City that has helped dreamers succeed

As Shenzhen has flourished over the decades, its dynamism has only grown. **Xu Wei** reports



The 33rd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting is scheduled to be held in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Nov 18 and 19. PHOTOS BY LIANG XU / XINHUA

For Luc Junior Denommee, one of Shenzhen's greatest attractions is not its futuristic skyline or the technology giants that call it home, but the ease with which an idea can become a product.

In Huaqiangbei, the sprawling electronics marketplace at the heart of the city in Guangdong province, almost everything an entrepreneur such as the Canadian Denommee needs — from batteries and electronic components to product designers, precision machining services and logistics providers — can be found within easy reach.

The concentration of suppliers and expertise means that an idea can move from the drawing board to a working prototype with remarkable speed, an advantage that impressed Denommee when he first arrived in Shenzhen in 2007.

Nearly 20 years later the marketplace continues to surprise him with new products and technologies. However, Denommee says Shenzhen has given something beyond business opportunities: a sense of belonging.

"I feel more at home in Shenzhen than anywhere else in the world. Here I'm really part of an ecosystem which is growing. I feel I am living; I am not just surviving."

His experience offers a glimpse into a defining feature of Shenzhen's transformation: a city that has drawn people from across China and around the world, allowing their ambitions and ideas to become part of its development.

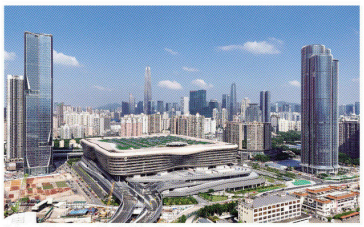
That spirit of openness and experimentation is also part of the vision President Xi Jinping has laid out for Shenzhen during his tours to the city since 2012.

Through those visits Xi has reaffirmed China's commitment to reform and opening-up, encouraged innovation and charted Shenzhen's development as a pioneer of high-quality growth.

Shenzhen, as the host city of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting this year, exemplifies China's economic transformation and its growing connections with the wider world.

Xi first visited Shenzhen in December 2012. The visit came as China faced the challenge of deepening economic reforms and finding new drivers of growth.

He emphasized the importance of respecting the people's pioneering spirit, encouraging bold experimentation and breaking new ground, while underscoring that reform and opening-up must continue.



A view of Huanggang Port in Shenzhen.

The message resonated with Shenzhen's history as a city built by successive generations of newcomers, many of whom arrived with limited resources but were determined to build better lives.

For Gao Feng, technical director of Shenzhen Toch Prepress Technology Co Ltd, Xi's emphasis on initiative and the pioneering spirit echoes his own journey from an unskilled migrant worker to an accomplished technician.

In 1993 Gao left his hometown with 300 yuan ($63.5), money his mother had saved by raising pigs for two years.

After a long-distance bus journey he arrived in Shenzhen with few skills and little idea of what awaited him.

His first job was packing materials on a construction site. The pay was meager, but he soon noticed that skilled workers could earn several times as much. "I firmly believed that learning a technical skill could change my life," he says.

Over the following 15 years Gao passed all five levels of electrician certification. His technical expertise brought him national honors and, later, a training studio bearing his name, where he could pass on the skills that had transformed his own life.

When Xi returned to Shenzhen in October 2018, as China prepared to mark the 40th anniversary of reform and opening-up, the city was confronting a different set of challenges.

Having established itself as a major manufacturing and export center, Shenzhen was increasingly seeking to strengthen technological innovation, develop advanced industries and deepen collaboration within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Two years later, at a celebration marking the 40th anniversary of its establishment as a special economic zone in the city, Xi laid out a more comprehensive agenda for the city's next stage of development.

He reflected on Shenzhen's transformation from a small border town into an international metropolis, describing its achievements as a miracle of development by the Chinese people.

Today the manufacturing ecosystem that helped establish Shenzhen's reputation is attracting a new generation of international entrepreneurs.

At Shenzhen InnoX Academy, Dalia Khoja, a Saudi Arabian, said she has found opportunities to connect directly with engineers, designers and suppliers as she pursues product development involving artificial intelligence.

"Here you can just design it and then order it and you will receive it."

Xi's 2020 vision went beyond technological progress and economic competitiveness. The ultimate purpose of reform and development was to improve people's lives, he said, as he called for more open talent policies to attract and cultivate leading scientists, young researchers and high-level innovation teams.

Diana Boraschi, director of the Laboratory of Inflammation and Vaccines at the Shenzhen Institutes of Advanced Technology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, said Shenzhen provides an environment where researchers can exchange ideas with talented colleagues from different backgrounds.

"Diversity is very important because by confrontation of different cultures and different ways of thinking, you get new ideas."

Gao, the technician, said skilled technicians were not considered part of the city's highest tier of talent. Now their experience is receiving greater recognition, and artisans like him can exchange ideas with leading scientists, who also listen to their suggestions.

He describes the relationship between the city and those who settle there as a two-way journey: Shenzhen offers people opportunities to succeed, and their work, skills and ambitions help the city grow.

"If Shenzhen's past four decades were a movie, then every ordinary person in this city would have had a part in it."

Optimism over joint efforts to promote tourism collaboration

By **CHENG SI**

Insiders and experts in the tourism industry have expressed optimism about tourism collaboration between China and other APEC economies, owing to strengthened trade and cultural ties as well as more streamlined visa policies.

