



The Kim Il Sung Birthday Tour

TOUR

April 14th - 21st 2023

7 nights in North Korea + Beijing-Pyongyang travel time

OVERVIEW

Just like every country, North Korea has much more to offer than just its capital. This week Korea tour package will take you to cities and places outside of [Pyongyang](#) that many consider as the highlights of North Korea beyond Pyongyang! Tick off must-see sites such as the [Juche Tower](#), [Kim Il Sung Square](#), and the [Mansudae Grand Monument](#) statue of the Great Leaders, as well as other highlights; [Kaesong](#), [DMZ](#), [Nampo](#), and [Mt. Myohyang](#). We will also go off the beaten track for a short visit to [Anju](#), an industrial city between Pyongyang and Mt. Myohyang and hardly ever on offer by other tour companies.

More importantly, joining us on this tour means you'll get to join the local North Koreans in celebrating one of the most important dates in the Korean calendar; Kim Il Sung's Birthday. Officially known as the '[Day of the Sun](#)'. Expect [mass dances](#) and even the possibility of a military parade and a firework display over the Taedonggang river. We will also get a chance to see the orchid named after the President, the [Kimilsungia](#).

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DAILY ITINERARY

APRIL 13 – THURSDAY

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.*

APRIL 14 – FRIDAY

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.

PM

- Flight departure from **Beijing Capital International Airport (PEK) Terminal 2** on [Air Koryo](#) flight JS152 at 13:05. 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 15:05. 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.
- Train arrival to [Pyongyang Railway Station](#) at 18:45.
- **Walk on [Future Scientists' Street](#)** | An evening stroll through one of Pyongyang's newest neighbourhoods.

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.

APRIL 15 – SATURDAY

The Day of the Sun – one of the DPRK's largest holidays. April 15, 2022, is the 111th anniversary of President Kim Il Sung's birth

On April 15th there may be large-scale celebrations in Pyongyang. A Military Parade is possible, in which case the itinerary for the day will be subject to change. Foreign travellers are typically allowed to view military units as they exit the city from the parade course and the city's residents come out en masse to greet them. Be prepared to potentially wait around for a few hours, but it will be well worth it. For The Day of the Sun we also expect student-organised mass dances at prominent locations throughout the city and the possibility of evening fireworks. Whatever happens this holiday, it will be impressive and unforgettable. Not to be missed!

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- [Mangyongdae Native House](#) | Birthplace and childhood home of President Kim Il Sung. A traditional Korean house in a beautiful natural surrounding.
- [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](#) | A 60-m archway commemorating the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule and larger than its counterpart in Paris.
- [Mansudae Fountain Park](#) | The historic centre of Pyongyang popular with local citizens after school and on weekends. Flanked by examples of ancient and modern architecture from different eras.
- [Mansudae Grand Monument](#) | Enormous bronze statues of the DPRK leadership overlooking downtown Pyongyang. A presentation of flowers and bow by the group is customary here. **Visitations are by special request only and decent dress is required. No shorts or flip-flop sandals allowed here.**
- [Moranbong Park with picnic lunch](#) | We'll take a stroll and have picnic lunch 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, a few of which are among the traditional 'Eight Great Sights of Pyongyang'.

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.
- [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 organizations and groups from across society compete to put on the best floral display.
- [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.
- [Mass Dance](#) | Large student organised dances held around Pyongyang on major holidays (*weather dependent*). Join in the fun!
- [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

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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.*

- **Dinner and sunset boat cruise along the [Taedong River](#)** | We will take a cruise on the Taedong River while having dinner with live music performance and waiting for the fireworks.

Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

APRIL 16 – SUNDAY

Pyongyang City Tour and drive to Kaesong

AM

- **[Kumsusan Memorial 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. We will need to dress formally for our visit: shirt, dress pants, and tie for men and covered shoulders, legs, and feet for women. The visit will take most of the morning and visitors are asked to bow a number of times inside. *Please note that this is a state-administered site and visits are subject to local conditions. Cancellations are rare but possible.*
- **[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. Okgyuwan specialises in Pyongyang Cold Noodles.

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- Drive to **[Sariwon](#)** | Drive south on the [Reunification Highway](#) to the provincial seat of North Hwanghae Province that is a centre of agro-industrial production and home to one of the country's top agricultural universities.
- **[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.
- **[Migok Co-Operative Farm](#)** | Learn about rural life in the DPRK at this farming community on the bucolic plains of Sariwon. Visit the farm's museum, viewpoint, and local home.

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- Continue south to [Kaesong](#), 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.
- [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'.
- Dinner with a live Kayagum performance - a traditional Korean instrument in a unique setting!

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.

APRIL 17 - MONDAY

Historic Kaesong and the Joint Security Area

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

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- [Janam Hill](#) | 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 permanently divide the nation. 45 minute drive each way from Kaesong through the countryside.
- Drive back to [Pyongyang](#) with a stop at the [Monument to the Three Charters of Reunification](#), a large stone archway over the highway memorializing joint agreements between north and south. *A 3-hour drive.*
- Dinner at [Pyongyang Duck Barbeque Restaurant](#) | South Pyongyang's famous grilled duck restaurant that has seen many a teary-eyed farewell.

Overnight | Yanggakdo Hotel, Pyongyang

APRIL 18 – TUESDAY

Nampo and the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum

AM

- **Drive west along River Taedong to [Nampo](#)**, the port city of Pyongyang at the mouth of the Taedong River on the West Sea.
- [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.
- [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.
- [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, and kindergarten, see the fields and greenhouses.
- Drive back to Pyongyang along the '[Youth Hero Highway](#)'.

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- [Mt. Ryonggak picnic and hike](#) | A popular local picnic spot in a scenic valley with an interesting and huge concrete dragon winding through the area. Also a 45-minute walk to the top for a view of Pyongyang City.
- [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.
- [Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum and USS Pueblo](#) | We'll tour this world-class museum led by local guides. Renovated in 2012 and its exhibits of Korean War from the DPRK perspective containing artifacts, 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 spyship [USS Pueblo](#). Central to the understanding of the country today and highlight of the trip.
- [Mansugyo Beer Bar](#) | A beer bar serving seven types of beer. Popular with locals after work and on weekends. Best place to drink pints with local people.

Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel

APRIL 19 - WEDNESDAY

Pyongyang City Tour and Drive to Mt. Myohyang

AM

- [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. You can also visit the school where her husband and father-in-law once taught.
- A ride through Pyongyang from Kwangbok Street to Pyongyang Station on one of the city's [municipal trams](#).

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- Drive to [Anju](#), a mid-sized industrial city located on the road and rail line north of Pyongyang on the Chongchon River. During the Korean War, major battles were fought near here between North Korean-Chinese forces and UN-South Korean forces. Coal is mined nearby.
- **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.

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- Continue driving to [Mt. Myohyang](#).
- [Manpok Valley Hike](#) | Various options for hikes of a range of distances/difficulties. Passing waterfalls, hermitages, interesting rocks, lovely wooded areas, and viewing points.

Overnight | [Huichon Hotel, Mt. Myohyang](#) | 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.

APRIL 20 – THURSDAY

Mt. Myohyang

AM

- [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 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.

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- [Drive back to Pyongyang \(2.5-3 hours\)](#) with a stop at [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.
- [June 9th Middle School](#) | Some of the classrooms can be visited; here they teach the normal curriculum so there is science and maths, foreign languages (if a class is going on tourists can sometimes join in), revolutionary history, and so on. If students are doing sports classes at the time of the visit then a kick-about on the football pitch can sometimes be arranged, but usually, the visit ends with a performance in the auditorium.
- [Pizza Restaurant](#) | Farewell dinner at one of Pyongyang's Italian eateries (there are three).

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Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

APRIL 21 – FRIDAY

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 JS251** at 10:15 with scheduled arrival at Beijing Capital Airport (PEK) Terminal 2 at 11:35.

OR

- Train departure by **train to Beijing** at 10:25 with transfer in Dandong. The scheduled arrival is to **Beijing Station** on Friday, April 22 at 08:40. *For this tour the default option is hard sleeper (six beds per berth).*

End of Tour

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