



SCENIC ATTRACTIONS IN KOREA AND ORIGIN OF THEIR NAMES

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PREFACE

Scenic attractions can be found wherever you go in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Korean people have cherished great pride in the picturesque mountains and rivers of their motherland, creating many legendary tales about them.

The tales about origin of place names and the stories of people's patriotism, good manners and customs told by scenic spots and other noted places reflect, as they are, the mettle, wisdom and rich emotions of the industrious and resourceful Korean people.

This book gives a glimpse of the country's time-honoured scenic attractions, origin of place names and interesting old stories.

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Celebrated Mountains and the Origin of Their Names

Mt Paektu

The highest mountain in the country, Mt Paektu is situated in the northern part of the city of Samjiyon, Ryanggang Province. It outstrips other mountains in grandeur and magnificence, and thus has been

known far and wide from of old. Rising imposingly in the East, it has shared the same destiny with the Korean nation for 5 000 years.

It has been deemed not only magnificent as it encompasses serial peaks more than 2 500m high such as Janggun Peak (2 750m), Hyangdo Peak (2 712m), Ssangmujigae Peak (2 626m), Chongsok Peak (2 662m), Paegun Peak (2 691m), and Chail Peak (2 596m), but also very mysterious as there is Lake Chon on the top of the mountain.

It is one of the celebrated mountains in the country, which the Korean people have long regarded as their ancestral mountain.



It is because Mt Paektu constitutes the very foundation, or origin, of all the mountains in the country from the geological and geographical point of view.

Another reason why Mt Paektu has been called a celebrated mountain, the ancestral mountain, of the nation lies in the fact that the Korean people have regarded it as the sacred mountain that represents the soul of their nation.

In reflection of the ideological sentiments of the Korean nation that worshipped Mt Paektu as the ancestral mountain, successive states in Korea regarded the magnificent Mt Paektu as the sacred mountain of the nation and made it a rule to hold annual sacrificial rites here.

Mt Paektu shines more brilliantly not only as the ancestral mountain



Mt Paektu seen from Mt Mubong



Rocks in Mt Paektu



Lake Chon on Mt Paektu



but also as the sacred mountain of the Korean revolution.

It is associated with the history of revolutionary activities of the great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung who, by leading the 15-year anti-Japanese armed struggle to victory, accomplished the cause of national liberation, and it is where the brilliant revolutionary traditions of the Workers' Party of Korea struck their strong roots.

And here the great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il was born and grew up, nurturing a big ambition to carry forward the revolution.

The area of Mt Paektu was registered as a global geopark at the 221st meeting of the Executive Board of UNESCO held in Paris in April 2025. The registration of the area as a global geopark further highlighted the geological significance of Mt Paektu, the ancestral mountain, and its tourist value.

Origin of the Name of Mt Paektu and Its Old Names

Mt Paektu always looks white as its summit is covered with snow, so the ancestors called the mountain Paektu.

Tonggukmyongsangi published in the 18th century reads that the mountain is called so as its summit looks as if it is covered with a large white jar.

The initial use of the name *Paektu* appears to date back to the days before the period of Koryo (918-1392), and it can be proven by *Chronicles of Koryo*, which records that General Songgol, ancestor of Wang Kon (founder king of Koryo), toured Mt Paektu.

In ancient times, the mountain was called Pulham, and was known even to China.

In the Middle Ages it came to have different names, such as Thaebaek, Tothae, Kaemadae, Paek, Jangbaek and Sangbaek, in addition to Paektu. These names generally denote that the mountain is as high as heaven and it is mysteriously white. For example, *Thaebaek* and *Tothae* mean the highest mountain, heavenly mountain, while *Jangbaek* and *Sangbaek* mean that its summit is covered with white snow and ice all year round.

Old Names of Lake Chon on Mt Paektu

Lake Chon on Mt Paektu was originally called Taethaek (Big Pond) long ago as it is located at the summit of the high mountain, and renamed Chon hundreds of years ago. It was named so in the sense that it is a lake lying in a place that is as sacred and high as heaven.

The lake, the source of three rivers—Amnok, Tuman and Songhua—is surrounded by precipitous cliffs, reflecting the fantastic images of peaks of Paektu on its indigo-blue water and giving rise to kaleidoscopic natural phenomena; all make up very impressive scenery.

In reflection of these mysteries, the Korean ancestors gave it names like Roethaek, Ryongdam and Sinil, besides Taethaek and Chon.

The name *Roethaek* was derived from the fact that, whenever the strong waves of the lake beat the cliffs at the shore, a roar of thunder rings out. And the names *Ryongdam* and *Sinil* came from the tale that a strong tornado, i.e., a water spout, can often be seen in the vicinity of the lake and, for this phenomenon, the lake is said to have been inhabited by a dragon god. Since olden times, Lake Chon has been

famous for its grandeur, mystery and picturesque scenery, along with Mt Paektu.

Scenic Spot—Chonphyong

Chonphyong is the old name of the forest areas at the foot of Mt Paektu. According to old books, the word *Chonphyong* owes its origin to the topography of the place where the plain and the sky appear to meet as it stretches evenly hundreds of *ri*, lined in every direction by Taegak Peak, Yonji Peak, Kwanmo Peak and Mts Sono, Kanbaek, Sobaek and Phothae, and is thick with woods.

From of old, Chonphyong has been known as a scenic spot peculiar to Mt Paektu for its majestic and appealing scenery; in the



morning the sunrays from the east promptly spread, dyeing anything and everything in the boundless expanse of the woods and in the evening mists from Mt Sobaek silently rise up. Its fame has been enhanced by the abundance in rare things including young antler, musk, marten leather and wild insam.

Mt Myohyang

Mt Myohyang has been known as one of the celebrated mountains in the country from of old as it is a scenic spot where a graceful sculptresque charm blends well with its magnificent appearance,



presenting a scenic masterpiece. The mountain is a time-honoured place for it not only boasts beautiful sights but also abounds in historical relics and remains including the Pohyon Temple and stories about the struggle of the people who fought bravely against foreign aggressors as well as a wide variety of legendary tales.

