

Seoul

The South Korean capital is energetic and sprawling; it's a 24-hour city that's home to some 10 million people and plenty of brightly lit billboards, skyscrapers and shops. But that's not all. Beyond the colourful clutter you'll find innovative building projects, lush green spaces and world-class museums, as well as a tasty spread of places to eat and drink. Hike up your *hanbok* and come and meet the people putting their hearts into Seoul.

Need to know

Get to grips with the basics

- 01 **Language lessons:** Address-related suffixes include *ga* (region or street), *gil* and *ro* (street), *gu* (district) and *dong* (neighbourhood).
- 02 **Natural wonders:** The shores of the Hangang offer a soothing reprieve from the high-rises, as does the artificially revived Cheonggyecheon downtown.
- 03 **Playing nice:** Koreans don't do kissing – at least not when they're greeting one another. A brief hug is more common among friends. If in doubt just smile and say “hello”: that's *ann-yeong* to friends and *ann-yeong ha-se-yo* to strangers, elders and business partners.
- 04 **Money matters:** Your safest bet is using American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard or Visa. Keep an eye out for machines that say “Global ATM”.
- 05 **Middle of the road:** The city's new address system uses street names and numbers whereas the old system was based on administrative divisions. Most Seoulites are still transitioning and use a combination of the new and old so we've done the same.

Hotels

Get comfortable

- 1 Park Hyatt, Daechi-dong
Room with a view

This striking glass box is all about the views: you'll find floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook the city sprawl (don't fret, there are blinds in the bathroom).

606 Teheran-ro, Gangnam-gu
+182 (0)2 2016 1234
seoul.park.hyatt.com

- 2 Handpicked Hotel & Collections, Sangdo-dong
Select design

This 10-storey hotel stands on the site of owner and general manager Sean Kim's former family home and helped revitalise the neighbourhood.

120 Sangdo-ro, Dongjak-gu
+182 (0)2 2229 5499
handpicked.kr

- 3 The Shilla, Jangchung-dong
Landmark hotel

The Shilla is an oasis perched on the peak of Namsan, which is reached by a winding road that passes a vast sculpture garden.

249 Dongho-ro, Jung-gu
+182 (0)2 2233 3131
shilla.net/seoul

Food and drink

Say kimchi

- 1 Keunkiwajip, Samcheong-dong
Sticky fingers

Koreans call *ganjang gejang* (raw crab marinated in soy sauce) “rice thieves” because they go so well with rice that they can make an entire bowl of it disappear in seconds. The secret to Keunkiwajip's fresh-crab dishes is the marinade.

62 Bukchon-ro 5-gil, Jongno-gu
+182 (0)2 722 9024
keunkiwajip.modoo.at

- 2 O'neul, Dongbinggo-dong
High-end classics

Homely Korean standards reach fine-dining heights at O'neul, which translates as “today”. The *yukgaejang* (rich beef soup) is simmered for 12 hours and the kimchi here has been fermented for years, not months.

60 Jangmun-ro, Yongsan-gu
+182 (0)2 792 1054

- 3 Bimbom, Seongsu-dong
Cinematic brunch

Opened in 2011 by playwright-turned-chef Sim Ka-young and her kitchen-appliance-designer husband Kim Tai-Kyung, Bimbom has lent the city brunch options beyond French toast and eggs Benedict.

18-14 Seoulsup 2-gil, Seongdong-gu
+182 (0)2 466 8790

- 4 Manufact Coffee Roasters, Sinsa-dong
Craftsman's brew

Found atop concept store Queenmama Market, Manufact Coffee Roasters was opened by Kim Jong Phil and his brother Jong Jin. Its name, drawn from the Latin words *manus* (hand) and *factum* (made), captures the Kim brothers' personal touch.

4F, Queenmama Market,
50 Apgujeong-ro 46-gil, Gangnam-gu
+182 (0)2 3442 0914

- 5 Southside Parlor, Itaewon-dong
Southern hospitality

When Southside Parlor opened in 2013, craft cocktails were hard to come by outside Seoul's five-star hotels. But after hosting a series of pop-ups, the bar's trio of Texan founders discovered an audience enthusiastic for a taste of the American South.

218 Noksapyeong-daero, Yongsan-gu
+182 (0)749 9522

Retail

Buyers' market

- 1 Beaker, Cheongdam-dong
A lotta labels

Launched in 2012 by Samsung's fashion arm, Beaker features about 300 men's and womenswear labels from the US, Europe and Asia, including Helmut Lang, Closed, Aspesi, Armor-lux and Maison Kitsuné.

1-2F, Cheongdam Building,
408 Apgujeong-ro, Gangnam-gu
+182 (0)2 543 1270
ssfshop.com/beaker

- 2 Queenmama Market, Sinsa-dong
All under one roof

The exterior of this nondescript grey-stone building may look a little lifeless but inside is a four-storey lifestyle shop so big and inviting that it's a veritable ecosystem of its own, selling South Korean ceramics, plants and homeware.

50 Apgujeong-ro 46-gil, Gangnam-gu
+182 (0)70 4281 3372
queenmamamarket.com

- 3 Sulwhasoo, Sinsa-dong
Spa and partners

Sulwhasoo's first standalone shop is a handsome six-storey space inspired by a lantern. Visit at dusk, when the brass-and-wood interiors glow through the rectangular windows, and pick up the label's signature ginseng cream, the original product launched in 1966.

18 Dosan-daero 45-gil, Gangnam-gu
+182 (0)2 541 9270
sukwhasoo.com

- 4 Vinyl & Plastic, Hannam-dong
Listen up

Housed in a glass-and-steel structure by Korean architecture firm Samuso Hyojadong, Vinyl & Plastic stocks South Korean and international records and CDs, with listening stations for you to sample before you buy.

683-131 Itaewon-ro, Yongsan-gu
+182 (0)2 2014 7800
vinylandplastic.hyundaicard.com

Vocabulary

Talking the talk

- 01 An-nyeong ha-se-yo: Hello
- 02 Gam-sa ham-ni-da: Thank you
- 03 Ban-gap sihm-ni-da: Nice to meet you
- 04 Dae-bak: The best
- 05 Cah-pee ju-se-yo: Please, give me coffee
- 06 Mat-shi suh-yo: It's delicious
- 07 Gun bae: Cheers



Buy today at all good bookshops or visit the online shops at monocle.com and shop.gestalten.com