

U.S. Department of State
 Bureau of Consular Affairs
 Washington, DC 20520

Country Specific Information

[Please click on this link to read important information you should see before you travel abroad](#)

Korea, Democratic People's Republic of

Americans planning travel to *Korea, Democratic People's Republic of* should read [Worldwide Caution Public Announcement](#) available on the Department of State web site at <http://travel.state.gov>

October 15, 2007

U.S. citizens planning to visit North Korea are encouraged to register prior to departing the United States with the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, if entering North Korea from China, or with the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang (U.S. Protective Power), contact details below.

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea or the DPRK) is a highly militaristic Communist state located on the Korean Peninsula between northeast China and the Republic of Korea (South Korea or ROK), with land borders with China, Russia and South Korea. The DPRK is one of the world's most isolated countries. The continuing dispute over North Korea's development of nuclear programs and nuclear weapons has resulted in tensions in the region and between the United States and the DPRK. North Korea limits trade and transportation links with other countries and tightly restricts the circumstances under which foreigners may enter the country and interact with local citizens. Telephone and fax communications are unavailable in many areas of the country and foreigners can expect their communications to be monitored by DPRK officials. In the past few years, North Korea has experienced famine, flooding, fuel and electricity shortages, and outbreaks of disease. Many countries, including the United States, have contributed to international relief efforts to assist the people of North Korea.

Foreign tourists are a means for North Korea to earn much needed foreign currency, but an underdeveloped service sector, inadequate infrastructure, and political tensions with surrounding countries have stymied any significant tourist flow. North Korean efforts to expand tourism have focused primarily on group tours from China, as well as from South Korea primarily to the Mount Kumgang tourist area.

The United States does not maintain diplomatic or consular relations with the DPRK. The Swedish Embassy located in Pyongyang acts as the United States' interim consular protective power and provides basic consular services to U.S. citizens traveling in North Korea. Please refer to Special Circumstances for additional information.

Read the [Department of State Background Notes on North Korea](#) for additional information.

ENTRY/EXIT REQUIREMENTS: North Korean visas are required for entry. The U.S. Government does not issue letters to private Americans

International
 Travel Home

New
 Requirements for
 U.S. Citizens
 International
 Travel
 Tips for Traveling
 Abroad

Document
 Requirements

Living Abroad Tips

Additional
 About Overseas
 Citizens' Services

seeking North Korean visas, even though in the past such letters have sometimes been requested by DPRK embassies. Prospective travelers entering and departing North Korea through China must also obtain a two-entry visa for China as a valid Chinese visa is essential for departing North Korea at the conclusion of a visit or in an emergency. While the ROK government is attempting to open direct travel routes to the DPRK, routine travel from the ROK to the DPRK is currently prohibited. Travel across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) is allowed only infrequently for official and government-authorized cultural and economic exchanges, or aid shipments. There are no regularly operating direct commercial flights from South Korea to North Korea at this time. U.S. citizens who arrive in North Korea without a valid U.S. passport and North Korean visa may be detained, arrested, fined or denied entry. Individuals traveling to North Korea report that fees for local travel costs (taxi, tolls, permits and the cost for security personnel assigned to escort foreigner visitors) can be high and arbitrary.

Where to obtain a North Korean visa: There is no DPRK embassy in the United States. U.S. citizens and residents planning travel to North Korea must obtain DPRK visas in third countries, for example in Beijing, China. For information about entry requirements and restricted areas, contact the DPRK Mission to the United Nations in New York. **Address inquiries to:**

The Permanent Representative of the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations

820 Second Avenue

New York, NY 10017

Tel: (212) 972-3105

Fax: (212) 972-3154

Americans living abroad can contact the DPRK Embassy, if any, in their country of residence.

U.S. citizens traveling to North Korea may obtain their visas at the DPRK Embassy in Beijing, China, which will issue visas only after receiving authorization from the DPRK Foreign Ministry in Pyongyang. Prior to traveling to the region, travelers may wish to confirm that authorization to issue their visa has been received from Pyongyang. Americans can call the North Korean Embassy in Beijing prior to their travel by telephone at (86-10) 6532-1186 or (86-10) 6532-1189 (fax: (86-10) 6532-6056).

