Asian Tiger, a seriously wired country or the world’s most heavily fortified border? All are accurate descriptions of South Korea though none fully captures the essence of this fascinating, complex nation. Social relations may be grounded in ancient Confucianism but South Korea is most decidedly a forward-thinking country thanks to its hurry-hurry approach to everything, an insatiable appetite for technological advancement and an indomitable can-do attitude. No one knows where the country is headed, but it’s fast-forward all the way. That’s what makes South Korea so exiting and at times unnerving; it’s a country of endless possibilities with limits imposed only by you.

New York might be the city that never sleeps, but Seoul is the city that never stops. Late night traditional markets, early morning cinemas and 24-hour public baths are all available before and after you’ve visited the galleries and toured the palaces. There’s an infectious energy in Seoul and it’s easy to get caught up in the Korean joie de vivre, one best experienced with a group over a barbecue dinner and several bottles of Soju (the local, distilled brew) to bridge cultural gaps, nullify language barriers and build a spirit of conviviality that could last well into the morning, and perhaps a lifetime.

Few international travellers explore the countryside, which is a tragedy and a blessing. Serene temples, picturesque mountains, lush rice paddies, unspoiled fishing villages and endless hiking opportunities are so far off the beaten track, it’s unlikely you’ll meet any Westerners on the road less travelled. English-language services are rare in the countryside, but that’s part of the charm. Come as an explorer, seek out adventure, cut your own trail. Challenge yourself and you may develop an appreciation for South Korea’s rich cultural tapestry and a newfound sense of personal freedom, the hallmarks of any truly great journey.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Authors</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National &amp; Provincial Parks</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting There &amp; Around</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sights</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking Tours</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul for Children</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tours</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festivals &amp; Events</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting There &amp; Away</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Around</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suraksan</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul Racecourse</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namhan Sanseong Provincial Park</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suwon</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean Folk Village</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everland</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icheon</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incheon</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island Hopping in the West Sea</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganghwado</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panmunjom &amp; the DMZ Tour</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odusan Unification Observatory</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang-won-do</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuncheon</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around Chuncheon</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangchon</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soyang Lake</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inje</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokcho</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of Sokcho</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South of Sokcho</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoraksan National Park</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alps Ski Resort</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangneung</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odaesan National Park</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yongpyong Ski Resort</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeongdongjin</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donghae</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samcheok</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around Samcheok</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taebaek</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taebaeksan Provincial Park</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeongseon</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonju</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiaksan National Park</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyeongsangbuk-do</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daegu</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around Daegu</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyeongju</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around Gyeongju</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pohang</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulleungdo</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andong</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hahoe Folk Village</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS

Andong Hanji  220
Dosan Seowon   220
Cheongnyangsan Provincial Park  221
Buseoksa 222
Juwangsan National Park 222
Uljin  223
Around Uljin 223

Gyeongsangnam-do
Busan  227
Gajisan Provincial Park  242
Tong-yeong  242
Jinju  244
Namhae Island  246
Jirisan National Park – East 247

Jeollanam-do
Gwangju  251
Around Gwangju 257
Jogyesan Provincial Park  258
Jirisan National Park – West 258
Nagan Folk Village  259
Yeosu  259
Dolsando  262
Geomundo  262
Boseong 262
Gangjin  262
Duryunsan Provincial Park  263
Wando  264
Bogildo  265
Jindo  266
Yeong-Am  266
Wolchulsan National Park  266
Mokpo  267
Oedaldo  270
Dadohae Haesang National Park 270

Jeju-do
Jeju-si  275
Eastern Jeju  281
Southern Jeju  285
Western Jeju  291

Jeollabuk-do
Jeonju  295
Geumsansa & Moaksan Provincial Park  299
Daedunsan Provincial Park  300
Maisan Provincial Park 300
Deogyusan National Park  301
Naejangsan National Park  302
Seonunsan Provincial Park  303
Byeonsanbando National Park  304
Gunsan  305
Seonyudo  305
Eocheongdo  305

Chungcheongnam-do
Daejeon  308
Geumsan  311
Gyeryongsan National Park  312
Gongju 312
Around Gongju 316
Buyeo 316
Boryeong 319
Daecheon Beach  319
Sapsido  320
Taean Haen National Marine Park  321
Haemi  322
Cheonan  322

Chungcheongbuk-do
Cheongju  324
Cheongnamdae  327
Songnisan National Park  328
Chungju 328
Suanbo Hot Springs  338
Woraksan National Park  339
Danyang  340
Around Danyang 342
Sobaeksan National Park  343

North Korea
Snapshot 349
History 349
The Culture 353
Environment 357
Food & Drink 358

Pyongyang
History 359
Orientation 359
Information 359
Sights 362
Sleeping 366
Eating & Drinking 366
Entertainment 367
Shopping 368
Getting Around 368

A ROUND NORTH KOREA
Kaesong  368
Panmunjom  369
Myohyangsan  370
Kumgangsan  371
Paektussan  372
Wonsan  373
Nampo  374
Sinchon  374
Chilbo  374
Rajin-Sonbong  375

NORTH KOREA
Directory
Accommodation 375
Children 375
Customs 375
Dangers & Annoyances 375
Embassies & Consulates 376
Holidays 377
Internet Access 377
Legal Matters 377
Maps 377
Money 377
Photography & Video 377
Post 378
Solo Travellers 378
Telephone & Fax 378
Time 378
Toilets 378
Travellers with Disabilities 378
Visas 379
Women Travellers 379

Transport
Getting There & Away 379
Getting Around 380

Directory
Accommodation 381
Activities 384
Business Hours 385
Children 386
Climate Charts 386
Courses 386
Customs 386
Dangers & Annoyances 387
Embassies & Consulates 387
Festivals & Events 388
Food 388
Gay & Lesbian Travellers 389
Holidays 389
Insurance 390
Internet Access 390
Legal Matters 390
Maps 390
MARTIN ROBINSON  
This is the second Korea guide that Martin has coordinated. He also authored the last two editions of Lonely Planet’s Seoul guide. Before that Martin lived in South Korea teaching English, working in a provincial governor’s office and writing a hiking guide to Jeollabuk-do. Other Asian experiences have included a stint with the British Council in Tokyo and writing travel articles for newspapers. He’s married and lives in New Zealand. For this edition, Martin wrote the Getting Started, Itineraries, Environment, Food & Drink, Jeollabnam-do, J eju-do, Jeollabuk-do, Chungcheongnam-do, Chungcheongbuk-do, Directory and Transport chapters, and contributed to Korea Outdoors.

The Coordinating Author’s Favourite Trip
Jeju-do (p271) has fantastic volcanic landscapes, tangerine orchards and a laid-back attitude. I hire a scooter in Jeju-si (p275), munch barbecued pheasant for lunch and head east to Manjanggul (p281), the world’s largest lava tube. I stay the night in Seongsan-ri with a great view of Ilchulbong (p282), a volcanic crater which I climb up for the sunrise (5.30am) next morning. After that I take a boat trip to Udo Island (p283) for a scoot round its black lava cliffs and white coral-sand beach. I spend the night in Seogwipo (p285) and enjoy a scuba dive, a balloon ride, and an acrobat show at Happy Town the next day. On day four I hike up Hallasan (p292), Korea’s highest and prettiest mountain, hoping to spot a cute roe deer.

RAY BARTLETT
Ray Bartlett began travel writing at the age of 18, when he jumped a freight train for 500 miles and sold an article and photos about the journey to a newspaper. More than a decade-and-a-half later, Ray is still wandering the globe with pen and camera in hand. He regularly contributes to Cape Cod Life magazine, is a staff author for Lonely Planet specialising in Japan, Korea and Mexico, and his prose and photography has been published in a variety of newspapers, magazines and essay collections including the Seattle Times, Denver Post, USA Today and the Miami Herald. He lives on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. For this edition Ray wrote the Gyeongsangdo-do and Gyeongsangbuk-do chapters, and contributed to Korea Outdoors.

ROB WHITE
For 11 years Rob has lived in Korea, teaching the past tense to college and university students. A shocking example of someone who never bothered to formulate a life plan, let this be a lesson to anyone with hopes of becoming a teacher in Korea: don’t get too comfortable otherwise you may end up staying longer than you ever imagined. A one-time civil servant at Busan City Hall, he and four others were the first foreigners employed by a municipal government in Korea. Rob lives with his family in Busan, where his only regret is the lack of affordable golf. For this edition, Rob wrote the Destination, Snapshot, Culture, Seoul and Gyeongsangnam-do chapters, and contributed to Korea Outdoors.

The Coordinating Author's Favourite Trip

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

North Korea was newly researched for this edition, but we have chosen not to identify our author so as to protect his identity and that of the North Koreans who assisted him on his travels.

Dr Trish Batchelor wrote the Health chapter. She is a general practitioner and travel-medicine specialist who works at the CIMIC Clinic in Kathmandu, Nepal, as well as being a Medical Advisor to the Travel Doctor New Zealand clinics. Trish teaches travel medicine through the University of Otago, and is interested in underwater and high-altitude medicine, and in the impact of tourism on host countries. She has travelled extensively through Southeast and East Asia and particularly loves high-altitude trekking in the Himalayas.

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Getting Started

Squashed onto its small patch of hilly peninsula, South Korea is a compact nation, just an hour by plane from north to south, so it’s easy to tour around the country’s bundle of delights. Hike through green forested mountains and national parks, listen to shaved-headed monks chanting in remote, colour-ful Buddhist temples, and step ashore onto unspoiled islands populated by bronzed fisher folk who turn in chefs in the evenings. Explore the relics of ancient Korean dynasties, tour round the extraordinary volcanic scenery of its two largest islands, Jejudo and Ulleungdo, and experience the warlike menace of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) border with impoverished, dictator-worshipping North Korea.

Discover the country’s unique barbecue and seafood cuisine: knock back pine needle soju (Korean vodka) one-shots with new-found friends in convivial bars or on scenic mountainsides; immerse yourself in boisterous traditional markets or glitzy modern malls. Here, the most wired, busy-busy cities on the planet are straining every sinew to become Asial’s IT, cultural, sporting and style leaders, the hub of a global trading empire with a GDP that’s already in the world’s top 10. Everybody is hard at work, but somehow they find time to befriend foreign visitors and make their visit memorable. In Korea do taxi drivers turn down tips, and drivers go out of their way to drop hitchhikers where they want to go.

Transport on planes, buses, trains, subways and taxis is a reasonably priced marvel, while smart new US$35-a-night motels provide clean, facility-filled rooms to stay in all over the country. If no one understands what’s coming out of your mouth, simply think back to party charades and use the language of gesture and mime. If you get lost, don’t worry as someone is bound to offer to help, especially if you’re a solo traveller.

Korea in a word? Dynamic. Korea in two words? Dynamic and conservative. Westerners see this as a (sometimes infuriating) contradiction, but to Koreans it’s yin and yang, two linked aspects that make up the circle and cycle of life.

WHEN TO GO

Korea has four very distinct seasons, each with its own special characteristics. The best time of year to visit is autumn, from September to November, when skies are blue, the weather is usually sunny and warm and the forested mountainsides are ablaze with astonishing fall colours.

Spring, from April to June, is another beautiful season, with generally mild temperatures and cherry blossoms spreading north across the country in April. Camellias, azaleas and other plants and trees flower, but as with autumn, some days can be cold, so bring warm clothing.

Winter, from December to March, is dry but often bitterly cold, particularly in northern parts. Siberian winds drag January temperatures in most of the country (except Jejudo) to below zero. This is the time of year when you really appreciate ondol (underfloor heating) and oncheon (hot-spring spas) as well as the ubiquitous saunas and spicy soups. White snow on hanok (traditional house) roofs is very picturesque, and winter is the time for skiers, snowboarders or ice-skaters to visit.

Try to avoid peak summer, from late June to late August, which starts off with the monsoon season, when the country receives some 60% of its annual rainfall, and is followed by unpleasantly hot and humid weather. Although air-conditioning makes summers much more bearable these days, many locals flee the muggy cities for the mountains, beaches and islands, which become crowded, and accommodation prices double. There is also the chance of a typhoon or two. View www.kma.go.kr for detailed weather forecasts in English.

COSTS & MONEY

Korea is a developed country, but you can get by on a modest budget, although the ever-rising won (appreciating 10% a year against the US dollar) has been making the country more expensive for foreign visitors. Accommodation is always the main travel expense, and comfortable, ensuite rooms cost around W30,000 (approximately US$33) in smart new motels or W5000 less in older-style yeogwan (motel). Top-end hotels are rare outside major cities, but their rack rates are generally heavily discounted to around W200,000 to W250,000. Midrange hotels are being squeezed by the new high-rise motels, and their normal W150,000 rates are sometimes discounted below W100,000.

Transport, Korean meals, alcohol, saunas and admission prices to sights and national parks are still relatively cheap, so careful-saving duos travelling around Korea can manage on W70,000 a day, while W100,000 a day allows for some luxuries – classier rooms, more taxi rides and bulgogi (sliced beef) instead of samgyeopsal (sliced fatty pork). The ultra-thrifty could hope to reduce their costs to W50,000 a day by staying in youth-hostel dormitories or rather grotty rooms, taking advantage of hospitable Koreans who meet, and living on a diet of gimbap (rice rolled in dried seaweed), bibimbap (vegetables, meat and rice) and ramyeon (instant noodles). Splashing out on luxury hotels, top-class meals and duty-free shops ups the budget to W400,000 a day or more.

BOOKS & BLOGS

The best-selling Korea Unmasked by Rhee Won-bok (2002) takes an illuminating and humorous look at contemporary Korean attitudes in a cartoon format that compares Korea to neighbouring rivals China and Japan. Korea and Her Neighbours by Isabella Bird (1997) is an insightful account of the intrepid author’s travels around Korea in the 1890s.

DON’T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT…

- Studying the food chapter (p62) so you know the difference between samgyetang (ginseng chicken soup) and samgyeopsal.
- Checking your socks have no holes in them as you must remove your shoes to enter Buddhist shrines, traditional restaurants and private homes.
- Packing your hiking boots, as Korea is stuffed with scenic mountains and well-marked trails.
- Improving your skill at charades and gestures as not many Koreans understand English.
- Learning the 24 Han-geul letters (p410) so you can figure out Han-geul motel and restaurant names, Han-geul menus and Han-geul bus destinations.
- Practicing being naked in front of strangers so you can enjoy Korea’s many excellent and reasonably priced hot-spring spas (p76).
- Packing a pair of sheets if you’re planning to stay in budget accommodation, which often has just quilts.
- Bringing personal hygiene and brand-name medical items that may be difficult to obtain.
**TOP TENS**

**In Korea**

- Venture inside a North Korean spy submarine (p179) near Jeongdongjin on the east coast.
- Peer inside the president's bedroom in Cheongnamdae (p327) in Chungcheongbuk-do.
- Hike inside the world's largest lava tube (p281) on Jeju.
- Get up at 3.30am to chant sutras with Buddhist monks on a temple-stay programme (p160).
- March along a North Korean invasion tunnel under the DMZ (see boxed text, p160) that the North claimed was a coal mine.
- Admire giant penises at Haeundae Gung-won (Penis Park; p183) and Totem Pole Park (p316).
- Dive with sharks (and live to tell the tale) in Jeju (p76).
- Sit inside a Buddhist version of paradise in the replica of King Muryeong's tomb (p313) in Gongju.
- Squeeze yourself into a goblin-sized teashop (p129) in Insadong, with birds flying around.
- Discover the Secret Garden (p101) inside a Seoul palace where kings wrote nature poetry and students sweated over their exam papers.

**Cultural Icons**

- banchan – small side dishes such as kimchi that accompany nearly every meal
- ceramics – world class celadon (green-tinged pottery) that was produced during the Goryeo dynasty (918-1392)
- dancheong – ornate and multicoloured eaves that adorn Buddhist temples and other buildings
- embroidery – superb craftsmanship is shown in this traditional female art
- hallyu – the wave of recent Korean TV dramas, films, fashions and music that has proved popular all over Asia from Mongolia to Malaysia
- hanbok – traditional gown-like clothing that is more admired than worn
- Hangul – the Korean writing system that was invented in the 1440s but which took over five centuries to replace Chinese characters
- hanok – traditional wooden buildings with a tiled or thatched roof that were grouped around a courtyard and heated with ondol (underfloor heating system)
- samul-nori – a lively and popular farmer's drum-and-gong dance that is full of colour and rhythm
- taekwondo – Korea's famous martial art with a kick

**Natural Wonders**

- Hallasan – an extinct 1950m volcano with a crater lake on Jeju (p292)
- Seongsan Ilchulbong – another spectacular extinct volcanic cone on Jeju (p282)
- Ulleungdo – a beautiful, rugged volcanic island in the East Sea with an off-the-beaten-track atmosphere (p212)

**TOP FORTRESS PICKS**

- A World Heritage marvel, Hwaseong (p144) was built in the 1790s by King Jeongjo and winds around part of Suwon city for 5.7km.
- South of Seoul, Namhan Sansaeng (p144) has walls that stretch for nearly 10km and provided a refuge for King Injo in 1636.
- The south coast fortress of Jinju (p245) was the scene of carnage when the Japanese attacked it in 1592.
- The walls of the well-preserved, 15th-century Gochang Fortress (p304) in Jeollabuk-do are nearly 2km long.

The Koreans by Michael Breen (1999) is an expat but expert analysis of the complex and often baffling Korean psyche.

Palaces of Korea by Kim Dong-uk (2006) covers the unique Confucian palaces in detail with the help of photos and illustrations.

A Walk Through the Land of Miracles by Simon Winchester (1988) describes a classic walk from Jeju to Seoul that vividly describes encounters with Korean monks, nuns, artists, marriage arrangers and US generals. The highlight is a visit to a barber shop.

To Dream of Pigs by Clive Leatherdale (1994) describes a journalist's jaunt around North and South Korea and the oddball characters he meets.

View http://throughwhiteyseyes.blogspot.com for quirky commentary on life on planet Seoul plus links to other blogs, or go to http://realtravel.com and enter 'South Korea' into 'search' for a bounty of blogs by expat English teachers with time on their hands.

**INTERNET RESOURCES**

- Korean Culture (www.koreatour.or.kr) A treasure trove of all things Korean, including literature and folk tales.
- Korean Film (www.koreafilm.or.kr) Reviews of the best Korean movies.
- Korean Martial Arts (www.koreamartialarts.com) Covers taekwondo (the one with high kicks and breaking wooden blocks with your bare hand) and samul-nori (the one that includes a bit of every other martial art).
- Korea Tourism Organization (www.visitkorea.or.kr) Lots of useful tourist info.
- Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Book Seoul accommodation and read the latest Thorn Tree traveller's tips on Korea.
**HONEYMOON ISLAND**

A constant stream of flights and ferries provide speedy and convenient transport to Jeju-si on Jejudo, Korea’s holiday and activities island, where palm trees and orange groves add an exotic Mediterranean feel.

The entire island is black volcanic rock which makes for outstanding scenery. Hike up the gentle slopes of **Hallasan** (p292), where gentle roe deer roam; head east from Jeju-si and be awed by the world’s longest and largest lava-tube cave, **Manjanggul** (p281), and on the island’s eastern tip, climb ‘sunrise peak’ **Seongsan Ilchulbong** (p282). Then explore nearby **Udo Island** (p283), which is touristy but still full of rural charms, and one of the places where **haenyeo** (female divers) still gather seafood from the ocean floor.

**DISCOVER KOREA**

This classic route traverses mountains, rice fields and lakes to the sandy beaches and seafood restaurants of the east coast.

Catch a bus or train from Seoul to **Gangchon** (p166) and cycle to the waterfall. Hop on a bus to the lakeside city of **Chuncheon** (p163) and cycle along the lake shore. Head to Soyang Dam, take a boat trip to Yanggu and paddle down an unspoilt river in **Inje** (p167).

Dine on fresh seafood in **Sokcho** (p170) and then hike around the peaks and waterfalls of **Seoraksan National Park** (p172). Next, journey north up the coast to relax on the sandy beach at **Haejiro** (p171), home to some historical holiday villas. Head back south to the small seaside resort of **Jeongdongjin** (p179) and venture inside a tiny North Korean spy submarine. At **Simcheke** (p182) explore the huge cave at nearby **Huanseon Donggul** (p183). South of Simcheok, check out the unforgettable **Heuning Gongwon** (Penis Park; p183).

Travel back to feudal times at **Hahoe Folk Village** (p220) and don’t miss the cultural museums of **Andong** (p217). Then on to the tour highlight – **Geochiu** (p397), the ancient capital of the Shilla kingdom – for two or more days among the royal tombs and Buddhist treasures.

Board a ferry in Ulsan to rugged, volcanic **Ulleungdo** (p212) for a special off-the-beaten-track experience. Back on the mainland, arrive in **Busan** (p227), a bustling port city with fast ferry connections to Japan.
THE GREEN TRAIL

2 weeks / 1200km

Journey through glorious mountain scenery, feast on pheasant and unwind on sandy beaches and in hot-spring spas. Along the way visit the presidential summer villa and admire treasures from the Baekje dynasty.

From Seoul take the subway to Suwon (p134), hike around the World Heritage 12th-century fortress, eat the best galbi (beef ribs) in the country and lose yourself for hours in the Gyeongju Folk Village (p147). Next stop is near Cheonan at the Independence Hall of Korea (p322), which charts the history of the epic but unsuccessful Korean struggle against Japanese colonialism before WWII. This is followed by two days of historical sightseeing in the Baekje kingdom's ex-capitals of Goryeo (p312) and Buyeo (p316).

Next, head to Daejeon Beech (p319) for the best beach and seafood restaurannts on the west coast. Cruise around quiet offshore islands and stay and eat with a fisherman's family on Sapsido Island (p320), before touring the pottery village of Anmyeon Island (p321) and watching the sunset from the rock-pinnacle garden and climbing a horse's ear at Seonunsan Provincial Park (p326). Next day, tour the lake beside presidential villa Cheongvila (p327) with its own golf course and splendiferous gardens.

Spot a shy gorals antelope in Jeollet National Park (p339), rejuvenate tired limbs in Sunvto Hot Springs (p334) and feast on pheasant. Take a two-hour scenic ferry trip from Chunchuo across Chunchu Lake to sleepy Danyang (p340). From there explore nearby limestone caves (p340) and Guina (p343), an amazing temple complex. Go bush in remote Jeongseong (p184), where you might see an ox-drawn plough. In Taebaeksan Provincial Park visit the mountain-top temple complex Dan sampler (p184), which honours Korea's mythical half-bear half-bird founder. Finally dive into the East Sea at a beach near Samcheok (p183). See p18 for Samcheok and beyond.

Further south in Gwangju, visit the My 38th National Cemetery (p253), a sombre reminder of the 1980 uprising against the military government of the time. Admire the ceramics in Gwangju National Museum (p252), explore more art and craft in Art Street (p256), eat in a duck restaurant (p256) and don't miss the bamboo town of Yeosu (p257).

At Mokpo visit the museum (p267) before taking a boat to the remote havens of Heuksando and Hongdo (p262). Mould your own ceramic pot in Boseong Daehan Dawon (p262) and taste food and drinks made from healthy green tea at the beautiful Boseong Daehan Dawon (Boseong Tea Plantation; p262). From Yeosu, hike up to Hyangiram (p262), a Buddhist temple perched on a cliff with awesome coastal and island views.

Jirisan (p245) has a terrible story to tell, and for a final eco experience don't miss the beautiful hike on the unspoilt Yongsan Island (p243), which is easily reached by ferry from Tongyeong. Finally, the Green Trail comes to an abrupt end in the bustling port of Busan (p227), Korea's second largest city.
KARMA KOREA

Located in beautiful forest-covered mountain areas are some of Asia’s most outstanding Buddhist temples, where monks and nuns still live and pursue their dream of enlightenment and freedom from the chains of desire. Their remoteness often makes the pilgrimage by bus difficult and the journey covers around 1500km, but it begins (like all journeys) with a single step. Buses go to all the temples, but often there is a ‘mind-washing’ walk through the forest before you finally reach the temple buildings. Try to leave the cares of the world behind when you enter the gates of a temple, in order to get the most out of the experience.

Buses from Seoul run to Guinsa (p343), the headquarters of the Cheontae sect and quite different from any other Korean temple, with multi-storey modern buildings lining both sides of a steep valley. It has a Utopian atmosphere, and delicious, free vegetarian meals are available. From here take a bus to Danyang and on to Guinsa (p316), an ancient and traditional temple in a remote spot with a hall of 1000 pint-sized disciples that are all slightly different. Can you find the one that looks most like you?

Journey southeast to Daegu and on to stunning Haesim (p195), which houses a staggering library of over 80,000 World Heritage 14th-century woodblocks. They were carved in an unsuccessful attempt to ward off Mongolian invaders. Back in Daegu, an hour on the bus takes you to Gimcheon, the gateway to Jikjisa (p196), a magnificent temple dating back to the 5th century. A soldier monk from here, Sa-myung, led the fight against Japanese invaders in the 16th century, and the thought-provoking, monks were not pacifists back in those days, whenever the nation was under threat.

Return to Daegu and then take a bus to Jeonju and another bus to Jinan, the access town for Tapj (p300), a tiny temple surrounded by two ‘horse ear’ mountains and an extraordinary sculptural garden of 80 stone pinnacles (or towers) that were piled up by a Buddhist mystic, Yi Kapmyung.

Return to Jeonju via Jinan and go south to Gwangju and on to Ujusa (p257). This temple has a fine collection of stone pagodas and Buddhas including unusual twin and reclining Buddhas – legend has it that the site originally housed 1500 Buddha and 1000 pagodas. Returning to Gwangju, catch a bus eastwards to Busan and on to Tongdosa (p242), said to be Korea’s largest and most important Buddhist temple, and housing an excellent Buddhist art museum containing 30,000 artefacts. Catch a bus to Uljan and from there to Seongnamsa (p242), a visual masterpiece set in a provincial park.

Finally return to Uljan and press on to Gyeyang and Bulgaksa (p202), a Unesco World Cultural Heritage-listed temple replica that represents the crowning glory of Shilla architecture and is constructed on a stone terrace.

Nearby, in the mountains above Bulgaksa is another World Cultural Heritage-listed site, a superb stone Buddha, hewn in the mid-8th century, that resides in the Seokguram Grotto.

GOURMET GALLOP

Korean cuisine outside Seoul covers such a multitude of flavours and styles that it would take a lifetime to sample everything, but here’s a start.

Red-bedecked restaurants in Incheon’s Chinatown (p152), a subway ride west of Seoul, offer delicious Chinese food including the famous jajangmyeon, a Korean/Chinese noodle dish.

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Sokcho, a fishing port on the east coast, is noted for squid sundae (squid stuffed with all sorts of goodies). Enjoy it in upmarket and green surroundings at the well-known and well-regarded Jinjangtajip (p170).

In Daegu city, take a break from Korean food at the ultra-romantic Bjoon (p292) with its high-class euro food, candles and a beautiful rose on every table. After a hard day touring Shilla relics in Gyeongju, satisfy your appetite with the wholesome fare at Kuro Ssambap (p206). Enjoy the folk museum ambience and feast on a banquet of more (refillable) side dishes than even the Joseon monarchs could handle. Wrap side-dish combos in lettuce and other sides before popping them in your mouth.

Further south in Busan, drop into Gommae Lee’s Rawfish House (p236) near Haeundae beach for sushi served straight from the tanks outside. The owner speaks English and loves to explain why Koreans adore raw fish.

Head west along the south coast until you reach the beautiful green-tea plantation BooengCheonTeaPlantation (p262), where you can try shakes, yogurt and ice cream all made with nogak (green tea). Lunch in the restaurant on green-tea flavoured jajangmyeon or bibimbap.

Then take a bus to Mokpo, where Igabonga (p269) offers a splendid tteokgalbi, a giant meat patty with seafood, bamboo shoots, salad and side dishes served on leaves and decorated with flower petals.

Head north to the stylish and smart Bongmyoongwan Ajiip (p257) in Danyang. It specialises in bamboo dishes. Rice topped with nuts and beans are cooked inside a bamboo stem. The doenjang (soybean paste) soup is flavoured with bamboo shoots, and bamboo leaf tea is free. Diners can take home their bamboo rice container as a souvenir.

The next stop north is Jeolbuk-do, the birthplace of bibimbap, and Hinheokkwan (p299) is a buzzing restaurant that serves up this classic dish with a bowl of moju homboreum. Order dosot bibimbap if you don’t want raw meat.

Then head on to Daegun city, where Pungyeon Sangmyeong (p310) is a large, unpretentious restaurant that cooks up an excellent samgyetang (ginseng chicken) served with foreigner-friendly lettuce and delicious cucumber side dishes.

From Daejeon take a short, scenic bus ride south to Geumsan (p311), known as Ginseng Town, where restaurants and stalls sell samgyetang, insam twigi (ginseng in batter) and insam makgolli (ginseng rice wine), and hundreds of shops and stalls sell ginseng tea, liquor, sweets and other ginseng products.

Next up is a detour to Suinbo Hot Springs in Chungcheongbuk-do, where Sato junchon (p339) serves up a seven-course pheasant meal that includes pheasant mandu (dumplings), mini pheasant kebabs, pheasant steamboat and pheasant soup.

Back in Daejeon, Seoul is less than an hour away on a KTX train.
INTRODUCTION TO DPRK
A standard tour to North Korea lasts roughly a week, but it's amazing the number of sights that can be packed in, with the guides keeping you busy day-in day-out with a seemingly endless stream of revolutionary sights.

On day one, you'll take the short flight from Beijing into another world, landing in Pyongyang (p358), where the rigorous pace of North Korean tourism quickly becomes apparent. Spend two full days taking in this uniquely with its barrage of monuments, statues, museums and other 'attractions'. From here, head south down the Reunification Highway to the ancient city of Kaesong (p368), where you'll be able to visit the country's most atmospheric hotel, the Kaesong Hotel (p369), and see what's been the highlight of their trip: the DMZ area (p369). From the tense heart of conflict on the Korean Peninsula, you'll normally be taken to relax in the mountains, North Korean style. Usually this will be in Myohyangsan (p370) where, as well as mountain walking along concrete steps embellished with revolutionary slogans, you'll pay a visit to the utterly bizarre International Friendship Exhibition (p370), with every gift ever presented to the two Kims displayed in huge vaults built into the side of a mountain. The last day is usually spent in Pyongyang and a visit to the incredible Mass Games (p355) between August and October, before boarding the overnight train back to Beijing.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK
You don't get much more off the beaten track than North Korea itself, but if you're determined to see parts that no one else has seen then there are some options. Of course, you'll still have to be on a tour (or at least with two guides) but you can really get out and see places few others do. While you'll fly or take the train to Pyongyang, there's still a huge amount in the city that isn't usually included on tours: request the zoo, a trip to the shooting gallery, the film studios and the three revolutions exhibit, for example. From Pyongyang, a charter plane can fly you up to Paekdu (Mt Paekdu; p372) for a visit to Korea's holy mountain and the magnificent crater lake Chon, mythically associated with the anti-Japanese struggle and the birth of Kim Jong II. Returning by plane to Pyongyang, having seen one of the remotest areas of the country, move on to the little visited east coast of the country. Overnight in the major port city of Wonsan (p373); from there a trip into the beautiful Kumgangsan (p371) is possible. If you really want to go the whole hog, a flying visit (again, by charter plane unless you enter overland from China) to the 'Special Free Trade Zone' of Rajin-Sonbong (p375) is about as different as you can get. You're pretty certain not to meet anyone else who has been to this oddest area of an extremely odd country.
Given the country's appetite for change, Korea's evolving outlook on the world is hardly surprising. Increasingly, the American government is perceived as a barrier to a fruitful dialogue with the North. The apex of this sentiment was a fringe-group campaign to raze a statue of General MacArthur. The man surely had his faults, but MacArthur's legacy includes one significant accomplishment: he saved South Korea's ass. If it weren't for MacArthur, South Korea's citizenry could conceivably find themselves bowing to Dear Leader and watching reruns of last year's Mass Games on a black-and-white TV while eating tree-bark soup.

The US is reducing troop strength in Korea by a quarter, or more. Some bases have been closed, like Busan's Camp Hialeah; others will be relocated, such as the Yongsan Garrison near Itaewon. Base closures and relocations are opening up large tracts of land in urban centres, but the future of this real estate is uncertain. Rumours about parks persist though it's difficult to remain optimistic, given the country's tradition of apple boxes filled with 'cash gifts' and penchant for 25-storey residential towers.

Japan and Korea continue to act out their own version of Mad magazine's Spy Vs Spy. Much of the wrangling concerns a territorial dispute over Dokdo (p35), a handful of islets 200km off Korea's east coast. The attachment to Dokdo is emotional – the prospect of Japan snagging a piece of territory is gut wrenching for every Korean – and financial: sovereignty over the rocks ensures territorial rights to fertile fishing grounds and a seabed of energy reserves.

Most Koreans are warming to the idea that building ties with North Korea yields benefits, despite the costs. Undeterred by the North's admission of nuclear-weapon capabilities, the government clings to the Sunshine Policy (p42). Aid, coupled with investments in the Kaesong industrial park, is viewed as a long-term strategy to stabilise the North, build links where none have existed for 50 years (such as rail lines and roads) and make a few bucks for South Korean companies who pay the North Korean government US$60 per month per factory worker to churn out pots, auto parts and electrical components.

Free trade is sharpening Korea's international economic focus. Talks with India, Japan, Canada and the US are at different stages. During preliminary negotiations with the US, Korea argued that goods manufactured in Kaesong should fall within the scope of a free-trade agreement. Only the future will tell if this puzzling idea is a stroke of genius or a sterling example of lateral thinking gone too far. Trade liberalisation is the future, it seems, but it's going to take a wizard to get through Korea's domestic politics, which include a vocal agricultural sector regarded as a loser in any future deal. Most people agree that protecting a national industry is important, but at some point someone has to ask why a small bag of locally grown carrots costs more than a kilogram of imported beef.
An Ancient People

Koreans emerged as a people on a mountainous peninsula. Someone once said that if the Korean peninsula were flattened with an iron, it would be as big as China; although Koreans don’t try to compare their country to China, they are more than willing to compare it to Japan and to say that there is a significant, important and, when prompted, world-beating country. Koreans associate their origins with one of the most beautiful points on the globe, the great mountain on their northern border, Paektusan (or White-Head Mountain), with a crystal-pure volcanic lake at its summit. (The North Koreans say that Kim Jong II was born there, even if most historians think he was born along the Sino-Russian border.) Koreans remain today a ‘mountain people’, who identify with hometowns and home regions that, they argue, differ greatly from other places in Korea. Koreans are also an ancient people: they are one of the few peoples in the world who can trace a continuous history and presence on the same territory going back thousands of years. Since Korea has had next to no ethnic minorities, Koreans have traditionally thought that they are a homogeneous and unique people – and that they always have been.

The imagined beginning of the Korean nation was the 3rd millennium BC, when a king named Dan·gun founded old Joseon. Joseon (Choson) remains the name of the country in North Korea, but South Koreans use the term Han-guk, a name dating from the 1890s.

The first Korean – Dan·gun – was not just a person but a king, and a continuous presence from his time down to the present, a kingly vessel filled by different people at different times, who drew their legitimacy from this eternal lineage. Under its first president, for example, South Korea issued a calendar in which Dan·gun’s birth was set at the date of 2333 BC. If the two Koreans can’t agree on many things, including what to call their country, they can agree on Dan·gun. In 1993 North Korea announced with great fanfare the discovery of Dan·gun’s tomb at a site close to Pyongyang: ‘The founding of Kojoson (old Joseon) by Dan·gun 5000 years ago marked an epochal occasion in the formation of the Korean nation… The Koreans are a homogeneous nation who inherited the same blood and culture consistently down through history’. All the scribes came forward to proclaim Koreans as the oldest (and therefore finest) people in the world, with one continuous line of history from the 30th-century BC down to the present.

Unfortunately there is no written history of Korea until the centuries just before the birth of Christ, and that history was chronicled by Chinese scribes. But there is archaeological evidence that human beings inhabited this peninsula half a million years ago, and that an advanced people were there seven or eight thousand years ago in the Neolithic period – as revealed by the ground and polished stone tools and pottery they left to posterity. These Neolithic people practiced agriculture in a settled communal life, and are widely supposed to have had consanguineous clans as their basic social grouping. Nationalist historians also trace many Korean social and cultural traits back to these Neolithic peoples, but around the time of Christ three ancient kingdoms emerged that influenced Korean history down to our time.

The first state to emerge in the Three Kingdoms era (57 BC–AD 668) was Baekje (Paekche), which was a centralised, aristocratic state melding Chinese and indigenous influence. By the 3rd century AD, Baekje was strong enough to demolish its rivals and occupy what today is the core area of Korea, around Seoul. The common Korean custom of father-to-son royal succession is said to have begun with Baekje king Geun Chugo. His grandson inaugurated another long tradition by adopting Buddhism as the state religion (in 384). The northern kingdom, Goguryeo (Koguryo), conquered a large territory by AD 312 and expanded in all directions, especially toward the Taedong River in the south, which runs through Pyongyang. Peninsular geography shaped the political space of Baekje and Goguryeo and a third kingdom called Shilla (Silla), which fills out the trilogy. Approximately three-quarters of the way down the peninsula, at the 37th parallel, the major mountain range veers to the southwest, dividing the peninsula. This southwest extension of mountains framed Baekje’s historic territory, just as it did the Shilla kingdom to the east. Goguryeo, however, ranged over a wild region consisting of northeastern Korea and eastern Manchuria, giving rise to contemporary dreams of a ‘greater Korea’ in territories that now happen to be part of China and Russia. While South Korea identifies itself with the glories of the Shilla kingdom, which they say unified the peninsula in 668 AD, the North identifies with Goguryeo and says the country wasn’t truly unified until the founding of the Goguryeo dynasty. Meanwhile people in the southwestern part of the country felt abused by dictators and left out of the growth of South Korea for decades until one of their own was elected president in 1997 (Kim Dae-jung), and often identified with the Baekje legacy.

Buddhism in Korea

Buddhism came to Korea from China in the latter part of the Three Kingdoms era, establishing itself first in Goguryeo and Baekje in the late 4th century and then in Shilla in the early 6th century. With royal support the faith spread throughout the peninsula and became the official religion in all three states – and remained so until the end of the 14th century. It wasn’t quite the familiar Buddhism of ascetic monks, however – some monasteries became wealthy and owned large estates and thousands of slaves, and some monks dressed in silk robes, rode fine horses and indulged in wine, women and song. Korean Buddhism also incorporated indigenous shamanist beliefs; many of the colourful wooden temples you can still visit in the mountain temples have a small hall dedicated to shamanist deities like the mountain gods and have histories that stretch back over a thousand years.

Far from being pacifists, Korean monks often came to the defence of their country. Many mountain fortresses found throughout the Korean peninsula contained temples and were garrisoned by warrior monks. Toughened by their spartan lifestyle and trained in martial arts, monk warriors played a major part in resisting the Japanese invasions in the 1590s – even though Confucianism had become the state doctrine and the...
new rulers treated them as lowborn and no better than beggars. Monks were not allowed to enter the gates of Seoul, for example, which is why many temples are hidden away on remote mountains. Today Buddhist sects in Seoul sometimes come to blows over their disputes, and some monks even marry and have children; the ascetic Seon (Zen) doctrine is the most common one, but has many rivals. If all this sounds heretical, the Korean approach to religion is often eclectic – the same person might be a Christian, a Buddhist and a Confucianist, depending on the day.

**Shilla Ascendancy**

Shilla emerged victorious on the peninsula in 668, and it is from this famous date that South Korean historians speak for the first time of a unified Korea. This brought an end to the era of the Three Kingdoms, but not before all of them had come under the long-term sway of Chinese civilisation by introducing Chinese statecraft, Buddhist and Confucian philosophy, Confucian practices of educating the young, and the Chinese written language. Artists from Goguryeo and Baekje also perfected a mural art found on the walls of tombs, and took it to Japan where it deeply influenced Japan’s temple and burial art. But it is the blossoming of Shilla that stillounds contemporary visitors to Korea, and makes its ancient capital at Gyeongju (Kyŏngju) one of the most fascinating tourist destinations in East Asia.

Shilla had close relations with the great Tang dynasty in China, sent many students to Tang schools, and had a level of civilisation high enough to merit the Chinese designation ‘flourishing land in the East’. Shilla culture melded indigenous and Tang influences: in 682 it set up a national Confucian academy to train high officials, and later instituted a civil-service examination system modelled on that of the Tang. But Shilla had a flourishing indigenous civilisation clearly different from the Tang, one that was among the most advanced in the world. Its capital at Gyeongju was renowned as the ‘city of gold’, where the aristocracy pursued a high culture and extravagant pleasures. Chinese historians wrote that elite officials possessed thousands of slaves, with like numbers of horses, cattle and pigs. Their wives wore solid-gold tiaras and earrings of delicate and intricate filigree. Scholars studied the Confucian and Buddhist classics and developed advanced methods for astronomy and calendrical science. ‘Pure Land’ Buddhism, a simple doctrine, united the mass of common people, who like today’s Hare Krishnas could become adherents through the repetition of simple chants.

The crowning glory of Gyeongju is the Bulguksa (Pulguksa) temple, which was rebuilt in the 1970s, and the nearby Seokguram Grotto. Both were built around 750 and are home to some of the finest Buddhist sculpture in the world. Buddhists came on pilgrimages to Gyeongju from as far away as India and Arab sojourners sometimes came to the temple to stay.

In spite of Shilla’s military strength, broad territories of the old Goguryeo kingdom were not conquered and a section of the Goguryeo elite established a successor state known as Parhae (Balhae), above and below the Amnok and Tuman boundaries that now form the border between China, Russia and Korea. Parhae’s continuing strength forced Shilla to build a northern wall in 721 and kept Shilla forces permanently below a line running from present-day Pyongyang in the east to the west coast. As one prominent South Korean historian wrote, ‘Shilla and Parhae confronted each other hostilely much like southern and northern halves of a partitioned nation’.

Like Shilla, Parhae continued to be influenced deeply by the Chinese civilisation of the Tang, sending students to the capital at Ch’angan, on which it modelled its own capital city. But it was cold in Parhae territory, up to 40°F below zero in winter, and Parhae people bequeathed a lasting invention to the Korean people: sleeping on ondol floors, a system that uses flues from a central hearth to heat the floors of each room – still in wide use in contemporary Korea, with the stone flues covered by waxed and polished rice paper. Ice may form in a water jug on the table while a person sleeps comfortably on a toasty warm ondol.

**Unification under Goryeo**

A formidable military leader named Wang Geon had defeated Shilla as well as some Baekje remnants by 930, and established a flourishing dynasty, Goryeo, from whence came the name Korea. Korea was now fully unified with more or less the boundaries that it retains today. Wang was not just a unifier, however, but a magnificent one. Regarding himself as the proper lineal king of Goguryeo, he embraced that kingdom’s survivors, took a Shilla princess as his wife and treated the Shilla aristocracy with unprecedented generosity. His dynasty ruled for nearly a millennium, and in its heyday was among the most advanced civilisations in the world.

With its capital at Kaesong, a town north of Seoul bisected by the 38th parallel, the Goryeo dynasty’s composite elite also forged a tradition of aristocratic continuity that lasted down to the modern era. By the 13th century there were two government groupings: civil officials and military officials. At that time the military people were stronger, but thereafter both were known as yangban (the two orders), which became the Korean term for aristocracy. Below the hereditary aristocracy were common people like peasants and merchants. Below them were outcaste groups of butchers, tanners and entertainers, who were called cheonmin and who lived a castelike existence, often in separated and ostracised villages, and whose status fell upon their children as well. Likewise, slavery was hereditary (matrilineally), with slaves making up as much as 30% of Goryeo society.

The elite fused aristocratic privilege and political power through marriage alliances and control of land and central political office, and fortified this class position to the point of impregnability by making status hereditary. Goryeo established a social pattern in which a landed gentry mixed its control of property with a Confucian- or Buddhist-educated stratum of scholar-officials, usually residing in the capital. Often scholars and landlords were one and the same person, but in any case landed wealth and bureaucratic position became powerfully fused. At the centre, a bureaucracy influenced by Confucian statecraft emerged, which thereafter sought to influence local power and which was a contrast with the Japanese or European feudal pattern of castle towns, landed domains and parcellised sovereignty all backed by a strong military class (although Korea came...
close to the feudal pattern in the 9th and 10th centuries, when strong walled-town lords and military commanders challenged central power).

The large landed families held their land in perpetuity and could bequeath it to their survivors; its produce was at the service of the owner, after taxes were paid. Worked mostly by peasant tenants who paid rent in kind, this land system often produced vast estates of great wealth worked by hundreds of tenants or slaves, and in its essential form persisted through the subsequent Joseon period and the Japanese colonial period. Family landholding became more important than office-holding in perpetuating aristocratic dominance over time. The wealthy, aristocratic landlord became a beneficence or a plague (depending on your point of view) from early Goryeo down to modern times, and an egalitarian redistribution of the land became a focal point of Confucian reformers, capitalist modernisers and communist agitators alike.

The Goryeo aristocracy was by no means a class without merit, however. It admired and interacted with the splendid Chinese civilisation that emerged during the contemporaneous Song dynasty (960–1279). Official delegations and ordinary merchants brought Korean gold, silver and ginseng to China in exchange for silks, porcelains and woodblock books. Finely crafted Song porcelains stimulated Korean artisans to produce an even finer type of inlaid celadon pottery unmatched in the world before or since for the pristine clarity of its blue-green glaze and the delicate art of its inlaid portraits. Buddhism was the state religion, but it coexisted with Confucianism throughout the Goryeo period. Buddhist priests systematised religious practice by rendering the Korean version of the Buddhist canon into mammoth wood-block print editions, known as the Tripitaka. The first was completed in 1087 after a lifetime of work, but was lost; another, completed in 1251, can still be viewed today at the Haeinsa temple (p.195). By 1234, if not earlier, Koreans had also invented movable metal type, two centuries before its inception in Europe.

This high point of Goryeo culture coincided with internal disorder and the rise of the Mongols, whose power swept most of the known world during the 13th century. Korea was no exception, as Kublai Khan’s forces invaded and demolished Goryeo’s army in 1231, forcing the government to retreat to Ganghwado Island, a ploy that exploited the Mongol horsemen’s fear of water. But after a more devastating invasion in 1254, in which countless people died and some 200,000 people were made captives, Goryeo succumbed to Mongol domination and its kings came to intermarry with Mongol princesses. The Mongols then enlisted thousands of Koreans in ill-fated invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281, using craft made by Korea’s great shipwrights. The Kamakura Shogunate turned back both invasions with help, as legend has it, from opportunite typhoons known as the ‘divine wind’ or kamikaze.

Last Dynasty

The overthrow of the Mongols by the Ming dynasty in China (1316–1644) gave an opportunity to rising groups of Korean military men to contest for power. One of them, Yi Seong-gye, grabbed the bull by the horns and overthrew Goryeo leaders, thus becoming the founder of Korea’s longest and last dynasty (1392–1910). The new state was named Joseon, harking back to the old Joseon kingdom 15 centuries earlier, and its capital was built at Seoul. General Yi announced the new dynasty by mobilising 200,000 labourers to surround the new capital with a great wall; it was completed in six months in 1394, and scattered remnants of it still stand today, especially the Great South Gate (Namdaemun) and the Great East Gate (Dongdaemun). He was generous to his defeated Goryeo antagonists, sending them off to comfortable exile. Such magnanimity encouraged one writer to wax poetic about Yi Seong-gye’s virtues — a typical example of how Koreans sing the manifold praises of their leaders, especially dynastic founders:

His presence is the mighty warrior, firm
He stands, an eagle on a mountain top;
In wisdom and resource none can compare,
The dragon of Namyang is he.

In judgment on the civil bench,
Or counsel from the warrior’s tent, he rules;
He halts the waves that roll in from the sea,
And holds the sun back from its heavenly course.

The deep Buddhist influence on the previous dynasty led the literati to urge the king to uproot Buddhist economic and political influence, which led to exile in the mountains for monks and their disciples. Over many decades the literati thus accomplished a deep Confucianisation of Joseon society, which particularly affected the position of women. Where many women were prominent in Goryeo society, they were now relegated to domestic chores of childcare and housekeeping, as so-called ‘inside people’. Up until recent times the woman’s role in Korean society seemed to be as old as the bones in ancestral graves: just as central, just as hidden, and just as unchangeable.

Goryeo society had a relatively strong matrilineal system. It was by no means a matriarchy, but it wasn’t nearly the patriarchy of later centuries. A new husband was welcomed into the wife’s family, if not several at the same time. Influential literati in the Joseon dynasty were ideologues who wanted to restore Korean society to its proper path as they saw it, which meant using the virtues to discipline the passions and the interests. The reforming came in the name of Neo-Confucianism and Chu Hsi, the Chinese progenitor of this doctrine. The result was that much of what we now see as ‘Korean culture’ or ‘tradition’ was the result of a major social reorganisation accomplished by self-conscious ideologies in the 15th century. Many foreign observers would declare that Korea was ‘more Confucian than China’.

1876
Japanese gunboats open Korean ports to foreign trade

1894
Donghae peasant uprising defeated

1882
Treaty signed with the US

1894
Slavery abolished
The unquestionable effect of the new reforms and laws was a slow-moving but ultimately radical change in women’s social position and an expropriation of women’s property, more or less complete by the late 15th century. From then on, the latticework of Korean society was constituted by patrilineal descent. The nails in the latticework, the proof of its importance and existence over time, were the written genealogies that positioned families in the hierarchy of property and prestige. In succeeding centuries a person’s genealogy would be the best predictor of his or her life chances; it became one of Korea’s most lasting characteristics. Since only male offspring could prolong the family and clan lines and were the only names registered in the genealogical tables, the birth of a son was greeted with great fanfare.

Such historical influences remain strong in both Koreas today, where first sons and their families often live with the male’s parents and all stops are pulled out to father a boy. Hereditary aristocratic principles became so ingrained that according to the late Edward Wagner, a relative handful of elite families were responsible for most of the 14,000-odd exam passers of the civil-service examination system in the 500 years of the Joseon, exams being the critical route to official position.

The self-conscious Confucianisation of Korean society had clear deleterious effects for women and common people, but it also reinforced some of modern Korea’s most admirable qualities: the deference for family; the broad respect for education (scholars and philosophers were at the pinnacle of Confucian reform), more or less automatic admiration for elders (and the elderly); and a belief that ultimately human society should be governed by the virtuous, not the powerful or the wealthy.

Korea & China: An Enduring Relationship

Smack in the middle of the grand boulevard approaching the central government offices in Seoul is a gigantic statue of Admiral Yi Sun-sin, whose artful naval manoeuvres and command of the geobukseon (the first metal-clad ship in the world) saved Korea from Japanese conquest in the 1590s.

This statue is a nice symbol of the general idea that for most Koreans most of the time, foreigners might be people intent on invading Korea. Japan is the best case, of course, with the warlord Hideyoshi laying waste to the peninsula only to be turned back by Admiral Yi, and with Japan’s victories over China in 1895 and Russia in 1905, establishing Japanese colonial rule in Korea. Mongols, Manchus and others usually grouped as ‘barbarians’ came charging across Korea’s northern borders. But the Mongols and Manchus were also conquerors of China, which made them barbarians, too, and led many Koreans to think that China was not just the centre of an admirable civilisation but also a good neighbour, giving to Korea more than it took away.

General Yi Song-gye founded his dynasty when he refused to send his troops into battle against a Chinese army, and instead turned around and used them to overthrow his own government and make himself king. Not surprisingly, he received the blessing and support of the Chinese emperor, and Korea became a ‘tributary’ country to China – but more than that, it became the ideal tributary state, modelling itself on Chinese culture and statecraft. Most of the time China left Korea alone to run its own affairs, and Korea was content to look up to China as the centre of the only world civilisation that mattered. This policy was known as sadae (serving the great). Because of this special relationship, when Hideyoshi’s forces attacked in the 1590s, Chinese troops were sent to help repel them. In just one battle as many as 30,000 Chinese soldiers died. Sadae was in the background during the Korean War as well, when a huge Chinese army intervened in late 1950 and helped rescue the North from certain defeat. Meanwhile, South Koreans felt that the behaviour of the Chinese troops during the Korean War was superior to that of any other force, including the American troops. Today China is South Korea’s largest trading partner, with thousands of Korean students studying there, while China maintains its long-term alliance with North Korea. So, it can be said that Korea’s relationship with China is one of the only foreign entanglements that most Koreans seem happy with, and it’s likely to grow ever stronger in the 21st century.

Of course, it isn’t clear what the common people thought about China until the modern period, nor were they asked; the vast majority were illiterate in a country that marked its elite literacy by having the world’s most literate populations.

1894–1895
Japan defeats China

1904–1905
Japan defeats Russia; Korea becomes a Japanese protectorate

1910
Japan annexes Korea and abolishes the monarchy

1919
Nationwide protests against Japanese rule

DONGHAK DEMANDS

The Donghak rebellion, which had been building for decades, erupted in 1893 in Jeolla province, attracting large numbers of peasants and lowborn groups of people. The rebels were only armed with primitive, homemade weapons, but they defeated the government army sent against them. The rebellion then spread to neighbouring provinces, and when King Gojong called in Chinese troops, Japanese troops took advantage of the uproar to march into Seoul. The rebels were defeated and their leaders, including Jeon Bong-jun, who was known as the ‘Green Pea General’ because of his small size, were executed by Japanese firing squads.

The demands of the rebels reveal their many grievances against the Joseon social system:

- Slaves should be freed.
- The low-born should be treated fairly.
- Land should be redistributed.
- Taxes on fish and salt should be scrapped.
- No unauthorised taxes should be levied and any corrupt yangban should be severely punished.
- All debts should be cancelled.
- Regional favouritism and factions should be abolished.
- Widows should be allowed to remarry.
- Traitors who support foreign interference should be punished.
into general use until after 1945, and then only in North Korea; South Korea used a Sino-Korean script requiring the mastery of thousands of Chinese characters until the 1990s. Today, though, Chinese characters have mostly disappeared from Korea’s public space, to the consternation of Chinese and Japanese travellers who used to be able to read all the street and commercial signs.

Royal Pomp & Ceremony

Many of the premier cultural attractions in Korea today, such as Seoul’s Gyeongbokgung (p83), Namdaemun (p103) and Changdeokgung (p101) are window relics of the long-lived Joseon dynasty. They are windows into a time in Korea’s history when absolute monarchs ruled. Pomp and ritual also became an essential aspect of royal power, with attention to ritual and protocol developed into an art form. Koreans appeared to break sharp with this royal system in the 20th century, but when we look at the ruling system in North Korea, or the families that run most of South Korea’s major corporations, we see the family and hereditary principles of the old system continuing in modern form.

It is difficult to imagine the wealth, power and status of Joseon kings in these more democratic times. The main palace, Gyeongbokgung, contained 800 buildings and over 200 gates; in 1900, for example, palace costs accounted for 10% of all government expenditures. In the royal household were 400 eunuchs, 500 ladies-in-waiting, 800 other court ladies and 70 gisaeng (female entertainers who were expert singers and dancers). Only women and eunuchs were allowed to live inside the palace – male servants, guards, officials and visitors had to leave at sunset. Most of the women lived like nuns and never left the palace. A yangban woman had to be married for years before daring to move in the outer world of society, and then only in a cocoon of clothing inside a cloistered sedan chair, carried by her slaves. In the late 19th century foreigners witnessed these same cloistered upper-class women, clothed and swaddled from head to toe, wearing a green mantle like the Middle Eastern chador over their heads and bringing the folds across the face, leaving only the eyes exposed. They would come out after the nightly curfew, after the bells rang and the city gates were closed against tigers, and find a bit of freedom in the darkness.

Isabella Bird Bishop visited the newly restored Gyeongbokgung in 1895 and noted in Korea and Her Neighbours ‘What with 800 troops, 1500 attendants and officials of all description, courtiers and ministers and their attendants, secretaries, messengers and hangers-on, the vast enclosure of the palace seemed as crowded and populated as the city itself.

In James Scarth Gale’s History of the Korean People, Harriet Heron Gale, a missionary, observed the pampered life of the crown prince: ‘An army of attendants and maids in long blue silk shirts and yellow jackets hover about his little kingship all day long, powdering his face, painting his lips and finger tips, shaving the top of his head, pulling out his eyebrows, cutting his food into the daintiest of morsels, fanning him with monstrous long-handled fans, never leaving him alone for a moment…even at night guarding and watching by his bedside, singing him to sleep with a queer little lullaby’.

Because the eunuchs were the only ‘male’ staff allowed to live inside the palaces, they were privy to all the secrets of the state, and had considerable influence because they waited upon the king.

Korea & Japan

In 2005 the South Korean president refused to hold a summit meeting with the Japanese prime minister because the latter insisted on visiting the Yasukuni shrine, a memorial to Japan’s war dead that happened to include Class A war criminals from WWII, and because all year long both countries were embroiled over the ownership of an uninhabited pile of rocks in the East Sea, known as Dokdo (that is, Takeshima). Relations between these two countries have not always been difficult and controversial, but certainly they have been for at least four centuries, since Hideyoshi sought to subdue Korea on the way to conquering China.

In 1592, 150,000 well-armed Japanese troops, divided into nine armies, rampaged throughout Korea looting, raping and killing. Palaces and temples were burnt to the ground and priceless cultural treasures were destroyed or stolen. Entire villages of ceramic pots were shipped back to Japan, along with thousands of ears clipped from dead Koreans, which were piled into a mound in Japan, covered over and retained into modern times as a memorial to this war. Fortunately a series of brilliant naval victories by Admiral Yi Sun-sin, using iron-clad warships called geobukseon (turtle ships), helped to turn the tide against the Japanese. Ming troops also arrived from China, and by 1597 the Japanese ambitions to dominate Asia, but only at the cost of massive destruction and economic dislocation in Korea.

Japan’s ambitions to seize Korea resurfaced 300 years later, at the end of the 19th century, when Japan suddenly rose up as the first modern
great power in Asia. Seizing on the Donghak peasant rebellion in Korea, Japan instigated war with China, defeating it in 1895. After another decade of imperial rivalry over Korea, Japan smashed Russia in lightning naval and land attacks, stunning the world because a ‘yellow’ country had defeated a ‘white’ power. Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 and a colony in 1910, with the acquiescence of all the great powers. It was a strange colony, coming ‘late’ in world time, after most of the world had been divided up, and after progressive calls had emerged to dismantle the entire colonial system. Furthermore Korea had most of the prerequisites for nationhood long before most other countries: common ethnicity, language and culture, and well-recognised national boundaries since the 10th century. So the Japanese engaged in substitution after 1910: exchanging a Japanese ruling elite for the Korean yangban scholar-officials; instituting central coordination for the old government administration; exchanging Japanese modern education for the Confucian classics; building Japanese capital and expertise in place of the Korean versions – Japanese talent for Korean talent; eventually even replacing the Korean language with Japanese.

Koreans never thanked the Japanese for these substitutions and did not credit Japan with creations. Instead they saw Japan as snatching away the ancien regime, Korea’s sovereignty and independence, its indigenous if incipient modernisation and, above all, its national dignity. Most Koreans never credit Japanese rule as anything but illegitimate and humiliating. Furthermore the very closeness of the two nations – in geography, in common Chinese civilisational influences, and in levels of development until the 19th century – made Japanese dominance all the more galling to Koreans and gave a peculiar intensity to the relationship, a hate/respect dynamic that suggested to Koreans, ‘there but for accidents of history go we’. The result: neither Korea nor Japan has ever gotten over it. In the North countless films and TV programmes still focus on atrocities committed by the Japanese during their rule, and for decades the descendants of Koreans deemed by the government to have collaborated with the Japanese occupation authorities were subject to severe discrimination. South Korea, however, punished very few collaborators, partly because the US Occupation (1945–48) reemployed so many of them, and partly because they were needed in the fight against communism.

The Independence Hall (p322), in Chungcheongnam-do, is the South Korean shrine commemorating the heroes of the anti-Japanese resistance. March 1 is a huge national holiday, honouring the day in 1919 when the death of ex-king Gojong and the unveiling of a Korean declaration of independence sparked massive pro-independence demonstrations throughout the country. The protests were ruthlessly suppressed, but still lasted for months. When it was over the Japanese claimed that 500 were killed, 1400 injured and 12,000 arrested, but Korean estimates put the casualties at ten times these figures.

A certain amount of Korean collaboration with the Japanese was unavoidable given the ruthless nature of the regime under the Japanese colonialists, and then in the last decade of colonial rule when Japan’s expansion across Asia caused a shortage of experts and professionals throughout the empire. Ambitious Koreans found new careers opening to them just at the most oppressive point in this colony’s history, as Koreans were commanded to change their names and not speak Korean, and millions of Koreans were used as mobile human fodder by the Japanese. Koreans constituted almost half of the hated National Police, and young Korean officers (including Park Chung-hee, who seized power in 1961), and Kim Jae-gyu (who, as intelligence chief, assassinated Park in 1979) joined the aggressive Japanese army in Manchuria. Pro-Japanese yangban were rewarded with special titles, and some of Korea’s greatest early nationalists, like Yi Gwang-su, were forced into public support of Japan’s empire. Although collaboration was an inevitable result of the repression of the Japanese occupation, it was never punished or fully and frankly debated in South Korea, leaving the problem to fester until 2004, when the government finally launched an official investigation of collaboration – along with estimates that upwards of 90% of the pre-1990 South Korea elite had ties to collaborationist families or individuals.

Westernised Japanese and Korean bureaucrats ran the colonial government. They implemented policies that developed industries and modernised the administration, but always in the interests of Japan. Modern textile, steel and chemical industries emerged along with new railroads, highways and ports. Koreans never thanked Japan for any of this, but it left Korea much more developed in 1945 than, say, Vietnam under the French. Still, the main trauma of the occupation was probably psychological rather than political or economic, because Japan tried to destroy the Korean sense of national identity.

The burst of consumerism that came to the world in the 1920s meant that Koreans shopped in Japanese department stores, banked at Japanese banks, drank Japanese beer, travelled on the Japanese-run railway and often dreamed of attending a Tokyo university. By 1940 the Japanese owned 40% of the land and there were 700,000 Japanese living and working in Korea – an enormous number compared to most other countries. But among large landowners, many were as likely to be Korean as Japanese; most peasants were tenant farmers working their land. Upwards of three million Korean men and women were uprooted from their homes and sent to work as miners, farm labourers, factory workers and soldiers abroad, mainly in Japan and Manchukuo, the Japanese colony in northeast China. Over 130,000 Korean miners in Japan – men and women – worked 12-hour days, were paid wages well under what Japanese miners earned, were poorly fed and were subjected to brutal, club-wielding overseers. The worst aspect of this massive

A LONG PROTEST

Since 1992, Kwang Jeung-jo and a handful of other Korean ‘comfort women’, survivors of the WWII camps where they were forced to have sex with Japanese soldiers, have protested outside the Tokyo embassy in Seoul every Wednesday at noon. ‘Our numbers are dwindling every year and nothing has changed,’ she has said. With their young supporters, the old ladies hold up placards demanding an apology and financial compensation. Kwang Jeung-jo has taken part in over 550 protests outside the embassy but has refused to give up. ‘We are still full of anger and they should apologise for what they did to us!’

| 1979 | Park assassinated by his own intelligence chief |
| 1988 | Olympic Games held in Seoul, publication of Lonely Planet’s first guide to Korea |
| 1991 | Agreement signed between Seoul and Pyongyang to make the Korean peninsula nuclear free |
| 1992 | Kim Il Sung elected president, ushering in a more democratic political era |
mobilisation, however, came in the form of ‘comfort women’ – the 100,000 to 200,000 young Korean women who were forced to work as sex slaves for the Japanese armed forces (p37).

It was Korea’s darkest hour but Korean guerrilla groups continued to fight Japan in Manchukuo; they were allied with Chinese guerrillas but Koreans still constituted by far the largest ethnic group. This is where we find Kim Il Sung, who began fighting the Japanese around the time they proclaimed the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932 and continued into the early 1940s. After murderous counter-insurgency campaigns (participated in by many Koreans), the guerrillas numbered only about 200. In 1945 they returned to northern Korea and constituted the ruling elite from that point down to the present.

Japan’s surrender to the Allies in 1945 opened a new chapter in the stormy relationship between the two countries. Thanks to a very soft peace and munificent American support, Japan began growing rapidly in the early 1950s. South Korea got going in the mid-1960s, and today companies and workers in both countries battle each other to produce the best ships, cars, steel products, computer chips, mobile phones, flat-screen TVs and other electronic equipment. The new rivalry is a never-ending competition for world markets, just as sports became another modern-day battleground to decide who is top dog.

The Korean War

In the immediate aftermath of the obliteration of Nagasaki, three Americans in the War Department (including Dean Rusk, later Secretary of State) drew a fateful line at the 38th parallel in Korea, dividing this nation that had a unitary integrity going back to antiquity. The line was supposed to demarcate the areas in which American and Soviet forces would receive the Japanese surrender, but Rusk later acknowledged that he did not trust the Russians and wanted to get the nerve centre of the country, Seoul, in the American zone. He consulted no Koreans, no allies and not even the president in making this decision. But it followed on from three years of State Department planning in which an American occupation of part or all of Korea was seen as crucial to the postwar security of Japan and the Pacific. The US then set up a three-year military government in southern Korea that deeply shaped postwar Korean history.

The Soviets came in with fewer concrete plans for Korea and moved more slowly than the Americans in setting up an administration. They thought Kim Il Sung would be good as a defence minister in a new government, but sought to get him and other communists to work together with Christian nationalist figures like Jo Man-sik. Soon, however, the Cold War rivalry overshadowed everything in Korea, as the Americans turned to Syngman Rhee (an elderly patriot who had lived in the US for 35 years) and the Russians to Kim Il Sung. By 1948 Rhee and Kim had both established separate republics and by the end of the year Soviet troops had withdrawn, never to return again. American combat troops departed in June 1949, leaving behind a 500-man military advisory group. For the only time in its history since 1945, South Korea now had operational control of its own military forces. Within a year a war had broken out and the US took back that control and has never relinquished it, illustrating that the US has always had a civil war deterrent in Korea: containing the enemy in the North and constraining the ally in the South.

In 1949 both sides sought external support to mount a war against the other side, and the North succeeded where the South failed. Its greatest strength came from tens of thousands of Koreans who had been sent to fight in China’s civil war, and who returned to North Korea in 1949 and 1950. Kim Il Sung also played Stalin off against Mao Zedong to get military aid and a critical independent space for himself, so that when he invaded he could count on one or both powers to bail him out if things went badly. After years of guerrilla war in the South (fought almost entirely by southerners) and much border fighting in 1949 (with both sides at fault), Kim launched a surprise invasion on 25 June 1950, when he peeled several divisions off in the midst of summer war games; many high officers were unaware of the war plan. Seoul fell in three days, and soon North Korea was at war with the US. The Americans responded by getting the UN to condemn the attack and gaining commitments from 16 other countries, although Americans almost always bore the brunt of the fighting, and only British and Turkish combat forces had a substantial role. The war badly for the UN at first, and its troops were soon pushed far back into a small pocket around Busan (Pusan). But following a daring landing at Incheon (Inchon) under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, North Korean forces were pushed back above the 38th parallel.

The question then became, ‘was the war over?’ South Korea’s sovereignty had been restored and UN leaders wanted to call it a victory. But for the previous year, high officials in the Truman administration had been debating a more ‘positive’ strategy than containment, namely ‘rollback’ or liberation, and so Truman decided to march north to overthrow Kim’s regime. Kim’s long-time relations with Chinese communists bailed his chestnuts out of the fire when Mao committed a huge number of soldiers, but now the US was at war with China.

By Christmas US forces were pushed back below the 38th parallel, and the communists were about to launch an offensive that would soon retake Seoul. This shook America and its allies to the core. Truman declared a national emergency, and WWII seemed to be at the doorstep. But Mao did not want general war with the US, and did not try to push the UN forces off the peninsula. By spring 1951 the fighting had stabilised roughly along the lines where the war ended. Truce talks began and dragged on for two years, amid massive trench warfare along the lines. These battles created the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the truce talks bequeathed the quonset huts at Panmunjom, where both sides have met periodically ever since to exchange heated rhetoric and where millions of tourists have visited.

At the end of the war, Korea lay in ruins. Seoul had changed hands no less than four times and was badly damaged, but many prewar buildings were left unburned, industries were destroyed and the entire country was massively demoralised, because the blood-

1994
Kim II Sung dies in July

1996
Korea achieves US$10,000 per capita income and elects two former presidents, Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, as rivals

1997
Kim Dae-jung elected

1998
Kim Jong II takes full power on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the regime

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Post-War Period

The 1950s were a time of depressing stagnation for the South but rapid industrial growth for the North. Then, over the next 30 years, both Koreans underwent rapid industrial growth. However, by the 1990s huge economic disparities had emerged. The North experienced depressing stagnation that led finally to famine and massive death, while the South emerged as an economic power ranked 11th in the world, with roughly the GNP of Spain. The North’s industrial growth was as fast as any in the world from the mid-1950s into the mid-1970s, and even in the early 1980s its per capita GNP was about the same as the South’s. But then the South began to build an enormous lead that soon became insurmountable.

This great triumph came at enormous cost, as South Koreans worked the longest hours in the industrial world for decades and suffered under one military dictatorship after another. Corrupt, autocratic rulers censored the media, imprisoned and tortured political opponents, manipulated elections and continually changed the country’s constitution to suit themselves; meanwhile Washington backed them up (except for a brief moment in the 1960s) and never did more than issue tepid protests at their authoritarian rule. Student protests and less-frequent trade-union street protests were often violent, as were the police or military forces sent to suppress them. But slowly a democratisation movement built strength across the society.

When the Korean War ended in 1953, Syngman Rhee continued his dictatorial rule until 1961, when he and his wife fled to Hawaii following widespread demonstrations against him that included university professors demonstrating in the streets of Seoul. Ordinary people were finally free to take revenge against hated policemen who had served the Japanese. Following a military coup later in 1961, Park Chung-hee ruled with an iron fist until the Kennedy administration demanded that he hold elections; he won three of them in 1963, 1967 and 1971 by spreading enormous amounts of money around (peasants would get white envelopes full of cash for voting). In spite of that, a young man named Kim Dae-jung nearly beat him in 1971, garnering 46% of the vote. That led Park to declare martial law and make himself president for life. Amid massive demonstrations in 1979 his own intelligence chief, Kim Jae-gyu, shot him dead over dinner one night, in an episode never fully explained. This was followed by five months of democratic discussion until Chun Doo-hwan, a protégé of Park, moved to take full power and the citizens of Gwangju rebelled in May 1980. That rebellion was put down by such brute and wanton military force (see p254) that it became a touchstone in Korean life, marking an entire generation of young people in university in the 1970s and 1980s.

Finally in 1992 a civilian, Kim Young-sam, won election and began to build a real democracy. Although he was a charter member of the old ruling groups, he surprised everyone by putting Chun Doo-hwan on trial, where he was convicted of treason and monumental corruption. That was a great victory for the democratic movement. One of the strongest labour movements in the world soon emerged, and when former dissident Kim Dae-jung was elected at the end of 1997, all the protests and suffering and killing seemed finally to have been worthwhile. Kim was ideally poised to solve the deep economic downturn that hit Korea in 1997, as part of the Asian financial crisis. The IMF demanded reforms of the conglomerates as the price for its $55 million bailout, and Kim had long called for restructuring the conglomerates and their cronyism with the banks and the government. By 1999 the economy was growing again.

South Korean presidents serve a five-year term and cannot run again, so when President Kim retired his party selected a virtual unknown, Roh Moo-hyun, a self-taught lawyer who had defended many dissidents in the darkest periods of the 1980s. To the surprise of many, including

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Summit between Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Roh Moo-hyun re-elected</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Korea and Japan co-host soccer's World Cup</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Six-party talks begin in Beijing</td>
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In 1998 President Kim Dae-jung began a ‘Sunshine Policy’ aimed at reconciliation with North Korea, if not reunification. Within a year Pyongyang had responded, various economic and cultural exchanges began, and in June 2000 the two presidents met at a summit for the first time since 1945. Often seen by critics as appeasement of the North, this engagement policy was predicated on the realist principles that the North was not going to collapse and so had to be dealt with as it is, and that the North would not object to the continued presence of US troops in the South during the long process of reconciliation if the US normalised relations with the North – something that Kim Jong Il acknowledged in his historic summit meeting with Kim Dae-jung in June 2000. By now tens of thousands of South Koreans have visited the North, big southern firms have joint ventures using northern labour, and Koreans have discovered that after 50 years of division they still have a great deal in common.

Samsung has become the new Sony in the eyes of many and Koreans have taken so quickly to the internet that it is now the most wired nation on earth. The talented younger generation has produced such a dynamic pop culture that hallyu (Korean Wave) is now a big phenomenon in China, Japan and Southeast Asia, and is gaining popularity in the West. Within a relatively short time and after a tumultuous 20th century, Korea has regained its place as one the great nations of the world. The single anachronism in Korea’s progress in the new century is the continuing dispute over the North’s nuclear programmes. The Clinton and Bush administrations had very different policies toward the North, with Clinton’s people talking directly to the North and getting an eight-year freeze on its plutonium facility, and a near buy-out of its medium and long-range missiles in late 2000. The Bush administration refused bilateral talks with the North and placed it in an ‘axis of evil’ along with Iraq and Iran. The North responded by saying it feared a US attack along the lines of the invasion of Iraq and needed a nuclear deterrent to stop it. Deeply worried about the possibility of conflict, China sponsored six-party talks (China, Japan, Russia, the US, and both Koreas) to get Washington and Pyongyang talking and negotiating, but as of this writing the talks have yielded no significant result. The North went ahead with its threat and successfully tested a small (one kiloton) plutonium bomb in October 2006.
THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

Korea is probably the most Confucian nation in Asia. At the heart of the Confucian doctrine are the Five Relationships, which prescribe appropriate behaviour between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, old and young and between friends. People in senior positions should be authoritarian rather than democratic, which is why some teachers and company bosses act arrogantly towards those with lower status. Determining one’s status is usually based on age and occupation.

Establishing a relationship of any kind implies that each person knows who is senior and junior. Based on this awareness, there is an expected behaviour that includes the appropriate usage of honorific language. That’s why gestures are fraught with social landmines: use the inappropriate level of language and you may insult the other person and make yourself look uneducated. People rarely use direct questions, such as “how old are you?”, to learn about someone. Critical information of this nature is generally provided by a third party before any meeting, otherwise it’s a social two-step with indirect methods of enquiry like, “I graduated from university in 1986. When did you finish school?”

Relationships are like a circle. If you’re on the inside, boundaries define obligations and expectations. If you’re on the outside, well, it’s a veritable state of nature. If you haven’t been properly introduced, there is no obligation to be polite, let alone acknowledge the other person’s existence. This worldview explains, in part, why people jump the queue, push their way through the subway door, or drive vehicles with reckless abandon.

Queue jumping and reckless driving are two manifestations of another Korean trait: tenacity. The country’s recovery from the ashes of the Korean War, construction workers on the job seven days a week, or computer game addicts they’re all strands cut from the same cloth, the country’s tenacious, pit-bull spirit. Once Koreans lock onto something, it’s difficult to break away. Life is competitive and everything is taken seriously, be it ten-pin bowling, hiking or overseas corporate expansion.

Koreans are also fanatical about health. The millions of hikers who stream into the mountains at weekends are not only enjoying nature but are also keeping fit. Saunas and hot-spring baths are big attractions. Thousands of health foods and drinks are sold in markets and pharmacies, which stock traditional as well as Western medicines. Health drinks include vitamin-packed canned drinks and alcoholic beverages flavoured with medicinal herbs and roots such as ginseng. Nearly every food claims to be a ‘well-being’ product or an aphrodisiac – ‘good for stamina’ is the local phrase.

Another aspect of the Korean character is generosity. Fighting to pay the bill is a common phenomenon, though the quid pro quo is that one person pays this time and the other fights a little harder to pick up the check next time. If a Korean takes you under their wing it’s difficult to pay for anything. When someone comes back from a holiday they often hand out a small souvenir to everyone. At New Year and Chuseok (Thanksgiving Day), gift-giving reaches fever pitch and stores are so filled with mountains of gift packages of grapes, pears and Spam that you can hardly squeeze inside.

LIFESTYLE

The dream of most people in an urban centre is to buy an apartment equipped with the latest gadgetry, like door locks with fingerprint recognition and high-speed internet. Although the amenities are modern, many people prefer to
THE CULTURE  ••  Lifestyle

THE CULTURAL MINDSET

The cultural divide separating Western and Korean thinking can be synthesized into two questions. Westerners ask why something is the case. In Korea, the great existential question is, "how can I live in society?" The answer comes from Confucius. Confucianism is a social philosophy, a prescription for achieving a harmonious society. Not everyone follows the rules but Confucianism does continue to shape the Korean paradigm. It's what makes Koreans different from Westerners.

- Obedience towards seniors is crucial. Never argue with parents, teachers or the boss. Be polite to older brothers and sisters. Don't start eating before your seniors. Expect a heavy penalty (including physical punishment) if you step out of line.
- Seniors get obedience, but it's not a free ride. Older sisters help out younger siblings with tuition fees and the boss always pays for lunch.
- Education defines a civilized person. A high-school graduate, despite having built a successful business, still feels shame at the lack of scholastic credentials. Students accepted into one of the country's top universities (Seoul National, Korea or Yonsei) are recruited by the best companies, where they quickly settle into fast-track management positions and arranged marriages with equally ambitious spouses.
- Men and women have separate roles. A woman's role is service, obedience and management of household affairs. Men don't do housework or look after children. In the past, women rarely inherited anything and widows couldn't remarry. Until 2005, the courts upheld laws that barred women from being the legal head of a household.
- Status and dignity are critical. Every action reflects on the family, company and country. Don't do anything that would cause your boss to lose face, even in a minor way, and he will always pay the bill when you go out eating and drinking.
- Everything on and beyond the earth is in a hierarchy. Never forget who is senior and who is junior to you.
- Families are more important than individuals. Individuals are an insignificant part of a family that stretches backwards and forwards in time. Everyone's purpose in life is to improve the family's reputation and wealth. No one should choose a career or marry someone against their parents' wishes - a bad choice could bring ruin to a family. Everyone must marry and have a son to continue the family line. For these reasons homosexuality is considered a grossly unnatural act.
- Loyalty is important. A loyal liar is a virtuous person.
- Be modest and don't be extravagant. Only immoral women wear revealing clothes. Be frugal with praise. Life is serious rather than fun.

sleep the old fashioned way, which is on a yo (a mattress, similar to a futon) on the floor. Most modern homes have tables and chairs but many people sit on the floor when family comes over for a special occasion. Floors are heated from underneath by the ondol system.

In 1995, internet access and relatively inexpensive home computers were available but the big explosion in usage didn't occur until the late 1990s, after the government offered telecom companies a W1.5 billion package to upgrade the nation's level of connectivity. Broadband was available but demand didn't surge until the emergence of Starcraft, an online multiplayer game that captured the imagination of virtually every male from 15 to 50. But in order to play well, a fast connection was needed. Enter broadband. Today, three-quarters of all homes have broadband access. Nearly 25% of the population has a home page - called minihompy - on Cyworld, a service provider that sells gimmicky accessories like online wallpaper and music which web page owners use to spruce up their minihompy. Gaming is wildly popular; a Korean game called Lineage is the world's most popular online game.

Except for the important national holidays like Chuseok and Lunar New Year, Koreans rarely entertain at home. Instead, restaurants, cafés and bars are popular places to meet and entertain friends and colleagues. A proper evening of entertainment involves extensive preparation, cooking and cleanup in order to provide the banquet of side dishes and main courses normally associated with a meal. Going out to a restaurant is just a lot easier. It is precisely for this reason that the wife of the first son dreads big holidays: she's expected to prepare and serve a feast for the husband's family.

Most parents are obsessed with their children's educational progress and will spare no expense to push their kids to the top of the class. Every educational decision is geared towards the standardized university entrance exam. Parents of elementary-school children push their kids so that they attend an elite middle school, which increases the probability of getting into a top high school, which increases the odds of doing well on the university entrance exam. Going to school is never enough, however. So middle-income families send their children to after-school private institutes - called hagwon - to study science, math, Korean and English. Families of wealth forgo the institutes and hire private tutores. Kids from lower-income families are left to fend for themselves as best they can.

Preparing for the university entrance exam is a three-year test of endurance. Top high-school students survive on as little as four hours sleep per night while torturing their brains with multiple-choice questions on calculus and the bizarre intricacies of English grammar. It's not all doom and gloom because there's a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow: university. Schools of higher learning are little more than a four-year vacation. There is remarkably little educational value inside the classroom and virtually everyone passes.

The race to the top has created opportunities for expat teachers. Most teach English but there is a demand for professors to teach content in English, especially in business and engineering fields. An expat English teacher can expect to receive W2 million a month as well as free accommodation, return flights, health insurance and a bonus at the end of a one-year contract. It's enough to live on but you won't be banking big money on this wage alone.

In a country like South Korea, where social pressures to conform to a rigid standard of 'normality' are intense, it's not surprising to learn that Koreans are intolerant of homosexual behaviour. Lack of tolerance is hardly unique to Korea, but what is interesting is the lengths to which Koreans will go to deny, dismiss or rationalize the existence of gay and lesbian relationships. For most of mainstream Korea, homosexuality is a) non-existent or so rare that it's hardly worth mentioning (so don't); b) a freakish crime against nature; c) the manifestation of a debilitating mental illness; or d) a social problem caused by foreigners.

There is a small gay and lesbian scene in Seoul, with a pocket of bars in Itaewon. Outside the capital, opportunities to socialize with openly gay people are spotty. Gays and lesbians coming to Korea seeking employment as English teachers are best served by keeping their sexual orientation in the closet at work.

Korean attitudes towards gays and lesbians may be changing if the experience of Hong Suk-chun is an indicator of values. His career as a TV personality seemed bright until he came out in 2000, at which point
he was banished from the airwaves. As the first public figure to come out, his personal life also took a turn for the worse: he was shunned by friends and taunted by strangers. Three years later, he’s back on TV with an active professional career and a public persona moulded by his efforts to change the way people think about homosexuality.

If a single truism could ever capture the essence of life in Korea, it is this: everything is in a constant state of change. As Korea zooms down the highway of modernisation, it often seems this society doesn’t notice the changing landscape. The basic fabric of society – marriage, family and purity of Korean blood – is currently undergoing a shift of tectonic proportions.

The traditional pattern of arranged marriages at a young age organised by parents, with the wife forced to stay home and be subservient to her husband and in-laws, is disappearing fast. A high rate of divorce – now on par with Western countries – coupled with the cost of raising a family has driven down the birth rate. With an average of 1.17 children per woman, it’s the lowest rate in the world.

The number of children is on the decline, but that’s only part of the statistical story. The number of girls is sharply lower than that for boys. In 2002, 109 boys were born for every 100 girls, and by the year 2010 it is estimated that there will be 118 single men at “peak marriageable age” (27 to 30 years old) for every 100 single, eligible women (24 to 27 years old). Most young families want a maximum of two children, and one of each gender is seen as ideal – two sons are acceptable but two daughters less so. Ultrasound scans can be used to discover the sex of any foetus and if female, she will sometimes be aborted. It is illegal for doctors to inform prospective parents of the sex of their foetus, but it does happen in some cases.

Korea’s demographic shift is already being felt in the countryside where many men cannot find a Korean bride. The shortage of local marriageable women has led to the birth of a new industry: imported brides. For a fee, local agencies connect Korean men – mostly from agricultural communities – with brides from poor nations such as Vietnam and the Philippines. In 2005, one in four marriages involved a Korean and a partner from another country.

Koreans are proud of what they see is a pure bloodline (even if historical evidence suggests otherwise). If current marriage trends continue and couples choose to raise a family here, the country will experience a new phenomenon: a multiracial population that will challenge the country’s less-than-tolerant racial attitudes. But attitudes might change everything else in this country does.

**POPULATION**

South Korea’s population is 48.4 million, of whom 10.4 million live in the capital Seoul. The greater-Seoul agglomeration, including Incheon and Gyeonggi-do province, has a population of 23.5 million people, making it the second-largest urban area in the world after Greater Tokyo. The population density of 480 per sq km is one of the highest in the world, but it actually feels more crowded because half of all people live in one of the country’s seven major cities.

Farming and fishing villages are in terminal decline as older people die and young people leave for a more alluring life in the cities. Villages are losing 3% of their population every year, and only 4% of the rural population is under 40 years old. Local governments are essentially powerless to stem the outflow of people who are attracted by educational facilities, health services, entertainment venues and job opportunities that aren’t available in regional communities.

**KOREA AND YOU**

Almost everything you’ll experience in Korea is going to be different. The food, customs and non-Romanised writing system are unlike anything in Western countries. What should you do? Embrace the differences and view your trip as a cultural expedition.

There’s no sugarcoating the fact that travelling in Korea does have its annoyances. Pushy people, absent-minded pedestrians blocking escalators, scooter drivers on the sidewalk who simply don’t care if you move out of the way or not and ‘bali bali’ (hurry, hurry) are part of the street scene. You’ll also encounter a people with unsmiling faces. Koreans are often reserved initially but if you are outgoing they respond in like manner. The key to an enjoyable journey is to be open-minded and positive.

Few people speak English with any degree of communicative competency, so the onus is on you to be prepared. It only takes a few hours to memorise the Korean alphabet along with some numbers and phrases. Many restaurants in larger cities have menus with some English writing but in the rest of the country, well, that’s a different matter. That’s also part of the charm of exploring the countryside. To prepare yourself, study the Food & Drink chapter (p62). Korea is a relatively crime-free country, but precautions should be taken. Women travelling alone at night should, for instance, avoid taking a taxi whenever possible.

Foreigners travelling in Korea are not expected to understand or follow the complex web of rules and subtleties that define social intercourse. But you can make a favourable impression by observing a few, simple rules. When visiting temples, homes, Korean-style restaurants and guesthouses, always remove your shoes and leave them by the front door. Wearing socks or stockings is more polite than bare feet. Korean travellers leave their shoes outside the door of their motel rooms; it’s a quaint custom but probably not appropriate for international travellers with large shoes (eg American size 12) because it’s almost impossible to find a replacement pair if yours should happen to go missing.

Always remember that you are judged by your appearance. Causal clothing is fine in most situations as long as it is neat with a conservative tone. In the hot and humid summer months, men almost never wear hair and blue eyes who dress provocatively may be approached by Korean men enquiring if they are Russian prostitutes.

When visiting someone’s home, it’s customary to bring along a small gift. Fresh fruit (often more expensive than meat) or boxed sets of Spam or tuna are always appreciated. When presented with a gift, your host may at first refuse it. This doesn’t mean that he or she doesn’t want it – the idea is not to look greedy. You should insist that they take it, and they will accept it ‘reluctantly’. For the same reason, the recipient of a gift is not supposed to open the package immediately, but rather put it aside and open it later. When receiving a gift or business card, always use two hands.
Talk to Koreans about the economy and they may use the word depression to describe both the state of national affairs and their emotional quotient. Prior to the economic crisis in 1997 that brought the country to its knees, the robust economy regularly experienced double digit rates of annual growth. Ten years later, Koreans have had to acclimatise themselves to a comparatively modest 5% rate of growth. Although high by Western standards, it's a level that hardly fosters optimism in Korea. Things can't be all bad, however: in 2005, the number of international trips taken by Koreans passed 10 million for the first time.

**SPORT**

**Baseball**

There are eight professional teams in the Korean baseball league, all sponsored by major jaebol (huge, family-run corporate conglomerates). The season generally runs from April to October and each team plays 126 games. A few Korean players have made it to the American Major Leagues, including Park Chan-ho, who had considerable success with the Los Angeles Dodgers. Another pitcher, Kim Byun-hyun, might be remembered for flipping his middle finger towards the hometown Boston Red Sox fans, but he is surely still live forever in the minds of trivia buffs as the man who gave up the home run that moved Bobby Bonds past Babe Ruth on the home run list.

**Basketball**

Ten teams play in the Korean basketball league and matches are played from October to March. Two foreign players (usually Americans) are allowed in each team.

**Soccer**

Soccer is a popular recreational sport played by men and children on the dirt fields at local schools. Outside the World Cup, which gives Koreans a reason to wear red shirts and wave the flag, interest in professional soccer is lukewarm. There are 14 teams in Korea's professional soccer league.

**Siseum**

Siseum is a traditional Korean sport. It's called Korean-style wrestling but it's actually closer to grappling. Two competitors start off kneeling, and then grab the sata (cloth tied around the opponent's waist and thighs). The object is to use leverage to force your opponent to the ground. This near-dead sport lacks both public and corporate support and may soon go the way of the Korean tiger. Choi Hong-man was a siseum champion who left the sport to earn a living as a K-1 fighter.

**Taekwondo**

Taekwondo is recognised around the world as a Korean martial art. Unlike most martial arts that claim to have a history dating back thousands of years, taekwondo has been around for about 50 years. It was cobbled together at the end of WWII by fighters who wanted a sport that, on the surface at least, was unrelated to anything Japanese. Bits were taken from (ahem) karate and blended with lesser-known Korean fighting skills such as taekkyon, which relies primarily on leg thrusts. By the mid-1950s the name 'taekwondo' was born.

**MULTICULTURALISM**

Korea is a monocultural society with marginal hints of multiculturalism. About 800,000 foreigners live in Korea, half of whom are migrant workers toiling for low wages in small and medium-sized factories. Foreign residents tend to congregate in pockets, such as Westerners or Nigerians in Seoul’s Itaewon, Russians on Busan’s Texas St or international tradespeople on Geoje Island, though none qualify as a distinct cultural community.

The Korean monoculture experience has two features: distrust of foreign cultures, which occasionally peaks into hypernationalism; and rigidity. Speak with any Korean adult about Japan and you'll be on the receiving end of an outburst detailing every wrongdoing ever committed by the Japanese during the past 500 years. You'll also hear how any cultural advancement that made its way to Japan first passed through Korea. Elementary school children will tell you they hate Japan, but they don't know why. The American military is also a common whipping horse. The deep distain which many people feel towards the US military is especially intense in these heady days of historical revisionism, as traditional allies – like the US – are seen as barriers to unification, while the North – despite its earlier involvement in the Korean War – is viewed with greater sympathy. It should be noted that Korea's historical grudges or attitudes about the US military are almost always directed at the governmental level; protestors or angry citizens rarely target individual travellers.

Despite the country's attraction, perhaps addiction, to economic and technological change, attitudes about cultural diversity sometimes appear fossilised. A Korean university student with a good command of English was asked if he enjoyed Thai food. His answer was: 'No, I'm Korean. I like Korean food.' This simple exchange encapsulates the Korean conception of multiculturalism: it's un-Korean. It's an age-old idea, a cultural leftover from the days of traditional allies – like the US – are seen as barriers to unification, while the North – despite its earlier involvement in the Korean War – is viewed with greater sympathy. It should be noted that Korea's historical grudges or attitudes about the US military are almost always directed at the governmental level; protestors or angry citizens rarely target individual travellers.

**RELIGION**

There are four streams of spiritual influence in Korea: shamanism, which originated in central Asia; Buddhism, which entered Korea from China in the 4th-century AD; Confucianism, a system of ethics Chinese origin; and Christianity, which first made inroads into Korea in the 18th century. Approximately half the nation professes to be Buddhist or Christian with the remaining 50% uncommitted.

**Shamanism**

Shamanism is an important part of Korean spirituality. It’s not a religion but it does involve communication with spirits through intermediaries known as mudang (female shamans). Shamanist ceremonies are held for a variety of
reasons to cure illness, to ward off financial problems or to guide a deceased family member safely into the spirit world. A gut (ceremony) might be held by a village on a regular basis to ensure the safety of its citizens and a good harvest of rice or fish.

These ceremonies involve contacting spirits who are attracted by lavish offerings of food and drink. Drums beat and the mudang dances herself into a frenzied state that allows her to communicate with the spirits and be possessed by them. Resentments felt by the dead can plague the living and cause all sorts of misfortune, so their spirits need placating. For shamanists, death does not end relationships, it simply takes another form.

On Inwangsan, a wooded hillside in northeastern Seoul, ceremonies take place in or near the historic Guksadang shrine (p.116). Food offerings to the spirits include a pig’s head.

**Buddhism**

When first introduced during the Koguryo dynasty in AD 370, Buddhism coexisted with shamanism. Many Buddhist temples have a samseonggak (three-spirit hall) on their grounds, which houses shamanist deities such as the Mountain God. Buddhism flourished through the unified period and contributed important works such as the Tripitaka Korea (81,340 carved woodblocks), which is at Haeinsa (p.196). Buddhism was persecuted during the Joseon period, when temples were tolerated only in remote mountains. It suffered another sharp decline after WWII as Koreans pursued worldly goals. But South Korea’s success in achieving developed-nation status, coupled with a growing interest in spiritual values and the environment, is encouraging a Buddhist revival. Temple visits have increased and large sums of money are flowing into temple reconstruction.

Today, about 90% of Korean Buddhists belong to the Jogye sect, which claims to have 8000 monks and 5000 nuns. Buddha’s birthday is a national holiday, which includes an extravagant parade in Seoul (p.102).

**Confucianism**

Confucianism is a system of ethics rather than a religion. Confucius (555-479 BC) lived in China during a time of chaos and feudal rivalry known as the Warring States period. He emphasised devotion to parents, loyalty to friends, justice, peace, education, reform and humanitarianism. He also urged respect and deference for those in authority and believed that men were superior to women and that a woman’s place was in the home.

As Confucianism trickled into Korea, it evolved into Neo-Confucianism, which blended the sage’s original ideas with the quasi-religious practice of ancestral worship and the idea of the eldest male as spiritual head of the family. During its 500-year history as Korea’s state philosophy, it became authoritarian and ultraconservative. Today, it continues to shape the way Koreans see the world. For an account of how Confucianism underpins modern Korean values, see p.44.

**Christianity**

Korea’s first significant exposure to Christianity was via the Jesuits from the Chinese imperial court in the late 18th century. The Catholic faith spread quickly – so quickly, in fact, that it was perceived as a threat by the Confucian government and was vigorously suppressed, creating thousands of Catholic martyrs. The Christian ideal of human equality clashed with the neo-Confucian ethos of a rigidly stratified society. Christianity got a second chance in the 1880s, with the arrival of Western Protestant missionaries who founded schools and hospitals and gained many followers.

**WOMEN IN KOREA**

The traditional role of women as housewife and mother is changing rapidly. In the 1980s, only 15% of women in the marrying age bracket – 25 to 29 – were single. Twenty years later, more than 40% of women in that cohort are single. Women who marry are discovering that their lives look quite different from that of their mother’s. Economic necessity is driving women out of the kitchen and into the workforce. Today, 60% of women with a college diploma or university degree are working, while half of all women 15 years and older hold a job, a 50% increase compared to three decades past.

Despite changes in the labour pool, the Korean workplace continues to challenge women. Sexual harassment is prevalent though it is becoming less tolerated thanks to several high profile cases, including one involving a male politician and a female reporter. Although working women put in just as many hours, they earn about one-third less than men. In the professional fields, there is still a glass ceiling based partly on the belief that women in their thirties stay home to raise a family, and therefore should not be promoted over men who are the traditional breadwinners.

