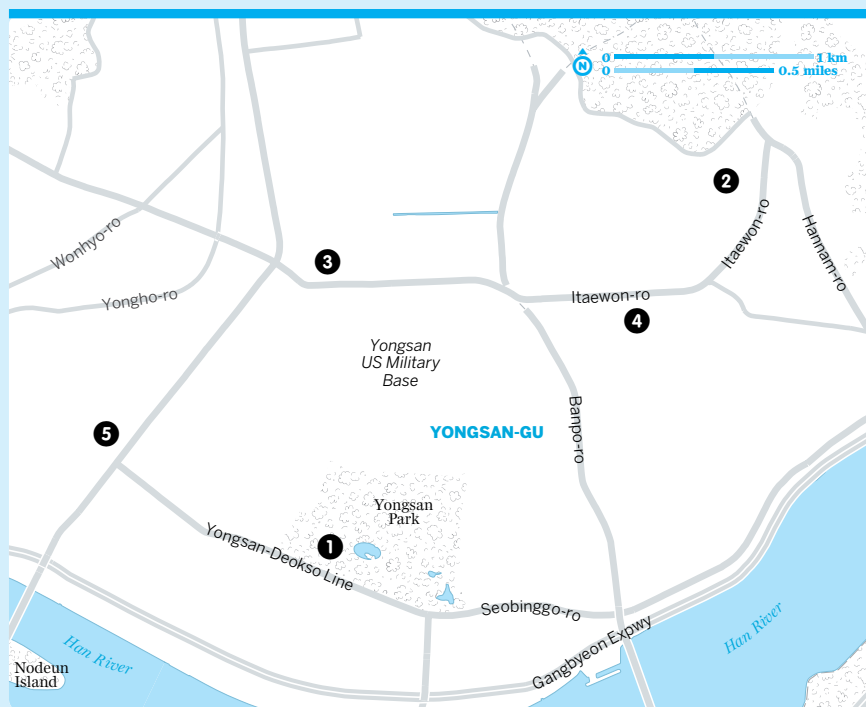


# Itaewon & Yongsan-gu

## Neighbourhood Top Five

- ➊ Survey centuries of Korean culture and art at the mammoth **National Museum of Korea** (p88) and take time to explore the attached gardens.
- ➋ Be amazed by the art and architecture of the **Leeum Samsung Museum of Art** (p89).
- ➌ Eat, drink and party the night away in **Itaewon** (p89) and neighbouring areas.
- ➍ Pay homage to those who gave their lives for the nation at the **War Memorial of Korea** (p90).
- ➎ Sweat, soak and be scrubbed super clean at **Dragon Hill Spa & Resort** (p95).



For more detail of this area, see Map p209 ➡

## Explore Itaewon & Yongsan-gu

Immediately south of Namsan, Yongsan-gu has for many decades been defined by the presence of the US army base on a massive tract of land. Next door is Itaewon, ground central for army personnel and expats to shop and relax in an international mix of restaurants, bars and, umm, other places. For this reason it had a dodgy rep, but no longer. The hostess and transvestite bars of 'Hooker Hill' are still there (as is a cluster of Seoul's most foreigner-friendly gay hang-outs on 'Homo Hill'), but this is now one of Seoul's trendiest dining and shopping districts, attracting people from across the city.

The vibe is spilling over into adjacent areas. Head down Itaewon-ro, the main drag, in one direction and you'll swiftly hit classy Hannam-dong, where you'll find the excellent Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, boutiques and cool cafes. In the other direction is happening Haebangchon (aka HBC) and Gyeongridan, home to laid-back restaurants, cafes and craft beer bars. In all these areas you're as likely to hear English spoken as Korean – and not just by the expats.

Two major cultural institutions – the National Museum and the War Memorial of Korea – are area highlights and there are fine opportunities to de-stress, either in one of Seoul's most elaborate *jjimjil-bang* (sauna) complexes or by strolling along the Han River Park, which can be accessed in around a 15-minute downhill walk from Itaewon.

## Local Life

- ➔ **Shopping** Itaewon is the best place to find clothes and shoes in foreigner-friendly large sizes as well as have something tailor made. It's also now getting a rep for small fashion boutiques.
- ➔ **Religion** The beautiful Seoul Central Mosque, Korea's largest such house of worship, sits atop a hill in Itaewon, surrounded by halal restaurants and shops with imported items from Islamic countries.
- ➔ **Online Gaming** Cheer on StarCraft players on the 9th floor of I'Park Mall where TV tapings of e-game tournaments are often held.

## Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Subway** Line 6 is the best way to reach Itaewon and around, with Samgakji the closest station to the War Memorial of Korea; transfer here to line 4 to reach the National Museum.
- ➔ **Tour Bus** The War Memorial of Korea and National Museum are both stops on the City Tour Bus route.

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

The best way to reach the Banpo Bridge (p99) from Itaewon is to walk south down Pokwangdong-gil (which, incidentally, is one of the fast-disappearing areas of central Seoul to retain an old Asian shopping atmosphere) to a pedestrian tunnel that leads to the riverside park.

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ OKitchen (p89)
- ➔ Vatos (p89)
- ➔ Le Saint-Ex (p89)

For reviews, p89 ➔

## Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Craftworks (p91)
- ➔ Takeout Drawing (p91)
- ➔ District (p91)

For reviews, see p91 ➔

## Best Places to Shop

- ➔ Millimetre Milligram (p93)
- ➔ Yongsan Electronics Market (p93)
- ➔ What the Book (p93)

For reviews, see p93 ➔