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**ULTIMATE**  
City Guide

# Tianjin BASICS



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# Tianjin BASICS

by JEANIE CARROLL



中国对外翻译出版公司  
CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS



图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

精彩天津: 英文 / (美) 卡罗尔 (Carroll, J.) 著.

北京: 五洲传播出版社, 2010. 5

ISBN 978-7-5085-1834-3

I. ①精… II. ①卡… III. ①旅游指南-天津市-英文 IV. ①K928.921

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字 (2010) 第083296号

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## 精彩天津 (Tianjin Basics)

出版发行: 五洲传播出版社

北京海淀区北小马厂6号华天大厦23-26层 邮编: 100038 发行电话 +86 10 5889 1281

策划编辑: 荆孝敏

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策划制作: That's & INTOUCH

中国浙江省杭州市莲花峰路24号 邮编: 310002 电话: +86 571 8763 0119/8763 0035

尺寸: 128mm×198mm

字数: 80,000字

印刷: 浙江国广彩印有限公司

版次: 2010年7月第1版

印次: 2010年7月第1次印刷

书号: ISBN 978-7-5085-1834-3

定价: RMB 96.00

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## Editor's Note

The minute this book is published I will have to start researching all over again to ensure that all the wonderful places that are in the Tianjin Basics book have not changed, expanded or been replaced by new and more wonderful venues in the city. You are not allowed to become frustrated as a travel guide writer over the fact that there is no way to hold time still so that every sentence of your "creation" is 100 percent accurate when it hits the tourists hands that desperately need information to navigate a new city, especially one that is the size of Tianjin. But you have to work your hardest to become a partner with your fellow travelers and try to impart the "juiciest" parts of the city. I have tried to do that in this book by adding some out of the way places that I would have been upset if I had missed while becoming familiar with this wonderful area. I have put some, perhaps not so sophisticated places that I feel as a traveler needs to be seen and experienced while in Tianjin because in my opinion, they are what make Tianjin- Tianjin.

Tianjin's rapid fire opening and closing of institutions during this hyper-development stage leaves writing a guide that is all-inclusive a little wanting, to say the least. The city stands on the brink of becoming a world player on the list of "most dynamic cities" in China. Already the third largest populated city, it seems determined to expand but not lose what has always made it unique. Luckily, no matter what restaurants, shopping areas and hotels that close or open, the same wonderful people will still fill the streets and that is what really gives this city.

I have heard so many people who are not familiar with the city say "Isn't that one of those big industrial cities?" But that will soon change as more and more come to see for themselves what really makes this city so wonderful as a tourist destination. There aren't many cities in China that can boast long beautiful beaches, snow-capped ski resorts, national forests, one of the most spectacular sections of the Great Wall, international cruises from one of the largest ports in the world and shopping and dining that rivals any city in China but for a lot less.

I lived in Tianjin for over a year and had many adventures wandering through the winding back alleys where I uncovered the "old China" that is still there and being nursed by the locals in an effort to ensure its continued existence. I also dined, danced and hung out with some of the most sophisticated and connected people from around the globe that come to this city to be involved in what is happening here.

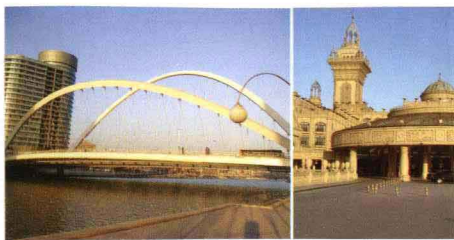
The natural beauty, parks, zoos, meandering rivers, beautiful bridges, giant Polar aquariums, museums, galleries filled with artists of the new age of China working furiously at some of the most prestigious universities in the country all represent cutting-edge achievements that are hard to find anywhere else in China.

My suggestion is to come to Tianjin and see for yourself what the next generation of tourist to China will be saying, "Why haven't I heard of this place before?"

