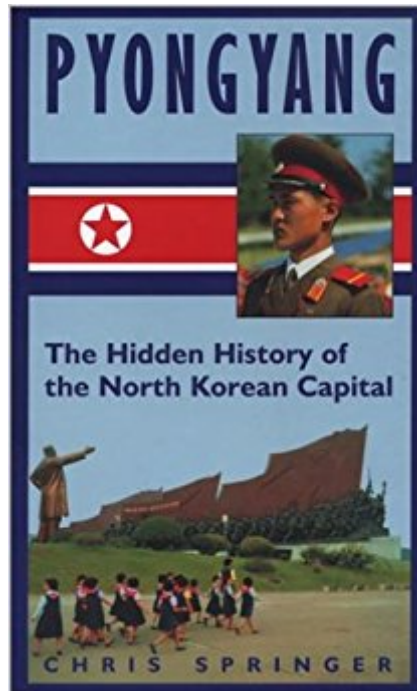




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Pyongyang: The Hidden History Of The North Korean Capital



Synopsis

This book explores North Korea's past and present as reflected by its showcase capital, Pyongyang. With photos and site-by-site descriptions, this nearly inaccessible place is revealed in unprecedented detail. (Hidden sites are also exposed, from the district for Party officials to prisons for dissidents.) In the process, the book illuminates dark corners of North Korean history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A rare and insightful glimpse into Pyongyang's history" -- Jeffrey Miller, Korea Times, August 9, 2003: "A valuable insight into the interplay between politics, social development and urban geography in Pyongyang" -- Paul French, The Asian Review of Books, March 12, 2004: "Thanks to Chris Springer, we know much more about Pyongyang than before." -- Anders Aman, Arkitektur, November 2003:

Robert A. Scalapino, Robson Research Professor of Government Emeritus, University of California at Berkeley: "An excellent, in-depth survey of Pyongyang, the DPRK's capital, including detailed descriptions of key aspects of the city and some beautiful pictures. Accompanying analyses that include historical sketches add to the value of the work." Nicholas Eberstadt, American Enterprise Institute: "'Pyongyang: The Hidden History of the North Korean Capital' purports to be a guidebook for this modern-day Forbidden City. But it is actually much more than that. In strolling us through the surreal landmarks of this Land That Kim Built, Chris Springer offers a vivid, fascinating and devastating view of the DPRK today. Thus this valuable little book will also

reward readers who have no intention of ever setting foot in the 'Dear Leader's' Juche Paradise."

"Pyongyang: The Hidden History of the North Korean Capital" is another of those recently-issued books which provide a wealth of otherwise hard-to-find information about the secretive state that is North Korea. As is the case with Robert Willoughby's "North Korea: The Bradt Travel Guide" and Jane Portal's "Art Under Control in North Korea," Springer's volume is based on first-hand observations and hard data that should rivet the attention of both the casual traveler and the serious scholar. Springer's book, in contrast to Willoughby's, is not a classic travel guide, and this is not the book to rely on if you need the basics about gaining access to North Korea, ensuring safe travel there, arranging tours, and choosing accommodations. With less text and a narrower focus, it also covers less of North Korea's history and less of its territory. However, Springer's "Hidden History" does a more thorough job of exploring Pyongyang, documenting the history of key buildings and sites in the city, and relating political trends and events to those buildings and sites. This issue of how physical structures and city layouts reflect political priorities is of critical importance to students of North Korean history and Kim Chong-il's leadership, and no better examination of this interplay is available.

I like this book, it came in excellent shape and within a week. It was more of a tourist picture book; it didn't actually have much information about life in Pyongyang, just pictures and explanations. But overall it was a pretty good book.

Tourists in Pyongyang have always had difficulties in interpreting what they are seeing and what they are perhaps missing. The ever present guides will of course talk a lot but they are carefully briefed and never say anything off the record. An unofficial introduction to the town is therefore long overdue and now we finally have one. More work probably went into this book than into many twice or three times its size on other places given the tough environment in which the author worked. The author had to work carefully and discretely whilst in the town itself. He had to play detective rather than tourist and continue his research abroad where former residents of Pyongyang could talk freely to him. As he admits, there are still gaps to fill, but few visitors will have the skill and patience to match his work. For those who will never have the chance to visit Pyongyang, the book is still worth buying as an introduction to North Korean politics. All those who have made their mark there, whether recognised or not by the current regime, are remembered and described. The book is as unusual as its subject; both deserve each other. Neil Taylor

Maps and beautiful color photographs enhance the informative text of *Pyongyang: The Hidden History Of The North Korean Capital* by Chris Springer. Pyongyang showcases a series of site-by-site descriptions of one of the most inaccessible capitals in the world. Well researched commentary provides truthful insights behind official history and propaganda, ranging from the Korean War down to the present day. A informational prize for armchair travelers, and a highly recommended introductory familiarization guide for anyone journeying to North Korea, *Pyongyang* is an enthusiastically recommended addition to personal and community library collections.

This is a remarkably well-written book works on both the level of a pictorial city guide and as political geography. The North Korean capital of Pyongyang was effectively flattened during the Korean War (1950-53) and its rebuilding reflected a series of political choices from what sorts of activities to locate in the capital to what kind of architectural design, materials, and construction techniques to employ. Springer mines this intersection of cityscape and political history beautifully, and it is hard to imagine anyone who would not learn something new from reading this book.

If North Korea ever implodes the way East Germany did or if we ever have to go in and liberate the DPRK once the dictator Kim Jong-il dies, then this is the book you need to have on your person when the M1s roll into Pyongyang. The book is well-illustrated, discusses the significance of most of the monuments and edifices you can see in the city and overall is well-written. The very nature of Pyongyang's contruction reflects on the totalitarian Communist regime which squandered resources in a country where people are literally starving. Here's to seeing the U.S. Army in Pyongyang for a SECOND time.

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