PYONGYANG INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL TOUR 2016
Sep 15 to Sep 20/21 (Thur to Tue/Wed)

5 nights in the DPRK + 1 on the train
Flight in / Train out

1790 EUR (inclusive of all film screenings and festival events)

As official partner, Koryo Tours has insider access to the 15th Pyongyang International Film Festival, which will be held in Pyongyang, DPRK, from September 16th to 23rd, 2016. Be there to see the glitz and glamour on Pyongyang’s red carpet at the opening ceremony.

The tour will include the opening ceremony, film screenings, opportunities to meet directors, actors, students, and visit film studio and film locations where Koryo Group filmed their co-production “Comrade Kim Goes Flying” and of course you will watch Korean and international films with a local audience.

Price includes tickets to the opening ceremony and film screenings. Since 2002 this biennial festival has been run as a true international festival welcoming films from around the world, whereas previously the event was reserved for ‘non-aligned and other developing countries’, including: Australia, France, Canada, China, Iran, Pakistan, UK, Mongolia, Thailand, Germany.

Koryo Tours has worked closely with the festival organizers to expand and improve the range of films shown at the festival and thus seen by large numbers of the DPRK population. Together with the British Embassy and Ealing Studios, Koryo Tours have arranged for many films from around the world to be entered in competition, the most well-known include ‘Bend it like Beckham’ ‘Mr. Bean Disaster Movie’, ‘The March of the Penguins’, and ‘Bride and Prejudice’.

Please note that the final program of events is not released until a few days before the start of the festival.

There is the option to extend this tour for an additional four nights to attend more film screenings, take an overnight trip to soak up the medicinal waters at Dragon River Hot Spa, Nampo and be in Pyongyang for the closing ceremony of the festival. If you are interested in this extension please let us know.

Highlights:
- Pyongyang International Film Festival -- opening events
- Watching film screenings in Pyongyang cinemas with locals
- Exclusive Q&A events with North Korean actors and directors
- Panmunjom/DMZ -- the border with South Korea
- Sightseeing in Pyongsong -- city tour and highlights

DETAILED ITINERARY:

Wed 14th Sep -- TOUR BRIEFING

4PM -- Group assembles in the Koryo Tours office for a pre-tour briefing which will last approximately 1 hour and is designed so that you will get the best out of your tour. Please be punctual - you can even come early, pay any outstanding tour fees and browse our art gallery and merchandise.

Thur 15th Sep -- ARRIVAL DAY

AM: This morning we will meet outside Koryo HQ (time TBC) and together head to Beijing Airport Terminal 2 for our flight Beijing to Pyongyang (1.5 hrs) -- the showcase capital of the DPRK.

PM: Upon arrival in Pyongyang (approximately 4pm -- DPRK is 30 mins ahead of China), we proceed through immigration and customs and meet our guides who will
OVERNIGHT: Yanggakdo Hotel, Pyongyang (one of the capital's deluxe hotels, located in the heart of the city)

Fri 16th Sep -- PIFF OPENING CEREMONY

AM: We'll start the day by taking a stroll through Kim Il Sung Square -- Pyongyang's largest square in the heart of the city. There used to be portraits of Marx and Lenin on display here but they were taken down in early 2012. This is where the military parades pass through and the mass dances take place – you can see the podium on which the leaders stand to view these incredible displays. Next we will visit the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum – fully renovated and reopened in 2013, it tells the history of the Korean War from the North Korean perspective, complete with rooms explaining the origins of the conflict, highly impressive dioramas, tanks, planes, and much more. We will also see the War Victory Monument -- built on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the end of the Korean War (27th July 1953) – as well as the USS Pueblo, captured by the DPRK navy in 1968 and retained ever since as a trophy. This American spy ship was originally moored on the Taedong River but moved in 2013 to the site of the new War Museum.

