

Chengdu takes on the world as both gateway, destination

Western China Intl Fair to open, beckoning global visitors and highlighting Belt and Road Initiative

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Chengdu, a mega city in western China, has turned into a major destination for international events in western China as it has become more international in recent years.

The 16th Western China International Fair, a State-level international exposition, will be held in the city from Nov 3 to 14, drawing delegates from 88 countries and regions.

The Western China International Fair was founded in 2000 for the implementation of China's Western China Development Strategy, when it picked Chengdu as the permanent site.

Under the theme "Western China, Opportunities for the World," the event this year will be held in two phases, including 10 major events and 60 special activities.

Sixteen countries will set up their own national pavilions, the largest number among all previous sessions of the fair, said the organizers.

This year's event will cover a total area of about 200,000 square meters.

Nearly 9,000 enterprises from 75 countries and regions will attend the fair, including some of the world's leading companies such as BMW, Daimler, METRO, DHL and Huawei.

The organizers expect the fair to attract more than 60,000 domestic and overseas guests and businessmen, among which 20,000 are from overseas.

The fair also aims to highlight elements of the Belt and Road Initiative. Four halls featuring Belt and Road materials, forums and activities will also be held.

During the event, the city of Chengdu will showcase its own achievements in high-tech industries such as rail transit, IT, auto manufacturing, aerospace and bio-medicine, as well as some of its leading innovative companies and products.

The city is also expected to bring in a series of major projects at the fair.

As a major part of the Western China International Fair, the 11th EU-China Business and Technology Cooperation Fair will be held from Nov 3 to 6.

The fair will welcome 200 foreign dignitaries from 14 European countries, as well as diplomats, companies, international organizations, and chambers and associations from overseas.

Dai Yiling, president of the EU Project Innovation Center in Chengdu, said the fair this year will focus on areas including energy conservation and environmental protection, new energy, new materials, information and communication technology and intelligent manufacturing.

The EU Project Innovation Center is the EU's first project innovation center in China. It serves as a comprehensive platform to promote trade, investment and technology cooperation between EU and western China.

"We will arrange for high-tech companies from Chengdu and Europe to have more than 800 one-on-one meetings, facilitating bilateral collaboration," she said.

In the past

Chengdu has played host to a number of major events this year, including the 2016 Chengdu Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair, the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting, and the 22nd World Route Development Forum.

The 2016 Chengdu Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair, an international platform promoting the exchange of innovative ideas and achievements,



A Sino-French cooperation forum was held on Oct 26 as a prelude to the upcoming event, due to open on Nov 3 in Chengdu.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Clockwise from top left: Chengdu launches a promotion in Frankfurt on Oct 24. The tour reflects local residents' love for pandas.

Chengdu media delegates pay a visit to Gimcheon, South Korea, on Oct 25, and hold an in-depth discussion with local mayor.

A German girl shows her gift of a panda figure during Chengdu's promotion event in Frankfurt.

A robot at the 2016 Chengdu Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair, a major event held in June in the city, a rising conference hub.

The Western China International Fair will be held at the Chengdu Century City New International Convention and Exhibition Center, a landmark convention center in Southwest China.



A rising international hub

In hopes of becoming a major international metropolis, Chengdu has recently expanded its international connections.

The city sent a delegation to Japan and South Korea in October to promote bilateral exchanges with its sister cities. The delegation visited Busan and Gimcheon in South Korea, and Kofu in Japan.

In the same month, the city held a panda-themed city promotion in Frankfurt and Warsaw.

The routes will be launched within one year.

Adrian Newton, an executive at UBM EMEA, which organized the forum, said the event was a success and it was a wise choice to have Chengdu as the host city.

"Chengdu has more than pandas; it also has the basic conditions to become an international metropolis," Newton said.

Over the past five years, Chengdu has introduced on average more than 10 new international conventions each year, including the 2013 Fortune Global Forum, the 12th World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention and the ninth World Biomaterials Congress.

A one-way trip takes less than 11 days.

According to the latest planning of the Chengdu-Europe Plus strategy, Chengdu will operate three major cargo rail routes to Europe, heading to Lodz, Moscow and Istanbul, Turkey.

Chengdu is the fourth largest aviation hub in China, with 100 international routes connecting it to more than 70 international cities including San Francisco, Paris, Frankfurt, Melbourne and Doha.

It is also a magnet to foreign investment. It has attracted 10 more Fortune Global 500 companies this year, making the number of Fortune Global 500 companies with a presence in the city to reach 278.

