

# The Sustainable Development of Tourism in Lijiang

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**Abstract:** Lijiang is a famous tourism destination. In recent years, the tourist industry in Lijiang has developed rapidly, and has brought improvements to the quality of life of the local residents. However, the scale of tourism has also resulted in environmental degradation such as the retreat of the iceberg of Yulong Snow Mountain. This paper analyzes the problems of tourism development in Lijiang. The author suggests that Lijiang's tourism is not sustainable under current conditions and that there is the danger that the natural environment will be destroyed. Lijiang has to change its present tourism development strategy to one that will be more sustainable over the long-term. This paper provides policy suggestions for an alternative development path for Lijiang.

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## 1. Outline of Tourism Development in Lijiang County

Lijiang county is located in north-western of Yunnan province in P. R. China, and it adjacent to Sichuan province and Dali region and Diqing region. Its area is 7425 square kilometers, and there is 92.74 percent area which altitude is about 2000 meters above sea level. Yulong mountainous region is located in middle of Lijiang county, whose altitude is about 5000 meters, and it is an extremely important water and mountain ecological region for Lijiang county. Laojun mountainous region is second highest in Lijiang, which is about 3000 meters and also is important ecological region for Lijiang. The topography of Lijiang shows high mountainous in middle and deep gorge surrounding. There are several climate types,

including subtropics, temperate zone, and frigid zone.

Lijiang is a beautiful shining jewel and famous tour place in China. It has many beautiful landscapes and very special culture. The major sceneries are:

Yulong(Jade Dragon) Snow Mountain. It is about fifteen kilometers from the ancient city of Lijiang, a modern maritime glacier in the southernmost of northern latitude. Shanzidou, the main peak of the mountain, looks like a gigantic dragon, clad in white snow all the year round at an altitude of 5596 meters above sea level. Yulong snow mountain is an important ecosystem in northwest of Yunnan. It has more than 50 species of azalea, 60 kinds of primroses, eight species of poppies and 20 lilies, four species of peonies, five camellias, 50 species of rough gentian, and six kind of flowering crabapple. It is also a sanctuary for animals, and many of them are rare animals who live at different temperature levels, such as the wild ass, the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey, the lesser panda, the forest musk deer, the clouded leopard, the blood pheasant, the silver pheasant, and the spotted, yellowish civet cat.

First Bend of Yangtze River. It is located at Shigu town which is 70 kilometers from the ancient city of Lijiang. There, Yangtze river, following a northwest course, plunges head on into a high and cragged cliff, takes a sharp U-turn, and changes its course in a northeast direction.

Hutiao(Tiger Leaping) Gorge. It with a drop of 3000 meters is believed to be the world's deepest canyon. The name of the gorge is attributed to the legend that a tiger had once jumped across the gorge at its narrowest section 30 meters in width.

Lijiang county is a minority autonomous district. In 2002, the total population of the county is about 351 thousands, and 58.6 percent is Naxi nation, and 24.43 percent is other minority, and just 16.97 percent is Han nation. Lijiang county is unique Naxi autonomous county in China.

The Naxis are a people with a long history and a rich cultural heritage. They are the descendants of the Shiqiang, an ancient nomadic people who dwelt in the northwestern mountainous of China. The ancient Naxis spoke Tibeto-Burman language and believed special religion---the primitive Dongba, which had neither systematic doctrine and temple nor priesthood. Their capital was Dayan---the ancient city of Lijiang present. Naxis created brilliant culture such as “ Dongba culture” , “ Naxi classical music”, and special language and building style.

Dongba culture originated from primary Naxi religion, and believes in super natural gods and their rule over the world. It includes Dongba scriptures and Dongba painting. Dongba scriptures are a series of more than 20,000 books written in Naxi pictographs with more 2000 hieroglyphs. It is reputed as the encyclopedia of ancient times of Naxi nation. “ Dongba scroll painting” and “art of Dongba painting” are invaluable treasures in the ethnic gallery.

Naxi classical music has been passed down as “musical legacy of Yuan Dynasty”. Some

western experts believe that they are “typical Chinese classical music” and “symphonies of Chinese style”.

The ancient city of Lijiang is found in Dayan town, a largely Naxi settlement first built during Southern Song Dynasty eight centuries ago. It has retained a historic townscape of high quality and authenticity. Its architecture is noteworthy for the blending of elements from several cultures that come together over many centuries. It also possesses an ancient water-supply system of great complexity and ingenuity that still functions effectively today. In 1997, the UNESCO put the ancient city of Lijiang on a list of the world’s major cultural heritages.

Beautiful landscape and unique Naxi culture provide abundant tour resources for Lijiang, and attract thousand and thousand tourist to visit there. The tourism of Lijiang started in late of 1980s, and it developed extremely fast. In 1991, total population of tourist was only 198.73 thousands; and the tourists increased into 700 thousands and the tourism income was 0.16 billion RMB in 1995. There were eight hotels, nine tour agencies that time. In 2002, there are 3,270 thousands of tourists to come in Lijiang, including 120 thousands foreigner and 3,150 thousands Chinese; there are 2.5 billions RMB of the tour income, including 36,020 thousands USD of the foreign tour income and 2.1 billions RMB of China domestic tour income. There are 64 hotels, 32 tour agencies, 14 tour companies, 6 tour automobile companies, 23 tour restaurants, 298 hostels present. It includes 1 five star hotel, 4 four star hotel, 12 three star hotel, 33 two star hotel. Lijiang has been as main tour place of both Yunnan province and China. It has 22 tour districts or sceneries, including 1 four A class tour district ---Yulong snow mountain, 1 three A class tour district---Black dragon pool park, 2 two A class tour district---Yushui village and Wenbi mountain. In 2002, the tourists who visit Lijiang are about 11.38 percent of total tourist population of Yunnan province.

Table 1. Annual Total Population of Tourist in Lijiang County

Annual	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Tourist(ten thousands)	19.87	30.25	25.0	42.5	70.0	89.19	135.0	153.0
Annual	1999	2000	2001	2002				
Tourist(ten thousands)	173.3	258.0	290.0	327.0				

The tourism development is changing the economic structure of Lijiang and improves largely the life of local resident. In late of 1980s, the major industry in Lijiang was agriculture and the local residents was very poor, and each person GDP only was about 510 RMB, and there was about 26,000 thousands RMB of public income. In 2002, the tourism and third industry is as major industry, and its income is 54.32 percent of GDP; there are 12 thousands employee to work directly for the tourism and 40 thousands employee to work indirectly for the tourism; each person GDP increase into 4867RMB, and the public income of Lijiang county increase into 100,070 thousands RMB.

## 2. Problems of Tourism Development in Lijiang

Generally, there are four major problems to influence the sustainability of Lijiang tourism development.

(1) Tour Resources Exploitation and Its Protection.

Lijiang county has a large number of tour resources and they are able to be divided into five kinds of tour district such as Yulong snow mountain tour district, Lijiang ancient city tour district, Yangzi river tour district, Laojun mountain tour district and Liming special landforms tour district. It is rationality that Lijiang local government has focused on developing both districts of Yulong snow mountain and Lijiang ancient city prior to other districts since 1996, according to quality of tour resources in Lijiang, because the twine are very more famous than the other. Thanks to selecting the strategy of tourism development accurately, it promotes Lijiang tourism developing quickly recent years. But thousands of tourists swarming up Yulong snow mountain has result in severe environmental problem. Under global climate warming and tourism developing, Yulong mountain glacier has already been observed to be in rapid retreat. From 1982 to 2001, Yulong White Water number 1 glacier retreated about 150 meters. Lijiang Prefecture, located around 27 degree north latitude and 100 degree east longitude, depend on the glacier as a natural reservoir for its water supply. In Lijiang, the water supply for more than 1.1 million people depends on the summer melt from the glacier, and its declining will be possible to endanger the tourism and agriculture, meanwhile it being possible to influence other economic activities and local resident life in Lijiang.

