



From left: A tourist takes photos at a plum farm in Huangfu township in Wanrong county. XUE JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY The Hukou Waterfall on the Yellow River in Jixian county is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Shanxi province. SUN RONGXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY A child flies a kite at a park in Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi. LIU TONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Millions of tourists descend on Shanxi for Tomb Sweeping Day

Hundreds of scenic and cultural sites are reopened with strict health monitoring rules in place



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Upon hearing that tourist destinations were reopening in Shanxi province, Tong Fuquan, a retired policeman, started planning a trip to the province for early April with several of his friends.

His trip covered Datong, Youyu, Linfen and many other places. Tong then shared his travel experiences on WeChat, attracting the interest of other friends.

"Spring is a good time to see the sights, visit friends and relax," Tong said. He added that the incentive packages of many destinations and hotels are making tours cheaper.

Tong and his companions were

not alone. During Qingming Festival — or Tomb Sweeping Day — at the beginning of April, Shanxi's various tourist destinations received nearly 7 million visits, according to the Shanxi Department of Culture and Tourism.

Officials at the department said the number is a welcome sign of recovery after the industry was hit hard by the outbreak of COVID-19 in the first quarter of 2020.

The recovery was also the result of a provincial marketing campaign to help the tourism industry overcome the negative effects of the pandemic.

The campaign launched by the department, which lasts from April 1 to June 30, called on tourism operators to offer preferential treatment to customers. This includes the exemption of ticket fees and deduction of transport and accommodation costs.

The three-day Qingming Festival was the first tourism peak of the year, with 215 out of 216 major desti-

nations in Shanxi open to tourists.

The provincial department of culture and tourism released a market report on April 7. It showed 6.99 million visits were made to Shanxi's destinations and total spending by tourists surpassed 3.68 billion yuan (\$522.6 million).

During last year's Tomb Sweeping Day, Shanxi's tourist destinations received 9.65 million visitors and netted 4.63 billion yuan in revenue.

"This year's numbers are not comparable to those in 2019. However, the sign of recovery is obvious," said Li Gui, deputy chief of the Shanxi Department of Culture and Tourism.

"Although ticket revenues decreased in many destinations, there was an increased willingness among tourists to spend on related services and products," Li said.

He added that the tourism boom was achieved while strict preventive measures were applied to ensure the health of tourists.

With these measures in place, tourists were allowed to expand their options from outdoor to indoor sites, according to Li.

Shanxi Museum, based in the provincial capital of Taiyuan, reopened on March 24. For Qi Chenyu, a frequent museumgoer in Taiyuan, the reopening was a long time coming.

"I planned to watch the murals show at the museum several months ago, but the trip was delayed by the epidemic," she said.

To her excitement, she was able to visit on April 7.

"I just felt I was the guest of honor when visiting the show with so few people. I could have enough time to study all the exhibits carefully and take pictures," Qi said.

To ensure the health of visitors, the museum only accepts online reservations from individual applicants and applies strict preventive measures.

Visitors are required to have their online health codes and body tem-

peratures checked at the entrance. They also have to keep a distance of more than 1.5 meters from each other inside the museum, according to its officials.

Every scenic area in Shanxi now has online reservation services, according to Shi Zhenya, an official at the Shanxi Department of Culture and Tourism.

He said those who booked their tickets online can directly enter a scenic area by scanning their ID cards or QR codes at the entrance. This practice reduces the risk of cross infection by avoiding close contact with staff members.

It is a tradition during Tomb Sweeping Day that people make sightseeing tours in the countryside after sweeping the tombs of their ancestors and deceased family members.

To meet this demand, tourism operators in various regions in Shanxi have organized special routes and programs for rural tours.

Flower-themed sightseeing festivals are now held in Yuncheng, Yangquan, Changzhi, Linfen and Jincheng cities.

In some areas surrounding public cemeteries, tree-planting events have been held. Planting trees is a tradition in China to commemorate ancestors as Chinese people believe that the later generations should rest in the shade of trees planted by their ancestors.

Li Yali contributed to this story.



## Students head back to school as virus now under control across nation

Grade-four students in 12 higher-learning institutions in Shanxi province returned to lectures on April 10, marking the reopening of local universities and colleges as the novel coronavirus epidemic is under control in the country.

According to the Shanxi Department of Education, all of the 30 universities in the province will resume classes by this weekend, with the return of 66,585 grade-four students. Local senior middle schools resumed classes on March 25, as grade-12 students were the first to return to school. Students of all grades at local universities, primary and middle schools are scheduled to return to their campuses in the near future.

