



2024 Annual Report of Changshu Sustainable Tourism Observatory (Data July 2023 - June 2024)

Annual Progress Report 2024.12 Edition



International Network
of Sustainable Tourism
Observatories

The Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Changshu (STOC)

Annual Progress Report-2024.12 Edition

MCSTO

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Foreword

In April 2015, the People's Government of Changshu Municipality and Sun Yat-sen University (SYSU) formally signed an agreement to establish the Changshu Observatory for Sustainable Tourism, under the auspices of the Monitoring Centre for Sustainable Tourism Observatories of UN Tourism (MCSTO). On 31 August 2015, the Changshu Observatory was officially approved by UN Tourism as the eighth observatory in China and the first in Jiangsu Province. It was also the first observatory worldwide to focus specifically on urban leisure and the conservation of urban tourism resources.

Since its establishment, the Changshu Observatory has centered its monitoring work on two key themes: First, the relationship between tourism development in economically advanced regions and the improvement of residents' living standards and well-being. Second, the balance between tourism development and ecological protection in such regions. Each year, the observatory conducts monitoring of local sustainable tourism development, aiming to provide robust practical models for UN Tourism.

From 23 to 30 August 2024, with the strong support of the Changshu Municipal Bureau of Culture, Sports, Radio, Television and Tourism, a monitoring team led by Professor Zhang Xiaoming successfully completed the tenth field study on sustainable tourism development at the Changshu Observatory. The team included one faculty member, four doctoral students, three master's students, and thirteen undergraduates from the School of Tourism Management and the Tourism Development and Planning Research Centre at Sun Yat-sen University.

This round of monitoring consisted of both regular monitoring and thematic monitoring. Regular monitoring assessed the current state of tourism development in Changshu, based on the sustainable development indicator system and methodologies. Thematic monitoring focused on distinctive tourism themes in Changshu, including research on urban leisure and residents' well-being and the planning and design of Yan Zi educational tourism projects. In addition, the monitoring paid particular attention to the economic development of the local tourism industry, while also reviewing the achievements of Changshu's sustainable tourism monitoring efforts over the past decade.

In July 2020, MCSTO officially launched the second five-year cycle of sustainable tourism monitoring at the Changshu Observatory. Building on the experiences of the first five-year cycle (2015–2019), the monitoring team refined the framework in line with the indicator system and methodologies recommended by the Department of Sustainable Development of UN Tourism. Special emphasis was placed on aligning monitoring practices with emerging trends and the development needs of local tourism, thereby optimizing and enriching the content of the monitoring work.

The year 2024 marked the tenth anniversary of the MCSTO's field-based work in Changshu. Building on the 2023 monitoring activities, the 2024 programme expanded its scope to include the economic development of the local tourism industry and reviewed a decade of sustainable tourism monitoring in Changshu, making the study both more comprehensive and substantive. The monitoring team completed the annual analysis and report writing by the end of October 2024.

Executive Summary

As an economically advanced region in the context of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and modernization, Changshu hosts the first UN Tourism Sustainable Tourism Observatory dedicated to monitoring urban leisure and the conservation of urban tourism resources in China. The primary objective of establishing this observatory is to conduct periodic monitoring of Changshu's tourism resources and environment, economy, society, urban leisure, and urban-rural integration.

Overall, tourism development in Changshu has remained stable with positive momentum, showing strong signs of recovery. As the city continues to advance the high-quality development of its cultural and tourism sectors, the supply and quality of tourism products have improved, while visitor satisfaction and experience evaluations remain high. The appeal and reputation of Changshu as a tourist destination have gained increasing recognition in the market.

From the perspective of residents' attitudes, Changshu has in the past year continued to prioritize municipal infrastructure and ecological construction, creating favorable conditions for tourism development and local leisure activities. As a result, the development of tourism has received broad recognition from local residents.

From an economic perspective, Changshu's tourism economy remained robust in 2023, with notable achievements in the integrated development of culture and tourism. During major holidays, tourism-related enterprises demonstrated a strong recovery trend, actively stimulating local participation in tourism employment.

Regarding tourism seasonality, no pronounced seasonal fluctuations were observed, largely due to changes in statistical methods. In terms of energy management, water management, wastewater management, solid waste management, and climate action, Changshu has actively promoted new initiatives. Likewise, in the areas of governance and accessibility, more proactive measures have been taken to align with practical governance needs and to further enhance the precision and quality of accessible services in building an integrated cultural, sports, and tourism industry system.

In addition, in the field of cultural tourism products, Changshu has leveraged relevant policies on study tours, together with its rich cultural heritage and tourism resources, to actively develop educational tourism themed around Jiangnan Confucian culture.

Changshu in Brief

Changshu, located in the southern part of Jiangsu Province, is a county-level city administered by Suzhou. It borders the Yangtze River to the north, facing Nantong across the river; adjoins Taicang to the east; connects with Suzhou's Xiangcheng District and Kunshan to the south; neighbors Xishan District of Wuxi and Jiangyin to the west; and shares its northwest boundary with Zhangjiagang. Situated between 31°31'–31°50' N and 120°33'–121°03' E, Changshu covers a total area of 1,276.32 square kilometers. The terrain is flat and interlaced with waterways. The city lies in the temperate zone and has a subtropical monsoon maritime climate.

Administratively, Changshu governs 8 towns and 6 subdistricts. By the end of 2023, the registered population had reached 1.051 million. Changshu ranks among the leading county-level cities in China in terms of economy, culture, finance, commerce, exhibitions, and shipping.

As an economically advanced region within the context of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and modernization, Changshu is the first UN Tourism Observatory that focuses on urban leisure and the conservation of urban tourism resources in China. The observatory was established in order to conduct periodic monitoring of local tourism resources and environment, economy, society, urban leisure, and urban–rural integration; to collect real-time data for evaluation indicators; and to build a database for sustainable tourism monitoring in Changshu. This framework enables the analysis and assessment of the city's tourism development, the timely identification of challenges, and the adoption of corrective measures. It also seeks to explore models of sustainable urban tourism that balance economic growth, citizen leisure, cultural and tourism industries, and resource protection, with a view to sharing replicable practices globally.

The Role of Tourism in Changshu

Changshu enjoys unique advantages in tourism development. First, the city is endowed with rich natural and cultural resources, harmonizing mountains, waters, and the city into a picturesque whole. As one of the birthplaces of Wu culture, Changshu boasts a profound scholarly tradition and vibrant intangible cultural heritage. Second, its strategic location in the Yangtze River Delta ensures convenient transportation, making it an important member of the region's tourism network. Third, Changshu

invested early in tourism infrastructure, and its supporting service facilities are well developed.

Over the past decade, Changshu has continuously enhanced its scenic areas, improved supporting facilities, and upgraded service quality. The city actively built the brand “A Blessed Land of Jiangnan—Changshu”, while tourism began to deeply integrate with other industries and urban development.

Since 2021, the city has entered a new phase of multi-faceted development and brand reshaping centered on Jiangnan culture. Marked by the recognition of the Yushan Cultural Tourism Resort as a national-level tourism resort in 2023, this stage highlights the restructuring, innovation, and upgrading of tourism resources. Changshu has promoted the deep integration of tourism with multiple industries, developed the “Four-Color Tourism” concept, and advanced an all-area tourism model under the theme of “Refined and Beautiful Tourism.”

Looking ahead, Changshu will continue to pursue the goal of building a higher-quality “Blessed Land of Jiangnan”. The city aims to develop flagship tourism products and consumption activities, create distinctive brands integrating culture, sports, and tourism, improve public tourism services, and regulate market management. It will further enhance tourism reception capacity, strengthen the foundation of the cultural–sports–tourism industry, and promote prosperity across these sectors.

The ultimate vision is to create a shared living space for both residents and visitors, showcasing a city characterized by cultural continuity, scenic vitality, lively neighborhoods, engaging countryside, and fortuitous encounters. This will enrich the connotation of the brand “A Blessed Land of Jiangnan—Changshu”, and present the unique charm and urban character of Changshu as “a city of mountains and waters, a life of ease.”

Methodologies and Issue Areas

The monitoring process was divided into three stages: preparation, field investigation, and report writing. Between July 12 and August 22, 2024, the monitoring team developed an outline and research plan, clarified the list of required materials, collected relevant secondary data, designed questionnaires, arranged schedules, and allocated personnel and tasks. At the same time, the team actively communicated and coordinated with the Changshu Bureau of Culture, Sports, Radio, Television and Tourism and other relevant units to ensure the smooth progress of subsequent fieldwork. They also collected 2023–2024 data reports and work summaries provided by Changshu units on tourism revenue, industry development, and water resource management.

From August 23 to August 30, 2024, the monitoring team conducted fieldwork through observation, questionnaire surveys, and interviews. The survey yielded 70,000 words of valid interview notes and collected 598 valid questionnaires, including 242 from residents (valid response rate: 97.6%) and 356 from tourists (valid response rate: 93.4%). The team conducted site visits to major attractions and emerging tourism resources in Changshu, and held both individual interviews and group discussions with representatives from the Changshu cultural and tourism departments and their subdivisions, enterprises engaged in new forms and scenarios of tourism, digital cultural tourism enterprises, cultural and creative tourism product companies, enterprises involved in the productive transformation of intangible cultural heritage, and experts on study-tourism and cultural history.

