



Visiting North Korea is not as bad an idea as you might think

By Ivan Lam, Tin Shui Wai Methodist College | December 16, 2016



Their notoriously nonsense atrocities notwithstanding, North Korea has long been seen as a very mysterious, closed-off country. Over the years, there has been a rising number of tourists that want to visit North Korea, and I am no exception – even though international sanctions have been placed on the country and it has restricted access to the outer world. Maybe my fascination for this country is misplaced. However, I believe that it's the suppressive political regime that's responsible for people's curiosity. For instance, they have their own intranet, the Kwong Ming Network, and there are department stores that are only available for the privileged few.

As intriguing as North Korea appears to be, I know that what is presented to us is only a glimpse of the actual truth. We know that there are a lot of hardships involved in being a North Korean citizen, and the suppression of impoverished North Korean nationals doesn't go unnoticed by the people of the world. What tourists are allowed to see are the people who have money, and who are put on show to prove to the world how prosperous North Korea is. We don't see how the locals really live. We don't really know what North Korea is like, but I feel that the Internet is helping to change that. I'm only a teenager, but when I am older I will probably pay a visit to North Korea, and experience what this intriguing, mysterious place is like for myself.

Ivan Lam, Tin Shui Wai Methodist College

Thank you for your letter, Ivan. North Korea seems to be a great mystery to outsiders, especially those in the West. However, we need to take care with the Internet as we know that not everything we read there is true.

Also, some people are interested in wanting the public to think about North Korea in a certain way. That is not necessarily the truth. It's good that you are keen to find out things for yourself, as much as you can. Given the circumstances, though, as you have pointed out, it might not be the truth, but just a PR picture of what Pyongyang wants you to believe.

Susan, Editor

Edited by Ginny Wong