

Northern Seoul

Neighbourhood Top Five

- 1 Hike up **Bukaksan** (p132), the tallest of Seoul's four guardian mountains, following an intact and heavily guarded section of the city's original fortress walls.
- 2 Admire the traditional buildings and elegant furnishings at the **Korea Furniture Museum** (p126).
- 3 Learn about the horrors of the Japanese colonial period at the **Sodaemun Prison History Hall** (p129).
- 4 Meditate at a templestay at serene **Gilsang-sa** (p129) in leafy Seongbuk-dong.
- 5 Witness ancient shamanistic ceremonies at **Inwangsan Guksadang** (p130).



For more detail of this area see Map p226 ➔

Explore: Northern Seoul

The city's northern districts seldom figure prominently on international tourist itineraries, which is a pity as they are home to some of Seoul's most charming neighbourhoods and some fascinating sights, including the best sections of the old fortress walls. Start exploring in the university district of Daehangno, a performing-arts hub with some 150 theatres ranging from intimate fringe-style venues to major auditoriums such as the Arko Art Theater.

Hike to Naksan Park and follow the wall northwest over to Seongbuk-dong, a leafy mountainside community known as the Beverly Hills of Seoul because of its grand mansions, many of them home to ambassadors and CEOs. Here you'll find the outstanding Korea Furniture Museum and serene Buddhist temple Gilsang-sa.

It's a stiff climb, but views of the city from the summit of Bukaksan repay the effort of getting there. Come down to Buam-dong, where the high-security trappings of the mountain overlooking the presidential compound are replaced by relaxed teahouses, cafes and galleries.

Continue following the walls to the summit of Inwangsan with its weirdly eroded rocks, temples and Guksadang shrine. The area has a special atmosphere because of the outdoor shamanist ceremonies that invoke the spirits of the departed. At the foot of the mountain is the large Seodaemun Independence Park, with monuments that celebrate Korea's march towards nationhood, free from the interference and colonisation of China and Japan. The haunting displays at the Seodaemun Prison History Hall provide a sobering end to this tour which can occupy several days of your time in Seoul.

Local Life

- ➔ **Hiking** Naksan (p127) is popular for relaxing and light exercise. Part of the fortress-wall hiking trail runs along the back of the park.
- ➔ **Cafe society** Buy coffee beans from around the world at Club Espresso (p132) in Buam-dong or chill out in the cafes and teahouses of Seongbuk-dong.
- ➔ **Street theatre** Check out the free performances by musicians, dancers, comedians and other dramatic hopefuls that take place most weekend afternoons at Daehangno's Marronnier Park (p127).

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Bus** Numbers 1020, 7022, 7212 for Buam-dong, 1111 or 2112 for Seongbuk-dong.
- ➔ **Subway** Daehangno is easily accessed by Line 4 to Hyeohwa; for Seodaemun take Line 3 to Dongnimmun.
- ➔ **Walking** The main sights can be accessed from the Seoul Wall hiking route.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

For info on what's showing at the scores of venues in Daehangno, and discounts on tickets of up to 50%, go to the **Theatre Ticket Office** (Map p226; Marronnier Park, 104 Daehak-ro, Jongno-gu; ☎11am-8pm Tue-Sat, to 7pm Sun; ㉠Line 4 to Hyeohwa, Exit 2) or the **Seoul Theater Center** (Map p226; www.e-stc.or.kr; 3 Daemyeong-gil, Jongno-gu; ☎1-8pm Tue-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat, 11am-7pm Sun; ㉠Line 4 to Hyeohwa, Exit 4).

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Jaha Sonmandoo (p130)
- ➔ Deongjang Yesool (p130)
- ➔ Serious Deli (p130)

For reviews, see p130 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Mix & Malt (p131)
- ➔ Dallyeora Gaemi 1 (p131)
- ➔ Suyeon Sanbang (p131)

For reviews, see p131 ➔

Best Places to Hike

- ➔ Bukaksan (p132)
- ➔ Inwangsan (p132)
- ➔ Ansan (p132)

For reviews, see p132 ➔