

FEBRUARY 15 - FEBRUARY 22/23 2020

The Kim Jong Il Birthday Tour

7 nights in North Korea + Beijing-Pyongyang travel time

Join in the celebrations for a quick stop in the DPRK over one of the biggest North Korea holidays – Kim Jong Il’s Birthday on February 16th.

From 1,349 EUR per person

Overall

General Kim Jong Il, President Kim Il Sung’s son and father of current North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, was born on 16th February. This date is known as the Day of the Shining Star. It is saved in the DPRK calendar as a day of celebrations, and one of the most important North Korea holidays.

Locals have time off work, and there are many special events that go on in the city, that foreigners are also welcome to attend.

During this North Korea holiday time, we expect mass dances , a special performance at the Pyongyang Circus, and a chance to visit the Kimjongilia Flower Exhibition. Plus, there may be a chance to view the epic North Korea fireworks from the infamous Kim Il Sung Square filled with locals also gathering to watch the fireworks after a day of celebrations with the family.

Aside from all of the special events, this action-packed itinerary also includes a city tour of all of the not-to-miss sites of Pyongyang, including the Juche Tower and Kwangbok Department Store.

With over a week in the country we’ll be spending time out of Pyongyang and off the beaten path as we test our skills out at the slopes of North Korea’s only ski resort open to foreigners: Masik Pass. Or alternatively, take a hike around the beautiful area of Mt. Kumgang – otherwise known as the Diamond Mountains.

This tour offers a great opportunity to head out of the hustle and bustle of Pyongyang and enjoy some of North Korea’s rarely explored countryside.

Highlights

- Day of the Shining Star - Celebrations on General Kim Jong Il's Birthday
- Pyongyang city highlights
- Hike in Mt. Kumgang or ski at Masik Pass Ski Resort

Itinerary

Briefing Day – February 14 | Friday

*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 - February 15 | Saturday

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 to Pyongyang's Sunan International Airport (FNJ) at 15:55. 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, museum and The Grand People's Study House, Korea's national library. See the centre of it all!

Walk on post-war Pyongyang's oldest street Victory (Sungni) Street from Kim Il Sung Square to Pyongyang Railway Station.

Train arrival to Pyongyang Railway Station at 18:45.

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.

Day 2 - February 16 | Sunday

DPRK Holiday - Birthday of General Kim Jong Il

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 in the country. 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.

Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum and USS Pueblo | We'll tour this world-class museum led by a local museum guide. 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 captures equipment from the US military, including the spyship USS Pueblo. Central to the understanding of the country today and highlight of the trip.

Okryugwan | A meal at Pyongyang's most famous restaurant. Housed in a huge traditional building on the banks of the Taedong River. Okryugwan specialises in Pyongyang Cold Noodles.

PM

Mansudae Grand Monument | Enormous bronze statues of President Kim Il Sung and Leader Kim Jong Il overlooking downtown Pyongyang. A presentation of flowers and bow by the group is customary here (5 EUR). Please note this is a government-administered sight and visits are subject to cancellation. Visits are optional and require a certain dresscode (close-toed shoes and covered legs and shoulders). Here we will also see the Chollima Monument, or 'thousand ri (400 km or 250 mile) horse' -a symbol of speed- commemorating the quick rebuilding of the country in the 1950's following the Korean War.

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.

Kim Il Sung Square | Pyongyang's central square lined with government ministries, museums, and The Grand People's Study House.

Mass Dance | As it's a national holiday, we also expect to see large student organised dances held around Pyongyang on major holidays (weather dependent). Join in the fun!

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.

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 organisations and groups from across society compete to put on the best floral display.

Golden Lanes Bowling Centre | Where Pyongyang locals go for their ten-pin fix. Also has billiards and arcade games. Non-bowlers can head next door to the Kumrung Leisure Centre for an airgun shooting range and some of the best coffee in Pyongyang.

Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

Day 3 - February 17 | Monday

Kaesong and the DMZ

Drive 3 hours south along the 'Reunification Highway' to Kaesong, ancient capital of the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392 AD) located near today's Korean Demilitarised Zone, 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.

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 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.

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).

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.

Kwangbok Department Store | Exchange for Korean currency and shop with the citizens of Pyongyang! Try the snack stand on the first floor for some of Pyongyang's best local eats.

Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang



Day 4 – February 18 | Tuesday

Mt. Myohyang

AM

Drive north passing rivers valleys and hills to Mt. Myohyang, the 'mountain of mysterious fragrance'. A 2.5 hour to 3 hour drive.

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.

PM

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.

Manpok Valley Hike | Various options for hikes of a range of distances/difficulties. Passing waterfalls, hermitages, interesting rocks, lovely wooded areas, and viewing points.

Drive back to Pyongyang (2.5-3 hours).

Evening walk on Ryomyong Street | Pyongyang's newest, environmentally-friendly street opened in 2017 housing apartment blocks and service facilities.

Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

Day 5 – February 19 | Wednesday

Pyongyang City Tour

AM

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

A ride through Pyongyang from Mangyongdae Tram Depot to Pyongyang Station on one of city's municipal trams made in former Czechoslovakia.

Mansudae Art Studio | The DPRK's centre of artistic excellence, where the majority of sculptures, mosaics, and paintings around the country are made. Visit workshops to see artists at work and an exhibition where pieces are sold.

