



# Lake's beauty lures visitors



Scenery of Guyu Lake in Longchang, Southwest China's Sichuan province, in early August. PHOTOS BY YOU ZIXIU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Tourism grows and local 'agritainment' businesses flourish in prominent Sichuan scenic destination

By YANG FEIYUE

yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

A breeze greets sightseers riding the tour bus along the shore of Guyu Lake in Longchang, Southwest China's Sichuan province, in early August.

Lush trees surround the lake area, offering a natural shield from the smoldering summer heat.

Wooden pavilions and pedestrian lanes allow for a close look at the lake, around which there are people skating or cycling.

"It's a little bigger than the West Lake in Hangzhou (in East China's Zhejiang province)," said Huang Yong, director of the Longchang tourism bureau. But Guyu Lake holds much more water, he said.

The lake covers an area of 5.4 square kilometers and contains 56 million cubic meters of water. It is 15 meters deep on average, and up to 27 meters at its deepest point.

Guyu Lake came into being when the local government decided to draw water from the Tuojiang river, one of the tributaries of the Yangtze River, in the 1970s.

In those days, Longchang was short of water, because it is at a higher level than the surrounding areas and did not have any big rivers or lakes.

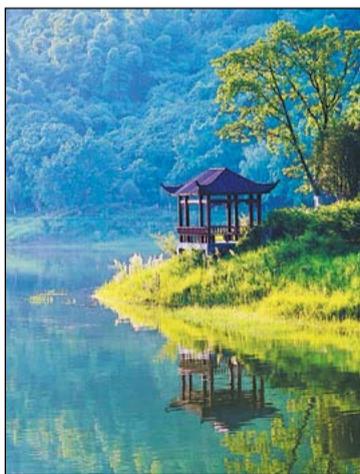
"So most of the time, we were dependent on the weather (to survive)," said Huang.

Since Guyu Temple is near the lake, the water body is named after it, said Huang.

The creation of the lake began in 1976, and it took two years to fill it.

The lake helps irrigate roughly 66.7 square km of land in Longchang, said Huang, adding that the local government in 2003 allowed fish-breeding in the lake.

"The fish-breeding took place in roughly one-fifth of the lake's area," Huang said, adding that it carried on for more than a decade before being stopped due to water shortage issues



A lakeside pavilion.

as the population of the area grew from 50,000 to 200,000 in the 1980s.

In 2009, work on improving the lake's environment began, and more than 200 hectares of farmland around the lake has since been changed into a green zone where trees have been planted.

As a result of the improvements, the lake has now begun to attract visitors. Numbers could hit 400,000 a year.

"They go boating in the summer and watch migrating birds in the

winter, besides enjoying local food," said Huang.

Tens of thousands of birds fly to the lake from November to April, creating quite a sight.

Then, one can see 90 varieties of bird, including white and gray cranes, as well as egrets and cormorants.

Local authorities have set up dozens of bird-feeding and observation sites for the public.

Guyu Lake was designated a prominent scenic spot in 2016, and growing tourism has helped the local "agritainment" businesses to flourish.

Currently, more than 35 agritainment facilities are up and running, and they cater to 2,000 to 3,000 visitors per day, said Huang, adding that some of the facilities earn as much as 200,000 yuan (\$29,000) to 300,000 yuan a year.

Tang Wenyi was the first local to open a restaurant in the area, 500 meters from the lake, in 2000.

"Business has been good, especially in recent years," said the 43-year-old.

"More visitors now come to see the lake and the surrounding environment is improving."

Tang, who can serve 400 people at a time, employs 11 locals, each of whom receives a salary of 2,000 to 5,000 yuan a month.

Like Tang, many other locals are also engaged in the tourism business with homestays and boating facilities.

For now, there are about 40 sight-seeing boats, and a total of 100 beds are available for those who want to spend the night.

Meanwhile, the local government is planning to further develop the area. A water town costing 3 billion yuan is to be set up a few hundred meters to the south of the lake within five years.

"We plan to use 3 million cubic meters of water from Guyu Lake (for the water town) and recycle it," said Huang.

Separately, Longchang is to work with top cosmetic and healthcare facilities and encourage them to open outlets in the water town.

A filmmaking facility is also expected to take shape in the area.

As for transportation, high-speed rail connects Longchang to Chengdu and Chongqing within an hour. So Guyu Lake could soon see even more visitors.