After completing the fieldwork, the team entered the report-writing stage. Based on the data and materials collected during the first two phases, and applying disciplinary knowledge of tourism studies, the monitoring team conducted evaluation and analysis. By the end of October 2024, the regular report and the thematic report had been completed.

During this process, the monitoring team focused on twelve Key Issue Areas, including the eleven identified in the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories project, as well as the market status of Changshu’s Yan Zi-themed study-tourism products. Table 1 outlines these issue areas, providing corresponding indicator descriptions and summaries of the current situation.

Table 1. Overview of Key Issue Areas Monitored During the Reporting Period

Key Issue Area	Indicator Description	Current Situation
1. Resident satisfaction with tourism	Includes residents' assessments of the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism.	Most residents recognize the positive economic contributions of tourism. While tourism generates many benefits, it inevitably imposes some negative impacts on communities, and residents' perceptions of these impacts are significant. Residents generally agree with the positive role of tourism in cultural preservation and development, and most also hold positive views on its environmental contributions.
2. Economic benefits of the destination	In 2023, Changshu's GDP reached RMB 280.016 billion, an increase of 3.6% over the previous year. The tertiary sector, including culture and tourism, accounted for more than 49% of total revenue, with added value of RMB 137.844 billion, a growth of 4.5%, effectively unleashing the vitality of the tertiary sector.	The tourism market remained buoyant. Rated scenic areas received 6.7495 million domestic and international visitors, up 76.1% year-on-year, and tourism revenue reached RMB 170.49 million, an 82.2% increase. Key events included the 4th China Future Scenic Area Conference and the first joint meeting of the Yangtze River Delta Historic Cities Exchange and Cooperation Alliance. In the cultural sector, infrastructure for residents was further improved, and a variety of festivals and exhibitions were staged for wider audiences. Notable events included the 2023 Yushan Culture and Shajiabang Tourism Festival, the "I Am a Yule Player" Cultural Tourism New Retail Consumption Festival, the inaugural "Encounter Yushan—National College Student Chinese Painting Exhibition," and the second "Encounter Yushan—Famous Chinese Painters' Sketch Exhibition."
3. Employment	Includes the number and proportion of local residents engaged in tourism-related employment.	For example, at Shajiabang Scenic Area, between July and December 2023, 380 out of 453 employees were local residents (83.89%). Between January and June 2024, 398 out of 471 employees were local residents (84.50%), indicating a high level of resident participation in tourism development.
4. Tourism seasonality	Includes visitor numbers and tourism revenues at key scenic areas.	At Shajiabang, Changshu's most important scenic area, visitor numbers reached 1.1082 million between July and December 2023, generating operating revenue of RMB 43.04 million and ticket revenue of RMB 21.36 million. Between January and June 2024, it received 984,600 visitors, with operating revenue of RMB 32.24 million and ticket revenue of RMB 15.95 million. Compared with the first half of 2023, visitor numbers remained essentially stable.
5. Energy management	Includes industrial energy consumption and energy structure.	On September 9, 2024, the Changshu Municipal People's Government issued the "Implementation Plan for the Continuous Improvement of Air Quality," which sets targets for optimizing the energy structure and advancing clean, low-carbon, and efficient energy development. Objectives include: (1) vigorously developing new and clean energy; (2) strictly controlling total coal consumption; (3) continuously reducing energy intensity in key

Key Issue Area	Indicator Description	Current Situation
		sectors; (4) promoting the phase-out or replacement of coal-fired boilers and the adoption of clean energy in industrial kilns.
6. Water resource management	Changshu has strictly implemented water conservation measures, reducing permitted water use by 31 million m ³ . The city passed the re-examination for designation as a national water-saving city and prepared for national-level recognition as a water-saving county. A total of 27 new water-saving units were established.	In 2023, surface water quality was excellent, with 94.0% of sections meeting or exceeding Class III standards, up 12 percentage points from the previous year. No sections fell below Class V. The main pollutant was total phosphorus. The average comprehensive pollution index was 0.33, a 2.9% decline. Drinking water quality met Class III or higher standards between 2013 and 2023. In 2023, both centralized water sources met Class II standards, with a 100% compliance rate, ensuring safe drinking water. All 80 monitored parameters were within standards.
7. Wastewater management	Compilation of the “Changshu Special Plan for Wastewater Management (2022–2035)” provides guidance for citywide wastewater control. In 2024, the “333 Action Plan” for improving rural and urban wastewater treatment was issued.	Groundwater quality monitoring began in 2013 under the National Groundwater Pollution Prevention Plan. Three monitoring sites were established: an urban site, an industrial site, and an agricultural site. Testing is conducted twice annually. In 2023, groundwater quality at all sites failed to meet Class III standards: the urban site (Class V, worse than last year, key parameter: total coliforms), the industrial site (Class V, unchanged, key parameters: turbidity and chlorides), and the rural site (Class V, unchanged, key parameters: odor and total bacterial count).
8. Solid waste management	The “14th Five-Year Plan for Building a Zero-Waste City” was issued, accelerating the creation of a society-wide zero-waste model.	In 2023, general industrial solid waste generation reached 6.721 million tons. Of this, 6.32 million tons were utilized, including 2,923.9 tons from previous stockpiles. Disposal amounted to 400,000 tons. Storage totaled 4,657.7 tons. Compared to the previous year, both generation and utilization increased significantly. The bulk originated from three industries: power and heat production, ferrous metal smelting and processing, and paper manufacturing, together accounting for 92.5% of the total.
9. Governance	To promote high-quality development of cultural, sports, and tourism industries, Changshu	Challenges remain, including limited brand influence, insufficient resource supply, inadequate synergies between culture/sports and tourism, a shortage of high-end tourism products, and low levels of consumer activity. The plan sets a target of significantly improving

Key Issue Area	Indicator Description	Current Situation
	issued the “Action Plan for High-Quality Development of the Cultural–Sports–Tourism Industry (2023–2026).”	the industry by 2026, with enhanced resource allocation, higher-quality tourism products, and deeper integration across sectors.
10. Climate action	Ecological protection efforts include implementing the “14th Five-Year Plan for Ecological Protection” and the “Beautiful Scenery” Three-Year Action Plan. Changshu pioneered ecosystem GDP (GEP) accounting in Jiangsu.	The 2022 GEP report valued ecosystem services at RMB 172.275 billion, equal to 72.8% of GDP. Continuous improvements in the Ecological Quality Index (EQI) ranked first in Suzhou. Air quality measures included 1,539 projects completed in 2023, VOCs emission inventories, regulation of 3,013 enterprises, and innovative platforms for activated carbon replacement and VOCs control. In green development, the Changshu High-Tech Zone was selected as a provincial dual-carbon pilot park in 2024, and Jiangxiang Village was recognized as Jiangsu’s first zero-carbon smart village.
11. Accessibility	Issued the “14th Five-Year Plan for Disability Services” and the “Administrative Measures for Accessibility Facilities.” Construction, renovation, and maintenance of accessible facilities followed relevant standards.	The “Smart Accessibility Improvement Project” enabled unified data management, improved interdepartmental coordination, and ensured barrier-free travel for people with disabilities. A citywide accessibility map covering 246 locations was completed. In digital accessibility, Yushan National Forest Park was designated as a model scenic area on the accessibility map.
12. Yan Zi-themed study-tourism products	Includes assessment of current products, SWOT analysis, and proposed implementation plans.	Challenges exist in content and organizational structure. Based on SWOT analysis, this report proposes a series of products themed around Yan Zi culture, including “Eight Rites Journey” for youth, “Party-Building Training Tour,” and “Six Arts and Eight Refined Pursuits” for high-end groups. These aim to position Changshu as the leading destination in the Yangtze River Delta for exploring Jiangnan Confucian culture.

Source: Regular Monitoring and Thematic Monitoring of the Monitoring Team in Changshu Observatory 2024

Issue Areas





Local Satisfaction With Tourism

This monitoring collected 242 valid resident questionnaires through field surveys. Among 226 valid responses, the gender ratio was approximately 1:1.42, with males accounting for 41.32% and females 58.68%, indicating a relatively balanced distribution. In terms of age, respondents aged 16–25 and 26–35 constituted the largest groups, accounting for 34.30% and 24.80% respectively, together comprising more than half of the sample. Regarding educational attainment, 42.98% held a bachelor's degree or above, and 16.60% had completed high school or vocational school, consistent with the concentration of respondents in the 16–60 age range. Monthly incomes between 3,000 and 10,000 RMB accounted for approximately 56.22% of the sample, indicating a relatively high overall income level among respondents.