**PROVERBS**

Traditional sayings provide an uncensored insight into a nation’s psyche:

- Koreans’ strong belief in the importance of education is reflected in this proverb: ‘Teaching your child one book is better than leaving him a fortune.’
- The hope of all Koreans of humble origins is to improve their lifestyle and be ‘a dragon that rises from a ditch’.
- The blunt, peasant humour of the Korean character is expressed by this poor man’s lament: ‘I have nothing but my testicles.’
- Koreans distrust lawyers and governments and prefer to settle disputes in their own way: ‘The law is far but the fist is near.’
- An unblemished character is a Korean’s most treasured possession. To avoid any suspicion of being a thief, ‘Do not tie your shoelaces in a melon patch or touch your hat under a pear tree.’
- Koreans have often needed guts and determination to overcome defeats and disasters: ‘After the house is burnt, pick up the nails.’

**MEDIA**

**TV**

Like all countries, Korean TV is a wasteland of home-shopping channels, B-grade English-language shows and local programming that fills the void in a lonely person’s life. The only English TV station in the country – excluding the TV arm of the US military, which is available in limited areas – is Arirang, broadcasting a steady stream of cheery, uplifting and thoroughly sanitised news about Korea. Korean comedies are popular and usually involve a team of wannabe celebrities who square off in contests that invariably involve a man carrying a woman sporting high-heel shoes and hot pants.

TV dramas are a refreshing change for compelling plots and superior production quality. Love triangles, revenge, odd twists of fate involving hospitalisation and memory loss, along with stirring music, are packaged into tender, innocent stories that have captivated women across the globe. Squired on by soap operas, the growing international demand for Korean pop culture is called hallyu, or the Korean Wave.
The wave started in 2002 with Winter Sonata, the first Korean TV drama to capture the hearts, and wallets, of Japanese women, but it certainly wasn’t the last. The historical drama Dae Jang Geum tells the story of a woman who worked as a cook in the royal court. Through perseverance she became the first female royal doctor during Joseon. Memory loss plays an important role in Stairway to Heaven, a serious tear-jerker about two sweethearts that become separated. The woman is involved in a car accident, loses her memory and changes her identity. The man comes back to her but his efforts to rekindle the relationship are complicated by another woman, a greedy stepmother and eye cancer.

**TRADITIONAL COSTUMES**

The striking traditional clothing that used to be worn all the time by Koreans is known as hanbok and was as much a part of the local culture as Han·gu·el and kimchi. Traditionally, women wore a loose-fitting short blouse with long sleeves and a voluminous long skirt, while men wore a jacket and baggy trousers. Both sexes wore socks. Cotton replaced hemp as the main clothing material during the Joseon dynasty. In winter, overcoats were worn over padded clothes and people piled on lots of undergarments to keep out the freezing cold. Men sometimes wore a wide waistcoat. The exact designs have varied over the centuries, especially female hanbok, but the clothes have maintained their basic pattern of simple lines without any pockets.

Hanbok-style followed the Confucian principle of unadorned modesty. Natural dyes were used to create plain colours, although some parts of clothing could be embroidered, and the very rich could afford silk. In the Joseon period clothing was strictly regulated and poorer people generally had to wear white. In those days you could tell a person’s occupation and status from the hanbok they wore. For instance, only yangban (aristocrats) could wear the black horsehair hats that were a badge of their rank, while a fancy binyeo (hairpin) in a big wig was a female status symbol. Scholars (invariably male in those days) wore a plain white gown with wide sleeves. At court, government officials wore special black hats and heungbae - embroidered insignia on the back and front of their gowns. Peasants and slaves wore white hemp or cotton clothes and straw sandals.

High-class women hardly ever left their home during the day, and if they did they had to wear a headscarf as a veil and were often carried about in a curtained palanquin by their slaves. Women of lower rank were not veiled and in some respects had more freedom than their wealthier sisters.

In the summer, lightweight, almost transparent ramie - a cloth made from pounded bark - provided cool and comfortable clothing for those who could afford it. Ramie clothing, with its unique texture and look, is making a comeback in the fashion world.

The problem with hanbok is that hardly anyone wears it. Up until the 1960s it was common but urbanisation and Westernisation have made it seem old-fashioned. The only horsehair hats you are likely to see are in dusty folk museums or on the heads of actors in historical TV dramas. Hanbok is usually only worn at weddings, festivals or other special occasions, and by women in some traditional restaurants and residents in touristic folk villages. Men prefer Western suits or casual wear, and most women find hanbok uncomfortable and unflattering: it restricts their movements, has no pockets and is difficult to clean.

Today, fashion designers are reinventing the hanbok for the modern world. In markets and shops you can buy modern or traditional hanbok. The everyday hanbok is reasonably priced, but the formal styles, made of silk and intricately embroidered, are objects of wonder and cost a fortune.

Waistcoats are still popular but only among hikers. Elderly men sometimes wear trilby hats, which are akin to modern hanbok, and ajumma (married women) sport brightly coloured baggy trousers with clashing multicoloured patterned blouses. Men used to have long hair tied in a topknot but King Gojong had his cut off in 1895 and yet another custom gradually died out.


**KOREAN SOAP CLEANS UP IN ASIA**

Winter Sonata was the first Korean TV drama to gain an international following. It’s the story of two high-school sweethearts whose innocent love was quashed by fate and a car accident. The boy discovers that the father of the girl he loves might be his long lost daddy. Overcome by the realisation that he might be in love with his half-sister, he decides to run away, only to be hit by a car. The girl thinks he is dead and moves on with her life. While he’s in hospital, the boy’s mother hires a shrink to erase her son’s painful memories of growing up as an illegitimate child, gives him a new identity and sends him off to America. Fast forward 10 years, and the hero with a new identity is back in Korea and, coincidentally, bumps into his old high-school sweetheart. The balance of the programme is about how the relationship unfolds and how the man with a new identity recalls his past.

Bae Yong-joon plays the man with two identities. He’s well known in Korea and is a certified superstar in Japan where middle-aged women fantasise about having a man like Mr Bae: soft, loving and totally into the relationship. Every shop frequented by Japanese tourists in Korea has larger-than-life images of Mr Bae.

**ARTS**

**Architecture**

The best examples of traditional architecture are in Buddhist temples, with massive wooden beams set on stone foundations, often built with notches instead of nails. Roofs are usually made from heavy clay tiles. The strikingly bold and colourful painted design under the eaves is called dancheong. Modern architecture, in contrast, reflects a keen interest in budget rather than urban design. Large concrete towers that look like shoeboxes define most city landscapes. There are notable exceptions, such as Seoul’s Jongno Tower, a magnificent structure with a Joseon influence. To experience how modern architecture can manipulate space in a playful manner, Seoul’s Leeum Samsung Museum of Art (p104) is a must-see. For sheer power and strength, there is 63 Building on Yeouido (p114), or go even bigger with Tower G in Gangnam, which stands 73 stories.

**Cinema**

The Korean film industry is protected by a screen-quota system. For 40 years cinemas were required to screen Korean films for 146 days per year, but after several years of wrangling and pressure from US interests that figure was dropped in 2006 to 73 days. Korea’s film culture is, however, strong and produces films that may not compare with Hollywood in terms of budget although the quality is often outstanding. Since being launched in 1996, the Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF) has grown quickly to become the most respected festival in Asia, and attracts crowds of film enthusiasts. Visit a DVD bang and you can watch Korean movies with English subtitles in the comfort of your own minicinema.

Some great Korean movies include the following:

- The Host (2006) has everything a great Korean monster movie needs: a beast in the Han River, family devotion and a story that blames the US military for wreaking an environmental disaster. It was a smash hit.
Old Boy (2003) is a disturbing yet brilliant piece of cinema. It's the story of a man imprisoned for 15 years who seeks revenge on his captors.

King and the Clown (2005) is a story of two court jesters during the Joseon dynasty with a homosexual subtext. A surprise Korean blockbuster.

Shiri (1999) is about an elite squad of North Korean terrorists threatening to unleash a dastardly weapon on the South.

Memories of Murder (2003) is based on a true, unsolved case. It's the story of two cops investigating the rape and murder of ten women in Gyeonggi province between 1986 and 1991. This thriller was directed by Bong Joon-ho, who also directed The Host.

JSA (2001) is a thriller directed by Park Chan-wook about a friendship that develops between soldiers on opposite sides of the Demilitarized Zone.

Taegukgi (2004) is a Korean War flick about two brothers with some terrific battle scenes.

Literature
In the 12th century, the monk Iryeon wrote Samguk Yusa (Myths and Legends of the Three Kingdoms), the most important work of early Korean literature. During Joseon, three-line siijo poems based on Chinese models continued to be written in Chinese characters even after the invention of Han-gul in the 15th century. In 1945 there was a sharp turn away from Chinese and Japanese influence of any kind. Western influence increased dramatically and existentialism became the guiding cultural philosophy. A growing body of modern English-language literature deals with Koreans living abroad and their struggles with identity.

War Trash by Hajin (2004) is a gritty novel about the life of a POW during the Korean War from the perspective of an English-speaking Chinese soldier.

Native Speaker by Lee Chang-rae (1996) is a political thriller about a second-generation Korean-American man on the outside looking in. Also take a look at Lee's A Gesture Life (1999), the story of an older Japanese gentleman who uses grace to mask past mistakes as a soldier in Burma while overseeing Korean comfort women.

Appointment With My Brother by Yi Mun-yol (2002) is a brilliant novella about a man from the South who meets his half-brother from the North. It's an emotional and stressful meeting for both of them, a collision of two worlds.

Music
Gugak (traditional music) is played on stringed instruments, most notably the bugeum (12-stringed ither) and haegum (two-stringed fiddle), and on chimes, gongs, cymbals, drums, horns and flutes. Traditional music can be subdivided into three categories: jeong·ak, which varies in thickness and tone, is the most important feature. The painting is meant to surround the viewer and there is no fixed viewpoint. Zen-style Buddhist art can be seen inside and on the outside walls of hundreds of temples around the country. Murals usually depict scenes from Buddha's life.

Stone Buddhist statues and pagodas are the most common examples of ancient sculpture. Cast bronze was also common for Buddhas and some marvellous examples can be seen in the National Museum of Korea (p104). Stone and wooden shamanist guardian posts are common and jeudo has its own unique harubang or 'grandfather stones' (p272). Many towns have sculpture gardens – including Seoul's Olympic Park (p133). Korea's best-known modern sculptor, Baek Nam-jun, who died in January 2006, was a Korean-American artist who used video monitors instead of stone to create inspired, sometimes bizarre, work. One of his larger creations, 'The More the Better,' is an 18m-tower with 1000 video monitors on display at the National Museum of Contemporary Art inside Seoul Grand Park (p141). His experimentation with video began in the 1960s, a time when information technology was beginning to enter the mainstream. Baek's unique artistic representations of technology's interface with society invite parallels with Marshall McCluhan, a media analyst who taught us that 'the medium is the message'.

Painting & Sculpture
Chinese influence is paramount in traditional Korean painting. The brush line, which varies in thickness and tone, is the most important feature. The painting is meant to surround the viewer and there is no fixed viewpoint. Zen-style Buddhist art can be seen inside and on the outside walls of hundreds of temples around the country. Murals usually depict scenes from Buddha's life.

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Other modern artists include painter Kim Whanki, mixed-media artist Min Yong-soon and Kim Tschang-yeul, a painter noted for his dedication to water drops; one of the latter's paintings is at the Leeum Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul (p104). For an international taste of modern art, Gwangju hosts a two-month modern festival every two years (p254).
Pottery
Pottery on the Korean peninsula dates back 10,000 years, but the 12th century is regarded as a special moment in time when skilled artisans turned out celadon earthenware with a green tinge. Nowadays Korean celadon earns thousands of dollars at auction. Pottery fans shouldn’t miss out on a visit to Icheon Ceramic Village (p148) near Seoul and two pottery villages in Jeollanam-do: the Pottery Culture Centre (p266) and the Gangjin Celadon Museum (p262).

Theatre & Dance

DANCE
Popular folk dances include samul-nori (drum dance), talchum (mask dance) and solo improvisational salpuri (shamanist dance). Samul-nori dancers perform in brightly coloured clothing, twirling a long tassel from a special cap on their heads. Good coordination is required to dance, twirl and play a drum at the same time. These dancers appear at every festival.

Talchum dance-dramas were performed by low-class travelling showmen on market days and usually satirised the yangban class. Masks indicated the status of the character – a yangban, monk, shaman, grandmother, concubine or servant – and hid the identity of the performer. Mask dance-dramas involved vigorous leaping, comedy and big gestures, together with shouting, singing and reciting. The performers usually mingled with the audience once their part was over. Today, masks are usually made of wood and every souvenir shop sells them.

There are two major modern dance festivals held in Seoul each year. The MODAFE festival (www.modafe.org) has been operating for over a quarter of a century and usually holds performances in the spring. The Seoul International Dance Festival (www.sidance.org) has been around for about a decade, with local and international performers taking the stage at numerous venues across the city including the Seoul Arts Centre. During the festival, which usually runs in October, there are workshops with noted choreographers.

THEATRE
Korea’s small, modern theatrical experience is primarily based in Seoul. Commercially safe, non-verbal shows like Nanta and Tobekki appeal to an international audience (p133). There’s an experimental scene in Daehangno but it’s entirely in Korean, though the Hakjeon Green Theatre has subtitles on a screen (p133).

KOREAN OPERA
Changgeuk is an opera that can involve a large cast of characters. Another type of opera is pansori, which features a solo storyteller (usually female) singing in a strained voice to the beat of a male drummer. The performer flicks her fan to emphasise dramatic moments. For details on Seoul’s traditional theatres that stage these shows, see p133.
South Korea's economic growth since 1960 has transformed the country from an agricultural to an industrial society. Sprawling apartment-block cities and huge industrial complexes have been constructed, rivers have been dammed and freeways have been bulldozed through the countryside. Authoritarian governments stamped on any opposition to development projects and the environmental impacts were ignored. Fortunately the 70% of Korea that is mountainous and forested is still largely undeveloped, and the hundreds of offshore islands are also unspoilt. For a developed country Korea is surprisingly green, as 90% of the population is packed into high-rise city apartments.

Nowadays politics is more democratic, mayors win votes by promising green policies and citizen environmental groups are no longer ignored by the media. Unpopular construction projects can face fierce local opposition – the government has been searching for a nuclear waste site since 1986 without success, as every site suggested has been met with a storm of local protest.

THE LAND
South Korea's land area is 99,538 sq km, the same size as Portugal and almost as large as North Korea. Its overall length from north to south (including Jejudo) is 500km, while the narrowest point is 220km wide. Forested mountains cover 70% of the land, although they are not very high – Hallasan (1950m) on Jejudo is the highest peak. Many mountains are granite with dramatic cliffs and pinnacles, but there are also impressive limestone caves to visit.

To the south is Jejudo, a volcanic island with spectacular craters and lava tubes, and off the east coast is another volcanic island, Ulleungdo, which is remote, rural and mysterious. Korea is not in an earthquake zone, but there are dozens of mineral-laden oncheon (hot springs) that bubble up through the ground and have been developed into health spas. Most large rivers have been dammed, but the man-made lakes created by them are scenic. World-class ski resorts lure winter-sports enthusiasts into the snow-laden mountainous regions in the colder, northern half of the country.

The plains and shallow valleys are still dominated by irrigated rice fields that are interspersed with small orchards, plastic greenhouses growing vegetables, and barns housing cows, pigs and chickens. In the south are green-tea plantations; on frost-free Jejudo citrus fruit is grown. Despite huge government subsidies and 50% tariffs on agricultural imports, the rural population is greying and shrinking every year. In some villages everyone is over 60 years old. Very few young people want to be farmers and fewer still want to marry a farmer, so foreign wives are being imported from Southeast Asian countries.

The hundreds of sparsely populated islands scattered around the western and southern coasts of the peninsula have a relaxed atmosphere, unspoiled by second-home owners, and a few have attractive sandy beaches. Here you can go way off the beaten track to islands where the inhabitants have never seen a foreigner. The west-coast mud flats are a vast larder of shellfish and crabs that not only support thousands of migrating birds, but also supply countless seafood markets and raw fish restaurants. Reclaiming the mud flats for farmland has become a highly emotive and divisive issue (p60).

ANIMALS
Korea's forested mountains used to be crowded with Siberian tigers, leopards, bears, deer, goral antelopes, wolves and foxes. Unfortunately these animals are now extinct or rare in Korea, and all that hikers are likely to
see are cute little Asiatic chipmunks, squirrels and birds. Efforts are now being made to build up the number of wild animals in the country (see boxed text below). Magpies, pigeons and sparrows account for most of the birds in the towns and cities, but egrets, herons and swallows are common in the countryside, and raptors, woodpeckers and pheasants can also be seen. Although many are visiting migrants, over 500 bird species have been sighted, and Korea has a growing reputation among birders keen to see Steller’s sea eagles, red-crowned cranes, black-faced spoonbills and other rarities.

PLANTS
Northern parts of South Korea are the coldest and the flora is alpine beech, birch, fir, larch and pine. Further south, deciduous trees are more common. The south coast and Jeju are the warmest and wettest areas, so the vegetation is lush. Cherry trees blossom in early spring followed by azaleas and camellias. Korea’s mountainsides are a pharmacy and salad bar of health-giving edible leaves, ferns, roots, nuts and fungi. Many of these wild mountain vegetables end up in restaurant side dishes and sashimi bibimbap (a meal of rice, egg, meat and mountain vegetables). Wild ginseng is the most expensive and sought-after plant.

FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF KOREA
Han Sang-hoon, Director of Jirisan Bear Project

The parks can be enjoyed in every season. In spring cherry blossoms, azaleas and other flowers are a delight; in summer the hillsides and river valleys provide a cool escape from the heat and humidity of the cities; during the summer monsoon, the waterfalls are particularly impressive, in autumn red-coloured leaves and clear blue skies provide a fantastic sight; and in winter snow and icetime the parks into a white wonderland, although crampons and proper clothing are needed for any serious hikes at this time of year. Korean winters can be Arctic, especially if you’re high up in the mountains.

Gaily painted wooden Buddhist temples and hermitages grace nearly every mountain, and river valleys, waterfalls and rocky outcrops abound. It’s not surprising that many visitors rate the national and provincial parks as the country’s top attraction.

Koreans are enthusiastic hikers, so most parks are crowded at weekends, particularly in summer and autumn. Many hikers go hiking every week and like to dress up in smart hiking gear – red waistcoats with plenty of pockets are a long-standing favourite, although ninja black is the latest hiking fashion. Proper hiking boots (not backpacker sandals) are de rigueur for serious hikers, although you may see young women (usually from Seoul) struggling up a mountain trail in high heels. Korean women have the strongest ankles in the world.

Take a bottle of soju (Korean vodka-like drink) or dongdongju (fermented rice wine) and a picnic along. All the parks have tourist villages near the main entrances with restaurants, market stalls, souvenir and food shops, and budget accommodation where big groups can squeeze into a small room. Camping grounds (W3000 for a three-person tent) and mountain shelters (W3000 to W5000 for a bunk) are cheap, but provide only very basic facilities.

JIRISAN NATIONAL PARK ANIMALS
Han Sang-hoon

The last Siberian tiger in Jirisan was captured in 1944. Plenty of people have claimed to have seen a tiger since then, or a footprint or whatever. But there is no definite evidence or proof. Siberian tigers are critically endangered as less than 500 survive in the wild, mostly in east Russia or northeast China, but they are occasionally reported in North Korea. Amur leopards used to be common in Korea but the last wild one was captured in 1962: now there are less than 50 living in the wild around the world.

The grey wolf is probably extinct in the wild in South Korea, as there has been no confirmed sighting of one for over 10 years. However there are a few in North Korea near Paektusan. I know that because I was lucky enough to see one when I was there on a joint project.

I estimate that 20 to 30 red foxes are living in the wild in the South. I’ve seen red foxes three times – in 1993, 1995 and 1997 – twice in Jirisan and once on Namhae island in Gyeongsangnam-do. There are perhaps less than 10 in Jirisan but they’ve never been photographed or filmed. If any visitor sees a fox please photograph it and send me a copy, addressed to the Bear Project at Jirisan National Park HQ.

Sika deer died out in the 1940s. Unhappily musk deer are also on the verge of extinction in Korea despite government protection. However the number of water deer is increasing, which is good news because they are a special sub-species found only in China and Korea. Roe deer can occasionally be found at higher elevations in Jirisan, and many more live on Hallasan on Jeju.

River otter numbers are decreasing due to dam and road construction disturbing their habitats.

Badger numbers are increasing in Jirisan but illegal hunting still goes on and is reducing their numbers elsewhere – badgers are a popular food for women after they’ve given birth. Raccoon dogs were doing well but recently they’ve been hit by a mystery virus. Leopard cats, martens and wild boars also live in the park but are rarely seen.

Dusk or dawn is the best time to see the park’s animals. Find a little-used trail and just stand still, and they will come out if they are around.

Han Sang-hoon, Director of Jirisan Bear Project
### Environmental Issues

Open any newspaper these days and you are likely to come across an environmental controversy of some kind. The NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) syndrome is starting to catch on as Korean society becomes more democratic and Westernised. Two long-running environmental issues concern where to store nuclear waste and the reclamation of mud flats at Saemangeum in Jeollabuk-do.

South Korea relies on nuclear power to generate one-third of the country's electricity, but the government has so far failed to find a permanent storage site for the radioactive waste that continues to be produced. It's all in temporary storage. Many sites have been proposed since 1986 but they have all provoked fierce opposition despite the billions of won in compensation offered to the local communities affected.

The huge US$2 billion Saemangeum project is being constructed on the west coast of the country by a South Korean company and is designed to reclaim 40,000 hectares of mud flats for agricultural use. The project has been controversial from the outset due to environmental concerns, including the loss of habitat for more than 100,000 migratory birds, including black-faced spoonbills and 12 other threatened species.

In February 2005, when the project was completed, thousands of opponents gathered at the site to protest against the destruction of the wetland area. The project has been ongoing for several years and is expected to be completed in 2010.

In response to the Saemangeum protests, the South Korean government has declared 60 sq km of wetlands at the Han River estuary in Gyeonggi-do a protected area. Ten smaller wetland areas (covering a total of 45 sq km) have already been protected.

Green policies have also become a hot potato in Seoul's local politics. The greening of the capital has just started after decades of delays and excuses. The new Ttukseom Seoul Forest (take subway line 2 to Ttukseom subway station) is a huge park with high peaks that is popular with serious hikers (East p237 and West p248). It is a giant park with high peaks that is popular with serious hikers.

Another small way that tourists can help is by refusing unnecessary packaging. A few stores such as E-Mart and Buy The Way are already discouraging the use of plastic bags by charging for them.

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FOOD & DRINK  ••  Staples & Specialities

Korea has one of Asia’s richest culinary traditions, and sampling all the quirky delights of the local food and drink is one of the joys of visiting the country. Listings in this chapter focus on Korean food, but Western fodder is nearly always available in bakeries, convenience stores and pizza and fast food outlets, which are numerous and easy to spot.

A typical Korean meal is based around boiled rice, soups and as many as a dozen side dishes, called banchan, which normally include Korea’s national dish, kimchi (pickled or fermented vegetables). Diners in Korea are not expected to finish everything – in fact if you do, the side dishes will probably be refilled until you burst!

Garlic, ginger, green onion, black pepper, sesame oil, soy sauce and vinegar abound. But the big spice is chilli pepper, which usually takes the form of gochujang (red pepper paste). A good general rule is red = spicy.

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

Bibimbap
Bibimbap is a tasty and foreigner-friendly mixture of vegetables, meat and an egg on top of rice. Mix it all together with your spoon before digging in. If you don’t want it too spicy, remove some of the gochujang before mixing. Bibimbap is usually served with soup but don’t mix that in too! Sanchae bibimbap is made with mountain greens while dolsot bibimbap is served in a stone hotpot. Vegetarians can usually order it without meat or egg.

Bulgogi
This signature Korean meal is thin slices of beef, marinated in sweetened soy sauce, that are cooked on a small barbecue grill on your table. To eat, take a lettuce or other leaf, put a slice of meat on it, add garlic, sauce or side dish items, wrap it up and enjoy. Bulgogi deobap is slices of beef served on a hotplate with vegetables and rice.

Chicken
Samgyetang is a small chicken stuffed with glutinous rice, red dates, garlic and ginseng and boiled in broth. It’s commonly eaten in summer, often accompanied by ginseng wine. Hantang or bakseok is similar but served with medicinal herbs. Dakgebi is pieces of chicken, cabbage, other vegetables and finger-sized pressed-rice cakes, which are grilled at your table in a spicy sauce.

Even zingier is jijim dak, a hot-hot-hot mixture of chicken pieces, transparent noodles, potatoes and other vegetables. On almost every street, informal bars serve a plate of fried or barbecued chicken along with pitchers of beer.

Desserts
As in other Asian nations, desserts are not traditional in Korea, but nowadays Western-style bakeries and yogurt and ice cream parlours have spread just about everywhere. Can’t find one? Pop into a convenience store.

Sometimes at the end of a meal, you’ll be served a few pieces of fruit plus a tea or soju, a refreshing drink made from cinnamon and ginger, served cold. Free self-serve coffee is provided in some restaurants.

GRILL YOUR OWN
If there’s any food for which Korea is famous worldwide, it’s barbecue. Barbecue restaurants typically have a grill set up on the table, on which you cook beef ribs (galbi), thin slices of beef (bulgogi), pork (samgyeopsal), chicken (dak), seafood or vegetables. Often your server will get you started by putting the meat on the grill; after that, generally you’re on your own to turn the meat and remove it when cooked. All are delicious, but samgyeopsal is belly pork and tends to be fatty.

The meals usually include lettuce and sesame leaf wraps. Take a leaf in one hand (or combine two leaves for different flavours) and with your other hand use your chopsticks to load it with meat, sauces and side-relishes to taste. Then roll it up into a little package and eat it in one go. Tip: use half a leaf for a more bite-sized package. The garlic can be eaten raw or cooked on the grill. Rice isn’t usually served, so some diners order naengmyeon (buckwheat noodles in an icy broth) as a kind of dessert.

Barbecue meals are usually only available in servings of two or more. Sharing food goes to the heart of Korean life and culture, which is still communal. In Korea nobody likes to eat alone.

WE DARE YOU

Beondaeji Silkworm larvae
Bosintang Dog meat soup
Dogantang Cow tongue soup
Mettujuji Fried grasshoppers
Sannakji Live baby octopus
Yukhoe Seasoned raw minced meat

Japanese-style dinner at Hanjungro or it’s more akin to a Western buffet, and is called a hanjeongsik. It's a good way to sample a wide range of Korean food at one sitting. Like barbecue dishes, hanjeongsik almost always needs to be ordered for two or more people. In the past only the king was allowed twelve side dishes, but now anyone can order it.

Hoejeot (Fish & Seafood)
Haemul (seafood) and seongeon (fish) are generally served raw, but can also be broiled or grilled. Koreans love raw fish and seafood despite the high prices. When fish is served sushi-style (raw over rice) it’s called chabap. Sashimi (without the rice) is called saengseonhoe and is often served with side dishes and followed by a red-pepper fish-bone soup. Another preparation is hoedeopbap, which is like bibimbap except that it contains raw fish instead of egg and minced meat. Restaurants near the coast serve squid, barbecued shellfish, octopus and crab.

Jeon
These savoury pancakes usually have seafood and spring onions, but other ingredients are possible. Another kind of pancake is bindaetteok, which is made from freshly ground mung beans and has a meat or seafood filling, along with vegetables.
**KIMCHI**

The national dish is served at virtually every Korean meal, whether it’s breakfast, lunch or dinner. The most common type is banchu kimchi, made from cabbage mixed with garlic and gochujang and left to pickle for months. But kimchi can be made from radish, cucumber and just about any other vegetable, even broccoli. Some varieties are aged for hours, others for years. Some are meant to be eaten in tiny morsels or wrapped around rice, while others, such as bossam kimchi, are flavour-packed little packages containing vegetables, pork or seafood. Belying its fiery reputation, mul kimchi is a fairly bland cold soup, similar to gazpacho. Many regions, restaurants and families have their own distinctive style of kimchi, and recipes are jealously guarded and handed down from generation to generation.

Traditionally, kimchi was made to preserve vegetables and ensure proper nutrition during the harsh winters. Even now, late-September to early December is the season for gimjjang, or making your own kimchi.

Kimchi dates back to at least the 13th century, although red pepper was added only in the 17th century. Nowadays most kimchi is bought from stores, and some is even imported from China. It isn’t just for winter anymore – it’s eaten year-round to add zest and a long list of health benefits to just about every meal. Consumption of kimchi is reducing but still stands at 25kg per person per year.

Kimchi is the one thing that no Korean kitchen can be without. Yet kimchi storage can be problematic. The temperature must be kept just so – if it’s too warm, the kimchi can over-ferment; too cold, and it will freeze. That’s to say nothing of the smell it imparts to other foods in the fridge. Kimchi is no longer buried or kept in big jars in the yard, so instead many families invest in a special kimchi refrigerator.

**Jjigae**

These stews are thicker than soups, often spicy, and served in a stone pot. Popular versions are made with dubu jjigae (tofu), doenjang jjigae (soybean paste) and kimchi. They’re served bubbling hot, so let them cool down before eating!

**Juk**

Juk is rice porridge, which comes mixed with almost anything: savoury versions include ginseng chicken, mushroom, abalone or seafood, while sweeter incarnations include pumpkin and red bean. The thick, black rice porridge is sesame. Look out for small, modern chain restaurants that specialise in juk meals, perfect if you are after a healthy, filling and fairly bland meal.

**Korean Breakfasts**

Traditional Korean breakfasts are centred on soup, rice and kimchi. If that sounds like lunch or dinner, it is, except with fewer side dishes. For something freshly baked head to a bakery, or for sandwiches, bakery items or coffee just pop into the nearest convenience store. Both are open early. Cornflakes are available in grocery and convenience stores. As in other countries, many young people make do with a quick cup of coffee and a fry.

**Noodles**

A popular noodle dish is naengmyeon, buckwheat noodles in an icy beef broth, garnished with finely chopped vegetables and half a boiled egg – add red pepper paste or gyeran (mustard). It’s especially popular in hot weather, and is often eaten after galbi (beef ribs) or other meat dishes as a kind of dessert.

Bibimb naengmyeon tops the noodles (still cold but not in soup) with the vegetables and other ingredients found in bibimbap. Japchae are clear noodles made from sweet potatoes, stir-fried in sesame oil with strips of egg, meat, mushrooms, carrots and other vegetables. It used to be served with Joseon monarchs.

Kalguksu are thick wheat noodles in a bland, creamy vegetable broth, while ramyeon is instant noodles served in fiery soup. A Koreanised Chinese dish is japchae, noodles in a bland brown sauce that children (and nostalgic adults) adore.

**Soups**

Soup (tang or guk) are a Korean speciality that vary from spicy seafood and crab soups such as haemultang to bland broths such as galbitang or soeoljeongtang. Gamjatang is a spicy peasant soup with meaty bones and a potato. Hajangguk (bean-sprout soup) is said to cure hangovers. Some soups are served hot and some cold, even icy. Tip: if a soup is too spicy, tip in some rice.

**Drinks**

Virtually every restaurant serves good old mul (water), either filtered or bottled, when customers arrive. If not, look for the self-serve water dispenser.

Tea is also popular. Nokcha (green tea) is grown in modest quantities and you can visit green tea plantations in jeju (p291) and jeollanam-do (p262), but black tea can be hard to find. Many other health teas are not made from the tea plant and include boricha (barley tea), omijja (five-flavour berry tea), yujcha (ginseng tea). They are served hot or cold.

For a country with a tea tradition, Korea has taken to coffee in a big way. In addition to coffee shops, there are vending machines from W300 per cup, and in some restaurants you can serve yourself coffee. Sorry, you’re probably out of luck but it never hurts to ask.

Bottled and canned soft drinks are everywhere, and you’ll find some unique Korean choices like grape juice with whole grapes inside, and sikhye, rice punch with rice grains inside.

Health tonics, made with fibre, vitamins, ginseng and other medicinal herbs, are available in shops and pharmacies. They’re usually sold in small (100ml) glass bottles. The top two brands are Baccus D (박카스 D), which is only sold in pharmacies, and Vita 500 (비타 500).

**Sauces Side Dishes**

Korean cuisine is well-known for banchan (side dishes), which are generally spicy and accompany nearly every meal. At least one kimchi (cabbage, radish or cucumber) will be included, but other common ones are green vegetables, acorn jelly, quail eggs, bean sprouts, small clams, anchovies, tofu, lettuce, seaweed, spinach, garlic or just about anything the chefs can dream up. It’s always fun to try a new one.

The side-dish system is wasteful because lots of food is thrown away. The government periodically tries to reform it, but Koreans are innately conservative and resist any meddling with their culinary culture.
FOOD & DRINK ••  Where to Eat & Drink

If you're looking for something stronger, maekju (Korean beers) are mainly lager, but recently dark beers have started appearing, and Guinness and other imported beers are increasingly available. A few microbreweries have started up, mainly in Seoul (p130). Wine is much more common than it used to be, although the choice is limited.

Soju is the local firewater (at least 20% alcohol) and is often likened to vodka in that it's clear, nearly flavourless and cheap to produce. For sale even in grocery and convenience stores, it comes in many flavours, including lemon, maple, cherry and bamboo. Innovative bartenders have been known to mix it with just about everything, including yogurt.

A tempting range of traditional alcoholic drinks are brewed or distilled from grains, fruits, roots and anything else to hand. Koreans could make alcohol even out of rocks. Each region has its own local specialities – try boldunja (made from berries), plum wine, insamju (made from ginseng) or whatever takes your fancy.

Makgolli, also known as dongpongju, is a traditional brew made from unrefined, fermented rice wine that has a cloudy appearance and a sweetish yoghurt flavour. It has a much lower alcohol content than soju and is traditionally served in a kettle and poured into small bowls. ‘Ganbei!’ (‘Cheers!’)

CELEBRATIONS WITH FOOD
Tteok (rice cakes) are associated with many traditional Korean festive occasions, and small family-run tteok shops are a common sight. Lunar New Year is celebrated with tteokguk (rice-cake soup); Chuseok (Thanksgiving) with songpyeon (crescent-shaped rice cakes with red-bean filling); and the winter solstice with patjuk (red-bean porridge with rice-cake balls).

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK
Restaurants
Sikdang is the general word for restaurant in Korean. Beyond major cities, few restaurants have English menus, but many have food photos or plastic food replicas.

Many Korean meals, like tteokbokki, are associated with various traditional Korean festive occasions, and small family-run tteok shops are a common sight. Lunar New Year is celebrated with tteokguk (rice-cake soup); Chuseok (Thanksgiving) with songpyeon (crescent-shaped rice cakes with red-bean filling); and the winter solstice with patjuk (red-bean porridge with rice-cake balls).

Why Metal Bowls & Chopsticks?
Given that Korea has one of the world’s great ceramic-making traditions and is surrounded by nations which use ceramic bowls and chopsticks made of plastic or wood, many visitors find it surprising that Korea uses stainless-steel bowls, dishes and utensils.

The most common explanation dates back to the Joseon dynasty, when the kings, ever vigilant about security, would insist on using silver chopsticks and bowls because silver would tarnish in the presence of poisons. The custom was carried on and was passed down to the common people, although they could only afford baser metals. Metal is also easy to clean and hard to break.
**DINING DOS & DON'TS**

**Dos**
- Do take off your shoes in traditional restaurants where everyone sits on floor cushions. You may sit with your legs crossed or to the side. Tip: sit at a table near a wall so you can lean back against it.
- Do pour drinks for others if you notice that their glasses are empty. It's polite to use both hands when pouring or receiving a drink.
- Do ask for gawi (scissors) if you are trying to cut something and your spoon won't do it.

**Don'ts**
- Don't start or finish your meal before your seniors and elders.
- Don't touch food with your fingers, except when handling leaves for wrapping other foods.
- Don't try to eat rice with chopsticks – use a spoon.
- Don't pick up bowls and plates from the table to eat from them.
- Don't leave your chopsticks or spoon sticking up from your rice bowl. This is done only in food ‘presented’ to deceased ancestors.
- Don't blow your nose at the table.
- Don't tip.

**VEGETARIANS & VEGANS**

Despite Korea's meat, fish and seafood reputation, there's enough variety of vegetables that vegetarians can usually find something. Plain, boiled rice is served with many meals and most side dishes are vegetables, although some are mixed with meat, fish or seafood. The same goes for kimchi, and watch out for soups and stews which are often made with beef or seafood stock. If all else fails, you can order bibimbap minus any ingredients you don’t eat, or else eat rice with side dishes.

**EATING WITH KIDS**

Fill children up with jjajangmyeop (noodles with a dark brown sauce), donkeoseo (cutlets), juk (rice porridge), barbecue chicken, sandwiches, bakery items, hot-teak and ice cream. Food courts have a wide choice of food and often have play areas, and Western fast food joints are usually around as a bribe or last resort.

**HABITS & CUSTOMS**

Typically, you'll order a main course, such as bulgogi, and it will come with rice, soup, kimchi and other side dishes selected to create balance in terms of saltiness, spiciness, temperature and colour combinations. Don't feel guilty about leaving food as no one is expected to finish all their side dishes.

In traditional restaurants diners sit on thin cushions on the floor (the ondol heating system is beneath). Tip: take two or three cushions to be more comfortable. Remove your shoes, putting them on shoe racks if provided.

If the table is not set, there will be an oblong box containing metal chopsticks and long-handled spoons.

Meals are generally informal and eaten communally, so most dishes are placed in the centre, and diners eat a bit from one dish, a bite from another, a little rice, a sip of soup, mixing spicy and bland in whatever way they want. The main point is always to enjoy the food.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAENGSEON-GUI</strong></td>
<td><strong>saengseon-gui</strong></td>
<td><strong>생선구이</strong></td>
<td>grilled fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAUGUI</strong></td>
<td><strong>saugui</strong></td>
<td><strong>새우구이</strong></td>
<td>grilled prawns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GONGIBAP</strong></td>
<td><strong>gongibap</strong></td>
<td><strong>공기밥</strong></td>
<td>steamed rice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SAEUGUI</strong></td>
<td><strong>saeugui</strong></td>
<td><strong>새우구이</strong></td>
<td>grilled prawns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GULBAP</strong></td>
<td><strong>gulbap</strong></td>
<td><strong>굴밥</strong></td>
<td>oyster rice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SAMCHIGUI</strong></td>
<td><strong>samchigui</strong></td>
<td><strong>삼치구이</strong></td>
<td>grilled mackerel</td>
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<td><strong>honghapbap</strong></td>
<td><strong>홍합밥</strong></td>
<td>oyster rice</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>ureok</strong></td>
<td><strong>우럭</strong></td>
<td>raw fish</td>
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<td><strong>OJING·EO DEOPBAP</strong></td>
<td><strong>ojing·eo deopbap</strong></td>
<td><strong>오징어덮밥</strong></td>
<td>squid rice</td>
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<td><strong>SAMGAK GIMBAP</strong></td>
<td><strong>samgak gimbap</strong></td>
<td><strong>삼각김밥</strong></td>
<td>assorted ingredients with rice and wraps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BOSINTANG</strong></td>
<td><strong>bosintang</strong></td>
<td><strong>보신탕</strong></td>
<td>dog-meat soup</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MAKTANG</strong></td>
<td><strong>maktag</strong></td>
<td><strong>막탕</strong></td>
<td>buckwheat noodles with vegetables</td>
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<td><strong>JOKBAK</strong></td>
<td><strong>jokbak</strong></td>
<td><strong>쪽발</strong></td>
<td>steamed pork hocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HAEMULTANG</strong></td>
<td><strong>haemultang</strong></td>
<td><strong>해물탕</strong></td>
<td>spicy assorted seafood soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NORANG GOGUMA</strong></td>
<td><strong>norang goguma</strong></td>
<td><strong>누룽지</strong></td>
<td>crispy burnt-rice globe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BOSSAM</strong></td>
<td><strong>bossam</strong></td>
<td><strong>보쌈</strong></td>
<td>pork with cabbage and lettuce, steamed pork with kimchi and lettuce wrap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOUP</strong></td>
<td><strong>soup</strong></td>
<td><strong>soup</strong></td>
<td>soup</td>
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<td><strong>NOODLES</strong></td>
<td><strong>noodles</strong></td>
<td><strong>noodles</strong></td>
<td>noodles</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RICE DISHES</strong></td>
<td><strong>rice dishes</strong></td>
<td><strong>rice dishes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MEAT DISHES</strong></td>
<td><strong>meat dishes</strong></td>
<td><strong>meat dishes</strong></td>
<td>meat dishes</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>kimchi</strong></td>
<td>kimchi</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>snacks</strong></td>
<td>snacks</td>
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<td><strong>DRINKS</strong></td>
<td><strong>drinks</strong></td>
<td><strong>drinks</strong></td>
<td>drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTHER</strong></td>
<td><strong>other</strong></td>
<td><strong>other</strong></td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FOOD & DRINK**  ••  Eat Your Words
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOOD &amp; DRINK</th>
<th>Eat Your Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**DONGCHIMI**
- **dongchimi**
- **동치미**
- **pickled radish**

**DONKASEU**
- **donkkaseu**
- **돈까스**
- **pork cutlet with rice and salad**

**DOTORIMUK**
- **dotorimuk**
- **도토리묵**
- **acorn jelly**

**GUJEOLPAN**
- **gujeolpan**
- **구절판**
- **eight snacks and wraps**

**HANJEONGSIK**
- **hanjeongsik**
- **한정식**
- **Korean-style banquet**

**JEONGSIK**
- **jeongsik**
- **정식**
- **meal with lots of side dishes**

**JUK**
- **juk**
- **죽**
- **rice porridge**

**KONGNAMUL GUKBAP**
- **kongnamu gukbap**
- **콩나물국밥**
- **spicy rice bean sprout porridge**

**MANDU**
- **mandu**
- **만두**
- **filled dumplings**

**OMEURASEU**
- **omeuraseu**
- **오므라이스**
- **omelette with rice**

**PAJEON**
- **pa jeon**
- **파전**
- **green-onion pancake**

**SANGCHARIM**
- **sangcharim**
- **산차림**
- **banquet of meat, seafood and vegetables**

**SHABU SHABU**
- **shabu shabu**
- **샤브샤브**
- **DIY beef and vegetable casserole**

**SIGOL BAPSAng**
- **sigol bapsang**
- **시골밥상**
- **countryside-style meal**

**SIKSA**
- **siksa**
- **식사**
- **budget-priced banquet**

**SUJEONGGWANG**
- **sujebi**
- **수제비**
- **dough flakes in shellfish broth**

**SUNDAE**
- **sundae**
- **순대**
- **noodle and vegetable sausage**

**SUNDUBU**
- **sundubu**
- **순두부**
- **uncurdled tofu**

**TWIGIM**
- **twigim**
- **튀김**
- **seafood and vegetables fried in batter**

**WANGMANDU**
- **wangmandu**
- **왕만두**
- **large steamed dumplings**

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**DRINKS**

**Nonalcoholic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRINK</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cha</td>
<td>tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daehaCha</td>
<td>red date tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hangha</td>
<td>black tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isae</td>
<td>juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keopi</td>
<td>coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nukeopi keopi</td>
<td>decaffeinated coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mul</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>redha</td>
<td>green tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>okha</td>
<td>barley tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saengganeha</td>
<td>ginger tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saengu</td>
<td>mineral spring water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seoltang neo-eoseo/ppaegeo</td>
<td>with/without sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sikhye</td>
<td>rice punch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>songhwaCha</td>
<td>herbal tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sjanggwa</td>
<td>cinnamon/ginger punch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sungnyung</td>
<td>burnt rice tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>su</td>
<td>milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sujeonggwang neo-eoseo/ppaegeo</td>
<td>with/without milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yujha</td>
<td>citrus tea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alcoholic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DRINK</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chungju/makgeolli</td>
<td>fermented rice wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insamju</td>
<td>ginseng liqueur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maekju</td>
<td>beer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saengsu</td>
<td>mineral spring water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sujeonggwa</td>
<td>cinnamon/ginger punch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sujeonggwa neo-eoseo/ppaegeo</td>
<td>with/without milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yujha</td>
<td>citrus tea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mountainous Korea is an outdoors destination that is especially attractive to hikers, with well-signed and well-maintained footpaths around the forest-covered slopes of the national and provincial parks that are served by regular bus services. Every weekend the parks fill up with Koreans of all ages who go there to enjoy nature, burn off calories and visit Buddhist temples. Fresh spring water is available at the temples and along most of the hikes, and country-style restaurants and food stalls cluster around the park entrances.

If two wheels rather than two feet is your style, cycling opportunities abound in tourist areas. Hiring a bicycle is often the best way to tour small offshore islands, and riverside cycleways in Seoul, Daejeon, Jeonju and other cities are also highly recommended. Mountain biking is yet to catch on, but you can link up with expat mountain-bike-club members in Seoul.

In July and August the nation's beaches are officially open and holiday-makers flock to the coasts to relax, eat raw fish and have fun. Korea is not known as a scuba-diving location, yet Jeju is outstanding, and all along the eastern and southern coasts are virtually virgin sites just waiting to be explored. Adrenaline junkies can go head to head with sharp-toothed sharks in Busan Aquarium.

Although mainly indoor, Korea's hot-spring spas and saunas are a health-and-beauty bargain that are popular 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can simmer in ginseng, green-tea and mud baths as well as bake in mugwort and jade saunas.

Korea is 70% hills and mountains and in winter the snowy slopes tempt skiers and snowboarders outdoors to Korea's fast-improving ski resorts. Ice skating outside Seoul City Hall is another great winter activity. Contact United Service Organizations (p159) in Seoul for ski package trips in winter as well as day-long water-rafting trips in summer (US$45).

CYCLING & MOUNTAIN-BIKING
Almost every city with a waterfront and hordes of tourists has a stand where bikes can be hired. Most are geared towards leisure riders with couples and families in mind, so expect well-marked, paved, flat trails designed for pleasure rather than intense cross-country exhilaration. To hire a bike, some form of ID is usually required; a cycle helmet or lock is almost never included. If you're looking for off-road mountain-bike trails in Seoul, there are a couple of useful websites with decent maps. Try www.mtbk-adventure.com or www.angelfire.com/ga/achamtb.

People who value full mobility in their limbs rarely venture onto Seoul's streets with a bike between their legs, but the bicycle trails along the Han River (p114) are ideal for a comfortable, car-free family outing. Watch out for speeding in-line skaters. Bikes can be hired on Yeouido, which is a good starting point for a 90-minute, 7km sprint to the World Cup Stadium or a more ambitious 38km ride to Olympic Park. The paved paths are dotted with parks, sports fields, gardens and the occasional snack bar. Further east and north of the river, bikes of similar quality and price can be hired at Ttukseom Resort.

Travellers in good shape can circumvent Jeju Island (p279) pedalling 100,000 m. The 200km pedal trek around the oval island takes about three to five days depending on the condition of the road and your legs. Highway 12 runs around the entire island and has bicycle lanes on either side. Shore roads also have bike lanes but it's a less developed system and not always bike-friendly. The inland
Hiking
Taekwondo might be the country's national sport, but hiking surely ranks as the number-one leisure activity. Over 1700 trails stream across the country with everything from easy half-day walks to strenuous mountain-ridge treks. Maybe it’s the intoxicatingly fresh air, or the occasional Soju pick-me-up, but Korea’s hiking trails are frequented by some of the country's most hospitable people.

Most of the exhilarating mountain trails, like those on Jirisan and Seoraksan, are located in the country's outstanding national parks. Basic shelters are available but expect a full house during holidays, summer months and autumn weekends. If you’re planning a major overnight mountain trek, shelter reservations two weeks in advance are recommended. About one-quarter of the trails may be closed at any one time to allow the mountain to regenerate itself. Visit the National Park Authority’s website (www.knps.or.kr) for contact numbers, trail-closure information and online reservations.

Hallasan
Hiking up this ancient volcano is a highlight of any Jejudo trip. The best plan is to take the Eorimok trail for outstanding views of dwarf fir trees, hillsides of springtime azalea and the occasional midget deer. After 2½ hours you should reach Witseoreum shelter (1700m), which has no accommodation but sells pot noodles. Hallasan's peak and the crater lake are up the trail but it’s been closed for a lengthy period to allow for plant regeneration. On the way down, try the Yeongsil trail for a spectacular two-hour hike to the bus stop. The climb up is only 700m and many young children reach the top, but it is tiring and you should prepare for bad weather, which can arrive faster than a KTX train.

Nearest town: Jeju-si (p290)
Entrance: adult/youth/child W1600/600/300
Information: 064 713 9950

Yeonhwado
Located off the picturesque Tongyeong coast in Gyeongsangnam-do, this undeveloped, and largely undiscovered, island is a splendid escape for travellers looking for a leisurely three-hour hike. From the ferry terminal, walk left and follow the cement path uphill past a temple. On the mountain ridge, a dirt trail cuts left with views of a cascading rock formation that dribsbiles into the ocean; locals ride amid horse drawn carriages, while looking out for waterbirds nesting in the reeds. In the late afternoon, cruise on two wheels along the shores of Uiam Lake for a pedal-stopping sunset view. Bikes can be hired outside the lake's tourist information centre (bikes per hr/day W4000/7000)

Diving
Korea has a surprisingly active scuba-diving scene and the best place to start is on the web:

Acoustic Frontier (www.aquaticfrontier.com) Runs dive certificate courses for $300.

Deep Blue Quest (www.deepbluequest.com) An English-speaking scuba-diving club in Seoul that organises PADI certificate courses and week-long trips north for all skill levels.

Seoul Scuba (www.seoulscuba.com) Atopst with the low-down on courses, diving clubs and dive sites in Korea, including diving with sharks in Ulleung Aquarium.

Mudeungsan Provincial Park
One of the country's higher peaks, Cheonwangbong (1187m), is in this popular park that is easy to reach from Gwangju and fills up with cheery hikers every weekend. A myriad of trails leads up to the peak, some of which can be challenging. On the way up, you pass an art gallery and the Cheonwangbong green-tea plantation. If the steep hike to the tea bushes looks uninviting, join the masses marching over to Yeongwado for outstanding views of dwarf fir trees, hillsides of springtime azalea and the occasional midget deer. After 2¼ hours you should reach Witseoreum shelter for outstanding views of dwarf fir trees, hillsides of springtime azalea and the occasional midget deer. After 2¼ hours you should reach Witseoreum shelter (1700m), which has no accommodation but sells pot noodles. Hallasan's peak and the crater lake are up the trail but it’s been closed for a lengthy period to allow for plant regeneration. On the way down, try the Yeongsil trail for a spectacular two-hour hike to the bus stop. The climb up is only 700m and many young children reach the top, but it is tiring and you should prepare for bad weather, which can arrive faster than a KTX train.

Nearest town: Tongyeong (p242)
One-way ferry ticket: W7700
Information: http://tongyeong.go.kr/eng/

Responsible Hiking
- Pay any fees required by local authorities.
- Be sure you are healthy and feel comfortable walking for a sustained period.
- Obtain reliable information about route conditions.
- Be aware of local laws, regulations and etiquette about wildlife and the environment. Do not hike closed trails.
- Walk only on trails within your realm of experience.
- Be aware that weather conditions can change quickly and seasonal changes alter trails. These differences influence the way walkers dress and the equipment they carry.
schools of fish, and dolphins that swim by now and again. The subtropical
ecology around Jejudo (like the land where pineapples and oranges grow
nondivers can do it after a two-hour training session, and there’s an experi-
enced English-speaking guide-instructor. The 30-minute dives take place on
In the west of Daejeon city is the famous
Alps Ski Resort
(p174) gets the heaviest powder of the province and is set
in a spectacular area right near the North Korean border. It is smaller than
YongPyong, but well worth visiting for its location, views, ambience and
powder. Further south, YongPyong Ski Resort (p179) boasts 18 sweet slopes
that provide skiers with everything from bunny options to teeth-rattling,
heart-racing thrills, and there are also courses for cross-country lovers as
well. So this should be on the top of any ski bum’s wish list. Olympic hopes
YongPyong Resort offers sublime skiing and snowboarding, with the
usual comforts of ski-resort towns.

Getting there, or to any of the resorts, is usually only a bus ride away. All the
resorts offer day packages (around W80,000) and overnight packages: prices
vary with the accommodation rates, which vary from W50,000 or under for
mini-bak (a room in a private home) and youth hostels, to over W250,000 for
flash condos and stylish hotels). Packages can be bought in travel agents
and include bus transport to and from Seoul as well as lift tickets, ski and cloth-
ing rental, and, if required, lessons and accommodation. Day, evening and
night skiing is the norm. It’s important to avoid the overcrowd weekends,
especially at resorts near Seoul, as Koreans ski like they drive.

Travelers heading further south can still enjoy winter sports – at least
for a while. In Jeollabuk-do, look for Miju Ski Resort (p301) in picturesque

KOREA OUTDOORS  ••  Hot-Spring Spas
KOREA OUTDOORS  ••  Winter Sports

Many Korean spas and saunas cost less
than W20,000, while luxury
ones are usually less than W50,000

HOT-SPRING SPAS
Koreans love hot food, hot baths and hot saunas – the hotter the better. Korea
has many onechon (hot-spring spas) where the therapeutic mineral-laden
water that wells up from the depths of the earth is piped into communal
baths. Equally popular are all kinds of saunas. Some spas are fairly spartan
but modern, luxury ones called jjimjilbang have a gym, hairdresser, café, TV,
internet access and more. In Korean spas you can bath like Cleopatra in just
about anything: hot and cold mineral water, green tea, ginseng, mud, mug-
wort, coffee, seawater and pine needles. Prices vary with the luxuriousness
of the facilities, and most are open 24 hours in this nation of workaholics and
workaholics who pride themselves on not wasting much time sleeping.

Spa etiquette is simple enough. Undress completely (no swimwear or under-
wear!) in the locker room (Adams and Eves have separate bathing facilities) and
then take a shower, as you must clean yourself thoroughly before getting into
a communal bath. Soap and shampoo is supplied, as well as toothbrushes
and toothpaste. A thorough cleansing is part of the bath experience. The ladies
section has hairdryers, foot massages and a line of lotions and perfumes. You can
often have your hair cut or shoes shined as well.

The water in the big public baths varies from hot to extremely hot, but
there may also be a cold bath, including a waterfall” shower. Relaxing in
a hot bath is good therapy as the heat soaks into weary bodies, soothing tired
muscles and minds.

Most spas also have sauna rooms, usually made of wood or stone, but all
are as hot as a pizza oven. If you want to suffer more, you can be pummeled
by a masseur, which costs extra. Many bathers take a nap lying down on the
dormitory floor with a block of wood for a pillow. Stay all day, or all night,
if you want to; nobody will hassle you to leave.

Sip into the gown supplied to visit the shared facilities outside the bath-
ing area.

A spa in the student area of HongK is Dongjang Sauna (p135; admission
w3,000), but it has everything and is a good place to take the plunge into the
Korean public bath experience for the first time.

In Icheon, an hour south of Seoul, is the wonderful and ultramodern Spa
Plus (p147; admission W7,000-W12,000) where you can play all day. Dip into (but

don’t be tempted to sip) the rice-wine bath, and try pine, fruit and herbal
baths along with alternating hot and cold baths and a waterfall bath.

In the west of Daejeon city is the famous Yuseung Spa (p123; admission W6,000).
Depending on the day, ladies can immerse themselves in exotic baths contain-
ing pine needles, mugwort and coffee. Coffee? Yes, coffee, which like the other
bath provides aromatherapy in a bath format. Both the women’s and means
sections have a ginseng and green-tea bath plus hot and cold saunas.

Geumsan, south of Daejeon, is GeumSan Wellbeing Sauna (p132; admission
W4,500), a relaxing in the ginseng bath and then nip smartly in and out (and
in and out) of the hot and cold saunas like the Finns do, to really get your
sensings tingling. Then email your friends in the PC bang (internet room), let
off some vocal energy in the noraebang (karaoke room; W5,000 a song), raise a
sweet in the mini gym and get thumped by an unsliming masseur (W10,000)
before finally sleeping it all off in the napping room.

A super new West Coast facility on Daecheon beach is Mud House (p324;
admission W9,000) that offers skin treatments using its special mud, as well
as a sauna and an aroma spa. It’s packed with merrymakers during the famous-among-expat-English-teachers, anything-goes mud festival.

In Icheon, an hour south of Seoul, is the wonderful and ultramodern
Dongjang Sauna (p135; admission w3,000), but it has everything and is a good place to take the plunge into the

KOREA OUTDOORS  ••  Winter Sports

YongPyong Ski Resort in
Gangwon do with leading
contender to host the the
2014 Winter Olympics,
having missed out in
2010 by just three votes.
Deogyusan National Park, which also has a beautiful and easy (three hours return) riverside hike to a temple, Baengnyeonsa. The ski resort is relatively new (it opened in 1990) and has become one of the country’s top winter playgrounds – its 26 slopes have something for everyone, from bunny beginner to mogul-hardened monster. In 1997 it hosted the Universiade Winter Games and its après-ski facilities are the best. The resort has snow-making machines and Jeonju, Jeollabuk-do’s capital, has an indoor skating rink.

Less than 2km from the spa hotels of Suanbo Hot Springs in Chungcheongbuk-do, Sajo Ski Resort (p338) is modest, but has seven slopes and three lifts, and the hot springs make for an oh-so-relaxing return after you’re done conquering the slopes.

There are other winter activities besides what’s on the slopes. Hiking trails in the national parks include Bukhansan (p141), just a short subway ride from downtown Seoul. The country’s 20 national parks are as beautiful in winter as they are in summer, and snow on temple roofs provides a wonderful photo opportunity. Keep in mind though that appropriate clothes and exposure precautions are a must as temperatures can reach Siberian levels and whiteout blizzards are possible up in the mountains.

Chuncheon (p163) has lakes, bike paths and ice skating, and ice-climbers may want to try their skills in nearby Gangchon (p166), site of a frozen waterfall, Gugok pokpo. This 50m waterfall is spectacular any time of year, but provides ice-climbers with challenging excitement when it freezes between December and February. Ask for information about bingbyeok deungban (ice climbing).

Indoor ice skating is available all year at Lotte World (p113) and Koreans are ace short-track skaters. Expats in Seoul can join an ice hockey team, which is organised by Gecko’s (p128). In winter Seoul joins the fun as swimming pools along the Han River become ice skating rinks, although the place for a magical skate is on the rink in the heart of downtown Seoul outside City Hall (Map p88–9). Skates can be hired and prices are a giveaway.

After a decent snowfall, why not join the excited family groups who head for the nearest slope and sled down it on homemade sleds ‘After a decent snowfall, why not join the excited family groups who head for the nearest slope and sled down it on homemade sleds’

Keep a lookout for winter festivals (p388), where barbecue snacks and soju are sold from igloos, ice sculptors carve wondrous (temporary) designs and everyone cuts holes in the frozen lakes to go fishing for dinner.

However cold the temperature outside, sleep on a traditional yu floor mattress and you’ll be snug as a bug in a rug with the ondol (underfloor heating system) keeping even your toes as warm as toast.
To get the most out of this fascinating, at times frustrating, city you have to accept Seoul for what it is: the world's largest company town. The company – Korea Inc – is not a commercial enterprise in the conventional sense but a gemeinschaft of hypercapitalism with 10 million employees dedicated to the pursuit of capital accumulation, conspicuous consumption and social, educational and corporate ladder climbing.

Art, urban panache and public amenities are on a par with what you'd expect in an iron-ore-mining community somewhere in the hinterland – in dramatically short supply – but there are pockets of world-class quality like the Leeum Samsung Museum of Art and the War Memorial Museum. Getting workers from point A to point B is what drives municipal organisation, with little thought given to what lies between. The result is an efficient subway and inoffensive, grey urban landscape that borders on bland. There are notable exceptions, like the Jongno Tower and nearby bell pavilion, which together constitute the city's most attractive architectural juxtaposition.

Like any mining town, Seoul's precious goods are below the surface and hard to reach. If you're going to tap into this city's rich culture, which is built on 600 years of Confucius sediment, it's essential to become an explorer. Dare to stroll neighbourhoods like Samcheong-dong, where English is hardly spoken. Experiment with unusual food like crispy bindaetteok (빈대떡; green-bean pancake) in the Gwangjang market accompanied by a bottle of makgeolli (막걸리), a milky rice wine. Most importantly, challenge yourself by trying things you never imagined possible, like the public bath, the quintessential Korean experience.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Satisfy your urge for meat barbecued at your table at Jongno Gol (p124)
- Reflect on the possibilities of an afterlife while listening to the shaman's chants on the hills of Inwansan (p116)
- Experience a euphoric sense of cleanliness at the Hurest Spa (p115) public bath and jjimjilbang (sauna)
- Behold the majesty of the Secret Garden at Changdeokgung (p101)
- Test your bargaining skills at the Jang-anpyeong Antique Market (p135)
HISTORY
With a population of almost 100,000, Seoul became the capital of Korea following the establishment of the Joseon dynasty in 1392. Confucianism was the ruling system of social order, Buddhism was banished and in the 19th century Catholics were executed. Until 1910, when Japanese colonial rule began, the rigid feudal system of kings, aristocrats, peasants, slaves and outcasts changed little. The nasty and brutish colonial masters destroyed much of the city’s historical legacy. Korean culture nearly suffered a similar fate, as the country was unable or unwilling to fight against Japan’s bid for regional dominance. Since 1948, Seoul has been the capital of South Korea after the peninsula was formally divided into two states. Today, with a population of 10.4 million people, Seoul is one of the world’s largest cities. It’s also the country’s centre of cultural, economic and political power, which Koreans living outside the city half-jokingly refer to as the Republic of Seoul.

NATIONAL & PROVINCIAL PARKS
On Seoul’s northern boundary, Bukhansan National Park (p141) is known for granite cliffs, a stone fortress and lots of people at weekends. With five million annual park visitors, the easier trails leading to peaks like N Seoul Tower are a popular destination for rock climbers who prefer bouldering to walling.

Just 25km southeast of Seoul, Namhansanseong Provincial Park (p144) is a popular day trip from Seoul, with great hikes past ancient temples, large stone gates, tiny villages and an ancient fortress that used to guard the southern access to Seoul.

GETTING THERE & AROUND
Most international travellers arriving by plane land at Incheon International Airport; there are a couple of international flights from Japan to Gimpo Airport, but that facility now handles mostly domestic connections. From Incheon heaps of buses run into the city, with an express bus service to Gimpo if you need to make a domestic flight connection.

Most trains to Seoul terminate at Seoul station but there are two others: Yongin and Cheongnyangni. All train stations are adjacent to subway stations.

The city’s subway network is easy to use. Every station has English-language signs and the trains run frequently, though they stop around midnight. The bus system is satisfactory for people staying long enough to make sense of the routes. For short-term stays, it’s tough to figure out. See p138 for transport details.

ORIENTATION
Downtown consists of Jongno, Gwanghwamun and the riverside Gyeryonggak district, Myeongdong, Namdaemun and N Seoul Tower are just to the south and easy to reach on foot if you’re up for a walk. Bars, restaurants and shops of varying interest are on the other side of the mountain in Itaewon, a popular tourist district that’s fast becoming the amphi of Seoul thanks to an overabundance of booze, testosterone and grime. During the day, the side streets are filled with stylish charact, suspicious street hawkers and an endless stream of annoying tailors who never stop asking if you want a made to measure suit (even though you’ve replie ‘no’ to the same person five minutes before). In the evening, there’s no shortage of hookers promising to love you for a long time, drunken expat English teachers and just enough fights to warrant comparisons with a British soccer match.

Further south, the Han River cuts horizontally through the city with a mid-river island called Yeouido. South of the river, Gyeongbokgung is the city’s hub of ostentation with expensive housing and Apujeong, called the Rodeo Drive of Korea. The COEX Mall, Lotte World and Olympic Park are also south of the river and within reach of the subway.

April is not an especially good month for outdoor events in Seoul because periodic yellow dust storms reduce visibility and hamper breathing. These storms are thought to originate from China’s Gobi desert. Sand, combined with air-borne particulates of industrial pollution – including heavy-metal concentrations of lead and copper largely emanating from China’s booming manufacturing sector – form a potent witch’s brew that on occasion requires pedestrians to wear a cloth mask over the nose and mouth to minimise health risks. Over the past few years, storms appear to have intensified, with particulate levels occasionally reaching 2000 parts per million (ppm) in a cubic metre of air, a level of pollution that is downright awful given that 300 ppm is considered hazardous.

Maps
The Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO) office (Map pp88–9) has an extensive selection of free maps.

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Leeum Samsung Museum of Art (pp104), the city’s only must-see gallery. After viewing masterpieces of art, try one of two classic meals in Myeongdong: baeksukg (ginseng chicken soup) at Baekje samgyetang (p132) or house immigrants for a spiritual journey of a different kind, go window-shopping in

Seven Days
Follow the suggested four-day plan, and...

SEUL IN...

Four Days
Walk the trails around Inwangsan (p116) and you might come across a shaman uttering sounds that do not seem of this world. For a spiritual journey of a different kind, go window-shopping in Samcheong-dong (p134) and try the sujebi (dough flakes in shellfish broth) at Samcheong-dong Sujebi (p125). Catch a taxi to Changdeokgung to join the day’s last tour of the Secret Garden (p101). After the tour, it’s a short taxi ride to Daehangno for shabu shabu (DIY beef and vegetable casserole) at Opseoye (p127) and music at Live Jazz Club (p132).

On day two go antiquing in the Myeongdong area for ancient treasures and mags is in the COEX Mall. There’s also a branch in the Jongno Tower basement (Mappp88–9).

On day three hunt down Seven Days (p135). For a different perspective on old things, head to Looms, the city’s only must-see gallery. After viewing masterpieces of art, try one of two classic meals in Myeongdong: bosintang (dog meat soup) at Gye Sunok Bosintang (p126) or samgyetang (ginseng chicken soup) at Baekje samgyetang (p126). As long as you’re in the area, take a bath at Hurest Spa (p115). Afterwards, enjoy the theatrical antics at Nanta (p133).

The third day’s theme is reflection. Explore the War Memorial Museum (p113), which has terrific Korean War exhibitions. Then wander the streets in Itaewon (p104) and ask yourself why it’s such a popular place. Subway over to Hapjeong and tour Seodaemun Prison (p114) for a graphic presentation of Korean history. Then subway over to Insadong for an afternoon of browsing and drinking tea at one of the many teashops (p129). Dinner is barbecued pork at the city’s premiere jazz joint. When it’s time for a cigar and port, walk over to the Tribeca building (p129).

Finally, spend the day at the track. The Seoul Racecourse (p143) has a lounge for international guests and is well set up for a day at the races. After, it’s an easy subway ride to the Millennium Seoul Hilton Casino (p130).

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It’s unlikely that emergency service operators will be able to communicate in English, but the police department may have an interpreter available. Phone % 1330 (24 hours) to contact an English-language speaker in a tourist information centre.

Internet Access
Internet rooms are on almost every street — look for the ‘PC’ sign. Most are open 24 hours and charge W1000 to W2000 per hour; after 11pm rates can be as low as W500. PC rooms are frequented by internet gamers and are often thick with smoke. Many backpacker guesthouses, hotels and cafés offer free internet access, as do these locations:

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<tr>
<th>CityHall (Mappp88-8)</th>
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<td>Incheon international airport (Mappp88)</td>
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<td>Itaewon tourist information centre (Mappp88)</td>
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<td>KTO information booth (Mappp88-8)</td>
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<td>KTO information centre (Mappp88-8)</td>
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Internet Resources
http://english.seoul.go.kr/About 130,000 foreigners live in Seoul, of which 60% come from China. Learn more and facts about Seoul on the travel websites.
www.english.seoul.go.kr/Good travel information about Korea divided by region.
www.nearsubway.com/Apartments in Seoul.

Laundry
Backpacker guesthouses usually provide free use of a washing machine with hang-dry facilities. If you stay in a yeogwon (budget motel), you may have to do your washing in the bathroom. Dry-cleaning shops are fairly common, but expect a hefty bill to clean your panties.

Left Luggage
Most subway stations and bus terminals have lockers. Small lockers cost W1000 a day and the ones large enough for a backpack are W2000.

Medical Services
Medical care in Seoul isn’t quite a par with western countries, but it’s better than what you’ll find in most Asian cities. Patients requiring hospitalisation can make their stay more bearable if friends and family visit on a regular basis, because food and room-cleaning services are minimal. Most facilities don’t accept international insurance so bring cash or credit cards.

Dr. Rooks Dental Clinic (Mappp88-8; % 791-0514; 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Above Seoul Pub
Inclusion Clinic (Mappp88-8; % 790-3577, www.inclusionclinic.co.kr; 5am-9pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) In Omotesando Building
Sung Moon Medical Center International Health Service (Mappp88-8; % 3810-0050; 51wording, Gimyang-ri, 8:15am-noon, 1-4:30pm Mon-Fri) Line 3 to Insadong, Exit 1 and detour to subway
Seevan Information Centre (Mappp88-8; % 2285-9180; emergeries 032-233-6562; www.seevaninfo.co.kr/en; 9am-11pm; 11am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat) The International Health Care Centre is on the 3rd floor of the large building beside Insa University. Line 2 to Insadong, Exit 3.

Money
Banks are open from 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Friday and most will exchange foreign currencies. Licensed moneychangers in Itaewon keep longer hours. Near Insadong, there is a moneychanger in front of the Nakwon Arcade, look for the ‘Money Exchange’ sign. Compare rates and commissions before using any of these services. Expats working in Korea may be required to show a copy of their employment contract and alien registration card to open a bank account and to wire money overseas. Some banks stamp passports with the amount of remittance.

Post
Gwanghwamun post office (Mappp89-9; % 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, holidays) Has extended hours. Line 2 to Gwanghwamun Station, Exit 5 and walk around the corner.

Shower Toilets
Free public toilets are available throughout the city. In a pinch, it is acceptable to enter a restaurant to use the washroom. Always carry tissue, as most restrooms do not supply this vital product. Older facilities are equipped with an oblong porcelain hole that requires users to drop their knickers and squat. Steady balance and the ability to hit the target are two skills needed to avoid a messy situation.

Tourist Information
Inondeading Tourist Office (Mappp89-9; % 794-2222; 9am-10pm)
Itaewon Tourist Information Centre (Mappp88; % 3810-2513; www.enjoy.itaewon.com; 9am-10pm)
KTO Information booth (Mappp88-9; % 729-9481; www.kto.or.kr; 9am-9pm)
Seoul Station (Mappp88-3; % 2382-1334; 9am-6pm)

Other tourist information booths include Incheon international airport, Gimpo airport, Korea City Air Terminal (KCAT), Deoksugung and the Namdaemun and Dongdaemun markets. There are also three in Itaewon and two near Lotte Young Plaza in Myeongdong.

Travel Agencies
Travel agents often advertise discounted fares in the country’s English language newspapers.

Apple Tours (Mappp88-7; % 731-3487; 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) On the 2nd floor in the same building as Omega Top Travel.

Other key tourist information includes:

SIGHTS
Gwanghwamun 광화문
GYEONGBOKGUNG 경복궁
GYEONGBOKGUNG 경복궁

At one time, this palace (Mappp89-9; % 732-2323; ady lady, English, 8am-noon) was the principal royal residence until the palace was destroyed in 1592 during the mjin Waeran war. It just the right angle and you’ll be

(Continued on page 101)
treated to a pretty view with a great depth of field: open courtyard in front, traditional building in the middle and rugged mountain in the rear. Walk to the far corner of the compound and step up on the rock to get an up-close look at the hip roof gargoyles. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7; the palace is 10 minutes down the road.

**BOSIN·GAK 보신각**
Opposite the Gyeongbokgung, this pavilion (Map pp88-9) houses a bell forged in 1468. The bell is only rung at New Year, when crowds gather to celebrate, but during the Joseon dynasty it was struck 33 times at dawn (for the 33 heavens in Buddhism) and 28 times at sunset (for the 28 stars that determine human destiny) to signal the opening and closing of the city gates. It’s best viewed at night when it’s floodlit. Take Line 1 to Jonggak station, Exit 4.

**SEOUL MUSEUM OF ART (GYEONGHUIGUNG ANNEXE)**
Finally, an art museum (Map pp89-9; admission free; Tue-Sun) with a building that makes a statement. We’re not sure exactly what that statement is, but the aircraft hangar interior does create a pleasant space. The museum hosts various exhibitions and an annual fine-arts competition.

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(JUST FAX ME THE MAP!)

There is a good reason why most hotel business cards in Korea include a map on the reverse side: street addresses are almost impossible to find. One reason why fax machines are still so popular is because Koreans often fax maps to locate a building.

In Korea, an ‘address’ exists in name only. There are almost no signs labelling street names. Indeed, most streets do not have names at all. Nor do houses have numbers on the outside, although every house does have an official number. Unfortunately, these ‘numbers’ mean little – numbers are assigned to houses when they are built, so house No 27 could be next to house No 324. Many larger buildings have names – knowing the name of the building will often prove more useful than knowing the address.

A ga (가) is an urban district in large cities like Seoul. A dong (동) is a neighbourhood inside a ga. A single ga contains many dong. An address like 104 Itaewon-dong, Yongsan-gu means building No 104 in Itaewon neighbourhood in Yongsan district. However you could wander around Itaewon for hours without finding this building, even with the help of a Korean friend. It’s best to phone the place you’re looking for and get directions, find a police station or tourist office – or a fax machine.

The word for a large street is ro (로), which is sometimes spelled as no. So, Jongno means Bell St. Large boulevards are divided into sections called ga (가). On a Seoul subway map there is a station at Euljiro 3-ga and Euljiro 4-ga – these are different sections of Eulji St. A gi (길) is a street smaller than a no or ro – Insadonggil is one such example.
10 GREAT ESCAPES FROM SEOUL

- Feel the heat of the Cold War at the DMZ and Panmunjom (p158).
- Get great views and exercise by hiking in Bukhansan National Park (p141) or Namhan Sanseong Provincial Park (p144).
- Dine on dumplings in Incheon’s Chinatown (p352) and meander along busy Wolmido Promenade (p150).
- Camp in the ancient forests of Chikisan National Park (p185) and hike up to its secluded temples.
- Step back into days of old in the Korean Folk Village (p147).
- Pick up some perfect pottery at Icheon Ceramic Village (p148), or try your hand at making something yourself.
- Bask in quiet solitude on Eulwangni beach (p153) and forget that Seoul is only two hours away.
- Get wet and wild while white-water rafting in Inje (p147).
- Meander Suwon’s World Heritage fortress grounds (p144) and then dine on spicy but delicious galbi (beef ribs).
- Head to Ganghwa and hike up Manisan (p157) to view an ancient stone altar.

CHANGYEONGGUN & JONGMYO

This palace might fascinate historians, but travellers with less-refined sensibilities may find Changyeonggung (Map pp92–9) % 02 763 0500; adults W20,000; children W10,000; tour W22,000; 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun (Mar-Oct); 9am-3pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun (Nov-Feb) a bore. But the park setting is ideal for a tranquil morning walk. Cross over the footbridge to Jongmyo, a shrine where the spirit tablets of Joseon kings and queens are kept. If you visit both places at the same time and use the footbridge between them, you only pay one admission fee. History buffs could attend a lecture % 11.30am & 3pm Tue. In October the gwanje (Joseon government exam) is re-enacted here.

INSADONG-GIL

A charming district, Insadong (Map pp88–9) boasts a delightfully confusing mishmash of back alleys. Some of the shops have tried to create an old-world feel with log-beam ceilings, flagstone flooring and wooden doors. Although the commitment to restoration lacks depth, it’s an endearing area that could easily occupy a day or more of exploring unusual restaurants, quirky teahops and brusque antique dealers. Souvenir hunters will have no trouble finding something to take back home if key chains, green-tea sets and handmade paper are on the list of things to buy. It’s a busy place after lunch and one of the few areas in the city where shopkeepers speak English. The main street is traffic-free Saturdays (2pm to 10pm) and Sundays (10am to 10pm), when the crowds and street vendors come out in full force.

JOGYESA

The highlight of this Buddhist temple (Map pp92–9; % 02 767 3750; 7am-7pm) is the evening parade of Buddhist monks in traditional dress. The monastery is the headquarters of the Jogye sect, Korea’s largest, which emphasises Zen meditation. It’s also the heart of Seoul’s annual Lantern Festival, several days of celebrations, exhibitions and educational programmes. The highlight is an evening parade from Dongdaemun to Jogyesa with 300,000 lanterns, usually held on the Sunday preceding Buddha’s birthday. Check the website (www.jogyesa.or.kr/eng) for details.

TAPGOL PARK

This park (Map pp90–9) is a popular resting place for retired people who play cards and backgammon, a game of strategy using stones. The park’s historical significance dates back to 1 March 1919, when the March First Movement was read aloud here, an act that ignited nationwide protests, known as the sam-il (March 1st) movement. Today, March 1st is a national holiday to commemorate the uprising.

East Seoul

DONGDAEMUN

Completed in the 14th century, Dongdaemun (Map pp98–7) served as the Great Eastern Gate of the Seoul fortress. The original gate was built in 1389 and repaired after the Korean War. This stone gate marks the start of Dongdaemun market, and, like similar structures in the city, looks stunning at night.

NAMDAEMUN & MYEONGDONG

A hip moniker – N’Seoul Tower – was adopted for 2 W120,000; % 02 757 2280; 11am-11pm) is how the Renaissance-style cable car (Map pp92–3; adult/ child W732 5292; 11.30am & 4pm, not on Mon) reaches the observation deck at the top of Namsan. In October the gwanje (Joseon government exam) is re-enacted here.

ANGLICAN CHURCH

The most interesting feature of this church (Map pp92–3) is the Renaissance-style architecture contrasts with every other building in the city. Work began in 1922, but the full design wasn’t completed until 1996. The signboard beside the church describes this building’s history. Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 2.

NAMDAEMUN

Completed in 1398, rebuilt in 1447 and renovated many times, Namdaemun (Map pp92–3), the Great South Gate, is an impressive sight, especially at night, and marks the entrance to Namdaemun market.

MYEONGDONG CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL

This cathedral (Map pp92–3) is a surprising source of urban eye candy. The Renaissance-style construction is an architectural standout in an area dominated by neon, glass and concrete. Completed in 1898, it gained notoriety by providing shelter to refugees during Korea’s post-war period of military rule. English-language worship occurs at 9am on Sunday.
Sculptures of haunting human forms dot the park surrounding the shrine, which includes a museum with a modest collection hardly worth mentioning, except for a barely perceptible piece of wood that supposedly contains the cross used to crucify Jesus Christ. Take Line 2 or 6 to Hapjeong station, Exit 7; go left at the second corner and walk beside the covered railway line, following the brown signs – it's a 10-minute walk.

Itaewon & Yongsan-Gu 이태원

LEEUM SAMSUNG MUSEUM OF ART

If you have time to visit just one gallery, this museum (Map p207; 328 4021; adm adult/youth W10,000/6000; Mon 9.30am-6pm, Tue-Sun 9.30am-5pm) should be your first choice. In Museum 1 visitors start on the 4th floor and descend a white staircase, a décor that contrasts playfully with the black galleries. The black-white interplay is particularly effective in the Buddhist gallery, where guests are greeted by a glittering bronze pagoda. Museum 2 has an entirely different look with outdoor lighting, natural construction materials and a collection of 20th-century art. Museum 3 is the Samsung Child Education & Culture Center, a head-scratching title because there's nothing here that deals with children or education. It is, instead, used for special exhibitions.

Entry into this fascinating museum requires a reservation except on Thursdays. Call between 10am and noon at least one day in advance. Take Line 6 to Hangangin station, Exit 1; walk straight five minutes and follow the road signs. Or, in Itaewon, exit the Hamilton Hotel left and walk 12 minutes towards Hangangin station.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KOREA

This museum (Map p328; 2077 5901; www.museum.go.kr; adm adult/youth W10,000/6000; Mon 9am-6pm, Tue-Sun 9am-4pm) hosts a permanent collection of 10,000 artefacts, which includes a small but curious gallery of the history of print with a small metallic printing block. Historians cannot state with certainty when movable metallic type was invented in Korea, but believe it was developed sometime during the Goryeo dynasty, which ended in 1391. If that date is correct, the evidence suggests Korea developed metallic movable block at least 61 years before Gutenberg, the man credited with the development of that technology in 1452.

The gallery has a replica of the first book printed with movable metallic blocks; a collection of Buddhist teachings. The original is in the French National Library. In 1866, the French launched a naval attack on Joseon and took several treasures, including this historic book. The world's oldest book printed with wooden blocks is also here. Take Line 4 to Ichon station, Exit 2.

WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

전쟁 기념관

This museum (Map p328; 207 2139; www.museum.go.kr; adm adult/youth W10,000/6000, special collection W15,000; Mon-Wed, Fri-Sun 9am-5pm, Thu 9am-4pm) does possess a large cache of killing technologies. Starting with rocks, arrows and bronze swords, the history of warfare extends with modern weaponry like a Soviet SCUD missile and the always impressive B-52 bomber.

There is a substantial collection of Korean War exhibits including a video montage of gun battles, rocket launches and air bombings. English-language audio-visual stations provide descriptive images, footage and commentary on specific aspects of the war such as China's entry into the bloody fray. Glass-enclosed exhibits often lack satisfactory English-language signboards, but an audio guide is available (W2000). The big hardware – such asitzers, aircraft and tanks – is outside. Every Friday from April to June and October to November, a military band performs at 2pm. Take Line 4 or 6 to Samgakji station, Exit 12.

OLYMPIC PARK

This is a wonderful park (Map p328; www.sio.org/ko; W30,000/26,000/23,000, after 5pm W26,000/22,000/20,000; Mon-Fri/Sat & Sun W7000/W8000; 9.30am-11pm) that gets rave reviews from kids. You can swing on the Viking, zoom through rapids, float down a log flume and defy gravity on the Gyro Drop. If this busy park isn't enough to fill the day, there are heaps of other attractions including a folk museum, a cinema multiplex and a bowling alley. It also has an indoor roller skating rink (Map p328; www.sio.org/ko; 9am-11pm, W1000) and a large indoor swimming pool (admission by reservation only; 9am-11pm, W5000).

(Continued on page 113)
The **Olympic swimming pool** (% 410-310, 139/138 adult/child W7000/5000; 6am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-8pm Sun) is open for public swimming, but the schedule changes. Line 8 to Mongchontoseong, Exit 1.

**YEOUIDO  여의도**

It's only 6 sq km in size, but this island (Map p100) in the Han River is known for parks, power and prestige. High-risers dotting the island are headquarters for media, finance, insurance companies, the stock exchange and National Assembly. The island's riverfront parks are popular places for walking and rollerblading. You can also go for a swim (opposite) or rent a bicycle (right). At the island's eastern tip, **63 Building** (% 272-8903; www.63.co.kr) is the city's third-tallest building (after the 73-storey Tower Palace in Gangnam and the 69-floor Mokdong Hyperion I in Yangcheon).

Purchase a package ticket (adult/youth/child W21,000/19,500/17,500) and you can feed the fish in the **Seaworld aquarium** (% 272-3583; 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) and watch a film at the **Imax cinema** (% 272-6530; 10am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) and shoot up to the 60th-floor **Skydeck observation platform** (% 10am-11pm Mon-Sat).

There are five passenger ferry terminals on the Han River: Yeouido (Map p100), Yanghwadaegyo (Map pp94-5), Ttukseom (Map pp98-9), Namja (Map pp84-5) and Jamesil (Map pp98-9). Most tours (% 272-4141; adult/child/young W400/300/200; 11.30am-1pm & 2-4pm Thu) are one hour, such as the return trip from Yeouido to the Han River Bridge. Tours operate year-round, and run every hour in July and August, and one every two hours in other months. A 90-minute **right-rope** (adult W4800/2700; 11am) departs Yeouido terminal.

North of the Han River **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

Specialising in modern Korean art, this spacious gallery (Map p98-9; 218-0081; permanent collection/adult/child W3000/500; special exhibitions/adult/child W3000/1000; 10am-6pm Tue-Thur, 10am-9pm Fri-Sun) is home to treasures like the late Baek Nam-june’s puzzling multimedia tower. Take Line 4 to Seoul Grand Park, Exit 2. Purchase a ticket for the elephant tram and get off at the museum stop. The museum is just behind the sky lift.

**TOP FIVE ART GALLERIES IN SEOUL**

- **Seoul Museum of Art** (Main Building; p104)
- **Leeum Samsung Museum of Art** (p104)
- **Seoul Museum of Art** (Gyeonghuigung Annex; p101)
- **Toto** (p101)
- **National Museum of Contemporary Art** (left)

**ACTIVITIES**

**Buddhist Temple Programmes**

The four-hour temple programme at **Jogyesa** (Map pp93-4; 789-4705; key. from 6am to 7pm; some services are in Korean only) starts with a simple meal, during which time talk (and food waste) and preparation for a meditation session. Everyone sits cross-legged and a monk teaches participants to concentrate on breathing. A monk then prepares green tea, which must be served at exactly the right temperature and consumed in three sips. Reservations should be made at least 10 days in advance.

The temple-stay programme at **Bongeunsa** (Map pp98-9; 382-4304; by donation; sees visitors sleep at the temple) reservations are required, as is a minimum of 10 people. A less time-consuming option is the **Temple Life Program** (adult/child W24,500/24,000; 2-4pm Thu). This informative two-hour tour with an English-speaking guide includes a description of Buddhist history, an introduction to meditation with a Buddhist venerable and a hands-on demonstration of green-tea etiquette. Attend this worthwhile programme and you'll learn why drinking green tea can be a calming experience.

**Cycling**

Bicycles of some vintage can be rented along the Han River on Yeouido outside Yeouinmaru station, Exit 2. Rice at the ferry-boat terminal in Ttukseom Resort (Map pp98-9). Some form of ID is required to rent a bike, which does not come with a lock or helmet.

Cycling on city streets is tantamount to suicide, but there are two trails along the Han River. The 7km ride to World Cup Stadium (Map pp84-5) takes 90 minutes. From Yeouido, cycle past the National Assembly and cross the river via the Yanghwadaegyo Bridge. Walk up the steps of the park and take a look at Seonyudo in midriver—a park that used to be a water-treatment plant. Wield your bike down the narrow path on the right of the steps on the other side of the bridge, and continue right along the cycleway along the northern side of the river. After 10 minutes turn right on the orange bridge, ride over a small bridge and then turn right again, following the green signs. Ten minutes later, you're at the large park surrounding the stadium.

For a longer ride spin out to Olympic Park (Map pp98-9). The 38km ride along a hill-free path takes four hours. Near the 18km distance marker from Yeouido, turn right (no sign), ride under a couple of bridges and follow the left side of a dry riverbed. At the road, turn left, cross over the minor road, then cross the major road using the pedestrian crossing, turn right, go over the bridge and the park is on your left.

**Golf**

A round of golf costs W200,000 or more with varying degrees of course quality, but it's almost impossible for travellers to book a tee time by themselves—club staff don't generally speak English and courses are busy. Your best opportunity to get into the swing is to try an indoor driving range. They're popular; just look for a large green net.

**Hyosung Golf Club** (Map pp96-7; 785-4411; adult/child W14,600/7300; 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7am-9pm Sat) has a practice range, driving range and a clubhouse. The four-hour temple programme at **Cheonggye-jeong Temple** (Map pp98-9; 785-4411; adult/child W20,000; 9am-5pm) sees visitors sleep at the temple—one hour, during which time talk (and food waste) and preparation for a meditation session. Everyone sits cross-legged and a monk teaches participants to concentrate on breathing. A monk then prepares green tea, which must be served at exactly the right temperature and consumed in three sips. Reservations should be made at least 10 days in advance.

**Seoul Grand Park** is home to treasures like the late Baek Nam-june’s puzzling multimedia tower. Take Line 4 to Seoul Grand Park, Exit 2. Purchase a ticket for the elephant tram and get off at the museum stop. The museum is just behind the sky lift.

**Public Baths & Gyms**

Here's the naked truth: you can't really say you've been to Korea unless you've been to a public bath. Avoiding it is akin to saying you visited Korea but didn't try the kimchi. International hotels have attractive facilities that nonguests can use, but the fees can be high—W20,000 or more.

**Hamilton Spa** (Map pp98-9; 789-8512; adult/child W20,000/10,000, 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-9pm Sat, 10am-8pm Sun) is a well-equipped facility with great tubs and saunas.

**Silicon Forest Spa** (Map pp98-9; 364-4414; adult/child W30,000/20,000; 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-9pm Sat, 9am-9pm Sun) is a small but well-equipped facility with great tubs and saunas.

**Dongbang Sauna** (Map pp98-9; 365-4414; adult/child W20,000/10,000, 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-9pm Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) is a small but well-equipped facility with great tubs and saunas.

**Seoul Mid** (Map pp98-9; 789-8182; 300,000; 9am-7pm) is a bit more upscale—spacious saunas and soaking tubs.

For further information on hot-spring baths, see p76.

**Swimming**

In July and August outdoor swimming pools in the parks along the Han River fill up with kids. On Yeouido parasols surround separate swimmingpools (Map pp98-9). Public baths & gyms (% 789-5663) are one hour, or outdoors W4000/1500; 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat, 10am-8pm Sun) are a good option to get into the swing. They're popular; just look for a large green net.

**Skydeck observation platform** (% 10am-11pm Mon-Sat).

**Skydeck observation platform** (% 10am-11pm Mon-Sat).
Inwangsan Shamanist Hillside Walk

In this short but uphill walk, you can see Seoul's most famous shamanist shrine, visit small temples and see part of the Seoul fortress wall. The walk only takes an hour if you just want a quick look, but it's sensible to take longer and soak up the unique atmosphere.

Take Line 3 to Dongnimmun station, Exit 2, and turn left at the first alley. This area is undergoing significant redevelopment, but look for the signs pointing to Inwangsan (인왕산). Walk through the temple gate (1) up to the signboard with a map. The text is in Korean, but each building is numbered. Turn left and walk towards the building (2). When the path ends, you'll find a small collection of homes and beautifully decorated temple buildings. Walk right up the cement steps and turn right as you weave through a narrow alley. The alley leads to a bronze bell (3) and the door to Inwangsan. Between the bell and door there is a shop that sells drinks and snacks. Beside the shop there is a set of steps leading up the hill. Walk up these steps.

Five minutes up the steps, you'll find a shamanist shrine called Gyeogungsa (4). Originally built on Mt Namsan, it was demolished by the Japanese in 1925 and later secretly rebuilt here by Korean Shaminists. The shrine is small, but the altar inside is often filled with food offerings, as shaminists believe spirits need food and drink. Continue up the hill on the left stairs and turn left when you see a surreal collection of rocks. Erosion has transformed these boulder (5) into semi-human forms. Exit the rock collection left and then turn left on the path leading up the hill.

Up the path, eroded rocks, dark crevices and the shaman's haunting chants give the place an X-Files feel of otherworldliness. Further up the hill, just past the exercise station (6), there are several outdoor shrines. This is where you'll find a small butterfly carving (7), a small statue (8) and a trail that swings right past more rocks. The trail provides a good look at the recently restored Seoul fortress wall (9). Follow the trail downhill and you'll end up near Guksadang. Alternatively, continue walking towards the fortress wall and you'll end up at a road that leads to steps (closed Mondays) up Inwang Mountain, or walk downhill through a residential neighbourhood called Dongnimmun station.

Respect is essential during this walk. Taking photographs or making unnecessary gestures or noise could interfere with the performance of important ceremonies.

Old & New Downtown Walk

This 90-minute walk passes through some of the downtown's most attractive and lively districts with contrasting images of Seoul, ancient and modern.

Immerse yourself in different world's of shopping, urban landscape and degrees of pedestrian congestion as you walk past and through some of the city's biggest and flashiest department stores like Lotte and the Namdaemun market (where haggling, shouting and jostling are all part of the old-world market experience) and Myeong-dong, a must-visit district. If you're looking for a wall-to-wall-people feel. Try the walk at night to get a different urban feel.

Take Line 1 to Jonggak station, Exit 4. At street level turn 180 degrees and you'll see Euljiro station (p. 103), the Great South Gate, and the entrance to Namdaemun market (p. 123). Cross the street at the intersection beside the Euljiro station and cross the street. Follow the sign pointing to the Namdaemun market. At street level, walk towards Lotte Young Plaza (9) and cross the street at the tourist information booth. Further down the main street, you'll pass a bronze statue (10) with a fountain and the Bank of Korea (11), an old stone building. Five minutes down the road, cross the street at the light and walk left. You should see Namdaemun (12; p. 103), the Great South Gate, and the entrance to Namdaemun market just around the corner.

Walk straight along the main lane of the market and you'll come across a tourist information booth (13) which usually has a detailed map of the market. Continue walking along the lane past the information booth and Shinsegae department store (14). At the first major interaction near an overpass, walk left for an up-close look at the bronze statue. Cross the street through underpass and come out through Exit 2. Turn left and you're in Myeong-dong. At the corner with a Levi's store, turn left onto a lane filled with low-cost clothes and accessories. Turn right at the corner with a...
TOURS

There are three main types of tours available for English-speaking travellers. For a quick city tour, there are several circuits with stops at most of the popular spots. With a little planning, you can plan a day to spend at a single day and, unlike the subway, develop a first-hand appreciation for Seoul's sometimes horrific traffic congestion. Travellers looking for a hassle-free escape from Seoul should check out the Royal Asiatic Society, which offers various excursions to different parts of the country. Trips are offered once a month, usually on weekends, so a bit of planning and schedule coordination is required.

Numerous organisations offer half-day and full-day DMZ package trips, a popular excursion that can be both compelling and underwhelming. Stepping inside a building that straddles the North and South Korean border does come with a certain ‘cool factor’ but can be disappointing if you're expecting to see a platoon of heavily armed, goose stepping Northern Korean soldiers standing down their South Korean comrades, because this type of presentation is rarely on display. On the surface, at least, Panmunjom – the truce village inside the Demilitarized Zone – has a serene, museum-like atmosphere.

Most DMZ trips leave Seoul in the morning and return in the afternoon. On the bus, the English-speaking tour guide provides historical background and a rather long list of do's and don'ts, such as the need to avoid pointing your index finger inside the DMZ (which, in the right light, might be interpreted as a hand gun). At times the often repeated rules, strict controls of your movement (eg when and where you can take a picture) and frequent passport inspections (you must bring this with you on the trip) seem like an attempt to create false drama, though the tour guide is quick to point out that controls are required to avoid an international incident.

The Royal Asiatic Society (Map pp94–5; 771 5593; usa.org/korea; Ticket: 9am-6pm) offers various DMZ tours, which cost up to W60,000. The schedule is prepared months in advance so check the website for details. The RSA also holds bi-weekly Tuesday lectures on Korean history and culture. Take Line 1 to Jongno 5-ga station, Exit 2 and walk straight 100m. The office (Room 611) is in the tall yellow-orange building (the Korean Science building but the sign is difficult to see) just past Dunkin Donuts.

United Services Organization (USO) (Map pp85–6; 747 7003; uso.org/korea; [16] 3pm to 7pm Mon-Fri; 3pm runs tours for American troops but civilians are welcome to join. Twice-weekly tours to Panmunjom with the DMZ and DMZ tour costing US$42; start at 7:30am and return to the city at 3:30pm. Advance bookings (sometimes a month in advance) are essential.

Panmunjom Travel Center (Map pp85–6; 771 5593; visitkto.com/291; Ticket: 9am-6pm) has package tours to Panmunjom (W70,000), a one-day tour of Panmunjom and the third tunnel (W110,000) and a chance to speak with a North Korean defector.

Visit KTO (Map pp89–9) for additional tour options or see www.starravel.co.kr.

Seoul City Tour Bus

Designed for tourists in a hurry, these comfortable buses tour Seoul’s top attractions north of the Han River. There are three routes: Downtown (includes Itaewon and the War Museum; W10,000; departures 9am to 7pm, every 30 minutes); the Historic Five Temple District and the Night Tour (includes N Seoul Tower; W5000; departures 7:30pm and 8pm). Tours begin (except Monday) in front of the Dongwha Duty-Free Shop (Map pp89–9) at Gwanghwamun station (Line 5, Exit 6). A W10,000 ticket for the Downtown or Palace tour (available on the bus) allows you to jump on and off the bus all day. Visit www.seoulcitytourbus.com for details.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

There aren't many, but Seoul does have a few festivals worth watching out for if you're in town at the right time. The huge festivals in Seoul take place at night, drumming, firework and street
SEUL •• Sleeping

Bukchon Hanok Village
This quaint residential neighbourhood between Gyeongbokgung and Changdeokgung used to be home for high court officials. Today, restoration work is returning many hanok buildings to their past glory with traditional designs and materials.

Souls Guesthouse (Map  p98-9; www.soulsguesthouse.com; dm/s/d $140/190/250; r $350,000/490,000/650,000) It's 10 minutes walk from Myeongdong. Take Line 4 to Myeongdong station, Exit 3 and turn left at the first street. Follow the road signs.

Other hanok recommendations:

Bukchon Guesthouse (Map  p98-9; www.bukchonguesthouse.com; dm/s/d $140/190/250; r $350,000/490,000/650,000) Take Line 3 to Anguk station, Exit 3 and turn left at the first street.

Voso Jip Guesthouse (Map  p98-9; www.wooli-jip.com; dm W100,000; r W200,000) Stay with Mrs Park's family and their dog. It's on a small lane off the same street as Bukchon Guesthouse.

Seoul Drum Festival (www.drumfestival.org) Three days of downtown street fun that the organisers believe demonstrates the cultural potential of Seoul. Events include a walking contest and tug of war.

Myeongdong & Around

BUDGET

Hotel Les (Map  p99-100; www.les.com; dm/s/d $110/160/220; r W65,000, s W51,000) This quaint residential neighbourhood between Gyeongbokgung and Changdeokgung used to be home for high court officials. Today, restoration work is returning many hanok buildings to their past glory with traditional designs and materials.

Other recommendations:

Guesthouse Korea (Map  p98-9; www.guild韩国.com; dm/s/d $130/190/250; r W250,000, s W150,000) Excellent value. Take Line 3 to Anguk station, Exit 3 and turn left at the first street.

Tongyi Hotel (Map  p99-100; www.tongyihotel.com; dm/s/d $120/180/240; r W200,000) Here's that romantic getaway spot you were looking for. Special rooms in this upmarket love motel have couple-friendly features like a steam shower and two-person whirlpool. Take Line 1 or 3 to Jongno 3-ga station, Exit 4.

Hotel Sunbee (Map  p99-100; www.sunbee.com; dm/s/d $180/240/300; r W300,000, s W180,000) Tired of hotel prices but just can't force yourself into a backpacker guesthouse? There are other options, and this is one of the best. The double bed is huge and the rooms are decorated tastefully. Many rooms come with a wide-screen TV and computer.

END

Korean House (Map  p99-100; 02/723-3456; r W250,000) This type-A personality hotel is designed for people on a mission who expect quality on par with their $1500 suits. The get-ready rooms are neatly decorated in neutral tones with dark wooden furniture. There is also a LAN connection, though you had better bring a compact notebook because the workspace in standard rooms is minimal. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 6.

Insadong & Around

BUDGET

Hilton (Map  p99-100; www.hiltonkorea.com; dm/s/d $280/380/480; r W120,000, s W60,000) Other recommendations:

BUDGET

Hotel Les (Map  p99-100; www.les.com; dm/s/d $110/160/220; r W65,000, s W51,000) Excellent value. Take Line 3 to Anguk station, Exit 3 and turn left at the first street.

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of the bathroom’s exterior wall. Take Line 2 to Euljiro 1-ga. Exit 6 and walk straight.

**TOP END**

**Lotte Hotel** (Map p111; 791 1086; r from W400,000; a i s) With 1400 rooms and 1300 staff, it’s the biggest hotel in Korea. It’s also one of the most stylish downtown properties. Prominent guests have included Bill Gates (he stayed in a standard room), Tiger Woods (he didn’t stay in a standard room) and Brookie Shields (nobody remembers where she stayed). It’s good enough for Brookie, so it should be okay for almost anyone.

**TOP END**

**Millennium Seoul Hilton** (Map p112; 759 7581; package W199,000; a i s) There’s a casino here. Take Line 1 to Seoul Station, Exit 8, walk straight and turn right at the street just before the green steps. The package includes a breakfast buffet.

**Hotel Shilla** (Map p112; 722 3333; r from W422,000; a i s) 3 Line 3 to Donguk University station. Exit 5. Past the gates, walk up the stairs beside the waterfall.

**BUDGET**

**Itaewon**

**Hilltop Motel** (Map p108; 771 0500; dm W11,000, s & tw W55,000, d & tw W63,000, & ondol W78,000; a i s) Here’s that dumpy flophouse in Itaewon’s hostess bar district you were looking for. A maximum-security prison most likely inspired the interior of the astonishingly bare rooms. But you do get a private bath and you’re within crawling distance of Itaewon’s late night bars. Take Line 6 to Itaewon station.

**MIDRANGE & TOP END**

**Hilton Seoul** (Map p108; 791 4400; s & tw W330,000, d & tw W390,000, & ondol W450,000; a i s) This sharp hotel is popular with business travellers on a budget who need to be in Gangnam. It’s also ideal for travellers accustomed to the comfort and style of a US$100 hotel room. Lower-priced rooms are slightly cramped but the rich décor and about half the price of Lotte Hotel. Take Line 2 or 8 to Jamsil station, Exit 3, walk right past the bike rack to the second light and turn right.

**Hotel Lake** (Map p108; 540 8000; s & tw W325,000, d & tw W390,000, & ondol W450,000; a i s) Close to the Rainbow Walkerhill so diversions like a 24-hour casino or theatre show are minutes away. The quickest route to the hotel is a taxi (W3000) from a subway station like line 5 Gwangnaru. A shuttle bus runs between the hotel and Gwangnaru station (Exit 1) every 10 to 20 minutes.

**Other Areas North of the Han River**

**Apgujeong**

**Princess Hotel** (Map p106; 546 0900; s & tw W104,000, d & tw W123,000, & ondol W145,000; a i s) Here’s the love motel andetry complete with parking-lot curtains and well-worn interior. The property has a sturdy feel, a testament to the steady flow of in-out action that takes place at this busy hotel. There are several suite options available including a spiffy hot-pink number. Take Line 3 to Apgujeong station. Exit 2. Take 180 degrees and walk around the corner. Ten minutes down the road, look for the arch with ‘Rodeo’ on the right. Turn right at the sign and right at the third lane.

**Hotel Ryugyong** (Map p106; 546 0900; s & tw W104,000, d & tw W123,000, & ondol W145,000; a i s) Consider this your best option in Apgujeong if walking distance to upscale shopping and evening entertainment is a priority, but you just can’t stomach the idea of a love motel. Rooms are pleasant décor, most likely inspired by a Martha Stewart manual. Take Line 3 to Apgujeong station, Exit 2. At street level turn 180 degrees; the hotel is around the corner.

**Other Areas South of the Han River**

**MIDRANGE**

**Tiffany Hotel** (Map p106; 546 0900; s & tw W104,000, d & tw W123,000, & ondol W145,000; a i s) Like an old pickup truck, this hotel doesn’t look pretty but it gets the job done. Room décor demonstrates a rugged motif, thanks to the red-and-black carpet and metal doors designed to take the heavy punishment that comes with driving a busy hotel. Take Line 7 to Cheongdam station, Exit 14 and walk 200m.

**Jelly Hotel** (Map p106; 546 0900; s & tw W104,000, d & tw W123,000, & ondol W145,000; a i s) Have you ever wanted to make love on a pool table? Here’s your chance. Special rooms come in a number of quirky motifs including Pocket Ball, equipped with a red felt billiard table. For women who aren’t intimately familiar with the game, there’s no need to worry on your stroke and learn how to manipulate balls gently. Take Line 2 to Gangnam station, Exit 8. Walk straight and turn left on the fence before the Intellectual Property Office.

**Sunshine Hotel** (Map p106; 546 0900; s & tw W104,000, d & tw W123,000, & ondol W145,000; a i s) This sharp hotel is popular with business travellers on a budget who need to be in Gangnam. It’s also ideal for travellers accustomed to the comfort and style of a US$100 hotel room. Lower-priced rooms are slightly cramped but the rich décor and about half the price of Lotte Hotel. Take Line 2 or 8 to Jamsil station, Exit 3, walk right past the bike rack to the second light and turn right.
Goryeo Supermarket (Map pp88-9, meals W3000) It's one of the best downtown locations to buy in-season fruit and veggies. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7, turn right at the corner and walk to the first street.

Roaming the streets of Jongno in the early hours of the morning can be stressful, especially if you're craving soup. That's why local residents come to this simple restaurant known for gajangtang (감자탕; ham and potato soup). Take Line 1 to Jonggak, Exit 3 – it's behind Pizza Hut.

Seolleongtang (Map pp88-9, meals W6000) Min-soo It's a scruffy restaurant on a hard-to-find lane, but getting a seat at lunch often requires a 10-minute wait. The specialty is seolleong-tang (설렁탕; beef broth with noodles), a delicious soup ideal for people looking for a non-spicy meal. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7, turn right at the corner and right at the second lane.

Tadam (Map pp88-89, meals W3000) 9am-2pm & 6pm-9pm The exterior looks like crap and it doesn't get much better past the front door, but this simple diner serves great home-style cooking. Korean food aficionados will appreciate the spicy flavour of the choduk kimchi jiggae (죽 김치찌개; kimchi stew with tuna), while those with sensitive palates should keep a jug of water handy. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 6.

Jongro Bindae-tteok (Map pp88-9, meals W3000) 11am-9pm This is a simple example of what a dumpling-lover's restaurant has to offer. Most people come for the bindae-tteok with beef (고기만두) or seafood (해물만두). The soybean-gukbap (소고기 만두; spicy beef soup) is also delicious. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7, walk straight and turn left at the first street.

Bukchon Hanok Village

Dolkemaeul Tofu House (Map pp88-9; lunch/dinner W19,800/35,200) For a low-cost meal, it's hard to beat kimchi dubu (김치 순두부; fresh mountain vegetables with rice) that's as fresh and flavourful as the spinach lightly tossed in sesame oil. The meal comes with a red squeeze bottle – this is a sweet potato sauce, not ketchup.

Park Ganae Maetdol Bindaeddeok (Map pp88-9; 9am-10pm) A true traditional restaurant with a great atmosphere. Some Korean food specialties like kim chi, gajang, and tteokbokki (tteokbokki) are available. The restaurant is down a lane opposite the Goryeo supermarket. It is one of the few restaurants in the area to open early. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7.

Park Ganae Maetdol Bindaeddeok (Map pp88-9; 9am-10pm) Some Korean food tastes better than its name might suggest. Fried green bean is a good example beondeng (변두기; silkworm larvae). Don't drop by this busy stall in the Gwangjang market for tasty and filling beondeng (변두기), it's not a great idea to try the food. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7, walk straight and turn left at the lane beside the art centre. The restaurant is down the road.

Jongro Gogi (Map pp88-9, 11am-11pm) Barbecued meat and soju (local vodka) – does it get any better? If you love pork, the answer is no. This outstanding neighbourhood restaurant specialises in solpigwamae (소일간매; smoked black pig). The meat is ripened in an outdoor barbecue and brought to your tabletop grill for cooking completion. Line 1 to Jongno 5-ga station, Exit 7. Turn right at the second corner. At the end of the street, make a quick left and right turn, then turn right at the first street.

SEOUL EATING

Minchajip (Map pp88-9; 9am-11pm) This quaint restaurant at the north end of Insadong serves vegetarian meals. It's a sedate place, but the full-flavour quality more than compensates for the lack of flash.

SEOUL TOP END

Mins Club (Map pp88-9; lunch W49,000, dinner W99,000) Under and around the Nakwon Arcade, there are several teek (חק) shops like this one, selling rice cake. Consume a W3000 package of yaksik (약식), a brown-rice cake with dates and chesnuts, and you may not eat for the rest of the day.

Raksa Map Ojigi (Map pp88-9; meals W6000) 11am-9pm It's a quaint and cluttered eatery where you can get the famous tteokbokki (대떡; fresh mountain vegetables with rice) that's as fresh and flavourful as the spinach lightly tossed in sesame oil. The meal comes with a red squeeze bottle – this is a sweet potato sauce, not ketchup.

Dolmen Tteokbokki (Map pp88-9; meals W6000) 9am-10pm For a low-cost meal, it's hard to beat kimchi dubu (김치 순두부; fresh mountain vegetables with rice) that's as fresh and flavourful as the spinach lightly tossed in sesame oil. The meal comes with a red squeeze bottle – this is a sweet potato sauce, not ketchup.

Samcheongdong

San Mandu (Map pp88-9; meals W3000) 11am-11pm High-quality mandu (만두; dumplings) is served in this friendly shop. The shop is on the first floor of a building with a parking garage.

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Samcheongdong Sujebi (Map pp88-9, meals W6000) 11am-11pm Prickly waitresses aside, the outstanding sujebi (수지비; dough flakes in shellfish broth) is probably the city's best. It's not spicy, but if you need a little zip, add green pepper-flavoured sauce from the tabletop container.
Meongdong Myeongdong Gye (Mapp. pp93-4; meals W6000) If you come for lunch, be prepared to stand in line because this busy restaurant has a reputation for deciding against refund, bimbimbap gukue (비빔밥 국수; spicy noodles) and kongpukgu (공복수; noodles in bean broth) are the specialties. Pay the woman walking around with tickets.

Siseon Sadeunjang (Mapp. pp93-4; meals W6000) 2.40pm Outstanding sadeunjang is the main dish. Like most restaurants serving this spicy broth, there are two side dishes of kimchi made from radish and cabbage. Use the scissors to cut the cabbage into bite-sized pieces.

Gjeon Sunnong (Mapp. pp93-4; meals W8000) 3.10pm This impressive outside signboard is written only in Chinese characters. The Korean classic samgyetang (삼계탕; chicken stuffed with rice and ginseng) is full of rich flavour and tastes even better with insulm (인삼술; ginseng whiskey) for W4000. Look for the signboard with the phone number 776 3267.

Itaewon Jeonju Bon·ga (Mapp. pp93-4; meals W6000) 3.20pm It’s not a beautiful restaurant, which might explain why few travellers come here. Pity, because it’s a hub of home-style cooking with great dollo bimbimbap (돌솥 비빔밥; vegetables and rice in a hot pot). By the time you’ve dug down to the bottom, the rice has been baked into a crispy cake, adding a new dimension of texture and taste.

Other recommendations:

UGO Carter (Mapp. pp95-6; meals W4000; 7am-3pm) For hamburgers and fries. Take Line 2 to Itaewon station, Exit 1. At street level, turn right, then right again at the corner and walk 200m.

Ginseng (Mapp. pp88; meals W6000; 6am-1am) Close the sadeunjang. Exit the Hamilton Hotel and walk left 10 minutes.

Memories (Mapp. pp88; meals W2000; noon-13pm) A great romantic setting in Itaewon. Nestled in the backyard.

Ol Rajce (Mapp. pp88; meals W6000; 5pm-3am) A romantic setting in Itaewon. Our Place

Nhelive Steak House (Mapp. pp88; meals W6000; 7am-12pm) This is the best-value restaurant in this outdoor restaurant. Appearant harnejang restaurant with a traditional dancer and music show at 3pm.

Hongik, Sinchon & Ewha BUDGET

Richardson (Mapp. pp94; meals W4000; 8am-11pm) When rice and kimchi are an impossibility, try this bakery with comfort-food staples like roast-beef sandwiches for a quick burst of energy. There’s a wide selection of chocolates including caramel truffes.

Donghul (Mapp. pp94; servings W3000; 8am-11pm) In the late afternoon, this is the only busy meat restaurant in the Hongik University area. Budget-conscious students are drawn to this hole-in-the-wall restaurant by the low cost, lean cuts and fun atmosphere.

Gordon (Mapp. pp94; meals W2400; 9am-2am) The specialty is dakgalbi (닭갈비), a boneless chicken dish with chunks of cabbage, leek and carrot smothered in a spicy sauce. The staff cook the food at your table, so there’s nothing to do except wait and put on the apron. Line 2 to Sinchon station, Exit 2. Turn left at the lane between Starbucks and the SK Telecom store.

Mirdrange

Agjo (Mapp. pp94; meals W6000; noon-2pm) It’s not your ordinary, garden-variety pizza joint, but it does serve pizza and there is a garden. Surrounded by leafy trees, it’s a romantic setting best experienced in the evening. Simple pasta dishes and pizza are the main menu items.

Moo & Mi (Mapp. pp94; meals W6000; noon-2am) & Sun Asian Fusion is the predominant menu theme in this outdoor restaurant next to Agjo. Enjoy Pad Thai under a canopy of trees all year. A glass of wine is W8800, so consider getting a bottle, which starts at W35,000.

Goblin City (Mapp. pp94; meals W6000; 9am-3:30am Mon-Fri, 9am-2am Sat & Sun) Chicken and beer – never has there been a more perfect combination since, well, pizza and beer. This Hong Kong University chicken outlet is unique because it roasts birds, stuffed with rice, over a spit.

Le Petit Paris (Mapp. pp94; 3% 8am-2am) Sichon services the food and drink needs of Yonsei University students, reputedly the country’s most intelligent young minds. Given the number of crappy restaurants in the area, it seems university students aren’t well-educated about food. That’s what makes Le Petit Paris so special. Run by a chef who worked in Paris, this small restaurant manages to find a balance between quality and budget. Steaks cooked to perfection start around W15,000.

Café GreEat (Mapp. pp96-7; meals W15,000-45,000) A Pakistani restaurant with a traditional dance and music show at 7pm. Outstanding memories lining the front steps and a woody interior make this one of the most attractive restaurants in the area. It’s also a great option for people looking to escape spicy food.

Moghul (Mapp. pp96-7; meals W15,000-45,000) A Pakistani restaurant with a weekend lunch (W4000), noon-2pm; dinner (W15,000-25,000), 7pm-3am. Not far from Hongik University (the all-night party zone for 20-somethings) this out-of-place restaurant serves comparatively expensive frozen troana in a 35+ crowd. Pay one price and you get unlimited servings.

Daehangno BUDGET & MIRDANGE

Choyo Ggomye (Mapp. pp96-7; meals W8000; 11am-2am) The interior doesn’t look like much, but it’s been in business forever serving gongnamul bibimbap (공나물 비빔밥; bean sprouts with rice) and cutting-edge dishes like picha chiju (피차치즈 밥; rice with cheese). One person eats for W3500 but a double order costs just W6000. Take Line 4 to Hyehwa station, Exit 2.

Tondeun Siche (Mapp. pp96-7; servings W8000; 11am-1am) This is the place to go for meat and soju. The meat is grilled on a slanted plate heated over a flame. Most customers throw kimchi on the grill to intensify the saltiness. Place a piece of pork, kimchi and garlic on a leaf of lettuce, wash back with soju and voila – you’ve got a gastronomical piece of heaven on Earth.

Mina Food (Mapp. pp96-7; meals W6000; 11am-2am) It looks like an open-air Marché restaurant (p128) without the same selection of food or steep prices. Located above a convenience store, it’s a fun restaurant when you have a craving for slightly upscale Korean food under a canopy. Grilled rice with seafood or chicken is the specialty. Live music starts hourly at 8pm.

TOP END

Oppaeyo (Mapp. pp98; servings W6000; 11am-3am) Flowers lining the front steps and a woody interior make this one of the most attractive restaurants in the area. It’s also a great option for people looking to escape spicy food. The specialty is shabu shabu (사바수; food cooked in a hot broth) cooked at your table. Great fun with a group, it’s a dining experience that should be tried on one occasion.

Bongjumimbok (Mapp. pp98; meals W11,000; 11am midnight) Don’t let the attractive wooden tables and chairs fool you. This deceptively appealing restaurant serves only one thing: flame-thrower-hot chicken. If you can’t take the heat, don’t come here.

South of the Han River

APGU EONG

Budae Shing (Mapp. pp95-6; meals W5000; 8am-3pm) It’s a long subway ride to Apgujeong, but that’s the kind of sacrifice required to find a close-to-authentic bagel and cream cheese. Go the extra mile and you’ll be rewarded with choices like onion, garlic or a good old plain bagel. It’s behind Hotel Popgren.

Zoo (Mapp. pp95-6; meals W8000; 8am-11pm) Some of Apgujeong’s cheapest eats are here. The highlight of this thinly decorated cafe is the lunch (W5000; 11am to 4pm) and dinner buffet (W9500, 4pm to 10pm). The dishes are limited, but it’s a good opportunity to load up on fresh salad for the cost of a bear.

Shing (Mapp. pp95-6; meals W6000; 4.30pm-11pm, Wed 4pm-11pm, Fri & Sat 3pm-11pm) This place claims to serve original Buffalo wings. Well, anyone who’s been to the Anchor Bar in Buffalo, New York, will tell you these chicken parts simply don’t compare in size, but they’re cooked to perfection. The best deal is from 6.30pm to 9.30pm when W15,000 buys all-you-can-eat wings. Be warned, gluttony has a price: eat everything you order or pay a penalty. It’s a couple of blocks behind Starbucks.

Mad for Garlic (Mapp. pp95-6; meals W8000; 11am-11pm) Other recommendations:

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OTHER AREAS SOUTH OF THE HAN RIVER

Marché (Map p99; meals W55,000; 11am-11pm) Inside the COEX Mall, this franchise looks like most others around the world, with food served in a market-like atmosphere. For big eaters, the best bet is the lunch buffet (W18,900) or dinner buffet (W24,900), which gives you access to everything except steaks, ribs and juice.

Simwon Garden (Map p100; 95; 548-3333; serving h: 11am-11pm. With seating for 3000 it's the city’s largest restaurant and maybe the best place to experience subgum gat (短暂居; barbecued meat). It’s also one of the most expensive one serving of meat starts at W28,000 but can run up to W49,000. This immaculate facility has seven dining halls, most of which are surrounded by water wheels and lush gardens.

Bueunilzigari (Map p100; dinner W10,000) It doesn’t look like much, but this modest shop on the 2nd floor of the Noryangin fish market is a great restaurant. The specialty is raw fish, but it also serves a amazing lunch menu that includes maeu-utang (매운탕; spicy fish soup); for W5000, you get a good selection of side dishes including a crispy potato cake, a baked-to-perfection fish and a pot of fish soup.

Like many good restaurants, this one requires at least two customers but Mrs Moon, the no-nonsense owner, makes an exception for foreign travellers. Take Line 1 to Noryangjin station, Exit 1, cross the bridge and find you.

RUNNING HEAD ••  RunningSubhead

lunch buffet 11.30am-2pm, dinner buffet 5-10pm)

Rocky Mountain Tavern (Map p84; drinks W6000; h: 6pm-2am Mon-Thur, to 3am Fri, 11.30am-5am Sat, to 2am Sat; Hockey sweaters, photos of Mounties and patrons finishing their sentences with ‘eh’ give this place a down-home feel for Canadian expats. If you’re part of the gang, it’s fun. If not, the atmosphere is as frigid as a Canadian winter.

BarBies (Map p84; drinks W6000; h: 4pm-1am Mon-Fri, to 3am Sat & Sun) It’s a wine bar with a barbecue. Bring your own steak and put it on the grill. Then enjoy a freshly cooked steak with a bottle of red wine.

Other recommendations:

Seoul Pub (Map p84; h: 3pm-2am Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat) A fun bar packed with American memorabilia and a crowd that seems to remember the days of leather jackets and lighters. Otherwise try Galpagogi near the bushes and you can pass the time people watching.

Dawon (Map p94; drinks W5000; h: 3pm-2am Sun) It’s nothing more than a madhouse full of curious drink? The Dr Pepper, rum and beer set ablaze. You can get 1000 it's the city's largest restaurant and includes at least seven dining halls, most of which are surrounded by waterwheels and lush gardens.

UNUSUAL TEASHOPS

Insadong (Map pp88-9) has many teashops serving traditional hot and cold drinks made from fruit, leaves, herbs and roots. Many teashop owners make a big effort to create a memorable décor. A cup of tea costs W6000, but it’s a quality product. Birdsong, running water and ethereal music add to the atmosphere.

Yetchalzip (Map p89; tel 02-2304-8858) This has a bire-ibop-braced little birds that fly around the teashop. Getting a seat in the afternoon can be difficult, as it’s popular with Japanese travelers.

Mesomikeoejanginga? (What are you worried about?) (Map pp88-9) Overflows with plants, flowers and remarkably fresh air. Lights in wicker baskets give the place a soft, relaxed feel, hence the name.

Insadong (Map pp88-9) A simple teashop in a relaxing setting. The inside seating area has a cozy feel, thanks to the cordwood and pots of tea brewing on the stove. Go straight to the back and you’ll discover a small outdoor courtyard surrounded by private rooms with floor seating.

Dawon (Map p89-9) Opposite Kyongin Gallery. Sit in a splendid courtyard under the trees or on floor cushions inside a 19th-century building. The omijcha is a delicious, cold, pink tea made from schisandra berries – it’s said to have five flavours.
Belle Vue (open 7pm to 2am) has an uneven, nationalist cannot enter casinos. Take Line 5 to Gwangju station and catch a taxi (W3000). On the way back to the city, board a shuttle bus to the subway.

The city's two other 24-hour casinos operated by Seven Luck (www.7luck.com) are in the Millennium Seoul Hilton (Map pp114-5; 2012 6000, Line 1 to Seoul station, Exit 8; and COEX Mall (Map pp114-5; 2012 6000, Line 2 to Samseong station, Exit 5 or 6.

**Gay & Lesbian Venues**

Itaewon has the only openly gay and lesbian bar scene that attracts foreigners and English-speaking Koreans. The small venues are clustered on an alley near Hooker Hill. Not much happens until 9.30pm or later, even on Friday and Saturday.

**Trance** (Map pp81; 4pm-7am) Drag-queen shows take the stage every Saturday night at 2.30am or whenever there's a big crowd.

Other recommendations:

**Queen** (Map pp81; 8pm-3am to 6am Fri, 6pm-1am Sat & Sun) Happy hour from 5pm to 12am,

**Always Homme** (Map pp81; 8pm-4am to 6am Fri & Sat) Come every night.

**LIVING IN SEOUL**

You've landed your first teaching job in Seoul. Now what? To make your sojourn an enjoyable one you need to tackle three pieces of business as soon as you arrive. The first is housing. Employers provide foreign workers with an apartment or a monthly stipend. Private-language schools that retain good teachers generally provide housing with a short commute to work. Other schools and most universities offer a monthly allowance of about W400,000, a patry sum insufficient to rent a studio apartment near a subway station. For this size and location expect to pay at least W600,000 per month plus W50,000 in maintenance fees. Some apartments require a refundable deposit (현차) between W3 million and W100 million, which your employer may or may not provide.

Aptment hunting usually begins online. Websites like nearsubway.com list vacancies by district. The Korea Herald online newspaper (www.koreaherald.co.kr) has a small listing of affordable accommodation with many places located in distant areas like Bundang, a suburb just outside of Seoul. Work in this quiet, wealthy residential community and you'll enjoy a comfortable, perhaps dull, lifestyle. If you don't work here, it's best to avoid Bundang because long subway commutes into Seoul can be draining. If you have a Korean-speaking friend, walk around any neighbourhood you like and visit a real-estate office (부동산). For proximity to a party zone, Hongik University or Sinchon are good areas (Map p94). If quality of life is important, expats report good things about Itaewon. The oldCamera store, next to the train station, is now a trendy boutique. Although the old camera aficionados have moved on, the new owners keep it distinctively Seoulian, with its eclectic mix of art, culture and coffee. For those looking for original and unique gifts, the Seoul Selection Bookshop (Map pp118) is a great place to find something special.

**ENTERTAINMENT**

**Casinos & Betting**

**Shenton Walker Hill Hotel** (Map pp81-2; 1000 600; 4pm-4am) Seoul's original casino in the offers the usual games including Black Jack and Roulette. There is no dress code, though shorts and slippers are not permitted. Korean nationals cannot enter casinos. Take Line 5 to Gwangju station and catch a taxi (W3000). On the way back to the city, board a shuttle bus to the subway.

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HONGIK UNIVERSITY

Hongik’s claim to fame is dance clubs and a small indie-music scene. Live shows start around 7pm and finish at 10pm. Entry is usually W5000 to W10,000 and includes a drink, but can jump to W20,000 for special events.

Woodstock (Map p94; W6000; admission free Mon; 6pm-4am Sat; Sun free; A GI institution, this bar has a rough-and-tumble feel. If you’ve been in a bar where two guys scrap because one guy didn’t like the way the other looked at the bar girl, you know what this place is like.

HONGIK UNIVERSITY

Samba, techno, hip-hop and whatever else comes along is played in this dubbing area. Entry usually costs W5000 to W10,000 but increases on Friday and Saturday if the club hires a special guest DJ.

Theatre Restaurants

Korean theatre outlets aren’t like any you’ve seen before. They’re not even like most other places in Korea. In fact, they’re more like what you’d see in Amsterdam.

SEUL

SEOUL

National Centre for Korean Traditional Performing Arts (Map pp92-3; W5000; www.ncktpa.go.kr/english/index_eng.jsp; tickets W8000-10,000) Holds weekly performances Tuesday (7.30pm-Midnight to December except mid-July to mid-August), Thursday (7.30pm-Midnight to July, September to December) and Saturday (7.30pm weekly). It’s down the road from the Seoul Arts Centre.

Shoestring Walker Hill Hotel (Map pp92-3; www.hotelwalkerhill.com) This gristy ½-hour show hits the stage in the Gayagum Theatre at 6pm and 8.40pm (except Wednesday, every night in December), with traditional Korean music and dance and a Western-style cabaret. Dinner and show costs W90,000 to W130,000; the wine-and-show option costs W60,000.

Theatres

Nanta Theatre (Map pp92-3; www.nanta.co.kr) The sopranos regularly appear at this attractive downtown complex along with baritones, mezzo-sopranos and, if you’re lucky, Michael Bolton.

Hijuk Green Theatre (Map pp85; www.hijukgreen.com) The performers appear at this distinctive downtown complex along with baritones, mezzo-sopranos and, if you’re lucky, Michael Bolton.

USS Enterprise (Map p94; admission W5000; 6pm-midnight Sun-Thu, 6pm-1am Fri, 6pm-2am Sat; W40,000 weekends) and Sinchon (Map p94). In Namdaemun, there’s a Shinsegae department store (Map pp92-3).

SPORT

Seoul has two pro basketball teams, the SK Knights and the Samsung Thunders. Home court for both is the Jamsil Gymnasium (Map pp98-9); take Line 2 to Sports Complex station, Exit 8. Seoul’s professional football club, FC Seoul, plays in the World Cup Stadium (Map pp84-5).

Baseball is supposedly Korea’s number-one sport but that’s hard to figure because weeknight attendance can be thin. The LG Twins and Doosan Bears play at Jamsil Baseball Stadium (Map pp98-9); take Line 2 to Sports Complex station, Exit 5 or 6. Advanced ticket purchases are almost never required. Walk up to the ticket booth on game day (adult/youth W8000/6000 weekdays, add W2000 weekends) and you might be asked what team you prefer: boisterous home-team fans sit on the first baseline, more sedate visi-

tors near third base. Food options outside the stadium include pajen and dried squid, and inside the stadium a cup of frothy draft beer costs W3000.

Most weekend and Saturday games start at 6.30pm. Sunday and holiday games start at 2pm in April, May, June and September, and at 5pm in July and August.

Theatre Restaurants

Korean House (Map pp92-3; www.koreanhouse.co.kr; lunch 2pm-8pm, dinner 5.30pm-7.30pm) A GI institution, this bar has a rough-and-tumble feel. If you’ve been in a bar where two guys scrap because one guy didn’t like the way the other looked at the bar girl, you know what this place is like.

HONGIK UNIVERSITY

Samba, techno, hip-hop and whatever else comes along is played in this dubbing area. Entry usually costs W5000 to W10,000 but increases on Friday and Saturday if the club hires a special guest DJ.

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near the corner. Line 5 to Gwanghwamun, Exit 6.

If you’re after electronics, head to Techno Mart (Map p94; 344/329-2258), which has eight floors filled with digital cameras, TVs, computers and software. Most major brand names are represented here. The Microsoft dealer, Ace Soft (% 231 9887), on the 7th floor sells OEM XP in English (Home W120,000, professional W180,000). Take Line 2 to Gangbyeon station, Exit 2.

Ahyeondong Wading Street
It’s probably a coincidence that this street (Map p94) of fairy-tale dreams, with 200 wedding outfitters, is located next to Ehwa Women’s University. Stroll down the street and you’ve got yourself a free fashion show. One of the more unique shops is Shell (% 398 0225; 10am–7pm, Mon–Fri). Where Rococo dresses cost up to W1 million, Line 2 to Ehwa Women’s University station, Exit 4.

Apgujeong
This posh area (Map p96–7) has deluxe department stores, boutiques and high-class hairdressers as well as a dazzling array of nail boutiques and plastic surgeons all promising to beautify, tonify and electrify.

Nail Gallery (Mapp96–7; 548 3203; 10am–7pm) When was the last time you took a good look at your cuticles? If you frequent Apgujeong with any regularity, the answer is probably last week. Manicures cost W20,000, pedicures W45,000. Men are welcome, but they have bigger digits, so add W5000.

Narda (Mapp96–7; 352 9947; 11am–10:30pm) Getting a tattoo is verboten in Korea, so the next best thing is piercing. You can get just about any body part stuck, including the navel (W140,000).

Holics (Mapp96–7; 344/329-1903; 10am–7:30pm) With designs by up-and-coming Korean designer Kim Gyusil, this is the vogue boutique for Korean-Americans looking to spruce up their nightclub wardrobe. Jeans start at W100,000 while a custom-fitted vest starts at W300,000.

Insadong
Small art galleries display paintings, while art-and-craft shops sell pottery, antiques and calligraphy brushes. Casettes of chanting and clothing can be bought in shops around Jogyesa.

Antique Watch (Map p98–9; 725 7204; 10am–8pm) Hey buddy, wanna buy a watch? Then step inside this curio of eclectic timepieces. Some timepieces date back to 19th-century France including the 2m-high swing clock that costs W23 million. Cuckoos, grandfather mantelpieces and mantelpieces are available as well as a sizeable collection of pocket and wristwatches dating from around the early 20th century.

Beautiful Tea Museum (Map p98–9; 725 6563; 10am–10:30pm) This exquisite building houses a delightful collection of tea paraphernalia. It’s also a place to learn about the surprisingly complex world of green tea. Premium tea – which can run as high W18,000 per pot – is as full bodied as good wine. Sets of premium tea cost W30,000 to W80,000.

Samcheongdong
The shops here are so interesting men often find themselves unexpectedly engrossed in a feminine form of behaviour: window shopping. One-of-a-kind clothing, funky jewellery and antiques are all part of the mix, with prices that sometimes make Apgujeong look affordable.

Vintage (Map p98–9; 722 2509; noon–8pm) Clothing, furniture and jewellery imported from Europe are found here. Some items, such as the W700,000 dress, appear overpriced, while the stunning cameo looks like a bargain at W1,500,000.

Gonbe (Map p98–9; 722 1418; 10:30am–8:30pm) Here’s a fun hat shop. These beautiful pieces designed by Choi Hye Jung cover the spectrum of headgear, from flappers to straw brims. Most cost between W100,000 and W300,000. Customers are welcome to try on a hat and admire themselves in the mirror.

Lanome (Map p98–9; 725 6567; noon–7pm) One-of-a-kind accessories are available in this artsy shop with an avocado décor, jewellery, bags and broaches are priced between W45,000 and W500,000.

Itaewon
DryS/Gooxy (Map p98; 796 2930; 9am–8pm) Craving macaroni and cheese? Then this shop...

TOP MARKETS

Dongdaemun Market
This massive collection of traditional markets, street stalls and department stores (Map pp86–7) has a dizzying array of choices that would take most serious shoppers a week to plough through. The eastern side of the market generally caters to the wholesale trade and opens late (10.30pm), while stores in the western section, such as Migliore and Doota, open early and close late (10.30am to 5am). A market map is available in the tourist information office near the old baseball stadium (9am to 10pm). Take Line 1 to Dongdaemun station, Exit 7.

Jang-anpyeong Antique Market
If it’s old and Korean, you’ll probably find it in this delightful antique market (Map p94–5) spread out over several buildings just outside the subway exit, Samhee buildings 5 and 6 contain ceramics, paintings, stone statues and more all piled up in small, cluttered shops. Interesting pieces include a stunning 1m swinging bell in a wooden frame at Donggo Hwarang (% 597 9887; 10am–7pm, closed 1st & 3rd Sun). The asking price is W5 million.

Down the street, the Jang-anpyeong building has a wider selection of large pieces including a 3m stone pagoda at Jinfabang (% 232 8502; 11am–7pm, closed 1st & 3rd Wed). Cost is W4 million. Upstairs, there’s a collection of Chinese medicine cabinets with 40 or so drawers, each with a different Chinese inscription. At Jang-an Antiques (% 232 8502; 10am–7pm, closed 1st & 3rd Wed). Reproductions cost W250,000, while the asking price for a 150-year-old piece is W7.5 million.

Take Line 5 to Dapsimni station, Exit 2. At street level, look left and you’ll see a sign pointing to Samhee 5 and 6. Walk straight for 10 minutes to the Jang-anpyeong building. It’s just past the German-car dealership. Many shops are closed weekends and most shut down for summer vacation, which usually runs from the end of July to mid-August.

Namdaemun Market
It doesn’t have the same range of goods as Dongdaemun, but this fun market (Map pp92–3) is easier to navigate, which makes for a more interesting day of exploring. There’s a good mix of traditional shops as well as day-and-night retail and wholesale markets, fashion malls and Shinsegae department store (10am–9pm, Mon–Sat). Souvenir hunters looking for a gift for someone who likes to cook should visit the Samseong Gown (Map pp92–3; % 752 0081; 6am–6pm Mon–Sat), where a Japanese sushi-chef jacket costs W24,000. A market map is available from the tourism information booth (8.30am to 6pm).

Noryangjin Fish Market
Every kind of marine life is swimming around in tanks, buckets and bowls at this large fish market (Map p100). It’s like a free aquarium show, except you can eat the animals. Giant octopuses, stingray and mussels along with a selection of unusual sea creatures are on view and on sale. A kilogram of prawns costs W20,000, while a king crab goes for W17,000 per kilogram. Take Line 1 to Noryangjin station, Exit 1, cross the bridge and walk down the stairs to the fish market.

Yongsan Electronics Market & Techno Mart
It would take several days to fully explore the merchandise available at this market (Map pp96–7; 9:30am–7:30pm, closed 1st & 3rd Wed). Thought to be the largest in Asia. There are hundreds of shops spread around 22 markets, though the biggest collection is concentrated in a few buildings such as Terminal Electronics Market, Sonin, Naja and iPark Mall. The latest computers, mobile phones, cameras, DVD players and wide-screen digital TVs are here. Be sure to enquire about warranties and inspect your purchases carefully because not everything is on the up-and-up.

English-language computer software is available at Wells Software (% 912 0811; 10am–7pm Mon–Fri), which stocks OEM XP Home (W120,000) and Professional (W180,000). It’s located on the 4th floor of the Terminal Electronics Market building. Take Line 1 to Yongsan station, Exit 3.
Myeongdong
If it's got a label, you'll probably find it in Myeongdong (Map pp92–3). The streets fill up every evening with shoppers, hawkers and people shouting out the latest sale into a megaphone. It can be an overwhelming experience that borders on sensory overload, as street vendors take over a couple of roads offering unusual snacks – like peanut-butter-flavoured squid – and an inescapable selection of plastic accessories.

GETTING THERE & AWAY
Air
For details of airline companies and flights in and out of Seoul, see p395.

INcheon International Airport
Spacious Incheon International Airport (Map 91; 8:00am-11:00pm; www仁川机场.com), 52km west of Seoul, handles most of the country’s international flights with limited domestic connections to Jeju, Busan and Daegu.

International arrivals are on the 1st floor, where you’ll find: tourist information centres (9:00am-9:00pm, ATMs and foreign currency exchange booths (5:00am-9:00pm), a currency exchange booth near the baggage claim area inside the arrivals terminal is open until the last flight arrives. Mobile phones can be rented at KT (100 won per day plus a local calling charge of W600 per minute. If you lose the phone there’s a W600,000 replacement fee. Outside the airport, buses depart for destinations in Seoul and elsewhere. In the basement, Incheon Airport Hospital (9:00am-9:00pm) charges W20,000 for a consultation. A dentist (9:00am-9:00pm, Mon-Fri) is also available.

The 3rd-floor departure area has places to eat and drink. Banks in the retail section beyond immigration control allow you to exchange won before leaving the country. To obtain a tax refund on goods purchased at shops participating in the tax-refund scheme, show the goods and receipts to a customs officer at the check-in counter. Once past immigration, take the stamped receipt to a Global Refund counter (9:00am-9:00pm) to get your money.

Incheon Airport Transit Hotel (9:00am-9:00pm; www仁川机场hotel.com) offers a shuttle service to Incheon International Airport (approx 50 minutes), as well as car-hire services, a travel agency and free internet access.

Bus
There are three kinds of buses. Inter-city buses are usually older vehicles and may make frequent stops. The major differences between express and deluxe buses are price and comfort: deluxe buses have fewer but wider seats, ample legroom and more expensive tickets. Some deluxe buses depart after midnight, which comes with a 10% surcharge.

The Seoul express bus terminal (Map pp96-7) connects with major cities and has two buildings: the Gyeongbu-Gumi-Yeongdong terminal and Hanamcheon terminal. The former connects with cities like Busan (W20,000), Daegu (W14,000) and Daejeon (W7600); the latter – connected to the Cental City complex – has routes to the Jeolla provinces and southern coastal area. Destinations include Mokpo (W16,000) and Jeonju (W10,000). Take Line 3 to Express Bus Terminal and follow the signs for the Gyeongbu or Honameline.

Seoul’s other bus terminals include the following:

Dong Seoul Bus Terminal (Map pp96-7) Has connections to some major cities and towns in the eastern part of the country. Take Line 2 to Gongdeok Station, Exit 4.


Sangdong Bus Terminal (Map pp95-6) Has limited services to cities north and east of Seoul. Take Line 7 to Sangdong Station, Exit 2. It’s opposite an E-Mart store.

Train
There are three major train stations in Seoul, all close to a Line 1 subway station. Most trains leave Seoul Station (Map pp92–3), which has high-speed Korea Train Express (KTX), Saemaul (express) and Mugunghwa (semi-express) services to many parts of the country. KTX destinations and one-way fares from Seoul station include Busan (W44,800) and Daejeon (W19,500). Current KTX trains take about 3 hours and 40 minutes between Seoul and Busan. If the last leg of track construction is completed on schedule in 2008, that ride will take less than two hours.

Yongsan station (Map pp96–7) handles all inter-city services. To get to the station, take Line 2 to Yongsan Station, Exit 2, turn right at the corner and mount the overhead crosswalk steps, then walk right—it’s in the basement of the Seoul Station.

Incheon International Airport
Check your luggage and go through customs and immigration procedures at the Korea City Air Terminal (KCAT; www.kcat.co.kr; 9:00am-9:00pm). Located in the GIXMIL’s (Map pp98-9) World Trade Centre, this service is available only for Korean Air and Asiana passengers. Passengers with goods to declare at customs that are stored inside checked bags may use this terminal: anyone with goods to declare in a carry-on bag must check-in at the airport. Nonstop buses run every 10 minutes to Incheon (W13,000) or Gimpo (W6000) airports. Allow 90 minutes to get from KCAT to Incheon and 60 minutes to Gimpo airport.

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Seoul’s other bus terminals include the following:

Dong Seoul Bus Terminal (Map pp96-7) Has connections to some major cities and towns in the eastern part of the country. Take Line 2 to Gongdeok Station, Exit 4.
Regular taxis to Seoul cost around W40,000, while a deluxe could cost W80,000 depending on traffic. Expect an expressway toll of W6700 to be added to the fare, and if you travel after midnight a 20% premium.

Buses run between Incheon and Gimpo airports (W4500, 30 minutes, every 10 minutes) along a special road. If your accommodation in Seoul is near a subway station, you could take a bus to Gimpo airport. Walk 10 minutes and you’ve got access to Line 5 and a 50-minute ride to downtown. A regular taxi ride from Gimpo to the city centre costs W20,000, while a deluxe taxi could set you back W30,000.

At the time of writing, a rail link promising to simplify travel to and from Incheon airport was under construction. Stage 1, scheduled for completion during the first half of 2007, will establish a 41km train connection between Incheon and Gimpo airports, while Stage 2 will connect Gimpo airport and Seoul station, with trains travelling up to 150km/h. The projected completion date for Stage 2 is 2009.

CITY LIMOUSINE BUS ROUTES
Limousine buses from Incheon International Airport are listed below, with bus numbers, route names and major stops.

600 (Jamsil) Seoul express bus terminal, Samseong station, Lotte World
601 (Dongdaemun) Hapjeongdong, Sinchon, City Hall, Jongno, Dongdaemun
602 (Cheongnyangni) Hapjeong station, Seokyo Hotel, Sinchon station, Gwanghwamun, YMCA
602-1 (Sungshin Women’s University) World Cup Stadium, Anguk-dong, Daehangno
603 (Guro) Mokdong Ogeori, Guro station
604 (Geumcheon-gu Office) Nambu cargo terminal, Novotel Hotel
605 (City Hall) Mapo, Seoul station, City Hall, Gwanghwamun
606 (Jamsil) Seoul express bus terminal, Samseong station, Lotte World, Olympic Park
607 (Sungnyeongguk) Nambu cargo terminal, Nourtel Hotel
608 (City Hall) Mapo, Seoul station, City Hall, Gwanghwamun
609 (Daechi station) Seoul express bus terminal, Gangnam station, Yangjae station

KAL LIMOUSINE BUS ROUTES
KAL1 (Jamsil) Sheraton Grande Walkerhill Hotel, Dong
KAL2 (Jamsil) Inter-Continental Hotel, COEX Inter-Continental Hotel
KAL3 (Jamsil) Renaissance Hotel
KAL4 (Jamsil) Sheraton Grande Walkerhill Hotel, Dong
KAL5 (City Hall) Korea City Air Terminal
KAL6 (City Hall) Seoul express bus terminal
KAL7 (Dongducheon) Hapjeong station, Hapjeong Dong Station

Public Transport
BUS
The bus system is good but it’s complex and ill suited for travellers who don’t understand Korean. Buses have different colours indicating different travel areas: yellow buses circulate downtown; red buses travel in the metropolitan area; green buses connect subway stations with downtown; blue buses travel to the suburbs. Fares start at W800 and increase depending on the distance travelled. Bus fare can be paid using the rechargeable transport card called the T-Money card, which can be bought for W2500 at any subway station booth; add credits in multiples of W1000. You can also use it at stores that display the T-Money sign.

SUBWAY
Seoul’s subway system (www.seoulsubway.co.kr, www.smrt.co.kr) is reliable and cheap. Trains run every few minutes from 5.30am to around midnight and many subway stations have lifts or stair lifts for wheelchairs. Lockers are available, though most are too small to take a full-sized backpack. Every station is well-signed in English and the system is very user friendly. The basic one-way subway fare is W900 and covers most of Seoul. Hour-long trips cost around W1500. The T-Money card provides a small discount on fares and saves the hassle of buying a ticket for each trip.

Taxi
Regular taxis are a good deal for short trips. The basic fare for 2km is W1600 and rises W100 for every 168m or 41 seconds after that. A 20% surcharge is levied between midnight and 4am. Deluxe taxis are black with a yellow stripe and cost W4000 for the first 3km and W200 for every 205m or 50 seconds, but they don’t have a late-night surcharge. Few taxi drivers speak English, but most taxis have a free interpretation service whereby an interpreter talks to the taxi driver and to you by phone. All taxis are metered and tipping is not required.
The province of Gyeonggi-do hugs Seoul like a reverse letter ‘C,’ providing excellent day trips or longer expeditions to some of Korea’s gems. Often overlooked due to its proximity to the Blade Runner-esque cityscape that is Seoul, Gyeonggi-do is a varied province: rivers and rice fields, shrines and scenery, timeless temples and ever-present smiles. Slip into the quiet fishing life on a West Sea island, walk on a deserted beach or a wave-smoothed mud flat, or go inland and take in fantastic vistas from hiking destinations such as Bukhansan National Park or Namhan Sanseong Provincial Park.

For a chilling reminder of cold-war animosities and the almost anachronistic threat of war, hop on a DMZ-bound tour bus and catch glimpses of North Korea, barbed wire and the paradox of Panmunjom. Shoppers looking to take home a piece of Korean art should hit the Korean Folk Village or Icheon Ceramic Village. When you’ve seen enough museums, travellers with children can enjoy Seoul Grand Park and Everland, or hit the slopes in winter for great skiing.

Suwon and Incheon are the area’s biggest cities; the latter has its own local government and telephone code and is the port for ferries to nearby islands, Jejudo, and even China. Ganghwado, a nearby island, is still relatively unspoilt, and has dolmen (ancient tombs), a mountain-top altar, fortifications and an interesting history, making it a perfect place to recharge your batteries if Seoul’s nightlife starts to wear thin.
History

Gyeonggi-do’s history is replete with pilgrimages, plundering, plots and plans, infiltrations, defeats and surrenders. Its nearby islands and many coves have been used repeatedly to gain access to Seoul or defend against attacks from China, Japan, France and the United States. Its current border with North Korea makes it a front line for this war (technically, a formal peace treaty ending the Korean War was never signed), and even today tunnel-detection teams operate in hopes of fending off North Korean incursions.

National & Provincial Parks

Gyeonggi-do is so close to Seoul that most of its parks are easy day trips, though hikers may want to budget more time to stop and smell the flowers along the way. The closest is Bukhansan, a beautiful park with a serene peak that overlooks Seoul. Its proximity to this giant metropolis means that the serenity is often shared with hundreds of other folks also looking to get away from it all; minimise the crowds by starting early or visiting during the week.

Namhan Sansung Provincial Park is nearby, an easy day trip from Seoul that offers hiking, wildflower and bird viewing, and interesting meandering along ancient fortress walls.

Also nearby is Suraksan (p143), not a national park proper, but still a beautiful area well worth visiting if time allows.

Getting There & Around

All of Gyeonggi-do is within day-trip distance of Seoul, making it a great place to escape to, even if you don’t have a lot of time. Buses and trains, and in some places even subway lines, make for speedy, inexpensive travel. Taxis are economical, even for longer jaunts, but are especially useful for quick trips once you’ve reached your destination.

SEUL GRANDPARK 서울대공원

The zoo (adult/youth/child W3000/2000/1000) is in the park and has a long history of breeding successes, including tigers and panda bears. Cage quality varies; some are lush and green (especially the aviary), others are muddy and a bit depressing. The zoo features cranes, swans, pelicans and other large birds, and an indoor botanical garden houses a forest of cacti, numerous orchids and carnivorous pitcher plants. A fun dolphin-and-seal show costs W1500 and shows three to four times per day. If you still haven’t gotten your fill of animal shows, you can watch a girl dressed in pink chase flamingos around to the cheers of kids and adults.

A combo ticket includes the tram, chairlift and zoo admission at a slight discount off the individual fares.

BUKHANSAN NATIONAL PARK 북한산국립공원

This national park (adult/youth/child W600/500/400, sunrise-sunset) is made up of a granite peak and surrounding area, visible from the city itself (and is so close that it’s possible to visit by subway). It offers sublime vistas of mist-shrouded mountains, maple leaves, rushing streams and remote temples.

Camping is possible in summer or you can stay in basic mountain huts, but they are not usually open in winter. During peak periods (10 July to 20 August and 1 October to 14 November), on public holidays and weekends, some huts and camping grounds have an online reservation system (www.npa.or.kr).

The following two hikes are recommended — both are all-day hikes so you need to be reasonably fit to complete the full course. If your energy begins to flag, consider taking a swing of the Korean hiker’s friend: pine needle soju (local vodka-like brew). One mouthful should be enough to help you make it to the top. Well, that’s what Koreans claim anyway.

Baoeungdae Hike 백운대

This moderate-to-strenuous hike takes six hours, including short breaks.

Leave Gupabal station by Exit 1, walk straight for 100m to the bus stop and take bus 704 (W900, 10 minutes, every 15 minutes) to the Bukhansan bus stop. Get off with the other
BUKHANSAN NATIONAL PARK

INFORMATION
Police Rescue Post ........................................ 1 B2
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES
Bukhansan National Park Ticket Booth.............. 4 A4
Dobongsan Hike ........................................... 2 A4
Baegundae Hike ........................................... 9 A3
SURAKSAN

Day Hikes

Dobongsan Hike
Dobongsan is a mountain with three rocky peaks. This shady 10km hike takes about five hours, but add time for a picnic lunch. Moderate fitness is required.

Take subway Line 1 north to Dobongsan station (W900). It takes 45 minutes from City Hall if your train goes all the way (not all do). Exit the station and follow the other hikers across the road, through the market and food stalls and past a bus terminal to the ticket booth.

Keep on the main path, following the sign to Jaunbong, one of Dobongsan’s peaks, which is 2.7km away. Five minutes past the spring, turn right, following the sign to Manjangbong (another Dobongsan peak). Keep a look out for woodpeckers and squirrels.

About an hour from the subway station, you arrive at Dobong Hut. Bear right following the sign to Mangwolsa. Then follow signs to Jaunbong, go past the police rescue post and up the final steep and rocky stretch to the top which is between two rocky peaks. Here the adventure begins as you scramble down a ravine helped by metal cables, then up and along a rocky ridge and through narrow crevices.

Follow the signs, descend via Mangwolsa or turn right at the sign marked ‘Wondobong Ticket Box’ for a less-used short cut down the hillside past a small spring. Half an hour from the right turn you join the main track down to the car park. Follow the road, bearing left as you enter the town, to Mangwolsa subway station (Line 1).

SURAKSAN

To the east of Bukhansan National Park is Suraksan (638m), another attractive climbing and hiking area. It’s not a national or provincial park, but expect crowds at the weekends or other peak times. One relatively easy hike is to take subway Line 4 to Danggogae station and hike up past Heunggyuksa to Suraksan peak, and then descend to Jang-am subway station. A harder hike from Danggogae station is up to the top of Bulamsan (508m) and then on to Buramsa and down to Sanggye station. Either way you’ll be glad you got out of the city, if only for the afternoon.

SEOUL RACOURSE 서울 경마장

The racecourse (Map pp98-9; % 503-3234; www.krc.co.kr; admission W600) has a comfy lounge area in the grandstand on the left for foreigners – take a lift to the 4th floor, turn right and it’s near Block A. Short races over 1km or 2km take place every half hour between 11am and 5.30pm at the weekend, and there are night races in July and August as well. The racecourse is closed four weekends of the year – check the racing calendar on the website for details. There are plenty of canteens and fast-food outlets. The small Equine Museum (% 503-3234; admission free; 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) is worth a peek, with a modest but interesting collection of horse-related artefacts and displays.

Getting There & Away
To get there, take subway Line 4 to Seoul Racecourse station (W800) and leave by Exit 2. A covered walkway leads almost all the way to the entrance.
NAMHAN SANSEONG PROVINCIAL PARK

Completed in 1626, Namhansanseong (543-619; www.namhansanseong.co.kr), a temple-fortress complex and wall 20km southeast of downtown Seoul, is famous for its beautiful pine forests, wildflowers and oak trees. It once guarded the city's southern entrance, while Bukhan Sanseong guarded the northern approaches. Buddhist monks - soldiers rather than pad- fiests in those days - lived here and kept watch. Numerous hiking options wind through the forests, some of them paralleling the old fortress wall, providing fantastic recreation in a site that's very accessible from Seoul.

Sights

HWAONSEONG 화성
Suwon's impressive fortress wall (admission free: 8am-7pm), made of earth and faced with large stone blocks, stretches for 5.7km: 95% of it has been restored. Hiking round the wall with its command posts, observation towers, entrance gates and fire-beacon platform makes for a fascinating two-hour historical walk. Start at Redmulm also known as Nammulm (South Gate), and follow the sign. Walk along the wall up to the top of Redmulm (143m), a good viewpoint, where you might hear see cuckoos.

HWAONSEONG HAENGGUNG 화성행궁
Before setting off around the fortress wall, you can visit the palace (http://ehs.suwon.ne.kr; admission 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) that was originally built by King Jeongjo. Courtyard follows courtyard as you wander around the large walled complex where King Jeongjo's mother held her grand 6lst-birthday party (the 6lst is considered particularly auspicious and marked a major date in an ancient Korean's life). The palace was destroyed during the Japanese occupation, after which a hospital and school were built on the site. You can try your hand at traditional Korean archery here (W1000 for five arrows).

Festivals & Events

Every October a grand royal procession is re-enacted as part of Suwon's annual festival. It's a grand affair, with colourful costumes and lots of onlookers taking photographs. Visit http://shof.or.kr for more info.

Information

The main tourist information centre (220-0522; www.suwon.gr; 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-3pm Nov-Mar) is outside the railway station, and another tourist information booth (9am-5pm) is near Paldalmun at the start of the fortress walk. Numerous PC bang (internet room) offer internet access for about W1000 per hour.

On weekends from March to November, a re-enactment of the changing of the guard occurs at 3pm (Saturday) or 2pm (Sunday), with a procession, drums and fanfare.

Sleeping

There are very few midrange and top-end hotels. The best deals are love hotels, which ofer squeaky-clean rooms, amenities and often internet for about W35,000 (sometimes less).

Gwangmyeong Yeoinsuk (254-3030; r with/without bathtub W29,000/23,000) Right in front of Suwon Station, this typical budget yeoinsuk (family-run hotel) has no beds, only yo (padded quilts) on the floor. The sign, down a dark alley off Maesanno, is easy to miss.

Regency Hotel (240-4321; www.regencyhotel.co.kr; rnt breakfast W40,000) A bit dusty, big and noisy at times if the function rooms are being rented, this top-end choice offers small rooms, comfy
Entertainment

JazzPeople

KOREAN FOLK VILLAGE

Food

KOREAN FOLK VILLAGE

Jazz People

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KOREAN FOLK VILLAGE
Yeong-woram Hermitage 영월암

Founded by the yogye sect in the interests of promoting self-cultivation, this 1000-year-old hermitage is perched high above the town, a steep 20-minute walk uphill from the visitors centre. Ancient gingko trees shade the brightly painted buildings (burned, unfortunately – the hermitage was carefully restored in 1993). Mess, a giant bed and a carved diif-face Buddha overlocking the sleepy city all make this a fun place to visit.

Icheon Ceramic Village 이천 도예촌

Don’t come here expecting picturesque riverside-huts or wispy-bearded characters labouring over kick wheels. The Icheon Ceramic Village (Icheon Doyeondan) is a busy town with a main street full of traffic, and the many potteries are spread out over a wide urban area. It’s as nice as some places, but the huge selection of wares makes it a fascinating destination for ceramics lovers or shopping aficionados.

Catch a taxi (W5000) or local bus 114 (W1300) from outside the bus terminal and get off after 15 minutes near Songpa Pottery (송파 도예). % 031-977-0386; www.songpadoye.com; h 9:30am-12:30pm, 1:30-5pm). The large traditional building with blue-green tiles. Inside is unusual crystalline pottery with fern-like designs as well as traditional inlaid celadon and buncheong style pottery. Don’t break anything – it could cost you W1 million. Some household items are W10,000, but a tea set is W60,000.

Walk along the main road and over the bridge to the town and you’ll come to a sign in Hangul indicating a right turn to Haejang Museum (a 20-minute walk from Songpa Pottery). % 031-592-1115; www.haejangmuseum.org; h 9:30am-5pm). A history of pottery has some interesting old kilns outside that are still used.

If you fancy making your own cup, bowl, or million-won vase, visit Namyang (남양; % 032-924-4219; www.namyang.org; h 9am-5pm). Where you can don a smock and sit down at a slippery mass of spinning clay, or handbuild something. If you like what you create, Namyang’s friendly owners can ship it to you (even overseas) for an additional postage and handling fee (W40,000 or so, depending on weight and destination).

Festivals

From late April through early June, the yearly World Ceramics Festival (www.earthceramics.org) is held, a massive event with potters, vendors and viewers world wide.

Sleeping

You probably want to do Icheon as a day trip from Seoul, but if not, there are numerous options to choose from.

Jeongang Resort (정강 파크모텔; % 631-4188; www.jangang.com; h 8am-12:30pm). Rooms are small, musty and have deep-red track lights if you need ‘ambient’, however, it’s the nearest accommodation to the bus terminal, only a one-minute walk away, and the owners are welcoming (though no English is spoken).

Icheon Hotel (이천호텔; % 633-6587; www.songpadoye.com; h 9:30am-4:30pm). Rooms are clean, dark and utterly characterless, but it’s a nice option for folks who don’t want a love hotel and it’s not far from the bus station. Japanese tour groups often stay here, which can sometimes mean a bit of noise.

Nawul’s The Moon Time (% 633-7370; www.nawul.com; h 5:30pm-11pm). Gets points for the crazy name, but it’s also (admittedly, a love hotel) spotlessly clean, brand new and very tastefully done, with heated toilet seats, a DVD collection (not only raunchy titles, but normal ones too). Many rooms have jacouzzi-style baths.

Miranda Hotel (미란다호텔; % 631-6033; www.mirandahotel.com). Located next to Spa Plus (spa plus.com), where guests receive a 20% discount, and overlooking a small lake with a pavilion on an island, this has the snazziest hotel in Icheon. It has a small business centre and a bowling alley (per game W2800, shoe hire W1000; open from 10am to 10pm). The lobby has fine examples of locally made ceramics. Other motels can easily be found around Icheon bus station and in Icheon Ceramic Village.

Eating

Near the bus station there are lots of small eateries and restaurants, with the usual Korean fare: saemap (asorted ingredients with rice and wraps), sundae (noodle and vegetable sausage), noodles and beef. If you want something more authentic, try one of these:

Yetgil Saebapgi (yetgil 월별집; % 631-3930; www.yetgil.com; h 8am-11:30pm). Near the Songpa Pottery showroom, you sit on cushions on the floor and eat a banquet of over 20 dishes. Cold plum tea rounds off an excellent feast. The more expensive options include additional steak, crab and fish dishes.

Getting There & Away

Buses run from Seoul’s Gangnam bus terminal (Map pp96–7) and Dong-Seoul bus terminal (Map pp98–9) to Icheon (W3600, one hour, every 30 minutes).
INCHON

Information
The principal tourist information centre (% 117 7272; 7am-noon & 1-6pm) is outside Incheon subway station and the staff are very helpful, with lots of excellent maps, tourist info and suggestions not only for the city, but for the surrounding islands as well. Smaller information centres are in the bus terminal and on Wolmido pier (832 1811; 8am-noon & 1-6pm).

Sights
Sangdo Resort (% 117 7423; admission W10,000) has a fairground with thrilling rides, paddle boats, a water slide and swimming in a large saltwater lake that is popular in summer. A Big Three ticket is W10,000, a Big Five ticket costs W15,000.

Also in Songdo is the Incheon Landing Memorial Monument Hall (% 117 7898; admission free; 9am-6:30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun, closed Mon) Old newsreel films of the Korean War reveal the ugly reality of modern warfare. Sixteen countries sent troops or medical units to help South Korea, and 70,000 UN and South Korean troops took part in the surprise landing in Incheon in 1950, supported by 260 warships.

Next door is Incheon Municipal Museum (% 117 7852; admission W3000; 9am-9pm daily).

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NEAR INCHEON SUBWAY STATION

**Hong Kong Motel** (£% 773-1030; w w hongkongmotel.co.kr; 310-26 Wolmido jj) One of the best budget options, this place has love.

**Paradise Hotel** (£% 152-5881; www.paradiseincheon.com; 54-104 Wolmido 1-ga) Built on a hill overlooking the port, this long-established hotel has a small casino. Steak meals cost W36,000 in the Western-style restaurant. Korean or Western-style rooms are available and there's a sauna as well (W15,000). Turn right as you exit the subway station and follow the road, looking to the right for the hotel on the hill.

**NEAR BUPYEONG SUBWAY STATION**

**Venus Motel** (£% 764-2522; w www.venusmotel.co.kr; 20 Wolmido 2-ga) Some rooms are a bit stale, but this is one of the nicest cheap options in Incheon and the staff are friendly. Triple rooms are available for W30,000 (W45,000 on Friday and Saturday). It's located on a small sidestreet to the left of the station, just next to the larger, fancier (and less friendly) Plaza Motel.

A number of other motel and yeonanuk (family-run hotel) options are on the same street, and there are other options nearby.

**WOLMIDO**

A number of motels are dotted around Wolmido, although many of them have seen better days. Among the better options are the **Spider Motel** (£% 773-1234; 20 Wolmido 2-ga), which is a far cry from upmarket, and the **Saphira Motel** (£% 773-1234; 20 Wolmido 2-ga). Some restaurants and bars may be a bit stale, but this is one of the nicest cheap options in Incheon and the staff are friendly. Triple rooms are available for W30,000 (W45,000 on Friday and Saturday). It's located on a small sidestreet to the left of the station, just next to the larger, fancier (and less friendly) Plaza Motel.

**SONGDO**

**Songdo Hilltop Motel** (£% 772-2390; www.songdockorea.com; 20 Wolmido 2-ga) Dark, almost gothic décor. VIP rooms are slightly fancier and all include PCs, but some standard rooms have computers as well at no extra charge.

**Ramada Songdo** (£% 830-2200; www.ramadasongdo.com; 20 Wolmido 2-ga) The luxury-accommodation choice with posh furnishings, beach and ocean views, three restaurants, asiana spa and gym, a business centre and an Internet lounge in every room. Ondol-style rooms (with underfloor heating systems) are slightly cheaper than Western-style ones.

**Getting & Drinking**

**WOLMIDO**

Prices are high here, but dishes are meant for sharing and you can order gogongbap (steamed rice) to cut down on the number of seafood dishes. Sushi, sashimi and beef are popular.

If you want something easier on the wallet, try the spotlessly clean **Jjanggu Jonghap Bunsik** (773-7787; www.bunbu.co.tv; 365 days of the year. Prices are high here, but dishes are meant for sharing and you can order gogongbap (steamed rice) to cut down on the number of seafood dishes. Sushi, sashimi and beef are popular.

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Town Square has been developed with half a dozen midrange hotels, a guesthouse and apartments for airport workers.

**Yeongjongdo Wharf Market** sells fish, shellfish, crabs and other varied seafood, which nearby restaurants will cook and serve for you (see opposite).

Behind the market, take bus 202 (W1200, 20 minutes, hourly) and ask the driver to drop you near Jamjindo if you want to visit Muuido. From the bus stop, walk over the causeway from Yeongjongdo to the islet of Jamjindo (중진도) and enjoy the views. A 15-minute walk brings you to the small ferry to Muuido (W1000, at least hourly).

On Muuido, try a delicious, fresh-shell fish barbecue – a big bowl costs W25,000 (feeds three or four people) and octopus (flounder) cost around W10,000 each, while prawns or blue crab are around W20,000 per kg. It’s a much better deal than you get in Wolmido.

**Getting There & Away**

**Airport Town Square** is a relatively new town that has been built on Yeongjongdo a few kilometres from the airport, not to be confused with the even-closer-to-the-terminal Airport Business District; the latter is essentially a few large business hotels and accompanying stores. Most accommodation in both places is quite new, and either town could be good for an overnight stay after you come or before you leave. Bus 111 (W1000, 30 minutes) and 103 (W1300, 10 minutes, every 30 minutes) run between Airport Town Square and Incheon International Airport. There is also a new shuttle bus service (10 daily) from the airport (3rd floor exit, Gate S5). Some hotels provide a free pick-up or drop-off service to and from the airport, but others charge up to W20,000. Bus 111 runs between Town Square and Incheon city.

**Eating**

Yeongjongdo Wharf Market

**Eating**

In addition to the seafood soup a winner. Look for this sound, with seafood, hot pots and noodles. The seafood soup is a must-try dish.

![Image of a seafood soup](image-url)

**Getting There & Away**

To visit Yeongjongdo and Muuido, take subway Line 1 to Incheon station and then a taxi (W1500) to Wolmido. On the promenade is the ticket office for the ferry to Yeongjongdo. The adult/child fare is W2000/1500 for the 20-minute trip and ferries run every half hour from 7am to 9pm daily. Cars cost an additional W6500. An alternative way...
Ganghwa-eup

The main town, Ganghwa-eup, is not particularly scenic, but is just 2km beyond the northern bridge and makes a good base for visiting the island's attractions.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

Buses to Ganghwa-eup (W4400, 1½ hours, every 5 minutes from 5.10am to 9.45pm) leave from Sinchon bus terminal in Seoul.

Around Ganghwa-eup

The small but modern *Ganghwahotel* (강화해양리조트, 383-1, Geumhwa-ri, Deokjeok-eup, 408-1400) reveals the island's interesting history and is located near a fortification (Gapgot Dondeja) close to the northern bridge. If you want to visit ask the bus driver to drop you off there rather than in Ganghwa-eup bus terminal, or else you'll need to take a taxi.

Even if history isn't your thing, there's fun cycle path here that goes to Gwangseongdo, 10km away along the coast. It's a scenic, mainly flat jaunt, though the summer sun can be scorching. Rent bikes from the *bycycle rental shop* (백령도 자전거 대여소, W1500, 4hrs, W2000, 7hrs) and make your own way around the island.

**ISEOPO**

Because it is the closest to Incheon, Iseopdo is the most popular, and it can be pricey.

**DEOKJEOKDO**

This is one of the most scenic islands that can be reached from Incheon, and the high-speed ferries make one-day excursions from Seoul possible. But why be in a rush to leave? Sit back and relax. The island is 77km from Incheon, and along its southern shore is Seopori Beach, which is 2km long and lined with a thick groove of 200-year-old pine trees. The beach is spectacular and easily the most popular on the island. The island also has many unusual rock formations and it's worth climbing the highest peak, Bijobong (292m) for the grand view.

There are plenty of yeogwan and minbak as well as a camping ground at Seopori Beach. No matter which ferry you take, you will be dropped off at Jilli Pier on Deokjeokdo. From there, it's a 20-minute bus ride to Seopori Beach. The high-speed ferry (W17,500, 50 minutes, 9.30am and 3pm) is the best option, although there is a cheaper regular ferry (W12,000, 2½ hours, 1.30pm and 7.30pm).

Far to the northwest of Incheon and within a stone's throw of North Korea is Baengnyeondo, a scenic island that is attracting an increasing number of tourists. The island is South Korea's westernmost point and is notable for its remote and dramatic coastal rock formations - taking a tour around the island by boat to view these unusual rock shapes is a 'must do'. With North Korea a stone's throw away, the military presence is visible.

The ferry (W25,000, four hours, four a day, but often fewer in summer) leaves from Incheon's Yeonan Pier. With the new bridge to the island, you can also reach the island by bus (four a day).

**YEONGHEUNGDO**

Simnipo Beach, at the northwest corner of the island, is 30km from Incheon. The beach has a 4km-long pebbly stretch and a 1km sandy stretch.

The ferry (W43,700, four hours, twice daily) and a regular ferry (W29,500, eight hours, once daily). Both ferries leave from Incheon's Yeonan Pier.

**GANGHWA-DO**

**GAHNGHAMDO강화도**

This is one of the most scenic islands that can be reached from Incheon, and the high-speed ferries make one-day excursions from Seoul possible. But why be in a rush to leave? Sit back and relax. The island is 77km from Incheon, and along its southern shore is Seopori Beach, which is 2km long and lined with a thick groove of 200-year-old pine trees. The beach is spectacular and easily the most popular on the island. The island also has many unusual rock formations and it's worth climbing the highest peak, Bijobong (292m) for the grand view.

There are plenty of yeogwan and minbak as well as a camping ground at Seopori Beach. No matter which ferry you take, you will be dropped off at Jilli Pier on Deokjeokdo. From there, it's a 20-minute bus ride to Seopori Beach. The high-speed ferry (W17,500, 50 minutes, 9.30am and 3pm) is the best option, although there is a cheaper regular ferry (W12,000, 2½ hours, 1.30pm and 7.30pm).

**Baengnyeondo백령도**

Far to the northwest of Incheon and within a stone's throw of North Korea is Baengnyeondo, a scenic island that is attracting an increasing number of tourists. The island is South Korea's westernmost point and is notable for its remote and dramatic coastal rock formations - taking a tour around the island by boat to view these unusual rock shapes is a 'must do'. With North Korea a stone's throw away, the military presence is visible.

**Seongmodo성모도**

A short ferry trip away on Seongmodo is Bomure, with a cliff-carved Buddha and beautiful old pines. Numerous sashimi and seafood restaurants make dining a pleasure, though you may find seafood is the only item and it can be pricey.

**Ganghwa-eup강화읍**

The main town, Ganghwa-eup, is not particularly scenic, but is just 2km beyond the
and the Easter Island statues can be seen there too. The site can be visited by bus (W900, 15 minutes, hourly from 6.20am to 8pm) or taxi (W2500, 10 minutes).

Oepo-ri 외포리
If you have been yearning for a close look at seagulls, come to Oepo-ri, a fishing village on the west coast about 13km from Ganghwa-eup. ‘Flocks’ is too small a word to describe the number of happy ‘rats with wings’ that follow the ferries between Oepo-ri to Seongmodo.

Even if you stay on land, there’s a quiet beauty here. The views of the harbour, mudflats and yes) seagulls seem to be cut from a Korean silk painting. Fishing travelers, either sun dappled or mist cloaked, chug in and out of the port, through a backdrop of lavender-coloured islands; it’s not hard to imagine that life here has been little changed for decades. The seafood market (turn right after you get to the water) has good prices and there are decent restaurants and yeogwan. It’s also the terminal for the ferry to Seongmodo (석모도), where the main attraction is the temple Bomunsa.

Panmunjom & The DMZ Tour
There are only two villages in the DMZ, and they’re both near Panmunjom – and within hailing distance of each other if you have a big enough loudspeaker. On the south side is Dae-seong, a subsided village with a church and high tax-free incomes. Each family there lives in a modern house with high-speed internet connection, and each farms seven hectares. All 230 residents must be at home by the 11pm curfew, and soldiers stand guard while the villagers work in the rice fields or tend their gingkامل.

Getting There & Away
Access to Panmunjom is permitted for tour groups only – this is not a do-it-yourself trip. You must have your passport or you won’t be allowed to board the tour bus, and unlikely the immigration checks at most world airports, here they actually look at your photograph closely and compare it with your face. Vital too is that you follow the dress and behaviour codes (which, among other things, forbids wearing jeans!), and before you enter the DMZ all visitors must sign a document absolving the UN and the South Korean government of responsibility in case of any injuries due to ‘enemy action’ while on the tour.

The United Service Organizations (USO; 933 704 7033; www.uso.org/korea), the US army’s social and entertainment organisation at the Yongsan base, runs tours (USO; W1100, 30 minutes, every 30 minutes from 6.40am to 6.40pm) that include the Third Tunnel, which was dug by North Korean spies still slip across the border from time to time. (Such incidents usually end with the spies getting caught, being shot, or swallowing poison and committing suicide. And you thought that only happened in B-grade Hollywood movies, right?) Sabre rattling or no, the threat of North Korea remains a big issue here. No other place in the world with a temperate-zone climate has been so well preserved. This has been a great boon to wildlife: for example, the DMZ is home to large flocks of Manchurian cranes. Environmentalists hope that the day the two Koreas cease hostilities, the DMZ will be kept as a nature reserve. With undetonated landmines still in place, the zone won’t be seeing tour groups anytime soon.

**DMZ NATIONAL PARK?**
The DMZ separates North and South Korea. It is surrounded by tanks and electrified fences, and is virtually sealed off to all people. Ironically, this has made it something of an environmental haven. No other place in the world with a temperate-zone climate has been so well preserved. This has been a great boon to wildlife: for example, the DMZ is home to large flocks of Manchurian cranes. Environmentalists hope that the day the two Koreas cease hostilities, the DMZ will be kept as a nature reserve. With undetonated landmines still in place, the zone won’t be seeing tour groups anytime soon.

**Gyemung-Do •• Panmunjom & The DMZ Tour**

**Ganghwa Youth Hostel** 光華 뮤소호스텔; % 983 8888; www.ganghwa.co.kr; ferry 7W000; 230 rooms are smallish and a bit stuffy, but clean, with the usual love-hotel amenities and a choice of andal or Western options. Tinted windows offer privacy whether it’s needed or not, and the location makes it a good choice for those planning to head to Bomunsa the following day.

**Buses** from Ganghwa-eup (W1100, 30 minutes, every 30 minutes from 6.40am to 6.40pm) take a scenic cross-island route. Ferries depart from the two tiny terminals for Seongmodo (석모도), right, as well as other islands.

**Bomunsa** 보문사
Situated high (steep walk, many stairs, catch your breath at the top) in the pine-forested hills of Seongmodo island, this temple has some superbly ornate painting on the eaves of some of its various buildings. The grotto and the 10m rock carving are standout features. Korean women come here in hopes of conceiving sons, and the Korean grandmothers you see are not praying for sons for themselves but for their daughters. Resorts and restaurants are dotted around the island’s coastline, but you can also make this a day trip from Seoul if you don’t mind getting up early and returning late.
companies cost around W40,000 and full-day tours cost around W60,000. Not all the tours are the same, and use caution before putting money down. Ensure they include Panmunjom. Some trips include a visit to the Third Tunnel and some don't. Visiting the tunnel is worthwhile and you should make sure it's included in the tour before handing over the cash. Also be sure to check the refund/rescheduling options if a tour is cancelled.

ODUSAN UNIFICATION OBSERVATORY

The Unification Observatory (Tong-il Jeonmangdae; % 945 3171; www.jmd.co.kr; adult/youth W2500/1300; h 9am-3:30pm Apr-Sep, 9am-3pm Oct, Nov & Mar, 9am-5pm Dec-Feb) at Odusan is as close as most Korean civilians can get to the DMZ. Panmunjom, north of Seoul, is actually inside the DMZ and can be visited by foreigners, but Korean civilians are not normally allowed there (so make sure you don't plan on bringing a Korean friend when you take the USO tour). This large, futuristic building has a viewing area, museum, gift shop and auditorium. Festivals and events are sometimes held here; check the website for details.

Since the Unification Observatory does offer South Koreans a rare peek at the forbidden North, tourists by the bus load turn up here daily throughout the summer months, and it's also popular with tours from Japan and Taiwan. It isn't quite the same as going to Panmunjom – there's little of the tension since the Unification Observatory isn't actually in the DMZ but is instead a few kilometres away. If you want to see anything at all (such as the UN post, the North Korean post – only just – and the North's propaganda signs), you have to use the pay telescopes for viewing. It's calm and non-threatening, but still interesting.

Getting There & Away

To get to the observatory from Seoul's Seobu bus terminal in Bulgwang-dong, take a bus (50 minutes, every 40 minutes) to Geumchon (buses to Munsan stop in Geumchon). Or from Seoul train station, take a train to Geumchon (one hour, hourly). From Geumchon bus station, take a local bus (30 minutes, every 40 minutes) to the Unification Observatory (these buses are marked Songdong-ri).

THE UNDERGROUND WAR

A brass plaque in Panmunjom gives the following account of the North Koreans' tunnelling activities.

‘On 15 November 1974, members of a Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) patrol inside the southern sector of the DMZ spotted vapour rising from the ground. When they began to dig into the ground to investigate, they were fired upon by North Korean snipers. ROKA units secured the site and subsequently uncovered a tunnel dug by the North Koreans that extended 1.2km into the Republic of Korea. On 20 November, two members of the UN Command (UNC) investigation team were killed inside the tunnel when dynamite planted by the North Koreans exploded. The briefing hall at Camp Kitty Hawk is named after one of the officers killed, Lieutenant Commander Robert N Ballinger.

In March 1975, a second North Korean tunnel was discovered by a UNC tunnel detection team. In September of 1975, a North Korean engineer escaped and provided valuable intelligence concerning the communist tunnelling activities. Acting on the information, a tunnel-detection team successfully intercepted a third tunnel in October 1978, less than 2km from Panmunjom.

Today the North Koreans continue to dig tunnels beneath the DMZ. The UN and ROKA have fielded tunnel-detection teams, which drill around the clock in hope of intercepting new tunnels. Since the plaque was put up, a fourth tunnel extending 1km into South Korean territory was discovered (in 1990).
Gang-won-do, northeast of Seoul and bordering the ocean and North Korea, holds many of Korea’s natural gems. Roads wind through wildflower-dappled valleys, rivers chase and meander their way to the sea, and verdant green mountains cloaked in mist rise up suddenly. Come here to trade the crazy neonscape of Seoul for rural majesty, or visit the quiet but still fun cities of Chuncheon or Gangneung.

Gang-won-do has several of South Korea’s most beautiful national parks, including Seoraksan, whose evocative, jagged peaks seem like giant, nature-made sculptures and whose trails offer hours – even days – of hiking. More sedate pleasures can be found in the beaches of Gangneung and Naksan, where Seoulites arrive in droves in the summertime to sunbake on smooth, white-sand beaches and splash in the sea. Bungee jumping, skiing, cycling, and white-water rafting are other outdoor options. Most of the more beautiful parts of the province are found in obscure valleys with dramatic gorges, raging rivers and dense forests, and the sandy coves and rocky headlands south of Samcheok provide serene sea views.

Approaching the northern border you’ll see tank blockades, barbed wire and lots of military: North Korean spies still slip through from time to time, and it’s a bit odd to see lines of spotlights that illuminate the beaches – they’re not for tourists, they’re to spot intruders.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Hike the breathtaking peaks of Seoraksan National Park (p172)
- Tour the North Korean villas and view lots of barbed wire at Hwajinpo (p171)
- Marvel at the giant penis totems at Sinnam’s Haesindong Gong-won (p183)
- Lounge in the white-sand splendour of Gyeongpo Beach (p176)
- Sample delicious, scaldingly spicy chicken at Chuncheon (p163)
- Explore the Coal Museum and Dan-gun’s mountain-top altar in Taebaeksan Provincial Park (p184)
- View the artistic Buddhist treasures at Woljeongsa (p177) and Sang-wonsa (p177) in Odaesan National Park

TELEPHONE CODE: 033  POPULATION: 1.5 MILLION  AREA: 16,874 SQ KM
History
Historically the province has been isolated due to its rugged terrain, and during the Korean War it was the site of many fierce battles for strategic mountain tops. After the war, the area's rich natural resources, including coal and timber, were industrialised, bringing road and rail links. With the closure of many coal mines during the 1990s, the province was forced to create alternative employment opportunities. Tourism was the solution.

In summer 2006 a 100-year rainy season brought torrential downpours, and with it flooding, landslides and death. The disaster killed over 60 people, washed away roads and trails (including many in the Seoraksan National Park and other hiking areas) and destroyed homes and businesses. By the time this book is published much will be back to normal thanks to aid and industrious rebuilding, but the memory of the loss is fresh and painful.

National Parks
Seoraksan National Park and Chikilsan National Park are the two biggest and most famous parks of the province. Both are spectacular. Seoraksan offers grand vistas, forest-darkened hiking trails, rushing rivers, beautiful autumn and winter trips, and stunning scenery all year round. Chikilsan, smaller and less visited, has a more subtle beauty that is just as charming, and its temples and peaks are some of the highest in the country. While both parks are well-equipped to handle large numbers of visitors, at peak times (usually July and August) the swarms of visitors take a bite out of the beauty. Escape them by hiking in the early morning, just after the trails open, or choosing to come at other times of the year.

Getting There & Around
Public transport is so good in South Korea that getting there and around is deceptively spectacular. Seoraksan offers grand vistas, forest-darkened hiking trails, rushing rivers, beautiful autumn and winter trips, and stunning scenery all year round. Chikilsan, smaller and less visited, has a more subtle beauty that is just as charming, and its temples and peaks are some of the highest in the country. While both parks are well-equipped to handle large numbers of visitors, at peak times (usually July and August) the swarms of visitors take a bite out of the beauty. Escape them by hiking in the early morning, just after the trails open, or choosing to come at other times of the year.

Activities
BICYCLE TOURS
Jungdo Cycle Ride
Hire a bicycle from the rental stall near the lakeside tourist information centre. You will need to take some form of ID. Cycle to Talbong Makgukus (p165) for lunch and then pedal to the ferry pier for Jungdo (△ △). Alternatively, catch bus 74 (W300, 10 minutes, daily).

This pretty little lake island has horse-and-carriage rides (per person W5000 for 10 minutes), rowing boats (W5000 per hour), an outdoor swimming pool (open in July and August), sports fields and picnic areas. Herons, ducks and other water birds occupy the reeds, more so at the island’s western end. You can look for ancient tombs as well. At the bicycle rental stall, Heukyemsotangjip Restaurant sells bulgogi (barbecued beef and vegetables) and seolleongtang (beef and rice soup) but most visitors picnic under the trees.

Lakeside Cycle Ride
A cycle path runs along Ulam Lake to the Korean War Memorial and beyond. It’s magical if you do it as the sun sets behind the mountains. The War Memorial is a reminder of the Cold War battle when the North Koreans lost 6600 men and 18 tanks.

BOATING
Row boats (W6000 per hour) and swan paddle boats (W10,000 per hour) can be hired from near the Ethiopia Café. Don’t fall in – the water is nasty.

ICE SKATING
The ice skating rink (% 263 3002; adult/youth W20,000/10,000) can be reached by bus 75 or you could cycle there.

Sleeping
Grand Motel (% 263 5021; Okcheondong 39-6; r W30,000; △ △ △)
A large and helpful tourist information centre is near the bus terminal and has free internet access and brochures on the whole of Gang-won-do. A smaller office is near the lake, Ulamno.

The ‘City of Lakes’, proud birthplace of the Scopusian yet-mouth-scaling dalkagi (chicken, rice cakes and veggies cooked with spicy chilli paste), still retains the charm and quiet of a small town, despite its size. Four pretty artificial lakes surround the city (the province’s capital), making for beauty, nice bike rides and (in season) mosquitoes. Whether you are up in the surrounding mountains, on the shoreline, or in the lakes themselves, you’ll find that it’s a gorgeous spot; however, outside the obvious outdoor activities and the dalkagi restaurants there’s not a lot to do and the water, pretty at a distance, is quite dirty up close. In spring a section of rice fields outside town becomes a haven for visiting cranes. Fans of Asian TV dramas will recognise this as the setting for the wildly popular Winter Sonata, posters of which still fly all over town.

Information
A large and helpful tourist information centre (% 250 3000; h Sungwonsan; △ △ △) is near the bus terminal and has free internet access and brochures on the whole of Gangwon-do. A smaller office is near the lake, Ulamno.
located in the centre of town, the Youngbinjang is unassuming and clean and the owners are friendly. Three ‘special’ rooms have desktop computers; all rooms have hair dryers and carpeted floors. Rooms are smallish but not at all musty. There’s a restaurant below.

**Ritz Motel** (% 254 2518; meals W3500) This motel has small, ultramodern rooms that are a bit heavy on the air freshener, and ‘deluxe’ rooms that have giant televisions and mammoth baths. A bar downstairs is open from 6pm to 1am. In case you’ve forgotten that this is a ‘tourist’ place much easier to find – look out for the church spire and you will be very close. It’s got nice character, with wooden floors, pretty embroidered sheets and paper screens on the windows. A restaurant, a coffee shop and even a slot-machine room are all on the premises. If you didn’t bring your own laptop, just ask: they’ll be able to lend you one.

**Chuncheon Bears Town Hotel** (% 256 2525; fax 256 2530; 8 Scct Rd W96,800) A peek at the parking lot says this place has seen better days, but this clean, modern hotel offers great lake views. Internet comes in two flavours: rooms with a computer or wireless. The koi pond, no-smoking lobby and several restaurants are additional pluses. Downsides? It’s a bit far from the centre of town… but well worth it for those wonderful views.

**Eating**

Dakgali Gori is a famous food street where more than 20 restaurants serve up delicious dakgali (grilled spicy chicken pieces). Other restaurants (some of them excellent) are a short taxi ride away. You need at least two people and it’s a good idea to order the boneless chicken and extra rice or noodles to mop up the leftover sauce.

*UNJI BUKAK* (% 244 2969; meals W1000-3000; h 9.30am–11.30pm Mon–Sun) Gimbap (Korean sushi), ramyeon (instant noodles), fried rice – dirt-cheap eats that can be taken on the go, but it’s worth ‘ducking’ (pun intended) into their curious backroom: anyone over 4ft tall will have to crouch. If time permits, ask for a sticky note and pen so you can help out with the wallpaper.

**Sobongjigu** (% 244 2938; meals W8000) This small, greenery-covered traditional restaurant has walls painted white for maigukus (cold buckwheat noodles with garnish). You can eat them dry or add broth to them from the kettle. Don’t mix in all the gochujang if you want to keep the chilli content down.

**Drinking**

**Ethiopia Café** (% 234 2969; h 10am–11pm, closed for rain) This is an old established café with river views and Ethiopian artefacts. Coffees and beers are W2000 to W3000.

**Getting There & Away**

Buses and trains take about the same time from Seoul if there aren’t any traffic jams. Buses will also get you right into Chuncheon, whereas the train stations are further away. On weekends, seats on both can be sold out.

**Bus**

Departures from the express bus terminal (% 256 2525) include the following:

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<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wonju</td>
<td>5000</td>
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<td>every 15 min</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Train**

Trains to Chuncheon depart from Seoul’s Cheongnyangni Station (W5200, 1½ hours, hourly between 6.15am and 10.20pm), which can be reached by subway Line 1. Chuncheon’s two train stations are both inconveniently located, so you’ll need to deal with the city buses, take a taxi or walk about 1.5km. Returning to Seoul, the last train leaves at 9.45pm.

**Around Chuncheon**

**Sundam Valley**

This valley, 8km from Chuncheon (up near the DMZ) is the base for various adventure sports companies, including *Hantangang Rafting* (% 422 0201; fax 422 0202), that organise kayaking, canoeing or rafting on the Hantang River. The season runs from mid-April to October. There are a few rapids, but they’re not scary except after the monsoon season.

A 1½-hour rafting trip (9km) along a scenic ravine costs W30,000, while a longer 18km, eight-hour trip costs W60,000. Kayaking and canoeing cost about the same and mountain bikes can be hired (from W5000 to W15,000).
Getting There & Away
Gangchon is a short bus ride away from Chuncheon (W950, every 40 minutes between 6am to 10pm). The bus stop is outside the Gangchon train station. Trains from there go to Seoul's Cheongnyangni station (W4200, 1½ hours, one to two per hour between 6am and 10pm). Subway access is expected to come through by the time this book is printed, so expect even more teens and 20-somethings than are here already.

SOYANGLAKE 소양호
The most interesting way to travel from Chuncheon west across Gangwon-do is to start via a short ferry ride across Soyang Lake, a large artificial lake with gentle green hills and slightly opaque water held back by one of Korea's largest dams. Catch bus 11 (W3000, 30 minutes, hourly) from Chuncheon's intercity bus terminal to Soyang Dam, and walk 1km past the market stalls (some of which sell metallurgy – fried grasshopper – for W2000 a cup) to the ferry pier.

There are hydrofoils (partly W10,000, which can be rented at Yangyu Pier to the northeast. The hydrofoils are small, and can only transport two to three people at a time.

Rent a boat (adult/youth/child W3000/1500/1000, 20min, 10am-5pm, 30min, 5-7pm)

To transport is W10,000, which can be rented at Yangyu Pier to the northeast. The hydrofoils are small, and can only transport two people at a time.

Rent a boat (adult/youth/child W3000/1500/1000, 20min, 10am-5pm, 30min, 5-7pm)

There is a small tourist information centre, which is 6km from the train station. Park your bike at the entrance. Market ladies sell black rice, dried apricots, sweet potatoes, omija tea, pumpkin jelly sweets and dongdongju (rice wine) homebrew (mmm, homebrew!). Walk for 15 minutes to the delightful waterfall, which cascades down a 50m cliff. The signs on the ropes say ‘Danger: Do not Cross’, but you might not be able to read them since so many people are ducking under to get closer for picture taking.

In winter it’s a popular spot for bingyeok (ice climbing). From near the waterfall you can also hike up Bonghwasan (486m; hiking 1hr 20min, 1hr 30min). Find it by going left out of the bus terminal and downhill to the T-Intersection. The centre will be on your right.

Getting There & Away
INJE

Inje (www.inje.gangwon.kr) is a small town and an adventure sports centre – white-water rafting, kayaking and bungee jumping are becoming increasingly popular with young Koreans. It was hit hard by the 2006 flooding, however; many homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed. You can use the internet free (not all day, please) at the terminals in the tourist information centre (W1500, 9am-6pm). Find it by going off right out of the bus terminal and downhill to the T-Intersection. The centre will be on your right.

Sleeping
INJE

Room rates go up 50% in July and August. Motels surround the express bus terminal and are within easy walking distance of the beach.
In July and August you can camp on the beach (W6000 per night) or rent a tent (W12,000 per night). A shower costs W1300.

**Gangwon-Do •• Sokcho**

Buses also leave from the Sokcho intercity bus terminal for Jinchuryeong (W4600, six daily from 6.10am to 2.20pm) and stop at Baekdamsa and Yondae-ri on the way. From Jinchuryeong shuttle buses go to the Alp Ski Resort.

Local buses leave from outside the intercity bus terminal in the north of Sokcho, but southbound-bound bus 7 (W900, 25 minutes, every 15 minutes) to Seorak-dong and bus 9 (W5000, every 15 minutes) to Nak-san can both be picked up along their routes, which express the intercity bus terminal.

**NORTH OF SOKCHO**

**Hwajinpo (화진포)**

This sandy beach is popular in July and August but almost deserted at other times. Nearby is a lake and three summer villas (see p399) with onward travel to China and the Forbidden North and you should be able to see the Geumgang mountain range.

**Getting There & Away**

**AIR**

There are flights from Seoul (Gimpo) to the north of Sokcho and Goseong Unification Observatory and south to Gangneung.

**BUS**

Buses leave Sokcho express bus terminal for Seoul Gangnam (W13,900, 4½ hours, every 30 minutes).

