

SPOTLIGHT

Ningbo's Workers Push Through Summer's Blaze

By Jin Yuhan

As summer settles in, the sweltering heat in Ningbo pushes workers across various industries to persevere through demanding conditions. Their dedication under the scorching sun reflects the hardworking spirit that defines the city.

Riding Through the Heat

In July, the asphalt roads of Jiangshan Town, Ningbo, radiate heat as temperatures soar to 35°C (95°F).

Despite the oppressive heat, 23-year-old He Fumei, a food delivery rider, loaded her tenth order into the insulated box on her electric scooter, her movements deft and practiced. Her sun-protective jacket was soaked through, but she smiled brightly. "This doesn't feel like work—it's more like a fun ride!"

He Fumei moved to Ningbo from Nuijiang, Yunnan, in April, drawn by the promise of better opportunities. Some of her family members had already settled down in the city.

At noon, her scooter displayed a temperature of 39°C (102°F). She parked under the shade of a tree and took a moment to sip on a heat-relief herbal tea provided by her delivery station manager.

The station makes sure riders stay comfortable, offering chilled drinks, sun-protective arm sleeves, and encouraging regular breaks. They also provide a heat stroke prevention kit and adjust delivery routes to minimize prolonged sun exposure.

This year, Jiangshan Town rolled out an initiative to support workers in non-traditional sectors, such as delivery riders. The town has taken proactive steps to address their needs and ensure newcomers feel at home in Ningbo.

Despite the heat, He Fumei remains positive about her job. "This is much easier than farm work back home, and every delivery means real, tangible income," she said with a content smile, gesturing to her scooter.



Workers under the scorching sun. [Photo by Sun Jiajun]

Sun Erniang Under the Sun

On a sweltering afternoon in July, our correspondent met with Shi Yingzhi, a local woman from Xinqiao Town in Xiangshan, known to many as Sun Erniang, a well-known fictional character from Chinese literature, depicted as a bold and fearless woman. Offscreen, she is a mother, balancing family life with the demanding world of acting.

Shi entered the world of background acting in 2016, quickly learning the harsh realities of summer film sets. Her most memorable experience was filming *Royal Nirvana*. During the height of summer in Xiangshan, ground temperatures reached nearly 40°C (104°F). Despite the scorching heat, Shi and her fellow background actors wore three layers of padded coats and trousers to portray winter

scenes. The cotton fabric, soaked with sweat, clung heavily to their skin with every movement.

"Background actors appear on screen for only a few seconds, but we owe it to the role to give our all," Shi often says.

In 2023, Shi transitioned to working as an interactive performer at Xiangshan Global Studios' tourist zone. Dressed in Sun Erniang's heavy costume, she interacts with visitors, even on the hottest days. Sweat beads roll down her face, but she continues to smile and pose for photos, never letting the discomfort show.

Her years of acting experience bring depth to her character, making her interactions with visitors vibrant and engaging. Guests often exclaim, "This Sun Erniang is so convincing!" unaware that beneath the costume, Shi is drenched in sweat as she turns to wipe her brow.

Spidermen Braving the Scorching Heights

On a scorching July morning, with temperatures reaching 35°C (95°F), our correspondents visited a group of aerial workers in an old residential area in Yinzhou District. They are known as "Spidermen" for their exterior wall painting work.

By 7 a.m., team leader Guo Guofei and his crew had already arrived, swiftly preparing for the day ahead. They mixed paint, filled buckets, climbed stairs, secured safety ropes, installed seat boards, and attached lifelines—motions that had become second nature.

Once on the rooftop, the team of three positioned themselves side by side, each suspending two paint buckets from their harnesses. They began their slow descent, carefully applying paint to the exterior walls.

Sweat poured down their faces as they worked under the

relentless sun. After three hours, they had used over a dozen buckets of paint, totaling more than 100 kilograms.

"We make the most of the cooler morning hours—every minute counts," Guo said. Summer, he explained, is the hardest season, with insulation layers trapping heat and pushing worksite temperatures to 50°C (122°F).

