

world.
JOURNEYS

YOUR GUIDE TO JAPAN & SOUTH KOREA





JAPAN

Japan is a land of striking natural beauty, complete with fascinating history, revered traditions, gracious people and delicious cuisine. Myriad flavours from all around the world have contributed to Japan's foodie culture, attracting more and more culinary figures worldwide to try the new eastern hot spot. A unique and incredibly scenic country with enchanting culture awaits!

HONSHU

TOKYO | OSAKA | HIROSHIMA | KYOTO | KANAZAWA

Japan's biggest and most populous island, with Tokyo at its heart, is the primary point of entry for most visitors. Expect a blend of big city bustle with the serenity of temples, gardens, shrines and the iconic Mount Fuji.

HOKKAIDO

SAPPORO | OTARU | KUSHIRO | FURANO

Renowned for its majestic natural beauty, home to national parks, volcanic landscapes, and invigorating hot springs (onsen). Spring and autumn unveil breathtaking displays of colours, and opportunities for nature exploration.

SHIKOKU

MATSUYAMA | TAKAMATSU | TOKUSHIMA | KOCHI

With picturesque lush forests, jagged mountains and a coastline on the Seto Inland Sea, Shikoku is for lovers of the outdoors. The island's charming towns are known for their relaxed, more traditional feel.

KYUSHU & OKINAWA

OITA | KUMAMOTO | KAGOSHIMA | NAGASAKI

Explore ancient temples, soak in natural hot springs, and savour Kyushu's famed tonkotsu ramen, or head for the islands of Okinawa with their pristine beaches, coral reefs and verdant jungle.





WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Japan is all about traditions, etiquette and showing respect. Japanese people love it when you try to embrace their culture, but don't judge you when you get it wrong – they are very welcoming to foreigners.

LANGUAGE & GREETINGS

Although English isn't widely spoken in Japan, main touristic areas will have signs and information in both Japanese and English. That said, learning a few words in Japanese is appreciated by the locals.

Bowing is another form of greeting – particularly in more formal settings. When entering/exiting a building or when greeting someone, a nod or bow of the head goes a long way.

SHOE ETIQUETTE

Make sure you're wearing the right shoes! It's the custom in Japan to remove footwear before entering a home, a traditional inn, temple, or shrine. Hosts will provide slippers for guests to wear inside, and different slippers to wear only in the bathroom. If the floor is tatami mat, only bare feet or socks are allowed.

TRADITIONAL ACCOMMODATION

Although modern hotels are plentiful, we highly recommend spending a night at a traditional Japanese inn (ryokan) for a more authentic experience. Ryokans in smaller towns often offer a private onsen, tea ceremonies and traditional meals.

ONSEN EXPERIENCE

Soaking in a traditional onsen comes with its own set of rules – a shower before you bathe, tie or wrap up any long hair so it doesn't get in the water, and no swimsuits allowed, you're going in the nude! Also, keep in mind that tattoos are frowned upon in Japanese society and prohibited in many hot springs. If you are uncomfortable being naked in front of others or concerned about your tattoos, there are places where you can book a private onsen.



