

FEATURE - Airbnb in Nordkorea



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Caption

AIRBNB IN NORTH KOREA

When I first arrived in North Korea in 2008, my guide told me that in the near future it may be possible for tourists to lodge with a North Korean family during their stay. I had to wait years before this sort of North Korean Airbnb came into existence so I'm thrilled when they finally tell me that I could do it. During my stay, I'll be a guest at the residence of a local fisherman's family in the village of Jung Pyong Ri, in Myongchon county, situated in the North Hamgyong province. With white sandy beaches, the remote village doesn't exist on any map. This beautiful portrayal of rural life provides the North Korean government a flattering image to capitalize on, showing tourists this pillar of the country's economy.

After 5 trips to North Korea, I'm always a tad suspicious when my guides tell me something is amazing. They regularly oversell events I should attend or places I should visit. In the past, I was brought to a fish farm without fish and a host of abandoned factories. Hopefully, this time will be different and Jung Pyong Yi will live up to its hype.

My journey there gives me a great opportunity to view the countryside, as it requires a several-hour bus ride to reach. The roads on the east coast are very muddy and filled with potholes that workers try their best to fix. I see an electric fence lining the beach as an attempt to stall possible Japanese invasion.

The poverty in these rural villages is palpable. From the comfy seat in my bus, I see old, dilapidated houses with roofs ready to collapse. Only huge murals of the smiling Kim Il Sung bring color to these bleak landscapes. My guide informs me that most tourists do not journey this far into the countryside, and that I may be the first European to ever visit this area. The bus continues on, accelerating every time it passes through a village, aggressively forcing other motorists to make way for the bus. There is a disparaging difference between the attitudes

Special instructions

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City

Jung Pyong Ri

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Original references