Travel Warning: North Korea (PDRK)
State-led violence
East Asia & Pacific > North Korea
11/9/2016

The State Department strongly urges U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to North Korea/the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) due to the serious risk of arrest and long-term detention under North Korea's system of law enforcement, which imposes unduly harsh sentences, including for actions that in the United States would not be considered crimes and which threaten U.S. citizen detainees with being treated in accordance with "wartime law of the DPRK." Since the United States does not maintain diplomatic or consular relations with North Korea, the U.S. government has no means to provide normal consular services to U.S. citizens in North Korea. This notice replaces the Travel Warning dated August 11, 2016.

At least 14 U.S. citizens have been detained in North Korea in the past ten years. North Korean authorities have detained those who traveled independently and those who were part of organized tours. Being a member of a group tour or using a tour guide will not prevent North Korean authorities from detaining or arresting you. Efforts by private tour operators to prevent or resolve past detentions of U.S. citizens in the DPRK have not been successful.

If you decide to enter North Korea against the advice of this Travel Warning, you should have no expectation of privacy. All electronic and multimedia devices including USB drives, CDs, DVDs, mobile phones, tablets, laptops, Internet browsing histories, and cookies are subject to search for banned content.

If DPRK authorities permit you to keep your mobile phone when you enter the country, it will not function unless you use the DPRK mobile service, which will enable DPRK authorities to monitor your calls. GPS-trackers and satellite phones are not allowed.

Possession of any media, either physical or electronic, that is critical of the DPRK government or its leaders is considered a criminal act punishable by long-term detention in hard labor camps and heavy fines.

In North Korea, the following – whether done knowingly or unknowingly – have been treated as crimes:

- Showing disrespect to the country's former leaders, Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il, or for the country's current leader, Kim Jong Un, including but not limited to tampering with or mishandling materials bearing their names or images;

- Entering North Korea without proper travel documentation;
- Possessing material that is in any way critical of the DPRK government;
- Proselytizing or carrying out religious activities, including activities that may be construed as such, like leaving behind religious materials;
- Engaging in unsanctioned political activities;
- Traveling without authorization, even for short distances;
- Having unauthorized interaction with the local population;
- Exchanging currency with an unauthorized vendor;
- Taking unauthorized photographs;
- Bringing pornography into the country;
- Shopping at stores not designated for foreigners; and
- Removing or tampering with political slogans and signs or pictures of political leaders.

Numerous foreigners have been held in North Korea for extended periods of time without being formally charged with any crimes. Detained foreigners have been questioned daily for several weeks without the presence of counsel and have been compelled to make public statements and take part in public trials.

Since the United States does not maintain diplomatic or consular relations with North Korea, the U.S. government has no means to provide normal consular services to U.S. citizens in North Korea. The Embassy of Sweden in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang is the Protecting Power for U.S. citizens in the DPRK providing limited consular services to U.S. citizens traveling in North Korea who require emergency assistance. Although the U.S.-DPRK Interim Consular Agreement stipulates that North Korea will notify the Embassy of Sweden within four days of an arrest or detention of a U.S. citizen and will allow consular visits by the Swedish Embassy within two days after a request is made, the DPRK government routinely delays or denies consular access.

The DPRK funnels revenue from a variety of sources to its nuclear and weapons programs, which it prioritizes above everything else, often at the expense of the well-being of its own people. It is entirely possible that money spent by tourists in the DPRK goes to fund these programs. We would urge all travelers, before travelling to the DPRK, to consider what they might be supporting.

The DPRK remains one of the most heavily sanctioned countries in the world. U.S. citizens traveling to North Korea should familiarize themselves with all applicable sanctions relating to the country, particularly U.S. sanctions on the DPRK. To learn more about U.S. sanctions on the DPRK, see the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

The State Department remains deeply concerned about the DPRK's ongoing, systematic, and widespread human rights violations. To learn more about North Korea's deplorable human rights situation, see the DPRK Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2015.

The United States and the United Nations Security Council have expressed grave concern regarding North Korea's recent nuclear tests, ballistic missile launches, and other activities prohibited by United Nations Security Council Resolutions. UN Security Council statements from January 2016 and March 2016 are posted on the UN website.

As a result of concerns arising from unannounced missile launch activities and GPS navigation systems interference and/or disruption, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has issued a Prohibition and Advisory notice to U.S. airmen and operators. The FAA has issued Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) 79 which prohibits U.S. civil aviation from flying in the Pyongyang Flight Information Region (FIR) west of 132 degrees east longitude, and the FAA has advised those flying in and around the Pyongyang (FIR) east of 132 degrees east longitude to be aware of possible GPS interruptions. For more information, U.S. citizens should consult the Federal Aviation Administration's Prohibitions, Restrictions and Notices.

For further information:

- See the State Department's travel website at https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en.html for current Worldwide Cautions, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and *Country Specific Information for North Korea*
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive important safety and security messages via email (though you may not have access to email while in North Korea). Enrollment also makes it easier to locate you in case of an emergency.
- U.S. citizens who plan to travel to North Korea are strongly encouraged to inform the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, China by enrolling in STEP. U.S. citizens residing in China can contact the U.S. Embassy directly. The Embassy is located next to the Ladies' Street (Nuren Jie) and Laitai Flower Market, near the Kempinski Hotel and Lufthansa Shopping Center on Tianze Road near the Liangmaqiao subway stop:

U.S. Embassy in Beijing
American Citizens Services Unit
No. 55 An Jia Lou Road
Chaoyang District
Beijing, China 100600
Telephone: (86-10) 8531-4000

Email: BeijingACS@state.gov
Emergency after-hours number for U.S. citizens: (86-10) 8531-4000

U.S. citizens traveling to North Korea are also strongly encouraged to contact the Embassy of Sweden by email prior to travel. Please provide the Embassy of Sweden with your name, date of birth, dates of your trip, and emergency contact information:

The Embassy of Sweden Pyongyang (U.S. Protecting Power in North Korea
Munsu-Dong District
Pyongyang, DPRK
Telephone: (850-2) 3817 485 (reception)
Telephone: (850-2) 3817 904, (850-2) 3817 907 (Deputy)
Telephone: (850-2) 3817 908 (Amb.)
Facsimile: (850-2) 3817 663
Email: ambassaden.pyongyang@gov.se

If you provide information to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing or the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang, officials will be able to locate you more easily in an emergency. Take note of and keep the contact details for the Swedish embassy for easy access in case of an emergency.

- U.S. citizens can obtain current information on safety and security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).
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