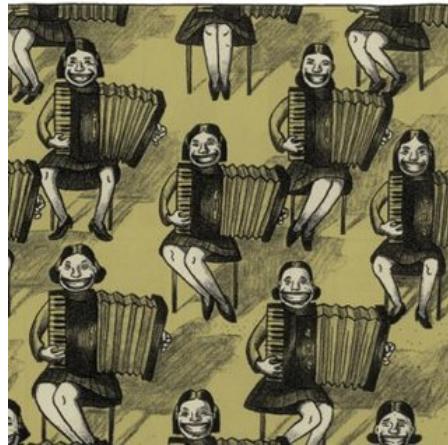


GUY DELISLE
PYONGYANG
A JOURNEY IN NORTH KOREA



Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea

Guy Delisle

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Famously referred to as one of the "Axis of Evil" countries, North Korea remains one of the most secretive and mysterious nations in the world today. In early 2001 cartoonist Guy Delisle became one of the few Westerners to be allowed access to the fortress-like country. While living in the nation's capital for two months on a work visa for a French film animation company, Delisle observed what he was allowed to see of the culture and lives of the few North Koreans he encountered; his findings form the basis of this graphic novel.

Guy Delisle was born in Quebec City in 1966 and has spent the last decade living and working in the South of France with his wife and son. Delisle has spent ten years, mostly in Europe, working in animation, an experience that taught him about movement and drawing. He is now currently focusing on his cartooning. Delisle has written and drawn six graphic novels, including "Pyongyang," his first graphic novel in English.

Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea Details

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Trish says

Delisle's Pyongyang experience is a little different from his other books because in the case of North Korea, Delisle is here to work on animation studies for a film. Apparently most major animation studios find animation devilishly expensive to produce in the home country and so go to lower-wage countries to do the in-between frames in a storyline so that the work is smooth and not herky-jerky.

Foreigners are asked to come for short periods of time to keep an eye on the project and get the work done on time and with the proper standards. While he was there, Delisle came across a not-insignificant number of people living in Pyongyang or passing through, on their way to remote outposts for different reasons. I'd always wondered about that, but wasn't sure if it actually happened. Must be pretty grim work, considering Delisle's experience ensconced in a big, empty, cold & impersonal hotel in the city...surely as comfortable a place as can be found.

Anyway, one gets a very good sense of what his days were like, what the city looked like, how fun was to be had, if it was to be had at all, but very little of the inner lives of residents, which is to be expected. Delisle's work again adds to the richness of our understanding of the world.

Paul Bryant says

Just seen the news about Sony's movie *The Interview* and now I'm thinking - Uh oh - I hope this review doesn't get hacked and bring Goodreads down with it! Because really, all I am trying to do is to lower the international temperature and turn those tears to smiles as we present a short musical selection we like to call

MY BRILLIANT KOREA

President Obama (dressed as a Mother Superior) :

*Have you met my good friend North Korea,
The craziest nation on earth?
You'll know it the minute you see it,
You'll collapse into inappropriate mirth*

Mrs Kim Jong-un (looking up from reading the New York Times):

*The Jong-uns, darling we're the Jong-uns
And Jong-uns shouldn't be afraid
to build - socialism - while the flame is strong
Cause we may not be the Jong-uns very long*

Kim Jong-un:

*Climb ev'ry mountain, ford ev'ry stream
Follow ev'ry rainbow 'till you build a socialist utopia
A socialist utopia that will need all the love you can give
Everyday of your life for as long as you live*

Prez Obama:

*How do you solve a problem like North Korea?
How do you drag the Kims before the courts
For infecting all the people with such fear
They try to make their brains stop thinking thoughts?*

Kim Jong-un:

*Pyongyang is pretty, oh, so pretty,
It's so pretty and witty and bright!
And I pity any supreme leader who isn't me tonight.
See the great leader on that billboard there*

(Cute party cadres : What billboard where?)