PM: In the afternoon we'll have the chance to visit the Pyongyang Feature Film Studios – the Hollywood of the DPRK where some of the most iconic DPRK feature films were shot and produced. It was visited hundreds of times by Kim Jong Il who wrote a book entitled On the Art of the Cinema – the 'bible' for Korean filmmakers. We will tour the sets and learn about film as art and propaganda in North Korea. Next we go deep underground for a ride on the Pyongyang Metro (6 stations) -- the deepest underground system in the world. The designs of the main stations are stunning, with superb lighting and mosaics. Following this, we will attend the events to mark the opening of the Pyongyang International Film Festival. Expect video montages with animated doves and live traditional Korean music and performances, as well as the raising of the festival flag. During the event the international jury will be introduced and we will watch the opening film.

The Koryo Group is recognised by PIFF as the official supporter of the festival. We have screened each of our 3 documentaries at PIFF as well as our feature film "Comrade Kim goes Flying". In 2002 our documentary "The Game of Their Lives" became the first ever foreign-made documentary not only to be screened at PIFF but then to be broadcast throughout the country – and it continues to this day to be regularly shown and is one of the North Korean public's most popular films. "Comrade Kim goes Flying" is a Belgium/UK/DPRK production and was co-directed by Nicholas Bonner (director of Koryo Group) and is currently on cinematic release throughout the country; it was the first North Korean film to be shown to a public audience in South Korea.

OVERNIGHT: Yanggakdo Hotel, Pyongyang

Sat 17th Sep

AM: First stop this morning is a visit to the Mansudae Grand Monuments – the giant bronze statues of North Korean leaders Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong II. This is a very important place for Koreans and visitors are requested to follow local customs, which include placing a bouquet of flowers at the monument and bowing in front of the statues. We then head back to the Pyongyang International Cinema House, which will house a series of events exclusive to Koryo Tours. Today we'll enjoy a screening of a DPRK film with an introduction from a member of the cast followed by a Q&A. There are two main film studios in North Korea and whilst some actors are associated with one studio it does not restrict them from working with the other. The top accolades for actors are Merited Artist followed by People's Artists. Actors such as Ri Yong Ho (who starred in the movie "Hong Kil Dong" and can be thought of as the Clooney of DPRK film) hold film star status and attract crowds when shooting scenes on location.

PM: This afternoon we will visit the Grand People's Study House - an enormous library/place of study (originally designed for the people who had missed an education due to the war) and has a great view over Kim Il Sung Square. We will tour the lecture rooms (complete with tables designed by Kim Il Sung to aid study) and hopefully get to see a few classes. It is supposedly stocked with over 3 million books. Next on our itinerary is another Koryo Tours innovation -- a trolley bus ride around the city, in some of the classic 1950s vehicles that still ply their trade on the streets of the DPRK capital. See the streets on a leisurely drive around the capital, get some great photos, and experience some vehicles that aren't in use anywhere else in the world any more. This is followed by a visit to the Juche Tower, the highest stone monument in the world (topped with a flickering red torch). We are given an explanation of the country's guiding Juche philosophy often translated as 'self-reliance' and can take the lift to the top for stunning views over Pyongyang (costs EUR 5). After this we head on to the Party Foundation Monument – an iconic sculpture of a hammer, sickle and calligraphy brush commemorating 50 years of the Workers' Party rule. After an early dinner we'll enjoy another exclusive film screening. A DPRK composer will introduce film scores he has worked on and talk about the process of creating music to fit the script in North Korean cinema. We will see him work with musicians on one of his current compositions. All feature films in DPRK have the theme tune composed before filming starts to help inspire the filmmakers and actors as well as to give an overall sense of the passion within the film.

OVERNIGHT: Yanggakdo Hotel, Pyongyang
Sun 18th Sep

AM: After an early breakfast we’ll take a 2.5-hour drive south to Kaesong, which is a historical city near the DMZ. After arriving in Kaesong we take a short drive (approx 20 minutes) to Panmunjom/DMZ where North and South Korea continue their decades-old face-off. It is possible to go into one of the huts that straddle the demarcation line and actually cross over into South Korea! This is one of the few places where you can take pictures of (and even with) members of the DPRK military. Next, we head back to Kaesong and visit the Kaesong Koryo Museum, a beautiful old Confucian University, to learn about the history of the area. The stamp shop here is excellent too. Lunch is a traditional pansanggi meal – something like Korean tapas. For anyone wanting to supplement their lunch, you’ll also have the opportunity to sample Korea’s famous delicacy: ‘sweetmeat soup’ (aka dog meat; costs EUR 5). On the way out, we’ll have the opportunity to take photos of the colourful exteriors of Kaesong city’s cinema before heading back to Pyongyang.

