



The Zhongdu grasslands in Zhangbei county, Hebei province, will host the InMusic Festival that opens today.

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Record conservation funding for Chengde imperial gardens

600m yuan for work on world's largest complex

By LIU XIANG and LIFUSHENG

The world's largest imperial garden complex is expected to receive 600 million yuan (\$94.2 million) for conservation from the Chinese government during the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) period, according to a conservation official in the city of Chengde in North China's Hebei province.

A 290 million conservation fund, nearly half of the total, has already been earmarked for the Chengde Imperial Summer Resort and eight adjacent imperial temples, the head of the conservation effort told China Daily late last month.

In addition to conservation efforts well under way, work on another 52 projects has begun this year, mainly dedicated to heritage conservation, fire safety and site protection, he said.

The resort will remain open to visitors as the work continues, the official added.

Started in 2010, the conservation initiative is another major move by the central government following similar efforts at the Potala Palace in Tibet and the Great Wall near Beijing.

The large investment tops the list of all conservation efforts nationwide since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

The program is expected to last three to five years.

The summer resort, built between 1703 and 1792 during the reign of three emperors in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), is the largest extant complex of



The Chengde Imperial Summer Resort was added to the UN's World Heritage List in 1994 along with eight nearby temples.

imperial palaces and gardens in the world.

Covering 5.64 million square meters, it is around two times the size of the Summer Palace and eight times the size of Beihai Park, both of them imperial gardens in Beijing.

Quite different from conventional Chinese gardens, the resort is built around a large mountain that accounts for more than 80 percent of its total acreage.

The mountain helps keep temperatures in the resort 3 to 4 degrees lower than the nearby terrain.

Because of its vast and rich col-

lection of traditional Chinese landscapes and architecture, the resort was added to the UN's World Heritage List in 1994 together with eight nearby temples that embody elements of Mongolian, Tibetan and Uygur architecture.

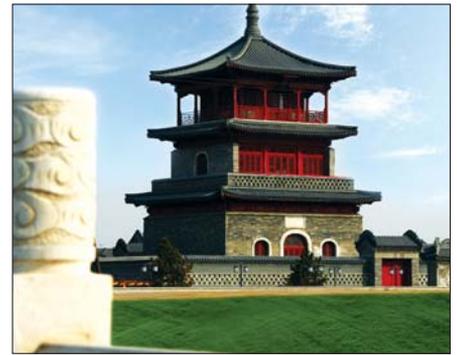
Built in the same period as the resort, the temples — which have a combined area of 400,000 square meters — once served as places of worship for leaders of Mongolian, Tibetan, and Uygur ethnic groups when they paid visits to the Qing emperors, especially the first several, who usually spent the summer in the resort.

With such resources, Chengde was listed among China's first group of historic and cultural cities in 1982.

Tourism has since been a pillar industry in the city less than 200 kilometers north of Beijing, said a local tourism official.

Official statistics show that the industry generated 12.6 billion yuan in revenue in 2011, accounting for more than 11 percent of the city's GDP.

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The Wenchang Pavilion in Shengfang, a town dating back to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC).



The newly built 80 million yuan Zhongdu museum covering the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) will house relics and serve as a place to study the imperial architecture of the Mongol empire as well as nomadic culture.

Historic Hebei rich in antiquity

By LIFUSHENG
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While Xanadu in Inner Mongolia, the summer capital of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), was made a World Heritage site in June, conservation efforts are also underway for the remains of another of the dynasty's capitals.

Zhongdu, which literally means central capital, is 50 kilometers north of the county of Zhangbei in North China's Hebei province. Built in 1307 by Kublai Khan's grandson Qayisan, it was burned to the ground by rebelling farmers in an uprising half a century later.

Three of the 27 original sites in the ancient capital that was built in a three tiered layout are now protected, according to local heritage experts.

The local government has also begun building a museum about Zhongdu.

In addition to housing relics, the museum will also serve as a place to study the imperial architecture of the Mongol empire as well as nomadic culture, said Zhangbei government officials.

Archaeological excavations at Zhongdu started in 1998 and the ancient capital was listed among the country's 10 major archaeological discoveries in 1999.

It was one of three capitals the Yuan emperors established, the most important of which was Dadu, or great capital, which stood on the site of today's Beijing.

Shengfang ancient town

Encompassing Beijing and Tianjin, Hebei is rich in historical sites.

In addition to Zhongdu and the Chengde Summer Resort, other places of historical interest in the province include Shengfang in Bazhou city, said a tourism official at the provincial government.

Once a riverside town, Shengfang can trace its history to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC).

It rose as a trade center in North China in the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), attracting merchants from neighboring cities and provinces.

At its peak Shengfang had more than 400 stores, including a British store that sold Shell-brand oil, a local historian told China Daily.

It was among the first group of towns in China to have a post office and photo studio, he added.

Shengfang also has more than 30 Western-style buildings constructed in the early 20th century.

They are telling evidence how modern the ancient town once was, said a local tourism official.

The rare blend of Western and traditional Chinese architecture has helped attract visitors, the official said.

InMusic Festival set to rock Zhangbei county

By LIU XIANG
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Rock'n' roll fans will soon be able to indulge their passion as preparations are in full swing for the 2012 InMusic

Festival in Zhangbei county of northwestern Hebei province.

Organized by the Zhangbei government and InMusic, an influential music magazine in China, the three-day gala opens today on the county's



The music festival held on 100 hectares is now well established as the largest outdoor music gala in China.

prairie lands about 250 kilometers from Beijing.

Music enthusiasts are expected to enjoy themselves since the event boasts an all-star lineup of musicians including Cui Jian, Faye Wang, Zhang Chu, as well as the bands Linkoban, Orbital and Spiritualized.

China's first heavy metal band Tang Dynasty is also scheduled to perform, according to a list released by the news portal Ifeng.com.

In addition to rock music, spectators will also have the opportunity to enjoy other genres such as jazz and folk music.

Begun in 2009 as an annual event, the festival on 100 hectares of grassland is now well established as the largest outdoor music gala in China, according to the event's organizing committee.

In 2011, the event drew a record of more than 300,000 concertgoers in just three days, setting a record for the country's musical activities.

Improved services

Due to the preparations of organizers, the event handled the sudden influx of people, but a shortage of parking and congested roads caused problems.

The organizers are making every effort this year to improve the situation, the committee told China Daily.

In addition, more stages have been set up and security enhanced since the number of fans is likely to double this year, they added.

The committee is also working to make the music fest a green event with all electricity provided by windmills.

It will also provide trash cans and erect signs calling for spectators to respect the natural environment, the committee said.

The event that has rocked its way to nationwide fame over the past three years, can be traced back to a casual encounter in 2008.

That winter, Zhangbei Party Chief Li Xuerong met Liu Yifan, head of the magazine InMusic, and asked Liu to find a way to help the county's development.

Finding that the surrounding prairie was a site for imperial entertainment in ancient China, Liu began planning for the music festival in 2009.

"Zhangbei has a unique environment that made me to initiate the festival at the very start," Liu said.

"Now the festival has become a regular event, and I hope it can create beautiful memories for more people," he added.