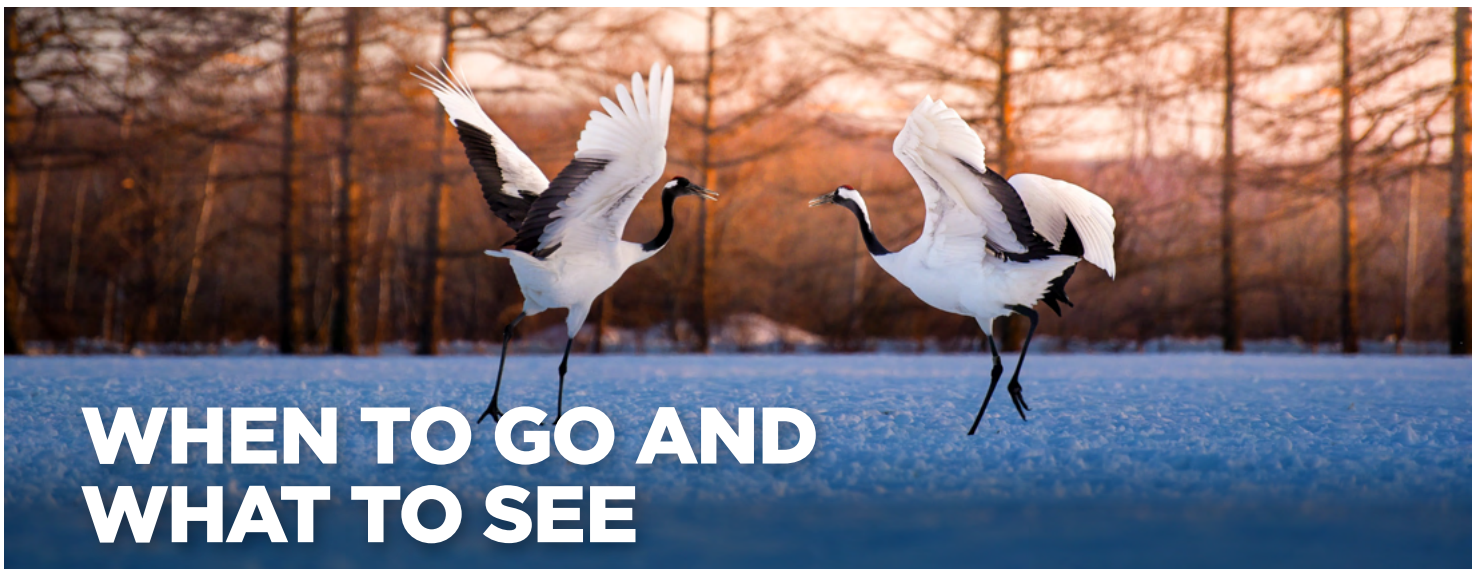
LOCAL CUISINE & SAKE CULTURE

Japan is a paradise for food lovers! Each region boasts its own specialties, offering a unique taste of local culture. Japan offers a range of dining experiences from casual to Michelin-starred, bento box meal (lunchbox) to vending machines that sell all kinds of goodies.

Sake is also an important part of Japanese culture. This alcoholic beverage is produced by fermenting rice that has been polished to remove the bran. There are many cities dedicated to the craft of this specialty drink and its unique flavours, where you can experience a sake tasting.

TRANSPORT

Japan has an incredible train network made up of Shinkansen (bullet trains), local trains and city metro systems. The country is also known for having the most punctual train services in the world, so don't be late! While on board, people will expect peace and quiet, so keep your phone on silent and avoid speaking on it. Conversations should be kept to a soft quiet tone.



WHEN TO GO AND WHAT TO SEE

The Japanese have an appreciation for the change of seasons with festivals and ceremonies dedicated to each period. From the beautiful cherry blossoms of spring to the warm tones of autumn, and the icy wonderland of winter, Japan is a year-round destination with a variety of festivals and activities for all types of traveller.



Spring (Mar - May)

The famous cherry blossom season starts down in Okinawa as early as January. The blossoms can then be seen in Kyushu in February, reaching Honshu at the end of March and late April. If you do intend to visit Japan during this busy season, make sure to book well in advance.

Summer (Jun - Aug)

The summer months in Japan can be hot and become busy due to a number of festivals held throughout the country. Most visitors head to the beaches and engage in various outdoor activities.



Autumn (Sep - Nov)

In the autumn months you can expect to see the red and gold leaves known as koyo sweep the country, making it great for photography, hiking and enjoying the outdoors. As the autumn colours last longer than the cherry blossoms, this makes it an easier time to plan travel.

Winter (Dec - Feb)