However, they caution that global economic and political uncertainties continue to pose challenges.

A report by the Chinese travel portal Tuniu says that the number of tourist trips to the United States grew 60 percent in the year to early November compared with the corresponding period last year. May and September were particularly strong months, the report said.

"The travel route connecting the East Coast and the West Coast, along with Yellowstone National Park, remains the most popular among Chinese travelers visiting the US for tourism so far this year," Tuniu said. Tourism orders for South Korea have grown significantly this year, it said.



South Korean tourists enjoy the views at Jiuzhaigou Scenic Area in Sichuan province in August. WANG XI / XINHUA

Wang Xiaoying, 32, of Beijing, said she has traveled to South Korea three times in the past two years. "The country has relatively short flight hours, roughly three hours from Beijing. I went to Seoul for sightseeing and shopping, and many designer brands and cheap and cheerful cosmetics were on sale. Jeju Island has beautiful scenery."

China and other APEC member economies enjoy closer business ties and nongovernmental exchanges, which have laid a solid foundation for tourism collaboration, experts said. In addition, APEC economies have stepped up efforts to strengthen tourism exchanges.

"Streamlined visa rules, more frequent flights and increasingly close commercial communication between China and other APEC economies contribute to stable tourism growth," said Yang Jinsong, a researcher at the China Tourism Academy in Beijing. "Social media platforms help people in APEC economies better understand each other's cultures and everyday lives."

Tourism is an important issue for APEC economies, Yang said. In June the 13th APEC Tourism Meeting was held in the Macao Special Administrative Region, where high-quality tourism collaboration in the Asia-Pacific region using digital and intelligent technologies was discussed.

Zhang Jinshan, a researcher in the Tourism Planning and Development Research Institute of Beijing Union University, said tourism exchanges between China and other APEC economies have switched from recovery to solid growth, supported by effective mechanisms.

China recently announced an extension of the stay period for APEC Business Travel Card holders to 90 days, with the policy taking effect from Nov 1. Previously, holders of this type of travel card were allowed to stay for up to 60 days on the mainland.

"Apart from more relaxed visa rules, more convenient cross-border payments also benefit tourism growth in the Asia-Pacific region," he said.

Based on these policy advantages and effective mechanisms, experts say they are confident about more tourism cooperation. "Tourism cooperation between China and other APEC economies is promising," Yang of the China Tourism Academy said.

"However, we must recognize that differing viewpoints within APEC economies may cause uncertainties to future exchanges and collaborations in the sector."

He called for APEC member economies to encourage companies and tourism service providers to improve their offerings, ensuring that travelers enjoy a satisfying and high-quality experience.

"It is also crucial to enhance the stability of the tourism services chain to withstand uncertainties or shocks such as natural disasters, diseases or geopolitical issues."

Forum can address crucial issues, ex-NZ PM says

By **YANG RAN**

Former New Zealand prime minister Jenny Shipley has spoken of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum's vital role in combating global protectionism.

She expressed optimism that China, as this year's host, can draw on its influence to tackle pressing world challenges, stressing the shared commitment of New Zealand and China to multilateralism and free trade.

Shipley, prime minister of New Zealand from 1997 to 1999, talked of APEC's enduring importance and her efforts as chair of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in 1999 to facilitate China's entry into the World Trade Organization.

"APEC at certain moments in history can be a problem solver or an initiator of an important set of movements or decisions that can have a big impact on the Asia-Pacific community," she said.

APEC has evolved significantly over the years, she said, transforming from holding relatively simple gatherings to becoming a sophisticated "multi-layered arrangement" with work programs that "actually deliver results", benefiting economies of all sizes.

APEC's unique value, she said, lies in fostering "genuinely intimate conversations" among APEC economic leaders and enabling crucial "pull-aside meetings" to deal with emerging issues.

China has been the chair of the APEC meetings in 2001 and 2014, and is hosting for the third time this year. With the theme "Building an Asia-Pacific Community to Prosper Together" for APEC 2026, the country has driven numerous initiatives, including Senior Officials' Meetings, APEC Digital Week, and ministerial meetings on women, trade, tourism, forestry and food security, bolstering regional economic integration.

Shipley lauded China's contributions to global economic development, deeming its hosting of the meeting "an opportune time". She described China as "increasingly a very stable force globally", citing its significant role in global economic growth. China accounted for about 30 percent of annual global economic growth in the 2021-25 period, according to official figures.

"Chinese growth over the last two decades has carried its neighbors with it", Shipley said.

Speaking of the current surge in protectionism, Shipley called for APEC to become a resolute voice against it. "At a time when protection is rising rather than falling, APEC can be a voice for finding a way through this very difficult moment in history," she said.

She criticized protectionism as excluding connectivity and "building walls rather than being open". She hoped China could deploy its diplomatic influence to encourage APEC member economies to reassess protective measures.

While acknowledging that some economies might adopt protectionism in the short term for adjustment, she warned that "tariffs are not sustainable in most economies, and it's unfair to workers and investors to leave those investments in non-competitive industries".

From New Zealand's perspective, Shipley said, the APEC meeting is about encouraging collaboration across the Asia-Pacific.

"New Zealand and China share a very common position. We support multilateralism. We want the institutional frameworks to be strengthened again so that countries, large and small, if they have disputes ... can go and have their cases heard. We want people to focus on reducing protection so people can engage, not increase it."

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