GROWS UP



Once a hippie haven where even India's tightly chaperoned teens

Shoba Narayan returns to a scene from her youth and finds that



could turn on, tune in, and drop out, Goa has lately gone upscale.

Goa (like the author herself) has only gotten better with age







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T IS CHRISTMAS IN GOA. The sun-dappled veranda of Alban and Maria Couto's sprawling ancestral hacienda is as good a place as any to discuss the future of India's smallest state. Old family friends, they are in their

sixties, maybe seventies—I dare not ask. Even though I've met them only twice, I call them Auntie and Uncle, Indian style. Alban, dapper in suspenders and tie, served in the Indian Civil Service with my in-laws; Maria, regally composed, is an acclaimed author. I have brought along her book *Goa: A Daughter's Story*, for an autograph.

After hellos and small talk about Aldona, the tiny enclave in which they live, we settle down. What, they ask, will I have to drink?

"Orange juice?" I reply doubtfully. (It is before noon.) Alban looks at me with pity. We will have *feni*, he announces. I should have known. Goans drink *feni* (thirty-five percent alcohol) at weddings and wakes, baptisms and birthdays, after butchering a pig and before lunch. A Goan home, the saying goes, will lack anything but liquor. Maria opts for white wine. Their man Friday brings me a shot glass and some salted cashews.

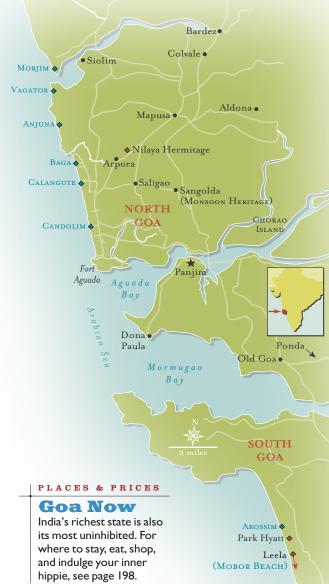
The *feni* is velvety smooth and fiery. I shake my head at its potency. Seeing what he takes to be my appreciation, Alban summons his Jeeves again. "Take an empty Sprite bottle and fill it with *feni* for madam," he says, chuckling at the duplicity of the act. My head buzzes.

"Goa has changed, hasn't it?" I begin, with a wide, somewhat silly smile. A who's who seems to be moving in: Bombay socialites, photographer Dayanita Singh; why, I heard that author Amitav Ghosh has bought here, too. Turns out that Ghosh is their neighbor. Later, during a tour of the house, I spot his books in Alban's library, each lovingly inscribed.

The Coutos are both descended from Brahmin families who were converted to Christianity by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, something that Maria recounts in her book. Worldly and well traveled, with a son in the United States and a British daughter-in-law, they could live anywhere, yet they chose Goa.

"It is a place where you can shed your inhibitions," says Alban. "Revel in simple pleasures. Goa is about . . . the good life." A life they fear is fast disappearing. "Goa has a wistful, elegiac quality to it," says Maria, sounding wistful herself. "And this quality is contained in Goan music: both joyful and sad."

They tell me about their neighbor, a poor farmer who came to them with a sob story



about needing money. Generations of his people had toiled on their land and he was heavily in debt, so the Coutos transferred title of a plot to the man—only to discover that he turned around and sold it for a small fortune. "What he doesn't realize, the poor fool, is that he now has no place in Goa to live," says Maria. "All these outsiders come in and tempt the locals with wads of cash."

At the Coutoses' recommendation, I call political cartoonist Mario Miranda, a living legend in Goa. I introduce myself as a journalist, and apologize for intruding on his Christmas holiday.

"Hate Christmas," Miranda cuts me off. "Hate being forced to be happy."

When I ask to see him, he demurs. Five minutes, I beg. I am a friend of the Coutoses.

