

South Korea and Jeju Explorer - 12 day tour

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- DMZ - peek into the reclusive state of North Korea, explore the Third Tunnel of Aggression and meet a North Korean defector
- Jeju - dive with the famous Haenyeo women divers and enjoy a short hike to the cylindrical and UNESCO-listed Sunrise Peak
- Gyeongju - take a bicycle tour to highlights of the city including the Cheonmachong Ancient Tombs and Gyerim Forest
- Busan - enjoy a ride on the Marine Cable Car for amazing views of the city shoreline and indulge in the city's thriving nightlife
- Seoul - explore South Korea's enigmatic capital to see the changing of the guard at Gyeongbokgung Palace and the iconic Blue House
- Gulgulsa Temple - stay at a traditional Buddhist temple in Gyeongju where you can practice martial arts, meditate and enjoy tea with a Buddhist monk
- Jjimjilbang - spend the night in a traditional Korean bath and sleeping house where you can relax in the sauna or an onsen hot bath
- Seoraksan National Park - hike to Ulsanbawi Rock and visit the North Korean refugee village of Abal by cable pulley boat

INCLUDED

- ✓ Airport departure transfer to Jeju airport on day 12
- ✓ 8 nights in hostels and dorm accommodation
- ✓ 1 night at Gulgulsa Temple in Gyeongju
- ✓ Local English speaking licensed tour guides for scheduled sightseeing
- ✓ DMZ excursion and meeting with a North Korean defector
- ✓ Cycling tour of Gyeongju
- ✓ Haenyeo Divers Experience on Jeju Island
- ✓ Beach BBQ on day 12
- ✓ 1 breakfast, 1 lunch & 3 dinners
- ✓ 1 night at a traditional Jjimjilbang (bath and sleeping house)
- ✓ 1 night overnight ferry to Jeju
- ✓ Unescorted travel between cities on buses, trains and ferries
- ✓ Visit to Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul
- ✓ Busan Marine Cable Car ride
- ✓ Day trek along the Jeju Olle Trail

NOT INCLUDED

- > International flights and visas
- > Optional activities
- > Laundry, drinks, items of a personal nature and any meals not included in the itinerary

ITINERARY

Day 1

Welcome to South Korea

Welcome to Seoul! On arrival in South Korea's capital, make your own way to our starting hostel. There's a pre-departure Welcome Meeting before we head out for a delicious Korean barbecue.

After our meal, we make our way using public transport to the top of Namsan Mountain, where we can enjoy incredible views of Seoul illuminated at night. For an even better view, you may wish to head to the top of the N Seoul Tower, which is the second highest point in the city. We then return to our hostel where the rest of the evening is at leisure.

Overnight: Seoul | Dinner

Day 2

Exploring the DMZ

Today we enjoy an excursion to the Demilitarized Zone, which is a 2.5 mile wide buffer zone between the hostile states of North and South Korea. Our bus journey to the DMZ takes around three hours and we stop at Dorasan Station en route. The train station was built with the intention of connecting the two Koreas, in times when relations were better.

Arriving at the DMZ, we visit the Dora Observatory where you can peek into reclusive North Korea and perhaps catch a glimpse of some North Korean villagers in the streets. We then descend into the Third Tunnel of Aggression, which was built by the North as a means of infiltrating South Korea.

After our visit to the DMZ, we board the bus to return to Seoul. We'll be joined onboard by a North Korean defector. You have a once in a lifetime opportunity to speak with someone who has experienced life in the closed off country of North Korea. Arriving back in Seoul, the rest of the day is at leisure, or you may wish to visit a local cat cafe.

Overnight: Seoul

ITINERARY

Day 3

Seoul sightseeing

We have an early start this morning, for a full day of exploring Seoul. We'll ride on the metro to the grand Gyeongbokgung Palace, which was once the main residence of the Joseon Dynasty. Watch the Changing of the Guard here before we enter the palace grounds. We also see the Blue House, which is the equivalent of America's White House for South Korea.

Later, we visit Bukchon Hanok Village, where you can opt to change into hanbok, traditional Korean clothes, to explore this historic village. We also enjoy a relaxing walk down the Cheonggyecheon Stream, an area of peace and tranquility in the bustling city. Visit Insadong Art Street and opt for Kimchi tasting at the Museum Kimchikan. The evening is free to relax or you could head out for a drink on Hongdae Street.

Overnight: Seoul

Day 4

Seoraksan National Park & jjimjilbang stay

This morning we head out of Seoul for a day trip to Sokcho, in the north east of the country. Arriving in Seoraksan National Park, we pay a visit to Sinheungsa Temple and hike up to Ulsanbawi Rock for incredible views over the national park.

