

# General Information About Harbin

**Harbin** has a population in excess of 10 million, and over 4 million in the city centre alone. Historically, the city has had a lot of Russian influence, in particular after the Russian Civil War of 1918, when White (Monarchist) refugees escaped the newly formed Soviet Union. The influence remains clearly visible in the building styles and foods. The city was founded in 1897 as a camp for Russian engineers surveying the Trans-Siberian Railway. Labour demands brought in a collection of outcasts from across Russia, Poland and even from within Manchuria. The city eventually was captured by the Japanese during World War II and later captured by the Chinese in 1946. Once nothing more than a Russian-built outpost of the railway, Harbin has managed to become a major player in her own right as well as capital of Heilongjiang Province.



**Language** – The official language of Harbin is Standard Mandarin, known in Chinese as *Putonghua* (普通话). It has been the only language used in education on the mainland since the 1950s, so most people speak it.

**Drinking Water** – Unlike most of the cities around the world, it is not safe to drink tap water without being boiled.

**Currency** – The official currency of the People's Harbin is the renminbi (人民幣) often abbreviated RMB. The base unit of this currency is the yuan (元), international currency code CNY. All prices in China are given in yuan, usually either as ¥ or 元. For years, the yuan was pegged at 8.29 to the US dollar, but in 2005 it was floated and has been slowly strengthening ever since. As of April 2008, it is around ¥7 to the US dollar (¥0.9 to HKD 1).



**Safety** - Petty crime remains relatively low, and it is common for people to quietly carry large amounts of cash. At the same time, one should take the usual precautions against being conspicuously wealthy. In some areas, there are many pickpockets. In crowded markets, buses, and even dance clubs it is common for wallets and mobile phones to disappear. Items such as purses left unguarded at restaurants are also liable to be stolen. Keep your eye on your bags and if you see a local wearing a backpack on their front, it's probably a good idea to do the same. **The emergency number to reach the police is 110.**

**Medical Facilities** – Harbin's medical facilities are among the finest in the northeast China, with well-qualified doctors, dentists and nurses. Drugs are generally available from a pharmacist without prescriptions. You can usually ask to see the instructions that came with the box. **The emergency number for medical care is 120.**

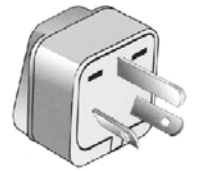
**Telephone** – International Direct Dialling is available in varies hotels. IDD calls can also be made from numerous phone card and credit card phones located around the city. Phone cards often have the value of ¥100 but sometimes can be had for as little as ¥25. As a general indication of price, a call from Harbin to Hong Kong is ¥2.99 per minute. The cards have printed Chinese instructions, but after dialling the number listed on the card English-spoken instructions are available. **IDD Call can be made by dialling the international dialling code (86) + area code (451)+ local number.**

**Tipping** - Tipping is not necessary and sometimes considered an inappropriate gesture, but under certain rare circumstances — such as a doorman allowing you into a building at a late hour — a tip is welcome. (A ¥1 tip would suffice for the above example.) The exceptions to this rule are in upscale businesses where you are rendered some type of service. Taxi drivers do not require tips. However, in some places, there's a flat fuel surcharge added to the meter fare.

**Weather and Climate** – Harbin is known for its cruel winter weather. Be sure to have adequate clothing and protect the extremities. Gloves, thick socks, scarves, and ear protections are a must. In summer times, it is quite dry and hot with great variations between the average maximum of 37° C (100° F) and minimum 16° C (61° F). Rainfall is not usually seen in Harbin.

**What to Wear** – Harbin's temperate weather makes light summer clothing (preferably of natural fabrics) most practical during June to August. However, there is a great variation in the temperature, it is advisable to bring along a windbreaker for outdoor activities. Most places are not restrictive on the dress code – polo shirts, t-shirts, jeans, slacks, blouses, skirts, sun dresses and sneakers are acceptable in most places. Although some establishments require formal wear for the evening suits and evening dresses will never out of place in Harbin's nightspots. It is always advisable to check beforehand on dress regulation.

**Electricity** – China's voltage is 220-240 volts AC, 50 cycles per second. On request, most hotels would provide transformers to visitors with electrical appliances of a different voltage, such as 110-120 volts, 60 cycles per second. The power plugs used in China are of three-pin as shown.



## More About Harbin (Sightseeing Spots)

市旗



市徽



哈尔滨道外清真寺



红博广场



中央大街街景



哈尔滨冰雪大世界