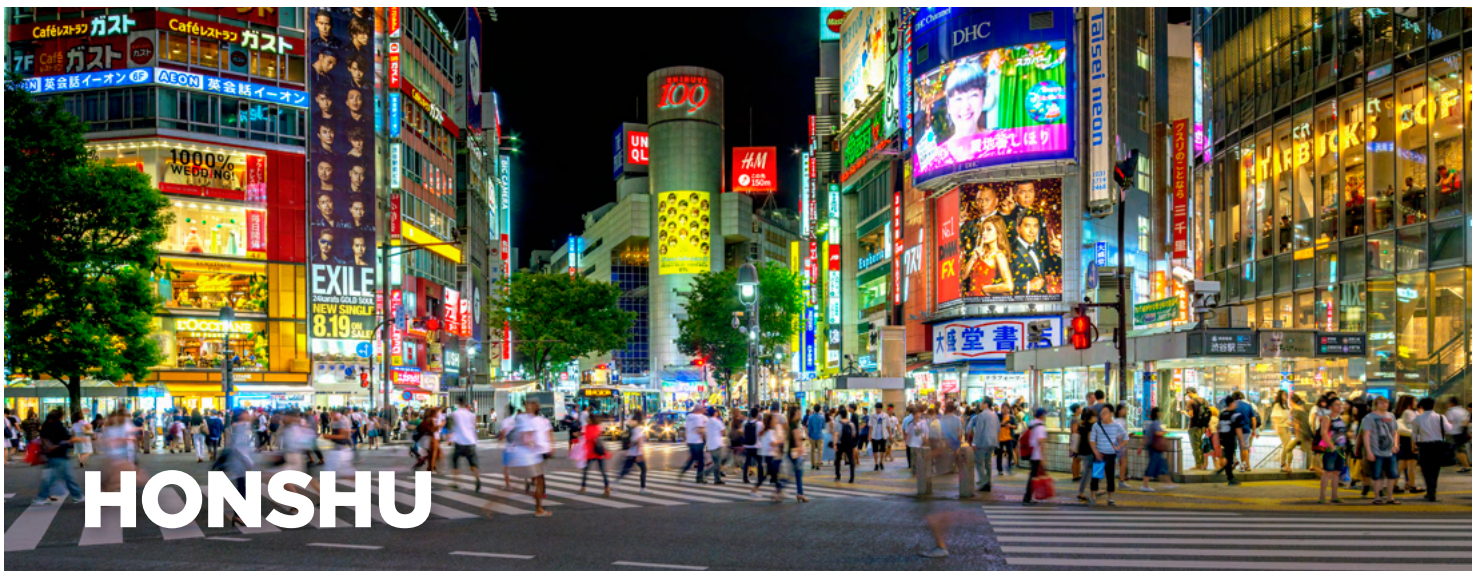
This season offers a spectacular experience best enjoyed when staying at ryokans, enjoying relaxing onsen baths admiring the snow changing the landscape – an experience also known as “yukimi buro”. The winter Snow Festival of Sapporo is an incredible spectacle, as are the snow monkeys of Yudanaka.

WAYS TO EXPERIENCE JAPAN

Japan offers a variety of activities and experiences for most types of traveller, from adventure and outdoor activities, vibrant cities to modern museums and cultural events. It's easy to get around, making this a popular destination for families and travellers wanting to explore at their own pace. A tailor-made journey is the way to go!

HOSTED JOURNEYS

Our small group (18 max) *Cherry Blossom Japan* escorted tour is a very popular way to visit Japan. Experience all the main highlights against the backdrop of cherry blossom season. Highly recommended for travellers wanting a hassle-free, guaranteed-to-go journey, with a host accompanying the group throughout, and flights included.



Modern buildings and bustling cities blend well with the serenity of temples and shrines. The largest and most populous island, it is home to the iconic Mount Fuji and most of the country's famous attractions.

Tokyo

Fast-paced and neon-lit capital that never sleeps. Explore local restaurants, shopping areas and vibrant streets. Stop at the famous Meiji Shrine and enjoy its serene atmosphere.

Hakone

Here you will get incredible views of iconic Mount Fuji – weather permitting. Enjoy a boat trip on Lake Ashi or stay at a traditional ryokan.

Osaka

World-renowned architecture and a popular spot for cherry blossom trees. Explore vibrant nightlife in the Dotonbori area and learn about local history and the main landmarks.

Kyoto

Once the capital of Japan, visit Shinto shrines, see Buddhist temples and get a glimpse of the local traditions and delicious cuisine.

Kanazawa

Known for its well-preserved Edo-era districts, art museums and regional handicrafts. See one of Japan's top three landscape gardens, Kenrokuen.

Yudanaka

Known for its hot spring resorts and is home to the adorable snow monkeys. A stay at a ryokan will complete the experience!

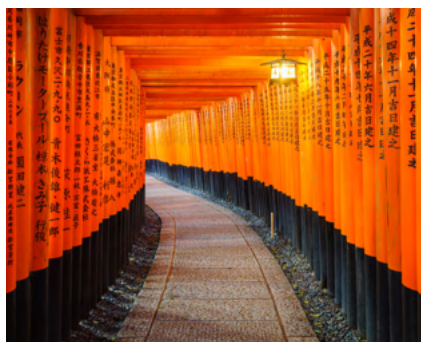


Hiroshima & Miyajima

Poignant history contrasts with the welcoming streets of today's Hiroshima. Catch a ferry to Miyajima to explore shrines and the famous Torii gate.

Tohoku region

Venture further north into the Tohoku region aboard an efficient network of trains and bullet trains. This hidden gem offers historical treasures and pristine landscapes ideal for summer activities or winter relaxation.





HOKKAIDO

Popular for its national parks, volcanoes and hot springs (onsen). Explore stunning and colourful landscapes and take advantage of hiking and wildlife viewing opportunities during summer and autumn.

Sapporo

This cosmopolitan city is home to the country's oldest brewery (1876), and each February hosts the spectacular Snow Festival, with huge snow and ice sculptures.

Otaru

Charming town with brick wall houses and buildings in a well-preserved canal area. Also known for its sake distilleries, music boxes and glasswork shops.

Kushiro

A major port city where you can enjoy fresh and delicious seafood dishes. Also home to rare, wild Japanese red-crown cranes.

Hakodate

Known for its stunning night views from Mount Hakodate. Visit Motomachi, residential hub of foreign traders in the 19th century.

Furano & Biei

Think patchwork fields of lavender, poppies, lilies, and sunflowers - ideal for bike tours or walks. July through mid-August is the best time to visit for colourful vistas.

Daisetsuzan National Park

Immerse yourself in untouched wilderness, incredible scenery and wildlife viewing. Perfect for outdoor activities from late July to September.

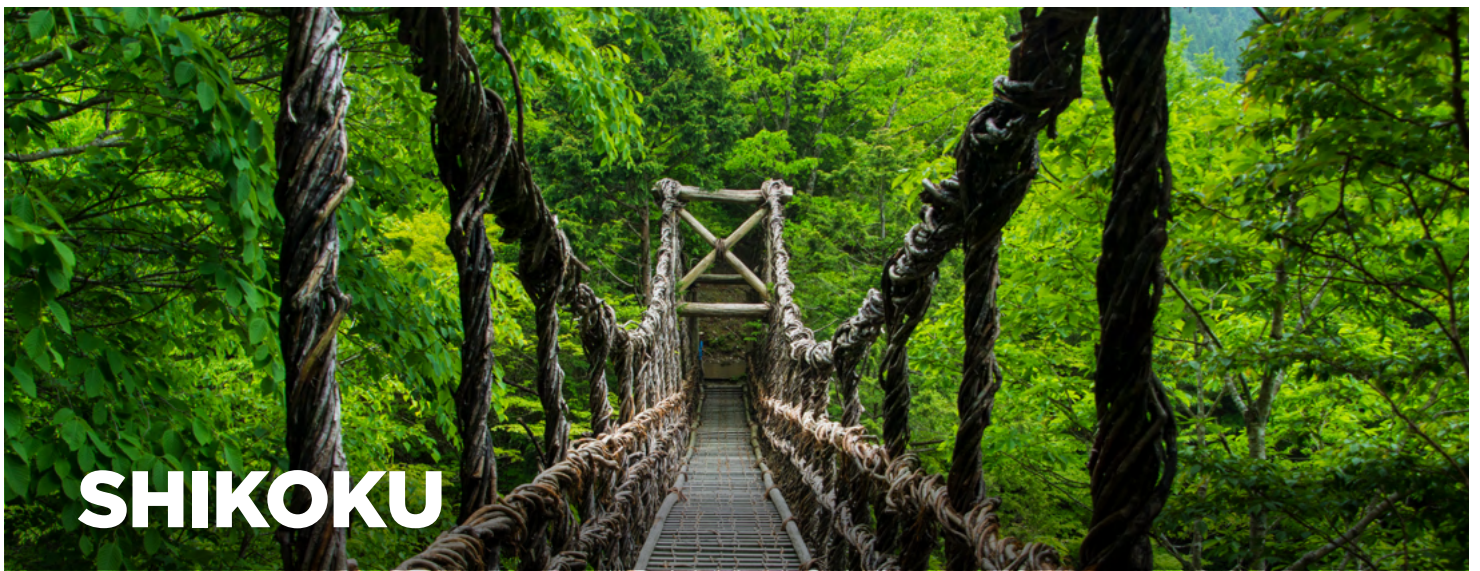


Travel tip

While summer and spring offer vibrant beauty, Hokkaido welcomes exploration year-round. Enjoy the region's renowned dairy products, from rich cheeses to creamy milk, and delve into its distinctive cuisine with steaming bowls of local ramen and tasty seafood dishes.

This region is also home to the Ainu people. Learn about their unique culture, artistry and skills in traditional wood carving, ceramics and textiles.





This slow-paced island with its small towns is perfect for travellers wanting to break up their journey and hit the outdoors. Explore temples, hiking trails and scenic landscapes.

Matsuyama

Stroll through traditional tiered wooden buildings dating from the Meiji period (1868-1912), and learn about the life of Masaoka Shiki, a renowned haiku poet.

Takamatsu

Explore the serene beauty of Ritsurin Garden, a masterpiece of Japanese landscape design. Visit historical sites and modern attractions.

Tokushima

Experience the vibrant Awa Odori, a fascinating festival of dance and music. Explore the outdoors or take a sightseeing cruise around the whirlpools.

Iya Valley

Unspoiled natural scenery, where vine bridges swing across dramatic gorges. End your day relaxing at a hot spring.

Setonaikai National Park

Centered around Seto Inland Sea, visit fishing villages and explore stunning scenery and wildlife viewing.

Kochi

Visit the impressive Kochi Castle, a symbol of the city's rich history. Immerse yourself in the lively atmosphere of Hirome Market, sampling local food and fresh seafood.



Travel tip

The Shikoku region is well-suited to self-drive journeys and slow-paced itineraries. The best time to visit this region is in spring (mid-March – May) or autumn (Oct – Nov).

Break up your journey with a scenic adventure and bike the breathtaking Shimanami Kaido, a land bridge connecting Honshu to Shikoku. You can also visit some of the 88 temples across the island and explore the sacred sites where Buddhist monk Kobo Daishi is believed to have trained.





From spectacular natural beauty, active volcanoes, and hot springs to museums, shrines and entertainment areas - Kyushu has a lot to offer and is well-paired with the Okinawa archipelago's pristine waters and relaxing atmosphere.

Oita region

Famous for its invigorating onsen and artistic heritage, Oita is a year-round destination with warm summers and cool winters. Visit the hot springs of Beppu and sample the local dishes naturally steamed in the town's bubbling waters.

Saga & Arita

Both cities are famous for their pottery and porcelain handicrafts. Stroll the cobblestoned streets and discover unique architecture and culture.

Kagoshima

Charming town perfect for your daily dose of onsen relaxation. Visit the famous Sakurajima, an active volcano, and journey through the historic grounds of Sengan-en.

Miyazaki region

With beautiful mountainous and coastal scenery, and steeped in legends, this region is also home to the breathtaking 17 meters high Manai Falls.

Nagasaki

Trading routes of old have left Dutch and Portuguese influences on this land of rolling hills and forested islands. Learn about Nagasaki city's wartime history as you visit the A-bomb sites.

Fukuoka

Famous for its culinary scene, visit the many Yatai food stalls – some of the oldest outdoor dining in the country! Try tonkotsu (Hakata) ramen, one of the city's specialties.



Welcome to Okinawa!

The chain of islands which make up Okinawa are Japan's hidden gem. Once an independent kingdom, it is the birthplace of karate and offers ruined and restored castles; along with lush forests, pristine beaches and coral reefs complete with whale sharks and manta rays. A must-try is the local awamori, a liquor made from Indica rice and aged in clay pots.



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This destination offers a seamless blend of tradition and innovation. Enjoy delicious street food, discover stunning mountains and national parks, explore vibrant neon-lit cities, and delve into 5,000 years of history - all in one trip!

NORTHERN REGIONS

Gyeonggi-do province in the west includes the buzzing metropolis of Seoul with its intoxicating mix of ultra-modern cityscapes and pre-historic sites, and the fascinating DMZ (demilitarized zone). Escape to nature in the cooler eastern province of Gangwon-do, its mountainous landscapes offering hiking and skiing.

CENTRAL REGIONS

Chungcheongnam-do province in the west is all about history and tradition, being home of the ancient Baekje Kingdom, with its fortresses and centuries-old burial tombs. To the east in Gyeongsangbuk-do province immerse yourself in authentic experiences and a visit to Andong Hahoe Folk Village. The UNESCO World Heritage sites of Gyeongju are a delight!

SOUTHERN REGIONS

Gyeongsangnam-do province is home to the vibrant port-city of Busan, where skyscrapers meet the beach. Jeollanam-do province in the south is famed for its cuisine and traditional hanok housing, particularly in the cities of Jinhae and Suncheon. Jeju-do province consists of the volcanic island of Jeju with its national park, the freshest of seafood and the centuries-old tradition of female Haenyeo divers who can dive up to 10 meters to collect shellfish.





WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

There are many ways to experience South Korea, from self-drive journeys, to hiking, small ship cruising and incredible food tours – all of which can be included on a tailor-made itinerary.

WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT IT

The country's blend of ancient heritage and modern innovation makes it a fascinating destination. Discover a land where centuries-old traditions like hanbok (traditional dress) and tea ceremonies coexist with futuristic skyscrapers and electrifying nightlife. From the majestic Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul to the infectious beats of Korean pop culture (K-pop), museums and festivals, there's something for every traveller.

Koreans are known for their hospitality and friendliness towards visitors – also known as “Jeong mentality”. You're likely to encounter warm welcomes and genuine interest in sharing their culture.

LOCAL CUISINE

South Korea is a foodie heaven, from the tangy, spicy flavours of kimchi (fermented vegetables) to the impressive dishes of Royal Court cuisine, world-famous Korean barbecue and renowned fried chicken! Visit local night markets and don't forget to try soju and makgeolli (rice wine), popular alcoholic drinks.

HANOK VILLAGES & SAUNAS

You don't have to go far from the big cities to immerse yourself in Korean heritage. Try a stay in one of Seoul's hanoks, beautifully crafted traditional wooden houses. These historic homes offer an authentic and serene atmosphere.

Unwind in mineral-rich saunas to rejuvenate a travel weary body. Many offer indoor and outdoor bathing areas in tranquil settings. Remember to wear appropriate attire and shower before entering.

TRANSPORT

It is easy to get around the country as all the major cities and regions are connected by modern transport systems including flights, great roads, and an extensive railway system including super high-speed trains, similar to bullet trains.





Spring (Mar - May)

Cherry blossoms typically bloom from late March to early April, although the exact timing can vary depending on the weather conditions each year. Stroll Gyeongju's main area for the most beautiful cherry blossom-lined streets. Further south, Jinhae is famous for its cherry blossom festival, held annually in early April.



Summer (Jun - Aug)

As temperatures rise the summer months can be hot and humid. It is also busy as it is festival season! Most visitors escape the heat by heading to the beaches, the mountains and the great outdoors. From the end of June through to August is peak monsoon season.



Autumn (Sep - Nov)

Clear blue skies and comfortable temperatures are the backdrops to the transformation of foliage from lush green to hues of red and gold in the north. Enjoy the various festivals throughout the country, including the colourful fireworks festivals in Seoul, Busan, and other cities across the country.



Winter (Dec - Feb)

With temperatures dropping to below zero in most parts of South Korea, the winter season is the perfect time to partake in winter activities such as skiing, snowboarding and ice-fishing, followed by a long soak in a relaxing sauna (jjimjilbang) as you admire the views. Spicy and warm dishes are perfect for this time of year.



NORTHERN REGIONS

Gyeonggi-do & Gangwon-do Provinces

SEOUL

Immerse yourself in the grandeur of South Korea's capital. Explore the vibrant 24/7 energy of bustling local markets, experience world-class shopping and indulge in exquisite street food. The city also offers easy access to beautiful coastal towns, temples, national parks and other sights including the following:

Incheon

You will more than likely arrive in to Incheon International Airport. This thriving transport hub also offers diverse entertainment districts.

Royal Palace

Gyeongbokgung Palace is a UNESCO World Heritage site at the heart of the Joseon dynasty. See the changing of the royal guards ceremony and explore its beautiful interior.

Seochon Hanok Village

Visit shops, beautiful cafes and one of the oldest and most well-preserved hanok villages in the country (Joseon era 1392 -1910).

Suwon Nammun Market

Handmade items, ceramics, clothing and must-visit if you want to enjoy a variety of mouth-watering food like a local!

Hwaseong Fortress

This fortress surrounds the centre of Suwon, built around 1790s by King Jeongjo of the Joseon dynasty to house and honour the remains of his father, Prince Sado.

Seoraksan National Park

Located east of Seoul, this national park is famous for its views, clear mountain streams and Buddhist temples. Hikes and outdoor activities are best enjoyed during the autumn season (late Sep – Nov).

DMZ

The Demilitarized Zone is a heavily guarded strip of land dividing North Korea from South Korea, offering a fascinating glimpse into Korea's complex history and current politics.

The small town of Taesung sits in the heart of the DMZ and existed before the barrier was created in 1953. The population of just 138 people, now in their 80s and 90s, live under some unique and restrictive rules.





CENTRAL REGIONS

Gyeongsanbuk-do, Jeollabuk-do & Chungcheong-do Provinces

Andong

Korea's most famous village is the Andong Hahoe Village, another UNESCO World Heritage site, founded around the 14th to 15th century, and preserving the architectural styles of that era. Remarkably, people still live here!

Gyeongju

Once the capital of the Silla Kingdom, Gyeongju is a treasure trove of historical and cultural sites. Visit Bulguksa Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the ancient Cheomseongdae Observatory.

Daegu

Visit the popular Seomun market for a glimpse of local culture. You will find locals selling clothing, souvenirs, handmade items and delicious food at various stalls. Include a visit at Biseulsan Mountain to admire its picturesque scenery.

Woraksan National Park

Renowned for its rugged mountain peaks, cascading waterfalls, and serene valleys. Visit Buddhist temples or enjoy one of the many hikes in the park.

Baekje Cultural Complex

A fascinating fortress, offering a glimpse into the ancient kingdom of Baekje, with its intricate architecture, rich history and burial grounds.

Seosan

This city boasts unique topography with its vast mudflats and diverse marine life. Visit temples and the Haemieupseong walled city to learn about its cultural heritage and history.

Jeonju

Known for its traditional hanok village where you can spend the night like a local. Enjoy shopping in craft shops and eat at various food stalls. Discover how rice wine is made at the traditional Wine Museum.





Yeosu

A vibrant port city, Yeosu boasts breathtaking coastal scenery and a rich maritime heritage.

Suncheon

Nature lovers will enjoy the Suncheon Bay Wetland Reserve with its lush reeds and endangered bird species, or the vast Suncheon Bay National Garden. On the outskirts of town you'll find the UNESCO listed Seonam Temple, the most treasured in Korean Buddhism.

Jinhae

Famous for its cherry blossom festival, the town comes to life with performances and events (Mar – May). A 2-hour drive from Suncheon during spring is also worth it as sakura blossoms ornament the highway to Jinhae.

Gwangju

The city has played a pivotal role in the country's democratic movement. Gwangju now has a vibrant cultural and artistic scene with various museums and art galleries.

Damyang

This serene countryside retreat enchants visitors with its vast bamboo forests and picturesque natural landscapes.

Busan

South Korea's second largest city combines natural beauty with industrial dynamism. A stop at a popular night market is a must if you want to try local flavours. Visit the colourful hillside community of Gamcheon Culture Village for stunning views.

JEJU ISLAND

Jeju Island, a volcanic gem, captivates with its pristine beaches, cascading waterfalls, and enchanting natural wonders. Hike to the summit of Hallasan Mountain, the island's iconic peak, or explore the scenic Jeju Olle Trail, offering breathtaking coastal vistas and glimpses of the island's volcanic cliffs.

Immerse yourself in Jeju's unique culture and traditions, including the legendary Haenyeo – skilled women divers who have harvested the sea for generations. Visit the Haenyeo Museum to learn more about local fishing culture.





PLANNING YOUR *tailor-made journey*

Tailor-made itineraries are designed to suit your interests, budget and time available, often including bespoke experiences, places and attractions. Whether travelling alone (solo travellers), as a couple, a family, or as a group of friends, the itinerary is custom-made for you and your preferences.

We include airport transfers, all accommodation, sightseeing with local guides and all transport, making 'independent' travel stress-free!

Take into consideration the following when planning your journey:

- How much time do you have?
- What are you expecting to experience? History and archaeology, cuisine, wildlife, landscapes, culture?
- What is your preferred style of travel, and budget?

Let us tailor-make the perfect itinerary for you!

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PLEASE CONTACT YOUR TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL