Korea, South

Risk Ratings

L LOW MEDICAL RISK for Korea, South
L LOW TRAVEL RISK for Korea, South

Know My Risks

COVID-19 is a pandemic. All areas are likely to experience an outbreak and disruption.

International SOS is monitoring the situation closely.

Please see our:

Medical and Security Alerts for South Korea

COVID-19 information for South Korea

Dedicated COVID-19 website

South Korea is a safe travel destination. In general, crime, particularly violent crime, poses a low risk to business travellers. City-centre protests and demonstrations occasionally end in minor clashes with the police. Periodic surges in anti-US or anti-Japanese sentiment very rarely provoke harassment of individual foreign visitors.

Occasional provocations from North Korea, along with persistent threatening rhetoric, periodically lead to increased tensions between both countries. However, they are highly unlikely to pose any direct security risks or to lead to wider conflict.

This information is intended as a summary of the travel security environment; however, the risks can change at short notice during a crisis or evolving situation. Please check our travel security alerts to ensure you are informed of the most recent developments.

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

Alerts

T COVID-19: Abide by country-specific advice as pandemic, associated consequences move into new phases

T North Korea, South Korea: Expect tensions to persist despite announcement by North Korean leader to suspend military action plans against South Korea

View All Alerts

Alerts

COVID-19: Abide by country-specific advice as pandemic, associated consequences move into new phases

Created and/or Modified: Friday, July 10, 2020 00:34:23 GMT

Level: Advisory
Location: **Afghanistan; American Samoa (US); Australia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei; Cambodia; China,Hong Kong (China SAR),Macao (China SAR); Cook Islands; East Timor; Fiji; French Polynesia (France); Guam (US); India; Indonesia; Japan; Kiribati; Laos; Malaysia; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Micronesia; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nauru; Nepal; New Caledonia (France); New Zealand; North Korea; Northern Mariana Islands (US); Pakistan; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; South Korea; Sri Lanka; Taiwan (China); Thailand; Tonga; Tuvalu; Vanuatu; Vietnam; Wallis and Futuna (France)**
Category: Travel restriction, COVID-19

A number of countries have relaxed some restrictions that aimed to contain the spread of COVID-19. This includes the relaxation of restrictions on internal movement, reopening of businesses and a resumption of some domestic and international travel. Nevertheless, strict measures remain in place, or are being re-imposed, in some

locations where there is increasing case activity.

International SOS is issuing this global alert for all countries and territories. In some locations all travel should continue to be deferred, while for others essential travel can resume after undertaking an individual risk assessment of the COVID-19 situation and entry restrictions, including the potential for sudden changes. Please refer to our dedicated country pages and alerts for details and location-specific advice.

Advice

Managers

- Closely monitor official advice and the extent of COVID-19 transmission and related developments for impacts on staff mobility or associated security risks.
- Review operational requirements such as:
  - Whether it is practical for any relocated staff to return to certain locations
  - Whether it is best for your staff and dependents to remain certain locations or to relocate
  - The viability of contingency plans for a deterioration in the logistical, security and/or medical environment and impact of a re-imposition of local measures on business operations and the workforce in-country with minimal forewarning.
- Ensure country-specific Business Continuity Plans are regularly reviewed and focused on next steps. These include mobility management, site operations and return to work.
- Ensure the strict compliance of your staff with local government containment efforts.
- Check the COVID-19 Travel Restrictions Page or contact International SOS for quarantine measures in place or transportation status for specific locations prior to approving a trip.
- Consult our country pages for country-specific advice.

In-country members

- Closely follow all official directives and abide by them. This includes any requirements to wear masks in public places, and self-isolation or quarantine obligations.
- Regularly re-evaluate whether it is best for you and your family to remain in-country or to relocate. Consider the circumstances that influence your ability to remain in-country. These include:
  - Your ability to work with the restrictions, directives and mitigation measures of the authorities.
  - The medical and security threats likely to be impacted by a COVID-19 outbreak.
- Closely monitor reliable sources for the extent of transmission in your location and information relating to security incidents or changes to internal mobility, including the International SOS country-specific alerts.
- Understand your company's medical and security triggers for changes to in-country posture.
- Prepare for an outbreak in your location:
  - Ensure you have a plan to restrict your movements and social interactions, and if required, to stay home for 14 days or more.
  - Keep yourself in the best possible health. Get the recommended amount of sleep each day, eat a healthy diet, and keep up regular physical activity.
  - Speak to your doctor now about any chronic medical conditions you may have and get them under optimal control.
  - Ensure you have adequate supplies of any necessary equipment and medication.
  - Have your annual flu vaccination.
- Reduce the spread of infection:
  - Consider wearing a face mask when in public. In some locations this is mandatory. See general information on wearing masks.
  - Anyone who has any symptoms even if only mild should stay home and seek medical advice.
  - Cough and sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.
  - Do not shake hands, hug or kiss.
  - Wash your hands frequently. Carry hand sanitiser for use when soap and water are not readily available.
  - Avoid sharing food, drinks and personal items.
  - Avoid touching your face.
  - If you must touch objects that are handled by many people (such as handrails, doorknobs) ensure you do not touch your face.
  - Practice social distancing: Keep 1-2 meters (3-6 feet) away from other people. Avoid crowded places.
- Social Distancing: Some people have COVID-19 without noticeable symptoms. Follow these measures:
  - Consider staying home as much as practical.
  - In public, try to maintain a distance of 1-2 meters (3-6 feet) from others.
  - Use private vehicles if possible.
  - Keep face-to-face interactions brief.
  - Choose outdoor activities rather than indoor.
  - Consider whether gatherings with friends and family should be minimised.
- For those who are sick:
  - Stay at home and call for medical advice. Follow the local procedure for your area.

For further health information and advice, see the current International SOS medical alerts and the COVID-19 information within the Pandemic Information Site.

Inbound travellers

- **Defer either all or non-essential travel (depending on our country-specific advice).**
- Understand your company's business-specific pandemic and business continuity plans and triggers for changes to in-country operations.
- Discuss all travel with management in accordance with your organisation's travel approval process. Review with your management the necessity of travelling against the potential risks. Consider the following factors:
- Reconfirm flights prior to departure. We do not hold information on specific flights or other modes of transport; contact the relevant service provider or your travel agent.
- Plan flexible itineraries taking into account any residual travel restrictions. Account for additional time required for likely health and temperature screening at airports and other transport hubs. Be mindful of any quarantine and isolation procedures being implemented at point of departure and destination.

More detail

An outbreak or resurgence of COVID-19 cases could occur at any time and location, and could escalate rapidly. This could lead to the re-imposition of border closures and localised restrictions, including lockdowns and business closures. Healthcare facilities may become strained or overloaded, limiting the ability to treat all illnesses, including COVID-19. Medical evacuations may be further constrained. From a security perspective, the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 will continue to resonate for some time. Ramifications will be distinct to local context but will likely exacerbate existing security challenges in the location.

International SOS continues to monitor related developments. Our risk assessment is made jointly by medical and security professionals, and accounts for current risk levels, as well as the likely evolution of risk in the coming weeks and months. Daily updated information on COVID-19-related restrictions worldwide is accessible on the COVID-19 Travel restrictions page of our International SOS Pandemic Information site. We will also continue to provide any necessary updates to significant mobility, logistical, medical and security implications, with corresponding advice, in dedicated country-specific alerts.

North Korea, South Korea: Expect tensions to persist despite announcement by North Korean leader to suspend military action plans against South Korea

Created and/or Modified: Monday, July 06, 2020 05:45:51 GMT

Level: Advisory
Location: **South Korea; North Korea**
Category: Conflict, Diplomatic issue

Members should continue to anticipate tensions along the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) to persist **in the coming weeks**, despite North Korea's declaration on 24 June that it was suspending military action plans against South Korea. North Korea has engaged in de-escalatory gestures since 24 June, including suspending plans to mobilise North Korean troops into the DMZ and removing loudspeakers recently installed along the DMZ. However, there remains potential for the sudden re-escalation of hostile rhetoric and provocative acts by North Korea due to unresolved underlying issues. Members should monitor developments in the Korean peninsula using reliable sources.

Advice

Managers

- Closely monitor reliable information sources on the latest developments in order to identify any indications of deterioration in bilateral relations and associated risks.
- Maintain robust escalation plans to help identify developments that genuinely presage an escalation of military tensions. Escalation plans will help minimise an organisation's exposure by linking such developments with actionable advice regarding inbound travel, in-country movement and the withdrawal of staff from South Korea.
- Those with operations in either country should be prepared for sudden changes in decisions linked to staffing, such as the withdrawal of non-essential staff first, and, eventually, all staff.

In-country members

- Consult reliable media sources, taking care to distinguish between fact and rumour. The local media are a source of information regarding domestic military activity such as air raid exercises.
- Members in South Korea should expect and be prepared to respond to civil defence drills. Adhere to all directives issued by the authorities, including those issued during civil defence drills.
- Register with your embassy.
- Tour group visits to the DMZ along the border between North and South Korea remain suspended due to COVID-19. Visits will likely remain suspended during heightened tensions due to the potential for hostilities.
- Monitor our alerts for related updates.

Inbound travel

- **Defer all non-essential international travel to South Korea amid the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- **Defer all travel to North Korea due to entry restrictions for all foreign nationals**. While the latest ban was imposed as part of COVID-19-related measures, the government has previously restricted the entry and mobility of foreigners during periods of heightened diplomatic tensions. There are also extremely limited legal and diplomatic avenues of recourse for foreigners in the event of any dispute or detention by the authorities.
- Contact your nearest Assistance Centre to seek itinerary- and profile-specific advice.

More detail

A North Korea's Central Military Commission preliminary meeting chaired by the country's leader Kim Jong-un on 24 June declared suspension of military action plans against South Korea. However, reports suggest that existing North Korean soldiers stationed near the DMZ are still under high state of alert.

Meanwhile, South Korean defense minister Jeong Keyong-doo announced that South Korea will continue maintaining an alert posture. In light of the recent developments, the country's military has reportedly strengthened its surveillance and preparedness, repositioning its troops along the Military Demarcation Line (MDL). Nonetheless, South Korea has also been urging its northern neighbour to completely withdraw military action plans rather than only suspending them.

A potential flashpoint in the coming weeks includes the Anniversary of the Liberation Day on **15 August**. In 2019, North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles the day after the anniversary and made a series of comments condemning South Korea's President Moon Jae-in.

Background

Tensions heightened in the past few weeks following threats made by Kim Yo-jong, the sister of Kim Jong-un. On 4 June, she warned that if South Korea did not take action against leaflet-dropping across the border by activists in South Korea, North Korea would take several actions. The threats include the annulment of inter-Korea peace agreements and the closure of the inter-Korea joint liaison office in Kaesong (North Hwanghae province, North Korea).

On 9 June, North Korea cut off all communication lines with South Korea. While the South Korean government announced on 10 June that it would press charges against activists attempting to send objects across the border, North Korea intensified its hostile rhetoric. The North Korean state newspaper on 13 June published Kim Yo-jong's retaliatory statement accusing South Korea of making little effort to stop the passage of anti-North Korean leaflets. The statement also contained threats of cutting all ties with South Korea and the destruction of the liaison office, as well as military action.

On 16 June, North Korea demolished the inter-Korea liaison office in Kaesong. A few hours before the demolition, the North Korean military warned that it is reviewing its plan to deploy troops to the DMZ, violating the inter-Korean military agreement. This development followed Kim Yo-jong's public direction of the General Staff Department of the Korean People's Army to take the next step against South Korea.

On the night of 22 June, activists in South Korea claimed to have sent anti-North Korean leaflets via helium balloons across the border from the border city of Paju (Gyeonggi province, South Korea). North Korea's state media responded with warnings of further retaliation against South Korea's failure to cease such campaigns.

North Korea also installed loudspeakers on 22 June at the border. The loudspeakers were previously used to broadcast propaganda messages, and were dismantled in April 2018 following the signing of a peace treaty by South and North Korean leaders. However, on 24 June, North Korean troops were seen dismantling a number of these loudspeakers.

Assessment

Tensions are expected to remain high in the vicinity of the DMZ **in the coming weeks** and sudden re-escalation possible despite recent de-escalatory gestures from North Korea. The underlying issues leading to recent tensions such as the activities of South Korean activists have yet to be fully resolved.

In addition, on 18 June, US President Donald Trump announced extensions on existing US sanctions on North Korea for another year, citing the continued 'unusual and extraordinary' threats from North Korea. While the US renewal of the sanctions is a routine event, its timing amid heightened tensions is likely to provoke further reaction from the North Korean government. The US military has also mentioned that it will be resuming US-South Korea joint military exercises in August 2020, another thorny issue in the peninsula.

Furthermore, North Korea's suspension of its military action plans was decided upon in a preliminary meeting, which could be revoked. The specifics as to whether the plans were dismissed from the meeting agenda, or whether they were postponed indefinitely, remain ambiguous.

While increased tensions are unlikely to lead to a serious military confrontation, further hostile rhetoric and small-scale military mobilisations along the MDL cannot be discounted**.** However, an overall deterioration in the travel security environment across the Korean peninsula and wider region remains unlikely.

The following activities can be anticipated across the Korean peninsula should tensions re-escalate:

- Further hostile rhetoric or provocative statements by North Korea, including any mention of the demolition of the liaison office;
- The deployment of additional security forces to the vicinity of the DMZ by the South Korean military;
- North Korean troops entering the DMZ;
- Injuries to military personnel on both sides as a result of small-scale military exchanges;
- Sending of propaganda leaflets across the border by South Korean activist groups, or by North Korea.
- Small-scale, localised demonstrations in the South Korean capital Seoul;
- The permanent closure of the Kaesong Industrial Complex by North Korea; and
- The firing of short-range missiles across the MDL or into the sea as a means of provocation.

Isolated demonstrations opposing the South Korean government are possible in Seoul during this period. However, such protests are unlikely to affect the ongoing escalation in the DMZ, given that rhetoric from North Korea is centred around the South Korean government and inter-Korea matters.

Presently, an overall deterioration in the travel security environment across the Korean peninsula and wider region is unlikely. International SOS is closely monitoring the following triggers that could lead to further escalation in tensions and require members to restrict non-essential inbound travel and maintain a higher level of evacuation preparedness:

- The imposition of additional US sanctions;
- A move by South Korea to increase its military preparedness from the current DEFCON 4 (second-lowest on a five-tier scale) to DEFCON 3 (middle), which last occurred in 1983;
- An increase in the level of warnings and advice on tensions on the Korean peninsula issued by the governments of South Korea, China, Japan, the US, Australia and the UK;
- An intercontinental ballistic missile test by North Korea;
- A missile test that is close to Japanese territory or that passes in the vicinity of US military assets in the region;
- Accidents that stem from missile tests, such as missile debris hitting an overflying aircraft, a ship or the Japanese mainland, which could prompt a limited military response from the US; and
- An above-ground nuclear test by North Korea.

The high-impact nature of any military confrontation requires security managers to maintain robust plans to identify markers of a genuine escalation. Escalation plans will help minimise an organisation's exposure by linking developments with actionable advice regarding inbound travel, in-country movement and the withdrawal of staff from South Korea, Japan, Guam (US) and the Northern Mariana Islands (US).

Vaccinations For Korea, South

Hepatitis A	Recommended for all travellers and expatriates, Read more
Hepatitis B	Recommended for most travellers and expatriates, Read more
Japanese encephalitis	Vaccine is recommended for people who will Read more
Typhoid fever	Recommended for adventurous and long-term Read more

Routine Vaccinations

- All routine vaccinations should be current: these include Measles-Mumps-Rubella, Polio, Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis, and Varicella.
- Annual influenza vaccination.

Other Medical Precautions

- Before you go - See your doctor and dentist and ensure you are in the best health before you leave. Other preparations:
- Malaria
- Zika Virus
- Health Threats

Alerts

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North Korea, South Korea: Expect tensions to persist despite announcement by North Korean leader to suspend military action plans against South Korea

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Summary

TRAVEL RISK SUMMARY

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COVID-19 information for South Korea

Dedicated COVID-19 website

South Korea is a safe travel destination. In general, crime, particularly violent crime, poses a low risk to business travellers. City-centre protests and demonstrations occasionally end in minor clashes with the police. Periodic surges in anti-US or anti-Japanese sentiment very rarely provoke harassment of individual foreign visitors.

Occasional provocations from North Korea, along with persistent threatening rhetoric, periodically lead to increased tensions between both countries. However, they are highly unlikely to pose any direct security risks or to lead to wider conflict.

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STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

Advice amid COVID-19-related restrictions

- Defer non-essential travel due to restrictions related to COVID-19.
- See country page for latest developments and advice.

Other advice

- Take basic security precautions against petty and street crime.
- In the event of any demonstrations, rallies or strike activity, avoid the affected area as a security precaution. Localised clashes could occur between protesters and the police, particularly if the former attempt to block routes, march towards cordoned-off areas or breach security cordons around government buildings.
- In the event of any emergency drills, exercises or military manoeuvres, comply with all instructions issued by the security forces.
- Seek itinerary-specific advice prior to travel to the disputed north-western islands of Yeonpyeong, Baengnyeong, Daecheong, Socheong and Woo.

Personal Risk

CRIME

The crime rate in South Korea is very low, though robberies and burglaries do occur and foreigners can be targeted, particularly in the capital Seoul and in the city of Busan. Petty crime, particularly pickpocketing and purse-snatching in crowded markets and tourist areas, poses the main risks to visitors. Violent crime and physical attacks on foreigners, including sexual harassment, molestation and rape, have occasionally been reported. Criminal activities occur more often in major metropolitan areas than elsewhere in the country. Exercise caution if travelling alone at night. Members can reduce the risk of falling victim to crime by adopting commonsense precautions.

According to police statistics, neighbourhoods with higher percentages of foreigners (mostly ethnic-Chinese) have also registered a slight increase in criminal activities.

The government is conducting a programme to improve living conditions and enhance basic security in areas with a higher concentration of non-Korean nationals; these include Yeongdeungpo, Daerim, Garibong-dong and Itaewon in Seoul; Ansan and Siheung in Gyeonggi province; and Changwon and Gimhae in South Gyeongsang province.

