

CHAPTER II

TOURISM PROMOTION IN CHINA, YUNNAN AND DALI; AND DALI ATTRACTIONS

1.1 TOURISM PROMOTION OF THE GOVERNMENT

The Central Authorities

The “Open Door” policy, started from 1978 with the Deng Xiaoping era that introduced and promoted “socialism with Chinese Character”, helped open China’s borders to tourism. Deng Xiaoping very much supported the development of tourism in China. In Yunnan Luyou Ninajian 2003 (Yunnan Year Book of Tourism, 2003), there are several records of Deng’s notions¹: In 1978, “civil aviation and tourism are worth developing...to improve tour infrastructure...to regard tourism as a focus for development...” On February 1, 1979: “to make the tourism industry into an integrated industry.” On February 6, 1979: “there is so much to do with tourism, we should give prominence to develop it and speed up...” On January 17 1979: “...to develop the tourism industry to increase national income” (Yunnan Luyou Ninajian, 2003:3-4). Harrison in his book mentions that as a key destination area, the number of tourists arriving in China increased from 6 million to almost 32 million from 1980 to 1988 (Harrison, 1992: 6). The GNP of China has been rapidly increased after the “Open Door” policy and the development of tourism.

The Central Committee of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) and the State Council of China have paid much attention to tourism development of the country and put the tourism industry into the 7th five-year-plan of national economy and social development as part of the national economic development strategy, and set relevant objectives (Yunnansheng Tongjiju, 1989).

Table 2.1 GNP of China 1975-2004

¹ Translated by the author

Sources: Ministry of Health P.R.China and National Bureau of Statistics of China.

Year	GNP (hundred million Yuan)
1975	2,997
1980	4,518
1985	8,995
1990	18,545
1992	26,651
1995	57,495
1996	66,851
1997	73,143
1998	76,967
1999	80,423
2000	88,190
2001	95,933
2002	105,172
2003	116,898
2004	136,515

In November 1999, the then Prime Minister of China, Zhu Rongji said in a speech in Singapore, that “continue to expand domestic demand and boost economic growth by increasing both investment and consumption” is one of the three strategic measures of China in the next century (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000). Domestic travel has significantly contributed to the tourism industry in China. The state has been paying much attention to promote and encourage domestic tourism for its economic growth (Tan, 2001). The peak time for domestic travel every year goes to three main national holidays, namely Spring Festival (Chinese Lunar Calendar New Year), International Labor Day (1 May), and National Day (1 October). The latter two have both been extended by the state from one day to three days, and then adjusted with neighboring weekends to be 7-day holidays that are called “Golden Weeks”.

The Han people constitute the majority population in China, and in addition there are 55 different ethnic minorities in the country. The 1995 sample survey of one per cent of China’s

population showed Han people were 1,099.32 million (91.02%), and the other 55 ethnic groups were 108.46 million (Cool and Murray, 2001: 121). The fifth national census in 2001 showed that the Han population increased to 1,159.4 million (91.59%), and 106.43 million (8.41%) belonged to other ethnic groups (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2001). Meanwhile, each group has their own traditional customs and life style although some are influenced by the mainstream national life in different levels.

Zhu Rongji made inspections of Yunnan in October 1995 and August 1999, and gave instructions for its economic and tourism development. During both visits, he said that Yunnan should effectively use the advantage of rich tourism resources to aggressively develop its tourism industry. Many other national leaders such as Qian Qichen (2000), Wu Yi (1999), Liu Huaqing (1999), Jing Shuping (1999) and Zhang Kehui (1999) also expressed their support to and hope for Yunnan tourism development. He Guangwei, the Director General of the Tourism Bureau was very concerned about the tourism development in Yunnan and gave guidelines for tourism development of Yunnan when coming there in August 1999 for working visit (Yunnan Luyou Ninajian, 2003).

