

South Korea Travel Specialist Webinar - Factsheet 3

Hidden cities of South Korea

Gangneung

Gangneung, a coastal city in Gangwon-do Province, is about 2 hours from Seoul by KTX speed train. Known for its beautiful beaches like [Gyeongpodae Beach](#), Gangneung offers clear water and breathtaking scenery. Nearby, [Gyeongpodae Pavilion](#) is a historical site that shines during cherry blossom season. Another popular spot is [Jeongdongjin](#), famous for its sunrise views and the [Jeongdongjin Sun Cruise Hotel](#), where a one-night stay costs around \$150, offering stunning water views.

Coffee Street

Gangneung is also well known for its coffee culture, particularly the coffee street along [Anmok Beach](#), which is lined with cafes and coffee shops that roast their own coffee beans. The cafes here all face the beach, providing a perfect waterview while you enjoy your coffee. The city hosts an annual [Coffee Festival](#), celebrating its rich coffee tradition.

Winter Olympics Sites

Gangneung was one of the host cities for the 2018 Winter Olympics, along with Pyeongchang in the Gangwon-do province, holding events like figure skating, ice hockey, and curling. The [Gangneung Olympic Park](#) remains a significant landmark. Gangneung's combination of natural beauty and culture makes it a vibrant and attractive destination for both domestic and international travellers.

Andong

Andong, located in Gyeongsangbuk-do Province in southeastern South Korea, is reachable from Cheongnyangri Station in East Seoul via KTX train in about 2 hours and 5 minutes. Known as the "Capital of Korean Spirit," Andong boasts a rich cultural heritage and traditional customs, having been a center for Confucian learning during the Joseon Dynasty. A significant historical site in Andong is the [Dosan Seowon](#), a Confucian academy completed in 1576, which commemorates the teachings of its founder, Toegye Yi Hwang.

The Andong Hahoe Folk Village

[The Andong Hahoe Folk Village](#), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is known for its well-preserved traditional houses and is home to descendants of the Ryu clan, who make up 70% of the villagers. Located near the Nakdonggang River, the village gained fame after visits from Queen Elizabeth II in 1999 and President George W. Bush in 2005.

Andong Mask Dance Festival

The village features cultural treasures, including the famous Hahoe Masks, and hosts the [Andong Mask Dance Festival](#) from September 27 to October 6 this year. The festival includes daily Hahoe mask dance performances at 2 PM (Tues-Sun) at the Mask Dance Exhibition Hall, celebrating traditional Korean culture.

Jeonju

Jeonju, located in the southwestern part of Korea, is the largest city in Jeollabuk-do Province and can be reached from Seoul by KTX train in about 1 hour and 55 minutes. Named a UNESCO City of Gastronomy in 2012, Jeonju is renowned for its rich history, culture, and exceptional cuisine.

Jeonju Hanok Village

[Jeonju Hanok Village](#), the largest hanok village in Korea, features over 700 traditional Korean houses. Visitors can rent hanboks (traditional Korean clothes) from nearby stores for about 7 AUD for 2 hours. The village showcases unique hanok architecture, designed for both hot and cold weather, with features like Maru floors and Ondol heating. Staying in a hanok in the village offers an immersive cultural experience.

Bibimbap

Jeonju is the birthplace of the iconic Korean dish, bibimbap, which includes rice mixed with various vegetables, marinated beef, a fried egg, and red chili paste. The city offers numerous restaurants and stalls, each with its own take on this dish. In October, the [Jeonju Bibimbap Festival](#) is held in the Hanok Village, featuring cooking competitions and demonstrations.

More info: [2024 Jeonju Bibimbap Festival](#)

Makgeolli

In [Jeonju's Samchudong Makgeolli district](#), visitors can explore about 40 venues offering unique varieties of makgeolli, Korean traditional rice wine. Served in yellow brass kettles and drunk from nickel silver bowls, this beverage is paired with complementary foods. Jeonju also has workshops nearby the Hanok Village, at the [Jeonju Traditional Hanji Centre](#), where traditional crafts like hanji (Korean paper) and pottery are made, allowing visitors to experience the culinary and cultural essence of Korea.

