

MARCH 17 - MARCH 27/28 2020

North Korea Budget Tour + Vladivostok with unique train across the DPRK!

10 nights in North Korea + Beijing-Pyongyang travel time

See Korea as it awakens from the cold of winter and ride the rails of North Korea with the locals.

From 1,799 EUR per person

Overall

A unique tour package from Koryo Tours - the only experts in DPRK travel!

After a comprehensive introductory tour to the frequently visited parts of North Korea, we take you on a local train from Pyongyang across to the DPRK's East Coast and then onwards up to the extreme North of the country; the Rason Special Economic Zone. See how locals travel by train, mingle with fellow-passengers, and get amazing access to parts of the country that only a few tourists have ever seen.

On this tour, we take you to see the main sites of the capital city Pyongyang, including; a ride on the Pyongyang Metro, Juche Tower, Kim Il Sung Square, and a walk down one of Pyongyang's newest streets.

We will also head out of Pyongyang to go to Pyongsong, the centre of scientific research. and the North-South Korea border DMZ. Here you can be one of the first foreigners to enjoy the recent freedom of being able to step over the demarcation line into the South.

We will explore Rason and then cross into Russia by rail and make our way to Vladivostok: capital of the Russian Far East and closed to all foreigners during the USSR years.

We show you around the highlights of this diverse and wonderful remote city including some amazing abandoned underground bases and military sites - far beyond the 'usual' tourist experience in both North Korea and Russia.

Another specially curated trip from Koryo Tours!

Be warned, there will be little time to for rest on this action-packed itinerary - not that you'll want to, though!

Highlights

- Highlights of Pyongyang, Kaesong and the DMZ
- Pyongsong: Provincial seat of South Pyong'an province and centre of specialist education
- TRAIN TRIP - travelling across the country through unseen areas and off-limits cities and town on a train with local people - as far as the train can go!
- Rason - free trade zone in the remote north. Little-visited and very different to the rest of North Korea
- Cross into Russia & visit Vladivostok - a tiny and little-used border crossing across a rail bridge. The one land link between the two countries

Itinerary

Briefing Day – March 16 | Monday

*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, pay any outstanding tour fees and browse our collection of Korean art. 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 domestic sleeper train to Dandong, the Chinese city on the border with the DPRK. 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.



Day 1 - March 17 | Tuesday

Arrival Day in Pyongyang

Train transfer at Dandong Station from overnight sleeper train to Dandong-Pyongyang local. Our local representative in Dandong will assist with the transfer. Train crosses the China-North Korea border followed by North Korean customs and immigration.

Free bus from the Koryo Tours office to Beijing Capital Airport Terminal 2 for those taking the flight. Exact time TBC at the pre-tour briefing. Alternatively, meet the group at the Air Koryo check-in counter.

PM

Flight departure from Beijing on Air Koryo flight JS152 at 12:55. A 1.5 hour flight with basic lunch (no vegetarian option).

Flight arrival into Pyongyang's Sunan International Airport (FNJ) at 16:05. 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.

Walk on Future Scientists' Street | An evening stroll through one of Pyongyang's newest neighbourhoods.

Overnight | The Sosan Hotel, Pyongyang. A sports-themed hotel located in West Pyongyang's Sports Village. Sports shop, bookstore, numerous bars, spa and small gym. Renovated in 2015.

Day 2 - March 18 | Wednesday

Kaesong City and DMZ Tour

AM

Drive 160 km south on the 'Reunification Highway' to Kaesong, historic capital of the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392) and today located near the Korean Demilitarized Zone. 2.5-hour drive.

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).

PM

Janam Hill | Statues of the DPRK leadership on a hill overlooking Kaesong city and historic pavilion used for archery demonstrations in days of yore.

Drive back to Pyongyang. 2.5 hours.

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.

Kwangbok Department Store | Shop with the citizens of Pyongyang and exchange for Korean currency! Try the snack stands for some of Pyongyang's best local eats.

Overnight | Sosan Hotel, Pyongyang

Day 3 - March 19 | Thursday

Pyongyang City Tour

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 on the itinerary. 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. Cancellations are rare but possible.

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.

PM

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.

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 with 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.

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.

Drive north to Pyongsong, a satellite city of Pyongyang and centre of scientific research. A 45 minute to 1-hour drive.

Overnight | Jangsusan Hotel, Pyongsong. The only hotel in Pyongsong open for tourists, an excellent bar with one of the best bartenders in the DPRK makes this hotel one of the most fun in the whole country! Basic facilities with fairly reliable electricity and hot water. Billiards, karaoke, haircut, and outdoor eateries in summer.



Day 4 – March 20 | Friday

Pyongsong and Pyongyang City Tours

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.

