

Welcome to Korea



Korean Culture and Information Service
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism

KOREA.net
Gateway to Korea

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01. Deoksugung, one of the five Joseon royal palaces, gives a singular night view of Korea's capital, Seoul.
02. Psy rose to international fame with the YouTube sensation "Gangnam Style."



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The Four Seasons

One of the most beautiful characteristics of life on the Korean Peninsula is the pendulum swing of the four seasons, each with its own appeal. Throughout the country's long history, people have found ways to embrace nature in all its diversity and changing forms throughout the year. The year on the peninsula begins with the new buds of spring, steps into life with the vitality of summer, ripens with age during the fall and then rests and recovers under layers of white snow during the winter. These colorful changes are brought about by geography, as the peninsula is nearly surrounded by water, with seas on three sides, and with almost 60% of the land covered by rugged mountains. The peoples of the Korean Peninsula developed cultures and kingdoms that were very close to the earth and to Mother Nature. This chapter provides you with an overview of numerous aspects of Korean society, including nature, culture and the wisdom of the traditional ways of life.

Spring

People interpret the "road" to mean "a journey through life," or "a path connecting people." The numerous hiking and walking trails that can be found across the country provide opportunities to reflect on this symbolic meaning. In the spring, when the buds appear and the flowers begin to bloom, hikers experience the awakening of nature and the revitalization of life as they walk along the trails of Korea.

Trails on Jirisan (mountain), Misiryeong Trail on Seoraksan (mountain)



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01. Azaleas herald the arrival of spring on the slopes of Yeongchwisan (mountain) in Yeosu, Jeolla-do (provinces).
02. Hikers can enjoy the wind and the sea while trekking along the Jeju Olle Trail.





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Summer

Many outdoor festivals are held during the summer, a season of fun and hot weather. There is a wide range of festivals that take advantage of the natural environment. Some popular events include the Mud Festival in Boryeong, which boasts Asia's only shell powder beach, the Maritime Cultural Festival in Mokpo, which focuses on the preservation of maritime traditions, and the Sea Festival in Busan, a blend of music and youth at the beach.



03. At the Boryeong Mud Festival, participants have fun in the mud and beat the summer heat. 04. Young and old enjoy the International Fireworks Festival held in Pohang, Gyeongsang-do (provinces). 05. The Hahoe Village, Important Folk Material No. 122, boasts a long tradition and tranquil scenery. 06. Experience Korean Buddhism and discover your inner self during a temple stay.

Fall

Fall is a season when all things ripen. Under the sun's warm rays, the leaves turn yellow, red and orange. This season of harvest is the perfect time to visit traditional folk villages, communities which preserve the traditions of Korea's ancestors to this day. Korea's folk villages, rich with history and tradition, are especially picturesque at this time of year.

Folk Village in Seogeup on Jejudo (island), Yangdong Village in Gyeongju, Wanggok Village in Goseong, Oeam Folk Village in Asan, Museom Village in Yeongju, Han-gae Village in Seongju



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Winter

With its wide annual range of temperatures, the Korean Peninsula gets very cold in the winter. However, you can still experience the beauty of nature, even in the cold. Pristine snowflakes greet you on days of heavy snowfall. The snow-covered land presents breathtaking views, especially in the mountainous regions of the country. Koreans long ago demonstrated resourcefulness in surviving the winter months by utilizing scientific knowledge and wise planning to fight off the cold.

Ondol System of Under-floor Heating, Traditional Earthen Walls, Traditional Doors



Food

Korean cuisine was also influenced by the well-defined four seasons and by the regional characteristics of the peninsula. Local dishes are made from ingredients that reveal the geographical characteristics of each microclimate and region. The recipes reflect the wisdom of living healthily by eating seasonally.

Koreans have a high regard for those who prepare food. We believe that one's hands play an important role in food preparation and in putting one's heart and soul into the cuisine. Come experience the diverse tastes and stories of Korean cuisine, filled with history, meaning and delicious taste.

Seoul & Gyeonggi-do (province)

A light and clean taste, not too salty or spicy.

