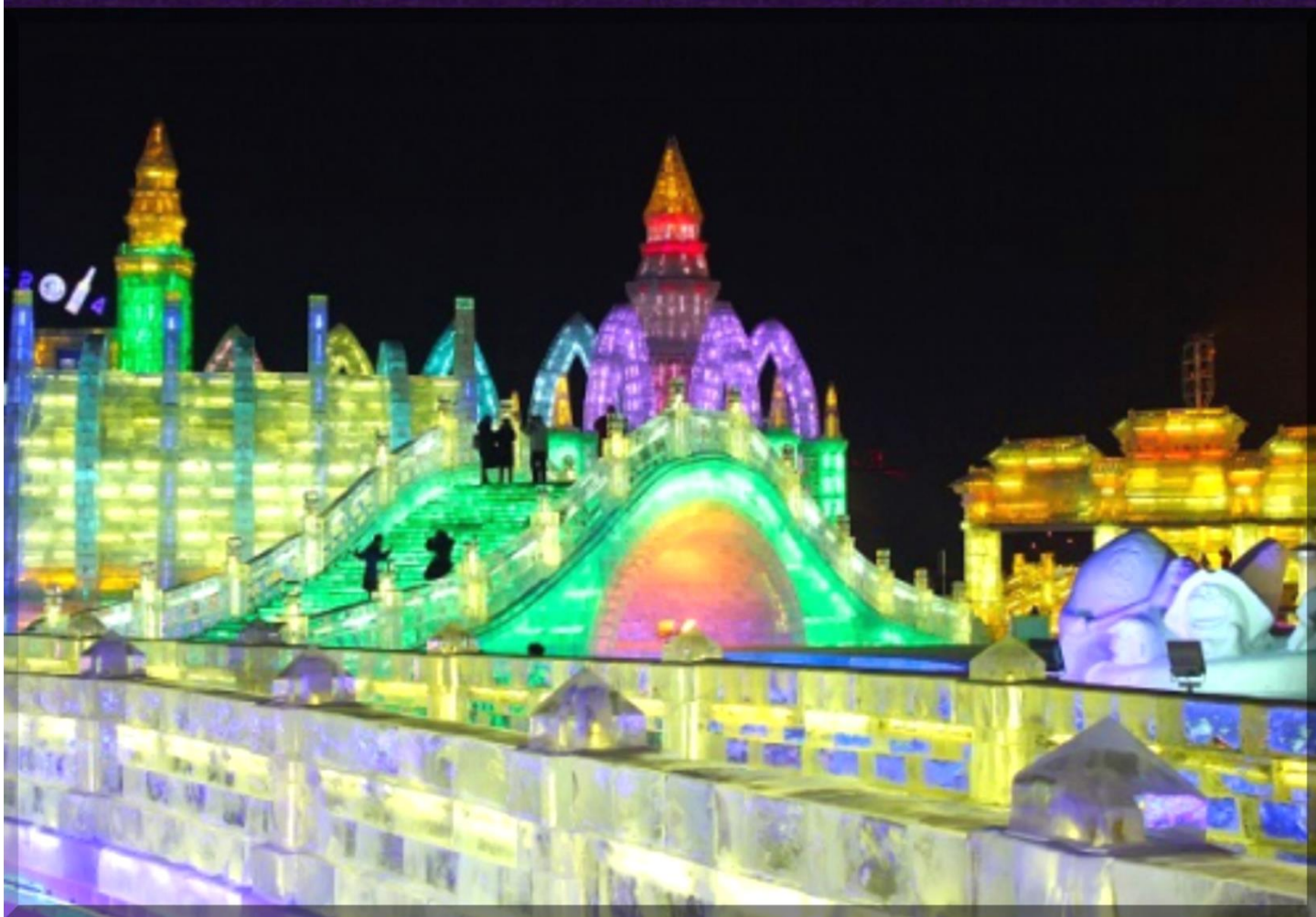


Harbin

China

World's Best Snow & Ice Festival



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Harbin, China

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1. INTRODUCTION

Harbin has the world's largest and most spectacular ice and snow festival. It is bitter cold, but the artistic snow and ice sculptures will wow you. Some sculptures are life size others are gigantic monuments. The snow and ice sculptures are majestic during the day, but wait until it gets dark. The illuminated ice sculptures - some of them even have animated lights - are some of the most impressive and gorgeous man-made monuments on the planet.