TERRORISM

There are no known terrorist groups operating in South Korea and the risk of terrorism from the North is low. Stringent security measures, however, have been implemented at major international airports to guard against the entry of suspected terrorists. An isolated attack occurred in May 2011, when two explosive devices that had been placed in lockers at the Seoul Station rail terminal and the Gangnam Express bus terminal in Seoul were detonated; the explosions caused no injuries.

SOCIAL UNREST

Demonstrations, particularly those organised by interest groups and opposition parties, occur fairly regularly and can be disruptive, particularly in Seoul, Gwangju (Honam region) and Busan. Violence, when it occurs, is usually limited to the immediate vicinity of the protest and does not escalate into rioting. However, there have been allegations of excessive police force during demonstrations, arising from the occasional use of riot control devices (water cannon, tear gas, batons and fire extinguishers). Although some demonstrations are anti-US or anti-Japanese in nature, foreigners are rarely singled out for attack. However, as a precaution, members should avoid all large public gatherings.

BUSINESSWOMEN

There are no specific risks for female travellers or businesswomen. However, all women are advised to follow commonsense security precautions such as:

- Politely decline invitations that would take you beyond your personal comfort levels, even if faced by amicable pressure to behave otherwise.
- Plan your itineraries bearing in mind risks incurred by women in various modes of transport available in your location; prioritise security in your choice of transport.

CONFLICT

North Korea

North and South Korea's diplomatic relationship has improved over the past couple of years, with the signing of the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula in April 2018. Plans are in progress to resume operations for inter-Korean joint projects and to continue holding diplomatic talks between the two countries.

Despite improvements in their relationship, there are underlying tensions between the two countries. North Korea has fired several short-range ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan (East Sea) to coincide with important dates and announcements since 25 July; these missiles are below the threshold of weapons that North Korea had agreed to refrain from testing. South Korea still has thousands of soldiers stationed in the demilitarised zone (DMZ), supported by around 28,500 US troops. The US military headquarters is based in Pyeongtaek (Gyeonggi province), south of Seoul.

The North continues to urge the end of the South's participation in the US-South Korea joint military exercises, which are held annually between February and April and in August, and following any tightening of sanctions against North Korea by the international community. South Korean military's Defense Readiness Condition level is currently at 4, which is the second-lowest level of readiness and considered ‘peacetime'.

There have been occasional clashes between South and North Korean troops along maritime borders. The last major incidents were North Korea's November 2010 attack on Yeonpyeong island that killed four people, including two civilians, and the March 2010 torpedoing of a South Korean navy vessel (for which the North continues to deny responsibility).

Tensions briefly spiked in August 2015 after South Korea accused North Korea of planting land mines in the DMZ, which injured two South Korean soldiers. The situation escalated when North Korea fired an artillery shell at loudspeakers broadcasting anti-North Korean propaganda along the border, triggering retaliatory fire from South Korea; however, no damage or injuries were reported. The tensions eased after North and South Korea reached an agreement during three days of high-level bilateral discussions.

After its first nuclear test in October 2006, North Korea in 2007 agreed to disable its nuclear facilities. Some sanctions against the country were lifted after it submitted a declaration of its nuclear activities and destroyed the cooling tower in its Yongbyon reactor in June 2008, though the process collapsed shortly after the North conducted a second nuclear test in May 2009. North Korea has since conducted four more nuclear tests: in February in 2013; January and September 2016; and September 2017.

North Korea has a history of alternating threats and aggression with periodic conciliatory gestures and talks to strengthen its negotiating position and extract concessions from the international community. North Korea frequently conducts missile and nuclear tests around important anniversaries. Further such acts of provocation are likely as diplomatic relations on the Korean peninsula remain tense. However, the nature of escalation discernible from more than 50 years of brinksmanship indicates that tense diplomatic relations on the peninsula are not likely to translate into a major conflict.

Japan

South Korea and Japan continue to contest claims over the islets of Dokdo (Takeshima in Japanese) and the latter has consistently been accused of failing fully to repent for its wartime aggression or abandon colonial claims on Korean territory.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Emergency Numbers	
Ambulance	119
Fire	119
Police	112

Country Stability

POLITICAL SITUATION

The Republic of Korea is a parliamentary democracy with executive power vested in the president, who is also the head of state. The prime minister's job is largely ceremonial and the president holds most of the political power. Legislation is the responsibility of the unicameral Kuk Hoe (National Assembly). The president is elected for one five-year term, while members of the National Assembly serve four-year terms.

The system is that of a multi-party democracy; the centre-left Democratic Party and the conservative Liberty Korea Party are the major parties. The party system has relatively weak linkages with society, is factionalised, focused on personalities and is characterised by a high degree of organisational instability that results in frequent splits and mergers. While democracy is entrenched and the risk of an unconstitutional seizure of power is low; governments have failed to reduce the special role of the country's chaebol (conglomerates), which continue to dominate the economy, resist aspects of reform, and retain close political relationships.

On 9 December 2016, parliament voted to impeach then-president Park Geun-Hye (Saenuri) over a corruption scandal which had sparked massive protests in Seoul demanding her resignation. The Constitutional Court on 10 March 2017 upheld Park's impeachment, who in December 2012 became the country's first woman president. Moon Jae-in was elected as her successor on 9 May 2017.

RULE OF LAW

Although there have been serious attempts to free the judiciary from political interference, institutional obstacles and bureaucratic traditions remain. While a workable mode of checks and balances between the parliament and the presidency has not emerged, the judiciary remains relatively independent from executive and legislative control.

The Korean National Police is entrusted with the duty to maintain law and order, ensure public safety and investigate criminal cases. Generally, the police personnel are courteous and efficient when dealing with foreigners. English-speaking police staff may be reached at 112.

CORRUPTION

Corruption is not a major problem in everyday activities and as such it is unlikely to affect business travellers.

NATURAL DISASTERS

The monsoon season generally begins in late June and ends in early September, and is often characterised by isolated flooding, landslides in mountainous areas, and temporary power cuts. Tropical storms are also common during this period, particularly affecting the south of the country, which can cause significant disruption and damage. Torrential rainfall can occasionally cause the Han river, which flows through Seoul, to break its banks, which can lead to flooding in districts south of the city centre, such as Seocho, Gangnam and Gwanak.

Heavy rainfall in July 2011 triggered landslides and flooding in the north-west of the country, including Seoul and parts of the provinces of Gangwon, Geyonggi, and South Chungcheong; the severe weather conditions killed at least 70 people and inundated roads and tracks of the Seoul Metropolitan Subway, while bridges over the Han River were closed off. There is low-level seismic activity in the southern part of the country.

RECENT HISTORY

In 1910, Japan formally annexed Korea and imported Japanese citizens to own land and run the economy. After Japan's defeat at the end of the Second World War, the country was divided, with the north controlled by the Soviet Union and the south by the US. The split along the 38th parallel resulted in two countries of roughly equal size. The Republic of Korea (South Korea) was established on 15 August 1946 and was initially led by Syngman Rhee with the support of the US. As the Cold War evolved, the Korean border — one of the few direct meeting points between the Soviet and US spheres of influence — became a key flashpoint. In June 1950, North Korea invaded the south, initiating the Korean War that lasted until 1953. The eventual outcome was a stalemate near the original border, where it has remained ever since; both Koreas are technically still at war.

Rhee maintained his grip on power until the threat of revolution forced his resignation in 1960. After a series of military coups, General Park Chung-hee became president in 1962 and remained in power for 17 years until his assassination in 1979. The socio-economic modernisation that began in the mid-1960s led to democratic change in the late 1980s, when a strong opposition movement led by Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung successfully mobilised urban workers, students, intellectuals and the middle class. General Roh Tae-woo won the presidential elections in December 1987. During his term, a pro-democratic consensus emerged among the political leadership and the general populace.

The election of former dissident Kim Dae-jung as president in December 1997 demonstrated that all relevant forces had been integrated into the political system. In June 2000, the first South-North summit took place between Kim Dae-jung and the North's then-leader Kim Jong-il. The meeting produced an accord that called for working toward reunification and for permitting visits between families divided by the war. Economic contacts have since been established and South Korea has become a significant humanitarian aid provider and trade partner for the North. A rail crossing through the demilitarised zone (DMZ) was symbolically reopened in 2007. Many US troops still remain in South Korea, though their numbers have decreased since the 1960s.

The last two major incidents involved clashes between North and South Korean troops and the shelling in November 2010 by North Korea of Yeonpyeong island and the March 2010 torpedoing of a South Korean navy vessel (for which the North continues to deny responsibility). In August 2015, tensions briefly spiked after South Korea accused North Korea of planting land mines in the DMZ, which injured two South Korean soldiers. The situation escalated when North Korea fired an artillery shell at loudspeakers broadcasting anti-North Korean propaganda along the border, triggering retaliatory fire from South Korea; however, no damage or injuries were reported. The tensions eased after North and South Korea reached an agreement during three days of high-level bilateral discussions in 2018.

