

NORTH KOREA:

The pictures Kim Jong Un doesn't want you to see



ERIC LAFFORGUE

Since 2008, I ventured to North Korea six times. Thanks to digital memory cards, I was able to save photos that I was forbidden to take or was told to delete by the minders.



A woman standing in the middle of a crowd of soldiers. This picture is not supposed to be taken as officials do not allow army pictures.



North Korean army is said to be one of the most important in the world. But if you travel there, you'll often see soldiers doing menial tasks like helping farmers.



On a little lake on the way to Wonsan, this fisherman uses a tire as a boat.



Outside of the urban areas, such a scene is fairly common.



Pyongyang's subway system is the deepest in the world as it doubles as a bomb shelter. Someone saw me taking this picture and told me to delete it since it included the tunnel.



The North Korean officials hate when you take this kind of picture. Even when I explain that poverty exists all around the world, in my own country as well, they forbid me from taking pictures of the poor.



When times are hard (as they usually are here), kids can be found working for the farming collectives.



For a long time, bans against black market sales have been strictly enforced. Grey market vendors are more common. They earn a little money selling cigarettes or sweets.



Only in North Korea: I was at a factory shooting with my TV crew. We were followed by a local cameraman who filmed throughout the trip (on the right). On this day, the government sent another cameraman to film us all! Very meta.



Perfection is key to any activity in North Korea. Only the best of the best are selected to perform in front of a live audience. This acrobat did 3 flips for this feat.



On the day of the Kimjongilia festival, thousands of North Koreans must queue up to visit various monuments.



천근근이 경선력을 총괄동원하여 선진조선의 존엄과 위력을 더 높이 발휘라!

Pyongyang is supposed to be the showcase of North Korea, so building exteriors are carefully maintained. When you get a rare chance to look inside, the bleak truth becomes apparent.



As cars have become more widespread in Pyongyang, the peasants are still getting accustomed to seeing them. Kids play in the middle of the main avenues just like before when there were no cars in sight.



One night, on the way back to the hotel my bus had to take an alternate route due to street closures. As we passed by old buildings, the guides asked me not to shoot with flash. The official reason was “to avoid scaring people”.



A visit to a rural home. Those houses and the families who live there are carefully selected by the government. But sometimes, a detail like a bathroom used as a cistern shows that times are hard...



Public transportation connecting the main towns is nearly nonexistent. Citizens need permits to go from one place to another. On the highways, you can spot soldiers hitchhiking.



Showing poverty is forbidden, but displaying wealth is also a big taboo in North Korea. In a park on a Sunday afternoon, I found this car that belongs to one of Pyongyang's elite. The owners were having a BBQ.



It is forbidden to take pictures of soldiers relaxing.



In a Christian church, this official was dozing off on a bench. You must never show the officials in a bad light. Woops!



It is also forbidden to photograph malnutrition.



You can find all kinds of food and drink in Pyongyang's two supermarkets where things are sold in both euros and wons. They even have Evian water. Only the elite can shop there.



When you sleep in Kaesong, near the DMZ, you are locked in an hotel complex composed of old houses. It allows the guides to say “Why do you want to go outside? It’s the same as in the hotel.” No, it’s not.



It's not a circus, they are workers in a country with low safety standards.



When visiting the delphinium in Pyongyang, you can photograph the animals, but not the soldiers who make up 99% of the crowd!



Paranoia is too strong in North Korean minds. I took this picture at a fun fair of a tired mother and child resting on a bench. I was asked to delete the picture since the guides were certain I would have said those people were homeless.



Taking pictures in the DMZ is easy, but if you come too close to the soldiers, they stop you.



Kids in Begaepong streets, collecting grains.



This soldier was sleeping in a field. This picture really contributed to me getting banned from the country.



Brand new restaurants have opened along the Taedong River in the new center of Pyongyang. Only the elite can afford to eat there for the equivalent of few euros. The sturgeon I had was actually very tasty.



The Pionners camp of Wonsan is often visited by tourists to show the youth from all over the country having fun. But some children come from the countryside and are afraid to use the escalators which they've never seen before.

This is never supposed to happen: a broom standing on the base of Kim Il Sung's statue in Mansudae, in Pyongyang.





This kind of picture is widespread in the west. The caption often explains that North Koreans eat grass from the park. The guides get furious if you take it.



When you visit families, the guides love it if you take pics to show the world that kids have computers. But when they see there is no electricity, then they ask you to delete!



It is absolutely forbidden to take a picture of the Kim statues from the back. It is considered very rude.



The guides prefer if you don't take pictures of these old trams which are ubiquitous in Pyongyang.



The way you dress is very important in North Korea. In town, you'll never find anybody dressed poorly. On this day, students were dancing in a park. When I asked to take a picture, the girl asked the man to straighten his shirt.



Every year, people from the town go to the country to help out in public projects. On this day, they repainted milestones. Before to government regarded shots like these as positive, but now they understand that we can interpret this as forced labor.



Money is a taboo topic of conversation in North Korea. It's very difficult to understand how much people earn, the cost of living, etc... When i took this picture of the cashier of the brand new fun fair counting a lot of money, it was not a good idea!



Never take a picture where you can see people doing silly things in front of the Kim portraits.



Queueing is a national sport for North Koreans.



Perhaps the most ridiculous prohibition I faced: this official painter was working on a new mural in Chilbo. I took the picture, and everybody started yelling at me. Since the painting was unfinished, I couldn't take the picture.



Something you can see often in North Korea, but still forbidden to photograph.



This man was taking a rest on the rocks by the sea in Chilbo. My guide asked me to delete this for fear that western media could say that this man was dead. He was alive.



I went to Chongjin, a city in the north that suffered a lot from hunger few years ago. My camera was confiscated for the duration of the bus trip. Once at the hotel, I understood why when I saw the people in the street.



On this day in spring, people had put some carpets to dry on the banks of the Taedong River. Since there was a Kim Il Sung statue in the back, taking picture with those carpets was forbidden.



The officials took issue with this photo for two reasons: 1) the teen has his cap worn in a strange way (according to my guide), and 2) there are soldiers in the back.



It is forbidden to take pictures of the daily life of the North Korean people if they are not well dressed. For my guide this man was not well dressed enough to be photographed.



At the DMZ, I took a picture of the South Korean side. A soldier asked me to delete this, as it was not in the mood of a “military” photo with the blurred curtains effect.



In the art center of Pyongyang, we experienced a power outage, a daily event the North Koreans hate to show. When it happens, they tell you it's because of the American embargo.



On the highways, you can see trucks loaded with coal, since North Korea has big problem getting oil like during WW2.



There are a lot of tired people since many have to ride their bikes for hours to go to work in the fields. Taking pictures of them is forbidden.



A very rare picture of a wheelchair. In six trips, I saw only two of them.

PALMOLEIN OIL
FORTIFIED WITH VITAMIN A AND D
GIFT OF NORWAY
WORLD FOOD
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WFP



North Korea say foreign aid is a war debt,
but taking pics of the WFP sign through
the window of a house in a village is
forbidden.



A rare example of an undisciplined kid in North Korea. The bus was driving in the small roads of Samijyon in the north, when this kid stood in the middle of the road.

Eric lafforgue
lafforgue@mac.com
www.ericlafforgue.com