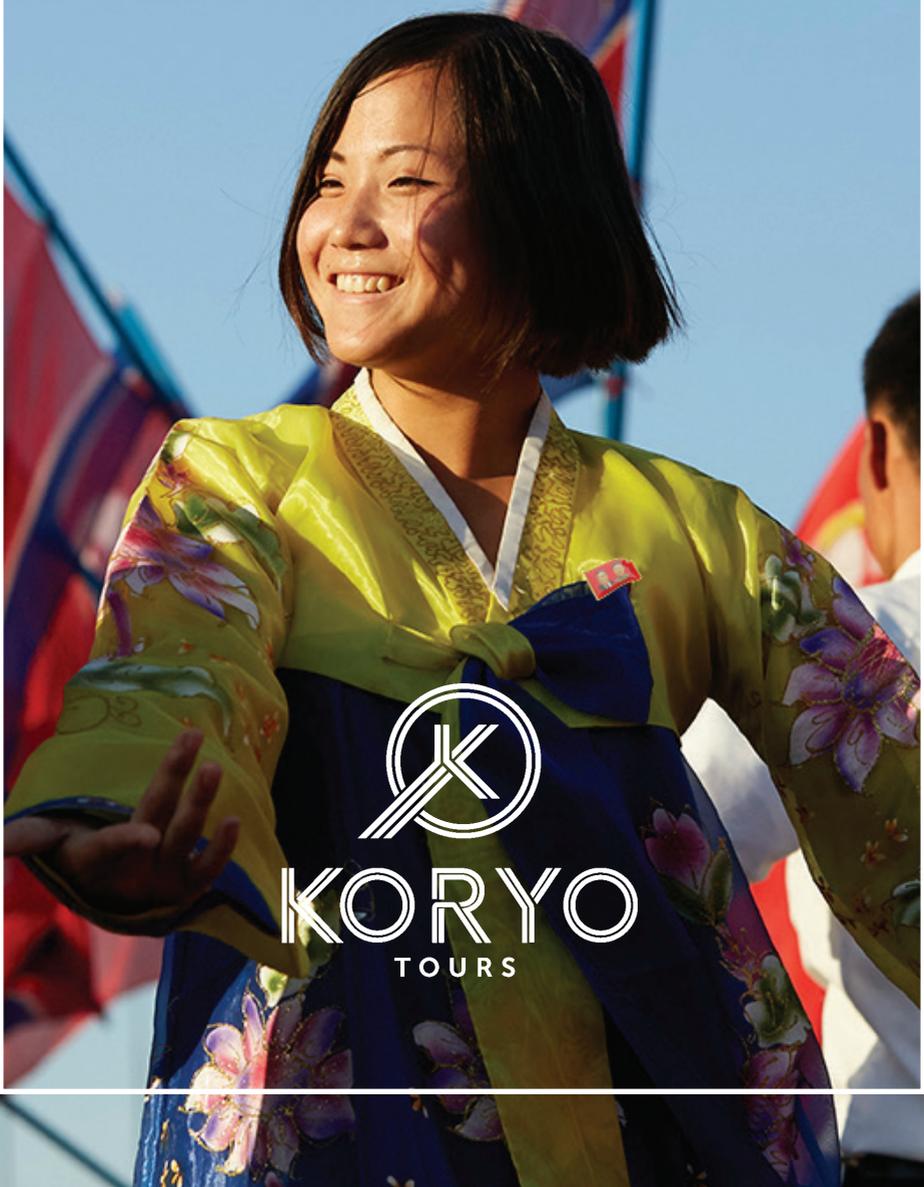


THE KORYO GUIDE TO NORTH KOREA (DPRK)



KORYO
TOURS



Important

Please note this guide is not for use during travel in North Korea. North Korea customs prohibits written materials, printed and electronic, about the DPRK from entry into the country.

INTRODUCTION

Tolerant even towards its clichés, Korea greeted us with morning calm

– Chris Marker in *Coréennes*, 1959

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the DPRK, North Korea, Choson, ‘The Land of the Morning Calm’. Many assume incorrectly, for one reason or another, they are not able to travel to North Korea or that obtaining a visa is extremely difficult. Many who know they can go assume that every tour follows the same tourist course. This guide is a modest attempt to show otherwise.

What follows is a general introduction to the country’s regions, sights, activities, and services available to foreign visitors at the time of publication and based on more than two decades of experience in the country. The guide is by no means exhaustive. New locations, sights and activities become available each year and even those which have been visited for many years often remain only partially explored or understood. An in-depth guide that does this complex and diverse country justice remains to be written.

The immediate purpose of the guide is to assist in planning your private tour to the DPRK. It may also be of interest to travelers on our group tours and those simply curious about this country. It is our suggestion that if you are interested in a private tour to the DPRK that you first have a look through this guide and use it to form a wish list of places you would like to visit.

Our expert staff will then use that to design a bespoke itinerary for you as our suggestion of a trip you may wish to consider. We can tweak, add, remove, as required until we have the perfect itinerary for your perfect trip to North Korea – this specialisation is the service we offer. A trip to North Korea shouldn’t be undertaken without research, familiarisation, and consultation with those who know how to do it safely, securely, and with the best access, value, and experiences it is possible to get on a visit – that’s what Koryo Tours have offered since 1993.

We look forward to bringing with you on this trip and we hope this guide is of use and interest to you in planning with us!

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We hope you enjoy reading our introductory guide to travel in the DPRK.

Koryo Tours,
Beijing, 2018



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THE PRIVATE TOUR

Why go on a private tour?

Our private independent tours are a great way to travel to North Korea if you want to have a more personal experience, fix your own dates, travel at your own pace or explore specific aspects of this fascinating and complex country.

How do I arrange a private tour?

Pre-Trip

Tour Manager

A Koryo Tours tour manager will assist in arranging your DPRK travel. Your tour manager is your main point of contact for planning your tour and answering any questions you might have about the trip.

Pre-Tour Briefing

We require all travelers to the DPRK to have a pre-tour briefing (approximately 1 hour) with one of our staff. The briefing covers guidelines, etiquette, and safety for travel in the DPRK. It is typically held the afternoon the day before departure in order to ensure the best possible travel experience.

Who will accompany me throughout the trip?

Tour Guides

While in-country you will be accompanied by two professional civilian guides from the Korean International Travel Company (KITC). These guides are highly-trained, very friendly, worldly and knowledgeable. They are not sinister figures as some may claim, and travelling with them provides the opportunity for genuine cultural exchange as you all learn from each other. We know them all very well and only work with the best guides in the country. Remote parts of the country (North Hamgyong Province, Sinuiju, Rason) have local guides who take over from the national 'Pyongyang' guides in those areas.

We can arrange guides who can speak a range of languages; such as English, Chinese, Russian, Japanese, French, German, Polish, Hungarian, and more.

Driver

Our partners employ only experienced and safe local drivers who know the roads of the country well. They will get you where you need to go, and are great fun to chat to as well

At the end of the tour it is customary to tip your tour guides and driver.

Site Specific guides

Many locations in the DPRK have a local guide or interpreter. You are not expected to nor should you tip sight specific guides.

Looking for a more social experience? Check our group tours:
www.koryogroup.com/group tours



GOT QUESTIONS? CONTACT US!

info@koryotours.com

+86 10 8416 7644

koryotours.com



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The guide is organised by major geographic regions starting from the capital Pyongyang, point of entry for most tourists, and nearby areas, before moving farther afield.

The introduction to each region provides a brief overview and accessibility from the capital Pyongyang or in some cases the border with China. Must-see highlights are listed first. Other locations, activities, and services are grouped in kind and listed alphabetically by locality within each region.

Each entry has a short description. Must see highlights of each region are represented with ⚡, while other recommended sights and services are represented with ⚡. Some entries are accompanied by important notes in italics or approximate additional costs typically not included in the tour:

€ - 1- 5 EUR

€€ - 5-20 EUR

€€€ - 20-50 EUR

€€€€ - 50-100 EUR

€€€€€ - 100+ EUR

Generally speaking, museums, schools, and workplaces (studios, workshops, exhibitions, and factories) are open on weekdays except for national holidays. Public locations such as squares, parks, and transport are typically open every day. Stores are often closed on Tuesdays and/or the day after a national holiday.

Like anywhere, the availability of services are subject to change based on local conditions and opening times. Please consult us for the most current information.

Our private tours specialists are here to assist in creating the best possible itinerary based on your interests and requests. We regularly travel to the DPRK on a monthly basis with group tours and/or for site inspections.

Important

Please note this guide is not for use during travel in the DPRK. DPRK customs prohibits written materials, printed and electronic, about the DPRK from entry into the country. Other prohibited items include:

- Religious materials
- Media of all kinds about Korea or in the Korean language
- Illicit drugs
- Pornography



THE SEVEN REGIONS

Today's DPRK is divided into nine provinces. While it is possible to visit all nine, for practical purposes we divide the country's key tourism areas into seven regions. Each region has its own special sights, points of interest, and unique character.

Pyongyang

Ancient and modern capital of Korea. Korean tradition meets high socialist modernism tempered by a fiercely independent spirit (p. 12).

Kaesong and the DMZ

Historic capital of Korea in one of the most heavily militarized areas of the world (p. 27).

The Northwest

The historic road to China through deep valleys and mysterious mountains (p. 34)

The Southwest

The Taedong River Valley; cradle of Korean civilization, and industrial-agricultural heartland. A microcosm of the whole country (p. 44).

The East Coast

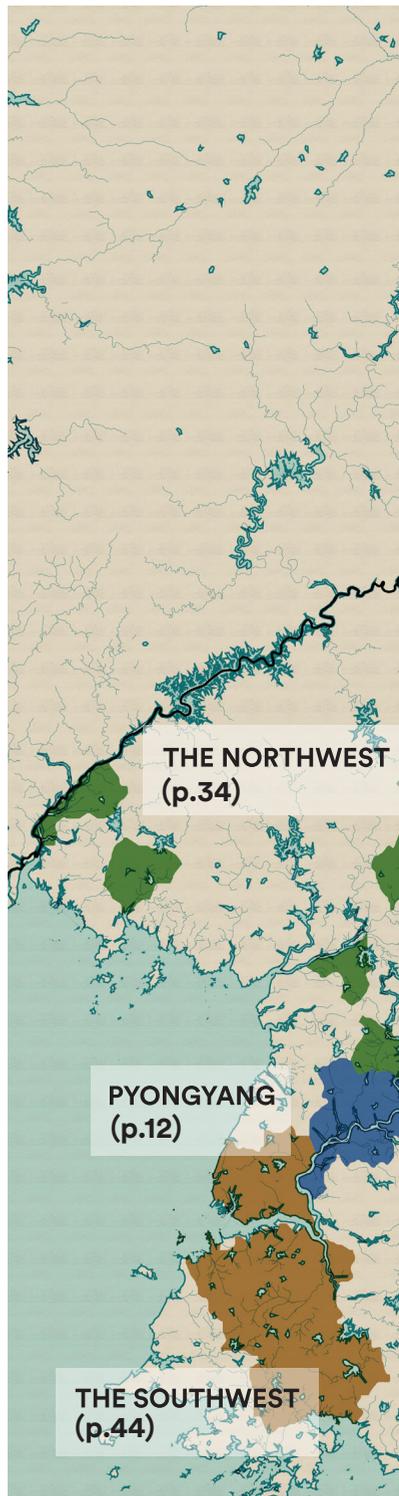
Port cities, beautiful coastline, and scenic mountains (p. 50).

Mt. Paekdu

Sacred volcano tied to the origins of the Korean people and the 20th century anti-Japanese struggle. Accessible in August and September by special charter flight from Pyongyang (p. 60).

The Northeast and Rason

The least visited area of the DPRK open to tourists. Pristine landscapes, vast industrial cities, and Korea's largest experiment with a free market economy. Accessible overland from China, or charter flight or train from Pyongyang (p. 64).



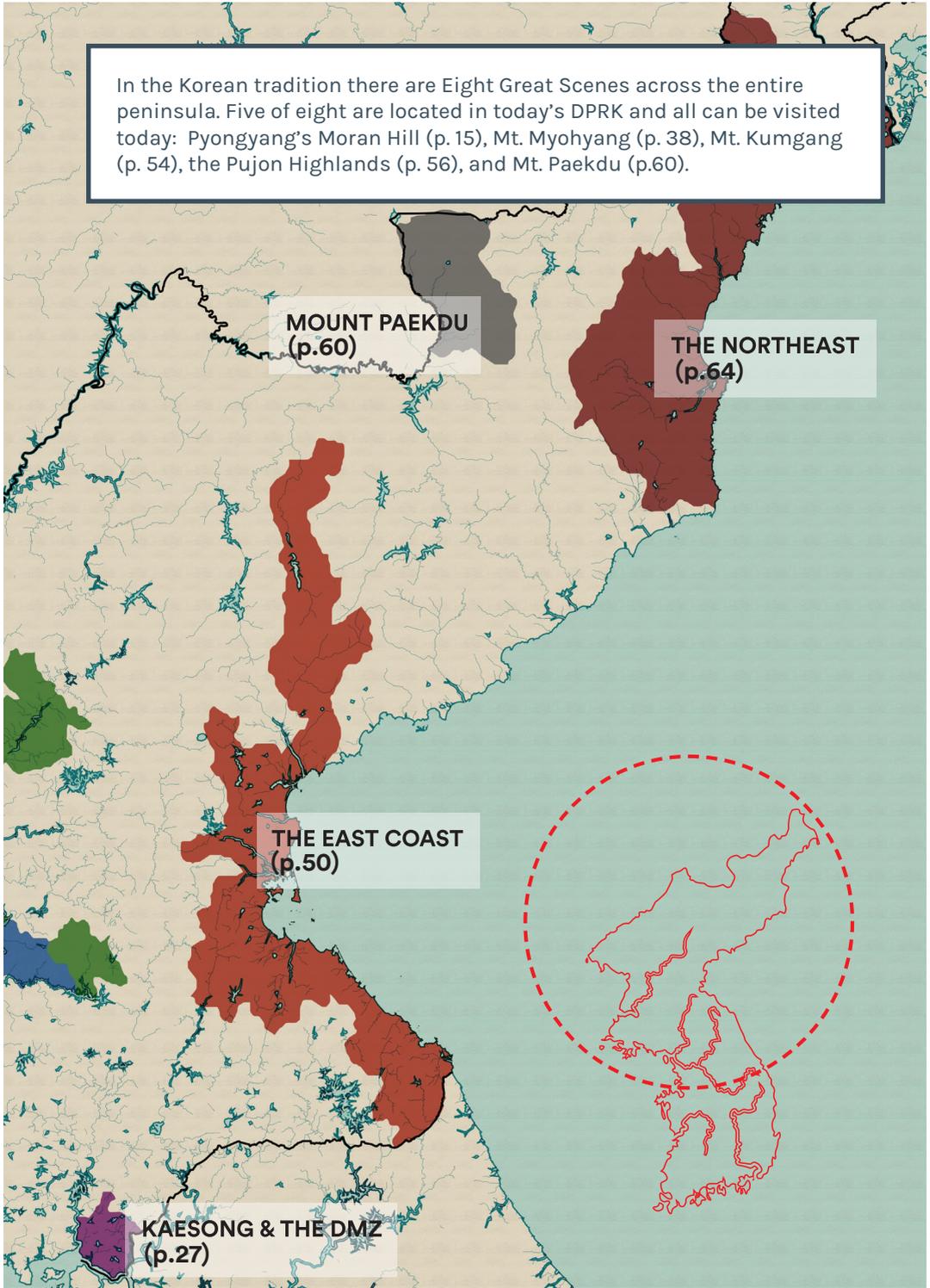
In the Korean tradition there are Eight Great Scenes across the entire peninsula. Five of eight are located in today's DPRK and all can be visited today: Pyongyang's Moran Hill (p. 15), Mt. Myohyang (p. 38), Mt. Kumgang (p. 54), the Pujon Highlands (p. 56), and Mt. Paekdu (p.60).