Home to ox bone or brisket soup (*seolleongtang*), spicy shredded beef soup (*yukgaejang*), Jangchung-dong pigs' feet in soy sauce and spices (*jokbal*), Cheongjin-dong blood pudding and beef tripe soup (*haejangguk*, or "soup to chase a hangover") and Suwon beef ribs (*galbi*)

Gangwon-do (province)

The eastern Yeongdong region is known for food made from pollack, squid, seaweed and wild greens, while the

western Yeongseo region is renowned for food made from corn and potatoes.

Home of buckwheat porridge (mae-milgukjuk), spicy floating goby stew (ggukjeogutang), cold acorn jelly soup with rice (mukbap), ground potato dumpling soup (gamjaongsimi), corn flour noodle soup (olchaengiguksu), Chuncheon buckwheat noodle soup (makguksu), chicken bits and vegetables in a spicy sauce (dakgalbi, or "chicken ribs"), and Chodang famous bean curd (dubu)

01. bibimbap 02. seolleongtang 03. kimchi 04. jokbal
05. Pyongyang naengmyeon (cold buckwheat noodles from Pyongyang) 06. daetongbap 07. jeotgal



Chungcheong-do (provinces)

This region's cuisine is known for its light and clean taste.

This region is famous for fish noodles made from freshwater fish, crab kimchi (hobakgegukji) and Byeongcheon famous blood sausage (sundae).

Jeolla-do (provinces)

This relatively flatter rice-growing region is known for its variety of ingredients, ranging from meat and vegetables to seafood.

It is famous for a wide variety of salted

08. Yukgaejang used to be eaten in the summer to replenish one's energy. Today, it is popular year round. 09. Bay salt naturally dried by wind and sunlight. 10. Tteokgalbi is made by mincing and pounding short rib meat while still on the bone and then marinating it in a sweet sauce before grilling it over charcoal. 11. The process of making jang, Korean cuisine's broad range of traditional fermented pastes. 12. Makgeolli is a very popular traditional alcoholic rice drink.

seafood, known collectively as jeotgal, made using the high-quality bay salt. The region is also known for a type of pickle, or jang-ajji, that's made from soybean paste instead of pepper paste, rice cooked matchstick slices of Korean white radish (mubap), stir-fried glass noodles with bean sprouts (kongnamuljapchae), Damyang famous rice and grain cooked in a container made from a bamboo stalk (daetongbap) and the region's beef rib meat that is minced on the bone and marinated (tteokgalbi).

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Gyeongsang-do (provinces)

The cuisine here is both salty and spicy, due to the hot weather.

This region is famous for giant crabs from Yeongdeok, garlic from Uiseong, ginseng from Punggi and seaweed, including laver and kelp, from Gijang.

It is also famous for the sweetened rice drink (sikhye) from Andong, marinated beef (bulgogi) from Eonyang, dried persimmons (gotgam) from Sangju, mixed vegetables, meat and rice (bibimbap) from Jinju and seaweed rice rolls from Chungmu.



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Jejudo (island)

This island province's staple is barley and other grains, with side dishes made from seafood.

Fish-based soups like pumpkin and hairtail fish soup, sliced boiled pork

(“chopping block” pork, dombe gogi), mini rice cake balls (omegitteok) and crab porridge (ging-ijuk) are some of the delicacies found on Korea's island province of Jejudo.

Fermented food, the basis of the dining table

Korean cuisine can be described as “slow food.” The basic fermented dishes, such as kimchi and the whole range of foods and condiments to which some degree of fermentation is applied (jeotgal), have excellent nutritional value. They are created over a long period of time for healthy, tasty food. Tasting these dishes is equivalent to experiencing the spirit, traditions and history of the nation.



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The Korean Heritage

Humans have been living on the Korean Peninsula for thousands of years and the resultant heritage is both tangible and intangible. These traditions are pathways to understanding the people of the past and keys to unlocking the future. Studying a society's heritage is like looking at its cultural and artistic DNA. Koreans have an intrinsic sense of the aesthetic, a sense of space that shows harmony and adaptation to nature.

Such aesthetics can best be understood through the Korean heritage items that are inscribed with UNESCO. Currently, there are 39 such items and locations. These include 11 on the World Heritage List, 17 traditions on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and 11 items on the Memory of the World Register. On top of these, Korea is home to several biosphere reserves.