Who can that attractive man be?
Such a noble face, such a well-cut suit,
Such a handsome smile, such a pretty me!
I feel stunning and entrancing,
Feel like running and dancing for joy,
For I'm loved by a pretty wonderful socialist nation!

*

(oh - what? what's that? you want a book review too? well... I suppose so...)

This is a slightly mean-spirited book which recounts all the tedium of a couple of months in Pyongyang as a Western visitor. There's nothing much to do except visit massive monuments to Kim Il-Sung as it was in 2005 when GD went there. Or you could visit massive monuments which are in the process of being built. Or you could mutter about being told to keep your acid jazz music down because it might not be appropriate for other people to hear. Hmph! All the minor indignities any Westerner would zero in on. Guy does a lot of huffing and puffing and tutting, and thereby reveals his own appalling pettiness just as he exposes the gruesome mindsets of the North Koreans. Since we already know that Westerners are a pain in the arse when they visit foreign countries and North Koreans are all poor and oppressed and benighted, you really don't get to learn much you didn't already know.

Two and a half very lukewarm stars.

Negativni says

Guy Delisle je u Sjevernoj Koreji radio kao posrednik između francuske produkcijske kuće za animacije i sjevernokorejskog studija koji im je radio manje zahtjevnu animaciju. Proveo je dva mjeseca u Pyongyangu, a u istoimenom stripu je zabilježio svoje dojmove.

Kako tehnologija napreduje s njom se razvija i reklamna industrija, tako da nam sve više vidike zaklanjaju raznim plakatima, a predviđa se da će u skoroj budućnosti plakati biti "inteligentni" i interaktivni, znat će tko im se približava i prilagoditi će reklame baš za tu osobu. I koliko god to iritantno zvučalo grad bez takvih plakata izgleda još strašnije. Nekako manje ljudski, više kao betonski zatvor. Nedavno sam pogledao jedan kratak video koji je neki turist uspio prošvercati iz Sjeverne Koreje. Video prikazuje spuštanje u stanicu podzemne željeznice i prvo što sam primjetio je da su zidovi prazni, nigdje reklame. Naravno, to je smiješno nebitan detalj u odnosu na stvarne probleme koji muže stanovništvo te zemlje, kao što su glad i tortura od strane države na razne načine.

Žalosno da i danas ima ljudi, odnosno cijelih nacija koje tako pate zbog par budala koje imaju vlast. Uz Sjevernu Koreju kak i naš Balkan ne izgleda tako loše, jer kako kaže naš narod "barem ne tuku", dok u Sjevernoj Koreji možeš završiti u zatvoru kak i ako imaš frizuru drugačiju od jedne od nekoliko propisanih.

Stripu nisam dao najvišu ocjenu jer mu ipak fali nekakav zaključak radnje, a možda ne bi bilo loše i da je neke stvari istražio podrobnije. Ovo je dnevnički zapis autora i treba ga gledati kao vrlo osoban uradak i kao takav funkcioniра.

Prije par godina gledao sam i odličan kratki dokumentarac *The VICE Guide to North Korea* njega također preporučujem a može se besplatno pogledati na njihovim stranicama.

Lilburninbean says

I don't know where to begin describing this book. When I first read about it, I was so excited to get my hands on it because it sounded so intriguing. And with all the excellent write-ups people have given it, I was hopeful it would offer a) an insightful account of a travel/work experience in North Korea and b) a narrative that was somewhat self-aware and unlike so many travel logs by douche-baggy Westerners who have a superiority complex yet claim not to be racist. I'm so utterly disappointed. At the first overtly racist comment Delisle made on page 9, I began anticipating that he would start out being the typical Western douche-bag only to learn a thing or two and redeem himself toward the end. But somewhere between pages 28-45, that glimmer of hope began to fade; I went back and started flagging all the unapologetic racism—all the easy generalizations and depictions of North Koreans as completely subservient sub-humans.