Information on [dual nationality](#) or the prevention of [international child abduction](#) can be found on our website. For further information about customs regulations, please read our [Customs Information](#) sheet.

Please see those sections below under Special Circumstances.

SAFETY AND SECURITY: DPRK government security personnel closely monitor the activities and conversations of foreigners in North Korea. Hotel rooms, telephones and fax machines may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be searched. Photographing roads, bridges, airports, rail stations, or anything other than designated public tourist sites can be perceived as espionage and may result in confiscation of cameras and film or even detention. DPRK border officials routinely confiscate visitors' cell phones upon arrival, returning the phone only upon departure. Foreign visitors to North Korea may be arrested, detained or expelled for activities that would not be considered criminal outside the DPRK, including involvement in unsanctioned religious and political activities, engaging in unauthorized travel, or interaction with the local population.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the [Department's Internet web site](#) at where the current [Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts](#), including the [Worldwide Caution Travel Alert](#), can be found.

Up-to-date information on worldwide security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The Department of State urges American citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For general information about appropriate measures travelers can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State's pamphlet [A Safe Trip Abroad](#).

CRIME:

The North Korean government does not release statistics on crime. Violent crime is very rare and street crime is uncommon in Pyongyang. Petty thefts have been reported, especially at the airport in Pyongyang.

INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and to the Swedish Embassy. If you are a victim of any crime while in North Korea, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the Swedish Embassy for assistance (address and phone number below).

See our information on [Victims of Crime](#).

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND HEALTH INFORMATION: Persons with medical problems should not travel to North Korea. For decades, medical facilities in the DPRK have suffered from a lack of resources and electricity, as well as inadequate and often outdated skills among the medical staff. Hospitals in Pyongyang can perform basic examinations and lifesaving measures but functioning x-ray facilities are not generally available. Surgery should be avoided. For accidents outside Pyongyang, transport back to the capital can be a lengthy trip without medical assistance. Persons requiring regular medication are encouraged to bring sufficient stocks of drugs for personal use since most drugs are impossible to obtain locally. Hospitals will expect immediate U.S. dollar cash payment for medical treatment. Credit cards and checks have not been honored in the past, according to diplomatic personnel stationed in the DPRK. Medical evacuation to Beijing can be arranged by the Swedish Embassy within approximately 5-10 hours. Local DPRK hosts are often not aware of available evacuation options and might claim that no such options exist. In case of serious medical problems, it is important to insist on immediate contact with the Swedish Embassy.

All necessary vaccinations should be administered prior to traveling to North Korea. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC Internet site at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at <http://www.who.int/en>. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/ith/en>. Travelers with special dietary requirements are advised to bring food with them to North Korea, as the restaurants available to foreigners may have limited menus that lack variety and nutritional adequacy.

MEDICAL INSURANCE: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. Please see our information on [medical insurance overseas](#).

In the case of a critical illness or accident, the Swedish Embassy will attempt to arrange flight clearances for air ambulances performing emergency medical evacuations. Medical air evacuation costs vary, but average approximately \$40,000 to \$50,000 for medical, personnel, aircraft and clearance costs. Clearances can usually be arranged within one week. Medical evacuation by regularly scheduled airlines can be arranged, but is limited to the very few flights that operate from Pyongyang to Beijing, Dalian, Shenyang and Macau. Chinese visas for injured foreigners and any escorts must be obtained prior to the evacuation from North Korea in order to transit China. Even in the case of a medical emergency, transit visas may take several days to arrange. Evacuation across the DMZ to South Korea is not allowed.

If an American citizen falls ill or is injured while traveling in the DPRK, accompanying travelers or family members should immediately contact the Swedish Embassy using the phone numbers listed below.

The Embassy of Sweden, Munsu-Dong District, Pyongyang, DPRK

Telephone and fax numbers for the Swedish Embassy (U.S. Protective Power) are:

Tel: (850-2) 3817 485 (Reception)
(850-2) 3817 904, 907 (First Secretary)
(850-2) 3817 908, 905 (Ambassador)

Fax: (850-2) 3817 663

Email: ambassaden.pyongyang@foreign.ministry.se

Notification also should be made to the U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit in Beijing, China, using the phone numbers listed below:

U.S. Embassy, Beijing

American Citizen Services
Number 2 Xiushui Dong Jie
Beijing, China 100600
Telephone: (86-10) 6532-3431
Fax: (86-10) 6532-4153.

