SOUTH KOREA

DETAILED ITINERARY

Oct 01/26

From bustling cities to serene temples, mountain landscapes to island coastlines, this journey through South Korea reveals the country's rich culture, living traditions, and natural beauty.

We begin in dynamic Seoul, where ancient palaces, traditional villages, and vibrant markets blend with sleek modern life. Highlights include a visit to the DMZ, Gyeongbokgung Palace, and Namsangol Hanok Village, along with a traditional performance at the National Gugak Center. As the sun sets, we enjoy a scenic Han River cruise, capping off our introduction to Korea's capital with views of its glowing skyline.

From Seoul, we head east to the coastal town of Sokcho, visiting the City Museum and taking a short boat ride to the charming Abai Village, orignally settled by refugees from North Korea. We explore the dramatic landscapes of Seoraksan National Park and browse Sokcho's colorful Fishery Market before continuing south to Andong, known for its preservation of Korean Confucian culture. Here, we glide across the river on a tranquil moon boat ride.

FACTS & HIGHLIGHTS

• 20 land days • Start and finish in Seoul • All meals included • Maximum 16 travelers • 2 internal flights included • Walk along the DMZ and glimpse one of the world's most heavily guarded borders • Enjoy a temple stay in Gyeongju and experience Buddhist monastic life, including morning meditation • Explore the UNESCO-listed Hahoe Folk Village and discover Korea's Confucian heritage • Stroll through Jeonju Hanok Village and learn to make Korea's iconic bibimbap • Ride the retro Haeundae Sky Capsule along Busan's stunning coastline • Discover Jeju Island's dramatic volcanic landscapes, women divers, and island traditions • Cruise along the Han River at sunset, watching Seoul's skyline light up • Wander through the serene bamboo groves of Damyang's Juknokwon Forest

DEPARTURE DATES & PRICE

Mar 05	**–**	**Mar 24, 2027**	**-**	**$8995 USD**
Oct 15	**–**	**Nov 03, 2027**	**-**	**$8995 USD**
Oct 09	**–**	**Oct 28, 2028**	**-**	**$9495 USD**

Activity Level: 2

Comfort Level: We have air conditioned vehicles for road travel.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Comfortable hotels with private bathrooms. At Golgulsa Temple Stay (day 9) accommodation will be basic with a mattress on the floor and up to 3 people of the same gender, per room. Bathrooms are shared by same gender for this 1 night.

We explore Hahoe Folk Village, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and visit the Mask Museum and Dosan Seowon Confucian Academy, before heading to Gyeongju, the ancient capital of the Silla Kingdom. A temple stay offers the chance to experience Buddhist monastic life. In Gyeongju, we greet the day with a morning meditation, then explore landmarks such as Bulguksa Temple, the Seokguram Grotto, and the Cheomseongdae Observatory.

Next, we head to Busan to visit the seaside Haedong Yonggungsa Temple, ride the retro Haeundae Sky Capsule, and relax in the famous spa area. A short flight takes us to Jeju Island, where we discover volcanic landscapes, visit Cheonjiyeon Waterfall, explore traditional life with the famed women divers, and enjoy making a tangerine sweet snack. We also take in a taekwondo performance, the Jeju Stone Museum, and stroll through the Forest of Healing.

Back on the mainland, we stop in Gwangju to wander the bamboo forest and learn about Korea's culinary heritage at Kimchi Town. Our final stop is the charming city of Jeonju, where we explore the Hanok Village and learn to prepare Korea's beloved bibimbap. We return to Seoul by high-speed train to conclude our unforgettable journey.

DAY 1 ARRIVE IN SEOUL, WELCOME DINNER

Arrive at Seoul Airport and transfer to our centrally located hotel. This evening we will have a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Overnight in Seoul.

DMZ

DAY 2 SEOUL - GYEONGBOKGUNG PALACE, NAMSANGOL HANOK VILLAGE, NATIONAL GUGAK CENTER TRADITIONAL PERFORMANCE, SUNSET RIVER CRUISE

This morning we begin our exploration of Seoul. Step into the past at Gyeongbokgung Palace, where we will witness the traditional changing of the guard ceremony.

We continue to Namsangol Hanok Village, where well-preserved traditional homes offer a vivid look into Korea's daily life during the Joseon Dynasty.

In the afternoon, we immerse ourselves in Korea's rich musical legacy at the National Gugak Center, enjoying a captivating performance of traditional music and dance.

Later, we unwind with a scenic Han River Cruise, gliding past Seoul's glittering skyline as the sun sets. With stunning views, a gentle breeze, and the city lights reflecting on the water, it's the perfect way to end a day of exploration.

Overnight in Seoul.

DAY 3 SEOUL - WAR MEMORIAL, DMZ TOUR

After breakfast, we visit the War Memorial of Korea. We have the opportunity to explore military artifacts, interactive displays, and inspiring stories that honor those who shaped Korea's journey.

We then drive 1.5 hours to the DMZ, visiting Imjingak Park, the Freedom Bridge, DMZ Theater & Exhibition, the dramatic 3rd Infiltration Tunnel, and Dora Observatory. After this unforgettable journey through Korea's past and present, we return to the hotel to relax.

