



People in Yanqing traditionally go to the Dragon Boat Temple Fair and the Dragon Boat Culture Festival is held in the county.

Tourists stream to Yanqing

By XIA HUAN

Yanqing local government has been making efforts to enhance the region's image and boost socio-economic development. These seem to have paid off as the area is now attracting people from far and wide.

Historically, Yanqing lies at the junction of the central plain farm culture and nomadic culture. Most of its

residents arrived from outside the county between 1403 and 1424. Thus, Yanqing has a unique regional culture.

Yanqing used to be under the jurisdiction of Guizhou county, Guichuan prefecture and Guichuan county. According to scholars, the unique Chinese character Gui is one of the oldest family names recorded in the ancient books in China. The Guihe River is known as the mother river of

Yanqing. Many place names in Yanqing start with Gui.

In September 2008, the local government of Yanqing invested more than 200 million yuan to build a complex in an area of 30,000 sq m that includes a museum, library, culture gallery and bookstore.

The museum covers an area of 6,100 sq m, the largest county-level museum in the suburbs of Beijing. The museum displays more than

1,000 real samples and more than 500 photos in its six halls, making it an ideal place to learn about Guichuan Culture. It has received more than 50,000 visitors since it opened in 2008.

Yanqing has a distinctive cuisine. Many people in Beijing would mention the "heated plate tofu banquet" at Liugou Village in Yanqing. Statistics indicate that the village has received more than 1.9 million visitors since the fall of 2003.

Yanqing has published a book, about ancient Guichuan culture called *Cultural Relics in Yanqing*, and will soon publish another book called *Culture History in Yanqing*.

People in Yanqing have a tradition of going to the Dragon Boat Temple Fair.

In 2004, Yanqing hosted a Dragon Boat Race at the Guishui River, which fetched great attention from both inside and outside the county.

In May 2006, the first Yanqing Dragon Boat Culture Festival took place by the Guishui River. The festival has now been held four times. Last year 20 dragon boat teams competed at the event.

This year, Yanqing Dragon Boat Culture Festival will be held between June 13 and

16. There will be 20 events of seven categories. During the festival, the townships of Yanqing, Badaling, Jingzhuang and Qianjia will hold Dragon Boat activities according to their own customs.

The Badaling section of the Great Wall is the most famous site within Yanqing. During the past three years, the number of tourists has soared, rising from around 5 million to more than 6 million each year.

Yanqing is the only county with most of its area outside the Great Wall. Yanqing is also the hometown of the Great Wall for parts of the wall originating from five different eras, with different features exist in the one area making Yanqing a natural museum of the ancient Great Wall.

Beginning from 2006, Yanqing reinforced and repaired the section from No. 7 to No. 16 towers in the southern part and in 2008, it reinforced the section from number 13 to number 19 towers in the northern part. As a part of its efforts to protect the Great Wall, Yanqing government will sign a responsibility letter for protection of the Great Wall in Yanqing with the counties and townships along the Great Wall every year.

Escape the busy crowds of central Beijing

By ZHANG JIAWEI

Yanqing county, in the northwest of Beijing, allows you to find some space away from the city's crowds.

Unlike most of the scenic spots in the city's downtown area, you have the chance to enjoy a different experience by visiting the Great Wall, climbing the mountains, and breathing some fresh air.

Badaling Great Wall

Badaling is said to be the most important part of China's Great Wall, dating from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

With an average elevation of 1015 m, the Badaling section of the Great Wall is the front gate of the Juyong Pass, and a place of vital importance in China's military history. The place was where Li Zicheng, a farmer rebel leader, entered Beijing and brought about the fall of the Ming dynasty. It was also the place that allowed Empress Cixi of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) to escape during the Eight-Power Allied Forces' invasion of Beijing.

The wall is made up of stones, with the single longest one being 3.1 m and weighing between 1.5 and 1.7 tons, showing the real feat accomplished by people in ancient times when there were no machines.

The Badaling section of the Great Wall has 43 similar stone towers. Most are two-story buildings with the height, length and width all 10 m. Ancient soldiers could not only sleep there in the night, but could also use them to store their personal materials.

The opening times are 6:30 am to 7:00 pm in the summer and 7:00 am to 6:00 pm in the winter. The ticket price is 45 yuan from April 1 to October 31 and 40 yuan from November 1 to March 31. Students pay half price on presentation of their valid certificates. Electronic guides are also provided.

Longqing Valley

The Longqing Valley, reputed as the "Little Three Gorges," makes a good day trip.

A 119-sq-km reservoir allows visitors to take a boat to visit the valley in the summer and autumn. In the cold winter, the annual Ice Lantern Festival featuring myriad attractions, including outdoor ice lantern shows and an international ice and snow sculpture contest, are held.

The themes of each year's

Ice Lantern Festival are different, but the core attraction of the festival – a huge ice fall stretching from the top of a 70-m high dam – remains every year.

In the summer, the valley, where the average temperature is 6 degrees Celsius lower than that in Beijing's downtown area, is a good place for people to shield themselves from the heat.

The Jiguan Mountain (or Cockscomb Mountain), Shenxian Yard and Baihua Cave, provide opportunities for people to climb the mountains, play in the water and see different kinds of plants.

Gui River

The Gui River is considered one of the top among the major scenic spots in Yanqing.

Emperors of the Jin and Yuan dynasties were said to be addicted to the beauty of the river, and in the Ming and Qing dynasties the river became a popular place for poets, and praised the scenery in their poems.

With a length of eight km, people can float down the river in a small boat and enjoy the scenery along the way.

Drifting on the river is available only on weekends during mid April and mid October, and on May Day and China's National Day holidays.

The recommended visiting time of the Gui River is from May 1 to mid October.

Guyaju cave complex

A total of 147 caves on the sheer cliff face of a peaceful gorge are in Zhangshanying town of Yanqing, 90 km north of downtown Beijing.

There is no written record of the origin or history of the Guyaju caves, which are a honeycomb of rooms of different shapes and sizes outfitted with doors, windows, kitchens and closets carved from stone.

Some of the quadrangular rooms, ranging from 3 to 20 sq m in size, are interlinked with vertical passages, while horizontal passages connect others. Some of the "houses" feature two to three rooms, while others only have a single compartment.

Any characters or murals that might have once covered the walls of the dwellings have vanished, leaving historians to scratch their heads about who had lived here and when.

Some believe they were built in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), while others contend it was during the Liao Dynasty (916-1125).



The Longqing Valley makes a good day trip in the summer and autumn.