Gangwon-do (province) : The Danoje Festival in Gangneung is a syncretism of Confucianism, Buddhism and shamanism

The fifth day of the fifth month according to the lunar calendar is a special day called Dano. It comes after the rice-planting season of early summer and people pray for a good harvest, a big catch at sea and peace in their household. The Danoje Festival in Gangneung is one of the most historic traditional festivals in Korea. During the festival, Confucian rituals, folk games and sha-

manistic exorcisms take place side by side. It is a unique, artistic festival that showcases folk religions as well as the traditions of cooperation and harmony that exist in the local community.

During the festival, one can visit the Daegwallyeong (mountain pass) deity shrine and the Guksaseonghwangdang (shrine). There is also the Gwanno Mask-dance Drama (once performed by government servants), folk games and a shaman ritual.



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01. The Gwanno Mask-dance Drama is a non-verbal play performed during the Gangneung Danoje Festival. 02. Sinju Bitgi, or the offering of alcohol to the gods, marks the beginning of the Danoje Festival in Gangneung.

Chungcheong-do (provinces) : The communal weaving of fine white ramie (mosi) in Hansan

People used to make clothes out of ramie for the hot summer. Ramie is a traditional summer fabric that demonstrates a unique sense of aesthetics. Ramie is as white and clear as white jade and so finely woven that there is a saying that one pil of ramie cloth, about 12 meters, can fit into a bowl of rice. The highest quality ramie is called semosi, the fine ramie made in the Hansan region.

During the Hansan Ramie Festival, women demonstrate ramie weaving at the traditional village of Seocheon.



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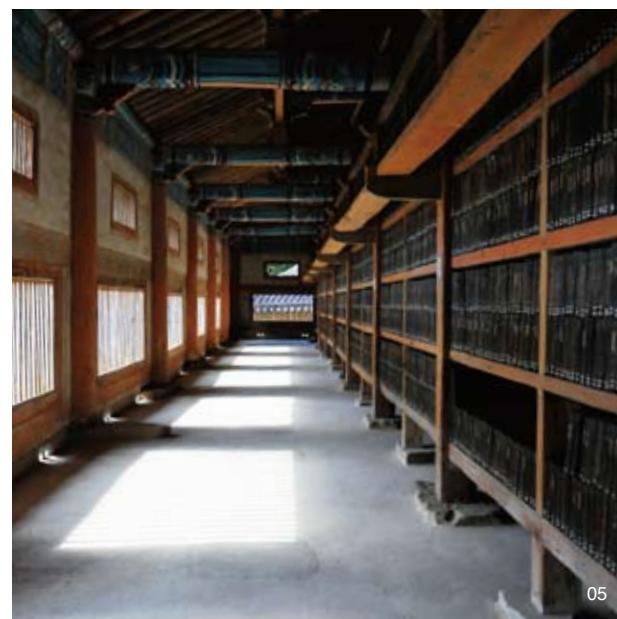
03. Clothes made of such fine, white ramie cloth are simple yet elegant. 04. Korea has such a high concentration of dolmen sites that it is known as the "Land of Dolmen."

Jeolla-do (provinces) : World famous dolmen sites

The Korean Peninsula is home to about 40% of the ancient, giant rock tombs known to exist in the world today.

Many of these megalithic constructions are concentrated in Jeolla-do (provinces), with the Gochang, Hwasun and

Ganghwa dolmen sites being inscribed as UNESCO world heritage sites. These giant stone sites have great research value, as they are well preserved and have diverse forms and designs. They are important items, inspiring our imagination and curiosity about our prehistoric world.



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Gyeongsang-do (provinces)

-The printing woodblocks of Tripitaka Koreana and miscellaneous Buddhist scriptures, scientifically crafted with a prayer for national security, and their storage halls, Janggyeong Panjeon

Beginning in 1237, it took 16 years to engrave the complete Buddhist scripture onto 81,258 wooden printing blocks. This is Tripitaka Koreana. There are over 52 million classical Chinese characters engraved on the blocks. It is so exquisitely crafted that it does not contain a single known misprint. Lined up in a row, these blocks would stretch over 60 kilometers. They have been preserved in almost perfect condition up

until the present, even though more than 775 years have passed since their initial creation. The perfect preservation of these blocks is not just due to multiple generations' conservation efforts, but also due to the way in which Janggyeong Panjeon was engineered to utilize conditions of the natural environment to preserve the wood blocks.