Overnight in Seoul.

Haechi and Gwanghwamun Gate

Lotte World Tower & Seokchon Lake

DAY 4 SEOUL SITES - INSADONG ST, GWANGJANG MARKET

After breakfast, we begin our Seoul adventure at Jongmyo Shrine, a UNESCO World Heritage site honoring Korea's royal ancestors. Next, we get creative with a Korean calligraphy class, designing our own decorative tumbler to take home. We then stroll through the charming streets of Insadong, known for its traditional art shops and teahouses.

At Gwangjang Market, enjoy a fun and flavorful lunch experience as our guide introduces us to a variety of Korean street foods, offering a taste of the local flavors and culinary traditions.

Overnight in Seoul.

DAY 5 TO SOKCHO - MAKGEOLLI BREWERY, BOAT TO NAMI ISLAND

After breakfast, we check out of our Seoul hotel and meet our guide for a scenic 2.5-hour drive to Sokcho, a picturesque coastal city nestled between the East Sea and Seoraksan Mountain. Known for its natural beauty and deep-rooted traditions, Sokcho offers a refreshing change of pace from the city.

Our first stop in Sokcho is a visit to a traditional makgeolli brewery, where you'll learn about Korea's centuries-old rice wine brewing process. Enjoy a guided tasting and experience the unique flavors of this beloved local drink.

Next, travel to the beautiful Nami Island, famous for its tree-lined paths, peaceful scenery, and picturesque landscapes. After a traditional lunch, take time to explore the island's walking trails and enjoy its relaxing atmosphere.

Yongajangseong Ridge

Afterwards, we visit Soyang Dam, one of South Korea's largest dams. Admire the impressive views of the surrounding mountains and reservoir while learning about the dam's importance to the region.

Later, we check in to our hotel and enjoy free time in the evening to relax or explore at your own pace. Whether you stroll along the nearby coastline, sample local street food, or simply unwind, Sokcho welcomes you with a calm and coastal charm.

Overnight in Sokcho.

DAY 6 SOKCHO - SEORAKSAN NATIONAL PARK

After breakfast, we head to Seoraksan National Park, one of Korea's most stunning natural landmarks. A scenic cable car ride takes us up to Gwongeumseong Fortress, offering breathtaking views of mountain peaks and the East Sea. We stop at the picturesque Sokcho Lighthouse, where you can enjoy sweeping coastal views and the refreshing sea breeze.

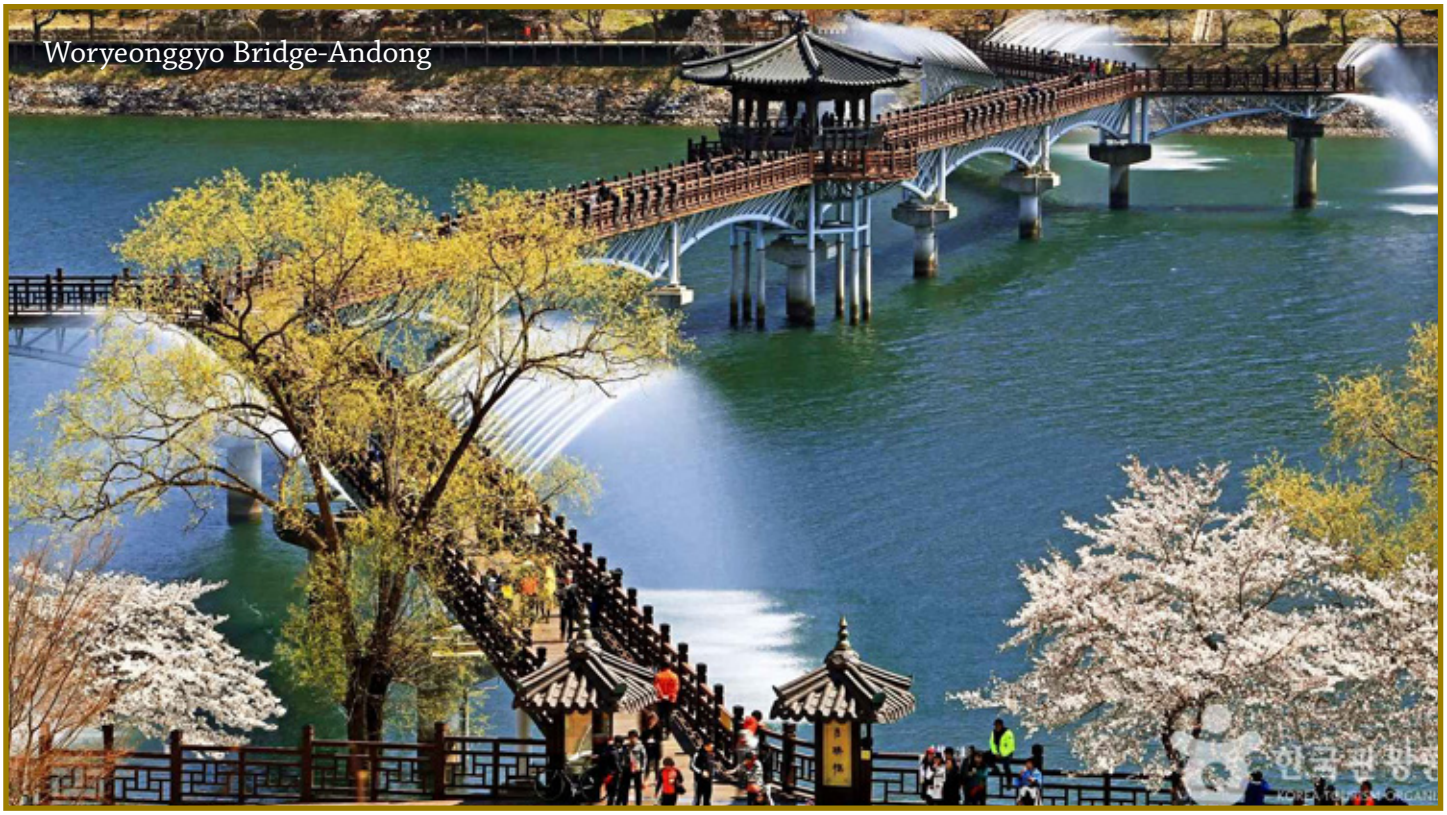
Returning to the hotel for a relaxing evening.