After our hike, we take the bus to Sokcho town and cross the river by cable-pulley boat to Abai, a small village of North Korean refugees. Explore the historic village and climb to the Lighthouse Observatory for amazing views of the surrounding area. We then return to Seoul and arrive at our accommodation for the night. We'll be staying at a Jjimjilbang, a traditional Korean bath and sleeping house. Enjoy an onsen bath or relax in the sauna this evening.

Overnight: Seoul

ITINERARY

Day 5

Gyeongju

Seoul - Gyeongju. Say goodbye to Seoul as we take the train to the city of Gyeongju. This afternoon we head out on a bicycle tour of the city. Ride to numerous highlights including the Cheonmachong Silla tomb in Tumuli Park. We then make our way to Cheomseongdae, the oldest surviving astronomical observatory in East Asia. We also explore Gyerim Forest and the Hyanggyo Confucius School.

Overnight: Gyeongju

Day 6

Golgulsa Temple stay

Rise early this morning for an optional visit to the UNESCO-listed Bulguksa Temple, on the slopes of Mt Toham. We then transfer by public bus to Golgulsa Temple, where we will be staying tonight. There's an included meditation class and you can opt to join archery or horse-riding classes.

Later, we watch a thrilling traditional arts performance and Sunmudo demonstration. Sunmudo is a Korean Buddhist martial art. After the demonstration, you may wish to lend a hand with the temple's communal work and chores before we enjoy a simple Buddhist dinner of vegetables, rice and fruit with the other temple visitors and members. There's an evening chanting service and you can learn the basics of Sunmudo yourself.

Overnight: Golgulsa Temple | Dinner

ITINERARY

Day 7

Busan

Gyeongju - Busan. Join the morning chanting service and meditation, then tuck in to a traditional breakfast.

Afterwards, we meet a Buddhist monk and enjoy a relaxed chat over some tea. There's a final chance to practice your Sunmudo skills and enjoy an included lunch at the temple before we return to Gyeongju and make our way by bus to Busan. On arrival, check-in to our accommodation and spend your first night in bustling Busan at leisure - perhaps head to the Haeundae beachfront to make the most of the city's thriving nightlife.

Overnight: Busan | Breakfast, Lunch

Day 8

Busan sightseeing

We spend today exploring the sights of Busan. Browse Jagalchi Market, which is the biggest seafood market in South Korea. You can opt for a delicious fresh seafood lunch here. We also take in BIFF Square in Nampo-dong, the city's famous movie district and you can choose to take part in a cutting edge Virtual Reality gaming experience or enjoy some free time to explore the city further.

Later in the day, we enjoy an included ride on the Marine Cable Car for incredible views of the shoreline and the city. You can return to the city via a cliff walk or ride back down on the cable car. The evening is then free to head out for dinner with your fellow travellers. Perhaps admire the impressive light show on Gwangan Bridge.

Overnight: Busan

ITINERARY

Day 9

Busan free time & Jeju

Busan - Jeju. This morning is free to relax or further explore Busan as you please. Optional activities available include a Korean cooking class, a visit to the cliff-top Buddhist temple of Haedong Yonggungsa or you may wish to head to Spa Land in Busan's largest shopping complex for a few more hours of saunas and onsen baths. Tonight we take the overnight ferry to Jeju, the small volcanic island dominated by the towering volcano of Hallasan.

Overnight: Overnight ferry to Jeju

Day 10

Diving experience & Sunrise Peak hike

Arriving in Jeju, we enjoy an incredible Haenyeo Divers Experience with the famous women divers of Jeju. These women, some in their 80s, practice centuries-old diving customs which are protected by UNESCO. They dive without the aid of breathing equipment to collect seaweed, shellfish and other seafood to eat and sell. Join the women on a diving experience to discover more about this incredible tradition.

Back on dry land, we enjoy a traditional liquor making experience, and you'll get to sample a variety of different types. There's also an included hike to the top of Seongsan Ilchulbong, better known as Sunrise Peak. A UNESCO World Heritage site, this cylindrical hill was formed by hydrovolcanic eruptions. On the way back to the hostel, we watch a Haenyeo Diver's performance by the beach.

Overnight: Jeju Island

ITINERARY

Day 11

Jeju Olle Trail & BBQ beach party

We spend our final full day in South Korea exploring Jeju further, beginning at Jeongbang Waterfall, which flows directly into the ocean. From this incredible natural wonder, we enjoy a day-long trek along the Jeju Olle Trail, which winds through incredible scenery of volcanic cliffs and bright yellow fields of canola. See the towering column of Oedolgae Rock, which emerges dramatically from the waves. There's time after the trek to relax on the beach or try your hand at surfing or paddle boarding.

To celebrate our final evening, there's an included BBQ party on the beach tonight. Relax and enjoy delicious food as we watch the sun go down.

Overnight: Jeju Island | Dinner

Day 12

Jeju Island

Today our South Korean adventure comes to an end. There is an included departure transfer to Jeju airport at a scheduled time.