

Amazing surge in popularity

Haining is home to one of China's most spectacular sights — the Qiantang River tides, **Lu Hong** reports.

Millions of tourists from China and overseas are drawn to the city of Haining in Zhejiang province every year to witness one of China's most unusual and spectacular sights — the amazing surging tides of the Qiantang River.

The extraordinary tides presented by the Qiantang River are a world-renowned natural wonder caused by gravitational pull. The centrifugal force produced by the rotation of the earth and by the peculiar bottleneck shape of Hangzhou Bay makes it easy for the tide to come in, but difficult for it to ebb. This amazing natural phenomenon is an incredible spectacle and visitors from around the world flock to witness it.

A high-speed railway and highway network, which has developed rapidly in recent years has cut travel time between Shanghai and Haining to less than an hour, so spending a weekend in Haining is an easy option for a family outing from Shanghai.

The Qiantang River is the biggest in Zhejiang province, running from the west to Hangzhou Bay in the east. It serves as a river hinge, playing an important role in water transportation between east and west.

The tide, which has a crest as high as 3.5 meters, causes the river's water to explode over the shoreline. Only the mouth of the Amazon River in South America can create tides on this scale.

An international tide watching festival has been held annually since 1994 and has attracted millions of domestic and overseas tourists.

There are three spots in the city suitable for tide watching: Dingqiao Daquekou, to watch where two tidal waves collide; Yanguan Park, for viewing tidal waves roll into the shore; and Lao Yan Cang, to watch the waves crash into the 9-meter walls of Dingzi Dam. You can rent a bike and following the tidal waves to see all three phenomena.

Yanguan tide watching park is the favorite area for wave-watching tourists (20 yuan admission). The park administrative office offers information about the best time day and best spot for tide watching. Haining tidal waves appear twice a day, so tourists don't need worry if they miss the first one.

Since 1994, Haining has held a tidal wave watching festival, the day when the most spectacular tides and biggest waves are seen.

The most violent tidal waves are seen each year along the river during the 18th day of the eighth month of the Chinese Lunar



The extraordinary tides of the Qiantang River are a world-renowned natural wonder.

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calendar, which falls on September 25 this year. Every year more than 1 million tourists from all over the world gather in Haining during this time to watch the tides and enjoy themselves at the festival.

Scientists predicted that this year's waves will be the highest in eight years. However, tourists are warned that tidal watching can be dangerous. Due to the gravitational force created by the tides, tourists can be sucked into the water even when standing three meters away from the waves. Every year at least a dozen wave viewers are drowned in the huge waves. So tourists are warned not to enter the sign-posted restricted area.

Haining is also famous for its leather industry. After watching the tidal waves, tourists still have time to head to the Haining Leather City, a complex of 1,300 stores covering 180,000 square meters. Here you will find all kinds of leather and fur products, including bags, coats, skirts, shoes

and gloves, among many other products. Leather City is home to many national and internationally known brands: Woodpecker, Pierre Cardin, Florsheim, Jaguar and Cobo, among them.

It is said that Haining produces a leather wallet in every three seconds, a leather sofa set every 48 seconds and a leather coat every 1.3 seconds. The light, thin, soft and tender texture of Haining leather products attracts tens of thousands of customers and wholesalers from home and abroad.

Last year, Leather City was granted a state-level 4A tourism spot, equal to the Great Wall, Huangshan Mount and West Lake.

A tip for leather buyers: you can bargain the offered price down by at least 50 per cent.

On the second floor of Leather City, there is a performance hall where audiences can watch traditional *Pi Ying Xi* (leather shadow

IF YOU GO

There are dozens of trains and long-distance buses running between Shanghai and Haining. The 108-kilometer journey costs 107 yuan by train and takes one hour. A one-day tour is enough, but if tourists are interested in watching the tide surges during the evening, they can easily find a hotel in downtown Haining.

plays). Haining shadow play is acknowledged as an intangible cultural heritage of Zhejiang province. In recent years, the art was in a state of decline because of poor promotion and shortage of talented practitioners. In order to promote the folk art, the local government lets the Jiangnan Shadow Play Troupe use the performance hall free of charge. The troupe has a dual role: entertaining exhausted leather shoppers and reviving Chinese traditional performance art.