Overnight in Sokcho.

DAY 7 SOKCHO - BOAT TO ABAI VILLAGE, FISH MARKET, TO ANDONG

After breakfast, we board a hand-pulled Gaetbae boat to cross over to Abai Village, a small fishing community founded by North Korean refugees during the Korean War. With its rustic charm, narrow alleyways, and authentic seafood dishes, Abai offers a unique glimpse into Sokcho's identity.

Next, we visit the lively Sokcho Fish Market, where we can sample fresh seafood and local specialties. Then we visit Sokcho City Museum, where we delve into the region's fascinating history and cultural heritage. Here, we enjoy a vibrant Samulnori


Woryeonggyo Bridge-Andong

performance; a traditional Korean percussion ensemble that brings local stories to life through rhythm and movement.

After lunch, we depart Sokcho and enjoy a scenic 3-hour drive to Andong, a city known for its deep cultural roots and traditional way of life.

Overnight in Andong.

DAY 8 ANDONG - HAHOE VILLAGE, MASK MUSEUM & CONFUCIAN ACADEMY

After breakfast, we visit Dosan Seowon, a historic Confucian academy surrounded by peaceful nature. Originally a private study hall, it became a state-recognized Seowon (academy) in the late 16th century, making it one of the most prestigious educational institutions of its time.

Afterwards, we explore Hahoe Village, a beautifully preserved traditional village recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Wander through its charming streets and soak in centuries-old architecture and local life.

Next, we visit the Hahoe Mask Museum and enjoy a captivating mask dance performance, showcasing Korea's rich folk traditions.

As the sun begins to set, we enjoy a peaceful ride on the Andong Moon Boats beneath the beautifully lit Woryeonggyo Bridge, creating a magical end to the day.

Overnight in Andong.

DAY 9 TO GYEONGJU - BUDDHIST TEMPLE STAY

After breakfast, we drive 2 hours to Gyeongju, the ancient capital known as Korea's "museum without walls." Our tour begins at the Daereungwon Tomb Complex, home to impressive royal burial mounds.

We then check in for the Golgulsa Temple Stay where tradition and tranquility await. Experience a Seonmudo demonstration and Korean traditional arts performance, followed by an orientation on

Donggung Palace and Wolji Pond

temple etiquette.

Participate in Seonmudo training and complete 108 prostrations; a moving spiritual practice. Dinner features authentic vegetarian temple cuisine, then time to rest and reflect.

Overnight at Golgulsa Temple.

DAY 10 GYEONGJU - BUDDHIST MORNING SERVICE, TRADITIONAL MEDICINE MARKET

We rise early at 5:00 AM for a serene start with Buddhist morning service and sitting meditation, followed by walking meditation to center the mind and spirit. Breakfast features nourishing vegetarian temple cuisine.

At noon, we check out of the temple and drive to Daegu where we visit the historic Yangnyeongsi Market, Korea's famous traditional medicine market. Discover centuries-old healing practices and enjoy a relaxing herbal footbath, a rejuvenating wellness experience rooted in Korean culture.

Afterward we continue on to Gyeongju and check in to our hotel.

Overnight in Gyeongju.

DAY 11 GYEONGJU - CHEOMSEONGDAE OBSERVATORY, HANOK VILLAGE & DONGGUNG PALACE

After breakfast, we visit Cheomseongdae Observatory, Asia's oldest surviving astronomical observatory, and possibly the world. Built during the Silla Dynasty in the 7th century, it was used to observe the stars and forecast seasonal changes for agricultural and ceremonial purposes.

Next, we explore Gyochon Village, a beautifully preserved traditional hanok village where you can experience life as it was during the Joseon Dynasty (1393 to 1920). It's known for its peaceful

Woljeonggyo Bridge

atmosphere, historic homes, and cultural activities.

