

# Overview of South Korea

Rich in natural wonders, traditional temples and modish shops, South Korea has rightly emerged from its neighbour Japan's shadow and become one of the great Asian destinations. Separated from North Korea by a demilitarised zone since 1953, it has flourished into a stable and mature democracy, where 50 million people inhabit nine provinces and, in particular, seven megacities.

The capital, Seoul, is the largest and most frequented city. The world's tenth largest city, its ancient shrines nestle beneath soaring skyscrapers in an urban sprawl of vibrant nightlife, unforgettable dining, and unique attractions. There is no shortage of luxury accommodation by way of five-star hotels, especially around Myeongdong and City Hall on the north of the river, and Gangnam to the south. Seoul also has a number of backpacker guesthouses for those visiting on a budget, and the traditional wooden guesthouses north of Anguk station in the palace district are becoming more and more popular.

Another area rich in tourist attractions is the southeastern region, with its wealth of archaeological treasures. Gyeongju, ancient capital of the Silla Kingdom, is an open-air museum boasting tombs, temples, pagodas, and ruins dating from as early as 57 BC. With its luxury hotels, the Bomun Lake Resort is a fine base from which to explore the area. New resort complexes are currently under construction to open up this fascinating area to even more tourist opportunities.

The least populated area of the country is Gangwon-do Province, on the eastern side of the peninsula. Here, remote forested mountains and valleys are studded with small towns. This area, which played host to the Asian Winter Games in 1999, is fast becoming one of the world's most sought after skiing destinations. For the rest of the year, visitors are drawn to the province's magnificent beaches and scenic hiking trails.

Those seeking a romantic getaway should head for South Korea's resort island, Jeju, known as 'Little Hawaii' because of its subtropical vegetation, volcanic landscape, sandy beaches, and sparkling waterfalls. The island is dominated by the towering Mount Halla volcano, but visitors need not fear a natural disaster as the volcano was last active in 1007.

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## Key Facts

**Language:**

The official language is Korean.

**Passport/Visa:**

All visitors require a valid passport, a return or onward ticket, sufficient funds, all documents for the next destination and a contact address in South Korea. Those requiring a visa should obtain one from a Korean Embassy or Consulate before entering the country or, if they qualify, apply for an e-visa and carry their Electronic Visa Issuance Confirmation. Visas are not required for passengers holding APEC Business Travel Cards, provided the back of the card states validity for travel to South Korea. It is highly recommended that visitors' passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

**Currency:**

The official currency is the South Korean Won (KRW), which is divided into 100 Jeon. Credit cards are not always accepted outside major cities and ATMs, though widely available, do not always accept foreign cards. Currency can be exchanged at most banks and at licensed moneychangers.

**Electricity:**

Electric current is 220 volts, 60Hz. Two-pin, round plugs are standard.

# Travel to South Korea

## Overview

Centuries of relative isolation has allowed South Korea to develop and maintain a distinct and unique culture. The past few decades have seen the country transform into a global powerhouse, with a combination of ancient history and cutting-edge modernity proving a huge pull for travellers.

Despite being a small country, South Korea is home to 11 UNESCO-listed sites. Ten of these are cultural and one is natural. The sites include the Changdeokgung Palace Complex; the ancient dolmen structures found at various sites; the Gyeongju Historic Areas; the Haeinsa Temple; the historic villages of Hahoe and Yangdong; Hwaseong Fortress; Jeju Island; the Jongmyo Shrine; Namhansanseong; the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty; and the Bulguksa Temple.

The Korean Wave has seen a massive appreciation growing internationally for Korean pop culture, with K-pop and fashion hitting the mainstream. The biggest urban attractions are thus often booming entertainment, buzzing nightlife, and restaurants.

Visitors exploring South Korea should consider purchasing passes tailored to their experience or location. These exclusive tourist cards can be used for transport, accommodation, entrance fees, and even shopping.

## Climate in South Korea

The climate in Korea is temperate, with four very distinct seasons. South Korea has a continental climate characterised by very cold, dry winters and very hot, humid summers. Spring and autumn are relatively short and temperatures are mild and generally quite pleasant, making these the most comfortable seasons to visit South Korea.

