

Southern island rolls out high-end products and services to match international standards

By MA ZHIPING

South China's Hainan province, known for its natural tropical landscapes, will develop more world-class attractions to entice visitors in the coming years, said officials with the local tourism authorities.

The province got approval from the State Council, China's Cabinet, to build an international tourism island in late 2009. Since then, the province has strived to internationalize its tourism sector.

Hainan, seen as something of a holiday paradise in China, has extraordinary natural resources to entice visitors, with 25 large-scale scenic spots. However, to date, it has remained largely a sightseeing tourism island, due to a lack of fully developed tourism complexes.

To rectify this, the island province is introducing and nurturing high-end tourism products and upgrading services to international standards, to ensure better travel experiences for visitors, according to Sun Ying, director of the Hainan Provincial Tourism Development Commission.

Toruk - The First Flight, a Cirque du Soleil touring production popular around the world, is one such event taking place in Hainan this year.

Inspired by the Hollywood blockbuster *Avatar*, *Toruk - The First Flight* is being staged by the Canadian entertainment company in Sanya until May 1. The excitement takes place on a stage that stretches 1,858 square meters in a tent that can accommodate 3,600 people.

Organizers say the show is expected to attract 300,000 spectators during its three-month run, as huge crowds of tourists come to the coastal city to enjoy the warm sunshine, romantic beaches and beautiful tropical landscapes.

"In addition to introducing top-notch cultural and entertainment shows and sports events, the city, popularly dubbed the oriental Hawaii, is also improving its international recognition by introducing more international brands," said Fan Mu, director of the Sanya Tourism Development Commission.

Sanya Atlantis, the third of its kind in the world after the Atlantis resorts in Dubai and the Bahamas, is welcoming its first guests this month, according to investor Fosun Group.

The landmark one-stop resort complex, built with 11 billion yuan (\$1.7 billion) investment, will provide larger-than-life exotic and marine exhibits and offer rich dining experiences. The complex is located at Haitang Bay, which has beautiful beaches that stretch along more than 10 kilometers of a world-class resort area in northeastern Sanya, about 28 km from the downtown area.

With its growing reputation at



Shimei Bay at Wanning, Hainan Island, is pictured with berths for yachts. Hainan is attracting more funds to tap its huge tourism potential with the provincial government investing 13.5 billion yuan to build a 900-km-long tourist road that circles the island. WANG KAI / CHINA DAILY

World-class destination

Priorities for investment and cooperation in Hainan

- 1 Large and super-large theme park projects 
- 2 Rainforest theme park and national wetland park projects 
- 3 Cruise projects 
- 4 New tourism formats and new product projects 
- 5 Round-island tourism highways 
- 6 International tourism market development 

Hainan tourism projects during 13th Five-Year Plan

Total projects: 488, investment of 839.3 billion yuan (\$133.1 billion)

number of projects	total investment	unit: billion yuan
44	259.3	marine tourism
23	20.1	medical and healthcare tourism
74	118.1	cultural and sports tourism
7	21.3	convention and exhibition
10	4.3	shopping tourism
23	21.5	rainforest tourism
7	3.8	feature town tourism
98	59	rural tourism
10	3.7	industry tourism
74	2	special tourism
115	105.3	tour infrastructure

Source: Hainan Provincial Tourism Development Commission

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home and abroad, Hainan is attracting more investment from overseas to tap its huge tourism potential.

"Hainan is determined to continue to upgrade tourism, the leading sector of the province's services industry," said Sun of the tourism development commission.

She added that Hainan will invest a total of 839.3 billion yuan during the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020).

Priorities will be to develop large theme park projects, rainforest

theme parks and wetland national parks, new-feature tourism products, cruise tours, island tourist ring roads and greater international tourism marketing.

Meanwhile, the provincial government will invest 13.5 billion yuan to build a 900-km tourist road that circles the island.

It will connect the major coastal cities and counties of the island including Haikou, Wenchang, Qionghai, Wanning, Lingshui, Sanya, Ledong, Changjiang, Danzhou, Lingao and

Strengths of the island

According to the Hainan Provincial Tourism Development Commission, there are nine major advantages for Hainan's tourism industry development:

- Top-class ecological environment.
- The country's largest special economic zone, granted special rights in local legislature and pilot reform policies.
- National strategy to build Hainan into an international tourism island and world-class island resort destination.
- Pivotal position on the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, a sound foundation for cooperation with Belt and Road Initiative countries and regions.
- Marine tourism: Hainan boasts 70 percent of the country's quality sand beaches and two-thirds of the country's sea territorial waters.
- Tropical resources: The country's only tropical province, with beaches, rainforests, lakes, rare animals and plants, volcano sites and karst caves, geothermal and hot springs, a pleasant climate and quality air.
- The Boao Forum for Asia, the country's most influential platform for international political and business dialogues.
- Integrated planning: The country's first province to conduct experiments in integrated planning for all development projects.
- Establishment of an all-round pilot tourism province, as an integrated tourism destination.

Chengmai, in the near future.

About 50 salons will be built along the road, according to a plan released by the Hainan Tourism Development Commission, Sun said. "We plan to invite international designers to make the designs and build each salon into a fantastic tourist spot."

By late last year, 56 air routes had been opened — connecting Hainan with Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and international destinations including Russia, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Germany.

International flight routes are expected to increase to 100 by the year 2020, according to Liu Cigui, Party chief of Hainan.

Meanwhile, sea routes to the province have also expanded, with a greater range that covers countries

in Southeast Asia.

"This year, we will adopt incentive policies for air companies and cruise liners to encourage inbound tourism. And more than 20 direct flights are expected to open with countries including Russia, Australia, the United Kingdom, Japan and South Korea," said Sun.

More flights will be added between Hainan and Hong Kong to make it more convenient for overseas travelers to visit the tropical island.

In December, Haikou, the capital city of Hainan, and Sanya — a city on the southern end of Hainan — launched cruise routes to link with the Philippines and Vietnam.

Hainan plans to further cooperate with Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.