

BUSINESS

Seniors turn off-peak season into tourism niche

More elderly travelers, especially women, embark on trips for Spring getaways

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Elderly consumers in China are seeking high-quality travel experiences in March, a traditional off-peak season for travel, thereby boosting the growth of the country's silver economy.

Since last year, among all age groups of women, those aged 50 and above have recorded the fastest growth in booking volumes for travel products, with their bookings more than doubling year-on-year, according to Qunar, a Beijing-based online travel agency.

Zhang Han, a female traveler from Beijing who is in her 50s, has more leisure time now that her daughter has just started college. As she no longer needs to synchronize her schedule with those of her husband and daughter, Zhang and two of her female friends intend to take road trips across the country, and recently pooled in money to buy a recreational vehicle.

Taking a trip in March typically costs less and tourist destinations are usually less crowded as the passenger flow at popular domestic tourist attractions gradually declines after the Spring Festival holiday.

Prices of flight tickets, too, have dropped by about 30 percent over the Spring Festival holiday period this year. For some popular destinations, the price decline has been more than 50 percent, industry players said.

Some of the hottest domestic destinations for female travelers in the over-50 age group include Kunming and Xishuangbanna in Yunnan province; Guangzhou, Guangdong province; Haikou, Hainan province; and Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, Qunar found.

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Cai Muzi, a researcher at Qunar

Appreciating flowers and taking a spring outing are some of their favorite activities. Destinations with the highest increase in bookings since early March include Wuyuan in Jiangxi province; Wuxi in Jiangsu province; and Tongnan in Chongqing, renowned for scenic spots with flower blossoms.

During the travel offseason, female tourists prefer to book flights in business class and luxury hotels with discounts, and the booking volumes for such high-end products last year were 30 percent to 40 percent higher than the previous year, data from Qunar showed.

“Compared with the traditional spending on food, clothing and utilities, women are increasingly willing to pay for experiences and emotional value. Besides, since last year, the average prices of domestic luxury hotels have declined by about 20 percent compared to the past few years,” said Cai Muzi, a researcher at Qunar.

In particular, from the beginning of 2024 till March this year, the largest spike in booking volumes for luxury hotels by domestic female travelers was observed among those from Chengdu, Sichuan province; Hang-



Travelers pose for photographs at a railway station in Yantai, Shandong province, on Sunday, before they embark on a journey specially designed for seniors. Destinations include many tourist attractions in the provinces of Hunan, Yunnan, Jiangxi and Guizhou, as well as the municipality of Chongqing. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

zhou; Chongqing; Shanghai; and Wuhan, Hubei province, and their favorite features at hotels included hot springs, indoor swimming pools, gyms, sky lounges and lobby bars.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government further deepened the reform of elderly care services and formulated policies to promote the development of the silver economy last year, according to the Government Work Report delivered on March 5 at the annual session of the

14th National People's Congress, the country's top legislature.

This year, the government plans to refine policies and mechanisms for developing senior care programs and industries and vigorously develop the silver economy to actively respond to the aging population, the report said.

As of the end of last year, China's silver-haired population, or those aged 60 and above, exceeded 300 million, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

Besides, it is noteworthy that the elderly have been interested in taking trips for some niche activities, such as glacier hiking, watching auroras and whales, and visiting the polar regions.

Female travelers who booked such trips accounted for nearly 70 percent of the total, Qunar said.

“To our surprise, half of the participants for some extreme tour groups, such as visiting New Zealand for stargazing adventures; visit-

ing the Arctic village in China's northernmost city Mohe, Heilongjiang province; and hiking to Mount Qomolangma (also known as Mount Everest), were women aged over 50,” Cai said.

She also pointed to the better consumption habits and physical fitness of a large number of middle-aged and elderly women consumers.

This year, as people born after 1970 gradually retire, the market is expected to embrace an era of silver tourism.

Pingdu in Qingdao picks up the pace on industrial development

By YUAN SHENGGAO

In conjunction with celebrating the rain water solar term on Feb 18, the county-level city of Pingdu in Qingdao, East China's Shandong province, held a signing ceremony for key projects to unveil a joint talent training practice base, accompanied by the signing of 50 projects with a total investment of 22.35 billion yuan (\$3 billion).

At the signing ceremony, data disclosed by Pingdu mayor Zhang Hongye, who also serves as deputy secretary of the Pingdu committee of the Communist Party of China, revealed that industrial technological upgrade investment has maintained double-digit growth for four consecutive years and the proportion of total research and development investment in GDP has ranked third in Qingdao for two consecutive years.

The signed projects cover multiple areas such as smart home appliances, modern agriculture, high-end chemicals, new energy and new materials, cultural tourism and healthcare. They complement Qingdao's innovative industrial layout and closely align with the 10 key industry chains that Pingdu is emphasizing to showcase its endowments in overall industrial development, local government officials said.

During the signing ceremony, Zhang emphasized the Qingte Intelligent Manufacturing Industrial Park project. Located in Tianzhuang town of Pingdu, the Qingte Intelligent Manufacturing Industrial Park has a total investment of 5.07 billion yuan. Leveraging automobile axle technology, it is setting up incubators, accelerators and R&D and production bases for manufacturing key components for commercial vehicles.

Since breaking ground in March of last year, the Qingte project has steadily progressed, including the construction of large casting workshops, comprehensive utilization workshops, sand regeneration



An elevated view of the Pingdu Olympic Sports Center in Qingdao, Shandong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

workshops and mold repair workshops. Its first phase production is expected to launch by December, and upon full completion, it is estimated that annual production of key automotive, agricultural and engineering machinery, along with robot components, will reach 200,000 metric tons. With the production of 550,000 front axles, 200,000 sets of primary and passive gears and 150,000 sets of front axle assemblies, the project's annual output value will hit 10 billion yuan, driving employment for more than 1,000 workers.

During the Qingdao two sessions in 2025, Ren Gang, mayor of Qingdao and deputy secretary of the CPC Qingdao committee, proposed that Pingdu should combine its own positioning and advantages, leverage its subjective initiative and strive to accelerate its high-quality development while serving the overall development of the city.

As a hinterland of Qingdao, Pingdu, located at the geometric center of the Jiaodong Peninsula, is speeding up construction of a comprehensive node city within the Qingdao metropolitan area, becoming an important advanced manufacturing and modern agricultural base, an official said.

With two high-speed railways and two freight railways passing through the region and six expressways crisscrossing, Pingdu is the county-level city with the longest mileage of national highways. Additionally, the area is adjacent to the three major ports of Qingdao, Yantai and Weifang. Qingdao Jiaodong International Airport is reachable in 40 minutes and Jinan in one hour, with direct access to Beijing in less than three hours.

On Feb 6, a meeting focusing on promoting high-quality development through high-quality projects was held in Qingdao, and in the following week, Pingdu held a conference to accelerate high-quality development of its advanced manufacturing. At that meeting, Zhao Xingji, secretary of the CPC Pingdu committee, said agglomeration of advanced manufacturing is very crucial.

On Feb 27, a Pingdu 2025 key project construction site promotion meeting was held in the city's economic development zone. A total investment of 23.28 billion yuan for 57 projects commenced construction, covering advanced manufacturing, modern efficient agriculture and livelihood improvement.

CNPC offshore engineering unit makes foray into Southeast Asia

By ZHENG XIN
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CNPC Offshore Engineering Co Ltd (CPOE) has made its first foray into Southeast Asia's offshore drilling services sector, securing a foothold in the international high-end offshore drilling market.

The company, a subsidiary of China National Petroleum Corp, officially launched its JUB offshore drilling project in Indonesia recently.

As the company's largest international contract to date, the project, valued at over 1 billion yuan (\$140 million), has a term of four years and represents a significant milestone for China's offshore oil and gas industry.

The project has been launched at a time when the international offshore oil and gas exploration sector has been witnessing sustained expansion, with roughly 30 percent of global oil and nearly 50 percent of natural gas reserves located offshore.

As demand for deepwater exploration continues to grow as onshore resources become harder to access, future growth in the oil and gas sector is mostly likely to come from offshore in China, making it an important energy growth driver, CPOE said.

Over 60 percent of China's new crude oil output came from offshore production last year, reinforcing the ocean's role as the backbone of the country's energy expansion, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Industry experts believe investments in the offshore sector will increase this year and through 2026. Li Ziyue, an analyst with BloombergNEF, said, “China's offshore oil and gas output has great upside potential.”

“The continuous upstream investment and production commitment by China's major oil and gas majors, including CNPC and China National Offshore Oil Corp, will play a critical role in China's energy supply security,” she said. According to a report released earlier by the CNOOC Energy

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Li Ziyue, an analyst with BloombergNEF

Economics Institute, a think tank that is part of the energy giant, China's exploitation of offshore natural gas resources has been steadily advancing toward ultra-deep waters, as the nation's marine economy has emerged as a key driver in boosting energy reserves.

As global offshore crude oil contributes over 70 percent of new discoveries, offshore natural gas discovery remains an area of significant untapped potential. China's offshore resources are set to play a more significant role in energy security, said Wang Zhen, head of the CNOOC Energy Economics Institute.



Employees of CNPC Offshore Engineering Co Ltd release mooring lines for an LNG tanker berthed at a port in Qingdao, Shandong province. YU FANGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY