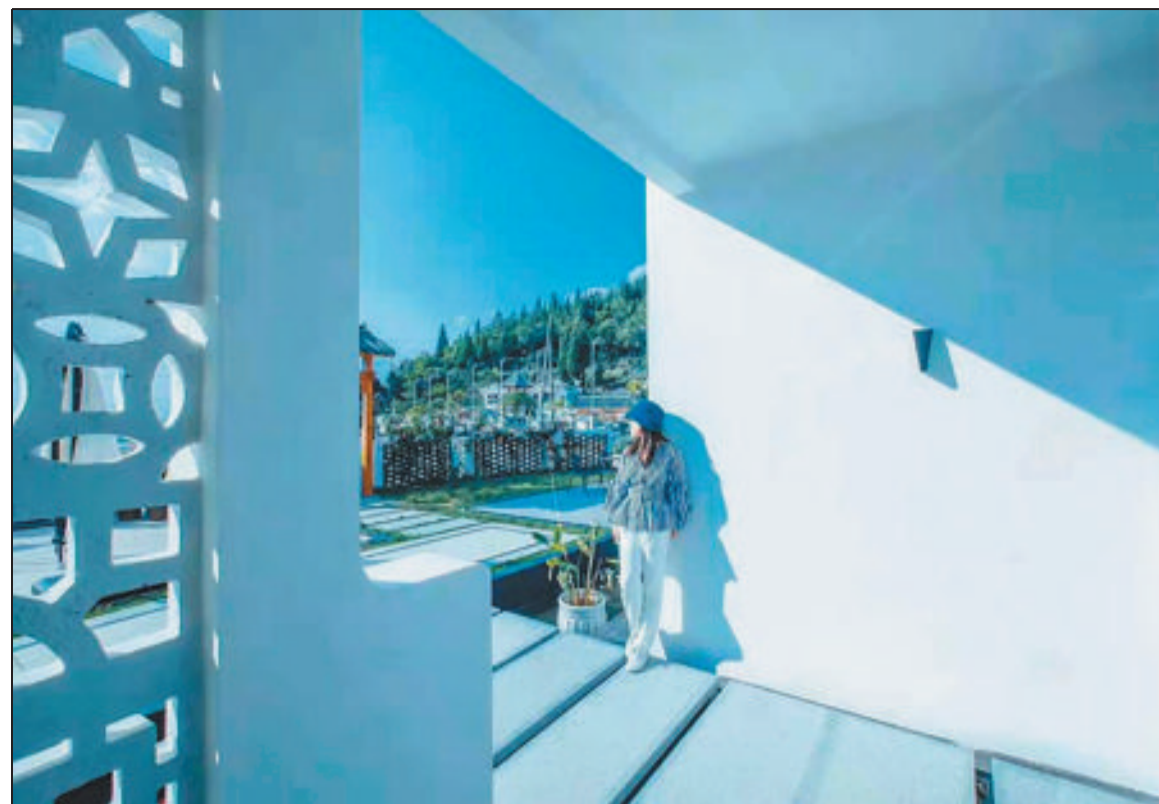


# CHINA



**Clockwise from left:** Hotel test sleeper Yang Yushu works at a guesthouse in Guiyang, Guizhou province; at Hilton Guiyang; and at Niccolo Chongqing Hotel. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## Rescue center a haven for injured migratory birds

NANCHANG — Equipped with a consulting room, an intensive care unit and a rehabilitation center, the Wucheng wildlife rescue center near Poyang Lake has become a place for sick and injured wintering birds to recover.

"We have treated 76 birds over the past two years. People send sick and injured birds to us whenever they find one," said Shu Guolei, director of the rescue center in Yongxiu county, Jiangxi province.

The rescue center is part of the Wucheng station, under the administration of the Poyang Lake Wetland Nature Reserve.

With a surface area of over 3,200 square kilometers, Poyang Lake hosts up to 700,000 wintering birds every year. The lake is an important wetland ecosystem and the largest habitat for wintering migratory birds in Asia.

Shu said meals are provided for the sick birds according to their species and eating habits. "For example, a corn and rice combo is given to ducks, geese and swans, and a fish and shrimp combo is for the oriental storks."

After a full recovery, the birds are released into the wild, Shu added.

Nearly 98 percent of the world's white cranes, over 80 percent of the oriental storks and more than 70 percent of the white-naped cranes spend their winter months at the lake before flying to warmer regions.

To explore a more effective mechanism to protect the flocks of birds, Jiangxi province coordinates the work of the nature reserve, local public security bureaus and health departments. More and more local residents are also joining in efforts to rescue injured birds as their awareness of environmental protection grows.

Li Chunru, 75, has cared for injured birds for nearly four decades. Previously a doctor at a hospital in Jiangxi's Duchang county, Li founded a clinic for birds in 2013 that is capable of taking care of 200 at a time. The clinic is fitted

with consulting rooms, an intensive care unit, inpatient wards, recovery rooms and outdoor sheds.

Bird rescue centers across China also work together to ensure safe trips for migratory birds after their treatment and recovery.

