

5 Winter Attractions in South Korea

South Korea has four distinctive seasons. This means that a location or vista can offer different views and experiences depending on the time of visit. In Korea, many tourist attractions have been developed to take advantage of each season's features.

For New Zealanders, December, January, and February are when many people plan vacations. These months are when Korea provides rich winter attractions that make good use of snow and ice. In addition to Korean Air's regular direct flight operation throughout the year, Air New Zealand's seasonal operation will take place from late October to March. Increased direct flights during Korea's winter season provide wider options for scheduling itineraries. Therefore, taking a break from the hot summer and experiencing winter attractions unique to Korea is highly recommended.

1. Ski Resorts

South Korea has well-established infrastructures for skiers. Skiing has been one of the most popular winter activities for the general public and school students on field trips, known as 'ski camp.' Furthermore, the International Winter Olympics and world event hosting experiences in 2018 and 2024 were opportunities to upgrade infrastructures even more. Many resorts have state-of-the-art snowmaking machines. This, combined with naturally produced snow, guarantees sufficient volume and quality throughout the ski season. While skiing can be experienced in many other countries, world-class resort facilities make Korea stand out from other ski destinations. Besides ski slopes, many resorts offer a wide range of relaxation, culinary, and entertainment services, such as spa & sauna, karaoke rooms, and arcades. Korean ski destinations not only cater for skiing itself but also considers the travellers' needs to socialise and have fun.

Most Korean ski resorts are concentrated in Gangwon-do province, which has the lowest temperature in winter and was the host of the Winter Olympics. The most renowned ones are **High1 Resort** in Jeongseon-gun, **Alpensia Resort**, and **Yongpyong Resort** in Pyeongchang-gun.



Overview of Alpensia Resort

2. Curling Centres

A nation's popular trend changes over time and is often influenced by an outstanding event. During the 2018 Winter Olympics, the Korean national women's curling team, often called "Team Kim," impressed everyone with their performance and won the silver medal. At the time, curling, which was a lesser-known sport in the country, suddenly became one of the most watched sports. "Young-mi!" the phrase the team invented to call for wiping the ice became a popular buzzword. For travellers who want to take a deep dive into the curling trend of the time, there are several curling sites that provide all the necessary equipment and a one-day class if you make a **booking in advance**.

To follow the story of Team Kim, a visit to **Uiseong Curling Centre** in Uiseong-gun, Gyeongsangbuk-do province, is recommended. It is Team Kim's hometown and used to be the main training site. Also, **Gangneung Curling Centre** in Gangneung-si, Gangwon-province, was the venue of the 2018 Winter Olympics, where Team Kim competed.



Gangneung Curling Centre

3. Ice Fishing

Due to the rich ocean, lakes, and rivers in the country, various styles of fishing have developed in South Korea. In contrast to the perception that fishing is for a few people with expertise, and mainly male, a wider range of groups have taken fishing as a hobby recently. In fact, fishing's popularity has grown rapidly in the last few years and has become one of the national pastimes.

In winter, while there are diverse snow and ice-related festivals, **ice-fishing festivals** always attract people by providing unique fishing experiences and the opportunity to taste the caught fish with other complementary Korean snacks. The most renowned ones are the Icefish Festival in Inje-gun, the Trout Festival in Pyeongchang-gun, and the Sancheoneo Ice Festival in Hwacheong-gun. Since all of them are located in Ganwon-do province, travellers can easily visit the festivals on the way to or from ski resorts.



Inje Icefish Festival

4. Backcountry Skiing in Ulleungdo Island

Ulleungdo Island is a volcanic island in the East Sea. CNN designated The island as one of the top 10 mysterious islands. Despite its high status as a natural heritage, the island was not an accessible travel destination, especially in winter. Due to the distance from the mainland and harsh, snowy weather, ship operations to the island used to be irregular. However, Ulleungdo Island began to be recognised as a winter travel destination since the cruise ship was upgraded in 2021.



Ulleungdo Island

Teamax Adventure, a tour operator specialising in adventure tours, provides well-organised tours that are ideal for upper intermediate skiers. Their ' Backcountry Skiing in Ulleung Island' tour includes outdoor experience, hiking, and skiing in the snowy, steep volcanic island. For more information, visit the information at the website ([TEAMAX ADVENTURE Co.Ltd](https://www.teamaxadventure.co.uk)).



Background Skiing in Ulleungdo Island (Image from Teamax Adventure)

5. Korean Winter Foods

While visiting the attractions listed above, people will easily see nearby restaurants and food carts selling Korean winter foods. While those foods are available all year, Korean people regard some menus as winter treats.

Especially in the case of street foods, food carts selling those winter snacks are easily seen anywhere. Without having to plan and search, people can easily stop by whenever they feel hungry or cold. **Fish-shaped pastry (Bungeoppang)** is the most typical winter street food. The pastry is filled with either hot sweetened red bean past or custard cream. Similarly, **Hotteok** can be regarded as a Korean pancake filled with syrup made of brown sugar and cinnamon and sometimes with the addition of seeds or nuts. For people who want savoury foods, **fish cake skewer** is highly recommended. Fish cake is made of dough consisting of flour, fish, and spices. Fish cake skewer is served with hot soup and soy sauce.



Fish-Shaped Pastry



Fish Cake Skewers

Moreover, winter delicacies are not limited to street foods and light snacks. Korea is renowned for its hot **soup menus**. If you visit a restaurant for a soup menu, customers are also provided with rice and side dishes that people can enjoy as much as they want without having to pay separate costs.