

City thrives on snowbird tourism

Zhanjiang is taking steps to present itself as the perfect destination for winter-weary travelers

By XU JINGXI in Guangzhou
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Zhanjiang, the southernmost coastal city of Guangdong province, aspires to take center stage in the Beibu Gulf Rim in the sector of tourism.

Despite the fact that the city boasts a coastline of more than 2,000 kilometers and has more than 140 islands, it is not as well known to domestic and foreign tourists as its neighbors Hainan province and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

One can get from Zhanjiang to Hainan Island in about 90 minutes by ferry and it takes about three hours to drive to Guangxi.

Nearly 90 percent of all tourist groups pass through Zhanjiang on the way to these two popular destinations, according to the city's mayor, Wang Zhongbing.

In an example of how Zhanjiang is working to increase its profile among tourists, Wang led a delegation to Northeast China last February, visiting the cities of Changchun, Harbin and Qiqihar to promote the warm southern coastal city as the ideal winter destination for leisure tourism.

"The trip effectively increased the profile of Zhanjiang among tourists from Northeast China, telling them it's more economical to travel to Zhanjiang to enjoy the blue sky and sea that is no less beautiful than Sanya (in Hainan) and Beihai (in Guangxi)," Wang said.

Altogether, 37.83 million tourist trips were made to Zhanjiang in 2016, an increase of 17.7 percent compared to 2015. The tourism industry generated revenue of 35 billion yuan (\$5 billion), seeing year-on-year growth of 28.6 percent.

Zhanjiang has set a goal of attracting 38 million tourist trips this year and generating revenue of 38 billion yuan from the tourism industry.

Tourism has become a new engine of economic growth for the city and will be developed into a "strategic pillar industry," according to Peng Hui, head of the Zhanjiang Bureau of Tourism.

She continued: "We will focus on providing more coastal tourism products and



Wei Hongguang (left), Party chief of Zhanjiang, Mayor Wang Zhongbing and other local city officials ride bicycles around Binhu Park, the city's largest lake wetland park, after the completion of reconstruction on Dec 30, 2016. LANG SHUCHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

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promoting Zhanjiang as a winter resort. Our goal is to develop Zhanjiang into the leading city in the Beibu Gulf Rim in the sector of tourism by 2020."

A high-speed rail network is



Tourists from Northeast China pose for a photo during their visit to the coastal city of Zhanjiang. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

currently under construction to link cities in the Beibu Gulf Rim.

With increasing connectivity and improved communication links, Zhanjiang's government is encouraging the city's tourism agencies to cooperate with their counterparts in Haikou in Hainan, Beihai in Guangxi

and Yangjiang in Guangdong to design and launch new products.

The Zhanjiang Bureau of Tourism has also proposed that cities in the Beibu Gulf Rim recommend three or four tourist attractions and offer discounted tickets to visitors choosing the designed route.

Chefs serve up seafood treats galore

While some may consider Guangdong province a heaven for a seafood gourmand, it is actually the city of Zhanjiang that is largely responsible for earning the province this lofty reputation.

Because of its coastal location, Zhanjiang offers diners the very freshest choice of fine seafood.

The city boasts a myriad of seafood stalls where you can sample, among other things, lobster, abalone,

that you can't stop your chopsticks from snatching up more of the delicious fresh seafood.

Besides the city's renowned seafood, the cooking method of Zhanjiang's chefs is also



unique. With an emphasis on the original flavor of the freshest ingredients, every chef uses this as the basis for developing their own individual style and concept.

Without the mass of chilies or gourmet powders, spicy clout or complicated cooking procedures found in other provinces, every ingredient is deftly handled. "Zhanjiang dishes are rooted in the original taste of the ingredients and simplicity," said Zheng Xiangyang, one of Zhanjiang's leading chefs.



Developed over a long period of time, this cooking style and philosophy have come to symbolize Zhanjiang's cuisine, and it has gained wide acceptance due to its respect for nature and natural ingredients. In essence, the very flavor and manner in which dishes are cooked are at the heart of Zhanjiang's culinary fame.

ZHUAN TI



crab, shrimp, grouper, oyster, cuttlefish and scallops.

The sights and smells can easily rouse the foodie in you, and help you to work up a real appetite at the same time.

Whether you opt for one of the random street bistros or vendors' stands around the city, you are certain to find something that will satisfy both your appetite and your curiosity.

You could also peruse the local markets and small food shops, which offer a cozy alternative to the hustle and bustle of street level.

Sea crab has long been regarded as a local treasure in Zhanjiang.

It is renowned as one of China's most famous varieties of edible crab,



and its meaty thighs, rich creaminess and crispy texture were noted in ancient Chinese literature.

Chen Qiaosen, a Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) poet and painter, relieved his cravings for the crabs by drawing them.

Another well-known seafood item that tends to fly off people's dinner plates is oyster, which has a history of more than 2,000 years.

Although not super large in size, the meaty, rich and tender Zhanjiang oysters will simply melt on your tongue.

