.



New China Dragon: It is unearthed in Guanling county and is said to be the fossil of an ancient marine reptile that lived around 220 million years ago.



Flying Red Flag: The upper portion of the stone is reminiscent of the color of the national flag. This is a "national red" stone that is native to Machang township.



Flying Chang'e: The stone discovered in Machang township is so named as its grains resemble a fairy from Chinese legend.



Robe of the God of Longevity: The stone has several colors, resembling a robe that is worn by the god according to legends. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A worker at a Chenchun plant shows a visitor the high-quality marble slabs that are produced by the company. YANG JUN / CHINA DAILY

Enterprise taps city's rich and growing market

By YANG JUN and LI JIA XU

For many centuries, people in Anshun have viewed the city's rich stone resources as the driving force of the local economy.

Stones have long been used in the city to build houses, make furniture and many different kinds of handicraft items.

And today, as the city in Southwest China's Guizhou devises plans to develop its stone industry into a local economic pillar, the business community has begun to tap the huge potential of the abundant natural resource.

According to local statistics, Anshun's stone reserve with industrial value stands at roughly 36.7 billion cubic meters, including yellow, gray and black-grained marble, all of which are well-known in the international marketplace.

Anshun's stone products are currently sold to numerous regions and countries including the United States, the Middle East, Italy, Japan, South Korea and Africa. One leading local enterprise that has attracted significant international attention is Chenchun Stone Industry Co Ltd.

The company was established in the Anshun Stone Industry Park in 2012, and with total investment of nearly 1.5 billion yuan (\$225 million), it will become fully operational next month.

According to company executives, Chenchun expects to produce 1 billion yuan worth of products this year.

"We have secured so many orders thanks to the high quality of the local stones that we've had to arrange additional work shifts to meet the demand," said Tang Shuhua, purchasing manager at Chenchun.

He said the company's most popular product among international buyers is its black-grained marble slab. Tang noted that Chenchun now has Anshun's largest single stone processing plant, with a capacity to produce 4 million square meters of slabs per year.

"About 85 percent of our raw materials are from local mines, which means that we make substantial savings on both time and transportation costs," added Wu Hongwen, administrative manager at Chenchun.

Tang described the Guizhou International Stone Exposition, which will be held in Anshun from Aug 26 to 29, as a great opportunity for the company to learn, expand its network and secure more orders.

"We will also have the opportunity to contact leading domestic and foreign equipment and technology providers," Tang said.

Anshun Stone Industry Park's location means that it can be easily reached via nearby highways and railways, and this is another draw for local enterprises such as Chenchun, Tang added.

"Transportation is the major cost consideration for a stone processing company," he explained.

The labor-intensive nature of the region's stone processing sector means that it has long played a crucial role in terms of offering employment to local people.

Chenchun now employs about 600 people, more than 80 percent of whom are locals.

Chen Dajun, 35, who is head of the production division at Chenchun, is a local resident.

"I have worked at Chenchun since it was founded. My monthly salary of more than 8,000 yuan is perfectly satisfactory, as are the food and lodgings provided by the company," Chen said, adding that he is able to visit his family at weekends because his home is nearby.

Local companies also attach great importance to the workplace health and safety of their employees.

According to Tang, Chenchun has invested about 30 million yuan in dust removal and the treatment of water used for dust removal.

"Our marble mining operation is also well planned. We ensure that the land is left in a usable condition after we have completed our mining operations. It can then be used for real estate development or as farmland after it has been filled in," Wu said.

Stone processing companies are also using the latest technology to upgrade their production and expand their sales network.

For instance, Tianyun Fashion, another major local player, is using big data to improve its product design and expand its sales network.

Local companies are hopeful that the upcoming stone expo will provide them with valuable new business opportunities.

"We will cooperate with Wulishi Co Ltd, a leading stone processing company from Fujian, to arrange a joint show at the expo," said Tang of Chenchun.

To facilitate trade for local companies, Anshun has established the Southwest Stone Products Trading Center. The comprehensive facility for trade, exhibition and culture will cover more than 360 hectares.

According to Yang Peishu, project manager of the center, the project will be the largest stone products trading facility in the world upon completion.

With an investment of about 1 billion yuan, the project's first phase is expected to become operational in 2017. Yang said the first phase can accommodate about 200 companies.

Zhou Jikun, Party chief of Anshun, said the center will give a strong boost to the local stone industry by bringing in more investment and technology to tap into and develop the abundant local resources.

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