Later that afternoon, Mario Joao Carlos do Rosario de Britto Miranda—gray-haired and with keen eyes—receives me in his study. "Call me Mario," he says. The high ceilings, orange walls, black-and-white drawings, ancient typewriter, and gramophone all make it

feel like a European salon or a well-preserved Park Avenue penthouse. I am tongue-tied. I congratulate him on his numerous awards, on the lifetime-achievement honor he received from Louis Vuitton a couple of years ago. I was at the post-award party, but Miranda never showed. "Hate parties," he says, waving off my praise. He asks about my life in Bangalore and, before that, New York, where his elder son is a coiffeur. I ask about Goa's future.

"Goa is finished, as far as I am concerned," he replies. He tells me about his neighbors, a Brit and a Kiwi. Lovely people, he says, leading the good life with Ves-

pas and an in-ground swimming pool. However, Goans are now a minority in Goa, he claims.

Like the Coutoses, Miranda honors his Hindu roots. His ancestors promised to deliver a sack of rice and a hundred coconuts to the local temple of the goddess Durga at the start of each harvest, he tells me—a commitment they've kept to this day, even though their lands have been disposed of and "Portuguese is my mother tongue."

This layering—of a Hindu past with a Mediterranean soul, of Latin beats with sitar strings, of Indian spices with European stews—is part of what makes Goa so irresistible.



That evening, I stroll down Arossim Beach from my hotel in South Goa to a makeshift shack and order a beer. All around me are singles and couples—a rainbow of colors and predilections—reading books, nibbling on shrimp, listening to local musician Remo Fernandes's hit "Muchacha Latina" on boom boxes. Anywhere else in India, I—an unaccompanied woman—would be the object of curiosity and questions. Here, nobody looks at me twice. Solitude, a multi-hued sunset, a salty breeze loosening tendrils of my upswept hair, all topped with a brawny beer—to be sure, this is the good life. No wonder the foreigners came.

THE PORTUGUESE WERE THE FIRST TO OCCUPY India and the last to leave, arriving with Vasco da Gama in 1498 and departing a mere forty-five years ago at the behest of the Indian army. Since its "liberation," Goa has accumulated many plaudits. India's smallest state is also its richest, with a high rate of literacy and few beggars. Barely industrialized, it is less a cohesive entity than it is a collection of villages, or *communidads*, with musical names like Calangute and Candolim, Mapusa and Morjim, all delivered in lilting Konkani.

I decide to start in South Goa and work my way up the coast. Goa has resorts and homestays to suit every bud-

This layering—of a Hindu past with a Mediterranean soul, of Latin beats with sitar strings—is part of what makes Goa so irresistible







get, but most are booked a year in advance. The more popular ones sometimes require a minimum stay of a week during high season, which begins in October and ends in March. In my view, the best time to visit is late December and early January. Just as Kerala is decked out for the Onam festival in September and Delhi is best seen during Diwali (India's biggest Hindu holiday) in October, Goa is at its most magical during Christmas and New Year. Christians comprise only thirty percent of the population, but they are an expressive and highly influential presence.

On Christmas night, I accompany Andrew Pegado to a village dance. Pegado is a photographer who covers parties for the local papers. Tonight he is off duty, but he nevertheless carries his camera because, he says, you never know when a celebrity will show up.

Silver Bells, the outdoor dance hall in Sangolda, is prettily lit. Pegado greets friends—a kiss on each cheek for the women, a handshake or hug for the men, depending on the level of friendship. He hands me a gin and tonic from the cash bar and goes to mingle. The hall is full of couples and families. The women are decked out in long dresses, and the men in either suits or black tie.

The heat and, yes, the hashish encourage a state of mind that Goans call sussegado a political cartoonist told me. "It means a life of leisure—and it is vanishing"

A band named Alcatraz comes onstage and begins to play—the fox-trot, the rumba, the samba, the swing. To my surprise, the floor fills up with couples, the men as graceful as the women. One twosome cradle a baby as they waltz. Little girls in flouncy dresses and boys in jackets and trousers freestyle in between the adults. It is like being at a family camp in the Poconos—cheesy but oddly charming.

