



Trans-DPRK: Across North Korea by Local Train



Travel through the DPRK by local train – ride the rails with locals from the capital to the extreme north!

- From Pyongyang to Rajin, Rason Special Economic Zone by local train – overnight trip in a sleeper train across the whole DPRK! Previously travel between Pyongyang to Rajin required a combination of domestic flight and road journey.
- Rason area tour for 3 days/2 nights – see this amazing, remote, and little-known free-trade area in North Korea – cities, markets, banks, schools, factories, local life and more!
- End the tour by crossing overland into China’s Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, a ethnically Korean area of China – finishing off a remarkable experience with lasting memories!

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Introduction

This is an exciting extension package for those on a [Koryo Tours' private tour](#) to the DPRK. Choose any private tours of two nights or more and of our and we can then add this amazing train tour, so that you are able to visit to the far northern area of Rason at the end of the trip. It is as simple as that! One of our tour managers will work with you to

Roll through fields and valleys, tunnel under mountains and ride past scenic coastal fishing villages. This journey takes you across the country and up the coast, giving you the chance to see the scenery that Korea is rightly famed. Farms, villages, towns, and cities dot the line all the way to the end. Factories, mines, fields, paddies, and beaches – all can be seen from the window as you roll past at a leisurely pace. This is the only way to see some remote parts of the country – another amazing opportunity brought to you through the hard work of Koryo Tours!

At the present time there is only one domestic train route open to tourists – the Pyongyang to Rajin line and you must travel the whole distance. The train departs on specific dates and the travel time is officially 31 hours in total. However, **we strongly advise that you be prepared for a longer journey**, as the train network, power grid, and general infrastructure of much of the country is not exactly in tip-top condition. The train uses a diesel engine at some times and is run from the electric supply at other times. This is done to overcome the sporadic power demands in the country. It is not possible to know more than 10 days in advance whether the diesel or electric train will be used. The diesel train is more reliable and can be expected to run more or less on time. However, the electric train takes a lot longer usually (up to 50 hours on occasion) and thus may even depart a day earlier than on the schedule. **This journey will therefore require some flexibility!**

When aboard the train we are not generally allowed to disembark, although it may be possible at some of the larger stops (such as Chongjin) to stretch your legs just outside the cabin for a minute or two. You should be prepared to be in the train for some time – however there is no need to worry as the train is comfortable (you have to ride in the sleeper compartment, which has 4 beds per room) and you will of course have the opportunity to stock up on food before the trip commences (there is no restaurant on this train). The view and the meandering pace of the journey makes this all worthwhile though – as well as travelling with locals and experiencing the country in a whole different way.

At the end of the train ride you will find yourself in the city of Rajin, the main settlement in the Rason Special Economic Zone (SEZ), which makes up the furthest northern tip of the DPRK. Here you will be met by local and begin your tour of this area. The itinerary for this part of the tour is listed below. Rason has no airport, but you can finish this tour by exiting into China – Koryo Tours can assist in arranging onward transport from the border. The area is

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somewhat remote, but the fascinating city of Yanji, prefectural capital of China's Yanbian Autonomous Prefecture, is only a couple of hours away and the far North East of China is itself a very interesting place to explore, if you have the time! From Yanji, onward travel is possible to Shenyang, Beijing, Shanghai, and even Osaka.

Please see below for an idea of the tour itinerary and what we can offer; this is open to anyone interested enough to add this unique experience to the end of a private tour in North Korea! As always please send us any further questions that you may have to info@koryogroup.com and we will do our very best to help you in becoming one of the lucky few to experience this amazing adventure into the North of North Korea. We look forward to hearing from you!

- **Departure Dates:** The train departs from Pyongyang Railway Station in the morning on specific days of every month. Namely the 1st, 4th, 10th, 13th, 16th, 21st, and 25th at 07:50. Arrival time in Rajin is officially 13:20 the next day but delays are to be expected. **If the train is an electric train it may even depart the day before listed so please be ready to be flexible!**
- **Rason itinerary:** After you finally disembark from the train you find yourself in Rason – a free trade zone and very enigmatic part of the DPRK. Many thousands of Chinese people visit this region every year (although beside them there are very few other tourists in Rason). Here you will find small cities, lovely countryside and a relaxed coastline, a different economic system (which the local guides will explain), a fascinating itinerary, and a very different vibe to Pyongyang and the rest of the country. Rason is the name of the whole zone, it comes from the names of the two main cities Rajin and Sonbong, both of which you will have a chance to see on the tour.

