

Red tourism brings riches to villagers

People of Caijiaya in Xingxian county of Shanxi province take advantage of new revenue streams generated by visitors



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Wen Shouhui, an 89-year-old in the village of Caijiaya in the western Shanxi county of Xingxian, likes to sit at his doorstep every morning in midsummer, enjoying the cool morning weather, chatting with neighbors and watching the tourists arrive.

He said at her age, the best thing to do is to enjoy his last lease of life, freed from any worldly worries.

He said what makes a worry-free life possible is the improved welfare of every resident in the village.

"The pension for every senior like me is more than 1,000 yuan (\$150) a month," Wen said. "And most of the cost of healthcare is covered by the government."

Wen said he also enjoys a government-granted subsidy for military veterans. He added that there are still quite a few veterans who used to serve in the armed forces led by the Communist Party of China in the 1940s.

In many ways, Caijiaya appears to be an ordinary village near the Weifen River, a branch of the Yellow River, in the heart of the Lyuliang Mountains.

However, it is historically extraordinary. More than 80 years ago, it was part of the Jinsui Revolutionary Base, home to the headquarters of the 120th Division of the Eighth Route Army led by famed Chinese general He Long (1896-1969). The army division was stationed there to protect Yan'an in neighboring Shaanxi province, the cradle of the Chinese Communist revolution during China's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and China's War of Liberation (1946-49).

Today, the Jinsui Revolutionary Memorial Hall in Caijiaya is a silent witness to the past. Red tour-



A group of students board the Taiyuan-Caijiaya train to visit the famed Red tour destination in Xingxian county. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ism, which focuses on tours exploring the history of the CPC before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, has grown tremendously during the past few years.

Caijiaya's popularity began to increase in the early 2010s with the boom of Red tourism. It made headlines in 2017 when some of the nation's leaders visited the village, hoping it to become one of important national bases for patriotic education.

The opening of a passenger railway route, which links Caijiaya and the provincial capital of Taiyuan, has further increased its appeal to tourists.

After renovating a former freight line, the Taiyuan Bureau of China Railway Group launched a passenger route between Taiyuan and Caijiaya on June 21, 2018, which, in

turn, established the first passenger train service in Xingxian county. The whole trip takes about four hours.

Before that, traveling from the Lyuliang Mountains to the rest of Shanxi province was no easy feat.

"It took more than seven hours from Xingxian to Taiyuan by bus. And the ride on zigzagging and bumpy mountain roads was especially uncomfortable for carsick passengers," said Zhang Jinmei, a native of Caijiaya who now lives in Taiyuan.

Zhang is a frequent traveler between Taiyuan and Caijiaya as her parents now live in Caijiaya.

"Family reunions are highly valued in our culture," Zhang said. "So I like to visit my parents as frequently as possible."

She added that her husband's parents live in the county of Lou-

fan, another destination on the railway line.

"I just feel this train service is tailored to my family, because there is much demand for us to travel between Taiyuan, Loufan and Caijiaya," Zhang said.

Executives of the Taiyuan Bureau of China Railway said the passenger train service aims to help revitalize the economy in regions the route passes through by offering travel for local people and bringing in tourists.

With tourists flocking to the Red tourism destination of Caijiaya, local residents have opportunities to improve their livelihoods with new sources of revenue.

Ren Jinfeng, 59, is a resident who works as a street cleaner near the Jinsui Revolutionary Memorial Hall. She has worked at this job for eight years and has witnessed

great changes in the village since it became a destination for Red tourism a decade ago.

"Most of our fellow villagers have benefited from the Red tourism industry," Ren said. "Life can be improved if you are willing to work hard."

Ren said that street cleaning is not a highly paid job, but "it ensures a stable source of revenue for me". She added that the income has helped to support her three children through their education. "I'm proud that all my children have graduated from universities and found jobs."

Bai Xingping, a local resident, runs a supermarket near the railway station. "I opened a store here nearly 30 years ago, mainly serving locals in the beginning," Bai said. He added that it had been only a small, self-run business for more than two decades.

"With the rapid growth in tourists after the opening of the train station, my business has grown into a larger supermarket," Bai said.

In addition to locals, Bai said his customers include tourists and construction workers.

"We've seen an increasing number of construction workers in Caijiaya," Bai said. "They are here to build various tourism and transport facilities."

Bai Yang, deputy chief of the village, said the Taiyuan-Caijiaya train service has brought in more than 20,000 tourists annually over the past four years. "There are even greater numbers of tourists coming here by car, by bus or even by plane," Bai Yang said.

Wen Baoquan, Party secretary of the village, said the villagers have seen their incomes increase steadily over the past few years, thanks to the development of tourism and other industries.

"Per capita disposable income in Caijiaya reached 8,000 yuan in 2021, compared with 6,200 yuan in 2017," Wen Baoquan said.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.

Master of welding proves knowledge is power

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Automation and digitalization are helping to free workers from repetitive labor in many manufacturing industries. But hands-on skills and personal initiative are still crucial, as the story of one man in Shanxi shows.

Liu Yanpeng, a winner of the 2022 Shanxi May 1 Model Worker award, is an expert welder at the equipment production plant of Fenxi Mining Industry. It is a branch company of Shanxi Coking Coal Group and it is based in the city of Jiexiu.

Liu has been a welder for nearly 10 years after he graduated from Taiyuan University of Technology.

"As a graduate from a leading university in Shanxi, he should be an engineer or a researcher in the company," said Ma Yitian, the instructor of Liu when he began his career.

Ma said it surprises him that Liu decided to be a welder and has remained at the post for 10 years.

Liu said he made the choice because of his fondness for hands-on work. "I'm a mechanic by nature and I like to make and repair things by myself," he said.

He added that another reason he is reluctant to leave his post is because of his instructor Ma, who is an expert welder and known throughout the province. Ma is the chief of an innovative welding studio at the company.

"Ma is the right person to teach you to be an outstanding welder," Liu said. "It's definitely worth a lifetime to learn from him."

Liu said it is the impression of many that welding is a laborious practice that requires endurance, concentration and physical strength.

"That impression is true because you have to endure the high-temperature environment and maintain your arm muscle strength for stable operations," Liu said. He added that to keep his arm strong he is a frequent user of a local fitness club during his spare time.

However, Liu said hands-on skills are not the ultimate attainment of a welder. "A successful expert welder should constantly innovate by keeping up with the latest technologies and techniques," he said.

He added that Ma's welding studio is one such place where he can make innovations by combining his hands-on skills with academic knowledge.

Liu recalled that the company installed two welding robots last year to improve efficiency. He later discovered the robots could not replicate the accuracy of manual work done by a skilled welder.

"We found something was wrong with the setting of technique parameters," Liu said. "After hundreds of experiments, we finally set the right operational parameters for the robots, which helped to reach the desired accuracy."

Liu, who has won a string of awards in provincial skill competitions since 2015, is now one of the leading members in the studio. He is also the instructor for new workers.

He has proposed a number of new techniques, which have helped his company save millions of dollars in costs.

Wu Jia contributed to this story.



Liu Yanpeng welds together components at Fenxi Mining Group's production plant.

ZHAO LIJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Museum preserves renowned baijiu brand's long heritage

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A museum of an old distillery, which is seen as the root of liquor production in Shanxi province, was opened on June 23 in the city of Fenyang.

The museum, called Old Fenjiu Distillery, is a renovation and expansion of the former museum of the renowned white liquor, or baijiu, producer Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group.

Fenjiu, which literally means Shanxi's liquor, can be used as a reference for all the baijiu products of the province. It is also a brand name of Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group.

The group is so named because it is a liquor producer in Xinghuacun, a township which is said to be one of the original sources of China's alcoholic beverages.

