

# NEW AIRPORT TO BOOST TOURISM IN CHINA'S NORTH



China is expanding in every field thinkable. Tourism is no exception. Two years ago they decided to boost tourism in the "China's North Pole" by building an airport here. It concerns the China-Russia border county of Mohe in Heilongjiang province, which is the northernmost county of China.

The county includes China's northernmost point, on the Heilongjiang (Amur) River border with Russia. Mohe is also the coldest place in the republic. The average annual temperature is 4 degrees Celsius below zero. During winter the temperatures drop to 30 to 40 degrees below zero and it gets as cold as 52.3 Celsius below zero. The country offers a wonderful tourism experience. Tourists may take a horse-driven sledge or they may admire meandering Heilongjiang River as well as wonderful mountain scenery. The mystical aurora borealis draws more and more Chinese as well as foreign tourists year after year. Deep, virgin forests offer a unique opportunity for exploring, hunting, and bonfire camping. The county can also offer number of historic sites like e.g. the Ancient Battlefield of Yaksa.

Being such an outlying destination makes it certainly attractive for tourists but on the other hand it makes transport somewhat difficult. In past, the only way how to get to Mohe, was by a sailing a boat on the river. Later on the forest county was made accessible by train, but it takes over 10 hours to get to the nearest traffic hub Jiagedaqi and approximately 30 hours to Harbin. Chinese authorities decided to make the county more accessible and by doing so to boost its tourism industry development. A civil airport construction began here in 2006 and finished in April this year. The new airport is designed to handle 120,000 passengers a year. Its terminal occupies 2,000 square meters and the total cost of the facility reached about 236 million yuan (34.3 million U.S. dollars). The new route that links Beijing, Harbin and Mohe is operated by China Southern Airlines. Currently, it operates a daily round trip with an Airbus A320 that seats 156 passengers.

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