Kim Jong Suk Higher Middle School | One of the DPRK's top middle schools for gifted students, tourists are encouraged to help teach an English class!

Paeksong Provisions Factory | A factory producing a range of foods and drinks: biscuits, cakes, soju, candy, and snacks. Here you can have a taste of the products and tour the production facilities.

PM

Drive back to Pyongyang. 45 minute - 1-hour drive.

Mangyongdae Native House | Birthplace and childhood home of President Kim Il Sung. A traditional Korean house in a beautiful natural surrounding.

Monument to the Party Foundation | Iconic structure featuring the hammer, sickle, writing brush which represent the workers, farmers, and intellectuals that make up the Worker's Party of Korea.

Tower of the Juche Idea | Iconic tower dedicated to the DPRK's guiding philosophy and located on the Taedong River. Take the elevator to the top for great views of the city (elevator ticket is 5 EUR).

Mansugyo Beer Bar | A bar serving seven types of beer. Popular with locals after work and on weekends. Best place to drink pints with local people.

Golden Lane Bowling Centre | Where Pyongyang locals go for their ten-pin fix (2.5 EUR per person per game). Also has billiards and arcade games. Non-bowlers can head next door to the Kumrung Leisure Centre for an air gun shooting range (approximately 6 EUR per 20 round cartridge) and some of the best coffee in Pyongyang.

Farewell group dinner at the Golden Lanes Bowling Centre's bulgogi BBQ restaurant.

Overnight | Sosan Hotel, Pyongyang.

Day 5 – March 21 | Saturday

Riding the Local Train!

AM

Train departure from Pyongyang Station at 07:50. Say goodbye to Pyongyang and off we go!

Most of the morning is spent travelling through relatively flat land. The first main stop is the city of Pyongsong, then the train sets off on a zigzagging path across the spine of the country heading for the East Coast.

PM

Through the afternoon we will go through valleys, over bridges and through tunnels, stopping at remote and unheard-of stations. Amazing views throughout!

Into the evening the coast approaches. The tunnels become fewer as the mountains give way to a narrow strip of plains, and the city of Hamhung is reached. This is a major city and here the train will pause for a while before switching from an easterly course to a northerly one.

It will be dark by now, time for bed. Each person will have a comfortable bunk for the night and the train is slow and smooth. The Korean countryside is very dark so not much to see out of the windows until dawn.

Overnight | On the train. Comfortable soft sleeper beds with fresh bedding for each person.

Day 6 – March 22 | Sunday

Aboard the Train - Arrival in Rason

AM

When we wake up we will be heading up the coast. Seaside views and fishing villages to the right, fields leading to hills to the left. The train doesn't totally follow the coast though as it passes on the inland side of the Chilbosan Mountain range.

We will pass Orang Airport and the town of Kyongsong shortly before arriving in the major city of Chongjin. Another moderately long stop here before heading even further north. Our destination approaches but still some sights to be seen and stops to make.

Although the Rason zone is part of the DPRK it is administered in a different way, so there is a kind of internal customs to pass. The guards will board the train and check tickets and passports. They may be surprised to see foreigners on this train, but be friendly and they will be too!

PM

Arrival at Rajin station after the train journey from Pyongyang – get off the train and meet local guides.

General intro to Rason area | Drive through Rajin city and check into the centrally located Namsan Hotel.

After freshening up (you've spent more than a day on the train after all!), visit the Statues of the DPRK's Leaders situated on a hill behind the hotel and offering a great view over the city and bay.

Have a walk through the Hae'an Park at the seaside. In good weather locals will gather here.

Czech Beer Bar | Opened with foreign investment. Slake your thirst with a range of made-on-site brews before dinner and overnight in this part of the DPRK

Overnight | Namsan Hotel, Rajin. Centrally located and locally famous. Right in the heart of Rajin city.

Day 7 – March 23 | Monday

Rason - Special Economic Zone

AM

Drive from Rajin to the nationally-famous Phipha Island Area, a scenic spot known to all North Koreans for its beauty. Salmon and trout farm | This is a seafood producing area after all – learn how they operate such places here. Emperor Hotel | Built with investment from Hong Kong this houses the first casino in the DPRK. Chinese tourists flock here for gambling and you can have a flutter yourself too, or enjoy a coffee and a look around this unexpected place! Phipha Island itself | A narrow road links it to the mainland. From here you can take an optional boat ride to see some seals who populate some rocks nearby, relax at the waterfront, or try some local seafood

PM

After returning to Rajin city the next stop is the Foreign Language School | Here local children learn English, Chinese, and other languages. Step in and help out with some lessons!

