

SHANGHAI NOW

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People enjoy a leisurely time along the Suzhou Creek — the mother river of Shanghai. Cruises will resume on the iconic creek in September, connecting several cultural and tourist attractions. — CFP

Suzhou Creek cruises to resume as city maps out recovery plan

Hu Min

CRUISES will resume on the Suzhou Creek, known as the mother river of the city, in September, connecting several cultural and tourist attractions.

Fang Shizhong, director of the Shanghai Administration of Culture and Tourism, mapped out the city's post-pandemic cultural and tourism development blueprint in a radio program this week.

"We plan to create a 'floating parlor on water' by launching this service," said Fang, adding the cruises will mainly serve group tourists at first and then open to individuals.

"The cruises will enable people

to appreciate the scenery along the creek and take a stroll at a number of attractions onshore," Fang stated.

"Based on our research, there are 205 venues with cultural and tourist value along the creek."

The Sihang Warehouse Battle Memorial, the Zhapu Road Bridge, Tian An 1000 Trees, the Fuxin Flour Mill and the former site of the Shanghai Brewery are on the list.

"The cruise will allow passengers to not only appreciate the city's enchanting scenery, but also savor its history, culture and art," said Fang.

Digital coupons are also being distributed in the city to boost the cultural and tourism industry. And

a three-year metaverse development plan will be released soon to help the sector.

New tourism programs focused on the five "new cities," industrial attractions, ancient towns and villages are being developed, and tours involving the Huangpu River, the Suzhou Creek and historic buildings are being upgraded.

"Safety and quality have become the priority under the impact of COVID-19," Fang noted. "And people are turning to destinations near their homes. Moreover, people are pursuing immersive tourism and cultural experiences blending the virtual and the real."

Amid pandemic, 'safe' Xinjiang sees tourism boom

Ke Jiayun

WHILE other provinces in China are still facing unprecedented changes brought by COVID-19, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region has become a popular destination for domestic travelers.

Xinjiang is known for its grand geographical views and tasty specialties. Since it has had no COVID-19 infections for more than two months, the region has loosened its quarantine policies and is dubbed a "tourism-friendly" area amid the pandemic.

People who haven't taken a journey for a long time for fear of an outbreak see Xinjiang as an ideal place and have flocked to it.

On online travel agency Trip.com, the price of flights from Shanghai to Urumqi in July and August ranges from 900 to 1,200 yuan (US\$133-178). An 8-day package tour in northern Xinjiang costs nearly 30,000 yuan.

The *minsu*, or bed-and-breakfast homestays, on some tourism sites charge more than 1,000 yuan a night.

According to the latest summer vacation tourism report released by Trip, in June, Xinjiang package tour bookings increased by 357 percent from May, while those for upscale hotels rose by nearly 90 percent.

Guangdong residents booked the most tours to Xinjiang, the report said.

For people in Xinjiang, the Corban Festival holiday, or Eid al-Adha, is one of the most important celebrations for Muslims. This year it ran from July 9 to 13.

During this period, many tourist attractions in Xinjiang saw a surge in visitors.

On July 9, the Tianchi Lake scenic spot received 16,655 visitors, 46 percent higher than last year.

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