



Sun-kissed Tattoo

Xirong(Hermione) Wu



In recent years, Dali has become increasingly attractive to younger generations seeking a change from the hectic pace of urban life. The region's favorable climate, characterized by mild winters and abundant sunshine, draws people looking for a more relaxed environment. This slower lifestyle not only promotes well-being but also fosters a deeper appreciation for simplicity and authenticity in everyday living.

Unlike busy cities in China, life in Dali is slower-paced, letting people enjoy the culture, weather, and their own lives without the rush and noise. It's a peaceful retreat for those who prefer a more relaxed way of living.



“Dalifornia” - Xizhou



Dali, also known as “Dalifornia”, is loved for its pleasant weather and sunny days year-round. In this beautiful region, you’ll find Xizhou, a small town mostly inhabited by the Bai ethnic group, known for preserving Bai culture and traditional architecture.

Xizhou Life and Interview

Interviewee:

A sojourn who originally lived in Beijing, now traveling around places, especially spending time in Xizhou and had came back multiple times.



Hermione Wu and a local's skin tone contrast

Question: What is a common need for Dali's locals and those who recently moved in?

Answer: So many people are coming here. Don't you think that's because Dali has something they commonly need? I'm not saying that this place has everything, but it has most of the things desired and required by those who chose to stay and those who decided to move in.

Question: As a sojourner who decided to spend an exceptionally large amount of time in Xizhou, Dali, what is so attractive about this place that makes you keep on coming back?

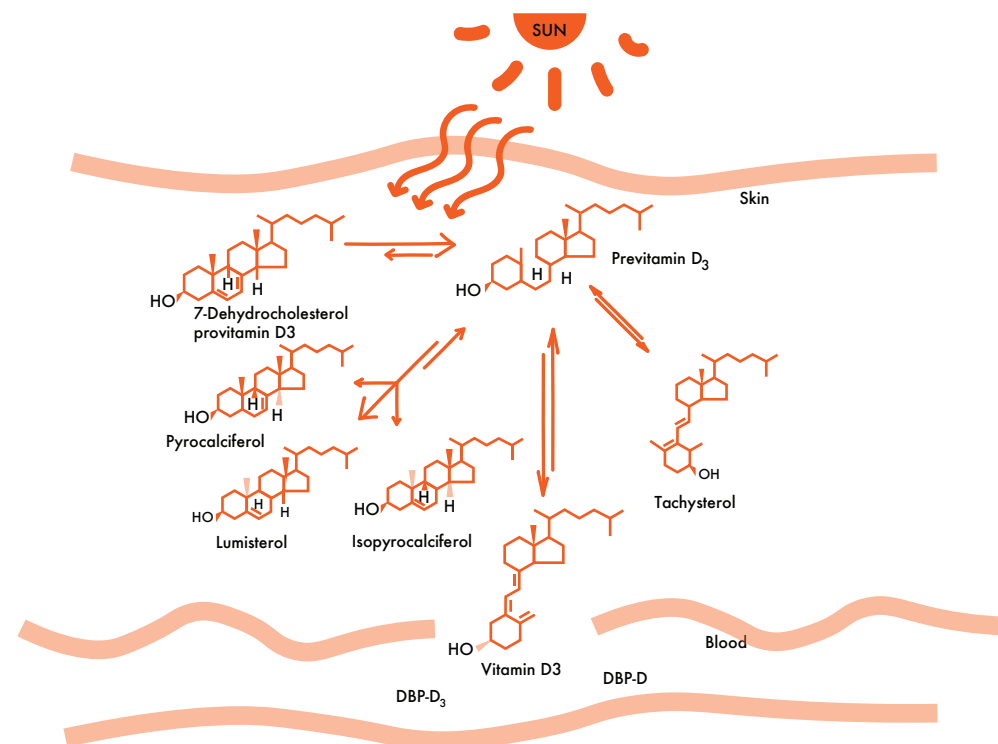
Answer: One of the things that drew me to Dali was the stark contrast in sunlight exposure compared to Beijing. In Beijing, like many others, I spent most of my days indoors, away from the sun. But in Dali, I found myself basking in sunlight every day.

Have you noticed that locals here generally have a darker skin tone despite the mainstream aesthetic standards in China to have a pale skin tone?

