



Passengers and train attendants pose for a photo at the first train service of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang High-Speed Railway on Monday.
PHOTOS BY WU DONGJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

High-speed railway to usher in new era of opening-up

Crucial channel links the Greater Bay Area, Hainan Free Trade Port and Beibu Gulf city cluster

By YUAN SHENGGAO

On Monday, the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang High-Speed Railway officially opened. This steel artery compresses the travel time between the two cities to 92 minutes.

Connecting the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and as an important part of the national high-speed railway network's coastal passenger transport corridor, the main line of the high-speed railway is 401 kilometers long, with a design speed of 350 km per hour. Between Guangzhou and Zhanjiang, it connects cities such as Foshan, Zhaoqing and Maoming. It is a crucial channel linking the GBA, the Hainan Free Trade Port and the Beibu Gulf city cluster, experts said. They added that it will accelerate Zhanjiang's development and enhance its land, sea and air transportation network.

Back in July 2018, the Jiangmen-Zhanjiang Railway, with a design speed of 200 km/h, ushered in the "high-speed train era" for western Guangdong.

Zhanjiang is at the southernmost tip of the Chinese mainland, in the southwest of Guangdong and strategically located between Hainan province and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. It is one of the first 14 coastal cities in China that opened to the outside world and is positioned as a hub of the Guangdong modern coastal economic belt and a subcenter city of Guangdong.

At a news conference held by the Zhanjiang government on Wednesday, Huang Weiyan, director of the Zhanjiang development and reform bureau, said that the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang high-speed railway, a "golden corridor", will significantly facilitate the rapid aggregation and



Passenger takes a picture in front of a high-speed train before it leaves for Guangzhou at Zhanjiang North Railway Station on Monday.

efficient allocation of high-end elements such as capital, information and technology in the surrounding areas towards Zhanjiang.

The opening of the railway will support Zhanjiang's industrial transformation from a "manufacturing base" to a full-chain model of "research and development plus manufacturing plus services", establishing it as an important "industrial partner" of the GBA, said Huang, adding that it will enhance industry chain collaboration, expand business opportunities and attract high-end talent.

Additionally, it will promote the outward expansion of Zhanjiang's distinctive and excellent industries, allowing them to reach the huge consumer market of the GBA more conveniently, according to Huang.

For a long time, Zhanjiang has played the role of a key port and an industrial center in the southwestern part of Guangdong, relying on its deepwater harbor. Via the transportation advantages, industrial base and opening-up toward the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the city has been on the fast track to become Guangdong's subcenter city

and a hub of the Guangdong modern coastal economic belt.

Donghai Island is the main location of the Zhanjiang Economic and Technological Development Zone and serves as the economic backbone of Zhanjiang. Yang Jiedong, director of the zone's administrative committee, said he believes that the "cities integration effect" generated by the high-speed rail era will transform Zhanjiang from a traditional "back-end base" to a "front-line position" that can be involved in the industrial division of labor in the GBA.

With the help of the 350 km/h rail, Zhanjiang will undertake advanced producer services, such as industrial design, inspection and testing, and supply chain services, promoting Donghai Island's transformation from a port-related industrial base to a "modern industrial community" with composite functions, Yang said.

Shorter journey may greatly change the psychological distance of talent toward Zhanjiang. Experts said Zhanjiang will more effectively attract high-level professionals to "settle", innovate in flexible models such as "weekend engineers" and "cloud consultants" for bringing in talent, and

lower the cost for talent from western Guangdong to return home.

Gao Xiuli, an associate professor from the School of Management at Guangdong Ocean University, said that the opening of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang high-speed railway coincides with the Hainan FTP's special customs operations on Dec 18, which elevates Zhanjiang from a hub of western Guangdong to a "dual gateway" connecting the GBA and the Hainan FTP.

According to Gao, in transportation, the city will become a core hub thanks to a roughly 90-minutes direct route to Guangzhou and future connectivity to Hainan. In industries, it will promote cross-regional collaboration of "GBA R&D plus Zhanjiang manufacturing" and "Hainan headquarters plus Zhanjiang base". In people's life and cultural tourism, it will accelerate regional integration and enhance talent attractiveness, Gao added.

