

Haikou Special



Senior citizens practice tai chi at People's Park. HE XIAOHUA / FOR CHINA DAILY



Young local men offer roses to their partners during the traditional Lantern Festival late last month. HUANG YIBING / FOR CHINA DAILY



A grandmother and her granddaughter check out the winning photos in a local photography competition focused on the city's scenery. ZHOU XU / FOR CHINA DAILY



The Haikou government has planted thousands of bougainvilleas to beautify the city. HUANG YIBING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Leaders spruce up efforts to beautify provincial capital

Flower planting, street cleanups among myriad city measures

By TANG ZHIHAO
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Haikou, capital of Hainan province, has been transformed into a sea of flowers in recent months.

Since July, the city government has planted thousands of pots of bougainvilleas to beautify the city and set an example for other cities.

The planting is part of an overall campaign to raise living standards. Authorities said keeping the city clean and civilized are two important factors in evaluating city administrators' work performances and enhancing the living environment for residents.

"The city's appearance has changed a lot since last year," said Zhou Zonggui, a Haikou resident.

"The markets for agricultural products have become clean and

tidy. Some markets have removed their old and illegally installed sunshades and upgraded their indoor lighting systems."

Zhou said the city also launched a series of measures recently to educate riders of electric motorbikes about traffic rules.

In the second half of last year, Haikou invested 480 million yuan (\$73.26 million) to upgrade more than 850 streets and alleyways. It also spent 162 million yuan to upgrade more than 40 farmers' markets and 10.3 billion yuan to rebuild 14 shantytowns for the benefit of 24,500 households.

Huang Yibing, a photographer in Haikou, recorded Haikou's changes through the lens of his camera.

"The initiative has made Haikou more beautiful, cleaner and

more suitable for living," Huang said. "The old streets were rebuilt and have been maintained. The walls are decorated with paintings and artwork. The lanes and alleys are nice and clean. Most importantly, many infrastructure facilities such as public squares have been built to provide more conveniences to residents."

These initiatives have paid off. Local tourism authorities indicated the initiatives have enhanced the city's branding. A clean, tidy and beautiful Haikou lured tourists, boosting the tourism sector in the city.

During the Spring Festival holiday early last month, Haikou received 1.3 million tourists, up 30.2 percent year-on-year.

The revenue in the sector hit 1.6 billion yuan, up 25.2 percent year-on-year.

The occupation rate of the 1,326 hotels in the city hit 71.19 percent, a historical high.

During the festival, consumer spending hit 1.8 billion yuan, up 7.9 percent year-on-year.

A total of 2.53 million tourists

shopped at the duty free shop in Haikou Meilan Airport, spending 51.3 million yuan in total.

Major changes

Ni Qiang, mayor of Haikou, said this year's efforts to construct a so-called national-level civilized and hygienic city will focus on 10 areas that include the construction of cultural facilities, city infrastructure and better traffic systems as well as passing environmental protection measures.

Ni said that the city will develop 29 cultural projects, including a city-level library, museum, art gallery and five district-level libraries.

Sun Xinyang, Haikou's Party head, said the city improvement plan is one of the most important projects in the recent three years. It marks Haikou's efforts to be an exemplary city.

Sun added that the initiative will help increase authorities' urban planning and administrative skills, enhance the local environment and optimize local development.

What they say

Editor's note: Three foreigners share their impressions of Haikou, the picturesque capital of South China's Hainan province, and their experiences in making friends, conducting business and enjoying their lives in the city. Zeng Yuqing and Tang Zhihao report.

"I have many friends and I love the relaxed island lifestyle, sitting outside under the sunshine and enjoying a beer and barbecue at the south gate of Hainan University or the night food stalls — all of these are wonderful. They are things you can hardly experience in Australia, and these things are what make Haikou a fun tropical holiday destination."



Sid Andrews, who was born in Australia, and worked as a teacher at a bilingual kindergarten in Haikou. He lived in the city for five years but went back home to earn his master's. He is planning to come back after he attains his degree.



"I have had a very successful life here. I have had experiences that have thoroughly enriched my life. The people, the island, and the country have been amazing."

Valerie Marshall, from the United States, is an English teacher at Hainan Overseas Chinese Middle School and has lived in Haikou for the past four years.



"Haikou is far away from the stress of China's mega-cities. It is an ideal location for a business meeting. It is well-managed, and has a friendly population and relaxed atmosphere that is conducive to business."

Zanuttini Henry, who is the owner of a pizza shop in Haikou and has lived in the city for the past nine years.