

## North Korea (DPRK) FAQs

### 1. What is DPRK

DPRK stands for Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

### 2. How long does it take to get a visa?

We ask you to complete application for the tours & visa 60 days before the departure date. The visa will be issued in Beijing just before the tour since there is no DPRK Embassy in the USA. But we will get a visa confirmation number beforehand by submitting the group list to DPRK Foreign Ministry.

### 3. Is it safe to Travel to DPRK?

Yes. The DPRK is probably one of the safest places in the world for tourists to visit with one of the lowest crime rates recorded.

### 4. Do I need any vaccinations for this journey?

No vaccinations are mandatory on this route but we would recommend you seek advice from your doctor. Some tourists may get a prescription for Cipro in case of a stomach bug.

### 5. Can I take pictures/video?

There are many restrictions on photography that have to be obeyed in DPRK. However you can take pictures of most things and everyone who visits always takes many more pictures than they think they will (extra digital memory cards and sticks are NOT available in DPRK so be sure to take plenty of those). Your guides will tell you when you are not allowed to take pictures. Your pictures will more than likely be checked upon your departure. Video cameras are generally prohibited but can be taken on some occasions; again restrictions as to their use do apply. DPRK regulations state that you cannot take a lens over 150 mm into the country. The Koreans do not examine your film or force you to develop the films you have taken.

### 6. What currency is used in the DPRK?

The local currency is the Korean Won. However, as a tourist you can only use Euros, Chinese Yuan or USD. Please take with you small change.

**7. Can I use credit cards or travellers checks?**

In the DPRK it is not possible to use traveller's checks and there are no ATM machines. Shops do not accept credit cards and only a long-winded process at the bank will enable cash transactions

**8. Can I use mobile phones or e-mail in DPRK?**

There is no mobile phone network currently in the DPRK. Additionally, mobile phones are judged by the North Koreans as GPS devices. Therefore on arrival at the border, phones are confiscated and returned to the owner only on departure from the DPRK. E-mail is not available for tourists in DPRK.

**9. Can I make phone calls abroad?**

Although you are not allowed to take your mobile phone around the country you can still make international calls from hotels.

**10. Will I be able to use internet?**

Internet facilities are limited, as few locals have permission to use it. Most of the larger hotels have Internet access available, but this needs to be applied for some days in advance. Advise your tour operator or inviting party of your requirements well ahead of time so that access permission can be arranged. There are no public internet cafes or business centers with web access in the hotels. Also note that even if you have internet access, your traffic may be monitored.

**11. What are the standards of food and water in DPRK?**

The standards of hygiene in the DPRK are excellent and are perhaps the highest in Asia. The food is safe, and can be described as interesting and varied. However, travellers are advised to drink only bottled water. The food is not too bad, but that is all based on personal preference some meals. Fruit and chocolate is scarce in the DPRK so if you need this while you are on the tour then you should take it with you.

**12. Can we go anywhere we want?**

There are many restrictions on the movements of foreign visitors to DPRK. You basically have to be accompanied wherever you go (you can however stroll in the grounds of the hotel without your camera!) and much of the country is off limits even to NGOs and diplomats.

### **13. Can we talk to local people?**

It is quite hard to do so unless you speak Korean, but you will have several chances to meet locals. Many North Koreans do not speak English. When visiting places you will encounter local citizens whom you may be able to talk to with the help of local guides. However, you are discouraged from asking them or the tour guides sensitive questions.

### **14. Can I write about my trip?**

Tourists will be asked to sign a form stating that they will not publish any articles about the tours without express permission. If you are interested in writing a travelogue or report on the tour for a personal website or something similar then it has to be discussed with officials beforehand and have a written agreement. North Korea does not issue visas to journalists except in special circumstances where they are invited by the authorities.

### **15. How many tourists go to North Korea every year?**

It is estimated that less than 2000 western tourists visit the DPRK every year. Although this number is rising it is still an exclusive club to be a member of. There are around 20 - 30,000 Chinese visitors a year and large numbers of Japanese Korean groups (Koreans living in Japan). Until recently US tourists were allowed into the DPRK only during the mass games period (August to October) for only four nights. But this changed at the beginning of 2010. Now longer trips are organized, including a few other cities.

### **16. How much cash would you recommend taking into North Korea for souvenirs, etc.?**

You will pay for most things up-front as part of your tour. Most sights have a shop associated with them where you can buy bottled water, souvenirs and snacks. These are reasonably priced. In August 2007, large bottles of local beer cost US\$2 at the hotel bars in Pyongyang, €200 for one week should be enough to cover your costs of water, drinks at the bars, souvenirs and tips for the guides.

### **17. Will I be able to purchase souvenirs?**

You will have opportunities to buy souvenirs, but the selection is a bit lacking. They have some beautiful hand painted propaganda posters that run 30 euros and some great stamps. The most popular stamp among Americans is of Richard Nixon being stabbed with several pens. There are also a few gift shops in your hotel where you can find plenty of books, postcards, traditional dress, pins, DVDs, etc.

**18. What happens if I need medical attention?**

Pyongyang has a foreigners hospital which is of higher quality than the other hospitals in the country, if you need any medical treatment above the order of a few aspirin or a plaster/band-aid then you would be sent here (Note that Friendship Tours cannot be held responsible for any medical costs). In dire emergencies you should check that your insurance company has a provision to have you airlifted back to Beijing and a western standard of hospital.