City guide: Tianjin

General
Tianjin, abbreviated as “Jin” in Chinese (meaning “port for the emperor”), is the largest coastal city in northern China. The city borders both China’s capital Beijing and Hebei Province, and is bounded to the east by the Bohai Gulf portion of the Yellow Sea. Tianjin stands in an area of 11,917 square metres and boasted a substantial population of 15.57 million by end of 2017.

Tianjin is one of the four municipal cities in China (the other three is Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing), and one of five national central cities. Tianjin used to serve as a stronghold and gateway for Beijing, however, after 600 years of development, it has now firmly established itself as a prosperous city in its own right. The city has become an industrial, commercial and financial centre, as well as a key hub of sea-land-air communications in northern China. Tianjin is divided into six city centre districts (Heping, Hexi, Hedong, Nankai, Hongqiao and Hebei), six town districts (Dongli, Xiqing, Jinnan, Beichen, Wuqing and Baodi) and three counties (Ji, Ninghe and Jinghai). Zone which hosts one of the most important software parks in the country.

Industry and Economy
In 2018, Tianjin’s GDP reached 1,881 billion RMB. It grew about 3.6 percent. Tianjin’s manufacturing sector makes up the largest part of its economy. Major industries include aviation, petrochemicals, textiles, automobiles, and metalworking.

Like many Chinese cities, Tianjin remained broadly unaffected by the international financial crisis in 2008 – in fact posting an increased total output value of 16.5% that year. Its growth has since remained largely the same and highly sustainable, although very recently its growth has become more consumer-driven rather than investment-driven, as is the case with much of China.

The Tianjin Economic-Technological Development Area has been at the top of the list of state-level economic and technological development zones, for 15 consecutive years, and the zone hosts enterprises from all kinds of industries.

In terms of specific industries, the machine and electron industries are two of the largest and most prosperous industries in Tianjin. Other staple industries include textiles, chemistry, metallurgical industry and petroleum industry. Obviously, Tianjin’s geographical location plays a large part in its economic success.

Ancient Street (above and left), known as Guwenhua Jie in Chinese, is popular with tourists for its Qing dynasty style architecture
Bars and Clubs

Tianjin has many choices for dining, especially if you are here on business or here permanently as a foreigner; there are plenty of places to drink. Such bars as Hank’s Sports Bar & Grill, The Spot Café and Alibaba cater towards Western clientele. However if you are looking to hang out with the locals Youyi Lu Bar Street is a popular venue.

Though not as wild as the nightlife in Shanghai or Beijing, you can still enjoy yourself here in Tianjin.

Shopping

Tianjin has both modern shopping malls and distinctive traditional stores. Binjiang Dao Business Street and Heping Lu Business Street are the busiest and most prosperous shopping centres in Tianjin. Most of the top malls or department stores can be found on these two streets: places such as Quanye Chang, Isten Department Store, Jinhui Shopping Square, and so on.

A variety of Tianjin specialties will provide you many choices for commemorating your visit to the city. Such offerings include Yangliuqing Nian painting, Wejin kites, Niren Zhang painted sculptures, amongst many more. You can visit Gu Wenhua Jie, Yilin Ge, Wenyuan Ge for inspiration as well as to buy. Traditionally designed stores line either side of the Gu Wenhua Jie street, dealing in paintings, calligraphy, jade, or other renowned Chinese arts and crafts. It is a good place to find souvenirs and enjoy the architectural spectacle.

Places of Interest

Where should you visit in Tianjin? The city boasts much architectural heritage, and its unique buildings are prominent throughout the city. Perhaps one place you should especially visit is Ancient Street (Guwenhua Jie), which hosts hundreds of craft and antique stores selling high quality goods. The street is architecturally modelled on the Qing dynasty.

The Tianjin Eye stands as the second largest ferris wheel in the world and is must-visit at least once. Taking forty minutes in total, the eye gives spectacular views of both in-land and coastal Tianjin.

Of course no trip to the city would be complete without visiting the Huangyaguan Pass of the Great Wall of China, located roughly 78 miles north of downtown Tianjin. The views are spectacular.

Dining

People in Tianjin, as a coastal city, tend to eat a lot of dishes revolving around seafood and is slightly lighter and more salty than its Beijing counterpart. Having said that, many of the specialities found in the city in fact feature meat. Such famous dishes include Eight Great Bowls – featuring eight different dishes, and The Four Great Stews, which comprises of fact several stews made with various meats and seafoods.

There are specially snacks available in Tianjin, such as Guobuli Baozi – a famous and traditional variation of Chinese steamed bun.

One region famous for its Tianjin food is Nanshi Cuisine Street (Shipin Jie). This place is essentially a shopping mall for food, full of street stalls where you can eat pretty much anything at a very cheap rate, from the sweet to the unusual.

Meanwhile, Western cuisine is covered well here. From Italian to French to South American, your needs should be met.

Transport

Tianjin Binhai International Airport lies about 13 km away from downtown and hosts 39 domestic and international airlines. The second largest airport in northern China, the airport is 400,000 square metres in size.

An important railway centre linking the north-east, south, east and north of China, Tianjin has 4 railway stations in total. These are Tianjin East Railway Station, Tianjin South Railway Station, Tianjin West Railway Station and Tianjin North Railway Station. Travelers can take trains easily from these stations to over 40 cities all over China.

The city’s bus system consists of school bus routes, special sight-seeing routes and regular routes which cover downtown and suburban areas. If you take a downtown bus route, you will pay CNY1 for twelve km or less and CNY1.5 for more. If you take a suburb line you have to pay CNY1 for the first ten kilometers (about 6.2 miles) and CNY0.5 for each extra five kilometers (about 3.1 miles).

Currently, six metro lines are operating, including line 1, line 2, line 3, line 5, line 6 and line 9. The extending section of line 1, line 6 as well as the south sections of line 4 and line 10 are under construction. They will serve the public in the near future.

Tianjin Light Rail, namely Jin Bin Mass Transit, is the east section of subway line 9. It supplies a rapid transit between the city’s urban area and the Binhai new area. From Zhongshanmen station in the downtown area, it takes 46 minutes for passengers to reach Binhai.

The starting fee for a Tianjin taxi is CNY8; while the distance surcharge varies from CNY1.5–2 per additional km.
Parking
Parking spaces can be very limited in Tianjin and there is hardly any free parking available downtown. In the centre of the city, hotels and other large building complexes are good places to find a parking spot. Spaces are priced at usually around 3 Yuan per hour; however, you can often get discounts for long-term stays. If you wish to rent your own parking spot, you will be looking at paying roughly 400 Yuan a month.

Pets
You are usually only allowed to bring one pet with you to China per adult passport. If you are planning on taking your pet with you, you will need to ensure you have all relevant health and vaccination certificates in order. In addition, you will need to provide your Chinese residential details. Once your pet arrives, it will have to be placed in between 15-30 days of quarantine in order to be checked upon. Whether or not you can keep your pet in your house/apartment is up to your landlord – therefore it is essential to ask their permission prior to your arrival. The regulation since 2012 says big dogs are not allowed in the city, and the definition of big is in excess of 1 meter tall. Thus, you need to ask for the permission from the local police as well if you think your dog is big.

PSB
Upon arrival in China, you will also need to register yourself with your local public security bureau (usually a police station), to ensure the Chinese authorities know that you are living here legally.

Garbage Disposal
Garbage will be disposed of in the relevant containers as provided by your building. Even for bigger garbage or recyclables, these can also be left at the same garbage site and maintenance will take care of it.

Voltage
In China, the voltage is 220-240V. Standard Type A, common Type I and Type C plugs can be used in this outlet. If you have appliances requiring 110V, you will easily find step-down voltage converters.

Tianjin steamed buns, Guobuli Baozi (above), are famous in the area

Schools
There are a number of international schools in Tianjin. These include The International School of Tianjin (IST), Tianjin International School (TIS) and Tianjin Rego International School, as well as Wellington College International Tianjin. Furthermore, the city hosts a Kindergarten called Hopeland International Kindergarten for the needs of your younger children.

Doctor
Tianjin is served relatively well by international medical practices. Hospitals for expats include the International SOS Tianjin Clinic, International SOS Clinic TEDA, Tianjin United Family Hospital and the Western Hospital (Huawei International Clinic). An international dentist also resides in Tianjin called the Aichi International Dental Center. Of course on top of this, there are multiple general hospitals and dental practices, but the guarantee of English speakers is not likely.

Mailing
When sending post from Tianjin abroad, you will need to go the local post office. If you are not fluent in Mandarin, it’s better to go the big post office at the Bell Tower as the staff at that branch can speak English. Alternatively, you may wish to call a delivery company to come and pick up your post for you. DHL, FedEx, and UPS all have offices in Tianjin – however the cost is normally higher than China Post.

Internet
If you are worried about internet accessibility – fear not, VPNs are very accessible. Internet services are commonly provided by your landlord, and if this is the case the cost will be included in your rent. If you wish to obtain a faster service, this can be done by contacting your Maxxelli consultant.

Tianjin emergency numbers
Fire department: 119
Police: 110
Ambulance: 120
Traffic Accident: 122
Foreign Affairs Office of Police: 7216795
Domestic Help

At the moment, Maxxelli Tianjin does not provide services for finding ayi for the client. However, we do not mind asking around for you. Normally, you can find a good ayi for a decent price through another ayi who works for expats.

Banking

Consider opening a Chinese bank account. Opening one in China can be complicated if the bank employs no English speakers. Therefore, again, a translator would be recommended. This article will provide a more detailed, step-by-step guide in opening a Chinese bank account.

Telecommunication

It is recommended to buy a local SIM card if your phone isn’t locked to other networks. If your phone is locked and you want to buy a Chinese one, there are tons of stores selling inexpensive phones everywhere. There are two main mobile phone operators in China: China Mobile and China Unicom. China Unicom is popular these days due to their good promotions and faster 3G connection.

For further information on living and working in China, please check out the Maxxelli Consulting. All of the information listed in the Tianjin City Guide can be found in detail there.

The Tianjin Eye (below) provides spectacular views of the city’s diverse surroundings
Tenant Lease Information

Below are the common issues and misconceptions throughout China. Maxxelli will attempt to alleviate any stresses felt from these items, and have tools and systems to ensure efficiency, but the items listed may vary greatly and are important to understand. Please be sure to ask your Maxxelli Consultant for any further explanations.

Property Representation
Open Market – Unlike many Western Countries, landlords in China are free to list their property with as many agents as they wish. This means Maxxelli has access to nearly any property available, regardless of whether or not it’s listed in our database currently.

Rental Rates
Local agencies list Net rental prices which do not include tax or compound management fees. Maxxelli will always list the Gross Rental price. Your Property Schedule will list clearly what’s included in the Gross Rental!

*Note: If your company is paying rent, the rental must usually include taxes and management fees*. “Management Fees” as mentioned by our Consultants are compound management fees (condo fees) and are not a Maxxelli management fee.

Requests for Property Alterations
Properties in China usually come fully decorated and furnished. Negotiating for changes is possible, but it is entirely dependent on the situation and is likely to cause an increase in rental. Not all landlords are willing to renovate or move/add furniture and inexpensive storage options are not readily available. Even something as simple as hanging a painting on the wall may require landlord permission.

Satellite
Foreign Satellite TV is non-government sponsored for residential use in China. The available systems are pirated, unstable, and need constant upgrading to keep up with efforts to block piracy via technological advances. Even if your property has a satellite or your landlord agrees to install one, please be prepared to maintain the costs of this unit personally. Should your property not have one and you wish to have one installed, we can provide the necessary contacts.

Online Housing Sources
There are numerous online housing sources available. It is important to remember that the majority of what is seen online is either fake, out of date, or local agents searching for new leads and doing a “bait and switch.” If you do find something online of course do not hesitate to send it to your Maxxelli representative, but please remember there is an very high chance that this property is falsely advertised.

Customer Service
At move-in, we'll show you how to use appliances and check the condition of the property with you, as well as show you around the compound, introduce you to the management office, and show you where to pay bills. Following the move-in you will be assigned one Customer Service Agent for the length of your lease.
At Maxxelli we strive to be the best in the industry and are always searching for ways to innovate in order to better serve our clients throughout our entire network. Below is our website that have evolved over the years to support the expat community. These were created with the sole purpose of making your life in China more efficient.

Maxxelli Consulting

www.maxxelli-consulting.com

All of the information in the above City Guide can be found in detail on the Maxxelli Consulting. If you do not find what you are looking for, please let your Maxxelli Consultant know – We will create a blog article matching your needs.