



Lijiang Streetscape of ancient Naxi style homes. Photo by © Global Heritage Fund

Lijiang Ancient Town, China

Saving China's Last 'Living' Ancient Town

Site Significance

In the heart of Northern Yunnan province in southwest China, near the borders of Burma and Tibet, is one of the last surviving ancient towns in China. Lijiang Ancient Town has survived intact for more than 1,000 years with over 4,000 native families living within its Core and Protected Areas. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997, Lijiang's Naxi people still preserve much of their native Dongba culture and deep linkage to nature. Snow-capped mountain vistas, ancient architecture and streetscapes, canals and waterways, and the people and their distinct culture give Lijiang its universal value to mankind.

Preservation by Design® Project Accomplishments

In partnership with Lijiang Ancient Town Management Committee, UNESCO World Heritage Centre Asia Pacific and Shanghai Tongji University's Urban Planning and Design Institute, GHF has provided a new vision

through Lijiang's first Master Conservation and Site Management Plan and an innovative Preservation Incentive Fund to provide subsidies for low-income households to help retain the native Naxi families that make this living ancient town so priceless.

Planning

GHF co-sponsored the surveys, architectural reviews, mapping, analysis and urban design needed to complete Lijiang's first, comprehensive Master Conservation Plan (MCP), comprised of three integrated conservation and management plans for the Ancient Town: (a) Master Protection Plan; (b) Management Plan; and (c) Heritage and Commercial Management Plan. The Master Conservation Plan has now been approved and implemented by the government.



Threats
Neglect
Uncontrolled Development

Completed Date
2006

Project Partnerships

- Lijiang Ancient Town Conservation and Management Bureau
- Shanghai Tongxi University

Conservation Science

Over the course of this project, 174 traditional Naxi home exteriors were authentically restored and over 300 modern concrete buildings were removed, while four new “gateways” with integrated parks, community spaces, housing and commercial districts were developed to reduce congestion and the impacts of mass

tourism. Historic Preservation Guidelines have also been produced for the local communities and builders.

Community

GHF also helped to provide training and support to the Lijiang Ancient Town Management Bureau as it grew from 12 persons in 2003 to 140 persons in 2007 in addition to effectively stopping the exodus of indigenous Naxi people from the ancient town through a program of restoration grants and improving the historic district’s infrastructure.

Recent Accomplishments

- The restoration of more than 184 traditional Naxi homes in the town’s core area
- The removal of approximately 300 modern buildings inappropriate to the historical environment
- The development of four new “gateways” to reduce congestion and the impacts of mass tourism
- The preparation of Historic Preservation Guidelines for the local community, officials and contractors



Restoration of Lijiang before (left) and after (right). Photo by © Global Heritage Fund

The UNESCO World Heritage site of Lijiang Ancient Town has been affected by natural disasters and by an unprecedented onslaught of mass tourism.



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