

Zigong Geopark of China: An Established Geotourism Destination

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Zigong Global Geopark, China

Zigong is located in the southern part of Sichuan Province, P.R.China. It is a city originated from the well-salt industry. As early as about 2,000 years ago (the East Han Dynasty, China), Zigong began its well-salt production, a lot of precious drilling, pircking-up brine, decocting salt tools have been created and completely preserved, as well as numerous well-salt production fields and sites, old towns, guildhalls and stockaded castles remained.

In 1915, Prof. Geoge D. Louderback from United States found a dinosaur tooth and thighbone in the side of Xushui River, Rongxian County, which opened the door of Zigong dinosaur lagerstätte. Up until now, about 200 vertebrate fossil sites have been discovered in Zigong area, 26 dinosaur species belonging to 21 genera have been described. Besides, the colorful lantern of Zigong, one of essential part in the well-salt industry culture with a history of over 800 years, assembles the bests of Chinese lantern culture, which is noted as the first lantern in the world. With its global significant unique geoheritages and specific culture and history, Zigong has been accepted as GGN member in Feb, 2008. The establishment of Zigong Geopark provides an important tourist destination here, hence, the tourism in the geopark become a key supporting industry for local social and economic sustainable development.

Since 2008, Zigong Geopark paid more attention to the construction for geotourism destination, local funds have been to build express ways and freeways, special bus routes have been set up for tourists. There are 22 traffic guide boards on the main crossroad leading to the geoheritage sites and also well advertise for the geopark. Three world-class distinct museums (Zigong Dinosaur Museum, Zigong Museum of Well-salt Industry History and China Colourful Lantern Museum) have been renovated, including four geopark visitor centers in the geopark. Cooperated with travel agencies, local hotels and restaurants, the geopark design several geotourism routes for visitors, and design questionnaire on visitors' satisfaction levels in order to analyze related information and made corresponding changes according to their suggestions. During the past years, the visitor number and tourism income of Zigong Geopark have been rapidly increased, the geopark has stimulated the optimization and upgrade of the local industry structure, and realized the rapid increase of economic, environmental and social benefits, as strongly promoted the social and economic development.