Spring is generally quite short and occurs in late March and early April. South Korean summers arrive suddenly in late April and are warmed by moist prevailing winds from the Pacific Ocean. Typhoon season is from June to September, and while South Korea doesn't experience typhoons such as those in Southeast Asia, the southern parts of the peninsula do experience a lot of rain. In fact, most of the rain falls in summer during a monsoon season known as *jangma*.

Autumn passes through the peninsula from late September through October, with winter setting in sooner in northern areas such as Seoul, and autumn lasting longer for the southern cities, such as Busan.

South Korean winters are harsh with temperatures dropping below freezing and icy winds blowing in from Siberia. Mountainous areas as well as the northern areas of the country experience some snowfall but the southern parts and coastal regions experience little to no winter snowfall.

## Health Notes when travelling to South Korea

There are no required vaccinations for entry to South Korea, though all eligible travellers are advised to be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines. Standards of medical care are high, but payment for treatment can be expensive. Travel insurance with provision for repatriation is recommended.

Typhoid inoculations are recommended for those who plan to spend prolonged periods in rural areas and there is a small risk of malaria in the same regions. Tick-borne disease is a risk across Korea during spring, and visitors taking part in leisure activities on grass are advised to wear long-sleeved tops and trousers.

Air pollution is common in South Korea throughout the year, though especially during spring. Residents and visitors are encouraged to stay indoors as much as possible, close windows and drink plenty of water when the concentration levels of dust particles are high.

## Safety Notes when travelling to South Korea

Most visits to South Korea are trouble-free. The crime rate against foreigners is low but it is still advisable to use sensible precautions, particularly in safeguarding passports, money and credit cards in crowded areas.

The political situation is generally stable but visitors should exercise caution and follow the advice of local authorities around the demilitarised zone, which has been present since the Korean peninsula was divided in 1953. Peace is maintained under an armistice agreement, but no formal peace treaty has ever been signed.

## Customs in South Korea

English is not widely spoken or understood, so it's best to have instructions written down in Korean when using taxis or other local services. It is advisable to carry some form of identification at all times. Social harmony is crucial and public anger or criticism that causes an individual to 'lose face' or dignity is a serious breach of etiquette. Koreans will go out of their way to maintain a comfortable situation. Guests should remove their shoes when entering a Korean home, guesthouse, temple or Korean-style restaurant.

## Duty Free in South Korea

Travellers (over the age of 19) arriving in South Korea may bring in the following items free of customs duty: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g tobacco products; 60ml perfume; 1 litre of alcohol; and gifts valued at not more than \$600. Products from communist countries are prohibited, as are fruit, seeds and any published or recorded material deemed to be subversive or obscene.

## Doing Business in South Korea

The increase in trade with Western countries has meant that Koreans do not expect visitors to understand all the nuances of their culture; however, attempts to respect traditions are appreciated. Koreans dress conservatively and formally and it is important to do the same. Koreans like to do business with people whom they know and often introductions via a third known party are necessary. Greetings often consist of a bow, followed by a handshake. Introductions are very important and establish the hierarchy, often according to age, which is to be observed and respected. Usually the most important person will be introduced first. Greetings and pleasantries in Korean will be appreciated, including 'an-yong-ha-say-yo' (hello), and 'kam-sa-ham-ni-da' (thank you). Business card etiquette is vital: cards should be given and received with both hands, with the details translated from English into Korean or Chinese on the alternate side, and must be treated with the utmost respect. Each one is to be read carefully and the name acknowledged. It is important, when issuing cards, not to stack them or keep them in one's wallet or purse. Koreans are referred to by their surnames or family names first and given names second, and it is best to ask in advance how to address the person. The giving of gifts is appreciated and often reciprocated. Business hours are generally 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

## Communication in South Korea

The international dialling code for South Korea is +82. Hotels, cafes and restaurants offer free WiFi; travellers can purchase local prepaid SIM cards for unlocked phones.

