



# Liáoníng

POPULATION: 43 MILLION

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Lǎobiān Dumplings (p285)
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## Best Places to Stay

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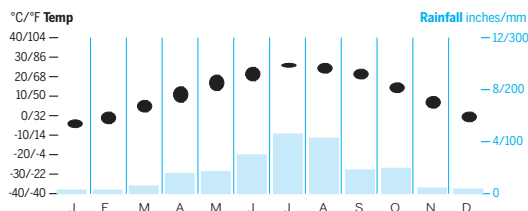
## Why Go?

History and hedonism are side by side in Liáoníng (辽宁). Walled Ming-dynasty cities rub up against booming beach resorts, while imperial palaces sit in the centre of the bustling modern cities. Nothing quite captures the fun and distinction, however, as much as seaside Dàlián with its golden coastline and summer beer festival (or is that bacchanalia?), but also former battlegrounds where Russian and Japanese armies wrestled for control of the region in the early 20th century.

Outside of the major cities, Liáoníng is largely expanses of farmland, forest and smokestack towns. The North Korean border runs alongside the province and is an intriguing area, not simply because it's as close as you can get to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) without actually going there. The heavy Korean population and the easy mix of cultures provides a ready example that China is only a land of stereotypes if you never venture far into it.

## When to Go

### Dàlián



**June** Catch good deals on seaside hotels.

**July** Have fun at the Dàlián International Beer Festival.



## Liaoning Highlights

- 1 Kick back in **Dalian** (p286), enjoy the beaches and a beer festival
- 2 Climb the easternmost stretch of the Great Wall at **Tiger Mountain Great Wall** (p294), near Dandong
- 3 Cruise the Yalu River close to North Korea and experience

the mix of Korean and Chinese culture in **Dandong** (p293)

- 4 Explore the tomb of Huang Taiji, founder of the Qing dynasty, in **Shenyang** (p283)
- 5 Lose yourself in nature at the enormous **Expo Garden Shenyang** (p284)

- 6 Wander the old battlefields and graves of **Lushun** (p291), fought over by rival Japanese and Russian Empires
- 7 Laze on the beach and stroll the old city of historic, little-visited **Xingcheng** (p296)

## History

The region formerly known as Manchuria, including the provinces of Liáoníng, Jílín and Hēilóngjiāng, plus parts of Inner Mongolia, is now called Dōngběi, which means 'the northeast'.

The Manchurian warlords of this northern territory established the Qing dynasty, which ruled China from 1644 to 1911. From the late 1800s to the end of WWII, when the Western powers were busy carving up pieces of China for themselves, Manchuria was occupied alternately by the Russians and the Japanese.

## Climate

Liáoníng's weather is cold and dry in the long winter with temperatures dipping to -15°C. It's warm (tending to hot) and wet in summer. Afternoon showers are frequent.

## Language

Nearly everyone in Liáoníng speaks standard Mandarin, albeit with a distinct accent. In Dāndōng and areas close to the North Korean border, it's quite common to hear Korean spoken.

## **i** Getting There & Around

Getting around Liáoníng is easy. Shěnyáng is the province's transport hub.

**AIR** Shěnyáng and Dàlián have busy domestic and international airports.

**BOAT** Boats connect Dàlián with Shāndōng province and South Korea.

**BUS** Buses are a speedy alternative to trains.

**CAR** There's a network of highways between the major cities.

**TRAIN** Rail lines crisscross the region; connections link Shěnyáng with cities south and north.

## PRICE INDICATORS

The following price indicators are used in this chapter:

### Sleeping

\$	less than Y200
\$\$	Y200 to Y400
\$\$\$	more than Y400

### Eating

\$	less than Y10
\$\$	Y10 to Y40
\$\$\$	more than Y40

## Shěnyáng

沈阳

☑024 / POP 7.2 MILLION

Shěnyáng's city government has made enormous strides to rid Liáoníng's capital of its reputation as an industrial city that could have been a model for William Blake's vision of 'dark satanic mills'. True, Shěnyáng is still a sprawling metropolis, with heavy traffic and a preponderance of uninspired grey buildings, while the harsh climate – either bitterly cold or hot and humid – doesn't help the air pollution.

But things are much better than they were a few years ago and much of this ancient city's heritage is still visible. Shěnyáng boasts its very own Imperial Palace, along with other relics of the Qing era, while a fine park and an impressive botanical garden offer relief from the bedlam that is the city's roads. A new east-west metro line was scheduled to open in 2010, with a second north-south line opening in 2012. Both should help greatly to relieve traffic and make the city a friendlier travelling destination.

## History

Shěnyáng's roots go back to 300 BC, when it was known as Hou City. By the 11th century it was a Mongol trading centre, before reaching its historical high point in the 17th century when it was the capital of the Manchu empire. With the Manchu conquest of Běijīng in 1644, Shěnyáng became a secondary capital under the Manchu name of Mukden, and a centre of the ginseng trade.

Throughout its history Shěnyáng has rapidly changed hands, dominated by warlords, the Japanese (1931), the Russians (1945), the Kuomintang (1946) and finally the Chinese Communist Party (1948).

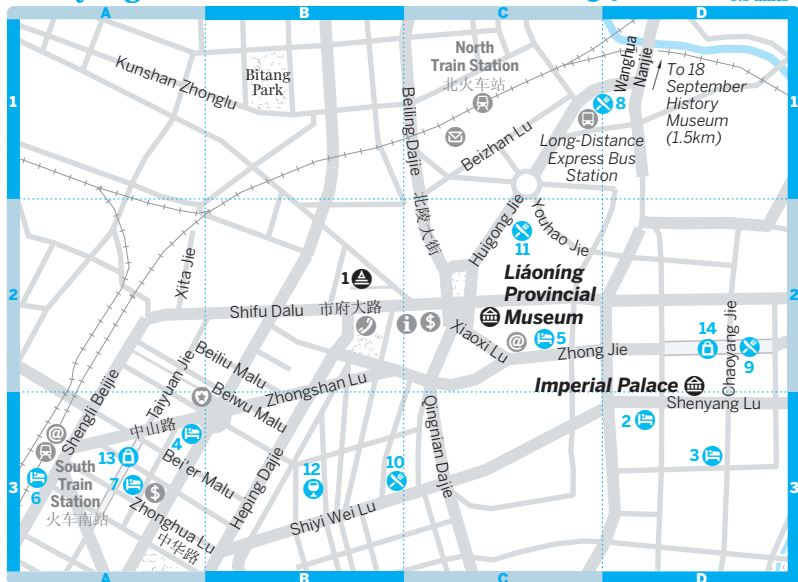
## **👁** Sights & Activities

### Imperial Palace

HISTORICAL SITE

(故宫; Gùgōng; 171 Shenyang Lu; admission Y60; ☉8.30am-6pm, last entry 5.15pm) Shěnyáng's main attraction is this impressive palace complex, which resembles a small-scale Forbidden City. Constructed between 1625 and 1636 by Manchu emperor Nurhachi (1559–1626) and his son, Huang Taiji, the palace served as the residence of the Qing-dynasty rulers until 1644.

The central courtyard buildings include ornate ceremonial halls and imperial living quarters, including a royal baby cradle. In



all, there are 114 buildings, not all of which are open to the public.

Don't miss the double-eaved octagonal **Dàzhèng Hall** (at the rear of the complex), which has two gold dragons curled around the pillars at the entrance, a deep interior plafond ceiling and an elaborate throne, where Nurhachi's grandson, Emperor Shunzhi, was crowned. At **Chóngzhèng Hall**, the first large building as you enter, the beams over the entrance portico are all carved in the shape of five-fingered dragons.

The palace is in the oldest section of the city. Take bus 237 from the south train station, or bus 227 from the North Tomb via the east side of the north train station.