Grand People's Study House | National library and public correspondence university with Neo-traditional Korean style and great views of the city.

PM

Drive east across the width of the peninsula to Masik Pass Ski Resort the DPRK's largest ski resort opened in 2013. A 4-hour drive with a rest stop at Sinpyong Lake.

Overnight | Masik Ryong Hotel

Day 6 – February 20 | Thursday

Skiing at Masik Pasik Ski Resort OR day-trip to Mt. Kumgang | *For today's activities you have two choices: all-day skiing at North Korea's largest Ski Resort or a day-trip for hiking in the Diamond Mountains that has attracted generations of travelers from across Korea and China, artists and poets, domestic and foreign tourists. Located not far from the DMZ, the region has been a centre of inter-Korean co-operation (and controversy).*

Skiing | Masik Pass features nine main runs, two beginner slopes, and a lodge with full amenities. Equipment rental and ski pass paid on the spot (approximately 65 EUR for 4-hrs or 100 EUR for 8-hrs). Snowmobile, inter-tubing, and ice-skating also available.

OR

Hiking in Mt. Kumgang | Drive 3 hours south along the East Sea coast to the scenic Mt. Kumgang, the 'Diamond Mountain' noted in East Asian history and famous in Korean legend. Home of some of Korea's most spectacular natural landscapes and best hiking. Spend the rest of the day hiking – a series of peaks and canyons rising above Korea's eastern seaboard and regarded since time immemorial as one of the most scenic regions in East Asia. Drive back to Masik Pass Ski Resort in the late afternoon.

Reassemble for dinner at Wonsan Tourist Restaurant for some of the best seafood in the DPRK.

Overnight | Masik Ryong Hotel

Day 7 – February 21 | Friday

Skiing at Masik Pasik Ski Resort OR Wonsan City Tour | *For today's activities you have two choices: half-day skiing or city tour in Wonsan, a major port city on Korea's East Sea. One of the DPRK's two 'Hero Cities' for the strategic role the city and its populace played on the frontlines in the Korean War. Now the focus of investment projects in the DPRK.*

AM

Skiing

OR

Wonsan City Centre and Docks | Central square and ship terminal in downtown Wonsan. The Mangyongbong-92 ferry/cargo ship which one shuttled Koreans living in Japan back and forth across the East Sea of Korea is moored here.

Former Wonsan Railway Station Revolutionary Site | Preserved Japanese colonial era train station, waiting room, guesthouse, and the train which future President Kim Il Sung rode to Pyongyang during the liberation of the country in 1945.

Kangwon Province Art Gallery | Small art exhibition selling artwork by local artists, where you can purchase paintings.

Jangdok Island and Lighthouse | Take a stroll on the breakwater to a small island in the middle of Wonsan harbour (1 EUR/USD entry fee). Local fishermen flock to this area, chat with them along the way. Also good for romantic evening walks.

PM

Drive back west to Pyongyang. Approx. 4 hrs drive with a rest stop.

Farewell dinner at South Pyongyang's Duck Barbecue Restaurant.

Future Scientists' Street // Walk in the newly built residential district for scientists and academics to view its unique modern architecture.

Overnight | Yanggakdo International Hotel, Pyongyang

Day 8 – February 22 | Saturday

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 JS151 at 08:30 with scheduled arrival at Beijing Capital Airport (PEK) Terminal 2 at 09:50.

OR

Train departure by train to Beijing at 10:25 with transfer in Dandong. The scheduled arrival is to Beijing Station on Sunday February 23 at 08:38. For this tour the default option is hard sleeper (six beds per berth).

End of Tour

Extras

Transport | Train and Flights to North Korea (Standard) This tour travels between Beijing-Pyongyang by train each way in a hard-sleeper carriage (6 bunks per compartment). The train journey takes 24 hours with a transfer at the city of

Dandong. One-way or round-trip flights are also available. The flight takes around 90 minutes. For an extra 199 EUR you can upgrade to a one-way flight. A round-trip ticket costs an additional 299 EUR.

Visit the DPRK border town of Sinuiju If you're heading back to Beijing by train this option lets you get off for an overnight in Dongrim before the next day's tour of Sinuiju — the border city with China. Spend an extra 24 hours in the DPRK seeing the sites of North Pyongan province. You will then continue on through to Beijing.

Visit Dandong — the Chinese gateway to the DPRK Instead of immediately returning to Beijing when your tour ends you can take some extra time to visit this fascinating border city, which directly faces the DPRK town of Sinuiju, but lies on the Chinese side of the Yalu River. We offer both one-night and two-night fully guided extensions that take in all the sights of Dandong, with a special North Korea theme.

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 with transfer at Dandong
- Train Pyongyang – Beijing with transfer at Dandong
- All meals on the tour except for meals on the train
- Hotel accommodation
- Two local Korean guides, and a driver per group
- A Koryo Tours tour leader
- All transportation in the DPRK

NOT INCLUDED

- DPRK visa fee 50 EUR
- Optional Air Koryo flights (one-way: 199 EUR; return: 299 EUR)
- Optional single room supplement of 40 EUR per night
- Tips for the local Korean 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) or film screening (approx. 10 EUR)
- Meals include a complimentary beer and water, but you will need to purchase extra drinks if needed
- Spending money for souvenirs
- SINUIJU EXTENSION: RMB 50 for the bus across the bridge to Dandong to be paid on the spot to the local guides

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.