## Tipping in South Korea

Tipping is not customary in South Korea, though expensive restaurants and luxury hotels will add a service charge.

## Passport/Visa Note

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## Entry Requirements

### Entry requirements for Americans:

US passport holders require a passport that is valid on arrival for entry. A visa or an approved Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA) is also required. Most US passport holders traveling to Korea for tourism or business purposes for less than 90 days can obtain a K-ETA. Passengers are subject to a COVID-19 PCR test within one day after arrival; passengers with an A-1 visa, an A-2 visa, or a Self-Isolation Exemption Certificate must install the 'self-check mobile app' found at <http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/selfcheck> before departure or upon arrival.

### Entry requirements for Canadians:

Canadian citizens require a passport that is valid on arrival for entry. A visa or an approved Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA) is also required. Most Canadian passport holders traveling to Korea for tourism or business purposes for less than 90 days can obtain a K-ETA. Passengers are subject to a COVID-19 PCR test within one day after arrival; passengers with an A-1 visa, an A-2 visa, or a Self-Isolation Exemption Certificate must install the 'self-check mobile app' found at <http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/selfcheck> before departure or upon arrival.

### Entry requirements for UK nationals:

UK passport holders require a passport that is valid on arrival for entry. A visa or an approved Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA) is also required. Most UK passport holders traveling to Korea for tourism or business purposes for less than 90 days can obtain a K-ETA. Passengers are subject to a COVID-19 PCR test within one

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day after arrival; passengers with an A-1 visa, an A-2 visa, or a Self-Isolation Exemption Certificate must install the 'self-check mobile app' found at <http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/selfcheck> before departure or upon arrival.

**Entry requirements for Australians:**

Australian nationals require a valid passport, as well as a visa or Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA) obtained at least 72 hours before boarding. Passengers are subject to a COVID-19 PCR test within one day after arrival. Those with an A-1 visa, an A-2 visa, or a Self-Isolation Exemption Certificate must install the 'self-check mobile app' found at <http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/selfcheck> before departure or upon arrival.

**Entry requirements for Irish nationals:**

Ireland nationals require a valid passport, as well as a visa or Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA) obtained at least 72 hours before boarding. Passengers are subject to a COVID-19 PCR test within one day after arrival. Those with an A-1 visa, an A-2 visa, or a Self-Isolation Exemption Certificate must install the 'self-check mobile app' found at <http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/selfcheck> before departure or upon arrival.

**Entry requirements for New Zealanders:**

New Zealand nationals require a valid passport, as well as a visa or Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA) obtained at least 72 hours before boarding. Passengers are subject to a COVID-19 PCR test within one day after arrival. Those with an A-1 visa, an A-2 visa, or a Self-Isolation Exemption Certificate must install the 'self-check mobile app' found at <http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/selfcheck> before departure or upon arrival.

**Entry requirements for South Africans:**

South African citizens require a valid passport, as well as a visa or Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA) obtained at least 72 hours before boarding. Passengers are subject to a COVID-19 PCR test within one day after arrival. Those with an A-1 visa, an A-2 visa, or a Self-Isolation Exemption Certificate must install the 'self-check mobile app' found at <http://ncov.mohw.go.kr/selfcheck> before departure or upon arrival.

## **Tourist Offices**

Korea National Tourism Organisation, Seoul: +82 33 738 3000 or <http://www.knto.or.kr>

## South Korea Embassies

### In the United States:

South Korea Embassy, Washington DC, United States: +1 202 939 5600.

### In Canada:

South Korea Embassy, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 244 5010.

### In the United Kingdom:

South Korea Embassy, London, United Kingdom: +44 (0)20 7227 5500.

### In Australia:

South Korea Embassy, Canberra, Australia: +61 (0)2 6270 4100.

### In Ireland:

South Korea Embassy, Dublin, Ireland: +353 (0)1 660 8800.

### In New Zealand:

South Korea Embassy, Wellington, New Zealand: +64 (0)4 473 9073/4.

### In South Africa:

South Korea Embassy, Pretoria, South Africa: +27 (0)12 460 2508.

