



The Liberation Day and Mt. Paektu Tour

TOUR

August 12th – 23rd 2021

11 nights in North Korea + Beijing-Pyongyang travel time

OVERVIEW

Join Koryo Tours on an adventure through North Korea (DPRK) that includes highlights such as partaking in [Liberation Day national holiday celebrations](#), taking a domestic chartered Air Koryo flight, and seeing the beautiful and sacred mountain of [Mt. Paektu](#) - the highest peak in Korea.

This tour begins in the North Korean capital city, [Pyongyang](#), where we will visit all of the must-see sights, and more! This includes the [Juche Tower](#), the [Arch of Triumph](#), and a stop at the [Kwangbok Supermarket](#), a local North Korean supermarket. Spending our first few days touring Pyongyang means we can enjoy the Liberation Day celebrations with the locals.

[Liberation Day](#) marks the end of Japanese occupation, and the local North Koreans spend this day by dancing in the park, playing games, and eating and drinking. After a few days of Pyongyang city touring, this comprehensive North Korea tour takes you out of the capital and into the North Korean countryside for a tour of areas rarely visited by foreigners. This includes visiting [Wonsan](#), [Mt. Kumgang](#), and [Mt. Paektu](#). You will be staying at the Yanggakdo Hotel, one of the deluxe standard hotels in Pyongyang.

Looking for a shorter Liberation Day in North Korea trip? Check out our shorter but comprehensive [The Liberation Day Tour](#).

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DAILY ITINERARY

AUGUST 11 – WEDNESDAY

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.

AUGUST 12 – THURSDAY

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. 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 JS252** at 14:05. A *1.5-hour flight with basic lunch (no vegetarian option)*.
- **Flight arrival into Pyongyang's Sunan International Airport** (FNJ) at 17:05. DPRK immigration and customs, meet your Korean guides, and transfer to the city.
- Train arrival to Pyongyang Railway Station at 18:45.
- **Walk on Future Scientists' Street** | An evening stroll through one of Pyongyang's newest neighborhoods.

Overnight | [**Yanggakdo International Hotel**](#), Pyongyang. Home away from home for most (but not all!) foreign visitors to Pyongyang, this 47-story hotel is located on an island in the middle of the Taedong River and offers great views of the city. Comfortable rooms and comprehensive leisure facilities: swimming pool, spa, billiards, bowling, gift shops, tea houses, beer brewed on-site, and a Chinese-run casino.

AUGUST 13 – FRIDAY

Pyongyang City Tour and Nampo

AM

- [**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
- [**Victory \(Sungni\) Street**](#) | Walk from Pyongyang Grand Theatre to Kim Il Sung Square along one of post-war Pyongyang's oldest streets.
- [**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.
- [**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 with 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 military, including the

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USS Pueblo. Central to the understanding of the country today and highlight of the trip.

- **Walk on Ryomyong Street** | A short stroll on Pyongyang's newest street completed in 2017.

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- 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.
- **Chongsan-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), the place where the 'Chongsam-ri Method' was developed (they will explain on-site). See how the farming system works, visit a farmhouse and the local shop & kindergarten, 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.
- **Clam BBQ** | A North Korean style clam bake!

Overnight | **Ryonggang Hot Spa Hotel**, Nampo. Compound with holiday houses and a main building for dinner and entertainment. Bring a torch! 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.

AUGUST 14 – SATURDAY

Pyongyang City Tour

AM

- **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**.
- **Grand People's Study House** | National library and public correspondence university with Neo-traditional Korean and great views of the city.

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- **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

- **Tower of the Juche Idea** | Iconic tower on the Taedong River dedicated to the DPRK's guiding philosophy. 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.
- A ride through Pyongyang from Kwangbok Street to Pyongyang Station on one of the city's [municipal trams](#).
- **Kaesong 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 | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

AUGUST 15 – SUNDAY

Liberation Day – the 76th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule

On August 15th there will be holiday celebrations in Pyongyang. We expect student-organised mass dances at prominent locations throughout the city, people heading to parks for a leisurely picnic, and performances in the afternoon.

