

Pyongyang, North Korea to Dandong, China

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Right after the border control in Sinuiju, North Korea we cross the Yalu River to Dandong, China. The feeling is, and I would never expect, relief to arrive China. Relief to a living being again, with freedom of thoughts and freedom to express those same thoughts. Glad to be back to life as we know it.

On the road there are those key moments, be it in the beginning, middle, end or even weeks after the trip ended that we notice that all the effort, all the money spent, all the resources used to make it happen were paid off, paid back with a unique and unparalleled experience. North Korea represented this key moment on this trip, an overland journey from Portugal to India, through Europe, Russia and China... And while I still have two more months on the road, whatever comes will come as an extra. To this feeling of relief follows another enlightening feeling. The trip is paid.

A week in North Korea was enough, the maximum I recommend to spend in what is the most hermetically sealed country in the world and most distinct reality as we usually understand as reality.

I would say that it comes naturally for an intrepid traveller to begin grouping the countries visited according to some generalizations, This beach reminds me of the Caribbean ... This landscape reminds me of the Moroccan Atlas and the Andean Highlands… It’s a typical city of Southeast Asia… This way of arranging destinations according to its characteristics comes like sorting out subjects on the shelves of a bookstore or a library: books of fiction, poetry, science, art and so on. If I had to place the country, North Korea in my own personal library, I would have a dedicated shelf to it, more than that, I would have a dedicated room to it, while in the other room would rest all other countries I have visited so far.

Tourism in North Korea comes as a diplomatic move by the North Korean government to show openness to the West by self-interest. North Korea does not want tourists, because they are threats to the current socialist paradise and stain the regime with its dirty and capitalist imperialistic ideas.

Therefore, travelling to North Korea is something like going to a cinema to see a movie - a masterpiece of Propaganda - where the KITA (Korean International Tourism Company), promoter and director of the film leads you to your place, presses the play, shows only the parts that considers relevant, censoring all others, remains throughout the screening of the film, controls your eye direction, controls the room and all the people who work there, keeps dialogue to a minimum during the movie and when finished leads you to the exit, this is China.

However, as exhaustive and efficient that control is, tourists who go to North Korea will read the lines between the subtitles, see the side parts that cannot be cut, look out for images and sensations given by an accurate sixth sense in order to get an idea of what is going on, and that just makes everything much more challenging and rewarding.

North Korea, or Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, as they name them selves, it’s Not a destination to enjoy, is a destination to change yourself, to change our perception of the world and of ourselves, that shows you in the most breathtaking way, how lucky we are not to have been born there.

