

# Exploring the "Poetry + Tourism" Model under the Integration of Culture and Tourism: A Case Study of Meibei Lake in Huyi District, Xi'an

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## Abstract

Classical Chinese poetry constitutes a vital "carrier of local cultural heritage, rich in literary connotations and historical value, and holds considerable potential for tourism development. As a historic cultural metropolis and celebrated tourist destination, Xi'an boasts profound cultural resources. Although much research has addressed tourism development in Xi'an, the unique role of ancient poetry remains underexplored. This paper takes Meibei Lake in Huyi District as its focal point, examining Tang and Song dynasty poetic portrayals of Meibei and their intrinsic connections with tourism planning. It aims to propose feasible recommendations for integrating poetry into local tourism development and to offer a reference model for deeper cultural-tourism integration in Xi'an and beyond.

**Keywords:** Meibei Lake, Huyi District, Tang and Song Poetry, Tourism Planning, Cultural Empowerment

## 1. Introduction

Meibei Lake, located in what is now Huyi District of Xi'an, was a renowned tourist destination in ancient Chang'an. Its name derives from the spring "Meiquan," famed for its sweet-tasting water. The area around Meibei is celebrated for its scenic beauty and abundance of historic sites, making it a favored haunt of poets and scholars since antiquity. During the Tang dynasty, Meibei Lake was one of the premier retreats in the capital region, where illustrious poets such as Du Fu, Cen Shen, Wei Yingwu, and Wen Tingyun would boat across its waters, feast upon its shores, and compose verse in its honor. In the Song dynasty, Meibei was even acclaimed as "the finest of Guanzhong's mountain-water landscapes," inspiring luminaries like Su Shi, Li Biao, and Zhang Dun to leave behind many celebratory poems. These works alternately portray Meibei's unique, exquisite beauty; express the poets' complex emotions about their political ambitions and disappointments; or convey a tranquil, reclusive spirit influenced by Buddhist and Daoist thought. In particular, Du Fu's travel poems about Meibei have become a lasting literary model and have laid a solid cultural foundation for the lake's tourism development.

The poetic depictions of Meibei Lake in Tang and Song literature represent a rare cultural treasure for Huyi District, offering immense value for integrating culture and tourism. These poems are not only masterpieces of literary art but also vital sources for shaping the district's unique cultural-tourism identity and enriching its cultural depth. However, despite Meibei Lake's wealth of poetic heritage, the study and application of classical verse in its tourism development remain limited. Research on incorporating ancient poetry into tourism strategies is still in its infancy, and this significant cultural asset has yet to be fully explored or utilized. As an emerging form of cultural tourism, "poetry tourism" can offer visitors a fresh, immersive experience and inject new vitality into the tourism market. Given its abundant poetic resources, Meibei Lake holds tremendous potential for such development. This paper proposes a "Poetry + Tourism" model to explore pathways for the integrated development of Meibei Lake's cultural-tourism offerings, providing valuable reference and inspiration for deeper fusion of culture and tourism in Huyi District and beyond.

## 2. Significance of Tang and Song Poetry Depictions of Meibei for Tourism Development in Huyi District

During the Tang and Song dynasties, Meibei Lake was renowned as a premier destination in Chang'an, drawing countless poets and scholars who visited and composed verse in its honor. It is estimated that around twenty-three poems referencing Meibei were written—by Tang masters such as Du Fu, Cen Shen, Wei Yingwu, Sima Zha, Wei Zhuang, and Wen Tingyun, and Song literati including Su Shi, Li Zhi, Li Biao, Wei Ye, and Zhang Zai. Among these works, Du Fu's "Meibei Xing" and "Rowing West of the City Moat" stand out as the most celebrated, and his stature as the "Sage of Poetry" has imbued Meibei with a profound humanistic aura[1]. These poems not only showcase the lake's exquisite scenery but also convey their authors' complex emotions and insights, making them a precious cultural treasure for Huyi District and conferring exceptional value for culture-tourism integration. The contributions of Tang and Song poetic depictions of Meibei Lake to the development of Huyi District's tourism industry are reflected in the following key areas:

### 2.1 Unearthing and Documenting Tourism Resources to Stimulate Visitor Interest

In today's thriving tourism industry, identifying and recording unique attractions to motivate travelers is essential for raising a destination's profile. By combining strategies—such as leveraging famous poetic lines in advertising, preserving poets' former residences, and naming sites after classical verses—destinations can effectively develop and promote their tourism assets[2].

