

NORTHERN KOREAN MONSTROUS HOTEL



Northern Korea is a mysterious country. Not much news get out of there. Nevertheless, there is at least one thing that is too obvious to be covered up. It is the construction of the 330 meters high hotel in Pyongyang.

The construction of the Ryugyong Hotel in the Potong District of North Korea's capital city of Pyongyang began in 1987. It is believed that it was a response to South Korean company's completion of the Westin Stamford Hotel in Singapore. North Korean establishment hoped to attract foreign investors to the hotel. There should have been casinos and nightclubs operated by the foreign investors. There should have been 3,000 rooms and even 7 revolving restaurants. This 105 stories and 330

m high building would definitely be one of the biggest hotels in the world.

However there were some hitches in it. First Korea, one of the world's poorest countries, spent approximately 2% or US \$ 750 million of its GDP on the construction. Continuous shortages of material, electricity as well as funding made the construction stop in 1992. Nowadays only the basic structure is completed and it is a distinct part of the capital's sky line.

The huge building that is even 9m taller than Burj al Arab Hotel in Dubai and which provides some 360,000 m² of gross floor area is not used these days. In fact it is dilapidating. Low quality concrete was used during the construction and therefore it would need a huge investment to make it operational. The communist regime was very enthusiastic about the building. They even printed the structure on stamps and included it in maps even before the construction was finished. Nowadays, on the other hand North Korean tourist guides claim they do not know where the structure actually is. Last but not least, the country receives only some 130,000 tourists a year. These people would never be able to use the hotel up to its capacity.

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