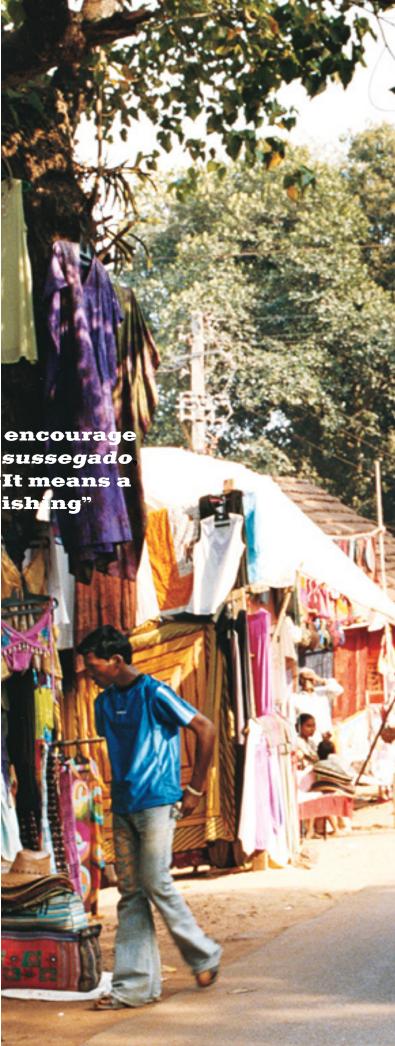
I observe an Indian couple dancing cheek to cheek. They are plump and not particularly attractive but move with impeccable rhythm and grace. This is new to me—Indian men are not known for their dancing. I make bold: I tap the lady on the shoulder and steal off with her partner. Turns out he is a real-estate agent and knows of a beachfront property. It's technically too close to the water to build on, he says, which is why it's so cheap. But he assures me that a big hotel chain (he won't say which) is building even closer to the shoreline and so I should be fine. Louis Armstrong's timbral voice wafts in from somewhere: "What a wonderful world,"he croons. I take it as a sign.

SOUTH GOA MAY BE QUIET—AND JUSTLY REnowned for its beaches—but North Goa is where the action is. The seashore at Baga, Calangute, and Candolim

is full of sunbathing bodies, sometimes nude. Masseurs and reflexologists ply the sand. And as (Continued on page 222)

Herd on the street: The village of Calangute, where all manner of locomotion effortlessly coexists.







SHANGHAI / GOA

you must learn exactly where your weight must lie and practice for ten years."

N ICONIC FIGURE OF 1930s Shanghai was Du Yuesheng, the famous gangster and drug lord. He ran Shanghai, rather like Al Capone ran Chicago. He owned a number of mansions around town and seems to have slept everywhere. One of his haunts was the Mansion Hotel, which I happened upon while out with my daughter. We walked into the courtyard as if we owned it (which is always the best way to see what you want to see in Shanghai), and up the front stairs into a lobby that made me gasp. It was a rich man's living room circa 1933: green and purple velvet club chairs, huge potted palms, ancient RCA record players playing ancient Chinese opera recordings, sepia photographs of 1930s weddings and family gatherings, all in a beautiful wood-paneled room that looked out onto a blooming garden complete with a mini-creek and a stone bridge. I sat right down and never wanted to leave.

The place was decorated and designed by one Dr. Yin, an imposing fellow who wears silk Chinese-collared jackets and has a mysterious air. He happened to be there the day I discovered it. I introduced myself and my daughter to him and told him how much I loved the lobby. "It is my private collection," he said of the '30s memorabilia. "Here is the first RCA record player ever made." He put on an old record of Mei Lanfang's, a famous Chinese opera star of the time singing in a falsetto whine. "And over here," he said, steering me to a woodand-glass' 30s shop display case, "is the first tube of toothpaste from Procter & Gamble produced in China. This was the house of Du Yuesheng, you know," he added.

