



North Korea National Day Cross-Country Train Tour

TOUR

September 8th – 17th 2020

8 nights in North Korea + travel time

OVERVIEW

One of our most unique tour packages, this North Korea tour takes you on a local train from Pyongyang across to [North Korea's East Coast](#) and then onward up to the extreme North of the country; the [Rason Special Economic Zone](#).

On this tour, we will be in North Korea for North Korea National Day - one of the biggest North Korea holidays, celebrating the foundation of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea). This year, North Koreans throughout the country will be in full celebration mode as they enjoy the festivities for the 72nd North Korea National Day.

During our time in [Pyongyang](#), we will take part in celebrations with the locals, as well as seeing all of the main sites and highlights of the city including; the [Mansudae Grand Monument](#), [Kumsusan Palace of the Sun](#), and the [Pyongyang Metro](#). We then visit the west coast city of [Nampo](#), as well as spending a night in [Kaesong](#), a border city just 10 minutes away from the [DMZ](#) North-South Korean border, before we start the next part of the adventure.

The next part of the tour has us travelling all across North Korea on a local train as we head from Pyongyang all the way to Rason in the North East, bordering with both China and Russia. [Rason](#) is the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) of North Korea and annually sees very few international tourists. See how locals travel by train, mingle with fellow-passengers, and get fantastic access to parts of the country only a few tourists have ever seen.

This tour ends in Yanji, China. But we can help to arrange your ongoing transport back to Beijing or elsewhere.

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DAILY ITINERARY

SEPTEMBER 7 – MONDAY

Briefing Day and Train Departure Day

***Pre-Tour Briefing** | *We require all travellers to attend a pre-tour briefing that covers regulations, etiquette, safety, and practicalities for travel in North Korea. The briefing lasts approximately one hour, followed by a question and answers session. Please be punctual for the briefing. You can come early, meet your fellow travellers, pay any outstanding tour fees and browse our collection of Korean art. A proper presentation is an essential part of travel to North Korea.*

For this tour, we will hold two briefings. One in the morning for those departing by train this afternoon and the other in the afternoon for those leaving by flight the next day.

AM

- *Recommended latest arrival in Beijing.*
- **10:00** | **briefing for those departing by train.**

PM

- **16:00** | **briefing for those departing by flight.**
- **17:27** | **Train travellers depart Beijing Station** by domestic sleeper train to [Dandong](#), the Chinese city on the border with the DPRK. Please arrange independent travel to the train station and arrive at least an hour and a half early for the train departure.

Overnight | *Hotel in Beijing not included in the tour for those taking the flight the next day. Contact us for recommendations near our office! Those travelling by train will spend the night on the train.*

SEPTEMBER 8 – TUESDAY

Arrival day in Pyongyang

AM

- **Train transfer at Dandong Station** from overnight sleeper train to Dandong-Pyongyang local. *Our local representative in Dandong will assist with the transfer. The train crosses the China-North Korea border followed by North Korean customs and immigration.*

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- **Free bus** from the Koryo Tours office to Beijing Capital Airport Terminal 2 for those taking the flight. *Exact time TBC at the pre-tour briefing. Alternatively, meet the group at the Air Koryo check-in counter.*

PM

- Flight departure from Beijing on **Air Koryo flight JS152** at 13:05. *A 1.5-hour flight with basic lunch (no vegetarian option).*
- **Flight arrival into [Pyongyang's Sunan International Airport](#)** (FNJ) at 16:05. DPRK immigration and customs, meet your Korean guides and transfer to hotel.
- Check-in at hotel followed by a **walk on post-war Pyongyang's oldest street Victory (Sungni) Street** from Kim Il Sung Square to **Pyongyang Railway Station**.
- Train arrival to Pyongyang Railway Station at 18:45.
- **[Mirae \(Future\) Scientists Street](#)** | Walk in the newly built residential district for scientists and academics to view its unique modern architecture.

Overnight | **[Haebangsan Hotel](#)**, Pyongyang. An old classic hotel located in downtown Pyongyang. Popular with Pyongyang's long-term residents. Excellent restaurant.

SEPTEMBER 9 – WEDNESDAY

DPRK National Day

AM

- **[Mansudae Fountain Park](#)** | The historic centre of Pyongyang popular with local citizens after school and on weekends. Flanked by examples of ancient, socialist, and modern architecture.
- **[Mansudae Grand Monument](#)** | Enormous bronze statues of President Kim Il Sung and Leader Kim Jong Il overlooking downtown Pyongyang. A presentation of flowers and bow by the group is customary here (5 EUR). Here we will also see the Chollima, or 'thousand *ri* [400 miles] horse' – a symbol of speed- commemorating the quick rebuilding of the country in the 1950s following the Korean War.
- **[Mass Dance](#)** | We'll watch as hundreds of locals, many in brightly coloured national dress, join together in a beautifully choreographed dance in the heart of the city (and maybe even join in ourselves!)

