



North Korea Budget Tour + Vladivostok

TOUR

March 20th – 31st 2021

8 nights in North Korea + Beijing-Pyongyang travel time

OVERVIEW

A unique tour package from Koryo Tours - the only experts in DPRK travel!

After a comprehensive introductory tour to the frequently visited parts of North Korea, we take you on [a local train from Pyongyang across to the DPRK's East Coast](#) and then onwards up to the extreme North of the country; the [Rason](#) Special Economic Zone.

See how locals travel by train, mingle with fellow-passengers, and get amazing access to parts of the country that only a few tourists have ever seen. On this tour, we take you to see the main sites of the capital city [Pyongyang](#), including; a ride on the [Pyongyang Metro](#), [Juche Tower](#), Kim Il Sung Square, and a walk down one of Pyongyang's newest streets. We will also head out of Pyongyang to go to [Pyongsong](#), the centre of scientific research, and the North-South Korea border [DMZ](#).

We will explore Rason and then cross into Russia by rail and make our way to Vladivostok: capital of the Russian Far East and closed to all foreigners during the USSR years. We show you around the highlights of this diverse and wonderful remote city including some amazing abandoned underground bases and military sites - far beyond the 'usual' tourist experience in both North Korea and Russia. Another specially curated trip from Koryo Tours! For our standard North Korea Budget Tour (March) [click here](#).

Be warned, there will be little time to for rest on this action-packed itinerary - not that you'll want to, though!

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DAILY ITINERARY

MARCH 19 – FRIDAY

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 answer 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 briefing 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 departing 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.

MARCH 20 – SATURDAY

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.

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Train crosses the China-North Korea border followed by North Korean customs and immigration.

- **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 12:55. *A 1.5-hour flight with basic lunch (no vegetarian option).*
- **Flight arrival into [Pyongyang's Sunan International Airport](#)** (FNJ) at 15:55. DPRK immigration and customs, meet your Korean guides, and transfer to the city.
- **Pyongyang Hotel Coffee Shop** | Some of the best coffee in Pyongyang (3-5 EUR) and decent views of downtown and the Taedong River.
- Walk from **Pyongyang Grand Theatre** to the hotel.
- Train arrival to Pyongyang at 18:45.
- Walk to the hotel from **Pyongyang Railway Station**.

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

MARCH 21 – SUNDAY

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 require 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 a number of times inside. This is a state-administered site and visits are subject to local conditions. Cancellations are rare but possible.*
- **[Revolutionary Martyrs' Cemetery](#)** | Hilltop cemetery with dozens of bronze busts of those who took part in the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule.

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- [Mansudae Fountain Park](#) | The historic centre of Pyongyang popular with local citizens afterschool 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). *Please note this is a government-administered sight and visits are subject to cancellation. Visits are optional and require a certain dress code (close-toed shoes and covered legs and shoulders).* Here we will also see the [Chollima Monument](#), or 'thousand ri (400 km or 250 mile) horse' -a symbol of speed- commemorating the quick rebuilding of the country in the 1950s following the Korean War.
- [Okryugwan](#) | A meal at Pyongyang's most famous restaurant. Housed in a huge traditional building on the banks of the Taedong River. Okryugwan specialises in Pyongyang Cold Noodles.

PM

- [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.
- Drive 1 hour to [Sarwion](#) the provincial seat of North Hwanghae Province and a centre of agriculture and industry with a stop at the [Monument to the Three-Charters 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'.
- [Migok Co-Operative Farm](#) | An example of a North Korean co-operative farm. Visit the farm museum, a farmhouse and a viewpoint overlooking the Chaeryong Plains.
- [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.
- Continue south along the '[Reunification Highway](#)' to **Kaesong**, ancient capital of the [Koryo Dynasty](#) (918-1392 AD) located near today's Korean Demilitarized Zone (**2 hours**).
- Dinner with **Kayagum Performance** | Traditional Korean stringed instrument performance, one of the the most beautiful sounds you will ever hear. Tip recommended (1-3 EUR) for this beautiful demonstration of Korean music.

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Overnight | [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.

MARCH 22 – MONDAY

Historic Kaesong and Panmunjom

AM

- [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 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 \(Songgyungwan Academy\)](#) | 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 Site. The buildings are in Koryo Dynasty style but date back to the early 17th century following their destruction in the Imjin War.
- [Stamp Shop](#) | Store selling stamps, postcards, local ginseng, souvenirs, art, and more. One of the best postcard collections in the country.
- [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

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as evidence of intent to permanently divide the nation. A 45 minute drive each way from Kaesong through scenic countryside.

- Drive back to **Pyongyang**. *3-hour drive*.
- [Walk on Future Scientists' Street](#) | An evening stroll through one of Pyongyang's newest neighborhoods.
- Drive north to [Pyongsong](#) a satellite city of Pyongyang and centre of scientific research. *A 45 minute to 1-hour drive*.