OFTEN IN SUMMER, WHEN THE MEN of Xinjiang Province appear on the streets with carts of raisins to sell, I need some respite from the sheer numbers of people who can throng the avenues. Though our population has grown in the West, we do not know numbers like these. I wade through them all into the back lanes and head for the Rui Jin Guest House, where there is some greenery and space. The seventeen-acre gardens of the guesthouse are always peaceful, and the Art Deco Garden Bar and Café at Building Number Three, where Mao once stayed, is my refuge. Much of this classic Gatsby-like estate was built by Henry Morris, an English banker who made his fortune in horse racing and newspapers.

I entered, and before me was the huge circular driveway, in the center of which is a marble fountain. The main house, a twostory redbrick Tudor mansion dating from about 1914 with gray stone trimming, wraps itself all around this drive, and it has a central archway through which were the stables where Morris kept his racehorses. He also built a canidrome (dog racecourse) on the property, and as I strolled under the vinecovered walkways, past the pond with its trumpeting swans, under spiky pine trees bent over with age, I tried to guess where it was the whippets ran. Squinting from the glare of the sun, I inhaled the earthy smell of healthy grass and hot soil, so precious in this polluted city, and since everything in Shanghai theoretically belongs to the people, this place belonged to me. I agree with Wallis Warfield Simpson, who visited Shanghai after her divorce in the early '30s and said, "No doubt about it, life in Shanghai is good, very good, in fact, almost too good for a woman."

I tried to study up on Shanghai architecture at the Old China Hand Reading Room on Shaoxing Road, the street of publishers. It belongs to photojournalist Deke Erh, who, along with Tess Johnston, a former foreign service officer, has published twenty books of pictures and histories of the very houses that I love so much, my favorite being *Art Deco Shanghai*.

Johnston met Erh in 1991. She couldn't speak Chinese, nor he English, but as Johnston said in her southern Virginia accent, "He knew what I meant when I'd blather on." Erh got the idea for a reading café while in Prague with Johnston on a book tour, and he has decorated it to look exactly like a European intellectuals' café of the 1930s.

I sat there at the round dark wood table in front of the big curved wooden bookcase near the trumpet phone, which hangs on the wall. An old silver electric fan purred in the corner, and I thought that Shanghai is one of the last cities on earth where you can still glimpse the world as it was at the dawn of technology.

NE DAY LAST AUGUST, MY daughter and I went for a lane walk. It was beginning to rain as we wandered down the back alley. We saw that one of the houses was being renovated, the families gone, probably to rent it out to waiguoren like us. A litter of white kittens, the progeny of a wild feline spring, crouched and mewed under wet leaves as we passed the natural garden. Suddenly, a man peddling a bicycle fast whizzed around the corner. Through a bullhorn, he cried out that a typhoon was coming. "Close your windows and doors," he sang out. "Take care!"

We hurried back past the outdoor dentist who was packing up his pictures of teeth and ominous pliers-like instruments.

We rushed into our little house, closed our casement windows, and bolted our wooden door. We could have turned on the TV to find out more about what was happening, but instead we made Pu'er tea and waited for the wind and rain.

Goa

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the sun sets, nightclubs like Britto's and Tito's pump out music.

As I sunbathe on Baga Beach, getting a back massage with clove oil, my real-estate agent/dance partner calls back with figures. All they want is \$1 million, he says. I jump up, scalded not by the sun but by the soaring prices. It feels like New York all over again. I decide I'm not that fond of beaches after all.

Leaving Baga, I encounter rice paddies and palm groves. White egrets take flight from lotus ponds. Crocodiles swim among the mangroves. Europeans on scooters speed down the narrow rural roads, dodging chickens, cows, dogs, and pigs. I chase them on my rented Vespa, determined to find their secret hideouts. Which is how I end up at the end of a long dirt road, saying hello to Yahel Chirinian and Doris Zacheres.

Foreigners feel at home here. They come on holiday and end up staying for years. Chirinian and Zacheres, for instance, met in Paris and moved to Goa eight years ago. Together, they own Monsoon Heritage, designing and building startlingly whimsical sculptural pieces for collectors here and abroad. They love India, Chirinian says, because the "weather is brutal, the snakes poisonous, and the friendships profound."

