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Axis Of Evil World Tour - An American's Travels In Iran, Iraq And North Korea



Synopsis

Axis of Evil World Tour goes beyond the superficial coverage found in much of the media to bring a boots-on-the-ground look at three of the most enigmatic, difficult-to-enter countries on the planet—Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. North Korea: Visit the tense yet quiet DMZ that divides North from South, one of the eeriest places on earth. Spend time touring Pyongyang, the showcase capital that houses the regime and its elites. Travel halfway across the country to the beautiful Mount Paektu, a “Heavenly Fragrance” mountain for a visit to the surreal, cult-like “museums” housing gifts to the country’s leaders, Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. Iraq: What’s it like to live on a U.S. military base during the war in Iraq? Spend two months as part of the Iraqi Survey Group, the international team that was tasked with finding Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction. Iran: What do Iranians think of the U.S. and Americans? You might be surprised. Travel around the country and take an inside look at Khomeini’s tomb, hear about Iran’s own fight against Al Qaeda, and take a look inside the secret world of the mullahs that really run Iran.

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Customer Reviews

I really loved this book. I've read a lot of books about North Korea, so when I saw that the countries that the author was going to visit included North Korea along with Iraq and Iran, this book was right up my alley. The author's home base at the time was South Korea (I don't know if this is presently his home) but he is American by birth. He chose to visit these countries to see what they are really like and what the people are like rather than assuming like many that they are all American-hating people who wish us harm. North Korea's Pyongyang airport via Beijing in an old Koryo airplane was the way into the country with a tour group. The author figured this would be the best way to go and to tour. There were Japanese tourists among the group and some Germans as well. Scott Fisher was assigned a tour guide who was with him from the time he got up and ate breakfast until he went to his hotel to sleep at night. It was a fairly hectic schedule where they went from one site to another with the guide always saying, "Hurry, hurry, hurry." One thing that Mr. Fisher noticed was how spotlessly clean the country appeared. Of course he was taken to the huge Tower of the Juche Idea. Juche is the ideology that Kim il-sung developed that stresses self-reliance and independence. This takes the burden off the government to feed its people and puts the people on their own to find food while the money goes for towers and huge statues of leaders (and weapons development). He also was taken to the statue of Kim-il-Sung where the protocol is very strict for honoring him with flowers and the correct kind of bow. North Korea has an Arch of Triumph which the guide pointed out that it was much bigger than the one in Paris. One of the most sobering parts of the tour was the trip to the DMZ with its million soldiers and its closeness to where Mr. Fisher lived on the other side of it. This part was very interesting because the author did not get to meet or talk to many local people in North Korea even though he spoke Korean. They are very wary of Americans since we are terrorists and killers to them (brainwashed into them by the regime) and many are afraid of Americans. After reading this first part of *The Axis of Evil* I would love to go to North Korea, but I'd be afraid of making some little mistake that would land me in jail. It doesn't take much. In another year or two, the author went to Iraq as a non-military government worker via a military cargo plane as part of the group looking for weapons of mass destruction. This was after the fall of Saddam Hussein, so Fisher's office was in a part of the wrecked palace that used to house the Baath party for R & R... The palace was surrounded by a moat and other water and he makes a good observation that in the desert those in control are the ones who have water. Mortar fire was a routine daily and nightly occurrence that he soon became used to since it was coming from the other side of Baghdad and he was on a military base. Home was a shabby trailer with nothing on top to protect them from mortars. Other countries' military lived in trailers that were built up on top with protection. He sat at a desk all day and as the project wound down he had less and less to do.

He had very little interaction with the Iraqi people since he was almost exclusively on the base. At this point after 3 months in Iraq at a desk, the author resigned. Nothing was getting better in Iraq. Scott Fisher arrived in his third and last country via Iran Air flight 801 in Tehran. He was met promptly by his guide who took him around the country to see both modern and ancient sites. I liked this part of the book best of all. Everywhere that he went, Fisher was greeted and welcomed to the country by the most friendly people he had yet to meet. The Iranians told him how friendly a people they are and that they don't hate Americans, just our government. Due to U.S. sanctions they cannot watch U.S. movies and have only a few Iranian channels and a couple of international channels to watch. As the guide took the author around, he was met with only smiles and welcomes. It made me realize that we have to meet the real people of a country or a society before judging them as the enemy or as someone who hates us because their government said so. I would like to read more of Scott Fisher's books, especially about North Korea. He has a nice casual style of writing and inserts a good bit of humor. He speaks Korean and shocked a few people who didn't know and he also learned a good bit of Farsi while in Iran. Great book.

Really enjoyed reading this account of someone who was there on the ground in countries that are so often portrayed simply through their foreign policy. I found Iran the most interesting of the countries visited, as there was true interaction with local people. It's amazing to get to hear unfiltered stories from the people that make up these places. North Korea was interesting as well, but obviously people were guarded. Still a very unique book and well worth the read.

I enjoyed this book. I bought it to read about North Korea, but I found the chapters from Iran to be a pleasant surprise. Three very different countries, with separate histories and cultures and contemporary challenges, and I liked reading about the author's highly constrained terms of travel in each country. I'm not sure if I will ever visit any of these places, so I am thankful that this book took me to them.

While no one can write anything about any country and be able to cover more than a few glimpses, Scott Fisher has tried his best to be thorough with limited exposure. Having read his book(s) about North Korea as well, I think Scott tries very hard to give an accurate view of his impressions. While being someone whom I love my own country (USA) but hate our government, not unlike some of the Iranians he spoke of, his appraisal of George W. Bush is both accurate and inaccurate at the same time with his parting shots at the end. However, all in all I enjoyed the travelogue he has given

US.

What I appreciate most about Fisher's account is that it is his first-hand, ground truth. There is no attempt to make it explain the cosmos, it doesn't look to find the perfect solution to stopping all the woes of these three countries, and it doesn't search for world peace. He provides an everyman experience for a place that 99% of the world's population will never be able to visit. I enjoyed the book and it is worth much more than the \$2.99 he asks.

Engaging and well written. Scott's common man view of the extraordinary places he visited gave me a better understanding of the often stereotyped views of these three countries. I found his one on one encounters the most telling of the disparities between the rulers and governments of countries and of the people they rule.

I found this book to be entertaining, after I realized that the book was not what I thought it would be. However, after completing the book, I realized another way to look at those three countries. Turns out I learned a lot more than I planned on.

An important read for me. I needed to be reminded that governments are not the same as the people they govern. WELL WRITTEN I felt as if I had made the visits. I feel it is an accurate account of the people.

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