The comments Delisle makes are not only painful to read, but they make me wish I could reach into the book and shake him for failing to see his own stupidity and ethnocentrism. What's worse is that his racism and complete lack of cultural sensitivity are so deeply connected to his plain bad manners; as a guest in someone else's country, you would think he'd have some moments of graciousness and tolerance let alone acceptance. Here's a list of some the comments I flagged:

At the hotel: “It’s got those good old standard rooms—cold and impersonal, just like they like them in Asia” (9). So now he’s the expert on the entire continent of Asia—a region that can be lumped into one category, stamping out any diversity.

At a restaurant: “I don’t mean to complain but this is the filthiest tablecloth I’ve ever seen...Argh! And it’s wet, too! My elbows are soaking! Ugh! This stuff [the food on his plate] is swimming in oil! What? They call this ice cream?” (20). He complains about the food throughout though there are a couple very brief moments where he acknowledges that many North Koreans do not have enough to eat. This jackass filled his belly with food whenever he needed or wanted to. Couldn’t he at least devote some significant portion of this book discussing his ridiculous amount of privilege?

About North Korean music on the radio: “The tunes sound like a cross between a national anthem and the theme song of a children’s show...like a Barney remix of ‘God Save the Queen’ or ‘Oh Canada’” (28). He’s constantly infantilizing North Koreans in their tastes and their political alliances, as well as their interests and leisure activities.

“It’s always a pleasure in these countries to pay \$5 for a lousy cup of instant coffee” (35). What are “these” countries supposed to signify? How many North Koreans have \$5 to dispose of everyday?

“Hey! We’ve got newcomers on the floor...You don’t have to be psychic to know they’re Chinese. They leave the door open, watch television in their underwear...and yell to each other from room to room until late into the night” (38).

He’s angry because the chambermaid comes into his room while he’s asleep to refill his water (an important and kind gesture, one might think, regardless of the inconvenient time): “As though it’s absolutely crucial, the chambermaid comes at 7am sharp to bring my daily water rations. [The next frames show him fantasizing about dumping water on her as a way to keep her out.] Two trips to China have taught me to hand this kind of situation with detachment. Mmgram bitch gmrrmm [he mumbles in his sleep]” (44).

In reference to his guide and translator’s enthusiasm for national landmarks and the country’s leaders he asks: “Do they really believe the bullshit that’s being forced down their throats?” (74) Couldn’t he ask himself that question about Western media as well? About Western politics and policies, customs, beliefs etc.? North Koreans are not the only people that are being suckered and duped in the world. Not by a long shot.

At a museum he notices: “The pick in the picture isn’t the same as the one on the wall. I think of mentioning it to our charming guide, but why bother in a country that’s devoid of common sense?” (102). “Common” sense? So, everyone should have a common idea of what common sense means? How is this perspective any different from the “let’s flatten individuality and diversity” missions of the North Korean leaders that Delisle seems to despise so deeply?

“Even though it’s a slow night, a girl at the wicket pulls a long face and sighs as she takes my money. Where else but in a Chinese casino?” (118). So all Chinese casino workers and ONLY Chinese casino workers are irritable with customer service? He seems to say “where else” would you find crabby, grumpy, sulky workers but in China. What a load of crap! First of all, why does he have such unrealistic expectations for customer service, such a sense of entitlement, and as if service industry labourers don’t have off days or get grumpy ANYWHERE else. I don’t even understand how his thinking can be so insular.

He visits an elementary school and some of the children put on a “little ‘improvised’ concert” for him:

“Behind their strained faces, you sense all the concentration that goes into playing the music and, especially into trying to keep up those miss world smiles [...] The little savant monkeys are displayed with great pride” (157). I CANNOT believe he refers to these children as savant monkeys; no matter how facetious he’s trying to be here, there is absolutely no way this term is acceptable. If he’s such an expert on the entire Asian continent, as he seems to claim, he should know the very problematic nuances of these terms.