## Foreign Embassies in South Korea

### American Embassy

United States Embassy, Seoul: +82 (0)2 397 4114.

### Canadian Embassy

Canadian Embassy, Seoul: +82 (0)2 3783 6000.

### British Embassy

British Embassy, Seoul: +82 (0)2 3210 5500.

### Australian Embassy

Australian Embassy, Seoul: +82 (0)2 2003 0100.

### Irish Embassy

Irish Embassy, Seoul: +82 (0)2 721 7200.

### New Zealand Embassy

New Zealand Embassy, Seoul: +82 (0)2 3701 7700.

### South African Embassy

South African Embassy, Seoul: +82 (0)2 792 4855.

# Currency

The official currency is the South Korean Won (KRW), which is divided into 100 Jeon. Credit cards are not always accepted outside major cities and ATMs, though widely available, do not always accept foreign cards. Currency can be exchanged at most banks and at licensed moneychangers.

## Exchange rate for 1 KRW - South Korean Won

<b>0.00 BMD</b> Bermudan Dollar	<b>0.00 EUR</b> Euro	<b>0.00 USD</b> U.S. Dollar	<b>0.00 GBP</b> U.K. Pound Sterling	<b>0.11 JPY</b> Japanese Yen	<b>0.00 CAD</b> Canadian Dollar
<b>0.00 CHF</b> Swiss Franc	<b>0.00 AUD</b> Australian Dollar	<b>0.03 UAH</b> Ukrainian Hryvnia	<b>0.33 KZT</b> Kazakhstani Tenge	<b>68.50 LBP</b> Lebanese Pound	<b>0.00 LYD</b> Libyan Dinar
<b>0.01 BOB</b> Bolivian Boliviano	<b>0.00 NPR</b> Nepalese Rupee	<b>0.00 OMR</b> Omani Rial	<b>0.00 QAR</b> Qatari Rial	<b>0.00 SGD</b> Singapore Dollar	<b>0.01 SEK</b> Swedish Krona
<b>0.00 TTD</b> Trinidad Tobago Dollar	<b>0.00 VEF</b> Venezuelan Bolivar	<b>0.04 DOP</b> Dominican Peso	<b>0.00 HRK</b> Croatian Kuna	<b>0.01 MXN</b> Mexican Peso	<b>0.45 XOF</b> West African CFA Franc
<b>0.00 PGK</b> Papua New Guinean kina	<b>0.00 BSD</b> Bahamian Dollar	<b>0.00 FJD</b> Fiji Dollar	<b>0.00 HNL</b> Honduran Lempira	<b>0.10 DZD</b> Algerian Dinar	<b>0.00 MMK</b> Myanma Kyat
<b>0.00 BWP</b> Botswana Pula	<b>0.00 PEN</b> Peruvian Nuevo Sol	<b>0.69 CLP</b> Chilean Peso	<b>0.28 AMD</b> Armenia Dram	<b>0.02 CZK</b> Czech Koruna	<b>0.01 MDL</b> Moldova Lei
<b>0.10 ISK</b> Icelandic Krona	<b>9.26 UZS</b> Uzbekistan Sum	<b>0.00 ILS</b> Israeli New Sheqel	<b>0.00 JOD</b> Jordanian Dinar	<b>0.00 KWD</b> Kuwaiti Dinar	<b>0.03 UYU</b> Uruguayan Peso
<b>0.00 MUR</b> Mauritian Rupee	<b>0.00 NIO</b> Nicaraguan Córdoba	<b>0.01 NOK</b> Norwegian Krone	<b>0.00 PLN</b> Polish Zloty	<b>0.00 SAR</b> Saudi Riyal	<b>0.00 LKR</b> Sri Lanka Rupee
<b>0.03 THB</b> Thai Baht	<b>0.00 AED</b> U.A.E Dirham	<b>0.00 BRL</b> Brazilian Real	<b>0.00 RON</b> Romanian New Leu	<b>0.01 HKD</b> Hong Kong Dollar	<b>0.45 XAF</b> Central African CFA Franc
<b>18.70 VND</b> Vietnamese Dong	<b>0.65 ARS</b> Argentine Peso	<b>0.00 XCD</b> East Caribbean Dollar	<b>0.00 GTQ</b> Guatemalan Quetzal	<b>0.01 MAD</b> Moroccan Dirham	<b>0.00 BHD</b> Bahrain Dinar
<b>0.00 PAB</b> Panamanian Balboa	<b>0.00 AZN</b> Azerbaijan Manat	<b>2.88 COP</b> Colombian Peso	<b>0.07 KGS</b> Kyrgyzstan Som	<b>0.27 HUF</b> Hungarian Forint	<b>0.01 TJS</b> Tajikistan Ruble
<b>11.83 IDR</b> Indonesian Rupiah	<b>0.04 EGP</b> Egyptian Pound	<b>5.49 PYG</b> Paraguayan Guaraní	<b>0.00 MYR</b> Malaysian Ringgit	<b>0.37 CRC</b> Costa Rican Colón	<b>0.00 NZD</b> New Zealand Dollar
<b>0.20 PKR</b> Pakistani Rupee	<b>0.07 RUB</b> Russian Rouble	<b>0.01 ZAR</b> South African Rand	<b>0.00 TND</b> Tunisian Dinar	<b>0.00 BBD</b> Barbadian Dollar	<b>0.00 BGN</b> Bulgarian Lev
<b>0.02 TRY</b> Turkish Lira	<b>0.04 PHP</b> Philippine Peso	<b>0.02 TWD</b> New Taiwan Dollar	<b>0.86 NGN</b> Nigerian Naira	<b>0.00 XPF</b> CFP Franc	<b>0.00 GHS</b> Ghanaian Cedi
<b>0.00 JMD</b> Jamaican Dollar	<b>0.00 ANG</b> Neth. Antillean Guilder	<b>0.00 BND</b> Brunei Dollar	<b>0.08 RSD</b> Serbian Dinar	<b>0.01 CNY</b> Chinese Yuan	<b>0.01 DKK</b> Danish Krone
<b>0.00 TMT</b> New Turkmenistan Manat	<b>0.06 INR</b> Indian Rupee				