On Jan 2, migratory bird protection centers in Jiangxi and Tianjin released nine recovered birds in Duchang, including oriental storks, gray cranes, swans and geese. Seven of the birds had been brought from Tianjin for treatment.

The birds were released in Poyang Lake so they could more easily rejoin their flock, said Li Zhenzhuo, director of a wildlife conservation center in Tianjin.

Apart from improving the habitat and beefing up rescue efforts, local governments in the province have also increased forage supplies for the birds.

Hu Wei, the Party secretary of Yugan county, Jiangxi, said since November nearly 3,000 white cranes had gathered in a paddy area covering 60 hectares to look for food. "Last summer, a major flood in the Yangtze River endangered the natural food supply for the birds, so we urgently secured dozens of hectares of unharvested rice for the flocks," he said.

Liu Xinxi, an official with the Poyang Lake Wetland Park, said the birds are becoming less timid. "They used to only forage in the remote lake area, but now they can be seen in the fields and pools that are close to people," he said.

Dai Nianhua, a researcher with the Institute of Bioresources at the Jiangxi Academy of Sciences, said the implementation of a 10-year fishing ban in Poyang Lake has better protected aquatic organisms and created favorable conditions for birds to breed.

"With people's increasing awareness of environmental protection, the ecological environment of Poyang Lake has been improving," Dai said.

XINHUA



An injured oriental stork takes shelter at Wucheng wildlife rescue center in Yongxiu county, Jiangxi province, on Jan 14.

ZHOU MI / XINHUA

## Professional hotel sleeper's work: Relax, review, repeat

Former reporter from Guiyang shares passion about her job traveling the nation

By **YANG JUN** in Guiyang and **YE ZIZHEN**

Yang Yushu has been a professional hotel test sleeper for 10 years.

The idea of being a hotel test sleeper, also known as a hotel connoisseur, might sound alluring to people who enjoy traveling.

They can stay in luxury hotels, have fine food for free and get paid. However, the job's responsibilities are more comprehensive than just falling asleep.

Yang, 34, was a reporter for a newspaper in Guiyang, Guizhou province, covering culture and travel. Through work, she gradually learned about the profession and fell in love with it. In 2011, she had her first invitation to be a test sleeper in Shanghai.

"I was among the first batch of people in the nation to be a sleeper. Back then, there was no proper noun to describe people like us," Yang recalled.

### Record every detail

Tasting, smelling, touching, hearing, feeling. All senses need to be working to record the experiences of staying in a hotel.

"We need to observe the service and environment of the hotel, the food, the sanitary conditions, the

price," Yang explained. "We need to determine whether the mattress is too soft or too hard, whether the network speed is fast, the speed of shower sprinkles and the indoor temperature. Then we will write reports for the hotel and potential customers for their reference."

Working as a part-time test sleeper, Yang travels across the country about one week each month.

"I will take note of whether the doorman will open the car door for me, how long it takes to check in and whether the elevator is easy to find. Interestingly enough, I will also note the smell of the lobby, as high-end customers care a lot about the fragrance used," she said.

The recording continues when Yang goes into the hotel room. Her cellphone becomes a critical tool. The number of towels in the bathroom, whether sheets are well folded and even the number of USB ports will all be presented by her report.

"Most hotels I have slept in are in the country. The fact that I'm from Guizhou makes hotels more willing to hire me as they want me to provide advice that suits the needs of customers from the province," she said.

### Passionate about her work

"I became a hotel connoisseur

simply because I enjoy traveling. It is a luxury to turn a hobby into an occupation," Yang said. "Almost 10 years have passed now, and I can't count how many hotels I have slept in."

She vividly recalled her first experience as a test sleeper at Moller Village, a hotel in Shanghai that was built by a Jewish man for his daughter.

"Personally, I like to stay in hotels with unique architecture features. That one in Shanghai looks like a castle from the outside, something that is rarely seen in China."

Yang has seen the progression of the hotel industry in the country.

"More brand hotels are starting businesses in China, and the facilities and services they provide are improving year by year," she said.

Yang used to work for free when she first started. Now she can earn as much as 5,000 yuan (\$774) to write a report for one hotel.

In 2018, she started staying in family hotels with her baby girl.

"After having a baby in 2017, I began to accept more offers from those hotels," Yang said.

"Many hotels in China now have special designs for kids, such as toilets for kids, kids' toothbrushes and robes, and there are also entertainment facilities both indoors and out-

doors for parents and kids to play together."

Working part-time as a hotel connoisseur for 10 years, Yang is experienced in identifying the quality of a hotel. One way is to check how many types of pillows are provided, she said. "Usually, a good hotel will provide six different types of pillows, including cotton and latex," Yang said.

In China, there is no official qualification of the profession as a hotel connoisseur.

According to Yang, online travel agencies will assess the payment level of a test sleeper based on their hotel experiences.

"I know people who have worked as full-time hotel connoisseurs for many years," she said. "They earn quite a lot and are recognized by many professional institutions."

Last year, Yang quit her job as a reporter and started a studio that specializes in marketing the culture-tourism industry.

"I will continue working as a part-time hotel test sleeper," she said. "It is my passion, and I am still excited about every sleep experience."

