



Explore North Korea

Now here's a trophy reserved to a restricted number of travelers. And yet, North Korea is not of Nations more difficult to visit. Will is to be acceptance to the bizarre conditions imposed by authorities and, of course, money.



Almost every day we are subjected to a hail of propaganda directed against North Korea. The information is basically non-existent and our ideas about what goes on in that country is being shaped by the "news", which, in fact, are almost always rumors. North Korea is closed. This is the only thing factual.

The rest are guesses and rumors. But ... If it is closed, how can you visit? Well, if you're a journalist, you can't, at least if you don't hide it carefully. If not, can, and it's easy.

The first thing you should know is that all tourists will have to enter the country on a tour framed by authorities. And you will never be able to walk freely. Always with the guides of the group. Very strange? Maybe. But it's not unique. It's the same in Bhutan. In any case, North Korea is far from the most difficult country to visit. The Saudi Arabia, for example, does not issue tourist visas. Many others do, but with so many conditions and requirements that becomes a nightmare. In the case of North Korea, the "seen" is just a routine, treated by the agency that organizes the tour where the tourist will include.



By the way, the visa is not really a visa, but a tourist card, the example of what happens in Cuba. To enter or to leave your Passport will remain untouched. You will not receive a stamp or a stamp to mark his visit. If you want a souvenir of this type, it is best to take a picture of the tourist card while you're there.

The photographs, a component so important to most travelers, are totally allowed in North Korea. In many other countries there are difficulties in this respect. In Turkmenistan, even though they are not formally banned, are very mal-vistas by the authorities and the visitor feels inhibited to photograph whatever it is. And then there are those Nations where you never know what you can shoot or not. Well, that's one of the advantages of the compartmentalised trips by North Korea. The guides would never let your group closer to something forbidden.



Cell phones were banned in the country until 2013. Visitors would have to leave the care of cross-border services for the duration of the trip, getting them back out. Currently the question no longer arises and can use mobile phones there, although it is necessary to use a local SIM (very reasonable prices) and, surprise of surprises, it may even make use of mobile Internet (Nothing reasonable price).

And there are some things you can't take? Theoretically, zoom lenses greater than 150 mm, but it seems that this rule is not implemented for a long time. Probably dedicated GPS units, despite not having found information specifies. All the rest is no problem. Computers, books, everything.

The meeting point to the beginning of a great adventure is in Beijing. Note that being Portuguese or Brazilian (in total there are 45 nationalities) can remain in this Chinese city for three days (72 hours) without a visa, which is excellent for the context ... can not only take a look at how you can get to North Korea without this expense (and boring) that would be the visa for China. If you don't find an economic way to fly to Beijing, you can always go to other Asian countries such as Thailand, and fly after locally with Air Asia.

From here, you can relax. It's (almost) all included in the price of the agency that organizes the trip and not have to worry about anything. The flights from Beijing, accommodation and all power are included in the prices of tours. Only small personal expenses, the visa and the gratuities to guides (about \$25) are usually added to the budget.

The groups are usually limited to twenty people, framed by one or two local guides and a Western Guide (do not know if all agencies follow this model, but some do and it will be better to check this).

Programmes, are quite good. For them to all tastes, generic or thematic, a few days or extended. And even built in a personalized manner for those who want to and can spend more money. There is great focus on mega-ceremony that in fact are a hallmark of North Korea. The celebrations of the anniversary of the "Great Leader", for example, are the core of a seven-day tour. There are programs focusing on architecture of Pyongyang and programs dedicated to hiking and camping. The more economical, of around \$950, are 4 or 5 nights, and the most extensive, the \$2000, arrive at 9 nights and include everything that you can include, going through every corner of the country. The best thing is to visit the page of one of the companies (see below) and go through all the options.

How to learn more and how to find these tours? In the Chutti.pk article dedicated to North Korea will find a comprehensive list of authorized agencies.