



New Rough Guide to Korea



A new title from Rough Guides, *The Rough Guide to Korea* opens up this fascinating yet relatively unexplored corner of Asia. Korea is a rapidly emerging destination, and its rich history, diverse culture and complex social and political situation makes it a unique and engaging place to travel.

The guide explores Korean history, politics and culture with expert knowledge on everything from the delicious, spicy and distinctive local cuisine to hiking in South Korea's national parks. The favourite national pastime - wherever you are in the country you're never far from a hiking trail. Watch out for the fascinating ajumma brigade: Korean grandmothers are nothing short of indestructible, and rock up to mountain rages in huge packs of up to 50. Wearing fishing jackets identical but for the choice of red or blue, they laugh, shout and sing their way all the way up and then all the way down again, putting many a Westener to shame with their strength and energy!

The guide also contains plenty of practical tips on the best information and transportation including what to see and what to take with you, plus the dos and don'ts of the country with a practical and revealing guide to North Korea, described as "the Holy Grail for hard-bitten travellers". With a full colour introduction and hiking section, comprehensive maps, and lively and relevant reviews on hundreds of shops, restaurants, hotels, bars and clubs this is an indispensable source of knowledge from the award-winning Rough Guides.

About the Author:

Nobert Paxman has lived in Korea. He can speak, write and read Korean and has a good understanding of what makes the perplexing peninsula tick. He has also lived in China & Japan, two countries that have exerted (& continue to exert) heavy influence on Korea.

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

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Ever wondered what they listen to in Korea?

How about **Grandmother Techo** - While modern K-pop has swept across continental Asia, there's another strain of music that you're just as likely to come across on your way around Korea: "Trot" songs – best described as a kind of grandmother techno – are fast-paced ballads, set to odd synthesized rhythms and crooned out in a semi-compulsory warbly voice. The songs have changed over the years but the style has been around since the 1930s and remains hugely popular with Korea's older set, as anyone who's seen a clutch of grannies getting down to the beats will testify. However, *Trot* is not the sole preserve of the elderly, and is unlikely to go out of fashion for some time – you'll find university students belting hits out in *noraebang* (Korean karaoke dens)

25 Things Not To Miss!

- 01 Ilchulbong** • Wake up early to catch the day's first rays at "Sunrise Peak", a verdant green caldera on the eastern tip of beautiful island of Jeju.
- 02 Gyeongju** • This former capital of Silla is the most traditional city in Korea, and should be on every visitor's itinerary.
- 03 Dongdaemun Market** • A 24-hour market in a city that never sleeps, Dongdaemun is a Seoul institution, with sights and smells redolent of decades gone by.
- 04 Galbi** • A fire at the centre of your table and a plateful of raw meat to throw on it – could this be the world's most fun-to-eat dish?
- 05 Hongdae** • There's no better place to party than Hongdae, Seoul's most happening nightlife district.
- 06 Boryeong Mud Festival** • Korea's dirtiest, most enjoyable festival takes place each July on the west coast – don't forget your soap.
- 07 West Sea Islands** • Over three thousand islands sprinkled like confetti around Korea's western coast; Mokpo is the best point of access.
- 08 Beopjusa** • A 33-metre-high golden Buddha stands over this wonderful temple, surrounded by the peaks of Songnisan National Park.
- 09 The DMZ** • Take a step inside the 4km-wide Demilitarized Zone, separating North and South Korea, the world's frostiest remnant of the Cold War.
- 10 Noraebang** • A near-mandatory part of a Korean night out is a trip to a "singing room", the local take on Japan's karaoke bars.
- 11 Buyeo Fortress** • Korea's most charming and historic fortress by far – this is where the Baekje dynasty met its end, literally toppling to extinction into the adjacent river.
- 12 Guinsa** • The most distinctive temple complex in the country, Guinsa's paths wind snake-like routes up a tight, remote valley in Korea's heartland.
- 13 Jagalchi Fish Market** • Your food may be so fresh that it's still wriggling on your plate at this highly atmospheric Busan fish market.
- 14 Seoraksan National Park** • Bald, rocky peaks jut out from the pines at what the locals claim to be the country's most magnificent park.
- 15 Jeongdongjin** • Korea's most surreal village has a train station on the beach, a ship-hotel atop a cliff, an American warship and an equally real North Korean spy submarine.
- 16 Dosan Seowon** • The wonderfully unspoilt countryside surrounding the city of Andong is studded with gems, but this former Confucian academy is one of the best.
- 17 Dongdongju** • Consumed by students all over Korea and often served in rustic wooden bowls, drinking this creamy rice wine is the most traditional way to guarantee a banging hangover.
- 18 Jeonju Hanok** • Here you can sleep in a traditional wooden hanok house heated from underneath by gentle flames, in one of Korea's most agreeable cities.
- 19 Biwon** • Relax by the lake as kings once did at this secluded "Secret Garden", which nestles at the back of a UNESCO-listed palace in central Seoul.
- 20 Jeju Teddy Bear Museum** • The epitome of kitsch, most notable for its diorama room portraying twentieth-century events such as teddies tearing down the Berlin Wall, landing on the moon and going down with the Titanic.
- 21 Insadong** • Immerse yourself in wholesome traditional activities on Seoul's most popular street, one peppered with art galleries, tearooms and rustic restaurants.
- 22 Paekdusan** Page 415 • The legendary birthplace of the Korean nation, this dormant volcano – the highest peak on the peninsula – rises up through the Chinese–North Korean border, its crater lake a preternatural blue when not frozen over.
- 23 Socialist Realist Art** Page 390 • What has become an ironic style in Eastern Europe remains iconic in the DPRK, with colourful murals found all across the country – send one home on a postcard.
- 24 Pyongyang** • The world's least-visited capital is a rhapsody of brutalist architecture, many buildings topped with red Hangeul slogans extolling the virtues of the government and its leaders.
- 25 Arirang Mass Games** • Performers outnumber spectators at this feast of synchronized dance, one of the biggest and most spectacular festivals you're ever likely to see.