At a museum: “Our guide is truly stunning, and listening to her graphic descriptions, I think up a few tortures of my own that I wouldn’t mind inflicting on her” (169). It’s incredible how connected Delisle’s racism and misogyny really are; his self-righteous, superior, ethnocentric attitude toward North Koreans is inseparable from his description of North Korean woman as “bitches” (in reference to the chambermaid) or hyper-sexualize play things that he might like to “torture.” This is some seriously unchecked prejudice and sexism.

It’s as though Delisle feels that since he’s been to Asia, traveled, and stayed in various countries for some time, he’s at liberty or even entitled to make all kinds of derogatory judgments and generalizations as he wants. He comments at one point that he doesn’t really make any North Korean friends, and what a shock! Who would want to befriend a guest that comes over and behaves like such a feeble, narrow-minded, judgmental asshole?

I just can’t believe that this book is being talked about in a positive light. All it really seems to do is reify and reiterate the master narratives of Western colonizers traveling to foreign lands where “barbarians” and “savages” go about their lives in unthinking and uncivilized ways. Who does Delisle think he is? He should be deeply embarrassed by this book. And tragically, he could be a talented writer and cartoonist with so much to offer. There’s so much I could have taken away from reading this book, and I knew that, which is why I was compelled to read it to the end. Unfortunately, I was left with a very bitter taste. I think Delisle owes the people of North Korea an enormous apology, as well as all the people he hurt and offended who’ve read this book and see right through his discriminatory and hateful claims and actions.

I wrote the publisher a very long letter explaining why this book offended me, and I asked them to forward the email directly to Delisle. I’m astounded at how many people on goodreads rated this book with 4 or 5 stars. Didn’t anyone else see the glaring racism here?

Greta says

This is a work of satire. Which means that trenchant wit, irony, sarcasm, parody or caricature is used to expose and discredit vice or folly, to ridicule conduct, doctrines, or institutions.

When I read the reviews, I have the impression that people tend to forget this, or that they really don’t like this genre. A considerable number of reviewers think the author is racist, misogynistic, self-righteous.

I don’t see him like that at all. His satire and politically incorrect jokes are lighthearted and not really offensive, and above all, he has always a self-mocking attitude.

Probably it all depends on one’s level of tolerance. If you’re easily offended, you better avoid this.

This book was originally published in 2002, and while much of its content is common knowledge by now, I was still startled by some of the things mentioned in it.

At some point Guy Delisle was surprised by the complete absence of handicapped people in Pyongyang.

When he tried to talk about it with his guide, he received this answer : "There are none. We're a very homogenous nation. All North Koreans are born strong, intelligent and healthy".

This struck me as curious indeed, and after some searching on the internet, I found some really upsetting information...

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world...>

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/...>

7/10

Estelle says

I rated it 2 stars at first simply because I felt bad hating something a friend had lent me... But I've gotta be honest, so this is getting a 1 star and a spot on my "hated list".

I didn't even bother finishing it, I was just too annoyed by the author's tone, his racist and misogynist remarks and the very poor humor.

This is not for me at all and I'd much rather be reading something else.

Give it a try if you're curious (Delisle seems to be a very popular graphic novels writer) and see for yourself.

EisNinE says

Guy Deslisle's 'Pyongyang' provides a rare and interesting look at the nation of whispering prisoners. Deslisle was an animator before he started making comics, and oddly enough, North Korea has been a world leader in cell animation for decades. This meant he was one of the few westerners to live the surreal life in Pyongyang, spending two months on a work visa.

