



Huguangyan National Geopark's lake was once a volcano caldera.

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# Zhanjiang's allure as holiday hotspot

Historic architecture, beaches, tropical islands and warm welcome

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## HOW TO GO

**By air:** Zhanjiang has an airport with direct flights to and from Hong Kong and Beijing as well as other cities in China.

**By road:** A five-hour drive from Guangzhou, the provincial capital.

Zhanjiang, the coastal city in the southwest of Guangdong, is on track to become the "Miami of the Orient", according to a top city official.

The city boasts a dozen beaches including one that stretches for 28 kilometers.

"We want foreign tourists to come for holidays and enjoy the nature and the tranquility of our historical city," said Mayor Wang Zhongbing.

Direct flights link the city to Hong Kong and Beijing and it is about a five-hour drive from Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province.

Businesses interested in the city are encouraged to contact Zhanjiang's bureau of foreign trade and economic cooperation, Wang said.

There were several attractions in Zhanjiang and it was common to see people jogging and families walking their dogs along the seaside in the evenings.

In the downtown area there are two beaches where people relax and swim.

Xuwen, a county in Zhanjiang at the southern tip of the Chinese mainland, is home to China's largest area and variety of coral reefs on the continental shelf.

The coral reef reserve covers about 15,000 hectares and boasts 82 varieties. Visitors can see the vast expanse of colorful coral in the shallows,

which emerges from the water when the tide ebbs.

Boats run from the city to five islands around Zhanjiang Bay, which makes island hopping a popular choice for visitors.

The longest beach in China, which is 28 km, is on Donghai, which is the largest of the five islands. Indo-Pacific humpbacked dolphins can be seen playing in the sea near one of the island's villages.

Nansan Island, the second largest of the five, boasts a white sandy beach, while Nanping Island is uninhabited and has a seven-km-long beach.

Of the remaining two islands, one is covered in forests, while the other is China's largest volcanic island. Visitors can stroll along Nanzhou Island's beach and see volcanic rocks that have been molded into interesting shapes by waves. The island is also home to one of the world's two crystal mirror lighthouses, which was built by the French in 1899.

Part of Zhanjiang was known as Kwangchowwan, which is literally translated as the Bay of Guangzhou, although the city is about five hours



The dragon dance, also called the "human dragon", is a popular cultural tradition from Zhanjiang.

drive from the provincial capital.

The name, also spelled Kwangchowwan, was adopted when a 518-sq-km area of land and some of its surrounding sea was leased by the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) to France in 1899.

Kwangchowwan was occupied by the Japanese during World War II (1937-45) and returned to China when the war ended in 1945. It was renamed Zhanjiang in the same year.

Downtown Zhanjiang is dotted with colonial-age buildings and those which were built in the 1920s and 1940s and combine Western and

Chinese architectural styles.

These include a Catholic church built in 1902, which is still used for religious services, the administrative office complex of Kwangchowwan's former French rulers, which was completed in 1903, and the building of the former Bank of Indochina, completed in 1926.

The city government has conservation orders on the historical buildings. The Kwangchowwan administrative office complex is a cultural remain on the provincial-level list for protection and is used as a venue for regular art exhibitions.

The city's surrounding Leizhou Peninsula also offers sites of interest. Villages on the peninsula have more than 10,000 ancient stone sculptures of dogs, which are traditionally worshipped in the area. Some of the sculptures can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC).

A highlight of Zhanjiang is the Huguangyan Geopark, the world's largest Maar volcanic lake, which was formed 140,000 to 160,000 years ago.

"Come to Zhanjiang, and you will be able to explore the history of China, the world and the nature," said mayor Wang.

# In search of foreign expertise

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Foreign engineers, urban planners, teachers and agro-scientists are on the top of the recruitment list in Zhanjiang, said Mayor Wang Zhongbing, who will lead a delegation to meet businesses and institutions in Germany in late June.

"Zhanjiang is undergoing rapid industrialization and there is a serious lack of skilled and experienced professionals," said Wang.

"Foreign talent, including those who have retired, will find their skills and experience greatly needed in Zhanjiang," he said.

"We appreciate that they are devoted to their professions and they have much experience — even life-long for some — and advanced skills."

Engineers are wanted for several giant projects in addition to the traditional marine and electronic appliance industries.

A 50 billion yuan (\$8 billion) iron and steel facility under construction in Zhanjiang by Baosteel, the country's largest steel producer, is expected to be completed in Sept 2015.



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MAYOR

Another massive project, the petrochemical joint venture between Sinopec and Kuwait Petroleum Corp, will be operational by 2016. An ethylene facility — a part of the joint venture — will follow in 2017.

Zhanjiang is also expanding its deepwater harbor, one of the most important along China's southern coast. Urban planners are needed because the city is expanding and many infrastructure projects are under way.

"We are having more and more high buildings but we want to stress the characteristics of a southern Chinese city," said the mayor.

The many colleges, schools and vocational schools are seeking teachers from abroad. The number and size of educational institutions rank second only to the provincial capital Guangzhou.

As there is more investment in sub-tropical and tropical agriculture, the city is looking for agro-scientists. The city has large plantations of sugar cane, pineapple and other crops in its suburbs and on nearby islands.

"Foreigners will find their life pleasant and their work fruitful in Zhanjiang," said Wang.

# Ecological focus for Haidong New District

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Building an ecological park and protecting wetlands and mangrove forests will be top priorities when a new urban area, called Haidong New District, is built in Zhanjiang, on China's southern coast.

Wang Zhongbing, mayor of the Guangdong city, said: "What we want is a place that can be beautiful in the following centuries, so ecology is the first thing to be considered."

Haidong is expected to be a new growth engine for Guangdong, the province that boosted China's rapid development since reforms and opening-up policies started in 1978.

The new district has a planned area of 228 sq km, including 180 sq km of land and 48 sq km of sea. It will boast a 120-km coast including a long, sandy beach.

A river will run across the new district and 11 major roads, including a 26-km-long avenue, are being built. A total of 21 projects, worth 21.3 billion yuan (\$3.4 billion), have started, most of which are infrastructure based.

"Public service facilities are our top priority. A school, a hospital, a public service center and a sports center are under construction," said Wang.

The sports center consists of four shell-shaped white buildings, including a main stadium, a swimming and diving center, a soccer field and a stadium with basketball and tennis courts.

Wang stressed the importance of urban planning in the construction of the new district. He said his government borrowed experience from ecologically successful cities in the world for the project.

"There are many ecological communities on our earth. For example,



Wang Zhongbing, mayor of Zhanjiang

Portland of the United States has rivers crisscrossing it. We are borrowing advanced experience in the building of Haidong and will have a Sino-US ecological exemplary zone," he said.

"The government of such a beautiful place as Zhanjiang can make great achievements in the building of an ecological city," he said.

Ecological cities demand sophisticated transport networks and public transportation is being developed as a priority in the new district, he said.

"In ecologically successful cities, public transportation takes up as much as 60 percent of the total transportation volume," said the mayor.

As well as the on-land network plans for an underground system are underway.

The government said it is exploring opportunities to cooperate with foreign companies and institutions on the treatment of garbage and sewage.

The government is building an underground system to transport water, electricity, gas, sewage and communication facilities.

The authority hopes this method will be more convenient and will avoid ruining the sea view.

"An ecological city can never be self-claimed. It has to be that people

who come and live here heartily feel that it is good for life," said Wang.

Cui Qing, head of Potou district, where Haidong will be located, said: "Our administration is devoted to building a solid foundation. When there is good infrastructure and great environment, high-quality businesses will naturally arrive."

The new district has welcomed businesses in e-commerce, electronic appliances, IT, creativity, modern services, tourism and emerging industries such as marine biomedicine and new materials.

"We also welcome a packaged industry cluster. For example, if a large company, like an automaker, wants to make a major investment, the government can map out a certain area for the company, and the company can have its own blueprint," said Cui.

"Our bottom line is that the businesses are all environmentally friendly," she said.



Zhanjiang Bay Bridge is among the longest cable-stayed bridges in the world.