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- [Pyongyang Metro Tour](#) | One of the deepest metro systems in the world with stunning artwork reflecting the name of each station. We'll ride six stations on the Chollima Line.
- [Arch of Triumph](#) | Massive archway made for the 70th anniversary of President Kim Il Sung in 1982 and commemorating the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule. Larger than its counterpart in Paris.
- [Moranbong Park](#) | We'll take a stroll and have picnic lunch in Pyongyang's central park popular with locals for picnics, dances, and sports. The park filled with historic pavilions, walls, and monuments- modern and ancient, a few of which are among the traditional 'Eight Great Sights of Pyongyang'.

PM

- **Volleyball Game** | We'll take on a local team in a game of volleyball!
- [Pyongyang Circus](#) (*optional*) | A one hour circus show including clowns, trapeze artists, jugglers, and much more. Pyongyang has two circuses: the Military Circus (no animals) and the Civilian Circus (with animals).
- [Tram Ride](#) | A ride through Pyongyang on one of the city's trams from Kwangbok Street. A Koryo exclusive!
- [Kaeson Funfair](#) | We'll take on the rides of Pyongyang's newest funfair with the locals: pirate ship, vominator, rollercoaster, bumper cars, arcades, and more. Tickets purchased on the spot (1 EUR entry, 2-7 EUR for rides).

Overnight | Haebangsan Hotel, Pyongyang

SEPTEMBER 10 – THURSDAY

Kumsusan Palace of the Sun and Drive to Kaesong

AM

- [Kumsusan Palace of the Sun](#) | Mausoleum of the DPRK leadership where President Kim Il Sung and Leader Kim Jong Il lie in state and the most solemn location on the itinerary. *Please note formal dress is required. Men require collared shirt with tie, dark non-jean pants, and dark shoes. Women need covered shoulders, knee-length dress or pants, and closed-toed shoes. The visit will take most of the morning, and visitors are asked to bow several times inside. This is a state-administered site and visits are subject to local conditions. Cancellations are rare but possible.*
- [Railway Museum](#) | Museum dedicated to the development of the DPRK's railways with some antique engines and cars on display. It was built on the location of Pyongyang's former baseball ballpark. Take me out to the Railway Museum!

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- [Kim Il Sung Square](#) | Pyongyang's central square lined with government ministries, Museum and The Grand People's Study House, Korea's national library. See the centre of it all!
- [Foreign Languages Bookshop](#) | Store selling Korean publications translated into English, German, French, Russian, Chinese, and Spanish. Also pick up DVDs, postcards, and small works of art.
- [Okryugwan](#) | A meal at Pyongyang's most famous restaurant. Housed in a massive traditional building on the banks of the Taedong River. Okryugwan specialises in Pyongyang Cold Noodles.

PM

- [Tower of the Juche Idea](#) | Iconic tower dedicated to the DPRK's guiding philosophy on the Taedong River. Take the elevator to the top for 5 EUR for great views of the city.
- [Monument to the Party Foundation](#) | Iconic structure featuring the hammer, sickle, writing brush which make up the emblem of the Worker's Party of Korea and represent workers, farmers, and intellectuals.
- Drive 3 hours south along the 'Reunification Highway' to [Kaesong](#), the ancient capital of the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392 AD) located near today's Korean Demilitarized Zone with a stop at the [Monument to the Three-Charter of National Reunification](#) an iconic arch over the Pyongyang-Kaesong Highway dedicated to joint meeting between the Koreas, north and south. Also known as the 'Arch of Reunification'.
- **Dinner and Kayagum Performance** | Traditional Korean stringed instrument performance at the Minsok Folk Hotel.

[Minsok Folk Hotel, Kaesong](#) | 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.

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SEPTEMBER 11 – FRIDAY

Historic Kaesong and Panmunjom

AM

- [Old City Walk and South Gate](#) | A stroll from the hotel through Kaesong's historic district lined with homes dating back to the Ri Dynasty from the city's historic South Gate.
- [Panmunjom Truce Village](#) | 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 society, 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.
- [Kaesong Koryo Museum & Stamp Shop](#) | 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 Site. The buildings are in Koryo Dynasty style but date back to the early 17th century following their destruction in the Imjin War.
- [Traditional Royal Korean Lunch \(*pangsanggi*\)](#) | A meal made of 12 dishes served in brass bowls fit for the kings of old. The more dishes, the more distinguished the guest! Traditional Korean 'sweet meat soup' is an option here (5 EUR).

PM

- [Janam Hill and Old City View](#) | Statues of the DPRK leadership on a hill overlooking Kaesong city and historic pavilion used for archery demonstrations in days of yore.
- [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 divide the nation permanently. A 45 minute drive each way from Kaesong through scenic countryside.
- Drive back to **Pyongyang**. 3-hour drive.

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- [Mansugyo Beer Bar](#) | A new standing bar serving seven types of beer (50 cents a pint). Popular with locals after work and on weekends!

Overnight | Haebangsan Hotel, Pyongyang

SEPTEMBER 12 – SATURDAY

Pyongyang and Nampo

AM

- [Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum and USS Pueblo](#) | We'll tour this world-class Museum led by a local museum guides. Renovated in 2012 and its exhibits of Korean War from the DPRK perspective containing artefacts, documents, photos, and lifelike dioramas. The exterior grounds house the War Victory Monument and displays of Korean People's Army Hero Equipment and capture equipment from the US military, including the spy ship [USS Pueblo](#). Central to the understanding of the country today and a highlight of the trip.
- [Mangyongdae Native House](#) | Birthplace of and childhood home of President Kim Il Sung. A traditional Korean house in beautiful natural surroundings.
- [Kwangbok Department Store](#) | Exchange for Korean currency and shop with the citizens of Pyongyang! Try the snack stand on the first floor for some of Pyongyang's best local eats.

PM

- Drive west along the 'Youth Hero Highway' to [Nampo](#) (45 minutes to 1-hour drive), the port city of Pyongyang at the mouth of the Taedong River on the West Sea.
- [Chongsam-ri Co-operative Farm](#) | The DPRK's most famous and iconic model farm. Visited hundreds of times by Kim Il Sung, the place where the 'Chongsam-ri Method' was developed (they will explain on-site). See how the farming system works, visit a farmhouse, the local shop, kindergarten and see the fields and greenhouses.
- [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. It also acts as a ship lock and fish ladder—one of the DPRK's greatest engineering feats.
- [Pi Island](#) | A local beach next to West Sea Barrage. Go for a swim or join the locals for a karaoke.

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- [Tae'an Glass Factory](#) | factory producing glass and glass products for the domestic market. Watch the glass-making process from smelting to sheet-cutting and even try to break a sheet of strengthened glass.
- Drive back to **Pyongyang**.
- Farewell dinner at one of Pyongyang's excellent BBQ restaurants, the perfect way to finish off the first part of our tour.

Overnight | Haebangsan Hotel, Pyongyang

SEPTEMBER 13 – SUNDAY

Riding the Local Train!

AM

- **Train departure from Pyongyang Station** at 07:45. Say goodbye to Pyongyang and off we go!
- Most of the morning is spent travelling through relatively flat land. The first main stop is the city of Pyongsong; then the train sets off on a zigzagging path across the spine of the country heading for the East Coast.

PM

- Through the afternoon we will go through valleys, over bridges and through tunnels, stopping at remote and unheard-of stations. Amazing views throughout!
- Into the evening, the coast approaches. The tunnels become fewer as the mountains give way to a narrow strip of plains, and the city of Hamhung is reached, a significant city, here the train will pause for a while before switching from an easterly course to a northern one.
- It will be dark by now, time for bed. Each person will have a comfortable bunk for the night, and the train is slow and smooth. The Korean countryside is very dark, so not much to see out of the windows until dawn.

Overnight | On the train. Comfortable soft sleeper beds with fresh bedding for each person.

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SEPTEMBER 14 – MONDAY

Aboard the Train - Arrival in Rason

AM

- When we wake up we will be heading up the coast: seaside views and fishing villages to the right, fields leading to hills to the left. The train doesn't follow the coast though as it passes on the inland side of the Chilbosan Mountain range.
- We will pass Orang Airport and the town of Kyongsong shortly before arriving in the principal city of Chongjin. Another moderately long stop here before heading even further north. Our destination approaches but still some sights to be seen and stops to make.
- Although the Rason zone is part of the DPRK, it is administered differently, so there is a kind of internal customs to pass. The guards will board the train and check tickets and passports. They may be surprised to see foreigners on this train, but be friendly, and they will be too!

PM

- **Arrival at Rajin station** after the train journey from Pyongyang – get off the train and meet the local guides.
- **Statues of the DPRK's Leaders** situated on a hill behind the hotel and offering a great view over the city and bay.
- [General intro to Rason area](#) | Drive through Rajin city and check into the centrally located Namsan Hotel.
- Rest at the hotel or spend some leisure time in a Korean-style sauna or get a massage if you like in one of Rajin's many health centres.
- After dinner, have a walk through the **Hae'an Park** at the seaside. In good weather, locals will gather here.
- **Czech Beer Bar** | Opened with foreign investment. Slake your thirst with a range of made-on-site brews before dinner and overnight in this part of the DPRK.

Overnight | Namsan Hotel, Rajin. Centrally located and locally famous. Right in the heart of Rajin city.

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SEPTEMBER 15 – TUESDAY

Rason - Special Economic Zone

AM

- Drive from Rajin to the nationally-famous **Pipha Island Area**, a scenic spot known to all North Koreans for its beauty.
- [Salmon and Trout Farm](#) | This is a seafood producing area after all – learn how they operate such places here.
- **Emperor Hotel** | Built with investment from Hong Kong this houses the first casino in the DPRK. Chinese tourists flock here for gambling, and you can have a flutter yourself too, or enjoy a coffee and a look around this unexpected place!
- [Pipha Island](#) itself | A narrow road links it to the mainland. From here you can take an optional boat ride to see some seals who populate some rocks nearby, relax at the waterfront, or try some local seafood.

PM

- [Golden Triangle Bank](#) | Here we will learn about the different economic system of Rason, change money into local won (yes, it is legal, not to be taken out of the country though, you are supposed to spend it), and see actual banking going on, the only place you get to witness this in the DPRK!
- [Foreign Language School](#) | Here local children learn English, Chinese, and other languages. Step in and help out with some lessons!
- **Sonryang Hana Shoe Factory** | Interesting small factory founded by a overseas Korean making various types of shoes (basketball, football, snow boots and many more). Many different designs. The logo of the brand is the Korean letter 'thiut (ㅄ)' referring to 'reunification'.
- [Rajin Port](#) | Here you will see what kind of industry is going on; fishing, shipping goods in and out, and look out for some very non-Korean people; one of the three piers operated by Russians who live on-site!
- [Haeyang Revolutionary Site](#) | A 20-minute drive from Rajin City this set of two houses are still occupied but are notable for having visited by Kim Il Sung. He gave 'on the spot guidance' about the lives of fisherfolk. There is a beautiful view of the sea here.

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- [Rajin City Market](#) | The only local market open to tourists in the whole country. Spread out through several buildings find consumer goods, stationery, food, drinks, building material, bicycles, and everything else a person in Rason would need. You can buy things too if you like – spend local money or RMB. Worth it just for the people-watching opportunity as it can get bustling here indeed!

Overnight: Namsan Hotel, Rajin

SEPTEMBER 16 – WEDNESDAY

Rason to Yanji – 2 different worlds!

AM

- Drive to the nearby city of **Sonbong**, the smaller of the sister cities in this zone.
- Stop for photos in the centre of town | Here there is a theatre, some monuments and mosaics, and an immortality tower too.
- **Sonbong Revolutionary Site** | Associated with the end of Japanese rule over Korea. The guides will explain the whole story.
- Drive on to **Tumangang Town**, right up on the Russian and Chinese borders, enjoy a packed lunch in this area.

PM

- Visit the [Russia-DPRK Friendship house](#) | Exhibit of photos of visits by key figures from the neighbouring countries.
- [3 Countries Border Viewpoint](#) | A picturesque pavilion offering views into China and Russia. From here you can see how the river divides the nations and also hear about a historical naval battle that a famed Korean admiral directed from this very hilltop.
- Next up is our final drive in the DPRK | We head across the northern part of the Rason zone and end up at **Wonjong Bridge**, the frontier between the DPRK and the PRC. We pass through customs here on the Korean side, take a short ride or walk across the bridge and then we are back in China, just like that!
- [Drive to Yanji](#) | We will get picked up after we enter China. We have a 3-hour drive (with scenic stops) to the Chinese city of Yanji, the capital of the **Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region**. We'll end up here for dinner, drinks to celebrate the end of this adventure, and an overnight stay to bring our tour to a close. Congratulations to you for being with us on this fantastic journey!

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Overnight | Yanji Hotel, Yanji

SEPTEMBER 17 – THURSDAY

Final Day

- Our tour sadly ends today, and we all bid each other a fond *farewell!* How you depart from here is up to you – there are trains, planes, buses, etc. Koryo Tours can assist in planning onward travel in this region, back to Beijing, or onward elsewhere (Yanji may seem remote, but you can get to a lot of fascinating places from here without too much difficulty) – drop us a line with how you plan to finish this trip, and we'll help you out!

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