

HIGHWAY TO YELL IN NORTH KOREA

A wide, multi-lane highway in North Korea, showing a cyclist and a car on the road. The road is paved and has multiple lanes. The background features a hazy mountain range under a clear sky. The overall scene is quiet and desolate.

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Travelling on the highways in North Korea is a great experience, as it allows us to see the daily life of the country not controlled by the government like in Pyongyang. The highways connect the main towns of the counties and are totally car-free. This creates a very strange atmosphere since the roads are as large as airstrips, however in poor conditions with numerous bumpings and holes.

Everything is planned when you visit North Korea, even the bathroom stops! According to the guide, it is too dangerous to stop on the highway to make a pee!

Some shops in the middle of nowhere welcome you with a relaxing moment where once again, you'll be reading some propaganda on the walls. It will also allow your driver to buy cheap soju (rice alcohol) that they drink like Red Bulls but with different side effects!



A highway junction is so rarely used by cars that kids can even dry corn on the road! Getting on the highways is a very good way to see scenes of local life, even though the bus driver drives at very high speed trying to hide the reality from foreign visitors.



There are no tolls in North Korea, but you cannot leave Pyongyang without a special authorization. Even for local people. The lack of public transportation is reducing the chances of escapes...



In France, you can spot wild animals crossing the highways. Whereas in North Korea, you can see the local kids crossing the large roads.



The highways are so large that even planes could land on them.



Lots of holes can be found on the highways, so lot of workers are trying to fix the road. Security is not the main concern, because the sign is put up just right next to the workers, not 200m before!



Me: Can we make a bathroom stop?

My guide: No, it is too dangerous to stop on the highway.

Me: But we haven't seen any cars for an hour!!

My guide: A stop is scheduled at half way !



In the middle of nowhere on the highway, a stop is planned by the guides in shops that sell alcohol. My bus driver loves drinking soju, the rice alcohol, just like our western drivers adore Red Bulls!



A nice and relaxing room in a Highway.



While your friends go to pee in the toilets of the shop, where there is no running water, you can enjoy some propaganda on the walls of the shop.

김일성주석 탄생 100돐경축 열병식 주석단에 계시는
조선로동당 제1비서이시며 조선민주주의인민공화국 국방위원회
제1위원장이시며 조선인민군 최고사령관이신 경애하는 김정은동지

Kim Jong Un, First Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, First Chairman of the National Defence Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army, standing on the rostrum to review the military parade held in celebration of the centenary of Kim Il Sung's birth.



A small souvenir shop on the highway. They are selling some apples. One euro for one apple! They are the first fruit I ever have during my two weeks' trip!



A sign saying that Seoul is just 64 km away from North Korea.



All along the highway near the south korean border, you can see those huge cement blocks. They can be used to block the highway in case of American invasion.



«Independance, peace, reunification » on the cement blocks of the DMZ highway.



Workers on the highway are repairing the road on the left side. On the right side, a live orchestra was playing!



Me: What is the orchestra doing on the highway???

My guide: Mr Eric, they are playing for the workers... it's nicer to work with music, is it not?



The kind of scene you can see along the highway. An overloaded truck breaks down with lot of smoke coming out... I have the chance to take these pictures just because... After lunch, my guides are enjoying the confort of the bus seats and snoring...



I hardly see cars on the highways of North Korea during all my six trips. Now I am lucky enough to spot an American... Hummer! My guides are rather annoyed as they know how symbolic this car is in their country, where everything is rationed out ... It is the first time that I hear them criticizing something from their system.



A kid with his geese on the highway side. Most of the time people use the highway for their daily activities. Therefore they got so surprised to see cars or buses on it.

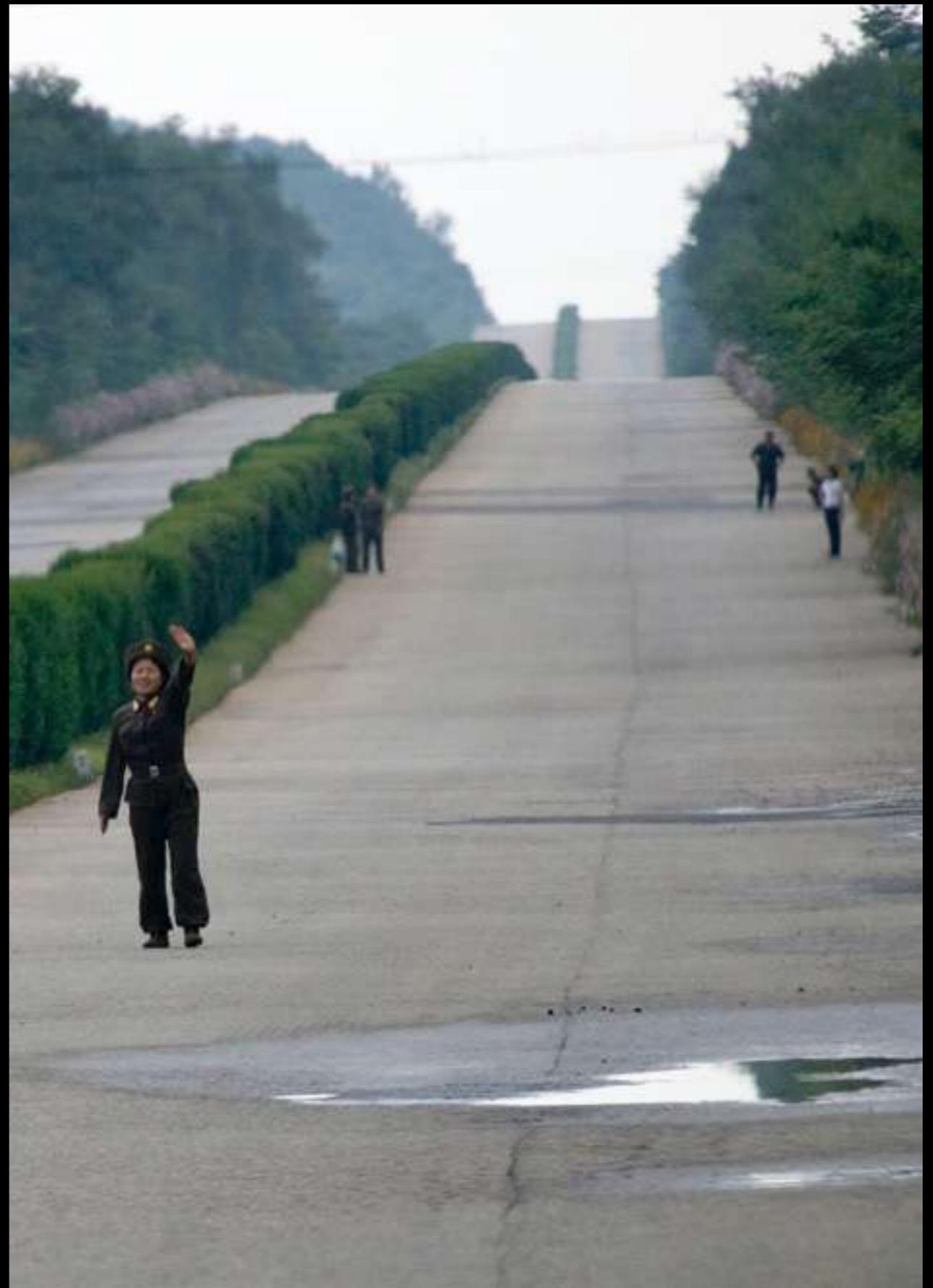


The trips on the highways allow us to see the reality of the countryside, and the lack of development. it seems time has frozen in the 50s..

A large propaganda billboard is mounted on a hillside. The billboard consists of 18 white rectangular panels, each containing a single Korean character in purple. The text reads: "내 나라를 위대한 김정일장군님의 나라로 더욱 빛내여 나가자!". The background shows a rural landscape with a brown, eroded hillside, a green field, and a dark, plowed field in the foreground. The sky is overcast.

내 나라를 위대한 김정일장군님의 나라로 더욱 빛내여 나가자!

Lots of propaganda billboards can be seen from the highway. A big investment compared to the transport...



Yes, in North Korea, you can bike without danger on highways. A lot of people are trying to stop cars, however they have to wait for hours... So, I ask my guide to stop for them as the tourist bus I have is empty. He refuses, explaining that it is absolutely impossible to do this.



It is forbidden to enter Pyongyang with a dirty car, so after a long trip on the highway, the cars and the buses must be cleaned before entering the town.

It is a way to respect the town of the Leaders, according to my guide.

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Ironically, the only advertising billboards you can see in Pyongyang are about... cars!



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