

Itaewon & Around

Neighbourhood Top Five

- ❶ Survey centuries of Korean culture and art at the mammoth **National Museum of Korea** (p97) and take time to explore the attached gardens.
- ❷ Get inspired by the art and architecture of the **Leeum Samsung Museum of Art** (p99).
- ❸ Pay homage to those who gave their lives for the nation at the **War Memorial of Korea** (p98).
- ❹ Indulge in some of Seoul's most varied cuisine with an impressive array of world food, often with a Korean twist such as at **Vatos** (p99).
- ❺ Join the party and head out for a hedonistic night on a pub crawl, starting off with craft beer at **Craftworks Taphouse** (p102).



For more detail of this area see Maps p222 and p224 ➔

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

If a visit to the Korean War Museum is on your itinerary (which it should be), aim to visit at 2pm on a Friday from April to June and October to November for the entertaining military parade. It's an awesome display of precision and weapon twirling by the honour guards.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Linus' BBQ (p100)
- ➔ Vatos (p99)
- ➔ Atelier du Saint-Ex (p101)

For reviews, see p99 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Craft Beer Valley (p102)
- ➔ Damotori (p101)
- ➔ Southside Parlor (p101)

For reviews, see p101 ➔

Best Places to Party

- ➔ Cakeshop (p101)
- ➔ Venue/ (p101)
- ➔ Thunderhorse Tavern (p104)

For reviews, see p101 ➔

Explore Itaewon & Around

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, a centre for army personnel and expats to shop and relax in an international mix of restaurants, bars and, umm, other places. For this reason it has had a dodgy rep, and was a place many Koreans feared to tread. While it maintains its gritty edge, and 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'), it's 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.

Up on the hill near the mosque is 'Halal Hill', home to Seoul's Islamic community with a large Arabic-speaking population. Just down from there along Usadan-ro is also a new happening strip which came about with the arrival of artists relocating here to set up studio spaces.

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 or cycling 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 to 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.

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.