

Lighting Up the Belt and Road with Culture and Tourism

By Dong Na

During the recent Dragon Boat Festival, Ningbo's travel and leisure consumer market witnessed significant recovery. Although international travel has yet to open up, demand for leisure and travel is still high, as consumers remain eager to seek out relevant information online.

ASEAN: the Best Place to Continue BRI Post-COVID

Before the COVID-19 epidemic, Southeast Asia had always been a popular travel destination for Ningbo citizens. Statistics show that in 2019, Southeast Asia was the favorite destination of Ningbo travelers, who made a total of 504,100 trips to the region. Among the Southeast Asian nations, Malaysia is well-loved by Ningbo people for its numerous beautiful tropical islands and unique cultural offerings.

In recent years, Malaysia and China have strengthened cooperation in various fields. Partnership has driven contact and understanding between the two peoples, which is clearly reflected in the rise of two-way tourism. The number of Malaysians visiting China grew, just as Chinese tourists in Malaysia increased.

The friendship between Southeast Asia and Ningbo was formed hundreds of years ago. As early as the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907), ships loaded with silk, tea, and porcelain set sail from Ningbo to the Malay Peninsula, bringing unique Chinese culture to Malaysia through the ancient Maritime Silk Road.

"Maritime trade thrived due to the special geographical location of Malacca. Now, you can still experience the unique Nyonya culture of the Chinese community there. Same as China, Malaysia is also a melting pot of ethnic groups," said Wizani Rosmin, the Tourism Section Consul of the Consulate General of Malaysia in Shanghai.

According to one survey, three to five of Chinese tourists' top ten overseas destinations are in Southeast Asia. "Tourism is a strong driver for Southeast Asia to revitalize its economy. In my opinion, ASEAN could be the best place to restart



▲ Dive Resort in Kapalai, Malaysia. [Photo provided by Tourism Malaysia]
◀ The correspondent with Malaysian Tourism Consul Wizani and his deputy. [Photo provided to Ningbo Times]



the Belt and Road Initiative after the epidemic," said Zhai Kun, a professor at Peking University.

Connecting Hearts by Integrating Culture and Tourism

"I have been to Ningbo twice, and each time I have been warmly received by the local people. The people of our two countries are very hospitable, which I think is what all travel-lovers expect and one of the biggest attractions," said Wizani.

As Wizani sees it, in terms of culture and tourism, east Zhejiang and Malaysia are alike in many aspects. Both have fairly long coastlines, and there are many pronounced similarities in the two maritime cultures. "We are both water-based places and rich in seafood, and maritime culture has accompanied our development."

Going forward, there are promising opportunities for deepening two-way people-to-people and cultural exchanges. Malaysia offers a comprehensive and quality learning environment for international students, just as Ningbo does. The

University of Nottingham has one overseas campus in Ningbo and another in Kuala Lumpur, in addition to its UK main campus.

Southeast Asia has always been deeply involved in China's Belt and Road Initiative. As an important link, cultural tourism plays a decisive role.

"I believe that with the advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative, there will be a very good atmosphere for exchanges between the two peoples. We are actively organizing Belt and Road-themed activities. Based on that, relevant tourism products will be developed, so that the people of both countries can personally experience the benefits of the Belt and Road & Maritime Silk Road," said Wizani.

Ningbo, a city that sprung up on the banks of three confluent rivers, is upgrading its travel destinations, striving for national and international popularity. Currently, there are ten main attractions, including Tianyige Museum, Moon Lake, Laowaitan, Baoguo Temple, and the Hemudu Neolithic Ruins. They form part of the city's Silk Road-based tourism ecosystem that offers opportunities for recreation and wellness as well as research and business.

Jointly Fostering a Favorable Environment for BRI

ASEAN has managed to emerge

strong from the challenges of COVID-19. Against the backdrop of a sharp drop in international trade, the total trade volume between China and ASEAN reached \$416.55 billion from January to August in 2020, an increase of 3.8% year-on-year. ASEAN has historically been China's largest trading partner.

With optimistic outlooks on the Belt and Road Initiative, Southeast Asia and China are steadily advancing cultural and tourism exchanges.

Through jointly-developed online platforms, tourists from the two sides could deepen their understanding of each other's local attractions, thereby making better-informed travel plans and choosing tourism products that best suit their preferences. "We are also constantly developing new tourist attractions and improving facilities at destinations. After the epidemic subsides, Malaysia will extend an invitation to Ningbo and Chinese tourists," said Wizani.

