A mingling of East and West

Cities in Hainan feature a architectural style brought back from Southeast Asia

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While the picturesque natural landscapes in Hainan province are the last draw for tourists, the island’s unique traditional cultures and ethnic diversity are just as captivating.

The province is home to many ethnic groups, with the Li and Miao people particularly prominent on the island.

The Li were the earliest settlers and developers of Hainan, with their first recorded appearance on the island traced back 1,600 years ago.

The Miao group, which is the largest ethnic group in Hainan, with more than 400 years of history in the province.

The two ethnic groups are highly diverse, each with their own distinct styles in clothing, dancing, architecture, handicrafts and religious beliefs. Each, however, have made great efforts to preserve their traditions.

Bamboo rice, glutinous rice wine and fuchao are, a local delicacy made up of rice and fish cooked in a special way.

In recent years, as the regional tourism industry develops, the Hainan government has made efforts to protect and highlight the two ethnic cultures.

The Binlang Valley Cultural Tourism Zone in Binlang, Hainan, for example, has preserved the ancient traditions of the Li and Miao ethnic groups.

Boyu, the birthplace of the Li in Hainan province, is the earliest settlement of the Li in the region.

The Binlang Valley Cultural Tourism Zone was established in 2006.

According to the tourism bureau of Sanya, about 4 million tourists visit the Sanya Scenic Area each year, which tops all scenic spots in the city.

Two mountain destinations for bliss and stone carvings

By LIU XIAOGUAN AND FU CHAO

In Hainan province, Dongshan Mountain and the Nanyang Scenic Area, the two most famous Buddhist destinations in the province, attract many Buddhists from across China every year.

According to historians, Buddhist came to Hainan during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), with the Chinese monk Jianzhen an important figure.

Jianzhen, today known for promoting Buddhism in Japan, attempted to visit Japan six times from AD 744 to 759.

In AD 748, after the fifth attempt failed, Jianzhen passed by Hainan. According to legends, he and his disciples gave lectures on Dongshan Mountain, a significant event in popularizing Buddhism on the island.

Dongshan Mountain, dubbed as the First Mountain in Hainan and located in the city of Wanning, is home to a number of famous temples, most of which were built during the Tang Dynasty.

The mountain area covers some 3 square kilometers and is 180 meters high at its peak. Ancient temples and cultural relics of Southeast Asian origin are key cultural heritage sites in Hainan.

The Chaotic Temple is a very popular destination for overseas Chinese Buddhists.

Dongshan Mountain is also known for its calligraphy works carved on its stone or stone-like figures for literary and artistic destinations.

The stone carvings in Dongshan Mountain were inscribed by the famous Chinese calligrapher Su Dongpo (AD 1037-1101).

From June 1 to September 30, tourists and ecologists would write and then sign a request to carve them out on stones. Today, the calligraphy works are inscribed on rocks, attracting art lovers from around the country.

More than a million tourists visit Dongshan Mountain annually. In 2012, the National Tourism Administration designated the mountain region as a national 4A tourist site (the highest level).

A stone carvings of the Nanyang Scenic Area is, for example, known for its stonewriting, which is known as the most beautiful Buddhist destination.

The name Nanyang originates from a popular Buddhist saying “seeking work and traveling to all corners of the Earth”. The island is also home to the ancient town of Dongshan.

The Nanyang Scenic Area and the statue of Guanyin Budakshila stands 103 meters tall on a manmade island off Nanshan island larger than the Statue of Liberty. There is also a temple inside the Budakshila on the island.

According to the tourism bureau of Sanya, approximately 4 million tourists visit the Xiamen Scenic Area each year, which tops all scenic spots in the city.

Dongshan Mountain is known for calligraphy works carved on its stones.