Once you've taken that first bite, you will likely find



Subtropical scenic spots take center stage

By REN JIE
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Zhanjiang, a coastal city in South China's Guangdong province, is a port city full of subtropical scenic spots.

It covers Leizhou, Lianjiang and Wuchuan cities; Xuwen, Suixi counties; and Chikan, Xiashan, Potou and Mazhang districts, with a total area of 12,471 square kilometers.

Zhanjiang was originally called *Kwangcho Wan* (literally "Guangzhou Bay"), when in 1898 it was ceded by the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) to France as a leased territory. It was returned to China in 1946 at which point it became Zhanjiang.

The city is one of China's national key environmental protection cities and also a State-level ecological demonstration pilot city.

It always ranks near the top of China's air quality indexes, and the quantity of negative oxygen ions in the air is more than 8,000 per cubic centimeter, which is four times above the 1,500 per cubic centimeter figure stipulated by the World Health Organization.

Zhanjiang's average year-round temperature is a pleasant 23.2 C, making it a city of verdant grasslands and trees.

Bordered by the sea on three sides, Zhanjiang has China's only subtropical peninsula.

The city's coastline extends over 2,000 kilometers. A coastal tourist resort formed by Techeng, Nansan, Donghai, Naozhou and Nanping islands and Zhanjiang Bay, offers tourists



Jinshawan beach is a popular tourist attraction in Zhanjiang.

RAO XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

a unique seaside experience in the heart of a city.

Other notable attractions along the Zhanjiang coastline include Longhaitian Beach, the longest beach in China; three national-level natural protection areas, Xuwen Coral Reef Nature Reserve, Mangrove Nature Reserve, and Leizhou Rare Marine Life Nature Reserve; the biggest volcanic island — Naozhou Island; the site of the first harbor of the Maritime Silk Road during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220) — Dahan Sandun Tourist Resort; and the Liezhou Tiancheng tourist resort, the perfect place to unwind and take in spectacular sunsets.

In addition to its unique natural resources and characteristic resorts, Zhanjiang's cultural aspects are another draw for visitors. For instance, the red soil cultural scenic spot in Leizhou city continues to draw numerous domestic and foreign tourists to the bay city.

The following is a selection of Zhanjiang's other notable spots:

•Huguangyan National Geopark Scenic Area

Huguangyan National Geopark, the only maar lake in China, is one of the world's rare non-renewable geological resources. Located southwest of Zhanjiang city, the geopark covers 4.7 square kilometers.

The lake, with a water surface area of 2.3 square kilometers and a depth of 446 meters, has 420-meters of volcanic mud sediment.

The average year-round temperature inside the scenic area is 3 C lower than outside and the air contains a high level of negative ions, which is believed to have health benefits. Volcanic mud is both a popular beauty product and a helpful treatment for arthritis and skin conditions.

•Wuchuan Jizhao Bay

Located 50 kilometers east



Zhanjiang Bay offers tourists a unique seaside experience. FANG XIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Visitors seek solace in deep South from cold

By ZHUAN TI
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When you consider the fact that even brown-headed gulls migrate to Zhanjiang, a coastal city in South China's Guangdong province, to spend the freezing winter months, it's not too surprising to learn that the human residents of China's northeastern regions like to do the same.

Statistics show that 11,300 tourists from northeastern China toured the city in 118 separate tour groups from March to December last year, showing that winter tours from the region to the warm and picturesque city are growing into their own industry.

The increasing number of tourists from China's frozen regions has proven a boon for tourism enterprises, which have in turn benefited from local government support.

The Zhanjiang city government announced early last year that it gave local tourism enterprises up to 500 yuan (\$72) for each tourist that traveled with them.

Northeast China's travel agencies have also been encouraged to establish branches in the city, where they will be provided with rent-free premises for a year.

Visitors are encouraged to access local healthcare providers and apply for urban housing accumulation fund loans in Zhanjiang.

City Mayor Wang Zhongbing said: "Zhanjiang has obvious attractions for tourists and their subsequent demands drive the supply-side reform of the tourism sector."

"We are all working to ensure that everyone who visits the city feels a genuine sense of belonging."

The city's clear, blue skies, temperate climate, charming coastline and the fact that its fruit trees yield bounty year-round are all pleasant surprises for tourists from Northeast China, one visitor wrote in a letter to his tour operator after a trip.

Wen Diqiang, general manager of Zhanjiang Comfort Travel Co, said: "Visitors to Zhanjiang can best discover the city's charms by indulging in a longer holiday due to the slow pace of life and efficient urban infrastructure."

Ma Yue, an executive with Liaoning Overseas Travel Agency, echoed Wen's sentiments. "The growth of the city's winter tourism industry marks a market shift from tourists' previous preferences for the island province of Hainan, and Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhuhai in Guangdong province," he said.

Last year, the city opened direct flights to Shenyang and Dalian, which has helped to establish the city as a new tourist destination for travelers from Northeast China's Liaoning province.

Looking forward, travel agencies anticipate more air routes and an improved transportation network helping to cater to the rising demand from tourism.