In the December 2012 elections, Park Geun-hye of the conservative then-New Frontier Party (Saenuri in Korean) was elected as the country's first woman president, defeating Moon Jae-in of the Democratic Party. On 9 December 2016, parliament voted to impeach President Park over a corruption scandal which had sparked massive protests in Seoul demanding her resignation. The Constitutional Court on 10 March 2017 upheld Park's impeachment. Moon Jae-in was elected as her successor on 9 May 2017.

Alerts

- SPECIAL ADVISORY: COVID-19 outbreak impacting health care
- SPECIAL ADVISORY: COVID-19 outbreak impacting health care
- SPECIAL ADVISORY: COVID-19 outbreak impacting health care

View All Alerts

Before You Go

See your doctor and dentist and ensure you are in the best health before you leave. Other preparations:

- **Check your routine vaccinations**
  Check your **measles** and other routine vaccinations are up to date (polio; varicella; mumps and rubella; tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, seasonal influenza). See a travel health practitioner 6 to 8 weeks before departure for destination-specific health preparations. You may need additional vaccinations, some of which require several doses, or be recommended malaria medication which may need to be started a week or more before arriving in the malarial country.

- **Documentation:** Arrange a copy of your personal health record to carry with you when you travel. Include a letter from your doctor explaining your need for all medications you are carrying, including any over-the-counter medications, in English and the language of your destination(s). Make sure you have copies of your prescriptions.

- **Medication:** Check the regulations of your destination country regarding importation of your medication, as some drugs may be strictly prohibited (especially narcotics and psychotropics) and may result in severe penalties. Some restrictions are published on the International Narcotics Control Board. Take any medicines you require *in their original packaging*, including any information leaflets, with them clearly labelled with your name (matching your passport name), and your doctor's name. Have enough to cover the trip, and extra in case of delays, however note that many destinations limit quantities of certain drugs to a 30-day supply. Carry medication in your hand luggage, with copies of your prescriptions.

Vaccinations for Korea, South

Recommendations may vary for short-term visitors. Always consult your travel health advisor or contact International SOS to discuss your specific needs.

Hepatitis A	Recommended for all travellers and expatriates, especially groups at higher risk including: • long-term and frequent visitors. • adventurous travellers who travel to more remote locations or stay in areas with poor sanitation. • gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men see (see US CDC). • people who use illicit drugs. • those with liver disease.
Hepatitis B	Recommended for most travellers and expatriates, especially: • For long-term or frequent visitors, and health-care workers. • For adventurous travellers who travel to more remote locations. • If possibility of new sexual partner, needle sharing, acupuncture, dental work, body piercing or tattooing during visit. Many travel health professionals recommend hepatitis B vaccination for all travelers, regardless of destination.
Japanese encephalitis	Vaccine is recommended for people who will participate in 'higher risk' activities while in an area where Japanese encephalitis risk exists. You are engaging in a 'higher risk' activity if you: • Travel during the peak Japanese encephalitis season (consult the "Health Threats" section of the International SOS country guides to see specific season details for this country). • Spend a significant amount of time outdoors, particularly in the evening and night-time, in areas outside of cities. (ex. camping, trekking, biking, fishing, hunting, farming). • Stay in accommodation that will likely have mosquitoes indoors, ex. lacking air conditioning, window screens, and bed nets. • Spend a month or more in a risk area during transmission season. Japanese encephalitis vaccine is not available in many of the risk countries. Have the complete vaccine series before departure.
Typhoid fever	Recommended for adventurous and long-term travellers, especially those who will: • Visit friends and relatives. • Eat from local vendors or restaurants. • Be exposed to conditions of poor sanitation. • Visit smaller cities or rural areas.

More on diseases in Korea, South

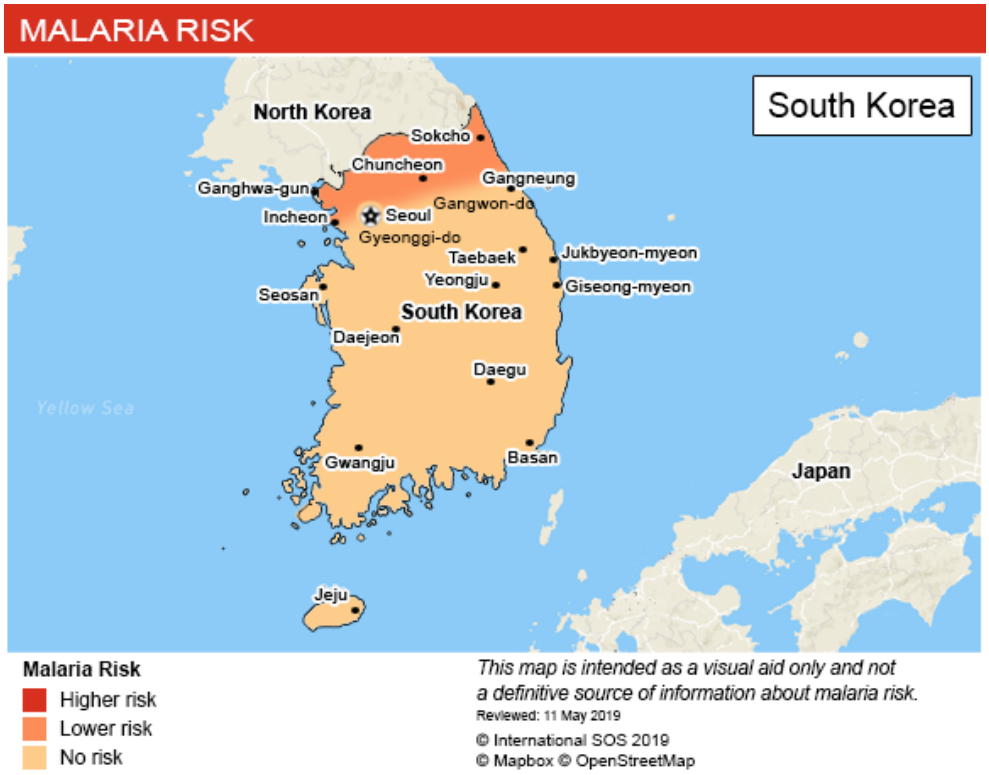
Malaria

Threat from: Bites and Stings

Limited risk of malaria is present (between March to December) in South Korea: rural areas in the northern parts of Kyonggi (Gyeonggi) and Kangwon (Gangwon) provinces, Incheon (towards the Demilitarized Zone [DMZ]).

Prevention:

- mosquito bite avoidance



Malaria is transmitted by mosquitoes that usually bite from dusk to dawn. Symptoms can develop as early as seven days or as late as several months after exposure. Early malaria symptoms are flu-like and can include fever, sweats/chills, head and body aches, and generally feeling tired and unwell. People also sometimes feel nauseous and vomit or have diarrhoea. Untreated, malaria can cause serious complications like anaemia, seizures, mental confusion, kidney failure and coma. It can be fatal.

Follow the ABCDEs to minimise malarial risk:

A: Awareness - Be **Aware** of the risk, the symptoms and malaria prevention.
B: Bite Prevention - Avoid being **Bitten** by mosquitoes, especially between dusk and dawn.
C: Chemoprophylaxis - If prescribed for you, use **Chemoprophylaxis** (antimalarial medication) to prevent infection and if infected reduce the risk of severe malaria.
D: Diagnosis - Immediately seek **Diagnosis** and treatment if a fever develops one week or more after being in a malarial area (up to one year after departure).
E: Emergency - Carry an **Emergency** Standby Treatment (EST) kit if available and recommended (this is the kit which contains malaria treatment).

Zika Virus

There is no Zika Virus in Korea, South.

Standard of Care

Emergency Response

Always try to call International SOS whenever medical care or advice is required, especially in emergencies.

South Korea has an excellent public ambulance service. The ambulances are well equipped, reliable and staffed with trained Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). Patients will be transported to the nearest emergency center. Serious cases will be transferred to a facility with the appropriate capability.

Emergency Numbers	
Ambulance	119

Fire	119
Police	112

Standard of Health Care

Let International SOS assist you.

International SOS will assist you to find suitable inpatient or outpatient care, will provide language assistance and may be able to pay your medical expenses.

Inpatient care

Medical care in South Korea of an international standard. There are no major differences between the public and private sectors. However, private hospitals tend to be more service oriented.

Generally, nursing care may differ from what is practiced in other countries. Family members or privately hired care-giving aids are usually expected to assist the patient for non-medical support (such as feeding, bathing etc…).

Many physicians in the major hospitals speak English. If there is a language barrier, most hospitals are able to facilitate language assistance services through interpreters. International clinics will have English speaking staff.

OutPatient Care

Seek outpatient care from international clinics, private hospitals and university hospitals. Many of the doctors practicing at the international clinics are internationally trained and familiar with providing medical care to international travellers and expatriates

Walk-in outpatient care is also available at some hospitals. The usual practice is to arrive at the hospital, register, pay and then wait to be called.

Paying for Health Care

Payment is usually expected in advance. All hospitals and clinics accept major credit cards. Foreign insurance plans are generally not accepted.

Do not defer medical treatment because of financial concerns. Contact International SOS, and if our terms allow, we will make financial arrangements on your behalf.

Dental Care

High quality specialist and sub-specialist dental services are available. Dental surgeries are clean and efficient.