First, poetic couplets play a powerful role in promotional campaigns. Classical Chinese poetry is renowned for its evocative imagery, which can greatly enhance a region's appeal. For example, lines like "Guilin's scenery is the best under heaven," "Above is paradise, below are Suzhou and Hangzhou," and "He who has never been to the Great Wall is not a true hero" have become iconic tourism slogans. In the Song dynasty, Zhang Ji's praise of Meibei Lake in his "Record of Kongcui Hall"—"Among Guanzhong's many scenic wonders, Meibei beneath Mount Zhongnan stands peerless and pristine"—bestowed upon Meibei the epithet "the finest landscape in Guanzhong," significantly boosting its renown. Second, poets' former residences and sites named after their verses serve as valuable tourism resources. Many classical poets stayed, wrote, or even built villas at Meibei Lake, leaving behind material heritage such as cottages and memorial pavilions[3]. These sites underpin the development of new cultural tourism offerings. For instance, poets Wen Tingyun, Zheng Gu, and Wei Zhuang commissioned lakeside retreats that inspired numerous celebrated poems. The "Chaoge Pavilion," built to commemorate Bai Juyi's studies at Meibei, and "Kongcui Hall," named after Du Fu's line "silk-pipes trill through emerald emptiness," both enrich Meibei's cultural depth and draw visitors seeking literary connection[4]. Finally, the vast corpus of humanistic landscape poetry itself constitutes a priceless record of early tourism resources. These works are not only a rich part of local heritage but also a critical reference for modern culture-tourism integration. By thoroughly researching and promoting these poems, destinations can deepen their cultural narrative, heighten their distinctive appeal, and transform into even more compelling tourist attractions.

### 2.2 Enhancing Tourism Value by Building Bridges Between the Destination and Its Celebrated Poets

In tourism development, enriching a destination's cultural depth and appeal is key to increasing its overall value. Take Meibei Lake in Huyi District as an example: Tang and Song dynasty poems about Meibei provide both a historical foundation and cultural endorsement for the site's development, while also forging a direct connection between modern tourism and celebrated literati[5].

A destination's literary image profoundly influences travelers' choices. In "poetry tourism," visitors are often moved by the scenes conjured by poets, setting their expectations high. Many classic verses instantly evoke their corresponding scenic spots, and people subconsciously equate the poet's renown with that of the place itself. At Meibei Lake, Tang and Song poets such as Du Fu (in "Meibei Xing"), Cen Shen (in "Feasting at Meibei with Local Officials"), Wei Yingwu (in "Viewing Meibei as Prefect of Hu"), and Su Shi (in "Meibei Fish") left behind celebrated works. These poems not only depict Meibei Lake's natural beauty but also reflect the deep admiration these writers held for the landscape. For instance, Du Fu writes in "Meibei Xing": "South of the islet, mountains sink into glassy depths; ghostly reflections dance in merging air," painting the lake as a living masterpiece and stirring readers' desire to witness it themselves. Su Shi's vivid portrayal of Meibei's fish—its delicate flavor and the heartfelt gift from a distant friend—kindles both curiosity and an appreciation of the bonds between poets and their peers. The continued circulation of these poems has steadily raised Meibei Lake's profile, drawing ever more visitors.

Because so many renowned poets have extolled its virtues, Meibei Lake has come to symbolize the finest of Guanzhong's mountain-water scenery, and its appeal and visibility have grown accordingly. Poems by celebrated figures serve as a bridge linking the destination to its illustrious patrons, boosting the site's fame and increasing the likelihood that travelers will choose it. Moreover, anything associated with these poets—stories, anecdotes,

historic sites—becomes an additional attraction, enriching the destination's cultural cachet. For example, Meibei Lake's transformation into a haven for literati like Du Fu and Cen Shen means that their biographies and the ruins connected to them are now integral parts of the visitor experience.