**Eating**

**On the harbour side of Dongmyeong Harbour**

Brand new and just a stone's throw from the beach, this hotel is trying for the snazz factor with its own Japanese restaurant, karaoke, and rooms with balconies and ocean views. They haven't loaded them up with kitsch, either – the décor is minimalist, black and tasteful.

**Boat**

Dongchun runs a ferry to Zarubino in Russia (see p399) with onward travel to China and Paekduzan, a mountain that straddles the border between China and North Korea.

**Getting There & Away**

**AIR**

The airport is well serviced by buses that run north to Sokcho and Goseong Unification Observatory and south to Gangneung.

**BOAT**

Dongchun runs a ferry to Zarubino in Russia (see p399) with onward travel to China and Paekduzan, a mountain that straddles the border between China and North Korea.

**Destinations Rates**

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**POLITICIANS VILLAS**

The site of Kim Il Sung’s Villa (김일성 별장) is a pleasant 20-minute walk from the Hwajinpo Aquarium. Nothing remains of the North Korean leader’s original summer residence except for some steps that feature in a fascinating 1948 photograph of his six-year-old son, Kim Jong II, with his younger sister and the young son of a Russian general. A small exhibition hall has old photos, which show the original building to have been a large European-style villa built of stone. The reason it is here in South Korea is that before the Korean War, this area was ruled by North Korea. At the 1953 Armistice, South Korea gained land here on the east side but lost Kaesong and the Ongjin Peninsula.

**Yi Gilsung’s Villa** (이기붕 별장) was built in 1920 and used by English missionaries who made a crazy-golf course in the garden. Between 1945 and 1953 the house was used by North Korean Communist Party members, then it became the summer retreat of Vice President Lee and his Austrian wife. When President Syngman Rhee fled to Hawaii in 1960, Vice President Lee’s son shot his parents dead and then turned the gun on himself. A 10-minute walk away is Syngman Rhee’s Villa (시정민 별장), furnished with many of his personal belongings. Educated at Princeton and Harvard, Rhee was South Korea’s president from 1948 until 1960. A tough autocrat, he was finally forced out by student and trade union protests in 1960, and he went to live in Hawaii where he died in 1965.
Catch bus No 1 or 1-1 (W3400, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes) from Sokcho to Daegin, a pleasant 50km ride up the coast with barbed-wire fences, fortifications and tank traps to remind you of the threat from the North’s armed forces. From Daegin Education Centre catch the shuttle bus (W2000, 20 minutes) to the observatory. If you’re driving, remember to stop first at the Daegin Education Centre to get your entry ticket otherwise you'll be turned around at the barricade. A pass costs adult/child W5000/2000.

**GANGWON-DO**  ••  South of Sokcho

**SOUTH OF SOKCHO**

Naksan Provincial Park

**Gangwon National Park**

This small coastal park (% 620 2288 admission free, 12km south of Sokcho, is famous for the temple Naksansa (% 620 2288 on the road, 30min. by cable car) and its 808-step staircase. It takes 45 minutes and is hard going but the reward is a spectacular view from the top.

Orientation

The park is divided into three sections.

Outer Sokcho is the most accessible and popular area and is nearest to Sokcho and the sea. Sokcho-dong has hotels, motels, restaurants, bars, noraejang (karaoke rooms) and a 24-hour supermarket. The left-luggage facility for the ticket office costs W1000 for most items and W2000 for a big backpack.

Inner Sokcho, at the western end of the park, is the least commercialised area. It has three entrance points: from Hwy 46 at Yongdangri to Baekdamsa, from Namgyo-ri, where a hiking trail goes through Seorakson-yewatong Valley; and from the south (Hwy 44), where a trail goes north from Jangguda. Southern Sokcho is the name given to the Osaek (Five Colours) area, which is famous for its cold mineral spring for drinking, and hot mineral springs for bathing and soothing those aching muscles after a long day’s hike.

Information

A helpful tourist information centre (% 622 0010 open from sunrise to sunset) is located rather inconveniently at Sunrise Park, where the Sokcho-dong access road joins the main coast road. A left-luggage facility costs W1000 to W3000 per bag, depending on its size.

**Outer Sokcho**

GWON-GEUNSEONG

A 1.1km cable car (% 665 7362 return W3000) runs every 20 minutes and the views (and queues) on a nice day are amazing. It drops you at a 10-minute walk away from the fortress remains and summit.

**SIBISEONGYETANG VALLEY**

This legendary Seoraksan valley is strewn with waterfalls, cascades, pools and large boulders.

The 2½-hour hike to Dumun Pokpo is a must see, and if you tire of the temple head down to the nearby coast for some of Korea’s best sandy beaches.

**Inner Seorak**

The park is divided into three sections.

Northern Seorak

This is the highest peak in the park at 1708m, but is currently closed for a five-year rotational restoration/preservation; it will reopen in 2011.

Southern Seorak

It’s easier to hike up Daecheongbong from Osaek Hot Springs in the south. The hike is steep and difficult but is reckoned to take four hours up and three hours down, after which you can soak your aching body in the hot spring pools (adult W2000). Alternatively you could continue and descend to Sorekdong (six hours down).

**SEORAK-DONG**

The first big section of seorak, shops and restaurants is on the left as you head west.

Seoraksan Youth Hostel (% 665 7125; www.euisangdae.tc.to; r W40,000) is located rather inconveniently at Sunrise Park, where the Sokcho-dong access road joins the main coast road. A left-luggage facility costs W1000 to W3000 per bag, depending on its size.

**SOUTH OF SOKCHO**

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**Catch bus No 1 or 1-1 (W3400, 1½ hours, every 15 minutes) from Sokcho to Daegin, a pleasant 50km ride up the coast with barbed-wire fences, fortifications and tank traps to remind you of the threat from the North’s armed forces. From Daegin Education Centre catch the shuttle bus (W2000, 20 minutes) to the observatory. If you’re driving, remember to stop first at the Daegin Education Centre to get your entry ticket otherwise you'll be turned around at the barricade. A pass costs adult/child W5000/2000.**

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very near the park entrance. Some rooms are shrines to Korean film stars. From September to June, the price drops to W129,000 including breakfast.

Hotel Sorak Park (% 681 7101; www.sorakhotel.co.kr; r W230,000) A wood-furnished hotel is the only one inside the national park. Substantial discounts are offered during off-peak periods.

Hyundai Oncheonjang (% 672 8500; r W50,000, Fri & Sat W60,000) This simple, natural wood-furnished hotel is the only one inside the national park. Substantial discounts are offered during off-peak periods.

SOUTH EAST SIGHTS

Express & Intercity Bus Terminal ........................................... 15 A5

TRANSPORT

Eating

Seoraksan is not noted for its food, but popular meals are sanchae jeongsik (rice topped with egg, meat, vegetables and sauce; W5000) and sanchae jeonggik (W8000), which features mountain vegetables. Trailside stalls sell snacks such as roast potatoes (W2000) and potato starch cakes with red-bean filling (W1000).

GANGNEUNG 강릉

Gangneung is the largest city on the northeast coast of Korea and hosts an annual Dano Festival (p176), held for the past 400 years. It is the gateway to Jeongdongjin beach, Odaesan National Park and Korea's top ski resort, Yongpyong. It's also pretty in itself, with a lagoon, beach, 'totof town' and more.

The main tourist information centre (% 640 4814; www.gntour.go.kr; 8am-6pm) is near the bus terminal and there is a smaller booth in front of the train station. They have both English- and Japanese-speaking staff.

Sights

OJUKHEON 오죽헌

This expansive complex (% 681 4721; daily Nov-Feb, 9am-4:30pm, Mar-Oct, 9am-5:30pm) is near the bus terminal and is a smaller booth in front of the train station. They have both English- and Japanese-speaking staff.

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come in season to catch them at the right time). If you come in winter, just look on the back of a W5000 note – the melon motif is based on one of her works.

Her son was an outstanding Confucian philanthropist and scholar. He could read at three years old and learned the Chinese Confucian classics from his mother at a very young age. In 1564 he won first prize in the state examination for provincial government officials. He served in various government posts including minister of the war. Unfortunately his advice to the king to raise an army of 100,000 to prepare against a possible invasion by Japan was ignored with disastrous consequences in 1592, eight years after his death, when the Japanese did invade.

The shamanist Dano Festival overtakes the city for a week on the 5th day of the 5th lunar month. People flock to Gangneung and a tent city rises to house them. There are circus and carnival acts, shamanist rituals, mask dramas (which were once performed by government slaves), folk operas, farmers’ bands, siraem (Korean wrestling) and assorted stalls and hawkers. It has the air of a medieval fair, which provides a rare chance to see Korea’s original shamanist religion. During the festival, an information stall staffed with multilingual guides is set up in the market centre.

Another festival, the Yulgokje Festival, is held annually at Okjukheon on 25 and 26 October, when traditional rites of respect are enacted and classical Korean music is played.

Sleeping & Eating
In 1996 Gangneung’s bus terminal moved to a new facility far from the city centre and (not surprisingly) several hotels have sprung up nearby. There are also places to stay at the old bus station and near the beach.

Korea-Motel (%) 641 0334 r without computer W40,000

Korea-Motel (%) 641 0334 r with computer W50,000

An option if you want to be near the beach. The rooms here are well-appointed and have TVs, fridges and bottled water. The décor is refreshingly bland, with not a hint of love-hotel tackiness. Follow the spiral stairs up one floor to get to the reception desk.

Hilton-Motel (%) 647 3357; meals W3000-9000;

A bit newer and more up-market, with a red chandelier in the lobby. Faux-wood floors and bottled water are additional touches.

Rascal Motel (%) 641 7321; meals W3000-9000

A bit bland, but the hallways have pretty Korean paper decorative screens. Small tables make the rooms feel a wee bit more homely.

Yongpyong (%) 641 7922; meals W3000-9000

A great place to put back a few beers, this tiny odeng (processed seafood) shop has beer, soju (local vodka), skewers of chicken and other simple dishes. It’s right near the bus terminal.

GANGNEUNG’S DANO FESTIVAL
Like Seoraksan, Odaesan (Five Peaks Mountain) is a high-altitude massif. The park (%) is 322 647 1313; www.oedusa.or.kr; admission W9,000; 9am-4.30pm) has great hiking possibilities, superb views and two prominent Buddhist temples: Wijangsa and Syanwonsa. Near the southern entrance, the Korea Botanical Garden (322 647 1313; www.kbotanic.or.kr; admission W3,000; 9am-6pm) is 1.7km down a lane and has over 1,000 native plants, orchids and a café.

Odaesan is 156.3km) is the highest peak in the park. From Sangwonsa you can hike it (it’s steep and not for the faint-hearted) and continue along a ridge to Wijangsa (1433m) then back down to the road and along to the temple (five hours). If you have the stamina, continue along the ridge to Duryong-dong (1422m) and Dangbeonsa (1433m) before heading down to Hwy 446.

As with Seoraksan, the best times to visit are late spring and early to mid-autumn when the hillside colours are prettiest, but it’s pretty any time of year.

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GANGWON-DO  ••  Gangneung
from over a millennium ago, so it is a prized possession, a symbol of an advanced Buddhist culture.

Sleeping & Eating
A small village of minbak and restaurants is on the left side of the access road, a 40-minute walk south of Woljeongsa. If you want more comfort there are two yeogwan near the ticket office. Halfway between the temples is Dong-pigol Auto-camping and Odaesan Shelter, which both cost W5000. A large camping ground and numerous minbaks are also available at the entrance to Sogeumgang.

Odaesan Hotel (% 335-5757; www.odae-sanhotel.com; r from W8000, as) This is the only deluxe option in the park. Rooms have plush sofas and soft lighting and many have balconies with scenic views. The hotel offers a generous 50% discount during off-peak months (from September to November and February to June).

Janggungum-Slodng (% 332-6987; meals W6000-13,000) This establishment serves tasty sanchae bibimbap (rice, egg, meat and mountain vegetables in hot sauce); delicious sanchae baekban (rice with mountain vegetable side dishes); and huge gamjakuchim ( 감자부침; potato pancake). Order a bottle of deicious menilikotsal (메밀 곡수; W3000), which is makegeolli (fermented rice wine) flavoured with buckwheat flowers. There's also free coffee.

Gangwon-Do •• YongPyong Ski Resort
taken an intercity bus from Gangneung (W3100, 45 minutes, every 10 minutes) to jinju intercity bus station (% 335 6307). From Jinju, local buses (12 per day) run from outside the bus terminal to Wolejongsa (W1420) and Sang-wonsa (W2320) in Odaesan National Park.

Take local buses 303 or 7-7 (W900, one hour, 12 daily) from outside Gangneung bus terminal to Sogeumgang.

YongPyong Ski Resort
With world-class facilities and lots of trees, YongPyong (% 033-335 5757; www.yongpyong.co.kr) is one of Asia’s best ski resorts. It only missed out on hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics to Vancouver by 56 votes to 53. The season runs from December to March and there are 31 slopes for skiers and snowboarders, plus mogul bumps, cross-country trails and two half-pipes.

A lifts-and-gondola day pass costs W56,000/42,000 (adult/child), while a day’s ski equipment rental is W25,000/19,000 (adult/child). Snowboards cost W33,000 for half-day hire, while cross-country skiing (including skis and entry fee) costs W20,000 and sledding W15,000. Day-long ski classes (in English) for beginners are W45,000/33,000 (adult/child), but you need a group of 10. Package deals including transport and accommodation are offered with discounts outside the peak season.

Sleeping
There are a number of sleeping options, most pretty pricey. Check the internet for deals in advance.

YongPyong Hotel (% 335 5757; fax 335 0160; basic condos W366,000, from up to 5 people W70,000) Peeking out of the pines like a Swiss chalet, this is a good option for friends on a budget who don’t mind sharing a room. It’s closed from March to October, except for group bookings.

Dragon Valley Hotel (% 335 5757; r W442,000, as) Nicely situated, with 50% discounts from March to October.

Goodmirth (% 335 5757; fax 335 0160; basic condos W400,000) Discounted 50% from March to October.

Getting There & Away
Buses leave from Gangneung intercity bus terminal (% 335 6307) to Haenggye (W2000, ½ hour, every 20 minutes). From Hoenggye a free shuttle bus leaves for YongPyong (10 minutes, 12 daily from 5.30am to 11.30pm), more frequently during the ski season.

Direct buses run to the resort from Seoul, Incheon, Busan, Daejeon and other cities.

Jeongdongjin
Twenty kilometres south of Gangneung is a holiday resort with novel tourist attractions, including a North Korean submarine. The town is famed for having a train station on the beach with a swiftnest in its eaves. The sandtimer hourglasses in the souvenir stalls relate to a popular Korean TV soap opera Hourglass, which used the station in some scenes. On a hilltop you can see a giant cruise ship and a sailing ship – a surreal sight.

Unification Park
In this park (% 600-4495; adult/child W6000/3000; h 9am-4:30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) you can venture inside a small North Korean spy submarine and a large American warship. There is also a tourist information centre.

The North Korean submarine weighs 325 tonnes, is 13m long and had a top speed of 13km an hour. The conditions must have been unbearable cramped for the 11 crew, 15 soldiers and agents inside.

On 17 September 1996 the submarine got stuck on some nearby underwater rocks. The commander burnt important documents (the fire-blackened compartment is still visible), shot the crew members and then landed with the soldiers and agents and attempted to return to the North. None succeeded, but it took 49 days to capture or kill them, and in the process 17 South Korean civilians and soldiers were killed and 22 injured.

The warship has a less dramatic story, having been built in America in 1945 and donated to the South Korean government in 1972.

To get there, take bus 11-1 (W900, 15 minutes, every 30 minutes) from jeongdongjin train station or Gangneung. Taxis charge W8000 for the 5km drive south along the coast from jeongdongjin.

Sleeping & Eating
Numerous motels (with names like Paradise and Sun Lovehouse) offer comfortable, modern rooms from W25,000 (but double that in July and August). Try to find a room with a balcony overlooking the sea and the sunrise.
MUREUNG VALLEY 무릉 계곡
This valley southwest of Donghae is considered by locals to be one of the prettiest in the country.

BEACHES
Mangsang Beach (망상 해수욕장) is a large, popular stretch of sand north of Donghae, with shallow water and many amusements and accommodation in July and August.

Sweet Buns
Halmeoni Chodang

Chungjeong (중정 해수욕장), to the south, is an attractive sandy cove with rocky headlands.

Festivals
They take their cuttlefish seriously in Donghae: a three-day Cuttlefish Festival at Mangsang Beach every July includes a cuttlefish-slicing contest, a catching-cuttlefish-hand competition and a cuttlefish quiz.

Sleeping
There are some good options next to Donghae intercity bus terminal.

New World Motel (% 533 7222; without/with computer W4000/5000; 17 rooms, 12 with a/c) is outside the Cheongok Donggul tourist information centre (9am-6pm). There’s a sewage disposal plant (% 531 3400; 9am-6pm), but the front desk is friendly, welcoming and English speaking.

New Donghae Tourist Hotel (% 532 7303; www.dhhilton.com; 223-52, Donggang-dong; r W80,000; 30% discount in the off-peak season; however, with no in-room computers this may not be an option for anyone needing the internet. On the plus side, it has a small goldfish aquarium in the lobby…and a (men only) sauna.

Donghae Hilton Hotel (% 531 8888; www.dh.com; 140-6, Cheongok-dong; r W100,000; 30% discount in the off-peak season; however, with no in-room computers this may not be an option for anyone needing the internet. On the plus side, it has a small goldfish aquarium in the lobby…and a (men only) sauna.

Getting There & Away
Buses 109 (W1100, six daily) and 112 (W700, every 30 minutes) leave from outside Gangneung bus terminal for Jeongdongjin. Other buses leave from near the Gangneung train station.

TRAIN
Trains leave Gangneung station for Jeongdongjin in 12 times daily and cost W2100. The same service operates to and from Donghae and costs W5200.

Getting Around
The attractions are spread out so seeing them involves either leg-work, working out the bus routes and times or taking a taxi.

Eating & Drinking
This is a good place to wander, as there are lots of small cafés and restaurants scattered around. Chances are you’ll find a gem on your own, but if not, head for one of the following:

Yujang Cheonggukjang (% 533 7222; r W4000; 8am-9pm) has a almost palatial en suite toilet and shower.

A clean, almost palatial en suite toilet and shower.

Harum Cheonggukjang (% 531 3411; meals W30,000; 8am-10pm) has a huge menu, including 21 different side dishes (most of them spicy too!). Fish (obvious) and a pork dish (ask) are the only meats, so this is a good choice for vegetarians. The friendly owners can bring only veggie options if you ask.

Swanky and spotless, with gold-embroidered sheets and softly lit rooms. Channel flipping will remind you (yowza!) that it’s a love motel, but the front desk is friendly, welcoming and English speaking.

Sweet Buns has the usual coffees and espresso drinks along with some more unusual ones, like sweet potato or pumpkin lattes. Unfortunately, the cheesecakes are nothing special.

Getting There & Away
BOAT
The Ulleungdo Fast Ferry (% 531 8888; www.juneon.co.kr; ferry W14,000, 10am-11pm) sails at 10am daily from March to October, departing from the island at 5.30pm, but times vary. The crossing takes three hours. Non-Korean citizens must have their passport. If possible, ask a Korean speaker to ring for details.

BUS
From Donghae’s Express Bus Terminal (% 531 8888; www.juneon.co.kr; buses leave for Seoul’s Gangnam bus terminal (every 40 minutes) and Dong-Seoul (nine daily). The standard bus fare is W13,500 and the journey takes around three hours and 20 minutes. Local buses leave from outside the intercity bus terminal next to the SCA gas station.

Intercity Terminal (% 533 3250; bus destinations include the following:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Rate (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Busan</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>3hr</td>
<td>3/day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daejeon</td>
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<td>Airport</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
TRAIN
Seven trains a day run to Seoul’s Cheongnyangjin station (W16,200). Trains head to Busan, Danyang, Jecheon, Taebaek and Gangneung as well.

SAMCHEOK 삼척
This beach, 25km south of Samcheok, has pine trees and is an attractive sandy cove between two rocky headlands.

YONGHWA BEACH 용화 해수욕장
This immense limestone cave (% 570 3292; W4000, 7am-8pm Apr-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar; entrance for cave W3000) is one of the largest in Asia. Inside are cathedral-sized caverns, waterfalls, cascades and pools. Nearly 2km of steel stairs inside the cave allow visitors to get a good look at the many and varied features. Some formations have fanciful names, and there are good English-language information boards.

SINNAM 신남 해수욕장
This small fishing village is home to an impressive Fishing Village Folk Museum (어촌 민속 전시관; % 570 3292; W4000, 9am-5pm Mon-Sun). Displays include shamanist rituals to ensure a good catch, taboos observed by local fishermen (such as not eating eggs before going on board), holographic projections and a fun fishing-boat simulation. Many of the exhibits are made with real creatures of the sea.

Near the ticket office is an exhibition of cave mock-ups. The usual motels can be found around Samcheok’s bus terminals.

SLEEPING & EATING
Crown Motel (% 573 2038; r W15,000)
It’s the best choice of Western or Korean painting.

The fishing yields returned to normal, and Sinnam’s custom of showing Mr Willy to the water remains to this day.

SHOW ME A PENIS
While phallic symbols are nothing new, the origins of this town’s penis fetish are not the usual fertility or stamina preoccupations one would expect. Sinnam legend has it that a young virgin drowned within sight of a fishing village. The fishing yields returned to normal, and Sinnam’s custom of showing Mr Willy to the water remains to this day.

While phallic symbols are nothing new, the origins of this town’s penis fetish are not the usual fertility or stamina preoccupations one would expect. Sinnam legend has it that a young virgin drowned within sight of a fishing village. The fishing yields returned to normal, and Sinnam’s custom of showing Mr Willy to the water remains to this day.
30 goes to Gungchon Beach, bus 70 goes to Yonggusan, bus 90 (nine daily) turns round at Imwon Beach, and bus 90-1 (five daily) continues to the end of the line at Hosal Beach. The standard buses charge W900 and deluxe buses charge W1300.

**MARKET WATCHING**

Yongeunsa, bus 90 (nine daily) turns round

The food section of Jeongseon’s five-day market is what catches the eye: middle-aged women are

sellers guard tables groaning under the weight of 20kg jars of fiery, glowing kimchi

ajumma (older woman) with a towel wrapped round her head is selling homebrew. The next stall has a monstrous octopus laid out on a bed ... and hey presto – a rice cracker pops out. Now that’s real magic. No wonder a gang of small kids is watching him intently.

TAEBAEK 태백

**pop35,000**

The train station, bus terminal, information centre and yeogwan are all conveniently within sight of each other in the town centre, and the tourist information centre (% 220-3110, 9am-6pm) has kind English-speaking staff.

The Taebaek Snow Festival takes place at the end of January with giant ice sculptures, sledging and igloo restaurants.

Getting There & Away

Numerous buses connect Taebaek to various destinations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dong Seoul</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>1½hr</td>
<td>every 15min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samcheok</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>1½hr</td>
<td>every 15min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taebaek</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2½hr</td>
<td>every 45min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trains depart for Seoul train station (W12,900, 11 daily) and Gangneung (11 daily).

**TAEBEAKSAN NATIONAL PARK**

**Taebaeksan** (% 220-3243, adult/youth/student W900/500/300, summer 9am-6pm, winter 9am-5pm), meaning Big White Mountain, is the sixth-highest mountain in South Korea. The mountain actually consists of twin peaks, janggunbong (1568m) and its neighbour, musumbong (1546m). The mountain is one of the three most sacred for shamanists, and on the summit is Cheonjeen (천제단), an altar connected with Dan-gun, Korea’s mythical founder, where ceremonies are still occasionally performed (3 October to 5 October, and 1 January). A rare outdoor Statue of Dan-gun (단군산) is in front of the Dan-gun shrine near the entrance to the park. The shrine is a simple, bare wooden hall with Dan-gun’s portrait and some food offerings in brass bowls.

The Taebaek region was once South Korea’s main coal-mining area, and the Gosi Museum (태백 석탄박물관, % 220-3243, adult/youth/student W2000/1500/700, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4.30pm Sat & Sun) by the park entrance is well worth a visit. You can’t miss the building, which has a mine-head contraction at one end. Don’t miss the simulated roof collapse – accidents and deaths were common, and more than 200 miners were killed between 1970 and 1996. At some mines in the remote mountains, tigers were another hazard and miners killed by tigers were given a special gravestone.

In front of the park entrance is a ‘tourist village’ of identical two-storey houses. There are plenty of restaurants as well.

Buses from Taebaek bus terminal (W1000, 25 minutes, every 45 minutes) provide a good service to the park.

**J E O N G S E O N 정선**

**pop41,000**

This remote, mountain-locked town can be visited on a one-carriage, gaily decorated train. Catch a train from Taebaek to Jeongseon (증산, W4400, 35 minutes, 11 daily) and change to the Jeongseon line, which goes to Jeongseon (35 minutes) and on to the end of the line at Gujeolli (1 hour). It’s one of the prettiest routes in Korea, with classic Gangwon-do scenes of densely wooded mountains and rivers bordered by terraced rice fields, vegetable gardens and orchards. Very occasionally there’ll be an ox pulling a plough, a scene from a previous era.

Jeongseon train station is 2km from the town centre and the nearest yeogwan, so you may need to take a taxi (W1500) as there are not many buses. It’s another 2km from the town centre to the express bus terminal. Dae-wangjang (대왕장) is a typical old-fashioned yeogwan but a reasonable deal at W30,000.

Getting There & Away

There are two terminals, Venjugun terminal (% 746 4181). The latter serves Seoul.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Cheongju</td>
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<td>hourly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goyang</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>1½hr</td>
<td>every 30min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dong-Seoul</td>
<td>14,600</td>
<td>4hr</td>
<td>every 30min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRAIN**

Trains (W4,800, nondaily) run between Wonju and Seoul’s Cheongnyangni station.

**CHIAKSAN NATIONAL PARK**

지악산 국립공원

Chiaksen means ‘Magpie Crags Mountain’ and this park (% 5223, www.chiaksenpark.com, Spring sunrise-sunset) is 20km northeast of Wonju, making it a very do-able weekend trip from Seoul. The dense forests, mist-cloaked mountains, rushing rock-strewn rivers and wildlife make it well worth checking out. The most

made pond and make for a relaxing place to stroll among students who generally jump at the chance to practice their English with a ‘real live’ foreigner. “A”, “B” and (yes, you guessed it!) “C” streets have a host of restaurants, hotels, motels and bars. The street market (open from 6am to 9pm) has an amazing variety of fruits and veggies. Local buses cost W950 and many of the stops are GPS-enabled, allowing you to know exactly when the next one will arrive.

Getting There & Away

There are two terminals, Venjugun terminal (% 746 4181). The latter serves Seoul.

<table>
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<th>Destination</th>
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<td>hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goyang</td>
<td>6,900</td>
<td>1½hr</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRAIN**

Trains (W4,800, nondaily) run between Wonju and Seoul’s Cheongnyangni station.
popular hike starts from Guryongsa (Nine Dragon Temple, partially burned and recently restored) and goes up to Birobong (three hours) and then either back down again to Guryongsa or down to Hwanggol. The hike down takes about two hours, whichever route you take. The hikes are quite tough and there are no mountain shelters in the park.

In the southern part of the park is Sangwonsa. Perched on top of a 50m cliff, it commands a mind-liberating view across the valley. Talk with an official about the current trail conditions before you make hiking plans.

Sleeping & Eating
The main minbak and restaurant area is outside the Guryongsa entrance. For those who prefer the great outdoors, camping is possible at Gumbori and Guryongsa (% 731-1289 small/large tent W3000/W6000).

Getting There & Away
From Wonju, you can take buses 41 or 41-1 (W950, 40 minutes, every 25 minutes) to Guryongsa. Buses 82 or 82-1 run to Hwanggol, while buses 21 to 25 run to Geumdae-ri and Seongnam-ri.
Gyeongsangbuk-do’s natural beauty is seconded only by its profusion of spectacular temples, Confucian schools, ancient pagodas, rock-carved Buddhas, teashops and tombs. Gyeongju, once the capital of the Shilla dynasty (57 BC–AD 935), is often called ‘the museum without walls’ for its historical treasures, many of which are outdoors. The oddly symmetrical ‘hills’ in the centre of town are serene, peaceful pyramids – stately reminders of the dead they still honour. Thankfully, this beautiful city was spared the ravages of bombings in the Korean War; even today it retains a 19th-century feel.

Come here and find treasures in all directions. Andong, in the north, offers mouthwatering mackerel, a fascinating folk village, strong soju (locally brewed vodka) and many temples as well, including the oldest wooden building in South Korea. To the south, check out Daegu’s medicinal herb market or peek at the anachronistic ‘pink light district’ that still operates despite new laws banning prostitution.

While technically in Gyeongsangbuk-do’s southern sister (Gyeongsangnam-do), Haeinsa is a must-see temple-library most easily accessed via Daegu: check out the 1000-year-old wooden tablets, preserved in a building so ahead of its time that modern science hasn’t improved it.

In the ‘Sea of Korea’, as Koreans call it, is the rugged, mist-kissed island of Ulleungdo, where fishing villages dry squid in quantities that boggle the mind. Even further east lies Dokdo (aka Takeshima), a fishing ground still disputed today.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- See and smell the fascinating medicinal herb market (p192) in Daegu
- Marvel at the 80,000-plus wooden tablets of the Buddhist sutras at the temple Haeinsa (p195)
- Slip back into the Shilla era in Gyeongju (p197)
- Experience the Confucian academies Oksan Seowon (p208) and Dosan Seowon (p220)
- Watch squid dry on the rugged, gorgeous island of Ulleungdo (p212), 139km offshore
- See centuries-old papermaking and masks at the villages of Hahoe (p220) and Andong (p220)
History
This beautiful province holds many of South Korea's oldest treasures. Whether you plan on meandering through Gyeongju's 'open-air museum' or want to create your own elixir of eternal life in Daegu's Herbal Medicine Market, you will find that the area's historical events are more tangible here, less a part of the distant past and more a part of the present. At the centre of South Korea, this area was once the capital of the Shilla empire (57BC–935AD), and as such was a central part of Korean government and trade. During this almost 1000-year-long empire, the Shilla rulers created alliances with China to defeat Japanese threats, as well as to repel other Korean invaders. During this time Confucian laws were widely adopted and informed all aspects of Korean life including who, where, and when a person could marry. In many ways these traditions are still held by modern Koreans, who often follow Confucian rules (as well as their parents' wishes) in deciding how to marry.

National Parks
Gyeongsangbuk-do's national parks are not as famous as those of its neighbour, Gang·won-do, but they provide wonderful hiking and photograph opportunities and are surprisingly close (thanks to KTX high-speed trains) to Seoul. Weekend trips to Gyeongju National Park, Palgongsan Provincial Park or Juwangsan National Park will bring you face to face with stunning scenery and temples, and will be less populated (even in the peak seasons) than some of the parks closer to Seoul.

The remote island of Ulleungdo, although not a park proper, might just as well be one: its jagged cliffs plunge down into steel-blue waters, populated only by seabirds. The small villages subsist on squid and other marine crops, and you will not be disappointed to be so far away from Seoul.

Getting There & Around
The area is serviced by Daegu's International Airport, by KTX and express trains, and by buses (the latter are cheap, quick and usually direct, often arriving faster than a train or flight). Some of the more remote areas are best accessed by car or (in the case of Ulleungdo) by ferry.

Information
Daegu has a tourist office (9am–10pm daily), located right in front of the Daegu station, inside Seomun Market, at Dongdu station (Map pp190–1) and in the central shopping district and by the Herbal Medicine Market (Map p193). All have comprehensive local maps in English, reams of pamphlets, and at some (including the one at Dongdu station), free internet terminals.

MARKETS & SHOPPING STREETS
Daegu is a shopper's dream. In addition to good prices on all kinds of 'normal' and brand-name goods (clothes, shoes, bags etc) at the various department stores, Daegu has numerous specialty markets that make for a fascinating stroll even if you're not going to part with any money.

Start at the Seomun Market (Map pp190–1; 1am–10pm daily), a bustling multi-storey complex with over 4000 shops in six sections. Bursting yet orderly, it's been one of Korea's big-three markets since 1669, even if the current buildings have little of that historic character. The market is closed on the third and fourth Sunday of each month.

Sights & Activities

DAEGU

%G33 / pop: 2.5 million

Daegu's fascinating traditional-medicine market is its biggest tourist draw. Come here to see strange roots the size of human thighs, jars of honey-coloured liquids, baskets of flowers, dried leaves and medicinal herbs. Even if it's pouring rain the avenues smell fragrantly of these ancient cures, which many Koreans still swear by today (though Viagra is gaining a foothold in the 'stamina-producing' arena).

A simple, two-line subway system makes getting around easy, and the country's third-largest city has great restaurants, good nightlife and neon that puts parts of Seoul to shame.

Daegu makes a great hub for day trips: be sure to check out Buseoksa (Map p196; 9am–5pm Nov–Feb)) and Jikjisa (Map p196; 9am–5pm) and the Sea Tomb of King Munmu (Map p196), both of which offer temple stays for those wishing to get a closer look. Note that Daegu, while surrounded by Gyeongsangbuk-do, is its own administrative district and has its own telephone area code.

Orientation
At 885 sq km Daegu covers a larger area than Seoul. Its subway was the site of a horrific fire (caused when a passenger set himself and others alight in 2003), but things are back to normal now – a second line opened up in 2005. Most of the city's attractions are within easy walking distance of the subway or train. The airport is a 30-minute drive from the city, to the northeast.

Gyeongsangbuk-do •• National Parks

GYEONGSANGBUK-DO  ••  National Parks
DAEGU

BULLO-DONG TUMULI PARK

North of town, not far from Daegu airport.

Bullo-Dong Tumuli Park (% 940 1224; admission free; 9am-6pm) covers some 330,000 sq metres. The grassy hillocks rising like bumps across the valley are tumuli (burial mounds, similar to those in Gyeongju). Dating from the 2nd to the 6th century AD, the tumuli are for both nobles and commoners – the higher the location on the hill: the higher the status of the person.

Tours

The City Tourist Information Centre (% 577 1000; www.daegutour.or.jp) offers a series of seven tours that are free for foreigners (not including admission, meals etc). Tour programmes change weekly.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Rojan Motel (Map pp190-1; 955 8155; r W30,000; www.rojanhotel.com; d/tw from W88,000/98,000) is home to a fine collection of pottery, Buddhist icons and various dioramas showing the local history. The English-language signage is reasonably good. The museum is well served by bus lines: from central Daegu take bus 242 or 427 to Daegu National Museum, or from Dongdaegu station take bus 814 or 514.

BUDGET

Amoreu Motel (Map pp190-1; 766 0336; r W18,000) is home to a fine collection of pottery, Buddhist icons and various dioramas showing the local history. The English-language signage is reasonably good. The museum is well served by bus lines: from central Daegu take bus 242 or 427 to Daegu National Museum, or from Dongdaegu station take bus 814 or 514.

BUDGET

Garden Hotel (Map pp190-1; 471 9911; www.middlehotel.com; d/tw from W88,000/98,000) is home to a fine collection of pottery, Buddhist icons and various dioramas showing the local history. The English-language signage is reasonably good. The museum is well served by bus lines: from central Daegu take bus 242 or 427 to Daegu National Museum, or from Dongdaegu station take bus 814 or 514.

SLEEPING

Garden Hotel (Map pp190-1; 471 9911; www.middlehotel.com; d/tw from W88,000/98,000) is home to a fine collection of pottery, Buddhist icons and various dioramas showing the local history. The English-language signage is reasonably good. The museum is well served by bus lines: from central Daegu take bus 242 or 427 to Daegu National Museum, or from Dongdaegu station take bus 814 or 514.
DAEGU’S HERBAL MEDICINE MARKET

This market (Map p193), west of the central shopping district, has a history as vast as its scope. It dates from 1658, making it Korea’s oldest and still one of its largest. Begin at the Yangnyeong Exhibition Hall (Mon–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun 9am–noon; adm free) for an introduction to insam (ginseng), reindeer horns and the people who popularised them – there’s usually someone who speaks English at the tourist booth outside who’ll show you around. Then head out to the street to stock up on everything from lizards’ tails to magic mushrooms (the latter with a prescription, of course); you might also catch a glimpse of someone receiving acupuncture. On the days ending with 1 or 6 (except the 31st), yangnyeong sijang (a wholesale market) takes place downstairs in the exhibition hall.

TOP END

Hotel Inter-Burgo (Map pp190–1; 952 0088; www.inter-burgo.com; W600,000–2,575,000 (258,381–$257,423) a Snazzy, with Spanish touches that give it more character than some top-end clones. The hotel boasts a park-like setting, contemporary lines, river views, pool, sauna and even a putting green.

Teegu Grand Hotel (Map pp190–1; 742 0000; www.teegugrandhotel.com; W250,000–1,400,000 (190–$120) @) A kilometre or two south of Dongdaegu station, newly renovated, with live music Monday to Saturday. Amenities include a business centre, health club and saunas (both male and female). Suites have computers.

Eating Around the Yasilomok district (Map p193) are literally hundreds of cafés, bars and nightclubs.

Ginseng Market (Map pp190–1; 425 0343; dishes W2,000–4,000 (15–$30) h 10am–10pm) Near by is the Gyeongbuk Ginseng Market, with lots of shops here selling ginseng (buckwheat noodles in an icy broth) and mandoo (dumplings) on the menu at rock-bottom prices. Folk music is incongruously festive in this well-lit greasy spoon.

Into (Map p192; 421 3965; dishes W4,000–12,000 (30–$15) h 10am–9pm) The Into is a European café that serves fine pastas and tasty salads. There are just four tables, but it has a nice variety of French and Italian items on the changing menu.

Keum Jeong (Map pp190–1; 424 7051; dishes W6,000–8,000 (45–$9) h 10am–10pm) A popular and respected place specialising in chewy and very tasty naengmyeon, and soft tofu. An English menu is available. Jazz tunes croon, and a faux chia pet hare adds flair.

Gangnam Myeonok (Map pp190–1; 425 6741; dishes W2,000–3,000 (15–$6) h 10am–10pm) One of Daegu’s oldest establishments, this eatery is well regarded for naengmyeon, bulgogi (barbecued beef) and galbi (beef ribs). Plastic food makes for user-friendly ordering.

Gangkim Samgyetang (Map pp190–1; 424 1448; meals W10,000–18,000 (75–$15) h 11am–3pm, 5pm–9pm) A famous favourite in easy walking distance from the markets downtown. Order one of the three menu items: Ginseng-infused chicken, barbecue chicken, or a half order of the latter (W4,000).

Sasong Gil (Map pp190–1; 426 6108; meals W10,000–12,000 (75–$15) h 11am–1pm, 5pm–9pm) For an only-in-Korea adventure, come here for dog and goat meat, both of which are fabled to have ‘stamina-producing’ powers in men. It’s behind the petrol station.

Dijon (Map pp190–1; 422 3041; meals W30,000–50,000 (225–$10) h 11.30am–2.30pm, last order 9.30pm) Next door, Dijon’s sister restaurant is surely the only place in Daegu with riesling on the wine list. Come here for French and Mediterranean dishes served warm, and a rose graces every table.

Drinking Being Korea’s third-largest city, Daegu has a gay district with many bars near the express bus terminal (Map p193). Around the Yasilomok district (Map p193) is a mix of 20- to 40-somethings, both local and foreign.

Entertainment

There is a huge Xn Milano complex that houses the Hanil Gukjang cinema (Map p193), where there are often English-language movies.

G2 (Map pp190–1; 266 1225; www.g2cafe.com; admission incl 1 drink W4000–12,000 (30–$15) h 3pm–2am) Come here to bump around in trance-inducing blackout darkness. The funk and hip-hop is ear-splitting – just the way most of the crowd wants it. Come after 11pm or you’ll have the place to yourself. Soldiers are asked to leave by 12.30am.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Asiana and Korean Air connect Daegu with Seoul and Jeju. International destinations include Shanghai and Bangkok.

BUS

There are five bus terminals (Map pp190–1; an express bus terminal (buses to Seoul and Jeju about every 2 hours, 8pm–6am). Note the prices are for Seoul and Jeju, while buses to some destinations leave from multiple terminals, so it’s best to inquire which
is most convenient. Some are connected by Daegu's subway system.

From the express bus terminal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<td>Daegu</td>
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<td>Dongdaegu</td>
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<td>3hr</td>
<td>every 30min</td>
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<td>every 20min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>13600</td>
<td>3/4hr</td>
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From Dongbuk intercity bus terminal (% 756 0017):

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<tr>
<td>Pohang</td>
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From Seobu intercity bus terminal (% 656 2825):

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<td>8daily</td>
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<td>Heinsa</td>
<td>4000</td>
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From Bukbu intercity bus terminal (% 357 1851):

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<td>every 20min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chungcheong</td>
<td>16600</td>
<td>5/4hr</td>
<td>5daily</td>
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</table>

TRAIN

Dongdaegu station (Map pp190-1), on the eastern side of the city, is the main station for long-distance trains. It’s also next door to the express bus station.

You’ll find that there are good connections to Busan and Seoul. Mugunghwa (limited express) trains run every 30 minutes to Seoul (W18,000 to W19,800, 3½ to four hours) and Busan (W6200 to W7300, 1½ hours). KTX service has frequent trains to Daegu and occasional ones all the way to Dongdaegu. Check www.korail.go.kr for exact schedules and fares.

Getting Around

TO/FROM AIRPORT

Daegu's airport is northeast of the city, about 2km from the express bus terminal. Bus 401 (W900) winds a circuitous route to the airport and can take 45 minutes. A taxi from the airport to the centre will cost around W3500 and takes about 20 minutes.

BUS

Local bus fares are W900 or W1300, depending on the route. To get to Daegu or Dongdaegu station, take bus 401.

SUBWAY

Two lines crisscross through the city centre. Stops include Dongdaegu station and Jun-gangno (city centre). Tickets cost W900.

AROUND DAEGU

Palgongsan Provincial Park

Just 20km north of Daegu, this park is sprawling, mountainous and well visited. Its highest peak, Palgongsan (‘mountain of the eight meritorious officers’; 1192m) received its name around the end of the Shilla period after eight generals saved Wang-Geon, the founding king of the Goryeo kingdom.

The park’s most popular destination is Haeinsa (983 8586; www.seonbonsa.com; admission W2500; 9am-6pm), the province’s leading temple, with a history stretching back to 493.

Haeinsa holds 81,340 woodblock scriptures, making it one of the largest Buddhist libraries of its kind. Known as the Tripitakakoreana (see p196), the blocks are housed in four enormous buildings at the temple's upper reaches, complete with simple but effective ventilation to prevent deterioration. Also housed here are an additional 2835 blocks from the Goryeo period containing more Buddhist scriptures, literary works and an illustration of the Avatamsaka Sutra. Although the buildings are normally locked, the blocks are easily visible through slatted windows.

As well as being one of Korea’s most significant temples, Haeinsa is also one of the most beautiful. Part of its beauty lies in the natural setting of mixed deciduous and coniferous forest. It’s a romantic’s paradise in wet weather, when wisps of cloud drift through the forest. At prayer times (3.30am, 10am and 6.30pm), the place can feel otherworldly (try listening with your eyes closed), and on our visit we were able to create our own print from an actual woodblock in the exhibition hall.

The main hall, Daeungjeon, was burnt down during the Japanese invasion of 1592 and again (accidentally) in 1817, though miraculously the Tripitaka escaped destruction. It escaped a third time when a South Korean working for the Allied forces refused to allow them to bomb it.

A Haesinsa museum (055-594 3152; admission W4000; 8am-11am, noon-5pm Wed-Mon) should be on every visitor’s not-to-be-missed list.

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TYRIPATKA KOREANA

The Tripitaka Koreana, also known as the Goryeo Buddhist canon, is one of the world’s most significant complete Buddhist sacred texts. Tripitaka literally means ‘three baskets’, representing the three divisions of Buddhism: the Sutra (scriptures), Vinaya (laws) and the Abhidharma (treatises).

The Tripitaka Koreana has been preserved on more than 80,000 beautifully carved woodblocks, which took 16 years to complete. From carefully selecting appropriate birch wood, then soaking it in brine and boiling it in salt before drying it, to locating and constructing a sophisticated repository, the techniques involved were so complex and the artwork so intricate that they remain an inspiration today. The woodblocks are housed and preserved in the 15th-century hall, Janggyeong Pango, a masterpiece of ingenuity in its own right; its techniques include charcoal beneath the clay floor and different-sized windows to minimise variations in humidity. Despite the ravages of Japanese invasion and fires that destroyed the rest of the temple complex, the repository remained standing with the woodblocks preserved intact.

During the 1970s, President Park Chung-hee ordered the construction of a modern storage facility for the woodblocks. The facility was equipped with advanced ventilation, temperature and humidity control. However, after some test woodblocks began to grow mildew the whole scheme was scrapped. Today the four storage halls and woodblocks are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List to ensure their continued preservation. In a bold attempt to ensure accessibility to more people, Haeninsa's monks have completely transcribed the complete works onto a single CD-ROM and translated the classical Chinese text into modern-day Korean – the 20-plus-volume set costs a mere W3,000,000. Excellent additional info is at www.cha.go.kr/english/world_heritage/haeinsa.jsp.

Hikers will want to challenge Gayasan (1430m), the main peak in the national park and a pretty one, though the 1100m up from Haeninsa are known to be tough. With luck you might spot an otter on a riverbank.

SLEEPING & EATING

Haeninsa is a popular day trip from Daegu, but there are options to spend the night. Probably the most interesting is Haeninsa itself, which participates in the Temple Stay Korea (p384). Don’t expect luxury – men and women sleep in separate ondol (underfloor heating) dorms, but it’s worth while to experience the 3.30am service.

Gimcheon (고바우, % 054-732 233; W18,000 W18,000 W4000) has a market with the enchanting on the walls. Rooms are simple and floor heated, with yellow lino- leum and a fat tube of toothpaste by the sink. Try the restaurant (7am to midnight) where many of the many side dishes is the main dish. Try for a table in the back room, where windows look out over a stream and tree.

Heinsa-Hotel (해인관광호텔, % 054-933 2000; www.heinsahotel.co.kr; d W78,650/84,700)

Comfort at the top of the hill, with fountains and a polished lobby, coffee shop and restaurant. English is spoken. The hotel offers a 20% weekday discount.

Jikjisa (직지사, % 054-436 2773; www.templestaykorea.net; per night W30,000)

A beautiful place to stay, with kind owners and interesting Korean poetry on the walls. Rooms are simple and floor heated, with yellow lino- leum and a fat tube of toothpaste by the sink. Try the restaurant (7am to midnight) where many of the many side dishes is the main dish. Try for a table in the back room, where windows look out over a stream and tree.

Jikjisa (직지사, % 054-436 2773; www.templestaykorea.net; per night W4000)

Of the 40 original buildings, about 20 still exist, the oldest dating from the 1602 recon-struction. Highlights include the 20-plus-volume set costs a mere W3,000,000.

SIGHTS

Of the 40 original buildings, about 20 still exist, the oldest dating from the 1602 recon-struction. Highlights include the 20-plus-volume set costs a mere W3,000,000.

getting there & away

While actually in Gyeongsamnam-do, Haeinsa is one of the most pictur- esque – with quiet forests, a river and ancient stone monuments covered with lush, green moss. The delicate paintings on the temples have a refinement and grace that is very ap-
famous temples. From here it's a quick ride to Seokguram, a mountain grotto with a historic Buddha.

There are tourist-information kiosks ( 772 4041; admission W1000; 7.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-sunset Sun) and in the car park near Bulguksa (Map pp198-9), all with English-speaking staff and a comprehensive English-language map with everything from sights to bike trails.

For the legends, the detailed history and current archaeological debate surrounding the Shilla remains, read Korea's Golden Age by Edward B Adams. This is a beautifully illustrated guide to the Shilla sites, written by a man who was born in Korea and who has spent most of his life there. The book can be purchased at one of the large bookshops in Seoul.

Sights CENTRAL GYEONGJU

Tumuli Park

In the heart of town, the huge walled Tumuli Park (Map p201;  772 4041; admission W1000; 7.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-sunset Sun) has 23 tombs of Shilla monarchs and family members. From the outside, they look like grassy hillocks – much more subtle than the Egyptian pyramids, but they served the same purpose: many of the tumuli have yielded fabulous treasures, on display at the Gyeongju National Museum. On colder days, the park closes at sunset.

One of the tombs, Cheomseongdae (Heavenly Horse Tomb), is open to visitors. A cross-section display shows its construction. The tomb is 13m high and 47m in diameter and was built around the end of the 5th century AD. Fashi miles of the golden crown, bracelets, jade ornaments, weapons and pottery found here are displayed in glass cases around the inside of the tomb; other finds include ancient eggs.

Noseo-dong Tombs

Across the street and closer to the main shopping area is the Noseo-dong district (Map p201), where there are other Shilla tombs for which there is no entry fee. Seodongmyeong and Geumgokdang are adjacent tombs built between the 4th and 5th centuries AD. They were excavated between 1921 and 1946, the finds including two gold crowns. Across the road is Noseo-dong, the largest extant Shilla tomb at 22m high and with a circumference of 250m; adjoining is Geumnyeokdang. Houses covered much of this area until 1984, when they were removed; more are due for demolition.

Respect these places – do not climb or picnic on them.

Wolseong Park

This park, southeast of Tumuli Park, houses the Far East's oldest astronomical observatory, Cheomseongdae (Map p201;  772 5334; admission W2300; 8am-sunset), constructed between 632 and 646. It apparently simple design conceals amazing sophistication: the 12 stones of its base symbolise the months of the year. From top to bottom there are 30 layers – one for each day of the month – and a total of 366 stones was used in its construction, corresponding to the days of the year (OK, so time was calculated a little differently back then!). Numerous other technical details relate, for example, to the tower's position in relation to certain stars.

A few minutes' walk south from Cheomseongdae is the site of Barwaksong (Castle of the Crescent Moon; Map pp198-9; admission free), once a fortified fortress. Now it's an attractive parkland, with some walls and ruins. The only intact building is Seokdinggo or 'Stone Ice House' (early 18th century, restored 1973), which was once used as a food store.

Anapji Pond

Across Wolseongno, the main road, on the left-hand side is Anapji Pond (Map p201;  772 4041; admission W1000; 7.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-sunset Sun), constructed by King Munmu in 674 as a pleasure garden to commemorate the unification of the Korean peninsula under Shilla. The buildings here burned in 935 and many relics ended up in the pond itself, to be rediscovered only when it was drained for repair in 1975. Thousands of well-preserved relics were found including wooden objects, a diure used in drinking games, scissors and a royal bangle – you can see them in the Gyeongju National Museum (see below).

Nowadays the buildings are still gone, but the pond has been refilled and is a popular spot for couples to take prewedding photos. In season (June to early August), lotus blossoms seem to fill the horizon. Bring the camera.

Gyeongju National Museum

Continuing along Wolseongno, you come to the Gyeongju National Museum (Map pp198-9;  772 5738; http://gyeongju.museum.go.kr; admission free/
Bunhwangsa

Composing this circuit is this largely pagoda (Map pp198-9; admission W6000; sunrise-sunset), built in the mid-7th century during Queen Seondeok’s reign, making it the oldest datable pagoda in Korea. It’s a rare example of one made from brick.

Experts estimate that the pagoda originally had nine storeys, but only three are left today. The magnificently carved Buddhist guardians and stone lions are a main feature; it is unique in that each entrance is guarded by two guardian lions. Bunhwangsa is in an intimate courtyard.

To get there follow the willow-lined road across from the National Museum until you reach the first intersection. Turn right at the intersection and then take the first lane on the right. The walk will take about 20 to 25 minutes.

EASTERN GYEONGJU

Bomunho Resort

Bomun is a newer district (Map pp198-9; around an artificial lake some 5km east of central Gyeongju. Tradition seekers will find the tandem bikes, paddleboats, conference centres and such less appealing, but it is home to Gyeongju’s top-end lodgings as well as some midrange options. The lake and extensive parklands are great for strolling or bike riding, though the area doesn’t have the character of the town centre.

The Seoje Museum of Contemporary Art (Map pp198-9; admission W3000; sunmudo.com) is located below the information centre by the lake. The Gyeongju Potters Association (Map pp198-9; sunmudo.com; admission free) features a cliffside Buddha carved out of solid rock in the 7th century, part of an interesting cave hermitage which is devoted to the findings at Anapji Pond and demonstrations are held on a regular basis throughout the year at Sunmudo University on the temple grounds. The cost is W15,000 to join morning or evening training sessions and two-day training sessions are available (US$50 including meals). Reservations are needed for all training; English translation may be arranged.

To reach Golgulsa, take the bus to the same stop as for Girimsa. From the bus stop it’s a 15-minute walk, or someone may be able to pick you up if you ring the temple.

Bulguksa

A group of small, rocky islets 200m off the coast is the setting for the famous Grotto of Seokguram (Map pp198-9; admission W4000; admission adult/youth W3000/1500; 6.30am-7pm Apr-Sept, 7am-6pm Oct-Mar), also on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List. Chipmunks dance in the thick woods leading up to the rotunda, where sits an image of the Sakyamuni Buddha surrounded by the heavenly kings, musical instruments, Buddhas and heavenly guardians. All considered masterpieces. This Buddha’s position looking out over the East Sea (visible in clear weather) has long been regarded as a protector of his country. He also bears striking resemblance to similar figures found in China and India, especially those at Badami, north of Mysores.

Seokguram was quite a feat of engineering when it was constructed in the mid-6th century. Huge blocks of granite were quarried far afield and hauled by donkeys. A group of masons then worked on the temple grounds. The Seokguram pagoda was quite a feat of engineering when it was constructed in the mid-6th century. Huge blocks of granite were quarried far afield and hauled by donkeys. A group of masons then worked on the temple grounds. The cost is W15,000 to join morning or evening training sessions and two-day training sessions are available (US$50 including meals). Reservations are needed for all training; English translation may be arranged.

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Girimsa

Once you’ve descended through the pass in the eastern district of Gyeongju National Park, you will reach the turnoff to Girimsa (Map pp198-9; admission W5000; 8am-5pm). A diagram by the entrance shows the one time layout, but for now that all remain are two-three storey pagodas – among the largest in Korea – and foundation stones. The pagodas are prototypes of those constructed following the unification of Shilla A, huge bell, some four times larger than the Emilie Bell in the Gyeongju National Museum, once hung in Gameunsa but was stolen during the 1592 invasion by the Japanese, who tried to take it back to their homeland. They didn’t get far and the bell was lost in this nearby. A team from Gyeongju National Museum searched for the bell several years ago but was unsuccessful. There are reportedly plans to try again.

Sea Tomb of King Munmu

A group of small, rocky islets 200m off the coast is the setting for the famous tomb (Map pp198-9; admission W3000; sunrise-sunset), just in front of the Hilton Hotel, holds three cavernous exhibition spaces with a diverse range of seasonal exhibitions, plus a permanent collection containing paintings, sculpture and mixed media.

Traditional dancing and musical performances are held on a regular basis throughout the year at the Bomun Outdoor Performance Theatre located below the information centre by the lake.

The Seoje Museum of Contemporary Art (Map pp198-9; admission W6000; www.sunmudo.com; admission adult/child/youth W4000/2000/3000; 6.30am-7pm Apr-Sept, 7am-6pm Oct-Mar), also on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List. Chipmunks dance in the thick woods leading up to the rotunda, where sits an image of the Sakyamuni Buddha surrounded by the heavenly kings, musical instruments, Buddhas and heavenly guardians. All considered masterpieces. This Buddha’s position looking out over the East Sea (visible in clear weather) has long been regarded as a protector of his country. He also bears striking resemblance to similar figures found in China and India, especially those at Badami, north of Mysores.

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were carried out by his son, Sinmun, who became the next Shilla king.

The rock visible in the pool at the centre of the islets is presumed to cover Munmu's ashes, though no investigations have been carried out and some experts dismiss it as a flash of fantasy. Don't plan on researching it yourself; however, the islets are off-limits, and even if visits were permitted, strong tides can make them dangerous to reach.

The tomb sits off Bonggil Beach. Both it and Desun Beach (a cove to the north) are popular with Koreans, especially during the summer holiday period, but there's nothing special about this stretch of coastline. There are plenty of minbak (private homes with rooms for rent) and seafood restaurants located in the area.

From Gyeongju take bus 150 toward Yangnam (W2700, one hour, every 15 minutes) and get off at Bonggil.

SOUTHERN GEONGSEU (U) (NAMSAN)
This mountain, south of the city centre, is one of the region's most rewarding areas to explore, a place where you can easily combine the athletic with the spiritual. It's beautiful, and strewn with relics, active temples, monasteries and sites for impromptu religious observance. Among the relics found (so far) are 122 temple sites, 64 stone pagodas, 57 stone Buddhas, and many royal tombs, rock-cut figures, pavilions and the remains of fortresses, temples and palaces.

You can choose from hundreds of paths, many of which run alongside streams that tumble down the mountain. The paths and tracks are well trodden, though at times you will need to head off the main trails to scout for relics that are not immediately visible, since only a few of them are signposted. See opposite for some day-hike suggestions.

You can also check with tourist offices at Gyeongju or Bomun for additional maps and information about trail conditions.

Bouses 11, 500, 501, 503, 505, 506, 507 and 591 all pass by Namsan.

Oreung Tombs 오릉
South from the city over the first bridge, these tombs (Map pp.139-40, % 722 6693; admission W6000; 9am-6pm summer, 9am-5pm winter) are five of the region's most ancient. The 2000-year-old tomb of the kingdom's founder, King Hyeokgeose, can be found here.

Poseokjeongji 포석정지
Quite a walk down the road is this former banquet garden (Map pp.190-1, % 745 8484; admission W12,000) has no bathroom, just a hose with odd-shaped rooms and is also close to the train station, right behind the bakery.

Nakwonjang Yeoinsuk (Map p201; % 742 4977; 122 temples, admission W15,000) have no bathroom, just a hose with limited running water, and small bathrooms. The rock visible in the pool at the centre is known for one symbol of Shilla elegance: a thin, shallow, abalone-shaped granite waterway, several metres in diameter, through which a stream once flowed. It's now dry.

Samneung 삼릉
This pine grove (Map pp.190-1; admission free) has the tumuli of three Shilla kings, mostly thought to be one of the earliest (Adalla, r 154-84) and two of the last (r 912-27). Another tomb, located away from the others, is said to contain King Gyeongae, who was killed when robbers raided Poseokjeongji during an elaborate banquet, setting the stage for the dynasty's collapse.

Samneung is also a good place to start your hike up Namsan; see opposite.

WESTERN GEONGSEU (U)

Tomb of King Muyeol
The main tomb of the Muyeol group is that of King Muyeol (Map pp.190-1; % 722-4838; admission W6000; 9am-4pm summer, 9am-3pm winter). In the mid-7th century he paved the way for the unification of Korea by conquering the rival Baekje kingdom; his son, King Munmu, is said to have been killed when robbers raided Poseokjeongji during an elaborate banquet, setting the stage for the dynasty's collapse.

Samneung is also a good place to start your hike up Namsan; see opposite.

BUDGET

Arirangjang Yeoinsuk (Map p201; % 722 4002; r W13,000) is a small, clean, fan-cooled ondo-style rooms steps away from the train station. Some (W12,000) have no bathroom, just a hose in which to splash yourself.

Siangdang (Map p201; % 773 8888; % 771 4009; www.siangdang.com; single/double from W5500/6500; ) This place has lots of character and a hostel-type atmosphere. It's in a traditional Korean house offering rooms with ondo beds. It's well decorated, has a courtyard, kitchen, internet, laundry machines and friendly owners. It is centrally located, right across from the tumuli park. Bookings ahead are essential.

NAMSAN DAY HIKING ROUTES

Central Namsan
There are numerous trails through Namsan; the most convenient starting at Samneung (Map pp.196-9). Whichever route you take, be sure to include detectors – necessary for hikes off track. There's virtually no English signage, but some Han-gyol (Korean phonetic alphabet) skill you should do fine. If the weather's clear, you can be assured of fine views and reasonable trails.

Three-hour course head up from Samneung, breaking to take in several relief carvings and statues along the way, to the hermitage Sangsabawi (상사바위, W12,000) have no bathroom, just a hose with beautiful paintings by the owner's daughter. The kitchen, courtyard and roof deck are great places to commune with other travellers. The yea-practising owner speaks English and Japanese and hands out free maps.

Five-hour course Instead of doubling back from Sangsabawi, continue on to the summit of Yongjang-ri (용장리, W12,000) to head across the ridge to Yongjangsaji (용장사지, W12,000) is an easy trip back towards the National Museum, about 20 minutes. Depending on your route, this itinerary might take you a half-day.

Eight-hour course Follow the route as far as Yongjangsaji, but instead of heading down towards Yongjang-ri head across the ridge to Chilbulam (칠불암, hermitage of seven Buddhas), Namsan's largest relic with images carved in natural rocks and stone pillars. From here it's mostly downhill towards the road and about another 1km to Namsan-dong (남산리, Namsan village) on the eastern side of the park, where it's an easy bus ride back to town.

Northeastern Namsan
Take local bus 11 from Gyeongju and get off as soon as the bus crosses the river, about 2.5km past the National Museum. Off the main road is a fork – take the left branch and you can wind your way to Borisa (보리사), a beautifully reconstructedunnery set amid old-growth trees and ancient images. It is possible to head over the hill behind Borisa to Tapgol (탑골, Pagoda Valley), but it's a rough climb. It's easier to backtrack down to the fork and take the other branch. Follow the river for several hundred metres until you come to a small village. Turn left here and head up the road through Tapgol and you'll reach the secluded hermitage Okyongam (옥용암). In the upper corner are ponderous boulders covered with Korea's greatest collection of relief carvings.

Returning to the bridge and looking towards the main road, you will see two stone pillars standing in a thicket of trees amid rice paddies. These pillars are all that remain standing of Mangdeoksa, a huge Shilla-era temple complex. From there it's an easy trip back towards the National Museum, about 20 minutes. Depending on your route, this itinerary might take you a half-day.
A real Miró hangs in the lobby of this Gyeongju chain. It has a sauna, squash courts, gym and a World Cup table where the German and Danish teams stayed. The Hilton owns the nearby museum, so a night’s stay includes free admission should you care to see more art than is in the lobby.

Eating

Gyeongju’s greatest concentration and diversity of choices is in the city centre. Southeast of Tumuli Park is a street full of sambar restaurants (sambar is lots of tasty side dishes, which you wrap up in lettuce and leftovers).

Galbi Haemul

Across from the car park at Samneung, serving seafood pajeon and haemul galgakju, wondrous homemade noodles with seafood—the noodles are greenish because they contain seaweed.

Burm Hardrocking

Across from Hansol-jang, the Swiss Rosen is a nice deal even if the rooms are not enormous. Add W20,000 and get breakfast, coffee, beer and even barbecue. From September to May rates are 20% less.

Bellus Hotel

This has modern décor in both ondol and Western rooms (ondol rooms have nice décor), all with bath-tubs. There’s internet access in the lobby and even a microbrewery downstairs (open from 5pm to 2am).

MIDRANGE

Two nice choices are in Bomunho. There are other options near the bus terminals.

Hotel Sunshine

Rooms here, both ondol and bed, each have a tiny balcony. Freevideo rentals are also available.

Bellevue Hotel

This has modern décor in both ondol and Western rooms (ondol rooms have nice décor), all with bath-tubs. There’s internet access in the lobby and even a microbrewery downstairs (open from 5pm to 2am).

Dining

There are numerous clubs, bars, pubs, and live houses in the streets near Rio and Dongguk University. At some the custom is to purchase anju (snacks, often W10,000 to W20,000) and chat in Korean with the female waitstaff. You may find yourself ignored if you go in with a few friends expecting to sit somewhere and chat by yourselves over beers. Bars change names frequently, but chances are the university students walking around speak enough English to understand a place or two.

Mahayeon

Tucked on a side street (across from the peach-coloured church) on the 2nd floor, Mahayeon offers traditional teas and dongdongju (rice wine) served in traditional style, with floor seating, dark wood tables and delicate paper screens. If you drink tea in Insadong, come here to experience the real thing.

Buzz

Located in the trendy student-populated street east of the bridge that heads to Dongguk University, diagonally across from the 7-Eleven and right next to Baskin-Robbins. Coffees here are prepared by hand, the way they should be; the only downside is that coffee addicts will be beshocked from DTs by the time the place opens at 11am.

Espresso

A coffee shop with espresso drinks, coffee and shaved ice.

Shumun & Gara

Jamaican Blue Mountain-lovers can get their fix at this classy café, along with classical music and understated contemporary décor. It’s northwest of the centre, on the student-dominated street east of the bridge that heads to Dongguk University, diagonally across from the 7-Eleven and right next to Baskin-Robbins. Coffees here are prepared by hand, the way they should be; the only downside is that coffee addicts will be beshocked from DTs by the time the place opens at 11am.

Rio

Buses from the intercity bus terminal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Busan</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daegu</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinju</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>4/½ hr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TRAINS

Gyeongju-Seoul Mugunghwa services run twice daily (W17,900 to W22,700) from the train station (Map p201; 741-4100). Several Sleeper lux (superior express) from Seoul (W33,700 to W38,800) make the trip as well. There are more services on weekends and holidays. Trains also connect Busan and Gyeongju, but buses are more frequent. Coin lockers (W1000) are available in the train-station lobby.

Getting Around

To/from the Airport

Several direct buses link Gyeongju with both the Ulsan airport (W4500, four daily) and...
Busan’s Gimhae airport (W9000, 12 daily). Buses leave from Gyeongju’s main terminal.

BICYCLE
Hiring a bicycle for a day or two is a great way of reaching the sites in the close vicinity of Gyeongju. There are some bike trails around Namson (but it’s rather hilly) and Bomunho. Most of the roads are quite safe.

There are bicycle rental shops everywhere, and the rates are standard: a mountain bike costs about W5000 hourly or W10,000 to W12,000 daily.

BUS
Many local buses (regular/deluxe W900/1300) terminate just outside the intercity bus terminal, alongside the river. For shorter routes (eg to Bulguksa), buses can be picked up along Namson and Daedongmung. Buses 10 (which runs clockwise) and 11 (counterclockwise) run a circuit of most of the major sites including Bulguksa, Namson and Bomunho, as well as the bus terminals and Gyeongju train station (every 15 minutes). Bus 150 departs from the train station to the eastern sights, via the Bomunho Expo arena (every 30 minutes). Bus 100 makes a similar initial route and then veers north after Eoilri.

TAXI
If your time is limited and you want to cover a lot of ground in a short time, taxis are often available for day hire outside the train and bus stations. Rates are negotiable but hover around W70,000/100,000 for five/seven hours. Do not expect the driver to speak much English.

AROUND GEONGJU
Many tourists do this area as a day trip out of Gyeongju – and wish they’d budgeted time to stay overnight. It’s hard to improve on the outstanding examples of traditional Korean architecture in sublime settings.

Yangdong Folk Village
양동 민속 마을
This beautiful and peaceful hillside Joseon-dynasty village (Map pp198–9) is full of superb mansions and traditional wooden houses. It’s been designated a preservation area since 1963. The village was established in the 15th and 16th centuries and consists of around 150 households typical of the yangban class – a largely hereditary class based on scholarship and official position. Yangdong was the birthplace of Son-so (1433–84), a scholar-official who was one of the key figures in quashing the revolt against King Sejo in 1467. His grandson, the great Confucian scholar Yi Eon-joe (pseudonym Hoejae, 1491–1533), was born in the same house. Much of the area around Oksan Seowon (below) is devoted to him.

From Gyeongju, the larger buildings include the Yi Hui-tae (1733; with its many outbuildings), Samsujeong (1560; the village’s largest structure) and Hyangdam (1543; known for tight-knit spaces) houses. Most of the houses here are still lived in, so you need to observe the usual courtesies when looking around; some of the larger mansions stand empty and are open to the public. There are descriptive plaques with English explanations outdoors and in some of the more important structures. If buildings are locked, you may be able to ask for a key nearby. The people who live here tend to be very friendly. There are no entry fees to any of the buildings. You should plan on spending several hours here.

Oksan Seowon & Around
옥산 서원
A seowon is a Confucian academy, and Oksan Seowon (Map pp198–9) was one of the most important. It was established in 1572 in honour of Yi Eon-joe (1491–1553) by another famous Confucian scholar, Toegye (see p220). Oksan Seowon was enlarged in 1772 and was one of the few seowon to escape destruction in the 1860s. However, an early-20th-century fire destroyed some of the buildings here; today only 14 structures remain.

During the summer holiday period, the banks of the stream are popular camping spots, and swimming is possible in the rock pools below the waterfall. It’s also a great place for a picnic.

SIGHTS

Dongnakdang
동낙당
A 10-minute walk beyond Oksan Seowon, along the road uphill, will bring you to Dongnakdang (Map pp198–9; admission free; by appointment), a beautiful collection of well-preserved buildings, constructed in 1515 and expanded in 1532 as the residence of Yi Eon-joe after he left government service. The walled compound is partly occupied by descendants of Master Yi himself.

Due to past vandalism, the family requests visitors to book appointments in advance (ask at tourist offices). They will open up the inner rooms and answer any questions (in Korean). Even if you don’t speak Korean, a visit feels like a private tour of a special place.

Dodeokam 도덕암
About 1.75km beyond Dongnakdang, up in the forested mountains near the end of the valley, is this tiny, intimate hermitage (Map p198; 9; 7:00–18:00; admission free). It’s a rustic place perched on a rock outcrop from which two springs emerge. The views, both above and below, are magnificent.

Dodeokam is a steep walk up from the road, not far from Gyeongju, and it’s about as far as you can get from the madding crowd. Barely any Koreans even know about it. To get here, take the main road through the valley past Dongnakdang and Jeonghyesa. Follow the stream for another 600m and you’ll see a rusty sign on the left. Turn left and follow the zigzag path up the mountain. It’s about 900m from here to the temple.

SLEEPING & EATING

Oksan Motel
의성 릴마트
Home stays and basic info on this area can be arranged by phoning 017-533-2196, where a lady sets up accommodations for families or groups.

Oksan Motel (Map pp198–9; 7:00–22:00; d W30,000; 762 9500)

Songseon-ri 송선리
Close to the summit of the thickly forested mountain Obongsan (640m), Bokduam hermitage (Map pp198–9) features a huge rock face out of which 19 niches have been carved. The three central niches hold a figure of the historical Buddha flanked by two bodhisattva (Munsu and Bohyeon); the remainder house the 16 arhat monks who have attained Nirvana. The carving is recent and although there’s an unoccupied house up here the actual hermitage was burned down in 1998 after an electrical fault started a blaze. There is also a recently erected statue of Gwanseum, the Goddess of Mercy, just beyond the rock face. Just below the hermitage is a stunning viewpoint from the top of a couple of massive boulders. It’s a great place for a picnic lunch.

The trail is well maintained and easy to follow, but bring water as there are no springs along the way. The trail up will take around an hour. From the bus stop in Songseon-ri, follow the track up along the narrow road about 500m to a small temple (Seongamsa). The trail starts just to the left of this temple and is well marked with Han-gaul.

A further 3.8km up the road from the bus stop for Bokduam is a small road leading to a remote Sinseonsa temple near the top of Danseoksan (827m) used as a base by General Kim Yu Shin in the 7th century. It has seen a bit of renovation work since then. About 50m to the right as you face the temple are some ancient rock carvings in a small grotto – it’s believed to be one of the oldest cave temples in Korea. It’s about a
1½ to two-hour circuit walk from the bus stop. There’s a little village along the way, about 2.5km from the bus stop.

En route to Sinseonsa, Danseok Sanjang sells drinks and light meals.

Bus 350 (W1300, every 40 minutes) from Gyeongju passes Songseon-ri for Bokduam and Jusaam. If you’re continuing on to Sinseonsa, tell the driver that’s where you’d like to get off.

POHANG

Pohang is a good springboard to Ulleungdo or the even more remote Dokdo, but isn’t particularly scenic in itself. The largest city on Korea’s east coast and an important industrial centre, Pohang is dominated by Posco (Pohang Iron & Steel Company), the world’s second-largest steel maker. The city centre is quite lively, however, and Bukbu Beach on the north side of town is popular with both visitors and locals. The two central intersections, Ogeori and Yukgeori, (‘five-road’ and ‘six-road’ junctions) brim with cafés, clothing stores, hofs, restaurants and game parlours. Another lodging, dining and entertainment strip faces lively Bukbu Beach.

Orientation & Information

Bukbu beach, adjacent to the ferry terminal, is 1.7km long, making it one of the longest sandy beaches on Korea’s east coast. Information booths (K 243 6553; Em 800-0000 from Gyeongsangbuk-do) are by the bus and ferry terminals, which are about 3km apart. Buses 105 and 200 go to Bukbu Beach from the intercity bus terminal.

Sights

BOGYEONGSA 보경사

This temple, 30km north of Pohang, is a gateway to a beautiful valley boasting 12 splendid waterfalls, gorges spanned by bridges, hermitages, stupas and the temple itself. There are a number of good hikes including ascending Nueseon (930m). The summit itself is called Hyangnobo and the return trip from Bogyeongsa is about 20km (around six hours).

The temple is 15 minutes’ walk from where the buses from Pohang terminate, and there’s a tourist village with a collection of souvenir shops, restaurants, minbak and yeogwan.

The trail to the gorge and waterfalls branches off from the tourist village and is well maintained. It’s about 1.5km to the first waterfall, 5m-high Sogeongpokpo. The sixth waterfall, Guerumjapokpo, is an impressive 72m and has two columns of water with a cave behind it. The seventh waterfall is called Yongganpokpo and is a respectable 30m high.

As you head farther up the trails, the going gets difficult and the ascent of Hyangnobo should only be attempted if the day is young. Buses run between Pohang’s intercity bus terminal and the temple (W250, 25 minutes, hourly).

HOMIGOT 호미곶

This district, on a natural cape that protects Pohang’s harbour, is a popular spot at sunrise, especially 1 January. The lighthouse museum (K 244 1845; ad 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) has a large collection of memorabilia relating to lighthouses in Korea and overseas.

Catch bus 200 or 200-1 from the bus terminal. Hop off at Guryongpo, the final stop (W1300, every 12 minutes), then catch a bus going to Daebu (W900, 20 minutes, every 40 minutes).

Sleeping

There are about two dozen yeogwan around the intercity bus terminal with rooms from W25,000. Note that rates in all categories may go up in peak times. The nightlife district in the town centre has similar options. For better scenery and more choice, head up to Bukbu Beach.

Hotel Royal Cygnus (K 242 2200; fax 242 3128; Bukbu Beach; r W30,000)

The hotel is well-manicured and has a large collection of memorabilia relating to lighthouses in Korea and overseas.

A snazzy place that is popular with conference groups. The hotel is within walking distance of the train station, and has a business centre and natural hot-spring baths.

Red-tile floors, sculpted bathtubs and flow-ered quilts are just a few of the nice touches. The downsides: there’s no internet (just LAN outlets) and a (possibly noisy) nightclub downstairs.

Sun Prince Hotel (K 242 2600; fax 242 6006; d from W60,000; ad 7am-9pm)

Newly remodelled, with a shiny marble lobby and both ondol and Western rooms available, the Sun Prince is a nice option for those not wanting a love motel. Red-tile floors, sculpted bathtubs and flow-ered quilts are just a few of the nice touches. The downsides: there’s no internet (just LAN outlets) and a (possibly noisy) nightclub downstairs.
Eating
For fresh seafood head for Bukbu Beach, where you'll find a grilled octopus (호오) waiting in tanks. Look for the telltale hoe (회) amidst the rocks, and you'll get a stone pot with rice included.

Pyeongju Ssamjip (℡ 247-3793; meals W40,000; h 10.30am-4pm) Head here for scrumptious sammjip (side dishes which you can wrap in lettuce leaves; W6000). No English menu, so order directly and you'll get a stone pot with rice included.

10 Mile (℡ 222-5992; meals W60,000-220,000; h 11am-6pm) Diner-style pork-place tucked away behind the bus station. Meals come with lots of sides.

Getting There & Away
AIR
Asiana and Korean Air both have Seoul–Pohang services. Asiana also operates a flight between Pohang and Jeju. For more information call the airport (℡ 284-1222).

BOAT
See p217 for details of ferries travelling to Ulleungdo.

BUS
Departing from Pohang Terminal (℡ 222-3194):

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<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<td>2hr</td>
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<td>Seoul</td>
<td>20,000</td>
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TRAIN
There are a few trains from Pohang Station (℡ 225-1229), including to Seoul (Saemaul; W35,800, five hours, two daily at 7.25am and 5.25pm).

Getting Around
Local buses cost W900/1300 (regular/deluxe). Bus 200 runs between the airport and the intercity bus terminal.

Ulleungdo울릉도
pop 8300
Come to Ulleungdo to get away from it all in the true sense – not the way the spa-resort brochures mean. The scenery is spectacular, offering vistas of spun-cotton clouds lazing over volcanic cliffsides, seabirds and fishing boats, quiet harbours dotted with piles of nets or buoys, and jagged coastline that could easily be from the set of Lord of the Rings. It's that beautiful. And that quiet.

Thankfully, there are no amusement parks or huge resorts; the most touristic that this place gets is a lonely cabled car that gives great bird-eye glimpses. Beyond that, there's not much to do except watch squid dry.

This small volcanic island was captured from pirates after an order from King Yej, the 22nd king of the Shilla dynasty, in order to secure the east coast of the peninsula. From then until 1894 the island remained essentially a military outpost, but from that year on migration to the island for settlement was sanctioned by the government.

Thanks to the rugged topography and isolation, the island is only sparsely inhabited and farms are tiny. Most of the people live in villages along the coast and make their living harvesting fish and seaweed. Other industries include the production of taffy made from pumpkin and woodcarvings made from native Chinese juniper – all offered for sale at the island's many tourist shops. Everywhere you look there are racks of drying squid, seaweed and octopus.

Orientation & Information
Most visitors arrive from the mainland to the port of Dodong-ri, on the island's southeastern side. A new port in nearby Sadong-ri has been underway for years, but typhoons keep hammering the island and the current opening date will be sometime in 2007. Preumably, once open it will radically alter the island's tourist flow. On the coast north of Dodong-ri is the busy village of Jeodong-ri, which retains a traditional fishing-village feel. The other main point of interest to tourists is Nari-bunji, a basin in the north of the island.

There's no English spoken at the information booth (℡ 247-3144) or at the ferry terminal; however, there are bilingual maps as well as bus schedules in Korean. The friendly owner of the Cafe Myconos (p216) will happily take the road speaks English and is a great source of local information. Detailed maps of the island can be bought from tourist shops. You can change money at Nonghyeop Bank in Dodong-ri.

Sights
Dodong-ri 도동리
Dodong-ri is the island’s administrative centre and largest town. Like a pirate outpost, its narrow harbour is almost hidden away in a narrow valley between two forested mountains, making it visible only when approached directly. It’s also the island’s main tourist hub, meaning the greatest selection of lodging and dining, but the number of tourists can be a little overwhelming. By the ferry terminal, a staircase leads around the base of the cliffs to a lighthouse (allow one hour to walk).

Mineral Spring Park 약수 공원
The highlight of this park, a 350m climb above Dodong-ri, is the cable car (℡ 247-3144; mid-Jul–mid-Aug: W35,800, five hours, two daily at 7.25am and 5.25pm)
Information

Information Booth (Korean) ........................................ B3
Nonghyup Bank (Korean) ........................................ B3

Sights & Activities

Cable Car ............................................................... A3 A2
Dodong Mineral Springs ........................................ A2
Dokdo Museum ..................................................... A2
Ulleungdo Historical Museum ................................ B2

Sleeping

Hamjae Yeopjan Gyeongjangjeon .................. B3 A1
Khan Motel...................................................... B2 B3
Pension Skyhill (Korean) .............................. A2 A1
Sunchang Janjegwisyugangjeongjeon ............... A1

Eating

99 Sikkang 99식당 ................................................. B3
Cafe Myconos.................................................... A2
Hanmyeongga이식당 ........................................ B2
Hannam Chain Supermarket (Korean) ......... A3 B3
Jeog Jega 체일진가 ............................................. A2 B1
Sanchang-hoe Sikkang (Korean) .................. A2 B1
Subbul Garden ..................................................... B2
Ulleung Raw Fish Town ...................................... B2

Drinking

Cafe Myconos .................................................... A1
Terra ................................................................. B2

Transport

Bus Stop Nari-bunji 장단장...................... C2 C3
Ferry Terminal ................................................... B2
Ferry to Jukdo 유대석기념관 .................... C2 C3

Hiking

The road from Dodong-ri follows a stunning, path along spectacular coastal cliffs (Map p213), passing rock formations and ocean cliffs covered with Chinese juniper. The journey can be made by public bus or taxi.

Sunset Point Pavilion (Map p214) is a great way to admire Ulleungdo’s dramatic landscape. Tours depart from Dodong-ri ferry terminal (Map p214) and last around two hours. They run up to four per day, depending on demand, with more tours possible during summer. In nonpeak seasons they may be cancelled.

Activities

Boat Trips

A round-island tour (W15,000) is a great way to admire Ulleungdo’s dramatic landscape. Tours depart from Dodong-ri ferry terminal (Map p214) and last around two hours. They run up to four per day, depending on demand, with more tours possible during summer. In nonpeak seasons they may be cancelled.

Waiting for Dokdo

In 1905, during the Japanese occupation, Japan annexed Dokdo – fishing grounds marked by two small, rocky islands – and renamed it Takeshima. Korea protested, but as a colony did not have much say. Following WWII, US general Douglas MacArthur designated the island part of Korea, and US forces erected a monument there to Korean fishermen accidentally killed nearby by American ordinance. However, Japan destroyed the monument in 1952, prompting Korea to send a defense unit and Japan to put the island under surveillance. It remains disputed territory because of its fishing rights, and fuels Korean ire at the Japanese.

Nari-bunji

Nari Beach (Map p213) is on the northern slope of Seong-inbong (984m), the island’s highest peak and the summit of a dormant volcano. Nari is the only place on the island that’s reasonably flat, so there are several farms here and a couple of reconstructed traditional thatched-roof houses. It’s a popular place to start or conclude a hiking expedition (right).

Minbak, camping and restaurants are available. At the restaurants by the campground, you might try hanjeongsik (rice wine; W6000). At the Cafe Myconos (p216) first – the owner’s husband owns a taxi, but if he is unavailable, she may be able to recommend another. It takes about one hour from Nari-bunji to Dodong-ri (Map p214), a steep 1.5km walk from Jukdo (Map p213), a nature preserve 4km from Ulleungdo. Boats (W30,000, up to four daily) offer excellent views of Ulleungdo as well as Jukdo’s own cliffs. Visitors are welcome to take a picnic to eat on the island. It takes about 1½ hours including walk or picnic time.

On Saturday in summer, boats offer trips around Dokdo, with a reservation and sufficient demand (W37,500, three or five hours return). The three-hour boats are speedier, but you can’t go outside the 5½-hour boats are slower and have open decks for sightseeing. If time permits, the latter are more enjoyable.

During the annual squid festival (three days in mid-August), you may be able to board boats and even ride a vessel out to sea. The rest of the year it’s interesting to watch them in the evening when they head out to sea with their lanterns glowing.

Car Trips

Another popular way to see the island is by taxi. Fees are negotiable, but you can expect to spend about W80,000 per day. Try asking at the Cafe Myconos (p216) first – the owner’s husband owns a taxi, but if he is unavailable, she may be able to recommend another. It takes about one hour from Nari-bunji to Dodong-ri.

Hiking

Various pathways lead to the summit of Seong-inbong but the two main routes run from Dodong-ri (about five hours return) or Nari-bunji (four to five hours return).

From Dodong-ri, take the main road to the temple Daewonsa. Just before you reach the temple, there is a fork in the trail and a sign (in Korean) pointing the way to Seong-inbong (a steep 4.5km).

From Nari-bunji, enter the forest, adhering to the right-hand path, and you’ll arrive at signboarded fields of chrysanthemum and thyme. Further on you’ll pass some traditional thatched-roof houses serve the island of Jukdo (Map p213), a nature preserve 4km from Ulleungdo. Boats (W30,000, up to four daily) offer excellent views of Ulleungdo as well as Jukdo’s own cliffs. Visitors are welcome to take a picnic to eat on the island. It takes about 1½ hours including walk or picnic time.

Sleeping

Ulleungdo has loads of choices (starting at around W25,000), although luxury travellers will be disappointed – even shocked. Love motels will be the fanciest; nothing here (yet) is five-star. Room rates rise steeply in peak season.
season (from W50,000 to W60,000 in July, August and holidays), so book ahead.

Camping is available on the beach at Namyang-dong, Naeseujeon and Sadong-ri. Toilets and showers are available at the latter two during summer. Camping (free) and minbak are also available at Nari-dong.

DODONG-RI
Hoejangyeogwane (Map p234; 791 2637; r from W30,000, VIP W50,000; daily buses go from Dodong-ri via Namyang-dong to Jeodong-ri). Lions greet you at the top of the stairs. Smallish rooms have faux-wood floors and not much of a view, but they are spotless. VIP rooms are enormous, with couches, computers, internet, sculptures and snazz. Don't confuse with the much simpler Jeil Minbak.

Eating & Drinking
Outdoor seafood stalls are so ubiquitous in Ulleungdo that you have to be careful not to trip over a squid; October is peak season. There are also a few scattered mandu/naengmyeon/gimbap shops where you can eat for as little as W20,000, and some casual outdoor restaurants by the harbour allow you to watch the boats unload squid for the women to clean and sell. Nari-dong has restaurants too.

DODONG-RI
Hanil-jang Yeogwan (Map  p214; 791 0028; d W70,000; 24hr). This newish place (opened 2003) near the top of town has a shared kitchen, rooftop barbecue facilities, VCRs and videos to borrow.

Hanil-jang Yeogwan (Map p234; 791 0028, www.motelkhan.com; d W70,000; 24hr). Tourists are welcome at this clean love motel, with both andal and Western-style rooms. Shiny tile floors, large televisions, embroidered sheets and a nightclub (open 5pm to 1am) are all pluses. Prices are up to W30,000 cheaper from September to June.

J EODONG-RI
Many lodgings in town offer free pick-up from Dodong ferry terminal with advance notice.

Kaiser Motel (791 8900; basic/deluxe W30,000/ W40,000). Basic rooms are stuffy but clean. It’s a good non-yeogwan option for those wanting Western style.

Naksanjang Yeogwan (791 0100; r from W20,000). Basic rooms are stuffy but clean. It's a good non-yeogwan option for those wanting Western style.

Sooniling Jeil (791 1040; d/ondol W28,000). This is a pleasant café to relax or enjoy a drink; it's on the 2nd level above Soul clothing shop. It means 'my glass is empty (implication: please refill it). Otherwise, there's loads of karaoke during the summer months.

Korean-ed out? Jeil Jegwa is a comfy bakery with a table for you to enjoy your treats. Self-caters will find numerous tiny groceries and the larger Hanam Chain Supermarket just up from the ferry terminal.

J EODONG-RI
Gyeongju Suyuk Sikdang (Map  p214; 791 2637; d 20,000; serves tasty yaksut bulgogi (medicinal herb-marinated beef; W15,000), but you have to order a minimum of three serves. The mixed-vegetable dishes and sanchae bibimbap (bibimbap made with mountain vegetables) are just as tasty.

Bongjang Juk Sikdang (791 0801). It's just up from seomyeon Market diagonally across the street, this has a similar menu and has recently redone the interior, with attractive bamboo and paper screens. Seating is on the floor.

Getting There & Away
You should carry your passport - you'll need the number in order to board the ferry and you may need it to register your arrival on Ulleungdo.

FERRY
You can get to Ulleungdo by ferry (Map  p213; www.daea.com). From Pohang (standard/1st class W51,100/56,200, three hours, one to three daily) or Donghwa (W54,500, three hours, one daily at 10am), but ferries are subject to cancellation in poor weather. The departure timetable varies month to month. Other ferries from Hupo and Sokcho may only run during July and August.

It is best to reserve all your tickets to and from the island, especially during summer. Otherwise you can buy your ticket at the boat terminal first thing in the morning, but you may go on a waiting list. Advance bookings and news about cancelled ferries can be obtained in Seoul (% 02-514 6766), Ulleungdo (% 791 0801) and Pohang (% 242 5111). Ring KCO (% 242 5111) for more details. Sometail travel agents make reservations and sell tickets.

Getting Around
bus
Buses run between Dodong-ri and Jeodong-ri every 30 minutes (W900, 10 minutes). Eleven daily buses go from Dodong-ri via Namjang-dong (25 minutes) to Cheonbuk (50 minutes), where you can transfer to Nari-bunj (10 minutes, eight daily). For an up-to-date timetable, ask at the tourist information booth.

TAXI
Taxis, usually 4WD, regularly ply between Dodong-ri and Jeodong-ri - wave them down if a seat is empty (per person W2400). All day trips can be arranged as well for about W80,000 to W100,000. Try asking at the Cafe Myconos (p213) first.

ANDONG 안동

The whole area surrounding Andong, roughly in the middle of Gyeongsangbuk-do, is peaceful, rural and notable for having preserved much of its traditional character. Famous for its mackerel, its strong soju and its wooden masks, Andong makes a good base for exploring the numerous sights outside the city.

Orientation & Information
Some sights are a considerable distance away and getting to them requires a series of bus rides, often with inconvenient schedules. Ask at the tourist information booth for help planning your trip.

Hiring a taxi (W120,000) for the day is an air-conditioned luxury that's well worth it if you're enduring summer's heat.

The tourist office ( 791 0800). The tourist office ( 791 0800) is to the left as you exit the train station. It is brand-spanking new, with English, Chinese and Japanese information and snazzy computerised displays.

Sights & Activities
ANDONG VILLAGE & FOLKLORE MUSEUM

MUSEUM
Just next door to the folk village is Andong Folklore Museum. The Andong Minsok Bangmulgwan (% 853 4181; admission W1000; 9am-6pm Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Feb) offers clear and fascinating displays of Korea's folk traditions from birth through to death.

The village is about 3km east of Andong, close to the dam wall on the opposite side of the river from the road alongside the train track. To get there catch bus 3 (every 35 minutes) and hop off at moksoon (folk village). A taxi will cost around W2500.

If you're walking (about 40 minutes) or have your own transport, stop off at the seven-storey Shilla-period brick pagoda, the largest and oldest brick pagoda in Korea. It looks oddly like someone went wild with oversized Lego and is well worth a quick peek.

SOJU MUSEUM 소주 박물관
Mmmm, alcohol...mmm. This museum (% 852 4582; www.wowandre.de; admission free) contains a couple of displays that detail the distilling process, the drinking ceremony and a history of soju labels. A tiny, thimble-sized taste of the liquor is given at the end of your visit.

The museum is in the south of Andong, across the Nakdonggang, and best reached by taxi (W3000) or by buses 34 or 36 (W900).

EATING 食事

Eumsikwigeori (food street) offers a good variety of eating options, as well as some souvenirs. The body and robes of these Buddha are carved on a boulder over 12m high, on top of which are the head and hair – carved out of two separate pieces of rock. Interestingly, the head was actually added at a later date.

Catch bus 54 (every 30 minutes) and ask the driver to drop you off at Jebiwon. Local buses to Yeongju can also drop you at Jebiwon.

BONG EONGSA 볍경사
This Shilla-period temple (% 853 4422; admission free) is set in a lovely garden in the small hill town of Jebiwon, 16km north of Andong. It has a rushing stream, small waterfall, lush moss and (in season) shrill cicadas. The ornately decorated Gyeongjeong (Paradise Hall) is considered the oldest wooden structure in Korea. Repair work on the Daeungjeon (main sanctuary) has revealed a Goryeo-era mural.

From bus 51 (W900, seven daily), it’s a 500m walk to the temple.

Festivals & Events

Andong Mask Dance Festival (held at the end of September to early October) is a great time to visit Andong. It brings together a colourful array of national and international mask dance troupes. It is usually held in tandem with Andong’s folk festival, showcasing many traditional performances of music and dance. Check with % 859 0014 for details.

Sleeping

There are plenty of inexpensive yeain-nuk (family-run hotels with small rooms and shared bathroom) around the bus terminal, though they’re not pretty.

Gwangdong Wineriuk (% 859 0407; 2014 Wondong Kojin; www.wonpark.co.kr). For the best deal on a tight budget, stay in a room at the Gwangdong Wineriuk. Your best bet is one of the rooms near the main building with river views. It also serves soups from 8am to 9pm.

Motel Q (% 857 1912; 3019 Wondong Kojin). Maximal style in Andong with a modern design. Looks and is very cool.

Motel Grand (% 857 2204; 1111 Wondong Kojin). Opposite Motel Q, it has red ‘mood’ lighting, dark faux-wood floors and bamboo patterns.

Features a fancy lobby, bar and restaurant with all furniture, and dark wash, sometimelit with black lights. Rooms are very clean, with ‘Moonlight’ embroidered on the sheets, and there are large TVs and ‘mood’ lights. Some rooms have closets the size of wine cellars. A coffee shop (open 8.30am to 7pm) is on the first floor.

Aroma Motel (% 866 6544; www.wonpark.co.kr). Unfortunate name, but the large rooms have TVs, coffee, wood-grain linoleum, and the lobby has large photos of area attractions. Onslo rooms are nice, but rooms with beds are available.

Hotel California (% 868 0222; www.wonpark.co.kr). Neat, sweet and central, though cheaper places are just as nice. It’s a love motel with tasteful, contemporary style that won’t jar sensibilities.

Andong Park Tourist Hotel (% 881 1200; www. andongparkhotel.com). Andong’s establishment choice, though unless you need a business centre or the sparkling, marbled lobby, there’s not much reason to pay twice as much for essentially the same thing as the Andong Hotel.

Andong Bus Terminal (3km); Brick Pagoda (2km). Take a taxi (W3000) or by buses 34 or 36 (W900).

Daeanno (Andong Minsok Bangmulgwan; admission W1500; Mon-Fri 9am-6pm, Sat-Sun 9am-7pm). It’s an impressive collection of various types of folk costume and traditional crafts (often pretty heady). The museum houses a collection of traditional Korean literature, as well as a display of traditional Korean textiles. There’s also a reconstructed traditional Korean house, complete with a kitchen and living area. The museum is open daily from 9am to 5pm.

The streets around Eumsikwigeori are compact and lively. Most are one-way, which means the flow of traffic is quite fast. It’s best to walk or cycle through the town, as the streets are narrow and crowded.

Jaerim Galbi (% 857 0622; d from W40,000; % 857 0622). A traditional Andong-style galbi restaurant with friendly service. The spicy chicken makes a hot day seem cool.

Mammoth Bakery (% 855 0650; set meals W5000-16,000; % 855 0650). The bakery has been around for more than 30 years. The wines are reasonably priced, and friendly, with good lattes and fresh breads, this bakery has been around for more than 30 years.

Bong Eongsan (% 859 0014; r Sun-Thu W25,000, Fri & Sat W30,000). A popular restaurant with a great atmosphere. The food is excellent and the service is friendly.

Andong Park Tourist Hotel (% 881 1200; www.andonghotels.com). A classy hotel with a great location. The hotel has a business centre and a comfortable, relaxing atmosphere. The restaurant serves excellent food, and the staff is very friendly.

Hotel California (% 868 0222; www.wonpark.co.kr). A modern and well-priced hotel with a great location. The rooms are comfortable and the staff is very friendly.

Jaerim Galbi (% 857 0622; d from W40,000; % 857 0622). A popular Andong-style galbi restaurant with friendly service. The spicy chicken makes a hot day seem cool.

If you’re walking (about 40 minutes) or have your own transport, stop off at the seven-storey Shilla-period brick pagoda, the largest and oldest brick pagoda in Korea. It looks oddly like someone went wild with oversized Lego and is well worth a quick peek.
ANDONG’S MASKED BALL

In late September/early October, masks and their admirers come from all over the world to join in a host of mask-related festivities. In Hahoe village, masked dancers perform traditional dances in the pine forests to the delight of crowds. Andong City has numerous mask-related shows, and a mask-making contest pits artisans against one in a delightful ‘mask off’ to see who can make the best mask. Firework displays are also a popular attraction.

Every weekend at 3pm from May to October (as well as Sunday at 3pm in March and November), Byeolsingut Talnori performances take place in a small stadium near Hahoe’s car park. These shows are a must-see: if they’re free, although donations are demanded by hard-working haenori (grandmas). If you can’t make it to a performance, you can view many masks at the Hahoe Mask Museum.

According to legend, the Hahoe mask tradition came about when the residents of Hahoe got frustrated with their hoity-toity noble clan. One clever craftsman carved a likeness of one of the most obsequious, much to the delight of his peers. Byeolsingut Talnori is a traditional dance style created by the common folk for the common folk to satirise the establishment. Characters wear masks representing social classes including corrupt monks and the rich, some with bulging eyes and crooked muzzles. The conflicts among them are portrayed in amusing combinations of popular entertainment and shamanshen. Accompanying the dance are the sounds of nong-ak, a traditional farmers’ musical percussion quartet. For more information, visit www.maskdance.com or call Andong’s tourist info booth (p217).

Some 28km to the north of Andong, Dosan Seowon was founded in 1574 in honour of Yi Hwang (aka Toegye 1501-70, see p208). Korea’s foremost Confucian scholar – he’s on the front of the W1000 banknote. For centuries during the mid-Joseon dynasty, this was the most prestigious school for those who aspired to high office, and qualifying examinations for the civil service took place here. It’s a beautiful spot, with mountains on one side and farm fields below. On the grounds, small lotus ponds harbour hundreds of frogs, which glisten on their lily leaves like jewels.

Toegye was also a prolific writer, publishing dozens of volumes summarising and explaining the Chinese classics. Some of his most famous expressions: ‘When you are alone, behave decently’ and ‘In practising virtue one should perform it with perseverance, suppressing one’s desires’. The buildings are beautifully preserved (and are often used by Korean film makers) and an exhibition hall gives clues about Toegye’s life and work.

Continuing along the main road, you’ll find the Ocheon Traditional Houses (Ocheon-ri; admission free; 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) housed the local Kim clan, which included scholars and government officials. The hillside setting is relaxing, relatively unvisited and excellent for picnicking.

Bus 67 (W900, 40 minutes) runs along the main road, dropping you off about 2km from the seowon; four buses daily continue the last 2km.

CHEONGNYANGSAN PROVINCIAL PARK

Cheongnyangsan, the summit of which is Geryongsan (870m), there are 11 scenic peaks, eight caves and a waterfall, Geryongsan. A spider web of tracks radiates out from Cheongnyangsan, most are well signposted and marked. The largest temple in the park is Cheongnyangsa and there are a number of small hermitages. Built in AD 663, the temple is quite scenic, sitting in a steep valley below the cliffs. Anstingbo is a small bistro of the temple and a pleasant teahouse. At the time you read this, a folk museum should have re-opened near the bus stop.

It takes about five hours to complete a round trip of the peaks, returning to the bus stops, or about 90 minutes to the temple and back again.

Saneung Sliding (% 852 3212; w20,000) is a restaurant and minbak. Try washing down your meal with some of the local dongdongju (W5000). There is also a small store near the restaurant.
It's a 1.5km walk from the bus stop to the restaurant and first trail. Bus 67 (W1300; one hour, six daily) continues past Dusan Seowon to the park; note that not all buses stop here.

**BUSEOKSA 부석사**

This temple of the floating stone (635; admission W5000; 6am-9pm Apr-Sep, 6am-6pm Oct-Mar) is small, serene and way-out-of-the-way, about 60km north of Andong, but well worth trekking to, as it has sublime views over a misty valley and a peacefulness that even the non-spiritual will feel. It was established in 676 by the monk Uisang after he had returned from China, bringing with him the teachings of Hwaom Buddhism. Though burnt to the ground in the early 14th century by invaders, it was reconstructed in 1358 and escaped destruction during the late-16th-century Japanese invasions.

This stroke of good fortune has resulted in the preservation of the beautiful main hall, Myeongdongjae, making it one of the oldest wooden structures in Korea. It also has what are considered to be Korea’s oldest Buddhist wall paintings, as well as a unique, gilded-day, sitting Buddha. The small exhibition hall houses some of Korea’s oldest paintings of Indra, Brahmadeva and Four Deva kings.

Below the entrance there is a small tourist village with restaurants and minbak.

Transport to Buseoksa is from Yeongju or Punggi, (city bus/deluxe W950/3600, one hour, hourly). From the bus stop it’s a steep but pretty climb up a graded hill, through cornfields and peach groves.

**JUWANGSAN NATIONAL PARK 주왕산 국립공원**

Far to the east of Andong and reaching almost to the coast, this 106sq km park (admission W4000; sunrise-8hr) is dominated by impressive limestone pinnacles that seem to appear from nowhere. Beautiful gorges, waterfalls and cliff-face walks also feature strongly, and with any luck you’ll glimpse an otter or protected Eurasian flying squirrel, among the 900-plus species of varied wildlife here.

**Orientation & Information**

The main gateway to the park is the town of Cheongsong, about 15km away. There is a national park information center (689 2034; 2nd fl bus terminal) with English-language park maps (W1000). Be sure to check here for local trail conditions.

**Sights & Activities**

Most visitors to the park are content to see the waterfalls and caves, but for a more rigorous experience try hiking up from Daejeonsa temple to Juwangsan (1km; known as Seokbyeongsan or ‘Stone Screen Mountain’, 1½ hours), along the ridge to Kalsunggappe (732m, 15 minutes) and then down to Hurimaeji (50 minutes), before following the valley back to Daejeonsa (1¾ hours).

On the way back down take the side trip to Juwang Cave, the track first passes Juwangam and then down to Wanggeoam (846m), before following the valley back to Daejeonsa (1¾ hours).

Open air shrines to the east of Andong and reaching almost to the coast, this 106sq km park (admission W4000; sunrise-8hr) is dominated by impressive limestone pinnacles that seem to appear from nowhere. Beautiful gorges, waterfalls and cliff-face walks also feature strongly, and with any luck you’ll glimpse an otter or protected Eurasian flying squirrel, among the 900-plus species of varied wildlife here.

**Getting There & Away**

Virtually all buses to Juwangsan stop in Cheongsong (W1300, 20 minutes, every 30 minutes).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongseod</td>
<td>34000</td>
<td>3½hr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dongseoul</td>
<td>22000</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

**EATING**

Bangalo Minbak/Restaurant (678 5200; 2nd fl bus terminal)

This place has a log-cabin exterior with central courtyard, and rooms have ondol or beds; some have a space for you to bring your own camping stove. It’s just outside the parking lot on the way back to town. From May to September the rates are around W10,000 cheaper.

Juwangam Spakus Restaurant (682 6801; Cheongson; d W80,000; 2nd fl bus terminal) This place has a log-cabin exterior with central courtyard, and rooms have ondol or beds; some have a space for you to bring your own camping stove. It’s just outside the parking lot on the way back to town. From May to September the rates are around W10,000 cheaper.

Juwangam Spa Hotel (682 6801; Cheongson; w W200,000) This is the region’s most upmarket hotel and a spa; it has a swimming pool with hot-spring baths. Doubles are W55,000 from May to September.

Dubuj (tofu) lovers will appreciate the several restaurants making their own tofu in the busy tourist village between the bus terminal and the park entrance.

**Sleeping & Eating**

There is a minbak village (minbakchon) opposite the Juwangsan bus terminal and a camping ground (W12000; 5am-9am) on the other side of the stream.

**Transport**

Bus Terminal (683 5000)

The bus terminal is in the south of town, a quick taxi ride from the main shopping area at least 1km away, across a bridge. If you need to cash up, the Nonghyup Bank in the shopping district has an ATM.

Some regional attractions are worth a look.

**Destinations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
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<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Cheongju</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>33,600</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangneung</td>
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<td>2½hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyeongju</td>
<td>69,000</td>
<td>1¾hr</td>
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**AROUND UJIN**

Seongnyugul 석류굴

To spot the Buddha, the Virgin Mary, a Roman palace and a wild boar all in one, head for this 470m-long cave (678 2131; adm W1400; 8am-5pm Apr-Oct, 8am-5pm Nov-Mar). Impressive stalactites, stalagmites and rock formations are said to resemble images of these icons and dozens more, alongside a number of large caverns and pools. It was Korea’s first cave to be developed for tourism. Although there are walkways and bridges inside, larger visitors (height and/or girth) may find some stretches a tight squeeze and hard hats are provided.

Spooky legend has it that human bones have turned up here over the years, said to date from
the 1592 Japanese invasion, when locals holed up inside only to be sealed in.

The easiest way to get there is by taxi (W5500) from Uljin. Otherwise five buses a day depart from Uljin.

**Bulyeongsas 불영사**

It's a pretty forest- and river-lined road through the Bulyeong Valley, but you may wonder, is it worth the 15km drive? Emphatically yes.

At the end of the canyon, and another 15 minutes' walk from the car park, Bulyeongsas (admission W2000; 6.30am-6.30pm) is an idyllic spot. The temple is a centre for ascetic practice for some 50 Buddhist nuns, set around a pond and ringed by mountains. It is said that one of the boulders topping one mountainside is a natural representation of the Buddha and, in the right light, the boulder casts its image onto the pond; hence ‘Bulyeongsas’ means ‘Temple of the Buddha’s Shadow’. The atmosphere is as harmonious as the name suggests, with well-maintained buildings, groomed grounds, pagodas and Buddhist paintings.

Buses connect Uljin with the temple (W2100, 35 minutes, hourly) but the best way to get around is independently; either riding a bike (note that there is a rather long uphill part through the valley) or driving a car.

**Deokgu Hot Springs**

The chief attraction here is the water at Deokgu Hot Springs Hotel (% 782 0677; fax 785 5169; r from W121,000, spa admission W6000; as), said to cure digestive and skin ailments. Separate men’s and women’s baths are large and attractive, while the hotel’s new, outdoor Spa World is mixed bathing (requiring a swimsuit).

Deokgu has some good walks further up the valley. One walk takes you 4km to Yongso pokpo, the original hot springs (no bathing facilities). A much more strenuous hike (about five hours) takes in the mountain Eungbongsan (999m) returning via Minssimyo (five hours).

There are a couple of other yeogwan below the Hot Springs Hotel, which charge around W30,000 a night but don’t have mineral springs on tap.

Buses connect Uljin and the hot springs (W2350, one hour, hourly).
South Gyeongsang province is a study in contrasts. Travellers looking for big-city action are unlikely to go away disappointed as Busan is full of interesting restaurants, thousands of places to drink and enough cultural assets to fill a few days of exploring. It’s the country’s second-largest city and one of the world’s busiest container ports, but Busan is not a high-energy Asian megacity. It is evolving into an interesting place thanks to a number of ongoing and proposed megaprojects. Chief among these is Lotte World 2, a 107-storey tower currently under construction in slightly dilapidated Nampodong.

The goal of turning Busan into Korea’s movie capital took a great leap forward when the city government announced plans to build MGM Studio City, an amusement park with studio sets and a film academy in conjunction with US media giant Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. With the closure of the US military installation at Camp Hialeah, the city is left with a difficult question: what to do with a large, valuable tract of land that’s 10 minutes on foot from Seomyeon?

While developers are busy rearranging the urban landscape, change comes slowly in the towns and fishing villages dotting the expansive countryside. Adventurous travellers willing to hop on a bus and explore will be rewarded with pristine islands, scenic mountains and lush rice paddies. While wandering the streets of a quiet village, don’t be surprised if a local resident asks if you need help and then insists that you join his or her co-workers for dinner. Find yourself lost on the back roads? Stick your thumb out and you might be surprised to learn that hitchhiking works here. Few people speak English, but all you really need to succeed is a warm smile, patience and the ability to read body language.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Shock your taste buds with Busan seafood specialities like raw fish at Gwang-an beach (p237)
- Go island-hopping off the coast of Tongyeong (p242)
- Rejuvenate your body at Hurshim-chung (p231), one of the world’s largest hot spas
- Explore Jirisan (p247), one of the best places to hike in Korea
- Take a stroll on the soft, white sand at Sangju Beach (p246)

**TELEPHONE CODE: 055**  **POPULATION: 7.9 MILLION**  **AREA: 10,500 SQ KM**
South Gyeongsang province has a long history of warfare, though it’s difficult to beat the Imjin War for destruction, treachery and the birth of an Icon. In 1592 the Japanese were eager to secure a land route to China. The Joseon government refused assistance, so the Japanese attacked. Led by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the Japanese invaded 600,000 troops at seven places including Busan, Sangu Beach and Jinju, where the Koreans made a valiant yet unsuccessful stand against a superior enemy.

The war’s star was Admiral Yi Sun-sin, a brilliant tactician credited with the development of the turtle ship, an ironclad vessel that served as a living museum of 40 years past are one subway stop north at Yeongheung station. Outside Exit 4, take local bus 8 or 8-1.

There’s a noticeably absent cosmopolitan feel in this port city known for raw fish and a harsh dialect that people in Seoul sometimes find incomprehensible. Underneath the urban landscape created by an unimaginative use of concrete, quirky people jump the queue, shout while conversing and giggle at the sight of inanimate objects. Cultural barriers have been dropped over dinner and drinks. Cultural sensitivity is prevalent most people from initiating contact with foreigners. But if you take the first step, the level of kindness and generosity extended your way can be surprising.

Getting There & Around
Most train travellers stop at Busan station, a big glassy facility close to the city centre. Some inbound trains also stop at Gupo, a handy west-end terminal ideal for travellers who don’t need to go downtown. Train travel in the rest of the province is possible, though schedules are not always convenient. For regional trips, the bus is a superior option with departures from Seobu and Dongbu bus terminals. By air, travellers land at Gimhae International Airport, about 30 minutes west of central Busan.

Information
City government (http://english.gsnd.net/default.jsp) Learn about South Gyeongsang province and its geography.

INTERNET RESOURCES

City government (http://english.busan.go.kr) For basic socio-economic and travel data.

Pusanweb (www.pusanweb.com) Astute to finding employment and chronic kinks.

MEDICAL SERVICES
Dongui Medical Centre (Map p284) 850-8529 Marie Kim is an RN who can help travellers. Take Line 1 to Yeongheung station, outside Exit 4, take local bus for 8-1.

Dr Hyun (Map p284) 897-2288 For dental problems, his 2nd floor office is near Line 2, Gaya station, Exit 2. Dr Seo (Map p284) 725-6033 For general medical maladies. Dr Hong (Map p284)

History
There are five national parks scattered across the province. On the western flank, Jirisan National Park is noted for serious climbs. Hallyeo National Maritime Park is a spectacular ocean playground encompassing coastal islands from Namhae to Geojje. Along the border separating South and North Gyeongsang provinces, Gayasan National Park is famous for Haema, one of the country’s most important temples (although it’s located in South Gyeongsang province, access is easiest from Daegu p195). Tucked into the northwestern corner of the province, Daeunggung National Park is where you’ll find downhill skiers and snowboarders hitting the slopes at Mt. Gijeong (1240m).

Orientation
Busan is a sprawling coastal city tucked into the southeastern corner of the peninsula. The city’s manufacturing centre and new container port are at the western end in Gangeo-gu (Map p230). Gimhae International Airport is further west, 27km from Busan’s city centre. Agricultural and fishing communities continue to survive in Gijang County in the city’s east end, though development pressures may bring significant changes over the next decade.

The heart of the city is concentrated in a band of north-south development running through the centre of Busan. Busy container ports dominate the southern coastline in and around Nampodong, an ageing commercial district with a mishmash of back alleys. Two passenger ferry terminals, the immigration office and a community of draggletailed learners who don’t need to go downtown. Train travel in the rest of the province is possible, though schedules are not always convenient. For regional trips, the bus is a superior option with departures from Seobu and Dongbu bus terminals. By air, travellers land at Gimhae International Airport, about 30 minutes west of central Busan.

There are two provincial parks: Yeonhwasan (40 minutes southeast of Jinju) and Gajisan (40 minutes north of Busan). Travellers looking for stimulating day trips from Busan should consider visiting Gajisan Provincial Park for terrific temples like Ssanggyesa and a challenging hike up Mt. Gijeong (1240m).

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**Beomeosa**

**Beomeosa**

- **Location:** Gyeongbuk, South Korea
- **Distance:** 72 km from Busan
- **Established:** AD 678
- **Features:** Magnificent **Beomeosa temple**, a world away from the urban jungle, with beautiful architecture nestled against an extraordinary mountain setting. It's a busy place, as the path leading to the temple serves as the northern starting point for trails across a unique mountain setting.

**Location and Access**

- **Map:** Busan City Map (p232); one way/return adult W3000/5000, child W2000/2500
- **Opening Hours:** 8am-6.30pm
- **Visitors:** Incoming visitors (international terminal) should pass under the gate and walk down a hill to a paved road. Turn right at the road and walk to a large signboard. Turn left here to pick up the trail to the South Gate.

**Travellers’ Information**

- **Tourist Information:** Kangsan Travel (Map p228; % 747 0033; www.kangsantravel.com) or Gyeongsangnam-Do Tourism Bureau (Map p230) is a long stone wall with 8 gates serving as expensive trail markers – not all is lost because this is where you’ll find some of the city’s best hiking. Outdoor enthusiasts seeking an intimate experience with nature should avoid the mountain on holidays and weekend mornings.

**Travel Agencies**

- **Korean Travel** provides English-language services geared towards expats.

**Sights & Activities**

- **Beomeosa temple:** Magnificent, a world away from the urban jungle, with beautiful architecture nestled against an extraordinary mountain setting. It's a busy place, as the path leading to the temple serves as the northern starting point for trails across a unique mountain setting.

- **Geumjeongsan:** A place of quiet contemplation and reflection.
GYEONGSANGNAM-DO  ••  Downtown Busan

INFORMATION

0 400 m
9am-6pm Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Feb

PUBLIC BATHS

You can’t really experience Korea unless you’ve been to a public bath.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Gwangjang Tourist Hotel (200m)

You cannot really experience Korea unless you’ve been to a public bath.

INFORMATION

Immigration Office

To Busan Station (200m);

Daecheongno

GB Bank KEB Bank

With 4300 sq metres of floor space, Hurshimchung (Map p228; adult/youth/child W7900/4000/5000; 24hr) is the best place to take the plunge. Reportedly the largest jjimjilbang (bathhouse) in Asia, the soaking tubs, saunas and domed roof make this spectacle a great place to relax and exfoliate. Guests can stay as long as they like and take a break in the 3rd-floor snack bar; put on the jjimjilbang uniform (Monday to Saturday W1000/Sunday free) in the change room and use the locker key to pay. The bill is settled as you leave the spa. Located opposite the Nongshim Hotel, it’s a 15-minute walk from Oncheonjang station or the cable car.

SEOKBULSA 석불사

Hard to find, difficult to reach and a wonder to behold, Seokbulsa temple (Map p232; adult free/child W3000; admission free/child W3000; 24hr) is a hermitage carved into rock. Two massive boulders stretching 40m in height jut out from the mountainside to form a U-shaped endave with three rock facings that is now a place of worship. Inside the enclaves, enormous Buddhist images have been meticulously etched into stone. Visually powerful in scale and impact, it’s the kind of work that moves first-time visitors to exclaim ‘Wow’ as they step back and arch their necks to get the full picture. Quietly walk past the women bowing on the ‘shoes-off’ platform and step into the small caves for a close-up look at the Buddha glowing in soft candlelight.

Getting to Seokbulsa is worthwhile challenge for anyone with a desire to explore out-of-the-way places. The most interesting – and strenuous – route is to add this stop to your Gumphengsan Mountain hike. From the South Gate (남문), the path indicated by the Mandeokchon (만덕촌) sign leads to a collection of restaurants and foot-volleyball courts in Namman Village (남만 마을). At one point, the path stops at a court; walk right and pick up the trail on the other side.

About 500m down the trail, look for a sign that reads 석불사 입구 (Seokbulsa entrance). Turn right and walk down the steep hill to the road sign pointing the way to a 600m uphill hike to the temple. On the way back, there’s no need to return to Namman Village. Take the trail to the top of the mountain and ride the cable car down. Bottom line: add 4km and 1½ hours to the Gumphengsan Mountain hike to experience one of the most unique temples in Busan.

BEACHES

Haeundae (Map p235) is the country’s most famous beach. During the peak travel season in August, umbrellas mushroom across the 2km beach while frolickers fill the water with truck-size inner tubes rented from booths behind the beach. It’s a fun family outing with 500,000 friends, though the marketing bumpf portraying Haeundae as a world-class resort is bunk. Take Line 2 to Haeundae station, Exit 3, and walk to the beach.

Among the city’s seven other beaches, Gwang-an (Map p228) is the best option for access and quality (the other beaches are Dadaepo, Songdo, Songjeong, Ilgwang, Immang and Pebble Beach). Although the ugly wall of commercial development behind the beach diminishes the daytime experience, Gwang-an really shines at night. The multi-coloured light show illuminating the bridge is grand. The shortest route to Gwang-an is Line 2 to Gumphengsan station, Exit 3. Rotate 180 degrees at street level and turn right at the corner; the beach is five minutes down the road.
YONGDUSAN PARK

In the centre of this humble park stands the 118m Busan Tower (Map 228; adult/youth/child W8000/7000/5000; h 8.30am-10pm Apr-Oct, 9am-9pm Nov-Mar). If the haze is not too thick, daytime views of container-ship traffic in the harbour provide a sense of the port's scale of operations. Other things to do: buy corn from a kiosk or watch pigeons swoop for food.

JAGALCHI FISH MARKET

Anyone with a love of seafood and a tolerance for powerful odours could easily spend a couple of hours exploring the country's largest fish market (Map p230). Waterfront warehouses, tiny shops and elderly women perched on street corners sell an incredible variety of seafood. Sea-weathered sailors offering a 20-minute boat tour of the harbour might approach you on the pier.

MUSEUMS & EXHIBITIONS

Busan frowns upon bourgeois pursuits like art and urban design, so it isn't surprising that the arts scene is, well, lacking.

The Busan Metropolitan Art Museum (Map 228; % 741 0301; adult/youth/child W5000/3000/1000; h 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, Sun; holiday times, to 3pm Jul-Aug) is hardly a must-see but it does come in handy during the typhoon season when you need a place to escape the rain. Take Line 2 to Metro Art Museum station, Exit 5 and walk 150m.

In Haeundae, the Busan Aquarium (Map 228; % 740 1501; adult/youth/child W13,000/10,000/7,000; h 9.30am-6pm) has a small collection of Korean War photos and film footage.

Across the street, the UN Cemetery (Map 228; www.unkorea.com; % 745 1038; admission free; h 9am-4pm) appeals to history enthusiasts, though the photo exhibition is an embarrassingly modest tribute. English-speaking tour guides are inside the kiosk. Line 2 to Daeyeon station, Exit 5. At street level turn 180 degrees and you'll see a sign pointing to the UN Cemetery.

Tours

Miipo Wharf (Map p235), the small wharf at the eastern end of Haeundae beach, is home base for two ocean tours. The 50-minute circuit (round trip adult/child W13,000/7000; tours 7.30pm, 8.30pm, 9.30pm and 10pm) runs around Gwangan Bridge. An 80-minute tour-shuttle service to the Coastal Ferry Terminal in Jungangdong (Map p230; one way adult/child W14,900/7450)
departs Haeundae every 90 minutes from 9am (last departure 4pm). On thereturn trip, departures from the Coastal Ferry Terminal start at 10.30 (last departure 5.30pm).

Festivals & Events
In August special events are held on the city’s beaches as part of the Busan Sea Festival, including the Busan International Rock Festival (www.rockfestival.co.kr). Limited information is online.

The Busan International Film Festival (www.biff.org) is the city’s largest and most significant festival. First launched in 1996, the 10th version in 2005 screened 307 films from 73 countries. The festival is held sometime between September and October.

Sleeping
BUDGET

Blue Backpackers Hostel (% 634 3802; www.bluebackpackers.com dm W35,000; tv W20,200-25,000 a i )
Everything today’s discriminating budget traveller needs is here: free washing machine, breakfast and internet. Take Line 1 to Beomnaegol station, Exit 3, and cross the street at the light. Turn left and walk towards the bridge. On the bridge, look for a door leading to a stair case. Walk down to the parking lot and go to building 106 with ‘1-2’ over the entrance. Take the elevator to 1802.

Seoul Hotel (% 630 2256; dm W60,000; tv W30,000-40,000 a i )
Unremarkable rooms close to the ferry terminal. You get a simple bed in a small room with a crap TV. If you need more, this is not the place for you. Take Line 1 to Jungangdong station, Exit 17. Turn left at the first street. Walk straight and turn left at second block.

Arpina Youth Hostel (% 722 4001; www.arpina.youth-hostel.com; dm W40,000; tv W35,000-40,000 a i )
Hostel and golf anyone? You get both and more at Arpina, a nonsmoking, mixed-use facility with dorm bunks, a five-lane pool, health club and driving range. For W100,000, you can rent a dorm room. Take Line 2 to Metropolitan Art Museum station; take Exit 3 and walk straight two minutes. The hostel is down the road beside the green net.

Hotel Motel (모텔 하오텔; % 548 1880; dm W90,000; tv W150,000 a i )
Spend W30,000 at any love motel and you might be disappointed, but spend your money here and be charmed by the country-inn feel of this understated property. From hallways adorned with green vine on white lattice to the wicker basket of towels, this place embodies cosiness. Take Line 1 or 3 to Yeonsan-dong station, Exit 1, walk straight and turn left at the second block then turn right at the first block.

MIDRANGE

Sugar Motel (Map p275; % 747 8620; standard/special/ twin W200,000/250,000/350,000 a i )
If your idea of a romantic getaway includes a supply of battery-operated devices, this motel is worth inspecting. Haeundae beach is around the corner, but with so much stuff in the room you may not get that far. Add W100,000/200,000 Friday/Saturday. Take Line 2 to Haeundae station, Exit 3 and walk towards the beach; turn right at the first major intersection.

Four Season Motel (포시즌 모텔; % 265 1372; standard/special/ twin W200,000/250,000/350,000 a i )
It’s finally here, a motel with a water park. Aqua fans go weak at the knees inside the Blue Hawaii room when they see the tub big enough to make a splash with any group. Friends stopping by later? No problem – there’s room for a party in the shower. Line 1 or 3 to Yeonsan station. Take Exit 5 and walk right at street level. The hotel is on the 12th floor of the CMC building.

Motel Business (Map p275; % 748 2951; dm W100,000; tv W250,000 a i )
B&B Hotel & Spa (Map p275; % 720 6100; dm from W300,000 a i )
Better than average facilities (like a 50m pool) across the street from Haeundae beach.

Paradise Hotel (Map p275; % 749 2111; tv W400,000 a i)
Busan’s best casino boutique.

Perhaps the city’s best tourist-class hotel, it’s ideal for travellers who require only a proper place to lay down after a busy day of sightseeing but can’t stomach the idea of slumming in a comparably priced love motel. Line 1 to Busan station, Exit 8, and walk across the plaza.

TOP END

Velasin Grand Beach Hotel (Map p275; % 748 7201; r W120,000-450,000 a i)
It’s Busan’s oldest international hotel, but gets better with age. A hint of retro shaken, not stirred, with modern touches, creates a James Bond – à la Sean Connery – dashing cool. Inside-and-out, this is the best hotel on Haeundae beach.

Other recommendations include Novotel Ambassador Busan (Map p275; % 743 1234; dm W150,000; tv W450,000 a i)
Hotel staff benefit from a customer-relations training seminar.

Grand Hotel (Map p275; % 740 3144; dm W400,000 a i)
Located from W120,000 and up, the hotel is steps from Haeundae beach.

Paradise Hotel (Map p275; % 749 2111; tv W400,000 a i)
Busan’s best casino boutique.

Eating

The food in Busan is salty, spicy and raw, just like the people of this fair metropolis. Seafood in various shapes and forms – like eel, octopus, and swellfish – is popular and plentiful.

BUDGET

Dokgeom (Map p275; meals from W50,000)
The interior looks like a pachinko parlor but the stem women who run this shop serve some of the city’s best
doenjang jjigae (된장찌개; spicy soy-bean stew). The soup bowls are small but with prices this low, order another set. Located at the end of a narrow lane one block west of the KB bank near BSC Bakery.

INFORMATION

Kangsan Travel .................................................. 1 C1
Tourist Office 군안 안내 ........................................ 2 C2

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Busan Aquarium 무안 아쿠아리움 ........................................ 3 C1
Haeundae Beach 해운대 해수욕장 ........................................ 4 C2
Mipo What 이미 .................................................. 5 D2

SLEEPING

Grand Hotel .......................................................... 6 B2
Novotel Ambassador Busan Hotel 미스ellaneous 더라구호텔 ........................................ 7 C1
Paradise Hotel 바리다이스 호텔 ....................................... 8 C1
Sugar Motel 수리 모텔 .................................................. 9 C1
Westin Chosun Beach Hotel 르ফ스턴 조선 비치 호텔 ......................... 10 B2

EATING

Geumusu Bokguk 길수 복국 ........................................ 11 C1
Grandmother Lee’s Raw Fish House 명숙 끼국다른 집 ........................................ 12 D2
Ops Bakery .......................................................... 13 C1

DRINKING

U2 ................................................................. 14 C1

ENTERTAINMENT

Megabox .............................................................. 15 C1
Paradise Casino 파라다이스 카지노 .................................. (see B)
A RAW DEAL

Raw fish is called hoe (회; sounds similar to 'when' without the 'n'). A typical raw-fish dinner starts with a small banquet of appetisers including raw baby octopus still wiggling on the plate. A platter of thinly sliced raw fish without rice is the main course. Fish is dipped into a saucer of chogochujang (초고추장), a watery red-pepper sauce, or a dish of soy sauce (간장) mixed with wasabi (와사비). The meal is customarily finished with rice and a boiling pot of maeun-tang (매운탕) spicy fish soup. Most Koreans love raw fish, which they say has a delicate taste and smooth texture. Western travellers may find the taste bland with a slightly tough, almost rubbery texture.

A substantial meal starting at W40,000 is rarely sufficient to satisfy a pair of raw-fish aficionados. Japanese sushi is also popular, also called chabop (초밥) or the longer, more accurate name saengseon chobap (생선 초밥). Like most special outings in Korea, raw fish is best accompanied with soju (the local firewater, Korea’s national hootch and leading cause of headaches).

**Miliik Town Raw Fish Centre** (밀리익 탓익 옛 센터; Map p228) This collection of raw-fish shops provides a rustic dining experience. Located at the northeast end of Gwang-an beach, purchase a fish for W15,000 to W30,000 and walk upstairs to eat; the woman selling you the fish will indicate which floor. Inside the seating area, your fish will be prepared and served for W10,000 per person.

**Haryu** (하류; 753 1126; Miliik Town Raw Fish Centre, per person from W40,000; set courses from W40,000; 24hr) If you don’t need to pick a fish, walk up to the 2nd floor to a restaurant run by the English-speaking owner, Mr Jeon. Take Line 2 to Gwang-an station, Exit 5. At the top of the stairs, turn 180 degrees and then right at the first street. Walk 600m and turn left at the beach. The raw-fish centre is the large, brown building 300m down the road.

**Grandmother Lee’s Raw Fish House** (하방하방 맛집; per serving W40,000; 10am-6am) Stop by for raw fish and you might end up partying until sunrise. It’s a small restaurant with ground-floor fish tanks and space for groups upstairs. The affable Mr Lee speaks English well and takes the time to explain the features of each fish. Walk to the eastern end of Haeundae beach, turn left at the first street past the Mipo ferry terminal and then a quick right turn. It’s the first restaurant on your right.

**Myeongseong Chobap** (명성 초밥; set from W20,000, raw fish W30,000-60,000) A popular Japanese-style restaurant serving saengseon chobap and saengjeonhoeokse (생선 초밥, 코스, Korean raw-fish set menu). Located in Jungangdong, it’s 100m north of the Tower Hotel with ‘sushi’ written on the signboard.

**The Jagalchi Fish Market** (Map p232) in Nampo-dong is the city’s sprawling wholesale and retail centre for all things fishy. There are heaps of waterfront restaurant options to enjoy raw fish, all surrounded by boats off-loading their catch, enormous seafood warehouses and salty characters. Although it’s a popular destination for Japanese tourists who seem to enjoy the ‘roughing it on the pier’ dining experience, the primitive interior design of many shops does not hold the same level of attraction for local customers who prefer a less rustic environ, like that found in the restaurants in and around Gwang-an and Haeundae beaches.

### Back alleys

Pastries, cakes and coffee are on the 1st floor; light meals are served upstairs.

**Bongtae Sanjejjang** (봉태산제강; Map p238; meals from W6000) Here’s a sterling example of a successful restaurant owner who won’t update, modernise or even clean up the shop interior. According to superstitution, the good fortune a successful shop enjoys could be lost if the interior were changed. Consequently, some shoddy-looking restaurants, like the one here, serve great food. The jjambbong (짬뽕; spicy seafood soup) and tangguyuk (탕수육; sweet-and-sour fried pork) are all excellent.

**Ops Bakery** (Map p226; meals from W6000; 7am-11pm) You thought everything in Haeundae was overpriced? Well, almost everything, now that Ops serves bacon and eggs for breakfast. Located on the street opposite the Novotel.

**Pobo Cheong** (Map p238; 060 9999; per serving W45,000) It’s not the best subitul galbi (소비타율 galbi; charcoal-fired barbecue) restaurant but it is very good. The main draw of this busy restaurant is the backyard barbecue feel in the outdoor patio. Lean moksal (목살; pork chop) tastes great, though most Koreans choose samgyeopsal (삼겹살; bacon). Unless you’re hoping to accelerate the likelihood of a heart attack, avoid this cut, which is essentially a slab of fat with a hint of pork.

**Bongak** (Map p220; meals from W6000; 8am-10pm) Located on Gwang-an’s Eonyang Bulgogi one-way street, this sabul galbi restaurant serves sumptuous though stratospherically expensive Eonyang beef. There is a belief in Korea that domestic beef – called Hanu (한우) – is superior in quality to imported meat and therefore war-rants high prices. Maybe, but at W130,000 per kilogram it better rock your world.

### Seafood

**Gaboja Eonyang Bulgogi** (가보자 엔영 불고기; 751 9232; meals from W6000; 11am-6am) A platter of thinly sliced raw fish without rice is the main course. Fish is dipped into a saucer of 초고추장 (a watery red-pepper sauce) or a dish of soy sauce (간장) made from soybean. The meal is customarily finished with rice and a boiling pot of 매운탕 (매운탕; spicy fish soup). Most Koreans love raw fish, which they say has a delicate taste and smooth texture. Western travellers may find the taste bland with a slightly tough, almost rubbery texture. A substantial meal starting at W40,000 is rarely sufficient to satisfy a pair of raw-fish aficionados. Japanese sushi is also popular, also called chabop (초밥) or the longer, more accurate name saengseon chobap (생선 초밥). Like most special outings in Korea, raw fish is best accompanied with soju (the local firewater, Korea’s national hootch and leading cause of headaches).

### Sutbul

**Myeongseong Chobap** (명성 초밥; set from W20,000, raw fish W30,000-60,000) A popular Japanese-style restaurant serving saengseon chobap and saengjeonhoeokse (생선 초밥, 코스, Korean raw-fish set menu). Located in Jungangdong, it’s 100m north of the Tower Hotel with ‘sushi’ written on the signboard.

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**Myeongseong Chobap** (Map p228) This scruffy-looking restaurant draws people from great distances for the chueotang (추어탕; loach soup). Made from ground loach and leafy cabbage, the dark-green soup has a mild taste. If it’s too mild, dip into the plastic tubs of seasoning, which includes sansho (산초), a brown spice that adds a rich, earthy flavour when used sparingly. With a self-serve coun-ter of unlimited side dishes like baked fish and seaweed, it’s an outstanding meal and one of the city’s best deals.

**Geumsu Bokguk** (금수 복국; meals from W8000; 10am-10pm Sun-Fri, 11am-9pm Sat) Remember the Simpson’s episode when Homer ate blowfish and was told he had survived. Stay on the 1st floor for relatively inexpensive dishes. Head upstairs and join the army of unlimited side dishes like baked fish and seaweed.
KYUNGSUNG-PUKYONG UNIVERSITIES

The commercial district in front of Kyunsgung and Pukyong universities is an electric party district with eating and drinking options catering to 40,000 hungry, thirsty and frugal students. Most expats hang out in one or two places.

*Cheonggyechon*(Map p228; drinks W3000; 8am-6pm) Bring your A-game to this hip-hopping dance club that mixes wall-to-wall fresh late Fridays and Saturdays. Mingle with local women sporting the latest music video-inspired club wear and the hardest b boyz to come out of Saskatchewan. It’s up the street from Ol’55.

HAE-UNDAE BEACH

Drinks in Haeundae can put a serious dent in your wallet. The beachfront hotel bars are popular with the corporate crowd who can set up a tab, though travellers with a refined sense of budget finding a beer-drinking crowd need look no further. If you’re looking for a low-cost option, grab some beverages from a nearby convenience store and plop down on the beach.

Wine Bar (Map p233; drinks W4000; 6pm-6am) An out-of-the-way harbour where people come for a drink to watch the sunset and unexpectedly stay for the sunrise. The harbour road is packed with tent restaurants so if this one happens to be busy, walk along the pier to find another. Snacks include gari-bi (가리비), grilled clams with a salakike sauce that tastes great. It tastes even better with soju at sunrise. Catch a W3000 taxi from Haeundae beach.

NAMPONGDON

Most of the drinking establishments in Nampodong cater to Japanese and Korean business travellers. But there are a number of shops where you can experiment with unusual teas or sips espresso.

*Holly’s Coffee* (Map p233; drinks W3000; 8am-10pm) Where else in the world can you drink great espresso and free high-speed internet access? Well, lots of places in Nampodong actually, and this is one of them.

*Theme Coffee Shop* (Map p233; drinks W5000; 8am-6pm) Fine espresso with a bacon-and-eggs breakfast from 8am to 11am. From Jungang-dong station, Exit 13, turn left at the first street.

Ssanggyejae (Map p233; drinks W5000; 9am-9pm) A teahouse with medicinal drinks like the dark and slightly bitter ssanghwahwa (쌍화차). Take Line 1 to Jungang-dong station, Exit 11, then walk two blocks past the post office.

Entertainment

LIVE MUSIC

*Giant Step Jazz Bar* (Map p233; drinks W3000; 8pm-3am) You’ve got friends coming to town and you need a place to impress. The usual haunts are out because you’ve earned a reputation for table dancing after multiple shots of soju. Enter the Giant Step, a jazz bar with all the trappings you’d expect in an upscale joint, like burgundy wood, black-and-white photos and a good supply of recordings, plus live 30-minute sets on stage Wednesday to Saturday (9pm, 10pm and 11pm). It’s near Gwangechon beach on the street behind the Fuzzy Navy (opposite).

Monk (Map p233; drinks W5000; 9pm-2am) Before and after jazz sets (9pm to 11pm, Wednesday to Saturday), Monk can be an empty sound stage with a few offbeat characters. When live music hits the stage, the place is full of offbeat characters. Poetry Plus runs one Saturday every six weeks (9pm to 11pm). It’s across the street from Ol’55 (opposite).

SPORTS

Professional sports provide a day of fun with ticket prices in the W5000 to W10,000 range. Perennial football feeders, the Lotte Giants, play baseball at Sajik Stadium (Map p228). From October to March, the KTF Magicwings play pro basketball at Geumjeong gymnasium (Map p232; Line 1 Nampodong station, walk 1km from Exit 1). The Busan Icons of the Korean soccer league play in Asiad Stadium (Map p229), located behind the Asiad Home Plus department store and a 10-minute walk from Sajik baseball stadium.
bowling lanes, health club (you only need to bring running shoes) and decent supermarket. Take Line 3 to Sports Gym Complex, Exit 11. At street level follow the sidewalk and turn left at the first lane.

Lotte department store (Map p233; Seomyeon) The biggest; there’s also a smaller version outside Myeong-nyun-dong station, Exit 1, on Line 1 (Map p232).

Nopodong Lotte department store (Map  p233 ; Seomyeon) The biggest; there’s also a smaller version outside Myeong-nyun-dong station, Exit 1, on Line 1 (Map  p232 ).

Getting There & Around

AIR

Korean Air Lines (KAL) runs one airport limousine service from Gimhae International Airport to the major hotels in Haeundae (adult/child W6000/3500, one hour, every 30 minutes). A taxi from the airport to Seomyeon takes 30 minutes and costs W20,000, depending on traffic. A 10-minute taxi to Deokcheon station costs W7000. The most economical link between the airport and city is a W1500 bus to Deokcheon station, 201 to Seomyeon station (Lotte department store) or the 300 to Hadan. There are also buses from the airport to regional cities including Gyeongju (W9000), Masan (W5700) and Ulsan (W7400).

International flights are mostly to Japan (Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Fukuoka), with infrequent departures to Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Manila and Vladivostok.

On domestic routes, the Busan–Seoul run on Korean Air or Asiana (one hour, every 30 minutes from 7am to 9pm) usually requires reservations for weekend and holiday travel. Most flights from Busan to Seoul land at Gimpo Airport, which has few international connections. If you’re flying out of the country, you’ll need to catch the express bus from Gimpo to Incheon International (see p.137). Flights also connect Busan and Jeju (one hour, every 30 to 90 minutes from 7am to 9pm).

FERRY

There are two ferry terminals located near the immigration office (Map p230). From Jungangdong station, take Exit 12 and walk towards the containers visible down the road and cross the major street. To find the Coastal Ferry Terminal (domestic departures), do not walk towards the immigration office. Instead, turn right and walk 200m along the waterfront to the large building on the left.

First-floor booths in the International Ferry Terminal sell tickets for overnight ferries to three Japanese cities: Fukuoka (round trip W152,000, departs 10:30pm, arrives 6am); Shimonomioka (round trip W161,000 to W608,000, departs 8pm, arrives 8am); and Osaka (round trip W237,000, departs 4pm, arrives 10am).

For a quick trip to Fukuoka on the Kobe or Beetle hydrofoils, go to the 2nd floor. There are five daily departures (round trip W171,000, three hours, departs 8.45am, 10am, 2pm, 3pm and 4:45pm) and an additional departure Friday morning (9:30am). Add a W2600 departure tax for all international trips.

The Coastal Ferry Terminal handles domestic departures to Goeje Island: Gohyoun (one way W19,700, 75 minutes, departs 10.30am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm, 4.30pm and 5.45pm); Okpo (one way W19,200, 55 minutes, departs 6.30am, 9.15am, 11am, 1pm and 3pm); and Jangsaenggou (one way W19,300, 45 minutes, departs 8am, 10am, 1pm, 4pm, 5pm and 6pm). There is one departure daily (except Sundays) for Jeju Island (one way W36,000, departs 7pm, arrives 6am).

BUS

Dongbu bus terminal (Map p232) is located at Nopodong station on Line 1. Intercity buses travelling to Dongbu allow passengers to get off at Dusil station, a great time-saver if you don’t need to go to the terminal. Departures from Dongbu include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daegu</td>
<td>9800</td>
<td>2hr</td>
<td>every 30-120min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyeongju</td>
<td>5300</td>
<td>1½hr</td>
<td>every 10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>5½hr</td>
<td>every 10-30min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seobu intercity bus terminal (Map p229) is located outside Seobang station on Line 2 with street level access through a department store. Westbound departures include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hadong</td>
<td>9500</td>
<td>2½hr</td>
<td>every 30-60min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinju</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>1½hr</td>
<td>every 10min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namha</td>
<td>8200</td>
<td>2½hr</td>
<td>every 30min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suseong</td>
<td>11,400</td>
<td>3½hr</td>
<td>every 2hr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUBWAY

Busan’s three-line subway uses a two-zone fare system: W900 for one zone and W1000 for longer trips. Purchasing a Hanaro card (W2000 plus travel credits, available at ticket booths) is handy; you get a small discount on fares and avoid the hassle of buying a ticket for each trip. See p.241 for a subway map.

TRAIN

Most trains depart from and arrive at Busan’s downtown station (Map p228). There are also departures from Gupo (Map p228), a station with easy subway access to Line 3 that saves the hassle of going downtown. Between Busan and Seoul, KTX is the quickest service with most trips taking three hours or less (adult/child W44,800/22,400; every 30 to 60 minutes). First-class tickets are more expensive, though the wide seats have ample legroom.

The Saemaul used to be known as the express service. Today, the 4½-hour ride to Seoul seems like an eternity (adult/child W36,800/18,400; departs every 60 to 90 minutes). Travelers desperate to save a buck – or wanting to read an entire book on the train – could try the painfully slow Mugunghwa service, which wheezes to Seoul in 5½ hours (adult/child W24,800/12,400; departs every one to three hours).

Bujeon station has limited Saemaul and Mugunghwa regional connections to places like Mokpo (adult/child W23,100/11,650, three trains daily). The Korea Rail (www.korail.co.kr) website has detailed schedules.

If you’re heading to Japan, a Korea-Japan Through Ticket provides discounted travel...
ACCORDING TO SUPERSTITION, DID
by train to Busan, the ferry crossing between Busan and Shimonoseki and a train to your destination in Japan. Contact Korea Rail at Busan train station for details.

It’s not the only harbour in the city, but Ganghung’s
a pig’s head is placed in front of new
“businesses to bring good luck
Tongdosa
is enshrined in a fenced area outside
the main hall and cannot be seen. It is a focal
point of devotion, which is why Tongdosa
does not have a Buddha statue in the main
hall, a rarity in Korea.

The Tongdosa Museum and Youth Centre (Map p226 ; adult/youth/child W2000/1500/1000; 9am-4.30pm Nov-Feb, to 6pm Mar-Oct, closed Tue) houses a substantial collection of Buddhist
ptings with limited viewing hours (9am to 11am, 1pm to 5pm) to minimise light
exposure. There are 30,000 artefacts with
day access including gongs, roof tiles
and wooden printing blocks. Before entering,
shoes are placed in a bag at the front door.

From Busan’s Dongbu terminal,
buses run to Sinpyeong(성평; W2000, 25 minutes, every 15 to 30 minutes). Facing the modest
bus terminal, walk left and turn right at the first corner; the temple entrance is past the parade of shops, restaurants and motels.

It is an easy day trip from Busan, but the
yakkyo bus tours and seemingly endless
opportunities to pull out your wallet give
Tongdosa a carnival atmosphere. If time
is short, take a pass on Tongdosa and visit
Seongnamsa.

TONGDOSA 통도사
Tongdosa (Map p226 ; adult/youth/child W2000/1500/1000; 9am-4.30pm Nov-Feb, to 6pm Mar-Oct, closed Tue) is one of the country’s most
important Buddhist temples, noted for a sari,

Sights & Activities
GANGGUAN 龍宮院
It’s not the only harbour in the city, but Gangguan is the prettiest. It’s also a busy pier
anchored by a promenade that serves multiple civic
functions including dock, basketball
court and picnic ground for package-tour
travellers who aren’t squeamish about a mid-
morning soju pick-me-up. Towards the north
end of the promenade there are two
restaurants (admission fees; 10am-5pm) and the jungsanglue
Fish Market, an open-air building with grannies
selling seafood out of plastic tubs.

Not long ago, the narrow zigzagging streets
west of the promenade were ideal for an hour
of window-shopping. Today it’s a commercial
block straight out of a developer’s cookie
切割器. Fortunately the far more interest-
Ing restaurant makes an exception for hungry
international travellers.

Anyone with the vaguest interest in indepen-
dent exploration should take a ferry to one of the nearby islands. There are heaps of options
to island hopping. If time is limited, the day trip
to Dongdu, there are
several dirt trails that might appeal to hik-
ers eager to get above the treeline. Travellers
unable to rattle boulders stay on the road,
which is well-intended. You might meet Pastor Lee, a
friendly island resident who walks this course
twice a day.

In Dongdu, the path behind the second
minbak (a home that rents rooms to travel-
ers) crosses the back end of a mountain and
passes a herd of black goats not far from a
rocky oceanfront. On the return trip, get back
to the pagoda and follow the dir path to the
mountaintop (215m) for a photogenic view of
Yongmeori and, if you use your imagination,
you could die if you leave a fan on in a
room with the window and door closed.

YEONHWA ISLAND 연화도
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Eating & Drinking

Gangguan’s promenade is the place for chungmu gimbap (충무 김밥), a spicy squid- and radish-dish made famous in Tongyeong, while the Seoho Bay road is known for raw fish. The city’s evening entertainment district is in Mujeon-dong, a 10-minute walk behind the bus terminal.

Jung·angno (중앙로): Hungry travellers with limited Korean skills come here because there’s no need to speak or read this place only serves chungmu gimbap. The waitress will ask how many servings you want and if necessary she’ll use her fingers to count. One serving of this spicy dish, which will test the red-pepper tolerance of the hardest Korean food-lover, should be enough for a single person.

Street Food (스트리트 모텔): This place has simple, clean rooms unlikely to disappoint or amaze. Older than the more expensive properties in the area, it’s a decent option for budget travellers who want to be close to the bus terminal and Mujeon Dong’s nightlife. It’s on the street immediately behind the bus terminal.

Jinju Fortress (진주성): This is one of the newer properties near Gangguan’s waterfront with rooms that don’t yet have the dents, scratches and cigarette burns customarily found in love motels. Despite the curious selection of ornate furnishings that give rooms a dollhouse feel, there’s tremendous value for a group that doesn’t mind an ondol. It’s near Gangguan harbour on a small lane beside the KB bank.

Getting There & Around

The bus terminal is 2km north of Gangguan. Express buses connect Tongyeong with Jinju (W7600, 1½ hours, every 20 minutes) and Busan (W9100, 2½ hours, every 30 minutes) with frequent local buses. Immediately outside the terminal, all city buses (W900) pass through Gangguan.

Prowstar Espresso Coffee (프로스타 카페): Traveling without good coffee isn’t just painful – it’s pointless. That’s why a coffee lover flock to this haven of joe, a remarkably uncommon sight in the province where coffee usually means a W300 cup of vending-machine swill. It’s near the Gangguan harbour beside an entrance to the Jung·ang Live Fish Market.

Jinju is known as ‘the education city.’ Students driven to succeed leave Jinju and the best way to escape is to study hard and enter a university in Seoul. Migration of the youth pool far from a large E-Mart department store, or the East Gate. Information booths (9am to 6pm) with a good supply of English-language maps are at both gates. The East Gate booth is closed weekends; the North Gate booth is open seven days.

Inside the fortress, the Jinju National Museum (진주국립박물관) specialises in artefacts from the Joseon and Japanese Toyotomi tussle between Joseon and Japan’s Toyotomi latter invading the former in 1592.

Sights & Activities

Jinju Fortress: This is the city’s most interesting and historically important site. Local street signs call it a castle, but it’s actually a well-preserved fortress partially destroyed during the Japanese invasion of 1592. It was here that one of the major battles of the campaign was fought, in which 70,000 Koreans lost their lives. Inside the fortress walls, traditional gates, shrines and temples dot the grassy knolls of this heavily wooded park. Enter the fortress from the North Gate, not far from a large E-Mart department store, or the East Gate.

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river road behind the north-end bus terminal is lined with motels ranging from dingy to delightful. There is a good selection of low-cost yeonuis (family-run motels with small rooms and shared bathrooms) two blocks from the fortress’s East Gate.

Eating & Drinking
For something different, try one of the edel restaurants along the waterfront near the fortress. They’re all about the same quality and price (W13,000 per person).

Bobos (W6000; 3pm-7pm) With low chairs and cool music, it’s a popular eatery with the locals and expats. Pasta and pizza are the specialties with Chilean wine starting at W32,000 per bottle.

Other recommendations:
• B&B (W6000; 7pm-2am) A tiny bar with a convivial atmosphere.

Getting There & Around
AIR
The closest airport is in Sacheon, 20km from Jinju. Three daily flights connect with Gimpo Airport in Seoul via Korean Air and Asiana. Korean Air also has two flights per week to Jeju Island. Local buses connect Jinju’s north-end bus terminal to Sacheon airport (W900, 30 minutes).

BUS
There is an express bus terminal south of the river. Most travellers use the terminal north of the river. Departures from the north terminal include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Busan</td>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>every 10-20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedong</td>
<td>4:00</td>
<td>every 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namhae</td>
<td>4:30</td>
<td>every 1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stongyeosu</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>every 1 hour, 3:30, 6:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongyeong</td>
<td>5:00</td>
<td>every 25 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TRAIN
The train station is south of the Nam River. Mugunghwa connections include Dageu (adult/child W9600/4800, 3½ hours, daily); Daejon (adult/child W18,400/9200, seven hours, twice daily); and Seoul (adult/child W27,700/13,900, seven hours, twice daily). One daily Saemaul departs for the capital (adult/child W41,100/20,600, six hours, 9:50am and Daejeon (adult/child W27,300/13,700, 5½ hours, 6:25pm).

HIKING
Jirisan National Park – East
Jirisan National Park (Map p218) is situated on Ssanggyesa, the highest peak (1915m), the country’s second-highest mountain. If you plan to hike here, the Jirisan National Park map (W1000, available at the park entrance) lists topographical information as well as trails, camp sites, springs, shelters and other points of interest. There are three principal park entrances, each with a temple. Two of the three temples, Ssanggyesa and Daejeonsa, are in South Gyeongsang province. From the west, Hwaeomsa is accessible via Gurye in Jeollanam province (see p258).

Jirisan Bear Project (p258) was established with the aim to build up a self-sustaining group of 50 wild bears in Jirisan, so keep a look-out on your travels.

SSANGGYESA
The visual imagery of this temple is a feast for the eyes, and like any exquisite dinner should be consumed with deliberation. Stone walls supporting multiple levels of buildings notched into the mountainside, combined with mature trees and a trickling creek, create a pleasant sensory experience. Three gates mark the path to the main hall; take time to read the signs to appreciate the symbolism of your visit. One of the most attractive temples in the province, it’s a long day trip from Busan. For a more relaxing pace, consider an overnight stopover in Jinju and an early-morning departure to the mountain.

Eating & Drinking
Getting there: Ask any university student on the street and they’ll know where to find this popular bar and restaurant.

Brewery & Pubs
Charles & Johnson (drinks W5000; 4pm-6pm)
Ask any university student and they’ll know where to find this popular bar and restaurant.

Gourmands’ Kitchen (meals W2500; 9am-11pm)
Great food at a great price.

Hilly’s Coffee (drinks W5000; 9am-1pm)
Great espresso and inspired Italian cakes.

Yoo Cheon (drinks W5000; 11am-1pm)
The digital bar; spicy chicken is never hotter than not.

A simple place to relax inside the Jinju museum. Namhae City is available (W1800, 40 minutes, every 30 minutes to two hours) but the return trip can involve long roadside waits. It’s not popular, but hitching a ride back to Namhae City is possible.

Sleeping
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SSANGGYESA
There are 10 shelters (W5000 to W7000). From west to east, they are Nogodan 1 and 2, Piagol, Baemsagol, Yeonhacheon, Byeksongsa, Saeseok, Jangteomok, Chibatmok and the Rotary shelter. Jangteomok has enough space for 150 bodies, and sells film, torches, noodles and drinks. Saeseok is the largest shelter, with space for 220 people. For overnight hikes bring bedding, food and tea/coffee, as most shelters have limited supplies. Online bookings are recommended and are essential for weekends and holidays. See the Korea National Park Service's website (www.npaka.or.kr) for details.

MINBAK & YEOWGAN

The path to Ssanggyesa is lined with restaurants, souvenir shops, a water wheel and a small village and useful transfer point in the region. If you can't get a direct bus to Ssanggyesa, travel to Hadong, where frequent buses connect with Busan (W9700, 2½ hours, every 30 to 60 minutes) and Jinju (W4100, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes).

Getting There & Away

Buses to Ssanggyesa often pass through Hadong, a small village and useful transfer point in the region. If you can't get a direct bus to Ssanggyesa, travel to Hadong and catch one of the frequent buses to the temple (W2000, 30 to 60 minutes, 13 times daily). On route to Ssanggyesa from Hadong, buses pass a large concrete bridge. The signboard lists times for several destinations, though most travellers are best served by heading to Hadong, where frequent buses connect with Busan (W9700, 2½ hours, every 30 to 60 minutes) and Jinju (W4100, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes).
History

Jeollanam-do, far from the centre of power in Seoul during the long Joseon era, was a place of exile, and was used as a dumping ground for political and religious dissidents. The tradition of political dissent has continued and the province was a hotbed of opposition to the military governments that favoured the eastern provinces and ruled South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s. Students and trade unionists led countless pro-democracy protests and demonstrations, until army tanks crushed an uprising in Gwangju city in May 1980. The soldiers' brutality stained the reputation of the military rulers, although it was not until 1992 that a civilian, Kim Young-sam, was finally elected president.

National & Provinicial Parks
Cruise around thousands of islands in Dadohae Haesang National Park (p.270) and take a cable car ride in Duryunsan Provincial Park (p.263). You could bump into a bear in Jirisan National Park (p.258), which spreads over three provinces, while two Zen Buddhist temples attract pilgrims to Jogye Provincial Park (p.258). At weekends hikers stand in queues at Mudeungsan Provincial Park (p.253) just outside Gwangju, while remote Wolchulsan National Park (p.266) can be traversed in under five hours.

Getting There & Around
Most travellers arrive by train or bus and then use buses and ferries to travel around, although trains do run to the southern ports of Mokpo and Yeosu and east to Busan.

Gwangju 광주
% 062 / pop 1.4 million

Gwangju may look like any other city with its shop-filled central area, an attractive riverside, busy restaurants, pubs and bars – all encircled by apartment blocks – but within this everyday exterior resides the heart of an artist and the soul of a revolutionary. Civic Gwangju emphasises the arts and the city has an important place in the history of Korea’s democracy and human-rights movement.

Information
Central post office (Chungjangno) Free internet. Fine Bank (Jukbongno) Foreign exchange.
Gwangju

The highlight of this museum, part of an ugly art plaza with concert and performance halls, displays highlights from the avant-garde Gwangju Biennale (p254). Thought-provoking exhibits could include a portrait of the back of someone's head, a cow made of leather or a landscape inside a suitcase.

Take bus 23 (W900, 10 minutes, every 15 minutes) from outside the bus terminal and get off at the Gwangju Art Museum stop (Munhwa Y sosul Hoegwan), a 15-minute walk from Gwangju National Museum. Bus 50 (W900, 20 minutes, every 30 minutes) runs from the train station to the Folk Museum; bus 55 runs from Guurnmanno to the National Museum.

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MAY 18TH NATIONAL CEMETERY

Gwangju National Cemetery is a somber memorial park surrounded by modern buildings. It is open from 8am to 6pm, and it is closed on holidays.

On the right, a memorial hall displays photographs of the ordinary folk – from students to grandmothers – who paid the ultimate price during the military government's so-called 'crackdown on communists'.

A five-minute walk through the memorial garden leads to the reinstated original cemetery, where the victims were first hurriedly buried without proper ceremony. Later the bodies were dug up and reinterred in the new cemetery.

Bus 518 (W900, 20 minutes, every 30 minutes) drops you off at the cemetery entrance and can pick you up at the Gwangju Hospital stop, near the large HomePlus store, or along Guurnmanno. Bus 311 (W900, 15 minutes, every 15 minutes) runs from the bus terminal to Gwangju hospital.

ASIAN CULTURE COMPLEX

This complex, in the old Provincial Hall overlooking the May 18th Democratic Plaza, features art displays and cultural performances from around Asia. Local bands let rip in the small park outside on warm weekends.

MUDEUNSGAN PROVINCIAL PARK

Overlooking Gwangju, Mudunsgan Provincial Park is a gorgeous green mountain range with a spider's web of...
well-signed trails leading to the peak, 
Cheonwangbong (1878m). About 1km (a 30-minute walk) from the bus stop (fork right to Saeinbong) is Uijeongbaegu (% 222 0440; admission W5000, 9.30-5.30am, Sat-Sun 9.30am-close), a chic art gallery that displays landscape, flower and bird paintings by Hyea Bae-ryeon (1891–1977), whose pen name was Uijeon. His modern-style house is in an idyllic spot, a five-minute walk away on the other side of the path.

Walk up from the gallery to the famous 
Chomu tea plantation that Uijeon established. It’s a steep 15-minute walk, up but turn left and then right to join the well-trodden main track up to Tokkideung (460m), a popular picnic spot with views of dramatic scarps and slopes, which takes half an hour. Otherwise walk downhill and the track comes out at the fork, a five-minute walk before the museum (20 minutes).

Alternatively, a 15-minute drive on from the art gallery takes you to Jeungsimsa, a temple with a Shilla-era iron Buddha backed by red-and-gold artwork, housed in an insignificant-looking shrine behind the main hall. The tiny shrine perched on a rock next to it is dedicated to the Shamanist Mountain God. From the temple you can continue on to Saeinbong (1.3km) or further afield.

The park is alive with Gwangjuites at weekends, and restaurant stalls that cling to the hillsides or overlook cascading streams. Sell pork, chicken and mountain-vegetable meals.

Buses 15, 27, 52, 555, 771 and 1001 go to the Jeungsimsa entrance to Mudeungsan Park, east of Gwangju. Bus 555 (W900, 30 minutes, every 15 minutes) can be picked up outside Exit 3 of Nongseoang subway station (a 10-minute walk south of the bus terminal) or along Geumnamno.

BASEBALL 투구

Catch the local Kia Tigers baseball team in action at Mudeungsan Park, which is two miles from Mudeungsan (460m), a popular picnic spot with views of dramatic scarps and slopes, which takes half an hour. Otherwise walk downhill and the track comes out at the fork, a five-minute walk before the museum (20 minutes).

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Sleeping

BUDGET

The usual mixture of yegwan (motel with small en suites) stuck in a 1980s time warp, and smart new motel rooms surround the bus terminals.

*Hotel Palace* (% 222 2525; www.hotelpalace.co.kr; r W50,000; 10am-8pm) A stuffed tiger guards the lobby and chandeliers light the large coffee shop of this well-priced and well-maintained hotel set amid a bevy of love motels near Gwangju train station. Rooms are spacious with ornate furniture and have a computer.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Palace (% 222 2525; www.hotelpalace.co.kr; r W50,000; 10am-8pm) In the heart of the city, amid the shopping frenzy of Chungjangno, are these quiet, quality rooms which have been recently renovated and are all stocked with smart computers. Pop into the pop-art coffee shop if you like lurid colour.

Gwangju Prince Hotel (% 222 0025; r W40,000; 10am-8pm) You might meet some Korean baseball stars staying at this modest but reasonably priced hotel near the museums. The lift is scruffy but this is a real hotel with a lobby, sauna, restaurants, coffee shop and bar, and yet the price is not much more than a smart motel. Rooms have computers.

Hotel Hinkle Continental (% 227 5800; www.hotelhinkle.co.kr; r from W40,000) The discounted price makes this hotel – named after Korea’s revered 2002 World Cup soccer coach – a reasonable option, but the suites are not worth the extra. The sky-lounge bar (beer W5000) is its best feature with armchairs, great city views, an outdoor terrace and a mixed bag of live music nightly at 8pm.

Eating

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

Hyundai department store (10am-10pm) Next to Gwangju train station, it has a bright and clean food court (meals W3500 to W5000) in the basement.

Shinsegae department store (10am-10pm) Next to the bus terminals, this classy store has 10 small, reasonably priced restaurants (W4000 to W10,000) and a café on the 8th floor, and the food plaza in the basement sells takeaway barbecue chicken, big mandu (dumplings) and hotteok (sweet pita-bread snack).

Yero (% 222 0025) Down an alley off Art Street is this very informal sannak (wraps and side dishes) restaurant made up of three rooms in the owner’s house. It’s all very rustic and untidy but people come for the food and Yero is as near to Korean home cooking as you can get.

Minsokchon (meals W4500-13,000; 11.30am-midnight) A popular bami like but attractive and cheery restaurant that echoes to so gai (소갈비: beef) and dwagvi galbi (돼지갈비: pork).

MAY 18TH MASSACRE

What the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre is to China, the 1980 Gwangju Massacre is to South Korea, a mass demonstration and protest against an authoritarian regime with deadly consequences that became an icon for its time.

Following large-scale student protests against military rule, on 18 May 1980 the army was ordered to move into Gwangju on the pretext of quelling a communist uprising. The soldiers had no bullets, but they used bayonets to murder dozens of unarmed protesters and passers-by. Outraged residents broke into armories and police stations and used the seized weapons and ammunition to drive the troops out of their city.

For over a week pro-democracy citizen groups were in control, but the brutal military response came nine days later on 27 May, when soldiers armed with loaded M16 rifles, supported by helicopters and tanks, retook the city. Most of the protest leaders were labelled ‘communists’ and summarily shot. At least 154 civilians were killed during the uprising, and an additional 4089 were wounded or arrested. Many of those arrested were tortured. For eyewitness accounts of the still-controversial street fighting, read Memories of May 1980 by Chung Sang-yong (2003) or view www.518.org.

In memory of the pro-democracy martyrs, the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights has been awarded since 2000, and recipients have included Aung San Suu Kyi, the pro-democracy leader struggling to overthrow the military rulers in Myanmar.
sizzling on table barbecues. The galbitang (갈비탕) is excellent with chunky, lean meat and 'weebling' additions. If this restaurant has a long queue outside, try the branch in Gwangyang-gil.

Mugijoo (meals W3000; 11.40am-6pm) With an architecturally adventurous design, this classy restaurant is often packed out on all floors, although its specialty, bosam (보쌈: steamed fatty pork with kimchi, cabbage and lettuce wraps), may not appeal to everyone. The lunchtime-only bosam jeongik (W6000) is a cheaper deal.

TOP END Yangni (meals W10,000-32,000) One of the many duck restaurants in Duck Street alongside Hyundai department store, it has starred on TV. The specialty is oritang (오리탕), which is meant for sharing and bubbles and thickens away at your table together with a pile of vegetables. I ignore the tatty décor; it's the taste of the food that counts.

Shinsegae department store (meals W6000; noon-2pm, 6.30-10pm) An atmospheric hanok where hanbok-clad staff serve a full-on yangban hanjeongik (banquet) in your own antique-decorated room, with gayageum (12-stringed zither) music in the background. The restaurant is expensive but special.

Drinking Soul Train (Wolgyeunggil; 4pm-5am) This dark basement pub, patronised by both Koreans and foreigners, has a square bar, a pool table and a nightclub feel.

Mike & Dave's Speakeasy (374-0660; 3.30pm-11.30pm) A popular live band rocks this informal and friendly bar, hidden down an alley, on Fridays at 10pm. The bar was set up by two enterprising Canadians and the beers include ABC stout.

SHOPPING Chungangno, Gwangju’s buzzing, semi-pedestrianised shopping district, is bursting with clothing and accessory stores, bars, nightclubs, buzzing restaurants and all the usual fast-food chains. A samll of young people sweeps along the streets every night, both above ground and in the Chungangno underground shopping arcade.

CHUNGAANGO (lename W3000 to W10,000; c downstairs with screens and vehicular décor. This music shop sells Western and Korean rock CDs downstairs, while classical and jazz selections can be found upstairs. MJJ (11.30am-1pm) It has stacks of fashion outlets, five cinemas on the 11th floor, a 24-hour jjimjilbang (luxury sauna admission W5000) and an event stage outside. The jjimjilbang has great facilities including aroma, cucumber and green-tea pools while a full-body massage, oil and scrub beauty treatment will set you back W12,000.

Art Street (Meunip Geon) This is Gwangju’s answer to Seoul’s Insadong with art galleries, a woodcarver’s studio, a leather workshop, teashops, and stores selling hanbok (traditional Korean clothing), hanji (handmade paper), art books, ethnic jewellery, calligraphy brushes, tea sets and dolls.

Shinsegae department store (11.30am-1pm) Brand-name outlets rub shoulders in this department store in a gleaming, luxury ambiance. There’s a Starbucks (drinks W3000 to W5000), the favourite haunt of local doenjangsyeo (a derogatory term for young women who only care about style and fashion), and next to it is an art gallery (admission free) showcasing changing exhibitions.

Getting There & Away AIR A dozen Gwangju–Seoul and nine Gwangju–Incheon flights run daily, and international flights operate to Shanghai and Macau.

BUS Gwangju’s huge, brand-new bus terminal houses both express and intercity buses, a tourist information centre and fast-food outlets, with a department store and other shops nearby.

Express bus destinations include

Destination Rice (￦) Duration Frequency
Busan 13,000 4hr every 30min
Seoul 11,000 1hr every 30min
Cheorog 10,000 3hr every 40min
Chejeon 8000 2hr every 4hr
Jeju 5000 3hr every 4hr
Seoul 13,000 4hr every 30min

Intercity buses departing Gwangju include the following services:

Train KTX trains (W33,300, 2¼ hours, 11 daily) run between Gwangju and Yongsan station in Seoul.

Saemal (W29,700, 3½ hours, two daily) and Mugungwha (W20,000, four hours, four daily) trains also run along the route. A Tonggung (commuter) train (W2000, one hour) runs once a day at 6.55am from Gwangju station to Mokpo or three times a day from Songjeong-ni station (W1600), west of Gwangju past the airport.

Getting Around TO/FROM THE AIRPORT Bus 1000 (W10,000, 30 minutes, every 15 minutes) runs from the airport to the bus terminal and Gwangju train station. Buy a disc ticket at the airport or in Damyang, north of Gwangju, has an amazing range of bamboo products, both ancient and modern. Furniture, exquisitely woven baskets – even a bamboo teapot and bamboo jewellery – are more interesting than you’d expect. Next door is a free display of exquisite bamboo wonders from around the world. Bamboo has 101 uses and the shops in front of the museum prove it. A few of the 46 kinds of bamboo grow behind the museum.

A two-minute walk down the road is the busy but superb Bongkimsa (보공미사) temple. The daeja (대종바) is excellent – rice and nuts cooked inside a bamboo stem, bamboo-shoot doenjang, and a dozen dazzling side dishes are served up with free bamboo-leaf tea. The side rooms have glorious views over the rice fields. Ask for a bag to carry home your bamboo rice container as a souvenir. Teekolabi (티끌바), two big sizzling meat patties, is another option.
Try and visit Damyang on the 2nd, 7th, 12th, 17th, 22nd and 27th of each month as the bamboo market is held on these days. A bamboo crafts festival is held in May.

Local bus 311 (W1200, 40 minutes, every 15 minutes) runs from gate 23 of the bus terminal northwards to Damyang, dropping off at the museum, but you have to walk for five minutes to the main road to catch the return bus. Bus 303 runs from Gwangju train station to Damyang. If you end up in the Damyang bus terminal it’s a 15-minute walk to the museum.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

- **Pagoda**
- **Ruins of Hyangnoam**
- **Monastery**
- **Seonamsa**
- **Seongeuyou**
- **Songgwangsa**

### SLEEPING

- **Shelter**

### TRANSPORT

- **Bus Stop**

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On the eastern side of the mountain is Seonamsa, a quieter hermitage dating back to AD 529, where the monks study and try to preserve the old ways. Below Seonamsa is Songgwangsa, one of Korea’s most exquisite ancient granite bridges, with a dragon’s head hinging from the top of the arch.

A spectacular hike over the peak of Jaeungbong (894m) connects the two temples. The walk takes six hours if you go over the peak or four hours if you go around it. Either route is fantastic.

Accommodation and restaurants are available by the car park at Songgwangsa. Lodgings here range from W20,000 to W25,000. There’s also a tourist village near Seonamsa.

From Gwangju buses (W5600, 1½ hours, every 1½ hours) run to Songgwangsa, but only one bus a day (W6000, ¼ hours) runs from Gwangju to Seonamsa, leaving at 7.45am.

### JIRISAN NATIONAL PARK - WEST

The highlight of this part of the park is Hwa·eomsa’s most famous structure, a unique three-storey pagoda supported by four stone lions. The female figure beneath the pagoda is said to be Yon·gi’s mother; her dutiful son offers her tea from another lantern facing her.

The temple is about 15 minutes’ walk from the ticket office. It is possible to continue from the temple and along Hwa·eomsa valley. After about 2½ to three hours the trail begins to ascend to a shelter, Ngoda·seong (a strenuous four-hour hike). From the shelter the trail continues to rise until you are finally on the long spine of the Jirisan Ridge. For hiking details and a map see p.247.

The large tourist village is located at the park entrance, with most restaurants having mountain-vegetables on the menu. Accommodation includes the recently renovated and smart Ngoda·seong (W3800, behind the car park with a log-cabin effect on the front, but prices can rise W10,000 on Friday and Saturday). Buses (W6000, ¾ hours, every 90 minutes) run from Gwangju bus terminal to Jirisan National Park and Hwa·eomsa.

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The city of Yeosu is shaped like a molar. The two roots (hilly, dramatic island coastlines) straddle a bay, crowned by the city centre. The island of Odongdo, linked by a pedestrian causeway, sits east of town, and the much larger Dolsando, now joined by a bridge to the mainland, is to the southeast. Yeosu bus terminal is 4km north of Jung·ang Rotary and the harbour, reachable by bus or taxi.

### Orientation

Yeosu is shaped like a molar. The two roots (hilly, dramatic island coastlines) straddle a bay, crowned by the city centre. The island of Odongdo, linked by a pedestrian causeway, sits east of town, and the much larger Dolsando, now joined by a bridge to the mainland, is to the southeast. Yeosu bus terminal is 4km north of Jung·ang Rotary and the harbour, reachable by bus or taxi.

### Information

- **Gyeongdo post office**
- **Korea Exchange Bank**
- **Tourist information centre**
- **Yeosu post office**

### Sights

- **ODONGDO**
  - This small, rocky island (W60,000, adult/youth/child W20,000/15,000/10,000), with 27 peaks and craggy cliffs, is a favorite destination for locals, is joined to the mainland by a 750m causeway that can be traversed by a roadtrain (W4000, adult/youth/child W1200/900/600). The island is one large botanical garden with bamboo groves and camellia trees, which are full of birdsong and can be walked round in 20 minutes. Take the lift up the light house for great views.
  - Shops, restaurants, a dancing fountain, a turtle-ship replica and boat trips around the island.

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试着在济州岛的9月、14月、19月和24月期间参观大阳。大阳的竹子市场在这些日子举行。大阳竹子工艺品节也在五月份举行。

从大阳巴士总站乘坐311路公交车（W1200，40分钟，每15分钟一班）可以到达博物馆，但您需要步行五分钟到达主路才能搭乘回程的公交车。303路公交车从光州火车站到大阳。

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES
- **Pagoda**
- **Ruins of Hyangnoam**
- **Monastery**
- **Seonamsa**
- **Seongeuyou**
- **Songgwangsa**

### SLEEPING
- **Shelter**

### TRANSPORT
- **Bus Stop**

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在山的东侧是Seonamsa，一个更安静的修道院，始建于AD 529年，僧侣们在这里研究并努力保存旧的习俗。Seonamsa是韩国最精致的古老的石桥，桥头有龙头悬挂在桥的顶部。

一条壮观的山道连接了两个寺庙。如果从山顶走大约需要6小时，从山脚走大约需要4小时。走哪条路线都非常棒。

住宿和餐厅可以使用山下停车场附近的设施。住宿费用从W20,000到W25,000不等。附近还有一个旅游村。

从光州的巴士（W5600，1.5小时，每1.5小时一班）到Songgwangsa，但每天只有一班巴士（W6000，20分钟），从光州到Seonamsa，每天7:45离开。

### JIRISAN NATIONAL PARK - WEST

公园的亮点是Hwa·eomsa，是韩国最著名的寺庙之一，由寺庙的Birojana佛像守护。它始建于AD 544年，是公元529年帝王返回中国后创建的。寺庙有两个二层大厅。还有几个巨大的佛像和各种雕塑。

它位于Hwa·eomsa山谷中。从寺庙继续向上走，经过一个避难所，Ngoda·seong，然后继续向山上走。直到你最终到达Jirisan脊背上。有关徒步旅行的细节和地图见第247页。

大的旅游村位于公园入口处，大部分餐厅有山地蔬菜。住宿包括最近修缮的智能型的Ngoda·seong（W3800，位于停车场附近，带有木屋风格的外貌），但价格可能会涨到W10,000，每周五和周六。

巴士（W6000，30分钟，每90分钟一班）从光州巴士总站到Jirisan国家公园和Hwa·eomsa。

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大阳是韩国济州岛的一个小镇，形状像一颗牙齿。两颗根（山地和海岛海岸线）形成一个海湾，海湾的尽头是城市中心。小岛Odongdo，由一座人行桥相连，位于东南方向。大阳巴士总站位于Jung·ang rotary以北4公里，可乘坐公交车或出租车到达。

### Orientation

大阳的形状像一颗牙齿。两颗根（山地和海岛海岸线）形成一个海湾，海湾的尽头是城市中心。小岛Odongdo，由一座人行桥相连，位于东南方向。大阳巴士总站位于Jung·ang rotary以北4公里，可乘坐公交车或出租车到达。

### Information

- **Gyeongdo post office**
- **Korea Exchange Bank**
- **Tourist information centre**
- **Yeosu post office**

### Sights

- **ODONGDO**
  - 这个小而崎岖的岛屿（W60,000，成人/青少年/儿童W20,000/15,000/10,000），有27座山峰和悬崖峭壁，是当地人最喜欢的地方。岛屿上有一个大型的植物园，有竹林和茶树，充满鸟鸣，可以步行20分钟。
  - 你可以乘坐路堤火车（W4000，成人/青少年/儿童W1200/900/600）到达岛屿。岛屿上有许多植物和树木，适合徒步和观鸟。
  - 商店、餐厅、舞蹈喷泉、海龟船模型和定期的游船环绕岛屿。

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Sleeping

Yi Sun-sin was Korea’s greatest admiral. Based in Yeosu, he led a series of successful naval battles in the 1590s. He introduced a new type of warship, the gokbokseon, which was protected with iron sheathing and spikes against Japanese ‘grapple and board’ tactics. A handful were deployed, and only one was known to have sunk the Japanese admiral’s flagship, Zédaik. Most accommodation is in a street of modern hotels and hostels, although some are still available in the old town.

Yeosu Amiga Hotel (663 1400; Chungminno; r W35,000-40,000; air conditioning, TV, fridge, WIFI, Internet, parking). This new motel with a friendly owner has some stylish features with big TVs and new computers, although bathrooms are small. The more expensive rooms are very spacious with comfortable armchairs and private balconies.

Daia Motel (663 3347; Sikdang 1-golmuk; r W35,900, 5½ hours, 0.1 miles). This new motel with a kind owner has some stylish features with big TVs and new computers, although bathrooms are small. The more expensive rooms are very spacious with comfortable armchairs and private balconies.

Golden Park Motel (665 1400; Chungminno; (meals W30,000-40,000; air conditioning, TV, fridge, WIFI, Internet, parking). The friendly young staff can help out with the language, which they are used to dealing with foreigners. The rooms are very clean and well maintained.

Jinamgwan (151-2, 100 m). This small fish restaurant, where a couple of tables have harbour views, serves fresh fish and seafood, although none of the food is memorable. The harbour view from room 805 is so fabulous that it earns a mention for this otherwise ordinary motel at the Yeosu end of Odongdo’s pedestrian causeway.

Mono Sikdang (meals W10,000-30,000; air conditioning, TV, fridge, WIFI, Internet, parking). On the 2nd floor above the police station is this small fish restaurant, where a couple of tables have harbour views. Try the spicy and more expensive Unro (meals W3000-6000). The friendly young staff can help out with the language, which they are used to dealing with foreigners. The rooms are very clean and well maintained.

Eating

The harbour front is loaded with restaurants serving fresh fish and seafood, although some of them are cheap.

Cheolpangwa Dakgalbi (Chulminno; Moved to the other side of the street). This small restaurant with a friendly owner has some stylish features with big TVs and new computers, although bathrooms are small. The more expensive rooms are very spacious with comfortable armchairs and private balconies.

Gleubukseon (101-7, 107 and 555). Otherwise it’s a 30-minute walk from Jangang Rotary to the harbour.

Travellers have to walk a long way to get to the harbour, which makes it a bit of a challenge to reach. Most accommodation is in a street of modern hotels and hostels, although some are still available in the old town.

On the right, a small but modern restaurant on the 2nd floor above the police station is this small fish restaurant, where a couple of tables have harbour views. Try the spicy and more expensive Unro (meals W3000-6000). The friendly young staff can help out with the language, which they are used to dealing with foreigners. The rooms are very clean and well maintained.

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almost any bus (W890, 15 minutes) can take you to Jungang Rotary. Check the destination with the driver. From the train station the same situation applies. From the airport, buses (W2500, 40 minutes, every 30 minutes) run to Jungang Rotary.

**Boseong 보성**

This town is the gateway to Boseong-teochew Dawson (6% 853-2564, 8am-9pm, adult/child W2100/500, 9am-9pm). Imagine standing on a hillside, its slopes covered with rows and rows of green tea bushes – that is what you find here in a very attractive setting. Photo opportunities abound as you walk around the tea plantation.

**Dolsando 돌산도**

This large, scenic island, where you might even see a bullock pulling a plough, is now connected to Yeosu by a bridge. Perched halfway up on a cliff on its southern tip is a popular temple and small monastery called Hyangiram (6% 849-3453, 8am-9pm). It’s a steep 10-minute walk from the bus stop through the tourist village up to the temple, passing through narrow clefts in the rock. Outside one shrine are 75 stone turtles, each with a W10 coin on its back.

Walk to the right and down the access road for 50m for the signposted walk up Gaeumun (323m). Climbing up the 350 steps takes about 30 minutes, and your reward is a fantastic vista of distant islands and a 360-degree view from the rocky summit. Carry on and the loop track brings you back down to Hyangiram (25 minutes).

Every restaurant in the tourist village sells locally made gatkimchi (간식지), which has a musty taste even if you don’t usually like kimchi you might like the mildish dishes here.

By the ticket office is Gaeumungyeon (개운영전, adults W5000, children W3000), which offers saenggeon-gei (생선구이; spicy crab soup) or seafood kalguksu (갈국수; noodles). If the weather’s fine, sit outside in one of the thatched shelters with a sea view.

Buses 101 and 111 (both W890, one hour, six daily) run from outside Jinnamgwan to Hyangiram. Check the times as the timetable has gaps.

**Gangin 강진**

One of two important ceramic centres in Jeollanam-do, Gangjin has been associated with celadon for over 1000 years. Across the district are the remains of nearly 200 kilns. Gangjin is specifically known for etched celadon, in which shallow patterns are cut out of the piece while it’s still wet and filled in with special glazes through an inlay process. The celadon is fired at 800°C before glazing and at 1300°C after glazing. Another distinctive feature of Gangin celadon is its ice-crackles. Most celadonware has cracks because the soil and glazes are a tiny bit mismatched – this wasn’t the case in Gangin.

**Gangjin Celadon Museum 강진전적박물관**

(534 2959; d W30,000)

This idyllic traditional inn, built around a courtyard and filled with art, is inside the park. It’s famous for mushrooms – choose pygogjeon-goli (pygogjeon goli; mushroom casserole) or pyogjeandeok (minced beef, seafood, mushrooms and vegetables). Look for the English sign halfway along the line of restaurants leading to the ticket office.

Getting There & Around

Access to the park is by bus (W850, 15 minutes, every 30 minutes) from Haenam bus terminal. A minibus runs from the parking lot to Dae-dunsan (W500).

**Green Tea**

The ‘wellbeing wave’, the name given to the trend towards healthy food and drinks, has boosted sales of nokcha, green tea, which was introduced in the 7th century. Like ginseng it is used as a flavouring for a wide variety of products from ice cream, chocolates, cakes and milk shakes to noodles, pasta and hotteok (sweet pita bread). Some spas even offer green-tea baths.

Korean Buddhist monks have always regarded green tea as an ideal relaxant and an aid to meditation, especially when prepared, served and drunk in the correct ceremonial way known as dadao. They usually settle any disputes over a cup of green tea.

This tea is fired at 800°C before glazing and at 1300°C after glazing. Another distinctive feature of Gangjin celadon is its ice-crackles. Most celadonware has cracks because the soil and glazes are a tiny bit mismatched – this wasn’t the case in Gangin.

The Gaeumungyeon (개운영전, adults W5000, children W3000) is a major Zen temple complex. The temple is thought to date back to the mid-10th century, but it remained relatively unknown until it became associated with Seosan, a warrior monk who led a group against Japanese invaders in 1592–98. Since then it has been very popular with Koreans, yet it maintains an atmosphere of rusticity. A museum houses a Goryeo-dynasty bell, other Buddhist treasures and a tea-ceremony display (Seosan was also a tea master). The temple is a 40-minute walk from the bus stop.

The park’s highest peak, Duryunsan (700m), provides a dramatic backdrop. To climb it, turn left after the temple museum. It takes 1½ hours to reach the top, and you are rewarded with a very picturesque view of Korea’s southern coastline and, on clear days, out to Jeju-do. Head back via the other trail and turn right at the first junction (20 minutes); it’s another hour back down to Dae-dunsan. It offers breakfast (W7000) and dinner (W10,000).

For an easier ascent, walk back down the access road from the bus stop and turn right up the road for 800m to the cable car (6% 5999 4638; one way/return W4000/6800, 9am-11pm) which has superb coastal views over clear blue seas when the mist disperses.

**Gangjin Celadon Museum**

Destination Price (W) Duration Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boeong</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>every 30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geumun</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>hourly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeosu</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>every 30 minutes</td>
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**Gangjin Celadon Museum (6% 534 2959; d W30,000)**

It offers breakfast (W7000) and dinner (W10,000).
On Wando’s south coast is Gugyeo-dong Park (adult/child W3000/2000, 8am-5pm), a tiny park that offers views of distant cliffs and offshore islands, a pebbly beach, and a 3km nature trail that runs through a thin slither of coastal woodland and to the Sanho Motel (below). Swimming is dangerous.

The Seobu (western side) bus (W850, five minutes, hourly) runs from Wando-eup bus terminal, not from the local bus stop. Get off at Sajeong and walk 600m down to the park entrance.

Sleeping
Smart new motels topped by neon signs run all the way along the western side of Wando-eup harbour. Rates rise in July and August if the town is busy. Jeoljodi (at the entrance to Gugyeo Park) and Bogildo have many minibak options.

Najin Yoeun (adult/child W3000/2000, Rock-bottom prices are charged at this basic budget pad that couldn’t be closer to the ferry terminal. Some rooms, though bare, are less cell-like than its brother yoeun, and most have beds and en suite bathrooms, although with a bathroom rather than hand basins. Jeoljodi (adult/child W23000/15000, with its faded furniture and fittings overlooking the fishing boats. Ask for a room such as No 101, which has an enclosed balcony and views. Sinheon Motel (adult/child W29000/21000, in a remote location at the far end of Gugyeo Park beach is this hilltop motel with a wonderful view, a coffee shop and artworks on the wall. It’s a special place with a guesthouse atmosphere in a get-away-from-it-all spot that’s popular with arty types. Sydney Motel (adult/child W35000/25000, Tired of small rooms and bathrooms? Then stay at this modern motel located halfway between the bus and ferry terminals. Great sea views, too. Opened in 2003, it’s still one of the spiffiest in town. There’s nice wood paneling and all rooms have shower stalls (hurray!), ondol rooms are larger.

Eating
Wando’s specialty is raw seafood, but saengseon·gui (생선구이; grilled fish) and jang·eogui (장어구이; grilled eel) are cooked-food options.

BOAT
From Wando Ferry Terminal (W18,250 to W28,000) sails to Jeju-do daily at 8am and takes five hours. Hanil Car Ferry 1, W54000, depart at 2:20pm (Monday to Saturday) and Hanil Car Ferry 2 departs at 3:30pm (Sunday to Friday). Both cost W19,800 and take around 3 to 3½ hours. Other ferries run to a dozen nearby islands.

The Bard of Bogildo
Yun Seondo (1587–1617) wrote his 40-verse masterpiece of sijo poetry, The Fisherman’s Calendar (http://thewordshop.tripod.com), while living in seclusion on Bogildo, a quiet and relaxing island off Jeollanam-do’s southern coast. While there he planted a natural-style Korean garden, Jeoljodi (15 minutes). The garden is a pleasant 20-minute walk from the ferry terminal (follow the English signs) or else take a bus or taxi.

The best and most convenient swimming beach is Myeongsasim-ni (생선구이·장어구이; grilled fish and eel) is cooked-food options.

BBQ (meals W10000-14000) Come to this casual and laid-back cubbyhole of an eatery for pizzas, burgers and chicken that arrives fried, barbecued or smoked. An English menu is available.

Getting Around
From Wando-eup bus terminal, one local bus heads west (Seobu bus) while another heads east (Dongbu bus). Both go to the bridge to the mainland before heading back to Wando-eup. The ferry terminal is a 25-minute walk from the bus terminal or a short taxi ride.

Getting There & Away
Car ferries (% 554 8000) ply between Bogildo and Wando (adult/child W7000/3500, 70 minutes).
JINDO 진도

Korea’s third-largest island (http://tour.jindogae.ki /english), south of Mokpo and connected to the mainland by a bridge, boasts some of the world’s largest tides. During low tide for a few days every year (usually in March or April), a 2.8km-long, 40m-wide causeway appears, which connects to a small island, Modo, off Jindo’s southeastern coast. Some 300,000 people make the crossing each year – in long rubber boots (available for rent, naturally).

The experience is known as the Ganjuyuk Gondo (Mysterious Sea Rd) and has long been celebrated among Koreans in legend. With the spread of Christianity in Korea, the similarity to the Israelites’ crossing of the Red Sea has only brought more enthusiasts. The Yeongdeung- bung festival that coincides with the crossing includes local folk music and dances, a jindog show and fireworks.

Jindo is also famous for its unique breed of dog, the jindogae (see p259), which is designated as a precious natural monument and is the only natural monument that can be described as faithful, brave and adorable.

The Jindo Dog Research Center (진도개사랑 연구소, 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) is dedicated to their study and training. There you can see a training session, telephone first (note: no English spoken). Otherwise, the dogs can be viewed in their pens. To reach the centre from the bus terminal, walk along the main road into Jindo-eup for 1km and at the blue sign (in English) turn right. It is about a 20-minute walk from the bus terminal.

Getting There & Around
Buses connect Jindo-eup (Jindo’s main town) with many places:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geochju</td>
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<td>2hr</td>
<td>every 30min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mokpo</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>19,000/20,100</td>
<td>6hr</td>
<td>4daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A free shuttle takes visitors to the Mysterious Sea Rd (Bonghalme Dongsan) during the festival.

YEONGAM 영암

The Yeongam district was a centre of Korea’s famed ceramic industry in the 7th to 9th centuries, and the Pottery Culture Centre (% 407-3660; admission free; 2hr) has many glazes and traditional wood-fired kilns, some dark-glazed pots on display, and potters in a workshop delicately smoothing their pots.

Some buses from Mokpo (W3170, 20 minutes, hourly) stop outside the pottery centre, but otherwise you must take a bus from Yeongam to Gurim (W850, 10 minutes, hourly) and walk 1.2km (20 minutes) to the pottery centre and the folksy tiled houses around it.

WOCHULSAN NATIONAL PARK

The sprawling port city of Mokpo is the end of the line for train and expressway traffic, with a starting point for sea voyages to Jeju and the western islands of Dadohae Haesang National Park. Korea’s National Maritime Museum is appropriately located here, and the craggy peaks of Yudal Park rear up in the city centre and offer splendid sea, city and sunset views.

Information
KB Bank (Jungangno) Foreign exchange and a global ATM. Post office (Jungangno) Free internet access; behind it is an atrium building.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist information centre</th>
<th>9am-6pm Tue-Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the train station</td>
<td>200-3897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sights
GATBAWI PARK MUSEUMS

This complex of museums and art galleries, situated between rocky hillsides and a wide river, is 4km northeast of downtown Mokpo. Jindogae (진도개) is a grand four-floor atrium building that displays the work of local artists who work in all genres – from traditional ink to colourful modern splodges, from photographs to the Asian art of bonsai trees.

The popular route is the 8km, six-hour hike from Dogapsa in the west to Cheonhwangsa in the east or vice versa as the bus service to both ends is frequent. Minbak and restaurants can be found at both ends. Tracks are well signposted, but steep and strenuous in places due to the rocky terrain.

Getting There & Away
The gateway is Yeongam, from where buses run the 11km to Dogapsa (W1000, 20 minutes, every 20 minutes) and the 4km to Cheonhwangsa (W850, 10 minutes, every 15 minutes).

MOKPO목포

The sprawling port city of Mokpo is the end of the line for train and expressway traffic, with a starting point for sea voyages to Jeju and the western islands of Dadohae Haesang National Park. Korea’s National Maritime Museum is appropriately located here, and the craggy peaks of Yudal Park rear up in the city centre and offer splendid sea, city and sunset views.

Information
KB Bank (Jungangno) Foreign exchange and a global ATM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist information centre</th>
<th>200-3897</th>
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<tr>
<td>At the train station</td>
<td>200-3897</td>
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</table>

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Getting There & Away
The gateway is Yeongam, from where buses run the 11km to Dogapsa (W1000, 20 minutes, every 20 minutes) and the 4km to Cheonhwangsa (W850, 10 minutes, every 15 minutes).

The Local History Museum (물어래사관, admission free; 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) has a natural rock collection – a popular Joseon-era hobby was collecting and displaying unusual-shaped rocks. Also on display are vigorous and colourful oil paintings by the 20th-century artist Oh Soong-woo, and more traditional works by four generations of artists from one family.

Nampo Memorial Hall (남농기념관, admis sion free; 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) has more artworks by the same talented family, some of which are excellent, but it’s a pity there aren’t more of the modern ones.

The brand-new Mokpo Natural History Museum (목포자연사박물관, 229-6767; adult/youth/child W500/200/100; admis sion-free; 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) is aimed at children, with large dinosaur skeletons, live lizards and fish, and colourful but dead butterflies. There are snacks available at the cafeteria.

The delivery of the Gatbawi rocks has been heavily eroded into shapes that are supposed to look like two monks wearing hats, but from land you only get a side or top view. Carry on from the Gatbawi rocks to hike up the rock-strewn hills behind the museums.
MOKPO

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES
Botanical Garden
Soyujeong
Korean War Memorial
Byulpo Beach
Yudalsan Park
Korea Maritime University

TRANSPORT
Bus Station
Ferry Terminal 1
Ferry Terminal 3
New Ferry Terminal (Under Construction)
Bus stop

DRINKING
Beach Gallery

SLEEPING
Good Day Motel
Shinan Beach Hotel
Baekje Tourist Hotel
Good Morning Motel

EATING
Heoreadcroe (meals W6000-20,000)
Highly recommended is the seafood mussels (막걸리), an outsourcing meet with seafood, bamboo shoots and salad side dishes that is served on leaves and decorated with flowers.

Bus 1 and most of the other buses that pass by can take you back to Mokpo train station.

Sleeping
Kumho Beach Motel (ME 242 9999; fax 242 9550; www.kumho-beachhotel.com) The best accommodation between the train station and the ferry terminal is this white high-rise motel run by a friendly and helpful owner. The modern and clean rooms have a dash of style thrown in.

Good Morning Motel (ME 243 3399; fax 243 3399; www.shinanbeachhotel.com) A good, modern motel with a convenient central location, and the young owner provides guests with plenty of free soft drinks.

Shinan Beach Hotel (ME 243 3399; www.shinanbeachhotel.com) Traditionally regarded as Mokpo’s top hotel, it towers over Yudal Beach and is classy in an old-fashioned way. Rooms (king and double) are welcoming with large windows, but the sky lounge is a disappointment. Ask for a 50% discount in the off-season.

Eating
Namupo (meals W6000-14,000) Not in a seafood mood? Try the galbi (갈비) grills at this thrllingly clean local favourite in the city centre. The meat of the namupo galbi (나 무게구기) is beautifully seasoned. A hotpot rice meal with good side dishes is another option.

Bagdeok (meals W6000-20,000) This glass box with comfy armchairs next to the National Maritime Museum is perfect for lunch or just to rest your feet and have a coffee while enjoying the view. The wide-ranging menu covers Western, Korean and fusion food.

YUDALSAN PARK

This attractive park (adult/youth/child W250/200/150), offers splendid views across the island-scattered sea as you wander around. Balancing rocks and rocky cliffs. From the train station, walk down Jungangno to the park entrance (20 minutes) and then past pavilions and an old cannon on the left.

You can turn right for 700m to the glass botanic garden (adult/youth/child W400/300/200) to see orchids and rare Korean plants, and nearby is the sculpture park (adult/youth/child W400/300/200). But stay on the main path for Mokjanggave (great views and two rock carvings), followed by Jusung (228m), another peak where swallows zip by and cuckoos can be heard. It’s a 30-minute walk from the park entrance.

Turn left (no sign) just before Sajeong (소정), a white pavilion, to head down to Yudal beach. Turn left at the sign to Airrang Gogae (아리랑고개) and then follow the sign to Nakjeol (낙조), a pavilion that you can reach 30 minutes after leaving Jusung. From Nakjeol pavilion it’s a 10-minute walk down the steps to the beach.

The beach is just a tiny patch of sand, rocks and seaweed, so the main attractions are the island views, the boats coming and going, and the outdoor swimming pool (adult/child W4000/2000). Restaurants offer mussels, raw fish and chicken meals, and the Beach Gallery (opposite) is here. Sightseeing trips (adult/child W10,000/5000) cruise around the nearby islands but don’t land.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Flights operate on the Gimpo-Mokpo route and sometimes on the Jeju-Mokpo route, but the airport is 22km from the city.

BOAT

Mokpo’s boat terminals handle ferries to Jeju and the smaller islands west and southwest of Mokpo. See the corresponding destination sections for details. From Ferry Terminal 1, the continental fast ferry runs to Jeju-si at 8am daily, takes 3½ hours and costs W45,200. From the International Ferry Terminal, slower ferries run to Jeju-si leaving at 9am (Tuesday to Sunday) and 3pm (Monday to Saturday), and take 4½ hours. Fares start at W21,800, with children under 12 half-price.

Four Season Cruise (ME 242 0598; fax W42,000) runs between Mokpo and Shanghai, departing on Monday at 5pm and Friday at 2pm.
TRAIN
KTX provides a fast service to Yongsan station, Seoul (W38,000, ¾ hours, 11 daily), as well as Saemaul (W34,200, 4½ hours, two daily) and Mugunghwa (W23,100, 5½ hours, five daily) services. Infrequent but cheap trains run to Gwangju, Boseong and Yeosu.

Getting Around
It's a 15-minute walk from the train station to the ferry terminals or to the entrance to Yudal Park.

Airport buses (W2500, 30 minutes) depart from near the train station and are timed to meet flights. They also stop by the bus terminal.

Local bus 1 (W850, 10 minutes, every 20 minutes) runs from the bus terminal to the train station and on to Yudal beach. Local bus 15 (W850, 15 minutes, every 30 minutes) runs to the Gatbawi Park museums.

OEDALDO
Tiny 1km by 1km Oedaldo, an island of fig trees and swallows, is worth a visit, but only in July and August when the huge outdoor swimming pool is open. Car ferries (W7000 return, one hour, five daily) run there from Ferry Terminal 2 in Mokpo.

DADOHAE HAESANG NATIONAL PARK
Consisting of over 1700 islands and islets and divided into eight sections, Dadohae Haesang (Marine Archipelago) National Park occupies much of the coast and coastal waters of Jeollanam-do. Some of the isles support small communities with income from fishing and tourism; others are little more than tree-covered rocks.

Mokpo is the gateway to the western sector, including Hongdo and Heuksando, the most visited and scenic of the islands. They are great places to beat the heat of July and August, so booking of ferries and accommodation is advised in those months.

Hongdo
The most popular and beautiful of the islands west of Mokpo is Hongdo (Red Island; visitor fee W2300). Some 6km long and 2.5km wide, it rises precipitously from the sea and is bounded by sheer cliffs, bizarre rock formations and wooded hillsides cut by steep ravines. The island is ringed by islets and sunsets can be spectacular, but the only way you can see most of it is by boat, because with the exception of the villages, Hongdo is a protected nature reserve; entry is prohibited.

Ferries to Hongdo land at Ilgu village, which like the smaller, northerly village of Igu has a tiny cove that provides shelter to the fishing boats. A boat connects the two villages.

Boat tours (W15,000, two hours, twice daily) around the island are the way to appreciate the island and its rocky islets and arches.

Igu has minbak and yeogwan at the usual prices. Royal-jang (% 246 3837; ondol r W50,000) is clean and rooms are just three minutes from the beach, but beware of the karaoke downstairs. Yuseongjang (% 246 3723; ondol W30,000, r 50,000-80,000; a) is next to the KT office and meals can be arranged. From September to June rates for both are W30,000.

Heuksando
Heuksando, on the way to Hongdo, is the larger, more populated and more accessible of the two islands. Views from its peaks show why Dadohae Haesang means ‘marine archipelago’. Fishing villages are linked by trails, but walking around the island would take around nine hours. Fortunately, local buses circle most of the island – a recommended trip is up the peak Bonghwadae, on the north coast hill, Sangnisan.

The largest village, Yeri, formerly a whaling centre, is where ferries dock. With sufficient demand, tourist boats will take you around the island (W13,000, two hours). The island’s other major village is Jinni.

Gecheonjang (% 275 9154; Yeri; r W30,000; a), a stone-fronted yeogwan by the post office, has bright yet rustic rooms with views of the harbour. Rates from September to June are W25,000. Daedo Minbak (% 275 9340; Yeri; d W25,000; a), with just a few rooms, is pleasant and unpretentious.

Seafood restaurants are plentiful but prices can be steep. The speciality is hung·eo (훙어; ray, usually served raw).

GETTING THERE & AWAY
The same ferries serve Heuksando, 90km west of Mokpo, and Hongdo, another 20km further on. Leaving from Mokpo’s Ferry Terminal 1 (% 243 2111), ferries run to Heuksando (adult/child one way W26,700/750, ½ hours, three daily) and continue on to Hongdo (adult/child one way W32,600/750, 2½ hours).
Hawaii, the Mediterranean, Disneyland, paradise…Jejudo has been compared to all four, and each is at least partly true. The volcanic island features swaying palm trees, cactus plants, orange orchards, circus shows, casinos, a dozen sandy beaches, 14 golf courses, scuba diving and much more. Jejudo is Korea's holiday and honeymoon island, where even bank tellers sport colourful, open-necked aloha shirts.

Most spectacular though are the volcanic landscapes. South Korea's highest mountain, Hallasan (1950m), is a special national park with varied ecological zones, cute little roe deer and wonderful azalea blooms in May. Out east is an awesome volcanic crater, Ilchulbong, while Udo island has dramatic, black-lava cliffs and a glaringly white coral-sand beach. Along the southeast coast are incredibly eroded and pockmarked cliffs at Yongmeori and a sheer-sided rock, Sanbangsan, which is a spiritual mountain with a grotto temple and water with healing powers. Then there's the world's longest lava tube at Manjanggul, folk villages, museums, sculpture parks and Asian-style gardens – masses to see and do. The sea temperature is the warmest in Korea and the coral near Seogwipo is as colourful as in the tropics.

Festivals and events include marathons, triathlons and iron-man contests, and outdoor concerts and movies are held on the fun-filled beaches in summer. Stay in world-class resorts, smart new motels or classy minbak. Dine on barbecued pheasant and grilled okdom, a local fish that used to be reserved for Joseon monarchs.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Be inspired by volcanic Hallasan (p292), South Korea's highest mountain, with its spectacular views and four distinct ecological zones
- Be awed by the world's longest lava-tube cave (p281) at Manjanggul
- Be entranced by forested volcanic craters atop Seongsan Ilchulbong (p282) and Sangumburi (p281), and dramatic eroded cliffs along the Yongmeori coast (p290)
- Be amazed by the colourful coral (p287) around Munseom Island, off Seogwipo
- Be thrilled by gravity-defying acrobats (p291, p291 and p291) on and off motorbikes and horses

**TELEPHONE CODE:** 064  **POPULATION:** 560,000  **AREA:** 1847 SQ KM
History

Despite being just 85km from the mainland, Jejudo was little visited for centuries. As a result it acquired its own history, traditions, dress, architecture and dialect.

According to legend, Jejudo was founded by three brothers (p277) who came out of holes in the ground and established the independent Tamna kingdom. Early in the 12th century the Goryeo dynasty took over, but in 1273 Mongol invaders conquered the island, contributing a tradition of horsemanship, a special horse jorangmal (p291) and quirks in the local dialect.

Over the years the island developed a unique architectural style: stone houses with a thatched roof that was tied down by rope against the strong winds. Different generations lived together in a walled compound, but unlike the rest of Korea, each generation had separate cooking facilities. Visit Seong-eup Folk Village (p284) to explore some traditional housing compounds that include outdoor toilets next to pigsties.

Local clothing was made from hemp and dyed with persimmon, and this orange-tinted clothing is a popular souvenir.

In 1653 a Dutch trading ship was wrecked on the island (p290). The 36 survivors were looked after by a kindly Jejudo governor, but when a few tried to escape they were severely beaten. After 10 months they were taken to Seoul and were forced to stay in Korea for 13 years until some of them escaped in a boat to Japan. One of the escapees, Hendrick Hamel, published his experiences (see www.henny-savenije.pe.kr), the first detailed account of the ‘Hermit Kingdom’ by a European.

During the later Joseon period, the island became home to over 200 exiles: intellectuals, Catholic converts and political undesirables who spent their time teaching the islanders and composing wistful poems.

Through it all, the locals carried on earning their living by fishing and farming. The island is famous for tangerines, which are grown on the southern coastal lowlands and are on sale throughout the year. Inland, pastures support horses and cattle.

Like the rest of the country, the past few decades have seen the island change radically – most of the coastline is now built up and many farm pastures have been turned into golf courses. The catalyst has been a flood of tourists from the mainland and abroad, which peaks from mid-July to mid-August. The numbers of haenyoe (see p284), hardy and hard-working female divers who still free-dive for seafood and seaweed, are in steep decline. Their daughters have opted for an easier life on dry land.

Recently the island has been given self-governing status and this may open the door to further economic development.

Climate

The island’s climate is less extreme than that of the Korean peninsula, and the mild winters mean palm trees, cacti, orange orchards and even pineapple plants thrive. Despite this, don’t expect tropical temperatures, but rather a moderate but fickle, four-seasons-in-a-day climate, typical of islands.

Jejudo is also the rainiest place in Korea thanks to the country’s highest mountain, Hallasan (1950m). But while most of the nation gets up to 60% of its rainfall during the summer rainy season, Jejudo’s is more spread out. Downpours are least likely during autumn.

The island is noted for its strong winds, but they are usually brief. Conditions are often misty or hazy, except in autumn.

Hallasan is the dividing line between the subtropical oceanic southern side and the temperate north. Conditions on the peak can change rapidly, as it’s a cloud trap.

Despite the heavy rainfall, surface water is a rarity due to the island’s porous volcanic rock. The riverbeds are usually dry and the waterfalls are spring-fed. Underground water, by contrast, is abundant – Jejudo is basically one giant aquifer.

Swimmers: being 33° north of the equator, you’ll want a wetsuit unless you’re swimming in July and August – or in a swimming pool.

National & Provincial Parks

Jejudo has only one national park but volcanic Hallasan (p292) is one of the best with roe deer, varied vegetation and wonderful views on the way up and down South Korea’s highest peak.
**FERRIES FROM JEJU-SI**

All ferries use the Jeju Ferry Terminal (Map p276) except New Sea World and Car Ferry 2, which use the International Ferry Terminal, 2km further east. City bus 92 (W850, every 20 minutes) runs from both ferry terminals, but a taxi is more convenient.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Ship’s name</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>Cozy Island</td>
<td>751 1901</td>
<td>32,000-150,000</td>
<td>11hr</td>
<td>Mon, Wed, Fri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seoul Bong Ho</td>
<td>751 1901</td>
<td>36,000-150,000</td>
<td>11hr</td>
<td>Tue, Thu, Sat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incheon</td>
<td>Ohama 11</td>
<td>721 2173</td>
<td>53,500-190,000</td>
<td>13hr</td>
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<td>Mokpo</td>
<td>New Sea World</td>
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<td>21,800-86,350</td>
<td>4/hr</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Car Ferry Rainbow</td>
<td>758 4234</td>
<td>21,800-50,100</td>
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<td>daily Tue-Sun</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>726 9542</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wando</td>
<td>Onbada</td>
<td>721 2171</td>
<td>18,250-28,000</td>
<td>5hr</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hamil Car Ferry 1</td>
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<td>19,800</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hamil Car Ferry 2</td>
<td>751 5050</td>
<td>19,800</td>
<td>3hr</td>
<td>daily Mon-Sat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**JEJUDO CUISINE**

The island is well known for certain foods that are difficult or impossible to find elsewhere in Korea. **Okdangui** (p281) is ubiquitous and tasty, a local fish that is semi-dried before being grilled and has a gourmet taste that appealed to Joseon monarchs. **Heukdwajeji** (pork from the local black-skinned pig) is also common – look for a picture of a black pig on restaurant signs. **Jeonbok juk** (abalone rice porridge) is another island favourite, but abalone is so expensive these days that the amount of abalone in the porridge is declining. A few restaurants serve up **kkwong** (Jeju pheasant) including Kwong Memil Gukus (p260) and Gombawi (p283). If you love raw fish, you would want to leave Jeju-do as every kind of how (raw fish) and seafood is available from restaurants and direct from honeye, the island’s traditional female divers.

For gifts, tangerines (especially the knobbly **hallabong**) are number one, but there is also prickly-pear jam, black oilja tea, honey and the less appealing local chocolates. Hallasan soju is smoother than some.

**SCOOTER**

Definitely the coolest and most fun way to see Jejudo is on a scooter, which can be hired in Jeju-si (p279).

**TAXI**

Taxi charge W2000 for the first 2km or so, but a 15km journey costs around W10,000. You can hire a taxi driver for around W100,000 a day (plus meals and lodging), but the price goes up to W150,000 for an English-speaking driver. Agree on the route and negotiate a price beforehand.

**JEU-SI 제주시**

Pop 234,000

Jeju-si (Jeju City), the island’s capital, sits at the middle of the north coast. The city centre, a mere 4km east of Jeju airport, is hardly glum but does have a few historic structures, a large market, the Chilseongno shopping precinct and lively student bars and restaurants opposite the old city hall. The seafront has no beach but still manages a seaside atmosphere in summer with a funfair and swimming pool. A new suburb, Sinjeju, has midrange hotels but little else.

**Information**

Central post office (Gwandeongno; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 1-6pm Sat) Has a global ATM, armchairs, toilets and free internet access.

City Hall post office (Jung-angno)

KB Bank (Jung-angno) Money exchange.

KTO tourist information office (742 0032; 1st fl airport terminal) Free internet.

Ramada Plaza Jeju (Tapdongno) Global ATM.

Shinhans Bank (1st fl, airport terminal) Global ATM.

Tourist information centres Jeju-si ferry terminal (758 7181; 6.30am-8pm); Jeju airport (742 4724)
Sights & Activities

JEJU-SI SEAFRONT

Hotels, motels, restaurants and fast-food outlets are strung along the seashore, but there is no beach. It can be lively in the evenings at the eastern end where you can hire skates and rollerblades along the promenade or shoot some hoops on the outdoor basketball courts. The small amusement park Fantasia (rides W1000-3000) produces screams more than a rock concert, the outdoor swimming pool complex called Water Park (adult/child W8000/6000; 10am-6pm Jul & Aug) makes a good beach substitute, and the outdoor concert hall hosts summer shows.

SAMSEONGHYEOL SHRINE 삼성혈

The main feature of this very unusual shrine (722 3315; Samseongno; adult/youth/child W2500/1700/1000; 8am-7pm Mar-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Feb) is a hole in the ground, or rather three holes in the ground. Legends say that three brothers, Go, Bu and Yang, came out of the three holes and founded the Tamna kingdom with help from three princesses who arrived by boat together with cattle and horses. The brothers divided the island kingdom into three sections by each shooting an arrow and taking the third where his arrow landed.

The shrine was originally built in 1526 and the spirit tablets of the island's first ancestors are housed in the shrine. There are two of the 45 remaining original harubang, which are over 250 years old.

Ask to see the English version of a 15-minute film about the legend that's shown in the exhibition hall on the right.

FOLKLORE & NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

This wide-ranging ecomuseum (722 2465; Samseongno; adult/youth/child W1100/500/0; 8.30am-6.30pm) in Sinsan Park has well-labelled exhibits on Jejudo's varied volcanic features including volcanic bombs, lava tubes and trace fossils. Fortunately the volcanoes have all been dormant for the last 1000 years, although earthquakes were felt in the 16th century. Other highlights to look out for are excellent
wildlife films, the bizarre oar fish and panoramic views of the island's six ecological zones.

MOKSEOWON 목석원
About 6km south of Jeju-si, Mokseowon (☏ 702 0203; adult/child W2000/1500; ☏ 8am-6.30pm Feb-Nov, 8.30am-5.30pm Dec-Jan) is both a garden and art park with oddly shaped rocks and gnarled roots. It’s a labour of love, put together over 30 years by Mr Kim, who has been reconstructing ancient ruins. The many other local museums dotted around the island usually feature antiques and can get their fix here. Many city buses stop outside, including bus 26 (W850, every 15 minutes).

YONGDUAM ROCK 용두암
On the seashore to the west of city, Yongduam Rock (Dragon's Head Rock) attracts coach loads of Korean tourists, but foreign visitors usually wonder why these oddly-shaped black basalt lava rocks attract such large crowds. Still, looking at people looking at rocks appeals to some...

IHO BEACH 이호해수욕장
The nearest beach to jeju-si along the west coast is blessed with an unusual mixture of yellow and grey sand, which means that you can build two-tone sandcastles. The beach is a decent size with shallow water that makes for safe swimming, and changing-room facilities are open in July and August. Further out to sea you can put your free-diving skills against haenyeo divers searching around the rocks for seafood and edible seaweed. A small fishing port is on one side, and terns dive for fish too.

Buses (W850, 20 minutes, every 20 minutes) leave Jeju-si bus terminal for Iho Beach – get off at Heonsa Village stop and it’s a 150m walk to the beach.

CYCLE, SCOOTER & SKATE HIRE
Pedal west along the coast road (lunching in one of the many restaurants) or even all the way round the island on bicycles rented from Smart Bicycle (☏ 755 1134; Seogwangno; per day W6000; ☏ 7am-8pm) or Tabalo Bicycle (☏ 751 2000; per day W8000; ☏ 8am-8pm), which has new bikes.

Tom and Suji at Travel Story (☏ 713 4778; Yonggung; ☏ 6am-7pm Mar-Oct, 8am-6pm Nov-Feb) speak English and hire out bicycles (per day W5000) and cute Taiwanese scooters (per W25,000 to W30,000) which can take two people. The scooters range from 50cc to 125cc and insurance is another W5000. A scooter is a cool and convenient way to tour Jejudo. Telephone and they will pick you up from the airport or ferry port.

On the western end of the seashore, Jeju Inline Skate Proshop (Tabalong; skates & bicycles per hr W2000; ☏ 11am-10pm) hires out skates either from the shop or from a truck parked round the corner on the esplanade.

Sleeping
Seashore motels and hotels are a 10-minute walk from the ferry terminal.

BUDGET
Chincheloil Minbak (☏ 755 5132; s/d W15,000/17,000)
Mrs Kim runs the city’s best under-W20,000 budget option. One of the many restaurants)

MIDRANGE
The smart new motels are worth the extra money.

Tapdong Hotel (☏ 723 3600; Haejongno; r W40,000; ☏) One of the best high-rise motels near the seashore with spacious, stylish rooms and bathrooms. Rooms are fully equipped with a computer as well as unusual extras like shower partitions and an electric kettle. A port makes it seem almost like home.

Bobos Motel (☏ 727 7200; Haejongno; r W40,000; ☏)
A classy, posh motel, opposite Tapdong Hotel, where the staff is welcoming and most rooms have ornate furniture as well as modern fittings. Ask for room 507 if you prefer something less like a love motel.

White Beach Hotel (☏ 753 8460; r W60,000; ☏)
The seashore location is the reason for staying here as long as you don’t mind a small bathroom. It feels like a genuine hotel rather than a motel, and everything is new and smart. Rooms with a sea view are W10,000 extra. The ground-floor restaurant serves Jejudo specialties (W12,000 to W15,000), while the rooftop bar (p261) is a hidden gem.

Robero Hotel (☏ 757 7111; www.roberehot.com; Gwanseoong; from W100,000; ☏)
The downtown location overlooking Gwanseoong pavilion suits shoppers, but the business centre is just a computer and fax machine in the lobby and room TVS are old. This is compensated by plenty of modern art, which adds a boutique style to the hotel. Exchange rates are 10% lower than the banks.

Pacific Hotel (☏ 758 2500; from W105,000; ☏)
Despite the name, this downtown haunt of tour groups has an Egyptian theme, from its pyramid shape to hieroglyphic walls. It’s smart enough but needs new TVS, showers and balcony furniture to receive an unequivocal recommendation.
Oriental Hotel (☎ 752 8222; www.oriental.co.kr; Tapdongno; r standard/sea view W123,420/145,000; )

This seafront hotel verges on top end so the lobby is impressive, overlooks a grotto and echoes to atmospheric live music in the evening. As is usual the public rooms and the casino are grander and more impressive than the guestrooms. Still, room windows are large, the décor is light, and sheets are whiter than snow, so small imperfections can be forgiven.

TOP END

Jeju KAL Hotel (☎ 724 2001, www.kalhotel.co.kr; Jung-an-gno; r weekday/weekend W160,000/210,000; )

This plush Korean Airlines high-rise in the heart of downtown has the best city views and all the top-end bells and whistles including a casino, a lap pool, aerobics and yoga classes, and a 19th-floor sky bar (beer W8000) with a live band.

Ramada Plaza Jeju (☎ 729 8100; www.ramadajeju.co.kr; Tapdongno; r W200,000; )

This brand new hotel, with a casino and conference centre, makes the most of its absolute seafront location with an overall nautical design that gives guests the illusion that they’re at sea on a luxury liner. The atrium lobby has ‘wow’ factor, and the usual corridors have been replaced with open balconies. Rooms have floor-to-ceiling windows, staff go the extra mile, and the hotel’s two small pool vehicules. Prices rise at weekends and rooms with sea views cost more, but breakfast is included.

Eating

E-Mart Food Court (Tapdongno; meals W2500-6000; 10am-9pm)
The food court on the 5th floor has sea views and a smorgasbord of cheap eats but is on the tatty side. Hidden away at the far end of the basement supermarket is a great takeaway section – sushi, kebabs, spare ribs, chicken and raw-fish platters (W30,000 while abalone rice porridge is W10,000.

Opposite E-Mart on the seafront are fish and seafood restaurants with prices and replicas of the food on show outside.

Other recommendations include:

Bonjuk (Jung-an-gno; meals W5000-8000) Enjoy one of the 16 flavours of rice porridge in this neat and clean chain restaurant on the high street.

Daeboskeong (meals W7000-12,000) Sit at the counter, at the only outdoor room and enjoy Japanese-style sushi, sea-bream soup or abalone rice porridge.

I Want Pizza (Samnyeong 1-ro; pizzas W9700-10,000; 11am-11pm) Sit inside among the mountains of pizza boxes for a reasonably priced 13-inch pizza at this takeaway near the bus terminal.

Taphyung Samgyetang (meals W7000-15,000) A popular place near the seafront for samgyetang (single pot) ginseng chicken) or duck dishes served as a soup or dry with vegetables.

Jeongdaesal (meals W7000-25,000; 24hr) With views over the sea, this 2nd-floor restaurant serves up fresh fish and hoedeopbap (rice patty; vegetables, rice and raw fish).

Drinking

Cheonsong Eoreum Makgeolli (Jung-an-gno; meals W4000-8000; 8pm-5am; ) Don’t leave without popping into this traditional makgeolli and mackerel pub restaurant near the seafront that offers a wide choice of wholesome grubs plus beers and kettles of makgeolli (fermented rice wine; W5000), join the locals (children welcome) for traditional food and good cheer in a friendly atmosphere. Ask for the English menu.

White Beach Hotel Bar (beers/cocktails W3000/6000; 2pm-2am) Enjoy a wonderful sea view from a modernist glass box atop this seafront hotel. On a fine day the outside terrace, decorated with flower boxes, is the perfect spot for a date or a sundowner.

Entertainment

Juliana (Haksaesa-ro; admission W35,000; 7pm-late) This nightclub in the student entertainment zone opposite City Hall operates on the Korean system and the high admission price buys three beers and anju (snacks). The music is mixed but mainly hip-hop. Extra beers are W4000.

Academy Cinema (admission W7000) Like all Korean cinemas, Academy screens foreign films in their original language, subtitled in Hangul.

Shopping

The city’s three prime shopping zones are Dongmun market, which spreads bustling and cheerful retail therapy over a large area in the city’s heartland, nearby Jungsang underground shopping centre, and the Chiseongho shopping precinct with its youthful fashion stores and brand-name boutiques stocked with clothes, accessories and cosmetics.

E-Mart (Tapdongno) has a souvenir section near the lift exit on the 4th floor, which stocks gift boxes of oranges and harubang-shaped jars of omijje (berry) tea and cactus honey tea. Soaps are another option, but sample the chocolate before you buy. Another souvenir is dojang. Korean name seals, which take 10 minutes to make and cost W6000. For eating options at E-Mart see opposite.

Getting Around

There are streams of city buses, most of which can be picked up outside the bus terminal or along Jung-an-gno, and taxis are cheap and convenient.

EASTERN JEJUDO

Samyang Beach

The first beach along the coast road east of Jeju-si is Samyang, which has the darkest sand on the island and is jet black when wet. In the summer, join the locals and bury yourself in the iron-rich sand for a therapeutic sand bath, said to relieve dermatitis, arthritis and athlete’s foot.

Take the Seongsan Ihlchubong bus (W1000, 25 minutes, every 20 minutes) or else several local buses, such as bus 26, go there too.

Jeju is famous for its wind – you can learn and Jeju is famous for its wind – you can

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Take a jacket, as the cave ceiling drips and the temperature inside is a chilly 10°C. The lighting is dim so a torch is a good idea. You can walk for 1km along the black tube to a 7m lava pillar, the cave’s outstanding feature. The walk takes 30 minutes as the floor is pitted and full of puddles.

Lunch at Daesikdang (대식당; meals W5000-12,000, 8am-6.30pm) where the local fish specialty, okdom (오돔), comes with rice and good side dishes. For a light lunch, two people can share one okdom. It’s on the 2nd floor of the tourist complex with an outside balcony.

A 20-minute walk back down the access road is Gimnyeongsagul (김녕사굴; Snake Cave), which is officially closed, but just follow the sign to walk through the first double-decker lava-tube cave and on to the even larger second lava cave, which you can venture down if you have the torch.

On the other side of the road, on the right by the shop, is another lava-tube cave with an unusual lava-platform feature.

GETTING THERE & AWAY
Take the Seongsan Ilchulbong bus (W1900, one hour, every 20 minutes) from Jeju-si bus terminal, which leaves from platform 4. It drops you on the main road, 2.5km from Manjanggul, but the 35-minute walk down the access road is lined with oleander trees and goes past fields bordered by dry-stone walls, woodland inhabited by pheasants, lava-tube caves and an excellent maze (see below). A bus (W850, five minutes, 11 daily) runs along the road but the service is usually irregular.

Gimnyeong Maze
A 10-minute walk from Manjanggul is this popular hedge maze ( 782 9266, adult/youth/child W1300/1650/550, 8.30am-7pm Mar-Oct, 8.30am-6pm Nov-Feb), which is as much fun for adults as for children. It’s fiendishly clever and a real challenge. Owner Fred Dunstin is often around if you enjoy a good yarn.

Woljeong Beach
This small, white, sandy beach is so little known that it’s not on most maps. Stay here for an off-the-beaten-track experience where you can even spot dotterels on the beach.

Jefferson Inn
Regularly reviewed as one of Jeju’s best, this 17-room (W25,000; ①) inn is just a 10-minute walk from the entrance to Seongsan-ri. Hotel rooms are spacious, some with views of the sea. Internet is free.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Sea Life Scuba
( 월드안드; meals W6000-12,000) has smart rooms with kitchens and balconies, though bathrooms are cramped. Take the Seongsan Ilchulbong bus from Jeju-si bus terminal, get off at the Manjanggul stop, and walk down the road to the beach (500m).

Seongsan Ilchulbong 성산 일출봉
Seongsan-ri (Fortress Mountain Village) is at the extreme eastern tip of Jeju, at the foot of the spectacular, extinct volcano Ilchulbong (Sunrise Peak, ④ 784 0959; adult/youth/child W2000/1000; ⑥ before sunrise-sunset). The summit (182m) is shaped like a punchbowl, though there’s no crater lake here because the volcanic rock is so porous. The crater is a forested Lost World shaped like a punchbowl, though there’s no crater lake here because the volcanic rock is so porous. The crater is a forested Lost World, ringed by jagged rocks and the sides of the mountain plunge vertically into the surf. It is one of Jeju’s most impressive sights.

Climbing to the summit only takes 20 minutes and doing it in time to catch the sunrise is a life-affirming journey for many Koreans – expect plenty of company on the trail. To do the sunrise expedition, you’ll have to spend the night in Seongsan-ri. The path is 1km along the black tube to a 7m lava pillar, the cave’s outstanding feature. The walk takes 30 minutes as the floor is pitted and covered in puddles.

Large rooms here – opposite Gombawi restaurant and near Ilchulbong ticket office – have views and a varied collection of sizable and comfortable rooms. It’s on the left on the way from the bus stop to the Ilchulbong ticket office access road.

Eating
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Eating
Most restaurants specialise in raw fish and hot-pepper soups but grilled fish, galchi gui, okdom gui (grilled, semi-dried fish) and jeonbok-juk (abalone rice porridge) are also available. The latter is a local specialty, though you don’t get much abalone for your W10,000.

Gombawi (골바위; meals W5000-25,000, ⑥ 7am-4pm) The best view and the best food are here, on the 2nd floor above LG 45 convenience store on the access road to Ilchulbong. Try the local specialty, peasant and buckwheat noodle hotpot (W10,000) or the tofu casserole (W5000). It has an English menu but is not open for dinner.

Getting There & Away
Buses (W3800, 1½ hours, every 20 minutes) run to Seongsan-ri from Jeju-si bus terminal. Make sure that the bus goes right into Seongsan-ri as a few stick to the main road and drop you 2.5km from Seongsan-ri.

Udo Island
Northeast of Seongsan-ri, 3.5km off the coast, is Udo Island (Cow Island), which has 1750
inhabitants yet still manages to be rural and relaxing despite throngs of tourists and tour buses, particularly at weekends. The highlights are the black-lava cliffs at Tolkani and the lighthouse that you can walk up to (15 minutes) for panoramic views of patchwork fields and brightly painted roofs. Korea’s only coral-sand beach, Hongjdong-gae Haebin, is brilliantly white. Take a picnic to the island as eating options are limited. A small community of haenyeo dives in the cove below the lighthouse.

To tour the island’s cobweb of narrow roads you have a choice of wheels, but keep in mind that the island is 17km in circumference: the tough way is by bicycle (two hours rental W5000), the soft way is on the hop-on hop-off tourist buses (W5000, every 30 minutes), and the fun way is on a scooter on hop-off tourist buses (W5000, every 30 minutes) for panoramic views of patchwork fields and brightly painted roofs. Korea’s only coral-sand beach, Hongjdong-gae Haebin, is brilliantly white. Take a picnic to the island as eating options are limited. A small community of haenyeo dives in the cove below the lighthouse.

**Sinyang Beach** 신양해수욕장

On the southeast coast, this crescent-shaped beach, 1.5km in length, is the island’s most sheltered. Many consider it Korea’s best beach for windsurfing; in summer you can rent sailboats and windsurfers and take lessons on how to use them. A 1km walk away is the rocky outcrop, Seopjikoji, which has provided a backdrop to Korean movie scenes. The adjacent small town has minbaek and restaurants. Buses (W3800, 1¼ hours, every 20 minutes) from Jeju-si bus terminal drop you at the main road, 2km from the beach. An hourly bus runs to the beach or you can walk, thumb a lift or take a taxi.

**Seong-eup Folk Village** 성인부족마을

A 10-minute bus ride north of Pyoseon Beach is Jeju-do’s former provincial capital of Seong-eup, where government assistance has encouraged the preservation and renovation of the traditional rock-walled, thatched-roofed houses. Modern intrusions include souvenir shops, restaurants and car parks, but parts still look fantastically feudal.

The village of 480 households has a number of sections that are worth taking the time to explore. Some inhabitants offer a free guided tour of their compound, but afterwards they want you to buy local products such as black omija tea (W25,000 per kilogram) or paper-thin dried fish called myeongtae, both of which are delicious.

Just take off down the narrow lanes and discover the place for yourself. Remember the houses are still occupied, but if the gate poles are down (see below) you are welcome to enter.

Buses (W2300, 45 minutes, every 20 minutes) leave from Jeju-si bus terminal and from Pyoseon or Jeju Folk Village (W850, 10 minutes, every 20 minutes).

**ACTIVITIES**

Along the road north of Seong-eup Folk Village and before the turning to Sangumburi Crater are ATV tracks, go-kart racing courses and horse riding (a steep W80,000 an hour). A bus runs along the road every 20 minutes.

**Jeju Folk Village** 제주민속촌

Just outside Pyoseon and close to the town’s extensive beach, Jeju Folk Village (☎ 787 4501; www.jejufolk.com; adult/youth/child W6000/4000/2000; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) is more re-creation than preservation, but in its way is more educational than Seong-eup Folk Village. Various sections cover Jeju-do’s culture from shamans to yungbang (crabs), and the differences between mountain, hill-country and fishing villages. Some of the buildings are hanok (traditional Korean houses) brought intact from other parts of the island and are 200 to 300 years old; the modern construction has been done in authentically traditional style.

The folk village has its own flora and fauna, country-style restaurants and traditional song and dance performances. The English-language audio guide (W2000) is worth the investment.

Direct buses (W3600, one hour, every 20 minutes) run to the entrance gate from Jeju-si bus terminal. Otherwise the folk village is a 1km walk from the bus stop in Pyoseon-ri.

**Pyoseon Beach** 표선해수욕장

At low tide a huge expanse of white sandy beach appears that stretches as far as the eye can see, and in the middle a lagoon forms. If you like plenty of space, this is the beach to visit. Behind is a small town with all facilities. Buses run here from Jeju-si via the 97 road cross-island route (W3400, one hour, every 20 minutes) or via the east coast road (W5100, two hours, every 20 minutes).

**Namwon 남원**

Just 100m up the coast road west of Shinyoung Cinema Museum, turn right at the hamburger sign, then left at another sign to reach the two-storey wood cabin that is Red Pond Herb Farm (붉은물허브팜; hamburgers W15,000; ☎ 10am-9pm; 📍). The English-speaking staff sells unique herb gardens the size of Frisbees – enough for four people or you can take away what you cannot eat. In a giant herbal bun packed with salad and even apple is a thin patty made from Jeju black-pig pork or else soy bean for a vegetarian option. Free herb tea is included.

**SOUTHERN JEJUDO**

**Seogwipo 서귀포**

pop 84,300

Amid the tangerine groves on the lower slopes of Hallasan sits touristy Seogwipo, Jeju-do’s second-largest town. It’s much smaller and more laid-back than Jeju-si, and scuba diving and ballooning are available. The town centre (up a steep slope from the harbour) is chock-full of motels and hotels. A short distance away are two spring-fed waterfalls — this is one of the few places on the island where water is not immediately absorbed into the porous volcanic rock.

**INFORMATION**

KB Star Bank (Jung-an)ngark; Foreign exchange only.
Post office (Jung-an)ngark; Free internet access.
SC First Bank (Standard; Jung-an); Foreign exchange and global ATM.

Tourist information centre (☎ 064-1330; 📍 9am-10pm) Free internet access.

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**HAENYEYO**

At 9am on Seongsan-ri harbour, 30 or so wrinkled grandmas are pulling on wetsuits, diving masks, wet belts and gloves, prior to a boat ride out to sea where they will use their low-tech gear – polystyrene floats, flippers, nets, knives and spears – to gather seaweed, shellfish, sea cucumbers, squid, black sea urchins, octopus and anything else edible that they can catch. Great physical stamina is a prerequisite. They use no oxygen tanks, but are able to hold their breath underwater for up to two minutes and reach a depth of 20m.

The women divers look so old and bent that it’s amazing that they continue to dive for hours on end every day and in all weathers. They work as a cooperative and share their catch. They shout at each other because most wear earplugs and are probably a bit deaf as well.

Watching them getting organised on the harbour front, you can only marvel at their toughness and communal spirit. They are a special breed – instead of staying home with their feet up every day and in all weathers. They work as a cooperative and share their catch. They shout at each other because most wear earplugs and are probably a bit deaf as well.

Mother the Mermaid is a memorable Korean movie about a feisty, overbearing mother and her daughter, which is intercut with flashbacks to when the mother was a shy young haenyeo on Jejudo and courting the local postman. The daughter and the mother-as-a-young-girl are played by the same talented actress.
JEJUDO  •  Southern Jeju

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES
Waterfalls
The 22m-high Cheonjyeon Pokpo (천지연폭포; ☎ 733 1558; adult/child W2000/1000; 7am-7pm) at the town centre, is a 15-minute walk east of the town centre.

Jeongbang Pokpo (정왕폭포; ☎ 733 1530; adult/child W2000/1000) is a 15-minute walk east of the town centre.

Submarine & Sightseeing Boat Tours

Daekuk Subsea Company (☎ 732 5000; www.climb2s.com; adult/child W40,000/20,000; 30min) offers guided tours deep into a 30m deep Munseom island, which has coral and fish. Tours run at 10am and 4pm.

Oedogae (Lonely Rock) juts out of the ocean. Like other unusual-shaped rocks there’s a legend associated with it – a Korean general is said to have scared away Mongolian invaders by dressing the rock up to look like a giant soldier. Oedogae is a pleasant walk through pine forests to a beautiful cliffside lookout.

Bus 200 or 300 (both W850, five minutes, eight daily) run to Oedogae or else it’s an easy and pleasant 30-minute walk from town.

SLEEPING

Bally Motel (발리호텔; ☎ 722 4040; adult/youth/child W2000/1000/600; 8am-10pm). Rooms have a computer and Jacuzzi, but rooms are small and have a modernist facade and spacious, high-quality bathrooms.

Galaxy Hotel (갤러리호텔; ☎ 722 4046; adult/youth/child W2000/1000/600; 8am-10pm). Rooms have a computer and Jacuzzi, but well-kept rooms are more cheerful and welcoming.

Hotel Daeguk Island Inn (대구섬어호텔; ☎ 722 4089; adult/youth/child W2500/1500/800; 8am-10pm). Rooms are seaview.

Jujeo Hiking Inn (주제호정진; ☎ 722 4091; adult/youth/child W3000/2000/1000; 8am-10pm). Rooms are spacious and have modern bathrooms.

SUN Beach Hotel (선우호텔; ☎ 722 4093; adult/youth/child W2500/1500/800; 8am-10pm). Rooms are seaview.

Seogwipo World Cup Stadium 월드컵경기장

The graceful soccer stadium, 6km west of Seogwipo, is the centrepiece of a cluster of buildings that includes a cinema multiplex, an E-Mart discount store, a water park, an Eros museum and Seogwipo’s new bus terminal.

SLEEPING

The town has hundreds of motels and hotels, so visitors are spoilt for choice.

Budget

Jeju Hiking Inn (☎ 763 2380; www.hikinginn.com; r W20,000; ⚫) is a popular budget option. Smart computers are free for guests, cyclists can keep their bikes in the lobby bicycle rack, and you can buy fresh fish or seafood in the covered market and cook it in the communal kitchen.

Bally Motel (☎ 732 8881; Cheonjyo 3-ry; r W30,000; ⚫) is the most modern and best motel is in the northern part of town and has a metalic, modernist facade and spacious, high-quality rooms, with a style that is more business hotel than love motel. Check that your room window has mosquito netting and a hairdryer. Drawback: the receptionist is often absent and you may have to telephone.

Other recommendations:

Galaxy Hotel (☎ 733 6678; r W25,000; ⚫) This motel is well kept, has friendly staff and the upper rooms are light and airy.

Seong Motel (☎ 732 5700; r W30,000; ⚫) Simple but well-kept rooms are more cheerful and welcoming than others at this price, and the ones on the 4th floor (no lift), such as room 405, have sea views.

Napoli Hotel (☎ 733 4701; fax 733 4802; W30,000). There’s nothing Italian here, but the standard motel rooms are pleasant enough and some have sea views.

Midrange

Shinseung Hotel (☎ 732 1415; fax 732 1417; r W50,000; ⚫) A classy new midcity motel with a hard-to-miss metal-and-chequerboard exterior. Rooms have a computer and Jacuzzi, but
don’t try to use both at the same time. A room with a sea view costs W10,000 extra, even if it’s too misty to see the sea.

**Hotel Daekuk Isle Inn** (763 0002; www.isleinn hotel.co.kr; r W73,000; ☏) Sorry to spoil the illusion, but the bright balcony flowers are not real, although they do add to the hotel’s continental European feel and style. Although the rooms are nothing special, it is a real hotel with real beds, a love motel, and the lobby has email access.

**Sun Beach Hotel** (732 5678; Taegeongno; r ind breakfast W80,000; ☏) A reasonable option if you’re into retro and hanker for these mid-range tourist hotels that resemble a grand dame somewhat past her prime but still retaining an air of faded gentility.

### Top End

**Paradise Hotel** (763 2100; www.paradisehoteljeju.co.kr; r from W210,000; ☏) Three cheers for a rare-as-hens’-teeth genuine boutique hotel with a dramatic adobe design, full of organic curves and African art. The five eclectic room styles all share the striking combo of barn doors and gold taps. Dream of lion safras in the African rooms that have four-poster beds with mosquito netting. During the 2002 World Cup, Ronaldo slept in room 209, David Beckham in room 302 and Michael Owen in room 303. The extensive garden has superb coastal cliff views as well as a popular restaurant and bar.

**Seogwipo KAL Hotel** (733 2001; www.kalhotel.co.kr; r from W245,750; ☏) An overall design of muted colours and pastels pervades this calm building, completed in 2003, is a striking glass cylinder design with ocean views. It is one of Jejudo’s most impressive buildings. The four-storey main hall is filled with vibrant murals of scenes from Buddha’s life and illustrations of his teachings. Climb the stairs to the 3rd floor, and you’ll also see cases containing some 18,000 tiny Buddhist figures. Flash photography is not permitted (time exposures are OK). Overnight stays are possible.

**Jungmun Beach**

A 25-minute bus ride west of Seogwipo is the tourist town, luxury resorts and surprisingly unsophisticated beach at Jungmun, surrounded by tourist attractions and activities.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Just before the Jungmun Beach access road off Hwy 12 is the legendary waterfall Cheonjeyeon Pokpo (천지연폭포; 738 1529; adult/child W2500/1370/850; sunrise-sunset), a three-tier cascade tucked deep inside a forested gully. Above soars a footbridge with sculptures of the seven nymphs who served the Emperor of Heaven and who, it is said, used to slide down those rocks to bathe here every night.

At the start of the access road to the resorts and beach is a huge, glass botanical garden, Yeomiji (여미지; 738 3828; www.yeomiji.or.kr; adult/youth/child W2500/1370/850; 9am-6pm Apr, 8.30am-5pm Oct-Feb). Indoor sections mimic rainforests, deserts and other landscapes, while outdoor plantings and designs include Italian, Japanese, palm and herb gardens.

Overlooking Jungmun Beach is Pacific Land (파시픽랜드; 738 2888; adult/child W12,000/10,000/800; ☏) (adult/child W6000/10,000/5000; ☏) 11am-9.30pm), a dramatic 2km stretch of coastline, known for hexagonal rock columns that look as if they were stamped out with a cookie cutter. The formations are the result of the rapid cooling and contraction of lava (just what you’d expect to happen when molten lava pours into the sea).

### Activities

Overlooking Jungmun Beach is the dramatic 2km stretch of coastline, known for hexagonal rock columns that look as if they were stamped out with a cookie cutter. The formations are the result of the rapid cooling and contraction of lava (just what you’d expect to happen when molten lava pours into the sea).

Although the Buddhist temple Yakeoonsa (약천사; 738 5000; admission free; sunrise-sunset) is only constructed between 1987 and 1997, it is one of Jejudo’s most impressive buildings. The four-storey main hall is filled with vibrant murals of scenes from Buddha’s life and illustrations of his teachings. Climb the stairs to the 3rd floor, and you’ll also see cases containing some 18,000 tiny Buddhist figures. Flash photography is not permitted (time exposures are OK). Overnight stays are possible.

The temple is less than 1km east of the Convention Centre, and can be reached by local bus 100, 110, 120 or 130 (W850, 15 minutes) from Seogwipo.

### Water Activities

Parasailing (739 3939; ☏), jet-skiing and water-skiing (738 5111; W20,000-40,000) operators are based between Pacific Land and the International Convention Centre, while jetboats (739 3939; W25,000) operate from an inlet east of the Convention Centre. Sit-on kayaks (per hr W15,000) can be hired on Jungmun Beach.

Jungmun Beach (중문해수욕장), a 500m stretch of golden sand with its jungly backdrop, only becomes crowded in summer when it’s patronized by lifeguards. Walk along the beach, up the steps to the Hyatt Regency Hotel, continue along the boardwalk and down the steps to reach an even more scenic
SLEEPING & EATING

Minbak, pension and restaurants are strung out along Hwy 12 near the 1km-long access road to Jungmun Beach, while luxury hotel resorts are down towards the beach.

Yeohang Donghwaguesthouse (여행동화; ☎ 713 4777; dm/r W10,000/30,000; 📍 This blue-and-white guesthouse is above a fish restaurant, set back from the main road and overlooking Yeomini botanical glasshouse. The dorms are big (25 beds in the men’s dorm, 15 in the women’s but the accommodation is brand new with a youthful vibe. Upstairs, wood-panelled rooms are very attractive and some have kitchenettes.

Gold Beach Minbak (골드비치민박; 728 7511; r/W50,000; 📍) Smart wood-panelled rooms with balconies and kitchenettes can be found here. Room 305 is one of the best. Look for a peach-balcony with kitchenette here. The breakfast is good. The accommodation is a bit out of the way there as not all the west coast buses do.

Lotte Hotel Jeju (738 7301; r from W300,000; 📍 This white, bee-hive shaped edifice along a soaring aquarium sports a beautiful spa/fitness facility, It’s the life’s club and foreigners have their own lounge with executive chairs on the 3rd floor of the brand-new Happy Ville grandstand. What is unique is that all the horses are local jorangmal, Jeju horses descended from the ones brought over by invading Mongols centuries ago.

Jeju Racetrack (주제경마장)
Enjoy a weekend afternoon at the races at the popular Jeju Racetrack (☎ 741 9412; admission W8000; ☎ 12.30-3.5pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun; 4-29-9.10pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug; 1.5km from Jeju-si. The facilities are first class and foreigners have their own lounge with executive chairs on the 3rd floor of the brand-new Happy Ville grandstand. What is unique is that all the horses are local jorangmal, Jeju horses descended from the ones brought over by invading Mongols centuries ago.

Jeju Racetrack  제주경마장
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Acrobats Shows
There are three shows along the cross-island 95 road, all of which are worth seeing.

Green Resort (계산그린리조트; 792 6102; admission W12,000; ☎ shows 10.30am, 2.30pm, 4.30pm & 5.40pm) hosts hour-long shows that combine Chinese acrobatics (tumbling, bicycle tricks, plate spinning) and Mongolian acrobatics on horseback (handstands on a horse at full gallop). Some of the tricks are amazing in this traditional-style show but the music and announcers are overloud.

Smarter and more high-tech is the circus at Happy Town (해피타운; 794 4444; admission W15,000; ☎ shows 10.30am, 2pm, 3.30pm & 5pm) that stars contortionists, motorbike stunt riders and unbelievable acrobats who perform in midair and on the ground.

Stunning aerial acrobatics plus motorbike tricks are the show highlights at Jeju Magic World (제주마직월드; 746 9005; www.jejumw.co.kr; adult/child W15,000/10,000/7000; ☎ shows 10am, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm Mar-Sep, 10am, 2pm, 3pm & 5.20pm Oct-Feb).
**MYSTERIOUS & GHOST ROADS**

For a ‘Twilight Zone’ moment, drive on to one of these stretches of road, turn off the engine, shift to neutral, and your car will appear to roll uphill. If you pour water or roll a ball on the pavement, there’s a similar effect. It’s really an optical illusion due to the angle of the road relative to sight lines, but it certainly looks convincing. If you decide to test it, watch out for other vehicles trying the same thing!

The first stretch to be discovered (allegedly by a taxi driver taking a break) is **Sinfrai Doro** (Mysterious Rd), in the hills about 7km south of the airport. **Dokkaebi Doro** (Ghost Rd) is to the east.

The cross-island (road 95) bus passes by all three venues every 20 minutes from Seogwipo and Jeju-si.

**Hallim Park**

No time to explore Jejudo? Just visit **Hallim Park** (公園, 796 000; adult/youth/child W6000/4500/3500; 早期 8.30am-5.30pm), which has everything – a botanical and bonsai garden, a mini folk village and a 500m walk through a lava-tube cave – all in one place. The park is filled with such beautiful plantings, most notably in a botanical garden full of local plants, that it’s hard to believe that the area was originally barren rocks. The cave, **Hyepochaegul**, only discovered in 1981, is one of the few lava tubes in the world with stalagmites and stalactites, usually only found in limestone caves. They’re here thanks to the large quantities of pulverised seashells in the soil above the cave, which were blown in from the shore over thousands of years.

**HALLASAN NATIONAL PARK**

Hiking up **Hallasan** (公園, 713 9950; adult/youth/child W1600/600/300) is a highlight of any trip to Jejudo. The best plan is to hike up the **Eorimok trail**, which starts after a 15-minute walk from the bus stop. It’s 4.7km, starting with a steep climb up through a deciduous forest (gorgeous coloured leaves in autumn). Halfway up, the dense trees give way to open, subalpine moorland of bamboo, grass, dwarf fir trees and hillsides of azaleas that flower in April and May. Small, light brown roe deer now number over 1000, and you have a good chance of spotting one here. After 2¼ hours you should reach **Witseoreum shelter** (1700m), which has no accommodation but sells instant noodles (W1500) to hungry hikers. Ahead are the craggy cliffs of Hallasan’s peak, but the path there is closed on a long-term basis to allow for plant regeneration (see below).

After lunch, head down the 3.7km **Yeongsil trail**, which is wetter but has grand scenery – panoramas of green oreum (craters) and pinnacle rocks atop sheer cliffs as you hike through a dwarf-fir forest, before reaching the mixed deciduous and evergreen forest lower down. It’s a 1½-hour hike down to the road and then a 30-minute walk along a roadside footpath to the bus stop. The climb is only 700m in altitude (it starts at 1000m), but it’s tiring — this is Korea’s highest mountain — and you need to be prepared for bad weather that can arrive in the blink of an eye. However small children can make it, so you can too.

The other two routes are longer and more difficult — the Gwaneumsa trail is 8.7km and takes five hours (no bus service to the start) and the Seongpanak trail is 9.6km and takes 4½ hours. These routes go to the peak (1950m) with views of the famous crater lake.

**RESTORING HALLASAN**

The very popularity of the trek up Hallasan was threatening to destroy the area’s unique and fragile ecosystem. Hikers were literally trampling plants to death and threatening the wildlife that the plants supported. Drastic action was required to save Korea’s highest mountain from an eco-disaster. Even the roe deer were under threat.

Wooden boardwalks were constructed to reduce the impact of hikers’ feet and to encourage them to stay on the track. The trail around the crater lake and the trail from the lake to Witseoreum shelter was closed for at least a decade to allow the worst affected and most fragile sections to recover. This meant that hikers up the popular and easier western trails could no longer view the crater lake. However, the mountain ecology is slowly recovering, and at the last count the number of roe deer had increased to 1249.

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Jeollabuk-do
전라북도

The southwestern province of Jeollabuk-do has always been Korea’s rice bowl, and the image of white egrets standing in terraced rice fields is a provincial icon. Unspoilt national, provincial and county parks cover the more mountainous parts and offer some of Korea’s finest get-away-from-it-all hikes and scenery. Buddhist temples, frequently rebuilt over the centuries, still house shaven-headed monks who find the surrounding rocks, hills and trickling streams an aid to Zen meditation as they try to escape from the chains of material desires.

Another form of escape is to off-shore islands, sun drenched in summer, when the beaches could almost be Thailand. In winter thrill-seekers head to the slopes of Muju Ski Resort, with its European alpine atmosphere.

Jeonju city is famous for its food (especially bibimbap, a dish of rice, meat and vegetables served up by countless restaurants nationwide), its traditional culture and its hanok (traditional house) village suburb with its craft workshops, museums and rustic teashops. Fans, dolls, boxes and even ties made of hanji (paper made by hand from mulberry bark) are popular buys. Pansori, a traditional musical drama performed by a solo singer and a drummer, is particularly associated with the province. Like its sister province to the south, its traditional culture and its European alpine atmosphere.

Jeollabuk-do has recently faced conflict over two major environmental issues: the storage of nuclear waste and the Saemangeum reclamation project on the west coast (p60).

HIGHLIGHTS
- Explore Jeonju’s fascinating hanok village (p297)
- Be amazed by the unique rock-pinnacle temple garden in Maisan Provincial Park (p300) in the shadow of ‘Horse Ears’ mountain
- Zip round Seonyudo (p305) on a nippy quad bike before relaxing on the beach
- Amble through pretty Seonunsan Provincial Park (p303) to a giant Buddha carving on a cliff
- Ski, skateboard or sled down the slopes at Muju Ski Resort (p301)
- Take a cable car up to the skyline in Dae-dunsan Provincial Park (p300) or Naejangsan National Park (p302)

TELEPHONE CODE: 063  POPULATION: 2 MILLION  AREA: 8050 SQ KM

History
The Donghak rebellion, led by Chon Pong-jun, took place mainly in Jeollabuk-do in 1893 when a raggle-taggle force of peasants and slaves, armed with various homemade weapons, seized Jeonju fortress and defeated King Gojong’s army, before being destroyed by Japanese forces. Their demands included the freeing of slaves, better treatment of the chosunin or low-born, the redistribution of land, the abolition of taxes on fish and salt, and the punishment of corrupt government officials.

National & Provincial Parks
An atmospheric temple, coastal views and a waterfall are features of Byeonsanbando National Park (p304). A cable car takes you near the peak in Daedunsan Provincial Park (p300) and afterwards you can relax in a hot-spring spa. Skiers and hikers both enjoy the super scenery in Deogyusan National Park (p301). Maisan Provincial Park (p300) is famous for its ‘horse ears’ mountains and mystical stone towers, while the big drawcard at Moaksan Provincial Park (p299) is its superb temple. Naejangsan National Park (p302) has a great ridge hike and a cable car up to it for softies. Pretty Seonunsan Provincial Park (p303) has a giant Buddha carving on a cliff.

Getting There & Around
If you arrive by train or bus, you can then base yourself in Jeonju, the hanok city, where buses radiate to every nook and corner of the province.

Jeonju
전주
pop 622,000
Jeonju (www.jeonju.go.kr), the provincial capital, is famous for being the birthplace of both the Joseon dynasty and bibimbap (rice, meat, egg and vegetables with a hot sauce). Centrally located, the city is the perfect base from which to explore Jeollabuk-do as it’s the hub for all the bus services. The historical area of the city has many outstanding hanok buildings, old and new.

Information
KB Bank (Girimno) Global ATM and foreign currency exchange.
Sights & Activities

JEONJU HANOK VILLAGE

This historical urban village can take all day to look around – ask at a tourist information centre for the excellent ‘Invitation to Our Tradition’ brochure.

The Oriental Medicine Centre (☎ 232 2500; www.hanbangcenter.com; admission free; 9am-6pm) offers medical tests and diagnosis from an Asian-medicine perspective for a fee of W1000 to W4000, and recommends herbal, acupuncture, massage, and traditional Chinese medicine for a fee of W3000.

Housed in a beautiful old hanok, the Traditional Wine Museum (☎ 287 6305; admission free; 9am-6pm) has a gosori (traditional still). You can learn how to make your own soju (Korean vodka), and (more to the point) taste and buy traditional Korean liquors.

Tourism in the 1500s to prepare their sons for the seowon (Confucian academies), the pupils took the all-important government service exams. The pupils studied Chinese characters and key Confucian texts. Over 600 seowon were spread across the country, making Korea more Confucian than China.

In the 1860s Regent Heungseon Daewongun forced most of them to close as he reasserted the king’s authority, but the buildings remain as symbols of Koreans’ unwavering passion for education.

Asian, Byzantine and Romanesque styles. The elegant interior contains stained-glass windows portraying early martyrs.

Housing the artwork and art collection of a well-known 20th-century calligrapher, Song Sung-yong (pen name, Gangam), is Gangam Calligraphy Museum (☎ 285 7442; admission free; 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). The artist’s response to the meaning and connotations of the words is expressed through the brush strokes.

Stroll around Jeonju Hyanggyo (☎ 288 4548; admission free; 10am-7pm), a well-preserved and very atmospheric Confucian shrine, school and dormitory complex that dates back to 1603 (see above).

Don’t miss the lanterns, boxes, ties and clothing all made out of paper at the Craft Treasures Centre (☎ 285 4403; Gyeonggiro; admission free; 10am-7pm). The courtyard is pleasant for a rest and on the nearby hill is Omokdae, a pavilion where General Yi Seong-gye celebrated a victory over Japanese pirates in 1380, prior to his overthrow of the Goryeo dynasty. Cross the bridge to Omokdae, a monument to one of Yi Seong-gye’s ancestors written by King Gojong.

Pungnammun, an impressive stone-and-wood gateway, is all that remains of Jeonju’s fortress wall and four gateways. First built in 1398 but renovated many times since, it’s a landmark that marks the beginning of the sprawling Nambu Market, where farmers’ wives sell fresh produce direct to the public.

Just past the Traditional Culture Centre, go under the bridge to Hanbyeokdang Pavilion, on rocks overlooking the river, where herons, egrets and swallows can be seen in summer.
JUNGnim Oncheon

Focuses mainly on indie, digital and experimental films. Not only the furniture but even the lift design is fancy. Large French windows, round beds and all-body showers add to the overall designer effect.

Bicycle Hire

Hire a bicycle from Jeonju Traditional Life Experience Park (right) for only W1000 a day. Why not cycle around the traffic-quiet Hanok Village, along the river and even farther afield?

Deokjin Park

Join Korean couples who hire paddleboats in this charming park ( 281 2436; admission free; 9am-11pm), in the north of the city, to view the lotus lilies, which are at their best in July.

Festivals & Events

The Jeonju International Film Festival (www.jiff.or.kr) is a nine-day event every April/May that focuses mainly on indie, digital and experimental movies. Around 200 films from 40 countries are shown in the Primus cinema multiplex and others nearby, and many have English dialogue or subtitles.

Sleeping

An ever-expanding galaxy of motels surrounds the bus terminals.

Budget

Munhwa Sauna Motel ( 251 5435; r W20,000; ) The best of the cheaper but unmodernised yeogwan (motel) is owned by Mr Kim who speaks some English. He also runs a sauna (W5000) in the same building. The modern motels are better but cost W10,000 extra.

Good Morning Motel ( 251 9948; r W30,000; ) Despite an unimpressive exterior, this is a popular, no-fuss motel where the staff is helpful and the spacious rooms and bathrooms are modern and clean. Rooms vary so look at more than one – some have round, heated waterbeds, and all-body showers as well as baths, while rooms with a computer are W5000 extra.

Apeullesaeu Motel ( 273 4193; r W30,000; ) Stay here if you like ‘love motel’ ornate, as not only the furniture but even the lift design is fancy. Large French windows, round beds and all-body showers add to the overall designer effect.

Kkumui Gungjeon Motel ( 274 7373; r W35,000; ) A new love motel that sets a new standard. Look round a number of rooms to choose which décor, bed shape and facilities you want. Electronic gear options include a giant TV, a smart computer, a DVD player and a bidet with as many dials and knobs as a pilot’s cabin.

Midrange

Mint Motel ( 271 3992; r W40,000; ) Stay in this love-motel palace with spacious, fully equipped rooms if you fancy trying out a two-person Jacuzzi.

Seunggwang ( 288 4566; r from W60,000) The best hanok stay as the small rooms have a TV, fridge and yo (padded quilt or mattress on the floor) as well as a tiny, modern en suite bathroom. The unique feature is that Seunggwang is owned by English-speaking Lee Seok, a grandson of King Gojong, who lives in the adjoining hanok. If he is busy or away, Ms Lim Lee will look after you and she speaks some English. It’s a special place down an alley with royal photographs on display. Breakfast is W5000.

Jeonju Traditional Life Experience Park ( 287 6300; www.jhanok.com; r W60,000, r with en suite W80,000 & 90,000) Stay in tiny bare rooms and sleep on a yo in this newly built but traditional-style hanok. Prices include a Korean-style breakfast and free loan of a bicycle.

Jeonju Tourist Hotel ( 280 7700; r/ste W60,000-80,000; ) This reasonably priced tourist hotel has a retro feel and the central location is close to Jeonju’s main entertainment and shopping area. A sun umbrella and chairs brighten up the lobby, which has free internet access.

Top End

Jeonju Core Riviera Hotel ( 232 7300; www.jeonjucorerivierahotel.co.kr; r W170,000/330,000; ) Ask for a room overlooking the hanok district in Jeonju’s best hotel, which has spacious rooms and suites that feature natural wood décor, glass showers and a computer. Live music livens up the Windsor Bar (6pm to 2am; beers/cocktails W5000/6600) at 10pm. There’s also restaurants, a fitness club and a sauna.

Eating & Drinking

Gimbap Ma-eul (meals W2000-4000; 10am-9pm) A small, clean eatery that offers budget meals such as a range of gimbap (김밥) that includes cheese, tuna and salad.

Sambaekjip (meals W3500; 24hr) This 50-year-old restaurant specialises in kongnamul gukbap (콩나물국밥), a local Jeonju dish of rice, egg, bean sprout and seasoning cooked in a stone pot. It’s said to be a hangover cure and comes with side dishes. To find the restaurant, walk down the road past Primus cinema and turn left.

Daho Teahouse (teas W4000; 11am-midnight) The best of the hanok teahouses is down an alleyway and has rustic, goblin-sized rooms overlooking an attractive garden where birds flit around. Listen to ethereal music as you sip the excellent teas such as daechucha (대추차; red date) and pink omijacha (오미차; dried five-flavour berries).

Nadeulbeol (Hanok Village; meals W4000-8000; 10am-8pm) This small rustic restaurant serves up what many locals say is the most delicious bibimbap (비빔밥; rice, fish and vegetable meal) in Jeonju.

Banya Dolstebap (Maeokg 1-gil; meals W6000-10,000; 11am-9.30pm) Hotpot rice is the speciality here with side dishes that include deodeok root, honey-coated potatoes, salad and soup. The ginseng version costs extra and moju (모주), a gingery alcoholic homebrew, is W1500. Service is off-hand but the food is good.

Hankookkwan (Orikkim; meals W7000-10,000; 11am-9pm) A dozen cooks and a dozen waiting staff provide speedy service even at hectic times in this ever-popular restaurant that serves up classic Jeonju bibimbap (비빔밥). Order dolso bibimbap (돌솥비빔밥) if you don’t want raw meat. It comes with side dishes and tea, while the medicinal homebrew moju is W1000 a bowl.

Traditional Culture Centre ( 280 7000; meals W9000-30,000; 10am-9pm) Visit this stylish, upmarket restaurant in a modernist building for Jeonju bibimbap, galbi jeongoksi (갈비정식; ribs and side dishes) or a full-on hanjeongsik (한정식; banquet). Next door is a teashop and a hall that hosts traditional music and dance shows.

Shopping

Hanok shops are at the far end of Jungangno, while the bustling Dongbu and Nambu Markets sell everything under the sun.

Nteopia ( 11am-11pm) A large fashion store in the youthful shopping precinct at Gaeksa, surrounded by beauty shops like The Face and Skin Food and Western restaurants such as Outback Steakhouse and Pizza Hut.

Lotte department store ( 10.30am-8pm) Has a cinema and is an 800m walk from the bus terminals.

Core department store ( 10.30am-8pm) Next to the Jeonju Core Riviera Hotel; houses 300 fashion outlets on seven floors.

Getting There & Away

Bus Destinations from the express bus terminal include:

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<th>Destination</th>
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Departures from the intercity bus terminal include:

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<td>4000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeong-eup</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jinan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muju</td>
<td>7000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naesosa</td>
<td>6000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Train

There are KTX (Korea Train Express; W27,000, 2½ hours, 19 daily), Saemual (express; W22,700, three hours, four daily) and Mugungwha (semi-express; W15,300, 3½ hours, 14 daily) trains to Yongsan station in Seoul, but KTX trains involve a change at Iksan. Trains also run south to Jeollanam-do.

Getting Around

Numerous buses (W850) run from near the bus terminals to downtown, while buses 105, 509 and others run to the train station. Taxis are plentiful and cheap (W1500 flag fall).

Geumsansa & Moaksan Provincial Park

This park ( 548 1734; adult/youth/child W2600/1700/1000; 8am-7pm), which contains Moaksan (794m), is only 40 minutes from Jeonju and is
a popular destination for hikers at weekends. The main attraction is Geumsansa, a temple that dates back to AD 599. To stay in the temple (W40,000 including meals), contact the information office (5481330; 9am-6pm, closed 2 weekdays a week). The Maitreya Hall is special, a three-storey wooden structure built in 1635 that retains an air of antiquity. Inside is an impressive Mireuksa Buddha, the Buddha of the Future, behind which is a huge painting.

On the left is a museum and a hall, with carvings of 500 Buddha helpers who all look different. Near the entrance, sip soothing tea in the serene, Zen-style atmosphere of Sanjang Dawon (tea W6000).

Between 10 and 20 monks live here for a maximum period of five years. Monks now have a TV in their common room and to keep fit they play games of soccer and volleyball (or Ping-Pong if it’s wet).

The usual climbing route up Moaksan goes past the temple, up Janggundae and along the ridge up to the peak. The hike is relatively easy and you can be up and down in three hours.

Overlooking the car park on the left is Hwarsu Hoegwan (회화호관; meals W5000-20,000), a restaurant where you can sit inside or outside under the wisteria. Choose between local black pig, tokkitang (도끼탕; spicy rabbit soup) or roast ot (오두) under the wisteria. Geumsansan and Moaksan are easily reached from Jeonju. Local bus 79 (W1400, 45 minutes, every 15 minutes) can be picked up along Girinno, Jeonju’s main street. Don’t get on buses that go to the other end of Moaksan park; ask for Geumsansa.

**MAISAN PROVINCIAL PARK**

This is a must-see park (433 3313; adult/child W2000/1500/900; sunrise-sunset). Maisan means ‘Horse Ears Mountain’, which refers to two extraordinary rocky peaks as they appear from the access town of Jinan. The east peak, Sutmaisan, is 678m while the west peak, Ammaisan, is slightly taller at 685m. Both ears are made of conglomerate rock, which is rare in Korea. Only Ammaisan can be scaled. It’s a steep half-hour climb, but grinning grandmas make it to the top without any problem.

Tapsa (Paga Temple), at the base of the female ear, has a unique sculptural garden of 80 stone towers or pinnacles that were piled up by a Buddhist mystic, Yi Kapmyong (1860–1957). Up to 15m in height, they represent religious ideas about the universe and miraculously never seem to crumble, although no cement has been used. The diverse stone towers are an intriguing sight, evoking the atmosphere of a lost world.

Nearby is Unsusa, a temple with a Dan-gun shrine, a centuries-old pear tree, attractive gardens and, best of all, you are allowed to bang the big drum.

An easy 1½-hour, 1.7km hike with a splendid view at the top and ever-changing views of Ammaisan starts from Tapsa and takes you back to the car park at the entrance. In April the cherry trees around the nearby lake burst into blossom.

Frequent buses (W3300, 50 minutes, every 30 minutes) run along the scenic route from Jeonju to the small town of Jinan. From Jinan, buses (W850, five minutes, hourly) run to the park entrance.

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**DEOGYUSAN NATIONAL PARK**

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

In the northwest of this park (322 3174; adult/child W1200/2200; sunrise-sunset) is Jeok-sang Sansseong, a fortress that was rebuilt and enlarged in the 17th century. Encircled by the 8km wall are the ruins of a Joseon-dynasty archive, a reservoir and An-guksa, a temple that was built in the 1860s. Buses only run along the main road to Geochung-dong, so you must get off at the access road and walk (4km) or hitchhike.

Opened in 1990, Muju Ski Resort (322 9000; www.mujuresort.com) is one of Korea’s top winter playgrounds, with 26 ski slopes that range from all skill levels. Snowboarding, sledging, night and mogul skiing and lessons in English are all available. The season runs from mid-December to April. The resort has top-notch facilities including an alpine-style village where you can shop, dine, dance, drink in a glass dome, play billiards, steam in a sauna or surf the net.

A few shops, restaurants and bars are open all year. The gondola (adult/child return W10,000/7000; 10am-4pm) to the top of Seolleongbong (1520m) takes 15 minutes and also runs in the off-season. Mountain bikes (adult/child per hr W10,000/8000; 9am-7pm) can be hired to ride round a special track.

Further on from Muju Ski Resort is a tourist village at Gucheone-dong, the start of the park’s best hike (1¼ hours, 6km) that follows the river and valley past 20 beauty spots (a small temple, Baengnyeonsa). Fairies are said to slide down rainbows to bathe in the pools, and the hike is enchanting at any time of the year. The trail continues past Baengnyeonsa for a strenuous, steep, 1½-hour ascent of Hyangjeokbong (1614m). Yew trees, azaleas and alpine flowers adorn the summit.

**Sleeping**

Accommodation is available in condos, or 2km up the access road in minibak (private homes with rooms for rent) and pension, which are connected to the ski slopes by free shuttle buses. The best policy is to buy a package deal that includes accommodation, ski hire, clothes hire, transport and lift passes.
NAEJANGSAN NATIONAL PARK

Getting There & Away
Mountain-surrounded Muju town, the gateway to Deogyusan National Park and Muju Ski Resort, is connected by bus to Daejeon (W3800, one hour, every 40 minutes), Geumsan (W2300, one hour, hourly), Jeonju (W7000, 1½ hours, hourly), Seoul (W12,100, three hours, five daily) and other cities.

From Muju town, the Gucheon-dong bus (W3000, 45 minutes, hourly) can drop you at the access road to Muju Ski Resort (2km from the resort) or at the beginning of the fortress or Gucheon-dong hills. The Muju Resort shuttle bus (free, one hour, six daily off-season, frequent during the ski season) runs from just outside Muju town bus terminal by the river.

NAEJANGSAN NATIONAL PARK

The mountainous ridge in this park (W538785; adult/youth/child W2300/1300/700; sunrise-sunset) is shaped like an amphitheatre. A spider’s web of trails leads up to the ridge, but the fastest way up is by cable car (adult/child one way W3500/2000, return W4500/2000). The hike around the rim is strenuous, but with splendid views on a fine day. The trail is a roller-coaster ride, going up and down six main peaks and numerous small ones before you reach Seorae-bong, from where you head back down to the access road.

There are metal ladders, bridges and railings to help you scramble over the rocky parts. Give yourself four hours to hike around the amphitheatre, with an hour for breaks and a picnic. If you find the hike too difficult, turn right at any time and follow one of the many trails back down to Naejangsan.

An easy and picturesque 2km walk from Naejangsan goes through Geumsong valley, which becomes a steep ravine before leading to a cave, a natural rock arch and a waterfall.

The tourist information centre (537 1330) has free internet access, and across the road is a bicycle hire stall (011-9449 4383; per hr W3000; 9am-6pm). Cycle up to the temple or back out of the park and around the nearby farms and villages.

Buses (W3000, one hour, every 15 minutes) run from Jeonju to Jeong-eup. From just outside the bus terminal on the left, local bus 171 (W17100, 30 minutes, every 20 minutes) runs to Naejangsan.

SEONUNSAN PROVINCIAL PARK

This pretty park (563 3450; adult/youth/child W1800/1800/1300; sunrise-sunset) has always been popular and has inspired poets such as Sa Chong-ju:

Every spring I go to Seonunsan To see the camellia flowers But this year they haven’t bloomed yet So I’m thinking about last year’s visit And the husky-voiced singing of a bar hostess.

Sights & Activities
A 20-minute walk along a rocky, tree-lined river brings you to Seonunsan and just behind the temple is a 500-year-old camellia forest that flowers around the end of April, although a few blooms linger into summer.

Another 35 minutes further on is Dosoram and just beyond is a giant Buddha rock carving. Folk art in style, it probably dates back to the Goryeo dynasty; the amazing image is carved into the cliff face and is 13m high. Despite centuries of erosion the Buddha is still an impressive sight, a testament to the faith of ancient times. On the right is a very narrow grotto, and next to it stairs lead up to a tiny shrine and a great view. From the Buddha, you can climb Nakjodae and carry on to Gaeippalsan.
and Seonunsan, with views of the West Sea, before heading back down to Seonunsan.

**Sleeping & Eating**
Accommodation is limited and the Seonunsan Youth Hostel (☎ 561 3333; fax 561 3448; W40,000) can sometimes be booked out at weekends.

At the park entrance are stalls selling locally grown bokbunja (wild berry), also in the form of juice, soju and rice-cakes. Others sell barbecued chicken and fish, norang goguma (tasty strips of dried sweet potato), muhwagwa (tiny dried figs), gingko fruit and roast chestnuts.

**Getting There & Away**
Buses (W4000, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes) run from Jeonju to Gochang, from where buses (W1800, 20 minutes, hourly) run to Seonunsan.

In Gochang, walk out of the bus terminal, turn left and at the main crossroads turn right to visit Gochang Fortress, a 10-minute walk. On the right is the Pansori Museum (☎ 560 2761; adult/child W800/500; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun), with memorabilia on this unique solo opera musical form. The well-preserved, ivy-covered, 15th-century fortress wall (admission free; ☎ 9am-7pm Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Feb) surrounds buildings such as a three-cell prison. A local belief is that if a woman walks three times around the wall with a stone on her head in a leap month, then she will never become ill and will enter paradise.

**BYEONSANBANDO NATIONAL PARK**

This coastal park ( <<= 582 7808; adult/yo/child W2200/1300/700; ☎ sunrise-sunset) contains Naesosa, where the buildings look old, with lots of unpainted wood. Take a close look at the main hall, especially the lattice doors, the painting behind the Buddha statues, and the intricately carved and painted ceiling with musical instruments, flowers and dragons among the motifs.

Hike up the unpaved road to Cheongneongam (20 minutes) for sea views; another 15 minutes brings you to the ridge where you turn left for Gwanembong. From the peak follow the path, which goes up and down and over rocks for an hour until you reach Jikso Pokpo.

A 30m-high waterfall with a large pool. Another pretty spot is Seonyeotang (Angel Pool). From there walk along the unpaved access road past the ruins of Silsangsa, destroyed during the Korean War. You may need to hitch a lift as buses are infrequent. For a more challenging hike head up Nakjoda, which is famous for its sunset views.

Beaches along the coast attract crowds in summer.

**Gyeokpo beach** has dramatic stratified cliffs and caves as well as seafood restaurants. The beach is safe for swimming but the sea disappears at low tide. Gyeokpo is also the starting point for ferries to Wido, a small island where every house in the little fishing village of Jinni is a minbak-cum-restaurant. The large sandy beach is a cool place to hang in summer.

**Ferries** (☎ 581 0023) go from Gyeokpo to Wido (W6500 one way, 40 minutes, three daily September to June, six daily July and August).

**JEOLLABUK-DO**

**BYEONSANBANDO NATIONAL PARK**

This coastal park ( <<= 582 7808; adult/yo/child W2200/1300/700; ☎ sunrise-sunset) contains Naesosa, where the buildings look old, with lots of unpainted wood. Take a close look at the main hall, especially the lattice doors, the painting behind the Buddha statues, and the intricately carved and painted ceiling with musical instruments, flowers and dragons among the motifs.

Hike up the unpaved road to Cheongneongam (20 minutes) for sea views; another 15 minutes brings you to the ridge where you turn left for Gwanembong. From the peak follow the path, which goes up and down and over rocks for an hour until you reach Jikso Pokpo. Seonyudo and the three islands that are linked to it by bridges. Six-person bungubungka (auto rickshaws; per hour W30,000) take pensioners on fun tours.

The main attraction is the 1.6km beach, a 10-minute walk from the ferry pier, on a spit of soft, golden sand with great island views on both sides. At the far end the adventurous should climb up rocky Mangjubong. Take the right turn towards Seonyeotang village and on your left are tracks leading through the grass up to some ropes that are fixed to the rock, which you can use to haul yourself up to a wooded gully. The view from the top is a wonderful panorama of islands.

Raw fish and squid dominate the restaurant scene, but you can find baekban ( 백반; rice, fish and vegetable meal) and galbi (갈비; beef ribs). Accommodation prices double in July and August. A friendly, weather-beaten owner welcomes guests to the clean and tidy rooms at Jung-ang Minbak ( 종암민박; ☎ 465 3450; W25,000). Next to the school, it has a distinctive rock-clad exterior.

The new Uri Park Minbak (우리파크민박; ☎ 465 0657; W30,000) has better views but so mattresses rather than beds. The restaurant cooks up galbi if you’re not a fish or seafood fan. Both are in the main fishing village, with its shops and restaurants, a 10-minute walk from the jetty and very near the beach.

Buses (W4000, one hour, every 15 minutes) leave from Jeonju for Goyeokpo. Ferries (adult/child one way W11,700/5500, 1½ hours, three or four daily) leave from the new Yeongan Yeogaek (Gunsan Coastal Ferry Terminal; 영안여객터미널; ☎ 467 6000), a 15-minute, W7500 taxi ride from Gunsan bus terminal.
Gongju and Buyeo in Chungcheongnam-do, commonly shortened to Chungnam, were once capitals of the ancient Baekje kingdom. The treasures found in King Muryeong's tomb make him the second capital of the Baekje kingdom in AD 475 when the first capital at Hanseong (Seoul) was captured by Goguryeo troops. The astonishing tomb of King Muryeong, discovered near Gongju in 1971, with its treasure trove of nearly 3000 items, all over a thousand years old, reveal the outstanding craftsmanship and highly developed culture of the period.

In AD 538 the capital was forced to move south again, this time to Sabi (Buyeo), but it didn’t last long before it was overwhelmed in AD 660 by the joint army of Shilla and China, and the Baekje kingdom disappeared forever.

Much of the region is still rural, with rice fields interspersed with vegetable plots and small orchards in the wide valleys between the forested hillsides. Unfortunately the national trend of growing crops under polythene mars the views.

Another feature is the quirky churches of all shapes and sizes that can be found in virtually every village as well as in every town and city neighbourhood. Haemi fortress encircles a prison where early Catholic converts were tortured and killed, as their beliefs undermined the strict Confucian apartheid-like hierarchy of aristocrats, peasants and slaves. Geumsan, south of Daejeon, is the Mecca for ginseng lovers with countless shops and stalls selling the medicinal root in every conceivable form.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Marvel at the 1500-year-old treasures from King Muryeong’s tomb (p313) in Gongju
- Tour around the fortress, royal pond garden and tomb sites of Baekje’s last capital, Buyeo (p316)
- Relax on Daecheon beach (p319) with its sandy beach, seafood eateries and mud therapies
- Relive the epic struggle against Japanese colonial rule at the Independence Hall of Korea (p322)
- Enjoy ginseng in all its healthy manifestations in Ginseng Town, Geumsan (p311)
- Offer a prayer for the early Catholic converts imprisoned and executed in Haemi fortress (p322)

**TELEPHONE CODE:** 041  
**POPULATION:** 1.9 MILLION  
**AREA:** 8586 SQ KM
DAEJEON 대전

% 962 / pop 2.5 million

Daejeon is South Korea's science and technology capital, a transport hub and the gateway to the ginseng centre of Geumsan and to hiking trails in nearby Gyeongsan National Park and Daejeon/Ji-eup Provincial Park in Jeolla-buk-do. The new KTX bullet-train service has made Daejeon, 160km south of Seoul, a suburb of the capital, since the journey there now takes less than an hour. At the same time, the recently opened subway system has improved transport within the city.

Like other major cities, Daejeon has its own telephone code, different to that of the province that surrounds it.

Orientation

Daejeon is a confusing city with three major bus terminals, two main train stations and a handful of scattered shopping and entertainment areas. A cluster of shops and markets is in front of Daejeon train station, while the best motels are in the Dongdaejeon/express bus terminal area. To the west is Yuseong, with its hot-spring hotels and spas. To the north are the remains of Expo '93 and a new arts plaza. The city is in a bowl, surrounded by hills. The most interesting walk is up Bomunsan.

Information

Chungnam National University Hospital (☏ 220 7134; www.cnuh.co.kr; Muhyeong 195, 223 from outside Daejeon train station bus terminal)...

SLEEPING

Coupleia Motel (☏ 1514; 14 Jung-angno Market, 11.30am-10pm)

EATING

Punggyeon Samgyetang (☏ 721 6890; 221; 11.30am-2pm)

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

City Tour Office (☏ 308 2150)

Post offices

Chinhwasa and behind Dongdaejeon bus terminal.

Shinhan Bank (Dongdaejeon) Exchange foreign currency and traveler's cheques.

Tourist Information Centre: at express bus terminal (☏ 632 1388; www.metro.daejeon.kr) Inside station.

Bus 103 (W1300, 35 minutes, every 15 minutes). From Expo '93, check to see which science pavilions and shows are still up and running.

To the right of Expo Park is SkyPark (☏ 153 4560, 12,000; 9.30am-7pm; admission includes rides). Small rides include roller coasters, bumper cars and Ferris wheels. The tram ride is a chance to enjoy a 15-minute helium-balloon ride that rises 150m for the best view over the city.

Kimbuckles (☏ 152 2500; 1234; day pass adult/child W1300/800; 9.30am-3pm; operation in summer), on the left of Expo Park, is a fun amusement park with parades, acrobatic shows and enough thrill rides to keep youngsters screaming happily for a couple of hours.

Connected by a pedestrian bridge to Expo Park, the National Science Museum (☏ 632 7894; www.sciencemuseum.go.kr; adult/child W1600/500; 9.30am-5.30pm). The Sun was designed with children in mind. Exhibits range from the age of dinosaurs through to the digital era, and everyone should find something of interest.

From Expo Park: stroll down to the river and turn left for a short walk before crossing over the new bridge. On the right is Hanbat Arboretum (admission free; 9am-6pm). On May 9th, there is a tranquil, green oasis perfect for a picnic. Further on, Sinsun (☏ 1544-4568, 9.30am-5pm; admission W1000), with its attractive roofs, rents out bicycles and scooters to explore the riverbank on your own. On the right is Daejeon Museum of Art (☏ 156 7234; www.daejeonmuseum.go.kr; adult/child W1000/500; 9.30am-5pm, admission includes rides).

Bus 103 (W1300, 35 minutes, every 15 minutes) leaves from outside the express bus terminal and Daejeon train station. Get off at the National Science Museum.

YUSEONG HOT SPRINGS 유성 온천

In the west of Daejeon is Yuseong, where 20 therapeutic onchae (hot-spring baths) are fed from 350m underground. Rejuvenate tired limbs and stressed minds in the indoor hot pools of a range of hotels and spas. If you’re not on a hotel guest, you can still enjoy a hot (and cold) pool for under W5000 and stay as long as you like.

Yuseong Spa (☏ 156 7234; adults/children W1300/500; 9.30am-5.30pm; closed Sun). Yuseong Hotel is a top hot-spring spa. Women can enjoy either pine needle mud-gout or even coffee baths (they vary each day), while both the women’s and men’s sections feature a ginseng and green tea bath plus hot and cold saunas. The men’s section has an outdoor pool.

Take bus 102 (W1300, every 15 minutes) from outside the express bus terminal (one hour) or outside Daejeon train station (45 minutes).

BOMUNSAN 보문산

Daejeon is encircled by a ring of wooded hills that provide a green backdrop to the city. The
most accessible is Bomunsan (457m) on the south side of the city. You can look around tiny Wongsaka and do a spot of bird watching on your way up past the observation deck, with panoramic views of the city, to Emin Ganeung, a small fortress that encircles the summit.

To get there, catch bus 724 (W1300, 20 minutes, every 20 minutes) from outside the express bus terminal or Daejeon train station. The bus drops you near the tree-lined access road.

### Sleeping

Hundreds of comfortable, reasonably priced new motels cluster around the express and Daejeon intercity bus terminals.

**Jiru Park** (% 687 8800; www.jirupalgak.com; 1am-5pm) is a clean and comfortable motel where rooms are modern, spacious and have large TVs and natural wood decor, with both a bath and a shower. A room with a computer is W5000 extra.

**Coupleria Motel** (% 682 1000; www.coupleria.com; 1am-5pm) is opposite Coupleria, Limounise is new and flashy. Bathrooms come with large glass showers and a bath, and electronic gear includes computers and DVD players.

**Yousung Hotel** (% 637 9600; 21 Yongtam 3-gil; www.yousunghotel.com; Yuseong; d, tw & ondol from W190,000; 9am-6pm) is near the bus terminals. The rooms are rather shabby, but are better than you would guess from the outside.

**Gupleila Motel** (% 637 9800; 21 Yongtam 3-gil; www.gupleila.com; 8am-10pm) is a clean and comfortable motel where rooms are modern, spacious and have large TVs and natural wood decor, with both a bath and a shower. A room with a computer is W5000 extra.

**Limounise Motel** (% 682 1000; www.limounise.com; 1am-5pm) is opposite Coupleria, Limounise is new and flashy. Bathrooms come with large glass showers and a bath, and electronic gear includes computers and DVD players.

### Eating

**Yangsuri** (% 744-2800; www.yangyoun.com; 8am-5pm) is a popular and famous sit-on-the-floor restaurant that specialises in budget cook-it-yourself shabu kalguksu (사부칼국수), a first course of spicy mushroom vegetable soup with thin strips of meat and thick noodles is followed by rice, egg and garnish added to the remains of the soup. The seafood option is great too, as is the squid pajun (green-onion pancake). Near the bus terminals, Yeongsusi is child-friendly and has an indoor play area.

**Tea House Hae Rock Courtyard** (% 744-2800; 8am-7pm) is a large, unpretentious restaurant for its samgyetang (삼계탕) with lettuce and cucumber side dishes. It's within an easy walking distance of the bus terminals and the manager is helpful.

**Bomun Saneung** (% 744-3700; 10am-9pm) is a popular and famous sit-on-the-floor restaurant that specialises in budget cook-it-yourself shabu kalguksu (사부칼국수), a first course of spicy mushroom vegetable soup with thin strips of meat and thick noodles is followed by rice, egg and garnish added to the remains of the soup. The seafood option is great too, as is the squid pajun (green-onion pancake). Near the bus terminals, Yeongsusi is child-friendly and has an indoor play area.

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**Bomun Sanseong** (% 744-2800; 9am-5pm) has an indoor play area.

To get there, catch bus 724 (W1300, 20 minutes, every 20 minutes) from outside the express bus terminal or Daejeon train station. The bus drops you near the tree-lined access road.

### Shopping

Shops in the underground shopping area that runs under Jungangno from Daejeon train station sell mainly clothing and souvenirs. On the left is the sprawling Jungangno market, which stocks everything from live eels to US$5 ‘Louis Vuitton’ bags. Further along, every evening a tsunami of young people swirl around the pedestrianised shopping district near the Milano 21 (jungangno 11am-11pm) fashion store.

### Getting There & Away

#### AIR

The nearest airport is Cheongju, 60km north of Daejeon in Chungcheongbuk-do, which is linked to Daejeon by bus (W3200, 45 minutes, five daily).

#### BUS

Daejeon has three bus terminals: the Seojeon (west) intercity bus terminal, the Daejeon (east) intercity bus terminal and express bus terminal, which are side by side near the motels.

Buses depart the express bus terminal for the following destinations:

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<th>Destination</th>
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<th>Frequency</th>
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<td>7900</td>
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<td>Geumsan</td>
<td>6200</td>
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<tr>
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From Daejeon intercity bus terminal, destinations include:

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<th>Destination</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cheongju</td>
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### Tourist Information

Most tourist information is available at the Korea Tourism Organization office and at the tourist information centre in the Daejeon train station.

### Backpacking

Korea joined the elite club of countries with super fast trains in April 2004, following the successful development of its own sleek 300km/h KTX trains (http://ktx.or.kr). Though based on the French TGV system, most of the 46 trains have been built in Korea. The sleek trains have over 900 seats and have already turned Daejeon into a suburb of Seoul, as it now takes less than an hour to travel between the two cities. It’s faster to reach Seoul Station from Daejeon by KTX than from Olympic Park by subway.

The project is mega expensive but the peninsula will shrink further when the special KTX track is extended all the way down to Busan in the southeast and to Mokpo in the southwest. Carbon-dioxide emissions will also be reduced as trains are a greener transport system than cars and aircraft.
One recommended option from Gongju is to take a bus to Donghaksa at the eastern end of the park, hike to Gapsa (4.7km, four hours), and then take another bus back to Gongju.

Sleeping & Eating

The eastern park entrance (Donghaksa) has a line of duck restaurants. At the western park entrance (Gapsa) is the usual tourist village. The eastern park entrance (Donghaksa) has a line of duck restaurants. At the western park entrance (Gapsa) is the usual tourist village.

MUSHROOMS

Donghaksa (Gapsa) has mushroom-shaped restaurants, diones mushroom sambap (버섯@AllArgsConstructor: acorn pancake) and assorted ingredients with rice and leaves. Hanbong or baekbap (한방 오리백숙: duck in medicinal soup) is served two, or just sip Korean tea amid eclectic furnishings that include a rhino head and a knight on horseback.

The camping ground has only basic facilities but the low prices (W3000 to W5000) attract plenty of nature lovers in July and August.

Getting There & Away

Bus 102 (W1300, one hour, every 15 minutes) from outside Daejeon express bus terminal goes to the eastern end of the park.

From the Gongju local bus terminal, take a local bus (W950, 30 minutes, every 30 minutes) to Gapsa at the western park entrance, or to Donghaksa (W950, 30 minutes, six daily) at the eastern end.

GONGJU

Gongju became the second capital of the Baekje kingdom in AD 475 when the first capital at Hansong (Seoul) was captured by Goguryeo troops. Less than 70 years later, in 538, the capital was forced to move south again, this time to Sabi (Buyeo). The city is most famous for King Muryeong's tomb and its treasure trove of 2900 ancient artefacts.

Information

If you're heading to the Gapsa or Donghaksa tourist village, with rooms that have fancy furnishings, light decor and a glass, hi-tech shower. Fluorescent wallpaper brightens up the corridors.

The market is larger on the second, seventh, 12th, 17th, 22nd and 27th days of every month.

Guemun can be reached along a scenic route by bus from Daejeon (W3000, one hour, every 20 minutes) and from Miju (W2300, 35 minutes, hourly) in Jeollabuk-do. Buses also run to Daejeon Provincial Park (W1600, 20 minutes, hourly).

The eastern entrance to Gyeryongsan National Park (625 3003; adult/youth/child W5000/2700/2500, h 6am-7pm) is 18km from Daejeon. The park contains two famous temples surrounded by forested hills, which give way to rocky cliffs towards the peaks. It’s a small but pretty mountain because locals thought the mountain resembled a dragon with a rooster’s head.

Donghaksa (a nunnery) is 1km from the park entrance, and from there you can hike up to another temple, Gyeongdokjeong, and then on to Sambulbong and Gwaneumbong before returning to Donghaksa via Eunseon Paldol (Eunseon Waterfall).

Gapsa, a temple at the park’s western end, is best visited from Gongju and is a 20-minute walk from the bus stop. Look out for birds and butterflies on the way. The temple has a superb bell, cast in 1584, Yongmun Paldol (원문钹), a 20-minute hike beyond the temple, is a small waterfall but sits in a very scenic location.

WONDER ROOT

Ginseng is a Korean health product that’s in demand throughout the world. It’s grown under black netting to simulate its natural habitat under shady trees, and the root takes years to grow to its optimum size. Roots with unusual shapes can be worth a fortune, as is ginseng that has grown wild. The more mature red ginseng is always more expensive than the white. The plant has attractive red berries but they seem to have no use – only the root has commercial value. Numerous health benefits are claimed for ginseng, and it turns up in products as diverse as soju, rice wine, tea, candy, biscuits, coffee, noodles, body lotions and shampoo.

KYUNGJI

The Kyungji exhibition hall contains actual-size replicas of the tombs that you can go to Sinwonsa (1.5km) to see. A local bus (W950, 30 minutes, every 30 minutes) goes to Sinwonsa. The burial chambers have all been sealed to protect them, so you cannot look inside. However the TOMB OF KING MURYEONG contains actual-size replicas of the tombs that you can go
into. Sit down in King Muryeong’s brick tomb, with its cleverly designed arched roof, and experience the special atmosphere of its lotus-flower pattern, symbols of Buddhist heaven. Another tomb has dragon, tiger, tortoise snake and phoenix designs inside.

Bus 25 (W950, 10 minutes, every 15 minutes) runs from the local bus terminal to the tombs, or catch a taxi (W2000). Otherwise it’s a 15-minute walk from the fortress entrance to the tombs.

**GONGSANSEONG 공성산**
This hilltop fortress (entrance: W4000, 2 hours) at the foot of Mt Sanseong, W9000, is a 15-minute walk from the fortress entrance. The 2.6km wall that encircles the 110m summit of Gongsan was made of earth during the Baekje kingdom. The stone facing was added in the 18th century.

**Sangjujeong** is a pavilion built where King Injo rested during his 10-day stay in the fortress to which he had fled to escape an insurrection. Nearby is an impressive stone-lined Baekje pond. An unusual stepwell is in front of the temple **Yeongjusa**, which housed warrior monks who fought valiantly against the Japanese in the 1590s. Korean monks were pacifist except when their country was attacked. **Gongjungru, Imnyugak and Gwanjungru** are all pavilions.

At the main entrance gate, a 10-minute **Changing of the Baekje Guard** takes place hourly between 2pm and 8pm on Saturday and Sunday in April, May, June, September and October. You can dress up as a Baekje warrior and try your hand at archery (W1000).

**HWANGSAEBAWI 황새바위성지**
Walk up to this serene hilltop park (% 853 8323; Pungmul Geori; r W25,000; h 9am-5pm) which has a poignant monument and solemn memorial chapel. Three hundred Catholics from all social classes were executed on this spot, mostly in the 1860s, but now their spirits lie in peace, surrounded by birdsong.

**Tours**
A free day-long **bus tour** (% 856 7700) of all the sites of Gongju runs every Sunday from April to October, and departs from the fortress car park at 10am, returning at 6pm.

**Festivals**
Gongju’s golden age is re-enacted and celebrated from the 9 October to 12 October every odd-numbered year with a **Baekje theme festival** of 100 events that includes a huge parade, dancing, music, games, sports and fireworks. The festival is held in nearby Buyeo in even-numbered years.

Every October a three-day **folk drama festival** takes place at the **Korea Folk Drama Museum** (public: W1000, adults W2000; h 10am-8pm, Sat-Sun). International folk music, dance and drama continue all day from 10am. Take a taxi (W4000) to get there.

**Sleeping**
**Minarujang** (% 853 2133; 396-7; Minarujang gil; c W25,000; a) One of a dozen budget yogwan clustered opposite the fortress, this is clean, well-priced and has a smiling hostess. The big plus is a computer in all the rooms, although bathrooms contain bowls rather than basins.

**Han’s Deli** (% 853 2080; Hwangsaebawi, W3500-3500; h 9am-5pm) is a bright and breezy eatery with music and a very youthful vibe that serves two unusual and tasty dishes — **ssambap** (lettuce wrap) and **gudeuraeteukju** (homebrew gudeurae 18%) which has a cool red-pop sauce and is eaten wrapped in dried seaweed, and **bokkeum bokkeum myunbap** (black pepper rice), thick strips of chestnut jelly in a soup with seaweed and a few pieces of kimchi. Both come with side dishes and tea.

**Japanese Restaurant** (% 853 2080; W25000; W10000; h 11:30am-10pm) A brand new, all-white restaurant that serves two unusual and tasty dishes — **teocheebibimbap** (oyster bibimbap), which has red-pepper sauce and is eaten wrapped in dried seaweed, and **bokkeum bokkeum myunbap** (black pepper rice), thick strips of chestnut jelly in a soup with seaweed and a few pieces of kimchi. Both come with side dishes and tea.

**Sitting in King Muryeong’s brick tomb, with its cleverly designed arched roof, and experience the special atmosphere of its lotus-flower pattern, symbols of Buddhist heaven.**

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in the city centre. Departures from the terminals include the following:

**Destination** | **Rice (W)** | **Duration** | **Frequency**
---|---|---|---
Boryeong | 300 | 45min | every 30min
Buyeo | 300 | 30min | every 30min
Cheonan | 300 | 1hr | every 30min
Changwon | 300 | 1hr | every 20min
Seoul | 600 | 2½hr | every 25min

**Getting Around**

Head to the local bus terminal to get around town or else just jump into an inexpensive taxi.

**AROUND GONGJU**

Buyeo was the site of the Baekje kingdom’s last capital, Sabi. The capital was moved there from Buyeo in AD 538, and six kings ruled as the dynasty flourished until it was destroyed by the combined forces of Shilla and the Tang (of China) in AD 660. Today Buyeo is a quiet backwater surrounded by wooded hills and rice fields, with friendly and tradition-minded inhabitants. Baekje relics include a fortress, burial mounds just out of town, a reconstructed pond garden and a five-storey stone pagoda. Many other treasures are inside Buyeo National Museum. The Jungang Covered Market is a great place to barter and bargain for food, clothes, souvenirs and just about anything else.

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**INFORMATION**

Hana Bank (cnr Wangungno & Sabiro) Foreign exchange.

Post office

Tourist information centre (www.buyeo.go.kr) Tourist information kiosks are inside Buyeo National Museum and inside Jeongimsa.

Sights

**BUYEOK NATIONAL MUSEUM 부여국립박물관**

This museum (9am-6pm Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Feb) has a reconstructed royal pleasure garden for the court ladies. A nature-viewing pavilion overlooks a pond that is surrounded by willow trees, flowers and rice fields. Ducks, egrets and herons have moved in. On the left is an imposing memorial to the last battle of General Gyebaek and his 5000 soldiers.

**BAEKJ ROYAL TOMBS 백제왕릉**

These seven royal tombs (9am-6pm, 350 3400; adult/youth/child W3000/1500/700) dating from 538 to 660, are on a hillside 3km from Buyeo along the road to Nonsan. It’s not possible to enter them, but an exhibition hall has small-scale models of the tombs that have been excavated. Onetomb has murals painted on the walls, but they are not very distinct.

The earth bank on the left is the remains of the city’s outer defences, which once stretched for 8km and were wide enough to ride a horse along. Phaeans and chickens now wander where once Baekje soldiers marched.

To get there from the bus station or along Wanguungno, hop on one of the local buses (W900, five minutes, every 30 minutes) to Nonsan (논산), or take a taxi (W4000).

**BAEKJ HISTORICAL MUSEUM 백제역사박물관**

This brand new museum (9am-6pm, 350 3400; adult/youth/child W3000/1500/700) contains a five-storey Baekje stone pagoda that fits together like Lego and is one of the few that survived the sacking of the town. It is a Goryeo dynasty Buddha so worn and weathered by age as to be hardly recognisable.

**GENERAL GYEBAEK’S LAST STAND**

General Gyebaek won many battles, but in AD 660 when he learnt of the size of the advancing Shilla and Chinese armies, he knew it was the end. Not wanting his family to face the suffering and disgrace of becoming slaves, he killed his wife and children.

After this extreme act he marched out with his small army of 5000 men to confront an enemy whose troops outnumbered his by ten to one. The general and his brave soldiers repulsed four enemy attacks on the Plains of Hwansanseol, but the fifth attack resulted in the death of General Gyebaek and all his soldiers. Their defeat meant the end of the Baekje kingdom, and 3000 court ladies are said to have thrown themselves off Buseosan cliff rather than surrender.

A statue of the general on horseback is in central Buyeo, and by Gungnamji pond is a stirring memorial to his final battle. The general and his men represent the unfurling martial spirit of the ancient kingdom of Baekje.
CHUNGCHEONGNAM-DO  ••  Buyeo

Eating, Drinking & Entertainment

The road down to the river ferry is the best street for restaurants.

**Boryeong**

Boryeong is the gateway to Daecheon beach (10km away) and Daecheon harbour (a further 2km), from where ferries sail to a dozen rural islands. All the frequent buses that connect Boryeong bus terminal and train station with Daecheon beach continue on to the harbour.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

**Buses**

Departures from Boryeong include the

- **Boryeong to Daecheon**
  - 300
  - 1.5h
  - hourly
- **Boryeong to Daejeon**
  - 800
  - 2h
  - hourly
- **Boryeong to Gongju**
  - 3100
  - 1h 10min
  - every 30min
- **Boryeong to Seoul**
  - 11,200
  - 2.5h
  - every 20min

**Train**

Saemaul (W15,700, 2½ hours, three a day) and Mugunghwa (W10,600, three hours, 13 a day) trains run between Daecheon station and Yongsan in Seoul.

**Daecheon Beach**

This is the best beach on the west coast; it’s almost golden-coloured sand is kept cleaner than most. Although 3.5km long and up to 100m wide, the beach can still be crowded on summer weekends. The sea is shallow and calm, and in the evening everyone gathers on the beach to watch the sunset and let off fireworks.

Architecturally, Daecheon beach is the Las Vegas of Korea with amusement parks and row upon row of fancifully designed and named motels, some of which have luridly coloured plastic palm trees outside that light up at night. It’s purely a tourist town with noraebang bars, nightclubs, billiard halls,
cafés and countless raw fish and seafood restaurants, but no banks.

Daecheon harbour, 2km away, is packed with fishing boats and is the ferry terminal for visiting the relaxing offshore islands, where the only residents are fisherfolk. For less commercialised beaches, take a ferry to Sapsido or on to Anmyeondo.

The tourist information centre (% 931 5933 h 9am-8pm) is in the Mud House (see below).

Activites
Water-skiing, canoeing, windsurfing, horse-and-carriage rides along the beach and speedboat, banana-boat and jet-ski rides are all available in July and August.

Located on the beachfront just to the left of the access road, Mud House (모텔 마드하우스: % 931 5353 h 9am-9pm) is a super new facility that offers a sauna, mud bath and aroma spa for W3000 for foreigners. Extras like massages and mud packs cost more. The local mud is full of health-giving minerals, and mud soaps and mud shampoos are on sale.

Sleeping
Daecheon beach has hundreds of large, modern motels with elevators and almost luxurious rooms. Prices start at W30,000 but usually increase on Friday and Saturday and in July and August.

Motel Coconuts (모텔코코넛스: % 931 5151 h 9am-9pm) This offers bland but neat and modern rooms, some with sea views, but the price doubles on Friday and Saturday.

Motel If (모텔이프: % 931 5153 h 9am-9pm) This offers bland but neat and modern rooms, some with sea views, but the price doubles on Friday and Saturday. Next to Motel Coconuts, on the left of the access road, this stylish motel has cozy rooms with black–rafter ceilings and bare brick walls that are hidden away inside the modern exterior. Rooms like No 503 have great sea views and cost W40,000.

Eating
Seafood and raw fish restaurants stretch along the beachfront, many with aquariums of fish, eels, crabs and shellfish outside. A pile of jogae modemugui (조개 모듬구이: mixed shellfish) is barbecued at your table for W30,000 (enough for three people). Raw fish like unak (우럭) and gwangae (광어) is expensive, while octopus or eel are other options.

For fast food there's Lotteria or convenience stores.

Getting There & Away
Buses (standard/deluxe W930/1300, every 30 minutes) run from Boryeong terminal and Daecheon terminal and Daecheon (Boryeong) train station to Daecheon beach (대천 해수욕장) and on to Daecheon harbour (대천 항). Get off at the first stop in Daecheon beach for the Mud House and the main access road to the beach.

SAPSIDO삼시도
This small relaxing island, 13km from Daecheon harbour, has few cars and three relatively unspoilt sandy beaches. It attracts so many visitors that in summer it becomes Mimibak Island, with nearly every one of the several hundred households offering accommodation and meals. Mimibak (private homes with rooms for rent) is sprinkled around the island but are concentrated around the two ferry jetties. Residents don’t usually lock their houses or cars.

From Sultung harbour walk for 15 minutes past the primary school to reach Goemeseom beach, with its fine stretch of sand between two rocky headlands, backed by sand dunes and fir trees. The only bolts on the landscape are a few huts and the garbage that the tide brings in. Except at high tide, you can walk left and clamber over the rocks to smaller jinmeodeokbanch which takes another 15 minutes. You might see terns, oyster catchers and cormorants. The walk back to Sultung harbour takes another 15 minutes, past fishermen repairing their nets and squid (rather than washing) hanging out to dry.

To get there and around, take the bus (W1500, one hour, hourly) goes on a ferry to Sapsido, then take the bus (W500, 30 minutes, hourly) to Daecheon beach (대천 해수욕장), which runs west past a line of sandy beaches. This attractive seaside area is being rapidly developed, creating a festive atmosphere in July and August.

Anmyeondo 안면도
The largest island (87 sq km) in the park has numerous beaches dotting its western coast. Ferries run from Daecheon harbour (W7000) and Sapsido (W7200), taking around 45 minutes to Yeongmukdo (영목도: 1 hour). From here the best option is to take the bus (W950, 30 minutes) to Jikji beach (叽지해수욕장), which runs west past a line of sandy beaches. This attractive seaside area is being rapidly developed, creating a festive atmosphere in July and August.
Taean

**pop 25,500**

Taean is the gateway to the northern maritime park beaches. Buses from Taean include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anmyeon</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>40min</td>
<td>hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheonan</td>
<td>9200</td>
<td>3hr</td>
<td>every 20min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daejeon</td>
<td>13,300</td>
<td>4hr</td>
<td>every 30min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haemi</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>50min</td>
<td>every 20min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>9600</td>
<td>2½hr</td>
<td>every 20min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mallipo Beach

Gorgeous, golden Mallipo beach has a rocky headland on one side and a cute fishing harbour on the other. Eighteen kilometres from Taean, it’s far less developed than Daecheon, but seafood restaurants, minbak and motels are beginning to sprout.

Just 2.5km up the road is the privately owned Cheollipo Arboretum (천리포수목원; 672-9818; guided tour W10,000; 9am-4.30pm Sat & Sun), founded by an American who loved Korea and trees equally. With 10,000 labelled trees and plants, tours take over an hour. Local buses (W1400, 30 minutes, hourly) run from platform 11 at Taean bus terminal. Buses also connect Mallipo directly with Seoul (W8600, three hours, four daily) and Daejeon (W14,700, 4½ hours, two daily).

**HAEMI 해미**

**pop 9600**

This imposing fortress (해미성; 660-2114; admission free; 6am-9pm), a five-minute walk from where buses drop passengers in the main street, was built in 1418 and served as a military headquarters until 1895. The walls are 1.8km long, 5m high and made with large stone blocks at the base and smaller ones at the top. Originally built to strengthen defences against marauding Japanese pirates, Joseon-era government offices and a guesthouse have been rebuilt inside. Steps lead up to a colourful hilltop pavilion, where silk-clad aristocrats used to compose nature poetry with a philosophical twist while listening to birdsong and admiring the view of distant misty mountains.

The fortress is a reminder of the dreadful persecution of early Christians by the Confucian Joseon kings - hundreds were executed here during the 1860s. The small prison has been rebuilt, complete with whipping frames, and outside is a gallows tree from whose branches the converts were tied by the hair to be tortured or killed.

Buses (W2400, 50 minutes, every 20 minutes) run from Haemi to Taean. Other buses run via Hongseong and Gongju to Daejeon (W10,900, 3½ hours, every 30 minutes).

**CHEONAN 천안**

**pop 403,000**

Cheonan is the gateway to a top museum, the Independence Hall of Korea, 14km east of the city.

**Independence Hall of Korea 독립기념관**

This major museum (% 560-0114; www.independence.or.kr; adult/youth/child W2000/1100/700; 9.30am-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb) shines a light on Korea’s plucky but doomed fight for independence against Japanese colonialism from the 1870s to 1945. Built on a grand scale with expansive plazas, 50m-high monuments, fountains and 800 Korean flags, it enjoys a parklike setting.

The seven exhibition halls contain some English-language descriptions and use historical photos, scale models, waxworks and relics to give a very detailed account of the pro-independence groups. They kept the spirit of a Korean identity flickering even during the darkest days of colonial oppression. But don’t expect anything much on the numerous Korean collaborators or on the American and allied contribution to Korean independence.

**Getting There & Away**

Take subway Line 1 to Cheonan (W2300, 2½ hours, every 15 minutes) from Seoul (or Suwon). Turn left at the ticket barrier and left again to East Square. Straight ahead is the tourist information centre (% 521-2038). Turn right for the bus stop, where city buses (W800, 20 minutes, every 10 minutes), such as buses 413 and 490, run to the museum. They stop on the main road, a 15-minute walk from the exhibition halls. A taxi costs W15,000.

Cheonan intercity bus terminal is in the basement of Galleria department store, 150m from the express bus terminal, and is a W2500 taxi ride north of Cheonan train station. Bus destinations include Seoul (W4200, one hour, every 20 minutes); Daejeon (W3600, one hour, every 15 minutes); and Gongju (W3900, one hour, every 20 minutes).
Chungcheongbuk-do
충청북도

Chungbuk is the only province that has no coastline, but it makes up for it by being the country's lake district. A two-hour ferry ride along Chungju Lake zips past attractive cliffs that inspired Joseon-era artists and poets. Lakeside, Cheongnamdae is a holiday villa used by Korean presidents that is open to the public for most of the year. Another lakeside attraction is the resort town of Danyang, within walking distance of a huge limestone cave and a bus trip away from a national park and the unique Gu·insa temple complex.

You can stroll round the attractive spa resort of Suanbo Hot Springs in a matter of minutes, but after a therapeutic dip and massage, you can savour local specialities such as rabbit, duck and pheasant meals in the restaurants that make up most of the town. Just a couple of kilometres down the road is Korea's most modest ski resort, which lures beginners who don't want a crowded ski-resort feel.

No less than three national parks line the province's southwest border with Gyeongsangbuk-do: Songnisan, famous for its giant Buddha statue; Sobaeksan, popular in late spring when the mountain azaleas paint the hillsides purple; and Woraksan, where rare but shy goral antelopes roam freely.

The province produces apples, peaches and chestnuts and provides a weekend escape for city folk from Seoul and Daejeon.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Board a fast ferry on Chungju Lake (p328) for Korea's most scenic waterway trip
- Tour the presidential holiday villa and gardens at Cheongnamdae (p327)
- Relax in lakeside Danyang (p340) and visit limestone caves, temples and mountain summits
- Soak in Suanbo Hot Springs (p338), savour pheasant meals, and hike or ski
- Safari through Woraksan National Park (p339) looking out for goral antelopes
- Explore Songnisan National Park (p328) and admire Beopjusa and its huge Buddha
History
The province was historically the southern boundary of the Goguryeo kingdom, and Suanbo Hot Springs has been providing therapeutic baths for a thousand years, but the province’s main claim to historical fame is based on Heungdeoksa, a temple in Cheongju city that no longer exists, where the world’s first book was printed using movable metal type (p325).

National & Provincial Parks
Don’t miss the unique temple complex in the north of Woraksan National Park (p343) or the wonderful azalea blooms in May in the park’s south. Songnisan National Park (p328) has a huge Buddha statue and peaks over 1000m, while Woraksan National Park (p339) is home to a growing herd of goral antelopes.

Getting There & Around
The province is best reached and toured by bus, but don’t miss the Chungju Lake boat trip.

Cheongju
Cheongju is the provincial capital and an education centre, but is easily confused with Chungju and Jeonju. It’s the gateway to the province’s main claim to historical fame is the first book was printed using movable metal type (p325).

History
While Woraksan National Park
destrianised shopping precinct and the lively Chungdae Jungmun student district.

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Eating & Entertainment

CHUNGCHEON

A lively student hang-out that always provides a good deal, with self-serve greenery wraps and free pajon (green-onion pancake) with the samyangsaj (삼양사절; barbecued pork). Otherwise try gochujang bulgogi (고추장 불고기), which is pork, ramyeon (noodles) and sauce cooked in a foil tray – you mop up the sauce with a mixture of rice, lettuce and dried seaweed.

SANGDANG SANEONG

Sangdajip (삼당집; minje W10,000) Opposite the bus stop, this restaurant makes its own tofu in a giant cauldron – try dubu jijim (두부 짜임; steamed tofu) for something light, but the recommended meal is hanbang ogpye (한방 오글예), locally sourced black chicken in a medicinal broth of bark, roots and cloves, and served with bindeokteuk (mung bean pancake), rice and tasty side dishes.

Malgolli (미끼생akah) is W1000 a bowl or W4000 a kettle. Hanbang orbadeulsuk (한방 오리백숙; herbal duck soup) is also available. Buses (p325) run from the bus stop back to town until 9.50pm.

Shopping

Carrefour/Homever (Seongan-gil; beer W4000) Next door to Lotte Mart, this high-rise fashion mall is packed with small stalls. A 24-hour sauna and spa is on the 3rd floor, a food court is on the 6th floor and cinemas are on the 8th floor.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Cheongju Airport has flights to Jeju and China, with services to Japan in summer.

BUS

Departs from the intercity terminal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3.5hr</td>
<td>hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheongju</td>
<td>6400</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>every 20min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daegu</td>
<td>3300</td>
<td>50min</td>
<td>every 25min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danyang</td>
<td>3200</td>
<td>30min</td>
<td>every 10min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyeongju</td>
<td>3400</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>6 daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singjin</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>6 daily</td>
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Departs from Cheongju express bus terminal:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Busan</td>
<td>14,200</td>
<td>4/4hr</td>
<td>9 daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daegu</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>2/2hr</td>
<td>hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>3/3hr</td>
<td>every 10min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TRANSPORT

Express Bus Terminal 고속버스터미널 22 A3

InterCity Bus Terminal 시외버스터미널 23 B3
served to all the employees whenever he had a good round. President Kim Young-sam disapproved of golf because of its association with corruption, and the golf course hasn't been used in recent years. President Kim Dae-jung planted the honeysuckle (the Korean word for “overcoming hardship”, which was his nickname) and built the thatched pavilion adorned with white castle battlements and blue turrets outside. Inside is a disco-décor lift with a bungy jump. After another hour the boat arrives at Chungju ferry terminal. Only seven buses a day (W950, 30 minutes) run from here to Chungju bus terminal, so you may have to wait sometime. A taxi costs W13,000.

Going the other way, from Chungju ferry terminal ferry boats go to the Woraksan terminal (W8000 return), Cheongpung (W9000), Janghoe (W13,000) and Danyang (W18,000). The ferry boats run at least twice a day, but the schedule depends on the number of passengers. If the ferry isn’t running to Danyang, take a ferry to Janghoe and a bus to Danyang.

From Danyang it’s a 30-minute boat ride to Janghoe ferry terminal, where the rocky cliffs are the most scenic. If you exit the terminal at Janghoe then turn right and continue 100m, opposite the bus stop is the ticket office for the western part of Woraksan National Park. (See p599)

A 2.5km hike up Jibongsan (723m) takes three hours return. From Janghoe to the next ferry pier, Cheongpung, takes another half hour. Nearby is a folk village and across the bridge is a resort with a bungy jump. After another hour the boat arrives at Chungju ferry terminal. Only seven buses a day (W950, 30 minutes) run from here to Chungju bus terminal, so you may have to wait sometime. A taxi costs W13,000.

Sleeping & Eating

Titanic Motel (타이타닉모텔, % 542 5858; r W25,000) is the large flashiest motel in Chungju. Its name is adorned with white castle battlements and -white tiles in the bathrooms that feature all-body showers. More spacious rooms with

SONGNISSAN NATIONAL PARK

 divisible into four sections, each served by a cable car, and an additional section which is accessible by a four-kilometre footpath. The highest peak, Cheonhwangbong, is an irregularly-shaped peak of 1058m. It is a popular route for hikers, and the views from the top are spectacular.

SLEEPING & EATING

Tianjin Motel (타이진무텔, % 542 5437; r W60,000) is Chungju’s flashiest motel. It is open to the public, and you can even peep into the presidential bedroom.

Getting There & Away

Take local bus 311 or 302 (W1250, 50 minutes, every 30 minutes) for Songnisan National Park.
a computer or Jacuzzi are W5000 extra. Opposite the train station, Titanic (named after the love-story movie rather than the sinking ship) is a 15-minute walk or W2000 taxi ride from the bus terminal.

**Train**

Mugunghwa (semi-express) trains (W11,700, five daily) run to Seoul.

**Suanbo Hot Springs 수안보**

This relaxing spa resort, 21km southeast of Chungju, is small enough to walk round, and its restaurants specialise in rabbit, duck and pheasant meals. Nearby is Woraksan National Park and a small ski resort. The tourist information centre is on the main street near the bus terminal.

Getting There & Away **BUS**

Chungju’s new bus terminal is a 15-minute walk or a W2000 taxi ride from the motels in front of the train station. Local buses from outside the train terminal run to Suanbo Hot Springs (W1000, 35 minutes, every 40 minutes) and to Sonegye-ri in Woraksan National Park (W1000, 45 minutes, five daily).

From across the road outside the bus terminal, bus 301 (W950, 25 minutes, seven daily) leaves for Chungju Dam and the Chungju Lake ferries.

**From Chungju bus terminal, destinations include**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Price (W)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chungju</td>
<td>6000</td>
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<td>every 20min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deogyang</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>2½hr</td>
<td>hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danyang</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>1hr</td>
<td>hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>2½hr</td>
<td>every 20min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sleeping & Eating**

**Sinseung Hotel (신승호텔)**

On the main road, a one-minute walk from the tourist information centre, is the best (and about the only) budget yeogwan. The corridors need upgrading, but the rooms are light and straightforward. The small oncheon (hot spring bath) downstairs is free to guests and is open from 6am to 7pm. Prices increase W10,000 on Saturdays.

**Suanbo Royal Hotel (수안보로얄호텔)**

On the main road is this new and bright hotel containing smallish rooms that have large bathrooms equipped with electronic bidets. The oncheon and sauna is W3000 for guests, W5000 for nonguests.

**Woraksan Royal Hotel (월악산로얄호텔)**

The most popular hiking route starts deeper in the park, so access is no problem. **Mireuk-ri**

The panda shrine at Suanbo Sangnok Hotel, which has a camping ground. Follow the trail up to Yongsun, the east gate of an ancient temple that was originally built in the late-Shilla or early-Goryeo period. A couple of stone pagodas and a stone Buddha are the main relics, though a replacement shrine hall is being built. The most popular hiking route starts deeper in the park; access is no problem.

**Woraksan National Park 월악산국립공원**

Woraksan, which means ‘Moon Crags Mountains’, offers fine hiking through picturesque forests, with lake views and the slim chance of seeing an endangered goral antelope (p340). Tickets can be purchased at the ticket office (adult/youth/child W6000/3000/1500). A road runs right through the park, so access is no problem. **Mireuk-ri**, the tourist village at the southern entrance, is 11km southeast of Suanbo Hot Springs. Scattered near the tourist village is the remains of a temple that was originally built in the late-Shilla or early-Goryeo period. A couple of stone pagodas and a stone Buddha are the main relics, though a replacement shrine hall is being built. The most popular hiking route starts deeper in the park, so access is no problem.
mountain fortress, whose walls stretched for 10km, that dates back to the Goryeo dynasty. Further on is a temple, Daeheungsa, another tourist village at the northern entrance to the park. The total distance is around 10km and takes about six hours.

There are shops, restaurants and minbak (private homes with rooms for rent) in Songgye-ri, Deokju and Mireuk-ri, plus two camping grounds (W3000 to W6000 per night).

Local buses (W1000, 45 minutes, five daily) leave from outside Chungju bus terminal to Mireungni and through the park to Songgye-ri. They can also be picked up in Suanbo’s main street (W1000, 10 minutes, five daily).

DANYANG 단양

ppp41,000

Danyang is a resort town nestled in the mountains on the edge of Chungju Lake (p328). Lakeside motels are as retro as the town itself, but you can spend a couple of pleasant days exploring the sights. Visit at least one of the limestone caves and don’t miss the awesome temple complex, Guinse (p327).

Information
Nonghyup Bank: Changes major currencies.
Post office: Hill from the bus terminal.
Tourist information centre (% 422 1146) Located just over the bridge.

Sights & Activities
GOSU DONGOUL 고수동굴
This spectacular limestone cave (% 422 3072; adult/youth/child W4000/2500/1500; 9am-5pm) is the most impressive in Korea. Endless metal catwalks and spiral staircases allow you to see the varied formations up close, and the subdued lighting is effective. Discovered in the 1970s the cave system is 1.7km long, so allow at least an hour to look round. Keep a look out for small cave-dwelling creatures. The stalagmites usually grow about 1cm every five to 10 years, so you can estimate their approximate age. The cave was inhabited back in prehistoric times. It’s a 10-minute walk from Danyang walk across the bridge and turn right.

Local honey is sold in the tourist village by the cave’s entrance, and restaurants sell farmed seongeo (trout).

AQUAWORLD 아쿠아월드
Swim in this smart, mainly indoor water park (% 422 1146; adult/child W20,000/15,000 Sat & Sun; 9am-8.30pm or longer). Immerse yourself in pine-needle, sulphur and Jacuzzi baths, and then steam away any remaining stress in jade, charcoal and amethyst saunas (W3000 extra). Play pool and four-ball or release vocal energy in the karaoke (karaoke) next to the restaurant.

LAKESIDE WALK 호수주변 산책로
Take an evening stroll along the promenade – lined with trees, flowerbeds and lighting – that runs along the lake from outside the bus terminal, past an artificial waterfall and outdoor concert area to the tourist hotel.

DONAL THE FOOL
The guy with bushy eyebrows that you see on signboards all over Danyang is Ondal. Born in the Three Kingdoms period, he was the local fool, but he married Princess Pyeongyang, who inspired him to study hard and become a skilled soldier. He was made a general but was killed by soldiers from Shilla. Education and a good wife turned him from a mocked fool into a respected local hero.

SAVE THE GORAL!
Goral antelopes have been a protected species in South Korea since 1967, but their numbers have declined in recent years. Most of the 700 or so that live in the wild can be found in Seoraksan National Park or the DMZ. However, Woraeksan National Park has been identified as an ideal habitat for these brownish-grey animals that have short horns and look like goats. Fifteen to 20 goral antelopes live in the park – they are so elusive that no one knows their exact number. Six have been released into the park and others were there originally or were born there. Plans include the release of 10 more goral, so keep a look out for these shy creatures when hiking in the park.
DAESONGSAN 대송산

Behind Danyang is this wooded hill. There are shady walks under the fir trees, and exercise areas and artworks are scattered around the place.

Festivals

The usually sleepy town comes alive during the 10-day Azalea Festival in late May, which features concerts and artworks, a funfair, outdoor films, sporting contests and stacks of stalls. It's a must-do if you're hiking Birobong to admire the mountain azaleas blooms.

Sleeping

Danyang lacks new motels, and the lakefront accommodation, like the town itself, is 20 years behind the times. Despite their Graeco-Roman façades, motel rooms are only average. Daemyung Resort is the best bet if you can obtain a special deal.

River Motel (% 421 2345; www.daveriver.com; W18,000 a) A variety of small, rather basic rooms are available here from owner Mr Kim, who speaks some English. Choose between a good view, a computer in the room or a larger room with a table and chairs.

Sujeul Motel (% 422 2210; W16,000 a) In this motel with a blue-and-white classical façade, rooms contain big TVs and a computer, and showers have fireplaces.

Seonggyang (% 422 2310; W15,000 a) Small but OK rooms - try for No 208, which has a balcony overlooking the lake and the artificial waterfall, and ask for some chairs.

Edelweis Danyang Tourist Hotel (% 423 7000; www.danyanghote.com; W40,000 a) Out of town, but the price is reasonable for this tourist hotel with a lobby and rooms with light decor and lake views. The restaurant serves steak and oxtail soup. Prices rise to W99,000 on Saturday.

Daemyung Resort (% 420 8311; www.daemyung.com; W30,000 a) Special off-season deals that include two meals are usually possible in the studio apartments above Aquaworld.

Eating

Hanaro supermarket and Danyang market can supply self-caters.

Jangdari Sikdang (% 422 3033; per trip W6000) Small, sightseeing boats take you on a short trip to view nearby rocky cliffs from the Namhangang (river).

More of an adventure activity, this case (% 422 3033; per trip W6000) requires visitors to squeeze through narrow cliffs and crawl through low tunnels. It's only 470m long and was discovered in 1977.

The cave is a 10-minute walk from the nearby bus stop and a 15-minute walk from the entrance to Sobaeksan National Park. Buses (W9500, 10 minutes, hourly) leave from outside Danyang bus terminal for Darian (Cheondong-i).

More celebrated rocky scenery on these boat trips (% 422 3033; per trip W6000). Small, sightseeing boats take you on a short trip to view nearby rocky cliffs from the Namhangang (river).

Sobaeksan National Park

Sobaeksan (Little White Mountain; % 423 0151; r W30,000; www.activetravel.co.kr) is the highest peak in the park and is most easily reached from Darian/ Cheondong-ni (three hours up and two hours down if you're reasonably fit). The route follows a picturesque 6.5km trail along the beautiful Cheondong valley. The peak is famous for azaleas, which bloom around late May.

Guinsa 구인사

Deep in the mountains stands the isolated and impressive headquarters of the Cheontae sect of Korean Buddhism, which was re-established by Song Wol Won-gak in 1945. The temple complex consists of 30 multi-storey concrete buildings that line a narrow road and are connected by elevated walkways. The buildings are squeezed into a steep, narrow, thickly wooded valley. The opulence is obvious and building work is continuing at a hectic pace. Carry on past the buildings to reach the founder's tomb.

The temple has the atmosphere of a utopian community; the gardens are beautiful, everything is spotless, and the monks, nuns and lay members, dressed in loose-fitting grey trousers and shirts, appear to be uniformly quiet and polite. The communal kitchen serves hundreds of simple but free vegetarian meals three days a week and visitors are welcome.

Camping is available at Darian, Namcheolli and Huibang, and plenty of minibak charge from W20,000 at the park entrances. Buses (W9500, 10 minutes, hourly) leave from outside Danyang bus terminal for Darian. Direct buses (W2600, 30 minutes, hourly) leave Danyang bus terminal at 20 minutes past the hour for Guinsa.

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Redefining the term rogue state through its isolationism, controversial nuclear weapons programme and missile testing, North Korea is probably the most mysterious country in the world today and one almost entirely untouched by tourism. Off the beaten path seems too slight a term for a nation that admits fewer than 2000 Westerners a year, and whose overwhelming attraction is its isolation and backwardness.

Here the Kim dynasty, which began life as a Soviet-sponsored communist government in the 1950s, has evolved into a hereditary dictatorship owing far more to Confucianism than Marxism. The founder of the state, Kim Il Sung, may have died in 1994, but he is still the president of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (the name locals prefer for their country). His son, a man who has only ever uttered one sentence in public (it was ‘Long Live the Victorious Korean People’s Army’ at a rally in Pyongyang in the early 1990s), continues to rule like a medieval monarch, an unknown quantity with nuclear weapons and a huge army at his beck and call, giving sleepless nights to governments in Seoul, Tokyo and Washington.

A trip to North Korea is strictly on its government’s terms, and it’s essential to accept that you’ll have no independence during your trip – you’ll be accompanied by two government-approved local guides at all times and only hear a very one-sided view of history throughout the trip. Those who can accept these terms will have a fascinating trip into another rather unsettling world. Simply to see a country where the Cold War is still being fought, where mobile phones and the internet are unknown, and where total obedience to the state is universally unquestioned is, for many, reason enough to visit.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Marvel at the grotesque totalitarian architecture in Pyongyang (p358).
- Feel the full force of Cold War tensions with a visit to Panmunjom (p369) in the Demilitarized Zone, where an uneasy armistice holds.
- Visit Pyongyang between August and October to see the incredible Mass Games (p355), a gymnastic spectacle featuring thousands of perfectly trained North Koreans.
- Explore the remote far north and Korea’s highest peak and holy mountain Paekdusan (p372).
- Enjoy pristine mountain walks in the stunning resort of Kumgangsan (p371).

**FAS FACTS**

- Area: 120,540 sq km
- Population: 23 million
- Currency: North Korean won (unofficial rate: 3000KPW = £1 on the black market)
- Percentage of GDP spent on the military: 31.3%
- Minimum military service for men: six years
- Number of internet cafés: none

**DON’T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...**

Anything medical or electrical that you will need during your stay; this includes simple everyday products such as painkillers, tampons and condoms. Everything from memory cards to batteries for your camera are best brought in too – such basic items are sometimes available, but their price and quality can be quite different elsewhere. As most trips are no longer than a week, bringing fruit from China is a great idea for snacking between sights – even a bag of apples is a luxury item in Pyongyang. Small change in euros (£1 and 50c are especially useful) and yuan (10, 20 and 50 yuan notes) are a huge help, as there’s never any change in the hotels and shops.

Small token gifts for your guides are a good idea – pens, postcards of your hometown, cigarettes (for male guides only) or chocolates will always go down well. Just as important is what not to bring, as these rules are quite strict. Mobile phones and laptop computers are best left at home. Most of all, bring a sense of humour and an open mind – you’ll need both to make North Korea enjoyable and rewarding.

**GETTING STARTED**

Trips to North Korea usually run like clockwork. Two guides will accompany you everywhere you go outside the hotel and control what you see and the spiel you hear while seeing it. Forward planning is a must: almost everything you want to see needs to be approved before your arrival as ad hoc arrangements make the guides very nervous and thus less fun to be around. That said, itineraries are always provisional and somethings are usually cancelled at the last moment for no discernable reason, although something else will always be substituted in its place.

The best option is to enjoy a positive relationship with your guides (who don’t make the decisions; they simply enforce them and monitor you during your stay), as once they trust you, they’ll help you make the most of your trip. Days are long in North Korean tourism – you’ll see a surprising amount in just a four-day tour, and possibly be burned out on a full-week tour.

**When to Go**

The best time to plan a trip is during the Arirang Mass Games (mid-August until mid-October most years) or during a national holiday. Special performances, which have been rehearsed for months, can be included in the itinerary. During these periods train and plane tickets are harder to obtain, so ensure that you have booked well in advance. In general, the most pleasant months for a visit are April, May, June, September and October. July and August are often unpleasantly humid and overcast. Tours don’t usually run in the winter: they finish in November, then start again in March. The month of February sees the Great Leader’s birthday and foreigners are particularly unwelcome at this time of year. Those finding themselves in North Korea in winter will find power shortages common (although not usually in hotels) and it’s generally a cold and miserable time to visit.

**Costs & Money**

As a tourist, North Korea is no budget destination. Opportunities to cut costs by staying in youth hostels do not exist. As well as paying for your bed and board in advance, you will also have to pay for two guides and a driver, making group tourism one of the few measures that can save you money.

As a rough guide, solo travellers should bank on paying about €250 per day for guides, hotel and full board. This can be reduced to around €130 per day if you go as part of a group. Note that the euro and Chinese yuan are the accepted currency for visitors to use and that small change in both currencies (euro coins and yuan in denominations of under 50)
The number of North Korean specialists is very limited, but those who run tours include

Geographic Expeditions (1-415-622-0448, www.geox.com; 1000-K General Kennedy Avenue, PO Box 303000, San Francisco, CA 94105; This upmarket American outfitted the first US tourism to DPRK. While US citizens are allowed into North Korea only during the Mass Games, Geographic Expeditions have tours that include Paekdusan and Mt Chilbo as well as the DMZ and Kaesong. All-inclusive prices from the US (which include flights and accommodation in Beijing) start at around US$5000 for 11 nights, seven of which are in DPRK.

Koryo Tours (1-646-759-9426, www.koryogroup.com; Room 43, Red House Hotel, 10 Tai Ping Zhuang, Chun Xiao Lu, Chaoyang District, 100027 Beijing) Nick Bonner’s Beijing-based company has been offering DPRK tours for over a decade. Koryo are the undoubted specialists, having a very good relationship with Korea International Tourist Service (KITS) and doing a host of other things from producing film in DPRK to selling North Korean art in Beijing (www.pyongyangartstudio.com). Tours can be tailored to meet specialist interests and individual travel can also be arranged.

Its website is an excellent place to start for any tourist, as it is packed with information about all things DPRK. A standard five-night tour of North Korea is available for as little as €990 all inclusive from Beijing.

Regent Holidays (1-202-995-7171, www.regent-holidays.co.uk; 15 John Street, Bristol BS1 2HR; Specialists in obscure destinations, Regent have been taking groups to North Korea since the late 1980s. A fully inclusive nine-day tour including the Mass Games costs £1295 (starting from Beijing). Longer tours including the charter flight to Paekdusan start at £1545 per person.

Other operators that offer tours:

Bestway Tours & Safaris (1-604-264-7378, www.bestway.com; Suite 205, 1050K General Avenue, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada V3J 3M4;)

Explore (44-20-333-4031, www.explore.co.uk; Flat 4, The Club, 116 Old Brompton Road, London SW7 3AA, UK)

Tintu Travel Services (1-631-231-3008, www.tintu.com; 725 Shimer Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63141;)

See (p378) for information about travelling on your own.

Travel Literature

The single best book to read if you’re curious to know what a trip to DPRK is like is Guy Delisle’s graphic novel Pyongyang. A Journey in North Korea. A French-Canadian cartoonist ‘on the margins of the globalised world’, Delisle was seconded to Pyongyang to work on cartoons, and his methodical documentation of all aspects of his trip is priceless. Highly recommended, even more so for any recent visitors who will find themselves laughing out loud in recognition.

SHOULD YOU VISIT?

North Korea is a police state with a human-rights record worse than anywhere else on earth. Concentration camps, executions, state-orchestrated terror and mass-control by a vast propaganda machine are a daily reality for millions here. All the revenue from your trip will go directly to the government, and during the Mass Games this is a sizable amount. So should you visit, and is it morally acceptable to do so?

The case against visiting, as outlined above, is strong. On the other hand, those who argue that you should visit point out that tourism is one of the few ways of encouraging openness in DPRK, of letting people see that the West is interested and, more importantly, friendly – not an insignificant fact for a population brought up on a relentless diet of anti-US propaganda. The one thing you should never do is come here to stir up trouble – your guides and any North Koreans having contact with your group will suffer very serious consequences and you’ll achieve nothing more than a speedy deportation. If you do come, listen to the version of history given to you by the guides, accept that this is their version (however untrue) and leave serious criticism until you are back at your hotel.
North Korea Through the Looking Glass (Kong Dan Oh, Ralph C Hassig, Kongdan Oh) has established itself as a classic overview of DPRK politics and society, although it has the usual limitations of any work concerning one of the most secretive governments on earth: much is conjecture and cannot be adequately supported by documented evidence. For all that, it's still a fascinating introduction to the country.

Bruce Cummings has written over a dozen books about Korea, the division of the peninsula and its future. Highly recommended is War and Television, which recounts his experiences recording interviews in North Korea for a documentary on the Korean War. His other authoritative histories of the division include Korea's Place in the Sun, one chapter of which gives an impressive analysis of the DPRK's political culture.

For a very readable, yet still substantial account of North-South relations since 1948, Don Oberdorfer's The Two Koreas is excellent. Oberdorfer puts the politics of both countries squarely in the context of constant efforts by both governments to reunify the peninsula, by peaceful means or otherwise.

Perhaps the closest North Korea has come to its own Gulag Archipelago is the horrific The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag by Kang Chol-Hwan. This book describes the hell on earth that is life as a political prisoner here. Not for the faint-hearted, but definitely recommended for anyone seeking the whole picture.

Pyongyang: The Hidden History of the Hidden Capital, by Chris Springer, is a city guide that tells the stories behind the mysterious buildings, monuments and ministries of the capital, and is by far the most detailed guide to Pyongyang available.

North Korea by Robert Willoughby is the most comprehensive guidebook to the country, although much of it is irrelevant for travellers as most of the towns included are off-limits to non-NGO workers and diplomats.

Living With the Enemy: Inside North Korea, by Richard Saccone (2006), is a detailed diary of the author's year-long stay in the North in 2001, working on the now-aborted KEDO nuclear power project.

Internet Resources

The scarcity of information from North Korea has created a large web community of DPRK-watchers, and although every subject from annual grain production to Kim Jong II jokes are covered, the bias of each website should always be borne in mind – few people are indifferent towards North Korea. The following sites offer the best coverage of events.


For an overview of Korean history before the division of the peninsula, see p26.

HISTORY

The Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula between 1910 and 1945 was one of the darkest periods in Korean history; the occupation forces press-ganged Koreans into slave labour teams to construct factories, mines and heavy industry – particularly in the north.
TONY DOES THE DPRK by Tony Wheeler

I have a fascination with cities and countries that seem to exist at a 90-degree angle to reality. In the world today North Korea is undoubtedly the best example of this phenomenon, and when George W Bush – himself a denizen of a strange parallel universe – decided to skewer North Korea on his axis of evil, I simply had to go.

Unfortunately a solo visit to the hermit kingdom is really impossible – you can go by yourself, but it’s still on an organised tour. But one glance at the group that assembled under tour guide Nicholas Bonner’s watchful eye at the Beijing railway station was enough to confirm this would be no ordinary group tour.

Day 1 Our early train from Beijing arrived at the Chinese border town of Onsongjin in the early morning. Remarkably, the station was still standing in the area outside the railway station. That evening the train is very slow as we arrived in Pyongyang and immediately went to pay homage to the Great Leader’s Mansudae statue.

Day 2 Apart from our little group, Pyongyang International Airport was deserted. We flew up to the northwest corner of the country then took a bus along the beautiful coastline and to the forested mountains of Outer Cholla.

Day 3 And then the flight took us to the border region where Lake Chongsan is a face across the border into China. It was the same where Kimjongil was killed in 2001.

Day 4 Back in Pyongyang we got to the Mass Games in the 1933 stadium. My Day stylus in the world's biggest stadium in the standard one-go-go flick Chinese bartenders with syndet and teal precision to make anmesy stream of pictures, while tons of smiling faces and women men and soldiers dance across the stadium floor.

Day 5 Activities including seeing anything from the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum (which see how North Korea almost single-handedly defeated the Japanese in WWI) to the Great People's Study House and the City of Pairs (Pajoli) before we ended the evening in the Egypt Palace Karaoke Bar in the hotel basement.

Day 6 Activities include a visit to the Institute of History, a tour to see how Kim Il Sung took over as the Great Leader in 1948.

Day 7 Apart from a collective breakfast and a park trip, we cross back over the peninsula to Pyongyang. We were all so excited by our visit to the Mansudae that we arranged an extra showing and singing.

Day 8 We barrel down the six-lane (but extremely empty) highway to the somewhat inaccurately named DMZ – there’s nothing very militarised about it. On the way back to Pyongyang we make a little stop in the provincial town of Kaesong and at the beautiful Hillside, which is on the outside of the town.

Day 9 The airport is rather busier today when we verify our group flight from Seoul taxis in right behind us; the bags from North and South are jumbled together on the luggage carousel.

Moreover, the use of Korean girls as 'comfort women' for Japanese soldiers – a euphemism for enforced prostitution – remains a huge cause of resentment today in both Koreas.

Most of the guerrilla warfare conducted against the Japanese police and army took place in the northern provinces of Korea and neighbouring Manchuria; northerners are still proud of having carried a disproportionate burden in the anti-Japanese struggle. In fact, modern history books from Pyongyang imply that Kim Il Sung defended the Japanese nearly single-handedly (with a bit of help from local comrades and his infant son).

While his feats have certainly been exaggerated, Kim Il Sung was a strong resistance leader, although not a strong enough force to rid Korea of the Japanese. This task was left to the Red Army, who, in the closing days of WWII, entered Manchuria and Northem Korea as the Japanese forces retreated. The United States suddenly realised that the strategic importance of the peninsula was too great for it to be left in Soviet hands.

Despite an agreement at Yalta to give joint custodianship of Korea to the USSR, USA and China, no concrete plans had been made to this end, and the State Department assigned the division of the country to two young officers, who, working from a National Geographic map, divided Korea across the 38th parallel.

American forces gradually moved in from Japan, while Soviet forces kept to the dividing line. The intention to have democratic elections across the whole peninsula soon became hostage to Cold War tensions, and after the North refused to allow UN inspectors to cross the 38th parallel, the Republic of Korea was proclaimed in the South on 15 August 1948, while the North proclaimed the Democratic People's Republic just three weeks later on 9 September 1948.

The People's Republic
Stalin, it is rumoured, personally chose the 33-year-old Kim Il Sung to lead the new republic. The ambitious and fiercely nationalistic Kim was an unknown quantity, although Stalin is said to have favoured him due to his youth.

He would have no idea that Kim would outlive not only him and Mao Zedong, but communism itself, to become the world's longest serving head of state. As soon as Kim had assumed the leadership of North Korea, he applied to Stalin to sanction an invasion of the South. The man of steel refused Kim twice in 1949, but perhaps bolstered by Mao's victory over the nationalists in China the same year and the USSR's own A-bomb project, he gave Kim the green light a year later.

The brutal and pointless Korean War of 1950–53, a stunning North Korean advance into the South, where it almost drove US forces into the sea, followed by an equally impressive counter-attack by the United States and UN, which managed to occupy most of North Korea. As the situation began to look bleak, Kim advocated retreating to the hills and waging guerrilla warfare against the South, unaware that China's Mao Zedong had decided to covertly help the North by sending in the People's Liberation Army in the guise of 'volunteers'. Once the PLA moved in and the balance of powers stabilised again, the North pushed the front down to the original 38th parallel, and with two million dead, the original stalemate was more or less retained.

The armistice agreement obliged both sides to withdraw 2000m from the ceasefire line, thus creating a huge nature reserve in the form of the Demilitarized Zone, still in existence today.

Despite the Chinese having alienated Kim by taking control of the war – Chinese commando Peng Dehui apparently treated Kim as a subordinate, much to the future Great Leader's anger – the Chinese remained in North Korea and helped with the massive task of rebuilding a nation all but razed to the ground by bombing.

Simultaneously, following his ill-fated attempt to reunite the nation, Kim II Sung began a process of political consolidation and brutal repression. He executed his foreign minister and those he believed threatened him in an attempt to take overall control of the Korean Workers' Party. Following Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation of Stalin's personality cult, Central Committee member Yun Kong-hun stood up at one of its meetings and denounced Kim for similar crimes. Yun was never heard from again, and it was the death knell for North Korean democracy.

Unlike most communist leaders, Kim's outstanding personality cult was generated almost immediately – the sobriquet 'Great Leader' was employed in everyday conversation in the North by the 1950s – and the initial lip service paid to democracy and multiparty elections was soon forgotten.

The first decade under Kim II Sung saw vast material improvements in the lives of workers and peasants. Literacy and full healthcare care were soon followed by access to higher education and the full militarisation of the state. However, by the 1970s, North Korea slipped into recession, one from which it has never recovered. During this time, in which Kim II Sung had been raised to a divine figure in North Korean society, an éminence grise referred to only as the ‘party centre’ in official speech began to emerge from the grey anonymity of Kim's henchmen.

At the 1980 party congress this enigmatic figure, to which all kinds of wondrous deeds had been attributed, was revealed to be none other than the Great Leader's son, Kim Jong II. He was awarded several important public posts, including a seat in the politburo, and even given the honorific title ‘Dear Leader’. Mini-Me was designated hereditary successor to the Great Leader and in 1991 made supreme commander of the Korean Army, although he had never served a day in it. From 1989 until 1994, Kim father and son were almost always pictured together, raised in tandem and generally shown to be working in close proximity, preparing the North Korean people for a hereditary dynasty far more in keeping with Confucianism than communism.
Beyond Perestroika

It was during the late 1980s, as communism shattered throughout Eastern Europe, that North Korea’s development began to differ strongly from that of other socialist nations. Its greatest sponsor, the Soviet Union, disintegrated in 1991, leaving the North at a loss for the subsidies it ironically needed to maintain its façade of autarky. North Korea has long always played China and the USSR off against one another, turned to the Chinese, who have played godfather to the DPRK ever since. Quite why the People’s Republic has done so has never been explicit. Chinese ‘communism’ has produced the fastest expanding economy in the world and any ideological ties with Maoism remain purely superficial, while China’s increasingly close relationship to both the South and Japan also makes its reluctant support for the Kim regime all the more incongruous. Yet China remains the North’s one trusted ally, although several times since the early nineties, Beijing has laid down the law to Pyongyang, even withholding oil deliveries to underscore its unhappiness at the North’s continuous brinkmanship.

The regime’s brinkmanship did pay off in 1994, however, when North Korea negotiated an agreement with the Clinton administration in which it agreed to cancel its controversial nuclear programme in return for US energy supplies in the short term. This was to be followed by an international consortium constructing two light-water reactors for North Korean energy needs in the long-term.

Midway through negotiations, Kim Il Sung, founding father of North Korea, gave way to a massive heart attack and died. He had spent the day personally inspecting the accommodation being prepared for the planned visit of South Korean president Kim Young-sam. This summit between the two leaders would have been the first ever meeting between the heads of state of the two nations, and Kim II Sung, towards the South, had noticeably changed in the last year of his life. Kim’s death rendered the North weaker and even less predictable than before. Optimistic Korea-watchers, including many within South Korea’s government, expected the collapse of the regime to be imminent without its charismatic leader. In a move that was to further derail the reunification process, Kim Young-sam’s government in Seoul did not therefore send condolences for Kim’s death to the North – something even President Clinton felt obliged to do. This slight to a man considered (officially, at least) to be a living god was a miscalculation that set back any progress another five years.

While the expected collapse did not occur, neither did any visible sign of succession by the Dear Leader. North Korea was more mysterious than ever, and in the three years following Kim II Sung’s death, speculation was rampant that a military faction had taken control in Pyongyang, and that continuing power struggles between them and Kim Jong Il meant that there was no overall leader.

Kim Jong Il finally assumed the mantle of power in October 1997 after a three-year mourning period. Surprisingly, the presidency rested with the late Kim Il Sung, making him the world’s only dead head of state, not to mention the longest serving – currently standing at 56 years – out-serving even Queen Elizabeth II. Kim Jong Il’s power base is believed to be centred on his control of the military rather than his role in government. As supreme military commander and chairman of the National Defence Commission, he holds sway over the nation’s all-powerful third estate.

However, the backdrop to Kim Jong Il’s succession was horrific. While the North Korean economy had been contracting since the collapse of vital Soviet supplies and subsidies to the DPRK’s ailing industrial infrastructure in the early 1990s, the terrible floods of 1995 led quickly to disaster. Breaking with a strict tradition of self-sufficiency (of course, one that had never reflected reality – aid had long been received secretly from both communist allies and even the South two months previously), the North appealed to the UN and the world community for urgent food aid.

So desperate was the Kim regime that it even acceded to unprecedented UN demands for access to the whole country for their own field workers, something that would have previously been unthinkable in North Korea. They also relaxed the tightly secret military climate. Aid workers were horrified by what they saw – malnutrition everywhere, and the beginnings of starvation, which led over the next few years to the death of up to three million people.

Axis of Evil

Kim Jong Il’s pragmatism and relative openness to change came to the fore in the years following the devastation, and a series of initiatives to promote reconciliation with both the South and the United States were implemented. These reached their height with a swiftly convened Pyongyang summit between the South’s Kim Dae jung and the Dear Leader in June 2000; the first ever meeting on such a level between the two countries. The two leaders, their countries ready at any second to launch holocaust against one another, held hands in the limousine from the airport to the guesthouse in an unprecedented gesture of solidarity. The summit paved the way for US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright’s visit to Pyongyang later the same year. Kim Jong Il’s aim was to have his country legitimised through a visit from the American president himself. However, as Clinton’s second term ended and George W Bush assumed power in Washington, the climate swiftly changed.

In his 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush labelled the North as part of an ‘Axis of Evil’, a phrase that has since passed into everyday language and haunted the DPRK leadership. The year that followed was to signal yet another identity crisis for the beleaguered nation’s diplomatic endgame.

New lows were reached in 2002 when North Korea resumed its nuclear programme, claiming it had no choice due to American oil supplies being stopped and the two promised light-water reactors remaining incomplete. Frustrated at being ignored by the United States throughout the Bush presidency, North Korea test launched several missiles in July 2006, followed by the detonation of a nuclear device on its own soil three months later. Both actions caused international condemnation and failed to kick-start direct talks with Washington, which has been the North Korean goal throughout. However, following the speedy application of UN sanctions on North Korea following the tests, Pyongyang has said that it will return to the six-nation talks it had been boycotting.

Against all odds, North Korea has survived almost two decades since the end of the Cold War, and the Kim regime seems to be in full control of the country – once more going against the predictions of many Korea-watchers. How long the status quo can go on remains a mystery, but the fact that Kim Jong Il saw the country through its most devastating famine on record, complete international isolation and recurring energy crises suggests that the quick dissolution of the hermit state is far from certain.

THE CULTURE

The National Psyche

The North Koreans are a fiercely nationalistic and proud people. Most refugees confirm that the popular affection for Kim II Sung was largely genuine, while Kim Jong Il has not endeared himself to the populace in the same way. While North Koreans will always be polite to foreigners, there remains a large amount of anti-pathy towards both the United States and Japan. Both due to propaganda and the very real international isolation they face, North Koreans have a sense of being hemmed
to overstate the ramifications of half a century of Stalinism—and it is no overstatement to say that North Korea is the most closed and secretive nation on earth. Facts meld with rumour about the real situation in the country; however, power cuts and food shortages are still everyday events in DPRK—although North Koreans are told to attribute both to American imperialism, leading to the comic tradition of Koreans shouting ‘blame America!’ whenever the lights go out. Food is now far more plentiful than it has been for years, although at the time of writing it was suggested that this may change again due to bad flooding in 2006. The ‘arduous march’ of the 1990s may not be over yet.

The system of political apartheid that exists in North Korea has effectively created a three-strata society. All people are divided up by taecho—a curious post-Feudalist caste system—into loyal, neutral or hostile categories in relation to the regime. The hostile are deprived of everything and often end up in forced labour camps in entire family groups, maybe for nothing more than having South Korean relatives or for one family member being caught crossing into China. The neutral have little or nothing but are not persecuted, while the loyal enjoy everything from Pyongyang residency and desk jobs (at the lower levels) to Party membership and the privileges of the nomenclature. At the top of the tree, the Kim dynasty and its vast array of courtiers, security guards, staff and other flunkies are rumoured to enjoy great wealth and luxury.

It is hard to overstate the importance of the military in North Korean culture, as witnessed by the Military First campaign, which sees priorities in all fields going to the army. North Korea has the world’s fifth-largest standing army and the social status of anyone in uniform is very high—rations increase in proportion to the individual’s importance to the regime’s survival.

North Korea is predictably austere. The six-day week (which even for office workers is compressed by heavily regulated weekends) means Sundays are a real event and Koreans visibly beam as they relax, go on picnics, sing songs and drink in small groups all over the country. A glance at the showcase shops and department stores in Pyongyang confirms that there is only a small number of imported goods available to the general population, highly priced and of poor quality. Testimonies taken from North Koreans in China gave a picture of daily life in the rural north of the country: many refugees tell tales of hair and teeth falling out due to malnourishment, and they tell stories of surviving on eating grass and rats during the famine years.

While in the 20 years following the Korean War it could genuinely be claimed that Kim II Sung’s government increased the standard of living in the North, bringing literacy and health care to every part of the country, the regression since the collapse of communism throughout the world has been just as spectacular, and people are now just as materially poor as their grandparents were in the early 1950s. Outside Pyongyang the standard of living is far worse, and this is visible on the street, although the carefully planned tour routes will never fully expose the poverty of the nation to the casual tourist. Still, glimpses of life in rural villages from the bus can be chilling.

Population
The current population of North Korea is anyone’s guess. Officially it stands at 23 million, but the devastation wrought by the famine in the late 1990s has had untold effects on the country and its people. In a watershed announcement in 1999, the North Korean government shocked the world by admitting that as many as three million people had died of starvation since 1995. How closely this corresponds to the real figure is still completely unknown. Terrifyingly enough, some North Korean defectors in China have suggested that the population could have dropped to as little as 15 million over the past decade.

All of the 2.2 million inhabitants of Pyongyang are from backgrounds deemed to be loyal to the Kim regime. And with a complete lack of free movement in the country (all citizens need special permission to leave their town of residence), no visitor is likely to see these termed hostile—anyway, most people in this unfortunate category are in hard-labour camps miles from anywhere. All North Korean citizens have been obliged to wear a ‘loyalty’ badge since 1970 featuring Kim Il Sung’s portrait. Since the 1980s, Kim Jong Il badges have also been worn. You can be certain that anyone without one is a foreigner.

Sport
Sports remain the most popular spectator sport, and seeing a match in Pyongyang is sometimes a possibility. These matches offer a chance to get as close to ordinary North Koreans as is generally possible for foreign visitors. North and South Korean national teams played each other for the first time in over a decade in 2002 in Seoul. With true diplomatic flair, the ‘reunification game’ ended in a 0-0 draw. The South’s stellar display in the 2002 World Cup and less successful appearance in the 2006 event was sketchily reported in the North, a rare display of nationalism overcoming political differences.

The North’s greatest sporting moment came at the 1966 World Cup in England, when they thrashed favourites Italy and stunned the world. They subsequently went out to Portugal in the quarterfinals. The story of the team is told in a strangely touching documentary—one of the few ever to be made by Western crews in DPRK—called The Game of Their Lives (www.thegameoftheirlives.com).

Weightlifting and martial arts are the only other sporting fields in which North Korea has created any international impact. One home-grown sporting phenomenon (for want of a more accurate term) that visitors should try to see is the Arirang Mass Games, held annually at the world’s largest stadium, the May Day Stadium, in Pyongyang. These mass gymnastic displays involve over 300,000 soldiers, children and students holding up coloured placards to form enormous murals in praise of North Korea’s achievements, truly an amazing sight.

Lifestyle
Trying to give a sense of day-to-day North Korean life is a challenge indeed. It’s difficult in all sides—threatened particularly by the South and the United States, but also by Japan. The changes over the past decade in both China and Russia have also been cause for concern. These two big brothers who guaranteed survival and independence have both sought rapprochement with the South.

On a personal level, Koreans are very good humoured and hospitable, yet remain extremely socially conservative. The combination of centuries of Confucianism and decades of communism by all means smile and say hello to people you see on the streets, as North Koreans have been instructed to give foreigners a warm welcome, but do not think about taking photos of people without the explicit permission of both your guide and subject. Similarly, giving gifts to ordinary people could result in very unpleasant consequences for them, so ask your guide at any point what is appropriate. Kids are remarkably forthcoming and will wave back and smile ecstatically when they see a foreign tour group. Personal relationships with North Koreans who are not your tour guides or business colleagues will be impossible. Men should bear in mind that any physical contact with a Korean woman will be seen as unusual, so while shaking hands may be acceptable, do not greet a Korean female with a kiss in the European manner. Korea is still a very patriarchal society and despite the equality of women on an ideological level, this is not the case in day-to-day life.

TIME LINE
1392 The start of the Joseon dynasty, unsympathetic to northerners
1866 The General Sherman goes aground on the Taedong River; all on board are killed
1910 Japanese occupation begins
1948 Declaration of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
1950 North Korean invasion of South Korea
1953 Korean War ends in stalemate
1980 Kim Jong Il anointed ‘Dear Leader’ and successor to his father
1983 North Korean bomb kills many South Korean cabinet members in Rangoon
1994 Kim II Sung dies
1995 Floods devastate North Korea
2000 Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong Il meet in an unprecedented summit in Pyongyang
2002 President Bush includes this North Korea part of his ‘Axis of Evil’
2006 North Korea test fires seven missiles and carries out a nuclear detonation leading to international condemnation and UN sanctions
Religion

In North Korea, all traditional religion is regarded, in accordance with Marxist theory, as an expression of a ‘feudal mentality’, an obsolete superstitious force opposing political revolution, social liberation, economic development and national independence. Therefore, it has been effectively proscribed since the 1950s. However, as the Kim regime became more Westernised, for instance, in the 1990s, official propaganda against organised religion accordingly stopped. A number of Buddhist temples are on show to tourists, although they’re always showpieces – you won’t see locals or any real Buddhist community. However, in recent years three churches have been built in Pyongyang, suggesting that there is a surprising amount of religious freedom relative to other human rights.

TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

The northern version of Korean shamanism was individualistic and ecstatic, while the southern style was hereditary and based on regularly scheduled community rituals. As far as is known, no shamanist activity is now practised in North Korea. Many northern shaman were transplanted to the South, chased out along with their enemies the Christians, and the popularity of the services they offer (fortune-telling, for instance) has endured there. Together with the near-destruction of southern shamanism by South Korean religious fundamentalism, we have the curious situation where the actual practice of northern Korean shamanism can only be witnessed in South Korea.

Northern Korea held many important centres of Korean Buddhism from the 3rd century through to the Japanese occupation period. The Kumgangsan and Myohyangsan mountain areas, in particular, hosted large Zen-oriented (Jogye) temple-complexes left over from the Goryeo dynasty. Under the communists, Buddhism in the North (along with Confucianism and shamanism) suffered a fate identical to that of Christianity.

Some historically important Buddhist temples and shrines still exist, mostly in rural or mountainous areas. The most prominent among them are Ryŏhō Temple at Kumgangsan, Pyŏndae Temple at Myohyangsan, and the Confucian Shrine in the Songgye-won Neo-Confucian College just outside of Kaesong (p369).

Arts

Largely due to Kim Jong Il’s lifelong interest in celluloid, the North Korean film industry has had money pumped into it on a disproportional scale. Kim Jong Il’s input has been all encompassing and hands-on – he is listed as the executive producer of many films produced in the country, and is believed to have many actors, actresses and directors among his personal friends in production.

The only North Korean film that can be seen with ease in the West is Shin Sang-ok’s Pulgasari, a curious socialist version of Godzila made by the kidnapped South Korean director, who escaped back to the South in 1986 (see p369).

The ongoing Nation and Destiny series of films is supposed to be a series of 100, so far 60 have been released. Far more interesting is the 1999 epic Front in Our Memory that, surprisingly, tackles the mass starvation of the mid-1990s. The climax of the film sees a big flood threatening the harvest and soldiers and farmers standing on top of a dam to create a human dyke with their bodies, all the while screaming ‘Long Live Kim Il Sung’ and waving the North Korean flag.

You can request a visit to the Pyongyang Film Studios when booking your tour – and you may even be lucky enough to see an agit-prop classic in production.

North Korean literature has not profited from the Kim dynasty, which has done little to encourage original writing. Despite an initial artistic debate in the 1950s, all non-party-controlled forms of expression were quickly repressed.

Kim Il Sung was a fierce nationalist, relentlessly emphasising the superiority of Korean culture. Tourists with an interest in traditional arts can benefit – visits to performances of traditional Korean music, singing and dance can be arranged. Some even argue that in terms of traditional culture, the North is the ‘real Korea’, untainted by the Americanisation of the South.

Exhibitions of traditional or modern pottery, sculpture, painting and architecture can be viewed on request, and it is highly recommended to include a visit to a cinema, theatre or opera performance. If one hasn’t been pre-arranged, your guide should be able to arrange a visit to a performance for a token extra charge, as long as you give some warning.

While the performances are unlikely to be cutting edge, or even comprehensible to the non-Korean speaker, Pyongyang does have a small opera and theatre scene. Again, it’s a question of asking your guides and preferably your travel agent before you go, but it may be possible to spend the evening at one of Pyongyang’s cultural institutes.

ENVIRONMENT

The one thing that strikes most visitors to North Korea is its squeaky-clean appearance. This is a function not just of the lack of consumer goods and their packaging but of determined policies that keep it that way. The streets are washed down twice a week, and before dawn each day street cleaners are out sweeping up any litter or leaves. You’d be hard pressed to find a single piece of paper on the streets, despite the absence of litterbins. Even in the countryside, locals are assigned a particular stretch of the main road to sweep – daily and even hourly.

North Korea boasts a diverse range of plants and animals. The varying climatic regions have created environments that are home to subarctic, alpine and even subtropical plant and tree species. Most of the country’s fauna is contained within the limited nature reserves around the mountainous regions, as most of the lower plains have been converted to arable agricultural land. An energetic reforestation programme was carried out after the Korean War to replace many of the forests that were destroyed by the incessant bombing campaigns. Notable exceptions being the area to the north of the DMZ, where defoliants are used to remove vegetation for security purposes. The comparatively low population has resulted in the preservation of most mountainous regions.

Only recently has the international community looked at assisting the North in assessing and monitoring the country’s biodiversity. Three areas of particular focus are the DMZ, the wetlands of the Tumen River and the Paekdu-Dusan mountains. For those people interested in participating in a tour of North Korea with a greater emphasis on flora and fauna, then it is possible to organise an appropriate itinerary.
with your Korean tour company. Bird-watching endeavours to some of the wetland habitats of migratory birds are the most popular. These tours, however, often involve greater expenses, especially if a chartered flight is necessary.

Two particular floral species have attracted enormous attention from the North Koreans, and neither of them are native. In 1965 President Sukarno named a newly developed orchid after Kim Il Sung – *kimilsungia* – popular acclaim in overcoming Kim’s modest reluctance to accept such an honour. Kim Jong II was presented with his namesake, *kimjongilia*, a begonia developed by a Japanese horticulturist, on his 46th birthday. The blooming of either flower is announced annually as a tribute to the two Great Leaders and visitors will notice their omnipresence throughout official tourist sites.

**Environmental Issues**

The main challenges to the environment are from problems that are harder to see. The devastating floods and economic slowdown during the 1990s wreaked havoc not only on property and agricultural land, but also on the environment. Fields were stripped of their topsoil, which, combined with fertiliser shortages, forced authorities to expand the arable land under cultivation. Unsustainable and unstable hillside areas, river banks and road edges were brought under cultivation, further exacerbating erosion, deforestation, fertiliser contamination of the land and rivers and the vulnerability of crops.

One advantage of its isolation is the pristine natural environment to be found in the mountains, untouched by commercialism or mass tourism. However, there has been substantial deforestation due to the famine. Fried leaves is a dish served very regularly in rural areas of DPRK – and some refugees have reported that their biggest surprise on finally reaching the South was to find that the hillsides were so lush and full of greenery. Due to food and fuel shortages, many areas of DPRK have simply been stripped of vegetation.

**FOOD & DRINK**

Staples & Specialities

While tour groups eat sumptuously by North Korean standards, the standard fare is fairly mediocre and varies depending on the food situation at the time. There is no danger of tourists going hungry, though, and you’ll find you get by very well on a diet of kimchi, rice, soups, noodles and fried meat. Vegetarians will be catered for without a problem, but they may simply be given rice, egg and cucumber non-stop for the duration of their visit.

**Drinks**

In 2000, in a surprise move for a country with millions of malnourished children, North Korea purchased the Ushers brewery in Trowbridge, England, dismantled it, shipped it to Nampo and rebuilt it on the outskirts of Pyongyang. Pyongyang and Taedonggang beers are the most popular brands, although neither rival imported beers such as Heineken or Tiger.

Other drinks on offer include a pleasant range of North Korean fruit juices and sodas, and Coke and Fanta are also available now in some Pyongyang hotels and restaurants. Soju (the local firewater) is drunk at dinners; it’s rather strong stuff. Visitors might prefer Korean blueberry wine: the best is apparently made from Mount Paekdu blueberries. Blueberry wine comes in two forms: the gently alcoholic, which tastes like a soft drink, and the reinforced version, which could stun an elephant.

**PYONGYANG**

% 0% / ppp 24.8 million / 20 sqkm

Traffic has been increasing on the once-empty streets of this extraordinary capital. That said, little else has changed in Pyongyang (“flat land”) over the last couple of decades. The city remains an eerie, unchanging place of wide streets, endless grey and white Soviet-style blocks, vast monuments to the party and an all-female team of fetishistically clad traffic wardens manually directing traffic with domineering zeal.

In the best possible tradition of Minsk and Ashgabat, Pyongyang rose from the ashes of destruction and as such was a tabula rasa for the Kim dictatorship to impose its world-view on. Mysterious and grey, Pyongyang is lush and full of greenery. Due to food and fuel shortages, many areas of DPRK have simply been stripped of vegetation.

**PYONGYANG HIGHLIGHTS**

- Ride the express lift to the top of the Tower of the Juche Idea (p362) for a magnificent view of the sprawling cityscape on a clear day
- Ride the spectacularly designed Pyongyang metro (p363)
- See where Kim II Sung lies in state at the Kumsusan Memorial Palace (p362), which makes Lenin’s mausoleum look like a shoebox – and can be visited by invitation only
- Escape the relentless grandeur of the city centre and have a walk on relaxed Moran Hill (p363)
This visit completed, you will have fulfilled your only obligatory act of Great Leader worship. While you will be required to suffer hours of effusive praise, you will not be expected to submit to the cult in any way – unless you are lucky enough to be invited to the Kumsusan Memorial Palace.

Kumsusan Memorial Palace
Kim II Sung’s residence during his lifetime, Kumsusan remains so in death. The palace is eerie, with bricked-in windows and a vast square cleared before it. The embalmed corpse of the Great Leader lies in state here on the top floor for the truly privileged to witness. Unlike Mao’s and Lenin’s mausoleums, access is not for the proles, but by invite only. Though tour groups are often able to go, it’s always best to request this a long time before you travel. The tone is profoundly sombre, and anyone invited should be dressed smartly (shirts, ties and trousers for men, modest dress for women). The moving walkways that carry you into the palace seem somehow incongruous with the seriousness accorded the visit, however.

Just as eerie is the Tower of Immortality, under which the traffic to the palace must pass from central Pyongyang. This tower, one of hundreds throughout the country, bears the legend ‘The Great Leader Comrade Kim II Sung will always be with us’.

Tower of the Juche Idea
On the other side of the Taedong River from Kim II Sung Sq, this honours Kim II Sung’s philosophy juche (see p357), and was unveiled to mark the president’s 70th birthday in 1982. Indeed, the tower is made up of 25,550 granite blocks – one for every day of Kim’s life until his 70th birthday. The tower stands at 170m and a trip to the top by lift (ES) is well worth it, providing a great view over the capital on a clear day. For the best views go in the morning, as the sun is still in the east, lighting up the western, more interesting side of the city. The pavilions surrounding the tower feature a trio of workers holding aloft the emblem of the DPRK and in the river immediately in front are two water jets that reach 150m on the rare occasions they are working.

Chollima Statue
Less obviously impressive, but an interesting example of how the Kim regime has sought to incorporate traditional Korean myths into its socialist cult, is the bronze statue of the Korean Pegasus, the steed Chollima. According to legend, Chollima could cover hundreds of kilometres a day and was untameable (see North Korea Speak p357). Kim II Sung appropriated the myth in the period of reconstruction following the Korean War so that the zeal of the North Korean workers to rebuild their shattered nation and construct vast and pointless monuments to the leadership became known as ‘Chollima speed’. When North Korea broke through to the quarterfinals of the World Cup in 1966, it was apparently because Kim senior had urged them to play ‘Chollima football’.

Triumphal Arch
Your guides will tell you with barely concealed glee that the Triumphal Arch is 3m higher than its cousin in Paris, making it the largest in the world.

The arched arch is the site where Kim II Sung first addressed the liberated Koreans after the end of Japanese occupation in 1945. The gloom you will hear will omit the fact that the Soviets liberated Pyongyang, not Kim II Sung’s partisans, who themselves gave full credit to the Soviets at the time. A vast mural a short walk away details the event and pictures a young Kim addressing a wildly enthusiastic local population. Set back from the arch is the Kim II Sung Stadium.

Kim II Sung Square
This vast plaza would be the packed hub of any other world capital, but Pyongyang’s central square and marching ground is strange in its emptiness, the open spaces seemingly cowered by the massive buildings surrounding it. Most impressive of these is the Grand People’s Study House, the country’s largest library and national centre of Juche studies. This is one of Pyongyang’s most striking buildings, a socialist realist structure melded with traditional Korean architecture. With over 30 million books, finding what you want is inevitably quite a challenge – and you will be proudly shown the incredible system of conveyor belts that can deliver books right to your desk. All foreign publications are viewable with special permission only, while even North Korean literature over 15 years old is proscribed to conceal the historical rewrites.

Other structures on the square include the Korean National Art Gallery, commonly included on tours, though it’s frankly fairly dull, and the Korean Central History Museum which is rarely visited by groups. There’s a great view from the riverside bank across the Taedong to the Tower of the Juche idea, where groups usually go to take photos.

Historic Pyongyang
To see something of Pyongyang’s prewar history is a challenge. The Mansudae Gate was the eastern gate to the original walled city of Pyongyang, and was built in the 6th century. The current gate was rebuilt in 1635, but is one of the oldest remaining structures in the city – a reminder that Pyongyang was once a traditional Asian city rather than the post-Soviet monolith it is today.

Nearby are the other major historical sites: the Pyongyang Bell, a bronze early-warning system for fire and invasion dating from 1726, and the beautiful Mangyongdae Children’s Palace – a grand People’s Study House with a stellar display of fantastically regimented youth. The grand finale is usually a loyalty song to Kim Jong II.

Moran Hill
This is Pyongyang’s top recreation ground for the masses. Couples wander, families picnic and there are people who even play musical instruments in an incongruously relaxed area of the capital. It’s particularly busy on a Sunday and a lovely place to stroll and absorb something of daily life. Even the guides seem to relax more here and will often allow you more freedom to wander than elsewhere.

Pyongyang Metro
Finally, one other visit that is often included on a city tour is a trip on the impressive Pyongyang Metro. It’s a good idea to request this in advance of travel, as it’s definitely a highlight. The network, which is made up of two lines, has a simultaneous function as a
nuclear bunker in the event of the long-awaited American invasion. Stations are deep below ground, and you can even see blast doors that will close if Pyongyang ever comes under nuclear bombardment (see below).

**Museums**
Pyongyang’s museums unsurprisingly offer the regime’s version of history. While one or two can be very interesting for a totally new perspective on events, the novelty can soon wear thin.

A visit to the **Korean Central History Museum** is all rather tedious and predictable – a large number of exhibits about the North’s struggle against imperialism and oppression. On the other hand, the **Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum** is a fascinating place. The key battles of the Korean War are depicted vividly in dioramas, and there’s some fascinating military hardware from war-damaged tanks and aircraft to torpedo boats used by both sides. These were all placed in the basement and the museum was then built around them.

Nearby, opposite the little Potong tributary of the Taedong, there is the impressive Monument to the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War 1950–1953, unveiled in 1993 to mark the 40th anniversary of the war’s end. The sculptures reflect the different battles of the war; the Victory Sculpture is the centrepiece.

A rarely visited museum is the Three Revolutionary Exhibitions, located at Mangyongdae, just outside of Pyongyang. The sprawling complex details the ‘three revolutions’ Kim Il Sung brought about in post-war Korea: ideological, technical and cultural. The six halls detail advances across the board in electronics, heavy industry, agriculture and technology (advances appear to be fairly slim, all the technical exhibits looking more like a display of antiques). The world’s weirdest planetarium can be found within the electronics industry hall, which looks like a silver replica of Saturn. There’s also an interesting outdoor display of vehicles produced in North Korea.

**Tomb of Tan’gun**
History continues to evolve in North Korea, with the régime’s version of history. While one or two can be very interesting for a totally new perspective on events, the novelty can soon wear thin.

**The Mystery Underground**
There can be no better example of the Kim régime’s prioritisation of the military-industrial complex than the fascinating Pyongyang metro. While two lines exist for civilian use, there are rumours of several government-only lines linking key ministries and military installations capable of withstanding a full-scale American bombardment. Since the system opened in 1973, each station has doubled as a nuclear bunker and there are frequent air-raid drills in Pyongyang, in which citizens make their way into the stations and the triple-blast doors shut behind them.

As tourists, visiting the Pyongyang metro will involve a one-stop trip between Puhung (Rehabilitation) and Yongwang (Glory) stations. All state visitors, from US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, were given the same show trip, giving rise to a rumour that power cuts and lack of repair have meant that the rest of the system no longer functions on a day-to-day basis. In fact the whole system is used, although it’s possible during the 1990s when North Korea was really on the skids that much of it was closed to make energy savings.

The entire system’s construction was overseen by the Great Leader, who offered his ‘on-the-spot guidance’. A guidebook to the Metro describes his wise words on opening the new network in 1973:

> “The Great Leader President said to officials in a thoughtful tone “I think it is difficult to build the metro, but it is not to cut the tape.” Hearing his words, which considered the trouble of builders first, the participants in the opening ceremony felt a lump in their throats and gave enthusiastic cheers, waving bundles of flowers.”

One of the deepest metros in the world, it is also one of the most elaborately decorated – marble platforms, vast chandeliers and impressive murals extolling the virtues of Juche and detailing yet more of the heroic activities of guess who…
The Mangyongdae Revolutionary Museum located nearby, continues the theme of the Great Leader’s childhood and makes the point that all his family members were Korean patriot revolutionaries of the humblest possible order.

You may also be lucky enough to visit the Mangyongdae Revolutionary School, where Pyongyang’s elite sons are trained for the next generation of leadership. This is a fun tour through the various classrooms and gymnasia, where children look at you with wonder.

To relax after the relentless propaganda, the Mangyongdae Rest House is a pleasant oasis built around the base of Song Hill, where you can relax with some day-trippers from the capital. You can throw a ball at American Imperialists at the coconut shy and take a ride on a North Korean rollercoaster.

Pyongyang Maternity Hospital
This smart hospital, designed apparently to look like a mother’s outstretched arms about to embrace her child, is sometimes available for groups. Here all Pyongyang women give birth for the first time (whether they like it or not); after that it’s the preserve of the privileged or the vulnerable. It’s an impressive place, with relatively modern equipment and spotless floors. The tour typically includes patient rooms, treatment rooms and the incubators where you can see Pyongyang’s newborns.

It’s interesting that North Korean fathers have no contact with their children for five days after their birth for health reasons. In the meantime, the camera phone booths on the ground floor are where interaction is restricted to, although such technology simply underscores how much of a showpiece this place really is.

SLEEPING
Pyongyang has the largest range of hotels in any North Korean city. They are, like much of the city’s architecture, built to impress, and while their façades are often striking, their interiors are all fairly uninspiring. The city’s skyline is dominated by the fabulously impressive pyramidial Ryugyong Hotel – designed to be the world’s largest luxury hotel in the 1980s. As you approach it, it becomes clear that it is a skeleton, with no windows or interiors. The project ran out of money and the vast structure now sits as a derelict monument to overly ambitious central planning, still dominating the city with its vast, sinister shape.

Yanggakdo Hotel (% 381 2334; fax 381 2900; s/d €250/500, a σ ) This is where most tour groups stay, a massive mid ’90s tower on its own island right in the middle of Pyongyang. The rooms are already showing their age, but they are at least spacious and comfortable, with great views from most. As well as a pool and sauna, there are numerous restaurants, a bowling alley, three pool tables, a karaoke lounge, several shops, a casino and a foreigners-only disco.

The advantage of the Yanggakdo is that you can wander around outside without your guides (although don’t even think of crossing the bridge into the city), something you can’t really do in other hotels in Pyongyang.

Keyol Hotel (% 381 4403) fax 381 4422; s/d €175/290; a σ The city’s other premier hotel, this 1985 orange-bronze structure is the preferred place to lodge UN functionaries and business people as well as some tour groups. Each of its twin towers has a revolving restaurant on top and its location is better than the Yanggakdo’s, on the relative bustle of Changgwang St, a short walk from the Pyongyang train station.

Potonggang Hotel (% 381 2224; fax 381 4408) Famously the only hotel in North Korea to get CNN, the Potonggang is owned by Unification Church leader Reverend Moon, who negotiated directly with Kim Il Sung in 1991 for its purchase. The hotel is situated by the small Pothong River, about 4km from the city centre and is often used for Japanese tourists. It’s almost unheard of for Western groups to stay here.

There are many other hotels in Pyongyang, including the Sosan, the Pyongyang and Chongnyon, but it’s not possible for Westerners to stay in them.

EATING & DRINKING
Pyongyang is by far the best place to eat in the country, offering both variety and decent fare. Almost all tour groups will eat out at least once a day, usually twice. Any restaurant outside your hotel that you are taken to is likely to be the exclusive preserve of foreigners and the party elite – there are popular local restaurants, such as those on Changgwang St, but foreign tour groups will usually not be taken there.

On tours all eating out will be included in your price, although there are extra charges for additional beers or specialties such as the local favourite, cold noodles.

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Yanggakdo One Day Barbecue is one of the best places in town, and will often be where groups go on their last evening.

The TV Tower has a great restaurant at the top with some breathtaking views over the city. It’s a popular lunchtime spot.

The National Restaurant is a camp and dandy experience due to fake grass on the ceiling and a basement setting respectively. The food here is good, though, and there’s a popular live show.

Yanggakdo One Day Boat Restaurant is moored off Kim Il Sung Sq, and although we’ve heard stories of it cruising the Taedong River for an hour during a meal, it’s been stationary whenever we’ve eaten here. Eating is on a pleasant outdoor deck and it’s very popular with tour groups and NGO staff.

The Chongnyon Restaurant opposite the Romanian Embassy is usually included for groups. It’s a pleasant place where you make your own hotpot dish on little individual gas stoves, although it’s equally notable for its ropey Swiss rolls served as a dessert.

Okyo is one of the city’s best-known restaurants, a huge monstrosity on the riverside that’s famed for its cold noodles and very popular with locals. For this reason it’s not usually on the schedule for groups, but you may be lucky. It was undergoing refurbishment when we were there, but the food is still good.

Pyulmori is a very exciting joint-venture coffee shop near to the Koryo Hotel. Run by a local charity supplying food to local orphans, Pyulmori was the only place to get good coffee in North Korea at the time of writing. There is also a good selection of cakes and pies, and delightful staff.

Finally, the Pyongyong Obich Film just outside the city has a restaurant serving (you guessed it) ostrich. It’s a surreal spot for lunch if your group is on a trip there.

Nightlife in Pyongyang is almost nonexistent although hotel bars can be rowdy, especially at weekends. The large diplomatic and NGO presence in town means that there are some private clubs where foreigners can relax away from the strictures of everyday Pyongyang life.

The Diplomatic Club (‘the diplo’ to any self-respecting foreign resident) by the Juche Tower and the Random Access Club (RAC) in the diplomatic quarter of Munsudong are popular, but there’s no way tourists can go to these, whatever diplomats may tell you.
AROUND NORTH KOREA  •• Panmunjom

NORTH KOREA and a visit to the town are a number of lesser tourist sights:
- The Koryo Museum, a wonderful place consisting of 20 traditional Korean yergans (small, well-equipped en suite rooms) all off a courtyard, and featuring a charming stream running through it. Power cuts are common here, but some light in the evening and half an hour's hot water can usually be rustled up. It's basic (bring a pillow from your hotel in Pyongyang if you want – the rice pillows are distinctly hard!) but fascinating.

AROUND NORTH KOREA

All tours begin and end in Pyongyang, but most also include a trip to other parts of the country. Almost everyone visits the DMZ at Panmunjom, as the government is very keen to show Westerners the result of what they see as American Imperialism. Visits to mountain resorts in the far-flung mountains in the country's northeast are also frequently included. Going into the countryside is the closest you can get to daily life in DPRK – Pyongyang simply isn't representative, and despite the best efforts of the government to take you to the country's most prosperous areas, the hardship of life outside the capital is evident to everyone.

Kaesong

This bleak city is just a few miles from the DMZ and has the world's most concentrated build-up of military forces, although you wouldn't know it from looking around, as Kaesong is a fairly relaxed place just off the Reunification Highway from Pyongyang. The city itself is dominated by a massive statue of Kim Il Sung atop a large hill, while the city's main street runs from the hill to the highway, full of shops that (according to brief glances afforded from the bus) appear to be selling TVs and fans almost exclusively.

Once the capital of the Goryeo dynasty, Kaesong has an interesting old quarter as well as the country's most interesting hotel, but KITS are not inclined to spend much time there, and you are usually just bused at the hotel for the night before returning to Pyongyang having seen the DMZ.

Despite Kaesong's history you won't see many relics of antiquity here due to three major wars, each leaving little but rubble. At least there is the Simgungyong Neog-Confucian College, originally built in AD 992 and rebuilt after being destroyed in the 1592 Japanese invasion. Today it is host to the Koryo Museum of celadon pottery and other Buddhist relics; re-enactments of Confucian ceremonies are very occasionally held here. The buildings surround a wide courtyard dotted with ancient trees, and the surrounding grounds are very pleasant to walk around. It's a short drive northeast of town.

Kaesong may be your only chance while in the DPRK to see an authentic Korean royal tomb. The best one by far is the Tomb of King Yongjong (the 31st Goryeo king, who reigned between 1352 and 1374) and his queen. It is richly decorated with traditional granite facing and stonework. It's a very secluded site about 13km west of the city centre; there are splendid views over the surrounding tree-covered hills from a number of vantage points.

The third great tourist site is the 37m-high Polygon Falls, one of the three most famous in North Korea. It's found in a beautiful natural setting some 24km north of town. Theoretically at least, some great hiking can be done around here from the falls to the Teuhyang Fortress, to the mid-Goryeo Kwanun Temple (with cave) and the Teuhyang Temple. Kaesong itself is a modern city with wide streets, though, of interest, though it does have an interesting older section consisting of traditional tile-roofed houses sandwiched between the river and the main street. Within the town are a number of lesser tourist sights:
- The Sinhyung Bridge, a tiny clapper bridge built in 1216 and opposite the Singyun Monument, which honours Neo-Confucian hero Chong Mong-ju; the Namun (South Gate), which dates from the 14th century and houses an old Buddhist bell; the Suryang Sosan (Confucian academy); and Gomunmen, the hill from which Kim II Sung's statue stares down at the city.

If you stay over here, you'll be based at the Kaesong Folk Hotel, a wonderful place consisting of 20 traditional Korean yergans (small, well-equipped en suite rooms) all off a courtyard, and featuring a charming stream running through it. Power cuts are common here, but some light in the evening and half an hour's hot water can usually be rustled up. It's basic (bring a pillow from your hotel in Pyongyang if you want – the rice pillows are distinctly hard!) but fascinating.

PANMUNjom

I ironically the sad sight of a pointlessly divided nation remains a highlight of any trip to North Korea. While military history buffs will really be in their element, you don't have to be an expert to appreciate the weirdness of the site where the bloody Korean War ended in an unhappy truce. Seeing the situation from the North facing off against US troops to the south is a unique chance to witness things from a new perspective.

KIDNAP VICTIMS

Nobody could accuse the North Korean government of lacking pragmatism. Need to teach spies Japanese? The simple solution is to kidnap Japanese civilians and employ them to do the job. By their own sheepish admission in 2002, the DPRK government kidnapped 13 Japanese nationals between 1977 and 1983, including couples enjoying romantic walks on desolate beaches and even tourists who were visiting Europe.

The Japanese government is unlikely to normalise relations with North Korea and pay billions of dollars in compensation for its colonial rule of the peninsula until the DPRK gives a fuller and more truthful account of the fate of its kidnapping victims. As well as Japanese citizens, more than 400 South Koreans, mainly fishermen, have been abducted by the North and their fates remain unknown.

The most sensational kidnap of all was orchestrated by Kim Jong Il. The keen cineaste, appalled by the state of film production in the North, ordered that South Korean director Shin Sang-ok and his movie-star wife Choi Eun-hee be kidnapped and brought north to make films. After surviving four years in the gulag for attempting to escape, Shin and Choi were brought before Kim Jong Il who greeted them like old friends, explaining how much he needed them. Given unlimited funds and the elite lifestyle exclusive to the inner circle of Kim Jong Il, Shin made seven films before managing to escape with Choi during a visit to Vienna. His autobiography Kingdom of Kim makes for some chilling reading about life in North Korea's heart of darkness.
The early quiet drive down the six-lane Reunification Highway – the road is deserted save for military checkpoints – gives you a sense of what to expect. Just before you exit to the DMZ, the sign saying ‘Seoul 70km’ is a reminder of just how close and yet how far normality is.

There are several aspects to the DMZ visit. Your first stop will be at a KPA post just outside the DMZ. Here a soldier will show you a model of the entire site, pointing out South Korean as well as North Korean HQ and watchtowers. Then you’ll be marched (single file!) through an anti-tank barrier to rejoin your bus, and you’ll drive down a long concrete corridor. Look out for the huge slabs of concrete on either side, ready to be dropped into the road at any minute in the event of an invasion.

The next stop is the Amnokdae Hill, about 1km into the DMZ. Here negotiations were held between the two sides from 1951 until the final armistice, which was signed here on 27 July 1953. You’ll see two copies of the agreement on display in glass cases, along with the original North Korean and UN flags. Next door there’s an exhibition of photos from the war, all presented in a typically one-sided manner. Outside, a plaque in red script best sums up the North Korean version of the ceasefire. It reads:

It was here on July 27, 1953 that the American imperialists got down on their knees before the heroic Chosun people to sign the ceasefire for the war they had provoked June 25, 1950.

From here you’ll reboard the bus and drive to the demarcation line itself, and reminded in more than usually severe language about sticking together ‘for your own safety’. The site consists of two sinister-looking headquarters staring at each other across the line (the North Korean is built to be the bigger of the two) and several huts built over the line for meetings. Amazingly, you can cross into South Korea a few meters within the huts, but the doors out to the south are closed and guarded by two soldiers.

Beating at the very centre of the biggest military face-off on earth is rather like being at the eye of a storm – tension is in the air, but it is so peaceful as to make the very idea of imminent combat seem ridiculous. South Korean and American soldiers eye their northern counterparts as they have done every day since 1953. Do not be fooled by the prevailing air of calm, though; any attempt to even approach the border proper will result in you being shot on the spot, possibly from both sides. In the 1980s, however, a Soviet tourist found a unique way to flee the communist bloc, and defected amid gunfire from both sides. Unless you are really short of time, this is not the best way to get to Seoul.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the North Koreans tunneled under the DMZ into South Korean territory. The largest was discovered in 1975, and US military experts estimated that 10,000 men per hour could pass through the tunnel into the South. The last tunnel was discovered in 1990 – and this persistent phenomenon gave the Pentagon such headaches that they allegedly hired psychics to help them find the tunnels.

The other interesting sight at the DMZ is the KoryoMun, a U.S.-constructed anti-tank barrier that runs the length of the entire 248km border. It has been hijacked as an emotive propaganda weapon by the North, who since 1989 have been comparing it with the Berlin Wall. Indeed, the issue has proven an emotive one in the South as well, where students have demanded it be dismantled. You’ll inspect the wall with binoculars and be shown a particularly hilarious North Korean propaganda video. Don’t go here on a cloudy day, as it’s a long and pointless drive.

MYOHYANGSAN

A trip to this pretty resort area, just 150km north of Pyongyang is often the first chance visitors will have to experience the pristine North Korean countryside, completely untouched by mass tourism. Mt Myohyang and the surrounding area of hills, mountain trails and waterfalls make for a charming trip, and if you begin to miss the relentless pomp and propaganda of Pyongyang, the International Friendship Exhibition (IFE) will remind you that you are still very much in North Korea.

Myohyangsan means ‘mountain of mysterious fragrance’ and it’s certainly no misnomer. The scenery is quite wonderful, and in summer awash with flowers. The focus of all trips there are, however, the two vast shrines that make up the IFE. The first one contains all the gifts presented to the eternal president Kim Il Sung. Before entering the vast traditional building, you will be asked to put on shoe covers in keeping with the reverential attitude shown by one and all. A member of your group may be honoured with the task of opening the vast door knob.