PM: We’ll arrive back in Pyongyang in time for dinner and for those who are keen we’ll round off the day by joining the citizens of Pyongyang at a public film screening as part of the film festival.

OVERNIGHT: Yanggakdo Hotel, Pyongyang

Mon 19th Sep

AM: We’ll start the day with a public film screening as part of the festival, at time of writing the film festival programme was still to be confirmed, but previous years have seen a choice of Indian action films, Hong Kong thrillers, and a new trend of North Korean co-productions. We’ll have opportunities to peruse the programme when we arrive and make our selections. After a quick visit to the snack stalls outside the cinema between screenings we’ll head back in for our last Koryo Tours exclusive screening, this time we’ll learn about the craft of acting in DPRK. Students and their drama teacher will reveal some of the techniques of DPRK acting followed by a film screening. We were on the production team of the 2013 documentary “Aim High in Creation” which looks at North Korean film and acting techniques and following our experience we hope you will get a feeling of some of the techniques of how to act the DPRK way.

PM: After the morning of film screenings we’ll head out into the city, firstly heading to Kwangbok Supermarket – a large multi-story shop selling all manner of local and imported goods. It’s a great opportunity to mingle with locals as they shop – and to join in, here you can even exchange money at the market rate (unavailable elsewhere) for local currency to spend on snacks, locally made food and drinks, as well as imported and locally made clothes, shoes and electronics. Next up we’ll visit Mansudae Art Studio, the DPRK’s centre of artistic excellence. This is where most of the country’s paintings, mosaics and statues are made. It’s possible to visit several different workshops here and see the artists at work. Our farewell treat will be one more public film screening as part of PIFF.

OVERNIGHT: Yanggakdo Hotel, Pyongyang

Tue 20th Sep

AM: Today is departure day. Sad times.

For those flying out the flight departs Pyongyang at 10:00am and arrives in Beijing at approx 11:30am.

The train departs Pyongyang at 10:10am and arrives in Beijing at approx 08:30am on Wednesday.

This is the end of the tour.

OR

Extend your trip by 4 more nights

There is the option to extend this tour for an additional four nights to attend more film screenings, take an overnight trip to soak up the medicinal waters at Dragon River Hot Spa, Nampo and be in Pyongyang for the closing ceremony of the festival.

If you are interested in this extension please let us know.
TOUR COST: 1790 EUR

Optional 4-Night Extension: price on application (let us know if you would like to add this extension)

PRE-TOUR MEETING: September 14th (Wednesday), 4PM, at our office in Beijing

Room upgrades available – please ask for more information.

TOUR FEE INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

- Flight Beijing-Pyongyang, train Pyongyang-Beijing
- All meals on the tour except on the train out of DPRK – see below
- Hotel accommodation
- All entry fees
- Two guides and a driver per group
- All transportation in DPRK

NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR FEE:

- Optional single room supplement of EUR 40 per night
- Spending money for drinks and souvenirs
- DPRK visa fee EUR 50
- Tip for the guides (approx EUR 75-80 total)
- Meals on the train out of DPRK - (bring your own food or eat dinner and lunch in the buffet car approximately EUR 5 per person)
- Entry tickets for special events if applicable – for example Revolutionary Opera if being staged, or a visit to the funfair
- The lift up the Juche Tower EUR 5
- Meals will have a complimentary beer but you will have to pay for extra drinks above those provided. If you are vegetarian or have special dietary requirements then please inform us beforehand
- SINUIJU EXTENSION: RMB 50 for the bus across the bridge to Dandong to be paid on the spot to the local guides

Please apply by August 14th, 2016