MOUNT PAEKDU
(p.60)

THE NORTHEAST
(p.64)

THE EAST COAST
(p.50)

KAESONG & THE DMZ
(p.27)





PYONGYANG

Pyongyang is the ‘Capital of the Revolution’ and the largest city of the DPRK. Located in the heart of the Taedong River Valley, the city’s name literally means ‘flat’ or ‘peaceful’ land.

Pyongyang has a history stretching back thousands of years to the early foundations of Korean civilization and ‘Old Choson’, the first Korean state. Ever industrious and fiercely independent, the city has had a distinct role in shaping Korean history.

American bombing largely destroyed the city during the Korean War and the new centrally planned city rose from the ashes. Touring the city’s highlights takes 2-3 days.

Beyond the grand architecture and monuments, there are many museums and history sights, traffic ladies, cold noodles, and lotus ponds. Pyongyang has something for everyone.

TRANSPORTATION: Pyongyang is accessible year round by flight from Beijing (three to five days a week), Shenyang (two days a week), Vladivostok (two days a week), and Shanghai (two days a week; high-season only). There is an international sleeper train four days a week (Sat, Mon, Weds, Thurs) to Beijing and local train to the Chinese border each day.

The city lies at the centre of the DPRK’s highway network connecting to most other regions. Travel between other regions often requires passing through Pyongyang.

At the time of writing it is only possible to reach Mt. Paekdu and Chongjin/Mt. Chilbo region via special charter flights in summer. There is an infrequent train from Pyongyang to Rason, from which it is possible to travel onwards to Vladivostok overland.



MUST SEE HIGHLIGHTS OF PYONGYANG



Mansudae Grand Monument

Enormous bronze statues of the DPRK leadership overlooking downtown Pyongyang. A presentation of flowers and bow by the group is customary (€). No shorts or flip-flop sandals allowed here.



Pyongyang Metro Tour

One of the deepest metro systems in the world with stunning artwork reflecting the name of each station. Ride six stations on the Chollima Line. The old train carriages were once used in West Berlin and share the line with newly made domestic cars.



Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum & USS Pueblo

This world-class museum exhibits the history of the Korean War from the DPRK perspective. The exterior grounds house captured equipment from the US military, including the spyship USS Pueblo. Central to the understanding of the country today.



Kumsusan Palace of the Sun

Large-scale mausoleum where the DPRK leadership lie in state. Formal attire is required here. Please note that this is a state administered site and visits are subject to local conditions. Cancellations are rare but possible. Open Sunday and Thursday mornings only. Typically closed early May - early July each year.



May Day Stadium

Tour the grounds and facilities of one of the world's largest stadiums. With a capacity of 150,000 and renovated in September 2014, it is used for all of the DPRK's major sporting events and in 2018 hosted the return of the Mass Games.



Kwangbok Department Store

Shop with the citizens of Pyongyang and exchange for Korean currency! Try the snack stands for some of Pyongyang's best local eats, and stock up on traditional delicacies to take home with you. Closed Tuesdays and the day after holidays.



Tower of Juche Idea

Iconic tower on the Taedong River dedicated to the DPRK's guiding philosophy. Take the elevator to the top for great views of the city. Lift ticket paid on the spot (€).



Okryu Restaurant

Pyongyang's most famous restaurant. Housed in a huge traditional building on the banks of the Taedong River. Okryu Restaurant specialises in Pyongyang Cold Noodles, and the ice cream is also becoming famous (€).



Mangyongdae Schoolchildren's Palace

Tour of one of Pyongyang's centres of extracurricular excellence with study rooms for fine arts, dance, sports, and music, then watch a spectacular performance put on by the students. Open Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.



Changgwangwon Health Complex

Huge health and leisure facility with Olympic-sized pool, barber shops, beauty salons, massage, and saunas. Leave feeling ten years younger, locals say! Tickets for activities (€) purchased on the spot. One of our favorites! Open Saturday mornings to foreigners or by special arrangement.



Party Foundation Monument

Iconic monument made up of stone depictions of hands gripping the hammer, sickle, and writing brush – symbols of the Workers' Party of Korea. Built in 1995 for the 40th anniversary of the Party.



Kim Il Sung Square

Pyongyang's central square lined with government ministries, museums and The Grand People's Study House, Korea's national library. The central point of the country from which road distances are measured and mass demonstrations held.

OTHER MAJOR PYONGYANG ATTRACTIONS



Arch of Triumph

A 60-metre archway commemorating the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule and larger than its counterpart in Paris. Viewing platform has a fee (€).



Moranbong Park

Stroll in Pyongyang's central park popular with locals for picnics, dances, and sports. The park is filled with historic pavilions, walls, and monuments modern and ancient. Visit here on holidays and weekends.



Three-Charter of National Reunification Monument

Iconic arch over the Pyongyang-Kaesong Highway dedicated to joint meeting between Koreans, north and south. Also known as the 'Arch of Reunification'.



Kimilsungia & Kimjongillia Flower Exhibition

Exhibit of flowers named after the DPRK's leaders and since 1999 held on the occasion of their respective birthday anniversaries near February 16 and April 15. See groups from across society compete to put on the best floral display.



Grand People's Study House

National library and public correspondence university with neo-traditional Korean architecture and great views of the city.



Mansudae Art Studio

Centre of artistic excellence, where the majority of sculptures, mosaics, and paintings around the country are made. Visit workshops to see artists at work and an exhibition where pieces are sold.



Mangyongdae Native House

Birthplace of and childhood home of President Kim Il Sung. A traditional Korean house in a park-like setting.



Mansudae Fountain Park

Centrally-located pleasant park popular with local citizens afterschool and on weekends. Flanked by examples of representative architecture from different eras.



Mt. Taesong

Funfair and gardens near the former site of an ancient Koguryo-era palace. Each year on May Day, there is a festival featuring music performances and folk games. A great time to have fun with the locals on their day off.



Science and Technology Complex

Newly built atom-shaped educational facility, library, computer lab, and exhibition of the latest developments in science and technology for students of all ages, educators, and researchers alike.



National Embroidery Institute

Workshop and exhibition of Korean needlework. Offers one of the best views of the 105-storey pyramidal Ryugyong Hotel.



Pyongyang Central Zoo

Newly renovated zoological gardens at the foot of Mt. Taesong featuring animals from Korea and abroad (many donated from friendly African leaders), as well as displays about natural scientists, dinosaurs, etc. Very popular with local families on Sundays. Zoo and individual halls have entry fees (€).

OTHER SIGHTS

Changgwang Kindergarten

Located behind the Russian Embassy and opened in 1982, this comprehensive two-year kindergarten is locally noted for producing excellent child musicians.

Children's Traffic Park

Where young people from 6-17 can come to learn the rules of the road. Has a miniature street layout that smaller kids can drive on, plus simulators and lecture rooms. Quirky/kitschy.

Jangchon Vegetable Farm

A taste of modern rural life just outside Pyongyang city. Visit the farm's cultural centre, kindergarten, home, and research laboratory. Good bye, city life!

Potong River Improvement Monument

Marking the completion of a channeling project to prevent flooding and secure arable land in this part of Pyongyang. This monument was erected in 1971. It is next to the DPRK futuristic satellite control centre. *No photos of the space centre!*

Pyongyang Botanical Gardens

A botanical gardens and a popular getaway for locals on weekends. Some trees donated by notable world personages.

Pyongyang Catfish Factory

A full-scale facility where you can learn about the fascinating science of catfish production. Also, great views of the South Pyongyang Thermal Station, a grand display of industrial power.

Railway Museum

Museum dedicated to the development of the DPRK's railways with a number of antique engines and cars on display. Built on the location of Pyongyang's former baseball ballpark. Take me out to the Railway Museum!

ART & ARCHITECTURE

Korean Central Art Museum

National gallery of Korean art from ancient times on through the socialist realist works of today. The local guides an excellent introduction to Korean culture and history through art.

Paekdu Architectural Academy

Major studio responsible for designing many of Pyongyang's iconic buildings. Meet architects, see urban plans and building blueprints here.

SPORT

Pyongyang International Football Academy

Premier football school for young and promising athletes. Tour the facilities and learn about the history of football in the DPRK. Has multiple training pitches where you can test yourself against some students here.

ANCIENT HISTORY

Mausoleum of King Tangun

The Mausoleum of King Tangun, the founder King of Old Choson, the first Korean Kingdom. A modern pyramid (claimed as a replica of how it originally was) sits atop the tomb, on the side of Mt. Taebak, around 45 min drive from Pyongyang. As Tangun is seen by Koreans as the originator king of Korean society his grave being here is seen as lending legitimacy to the North as well as to Pyongyang as rightful capital. *Tangun's bones themselves can be viewed for an extra fee (€ € € €) - there is a replica in the history museum.*

Tomb of King Tongmyong

Largest of the UNESCO listed Koguryo Tombs spread through the area, this is the beautiful tomb complex of the founder of the Koguryo Dynasty two thousand years ago. Burial mounds, a Buddhist Monastery, and scenic woodlands make this a fascinating visit. *Please note: tomb murals are not preserved.*

Korean Central History Museum

National museum of Korean history from prehistoric times onwards. Home of rare artifacts and reproductions.

REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

Chilgol Revolutionary Site

The native home of Kang Pan Sok, mother of President Kim Il Sung. A Statue of 'the Mother of Korea' sits outside by the lotus ponds. You can also visit the school where her husband and father-in-law once taught.

Chollima Statue

Winged-horse statue commemorating the quick rebuilding of the country in the 1960's following the Korean War.

Friendship Tower

Hilltop tower dedicated to the Chinese People's Volunteers who fought in the Korean War.

Jonsung Revolutionary Site

A system of underground tunnels and bunkers used by the DPRK government's cabinet during the 1950's exhibiting life underground during the Korean War.

Liberation Monument

Hilltop spire dedicated to the USSR's contribution in the liberation of Korea in 1945. Located inside Moranbong Park.

Monument to the Decision Made at the Fork in the Road

For all true monuments completists! If you really want to know what choice Kim Il Sung made when he stopped here then visit to find out!

Revolutionary Martyrs' Cemetery

Hilltop cemetery with dozens of bronze busts of those who took part in the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule. At the top of the hill are the graves of Kim Jong Suk (wife of Kim Il Sung) and Kim Chaek (Kim Il Sung's right-hand man). *A presentation of flowers is customary here (€).*

Ri In Mo Monument

Bronze statue of Ri In Mo, a long-term unconverted prisoner who spent decades in captivity in the south after being captured during the Korean War. Located on modernist Tongil Street. Ri In Mo is known in the DPRK as 'the incarnation of faith and will'.

Three Revolutions Exhibition

Exhibitions halls showing the nation's achievements of the Technological, Cultural, and Ideological revolutions. Somewhat akin to an expo centre - large exhibition halls also used for the biannual Pyongyang International Trade Fair.

Underground Revolution Museum

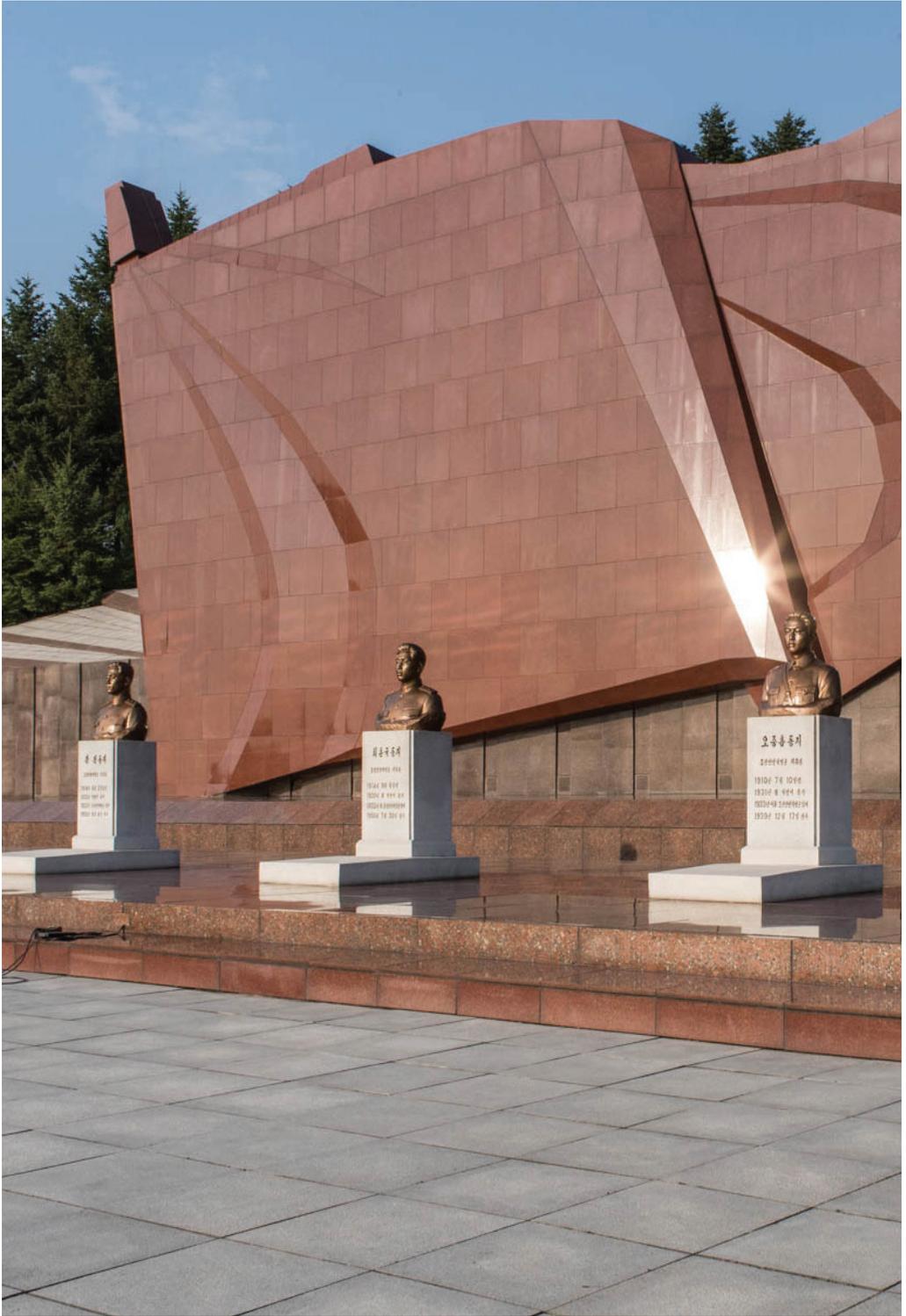
Tour of this enormous museum describing the construction of the Pyongyang Metro. Also contains rooms about the construction of the museum itself.