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.*
- **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*

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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 miles) horse’ - a symbol of speed - commemorating the quick rebuilding of the country in the 1950s following the Korean War.

- [**Moranbong Park and picnic lunch**](#) | We'll take a stroll in Pyongyang's central park popular with locals for picnics, dances, and sports (especially on holidays such as the one today!). The park is filled with historic pavilions, walls, and monuments – modern and ancient, a few of which are among the traditional ‘Eight Great Sights of Pyongyang’.

PM

- [**Mangyongdae Native House**](#) | Birthplace and childhood home of President Kim Il Sung. A traditional Korean house in a beautiful natural surrounding.
- [**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.
- [**Pyongyang Circus \(or other available performance\)**](#) | We will leave time this afternoon to try and catch a local performance — either of the Pyongyang Circus, theatre, or a revolutionary opera. Schedules are typically announced only a few weeks before the trip. If no performances are available, we will find an alternative activity in the city. *Tickets to be paid on the spot (from 5-25 EUR) depending on the available performance.*
- [**Mass Dance**](#) | As it's a national holiday, we expect to see large student-organised dances held around Pyongyang on major holidays (*weather dependent*). Join in the fun!
- [**Mass Games!**](#) | The Mass Games are an art form in North Korea, developed over decades, which can involve up to 100,000 performers in massive synchronised displays of gymnastics and dance. Not to be missed!

Overnight: Yanggakdo Hotel, Pyongyang

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AUGUST 16 – MONDAY

Pyongyang Full Metro Tour and drive to Kaesong

AM

- **Ride the full [Pyongyang Metro](#)** | One of the deepest metro systems in the world with stunning artwork reflecting the name of each station. Ride the full length of both lines, stopping at every station to get the full experience!
- **[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.

PM

- Drive 3 hours south along the '[Reunification Highway](#)' to [Kaesong](#), 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-Charters of the 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'.
- **[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. A 45 minute drive each way from Kaesong through scenic countryside.
- **[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.
- **[South Gate and Old City Walk](#)** | A stroll to the hotel through Kaesong's historic district lined with homes dating back to the Ri Dynasty from the city's historic South Gate.
- **[Traditional Korean Royal Meal with Kayagum Performance](#)** | 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!

Overnight | [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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AUGUST 17 – TUESDAY

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.
- **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 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.
- **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.

PM

- **Pakyon Waterfall** | Light walking with a picnic lunch in a relaxing wooded area. Local people commonly visit here for picnics and sometimes swimming in the series of pools above the falls.
- **Gwanum Temple** | Located a 30-minute hike, 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 in the nearby cave. The current building dates back to the Ri Dynasty and has an interesting tale associated with its construction.

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- **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.
- Drive back to **Pyongyang**. *3-hour drive*.
- **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'.

Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

AUGUST 18 – WEDNESDAY

Wonsan

AM

- Drive east across the width of the peninsula to **Wonsan**, a major port city on Korea's East Sea. A friendly and relaxing stop and gateway to Mt. Kumgang. One of the DPRK's two 'Hero Cities' for the strategic role the city and its populace played on the frontlines in the Korean War. Now the focus of investment projects in the DPRK. A *4-hour drive* with rest stops at **Sinpyong Lake** and **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.

PM

- **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 German monks living in the area in the early 20th century.
- **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, birdhouse, gymnasium, and more!
- **Wonsan City Centre and Docks** | Central square and ship terminal in downtown Wonsan. The *Mangyongbong-92* ferry/cargo ship which one shuttled Koreans living in Japan back and forth across the East Sea of Korea is moored here.
- **Mangyongbong-92** | A ferry/cruise ship built in 1992 to ferry Japanese Koreans and goods between Japan and North Korea till 2006. In 2018, the ship carried North Korean performers for the Winter Olympics in South Korea.