Coming here, sunlight makes a difference. Though they might not be able to make a ton of fortune here, they are always happy and enjoy life much more than just on the materialistic level. I think the level of exposure to sunlight may also relate to the depression rate in the cities.

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Benefits of Sunlight



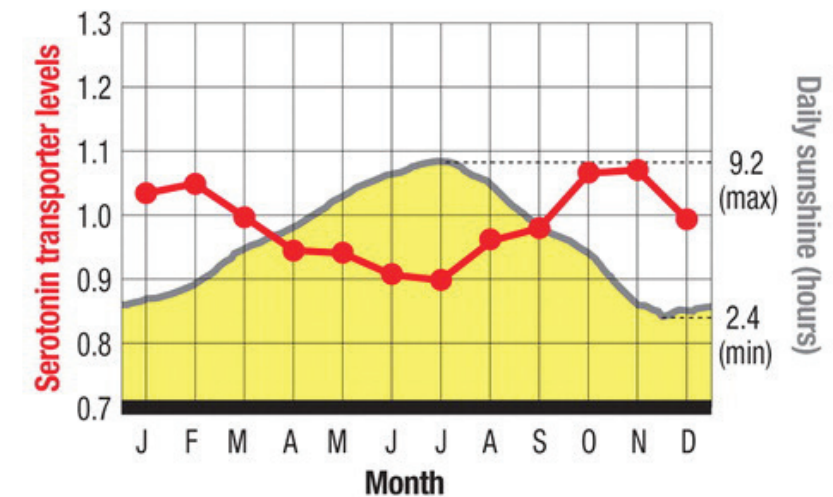
Physical - Absorption of vitamin D.

When exposed to sunlight, 7-dehydrocholesterol in the skin absorbs UV B radiation and then converts to previtamin D3 which in turn isomerizes into vitamin D3.

The human body can only absorb calcium under the presence of Vitamin D, which is crucial to building and maintaining healthy bones.

Let the Sunshine in

In a study of 88 subjects, researchers found that there may be a seasonal influence on the number of serotonin transporters in the brain. There are fewer transporters when there is more daily sunshine, and more when there is less daily sunshine.



Source: Jeffrey Meyer, M.D., Ph.D., et al., *Archives of General Psychiatry*, September 2008

Mental - Help with the secretion of serotonin.

Sunlight helps boost your brain's secretion of the hormone serotonin. Serotonin is associated with boosting mood and helping a person feel calm and focused. Serotonin transporters are brain proteins that deprive the nerves of the "feel good" nerve. Researchers found a significant presence of fewer serotonin transporters in the brain during spring and summer. Hence, there is more serotonin present in the brain due to fewer serotonin transporters, and as it correlates with the amount of sunlight one gets exposed to, we can say that the more sunlight we contact, the better we feel.

Beauty Standards

The admiration for pale skin traces back to the Han Dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE), where skin tone became a marker of social status due to the leisure afforded to wealthier families who could avoid sun exposure. This cultural nuance has persisted, shaping prevailing aesthetics in China up to the present day.

Yet, in recent times, there has been a discernible shift towards embracing a broader spectrum of skin tones. This transformation is partly influenced by Western aesthetics and a growing acknowledgment of the innate beauty of Asian skin tones. Consequently, China's beauty standards have evolved to become more inclusive. They now emphasize enhancing individual features and celebrating natural attributes, moving beyond the singular idealization of pale skin.



People wearing "Facekini" at the beach

Beginning with Xizhou, Dali, the ample sunlight there results in a noticeable darker skin tone among locals. A striking contrast emerges between tourists, who don UV-resistant clothing, hats, and masks, and the locals who embrace their darker complexion with simplicity.

Moreover, our interviews and observations confirm that locals derive a sense of relaxation and joy from sun exposure, which significantly influences their mood independent of their income.

This sharp contrast prompts reflection on my hometown, Shenzhen, Guangdong. As a first-tier city in China, Shenzhen faces pressures from work, high living costs, and other stressors contributing to higher rates of depression and anxiety compared to second and third-tier cities.

According to the National Health Library, depression and anxiety symptoms affect 10.4% and 11.3% of adults in Shenzhen communities, respectively.

While income undoubtedly influences these statistics, the lack of natural sunlight exposure due to long hours in office buildings from dawn to dusk emerges as a significant factor contributing to prevalent depression and anxiety symptoms.

Here, we introduce...



