

 Gyeongbok Palace, South Korea

Trip Notes: South Korea

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

U.S. citizens don't need a visa for short visits (under 90 days) to South Korea for tourism or business, but require a valid passport (with 6+ months validity). While the K-ETA (Korea Electronic Travel Authorization) is usually needed, it's currently waived for U.S. citizens until the end of 2026, but will be required from 2027.

PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

Travelers from certain U.S. states may need to complete a Q-CODE health declaration.

VACCINATIONS

No medication or vaccinations are required for entry to South Korea. Please check with your travel clinic for their recommendation based on your personal health history.

CURRENCY

The won is the official currency of South Korea. The symbol is ₩; and the code is KRW. A convenient currency converter can be found at <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>

CREDIT CARDS

Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted, American Express less so. Cash is needed for shopping at small, local restaurants and shops. ATMs are easily found outside banks, in major hotels and some convenience stores.

TIME DIFFERENCE

South Korea is 14 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time, 17 hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time.

SHOPPING

Clothes, shoes, K-beauty cosmetics and crafts are the typically purchased souvenirs of South Korea. Hallyu (K-pop culture) items also make good souvenirs.

POWER

South Korea operates on 220 volts, 60 hertz and requires plug type C or F, please visit. <http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets/>

LANGUAGE

The official language of Korea is Korean. English is widely spoken in the tourist sector.



Busan



Korean ladies



Old Seoul

CLIMATE

South Korea has a temperate climate with four distinct seasons. Winters are usually cold and dry. Summers are hot, and humid. Spring and autumn are pleasant. Seoul's average maximum temperature in January is 35° Fahrenheit and in July the maximum daytime temperature is about 83° Fahrenheit.

TIPPING

It is not customary to tip in Korea. Trying to tip might even cause embarrassment and/or confusion. Liberal use of the phrase 'thank you' is always understood, appropriate and appreciated.

SAFETY & SECURITY

South Korea is generally very safe with low violent crime, but visitors should exercise normal precautions against petty theft and be aware of political demonstrations, especially in Seoul, which can disrupt transport; women should be cautious in nightlife areas where harassment can occur, though overall public spaces are secure due to extensive CCTV and police presence. The main security concerns are common sense awareness, avoiding protests, and being prepared for occasional civil defense drills.

PHONES

To dial South Korea from the US: 011 + 82 + area code and then the local phone number.

To dial the US from South Korea, start with a Korean exit code (like 001, 002, or 00700), then dial the US country code 1, followed by the US area code, and finally the local phone number (e.g., 001-1-AreaCode-LocalNumber).

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

For South Korea, pack layers for dramatic seasons (T-shirts, sweaters, waterproof jacket/heavy coat), essential electronics (power adapter Type C/F, power bank), comfy shoes (walking is key), and personal items like toiletries, plus masks/wipes for public transit, while prepping apps like Naver/Kakao. Don't overpack clothes; Korea offers great shopping, and focus on essentials like your passport, cash, and layered outfits.

ETIQUETTE

Public displays of affection are looked down upon and seen as highly immodest among older individuals in South Korea. This has become less taboo with the current generation of young adults, but is still widely discouraged by elders.

South Koreans usually shake hands when they meet for the first time. In order to show respect, individuals support their right forearms with their left hands. The bow is also a traditional South Korean greeting and is often accompanied by a handshake among men.

South Koreans are uncomfortable being touched by someone who is not a relative or close friend.



📍 Monorail, Busan



📍 Seoul



📍 Paper Lanterns, Seoul

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2026

- 1 January - **New Year's Day**
- 16-18 February - **Seollal Holiday**
- 1-2 March - **Independence Movement Day**
- 1 May - **Labor Day**
- 5 May - **Children's Day**
- 24 May - **Buddha's Birthday (Observed 25 May)**
- 3 June - **Local Election Day**
- 15 August - **Liberation Day (Observed 17 August)**
- 24-26 September - **Chuseok Holiday**
- 3 October - **National Foundation Day (Observed 5 October)**
- 9 October - **Hangeul Proclamation Day**
- 25 December - **Christmas Day**

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

[US State Department Travel Advisories](#)

[U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Taiwan](#)

[Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)

[US Passports](#)

[International Travel Guidance](#)

This information is provided by Travel Answers as a guideline to the country you will be visiting. Further information is available to you at <https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/travel-advisories/sri-lanka.html>.

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