

THE NORTHEAST

When I hear the song of the nightingale / In the woods on the mountain behind / I, from whom my love has departed / have become increasingly sorrowful.

- From The Sorrowful Tune of North Hamgyong Province

Fierce dogs fighting in a mud field.

- Traditional saying on the people of the northeast for their determination.

The Northeast is the most remote and least visited region of the DPRK open to foreign tourists. The last area incorporated into the Korean realm, this has traditionally been a frontier for exiles, brigands, and revolutionaries. Heavily industrialized during the Japanese colonial era, Communist idea took early root among the region's many workers and peasants. The region remains a key part of the DPRK economy, especially with the addition of the Rason Special Economic Zone.

At the time of writing travel in this region is best done with a group of 3 or more.



CHONGJIN

The DPRK's 'city of steel', Chongjin is the DPRK's third largest. Its skyline dominated by the towering Kim Chaek Steelworks, Chongjin is the administrative and economic centre of northeast Korea. Being remote and tricky to access, Chongjin sees relatively few western tourists but is well worth the effort to visit. Accessible by internal charter flight or by road from the northern border with China (Rason or Hoeryong) this port and industrial city is perhaps one of the most typically 'North Korean' places you can visit. Home to very remote Chinese and Russian consulates too.

TRANSPORTATION: Chongjin can be reached overland from China or by flight from Pyongyang to the relatively close airport at Orang. Also road access from the remote northern border crossing of Namyang (opposite China's Tumen City) and from the free trade zone of Rason).



◇ Chongjin Trolley Bus

Take a ride down Chongjin's main drag on one of the city's trolleybuses. The slogan 'Our Country is the Best' adorns their sides. Outside of Pyongyang this is the DPRK's only trolleybus system.

◇ Chongjin Central Square

Central Square of Chongjin city with statues of the DPRK leadership. A presentation of flowers is customary (2-3 EUR). As the centre of the city many new buildings have been raised and more are planned for this area.

Jipsam Revolutionary Site

A seaside revolutionary site located just outside of Chongjin with a small beach and scenic rocks. A fishing village sits next to the site and you can get a look at the local squid fishing fleet here.

North Hamgyong Province Art Gallery

Studio exhibiting and selling art from the region at comparatively good prices.

North Hamgyong Province E- Library

A library, study, and computer centre for the province, located just off Chongjin Central Square. Also displays aspirational plans for the redevelopment of Chongjin city centre.



◇ Steelworker's Kindergarten and Performance

Visit to a local kindergarten with a small student musical and theatrical performance as well as a tour of the facilities and introduction to the kindergarten educational system

◇ Chongjin Fisherman's Club

Bar, billiards, restaurant, and sauna for merchant mariners visiting the Chongjin Port. A great place to relax after days on the road in the northeast.

North Hamgyong Province Revolutionary Museum

A museum dedicated to the revolutionary exploits of Northern Hamgyong Province. Their slogan trees exhibit is very good.

So Ryang Hwa Waterfall

A picturesque waterfall along the scenic coastal road from Mt. Chilbo north to Kyongsong. It is possible to stop here if weather permits access to the road.

Yombun Revolutionary Site

A seaside revolutionary site located near Kyongsong between Chongjin and Mt. Chilbo. Great views of the rocky coastline in this area. Nearby are salt flats.



ACCOMODATION

◇ Chongjin Tourist Hotel

A basic hotel near Chongjin railway station with basic rooms, restaurant, sauna, and on-site micro-brewery.

◇ Chongjin Foreigners' Lodging

The former foreign expert apartments of Kim Chaek Steelworks, similar in design to local apartments. Basic rooms but great food and service.

MT. CHILBO

Mt. Chilbo, named after the 'Seven-Treasures' of East Asian lore, is one of the DPRK's most remote and pristine natural areas. Unique for the DPRK it is almost untouched by politics too as it was never visited by Kim Il Sung (almost untouched; there are still some mosaics and sites related to the DPRK's Leaders here).

It is a stunning mountain range of peaks, valleys, waterfalls, and unusually-shaped rocks that lend themselves well to the local habit of telling (often profane) folk stories and legends about the meaning of each shape.

The area can be broken down into three parts: Outer Chilbo - where the mountains rise from the narrow plains and rock formations start to develop through the forests; Inner Chilbo - with hiking trails and walkways to pagodas offering excellent viewpoints as well as the charming Kaesim Buddhist Temple; and Sea Chilbo - where the range abruptly ends at the sea. Beaches, fishing villages, and swimming opportunities lie here where the edge of the DPRK meets the East Sea of Korea (AKA: the Sea of Japan). The main attraction of Chilbosan is natural beauty in all its forms and a break from the politics of the rest of the DPRK.