**Jeanie Carroll**



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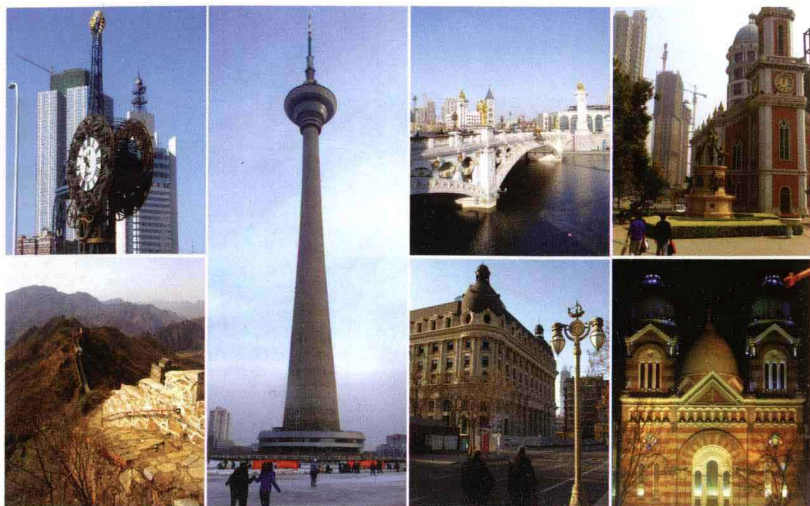
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# 1 History and Modern Perspective

## INTRODUCTION TO TIANJIN

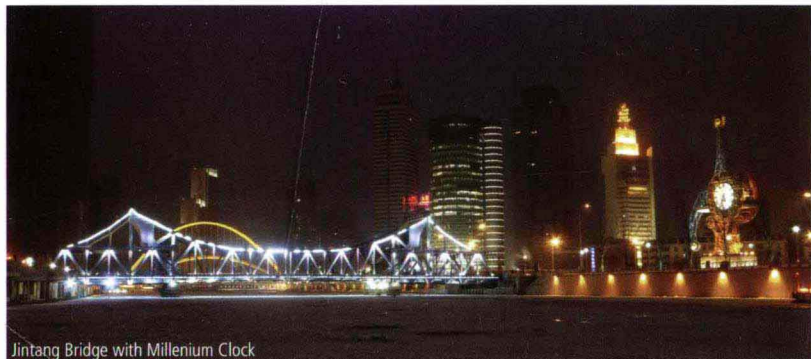
Tianjin is often affectionately called “Jin” by the locals. It is located about 2 hour’s drive just south of Beijing in the northeastern part of mainland China but with the new “bullet” train that began operation shortly before the 2008 Olympics you can be in Beijing in about 30 minutes. The train moves at an amazing 350 km per hour. It is one of China’s four semi-autonomous city municipalities and is under the control of the central Chinese government. It is bordered by Hebei province and Beijing municipality and has an area of 4,400 square miles (11,300 sq. km). It is the third largest city in China, only behind Beijing and Shanghai in population. At last report there were over 11 million people residing there with a steady increase daily as the city expands into one of the top economic development zones designated by the Central Chinese government.

Tianjin is located along the famous Haihe River that connects the Yellow and Yang-

tze Rivers via the Grand Canal. Tianjin includes the Binhai New Area (BNA) that includes the Tanggu coastal region, Hangu and TEDA (Tianjin Economic-Technology Development Area) and Dagang which is home to China’s Dagang Oilfield that lies just outside the city and represents only one of multiple natural resources available there.

It is home to the first EADS A320 Airbus final assembly plant located outside Europe and is compiling a long and prestigious list of international joint ventures. Tianjin is often referred to as “the Shanghai of the north” due to its rapid growth and importance to China’s economic expansion. It is clear that the government’s intention is to develop Tianjin to rival the importance of Shanghai as a port city.