The presumption is made based on an archaeological discovery at the production site of Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group, which points to a

Chinese alcoholic beverage production history of about 6,000 years.

One of the remarkable findings was a waving spindle-shaped bottle with a distinctive feature of Yangshao Culture, an ancient civilization that resided in the middle reaches of the Yellow River between 5,000 and 7,000 years ago. Researchers believe this is the earliest alcoholic beverage-making utensil found in China.

The bottle is now on display in the museum, which is owned and operated by Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group.

In addition to this historically significant exhibit, an old distilling mill, with a history of 810 years, is the centerpiece of the museum. It is also called the living fossil of the ancient Chinese baijiu industry, as production based on ancient techniques is still going on at the mill.

The museum, covering about 9,000 square meters in floor space, is



The Old Fenjiu Distillery museum in Xinghuacun, Fenyang city, is a place where visitors can tap into the centuries-old liquor-making techniques. WEN ZHAOYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

the former premises of time-honored Jinyu Fenjiu Company. Xinghuacun Fenjiu was founded in the late 1940s after Jinyu and other local distilleries merged. The museum also includes a

2,000-sq-m garden and an ancient well used as the water supply source for liquor making.

Jinyu attained its peak of development in the early 20th century

Innovative cabins assist medics in pandemic fight

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Nucleic acid testing cabins, which can easily be seen across Chinese cities, are now playing an important role in helping the country combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, in the hot summer, the high temperature in the cabins is still a severe challenge for the medics working inside, even with air conditioners.

A new solution offered by Shanxi-based Huayang Group is expected to solve the problem.

The first batches of such cabins are now in use in Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi province. And users said this is one of the most considerate solutions for medics' health in the hot and humid environment of summer.

The offering from Huayang is a complete solution that includes the use of aerogel as walling material and an integrated ventilation and air-conditioning system.

Wang Jing, a nurse who is among

the first users of the nucleic acid testing cabins, compared the new product with traditional ones.

"In the past, we needed to wear the stuffy protective clothing to collect saliva samples from residents," Wang said. "This meant we had to endure extremely high temperatures and humidity inside the clothing."

And now, working in a totally enclosed environment that is made possible by a cutting-edge integrated ventilation and air-conditioning system, she does not need to wear protective clothing anymore. Furthermore, the aerogel walling material keeps a constantly lower temperature inside the cabin, making shifts more comfortable for medics.

According to Duan Xinyong, a researcher at Huayang Group, the integrated ventilation and air-conditioning system is developed by Huayang's partnership with Shanghai-based Donghua University and Zhejiang-based Furuibang New Materials Technology. And the aero-



The new nucleic acid testing cabins produced by Huayang Group are now in use in Taiyuan. PENG KE'ER / FOR CHINA DAILY

gel walling material is a cutting-edge, patented product developed by Huayang itself.

In addition, the cabin is also equipped with electrical-heating graphene flooring, which can be used in winter to further improve

indoor heating and reduce energy consumption.

Duan said aerogel is a new material that can substantially increase the insulating performance of structures.

Aerogel used to be a high-tech

material mostly used in the aerospace industry. The domestic market had been dominated by overseas suppliers, and the price of the material was as high as 1.2 million yuan (\$179,840) per metric ton before 2018, according to industry insiders.

Huayang Group, based in the Shanxi city of Yangquan, was one of the Chinese pioneers able to break the overseas monopoly in the domestic market. It began to develop aerogel products in 2018 and founded Asia's largest aerogel manufacturing enterprise — Yangzhong New Materials — in Yangquan, in cooperation with Zhongning Aerogel Technology based in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

"With a density just 2.7 times that of air, the aerogel we produce is superlight in weight and high in heat-insulation and flame-resistance performance," said Duan.

Huayang-made nucleic acid testing cabins are first being used in Taiyuan and are expected to be incorporated into other regions in Shanxi and the rest of the country in the near future, according to Duan.

Peng Ke'er contributed to this story.