

# Miao, Dong groups featured in local tourism campaign

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## 33

ethnic groups

live in the Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture of Guizhou province

Ethnic culture is playing an increasingly important role in the development of Guizhou, where ethnic groups account for 38 percent of the province's total population.

The Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture in the south-east of the province is one example of this trend.

Qiongdongnan is home to 33 ethnic groups, with the native Miao accounting for some 42 percent of the population and the Dong, 32 percent.

Local decision-makers have said that publicity is the key to growth in the lesser-known mountainous region. Its diverse cultures will be the centerpiece of these campaigns.

"We have vast potential for tourism," said Li Feiyue, Party chief of the Qiongdongnan prefecture.

He explained that Qiongdongnan has more than half of the country's Dong people, who have worldwide reputation for their folk music.

Because they have no written language, the Dong people have long passed on their history, culture and knowledge through songs, which have evolved part of their lives over centuries.

One of the best-known folk music traditions of the group is the Dong Grand Chorus, a multipart polyphonic choir without accompaniment or a director. It was included in UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritages in 2009.

"The Dong Grand Chorus has won worldwide acclaim. It is not only a cultural heritage that we need to protect but also a window open to the world that helps more people to learn about us," said Xie Weiping, a researcher at the Guizhou Academy of Social Sciences.

Folk music is not the only element that attracts tourists. For ethnic minority groups in the southwest of China, clothes are an integral part of their cultural identity.

Most often, traditional costumes in this part of the country use bold colors combined with intricately crafted jewelry.

Each ethnic group has its own designs, but the types of jewelry remain roughly the same — crowns, necklaces, earrings, bracelets, rings and waist hoops.

For the Miao, silver is their most-prized material for crafting jewelry. Traditionally an ordinary Miao

woman cannot get a piece of silver jewelry until she is getting married and receives such a gift from her elders to adorn her wedding outfit.

To prepare for this, her parents usually have to save up for years.

In recent years, souvenirs like silver ornaments and jewelry have become popular with travelers in the Qiongdongnan prefecture.

### Blooming tourism

More than 4.19 million tourists visited Kaili, capital of the Qiongdongnan prefecture in the first four months of this year, generating some 5.25 billion yuan (\$855 million) in revenue, an increase of 66 percent year-on-year.

Among them, 3,900 travelers are from abroad, bringing in combined revenue of \$681,600.

"Although the overseas tourist number is not as big as those of visitors to metropolises like Beijing and Shanghai, but we consider it a good start," said Huang Yuanliang, Party chief of the city.

The capital city is not the only beneficiary of the tourism strategy that capitalizes on local cultural diversity.

More counties and townships in the Qiongdongnan prefecture are following suit by combining ethnic culture and tourism together.

"Our ultimate goal is to build a world tourist destination," Li said, adding that to pave the way, local authorities are accelerating infrastructure construction covering a traffic system.

As well, dozens of hotels and motels will also be added to meet the needs of the blooming tourism industry.

Local authorities expect to draw a group of internationally influential tourism companies and an influx of large capital to Qiongdongnan in a bid to boost local tourism, Li said.

"It needs a fostering process," he said, noting that as a long-run investment, it takes time for investors to get to know Qiongdongnan's advantages and features in tourism. Yet, Li stressed that he has faith in the campaign.



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Miao women in a line, dressed up with silver ornaments, welcome visitors at the entrance to the fair, which opened on Tuesday in Guizhou province.

# Folk arts are big draw for visitors to Guizhou

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The sixth China Kaili Original Ecological Folk Culture and Art Festival and 2013 China (Guizhou) International Folk Artworks Fair opened on Tuesday in the Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province and will last through Friday.

The events provide a stage for the prefecture to showcase its rich cultural resources to tourists from around the world, organizers said.

With the help of modern technology, various cultural characteristics of the Miao and Dong ethnic groups in Qiongdongnan are on show.

The events began with a live performance on the lake at the Ethnic Culture Park in the host city of Kaili. The performance, inspired by the Miao, Dong and Yao cultures, featured native customs and presented the cultural richness of Qiongdongnan to the audience.

Combining different performing arts and using Kaili's real landscape as the backdrop, the show created a spectacle imbued with the charms of the local cultures.