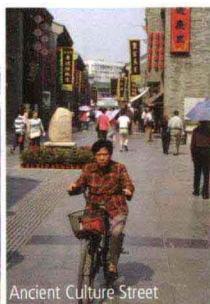
One of the biggest reasons for the selection of the city as the new top economic zone is understood when you see Tianjin on a map and notice the incredibly large port that ex-



Jintang Bridge with Millenium Clock



European Concession St.



Ancient Culture Street



Famous bridge

ists and that see that it is being expanded to utilize it to the maximum for imports, exports and to draw foreign investment to this ripe environment.

The harbor port has over 60 docks and over 30 international routes and is the most convenient sea outlet for Beijing and other northern areas of China that link the country to over 300 international harbors.

Some of the current projects include a new Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City project that will incorporate all things “green” and offer full services to those who reside there. Many of the older established universities like Nankai University will have new facilities built in this area with residential and commercial development surrounding it. Special attention to energy-saving transportation systems and living specialties will all be incorporated into this joint project and will be the biggest and most extensive Eco-city of its kind when completed.

The city itself, which is close to an hour away from the port, holds relics from the past: both Chinese and some from those that came to reap its rich rewards. The architecture throughout the city is sprinkled with buildings resembling those of the same quality and grandeur that a traveler could find in medieval Britain, Athenian Greece, the classic styles of Russia, Gothic Germany, the romantic styles of France plus those resembling ancient Rome. At one point in history Tianjin was held at least partially by up to nine countries that included Great Britain, Japan, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, Austria-Hungary and Russia. Much of this incredible archi-

tecture can be found along the Hai River in an area called Wudadao or the “Five Main Roads” of the Heping district. This area holds treasures for travelers by offering the best in dining, shopping, accommodations and beautiful scenic areas.

The Haihe River walk areas are filled with ornate Parisian handrails and exotic bridges plus the opportunity to see locals enjoying their daily rituals. People fish, swim, perform opera, do taiji, air their caged birds and walk the multitude of dogs that frequent the city, especially near sunset when the locals take to the streets. The city is filled with ancient alleyways and intimate courtyards for a look at Chinese daily life. Temples filled with incense and spiritual chanting can be found in and around the city in the numerous temples and mosques.

Anyone who has studied the history of China knows that the period referred to as the “unequal treaties” period was all about creating Treaty Ports, of which Tianjin played a key role. Tianjin’s history is filled with stories of intrigue that occurred during those historic days. There were over 20 countries that had consulates here and the city is filled with the relics and memories that prove that most of the world has, at some point in Tianjin’s history, staked a claim, at least temporarily, to this majestic city. Strong trade has always been at the center of the city’s success and as a port city, in the 1940’s Tianjin represented a large portion of the country’s revenue in trade and manufacturing. Tianjin was a shining example of impressive commerce with influential international bankers coming here





Fountain in concession area



Nanjing Rd.

hundreds of years ago. The old banking street "Victoria Road" as it was formerly called and now named North Jiefang Road means North Liberty Street and was akin to an earlier version of Wall Street. In fact, it is said that the first stock market in China was first established in Tianjin.

Many famous residents occupied these foreign concession areas of Tianjin including the exiled Pu Yi, the last Emperor of China, two Presidents of the Republic of China, seven Premiers and a large number of famous celebrities. These included the famous educators Yan Xiu and Zhang Boling, international industrialists, political leaders such as Zhou Enlai and others. This section of the city has been meticulously restored and most of these historic buildings are now considered National Treasures which provides them with protection from the city's rapid development.

Despite all the changes in Tianjin, the city has never lost its distinctive Chinese flavor and has stubbornly held onto many ancient Chinese customs, specialty food, their language and a city filled with scenic beauty and traditional Chinese architecture. Life in Tianjin is much slower than in Beijing and most locals focus on enjoying life rather than spending all their time working.

The stereotypical Tianjiner is described as eloquent, humorous and free spirited. They are said to be always eloquent with a good sense of humor. The term for a Tianjin native is "weizuizi" which means "the Tainjin mouth" and can perhaps be explained through the comparison of the reputation and attributes of the famous Tianjin cross-

talk performer, Ma Sanli.