TRANSPORTATION: From Pyongyang Mt. Chilbo is accessible by charter flight to Orang Airport, around 2 hours by road from the mountain range itself and halfway between here and the city of Chongjin (which should be combined with Chilbo for a great look at the range of things to see in this part of the country). Chilbo can also be reached by road from Rason and the Tumen (China)/Namyang (Korea) border.

MT. CHILBO ACCOMODATION



◇ Homestay Chilbo

The only place in the entire country where tourists can sleep in the homes of locals. This village was built with assistance from the World Tourism Organisation and the families who live here are mostly fishermen and farmers. Some houses have 'European style' beds, and other Korean style mats on the floor. Take a gift for your hosts and have a unique overnight experience here. A beach is a mere 250m down the road too.

Outer Chilbo Hotel

A complex of simple houses in a valley inside the mountain range. Comfy rooms despite the rustic area. Order the pine mushrooms when they are in season.

KYONGSONG

Once one of the primary cities in Hamgyong Province, from which 'Kyong' derives, now eclipsed by neighbor Chongjin. Kyongsong is renowned for its hot spas which provide needed relaxation after days on the road and outdoor activities at Mt. Chilbo. A good spot to stop on the road between Chongjin and Mt. Chilbo.

TRANSPORTATION: Kyongsong is located about 30 -45 minutes south of Chongjin by road. A pleasant drive with farms and mountains to one side and the sea to the other.



◇ Health Spa

There are many of these in Kyongsong (some belong to the military, some to the Party, some are open to the public). Here you can use the saunas and bathing facilities. The water coming up from the ground in a kind of panacea and historical records show it has long been considered good for recovering health and especially fertility (€).

Kyongsong City Walls

Old city walls of Kyongsong city, once the largest city in the region before being eclipsed by nearby Chongjin. You can't actually stop by the walls, but the local guides can point them out from the road.

Kyongsong Revolutionary Site

Japanese colonial-era house once used by the DPRK leadership and telling of their exploits in the region.

ACCOMODATION

◇ Kyongsong Inn

A small hotel in walking distance of Kyongsong's famous spas. Very basic rooms but great seafood, painted mural of the sea, and pleasant grounds. From here a visit to one of Kyongsong's famous sanatoria.



HOERYONG

A remote city in the far north on the border with China and rarely seen by foreign visitors. Nationally known for being the home city of local heroine Ms. Kim Jong Suk – the wife of President Kim Il Sung and mother of Leader Kim Jong Il. The city is famous for its white apricots, ceramics, and beautiful women. Since Hoeryong is located so far from the main population centres of the country, it is very rare to meet anyone who comes from here or who has been here. Amaze any North Korean friends in Pyongyang with tales of a trip here!

TRANSPORTATION: Literally a stone's throw from Chinese territory this city can be reached by land from China or via charter flight from Pyongyang to Orang and then a long drive north.



Kim Ki Sung Middle School

Local school named for the brother of Ms. Kim Jong Suk. Tour the facilities, drop in on classrooms to help practice English, or play football in the schoolyard.

◊ **Central Square and Statue of Ms. Kim Jong Suk**

Bronze statue of 'The Mother of Korea' in central Hoeryong. A presentation of flowers is customary here (€). This is notably the only city in the DPRK that doesn't have statues of Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il downtown.

DPRK-Chinese border at Hoeryong

View of the commercial border crossing with China across the Tumen River. This specific crossing cannot be made by tourists, but a nearby crossing from the town of Namyang to the Chinese city of Tumen is accessible.

Hoeryong Revolutionary Museum

Museum depicting the revolutionary struggles of the region. Particularly interesting for its giant mural depicting the 'Three Generals of Mt. Paekdu' during the anti-Japanese revolutionary struggle. The painting was made by artists from the Mansudae Art Studio in Pyongyang and smaller replicas of it can be found throughout the country.

Native House of Ms. Kim Jong Suk

Traditional Korean home of Kim Jong Suk set among a peaceful white apricot orchard, a product for which Hoeryong is famous.



◊ **Wangjaesan Grand Monument**

Large tower and socialist realist sculpture group set atop a prominent mountain and dedicated to the anti-Japanese guerilla struggle. One of three grand monuments in the DPRK: the others are at Mansudae in Pyongyang and Samjiyon near Mt. Paekdu. Rarely visited by foreigners as only practicable for those crossing the border at Tumen-Namyang.

Wangjaesan Revolutionary History Museum

Next to the Grand Monument this museum tells the tale of revolutionary activity in this area. Some great examples of the famous 'slogan trees' can be found here.

ACCOMODATION

Hoeryong Hotel

A basic hotel featuring large rooms with air conditioning but no hot water, separate sauna/shower block, small shop and bar, and large banquet hall. The staff of the hotel can put on a dinner performance for groups at a cost (€€€€).

DINING

Hoeryong Food Street

Group of restaurants on in downtown Hoeryong offering a taste of the local cuisine.