MA LIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Coal pipeline reduces costs and environmental impact

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Construction on a 8.4-kilometer-long coal-transmission pipeline was recently completed in Jincheng Economic and Technological Development Zone in Jincheng city, Shanxi province, enabling the conveyance of more than 1,000 metric tons of coal per hour.

Built by Huayu Coal Chemicals, a subsidiary of Jicheng Anthracite Coal Mining Group, the pipeline connects Huayu's Sihe Mine and its coal processing facility. The pipeline system is currently under trial operation and its official operation will begin in the near future.

Huayu is one of the largest coal liquefaction enterprises in Shanxi province.

It uses high-sulfur coal, coal-bed methane and other industrial waste to produce methanol, a kind of clean fuel.

Its coal liquefaction facility can

transform 2.2 million tons of high-sulfur coal into 1.2 million tons of methanol a year, according to the company.

Wang Jie, an executive at Sihe

Mine, said such a huge facility needs a daily supply of 4,500 tons of crude coal from Sihe.

He said the coal is currently transported by truck.

"We are using a fleet of 50 trucks to carry coal to the liquefaction plant. The loading and unloading are time-consuming and the spilling of coal from the trucks is a big threat to the environment," Wang said.

To solve the problems, Huayu began the construction of the pipeline system in October 2018, with a total investment of 246 million yuan (\$34.9 million).

"During construction, we had to overcome a number of difficulties including complicated terrain and high-altitude operations," said Zhang Zilong, a Huayu executive in charge of the construction.

The pipeline crosses two townships, six highways and 18 high-voltage power transmission lines, according to Zhang.

Zhang is responsible for the pipeline's trial operation.

He said the whole system is monitored by automatic devices and access is available on both sides of the pipeline to make it easier for maintenance.

As the pipeline is fully enclosed, spilling of coal can be avoided, reducing pollution of the environment, according to Wang.

The executive said the system can save 18 million yuan a year in transportation costs compared with the use of trucks.

He said the pipeline is the longest in Asia for coal transmission.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.



The 8.4-kilometer pipeline built by Huayu Coal Chemicals is the longest in Asia for coal transportation. JIAO ZHAOZHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Taiyuan showcases 5G tech to the public

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A 5G experience event was held in Taiyuan on April 11, allowing visitors the chance to get to grips with ultra-high definition streaming, high-speed network connections and real-time virtual reality transmission.

The event was held by the Shanxi branch of China Unicom and information technology giant Huawei.

Yuan Xiaoshen, an online movie enthusiast, was among the excited visitors during the event.

"It's amazing that it takes less than 10 seconds to download a high-definition movie of one gigabyte. That's the amazing speed of 5G," Yuan said.

The event was held two days after the government of Shanxi announced the latest developments in the commercialization of 5G technologies.

At a news conference on April 9, Zhang Zhanxiang, deputy chief and spokesman of the Shanxi Department of Industry and Information Technology, told the media the province has recently achieved breakthroughs in the 5G communications industry.

According to Zhang, more than 3,800 5G base stations have been built and operational in Shanxi as of the end of March. All 11 prefecture-level cities in the province have drafted their 5G network development plans.

In addition, 5G networks deployed by the three major telecom operators — China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom — cover all major urban areas in the 11 cities.

While residents pin their hopes on 5G changing their lives, local market players and industrial officials are more optimistic about 5G applications in industries.

"While the 5G infrastructure is in place, we will shift our focus to industrialized use of the new technologies," said Wu Jin, chief of the Shanxi Communications Administration Bureau.

The official cited the example of Huozhou Coal Electricity Group, which is currently promoting the use of 5G technologies to manage its coal mines and other production sites.

The group based in Huozhou, Shanxi province, signed a cooperation agreement with China Unicom to explore 5G applications, including artificial intelligence, big data and augmented reality, in coal and electricity production.

In May 2019, the group launched its first smart mine and equipment inspection and monitoring system at its Pangpangta Mine, with the help of China Unicom, marking the beginning of its large-scale application of 5G in its production.

"The system can greatly improve safety and efficiency at our mines and production sites through such technologies as remote sensing, remote diagnoses and real-time data transmission and processing," said Yan Lila, an executive at Pangpangta Mine.

He added the smart system can be upgraded to cover more functions in the future, including smart transportation, smart ventilation and other remotely controlled operations.

Wu from the Shanxi Communications Administration Bureau cited 5G applications in the prevention and control of the COVID-19 epidemic.

One example is a 5G thermal imaging system used to monitor body temperatures in crowded public venues.

Wu said 5G technologies will be widely used in such fields as manufacturing, transportation, power transmission, healthcare and education.

"The broader applications of 5G demand closer collaborations among industrial players, telecom operators and equipment providers," he said.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.