United Front Monument

Located near the new Sci-Tech complex, this monument tells visitors about the short-lived 1940s movement that included Communist organisations in South Korea as well as their ideological partners in the North.

War Heroes' Cemetery

Cemetery dedicated to heroes of the Korean War. Opened in 2013 and centred around a monument of a rifle and red flag. *A presentation of flowers is customary here (€).*



PYONGYANG ACTIVITIES & STORES



City Cycling

Several urban routes are possible and permitted for tourists. Koryo Tours keeps some bikes in Pyongyang for anyone wishing to use them. Try Kwangbok Street or a ride along the Taedong River (€€).



Film Screening at the Yanggakdo International Cinema

An exclusive showing of a Korean film at one of Pyongyang's major cinemas. Ask for *Comrade Kim Goes Flying*, North Korea's first girl-power rom-com, co-directed by Koryo founder Nicholas Bonner. Subtitles in English (€€).



Future Scientists Street

Walk in the newly built residential district for scientists and academics to view its unique modern architecture.



◊ Helicopter Ride

Take to the skies in an Air Koryo Mil MI-17 Chopper for a 40 minute tour of Pyongyang from the sky. Incredible views and photo-opportunities over the city, includes an excellent lunch at the airport restaurant. Best arranged with a concurrent group tour (€€€€€) - enquire for details. Weather dependent.



Kaeson Funfair

Take on the rides of Pyongyang's small but excellently located central funfair with the locals: pirate ship, 'vominator', rollercoaster, bumper cars, arcades, and more. Entry and ride tickets purchased on the spot (€-€€). Open April-October.



Munsu Water Park

Take a break at this outdoor and indoor water park with water slides, lap pools, and hot tubs. There are 20 different slides and saunas. Bar, coffee shop, and shops for non-swimmers (Entry fee (€); swimming fee with suit rental (€€); tennis (€)).



Mirim Flight Centre

Featuring a fleet of Microlight aircraft. Visitors under 90kg can take flights over Pyongyang with a skilled local pilot. Amazing views of the centre of the city from low-altitude (€€€€€). Open April - October.



Pyongyang Circus

A one hour circus show including clowns, trapeze artists, jugglers, and much more. North Korea circus performers have won awards around the world. Enquire about availability in-country (€€€).



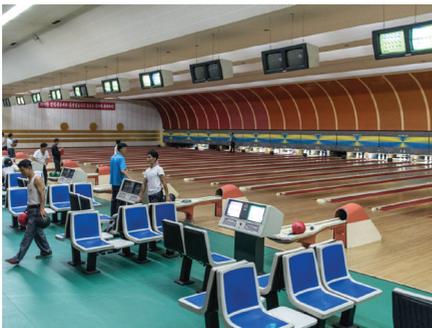
Pyongyang Metro Two-Line Tour

One of the deepest metro systems in the world with stunning artwork reflecting the name of each station. Ride both lines and stop off at smaller stations, rarely visited by tourists (€€€).



Mt. Ryonggak Picnic and/or Hike

A popular local picnic spot in a scenic valley with an interesting and huge concrete dragon winding through the area. A 45-minute walk to the top for a view of Pyongyang City.



Golden Lane Bowling Centre

Where Pyongyang locals go for their ten-pin fix, billiards and 90's arcade games (€). Excellent for people-watching on weekends and holidays.



Meari Shooting Range

Shoot at targets with low caliber sports pistols and rifles in the facility that trained Olympic medalists. Pay by the bullet (€). Also features archery range, screen-shooting, pheasant shooting (!), and a tennis court. Located in the Pyongyang Sports Village.

SHOPS

Foreign Languages Bookshop

Buy Korean publications translated into English, German, French, Russian, Chinese, and Spanish. Also pick up DVDs, postcards, and small works of art.

Rakwon (Paradise) Department Store

Department store selling domestic and foreign made goods. A good place to pick up fruit, vegetables, and baked goods. Accepts foreign currency.

Stamp Exhibition

Displays of stamps issued since the start of the DPRK featuring all manner of decorations. Some expected, some very unexpected! Part shop, part exhibition. Good for souvenirs, mementoes.

Taesong Department Store

Local department store in East Pyongyang with domestic and foreign made products. Small bakery inside. Accepts foreign currency.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Revolutionary Opera

Enjoy a performance of one of Korea's revolutionary operas, a socialist art-form largely lost to the rest of the world. The opera schedule is difficult to obtain in advance, so enquire a few weeks before your trip about availability (€).

Rakwon (Paradise) Microbrewery

The bar next door sells beer and makkolli (traditional rice wine) brewed on site (€).

Tram Ride

A ride through Pyongyang from Kwangbok Street to Pyongyang Station on one of city's municipal trams made in former Czechoslovakia. You can charter your own (€€€€) or join a concurrent group tour.

Trolleybus Ride

A ride through Pyongyang on one of the city's famous trolleybuses. You can charter your own (€€€€) or join a concurrent group tour.

CHURCHES

Bongsu Church

Largest Protestant church in DPRK. Well-equipped with projectors and English Bibles (donated from abroad). Open on Sundays for services and welcomes visitors at that time too. Incredible choir (as you'd expect in a country of great singers!).

Changchung Cathedral

Pyongyang's only Roman Catholic place of worship. Open on Sundays for services. Lacks a full-time priest so services are conducted by a layman and thus no confessions, baptisms, catechisms, etc. can be performed on a regular basis.

Chilgol Church

Smaller, but older, of the two Protestant churches in Pyongyang. Located next to the native home of Mrs. Kang Pan Sok; churchgoer and mother of Kim Il Sung. A charming building with few congregants but an excellent choir. Open for services on Sunday mornings only.

LEISURE & SPORT

Diplomatic Club

Leisure complex with restaurant, swimming pool, bar, karaoke, billiards, and banquet hall for foreigners residing and visiting Pyongyang. Open late!

Kumrung Leisure Centre

Airgun shooting range (€€) and some of the best coffee in Pyongyang. Upstairs is a dance studio and squash courts as well as a restaurant.

Mirim Riding Centre

Built in 2013, the DPRK's first civilian horse riding centre (€€) is located in the eastern suburbs of Pyongyang. A large facility with indoor and outdoor tracks. Visitors can ride horses and ponies. All skill levels can be accommodated. Safety equipment is provided and ½ hour of riding included. Many *Orlov* horses here were gifts from Vladimir Putin.

Pyongyang Ice Rink

On Chollima Street – open to foreigners on Saturdays for leisure skating (€). Ice Hockey Matches are also played here as well as an annual figure skating festival in February.

Ryugyong Ice Rink

Enjoy ice skating, one of Pyongyang's winter pastimes, with the locals. Entry fee and rentals available on site (€ - €€). A gym and other leisure facilities are housed in this building.

Pyongyang Skate Park

Next to the Ryugyong Health Complex is the larger of Pyongyang's several skate parks. Popular with kids on Sundays mostly, rent or bring your own rollerblades (€), skateboards can also be used here (bring it yourself).

Rungnado Funfair & Leisure Facilities

The newest of Pyongyang's funfairs, this has all-Italian rides spread over a large area. Also here is a mini-golf course, a hedge maze, and the famous Dolphinarium (with a frequent performance), as well as a waterpark (€ - €€). Open April-October.

Ryugyong Ice Rink

Enjoy ice skating, one of Pyongyang's winter pastimes, with the locals. Rentals available on site. Also a gym and other leisure facilities are housed in this building.

Kayaking on the Taedong River

Koryo Tours keeps 3 kayaks in Pyongyang for the use of our guests – maximum 2 people, one must be used by a guide. With advance notice there are a number of options for trips in these vessels:

- *Half-Day:* Start at Yanggakdo Hotel and see the city centre from the centre of the river. Up as far as the Juche Tower, down as far as the Sci-Tech centre.

- *One-Day:* Travel from the Juche Tower in the centre of Pyongyang down to scenic Mangyongdae, south of the city. Passing residential areas, small docks and ports, and ships of various sizes.

- *Two-Day:* A longer trip down the wider Taedong River, from Chollima District on the outskirts of Nampo City. See larger ships, docks & ports, villages and local fishermen along the way. End in Pyongyang City Centre.

THE EIGHT GREAT SCENES OF PYONGYANG

Like Korea, Pyongyang traditionally has its own Eight Great Scenes from days of yore. Each is actually a combination of a location in the city tied to a particular activity that should be done there. In no particular order, these are: (1) Climbing to the Ulmil Pavilion in spring, (2) Gazing at the autumn moon from Pubyok Pavilion, (3) Boating on the Taedong River, (4) Seeking out the monks of Yongmyong Temple, (5) Seeing guests off at Potong Gate, (6) Listening to the rain fall on the lotus pond, (7) Viewing the evening scene at Mt. Taesong, and (8) the spring thaw at Matan Ford. Today the monks of Yongmyong and the fords of Mahan no longer exist, but the rest of the Great Scenes remain.



PYONGYANG ACCOMMODATION

Contrary to what you may hear, there are numerous hotels to stay in Pyongyang, each with its own unique character, style, and experience. There are three types of hotel: budget, standard, and deluxe.

BUDGET HOTELS

Budget hotels have limited hours of hot water (typically one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening) and limited service/entertainment options. Many of these hotels are in the process of upgrading their facilities. This can often come as a pleasant surprise!

Changgwangsan Hotel

A centrally located classic hotel built in the 1970's and within walking distance of some attractions. It has a large indoor swimming pool, great bookstore and coffee shops.

Chongnyon (Youth) Hotel

A very green retro-futurist giant located on modernist Kwangbok Street. Outdoor and indoor swimming pools and home to the best foreign karaoke in Pyongyang.

Haebangsan Hotel

An old classic hotel located in downtown Pyongyang. Popular with Pyongyang's long-term foreign residents. Excellent restaurant.

Pyongyang Hotel

Pyongyang's oldest hotel in operation and centrally located. Popular with overseas Koreans and Japanese. Excellent restaurants and cafes. Limited availability.

Ryanggang Hotel

Located in a wooded setting with great views overlooking the confluence of the Taedong and Potong rivers with a retro vibe. Has a partially revolving restaurant.

Sosan Hotel

A recently renovated sports-themed hotel located in West Pyongyang's Sports Village. Friendly staff and small on-site gym. Comfy rooms, decent hot water supply. Also has a golf driving range on-site.

Rakrang Hotek

A newly opened hotel on the south bank of the Taedong River. Small and comfortable with a waterfront restaurant and nautical-themed bar.

DELUXE HOTELS

Deluxe Hotels cater to high-end tourists, delegations, and dignitaries. These offer the best service, comfortable rooms, and quiet settings. Deluxe rooms are also available in the Yanggakdo and Koryo Hotels.

Changgwang Guest House

A small and comfortable hotel located downtown. Nice rooms but limited on-site facilities. The Koryo Hotel is nearby if you need somewhere a bit more lively to visit.

Kobangsan Hotel

High-end hotel located outside of Pyongyang to the north. This hotel is traditionally used to house diplomats, state visitors and American NGOs.

Moranbong Hotel

Pyongyang's finest and most secluded hotel located next to Moranbong Park. On-site deluxe restaurants and spa facilities. Limited availability and only a handful of rooms. Excellent spa.

Potonggang Hotel

Recently renovated deluxe hotel on the Potong River and hang out for Pyongyang's most fashionable. Large corridors and comfortable rooms. Usually somewhat empty though.

STANDARD HOTELS

Standard hotels have comprehensive facilities and 24-hour hot water. Most travelers to Pyongyang choose one of these options as they offer the best mix of affordability and comfort. International television and phone calls available.

Koryo Hotel

The go-to for special delegations, foreign and domestic, visiting the capital. A comfortable spot located in the heart of downtown.

Yanggakdo Hotel

Home away from home for the majority of tour groups visiting Pyongyang. Great views of the city and the creature comforts of home on an island in the middle of the Taedong River. Cafes, micro-brewery, billiards, bowling, revolving restaurant, etc.







PYONGYANG DINING

While meals are typically included on a tour, Pyongyang has a wide-range of specialty dining options, coffee shops, and bars for those willing to pay on the spot. Prices are reasonable compared to dining around the world.

◇ Arirang Restaurant

Part of the Pyongyang Hotel. Somewhat dingy inside but justly renowned for the quality of its barbeque.

Chongryugwan

Boat shaped restaurant next to a large lotus pond. Specialty dishes here include Sinsollo; Royal Hot Pot - a mixture of ingredients cooked in a brazier-type bowl.

◇ Duck Barbeque Restaurant

South Pyongyang's famous fire-grilled duck restaurant.

◇ Kwangbok Department Store Food Stands / Food Court

On the top floor of a large shopping centre - mix with local shoppers/diners while lining up and eating with them.

◇ Kumrung Leisure Complex Café

Snow White Coffee Shop - hidden away on Mirae Street, a large Starbucks-style place. Great coffee, very good food too, a hidden gem! The best coffee in Pyongyang!

◇ Mansugyo Beer Bar

A new bar serving seven types of beer. Popular with locals after work and on weekends. Best place to drink pints with local people.

Moran Beer Bar

A recently renovated local bar with cheap brews (0.50-1 € beers). Also serves food.

Pizza Restaurant

Dinner at one of Pyongyang's Italian eateries (there are three). Pizzas range between 5-12 € each.

Pyongyang Ramen House

Japanese noodle and sushi restaurant run by Kenji Fujimoto. Ramen dishes are affordable (€), while sushi will put you back quite a lot (€€€).

Potonggang Restaurant Lamb BBQ

One of the best lamb barbeque places around. Good atmosphere and location as well as food.

Pyolmuri Café

The first foreign-invested café in the city. Serves excellent pies. Located very conveniently for any Koryo Hotel guests.

◇ Pyongyang Hotel Café

Some of the best coffee in Pyongyang (3-5 €) and decent views of downtown and the Taedong River.

Pyongyang Sweet Meat Restaurant

For anyone looking to try this Korean specialty (hint: 'sweet' is a euphemism), this is the best place in Pyongyang. (€€).

Rakwon (Paradise) Department Store and Microbrewer

Bar selling beer and makkolli (traditional rice wine) brewed on site (1 € a pint).

Ryugyonggan (formally Haedanghwa)

A high class restaurant located in East Pyongyang with branches overseas. Some of the best dining in Pyongyang (€€€).

Taedonggang Bar No. 3

Upscale bar across the street from the Tower of the Juche Idea. There are a variety of beers on tap produced at Pyongyang's Taedonggang Brewery outside of town (2-2.5 € per glass).

Sunrise Café

One of the most expensive cafes in Pyongyang, located near the city centre.

Paulaner Restaurant

A purposefully unassuming foreign-brand restaurant in downtown Pyongyang, serving German cuisine and beer.