Yunnan Province

Following the national trend of promoting tourism for economic development, the Yunnan Province has also been trying to promote its tourism industry. Located in southwest of China, Yunnan is well known for its rich natural resources, and has been known as the Kingdom of Plants, the Kingdom of Wild Animals, and the Kingdom of Nonferrous Metals. The Yunnan Province is bordering Myanmar in the west, Laos and Vietnam in the south. This province is included in the Great Mekong Region together with five countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar. Yunnan has the most diverse culture in China with - in addition to Han - 25 different ethnic minorities, of which 15 are unique to Yunnan. This gives Yunnan another name: the Kingdom of Ethnic Culture.

The long distance from the political, economic and cultural center, mountainous terrain

and the diverse minority situation make Yunnan one of the least economic advanced provinces in China. Tourism has been recognized and promoted as one of the main approaches to improve its economic development (Sofield and Li, 2003).

The tourism industry in Yunnan started in the 1950s. The symbolic outset was the establishment of the China International Travel Agency Kunming Branch, and the Kunming Hotel—the first hotel open for foreigners. The Cultural Revolution that started in 1966 totally stopped the tourism industry of Yunnan (Yunnansheng Tongjiju, 1989).

The guideline “to reform, to open” established at The Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China gave direction and commitment to the development of tourism industry in China. With the subsequent decision of the CCP Yunnan Provincial Committee and the Provincial Government, the Yunnan Provincial Tourism Bureau was established in 1978. Meanwhile, a provincial tourism leadership team was established to strengthen the management of and guide the tourism industry of the whole province. In 1986, for the first time, Yunnan put tourism industry into the 7th five-year-plan for its economic and social development. From then on, as part of national economy and social development, tourism gradually became a growing economic and social industry (Yunnansheng Tongjiju, 1989). In 1993, the provincial government decided to extensively develop the tourism industry in Yunnan, to speed up its development and to make it into a new economic support sector. This decision of the provincial government created good circumstances and made a big contribution to tourism development, in the whole province (Zhonggong Yunnan Shengwei Dangshi Yangjiushi, 1998: 579).

With the governmental support, the tourism industry of Yunnan has been rapidly developed. More agencies and relevant organizations have appeared and the number of employees in this area has been increased, with the quality both on personnel and services improved (Yunnansheng Tongjiju, 1989). The success of tourism development in Yunnan is significant. The CCP Yunnan Provincial Committee and the Provincial Government put much effort to develop it, show the rich resources, make famous brands, hold exhibitions, conduct

promotion projects, and encourage all aspects contributing to it. The Yunnan tourism economy has rapidly increased: being the 12th strongest in China in 1990, it became the 8th strongest in 2001. In 2001, the income of tourism was 25.6 billion Yuan (12.5% of GDP). 250,000 people worked directly in the tourism industry while 1.45 million others worked indirectly (Zheng, 2003). Kunming Wujiaaba International Airport was launched into use in March 1990. It was constructed in 1958 as a National Level 2 airport and with Central Government support was reconstructed in 1985 into National Level 1. It has become one of the five biggest international airports in China, which has been a huge boost for the tourism development in Yunnan (Zhonggong Yunnan Shengwei Dangshi Yangjiushi, 1998: 450).

Table 2.2 Economic output of the Yunnan tourism industry

Sources: Yunnan Luyou Ninajian, 2003; Yunnan Luyou Ninajian, 2004 and Yunnan Sishi Nian, 1989

Year	National currency income (Billion Yuan)	Foreign currency earned (Million USD)	Direct employment (Persons)	Indirect employment (Persons)
2003	30.660	34,014.12	280,000	1,374,000
2002	28.990	41,930.13	272,000	1,333,000
2001	25.600	36,701.51	250,000	1,450,000
2000	21.140	33,901.84	250,000	1,225,000
1999	20.500	35,032.55	250,000	N/A
1998	13.690	26,103.00	N/A	N/A
1997	11.900	26,816.51	N/A	N/A
1996	7.330	22,111.35	N/A	N/A
1995	6.115	16,503.23	N/A	N/A
1990	0.596	1,643.00	70,000	N/A