Blood Supplies

Blood supplies are fully screened and are safe. All blood types are usually available, though Rh -ve can sometimes be in short supply.

Even in areas where the blood supply is considered safe, it's best to avoid blood transfusions if possible. Screening cannot detect every blood-borne disease, and immune reactions can vary from minor to life-threatening. If a blood transfusion is recommended and circumstances permit, seek a second opinion from International SOS or your health advisor.

Medication Availability

Most medications are available at pharmacies in South Korea. Whenever possible, consult with a doctor and get a prescription.

Since brand names vary, know the generic (chemical) names of your medications. It is always advisable to bring an adequate supply of prescription and other medications from your home country. However ensure you check the regulations of your destination regarding importation of your medication, as some drugs may be strictly prohibited (especially narcotics and psychotropics) and may result in severe penalties. Some restrictions are published on the International Narcotics Control Board.

Clinics & Hospitals

Medical Providers

No matter where you are, contact International SOS first if you are sick, injured or need medical advice.

Our medical staff will advise you, help you select the correct doctor, hospital or clinic, and make any necessary appointments on your behalf. If our terms allow, we will also make financial arrangements for you.

It is recommended that you contact International SOS before accessing medical care in Korea, South

Hospitals / Clinics

If you are unable to contact International SOS, the following list of hospitals and clinics is provided in case of medical emergencies.

Busan

Inje University Haeundae Paik Hospital

Category: Hospital

Address:	875 Haeun-daero Haeundae-gu Busan, Busan 612-896
Telephone:	82 51 797 0564
Pusan National University Hospital	
Category:	Hospital
Address:	179 GudeokRo Seogu Busan, NA 49241
Telephone:	82 51 240 7000 82 51 240 7473

Seoul

Asan Medical Center	
Category:	Hospital
Address:	88, OLYMPIC-RO 43-GIL SONGPA-GU Seoul, NA 138-878
Telephone:	82 (0)2 3010 5001
Samsung Medical Center	
Category:	Hospital
Address:	81 Irwon-ro Gangnamgu Seoul, NA 06351
Telephone:	82 234100232
Severance Hospital	
Category:	Hospital
Address:	50 Yonseiro Seodaemungu Seoul, NA 03722
Telephone:	82 (0)2 2228 5800

Food & Water

Food and Water Precautions

Travellers have a small risk of developing diarrhoea in any country. It may be advisable to drink bottled water only, especially on short trips. Always wash your hands with soap before eating, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. See the following country-specific recommendations:

Water and Beverages

Tap water is safe.

Food Risk

Food is safe in South Korea, especially in hotels and restaurants. There are many food stalls which are also safe.

More on food and water safety

Health Threats Summary

Health threats present include:

Animals: Hantaviruses, Rabies

Bites and Stings: Japanese encephalitis, Malaria, Scrub typhus

Coughing/sneezing: *COVID-19, Tuberculosis (TB)

Environment: Air Pollution

Food and/or water: Hepatitis A, Travellers' diarrhoea, Typhoid fever

Sex/blood/needles: HIV, Hepatitis B and C, & STIs

Health Threats

***COVID-19 |** Threat from : Coughing/sneezing

This is a rapidly evolving situation. International SOS is monitoring closely - **please see the MEDICAL ALERT on the "View All Alerts" section of this location guide**, and the COVID-19 pages of the Pandemic Information website.

Towards the end of December 2019, authorities in Wuhan, Hubei province, announced a cluster of cases of pneumonia associated with the Huanan / South China Seafood Wholesale Market, for which a cause had not yet been identified. By January, a new coronavirus was identified as the cause of the illness. Initially called 2019-novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), the virus was renamed severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), and the disease it causes is called Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The situation is now a pandemic, and every location is expected to eventually be affected.

Transmission of the virus is from human to human. Although the exact way this happens with COVID-19 is still being investigated, it is probably occurring in the same way as other respiratory infections - through infected respiratory droplets. The infected person expels these when they cough, sneeze, or talk. Others can get the disease via contact (direct or indirect) with these contaminated droplets. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath and breathing difficulty. Less common symptoms include headache, muscle aches and diarrhoea. Around 15% of cases have been severe and some will die. Older people, and people with underlying health conditions appear to be at higher risk for severe disease. There is no specific treatment - "non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS)", such as ibuprofen, which are often available over the counter without prescription, should NOT be used to treat symptoms. They might make the illness worse. Paracetamol / acetaminophen can be used.

There is no vaccine yet, however research and development has commenced. Prevention is through avoiding potential exposure (keeping 1-2 metres away from other people) and employing general hygiene measures (washing hands, not touching your face, keeping surfaces clean).

Korea, South

The first imported cases were identified on 20 January 2020, about 30 days later the outbreak had reached over 1,000 cases. A large number of cases were linked to a cluster at a megachurch in Daegu. Contact tracing and public health measures were enforced in effected areas. Cases have been declining since the peak in early March. By April, over 10,000 cases were confirmed and towards the end of the month lock down had begun to ease. Although a declining trend occured throughout May and June, sporadic clusters occured.

The latest updates on COVID-19 in South Korea can be found on the Ministry of Health website. ESRI Korea has also created an interactive dashboard (in Korean) detailing affected locations and case counts. The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) have established a hotline for people who think they may have symptoms: call 1339 or 1345 (English) to be directed to an appropriate facility.

Air Pollution | Threat from : Environment

Poor air quality, also known as "haze", "smog" and "air pollution", can negatively impact one's health. Some groups are especially vulnerable to problems caused by polluted air. These include children, the elderly and anyone with underlying chronic health problems such as heart disease, emphysema, bronchitis or asthma.

The chemicals in polluted air can affect the lungs resulting in wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath and even pain. Polluted air can also irritate the eyes and nose, and may interfere with immune system function. Long-term exposure can result in reduced lung function, particularly in children. It can also lead to lung cancer.

Limiting exposure to polluted air is the best way to prevent health problems. When air quality is poor, it may be advisable to avoid outdoor physical activities. While indoors, keep doors and windows closed, and use an air conditioner on ‘recirculate' if possible. If the air quality is frequently problematic, consider using an air cleaner. During particularly bad periods, you may want to wear a mask while outside. Ask your healthcare provider before using a mask, especially if you have underlying health conditions.

See the International SOS Air Pollution website - use your membership number to log in.

Korea, South

Rapid industrialisation with emissions from automobiles, construction and power plants are a major source of air pollution in the country. Episodes of poor air quality also occur due to high concentration of fine dust blown across borders (transboundary pollution).

Hantaviruses | Threat from : Animals

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses that belong to the *bunyaviridae* family. They can cause two different types of illness in humans: hemorrhagic fever with renal failure syndrome (HFRS) and hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). The latter also known as hantavirus cardiopulmonary syndrome (HCPS). It is a widely distributed disease and occurs across Americas, Europe and Asia.

Regardless of which illness they cause, hantaviruses are carried by infected rodents that can carry the virus for their entire lives without any signs of illness. Virus is present in the animal's saliva, urine and feces. Humans become sick when they inhale the aerosol droplets of these excretions. Rare cases of human to human transmission have occurred.

Although not clearly known, symptoms of **HCPS** appear about one to eight weeks after exposure to the virus. Early symptoms include fatigue, fever, and muscle aches. About 50 percent of all patients also experience headache, dizziness, and abdominal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, pain). Late symptoms are cough/shortness of breath and a feeling of overall tightness in the chest. Heartbeat and breathing may both become rapid at this stage. Most people recover from the disease. The overall case fatality rate is about 30 percent, and most deaths occur rapidly - within 24 hours of hospitalization.

The incubation period for **HFRS** is usually 2 to 4 weeks, but could be as short as a few days. Patients usually experience a fever that begins suddenly, headache, muscle pain, gastrointestinal upset, eye pain and blurred vision. Patients may later develop hemorrhage, including bleeding from the skin, conjunctiva of the eye, and mouth. complications include kidney failure. Most patients fully recover. The overall mortality ranges from 5-15 percent, depending on the strain of the virus.

The best way to avoid infection is to eliminate rodents from your living space and worksite, and/or avoid contact with them. Keep food tightly contained, clean dishes immediately after use, do not leave pet food out all day, and seal holes to the outside – generally, make your environment inhospitable to rodents. When in an area known to be infested with rodents, avoid activities that can stir up dust, like vacuuming or sweeping, as there may be virus-containing rodent feces, urine, or saliva present. Do not sit in meadows, on haystacks, or woodpiles where rodents are likely to nest.

Treatment is supportive. Ribavirin has improved the chances of surviving **HFRS** although its effectiveness has not been proven in **HCPS**. A vaccine is available to protect against certain viruses that cause HFRS, most especially those that are prevalent in mainland China.

Korea, South

Cases of hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS) are known to occur although primarily in rural areas. Peak disease activity is observed during autumn and winter.

Hepatitis A | Threat from : Food and/or water

Hepatitis A is a viral disease that causes liver inflammation. The virus is present in the faeces of an infected person. It spreads through contaminated food and water, and is common in areas with poor sanitation. Person-to-person spread also occurs, when the virus is inadvertently transferred into the mouth, including during sexual activity. People at higher risk of infection include men who have sex with men, illicit drug users and people with liver disease.

Symptoms begin on average 28 days after exposure (range 2 to 8 weeks), and include fever, chills, fatigue, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, dark urine and jaundice (yellow colour of the skin and eyes). Many infected people suffer only a mild illness. Most cases recover fully after four or more weeks. However for some, the disease can be severe, and occasionally is fatal. There is no specific treatment and cases are managed through supportive therapy.

Prevention is through vaccination, attention to hygiene, and access to safe food and water.

HIV, Hepatitis B and C, & STIs | Threat from : Sex/blood/needles

HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C are spread by contact with bodily fluids (especially blood and semen).

- unprotected sex,
- needle sharing during IV drug use, or
- unsafe blood or medical/dental instruments.

Genital herpes (HSV), genital warts (HPV), gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and most other sexually transmitted diseases are spread by genital contact.

Prevention:

- In many countries, hepatitis B is now a routine childhood immunisation and need not be repeated. All non-immune travellers should consider vaccination.
- Always use new condoms (preferably brought from your home country).
- IV drug users should not share needles.
- Avoid having tattoos or piercings done.
- In healthcare settings, make sure that needles and syringes sterile and not shared between patients.
- Call International SOS or your corporate medical department if you are hospitalised.
- Be aware of your risk when assisting anyone with an injury. Protect yourself from contact with bodily fluids.
- Seek medical attention within 24 hours if you accidentally come into contact with someone else's bodily fluids.

Japanese encephalitis | Threat from : Bites and Stings

Japanese encephalitis is serious viral illness, spread by mosquitoes. It occurs in most of Asia as well as some parts of the Western Pacific, mostly in rural agricultural areas. Although many people won't have any symptoms, it can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) with permanent brain damage, or be fatal. Prevention is through preventing mosquito bites. In addition, vaccination is recommended for travellers at higher risk.

Korea, South

Occasional cases of Japanese encephalitis can occur in much or all of the country. Transmission occurs from May to October. The last major outbreak occurred in 1982.

Malaria | Threat from : Bites and Stings

Malaria is transmitted by mosquitoes that usually bite from dusk to dawn. Symptoms can develop as early as seven days or as late as several months after exposure. Early malaria symptoms are flu-like and can include fever, sweats/chills, head and body aches, and generally feeling tired and unwell. People also sometimes feel nauseous and vomit or have diarrhoea. Untreated, malaria can cause serious complications like anaemia, seizures, mental confusion, kidney failure and coma. It can be fatal.

Follow the ABCDEs to minimise malarial risk:

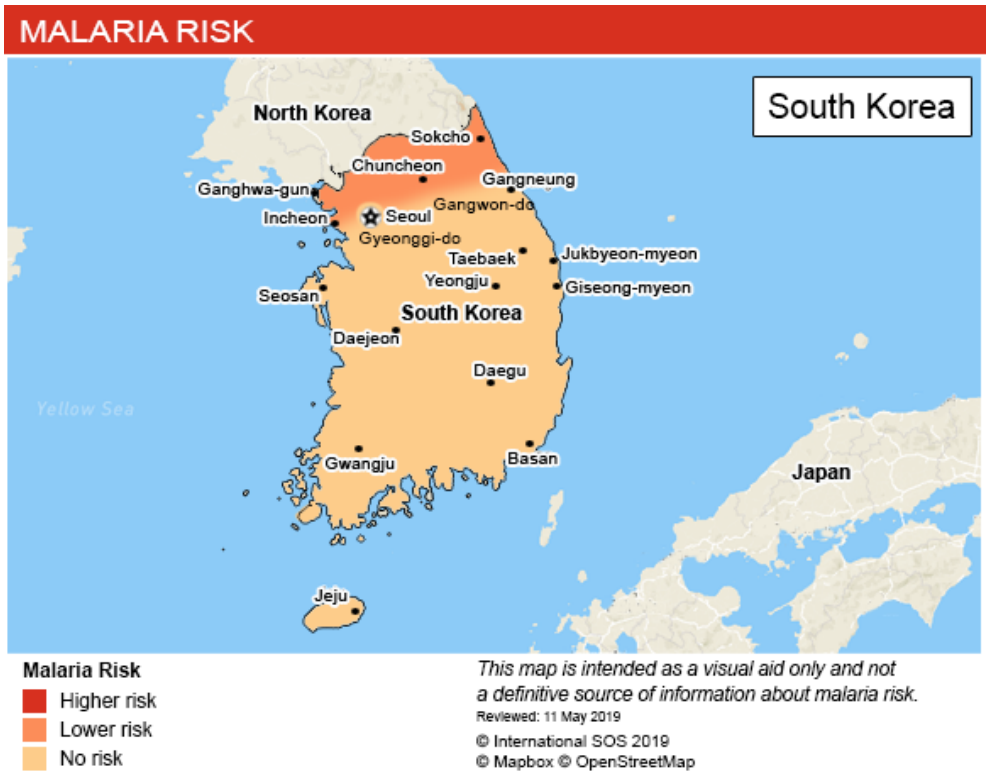
A: Awareness - Be **Aware** of the risk, the symptoms and malaria prevention.
B: Bite Prevention - Avoid being **Bitten** by mosquitoes, especially between dusk and dawn.
C: Chemoprophylaxis - If prescribed for you, use **Chemoprophylaxis** (antimalarial medication) to prevent infection and if infected reduce the risk of severe malaria.
D: Diagnosis - Immediately seek **Diagnosis** and treatment if a fever develops one week or more after being in a malarial area (up to one year after departure).
E: Emergency - Carry an **Emergency** Standby Treatment (EST) kit if available and recommended (this is the kit which contains malaria treatment).

Korea, South

Limited risk of malaria is present (between March to December) in South Korea: rural areas in the northern parts of Kyonggi (Gyeonggi) and Kangwon (Gangwon) provinces, Incheon (towards the Demilitarized Zone [DMZ]).

Prevention:

- mosquito bite avoidance



Rabies | Threat from : Animals

Rabies is a viral disease contracted when bitten or scratched by an infected (rabid) animal, often a dog. Once it enters the body, the virus travels along nerves and causes paralysis. As it reaches important organs like the spinal cord and the brain, it causes coma and death.

In countries where rabies is present in animals or bats, ALL animal / bat bites, scratches and licks to broken skin must be treated seriously. Rabies vaccination is very effective in preventing rabies, even after a bite/scratch by a rabid animal.

Rabies vaccination
Pre-exposure vaccination is often recommended for expatriates and long-term visitors to destinations where rabies is present. It's especially recommended if quality medical care may not be available after being bitten or scratched by an animal. Pre-exposure treatment can be especially useful for children, since they may not tell their parents that they have been bitten/scratched.

Pre-exposure vaccination makes it easier to treat a bite or scratch. That's important because some types of rabies treatment can be in short supply in many countries, even in cities.

If bitten, scratched or licked (on broken skin) by an animal:

- Immediately cleanse the wound with soap and water and a povidone-iodine solution if available.
- Seek medical advice from a qualified source or your assistance company.
- Notify local health authorities immediately. You may need *post-exposure vaccination*, even if you have had pre-exposure vaccination. (THIS CAN BE LIFE SAVING.)

Scrub typhus | Threat from : Bites and Stings

The bacterial disease scrub typhus is also known as tropical typhus or "chigger fever". Humans become infected when bitten by disease-carrying mites. A lump develops at the bite site. It ulcerates and forms an eschar (like a cigarette burn). Glands near the bite swell. Sudden onset symptoms progress, including high fever, headaches and sore muscles. About a third of those infected develop a rash.

Complications, such as pneumonia and nervous system impairment, can occur. Treatment with timely appropriate antibiotics will cure the disease. Untreated, mortality can be as high as 30 percent. No vaccine is available. Prevent infection by avoiding mite habitats (such as rodent infested areas, recently cleared forests clearings and rice paddies) and by preventing mite bites.

Travellers' diarrhoea | Threat from : Food and/or water

Travellers' diarrhoea is the most common travel-related illness. It usually occurs within the first week away from home. It is spread through contaminated food and water.

Prevention is through choosing safe food and water, and paying attention to hygiene. Select food that is thoroughly cooked while fresh and served hot. Avoid undercooked or raw meat, fish or shellfish. Avoid salad and raw vegetables unless you can wash them with clean (treated) water and you peel them yourself.

Unless you are certain that the tap water is drinkable - choose bottled water and beverages, avoid ice.

Korea, South There is a moderate risk of developing travelers' diarrhea when staying outside first class hotels and tourist resorts.

Tuberculosis (TB) | Threat from : Coughing/sneezing

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious bacterial disease. The bacteria can be coughed or sneezed into the air by an infected person. Most people who contract TB have had prolonged, close, exposure to an infected person. This means they have spent days or weeks – not just a few hours – sharing the same air space with an infected person (e.g. living in the same house). People who work or live in institutions such as nursing homes or correctional facilities are also at higher risk.

Active TB causes a variety of symptoms that are sometimes vague, but often include cough, fever, night sweats, unintended weight loss and lethargy. Latent (inactive) TB causes no symptoms. Most strains of TB can be treated with antimicrobial drugs. Up to four different types of medicines may be used together to treat a patient. If left untreated, active TB can be life-threatening.