PYONGYANG'S FOUR FAMOUS FOODS

Pyongyang is known for its 'Four Famous Foods': (1) Pyongyang cold noodles (*raengmyon*), buckwheat noodles in chilled broth so famous that there is a catchy jingle written about them, (2) green bean pancakes, (3) Taedong River mullet fish soup, and (4) *onban*, a chicken and rice dish in soup topped with a green bean pancake. Most visitors to the capital get to try at least two.

KAESONG & THE DMZ

*Is this snow covered scene the image of old Koryo?
The cold ring of the bell seems to call out the ancient country
Alone, I stand leaning atop the south gate
As old smoke rises from the fallen walls.*

- From the poem 'Songdo' by the 16th century poetess Hwang Jin I

*Another wonder ginseng (insam in Korean)... It's the most precious vegetable in the world.
...It was the Chinese aphrodisiac: rich Mandarins outfitted caravans to seek the root of
deathlessness. They died of it. Raised to the rank of divinities by their exploits, they were
called back by the jealous (or curious) gods.*

- Chris Marker in Coreennes

The old capital of the medieval Koryo Dynasty, Kaesong is known for its numerous historic relics and medicinal *insam* (ginseng). Once a great mercantile centre on the land and sea Silk Roads, 'Kaesong' literally means 'open walls'.

Included in South Korea after 1945, the city changed hands during the Korean War. Kaesong was spared aerial bombardment, preserving much of the city's old quarter. Kaesong is now located just north of the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), the 4-km wide buffer zone dividing the two Koreas.

Most visitors travel to Kaesong on a daytrip from Pyongyang or spend one night in the city to see the DMZ and Panmunjom Truce Village. The city has a lot to offer off the normal tourist track. Those interested in Korean history, ancient and modern, may want to spend 3 days/ 2 nights in Kaesong.

TRANSPORTATION: Kaesong is located approximately 160 km south of Pyongyang on the 'Reunification Highway'. The drive takes 2.5-3 hours and passes through the city of Sariwon.





MUST SEE HIGHLIGHT OF KAESONG



◇ Panmunjom and DMZ

Perhaps the most famous place in the entire country. The iconic manifestation of the tragic division between North and South Korea. The 'truce' village where several huts straddle the Central Military Demarcation Line (de facto border) with soldiers from each side standing guard. A tour here starts with a briefing at the edge of the DMZ, a visit to the Armistice Negotiation Hall and Armistice Signing Hall, seen as symbols of victory over foreign aggression on this side of the line. Then to Panmunjom itself – cross the border inside one of the blue huts, experience the uncanny feeling of crossing the front line of a sad and needless division of one people, and then take a higher view from the Panmun Pavilion looking over the line from above. A Korean People's Army officer will be there to explain their side of things and will willingly pose for some photos too. A completely and utterly unmissable place. *Entrance into one of the blue huts isn't guaranteed - it depends on the southern side's schedule.*

OTHER KAESONG ATTRACTIONS



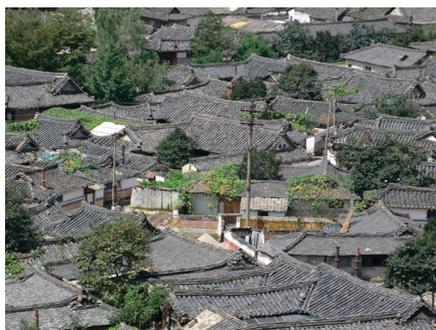
◇ Concrete Wall and view of DMZ

View of a complex fortification system erected on the southern boundary of the DMZ accompanied by a military guide. The wall is seen as evidence of intent to permanently divide the nation. 45 minute drive each way from Kaesong through the countryside.



◇ Kaesong Koryo Museum (Songgyungwan Academy)

A former Confucian school and now a museum on the Koryo Dynasty exhibiting historical objects, statues, pagodas, and porcelain from the time. One of Kaesong's many UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The buildings are in Koryo Dynasty style but date back to the early 17th century following their destruction in the Imjin War.



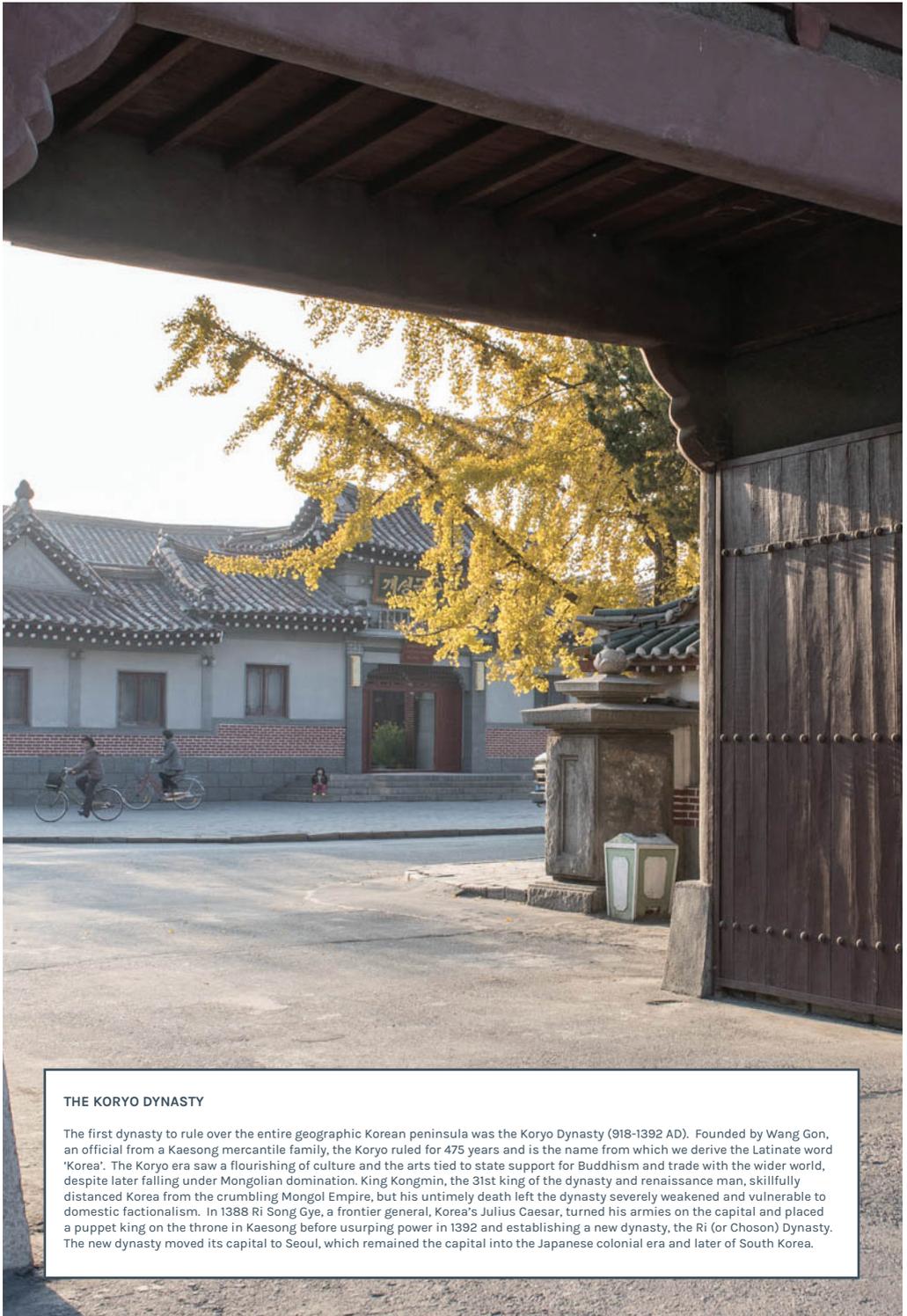
◇ Janam Hill

Statues of the DPRK leadership on a hill overlooking Kaesong city and historic pavilion used for archery demonstrations in days of yore.



◇ Tomb of King Kongmin

Tomb of the 31st king of the Koryo Dynasty, a talented statesman and prolific painter, and his Mongolian wife. Set the end of a picturesque valley. A UNESCO World Heritage Site.



THE KORYO DYNASTY

The first dynasty to rule over the entire geographic Korean peninsula was the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392 AD). Founded by Wang Gon, an official from a Kaesong mercantile family, the Koryo ruled for 475 years and is the name from which we derive the Latin word 'Korea'. The Koryo era saw a flourishing of culture and the arts tied to state support for Buddhism and trade with the wider world, despite later falling under Mongolian domination. King Kongmin, the 31st king of the dynasty and renaissance man, skillfully distanced Korea from the crumbling Mongol Empire, but his untimely death left the dynasty severely weakened and vulnerable to domestic factionalism. In 1388 Ri Song Gye, a frontier general, Korea's Julius Caesar, turned his armies on the capital and placed a puppet king on the throne in Kaesong before usurping power in 1392 and establishing a new dynasty, the Ri (or Choson) Dynasty. The new dynasty moved its capital to Seoul, which remained the capital into the Japanese colonial era and later of South Korea.



OTHER KAESONG ATTRACTIONS, ACCOMMODATION & DINING



Kaesong Ginseng Factory

See how this famous panacea and aphrodisiac is harvested and processed into various forms (tea, candy, powder, etc). Also learn the history of the root – it was first cultivated in Kaesong, the 'home of ginseng'.

◇ Kayagum Performance

Traditional Korean stringed instrument performance at the Minsok Folk Hotel. Tip recommended (1-3 EUR per person on group tours; 15-20 EUR in total for private tours) for this beautiful demonstration of Korean music. One of the most beautiful sounds you will ever hear.

Gwanum Temple

Located a 30 minute hike (or 5 minute drive), above Pakyon Waterfalls, the temple dates back more than a thousand years and is dedicated to the Buddhist Bodhisattva of Mercy. There is an ornate marble Bodhisattva statue the nearby cave. The current building dates back to the Ri Dynasty and has an interesting tale associated with its construction. Nearby are some natural water slides.

Kaesong Schoolchildren's Palace

The earliest schoolchildren's palace in the DPRK and centre of extracurricular excellence where the youth of Kaesong come to hone their skills in music, dance, sports, mechanics, taxidermy, and more!

Manwoldae

Ruins of the Koryo Dynasty 'Palace of the Full Moon' destroyed by a marauding army of Chinese peasants in 1361. There are numerous folk tales and legends tied to the location. On-site are the remains of an ancient astronomical observatory and Kaesong citizens still come here on the Lunar New Year to view the moon.

Pakyon Waterfall

Light walking in relaxing wooded area to a scenic waterfall. There are hiking trails of various lengths to Taesung Mountain Fortress and Gwanum Temple. Local people commonly visit here for picnics and sometimes swimming in the series of pools above the falls. Beautiful autumn scenery.

Ryongtong Temple

A large rebuilt temple located in a beautiful valley with grand rock formations, the temple houses a number of buildings, stone pagodas, and Buddha sculptures. Rarely-visited and historically significant, this is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The drive to the temple gets you off the beaten track. Nearby is a stone in the shape of a naked woman.

Sonjuk Bridge

Small stone bridge built in 1290, which in 1392 was the site of the assassination of the last loyal Koryo Dynasty minister Jong Mong Ju by a son of Ri Song Gye (founder of the next, and final, dynasty). This bloody act extinguished the Koryo Dynasty which had ruled over Korea for 474 years and is said to have left a permanent mark on the bridge that can be seen to this day.



Old City Walk and South Gate

Kaesong's historic district is lined with homes dating back to the Ri Dynasty. The historic south gate of Kaesong's ancient inner city wall has a large bell with bullet marks from the Korean War.

Sunyang Pavilion

The former home of Koryo Dynasty minister Jong Mong Ju, who preferred death over betraying his lord. Some classic North Korean films have been filmed here.

Stamp Shop

Store selling stamps, postcards, local ginseng, souvenirs, art, and more. One of the best postcard collections in the country.

Taehungsan Fortress

A mountain fortress, typical of those found throughout Korea, located above Pakyon Waterfall. The fortress gate is accessible on the hike to Gwanum Temple.

Tomb of King Wanggon

Resting place of the founder of the Koryo Dynasty, who died in 943. The tomb is largely reconstructed after looting by Japanese occupiers and general disrepair. A UNESCO World Heritage Site

ACCOMMODATION

◇ Janamsan Hotel

A basic hotel with distinct Soviet-style architecture and friendly staff. Ideal for those wanting a western bed, hot water, and reliable electricity. Recommended in winter.

◇ Minsok Folk Hotel

Traditional style hotel where guests sleep on heated floors in Korean style. Housed in beautiful courtyards of Kaesong's old city, structures date back to the Ri Dynasty. Basic bathroom facilities. Hot water not guaranteed and erratic electricity supply – please bring a torch.

DINING

Traditional Korean Royal Lunch

Also known as *pansanggi*, the meal is made up of different dishes served in small brass bowls. The more dishes, the more distinguished the guest!

Ummaegi

Locally made rice-cakes doused in honey. Pre-order at the Janamsan Hotel.

Ginseng

'The King of Herbs'; this miracle root will cure what ails you. Good for health, good for the mind, and good for your love life. Kaesong is the home of ginseng.

Yakgwa

These 'medicine snacks' are sweet dry baked goods. Pre-order at the Janamsan Hotel.



THE NORTHWEST

*...from Ping Yang still north. Through the snowclad
Korean mountains their ways leads to Wiju [Uiju],
on the Yalu River...*

- Jack London reporting from Korea in 1903.

*In the deep recess a rain of pink petals
The long bamboo emit emerald mists.
Frozen white clouds lodge on the peak
A monk dozes beside a blue crane.*

- The Great Master Sosan of Mt. Myohyang,
from the Anthology of Korean Literature

The old 'Peking Road' to China reaches north from Pyongyang to the Amnok (Yalu) River through river valleys and mountains hiding limestone caves, walled towns, mountain fortresses, and serene temples.

At times a trade route for caravans laden with goods for China and beyond, at times the invasion route for foreign armies, the region has a rich and colorful history full of climactic battles, fighting monks, and jet-age aerial duels in MiG Alley during the Korean War.

Today the main destination for visitors to the region is Mt. Myohyang. Pyongsong and Sinuiju are examples of two smaller Korean cities and offer a contrast to the capital. Anju is rarely visited, but it is an example of a North Korean industrial town.



PYONGSONG

Pyongsong is a satellite city of Pyongyang active in the regional economy, science-technology research and education. It is home to a branch of the DPRK Academy of Science, next to the newly built Unjong Scientists' District. One can visit Pyongsong by day trip from Pyongyang or spend the night and see more of small-city life outside of the capital.

TRANSPORTATION: Pyongsong is located approximately 40 minutes north of downtown Pyongyang. On the way you'll pass farms, mines and truck carrying minerals, the DPRK Academy of Sciences and the Unjong Scientific Park.



◇ Doksung Primary School

A local primary school with tour of classrooms, demonstration rooms, dance and music halls, and gymnasium. See the school's award-winning dance troupe and take on the schoolchildren in ping-pong, a sport this school specialises in teaching.

Anguk Buddhist Temple

A beautiful 6th century Buddhist temple which somehow managed to survive the Korean War undestroyed, a fate not shared by most other temples through the country.

Pyongsong City Square

Central square of Pyongsong City with statues of the DPRK leadership. A presentation of flowers is customary.