German Claudia Derain and her Indian husband, Hari Ajwani, are another such couple, having opened the magical Nilaya Hermitage, an eleven-room hotel with a cult following, fourteen years ago. Englishman James Foster, another expat, manages Casa Boutique Hotels, a chain whose accommodations have the feel of bungalows. In fact, the only foreigners who don't seem plentiful these days are the Portuguese.

"Goa has a special vibration, a Latin feel," says fashion designer Wendell Rodricks, one of the few openly gay Indians. Rodricks lives with his French partner, Jerome Marrel, in a beautifully restored Portuguese mansion in Colvale.

I visit Rodricks on the eve of his spring fashion show. It is midmorning. He sits outside under a banyan tree, sketching and describing the model lineup to an assistant. A manservant brings breakfast: fresh fruit juice, green tea, and oatmeal on a stylish wooden tray. Five dogs lounge around Rodricks's feet, occasionally nuzzling his Prada

sandals; Marrel sits on a balcony above us, reading. It is a cozy domestic scene, and I want it all—the restored Portuguese mansion, the manservant, the dogs, and, if possible, the Prada sandals.

Although his flowing monochromatic designs have long been scooped up by India's most stylish women, Rodricks feels that he "bloomed" as a designer only after moving to Goa in 1993. Today, he lives an idyllic life: walking the village and sketching in the morning, spending the bulk of his day at his shop in Panjim, going out on his boat at sunset, and attending a different soirée almost every night. "I was at a party last night where I was the only Goan," he says. "Lots of international citizens live here, a life that is part lotus-eater, part evolved globe-trotter."

Living in a trading port for the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Europeans meant that Goans were forced to interact with the outside world far earlier than the average Indian. This has made them friendly but not overly curious about foreigners. Unlike in the rest of India, white people don't get stared at here, even in the most rural settings. Trance music and tranquil beaches nudge type A personalities into subdued sublimity. The heat and, yes, the hashish encourage a languid pace of life and a state of mind that Goans call *sussegado*, political cartoonist Miranda told me. "It means a life of leisure—and it is vanishing."

A couple of years ago, a group of concerned citizens began a Save Goa campaign to prevent the government from converting off-limits agricultural land into Special Economic Zones (SEZs) subject to development. Everyone I meet is up in arms—against the "Russian mafia," who are buying large tracts near Morjim Beach, where the olive ridley sea turtles come to nest, and against nouveau riche North Indians who are buying up Goa without respecting its values.

Upendra Gaunekars and his wife, Sangeeta—an old, aristocratic Hindu family in hilly Ponda—say the solution lies in green businesses that suit Goa's psyche. They talk with pride of the "Nylon 66" agitation that forced the DuPont chemical company to withdraw from Goa. It reminds me of a Southern gentleman I once met in Memphis who told me that the difference between a Yankee and a damn Yankee is that Yankees go back home.

"Goans don't want development. We want our heritage to continue," says Sadiq Sheikh, a fourth-generation Goan. Sheikh lives high on a hill in tony Dona Paula, with stunning, sweeping views of the Mandovi River. "I own everything you see," he says matter-of-factly. Behind us is a development of bland two-bedroom apartments, built by a businessman to whom Sheikh sold the land. If I didn't know better, I'd think I was in New Jersey.

Sheikh rues the pace of construction but is not sure how to stop it. "We don't want spoiled brats from other states to come in and polarize Goa," he says. "But how can I censor whom I sell my land to? How can I control what they do with it once they buy it?"

The Save Goa folks would argue that Sheikh shouldn't sell his land at all. Armando Gonsalves is a jazz musician and real-estate agent who owns several waterfront acres right beside Sheikh's. Gonsalves has dreams of converting it into an eco-village or a jazz community—he's not sure which. He knows it doesn't make business sense, but he believes that green development is the only thing that will preserve his Goa. "For me, Goa is life itself," he says without a trace of theatrical exaggeration.