Tianjin was the scene of many battles and there is much history surrounding famous military and political leaders that fought against the Japanese and the would-be colonialists as well as those who fought for and played a key role in the development of modern day China and the formation of the People's Republic of China.

The Huangyaguan or Great Wall holds special pride among the locals and is located in one of the most majestic and pristine areas in Tianjin. This is really a special attraction for visitors as this whole area is filled with special scenic beauty. There is a National Forest, hiking trails, ancient farmhouse accommodations, ski resorts, beautiful mountains, stone forests, hot springs and multiple lakes that offer visitors a special respite from the noise and fast paced lifestyle found in the urban area.

The presence of the Great Wall in Tianjin is a reminder of why this city can boast of a history of open defiance to intruders. But at the same time it has maintained the special Tianjin "small town" atmosphere that still permeates it today.

Many of the locals you will meet have family ties with the city that go back for generations. Even given the size of the city and its dispersed layout, you do not get the feeling of an immigrant city but rather one that has maintained its close ties as a citizenry for centuries as well as a sense that Tianjiners have stood firm throughout time to ensure that their way of life was preserved and have always maintained their overriding sense of pride in all things Chinese.



## URBAN DISTRICTS IN TIANJIN

Figuring out where you are and where you want to go can be a daunting task in Tianjin because of its size but the city is laid out in districts that can help you understand the layout a little better.

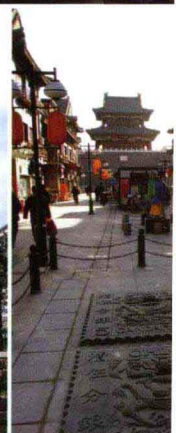
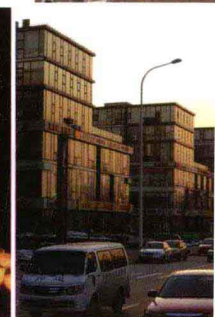
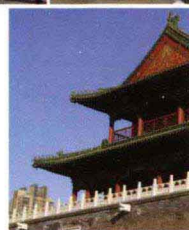
The urban area is usually thought of as the six center districts of the municipality although as the expansion plans continue some of what has been considered as outside the urban area may now become part of the central nucleus of the city.

In an effort to explain how the city is structured here is a brief explanation of the six central districts and the type of facilities that are located in each. This won't give you every location for dining, shopping and all the other things you will want to do but if you use the addresses in this book that have the districts noted then you will have a better idea of what section of town you want to go and be able to plan your route accordingly.

The best way to think about the layout of the city is to imagine a giant circle that contains the main center of Tianjin and then divide it into sections. Inside the center of the circle is Heping District. Now think of the other five districts as they relate to that center area using Heping at the very center of the city. Hongqiao is northwest and Hebei is northeast of the Heping district. Hexi is almost directly south and Nankai district is west of Heping with Hedong district to the east of Heping. These six districts are where most of the hotels, dining establishments, tourist attractions, shopping and cultural and historic locations lie within the city. But, don't forget that you have another whole world of options outside these six districts to see some of the most noteworthy and beautiful areas in China. These would, of course, include the Huangya Pass section of the Great Wall, the Shi Family compound and others.

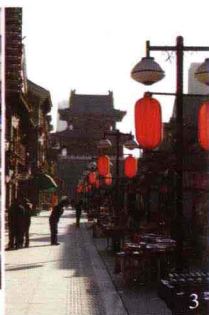
**Heping district** is filled with historical remnants of the past and covers about 10 square meters of land. Many of the city's best hotels, theatre and concert halls and other notable landmarks reside in this district. Heping means 'Peace' and is often referred to as Peace district and especially along Heping Road where it is called Peace Street. This district also boasts the best shopping areas along Binjiangdao and Heping Road with the top retailers and shopping centers located near this intersecting street area of the district. Two of the newest five-star hotels, Raffles and the Westin opened up in this swanky hotel area that also includes the internationally historic Astor Hotel that has been selected for one of the pavilion areas at the World Expo by Tianjin to demonstrate its long historic past.

**Nankai district** is one of the largest districts in the city and is hemmed in by the rail line on the west and the Hai River in the east. This is definitely a university district with both the famous Nankai University and Tianjin University located along the Weijin Road sections of the district. The Shanggu Commercial Area is there and offers many dining options as well as the famous





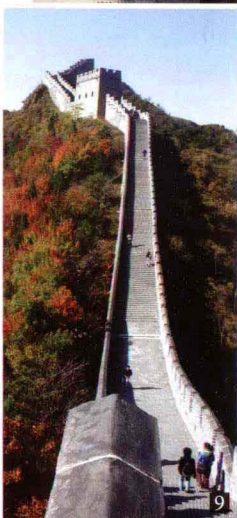
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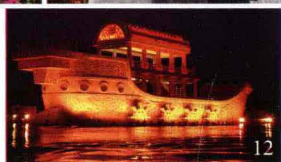
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9



12

1. Binjiangdao
2. Horse and carriage statue in European districts
3. Red lanterns street scene at Drum Tower
5. Drum Tower
6. Lion statues on Tianjin Bridge
7. Shanggu, Nankai District
8. Tianjin Railway Station
9. Great Wall in Tianjin
10. Tianjin TV Tower
11. Chinese shopping street
12. Stone boat on Ziya River

Water Park, Tianjin Radio and TV Tower, the Tianjin Zoo and the historic Cairnhill Hotel. The TEDA International Club has a deceptive name as you might think it is located in TEDA but sits just outside the perimeter of Nankai University and offers some of the most luxurious accommodations in the city.

**Hexi district** is filled with German reminders of the colonialization period and some good hotels and top-notch restaurants. You will find the Tianjin Amusement Park, Tianjin Museum of Modern History, the Natural History Museum and the Science and Technology Museum all in this area. Other notable locations in the district are the Tianjin Golden Crown Hotel, the Mighty Deli and Bakery, the Tianjin Book Store or Tushudasha, plus both of the historic restaurants, the Kissling Restaurant and Hongqishun. Then you can top your visit off with a dining experience at the restaurant that was rated as one of the ten best in the world by the *N.Y. Times* called Din Tai Feng.

**Hongqiao district** is an ancient section of the city and served as the cradle for the city in the beginning of its development. It has a large and established Muslim community that offers some of the best Muslim restaurants in China. The Great Mosque and several beautiful bridges are located in this area. The Da Hutong, the enormous Chinese market, is located there and is not far from the Ancient Culture Street and Drum Tower areas of the city. This district is adjacent to the northern end of Nankai and is filled with lots to do. Most of the waterways converge in this area including the Ziya River, the South and North Canal that meet the famous Haihe River. The Tianjin West Railway Station is located there.

**Hebei district** is an area that is not as frantic as its neighbor Heping district and offers lots of cultural sightseeing within walking distance like the Ancient Culture Street, Wanghailou Church and Shizilin Bridge. It is also the area that has the authentic Beijing duck restaurant, Qianjude Roast Duck Factory that is always a crowd pleaser. Lots of lovely little streets with nooks and crannies for the curious traveler are everywhere. Enjoy the Yongle Bridge with the giant ferris wheel called the Tianjin Eye. Or wander through the Italian Concession's pedestrian area with restaurants, trolley and entertainment that is offered near the old British concession areas. This is a great district to take advantage of the horse and buggy tours or visit the Dabeiyuan Monastery. You will find both the new Tianjin Railway Station and the North Railway Station located there.

**Hedong district** is still a work in progress but has large expansion plans in the future. It is a quiet area of the city and has many walking areas for browsing that include the 600 year old scholar tree and large copper bells. The bright colored and popular Royal Court Restaurant is located there along with the Radisson Hotel and other accommodations and restaurants.