Bai Enpei, the CCP Yunnan Provincial Committee Secretary, on July 5, 2002 said that the government at all levels in Yunnan should strengthen the tourism development since the general plan, strategy and approaches of tourism industry for the whole province have been clearly made. He asked all CCP committees and the authorities in every region to further understand the importance of tourism development, and to regard it as a major issue for the overall, local social economic development that should get the same attention as the tobacco industry. CCP Committees should lead and direct, governments be the functionaries, and the relevant departments be the implementers. There should be clear tasks for every level and the

outcome be considered in appraisal. The main leaders in the CCP should be responsible to attach importance to tourism development, and work more on its direction and coordination, to identify problems, obstacles and hot issues and solve them in time. Tourism should be developed with a long-term perspective, comprehensively and as a large industry. Any necessary festivals, celebrations and exhibitions that can promote tourism development should be encouraged, on condition that quality, speed, health and sustainability should be guaranteed.

In the same speech, Mr. Bai mentioned the importance of good management of tourism for the sake of society as well as the key to tourism development. More work was needed. The “discipline” of the tourism market is its lifeline, which may destroy the whole industry if badly dealt with. Each department should take on specific tasks and respond to problems on their own. Government at all levels should build the capacity of rule of law, to guarantee the rights of business operators and travelers, to ensure reasonable prices, to prevent counterfeit products, and to establish a good and healthy image. Mr. Bai urged governmental departments to have simple and transparent procedures, less intervention, and to increase working efficiency. The speed of Yunnan economic growth was slowing down, while speeding up the tourism development should be a vital task to improve this situation. Mr. Bai said that we should mobilize every aspect to support tourism development so that everyone will pay sufficient attention to and be willing to promote its full development.

Three main reasons have contributed to the rise of the tourism industry: 1) rich and unique resources; 2) strong support from the government at all levels; 3) a long history and diverse ethnic minority cultures. Among them, the ethnic minority cultures are the most attractive. To understand and feel the ethnic minority life and culture is the main motivation for traveling to Yunnan for the majority of the tourists from within China and from outside China. The tourism industry in Yunnan has been very successful in the ethnic minority regions (Zheng, 2003).

Zheng (2003: 85) quotes Bai Enpei: “Yunnan has rich and colorful ethnic minority cultures, and almost every key attraction is related to a unique culture. This is our biggest advantage to develop tourism.”²

The cities, counties, districts and prefectures of Yunnan Province have established their

² In Chinese Language, and translated by the author.

respective tourism bureaus to promote the tourism industry development. With the large investment from the provincial government, the tour resources of the province have been developed and utilized. After seeing the economic growth and social development of Yunnan, many regions started to regard tourism industry as an approach for economic progress (Yunnansheng Tongjiju, 1989). 10 of them including the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture have made tourism industry the main support economic sector.

Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture

The Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture is located in the northwest part of Yunnan Province with a total territory of 29,459 square kilometers. It is the only Bai autonomous prefecture in China with a population 3.3 million, of which one third is Bai, one half is Han and the rest belongs to 11 other ethnic minorities such as Yi, Hui (Muslim), Miao, Lisu, Lahu, etc (Zheng, 2003; Xinhua Wang 2003, Travel and Tourism Bureau of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, 2005). Dali City is the capital of the prefecture, 338 kilometers away from Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan Province. The distance of the air route between Kunming and Dali City is 275 kilometers. Historically, Dali City was a vital communication hub between Sichuan Province and India and an ancient bridle path for the shipment of tea. It was the only passage of the southern route of the ancient Silk Road in China leading to Southeast and South Asia. Human activities in Dali can be traced back to the Stone Age over 100,000 years ago. Five counties of Dali were established in the West Han dynasty. During the years 649-749, the Nanzhao Kingdom was established and unified with the capital city Yangjuyang (Dali Old Town) but collapsed in 902. After that, Duan Siping, a Bai aristocrat established the Dali Kingdom and maintained the same capital. The Nanzhao Kingdom and the Dali Kingdom together lasted for 500 years. It used to be the political, economic and cultural center of Yunnan. During the Yuan Dynasty, the Yunnan Administration Province was established with Kunming replacing Dali City as the capital city. In 1954, Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture was established (Zheng, 2003).