Held at the same time, the 2013 China (Guizhou) International Folk Artworks Fair and the second China-Kaili Silver Embroidery Exhibition are also highlighted with the unparalleled folk culture in Qiongdongnan.

The exhibitions display exquisite folk artwork from 18 provinces, cities and areas in China, Vietnam and Malaysia. It is the first professional exhibition of this type of silver and embroidery in China.

In the Qiongdongnan prefecture, a region known for its well-preserved folk culture, the silver ornaments and embroidery of the Miao people has been enlisted in the national intangible cultural heritage.

Qiongdongnan is known as "King of Silver" for its exquisite workmanship.



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Li Feiyue (first from the right), Party chief of the Qiongdongnan prefecture, examines a silver ornament during his inspection of the exhibition.

The production of silver ornaments in the prefecture involves more than 30 steps, and many of the processes involved require specialized skills honed over generations.

The many varieties of ethnic Miao and Dong embroidery are famous nationwide for their superb craftsmanship.

In addition, renowned exhibits from traditional embroidery hubs like Suzhou and the provinces of Hunan, Sichuan and Guangdong as well as other new centers, such as Hangzhou and Changzhou, are also on display, providing a glimpse into diverse embroidery expertise across the country.

Also, there are displays of thangka, a traditional Tibetan form of textile painting, as well as bronzeware from Shaanxi, new year paintings



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Chula Samarawickrama from Sri Lanka shows off her exhibits.

from Shanxi, Jun porcelain from Henan, Jingdezhen ceramics and Chiang Mai wood carvings from Thailand.

A series of forums and other events during the expo will provide rich options for visitors to fully experience every aspect of local culture.

# For showcasing ethnic culture, the plays are the thing

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When famous Chinese singer Song Zuying performed in Vienna in 2003 wearing traditional Miao costume, it was the first time for many Westerners to ever experience the unique charms of the ethnic group.

Ten years later, a series of musicals staged in the Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture of Southwest China's Guizhou province is once again drawing growing attention to the local customs and diverse cultures highlighted in the plays.

Among them is a drama called "Silver Show", which focuses on the silver culture of the Miao people and integrates elements of Qiongdongnan's unique landscape, architecture and heritage, said director Xing Shimiao.

One of the oldest ethnic groups in China, Miao people lack their own written languages.

Their culture and history have been passed on from generations to generations through dances, songs, designs of traditional costume and silver accessories.

The Miao people's silver jewelry reflects their history and has become an indispensable part of their lives.

The silver ornaments are famous across the nation.

As a result, the silver industry, quiet for about half a century, has once again begun to flourish.

In Qiongdongnan, where Miao people account for 42 percent of the prefecture's total population, there are now thousands of people making silver ornaments in family workshops.

And there are even some so-called silversmith villages, such as Kongbai, Maliao and Magao, where more than 80 percent of the households are involved in processing silver articles.

The 70-minute show comprises five sections and each of them represents an individual story covering a different type of subject matter, including Miao folklore, nature, love, history and life.

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### Striking visuals

The theater drama combines music, dance and songs with other performing arts, such as acrobatics, shadow plays and stunts to provide a multi-faceted view of the Guizhou Plateau native people.

In addition to performing arts, it also employs modern technology to improve state artistic design and highlight Miao culture, Xing added.

Since its premiere performance at

the end of April, the show has been staged more than 50 times so far and on average, attracts an audience of more than 500, including tourists from the United States, Australia and France.

"It will start a nationwide tour in August. In November, we will perform at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing," said an organizer of the show. "We are also planning a world tour series for next year."

The show's management team considers the show to be a cultural brand and plans to develop a related product series in a bid to boost the creative industry and tourism of

Qiongdongnan, he added.

Another musical, "Colorful Guizhou", is also based on Miao culture.

Since its debut in 2006, it has been performed more than 500 times for theater audiences surpassing 500,000 around the globe, helping Guizhou's local cultures gain broad acceptance worldwide.

"Colorful Guizhou" has set an example for us," said Luo Yongquan, a manager of the "Silver Show" operational team.

"Our show will develop its own style and character on the path toward international stages and brand-building."