



# Essentials

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Seoul is the capital of the Republic of Korea. It is also the country's most populous and economically powerful city, and its educational and cultural center. It is divided administratively into 25 districts or “*gu*,” and 522 neighborhoods or “*dong*.” Seoul has served as capital since 1394.

**Name:** Seoul has gone by many names in its long history including Hanyang and Hanseong. It has been known as Seoul (“capital” in Korean) since 1945.

**Location:** Seoul is in the northwest part of South Korea, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the North Korean border. Seoul lies roughly halfway down (or up) the Korean Peninsula, 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of the West Sea (also known as the Yellow Sea) port city of Incheon. The Han River flows through Seoul from east to west in a wavy “w” pattern, and the city is surrounded by mountains.

**Area:** The city covers 605 square kilometers (234 square miles). By comparison, the five boroughs of New York City comprise 790 square kilometers (305 square miles), and Greater London, England is 1,580 square kilometers (610 square miles).

## They said it

“The streets and markets pulsate with an energy unlike anywhere in the world, and change is ever-present. Seoul could very well be the world’s most dynamic city.”

– Robert Koehler from his 2009 book  
*Seoul* published by Seoul Selection.

**Latitude and longitude:** Seoul is located at 37.34 N latitude and 126.59 E longitude. These coordinates put the city at roughly the same latitude as Tokyo, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Lisbon, and along a similar longitude as Pyeongyang, North Korea; Timor-Leste, East Timor; and Australia’s Great Victoria Desert.

### Distance from Seoul to:

**Pyeongyang, North Korea:** 195 km (121 miles); **Beijing, China:** 958 km (596 miles); **Tokyo, Japan:** 1,159 km (720 miles); **Manila, the Philippines:** 2,614 km (1,624 miles); **Mumbai, India:** 5,614 km (3,489 miles); **Moscow, Russia:** 6,615 km (4,111 miles); **Sydney, Australia:** 8,304 km (5,160 miles); **London, England:** 8,864 km (5,509 miles); **Los Angeles, USA:** 9,585 km (5,956 miles); **Toronto, Canada:** 10,607 km (6,592 miles); **Lagos, Nigeria:** 12,415 km (7,715 miles); **Sao Paulo, Brazil:** 18,340 km (11,396 miles).

## Did you know . . .

that Seoul ranked number three in a January 2010 *New York Times* article entitled “The 31 Places to Go in 2010”? Writes *The Times*: “Forget Tokyo. Design aficionados are now heading to Seoul.” A diverse group of destinations rounded out the top five on *The Times*’ list: Sri Lanka, Argentina’s Patagonia wine country, Mysore (the south Indian city of palaces), and Copenhagen, Denmark.

**Population:** Seoul's population is 10.45 million people, distributed over 4.1 million households. The population is roughly divided between those living north and south of the Han River. Seoul occupies less than one percent of South Korea geographically, but contains over a fifth of the nation's population.

The number of people in the Seoul National Capital Area, which takes in Seoul City, Incheon City and Gyeonggi Province, is more than double the city number, placing metropolitan Seoul among the world's most populous urban areas. The capital region's population represents about half of South Korea's 48.5 million people. There are roughly 229,000 foreigners living in Seoul, a number equivalent to the population of Birmingham, Alabama; Saskatoon, Canada or Swansea, Wales.

**Time zone:** Korea Standard Time (KST). KST is nine hours ahead of Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) or Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). This is 14 hours ahead of North American Eastern Standard Time (when daylight savings is not in effect). South Korea does not use daylight savings time.

**System of measurement:** Metric.

## Did you know. . .

that U.S. President Barack Obama is an aficionado of taekwondo, South Korea's national sport? Obama practiced taekwondo for several years while serving as a state senator in Illinois, and on his 2009 visit to Seoul was presented with an honorary black belt and taekwondo uniform by South Korean President Lee Myung-bak.

## TAKE 5 FIVE MOST POPULOUS SOUTH KOREAN CITIES

1. **Seoul** 10.5 million
2. **Busan** 3.5 million (on the southeastern coast, 327 km/203 mi. SE of Seoul)
3. **Incheon** 2.6 million (on the west coast, 40 km/25 mi. W of Seoul)
4. **Daegu** 2.5 million (inland in the southeast, 236 km/147 mi. SE of Seoul)
5. **Daejeon** 1.5 million (inland in west-central S. Korea, 150 km/93 mi. S of Seoul)

**Area and country code:** The country code for South Korea is 82 and the city code for Seoul is 02 (not used if calling locally). If calling from outside Korea, drop the “0” in “02.” Mobile phone numbers do not include the Seoul city code; the country code (82) is followed by the prefix 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, or 19, after which comes the phone number. Cell phones are available for rent at Incheon Airport and other locations.

**Seoul city symbol: Haechi.** Also known as *Haetae*, Haechi was chosen as city symbol in 2008. Haechi has a lion-like head and dog-like torso, and is a mythological figure known as a protector. Haechi’s traditional self is represented in the statue in Gwanghwamun Gate, and in print he appears as a simple blue and white line drawing. Haechi’s

### Did you know. . .

that the Rose of Sharon is the Korean national flower? The *Mugunghwa*, which is indigenous to Korea, has been treasured for centuries, and Mugunghwa Country was a name given to the Silla Kingdom. The Rose of Sharon, which blooms from early July to October, is a hardy plant and Korea is home to more than 100 cultivated varieties.

## Did you know. . .

that Seoul has 22 sister cities worldwide? Seoul's first sister, Taipei, Taiwan, arrived in 1968.

more fanciful self is a yellow mascot who has white mitten hands, a big smile and a prominent orange nose. The latter Haechi dispenses tips on life in Seoul to visitors and locals. Other prominent Seoul symbols and icons include the tiger, the pine tree and the ginkgo tree.

**Slogans:** “Soul of Asia” and “Hi Seoul.” These mottos are used to denote Seoul’s position as a leading Asian hub for business and tourist travel, as well as its status as a historic, culturally rich and open city.

## ON AN AVERAGE DAY IN SEOUL . . .

- 254 babies are born
- 104 people die
- 203 couples get married
- 67 couples divorce
- 7,845 people move in or out of the city
- 19 construction permits are issued

## They said it

“The heart of every Korean is in Seoul. Officials have town houses in the capital, and trust their businesses to subordinates for much of the year. Landed proprietors draw their rents and ‘squeeze’ the people on their estates, but are essentially living in the capital. Every man who can pay for food and lodging on the road trudges to the capital once or twice a year, and people who live in it, of whatever degree, can hardly be bribed to leave it, even for a few weeks. To the Korean it is the place in which alone life is worth living.”