Dali not only has a long history, but also beautiful scenery. Cangshan Mountain, Erhai Lake and the Three Pagodas of the Chongsheng Temple are symbols that are famous nationally and internationally. In addition, Dali is famous for its good weather with an average temperature of 15.1 °C. Located in a basin, it has spring-like weather all year. Natural disasters seldom occur. Furthermore, Bai culture is unique to Dali. The Bai tradition is one of the main attractions for tourists. In 1982, the State Council of China listed Dali City in the first group of the National Historical Cultural Heritage Towns. In 1984 it included Dali as one of the open cities in Level Two. The Tour and Tourism Bureau of Dali City was established in January 1985 (Dali Luyou Xinxi Wang), and travelers have pour in from then on.

Economically, Dali is still a very underdeveloped region of China, although its GDP per capita of USD 638 (2003) is not much lower than the Yunnan Provincial GDP per capita of USD 683 (2003). However, compared to the national GDP of USD 1,090 (2003), Dali's is still very low. Furthermore, it also has to face problems on incentives for investors, market development and environmental issues, when developing its indigenous industry. Tourism, as the 'smokeless industry', has become the 'backbone' of present and future policy for local development (Zheng, 2003).

Table 2.3 GDP per capita in China, Yunnan and Dali 2003

Sources: Yunnan Luyou Ninajian, 2004 and Ma Jianquan 2005

Place	GDP per capita 2003 (USD)
China	1,090
Yunnan	683
Dali	638

Government strong support and promotion is not enough for successful tourism development. The destination must have its unique attraction. Location, weather, culture, beautiful natural scenery and parks can be reasons for tourists coming. Dali has many attractions that contribute to its rapid tourism development.

2.2 DALI TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

Good location and pleasant weather, “a stream goes by every family, every house has flowers” (a local saying), beautiful scenery and a unique Bai culture makes Dali a place attracting people in the world. There are over 130 listed tourism attractions in the whole prefecture (Huang, 2005). Dali is said to be “a city you must visit in your life time” (Travel and Tourism Bureau of Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, 2005).



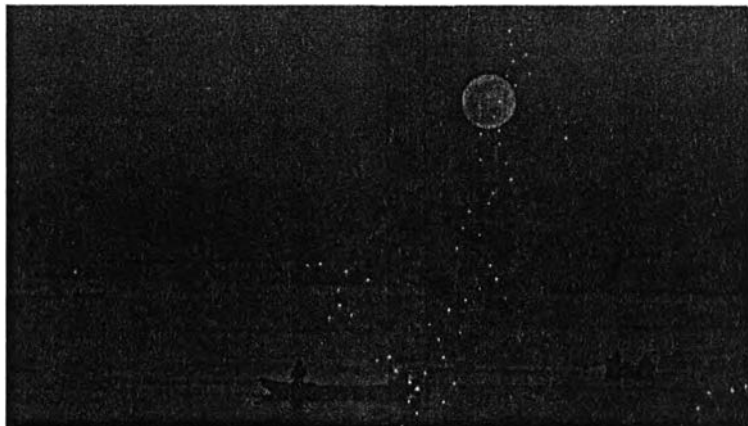
2.1, A gate in Dali

Photo Source: Dali Luyou Xinxu Wang

Natural Attractions

➤ Erhai Lake

Erhai is the second largest lake in Yunnan, about 41.5 kilometers long and 3-9 kilometers wide. It is about 250 square kilometers large and lies at an altitude of 1,972 meters above sea level (Zhan and Zhang, 1990). With its elegant charms, Erhai Lake is known as the “High Plateau Pearl”.