Gonsalves runs a nonprofit called Heritage Jazz that holds concerts in historic buildings, including his own home, which occupies an entire city block in Central Panjim. Walking into the Gonsalves mansion is like visiting Portugal circa 1940: a faintly sepulchral silence pervades the cool, dimly lit rooms furnished with ornately carved antiques.

We sip tea from delicate pink china and nibble on *bibinca*, a coconut layer cake that is a Goan specialty. Gonsalves introduces me to

Reboni Saha, an attractive architect who is also a Save Goa activist. Saha, whose mother is German, bounced around Europe for years before settling in Goa. "In Goa, there is no prejudice," she says. "As a single woman, I felt safe. I wasn't pigeonholed. Maybe it's because of the hippies."

Of course, it was the hippies from America and England who helped put Goa on the map in the 1960s, drawn by the pristine beaches and laid-back lifestyle. A decade later, Goa was still the only place in India where otherwise carefully chaperoned Indian kids like me could escape for a weekend of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Accessible from any major metropolis by bus, train, or air, it was party central. Beach shacks could be rented for a hundred rupees (about three dollars) a night for days or months at a time.

Like the rest of us, Goa has grown up in the intervening years. Some of the best things remain: Women can still sunbathe topless on Candolim Beach (or watch others do it). The beach shacks still serve up some of the country's freshest seafood (and coldest beer). And the Goanese spirit—equal parts Portuguese joie de vivre and cloistered Catholicism—has given rise to some of the most interesting artists and designers in India.

"Portugal did Goa a great favor," says architect Gerard da Cunha. "We were cut off from the shackles of Indian tradition. We were forced to look outside." Da Cunha is my last stop. He tells me about Goan music and the state's distinctive mix of spices, and he takes me on a tour of Calizz, the museum he has fashioned from seven traditional Goan homes, which juxtapose Indian-style courtyards and verandas with the Portuguese penchant for high-ceilinged rooms and terra-cotta roofs. "Architecturally, it may be one of the richest hybrids there is," he says.

Naturally, what follows is a lament over how quickly it is all

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changing. "There is a temper to this place that is getting eroded; it upsets me greatly."

OSTALGIA ASIDE, WHAT NOW for Goa? Personally, I don't see much to worry about. The day before I leave, newspapers carry a warning from the Save Goa activists demanding that tourists leave Goa. It is no longer safe, scream the headlines.

We have to say these things, counter the agitators with a nudge and a wink—only then will the government take us seriously; after all, tourism is Goa's lifeblood. Sure enough, the government bows to public pressure: The next day it announces an end to all SEZ development. Such is the power of Goa's red earth. It reminds me of something Wendell Rodricks told me. "The way I love Goa," he said, "if someone told me to eat the soil, I would."

As for my own urge to buy in, I decide to do Goa a favor: I walk away. My motives aren't entirely altruistic, though. They spring from something architect Gerard da Cunha said. "You know, it is always the marginals who discover paradise," he told me when we bid good-bye. "Guess where the hippies are these days? In Gokarna."

So I rent a car and drive 150 miles south to the tiny village of Gokarna. Sure enough, I find my hippies. And, who knows, maybe even my own piece of paradise—for a quarter of the cost.

North Korea

(Continued from page 186)

view, I could now for the first time see hidden among the apartment blocks.

After lunch, we were driven to the nearby Korean Art Gallery. Mr. Kim rushed us up the steps, so that for some strange reason we couldn't watch the thousands of Korean Workers' Party members building up the riverbank that bordered the massive Kim II-sung Square. Patriotic music blared from a minibus to fire up the workers, and hand-painted tote boards listing the progress of different groups hung nearby—an effort, I suppose, to keep them competitive.

The docent told us how quickly the gallery had been constructed and its size in square meters. I was fascinated by the vast socialist-realism paintings of steelworks at sunset, and the superb collection of anti-U.S. propaganda. Nearly all the other paintings we were permitted to see celebrated the Kims' many heroic achievements.

