

## CHINA

Visitors admire a stone statue at the Yungang Grottoes in Datong, Shanxi province. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



# Shanxi's cultural heritage remains timeless

Province's 28,000 ancient buildings attract 300 million visits in first three-quarters this year

By ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan and CHEN LIANG

In the heart of northern China lies Shanxi province, one of the cradles of Chinese civilization. In recent years, Shanxi has been actively integrating its rich cultural heritage with tourism, driving high-quality development across various sectors.

The province boasts unparalleled cultural and tourism resources, with it being described by many as an open-air museum, home to nearly 28,000 ancient buildings. With 531 cultural heritage sites under State protection, Shanxi tops all other Chinese provinces.

In the first three quarters of this year, Shanxi received 318 million domestic visits, marking a 13.8 percent increase from the same period last year.

Tourism revenue soared to 276 billion yuan (\$38.1 billion), up 25.9 percent. The weeklong National Day holiday also saw a significant surge in domestic tourists compared to the previous year.

On Aug 20, the Chinese video game *Black Myth: Wukong* was released, captivating gamers worldwide. Of the 36 setting locations in the game, 27 are in Shanxi, featuring elements from the province's grottoes, temples, ancient buildings, sculptures and murals.

Wang Aiqin, director of the Shanxi Department of Culture and Tourism, said that the game's dedication to traditional Chinese culture aligns perfectly with Shanxi's rich cultural resources. She said Shanxi has capitalized on the popularity of the game, with the province being widely discussed online, and an increase in tourist numbers and revenue.

According to Wang, Shanxi is focused on upgrading its three UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites: Pingyao Ancient City, Mount Wutai and the Yungang Grottoes.

The province is enhancing infrastructure, diversifying tourism offerings and improving services. It has also completed the longest tourism highway network in the country, spanning 13,000 kilometers and connecting 113 counties and 5,630 villages.

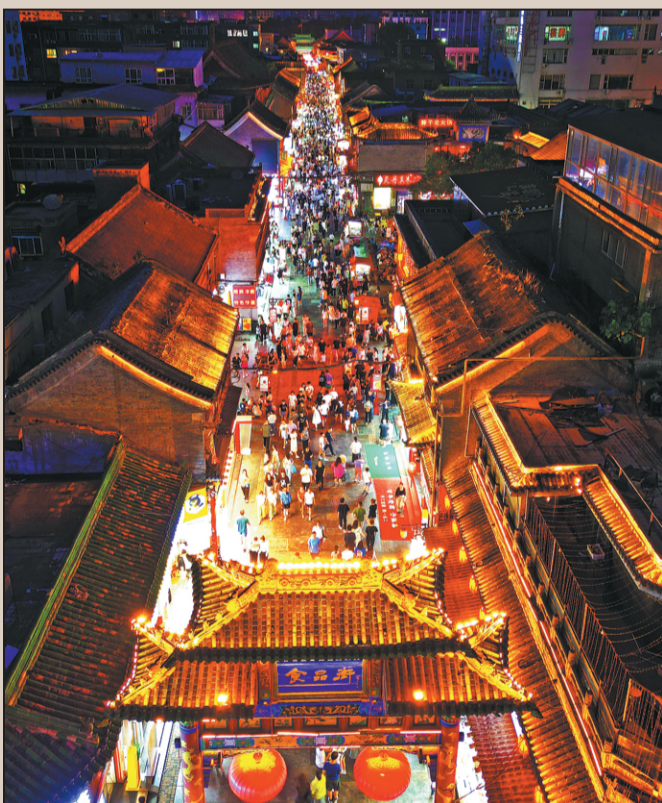
Shanxi is also a region with rich Red tourism resources. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), it was the center of resistance in North China, home to the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army and its main divisions.

Shanxi is harnessing comprehensive reforms to stabilize its economic base and develop new productive forces tailored to local conditions, Wang said.

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Tourists take photos of painted sculptures at Guanyin Temple in Changzhi, Shanxi.



A pedestrian street lined with eateries bustles at night in Taiyuan, Shanxi.



Tourists ride on a donkey in front of the Hukou Waterfall on the Yellow River in Jixian county.



A visitor takes a selfie with an effigy of Wukong from the video game, *Black Myth: Wukong*, in Taiyuan.



**Left:** Tourists visit the Xuankong (Hanging) Temple in Hunyuan county, Shanxi. **Right:** Visitors descend a stairway leading to the wall of Pingyao Ancient City.