Animation is the most unlikely of North Korea's rare export success stories, and a dying one; cell animation continues to diminish in favor of easier, cheaper and better computer animation. But North Korea's richest domestic crop is fear and paranoia, and what with the insane dictators and the nuclear bombs and all, it's become their top export as well; now the rest of the world can enjoy cold war-type armageddon-shivers with a spicy Korean flavor. Hey, man... remember the 80's? You haven't lived until you've escaped a post-apocalyptic nightmare of the irradiated, un-walking-dead variety... waking up in a cold-sweat, still believing that a mostly wax-based muppet-turned-president -- or a toddler-sized maniac who built an ICBM arsenal just to compensate for an endless array of shortcomings-- got bored and kicked off WWIII; running outside, naked and weeping in the middle of February, just to reassure yourself that it's snow, and not nuclear fallout. Fun shit, but we're nowhere near the glory days of nihilism, circa 1984.

'Pyongyang' is going to be far less dire and dramatic than a native North Korean's account. Westerners, of course, only get vague hints of the clockwork nightmare behind the curtain, though portraits of the fat little wizard and his Pop were everywhere. I guess Big Brother is the proper analogy, since Pyongyang sure as hell isn't the Emerald City, and there's nothing remotely similar to a yellow brick road. On the other hand, Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un are clearly munchkins.

Although he keeps the atmosphere light and entertaining, and his artwork has a charming, minimalistic style, the creepiness of it all adds up to an unsettling look at the institutionalized madness of North Korea.

More Art-book Reviews

More Comic-book Reviews

More Novel Reviews

Grace says

It was ok. The subject matter and observations were pretty fascinating. But I LOATHED the artist's tone, and it was distracting. I found him to be disrespectful and xenophobic. Yes, I said disrespectful and I meant it. Sure, the North Korean government is responsible for some of the worst human rights violations in the world, and they deserve to be criticized. But the author chose to go there, chose to do business with them, and chose to allow the money he is getting paid for his work there to enable him to live like royalty while the people around him suffer, brainwashed and starving. Forgetting the FLAT-OUT RACIST comments he casually drops about *other* asian nations, I don't think he understands the difference between criticizing a tyrannical government and criticizing an ethnic culture.

I am also not a fan of his artistic style, but that's just a matter of opinion.

[note: This was translated from the original French, so while I think a certain *je ne sais quoi* might have been lost in translation, *i don't know what* it might have been.]

Lady Jayme, says

This book is a true account of a French animator (Guy Delisle) who travels to North Korea to oversee a cartooning project. Since North Korea is one of the most closed nations on earth and is run by a totalitarian government, this insight into North Korean life is amazing and somewhat shocking. This is a graphic novel and Delisle's drawings are simple but fun. The lack of freedom is at times heartbreaking, but there are plenty of humorous moments. Delisle also throws in some facts about the world of animation, which is also interesting.

The book follows him on his two-month stay. The entire time a "guide," who is really there to keep tabs on him, shadows him and there are only a few times he and the other few visiting Westerners give the guides the slip and go adventuring without them. The amount of propaganda produced by the government will shock you—they go on a picnic in the countryside and the name of the "Great Leader" is carved into the side of a mountain. This book will not only give you a peek into a strange world, it will make you appreciate the

freedoms we have.

angela says

I have to agree with some of the other reviews that call Delisle on his racism and misogyny. It wasn't even the kind of over-the-top, look-at-how-ridiculous-I-am-being, poking-fun-at-racism kind of racism that I've come to expect from so-called comedians and authors today. It was plain, old boring thinly veiled racism and misogyny. Objectifying women, calling them bitches, calling Korean children "monkeys", generalizing about "these" countries and all of Asia as if there is no diversity to be found there.

Despite the racism, I read on. The small glimmers of North Korea were interesting (although clearly coloured by his racism) and if it wasn't so coloured by his typical privileged white Western male bullshit I think it could have been humorous. It can't be used (clearly) to generalize about North Korea, but it was still interesting to see those glimmers. If I could somehow black out the racist, sexist bullshit I'd recommend it for being a decent graphic novel. As it stands, it was simply okay and I don't feel quite right about recommending it due to the racism and sexism.

Adalira Morningstar says

This book should be renamed to A Journey of a Fucking Asshole because the author is an insufferable, racist, whiny dickbag of colossal proportions.