– **British travel writer Isabella Lucy Bird from her 1898 book *Korea and her Neighbours*. Bird visited Korea four times during the mid-1890s.**

## SOUTH KOREAN DEMOGRAPHICS

**Population:** 48.5 million (25<sup>th</sup> largest of 237 worldwide)

**Median age:** 37.3

**Population growth:** .266 percent (178<sup>th</sup> of 223 worldwide)

**Birth rate:** 8.93 births/1,000 population (212<sup>th</sup> of 223 worldwide)

## TAKE **5** SAM HAMMINGTON'S TOP FIVE THINGS YOU *MUST* BRING TO KOREA

Sam Hammington was born in 1979 and is a native of Australia. He is passionate about Korea and his adopted city of Seoul. He loves its peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, and all the things that make it unique. He is Korea's first foreign comedian, and can be seen on the long running local TV comedy program *Gag Concert*. He also co-hosts the popular radio show *Drive Time*, which is broadcast on 103.1 TBS eFM in Seoul.

### 1. **Underwear.**

I don't know about you, but my Mum always told me to never leave the house without a clean pair of underwear on. And as such, this ranks number one on my essentials list! It's a good thing I always listen to her, because Korean underwear just doesn't seem to fit right.

### 2. **An iron liver.**

The best way to develop a close relationship with anyone in Korea is through the art of drinking. And Koreans do like a good drink! Even if you are not a drinker, you will be expected to drink your share of beer and *soju* over a Korean barbeque dinner. Most social outings, and a good many business meetings, are held over a drink or three.

### 3. **An open mind.**

Korean culture has a structured hierarchy; as such, age is an important factor. Thus, when someone asks you how old you are, don't take

**Urbanization:** 81 percent

**Life expectancy:** 78.7 years. (Men: 75.5 years; women: 82.2 years).  
The combined figure is 40<sup>th</sup> of 224 worldwide.

**Literacy (percentage over the age of 15 who can read and write):**  
97.9 percent.

offense. It's a way for the person to figure out how formal you will need to be with each other. Other questions that may put you on the back foot include "Are you married?" and "Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?" Don't stress it, they're just icebreakers here in Korea.

#### 4. An appetite for destruction.

There are plenty of exciting things to chow down on while in Korea. One of my personal favorites is the live baby octopus, a whole baby octopus wrapped around a chopstick. You've got to put it in your mouth quickly, then chew, chew, chew, before it sticks itself to the roof of your mouth, or finds its way into your nasal cavity. Some other good items are live prawns, ice-cold spicy noodles and plenty of hot, hot food!

#### 5. A tie between a spork and deodorant.

Two things that you might have trouble finding in Korea are forks and deodorant. For those of you that have trouble using chopsticks, you should bring your own spork! In my opinion, it's a greatly underappreciated utensil in its combination of a spoon and fork. Also, Koreans don't seem to have the same underarm odor problems that many in the West do. Deodorant is something that you will struggle to find here, but believe me you are going to need it, especially if you come in the summer.



# You Know You're From Seoul When . . .

- You think that South Korea's second largest city, Busan (population 3.5 million), is a quaint seaside town.
- If in need of a quiet place to clear your head, you visit the grounds of a 600-year-old palace.
- You think of cell phones as disposable, and replace yours every few months.
- You take it for granted that you can travel anywhere in the city, including the subway, day or night, without fear for your personal safety.
- You think a proper school day ends at 10 p.m. (Local students often attend after-school academies; sessions for teenagers can stretch into the night).
- Everyone seems to be related (you call people "older brother," "older sister," "aunt" and "uncle" instead of using their given names).
- You watch more TV on your phone while commuting than you do at home.
- You think a hike up Namsan Mountain (in the middle of Seoul) counts as a trip to the countryside.
- You're not sure if you believe that rain landing on your head causes baldness, but you're not taking any chances.
- You associate the smell of rotting gingko nuts with the start of autumn, but know that the spectacular colors to follow are more than worth it.
- You're blessed with the ability to simultaneously talk on the phone, watch TV, smoke a cigarette and drive.
- You wake up well before dawn to get on the road for your holiday getaway, thus avoiding the seven a.m. weekend-exodus rush hour.
- Fashion trends like mini-skirts or shawls hit like typhoons, and women wearing the item *du jour* are suddenly everywhere.
- You consider a 1.5-hour commute to work from a satellite suburb normal.
- You decide which restaurant or cafe to patronize based on the discounts you can get from your cell phone plan or credit card.
- You've been playing the videogame Starcraft at a PC *bang* (room) with your friends for over a decade.
- You order pickles with Italian food, and must have kimchi to accompany your meal, whether the cuisine is Indian, Mexican or North American.
- You accept the fact that when you visit a city park, the grassy portion is "off-limits," and is for admiring from the paved walkways.

**Voting age:** 19.

**Military service:** Mandatory for roughly two years, depending on the branch of service, for men aged 20 to 30. There are approximately 560,000 Republic of Korea soldiers on active duty.

## TAKE 5 FIVE ICONIC SEOUL LANDMARKS

1. **N Seoul Tower.** Constructed on Namsan Mountain in 1969 to transmit radio and television signals, N Seoul Tower is visible from many places in the city. Renovated in 2005, N Seoul Tower features a high-tech observatory, a café, a Korean style family eatery and a revolving restaurant.
2. **Gyeongbokgung Palace.** The expansive palace, completed in 1395, lies near Mount Bukhansan and was the principal home of the Royal Family during the Joseon Kingdom. It was burned down in the 1590s and rebuilt in 1868.
3. **Namdaemun Gate.** Built in 1398, National Treasure No. 1 stands at one of the city's busiest intersections, and perfectly captures the juxtaposition of feudal Seoul with the city's high-tech contemporary face. Namdaemun, also known as Great South Gate, is built of wood and stone with a tiled roof. It was badly damaged by a 2008 fire; renovations are expected to be completed by the end of 2012.
4. **Olympic Stadium.** The 70,000-seat Olympic Stadium is part of the Jamsil Sports Complex constructed for the 1988 Olympics. The stadium's curved design is inspired by a Joseon-era vase.
5. **Skyscrapers.** The 63 City building on Yeouido (60 above-ground floors), the Samsung Tower Palace luxury apartment complex (73 floors), and the Trade Tower (55 floors) are just a few of Seoul's many high-rises, a feature which has come to dominate the city in the last 25 years.

