



(From left to right): The Songhua Lake, Jingyuetan, and areas along the Songhua River in Jilin province exude special charm throughout the different seasons.

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# Jilin charms with its lakes, frosty forests

With rime-covered trees and other majestic scenery, province is a hidden gem. **Liu Mingtai** reports.

Jilin province in Northeast China is a place known for spectacles both natural and manmade.

The province features scenic treasures, such as Clear-Moon Lake and Chağan Lake as well as majestic historical wonders, such as the Puppet Manchurian Palace.

## The Puppet Manchurian Palace

For those interested in ancient history, the Puppet Manchurian Imperial Palace Museum in Jilin province is a good place to go. Though not as famous as Beijing's Forbidden City, the Puppet Manchurian Palace is a well-established national tourist attraction where relics of China's last emperor are kept.

The museum was built by Aisin-Gioro Puyi, China's last emperor, who lived here from 1935 to 1942.

The museum is also one of China's three major existing palace relics.

Today, the palace has become a historical site where people can learn about the country's history, and it is reflective of the nation's ancient culture. By taking a walk around the museum, you get a closer look at the life of China's last emperor and can experience the way he spent his last days in the palace.

The museum takes up an area of 137,000 square meters. Major buildings include places where Puyi used to work and hold ceremonies. Moreover, you can take a look at Jixi Building, where the concubines of Puyi used to live.

The palace museum also includes the Imperial Garden, the Jiayue Palace, where grand banquets were held, and the Huaiyuan Building, which was used for ancestor worship.

You can also take a look at Puyi's piano room. China's last emperor spent a lot of time playing the piano during his days here.

The main building of the Puppet Manchurian Palace is a two-story attic with yellow-glazed roof tiles. The building combines features of Oriental and Western architecture.

Today, some structures of the palace have been included into the Jilin provincial museum, which shows the historical documents of how the Gaogouli, Bohai, the Liao and the Jin built their empires in northeast China.

## Soft rime in Jilin

Ice crystals that condense on tree branches when frost meets water vapor are known as rime, snow willows or ice flowers.

It is strongly recommended that travelers to Jilin take the opportunity to witness the beauty of soft rime covering the province's many forests.

The soft rime in Jilin has been hailed as one of the four natural marvels in China. The other three are the natural beauty of Guilin, the Three Gorges of the Yangtze River, and the stone forest in Yunnan province.

Soft rime is mostly seen along the Songhua River side, near the city of Jilin. The rime is created when the cold atmosphere meets the warm river to form masses of moisture.

Winter in Jilin is cold. The temperature usually remains around minus 25 C. However, though the Songhua River is freezing, the water released from the river dam has a temperature of 4 C, which immediately creates masses of fog along the riverside once the water is released due to temperature difference.

Soft rime is a white deposition of ice that forms when the water droplets in light, freezing fog or mist freeze to the outer surfaces of objects, such as branches. The fog usually freezes to the windward side of tree branches.

As the Songhua River flows through the city of Jilin, the city looks glorious with the frost lingering on all the plants. Soft rime is quite rare in China because the two conditions are not easily met. It requires low temperatures in the area as well as a river that does not freeze in the winter.

According to the Jilin weather station, soft rime usually starts to form in November each year and lasts until the following March. Each year when the rime season arrives, areas along the Songhua River in Jilin seem to be suddenly covered with white pear flowers.

The pure, wet and cold scene is something you will never forget.

## Clear-Moon Lake

Jingyuetan, or Clear-Moon Lake, is located in the southeastern part of Changchun city, Jilin province, about 12 kilometers from the city's downtown. The lake got its name because it is shaped like a quarter moon, and it looks pure and bright.

It is in fact an artificial lake. The construction of the lake started in the 1930s as a way to solve the city's water supply problems. In order to bring more water to the city of Changchun, a 550 meter dam was built to cut a tributary of the Yitong River and collect water in the middle of three mountains. Thus, Clear-Moon Lake was built amid the mountains.

One important feature of the lake is that it contains various kinds of plants and forests, which is why it is hailed as the lung of the city. Before 1958, the lake was the city's only surface water resource, and so it was considered the heart of the city as well.

In order to preserve the lake during that time, local people built a manmade forest, which occupies about 8,000 hectares of land. It was known as the largest manmade forest at the time.

Today, Clear-Moon Lake and its surrounding forests are known as the "green pearl of Asia" for people overseas. It has also become one of the most popular destinations for winter skiing. It is the venue where the Inter-

national Vasaloppet Ice and Snow Festival is held every year.

## Ice fishing in Chağan Lake

Ice fishing is something that you can only do in northeast China, and it is definitely something you should not miss when traveling in Jilin. The Chağan Lake covers about 40,000 hectares of land, and the water is about 2.5 meters deep on average. It is the largest terminal lake in Jilin province.

Though it is the largest lake in Jilin, it is not very well known to most tourists. Therefore, the natural beauty of the lake has not been spoiled by human presence. Since ancient times, it has always been a paradise for wildlife and birds, including foxes, rabbits and badgers.

Fishing is the major industry for people living along the Chağan Lake, where the fishing line is about 128 kilometers. The lake produces 3,000 tons of fish every year. Win-



ter fishing along the Chağan Lake dates back to ancient China and was especially popular during the Liao (916-1125) and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties.

Here is what you do when ice fishing in Chağan Lake. First, you find a place on the surface of the lake where the ice surface is about 1 meter thick. Then dig a hole on the ice surface every 8 or 9 meters, usually hundreds of holes for one draught. Because the fish lie deep in the water and are very heavy, it usually requires several horses to drag the fishing net to the ice surface. Each fish weighs about 10 kilograms.

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Jixi Building in the Puppet Manchurian Imperial Palace Museum, where relics of China's last emperor are kept



A waterside view of the Chağan Lake in Jilin province