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- [**Kangwon Province Art Gallery**](#) | Small art exhibition selling artwork by local artists, where you can purchase paintings.
- [**Jangdok Island and Lighthouse**](#) | Take a stroll on the breakwater to a small island in the middle of Wonsan harbour (1 EUR/USD entry fee). Local fishermen flock to this area, chat with them along the way. Also good for romantic evening walks.

Overnight | [Songdowon Hotel, Wonsan](#). Large seaside building. Basic but clean and with an excellent bookshop often stocking titles long sold-out in Pyongyang. Great interior decorating.

AUGUST 19 – THURSDAY

Mt. Kumgang

AM

- Drive south along the East Sea coast to the scenic [**Mt. Kumgang**](#), the ‘Diamond Mountain’ noted in East Asian history and famous in Korean legend. Home of some of Korea’s most spectacular natural landscapes and best hiking. A 2.5-3 hour drive.
- [**Samil Lagoon**](#) | A charming green-water coastal lagoon lined by pine forests. Named for the ‘three-day’ stay (sam-il) of a king in days-gone-by to take in the full beauty of the area.

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- Spend the afternoon [**hiking in the Mt Kumgang area**](#) | ‘The Diamond Mountain’ – a series of peaks and canyons rising above Korea’s eastern seaboard and regarded since time immemorial as one of the most scenic regions in East Asia. An 8 km (round-trip) hike to a scenic ‘Nine-Dragons’ waterfall will take us through forests, along mountain streams and by emerald pools.
- [**Kumgangsan Hot Spa**](#) | Relax in the facilities of Kumgangsan’s hot spa or treat yourself to a massage (*approx 10-15 USD*).

Overnight | [Mt. Kumgang Hotel, Mt. Kumgang**](#).** A comfortable hotel with good hot water supply and clean rooms. Top floor bar and karaoke, outdoor balcony barbecue, billiards, gift shops, and small sauna facilities.

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AUGUST 20 – FRIDAY

Back to Wonsan

AM

- Drive back north to **Wonsan**. A 2.5-3 hr drive.
- **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.

PM

- **Time to relax and swim on the beautiful beaches of Wonsan!**

Overnight | Songdowon Hotel, Wonsan

AUGUST 21 – SATURDAY

Flight to Mt. Paektu!

AM

- Charter flight to **Samjiyon Town**, the gateway to Mt. Paektu from **Wonsan Kalma International Airport** that is not yet used for any international flights but a fascinating talking point for looking at the plans to develop this area. The US Marines landed here during the Korean War.
- **Mt. Paektu 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 with a picnic lunch to maximise the time here.

PM

- **Mt. Paektu Secret Camp** | The guerilla headquarters of General Kim Il Sung during the anti-Japanese struggle set in a 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.
- **Rimyongsu Waterfall** | A scenic waterfall which never freezes due despite chilling alpine winters. The waterfall also provides hydroelectric power to neighbouring villages.

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Overnight | [Pegaebong Hotel](#), Samjiyon. 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.

AUGUST 22 – SUNDAY

Samjiyon Town and flight back to Pyongyang

AM

- [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. Paektu in the background on a clear day.
- [Samjiyon Schoolchildren’s Palace](#) | Centre of extracurricular activities in the arts, music, and sports for local children with a performance.

PM

- Charter flight back to [Pyongyang Sunan Airport](#).
- [War Heroes' Cemetery](#) | Large gun, flag, and bayonet monument surrounded by rows of tombstones commemorating individual heroes of the Korean War.
- [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: Yanggakdo Hotel, Pyongyang

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AUGUST 23 – MONDAY

*Departure Day from Pyongyang and return to Beijing by flight or train. Please confirm your preferred transport method upon booking**

AM

- Flight departure from Pyongyang on **Air Koryo Flight JS151** at 08:40 with scheduled arrival at Beijing Capital Airport (PEK) Terminal 2 at 10:00.

OR

- Train departure by **train to Beijing** at 10:25 with transfer in Dandong. The scheduled arrival is to **Beijing Station** on Tuesday August 24 at 08:40. *For this tour the default option is hard sleeper (six beds per berth).*

End of Tour

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