

Finding New Zealand Ties in South Korea

New Zealand is a nation built on immigration. Due to this, New Zealanders show a high interest in genealogy and country ties throughout the globe. An interest which can be incorporated into tourism, providing an opportunity for Kiwi travellers to visit places related to heritage, history and connection.

One particularly strong connection relates to New Zealand armed forces who fought in battles around the world. Including the Korean War.

In Seoul, **Yongsan** is one of the most recommended cities for travellers, renowned for the National Museum of Korea. In addition, the National Hangeul Museum, U.S. Army Garrison, and Hype Insight offer interesting exhibitions to visitors. In the city, diverse cultural exhibitions, parks, the Han River, local residential areas, and skyscrapers are located within proximity, providing the perfect opportunity for visitors to explore.

For New Zealanders who want to connect with New Zealand influences, **The War Memorial of Korea** is a perfect option. While visitors can learn about wars that span various eras, the main focus is the Korean War (also known as the 6.25 War). Many exhibitions and monuments commemorate the sacrifices of Korean and UN soldiers. In the case of New Zealand, among 3,794 soldiers who were sent to Korea, 43 passed away, and 79 were injured. The museum website contains information about sacrificed NZ soldiers in **the Role of Honour Database**. Furthermore, at **each side of the museum's entrance**, the hallway is filled with monuments dedicated to countries that participated in the Korean War. Each soldier's name is inscribed on the monument. In March 2024, guided by **Seung-Joo Baek**, the president of The War Memorial of Korea, **Brook van Veldon**, New Zealand Minister of Internal Affairs, and **Dawn Bennet**, New Zealand Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, visited the site. They visited 6.25 War Room III (UN Room) and the hallway to pay tribute to the New Zealand soldiers. While having meaningful conversations and appreciating New Zealand's contribution, Brook van Velden sang Pokarekare Ana, a traditional New Zealand song. During the war, the song was passed to many Koreans by New Zealand soldiers. Now, the song is known as "Yanga" to Koreans.

While the museum offers rich educational opportunities and a monument dedicated to New Zealand soldiers, you have to visit **Busan** to see where the soldiers are buried. Busan is a popular city for both domestic and international tourists due to its modern & distinctive cityscape, adjacent to the renowned ocean. Busan's famous attractions, such as Igidae Park, Oryukdo Islets, and Gwangan Bridge take advantage of the landscape. While experiencing these famous attractions are a must-do, there is a place where the UN soldiers, including NZ soldiers, are resting only a few minutes away from those popular sites.

United Nations Memorial Cemetery is the only UN cemetery in the world. Like The War Memorial of Korea, the place is dedicated to the soldiers who were sacrificed during the Korean War. While originally it was the resting place of over 10,000 remains, now 2,300 remain currently after repatriations. In South Korea, most of the New Zealanders who fought in the war are buried here. Among 45 New Zealanders who passed away, 34 can be found here. Information on those soldiers can be found on the UN Memorial Cemetery's website (Find the Interred at UNMCK). At the cemetery site, the burial area is divided into several sections dedicated to each country. When former prime minister **Helen Clark** visited Busan for the APEC Summit in 2005, she visited the place with six Korean war veterans to officially unveil the New Zealand Memorial in the UN Memorial Cemetery. New Zealand artists (Fred Graham and John Edgar) and an architecture firm (Warren and Mahoney Architects) designed the memorial. Also, it consists of Coromandel granite that has 45 cuts, representing the number of lost NZ soldiers (Beehive, 2005).

While having unique experiences in a foreign country, finding traces of one's home country can be an enriching experience. Especially in South Korea, places related to the Korean War, and the veterans who made extreme sacrifices, are considered place-specific attractions. Visiting the associated museums, monuments, and cemeteries will be a meaningful opportunity for people with a relationship with the Korean War soldiers. However, even for people with no relation to the veterans, it is worth considering these sites that offer rich information about the two countries' connection and historical events that passed.