With regard to Ningbo's tourism promotion, Wizani suggested, "I hope that Ningbo could gradually reach beyond China with its own advantages, and show its elegant demeanor to the world. If there is a chance, I hope to invite representatives of the Ningbo Tourism Department to visit Malaysia and organize promotion events or road shows in important cities to showcase its attractions to the Malaysian people."

SPOTLIGHT

The Female Street Vendor Who Became a Writer

By Jin Lu

At around 6 o'clock every morning, you can always see a woman selling daily goods from a cart in front of the vegetable market in Lianglong Town, Yuyao, Zhejiang Province.

Her name is Chen Hui. She is 44 years old, and her hometown is in Rugao, Jiangsu. In April 2021, she published her second book. Her first book came out three years ago and was ordered for a second printing due to its success.

"I set up my stall at 6AM every morning, return home at 11AM, take a two-hour break, and then start writing," Chen Hui told the correspondent. Compared with her peers, her life story is somewhat complicated.

"I spent my entire life before the age of 26 in Rugao, Jiangsu. I was adopted as a child and returned to my birth parents when I was a teenager. After graduating from high school, I suddenly contracted a chronic disease and was homebound for many years," said Chen Hui. At 27, she married a man in Yuyao and opened a corner store in Lianglong Town. However, she got pregnant after about a year and had to close the store.

"When my child was nine months old, I assembled a simple trolley and began selling homeware on the street to cope with the increased financial pressure of family life," Chen Hui continued. "In 2010, I started to use my spare time to write essays for personal enjoyment."

Now, Chen Hui lives with her son, who is in high school. Once, her son asked her, "Mom, do you regret coming to Zhejiang?" Chen Hui answered, "You lose some, and you gain some—that's life."

Chen Hui often writes about marginalized individuals. Some characters are based on the people from her hometown, some on neighbors and acquaintances, and some even on herself.

Chen Hui said that she would continue to write, as writing has become a part of her life, all the while carrying on with her street vendor business, which is her most reliable source of income.

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INFO&TIPS

Let's Go! Time for Fresh Local Bayberry

By Gou Wen

Now is the season for picking ripe bayberry in Ningbo. Greenhouse bayberry has already debuted on markets around the city. Then, orchard-grown bayberry will soon be available. In Ningbo, bayberry cultivation is a thriving local industry that consists of plantations, pick-your-own farms, and tourist destinations. According to statistics, 21,800 ha of bayberry farms are currently operating in Ningbo, mainly in the counties of Cixi, Yuyao, Ninghai, and Xiangshan.

In Sanqishi town, Yuyao, 800 ha of bayberries are grown, with an annual output of 5,000 tons. According to the scientific publication *Flora of China*, the best variety of bayberry, the *Biqi*, originated in Zhanghuxi, Shibu village, Sanqishi town of Yuyao County. It was sent to the imperial court as tribute as early as in the Han Dynasty and has been cultivated for more than 2,000 years.

Sanqishi Town's historical pick-your-own bayberry grove covers an area

of 1,665 m² and is situated near S319 expressway. This is the first cluster of old bayberry trees identified in China, with more than a hundred trees over 150 years old. The largest has a girth of 3.4 meters and is recognized by experts as the oldest known bayberry tree of the *Biqi* variety.

To reach the Sanqishi grove, take bus No. 337 to Sanqishi town, get off at Sanqishi station, and walk to Shibu village. If you are driving, set "shibucun" (Shibu village) as the destination on your navigation app.

The white bayberry of Moushan town is also well-known. The varieties *fenhong* ("pink") and *shuijing* ("crystal") represent the finest of Moushan's agricultural produce. The town has 233 ha of nationally-recognized pollution-free bayberry orchards, mainly in Hushan village and Qinggang village.

White bayberry is a semi-wild variety that requires high water and soil quality to thrive. Unripe white bayberries tend to fall from the branches prematurely, so the yield is significantly lower than other varieties. *Shuijing* bayberry is pearly white and the



Bayberries enter harvest season in Ningbo.

[Photo by Gou Wen]

hardest to cultivate; its output is the lowest.

There are more than 30 bayberry-picking groves in Moushan town, each covering more than 20,000 m².

To reach Hushan village, take a bus to Yuyao Xizhan (Yuyao West Bus Station),

then transfer onto Yuyao city bus 517 and get off at Jiangshan station. It takes about seven minutes to walk to the destination. If you are driving, set "hushancun" (Hushan village) as the destination on your navigation app.