I think I finally snapped after the author talks about how people in North Korea are going without food, only to turn around and complain that he's gaining weight from the oily food they serve him at his hotel. How the fuck can you be so insensitive to complain about being so well fed while others literally starve around you? How do you draw that and then think, "Yes, this is a perfectly reasonable thing to complain about. Woe is me."

Not to mention the racism. Look, if I want to avoid trying to bite through my tongue while casual racism is tossed around like glitter at a child's birthday party, I'll have dinner with my white Southern conservative family. And even they know it's not fucking okay to call children monkeys.

In short: I would probably pay to punch this guy in the dick.

Clickety says

Reading this about the same time I read Persepolis 2 got me thinking about the differences between the experiences each author had traveling/living in another country. In Persepolis 2, the characters are a hodgepodge of flavors; in Pyongyang, there are two types: foreigner and native.

Delisle seems blissfully unaware of his own prejudice and selfishness, which was what really made the book ring true. I mean, honestly - everyone thinks that his or her own belief system and way of life is "right." (Otherwise why do you believe it??!)

However, Delisle doesn't leave it at that. He's a moron with a mission: he's going to convert the country - or at least his guide and his translator - to capitalism. In fact, he gives one of them a copy of *1984*, ignoring the possibility that it will be OFFENSIVE as well as subversive.

During his stay in North Korea, the main character is alone simply because he chooses to be. He ignores and/or antagonizes the North Koreans who are working with him rather than connecting with them.

Whether or not you *liked* the book, if you found it intriguing, you might enjoy *A State of Mind*.

Pramod Nair says

Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea - originally published as '*Pyongyang*' in French - by Canadian cartoonist *Guy Delisle*, is a travel memoir presented in a graphic novel format. The book presents the author's personal experiences at 'Pyongyang', the capital of North Korea during his two months stay in 2001 working as a coordinator between a French animation company and SEK studio in North Korea. During this stay every movement of Guy Delisle was constantly accompanied and monitored by the state sponsored translators and guides and like any foreign visitor he was limited to access only a *pre-select* choice of sights and monuments to enjoy.

The book is narrated in a straightforward, matter-of-fact tone, which can seem insensitive and even rude at the first glance. Guy Delisle records the routine life that he faced during his stay in Pyongyang as sharp notebook sketches brimming with his thoughts and opinions on whatever sights and people he was allowed to encounter. While conveying these opinions the author is so candid and full of cynicism that these comments and thoughts borders the realms of being classified as racist, tactless, egocentric and arrogant. He is not at all concerned about being politically correct and this is the point which makes '*Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea*' a worthy read.

The sketches are done entirely in black-and-white with a plain, unadorned pencil drawing style and this shows the author's intent on reflecting the bleak dullness and monotony of a totalitarian regime, which he experienced during his stay. This book was written during a period when North Korea was opening it's doors for foreign economic investments after a long period of isolation and this is mused upon by the author in some of his sketches.

This is **not** a book on the daily life of North Korean people or a judgmental study of the moral atrocities related to the authoritarian system of the country. The '*author intent*' was to showcase the personal viewpoints and thoughts of a foreigner who was experiencing such a strange controlled environment for the first time as candidly as possible and in this '*Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea*' succeeds.

Diane says

I've been trying to read more books about North Korea because of recent news events. This is an interesting memoir by a Canadian artist who was sent to Pyongyang for his animation work. (Apparently a lot of animation is now done in Asia.) Delisle has a Western viewpoint, and he shares his cynicism about the endless propaganda and nationalism that is promoted in North Korea. Being a foreigner, he has several privileges that the citizens don't, such as access to more food and electricity, but everywhere he goes he has

to have a local guide with him, which was like having a prison guard monitoring his every word and movement.

Because so little is known about North Korea -- most of what we know comes from people who have defected -- I really liked this graphic novel travelogue, and his experience matches other material I've read, so it seemed believable.

