



President Hu Jintao received visiting state leaders in Sanya in 2008, the first time for such an event to be held outside Beijing.

WU ZHIYI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Five attractive reasons to pay Sanya a visit

By HUANG YIMING  
AND LIU XIAOLI

Sanya, known in history as Yazhou (Cliff state), is China's southernmost city and lies on the South China Sea coast.

Its remoteness meant that it was often the final place for exiled officials in early times, one of the most prominent of them being Lu Duoxun, a prime minister of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). He wrote a poem referring to it as a desolate, lonely place.

Now, more than 1,000 years later, old Yazhou has morphed into beautiful Sanya, with four S's (sun, sand, sea and shopping) that keep tourists from home and abroad coming back.

Sanya has a tropical monsoon climate, with average temperatures around 25.4C. In the summer it peaks at 28.3C and at its lowest, in January, hovers around 20.7C.

The balmy weather all year round is irresistible to tourists and some even come to stay. It had a population of 685,000 by November 2010, according to the sixth census, a 40-percent increase from the 2000 figure.

That increase is a testament to Sanya's natural beauty. It is China's only tropical seaside city and is never short of sunshine. Its five bays - Yalong, Da Donghai, Sanya, Haitang, and Yazhou - each has its own distinct features.

The best-known is Yalong, 8 kilometers long and crescent-shaped, with water so clear that a person can see 10 meters down. The fine, white sand is ideal for people who enjoy lolling about in the serene surroundings.

Yazhou Bay is a must-see for history buffs since it was a major Chinese port for almost 2,000 years. It was a departure point for the maritime Silk Road and is a living history museum.

For pristine scenery lovers, there is Haitang Bay. It is far from the city and most of its natural landscape is unmarred by human activities. The 19-kilometer-long coastline is dotted with oases and water, complemented by rolling hills and silver sand.

Sanya Bay is an unlikely place with local characteristics. At night, fishermen pull in their nets, vendors sell seafood, and drivers look for passengers. Tourists can meet the locals here and get a taste of ordinary daily life.

Partygoers may just as well make a beeline for Da Donghai, where bikini-clad tourists tend to gather. Some just lounge around soaking up the sun while others play soccer and volleyball. Thanks to its popularity with Russian travelers, it's hardly surprising to find Russian cuisine served in many of the restaurants.

Sanya is a rare convergence of bright sunshine, soft sand, clear water and pleasant climate, all of which adds up to one of the world's most promising tourist destinations.

# Sanya hosting world leaders

By HUANG YIMING  
AND LIU XIAOLI

It took Sanya 25 years of hard work to build itself into a world-

class tourist resort; no small feat when people consider that it was nothing more than a poor fishing village, according to Jiang Sixian, vice-governor of Hainan province

and Party secretary of Sanya city.

Today it covers a 28.3-square-kilometer area, 11 times the size it was back in 1987. And it has 180 star-rated hotels, an incredible compared to the two hotels it had back in 1987.

But, Sanya has been on a fast development track for some time after its administrative status was changed from county to prefecture. Its GDP has been growing at a rate of 15.6 percent annually, and annual urban incomes at an average of 13.8 percent, with rural ones at around 12.4 percent.

Its economic structure differs from that in the rest of China, with tertiary industry making up the largest portion. It accounted for 53.7 percent of the economy in 2008, while first-tier industries took up 21 percent, and secondary ones, 25.3 percent.

Tourism has seen a 20 percent

growth rate on average, with a modern structure in place, with tourism and trade at the core, complemented by the maritime and real estate industries.

Sanya's air quality reaches the "excellent" standard over 320 days a year, and its sea water quality is among the best in the world.

The lives of Sanya's rural people have improved considerably and they now have access to insurance and infrastructure that were previously only available to urbanites.

The final leg of road construction in one of the most remote places - Red Orient Village - was recently completed, putting six towns more in touch via asphalt roads.

Sanya has also played host to many high-profile international events. From 2003 onwards, it held five Miss World finals, an

event that seems to go along with Sanya's stunning beauty.

In 2008, President Hu Jintao received visiting foreign state leaders in Sanya, marking the first time for an event of this kind to be held outside Beijing.

Sanya has also played host to sports events such as the International Beach Volleyball Tournament, Tour of Hainan, and a professional chess competition.

In April 2011, further raising its profile, leaders of the five BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - converged on Sanya for the Brics Leaders Meeting.

