

# TIANJIN (天津)



Located on the northern coast, only a stone's throw from the bustling capital, Tianjin is often overlooked by visitors to China, which, given its unique and interesting historical background, elegant European-style architecture and relaxed atmosphere, is a great shame.

After opening up to foreign trade in 1860, the city of Tianjin was ruled by nine different countries, including Great Britain, Italy, France and Hungary, each of which opened their own self-contained concessions across the city. Though this rule ended in 1900, many architectural reminders remain in Tianjin, giving the city a distinctly European feel.



Since this time, Tianjin has become one of China's most important international trade hubs and a very interesting destination for both domestic and international travellers.

## Attractions

**Ancient Culture Street (Jingmen Guli):** Formally opened in 1986, the Ancient Culture Street is a beautiful area in which visitors can appreciate traditional architecture, shop for traditional gifts and try some of Tianjin's delicious local snacks. The buildings in this area have been built using blue bricks and the doors and windows are decorated with colourful paintings, some of which tell stories from classic Chinese novels. The area is designed as a place for visitors to experience Chinese folk custom and is an interesting area to explore!



**Porcelain House:** Built in the 1920's, the Porcelain House is a French style building, covered in porcelain from various periods of Chinese history. Located along Chifeng Road, the house stands among regular buildings of Tianjin, making for a very interesting and attention-grabbing sight. Visitors can enter the building for 35 RMB to explore three floors, which contain hundreds of preserved pieces of furniture and paintings from various Dynasties and famous painters.



**The Five Great Avenues:** Wǔdàdào (Five Great Avenues) is the name given to five upmarket parallel streets in Tianjin, which feature architecture from various European countries such as Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and Spain. Over 50 of the 230 buildings have been occupied by foreign celebrities, which is noted on plaques outside of the various residences. Characterised by its mixture of architectural style from the Renaissance, ancient Greece and the Qing Dynasty, the Five Great Avenues are an interesting area that captures the city's charm and history.

**The Tianjin Eye:** Doubling up as a bridge over the Hai River, the Tianjin Eye makes for an extremely impressive sight. The height of a 35-storey building, the wheel holds 64 transparent gondolas and provides passengers 40km worth of views. Even for those who don't wish to take a ride, the Eye is well worth a visit, most notably at night when it lights up. It's worth noting that the wheel is open daily from 9.30am to 9.30pm, except for Monday mornings, when it's closed.



**The Italian Style Street:** Built in 1902, the Italian Style Street is an area filled with Italian style buildings, located around the central square, also known as Marco Polo Square. The area has a very European feel to it and is home to restaurants serving good Italian, French and German cuisine. As well as restaurants, the area houses many lively bars, cafes, cinemas and several small shops/market stands.



## Food

Tianjin is famous throughout China for its traditional snacks and great food scene and it's not something that should be missed!

### Tianjin Snacks:

**Shiba Jie Mahua:** One of the city's most popular snacks, this is a sweet, crispy dough, fried in peanut oil and stuffed with various fillings.



**Where to try it:** *Shiba Jie Mahua Hotel Street Branch, No.18, Jiashang, Beilou, Hotel Street*

**Goubuli Baozi:** This traditional snack has a history of over 150 years and has become famous not only across China, but also throughout other Asian countries. It is a type of Baozi (dumpling), which originated in Tianjin. One of the features that differentiates it from other types of Baozi is that each Goubuli bun has 18 wrinkles.



**Where to try it:** *Goubuli Baozi General Restaurant, No.77, Shandong Lu, Heping District*

**Erduoyan Zhagao:** This snack translates literally to 'ear hold fried rice cakes' and gets its name from the Tianjin Hutong, named 'Ear-hole hutong'. Glutinous rice is kneaded into a dough and fried to create a golden coloured, crispy rice cake, with a soft centre.



**Where to try it:** *Erduoyan Zhagao, No.37, Beimenwai Dajie, Hongqiao District, Food Street Branch*

**Zhilanzhai Gao Gan:** This is a famous sweet snack of Tianjin and originates from the early Ming Dynasty. This dry cake is white in colour, very refreshing and nutritious.

Not only does Tianjin serve great local food, it is also home to many great restaurants serving food from other regions of China, as well as Korean, Japanese and Western dishes. For visitors looking for a taste of Europe, restaurants on the Italian Style Street are a must.

## Accommodation

**Tianjin Cloudy Bay Hostel:** This small, modest hostel has been designed to complement the city's history and European influences. It offers a couple of dorm rooms and two single rooms, as well as air conditioning, free wifi, laundry facilities and a bike rental service. Located across the river from the railway station and close to Haihe Cultural Square, this conveniently located hostel is a great choice for any budget traveller. Also, the hostels rooftop terrace gives guests a great view of the city.

**Ibis Tianjin Railway Station:** Located only a 15-minute walk from the city's main train station, this hotel is well located for visits to the city's main attractions. Offering comfortable and reasonably priced private rooms, as well as a free breakfast, this hotel is perfect for a short city break.

## Entertainment



Thanks to its proximity to Beijing and its modern city centre, Tianjin offers visitors a lively nightlife. Not only is the Italian Style Street great to visit during the day, but it's also a popular and vibrant place to spend the evening. There are also many bars across the city, including:

**City Place (云景):** Located on the 50<sup>th</sup> floor of the Raffles Hotel, City Place is a popular bar that offers stunning views across the city. Unlike other bars in Tianjin, City Place is quite quiet, making it a great place to chat with friends over a drink.

**May Flower (五月花):** This bar is known for its live performances from singers and bands and is a great place to go for cheap drinks, though the music is often Chinese and can be very loud.

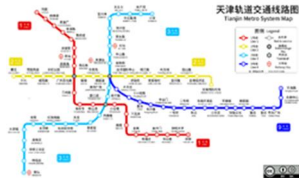
**Xitang Club (昔唐酒吧):** This bar is popular among the foreign expats of the city and is a fun, lively venue.

**Xiangsheng (相声),** known as comic cross talk, is a popular form of Chinese entertainment, which is fairly similar to comedy. Xiangsheng is a traditional Chinese comedic performance in the form of a dialogue between two performers, or in some cases a monologue. Performers talk fast and use lots of puns, making it an entertaining art. Xiangsheng is one of China's most famous and popular performing arts and Tianjin and Beijing are known as the best places to see a show.



In Tianjin, most performances are given in teahouses, so visitors can enjoy Chinese tea whilst watching this traditional form of entertainment. One of the best places to see this in Tianjin is **Mingliu Tea House (名流茶馆)** on the Ancient Culture Street.

## Getting around Tianjin



Tianjin has a metro system, of which there are currently 5 lines in operation; Line 1, Line 2, Line 3, Line 6 and Line 9. The city eventually plans to have 12 lines, which would serve all 13 districts. Click on the map to enlarge.

Tianjin city buses consist of special sight-seeing routes and regular routes which include inner city and suburban lines. On inner city bus routes, passengers must pay 1 RMB for 12km or less and 1.5 RMB for more. On suburban lines, passengers must pay 1 RMB for the first 10km and 0.5 RMB for each extra 5km.

Aside from the metro, taxi is the most convenient way to get around Tianjin. It's easy to flag a taxi down on the street, but it's always best to check with the driver that they will run on the meter before getting in the car. Tianjin city taxis start on 8 RMB for the first 3km and increase by 2 RMB for every km after that. If travelling over 10km, expect to pay 3 RMB per kilometre over 10.

## Travel

Tianjin Binhai International Airport (TSN) is the second largest airport in Northern China and operates flights to several cities, both domestic and international.

Tianjin is an important railway hub, linking the Northeast, North, East, and South of China via several major railway lines. There are four important train stations in the city, including Tianjin Railway Station, West Railway Station, North Railway Station, and South Railway Station. It's easy to reach cities all over China from these stations on both high-speed and slower trains.

Tianjin's West long-distance bus station, runs buses to major cities in other provinces, including Hebei, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Jiangxi, and so on.