### *2.3 Enhancing the Taste of Tourism Resources and Elevating Visitors' Aesthetic Appreciation*

Against the backdrop of culture–tourism integration, Tang and Song dynasty poems about Meibei Lake do more than showcase its rich natural scenery—they convey profound emotional depth that plays a critical role in refining the taste of tourism offerings and cultivating visitors' aesthetic sensibilities. Just as travelers who behold West Lake recall the line “I compare West Lake to Xi Shi; lightly or heavily adorned, she is always graceful,” or stand atop Yueyang Tower and recite “The rosy clouds and lone wild goose fly together; the clear waters mirror the boundless sky,” so too can the appreciation and interpretation of Meibei's poetic heritage unlock its deeper cultural value and heighten its appeal as a destination.

#### *2.3.1 Scenic Description and Atmosphere Creation*

Poetic depictions of Meibei Lake in the Tang and Song eras convey three principal qualities: a grand, almost fantastical vastness; an ethereal, mist-shrouded ambience; and a pure, delicate beauty. Du Fu opens “Meibei Xing” with: “My brother Cen Shen and I, curious at heart, traveled far to roam Meibei. Suddenly heaven and earth took on strange hues; ten thousand acres of waves piled up like colored glass.” Here, the poet evokes the lake's sweeping grandeur and otherworldly brilliance, inspiring his companion's—and ours—desire to explore its wonders. Cen Shen, in “Feasting at Meibei with Local Officials,” writes: “Ten thousand acres steeped in sky's hue, a thousand fathoms probing earth's roots.” In just two lines, he summons the lake's boundless expanse and unfathomable depth. In the Song dynasty, Li Chuo's “Meibei” describes: “Gazing out on mist-shrouded emptiness fills my soul; I seek old traces atop the high terrace. Slanting sunlight brightens treetops then fades, and when winds subside, mountain shadows appear upon the still waters.” With brush-stroke precision, he paints a mist-laden landscape that feels like an ink-wash painting, drawing readers into its serene mystery. Another Song poet, Li Biao, in “Yang Bei,” portrays yet another facet: “Clear skies reflect as dark-green hills, waves as blue as indigo; Calm waters mirror heaven's clarity, filling the jade basin. Standing within this painted scene, my heart soars with birds over Zhongnan.” On a clear day, the lake's emerald surface appears tranquil and enchanting—an idyllic sanctuary that today's visitors would find equally mesmerizing. Finally, Wei Yingwu's “Viewing Meibei as Prefect of Hu” captures the lake's pure elegance: “Wild waters gleam along the long pond; under clear skies, blossoms swirl. Verdant trees drift in soft mist; green peaks rise beyond a thousand hills.” These vivid portrayals enrich visitors' visual imagination of Meibei Lake and elevate its cultural refinement as a destination.

#### *2.3.2 Emotional Connotations and Cultural Resonance*

The Tang and Song poems about Meibei Lake are imbued with rich emotional layers, including scenes of festive splendor, yearnings for reclusion, and nostalgic reflections on the past. In Du Fu's “Rowing West of the City Moat,” he depicts the poets' experience aboard a pleasure boat amid Meibei's grand scenery: “On lacquered decks fine ladies and gentlemen recline, flutes and pipes lament the distant sky.

Spring breezes sway the painted masts, and in the slow sunlight I watch the brocaded cables pulled.

Fish stir gentle ripples that sway song fans, swallows dance among petals at the banquet's edge.

If no small boat can ply these oars, what river of wine would flow like a spring?”

Here, ornate pavilions and painted boats, song and dance, wine and feasting—all convey the exuberant joys of Tang-era revelry and invite modern readers to long for such lavish pleasures. Similarly, in Cen Shen's “Feasting at Meibei with Local Officials,” he writes of the lakeside banquet: “Idle egrets startled by flute and pipe, hidden dragons drawn to the wine jar.” The flute's notes disturb the languid waterbirds, while the aroma of the feast even entices mythical dragons from the depths—capturing the bold, romantic spirit of the High Tang. These vivid portrayals can inspire today's visitors to recreate Meibei's ancient pageantry by developing attractions that evoke the Tang dynasty's “pleasure boat” experience. In contrast, Wei Yingwu's poem “Watching Swallows at the West Pond of Hu Pavilion” expresses a desire for retreat: “At dawn's bright hour I gaze across the peaceful lake; Fine trees emerge in soft mist as spring outings swell. Official duties weary my soul, yet here my heart finds release. With wine now brimming high, I ask you to drink deep.” Serving as the county magistrate, the poet's daily burdens had worn him down, kindling a Daoist–Buddhist longing for seclusion. His visit to Meibei's serene landscape renewed his spirit—a sentiment resonant with modern travelers who seek solace from busy urban lives.

