

Hot springs heating up hospitality industry

By YANG JUN

Tongren in Guizhou province is rich in hot springs and has thus become a magnet for healthcare-themed hotels and resorts.

• Jiulong Cave Spring

Located inside the Jiulong Cave national scenic site, Jiulong Cave Spring Holiday Manor is one of 100 key tourism projects in Guizhou. The holiday resort is also on the list of the province's key programs for promoting cultural industry.

Its spring water comes from 1,810 meters deep underground. Tests by the Ministry of Land and Resources show that the water here has no visible impurity or bad smell and is extremely soft. It is rich in fluoride and the density of some useful acids is high enough for medical use. The hot spring can help to treat rheumatoid arthritis and similar diseases.

• Jiutian Spring Hotel

Located at the junction of Sichuan, Hunan and Guizhou provinces, Jiutian Spring Hotel faces Wujiang River to the east and is surrounded by mountains. It has rich tourism resources nearby, with the Fanjing Mountain national nature reserve in Guizhou 67 km away, the ancient city of Fenghuang some 150 km away, and the Sinan Karst stone forest 100 km away.

The hotel, which cost more than 500 million yuan (\$73 million) to construct, is the center of a bigger project called the Si'nan spring travel complex, which occupies approximately 47 hectares.

The complex is set to become one of the key tourism projects in Guizhou, and has been granted 4A-level scenic site status.

• Shiqiang Spring

The Shiqiang Spring dates back to 1606 AD and has a daily supply of more than 6,000 tons of hot water, enough to support all its 138 bathing pools.

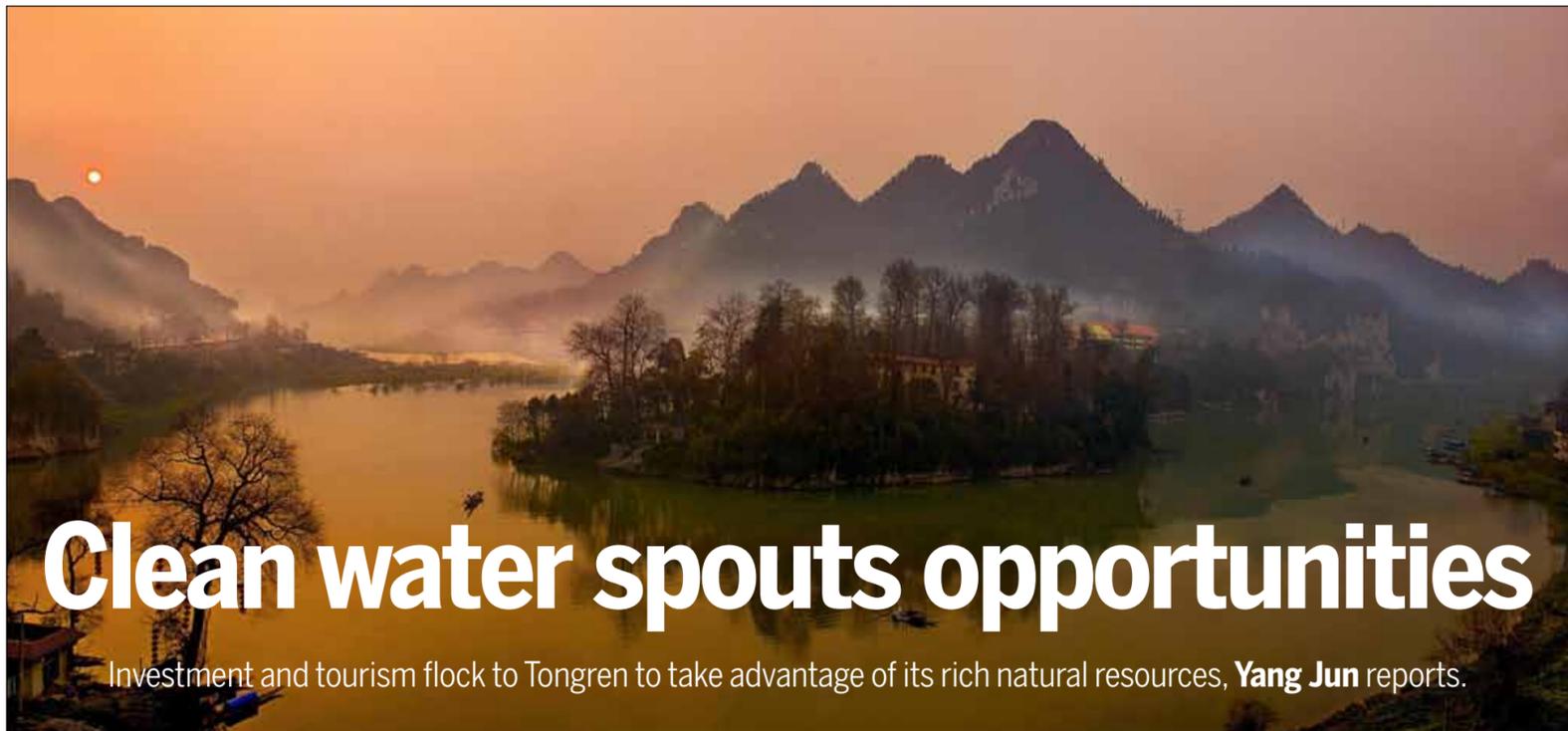
With more than 20 beneficial trace elements, the spring water can be used for both bathing and drinking, which is unique nationwide.

