

EXPLORE!



South Korea Explorer

9 days

South Korea - Trip code SKO

South Korea Explorer

From the cosmopolitan city of Seoul to the ancient Silla capital of Gyeongju, we discover all that South Korea has to offer. Experience one of the last frontiers of the Cold War, the Demilitarised Zone, and see the barrier separating North and South Korea. Take part in a traditional Korean tea ceremony and spend the night in a Buddhist monastery, witnessing the morning temple rituals. Discover Tongdosa Temple, one of the Jewel Temples of Korea, the beautiful Korean countryside.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Seoul** - Explore South Korea's dynamic capital. Visit the Demilitarised Zone and the Gyeongbokgung Palace
- ★ **Samwhasa Temple** - Spend a night in a monastery learning about a monks traditional lifestyle
- ★ **UNESCO World Heritage Sites** - Visit the Hahoe Folk Village, Seokguram Grotto and the Bulguksa Temple

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Seoul

We begin this exciting adventure in Seoul, South Korea's dynamic capital and one of the world's fastest growing cities. The economic, political and cultural centre of the country, Seoul is a fascinating mix of glass towers, historic temples, parks and museums, spanning the banks of the Han River. Arriving today we have a free evening to relax and settle into the flow of one of Asia's most exciting cities.



Accommodation: Shinshin Hotel Seoul (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Morning orientation tour of Seoul. Afternoon free

This morning we take an orientation tour around the centre of Seoul, walking through the Myeongdong shopping district and down to the market at Namdaemun, before heading past the City Hall to the Gyeongbokgung Palace. The largest of five great palaces built by the Joseon Dynasty, Gyeongbokgung still remains the grandest and we pay a visit before moving on to the National Folk Museum. Later we walk down into the area of Insadong, famed for its antiques and handicrafts. We stop for lunch here, after which the rest of the day is free to enjoy as we wish.



Accommodation: Shinshin Hotel Seoul (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Drive to Samwhasa Temple via Gangneung and the Ojukheon House

A different experience today as we make our way to the Samwhasa Temple where we spend the night. Our journey takes us via Gangneung which is one of the venues for the 2018 Winter Olympics, and the location of Ojukheon House. Built during the early Joseon Dynasty this is still one of the oldest wooden residential buildings in Korea.

This afternoon we have an opportunity to partake in a traditional tea ceremony and learn a little more about temple life. Please note that the sleeping arrangements at the monastery will be up to four people per room.



Accommodation: Samhwasa Temple (or similar)



Simple Monastery



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 4 - Discover the Buseoksa Temple and drive to the Suaedang homestay

For early risers there is a chance to watch the monks perform their morning rituals before we leave our temple home and head for one of Korea's most beautiful temples. Hidden amongst the wooded slopes of Bonghwangsan, Buseoksa Temple dates back to the latter years of the 7th century and differs from many other temples in Korea because of its huge size. From here we continue to Suaedang via the stone Buddha at Jebiwon, an impressive 11th century carving that sits on top of a rocky outcrop overlooking the Sobaek Mountains. Arriving at our homestay later this afternoon, we enjoy a tea ceremony and some local games and dinner. Please note that the sleeping arrangements at the homestay will be up to four people per room.



Accommodation: Suaedang Homestay (or similar)



Standard Homestay



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 5 - Visit the Hahoe Folk Village and Mask Museum. Drive to Gyeongju

After a relaxing morning we check out and drive on to the Buyeongdae Viewpoint. From here we then continue to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hahoe, where we find the Hahoe Folk Village and its fascinating Mask Museum. We visit the site with a local guide, spending time wandering through the traditional houses of this early Joseon Dynasty village and exploring the museum. We then continue on our journey to the city Gyeongju, a journey of around two and a half hours.



Accommodation: The Swiss Rosen (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Explore Gyeongju, the Seokguram Grotto and Bulguksa Temple

We enjoy a full day tour of South Korea's second largest city today. Once the capital of the ancient kingdom of Silla, Gyeongju ruled over much of the Korean Peninsula between the 7th and 9th centuries. Our first visits this morning are to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Seokguram Grotto and the Bulguksa Temple. We also visit the Silla Kiln and the city's National Museum, a rich repository for the relics and artifacts of the Silla kingdom, one of the longest dynasties in Asian history.



Accommodation: The Swiss Rosen (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Visit Namsan Mountain and Tongdosa Temple. Take the high speed train to Seoul

There is the option to make an early morning visit to Namsan Mountain which provides a beautiful natural setting for hundreds of temples and Buddha statues. There are hiking trails to enjoy, a boating like and cycles to hire to help you make the most of the area.

In the late morning we'll drive to Tongdosa temple, the largest in Korea and considered one of the country's 'three jewels'. It is said that its Beopdeung, or temple candle, has been burning continuously for 1,300 years.

Later, we head for Busan where there'll be time to visit the Fish market and International market before taking the high speed train to Seoul.



Accommodation: Shinshin Hotel Seoul (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Visit the Demilitarised Zone

Today we experience one of the last frontiers of the Cold War - the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) that separates North and South Korea - an area where over a million soldiers remain on high alert on either side. Formally the Korean war technically has never ended - and this geo-political fault line is still raw for the people of Korea. We are escorted by the Military right into the DMZ and stand right at the very edge - both sides literally staring at each other just metres apart. Whilst in the Joint Security Area (JSA) you must be respectfully dressed, no jeans or sandals are allowed nor can you make any arm or hand gestures as visitors are closely monitored (and photographed) by the North Koreans for propaganda purposes. Our next stop is underground to explore a tunnel built by the North into South Korea with the aim to breach the border. This was found by accident - the tunnel is wide enough for 2000 troops

an hour to pass through and is just 1 of 4 that were subsequently discovered. Military clearance is obtained for all visitors and you will be in a larger group, please be aware that due to the nature of the area visited this excursion may be cancelled at short notice (although highly unlikely) depending on the security situation.



Accommodation: Shinshin Hotel Seoul (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 9 - Trip ends in Seoul

Our trip ends in Seoul after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 8
Lunch: 1
Dinner: 2



Transport

Bus
Flight



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

1 nights standard homestay
6 nights standard hotel
1 nights simple monastery

Trip information

Country information

South Korea

Climate

South Korea has four distinct seasons: long, cold winters; short summers which tend to be hot and humid; autumn and spring offer pleasant weather but tend to pass quickly. Jeju Island tends to have a warmer climate due to its southern location, temperatures usually reach up to 25 degrees during the summer months. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Time difference to GMT

+9

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Buddhist, Christian

Language

Korean

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Seoul - Changdeok Palace \$3. Changgyeon Palace \$1. Bukchon Hanoe Village - no entrance fee.
Gyeongju - Outdoor Theater - No fee for admission (opening dates variable depending on the seasons)
Mt Namsan - No fee for admission.
Pedal boat ride - US\$ 10 for 2 passengers

Clothing

Lightweight raingear is required all year round. For winter departures warm sweaters, gloves, scarf, hat, warm coat, thermal underwear will be required.

Footwear

Please bring comfortable shoes and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

Please bring a suitcase or holdall and rucksack for the day.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £25 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

South Korea

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£10

Dinner price

£15

Beer price

£4

Water price

£1

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Won

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Either EUR, USD or GBP.

Where To Exchange

In all towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

All major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Most major restaurants and stores.

Travellers Cheques

We do not recommend to take travellers cheques as these can be difficult to exchange.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Flight

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

South Korea: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens for a stay of less than 90 days. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of

booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom. Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

South Korea

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, infectious hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Travellers may wish to take immunisation against Japanese Encephalitis. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
