

New travel trails to promote culture

Routes to bring tourists to heritage sites connected by various themes related to historical events, figures



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

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For generations of literature lovers, a memorial temple in Meishan, Sichuan province, has been a landmark.

The San Su Shrine was the former Su family residence during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). In their day, three famous writers, Su Xun, Su Shi and Su Zhe — a father and his two sons — demonstrated the importance of education and culture in development, as well as the duty that literati had toward their country.

While visiting the shrine in 2022, President Xi Jinping hailed it as a site that showcased cultural confidence and served as an inspiration for national governance.

Su Shi was the shining star among the trio. As a poet, calligrapher, politician and gourmet, he is a household name in China. More importantly, his righteousness, honesty and optimism in the face of challenges have inspired people for generations.

But these days, what can the government do to breathe life into the memory of Su Shi and others like him? And how can people better understand a theme in traditional Chinese culture in a bigger picture?

In May, the National Cultural Heritage Administration, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Development and Reform Commission issued a notice on the development of travel routes themed

on cultural remains.

According to the notice, the routes should take tourists to cultural heritage sites connected by certain themes.

As one of the first steps taken in line with the notice, representatives of 10 provincial governments visiting Chengdu, Sichuan's provincial capital, on Saturday, China's annual Cultural and Natural Heritage Day, announced that they would promote the coordinated design of travel routes based on sites related to Su Shi.

Promoted over the course of the reigns of four emperors, he was both a high-status politician in the imperial capital and also devoted to local affairs as he served as an official in various regions.

A pilgrimage honoring Su Shi's life is the first of many themed trails being planned across the country.

"For a long time, the development of tourist attractions and efforts to protect cultural heritage were organized in a scattered way, but the creation of such trails will link the sites and will be good for their systematic protection," said Zhan Dongmei, an associate researcher with the China Tourism Academy. "It also offers an immersive cultural and tourist experience for travelers."

Three trail types

The notice stated that the routes should be developed at the national, regional and county levels.

National-level trails should be connected to the development of national cultural parks and align with

major national strategies. They should instill a sense of national pride and strengthen the global influence of Chinese culture.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), up to five experimental national trails will be created, according to the document. Upon completion, authorities will publish directories and maps of the trails.

Important regions in China, including the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Yangtze River Delta and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, have been encouraged to set up regional travel trails. The notice also calls on provinces with an abundance of cultural remains to establish travel routes.

County-level trails will focus on cultural heritage sites that people tend to ignore, thus introducing them to a wider audience. "When people follow themed trails, in addition to appreciating cultural heritage, they can also learn more about the value and cultural connotations of the sites and gain a deeper understanding of a historical period, event or figure," Zhan said.

The document said that famous roads, sites, influential historical events and figures can all be regarded as themes for routes.

Routes underway

Some trails related to cultural heritage have already been developed.

For example, according to the Tianjin Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism, the city unveiled its first group of cultural heritage

themed trails in January. The routes follow three themes and connect 38 cultural heritage sites in eight of the city's districts.

One of the trails connects sites related to the Grand Canal, illustrating Tianjin's history as an important stop along the canal. Another route links the sites of foreign banks present between 1840 to 1949, demonstrating Tianjin's past as a northern financial hub during the period.

The inclusion of innovative activities is encouraged in the design of trails. They can be combined with study tours, hiking, biking, camping, performances and even sports. Moreover, modern technology such as big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence should be involved to create immersive experiences, the notice said.

According to Zhan, Tianjin is planning its second group of trails, which will link more types of culture-related companies and combine more forms of entertainment.

"In this way, people will be able to experience more of the city's charm during even a limited visit," Zhan said. In the long run, the efforts could strengthen the appreciation of cultural heritage, enhance the historical and cultural aspects of tourism and contribute to the increasing desire for a better life, she said.

Liu Qingzhu, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and dean of history school at Zhengzhou University, highlighted the combination of archaeological sites with tourism. "Archaeology is a social

science, and all sciences should serve society," he said. "Therefore, sharing the progress of archaeological studies, including the sites and unearthed artifacts with the public in this way, is meaningful."

Liu said that improving the quality of tourist guides on routes is important, adding that it is good to tell the stories behind cultural heritage.

"It's important to help people gain something from history, which encapsulates the experiences of our ancestors. It should not be over-commercialized," he said.

According to the NCHA notice, the cultural heritage authorities will examine cultural heritage and oversee the explanations of their value. The culture and tourism authorities will encourage tourist organizations to participate in the planning and operation of themed trails and promote them, while development and reform commissions at all levels of government will support efforts to create facilities related to trails.

Provincial-level cultural heritage administrations are required to report the development status of trails to the National Cultural Heritage Administration at the end of each year, after which the administration, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Development and Reform Commission will select the best examples.

Xu Lin contributed to this story.

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Plan aims to protect, use Three Gorges artifacts

By **XU LIN** in Beijing
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Authorities recently announced a plan to protect and make use of heritage sites and artifacts unearthed in the Three Gorges Dam area along the Yangtze River.

The plan, scheduled for 2023 to 2035, focuses chiefly on protecting the relics and their environment and designates a 57,500-square-kilometer protection area encompassing 26 districts and counties in Chongqing municipality and Hubei province, through which the Three Gorges area passes.