Some forms of TB have become resistant to drugs (MDR TB), and some forms are *extensively* resistant to drugs (XDR TB). These diseases are hard to treat. People sometimes contract MDR or XDR TB through direct contact with a person who is already infected. Or, in other cases, people with more traditional TB infections develop a drug-resistant strains. This can happen if anti-TB medication is used inappropriately or stopped too soon.

Many countries where TB is common will routinely give the Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine against tuberculosis to babies or children. The BCG vaccine protects these children against severe TB. If you live in an area with higher rates of TB infection, you may also consider vaccinating children up to 16 years old if you plan to live there for 3 months or more.

Travellers and expatriates may be able to reduce their chance of contracting TB by limiting the amount of time they spend in crowded places. Avoiding people who are coughing also minimises risk. Consider TB screening of local staff who live with you – especially if you have young children in your household.

Korea, South

South Korea falls in the "moderate incidence" range for tuberculosis as per the World Health Organization (WHO), with between 50 to 299 new cases per 100,000 population diagnosed each year. BCG vaccination is given between birth and one month and is included in the country's immunisation schedule.

Expatriates or frequent travellers should consider consulting their doctor as TB screening may be offered.

Typhoid fever | Threat from : Food and/or water

Typhoid fever is a serious infection caused by *Salmonella* Typhi bacteria. People are infected through ingesting contaminated food or water. Choosing safe food and water and vaccination reduces the risk of developing the disease.

Symptoms usually begin one to three weeks after exposure. Although typhoid fever is often called a diarrhoeal disease, some patients do not have diarrhoea. Persistent, high fever is typical. Other early symptoms are flu-like: body aches and pains, weakness, loss of appetite and a continuous dull headache. A rash with pink spots may appear on the chest and abdomen of some patients. In severe cases, perforation of the bowel can cause severe bleeding or infection in the abdomen, which can be fatal.

Typhoid is treated with antibiotics. However there is a growing problem of antibiotic resistance. "Extensively drug-resistant' (XDR) typhoid is present in some locations and does not respond to many of the antibiotics which are usually used against typhoid, making preventive measures even more important.

Getting There

METHOD OF ARRIVAL

By air

Incheon International Airport (ICN), situated in the eponymous port city virtually adjacent to Seoul, replaced Gimpo Airport (GMP) as the main international airport serving the capital. Gimpo (previously known as Kimpo) now serves mainly domestic flights. Other international airports are Gimhae International Airport (PUS), located in the city of Busan; Cheongju International Airport (CJJ); and Jeju International Airport (CJU). Daegu International Airport (TAE), Yangyang International Airport (YNY) and Muan International Airport (MWX) have flights between China and South Korea.

Airlines have variable security standards. You may wish to consult the European Commission's website for a list of airlines banned within the EU and the US Federal Aviation Administration's website for a database of aviation accidents and statistics.

By sea

Ferry services are available from China, Japan and Russia. However, sea journeys are time-consuming and therefore less efficient for business travellers. In addition, ferry services are vulnerable to adverse weather conditions, particularly during winter months.

Entry & Departure Requirements

Passport and visa requirements are subject to change and vary depending on the length of stay and visa type (business or tourist). Check with your travel advisor, embassy or consulate in your home country. Passports must be valid for at least six months from the date of entry.

	Passport Required?	Visa Required?	Return Ticket Required
Australia	Yes	No	No
United Kingdom	Yes	No	No
Canada	Yes	No/1	No
Europe	Yes	No/2	No
United States	Yes	No	No

Travelling during the COVID-19 outbreak poses significant health, business continuity risks, and potentially second- and third-order security consequences. Defer non-essential to South Korea. International SOS is monitoring the situation closely. Please see the Pandemic Information website.

The table and information below are intended as a guide. Visa regulations can change with little or no notice. In addition, the complexity of visa regulations often leaves the process open to the interpretation of local immigration officials who may apply the regulations differently. Travellers should, therefore, check with respective embassies/representative offices/travel agencies prior to departure.

Visas

All nationals referred to in the above chart can stay without visas for three months except:

1. Nationals of Canada can stay for six months.
2. Nationals of Portugal can stay for two months, while citizens of Cyprus can stay for one month.

Additionally, citizens of countries mentioned in the list do not require visas for stays of up to 90 days. All other nationals should consult their nearest South Korean diplomatic mission to check their visa requirements.

Travellers intending to stay beyond 90 days are required to get a long-term visa prior to arrival. The cost of a visa varies from country to country. Generally, five working days are required for visa processing. Business travellers planning to attend conferences in South Korea should check with their local embassy if they should apply for a specific visa in advance as changing a visa status is generally not possible and visitors will have to exit the country and reapply for a new visa.

Travellers planning to stay in South Korea past their visa expiration date should apply for an extension well in advance at the Korea Immigration Service. Travellers that overstay their visa will be required to pay a fine before leaving.

Entry/Exit requirements

Nationals of all countries require a passport valid for a minimum of three months beyond their stay. Visitors are required to fill out an arrival card and submit a customs declaration form on arrival. Additionally, foreigners need to record their fingerprints and facial scan (biometrics) upon entry into the country; however, diplomats, international organisation officials and their immediate family members are exempted. Travellers carrying foreign or local currency exceeding US$10,000 must declare the amount on arrival.

Procedures

All travellers will be subject to health screening measures at airports.

In addition, the Korea Immigration Service (KIS) gathers the biometric data of travellers at ports of entry. Foreigners whose passports contain evidence of travel to North Korea may face thorough and time-consuming checks. Foreigners intending to stay beyond 90 days are required to apply for an Alien Registration Card. Travellers should consult the Immigration Bureau website for further details.

Departure Tax

- Included in the air fare.

Getting Around

BY AIR

Korean Air is the national carrier. Foreigners must carry passports on internal flights. Wonju Airport (WJU), Gunsan Airport (KUV), Pohang Airport (KPO), Gwangju Airport (KWJ), Yeosu Airport (RSU), Sacheon (HIN) Airport and Ulsan Airport (USN) are the domestic airports. Charter flights are also available.

BY ROAD

The complexity of road layouts, the density of traffic and the need to understand Korean road signs is likely to make driving inconvenient for most short-term visitors. Excellent motorways link major cities, but road surfaces on less-travelled routes can be poor. Traffic drives on the right. An international driving permit is required. Travellers who plan to drive in South Korea should carry disposable cameras to document traffic accidents, no matter how minor. Deaths due to poor or rash driving are common and car drivers are presumed to be at fault in accidents involving motorcycles or pedestrians. Drivers should be careful of motorcyclists and pedestrians. The charges are accompanied by heavy penalties in the event of injury. If the accident results in an injury or there is dispute about the cause, the police may impound the traveller's passport. The legal blood-alcohol limit is extremely low; motorists found guilty will be liable to pay a hefty fine and may face licence suspension or cancellation.

Heavy rain during the monsoon season (mid-June to mid-August) can temporarily block isolated sections of roads. Additionally, road closures due to heavy snow can cause significant disruption to overland travel in more rural areas. Avalanches and landslides can also block roads in mountainous areas during winter. Delays should be expected during the Lunar New Year (late January-early February) holiday period due to increased traffic.

BY TAXI

Taxis are safe, convenient and can be hired at a taxi rank or hailed on the street. There are two types of taxis; the regular grey, white or orange taxis, and the deluxe black taxis with yellow roof signs. Black taxis are generally more comfortable, though they are more expensive. Metered fares are strictly applied in cities.

International taxis are also available; they are easily identified by their orange colour and international taxi logo. The drivers speak English and Japanese. These taxi services offer translation facilities upon request. However, travellers are advised to have the destination name written in Korean for convenience.

BY TRAIN

Korean National Railways runs a good railway network that connects all major cities. Services are safe and divided into three categories – non-stop Saemaeul trains, Mugunghwa trains and KTX express trains. S-RAIL also provides Super Rapid Train (SRT). KTX and SRT express trains are the fastest and most comfortable. Travellers should have their destination and the type of ticket required written down in Korean characters (hotels will be able to assist). Station signs and timetables are often in English.

BY OTHER MEANS

Comfortable air-conditioned buses run intercity services.

By Sea

Domestic ferry services are available throughout the country. Similar to international ferry journeys, domestic sea journeys are time-consuming and therefore less efficient in terms of travel time, particularly when compared to other forms of transport within South Korea.

Language & Money

LANGUAGE

Korean is the official language. English is widely spoken in official and business circles and is spoken by staff at most good hotels. Not all Korean business associates are likely to speak English.

MONEY

The local currency is the South Korean won (W). ATMs are widely available; majority of foreign bank and credit cards are accepted. Banking services are sparse in rural areas compared to metropolitan areas. Traveller's cheques are accepted and can be exchanged easily at banks and bureau de change.

Cultural Tips

General Tips

- Entertainment is usually extravagant, and Korean hosts may be offended if you refuse their hospitality.
- Small gifts are customary on social occasions.
- Gifts should be given and received with both hands. Gifts are not opened in the presence of the giver.
- If invited to a Korean home, bringing fruit, imported coffee or tea, chocolates or crafts from your country will be appreciated.
- Eye contact is important in conveying sincerity.
- Remove your shoes before entering a Korean home or temple.
- US and Japanese nationals are advised not to broach potentially inflammatory subjects, such as the US military presence or Japan's occupation in the early 20th century, and should avoid discussing current affairs and international relations during periods of strained relations.
- Homosexuality is legal in South Korea.

Business Tips

- Business titles are often used as a sign of respect.
- Koreans traditionally nod or bow slightly when greeting. However, handshakes are also common and appropriate. Women should initiate handshaking.
- Appointments should be made in advance.
- Punctuality is very important for both business and social engagements. Lateness is frowned upon.
- Businesspeople are expected to dress in formal attire, such as suits.

- Make sure to bring several business cards, as they are commonly exchanged. Use your right hand to give or take a card.
- Do not write on business cards that you receive.

Businesswomen

There are no specific risks for female travellers or businesswomen. However, all women are advised to follow commonsense security precautions such as:

- Politely decline invitations that would take you beyond your personal comfort levels, even if faced by amicable pressure to behave otherwise.
- Plan your itineraries bearing in mind risks incurred by women in various modes of transport available in your location; prioritise security in your choice of transport.

Tipping

Tipping is not customary as a service charge is usually included in the bill.

Working Week

- Working week: Monday to Friday
- Office hours: 09.00-18.00
- Bank hours: 09.00-16.00

Phone & Power

Korea, South Telecommunications

Emergency Numbers	
Ambulance	119
Fire	119
Police	112

Dialing Codes	
Country Code	82
IDD Prefix (International Direct Dialing)	001
NDD Prefix (National Direct Dialing)	0, 082

Telephone Information

Both domestic and international telephone services in South Korea are excellent and equipped with new technologies. There are no restrictions on the use of satellite phones. South Korea also enjoys roaming agreements with foreign mobile phone companies. Travellers can either rent phones or purchase prepaid SIM cards upon arrival at an airport. The major GSM mobile telephone networks are KT Corporation and SK Telecom. Public telephones accept coins and phone cards. Internet cafés can be found in public places such as airports, train stations and bus terminals across the country. Postal services are widely available.

Information Security

Members should anticipate a degree of government surveillance in South Korea particularly over internet and social media, primarily due to the threat of cyber activity from North Korea. Sharing of any sensitive information against national security is subject to screening and punishment under the National Security Law. Also, the government is known to co-operate with private telecommunications companies to detect any threats to national security. Members working in the defence, high-technology, financial, manufacturing, telecommunications and energy sectors are likely to be monitored more closely.

Cyber-crime against individuals and organisations continues to pose a threat, though the government has increased protection requirements and enhanced security measures against hacking, denial of service (DoS) attacks, malicious programs and internet fraud. Most cybercriminals target individuals for financial purposes by illegally obtaining personal information.

Various laws and regulations have been implemented that stipulate stiff penalties for crimes against national security, information network infringement and illegal use of information networks or personal information, among others.

Advice

- Minimise the number of devices you bring in-country; only carry devices that are absolutely essential. Clean devices, containing only data necessary for the trip with no access to shared networks, should be used if targeted attacks are likely.
- Ensure all devices you bring in-country are well secured, with strong passwords; ensure all storage devices have full disk encryption.
- Ensure all software, including anti-virus protection, is up to date prior to travel; avoid updating software while away.
- Avoid connecting to insecure Wi-Fi networks where possible. Public Wi-Fi connections are almost always unencrypted. This allows attackers to easily instigate man-in-the-middle attacks, where they redirect your browsing request to a malicious website and then run malware on your device.
- If necessary, only connect to public networks using a virtual private network (VPN). Always familiarise yourself with the legal status of any VPN or application in your destination country prior to travel. Be aware of other relevant legislation, including compliance requests which allow authorities to inspect devices.
- Keep devices on your person as much as possible. If unattended, ensure devices are powered down and well secured. If using hotel safes, secure them with a secondary personally lockable device.
- Limit location tracking/turn off your phone's location function to deter surveillance, with the exception of our Assistance app or other essential applications. Turn off Wi-Fi and Bluetooth when not in use.
- Run a thorough check of all devices upon your return and use the ‘forget network' setting if you did connect to any public Wi-Fi networks.

- Comply with local legislation. This includes any official requests to inspect devices. If this occurs, inform your IT department as soon as possible and exercise caution when using the device after. Power off devices prior to approaching customs.
- Obtain profile-specific advice, taking into account your industry and position in the company.

Korea, South Electricity

Voltage and Frequency

Additional Electrical Information

Voltage: 220 volts
Frequency: 60 Hz

This is the most common plug type used:

Geography & Weather

Weather data provided by weather.com

Climate

South Korea has a continental climate with four distinct seasons. Spring starts in early April to May, with average temperatures of about 10 ºC (50 ºF) to 12 ºC (54 ºF) rising steadily through May and June to 20 ºC (68 ºF). There is occasional light rain during this season. Summer is hot and humid (80%), with monsoon rains from July to early September. Typhoons are common during this period. Temperatures vary from 20-30 ºC (68-86 ºF) through July and August (26 ºC (79 ºF) in Seoul). Autumn is mild and dry, with temperatures averaging about 12 ºC (54 ºF). Very little rain falls at this time of year.

Winter is cold and dry, with temperatures below freezing for most of December through to February. The mean temperature in Seoul in January is -6 ºC (22 ºF), though strong winds from Siberia can push the temperature down to -15 ºC (4 ºF) at night. The best time to visit South Korea is either before the monsoons (April-June) or afterwards (September-early November). Jeju island's climate is warmer all year round, with temperatures even in winter rarely falling below 7 ºC (45 ºF).

GEOGRAPHY

The Republic of Korea (South Korea) is bordered by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) to the north. The two states are separated by a 2.5-mile (4km) wide Demilitarised Zone (DMZ). South Korea is surrounded by the Sea of Japan (East Sea) to the east, the East China Sea to the south, and the Yellow Sea (West Sea) to the west. Its capital is Seoul and other big cities are Incheon, Busan, Taegu, Gwangju and Taejon. The country is administratively divided into nine provinces, six metropolitan cities, one special city (Seoul) and one governing city (Sejong).

Embassies & Consulates

Embassies

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Seoul 140-861
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Telephone: +82 2 796 8144

Fascimilie: +82 2 792 5820

Email: ecoresec@mrecic.gov.ar

website: http://ecore.cancilleria.gov.ar/en

Australia Embassy

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19th Floor, Kyobo Building, 1 Jongro-1-Ga, Jongro-Gu; Seoul

Seoul 110-714

Korea, South
Telephone: +82 2 20030100

Fascimilie: +82 2 7229264

Email: consular.seoul@dfat.gov.au

website: https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/republic-of-korea/Pages/republic-of-korea-south

Belgium Consulate

100 Ijin-ro, Onsan-eup, Ulju-gun,; Ulsan

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Telephone: +82 52 231 0091

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Email: Seung-bong.choi@solvay.com

website: http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/services/embassies_and_consulates/belgian_e

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Telephone: +82 2 7490381~4

Fascimilie: +82 2 797 1688

Email: seoul@diplobel.fed.be

website: https://republicofkorea.diplomatie.belgium.be/en

Brazil Embassy

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73 Cheongwadae-ro, Palpan-dong, Jongno-gu; Seoul

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Telephone: +82 2 738 4970

Fascimilie: +82 2 7384974

Email: ambassador.seul@itamaraty.gov.br

website: http://seul.itamaraty.gov.br/en-us/

Canada Consulate

Busan
c/o Dongsung Chemical Co. Ltd, 99 Sinsan-ro, Saha-gu; Busan

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Email: seoul-cs@international.gc.ca

website: http://www.korea.gc.ca

Canada Embassy

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website: http://www.korea.gc.ca

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Fascimilie: +82 51 7437987

Email: chinaconsul_bu_kr@mfa.gov.cn

website: http://busan.china-consulate.org/chn/

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27 Myeongdong 2-gil, Jung-gu,; Seoul

Seoul 110-033
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Telephone: +82 2 7381038

Fascimilie: (822) 755-0469 (cons

Email: chinaemb_kr@mfa.gov.cn

website: http://kr.chineseembassy.org/chn/

Denmark Consulate

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website: http://www.ambafrance-kr.org/

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website: http://www.seoul.diplo.de/Vertretung/seoul/de/Startseite.html

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website: www.indembassyseoul.gov.in

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website: http://www.ambseoul.esteri.it/ambasciata_seoul

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website: https://kr.usembassy.gov/

Calendar

2020

15 Aug Liberation Day
Banks and most businesses will be closed.

30 Sep - 02 Oct Chuseok (Korean Harvest Day)

03 Oct National Foundation Day

09 Oct Hangeul Proclamation Day

25 Dec Christmas Day
In some countries, if this holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, a public holiday is declared for the following Monday.

2021

01 Jan New Year's Day

In many countries, if this holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, a public holiday is declared for the following Monday.

05 May Children's Day

07 May Substitute holiday for Children's day

06 Jun Memorial Day

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