

KOREA

Korean War –information

The Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, and ended with a cease-fire on July 27, 1953. Sixteen countries dispatched combat troops to help the South and five others sent medical supplies. Ever since Korea has been divided into South and North. The Demilitarized Zone was established on July 27th, 1953, after the end of the Korean War when the cease-fire treaty was agreed upon. It cuts the Korean peninsula in half, a 2 km area on either side of the border where North and South Korea both cease military activities and offensive activities. It is also an invaluable ecosystem preservation area for rare plants and animal species.

FAST FACTS

- Imjingak

Established in 1972 for those who had to flee their hometowns in North Korea during the Korean War, located northwest of Seoul. You will find a display of twelve different Korean War tanks and combat planes.

- Panmunjeom

Panmunjeom is located in the DMZ 4 km northwest of Imjingak. This cease-fire village was founded on July 27, 1953, and it is the place where the armistice agreement of the Korean War was signed. South-North talks still take place here.

- Dorasan Station, Dora Observatory and The 3rd Infiltration Tunnel

Only 300 people are allowed to visit the area at a time. From Dora Observatory, tourists can view the North Korean propaganda village in the DMZ and as far north as the city of Gaeseong.

The 3rd Infiltration Tunnel was discovered between Panmunjeom and Imjingak in June 1978. About 73 meters below ground an 2 meters high and wide.

- Iron Triangle Battlefield

The Iron Triangle was a major front-line battlefield during the Korean War and an important spot connecting the three strategic areas of Cheorwon, Pyeongyang and Gimhwa. Here visitors will find Baengma (White Horse) Hill, where battles with Chinese soldiers took place during October 1952 and control of the high ground changed twenty four times between the two sides over a ten day period. In March 1975 the 2nd Tunnel was discovered, wide enough to pass 30,000 fully armed invading soldiers within one hour.

- Yanggu Punch Bowl Battleground

During the Korean War this bowl shaped highland valley was an area of several fierce battles. Nearby is the 4th Tunnel.

- The 4th Infiltration Tunnel

Discovered in March 1990, this underground invasion route is located 10 minutes by car from the Yanggu North Korea Exhibition Hall. It is 145 meters deep with a height and width of 1.7 meters. It is 2,052 meters long.

- War Memorial of Korea

Opened on June 10, 1994, the War Memorial offers visitors an educational experience of the many wars in which Korea has been involved – located in Seoul.

- Korea Military Academy (KMA)

Located in north eastern Seoul, KMA is a college established especially to produce a select group of officers with training in literary and military arts. A tour includes the Army Museum, KMA Tower, Field Weapons Exhibition site etc. Every Saturday a cadets' parade is held on Hwarang Drill Field.

- Euji Observatory

Located on Gachilbong Peak, one of the most fiercely fought battlefields on the central front line during the Korean War.

- Historical Park over Geoje POW Camp

The Geoje Prisoner of War Camp, left as rubble at the end of the Korean War, has been reborn as a historical theme park. In honour of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War, a new park on the old site of the Geoje POW Camp was opened in October 2002.

- DMZ

Hundreds of kilometers of barbed wire and electric fences, artillery and soldiers, as well as 19 million landmines, in the heavily fortified landscape make it seem one of the most unbalanced places on Earth. Dotted with national treasures – temples, ancient villages and tombs – the landscape of rice paddies unfolding to craggy mountains carpeted in red pine is achingly beautiful.

Buses crawled past sandbagged observation posts and battle ready South Korean soldiers armed with automatic rifles.

Despite its reputation the DMZ is no wasteland. White egrets wade in swamps and lakes shadowed by craggy ridges scarred by military intrusion. A forestry study shows the 90,800ha, 248 km long DMZ is home to about 2,200 animal species, including eagles, antelope, cranes and deer. Conservationists believe it may also be home to the Korean Tiger, once thought extinct. The DMZ, built after the signing of an armistice (not a peace treaty) ended the Korean War in 1953, split the peninsula and the families of 11 million Koreans. What separates people has unified nature.

- There are six potential road crossings along the DMZ, including the Kumgang Gate and the Gaesong Gate at Panmunjom in the west, opened in late October 2003.
- The first commercial flight from North to South Korea in 50 years took place late September 2003. There are also direct flights from Beijing to Pyongyang. Previously, the only way in by rail was on an overnight train from Beijing, via Manchuria, to Pyongyang.