As the sun sets, we stroll around the beautifully illuminated Donggung Palace and Wolji Pond, soaking in the tranquil atmosphere of this historic site. We then return to the hotel for a restful evening.

Overnight in Gyeongju.

DAY 12 TO BUSAN - HAEDONG YONGGUNGSA TEMPLE & HAEUNDAE SKY CAPSULE

After breakfast, we drive about 1.5 hours to Busan, Korea's vibrant seaside city. Our first stop is Haedong Yonggungsa Temple, a stunning cliffside temple overlooking the ocean and one of the few temples built by the sea.

Next, we head to Haeundae Beach, where we take a relaxing ride on the Haeundae Sky Capsule, a charming aerial monorail featuring colorful, vintage-style capsules. These four-seater pods travel at a leisurely pace of 4 km/h (about 2.5 mph), offering a 30-minute scenic ride with sweeping views of the ocean, cliffs, and coastline.

We stop at the APEC House, a landmark of international cooperation surrounded by the scenic beauty of Dongbaekseom Island.

After soaking in the sights and sea breeze, we check in to our Busan hotel for the evening.

Overnight in Busan.

DAY 13 BUSAN - FISH MARKET, CULTURAL VILLAGE & SPA LAND

After breakfast, we dive into the bustling Jagalchi Fish Market, Korea's largest seafood market, where fresh catches and lively vendors create an unforgettable atmosphere. Next, we explore Gukje Market, filled with local goods, souvenirs and street food.

We then visit Gamcheon Culture Village, famous for its colorful murals, quirky art installations, and winding alleys.

In the afternoon, we experience breathtaking city views from Busan from the SKY observation deck. To unwind, we head enjoy a relaxing spa experience before returning to the hotel.

Overnight in Busan.

DAY 14 FLY TO JEJU ISLAND - TEA MUSEUM, CHEONJIYEON WATERFALL

We transfer to Busan Airport and take a flight to the beautiful island of Jeju. Upon arrival, we explore Hallasan National Park via the scenic Eoseungsaengak Trail, enjoying stunning views of Jeju's volcanic landscape.

Next, we visit the Osulloc Tea Museum, where we learn about Korea's tea culture.

Our final stop is the Cheonjiyeon Waterfall, surrounded by lush greenery and a tranquil atmosphere.

We then check in to our hotel for dinner and overnight.

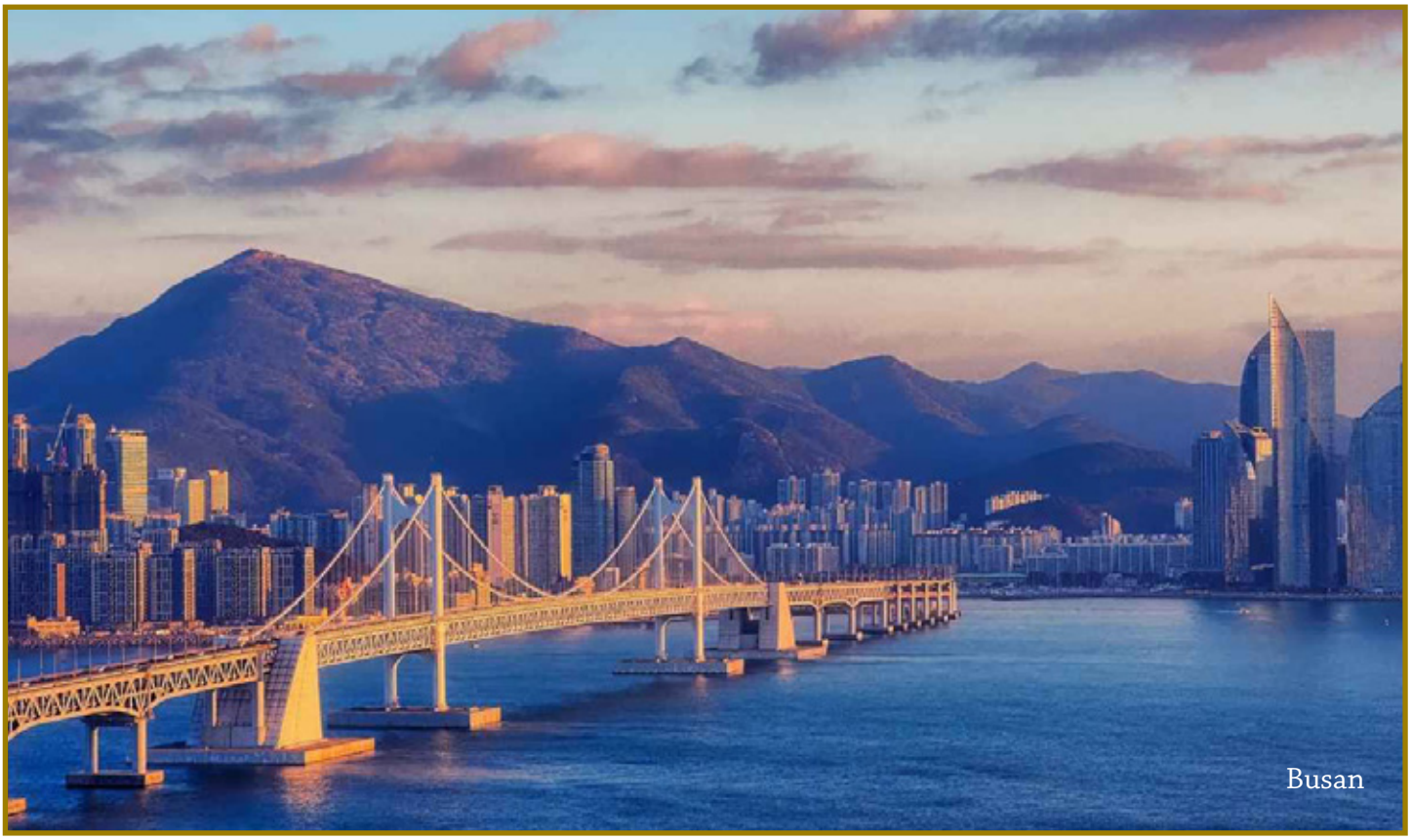
Overnight in Jeju (Seogwipo area.)

