



The Kim Jong Il Birthday Tour

TOUR

Feb 13th - 20th 2023

7 nights in North Korea + Beijing-Pyongyang travel time

OVERVIEW

General Kim Jong Il, President Kim Il Sung's son and father of current North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, was born on 16th February. This date is known as the [Day of the Shining Star](#). It is saved in the DPRK calendar as a day of celebrations, and one of the most important North Korean holidays. Locals have time off work, and there are many special events that go on in the city, that foreigners are also welcome to attend.

During this North Korea holiday time, we expect [mass dances](#) and a chance to visit the [Kimjongilia Flower Exhibition](#), where we will see the begonia named after the late General Kim Jong Il, the [Kimjongilia](#). Plus, there may be a chance to view the epic North Korea fireworks from the infamous [Kim Il Sung Square](#) filled with locals also gathering to watch the fireworks after a day of celebrations with the family.

Aside from all of the special events, this action-packed itinerary also includes a city tour of all of the not-to-miss sites of Pyongyang, including the [Juche Tower](#) and [Kwangbok Department Store](#). With over a week in the country, we'll be spending time out of Pyongyang in cities such as Sariwon, Kaesong, the Mt. Myohyang region and Pyongsong. Get out of Pyongyang and venture out to some of North Korea's rarely explored countryside.

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DAILY ITINERARY

FEBRUARY 12 – SUNDAY

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, and pay any outstanding tour fees. 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 Chinese domestic sleeper train to [Dandong](#), the Chinese city on the border with North Korea. 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.*

FEBRUARY 13 – MONDAY

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*

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with the transfer. Train crosses the [China-North Korea border](#) followed by North Korean customs and immigration.

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- Flight departure from **Beijing Capital International Airport (PEK) Terminal 2** on [Air Koryo flight JS152](#) at 12:55. A 1.5-hour flight with basic lunch ([vegetarian option](#) is subject to availability). **Check-in starts 3 hours prior to departure.**
- **Flight arrival to [Pyongyang's Sunan International Airport](#)** (FNJ) at 15:55. DPRK immigration and customs, meet your Korean guides and transfer to the city.
- [Kim Il Sung Square](#) | Pyongyang's central square lined with government ministries, museums, and The Grand People's Study House.
- **Victory (Sungni) Street** | Walk from Kim Il Sung Square to the [Pyongyang Grand Theatre](#) along one of post-war Pyongyang's oldest streets.
- Train arrival to [Pyongyang Railway Station](#) at 18:45.

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.

FEBRUARY 14 – TUESDAY

Pyongyang, Sariwon and Kaesong

AM

- [Mangyongdae Native House](#) | Birthplace of and childhood home of President Kim Il Sung. A traditional Korean house in a park-like setting.
- [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 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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- [Kwangbok Department Store](#) | Exchange for Korean currency and shop with the citizens of Pyongyang! Try the snack stands for some of Pyongyang's best local eats

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- [Sariwon](#) | The provincial seat of North Hwanghae Province and a centre of agriculture and industry. *A 1-hour drive.*
- [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 to [Kaesong](#), the historic capital of the medieval Koryo Dynasty (918-1392 AD). Once located in South Korea, the city changed hands during the Korean War. It is now located just north of the DMZ.

Overnight | [Janamsan Hotel](#), Kaesong. One of our favourite hotels in the DPRK. Friendly staff, great food, and 1970's socialist design. A cosy place to stay in winter!

FEBRUARY 15 – WEDNESDAY

Kaesong and the DMZ

- [Panmunjom Armistice Village and DMZ](#) | The site of the signing of the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War and demarcation line between north and south. On some days it is possible to visit the hut straddling the line, where negotiations between both sides once took place. Here we will be accompanied by military guides from the Korean People's Army.
- [Kaesong Koryo Museum](#) | Once the Songgyung Academy, a Confucian school, and now a museum on the Koryo Dynasty exhibiting historical objects, statues, pagodas, and porcelain from that era. A UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- [Kaesong Korean Stamp Exhibition Hall](#) | Store selling stamps, postcards, local *ginseng*, souvenirs, art, and more! One of the best postcard collections in/ the country and friendly staff.
- [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

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distinguished the guest! Traditional Korean 'sweet meat soup' is an option here (5 EUR).

PM

- [Pyongyang](#) | Drive back north up the Reunification Highway to the capital.
- [Three-Charters of National Reunification Monument](#) | The iconic arch over the Pyongyang-Kaesong Highway dedicated to joint meetings between Koreas, north and south. This monument is also known as the '*Arch of Reunification*'.
- [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 military, including the [USS Pueblo](#). Central to the understanding of the country today and highlight of the trip.
- [Mansugyo Beer Bar](#) | A standing bar serving seven type of beer (50 cents a pint, 4.5 EUR for a flight). Popular with locals after work and on weekends!

Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

FEBRUARY 16 - THURSDAY

DPRK Holiday - Birthday of General Kim Jong Il

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 in the country. **Visitations are by special request only and 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.*
- [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 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). *Please note this is a government-administered sight and visits are subject to cancellation. Visits are optional and require a certain dresscode (close-toed shoes and covered legs and shoulders).*
- [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 huge traditional building on the banks of the Taedong River. Okryugwan specialises in Pyongyang Cold Noodles.

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- [Kimilsungia and Kimjongillia Flower Exhibition](#) | Exhibit of the two flowers named after the DPRK's leaders and held on the occasion of their respective birthday anniversaries in February and April. See organisations and groups from across society compete to put on the best floral display.
- [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 this Party.
- [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*).
- [Mass Dance](#) | As it's a national holiday, we also expect to see large student organised dances held around Pyongyang on major holidays (*weather dependent*). Join in the fun!
- [Golden Lanes Bowling Centre](#) | Where Pyongyang locals go for their ten-pin fix. Also has billiards and arcade games. Non-bowlers can head next door to the [Kumrung Leisure Centre](#) for an airgun shooting range and some of the best coffee in Pyongyang.
- Dinner at [Pyongyang Duck Barbeque Restaurant](#) | South Pyongyang's famous grilled duck restaurant.

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Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

FEBRUARY 17 – FRIDAY

Mt. Myohyang

AM

- [Mt. Myohyang](#) | [Drive north](#) passing rivers valleys and hills to the 'mountain of mysterious fragrance'. *A 2.5 hour to 3 hour drive.*
- [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.*

PM

- [Pohyon Buddhist Temple](#) | A peaceful temple dating back to 1042 CE with stone pagoda and repository of print blocks and historic text of the *Tripitaka Koreana*, Buddhist scriptures first produced to invoke divine assistance from foreign invasions during the Koryo Dynasty.
- [Manpok Valley Hike](#) | Various options for hikes of a range of distances/difficulties. Passing waterfalls, hermitages, interesting rocks, lovely wooded areas, and viewing points.
- [Pyongyang](#) | Return to the capital city (*2.5 hours*).

Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

FEBRUARY 18 – SATURDAY

Pyongyang and Pyongsong

AM

- [Trolleybus Ride](#) | A ride through Pyongyang from Pyongyang Railway Station to Arch of Triumph on one of the city's famous trolleybuses. A Koryo exclusive!

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- [Korean Art Film Studio](#) | The home of the North Korean film industry, commonly known as "Chollywood" (a combination of "Chollima" + "Hollywood").

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- [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. Statues, a Buddhist Monastery, and lovely wall paintings make this a fascinating visit for history buffs
- [Munsu Water Park](#) | We'll take a break at this outdoor and indoor water park with water slides, lap pools, and hot tubs. Bar, coffee shop, and shops for non-swimmers (*Entry fee 2 EUR; swimming fee- 10 EUR with suit rental; tennis- 5 EUR*).
- [Mangyongdae Schoolchildren's Palace](#) | Tour 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.
- [Pyongsong](#) | Drive north from Pyongyang to the provincial capital of South Pyongan and a centre of the national Sci-Tech industry. *A 45 minute to 1-hour drive.*

Overnight | [Jangsusan Hotel, Pyongsong](#) | 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 the best bartenders in the country mans the bar. Billiards, karaoke, hairdresser, and outdoor eateries in summer.

FEBRUARY 19 – SUNDAY

Pyongsong City Tour and Farewell in Pyongyang

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.
- **Local Factory** | Pyongsong is a major industrial area of the DPRK, we'll visit one of the local factories to see and learn more about the industrial side of the country. We will visit either the Paeksong Provisions Factory or the Ponghak Foodstuffs Factory. *Please note that factory visits may depend on on-site activities/conditions.*

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- [Konji-ri Revolutionary Site](#) | Location of the headquarters of the Korean People's Army & home of Kim Il Sung during the Korean War. Tour the renovated buildings and learn about life there during the war.

PM

- [Pyongyang](#) | Drive south back to Pyongyang A 45 minute to 1-hour drive.
- [Grand People's Study House](#) | National library and public correspondence university with Neo-traditional Korean style and great views of the city.
- [Moran Beer Bar](#) | A recently renovated local bar with cheap brews (0.50-1 EUR beers). Also serves food.
- [Pizza Restaurant](#) | Farewell dinner at one of Pyongyang's Italian eateries (there are three).

Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

FEBRUARY 20 – 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 08:30 with scheduled arrival at Beijing Capital Airport (PEK) Terminal 2 at 09:50.

OR

- Train departure by **train to Beijing** at 10:25 with transfer in Dandong. The scheduled arrival is to **Beijing Station** on Sunday February 20 at 08:40. *For this tour the default option is hard sleeper (six beds per berth).*

End of Tour

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