

Journey Idea to North Korea

Classic North Korea
13 Days



Prepared for
Steppes Travel Clients

QUICK REFERENCE ITINERARY

Day 1	Fly London Heathrow / Beijing (overnight)
Day 2	Arrive Beijing
Day 3	Fly Beijing / Pyongyang
Day 4	Pyongyang
Day 5	Drive Pyongyang / Mt Myohang
Day 6	Drive Mt Myohang / Pyongyang
Day 7	Pyongyang
Day 8	Drive Pyongyang / Kaesong
Day 9	Drive Kaesong / Pyongyang
Day 10	Train Pyongyang / Beijing (overnight)
Day 11	Arrive Beijing
Day 12	Beijing
Day 13	Fly Beijing / London Heathrow

DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY

Korea's history spans over 5000 years. Due to its strategic geographical location, neighbouring China, Japan and Russia, the peninsula has often been the field of battle of foreign powers and as now inextricably enmeshed in the global political climate.

Japan occupied Korea from 1910 until the end of the Second World War whereupon the Russians took the surrender in the north and the Americans to the south on the 38th parallel. This was meant to be a temporary border however due to mistrust between Russia and America and the outbreak of the Cold War the line became permanent. Tension between the two halves led to the outbreak of the Korean War, 1950-1953 (Fatherland Liberation War) which has left the country divided until the present day.

The North is a country run on communist principles but dominated by the countries 'Juche Idea', a philosophy aimed at developing self-reliance. With the change in political direction of its old comrades Russia and China, North Korea has become increasingly isolated and is seen as one of the most difficult countries to get a tourist visa. It was thought that the food and economic crisis would put too great a strain on the Juche ideology, inevitably leading to the opening of the country through reform or even implosion or war. However it is apparent that the DPRK is still maintaining its steadfast attitude and optimists are seeing this decade as a change through dialogue with the South and the outside world.

This is the last bastion of Communism in the world. A visit now will surely leave a lasting impression in your mind.



Day 1

London / Beijing

This afternoon depart London Heathrow on the direct flight to Beijing, flying overnight.

Day 2

Arrive Beijing

Following your arrival in Beijing you will be met and transferred to your hotel. On the way you will be taken to our partner's office for a briefing on North Korea. This will be for about 90 minutes. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

Overnight at the 4 Marriott Courtyard Hotel.*

Day 3

Beijing / Pyongyang

After breakfast you will be collected from your hotel and transferred to the airport for the flight to Pyongyang.



On arrival you will be met by your guides and begin your sightseeing programme, if time allows.

Visit the Arch of Triumph, erected in 1982 to celebrate the 70th birthday of Kim Il Sung.



See the Mansudae Grand Monument which has a statue of Kim Il Sung flanked by monuments to the anti-Japanese struggle and the Korean War. It was erected in 1972 on Mansu (Longevity) Hill. (You are expected to lay flowers and bow. The cost is Euros5 per group and is payable locally).

Take a walk in Fountain Park. It is here that many newly-wed couples come to have their pictures taken amongst the white alabaster statues. Nearby, is the Grand People's Study House, rather like a huge library. The building is massive with a green tiled roof and a tour of the inside should certainly leave an impression.

Overnight at the 4 Yanggakdo Hotel (Breakfast, dinner).*

Day 4

Pyongyang

This morning visit Kumsusan Memorial Palace, Kim Il Sung's Mausoleum (please note smart dress is required which means a shirt and tie for men). It was his residence when he was alive and is now a sombre but impressive shrine.



The Revolutionary Martyr's Cemetery contains the graves of revolutionaries killed in the fight against Japanese occupation. There are about 110 bronze busts. At the top there is a bust of Kim Jong Il's late mother, an anti Japanese guerrilla herself.



Continue sightseeing with a trip on the Pyongyang Metro. The stations are elaborately decorated in ways similar to those in other former communist countries and illustrate the DPRK's liberation and socialist construction. There are 16 stations on two lines and it doubles as an air-raid shelter. You are only usually able to travel between two stations - Yonggwang (Glory) and Puhong (Reconstruction).

Experience the peace and tranquillity of the Mangyongdae Native House. This was the birthplace of Kim Il Sung. It is a straw-



thatched house set in a park containing various family treasures. It offers an insight into the lifestyle of people of his class in the early part of the 20th C.

The local people like to relax in the parks and at Moranbang Park you are likely to see families picnicking and possibly performing on the covered stage. Another area of recreation is the Kaeson Funfair where children love to visit with their parents.