Finally, in the late Tang, Wei Zhuang recalls Meibei's former glory in “Passing Meibei, Recalling Old Times”: “Three paths overgrown, lost amid bamboo; neighbors gone, fields now mulberry groves. Meibei's past affairs live only in memory; the purple pavilion remains in fading smoke.” Returning after twenty years, he finds the lakeside's

former bustle vanished. Witnessing the sea of change, his sorrow is evident: “At sunset’s end, I wept as I finished my verse.” Such reflections on the passage of time touch upon a universal human experience, drawing visitors across millennia into an emotional dialogue with Meibei’s evolving landscape. These poems’ emotional depths not only enrich visitors’ cultural understanding of Meibei Lake but also spark personal resonance, elevating their aesthetic and emotional engagement with the destination.

### 3. Empowering Meibei Lake’s Tourism Development through Tang and Song Poetic Depictions

Tang and Song dynasty poetry, as treasures of ancient Chinese literature, not only holds exceptional artistic value but also conveys rich cultural connotations and historical insights. Meibei Lake in Huyi District of Xi’an—long celebrated as a retreat for poets and scholars—appears frequently in these classical works, providing the region’s cultural-tourism industry with a unique reservoir of heritage. This paper explores how such poetic portrayals of Meibei empower Huyi District’s cultural-tourism development across three dimensions: the interpretation system, tourism product creation, and the synergy between characteristic landscapes and the celebrity effect.

#### 3.1 Interpretation System

At present, tourism development often focuses on the physical enhancement of scenic spots while neglecting the cultural dimension—particularly the development of the tourist interpretation system, which is the primary medium through which visitors receive and appreciate a site’s cultural significance. Although Huyi District boasts abundant historical and cultural resources, the use of Tang and Song poetry about Meibei Lake in its cultural-tourism offerings remains unsatisfactory. Aside from a few quotes from Du Fu on information boards and the official WeChat account, the powerful cultural appeal of these poems has yet to be fully leveraged. Consequently, visitors lack a poetic framework to guide their experience and struggle to perceive the resonance between the ancient verses and the modern landscape.

To address this, Huyi District should prioritize the design and construction of a comprehensive interpretation system that weaves together centuries of poetic works with engaging stories and cultural insights. For example, along the lakeside promenade, interpretive scripts could highlight Du Fu’s lines,

“Suddenly heaven and earth took on strange hues; ten thousand acres of waves piled up like colored glass,” inviting visitors to behold the lake’s vast expanse and its ever-changing light. Cen Shen’s verse, “Ten thousand acres steeped in sky’s hue, a thousand fathoms probing earth’s roots,” would encourage them to feel the lake’s breadth and depth. Wei Yingwu’s line, “Wild waters gleam along the long pond; blossoms swirl under clear skies,” could draw attention to the water’s clarity and the tranquil atmosphere. In a cultural experience zone, Su Shi’s “Meibei Fish” could be featured: “Bamboo frosted and slit into twin gates; within, long fish lie like resting swords,” recreating the lake’s historic fisheries and introducing visitors to ancient fishing practices. At each historic ruin—Kongcui Hall, Yunjisi, Chaohe Pavilion—narrators could recount the poets’ connections to these sites, sharing anecdotes and background that bring the verses to life. By integrating these interpretive elements, visitors will not only admire Meibei Lake’s natural beauty but also gain deeper insight into its literary heritage and the unique emotions conveyed by its poets.

#### 3.2 Tourism Product Development

Scenic spots frequently celebrated in classical poetry often become flagship attractions. As a favored retreat of Tang-dynasty literati, Meibei Lake’s abundant presence in Tang and Song poems provides a wealth of cultural resources for tourism product development. One could create a series of cultural-themed routes—such as a “Meibei in Tang Poetry” tour—that weaves together the lake’s poetic landmarks with modern travel itineraries, allowing visitors to appreciate its natural beauty while immersing themselves in the charm of classical verse.

