

Hēilóngjiāng

POP 38.3 MILLION

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Best Places to Eat

- → Wángmáolů Dòufu Měishí Diàn (p199)
- Orient King of Eastern Dumplings (p192)
- Harbin Food Market (p193)

Best Places to Sleep

- → Sunny Date International Hotel (p195)
- → Lungmen Grand Hotel (p192)
- Jīndì Bīnguăn (p192)

Why Go?

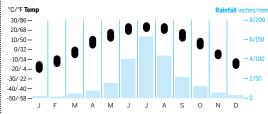
Hēilóngjiāng (黑龙江) means 'Black Dragon River', and this particular coiling dragon is the separating line between China and Russia. Across the province a neighbourly influence is evident in architecture, food and even souvenirs. Capital Harbin (Hā'ĕrbīn), famed for its cobblestoned streets and Europeanstyle facades, is ground zero for this hybrid experience.

Of course, it gets cold – sub-Arctic cold – in China's northernmost province, but that frigid weather is put to good use in winter, the peak tourist season. Harbin hosts a worldrenowned ice-sculpture festival and the region has some of China's finest ski runs. It gets busy, but it's worth swaddling yourself in layers and joining the crowds.

Outside the cities, Hēilóngjiāng is a rugged, beautiful landscape of forests, lakes, mountains and dormant volcanoes. From Mòhé, China's most northerly city, you can access the remote Běijícūn and Běihóngcūn for bragging rights to say you have stood at the very top of the Middle Kingdom.

When to Go

Harbin



Jan Harbin hosts the Ice and Snow Festival. **Jun** Mòhé holds the Northern Lights Festival. **Dec-Mar** Ski season at Yàbùlì and Wǔdàlián Chí.



Hēilóngjiāng Highlights

- Möhé (p199) Exploring China's northernmost village, where every day feels like Christmas, while hoping to catch the elusive but spectacular aurora borealis.
- 2 Harbin (p188) Braving the cold to join the crowds who flock to Harbin's world-famous lee & Snow Festival, and
- then walking the brick-lined streets of Dàolǐqū district to explore Harbin's Russian and Jewish past.
- **3 Wŭdàlián Chí** (p197) Hiking to the top of a dormant volcano's crater mouth and through petrified lava fields, which fringe five lakes.
- 4 Yàbùli Ski Resort (p196) Skiing and snowboarding at one of China's finest ski resorts.
- **5 Rare Cranes** (p198) Searching for these beautiful, endangered birds across the north in sanctuaries, such as in Zhālóng Nature Reserve, where Siberian cranes take flight.