

## Discover Jilin — Home to the Changbai Mountains and Songhua River

# Jilin a hot spot for cold fun

By LI FUSHENG  
lifusheng@chinadaily.com.cn

While many consider vacations to be an affair for the summer, visitors to Jilin province are finding that winter can be just as fun.

The northeastern province is home to the Changbai Mountains, where tourists can savor what is said to be the country's most magnificent snow spectacle.

Viewed from the foothills, the snow-clad ranges seem to roll out like a giant traditional Chinese ink-wash painting. The vast white expanse is dotted with peaks, ponds, and forests that are not fully covered in snow.

On a trek up the mountains surrounded by freshly fallen snow as far as the eye can see, it feels as if one is embarking on a soul-purifying journey, leaving behind earthly worries.

When hikers come back at nightfall, they can soothe tired muscles in one of the many hot springs that are found throughout the mountains, which are dormant volcanoes.

Some springs can be found near the Tianchi Lake, a crater lake at an altitude of some 2,200 meters, while others may lie several hundred kilometers away, making it convenient to enjoy.

The springs have constant temperatures, flows and water quality, and they are rich in healthy minerals. They are also said to have therapeutic effects on arthritis and dermatitis.

Another thing the province is known for is its soft rime, which is hailed as one of China's top natural wonders. Rime is ice crystals that condense on tree branches when the water vapor from warmer rivers meets the cold air.

The most beautiful soft rime is found along the Songhua River in downtown Jilin city because water in the section rarely freezes throughout the winter.

The province's long snow season also makes it a prime spot for skiing.

The snowy period can stretch for some 150 days, with the first snow usually falling in late October and the last in early April.

The province has built more than 20 large ski resorts in such cities as Changchun and Jilin as well as Yanbian prefecture, making it easy for visitors to indulge their passion



Tourists participate in a sledding competition. Riding a sled is a traditional pastime in rural areas of Northeast China.

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The snow-capped Changbai Mountains roll out like a giant traditional Chinese ink-wash painting.

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for winter on skis, sleds, and snow motorcycles.

Winter carnivals have been held in recent years to combine leisure

activities with the local way of life.

Jilin is home to people of different ethnic groups, such as Han, Korean, and Manchu, who have kept their



Locals and tourists marvel at the soft rime on tree branches in Jilin, hailed as one of China's top natural wonders.

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conventional customs, including winter fishing and hunting, said local tourism officials.

Visitors also have the opportu-

nity to taste local food, especially the renowned stews and locally brewed strong liquor, which help to fight off the freezing cold, they added.

## Ice, snow culture sets province apart

By CAO BAOMING in Changchun

In Jilin, locals celebrate the arrival of winter, which brings with it the snowy majesty for which the province is known.

After the first leaf falls in early winter, snow soon follows. The icy northerly winds send a signal that a seasonal cold front from Siberia is coming. Swirled by the biting winds, snow descends upon the barren grasslands, sandy plains and black soil, drawing a hazy veil over the region.

Common in Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning in Northeast China, snow varies in the three provinces.

In Heilongjiang, closer to Baikal Lake and Siberia to the north, the snow is harder, making it more suit-

able for carrying sleds and reindeer.

In Liaoning, the southernmost of the three provinces, the snow is softer and smoother.

Because Jilin is located between the other two, its snow can be both soft and hard and takes on different properties depending on where it is found.

Locals have developed their unique winter customs that draw on their love of snow and ice.

Despite the cold, snow exhilarates people. For them, winter is a time to enjoy the outdoors.

When winter approaches, fishermen living near rivers, lakes and streams make ready their ice fishing tools, such as chisels, sleighs and nets, in preparation for the fishing season.

Children begin to build snowmen and enjoy snowball fights, and workers start to make ice lamps at tourist destinations.

Around Jilin's famous Chagan Lake, villagers can partake in a number of winter activities, like ice fishing and ice lanterns. Eating pickled Chinese cabbage, building igloos and celebrating the Chinese New Year holiday in the northeastern style are also essential for any traveler.

The local attitude toward snow reflects the history and experience of the aboriginal people of Northeast China, who have long struggled to survive in a harsh environment. Because of the snow, winter days in the region have great significance.

Snow is like a relative that calls on locals from afar once a year. They look forward to its arrival. With little or no snow, the region would lose its geographic features and could not be grouped in with the other provinces in Northeast China.

Jilin people need to cherish their ice and snow cultural resources and map out a route for tourists to travel along from west to east.

The route is designed to take visitors from the western Harqin grassland, which covers Inner Mongolia and Jilin, to the Xianghai National Nature Reserve and Chagan Lake and then eastward until they reach the Changbai Mountains.



Through years of development, Jilin province has improved infrastructure and services in ski resorts.

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Villagers are on the way to shop for the Chinese New Year. Celebrating the festival in the Northeast Chinese style is promoted as a tourism product.

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The author is a vice-president of the Jilin Provincial Federation of Litera-

ture and Arts and an expert in local customs.

## Winter tourism picking up in Northeast

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun  
liumingtai@chinadaily.com.cn

Tourism is becoming a major industry in Northeast China's Jilin province, according to official statistics.

Last year, the province received nearly 90 million visitors, and its tourism industry generated 118 billion yuan (\$18.9 billion) in revenue.

# 118

billion yuan

in tourism revenue generated in 2012

The figure is likely to reach 145 billion yuan this year, and the number of tourists is projected to surpass 100 million, according to the provincial tourism administration.

"The sector is now in a golden development period and at a key strategic stage for improvement, facing new tasks and demands," said Zhang Wei, deputy chief of the administration.

Last year alone, a combined investment of 21 billion yuan was made in the sector, an increase of 49 percent over 2011. The influx of investment has further improved infrastructure and services and helped to realize the province's goal of becoming a popular tourist destination in Northeast Asia, local officials said.

"Ice and snow is common in Northeast China. Harbin, Jilin, Changchun and the Changbai Mountains are all rich in northern-style tourism resources and have complementary advantages," Zhang said. "Linking them up, we can build a branded tourism route with a typical northeast favor."

For Jilin province, the biggest advantage is snow, according to Zhang. "Our province has fine snow, heavy snowfalls and a longer snow period," he said. "Skiing in Jilin has an absolutely advantage in the country's winter tourism events."

Over years of development, the province has seen fundamental changes in its skiing infrastructure and services at local ski resorts, the official noted.

In addition, health spas and the province's trademark wintry landscapes appeal to tourists, who will be in awe when they see miles of shining tree branches covered with frost, he added.

Local authorities are also developing new winter tourism products in the Changbai Mountains.

The actual temperature on the mountain is even higher than that in the provincial capital Changchun, though people tend to feel colder due to the stronger winds at that altitude, Zhang said.

But visitors need not worry about the chill because they will be shielded by warm rooms and outdoor heating facilities at resorts, the official said.

Moreover, winter tourism is generally related to such sports as skiing, hiking and mountain-climbing. "After sports, you won't feel that cold," he said.

"A health spa surrounded with snow was once a feature only found at some overseas resorts, yet we can make it a reality in the Changbai Mountains now," he said.

Tourism involves an industrial chain covering dining, accommodations, transportation, travel, shopping and entertainment, Zhang said. "Above everything else, dining is what tourists are concerned about most," he said.

"At the start of this year, we designed a food festival for Chinese New Year's Eve dinner in Jilin, which is expected to promote local customs as a tourism product and attract more travelers to the province for skiing, vacations, spa and the Chinese New Year," he said.



Ice fishing, a traditional event, has become a popular attraction among travelers.

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