In the future, a key step is to open the high-speed railway project that connects Zhanjiang and Haikou in Hainan and deepen industrial collaboration to unleash its "inland gateway" value, said Gao.

Line helps Zhanjiang flex tourism muscles

By HAO NAN
haonan@chinadaily.com.cn

On the inaugural day of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang High-Speed Railway, nearly 200 tourists embarked on a special journey organized by the Guangzhou bureau of culture, radio, television and tourism, in collaboration with GZL International Travel Service, a subsidiary of Lingnan Group.

These travelers had the opportunity to take the first train on this new route to explore the vibrant city of Zhanjiang in Guangdong province. Some of them opted for an immersive three-day tour, while others chose the "Zhanjiang plus Hainan" five-day itinerary. This combined high-speed rail and ferry travel for them to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Qiongzhou Strait and the benefits of duty-free shopping.

Wen Shuang, vice-president of GZL International Travel Service, highlighted the rising popularity of Zhanjiang as a tourist destination. The company's revenue from Zhanjiang-related products saw an increase of approximately 50 percent compared to that in 2024.

Zhanjiang, known as the southernmost coastal city on the Chinese mainland and the birthplace of Leizhou culture, boasts rich natural landscapes and cultural tourism resources. With the railway's opening, various parts of the city are poised to leverage their cultural and tourism assets.

For instance, Xiashan district, home to Zhanjiang North Railway Station, has rapidly evolved into a "gateway hub" for visitors. This designation as "the first stop for tourists in Zhanjiang" serves as more than a geographical marker; it is a key factor influencing the rest of their journey.

The Guangzhou-Zhanjiang high-speed railway links cultural sites, scenic beauty and culinary delights along its path. "With its opening, tourists can experience the catch-and-eat seafood journey, enjoying fish, shrimp and crabs raised in the pure ecological cycles of the mangroves, showcasing the synergy between ecology and economy," said Xu Hechang, a village official in Zhanjiang's Mazhang district.

Chen Yu, chairman of Guangdong Maodegong Group, a company dedicated to the cultural tourism industry in Zhanjiang, said: "The opening of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang high-speed railway is something the local people have long awaited. With the influx of visitors, we are eager to showcase Zhanjiang's beautiful sights, delicious food, and engaging activities with friends across the country and the world."

The convenience of the high-

speed railway is also vitalizing short-distance and weekend travel markets, boosting related industries such as hotels, dining and retail, and injecting vitality into local consumption. "We are working overtime to renovate the site, optimize hygiene and scenery, and prepare reception services," said Shen Guanxiong, a staff member at the May Coast Bed and Breakfast on Naozhou Island.

At a news conference held on Wednesday, Liu Chunhui, deputy director of Zhanjiang's commerce bureau, stated that the launch of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang High-Speed Railway is being leveraged as a core driver for the entire consumption season.

"By integrating the high-speed rail network with flagship events such as 'celebrate the New Year in Zhanjiang', we are meticulously designing tailored travel routes that combine high-speed rail, winter tourism, cuisine and shopping," Liu noted.

This initiative aims to deeply integrate the city's cultural, tourism and recreational resources with high-speed rail passenger flow, enabling travelers to instantly immerse themselves in Zhanjiang's vibrant consumption scene upon arrival and seamlessly access a diverse array of consumption scenarios, he added.

Currently, the city has launched a consumer coupon campaign. It invites major enterprises including those recognized for "Zhanjiang's top 10 traditional dishes" and renowned dining establishments, ensuring that subsidy funds are used in publicly approved and high-quality dining venues.

In January and February, Zhanjiang is to host activities such as the "winter vacation study tour", offering experiences of Lingnan traditional culture, allowing families to gain knowledge and strengthen bonds during their visit.