Rajin Port | Here you will see what kind of industry is going on; fishing, shipping goods in and out, and look out for some very non-Korean people; one of the three piers is operated by Russians who live on site!

Golden Triangle Bank | Here we will learn about the different economic system of Rason, change money into local won (yes, it is legal, not to be taken out of the country though, you are supposed to spend it), and see actual banking going on, the only place you get to witness this in the DPRK!

Rajin City Market | The only local market open to tourists in the whole country. Spread out through several buildings find consumer goods, stationary, food, drinks, building material, bicycles, and everything else a person in Rason would need. You can buy things too if you like – spend local money or RMB. Worth it just for the people-watching opportunity as it can get very busy here indeed!

In the evening spend some leisure time getting a massage if you like as one of Rajin’s many health centres, or visit a park, or local bar near the hotel before dinner.

Overnight: Namsan Hotel, Rajin

Day 8 – March 24 | Tuesday

Rason to Vladivostok - 2 different worlds!

AM

Drive to the nearby city of Sonbong, the smaller of the sister cities in this zone

Stop for photos in the centre of town – here there is a theatre, some monuments and mosaics, and an immortality tower too.

Sonbong Revolutionary Site | Associated with the end of Japanese rule over Korea. The guides will explain the whole story.

Drive on to Tumangang Town, right up on the Russian and Chinese borders, enjoy a packed lunch in this area.

PM

Visit the Russia-DPRK Friendship house which exhibits photos of visits by key figures from the neighbouring countries. 3 Countries Border Viewpoint | A picturesque pavilion offering views into China and Russia. From here you can see how the river divides the nations and also hear about a historical naval battle that a famed Korean admiral directed from this very hilltop.

If you do not wish to join the Russia part of this tour then at this point you will wave an emotional goodbye to those heading into the land of the Bear. You'll then be transferred to Wonjong Bridge which crosses from the DPRK to PRC. Pass through customs, immigration, cross the bridge and your tour ends as you enter China. We can help arrange onward travel from here of course, just drop us a line to ask about it!

Tumangang Station | Here we board the train that takes us on the short journey across the bridge into the Russian Federation – a 30 minute stopping-and-starting trip between two very different cultures. On arrival we pass through Russian customs, meet our local Russian guide and have a long evening drive (with rest stops) to Vladivostok, arriving late evening.

Overnight: Vladivostok

Day 9 – March 25 | Wednesday

Vladivostok - Intro to the 'Ruler of the East'

AM

A leisurely start this morning after a long international journey yesterday.

We start our city tour on foot by heading for the Eagle's Nest | A hilltop viewpoint looking over the city and Golden Horn bay – great for orientation and to get a sense of where you are.

Ride a Funicular Railway down to the city streets, see how the 19th Century meets the 20th and 21st as we then walk into the heart of the city for lunch at a local café.

PM

Heroes Square | The centre of the city dominated by a statues depicting soviet fighters victorious in the long civil war which followed the October Revolution in 1917. Vladivostok was one of the last places 'liberated' in this war.

C-56 Hero Submarine | Step inside a WWII-era submarine for a history lesson of what it was like to spend time in such a cramped machine, plus the background to the Russian/Soviet/Russian Pacific fleet, Headquartered in Vladivostok.

Pacific Fleet Shop | Get yourself kitted out in a stylish striped sailor's shirt here if you like!

Visit the final stop on the mighty Trans-Siberian Railway. The marker positioned at the 9288th km of the route. A basic history of how the rails stretched from Europe to here will be explained, as well as what Ho Chi Minh was doing on this platform so many times in the 1920s.

Free time in the evening to explore – Russian cities are no longer simply full of vodka & violence, but have a thriving cocktail scene, interesting promenade areas, shops, and entertainment options. See what you can experience!

Overnight: Vladivostok

Day 10 – March 26 | Thursday

Underground & Abandoned Vladivostok

AM

This morning we head underground to an abandoned formerly top-secret NKVD base and bomb shelter | Vladivostok is full of tunnels and secret areas and this is one of the very best. A guided trip through history and engineering, all taking place in tunnels under the city. Wear something warm and prepare to learn a lot about the psychology of living in such a society and preparing for action at all times

When we emerge like moles back into the light we will make a stop at the post office (send cards if you like) and a statue of an unusual American lady who lived here pre-revolution, before lunch in the city.

PM

This afternoon we cross one of the brand new bridges built in Vladivostok for the 2012 APEC summit to Russkiy Island. Much key infrastructure has been moved to this island in the last few years as it was previously only accessible by boat – now the bridge has made it much easier to access

On Russkiy Island (it is big, bigger than the rest of the city) we will first visit the famous Voroshilov Battery | Credited with saving the city from Japanese invasion (it's a long story, hear it all on the trip), as well as a new nearby tank and military equipment park (yes you can fire an AK-47 here).

