



THE WONDERS OF SOUTH KOREA

Discover this fascinating land of contrasts where the ultra-modern sits alongside centuries-old monuments. Dive into the sparkling modernity of Seoul, breathe in the serenity of mountain temples and immerse yourself in raw nature on Jeju Island.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



Asia, South Korea



12 days from AU\$19,880 pp



Private

Journey Overview

South Korea is both modern and vibrant while also steeped in long established traditions. Experience these contrasting aspects on a journey encompassing the best the country has to offer. Visit ornate temple and palace complexes illustrating the country's artistic history and culture. Learn about the more recent conflict of the Korean War and the divisions on the peninsula that remain today at the DMZ. Immerse yourself in the practices of Buddhism with the chance to stay at a UNESCO listed temple. Escape to the dramatic volcanic scenery of Jeju Island and lose yourself among the bustling markets and street food vendors of Seoul.

Journey Highlights

- Discover inner peace as you sample the monastic life, spending a night in an historic temple
- Don a traditional Korean hanbok robe
- Enter a sacred Buddhist realm at the UNESCO World Heritage listed Bulguksa Temple
- Soak up panoramic vistas hiking amidst wildflowers, trickling streams and rugged cliffs on volcanic Mt Halla
- Witness the lifestyle and culture of the haenyeo women divers of Jeju
- Learn to make authentic kimchi, Korea's famous fermented cabbage dish



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Seoul

Arrive into the South Korean capital where you are met by A&K and transferred to your stylish hotel. The remainder of your day is at leisure.

Four Seasons Hotel Seoul

Day 2: Seoul

Begin your discovery of this fascinating city with a visit to Gyeongbok Palace. This vast complex, built in 1395, was the most prominent of Seoul's royal palaces and, much like Beijing's Forbidden City, is a sprawling network of pavilions, passageways, shrines and courtyards. Wander through the grounds, filled with lotus ponds, pleasure gardens and ornate statues, and peruse the exhibits at the National Folk Museum.

Then head to the charming Bukchon Hanok village where hundreds of old-style Korean homes (hanoks) that date back 600 years to the Joseon Dynasty can be found. Stroll the cobbled streets, seek out quaint teahouses or curio-filled galleries and immerse yourself in traditional Korean culture. Complete the experience by trying on a hanbok, the traditional Korean outfit, often characterised by vibrant colours and simple lines, worn at celebrations.

Spend the afternoon in two of the city's most vibrant market districts: Isadong, the largest area for traditional Korean handicrafts and art works, is a charming labyrinth of alleys lined with art stalls, antique galleries, bookstores and boutiques; Gwangjang Market, Seoul's first and oldest covered market, was originally the place to buy traditional Korean garments. Though the market still specialises in textiles, it has become one of Seoul's biggest street food hot spots, where nearly any type of Korean cuisine can be savoured.

This evening, enjoy the NANTA show, a clever performance that blends acrobatics, martial arts, comedy and culinary skills set to traditional Korean Samul Nori folk song rhythms.

Four Seasons Hotel Seoul | Meals: B

Day 3: Seoul

This morning venture north to the Joint Security Area and the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) which demarcates North Korea from South Korea and roughly follows the 38th parallel. Your guide will enlighten you on Korean military history, how the DMZ was created at the end of the Korean War and today's ongoing tensions. Much of your exploration is on foot, visiting key sites including the official buildings used by the two opposing forces and the United States for formal talks, the Third Aggression Tunnel which snakes under the border and the observation towers which enable a view across into North Korea. A North Korean defector will accompany you during the visit sharing their experiences of living and fleeing the North and giving a unique insight into the contrasts that exist on either side of the DMZ.

Next you transfer to Heyri Art Village, for a guided tour of its eclectic collection of museums and art galleries. Later return to the city, where you meet a professional kimchi maker who shares the secrets of Korea's famous fermented cabbage dish so you can create your own. Discover how Kimchi forms a fundamental part of Korean history, culture and tradition before tasting.

Four Seasons Hotel Seoul | Meals: B

Day 4: Seoul

Escape the city today and immerse yourself in nature on a visit to Nami Island (Namiseom). Created by the rising waters following the construction of the Cheongpyeong Dam in 1944, the half-moon shaped island is famous for its lovely tree-lined paths and verdant landscapes often used as a film location. In the afternoon choose between visiting the Garden of Morning Calm or taking a ride on a Gangchon Rail Bike. Korea's most beautiful garden and arboretum, The Garden of Morning Calm is divided into 20 different sections covering some 30 hectares and has more than 5,000 species of plants including many endangered and indigenous varieties. If you prefer to travel by rail bike you'll head to the Gangchon Rail line. The tracks of this now disused railway wind for six kilometres through forested mountains, several tunnels and along the Bukhangang River. Your two or four-seater 'rail bike' is mounted on the tracks so enjoy the views without needing to steer.

Four Seasons Hotel Seoul | Meals: B

Day 5: Seoul - Gyeongju

Travel by bullet train to Gyeongju, the seat of ancient Korean culture and capital of the Silla dynasty (57BC – 935AD), 370 kilometres southeast of Seoul. Today the city boasts many UNESCO World Heritage Sites showcasing the dynasty's magnificent achievements in art, architecture, and culture.

Accompanied by your guide and historian visit the Seokguram Grotto. Entering the cave, you pass beautifully carved stone reliefs depicting the guardians of Buddha before reaching the large granite domed ceiling protecting a large Buddha statue. Move on to the Bulguksa Temple, the finest example of the golden age of Buddhist art during the Silla period. It is said that you can leave the earthly world and enter the realm of Buddha by crossing over the temple bridges, and it is easy to see why as you marvel at the intricately painted gates and roofs.

Hilton Hotel Gyeongju | Meals: B

Day 6: Gyeongju

Spend this morning exploring the Daereungwon tomb complex, the burial mounds of the kings and nobility. Excavations of the 23 large tombs have yielded incredible artifacts including gold crowns and a delicately painted cheonma, a Korean flying horse. Delve into some of the tombs to see how they were laid out. Continue to Donggung Palace, originally built in 674AD as part of the Silla palace complex, whose elegant pavilions are mirrored in the serene waters of the Wolji pond.

Experience a complete Buddhist immersion this evening when you spend the night at the Haeinsa Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site founded in 802. There is time to reflect on this peaceful way of life participating in Chahm-Suhn meditation, a morning chanting ceremony and tea blending meditation as well as the opportunity to converse with a Sue-Nihm (monk). The temple houses the Tripitaka Koreana, the most complete surviving collection of the Buddhist scriptures all intricately carved into 81,258 wooden printing blocks in the 13th Century. While at the temple you'll learn how the wood blocks were used and try your hand at printing your own heart sutra.

Haeinsa Temple | Meals: BD

Day 7: Gyeongju - Busan

Continue your journey south to the maritime city of Busan, situated at the convergence of the Yellow and East Seas. The country's most important port and naval centre is also noted for its beaches, parks and beautiful gardens. It is also one of South Korea's major arts and entertainment centres hosting Asia's premier film event the Busan International Film Festival.

This afternoon you'll visit Igidae Park, which connects to Jangsanbong Peak, famed for its towering rock cliffs. Meander through the park to appreciate the great cliff and ocean views. If you're feeling adventurous step out on to the Oryukdo Skywalk, a translucent walkway that allows you to look straight down the cliff face into the ocean, a thrilling perspective. Conclude with the UN Memorial Cemetery Park, a collection of memorials honouring the fallen soldiers of the UN international forces who fought to protect South Korea during the Korean War from 1950 to 1953.

Park Hyatt | Meals: B

Day 8: Busan

Start your day at Taejongdae Park, considered one of Busan's most scenic spots, renowned for its rocky beach and towering 250-metre-high cliffs where the panoramic views are incredible. Then marvel at the variety of seafood on sale at the Jagalchi Fish Market, the country's most famous, before pausing in lively BIFF Square, the heart of Busan's movie district. Later there's time to explore Gukje Market, the largest in Busan, where shoppers can find all manner of goods from shoes, pottery and kim chi to cosmetics, lanterns and tasty street eats.

After lunch (payable locally), ascend to the top of the 120-metre-high Busan Tower to enjoy the city panorama. Your day of exploration concludes with a stroll around the Gamcheon Culture Village an eclectic residential area full of colourful pastel houses. Long an enclave of low-income housing from the post Korean War period, a recent movement of urban renewal has seen the district transformed into a creative community run by residents and artists with a delightful collection of cafés, galleries and art installations.

Park Hyatt | Meals: B

Day 9: Busan - Jeju

Today you are transferred to the airport for your flight to the volcanic island of Jeju. Get a real appreciation of its unique scenery as you head to Yongmeori Beach to view the striking Yongmeori Cliffs. Here the volcanic dome of Mount Sanbongsan drops into the ocean in a series of especially dramatic cliffs and rugged rock formations said to look like a dragon diving headfirst into the turquoise waters. Sanbongsan, means 'the cave inside the mountain' referring to a cave about 150 metres up which gives visitors a spectacular view down onto the ocean and along the coastline.

Later you'll learn about the intricacies of green tea at the Osulloc Green Tea museum which celebrates Jeju's rich tea culture.

The Shilla Jeju | Meals: B**Day 10: Jeju**

Haenyeo are the women divers who harvest abalone, shellfish, seaweed and other marine life by freediving. Once prevalent across the region, this traditional way of life is now limited to a significantly reduced number of divers and Jeju remains the centre of the practice. Discover the history, customs, artifacts, shamanism and folklore of the haenyeo way of life at the Jeju Haenyeo Museum, the only one of its kind. After lunch at a local restaurant (payable locally) you'll be driven to Seongsan Ilchulbong, popularly known as Sunrise Peak, a volcanic cone jutting out of the shallow waters. Here you have the unique opportunity of witnessing the incredible skill of the haenyeo as they reap their harvest from the depths.

Today's final highlight is the Seongeup Folk Village where the unique Jeju culture can be seen in this living museum of traditional houses, schools, stone monuments and the ruins of earlier structures, including a fortress.

The Shilla Jeju | Meals: B**Day 11: Jeju**

Hallasan Mountain, Korea's tallest, rises proudly from the centre of Jeju Island and is perhaps the island's most memorable landmark. The national park around it encompasses 368 parasitic cones around the main mountain and is famous for its vertical ecosystem of plants created by the varying temperatures along the mountainside. There are several well-developed hiking trails to follow, from 10 to 20km long, allowing keen walkers to reach the summit overlooking the crater lake and back in one day. Stretch your legs to soak up the spectacular vistas, craggy valleys and lush vegetation.

The Shilla Jeju | Meals: B

Day 12: Jeju - Depart Seoul

Transfer to the airport for your flight back to Seoul.

Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

Four Seasons Hotel Seoul



Centrally located nearby iconic sites including Gwanghwamun Plaza, the Royal Gyeongbokgung Palace and Sejong Art Centre, the Four Seasons Hotel Seoul provides a perfect base for discovering the city. This luxury hotel combines classic Korean motifs with a clean, modern aesthetic that effortlessly blends the old and new, its walls home to some 160 contemporary artworks. The 317 rooms and suites are flooded with natural light from the floor-to-ceiling windows which showcase incredible views out over the city and towards the surrounding mountains.

The hotel offers a wide range of dining options, with seven restaurants and bars to choose from. Local Korean favourites are on the menu at Maru, savour flavourful Italian cuisine at Boccacino, indulge in sushi and Japanese share plates at Kioku, while Yu Yuan delivers Michelin-starred Cantonese delights. Later sip a sundowner at the intimate Charles H. bar, where Seoul's burgeoning craft-cocktail scene is at its finest.

For those looking to relax, you can unwind in the Korean sauna, indulge in a treatment at the serene spa, or take a dip in the indoor swimming pool.

Park Hyatt Busan



Taking on the appearance of a wave, or sail, The Park Hyatt sits in the heart of the city's upmarket shopping and beach districts. Pale wood and neutral colours, sleek furnishings and oak flooring adorn the 269 guestrooms and suites evoking a calming lightness within every space. The floor-to-ceiling windows offer views out onto the city, marina and iconic Gwangan Bridge. The city panorama is particularly impressive from The Lounge on the 30th floor as the sun sets and the lights complement a sundowner cocktail. For those looking to unwind there is an indoor pool, sauna, spa and fitness room to use at your leisure. Food enthusiasts are spoilt for choice, with modern French cuisine on show in the Living Room or flavourful fusion on offer at the hotel's main grill and sushi restaurant, The Dining Room. For those craving something sweet there is also a patisserie serving a selection of delights.

The Shilla Hotel, Jeju



A resort style hotel set in extensive manicured gardens., The Shilla Jeju boasts commanding views of both the ocean and Mt Halla, with a Mediterranean feel and European atmosphere. Interior design marries both East and West, with the bright and spacious rooms appointed in either a contemporary western style or the Korean Ondol style with simple and elegant décor. The hotel offers endless leisure opportunities, with an indoor pool and two cabana-lined outdoor pools perfect for lounging.. Those looking for to get active can make use of the tennis courts and gym while the Guerlain Spa offers the chance to relax and indulge. Gastronomes can savour a variety of cuisines, with a smorgasbord of dining options available ranging from Asian to European, fine dining or more casual.

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