

**Preliminary Field Study on Changshu Municipality for
Admission to the United Nations World Tourism
Organization Programme on Sustainable Tourism
Observatories**

Report by the MCSTO (Monitoring Centre for UNWTO Sustainable
Tourism Observatories in China) rapporteur

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Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by the UNWTO to consider the application of the Changshu People's Government for Changshu to be part of the UNWTO Monitoring Observatory Programme for Sustainable Tourism.

The report was based on visits made to various tourism attractions within Changshu during the period of 7th to 10th April, 2015.

The principles upon which the visit was conducted were based upon those of the UNWTO and the application of the Changshu People's Government, and no conflict was found between those two sets of principles. These principles are described in paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6 of this report.

It is recommended that Changshu be accepted into the UNWTO programme

A number of minor and major issues are identified for future consideration within the joint programme with the UNWTO. Some are short term and minor such as the siting of signposts at Nanhu Lake, others of an intermediate term such as better conveying information to tourists, while others are of long term consideration such as the changing social fabric of surrounding villages that are developing tourism.

It should be noted and made explicit that the tourism attractions visited were of a high standard and indeed impressive work was being undertaken to recover previously polluted areas to create new environmentally friendly attractions – as evidenced at Nanhu Lake.

One issue for Changshu is its location with reference to more famous tourist locations such as Suzhou, Hangzhou and Shanghai – all within little more than about 2 hour's drive time along the motorway system. It is suggested that in seeking to demarcate itself Yushan Hill might

provide the basis for establishing an iconic destination that symbolises the tourism of Changshu.

The author of the report would wish to acknowledge the time, courtesy and help provided in the arrangements that permitted this report to be written, and it is hoped that membership of the UNWTO MCSTO programme will bring benefits to all the stakeholders involved.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report is commissioned by the Monitoring Centre for United Nation's World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Sustainable Tourism Observatories and is a summary of developments undertaken at Changshu to develop tourism. The purpose of the report is to assess the viability of Changshu being part of the UNWTO's programme of Sustainable Tourism including the establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Observatory in Changshu.
- 1.2 In China the programme for Monitoring Observatories is co-ordinated by the Monitoring Centre of for United Nation's World Tourism Organisation Sustainable Tourism Observatories (MCSTO) at Sun Yat Sen University under an agreement signed with the UNWTO in September, 2010.
- 1.3 Currently the Observatories in China are sited at Yangshuo, Huangshan, Zhangjiajie, Kanas, Chengdu, Xishuangbanna, and Henan. In March 2015, a three year co-operation agreement was signed between the UNWTO and the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) '(T)o deepen cooperation in promoting sustainable tourism, strengthen personnel exchange and launching joint training sessions to facilitate the development of global tourism industry'.
- 1.4 The application made by Changshu is in accord with the spirit of that agreement and the objectives of the MCSTO.
- 1.5 The objectives of the MCSTO are to:
 1. Take charge of the monitoring activities in all existing and future UNWTO observatories in China and at a later stage, if conditions are met, in the Asia-Pacific region on the basis of the UNWTO methodology for sustainable tourism indicators.
 2. Collect and compile good practices of sustainable tourism development on the basis of UNWTO methodology for sustainable tourism indicators.
 3. Coordinate the production of the UNWTO/SYSU Observatory Monitoring Report on an annual basis and disseminate the information to other destinations of the world.

4. Provide recommendations for the improvement of the methodological framework of the UNWTO sustainable tourism indicators through accumulated experiences of monitoring the observatories.
 5. Support capacity building activities related to the activities of the Centre.
 6. Facilitate and coordinate networking and exchange opportunities among observatories in the region.
- 1.6 In their application Changshu People's Government specified that key themes of the initial exploratory observation should be:
- 1) Tourism Industry Development;
 - 2) Eco-protection; and
 - 3) Residents' well-being and the enhancement of a 'happiness index'
- 1.7 The initial exploratory visit took place over the period 7th to 10th April, 2015, and the itinerary of places visited is listed in Appendix One.
- 1.8 The significance of the application for MCSTO is that Changshu is designated an economically developed region, is primarily a significant urban centre of population, and therefore differs from the other MCSTO Observatories that are primarily sited in areas of rural landscapes of significant landscape and heritage values.

2.0 Changshu

- 2.1 Changshu is located in Jiangsu Province and is about 100 km from Shanghai and about 50 km from Suzhou. This means it is easily accessible by key domestic markets for extended weekend stays, conferences and festivals in addition to wider domestic marketing. Equally, there remains a potential for attracting international visitation that uses Shanghai's airports as an entry and departure point. Accessibility is enhanced by

the The 204 National Highway, Sujiahang Expressway and Suzhou-Jiaxing-Hangzhou, all of which pass through Changshu.

- 2.2 Administratively Changshu is a county-level administration jurisdiction and comes under the aegis of Suzhou Prefecture City. Potential implications of this are the ability to co-ordinate with Suzhou, while at the same time there may be opportunities to enhance tourism product that is based upon Suzhou's world famous water-towns.
- 2.3 Economically Changshu has a diversified industry including a high-tech centre Industrial Development Centre that was initially established in 2003. This is a major driver of economic development and has attracted many awards. Of more importance is its actual economic role, and Changshu is a major player in China's automobile industry with the Chery Jaguar Land Rover Automobile headquartered in Changshu. Not only is there car production but ancillary industries such as the Changshu Tongrun Auto Accessory Company are found here. Other companies found present include Toyota Motors Transmission, Mitsubishi Motors Electronics, Continental Automobile, ContiTech, Zhong'ou Automobile etc., (bonded by Toyota Warehousing), Toyota Logistics (Changshu) Co., Ltd. and GLP Park, - all of which integrate R&D, production, logistics and trade for finished automobiles and parts. Major industries represented in Changshu also include textiles, steel, chemicals and the paper industry. In total over 800 international companies have a presence in Changshu, of which approximately 18% originated in Taiwan.
- 2.4 The city also hosts a number of electronic and computer and information based companies – and these are supported by the Changshu Institute of Technology and Changshu Radio and TV University.
- 2.5 The city covers an area of 1,264 square kilometres and officially has a population of approximately 1.8 million people, but past industrial expansion has attracted workers as in many other Chinese cities, and the population may be about 2.0 million as an estimate. Of these about 55% are native to Changshu. Historically an agricultural area that industry still has a visible presence as can be seen when travelling around the 21 townships that form the city of Changshu. Indeed, such a presence is one of the potential tourism opportunities as agri-tourism emerges based upon tea, rice, vegetables and medical herbs. Indeed the name of the city may be translated as 'frequent harvest' – thus betraying its agricultural past.

- 2.6 A further distinguishing feature is the aquatic nature of the city. Situated on the banks of the Yangtze River Changshu has a long history as a commercial and agricultural centre. The city has a history that extends prior to its formal declaration of being a town in 283D. One consequence of this is a richness of heritage that can become part of the story that may be told to tourists.
- 2.7 However, one issue that Changshu faces in the development of both domestic and international tourism markets is that it is located in an area that has many offerings for tourists. Located between Hangzhou and Shanghai there are, for example, many water towns and places of historic and cultural heritage around which tourism may be built. An issue is therefore to develop unique characteristics that permit Changshu to develop points of difference. It might be said that internationally Changshu does not have the immediate recognition achieved by other Chinese tourist destinations. Nonetheless, among the aspects that are being developed one can identify at least three: (a) tourism based upon the stories of resistance to the Japanese invasion and the development of the Chinese Communist Party (red tourism), (b) wetland tourism and (c) tea tourism and the tradition of the tea house. In addition, there are a number of historic homes from the days of past scholars and merchants. Moreover there are also well established festivals that build upon these themes as described in paragraph 4.3.
- 2.8 While there are many competing destinations Changshu does possess advantages in the domestic market. As noted in paragraph 2.1 there is a large immediate catchment area of many millions of people who have easy access to the city and who may wish to avail themselves of its urban comforts as an escape from larger and more congested places. In addition with a resident population of approaching 2.0 million people the city has the capacity to create resources that are supported by the local population as places of relaxation and escape. It also has a popular history dating from the 1960s and the popularity of the Beijing Opera *Sha Jia Bang* while there was also a popular TV series of the same name – both of which are set in Changshu.
- 2.9 Hu and Qian (2012) provide detailed data as to the then current level of tourism in Changshu. They note that in the period 2001 to 2009 the proportion of total visitors to Changshu had increased, and while in 2001 Changshu accounted for 11.9% of all visitors to Suzhou, by 2009 this had increased to 22.8% of the total. By 2010 Changshu hosted about 15.7 million visitors and in the prior seven years the annual

growth rate in visitors had averaged about 12.8% per annum. The data for 2013 indicated a total of 17.09 million visitors involving an expenditure of 24 billion RMB. In 2014 a slower rate of growth (6.34%) meant about 18.43 million visitors came to Changshu involving 26 billion RMB expenditure.

Examination of the web pages of the Suzhou Tourism Information centre show levels of visitor satisfaction to be high.

- 2.10 The growth of tourism has certainly impacted on improvements in the provision of accommodation and currently 6 five-star and 5 four-star hotels exist and a total of 21 star rated hotels have been identified, most of which belong to well-known branded companies. It is estimated that the industry employs directly 13,000 people and a further 60,000 indirectly.
- 2.11 However it is noted that the rate of growth has slowed down in recent years, and the city does struggle in the sense that it has no nationally known or iconic attractions. It is also noted that much of the market is domestic in nature, but equally Hu and Qian (2012) express the view that Changshu can potentially attract an international market. The core tourism product is perceived as being ‘mountain, water and city’ but other potential attractions are noted. Red tourism is one such feature, while additional potential lies in the industrial heritage – both past and present in the city.
- 2.11 Despite its comparative lack of iconic attractions, the ease of access from Shanghai and the other major cities of the Suzhou-Zhejiang conurbations remain key target market areas for purposes of weekend and leisure breaks, and Hu and Qian note the need for targeted marketing and development of a brand image.

3.0 Appraisal of destinations visited

- 3.1 As listed in the appendix there were a number of destinations that were visited. Unlike past appraisals it is not the purpose of this report to identify specific strategies to improve the operational aspects of the different locations. Rather, the purpose of this report is to establish whether within the nature of the attractions it is possible to contribute to the objectives of the application made by the Changshu People’s Government, and whether MCSTO monitoring would support these objectives.

- 3.2 Consequently the following paragraphs will simply outline a number of the attractions and indicate ways in which they help achieve the objectives and thereby attract MCSTO support.
- 3.3 Prior to doing this it should be noted that the city has initiated a programme of festivals. Festivals are important in that they help to establish a ‘brand’ image for the city and while also helping to distribute tourists seasonally so smoothing patterns of visitation to those periods when excess capacity exists (for example when hotel occupancies are low) and away from times of possible congestion (for example Golden Weeks). Festivals also serve to make a city more attractive for its residents. Changshu has successfully established a number of festivals such as the Baoyan Red Bayberry Festival/Summer Forest Eco-tourism Festival held in June each year at Yushan Hill, and the Spring Time Peony Festival at Shanghu Lake. The latter festival is fast accruing a national reputation and the product is being enhanced by a number of ancillary activities as listed in appendix two to this report. It is also noted that the developments are consistent with the City’s tourism administration’s core themes of water, nature, culture, heritage and wellness – but equally there is an opportunity for further development – possibly around boating themes. In addition the city also hosts a number of athletics events such as the Marathon and Cycling events– all of which retain residents and their leisure spending in the city while also attracting out of city visitors.

4.0 Yushan Hill

- 4.1 Yushan Hill is a dominant landmark rising on the western boundary of the city and separating Changshu from Shanghu Lake. It comprises Yushan National Forest Park and Jianmen Scenic Area. It reaches a height of about 300 metres but soars above the Yangtze plain, and covers an area of 6.5 square kilometres. It is said to resemble a sleeping cow. Su et al (2003) describes the diversity of the flora based on the APG III classification system and phylogenetic studies. Three main groups are identified, 23 groups of mixed forest, 13 groups of bamboo forest and 17 groups of tea garden.
- 4.2 In addition to the natural heritage Yushan also has a cultural significance – being associated with Yu Zhong, the second son of King Zhou who was buried in the vicinity in the 11th Century BC, and Yan Yan (506 – 443 BC), a disciple of Confucius,

who was also buried here. A marker still exists commemorates his writings (Figure 1).



Figure One Information Board located near Yan Yan's Burial Place

- 4.3 The hill thus meets the criteria of possessing natural and historic interest and hence fits the criteria of MCSTO and UNWTO. It further fits by reason of the tourist and recreational use that is made of the mountain. In public ownership since 1931 Yushan has long served as a 'green lung' for the city. By 1970 the Park was renamed the People's Park and slowly buildings began to appear across the hill's perimeter thereby scarring its appearance over time. Under the City Masterplan the area was then cleared and the hill brought into the ambit of the city as a recreation asset.
- 4.4 The hill is divided into various zones and served by buses and a cable car that takes people to the top of the mountain. Apart from the use of the lower reaches for exercise, relaxation, dancing and kite flying two other major features of the hill are the use of the various tea houses (some of significant antiquity) for socialising and conversation, and the presence of various temples (see Figures 2 and 3). The tea houses are a notable feature of Yushan Hill, not only from the perspective of their functional aspects but also from the aesthetic point of view as many contain pleasant gardens that contain water features, and are representative of classical Chinese garden landscapes on a small scale.



Figures Two and Three Tea House and Gardens on Yushan Hill

4.5 The hill also attracts tourists, and a small stream of international tourists has been discerned, estimate at 10,000 (*pers. comm*). A tourist information centre exists (see Figure 4), but little literature exists – both in total and even less in languages other than Mandarin.

4.6 However, it can be concluded that Yushan Hill possesses all the attributes that confirm a role for MCSTO.

5.0 Shanghu Lake

5.1 The present aspect of Shanghu Lake Park dates from construction undertaken in 1985. The lake covers an area of 2000 acres and is famous for its flora and fauna. In particular it is noted for its peonies and it has been estimated that as many as 50,000 may flower, and that 300 different species can be found. The second feature is the diversity of its water fowl, and these have become more numerous over the years.

5.2 Fan (2006) writes of the heritage of the area and its significance as a cultural and historic resource, particularly with reference to *Jiang Shangwen* culture. He also notes references to the area in the *Book of Songs*, *Bamboo Annals* and other works. He is nonetheless critical of the promotion of the lake (which is in its present form, of relatively recent construction as noted in paragraph 5.1) as a recreational and tourist asset, noting that themes can be developed around the lake such as “wisdom zone”, “Shangxian area”, “safe area”, and “longevity area” (姜尚文). During the visit there appeared to be relatively little interpretation of the lake but it is admitted that the visit took place in the early spring and possibly prior to periods when major events were yet to take place.

- 5.3 What was noted was that management techniques were being used to ensure that boats were being kept away from the immediate zone where water based vegetation and trees provided shelter and nesting sites for the water fowl. This is particularly important at times such as spring when mating and nesting behaviours are exhibited by the birds – and hence appropriate policies appear to be in place. During the visit Little (*Egret garzetta*) and Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) were very much present and were flying in large numbers.
- 5.4 In such areas there is always a need to ensure that the natural carrying capacities of sites are not exceeded, and on this basis the inclusion of Changshu into the MCSTO programme may well make an additional source of information and advice available to the Park Authorities and the City Administration.
- 5.5 In terms of facilities for visitors, the walks are well marked and should help deter informal tracking. Some lakeside café facilities exist, but the primary activities would seem to be based on walking and cycling around the lake and enjoying the landscape, watching birds, and in season also viewing the peonies.
- 5.6 During the visit itself the Park was not crowded, and reference to travel sites and social media such as TripAdvisor seem to indicate that issues of over-crowding are not a problem. Reactions to the Lake Park are positive and it seen as a place within which to relax and enjoy nature. Certainly the lake today gives every appearance of being a well-established wetland area consistent with the brand image of ‘mountain. water and city’ and the desired role of Changshu as a city concerned with environmental protection and the provision for a green and restful environment for its residents.

6.0 Xingfu Area

- 6.1 The Xingfu Temple and its immediate area represent a location that local people enjoy and tourists love to discover. Set in an area shaded by bamboo and other trees the temple occupies a site used for religious purposes for over 1500 years. The Temple is

a place of prayer and Buddhist monks are present. A small market exists outside for selling devotional objects as is common in China. A feature of the Temple is the Xing-Fu stone.

- 6.2 It is suspected that for many however a major attraction are the numbers of small restaurants that cluster in the shade not far from the entrance of the Temple. Here it is common to tuck into a bowl of the thin Xun Oil noodles that are a characteristic dish of Changshu – that is noodles mixed with a fungus that grows on Yushan Hill. For many local residents the breakfast fortifies them prior to walk up the hill.
- 6.3 Adding to the scene, as one eats you may purchases a massage, have your fortune told or buy flowers or other small items. Unlike many other parts of China the salespeople are not pushy and generally do not disturb conversations or eating.
- 6.4 As an area Xingfu meets the objectives established by the Changshu People’s Government in their application for MCSTO Laboratory status in providing a resource for people’s wellbeing through the provision of a relaxing and relatively inexpensive place to eat.

7.0 Shajiabang Scenic Area

- 7.1 Shajiabang is a resort complex covering approximately 5,000 acres. It comprises three main zones, namely a series of heritage streets, the Shajianbang memorials dedicated to the resistance to the Japanese in the 1930s, and a reed wetland where it is possible to take a boat trip to enjoy the ride, the singing boat men and women who guide the boat through the reed maze allowing tourists to both see the waterfowl and enjoy the trip. Shajiabang is classified as a National Urban Wetland Park (NUWP) under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development. It is one of 41 such parks, all of which came into being in 2010 as a classification of natural assets. As such it is classified as being pollution free and being a bird resource. The use of macrophytes (reeds) is vital in establishing pollution free waters and when used with duckweeds can also minimize mosquito populations. They are also effective in removing lead pollution. Reeds have also been put to use by humans for hundreds of years – e.g. as roofing materials.

- 7.2 The site is well known to many Chinese because of its patriotic connotations that were summarized in the opera, *Shajiabang*, sung in the style of Peking Opera. The work was composed in 1963 and tells the story of resistance to the Japanese and the hiding of members of the New 4th Army hiding among the reed beds before the Army reformed and eventually liberate the area.
- 7.3 Associated with this period there is a museum and also a continuing Defence Educational Area that is used for training and as a resource for schools.
- 7.4 Examining social media relating to this site one finds a series of references to the history of the area, the numerous restaurants in the built ‘township’ including references to the local delicacy of Yangcheng Lake hairy crab, and the pleasure of taking the boat ride. Comments relate to the breezes felt during the summer, the beauty of the reed beds during the early morning and sunset and occasionally references to the waterfowl. The Wetland has been expanded over the years and is designated as a provincial model scenic spot.
- 7.5 A well-managed resort complex, the uniqueness of Shajiabang lies in its patriotic story and the boat trips, while the heritage area provides a number of retail opportunities and places for socialising over a tea or a meal. It certainly complements the mix of attractions that reinforce story-telling and the development of a nature based experience. It also provides employment and it is reported that the boatmen can earn 200 RMB a day during the main season.

8.0 Jianxiang Rural Tourism

- 8.1 Jianxiang also has a story to tell – but one that is very much a story of the reform period since 1979, and once closely related to the community that is resident. Whereas Shajiabang is a place to visit – Jianxiang is a place where people live and which has progressed through a series of developments to arrive at the point where it now seeks to develop a service industry based around tourism. A village possessing a population of about 800 belonging to 190 families the community has become famous in China for its development and progress since the 1960s (Zhou, 2010). Much of this is due to

the dynamic nature of Village Party Secretary Chang Desheng, who now, aged 70, continues to lead his village even though he possesses no residential rights due to his having married a woman from Shanghai. The formula for the village development has been a progression from agriculture to manufacturing industry and now to the service industry based upon tourism.

- 8.2 The history of the village and its development is recorded on a display board within the village museum. The display traces the emergence of the village from poverty – a process that began when Chang persuaded the villages to return privatized land back to the village collective. With the resurgence in agricultural production and its distribution into the growing region of Suzhou Chang turned his attention to industrial production and the Jiangsu Changsheng Group Corporation, based in Jiangxiang, was listed as a national township enterprise in 2003. It is now a widely recognized brand in steel and building materials. By 2006, Jiangxiang's total output value had reached 1.2 billion yuan, with 1.15 billion from industry. Average annual income had surpassed 16,000 yuan per capita.



Figure Four Residents Houses - Jianxiang

- 8.3 The village today provides a high standard of living for its residents who have access to centres for cultural activities, sports, entertainment, and medical treatment. Each household has access to cable television, gas stoves and solar water heaters and as shown in Figure Four the village resembles a resort complex as the modern apartments stand within cultivated gardens. Tourism has been developed and is

currently moving from the village simply being a place to visit for its history and the gardens to one now providing accommodation. Accommodation units have now been built and will be under the management of a local youth hostel association. One aspect of the concerns that motivate the development is the choice made available to families for the care of their elderly. Seniors may choose to continue living either with their children or alone in units designed for them, but which are within walking distance of the family home. Hence the elderly may, if they wish, be independent of their children, but are within easy distance if requiring help – while in addition medical facilities are also on site. Just over 100 such apartments currently exist.

8.4 Jianxiang thus represents a unique tourist destination as tourists will be visiting a success story of the post 1979 Reforms while enjoying the sights of a working agricultural farm. It combines agri-tourism with a story based on socio-political themes and the leadership of a charismatic leader Chang Desheng, who makes himself available to many types of groups and individuals. Comparisons might also be made with the industrial heritage products found in other countries such as Port Sunlight in the United Kingdom as the village also demonstrates ways to create community based living based on walking patterns to work.

8.5 Again one can only conclude that there is a congruence between the objectives of the Changshu People's Government, the MCSTO and the authenticity of the story being told to tourists. The development will be of obvious interest to domestic Chinese as throwing light on recent history while it will also appeal to international tourists who possess an interest in the history of China's emergence over the last four decades.

9.0 Wengtonghe Memorial Hall

9.1 Wengtonghe Memorial Hall is ranked 45th of 48 tourist attractions in Changshu that are listed by TripAdvisor.com. Zhang (2010) takes the Hall as an example of how Confucian principles were applied in classical Chinese architecture to illustrate zones of study, personal life, family life and recreation – with the central courtyard being a specific feature for family privacy.

9.2 The house was listed as a municipal cultural relics protection unit in 1982 with the name "the Former Residence of Wen Xincun". Its main hall, called "Caiyi Hall" (彩衣堂), was listed into the fourth group of *National Key Cultural Relics Protection Units* in 2001. The property dates from the Ming Dynasty and was purchased by Wen Xincun in 1833. Its decorative colourings are thought to be of values while in addition the hall houses an exhibition of calligraphy. The house is especially associated with Weng Tonghe, a tutor to the Emperors Tongzhi and Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty, who served as a Minister of the late Qing period and whose commentaries on calligraphic styles are represented within the house (Cao, 2010). He also possessed significant political importance as a leader of the pro-war group during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 (Gong, 1994) and as a member of the pro-Reform group.

9.3 As an example of a heritage home the Hall has changed little since the early nineteenth century and is representative of homes owned by a elite from that period. It holds interest for those interested in the architectural and social history of pre-revolutionary China.

10.0 The Zong's and Zhao's Garden

10.1 The Gardens have the function of providing citizens of Changshu with a place to relax, appreciate classical Chinese styles of garden, meet friends and people, exercise, listen to music and enjoy the fresh air in a lovely setting.

10.2 The two gardens are adjacent to each and were formerly built in an area known as the 'Small Chuan' by the then censor of the Ming Dynasty, Qian Di. There is a literary connection in that during the Qing dynasty the then resident Zeng Pu achieved some success with his novel *Torn Flowers*.

10.3 The gardens illustrate a number of features of the classical Chinese Gardens. The interplay between rockery and water reflects the *shan-shui* (mountain-water, hard-soft) components of *ying* and *yang*, and the rockery additionally reflects a view of 'derived from nature, superior to nature' in its aesthetic appeal (Zhao & Chen, 2006).

- 10.4 Another feature is the above water zig-zag board walks that connect the small ‘pagodas’ representing human presence amidst nature while the zig-zag paths protect those seated in the shelters from the evil spirits who can only walk in a straight line. The gardens and the Zhao family themselves have attracted significant attention, especially from scholars in Changshu.



Figure Five A Corner of the Zhao Gardens

- 10.5 Figure Five illustrates the nature of the Gardens. From a tourist perspective the gardens have much to attract both the lay person and the keen gardener due to the various vistas that unfold as one walks through the gardens. The gardens comprise a number of harmonies relating to mixtures of species, the interplay between people, flora and water and rock features, and certainly fulfil an objective of making Changshu a place of mental well-being as people can contemplate the scene.

11.0 Nanhu Lake Park

- 11.1 Nanhu Lake Park represents a significant conversion of what was previously an industrial area and an extension of Yang-Chen Lake to create a new ecology of scientific and leisure activity. The area covers 4.21 square kilometres and involved

the relocation of old factory buildings and in the future the relocation of the remaining families who earned a living from fishing into new apartments with living conditions better than those currently found on their boats.

- 11.2 With such a history of past industrialisation and pollution, exacerbated by low flows of water at times, the lake has been subjected to substantial eutrophication at times in addition to retaining elements of trace minerals associated with its past heavy industry (Fan et al, 2005). Li and Ye (2010) also note the importance of the wetlands as a source of water for agriculture, thereby implying again the importance of the water being of high quality.
- 11.3 The wetland park is still currently under construction, and as a part of the improvement of the environment significant sludge removal has been taking place and in addition careful construction of new canals and waterways to improve the water flow has taken place. There was much evidence of tree planning and the embryonic development of recreational and leisure facilities – notably with the construction of footpaths and cycle ways, a tea house/café and signage. With reference to the location of signposts conveying information to future recreational users of the Park it was noted that some seem to be located by the highway rather than on the foot paths and cycle ways. As indicated in Figure Six it is unlikely that motorists would stop to read the small print, while in some instance their location would require walkers to leave the foot path and approach the road.



Figure Six Notice boards difficult to read as cars pass by – and away from cycle-way/footpath.

- 11.4 Nonetheless the initiative has much to recommend it in terms of improving the natural environment. It was noted that some plantings on the lake banks were beginning to form and undoubtedly the area will attract bird life to the resource.

12.0 Changshu Oriental Rosewood Co. Ltd

- 12.1 With the influx of visitors and an expectation that more visitors will be attracted to the city, opportunities may be created for companies not normally associating themselves with tourism to begin to use their assets to add to the portfolio of products. Such initiatives may appeal to niche market segments or add value to those who seek something new. One such example is the Changshu Oriental Rosewood Co. Ltd that has taken advantage of using its showrooms to develop a new visitor attraction.
- 12.2 The company specialises in the Su style of rosewood furniture drawing upon designs from the Ming and Qing dynasties. The Su style does not slavishly follow these older designs but seeks to capture the freshness and delicacy of , especially, the Ming furniture while emphasising the nature of the woods.
- 12.3 From a narrow tourism perspective, in this instance, the showrooms presented the different items in the best possible way and the information panels were clearly presented and informative. Human interest is added by an opportunity to see one of the crafts people at work carving a design. While for many this would not be a major attraction – and furthermore an attraction that is not aided by the nondescript outer appearance - what is on show would interest a part of the tourism market that appreciates beautiful wood work and furniture.
- 12.4 From a wider perspective the relationship between the company and the tourism authorities is potentially beneficial to both. For the tourism authorities the involvement of companies like the Changshu Oriental Rosewood Company adds to the portfolio of product being offered to visitors, and those interested in the product

will elect to visit the company. It also can be incorporated into tours based on concepts of industrial heritage – which products are quite well established in an European context. These tours can not only offer insights into production techniques but can also weave heritage, culture and history into the story telling. The same opportunities exist for the industrial heritage of Jianxiang. An additional benefit for the Tourism Authorities is that it establishes links between them and the wider industrial activity of the City. From the viewpoint of the company it permits the possibility of attracting people to its showrooms and in turn perhaps to its webpages – thereby increasing the potential to make sales. It therefore seems that a mutually beneficial synergy can be created in initiatives such as this.

13.0 Other locations visited - Jianmen Scenic Spot, Baoyan Ecological Sightseeing Park and surrounding villages.

13.1 These locations typify the attractions that would appeal to weekend break tourists from Shanghai and other major conurbations as representing an escape from the city into a rural area offering good standards of accommodation, access to scenic views and places to visit. In addition they also demonstrate the ways in tourism is being used to increase the income of rural areas.

13.2 Such developments are of importance as part of a specific pro-poverty alleviation programme in China, and is being encouraged by the Central Government. The often used rationale is economic because such programmes provide job opportunities for those of working age, thereby mitigating a need to join the exodus to the cities and hence better retaining income in the rural areas. More recently comments have emerged about the role of such programmes in addressing wider social issues. The exodus has meant for many who stay an increased sense of loneliness (Ma, 2015) and additionally an increased difficulty in acquiring marriage partners. Zheng Gongcheng at Renmin University has also published a series of reports that note that addressing issues of a rural exodus also has important social consequences. First there is likely to be a better support system for the elderly if sons and daughters are able to stay at home while possessing jobs, and equally there are emergent signs that children left in the care of aged grandparents may exhibit higher incidences of behaviour such as

school truancy and other similar issues. Being able to retain the family unit thus has not only economic advantages but also social advantages.

- 13.3 The opportunity therefore to develop such tourism is thus consistent not only with central government policy, but also with the Changshu People's Government's objective of 'Tourism Industry Development, Citizens' Living Quality and Enhancement of Happiness Index in the Economically Developed Region' stipulated in their letter of application to the UNWTO.
- 13.4 Therefore it was of interest to note the obvious development of the rural villages near to Changshu. Large houses had been recently built and an air of prosperity as evident in both the houses and the numbers of cars parked in the village. However, evidence was found at an anecdotal level of social changes that are found elsewhere in China in similar villages. When a worker in one of the café/restaurants was asked whether she was a local person she replied she was only working there while her husband was working on a local construction site, and they had both come from another area of China. Nonetheless such stories are evidence of an improving employment and income situation, but equally it can be seen that the consequences of such policies may be less simple than first thought.
- 13.5 Figure Seven is illustrative of the type of outlet found in this region, and indicates the high standard of fittings and the role of government in providing the infrastructure that supports such products. Such infrastructure does not only include road access but, as evidenced in this photograph, work relating to the provision of water features. The actual fittings and development of the restaurants are left to the individual families, and not all families wish to develop such facilities. Longer term social implications can arise and evidence from elsewhere points to a widening of incomes within the villages and the possibility of people selling businesses to entrepreneurs outside of the village, thereby changing the nature of the community. That things need not be like this is evidenced by the example of Jianxiang Village noted above – all of which indicates that there are different means of implementing the philosophy of the socialist market place espoused by Beijing.



Figure Seven Café/Restaurant Development

- 13.6 Currently in China there is a debate about how today industry nurtures agriculture. In the 1980s much of the development in China was driven by reform in the agricultural sector and the increases in food and other production that was being achieved. Today as evidenced in Changshu and other MCSTO regions such as in Xishuangbanna, Dai Prefecture tourism is providing an impetus to local agricultural production as it generates an increasing demand for food by tourists, while also allowing local people to obtain better prices for their agricultural produce as they sell through their own restaurants.

14.0 Conclusions

- 14.1 The purpose of the report was to assess whether Changshu had tourism product in sufficient number and nature to be consistent with the objectives of the UNWTO Observatory criteria. The answer is in the affirmative.
- 14.2 Indeed, the Changshu City, its tourism authorities and the administrations of the various sites visited are to be congratulated on the progress made toward the development of tourism and recreational product that enhances the city by the provision of parks and lakes that make natural settings easily accessible to many residents, that create economic advantages for small and medium sized entrepreneurs

and for the conversion of previously polluted sites into areas that will benefit both human and local wild life at Nanhu Lake. These are significant and impressive achievements. There are though some minor and major elements with which the UNWTO Monitoring staff can work with and aid the People's Government as listed below.

15.0 Recommendations

15.1 The primary recommendation is that Changshu be engaged in the UNWTO Observatories programme for Sustainable Tourism.

15.2 Within this overall recommendation it is noted that the Changshu People's Government proposed three factor that it wished to pursue, namely

- 1) Tourism Industry Development;
- 2) Eco-protection; and
- 3) Residents' well-being and the enhancement of a 'happiness index'

15.3 It is suggested that with reference to product development there are both minor and major elements for future consideration. The minor elements that relate to product development include enhancing the visitor centre at Yushan, the consideration of providing at some sites better information and paying more attention to the modes of delivering that information, and the siting of signposts are among the issues mentioned in the report above. This attention to tourism product includes the web, and in the process of writing this report it appears that in early May 2015 the web pages that appeared first when using a search engine with the queries 'Changshu' and 'tourism' were criticisms of the pig jumping at Shiyan Lake on May 1st rather than other pages relating to the above attractions. The needs to monitor web usage and to use Baidu Analytics to discern trends, attitudes and visitor search patterns is evident.

15.4 A major marketing issue facing the tourism authorities is that of identifying the role of Changshu within the wider tourism of the Hangzhou, Suzhou and Shanghai region. The objectives noted in paragraph 15.2 reflect a domestic and regional focus, and that arguably reflects the current nature of tourism in Changshu. The product is oriented toward a domestic market centered on traditional features of heritage, nature and

relaxation – and as such ideally suits market segments such as the weekend break market. It does pose one marketing issue, and that is, how might Changshu sufficiently demarcate its product from many other Chinese locations offering much the same type of attractions. However the theme of ‘mountain, water and city’ possesses integrity and permits sub-themes such as tea, nature, flowers, heritage and history to be developed. The issue is how might these be brought together to form an iconic image for the city. Hangzhou has West Lake, Suzhou its water town and Shanghai the Bund to which it adds the Yuyuan Tourist Mart and a Disney Resort. It is suggested that Changshu seeks to place itself as the complementary wellness tourism product based on quality of life.

- 15.5 Many destinations seek to establish an aspect of their location that can be used to symbolize the place, its meanings and its spirit. For example New York uses the Statue of Liberty as having both a symbolic and heritage meaning harkening back to its migrant tradition. Sydney uses its Opera House with its free flowing and innovative architecture to express an Australian spirit of looking at things anew and tackling things with an adventurous spirit. Changshu possesses Yushan Hill that visually dominates the surrounding plains, and offers views that contrast between city and Shanghu Lake. Ormanes including hill has become a place of recreation and leisure and combines natural setting with traditions of the tea houses, the flying of kites, Confucian connections, temples and might well be used for a series of events and performances of a contemporary nature. It has spaces that permit people to congregate. Yushan may then well become a symbol of Changshu that brings together the themes of nature, wellness, relaxation, heritage, water and which would permit the development of festivals and events that add to these themes. Yushan permits a tourism product that retains authenticity with the Changshu government’s objectives, the issues of sustainability that are the concern of the UNWTO, and may come to represent Changshu as the symbol of ‘frequently harvesting tourism’
- 15.6 One other factor that demarcates Changshu from other UNWTO MCSTO locations is the fact that Changshu is an urban centre with an industrial role. It may be possible to develop tourism product based on its high tech industries in ways consistent with its messages of environmentally friendly development and so develop a tourism industry product based on future technologies as Masdar City in Abu Dhabi is seeking to do.

15.7 One social issue that Changshu faces in its rural locations is common to much of China's newly enriched rural areas. As the villages become richer through tourism it needs to be noted that local Gini coefficients increase as income differentials become more apparent as the more entrepreneurial thrive. Those engaged in the administration of village tourism need to consider the potential implications of social and population change as residential patterns change as incomes and business opportunities emerge with the development of tourism. As noted in paragraph 13.2 these changes can be substantial over a decade, and thus present challenges to the concepts of the social marketing place.

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Appendix One

Schedule in Changshu – Purpose - UNWTO appraisal

7 April

Visit Yushan Park

Visit Jianmen Scenic Spot

Visit Baoyan Ecological Park

Visit Shanghu Lake Scenic Area

Met with official from the Council and Tourism Authorities

8 April

Visit Xingfu Area

Visit Xingfu-Sanfeng area and village communities

Visit Shajianbang Scenic Area

Visit Jianxiang Rural Tourism – village development

9 April

Visit Wengtonghe Memorial Hall

Visit Zeng and Zhao Garden

Visit West Gate Area

Visit Nanhu Lake Park (new wetland construction site)

Visit Changshu Oriental Rosewood Company

Meeting with staff from Council and Tourism Authorities – feedback and presentations

Appendix Two

Activities associated with the Peony Festival

Kite flying and azalea show – Mount Yu City Wall

Jiang Shang cultural experience and wellness tourism

‘Riverside Residence’ – reproduction of Kiangnan

Cartoon Carnival

Clown show

Calligraphy Works Exhibitions

Pingtang Show

Guqin Show

Kunqu Show

Tea making show

Matchmaking Assembly

Kiangnan Tea Fair