We'll see other former military sites on the island this afternoon as well as a look at some of the new constructions put here for the summit and see how island life is changed since connection to the rest of the city.

Finally we return to the main part of Vladivostok for a bit of free time before a final farewell dinner. Our guide and tour leader can recommend shops, bars, and so on of course so make the most of the evening in this amazing remote city!

Overnight: Vladivostok

Day 11 – March 27 | Friday

Final Day

Our tour sadly ends today and we all bid each other a fond da svedanya! How you depart is up to you – there are trains, planes, buses, and boats. Koryo Tours can assist in planning onward travel to China, if you are staying in Russia

we can make the Letter of Invitation for the visa last longer to cover onward travel which we can also advise on – drop us a line with how you plan to finish this trip and we'll help you out!

Extras

Transport | Train and Flights to North Korea (One Korea Tour) This tour travels between Beijing-Pyongyang by train in a hard-sleeper carriage (6 bunks per compartment). The train journey takes 24 hours with a transfer at the city of Dandong. Flight to Pyongyang is also available. The flight takes around 90 minutes. For an extra 199 EUR you can upgrade to the flight to Pyongyang.

Helicopter flight over Pyongyang Why not take a helicopter sightseeing flight over the DPRK's capital? Grab this rare opportunity to tour the skies above the city in a 40-minute helicopter trip aboard an Air Koryo Mi-17 chopper. The flight offers an unrivalled view from above, and great opportunities for photos and video from a completely different angle.

Upgrade to your own room All hotel rooms on our all-inclusive group tours feature twin beds, and will be shared. If you'd like a room to yourself then you can upgrade for an extra 40 EUR per night.

Insurance for up to six nights We're unable to take you on one of our tours if you do not have medical insurance that covers the destination in question. Issues of isolation and infrastructure where we go mean it would be irresponsible of us to do so. We can provide this if you do not have it — or you can use your own.

What is / is not included?

INCLUDED

- Train Beijing – Pyongyang
- Train Pyongyang – Rason
- Train Rason – Khasan (Russia)
- Transfer Khasan – Vladivostok
- All meals on the tour apart from those taken during free time in Russia
- Hotel accommodation and Overnight train accommodation
- A Koryo Tours tour leader, two local Korean guides, and a driver per group in the DPRK. One guide in Russia.
- All transportation between sites visited in the DPRK and Russia
- LOI visa support for Russian Visa

NOT INCLUDED

- DPRK visa fee 50 EUR
- Optional Air Koryo flight to Pyongyang (199 EUR)
- Optional single room supplement of 40 EUR per night
- Tips for the local guides and driver (approx 10-15 EUR per day)
- Optional activities such as the lift up the Juche Tower (5 EUR) or a visit to the funfair (approx. 2 EUR entrance fee per person)
- Entry tickets for special events if applicable – for example Pyongyang Circus (approx. 20 EUR per person)
- Meals include a complimentary beer and water, but you will need to purchase extra drinks if needed
- Spending money for souvenirs
- Onward travel from Vladivostok in Russia - we can advise and assist with options though



Notes

Groups will be in the experienced hands of two or three local Korean guides. Furthermore, for groups of 10 or more, a member of the Koryo Tours team will accompany the trip.

Please note that when on tour your day-to-day itinerary may differ slightly to what is advertised above. Your tour leader will ensure, however, that everything available at the time is covered, and replacement options are provided where needed. We will also add in extras when there is time (such as a visit to a local bar or amusement park). We visit the DPRK regularly so know all the best places to go, and how to make the most of your days there to guarantee the experience of a lifetime. After the tour, we will send out a list of all participants' emails, so you can keep in touch, swap photos etc. If you do not wish to be on this list then please let us know.

Visa Information

We arrange your North Korean visa as part of your tour package [+50 EUR]. However, given the tour starts and finishes in China you may also need to consider entry and exit procedures in China for your trip. This can be obtained at a Chinese embassy abroad. We recommend obtaining at least a double-entry Chinese visa for your trip.

Over 50 nationalities can obtain a visa-waiver for up to 144 hours when in transit through Beijing Capital Airport (PEK) using direct international flights. Most other nationalities can transit for up to 24 hours. If you don't want to visit China as part of your trip, this could be the easiest option for you. It is not possible to obtain a transit-waiver when using a train for entry or exit from China.

Please be sure to check your visa status for travel through China while planning your trip. We may be able to assist with Chinese visas. We can also provide documentation in support of visa applications upon payment of a tour deposit.