After hours, please call (86-10) 6532-1910 and ask for the Embassy duty officer. Americans who wish to contact U.S. consular officials in China can e-mail questions to: amcitbeijing@state.gov

Companies that may be able to arrange evacuation services include, but are not limited to those listed below. Travelers may wish to contact these or other emergency medical assistance providers for information about their ability to provide medical evacuation insurance and/or assistance for travelers to North Korea.

SOS International (www.intsos.com)

U.S. telephone: (1-800) 468-5232
China telephone: (86-10) 6462-9111/9118

Medex Assistance Corporation (www.medexassist.com)

U.S. telephone: (410) 453-6300 / 6301
Toll free: 108888-800-527-0218 (call from China)
China telephone: (86-10) 6595-8510

Global Doctor (www.globaldoctor.com.au/default.php)

China telephone: (86-10) 83151914).
(86-24) 24330678 in Shenyang,
Liaoning Province

Useful information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided in the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure [Medical Information for Americans Traveling](#)

[Abroad](#), available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page.

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning North Korea is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or situation.

Foreigners not holding a valid DPRK driver's license are not allowed to drive in North Korea. Foreigners generally are not allowed to use public buses or the subway. North Korea has a functioning rail transport system; however delays occur often, sometimes for days. On occasion, service may be totally interrupted before reaching the final destination. Bicycles are unavailable for rental or purchase. Please refer to our [Road Safety](#) page for more information.

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and North Korea, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed North Korea's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

INTERIM CONSULAR PROTECTING POWER: The United States does not maintain diplomatic or consular relations with the DPRK. The U.S. Government therefore cannot provide normal consular protective services to U.S. citizens in North Korea. On September 20, 1995, a consular protecting power arrangement was implemented, allowing the Swedish Embassy in the DPRK capital of Pyongyang to provide basic consular protective services to U.S. citizens traveling in North Korea who are ill, injured, arrested or who have died while there.

CONSULAR ACCESS: There is no United States diplomatic or consular presence in the DPRK. Americans traveling in the DPRK may receive limited consular services from the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang. Please see section above on "Medical Insurance" for address and contact information for the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry photocopies of their passport data and photo pages with them at all times so that, if questioned by DPRK officials, proof of their U.S. citizenship is readily available. The U.S.-DPRK Interim Consular Agreement provides that North Korea will notify the Swedish Embassy within four days of an arrest or detention of an American citizen and will allow consular visits within two days after a request is made by the Swedish Embassy. However, consular access has not been readily granted in cases where American citizens have been reported as being detained or held against their will by DPRK officials.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS: DPRK authorities may seize documents, literature, audio and videotapes, compact discs and letters deemed by North Korean officials to be pornographic, political or intended for religious proselytizing. Persons seeking to enter North Korea with religious materials in a quantity deemed to be greater than that needed for personal use can be detained, fined and expelled. It is advisable to contact the DPRK Mission to the United Nations or a DPRK embassy or a DPRK consulate in

a third country for specific information regarding customs requirements. Please see our information on [customs regulations](#).

DUAL NATIONALITY: The DPRK does not recognize dual nationality. U.S. citizens of Korean heritage may be subject to military obligations and taxes on foreign source income.

For further information see our [dual nationality flyer](#).

Additional questions on dual nationality may be directed to Overseas Citizens Services, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20520 or by telephone at 1-888-407-4747.

