

Travel to Seoul



Tips for visiting

Transportation/Navigation

From Incheon Airport, the AREX Express train & Seoul Airport Limousine are convenient ways to get to the city (~50min to Seoul Station). There is no need to pre-book and you can get more information at the info desk right outside of the arrival gate. Taxi would cost around USD 50-.

Navigating Seoul is convenient thanks to its excellent subway system and often faster buses, which benefit from dedicated lanes. You can buy a T-Money transportation card at any convenience store (GS25, CU, 7-Eleven) and recharge it there too. It works for the subway, bus and even taxis. You can also use Apple Pay or Samsung Pay for transit if you're tech-savvy and have local settings. Remember to tap your transportation card upon boarding **and** exiting. This system is generally advantageous, often resulting in no charge upon departure, and transfers to other subway lines/buses within an hour are free. For quicker travel, taxis are available, though hailing one directly can be challenging as most locals utilize the [kakao T](#) app. Uber is also an option but could be difficult to find drivers.

Google Maps doesn't work here so I suggest downloading Naver maps or kakao maps - maybe kakao maps if you're going to be using kakao T.

Accommodations

Here are a few hotel options across different neighborhoods that are well-located for exploring the city. These are all solid choices with good service and access to food, culture, and transportation. There are other different budget or boutique options

- [Grand Hyatt Seoul](#)
 - **Location:** North side of Seoul (Itaewon area)
 - **Why stay here:** Classic Seoul hotel with panoramic views of the city. It's been around forever and has everything—ice skating rink in winter, a great pool, multiple restaurants, and close access to nightlife in Itaewon. It's also near Namsan Park for morning walks.
 - **Vibe:** Resort-style, spacious, well-rounded
 - **Price:** \$\$
- [Mondrian Seoul Itaewon](#)
 - **Location:** Itaewon (near Grand Hyatt)
 - **Why stay here:** A newer, boutique-style hotel with a trendy design and vibrant nightlife scene nearby. Rooms are on the smaller side, but the hotel has a cool rooftop pool, nice bar, and good aesthetics.
 - **Vibe:** Stylish, modern, more nightlife-centric
 - **Price:** \$\$
- [Andaz Seoul Gangnam](#)
 - **Location:** Central Gangnam
 - **Why stay here:** High-end rooms with a clean, modern aesthetic. Great access to Apgujeong, Garosugil, and Gangnam Station—lots of shopping, cafes, and restaurants nearby. The hotel also has a beautiful spa and pool.
 - **Vibe:** Polished, stylish, upscale
 - **Price:** \$\$\$
- [Four Seasons Hotel Seoul](#)
 - **Location:** Gwanghwamun (north side, near palaces and historic sites)
 - **Why stay here:** Arguably the nicest hotel in Seoul. It's close to Gyeongbokgung Palace, Bukchon Hanok Village, and other cultural landmarks. Rooms are luxurious and spacious, with some of the best hotel service in the city.
 - **Vibe:** Luxury, traditional-meets-modern, elegant
 - **Price:** \$\$\$
- [Hanok stays](#)

- **Location:** Bukchon
- **Why stay here:** We suggest that you stay at a Hanok, a traditional Korean house, for at least a night or two. The serene and tranquil atmosphere of a Hanok, with its natural materials and traditional design, will provide a peaceful escape from the bustling city.
- **Vibe:** Traditional
- **Price:** varies

Places I might skip

A lot of tourists are recommended to go to [Myeongdong, Jung District](#) but honestly, this is a tourist trap and there isn't much to do here. Locals don't really go here.

Money / Payment

Korea is mostly cashless. Credit cards are accepted almost everywhere, even for small purchases. Still, it's good to carry a small amount of cash (~~₩~~10,000—~~₩~~50,000) for street food.

English

Not everyone speaks English fluently, but people are friendly and will try to help. Use Papago app (by Naver) or Google Translate for the best Korean–English translation, especially for menus or conversations.

Etiquette

- No tipping – people are paid an hourly wage however, no one will reject your tip.
- When entering someone's home or traditional places, remove your shoes.
- When handing or receiving something, especially money or cards, use two hands or support your right hand with your left—it's polite.

Shopping

Tax Refunds are available for foreign tourists! Look for stores with “Tax Free” signs and bring your passport when shopping. You can claim refunds at the airport or sometimes instantly at the store.

K-Beauty

You have to get anything beauty related while you're here! Get some beauty treatment from botox to Ultherapy (much cheaper and wayyy better than the US). Sorry, I don't have a rec for where to go. If you are trying skin treatments, be sure the clinic has good reviews and licensed dermatologists or plastic surgeons. Shoot either of us a message for more details if you are serious about the treatment and want more help!

As for skin care products, you'll find the more expensive tiers at malls with brands like Amore Pacific, Hera or Sulwhasoo. But for travelers, I recommend more affordable alternatives at Olive Young (there's one in every block).

Clara's recommendations

- [Aestura Atobarrier cream](#) - I LOVE this moisturizer (probably on my 7th bottle) It's lightweight but very moisturizing. For days my skin feels a bit dull, I put a large chunk before I go to sleep like a mask then I wake up with glowing skin.
- [BIOHEAL BOH PANTHECELL Repair Cica Cream Mist](#)
- [Banila Co cleansing balm](#) - I've been using this since highschool and I'm in my 30s so that says everything. This removes all my makeup and I don't have to double cleanse after. You just need to use this on your face DRY and then wash it with water. Buy the original pink one.
- [Roundlab sunscreen](#) - moisturizing sunscreen that's great for dry skin

Places to visit in Seoul



(North of River) Gangbook

Area 1

[Gyeongbokgung Palace](#) You can enter the grand and historic Gyeongbokgung Palace for free simply by renting a Hanbok (Korean traditional wear) at the Gyeongbokgung Palace Entrance, the main access point for visitors. Plus, it's a fantastic photo opportunity, and you'll see many Koreans doing the same, with numerous rental shops conveniently located nearby.