More info: [Jeonju's Samchudong Makgeolli district](#)

Mokpo

Mokpo, a port city in Jeollanam-do Province, is located in the southwestern part of South Korea and is reachable from Yongsan Station in Seoul by KTX in about 2 hours and 40 minutes. Known for its maritime history, Mokpo serves as a gateway to numerous Korean islands, including Jeju Island and Hongdo Island. [Intrepid's Premium South Korea](#) tour package includes Mokpo as a destination before taking the ferry to Jeju Island. A notable attraction in Mokpo is the [Gatbawi Sea Cliff](#), or Gatbawi Rock, named for its resemblance to two human figures wearing gatgat (traditional hats usually worn by men in the past).

Sihwa Village

[Sihwa Village](#) in Mokpo features houses that were once home to fishermen, now colourfully decorated by local artists as part of the Seosan-dong Sihwa Alley Development Project. The village retains an old-

fashioned charm with faded signboards and markets, offering a glimpse into Korea's 1980s past. Walking along Sihwa Alley, visitors can enjoy ocean views from Bori Madang ("barley yard"), making it an ideal starting point to explore Mokpo.

Yudalsan Mountain

[Yudalsan Mountain](#), the most well-known mountain in Mokpo, stands at 223 metres. Reaching the summit via stairway takes about 20 to 30 minutes, or visitors can take a cable car from the Yudalsan platform. The cable car operates from 9 AM to 8 PM Sunday to Friday, and until 9 PM on Saturdays and public holidays, with return tickets costing around AUD 26 for general cars and AUD 31 for crystal cars. The summit offers stunning views of the sunset and evening lights, particularly over Mokpodaegyo Bridge, reflecting beautifully over the water.

SEASONS & WEATHER

South Korea boasts a mid-latitude, temperate climate with four distinct seasons, each offering its own outdoor activities. Spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November), feature clear and mild weather ideal for exploration. Summer brings hot and humid conditions, while winter is characterized by cold and arid climates. Despite minor temperature variations, southern regions, such as Busan, tend to be slightly warmer.

Season	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Dates	Mar-May	Jun-Aug	Sep-Nov	Dec-Feb
Av low temp	3°C - 14°C	19°C - 23°C	4°C - 19°C	-6°C - 3°C
Av high temp	10°C - 23°C	26°C - 29°C	11°C - 25°C	1°C - 10°C
Dates to be mindful of		Rainy season "Jangma" late June - early Aug	Korean Thanksgiving "Chuseok" Mon, 16 Sept 2024 – Wed, 18 Sept 2024	Korean Lunar New Year "Seollal" Wed, 29 Jan 2025

More info: <https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/svc/contents/infoBscView.do?vcontsId=140636>

Seasonal activities and festivals:

Spring

- Cherry blossoms bloom, including the unique "King Cherry" variety.
- [The Jinhae Gunhangje Festival](#) in early April showcases cherry blossoms along Jinhae's streets and naval port.
- Less crowded cherry blossom viewing opportunities in cities and countryside.

Summer

- Sweltering heat with over 270 beaches available for visits.
- Outdoor activities like camping and spending time at Han river park or Busan's Haeundae beach.
- [Boryeong Mud Festival](#) on the west coast (July-August).
- Need to monitor weather trends due to typhoon season (July-October).

Autumn

- [Spectacular fall foliage](#) ("danpung") from early October to early November.
- Best seen in national parks and mountains like [Naejangsan](#) and the annual Naejangsan Maple Festival
- Major holiday: Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving).
- Similar beauty to spring, with specific foliage observation calendars available

Winter

- Temperatures range from -6°C to 10°C, sometimes dropping to -15°C.
- Activities include skiing at ski resorts, shopping in underground malls, visiting jjimjilbang spas, and winter festivals like the [Hwacheon](#) and [Pyeongchang trout fishing festivals](#) in January.
- Major holiday: Seollal (Lunar New Year).

Keep in mind that many Koreans travel domestically and internationally during Chuseok and Seollal, leading to potential travel congestion.

HIKING (SPRING & AUTUMN)

Hiking in Korea is a popular activity, especially in spring and autumn when the weather is ideal. In Seoul, accessible hikes include the Seoul city wall trail, [Gwanaksan Mountain](#) (south of the river), and [Bukhansan National Park](#) (north), all reachable via public transportation with round-trip hikes taking 2.5-3.5 hours. Bukhansan National Park, with its dramatic granite peaks, is the most visited national park per unit area in the world, featuring peaks like Baegundae, Insubong, and Mangyeongdae. For those willing to travel further, [Seoraksan National Park](#) near Sokcho (3-4 hours from Seoul) and [Naejangsan Mountain](#) in the southwest offer stunning trails, ancient temples, and panoramic views. Seoraksan, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is particularly noted for its seasonal beauty and diverse hiking options.

CYCLING (SPRING & AUTUMN)

[The Four Rivers Trail](#) in South Korea is a 633-kilometre cycling route that runs from Incheon to Busan, following the Han, Nakdong, Geum, and Yeongsan rivers. It features dedicated bike paths, rest areas, water fountains, bike repair stations, and clear signage, ensuring a safe and comfortable ride. Cyclists can collect stamps at certification centres along the route and earn a certificate and medal upon completion. The trail passes through various cultural and historical sites, showcasing Korea's rich heritage and natural beauty, from urban landscapes in Seoul to serene countryside and river views. Accommodations such as hotels, guesthouses, and camping sites are available, making it convenient for multi-day trips.

DMC for Cycling Tours	
Teamax Adventure	Mr Max Kim Manager max@teamaxadventure.com (+82)-2-2682-1518 /(+82)-10-7194-9407 http://www.teamaxadventure.com

WINTER SPORTS

While some are surprised to hear South Korea offers world-class skiing, interest is surging. We've got 16 world-class ski resorts like [Mona Yongpyong](#) and [High1](#) in Gangwondo Province, all the way to backcountry powder skiing on Ulleungdo Island. It's a destination that ticks all the boxes for families to advanced skiers and boarders, while being affordable and convenient to access from Australia, alongside the opportunity to experience Korea's blend of traditional and modern culture that is capturing the world's attention.

DMCs List for Winter Tours	
H-Force	Mr. Sung Won HWANG CEO hwangsw@hforce.co.kr Mr. Isaac Choi Phoenix Pyeongchang Resort Foreigner Snow School / H-Force Director isaacchoi@hforce.co.kr
Winterfriend	Ms. Annie Choi info@winterfriend.com (+82)-10-4259-2890 https://plusplanner.kr/
Teamax Adventure (Ulleungdo Island Ski Tours)	Mr Max Kim Manager max@teamaxadventure.com (+82)-2-2682-1518 /(+82)-10-7194-9407 http://www.teamaxadventure.com

More info: [12 Ski Resorts to Spend an Exciting Winter in South Korea](#)

SUMMER SPORTS

Surfing in Korea

With its growing popularity among water sports enthusiasts, surfing in Korea is predominantly enjoyed on the east coast, particularly at [Yangyang Surfyy Beach](#) in Gangwon Province and stand up paddleboarding in Haeundae Beach or [Gwangalli Beach](#) in Busan. Surfers flock to Yangyang to catch consistent waves, with surf schools available for beginners looking to learn the sport. The summer months, with warmer waters and favourable winds, provide ideal conditions for surfing, making it an exciting and accessible activity for locals and tourists alike.

Wakeboarding and Lake-Based Watersports

South Korea's lakes offer a playground for wakeboarding and other lake-based watersports enthusiasts. [Cheongpyeong Lake](#) in Gyeonggi-do is a popular destination for wakeboarding, with rental services and wakeboard parks providing opportunities for riders of all levels. In addition to wakeboarding, visitors can enjoy activities such as waterskiing, banana boat rides, and jet skiing, making it a vibrant hub for water sports excitement amidst picturesque lake surroundings.