

# The Construction of Evaluation System and Development Path for Yibin as an International Tourism City

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**Abstract:** As the gateway city for Sichuan Province's southward opening and cooperation, Yibin has been entrusted with a significant mission within the provincial "one core, multiple poles" development strategy. The Yibin municipal government has explicitly set the strategic development goal of building an international tourism city by 2025. Research indicates that, when compared to mature international tourism destinations, Yibin faces five core deficiencies. To address these shortcomings, a quantitative evaluation system comprising 4 primary indicators and 28 secondary indicators has been established, based on which four categories of countermeasures and suggestions are proposed.

**Keywords:** International Tourism; Yibin; Evaluation Indicators.

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## 1. Introduction

As the first city along the Yangtze River, Yibin is strategically located at the junction of the national "Belt and Road Initiative" and the Yangtze River Economic Belt. It serves as a crucial hub connecting the Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta, Beibu Gulf, South Asia, and East Asia, and represents an important node for Sichuan Province's southward opening. In 2023, the Sichuan Provincial Government explicitly stated in its "Opinions on Supporting the Development of Yibin and Luzhou as the South Sichuan Provincial Economic Sub-center" that it supports Yibin in building an international tourism city. In 2025, Yibin City issued "The Decision on Promoting the Deep Integration of Culture and Tourism to Accelerate the Construction of an International Tourism City," anchoring its development goal of becoming an international tourism city. The city is fully committed to constructing a comprehensive tourism development pattern that integrates scenic areas with urban environments across all domains and business formats, vigorously shaping an urban brand image that attracts both domestic and international visitors, and dedicating efforts to providing high-quality services and experiences shared by both residents and tourists.

## 2. Understanding the Concept of an International Tourism City

The academic community still holds divergent views on the definition of international tourism destinations. The currently more widely accepted description is that an international tourism destination typically refers to a place with favorable economic development momentum where tourism is a pillar industry that actively promotes local economic development, and whose tourism brand enjoys relatively high international recognition. International tourism destinations are not only products of tourism development but also products of the internationalization development of destinations. Therefore, the development of international tourism destinations cannot be evaluated solely by the scale of tourism destination construction and visitor reception capacity; its essence should

be an exploration of international tourism attributes. At present, the main indicators for building international tourism destinations in China include: high-quality tourism resources with global appeal; comprehensive tourism infrastructure and service facilities offering convenient touring experiences; strong accessibility for international tourists with streamlined entry and exit procedures; advanced tourism information systems facilitating easy reference by tourists; a distinctive destination image with strong international appeal; and efficient tourism management systems that safeguard tourists' interests. Additionally, such destinations should feature developed tourism markets, internationalized conference venues, a friendly and civilized tourism atmosphere, and modernized booking and settlement methods.

Based on the concept of tourism destinations and academic descriptions of international tourism destinations, the international tourism city referred to in this paper is defined as a comprehensive tourism geographical entity capable of attracting international tourists for sightseeing, leisure vacations, and conferences and exhibitions, with service functions reaching international standards. Its essence lies in the internationalized leisure tourism functions and development level.

## 3. Resource Conditions for Yibin's Development as an International Tourism City

In terms of resource conditions, Yibin possesses world-class tourism resources, making it a veritable rich zone of tourism resources with high comprehensive tourism value and international appeal. The Xingwen Stone Sea World Geopark and Shunan Bamboo Sea National Tourism Resort constitute Yibin's main international tourism attractions. The quality of these resources is high: the First City along the Ten Thousand-Li Yangtze River, Lizhang (one of the four major cultural centers during the Anti-Japanese War), the world's largest standing Buddha statue, one of China's ten most beautiful forests, China's Liquor Capital, and the ancient homeland of the Bo people are all monopolistic tourism resources. The types of resources are comprehensive: Yibin boasts distinctive

resources including geological landforms, canyon forests, rare plants, historical sites and relics, covering eight major resource types. From an ecological perspective, Yibin presents a feng shui ecological environment, a poetic forest environment for human habitation, a profound historical and cultural environment, and a favorable social environment, making it an ideal pure land yearned for by both Eastern and Western humanity under the concept of sustainable development. From an urban cultural perspective, Yibin has a 2,190-year history of city building and a 4,000-year history of liquor brewing, being a place renowned since ancient times as an auspicious land. The perfect fusion of history and modernity provides excellent cultural background support for Yibin tourism to connect with international markets.

## **4. Current Status and Issues**

Compared with mature international tourism destinations, Yibin's gaps mainly manifest in the following five aspects.

### **4.1. Lack of a Quantitative Target System, Leading to Weak Purposefulness in Construction**

The improvement of a destination indicator system is the foundation and prerequisite for Yibin's effective development as an international tourism destination, with irreplaceable strategic and holistic functions. Currently, Yibin has not clearly proposed a relevant target system, which in practice manifests as a lack of guiding basis for destination construction and a lack of core objectives for collaboration among various parties.

### **4.2. The Overall Image of the Destination Lacks International Appeal and Distinctive Yibin Symbols with International Attraction**

Yibin has previously proposed various image positionings, such as "First City along the Ten Thousand-Li Yangtze River," "China's Liquor Capital," "Homeland of the Bo People," "Birthplace of Nezha," "Pleasant Mountains and Waters - Most Suitable (Intoxicatingly Beautiful) Yibin," "Intoxicatingly Beautiful Yibin," "Southwestern Half of Ancient Rongzhou," "Beautiful China - Picturesque Yibin," etc. However, frequent changes of image have led to a blurred tourism image. Some of the current image expressions, such as "Shunan Bamboo Sea - World's Greenery," "Bo People's Suspended Coffins - World's Mystery," "Divine Land's Nectar - Wuliangye," "Stone Sea Cave Township - World's Wonder," etc., are all targeted at specific tourism resources, representing partial images and brand images of certain tourism products, rather than the overall image of the tourism destination.

### **4.3. Rapid Development of Tourism Transportation, but Core Scenic Areas Lack International Recognition and Driving Effects**

Currently, Yibin does not have any 5A-level scenic areas. In the competition for 5A-level scenic area designation, Shunan Bamboo Sea faces challenges from Anji Bamboo Sea; the Xingwen Stone Sea World Geopark is also overshadowed by the image of Lunan Stone Forest.

## **4.4. Tourism Products Lack Distinctive Features and International Market Appeal**

Within the product system composed of the six major elements of tourism, Yibin's tourism products suffer from serious homogenization. Taking festival tourism products as an example, the seemingly dazzling array of rural tourism festivals essentially rely on "agritainment" facilities at the festival venues, using fruit trees and flowers as tourism resources and providing tourism reception services. The festival products offered to tourists are similar, resulting in similar sightseeing experiences and service experiences for tourists, leading to low tourist satisfaction. Low-level, homogenized tourism products do not attract international tourists.

## **4.5. Inadequate Destination Support Systems for International Tourism Talent Cultivation, Service Facilities, and Smart Tourism**

In terms of support systems, Yibin still has considerable gaps compared to international tourism destinations: there is a severe shortage of international tourism talent, with most tourism professionals trained at Yibin University and Yibin Vocational and Technical College going to work in large cities or coastal areas; Yibin is not yet a Category I aviation port and has not opened international air routes; it lacks an international tourism distribution center; night tourism projects are insufficient; and smart tourism is just beginning to develop.

## **5. Countermeasures and Suggestions for Yibin's Development as an International Tourism City**

Well-known international tourism destinations achieve internationalization through the creation of core attractions, highlighting the destination's unique personality, ensuring comprehensive supporting facilities, promoting international brands, and creating a favorable environment. Therefore, deeply exploring tourism resources and creating unique core tourism attractions are key elements in building an international tourism destination. Drawing on the successful experiences of international and domestic cities such as Singapore, Shanghai, Chengdu, and Leshan in creating tourism destinations, Yibin needs to focus on the internationalization of tourism products, tourism services, comprehensive support and tourism management, and urban functions, thereby evolving from a resource-based, scenic area-based tourism destination to a regional, urban-type international tourism destination. A mature, globally renowned international tourism destination must possess international appeal, meet a series of international standards, and emphasize internationalized development paths. Therefore, Yibin's construction of an international tourism destination should revolve around three major propositions: Finding Yibin's characteristics—attracting international markets with Yibin's distinctive urban personality, urban culture, and themed tourism products; Aligning with international standards—selecting evaluation standards that meet Yibin's urban development requirements and comprehensively enhancing urban tourism functions and service elements according to international requirements; and Innovating breakthrough paths—targeting key issues

troubling Yibin's tourism, clarifying Yibin's tourism development strategies, and innovatively constructing Yibin's tourism development models and paths.

### **5.1. Constructing an Evaluation System to Align with International Standards**

Currently, there is no unified, fixed quantitative standard for international tourism destinations. The evaluation standards that are relatively recognized and widely referenced include: the global tourism destination ranking proposed by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), which mainly focuses on two indicators: inbound tourist volume and tourism foreign exchange earnings; the Global Tourism Competitiveness Report proposed by the World Economic Forum (WEF); and the excellent tourism destination evaluation system proposed by the Center for Excellence in Destinations (CED). These standards focus on core elements including inbound tourist numbers, tourism foreign exchange earnings, tourism management, and infrastructure construction.

In recent years, China has also introduced some constructive standards in the process of tourism internationalization, mainly including: the "China's Best Tourism Cities" creation standard proposed by the China National Tourism Administration & World Tourism Organization; the "China's Excellent Tourism Cities" evaluation standard proposed by the China National Tourism Administration; the "World-Class Tourism City" indicator system proposed by the Beijing Municipal Tourism Development Commission; and the "International Tourism and Leisure Center" indicator system proposed by Hangzhou. The core elements of these standards include environmental sustainability, tourism attraction, comprehensive support, tourism's comprehensive contribution, and city image.

In 2022, the Sichuan Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism collaborated with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) to draw on research findings, construction standards, and evaluation systems related to world tourism destinations from the World Tourism Organization, associations, forums, federations, and domestic scientific research institutions and universities. Combined with the practical construction of world tourism destinations at home and abroad, they proposed the "World Tourism Destination Evaluation Indicator System (Six Dimensions)," mainly including six dimensions:

economic contribution, recognition, attraction, openness, comfort, and satisfaction, based on which they formulated the "Sichuan Province Plan for Building an Important World Tourism Destination (2023-2035)." Among these, "contribution" reflects the economic contribution and overall prosperity of the destination's tourism industry, divided into "development scale" and "growth rate and proportion" indicators. "Recognition" reflects the degree of cognition and approval of the destination's tourism image by the international community, divided into "identifiability," "attention," and "influence" indicators. "Attraction" mainly reflects the appeal of the destination's resources, tourism products, and new business formats, divided into "core resources," "world-class products," and "new business formats" indicators. "Openness" reflects the destination's free market transaction environment, divided into "market vibrancy" and "international openness" indicators. "Comfort" reflects the destination's accessibility and hardware facility comfort level, divided into "transportation convenience" and "service facilities" indicators. "Satisfaction" reflects the matching degree between the destination's tourism services and market demands, divided into "overall satisfaction," "tourist complaints," "service quality," "safety guarantee," and "risk management" indicators.

By comparing international standards and domestic evaluation factors, it can be seen that international tourism destinations mainly include four levels: international tourism development level, destination characteristic highlighting power, international tourism support system, and international tourism environment construction. To build an international tourism and leisure destination, Yibin should achieve internationalization through the creation of core attractions, highlighting the destination's unique personality, ensuring comprehensive supporting facilities, promoting international brands, and creating a favorable environment. Referring to the above research results and combining Yibin's development characteristics and construction path as an international tourism destination, a preliminary "Evaluation Standard System for Yibin's Construction as an International Tourism and Leisure Destination" has been drafted, mainly including four levels: international tourism development level, destination characteristic highlighting power, international tourism support system, and international tourism environment construction, with 28 specific standards.

**Table 1.** Evaluation Standard System for Yibin's Construction as an International Tourism and Leisure Destination

Basic Level	Specific Standard	Basic Requirement
International Tourism Development Level	1. Annual international tourist numbers	Over 100,000
	2. Average tourist length of stay	Over 1-3 days
	3. Annual average tourism foreign exchange income	Over 5% of total tourism income
	4. Number of international travel agencies	Over 50% of total travel agencies, with top 100 national travel agencies accounting for over 8%
	5. Occupancy rate of internationally renowned brand hotels	70%-90%
	6. Completeness of city tourism inquiry system	Over 3 tourism information or service centers
	7. Tourism complaint resolution rate	100%
	8. International tourism promotion	Has special international tourism promotion funds; has over 10 English tourism websites
Destination Characteristic Highlighting Power	9. Richness and uniqueness of core tourism resources	Has a certain scale of World Geoparks, National Nature Reserves, Key Scenic Areas, National Forest Parks, National Geoparks, National Wetland Parks, National Holiday Resorts
	10. Core scenic area quality	Over 4 5A-level scenic areas and National Tourism Resort Areas
	11. Specialized leisure tourism products	Continuously launching leisure vacation specialized products with good international reputation; annual update rate over 20%
	12. Urban landscape	Unique historical style, has characteristic cultural, leisure, and dining districts
	13. Cultural activities	Has national-level cultural activities with international reputation
	14. Tourism commodities	Distinctive regional characteristics, excellent quality
	15. Destination tourism image	Distinctive features, high international market awareness, approval rate (questionnaire survey) over 80%
International Tourism Support System	16. Aviation conditions	Has an airport with international routes
	17. High-speed rail	Over 3 lines
	18. Convenience of border crossing for foreign tourists	Achieves "24-hour customs clearance service"
	19. Financial and communication services	Pass rate of credit services of major banks, circulation rate of major foreign currencies, and international telecommunications access rate all reach 100%
	20. Public service facilities	Has international emergency rescue network hospitals under the Ministry of Health or international SOS rescue centers and other international emergency rescue institutions; establishes tourism rescue special police force; public toilet provision rate of over 4 per 10,000 people; has internationalized exhibition venues
	21. Government support	Has special funds for international tourism development and preferential policies for international tourism development
International Tourism Environment Construction	22. Destination ecological environment	Good ecological protection, excellent urban soft and hard environment
	23. Safety sense of international tourists	Over 98%
	24. Basic English popularization rate in service industry	Over 80%
	25. Basic English popularization rate among residents	Over 40%
	26. Popularization rate of multilingual signage systems in the city	Achieves full bilingualism
	27. Friendliness of residents towards international tourists	Citizens are warm, hospitable, honest, and civilized, with a high level of acceptance of international tourists
	28. Residents' sense of happiness	Good

## 5.2. Improving the Organizational Structure of Yibin's Tourism Internationalization Strategy and Formulating Corresponding Policies and Measures

