

TOUR CODE

KR1

ADVENTURESABROAD

SOUTH KOREA

Dynamic • Traditional

9 days

Updated 09/08/2010

Day 1 *Arrive in Seoul*

Arrive in Seoul / Incheon, South Korea and transfer to our hotel.

Seoul is a city of contrasts. In this rapidly evolving metropolis, the traditional exists with the modern in a state of harmony. For over 500 years the seat of Joseon Dynasty kings, Seoul is now the beating heart of modern Korea, the centre to which all else in the country is drawn.

Overnight in Seoul. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Seoul: City Tour*

Today you will have a city tour of Seoul, including the Blue House (Presidential Residence, photo stop outside), the National Folk Museum, and Gyeongbokgung Palace.

Of all the tourist attractions in Seoul, the Joseon Dynasty Palaces and, particularly Kyongbuk Palace, are the most tangible link between modern Korea and its not-too-distant monarchical past. Not merely inert relics, they are symbols of a deep history and rich culture. Although substantially reduced in number, the remaining palace buildings provide a glimpse of traditional architecture and the overall organization of a palace grounds.

General Yi Seong-gye (King T'aejo) ordered the construction of Gyeongbokgung-gung ("Palace of Shining Happiness") in 1394, two years after founding the Joseon Dynasty. In its original form, it is said to have had about 500 buildings. For the next 200 years, Gyeongbokgung-gung was the seat of government and the royal residence of Joseon Dynasty kings.

This afternoon we visit the Korean Folk Village where the old traditional style houses and life style of 18th-19th century are being practiced by people living in the village.

Overnight in Seoul. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Seoul - Mt Seorak*

We continue to Mt Seorak through the picturesque countryside to the vicinity of Seoraksan National Park, with its towering craggy peaks, waterfalls, forests, hiking trails, mysterious temples, and remote hermitages. Upon arrival in Mt Seorak you will have the afternoon to relax with outdoor and indoor hot spring pools and sauna.

Overnight Mt Seorak. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Mt Seorak Area*

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We depart for Mt Seorak National Park where we take a cable car to one of the peaks for panoramic views of Mountain Seorak. Seoraksan's aerial tramway runs 1100 metres (3,608 feet) from the valley floor to the ridge above. The 5-minute ride offers a bird's-eye view of the Outer Seorak area. About 100 metres below the upper cable car terminus is the tiny hermitage of Allak-am. This religious site sits precariously on the edge of a precipice. On the sides of its main hall, colourful paintings depict scenes from Buddha's life and other familiar topics.

We later proceed to Sinheungsa Temple. A short, easy stroll from the park plaza brings you to Sinheungsa ("Divine Undertaking Temple"), the principal temple of Seoraksan. At the junction of two major valleys below high peaks, this small compound has one of the most spectacular settings of any temple in Korea. It was established in 653 as Hyangseongsa Temple by the monk, Chajang.

This afternoon we proceed to Goseong Unification Observatory located on the borderline with North Korea.

Overnight in Mt Seorak. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Mt Seorak - Haeinsa*

Our tour continues to Haeinsa Temple, one of the most important Buddhist treasures in Korea. Haeinsa Temple features the famous Korean cultural treasure, Tripikata Koreana, built during the Goryeo Dynasty to protect the country from the invasion of Mongolian troops. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Tripitakana Koreana consists of over 80,000 pieces of inscribed wooden plates carved during the Goryeo Dynasty. It took more than 15 years to complete this incredible work.

Overnight in Haeinsa. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Haeinsa - Gyeongju*

Today we take a very scenic drive down to Gyeongju passing tiny fishing villages. Gyeongju is Korea's ancient cultural city, the capital of the once great Silla Kingdom. It is to Korea what Kyoto is to Japan. During its 1979 meeting in Thailand, UNESCO selected Gyeongju as one of the world's most important ancient cultural cities, both for its position in the historical and cultural development of East Asia and for its role in the formation of the Korean nation.

Around Gyeongju there are hundreds of royal tombs, temples, palace sites, fortress ruins, pagodas and rock sculptures. Finely crafted gold and silver ornaments, skillfully shaped clay figures and pottery, metal utensils and weapons and an astonishing number of other objects discovered here are now displayed in the Kyongju museum which we visit. We also observe scraps of Silla Literature and the legends that are preserved in ancient books and annals.

Overnight in Gyeongju. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Gyeongju: Area Tour*

We will spend a whole day sightseeing in Gyeongju with visits to Bulguksa Temple, Seokguram Grotto, Tumuli Park-Royal Tombs. While many important sites are scattered in the vicinity, Gyeongju, as the heart of the former Silla Kingdom, still has the largest concentration of remains. Mounded tombs, the most obvious remnant of the city's past, dominate your view as you approach this historic city. Many of the early tombs were constructed near the Banwolseong Palace site-- then undoubtedly the city centre but now at the edge of downtown. Later others were constructed outside the city, in the midst of flat farming fields and at the foot of the low hills that rim this valley.

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Over the centuries these mounds have, by and large, been left un-plundered. Some informal excavation was done in the early 1900's, but the first government-sponsored excavations were authorized by the Japanese during the occupation.

Overnight in Gyeongju. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 Gyeongju - Busan

Our journey continues to Korea's second largest city, Busan (formerly Pusan). The city's name derives from two place names: Suwon, which means "water source" -- the land depression that the city occupies was for centuries known for its clear-water wells. High above the city rises P'aldal-san, a tall hill at its height of beauty in the spring, with its slopes awash with the colour of pink cherry blossoms. In the late 1600's the military established a garrison here as one of the five principal fortifications set up to protect the approaches to Seoul. Intending to move the official capital from Seoul to Suwon, King Chongjo the 22nd Joseon Dynasty King, had the fortress wall constructed in 1794. Battlements and palace buildings were erected, but the king died before he could initiate the move. Although there were great plans for this city, they never had the opportunity to mature, as the decision was made to keep the capital at Seoul.

Our tour continues with a visit to Kukje Market and Jagalchi Fish Market.

Overnight in Busan. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 Busan - Seoul - Depart

Today we fly to Seoul and connect with our homeward flights.

NOTE: LAND ONLY PASSENEGER MUST ENSURE THAT THEIR FLIGHT FROM SEOUL / INCHEON ALLOWS FOR THE INCOMING FLIGHT FROM BUSAN. THOSE WITH EARLY FLIGHTS FROM INCHEON MAY HAVE TO SPEND AN EXTRA NIGHT AT THEIR EXPENSE.

BON VOYAGE!! Meal plan: Breakfast.