Sebastien says

I generally like Delisle's work. I like his drawing style, I find it rather charming and I like his slice of life stuff that informs the work. He is adept at throwing in little touches of humor, both visual and verbal, which I enjoy. But I gotta be honest here, there were points in this book where he came across as very smug and condescending towards North Koreans. Dehumanizing. It was surprising and disappointing, I guess I didn't expect that from him, and I found it disrespectful and I think it reflected poorly upon him. His actions and thoughts often manifested a sort of smug elitist western attitude that was off-putting, I don't know if I only just realized it in this work or if this is also in his other work and maybe I'm just more keyed into this kind of thing? I actually liked various scenes in the comic but the disrespectful smugness and moments where he acts incredibly self-righteous brings the work down a couple notches for me. One can make a critique of totalitarianism and state violence without dehumanizing and disrespecting its victims.

There is a sort of ironical symmetry where Delisle critiques a regime for dehumanizing its people while often manifesting his own dehumanizing attitude towards its victims. Hmm.

serena says

Go read Lilburninbean's review. She pretty much does an excellent job summing up.

I forced myself to finish this graphic novel and felt like smacking the guy upside the head... Boo hoo hoo, poor French Canadian dude has to spend a few months in North Korea, living what is a very good life and eating very well compared to other North Koreans, but whining through it. Acting like a pretty standard spoiled, holier-than-thou Westerner. It is a poor, unenlightening account that doesn't bring you any closer understanding of the people or how much more he really has to learn.

Of course his next book is on China (Shenzhen)!

Magrat Ajostiernos says

Una manera fácil y amena de aprender un poco más sobre el terrible régimen norcoreano.

En este reportaje Delisle nos cuenta su propia experiencia en este país y resulta tan surrealista que a veces no puedes evitar soltar alguna carcajada... pero luego lo piensas y te dan ganas de llorar.

Emily May says

I think of mentioning it to our charming guide, but why bother in a country that's so devoid of common sense?

I've spent most of the last 24 hours immersed in non-fiction graphic novels. Tatiana's review of The Arab of the Future 3 inspired me to seek out other graphic novels about foreign countries, and I've already read and enjoyed Sacco's Palestine and Delisle's Jerusalem: Chronicles from the Holy City.

Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea is another Delisle book, but this one I liked considerably less. It didn't sit well with me how callous and pompous Delisle is towards the North Korean citizens, most of whom live in fear of imprisonment, or worse. He mocks their clothing and their insistence that the "Great Leader" is amazing, without pausing to consider what it must be like to live in such a strict regime. In Jerusalem, I enjoyed his touristy approach, but here it feels insensitive. He seems to portray the North Korean people as something less than human, unworthy of basic respect.

There's also something very creepy - even predatory - about the way he talks about women. One Korean woman is showing him through a museum which depicts Americans inflicting horrible torture on North Koreans, and he thinks:

Our guide is truly stunning, and listening to her graphic descriptions, I think up a few tortures of my own that I wouldn't mind inflicting on her.

Gross.

There are some interesting insights into life in Pyongyang, but the narrator's insufferable arrogance makes it difficult to stomach.

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Ivan says

Bit different than other graphic novels I read. There is no classical storyline, plots twists or punchline. This is kind of memoir from one of not many foreigners who had visited North Korea and brief window into bleak reality of country surgically removed from the rest of the world.

Michael Finocchiaro says

All of Guy Delisle's comic books are beguiling, funny and insightful and Pyongyang is extraordinary in this regard. And, in this particular moment, with certain dictatorial presidents trying to legitimize the completely f*cked up regime there (surely the ground-breaking of Trump Pyongyang International Hotel, Casino, and Bordel will happen in 2019-2020), it is a timely read. The author does all the drawing and screenplay and is a

pleasure to read due to his perceptiveness but also his deadpan Canadian humor. Yes, he is Canadian so there is another reason to read it now ;-)