We left the gallery and walked across the square to a foreigners-only bookstore, passing queues of squatting schoolkids and shovel-wielding workers, all awaiting their tram home. The people closest to us were careful not to look in our direction, but once we were at a safe distance, everyone stared. The bookshop was more interesting than I had expected, with plenty of propaganda for sale, but in euros only—dollars are not accepted, and non-natives are not allowed to use DPRK currency.

Our next stop was a souvenir shop. As we entered, the lights were switched on and some smartly uniformed shopgirls popped up from behind the display cases (did they sleep there?). A television playing the staterun channel displayed images of cherry trees—until a power outage plunged us into darkness once again.

Over a dinner of *sinseollo* (a hot pot casserole) at a nondescript restaurant nearby, the other diners, all Chinese, shared with us their homemade alcohol. The evening ended with beer and target practice at one of the university sport centers. One employee told me how glad he was that the recent missile tests were so successful. No one expressed interest in where we were from or what life was like outside the DPRK.

AIN GREETED US THE NEXT day as we arrived at the U.S.S. *Pueblo*, a ship seized in 1968 along with its eighty-three-man crew. Our guide wore the familiar KPA uniform and told us about imperialist spies from under the dripping eaves of her *101 Dalmatians* umbrella. We watched a propaganda film, which featured forced confessions from the eighty-two Americans captured alive (all of whom were later released), and we explored the ship, which was replete with bullet holes. Today, we were told, was the fifty-third anniversary of the end of the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War.

Next up was the Grand Monument, the famous sixty-five-foot bronze of Kim Ilsung that all visitors to the DPRK are required to visit at some point during their stay. We were obliged to line up and bow as a wreath of flowers was placed among stacks of others. When we took our photos, Mr. Kim cautioned us that we must be careful to include the whole statue in our pictures. Interestingly, the Great Leader's pose appeared identical to that of the Saddam Hussein statue toppled in Baghdad's Firdos Square following the U.S. invasion.

After the Grand Monument, we visited the Kaeson Youth Funfair, open and busy even in the rain. Rousing patriotic songs blared from the merry-go-round, and the archery stall had renderings of dying U.S. soldiers as targets. I watched a bizarre ride that threw people around as they struggled to remain seated—the riders climbed off kneading the backs of their necks.

Our last stop was the Korean Film Studio, about six miles out of town. The Dear Leader is a movie fanatic, and the studio produces a steady stream of propaganda films. Here, the gate was opened by a female KPA soldier, her bayonet fixed to her AK-47. We passed teams of squatting men who were weeding the footpaths, and were handed over to another waiting guide, who told us how quickly the studios were built and how large they were in square meters. Workers scuttled out of view as we were escorted through the deserted streets of a feudal village; Seoul in the 1920s; a European town.

As I wandered the quiet back lots, I thought about what I had witnessed: Never before had I observed a citizenry whose lives were conducted in such lockstep. Nor had I encountered a people so isolated from—and incurious about—the world outside their borders. Here, there was no apparent thirst for money, no obvious desire for anything at all. And yet I was also aware of how little I had been allowed to see: no one destitute, and, except for the crumbling embankment, nothing in disarray.

As we reboarded the bus and made our way back to the airport, I couldn't quite tell where the film sets ended and reality began.

Places & Prices

Private Access

North Korea remains one of the most isolated countries on earth—reason enough to see it for yourself. There are currently only two tour operators that can facilitate a trip to North Korea: Abercrombie and Kent, which offers a luxury tour, including private guides and drivers (800-554-7016; abercrombiekent.com; from \$8,395), and Koryo Tours, the outfitter Cook used. Koryo organizes visits during the Mass Games, North Korea's annual propaganda extravaganza that takes place in late summer. Allinclusive tours from Beijing begin at \$2,630 for four nights, with tickets to the Games costing an extra \$60 to \$220. With Koryo, you'll be traveling as part of a group, so you'll forgo a certain amount of privacy in exchange for a more affordable price (86-10-6416-7544; koryogroup.com). Be forewarned that North Korea reviews its visa applications closely and has strict guidelines on who it will allow into the country; your tour operator will be able to fill you in on the eligibility requirements.-Hanya Yanagihara