U.S. GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST NORTH

KOREA: At this time, goods of North Korean origin may not be imported into the United States either directly or indirectly without prior notification to and approval of the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). Exports to North Korea may be subject to licensing requirements. Check with the Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security. Most financial transactions between U.S. and North Korean citizens are authorized, provided they meet the criteria outlined in the June 19, 2000, and subsequent amendments to OFAC regulations. All transactions ordinarily incident to travel to, from and within North Korea and to maintenance within North Korea are authorized, and U.S. travel service providers are allowed to organize group travel to North Korea. Commercial U.S. ships and aircraft carrying U.S. goods are allowed to call at North Korean ports with prior clearance. In May 2006, OFAC began prohibiting U.S. persons from "owning, leasing, operating or insuring any vessel flagged by North Korea." Full text of the regulation can be found in the Federal Register at <http://www.fas.usda.gov/info/fr/2000/061900-a.txt>.

The U.S. maintains various export controls and other sanctions on North Korea for counter- terrorism, nonproliferation and other reasons. Exports of military and sensitive dual-use items are prohibited, as are most types of U.S. economic assistance. The U.S. also abides by multilateral restrictions and sanctions with respect to North Korea, including those contained in recent United Nations Security Council Resolutions in response to the North Korean missile launches and nuclear test in July and October 2006.

For additional information, consult the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) home page on the Internet at <http://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/>.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States. Local laws also may not afford the protections available to U.S. citizens under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking local laws can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict, and convicted offenders often face long jail sentences and heavy fines. North Korean security personnel may view unescorted travel by Americans inside North Korea without explicit official authorization as espionage, especially in cases where the U.S. citizens are originally from South Korea or are thought to understand the Korean language. Security personnel may also view any attempt to engage in unauthorized conversations with a North Korean citizen as espionage. Foreigners are subject to fines or arrest for unauthorized currency transactions or for shopping at stores not designated for foreigners. It is a criminal act in North Korea to show disrespect to the country's current and former leaders, Kim Jong-Il and Kim Il-Sung, respectively. Foreign journalists have been threatened when questioning the policies or public statements of the DPRK or the

actions of the current leadership.

Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Please see additional information on [Criminal Penalties](#).

CHILDREN'S ISSUES: For information see our Office of Children's Issues web pages on [intercountry adoption](#) and [international parental child abduction](#).

EMBASSY LOCATION AND REGISTRATION: There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in North Korea. The Swedish Embassy (U.S. Protective Power) is located at Munsu-Dong District, Pyongyang. The telephone and fax numbers for the Swedish Embassy (U.S. Protective Power) are:

Tel: 850-2) 3817 485 (reception)

Tel: 850-2) 3817 907 (First Secretary)

Tel: (850-2) 3817 908, (850-2) 3817 905 (Ambassador)

Fax: 850-2) 3817 663

Americans who have a medical or consular emergency and who wish to contact the Swedish Embassy are reminded first to communicate this need to their North Korean escorts or guides. Do not attempt to travel to the Swedish Embassy unescorted.

U.S. citizens planning to visit North Korea are encouraged to register prior to departing the United States with the U.S. Embassy in Beijing if entering North Korea from China. U.S. citizens planning to visit the Mount Kumgang tourism area from South Korea should register with the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. Registration can be done on line through [the State Department's travel registration web site](#) or in person, by telephone or fax, at the U.S. Embassy.

The American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, China, is located at:

Number 2 Xiushui Dong Jie

Telephone: (86-10) 6532-3431.

Fax: (86-10) 6532-4153.

After hours please call (86-10) 6532-1910 and ask for the Embassy duty officer. Americans who wish to contact U.S. consular officials in China may also e-mail questions to: amcitbeijing@state.gov. It is also possible to register from the United States via the Internet through the U.S. Embassy's home page at <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/>.

The American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, South Korea, is located at:

32 Sejong-no, Jongno-gu, Seoul. The Embassy is located across the street from Sejong Cultural Center and next to the Ministry of Information and Communication/KT Building.

Telephone: (82-2) 397-4114.

Fax: (82-2) 2-397-4101.

E-mail: seoul_acs@state.gov.

The Embassy Seoul web site is <http://seoul.usembassy.gov/>.

For after-hours emergencies please call (82-2) 721-4114 and ask for the Embassy duty officer.

* * * *

This replaces the Country Specific Information dated March 5, 2007, to

update the sections on Country Description, Entry/Exit Requirements, Safety and Security, Medical Facilities and Health Information, Medical Insurance, and Travel Safety and Road Conditions, Children's Issues, and Embassy Location and Registration.