

# South Korean Express

7 days | Starts/Ends: Seoul



*Escorted Group Tour: See the best of South Korea, from vibrant Seoul - the nation's captivating capital and the intriguing Demilitarized Zone, to the cultural and historic sights of Andong and Gyeongju - the museum without walls.*

## HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

### Trip Highlights

- Seoul - the nation's captivating capital; Gyeongbokgung Palace, Jogyesa Temple, Insadong Antique Alley, Cheonggyecheon Stream and Seoul Tower on Mt. Namsan
- The DMZ - one of the most heavily militarized borders in the world, Imjingak Park built to honour the displaced from both the North and the South of Korea, Dora Observatory
- Andong - UNESCO World Heritage listed Hahoe Folk Village and Andong Folk Museum
- Gyeongju - former capital of the Silla Kingdom and historic heart of the nation; Gyeongju National Museum, Tumuli Park and the Sill royal tombs, Anapji Pond, the ancient Cheomseongdae Observatory

- UNESCO Listed Seokguram Grotto - one of Asia's finest Buddhist shrines and Bulguksa Temple

### What's Included

- 6 nights 3 - 4 star hotels
- 6 breakfasts
- Escorted by a qualified local tour guide (separate driver and tour guide for groups of 5 or more)
- Touring of Seoul, Andong and Gyeongju
- Guided tour of the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone). A full day coach tour - in conjunction with other tourist groups, not solely On The Go
- Airport arrival and departure transfer on days 1 and 7
- All transfers and transportation in private air conditioned vehicles

### What's Not Included

- Entrance Fees: USD\$25-\$35pp, paid in local currency
- International flights and visa
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture. For your tour guide and driver, we suggest you allow USD8 - 10 per traveller per day.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### Day 1 : Seoul

Sunday. Welcome to Seoul! Upon arrival you will be met at Incheon Airport and transferred

to our hotel in the centre of Seoul. The remainder of the day is free for you to relax or explore South Korea's vibrant capital. The subway station is within walking distance of the hotel, giving you easy access to all areas of the city. **Overnight - Seoul**

### Day 2 : Seoul Sightseeing



After breakfast this morning, there is a welcome meeting in the hotel lobby on the 1st floor at 08.30am, where you will meet your tour guide and the rest of your group. After the meeting we set off for a full day of sightseeing in the capital. Today we discover highlights of the nation's charming capital on a guided tour. First stop is the grand Gyeongbokgung Palace which was once the main residence of the Joseon Dynasty and within the beautiful palace grounds we visit the National Folk Museum which focuses on Korean culture and history.

We continue on to Jogyesa Temple, the centre of Zen Buddhism in Korea and

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nearby Insadong, a lively antique alley, lined with art galleries, antique, craft and pottery shops, traditional restaurants and teahouses. We then take a stroll alongside Cheonggyecheon Stream which runs serenely through the heart of downtown's gleaming sky scrapers. Our final port of call is the lofty Seoul Tower on Mt. Namsa, which provides spectacular panoramic views of the city from its observatory. **Overnight - Seoul (B)**

### Day 3 : The DMZ



Seoul - DMZ - Seoul. Departing at 07.30am this morning, we take an exciting excursion to the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) today, which is located 45km north of Seoul and acts as the buffer zone and border between the two nations of North and South Korea. Our coach tour provides a fascinating insight into the events that resulted in Korea's division and also includes a visit to Imjingak Park, built to commemorate those who lost their homes and families when Korea was divided and the 3rd North Korean Infiltration Tunnel. The tunnel, which is 1.5km in length and 150m below ground, was built with the intention of a surprise invasion by North Korea.

You'll also have the chance to peek into the reclusive north by visiting Dora Observatory situated on Mount Dora and visit Dorasan Station, once used for freight trains to travel between the South and the North. On the way back to Seoul the tour coach makes a stop at an amethyst or ginseng shop, for those who are interested.

Please note: The DMZ coach tour is not operated by On The Go. There will be other travellers joining you and your tour guide will not be accompanying you on the journey to the DMZ. **Overnight - Seoul (B)**

### Day 4 : Scenic Andong



Seoul - Andong. After breakfast and hotel check out at 9am, we travel south to Andong, the picturesque home of Korean Confucianism. On an afternoon tour we explore ancient UNESCO Listed Hahoe Village, where approximately 130 traditional houses of varying size and standard have been immaculately preserved by the same families for generations. We'll also visit the Andong Folk Museum and the historic Dosansewon Confucian School, which was established in 1574. **Overnight - Andong (B)**

### Day 5 : Gyeongju - Capital of Silla Kingdom



Andong - Gyeongju. Travelling south we reach historic Gyeongju - the 'museum without walls,' which was the capital of Silla Kingdom from 57BC to 935AD. This afternoon we visit Gyeongju National Museum which is home to countless treasures including the 23 ton Emille Bell cast in AD771. At Tumuli Park we see the incredible giant grass-covered burial mounds which house the Silla royal tombs and we take a stroll around scenic Anapji Pond where the Silla royal family spent their leisure. Another highlight of today's touring is Cheomseongdae Observatory, one of the world's oldest astronomical observatories. **Overnight - Gyeongju (B)**

### Day 6 : Bulguksa & Seokguram Temple



Gyeongju - Seoul. This morning we visit two magnificent UNESCO World Heritage Listed temples - Seokguram Grotto, one of Asia's finest Buddhist shrines, which is dramatically located on the slopes of Toham Mountain and the beautiful temple of Bulguksa which was built in 528 during the Silla Dynasty. Depart for Seoul this afternoon and spend your final evening at leisure in the capital. **Overnight - Seoul (B)**

### Day 7 : Seoul

Saturday. After breakfast and hotel check out, spend the remains of the day at leisure before your transfer to the airport for your flight home. (B)

### HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

**Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.**

#### Centermark Hotel

#### CM Park Hotel

#### Commodore Hotel

The Commodore in Gyeongju has a variety of rooms, from the traditional Korean Ondol to palatial suites. All rooms are air conditioned and equipped with a cable TV. The hotel itself also boasts a seasonal outdoor pool, extensive gardens, restaurant and karaoke facilities. The restaurant serves up a generous range of Korean,

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Japanese and European dishes, all of which are expertly prepared and utterly delicious. All rooms have mountain views. The Commodore is located in a glorious setting on the banks of the picturesque Bomun Lake.



## Entrance Fees

Entrance fees are not included. These payable in local currency (Won) and will be collected by your guide at the welcome meeting on day 2.

## DMZ Dress Code

When travelling to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) please note that the dress code is smart casual. No ripped jeans or scruffy clothing. Women should dress conservatively, no skimpy or sheer clothing, mini skirts or short shorts. Please also note that you will need to take your passport on this excursion.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

### Visas

UK, EU, Australian, New Zealand, Canadian and US passport holders do not require a visa to enter South Korea for touristic purposes for a stay of up to 90 days. South African passport holders can obtain a visa upon arrival enter for a stay of up to 30 days.

A full passport with two full blank pages and at least 6 months validity beyond date of exit from South Korea upon entrance is essential. Please Note: Visa information is subject to change. Contact your nearest South Korean Embassy for the most up to date information. Visa procurement remains the responsibility of the passenger and not that of On The Go.

### Health

It is recommended that you be vaccinated for Tetanus and Polio, if you haven't had a booster in the last ten years. Food and waterborne diseases are more common, so

we recommend vaccinations for Typhoid (valid 3 years) and Hepatitis A (validity varies). There is a malarial risk in some remote areas and from June to October Japanese encephalitis can be transmitted from mosquitoes in rural areas, so do check the current situation and medical requirements before travelling.

Vaccination information can change regularly so please visit your local health care provider for the most up to date information.

Tap water is safe to drink in South Korea although it may be best to avoid this when staying for short periods. It's possible to purchase bottled mineral water at a reasonable price.

Avoid stomach upsets, by only eating freshly prepared, well-cooked meat and fish. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

### Climate

South Korea's climate is typically temperate with four distinct seasons. Late March or early April signals the start of Spring when mostly sunny days can be expected throughout March and May. Summer can be rather hot and wet and by June the average temperature is 20°C, monsoonal rains can begin around the end of June lasting through to middle or late September. After a typically humid summer continental winds move in bringing dry and clear weather for autumn and making the month of October the most pleasant time to visit. December to February signals the onset of winter which is cold and dry with occasional snow.

### Currency

The currency of South Korea is Won (KRW).

USD\$1 - KRW1060 GBP£1 - KRW1780 AUD\$1 - KRW960 Euro1 - KRW1470

Please Note: Exchange rates are subject to change.

Notes are in denominations of 50,000, 10,000, 5,000 and 1,000.

Coins are in denominations of 500, 100, 50 and 10.

Pound Sterling, US Dollars, Euro and other major currencies can be converted into South Korean Won locally, or you can purchase currency in advance. Foreign currency and traveller's cheques can be converted into Korean Won at foreign exchange banks and other authorized money changers.

Most major credit cards are accepted in large restaurants, shops and hotels and there are ATM's in all cities. In remote rural areas and at small businesses, credit card may not be accepted.

### Time & Voltage

Time: South Korea is 9 hours ahead of GMT. During British Summer Time (end March - October), time is 8 hours ahead.

Voltage: 220v 60Hz. South Korean plugs are of the European variety with two round prongs. If travelling to South Korea with a device that does not accept 220 volts at 60 Hertz a voltage converter will be required.

### Food

Largely based on rice, noodles, tofu, vegetables and meat, Korean cuisine is delicious. Traditionally with main meals a quantity of side dishes are served known as banchan, the most popular of these being kimchi. Kimchi is a traditional fermented dish made with vegetables, typically cabbage, radish, onions or cucumbers and flavoured with salt, garlic, ginger, and gochujang – a fermented chilli paste, it can have a very salty and spicy flavour.

One of the best known Korean cuisine exports is the Korean barbecue. This usually involves grilling of beef, pork or chicken. The grilled dishes are typically prepared at the diner's table on a gas or charcoal grill built into the centre of the table or on a portable grill if built in barbecues are not available. One of the most popular dishes served is galbi, beef short ribs, often marinated in spices before grilling. In a specialised restaurant the diner will request from a menu the types of meat they would like, these are brought to the table and the diner cooks them to their liking. For those diners that are new to Korean barbecue the waiter is always on hand to offer help,

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though typically it is only ever foreigners that need help.

## Shopping

Considered a shopper's paradise, great deals can be had in South Korea on shoes, clothes, leather goods, silk, antiques, handbags, suitcases and so much more. Clothes can be tailor-made and range in quality depending on the amount of money you are willing to part with. Many department stores have fixed prices but can still be bargained over within reason. The major open air markets such as Namdaemun or Dongdaemun in Seoul offer everything imaginable from well known brand names to near perfect rip offs and it is here where the true haggling takes place, just be sure you know whether you are haggling over a fake or a genuine item! Those shopping for arts, crafts, jewellery, antiques or souvenirs, should head to the wonderful markets and shops of Insa Dong.

Shopping tip: You can claim 70-80% of your paid VAT and SET (special excise tax) back at certain retail outlets. For purchases of more than #30,000 at outlets with 'Tax Free Shopping' or 'Tax Refund Shopping' signs, you can collect your refund in cash at the tax refund counters at the airport, have it mailed to you or sometimes refunded to your card. Participating retail shops will issue you a 'VAT Refund Check' and you should get a certificate stamp on it at the customs desk when you leave Korea.

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