By the end of last year, Chengdu had direct economic and trade relations with 223 major cities worldwide, including 20 that have opened trade and tourism offices in the city. Currently, the city has 32 international sister cities. A total of 16 countries have been approved to open a consulate in Chengdu, the largest number in western China.



Staff at HitGen, a startup high-tech firm founded by professionals who returned from overseas. It has consolidated its foothold in Chengdu.

Top choice for companies from home and abroad

By ZHUANTIAN

Chengdu, an economic star in western China, is drawing companies and talents from home and abroad with its solid industrial foundation, vast opportunities and strong cultural atmosphere.

Jean-Francois Vallee, manager of the France-headquartered Ubisoft Entertainment SA's Chengdu studio, has been in the Sichuan city for eight years and has started a family there.

Ubisoft is a creator, publisher and distributor of interactive entertainment and services.



Ubisoft Entertainment SA's Chengdu studio has staff from around the world.

Vallee started his career with Ubisoft in 1997. In 2005, he went to the company's Shanghai studio, hoping to learn more about China and its long history.

Three years later, Vallee moved to Chengdu to build the company's second production studio in China from the ground up, starting with fresh graduates hired from the city.

Located in the Chengdu Tianfu Software Park, Ubisoft Chengdu is 200-people strong today and has become one of the biggest studios in western China.

Vallee said the Chengdu studio participated in the development of many exciting gaming projects and has achieved great success.

The studio made significant contributions to 3A games such as *Assassin's Creed Syndicate* and the record-breaking *Tom Clancy's The Division*. Its first mobile game, *Monkey King Escape*, surpassed 2 million downloads in Asia alone.

"Experts say that they expect the gaming industry in China to continue soaring, with more and more players; this will definitely have a great impact on the status of Chengdu as a city filled with game developers," said Vallee.

The city is one of the major bases for game development in China. Hundreds of game-developing companies gather in its technology parks, including Chengdu Tianfu Software Park, Chengdu Hi-tech Incubation Park, and ThinkZone.

"Some may know Chengdu as a calm and slow-paced city. For me, it's a place that continuously challenges and inspires," Vallee said, adding that he is proud to call Chengdu home.

Li Jin, former global director of compound and computational sciences at the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca plc, established a bio-tech company, HitGen Ltd, at the Tianfu Life Sciences Park in the Chengdu high-tech zone in 2012.

He is a fellow of the United Kingdom's Royal Society of Chemistry.

Li said he chose Chengdu because of its solid foundations in biotechnology. In addition, the Chengdu government provided his startup projects with plenty of support. For example, they offered free office space for three years, setup funds and various subsidies.

The city is home to 53 universities and 30 national-level research institutes. The West China Medical Center of Sichuan University and its many hospitals and research arms are the country's top medical schools and hospitals.

Since its establishment, HitGen has signed cooperation deals with more than 10 global bio-pharmaceutical firms.

In September, the company announced a multi-target global collaboration with Janssen Biotech Inc, one of the Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson.

This collaboration aims to discover potential new therapies in areas of strategic interest to Janssen, especially in the areas of oncology and metabolism.

As part of the agreement, HitGen's technology platform, centered around design, synthesis, screening, and hit validation, will be deployed to find new small-molecule hits and leads for therapeutic targets identified by Janssen.

Lyu Guotao, born in 1978 in Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang province in Northeast China, stayed in Chengdu after he graduated from Sichuan University.

He is founder and CEO of iBaby, a platform that gathers obstetricians from around the country to provide professional consulting services for expectant mothers.



iBaby staff at office answer a mother's online question.

Launched in May 2015, the iBaby application already has 1.2 million expectant mother users and 100,000 obstetrician users, half of the whole country's obstetricians.

"Research shows that 30 percent to 40 percent of patients don't need to go to the hospital. The iBaby app popularizes general medical and health knowledge among expectant mothers, helping to save medical resources and easing the burden on hospitals," he said.

Lyu said his company will set up branches around the country next year, including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, Guangdong province. He expects the number of expectant mother users to reach 5 million in the first half of next year.

The company has received 10 million yuan (\$1.5 million) angel investment and is about to finish the B round financing.

Lyu said he has stayed in Chengdu because of the city's strong cultural atmosphere, as well as the opportunities created with the implementation of the "Go West" campaign, as well as the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road initiatives.

He also appreciates the local government's support in finance and business promotion.

"Chengdu is taking a lead in the country regarding innovation and entrepreneurship. It is attracting an increasing number of talents from around the world to work and start businesses here," he said.