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From left: A section of a rural road in Lingchuan county, which is a branch of the Taihang Mountains. A spectacular bend of the Yellow River near Pianguan county's Laoniuwan village, where the river and the Great Wall meet. Photos provided to china daily

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanxi's landmark attractions — the Yellow River, the Taihang Mountains and the Great Wall — are now connected by the trunk roads of three major sightseeing highways, allowing tourists to better experience the province's spectacular natural wonders, long history and brilliant cultures.

Since 2018, North China's Shanxi has invested nearly 100 billion yuan (\$13.75 billion) in the construction of sightseeing roads. With a planned total length of 13,000 kilometers, the three highway systems which are called Yellow River No 1, Taihang No 1 and Great Wall No 1 — are designed to link nearly 1,000 tourism sites among the three attractions, according to a local official.

These three highways also connect to other transport systems — national and provincial truck highways, high-speed railroads and airports — in Shanxi. "The sightseeing highways give people fast access to and an in-depth touring experience of various desti-

The official added that the project was designed to promote the integrated development of transportation, tourism and rural

Local statistics show that the bulk of the three No 1 highways, with a total length of 10,900 km, has been opened to traffic. Officials said the entire project will be complet-

ed by the end of this year. The project will also feature infrastructure to offer services for self-driving tourists. Facilities like filling stations, charging stations, recreation vehicle parks and scenic viewpoints have been built along the roads and these will continue to increase and improve in the future, said the officials.

Shanxi's three landmark attractions offer a unique appeal to tourists but the road journeys along the three routes had been challenging because of the distance they cover. The new highways aim to alleviate that.

Shanxi is one of the best places to see Chidefensive structure, the Great Wall was built Linfen and Yuncheng.

Yellow River No 1

lions of years.

ranges in North China.

place to be visited many times

The Yellow River No 1 Highway is designed to string together more than 200 scenic spots, including wetlands, waterfalls. ancient villages and ancient ferry ports, with

from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC)

the river has left one of its most beautiful fea-

tures — the Shanxi-Shaanxi Grand Gorges.

The gorges were formed by the Yellow River

Also holding an important position in

With breathtaking peaks, steep cliffs,

unique rocks, lush forests and clean waters,

Taihang is regarded by many sightseers as a

As the Yellow River, Great Wall and Tai-

hang Mountains are located in the west,

north and east of Shanxi respectively, it

might be difficult for tourists to visit all three

attractions in a short period of time. Howev-

er, with the construction of three major

Shanxi's tourism map are the Taihang Moun-

tains. Extending more than 400 km from north to south, they are among the largest

to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

road of Yellow River No 1 begins in Pian-point of the Yellow River, which used to be a guan's Laoniuwan and ends in Xihonghong architectural wonders of the Great village in Yuanqu county. It covers four a reservoir was built in the 1990s. Wall. As the country's most iconic ancient major Shanxi cities of Xinzhou, Lyuliang, It has also silently witnessed the incessant official of the village.



A sightseeing road twists its way close to the Yellow River

lage of Laoniuwan has been transformed into a popular tourist destination. Laoniuwan is a landmark in Shanxi, not only because it is the beginning of the grand gorges but because it is the intersection of

The village borders the Inner Mongolia autonomous region in the north and neighbors Shaanxi province in the west. Locals sightseeing roads, travel in Shanxi has been call it a place where "the cock's crow can be heard in three provinces".

At the convergence of the Yellow River and the Great Wall, the most spectacular part of the area is a big, 180-degree bend that forms a small peninsula opposite to the village.

Standing on the peninsula is a Great Wall watchtower called Baozita, which was built With a total length of 1,238 km, the trunk in the early Ming Dynasty. It is a vantage torrential waterway but became a lake after

flow of the river and witnessed changes in in a period spanning some two millennia — As the starting point of this route, the vil- — the area for hundreds of years.

The village provides visitors with the opportunity to explore the mysterious fortresses of the Great Wall and experience the beauty of the Yellow River. Visitors can also savor delicious farm-to-table cuisine and enjoy overnight accommodation in unique cave dwellings, with a chance to sleep on a kang – a cozy clay-and-brick stacked bed heated from within.

Almost every family in Laoniuwan now runs a homestay and tourism has become a of cars with non-local license plates is evicash cow for the villag Local man Guo Jianhua, who operates a obscure and forgotten, have been revitalized

bed-and-breakfast business, said that he had and are now bustling with activity.

"The sightseeing highways give people fast access to and an in-depth touring experience of various destinations." A local official in Shanxi province

more than 100 tourists staving and dining at **Taihang No 1** his B&B establishment at the peak of his

When mentioning a road that can provide self-driving tourists with a sightseeing experience of a long range of spectacular mountains, one may think of the Blue Ridge Parkway in the Appalachian Mountains in the United States, which inspired John Denlining the highway. The local villages, once ver to write his famous song *Take Me Home, Taihang Mountains*.

Qinshui county and ends in Pingxingguan between the "iron walls of Taihang", it can village in Fanshi county in the north. With its easily strike a chord among tourists trunk line and branches covering the five cithang region are the cliffs rising up from the ies of Jincheng, Changzhi, Jinzhong, Yangquan and Xinzhou, the road system now has valleys. The cliffs are often called the "iron more than 4.100 km opened to traffic. walls of Taihang".

its Taihang Mountains region. The Taihang

An overhead view of the Yellow River No l Highway in Linfen city

No 1 Highway starts from Yaodu village in (1931-45). And when the music resonates

Resistance Against Japanese Aggression

One of the most imposing sights in the Tai-

But for many Chinese people, the term is

tains were an important base for the Eighth Route Army led by the Communist Party of

China, a vital force in the war of resistance.

this pledge and rendered new significance to

The Taihang Mountains are a famed tourist destination in China, featuring a perfect not only a description of the landscape, but combination of natural and cultural wonhomage to the heroes who protected the Like the sentiment of Denver when driv-

ing on the Blue Ridge Parkway, a yearning for singing is often inevitable for tourists on the Taihang roads. This is especially true on the Lingchuan section of Taihang No 1. The road features the three colors of red,

vellow and blue on its surface. But the most amazing part of it is that it can sing. When Great Wall with their very flesh and blood". driving at a speed of 30 km per hour on the road, electronic devices along the road will In the the "iron walls of Taihang"

the site of the Hundred-Regiment Campaign in Yangquan city. The county of Lingchuan, where the

Memorial Museum in Wuxiang county, and

important bases for the army during the war and is also the birthplace of the song *In the* Taihang Mountains In addition to "the road of music", Ling-

chuan has a road reflecting the enterprising spirit of contemporary locals. In the mountain-locked village of Xiyagou, esidents who had lived in isolation aspired to be linked to the outside world for hundreds of years. This was realized late last cen-

tury with the construction of a "cliff-hanging The change took place in the early 1980s when local officials and residents agreed to

build a road linking it to the rest of the county and Shanxi province. Song Zhilong, 69, was the former chief of

the village. He recalled how the road was built. "We had mobilized almost all the well known among tourists. resources of the village. In addition to investment from the county government, many families contributed their savings to the

"The job to build a road on and through the cliffs was by no means easy. As the natural conditions didn't allow the use of explosives, we cut through the cliffs inch by inch.

"The total length of the road is only 7.5 km but it took us about 10 years to complete,"

After its completion in 1991, the road was listed as one of China's top 60 new landmarks by the then National Administration of Tourism. It immediately turned the village into a popular attraction in Shanxi.

The road and Taihang No 1 are presenting When the Chinese nation and its people the hidden charms of the mountains to tourwere at their most critical moment, the warists and bringing visible benefits to locals.

Great Wall No 1 Many of them sacrificed their lives to honor

Taihang is now home to a great number of in the eastern Shanxi county of Fanshi, is a sections. $The song is a tribute to the national heroes \\ Red tour ism sites related to China's revolu-\\ road network of 3,573 km, including 1,171 km \\ road network of 3,573 k$

Shanxi is one of the nation's leading prov inces in Great Wall-related tourism. The northern Shanxi city of Datong was one of the nine border garrison towns in the Ming "music highway" is located, was one of the Dynasty, when construction of the Great Wall reached its height for the purpose of defending against the remnants of the northern Mongol Yuan forces. To this date, the city holds the largest number of Great Wall relics in Shanxi.

Datong is strategically located at the natural boundary between the farming areas of Shanxi and the nomadic areas in the north. Many Great Wall sites from multiple dynasties are located within the city. The Datong Great Wall consists of both an inner and an outer layer, with a total length of 503 km, of which the Shoukou Fortress, Zhenbian Fortress, Desheng Fortress and Xinping Fortress are all well preserved and worth

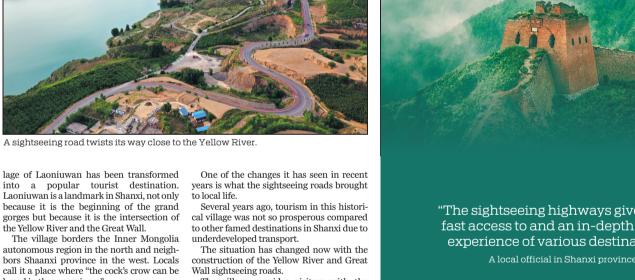
Among the many Great Wall fortresses in

Desheng was originally built in 1538 and was renovated and enhanced in 1574 and 1607 respectively. It features 18 watchtowers and four turrets on the four corners of the wall. While functioning as a stronghold during wars, the fortress was a hub for trade and cultural exchanges in times of peace.

Even in the modern era, the strategic importance of Shanxi's Great Wall has remained. Since 1937, as part of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and World War II, numerous battles took place

along the walls. In September 1937, for instance, the Eighth Route Army launched a battle against the Japanese invaders at the Great Wall pass of Pingxingguan and won a victory that helped to raise the morale of the entire Chinese military.

Both Desheng and Pingxingguan fortress es are accessible with the Great Wall No 1 The Great Wall No 1, starting from Highway. The road system offers great con-



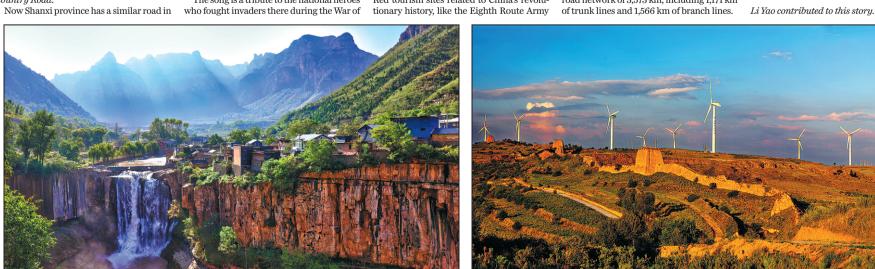
about 3,000 yuan.

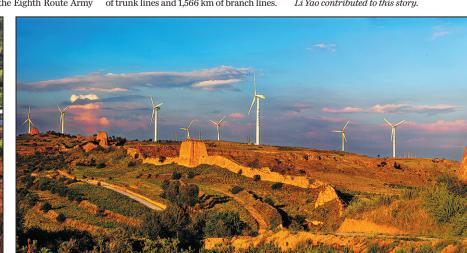
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On the Yellow River No 1, a constant flow









From left: The Yellow River winds its way between Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces. A group of statues stand in front of the Pingxingguan Victory Memorial Museum in tribute to the Chinese warriors who fought invaders during the War of Re destinations thanks to its connection to the Taihang No 1 Highway. A section of the ancient Great Wall in Datong offers a sharp contrast with a modern wind farm close by