

# Tianjin Binhai New Area:

## Rising Manufacturing Center and Tourism Destination



The central business district of Tianjin Binhai New Area.

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**T**HE historical mission of Tianjin – the country’s marine gateway – was to defend Beijing and its environs. Thanks to a 600-year accumulation of marine transport and trade development, over the past decade Tianjin Binhai New Area has become a flourishing business and tourism destination.

### Prehistoric Saline Marsh

Archaeological research shows that 6,000 years ago Binhai New Area was a vast expanse of water. Shortly after, the influence of glaciers caused a gradual recession of these waters that permanently exposed the land, forming an embankment. Two thousand years later, the Yellow River that had flooded the North China Plain for millennia changed its route, so forming a vast territory. This evolution-

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ary process came to an end during the Song Dynasty (960-1276).

This area of watered land attracted people from the north, who went there to fish and make salt. They built dwellings from reeds and clay and pioneered there a new homeland area.

These early settlers made salt from evaporating boiled sea water, according to historical records during the Warring States Period (475-221 BC). The area remained a prominent salt production center throughout history.

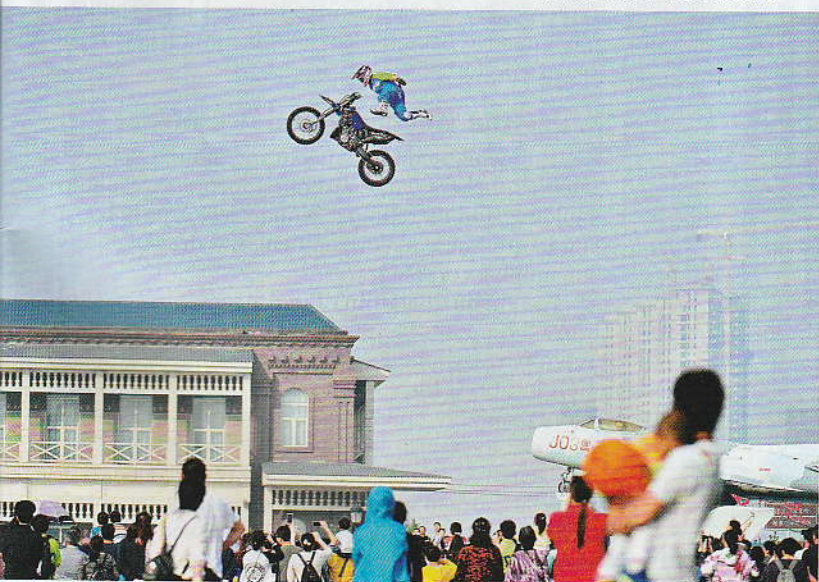
As Dagukou Port was on the estuary of Haihe River, Tianjin was also a main artery for the water transportation of grain from the South China to the capital. In a sense, therefore, Binhai New Area is inextricable from Tianjin’s ancient culture. After the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) moved its capital from Nanjing to Beijing, Tianjin and its environs became the maritime port from Beijing to southern China.

China (Tianjin) Pilot Free Trade Zone’s booming





A motorcycle stunt performance on the Kiev aircraft carrier.



prosperity now makes it a bridge between there and the rest of the world.

### Global Purchases

The Tmall Global Country Pavilion Experience Center in Yujiapu of Tianjin offers a range of themed products from dozens of countries. As well as satisfying shoppers in pursuit of overseas goods, it also offers a choice of purchasing modes through the new combination online-offline shopping mode.

This abundant selection of European luxury brands helps consumers keep pace with worldwide trends. As a self-confessed foodie, I was dazzled by its array of tropical fruits from Southeast Asia, Australia, and South America. I was particularly tempted by the pineapples from Phuket in Thailand, Australian avocados, and guavas from Latin America.

Most striking was the Bazaar Park, whose design was inspired by the world renowned Grand Bazaar in Istanbul. This 2,500-square-meter indoor market, redolent of Turkish culture and customs, features crafts, gourmet foods, and onsite performances. These include coffee tasseography – Turkish fortune telling from coffee grounds. This fascinating folkway, which is on the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage, draws crowds of visitors at the park. I was more drawn to the distinctly rich milk flavor of the delicious dondurma (Turkish ice cream) which took me back to my childhood.

In addition to its space for these smaller items, Yujiapu also includes a parallel import car trade center. On display in its 4,000-square-meter exhibition hall are luxury car brands such as Benz, BMW, and Porsche, at sale prices 10 to 20 percent lower than on the market.

### Dagukou Fort Site

Dagukou Port is a must-see for history-hungry visitors to Binhai New Area. Portugal and Spain's opening of new sea routes to the Far East at the end of the 15th century heralded the global oceanic era. Two centuries later, Emperor Jiaqing of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), aware of the strategic position of Dagukou Port in guarding the capital city and as a maritime gateway, issued an imperial edict reestablishing a naval base there. Accordingly, in April 1816, batteries were built along both shores of Dagukou Port.

The First Opium War (1840-1842) eventually shattered the feudal Qing Dynasty closed-door regime, so influencing the historical course of modern China. In the 100 years after 1840, China's territory was trampled underfoot by Western powers. Between 1858 and 1860, Dagukou Port was site of three battles, so underlining its strategic position as a maritime gate. In 1900, the Eight-Power Allied Forces attacked Dagukou Port and gradually occupied Tianjin and Beijing. Later, in 1901, the Qing Dynasty signed the humiliating Boxer Protocol. The Dagukou Port batteries were dismantled the same year.