Tour Code
KR1

ADVENTURESABROAD

SOUTH KOREA

Dynamic & Traditional

8 days

Created on: 14 Nov, 2026

Day 1 Arrive in Seoul

Today we arrive in Seoul, located on the Han River, ringed by granite peaks that have shaped the city's growth for centuries and give even the modern skyline a backdrop of forested mountains.

The city has been rebuilt twice within living memory: first from the Korean War's near-total destruction in the 1950s, then again into one of the world's most connected capitals. Almost no trace of either transformation shows on arrival. Korea spent decades under Japanese colonial rule, here from 1910 to 1945. That period ended with the peninsula's division into North and South, the line we see for ourselves later this week.

Overnight in Seoul.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Seoul City Touring

We begin at Gyeongbokgung, the largest of Seoul's Five Grand Palaces and the first the Joseon dynasty built when it founded the city as its capital in 1395. Japanese forces burned it during the 1592 invasion, and it stood in ruins for over 250 years until a full reconstruction in the 1860s. We time our visit, where possible, for the changing of the royal guard at the main gate. Inside the grounds, the National Folk Museum sets the daily life of that era against the throne halls outside: farming tools, wedding customs, the rhythms of a Confucian court.

After a break for lunch we visit Jongmyo, the shrine built to hold the memorial tablets of Joseon's kings and queens. Its long, plain halls, deliberately unornamented to focus the mind on ritual, have stood since the 16th century. A royal rite is still performed here each May, the oldest continuously observed Confucian ceremony anywhere.

We finish at Namsan Seoul Tower, raised in 1969 as the country's first integrated broadcast tower. The observation deck gives the clearest view in the city: the mountains that ring Seoul and the Han River curling through it. We stay for dinner at the top as the skyline lights up. The palace we walked through this morning sits far below.

Overnight in Seoul.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Seoul & The DMZ

We travel north along the Han River to the Demilitarized Zone, the 4-kilometre/2.5-mile buffer that has divided the peninsula since the 1953 armistice ended fighting without formally ending the war. Barbed wire and guard posts line much of the route.

At Imjingak we walk to the Freedom Bridge, where 12,773 released prisoners of war crossed south in 1953 after the fighting stopped. A rusted steam engine, riddled with bullet holes from the war, stands nearby. The Mangbaedan altar lets displaced families perform memorial rites for relatives they cannot visit in the North.

We then descend into the 3rd Infiltration Tunnel, one of four found running under the DMZ since 1974 and dug, North Korea maintains, for coal mining. It reaches within 170 m/560 ft of the Military Demarcation Line, and the walk down is steep and low-ceilinged.

At the Dora Observatory we look across the DMZ itself: Kijong-dong, the North's unoccupied propaganda village, and its flagpole, one of the tallest in the world at 160 m/525 ft. From the platform, guides point out the DMZ's forest, undisturbed by development for seven decades and now one of the most intact temperate habitats on the peninsula.

In the afternoon we return to Seoul and visit the War Memorial of Korea. Its galleries and outdoor displays of tanks and aircraft set the day's sites into the fuller history of the 1950-53 war.

NOTE: today's route and stops may be altered or curtailed without notice, owing to the security situation.

Overnight in Seoul.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Seoul - Fly to Jeju Island

We fly this morning from Seoul to Jeju, Korea's largest island and the country's only volcanic one, built up in eruptions that continued into the last few thousand years. Hallasan, the shield volcano at its centre and South Korea's tallest peak at 1947 m/6,388 ft, is visible on a clear day from nearly anywhere on the island.

Jeju's culture grew from that geology and from its distance from the mainland. Farming was hard on volcanic soil, so for generations the sea supported families instead, largely through the haenyeo. These free-diving women harvest shellfish and seaweed without oxygen tanks, some diving into their seventies and eighties. Their diving income long gave Jeju women more economic independence than was typical elsewhere in Korea, shaping a more matriarchal society. UNESCO recognised the tradition in 2016 as it has grown rare.