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Itinerary

DAY	AM	PM	HOTEL
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board the train at Pyongyang Station – it departs at 07:50 but you will have time to find your bunks, say ‘hi’ to your fellow-travellers, and take some photos on the platform. Say ‘goodbye’ to Pyongyang and off you go! Most of the morning is spent travelling through relatively flat land. The first main stop is the city of Pyongsong which is visited on many tours, then the train sets off on a zigzagging path across the mountainous spine of the country heading for the east coast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the afternoon you 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 there is not much to see out of the windows until dawn. Through the night you will pass through the Korean city of Kim Chaek, one of the DPRK’s major cities completely closed to foreigners. 	On the train
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you wake up you 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 Chilbo Mountain Range. You will pass Orang airport and Kyongsong, once a regional centre and now a small resort, shortly before arriving in the major city of Chongjin. Chongjin is the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	Namsan Hotel, Rajin

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	<p>DPRK's third largest city and a centre of heavy industry. Another moderately long stop here before heading ever further north. Your destination approaches but still some sights to be seen and stops to make.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the Rason SEZ 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! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive from Rajin to the nationally-famous Pipha Island Area, a scenic spot known to all North Koreans for its beauty. • Visit a salmon and trout farm – this is a seafood producing area after all – learn how they operate such places here • Visit the 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! • Pipha 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After returning to Rajin city the next stop is the city's 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 you 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 	Namsan Hotel, Rajin

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		<p>RMB. Worth it just for the people-watching opportunity as it can get very busy here indeed!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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! 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Drive to the Wonjong Bridge – separating DPRK from China. Here you pass through Korean and Chinese customs and immigration and pass from DPRK to PRC. The tour ends here with a good bye to the guides after an amazing adventure across the country! <p>End of Tour</p>	

Tour Costs:

Group Size	Price (EUR) per person
1 person	650
2 people	610
3-5 people	570
6-9 people	510

- Optional single room supplement in Rajin is 40 EUR per night – no single room is possible on the train
- **IMPORTANT:** as two guides are sent from Pyongyang to ride the train as far as Chongjin there is an additional fee per group of **300 EUR** to cover their tickets. This is charged regardless of group size.

Notes:

- **Photos (as always in North Korea) can be problematic** – you are not supposed to take pictures of key infrastructure in the country and that includes railway stations. So please understand and limit the pictures on the train to countryside, villages, scenic areas, etc. When departing the Rason zone customs officers are allowed to check photos so please be aware that they may do so rigorously depending on how they are feeling at the time
- **There are no guides with you on the train after departing from Chongjin to Rason**, but there are many local people (it is a local train after all), and while you cannot go wandering through the whole train and must stay in the sleeper carriage, you can interact with the local people there. Many will be workers on their way to Russia. They will be friendly and may or may not mind being in photos. Make sure you ask their permission before taking pictures of them. It isn't considered appropriate to give them gifts (other than consumables) as this can be compromising when they pass customs themselves
- **There is no restaurant on the train and nowhere to buy food or drinks** – the Pyongyang guides will take you to a supermarket where you can stock up beforehand though. There is a samovar in the carriage dispensing hot water though so bring teabags/coffee and a mug with you!
- **There is a bathroom (basic; toilet and tap/faucet) at each end of the carriage.** These stay open all the time

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- At the end of the carriage is a smoking area and a window out the back of the train, it is the last carriage. A good view down the track can be had from here
- **While the train is technically non-smoking in reality Korean men really do smoke almost anywhere.** Windows in the corridor open and help with this but there will be a smoky atmosphere in the smoking area which does drift into the rest of the train. This is simply how trains are in this part of the world
- **Don't expect anyone to speak English on this train.** Some of the travellers with you may manage a word or two of Russian or Chinese, but communication will mainly be in your best Korean or in sign language. Don't be embarrassed though, give it a try! The guides in Pyongyang and in Rason do speak excellent English though!

Please feel free to e-mail info@koryogroup.com with any questions you might have and see below for a short photo gallery of the trip.

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Selling snacks at a small town station.

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Passing a village in the mountains of rural Korea.

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Loading up the train with goods.

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Travelling up Korea's scenic east coast.

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Looking out over Rajin city.

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