DAY 15 JEJU TOUR - TANGERINE SNACK CLASS, TAEWOO FISHER BOAT, WOMEN DIVERS

After breakfast, we we join a fun tangerine snack cooking class, discovering local flavors and hands-on traditions. We then take a scenic ride on the Taewoo Fisher Boat at Soesokkak Estuary, soaking in the stunning coastal views.

After lunch, we enjoy a captivating Women Divers Show at Seongsan Ilchulbong, showcasing their incredible skills. Next, we visit the Haenyeo Museum to learn about Jeju's legendary women divers and their unique way of life.

Overnight in Jeju (Hamdeok area.)



Busan

Busan

Women Divers of Jeju

DAY 16 JEJU - TAEKWONDO PERFORMANCE, JEJU STONE MUSEUM -AND FOREST OF HEALING

Following breakfast at the hotel, we set out for another day of unforgettable sightseeing on Jeju Island. We begin with the dynamic Arirang Hon Taekwondo Performance, showcasing Korea's martial spirit and artistry.

Next, we stroll through the peaceful Seogwipo Forest of Healing, surrounded by nature's tranquility. Our day offers the perfect blend of culture, history and relaxation.

Finally, we explore the unique cultural treasures of the huge Jeju Stone Museum. The indoor/outdoor museum is a cultural and ecological theme park dedicated to the volcanic origins of Jeju Island and its deep connection to stone. It beautifully showcases Jeju's unique stone culture, including traditional stone statues like dolhareubang (grandfather statues), stone walls, and stone tools used in daily life.

Overnight in Jeju (Hamdeok area.)

DAY 17 TO GWANGJU - BAMBOO FOREST AND KIMCHI TOWN

After breakfast, we transfer to Jeju Airport and take a short flight to Gwangju, where a new adventure awaits. The city is surrounded by lush scenery and is often called the food capital of Korea. Gwangju is best known for its pivotal role in Korea's modern history. The Gwangju Uprising (May 18, 1980) was a major pro-democracy movement against military dictatorship. Today, this legacy is honored at the May 18th National Cemetery and Memorial Park, making Gwangju a powerful symbol of freedom and civic courage in Korea.

Upon arrival, we begin our Gwangju tour with a visit to the serene Juknokwon Bamboo Forest, known for its refreshing air and beautiful walking trails, with eight scenic paths to explore and enjoy. We will enjoy an easy walk on one of the 8 trails.

Later, we dive into local flavor at Gwangju Kimchi Town, where we learn about Korea's iconic dish.

Overnight in Gwangju.

Jeju Stone Park

Jeju

Jeju

Seoul

Seoul

DAY 18 GWANGJU TO JEONJU - HANOK VILLAGE, COOKING CLASS

We begin our day with a scenic drive to Jeonju, taking about 1.5 hours. Upon arrival, we step back in time at the charming Jeonju Hanok Village, where hundreds of traditional Korean houses showcase the city's rich heritage. Here we visit the Fan Culture Museum and the Korean Traditional Liquor Museum, offering insights into Korea's craft of brewing.

In the evening, we roll up our sleeves for a fun Jeonju Bibimbap cooking class, followed by a delicious dinner. After a full day of culture and cuisine, we check in and relax in Jeonju.

Overnight in Jeonju.