A local investment company has poured 520 million yuan into making full use of the spring to develop the 4A-level tourism site, which is designed as a holiday resort combining healthcare, sightseeing and leisure activities.

Zhang Zhouxiang and Dong Xianwu contributed to this story.



Jiulong Spring resort is located at a scenic site.
LIU YANGSHE / FOR CHINA DAILY



Clean water spouts opportunities

Investment and tourism flock to Tongren to take advantage of its rich natural resources, Yang Jun reports.

Tongren in Guizhou province is rich in water resources, which are key to developing its tourism, bottled water businesses and healthcare services. TIAN YU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Authorities in Tongren, Guizhou province, are looking to boost the development of its water industry, as the city prepares to host the first international natural drinking water expo between Saturday and Monday.

The city's total output value of bottled water and other water-related industries reached 8.97 billion yuan (\$1.3 billion) in 2015, or 13.1 percent of the total industry value of the city, according to the city government.

"With its rich natural resources, Tongren has attracted a number of big brands in the industry, such as Nongfu Spring and Watsons, to invest in the city in recent years," said Yang Xiangdong, deputy Party chief of the city. "We have also developed a number of local enterprises. The prospects (for water-related industries) are more than bright."

The First Guizhou International Natural Drinking Water Expo will be held in Bijiang district of Tongren starting from Saturday, with major bottled water producers including Acqua Minerale San Benedetto SpA, Hangzhou Wahaha Group, Longlife, and Tibet Water Resources Ltd set to take part in the expo.

"Hosting the water expo in Tongren will serve as a good promotion platform for the water resources of the city. We hope the water expo can become a high-end platform in the industry," Yang said.

Fanjing Mountain, located in Tongren, reportedly has the best preservation of natural forests compared with areas of the same latitude across the globe.

The environment has also endowed the city with high-quality, pure, natural drinking water resources.

The city, located in the eastern part of Guizhou, is rich in fresh water, springs,



Fanjing Mountain, a national nature reserve in Tongren, is famed for its natural beauty, diverse species and Buddhist culture.
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From left: Waterfalls at Tianshengqiao Valley in Tongren. LIU YANGSHE / FOR CHINA DAILY. Fishing in Tongren at night. MAO ZHIXIA / FOR CHINA DAILY. A fishing boat anchored at the Jinjiang River, which runs through Tongren. MAO ZHIXIA / FOR CHINA DAILY

180
springs

in Tongren, Guizhou province

40,000
hectares

of water suitable for fish farming in Tongren

water for medical purposes and drinkable hot spring water. This has made it possible for the city to develop into a world water-manufacturing hub.

The city has 180 springs that can discharge more than 5 liters of water per second, with a total flow of 2.4 billion cubic meters of water each year. The springs enable the production of 150,000 bottles of mineral water each second.

China's beverage giant

Nongfu Spring Co Ltd was among the first major beverage companies to invest in Tongren.

"The reason we chose Tongren is because of its well preserved ecosystem, high-quality mountain springs and friendly investment environment," said Wen Shengzao, general manager of the company's subsidiary in Tongren.

Wen said his company has a total annual production of 600 million bottles of water in Tongren.

The city's water resources are also rich in minerals, such as strontium, zinc and selenium, elements that are indispensable to human bodies.

The region's rich water resources are conducive to the development of the fishing industry and hot spring-themed tourism.

The city has about 40,000 hectares of water suitable for fish farming, which took up 20 percent of the provincial total.

Tongren now has about 6,000 hectares of water surface dedicated to ecological fish farming, with the output value of the fishing industry exceeding 1 billion yuan. The development of this industry has greatly helped poverty relief efforts in the city, local officials said.

Shiqian, Sinan, Yinjiang and Yanhe counties in Tongren are also rich in hot springs. The Shiqian county was accredited as "the home of hot springs in China" in 2009.