05. Janggyeong Panjeon, which stores Tripitaka Koreana in almost perfect condition, was engineered to utilize conditions of the natural environment. 06. The engraving of 81,258 wood blocks with Buddhist scriptures reflects a deep desire to protect the nation through the strength of Buddhism.

-Bulguksa (temple) and Seokguram (grotto), Silla's religious values and artistic spirit

Completed in 774 during the Unified Silla era (668-935), Bulguksa and Seokguram were the first Korean treasures listed by UNESCO as part of the world heritage. Bulguksa is a beautiful temple that shows the craftsmanship and skill of ancient masons. Seokguram, carved into a mountainside, was exquisitely constructed from 360 stone slabs, showing how Silla artisans excelled in architecture, mathematics, geometry and the arts.

07. The statue of the Sakyamuni Buddha in Seokguram is a legacy of Silla Buddhist art. 08. Bulguksa symbolizes the heavenly Buddha realm. 09. The sunrise peak in Seongsan 10. One can experience the nation's history, culture and natural beauty at designated places along the DMZ.



08

Jejudo (island) : The Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes

Jejudo (island) was formed 1.8 million years ago from volcanic activity. It is home to rare plants and animals and to unique geographical features. The Hallasan Mountain Natural Reserve, the Geomunoreum Lava Tube System and the sunrise peak in Seongsan have all been grouped together and listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site under the name Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes. The sites are recognized for their volcanic features and outstanding system of caves.



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The DMZ, an ecological treasure house, is seeking UNESCO designation as a biosphere reserve

As the Korean War drew to a close in July 1953, the nation was separated into north and south by the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The 4kilometer wide strip of land has been a no-man's land for more than 60 years, and is thus a natural preserve for a wide variety of plant and animal species. It has been recognized for its academic value as a place to conduct research on ecosystems, and reflects the wishes of both Koreas for peaceful reunification.



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Pyeonghwa Nuri Park, Pyeonghwa Nuri Road, World Peace Concert

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Figures & Infographics

Korea Facts & Figures

01. The Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP), the world's largest asymmetrical building, reflects the dynamic life of the Dongdaemun neighborhood. 02. The Busan International Film Festival, held in October each year, is Korea's first international film festival and the pinnacle of Asian film festivals.



Pop Culture, Mass Media & the Arts

Recently, the popularity of Korean pop culture and the arts has grown across the globe. Korean pop music, movies, dance troupes, TV dramas and sports teams have all earned key positions in the world of culture. The country has been able to emerge as a cultural powerhouse because of the success and creativity of its actors, directors and singers. Modern Korean popular culture absorbs influences from around the world, incorporates them into mainstream Korean culture and then produces fabulous creations, entertaining fans around the world.

Modern Korean pop culture and its spread across Asia and the world stems from the following four pillars of the culture industry.

Pop Music : Korean pop songs take over the world

Korean pop songs, generally branded as "K-pop" since the mid-2000s, have earned fans around the world. Korean teenage idols have dominated Asia's pop charts with their upbeat rhythms, catchy tunes and lyrics and stylish dance moves. Pop music exports have succeeded in enhancing the overall image of "Brand Korea," a feat never envisioned in other industries.

Movies : Korean movies garner attention for their deep imagery and meaning

Korean movies have been received enthusiastically all over the world and the industry is rapidly growing in both range and variety. Boasting unique stories, spectacular cinematography and creative scripts, Korean movies have positioned themselves at the forefront of the cultural content landscape.

01. One of Korea's most popular pop groups is Girls' Generation. 02. EXO is a rising Korean pop group.



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Many acclaimed directors such as Im Kwon-tae, Lee Chang-dong, Bong Jun-ho, Kim Ki-deok, and Park Chan-wook have succeeded in connecting with audiences worldwide. This shows the solid foundation that Korean movies have been laying around the world. The Busan International Film Festival and the Jeonju International Film Festival are great events for getting a richer experience of Korean movies.

Painted Fire by Im Kwon-tae, Poetry by Lee Chang-dong, Snowpiercer by Bong Jun-ho, Arirang by Kim Ki-deok , Old Boy by Park Chan-wook

TV Dramas : Winning the hearts of viewers at home and abroad

In the late 1990s, TV dramas made

by Korean studios were first exported to mainland China and then quickly spread around the globe. Viewers in many countries were moved by the lives and love stories of the stars on the small screen. Backed by the success of such TV dramas and miniseries, many actors and actresses, both young and old, have risen in popularity.