Guo reminisced about painting the 52-story, 170-meter Jinguang Center Building, where over a dozen workers collaborated on the task. "It was unforgettable."

Now approaching 50, Guo still moves with the agility of a younger man, ascending and descending like a real-life "Spiderman".

"Doing this work is fulfilling: it helps me make a living, improve the community, and enhance the city's image. I just hope to keep doing meaningful work like this," he said.



Ningbo Art Win Hearts in Morocco

By Jin Lu

At 8:30 p.m. local time on July 3, the 54th Marrakech Popular Arts Festival opened with a dazzling performance by the Ningbo Art Troupe. Blending tradition and modernity, the troupe presented several signature pieces that captivated the audience.

The program began with the "Golden Snake Dance", a classical Chinese piece in which dancers used silk fans to create a rapid fluttering effect, symbolizing a golden snake bringing good fortune. This was followed by a spectacular lion dance—an item on China's intangible cultural heritage list—performed by the Meis-

han Lion Dance Team. The routine combined elements of both northern and southern lion dance traditions with martial arts unique to Ningbo's Meishan area. One of the highlights featured dancers leaping from pole to pole, delivering a breathtaking display of balance, power, and precision.

The performance continued with "Charm of Jiangnan", a graceful dance evoking the misty landscapes of southern China, followed by "Ethnic Fusion Dance", a spirited celebration of China's ethnic diversity. Together, the pieces offered a vibrant, multidimensional portrait of Eastern culture to the Moroccan audience.

The Ningbo delegation—

jointly formed by the Ningbo Performing Arts Group and the Beilun Meishan Lion Dance Team—was selected and supported by China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ningbo Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism.

According to Shen Haidi, a nationally recognized inheritor of the Meishan lion dance tradition, the art form was designated as part of Ningbo's intangible cultural heritage in 2010. The Meishan troupe remains the only one in Zhejiang Province capable of performing the complex pole-hop routine. The group, made up of veteran performers and emerging talent, spent more than 20 days in



The 54th Marrakech Popular Arts Festival opened by the Ningbo Art Troupe. [Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

intensive rehearsals, creating physically demanding new movements specifically for this overseas tour.

In Fenghua, Ducklings Hatch to Pop Hits and High Standards

By Zhao Yu

Early in the morning, Zhou Zhenjing, general manager of Ningbo Fenghua Aoji Agricultural Technology Co., Ltd., arrived with two colleagues at the company's Fenghua duck breeding base to begin a new day's work.

"We spend several hours here each day, especially in hot weather," Zhou said. "We have to monitor egg production, feeding conditions, and water quality in the pools."

Fenghua ducks are known for their flavorful meat and highly nutritious eggs. The base maintains a steady population of around 12,000 ducks, producing approximately 200 metric tons of eggs annually.

Inside the incubation room, rows of fully automated incubators were in operation. After 28 days of incubation, ducklings begin to hatch. "May and June are peak hatching months for Fenghua ducks," explained Dong Shihai, founder of the base. "After selection, some ducklings are sold to other farms as breeding stock, while others are sent to what we call the 'VIP room.'"

The "VIP room" is located next to the base's main water pool. To ensure comfort for the ducklings, caretakers spread dry straw across the floor and installed a small speaker to play music. "Newly hatched ducklings tend to pile up, which can lead to injuries or suffocation," Zhou said. "When they hear music, the younger ducklings scatter, thinking someone has arrived. The older ones get used to the music and even move rhythmically, almost like they're dancing."

Some even develop musical preferences. "Lately, we've played songs by Jay Chou, G.E.M., and Andy Lau," Zhou said with a smile. "Today, they had a strong reaction to G.E.M.'s *Where Did U Go*. Looks like they've found a new favorite."

After spending 25 days in the "VIP room", the ducklings are transferred to standard housing. When fully grown, the strongest birds are placed in individual breeding compartments and paired with mates they show interest in.

"We're committed to improving the breeding and marketing of Fenghua ducks," said Dong. "Our goal is to raise quality standards, extend the value chain, and build up the Fenghua Duck brand."

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