



More than a beach: What I got wrong about Hainan

Descrizione

COMUNICATO STAMPA - CONTENUTO PROMOZIONALE

HAIKOU and WENCHANG, China, June 15, 2026 /PRNewswire/ - The article is from a guest diary on Let's Hainan column of the China Services Info website, where contributors share their personal discoveries about Hainan province. The website (chinaservicesinfo.com) is an official English-language service platform operated by China Daily. It provides authoritative information and practical services about investment, education, travel and employment in China.

Hainan has been on our list of "we have to go there someday" places in China for a long time, mostly for its world-class beaches and resorts. Now that I have finally been, I'm almost embarrassed to admit how little I knew about what the island has to offer. Sure, the beaches and resorts in Sanya are world-class, but that's not the whole story.

Starting in the north is Haikou, the capital, and a perfect introduction to the island. It's growing fast, with striking new buildings going up complementing the old streets and facades. Despite these modern buildings, Haikou has not lost any of its character - far from it.

At night the city comes to life. Families line the streets of the old town, socializing, preparing fruit and eating dinner. Friends meet at the bars along the river, and competing teams of aunties dance by the clock tower.

After walking around that night, I revisited the old city in the heat of the day and discovered the local culture of Lao Ba Sha (old dad's tea), enjoying hand-selected dishes from a never-ending line of delicious treats.

Then I felt like I time-traveled from old Haikou to Wenchang on the northeast coast. Wenchang is China's Aerospace Tourism City and home to a spaceport. If you time your trip well, you can watch a rocket launch yourself from a viewing platform at the space center, your hotel balcony, or even the beach!

Heading inland, the island changes once again. The center is covered in tropical rainforest, and the air here is some of the cleanest in China. It is here you can discover the culture of the Li ethnic group, who have lived on Hainan for more than 3,000 years.

With all this, I still found time to learn to surf when travelling down the east coast. Wanning has become a popular surf town and if you are nervous about learning in the sea, you can head to the surf resort where there's a hotel with its own artificial wave pool, making learning easy enough for a complete beginner (young or old!) to have a go.

After experiencing all this I can't wait to return with my family. My kids would be more than happy to spend every day on the golden sand. However, I think the rainforest, the Li villages, the old streets of Haikou and the chance to see a rocket launch would stay with them much longer. The only hard part will be fitting it all into one holiday!

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