

THE SOUTHWEST

Hats adorned with golden flowers fluttering in the wind/ white shoes dancing with slow steps / wide sleeves elegantly wave / like birds come from east of the sea.

- 7th century Chinese poet Li Bai on the dances of the Koguryo Kingdom.

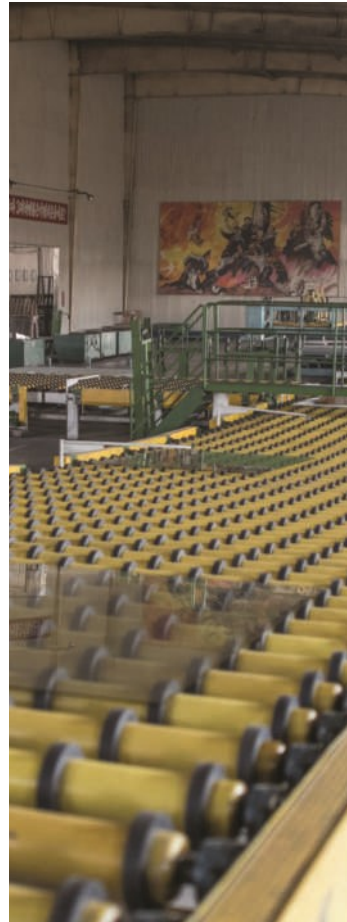
As if throwing a stone into a wave on a spring day.

- Traditional sayings on the people of the region.

The Southwest is a microcosm of the DPRK. The lower Taedong River Valley is the cradle of local civilization and has a diverse variety of historic sites, including the first of the DPRK's main UNESCO World Heritage sites - the complex of Koguryo Tombs dating to the 5-7th centuries. Long northern Korea's agricultural heartland, the region today is home to representative examples of the DPRK's flagship industrial base.

Cross the 8 km long West Sea Barrage, an engineering marvel, to the mountains of Kuwol and loops back to the main Pyongyang - Kaesong Reunification Highway, seeing towns, countryside, and much of interest along the way.

The majority of visitors to the region make a quick day trip to Nampo from Pyongyang or visit Sariwon on the way to Kaesong. Travel further afield can make for long drives on rough roads, but for those wanting to see Korea's countryside up close this is the place to do it.



NAMPO

Located at the mouth of the Taedong River on the West Sea, Nampo is the port city for Pyongyang. While the city proper has relatively few locations open to tourists, the environs offer a chance to see a mix of rural life, heavy industry, and some of Korea's (north and south) most valuable historical sights.

TRANSPORTATION: The Youth Hero Highway (40 minutes) and an older riverside road (1.5 hours) link Pyongyang and Nampo. It is possible to cross the West Sea Barrage (mornings and evenings) to the Mt. Kuwol Region and drive onward to Sinchon/Sariwon (2-3 hours) or Kaesong (6-7 hours). It is also possible to kayak between Pyongyang and Nampo by special arrangement.



◇ **Chollima Steelworks**
A major heavy industry site of the DPRK, known to Koreans as the birthplace of the Chollima Movement and famous for making 'Juche Steel'.

Chongsam-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), and the place where the 'Chongsam-ri Method' was developed. See how the farming system works, visit a farmhouse and the local shop & kindergarten, see the fields and greenhouses.

Dokhung-ri Koguryo Tomb
Early 5th century tomb of a Koguryo magistrate. The tomb contains some of the best preserved Koguryo murals, including a portrait of the magistrate, scenes of daily life, and mythical creatures. A UNESCO World Heritage Site (€€€€).

Kangso Mineral Water Bottling Plant
Production plant for the DPRK's largest and most famous brand of sparkling water. The brand symbol, the White Tiger, is taken from the nearby Kangso Koguryo Tomb.

Koguryo Kangso Three Tombs
Three Koguryo tombs dating back to the late 6th-early 7th centuries. The Medium Tomb is representative of Koguryo-era tomb murals, depicting the Four Directional Guardian Spirits: Dark Warrior, Red Phoenix, Blue Dragon and White Tiger (€€€€).

Nampo Square
Central square of Nampo with statues of the DPRK leadership.



◇ **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. One of the DPRK's greatest engineering feats.

House of Kim Ung So
Traditional home of Kim Ung So, a Korean official and general during the Imjin War, the 16th century Japanese invasion of Korea. Visiting gets you out into the North Korean countryside off the highway to Nampo. Kim's descendants maintain the site.

Susan-ri Koguryo Tomb
A late 5th century Koguryo tomb of an aristocrat and his wife. The murals inside are damaged and in poor condition, but nonetheless insightful about the daily lives of ancient people. The drive here takes you far off the beaten tourist track. A UNESCO World Heritage Site (€€€€).

Tae'an Glass Factory
Factory producing glass and glass products for the domestic market. Watch the process from smelting to sheet-cutting and even try to break a sheet of strengthened glass.

Wau Islet
Scenic spot perfect for relaxation with swimming/diving areas.

Tae'an Heavy Machine Tool Complex
Vast complex of heavy industry, excellent for photos but often closed to tourists.