During the conference, Chen Chen, deputy director of the city's bureau of culture, radio, television, tourism and sports, said that Zhanjiang will accelerate the quality enhancement and upgrading of its cultural and tourism sectors to deliver a premium visitor experience. Authorities will also step up investment promotion efforts and organize diverse activities to establish an integrated development model of "transportation plus cultural tourism plus consumption". The goal is to make Zhanjiang the top choice for "weekend micro-vacations" among travelers from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.



The Jinsha Bay is a popular tourist destination in Zhanjiang.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

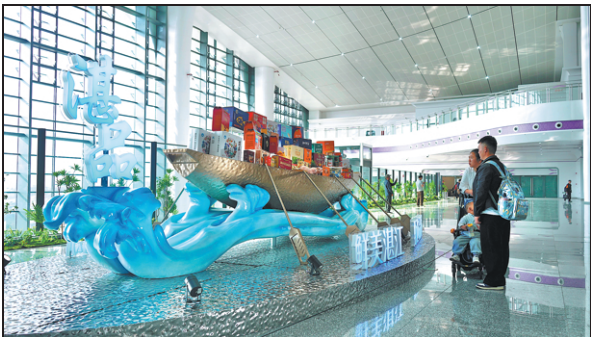
Researchers and business leaders hail quicker journeys

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Ren Gang, deputy director at the Zhanjiang Bay Laboratory, leads a life of "two cities". His family is in Guangzhou but he spends most of his time working in Zhanjiang. Ren said he had been looking forward to the opening of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang High-Speed Railway for a long time.

"The opening of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang high-speed railway greatly shortens the travel time between Guangzhou and Zhanjiang, making weekend family reunions more convenient, reducing the stress of long-distance travel, improving work-life balance, and enhancing overall happiness," he said.

The Zhanjiang Bay Laboratory focuses on marine equipment, marine energy and marine biology.



Exhibition area for Zhanjiang's signature products at Zhanjiang North Railway Station. WU DONGJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Using the laboratory's research as an example, Ren thinks that the high-speed railway will aid frequent cooperation and exchanges between the

laboratory and research institutions and universities from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area's major cities, such as Guang-

zhou and Shenzhen; accelerate the flow of talent, technology, data and samples; and enhance research collaboration and output efficiency.

Ren said that the railway helps attract high-end talent to engage in research and industrial work in Zhanjiang, alleviating the challenges of talent mobility due to transport limitations. Furthermore, the transport of research materials such as equipment and reagents becomes more efficient and the laboratory may better integrate into Guangdong's innovation network.

Huang Gangming, an executive at Baosteel Zhanjiang Iron and Steel, also believes that the roughly 90-minutes journey brings enterprises closer to research institutions in the Pearl River Delta, creating more convenient conditions for technological cooperation and attracting talent.

According to local news reports, since the announcement of the opening of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang high-speed railway, there has been an increase in investment enquiries from the GBA. Recently, there have been plans for delegations to take the high-speed train for negotiations, covering projects in several fields such as high-end equipment manufacturing, new energy and new materials.

At a news conference held by the Zhanjiang government on Wednesday, Huang Ming, deputy director of the Zhanjiang investment promotion bureau, said that they will seize the "high-speed rail opportunities" and fully undertake the industrial transfer from the GBA. They will focus on the "four greens and one blue" (green steel, green petrochemicals, green energy,

green food and the blue marine economy), as well as fields including artificial intelligence and the low-altitude economy to attract investment, emphasizing "quality, brand and taste". They will accelerate the development of an intelligent, green and integrated modern industrial system, creating dynamic and vibrant "industrial Zhanjiang", according to Huang.

"The opening of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang high-speed railway is what I am most looking forward to this year," said Liang Xinying, the founder of a Zhanjiang-based agricultural technology company.

Liang added: "We specialize in '48-hour live or chilled golden pompano (fish) delivery to your door' and 'ready-to-eat golden pompano products nationwide delivery'. The high-speed railway will allow western Guangdong's fresh products, especially our golden pompano products, to enter core markets of the Greater Bay Area more quickly."