## Overview of the Attractions in South Korea

Centuries of relative isolation has allowed South Korea to develop and maintain a distinct and unique culture. The past few decades have seen the country transform into a global powerhouse, with a combination of ancient history and cutting-edge modernity proving a huge pull for travellers.

Despite being a small country, South Korea is home to 11 UNESCO-listed sites. Ten of these are cultural and one is natural. The sites include the Changdeokgung Palace Complex; the ancient dolmen structures found at various sites; the Gyeongju Historic Areas; the Haeinsa Temple; the historic villages of Hahoe and Yangdong; Hwaseong Fortress; Jeju Island; the Jongmyo Shrine; Namhansanseong; the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty; and the Bulguksa Temple.

The Korean Wave has seen a massive appreciation growing internationally for Korean pop culture, with K-pop and fashion hitting the mainstream. The biggest urban attractions are thus often booming entertainment, buzzing nightlife, and restaurants.

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# Public Holidays in South Korea

	2023	2024
<b>New Year's Day</b>	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1
<b>Seollal (Lunar New Year)</b>	Sun. January 21 to Wed. January 24	Fri. February 9 to Sun. February 11
<b>Independence Movement Day</b>	Fri. March 1	Fri. March 1
<b>Labour Day</b>	Wed. May 1	Wed. May 1
<b>Orininal (Children's Day)</b>	Sun. May 5	Sun. May 5
<b>Buddha's Birthday</b>	Mon. May 27	Wed. May 15
<b>Memorial Day</b>	Thu. June 6	Thu. June 6
<b>Kwang Bok Jul (Independence Day)</b>	Thu. August 15	Thu. August 15
<b>Chuseok (Harvest Moon Festival)</b>	Sat. September 28 to Mon. September 30	Mon. September 16 to Wed. September 18
<b>Kae Chun Jul (National Foundation Day)</b>	Thu. October 3	Thu. October 3
<b>Christmas Day</b>	Wed. December 25	Wed. December 25