DAY 19 JEONJU, RETURN TO SEOUL

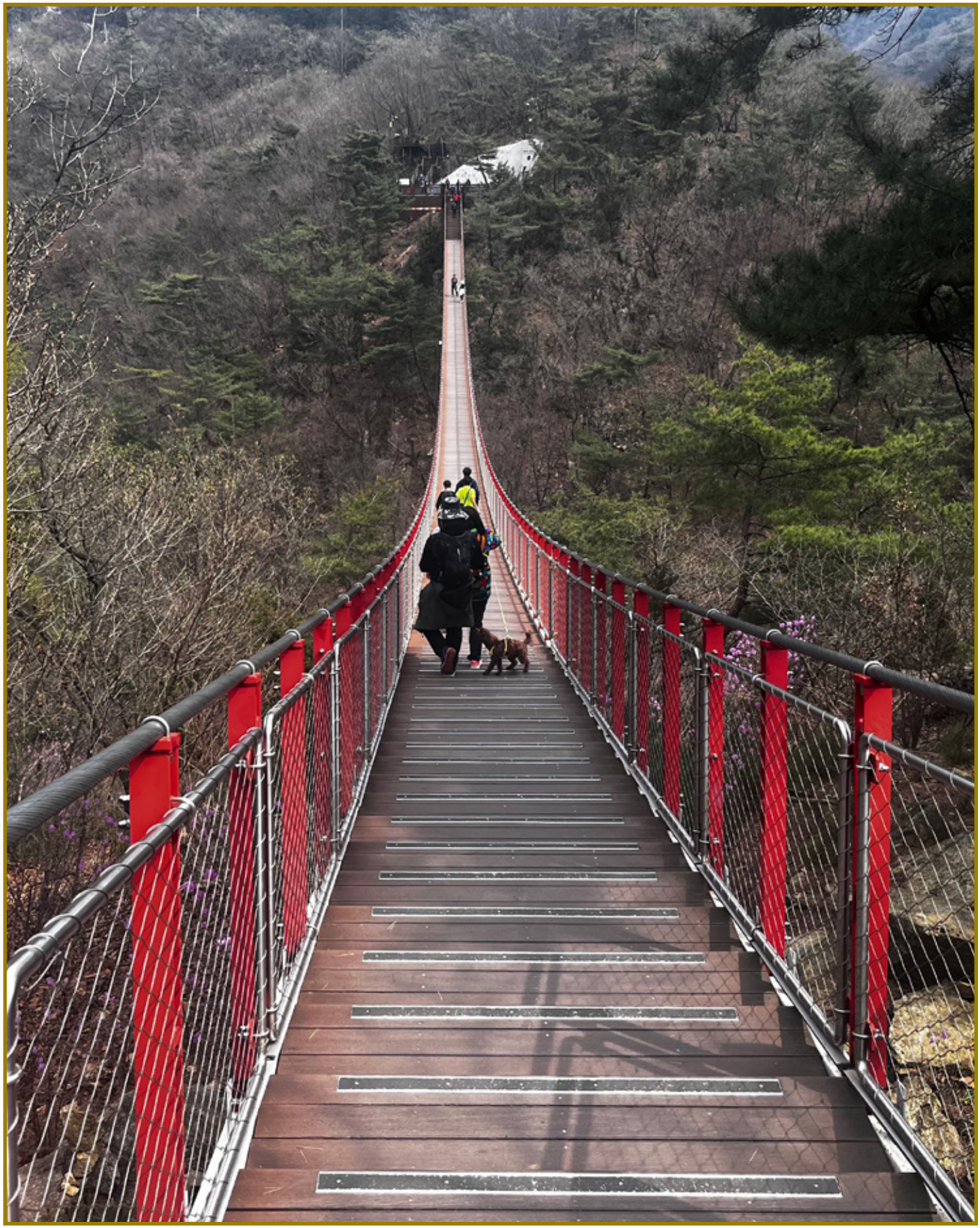
This morning, we depart Jeonju and enjoy a comfortable train ride to Seoul, which takes approximately 2 hours. Upon arrival, we check in to our hotel and settle in.

The rest of the day is free for you to enjoy at your own pace, and explore the vibrant streets of Seoul, do some last-minute souvenir shopping, or simply soak in the city's lively atmosphere before our farewell dinner; the perfect way to spend your final evening in Korea, to reflect on an unforgettable journey through Korea's past and present!

Overnight in Seoul.

DAY 20 DEPART SEOUL

Today we transfer to the airport for our flights homebound.



Gyeongju - Cheomseongdae Observatory

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. HOW BIG ARE THE GROUPS?

Each group is limited to 16 participants. Small groups are an important ingredient in adventure travel. They allow for more interaction and more personalized service throughout the itinerary.

2. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

All accommodations throughout; all meals, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); bottled drinking water throughout the trip; all internal transportation; airport transfers on day 1 and departure day (i.e. the last day of the ElderTreks tour); all day trips and entrance fees as outlined in the itinerary; tips for hotels (porterage), bus driver, restaurants, national guides, and spot guides; services of a trip leader.

3. WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE?

International flights, tips to ElderTreks tour leader, alcoholic drinks, visas and travel insurance.

4. ARE THESE "EDUCATIONAL" TOURS?

Yes, in the broadest sense of the word, "educational". We visit museums, national parks and reserves and have talks and discussions on many aspects of history, culture and nature. But this is only a portion of the educational experience. We believe that it is equally educational to meet local people on a non-commercial basis, and even try to learn a few words in the native language. Sometimes the most "educational" moments are wandering through the streets of a mountain village.

5. HOW DO WE TRAVEL DURING THE TOUR?

All land transportation is included in the land price of the trip. We have air conditioned vehicles for road travel; we travel by high-speed train and we take 2 flights.