## THE PORT

The Dongjiang Port development is ongoing and is hoped to be finished by 2012. When completed it will be the largest bonded port in China and the 6th largest port in the world with a current annual throughput of over 300 million tons and growing. Upon its completion, the Port will be wide enough to handle 300,000 ton freighters and the throughput is expected to exceed 550 million tons and have the capacity to handle 17 million containers. New aspects that are under consideration for future development include preferential policies for international shippers that would include express channels for bonded goods, duty-free shopping and visa processing plus a plan that would include a Port area that offers a registration system for international shipping which would reform the shipping duties process.

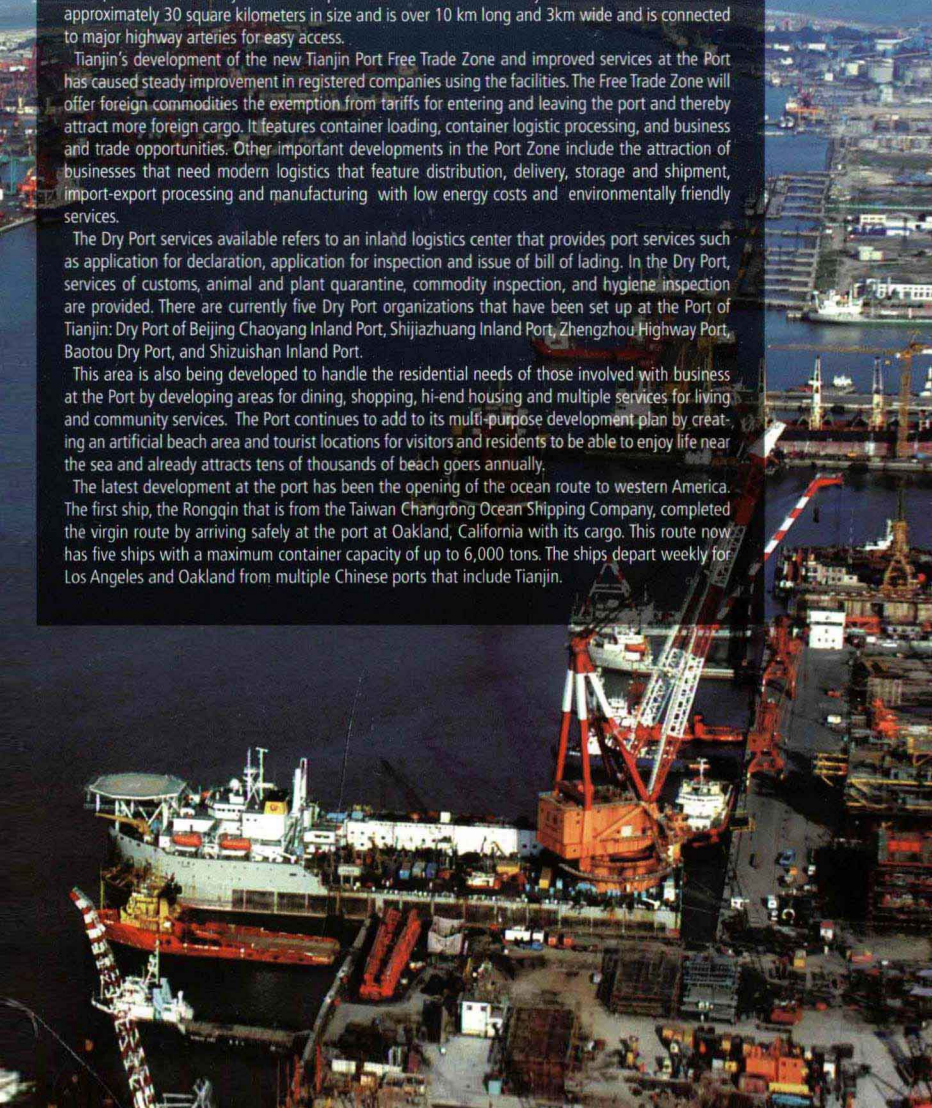
The port is an artificially constructed port area that is surrounded by the sea on three sides. It is approximately 30 square kilometers in size and is over 10 km long and 3km wide and is connected to major highway arteries for easy access.

Tianjin's development of the new Tianjin Port Free Trade Zone and improved services at the Port has caused steady improvement in registered companies using the facilities. The Free Trade Zone will offer foreign commodities the exemption from tariffs for entering and leaving the port and thereby attract more foreign cargo. It features container loading, container logistic processing, and business and trade opportunities. Other important developments in the Port Zone include the attraction of businesses that need modern logistics that feature distribution, delivery, storage and shipment, import-export processing and manufacturing with low energy costs and environmentally friendly services.

The Dry Port services available refers to an inland logistics center that provides port services such as application for declaration, application for inspection and issue of bill of lading. In the Dry Port, services of customs, animal and plant quarantine, commodity inspection, and hygiene inspection are provided. There are currently five Dry Port organizations that have been set up at the Port of Tianjin: Dry Port of Beijing Chaoyang Inland Port, Shijiazhuang Inland Port, Zhengzhou Highway Port, Baotou Dry Port, and Shizuishan Inland Port.

This area is also being developed to handle the residential needs of those involved with business at the Port by developing areas for dining, shopping, hi-end housing and multiple services for living and community services. The Port continues to add to its multi-purpose development plan by creating an artificial beach area and tourist locations for visitors and residents to be able to enjoy life near the sea and already attracts tens of thousands of beach goers annually.

The latest development at the port has been the opening of the ocean route to western America. The first ship, the Rongqin that is from the Taiwan Changrong Ocean Shipping Company, completed the virgin route by arriving safely at the port at Oakland, California with its cargo. This route now has five ships with a maximum container capacity of up to 6,000 tons. The ships depart weekly for Los Angeles and Oakland from multiple Chinese ports that include Tianjin.





## History

Tianjin was first mentioned as a trading port during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1126) and developed further during the construction of the Grand Canal during the Sui Dynasty. Tianjin has a rich history of over 600 years and began as a small seashore town named “Beitang” where the original inhabitants fished along the Bohai Bay. The area was later called “Zhigu” or “Straight Port” until the 1400’s when Emperor Yongle renamed it “Tianjin” or “Heavenly Ford” in around 1404 which means that the Emperor or Son of Heaven forded the river there. The marshes along the sea were drained during the Qing Dynasty in the 18th century. The city was walled and the fort was established called Tianjin Wei or Fort Tianjin to guard the harbor from attack and invasion. Tianjin represented the first line of defense from naval attack from those who wanted to reach the capital in Beijing.

Tianjin was elevated to a prefecture in 1725 after becoming a prominent shipping and grain storage location for northern China. Tianjin county was established in 1731.

Soon after the Second Opium War in 1860, the *Treaties of Tianjin* opened the way for foreign concessions to be opened in the city. This period saw an unprecedented period of growth in trade and investment

by the “Western Powers” that spearheaded the building boom that left Tianjin with so many European architectural gems. There are some 230 Western-style buildings and 50 former residences that were built in the 1920’s and 1930’s.

The Wudadao or “Five Main Roads” area of Tianjin consists of 22 roadways and covers an area of 1.3 square kilometer and is reputed as being a “World Building Exposition”. This area is a reminder of the social and historical changes in China over the past century.

The foreign presence in Tianjin had periods of unrest and upheaval including the ‘Tianjin Church Incident’ in June 1870 that began with a dispute between the locals and members of the Wanghailou Church who were accused of kidnapping, child neglect and improper burial practices. This violent outburst caused the destruction by fire of the church and the French consulate.

Another incident included the seize of Tianjin by the Boxers in June 1900, who held the city captive for many weeks after successfully stopping European troops headed for Beijing.

In July 1900 the Eight-Nation Alliance won the city back and set up the Tianjin Provisional government comprised of members of all the eight countries. This council gov-



Tramcars in old days