It is recommended to establish the "Yibin International

Tourism Destination Construction Committee." The committee would represent the municipal party committee and government in comprehensively advancing tourism internationalization work, guiding, coordinating, supervising, and evaluating the implementation of the city's tourism internationalization strategy, and gradually establishing a Yibin tourism destination management organization

responsible for destination management and marketing. Regular meetings should be held to study and resolve problems encountered in promoting tourism internationalization. The committee should take the lead in establishing a scientific and reasonable evaluation indicator system and development index for Yibin's tourism internationalization, periodically assess the progress of tourism internationalization, timely grasp the balance of indicator development, and immediately understand the focus, direction, and fields of the promotion work. Various scenic spots and member units should propose detailed plans according to the committee's action content, which must specify annual work objectives, tasks, responsible units, and other content. Tourism internationalization work should be included in the annual municipal government work target assessment. The committee should formulate assessment and reward methods for tourism internationalization work, assign assessment tasks based on reports from member units by year, and provide certain rewards to units and individuals who make outstanding contributions to promoting tourism internationalization.

### **5.3. Focusing on the Image Positioning of "First City along the Yangtze River, China's Liquor Capital" to Promote the Upgrading of Core Scenic Areas**

Attract the international market with distinctive Yibin personality, regional culture, and themed tourism products; target key issues troubling Yibin tourism, clarify Yibin tourism development strategies, and identify "explosive" products for target markets. "First City along the Yangtze River, China's Liquor Capital" is Yibin's image positioning to connect with world tourism. The First City along the Yangtze River, China's Liquor Capital, the Most Beautiful Bamboo Sea, Xingwen Stone Sea, and Lizhang Ancient Town are tourism brands with international influence. Focusing on image positioning and international tourism brands, the upgrading of core scenic areas should be promoted. Priority should be given to the construction of international tourism demonstration zones for the Bamboo Sea and Stone Sea, striving for Shunan Bamboo Sea and Xingwen Stone Sea to successfully create 5A-level tourism scenic areas by 2026. Emphasizing the integration of culture and tourism, priority should be given to creating the Xingwen Stone Sea International Study Tour Base, the Baxianshan Religious Culture Tourism Area, the Wuliangye Industrial Tourism Area, the Yangtze River International Bicycle Race, and others. Five major marketing channels should be constructed—mass media, the internet, globally renowned travel agencies, international tourism trade fairs, and international organizations and associations—to market Yibin's international tourism brand in multiple ways.

### **5.4. Building Three Major Support Systems to Enhance International Service Level**

In terms of the transportation system: Construct a convenient regional three-dimensional transportation system integrating "aviation - rail - road - water" to provide seamless transfer services in a composite transportation system, increasing accessibility for international tourists. It is recommended that the province coordinate with national port offices, the Civil Aviation Administration, and other

departments to support Yibin Airport's application for a Category I aviation port and open international routes to South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asian countries and regions.

In terms of the destination service system: Establish a complete international tourism distribution center; achieve thematic and boutique accommodation, distinctive catering, develop "Yibin Souvenirs" tourism products, and focus on developing night tourism products in the entertainment industry. At the same time, strengthen international tourism talent training, improve services in scenic areas, guide services, financial services, international emergency rescue services, communication services, etc.

In terms of the smart tourism system: Construct and improve smart tourism public service systems, smart tourism government administration systems, smart scenic area management systems, and smart tourism service terminal systems.

## **6. Conclusion**

Building Yibin as an international tourism city is a long-term and systematic project. Although it currently faces many challenges such as homogenization of tourism products and imperfect support systems, through the implementation of a series of countermeasures including constructing a scientific and reasonable evaluation standard system, improving the organizational structure and policy measures of the tourism internationalization strategy, promoting the upgrading of core scenic areas around distinctive image positioning, and building three major support systems to enhance international service levels, Yibin is expected to gradually enhance its competitiveness in the international tourism market. In the future, Yibin needs to continuously pay attention to international tourism development trends, constantly optimize and improve various construction measures, and attract more international tourists with its unique urban personality, rich tourism products, perfect support systems, and high-quality service levels, achieving a successful transformation from a resource-based, scenic area-based tourism destination to a regional, urban-type international tourism destination, truly becoming a tourism city with international appeal and influence.

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