**Driving:** Vehicles drive on the right-hand-side. There are about three million cars registered in the city of Seoul, and over seven million in the metro area. Roads are usually in good repair, and signs for major arteries are in Korean and English. Local streets, however, are often not marked, and traffic in Seoul can be fierce. Most visitors find negotiating Seoul via its efficient public transportation system and plentiful private taxis a far better option than driving.

**Languages (other than Korean):** English is widely found on signs. Japanese and Chinese language signs are also found in some areas. Many Koreans speak at least some English, and most read it at a basic level or higher.

**Currency:** The Korean won. Exchange rates are always fluctuating, but very broadly speaking, the 1,000 won note has similar status as a U.S. one-dollar bill, and the 10,000 won note is similar to a U.S. ten-dollar bill or five-Euro note.

## MAJOR HOLIDAYS

- **New Year's Day (January 1).**
- **Seollal (Lunar New Year):** occurs in January or February. Most things are closed for three days, and many Koreans visit their hometowns and eat traditional foods.

## Did you know. . .

that Koreans are much more likely to “Naver” ([www.naver.com](http://www.naver.com)) something than Google it? Naver is far and away Korea's leading search engine, and has a separate gaming portal that caters to Korea's avid on-line gaming community. Naver leads the pack chiefly because it provides a large amount of Korean language content. Another Korean language search engine, Daum ([www.daum.net](http://www.daum.net)) is second to Naver. Google and Yahoo's Korean sites are not widely used.

- **Independence Movement Day (March 1):** commemorates resistance to Japan's former occupation of Korea.
- **Labor Day (May 1).**
- **Buddha's Birthday:** occurs in May according to the lunar calendar.
- **Children's Day (May 5):** honors and supports children. Family outings to parks and zoos are common.
- **Memorial Day (June 6):** National Cemetery in Seoul is the scene of a major ceremony honoring the nation's war dead.
- **Liberation Day (August 15):** commemorates the liberation of Korea from Japanese rule in 1945.
- **Chuseok or Harvest Moon Festival:** takes place in September or October depending on the lunar calendar. Koreans often journey home to be with family and celebrate the fall harvest.
- **National Foundation Day (October 3):** honors the founding of the Korean nation in 2333 BCE.
- **Christmas Day (December 25).**

**Other special days:** Parents' Day (May 8), Constitution Day (July 17), Hangeul (Korean alphabet) Day (October 9).

## ROYAL PALACES

Seoul's palaces date to the Joseon Kingdom (1392-1910), and are an essential aspect of the city. The suffix "gung" means "palace" in Korean.

## Did you know. . .

that 61 percent of Korean high school graduates enter college? In Japan the figure is 46 percent, in Great Britain 55 percent and in Germany 34 percent.

**Gyeongbokgung.** The Kingdom's chief palace was built in 1395 shortly after Seoul was designated capital. The palace's location was established according to principles of *pungsu-jiri*, (the energy emanating from the earth and the elements). Mount Bugaksan lies behind Gyeongbokgung, and Gwanghwamun Gate serves as its entrance. Sejongno, the busy artery leading to the palace, was once the Kingdom's main thoroughfare, and is now home to Gwanghwamun Square (as well as a number of important contemporary buildings).

Gyeongbokgung, like most everywhere in Seoul, has paid a heavy

## World Design Capital

Seoul is recognized as a world center for industrial and urban design, and was named World Design Capital for 2010 by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design. The designation takes in the calendar years of 2009 and 2010, and includes competitions, exhibitions, forums, and festivals highlighting Seoul's innovative design scene. For more information, visit <http://wdc2010.seoul.go.kr/eng/index.jsp>.

The Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP), designed by acclaimed British-Iraqi architect Zaha M. Hadid, is the city's signature building in its role as Design Capital. The DDP and accompanying park incorporate an ancient city wall in their design, and are next to the Dongdaemun Market, a world center for fashion design, production and sales. The plaza will support the fashion industry, while the park will provide added green space in central Seoul, and highlight the area's culture and history. The DDP complex will be completed in 2011.

Dongdaemun Design Plaza is just one in a series of projects that have transformed, and are transforming, the face of Seoul. In this century alone, Incheon International Airport (2001), Seoul Plaza (2004), the National Museum of Korea building (2005), Cheonggyecheon Stream (2005), Seoul Forest (2005),

price at the hands of occupiers and invaders. It was destroyed in the 1590s by the Japanese, and then abandoned for over 250 years before being rebuilt in 1868. During the Japanese occupation in the first part of the twentieth century, Gyeongbokgung was altered and large parts of it demolished. Much of Gyeongbokgung and its expansive grounds have now been restored and reconstituted. There are many elegant buildings to explore, lovely views throughout, and free guided tours. The National Folk Museum of Korea (which contains over 4,000 artifacts used by Koreans in their everyday lives in years past) and the National Palace Museum are also located on the palace grounds.

Gwanghwamun Square (2009) and the presidential museum Cheong Wa Dae Sarangchae (2010), are just some of the major projects that have been completed. Coming soon is a new City Hall building (2011), a renovated Seoul Station (2011), and, further on the horizon, a major upgrade to Seoul Grand Park and the creation of the Yongsan International Business District by Studio Daniel Libeskind. The “Yongsan Dream Hub,” which will remake the area and cost more than \$22.6 billion, is scheduled to be completed in 2016 and will include the world’s second tallest building.

In addition to Hadid and Libeskind, a number of other global superstar architects, including Rem Koolhaas, Mario Botta, Jean Nouvel and Rafael Vinoly have designed commercial and institutional buildings in Seoul. In many cases, foreign architects work in conjunction with local firms, and South Korean architects have been behind a number of visionary projects constructed in the capital area in the last decade. Unlike some cities which are, in a sense, “finished,” Seoul is still evolving; the various recent ventures are reinterpreting and renovating the city’s past, and charting new directions for a capital that is both ancient and futuristic.

# TAKE 5

## LARS VARGO'S TOP FIVE KOREAN READS

Lars Vargo is the founder and President of the Seoul Literary Society. He has a doctorate in Japanese history from the University of Stockholm, and is the author of many books. He has served as the Swedish Ambassador to South Korea since January 2006, and is keenly interested in literature, particularly as a means of understanding a nation and its people.

1. ***The Dawn of Modern Korea - The Transformation in Life and Cityscape* by Andrei Lankov (1963-).** Andrei Lankov was born and raised in Russia, but is a longtime Korea specialist who is an Associate Professor at Kookmin University in Seoul. He writes in English, Korean and Russian on North and South Korean history, politics and society. Lankov is well known for his realistic, critical and cynical views on North Korean society, but in *The Dawn of Modern Korea* he examines the history and society of South Korea in the twentieth century with curious eyes. He tells stories and anecdotes in a refreshing way, revealing interesting and unknown details about the everyday lives of Koreans in a period of great change.

2. ***Ten Thousand Lives* by Ko Un (1933-).** Translated by Brother Anthony of Taizé, Young-moo Kim and Gary Gach. Green Integer, 2005, 366 pages.

The poet Ko Un is believed to have been on the short list for the Nobel Prize in literature for many years. His *Ten Thousand Lives* is part of a project to document in the form of poems all the (interesting) people he has met in his life. Ko has produced approximately 140 volumes of poetry, fiction and essays in his lengthy career, and has received numerous awards both in Korea and abroad for his work. Ko is a former Buddhist monk whose poetry took on a nihilist bent in the 1960s. In the 1970s, he became a major figure in the democracy movement, and he was three times imprisoned for his outspoken views on free speech and human rights. He has written in many styles, and his "zen poetry" is filled with both insight and refreshing naïveté.

3. ***The Book of Korean Shijo***. Translated and edited by Kevin O'Rourke (1939-). Harvard University Press, 2002, 219 pages. O'Rourke is an Irishman who came to Korea in 1964 as a young priest. He later received a doctorate in Korean literature from Yonsei University, and is a Professor Emeritus of Korean language and literature at Kyung Hee University in Seoul. In this volume he has collected classical Korean poems of the *sijo* form. Although not as compact as Japanese haiku, *sijo* are short poems following set patterns. A real treasure.

4. ***The Coldest Winter - America and the Korean War*** by David Halberstam (1934-2007). Hyperion, 2007, 719 pages. The Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist's last, and perhaps best, book is a detailed description of the Korean War. The author sympathizes with the soldiers in the field while criticizing many of the commanders for taking wrong, and sometimes cowardly, decisions. The many pages disappear quickly, and the reader ends up with a feeling of having been part of the war.

5. ***Korea at the Crossroads - The History and Future of East Asia*** by Bae Kichan (1962-). Translated by Kim Jin. Happyreading, 2007, 488 pages. A refreshing and new analysis of Korean and East Asian history. The author believes that clashes between maritime and continental powers have been key in shaping the region over a period of centuries. The book gives a good overview of how Korean society has been formed, and is useful as reference material. Simply fascinating.

**Bonus anthologies: *Modern Korean Fiction* Edited by Bruce Fulton & Youngmin Kwon.** Columbia University Press, 2005, 416 pages. A good selection of stories by 22 representative Korean writers, including some North Korean authors. ***Azalea - Journal of Korean Literature & Culture***, Korea Institute, Harvard University. An annually published anthology of fiction and poetry that began in 2007.



## They said it

“In spite of half a century of American influence, South Korea has adopted only those things it found useful – perhaps the middle-class American dream – and made them Korean, but it doesn’t want to be anything other than Korean. That’s just as well. There are few enough places that remain enigmatic to westerners.”

– Jennifer Barclay from her 2008 book *Meeting Mr. Kim or How I Went to Korea and Learned to Love Kimchi*.

**Deoksugung.** Located in downtown Seoul near City Hall, Deoksugung was the last of the palaces to serve as a royal residence. Emperor Gojong lived at Deoksugung from 1897 to 1919, although he abdicated the throne in 1907. The compound is a mix of old, new, traditional Korean and Western structures. Deoksugung is in the heart of the action, and passers-by and office workers often relax on the grounds during their lunch break. There is a spectacular 30-minute changing of the guard ceremony held three times daily, and the palace grounds are home to Deoksugung Art Museum.

**Gyeonghuigung.** Gyeonghuigung was sometimes known as “West Palace” as it was in the city’s western area during Joseon times. A number of historical dramas have been filmed at Gyeonghuigung, the filmmakers taking advantage of the palace’s traditional sloping tiled roofs, which harmonize with the surrounding mountains. Gyeonghuigung features twice-weekly taekwondo performances and there are several attractions in the immediate vicinity, including the Seoul Museum of History and the Seoul Museum of Art.

## Did you know. . .

that at Seoul post offices, in addition to mailing a letter, you can access the Internet for free, and even check your blood pressure?

## TAKE 5 FIVE UNIQUE SEOUL MEETING VENUES

There are many special places in Seoul available for meetings and receptions, as well as recreation and sightseeing. Seoul offers venues exhibiting great natural and architectural beauty, not to mention ones rich in culture and history. There are also trendy spots with a lively big city vibe. The Seoul Convention Bureau ([www.miceseoul.com](http://www.miceseoul.com)) has all the details.

1. **Fradia.** Elegant Fradia comes alive at night for fine Italian dining, concerts, meetings and receptions. The waterfront location on the Han's south side provides exceptional city and river views. [www.fradia.co.kr](http://www.fradia.co.kr).

2. **Aston House and the Jade Garden.** On the slopes of Ahasan Mountain in northeast Seoul, these venues provide mountain and river views. Located in the same complex as the super deluxe W Seoul Walkerhill Hotel and the Sheraton Grande Walkerhill, the exclusive Aston House is a sanctuary just outside the hustle and bustle of the central city. The Jade Garden, a separate facility, is a larger outdoor space nearby. [www.sheratonwalkerhill.co.kr](http://www.sheratonwalkerhill.co.kr).

3. **Samcheonggak.** Located in the forested hills of northern Seoul, Samcheonggak is an enchanting spot. It was founded in 1972 as a venue for meetings between high-ranking government officials and is now a traditional culture and arts complex with a performance stage, Korean restaurant, wine bar and cultural experience hall. The traditionally designed building is popular for banquets, seminars and workshops, and the rustic setting is exquisite. [www.samcheonggak.or.kr/](http://www.samcheonggak.or.kr/).

4. **Yeong Bin Gwan.** Once known as the State Guest House, Yeong Bin Gwan was built in 1967 by the Korean government to welcome foreign visitors. It is now part of the Shilla Hotel, and is a spectacular setting for banquets and garden parties. The traditional two-story building reproduces the splendor of the Silla Kingdom, and is an elegant space with lovely views. [www.shilla.net/en/seoul](http://www.shilla.net/en/seoul).

5. **Korea House.** Centrally located Korea House, operated by the Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation, is a wonderful place for groups to sample royal cuisine and enjoy cultural offerings, including traditional Korean performances and ceremonies. [www.kangkoku.or.kr/eng](http://www.kangkoku.or.kr/eng).

**Changgyeonggung and Jongmyo Royal Shrine.** Changgyeonggung was constructed in 1483, and like all of Seoul's palaces, heavily damaged during 1590s invasions. It also suffered destruction from fires in 1624 and 1830. Changgyeonggung is linked by a footbridge to the Jongmyo Royal Shrine, and on its other side is connected to Changdeokgung Palace. Jongmyo Royal Shrine, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was built in 1394 when the Joseon capital was established in Seoul. The shrine houses spirit tablets pertaining to Joseon royalty and other meritorious subjects. Ritual ceremonies, whose origins date to the fifteenth century, still take place in the shrine.

**Changdeokgung Palace and its Secret Garden.** Changdeokgung was built in 1405 and served as principal palace for approximately 300 years, a longer period than any of the other palaces. King Sejong, Korea's most famous ruler, spoke of it as an "ideal place." Behind Changdeokgung is another UNESCO World Heritage Site: Huwon, also known as the Secret Garden. The *ongnyucheon*, or stream, as well as the waterfall, pond, plants, trees, and palace pavilions form a harmonious, peaceful and elegant tableau. Joseon royalty would convene in this idyllic setting to study, write poetry and drink wine.

## **A COMPLETE CONVENTION CITY**

Seoul is ranked in the top ten convention cities worldwide by both the International Congress and Convention Association and the Union of International Associations. The city hosts hundreds of international meetings every year, and more than 60 facilities are registered for hosting conventions (including 14 with a capacity of 1,000 people or more).

Seoul has 34 large-scale convention hotels, all of them in the super deluxe and deluxe category, as well as numerous government approved high-quality mid and budget-priced accommodations, designated as "Innostels." Seoul also features elegant traditional Korean guest houses, serviced residences (ideal for extended visits), and novel experiences including "temple stays" that are perfect for independent, leisure travelers.

In 2008, Seoul hosted the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Congress of Philosophy and the 18<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Safety and Health at Work, while 2009 brought the 35,000 delegate Herbalife Asia Pacific Extravaganza to the city. Major events in 2010 and beyond include SIGGRAPH Asia 2010 (20,000 participants), the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Congress of Dermatology (15,000 participants) and the 2016 Rotary International Annual Convention (50,000 participants).

Seoul continues to grow as a convention destination, and there are several new facilities scheduled to open in the next several years including Dongdaemun Design Plaza, the Seoul International

## TAKE 5 FIVE SEOUL CONVENIENCES

1. **Waiter Call Buttons.** In most restaurants and bars, you don't have to wait for your server if you require another drink, more napkins or extra sauce. There are little buttons on the table that you can push notifying your waiter or waitress that you are in need.
2. **Professional Designated Drivers.** This service is invaluable if you've had too much to drink and need to get yourself, and your car, home safely. In Korea, you can call a service that will come and drive you and your vehicle home for about \$20.
3. **24-Hour Food Delivery.** You can get a bite to eat any time of day or night in Seoul, and you don't even need to step outside. A surprising range of restaurants deliver, including fast food chains like McDonald's.
4. **Convenience Stores.** These are located most everywhere and many are open 24-hours. They have everything from food, beer, stationery products, dog food and cigarettes to socks and aspirin. Most have areas inside or out where you can sit, eat, and drink.
5. **DMB, 3G, WiBro, and full bars (cell phone signal bars).** You can always connect to the phone and Internet in Seoul, no matter what your location, including underground in the subway, or on top of a mountain.

Financial Center and the Seoul International Exchange Center.

Choice can be overwhelming, but there are people in Seoul to help. The Seoul Convention and Visitors Bureau ([www.miceseoul.com](http://www.miceseoul.com)) serves as a one-stop resource for planning meetings and events in Seoul.

### TOP CONVENTION CENTERS:

- **COEX World Trade Center.** A world-class exhibition destination, COEX spreads out over 225,000 square meters (2.4 million square

## TAKE **5** FIVE THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR MOBILE PHONE IN SEOUL

1. **Watch television.** Since 2005, Korean cell phones have been able to receive digital television signals. Mass transit commuters often take advantage of this feature to catch up on the latest television dramas or sports highlights.
2. **Pay transit fares and buy snacks.** A chip in the phone can be charged with “T-money” that can be used to get on the subway or to make purchases at kiosks, convenience stores and vending machines. Parents can put T-money on a child’s phone instead of handing over cash. Some taxis also take payment by mobile phone.
3. **Send someone a gift.** A person can purchase a gift from a merchant and it will show up on the recipient’s phone as an icon—such as a pizza or tube of lipstick—which can then be redeemed.
4. **Turn on the heat, air conditioning or lights.** Seoul’s newest luxury apartments like the Samsung Tower Palace allow residents to use their phone to remotely turn on the heat, AC or lights. No more coming home to a cold, dark apartment in winter (or a steamy one in summer). A phone can also be used to start a load of laundry, as well as monitor doors, windows and locks for security purposes.
5. **Banking.** An ATM or computer is not needed to check bank balances, transfer funds or send money; these tasks can all be accomplished from a mobile phone.

feet) on eight floors, and includes 36,000 square meters (387,500 square feet) of exhibition space. COEX features outstanding lodging, dining and shopping facilities, and is located in Samseong-dong in the heart of bustling Gangnam-gu. The World Trade Center Seoul and ASEM Tower are nearby. [www.coex.co.kr/eng](http://www.coex.co.kr/eng).

- **SETEC.** The Seoul Trade, Exhibition and Convention Center opened in 1999 and is operated by the Seoul Business Agency. It has three exhibition halls with 11,000 square meters (118,403 square feet) of floor space on a site of almost 32,000 square meters (344,445 square feet). [www.setec.or.kr/eng](http://www.setec.or.kr/eng).
- **aT Center.** The Agro Trade & Exhibition Center opened in 2002 and offers a full range of meeting, exhibition and convention facilities. It often hosts international fairs and exhibitions in the area of agriculture and food products and services. The aT Center is located in Yangjae-dong, in the thriving and upscale Seocho-gu south of the Han River. [www.atcenter.co.kr/at\\_ahe](http://www.atcenter.co.kr/at_ahe).
- **Seoul Women's Plaza.** Opened in 2004 and specializing in events and programs geared toward women, Seoul Women's Plaza operates under the auspices of the Seoul Foundation of Women & Family. [www.seoulwomen.or.kr/nhpeng](http://www.seoulwomen.or.kr/nhpeng).

## MEDICAL TOURISM

Seoul is home to 56 major hospitals, as well as over 500 cosmetic surgery clinics and 11 comprehensive international clinics. South Korea has an impressive medical system, and boasts one of the world's leading treatment rates for stomach, liver and cervical cancer.

Increasing numbers of foreigners are coming to Korea for medical

## Did you know. . .

that there are 95 embassies in Seoul? The capital is also home to numerous consulates, trade offices and agencies representing foreign countries and regions.

and health purposes – over 27,000 in 2008 and approximately 50,000 in 2009. The number of such visitors should hit 200,000 in 2013, and Korea’s Health Industry Development Institute is devoted to promoting Korea as a premier destination for medical procedures. In 2010 Seoul played host to the Global Healthcare & Medical Tourism Conference, which brought attendees from over 25 countries to the city. People come to Korea for everything from dental care to cancer treatment to cosmetic surgery, and can obtain special medical tourist visas lasting from three months to a year.

Cosmetic surgery is common in Seoul, and the Apgujeong-dong area of Gangnam-gu is akin to Beverly Hills, with plentiful plastic surgery clinics, great shopping and lots of trendy places to eat and drink.

Seoul’s Medical Tourism Center ([www.seoulmedicaltour.com](http://www.seoulmedicaltour.com)) is a one-stop clearing house for information on a range of medical procedures available in the capital city. It provides information on Korean medical institutions that treat foreigners, as well as details on visas and tours. The office is located in downtown Seoul and can be reached at 82-2-2268-1339 (don’t use the 82 or 2 if dialing from Seoul). Visitors can use body composition and skin analyzers, as well as stress and blood pressure monitors free of charge. Medical tourism information is also offered at Incheon Airport, which has a Medical Tourism Information Center and lounge specifically for medical tourists. Information on

## **Did you know . . .**

that South Koreans, and Seoulites, are among the planet’s most wired people? Korea has 37.5 million Internet users (tenth in the world), 45.6 million mobile phones and 21.3 million land lines. Mobile phone use is 93 percent, and each Korean household has, on average, 2.73 cell phones. The Internet penetration rate is the highest of any OECD nation, and Korea is number two in the world in broadband access (after the Netherlands).

medical tourism can also be found online through [www.visitkorea.or.kr](http://www.visitkorea.or.kr) (from the “Sights, Activities & Events” tab, click on “Themed Travel” and “Medical Tourism”). This site links to a searchable database of medical institutions and procedures, and is reachable by phone at 82-2-1330 (don’t use the 82 or 2 if dialing from Seoul). Another source of information is Medical Korea ([www.medicalkorea.or.kr](http://www.medicalkorea.or.kr)).

## TAKE 5 FIVE THINGS NAMED AFTER KING SEJONG (1397-1450), KOREA’S MOST FAMOUS RULER

King Sejong’s rule was marked by an explosion of achievements in the arts and sciences. It was during his reign that Hangeul, the Korean phonetic alphabet, was developed.

1. **Sejong Cultural Center.** Opened in 1978, the Sejong Center is located on Sejongno Boulevard. This was at one time the Joseon Kingdom’s main thoroughfare, and was known as the “Street of Six Ministries.” The Sejong Center represents the heart of Korean culture and includes the 3,000 seat Grand Theater.
2. **Sejong Hotel.** A deluxe 273-room hotel that opened in 1966 in the Myeong-dong area.
3. **Sejong University.** Founded in 1940, Sejong University was formerly Soodo Women’s College of Education. It first admitted male students in 1978, and has been known as Sejong University since 1987. It is located near the Children’s Grand Park subway station.
4. **Sejong Institute.** Founded in 1983, the Sejong Institute is a private think tank performing research and analyses in the areas of foreign affairs, security and national unification.
5. **Sejong City.** A proposed administrative center south of Seoul near the city of Daejeon. It was planned as the future home for much of the South Korean national government, but court rulings and political resistance have left its future up in the air and it remains a work in progress.



# The DMZ

The DMZ (Demilitarized Zone) is an enduring reminder of the Cold War and the ongoing tensions between North and South Korea. The DMZ is a 4 kilometer (2.5 mile) wide band that stretches the length of the Korean Peninsula, and divides a people who share a common language, history and ethnicity into two very separate Koreas. Technically, the two countries are still at war, and the DMZ is part of the 1953 armistice agreement.

Visitors to the DMZ include history and military buffs, as well as those keen to get close to North Korea (truly a Hermit Kingdom). Another group that has found the area fertile ground, literally, are naturalists and wildlife biologists. There is no development within the DMZ, and this has made it a de facto sanctuary for flora and fauna whose habitats have elsewhere been damaged or destroyed.

The DMZ lies a mere 55 kilometers (28 miles) from Seoul, but the area is heavily guarded and you can't just pop in unannounced. If you wish to visit, you must travel as a member of a tour. Itineraries vary, but typically include the Bridge of Freedom, Dora Observatory (from which North Korea is quite visible) and Panmunjeom, the Joint Security Area (JSA) where negotiations took place to end the fighting in the Korean War. During the warmer months, an unexpected delight is the journey down into the deliciously cool Third Tunnel of Aggression.

The tunnel was discovered in 1978 and is one of several dug by the North Koreans, presumably to infiltrate and attack the South Korean side. The weight of history bears down upon the DMZ installations, as is the knowledge that the forbidden, the unknown, the menacing—North Korea—lies a stone's throw away.

Tens of thousands have visited the DMZ, but Lotte World it's not — a passport is required, and there is a dress code (business casual is fine). The tours, which need to be reserved in advance, are conducted by U.S. Army and Republic of Korea soldiers. A number of companies offer tours; excursions generally leave from Seoul in the morning and return in the mid or late afternoon.

## They said it

“1. A military demarcation line shall be fixed and both sides shall withdraw two (2) kilometers from this line so as to establish a demilitarized zone between the opposing forces. A demilitarized zone shall be established as a buffer zone to prevent the occurrence of incidents which might lead to a resumption of hostilities.

7. No person, military or civilian, shall be permitted to cross the military demarcation line unless specifically authorized to do so by the Military Armistice Commission.”

– Article 1, points number 1 and 7 from the  
July 27, 1953 Korean War Armistice Agreement.

## GETTING AROUND

First the good news: Seoul is very safe, and almost all destinations are easily accessed by taxi, subway, or bus. Cabs are reasonable and the subway is wonderfully efficient and user-friendly.

On the downside, unless you are going to a landmark like a big hotel, the 63 City building, or Gyeongbokgung Palace, finding your way can sometimes be challenging. Many streets are not marked, and building numbers are rarely in sequential order. Taxi drivers know the major spots, and it helps if you write your destination on a piece of

## Did you know. . .

that Seoul-based *Chosun Ilbo* is Korea's largest newspaper with a daily circulation of about 2.3 million copies? Two other Seoul dailies, *The JoongAng Ilbo* and the *Dong-A Ilbo*, are close behind in readers. *The Wall Street Journal*, by comparison, has a circulation of about two million copies. English-language newspapers published in Seoul include *The Korea Herald*, *The Korea Times* and *The Seoul Times*. The previously mentioned Korean-language dailies also publish English-language editions.

paper, if possible in English and Hangeul (the Korean script).