Overnight | [Jangsusan Hotel, Pyongsong](#). The only hotel in Pyongsong open for tourists, an excellent bar with one of the best bartenders in the DPRK makes this hotel one of the most fun in the whole country! Basic facilities with fairly reliable electricity and hot water. Billiards, karaoke, haircut, and outdoor eateries in summer.

MARCH 23 – TUESDAY

Pyongsong and Pyongyang City Tours

AM

- [Pyongsong City Square](#) | Central square of Pyongsong City with statues of the DPRK leadership and flanked by the provincial revolutionary museum. Presentation of flowers customary.
- [Kim Jong Suk Higher Middle School](#) | One of the DPRK's top middle schools for gifted students, tourists are encouraged to help teach an English class!
- [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 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.

PM

- Return to the capital. *45 minute-1-hour drive*.
- [Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum](#) | Tour this world-class museum led by a local museum guide. Renovated in 2012 and it exhibits the 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 captured equipment from the US

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military, including the [USS Pueblo](#). Central to the understanding of the country today and highlight of the trip.

- [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 great views of the city (*elevator ticket is 5 EUR*).
- [Monument to the Party Foundation](#) | Iconic structure featuring the hammer, sickle, writing brush which represent the workers, farmers, and intellectuals that make up the Worker's Party of Korea.
- [Golden Lane Bowling Centre](#) | Where Pyongyang locals go for their ten-pin fix (2.5 EUR per person per game). Also has billiards and arcade games. Non-bowlers can head next door to the [Kumrung Leisure Centre](#) for an airgun shooting range (*approximately 6 EUR per 20 round cartridge*) and some of the best coffee in Pyongyang.
- [Kim Il Sung Square](#) | Pyongyang's central square lined with government ministries, museums, and The Grand People's Study House, Korea's national library. See the centre of it all!
- **Victory (Sungni) Street** | Walk from Kim Il Sung Square to the hotel along one of post-war Pyongyang's oldest streets.

Overnight | Haebangsan Hotel, Pyongyang

MARCH 24 – WEDNESDAY

Pyongyang City Tour

AM

- [Mansudae Art Studio](#) | The DPRK's 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.
- [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.
- [Arch of Triumph](#) | Massive archway commemorating the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule. Made for the 70th anniversary of President Kim Il Sung in 1982.

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- [Jonsung Revolutionary Site](#) | A system of underground tunnels and bunkers used by the DPRK government's cabinet during the 1950s exhibiting life underground during the Korean War.

PM

- **Walk on Ryomyong Street** | A short stroll on Pyongyang's newest street completed in 2017.
- [Railway Museum](#) | Museum dedicated to the development of the DPRK's railways with a number of antique engines and cars on display.
- [Mangyongdae Native House](#) | Birthplace of and childhood home of President Kim Il Sung. A traditional Korean house in a park-like setting.
- [Kwangbok Department Store](#) | Opportunity to use [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.
- [Tram Ride](#) | A ride through Pyongyang from Kwangbok Street to Pyongyang Station on one of the city's municipal trams.
- **Local Beer Bar** | For this beer bar visit we'll be heading to somewhere very special - a true local beer bar in Pyongyang that is off-limits to foreigners. The perfect way to finish our tour and toast our local Korean hosts!
- **Farewell dinner at Arirang Restaurant** | Considered one of Pyongyang's best restaurants serving fantastic Korean food. They also happen to make what some people in the know consider to be the best Makkoli in Pyongyang and served the traditional way.

Overnight | Haebangsan Hotel, Pyongyang

MARCH 27 – THURSDAY

Riding the Local Train!

AM

- **Train departure from Pyongyang Station** at 07:50. Say goodbye to Pyongyang and off we go!

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- 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. This is a major city and here the train will pause for a while before switching from an easterly course to a northerly 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.

MARCH 26 – FRIDAY

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 totally 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 major 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 in a different way, 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 local guides.

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- [General intro to Rason area](#) | Drive through Rajin city and check into the centrally located Namsan Hotel.
- After freshening up (you've spent more than a day on the train after all!), visit the **Statues of the DPRK's Leaders** situated on a hill behind the hotel and offering a great view over the city and bay.
- 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.

MARCH 27 – SATURDAY

Rason - Special Economic Zone

AM

- [Pipha Island Area](#) | Drive from Rajin to this nationally-famous 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.
- [Imperial 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** | 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

- [Rajin Foreign Language School](#) | Here local children learn English, Chinese, and other languages. Step in and help out with some lessons!
- [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 is operated by Russians who live on site!

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- [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!
- [Rajin City Market](#) | The only local market open to tourists in the whole country. Spread out through several buildings find consumer goods, stationary, 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 very busy here indeed!
- In the evening spend some leisure time getting a massage if you like as one of Rajin’s many health centres, or visit a park, or local bar near the hotel before dinner.

Overnight: [Namsan Hotel](#), Rajin

MARCH 28 – SUNDAY

Rason to Vladivostok - 2 different worlds!

AM

- **Sonbong** | Drive to the smaller of the sister cities in this zone
- **Photo stop in Sonbong** | 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.
- **Tumangang Town** | Drive right up on the Russian and Chinese borders, enjoy a packed lunch in this area.

