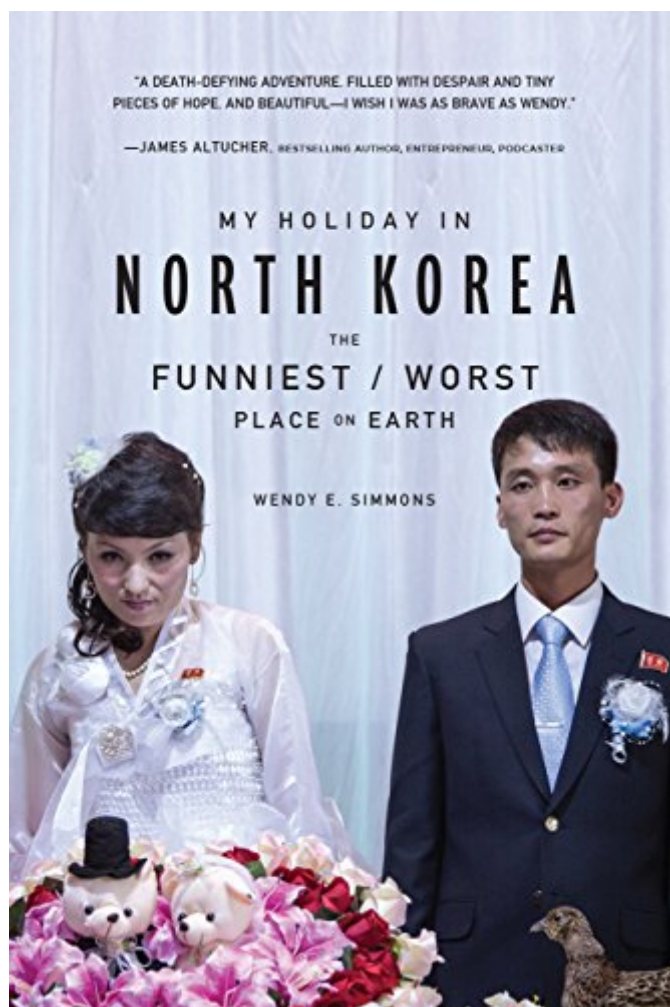


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My Holiday In North Korea: The Funniest/Worst Place On Earth



Synopsis

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.

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Customer Reviews

I became fascinated by North Korea after reading Adam Johnson's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, "The Orphan Master's Son". Johnson painted a picture of North Korea that was so surreal it could easily have been likened to an "Alice in Wonderland" kind of place. Well, in her utterly engaging and

fascinating travel memoir, Wendy E. Simmons does exactly that; she describes her experiences in North Korea (which she calls: NoKo) as falling down the rabbit hole and she sprinkles appropriate Lewis Carroll quotes throughout. This travel memoir is like nothing I've ever seen before - and I say "seen" rather than "read" because it's full of stellar photographs that Simmons took of NoKo. It's really like a long magazine article, or a perfectly curated photo album. I have no idea how this book looks on an e-reader, but in hand it is printed on photo-quality paper. I haven't had this much FUN reading a book in a long time. Simmons is hilariously funny, to be sure. And NoKo is clearly an amusingly paradoxical place. But Simmons' observations are also quite insightful, and she is kind when kindness is called for and critical when the situation demands it (a lot of the time). Her style is wonderfully earthy, and the reader is cast as a friend to whom she is recounting this amazing and almost unbelievable adventure. I can understand journalists, photographers, cultural historians, and other curious folks wanting to go to NoKo, but I can't grasp choosing to go there for a FAMILY VACATION, yet Simmons does meet a family of four from Australia.

Imagine a chance to visit the post-Bolshevik revolution Russia, in all its insanity without having to go back in time. And Cultural Revolution China. That's "My Holiday in North Korea." The most mysterious, hidden realm is revealed with pictures and text by Wendy Simmons. This is a trip to a country modeled on a Potemkin Village, which in case you didn't know, was a village assembled along the Dnieper River, then disassembled and moved downstream to give Catherine the Great the idea that the peasants were fat, clean and happy. Far from it. But--she never saw and neither does Wendy, who is firmly in tow between two implacable female North Korean apparatchiks and sees what they want her to see. The photos are of clean classrooms with sturdy polished wood doors, shiny floors and almost-identical looking students learning language or piano or practicing Tai Kwan Do under a huge ornate glass chandelier in a dojo that looks like a ballroom (maybe, it was.) But it's a shocking fraud. This land, with starving people, spent money on fake factories, gleaming with glass, metal, but fake wall monitors, no control panels and above all, no workers. The story is always the same; just went home. Lunch break. There's an entire Potemkin City, fake tourist creations, while outside the Disneyland of Pyongyang, Third World rural hovels, no plumbing, electricity, and mandatory rice field duty. The most telling point to me was that the giant infrastructure of this country is so impoverished, water purification and distribution is even minimal to practical none, even in the showplace capital. Here is the capital of a country and it doesn't really have running water. Even in the showplaces. Is it just the false fronts that they didn't bother to plumb?

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