### North Tomb

HISTORICAL SITE

(北陵; Běi Líng; 12 Taishan Lu; park/tombs Y6/30; ☀6am-6pm) Another Shěnyáng highlight is this extensive tomb complex, the burial place of Huang Taiji (1592-1643), founder of the Qing dynasty. The tomb's animal statues lead up to the central mound known as the Luminous Tomb (Zhāo Líng).

In many ways a better-preserved complex than the Imperial Palace, the tomb site is worth a few hours examining the dozens of buildings with their traditional architecture and ornamentation. **Lóng'ēn Hall**

## Shěnyáng

### Top Sights

- Imperial Palace ..... D2
- Liáoníng Provincial Museum ..... C2

### Sights

- 1 Huáng Simiào ..... B2

### Sleeping

- 2 City Central Youth Hostel ..... D3
- 3 Home Inn ..... D3
- 4 Liáoníng Bīngguǎn ..... A3
- 5 Méishān Bīngguǎn ..... C2
- 6 Shěntiě Shěnzhan Bīngguǎn ..... A3
- 7 Traders Hotel ..... A3

### Eating

- 8 Carrefour Supermarket ..... D1
- 9 Lǎobiān Dumplings ..... D2
- 10 View & World Vegetarian Restaurant ..... B3
- 11 Yúfú Mǎtǒu Shaokǎo ..... C2

### Drinking

- 12 Stroller's ..... B3

### Shopping

- 13 Night Market ..... A3
- 14 Zhong Jie ..... D2

## THE 'MUKDEN INCIDENT'

By 1931 Japan was looking for a pretext to occupy Manchuria. The Japanese army took matters into their own hands by staging an explosion on the night of 18 September at a tiny section of a Japanese-owned railway outside Mukden, the present-day city of Shěnyáng. Almost immediately, the Japanese attacked a nearby Chinese army garrison and then occupied Shěnyáng the following night. Within five months, they controlled all of Manchuria and ruled the region until the end of WWII.

is a particularly fine structure, and as you circumambulate the base observe the richness of traditional symbols (peonies, vases, lucky clouds) carved in relief.

The North Tomb sits a few kilometres north of town inside expansive **Běi Líng Park**. With its pine trees and large lake, the park is an excellent place to escape Shěnyáng's hubbub. Locals come here to promenade, sing or just kick back.

Take bus 220 from the south train station or bus 217 from the north train station. Bus 227 from the Imperial Palace via the east side of the north train station also travels to and from the North Tomb.

**Expo Garden Shěnyáng** GARDENS  
(沈阳世博园; Shěnyáng Shìbó Yuán; admission Y35; ☉9am-5pm) These vast gardens on the eastern outskirts of Shěnyáng have dozens of elaborate exhibition gardens featuring plants and flowers from almost every region of China, as well as some from overseas. With restaurants and snack stops scattered throughout, you can easily spend a day wandering.

Trains leave the north station at 6.15am and 9.15am (Y3.50, 30 minutes) and return at 6.15pm and 7.30pm, but you can catch bus 168 back to the city or a taxi (Y50 to Y70).

**FREE Liáoníng Provincial Museum** MUSEUM  
(辽宁省博物馆; Liáoníng Shěng Bówùguǎn; SE cnr Government Sq; ☉9am-noon & 1-5pm, last entry 3.30pm, closed Mon & public holidays) Three floors of exhibits highlight the region's prehistoric culture, Liao-dynasty ceramics, ancient Chinese money and carved stone tablets illustrating the evolution of Chinese calligraphy.

**Huáng Simiào** BUDDHIST TEMPLE  
(皇寺庙; ☉8am-9pm) This Buddhist complex was first built in 1636 and houses the remains of a high-ranking monk. Probably more interesting are the large black statues outside the temple representing all the Qing-dynasty emperors.

**FREE 18 September History Museum** MUSEUM  
(九一八历史博物馆; Jiǔ Yī Bā Lìshì Bówùguǎn; 46 Wanhua Nanjie; ☉9am-5.30pm) There's an obvious propagandic purpose to this museum, but the hundreds of photographs, sculptures, paintings and dioramas are informative on this notorious part of China's modern history (see the boxed text, left). English captions are limited. Bus 325 from the north train station stops in front. The museum is about 2km northeast from the town centre.

## Sleeping

The best area to stay is around the Imperial Palace, but note that many of the smaller hotels are not permitted to take foreigners.

**Liáoníng Bīnguǎn** HOTEL \$\$  
(辽宁宾馆; Liaoning Hotel; ☎2383 9104; 97 Zhongshan Lu; 中山路97号; incl breakfast s Y298, d Y358-498; ㊟) This grand old Japanese-built hotel dates back to 1927. Recently refurbished, it retains many of its period details – the marbled lobby is particularly impressive – but also offers comfortable modern rooms, some of which offer a fine view of Zhongshan Sq.

**Traders Hotel** HOTEL \$\$\$  
(商贸饭店; Shāngmào Fàndiàn; ☎2341 2288; www.shangri-la.com; 68 Zhonghua Lu; 中华路68号; d Y698-1238; ㊟) Owned by the Shangri-La chain, this is Shěnyáng's best luxury hotel, with big rooms and efficient, English-speaking staff delivering top-notch service. Room rates vary depending on the season. Book online for good deals. Add a 15% service charge to room rates.

**Home Inn** HOTEL \$  
(如家快捷酒店; Rújiā Kuàijié Jiùdiàn; ☎8295 0925; 7 Donghua Lane, Shenyang Lu; 沈阳路东华南路7号; d from Y166; ㊟) Bright, spotless rooms feature free broadband, and the ones that face the alley are surprisingly quiet. Given the doubles here are just a few dollars more than the hostel rooms, and are in the same neighbourhood as the Imperial Palace, this is a solid budget choice.

**City Central Youth Hostel**

HOSTEL \$

(帅府国际青年旅舍; Shuàifǔ Guójí Qīngnián Lǚshè; ☎2484 4868; www.chinayha.com; 103 Shenyang Lu; 沈阳路103号; dm Y40, d without bathroom Y100, s & d with bathroom Y158) This historic building was built to house officers from the army of notorious warlord Zhang Zuo Lin. A stone's throw from the Imperial Palace, it's popular with Chinese travellers and has four- or six-bed dorm rooms that are good value, though there are no hostel standards like laundry and internet. The singles and doubles are getting pretty scuffed and need a new paint job. Book ahead here.

**Méishān Bīnguǎn**

HOTEL \$

(梅杉宾馆; Main Sun Hotel; ☎2278 3399; 48 Xiaoxi Lu; 小西路48号; s Y60-100, d Y80-120; ㊟) The cheaper, single rooms are rather cell-like and have no attached bathrooms; it's worth splashing out for the more spacious doubles, though in general the hotel is in need of an update.

**Shěntiě Shěnzhan Bīnguǎn**

HOTEL \$

(沈阳沈站宾馆; Shěnyáng Railway Station Hotel; ☎2358 5888; 2 Shengli Dajie; 胜利大街2号; s without bathroom Y80, d Y168-188; ㊟) A convenient if ageing place next to the south train station. Some of the singles without bathrooms have no windows.

 **Eating**

Both the north and south train stations are cheap-restaurant zones. You'll also find lots of reasonably priced restaurants around the Imperial Palace. Most have picture menus.

**Lǎobiān Dumplings**

DUMPLINGS \$\$

(老边饺子馆; Lǎobiān Jiǎoziguǎn; 2f 208 Zhong Jie; dumplings Y8-35; ☎10am-10pm) Shěnyáng's most famous restaurant has been packing in the locals since 1829, and they continue to flock here for the fine dumplings. But the soups are equally impressive. The restaurant is on the 2nd floor of the Lǎobiān Hotel.

**View & World Vegetarian Restaurant**

VEGETARIAN \$\$

(宽巷子素菜馆; Kuān Xiàngzi Sùcàiɡuǎn; 202 Shiyi Wei Lu; dishes Y8-38; ☎10am-10.30pm; ☎) Peking duck (Y28) and meatballs (Y24) are on the menu here, but there won't be any actual meat on your plate. Everything is meat-free at this nearly vegan paradise, which claims to be the only non-MSG restaurant in all northeast China (an astonishing claim if true). The fruit and

vegie drinks pair up nicely with the main courses.

**Yúfú Mǎtóu Shāokǎo**

SEAFOOD \$\$

(沈阳渔夫码头烧烤; Fisherman's Harbour Barbecue; 75 Huigong Jie; dishes Y6-38; ☎11.30am-midnight) A friendly, fun, three-floor restaurant with a nautical theme. The seafood platter (Y118) arrives in a boat-shaped dish and satisfies two or three people easily. Plenty of meat is available, plus hotpot, and some very filling and cheap noodle and veggie dishes with an emphasis on spice. There's also a proper bar where you can sip a Harbin beer. Picture menu available.

**Carrefour Supermarket**

SUPERMARKET \$

(家乐福; Jiālèfú; Beizhan Lu; ☎7.30am-10pm) Near the long-distance bus station. You can pack a picnic for your travels here or grab a quick bite from the noodle joints on the ground floor.

**Drinking****Stroller's**

BAR

(流浪者餐厅; Liúlàngzhě; 36 Beiwu Jing Jie) It looks more like a superior junk shop than a bar, with the walls and ceiling covered with old posters, helmets, bikes and seemingly anything they could find. A popular spot with both locals and expats, it does reasonable Western food, too. The street is not signed, so look for the Royal Hotel on Shiyi Wei Lu. Stroller's is about a block north.

**Shopping**

Near the south train station is Taiyuan Jie, one of Shěnyáng's major shopping streets, with department stores and a bustling **night market**. Below Taiyuan Jie is an extensive underground shopping street.

**Zhong Jie**, near the Imperial Palace, is another popular pedestrianised shopping zone that was getting a full revamping at the time of writing to make it ready to host the hordes who will be flocking here soon on the new metro.

**Information**

ATMs accepting foreign cards can be found all over the city.

**Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng) Government Sq (253 Shifu Dalu; ☎8.30-5pm Mon-Fri); south train station area (96 Zhonghua Lu; ☎8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri) South station area branch has 24-hour ATM. Both will change travellers cheques.

**Internet cafe** (网吧; wǎngbā; main level, south train station; per hr Y3; ☎24hr)

**Photo shop** (64 Xiaoxi Lu; CDs Y10) For CD burning; near the Méishān Bīnguǎn.

**Public Security Bureau** (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; ☎2253 4850; Zhongshan Sq)

## **i** Getting There & Away

Large hotels can book airline and train tickets, as can **China Travel Service of Shenyang** (沈阳市中国旅行社; Shěnyáng Shì Zhōngguó Lǚxíngshè; ☎13700-000-681; 1 Shifu Lu; ☎8.30am-5pm).

### Air

**Shenyang Taoxian International Airport** (www.taoxianairport.com) has flights to Seoul (return Y3200) as well as the domestic cities listed below. There are no direct flights to Russia.

**Běijīng** Y770

**Hǎ'ěrbīn** Y580

**Shànghǎi** Y1390

### Bus

The **long-distance express bus station** (长途汽车快速客运站; Chángtú qìchē kuàisù kèyùn-zhàn; Huigong Jie) is south of Beizhan Lu, about a five-minute walk from the north train station and close to the Carrefour Supermarket. Buses service the following destinations:

**Běijīng** Y129, 7½ hours, six daily (8am to 10pm)

**Chángchūn** Y68, 4½ hours, hourly (7am to 6pm)

**Dǎndōng** Y77, three hours, every 30 minutes (6am to 7pm)

**Hǎ'ěrbīn** Y76, 6½ hours, four daily (8.10am to 2.30pm)

**Jílín** Y105, 4½ hours, six daily (7.30am to 4.30pm)

**Xīngchéng** Y78.50, 3½ hours, two daily (8.50am and 3.40pm)

### Train

Shěnyáng's major train stations are the north and south stations. Many trains arrive at one station, stop briefly, then travel to the next; it may be different when departing – always confirm which station you need. Buy sleeper or D-train tickets (to Běijīng or Shànghǎi) as far in advance as possible. Bus 262 runs between the north and south train stations.

## SOUTH STATION TRAINS

**Báihé** seat/sleeper Y50/100, one daily (departs 9.30am, arrives just past midnight)

**Běijīng** seat/sleeper Y96/218, eight to 10 hours

**Chángchūn** Y47, four to six hours

**Dàlián** Y49 to Y65, four hours

**Dǎndōng** Y24 to Y37, four hours

**Hǎ'ěrbīn** Y38 to Y67, five to seven hours

**Xīngchéng** Y28 to Y41, four hours, eight daily

## NORTH STATION TRAINS

**Běijīng** (D train) Y218 to Y261, four hours

**Shànghǎi** seat/sleeper Y231/401, 27 hours

**Shànghǎi** (D train) seat Y410 to Y511, 14 hours

## **i** Getting Around

**TO/FROM THE AIRPORT** The airport is 25km south of the city. Taxis to Shěnyáng are Y50 to Y80.

**BUS** Buses are cheap, frequent and cover the city. Maps of the routes (Y5) are sold at train stations.

**SUBWAY** A new subway system is under construction in Shěnyáng. The first line (green; to run east-west) is scheduled to open late 2010, with a second in 2012. Expect stations at south train station and Zhong Jie (for the Imperial Palace).

**TAXI** Taxis cost Y8 for the first 3km.

## Dàlián

大连

☎0411 / POP 3.4 MILLION

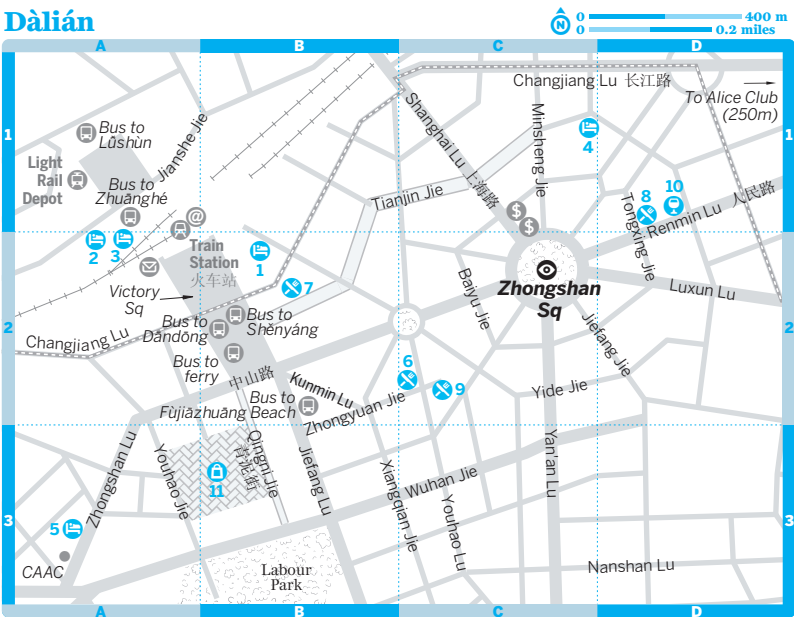
Dàlián is one of the most relaxed and liveable cities in the northeast, if not all of China. Tree-lined, hilly streets, plenty of early-20th-century architecture, an impressive coastline complete with beaches, manageable traffic and (relatively) clean air, as well as the booming local economy and some serious shopping, have resulted in the city being dubbed the 'Hong Kong of the North'.

Perched on the Liáodōng Peninsula and bordering the Yellow Sea, Dàlián is a fine city to relax in for a few days (once you get away from the train-station area). As well as lazing on the beach, strolling for hours along the southwest coastline, and exploring the formerly closed historic port town of Lǚshùn, there are good seafood restaurants, plus cafes and a buzzing bar scene to enjoy.

## **i** Sights & Activities

**TOP CHOICE** **Southwest Coastline** SCENIC COASTLINE (Map p292) Dàlián's southwest coast is dotted with pleasant beaches that boast both a laid-back community feel and a subtly exotic distinction. At **Fùjiāzhuāng Beach** (傅家庄海滨; Fùjiāzhuāng Hǎitān), a popular beach set in a deep bay, junks float just offshore, small broken islands dot the horizon, and loads of families can be seen





having fun. Take bus 5 from Jiefang Lu (Y1, 20 to 30 minutes) and get off at the square across from the beach.

From Fùjiāzhuāng you can walk to **Xīnghǎi Sq** along a combination of side-walks and boardwalks that runs along the contours of the coast. At Xīnghǎi Sq, which is sporting some heady architecture these days, the path crosses a pedestrian bridge, widens and continues for another hour alongside the sea (it looked like it would soon go even further). This has to be one of the longest (to say nothing of most scenic) continuous coastal walks you can do in China without interference from motor vehicles.

On the other side of Xīnghǎi Sq look for the tram line on Zhongshan Lu to take you back to the city centre.

### Golden Stone Beach

BEACH

(Map p281; Jīnshítān) The coast around Golden Stone Beach, 60km north of the city, is in the process of being turned into a domestic tourist mecca with a number of theme parks, and rock formations commanding inflated entrance fees. The long pebbly beach itself is free and quite pretty, set in a wide bay with distant headlands.

To get there take the light rail, known by the locals as Line 3 (轻轨三号线; Qīngguǐ

## Dàlián

### 📍 Top Sights

Zhongshan Sq.....C2

### 🏠 Sleeping

- 1 Bóhǎi Pearl Hotel.....B2
- 2 Broadway Hotel.....A2
- 3 Dōng Hào Hotel.....A2
- 4 Home Inn.....C1
- 5 Nóngkěn Hotel.....A3

### 🍴 Eating

- 6 Dàbáicài Gǔtougǔān.....C2
- 7 Night Market.....B2
- 8 Tiāntiān Yúgǎng.....D1
- 9 Xiāo Yāogǔ Shǎnxī Miàn  
Zhūāng.....C2

### 🍷 Drinking

- 10 Meeting Place Bar.....D1

### 🛍 Shopping

- 11 New Mart Shopping Mall.....B3

Sānhàoxiàn), from the depot on the east side of Triumph Plaza, behind the Dàlián train station (Y8, 50 minutes). From the beach station it's a 10-minute walk to the beach, or catch a tourist shuttle bus (Y20,



## THE DÀLIÁN OIL DISASTER

It was the worst oil spill in Chinese history. On 16 July 2010, two pipelines in the Xingang oil terminal burst as high-sulphur crude was being unloaded from an oil tanker. A fire raged for 15 hours and untold barrels of oil leaked into the Yellow Sea. Within days officials had acknowledged that over 400 sq km of ocean had been affected.

The Dàlián refinery is one of China's largest, but like most (if not all) it had no contingency planning to deal with such a serious emergency. City officials, quickly realising they were incapable of handling the disaster on their own, started offering volunteers US\$44 for every barrel of oil they recovered from the sea. That was all that was needed to unleash the entrepreneurial valour of the Chinese. Within three weeks 8000 workers on 800 fishing boats (with the help of a few specialist clean-up vessels) had removed almost all traces of the spill.

Small fortunes were made, but volunteers were lucky if they had rubber gloves to work with. Many scooped the crude out of the sea using their bare hands or used absorbents made of straw mats and stockings filled with donated human hair. Some became seriously ill even before the clean-up was over.

Officially the government is sticking to its story that 1500 tonnes (about 11,000 barrels) were released into the Yellow Sea. Anecdotal evidence of the extent and thickness of oil on the water's surface suggests far more, as does a report that, as the fire from the initial explosion spread, up to 50,000 tonnes of oil was deliberately released from onshore tanks to prevent them catching fire.

Rick Steiner, a respected American marine conservationist who has spent years working on oil spills around the world, visited the affected area and reported that several hundred thousand barrels of leaked oil is a more likely figure. This puts the Dàlián spill on a comparable scale with the Exxon Valdez disaster (which Steiner studied) off Alaska in 1989.

For now, the Dàlián coastline shows few signs of the spill, and swimmers have gone back to enjoying the gold-sand beaches and warm waters. The long-term effects on the coastal environment, the fisheries and the locals, who suffered both from direct contact with the oil and from the toxic air that hung over the city for days, remains uncertain.

30 minutes) which winds round the coast first before dropping you off at the beach. There's a **visitor centre** to the right of the train station as you exit, with English-speaking staff if you need help.

### Labour Park

PARK

(Map p292; 劳动公园; Láodòng Gōngyuán) In the centre of this hilly park is a giant football, a reminder of the time at the turn of the century when the local soccer team, Dàlián Shí'de, was the best in China. There are good views of the city from the TV Tower.

### Zhongshan Sq

SQUARE

(Map p287; 中山广场; Zhōngshān Guǎngchǎng) This is Dàlián's hub, with grand buildings, mostly from the early 1900s, encircling a huge roundabout. Dàlián Bīnguǎn, a dignified hotel on the square's south side, appeared in the movie *The Last Emperor*.

## Sleeping

### Dàlián Bīnhǎi Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p292; 大连滨海大厦; Dàlián Bīnhǎi Dàshà; ☎8240 6666; fax 8240 6670; 2 Binhai Xilu; 滨海西路2号; d Y398-588; 📶📶) A favourite with visiting Russians, this high-rise place looks slightly rundown on the outside but is one of the best-value options if you want to stay by the coast. The hotel is literally across the road from Fùjiāzhuāng Beach and decent-sized rooms with a sea view are about Y498 in summer.

### Home Inn

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p287; 如家快捷酒店; Rújiā Kuàijié Jiǔdiàn; ☎8263 9977; www.homeinns.com; 102 Tianjin Jie; 天津街102号; d from Y228; 📶📶) With its brightly coloured and tidy little rooms, free broadband and in-house restaurant serving cheap but tasty dishes, this is a good choice for the city centre. It's popular with Chinese travellers, so book ahead. If you stay more than a night it's worthwhile to get a mem-

bership card (Y40) as it drops the room rate down.

### Bóhǎi Pearl Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p287; 渤海明珠酒店; Bóhǎi Míngzhū Jiǔdiàn; ☎8812 8888; www.bohaipearl.com; 8 Victory Sq; 胜利广场8号; d/tw/tr Y578/478/678; ㊟㊟㊟㊟) This 30-storey tower with a kitschy revolving restaurant faces the train station, but the large lobby area means you are spared the madness of the outside world. Rooms have generic midrange comfort, large bathrooms and broadband internet. A few unexpected services include spa and pool.

### Nóngkěn Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p287; 农垦宾馆; Nóngkěn Bīnguǎn; ☎8886 7888; www.nongkenhotel.com; 141-3 Zhongshan Lu; 中山路141-3号; d/tw Y420/480) Rooms have a suburban notion of cosy comfort (think striped wallpaper, dim lights) but the location is great, close to Labour Park and the start of the leafy section of Dàlián.

### Broadway Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p287; 四方盛世酒店; Sīfāng Shèngshì Jiǔdiàn; ☎6262 8988; www.4Fhotel.com; 26-28 Jianshe Jie; 建设街26-28号; d Y328, discounts of 50%; ㊟㊟) Rooms are bland, and the sheet thread count is low, but the place is clean and, with the price usually discounted 50%, fine for a night's stay. To find the hotel, take the underground passageway to the right as you exit the train station. When you pop out on the other side, look for a tall building to the left across from where the buses park. The Chinese characters run down the side, but the English says You Ho.

### Dōng Hào Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p287; 东浩大酒店; Dōnghào Dàjiǔdiàn; ☎3965 9888; 12 Jianshe Jie; 建设街12号; d Y368-398, discounts of 30%) Also on the back side of the train station, Dōng Hào features standard rooms that vary in their level of upkeep. Look for the hotel entrance just past the Kentucky Fried Chicken to the left as you exit the underpass.



## Eating

There are plenty of small restaurants on the roads leading off Zhongshan Sq and Friendship Sq. The upscale New Mart Shopping Mall has a spiffy food court (dishes from Y8 to Y38) on the 5th floor with a huge range of eating and drinking options. It's a good choice for a single traveller in a city where most restaurants are set up for groups. There's also a well-

provisioned supermarket on the lower level. Note that Friendship Sq has numerous buildings crowded in the plaza, so look for the big mall directly across from Starbucks. The food court in the nearby underground mall in Victory Sq is older and a bit cheaper.

Both sides of the plaza outside the train station are lined with fruit vendors and shops selling cheap *bàozi* (steamed meat buns).

### Dàbáicài Gǔtougǔǎn

DONGBEI \$\$

(Map p287; 大白菜骨头馆; 21 Zhongyuan Jie, btwn Youhao Lu & Xiangqian Jie; dishes Y14-36; ☎9.30am-10pm) This home-style restaurant with a friendly and loud atmosphere serves fresh seafood and fiery northern-style fare. Look for the sign high up with a green cabbage on it. Note that the restaurant is located on a corner and you must walk up the stairs to get to it. Otherwise it's easy to pass by.

### Xiǎo Yāogǔ Shǎnxī Miàn Zhuāng

SHAANXI \$

(Map p287; 小腰鼓陕西面庄; dishes Y3-10; ☎8am-9.30pm) At the end of Zhongyuan Jie, one block past Dàbáicài Gǔtougǔǎn, is this Shaanxi restaurant that serves great dishes such as lamb *jiāmó* (羊肉夹馍; lamb in pita bread) or *pàomó* (泡馍; bread stew) at a ridiculously low price. A light meal will set you back under Y10. Look for the red lanterns outside and place your order at the front desk beside the picture menu.

### Tiāntiān Yúgǎng

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(Map p287; 天天鱼港; 10 Renmin Lu; dishes Y12-88; ☎11am-10pm) Choose your meal from the many sea creatures swimming in the tanks at this upscale seafood restaurant. Most

## BEER MANIA

For 12 days every July, Dàlián stages the **Dàlián International Beer Festival** ([www.12chinabeer.com](http://www.12chinabeer.com)), its very own version of Munich's Oktoberfest. Beer companies from across China and around the world set up tents at the vast Xīnghǎi Sq (Map p292), near the coast, and locals and visitors flock there to sample the brews, snack on seafood, listen to live music and generally make whoopee. Entrance tickets are a low Y10 and in 2010 there were over 400 brands of beer for sampling.

dishes are set out in refrigerated levels for you to choose, making this a rare easy seafood-eating experience in China.

### Night market

MARKET \$

(Map p287; Tianjin Jie) Near the Home Inn. You can sit outside and eat barbecue seafood with a beer.



## Drinking & Entertainment

For what it's worth, Dàlián has the most happening bar and club scene of any city in the northeast. Check out *Focus on Dalian* magazine for more.

Changjiang Lu is home to a host of clubs, ranging from the upmarket and sleazy to the downright seedy. A couple of upscale bars with outdoor patios sit almost next door to I-55 bakery.

### I-55 Coffee Stop & Bakery

BAKERY

(Map p292; Àiwúwú Měishì Kāfēizhàn; 67 Gao'erji Lu; ☎8.30am-midnight; ☎) For coffee, cakes and sandwiches, try the I-55. There's a cosy upscale atmosphere here with throw-cushion-decked lounges, jazzy music and a nice leafy outdoor patio.

### Alice Club

CLUB

(艾丽丝; Dàlián Àilìsī; 8 Zhi Fu Lu) Behind the Furama Hotel. A long-term favourite.

### Noah's Ark

BAR

(Map p292; Nuòyà Fāngzhōu; 32 Wusi Lu; ☎12.30pm-2am; ☎) A good, long-standing place to catch some fine local musicians and grab a beer. Mix of locals and expats. Very strong wireless connection.

### Meeting Place Bar

BAR

(Map p287; 互动酒吧; Hùdòng Jiǔbā; 12 Renmin Lu) Sports-bar styling with a Chinese house band. Popular with locals.



## Shopping

There are malls all over Dàlián. The **New Mart Shopping Mall** (Map p287), south of Victory Sq, is a pedestrian plaza lined with upscale department stores. Across from the train station there's an enormous underground shopping centre below Victory Sq.



## Information

There are ATMs all around town. Zhongshan Sq has a number of large bank branches including **Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; 9 Zhongshan Sq; ☎8.30-11.30am & 1-7pm Mon-Fri), where you can change currency and travellers cheques.

**China International Travel Service** (CITS; 中国国际旅行社; Zhōngguó Guójī Lǚxíngshè; ☎8367 8019; www.citsdl.net; 145 Zhongshan Lu; ☎8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) On the 2nd floor of the Central Plaza Hotel (Xiāngzhōu Dàfāndiàn). Has tours to Bingyu Valley (Y260) in summer.

**Dàlián Xpat** (www.dalianxpat.com) A good source of English-language information about restaurants, bars and clubs in Dàlián.

**Focus on Dalian** New bilingual magazine with good articles and restaurant and bar recommendations. Has a local perspective, though, so directions to places are poor.

**Internet cafe** (网吧; wǎngbà; lower level, train station; per hr Y2) Exit the train station and turn right. The entrance is on the corner of the west side of the building, downstairs.

## Getting There & Away

### Air

**Dàlián International Airport** (www.dlairport.com/wyweb/YW\_index.asp) is 12km from the city centre and well connected to most cities in China and the region. Tickets can be purchased at the **Civil Aviation Administration of China** (CAAC; 中国民航; Zhōngguó Mínháng; ☎8361 2888; www.tickets.dlairport.com; Zhongshan Lu; ☎8am-4pm) or any of the travel offices nearby.

### DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

**Běijīng** Y780, one hour

**Hǎerbīn** Y930, 1½ hours

**Hong Kong** Y2400, 3½ hours

### INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

**Khabarovsk** Y2800, two flights weekly

**Tokyo** Y2450, four flights weekly

**Vladivostok** Y2600, two flights weekly

### Boat

There are several daily boats to Yántái (Y140 to Y600, four to seven hours) and two daily boats to Wēihǎi (Y160 to Y260, seven hours, 10.30am and 9pm). Buy tickets at the passenger ferry terminal in the northeast of Dàlián or from one of the many counters in front of the train station. To the ferry terminal, take bus 13 from the northeast corner of Shengli Guangchang and Zhongshan Lu near the train station.

### Bus

Long-distance buses leave from various points around the train station. It can be tricky to find the correct ticket booths, and they do occasionally move.

## BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO SOUTH KOREA FROM DÀLIÁN

The Korean-run **Da-in Ferry** (Dàlián 8270-5082, Incheon 8232-891 7100, Seoul 822-3218 6551; www.dainferry.co.kr) to Incheon in South Korea departs from Dàlián on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 3.30pm (Y920 to Y1848, 19 hours).

**Dāndōng** (Y92, four hours, eight daily) Buses leave from stand No 2 on Shengli Guangchang just south of Changjiang Lu.

**Lǚshùn** (旅顺; Y7, one hour, every 10 minutes) Buses leave from the back of the train station, across the square.

**Shěnyáng** (沈阳; Y122, 4½ hours, every 30 minutes) Buses depart from the south side of Changjiang Lu, directly across from the train station. Buy tickets in a booth just at the top of the stairs leading into the underground mall.

**Zhuānghé** (庄河; Y43, 2½ hours, 15 daily) Buses leave from in front of the ticket booth on Jiangshe Jie, the first street behind the train station.

### Train

Buy your ticket as early as possible for long-distance trains.

**Běijīng** seat/sleeper Y140/247, 10 to 12 hours

**Chángchūn** seat/sleeper Y94/168, seven to 10 hours

**Hǎ'ěrbīn** seat/sleeper Y125/223, nine to 13 hours

**Shěnyáng** Y49 to Y65, four hours

## Getting Around

Dàlián's central district is not large and can be covered on foot.

**TO/FROM THE AIRPORT** A taxi from the city centre costs Y30 to Y60 depending on the time of day. No shuttle buses.

**BUS** Buses are plentiful and stops have English signboards explaining the route.

**TAXI** Fares start at Y8; most trips aren't more than Y15.

**TRAM** Dàlián has a very slow tram, with two lines, the 201 and the 202 (Y1 each) – 201 runs past the train station on Changjiang Lu; 202 runs out to the ocean and Xinghǎi Sq (you must take 201 first and transfer).

## AROUND DÀLIÁN

### Lǚshùn

旅顺

With its excellent port, and strategic location on the northeast coast, Lǚshùn (formerly Port Arthur) was the focal point of both Russian and Japanese expansion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The bloody 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War finally saw the area fall under Japanese colonial rule, which would continue for the next 40 years.

Only recently opened to foreign tourists, Lǚshùn is a must see during any visit to Dàlián. It's a relaxed town built on the hills and, while most sites are related to military history, there's an excellent museum on Liáoníng, as well as a number of scenic lookouts and parks.

As soon as you exit the bus station at Lǚshùn, taxis will cry out for your business. A few hours touring the sights will cost Y100 to Y150. Pick up a bilingual English-Chinese map at the newsstand at the station to help you negotiate.

## Sights

**TOP CHOICE** **Soviet Martyrs Cemetery** CEMETERY  
(苏军烈士陵园; Sūjūn Lièshì Língyuán)

The largest cemetery in China for foreign-born nationals honours Soviet soldiers who died in the liberation of northeast China at the end of WWII, as well as pilots killed during the Korean War (known as the War against US Aggression). Designed by Soviet advisers, the cemetery is heavy with communist-era iconography. A giant rifle-holding soldier guards the front, while inside are memorials to the sacrifice of Soviet soldiers and rows of neatly tended grave-stones.

### Lǚshùn Museum

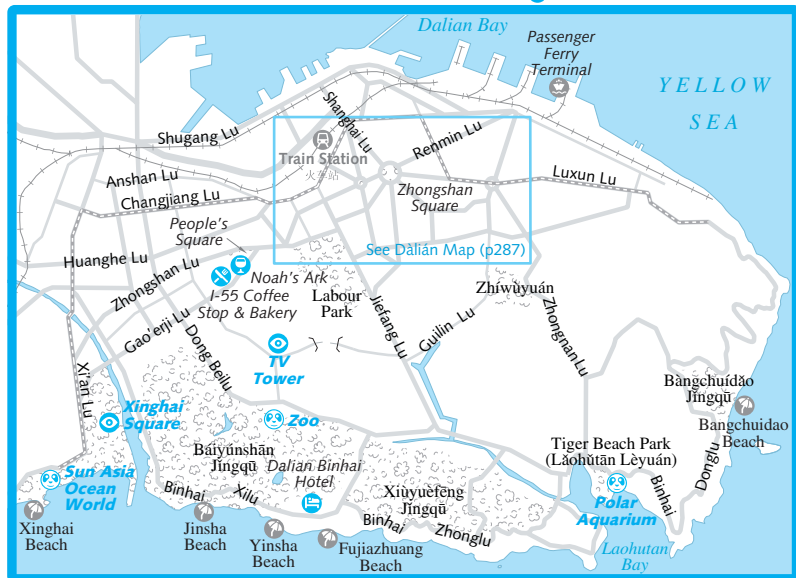
MUSEUM

(旅顺博物馆; Lǚshùn Bówùguǎn; admission Y20; ☉9am-4.30pm) The history of Liáoníng province is covered in this stylish old museum in a building erected in 1917. Among the thousands of artefacts on display are ancient bronzes, coins and paintings, as well as several mummies.

### Hill 203

WAR MEMORIAL

(二〇三景区; Èr Líng Sān Jǐngqū; admission Y30) During the 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War, troops fought like wildcats for control of this strategic hill (when you get to the top you'll see why). Over 5000 Russian and 10,000



Japanese soldiers lost their lives in the battle, which eventually went to the Japanese. Afterwards the victors erected a 10m-high bullet-shaped memorial (constructed from shell casings) and, remarkably, it still stands to this day.

**Lúshùn Railway Station** OLD RAILWAY STATION  
(旅順火車站; Lúshùn Huǒchēzhàn) Built in 1903 during Russia's brief control of the area, the handsome station was rebuilt in 2005 following the original design. It's worth a pop by on your way to other sights.

### **i** Getting There & Away

Buses to Lúshùn (Y7, one hour) leave every 10 minutes from a stop across the square at the back of the Dàlián train station (see Map p287). Buses run from early morning to evening.

## Bīngyù Valley

If you can't travel south to Guilín (p584), the **Bīngyù Valley Geopark** (冰峪沟; Bīngyù Gōu; www.dlby.com; admission Y120) offers a taste of what you're missing. About 250km north-east of Dàlián, this park has tree-covered limestone cliffs set alongside a river and is similar to Guilín, if not nearly as dramatic. A boat from the ticket office takes you along

a brief stretch of the river, where rock formations rise steeply along the banks, before depositing you at a dock. From there, you can hire your own little boat and paddle around the shallow waters, or follow some short trails along the river and up to some lookouts.

The park is increasingly popular with big tour groups, who come for the zip lines, tame amusement-park rides, and even jet skiing. Given the rather small area you can explore it can be tough to find any tranquility in this otherwise lovely environment.

In summer Dàlián CITS arranges tours (Y260) leaving at 7am and returning around 7pm. Otherwise, catch the bus to Zhuānghé (Y43, 2½ hours, 15 daily, 6.20am to 4.30pm) behind Dàlián station. From Zhuānghé bus station, minibuses to Bīngyù Valley's east gate (Y10, one hour) leave frequently.

Accommodation in the park is poor value (you'll spend several hundred if you want a room with a shower). Outside the park gate are several small guesthouses including **Sūnjié Nóngjiāyuàn Lǚfāndiàn** (孙杰农家院旅店; ☎1300-9432 249; d Y100), a popular family-run place in a farming village about five minutes' walk from the park. Rooms are small and nondescript but face out into the courtyard,

and the whole complex is surrounded by forest. Some very fine homemade meals (dishes Y12 to Y38) from fresh local ingredients are available.

Buses from Zhuānghé back to Dàlián leave about every 20 minutes until 4.30pm. If you're travelling north to Dāndōng, buses depart Zhuānghé (Y35, three hours) at 6.29am, 7.16am, 8.17am and 1.18pm.

## Dāndōng

## 丹东

📍0415 / POP 752,200

The principal gateway to North Korea (Cháoxiān) from China, Dāndōng has a buzz unusual for a Chinese city of its size. Separated from the DPRK by the Yālù River (Yālù Jiāng), Dāndōng thrives on trade, both illegal and legal, with North Korea.

For most visitors to Dāndōng, this is as close as they will get to the DPRK. While you can't see much, the contrast between Dāndōng's lively, built-up riverfront and the desolate stretch of land on the other side of the Yālù River speaks volumes about the dire state of the North Korean economy and the restrictions under which its people live.

Although CITS runs tours to the DPRK, they are aimed at Chinese nationals. If you want to visit, then you'll do far better to travel with the reputable Běijīng-based **Koryo Tours** (📞010-6416 7544; www.koryogroup.com; 27 Beisanlitun Nan, Běijīng), which can help you organise visas and offers trips designed for Westerners. At the time of writing, US citizens could fly into North Korea but not take the train.

The river is about 700m southeast of the train station. The Business and Tourism District (Shāngmào Lǚyóuqū), lined with riverfront restaurants and many KTV joints, is southwest of the Yālù River bridge. The main shopping district is just east of the station.

## 👁 Sights & Activities

### North Korean Border

BORDER

(北朝鲜边界; Běi Cháoxiān Biānjiè) For views of the border, stroll along the riverfront **Yālùjiāng Park** that faces the North Korean city of Sinuiju.

In 1950, during the Korean War, American troops 'accidentally' bombed the original steel-span bridge between the two countries. The North Koreans dismantled the bridge less than halfway across the

river, leaving a row of support columns. You can wander along the shrapnel-pock-marked **Broken Bridge** (Yālùjiāng Duànqiáo; admission Y35; 🕒7am-7pm) and get within the distance of a good toss of a baseball to the North Korea shoreline. The Sino-Korean Friendship Bridge, the official border crossing between China and North Korea, is next to the old one, and trains and trucks rumble across it on a regular basis.

To get closer to North Korea, take a **boat cruise** (guāngāng chuán; 🕒7am-6pm) from the tour-boat piers on either side of the bridges. The large boats (Y50) are cheaper than the smaller speedboats (Y70), but you have to wait for them to fill up with passengers. In the summer, you can sometimes see kids splashing about in the river, as well as fishermen and the crews of the boats moored on the other side.

### Jīnjiāng Pagoda

PAGODA

(锦江塔; Jīnjiāng Tǎ) The highest point around for miles, the pagoda sits atop Jīnjiāngshān in a park of the same name. The views across to North Korea are unparalleled and the park itself (a former military zone) is a well-tended expanse of forested slopes. You can take a taxi to the entrance or easily walk there in 20 minutes from the train station, though it's another steep kilometre uphill to the pagoda.

### 🆓 Museum to Commemorate US Aggression

MUSEUM

(抗美援朝纪念馆; Kàngměi Yuáncháo Jìniànguǎn; 🕒9am-4pm Tue-Sun) With everything from statistics to shells, this comprehensive museum offers Chinese and North Korean perspectives – they won it! – on the war with the US-led UN forces (1950–53). There are good English captions here. The adjacent North Korean War Memorial Column was built 53m high, symbolising the year the Korean War ended.

A taxi here will cost Y7 from downtown, or you can walk there as part of a trip to the pagoda. From the entrance to the park on Shanshang Jie, it's about 1.5km to the entrance to the memorial.

### 🏆 Tiger Mountain Great Wall

GREAT WALL

(虎山长城; Hǔshān Chángchéng; admission Y60; 🕒8am-dusk) About 12km northeast of Dāndōng, this steep, restored stretch of the wall, known as Tiger Mountain Great Wall, was built during the Ming dynasty and runs parallel to the North Korean border.





## Dāndōng

## Sights

- 1 Broken Bridge ..... B2  
2 Yalujiāng Park ..... B2

## Activities, Courses &amp; Tours

- 3 Tour-Boat Pier ..... B2  
4 Tour-Boat Pier ..... B2

## Sleeping

- 5 Huà Xià Cūn Bīnguǎn ..... A1  
6 Lǚyuàn Bīnguǎn ..... B2  
7 Oriental Cherry Hotel ..... B1

## Eating

- 8 Āiláng Xiǎnzú Fēngwèi ..... B1  
9 Pyongyang North Korean  
Restaurant ..... B1  
10 Tesco's ..... B1

Unlike other sections of the wall, this one sees comparatively few tourists.

The wall ends at a small **museum** (admission Y10) with a few weapons, vases and wartime dioramas. From here three paths loop back to the entrance. Avoid heading right, as it's simply a road. Going left you can either follow the river on a narrow dirt path (North Korea is just on the other side) or climb back up the wall stairs and look for a path on the right that literally runs along the cliff face. There are some good scrambles and in 20 minutes or so you'll get to a point called Yībùkuà – 'one step across' – marking an extremely narrow part of the river between the two countries.

Close up, the border fence on the DPRK side looks like a less-than-effective barrier, but don't try to test it; a gun-toting soldier may suddenly appear. Boats (Y20, 10 minutes) wait on the water. It's OK to pass through the barbed-wire gate and take them either back to the museum or onward to the end of the path just a minute from the entrance. You can also walk this last stretch. Note that if you walk along the dirt river path from the museum you will also reach this same point.

Buses to the wall (Y5.50, 45 minutes) run about every hour from the Dāndōng long-distance bus station.

## Sleeping

There are many hotels in Dāndōng, most for around Y200 a night.

## Huà Xià Cūn Bīnguǎn

HOTEL \$

(华夏村宾馆; ☎212 1999; fax 2123 5266; 11 Bajing Jie; 八经街11号; d incl breakfast from Y160, dis-

counts of 25%; ☎@) This is a good budget option, with rooms sporting comfort far above their price level, broadband internet and a location smack in the middle of town. The restaurant on the ground floor serves a range of tasty northern dishes (Y10 to Y30) and has a picture menu wall. Portions are large.

## Oriental Cherry Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(樱桃大酒店; Yingtáo Dàjiùdiàn; ☎210 0099; 2 Liuwei Lu; 六纬路2号; d/tr Y398/480, discounts of 30-40%; ☎@) With the discounts that are regularly on offer here, the large double rooms are decent value, especially if you ask for the ones with views of the river and the DPRK. The hotel is a half-block from the riverfront and has broadband internet.

## Lǚyuàn Bīnguǎn

HOTEL \$

(绿苑宾馆; ☎212 7777; fax 210 9888; cnr Shiwei Lu & Sanjing Jie; 三经街十纬路交界处; dm Y80-90, s/d Y160/188; ☎) There are reasonable three- and four-bed dorms at this slightly gloomy guesthouse located close to the riverfront, but the more expensive doubles are overpriced.

## Eating &amp; Drinking

On summer nights, the smoke from hundreds of barbecues drifts over Dāndōng as street corners become impromptu restaurants serving up fresh seafood and bottles of Yālù River beer, the excellent local brew. One of the best places for barbecue is on the corner of Bawei Lu and Qijing Jie. More conventional restaurants, including a range of Korean, and a number of cafes where you can sip coffee and watch how the other half



lives, line the riverfront on either side of the bridges. There's a big **Tesco's** (Lègòu; cnr Liuwei Lu & Sanjing Jie) supermarket.

### Pyongyang North Korean Restaurant

NORTH KOREAN \$\$

(平壤高丽饭店; Píngǎng Gāolì Fàndiàn; Bawei Lu; dishes ¥18-58; ☎11am-11pm) A big part of the experience for many travellers to this region is eating at a North Korean restaurant with real North Korean waitresses. At Pyongyang, waitresses clad in air hostess-style uniforms are a chirpy lot and will happily suggest a meal, normally grilled beef or fish. To find this place, look for the sign with the DPRK flag on it. The restaurant's characters are actually displayed on the 2nd floor. Picture menu available.

### Āliláng Xiǎnzú Fēngwèi

HOTPOT \$\$

(阿里郎鲜族风味; Binjiang Lu; ☎9am-9.30pm) Your basic hotpot costs ¥18; after that the sky's the limit as you choose from a huge array of marine life as well as vegie and meat dishes.

## i Information

**Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng; 60 Jinshan Dajie) Has ATM. Also ATM and currency-exchange at branch in business and tourist district.

**China International Travel Service** (CITS; 中国国际旅行社; Zhōngguó Guójí Lǚxíngshè; ☎213 2196; 20 Shiwei Lu, at Jiangcheng Dajie; ☎8am-5.30pm) Can arrange DPRK visits with Chinese tours. Email English-speaking Jackie Zhang for details (jacky790117@hotmail.com).

**Internet cafe** (wǎngbà; 26 Jiangcheng Dajie; per hr ¥3; ☎8am-midnight)

**Public Security Bureau** (PSB; 公安局; Gōng'ānjú; ☎210 3138; 15 Jiangcheng Dajie; ☎8am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

## i Getting There & Away

Dāndōng airport has infrequent flights to a few cities in China, but most travellers arrive by bus or train.

### Bus

The **long-distance bus station** (98 Shiwei Lu) is near the train station.

**Dàlián** ¥91, 3½ hours, eight daily (6am to 2.50pm)

**Jí'ān** ¥60, 6½ hours, one daily (8.30am)

**Shěnyáng** ¥76, three hours, every 30 minutes (5.10am to 6.30pm)

**Tōnghuà** ¥72, eight hours, two daily (6.30am and 8.50am)

### Train

The train station is in the centre of town, north of the river. A lofty Mao statue greets arriving passengers.

**Běijīng** seat/sleeper ¥132/256, 14 hours

**Dàlián** seat/sleeper ¥47/99, 10 hours

**Shěnyáng** seat ¥24 to ¥37, four hours

The K27 train from Běijīng to Pyongyang stops at Dāndōng at 7.17am on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday (Dāndōng to Pyongyang takes 14 hours). If you have the necessary visas (normally requiring that you travel with a tour group), you can hop aboard.

## TRICKS OF THE TRADE

It's no exaggeration to say that, without China, the North Korean regime would not survive. The DPRK relies on China for food, fuel and arms. For China, keeping North Korea's leader, Kim Jung-il (or likely his son Kim Jong-un by the time you read this), in power is a way of maintaining the delicate power balance in North Asia, where South Korea and Japan are both strong allies of the US. Equally important, though, is the fact that the DPRK is a captive market for Chinese companies and one worth an estimated US\$2 billion a year.

Dāndōng is the hub of Sino-North Korean trade. Local Chinese websites advertise business opportunities across the border, while North Korean officials come looking for raw materials and machinery, as well as access to Chinese markets. But there's a thriving black-market economy too. Everything from cigarettes and mobile phones to TVs and furs (a UN resolution bans the export of luxury goods to the DPRK) makes its way across the Yálù River.

This illicit trade is having a significant impact on life inside the DPRK. Mobile phones enable people to communicate outside their local areas and, in some cases, abroad (they are officially banned), while the yuán is now an alternative currency to the inflation-prone won in many regions. If and when North Korea does open up to the outside world, China will be ready to take full advantage.

## BORDER CROSSING: GETTING TO SOUTH KOREA FROM DĀNDŌNG

The **Dāndōng International Ferry Co** (cnr Xingwu Lu & Gangwan Lu; www.dandongferry.co.kr; ☎8am-5pm) runs a boat to Incheon in South Korea, departing 4pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday (Y810 to Y1270, 17 hours). Buy tickets at the company's office on Xingwu Lu.

## Xīngchéng

## 兴城

☎0429 / POP 110,000

Despite being one of only four Ming-dynasty cities to retain their complete outer walls and boasting the oldest surviving temple in all of northeastern China, as well as an up-and-coming beach resort, Xīngchéng has stayed well off the radar of most travellers. In truth it's still a bit dusty and rough round the edges, and the old city is as notable for its rows of jeans shops as Ming gates, but conditions are improving and historians and aficionados will have a field day here.

Xīngchéng's main drag is Xīnghǎi Lù Ērduàn (兴海路二段), where you'll find hotels, a **Bank of China** (中国银行; Zhōngguó Yínháng) with a 24-hour ATM, and restaurants. From the train station head right, take the first left, and then a quick right to get onto Xīng Hai Lu Yi Duan. This merges into Er Duan (Section 2) in a kilometre.

## 👁 Sights

### Old City

OLD CITY

(老城; Lǎo Chéng) The principal reason to visit Xīngchéng, this walled city dates back to 1430. Modern Xīngchéng has grown up around it, but it's still home to around 3000 people. You can enter by any of the four gates, but the easiest one to find is the **south gate** (南门; *nánmén*), which is just off Xīng Hai Lu Er Duan. There are signs in English and Chinese pointing the way.

In addition to the **City Walls** (城墙; Chéngqiáng; admission Y25; ☎8am-5pm), the **Drum Tower** (鼓楼; Gǔlóu; admission Y20; ☎8am-5pm), which sits slap in the middle of the Old City, and the watchtower on the southeastern corner of the city are all intact. You can do a complete circuit of the walls in around an hour.

Also inside the Old City are the **Gao House** (将军府; Jiāngjūn Fǔ; admission Y10; ☎8am-5pm), the former residence of General Gao Rulian, who was one of Xīngchéng's most famous sons. The impressive and well-maintained **Confucius Temple** (文庙; Wénmiào; admission Y35; ☎8am-5pm), built in 1430, is reputedly the oldest temple in northeastern China.

## BEACHES

Xīngchéng's imaginatively named **Beach 1** (第一浴场), **Beach 2** (第二浴场) and **Beach 3** (第三浴场) are pretty enough, with golden sands and calm waters, but are not particularly special.

At Beach 1 look for a statue honouring **Juhua Nu** (the Chrysanthemum Woman). According to local legend, she changed herself into an island to protect Xīngchéng from a sea dragon. This island, **Júhuā Dǎo**, lies 9km off the coast and is home to a fishing community, a small beach and a couple of temples. Daily **ferries** (round trip Y175; ☎depart 8.30am & 10am, return noon, 2pm & 5pm) leave from the northern end of Beach 1.

Bus 1 (Y1) travels from Xing Hai Lu Er Duan to Beach 1 (9km from the city centre) in about 30 minutes, and then further north to Beach 2 and Beach 3. A taxi to the area costs Y15 to Y20.

## 🛏 Sleeping

Beach hotels are aimed at the domestic tourist market and budget options are limited from early July to September. In the short low season this is the best area to stay, as rooms are often cheaper than in the city.

### Bāyī Bīnguǎn

HOTEL \$\$

(八一宾馆; ☎385 2888; d Y298; Ⓜ) A cosy little place just off Beach No 1 with simple rooms that go for Y100 in low season but up to Y400 in summer. To get here turn right when you hit the beach strip and walk 200m.

### Jīn Zhōng Zì Dà Shà

HOTEL \$\$

(☎352 1111; 9 Xing Hai Lu Yi Duan; 兴海路一段9号; r from Y298, discounts available; Ⓜ) Right in the heart of the city on a busy intersection, this hotel offers comfortable rooms, free broadband internet and a good restaurant (dishes from Y8 to Y25). With the standard discount a double goes for around Y200.

### Kǎilái Bīnguǎn

HOTEL \$

(凯莱宾馆; Xing Hai Lu Er Duan; ☎385 7168; d Y108-168; Ⓜ) Very basic rooms (though

with broadband internet) on the main drag in Xingchéng. The cheapest doubles usually go early.



## Eating

Unsurprisingly, seafood is big here. Restaurants line the beachfront at No 1 Beach, where you can pick your crustacean or fish of choice from the tanks in which they await their death.

Xing Hai Lu Er Duan is home to many restaurants, including **Tiānhé Féiniú** (天和肥牛; dishes ¥5-28), a bright, modern hotpot place on the left a couple of hundred metres before the turn for the south gate.

There are street-food stalls outside the south gate of the Old City that stay open until late, and a number of barbecue places that only open up in the evening. The Hui Muslim stalls always have the best lamb skewers (¥1).

## **i** Getting There & Away

Xingchéng is a stop for many trains between Běijīng and Hā'ěrbīn (and all cities in between), but it's usually easier to get a bus out than a train.

### Bus

Destinations from Xingchéng Bus Station (兴城市客运站; Xingchéng Shi Kèyùn Zhàn):

**Běijīng** ¥117, one daily (8.10am)

**Jīnzhōu** ¥15, two hours, every 30 minutes

**Shānhǎiguān** ¥20.50, two hours, two daily (6.50am and 8am)

**Shěnyáng** ¥78.50, 3½ hours, three daily (7.50am, 2pm and 3.40pm)

### Train

**Běijīng** seat/sleeper ¥55/103, six to seven hours, five to six daily

**Shānhǎiguān** ¥9 to ¥27, 1½ hours

**Shěnyáng** ¥28 to ¥41, four hours

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