ACCOMODATION

◇ Ryonggang Hot Spa Hotel

Compound with holiday houses and a main building for dinner and entertainment. 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. Bring a torch!

Nampo Merchant Mariners' Club

Riverfront hotel for foreign merchant mariners at the Nampo Port. Decent but basic facilities. It is possible at times to charter a boat for trips from here to the West Sea Barrage.

Hanggu Hotel

A basic nautical themed hotel in Nampo city proper. Ideal for those arriving late or departing early from Nampo. Excellent banquet hall and seafood restaurant. Limited hours of hot water.



SARIWON & ENVIRONMENT

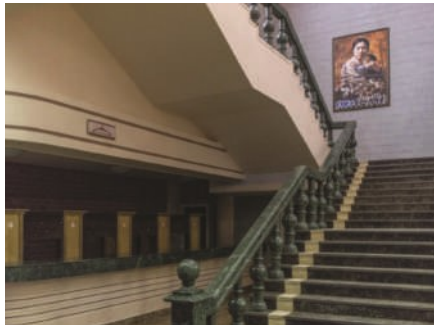
Once a sleepy rural town on the Charyong Plain, the coming of the railway in 1915 turned Sariwon into a regional centre. Today Sariwon is the provincial seat of North Hwanghae Province and is a centre of agro-industrial production and home to one of the country's top agricultural universities.

On the south side of the Taedong River estuary, rising from the coastal lowlands is Mt. Kuwol, the 'September Mountain'. This forested mountain region was sacred to the earliest Koreans and later Buddhists. Today Mt. Kuwol is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Inland from Mt. Kuwol is the town of Anak, home to some of Korea's best-preserved and most elaborate Koguryo Tombs.

This region saw some of the most brutal fighting during the Korean War and the town of Sinchon is the location of the Museum of US Atrocities. Accounts disagree of what exactly happened at Sinchon, but it was no doubt horrific.

TRANSPORATION: Sariwon can be reached within a 1 hour drive from Pyongyang on the Reunification Highway. Mt. Kuwol, Anak and Sinchon are all accessible.



◇ **Sinchon Town and Museum of US War Crimes**
Recently renovated museum dedicated to 'crimes committed by the US imperialists'. Located on the site of a civilian massacre, the museum has an array of harrowing exhibits, displays, and panoramas on the haunting events that took place in this region during the war. Not for the faint at heart and sensitivity is called for here.

Songbol Temple
Early Koryo Dynasty style temple located on Jongbang Mountain near Sariwon. The temple houses one thousand buddha statues, each with its own distinctive look.

Woljong Temple
Buddhist temple established in the middle of the 9th century and later rebuilt at the start of the Ri Dynasty.



◇ **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.

Sariwon Central Square
Statues of the DPRK leadership where locals go to pay their respects. Recently opened to tourists. *A presentation of flowers is recommended.*

ACCOMODATION

◇ **March 8th Hotel**
March 8th is Women's Day, a noted holiday in the socialist world. This hotel is a quirky one as it is gaudily furnished by donated beds, chairs, etc. from a South Korean furniture magnate during friendlier times. Good restaurant and some basic leisure facilities, rarely used by foreign guests due to its proximity to Pyongyang. This is certainly a 'different' option.

HAEJU

Haeju is a port city on Korea's west coast and the provincial seat of South Hwanghae Province. The city and environs offer a number of historic sights and scenic countryside for those looking to see a rarely visited area of the DPRK. The city is situated a mere 60km north of the line dividing Korea in two and thus is considered a frontline city.

TRANSPORTATION: Haeju and nearby sights can be reached by road from Sariwon or Kaesong. Budget a whole day as road conditions vary and sights are spread far afield. The journey is rugged and rough, but very much worthwhile to see a part of the country usually ignored - villages, winding roads, the change of scenery from mountains to plains - certainly a unique experience.



◇ Puyong Hall

Beautiful ancient pavilion set above a lily pond. Originally built in 1500 but largely destroyed in the Korean War. Scenic and well-located in the centre of town.

Gyenam Stock Farm

Very scenically located farm specialising in livestock (almost all other farms in the country that you can visit are crop farms). Pigs, cows, goats, etc. Meat and milk are produced, and methane gas is processed here too.

Haeju Central Square

Modestly-sized square in the centre of the city, with statues of the DPRK's leaders at one end.

◇ Koryo Fortress

Defensive Koryo-Dynasty fort built above the split 120m Suyang Waterfall. Demonstrates the strategic importance of this area through the centuries (being a key port for trade with China mainly). Involves a drive outside of town and then a trek to reach the fortress itself.

Sokdam Ravines

Nine valleys spread over a large area, featuring historical remains such as the 16th Century Sohyon School, stone tombs, and medicinal water springs. Good for a picnic stop too.

ACCOMODATION

◇ Haeju Hotel

Located beside the central square in the heart of the city, this is the only option for overnight visitors. Basic but good enough for a trip here, clean rooms and a billiards table and bar as leisure facilities.