##### 3.2.1 Curated Themed Routes

One example is a “Poetic Cruise” that draws on Du Fu’s descriptions in “Meibei Xing” and “Rowing West of the City Moat.” A boat route would carry visitors across the glittering lake, allowing them to experience Meibei Lake’s grandeur firsthand. During the cruise, recordings of poems by Du Fu, Cen Shen, and others would be broadcast over the speakers, accompanied by live or recorded guzheng music to enrich the cultural atmosphere. A “Poetry Pavilion” could be installed at the center of the lake, where visitors might recite verses, take part in poetry contests, and win Meibei-themed cultural souvenirs. Around the shore, a “Poetry Promenade” could be laid out, with interpretive panels displaying poems by Du Fu, Cen Shen, Wei Yingwu, and their historical contexts. Trained cultural volunteers would walk the route, explaining the imagery and background of each poem. Additionally, drawing on Du Fu’s references to “Kongcui Hall” and “Yunjisi” in “Meibei Xing,” a separate “Historic Ruins Tour” could be developed. At the restored Kongcui Hall, a small “Poets’ Memorial Gallery” would showcase the

lives and works of Du Fu, Wei Yingwu, and other literati, allowing visitors to feel the serenity of the ruins and the weight of history.

### 3.2.2 Poetic Homestays and Dining Experiences

Integrate Tang and Song poetry into lodging and dining. Establish “Poetic Inns” where rooms feature décor inspired by classic verses, and guests receive calligraphy reproductions of relevant lines. Create a “Poetry Restaurant” whose menu items are named after famous poems—such as a “Meibei Fish Banquet”—and that includes a poetry corner stocked with anthologies for guests to read and discuss.

These offerings blend Meibei’s poetic heritage with contemporary tourism, delighting visitors with immersive cultural experiences while boosting local engagement and economic vitality.

### 3.3 Historic Landscapes and Celebrity Effect

Over time, some historic sites fade from view unless immortalized by poetry. Meibei Lake, once the Qin–Han imperial garden and a Tang-era retreat, earned the epithet “the finest of Guanzhong’s landscapes.” By restoring or recreating key sites—such as Kongcui Hall, Chaohe Pavilion, and Yunjisi—tourism planners can leverage market demand for authenticity. Employ VR to reconstruct these structures, allowing visitors via mobile devices or VR headsets to explore Meibei’s past and hear narrated cultural insights. A VR “Poetic Boat” could simulate Tang–Song era excursions, with virtual landscapes unfolding alongside narrated verses.

Poems by Du Fu, Su Shi, and other renowned poets have elevated lesser-known spots into cultural icons, inspiring modern travelers. To harness this celebrity effect, promotional materials—online and offline—should prominently feature these poets’ lines, forging an emotional connection that motivates visits and strengthens Meibei Lake’s identity as a place where history, literature, and tourism converge.

## 4. Conclusion

Meibei Lake, this ancient and enchanting body of water, has long been beloved by poets and scholars. During the Tang and Song dynasties, literary masters such as Du Fu, Cen Shen, Wei Yingwu, and Su Shi left behind numerous admired poems that constitute a precious cultural asset for Huyi District’s integration of culture and tourism. However, Meibei Lake’s current tourism development still underuses these poetic resources, and research into their combined application in tourism remains insufficient. The “Poetry + Tourism” model proposed in this paper seeks to transform Tang and Song poetic depictions of Meibei into lively modern tourism practices. These innovative initiatives not only offer fresh ideas for Meibei Lake’s development but also provide valuable reference for the deeper fusion of culture and tourism in other locales. In sum, Tang and Song poems about Meibei Lake supply Huyi District’s cultural-tourism industry with rich connotations and unique charm. By thoroughly uncovering and appropriately leveraging these poetic resources, one can effectively elevate Meibei Lake’s tourism quality, enhance visitors’ cultural identification, and promote high-quality development of the district’s cultural-tourism sector. Looking ahead, we anticipate Meibei Lake becoming a model of culture-tourism integration, where every visitor fully experiences the allure of classical poetry and the richness of cultural heritage.

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