



The azalea flowers, blossoming in spring in Heilongjiang's forests, consist of one of the attractive sights for tourists.

ZHAO TIANHUA / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Northern part of China has its own delights

For example, with a local cuisine, where every dish has a story behind it

BY ZHANG ZHAO

Authorities in Northeast China's Heilongjiang province are pinning their hopes on tourism for greater economic growth, and have their sights set on 12 major resorts.

Work on the resorts began last year, with 2.1 billion yuan (\$321.7 million) invested overall.

"To attract more tourists and get them to stay, we have to improve services and facilities at the sites," explained Ji Bingxuan,

provincial Party chief.

"Last year was just the beginning, but we've already done a lot. We chose these 12 because they represent the province's best — winter attractions, vast forests, a place where people can escape the summer heat and city life, and the large rivers and lakes on the border between China and Russia," Ji added.

One example of the development focus is Beijicun, the northernmost village in China, nicknamed "China's North

Pole". Russia is just across the Heilong River.

Two of the village's major tourist attractions are the snow in winter and tours in summer. The sun here shines about 20 hours a day during summer.

Another tourist site in the north of the province, Wudalianchi, with a series of volcanic lakes with mineral springs, is regarded as a health resort and a scientific research site.

The local government plans to turn the region into a "volcano museum" by integrating entertainment with education.

Other lake zones set for development are Jingpo, Xingkai, and Lianhuan, which have mountains around them, natural beauty, and a distinct local culture.

Water activities, the woods and rural life are the major offerings. And, when the infrastructure is improved, the sites will become business and trade zones.

Then there is Yabuli Ski Resort, in southern Heilongjiang, the largest ski area in China.

Infrastructure plans for the tourism sites include roads, parking lots, restaurants and shopping facilities. Last year, the province spent about 860 million yuan on these projects.

This year, the focus is on local cuisine, and developing a diet that combines "culture, health, and pleasure, and making sure every dish has a story behind it", according to the Heilongjiang tourism bureau.

Russian food and local ethnic

dishes are being highlighted.

The government is giving certain problems greater attention, one of these being the public lavatories. It has set some higher standards for hygiene, eco-friendliness, and size and shape.

It has already built some more handsome, easy-to-use lavatories at major tourist sites, using bio-technology to break down the waste and produce marsh gas at the same time.

To promote the province all across the nation, the government has established closer ties with media groups such as the Xinhua News Agency, China Central Television, People's Daily, Hong Kong's Economic Times and Wen Wei Po, and sina.com.



WANG CHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Wetlands in Harbin will be a new attraction to tourists when a wetland festival is held in the city in June.



CHENG YINGPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

China's Ministry of Commerce signed an agreement with the Heilongjiang government last month, putting its weight behind the province's move to increase trade with Russia.

## Getting even closer to Russia

BY CHAI HUA

Heilongjiang's government wants to improve its trade with Russia, in structure, scale and development speed.

This decision comes in response to a decrease in trade between Heilongjiang and Russia over the past three years.

Heilongjiang was a leader in Sino-Russian trade for a long time: as recently as 2008, it hit an historical high of \$11.08 billion.

But last year, that trade was only worth \$7.47 billion, lagging behind Zhejiang and Guangdong provinces for the first time.

The financial crisis that began in the second half of 2008 was partly to blame, but outdated methods and structure are also reasons for the drop of trade.

To correct this, the provincial government is looking for new international trade resources and more innovative methods.

Construction machinery, farm equipment, household electric appliances, and automobile exports are increasing, and the government that exports of produce, textiles and many other exports will increase.

It also plans to increase imports of energy and raw materials, such as timber, pulp, petroleum, fertilizers and electricity to ensure adequate supplies for economic growth.

Over the past five years, the province imported 15 million tons of crude oil and petroleum products, 7.7 million tons of iron ore, more than 40 million cubic meters of timber, and 4.27 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity from Russia.

"To improve the trade quality, we plan to expand trade with Russia to many fields and a higher level," the provincial foreign trade bureau has said.

Heilongjiang now has 1,280 non-State-owned companies engaged in Russian trade, making it the province's main force.

But, the provincial and local governments have programs for more comprehensive cross-border trade and cooperation. These include more trade and development zones, logistics parks, and wholesale markets in border towns on both sides.

As part of this, a Heilongjiang-Russia electric power organization was established on January 10, 2010, with 44 members.

The province's next step is to build more partnerships

with Russia in the petroleum, natural gas, wood, mineral resources and infrastructure fields.

The foreign trade bureau is also looking at greater trade and business cooperation with Russia through various shows and events.

There is already the annual Harbin International Economic and Trade Fair — China's largest Sino-Russian business cooperation show. But, the bureau will try to find local Heilongjiang businesses to take part in commodity exhibitions and fairs in Russian cities, including Vladivostok, Blagoveshchensk, or even Moscow.

The provincial government in fact has some big goals for the future. It wants to turn the province into a Russia-oriented distribution center — with border cities such as Suifenhe, Tongjiang, and Heihe as regional hubs — but with its influence reaching across the nation and even to the rest of Asia and Europe.

In fact, it is already cooperating with 225 countries in foreign trade, which amounted to \$25.5 billion in 2010, up 57.2 percent from the previous year.

## A better life through roads and bridges

BY TIAN XUEFEI

The city of Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang province, wants to solve residents' traffic and transportation problems, and a massive road construction and renovation program is its answer.

The local government said that 141 kilometers of roads will be built, expanded and renovated this year, along with 24 bridges and tunnels.

This is just a part of a city strategy to revive the old industrial bases and generally improve life for the locals.

The focus is mainly on work in eastern, western, and central parts of the city.

In the east, new roads are needed to connect tourist resorts around the Songhua River wetland, the Xiaobaityupao wetland, and the Volga Villas.

And, several roads will be extended eastward to the railway container terminal to help the city's growing logistics sector.

In the western part, the focus is on the Yangmingtan Bridge over the Songhua. The eight-lane, 7,133-meter-long

bridge is a key infrastructure project, with a budget of about 1.88 billion yuan.

Work on the bridge started in December 2009. The main structure should be completed next month and the bridge itself is scheduled to open by October 1, this year.

It is expected to handle 9,800 vehicles per hour, and to solve the traffic congestion problem on both sides of the Songhua.

In the city center, the emphasis is on Harbin Railway Station links and a more beautiful environment in old

residential areas and business districts. More trees and grass will be planted.

Work already began on the Yangmingtan Bridge a year ago. Work on many of the other projects began this month.

Roads to the Harbin International Convention, Exhibition and Sports Center will be completed before June 15, the opening day of the International Economic and Trade Fair.

Also, tourist facilities at resorts in the east are expected to be ready before tourism hits its peak in August.

## Book Expo: it's not just books and publishing

BY ZHAO YUNPENG

One convenient way for Heilongjiang to increase its trade — domestically at least — is via its National Book Expo, China's largest publication trade show.

This year, the event — the 21st National Book Expo — will be held in the provincial capital of Harbin, May 27 to 30.

It was previously called the national book fair, until 2007, when it got the name change in Chongqing.

Over the past two decades, the expo has gone from being a mere book fair to a more comprehensive event with exhibits, information exchanges, networking and other cultural activities.

This year, the session's sponsors are the General Administration of Press and Publications and the Heilongjiang provincial government.

The organizers have said that the local government wants to do more than just be a trade facilitator. It wants to use this opportunity to

showcase the province's recent publishing developments to help increase public interest in reading and to improve the "spiritual well being" of the local people.

The organizers said that about 100,000 business representatives from 31 provinces and regions — including Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan — will take part. They represent publishers who have reserved nearly 4,000 booths for the event.

The organizing committee is asking for volunteers to help provide services, to augment its professional service team.

The committee have selected 12 hotels to provide accommodation for people attending the event.

The main venue is the Harbin International Exhibition, Convention and Sports center. Other supplemental sites will be located in the cities of Qiqihar, Mudanjiang, Jiamusi, Daqing and Jixi.

The organizers explain the use of so many locations by

saying they want to make it a truly unique event, one with the widest influence and the highest level of development in its history.

They also hope it will give as many people as possible access to various publications from all over the country.

And it will not be limited to just books and publications: a number of other concurrent events will be held.

These include a publishing industry forum, where officials from the General Administration of Press and Publications, provincial gov-

ernment leaders, business leaders, and scholars can share their insights on industry developments.

The event is also a sort of gala for local people who love to read, with a number of interactive activities involving customers, authors, and publishers.

Other activities include a readers' conference and a show with photos from local people and publishers.

There will also be a ceremony where publishers nationwide donate books to rural Heilongjiang libraries.



ZHAO YUNPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

About 100,000 business people will attend the book expo, organizers said at 30-day countdown ceremony, on April 27.