

LIFE



**Left:** The site of the Zunyi Conference in Guizhou province is the region's most popular red tourism spot. **YOU YOUHAI / FOR CHINA DAILY** **Right:** Performers play ethnic music to welcome tourists at the entrance of a Dong village in Zhaoxing, in Guizhou's Liping county. **ZHANG LIN / FOR CHINA DAILY**



# Guizhou celebrates its Long March history

Province preserves sites and artifacts from significant period in time, integrating them with local culture, report **Yang Jun** in Guiyang and **Yang Feiyue** in Beijing.

In southwestern China, Guizhou province was an important site during the Long March. This was where the Red Army recuperated and went from setbacks to victory. From September 1934 to April 1936, the army trekked across more than 60 cities, counties and districts in Guizhou, leaving behind a trail of rich history for future generations.

Today, Guizhou is a place filled with red culture, in which its red tourism industry focuses on tours exploring the history of the Communist Party of China before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Along with Guizhou's magnificent natural landscape, the province has become an ideal place for red tourism.

Local authorities have tapped into the province's Long March historical significance and integrated it with ethnic, cultural and ecological elements, fueling red tourism development over the years.

According to the local government, many red tourism spots in Guizhou have seen sharp rises in tourist numbers, especially this past Spring Festival and National Day holiday last year.

Also, young people have shown increasing interest in red tourism, with those born in the 1980s and '90s accounting for 40 percent of all tourists.

### Downtown Zunyi

Zunyi has drawn tourists from



across the country over the years for the historical significance of its red tourism. Tourists can relive the Long March days of the Red Army by appreciating the large number of cultural relics, precious historical objects, photos and documents that are on display at the historical sites.

Red tourism in the city continues to grow. During this year's Spring Festival, the revolutionary memorial halls and related cultural and museum sites received about 440,000 visitors, accounting for 19.3 percent of all tourists in the city, according to the local culture, sports and tourism bureau.

The site of the Zunyi Conference is the most popular red tourism spot, with more than 4 million tourist visits a year.

From Jan 15 to 17, 1935, the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee held the Zunyi Conference to solve the most urgent organizational and military problems faced by the Party. The conference established Mao Zedong's leading position in the Party and the Red Army, and saved China's revolution during an extremely dangerous historical juncture.

The Zunyi Conference site opened to the public in 1955 and was one of the country's first facilities in memory of the revolution-



**Above:** A chorus performs the Grand Song of Dong, classified as a World Intangible Cultural Heritage, in Liping. **Bottom:** The memorial hall in Xishui county, the site of a key battle during the Long March in the 1930s. **PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY**

ary history. There are a large number of cultural relics, precious historical pictures and documents at the site, vividly reliving the course of the Long March.

The site uses information technology and an artistic approach to recount historical moments and offer immersive experiences.

"The scenes in the video were performed by special actors, using phantom imaging technology to restore the scene of the Zunyi Conference," says Zhang Xiaoling, vice-curator of the site.

"The isometric stereo imaging of this scale is the first of its kind at home and abroad."

### Liping

On Dec 18, 1934, the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee held a meeting in Liping county that affirmed Mao's plans. They gave up the original plan of going north to Xiangxi to join two other Red Army troops, and established a new base at the border of Sichuan and Guizhou. This enabled the Red Army to avoid the danger of falling into enemy encirclement and paved the way for the Zunyi Conference.

Liping authorities have preserved a large number of cultural relics and historical sites from the

time and combined it with local Dong ethnic culture to develop its red tourism.

In 2009, the county government built a memorial hall opposite the site of the Liping Conference. Visitors can view historical items and buildings at the site. Nearby, visitors can also choose to pick tea leaves and appreciate Dong music in the neighborhood.

This past Spring Festival, the Qiaojie red tourism zone that houses the Liping Conference site and former residences of historical figures, such as Mao's, had 45,000 tourist visits and earned 43 million yuan (\$6.57 million) in revenue.

Local authorities are now working on upgrading the Liping Conference site and memorial hall, and will set up folk cultural museums on Qiaojie street, says Yang Zuhua, an official with the Liping Conference Memorial Hall.

This is in response to the country's call for developing a national Long March cultural park.

"We should strengthen excavation and organize the ancient city culture, so that the Long March National Cultural Park has a 'skeleton, flesh and blood', and fresh local culture," Yang says.

### Xishui county

Under the command of Mao and other leaders, the Red Army crossed the Chishui River four times and escaped the encirclement of more than 400,000

Kuomintang troops from January to May 1935. It was one of the most brilliant military moves by the Red Army during the Long March, and a great example of the disadvantaged gaining the upper hand.