Kim Jong Suk Higher Middle School

One of the DPRK's top middle schools for gifted students. This school specializes in science and foreign language teaching. A great chance to have a chat with students in English. Also has a quirky taxidermy room.

Konji-Ri Revolutionary Site

Headquarters of the Korean People's Army during the Korean War in the hills north of Pyongyang. Preserved traditional homes which served as army offices during the war, bunkers, as well as burnt trees and bomb casing from American aerial attacks set among a bucolic landscape. The on-site museum compliments the War Museum in Pyongyang.



Paeksong Revolutionary Site

Location of Kim Il Sung University during the Korean war. Tour the old classrooms and hear about how students lived during the war. There is a bronze statue of a contemporaneous Kim Il Sung visiting in 1952 to support the students here.

South Pyong'an Revolutionary Museum

Museum explaining anti-Japanese activities during the colonial era. Located on the central square of Pyongsong City.

Paeksong Provisions Factory

A factory producing a range of foods and drinks: biscuits, cakes, soju, candy, and snacks. Here you can have a taste of the products and tour the production facilities.

Ponghak Foodstuffs Factory

Ponghak is the local beer of Pyongsong and among the largest brands in the DPRK. The factory is located just outside of town. Not always open, but if it is then try some of the products fresh out of the production line.

ACCOMMODATION

◇ Jangsusan Hotel

The only hotel in Pyongsong open for tourists and one of the most fun in the whole country! Basic facilities with fairly reliable electricity and hot water. One of best bartenders in the country mans the bar. Billiards, karaoke, hair dresser, and outdoor eateries in summer.



HOECHANG

Way off the beaten track and very rarely-visited by tourists this area is famous for being a base of the Chinese Volunteer Army during the Korean War, as well as the resting place of Chairman Mao's son (killed during the war). Main industries are iron and zinc mining with the mine itself at the edge of the town. Scenic and ideal for anyone looking to get off the beaten path or for those interested in Korean War history. A very long day trip, or stay overnight (recommended).

TRANSPORTATION: Hoechang is located approximately 3-3.5 hours' drive east from Pyongsong or Pyongyang on winding roads through some amazing countryside. Not the most comfortable drive ever. Be ready for some bumps!



◇ **Cemetery for the Martyrs of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army**

Built in the 1950s (renovated in 2010) and opened by Zhou Enlai. Scenic Chinese hillside cemetery with domed tombs of 134 Chinese soldiers. Including a bust and tomb of Mao Anying; the Chairman's son.

Songhung Revolutionary Site

Drive past the giant zinc factory to the wartime base of the Volunteer Army. Caves and tunnels, buildings from the period used by the soldiers and by Kim Il Sung when he visited to thank them for assistance.



ACCOMMODATION

◇ **Hoechang Guesthouse**

The only accommodation in Hoechang - small and simple with just seven rooms. Has a restaurant but no other facilities. Staff are welcoming to their few foreign guests and can provide drinks and a rudimentary bar in the small lobby.

MT. MYOHYANG

Mt. Myohyang, or the ‘mountain of mysterious fragrance’, is one of ‘Korea’s Five Famous Mountains’. It is home of DPRK’s cavernous International Friendship Exhibition, housing gifts presented from foreign nations and individuals. The region is also home to some of the Korea’s most treasured historic relics, giving a well-rounded experience of the country’s natural landscape, ancient history, and the modern state. Lonely pine covered mountains, jade green streams, overflowing in numerous waterfalls, and fresh air make the area an ideal escape from it all.

A minimum overnight trip is required from Pyongyang. Visitors interested in hiking the mountains (or in underground caves) may want to spend an additional night in the region.

TRANSPORTATION: The Mt. Myohyang Tourist Highway passes Anju on the way to Mt. Myohyang, a drive of 2.5-3 hours. The drive starts in agricultural plains before ascending into the mountains. One can see examples of the DPRK’s heavy industry, a grand monument, and mining industry along the way.



International Friendship Exhibition

A semi-subterranean exhibition hall displaying gifts of all kinds given to the DPRK leaders by foreign states, leaders, and organizations. The exhibition is a fascinating look into material culture in the second half of the 20th century. Highlights include a plane given by the Soviet Union, basketball signed by Michael Jordan from the US State Department, and vodka given by Dennis Rodman. The visit takes most of the morning. *Presentable dress required.*

Pohyon Buddhist Temple

A peaceful temple dating back to 1042 AD with stone pagoda and repository of a print blocks and historic text of the Tripitaka Koreana, Buddhist scriptures first produced to invoke divine assistance from foreign invasions during the Koryo Dynasty.

Ryongmun Caves

A subterranean complex of limestone caves and grottoes. Led by an experienced local guide, you will see weirdly (and suggestively) shaped rocks and stalactites/stalagmites and hear a wealth of stories and legends about each - some not appropriate for young audiences.



Manpok Valley Hike

Various options for hikes of a range of distances/difficulties. Passing waterfalls, hermitages, interesting rocks, lovely wooded areas, and viewing points. Good for picnics too.

ACCOMMODATION

Huichon Hotel

Basic but clean hotel located 30 minutes north of Mt. Myohyang. Very good local food much different from the lowlands, on-site sauna, and limited electricity. A must for those wishing to visit every province in the DPRK as it is situated just across the border into the otherwise tourist-devoid Jagang Province.

(Accommodation continued on the next page)



◇ **Chongchon Hotel**

Basic but clean hotel at Mt. Myohyang. Book and souvenir shop, billiards, ping-pong, and karaoke. Best price and location balance in this area.



Hyangsan Hotel

The fanciest hotel in the DPRK. Renovated in 2010. The only hotel with internet access for tourists and other 7-star facilities. Excellent swimming pool, lovely location, very high additional fees! You can stop by for lunch without any additional fees though.

ANJU

Anju is a mid-sized industrial city located on the road and rail line north of Pyongyang on the Chongchon River. Like many cities in the northwest of Korea, Anju has an old city wall. In 612, near here a smaller Korean force almost totally annihilated the grand army of the Chinese Sui Dynasty. During the Korean War, major battles were fought near here between North Korean-Chinese forces and UN-South Korean forces. Coal is mined nearby.

Visitors to Anju must overnight at Mt. Myohyang, Pyongsong, or Pyongyang as there is no accommodation open to foreigners in the city.



Paeksang Pavilion and Anju City Walls

The greatest pavilion in Kwanso (Pyong'an Province) which overlooks the Chongchon River. Rebuilt after destruction in the Korean War.



SINUJU, UIJU & TONGRIM

Sinuiju is the main overland gateway to the DPRK from China. Literally 'New Justice Province', the city has surpassed its historic twin and is now a major entry port for foreign trade and largely known in the west as part of 'Mig Alley', the location of fierce aerial combat during the Korean War.

Uiju was once an administrative and military outpost for the Korea-China borderlands and played a major role in the Koryo-Ri Dynasty transition in the late 14th century. Tongrim is a small town and overnight stop for all tourists in the region.

TRANSPORTATION: Sinuiju, Uiju, and Tongrim are accessible either by train from Pyongyang (approximately 6 hours) or by crossing the border from the Chinese city of Dandong across the Yalu River. Usually this visit is made as a day trip (solo, or with a larger Chinese group) but overnight stays as an extension to a visit to Pyongyang are possible too. A final option would be to visit by plane. There is a small airfield in Uiju where charter flights from Pyongyang land. Plans to make this a regular service have started and stopped over the last 2 years.



◇ Sinuiju Kindergarten

Tour this large and locally famous facility and finish with a stunning performance by some very talented children. This school is famous in the DPRK for training acrobats and performers from a young age.

Sinamri co-operative Farm

See how agriculture works in this area, one of the more fertile parts of the country with a viewing platform to have the first glimpse of China and the unopened New Yalu River Bridge (the 'Bridge to Nowhere').

Sinuiju Cosmetics Factory

See production lines, learn about what cosmetics are popular among the ladies of North Korea, and even pick up a few bargains in the factory shop. The most popular product is the Bomhyangji Spring scent.

Sinuiju Central Square

With statues of the DPRK's Leaders. Modernised in 2015 and bounded by the local museum and the railway station.

◇ Sinuiju Folk Park

A narrow park running through the city centre and along the railway lines. Depending on the season you can play some games, mix with local picnickers and retirees hanging around.

North Pyongan Province Revolutionary Museum

Devoted to the history of revolutionary activity in the area this will give a good introduction about the importance of this frontline city to the Korean national narrative.

North Pyongan Province History Museum

Historical remains from prehistoric times to the modern ages, antiquities excavated and collected in the province and materials are on display here.

Sinuiju Art Gallery

An eclectic collection of landscapes, socialist realism, portraits, and so on. Also has works for sale and prices here are significantly lower than in Pyongyang usually. Also has a portraitist on hand who can churn out pencil portraits in just a few minutes.

ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD

◇ Tongrim Hotel

Chinese-built hotel in the town of Tongrim (90 mins drive from Sinuiju). Modern and pretty decent, a little remote but also at present the only option for an overnight in this area. Nearby is a lovely waterfall that can be visited on foot.

Amnokgang Hotel

Ideally located in the centre of Sinuiju. Retro-styled and fun place, but sadly now off-limits to tourists staying overnight. The restaurant here is possible to use though.

Amnokgang Travel Company Restaurant

Used for large Chinese groups, food is Korean/Chinese, but the main attraction is that it is on the riverfront and gives an excellent view across to Dandong and the famous 'Broken Bridge' - bombed by the USAF in the Korean War.





THE SOUTHWEST

Hats adorned with golden flowers fluttering in the wind/ white shoes dancing with slow steps / wide sleeves elegantly wave / like birds come from east of the sea.

- 7th century Chinese poet Li Bai on the dances of the Koguryo Kingdom.

As if throwing a stone into a wave on a spring day.

- Traditional sayings on the people of the region.

The Southwest is a microcosm of the DPRK. The lower Taedong River Valley is the cradle of local civilization and has a diverse variety of historic sites, including the first of the DPRK's main UNESCO World Heritage sites - the complex of Koguryo Tombs dating to the 5-7th centuries. Long northern Korea's agricultural heartland, the region today is home to representative examples of the DPRK's flagship industrial base.

Cross the 8 km long West Sea Barrage, an engineering marvel, to the mountains of Kuwol and loops back to the main Pyongyang - Kaesong Reunification Highway, seeing towns, countryside, and much of interest along the way.

The majority of visitors to the region make a quick day trip to Nampo from Pyongyang or visit Sariwon on the way to Kaesong. Travel further afield can make for long drives on rough roads, but for those wanting to see Korea's countryside up close this is the place to do it.



NAMPO

Located at the mouth of the Taedong River on the West Sea, Nampo is the port city for Pyongyang. While the city proper has relatively few locations open to tourists, the environs offer a chance to see a mix of rural life, heavy industry, and some of Korea's (north and south) most valuable historical sights.

TRANSPORTATION: The Youth Hero Highway (40 minutes) and an older riverside road (1.5 hours) link Pyongyang and Nampo. It is possible to cross the West Sea Barrage (mornings and evenings) to the Mt. Kuwol Region and drive onward to Sinchon/Sariwon (2-3 hours) or Kaesong (6-7 hours). It is also possible to kayak between Pyongyang and Nampo by special arrangement.



◇ Chollima Steelworks

A major heavy industry site of the DPRK, known to Koreans as the birthplace of the Chollima Movement and famous for making 'Juche Steel'.

Chongsam-ri Co-operative Farm

The DPRK's most famous and iconic model farm. Visited hundreds of times by Kim Il Sung (there is a bronze statue of him and various farm workers here), and the place where the 'Chongsam-ri Method' was developed. See how the farming system works, visit a farmhouse and the local shop & kindergarten, see the fields and greenhouses.

Dokhung-ri Koguryo Tomb

Early 5th century tomb of a Koguryo magistrate. The tomb contains some of the best preserved Koguryo murals, including a portrait of the magistrate, scenes of daily life, and mythical creatures. A UNESCO World Heritage Site (€€€€).

Kangso Mineral Water Bottling Plant

Production plant for the DPRK's largest and most famous brand of sparkling water. The brand symbol, the White Tiger, is taken from the nearby Kangso Koguryo Tomb.

Koguryo Kangso Three Tombs

Three Koguryo tombs dating back to the late 6th-early 7th centuries. The Medium Tomb is representative of Koguryo-era tomb murals, depicting the Four Directional Guardian Spirits: Dark Warrior, Red Phoenix, Blue Dragon and White Tiger (€€€€).

Nampo Square

Central square of Nampo with statues of the DPRK leadership.



◇ West Sea Barrage

An 8 km concrete, steel, and earthen barrage constructed between the Taedong River estuary and the West Sea for land reclamation, irrigation, flood prevention, and power generation. One of the DPRK's greatest engineering feats.

House of Kim Ung So

Traditional home of Kim Ung So, a Korean official and general during the Imjin War, the 16th century Japanese invasion of Korea. Visiting gets you out into the North Korean countryside off the highway to Nampo. Kim's descendants maintain the site.

Susan-ri Koguryo Tomb

A late 5th century Koguryo tomb of an aristocrat and his wife. The murals inside are damaged and in poor condition, but nonetheless insightful about the daily lives of ancient people. The drive here takes you far off the beaten tourist track. A UNESCO World Heritage Site (€€€€).

Tae'an Glass Factory

Factory producing glass and glass products for the domestic market. Watch the process from smelting to sheet-cutting and even try to break a sheet of strengthened glass.

Wau Islet

Scenic spot perfect for relaxation with swimming/diving areas.

Tae'an Heavy Machine Tool Complex

Vast complex of heavy industry, excellent for photos but often closed to tourists.



ACCOMODATION

◊ **Ryonggang Hot Spa Hotel**

Compound with holiday houses and a main building for dinner and entertainment. Spa bath in every room with mineral water from the Sindok Spring- the most famous mineral spa in the DPRK. Billiards, karaoke, and ping pong. Bring a torch!

Nampo Merchant Mariners' Club

Riverfront hotel for foreign merchant mariners at the Nampo Port. Decent but basic facilities. It is possible at times to charter a boat for trips from here to the West Sea Barrage.

Hangu Hotel

A basic nautical themed hotel in Nampo city proper. Ideal for those arriving late or departing early from Nampo. Excellent banquet hall and seafood restaurant. Limited hours of hot water.



SARIWON & ENVIRONMENT

Once a sleepy rural town on the Charyong Plain, the coming of the railway in 1915 turned Sariwon into a regional centre. Today Sariwon is the provincial seat of North Hwanghae Province and is a centre of agro-industrial production and home to one of the country's top agricultural universities.

On the south side of the Taedong River estuary, rising from the coastal lowlands is Mt. Kuwol, the 'September Mountain'. This forested mountain region was sacred to the earliest Koreans and later Buddhists. Today Mt. Kuwol is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Inland from Mt. Kuwol is the town of Anak, home to some of Korea's best-preserved and most elaborate Koguryo Tombs.

This region saw some of the most brutal fighting during the Korean War and the town of Sinchon is the location of the Museum of US Atrocities. Accounts disagree of what exactly happened at Sinchon, but it was no doubt horrific.

TRANSPORATION: Sariwon can be reached within a 1 hour drive from Pyongyang on the Reunification Highway. Mt. Kuwol, Anak and Sinchon are all accessible.



