

HARBIN: EAST-WEST CROSSROAD DESTINATION



Tourists have vastly different tastes. While some would prefer the hustle and bustle of the city culture in the metropolis, others would be more suited to the silent grandeur that a visit to a historical site would bring. Now here is where Harbin, the largest city in the Heilongjiang Province in China, comes in. Also known as "Oriental Paris" or "Oriental Moscow," this place provides a unique mix of two very different cultures: the "old" Chinese culture, and a taste of the more visibly modern Western zeitgeist.

Summer in Harbin offers visitors the best weather for cycling. The temperature is just right, neither too warm nor too chilly, and the light breezy climate will surely make people grab their bikes and just set off to explore the city's wonders on their own.

First off in any cyclist's itinerary is the Chinese-Baroque Historic Block that is located on Daowai Nan Street. It is a nostalgic showcase of Baroque and other European architectural styles which influenced the architecture of the buildings situated there.

Just across the block in Jiangpan Lu can be found the city's lifeblood and one of its primary waterways- the Songhua River. On the opposite end of the river, near its northern bank, is the Sun Island recreational area. Considered as one of the best resorts in China, this area is known for the multitudes of fun activities you can do here. You could visit a lifelike miniature of a Russian town, a deer park and a swan lake, and "Ice and Snow World: that is open every night. It like communing with nature right in the middle of a city.

After Sun Island, one could cycle down the length of Jiangpun Lu and head on over to the Harbin Flood Control Monument. Now considered as a city landmark, the 22.5 meter tower marks Harbin City's hard fight against the deadly floods of 1957.

A cycling trip around the city would most probably end in Central Avenue, Harbin's first paved street, where cyclists will have to get off their bikes and experience the area's wonders for themselves (Central Avenue only allows pedestrians, so no bikes are allowed). This is one of the busiest streets in Harbin, where art and business come together in a delightful bedlam. The 1450 meter street is lined with buildings heavily influenced by Russian architecture, and when night comes, gets filled with activity as people come to shop, eat, or just to enjoy the robust nightlife.

Lastly, good restaurants abound in Central Avenue. One looking for a good eat at the end of a long day can feast on traditional Harbin ice cream. You can find these goodies near Modern Hotel, the first hotel that was built in the city. For those who want the taste of real, authentic Russian food, Huamei Restaurant is the place to go.

Harbin City is a great place for a cycling trip. It promises an interesting adventure where one could see the lovely fusion of Eastern and Western cultures, and the history that comes along with it.

Date: 2012-05-21

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/harbin-east-west-crossroad-destination-in-china-news3248>