The Jeju Folklore and Natural History Museum introduces both threads, the island's volcanic formation and the customs, from stone walls to shamanist ritual, that developed on top of it. At Jeju Stone Park we see basalt shaped by wind and water into the grandmother and grandfather figures, dol hareubang, that stand guard at village entrances across the island. The grounds also recreate a traditional Jeju village.

Overnight on Jeju.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Jeju Island Touring

At Seongsan Ilchulbong, Sunrise Peak, we climb the rim of a tuff cone that rose from the sea floor about 5000 years ago. It is one of the youngest features in this volcanic landscape, and part of the same UNESCO listing that covers the island's lava tubes. The crater, 600 m/1,970 ft across, has given the peak its name since dynasties looked to it for the first light of the day. The climb up wooden stairs takes about 20 minutes and rewards with views along the coast in both directions.

We continue to the Jeju Haenyeo Museum, dedicated to the free-diving women we learned about yesterday. Photographs, diving gear and the museum's recreated village houses show a working life passed from mother to daughter for centuries. It is now kept alive mostly by women in their sixties and older. Fewer than 3,000 haenyeo still dive today, down from over 20,000 in the 1960s, and most are now in their seventies.

In the afternoon we walk part of Manjanggul, one of the longest lava tubes in the world at over 7 km/4.3 mi. It formed as Hallasan's lava flowed to the sea some 200,000 years ago. Its open section reveals lava columns, ropy flowstone and a 7.6 m/25 ft lava column, the tallest of its kind known anywhere. Manjanggul was discovered in 1958 and only a fraction of its length is open to visitors, kept dim and cool year-round regardless of the season outside.

Overnight on Jeju.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Jeju Island - Fly to Busan: City Touring

We fly this morning from Jeju to Busan, Korea's second-largest city and its busiest port, spread around a natural harbour at the peninsula's southern tip. It has been Korea's gateway to the sea since the country opened to foreign trade in the 1870s.

Gamcheon Cultural Village began as an informal settlement, built up the hillside by refugees who fled here during the Korean War. Busan was

the only part of the country never occupied by North Korean forces, and its population tripled almost overnight. The houses, painted in blues, yellows and pinks since a 2009 arts programme, still house residents, and narrow stepped lanes wind between them to viewpoints over the harbour.

We break for lunch at Jagalchi Fish Market, Korea's largest, where the morning catch is sold straight off the boats and can be cooked to order at stalls upstairs. Stalls run three levels deep along the waterfront, and the market has operated here since the 1930s.

In the afternoon we visit the United Nations Memorial Cemetery, the only UN cemetery in the world. It holds more than 2,300 soldiers from the 1950-53 war, representing 11 countries that fought under the UN flag. Each grave faces east toward its home country, and the grounds include a memorial wall listing more than 40,000 further dead whose remains were repatriated.

Overnight in Busan.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Busan:Gyeongju Excursion

We drive south from Busan to Gyeongju, capital of the Silla kingdom for nearly a thousand years and now one of Korea's richest concentrations of ancient sites.

Bulguksa Temple was built in the 8th century and reconstructed after fire during the Japanese invasions of the 1590s. Its two stone pagodas anchor a design meant to represent a Buddhist paradise on earth. Inside, a wooden hall houses a bronze Buddha that has survived from the temple's founding.

Tumuli Park holds 23 of the more than 200 royal burial mounds scattered through the city, grass-covered domes under which Silla's kings, queens and nobles were buried. Gold crowns and other treasures from the tombs are now displayed in the Gyeongju National Museum. We walk among the mounds before visiting the museum itself, whose collection centres on the Silla gold and a 3 m/10 ft bronze bell cast in 771.

Cheomseongdae, a stone tower built around 647, is among the oldest surviving astronomical observatories in East Asia. Its 362 stones, laid in 27 courses, are said to mirror the days and months of the lunar year the tower was built to track.

We finish at Donggung Palace and Wolji Pond, a former royal retreat built beside an artificial lake in the 670s. Its reflecting pool and reconstructed pavilions, based on excavated foundations, are lit after dark.

NOTE: given the length of today's excursion, your Tour Leader may include lunch and leave dinner free.

Overnight in Busan.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Departure from Busan

Departure from Busan.

BON VOYAGE!!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast