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Itineraries

South Korea’s Highlights

Access the best of Korea on this trip taking in the dynamic capital Seoul, the southern port of Busan, lost-in-time country towns, quirky sights and beautiful Jeju-do.

Spend four or five days in Seoul, including a day trip north to the DMZ. Next head east to Chuncheon, where you can cycle around Uiam Lake and sample the town’s famous chicken dish, dakgalbi.

Dine on fresh seafood in Sokcho then hike around the stunning peaks and waterfalls of Seoraksan National Park. Follow the coast south to Gangneung to view well-preserved Joseon-era buildings, quirky museums and a tiny North Korean spy submarine at Unification Park in Jeongdongjin. From Samcheok explore the huge Hwanseongul and Daegeumgul caves, as well as Haesindang Park, packed with phallic sculptures.

Delve into Korea’s past at serene Hahoe Folk Village and Gyeongju, ancient capital of the Shilla kingdom, where you can spend a couple of days exploring royal tombs, the excellent museum and the World Heritage–listed grotto at Seokguram.

Busan, with its fish market, beaches and urban buzz, is worth a few days. From here fly to Jeju-do, where you can enjoy amazing volcanic scenery on leisurely hikes.
This cross-country itinerary is ideal for those looking to experience the more rustic and natural side of South Korea, with stops on ruggedly beautiful islands and hikes along leafy mountain trails.

From **Incheon International Airport** it’s a quick hop to the small, idyllic island of **Muuido**, from where you can walk to **So-Muido** or relax on lovely beaches. Enjoy Chinese food in the historic Chinatown of **Incheon**, then stroll around the Open Port area. Take a direct bus to **Suwon**, where you can stride around the ramparts of the meticulously reconstructed fortress wall.

**Gongju** and **Buyeo**, the ancient capitals of the Baekje kingdom, are your next stops – hillsides, tombs, a fortress and museum will give you an insight into Korea’s oldest dynasty. After enjoying the sand, seafood and mud skincare spa of **Daecheon Beach**, sail to the serene island of **Sapsido**, where you can spend the night. Return to Daecheon and continue north by bus to **Anmyeondo**, the largest island in the Taean Haean National Marine Park. Continue working on your tan at either **Khotji Beach** or **Mallipo Beach**, or hike some the new Haebyeongil trails through the park.

Travel inland to **Daejeon** to soak at **Yuseong Hot Springs**. Continue to **Cheongju**, learn about the world’s oldest printed book then move on to **Songnisan National Park**, covering central Korea’s finest scenic area and home to a 33m-tall gold-plated Buddha statue.

**Chungju** is the gateway to lovely **Woraksan National Park** and for a two-hour scenic ferry trip across Chungju Lake to sleepy **Danyang**, which is small-town Korea at its most charming. Explore nearby **limestone caves** and the stately temple complex of **Guin-sa** within Sobaeksan National Park.

Use **Andong** as a base for exploring the surrounding area packed with attractive river and lakeside villages. It’s only a couple of hours by bus from here to **Pohang**. From Pohang visit **Bogyeong-sa** temple in a gorgeous valley with 12 waterfalls, then board the ferry to **Ulleungdo**, a sparsely inhabited, volcanic island.
The Deep South Trail

This 850km route around Korea’s greenest and least-industrialised region offers the opportunity to visit scores of rural islands, dine in countless seafood restaurants and dig deep into artistic traditions.

**Jeonju** has a fascinating hanok village crammed with traditional houses and buildings. Use it as a base for visiting the 6th-century Geumsan-sa temple in **Moaksan Provincial Park**. Don’t miss **Maisan Provincial Park**, where you can hike between a pair of ‘horse ear’ mountains and see a sculptural garden of stone pinnacles piled up by a Buddhist mystic at the **Tap-sa** temple. Alternatively, go hiking or skiing in beautiful **Deogyusan National Park**.

The industrial port city of **Gunsan** boasts Korea’s largest collection of Japanese-colonial-period buildings. From here hop on a ferry to the relaxing island of **Seonyudo**, situated amid 60 mostly uninhabited small islands. When the tide is in and the sun is out, the views from here are unbelievably beautiful.

Bronze and Iron Age tombs dot the lush green hills around the small village of **Gochang**, where you can also explore the 15th-century, ivy-covered **Moyang Fortress**.

Further south, **Gwangju** is home to several interesting historical sites, museums and a major arts complex. Make a day trip to **Damyang** to stroll the sandy trails through its Juknokwon bamboo grove. Move on to the port of **Mokpo** to board boats to the remote havens of **Heuksando** and **Hongdo** in the **Dadohae Haesang National Park**.

Admire Korea’s centuries-old tradition of pottery at **Gangjin** and taste products made from healthy green tea at the beautiful **Boseong Daehan Dawon Tea Plantation**.

Go bird spotting in the Ramsar-listed wetlands of **Suncheon Bay** then continue to **Yeosu**, site of Expo 2012 and access point for **Dolsando**, where you can hike up to **Hyangiram**, a Buddhist temple perched on a cliff.

For a final island experience, take in terraced rice paddies and misty temples on picturesque **Namhaedo**. The trail finishes at Korea’s second-largest city, **Busan**.
This two-centre itinerary is well suited to parents travelling with kids. Seoul’s many parks, interactive museums and, in summer, outdoor swimming pools are ideal for family fun. Older kids will most likely be happy cruising the capital’s vast shopping malls and department stores looking for souvenirs of Korea’s pervasive pop culture.

Day trips include the beaches of the West Sea islands; Korea’s biggest amusement park, Everland; and the Korean Folk Village. The latter two can just as easily be visited from Suwon, where it’s fun to walk around the walls of an 18th-century fortress. North of Seoul, the modern village of Heyri offers inventive sculptures and art exhibits.

Hop on a flight to Jeju-do, blessed with a fascinating volcanic landscape and dozens of sandy beaches. Amusement and water parks, cycle and skate hire and a whole raft of adventure activities, from quad biking to scuba diving, are possible on this fun-packed island with plenty of world-class resorts.
Map Legend

Sights
- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours
- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping
- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating
- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife
- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment
- Entertainment

Shopping
- Shopping

Information
- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic
- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population
- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport
- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro/MRT/MTR station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Skytrain/Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes
- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries
- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography
- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas
- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book
Lucky for Rebecca, Korea is just a short flight from her home in Tokyo. Previous trips had already sold her on the charms of makgeolli and jjimjilbang, so she jumped at the chance to explore the country’s southern reaches for this edition. Highlights included eating live octopus in Mokpo, steaming in the saltwater baths in Hampyeong and having morning tea on the veranda of a 100-year-old home in Jeonju. Rebecca has also written Lonely Planet’s guides to Tokyo and Japan. Follow her on Twitter @tokyorebecca. Rebecca also wrote the Arts & Architecture chapter.

Phillip Tang spent this trip inviting himself to Korean homes, tagging along to local street eats and being out-hiked by Koreans twice his age bolting up mountains. He writes about travel on his two loves, Asia and Latin America, and has contributed to Lonely Planet’s guides to China, Japan, Mexico and Peru, and for other publishers. Find his photos, tweets and articles from this Korea visit through philliptang.co.uk. Phillip also wrote the In the Korean Kitchen, The Natural Environment and Survival Guide chapters.

A Busan resident for more than 15 years, Rob spends several weeks each year backpacking across the country in search of secluded getaways. One memorable discovery on this journey was a hamburger restaurant on Udo, which has an amazing collection of Anne of Green Gables memorabilia including a first edition of the book. That discovery was a reminder that we have everything we need for a magnificent journey. Rob also wrote the Korean People chapter.

The author of our North Korea chapter has chosen to remain anonymous.
Simon Richmond
Coordinating author, Seoul
UK-born writer and photographer Simon first co-ordinated Lonely Planet’s Korea guide in 2009 when he explored Seoul and its surroundings over several weeks. He liked the place so much that his next visit, to update the 9th edition of Korea and 7th edition of Seoul, saw him spend over two months living in Seoul and travelling down to Jeju-do. For Korea 10, Simon co-ordinated the general coverage of the country and covered central, northern and western areas of Seoul; he also hiked around the old city walls on a beautiful spring day and had an enjoyable but messy time learning to make magkeolli. Follow him on Twitter, Instagram and at www.simonrichmond.com. Simon also wrote the Plan Your Trip section, as well as the Korea Today and History chapters.

Megan Eaves
Lonely Planet’s North Asia Destination Editor, Megan has worked on Lonely Planet’s China guide and is a recent convert to the delights of the Korean peninsula. Originally from New Mexico, she is a mountain girl at heart and an avid skier. For this edition, she researched Korea’s winter activities, downing as much kimchi, fried chicken and soju as she could in between stints on the country’s many snowy slopes. You can follow her on Twitter @megoizzy. Megan contributed to the chapters Gangwon-do, Around Seoul, Chungcheongbuk-do and Jeollabuk-do.

Trent Holden
Around Seoul
Having covered the length of the peninsula on other writing assignments, this is Trent’s first gig working on the Korea book for Lonely Planet. He researched the regions surrounding Seoul, where he was blown away by the area’s diversity and beauty. Trent has worked on over 20 books for Lonely Planet, covering mainly Asia and Africa. You can catch him on twitter @hombreholden.