[Bukchon Hanok Village](#) offers a unique glimpse into traditional Korean living, possibly the only place in Seoul where you can see people residing in authentic Hanok houses. This charming area is filled with shops, cafes, galleries, and restaurants, promising plenty to explore. Embrace the spirit of discovery – like much of Korea, it's a wonderful place to wander! Conveniently located next to Gyeongbokgung Palace, it's easily walkable. You can even experience a Hanok stay here for a truly immersive visit.

[Insadong](#) If you're already near Bukchon or Gyeongbokgung, check out Insadong for a walkable area with traditional teahouses, calligraphy shops and street food.

[MMCA \(National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art\) Seoul](#)

- [Naver link](#)

[Gwanghwamun Square](#) in between gyeongbokgung palace and cheonggyecheon. You can walk to cheong gye cheon from here

[Cheonggyecheon](#) / cheong gye river - Stroll along the stream in the heart of Gangbuk (north of the river). Go after sunset/ nighttime.

[Euljiro \(for dinner and drinks\)](#) - Try a pocha (outdoor bar?)

Food

- [Sujebi \(hand torn noodle soup\)](#) order some sujebi and some rice wine!
- [Onjium](#) is a restaurant nearby that I've been wanting to try. If you're down for a treat, you can try this korean fine dining experience! You have to make reservations in advance!
- [Trip advisor list](#) - this is probably a good list

Cafe - I don't really have a good list

- [Archivist](#) - they're known for their einshpenner
 - <https://naver.me/5PS2S6nZ>

Area 2

[Itaewon](#)

Because this is where the US Army base used to be (70s till recently), outsider culture thrived for the past decades and that's why you'll see a lot of diverse culture compared to other areas. Behind the [fire station](#) is where you'll find a lot of LGBTQ+ friendly bars and clubs - loads of fun drag lounges as well. This area is definitely for the nightlife. Get ready to clurb. Nightlife starts post 11pm

- There are so many galleries in this area so I suggest maybe taking a look in the day time
 - Leeum Museum of Art - I highly recommend.
 - Pace Seoul - much smaller than Pace galleries elsewhere
- Clurbs - sorry i'm not hip enough to know the hottest nightlife 😊
 - [Cake Shop](#) - might not be the hottest spot anymore... it's been a while since i've gone out
 - Casa Corona
- It's a tradition for us people to eat some kebabs after a night out. Some went for Mr. Kebab but I went to [Ankara Picnic](#)
- Great daytime cafes and brunch places & fun shops around

[Namsan Tower](#)

See the view from this tower and lock some lockets with your loved ones. You can take a cable car or hike up to Namsan Tower for panoramic views of the city.

- [📍 콤포타블 남산 Komfortabel coffee Namsan](#) Cafe near but not close to namsan tower. You'll get to see an amazing view from here!

Area 3

Seongsu dong

What used to be an area of bag and shoe factories is rapidly being developed into a new cultural space with new high risers and pop up stores. It's kinda like the Brooklyn of Seoul with a lot of big brand pop ups. Because of its history many travelers are able to find leather goods from smaller stores. Like I've already mentioned, the best way to find these places is to get lost.

- [Here's a blog post](#)
- [🇰🇷 4K Seoul Walking Tour : Explore South Korea's Bustling Streets 2024 - 4K HD...](#)
- Korean brands you should check out here
 - Biggest Olive Young store
 - Amore Pacific Flagship store - Amore owns many well known korean brands including Laneige and Hera.
 - [Stand Oil](#)
 - [Osoi](#) - I believe this is trending in the states
 - Fwee
 - Dasique Seongsu Flagship Store
 - [Tamburins](#)
 - [Insilence](#) - I like their coats
 - [Coor](#) - good mens wear

Area 4

Hongdae

This place is like the Lower East Side of Seoul and because it's a place of youth and college students, it's rich with culture with a lot of busking and street dancing. However, you're probs too old to be here if you're older than 25. Sorry ... I hear it's cool and fun

(South of River) GangNam

This area is the more flashy area of Seoul

[Apgujeong Rodeo Street](#) Go visit this hip area and get lost here are some places you can stop by

- Gentle Monster store - take a look around this antenna/concept store. Make sure to take a look around Tamburins on the top most floor and their cafe in the basement.
- [Wiggle Wiggle](#) This is a fun stationary store, but there's so much more to see.
- [Camel coffee](#) - Hip cafe that just opened one up in LA

[Banpo Hangang Park](#) Right by Apgujeong, go walk along the Hangang River (Hangang since gang means river) See the walk across the bridge, eat some cup ramen from the convenience store, eat some fried chicken and beer. Going closer or after sunset is a requirement.

Department stores: Korean department stores are more than just retail - they're cultural destinations. Whether or not you're a big shopper, visiting one is a great way to see how luxury, food, beauty and hospitality come together in Korea. I recommend The Hyundai Seoul, Galleria depending on your area of stay.