Table 2. Sample Characteristics

Item	Category	Number	Proportion
Gender	Male	100	41.32%
	Female	142	58.68%
Age (year-old)	15 and below	13	5.37%
	16-25	83	34.30%
	26-35	60	24.80%
	36-45	47	19.42%
	46-60	30	12.40%
	60 and above	9	3.72%
Education Experience	Elementary School and Below	4	17.02%
	Junior High School	36	15.32%
	Senior High School	39	16.60%
	Associate Bachelor	55	23.40%
	Bachelor	83	35.32%
	Above Bachelor	18	7.66%
Income per Month (yuan)	Below 1000	9	4.48%
	1001-2000	6	2.99%
	2001-3000	27	13.43%
	3001-5000	45	22.39%
	5001-10000	68	33.83%
	Above 10000	46	22.86%

Source: 2024 Changshu Monitoring Resident Questionnaire Survey

Local residents' satisfaction with tourism encompasses their evaluations of the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism. The assessment framework, as shown in Table 3, consists of 29 indicators: 15 positive and 14 negative,

to capture respondents' genuine attitudes and minimize careless or invalid responses. Each indicator was rated on a five-point Likert scale: "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Neutral," "Agree," and "Strongly Agree." For data analysis, these categories were assigned values of 1–5 respectively, to facilitate statistical comparison of mean scores, with higher means indicating stronger levels of agreement. Each item was also analyzed separately, focusing on the proportion of responses in each category to assess different attitudes and distribution tendencies within the respondent group, with higher proportion indicating a larger number of respondents holding that opinion.

Table 3. Indicators for Residents' Evaluation of Tourism Impacts

Dimension	Evaluation Indicators
Economic Impacts of Tourism	1. Tourism development has attracted more investment and consumption
	2. I personally benefit economically from tourism
	3. Tourism development has created more job opportunities for local residents
	4. Tourism development has accelerated the rise of local housing prices
	5. Tourism development has accelerated the rise of local commodity prices
Social Impacts of Tourism	1. Tourism development has improved municipal infrastructure
	2. Tourism development has improved local healthcare conditions and services
	3. Tourism development has generally enhanced residents' quality of life
	4. Tourism contributes positively to local development
	5. Tourism has fostered more open-minded attitudes among residents
	6. Tourism has broadened the horizons of children and youth
	7. Tourism has disrupted residents' daily lives
	8. Tourism has worsened social conduct
	9. Tourism has worsened public security
	10. Tourism development has intensified tensions between residents and tourists
	11. Tourism development has reduced residents' access to public spaces
	12. Tourists has crowded out residents in the use of recreational and sports facilities.
	13. Tourism development has aggravated traffic congestion
Cultural	1. Tourism has promoted cultural exchange between locals and outsiders

Impacts of Tourism	2. Tourism has facilitated the spread of Mandarin Chinese
	3. Tourism has improved the preservation of historic buildings
	4. Tourism has supported the protection and transmission of local handicrafts
	5. Tourism has supported the protection and transmission of traditional folk customs
Environmental Impacts of Tourism	1. Tourism has worsened air pollution
	2. Tourism has worsened water pollution
	3. Tourism has worsened noise pollution
	4. Tourism has increased the volume of waste
	5. Tourism facilities (e.g., buildings, roads, parking lots) have damaged the landscape
	6. Tourism development has enhanced landscape conservation

Source: 2024 Changshu Monitoring Resident Questionnaire Survey

Most residents affirmed the positive economic impacts of tourism. Overall, more than 45% of respondents selected “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” across the economic indicators. Specifically, for the indicators “Tourism development has attracted more investment and consumption” and “Tourism has created more job opportunities for local residents,” over 75% of respondents rated them 4 or 5, exceeding the results of 2023 and showing a notable increase. This indicates an enhanced public perception of tourism’s contribution to economic development. However, for the indicator “I personally benefit economically from tourism,” support was relatively weaker: only 54.32% agreed, while 23.87% remained neutral. This suggests that while residents recognize tourism’s contribution to the local economy, many are unclear about its direct impact on their personal economic well-being—likely influenced by Changshu’s tourism development patterns, occupational structures, and educational levels. Regarding negative impacts, 43.21% agreed that tourism accelerated housing price increases, and 45.68% agreed it raised commodity prices—down from 71.68% in 2023. This suggests that although concerns about inflation and housing costs remain, there has been some improvement compared to the previous year. Overall, many residents not directly involved in tourism perceived limited personal benefits but bore part of the economic costs, contributing to stronger perceptions of negative impacts.

Residents gave generally high evaluations of tourism's positive social impacts, with mean scores rising compared to previous years. The highest-rated indicator was "Tourism contributes positively to local development" (mean=4.33), followed by "Tourism has broadened the horizons of children and youth" (mean=4.32), "Tourism has improved municipal infrastructure" (mean=4.10), "Tourism has generally enhanced quality of life" (mean=4.03), and "Tourism has improved healthcare conditions and services" (mean=3.87). Most indicators scored close to 4, showing broadly positive perceptions. In particular, improvements in municipal infrastructure and healthcare in recent years have reinforced residents' confidence in tourism's benefits at both macro and micro levels. Perceptions of negative social impacts have weakened overall, though concerns remain regarding traffic congestion, social conduct, and disruptions to daily life.

Tourism's positive contributions to cultural preservation and development were also widely recognized. Approximately 75% of residents agreed or strongly agreed with positive cultural impact indicators, with the highest agreement reaching 84.36%. Around 10–20% expressed neutral attitudes, and about 5% expressed negative views. While cultural impacts were assessed positively overall, lingering concerns about negative aspects suggest the need for continued efforts in fostering cultural exchange, heritage conservation, and public engagement with tourism-related cultural development.

Regarding environmental impacts, residents expressed overall affirmation of tourism's positive role. Notably, 79.01% agreed that "Tourism has enhanced landscape conservation," suggesting a strong perception of progress in this area. At the same time, perceptions of negative impacts have diminished, particularly concerning pollution and waste management, reflecting government efforts to strengthen control systems. For four of the negative environmental indicators, more than 50% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The exception was "Tourism has increased the volume of waste," where agreement remained highest among negative indicators, indicating that waste generation remains a prominent public concern. In summary, residents generally perceive tourism as environmentally beneficial, but issues such as waste management, landscape protection, and transparent communication of environmental outcomes still require further attention.



Destination

Economic Benefits

In 2023, Changshu's tourism economy steadily recovered and continued to improve, accompanied by rising urban quality and higher living standards for residents. The integrated development of culture and tourism achieved tangible results. The city's gross domestic product (GDP) reached 280.016 billion RMB, representing a 3.6% year-on-year increase. The tertiary sector, which includes the cultural and tourism industries, accounted for more than 49% of the total output, with an added value of 137.844 billion RMB, up 4.5% from the previous year. These figures highlight the strong dynamism and effective release of vitality within the service sector.

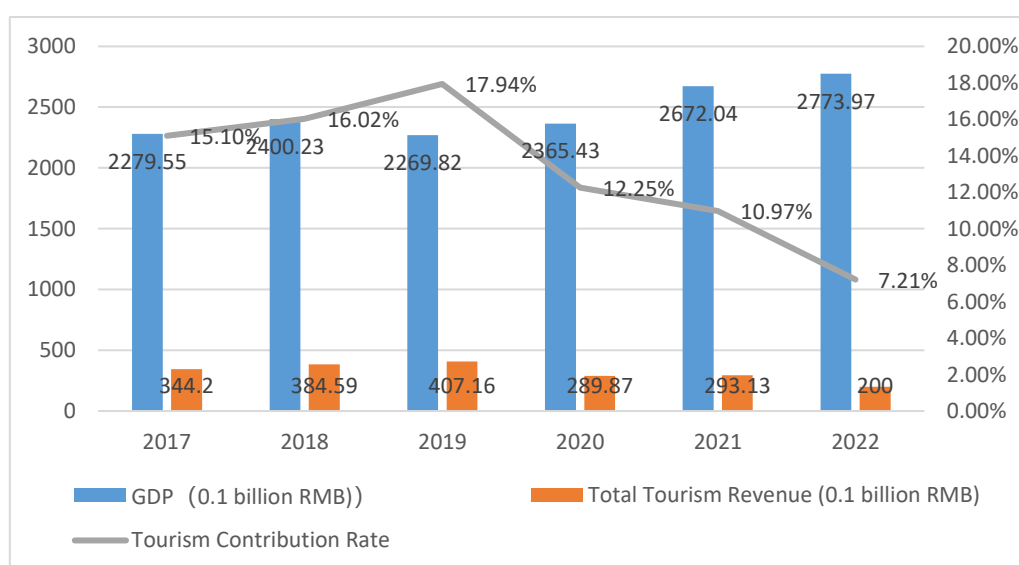
The tourism industry in particular demonstrated robust market performance. A-level tourist attractions across the city received 6.7495 million domestic and international visitors, marking a 76.1% increase compared with the previous year. Total tourism revenue reached 170.49 million RMB, an 82.2% year-on-year growth. During the year, Changshu successfully hosted several high-profile events, including the Fourth China Future Scenic Area Conference and the First Joint Conference of the Yangtze River Delta Historic and Cultural Cities Exchange and Cooperation Alliance. The city ranked second nationwide among counties in the 2023 National Top 100 Counties in Comprehensive Tourism Competitiveness. The Yushan Cultural Tourism Resort was awarded the title of "2023 National Leisure Tourism Destination," while the Shajiabang Revolutionary History Memorial Hall and the Shajiabang–Yushan–Shanghu Scenic Area were included in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's Yangtze River-themed national tourism routes. Furthermore, the Art Duck Innovation Center was designated as a provincial-level industrial tourism zone.

