

Flavours of South Korea



TRIP OVERVIEW

Combining war-time monuments, culinary delights and ancient imperial palaces, this 11-day tour of South Korea delves into its fascinating past and politically charged present. Travel from the modern charms of Seoul and coastal Busan to the historic treasures of Gyeongju and Andong, with a visit to the North-South Demilitarized Zone completing your quintessential South Korean experience.

ITINERARY & DETAILS

This document aims to give you all the information that you require for a smooth and comfortable trip to South Korea. Please take the time to read this dossier to familiarise yourself with all the aspects of our tour. It includes important information such as visa requirements and travel insurance.

Your included meal guide:

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

DAY 1: UK to Seoul

Depart London on your scheduled, overnight flight to Seoul.

DAY 2: Seoul D

On arrival in Seoul, you will be met by your representative for a short tour of the city including the Changing of the Palace guard. Enjoy lunch at a local Korean restaurant before being transferred to your hotel and checking in. After time to settle in, re-join your group for tonight's welcome dinner at a local Korean restaurant, giving you the opportunity to sample Korea's world-renowned cuisine.

DAY 3: Seoul B/L/D

Following breakfast, embark on a tour of South Korea's Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the no man's land that forms the highly secure frontier between North and South Korea. Visit Dorasan train station, which connects north and south, and the Dorasan Observatory which overlooks the DMZ. Explore the 3rd Infiltration Tunnel, a secret passageway built by North Koreans trying to tunnel into the south, and view the heavily guarded Bridge of Freedom which links the two nations. After lunch, return to Seoul and browse through the stalls of Gwangjang Food Market. Travel to the N. Seoul Tower which rises above the city skyline and provides panoramic views over the city, then return to your hotel for dinner.

DAY 4: Seoul B/L/D

Seoul has undergone a dramatic transformation over the last five decades, with the ravages of the Korean War making way to sleek skyscrapers and neon-lit districts. The city still retains several remnants of its imperial past and today's walking tour takes in these centuries-old structures, using Seoul's world-class underground system to move between sights. Starting at Changdeokgung Palace, built by the kings of Korea's Joseon Dynasty, explore the pavilions and rooms of this imperial residence before touring its Secret Garden, where the pond, greenery and pavilions combine to create a tranquil setting. Witness the changing of the palace guards then continue onward to Insadong Antique Street and browse through the wares on display in elegant, wooden shopfronts. Travel to the Kimchi Museum and learn more about how this local fermented cabbage dish grew to its current popularity then stop in at the Buddhist temple of Jogyesa. Continue onward to the Bukchon Hanok Village, teeming with charming, traditional 'hanoks' or wooden houses before returning to your hotel for an evening at leisure.

DAY 5: Seoul to Busan B/L/D

This morning, transfer by metro to the train station (luggage will be transported) and board your high-speed train to the coastal city of Busan. On arrival in Busan, set out on an afternoon coach tour of the city, stopping first to wander through Gamcheon Cultural Village with its pastel-coloured houses set in the slopes of a mountain. Next, pay your respects to the soldiers killed in the Korean War at the UN Memorial Cemetery then visit peaceful APEC

Nurimaru Park and the soft sands of Haeundae Beach. Climb 108 steps to picturesque Haedong Yonggungsa temple and explore this sacred Buddhist site which boasts a stunning setting on Busan's coastal cliffs. Transfer to your hotel for check-in.

DAY 6: Busan to Gyeongju B/L/D

After breakfast, embark on a morning tour, moving between sights by metro. Wander through bustling Jagalchi Fish Market and haggle with the hawkers of Kukje Market, where you'll stop for a delicious lunch. Visit nearby BIFF Square, Korea's answer to the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and continue on to the soaring Busan Tower. Next, transfer to Busan Train Station and embark on your rail journey to Gyeongju, taking in rural landscapes and urban skylines along the way. On arrival, enjoy dinner and a night-time tour of Anapji, the site of a spectacular palace and pond.

DAY 7: Gyeongju B/L/D

A full-day tour of Gyeongju takes in the major sites of Korea's ancient former capital, known as the "Museum Without Walls". Journey from the immense Buddha statue which lies in Seokguram Grotto to UNESCO-listed Bulguksa Temple where you'll explore its Buddhist relics, pavilions and gardens. For lunch, visit a Korean cooking school where you will learn how to make Korea's delectable beef barbecue and dine on your culinary masterpiece. Continue onward to the age-old observatory of Cheomseongdae before taking in the greenery of Tumuli Park and browsing through ancient artefacts in the Gyeongju National Museum.

DAY 8: Gyeongju to Andong B/L/D

Transfer to the train station for your train to Andong, a city renowned for its open-air heritage museums. On arrival, journey to Hahoe Village where you'll discover hundreds of ceremonial masks on display in the Hahoe Mask Museum. Soak in sweeping views of the village from nearby Buyongdae Cliff then wander through the local market. Transfer to your hotel for check-in and dinner, followed by an evening at leisure.

DAY 9: Andong to Seoul B/L/D

Depart Andong this morning and travel by coach to Poonggi where you'll visit the city's sprawling ginseng plantation and the area's oldest ginseng market. Marvel at the amazing variety of ginseng products on display then journey onward to Daegang Makgeolli (Rice Wine) Brewery in Danyang. Here, you can learn about and taste this unique alcoholic drink and see samples of home-brewed Korean liquor that date back to the Japanese colonial era. Continue on to Seoul, where a night of entertainment awaits. Re-join your group for a farewell dinner and a trip to see 'Nanta', one of the most famous theatrical performances in the country.

DAY 10: Seoul B

Enjoy a day at leisure to explore this bustling metropolis at your own pace. Alternatively, a number of optional excursions are available (at a fee). Make stir-fried glass noodles and seafood pancakes at a cooking class, join a workshop and learn how to make kimchi (Korea's traditional fermented cabbage dish) or enjoy a show at the Jeongdong Theatre.

DAY 11: Seoul to the UK or extension B

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK.

ACCOMMODATION DETAILS & MAP



Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience, location, comfort or character, and can range from business hotels to leisure hotels. Hotel accommodation is generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note there is no international classification system for hotels, and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the UK and South Korea. All group tours hotels have private bathroom facilities and air-conditioning, where needed. Rest assured that all accommodation used by Mercury Holidays is regularly inspected by our staff and partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

If you have booked a triple share please note that your room will be a twin room with a rollaway bed or sofa bed added. This may limit the floor space in the room.

Please note: the hotels listed are provided for guidance only and final confirmation of your accommodation will be sent in a document, along with your final flight information, approximately 10 days before you travel.

Meals

Breakfast is always western style and served in the hotel each morning. Lunch and dinner will be taken in local South Korean restaurants. A variety of restaurants are visited giving you the chance to experience a range of dishes and flavours.

ON YOUR ARRIVAL

On your arrival in Seoul you will be met by a representative from our local agent in South Korea, **Holidaylink**, holding a sign displaying 'Mercury Holidays'. The Mercury Holidays/Holidaylink representative will transfer you to your hotel on arrival where you will spend your first night. Your guide will be able to answer any queries you may have. If you need to contact Holidaylink during your stay the details are:

Holidaylink

Seoul office address:
RM705, Jindo Bldg., 44 Mapo-daero, Mapo-gu,
Seoul, 04174, South Korea.
Telephone 09.00am-18.00pm: 0082-2-755-2955

Emergency contact information

Please find below the emergency contact details for Holidaylink's 24-hour hotline (during office hours and after working hours):
Mobile: 0082 10 4935 1253 or 0082 10 9267 6530

WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR TOUR

Visas

A visa is not required for you travel to South Korea. Further advice should be sought from the applicable tourist authority for other nationalities and for general queries. We strongly advise you check your destinations' Tourist Board or Embassy for the most up-to-date guidelines regarding visas and passport validity.

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you and all members of your party are suitably insured as soon as you book your holiday. It is a condition of booking that you must have suitable travel insurance. It is important that you purchase travel insurance that suitably covers your participation in whatever activities you may undertake at the time that you make your booking. To assist you with this, we have arranged travel insurance in partnership with Holiday Extras. To arrange your travel insurance with Holiday Extras, please call **0800 781 4237** and quote **'WK830'** for preferential rates. Please ensure you provide us with the name of your insurer, policy number and their 24 hour emergency contact number as soon as possible. Mercury Holidays will not be liable for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to take out suitable travel insurance from the date of booking.

Health and Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to check any health and vaccination requirements applicable to your booked arrangements. We can only provide general information about this. Health and hygiene facilities and disease risks vary from country to country. You should take health advice about your own needs as early as possible and in good time before your departure. Sources of information include: www.fco.gov.uk, www.travelhealthpro.org.uk, www.hpa.org.uk, your General Practitioner or a specialist clinic.

Tour Guides - Local Guides

This is a fully escorted tour meaning that you will be met by a local guide in each of the cities that you visit, ensuring that you have first-hand knowledge at all times.

Private Tour

If you have booked a private tour then you will be accompanied by a Driver Guide or a Driver and Local Guides. These will be available to you during all scheduled sightseeing. Private Tours can depart on any day of the week depending on flight and train schedules and the opening days of the attractions. They will follow the itinerary as described in the brochure unless you have been advised otherwise and you will still have all of the same meals, sightseeing and local excursions included.

Physical Accessibility

This tour is accessible to most people with a good level of fitness and normal mobility. It involves climbing of steep stairs and getting on and off coaches. This tour is not suitable for anyone with walking difficulties. All our tours feature a "Tour Pace" to help find the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights, climb stairs and get on and off coaches and boats. The tour pace of Flavours of South Korea is rated as Advanced. A higher level of fitness as required as you may be on your feet for most of the day though this will be interspersed with regular breaks and vary from day to day. You will be walking around the sights, getting on and off coaches, trains, boats and climbing steps which may be irregular. There may be some time spend at high altitude. You will stay in variety of hotels, possibly including overnight trains, and accommodation standards may not match those you are used to at home. Our guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Tipping

It is customary to tip your guides and drivers approximately £1-£2 per person per day. This is a total of £20 per person to budget for tips on your trip. Tips are collected in the local currency South Korean won.

Group Size

The minimum number of travellers in your group will be 10, and the maximum will be 40. If in the unlikely event there are less than 10 people booked on your tour date, we will endeavour to reduce any disruption to your holiday and try to operate your tour with lower passenger numbers. If we are not able to operate your departure date, then you may be asked to change to a different date and a full refund will be made available to you should this alternative not be suitable.

Currency Exchange

The currency in South Korea is the South Korean won, known as KRW. We recommend that you exchange your currency before you leave the UK. We recommend that you exchange your currency before you leave the UK. It is important that you budget carefully and ensure you have the right form of currency before you arrive in the country. Cash machines will also be available throughout the tour in order to withdraw money in your local currency.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take money with you to cover any personal purchases such as souvenirs, laundry, any meals not included in the itinerary as well as drinks and any additional snacks. Approximately £350 per person will be sufficient for the duration of the tour. It is a good idea to try and maintain a supply of small notes and change in the local currency for tipping or small purchases.

Credit Card Information

As normal practice you will be asked for your credit card details on check-in at the hotel in order to cover any extras incurred during your stay. If you do not have a credit card, you may be asked for a cash deposit. American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted in hotels.

Itinerary Changes

The order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions or for operational purposes. The schedules of the domestic airlines in country are subject to frequent changes. For this reason, we have indicated approximate times only. Your local guide will inform you of any schedule changes as they are informed of them. Some road construction &/or weather conditions may lengthen the driving times. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

WHAT TO PACK

- Sunscreen and hat in summer
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Camera and charger
- A travel plug adaptor - The voltage in South Korea is 220v 60Hz. South Korean plugs are of the European variety with two round prongs.
- Loo paper for public WCs
- Binoculars
- Small day pack for excursions
- Personal first aid kit containing travel pills, rehydration powder, plasters, stomach settlers, antiseptic creams, aspirin etc
- Waterproof, lightweight jacket
- Lightweight clothing
- Sweater
- For winter departures warm sweaters, gloves, scarf, hat and a warm coat will be required

FLIGHT INFORMATION

IMPORTANT: Please note that final flight details, including terminal, airline and baggage allowance, will be confirmed on your final documentation which will be sent to you approximately 10 days before departure. A printed E-ticket is no longer required at check-in, all you need to do is present your passport to the staff at the desk and your boarding pass will be given to you.

Airport Extras

If you wish to arrange Airport car parking or accommodation at preferential rates, we recommend you book this in advance with Holiday Extras on 0871 360 2000, quoting HX313.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Weather can vary quite considerably throughout the year, so please familiarise yourself with the climate charts below.

