

North Korea Unveiled | Small Group Tour for Seniors

Reading List

Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea

by Barbara Demick

A National Book Award finalist and National Book Critics Circle finalist, Barbara Demick's *Nothing to Envy* is a remarkable view into North Korea, as seen through the lives of six ordinary citizens.

Award-winning journalist Barbara Demick follows the lives of six North Korean citizens over fifteen years—a chaotic period that saw the death of Kim Il-sung, the rise to power of his son Kim Jong-il, and a devastating famine that killed one-fifth of the population. Demick brings to life what it means to be living under the most repressive totalitarian regime today—an Orwellian world that is by choice not connected to the Internet, where displays of affection are punished, informants are rewarded, and an offhand remark can send a person to the gulag for life. Demick takes us deep inside the country, beyond the reach of government censors, and through meticulous and sensitive reporting we see her subjects fall in love, raise families, nurture ambitions, and struggle for survival. One by one, we witness their profound, life-altering disillusionment with the government and their realization that, rather than providing them with lives of abundance, their country has betrayed them.

North Korea's Hidden Revolution: How the Information Underground Is Transforming a Closed Society

by Jieun Baek

The story of North Korea's information underground and how it inspires people to seek better lives beyond their country's borders

One of the least understood countries in the world, North Korea has long been known for its repressive regime. Yet it is far from being an impenetrable black box. Media flows covertly into the country, and fault lines are appearing in the government's sealed informational borders. Drawing on deeply personal interviews with North Korean defectors from all walks of life, ranging from propaganda artists to diplomats, Jieun Baek tells the story of North Korea's information underground—the network of citizens who take extraordinary risks by circulating illicit content such as foreign films, television shows, soap operas, books, and encyclopedias. By fostering an awareness of life outside North Korea and enhancing cultural knowledge, the materials these citizens disseminate are affecting the social and political consciousness of a people, as well as their

everyday lives.

My Holiday in North Korea: The Funniest/Worst Place on Earth

by Wendy E. Simmons

Most people want out of North Korea. Wendy Simmons wanted in.

In My Holiday in North Korea: The Funniest/Worst Place on Earth, Wendy shares a glimpse of North Korea as it's never been seen before. Even though it's the scariest place on Earth, somehow Wendy forgot to check her sense of humor at the border.

But Wendy's initial amusement and bewilderment soon turned to frustration and growing paranoia. Before long, she learned the essential conundrum of "tourism" in North Korea: Travel is truly a love affair. But, just like love, it's a two-way street. And North Korea deprives you of all this. They want you to fall in love with the singular vision of the country they're willing to show you and nothing more. Through poignant, laugh-out-loud essays and 92 never-before-published color photographs of North Korea, Wendy chronicles one of the strangest vacations ever. Along the way, she bares all while undergoing an inner journey as convoluted as the country itself.

North Korea Confidential: Private Markets, Fashion Trends, Prison Camps, Dissenters and Defectors

by Daniel Tudor

North Korea is one of the most troubled societies on earth. The country's 24 million people live under a violent dictatorship led by a single family, which relentlessly pursues the development of nuclear arms, which periodically incites risky military clashes with the larger, richer, liberal South, and which forces each and every person to play a role in the "theater state" even as it pays little more than lip service to the wellbeing of the overwhelming majority.

With this deeply anachronistic system eventually failed in the 1990s, it triggered a famine that decimated the countryside and obliterated the lives of many hundreds of thousands of people. However, it also changed life forever for those who survived.

A lawless form of marketization came to replace the iron rice bowl of work in state companies, and the Orwellian mind control of the Korean Workers' Party was replaced for many by dreams of trade and profit. A new North Korea Society was born from the horrors of the era—one that is more susceptible to outside information than ever before with the advent of k-pop and video-carrying USB sticks. This is the North Korean society that is described in this book.

In seven fascinating chapters the authors explore what life is actually like in modern North Korea

today for the ordinary "man and woman on the street." They interview experts and tap a broad variety of sources to bring a startling new insider's view of North Korean society—from members of Pyongyang's ruling families to defectors from different periods and regions, to diplomats and NGOs with years of experience in the country, to cross-border traders from neighboring China, and textual accounts appearing in English, Korean and Chinese sources. The resulting stories reveal the horror as well as the innovation and humor which abound in this fascinating country.

Dear Leader: My Escape from North Korea

by Jang Jin-sung

THE STORY THEY COULDN'T HACK: In this international bestseller, a high-ranking counterintelligence agent describes his life as a former poet laureate to Kim Jong-il and his breathtaking escape to freedom.

As North Korea's State Poet Laureate, Jang Jin-sung led a charmed life. With food provisions (even as the country suffered through its great famine), a travel pass, access to strictly censored information, and audiences with Kim Jong-il himself, his life in Pyongyang seemed safe and secure. But this privileged existence was about to be shattered. When a strictly forbidden magazine he lent to a friend goes missing, Jang Jin-sung must flee for his life.

Never before has a member of the elite described the inner workings of this totalitarian state and its propaganda machine. An astonishing exposé told through the heart-stopping story of Jang Jin-sung's escape to South Korea, *Dear Leader* is an "impossibly dramatic story...one of the best depictions yet of North Korea's nightmare" (Publishers Weekly).

Without You, There Is No Us: Undercover Among the Sons of North Korea's Elite

by Suki Kim

A haunting account of teaching English to the sons of North Korea's ruling class during the last six months of Kim Jong-il's reign

Every day, three times a day, the students march in two straight lines, singing praises to Kim Jong-il and North Korea: Without you, there is no motherland. Without you, there is no us. It is a chilling scene, but gradually Suki Kim, too, learns the tune and, without noticing, begins to hum it. It is 2011, and all universities in North Korea have been shut down for an entire year, the students sent to construction fields—except for the 270 students at the all-male Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST), a walled compound where portraits of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il look on impassively from the walls of every room, and where Suki has gone undercover as a missionary and

a teacher. Over the next six months, she will eat three meals a day with her young charges and struggle to teach them English, all under the watchful eye of the regime.

Life at PUST is lonely and claustrophobic, especially for Suki, whose letters are read by censors and who must hide her notes and photographs not only from her minders but from her colleagues—evangelical Christian missionaries who don't know or choose to ignore that Suki doesn't share their faith. As the weeks pass, she is mystified by how easily her students lie, unnerved by their obedience to the regime. At the same time, they offer Suki tantalizing glimpses of their private selves—their boyish enthusiasm, their eagerness to please, the flashes of curiosity that have not yet been extinguished. She in turn begins to hint at the existence of a world beyond their own—at such exotic activities as surfing the Internet or traveling freely and, more dangerously, at electoral democracy and other ideas forbidden in a country where defectors risk torture and execution. But when Kim Jong-il dies, and the boys she has come to love appear devastated, she wonders whether the gulf between her world and theirs can ever be bridged.

Without You, There Is No Us offers a moving and incalculably rare glimpse of life in the world's most unknowable country, and at the privileged young men she calls "soldiers and slaves."
