

[illegible]

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I have been told over and over again that this is a common trait of China's Northerners. Though this was my first trip to that region, I have a few friends from Harbin, and when we get together for dinner, they are usually quite generous, fight over the bill and know how to keep the atmosphere light. I've always assumed it's a personality trait, but now it seems to be more than that; it's a common trait of people raised in the Northern region of China.

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I spent about a week in Yanji. I found the people there have this uncontrollable zest to help others. It's not with everybody, but most of the people I met along the way attempted to help me, and it's sizably much more than I would encounter in other cities.

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For example, when I went shopping, I was instantly surrounded by four staff members at a supermarket, asking me whether I need assistance, when I only glanced their way. When I ate at a restaurant and asked to wrap up my leftovers to go, they not only did a perfect job, but also wrapped mint candies to go and included a hand-written note that said, "Thank you and have a nice day."

[illegible]

If you think these are only **examples** in **service** and don't mean anything, I can say strangers I meet on the streets have been just as helpful. **Besides the lady** on the train, when I asked for directions, one woman walked 10 minutes with me to arrive at the destination.

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I was raised to be in the habit of defending myself from others taking advantage of me. I don't think this is something to be shameful about, because I see scams happening all the time around me and I think one needs to be alert.

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Just last week, I ran into an old lady on the street around the corner from my house and she said she was in desperate need of food and asked me for money. When I offered to call the police to help her, she became furious and called me dirty names. I knew instantly she was trying to scam me. So much for my good-heartedness, it was all in vain.

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When such incidents happen, I yearn for what I encountered in the Northeast.

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