All these events show how the world has come to see Sanya and how far it has come in the space of 25 years - from almost total obscurity to international stardom. Now it's just waiting to take its next step.



CHEN WEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Jiang Sixian (left), vice-governor of Hainan province and Party secretary of Sanya city, visits Lars-Ake Skager (center), former deputy lord mayor of Gothenburg in Sweden who lives in Sanya now.

## One more thing to add to Sanya's popularity

By HUANG YIMING  
AND LIU XIAOLI

A recently announced duty-free entitlement brought an influx of tourists to Sanya in April and May, a normally dull part of the tourist business.

On Labor's Day, Sanya became one of the hottest domestic tourist destinations, with Lijiang, Xiamen, Xi'an, Shanghai and Qingdao lagging behind, according to Kuxun, a leading online travel service provider.

The duty-free program allows tourists and Hainan residents to get a tax refund on any items they buy in a duty-free store, before flying out of Hainan, if they have a valid ID and ticket.

Tourists can make duty-free purchases two times a year and Hainanese, once a year.

They are limited to no more than 5,000yuan (\$762) worth of goods per person each time.

Tourist can also buy one item worth more than 5,000 yuan each time, with a lower tax rate, including customs duties, VAT and consumer tax.

The process works as follows:

First, get a purchase card at the duty-free store, with the bar code recording their personal information, flight information and record of purchases. Members of a group can get the cards at the reception desk and individual tourists from the cashier.

Second, after paying for the goods, the store sends the items to the airport to be picked up, either at Haikou's Meilan Airport or Sanya's Phoenix Airport.

Third, collect the purchases at the airport by showing an ID, receipt, and boarding pass.



Opening ceremony for Hainan's new offshore duty-free policy experiment.

PHOTOS BY HUANG YIMING / CHINA DAILY

To make sure that the items arrive at the airport on time, tourists departing from Meilan Airport need to make their purchases a day ahead of time, and those leaving from Phoenix, six hours ahead of time.

Travel agencies have added these duty-free shops to their routes, and this has gone down fairly well, as can be seen by the swarms of tourists.

The Sanya duty-free store had 42,000 customers making more than 10,000 purchases during the Labor Day holiday, according to Sanya's tourist authorities.

The program started on April 20, and

the duty-free store has been thronged with customers every day since then.

Phoenix saw a 4.1 percent year-on-year increase in its daily passenger volume, climbing to 75,062. Sanya tourist attractions saw increased traffic, with South Mountain receiving 41,000 tourists, a year-on-year increase of 24.2 percent. End of the Earth got 40,200 tourists, up 14.2 percent from last year.

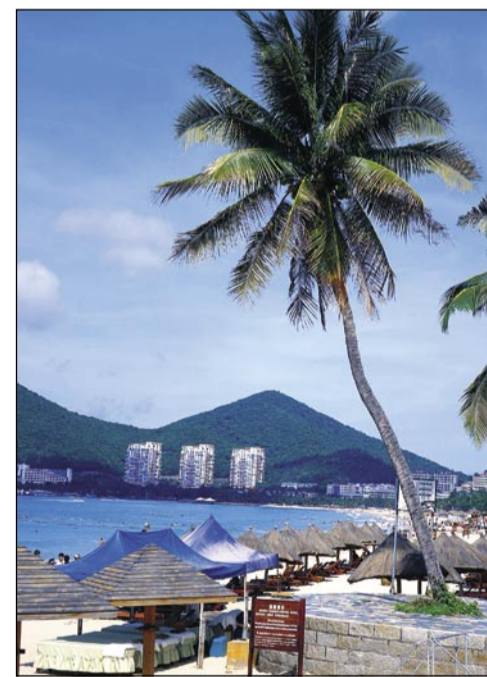
Sanya's duty-free prices are mostly on a par with those in Hongkong.

According to Teng Rui, deputy manager of the Sanya store, their luxury goods

are generally 15 to 35 percent lower than on the mainland, thanks to the tax exemption and reduced other fees.

Sanya authorities are now looking at building a large Duty-free Shopping Block, a grand undertaking land part of the improvements in Sanya's commercial infrastructure, according to Wu Yanjun, deputy mayor.

The duty-free shopping has given Sanya even more allure, something to add to its combination of sun, sea and sand and it is on its way to becoming a popular tourist destination all year round.



Scenic view of the sea from Sanya.



China's prosperous, southernmost city, on the South China Sea coast.