Overnight at the Yanggakdo Hotel (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 5



Pyongyang / Mt Myohang

Climb or take a lift up the Juche Tower (The cost is Euros 5 per person for the lift which is payable locally) which is 150m tall topped by a 20m torch and was erected in 1982 to celebrate Kim Il Sung's 70th birthday. The view from top offers fine views of the city.

The Monument to Party Foundation was erected to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the ruling Korean Workers Party. This huge stone sculpture consists of a hammer, a sickle and a writing brush each 50m high. "Juche" is the guiding ideology of the DPRK and was developed by the Great leader Kim Il Sung. It is adhered to and practiced by all the nation's people.



The Mansudae Art Studio displays both modern and ancient art. Paintings, sculptures, crafts and pottery are all included.

In the afternoon you depart by coach for Myohyangsan, a journey of about 2.5 hours. Mt Myohyang, meaning "mountain of a unique fragrance" is one of Korea's five sacred mountains. On arrival check in to your hotel.

You will have time to see the Pohyon Buddhist temple, a working temple dating back more than 1000 years.

Overnight at the 3 Hyangsan Hotel (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).*

Day 6



Mt Myohang / Pyongyang

This morning visit the International Friendship Exhibition set in lush hills. Here gifts that have been given to the DPRK's leaders are on display including a football from Pele and a basketball from Michael Jordan.

You will have the opportunity for a gentle walk to see some of the local waterfalls. This is a welcome addition to the programme and allows you to experience the wonderful scenery of the area.

Return to Pyongyang after lunch and continue your visits. You will go to a school children's Palace where you will be given a tour often followed by a performance. These are centres for gifted children who attend classes after school to study subjects such as Taekwondo, harp playing, calligraphy, music and gymnastics.

Overnight at the Yanggakdo Hotel (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 7



Pyongyang

The Grand People's Study House, rather like a huge library. The building is massive with a green tiled roof and a tour of the inside should certainly leave an impression.

The Korean Art Gallery displays both modern and traditional art. It shows the achievements and goals for the country.

Finally, this morning you will have the opportunity to take a stroll along the Taedong River to Kim Il Sung Square.



In the afternoon you will be taken to the USS Pueblo, an American spy ship, anchored in the Taedong River. It was captured by the North Koreans in January 1968. One crew member died and the 82 surviving crew were captured and held for 11 months.

The Korean war is an important modern event in the history of the region and you will be taken to the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum to learn how it affected the country and to see the War Victory Monument.



You have the opportunity to visit the Pyongyang film studio. You can walk amongst the sets, some of which you might find surprising.

Overnight at the Yanggakdo Hotel (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 8



Pyongyang / Nampo / Kaesong

After breakfast depart for Nampo. Here you will see the West Sea Barrage. Built in record time the Korean's are very proud of this achievement.

Continue to Kaesong in the south of the country, the nearest town to the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ).

On arrival check in to the 3* Minsok Folk Hotel - a traditional Korean hotel formerly part of the old town (mattress on the floor with under floor heating).

Visit the tomb of King Kongmin, a magnificently preserved tomb of the last emperor of the Koryo dynasty and his wife. It is the only double-domed tomb in Korea. *(Breakfast, lunch, dinner).*

Day 9



Kaesong / Pyongyang

Begin this morning with a visit to the Koryo Museum.

Continue to visit the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) at Panmunjom, the most heavily fortified border in the world. Seoul, capital of South Korea is 70 km from the border. The Korean People's Army will introduce you to their view of the division of the Korean peninsula. Visit the hall where the armistice talks were held and the armistice itself was signed. It is possible to cross the border for a few steps in the building that straddles the demarcation line. You will also be taken to view the Concrete Wall, a very heavily fortified section of the border that faces you across a valley of tangled grass, shrubs and small trees.

Return to Pyongyang on the Friendship Highway. On arrival you will have the opportunity to do some shopping. Not shopping in



the conventional sense though. You will be taken to a stamp shop where you can buy Korean Classics, stamps, postcards and local souvenirs.

Overnight at the Yanggakdo Hotel (Breakfast, lunch, dinner).

Day 10



Pyongyang / Beijing

After breakfast you will be taken to the railway station from where you depart by train for Beijing crossing the border at Sinuiju/Dandong, the Chinese border town. The train departs at 10.10 and arrives in Dandong at about 17.30. After customs and immigration the train continues on its way to Beijing.

Overnight on board train (Breakfast. Lunch/dinner - available on train for Euro5 which is payable locally).

Day 11

Arrive Beijing

On arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

Overnight at the 4 Marriott Courtyard Hotel.*

Day 12

Beijing

The full day is at leisure.

