

# Connecting the World's Youth through the Grand Canal on Cloud

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## Abstract

The paper discusses the idea of using the Grand Canal and canals worldwide as tools to engage youth in cultural and technological exploration. The author recounts personal experiences with the Grand Canal and introduces the initiative, "Grand Tours on the Grand Canal" (GTGC), which aims to provide a framework for youth development through canal-related activities. The initiative also proposes creating a cloud platform to facilitate digital engagement and cross-cultural exchanges around global canal cities. The paper concludes with a call for international collaboration to establish this platform, which would connect youth worldwide, foster global friendships, and promote intercultural understanding.

**Keywords:** Grand Canal, Youth Development, Cultural Exchange, Global Connectivity, Digital Platform, Canal Walk Initiative, Intercultural Communication

## Introduction

Cheng Hao introduces his personal connection to the Grand Canal, describing it as a significant part of his upbringing. He reflects on his travels along the canal, including a 2000-kilometer journey and a father-son educational trip, which inspired him to think about canals' potential for connecting people globally. His experiences led to the idea of using the canal as a medium to bring together youth from different parts of the world, fostering cultural exchange, learning, and collaboration.

## Methodology

The methodology section centers around the idea of implementing the "Grand Tours on the Grand Canal" (GTGC) initiative. Cheng Hao explains that the initiative uses both physical journeys along the canal and a digital platform, "The Grand Canal on Cloud" (GCOC). The GCOC platform offers various features such as Canal-exploring maps, courses, and dashboards to allow youth to explore, learn, and document their experiences related to the canals. By utilizing mobile internet technology, the platform makes the canal accessible to global audiences, encouraging engagement through interactive tools and resources.

## Results

Although no empirical data is presented, the paper discusses several outcomes of Cheng Hao's efforts. His first book inspired

people to take meaningful journeys, and the GTGC initiative has seen growth with youth engaging with Chinese canal cities. The success of these early initiatives prompted the creation of the GCOC platform, which has enhanced global youth's access to canal resources and connected them to cultural, historical, and technological aspects of canals. The expansion of this idea to a global scale represents a significant step forward, offering more opportunities for international engagement.

I am Cheng Hao, from Beijing, China. I am a dreamer, dedicated to using science and technology to bring people and families from China and around the world together in the name of canals, especially to help young people from all over the world to meet, know each other, and make friends.

I was born in a small town near the Grand Canal in China, and grew up by listening to the whistles of boats every night. To me, the Canal is a gateway to distant horizons, and a lighthouse, bringing me out of my hometown to the world outside, and now bringing me here, to the venue of the World Canal Conference.

At the age of 20, I traveled alone by bike for 2000 kilometers along the Grand Canal in 30 days, just for experiencing the Canal. Two years later, I did another 40 days travel along the Canal

for celebrating my university graduation. During the trip, I had visited 30 notable figures in China's economic sector.

Based on the two trips, I wrote and published a book titled "Meeting the World Right Here Right Now", with the intention to inspire many people to do their own dreaming trips.

In 2015, along with a famous Chinese navigator ZHAI Mo, we organized a meaningful sailing voyage across the Mediterranean. In 2016, with my 6-years-old son, we did a 30-day father-son educational journey along the Grand Canal, which brought us loads of joy and unforgettable experiences.

To me, canal is like a hub connecting rivers to the sea, like an encyclopedia with tremendous and valuable contents, and like the internet, with powerful connecting and communicating capabilities. I have kept thinking how to take advantage of the Grand Canal in China, and the canals around world as well. Can we utilize the canals to connect the world? Can we attract youths to the canals for a journey filled with meanings and visions? The idea of "Grand Tours on the Grand Canal (GTGC)" emerged naturally when China's Grand Canal was successfully honoured as a World Heritage site in 2014.

Subsequently, I became the Initiator of the initiative of Grand Tours on the Grand Canal (GTGC). The GTGC project aims to make the Canal and the cities along it a unique setting for youth development. The GTGC initiative encourages youths to explore the Canal cities and experience the Canal culture and technology, promoting engagement and preservation of the canals. In 2023, I published my second book "Grand Tour on the Grand Canal," exploring Chinese Canal cities in a journey of discovery. I look forward to the opportunity to extend the GTGC activities into more worldwide canal cities.

Following the development and advancement of mobile internet, I quickly realized that it would a good idea to use digital toolset to gather Chinese and global youth to the Canal subjects. As a result, I have established the Grand Canal National Cultural Park Study Platform, namely The Grand Canal on Cloud, a digital cloud platform providing online and offline services and helping young people to access the Grand Canal resources much easier, more efficient, more engaging, and more rewarding. The platform includes Canal-exploring maps, Canal-related courses, fieldtrip routes, check-ins of growth, study reports, and study dashboards among other features. This allows the process of exploring the Grand Canal to be documented, reviewed, continuously learned, and the results visualized and shared.

I firmly believe that a technology-enabled Canal exploring platform, such as GCOC, would benefit not only the Chinese youth, but also the youths around the world. Furthermore, the worldwide canals, with richness in history, culture, science, and lifestyle, are also worthy of discovery and exploration by youths globally.

As the next step, I start to think about the necessity and possibility of connecting every canal and every canal city around the world, making them globally shared subjects of study and travel destinations, and establishing a global cloud platform for the purpose by extending the GCOC.

It is the time to explore the worldwide canals and canal cities in an innovative way, enabling global youth and families to experience and study canals more creatively. We believe this represents a rare opportunity for every canal city and a stroke of fortune for each canal. Here, I would like to invite global partners to work collectively to make this exciting mission into reality.

Finally, please allow me to take this great opportunity of the World Canal Conference to make a collaboration proposal as follows.

1. The inherent communication function of canals has instilled in us the spirit of freedom, openness, and interconnectivity among canal cities.
2. With this spirit, we propose to launch the Canal Walk initiative globally among world canal cities and jointly establish the Cloud Platform for Study Tours in World Canal Cities (CPWCC) based on digital technology. By combining online and offline options, we aim to leverage the positive role of canal culture in facilitating communication and exchanges among world canal cities. Canals around the world are rich in cultural history, science and technology, and lifestyles, making them worthy of exploration, discovery, experience, and understanding by global youth. The Canal Walk initiative can effectively promote world canal culture, enabling young people worldwide to more easily explore canals in various countries, enhance their knowledge, foster friendships, and deepen international understanding and cultural exchanges.
3. As the online service support platform of Canal Walk, Cloud Platform for Study Tours in World Canal Cities (CPWCC) would bring cultural experience and technology empowerment as means to in line with this spirit, we propose the creation of Cloud Platform for Study Tours in World Canal Cities (CPWCC) by the canal cities worldwide. Using innovative technologies, this platform will enable countries, especially their youth, under the flags of canals, to contribute to the preservation and promotion of canal culture and foster cultural exchange and educational cooperation among global canal cities.
4. We appeal to governments, educational institutions, enterprises, and social organizations to lend their strong support and assistance to the construction of this platform, to jointly create an open, shared, and mutually beneficial international canal cultural exchange platform.

The World Canal Cities Study Tour Cloud Platform will be a comprehensive online platform that integrates global canal cities resources, historical culture, and educational content.

5. Cloud Platform for Study Tours in World Canal Cities (CPWCC) will delve deeply into canal cultures worldwide, develop international canal courses, and transform every canal city into a secondary classroom, a spiritual home, and a practical base to assist the growth of young people.

It will provide diverse learning resources to youth worldwide, fostering the inheritance and promotion of canal culture, offering an easy communication platform for international canal cities, and providing a broad space for learning and practice for international youth.

Through Cloud Platform for Study Tours in World Canal Cities (CPWCC), every canal and each canal city will become a shared learning subject for global youth. The platform will accompany growth, witness growth, and empower growth, creating new opportunities for the development of world canal cities and offering new avenues for the growth of international youth. Youth from various countries can choose appropriate bases and courses through the platform, participate in more practical activities, cultivate a global perspective, and enhance intercultural communication skills and international understanding.

6. Canals connect rivers, lakes, seas, and different cities, linking the world together. The Canal Walk initiative and Cloud Platform for Study Tours in World Canal Cities (CPWCC) will greatly empower canal cities and every canal youth, and bring new opportunities to each corner of the canal basin. Cloud Platform for Study Tours in World Canal Cities (CPWCC) can, with great hope and potentials, bring new opportunities to every canal city, connecting the growth of every canal city with that of its youth and every family.

### Discussion

The discussion highlights the broader significance of canals as cultural and technological hubs. The author suggests that canals are natural gateways to understanding different cultures, fostering a spirit of freedom, openness, and interconnectivity. Through

the GCOC platform, young people can study canal cities worldwide and engage in meaningful exploration of history, science, and culture. Cheng Hao discusses the potential of global partnerships, particularly the "Canal Walk" initiative, which aims to establish a network of youth who are connected through the exploration of canals.

### Conclusion

The conclusion emphasizes the potential of canals to connect global youth and foster intercultural communication. The author reiterates the importance of using technology to enable worldwide access to canal exploration and proposes the creation of a global cloud platform, CPWCC, as a next step. The vision is to turn each canal city into a learning base for youth development, offering courses and practical activities that enhance international understanding. The paper ends with a call to governments, institutions, and organizations to support this initiative, which could lead to new growth opportunities for canal cities and global youth alike.

This paper reflects a strong combination of personal passion and a forward-thinking approach to using historical infrastructure to inspire youth development and international cooperation.

**Thank you all!**