What is Love, Winter Sonata, Dae Jang Geum (Jewel in the Palace), The Heirs

03. The Busan International Film Festival is the top Asian film festival. 04. The SBS TV drama "My Love From the Star" is a fantasy romance between an alien and an actress. 05. Yuna Kim is a figure skater and the honorary ambassador for the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. 06. Jisung Park is a legendary football player. 07. Tourists shopping for pop culture products

Sports : Korea rises as a new sports powerhouse

Korea has hosted a range of international sporting events, from the Asian Games to the Olympics and the World Cup. Team Korea regularly picks up gold medals, whether it be in track & field or Little League baseball. This success has been driven by the nation's renowned sports development program producing numerous home-grown athletes. It is their hard work and effort that makes them role models and an inspiration to people everywhere and to fans around the world.



History

Descriptions of the history of the Korean Peninsula often boast of “a history of 5,000 years,” a common expression that means a very, very long time. Modern-day Koreans are the result of many kingdoms, tribes and nations that were born on the peninsula, flourished and disappeared between ancient times and today. Through numerous invasions, alliances and waves of migration, people have managed to maintain a continued existence on this land. Their perseverance and determination has fashioned the country’s history and culture.

Prehistoric-Gojoseon (unknown-108 BCE)

Artifacts dating back to 700,000 BCE have been discovered in and around the Korean Peninsula. The first ancient kingdom on the peninsula was Gojoseon, established in 2333 BCE. Dangun, the mythical first king of Gojoseon, is the son of Heaven (Hwanung), and the female bear Ungnyeo, who stayed in a cave for 100 days to become a woman and a devoted mother. In this myth, the concept of Hong-ik in-gan first appears—an exhortation to live and work for the benefit of all mankind. This later becomes the founding philosophy upon which society and the education system are based.

The Three Kingdoms of Korea (57 BCE-668 CE) and the North South States Period (698-926)

The Three Kingdoms of Korea refer to Goguryeo (37 BCE-668 CE), Baekje (18 BCE-660 CE), and Silla (57 BCE-935 CE). During this period, Buddhism became the dominant cultural and religious force across Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula. In the late 600s, Silla triumphed in battle over Goguryeo and this led to the beginning of the North South States Period. Central and regional administrations were established to govern the larger amount of land and the greater number of people.



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01. The petroglyphs of Cheonjeon-ri, Ulju, are National Treasure No. 147. They depict the lives of people from prehistoric times up to the Silla Kingdom. 02. The Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje is National Treasure No. 287. It is a masterpiece of art that reflects Baekje's ideology and beliefs.



03

Goryeo (918-1392)

Goryeo was established in 918 by Wang Geon and lasted for 474 years. The modern word "Korea" also comes from the word Goryeo. Merchants from the Song Dynasty in China (960-1279), the Abbasid Caliphate of ancient Arabia (750-1258) and ancient Southeast Asian kingdoms traded actively with Goryeo at the bustling port of Byeongnando on the western Yellow Sea. The Gukjagam was established in 992 and is one of the world's oldest universities.

Joseon (1392-1910)

For 518 years, Joseon was ruled over by 25 kings and 2 regents of the royal House of Yi, stretching in a patrilineal line from King Taejo (r. 1392-1398) through to Emperor Sunjong (r. 1907-1910). Covering both the Joseon Kingdom (1392-1897) and the Great Han Empire (1897-1910), Joseon times saw a flourishing of the arts, agriculture



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06. Incheon International Airport, which opened 2001, was ranked No. 1 in airport services for the past nine consecutive years.

and trade. During the reign of King Sejong the Great (r. 1418-1450), one of the world's first rain gauges was developed, and he also oversaw the creation of the scientific yet beautiful written script now used across the Korean world, Han-gul. The nation struggled with invasions from neighboring countries, striving to preserve the nation state.

Japanese Colonial Period (1910-1945) and Independence Movement

Despite being occupied by oppressive foreign colonial forces, Koreans continued to struggle for their freedom. The provisional government of the Republic of Korea was established in 1919, and there was a government-in-exile based in China.