The cultural sector also maintained strong momentum, further strengthening the city's infrastructure and offering rich cultural experiences to both residents and visitors. Major events organized in 2023 included the Yushan Culture and Shajiabang Tourism Festival, the "I Am a YuLe Player" cultural tourism consumption festival, the First "Encounter Yushan—National University Students' Chinese Painting Exhibition," and the Second "Encounter Yushan—Chinese Fine Arts Masters' Sketch Exhibition." By the end of 2023, Changshu had developed a comprehensive network of cultural venues and facilities. The city was home to six registered museums, four art performance venues, and two art galleries. The library system consisted of one central library, fourteen branches, twenty-one "24-hour city study rooms," forty-seven internal circulation points, and thirty-one specialized external circulation points, complemented by 336 community or village reading rooms, eight intelligent

book-lending lockers, and five manual book-lending stations. Together, these facilities generated a total circulation of 1.24 million person-times. In addition, the city maintained one cultural center, 114 community cultural activity rooms, and 210 village cultural activity rooms, ensuring full coverage and significantly enriching the cultural life of residents and visitors.

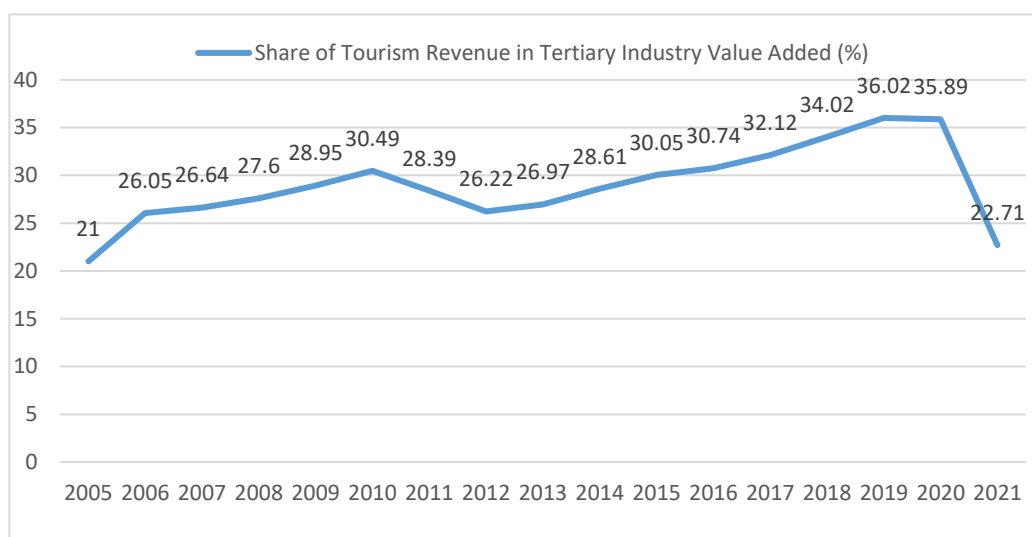
Between 2017 and 2022, Changshu's total tourism revenue was heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, the city's total tourism revenue dropped to 20 billion RMB, a 32% decline compared to the previous year. Before 2020, however, tourism revenue as a share of GDP had shown a steady upward trend, rising from 15.10% in 2017 to 17.94% in 2019. Beginning in 2020, the sector was severely impacted by the pandemic and subsequently entered a sustained decline. Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of total tourism revenue in Changshu's GDP between 2017 and 2022, while Figure 2 demonstrates the share of total tourism revenue in tertiary industry value added between 2005 and 2021, both based on data from the *Changshu Statistical Bulletin of National Economic and Social Development*.

Figure 1. Proportion of Total Tourism Revenue in Changshu's GDP (2017–2022)



Source: 2017–2022 *Changshu Statistical Bulletin of National Economic and Social Development*

Figure 2. Share of Total Tourism Revenue in Tertiary Industry Value Added (2005–2021)



Source: 2005–2021 *Changshu Statistical Bulletin of National Economic and Social Development*

Due to changes in official statistical definitions, the *Statistical Bulletin* ceased publishing data on total tourism revenue and its share of GDP after 2022. As a result, other indicators—such as visitor arrivals at A-level attractions, tourism revenue, and year-on-year fluctuations—have been adopted as reference points to evaluate industry performance. In 2022, A-level tourist attractions received 3.528 million domestic visitors, a decline of 61% compared with the previous year, while annual tourism revenue fell to 67.919 million RMB, down 55.4%. In contrast, the year 2023 saw a strong recovery, with visitor arrivals surging to 6.7495 million, an increase of 76.1%, and tourism revenue reaching 170.49 million RMB, representing an 82.2% growth.

From an industrial structure perspective, Changshu's economic aggregate continued to expand in 2023. GDP reached 280.016 billion RMB, growing 3.6% year-on-year. The primary industry recorded an added value of 4.256 billion RMB, up 4.5%; the secondary industry contributed 137.916 billion RMB, up 2.5%; and the tertiary industry generated 137.844 billion RMB, also up 4.5%. The resulting three-sector structure ratio of 1.52:49.25:49.23 reflects the balanced contributions of the secondary and tertiary industries to the city's overall economic development.



Employment

Due to adjustments in official statistical definitions, data concerning the number of individuals employed in tourism at the county level, as well as the share of local residents among tourism employees at the end of 2023 and in the first half of 2024, are not available through public sources. Consequently, the analysis of tourism employment in Changshu relies primarily on two perspectives: employment conditions in Shajiabang Scenic Area, one of the city's most significant tourist attractions, and the overall development of local tourism enterprises.

Taking Shajiabang Scenic Area as an illustrative case, between July and December 2023, a total of 453 employees were recorded, of whom 380 were local residents, accounting for 83.89%. Between January and June 2024, the total number of employees rose to 471, with 398 local residents, representing 84.50%. These figures indicate a consistently high level of local resident participation in the city's tourism development.

Table 4 Employment in Tourism: Shajiabang Scenic Area

Position	Jul.-Dec. 2023				Jan.-June 2024			
	Total		Local		Total		Local	
	Number	Proportion	Male	Female	Number	Proportion	Male	Female
Accommodation	8	1.77%	/	/	8	1.70%	/	/
Catering	89	19.65%	/	/	107	22.72%	/	/
Transportation	47	10.38%	/	/	46	9.77%	/	/
Entertainment	30	6.62%	/	/	35	7.43%	/	/
Sightseeing	0	0.00%	/	/	0	0.00%	/	/
Others	279	61.59%	/	/	275	58.39%	/	/
Total	453	100.00%	164	216	471	100.00%	169	229

Source: 2024 Statistical Data of Shajiabang Scenic Area

The expansion of tourism enterprises further reflects this trend. Between January 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, the steady increase in visitor arrivals created broader market opportunities and generated positive employment effects. The catering industry, in particular, demonstrated robust growth. During this period, 5,569 new catering enterprises were registered in Changshu, with a combined registered capital of 2,500.09601 million RMB. The majority of these were individual catering businesses, signaling the continuous development of the tourism-related food and beverage sector. Through proactive government guidance and active engagement by market stakeholders, Changshu has innovatively utilized food festivals and convention events as strategic levers to stimulate the vitality of the catering market, thereby reinforcing

the city’s culinary identity as an integral part of its destination branding.

Similarly, the hospitality sector has shown signs of steady recovery and expansion. From January 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, a total of 176 new tourism accommodation establishments were added, with a combined registered capital of 6,505.08713 million RMB. According to the latest data from Ctrip, Changshu now offers 329 accommodation facilities, including hotels and guesthouses, with a spatial distribution concentrated in the city center, Wanda Plaza commercial district, the Yushan/Shanghu Resort Area, and Shajiabang Scenic Area. This growth reflects an expanding supply capacity and continuous improvements in service quality.

Table 5 Number of Hotels in Changshu (2017–2024)

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number	221	243	285	270	268	280	312	329

Source: 2017–2024 Changshu Tourism Monitoring Report

As for the travel agency sector, by June 30, 2024, Changshu hosted 49 registered travel agencies, all of which provide inbound tourism services in alignment with China’s 144-hour visa-free transit policy. In 2023, the city employed 222 licensed tour guides, nine more than in 2022. Among them, 213 held an associate degree or higher, while 127 had formal labor contracts. These developments demonstrate not only the resilience of Changshu’s tourism employment landscape but also the growing professionalization of its workforce.



Tourism Seasonality

During the period from 2023 to 2024, with the arrival of the post-pandemic era, the tourism market in Changshu remained generally stable and orderly, offering a diverse range of products. Holiday market operations were well-managed, effectively achieving the five unified goals of holiday tourism work: safety, order, quality, efficiency, and civility. Self-driving tours, leisure travel, study tours, and family-oriented trips collectively characterized the holiday tourism market as both “diverse and personalized.” The seasonal impact of tourism, however, was not pronounced, and monthly statistical data remain unavailable.

Using data from one of Changshu’s most important attractions, Shajiabang Scenic Area, as an example: between July and December 2023, the scenic area received 1.1082 million visitors, generating total revenue of 43.0401 million RMB, including ticket revenue of 21.3616 million RMB. Between January and June 2024, the area hosted 0.9846 million visitors, with total revenue reaching 32.2384 million RMB and ticket revenue of 15.9485 million RMB. Compared to the first half of 2023, visitor numbers were essentially stable. This indicates that, despite the normalization of tourist flow and revenue, the recovery of consumer confidence in the tourism market remains incomplete due to the slow pace of domestic economic recovery. Tourism products require transformation and upgrading, scenic areas face significant financial pressure, investment in tourism projects remains insufficient, and the stability of the tourism economy needs further reinforcement.



Energy Management

Changshu is an industrial city primarily dependent on coal. Currently, coal remains the dominant energy source, and the proportion of coal consumption is showing an upward trend. In 2023, industrial energy consumption in Changshu was as follows: coal consumption totaled 16.848 million tons, fuel oil (excluding vehicle and marine use) 0.072 million tons, coke 1.094 million tons, and natural gas 0.92 billion cubic meters (equivalent to approximately 1.114 million tons of standard coal). Electricity consumption reached 12.65 billion kWh (equivalent to approximately 1.555 million tons of standard coal). Coal thus continues to rank first in the city's energy consumption. Compared to the previous year, despite efforts to reduce coal use in both industrial and residential sectors and to establish a clean energy system centered on electricity and natural gas, supplemented by geothermal and solar energy, total coal consumption remains among the highest in Suzhou, and biomass combustion continues to account for a significant share. The city's energy structure therefore requires further optimization and upgrading.

On September 9, 2024, the Changshu Municipal Government issued the *Implementation Plan for the Continuous Improvement of Air Quality in Changshu*, proposing to optimize the energy structure and accelerate the clean, low-carbon, and efficient development of energy. The work objectives include:

1. Vigorously develop renewable and clean energy. By 2025, the installed capacity of renewable energy is expected to reach 980,000 kW, accounting for 14% of total power capacity, with a monitored renewable energy generation of 1.3 billion kWh.
2. Strictly and reasonably control total coal consumption. Under the premise of ensuring energy supply security, total coal consumption will continue to be regulated, and outdated coal-fired capacity will be phased out in an orderly manner. Power generation is encouraged to shift toward high-efficiency, clean units. By 2025, coal consumption in non-electricity industrial enterprises above designated scale is expected to decrease compared to 2020. In principle, no new self-owned coal-fired units will be added, and support will be provided for replacing existing units with clean energy alternatives.
3. Continuously reduce energy intensity in key sectors. For sectors failing to meet the basic targets for energy intensity reduction, high-consumption projects will face delayed or restricted approval during energy audits. The energy efficiency of ongoing projects is expected to reach benchmark levels comprehensively.

4. Promote the shutdown and consolidation of coal-fired boilers and the replacement of industrial furnaces with clean energy. The requirements of high-pollution fuel prohibition zones will be strictly enforced, and in principle, no new high-pollution fuel facilities will be constructed. Combined heat and power plants with capacities of 300,000 kW or more will be fully utilized for heating. Outdated small coal-fired power units within a 30 km heating radius, including self-owned plants, will be shut down or consolidated in an orderly manner. No new coal gasification furnaces will be constructed, and the renovation or expansion of heating, heat-treatment, drying, and melting furnaces will primarily adopt clean and low-carbon energy.



Water Management

Changshu is crisscrossed with rivers and lakes, forming a dense and well-developed water system. Located in the lower reaches of the Taihu Basin and part of both the Yangtze River and Taihu water systems, it is a typical water town in southern China. The jurisdiction contains 22 major drainage and diversion rivers, including two basin-level rivers, six regional-level rivers, and 14 municipal-level rivers, as well as 81 township-level rivers, 468 village-level rivers, 4,971 production canals, and numerous small rivers and ponds such as Shangbang River and Tianluotan distributed throughout the region. There are 13 lakes or ponds larger than 200 mu (approx. 13 hectares). Major rivers are generally arranged radially around the urban center, with a denser network in the south and sparser in the north. The rivers have small gradients, gentle flows, and meandering patterns.

Changshu strictly implements water-saving management, reducing permitted water consumption by 31 million cubic meters in 2023. The city successfully passed the national review for water-saving cities and prepared for the establishment of a nationally recognized county-level water-saving society, creating 27 water-saving carriers. A total of 34 water users underwent “dual-random” inspections for water resource management and conservation, promoting standardized enterprise water management practices. In the 2022 annual evaluation of the strictest water resource management systems, Changshu achieved excellent performance, maintaining a record of “eight consecutive excellents.” Key infrastructure improvements included 11 km of water supply pipeline renovation and 4,127 rural water network upgrades. The Changshu segment of the Suzhou-Taicang water supply interconnection project was completed, involving 6.32 km of pipeline.

In 2023, the quality of surface water in Changshu was generally excellent, with 94.0% of monitored sections meeting or exceeding Class III water standards, an increase of 12.0 percentage points compared to the previous year. No water sections fell below Class V, consistent with the prior year. Total phosphorus was identified as the main pollutant. The average comprehensive pollution index of surface water was 0.33, down 0.01 from the previous year, a decrease of 2.9%. Overall, surface water quality improved by one category compared to the previous year, reflecting better water environmental conditions.

Drinking water in Changshu comes from two sources: the Shanghu Reservoir (lake-based) and the Yangtze River Changshu water source (river-based). Monthly monitoring of drinking water quality has been conducted from 2013 to 2023, and

water quality has consistently met or exceeded Class III standards. In 2023, both centralized water sources achieved a 100% compliance rate, reaching Class II water quality standards, indicating excellent and safe drinking water. Compared with the previous year, the Shanghu source improved by one class, while the Yangtze River source remained at Class II. All 80 centralized water supply projects in the city had no exceedances, confirming the safety and stability of the water supply.



Waste Water Management

Under the leadership of the Changshu Municipal Party Committee and Government, the Changshu Water Authority formulated the *Special Sewage Plan for Changshu (2022–2035)* to guide citywide sewage management. In 2023, Changshu implemented the “Sixteen-Character” water governance policy and advanced the “333” action for improving sewage treatment quality and efficiency, strengthening water supply and drainage assurance. Key tasks were fully completed, with total investment of 315 million RMB. A total of 114 direct discharge outlets were eliminated, and 372 small-scale industrial enterprises, 129 industrial facilities, 37 balcony or internal unit discharge points, and 52 construction sites and garbage transfer station discharge points were rectified. Pipeline inspection and maintenance covered 205 km, with 167 repairs completed. In the half-year evaluation of Suzhou’s high-quality urban sewage treatment indicators, Changshu ranked first.

In 2024, the city issued the *Targeted Action Plan for the 2024 Urban and Rural Domestic Sewage Treatment Quality and Efficiency Improvement “333” Campaign*, emphasizing water ecological environment management. Phase I of the Hongtong Water Purification Plant was commercially operated, adding a daily sewage treatment capacity of 70,000 tons. The fourth phase of the rural decentralized domestic sewage PPP project added 2,300 new decentralized facilities, completed 2,114 household connections, and constructed 16.9 km of sewage pipeline, achieving a 99.6% rural sewage treatment rate. Changshu became the first city in Suzhou to complete protection and utilization plans for nine lakes under the “one lake, one plan” initiative. A total of 75 Class V– or worse water bodies were rectified, achieving dynamic zero status for all inferior water bodies citywide. The city established 84 “Happy Rivers and Lakes,” with eight rated at Suzhou municipal level, and created the provincial-level ecological and clean small watershed, Jiangxiang. Rural river rehabilitation included 120 rivers totaling 75.1 km.

To implement the *National Groundwater Pollution Prevention Plan (2011–2020)*, Changshu began groundwater quality monitoring in 2013. Three monitoring sites were set up for different quality zones: urban (Changshu Water Technology Promotion Station), industrial (Meili Tongjiang Industrial Park), and agricultural (Xinzhuang Water Conservancy Station), with monitoring conducted once per dry and wet season each year. According to the *Groundwater Quality Standards (GB/T 14848-2017)*, all three sites were monitored in 2023. None of the sites met Class III water quality requirements. The urban site deteriorated to Class V (total coliforms), the industrial

site remained Class V (turbidity, chlorides), and the rural site remained Class V (odor/taste, total colony count).



Solid Waste Management

Industrial solid waste in Changshu is classified into general industrial solid waste and hazardous waste. In 2023, the generation of general industrial solid waste in Changshu reached 6.721 million tons. The amount utilized comprehensively was 6.320 million tons, including 2,923.9 tons from previous stockpiles. The amount disposed of totaled 0.400 million tons, with 0.09 tons from previous stockpiles. The total stockpiled waste was 4,657.7 tons. Compared to the previous year, the generation of general industrial solid waste increased by 0.453 million tons, utilization increased by 0.446 million tons, and disposal increased by 0.008 million tons.

By industry, general industrial solid waste was mainly concentrated in the electricity and thermal power production and supply industry, the ferrous metal smelting and rolling processing industry, and the paper and paper products industry. Together, these three industries accounted for 92.5% of the total general industrial solid waste generated in the city.

In 2023, the Changshu Municipal Government issued the *Implementation Plan for the Construction of a “Waste-Free City” during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period*, actively promoting the creation of “waste-free cells,” including “waste-free factories,” “waste-free communities,” “waste-free villages,” “waste-free hospitals,” “waste-free schools,” “waste-free scenic areas,” and “waste-free industrial parks.” This initiative accelerates the construction of a citywide “waste-free” environment and fosters a shared culture of waste reduction. Positive results have been achieved, with the Chemical Park and New Materials Industrial Park establishing “waste-free industrial parks,” Meili Longteng Special Steel establishing a “waste-free steel plant,” and enterprises such as Bosideng, Chuangmei Crafts, Longteng Special Steel, and Foster actively creating “waste-free factories.”

Changshu has innovatively built a “three-network integrated” multi-channel solid waste collection, storage, and transportation system. A total of 3,364 enterprises have been included in the hazardous waste full-life-cycle monitoring system. The New Materials Industrial Park established China’s first R&D center for fluoride pollution control and was the only park in Suzhou included in the provincial pilot for new pollutant management.

Looking forward, Changshu plans to further promote the construction of “waste-free cells,” using various social and industrial units as carriers, gradually expanding from small points to a citywide “waste-free city.” The goal is to achieve comprehensive

reduction, resource utilization, and harmless disposal of solid waste, thereby enhancing urban environmental quality and residents' living standards.



Governance

Currently, Changshu's cultural, sports, and tourism industry faces several shortcomings, including weak brand influence, insufficient resource supply, limited empowerment of tourism by cultural and sports activities, scarcity of high-end tourism products, and relatively inactive cultural, sports, and tourism consumption.

To promote high-quality development of the city's cultural, sports, and tourism industry and build a distinctive Changshu industrial system, the 26th executive meeting of the Changshu Municipal Government on September 23, 2023, approved the *Action Plan for High-Quality Development of Cultural, Sports, and Tourism Industry in Changshu (2023–2026)*. The plan focuses on the integrated development concept of “culture and sports empowering tourism,” leveraging the natural and humanistic advantages of the city's mountains, waters, and historical heritage. It aims to comprehensively integrate cultural, sports, and tourism resources, enrich cultural and sports tourism products, and enhance urban attractiveness, contributing to the elevation of Changshu's city-level capacity.

The plan sets targets for 2026: steadily improve industry development, optimize resource allocation, enhance quality of tourism and vacation products, and achieve high-level integration and high-quality development. It aims to expand cultural and tourism brand influence, promote the Yushan Cultural Tourism Resort as a destination for “a city of mountains and waters, a leisurely lifestyle,” and strengthen the Red Shajiabang cultural tourism brand. The plan also seeks to improve the quality of tourism and leisure vacation products, cultivate one to two nationally influential flagship cultural and tourism projects, achieve an annual visitor growth of more than 3%, annual tourism revenue growth of over 5%, and reach leading levels in overnight tourist reception within Suzhou. Furthermore, the plan emphasizes enhancing cultural and sports empowerment of tourism, increasing the influence of cultural and sports activities, refining special sports events and experiential projects, and fostering synergistic development of “cultural connotation, sports experience, and tourism carrier,” making Changshu a unique “Jiangnan Cultural Water Town and Domestic Leisure Vacation Destination” in the Yangtze River Delta.



Climate Action

In terms of ecological and environmental protection, Changshu is actively implementing the *14th Five-Year Plan for Ecological and Environmental Protection* and the three-year “*Fresh and Beautiful Scenery*” *Action Plan*. The city took the lead in the province by initiating GEP (Gross Ecosystem Product) accounting, making solid progress in implementing the “Two Mountains” theory. In 2022, Changshu first published a GEP report in Suzhou, estimating the total value of the city’s ecosystem at 172.275 billion RMB, accounting for 72.8% of GDP. The city is also advancing EQI (Ecological Quality Index) improvements through the construction of an ecological protection assessment platform and the “1+6+N” biodiversity observation network, achieving the highest EQI change ranking in Suzhou. Changshu actively participates in regional integrated development and leads the “Chang-Kun-Xiang” joint ecological protection and governance initiative. Policies supporting enterprises include 21 measures such as optimizing the business environment and strengthening management of third-party environmental service institutions.

Regarding air pollution control, Changshu fully implements measures to protect air quality and sustain the “Blue Sky” initiative. In 2023, 1,539 key annual air pollution control projects were completed. VOCs source inventories were established, and 3,013 VOCs-related enterprises underwent comprehensive inspection and remediation. Specialized exhaust gas treatment was carried out for 216 key industry enterprises, 71 biomass boilers were rectified, and 83 air emission issues were addressed for 15 major emitters. A total of 2,852 high-emission vehicles were retired, 18,000 non-road mobile machines were registered, and 170 dust-related issues in construction were rectified. Innovative “two inspections, two promotions” interventions and information platforms such as the “Environmental Steward” system were implemented. The city ranked second in PM_{2.5} average concentration among Suzhou cities and first in improvement rate for air quality compliance. A platform for active carbon “barcode” supervision was launched, VOCs management personnel were deployed, assessment mechanisms were established, and detailed air pollution prevention plans were implemented to ensure continued improvement.

For green and low-carbon development, Changshu continues to promote industrial green transformation and cultivate low-carbon production and lifestyles. In 2024, Changshu High-Tech Zone was selected as one of the province’s first “dual-carbon” pilot zones. The city is advancing energy-saving and carbon-reduction upgrades for energy infrastructure, demonstrating green low-carbon technologies, and building

green circular development model parks. Key projects include greenhouse gas emission reporting for 10 power generation enterprises, verification of emission reports for 125 key units, and targeted rectification of 368 “scattered, disorderly, and polluting” enterprises (298 closed, 70 upgraded). Traditional industries such as textile dyeing are undergoing technological transformation and pollution control improvements, with the establishment of the Textile Dyeing Green Innovation Consortium. Emerging green industries, such as acoustics, are being promoted, with the provincial Environmental Monitoring Center collaborating with the Changshu Acoustics Research Institute to address noise pollution, and the city was selected as a national pilot for urban noise mapping applications. The “Carbon Inclusive” information platform was launched, and Jiangxiang Village became the first zero-carbon smart village in the province.



Accessibility

The Changshu Municipal Government Office has issued the “*14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Disability Services in Changshu*” and the “*Changshu Accessibility Facility Management Measures*”, which serve as the basis for the construction and management of accessibility facilities throughout the city.

Regarding the management of accessible facilities on urban roads, Changshu has a total of 194 main, secondary, and branch roads within the built-up area, all of which are equipped with accessibility facilities. Thus, the accessibility facility installation rate for urban roads is $194/194 \times 100\% = 100\%$.

In addition, based on documents such as the “*Accessible Environment · Changshu, Jiangsu Province, ‘China Habitat Environment Award’ Review Data – Indicator Summary 159 Construction Regulations*”, “*Changshu Municipal Facility Construction Standards*”, and “*Changshu Municipal Facility Maintenance Standards*”, Changshu has implemented new construction, renovation, repair, and maintenance of accessibility facilities. According to these regulations, all newly built roads, public buildings, public transportation facilities, and residential communities are fully accessible. New projects are designed, constructed, and inspected in full compliance with accessibility standards. Existing roads and buildings are gradually retrofitted to improve accessibility. Urban roads are continuously upgraded with curb ramps at pedestrian crossings, entrances and exits, and tactile paving for the visually impaired along main roads and commercial pedestrian streets.

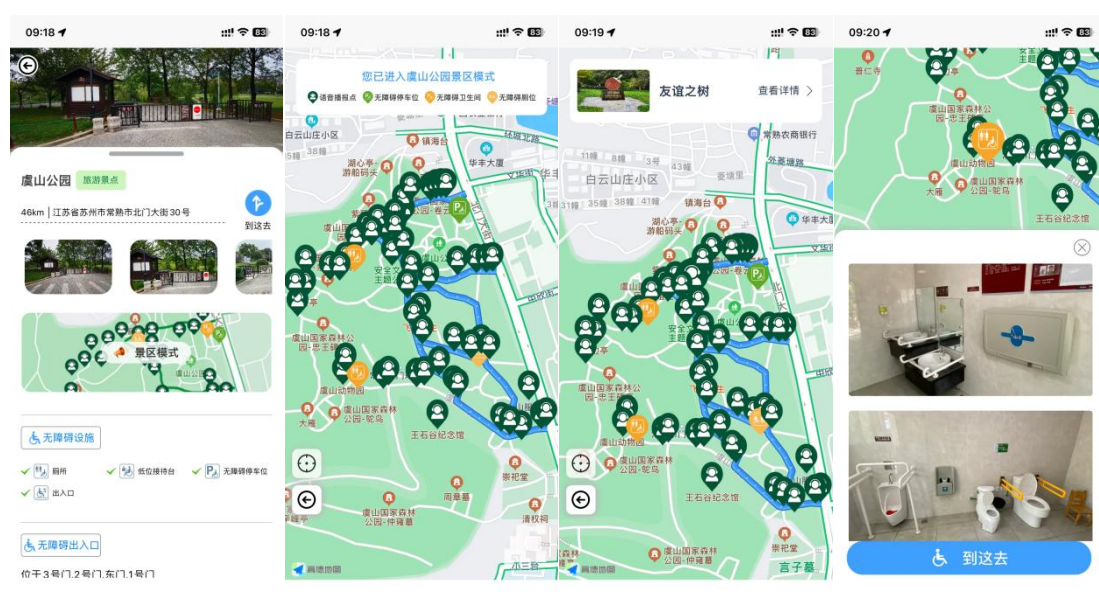
From 2012 to 2019, newly built, expanded, or renovated urban sidewalks were equipped with 382 curb ramps at various intersections, entrances, and pedestrian crossings, achieving a 100% installation rate. New, expanded, or renovated sidewalks along main roads and commercial pedestrian streets were fitted with 364 tactile paving installation points, totaling 24,413 meters of guidance paths for the visually impaired.

Regarding accessible public services and tourism, the Changshu Disabled Persons’ Federation, together with implementing agencies, completed the “*Changshu Smart Accessibility Comprehensive Upgrade*” project. This project enabled unified management of accessibility data, improved the management of accessible environments across departments, and ensured safe and barrier-free travel for persons with disabilities.

Currently, the Changshu Accessibility Map has been completed, covering 246

locations with accessibility facilities, providing convenient navigation for people with disabilities. By integrating passengers, buses, bus stops, and roads, the city provides intelligent barrier-free travel services for visually impaired individuals and wheelchair users. In the digital accessible demonstration scenic areas, the *Yushan National Forest Park* is designated as a special scenic area mode on the accessibility map. Within this mode, barrier-free routes are planned, attractions provide voice broadcasting and key displays, and electric Braille guide machines are installed at visitor centers to provide precise services for disabled tourists.

Figure 3. Changshu Accessibility Map – Scenic Area Mode (Wheelchair Edition)



Source: Changshu Disabled Persons' Federation WeChat Official Account

Changshu Yan Zi
Cultural Study
Tour Products

Changshu Yan Zi culture is an important component of Jiangnan Confucianism, rich in historical value and contemporary significance. Yan Zi, also known as Yan Yan, was a disciple of Confucius and renowned for his literary achievements. His thought has exerted a profound influence on the development of Confucianism. As a figure from the late Spring and Autumn period, many details of Yan Zi's life cannot be historically verified, and direct evidence of his contributions to southern Chinese culture is limited. Nevertheless, due to his historical distance and remarkable achievements, his influence permeates the broader cultural lineage. Elements such as the *Six Arts* and *Eight Elegant Skills*, the inheritance of ritual (*li*), and the ideals of harmonious governance and the well-being of all (*Datong* and *Xiaokang*) reflect Yan Zi's emphasis on propriety and deeply rooted cultural ethos. This cultural richness not only enhances the urban character of Changshu but also provides spiritual impetus for local socio-economic development.

Cultural tourism products are an indispensable part of Changshu's tourism offerings. In 2021, Changshu tourism emphasized strengthening the Jiangnan cultural brand and accelerating the integration of culture and tourism. In the field of study tourism, Changshu leverages favorable timing (national policies supporting study tours and growing attention to education), advantageous geography (proximity to major Yangtze River Delta cities), and local cultural resources to develop study tourism. According to the Changshu Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Sports, and Tourism, the main strategy involves partnering with institutions, study camps, and educational organizations to coordinate the city's natural, historical, cultural, and educational resources, actively promoting the *Changshu Study Tour* brand nationwide. The core concept of these products combines "tourism elements + private extracurricular academies."

Currently, the development of Changshu's study tour products faces challenges in both content and organizational structure. In terms of content, first, despite rich cultural resources, the core theme of the overall tourism product is unclear, interlinkages between study points are weak, and the system and completeness of study tour products are insufficient, resulting in fragmented visitor experiences. Second, the content is often singular, with limited interactivity and experiential engagement. Most study programs rely on traditional methods of "seeing" and "listening" through displays and guided tours, lacking interactive or hands-on experiences, which reduces visitor engagement. Third, cultural differentiation is

insufficient, resulting in low core competitiveness. Changshu's cultural content is similar to neighboring cities, making its products and image less distinct, and unique advantages in intangible cultural heritage have not been fully leveraged. Fourth, the potential for tourism consumption is underdeveloped. Due to convenient transportation, most visitors take day trips, limiting overnight and nighttime spending. Additionally, the reliance on local primary and secondary education institutions constrains the market expansion of study tours.

In terms of organizational structure, first, cultural venues such as the Changshu Museum and Art Gallery have inconvenient booking systems and communication channels, making it difficult for visitors to find clear guidance and contact information. Second, the reservation channels for intangible cultural heritage activities are relatively unclear. For example, the Guqin Art Museum next to the library, despite its unique cultural value, lacks effective promotion of activity schedules and participation methods, and its content and facilities require further improvement. Third, map information is incomplete, making it difficult for visitors to locate sites. Many locations in the city maps have similar names, and many functions and operating hours are not fully listed online, potentially reducing visitor exploration and overall tourism experience. Fourth, guided tour reservations are limited. Most cultural venues offer few slots, primarily for group visits and require advance phone booking. Most guides are part-time staff, leading to insufficient systematization and professionalism, with monotonous guiding methods that fail to stimulate visitor interest.

This monitoring report conducts a SWOT analysis of Changshu study tour products to evaluate internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats, providing a basis for improving Yan Zi study tour products.

Strengths: The Yan Zi study tour products benefit from direct guidance by intangible cultural heritage inheritors, ensuring professional quality and broad recognition. Some activities are scarce and distinct, such as bonsai and lace-making experiences, which retain regional characteristics. Participants engage in immersive experiences, including wearing traditional costumes, enhancing situational and ritualistic authenticity. The product themes are clear and well-positioned, providing unique memorable points for potential customers.

Weaknesses: Overall venue facilities are incomplete, lacking a comprehensive multi-project center like a Yan Zi Academy, creating gaps between different route

nodes. Personnel management poses challenges, as intangible cultural heritage inheritors often have their own studios and limited availability, increasing the risk of scheduling and operational issues.

Opportunities: National and local government emphasis on study tourism, combined with the rapid development of the sector, provides favorable conditions for local products. The rise of short-distance urban trips and Changshu's location within the Yangtze River Delta economic circle offer a sufficient visitor market.

Threats: In terms of resource integrity and scenic harmony, Changshu is generally less favorable compared with Suzhou Gusu District, posing a competitive threat. Supporting facilities are also limited; relative to Suzhou and Shanghai, Changshu has fewer themed hotels, making it difficult to meet diverse visitor needs.

Based on this market analysis, the report proposes a series of themed study tour product implementation plans centered on Yan Zi culture. The strategy positions Changshu as the top destination in the Yangtze River Delta for exploring Jiangnan Confucian culture through innovative, high-quality Yan Zi study tour products with educational practice, political-cultural guidance, and professional high-end customization.

The target market is divided into three concentric layers based on geography, market demand, and cultural recognition: core, extended, and potential markets. The core market comprises Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Shanghai; the extended market includes nearby provinces such as Shandong, Henan, and Anhui; the potential market includes other economically developed provinces and municipalities, such as Fujian, Guangdong, Beijing, and Tianjin.

The products are tailored for three main customer groups: youth, government and enterprise staff, and high-end cultural and artistic enthusiasts. Three themed product packages are proposed: the *Youth Eight Rites Tour*, the *Party-Building Training Tour*, and the *High-End Six Arts and Eight Elegances Tour*, providing immersive and educational experiences tailored to each target audience.

Conclusions and Suggestions

This monitoring report, based on the UN Tourism indicator framework, the previous nine monitoring cycles, and Changshu's tourism developments in 2024, has established a basic indicator system for sustainable tourism development in Changshu. Through data collection and analysis on tourism's interaction with resources and environmental protection, community engagement, visitor behavior and satisfaction, and economic impacts, the report draws the following key conclusions, highlighting both achievements and areas for improvement, with corresponding recommendations.

Main Conclusions

Over the past year, Changshu's tourism sector has demonstrated robust and positive growth. Continuous efforts in ecological construction have created a favorable environment for both tourism development and residents' daily leisure, earning high recognition from local residents. Alongside the push for high-quality cultural and tourism development, the supply and quality of tourism products have significantly improved, and visitor satisfaction and experience ratings remain high. This has enhanced Changshu's tourism attractiveness and strengthened the recognition of its tourism brand in the market.

Overall ecological conditions remain stable, though some management efforts have slightly lagged. In the past year, surface water quality was largely excellent and improving, while air quality slightly declined compared with the previous year, and average noise pollution increased. Targeted ecological management actions—such as enterprise emissions control, construction site environment rectifications, and lake water quality improvement—have been undertaken to sustain a sustainable ecological development environment.

Changshu's reputation as a livable city is well-established, with residents largely recognizing the positive impact of tourism. The city's rich leisure and tourism resources, including natural parks and historical sites, provide varied recreational experiences, enhancing its appeal as a city for living, working, and visiting. Nevertheless, while most residents perceive tourism's positive economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts, overall recognition of tourism's benefits could be further strengthened, particularly regarding concerns about rising housing and commodity prices and environmental pressures. Future tourism development should

continue to consider residents' interests, engage with their perceptions, and increase overall positive sentiment.

Visitor satisfaction with Changshu tourism is relatively high. The majority of visitors are young to middle-aged adults, primarily from the East China region, with most from Jiangsu province. Visitors rate Changshu's natural scenery, architectural style, and leisure atmosphere highly. Since 2023, Changshu tourism has expanded its influence on social media, improving overall visitor evaluation. Attractions such as Shajiabang and Shanghu have actively developed night tourism programs, which have been welcomed and positively reviewed by tourists. However, the proportion of day-trip visitors continues to rise, and the city's ability to extend visitor stay duration remains limited. Changshu should continue to diversify night tourism offerings and enhance supporting facilities such as accommodation and dining to increase overall tourism attractiveness.

Problem Diagnosis

Fragmented Resources and Weak Integration of Attractions. Changshu's tourism attractions remain largely isolated and have not been organically connected. The city's tourism resources collectively form a distinctive Wu cultural landscape with Jiangnan characteristics, yet each site retains its unique traits—for example, Shajiabang Red Tourism Scenic Area reflects strong revolutionary cultural elements, while Shanghu Yushan Scenic Area showcases a natural and leisure-focused green cultural atmosphere. Although these attractions have inherent potential and willingness to form integrated routes and systems, current efforts at integration are limited. Scenic spots are not systematically connected in terms of geography, ticketing, or thematic programming, resulting in weak overall visitor awareness of Changshu's Wu culture or Yan Zi cultural heritage. Furthermore, due to historical urban development, most attractions, such as Zeng Zhao Garden, Yan Zi's former residence, and Wang Ganchang Memorial House, are located within residential areas, limiting the scale, frequency, and depth of interactive activities without significantly disturbing local residents. This constrains the growth and sophistication of the tourism industry chain, weakening differentiated perceptions among visitors and reducing the breadth and depth of their experiences. Additionally, the government has not effectively engaged residents in tourism planning, which lowers local willingness to participate in tourism development.

Insufficient Creative Transformation and Innovation of Cultural Resources.

Changshu possesses deep and unique historical and cultural heritage, such as Wu culture, but lacks creative transformation and innovative development of these resources. Tourism products still rely heavily on mainstream or popularized content, using traditional motifs such as Jiangnan water towns and red culture to attract primarily leisure-seeking short-distance travelers. The utilization of unique cultural assets and the ability to convert cultural advantages into economic value remain weak. Cultural and creative tourism integration is yet to reach a high level. Interviews indicate that entertainment offerings are updated slowly, failing to meet increasingly diverse visitor expectations. While Changshu has begun building a city brand with the slogan “One City, Scenic Waters, Free Life,” and has further refined its cultural tourism product system in 2024, visitors’ impressions largely remain generalized as “Jiangnan water town,” with limited recognition of the city’s unique cultural identity. Awareness of cultural tourism festivals and industry clusters is mostly superficial, and existing products primarily meet general leisure needs without offering deep, locally distinctive experiences. Overall, the depth of cultural resource extraction and symbolic representation requires improvement.

Limitations in the Cultural and Creative Industry Market. Local cultural and creative enterprises face challenges in expanding markets and scaling production. Changshu has fostered a number of local cultural enterprises through innovative development and creative transformation. Festivals and events—such as Yucheng Food Festival, Yushan Cultural and Shajiabang Tourism Festival, Yushan Baoyan Yangmei Festival, and Shajiabang Lantern Festival—are organized for residents and tourists, but enterprises still face difficulties in reaching wider markets and mass production. Festival activities generally lack “breakout” design and marketing; they tend to focus on marathons, city competitions, and flower-viewing events, with limited appeal beyond local or provincial audiences.

Weak Tourism-Driven Industrial Linkages. Currently, Changshu’s tourism is predominantly sightseeing and leisure-based, with shallow inter-industry linkages. Tourists primarily spend on food, accommodation, transportation, and attractions. While the hospitality sector has seen steady growth in both quantity and quality, and festivals have boosted consumption and economic activity to some extent, tourism’s capacity to drive other industries remains limited. Enhancing deeper integration between tourism and other sectors is essential to improve the overall economic impact

and industrial upgrading potential of tourism development.

Resident Convenience and Leisure Needs Not Fully Met. Local residents highly value tourism development and leisure offerings, representing a significant advantage for sustainable tourism monitoring. Despite positive perceptions of tourism benefits, negative impacts such as traffic congestion, disruption to daily life, and perceived deterioration of social environment remain concerns. The government should address conflicts between tourism development and residents' daily lives, provide residents with more opportunities for leisure participation, and strengthen channels for feedback, professional training, and support for innovative enterprises and individuals to enhance residents' sense of gain and engagement.

Incomplete Destination Image and Branding for External Visitors. Changshu has long promoted its tourism image through slogans such as “Blessed Land of Jiangnan, Visit Often, Come to Changshu,” but has not fully leveraged new media and digital marketing trends. Promotional efforts are limited, events have small scale and narrow audience reach, and marketing does not achieve broad, sustained engagement.

Behavioral and Visual Identity Gaps. While Changshu organizes a variety of festivals, exhibitions, and sports events (e.g., Grand Canal Cultural Tourism Expo, “Mountains&Waters · Song Moon Night,” Mid-Autumn Cultural Garden Tour), these activities only partially enhance recognition and influence. Many events are small in scale, cater to niche audiences, and lack interactive designs, limiting visitor engagement and overall experience. Visual identity is also underdeveloped. City symbols, colors, and fonts have not formed a unified, distinctive system, reducing Changshu's visual memorability. Promotional materials often lack creativity and appeal, and some cityscape issues, such as aging facilities and insufficient sanitation at attractions, negatively affect visual impressions and overall tourism experience.

Suggestions

To strengthen Changshu's tourism development, it is essential to integrate tourism resources and build a comprehensive urban tourism system. All-region tourism seeks to systematically plan and develop all attractions within the city, linking them into a cohesive network that allows visitors to experience “scenic everywhere, scenic anytime.” Historically, many scenic areas in Changshu have been managed independently, resulting in fragmented spatial layouts, uneven development, and discontinuous visitor experiences. Treating the city as a unified destination through

coordinated management can overcome these challenges and establish a consistent urban cultural and tourism image. In practice, this could involve leveraging leading attractions such as Shajiabang and Shanghu as anchor hubs to attract visitors through combined ticketing or bundled itineraries, while also highlighting the unique characteristics of each attraction—whether natural sightseeing, historical culture, or festival experiences—to create integrated, themed routes that communicate local stories and establish recognizable cultural symbols. Furthermore, integrating tourism with primary, secondary, and tertiary local industries through a “tourism+” model can optimize resources across sectors, improve ecological and public services, and provide residents and visitors with a comprehensive “eat, stay, travel, play, shop, enjoy” experience.

Resident engagement is crucial for sustainable tourism. Government guidance is needed to understand and address local needs, listen to resident feedback, and implement incentive and benefit-sharing mechanisms that ensure communities benefit from tourism. Promoting community participation and demonstrating tourism’s positive impact can help residents recognize their role in shaping local tourism, encouraging active involvement. In parallel, preserving Changshu’s leisure atmosphere and developing innovative local leisure industries can enhance resident satisfaction, stimulate the tourism market, and upgrade tourism products. Efficiently utilizing local artistic talent, establishing talent databases, providing training and exchange opportunities, and fostering collaboration between cultural organizations and communities can improve cultural literacy, strengthen artistic skills, and create distinct local cultural tourism brands.

Developing a coherent destination image will further enhance tourism appeal. Creative transformation of the Zhuangyuan culture and Yushan culture can form high-impact attractions that expand Changshu’s influence. The historical depth and spiritual significance of Zhuangyuan culture can be linked to modern educational values, enabling the design of themed study tours or simulated imperial examinations that allow visitors to experience this culture firsthand while promoting diligence and learning. Yushan’s natural landscapes and cultural heritage—including ancient city walls, bridges, pavilions, and local music and painting traditions—offer opportunities to create visually striking experiences. The use of digital and virtual reality technologies can enhance visitor interaction with these cultural elements, particularly engaging younger audiences and injecting new vitality into Changshu tourism.

Exploring new market opportunities is also key. By conducting in-depth market research and anticipating personalized and diverse consumer demands, Changshu can leverage unique cultural resources to develop differentiated tourism products, such as family-oriented tours, historical-themed routes, and innovative offerings like custom or “mystery box” experiences. Strengthening ecological tourism and innovating products and services can increase repeat visitation and expand market share. The use of big data and artificial intelligence can further analyze visitor behavior, optimize experiences, and promote cross-industry collaboration with transport, accommodation, and dining, creating a healthy tourism ecosystem.

Finally, optimizing resource allocation and enhancing human capital are essential for sustaining growth. Beyond material resources, human resources must be developed through professional training and skill enhancement for tourism personnel. Building a high-quality, professional service team will allow Changshu to respond effectively to evolving market demands, maintain a competitive position in emerging markets, and ensure continuous growth and prosperity for its cultural tourism industry.



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