Overnight at the 4 Marriott Courtyard Hotel.*

Day 13

Beijing / London

This morning you will be taken to the airport for the direct flight to London Heathrow, arriving in London later the same afternoon. *(Breakfast).*

The Mass Games



Mass Games can basically be described as a synchronized socialist-realist spectacular, featuring over 100,000 participants in a 90 minute display of gymnastics, dance, acrobatics, and dramatic performance, accompanied by music and other effects, all wrapped in a highly politicized package. Literally no other place on Earth has anything comparable and it has to be seen with your own two eyes to truly appreciate the scale on display.

The Mass Games organisers state that 'Juche orientated mass gymnastics of Korea originated from Flower Gymnastics, a work by President Kim Il Sung created in 1930, the early days of his anti Japanese revolutionary struggles'. 1961 marked the first truly Korean style Mass Gymnastics piece with the catchy title of 'The Era of the Workers' Party'. Today, Mass Gymnastics represents 'the ideological theme of the history of the country and nation splendidly through combination of gymnastic formations, backdrops involving tens of thousands of people and music'. The games is not merely a visual spectacular, through the training and performance of the games 'the ideological theme promotes social development and it trains not only the people's physiques but also their spiritual power'.

Unlike a sports competition, where the athletes compete for a prize, the mass gymnastics of Korea brings 'pleasure and satisfaction to the performers as well as to the audience and instills in their hearts hope for the future'.

As Leader Kim Jong Il pointed out in a meeting with the mass gymnastics organisers in 1987 'the Korean style of mass gymnastics is a mixed form of comprehensive physical exercises with a combination of high ideological content, artistic quality and gymnastics skill'.

The Mass Games are never guaranteed to run. However, in years when they do they are usually performed between August and early October.

Tickets are purchased in the country and prices start at €50 per person (subject to change).

TRIP PRICE

4* hotels - Price from £2,940.00 per person + flight taxes

£150 per person - Supplement for using Air China (Beijing/Pyongyang)

The rates quoted are subject to the availability of all services, currency fluctuations, written confirmation and Steppes Travels terms and conditions.

The price includes - Return flights from London in Economy Class, accommodation in twin/double room, private transfers & transportation (air-conditioned car, regional flight in Economy Class, 1st Class shared 4 berth train compartment), private sightseeing programme with English speaking guide and entrance fees to tourist sites, meals as indicated.

The price excludes - Visas, travel insurance, meals unless indicated, early check in or late check out at hotels, camera/video fees at museum/sites, items of a personal nature, gratuities.

There are some additional costs that are payable locally -

- flowers at monuments (2 sites) - Euros5 per group
- circus - Euros10 per person
- lunch on train - Euros5 (not compulsory)

Please note that the above is only a suggested journey, allowing in-depth visits to the highlights of the country and the chance to explore the wide range of possibilities this fascinating country has to offer.

Why Travel with Steppes?

Steppes Travel was founded in 1989 with the objective of creating a travel company where service and knowledge are of the highest priority. We aim to design itineraries and include the highlights of any country, whilst taking travellers off the beaten track to see lesser known, interesting places not frequented by large numbers of tourists. We offer individuals the ability to travel safely in remote areas, with the knowledge that we have travelled there before.

Financial Protection

Steppes Travel is a fully bonded tour operator that complies with the Civil Aviation Authority bonding conditions of the UK. This fully guarantees your money in the unlikely event of us going out of business before you start your holiday. Our ATOL number is 6945 and we have full insurance to cover the financial failure of an airline. In addition, all accommodation-only bookings (such as hotels, lodges and boats) which are not covered by the ATOL regulations are financially protected with all payments being held in a separate trust account until the date of departure. This is in accordance with the Package Travel Regulations Act 1992.

Specialist Knowledge

We demand and employ only a very high calibre of staff. All of our specialists have a wealth of travel experience and have travelled, and continue to travel, extensively throughout their regions of specialisation. You can therefore rely on their first hand knowledge and expertise. Some have been with us for more than ten years. They will tell you about those intimate, friendly hotels and introduce you to our charismatic guides - those little extra qualities that make your holiday both unique and special.

A Tailor-made Journey

After an initial discussion with you, one of our specialists will create a unique itinerary for your trip, designed around your own interests, preferred style of accommodation and the pace at which you like to travel. This will be fine tuned until you are completely satisfied with it. Throughout this whole process, you will be dealt with by the same specialist and you are welcome to call them at any time.

24 hour Emergency Service

We have an emergency service so that we can be contacted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Recognition

More than 65% of our business is achieved through recommendations, referrals and repeat bookings. This, for us, is the highest endorsement we could have. In addition, our 20 years of experience in this specialist travel sector confirms our expertise.

Please contact Steppes Travel on 01285 880 980 or visit our website www.steppestravel.co.uk for further information.

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