6. WHAT ARE OUR ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE?

Comfortable hotels with private bathrooms. At Golgulsa Temple Stay (day 9) accommodation will be basic with a mattress on the floor and up to 3 people of the same gender, per room. Bathrooms are shared by same gender for this 1 night.

7. WHAT ABOUT THE WEATHER?

For September to early November the weather is pleasant and cool, with occasional heat spikes. Average temperatures range between 15 - 25 C (highs from around 60's - 70's). The weather is usually dry with clear skies.

For mid-March to end of May departures, the weather is mild and pleasant, with occasional rain. Temperatures range between 7 - 17 C (50's - 60's.) Spring flowers and budding can trees make this a delightful time to travel.

8. WHEN IS PAYMENT DUE?

A non-refundable deposit of $500 USD (plus insurance if you require it) is due at time of booking and will reserve your place on the tour. Payment of the full land cost is due 120 days before departure. Cancellation charges are applicable and are outlined in the "Terms and Conditions" section of our brochure.

9. IS MEDICAL INSURANCE REQUIRED?

Insurance coverage is not included in the cost of your trip. Please note that medical insurance is not required for this adventure but is recommended. ElderTreks offers comprehensive travel insurance with Manulife for Canadian guests, and John Hancock for American guests and we are happy to provide you with a quote if you call our office. If you are purchasing insurance elsewhere, please ensure you provide the details to ElderTreks as soon as possible.

10. WHAT SHOULD I TAKE ON THE TOUR?

There is a detailed "What to Take" list in our Trip Kit, which we will send to you after you have booked the trip.

11. WHAT MEALS ARE INCLUDED?

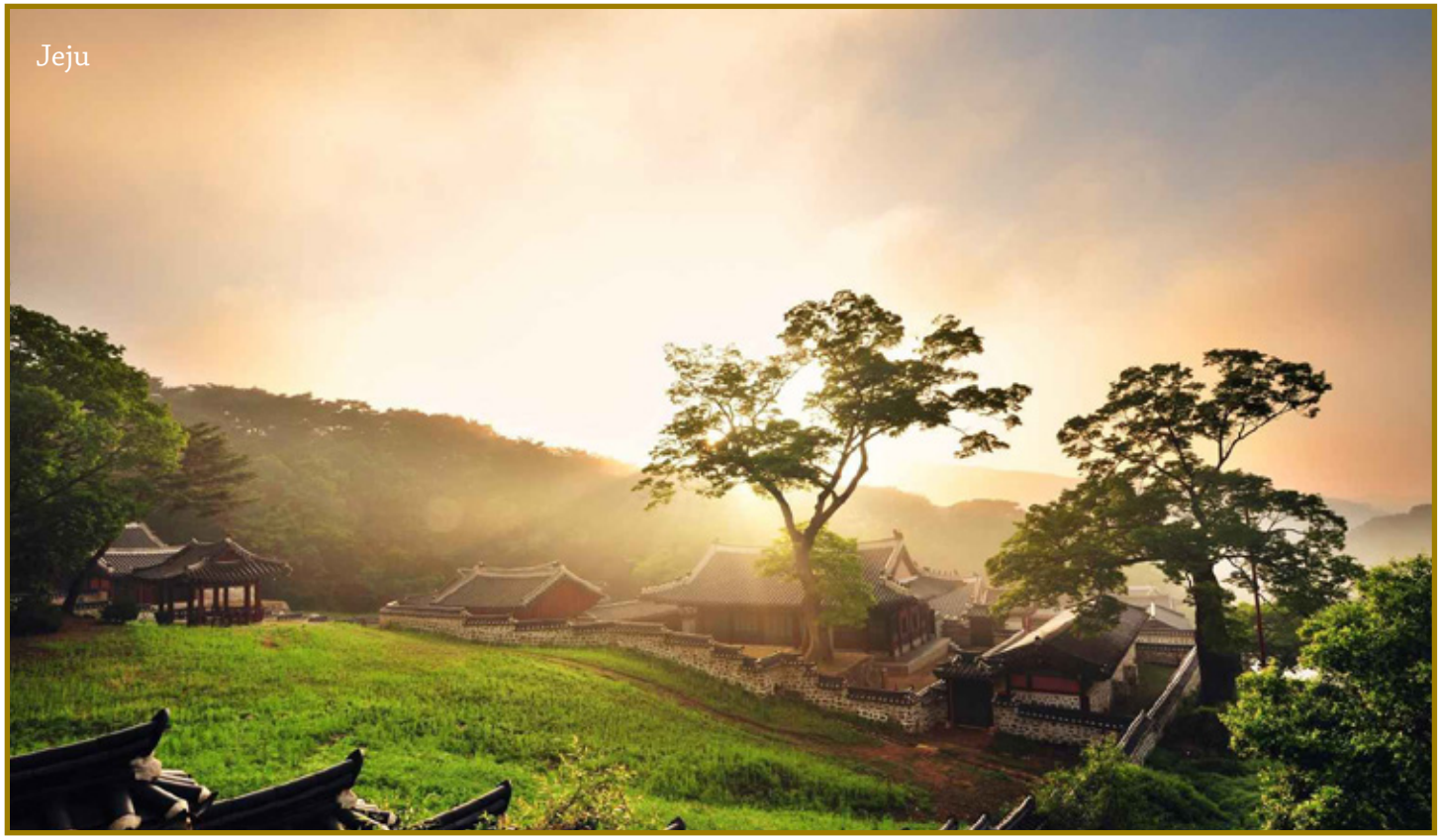
All meals during the itinerary are included, starting with dinner on day 1 and finishing with breakfast on departure day. We eat a variety of local and international foods prepared in a wide range of settings. In many cases, we simply order a number of dishes and share, allowing you to sample new foods and decide what you enjoy best.