The Chengnan Hot Spring in Shiqian receives more than 500,000 tourists each year and provides about 400 jobs. The hot spring generates about 30 million yuan each year in tourism revenue.

Jiutian Hotsprings in Sinan county, featuring Tujia ethnic culture, receives 240,000 tourists each year. It provides 200 employment opportunities and brings about annual revenue of 15 million yuan.

Xia Hong, deputy mayor of Tongren, said the city government is looking to attract more enterprises to invest in the city through further optimizing its service awareness and policy support.

The authorities are looking to increase variety, improve quality and cultivate brands to increase the competitiveness of the city's bottled water industry.

"We are aiming to develop natural drinking water into an advantageous industry and a new growth engine by the end of the 13th Five Year Plan period of 2016-20," Xia said.

"By then, the total output value of the bottled water industry will reach 20 billion yuan and production volume will exceed 3 million tons."

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Xu Wei and Dong Xianwu contributed to this story.

Food and beverage businesses flowing into Southwest China

By YANG JUN

With a good natural environment and clean water sources, Tongren in Guizhou province is becoming a major base for high quality water and food in Southwest China.

"The major reason we chose Tongren as a production base is its high quality water," said Wen Shengzao, general manager of Nongfu Spring (Guizhou) Wulingshan Beverage Co, a subsidiary of Nongfu Spring, one of China's largest bottled water producers based in Zhejiang province.

With a yearly production capacity of 600 million bottles of water, Nongfu Spring's base in Tongren has become one of its eight major production bases in China.

To ensure water sources in Tongren meet Nongfu Spring's stringent standards, the company monitored water sources in the area for five years before

the first bottled water rolled off the factory line in 2014, Wen said.

"When we visited Tongren in 2007, we learned it has excellent water resources," Wen said. "Our surveyors were sent here to test the water quality, and the results showed the water is very good in all indexes."

Since then, the company has sampled water from Liulong Mountain in Tongren every month for five years and sent the samples to its testing center in Shanghai, where the water proved to be of consistently high quality, he said.

The first phase of the production base in Tongren has been completed, including a line with a production capacity of 72,000 bottles of water per hour, one of the fastest lines in the world.

The three production lines in the first phase of the project consume about 330,000 tons of water every year, and almost all

bottled water from the base is sold out across China within a month of production, Wen said.

Like Nongfu Spring, Haocaitou Food Co, a major food producer based in East China's Fujian province, has also made a presence in Tongren in recent years, due to the city's well preserved ecosystem and pollution-free water.

Dong Honghai, deputy general manager of Guizhou Haocaitou Food Co, said the water in Tongren essentially has no pollution, and that its quality ranks highest of all of the company's production bases in China.

Founded in March 2015, the company's first two beverage production lines, which have an annual production capacity of 60,000 metric tons of yogurt, started production in April this year.

"The first batch of yogurt won high recognition in the market," Dong said. "Tests



Guizhou Haocaitou Food Co started production at its Tongren plant in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

showed the products made in Tongren taste best of all similar products from our other plants. The popularity of the products is largely attributed to the good water in Tongren."

With more enterprises bringing investment and creating jobs in Tongren, high-level professionals have also flowed into the city.

Since Nongfu Spring Wulingshan Beverage Co began production in Tongren two years ago, the company has recruited more than 400 employees, offering them an average monthly salary about 3,500 yuan (\$510) higher than the local average, Wen said.

"We are planning another factory in the Jiangkou area

and will offer more job opportunities then," he said.

Dong, from Guizhou Haocaitou Food, said his company is also considering expansion in Tongren to meet increasing demands for its products.

"We are seeking more suitable water sources for our yogurt products, continuing to expand investment and diversify our business in Tongren," he said. "The number of our employees in Tongren will increase from 300 to about 1,000."

"The company is developing so quickly, and this brings many opportunities for us," Cong Shenghui, 25, said.

Cong, from Harbin, capital of Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, joined Guizhou Haocaitou Food two years ago upon graduation and is now chief of testing.

"Due to good water sources, every product made here passes our quality tests," she

said. "Tongren boasts beautiful mountains and clear water, and my company also offers a good salary, so I am planning to settle down here."

According to the Tongren government's plan, annual production of natural, drinkable water is projected to reach 1.5 million metric tons by 2020, with a total value of 2.4 billion yuan. This will bring in annual government revenue of more than 300 million yuan, and 10,000 employment opportunities for locals.

"Tongren will make full use of its rich water resources to develop a robust economy and build a harmonious society," said Chen Changxu, Party chief of Tongren. "We will protect its good environment while tapping new areas for economic growth."

Wang Xiaodong and Dong Xianwu contributed to this story.