



South Korea Information

Travel documents

U.S. citizens traveling to South Korea must have a passport that is valid for at least six months after their expected return date. U.S. citizens traveling to South Korea need a visa, which should be obtained prior to tour. We recommend using visacentral.com/efvisas where EF travelers receive a discount. Please check travel.state.gov to confirm passport validity requirements prior to your tour. Citizens of all other countries should contact their appropriate embassies to find out what specific documentation is required for them to travel. For a list of embassies, please visit embassy.org.

Vaccinations and health precautions

For the most up-to-date information on vaccinations and other health requirements, we recommend checking cdc.gov or consulting your physician.

Tour Director and bus drivers

You will have a bilingual Tour Director for the duration of your tour. Your Tour Director will inform you before departure if they will be picking you up at the airport or if a transfer Tour Director will meet you there. If you're traveling to Japan, you'll have another Tour Director, different than the one you had in Korea. You will have multiple bus drivers while on tour, so please consider tipping them daily.

Tipping

It's customary to tip your Tour Directors and bus drivers as a token of appreciation. We recommend:

- \$6–8 per person per day for the Tour Director
- \$3 per person per day for the bus driver
- \$2 per person per tour for each local guide

We encourage Group Leaders to collect all tip money from their travelers before departing for tour. To keep tips organized, we recommend using the envelopes from your Departure Kit. For larger groups, feel free to divvy up the money between chaperones. It is preferable for tips to be given in the local currency of your destination, especially for local guides. You can ask your travelers to convert their U.S. dollars before you collect tip money, or you can exchange the money yourself into local currency (either in the U.S. or when you arrive abroad). If you have any questions on tipping, please reach out to your Tour Consultant.

Currency

South Korea's currency is called South Korean Won (KRW). Getting KRW can be difficult since many ATMs do not accept foreign cards and traveler's checks are not easy to exchange. We recommend you exchange money at your bank or at the airport before your departure to South Korea. Once in South Korea, ATMs located in convenience stores or post offices will accept major cards. These ATMs are available throughout the major cities you will visit, so ask your Tour Director to direct you to one that will work. Be sure to inform your local bank of your travel plans prior to your departure to ensure your debit or credit card and pin number will work in South Korea. Visit xe.com for current exchange rates and more information.

Transportation

You'll primarily travel through South Korea on modern, air-conditioned buses and internal flights. Long transfers will be broken up with rest stops and tourist spots along the way. You will travel on a bullet train at least once during your tour in South Korea. Travelers should bring a small backpack with overnight clothes, as this is the only luggage that you can take on the train. All other checked luggage will be sent by courier ahead to the group's next hotel.

Accommodations

Hotels are generally business-style with modern amenities like elevators, air-conditioning, and television, but the rooms are often small. Students under the age of 20 will share rooms with two or three other travelers of the same gender. These rooms will have single or shared double beds, or a combination of the two. Adults will share twin rooms with other adults of the same gender. Please note that groups may not always be roomed next to each other (some may be on different floors) and hotels may be located outside of the city center. Electrical voltage and outlets in South Korea are different in the U.S., so you will need an adapter or converter. South Korea has type F sockets and a standard voltage of 220V.

Please note: Many hotel and public bathrooms do not permit toilet paper to be flushed. Travelers are advised to bring travel toilet paper and hand sanitizer.

Phones and internet

If you plan to use your personal cell phone on tour, contact your wireless provider to see what fees you may incur for calling, texting, or using data abroad. Free Wi-Fi is available in most hotels, however may not be available in your hotel room so you'll have to go to the lobby to access it. International phone cards are also easy to purchase. Your Tour Director can help you find places to buy them.

Local food

Water is chlorinated throughout the country and safe to drink, so travelers should bring a reusable water bottle to refill throughout the tour. Some people may choose to use bottled water, which is available for purchase everywhere. Check with your Tour Director before purchasing food from street vendors. Breakfasts on tour will be buffet-style, with Asian offerings like noodles and soup, as well as Western options such as toast and eggs. Dinners will either be served family-style (in the middle of the table for all to share) or you will receive your own portion. A small dessert may be included, however Korean meals do not traditionally include starters or desserts. Options are available for vegetarians or travelers with allergies.

Bathing etiquette

If arranged by the Tour Director, students may have the opportunity to visit a Korean bathhouse known as a *jjimjilbang*. A relaxing dip in the public bath offers the chance to experience a custom enjoyed by South Korean people of all ages, but travelers should know that South Korea's bathhouses have strict rules and an important code of etiquette. Clothing and swimsuits are never allowed in the bathing area, and nearly all bathhouses deny access to individuals with tattoos. The small towel available at the bath entrance is for drying off only and should never touch the pools of water. Visitors must wash thoroughly and rinse away all soap before entering the communal bath. For further information regarding bath etiquette, please ask your local Tour Director.

Weather

Located in the temperate zone, South Korea is known for having four distinct seasons. Winter is typically cold and dry, while summer is generally hot and humid with a lot of rainfall. Spring and autumn are mostly dry and clear. In Seoul, the summers are long, warm, and wet, with temperatures ranging from 80–90°F. Summer in Busan and Gyeongju tends to run a bit warmer (85–95°F), and in Jeju, they're short, wet, and windy, with temperatures also ranging from 85–95°F. Please check weather.com for your destinations and travel periods.

Packing

Pack as lightly as possible, as you are expected to carry your own luggage on and off buses and into hotels. Our tours in South Korea include traveling by bullet train at least once and most will have limited luggage storage space.

Typical dress in South Korea is similar to what one might expect in most European and American cities, although you might see a few women dressed in traditional *hanbok*. A good pair of walking shoes is highly recommended. Keep in mind that you have to remove your shoes to enter most South Korean homes, temples, and even schools, so clean socks are also recommended.

Luggage

Baggage is included on both international flights and internal flights within South Korea and between South Korea and Japan. Please limit your one checked bag to 44 lbs (domestic), 50 lbs (international), and your one carry-on item to 17 lbs, as this is normally the maximum baggage allowance for flights. Please contact your airline for baggage restrictions and regulations.

Safety

Always inform your Tour Director if you need to leave the group at any point. Store valuables in hotel safe deposit boxes and refrain from carrying large sums of money or wearing valuable jewelry. Although hotels in coastal areas may be located near the beach, for safety reasons swimming is only permitted in certain areas designated by EF. Please be sure to read EF's *Safety Handbook* before going on tour.