



The red-blue branch section of the East Mountain Sightseeing Road is designed to reach the standards of international highway cycling races. MA LIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Road to riches as villagers grasp potential of new transport route

Remote communities now welcoming tourists and entrepreneurs are sensing opportunities

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A new sightseeing road opened recently in Taiyuan, capital city of North China's Shanxi province, is expected to boost local tourism and rural development, according to local businesspeople and residents.

The East Mountain Sightseeing Road welcomed traffic at the end of June and is connected to the West Mountain Sightseeing Road, which was completed in the summer of 2019.

The two roads are jointly called the East-West Mountains Sightseeing Road. They link major tourist destinations in the mountainous areas of Taiyuan's east, north and west.

The two-lane East Mountain Road begins in Wangjiashan village in the northeastern suburbs of Taiyuan.

According to Gao Zhankui — an executive of China Railway No 3 Engineering Group, the project builder — the East Mountain road is designed for the slow-paced tours of self-driving tourists, cyclists and runners.

"The speed limit of the whole road is 30 kilometers an hour, which allows tourists to have close contact with the scenery and local life," Gao said.

The road is shaded by trees like pines, plums and Chinese Scholar trees. Under the trees are bushes of roses.

With deep breaths, tourists can sense the air quality is much better than in the city.

A highlight of the road is about 1 km away from Wangjiashan, where there is a red-blue branch section called Rainbow Road.

"Also known as Hairpin Bend, the section is designed to the standards of international highway cycling races," Gao said.

The executive talked about the unique features of the cycling road. "The road has a grainy surface as it has ceramic granules underneath," Gao said. He explained that such a design aims to increase friction and slip resistance.

For local residents, the road is significant as it can help in local economic growth and poverty reduction.

In Wangjiashan village, local residents make a living by growing and selling fruit.

"Our village used to be connected to the city center of Taiyuan by two roads. The nearest was a dirt road without lighting, and the other one with better conditions required a longer journey," said Li Jianjun, a local farmer.

Now the East Mountain Sightsee-



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I'm glad to see our village is a stop on the new East Mountain Sightseeing Road, which brings in more tourists and produce dealers."

Shi Goushuan, Party secretary of Dianzidi village in Taiyuan city

ing Road can better serve residents' need to travel. "It takes only 20 minutes to travel to Taiyuan on the new road," Li said.

In addition to the main stretch, there are several branch roads to nearby tourist attractions.

With improved road connectivity, the local people are in a better position to open tourism-related businesses.

Zhang Fang, a local villager who runs a bed-and-breakfast in the West Mountain area, said she is currently planning to come back to

open a B&B business in her home village.

"My business will consist of three cave rooms for accommodation, a well-shaded courtyard and a nearby farm with vegetables, fruit trees, chickens and geese," Zhang said. She added that it will be a place to offer genuine rustic experiences to tourists.

Dianzidi, another village along the road, was a People's Liberation Army base. It was used in a decisive battle during the civil war in the late 1940s.

"We planned to develop a 'Red tour destination' — Chinese revolution-related tourism — in our village. However, poor road connectivity hindered development," said Shi Goushuan, Party secretary of the village.

"It was even difficult for locals to sell produce outside the village. We had to use horses and bicycles to transport goods," Shi added.

"I'm glad to see our village is a stop on the new East Mountain Sightseeing Road, which brings in more tourists and produce dealers," the village official said.

According to Gao of China Railway No 3 Engineering Group, the East Mountain Sightseeing Road will benefit the area's major tourist destinations. These include Caiwei Villa, Tianlong Mountain, Gengyang Forest Park and Jingyin Buddhist Temple.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.

Role models honored for generous public service

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Medical workers who fought COVID-19 earlier this year and volunteers who served the second National Youth Games last August were honored as Shanxi's special role models at an awards event.

To mark their contributions to society, an awards ceremony for the "2019 top 10 inspirational role models in Shanxi" rated by local media was held in Taiyuan on July 10.

The award-winning medical workers included those who fought on the front line against the pandemic in Hubei and Shanxi provinces.

Since Jan 26, Shanxi had dispatched 13 medical teams consisting of 1,516 members from 189 medical institutions to Hubei, the center of the outbreak in China.

They worked in 16 hospitals in the cities of Wuhan, Xiantao, Tianmen and Qianjiang. There they treated 3,527 patients with a collective recovery rate of more than 95 percent.

The teams also carried out 18,000 nucleic acid tests, 3,377 CT scans and trained more than 6,200 local medical workers. During their two-month tour, no cases of infection were reported among the medics.

Su Hui, a doctor from the Changzhi People's Hospital, is one of the medics who served as part of the relief effort.

At the ceremony, she shared her story of serving two special patients — a mother confirmed with COVID-19 and her newborn

— in a hospital in the Hubei city of Qianjiang.

"As all the members of the family were quarantined, I was assigned to take care of the mother and 10-day-old baby," said Su, who is an obstetrician.

With the limited number of medics in the special period, Su had to work as both a doctor and a nurse. Feeding the baby, changing diapers and conducting tests were all part of her job.

"The mother, who was separated from the baby, was always worried about the baby.

"So I took a lot of videos of the baby and showed them to the mother," said Su, adding that she felt sympathetic to the mother as she is a mother too.

Another special award was granted to the 450,000 volunteers who served the second National Youth Games. The volunteers came from all walks of life and included university students.

Serving the swimming events were 119 students from Shanxi Agricultural University. Among them were six girls from the same dormitory.

"As we worked in various activities, it was a great fun to share our stories when we came back to the dormitory at night," said Zhao Xiaoqian.

She said volunteering is a worthwhile experience, as it requires teamwork and helped her make a lot of friends with athletes and volunteers.

Li Yali contributed to this story.



Top: Medics returning from Hubei province are welcomed as heroes by residents in Taiyuan. XUE QINGLING / FOR CHINA DAILY
Above: Volunteers work at one of the events of the second National Youth Games. HU XUGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Yingze Park leaves big impression on worker

By ASSUAH JONATHAN ARIZE



Assuah Jonathan Arize

On the third day after my arrival in Taiyuan, capital city of Shanxi province, I went to Yingze Park, the city's central park that I had heard about for a long time.

Yingze Park is located near the Great South Gate of Yingze Street in Taiyuan city. When I got out of the taxi, I could see the archway of the park. It looks magnificent.

Coming in from the north gate of the park, there were rocksculptures of different shapes in front of us. Beside them, there were all kinds of flowers. The park keepers were in a rush to open up, trying their best to show the tourists the blooms' luxury, fragrance and elegance.

I walked along the boulevard to Yingze Lake. The breeze blew ripples onto the lake and under the sunshine there were many colors on the surface, like colorful ribbons.

While I was enjoying the pleasant scenery, someone rowed across the lake, laughing and greeting people from time to time.

On the shore of the lake, there is a pavilion made of red walls and yellow tiles. It looks solemn and

elegant. Under the pavilion, old people were singing and laughing, full of youthful vitality.

I continued to the south, seeing a seven-arch bridge across the lake. The bridge was crowded with happy people. When I approached the amusement park, I saw a Ferris wheel, bumper cars and a roller coaster.

Watching the tourists enjoy themselves in the park, I felt relief from the tiredness of being on the road a few days ago.

There are not only a beautiful scenery, blooming flowers, shady trees, man-made lakes, gliding boats, rock sculptures and buildings in a simple style, but also many recreational facilities for people to relax.

In addition to tourists, there are people who sing, dance, kick shuttlecock and do other colorful activities in the park to cultivate their mood and exercise.

Yingze Park is beautiful. I love it. Because I fell in love with Yingze Park, I began to fall in love with the city.

The writer is a Ghanaian citizen working and living in Taiyuan.

Emotional history adds visitor appeal to Shahu Pass

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The Shahu Pass, a strategic stronghold on the Great Wall and hub for the famed Shanxi merchants, has used its unique historical and cultural resources to develop into a major tourist attraction.

The Shahu Pass, which literally means "tiger-killing pass", is located in Youyu county in northern Shanxi province.

Its history as a military stronghold dates back to the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), when it was one of the passes on the Great Wall in the north of China to defend against the invasions of nomads.

For more than 2,000 years, the Shahu Pass has held a unique position among the people of Shanxi as well as the entire nation, as many soldiers were killed during numerous wars and battles there.

The paths of the place is captured by an ancient poem:

"The dried skeletons near the Great Wall

Were frequent visitors to the dreams of their beloved ones afar."



Established in 2000, the Shahu Pass Scenic Area is a major tourist destination in Youyu county. YANG JIANMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

As ethnic conflicts waned during the early and middle Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the pass became a hub of trade for the Shanxi merchants, who were said to dominate the business circles of North China for more than 500 years.

During this period, the place became known as a send-off point, as merchants were bid farewell

there by their families when they walked or rode horses to regions as far as Russia and parts of Europe.

The departure at the Shahu Pass, which was also referred to as Western Pass, is a common topic in many literary works and folk songs.

The paths of departure has touched the hearts of many Shanxi locals through the folk song *Out of*

the Western Pass, with the lyrics:

"When you started your trip out of the Western Pass, my dear, I know there's no way to hold you back ..."

Emotional separations at the Shahu Pass are long gone as highways, railways and airports have emerged as the means of transportation since the 1950s.

But the Shahu Pass, as well as the nearby Great Wall sections, has become a popular tourist attraction in Youyu county. This is because of its emotional significance among Shanxi locals, with many legends and relics in the area.

Established in 2000, the Shahu Pass Scenic Area is a 4A-class tourist destination. The tourism industry in Youyu county has seen rapid development in recent years, driven by the renowned destination.

Youyu was named a model county in Shanxi for tourism development in 2017. It received 3.88 million visits in 2019, growing 33.8 percent year-on-year. Its tourism revenue reached 3.56 billion yuan (\$510.5 million) in 2019, up 31.9 percent from 2018.

Li Yu contributed to this story.