Today it is known at home and abroad as a world-class tourist attraction and a holiday resort for the people.

On October 15, 1979, President Kim Il Sung, enjoying on



Paegundae in summer

the balcony of the International Friendship Exhibition House the autumnal scenery of Mt Myohyang dressed up with yellow leaves, recited an impromptu poem, titled, *Mt Myohyang on an Autumn Day*.

Origin of the Name of Mt Myohyang

The name *Myohyang* means that the mountain is fantastic in shape, fragrant and beautiful. The fantastic and magnificent appearance of the mountain has something to do with the history of geological and



Inhodaek in Mt Myohyang

Legendary Tale of Inhodaek

A legendary tale of Inhodaek is as follows:

One May day an unusual sleet blurred the eyesight of the people on the way to the Sangwon Hermitage. They were in a quandary as they were ascending a high cliff with a waterfall. At this juncture a large tiger came down to guide them to the top of the cliff where the hermitage stood.

There is another tale slightly different from the above one:

A monk in Mt Myohyang, hearing a rumour that there was a site suitable for a temple above the Ryongyon Falls, embarked on a journey to see the site. He strayed because of the falling snow, and then a large tiger turned up and cleared a path for him as a guide. At last he could choose a site above the waterfall to build the Sangwon Hermitage.



Sangwon Valley in autumnal tints



Isonnam Falls

geographical development of this area. The mountain owes its fame as a fragrant beautiful mountain to the abundance in aromatic trees like magnolia, lilac, halfglobe savin and Korean arborvitae, which thrive in this area.

The mountain was explored long ago, but it is from the early 11th century that it has been called Myohyang. Earlier it had been called Yonju as it belonged to the town of Yonju, and Thaebaek since the middle period of Koryo in the sense that the rocks in the mountain are unusually white and clean.



Sanju Falls in autumn
and in winter



The highest peak in the mountain is called Hyangbiro, and the word *biro* is from the Buddhist Scripture, meaning to be the highest; it appears to have something to do with the history of Mt Myohyang that was one of the hubs of Buddhism for a long period in Korea.

The cultural remains, peaks, rocks and waterfalls in Mt Myohyang tell a variety of legendary tales related with the creation of ancient states, struggle against invaders, picturesque natural scenes of the mountain and religion.

Mt Kumgang

Mt Kumgang, situated in Kosong and Kumgang counties of Kangwon Province, has been known as one of the celebrated mountains in the country. It is a pride of the Korean people and a world-renowned mountain.

Countless peaks that are called Twelve-thousand Peaks are of myriad, queer shapes while the crystal-clear streams flowing down deep ravines and spectacular waterfalls blend well with beautiful and rare flora and fauna; the mountain is really a wonder of nature that can be found nowhere else in the world. Hence the old saying, “Don’t talk about the beauty of mountains and rivers before you tour Mt Kumgang of Korea.”

Since the modern times, the fame of the mountain has spread worldwide, attracting tourists, alpinists and scholars from many countries. After climbing the mountain they have been unanimous in



Kwimyon Rock



Manmulsang

Jipson Peak in Mt Kumgang





Samson Rock

extolling it as a world-famous mountain and a world-class natural park.

Fascinated by the beautiful scenery of Mt Kumgang, famous poets and painters came to this area and created many works. Among the works that remain to this day are some depicting the wonderful sights of the mountain, sightseeing routes and scenic beauties, and some others describing the people's struggle, labour and folk games.

Describing the beauties of Mt Kumgang, a 16th century poet Jong Chol wrote in his poem *Kwandongbyolgok*: Entering the Manphok Valley after looking round the Paekchon Valley, I can find the waterfalls deafening and dazzling for their beauty and splendour; if Li Tai-po, who had sung in praise of the beauty of Lu Mountains

of China, toured Mt Kumgang, he would not dare say that the former is better than the latter.

Origin of the Name of Mt Kumgang

The name *Kumgang* was taken after diamond, the most valuable of jewels. As its scenery varies by season, the mountain has been called Kumgang in spring, Pongnae in summer, Phungak in autumn and Kaegol in winter. The name *Pongnae* came from the fact that the



summer scenery of the mountain features lush woods and inviting shade; the name *Phungak* from the fact that in autumn it is ablaze with beautiful autumnal tints; and the name *Kaegol* from the fact that in winter the white snow-covered mountain body remains conspicuous.

Kuryong Falls



Seji Peak in Mt Kumgang

Legendary Tale of Eight Fairies in Mt Kumgang

Once upon a time there lived in Mt Kumgang a diligent and kind-hearted young woodcutter.

One day he saved a deer from a chasing hunter. Afterwards the deer helped the boy marry a beautiful fairy from heaven. Later, the couple had a son and a daughter and led a happy life. However, the man broke his promise with the deer never to give her celestial raiment until they had three children. This caused his separation with his wife and children. Though back in heaven, the fairy missed the days of being in love with the young woodcutter and leading a happy life with him in the picturesque Mt Kumgang, so she returned to the mountain....

This tale, created by comparing the beautiful Mt Kumgang to the immortals' heaven, reflects the simple aspirations of the ancient people after a happy life.

Mt Kuwol

Mt Kuwol, situated in the northwestern part of South Hwanghae Province, is one of the scenic spots in the country. The mountain encompasses a large number of gorges featuring not only majestic cliffs, superb graceful peaks and queer rocks but also beautiful waterfalls and ponds. It is also home to a multitude of historical remains and relics revealing the traces of creation left by the ancestors who settled there from of old, and it is related to more legendary tales, in comparison to Mts Kumgang and Myohyang that were relatively thinly populated.

Origin of the Name of Mt Kuwol

The name *Kuwol* was derived from its old names—Kunghol and Kwol. An old book says that Kunghol becomes Kwol if pronounced fast and Kuwol if done slowly.

In addition, according to a myth, the mountain had other names like Asadal, Kummidal and Paegak in ancient times.

Asa means morning, first thing or first time in ancient Korean, while *dal* means a place or mountain; there is still a peak called Asa in the mountain.

Kummidal was derived from *Komidal*, which would come from the slow pronunciation of Komgol or Komsan.

And *Paegak* came from the fact that the rock at the summit of the mountain is white in colour.

Origin of the Name of the Phaeyop Temple

The Phaeyop Temple is one of the major temples in Mt Kuwol. This temple, known to have been built in the early 9th century by a monk called Saint Kuyop, was called Hansan at the time. It is said that later it was renamed Phaeyop as it kept phaeyop (tree leaves that look like those of a plantain) on which the monk wrote the Buddhist Sutra and which he brought from India.

Origin of the Name of the Talchon Spa

There is a spa called Talchon at the foot of the Wolmyong Valley in Mt Kuwol.

Once upon a time a filial daughter, named Tali, living at the foot of Mt Kuwol, entered the mountain to gather medicinal herbs for the treatment of her mother's disease. She saved a lark whose legs had been broken by a big snake. The lark dipped the legs into a steaming spring in the valley and then flew away with completely cured legs. The girl was so surprised to see it that she took the water and served it to her mother. Soon the latter recovered from her illness. It is said that from then on people called this hot spring Talchon after the girl's name.

Legendary Tale of Muyom Peak

In olden times the Kuwolsan village near the sea was frequently invaded by the Japanese pirates. Each time the villagers discussed ways for defending their village, and among them there was a clever boy, called Kkoedol.

He proposed hanging brushwood on tree branches so that the peak looked like being dotted with sacks of grains. In support of his proposal, all the villagers turned out; they fastened brushwood to trees and climbed the peak every day to beat drums and clank weapons.

One day a Japanese spy came, and asked Kkoedol, who was pretending to be gathering firewood, "Hey! What are the grey things over there?" The boy answered, "Don't you know them? People say that there are now thousands of our soldiers in Mt Kuwol and the grey things seen over there are the stacks of military provisions and salt which they will consume." At his answer, the spy got so frightened that he took flight.

Upon hearing this, the Japanese pirates dared not to set foot in this village again.

It is said that the then brushwood-strewn peak has since been called Muyom Peak (peak without salt) because it looks like having piles of salt, although there is no salt.



Mt Kuwol in winter and in spring



Pools in Mt Kuwol

Mt Chilbo

Situated in the southern part of the east coast of North Hamgyong Province, Mt Chilbo is one of the celebrated mountains in the country, embracing the East Sea of Korea to the east and occupying an area of over 250 sq km between the Orang Stream in the north and the Hwadae Stream in the south.

Pak Jong, a renowned traveller and poet in the 18th century, wrote in praise of the beautiful scenery of Mt Chilbo as follows: Mt Kumgang should be the choice in terms of serenity and pertinence, and Mt Myohyang in terms of misty and overlapping mountain terrain, but Mt Chilbo is the best in the aspect of depth and queerness.

Origin of the Name of Mt Chilbo

There are different stories about the origin of the name *Chilbo*. Among them is one that tells that the mountain was named so for it has seven treasures, most precious and beautiful in the world. The scenery of Mt Chilbo varies by mountain, ravine and sea, so it is divided into Inner Chilbo, Outer Chilbo and Sea Chilbo according to its features. It has also been called Hambuk Kumgang for the scenery of its ravines, forests and sea which is as beautiful as that of Mt Kumgang.



Kangson Gate in Outer Chilbo



Rojok Peak in Outer Chilbo



Nungin Falls in Outer Chilbo



Tal Gate in Sea Chilbo



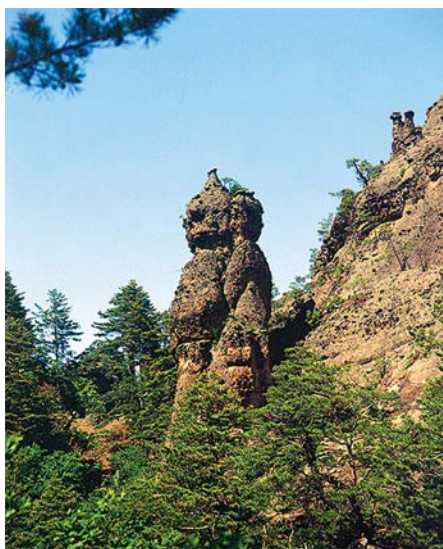
Pom Rock in Inner Chilbo



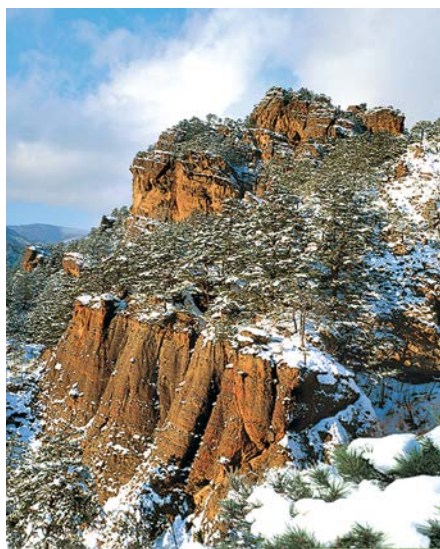
Huin Rock in Inner Chilbo



Sol Islets in Sea Chilbo



Pubu Rocks in Inner Chilbo



Mansa Peak in Inner Chilbo



Manmulsang in Sea Chilbo



Munphil Rock in Sea Chilbo

Legendary Tale of Choe Sok Gum Rock

When passing by the Joksok Rock in Mt Chilbo, one will find an eye-catching rock akin to a monk with a bag on his back followed by a woman with a baby on her back and a gasping puppy. The locals call it Choe Sok Gum Rock, which tells a legendary tale as follows:

In olden times the sea off Mt Chilbo was a fertile field, centring on a rich village. Many people there were mean. One day a monk came to this village to beg for food. He went about the village all day long, but failed to get even a handful of rice. Fortunately, he came across a generous woman and could get a gourd of rice from her. So, to pay for her generosity the monk left the village with her. At that time he asked her earnestly not to look back whatever might happen. When they climbed onto the Joksok Rock there roared a thunder and lightning behind. The woman looked back in spite of herself; then the village and field which existed just before suddenly turned into the sea and at the same time the monk, the woman and the puppy following them turned into rock.

According to another tale, a rich man, called Choe Sok Gum, ordered his servant to put horse droppings into a gourd and give it to the begging monk, but his daughter-in-law gave rice to the monk in secret before leaving the village together. At that time the above-mentioned thing happened, so they turned into rock.

Renowned Rivers and the Origin of Their Names

Amnok River

The Amnok, the longest river in the country, originates in Lake Chon of Mt Paektu and flows into the West Sea of Korea. Known as the 2 000-*ri*-long river from ancient times, it is 803km long.

Since olden times the river has been closely connected with the history of the Korean nation.

It tells numerous stories about the great role it played in the Korean people's struggle against foreign invasion.

Still there remain relics and ruins of castles on its shore, left by the forefathers who fought in defence of their country.

There are many pavilions such as the Segom Pavilion in Manpho—where it is said that the soldiers washed the blood-stained swords in the river after annihilating the foreign aggressors who invaded the country from the north in the 17th century—and Thonggun Pavilion in Uiju, as well as various mountain forts including the Koryo Fortress in Uiju, Paengmasan Fortress in Pihyon, Kumsan Fortress in Changsong, Tokji Fortress in Chosan and Ryoyon Fortress in Junggang.

The Amnok River basin constitutes a treasure house of forest resources; it boasts not only beautiful natural scenery but also plenty of precious resources.

There are over 80 species of fish and rich waterpower resources in the Amnok and its tributaries.

Its basin is also home to the revolutionary sites and battle sites where Kim Il Sung waged the anti-Japanese armed struggle.

Origin of the Name of the Amnok

The Amnok was called Arinari in the period of Koguryo. Here *ari* means long or large and *nari* means river or ferry. Later it became Amnok as the name of the river was written in Chinese characters. This means limpid and azure-blue. In the myth related with the birth of Koguryo a river, called Chongha, is referred to; it is another name of the Amnok, which also implies a blue river.

Tuman River

The Tuman, the second longest in the country, originates in Mt Paektu and flows into the East Sea of Korea. It is 547.8km long. In the period of Japanese imperialist occupation it was a river which the stateless Koreans crossed to go to alien lands leaving their native places behind.

But after Kim Il Sung launched the anti-Japanese struggle, it became a river carrying along the traces of bloody struggle of the revolutionary forerunners in its stream, and today it has been turned into a river of paradise.

Among the woods in the basin of the river the mature woods

account for 94 per cent. In its lower reaches there are dozens of large and small islands formed by the change of water course and sand accumulation, and a delta at its estuary.

There are scores of species of cold-water fish like Tuman carp which is peculiar to this river and anadromous fishes in the river.

The Tuman and its tributaries are used in various sectors including power generation, irrigation, industry and transport.

Origin of the Name of the Tuman

The name *Tuman* is related to the word *zumun*. *Zumun* in ancient Korean meant a thousand in number. The river was named so because it has 1 000 tributaries. The tributaries, more than 5km long, number about 300, and the total number reaches one thousand if smaller ones are put together.

Taedong River

The Taedong, which starts on Mt Rangnim in Taehung County, South Phyongan Province, and flows into the West Sea of Korea, meanders through Pyongyang, the capital of the DPRK. With a length of 450.3km, it is one of the longest rivers in the country. Its basin abounds with underground resources. The area has a high level of forest accumulation, dominated by needle- and broad-leaved trees.

There are more than 60 species of fish in the river, and its water is used as industrial and agricultural water in different sectors of the

national economy and for urban population. On its shore there are Mangyongdae, the native place of President Kim Il Sung, and the Tower of the Juche Idea.

On the Taedong are Rungna, Yanggak, Ssuk and other islands and islets formed by transportation and accumulation of sediments. On the Ssuk Island is the Sci-Tech Complex built splendidly as required by the new century. On the Rungna Island, there is the May Day Stadium which was the venue of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 13th World Festival of Youth and Students.

One day in July 1960 Kim Jong Il, together with his classmates, came to the riverside and recited a poem *Greeting the Sun Rising over the Taedong River* while enjoying the sunrise on the river.

At the estuary of the river adjoining the West Sea of Korea is the 8km-long West Sea Barrage known widely in the world.

Origin of the Name of the Taedong

In ancient times the Taedong was called Phae or Wangsong. All these mean a river meandering through Pyongyang, a time-honoured city which had thrived since olden times.

Here the word *phae* is the pronunciation of the Chinese character for para and puru from parana and puruna, old names of Pyongyang. The Wangsong River means a river flowing through a fortress where the king is, that is, a river in the capital city.

It was around the 11th century that the river began to be called Taedong. Long ago some people understood the name as a river which unites many rivers into one, considering the meanings of its Chinese

characters.

To take an example, some old geography books including *Tonggukyojisungnam* and *Taedongsugyong* say to the effect that it was named Taedong because many rivers converge as one. However, the Chinese characters for *Taedong* mean “handuru” in ancient Korean. Here *han* means great and *duru* has the same meaning as *puru*, which signifies town or capital city or open field.

In the final analysis, the name of the river means a river of Pyongyang, the capital city.

Scenic Spots and the Origin of Their Names, and the Eight Ancient Famous Scenes

Scenic Spots and the Origin of Their Names

Old documents note, along with sets of eight famous scenes, sets of three, ten, twelve and 16 famous scenes, including the Ten Famous Scenes in Hwachon (Mangyongdae) in Pyongyang, Three Famous Scenes in Paektu in Hamgyong Province, Sixteen Famous Scenes in Sokju in Kanggye and Twelve Famous Scenes in Pongsan in Hwanghae Province.

This fact highlights the Korean people’s age-old custom of boasting the beautiful scenery of their native places with a deep attachment to them.

Origin of the Name of Mangyongdae and Ten Famous Scenes in Hwachon

The name *Mangyongdae* originated from Mangyong Hill.

According to *Hwaunjip* published in the 18th century, the area encompassing Mangyong Hill had been called Namho and Mangyong Hill, Nam Hill, because Mangyong Hill is situated on the shore of the Namho where the Taedong, Sunhwa and Pothong converge. It was later renamed Mangyongdae in the sense that the topography of the hill consists of a high cliff whose flat top akin to an exquisite pavilion commands a bird's-eye view of ten thousand scenes within 100 *ri*. The name *Mangyongdae* was later fixed as the name of the place comprising not only Mangyong Hill but also its surrounding areas.



Mangyong Hill

The Koreans have long designated the superb landscape of the Namho area where there is Mangyong Hill as one of the Eight Famous Scenes in Pyongyang (boating in the Komun Ferry), and named the famous scenes viewed from Mangyongdae the Ten Famous Scenes in Hwachon.

They include the spring scenery of Mangyongdae, scene of moonlit night on three islets, fishing on Pongpho, cattle-grazing in Usan, smoke of rice-cooking in the Kwangchon village, sailing ships on Sokho, valiant spirit of Yang Hill, red cliff at Wonam, sight of sowing in Chugyo and seeing guests off at the Tongnim Ferry.

The above three islets indicate Turu, Tudan and Munbal in front of Mangyong Hill; Pongpho is the name of an old ferry which had once been set up in front of Ponghwang Hill on the left side



Namri village at Mangyongdae

of Mangyong Hill; and Usan is supposed to be the present Chaga Valley in Wollo-ri, Mangyongdae District, which in the past was also called Jimsung (Animal) Valley because lots of animals were raised there. Kwangchon refers to Kwangthan-dong which was in the present Taephyong-dong, Mangyongdae District, west of the Sunhwa. And Sokho was the ferry which was at the junction of the two rivers—Pothong and Taedong; in the past there stood a pavilion called Sokho near it. Yang Hill is the present Yang Hill in Ryongbong-ri, Mangyongdae District, and Wonam is a cliff at the foot of Mt Wonam in Rangnang District seen straight from Mangyong Hill. And Chugyo and Tongnim mean, respectively, the present Chuja plain in Kumchon-dong, Mangyongdae District, and Tongnim Pier at the foot of Mangyong Hill.

It is characteristic that each famous scene in Hwachon has its own unique beauty, and the scenes all make up an overall kaleidoscopic view in and around Mangyongdae and reflect fully the emotional world and noble aspiration of the Koreans living in this scenic area.

Introducing the Ten Famous Scenes in Hwachon, an old document says, “All the mountains and rivers in Pyongyang are beautiful. But among them, the scenery of the Hwachon area is really the best.” In particular, with regard to the charming view of Mangyongdae, it notes, “It is not too much to say that there is no such place as this elsewhere in the country.”

This scenic spot is home to the birthplace of President Kim Il Sung.

Three Famous Scenes in Paektu

The Three Famous Scenes in Paektu indicate the three scenes representative of the unique natural landscape of the Mt Paektu area in the past.

According to *Account of an Expedition to Mt Paektu*, written by An Jae Hong in 1931, the Three Famous Scenes in Paektu include the majestic sight of the peaks and Lake Chon of Mt Paektu, the panoramic view seen from the top of Mudu Peak and the beauty of clean and beautiful Lake Samji. These three scenes are highlighted in Pak Jong’s *Account of Trip to Mt Paektu*, So Myong Ung’s *Account of Sightseeing in Mt Paektu*, Hong Ryang Ho’s *Height of Mt Paektu* and Song Hae Ung’s *Trip to Famous Mountain in the Eastern Country* published in the 18th century. The majestic sight of the peaks and Lake Chon of Mt Paektu is quite solemn and mysterious; the imposing appearance of the peaks of Mt Paektu soaring into the high and clear sky and the picturesque scenery of Lake Chon that appears to be embracing the universe are in harmony with each other.

The panoramic view seen from the top of Mudu Peak is a majestic panorama of the forests and high and low peaks surrounding them, and the beauty of clean and beautiful Lake Samji is the delicate and fascinating view of Lake Samji against the peaks of Mt Paektu.

Old books praised these scenes as a “strange creation of heaven” and a “mysterious art of harmony rare to be seen in human world,” adding that they are the fantastic scenes that combine the magnanimous and imposing masculine character with clean and elegant feminine beauty.

Origin of the Name of Hoeryong and Three Beauties in Hoeryong

Located near the Tuman River, Hoeryong is in the northern part of North Hamgyong Province. The name *Hoeryong* is connected with Osan, a hill in this area. In the days of Koryo this area was called Osan and Hoesan, and then Hoeryong in the early 15th century.

Hoe comes from Hoesan, the original name of the area, and *ryong* from the first letter *nyong* (pronounced as *ryong*) of Nyongbukjin, the name of a fortress that had once existed there. *Nyongbukjin* means the place lying north of Puryong (Punyong) at the time. *Hoeryong* means the place where there are Hoesan and Nyongbukjin.

From olden times the Hoeryong area was renowned for its white



White apricots in Hoeryong

apricots, glazed earthenware, picturesque mountains and streams and beautiful women. The Three Beauties in Hoeryong represent the three prides of the locality, that is, white apricots, earthenware and beautiful women. White apricots, known as a specialty of Hoeryong, are juicy, sweet, aromatic and less sour.

Eight Ancient Famous Scenes

From antiquity the Koreans have had a custom of emphatically calling the scenery of famous mountains and streams, culture and good manners of their locality as eight famous scenes and boasted about them with pride in living in a land as beautiful as a golden tapestry. In particular, there were many kinds of eight famous scenes in the country, and this is related with the custom that the ancient Koreans regarded eight as an auspicious number. This custom is very old. It is evidenced by the fact that Tangun of Ancient Joseon, after founding a state, appointed eight ministers and the fact that the eight-forked bronze bell was discovered in the area of the ancient state of Jinkuk. The reason why the legendary tale of eight fairies of Mt Kumgang was so famous can also be explained in connection with this custom.

Among the eight ancient famous scenes are those that are still extant like the Eight Famous Scenes in Pyongyang and the Eight Famous Scenes in Mt Myohyang, but many of them vanished from the people's memory with the passage of time. According to old documents, almost every locality had its own eight famous

Moran Hill in spring



scenes, particularly the Eight Famous Scenes in Pyongyang and the Eight Famous Scenes in Kwanso, and they totalled dozens.

Moran Hill

On the right side of the Taedong dividing Pyongyang is Moran Hill. The hill in Mt Kumsu, which extends along the Taedong, was named



Ulmil Pavilion

so because the chain of peaks centring on the Choesung Pavilion looks like a just blown peony blossom (*moran* in Korean).

The hill is 95m high, and the site where the Choesung Pavilion stands is the highest place.

With the pavilion at its centre, the hill stretches to the north, south and west with slow slopes forming several peaks, linked one after another.

In between are shallow ravines like Kyongsang and Hungbu. To the north stands Ryongnam Hill (47m) and to the south, such low hills as Mansu Hill.

The eastern slope is Chongnyu Cliff under which the Taedong meanders. Just across the river from the cliff is the May Day Stadium on the Rungna Island which adds to the picturesque scenery of the hill. From olden times enjoying spring on the Ulmil Pavilion and enjoying the full moon on the Pubyok Pavilion—both on the hill—have been included in the Eight Famous Scenes in Pyongyang.

Over 180 plant species occur in Moran Hill.

Of them, more than 20 are coniferous trees and 70-odd species, broadleaved ones.

There are big and small waterfalls made artificially.

Among them is the Chongnyu Falls flowing down the Chongnyu Cliff, a scenic spot in Moran Hill. In the ravines of the hill are several lotus ponds adding beauty to the hill in harmony with the green woods. Many pavilions have been built on the peaks and slopes to blend well with the old pavilions like Ulmil and Choesung.



Moran Hill in autumn



Hyonmu Gate

Pujon Plateau

One of the country's scenic spots, the Pujon Plateau is situated in Pujon County, South Hamgyong Province.

Covering an area of 1 770 sq km, the plateau is 1 490m above sea level on average.

Surrounding the plateau are mountains less than 2 000m above sea level. At the centre is Lake Pujon and the Pujon River flows to the north. The area abounds with underground resources such as gold, molybdenum and serpentine. The land is inclined towards the lake and the river valley, but it is mostly sloping lowly towards the north. The grade of the slope is 4-5 degrees on average, which means that the surface is nearly flat.

Continental climate is distinctive in this area with an average annual temperature of 0.4°C. The average temperature in January is -18.2°C and in July, 16.6°C; it is very cold in winter that lasts long and cool in summer that lasts short. The average annual precipitation is about 800mm.

It is one of the areas with rich forest resources; trees like larch, *Abies nephrolepis* and spruce thrive in the plateau, and rare flowers like Siberian iris and wetland plants that can be seen only in the highlands are found here.

The area is inhabited by bears, roe deer, musk deer, otters and other animal species.

Peculiar natural scenery of the highlands, beautiful valleys, scene of the artificial lake Pujon, called a "sea on the mountains," and

sunrise over the East Sea of Korea seen from afar—all these unique scenes form a scenic spot. The plateau is now a camping site, tourist attraction and summer resort for working people.

Scenic Spots

Among the country's scenic spots are Kyongsong and Monggumpho.

Kyongsong is the seat of Kyongsong County, North Hamgyong Province. It is a scenic spot noted for the peaks covered with dense forests, myriad-shaped rocks, incessantly flowing clear streams, waterfalls, blue pools and ubiquitous hot springs. Its abrasion coast is also a beauty spot.

Monggumpho is on the beach of Ryongyon County, South Hwanghae Province. The name originates from the scenery of the white beach seen in front and the golden scenery viewed behind from Sungson Peak.

Since olden times it has been known as a typical scenic spot for the beautiful coast where white beach, red sweet brier and green pine trees are in harmony, evening seascape and rocky cliffs on the shore.

Eight Famous Scenes in Kwanso

As the eight famous scenes in the Kwanso area (the present-day Pyongyang, South and North Phyongan provinces and Jagang Province), they include Ryongwang Pavilion in Pyongyang, Kangson Pavilion in Songchon, Paeksang Pavilion in Anju, Yaksandongdae in Nyongbyon, Tongnim Falls in Tongnim, Thonggun Pavilion in Uiju,

Inphung Pavilion in Kanggye and Segom Pavilion in Manpho.

The Ryongwang Pavilion in Pyongyang, noted for its beautiful scenery, was built in the mid-6th century in the period of Koguryo, and later reconstructed several times.

The present structure was built in 1670. Featuring the Koreans' architectural skills, the pavilion is associated with their patriotic struggle against foreign invaders.

It was severely damaged due to the US bombing during the



Ryongwang Pavilion

A Poet Weeps and Goes Back

An uncompleted poem hangs on a column of the Ryongwang Pavilion in Pyongyang, which tops the list of the Eight Famous Scenes in Kwanso. Originally, this poem by Kim Hwang Won, a famous poet of Koryo, was hung on the Pubyok Pavilion, and it was later moved to the Ryongwang Pavilion frequented by many people to enjoy its picturesque scenery.

This happened when Kim came to Sogyong (present Pyongyang). One day he went to the Pubyok Pavilion, only to be fascinated by the beautiful scenery of the Taedong River and its surroundings. At the moment, a poetic inspiration flashed upon him; he was good at composing poem, and so he was later praised as the “number-one poet in Haedong.” How could he stand still at the sight of this scenic beauty?

He read old poems hanging on the columns, but none of them pleased him.

He ordered his attendants to remove and set fire to all the tablets of poems, and made up his mind to personally write and hang the best masterpiece about the Taedong River.

Spreading a scroll and taking his writing brush, he wrote down at a stroke.

*The river meanders along the long wall,
Hills are standing east of the plain*

His running brush stopped here. His attendants, who were looking down shoulder to shoulder, exchanged looks of embarrassment, but he did nothing but faltering.

The sun started to go down, but Kim kept reciting the phrases of his poem, only grumbling. He racked his brains, but ended up throwing off his writing brush, unable to find the next verse.

“Oh, I am too untalented to express this beautiful scenery!”
He lamented in a hoarse voice.

Fatherland Liberation War, and restored after the war. It is now preserved as a national treasure telling of the time-honoured history of Pyongyang.

The Kangson Pavilion was in the county town of Songchon in South Phyongan Province. It was used as a place of banquet held for public servants of the state and foreign guests staying in the Songchon Guesthouse.

Among the guesthouses in the feudal days of Korea, this guesthouse was one of those largest in size and most perfect in composition and structural layout.

During the military occupation by the Japanese imperialists the pavilion and other buildings of the guesthouse were severely damaged.

After the liberation of the country on August 15, 1945 they were restored, but in December 1951, during the Fatherland Liberation War, they were burned down by the US air raid. The remaining Pangson Gate, the first gate to the guesthouse, is well preserved now.

The Paeksang Pavilion in Anju was built first in the days of Koryo and rebuilt in the days of the feudal Joseon dynasty. The name of the pavilion means that one can see one hundred beautiful things on the pavilion. The pavilion played an important role as a command post in the days of Koryo, when the soldiers and civilians in the Walled



Paeksang Pavilion

City of Anju fought against foreign invaders. During the Fatherland Liberation War it was severely damaged. It was later restored to its original state, and it is now preserved as a relic of national value.

Yaksandongdae in Nyongbyon is not so rugged, but the myriad-shaped peaks and rocks, dense forests and the flowers blooming by season present beautiful scenery.

Yaksan means medicinal mountain, i.e., an area with an abundance of medicinal herbs and mineral springs, and *dongdae*, hill in the east.

It was first renowned for the beautiful azalea blossoms in spring, but the green foliage in summer, red tints in autumn and snowscape in



Yaksandongdae

winter are also worth enjoying.

What strikes the people with admiration most is the Kobuk (Turtle) Rock.

A plate of granite has been weathered into this mysterious form. The rock is inscribed on the list of natural monuments.

Tongnim Falls in Tongnim is not so big, but it is renowned as a scenic spot for its beautiful scenery.

Written on a large rock at the back of the waterfall are the letters *Okphodong*, carved in a bold stroke.

It was also called Okpho (Falls of Beads) as the water falls like beads and is crystal-clear and sweet for it flows washing such valuable medicinal herbs as wild insam.

The Thonggun Pavilion in Uiju is on top of Samgak, a mountain in Uiju County on the shore of the Amnok River.

First built in the early period of Koryo, the pavilion underwent repair on several occasions until the 15th century.

It is associated with the proud history of the Korean people who fought against foreign aggressors. As a precious asset showing the architectural skills of building pavilions, it is preserved as a relic of national value.

The Inphung Pavilion in Kanggye was first built in 1472 and underwent reconstruction in 1680.

Going well with the surrounding scenery, every element and painting of the structure conform to the characteristics of the pavilion.

It shows the wisdom and artistic skills of the Korean ancestors.

Today, the pavilion is preserved as a valuable historical relic.

The Segom Pavilion in Manpho was built in the days of the feudal Joson dynasty.

After the Korean soldiers defeated foreign aggressors and washed their blood-stained swords here, a pavilion was built and named Segom, meaning washing the swords.

Every famous scene in the Kwanso area has its characteristics; what is distinctive is that they all represent the beautiful scenery of the cliffs on the shores of the large rivers which meander round them.

Eight Famous Scenes in Pyongyang

The Eight Famous Scenes in Pyongyang reflect the folk customs and emotions of Pyongyangites along with the well-known natural picturesque scenery.

They include enjoying spring on the Ulmil Pavilion, enjoying the full moon on the Pubyok Pavilion, going to see the Buddhist monks in the Yongmyong Temple, sending off guests at the Pothong Gate, boating in the Komun Ferry, pattering of raindrops heard in the Ryon Hall, evening scenery of Mt Taesong and the whirl of thawing water in Mathan in early spring.

Enjoying spring on the Ulmil Pavilion indicates the beautiful scene viewed from the Ulmil Pavilion on Moran Hill in spring, while enjoying the full moon on the Pubyok Pavilion signifies the striking emotion evoked by the full moon seen on the Pubyok Pavilion on Moran Hill.

Going to see the Buddhist monks in the Yongmyong Temple implies that one can enjoy fantastic sights on the way to the Yongmyong Temple that stood on the Chongnyu Cliff at the foot of Moran Hill. The temple was burned down by an aerial bombing during the Fatherland Liberation War.

Sending off guests at the Pothong Gate, a gateway to the northwest of the Walled City of Pyongyang in olden times, represents the folk customs of the Koreans sending off their guests at a distant place.

Boating in the Komun Ferry means the pleasure of hearing the splashing water against the boat side and seeing the gulls freely flying in the blue sky while oaring a boat in Namho, a place where the Taedong, Sunhwa and Pothong rivers meet.

Pattering of raindrops heard in the Ryon Hall means that when it rained in the lotus pond which had formerly been in front of the Ryongwang Pavilion, its sound was attractive and the raindrops falling on the lotus leaves sounded like a lute playing a love song.

The evening scenery of Mt Taesong signifies the view of the mountain that looks evergreen for it is wholly covered with pine trees.

All species of flowers coming into full bloom in their seasons along with the forest of evergreen pine trees add beauty to the harmonious landscape of nature there.

The whirl of thawing water in Mathan in early spring is a scene of the whirlpool of the overflowing thaw in early spring in Mathan, shallows in the Taedong. The name *mathan* was derived from the story that the piled-up horse carcasses of foreign invaders

made up “horse shallows.”

Eight Famous Scenes in Hoeryong

The Eight Famous Scenes in Hoeryong have been handed down by the recording in *Sokkwanbukji* compiled at the end of the 19th century. They are the willows on the Hoeryong Stream, Undu Walls in late autumnal tints, lanterns for fishing on the Tuman, sound of song resounding in Pyokphyong, greeting the moon on the eastern pavilion, blue mist west of the fortress, drizzle in Mt Pongui and snowscape of Osan. The Undu Walls indicates the old rampart on Undu Hill in Songdong-ri in the city of Hoeryong; Pyokphyong refers to the plain in the lower reaches of the Pyoksong Stream in Pyoksong-ri and Tokhung-ri in the city of Hoeryong; and Osan indicates Osan Hill in the city.

Old documents contain materials about another set of Eight Famous Scenes in Hoeryong. They include the evening glow over Osan, scene of sunset viewed from the Undu Walls, warbling of oriole in archery field, seeing fish on the misty riverside, prospering frontier trade between two countries, field of ripening crops, view of washing site at a moonlit night and drawing water at dusk. They fully reflect the beautiful customs of the diligent people in the Hoeryong area in those days.

Eight Famous Scenes in Mt Myohyang

The Eight Famous Scenes in Mt Myohyang represent the most typical eight scenes in Mt Myohyang, a celebrated mountain in the

country; they include greeting and seeing off guests in the Simjin Pavilion, seeing the moon on Puryongdae, seeing the waterfalls from Inhoda, seeing fish swimming in the Kumgang Pond, thick forests on Thammil Peak, cloud drift at Sollyongdae or seeing Paegundae in autumnal tints, evening glow over the Tangun Rock, and enjoying the scenery of the Manphok Valley from Pongdutha.

Eight Beauties in Mt Kumgang

The Korean people designated eight beauties in Mt Kumgang.

The beauty of mountain ranks first. The mountain has Piro Peak rising majestically among the Twelve-thousand Peaks, with ten-odd



peaks more than 1 500m high and over 100 peaks more than 1 000m high; it is literally a mountain of thousand peaks, high and low. Many peaks in Mt Kumgang such as Jipson, Ilchul, Wolchul, Chaeha and Chottae, resembling a spear head, knife edge, gimlet, candle or writing brush, all standing vertically, give a feeling of courage, while Chail and Paengma peaks are round, giving a feeling of magnificence yet softness. Their mysterious natural beauty is really fantastic. A typical example is Chonnyo Peak, which is associated with a tale that “angels” and “fairies,” who descended from the heaven to play for a while, were fascinated by its superb scenic beauty, so they forgot to return to the heaven and turned into rocks.



Podok Hermitage

Rock “sculptures,” which would put even outstanding sculptors and architects in the shade, are ubiquitous, catching the eyes of the passers-by. The natural rocks including the Samson Rock, Kwimyon Rock and



Lagoon Samil



Chongsokjong in Thongchon

Chilchung Rock, Tabo Pagoda, Sumi Pagoda, Tongja Rock resembling a child studying by a candlelight at night in a remote mountain, Sarang Rock akin to a woman with a lovely baby on her back, Pubu Rocks standing side by side like a man and his wife and Mundap Rocks resembling a master and his disciple talking to each other—all these arouse admiration for a high level of nature’s “sculptural art.”

The beauty of valleys adds to the splendid scenery of the mountain. The Manphok Valley, representative of the beauty of valleys, and the deep and long Kusong Valley linked to Piro Peak show a rare beauty of valleys for their beautiful scenery making a kaleidoscopic change with



Pibong Falls

thick forests and myriad-shaped rocks and stones in good harmony. The Suryuhwagae Valley is akin to a fairyland for the clear water flowing over the rocks silently, all kinds of flowers in full bloom and twittering of birds in summer.

The scenery of Inner Kumgang, Outer Kumgang and Sea Kumgang as a whole seen from Piro Peak and the main chain of peaks gives a feeling of solemnity and excitement.

The sun like a large mass of fire rising slowly, colouring the sky, sea, clouds and islands red, is also a beautiful scene. Compared to the thrilling and solemn feeling felt when seeing the sunrise from Puljongdae, Piro Peak, Sea Manmulsang and Chongsokjong, the beauty of sunrise reaches its zenith when seen from Taeja and Sujong peaks of Outer Kumgang.

The Kumgangsan hot spring that relieves all fatigues the moment your body is soaked in it after sightseeing, many mineral springs including the Kumgang mineral spring below Paegundae, a sip of which is said to give longevity, and other clear springs are a pride of Mt Kumgang.

The beauty of lakes and small ponds adds more to the magnificent view of the mountain. The clear and gentle lakes such as Lagoon Samil, and the beautiful pools including Kuryong, Ponghwang, Ryonju, Upper Eight and Okryu constitute one of the Eight Beauties in Mt Kumgang.

The beautiful scenery of Mt Kumgang becomes more conspicuous thanks to the scenes of waterfalls. Dozens of large and small waterfalls including the four famous waterfalls—Kuryong, Pibong, Ogyong and

Sibi—unfold the scenes of a hanging roll of silk.

All in all, the Eight Beauties in Mt Kumgang are mountain; sculpture-like rocks; valleys; panoramic views; seeing the sunrise; hot springs, mineral water and spring water; lakes and pools; and waterfalls.

**SCENIC ATTRACTIONS IN KOREA
AND ORIGIN OF THEIR NAMES**

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