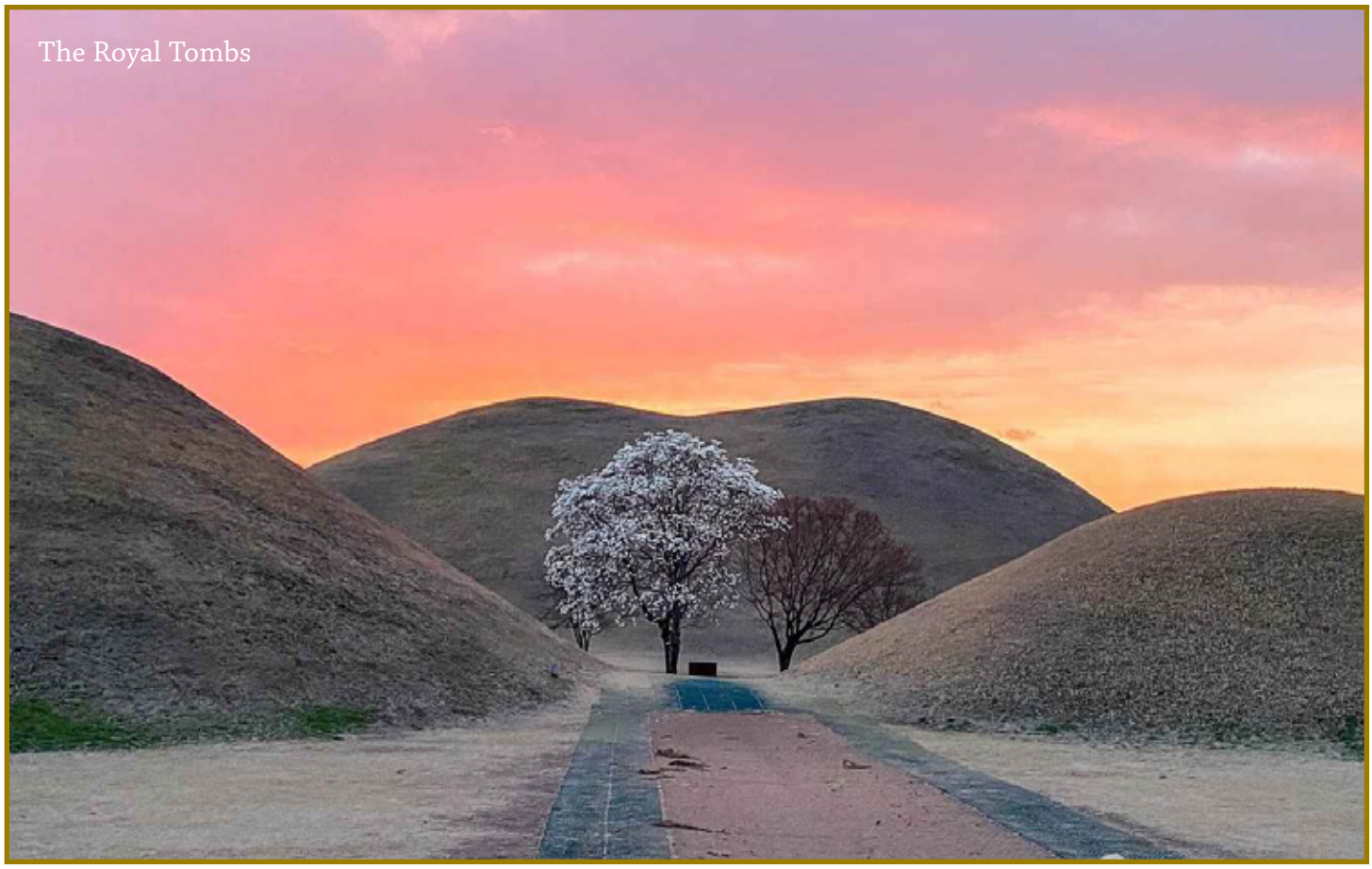
12. CAN YOU ARRANGE MY FLIGHTS?

We would be happy to take care of your air arrangements. ElderTreks offers personalized flight itineraries — not group flights. Stop over en route, come in a few days early, or extend your stay. Call us for a customized itinerary.

13. WHAT IF I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION?

If you have any further questions about the adventure, please call our office for more details. A Trip Specialist will be happy to answer your questions. A Trip Kit containing further details on the destination will be sent to you once you have booked the trip.


Jeju


The Royal Tombs

Jeju

Jeju

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