If traveling on your own, the key is to get directions based on landmarks. For example, to proceed from a subway station: “Take exit 3,

## **TAKE 5** DAVID A. MASON'S TOP FIVE SEOUL CITY MOUNTAINS

David A. Mason is a Professor of Korean Tourism at Seoul's Kyung Hee University, and a researcher on the religious character of Korea's mountains. A U.S. citizen, he has lived in Korea for 25 years, and has authored six books on Korean culture and tourism, including *Spirit of the Mountains* and *Passage to Korea*. His popular website on sacred Korean mountains and their spirits can be found at [www.san-shin.org](http://www.san-shin.org). The suffix “san” means “mountain” in Korean.

### **1. Inwang-san of Jongno-gu and Sodeaemun-gu**

The sacred “White Tiger” crags looming west of Gyeongbokgung Palace are named the Benevolent King Mountain, and have been the key feature of Seoul's spiritual geography ever since human beings have lived here. It's a great little mountain to hike over in just a couple of hours, offering some of the best views of the downtown skyscrapers beyond the palaces. It is also host to a wonderful complex of Buddhist temples and shamanic shrines that contain profound religious artworks worthy of viewing on repeated visits.

### **2. Samgak-san in Gangbuk-gu**

The “Three Horns,” Insu-bong, Baekun-dae and Manggyeong-dae, are mighty and impressive peaks that have always served as the capital's spiritual guardians. Currently part of the Bukhan-san National Park, they are Korea's most popular destination for mountain-hikers and rock-climbers, and host to more than a dozen fantastic Buddhist temples and national-shamanic shrines.

turn right as you leave, go two blocks until you see a Safeway, then look for the green sign.” If you get lost, try asking someone for help using the name of your destination rather than its street address.

### 3. **Dobong-san in Dobong-gu**

Relatively remote but always worth a visit, this is an amazing set of cliffs and peaks extremely popular with hikers, photographers and picnickers. It is home to several dozen varied religious institutions and sacred sites, as well as some really wonderful artworks including a gigantic statue of Dangun, Korea’s Founding-King.

### 4. **Surak-san and Bulam-san in Nowon-gu**

These two mountains are really one huge hikeable-ridgeline with sharp craggy peaks that can be seen from all over northeastern Seoul. They have recently become easily accessed from several different metro-train lines, and are deservedly rising in popularity due to their awesome and challenging beauty. They feature dozens of fascinating Buddhist temples both within Seoul’s borders and just outside of them.

### 5. **Gwanak-san in Gwanak-gu**

These dry rocky crags form the center of Seoul’s southern border, and are incredibly popular with weekend-hiker crowds. Mt. Gwanak features the cliff-top Yeonju-am Buddhist shrine, one of the most photogenic sites anywhere, and many other vibrant temples well worth a visit.

# TAKE 5 FIVE LEADING SEOUL UNIVERSITIES

Seoul is a leader in Asia and world-wide for post-secondary education, and many people from other regions of South Korea move to the capital to study. There are dozens of universities, colleges and technical schools in Seoul, and lately, an increasing number of international students. While it is difficult to objectively measure the “best” universities, the following institutions typically rank among the leaders.

1. **Seoul National University.** According to the *Times Higher Education Supplement* 2009 survey, SNU ranks number 47 worldwide. Entrance to SNU is notoriously competitive, and the school’s graduates populate the upper echelons of South Korea’s top corporations and government institutions. The university, which was founded in 1946, temporarily relocated to Busan during the Korean War. In addition to its role as training ground for the nation’s elite, SNU has a strong international orientation and is a high profile research institution.

2. **Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST).** KAIST was founded in Seoul in 1971 as the country’s first graduate institution devoted to science and engineering education and research. KAIST is no longer located in the capital, having moved to the city of Daejeon in 1989. A highly competitive institution, it played a key role in the rise of the Korean auto, chemical and semi-conductor industries in the 1980s.

3. **Yonsei University.** The oldest private university in Korea, Yonsei was established by Christian missionaries in 1885. An important research institution, Yonsei has nearly 30,000 students, 3,500 faculty and 19 graduate schools.

4. **Korea University.** Founded in 1905, KU has 35,000 students and a picturesque campus. It is particularly strong in the humanities and Asian studies, and is known for its role in preserving and fostering Korean culture.

5. **Ewha Womans University.** Founded by a Methodist missionary in 1886, Ewha was a pioneer in women’s education in Korea and today enrolls 20,000 graduate and undergraduate students. The name “Ewha” was bestowed by Emperor Gojong in 1887, and means “pear blossoms.” In 1946, following Korea’s liberation, Ewha became the nation’s first accredited four-year university.

## The Splendid Subway

Seoul's subway debuted in 1974 and is fast, safe, clean and inexpensive. With over 400 stations, it will get you virtually anywhere in the city you want to go. Many subway stations have restrooms and lockers, and the larger stations are usually connected to underground shopping areas. Some stations incorporate whimsical design elements including fish tanks, murals and sculptures, making them worth the trip itself. Best of all, the system is easy to use and all of the signs and announcements are in both Korean and English.

Virgin Vacations ranks the Seoul system sixth (between Tokyo and New York) in its "Top 11" underground transit systems worldwide. Virgin notes the Seoul subway's "beautiful architecture," as well as its spectacular expansion in recent years. The Seoul subway has nine lines and logs more than 8.1 million passenger trip daily; during peak operating hours, the average interval between trains is two and a half to three minutes. Seoul's subway ranks among the world's busiest, trailing Tokyo and Moscow, but ranking ahead of New York City, Mexico City and Paris in ridership.

The general adult fare is 1,000 won (less than one U.S. dollar) for the first 10 kilometers, and an additional 100 won each additional 5 kilometers. Senior citizens and the disabled ride free. Seoul's subway connects to surrounding cities like Incheon (including the airport) and Suwon, and also links to inter-city rail and bus stations. The Seoul CityPass and SeoulCityPass+ are rechargeable transportation cards

## Did you know. . .

that on May 22, 2007, line 2 of Seoul's subway system carried its 30 billionth passenger? The system records about two billion passenger trips yearly. Prior to the introduction of the reusable single journey subway ticket in 2009, the Seoul subway network issued more than 450 million paper tickets annually.

which can be used on the subway, buses and the Seoul City Tour Bus. The “plus” card can also be used to purchase goods in T-money member stores, as well as for discounts at various attractions.

One tip: Pay attention to which exit you need to take when leaving the station to get to your destination. Subway maps are available at many places in Seoul, as well as in person and online through the Seoul City and Korea tourism organizations, and from the Seoul Metropolitan Rapid Transit Corporation ([www.smrt.co.kr/Eng/index.jsp](http://www.smrt.co.kr/Eng/index.jsp)).

Riding the Seoul subway is a bargain. The following 2010 survey of systems worldwide is for a one-way adult cash fare using the fewest possible zones (where applicable).

<b>City</b>	<b>Local currency</b>	<b>U.S. dollars</b>
Beijing	2.0 yuan	\$0.29
<b>Seoul</b>	<b>1,000 won</b>	<b>\$0.87</b>
Moscow	26 rubles	\$0.87
Rio de Janeiro	2.8 reals	\$1.55
Tokyo	160 yen (up to 6 km)	\$1.75
New York	\$2.25	\$2.25
Stockholm	20 kroner (basic, one zone)	\$2.77
Berlin	2.1 euroS (one zone)	\$2.84
Toronto	\$3.00 CDN	\$2.89
London	4 pounds	\$6.08

*Sources: Beijing Subway Corp. Seoul Metropolitan Rapid Transit Corp., Moscow Metro, Tokyo Metro Co., Ltd., Metropolitan Transportation Authority-New York City Transit (MTA-NYC Transit), Toronto Transit Commission, Transport for London, Metro Rio, Stockholm Metro, BVG.*

## **Buses**

There are approximately 10,000 buses in Seoul, and over 4.5 million trips taken daily. While the bus system may seem confusing, there are some general rules and most buses are color-coded:

- Blue buses are wide ranging and run between the most popular locations in Seoul (1,000 won).

- Green buses run between major subway and bus transfer points (1,000 won).
- Red buses connect Seoul with its satellite cities (1,600 won).
- Yellow buses connect subway stations and major bus transfer points, and also hit many major attractions in the central city (800 won).
- Green buses with only two-digits are neighborhood buses (700 won).

The official Seoul city government site, [www.seoul.go.kr](http://www.seoul.go.kr), has a very useful “bus map” in English which lets people map out which buses they need to take to get from point A to point B. Finally, if you are using a T-money card, which entitles you to a small discount, place it on the panel as you enter *and* leave the bus.

### **Taxis**

- Normal taxis cost 2,400 won for the first 2 kilometers (1.2 miles). A 20 percent surcharge is added for travel between midnight and 4 a.m.
- Deluxe taxis (black) are 4,500 won for the first 3 kilometers (1.8 miles), and there is no midnight surcharge.
- Jumbo taxis (black) are available by call and are comparable to deluxe taxis in price, but with an extra 1,000 won dispatch fee.
- International taxis (orange) cost 20 percent more than normal taxis, and cater to foreigners. There are currently 120 international taxis in Seoul, but that number is expected to double. They can be reserved and chartered at [www.internationaltaxi.co.kr](http://www.internationaltaxi.co.kr).

### **Seoul City Tour Bus**

One ticket allows the rider to get on and off the bus at multiple locations, and there are downtown tours, palace tours and night-time tours. Departure points include Gwanghwamun subway (near Gyeongbokgung Palace), Seoul Station and Yongsan Station. There are single and double-decker buses, and group discounts are available. Visit [www.visitseoul.net](http://www.visitseoul.net) for more information, or call 02-777-6090 (the “02” is not needed in Seoul).



## **Incheon International Airport**

Incheon International Airport, which opened in 2001, was named “World’s Best Airport” in 2009 by Skytrax, which bases its rankings on customer surveys drawn from 190 airports worldwide. Incheon International features numerous high tech amenities, great food and shopping, and an out-of-this world observation deck. It is also home to the Korean Culture Museum (operated in cooperation with the National Museum of Korea) as well as other cultural galleries and exhibitions. The airport is well connected to Seoul, and there are plenty of easily accessed buses, shuttles, taxis, and limos, as well as a rail link. Visit [www.airport.kr/eng/](http://www.airport.kr/eng/) for more information. Seoul’s second airport, Gimpo, is used primarily for domestic flights.

# **Key Weblinks and Numbers**

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(For a further list of sites devoted to arts, entertainment and culture in Seoul, including newspapers and magazine sites, see the end of the “Arts and Entertainment” chapter).

## **Seoul City Tourism**

[www.visitseoul.net](http://www.visitseoul.net)

Part of the Seoul Metropolitan Government, the site has plentiful information on accommodations, food, tours, day-trips, shopping and transportation. There is also material on events, activities, museums and sights along the themes of traditional, modern and outdoor Seoul, as well as links to many other sites. Call DASAN Seoul call center 120(9) from Seoul.

## **Seoul Convention Bureau**

[www.miceseoul.com](http://www.miceseoul.com)

The Seoul Convention Bureau is a division of the Seoul Tourism Organization and part of Seoul Metropolitan Government. The site features a venue finder, as well as promotions and information about Seoul for meeting planners and tourism professionals.

**Seoul Metropolitan Government**

[www.seoul.go.kr](http://www.seoul.go.kr)

Lots of material on Seoul for tourists, businesspeople and locals. Includes activities, events and news.

**Seoul Global Center**

[www.global.seoul.go.kr](http://www.global.seoul.go.kr)

Useful information on business and daily life for foreigners living in Seoul. Open regular business hours. Locally, from Seoul: 1688-0120.

**Korea Tourism Organization (KTO)**

[www.visitkorea.or.kr](http://www.visitkorea.or.kr)

Seoul naturally figures heavily in the KTO site, which is a must if you are traveling outside of the capital city.

**Republic of Korea Official Website**

[www.korea.net/](http://www.korea.net/)

A lively site with material on Korean culture, government, economy and other topics. Plenty of stats, current events and practical information.

**KBS World**

[www.world.kbs.co.kr/english/](http://www.world.kbs.co.kr/english/)

Korean Broadcasting System in English. Lots of Korean and foreign news as well as arts, entertainment and travel coverage.

**Korea Tourism Tourist Information Center:** Dial 1330. Very useful if you find yourself in a jam, or just plain puzzled. The service is open 24 hours daily and staffed by Korean, English, Japanese and Chinese speakers. From a cell phone, dial “02” before the number.

**Dasan Call Center**

A one-stop call center for information on daily life in Seoul. Service is available in English and some other languages. Dial 120 from Seoul.

**BBB (Before Babel Brigade Service).** Interpretation provided by volunteers from 17 countries. From Seoul: 1588-5644.