We've all encountered a familiar scenario: acquiring an unusually peculiar tan line either deliberately or inadvertently during summer. Rather than deeming it unappealing, we might regard it as a personal imprint left by our beloved sun.

Inspired by this notion, I endeavored to harness these lines, transforming them into artistic shapes upon our skin, allowing us to craft and redefine our own unique canvases.



Mission and Design:

This project is dedicated to promoting a more diverse beauty standard by advocating for healthy tanning and highlighting the comprehensive benefits of sunlight, both physically and mentally.

Our approach involves crafting intricate designs reminiscent of tattoos, specifically incorporating symbols, patterns, and features inspired by the traditional Bai ethnic group. These designs are delicately painted onto the skin, covering designated areas. By encouraging individuals to expose these areas to sunlight, a natural tanning process ensues. Over time, the contrast between tanned and untanned skin creates a semi-permanent, personalized "tattoo" that reflects each individual's unique characteristics. This innovative method not only honors cultural heritage but also encourages a broader, inclusive appreciation of beauty.

Instead of always "hiding away from the sun" for the sake of the influence of the mainstream aesthetic, we wish for people to embrace this excellent source of happiness and to be "kissed" by the sun to bless our physical and mental health.



Sun-kissed Tattoo

All you need:

- * Any part of your skin, clear and cleaned
- * My product and service
- * Enjoy your time in the sun
- * Wash it off after your lovely tanning session
- * Voila! Enjoy your new tattoo!

◆ 一个健康、简单、便宜的纹身方式。
◆ 利用自己未晒黑的肤色与被大理阳光滋养过的肤色形成属于你独一无二的纹身。

◆ A healthy, easy, and cheap method of tattoo.
◆ By covering parts of the skin and creating fashionable shapes, the tanned skin will create a bright contrast, serving as a unique "tattoo".

白族传统图案

Sun-kissed
TATTOO
太阳之吻

♥ 阳光有助于身心健康：产生维生素D促进钙地吸收 + 帮助分泌血清素调节情绪。
Sunlight is important to our health both physically and mentally by forming vitamin D to facilitate the absorption of calcium and helping the secretion of serotonin to battle negative emotions.

♥ 美是不被定义的！可以“白到发光”也可以被太阳亲吻后留下自己独一无二的印记！



Pop-up Sale



"I've never seen this kind of tattoo before, it's so creative and healthy!"



"I wanna keep this forever...I'm going to stay in the sun all day today to make this permanent"



“I’ve never thought of this before...I’m going to take off all these uv-protective masks and jackets today!”



“Mhm! We do need to promote diversity of beauty standards!”



Personal Thoughts:



Amidst the hustle of the pop-up sale, I found myself sharing the sun's burden, striving to flaunt summer's finest. Each step into daylight meant donning UV-proof masks and jackets, a ritual that shielded my skin but stifled my spirit. Why this elaborate defense against the sun's touch, I wondered, when compliments on my "admirable pale skin" only reinforced the norm?

Yet, a year in America reshaped my perspective. Witnessing a surge of self-acceptance on Chinese social media, I began shedding layers in the warm embrace of summer. These shields, once deemed "protection," felt more like shackles chaining me to societal ideals. I craved the sun's gentle kiss, its warmth seeping through pores, lifting not just my body but my soul. I yearned to share this newfound freedom with those around me, dressed alike under the summer sky.

Engaging in my project, I felt invigorated by conversations with fellow souls shedding their masks. When I tell them, "it takes 5-10 minutes to dry completely, after that you can put your jacket back on", many responded, "no worries, I won't be wearing it after this." I marveled as many chose to linger in the sun, their words like warm touches upon my heart. At day's end, it was these courageous souls dismantling beauty's barriers, embracing themselves beneath the sun's nurturing glow.



Glowing need not require pallor...
Only shedding the chains of beauty's lore
Let us radiate as our true selves
A beacon of warmth and light, breaking molds.

Afterwords:

I still notice comments on Chinese social media where posts with lots of “likes” suggest that influencers with darker skin tones should consider having paler skin. It’s heartening to see these comments becoming less frequent, with more people speaking out to promote diverse beauty standards. However, creating a truly safe space will demand much more effort. This project marks a humble step toward fostering an idealistic world of beauty standards, but greater efforts are undoubtedly necessary. I’m encouraged by the impact it has had and look forward to seeing my home country and the world embrace more diversity, inclusivity, and encouragement!

