

World's largest indoor ski resort opens in Shanghai as China logs hottest month

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On Friday, the Shanghai L*SNOW Indoor Skiing Theme Resort was officially certified by the Guinness Book of Records as the world's largest.

Shanghai opened the world's largest indoor ski resort on Friday, welcoming visitors in snowsuits to its pistes as China reported its hottest

August in 60 years.

This year's northern summer saw the highest global temperatures ever recorded, and in the faux Alpine square where the resort's opening ceremony took place, the mercury had already hit 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) by 9:00 am.

But the temperature plummeted to well below zero inside the cavernous atrium, where visitors switched from sunglasses and T-shirts into padded overalls, some opting for designer goggles or flapping bat-winged helmets.

At the top of a piste, snowboarder Jessica Zhang was unfazed by the August heat record.

"When it comes to climate I feel like you get ups and downs in temperature—maybe every few years a hottest year comes along," she shrugged.

Real snow shrinking

This year is likely to be the Earth's hottest ever logged, beating the record set in 2023, according to the EU's climate monitor.

China is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, although in recent years it has also emerged as a global leader in renewable energy.

Climate change has affected traditional outdoor skiing destinations, with ice and snow retreating as world temperatures rise.

"In China, it might have more of an effect in the north because of climate change, there are fewer people doing winter sports there... so some of the snow parks just aren't operating well, they're shrinking,"

said Zhang Jin, a 48-year-old skier.

"Instead, it's this kind of thing that's opening up right now, larger indoor ones, which I think is still pretty good."

Even as the country warms, huge government support and the interest of an expanding middle class have seen the ski industry coast to new heights in China, particularly after Beijing hosted the 2022 Winter Olympics.

The country leads the world when it comes to indoor ski resort building, boasting half of the world's top ten based on snow area, according to Daxue Consulting.

On Friday, the Shanghai L*SNOW Indoor Skiing Theme Resort was officially certified by Guinness World Records as the world's largest, overtaking the previous record-holder—also in China, in northern Harbin.

Modeled like a glacier, the almost 100,000-square-meter snow world towers over coastal Lingang, about 1.5 hours away from the city center.

Inside, a chairlift, cable car, and a green and red "steam train" ferry visitors to the complex's four ski slopes and other rides.

"There were no ski resorts around Shanghai before and there was no way to practice in the summer. But now I have the opportunity to do it... so I'm quite happy," snowboarder Cynthia Zhang told AFP before launching herself down the curving white incline.

'A lot of energy'

A Shanghai government report in August acknowledged that such

projects "will inevitably consume a lot of energy".

Resort executive Yin Kang told AFP that to keep the temperature below zero, 72 cooling machines and 33 snow-making machines worked continuously.

The Shanghai government report said the resort was built to maximize energy reuse, through elements such as its ice storage and waste-heat recovery systems.

Over three quarters of the resort's rooftop is covered in photovoltaics, or solar panels, which helps counteract its carbon footprint, it said.

"We have taken a lot of energy-saving measures," Yin told AFP.

The resort's completion has been pushed back several times. Industry media reported its originally planned opening date to be 2019.

Its soft opening period has not been wholly smooth.

The resort said it would add more safety measures after an accident in which a guest claimed a finger was severed, state media reported Wednesday.

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