The plan states that by 2025, greater effort will have been made to restore the heritage sites and artifacts, with significant examples becoming properly protected and made use of effectively.

By 2035, substantial progress is expected to have been made, with a sustainable mechanism established

for the protection and use of heritage sites and artifacts, and ancient remains are to have been successfully integrated with tourism and national environmental preservation efforts.

By last year, there were 16,601 immovable and 544,799 movable relics in the Three Gorges area.

The plan emphasizes enhancing archaeological work in the Three Gorges area, exploring the cultural and historical value of heritage sites and artifacts found in the area and highlighting their significance to the Yangtze River culture and wider Chinese civilization.

Priorities include undertaking major archaeological research projects, ensuring the proper excavation, organization and interpretation of findings and enhancing archaeology in the Three Gorges area.

An official statement from the National Cultural Heritage Administration emphasized the impor-

ance of the systematic preservation of Three Gorges heritage sites and artifacts, strengthening the management and security of the area's cultural heritage and using technology to support this work.

It also stressed the importance of finding new ways to exhibit and make use of heritage sites and artifacts, promoting integration between artifact preservation and use with rural vitalization and tourism, and telling new stories about traditional culture.

The plan also states that Three Gorges archaeology is expected to play a vital role in showcasing the origins of Chinese civilization, and its developments and achievements.

"To achieve that, first it's important to ensure that archaeology fulfills its educational role. Some of the cultural treasures are already on display in some of Yichang's museums, enabling visitors to learn about

the Three Gorges culture," said He Zhongyuan, deputy curator of the Yichang Museum in Hubei. "Second, exhibitions of the Three Gorges artifacts need to be organized in locations outside the region."

The Yichang Museum is currently hosting an exhibition of stone inscriptions discovered in the area. The exhibition can be viewed both in-person and online, and opens up access to a wider audience. He said that the exhibition will facilitate cultural exchange and can be held at other museums as part of a reciprocal program.

According to the plan, Three Gorges heritage sites and artifacts are still underused.

He said that over half of Yichang's cultural relics consist of tombs, heritage sites, grotto temples and stone carvings. Because many are privately owned, it is neither practical nor possible for many of them to go on public display. Still,

many tombs and stone carvings are located in wild areas that the public can access for free.

"This represents a different form of use compared to traditional cultural attractions," he said.

He suggested that authorities should disclose the state of cultural heritage to the public, to ensure that everyone is aware of the heritage sites and artifacts present in the reservoir area.

Moreover, they should engage with the public and harness their creative potential. This can be achieved by attracting direct investment for the restoration and use of heritage sites and artifacts, as well as by encouraging participation in the design of cultural and creative products, such as those inspired by the many stone inscriptions found in the Three Gorges area.

He also emphasized that cultural heritage authorities should provide appropriate guidance during the public use process.

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Policy Digest

Draft guideline to curb online violence

China is soliciting public opinions on a draft guideline about how to properly punish people engaged in online violence.

The guideline, drafted by the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the Ministry of Public Security, is aimed at protecting the personality rights of individuals and maintaining order on the internet.

According to the draft, online violence includes behaviors such as spreading rumors and slander and the infringement of privacy, which damage reputations and can psychologically disturb victims or even lead them to commit suicide, it said.

Given that the victims of online violence rarely know their attackers and so have trouble identifying the perpetrators, collecting evidence and pursuing legal remedies, the draft requires authorities to offer better legal assistance to victims.

Those who commit online violence against minors or people with disabilities, or who fabricate sex-related stories that infringe upon personal dignity, will be punished more severely, the draft guideline stated.

It also stipulated that in some cases, depending on severity, authorities could apply the Criminal Law to punish those accountable.

The solicitation of public opinion will end on June 25.

Imports, exports up despite low demand

China's imports and exports increased 4.7 percent year-on-year to 16.77 trillion yuan (\$2.35 trillion) in the first five months of 2023, showing continued resilience despite sluggish external demand.

During this period, exports grew 8.1 percent year-on-year while imports rose 0.5 percent, the General Administration of Customs said on June 7.

Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations continued to be China's largest trading partners during the five months, with trade volume reaching 2.59 trillion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 9.9 percent.

From January to May, trade with member countries of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement experienced stable growth, accounting for more than 30 percent of China's foreign trade, GAC data showed.

Trade with Belt and Road countries rose 13.2 percent year-on-year to 5.78 trillion yuan in the period.

In particular, trade with the five Central Asian countries — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — surged 44 percent year-on-year, the GAC said.

During the January-May period, imports and exports by private enterprises jumped 13.1 percent to 8.86 trillion yuan, accounting for 52.8 percent of the national total.

In terms of the types of goods, exports of mechanical and electrical products expanded by 9.5 percent and accounted for 57.9 percent of total exports.

5G being integrated into national economy

The application of 5G networks is being consistently promoted and has been integrated into nearly 60 percent of the major categories that make up the national economy, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology told China Central Television on June 6.

China first started to grant 5G licenses for commercial use on June 6, 2019.

Four years on, solutions supported by 5G applications are being widely used in key industries related to mining, ports and electric power, and are facilitating the digitalization of companies.

According to the ministry, 5G is being used by 60 of 97 categories that make up the national economy, with more than 50,000 applied cases.