

Happy Farms in China Report USD 4.7 Billion Revenue

According to Chinese local authorities, a new style of tourism dubbed "happy farms" which attracted 900–million–plus visitors in the year 2013, reported revenues of US\$4.7 billion for rural areas. In comparison, rural tourism received more than 720 million visitors in 2012 – according to the Chinese National Tourism Administration – bringing incomes of 216 billion yuan, roughly US\$ 35.68 billion.



Statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture reveal that some 1.5 million "Nongjiales" or happy farms currently operate across China, offering food and rural accommodation to visiting tourists who are especially urbanites escaping the busy life in their resident cities.

This latest rural tourism trend is also complemented by other facilities in China, like villages that attract tourists owing to their folkloric culture; agricultural parks and/or farms for resting.

This year, and for the first time ever, a cross–Straits rural tourism product–exhibition hall has opened in the Strait Travel Fair (STF). It opened its doors to the world on Sept 6 in the Chinese city of Xiamen, Fujian province, and covered 504 square–meters.

The new exhibition hall – dubbed “Rusticity, Culture and Leisure” – has a capacity for up to 100 booths for various cross–straits enterprises. Varieties of rural cuisines from both Mainland China and Taiwan – including rice, wine and plums native to Fujian province, as well as dry–cured duck native to Taiwan – will be displayed in the exhibition hall. Exhibitors from Taiwan are also bringing other special rural tourism products.

The latest cross–Straits tourism co–operation – which began mainly with personnel exchanges across the Taiwan Strait – is now transforming into an industrial co–operation between various players in both the Mainland and Taiwan. Rural tourism which according to the deputy director of the Fujian Provincial Tourism Bureau Zheng Weirong is a major task for the development of domestic tourism is one of the main themes of the 10th STF.



Zheng also added that rural tourism in Taiwan kicked off quite early and grew rapidly; it is a predecessor for Mainland China to learn creative thoughts, operational ideas as well as marketing operations.

A rural tourism round-table conference in the STF incorporating players from both sides of the Taiwan Strait – including 150 participators from the island – aims to offer a chance for communication between businessmen from both Mainland China and Taiwan.

According to Zheng, Fujian province also hopes to gain a lot of Taiwanese experience in management and development as well as strengthen cross-Straits co-operation in the budding rural tourism industry. This will help conduct an effective and all-round co-operation and also promote rural tourism in Fujian province.

Xiamen Tian Zhu Company – a pioneer in the rural tourism industry in Xiamen – has from 2005 on transformed the Tian Zhu mountain into a forest-park composing of a plantation of Moringa oleifera trees; a vanilla garden as well as beautiful agricultural sight-seeing site. Prior to this, the mountain was a barren waste-land in the Haicang district of Xiamen.



From Taiwanese experts, the Tian Zhu Company has learned why rural tourism is not about food and leisure only but also about special products, as well as exclusive gifts, that tourists can take away after visiting.

Most customers of the Tian Zhu Company today are Xiamen locals, with rural tourism projected to occupy a big chunk of the market in the future since ecology is very crucial for the development of Xiamen. According to the vice president of the Tian Zhu Company Sun Xianming, rural tourism is a good way of developing this ecology.

Sun also added that rural tourism companies require professional communication and interaction more than they need product displays.

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