



The island province of Hainan is an attractive destination for tourists from around the world for its sunny weather and seaside resorts. Now its growing number of healthcare facilities tailored to visitors is also proving popular. FENG HONGBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Beyond the beaches of Hainan

China's southernmost province is increasingly becoming popular among international travelers for its TCM tourism industry, **Fu Chao** and **Huang Yiming** report.

Every winter, millions of tourists from around the world travel to China's Hainan province to enjoy the sunshine, the fresh ocean breezes and pristine beaches.

But increasingly, many travelers are flocking to the sunny region for a more holistic mission, namely its traditional Chinese medicine therapies and healthcare facilities. Long recognized by Chinese as the "island of longevity", Hainan is developing into China's health tourism hub.

Variety of therapies

Sanya is the province's most popular TCM destination among foreign tourists, where they seek therapeutic massages as well as acupuncture and TCM fuming and steaming therapies.

Chen Xiaoyong, director of the Sanya TCM Healthcare Tour Association, said that by the end of March 2014, tourists from Russia, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Germany, France and other countries had visited Sanya TCM Hospital for various therapies. Every year, about 200,000 foreigners travel to Sanya for healthcare tours, where the average total expenditure per person is about \$1,200.

"TCM health tourism is very promising in the tourism industry," Chen said.

Alexandra Valentina, who is from Sochi, Russia, said she fell in love with Sanya upon her arrival recently and was impressed by the city's TCM programs.

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A Russian man who would only give his first name, Igor, said he settled down in Sanya to work as a TCM tourism agent after first visiting Hainan six years ago. He is currently working as a manager at CYTS Tours Sanya Co to mainly arrange TCM health tours for Russian tourists.

"The weather here is so amazing. I've never had a cold since I came to Sanya. My parents often travel here, too. I've already decided to stay here for the rest of my life and introduce TCM therapies to more Russians."

Sanya's TCM tourism industry has matured recently, and now offers a wider range of institutions and facilities. According to Sanya city government, the construction of the Sanya International TCM Rehabilitation Hospital will be completed this year. Covering more

than 23,000 square meters and with a total investment of 169 million yuan (\$27 million), the hospital offers a range of TCM healthcare services.

Abundant springs

The province is also a popular destination because of its hot and cold springs.

With an abundance of geothermal energy, Hainan has more than 40 hot and cold spring destinations in various regions, including Sanya, Haikou, Qionghai, Qiongzong, Wanning and Baoting.

Mission Hills Resort in Haikou is one such spring destination. Covering approximately 44,000 sq m of natural land, the resort has 168 hot and cold spring pools. Temperatures for its cold springs can reach below 25 C.

In a cold spring, body temperatures initially drop but then rise again after a short period of time. During this process, pores close and enlarge, allowing the water's minerals to be absorbed into the body.

Last year, Mission Hills Resort welcomed approximately 200,000 people.

The Quantang Hot Springs Resort in Qionghai — in the east of Hainan — is renowned for its peculiar fragrances and therapeutic functions.

While the hot springs are high in hydrogen sulfide content that give off the smell of rotten eggs, they also contain a high amount of the colorless and odorless gas of radon, which apparently can help relieve body pains and improve the flow of blood.

Major initiative

Qionghai is currently in the

process of rolling out a new initiative. A healthcare and tourism industry cluster will be located along the Wanquan River between Jiayi township and central Boao, the host city of the Boao Forum for Asia, a high-level political forum for leaders around the continent.

Called the Boao Lecheng International Healthcare & Tourism Area, the initiative was approved by the State Council in 2013.

In February, the province released a general plan for the project. In 10 years, the area will be a cluster of world-class healthcare tourism destinations, a hub for high-end talent in medicine and a venue for international cooperation.

Chen Yao, an official from the Hainan Tourism Development Commission, said by offering a number of healthcare and rehabilitation programs and hosting the Boao Forum for Asia, the province will become a global tourism destination.

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TCM therapies

Acupuncture uses needles to stimulate specific points of the body. According to TCM practitioners, the stimulation can correct the imbalance in the flow of *qi*, or one's life force. The free flow of *qi* improves a person's metabolism and the function of organs. Acupuncture is used to treat diseases such as cervical and lumbar spondylosis, apoplexia and depression.

Therapeutic massages can increase blood flow, release the body's energy as well as relieve pain from cervical and lumbar spondylosis and joint dislocation.

Many foreign tourists are also giving TCM steaming therapy a try because it is painless. Patients lie down with their bodies partially immersed in a chamber-like device of hot steaming herbal medicines. The medicinal steam helps people to relax and sleep.

FU CHAO



A tourist enjoys a therapeutic massage on a beach in Sanya. HUANG YIMING / CHINA DAILY



Foreign tourists can enjoy fish pedicure treatments throughout Hainan. HUANG YIBING / FOR CHINA DAILY



A group of students from Kyrgyzstan are playing at one of Sanya's many pristine beaches. CHEN WEN / FOR CHINA DAILY