*Che Weimei contributed to this story.*

Contact the writers at [yezizhen@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:yezizhen@chinadaily.com.cn)

## City lowers skyscrapers to restore its heritage

HANGZHOU — Unlike many cities that compete to build more skyscrapers, a city in East China is undertaking a renovation project to lower its skyline.

Shaoxing in Zhejiang province has listed a total of 178 high-rise buildings in the old urban district as potential structures where floors may need to be cut.

The aim is to give the 2,500-year-old city a relatively flat and uniform skyline.

The move is designed to stop the high-rise buildings from blocking the view of the city's iconic 9.09-square-kilometer old district where literary figures in ancient China used to live and have left behind a huge cultural heritage legacy.

"In preserving Shaoxing's cultural heritage, we follow the principle of keeping alive their original forms," said Xu Juemin, director of Shaoxing's city conservation office.

Top of the 178-building renovation list is a hotel that was once the city's landmark and tallest building.

The hotel, along with another tall building, is located right in front of the entrance to Shaoxing's historical



A resident dries turnip slices on a stone bridge in the old district in Shaoxing, Zhejiang province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

district. "Local people often dubbed the buildings unfavorably as two 'candles' that looked out of place in the historical area," said Zhang Feng, an executive of a cultural company in charge of renovating the neighborhoods. "Many visitors from out of town can't even find the entrance of the neighborhoods because of the buildings."

Creating a low skyline has long been on the mind of Shaoxing's city planners. In 2013, authorities set the height limit of buildings in its old district at 24 meters.

In 2019, after widely soliciting public opinion, the municipal legislature put into effect a regulation on protecting and utilizing the old district, in which the height limit was written into law.

After careful planning and construction, two government buildings, with 10 and 12 stories respectively, were both lowered to five stories and converted to museums.

Shaoxing has also undertaken other programs in its old district to better preserve its cultural heritage, including the relocation of government offices and the renovation of residents' homes.

Last year, 77 residential quarters in the old district were renovated. "The program not only gives the district a face-lift but also greatly improves our living condition," local resident Yang Xingquan said.

XINHUA

## Tianjin artist sculpts his way to success

TIANJIN — Surrounded by sculpting tools such as carving knives, brushes and pigments, Li Chunyu picks up an unfinished polymer clay figurine of a rabbit and coats its hair in white with a brush.

From figurine designing and sculpting to spray-painting and coloring, Li, a 33-year-old craftsman, is busy creating a series of polymer clay statues with Chinese zodiac animal themes in his workshop in Tianjin.

With more than a decade of experience in creating and designing polymer clay sculptures, his works are usually inspired by traditional Chinese cultural themes.

For Li, it was a box of Plasticine that first sparked his dream.

"At a young age, apart from watching animations and collecting animated character toys, my biggest interest was kneading Plasticine," Li said.

Each time he received money during the traditional Spring Festival, he would immediately go to a stationery store to buy as many boxes of Plasticine as he could.

"I kneaded them all into a big ball of dough and then made figurines," he recalled.

In 2009, Li started working after graduating with a mechanical engineering degree. A friend of his sent him a box of polymer clay, which rekindled his long-lost dream.

"Figurines made by Plasticine can't be kept for a long time, but

polymer clay sculptures can be better-preserved after heating," Li said.

Without any professional knowledge of painting and carving sculptures, he started by imitating famous works and classic designs.

"There are no shortcuts to being a craftsman. Only through practice can we create high-quality artwork," Li said.

From the basics of painting to sculpture, it took him several years to become a professional. He has since created nearly 100 works and attended various exhibitions, earning him a good reputation. Some of his pieces have since become hot-selling items.

Li focuses on fine details and always strives for excellence. For instance, to make a sculpture of Dayu, a legendary figure who tamed floods in ancient China, Li adjusted the figurine's facial expressions and poses countless times to ensure it was just right.

It also took him three weeks to carve the decorative patterns on the figurine's weapon, and a month to make the furry ornaments on its clothes.

To learn more about Dayu story, he printed out a stack of reference materials.

"Through the preparation process, I became even more fascinated by our traditional culture and history," he said.

Since then, whenever Li has ventured to different places in China, visiting local museums became a

must-do for him. He took thousands of pictures of ancient relics and incorporated many elements into his works.

"Chinese culture is extensive and profound," Li said. "Many young people are interested in historical relics but might not have a good understanding of the stories behind them."

He hopes to show traditional culture in a relatable way to help more young people understand the profound meaning behind it.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Li created a new polymer clay sculpture with an anti-epidemic theme. Moreover, he grasped new skills, learning how to sketch sculptures on his computer and making 3D-printed sculptures.

"Many parts that are difficult to engrave by hand can be engraved via an electronic pen. I can also modify any mistakes on the computer at any time. That's convenient," he said, adding that after 3D printing, he can polish his sculptures again by hand.

In his eyes, the integration of advanced technology and traditional craftsmanship is a good thing.

"I have met more and more figurine craftsmen and enthusiasts in various competitions and exhibitions in recent years, which shows that this field is receiving more love and recognition," Li said. "It is a great encouragement for me."

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