On the other hand, thousands of tourists concentrated on Dayan town---the capital of Lijiang county, result in Dayan town swelling quickly and more modernization. In the town, the proportion of Han nation population, who are employers or employees for chasing the modernization, increases very fast. It is changing the traditional style of Dayan town---ancient Naxi nation city. I am afraid that it will be possible to change unique Naxi culture in future.

(2) Rural Development Corresponding with Tourism Development.

In Lijiang, the agriculture is still traditional industry. Most of farmer cultivate land for grain and get very low income. How to promote the farmer's welfare through tourism development, is a very important issue in the case of Lijiang. Because majority of Naxi population are local farmers, the farmer's development means improvement of minority's condition. For this reason, it is necessary to let agriculture development correspond with tourism development so that more people are able to enjoy the benefit of tourism and support its development such as protecting tour resources or scenery. This issue includes two kinds of economic activities. Firstly, it asks to develop the village tour activities such as tour of folk custom at Naxi villages in countryside. Recently, Lijiang government constructed a few of Naxi villages of folk custom. One of them calls Huangsang Folk Custom Village, which is located near Dayan town and hosted 66 thousand of tourists in 2002, which showed its potential benefit. But its scale is very small and most of another villages of Lijiang don't have the chance to develop their folk custom tour. Secondly, the issue

requests that agriculture should be a landscape agriculture, which has more trees, flowers and fruits instead of grain, so that tourists are able to enjoy both scenery and diverse fruits in their touring. In addition, the landscape agriculture will enhance natural tour scenery and will be better to protect natural tour resources, especially it being necessary for the villages which are far from Dayan town but next to famous natural tour district such as Yulong mountain, Laojun mountain and Liming district. It will be possible to go ahead agriculture modernization through the landscape agriculture for these villages. Unfortunately, it has been nothing for landscape agriculture until present in Lijiang.

(3) Manufactures Development Corresponding with Tourism Development.

In Lijiang, the major manufactures are hydroelectric power, building material, wood manufacturing, leather manufacturing, food manufacturing and tour souvenir manufacturing. It is apparently that many manufactures such as wood manufacturing, building manufacturing, are badly for tour scenery protection. It is very necessary to put the manufactures development corresponding with tourism and change the structure of manufactures, and should stop wood manufacturing and building material manufacturing and develop mainly tour souvenir manufacturing, food & beverage manufacturing, and medicine industry, so that the manufactures will be able to promote the tourism development instead of standing in the way of the tourism's. Generally, the hydroelectric power industry doesn't conflict with the tourism, but it needs to be planed carefully and to be corresponded with the tourism so that it won't damage the tour resources or sceneries. In addition, I think Lijiang should take its advantage of tour and develop a few of information industry so that it will be able to get more industry benefit from the tourism but not damage the environment and the tourism.

(4) Public Income and Sustainable Development of Tourism Investment.

Tourism needs a large number of infrastructures, such as transportation, electric power, water supply and environmental infrastructure, to support its development. These infrastructures mainly are invested by government until present. Therefore, it is necessary that the public income increases with the tourism development. But in Lijiang, the public income from the tourism only narrows down to the company tax, and it is not enough obviously for the tourism infrastructure investment, which result in big debt of Lijiang local government. For example, in 1978, when the tourism didn't develop in Lijiang, the public income was 6.42 millions RMB and the public payment was 6.15 millions RMB, and the government wasn't deficit; but in 1990, when the tourism started to develop, the government begun to have 17.45 millions RMB of deficit, and the deficit has increased quickly with the tourism development since that time and it arrived 252.01 millions RMB in 2002. Obviously, the government won't afford so much large debt to support the tourism development for long time. We have to search more ways of getting public income so that it can ensure the demand of the tourism infrastructure construction. Just that, the tourism of Lijiang will be possible to develop sustainable.

