A fantastic view of Huangguoshu Waterfall in Anshun, Guizhou province, which is typical of the karst landform. PHOTO: CHINA DAILY

Waterfall aims for recognition as UNESCO World Heritage site

Huangguoshu Waterfall, located in the Huangguoshu-Tunpu landscape cluster in the city of Anshun in Guizhou province, is known as the greatest waterfall in China.

The local government is currently submitting a bid to UNESCO for the area’s nomination as a World Natural and Cultural Heritage site.

Huangguoshu Waterfall is 73 meters high and 101 meters wide. It can be seen from all angles, even from beyond the waterfall itself.

The waterfall, which is 87 meters high and 103 meters wide, is surrounded by beautiful karst features, including Lousen Waterfall, Silver-Charm Waterfall and Shuxian Waterfall, making up the Huangguoshu Waterfall Cluster, spanning more than 80 kilometers.

It took 200,000 to 500,000 years for such awe-inspiring features to appear. The waterfall is formed by the27 receding of water in the rock stratum.

Known as the Kingdom of Waterfalls, the Huangguoshu Waterfall is characterized by its unique karst topography, with multiple peaks and caves.

During the spring season when the water flows into the karst landform, it forms the waterfall by the erosion of soluble rocks.

The Huangguoshu-Tunpu landscape cluster also covers the Getu River landscape, according to Xiang Kangping, a professor at Guizhou Normal University. The Getu River Landscape embodies the ancient communities that built up the Miao ethnic group under the natural conditions of special karst landforms. Their traditions of living in close contact with nature, culture and rock climbing are the living encyclopedia of residents’ interactions with nature.

In 2016, the local government had the application plan for researching and recovering the natural scenery.

In July 2014, a special conference was held by the provincial government to discuss the application for Huangguoshu-Tunpu landscape cluster’s nomination as a World Natural and Cultural Heritage site.

After one month, the local government organized a working group to focus on the application. Afterwards, a comprehensive plan was formed with oversight from all levels of government.

“We have undertaken a lot of work to make the region’s karst landscape a major world heritage site,” said Zhu Guanpeng, deputy secretary of Anshun city.

The whole area first applied for World Heritage status in 2009, following the successful application of the Getu River landscape also being added.

Last year, the zone’s tourism revenue reached 77.3 billion yuan ($11.4 billion), up 50 percent year-on-year.

The added value of the service industry accounted for 79.7 percent of the zone’s gross domestic product.

The zone plans to invest 100 million yuan per year in poverty alleviation.

Targeted strategies

Xia said that the burgeoning tourism of the zone has opened a window for villagers who still live below the poverty line.

By auditing the advantages and resources of every village, the area will map out tailored plans for its 18 villages and 5,827 poor families. It will seek solutions suited for the area, such as promoting ethnic culture, opening fish farms, creating tourism, or developing mining attractions.

To improve incomes and protect the local environment under the all-region tourism model, the zone first set up a professional cooperative agency.

Each demonstration area is the Daweng village in Baotun county, where oranges have helped several villages to become prosperous and have attracted migrant workers to stay and start their own businesses in their hometowns.

Village head Yang said that the Daweng village has been the main area affected by poverty because the surrounding buildings were once used as homes. “Planting oranges has been the most important economic source for the household for a long time,” Yang said. “I am still living in my home. I feel happy to stay here with my family,” she said.

In 2015, the Daweng village’s Party committee said that the past three years have been the most prosperous one.

Several years ago, a total of 580 people in a similar village had been struggling to make ends meet.

In 2017, Pan introduced 1,200 mandarin oranges to Daweng village.

Last year, the total plantation area has expanded to 256 hectares, including 300 hectares of oranges and 56 hectares of oranges for reforestation.

The area’s income has increased by 20.7 million yuan in 2016 and 44.5 million yuan this year.

This income comes not only from the fruit but also from tourism.

Tourism has become a major source of income.

The zone’s 3,300 hectares of forests, with 27 percent of the zone’s total area, is an important capital for poverty alleviation.

The Daweng village has an orange grove that helps to alleviate poverty based on all region tourism.

“The idea is that the economic development of our village is transport and infrastructure,” said Lang Xingping, deputy village chief of Daweng village. “People are saying that the region’s potted oranges and vegetables become more popular because of its unique tourism.”

Another important aspect is sustainable management.

Due to the rising cost of labor, the zone had been allowed to sell its oranges.

In the past, Daweng village had also had trouble from poverty alleviation based on all region tourism.

“Due to the geographical condition of our village, our house is far away from town,” said Lang Xingping. “People are saying that the region’s potted oranges and vegetables become more popular because of its unique tourism.”

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Despite its magnificent waterfall landscape and unspoiled natural scenery, the Huangguoshu scenic zone has been hit by a series of issues that have kept its road ahead in its efforts to lift villagers out of poverty and achieve sustainable development, according to local officials.

“Due to the long poverty alleviation tourism industry chain and encouraging poor households to take part in the process,” said Xin Daqing, deputy director of the area’s political department.

“We should implement targeted measures to advance all-region tourism and endeavor to change every village into a wonderful spot,” Xin said.

All-region tourism is different from traditional tourism, as it replaces the idea of scenic spots being independent from the surrounding areas. Instead, an entire region becomes a tourist destination.

This model will boost infrastructure, investment, culture and the economy, increasing prosperity throughout the whole area, according to local officials.

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