

LIFE



With the help of its rich intangible cultural heritage assets, Danzhai has emerged as a tourist attraction. In just four years Danzhai Wanda Town has received more than 20 million tourists and according to official figures by May 12 the number of visitors to Danzhai had risen by 3 percent year-on-year compared with 2019. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Protecting the intangible takes a special touch

Cultural experts discuss way of ensuring that heritage remains relevant and survives

By ZHANG LEI in Danzhai, Guizhou province

Protecting intangible cultural heritage means maintaining cultural diversity, the foundation of cultural tourism, says Lyu Pintian, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Arts.

"The key to complementing protection and utilization is not to turn intangible heritage into tourist performances," he says. "The essence of intangible heritage is the daily life of those who live in tourist destinations."

Lyu was speaking during the second China Danzhai Intangible Heritage Week in Danzhai, Guizhou province, which began on May 15 and finishes on Sunday.

At one of the events, the China Intangible Heritage and Tourism Integration Development Forum on May 15, Dai Bin, dean of the China Tourism Research Institute, asked: "Can the ancient and rich intangible cultural heritage become more fashionable? Can it take the route of light luxury, and can it promote the integration of culture and tourism to go further?"

"Of course intangible heritage needs to be protected and inherited. When it has contemporary value, there is no doubt that it will perpetuate itself and expand. The role of the market in protecting and making the most of intangible cultural heritage should be accorded its original place. We must trust in the cultural tastes of people and in the commercial wisdom of business people."

Zou Tongyan, dean of the School of Tourism Management of Beijing International Studies University, said that if intangible cultural heritage cannot be endowed with new forms, new scenes, new meanings and new contexts it risks becoming extinct.

"It must be integrated into current life. One of the biggest problems is a lack of professional tourism planners in activating authentic intangible heritage tourism. In addition, the scale of such



The Guizhou Statistics Bureau says that in the period 2016-2020 Guizhou Qiongdongnan prefecture received 483 million tourist visits and tourism income of 420 billion yuan.

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Luo Qiang, deputy secretary of the Qiongdongnan Prefecture Party Committee of Guizhou province and governor of the prefecture



Danzhai county has created an all-element intangible cultural heritage environment seeping into all elements of tourism.

heritage projects is relatively small, and with low economic return we have yet to witness the scale effect."

Accurately positioning the development of intangible heritage and tourism for rural revitalization has been a major theme of the heritage week.

One event during the week, an exhibition titled "Intangible Cultural Heritage Helping Precision Poverty Alleviation", guided by the Intangible Heritage Department of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, showcased intangible cultural heritage poverty alleviation employment workshops across the country. Sixty workshops were selected from 16 counties and cities in Qiongdongnan prefecture, covering activities such as Miao embroidery, Dong embroidery, Miao silver ornaments, Miao batik, bamboo weaving, rattan weaving, inkstone, ethnic medicine, tea and specialty snacks.

More than 30 traditional craft intangible cultural and creative products in the prefecture have been included in the fifth batch of national intangible cultural heritage list this year. The number of such projects in the prefecture is expected to rise from 56 to 78 in a few years. There is vigorous support for inheritors, and all

Lin Jifu, a professor at Minzu University of China in Beijing, said rural

revitalization is a "comprehensive revitalization" centered on the wholeness and relevance of rural people's lives. As an excellent rural traditional culture, intangible cultural heritage has become an important part of this revitalization. It is necessary to realize the mutual integration of rural revitalization and the construction of cultural and ecological protection areas.

"The key for the connection is space empowerment," Lin said. "Danzhai belongs to the core area of the Qiongdongnan National Cultural Ecological Protection Experimental Zone. Danzhai Wanda Town is a very important space for rural revitalization and poverty alleviation."

"Culture is a unique symbol of a nation, and cultural heritage is its long-term memory," said Luo Qiang, deputy secretary of the Qiongdongnan Prefecture Party Committee of Guizhou province and governor of the prefecture. Six more projects in the prefecture have been included in the fifth batch of national intangible cultural heritage list this year. The number of such projects in the prefecture is expected to rise from 56 to 78 in a few years. There is vigorous support for inheritors, and all

the heritage projects throughout the prefecture are living skills and cultures still employed by the masses in their current production and life, Luo said.

Lyu Pintian, a researcher, concurs in so far as revitalizing local art is concerned. The roots of Chinese culture lie in the countryside, and the integration of intangible cultural heritage and tourism should be practiced with rural revitalization through the construction of rural art, he said.

"The revitalization of handicrafts and the activation of folk customs are the fundamental path to protect intangible cultural heritage and promote the integrated development of cultural and tourism."

Lan Jing, director of the Ethnic and Folk Literature Development Center of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, in Danzhai for the first time, said he is deeply impressed by the small town. In his time in the town he has seen a lot of intangible cultural heritage products on the street with unique characteristics of the local Miao and Dong culture.

Qiu Chunlin, director of the Arts and Crafts Research Institute of the China National Academy of Arts,

agreed that the development and utilization of intangible cultural heritage products and cultural differences in handicrafts should be based on some of the core elements of local intangible cultural heritage.

Cai Hong, a professor at the Capital University of Economics and Business in Beijing, said the charismatic little town of Danzha reflected to a certain extent that the integrated development of intangible cultural heritage and tourism is a great help in promoting rural revitalization.

An "ethnic medicine and famous doctor free consultation event" during the heritage week, hosted by the Chinese Medicine Coordinating Committee of the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Association, also attracted much interest.

The committee invited representatives of well-known doctors from all over the country to allow tourists to take part in intangible cultural heritage projects of Chinese medicine. The appointment of the free clinic was fully booked within half a day on May 13.

Among the 55 ethnic minorities in China, more than 30 ethnic groups have their own traditional medicines. Traditional Chinese medicine, including ethnic medicines, is an important representative of outstanding traditional culture and has a unique role in protecting China's intangible cultural heritage, said Wang Xiaofeng, president of the China Intangible Heritage Protection Association, at the first Ethnic Medical Intangible Cultural Heritage Forum in Danzhai on May 16. Exploring the protection and inheritance of traditional ethnic medicine has become a new highlight of China's heritage work.

TCM acupuncture and Tibetan medicine prevention have been included in the UNESCO Representative List of Human Intangible Cultural Heritage. Among the four batches, 10 categories and 1,372 national intangible cultural heritage items that have been published on the representative list of national intangible cultural heritage, 137 traditional medicine items account for 9.99 percent, with 132 national representative inheritors.

Sun Da, deputy director of the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine, said that to help build a healthy community it will continue to support ethnic minority medicines.

"Traditional Chinese medicine has become an important part of cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world and in promoting exchanges between Eastern and Western civilizations."

Heritage tourism: New logic for rural revitalization

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Among the topics that experts discussed were "Maintaining cultural diversity in life to promote tourism development", and "The integrated construction of cultural and ecological protection areas for rural revitalization".

"Chinese tourism garnered 6 billion visits in 2019, which is more than four times the population of the country," said Luo Shugang, deputy director of the Cultural, History and Learning Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

"Tourism has become China's largest mobile activity."

In a tourism market as large as that of China, to focus on the construction of tourism civilization, tourism officials must use excellent traditional culture to shape tourism, Luo said, and intangible heritage is the most comprehensive carrier of excellent traditional culture.

"Danzhai Wanda Town is a successful case of intangible cultural heritage meshing with a scenic spot," Luo said.

"The town has created an all-element intangible cultural heritage environment, with intangible cultural heritage seeping into all elements of tourism, including food, housing, transport, travel, shopping and entertainment. I feel and experience intangible cultural heritage everywhere, and the intangible cultural heritage products provided by the town provide tourists with what they want. This successful case is a model for scenic spots across the country."

Xi Jianchao, a researcher at the Institute of Geographical Sciences and Natural Resources Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said in a discussion that when talking about integrating intangible heritage and tourism, intangible cultural heritage is a basic entry point. In fact, many locals are accustomed to the traditional production

or lifestyle of intangible heritage. Integration is a form of internal and external sharing of local culture that reflects the basic requirement of a culture to serve people, he said.

"The high-quality development of tourism and intangible cultural heritage come in two dimensions. When the two are integrated and gain momentum, you get what we see in Danzhai: continuous growth in economic output, and a steady increase in social contributions."

The original intention of holding China Danzhai Intangible Heritage Week and China Intangible Heritage and Tourism Integrated Development Forum was to further clarify the idea of integrated development of intangible heritage and tourism so as to promote a deeper and higher level of development.

No doubt with the help of its rich intangible cultural heritage assets, Danzhai has emerged as a tourist attraction. In just four years Danzhai Wanda Town has received more than 20 million tourists and accord-

ing to official figures by May 12 the number of visitors to Danzhai had risen by 3 percent year-on-year compared with 2019.

Tourism income rose 46 percent over a year in 2019, individual tourists accounting for 79 percent of that spending. Overnight tourists and per capita consumption have risen significantly. During the May 1 Golden Week this year, per capita sales rose 51 percent compared with the same period in 2019.

Luo Shugang cited an example of turning intangible cultural heritage into tourist souvenirs, a common practice in many countries. But intangible cultural heritage products are not just tourist souvenirs, he said. They must be sublimated into tourist souvenirs through innovation.

"This kind of innovation should be realized through interaction with tourists."

The Guizhou Statistics Bureau says that in the period 2016-2020 Guizhou Qiongdongnan prefecture



China's top intangible heritage skills, such as rolling lights, stone locks, and wind and fire meteors have been on public display, a rare event in which attendees were able to enjoy a visual feast.

received 483 million tourist visits and tourism income of 420 billion yuan, of which intangible cultural heritage tourism accounted for more than half. The prefecture also vigorously supports the construction of intangible cultural heritage projects such as poverty alleviation employment workshops.

Since 2018 more than 20 million yuan has been invested, focusing on supporting the workshops to carry out research and development design, skills training, brand cultivation and publicity and promotion, and the move has helped 12,333 people of 5,620 households to be lifted out of poverty.