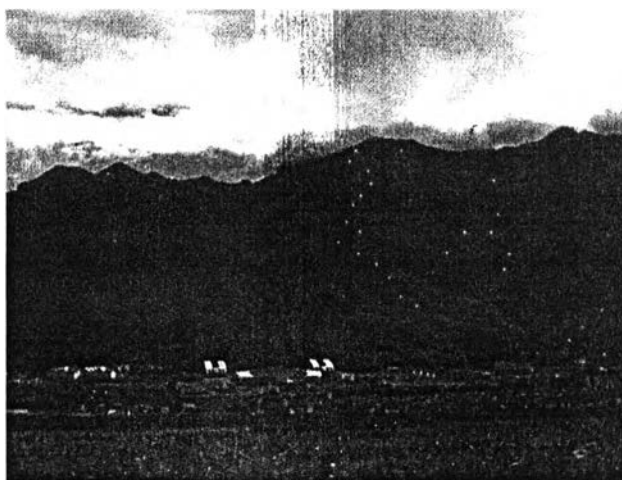
2.2, Erhai Lake night view

Photo Source: Dali Travel Group

Clean water, blue sky, white clouds, lovely sunshine, flying birds, jumping fish, relaxing people, splendid Bai culture and flourishing plants make it a ‘paradise for tourists’. In spring, various flowers with different colors are blooming on the lakeshore and the drooping willows cast shadows around; in summer, it is a natural swimming pool. There are several small islands in Erhai Lake featured with a variety of scenery and attractions, for example Shuang Lang (Nanzhao Island) and Xiao Putuo.

➤ Cangshan Mountain

“Cang” means bluish green in Chinese and “shan” means mountain. Cangshan Mountain is located in the middle of Dali Prefecture and west of Erhai Lake, and is famous for its clouds, snow, streams and marble stone. 1) Cangshan has 19 peaks and between every two of them there is a stream so that there are 18 streams. The 19 peaks are magnificent and charming, standing from north to south. The streams are running meanderingly along the valleys to Erhai Lake through the year with lovely sound, and sweet water. 2) The snow on the top stays unmelted all through the year and is always brilliant in sunshine. There is now a cable cart to transport tourists to a road (the Jade Belt Road) along the crest of the mountain. 3) Good quality marble is excavated in the mountain and processed in Dali. Actually, the Chinese word for “marble” means “stones from Dali”. 4) At the end of summer and the beginning of autumn, there is a white thick cloud belt surrounding the 19 peaks that is over hundred miles long. Zhan and Zhang (1990) describe it like a jade belt, so people call it Yudai Yun (Jade-belt cloud). Wangfu Yun (Looking-forward-to-the-Husband cloud) appears in winter. It sits above the Yuju Peak of Cangshan, moving up and down, shaped like a longhaired lady waiting for her husband.



2.3, Cangshan Mountain
Photo Source: Author

There are plenty of old trees, green and growing into the sky, bamboos, waterfalls and flowers. Heilong Tan (Black Dragon Pool) and Xima Tan (Xima Pool) are examples of numerous lakes that look like bright pearls scattered around the peaks. Cangshan Mountain and Erhai Lake reflect each other. People use the expression “Yu Er Yin Cang” (Jade Erhai and Silver Cangshan) to describe this beauty.

➤ Butterfly Spring

The Butterfly Festival is April 15 in the Chinese Lunar Calendar, celebrated at Butterfly Spring, a beautiful water source. Bai girls and boys gather in large numbers singing and dancing to celebrate true love. Old trees surround the Butterfly Spring, and one of them bends over the spring thus named the Butterfly Tree. One key feature and attraction of the Butterfly Spring used to be the large number of butterflies hanging on the trees during this festival when flowers are in bloom (Yang and Li, 2001), but they have unfortunately gradually disappeared.



2.4, Butterfly Spring

Photo Source: Dali Travel Group

Historical Attractions

Located at the foot of Peak Zhonghe of Cangshan Mountain, the Dali Old Town itself in general is a main attraction. With its over 500 years of history established as the capital town for Nanzhao Kingdom in the Tang Dynasty (Wu, 2003), it has rich historical features, as well as a great diversity of different cultures and religions. Han, Bai and Hui (Muslim) lived in the old Kingdoms, and due to its early openness to commercial transportation. Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Christianity and other religions have been practiced in Dali for hundreds of years.

The town wall and bell tower have been reconstructed since 1980, according to its original design and layout. A main street connects the south gate - the symbol of Dali, and the north gate. Streams from Cangshan Mountain run through the old town, some were covered for a number of years and later restored by the government.



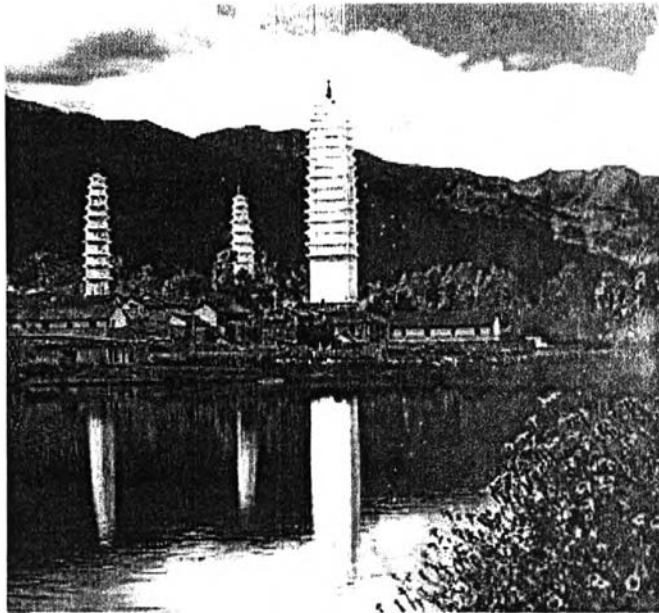
2.5, Dali Old Town gate and wall
Photo Source: Dali Luyou Xinxigang

There are also some other special ‘tourism spots’ which have been especially promoted. The main one is the Three Pagodas and the Chongsheng Temple.

➤ Three Pagodas and the Chongsheng Temple

The Three-pagoda Park is 1.5 kilometers north of Dali Old Town. The Three Pagodas stand in front of the reconstructed Chongsheng Temple. The tallest one is called Qianxun, built with bricks during A.D. 823-859, and is 69 meters high, and 16 stories in square shape. The two smaller southern and northern pagodas are both 42 meters high with 10 stories each in octagonal shape, and were built with bricks in the A.D.1100s (Li, 1991). Chongsheng Temple was built during the early years of Tang Dynasty (713-741), and had important meaning to the royal families of the Nanzhao and the Dali Kingdoms. It was once regarded as ‘the capital of Buddhism’. The Chongsheng Temple was destroyed long time ago. In 1961, the Chinese State Council included the Three Pagodas of the Chongsheng Temple in the first group of National Key Units of Cultural Relic for Protection. It has become the symbol of Dali as a National Historical Cultural Heritage Town (Dali Travel Group, 2005).

For the past few years, the Dali government redesigned the whole area according to historical records and restored a number of the relics. The Jianji Big Bell, Yutong Kwan-yin Statue, and the three pagodas used to be three of Chongsheng Five Key Features, and the former two were restored under government redesign, with some 'modernized' features added such as the Dali Kwan-yin Culture Exhibition Hall, the Three Pagoda Relics Display Hall, the Three Pagoda Reflection Pond and a night-view lamplight project (Dali Travel Group, 2005).



2.6, The Three Pagodas and the Reflection Pond
Photo Source: Dali Luyou Xinxigang

Together with other various attractions, these beautiful or historical places attract visitors for different purposes. Meanwhile, more cultural features have been explored by the government, since the Bai culture also is very attractive for tourists.