◇ Sinchon Town and Museum of US War Crimes

Recently renovated museum dedicated to 'crimes committed by the US imperialists'. Located on the site of a civilian massacre, the museum has an array of harrowing exhibits, displays, and panoramas on the haunting events that took place in this region during the war. Not for the faint at heart and sensitivity is called for here.

Songbol Temple

Early Koryo Dynasty style temple located on Jongbang Mountain near Sariwon. The temple houses one thousand buddha statues, each with its own distinctive look.

Woljong Temple

Buddhist temple established in the middle of the 9th century and later rebuilt at the start of the Ri Dynasty.



◇ Sariwon Folk Village and City View

Mock-up of a traditional Korean town which includes a history museum, food street, and pavilions. There is a small tavern selling Makkoli, traditional rice wine. Climb a nearby hill for a view of Sariwon City and the surrounding plains.

Sariwon Central Square

Statues of the DPRK leadership where locals go to pay their respects. Recently opened to tourists. A presentation of flowers is recommended.

ACCOMODATION

◇ March 8th Hotel

March 8th is Women's Day, a noted holiday in the socialist world. This hotel is a quirky one as it is gaudily furnished by donated beds, chairs, etc. from a South Korean furniture magnate during friendlier times. Good restaurant and some basic leisure facilities, rarely used by foreign guests due to its proximity to Pyongyang. This is certainly a 'different' option.

HAEJU

Haeju is a port city on Korea's west coast and the provincial seat of South Hwanghae Province. The city and environs offer a number of historic sights and scenic countryside for those looking to see a rarely visited area of the DPRK. The city is situated a mere 60km north of the line dividing Korea in two and thus is considered a frontline city.

TRANSPORTATION: Haeju and nearby sights can be reached by road from Sariwon or Kaesong. Budget a whole day as road conditions vary and sights are spread far afield. The journey is rugged and rough, but very much worthwhile to see a part of the country usually ignored - villages, winding roads, the change of scenery from mountains to plains - certainly a unique experience.



◇ **Puyong Hall**

Beautiful ancient pavilion set above a lily pond. Originally built in 1500 but largely destroyed in the Korean War. Scenic and well-located in the centre of town.

Gyenam Stock Farm

Very scenically located farm specialising in livestock (almost all other farms in the country that you can visit are crop farms). Pigs, cows, goats, etc. Meat and milk are produced, and methane gas is processed here too.

Haeju Central Square

Modestly-sized square in the centre of the city, with statues of the DPRK's leaders at one end.

◇ **Koryo Fortress**

Defensive Koryo-Dynasty fort built above the split 120m Suyang Waterfall. Demonstrates the strategic importance of this area through the centuries (being a key port for trade with China mainly). Involves a drive outside of town and then a trek to reach the fortress itself.

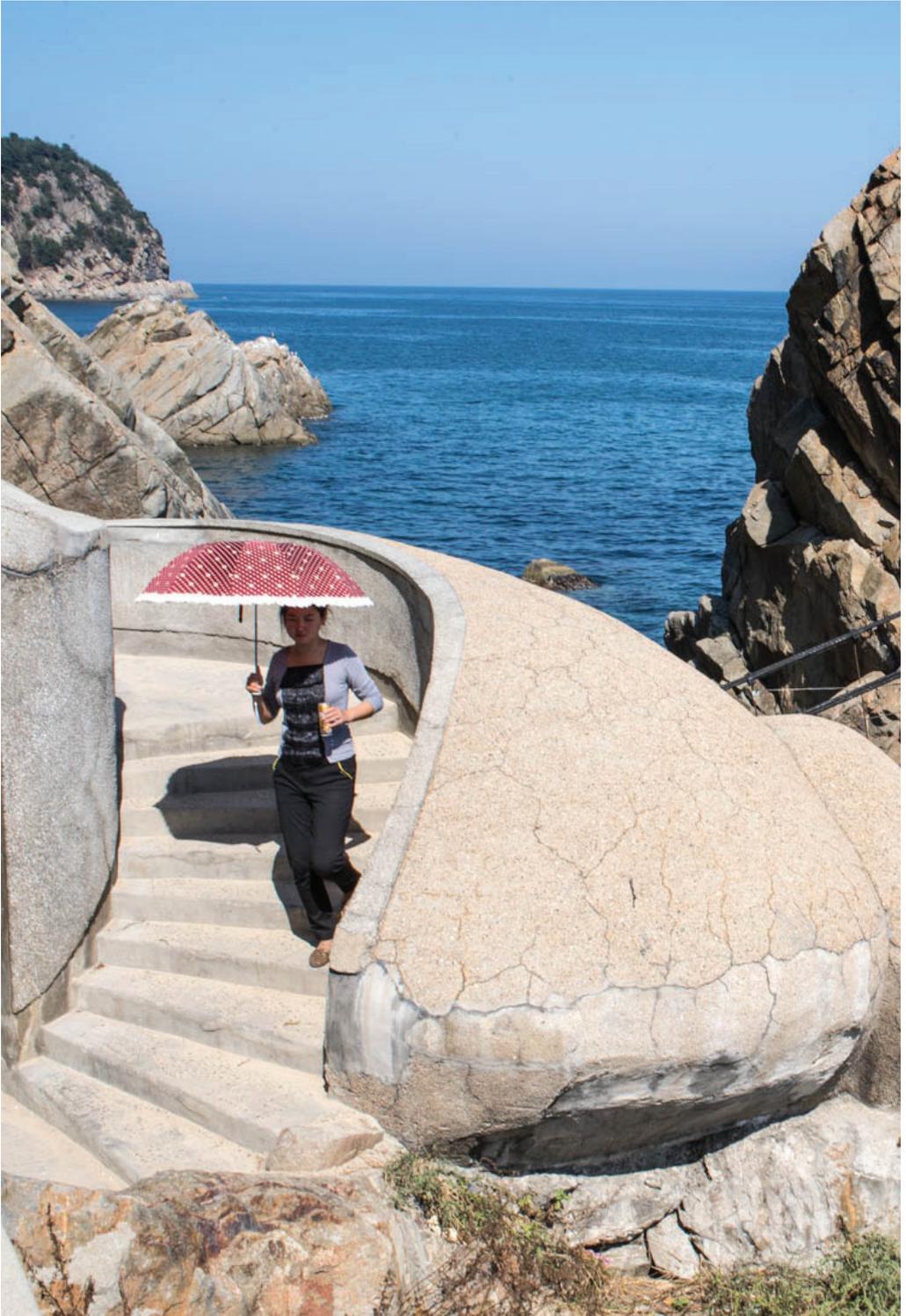
Sokdam Ravines

Nine valleys spread over a large area, featuring historical remains such as the 16th Century Sohyon School, stone tombs, and medicinal water springs. Good for a picnic stop too.

ACCOMODATION

◇ **Haeju Hotel**

Located beside the central square in the heart of the city, this is the only option for overnight visitors. Basic but good enough for a trip here, clean rooms and a billiards table and bar as leisure facilities.



THE EAST COAST

The scenery is good, but the living is better.

- From a folk song of the same name.

...from which green hills rise abruptly, backed by fine mountain forms ...where the sea murmurs in cool grottoes, and beats the pure white sand into ripples at the feet of cliffs hidden by flowers, ferns, and grass, and its air of dreamy repose - 'a land where it is always afternoon'.

- Isabella M Bird

Peaceful as an old Buddha sitting under a rock.

- Traditional Korean saying

There is another Korean saying that over the mountains there are mountains. Head east from Pyongyang, and go over enough mountains and one eventually finds Korea's scenic eastern seaboard. The East Coast rewards visitors with clean beaches backed by spectacular highlands, including the famous Mt. Kumgang. It is also home to the DPRK's second largest city, Hamhung, and the major port city of Wonsan.

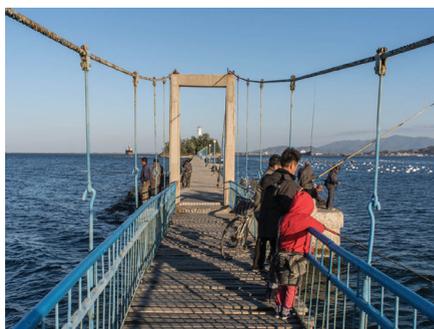
Visiting the East Coast of Korea is a rewarding experience for those looking to see another side of the DPRK or just looking for a relaxing getaway. At least 4 days / 3 nights are needed for an introduction to the region. It is possible to spend additional days hiking, at the beach, or traveling deep into the highlands.



WONSAN

Wonsan is a crucial city on the east coast of the country. The least heavily industrial but a key port and a city where the national government focuses efforts on leisure facilities and promoting the favourable location of the city between sea and mountains. To reach anywhere else on the east coast by road from Pyongyang the first stop would be Wonsan.

TRANSPORTATION: The Pyongyang-Wonsan Highway stretches across the width of the peninsula. Wonsan is a 4 hour drive from Pyongyang across the width of the peninsula and over the spine of mountains that run down its length.



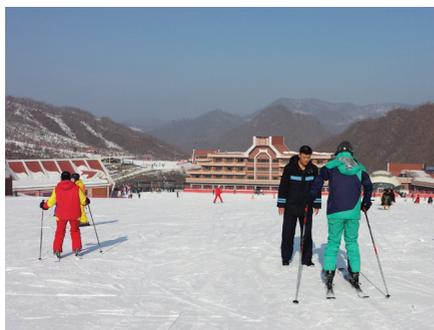
◇ Jangdok Island and Lighthouse

Take a stroll on the breakwater to a small island in the middle of Wonsan harbor (1 EUR/USD entry fee). Local fishermen flock to this area, chat with them along the way. Also good for romantic evening walks.



◇ Songdowon International Schoolchildren's Camp

A classic socialist summer camp where Korean and international children can spend two weeks learning socialist values and teamwork. Tour the recently renovated dormitories, aquarium, bird house, gymnasium, and more!



◇ Skiing at Masik Pass Ski Resort

The DPRK's largest ski resort. Opened in 2013, Masik Pass features nine main runs, two beginner slopes, and a lodge with full amenities. Ski season is late November – early March. Equipment rental and ski pass paid on the spot (approximately 100 EUR per day). Snowmobile and ice-skating also available. Hiking in spring, summer, and autumn. It is possible to stop here for lunch or coffee on the way back to Pyongyang from Wonsan.



◇ Sokwang Temple

Remains of a Buddhist temple established dating back to the late-14th century and associated with the dream that predicted the fall of the Koryo Dynasty. A historic and haunting place set in a serene mountain valley with stream.





Chonsam-ri Co-operative Farm

Learn about rural life at this farm specialising in rice and persimmons. Visit the cultural centre, farm house, and fish pond.



◇ Dongmyong Hotel

Waterfront hotel with stunning seaside views of Wonsan Harbor. Limited hours of hot water, bar, billiards, ping-pong, barber shop, beauty salon, dry-sauna, and indoor seawater swimming pool.



Ulim Waterfall

Hidden amongst the mountains on the road to Wonsan, 'Echo' Waterfall is a scenic stopover to enjoy lunch, stretch your legs, or go for a dip in the pool beneath. (re)Discovered by the Korean People's Army in 1995 while building roads in the area.

Former Wonsan Railway Station Revolutionary Site

Preserved Japanese colonial era train station, waiting room, guesthouse, and the train which future President Kim Il Sung rode to Pyongyang during the liberation of the country in 1945.

Kangwon Province Art Gallery

Small art exhibition selling artwork by local artists, where you can purchase paintings.

Wonsan Agricultural University

The DPRK's premier agricultural university set among beautiful hillside scenery. Tour the grounds and the neo-Romanesque teaching hall, originally built by Catholic monks living in the area in the early 20th century.

Wonsan City Centre and Docks

Central square and ship terminal in downtown Wonsan. The Mangyongbong-92 ferry/cargo ship which once shuttled Koreans living in Japan back and forth across the East Sea of Korea is moored here.

Wonsan Kalma International Airport

Brand new and not-yet used for any international or regular domestic flight (at the time of writing). Usually closed to visitors but a fascinating talking point for looking at the plans to develop this area. The US Marines landed here during the Korean War.



OTHER ACCOMODATION

Songdownon Hotel

Large seaside building. Basic but clean and with an excellent bookshop often stocking titles long sold-out in Pyongyang. Great interior decorating.

Kalma Hotel

On the Kalma peninsula that juts out opposite the city proper. This is a pretty luxurious place that strangely isn't always open to visitors. Extra surcharge for staying, and expect no other guests. Ideal for relaxing on the beach though.

MT. KUMGANG

The Diamond Mountains, a place so beautiful that celestial fairies once descended from heaven to play in its woodlands and bathe in its crystal streams beneath towering pinnacles. Beyond celestial beings, the mountain has attracted generations of travelers from across Korea and China, artists and poets, domestic and foreign tourists. Located not far from the DMZ, the region has been a centre of inter-Korean co-operation (and controversy).

Most visitors spend one night at the mountain, but this can easily be extended to two or three nights for those interested in hiking and scenery. The region is divided into Outer Kumgang, Inner Kumgang and Sea Kumgang.

TRANSPORTATION: Mt. Kumgang is located a 2 ½ - 3 hour drive south of Wonsan along a scenic coastal highway.



◇ Changsokjong

Commonly represented in paintings and shown on TV yet almost never visited, this stunning area is made up of basalt columns rising from the sea. Very scenic and photogenic, and perfect for a picnic stop. Not always open to foreign visitors.

Sea Kumgang

A seaside rock formation located inside of the DMZ. Needs special permission to access.

Former Hyundai Resort Area

Until 2008 this area was open to visitors from South Korea, who came in their hundred of thousands. The central part was built by Hyundai Asan and while the shops and facilities are now all closed. It is interesting to get a peek at what once was a shopping area, an old circus, etc. A little like North Korea meets Jurassic Park minus the T. Rex. *A ha!*

Other Hiking Routes

The number of routes through this large range is impossible to list but here are options for hikers/walkers of all levels of ability and ambition - from gentle strolls in valleys up to 12-13 hour hikes up to remote peaks with stunning views. Led by local hiking guides. Camping is also possible in a couple of areas here.



◇◇ Hiking at Kuryong Waterfall

A 8 km (round-trip) hike to a scenic waterfall through forests along mountain streams and emerald pools.

INNER KUMGANG

Lake Sijung

Idyllic coastal lake with fishing, boating, and medicinal mud-baths.

◇ Samil Lagoon

A charming green-water coastal lagoon lined by pine forests. Named for the 'three-day' (sam-il) visit of a king in days gone-by to take in the full beauty of the area. A buoy floating in the lake marks the spot where Kim Jong Suk, the mother of Kim Jong Il, showed off her marksmanship when visiting the area.

Sijung Guesthouse Beach

Sandy beach on the East Sea of Korea for swimming and relaxing (2 EUR entrance fee to swim and stays over 30 minutes.)

MT. KUMGANG AREA ACCOMODATION

◇ Mt. Kumgang Hotel

Comfortable and clean hotel with scenic views of the mountains and forests. Hot water and electricity are generally reliable. It has pleasant bars, a good gift shop, expensive international calls, a massage parlour and a small sauna.

Outer Kumgang Hotel

Decent hotel at the Mt. Kumgang Tourist Zone Village and built for South Koreans (so a South Korean adaptor is necessary).