Xishui was the main battlefield where the four Chishui River crossings took place. The county built a memorial hall in 2006 in Tucheng ancient town where the first crossing happened. A cluster of museums covering an area of 15,000 square meters was also developed, integrating local red culture with folk art and customs. To date, Tucheng boasts a well developed red tourism industry with tourist sites such as the Female Chinese Red Army Museum and the Qing-gangpo battle site that are popular among tourists. There are also a number of unique facilities that showcase local culture such as the ancient salt trade.

At the battle experience park, tourists can engage in role play and experience scenes of past battles, while enjoying modern tourism elements.

The Xishui county government has also continued to improve red tourism infrastructure over the years. Chen Zhao, deputy Party secretary of the county, says the government has developed forests, wetland parks and cycling lanes to enhance the travel experiences of tourists.

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# Patriotic site boosts rural tourism and helps educate visitors

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Maodong villagers have grown accustomed to tour buses arriving over the years.

Tourists are drawn to the Xifeng Concentration Camp memorial hall, a revolutionary history museum in the village that sits in Guiyang city of Guizhou province. The concentration camp was the largest, highest-level prison set up by the Kuomintang in 1938 and was abolished in 1946. More than 1,200 members of the Communist Party of China and patriots were detained there, and 600 of them were tortured and killed in the prison.

The prison is now a popular patriotic education site in Guizhou.

Chen Mengju, an official of Maodong village, says annual tourist visits to the site have exceeded 700,000.

The site's popularity has also boosted rural tourism in the village.

Many tourists would go on to tour the rest of Maodong after visiting the camp, especially during the spring and summer.

Unique folk dwellings are built against the mountain backdrop, with red flowers and green willows dancing in the warm spring breeze and a gurgling stream nearby.

When the summer comes, many Chongqing tourists would come to beat the summer heat in the small village. And all 1,100 beds in lodgings will be fully booked.

Wu Jiaqi, who runs the Sanjia Inn in the village, has continuously improved the infrastructure and planted flowers to make his inn more beautiful and comfortable for his guests.

Tourists can pick grapes, walk in the field and go hiking.

Wu believes it is the unique red tourism and continuous improvements of the rural environment that draw more tourists to visit the village.

In the past, there were only mud

roads connecting locals in Maodong. Garbage-treatment facilities and tourism infrastructure were nowhere to be found.

Most villagers struggled to make a living and some had to work away from home to support their families.

Then in 2008, the Xifeng Concentration Camp memorial hall opened to the public for free, and a tourism town was developed right next to it.

Since then, great changes have taken place. A plaza covering an area of 800 square meters was built, roads were paved, and street lamps and trees were put in place. Garbage was also cleared.

All these changes have given Maodong a face-lift and attracted tourists from afar.

Seeing the positive changes, the villagers began to invest in catering and accommodation. Restaurants, hotels, inns and happy farmhouses sprung up.

The village has also established a



A villager takes care of bonsai trees at the planting cooperative in Maodong village in Guiyang, Guizhou province. **PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY**

tourism development company to manage the tourism businesses.

Liu Yunlong now runs a catering center of the Xifeng Concentra-

tion Camp memorial hall. He is one of the locals who have come back to the village for work opportunities.

His catering center often receives more than 1,000 tourists a day.

During peak season, the catering center can serve more than 250 tables a day.

"We are very optimistic about the red tourism industry in our home," he says.

Liu says that he got tired of his life away from home looking for jobs.

A few years ago, he brought back his savings and working experience and signed a contract with the catering center with two other locals.

Many other villagers have also relied on the booming red tourism industry to develop orchard and flower nursery businesses.

In 2017, a planting cooperative was set up and a professional fruit planting enterprise was introduced to develop a high-quality fruit picking garden. Villagers were encour-

aged to join the cooperative and grow fruit trees under professional guidance.

The move has helped more than 130 rural households increase their income levels.

The per capita income in 2018 reached 8,600 yuan (\$1,314) at Maodong.

In addition, the village works with flower companies to develop cultivation of roses and peonies as well as a variety of trees and bonsai.

Liu Kaiyang is now fully focused on taking care of tree seedlings at the fruit picking garden in Maodong.

His family contributed 3 mu (0.2 hectares) of land as part of the garden.

The rental of his family's land gives his family a fixed annual income of 1,800 yuan.

"I get more than 1,000 yuan a month by working here and will get more dividends once the orchard makes a profit," he says.