PM

- [Russia-DPRK Friendship house](#) | Visit this house which exhibits 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.
- If you do not wish to join the Russia part of this tour then at this point you will wave an emotional goodbye to those heading into the land of the Bear. You'll then be

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transferred to Wonjong Bridge which crosses from the DPRK to PRC. Pass through customs, immigration, cross the bridge and your tour ends as you enter China. We can help arrange onward travel from here of course, just drop us a line to ask about it!

- **Tumangang Station** | Here we board the train that takes us on the short journey across the bridge into the Russian Federation – a 30 minute stopping-and-starting trip between two very different cultures. On arrival we pass through Russian customs, meet our local Russian guide and have a long night drive (with rest stops) to **Vladivostok**, arriving early in the morning.

Overnight: Vladivostok

MARCH 29 – MONDAY

Vladivostok - Intro to the 'Ruler of the East' and 'Going Underground'

AM

- A leisurely start this morning after a long international journey yesterday.
- **Eagle's Nest** | A hilltop viewpoint looking over the city and Golden Horn bay – great for orientation and to get a sense of where you are.
- **Funicular Railway** | Ride the rails down to the city streets, see how the 19th Century meets the 20th and 21st as we then walk into the heart of the city for lunch at a local café.

PM

- **Heroes Square** | The centre of the city dominated by a statues depicting soviet fighters victorious in the long civil war which followed the October Revolution in 1917. Vladivostok was one of the last places 'liberated' in this war.
- **C-56 Hero Submarine** | Step inside a WWII-era submarine for a history lesson of what it was like to spend time in such a cramped machine, plus the background to the Russian/Soviet/Russian Pacific fleet, Headquartered in Vladivostok.
- **Pacific Fleet Shop** | Get yourself kitted out in a stylish striped sailor's shirt here if you like!
- **Final stop on the mighty Trans-Siberian Railway** | The marker positioned at the 9288th km of the route. A basic history of how the rails stretched from Europe to here will be explained, as well as what Ho Chi Minh was doing on this platform so many times in the 1920s.

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- **NKVD base and bomb shelter** | Vladivostok is full of tunnels and secret areas and this is one of the very best. A guided trip through history and engineering, all taking place in tunnels under the city. Wear something warm and prepare to learn a lot about the psychology of living in such a society and preparing for action at all times.
- **Vladivostok Post Office** | When we emerge like moles back into the light, we will make a stop at the post office (send cards if you like) and a statue of an unusual American lady who lived here pre-revolution, before lunch in the city.

Overnight: Vladivostok

MARCH 30 – TUESDAY

Russkiy Island (Abandoned Vladivostok)

AM

- **Russkiy Island** | Today we cross one of the brand new bridges built in Vladivostok for the 2012 APEC summit to Russkiy Island. Much key infrastructure has been moved to this island in the last few years as it was previously only accessible by boat – now the bridge has made it much easier to access
- **Voroshilov Battery** | On Russkiy Island (it is big, bigger than the rest of the city) we will first visit this famous Battery. Credited with saving the city from Japanese invasion (it's a long story, hear it all on the trip), as well as a new nearby tank and military equipment park (yes you can fire an AK-47 here).
- **The Man's Monastery** | The only island monastery in the Russian Far East. In the past, these were the most powerful fortifications of the Vladivostok Fortress, in Soviet times, the territory of one of the military units, now monks have replaced the defending soldiers. A long, barracks-type one-story building in the back of the courtyard is the main temple of the monastery, once a regimental church of the 34th Siberian Rifle Regiment, then a club. Here there will be the monastery lunch.

PM

- **Russky Mountain** | This is the highest point of Russky Island and one of the largest peaks in Vladivostok. The top offers a wonderful view of Vladivostok where you can make mind-blowing photos.
- **Former Military Sites** | We'll visit former bases on the island this afternoon as well as a look at some of the new constructions put here for the summit and see how island life is changed since connection to the rest of the city.

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- **Voevoda Bay Marine Farm** | Here you will meet marine biologists who are engaged in the cultivation of aquatic organisms. Accompanied by a technologist, you will visit the premises where spawning and cultivation of sea cucumber and oysters takes place. You can see where scallops, sea cucumber, and oysters are grown.
- **Vladivostok** | Finally we return to the main part of the city for a **farewel dinner with fresh seafood at a Far Eastern cuisine restaurant.**

Overnight: Vladivostok

MARCH 31 – WEDNESDAY

Final Day

- Our tour sadly ends today and we all bid each other a fond *da svedanya!* How you depart is up to you – there are trains, planes, buses, and boats. Koryo Tours can assist in planning onward travel to China, if you are staying in Russia we can make the *Letter of Invitation* for the visa last longer to cover onward travel which we can also advise on – drop us a line with how you plan to finish this trip and we'll help you out!

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The Experts in Travel to Rather Unusual Destinations.
info@koryotours.com | +86 10 6416 7544 | www.koryotours.com
27 Bei Sanlitun Nan, Chaoyang District, 100027, Beijing, China