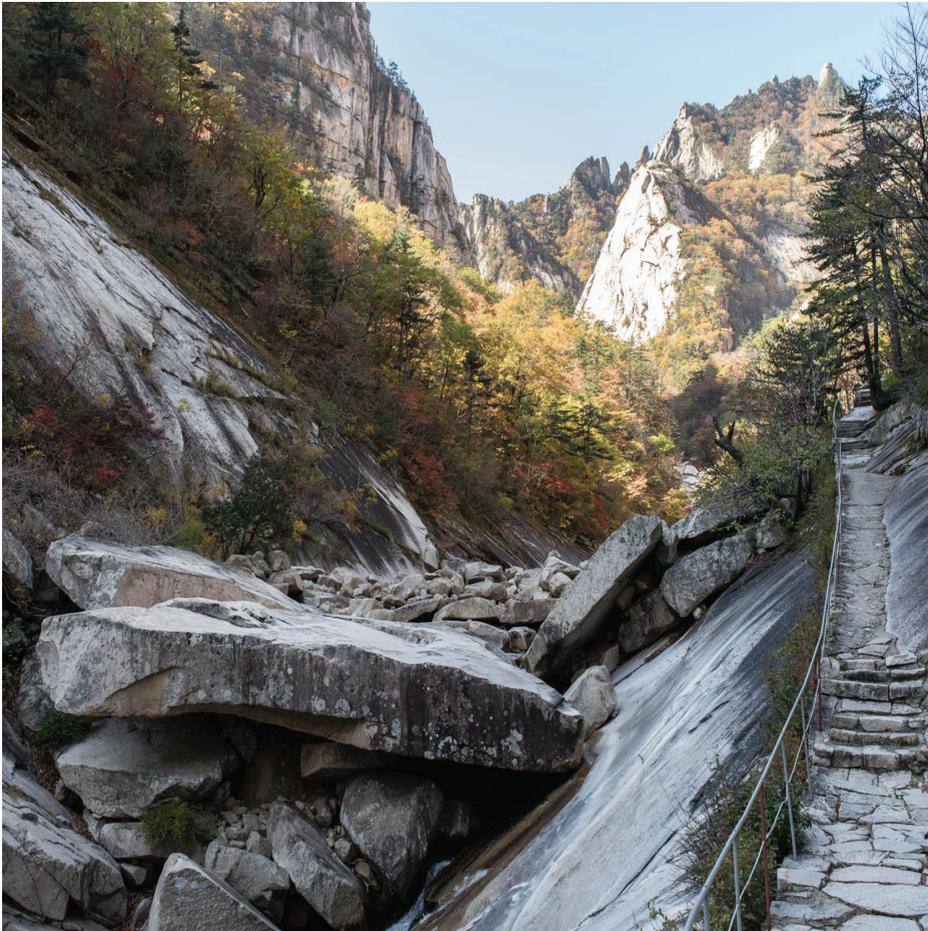
Reunion Hotels

A hotel primarily used for North-South family reunions at Mt. Kumgang.

Sijung Guesthouse

Technically located outside of the Kumgang range this is a good option anyway as it is small, basic, relaxing, and offers sludge bath medical treatments (if you dare!)

Most of the hotels inside Mt. Kumgang that are used by tourists are quite similar. One was built to accomodate South Korean guests who visit for family reunions, and all have good restaurants and facilities, scenic views and so on.



HAMHUNG

Hamhung together with its southern neighbor Hungnam make up the DPRK's second largest urban area by population and are a major centre of chemical industry, producing fertilisers and Vinalon, or 'Juche Fiber'. The twin cities were rebuilt after the Korean War with the assistance of East German architects and planners. Hamhung is the gateway to the Pujon Highlands.

TRANSPORTATION: Hamhung is a 3 hour drive north of Wonsan. The drive to and from Pyongyang takes the majority of the day (7-8 hours). The Pujon Highlands are an additional 3 hour drive northeast of the city.

HAMHUNG MUST SEE HIGHLIGHTS



◇ Hungnam Fertiliser Factory

Massive chemical-industrial plant producing various kinds of fertilisers. Tour of the plant control room, production facilities, and packing plant - just don't light up next to the Ammonium Nitrate! A bust of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai stands at this complex to note the contributions China made to the development of the plant. A museum is also on site, this is where Kim Il Sung uttered his famous phrase 'Fertiliser is rice. And rice, itself, is Communism'

◇ Kim Il Sung Statue

For completists and statue-obsessives. There is a small one located between the Fertiliser and Vinalon factories. Much more modest than the statues in Hamhung city centre.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS & ACCOMODATION



◇ Pujon Highlands

A scenic drive through the highlands above Hamhung, traditionally considered as one of the 'Eight Great Sights of Korea'. Home to the Pujon Stone River, a multi-kilometer river of boulders running down the side a mountain and the Okryonsan Revolutionary Site - a base for anti-Japanese guerillas during the colonial period. This region was the sight of some of the most brutal fighting of the Korean War in the middle of the unusually cold winter of 1950. Notice how the local architecture differs from the lowlands below.



◇ Tongbong Co-operative Farm

Local farm in the outskirts of Hamhung. View the machinery, a home, and the farm shop to buy some homemade products.

◇ Home of Ri Song Gye

Home of the first king of the Ri Dynasty (1392-1910) who extinguished the Koryo Dynasty, only to be then ousted by his own son. A traditional hall and pavilion and associated naughty stories of the former King's retirement years - some not appropriate for the youth.



Hamhung Grand Theatre and Central Square

Exterior view of the DPRK's largest theatre on the city's central square.

South Hamgyong History Museum

Modest museum devoted to the history of the province from earliest times. Rarely visited.

Tonghung Revolutionary Site

Hillside park with statues of the DPRK leadership overlooking Hamhung city centre and the Songchon River. A presentation of flowers is customary.



Majon Hotel

In the next bay south from the simpler guesthouse this is the first of the new wave of luxury hotels built in the DPRK. Very shiny and fancy but also has a steep surcharge.

◊ Majon Beach Guesthouse

A beachside holiday compound with basic but comfortable chalets. Rooms have heated floors but no running water. There is a main building with restaurant, bar, billiards, table-tennis, bookshop, and Korean karaoke. Bring a torch!

Sinhungsan Hotel

A basic hotel located in central Hamhung. Rooms have limited hours of hot water. Great bookshop for rare finds.







THE NORTH: MT. PAEKDU & SAMJIYON

*Oh Paektu, sacred mountain
The mountain crests are folded in your hands
Like the spikes of a fan. / Your grey mane floats on high above the clouds
And for thousands of centuries you have seen
All that lies below you.*

- From the revolutionary poem Mt. Paektu (1947) by Chon Jo Ki.

The Millennium Eruption of Mt. Paektu (known as Changbaishan in China), circa 946 AD, is one of the largest in the historical record... The eruption is thought to have formed the 5-km-wide caldera at its summit that host Lake Chon.

- Ri et al. 2016

Tradition says that the Korean people originated from the wilderness around volcanic Mt. Paektu – a charming folk story of a tiger and bear undergoing a garlic-involved ritual here that led to the creation of the first Koreans can be explained by your guides. At 2,750m, Mt. Paektu is the peninsula's highest peak, a massive sleeping volcano topped with the beautiful Lake Chon (Heaven Lake), the lake formed from one of the largest eruptions in recorded human history. The region is also closely associated with the guerilla struggle to liberate Korea from Japanese colonial rule and thus has great spiritual, historic, and revolutionary significance for the Korean people.

TRANSPORTATION: Mt. Paektu is only accessible by special charter flight (1 hour) from Pyongyang in August or September arranged for group tours. It is possible for private tours to ride the same flight and continue a private tour on arrival. Contact us for more details and available dates.

The roads around Mt. Paektu are bumpy and rudimentary, but the scenery and how it changes from dense forest to scrubland, to remote mountainside is remarkable and well-worth the effort. Timber is produced, berries are harvested, and one of the most fascinating sights is that of groups of Korean visitors from other parts of the country marching through the area dressed in the style of the 1930s-40s guerilla army – learning about the past while re-enacting it at the same time.

MT. PAEKDU ATTRACTIONS & ACCOMODATION



◇ Mt. Paekdu crater rim and Lake Chon

Ascend to the highest point in all of Korea (on foot, or by funicular railway) for amazing views of the highest crater lake in the world, sitting in the caldera of the volcano. A breathtaking and remote place of stunning and unique scenery – unforgettable in fact. From the top one can either walk down or cable car (weather permitting) to the lake itself to sample the crystal-clear waters. Basic facilities on site, but a picnic lunch to maximise the time here is recommended.



Mt. Paekdu Secret Camp

The guerilla headquarters of General Kim Il Sung during the anti-Japanese struggle set in hidden alpine valley lined by towering peaks and said to be the birthplace of leader Kim Jong Il. See the reconstructed camp telling of how the guerillas lived year in and year out.

Pochonbo Revolutionary Site

Site of the first conventional battle between leader Kim Il Sung's guerilla army and a Japanese garrison. Here you can see monuments commemorating the battle and the former command post, town, etc. from colonial times.



◇ Rimyongsu Waterfall

A scenic waterfall which never freezes due despite chilling alpine winters. The waterfall also provides hydroelectric power to neighboring villages.

Samjiyon Schoolchildren's Palace

Centre of extracurricular activities in the arts, music, and sports for local children with a performance available on weekdays.



◇ Samjiyon Grand Monument

Vast complex of bronze statues, including one of President Kim Il Sung, and stone monuments next to a scenic alpine lake. One of three 'grand monuments' in the country and a truly impressive scenic/propaganda wonder. On the site that the army paused before their first major military engagement. Look for Mt. Paekdu in the background on a clear day.

ACCOMODATION

Pegaebong Hotel

The only option in this area. Located on the edge of Samjiyon Town. A well-maintained place offering hospitable service, a range of potato-based dishes (spuds are the main crop in this area) as well as billiards and a very nice garden area. The hill opposite (Pegaebong means 'pillow hill') has a ski run on it, open only in deep winter, when it is almost impossible to get here! The hill itself is made out of lava erupted from Mt. Paekdu.





photo credit: Austin Andrews

THE NORTHEAST

When I hear the song of the nightingale / In the woods on the mountain behind / I, from whom my love has departed / have become increasingly sorrowful.

- From The Sorrowful Tune of North Hamgyong Province

Fierce dogs fighting in a mud field.

- Traditional saying on the people of the northeast for their determination.

The Northeast is the most remote and least visited region of the DPRK open to foreign tourists. The last area incorporated into the Korean realm, this has traditionally been a frontier for exiles, brigands, and revolutionaries. Heavily industrialized during the Japanese colonial era, Communist idea took early root among the region's many workers and peasants. The region remains a key part of the DPRK economy, especially with the addition of the Rason Special Economic Zone.

At the time of writing travel in this region is best done with a group of 3 or more.



CHONGJIN

The DPRK's 'city of steel', Chongjin is the DPRK's third largest. Its skyline dominated by the towering Kim Chaek Steelworks, Chongjin is the administrative and economic centre of northeast Korea. Being remote and tricky to access, Chongjin sees relatively few western tourists but is well worth the effort to visit. Accessible by internal charter flight or by road from the northern border with China (Rason or Hoeryong) this port and industrial city is perhaps one of the most typically 'North Korean' places you can visit. Home to very remote Chinese and Russian consulates too.

TRANSPORTATION: Chongjin can be reached overland from China or by flight from Pyongyang to the relatively close airport at Orang. Also road access from the remote northern border crossing of Namyang (opposite China's Tumen City) and from the free trade zone of Rason).



◇ Chongjin Trolley Bus

Take a ride down Chongjin's main drag on one of the city's trolleybuses. The slogan 'Our Country is the Best' adorns their sides. Outside of Pyongyang this is the DPRK's only trolleybus system.

◇ Chongjin Central Square

Central Square of Chongjin city with statues of the DPRK leadership. A presentation of flowers is customary (2-3 EUR). As the centre of the city many new buildings have been raised and more are planned for this area.

Jipsam Revolutionary Site

A seaside revolutionary site located just outside of Chongjin with a small beach and scenic rocks. A fishing village sits next to the site and you can get a look at the local squid fishing fleet here.

North Hamgyong Province Art Gallery

Studio exhibiting and selling art from the region at comparatively good prices.

North Hamgyong Province E- Library

A library, study, and computer centre for the province, located just off Chongjin Central Square. Also displays aspirational plans for the redevelopment of Chongjin city centre.



◇ Steelworker's Kindergarten and Performance

Visit to a local kindergarten with a small student musical and theatrical performance as well as a tour of the facilities and introduction to the kindergarten educational system

◇ Chongjin Fisherman's Club

Bar, billiards, restaurant, and sauna for merchant mariners visiting the Chongjin Port. A great place to relax after days on the road in the northeast.

North Hamgyong Province Revolutionary Museum

A museum dedicated to the revolutionary exploits of Northern Hamgyong Province. Their slogan trees exhibit is very good.

So Ryang Hwa Waterfall

A picturesque waterfall along the scenic coastal road from Mt. Chilbo north to Kyongsong. It is possible to stop here if weather permits access to the road.

Yombun Revolutionary Site

A seaside revolutionary site located near Kyongsong between Chongjin and Mt. Chilbo. Great views of the rocky coastline in this area. Nearby are salt flats.



ACCOMODATION

◊ Chongjin Tourist Hotel

A basic hotel near Chongjin railway station with basic rooms, restaurant, sauna, and on-site micro-brewery.

◊ Chongjin Foreigners' Lodging

The former foreign expert apartments of Kim Chaek Steelworks, similar in design to local apartments. Basic rooms but great food and service.

MT. CHILBO

Mt. Chilbo, named after the 'Seven-Treasures' of East Asian lore, is one of the DPRK's most remote and pristine natural areas. Unique for the DPRK it is almost untouched by politics too as it was never visited by Kim Il Sung (almost untouched; there are still some mosaics and sites related to the DPRK's Leaders here).

It is a stunning mountain range of peaks, valleys, waterfalls, and unusually-shaped rocks that lend themselves well to the local habit of telling (often profane) folk stories and legends about the meaning of each shape.

The area can be broken down into three parts: Outer Chilbo - where the mountains rise from the narrow plains and rock formations start to develop through the forests; Inner Chilbo - with hiking trails and walkways to pagodas offering excellent viewpoints as well as the charming Kaesim Buddhist Temple; and Sea Chilbo - where the range abruptly ends at the sea. Beaches, fishing villages, and swimming opportunities lie here where the edge of the DPRK meets the East Sea of Korea (AKA: the Sea of Japan). The main attraction of Chilbosan is natural beauty in all its forms and a break from the politics of the rest of the DPRK.



TRANSPORTATION: From Pyongyang Mt. Chilbo is accessible by charter flight to Orang Airport, around 2 hours by road from the mountain range itself and halfway between here and the city of Chongjin (which should be combined with Chilbo for a great look at the range of things to see in this part of the country). Chilbo can also be reached by road from Rason and the Tumen (China)/Namyang (Korea) border.