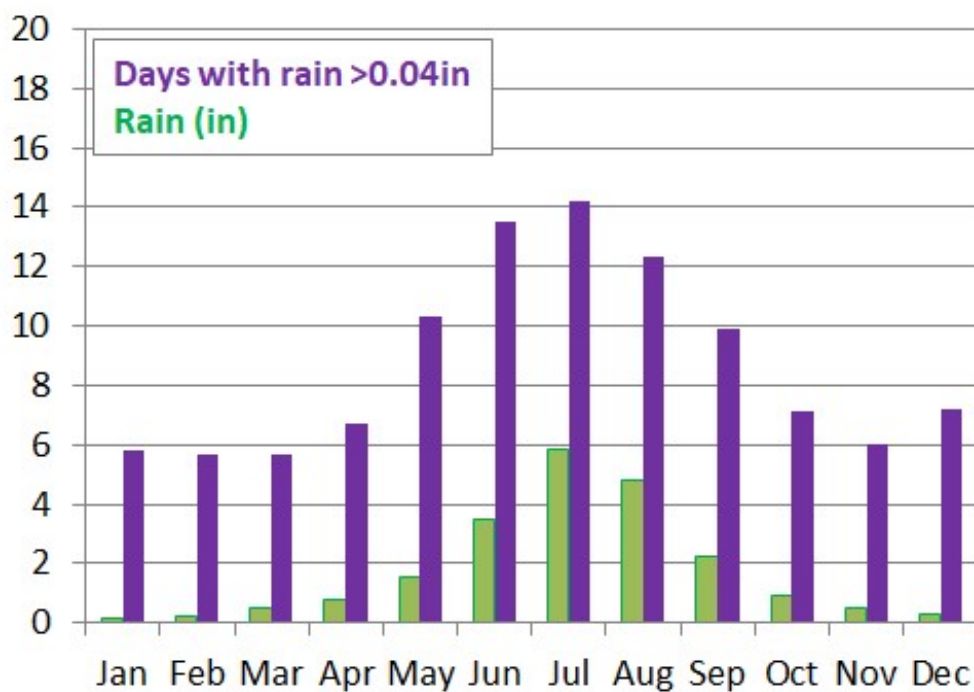
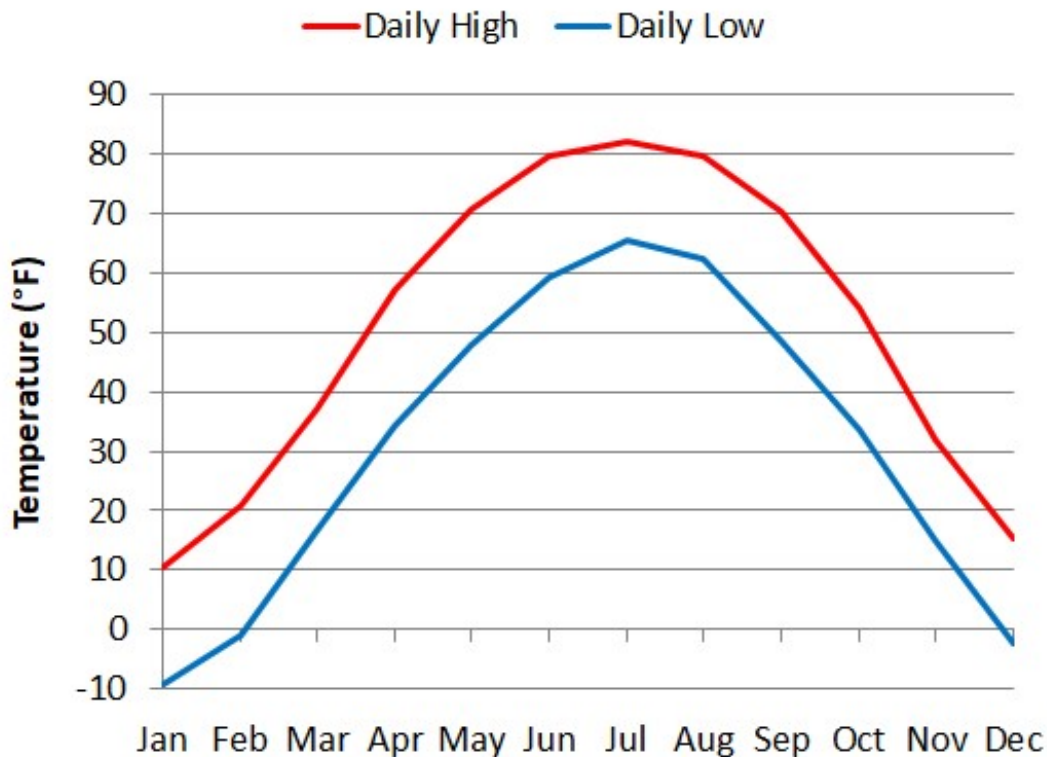
Harbin is the provincial capital of the Heilongjiang province and is the eighth most populous Chinese city with a population of 5.3 million and a total of 10.6 million people in the greater metropolitan area.

The name Harbin comes from the Manchu word "place for drying fishing nets". Nowadays, Harbin is known as Ice City and for its world renowned **Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival** that is held here since 1985.

This region was inhabited since at least 2200 BC, but the city of Harbin was only founded in 1898 on the banks of the Songhua River when the Chinese Eastern Railway was built. The railway was financed by the Russian Empire as an extension of the Trans-Siberian Railway. The Russians selected Harbin as the administrative center for their efforts and as a showcase for Russian imperial influence in Asia.

Harbin, China

Harbin in winter is bitter cold. The climate that you can expect is shown here:



Cruising the Caribbean

2.1 DISCLAIMER

In this guide I am doing my best to give you the most accurate information. Over time, however, prices, times, and even attractions are subject to change. Therefore, I and backpackandsnorkel.com cannot be held responsible for the experiences of users while traveling. I strongly suggest that you write or call the attractions you plan to visit for confirmation when you make your travel plans.

Also, please stay alert, be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye on your belongings. Pickpockets and other criminals can easily ruin even the best planned vacation.

2.2 COPYRIGHT

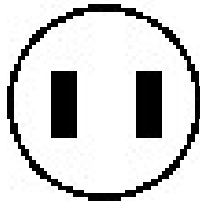
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4. MISCELLANEOUS

Make sure to get enough RMBs to pay for taxis, stores, restaurants and attractions. Some will take credit cards, but for most: cash is king. Be advised that there are still lots of ATMs in China which do not accept foreign debit cards, so my best advice is to exchange money at the airport. Many hotels can exchange currency too, but often to bad rates.

The voltage in China is 220V & 50Hz. Hotels in China often have wall plugs that accept US (Type A) and European (Type C & F) and Australian (Type I) style power plugs.

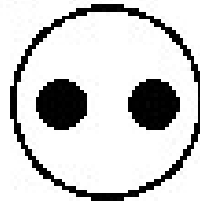
Type A



Type I



Type C & F



Make sure that your electronic devices can handle 220V. Otherwise they will be fried and likely destroyed and may even catch on fire.

Also be advised that, if your electronics are used to operating at 60 Hz (like the US), then they will likely run slower.

Harbin, China

5. HARBIN INTERNATIONAL ICE AND SNOW SCULPTURE FESTIVAL

The Harbin International Ice and Snow festival is an annual winter festival that takes place in Harbin, China, since 1985. It is the world's largest ice and snow festival and it attracts more than 18 million visitors and generates more than 28 billion RMB (> US\$4 billion).

It is not just the world's largest snow and ice festival, it also features the world's largest ice sculptures.

The official start of the festival is January 5 and it lasts for one month. Weather permitting, it often opens earlier and closes later.

In 2020, about 220,000 cubic meters of ice blocks were cut from the frozen Songhua River. In some cases, deionized water is used to produce ice blocks that are as transparent as glass.

Multicolored lights are often integrated into the ice sculptures to create spectacular effects at and after sunset.



6. HOW TO SURVIVE WINTER IN HARBIN

When I was planning our trip to Harbin for the Snow and Ice Festival, I learned:

The temperature will be a frigid -5F to -20F (-20C to -30C) during the day and the air pollution is enormous as Harbin is powered by many coal fired power plants that supply the entire city with heat and small airborne particulates that will get in your lungs and can cause health problems.

To deal with the cold, we purchased thick winter shoes, knowing that I may only wear them again in Antarctica as I normally don't have problems with cold weather. My wife on the other hand has worn her shoes multiple time since Harbin.

Some people suggest spikes or snow shoes and claim that walkways are icy. We walked a lot in Harbin and I can tell you that we saw one small spot that was a little slippery. All the walkways are absolutely safe to walk on.

We purchased hand and foot warming pads and quality particulate filter facemasks in advance. I had read from too many travelers that complained that you can only get expensive but low quality counterfeits in Harbin that really don't do anything. We did not want to take this risk.

Harbin, China



Harbin, China

10. SNOW EXPO IN SUN ISLAND PARK (TAI YANG DAO) ([MAP](#), [REVIEWS](#))

This is an excellent daytime attraction. You will see artistic snow and ice sculptures ranging from less than 10 feet in height to enormous monuments that probably stand 100 feet tall. We enjoyed the humongous park for several hours and opted to walk everywhere. If you don't walk, you can hire a driver.

The park closed at 5pm and they started illuminating the large snow and ice structures in different, sometimes animated, colors at 4:30pm.

It was bitter cold, but there are few warming spots, e.g. a restaurant with large glass windows and a limited selection of food and hot drinks.

When we left at around 5pm, there were only few taxi cabs left. It may be advisable to not leave too late without pre-arranged transportation.



Harbin, China

11. ZHAOLIN PARK ([MAP](#), [REVIEWS](#))

This is the smaller version of the Snow and Ice Festival. It is located South of the river and the only major attraction that can be reached on foot from several of the downtown hotels.

We went to the Snow Expo in Sun Island Park in the early afternoon and our plan was to see Zhaolin Park in the evening. As my wife was frozen stiff at the SNow Expo and wanted to stay in the hotel, I decided to go to Zhaolin Park on my own.

The only entrance and ticket booth are in the South of the park. All other entrances are locked. Surprisingly, there was no English written anywhere on the ticket booth and, you may have guessed it, the cashier did not speak English. Luckily, there were some teenagers in front of me who spoke some English and who explained to me which of the many different prices were for me.

In the park, there are several buildings and 1 slide made from ice blocks and many little larger-than-life ice statues. Many of them very skillfully made. Besides, there are some other activities like bumper-cars on ice.

Every building and almost all ice statues are beautifully illuminated at night.



ZHAOLIN PARK IN CHINESE

兆麟公园

黑龙江省哈尔滨市
道里区森林街377号

Harbin, China

that if you come in winter, it will be brutally cold. While the temperature inside of the bus is not too bad, it will likely be -10 to -20F outside. So come prepared (see my [How to Survive Harbin](#) tips). For us, this was a worthwhile trip. Those tigers and lions are impressive and huge and they don't seem to mind the cold.



SIBERIAN TIGER PARK IN CHINESE

东北虎林园

黑龙江省哈尔滨市
松北区松北街88号