Republic of Korea (1945-present)

Soon after liberation, Korea had to en-

dure the pain of division and a fratricidal war. However, since that time, the nation has made significant progress in terms of politics, economic development and social movements. By the late 1980s, it had achieved democracy and from the 1960s through to the 1990s saw astonishing economic development, known as "The Miracle on the Hangang (river)." Korea was admitted into the OECD in 1996 and successfully hosted the G20 Summit in 2010. Based on its development from an agricultural economy, through a manufacturing and industrial economy to an economy based on technology and innovation today, and from being an aid recipient in the 1950s to becoming an aid donor in the 2000s, Korea is now making great strides as it finds its place as a leading middle power.

Seoul, the Capital

For at least two millennia, Seoul has served as a capital for various Korean kingdoms. It first became a capital during the Baekje era (18 BCE-660 CE), and was then reinstated as the capital in 1394 during Joseon. It has been the capital and largest city ever since. Today, Seoul is the hub of Korean politics, finance, business, society, theater, sports and fine arts. Seoul is a city where the past and the present coexist, a starting point for modernity, a place of breathtaking views and a wellspring of youth and energy. It is full of stories, a place of adventure.

Jongno, nature in the city

The three sides of Jongno are surrounded by mountains. A stream flows through its center. It is also located near the Fortress Wall of Seoul, which was constructed along the ridges of Bugaksan, Naksan, Namsan and Inwangsan (mountains). In this district, the past and present, nature and civilization, all coexist. There are several programs available for visitors to enjoy the stream, the mountains and the bustling life of the city.

Collect a stamp at each station along the ancient city wall, tour the winding neighborhood alleys, visit the museums.

Seoul's history and development reflected in the cultural heritage

Seoul, the heart of the country, is home to Korea's major cultural sites, including many palaces. The five grand Joseon palaces-Gyeongbokgung, Changdeokgung, Changgyeonggung, Gyeong-ungung (now Deoksugung) and Gyeongheegung-connect the past and present. Visitors feel as if they have been transported back to the past as they step over the threshold into these majestic royal residences.

01. Gwanghwamun, the main entrance to Gyeongbokgung
02. Myeongdong, one of the most exciting areas of Seoul, is a must-see for tourists.



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As Seoul served as the starting point of the modern state of Korea, it is also home to a colorful modern culture. The city has not only striven to develop the modern aspects of its way of life, but has also reinterpreted the ancient culture from a modern perspective.

Old Seoul Station building, Tapgol Park

Urban roads and the diversity of space

Roads leave lingering memories during your travels. It is on roads that you can meet new people. In Seoul, you can see antiques as well as arts and crafts in Insa-dong, walk around the century-old houses in the Bukchon Hanok village and see the vibrant theater and musical scene in Daehangno.

The warrens of narrow alleyways can be



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just as fascinating. There is Pimatgol, an alley, which dates back to Joseon times, and the Oksu-dong alley, known for its meandering stairs. Every alley is infused with old stories of Seoul.

Jegi-dong Medicine Market, Sajikdan altar

Hongdae, relive your youth, enjoy the music

Hongdae is a place of artistic spirit and creative talent, the center for Seoul's indie art and music scene. Here, one can feel the individualism and creativity of artists, comic book illustrators and rock band hopefuls as well as explore the underground street scene. The wide range of attractions includes a flea market, ample street art, art galleries and all-night dance clubs.

Hongdae flea market, Trompe-l'oeil Trick Eye Museum, Rolling Hall, an indie concert venue



06



07

Figures & Infographics

Though there was pain and suffering from the tragic Korean War (1950-1953), people looked beyond the ruins and strove forward. In a relatively short period of time, they achieved astounding growth. This has only been possible through hard work, especially that of the factory workers, who shed blood and tears to rebuild the country and create a better society. The following statistics show the truly remarkable progress that has been made.

*Source : Korea in the World, Institute for International Trade, Korea International Trade Association



Korea Facts & Figures



Official Name of South Korea
The Republic of Korea (ROK)

Capital City
Seoul

Area
Korean Peninsula : 223,405km²
South Korea : 100,267km²

Population (2013)
51.14million

Political System
Democratic Republic, Presidential System

President
Park Geun-hye

Language
Korean(Writing System : Han-gul)

Economic Statistics (2013)
GDP : US\$ 1.304 trillion
Per capita GNI : US\$ 26,205
GDP Growth Rate : 3.0%

Currency Unit (2013)
Won (US\$1=1,095 won)