



CHINA • YUNNAN



Belt and Road

Driving to Laos and Thailand increasingly popular among Chinese tourists

Li Yujie and
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With the development of Kunming-Bangkok Highway, China-Laos-Thailand trilateral ties and the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, driving to Laos and Thailand for vacations is becoming more and more popular among Chinese tourists. Statistics show that 735,722 outbound tourists and 257,217 private vehicles entered Laos via the Mohan land port between 2011 and 2015, up 131% and 430.2%, respectively, compared with the previous five years.

In early December 2015, the inspection hall at the Mohan land port had already been filled with outbound tourists. "It's the low season with far less self-driving tourists, compared with the Chinese New Year holiday, during which we had handled 678 vehicles on the first day alone." An official from Mohan Office of Mengla Transport



An international bus from Kunming to Luang Prabang is entering Boten after custom clearance.
Photo by Lei Tongsu

Authorities said that tourists can get permits to drive abroad by producing their passports, vehicle registration documents and driving licenses.

Ai Wenhan, who was applying for a permit said, "I'm driving with a couple of friends. We are heading for Chiang Khong of Thailand via the Houei Xai Bridge. It's easy to complete the clearance now. The

Kunming-Bangkok Highway is quite scenic. We would drive to neighboring countries every year to experience exotic lifestyles." Ai Handan, waiting nearby, also said that he was going to visit relatives abroad and he would drive to drop by every now and then as it's so convenient.

An official from the Mengla Transport Administration told

the reporter that more and more Chinese choose to drive into Laos and Thailand, and they can get overseas driving permits quickly if all their documents are ready. During high seasons, such as over the Chinese New Year and Songkran holidays, there are additional staff to help out at more service windows. The port also contacts with travel agencies to collect information of tourists and their vehicles in advance so as to further reduce their waiting time. Vehicles of teams can apply for travel permits by making appointments in advance. Chinese cars can travel throughout Laos after getting such permit and buying the Lao third party liability insurance. In addition, office hours of the port also extended from 8:30-17:30 to 8:30-21:30. Annual and quarterly meetings are held by transport authorities of both countries under a working mechanism to further coordinate and facilitate customs clearance.

Connectivity

Development of Yunnan's cross-border cooperation zones bears fruit

Luo Rongchan
and Han Chengyuan

Since 2015, Yunnan's three cross-border economic cooperation zones (Mohan-Boten, Hekou-Lao Cai and Ruili-Muse) have been developing in full swing as important platforms in boosting Yunnan's economic growth.

At present, the overall plan for the development of the Mohan-Boten Economic Cooperation Zone was officially signed and exchanged by the two sides. It is taking effect as Yunnan provincial government and Chinese Ministry of Commerce jointly submitted a report to the State Council for the establishment of this cross-border economic cooperation zone. Late last year, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture completed drafting the implementation plan of the Chinese part.

Meanwhile, Chinese Ministry of Commerce and Vietnamese Ministry of Industry and Trade are signing the overall plan for the development of the Hekou-Lao Cai Economic Cooperation Zone. Last year, preliminary consensus had been achieved on advancing the development of the Ruili-Muse cooperation zone during the first meeting of the Joint Working Group formed by the Yunnan authorities and Myanmar Ministry of Commerce.

Economy

Construction of Saysettha Development Zone speeding up

Luo Rongchan

Reporters learned from the Yunnan Provincial Department of Commerce that construction and investment interest in the Saysettha Development Zone in Vientiane, Laos, have both seen major breakthroughs recently.

The Saysettha Development Zone is situated in Saysettha and Saythany counties in northeast Vientiane, Laos. Construction was implemented by Yunnan Overseas Development Co., Ltd., and undertaken by Lao-China Joint Venture Investment Co., Ltd., which was jointly established by Yunnan Overseas Development Co., Ltd. and the Vientiane Municipal Government. It takes a comprehensive development approach of

"building an industrial park and a new city proper". This strategy includes the building of dedicated divisions of processing bases of agricultural and light industrial products for export, as well as a services and logistics center, a bonded zone, a modern business district and a leisure and tourism area.

Currently, Entrance Road 1, a zone entrance and office buildings have been completed with water, electricity supplies, communications and other facilities in place. Chinese and Lao management staff officially moved in November 2013. The 10,000 square-meter standardized plant has been basically completed.

Twelve companies, in the fields of energy and chemical industry,

machinery leasing and warehousing, logistics and transportation, have signed agreements to join the zone with an estimated total investment of about 260 million USD. Chinese agricultural enterprise New Hope Group's Lao subsidiary also joined. Its new livestock feed factory with a 200,000-ton annual capacity has been completed and put into operation.

Yunnan Construction Engineering Group has signed an agreement with the Kunming High-Tech Development Zone on the joint development of Saysettha Development Zone, attracting investment from industries such as garment manufacturing, machinery processing, trade-based logistics, bio-pharmaceuticals and e-commerce.



A park featuring a 400-meter-wide manmade waterfall was finished and opened to public for free in Kunming recently.
Lin Yiguang



At an awarding ceremony on January 9, a total of 19 Kunming-based business entities were entitled as the best ones by GoKunming.com, an influential English website in Kunming. The awarded businesses fall into ten categories including restaurants, cafes, bars and other venues.

Wang Shixue and Wang Jing

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