MT. CHILBO ACCOMODATION



◇ Homestay Chilbo

The only place in the entire country where tourists can sleep in the homes of locals. This village was built with assistance from the World Tourism Organisation and the families who live here are mostly fishermen and farmers. Some houses have 'European style' beds, and other Korean style mats on the floor. Take a gift for your hosts and have a unique overnight experience here. A beach is a mere 250m down the road too.

Outer Chilbo Hotel

A complex of simple houses in a valley inside the mountain range. Comfy rooms despite the rustic area. Order the pine mushrooms when they are in season.

KYONGSONG

Once one of the primary cities in Hamgyong Province, from which 'Kyong' derives, now eclipsed by neighbor Chongjin. Kyongsong is renowned for its hot spas which provide needed relaxation after days on the road and outdoor activities at Mt. Chilbo. A good spot to stop on the road between Chongjin and Mt. Chilbo.

TRANSPORTATION: Kyongsong is located about 30 -45 minutes south of Chongjin by road. A pleasant drive with farms and mountains to one side and the sea to the other.



◇ Health Spa

There are many of these in Kyongsong (some belong to the military, some to the Party, some are open to the public). Here you can use the saunas and bathing facilities. The water coming up from the ground in a kind of panacea and historical records show it has long been considered good for recovering health and especially fertility (€).

Kyongsong City Walls

Old city walls of Kyongsong city, once the largest city in the region before being eclipsed by nearby Chongjin. You can't actually stop by the walls, but the local guides can point them out from the road.

Kyongsong Revolutionary Site

Japanese colonial-era house once used by the DPRK leadership and telling of their exploits in the region.

ACCOMODATION

◇ Kyongsong Inn

A small hotel in walking distance of Kyongsong's famous spas. Very basic rooms but great seafood, painted mural of the sea, and pleasant grounds. From here a visit to one of Kyongsong's famous sanatoria.



HOERYONG

A remote city in the far north on the border with China and rarely seen by foreign visitors. Nationally known for being the home city of local heroine Ms. Kim Jong Suk – the wife of President Kim Il Sung and mother of Leader Kim Jong Il. The city is famous for its white apricots, ceramics, and beautiful women. Since Hoeryong is located so far from the main population centres of the country, it is very rare to meet anyone who comes from here or who has been here. Amaze any North Korean friends in Pyongyang with tales of a trip here!

TRANSPORTATION: Literally a stone's throw from Chinese territory this city can be reached by land from China or via charter flight from Pyongyang to Orang and then a long drive north.



Kim Ki Sung Middle School

Local school named for the brother of Ms. Kim Jong Suk. Tour the facilities, drop in on classrooms to help practice English, or play football in the schoolyard.

◇ Central Square and Statue of Ms. Kim Jong Suk

Bronze statue of 'The Mother of Korea' in central Hoeryong. A presentation of flowers is customary here (€). This is notably the only city in the DPRK that doesn't have statues of Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il downtown.

DPRK-Chinese border at Hoeryong

View of the commercial border crossing with China across the Tumen River. This specific crossing cannot be made by tourists, but a nearby crossing from the town of Namyang to the Chinese city of Tumen is accessible.

Hoeryong Revolutionary Museum

Museum depicting the revolutionary struggles of the region. Particularly interesting for its giant mural depicting the 'Three Generals of Mt. Paekdu' during the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle. The painting was made by artists from the Mansudae Art Studio in Pyongyang and smaller replicas of it can be found throughout the country.

Native House of Ms. Kim Jong Suk

Traditional Korean home of Kim Jong Suk set among a peaceful white apricot orchard, a product for which Hoeryong is famous.



◇ Wangjaesen Grand Monument

Large tower and socialist realist sculpture group set atop a prominent mountain and dedicated to the anti-Japanese guerilla struggle. One of three grand monuments in the DPRK: the others are at Mansudae in Pyongyang and Samjiyon near Mt. Paekdu. Rarely visited by foreigners as only practicable for those crossing the border at Tumen-Namyang.

Wangjaesen Revolutionary History Museum

Next to the Grand Monument this museum tells the tale of revolutionary activity in this area. Some great examples of the famous 'slogan trees' can be found here.

ACCOMODATION

Hoeryong Hotel

A basic hotel featuring large rooms with air conditioning but no hot water, separate sauna/shower block, small shop and bar, and large banquet hall. The staff of the hotel can put on a dinner performance for groups at a cost (€€€€).

DINING

Hoeryong Food Street

Group of restaurants on in downtown Hoeryong offering a taste of the local cuisine.

RASON

The DPRK's first and largest Special Economic Zone, Rason is a combination of the twin cities of Rajin and Sonbong in extreme northeast of the peninsula.

Rason is where economic experimentation takes place in the DPRK: the first mobile phone system was set up here, the first card payment system, the first legal public market. Foreign businesspeople can own property and invest here too. The economic system is simply different, the vibe of the place is different, and a visit here is thus confusing and rewarding.

Technically the area is visa-free, but you do need an entry permit (almost indistinguishable from a visa). Ideal for those who have visited Pyongyang already, for a sense of the similarities and the contrasts all at once, and best combined with a visit to neighboring North Hamgyong Province.

TRANSPORTATION: Bordering with both China and Russia, entry and exit to this area can be made by road (China; every day) or train (Russia; twice a week).

It is also possible to exit from Rason into the rest of North Korea by car, then travel onwards to Chongjin and the Mt. Chilbo area. To get from Rason to Pyongyang, a charter flight from Chongjin is necessary, or you have to go back into China and travel from there. As of late 2017, it is possible to catch a sleeper train from Pyongyang to Rason, which departs on selected days of the month. Delays are possible so you will need to be flexible with both time and money!



◇ Hae'an Park

Seaside area with a small waterpark, 3D cinema, and other leisure facilities. Best for a simple walk around on a nice evening. Popular with local people. Contains a Czech Beer Bar with various beers brewed on site, very highly recommended.

Imperial Hotel

One of the zone's biggest curiosities; this hotel is owned and run by Emperor Group from Hong Kong, it contains a casino which is wildly popular with visiting Chinese tourists (99% of the games are baccarat) as well as a duty-free shop, a nice café, and quirky décor. Possibly the least Korean place in the whole DPRK.



◇◇ Rason City Market

The first free market in the country and the only one that foreign tourists can visit. A row of large buildings full of hundreds of vendors and thousand of local shoppers daily. Most goods are from China (as with all markets in the world) but some interesting local goods can be found here too. No photos allowed, but use of the local currency here is legal. Well worth a couple of hours for the people-watching and mingling alone!

Golden Triangle Bank

Learn how the economic system in Rason differs from that of the rest of the country. You can also exchange foreign currency for local currency (legally) here. Spend it at Rason City Market.



Foreign Languages Bookshop

Sells a range of publications in foreign languages, mostly in Chinese. It also sells souvenirs, including some interesting alcohol.

Kimilsungia and Kimjongilia Flower Greenhouse

Every city, town, village, factory has one of these, but this one is well laid out, shows how people in this far northern area grow these iconic national flowers, and display them for festivals in February and April.

Mountain Viewpoint

Exceptional view over the whole of Rajin city and port area. A bit of a climb which starts at a tourist souvenir shop (aimed at Chinese tourists) but much of the road can be driven. Ideal on a clear day.

Orphanage School

New, modern, well-equipped school for orphans of various ages. A tour of the building can be led by a local teacher.



◇ Rason Port

The largest of the ports in this area, made up of three piers and various container areas. Foreign ships from China and Russia come through this ice-free port for shipping and for storage. You can even see foreign dock workers and crews. The lifeline of this area.

Rason Revolutionary Museum

As with all Revolutionary Museums this is dedicated to the revolutionary exploits of the national leaders and their anti-Japanese activity in this area.

Rason Schoolbag Factory

Interesting small factory making bags for schoolchildren of various ages. Many different designs. These are provided at subsidized rates to kids throughout this region.

Rason Textiles Factory

One of the main industries of the area. Not always possible to visit but when it is you see rows of locals finishing off clothes, jackets, etc.

Haeyang Revolutionary Site

A 20 min drive from Rajin City this set of two houses are still occupied but are notable for having been visited by Kim Il Sung, who gave 'on the spot guidance' about the lives of fisher folk. There is a nice view of the sea here.

Pipha Island

Scenic spot on the coast named for the musical instrument it is shaped like. People who live on the other side of it call it 'Whale Island' though (it's a matter of perspective!). Boat trips to see a nearby seal colony operate from here (weather dependent).

Rajin Stadium

Small but pretty stadium for local sports events, usually football. Catch a match if there is one going on!

Rason Foreign Languages High School

Tour the facilities, and even jump in to help out with a lesson in English, Russian, or Chinese. Very talented kids at this school.



◇ Seafood Factories

As a coastal area, seafood processing is a key part of the domestic and international economy (when sanctions allow). The largest and most impressive is the Tae'an Trading Company complex, with dozens of rooms for processing the catch. Also the Rajin City Seafood Factory and the smaller Pipha Island Trout Farm are worth a look. Fresh seafood can be purchased and cooked nearby.

Statues of DPRK Leaders

Situated on a hill looking over the centre of town. *Presenting flowers is customary here (€).*

Rajin Square

At one end is the Namsan Hotel with its giant screen showing local TV at the front (locals gather to watch when the weather is good), at the other a small bar serving excellent local beer.

RASON AREA & SONGBONG ATTRACTIONS

DPRK-Russian Friendship House

A small building just outside Tumangang town and overlooking the borders of China and Russia. Displays photos of visiting Russian leaders and DPRK's Leaders' visits to Russia

Tri-border Viewpoint

A pavilion atop a strategic hill from where a notable naval battle was directed in the past. Offers a windy view over the borders with China and Russia - all can be clearly seen from up here - an excellent finish to a visit in Rason.

Sonbong Revolutionary Site

Quiet and scenic complex of buildings on the waterfront. Made up of a former Japanese merchant's house that was turned into a Party HQ, a house where Kim Jong Suk stayed when visiting the area in the 1940s, and various monuments and mosaics about revolutionary exploits in Sonbong.

Sonbong Kindergarten

Very good example of early education in the DPRK. Welcoming staff and small but carefully-maintained facility. One of only a few things that can be visited in Sonbong city.

RASON ACCOMODATION

Rason has more than 20 hotels that can accommodate foreign visitors. Most are used by visiting business people from China. We have selected a handful below which we recommend considering.



◇ Namsan Hotel

A rare remnant of the Japanese colonial-era. This classic building has central location within walking distance of some locations. Somewhat dated rooms but a modern lobby, good bar/café, quality breakfast.

DINING

When in Rason, try the seafood and try the Czech beer.

Dongmyong Hotel

Very comfortable hotel overlooking the sea with excellent facilities and swimming pool but far out of town. Seaview rooms have a great view and surcharge. Rooms at the back have a close-up view of a hill.

Emperor Hotel

High-end resort used with casino for Chinese gambling visitors (invitation only). Nice facilities and pool but unless you're here for the baccarat only it is a bit remote and not-at-all Korean. AKA Imperial Hotel (confusing!).

Pipha-gak Guesthouse

Charming place on a mountain by the sea but remote and nowhere near town. Used by high profile visitors in the past.

Rajin Hotel

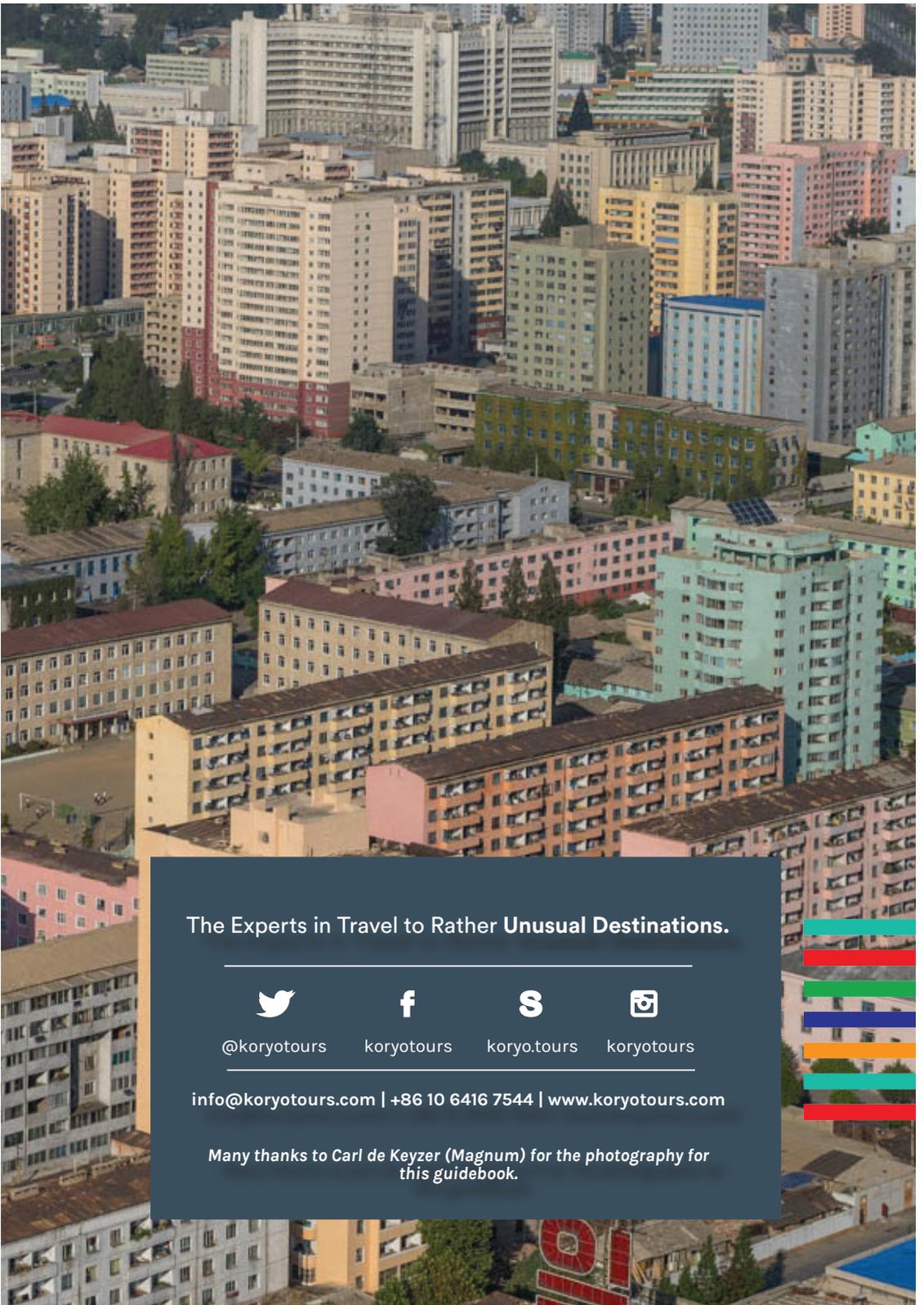
A 1980s style large building with a view over Hae'an Park and Rajin Port. Basic leisure facilities and a good location.

Sonbong Hotel

Very basic but the only option for an overnight in Sonbong City. On the waterfront near the Sonbong Revolutionary Site.

Songbyok Hotel

A quirky, remote hotel shaped like part of the Great Wall near Sobon Lake and the DPRK-Russia-China border.



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