Kim Il Sung’s gifts are very impressive. Particularly noteworthy is the beautiful armoured train carriage presented to him by Mao Zedong and a housewarming gift from Kim Il Sung to Josef Stalin. The exhibits are arranged geographically, although you will thankfully only be shown the highlights of over 100,000 gifts spread over 120 rooms. Gifts from heads of state are displayed on red cloth, those from other officials on blue and gifts from individuals on brown. The undeniably high-light is a stuffed crocodile holding a tray of wooden glasses, presented to the Great Leader by the Sandinistas.

The tour of the DMZ is very strict and sombre, so avoid the very real temptation to ice skate over the ridiculously over-polished floor in your foot covers. The most reverential and surreal part of the exhibit (quite an achievement) is the final room, in which there is a grimly life-sized waxwork of the Great Leader, to which you will be expected to bow your head before leaving respectfully. The waxwork itself was apparently a gift from the Chinese and Kim Jong Il sits beside it in a tiny, hilariously-illuminated, 3D landscape of bucolic idyll, replete with birdsong, gentle breeze and elevator music. The tone is so remarkably odd that you’ll have to concentrate not to giggle, especially when your guide insists on how serious it all is.

Next is Kim Jong II’s similarly spectacular warehouse. Since taking over as leader on his father’s death, an incredible array of gifts have been showered upon the Dear Leader. The exhibits are housed in a vault built into the cave wall, recalling the secret lair of one of the Bond villains. There is a noticeable shift away from the grand fraternal gifts of fellow communist dictators that characterised Kim Il Sung’s exhibit. Instead, Kim Jong II’s collection smacks of corporate and political gesture – characterising much of his reign since 1994. For example, where Kim Srn received gifts from Ceausescu and Honecker, Kim Jrn has gifts from Hyundai and CNN, as well as a gold sculpture from the Sandinistas.

Indeed, some of the exhibits look like any up-market electronics showroom – row after row of wide-screen televisions and stereo equipment donated by industrialists.

The highlight of Kim Jong II’s Friendship Exhibition is one of the only statues of the Dear Leader in the country. It depicts the Marshall seated benevolently, back-lit with pink soft-tone lighting.

Having completed a tour of both exhibits, the perfect way to unwind from the seriousness is with some walking on the beautiful mountain trails. Sangwon Valley is the most common place for a hike and is directly north-east of the IFE.

Don’t miss the Pyongan Temple, the most historically important Buddhist temple in western North Korea. The temple complex dates back to 1044, with numerous renovations over the centuries. It’s just a short walk from the IFE, at the entrance to Sangwon Valley. It features several small pagodas and a large hall housing images of the Buddha, as well as a museum that sports a collection of wood blocks from the Buddhist scriptures the Tripartita Korea.

It is common for tours to visit the Pyongan Big Cave either prior to or after a visit to Myohyangsan. This 6km-long limestone cave has some enormous caverns and a large number of stalactites. Enjoy sights like the Pool of Anti-Trekking, the Juche Cavern and the Mountain Peak of the Great Leader.

Sleeping

Tourists are usually put up at the deluxe Hyangsan Hotel, a 15-storey pyramidal building that is now in a rather poor state of repair. In keeping with North Korean hotel tradition, there is a revolving restaurant on the top floor, complete with net curtains, from which absolutely nothing is visible in the evenings due to the hotel’s isolated mountain location.

KUMGANGSAN

South of the port city of Wonsan on the east of the Korean peninsula, the most dramatic scenery in the entire country begins to rise. Kumgangsan (Diamond Mountains) have exerted a strange hold over people for centuries, including the notoriously insular Chinese who deigned to include Kumgangsan among the five most beautiful mountain ranges in the known world (the other four ranges were in China). Located just north of the 38th parallel, the area has also been annexed for very heavily controlled South Korean tourism by the Hyundai Corporation.
Kumgangsan is divided into Inner, Outer and Sea Kumgang regions. The main tourist activities (at least theoretically) are hiking, mountaineering, boating and sightseeing. The area is peppered with former Buddhist temples and hermitages, waterfalls, mineral springs, a pretty lagoon and a small museum. Maps of the area are provided by park officials to help you decide where you want to go among the dozens of excellent sites.

If your time here is limited, the best places to visit in the Outer Kumgang Region are the Sinri Lagoon (try hiring a boat, then rest at Tappung Restaurant); the Minm晤iang Area (fancifully shaped crags); and the Koryo and Pibong Falls (4.5km hike from the Mongnian Restaurant).

In the Inner Kumgang Region, it’s worth visiting the impressively reconstructed Pyohon Temple; founded in AD 670 and one of old Korea’s most important Zen monasteries. Hiking in the valleys around Pyohon Temple or, really, anywhere in the park would be rewarding and memorable. Reddog (1639m) is the highest peak out of at least a hundred. The usual route to Kumgangsan is by car from Pyongyang to Onjong-ri via Wonsan along the new highway (around 315km, a four-hour drive). Along the way to Wonsan, your car or bus will stop off at a teahouse by Sinpyeong Lake. From Wonsan, the road more or less follows the coastline south, and you’ll get glimpses of the double-wired electric fence that runs the entire length of the east coast. There may also be a stop for tea at Shijung Lake.

Your final destination is the village of Onjong and the first-class Kumgangsan Hotel. The hotel is quite a rambling affair consisting of a main building and several outer buildings that include chalets, a shop, a dance hall and bathhouse (fed by a hot spring). The food served here is good, especially the wild mountain vegetable dishes.

PaeKdusan
One of the most stunning sights on the Korean Peninsula is PaeKdusan (Mount Paekdu), a national park that straddles the Chinese-Korean border in the very far northeast of North Korea. Apart from it being the highest mountain in the country at 2744m, and an amazing geological phenomenon (it’s an extinct volcano now containing a vast crater lake at its centre), it is also of huge mythical importance to the Korean people.

PaeKdusan is not included on most tours, as it involves chartering an internal flight to the city of Chongjin and then travelling into the mountains from there. However, if you have the time and money to include a visit on your trip, you will not be disappointed.

The natural beauty of the extinct volcano now containing one of the world’s deepest lakes is made all the more magical by the mythology that surrounds the lake, both ancient and modern. The legend runs that Hwanung, the Lord of Heaven, descended onto the mountain in 2333 BC, and from there formed the nation of Choson – ‘The Land of Morning Calm’, or ancient Korea. It therefore only seems right and proper that four millennia later Kim Jong II was born here and flying white horses were seen in the sky according to official sources. In fact, Kim Jong II was probably born in Khabarovsk, Russia, where his father was in exile at the time, but the necessity of maintaining the Kim myth supersedes such niggling facts.

Much like Myohyangsan, an area of spectacular natural beauty is further enhanced by revolutionary ‘sights’ such as Jong II Peak and the Secret Camp from where Kim II Sung supposedly directed some of the key battles during the anti-Japanese campaigns of WWII, despite the fact that no historians outside DPRK have ever claimed that the area was a battle scene. North Korea’s current history books also claim that he established his guerrilla headquarters at Paekdusan in the 1920s, from where he defeated the Japanese. To prove this, you’ll be shown doctored declarations that the Great Leader and his comrades carved on the trees. More and more of these ‘slogan-bearing trees’ are being discovered every year, sometaso well preserved you’d think they were carved yesterday. The North Korean book Kim Jong II in His Young Days describes the Dear Leader’s difficult childhood during those days of ceaseless warfare at Paekdusan:

His childhood was replete with ordeals. The secret camp of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army in the primeval forest was his home, and ammunition belts and magazines were his playthings. The raging blizzards and ceaseless gunshots were the first sounds to which he became accustomed. Day in and day out fierce battles went on and, during the breaks, there were military and political trainings. On the battlefield, there was no quilt to warm and no food to nourish the new-born child. So women guerrillas gallantly tore cotton out of their own uniforms and each contributed pieces of cloth to make a patchwork quilt for the infant.

Visitors here will be shown the secret camp beneath Jong II Peak, said to be the Dear Leader’s birthplace, which features a log cabin, and plenty of monuments commemorating patriotic fighters and glorious battles. But the real reason to come here is the glorious nature: vast tracts of virgin forest, abundant wildlife, lonely granite crags, fresh springs, gushing streams and dramatic waterfalls – and, for those able to make the steep and treacherous climb, the astounding Jong II peak, where heaven indeed seems close and the mundane world is so very far away.

Few foreign travellers make it here at all, due to the formidable costs involved, and that is unlikely to change until a highway or train line is built.

Sleeping
Hotels in this area include the second-class Pegeabong Hotel located in the middle of the forest in Samjiyon County, a nice place built for mountain climbers in lodge style. Further away, you can also stay in the town of Hyesan, at the second-class Hyesan Hotel.

Getting There & Away
Paekdu Is only accessible from around late June to mid-September; at all other times it is forbiddingly cold and stormy. Access to the mountain is by air, followed by car. There are charter flights available that can hold up to 10 people, for €4600 per round-trip flight. At €150 per person that isn’t unreasonable, but it’s a bit much for a solo trip. Unfortunately, this flight is currently the only transport offered to Paekdusan.

Wonsan
pop. 330,000
The port city of Wonsan on the East Sea is not a huge tourist draw itself, but is an interesting stop en route to the Kumgangsan mountains. As it’s not usually a destination, it reflects real North Korean life to a good extent. The city is an important port, a centre of learning with 10 universities and a popular holiday resort for Koreans, with beaches at nearby Lake Sijung and Lake Tongjong. An overnight stop can be pleasantly rewarding.

The city, 200km east of Pyongyang, is surrounded by verdant mountains. It is modern with high-rise buildings, but also pleasantly attractive, especially during the summer months. The two main tourist hotels are the Songdowun Tourist Hotel and the Tomgmyong Hotel, both second class.

The nicest part of Wonsan is the suburb of Songdongwon on the northeastern shore. There is a clean sandy beach here set among pines where the Jokchon Stream runs into the East Sea, and a small zoo and botanical garden, both pleasant enough to walk in.
NAMPO
pop 370,000
On the Taedong delta, 55km southwest of Pyongyang is Nampo, North Korea’s most important port and centre of industry. Nampo has made its name for being the ‘birthplace of the Chollima movement’, after the workers house now open to tourists. Sadly there’s nothing much to see in the town itself.

The reason tourists come here (usually on an overnight stop en route to Kaesong) is to see the West Sea Barrage, a classic piece of socialist tourism, built across an 8km estuary of the Taedong, which solved the irrigation and drinking water problems in the area. The impressive structure, built during the early 1960s and opened in 1986, is nevertheless rather a dull visit. You’ll drive across it, then up to a hill at the far end from where you’ll get good views and enjoy a quick (hilarious) video at the visitor centre. You’ll then (if all is running to plan) drive down to the sluice gates and watch them open – the purported highlight of the trip.

It’s now common to include Nampo in an overnight trip from Pyongyang, where your group will sleep some way outside the city at the Ryang Pyong Hot Spring House, a former government site now open to tourists. It’s a fairly unique place – some 20 well-appointed villas containing several bedrooms each are spread out in the sprawling grounds, each room containing its own spa bath where you can take the waters in your room for a maximum of 15 minutes a time – it’s not clear what will happen if you stay in for longer than 15 minutes, but the guides make it clear that it would be bad.

On the other side of the West Sea Barrage, there are nice beaches about 20km from Nampo. Here, if you are lucky enough to go, you will see the locals enjoying volleyball and swimming.

SINCHON
This small, nondescript place is often visited between Nampo and Kaesong. It’s interesting to stop here, as this is a small North Korean town and it’s easy to get a sense of daily life from passing through.

The reason you’re here, though, is to visit the Sinchon Museum which details the US atrocities committed in the town during the Korean War. That US atrocities were committed here and in other places is not in question (both sides frequently violated the Geneva Convention), but the typically hyperbolic portrayal of these sad events does nothing for the victims or making them into a propaganda tool.

On arrival the museum director brings tourists into the administration building and gives a 90-minute slide show. He then takes you on a guided tour of ‘the horror of the American brutality’ (people having their heads sawn open, a man being pulled in two by two cows attached to either arm, people being burned at the stake) – the entire place will make your blood boil with determination to extract every drop of propaganda from its dead. There is no hotel in Sinchon, but from here it’s a three-hour drive to Kaesong.

CHILBO
The area around Mount Chilbo is one of the most beautiful places in North Korea. It’s also incredibly remote – the only way to get here is to charter a flight from Pyongyang to Chongjin Orang (€4,000 return), which is done quite often with bigger tour groups. The World Tourism Organisation has pioneered a homestay programme and an ecotourism zone here. There’s also the Waechilbo Hotel for when the homestay isn’t functioning.

RAJIN/SONBONG
This eccentric corner of North Korea, right on the border with China and Russia has made its name for being the ‘birthplace of the Chollima movement’, after the workers house now open to tourists. Sadly there’s nothing much to see or do. The Chinese-owned five-star Emperor Hotel (possibly the country’s best) is here, although its casino has closed (the main attraction for many Chinese to come) so it’s even quieter than usual. Rajin-Sonbong also boasts what must be the world’s worst zoo on a recent visit it contained three ducks, an exceptionally large turkey, some foxes we couldn’t see, a picture of a monkey, that was not missing any limbs, which was missing one arm – and a cow tied to a fence (we couldn’t decide whether the cow was part of the display or just passing through).

Despite the lack of things to do, Rajin-Sonbong is uniquely beautiful, with its rocky cliffs, lakes and sandy coastline, but it feels like the end of the universe, and it’s very unusual to come here these days. There are two guesthouses for tourists who don’t stay at the Emperor.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES
As a foreigner you will be both conspicuous and unfathomably wealthy compared to the average local. Be as vigilant as you anyone’s listening. In any case, save anything you say. No one’s listening. That US atrocities were committed here and in other places is a fact, and the hyperbolic portrayal of these sad events does nothing for the victims.

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NORTH KOREA DIRECTORY

Accommodation
All accommodation in North Korea is in state-run hotels, all of which are perfectly fine – particularly those in Pyongyang. You won’t have any control over where you stay, but you can always make requests. All hotels have the basics of life a restaurant, a shop (although bring everything you need outside of Pyongyang) and usually some form of entertainment, from the ubiquitous karaoke to pool tables and a bar.

A new homestay scheme in Chilbo was being pioneered in 2006, although we were unable to stay there during research for this guide. If you’d like to experience a homestay, ask your tour operator.

While most hotel rooms are probably bugged, there’s only a very small chance that one will listen. In any case, save anything you say. In any case, save anything you say.
would be anywhere else, but realistically, your chances of being a victim of crime are very low. Pyongyang’s Sunan airport seems to be one place where petty theft could be a problem.

The major potential for disaster is thoughtless visitors openly criticising the regime while in the country. In 2002, according to rumours, an American aid worker was incarcerated for two months after asking why Kim Jong II was so plump while ordinary North Koreans were so skinny. It is to be hoped that most readers would have more sense than to make such a remark. If in doubt, bite your tongue – be similarly discreet on the phone, by fax and in your hotel room, all of which can be monitored.

Likewise, spare a thought for both your guides and the few locals you will come in contact with. Despite being the official representatives of a brutal Stalinist regime, your tour guides are vulnerable to persecution themselves. Running away from them, disobeying them or otherwise going against the grain will be far more dangerous for them than for you.

When meeting North Koreans in the street, take your lead from the guides. Ask before you take photographs, do not give them any gifts that could incriminate them in imperialist flunkeyism and generally proceed with caution.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES
North Korea now enjoys full diplomatic relations with most EU countries, although many do not maintain embassies in Pyongyang. In theory, North Korean embassies can all process visa applications abroad, but in reality they are largely useless for the average tourist. The Beijing Embassy remains the most useful, as well as being the only embassy used to dealing with tourists.

North Korea Embassies & Consulates

Canada (613) 232 1712, 351 Slater St, 6th fl, Ottawa, KIP-1H
China (654) 6532 1189/1188, Westend (654) 6532 6056; fax 6532 6056; 2nd Ave, New York, NY 10010
France (0) 1 4745 3855; fax 01 4734 3841; 47, rue Chaban-Delmas, 75011 Paris
Germany, (622) 591 6318; 9, Lothringerstr. 57, D 10117 Berlin
Hong Kong (2869) 1447, Consulate General of DPRK, 2F, Victoria Century Tower, 138 Gloucester Rd, Wan Chai
Italy (02) 3848 930, Via Foscolo, 1, 00177 Rome
Japan (03) 3204 5245, Koryo Hotel, 1-9-8 Hibiya, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0084
Korea, (82) 2 2457 0001, www.korea.or.kr
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Latvia (37) 843 053, 5th fl, 15 Dzirnavu Str., Riga 1018, Latvia
Mexico (52 55) 5115 5652, Via Universidad 119, Col. Roma, C.P. 06100, Mexico City
Netherlands (020) 30 23 070, Nieuwezijds Kolk 161, 1012 GH Amsterdam
Russia (95) 143 64 95, 55 Mostovaya St, Moscow 107078
Spain (34) 91 565 56 56, Plaza del Espana 8, Madrid 28020
Sweden (08) 562 41 40, Kungsholmen, Sroa, Stockholm 111 38
Switzerland (022) 99 33 33, CH-1204 Geneva
UK (0) 20 8992 309, 193 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1
USA (202) 330 7070, 3860 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20009

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INTERNET ACCESS
There is no internet access to be had in DPRK for tourists, but you can send an email and even receive a reply via the communication centre at the Yanggakdo Hotel in Pyongyang, as well as pay $2 per 125KB (roughly half a page of text).

Intranet (ie a closed internet with no connections to the wider web) is being developed in quite a few places in the country, but obviously this remains entirely government controlled.

LEGAL MATTERS
It is extremely unlikely that a tourist will experience legal problems with the North Korean authorities, but if this does occur, stay calm and ask to speak to your country’s diplomatic representative in North Korea. Usually, tourists who breach the law in North Korea are deported immediately. Breaking the law here is a particularly stupid thing to do.

MAPS
You do not need a map of anywhere in North Korea, due to the unique hand-holding arrangement with the guides. However, Pyongyang maps are available at most hotels and shops in the capital and can be helpful for getting to grips with its layout. Elsewhere maps aren’t really needed, nor are they available. There are few good-quality maps of North Korea available outside the country; the best on offer from travel specialists is the general map of Korea published by Nelles Maps.
If you are able to get a video camera into North Korea, the restrictions are similar to those with a camera. But, as a number of journalists have made video documentaries about the country in situations where disabled access is a problem, the guides are likely to find some locals to help out.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

NORTH KOREA

They are closely monitored, so apply as far before your trip as you can (preferably allow two months, although one month should suffice). Your travel agency will handle the application for you, and in most cases the visa is a formality if you travel with a well-known agency. But, as a number of journalists have lic, but a network has been established in

You will also see years such as Juche 8 (1919) or Juche 93 (2004). Three years after the death of Kim II Sung, the government adopted a new system of recording years, starting from Juche 1 (1912) when Kim No 1 was born. Despite the wide use of these dates internally, they are always clarified with ‘normal’ years.

TOILETS

In Pyongyang and around frequently visited tourist sites, toilet facilities are basic but sanitary. There are regular cuts in the water supply outside Pyongyang, and often a bucket of water will be left in your hotel room for this eventuality. A straw poll of tour operators reveals the worst toilet in North Korea is at the rest stop on the Pyongyang–Wonsan highway. Toilet paper is supplied in hotels, but it’s always a good idea to carry tissues for emergencies, especially as diarrhoea is a common problem for visitors.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

North Korean culture places great emphasis on caring for the disabled, especially as the Korean War left such a brutal legacy among young recruits. Popular songs such as I Live an Unmarried Disabled Soldier encourage marrying the war-wounded, and so disabled visitors need not fear a lack of local understanding. Facilities are basic, but manageable, and even in situations where disabled access is a problem, the guides are likely to find some locals to help out.

VIAS

M USD 140, while a page to Europe will set you back €13! Following pages are slightly less expensive.

TIME

The time in Korea is Greenwich Mean Time plus nine hours. When it is noon in Korea it is 1pm in Sydney or Melbourne, 3am in London, 10pm the previous day in New York and 7pm the previous day in Los Angeles or San Francisco.

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VIAS

People of all nationalities need a visa to visit North Korea. Traditionally visas have not been issued to US or South Korean travellers, but nationals of both countries can now visit under certain conditions.

Restrictions have relaxed somewhat across the board. Until recently it was necessary to supply a full CV listing all your previous employment as well as to provide a letter from your employer detailing the duties of your current job. As this still didn’t prevent journalists entering the country in the guise of tourists, this practice seems to have stopped, and now you just have to supply the name of your employer and your job. Ensure that if you work in any field of the media that you do not put this. Try to do something innocuous instead.

Each visa needs approval from Pyongyang, so apply as far before your trip as you can (preferably allow two months, although one month should suffice). Your travel agency will handle the application for you, and in most cases the visa is a formality if you travel with a well-known agency.

Tour groups usually have visas issued in Beijing the day before travel, so don’t worry about leaving home without your visa. It does mean that you need to spend 24 hours in Beijing before going on to Pyongyang, though. Individual visas can usually be issued at any North Korean Embassy. The embassy visa charges are included in nearly all packages. North Korean visas are not put into passports, but are separate documents taken from you when you exit the country. If you want a souvenir, make a photocopy. No stamp of any kind will be made in your passport.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

While communist ideology dictates equality of the sexes, this is still far from everyday reality in a traditionally patriarchal society. However, women travellers will have no problem at all in the country, as no North Korean would be foolhardy enough to get themselves in trouble for harassing a foreigner. There are an increasing number of female guides being employed by Ryohaengsa and it is possible to request them for individual travel.

AIR

The national airline Air Koryo, running a fleet of old Soviet Tupolevs, flies to Beijing, Shenyang and Vladivostok. The most popular route is from Beijing, from where flying time to Pyongyang is just over an hour. There are three flights per week on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday in each direction, and a return flight costs €300. The flight codes are JS151 and JS152. The weekly flight from Vladivostok is the second most popular, going in both directions every Thursday, while there’s a flight to/from Shenyang on both Wednesday and Saturday. China Southern Airlines has also recently restarted flights from Beijing, currently on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Pyongyang’s airport code is PJN.

TRAIN

There are four trains each week in either direction between Beijing and Pyongyang via Dandong and Sinuiju, the border towns of China and DPRK respectively. They run Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. On each day, train No 27 leaves Beijing at 5.48pm and
arrives at Pyongyang the next day at 6.05pm (about 23 hours). Going the other way, train No 26 departs from Pyongyang at 10.10am arriving in Beijing at 9am. The fare each way is €75 for a soft sleeper. In contrast to the plane, it's possible to pick up your train tickets to Pyongyang without a DPRK visa.

The North Korean train is actually just two carriages attached to the main Beijing-Dandong train, which are detached at Dandong (Chinese side) and then taken across the Yalu River Bridge to Sinuiju (Korean side), where more carriages are added for local people. Non-Koreans remain in their original carriages.

The trains usually spend about four hours at the border for customs and immigration – two hours at Dandong and two hours at Sinuiju. You may wander around the stations and take photos, but ask permission first and obey the directives of signs and officials about going outside.

Sinuiju station will be your first introduction to North Korea and the contrasts with China will be quite marked. Everything is squeaky-clean and there are no vendors plying their goods. A portrait of the Great Leader looks down from the top of the station, and at all other train stations in North Korea.

Soon after departing Sinuiju, you'll be served lunch. The food is excellent and the service is fine. Make sure you have some small denomination euro notes to pay for the meal (about €5), as this is not usually included in tours. There are no facilities for changing money at Sinuiju or on the train. The dining car is for the use of non-Koreans only.

Your guide will meet you on arrival at Pyongyang train station and accompany you to your hotel. Likewise, when you leave North Korea, your guide will bid you farewell at Pyongyang train station or the airport and you then travel to China unaccompanied. Be very careful taking pictures from the train in North Korea. While you'll get some great opportunities to snap everyday DPRK scenes, do not take pictures in stations as this will cause big trouble if you are caught.

When leaving North Korea, you can link up with the Trans-Siberian at Dandong, China. To make this connection you need to reserve your tickets with CITS (China International Travel Company) or KITC in Beijing beforehand.

Leaving the Country
If you are departing by air, your guide will accompany you to the airport. You must pay an airport departure tax of €15 at the airport, while there is no departure tax for the train. Similarly your guides will leave you at Pyongyang station if you are taking the train out.

GETTING AROUND
All accommodation, guides and transport must be booked through the government-run Ryohaengsa. You can also book through a travel agent (p346) and they will then deal with Ryohaengsa on your behalf.

The main office of Ryohaengsa (% 6437 6666/3133; fax 6436 9089; Korean International Travel Company, 2nd Fl, Yonsei, NoA2 Jiangtai Rd, Chaoyang District, Conghuang) is in Beijing, and there are also branches in Dandong, Liaoning Province and in Yanji in Jilin.
ACCOMMODATION

Expect to pay W15,000 for a dormitory or room in a yeoinsuk (small, family-run budget hotel with shared bathroom); W25,000 for a yeogwan (motel with small en suite) or basic countryside minbak (private home with rooms for rent); W30,000 for a motel; W50,000 for a pension (upmarket rural retreat) or smart minbak; at least W90,000 for an upper midrange hotel; and W200,000 upwards for top-end luxury. Upper midrange and top-end hotels add 21% tax and service to the bill, but this has been included in all the prices quoted in this guidebook. If the accommodation has internet access it will invariably be broadband.

Modern motels, often clustered around bus terminals, offer the best deal. Tip: look for the newest motel building and stay there. Accommodation is normally charged per room, so solo travellers receive little or no discount. Still it’s always worth asking. If you’re staying a few days or it’s off season (outside July and August on the coast or outside July, August, October and November in National parks), you can always try for discount.

Only staff in Seoul guesthouses and upper midrange and top-end hotels are likely to speak any English. An extra bed or yo (mattress or futon on the floor) is usually available. Check-out time is generally noon. Prices can rise on Friday and Saturday and at peak times (July and August near beaches or national parks, and October and November near national parks).

Laundry is a problem – bring lots of clothes or else many travellers wash their clothes every night and hang them up in their room to dry, or lay it on the ondol-heated floor in winter. Launderettes are virtually extinct and yeogwan and motels rarely offer laundry services.

In general, booking accommodation is unnecessary and is difficult in the case of motels as staff very rarely speak any English.

Budget accommodation is defined as rooms that cost W39,000 or less, midrange is rooms from W40,000 to W150,000, and top end is anything over W150,000.

Backpacker Guesthouses

Seoul has a dozen small guesthouses, ideal for budget-minded foreign tourists, where the staff are friendly and speak English, and...
PRACTICALITIES

- The Korea Times and Korea Herald newspapers carry mainly political and business stories, but ‘Weekender’ sections on Friday (Korea Times) and Saturday (Korea Herald) cover culture and what’s-on.
- Seoul is an excellent 75-page monthly magazine covering life, culture and coming events in the always-buzzing capital city.
- KBS1, KBS2, MBC, SBS are the four main Korean-language TV networks. AFN (http://afnkorea.com), which is run by the American military, English-language Arirang (www.arirang.co.kr), and 50 other channels (including CNN, BBC World, sports and movie channels) are available on satellite and cable.
- The video system is NTSC – rental charges are cheap (free in many motels) and videos are not usually dubbed into Korean. DVDs have an English-language option.
- Electricity supply is 220v at 60Hz and uses two round plugs with no earth, although a few ancient yeogwan may still be wired for 110V and have two flat pins.
- The metric system rules, but real estate is measured in pyeong (3.3 sq metres, or almost 6ft x 6ft) and markets still use wooden measuring boxes.

it’s easy to meet other travellers and pester them with questions. The guesthouses offer dormitories (W15,000 per night) and double rooms (W35,000), some of which are en suite. Communal facilities include toilets, showers, satellite TV, a kitchen and washing machine. Free internet and breakfast is also provided. Sadly they hardly exist outside Seoul.

Campings & Mountain Huts
Nature lovers can camp at beaches and at the entrances to some national and provincial parks. The cost is only W3000, but facilities are very basic and they are only open in July and August. Sanjiang (mountain huts) cost the same although the better, newer ones cost W5000.

In general, yeogwan, motel and minbak accommodation at the national-park entrances are reasonably priced, and only a few major hikes in Seoraksan and Jirisan National Parks require overnighting in a mountain hut. Huts and camping grounds can be fully booked at weekends and peak times – log on to www.npao.or.kr to make a reservation.

Hanok
Staying in a hanok – a traditional yangban (aristocrat) wooden house – is a unique experience. Rooms are very small and grouped around a courtyard, and guests usually sleep on a yo on an ondol-heated floor. Seoul and Jeonju in Jeollabuk-do are just about the only places to experience a hanok stay as few have survived the Korean War and the postwar bulldozers.

Homestays
View www.labostay.or.kr or www.home staykorea.com to contact Korean families willing to offer rooms in their homes to foreigners. Guests often receive royal hospitality, and the cost is around US$35 (single) or US$60 (double) for bed and breakfast. Rates are greatly reduced for long stays. It’s your best opportunity to experience the local lifestyle at first hand. Book online at least two weeks before you arrive.

Hotels
Luxury hotels are scarce outside of major cities and Jeju. They are world-class in terms of communal facilities, but rooms and bathrooms can be on the small side with some imperfections – showers above baths are common as are marked carpets. The lobbies, fitness centres and restaurants are often their strong points. Hotels generally quote rack rates which then have 21% tax and service added on top, but discounts or packages are nearly always available.

Websites that offer discounted prices and special deals include www.koreahotels.net and www.khc.com. Always check if discounted prices include the 21% service and tax. The discounts look good but may be less than you could obtain direct, and some hotels claim that the best rates are obtainable from their own websites.

Minbak & Pension
Most minbak provide basic accommodation (and usually meals) on islands, near ski resorts, in rural areas and near beaches and national parks. Expect to pay W25,000 for a room but double that in peak seasons. You sleep on a yo on an ondol-heated floor with only a TV and a heater or fan in the room. Facilities are usually en suite. Lots of people can share a small room – an extra person usually costs W10,000. Nowadays there are more upmarket minbak, which are similar to pension and cost W50,000 or more, and provide modern, stylish rooms with beds and kitchenettes. Pension are more luxurious than most minbak and cost W50,000 to W70,000 with spacious rooms, often with stylish furniture, balconies, kitchens and great views.

Motels
They started out as love motels, and rooms can still be rented by the hour, but nowadays the modern motels also provide the best deal accommodation for touring Korea. In general you don’t need to worry about where to stay in Korea – motels are so numerous that there’s no need to book ahead. How they all survived the Korean War and the postwar years is a mystery. Invariably priced at W30,000 (but allow up to W10,000 extra for special facilities like a waterbed, jacuzzi or a coffee maker) the newest ones provide a mid-range style of room at a budget price. Most motel rooms are just regular rooms, although you might find large mirrors, mood lighting and maybe round beds or a free packet of condoms. It’s unusual to come across erotic art, and you will never see bondage gear or whips in the corner!

In modern motels, rooms and bathrooms are reasonably sized, with a high standard of fittings, furnishing and décor, a comfortable bed, a large TV, video player (free videos available), air-con, a fridge with free soft drinks, a washer dispenser, small towels, a hairdryer, shampoo, lotions and even hair brushes and toothbrushes. TVS have satellite or cable links and can pick up 50 or so channels including an X-rated one. Windows are double (or triple) glazed for quietness. Modern high-rise motels have 30 or so rooms and an elevator, but usually no English is spoken, no staff are employed to help with bags, and there is no coffee shop, laundry, restaurant, bar or communal facility. You just get a clean, facility-filled room.

Every city, small town and tourist area has batches of motels, usually surrounding the bus terminal or train station. Some look like Disneyland castles, while others are metal domes. It’s unusual to come across erotic art, and you will never see bondage gear or whips in the corner!

Rental Accommodation
Many expat workers live in accommodation supplied by their employers, but a few live in a guesthouse, homestay or yeogwan on a monthly basis and negotiate a reduced daily cost. Serviced apartments and apartment sharing are other options in Seoul, although space rooms are difficult to find – try the notice boards on the Seoul government or newspaper websites, such as www.koreaherald.co.kr.

Renting an apartment is tricky because of the traditional payment system and because prices in Seoul keep going up. Chonsei is when you loan from W50 million to W200 million (or more) to the landlord and get it all back at the end of the rental period. Wolse is when you pay a smaller returnable deposit of W3 million to W10 million plus a monthly rental fee. However some accommodation is available to foreigners on the Western system, with a small refundable deposit and a monthly rent.

If you are looking to rent, take note that real estate is measured in pyeong (1 pyeong = 3.3 sq metres). A large apartment is 50 pyeong and medium-sized is about 30 pyeong, though smaller budget ones of 15 pyeong to 20 pyeong do exist.

Sauna Dormitories
Saunas and jjimbang (luxury saunas) nearly all have a dormitory or napping room. They are not really meant for overnight sleepovers, but they can be used for that purpose. Pay the entry fee (usually under W10,000), use the
facilities and then head for the dormitory.
Don’t expect much in the way of bedding, and the pillow may be a block of wood.

Serviced Apartments
More than 20 serviced apartments have sprung up in recent years in Seoul as an alternative to small hotel rooms and the hassle of finding and renting an apartment. Known locally as residences or suites, prices range from W75,000 to W250,000 a day with a reduction for month-long stays.

Temple Stays
Overnight stays in Buddhist temples (www.templestaykorea.net) are a unique experience and cost around W50,000. Guests are given Buddhist robes to wear and stay in their own room or single-sex dormitory-style accommodation, sleeping on a padded quilt on the floor. Don’t go to bed too late as guests are asked to get up around 3:30am the next day to join the monks at dawn prayers. Remember to take your shoes off before entering Buddhist shrines, and to use the side door. As you might expect, alcohol and cigarettes are not allowed.

Sweeping paths, making stone rubbings and hiking in the mountains could also be on the programme, as well as meditation and a tea ceremony. Simple vegetarian meals are provided. Temple stays are an enlightening experience, providing genuine insights into the daily lifestyle and beliefs of Korean monks.

Yeogwan & Yeoinsuk
Yeogwan provide old-fashioned budget rooms, but are only W5000 to W10,000 cheaper than the much better modern motels. Rooms (and bathrooms) are smallish but are fully equipped with satellite or cable TV, a fan, air-con, heating, a fridge, bed and sometimes a table and chairs. The drawbacks are that furnishings and fixtures are dated, rooms and corridors are usually gloomy, and bedding is often quilts rather than sheets. Quilts are usually aired rather than washed so you may want to bring a pair of sheets with you. ‘Adequate but shabby’ sums up most yeogwan.

A few yeoinsuk (family-run budget hotels) have made it into this guide despite their bargain W15,000 to W20,000 price tag because they are generally too grotty to recommend. Facilities are usually shared, and rooms are tiny, bare and usually furnished with just a TV and fan, and none too clean. The ancient proprietors may be unwilling to accept foreigners, and guests are usually Korean singles or families on their luck. Youth hostel or sauna dormitories provide a much more pleasant budget option.

Youth Hostels
Sixty large youth hostels (www.HIhostels.com) are spread around the country. Modern and clean, the dormitories offer the best deal for solo travellers at W11,000 to W15,000 a night (W22,000 in Seoul). Family rooms cost as much as motel rooms and are not as good. Not many foreigners stay in these hostels, perhaps because they are rather institutional and soulless, can be inconveniently located and are sometimes full of screaming children on a school trip. Membership costs W25,000 for adults, W18,000 for youths.

ACTIVITIES
See the Korea Outdoors chapter for hiking (p74), cycling and mountain bking (p73), diving (p75), winter sports (p77) and hot spring spas (p76).

Martial Arts
Korean martial arts are attracting worldwide interest. Taekwondo is now an Olympic sport, but there are other lesser-known ones. English-speaking martial art groups advertise in the World Taekwondo Federation Bulletin on Thursdays. The World Martial Arts Festival, held every October in Chungju (p337), includes obscure martial arts from many countries.

BUDDHIST PRAYER BEFORE EATING
A MEAL

Now we take our meal that caused no harm to any sentient beings.
Let us consider whether our behaviour deserves this meal.
Let us cultivate our minds away from greed, anger and foolishness.
We eat this meal to become enlightened.

GUICHEON
Guichon (www.guichon.org) is an indigenous and ancient Korean martial art that is so little known that most Koreans have never heard of it. The mind/body discipline is based on six body postures and special exercises are designed to promote joint flexibility and free up the qi energy paths. See the website for courses, contacts and more information.

HAPKIDO
This gentle martial art uses deep breathing to achieve focus, and practitioners are taught to make use of their opponent’s aggression and weak points to achieve victory.

SUNMUDO
This Zen Buddhist practice focuses on breathing as an aid to attaining enlightenment. To watch demonstrations or take part in Sunmudo training, head to the mountain temple at Golgulsa (p203).

TAEKWONDO
Millions of Korean children learn taekwondo in private schools and can often be seen in local neighbourhoods heading to evening classes in their taekwondo uniforms. All trainee soldiers in Korea also learn taekwondo, a Korean martial art with a global following that is based on taekkyon, a martial art which is similar to sumo. Taekkyon is a defensive art that teaches movement, while taekwondo is known for its high kicks.

For most government and private offices, business hours are from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday. From November to February government offices may close an hour earlier. Tourism information centres are usually open from 9am to 6pm daily while national parks are open daily from sunrise to sunset. Keep in mind that many (but not all) government-run museums and tourist sites close on Mondays.

Banking hours are from 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Friday. The hours that ATMs are available vary and are written on the machine, but they are not generally open 24 hours.
Post offices are generally open from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday, but some are open longer hours.
Department stores traditionally open from 10.30am to 7.30pm six days a week. Nowadays some open every day and a few open until late at night. New youth-oriented shopping malls tend to stay open until 10pm. Small general stores often stay open until midnight even in suburban areas, and many convenience stores are open 24 hours. Shops are generally open from 10am to around 9pm every day, but the trend towards more days off means that some do now close on Sunday. Travel agents may take Saturday afternoon off as well as Sunday.

Restaurants usually open from 10am to 10pm every day. Cinemas traditionally open at 11am, with the last show ending just before midnight, but a few run later. In big cities, midnight showings and even all-night movies are becoming a more popular option.

Pubs and bars open daily from 6pm to midnight but they close later on Friday and Saturday. Some open at noon for the thirsty early birds.
CHILDREN

Lonely Planet's Travel with Children is recommended reading. For information on children travelling with young children, a novelty in Korea, but once they've got over their surprise, expect the locals to be particularly helpful and intrigued. View www.travelwithyourkids.com for general advice and a first-hand report on Seoul for kids, which gives the city a thumbs up.

Only luxury hotels are likely to be able to organise a cot, but you could always ask for a yo. Bring your own car safety seat and bicycle helmets as they are rare. Few restaurants have high chairs. Nappy-changing facilities are more common in Seoul toilets than in the provinces. Bring your own babyfood unless you can decipher Han-gul (Korean phonetic alphabet) labels. Baby-sitting services are almost non-existent, except in Lotte World Hotel in Seoul.

The good news is that zoos, funfairs and parks can be found in most cities along with cinemas, DVD rooms, internet rooms, video arcade games, ten-pin bowling alleys, noraebang, pool tables and board-game cafés. Children will rarely be more than 100m away from an ice cream, a cake or a fast-food outlet. In winter hit the ski slopes, and in summer head for the water parks or beaches. To keep kids happy in Seoul see p118.

CLIMATE CHARTS

Korea has four very distinct seasons: spring from mid-March to the end of May; summer from June to August; autumn September to November; and winter from December to mid-March. Of course the actual weather doesn't always fit these neat categories.

Temperatures vary hugely between mid-summer and mid-winter, with August being very hot and sticky, while December and January are literally freezing. Winters in the north are colder than in the more southerly Busan or Jeju. Heavy rainfall always arrives with the summer monsoon season (late June to mid-July). See p14 for advice about the best times to visit.

SMOKING OR NONSMOKING?

Many Koreans smoke and they used to be allowed to smoke anywhere they wanted. This has all changed recently, but the smoking rules (like the driving rules) are not always enforced. In theory smoking is banned in schools and hospitals and on public transport, and restricted to designated smoking areas in other public places. The nonsmokers are winning the war but hard-core smokers still light up in restaurants, cafes, bars and PC bang. It's not too common and so isn't usually a problem. However the nonsmoking icon has not been used in this guide book because many places that claim to be nonsmoking don't strictly enforce nonsmoking rules.
GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Korea has never passed any laws that overtly discriminate against homosexuals, but this should not be taken as a sign of tolerance or acceptance. Korean law does not mention homosexuality because it is considered so bizarre and unnatural as to be unmentionable in public. Many older Koreans share the outlook of conservative American Christian fundamentalists. Younger Koreans and expats are less prejudiced than their parents, so some progress is being made, although only one celebrity so far has come out.

Virtually all Korean gays and lesbians keep their sexual orientation a secret from their extended family, work colleagues and friends, although the closet door is inching open. Major cities have a handful of gay clubs, bars and saunas, although they maintain a low profile. Despite increasing discussion of the issue in the media, it is generally a taboo topic, especially for the older generation. Gay and lesbian travellers who publicise their preferences can expect some shocked and hostile reactions. But if you don’t raise the issue it’s unlikely that anyone else will.

Male to male (and female to female) touching is more common in Korea than in the more uptight Western nations, but is simply a sign of friendship, nothing more.

FOOD

Exploring Korea’s unique and diverse cuisine is one of the pleasures of any visit — see p62. Western, Japanese, Chinese and fast food is also widely available. Price categories for the eating listings in this book are:

- Budget: Most meals under W9,000.
- Midrange: Most meals in the W9,000 to W18,000 range.
- Top end: Most meals cost more than W18,000.

UNUSUAL FESTIVALS

Korea’s many oddball festivals include:

- Gagneung’s Cuttlefish Festival – has a tricky catch-a-cuttlefish-by-hand competition
- Cheongju’s Uncurled Tofu Festival – only exciting for vegetarians
- Jeong·eup’s Bullfighting Festival – more pushing and shoving than actual fighting
- Gijang’s Fire Festival – the tiniest festival theme
- Gimje’s Horizon Festival – because all the other festival topics have been taken.

Visit www.tour2korea.com for more festival information.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

Eight Korean public holidays are set according to the solar calendar and three according to the lunar calendar, meaning that they fall on different days each year. Restaurants, shops and tourist sights stay open during most holidays, but may close over the three-day Lunar New Year and Chuseok (Thanksgiving) holidays. School holidays don’t cause any particular problems for tourists, although beaches can be busy in August, but school trips in May can overcrowd museums and tourist sights.

New Year’s Day (1 January) Bell rings out at midnight.

Lunar New Year (17-20 February, 27 February-2 March) Koreans give thanks for all their blessings during the New Year and start the new year with a fresh start.

Independence Movement Day (1 March) The anniversary of the day in 1919 when nationwide protests against Japanese colonial rule began.

Children’s Day (1 May) The festival is held on the first Tuesday of May and is focused on children. It is also a long traffic jam.

Buddha’s Birthday (25 May 2007, 14 May 2008) This is a religious holiday with a lot of events in the Buddhist temples.

Constitution Day (1 July) Commemorates the founding of the Republic of South Korea in 1948.

Liberation Day (15 August) This day commemorates the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945.


National Foundation Day (15 October) Commemorates the founding of the Kingdom of Joseon in 935.

Christmas Day (25 December) Christmas is not celebrated.
Insurance
A policy covering theft, loss, medical expenses and compensation for cancellation or delays in your travel arrangements is highly recommended. If items are lost or stolen, make sure you obtain a police report straightaway – otherwise your insurer might not pay up. There is a wide variety of policies available, but always check the small print. See p404 for health insurance and p402 for car insurance.

Worldwide coverage to travellers from over 44 countries is available online at www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services.

Internet Access
Internet rooms (all with high-speed access) are on almost every street in the country, mainly serving youthful computer game addicts playing Starcraft or Lineage. They charge W1000 to W2000 per hour – look out for the ‘PC방’ signs. Many post offices and some tourist information centres, cafés and other establishments provide free internet access, as do guesthouses in Seoul. Some motels and nearly all hotels provide computers with broadband access. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can offer you an English-language homepage and continuous broadband access for around W25,000 a month. See p393 for useful regional tourism websites.

Legal Matters
Most tourists’ legal problems involve visa violations or illegal drugs. In the case of visa transgressions, the penalty is normally a fine and possible expulsion from the country. As for using or selling narcotics, think twice: you could spend a few years researching the living conditions in a South Korean prison.

Maps
The Korean Tourism Organisation (KTO) and tourist information centres in every province and city hand out free tourist maps in English, which are good enough for most purposes. Ask at the ticket booths at national and provincial parks for good-quality hiking maps which usually contain some English.

Money
The South Korean unit of currency is the won (W), which comes in W10, W50, W100 and W500 notes. Notes come in denominations of W1,000, W5,000 and W10,000. The highest-value note was worth about US$10 at the time of research, so be prepared to carry around a thick wad of notes. See p15 for the cost of everyday items, and the inside front cover for exchange rates at the time of printing. Go to www.kkb.co.kr for current exchange rates.

Banks in most high streets offer foreign exchange services, although changing money can take some time. Tourist shops and hotels exchange money, but compare their rates and commissions with the banks before using their services. US dollars are the easiest to exchange but any major currency is accepted. Travellers cheques have a slightly better exchange rate than cash.

Don’t forget to recover any surplus won into another currency before you leave the country, as exchanging won outside Korea can be difficult or impossible if you exceed more than WUS$2000 worth of won at Incheon airport. You will have to show bank receipts to prove that you exchanged the money legally.

ATMs
Korean ATMs are a little strange. If you have a foreign credit card, you need to find an ATM with a ‘Global’ sign or the logo of your credit card company. NICE ATMs often accept foreign cards. Most Global ATMs have basic instructions in English and operate in units of W10,000. ATMs can be found outside banks and post offices and inside deluxe hotels, subway stations and department stores.

Restrictions on the amount of money you can withdraw vary from machine to machine; it can be below W300,000 per day, but many ATMs have a W700,000 limit. Another problem is that ATMs have time restrictions and most only operate between 9am and 10pm. If you can’t find one, Itaewon subway station (Line 6) has a Global ATM that has instructions in English, is open 24 hours and has a withdrawal limit of W300,000.

Credit Cards
More and more hotels, motels, shops and restaurants in cities and tourist areas accept foreign credit cards, but there still plenty of yeogwan, restaurants and small businesses that don’t. Be prepared to carry around plenty of cash, especially if you are touring around outside the main cities.

Photography & Video
Korea is more than up to date with all the latest digital equipment and services. Due to the arrival of the Digital Age, photographic shops are not as numerous as they once were, but they can burn your memory-stick photos onto a CD (W3000). All of the major cameras and video brands are available including the local ones, such as Samsung, which are challenging the Japanese manufacturers. Yongseang Electronics Market and Techno Mart in Seoul offer the best prices to buy the latest cameras and video equipment.

Most people do not mind being photographed, but monks, market traders, riot police and haenyeo (female divers) in jeju-do are among those who may not want to be photographed, so always ask first. Never take photographs inside Buddhist shrines or of shamanist ceremonies without asking permission first. In the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) you may take photographs, but always follow the advice of your tour guide or you might spark off a second Korean War. For professional hints on how to improve your pictures, purchase Lonely Planet’s Travel Photography.

Post
Korean postal services (www.koreapost.co.kr) are reliable and reasonably cheap, and post offices often have free internet access. Domestic post rates are W190 for a postcard, W220 for a letter and W2700 for a package weighing 2kg. Local mail is usually delivered in two days or so, but letters with the address in English can take a day or two longer.

Postcards are W350 and airmail rates W400 to any country, but international letter and parcel rates vary according to the destination. Airmail letters (20g) cost W650 (for zone three North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand). For zone three, airmail rates are W1800 for a 2kg packet, W2600 for a 10kg parcel and W13300 for 20kg. Surface rates are W1200 (2kg), W28000 (10kg) and W48000 (20kg).

Don’t seal your package if you want to take advantage of the lower rate that applies to sending printed papers only. Larger post offices have a packing service that costs from W2000 to W5500.

Shopping
Bustling traditional markets that sell everything under the sun can still be found in most cities and towns, while modern high-rise fashion malls, ritzy department stores packed with brand-name shops, and chain stores clustering together in semi-pedestrianised streets that fill up with people in the evenings. Korean craft shops abound and souvenir shops are mixed in with restaurants in the tourist villages that have grown up at the entrances to national and provincial parks. In Seoul, specialist markets (p135) cover everything from fashion, fish and flowers to electronics, embroidery and ed-skin bags.

Global Refund (%: 02-725-2120, www.jain-doji-refund.co.kr) and Korea Refund (%: 02-337-2729) offer a partial refund of the 10% VAT (between 5% and 7%). Spend more than W30,000 or W50,000 in any participating shop and the retailer gives you a special receipt, which you must show to a customs officer at Incheon International Airport. Go to a Customs Declaration Desk (near check-in counters D and J) before checking in your luggage, as the customs officer will want to see the items before stamping your receipt. After you go through immigration, show your stamped receipt at the refund desk to receive your won refund in cash or by cheque.

Solo Travellers
Solo travellers are at a disadvantage in Korea because few motels and hotels have single rooms; and singles pay the same or almost the same as a couple. When travelling solo around the country, budget travellers could consider staying in youth-hostel dormitories, although motels are a better option if you don’t mind paying W30,000 a night.

Some traditional Korean meals are for sharing and are not available in single portions, so find a companion if you want to enjoy haenyeonggak (Korean-style banquet), jjimdak (stewed chicken in a hot sauce) or a barbeque meal.

On the plus side, lone travellers in particular can expect locals to go out of their way to help or act as a tourist guide.
If you want to send a fax, first ask at your guesthouse, motel or hotel, but if they can't help you, try the nearest stationery shop or photocopy shop. Deluxe hotels have business centres which are usually helpful.

Mobile Phones

Korean mobile phones operate on the CDMA system, which few countries other than Japan and Korea use, but you can rent mobile phones at Incheon International Airport from one of the three main providers, SK, KTF or LG. They offer similar but not identical schemes. Charges at present are W3000 a day. Incoming calls are free while outgoing domestic calls cost W660 a minute, or W750 to W1000 a minute to the US for example, depending on the international access code used. Other countries cost more – up to W1700 a minute. Local text messages are usually free. A SIM card can be rented for W1300 a day. Check that prices quoted include the 10% VAT, and since the industry is in constant flux, don't be surprised if things have changed. A couple of deluxe hotels in Seoul offer rent-free mobile phones to their guests.

Phone Codes

Korea's nine provinces and seven largest cities have their own area codes. It's easy to forget that the major cities have their own codes – thus Gwangju City's code (061) is one digit different to the surrounding province of Jeollanam-do (062). South Korea's country code is +82. Do not dial the first zero of the figure number starting with 15 do not have an area code.

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<tr>
<th>Province/ City</th>
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<td>Busan</td>
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<td>Chungbuk</td>
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Jegu-dc % 004
Jeollabuk-dc % 003
Jeollanam-dc % 001
Seoul % 02
Usan % 002

Phonecards

Telephone cards usually give you a 10% bonus and can be bought at convenience stores and many small shops. There are two types of cards so if your card does not fit in one type of phone, try a different-looking phone. The more squat phone accepts the thin cards. A few phones accept credit cards. Local calls cost W140 for three minutes.

Dial KT (% 001), Dacom (% 002) or Onse (% 008) to call abroad, and you can make international calls from many phone booths. Much cheaper international rates (up to 300 minutes to the US for W15,000) are offered by other providers whose call-back telephone cards are on sale in Taewon and Dongdaemun in Seoul. Some cards are discounted on their face value. Internet phones are even cheaper.

TOURIST INFORMATION

In Seoul the excellent KOTourist information centre (KTO Mhp; 02-1330 001, www.tour2korea.com) has stacks of brochures on every region as well as helpful and well-informed staff. They can book hotels for you and advise you about almost anything.

A very useful tourist phone number (% 1300 h 24) connects you with English-speaking tourist information staff. They can also act as interpreters if someone can't understand you and you have a mobile phone. Dial % 02-1330 if you're on a mobile phone. If you want to contact a tourist information centre outside Seoul, dial the provincial or metropolitan code first – so for information on Gwang- won, dial 033-1330.

Many tourist areas throughout the country have their own tourist information centres, so it's not a problem to find one.

For tourist information on the provinces and metropolitan areas check the following websites:

Busan: www.pusanweb.com
Chungbuk: http://foreign.db2.net/english
Chungnam: www.chungnam.net
Daegu: www.daeguguide.com
Daejeon: www.daegunguide.com
Gangwon: http://eng/gwd.go.kr
Gyeongbuk: http://www.gyeongbuk.go.kr
Gyeongsang: http://www.gyesang.go.kr
Gyeongnam: http://www.gyeongnam.go.kr
Incheon: http://english.incheon.go.kr
Jeju: http://jejuinfo.net
Jeollabuk: http://www.pw.jeollabuk.kr
Jeollanam: http://www.jeollanamgo.kr
Seoul: www.seoul.go.kr
Usan: www.usan.go.kr

TOURS

Kyu如此 (02) 3300-2300, 02-772-2222 operates tours to Geumgangsan in North Korea that run by bus across the DMZ, using the east coast road north of Sokcho in Gangwon-do. Geumgangsan (spelled 'Kumgangsan' in North Korea) is a famous scenic area of towering mountain peaks, granite pinnacles and waterfalls (p371). No visas are required. If you share a dormitory (six people) a three-day/two-night tour costs W230,000, while the same tour costs W350,000 per person if you share a double room at Haegumgang Hotel. Hiking, a hot spa bath, a circus and shopping are available on the tour. The North Korean government sometimes cancels tours for political or other reasons. Other tours of the North may become available (to Kaesong for example). See p119 for tours around South Korea.
If you don’t want to forfeit your work or study visa, you must apply at your local immigration office for a re-entry permit before making any trips outside South Korea. The fee is W30,000 for a single re-entry or W50,000 for multiple re-entries, but permits are free for some nationalities.

If you are working or studying in Korea on a long-term visa, it is necessary to apply for an alien registration card within 90 days of arrival, which costs W10,000. This is done at your local immigration office.

VOLUNTEERING
Volunteers are always needed to teach English and entertain children who live in orphanages. Around 26,000 children are stuck in the orphanage system with little chance of escape as Koreans are very reluctant to adopt children, partly because of the huge educational costs and partly because of the traditional emphasis on blood lines. Contact the Y-Heesun Volunteer Support Group (www.yheesun.com) for more information.

Willing Workers on Organic Farms (www.wwoofkorea.com) has 50 farms that welcome volunteer workers who work a few hours a day in return for free board and lodging. For a W50,000 joining fee you’ll receive a booklet with contact details.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS
Korea is a relatively crime-free country for all tourists including women, but the usual precautions should be taken. Korea is a very male-dominated society, although it is becoming less so.

WORK
South Korea is a deservedly popular place for English-language teachers to find work. Recently salaries have been rising and native English teachers on a one-year contract can expect to earn W2 million or more a month, with a furnished apartment, return flights, 50% of medical insurance, 10-days paid holiday and a one-month completion bonus all included in the package. Income tax is very low (around 4%), although a 4.5% pension contribution (reclaimable by some nationalities) is compulsory. Careful spenders can save heaps. Koreans have an insatiable appetite for studying English so finding an English-teaching job should not be too difficult. New teachers in Seoul should check out p131.

Most English teachers work in a hagwon (private language school) but some are employed by universities or government schools. Private tutoring, company classes, English camps and even teaching via the telephone are also possible. Teaching hours in a hagwon are usually around 30 hours a week and are likely to involve split shifts, and evening and Saturday classes. Overtime (around W20,000 an hour) is often possible if you want it.

A degree in any subject is sufficient as long as English is your native language. However it’s a good idea to obtain some kind of English-teaching certificate before you arrive as this increases your options and you should be able to find (and do) a better job. Conversation classes are easy enough, but you never know when a student might fire a tricky grammar question at you. Just what is the difference between ‘I have eaten kimchi’ and ‘I ate kimchi’?

Some hagwon owners are less than ideal employers and don’t pay all that they promise, so check out the warnings on the websites below before committing yourself. Ask any prospective employer for the email addresses of foreign English teachers working at the hagwon, and contact them for their opinion and advice. One important point to keep in mind is that if you change employers, you will usually need to obtain a new work visa, which requires you to leave the country and fly or take a ferry to Fukuoka in Japan to pick up your new visa. That is likely to cost over W300,000, although your new employer may pick up all or at least part of the tab.

The English-language newspapers have very few job advertisements, but hundreds of English-teaching vacancies are advertised on the following websites:

www.englishspectrum.com: has stacks of job offers (job seekers can advertise too) and a bulletin board with accommodation options.
www.eslcafe.com: new job postings daily and useful forums on working and living in Korea.
www.eslcities.com: offers lesson ideas as well as job vacancies.
www.eslhub.com: contains full and part-time teaching jobs and other classifieds.
www.pusanweb.com: has jobs in Busan and elsewhere.
## Entering The Country

Disembarkation in Korea is a straightforward affair, but you have an extra form to fill in if you are carrying more than US$10,000 in cash and traveller’s cheques.

### Passport

There are no restrictions when it comes to citizens of foreign countries entering Korea. Most visitors don’t need a visa, but if your country is not on the visa-free list, you will need one (p393).

### Things Change...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.
CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL
Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change
Pretty much every form of motor transport generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household’s gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes
Climatecare.org and other websites use ‘carbon calculators’ that allow travellers to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: www.lonelyplanet.com.

KLM/Royal Dutch Airlines (airline code: K, % 02-2011 5000, airport 02-744 6900, www.klm.com) Hub Amsterdam, Amsterdam


TICKETS
Be sure you research all the options carefully to make sure you get the deal that best suits your circumstances and requirements. The internet is a useful resource for researching airline prices.

Automatic online ticket sales work well if you’re doing a simple one-way or return trip on specified dates, but are no substitute for a travel agent with the low-down on special deals, strategies for avoiding layoffs and other useful advice.

Paying by credit card offers some protection if you unwittingly end up dealing with a rogue fly-by-night travel agency, as most card issuers provide refunds if you can prove you didn’t receive what you paid for. Alternatively, buy a ticket from a bonded agent, such as one covered by the Airline ticketing organisation’s Licensing scheme in the UK. If you have doubts about the service provider, at the very least call the airline and confirm that your booking has been made.

The following websites can search for air fares to Korea when booking online or researching prices prior to visiting your travel agent:

www.clonedflights.com
www.airtickets.com
www.travelocity.com

Korean airport departure taxes are included in the ticket price.

Ticket prices have not been listed as they vary so much and change so quickly, depending on the airline, the season, the amount of competition, the level of demand and so on. Ever-increasing security, fuel and other surcharges add another element of uncertainty.

From China
Ticket prices have not been listed as they vary so much and change so quickly, depending on the airline, the season, the amount of competition, the level of demand and so on. Ever-increasing security, fuel and other surcharges add another element of uncertainty.

Prices to destinations like Winnipeg are expensive even in the low season.

From Continental Europe
The cheapest return flights from different cities in Continental Europe to Incheon airport are usually similar, although ultra specials are sometimes available – for starters try Aeroflot, KLM or Lufthansa.

In Germany contact STA Travel (0180 331 663; www.statravel.de) for up-to-date fare details.

In France contact Union Voyages (08 20 20 20 20; www.unionvoyages.fr) or Nouvelles Frontieres (08 92 00 00 02; www.nouvelles frontieres.fr) for reliable travel agencies with branches nationwide.

In Holland call NESS Reizen (020 620 5071; www.ansion.nl) or Holland International (020 307 6307; www.indialnternational.nl) for the latest flight special information.

Special offers on return flights from Incheon airport to Continental Europe can save you up to W100,000. Book early (for instance on Thai Air or Singapore Airlines) for the best deals on summer trips to Europe. Taxes, surcharges and landing charges can be high, so check that quotes include them.

From Hong Kong
To book flights, contact Phoenix Travel Services (www.phoenixtravel.com) in the Tsimshatsui district of Hong Kong, which receives good reviews from travellers. T’logic Travel (www.tlogic.com) is another option, while STA Travel (08 2736 8888; www.statravel.com.hk) has six branches
in Hong Kong and Macau. Check the classifieds in the English-language newspapers for a guide to current prices and discount offers, although they may not tell the whole story.

Return flights from Incheon airport to Hong Kong are sometimes discounted.

From Japan
Japanese tourists make up the majority of foreign visitors to Korea, and increasing numbers of Koreans are flying to Japanese cities, sometimes just for the weekend. There are direct nonstop flights from 26 Japanese cities to Incheon, but flights from Tokyo are usually the cheapest – try United or Northwest Airlines. Fares go up and down with the seasons, and fares in Golden Week (April and May) and August cost up to twice the price of low-season fares. Flights are also available from Japan to airports in Busan, Daegu and Jeju Island. Fast ferry boats from Japan to Busan are another option.

Asian Traveler's Bureau (_tokyo%2c%20japan (03)3207%2c%201577%2c%20www.asiantravel.com) and just Travel (% 03-307-8111) have English-speaking staff who can help you find discounted fares. Also check classified advertisements in the Japan Times (www.japantimes.co.jp) or on its website, which operates an online travel service, as well as in the Japan Travel (www.japan-kyoto.com), a monthly magazine for expats.

Special offers on return flights from Incheon airport to Tokyo and Osaka, usually on United Airlines, can save you some hard-earned money.

From New Zealand
Air New Zealand offers twice-weekly flights from Auckland to Seoul during the peak season (March-May) and twice-monthly flights during the off-peak season (June-August). Return flights from Auckland to Seoul start at $1,397 without taxes and fees.

From Singapore
Cut-price youth fares can slash the cost of return flights from Singapore to Incheon.

SIA Travel (% 0737-7181) www.siatravel.com.sg and Four Seasons Travel (% 2207-9849) www.fourseasravel.com have offices in Singapore, and other travel agents advertise special offers in the classified columns of the Straits Times.

Return flights from Incheon airport to Singapore are rarely discounted.

From the UK
The UK has an endless number of worldwide discount offers, so it’s always worthwhile to do a thorough check before buying a ticket. From Heathrow or Gatwick (both near London) try Emirates via Dubai or direct flights on Korean Air. Off-season specials are always likely.

London has hundreds of discount travel agents including Travelfinders (% 0870-160-0599; www.travelfinders.co.uk), which has offices in nine cities, and SIA Travel (% 0300-120-999; www.siatravel.com). From Korea, buy tickets as early as you can or go via Southeast Asia to reduce the cost of flights. In July and August every flight can be fully booked.

From the USA
From New York and Los Angeles, there are usually return-flight specials to Incheon airport – try United, Northwest or Malaysian Airlines. Off-season specials are always likely. Also check out SIA Travel (% 012-727-6411; www.statravel.com) for discounted fares. Prices of return flights from Incheon airport to New York and Los Angeles are double in July and August, and you’ll be lucky to find a ticket.

To From China
Flights from China are sometimes discounted. Flights from Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and other cities in China are sometimes discounted. Flights from China to Korea are rarely discounted.

KOREA–CHINA FERRIES FROM INCHEON

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<th>Departure Time</th>
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<td>Qingdao</td>
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GETTING AROUND

South Korea is a public-transport dream come true with everything reasonably priced. Planes, trains and express buses link major cities, intercity buses link cities and towns large and small, while local buses provide a surprising good service to national and provincial parks and villages in outlying rural areas. Car ferries ply numerous routes to offshore islands. Local urban buses, subways and taxis make getting around cities and towns easy. All transport works on the Korean pali pali (hurry hurry) system, so buses and trains leave on time, and buses and taxis tend to be driven fast with little regard to road rules.

Comparing the three forms of transport, Seoul to Busan (444km) costs W19,300 by ordinary bus and W24,800 by deluxe bus, which takes 5½ hours and runs at least every 30 minutes. The train options are KTX (high-speed, W44,800, three hours, every 30 minutes), Saemaul (express W36,800, 4½ hours, every 45 minutes) and Mugungwha (semi express, W24,800, 5½ hours, every 45 minutes), most of which are faster and more comfortable than the buses. Flying costs W58,000 and only takes an hour, but travelling to and from the airports takes another 1½ hours.

As in other countries, rising fuel prices are pushing up the price of transport, so in 2007 expect KTX train fares to rise 3%, Saemaul train prices to increase 12%, and bus fares to go up between 7% and 10%.

AIR

Airlines in Korea

South Korea has only two major domestic carriers – Korean Air (1588 2001; www.koreanair.com) and Asiana Airlines (1588 8000; www.flyasiana.com) – but a new low-cost operator, Jeju Air (www.jejuair.com), started up in June 2006. Initially flying between Jeju and Gimpo, Seoul (p274), and undercutting the prices of the other two airlines, the plan is to expand the number of routes.

Both the major domestic airlines provide flights to and from a dozen local airports, and charge virtually identical but very reasonable fares – less than US$100 even for the longest domestic flights. Gimpo International Airport handles nearly all of Seoul’s domestic flights, but Incheon International Airport handles a handful of domestic flights to Busan, Daegu and Jeju. The longest flight time is just over an hour between Seoul Gimpo and Jeju. Fares are 15% cheaper from Monday to Thursday when seats are easier to obtain. Flights on public holidays have a surcharge and are often booked out. Students and children receive discounts, and foreigners should always carry their passports on domestic flights for ID purposes.

GETTING AROUND • Car & Motorcycle

DOMESTIC AIR FARES – SOUTH KOREA

Thousand of long-distance buses whiz to every nook and cranny of the country, every 15 minutes between major cities and towns, and at least hourly to small towns, villages, temples and national and provincial parks. Only a selection of bus destinations are given in the transport sections of each city, town or tourist site covered. All the bus frequencies given are approximate, as buses don’t usually run on a regular timetable and times vary throughout the day. Bus terminals have staff on hand to ensure that everyone boards the right bus, so help is always available. Buses don’t have toilets on board, but on long journeys drivers take a 10-minute rest at a refreshment stop every few hours.

Express buses link major cities, while intercity buses stop more often and serve smaller cities and towns. The buses are similar, but they use separate (often neighbouring) terminals. Expressways have a special lane that operates at weekends and reduces delays due to heavy traffic. Buses always leave on time (or even early!) and go to far more places than trains, but are not as comfortable or smooth, so for travelling long distances trains can be the better option.
the country are Korean-made, although a few luxury cars are imported. Repairs and spare parts are not generally available for most imported cars, but finding petrol is no problem.

Driving Licence
Drivers must have an international driving licence, which should be obtained before arrival as they are not available in Korea. After one year, a Korean driving licence must be obtained.

Hire
Driving in Korea is not recommended for first-time visitors, but travellers who wish to hire a car must be 21 years or over and must by law have an international driving licence (a driving licence from your own country is not acceptable). Official prices are usually discounted by 65% and start at around W46,000 for a small car. Insurance costs around W10,000 a day, but depends on the level of the excess you choose. A better option than driving yourself is to hire a car and a driver at W145,000 per day (10 hours). There are a few car-hire desks at Incheon International Airport. View www.kumhorenat.com to see what Kumho-Hertz has to offer.

Insurance
Insurance is compulsory for all drivers. Since the chance of having an accident is higher than in nearly all other developed countries obtain as much cover as you can, with a low excess.

Road Conditions
Korea has about the worst road-accident record among the 29 OECD countries, and foreign drivers in large cities are likely to spend most of their time lost, stuck in traffic jams, looking for a parking space or taking evasive action. Impatient and careless drivers are a major hazard and traffic rules are frequently ignored. Driving in rural areas on or Jeju is more feasible, but public transport is so good that few visitors feel the urge to sit down behind a steering wheel.

Speed cameras are ubiquitous, and your credit card may be debited for a speeding fine even after you've handed the car back.

Road Rules
Vehicles drive on the right side of the road. The driver and front-seat passengers must wear seatbelts, drunk drivers receive heavy fines and victims of road accidents are often paid a big sum by drivers wanting to avoid a court case.

HITCHING
Hitching is not a local custom and there is no particular signal for it, but the country is relatively crime-free, so if you get stuck in a Rural area, stick out your thumb and the chances are that some kind person will give you a lift. Drivers often go out of their way to help foreigners. Normally bus services are frequent and cheap enough, even in the countryside, to make hitching unnecessary. Accepting a lift anywhere always has an element of risk.

LOCAL TRANSPORT
Bus
Local city buses provide a frequent and inexpensive service (around W850 a trip, irrespective of how far you travel), and although rural buses provide a less-frequent service, many run on an hourly or half-hourly basis, so you don't usually have to wait long. Put the fare in the glass box next to the driver – make sure you have plenty of W10000 notes because the machines only give coins in change.

The main problem with local buses is finding and getting on the right bus–bus timetables, bus stop names and destination signs on buses are rarely in English, and bus drivers don't speak English. Writing your destination in big Han-gul (Korean phonetic alphabet) letters on a piece of card can be helpful. Local tourist information centres usually have English-speaking staff, and are the best places to find out which local bus number goes where, and where to pick it up.

Subway
Six cities now have a subway system: Seoul, Busan, Daejeon, Daegu, Gwangju and Incheon. The subway is an inexpensive and convenient way of getting around these major cities, and since signs and station names are in English as well as Korean, the systems are foreigner-friendly and easy to use.

Taxi
Taxis are numerous almost everywhere and are so cheap that even high-school students use them. Fares vary only slightly in different areas. Every taxi has a meter that works on a distance basis but switches to a time basis when the vehicle is stuck in traffic jams. Tipping is not a local custom and is not expected or necessary.

Ilban (regular taxis) cost around W1800 for the first 2km, while the mobeom (deluxe taxis) that exist in some cities cost around W4000 for the first 3km. Since very few taxi drivers speak any English, it can be useful to write down your destination or a nearby landmark in English. Any expressway tolls are added to the fare. In the countryside check the fare first as there are local quirks, such as surcharges or a fixed rate to out-of-the-way places with little prospect of a return fare.

TRAIN
South Korea has an excellent but not comprehensive train network operated by Korean National Railroad (% 3541778 78; www.korail.go.kr), connecting most major cities and the towns along the way. Trains are clean, comfortable and punctual, and just about every station has a sign in Korean and English. Trains are the best option for long-distance travel, although buying a ticket in advance is a good idea, especially at the weekends. Go to the website, click on ‘online reservation’ and then ‘inquiry/reservation’ to access all the train schedules and fares.

Talks about reopening rail links between North and South Korea are continuing, but this depends on the agreement of the North Korean government. If the rail link ever started running, it would open the way to the development of a Seoul–London and even a Seoul–Singapore rail link, but this is probably a very distant dream.

Classes
There are four classes of trains. Developed in Korea, the new high-speed KTX trains, introduced in 2004, can travel at over 300km/h. At present the high-speed track extends from Seoul to Daegu, which KTX trains reach in an hour or less, and is being extended to Busan on the east coast. The next fastest and most luxurious are Saemaul trains, which also stop only in major cities. Mugunghwa trains stop more often and are almost as comfortable and fast as Saemaul trains. Tonggaen (commuter) trains are the cheapest and stop at every station, but only run infrequently on certain routes and are a dying breed. Some trains have a dining car, while others have gimbap (Korean sushi) lunch boxes and a snack trolley.

Costs
KTX trains are 40% more expensive than Saemaul trains (and KTX 1st class is another 40%). Saemaul 1st class is 22% more than the standard Saemaul fare. Saemaul standard fares are 50% more than Mugunghwa class, which is 80% more expensive than tonggaen (commuter) class. KTX tickets are discounted 7% to 20% if you buy seven to 60 days before departure. Tickets are discounted 15% from Tuesday to Thursday, and 10% on Fridays (standing tickets are discounted 15% to 30% depending on the length of the journey, with a standing ticket, you are allowed to sit on any unoccupied seats). Children travel for half price and seniors receive a 25% discount. The full range of discounts is complicated and confusing. For fares and schedules see the website.

Reservations
The railway ticketing system is computerised and you can buy tickets up to two months in advance at railway stations and some travel agents or from the website of Korean National Railroad (% 02 729 2680), inside the KTO tourist information centre (Map pp88–9) in Seoul. There are far fewer trains than buses, so seat reservations are sensible and necessary on weekends, holidays and other busy times.

Train Passes
Foreigners can buy a KR Pass at overseas travel agents or from the website of Korean National Railroad (% 02 729 2680). The KR Pass offers unlimited rail travel (including KTX services) for three/five/seven/10 consecutive days at a cost of US$76/114/144/166. Children (four to 12 years) receive a 50% discount, and youths (13 to 25 years old) receive a 20% discount. Are they worth it? The problem is that distances in Korea are not great, trains don't go everywhere, and the pass is unlikely to save you much if any money. Using a flexible combination of buses, trains and planes is the best way to see the country.
The following advice is a general guide only and does not replace the advice of a doctor trained in travel medicine.

BEFORE YOU GO

Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charges) to a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made.

RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

No special vaccinations are required or recommended for South Korea, but check the latest situation with your tour company before visiting the North.

INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the internet. For further information, lonelyplanet.com is a good place to start. The World Travel Organization (WHO) website also has good general information.

FURTHER READING

Pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's Healthy Travel Asia & India. Other recommended references include Traveller's Health by Dr Richard Dawood and Travelling Well by Dr Deborah Mills (www.travellingwell.com.au).

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

The following are recommended items for personal medical kits:

- antifungal cream (eg Clotrimazole)
- antibiotic ointment (eg Mupirocin)
- antibiotics if you are planning on visiting rural areas: one for skin infections (eg Amoxicillin/Clavulanate or Cephalexin) and another for diarrhoea (eg Norfloxacin or Ciprofloxacin)
- antihistamine – there are many options (eg Cetrizine for daytime and Promethazine for night)
- antiseptic (eg Betadine)
- anti-spasmodic for stomach cramps (eg Buscopan)
- contraceptives
- decongestant (eg Pseudoephedrine)
- DEET-based insect repellent
- anti-diarrhoeal treatments – consider an oral-rehydration solution (eg Gastrolyte), diarrhoea ‘stopper’ (eg Loperamide) and anti-nausea medication (eg Prochlorperazine)
- first-aid items such as scissors, elastoplasts, bandages, gauze, thermometer (but not mercury), sterile needles and syringes, safety pins and tweezers
- anti-inflammatory (eg Ibuprofen)
- indigestion tablets (eg Quick Eze or Mylanta)
- iodine tablets (unless you are pregnant or have a thyroid problem) to purify water
- laxative (eg Colonyl)
- migraine medicine – sufferers should take their personal medicine
- paracetamol
- Permethrin for clothing and mosquito nets
- steroid cream for allergic/itchy rashes (eg 1% to 2% hydrocortisone)
- Ural or equivalent if you’re prone to urine infections

Health issues and the quality of medical care vary significantly depending on whether you stay in cities or venture further out into rural areas. Travellers tend to worry about contracting infectious diseases while abroad, but infections are a rare cause of serious illness or death while overseas. Accidental injury (especially traffic accidents) and pre-existing medical conditions such as heart disease account for most life-threatening problems. Becoming ill in some way, however, is relatively common. Fortunately most common illnesses can either be prevented with some common-sense behaviour or be treated easily with a well-stocked traveller’s medical kit.

HEALTH ADVISORIES

It’s usually a good idea to consult your government’s travel-health website before departure, if one is available:

- Australia (www.dfat.gov.au/travel)
- Canada (www.travel.gc.ca)
- New Zealand (www.dia.govt.nz/travel)
- UK (www.dh.gov.uk/traveladvice)
- US (www.cdc.gov/travel)
**INTRANSIT**

**DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)**

Deep vein thrombosis occurs when blood clots form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most blood clots are realised uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they may cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle, or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and difficulty in breathing. Travellers who find that they have any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights, you should walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids, and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

**JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS**

Jet lag is common when crossing more than five time zones; it results in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag, try drinking plenty of fluids (non-alcoholic) and eating light meals. Upon arrival, seek exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine), prochlorperazine (Phenergan) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are generally the first choice for the treatment of motion sickness. Their major side effect is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

**IN KOREA**

**TRAVELLERS' DIARRHOEA**

Travellers' diarrhoea is the most common problem which affects travellers – between 10% and 20% of people visiting South Korea will suffer from it. The risk in South Korea is 40% to 60%. In the majority of cases, travellers' diarrhoea is triggered by a bacteria (there are numerous potential culprits), and therefore responds promptly to treatment with antibiotics, which will depend on your circumstances: how sick you are, how quickly you need to get better, where you are etc.

**STDs**

Sexually transmitted diseases are common throughout the world and the most common include herpes, warts, syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia. People carrying these diseases often have no signs of infection. Condoms will prevent gonorrhea and chlamydia but not warts or herpes. If after a sexual encounter you develop any rash, lumps, discharge or pain when passing urine, seek immediate medical attention. If you have been sexually active during your travels, have an STD check on your return home.

**Tuberculosis**

Only North Korea has significant risk. While tuberculosis is rare, travellers, medical and aid workers, and long-term travellers who have significant contact with the local population, should take precautions. Vaccination is usually only given to children under the age of five, but adults at risk are recommended to undertake pre- and post-travel TB testing. The main symptoms are fever, cough, weight loss, night sweats and tiredness.

**Typhus**

Scrub typhus is present in the scrub areas of Korea. This is spread by a mite and is very rare in travellers. Symptoms include fever, muscle aches and a rash. Following general insect-avoidance measures when walking in the scrub will help you avoid this disease. Doxycycline works as a prevention and treatment for typhus.
**DRINKING WATER**

- never drink tap water
- bottled water is generally safe – check the seal is intact at purchase
- check ice has not been made with tap water
- boiling water is the most efficient method of purifying it
- the best chemical purifier is iodine, but it should not be used by pregnant women or those with thyroid problems
- water filters should also filter out viruses; ensure your filter has a chemical barrier such as iodine and a small pore size (eg less than four microns)

**HEALTH**

**INSECT BITES & STINGS**

**Insects**

Insects are not a major issue in Korea; however, there are some insect-borne diseases present.

Ticks are contracted after walking in rural areas. Ticks are commonly found behind the ears, on the belly and in armpits. If you have had a tick bite and experiences symptoms such as a rash at the site of the bite or elsewhere, fever or muscle aches, you should see a doctor. Doxycycline prevents and treats tick-borne diseases.

Insects such as bees and wasps mainly cause problems for people who are allergic to them. Anyone with a serious bee or wasp allergy should carry an injection of adrenaline (eg an Epipen) for emergency treatment. For others pain is the main problem – apply ice to the sting and take painkillers.

**Parasites**

The most common parasite in Korea is Clonorchis. Infection occurs after eating infected fresh-water fish – these may be raw, pickled, smoked or dried. Light infections usually cause no symptoms; however, heavy infections can cause liver problems. In some areas up to 20% of the local population are infected.

**Environmental Hazards**

**Air Pollution**

Air pollution, particularly from vehicles, is an increasing problem in Seoul. If you have severe respiratory problems, speak with your doctor before travelling to any heavily polluted urban centres. This pollution also causes minor respiratory problems such as sinusitis, dry throat and irritated eyes. If troubled by the pollution, leave the city for a few days and get some fresh air.

**Food**

Eating in restaurants is the biggest risk factor for contracting travellers' diarrhoea. Ways to avoid it include eating only freshly cooked food and avoiding shellfish and food that has been sitting around in buffets. Peel all fruit and cook vegetables. Eat in busy restaurants with a high turnover of customers.

**Traditional & Folk Medicine**

Traditional medicine in Korea is known as Oriental medicine and is based on traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). Although Korean traditional medicine is heavily influenced by TCM, it has developed its own unique methods of diagnosis and treatment. Acupuncture techniques and herbal medicines are widely used.

Unique to Korean traditional medicine is Sasang Constitutional Medicine, which classifies people into four types (Taeyangin, Taeumin, Soyangin and Soeumin) based on their body type, and treats each differently according to their constitution. In Korea ‘fusion medicine’, which combines both traditional and Western medical systems, is increasingly popular. The World Health Organization has more than one research facility looking into traditional medicine in Seoul.

Be aware that ‘natural’ doesn’t always mean ‘safe’, and there can be drug interactions between herbal medicines and Western medicines. If you are utilising both systems, ensure you inform both practitioners what the other has prescribed.
Korean is a knotty problem for linguists. Various theories have been proposed to explain its origins, but the most widely accepted is that it is a member of the Ural-Altaic family of languages. Other members of the same linguistic branch are Turkish and Mongolian. In reality Korean grammar shares much more with Japanese than it does with either Turkish or Mongolian. Furthermore, the Koreans have borrowed nearly 70% of their vocabulary from neighbouring China, and now many English words have penetrated their language.

Chinese characters (han·geul) are usually restricted to use in maps, government documents, the written names of businesses and in newspapers. For the most part Korean is written in Hang·gul, the alphabet developed under King Sejong’s reign in the 15th century. Many linguists argue that the Korean script is one of the most intelligently designed and phonetically consistent alphabets used today.

Hang·gul consists of only 24 characters and isn’t that difficult to learn. However, the formation of words using Hang·gul is very different from the way that Western alphabets are used to form words. The emphasis is on the formation of a syllable, and the end result bears some resemblance to a Chinese character. For example, the first syllable of the word Hang·gul (Hang·gul) is formed by an ‘n’ (ŋ) in the top left corner, an ‘a’ (ㅏ) in the top right corner and an ‘n’ (ŋ) at the bottom, which together form a syllabic ‘box’. These syllabic ‘boxes’ are strung together to form words.

ROMANISATION

In July 2000, the Korean government adopted a new method of Romanising the Korean language. Most of the old Romanisation system was retained, but a few changes were introduced to ensure a more consistent spelling throughout Korea and overseas. The new system has been energetically pushed throughout the government and tourist bureaus, but some corporations, individuals, academics and news outlets are reluctant to adopt it.

We use the new Romanisation style throughout this book, but you’ll come across many spelling variations. To avoid confusion it’s always best to go back to the original Korean script. In fact, it’s well worth the few hours required to learn the Korean alphabet, even though we’ve provided Korean script throughout this book for map references and points of interest.

Pronunciation

In the words and phrases in this chapter, the use of the variants 꾹, 꺾 and 은/은 depends on whether the preceding letter is a vowel or a consonant respectively.

Vowels & Vowel Combinations

| a | as in ‘are’ |
| ya | as in ‘yard’ |
| ye | as in the ‘o’ in ‘of’ |
| yeo | as the ‘you’ in ‘young’ |
| o | as in ‘go’ |
| yo | as in ‘yoke’ |
| u | as in ‘flute’ |
| yu | as the word ‘you’ |
| eu | as the ‘oo’ in ‘look’ |
| i | as the ‘ee’ in ‘beet’ |
| ae | as the ‘a’ in ‘hat’ |
| ye | as the ‘ya’ in ‘yam’ |
| e | as in ‘ten’ |

Double Consonants

Double consonants are pronounced with more stress than their single consonants counterparts.

Consonants

Unaspirated consonants are generally difficult for English speakers to render. To those unfamiliar with Korean, an unaspirated kw will sound like ‘g’, an unaspirated t like ‘d’, and an unaspirated pl like ‘b’.

Whether consonants in Korean are voiced or unvoiced depends on where they fall within a word. The rules governing this are too complex to cover here - the following tables show the various alternative pronunciations you may hear.

Single Consonants

The letter ㅅ is pronounced ‘sh’ if followed by a vowel it is transliterated as si.

In the middle of a word, ㅂ is pronounced ‘m’ if it follows an r or ng, but when it follows an n it becomes a double ‘l’ sound (ll); when a single ㅂ is followed by a vowel it is transliterated as r.

Multiple Consonants

Consonants

These occur only in the middle or at the end of a word.

POLITE KOREAN

Korea’s pervasive social hierarchy means that varying degrees of politeness are codified into the grammar. Young Koreans tend to use the very polite forms a lot less than the older generation, but it’s always best to use the polite form if you’re unsure. The sentences in this section use polite forms.

ACCOMMODATION

I’m looking for a …

... guesthouse

... youth hostel

... hotel

... contraband

... where is a cheap hotel?

... is there a hotel near here?

... is there a guesthouse near here?

... do you have any rooms available?

... what is the address?

... what is the address?

... where is the guesthouse?

... where is the hotel?

... where is the youth hostel?

... what is the address?

... do you have any rooms available?

... where is the guesthouse?

... where is the hotel?

... where is the youth hostel?

... is there a hotel near here?

... is there a Guesthouse near here?

... is there a youth hostel near here?

... is there a hotel near here?

... is there a guesthouse near here?

... is there a youth hostel near here?

... where is the guesthouse?

... where is the hotel?

... where is the youth hostel?

... where is the guesthouse?

... where is the hotel?

... where is the youth hostel?

... where is the guesthouse?

... where is the hotel?

... where is the youth hostel?

... where is the guesthouse?

... where is the hotel?

... where is the youth hostel?

... where is the guesthouse?

... where is the hotel?

... where is the youth hostel?
Conversations & Essentials

**Hi**
안녕하세요

**Hello**
안녕하세요

**Goodbye**
안녕히 가세요

**Excuse me**
죄송합니다

**I'm...**
저는...

**Where are you from?**
어디서 오셨어요?

**May I see it?**
이름이 어디에 있어요?

**Yes**
네

**No**
아니요

**Please confirm**
사용할 수 있는지 와 가격 확인해 주세요

**Reservation**
예약하라고 하는데요...

There's been an accident.
사고 났어요

There's an accident.
사고에 났어요

**To person leaving**
길을 잃었어요

**To share a room**
한사람

**Date**
날짜로...

**Market**
시장

**Pharmacy**
약국

**Police**
경찰서

**Stadium**
경기장

**Hospital**
병원

**A doctor**
의사

**A nurse**
간호사

**Antibiotics**
항생제

**Condom**
安全性

**Contraceptive**
방사선

**Antiseptic**
살균제

**Cardio**
심장

**Gastrointestinal**
복부

**Diabetic**
당뇨병이 있는

**Cathedral**
교회

**Castle**
성

**Sea**
바다

**Tower**
탑

**Church**
교회

**Credit card**
신용 카드...

**Expiry date**
 만료일
### Language Difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>천/천원</td>
<td>Thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>백/백원</td>
<td>Hundred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>십/십원</td>
<td>Ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>유/원</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Numbers

Korean has two counting systems. One is of Chinese origin, with Korean pronunciation, and the other is a native Korean system – the latter only goes up to 99 and is used for telling the time. Sino-Korean numbers are used to express minutes when telling the time, as well as dates, months, kilometres, money, floors of buildings; numbers above 99 and can also be written in Chinese characters. Either Chinese or Korean numbers can be used to count days.

### Transport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Transport</th>
<th>Modern</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>기차</td>
<td>열차</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>버스</td>
<td>버스</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subway</td>
<td>지하철</td>
<td>지하철</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airplane</td>
<td>비행기</td>
<td>비행기</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship</td>
<td>여객선</td>
<td>여객선</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>택시</td>
<td>택시</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Shop & Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>객실</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>식당</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>약사</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>은행</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>우체국</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping Mall</td>
<td>소핑몰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience Store</td>
<td>편의점</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Time & Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Today</td>
<td>오늘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomorrow</td>
<td>내일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday</td>
<td>어제</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>월요일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>화요일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>수요일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>목요일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>금요일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>토요일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>일요일</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sino-Korean vs. Korean Numbers

Korean and Chinese have different number systems. Korean uses a native system that only goes up to 99, while Chinese numbers are used in modern contexts. The table below compares the two systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sino-Korean</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>일/일</td>
<td>일/일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>이/이</td>
<td>이/이</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>삼/삼</td>
<td>삼/삼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>사/사</td>
<td>사/사</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>오/오</td>
<td>오/오</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>토/토</td>
<td>토/토</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>일/일</td>
<td>일/일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>아홉/아홉</td>
<td>아홉/아홉</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>열/열</td>
<td>열/열</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question Words

- 뭐/뭐? (What) - 뭐/뭐가? (What is?)
- 누구/누구? (Who) - 누구/누구가? (Who is?)
- 무엇/무엇? (What) - 무엇/무엇가? (What is?)
- 언제/언제? (When) - 언제/언제가? (When is?)
- 어디/어디? (Where) - 어디/어디가? (Where is?)
- 어때/어떻게? (How) - 어때/어떻게가? (How is?)

### Combination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>일</td>
<td>일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>이</td>
<td>이</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>삼</td>
<td>삼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>사</td>
<td>사</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>오</td>
<td>오</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>토</td>
<td>토</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>일</td>
<td>일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>아홉</td>
<td>아홉</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>열</td>
<td>열</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SHOPPING & SERVICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>세븐일레스</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SM Mall</td>
<td>SM 백화점</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotte Mall</td>
<td>롯데백화점</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Mart</td>
<td>이마트</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Mart Premium</td>
<td>이마트프리미엄</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### LANGUAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1,250 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1,350 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sino-Korean

I'll take it.  
I don't understand.

### Korean

I'll take it.  
I don't understand.

### PAPERWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Type</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passport</td>
<td>여권</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>비자</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver's License</td>
<td>운전면허증</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Certificate</td>
<td>출생증명</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National ID Card</td>
<td>국적증</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SHOPPING & SERVICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket</td>
<td>スーパーマーケット</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience Store</td>
<td>편의점</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugstore</td>
<td>약국</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td>베이커리</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>레스토랑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TRANSPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Transport</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airline</td>
<td>항공사</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>기차</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>버스</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subway</td>
<td>지하철</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>차</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>택시</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### QUESTION WORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who/What</td>
<td>누구/무엇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where/When</td>
<td>어디/언제</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>어떻게</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NUMBERS

Korean and Chinese have different number systems. Korean uses a native system that only goes up to 99, while Chinese numbers are used in modern contexts. The table below compares the two systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sino-Korean</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>일/일</td>
<td>일/일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>이/이</td>
<td>이/이</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>삼/삼</td>
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<tr>
<td>사/사</td>
<td>사/사</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>오/오</td>
<td>오/오</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>토/토</td>
<td>토/토</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>일/일</td>
<td>일/일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>아홉/아홉</td>
<td>아홉/아홉</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>열/열</td>
<td>열/열</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Combination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>일</td>
<td>일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>이</td>
<td>이</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>삼</td>
<td>삼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>사</td>
<td>사</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>오</td>
<td>오</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>토</td>
<td>토</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>일</td>
<td>일</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>아홉</td>
<td>아홉</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>열</td>
<td>열</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I want to go to...
...
...에 가고 싶습니다

The train has been (delayed).
gichaga (yeonchak) doe-eosseumnida
기차가(연착) 되었습니다

The train has been (cancelled).
gichaga (chwiso) doe-eosseumnida
기차가 (취소) 되었습니다

the first
첫

the last
마지막

bus station
버스정류장

platform number
파란다리번호

subway station
지하철역

ticket office
표 파는곳

ticket vending machine
표 자판기

timetable
시간표

train station
기차역

road signs

Private Transport

l'dlike to hire a/an...
…를/을 빌리고 싶어요

I had an accident.
사고 났어요

travel with children

is there (a/an)...
...있어요?

Do you mind if I breastfeed here?
yegi-seo agi jeotmeok yeodo doenayo?
여기서 아기 젖먹여도 되나요?

Are children allowed?
eorinido doennikka?
어린이도입니까?

transport

I want to go to...
...
...에 가고 싶습니다

The train has been (delayed).
gichaga (yeonchak) doe-eosseumnida
기차가(연착) 되었습니다

The train has been (cancelled).
gichaga (chwiso) doe-eosseumnida
기차가 (취소) 되었습니다

the first
첫

the last
마지막

bus station
버스정류장

platform number
파란다리번호

subway station
지하철역

ticket office
표 파는곳

ticket vending machine
표 자판기

timetable
시간표

train station
기차역

road signs

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transport

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...에 가고 싶습니다

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The train has been (cancelled).
gichaga (chwiso) doe-eosseumnida
기차가 (취소) 되었습니다

the first
첫

the last
마지막

bus station
버스정류장

platform number
파란다리번호

subway station
지하철역

ticket office
표 파는곳

ticket vending machine
표 자판기

timetable
시간표

train station
기차역

road signs

Private Transport

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…를/을 빌리고 싶어요

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...있어요?

Do you mind if I breastfeed here?
yegi-seo agi jeotmeok yeodo doenayo?
여기서 아기 젖먹여도 되나요?

Are children allowed?
eorinido doennikka?
어린이도입니까?

transport
GLOSSARY

For more food and drink terms, see the Menu Decoder (p69); for general terms see the Language chapter (p410).

ajumma – a married or older woman

-ae – a suffix indicating the Korean tradition

arju – a hermitage

~am – a suffix indicating drinking alcohol

bang – a room

bawi – a large rock

~bong – a peak

buk~ – a suffix indicating north

bucheong – a type of pottery from the Joseon dynasty with simple folk designs

celadon – green-tinged pottery from the early 12th century

cha – tea

~cheon – a small stream

Chuseok – Thanksgiving Day

dae~ – a suffix indicating great, large

dancheong – the colorful eaves that adorn Buddhist temples and other buildings

Dan·gun – the mythical founder of Korea

DMZ – the Demilitarized Zone that runs along the 38th parallel of the Korean peninsula, separating North and South

do – a province

–do – an island

dong – a neighborhood or village

~dong – a suffix indicating east

donggul – a cave

DPRK – Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)

DVD bang – a room for watching DVDs

eup – a town

–ga – a suffix indicating a section of a long street

~gang – a river

~guk – a suffix indicating a country

~gung – a suffix indicating a palace

gwageo – the traditional Korean government service exam

hanbok – traditional Korean clothing

han·geul – the Korean phonetic alphabet

hanja – Chinese characters

hanji – traditional Korean handmade paper

hanok – a traditional Korean one-storey wooden house with a tiled roof

harubang – lava-rock statues found only on Jejudo

~ho – a suffix indicating a lake

hof – a small pub

~hong – a suffix indicating a door

~jaebeol – a huge family-run corporate conglomerate

~jeon – a hall of a temple

~jeong – a pavilion

jjimjilbang – an upmarket spa and sauna

Juche – the North Korean ideology of economic self-reliance

KTO – Korea Tourism Organisation

KTX – Korea Train Express (fast 300km/h train service)

minbak – a private home with rooms for rent

mudang – a female shaman

Mugunghwa – a semi-express train

~mun – a gate

~myeon – a township

~myo – a shrine

~neung – a tomb

~no – a street

noraebang – a karaoke room

~nyeong – a mountain pass

oncheon – a hot-spring bath

ondol – underfloor heating system

pansori – traditional Korean solo opera

PC bang – an internet café

pension – a more upmarket form of B&B

pokpo – a waterfall

~pyeong – a unit of real estate measurement equal to 33 sq metres

~reung – a tomb

~ri – a village

~ro – a street

ROK – Republic of Korea (South Korea)

~ryeong – a mountain pass

~sa – a temple

Saemul – a semi-express train

samil·nori – a traditional Korean drum-and-gong dance

~sin – a mountain

~san – a mountain

seung – a fortress

seol·gung – a palace

~seong – a fortress

seowon – a Confucian academy

shamanism – a set of traditional beliefs where communication with spirits is done through a mudang

~si – a city

sijang – a market

sijo – a short poem about nature and life in the Joseon period

soju – the local firewater; often likened to vodka

sireum – Korean-style wrestling

taskwong – Korean martial art

tap – a pub

tonggun – a commuter-class train

yengchun – a resort

yeoju – a motel with a small ensuite

yedimuk – a small, family-run budget accommodation with a shared bathroom

yo – a padded quilt that serves as a mattress or futon for sleeping on the floor

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