3. Suggestions and Policies

Firstly, we have to advocate the idea of sustainable development in Lijiang tourism and are faced earnestly with the problems of tourism development. I think it is necessary below:

---- to make sustainable development planning of Lijiang tourism, which includes tour resources exploitation and protection, tourism regulation, tourism tax and public investment, tourism infrastructure construction, and so on. For this reason, it is very necessary to do a big research project on “Impacts of Economic Development and Environmental Change on Regional Sustainability and Policy Response in Yunnan Lijiang—Yulong Mountain Region”. But it needs large money to support this project, so it is difficult for Lijiang government and Yunnan provincial government to do that. If any international organization like to support the research project, it will be wonderful for Naxi people and Lijiang government. The conclusion of this research project will be base of sustainable development of Lijiang tourism, which will have to promote the economic growth and human welfare improvement in Lijiang.

---- to enlarge propagation of sustainable development of tourism so that both leaders and local residents understand it and act consciously according to the sustainable development. It include: training leaders, managers, staffs and farmers; enforcing severe regulation of both tourism and environmental protection; enhancing the investment of both tourism infrastructures and new tour scenery district so that it will be able to allocate oversize tourist in Yulong snow mountain and Lijiang ancient city and release their environmental pressure; changing the structure of Lijiang manufacture and protecting the tour resources, and so on.

--- to research property right system of tour resources and establish new law system which based on this property right system. These systems will distinct everyone’s duty and right to tour resources and benefit tour resources protection.

Secondly, the government should establish some mechanism to encourage the farmers developing both tour of rural folk custom and landscape agriculture, by which to promote modernization of agriculture and farmer’s welfare improvement. Therefore, the government has to give the financial support to the farmer, which will be helpful to the farmer changing their investment into new business; and to establish some funds, which to encourage the technicians going into the rural area for instruction; and to construct high quality roads and bus lines for these villages so that it will be more convenient traveling. If the farmers can get more benefit through tourism development, they will have more interesting to protect the tour resources and to support the policies of sustainable development of tourism. Of course, it is also very important to train the farmers so that it can enhance level of farmer’s education and their elaboration competency. In a word, Lijiang government should enforce a balanceable development strategy in both rural and city so that everyone will be able to get the most benefit through the tourism sustainable development.

Thirdly, the government needs to explore some new ways of financing money for the tourism development except tax and loan so that it can decrease the deficit or the debt of government. For example, the government should establish a fund of tourism development through sharing the tour income with the tour companies; and should put on sale of tourism bond or lottery ticket so that it can attract companies and individual investing the tourism and decreasing the government’s payment; and should enforce item finance model to exploit tour resources & new tour spot and district or to construct tour infrastructures so that the tourism development

will be based on marketability operation or conduction and will decrease government's intervention; and should explore the possibility to impose tour resources tax so that it extends the scale of public income and balance the budget of local government. In short, it is necessary to decrease the deficit or debt of government for sustainable development of tourism, and the basic strategy for this goal is to increase marketability of tourism construction. For this reason, reforming administrant model of tourism is necessary for Lijiang government.

#### 4. Conclusion

Lijiang is a famous tour palace in the world and has abundant tour resources. Recent years, its tourism develops very fast and it results in some environmental and economic problems, which damages sustainable development of its tourism. Therefore, it is very necessary for Lijiang to enforce sustainable development strategy of the tourism, and it includes: making sustainable development planning; enforcing severe regulation of tour resources protection; promoting balanceable development of both rural and city; reforming administration model and rules; adjusting the structure of manufactures; training local people, and so on. But it has been a long way to go for the goal of sustainable development in the case of Lijiang. It is very nice if any international organization or expert like to help Naxi people and Lijiang government in sustainable development of Lijiang's tourism.