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Korean Culture and Information Service
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism



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K-pop performances by Korean entertainers in Paris in June 2011 were a smashing success.
(SM TOWN live world tour in Paris)



KOREAN WAVE ENLIVENS INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL SCENE

For more than a decade, South Korean TV dramas and music have enjoyed popularity throughout Asia, creating a Korean cultural phenomenon called the “Korean Wave.” More recently, Korean films, popular music or “K-pop,” and even Korean fashion and cuisine have begun to find their way into Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas.

1 K-pop dancers and musicians dazzling international audiences. (Super Junior) 2 Korean delegates delight to hear the IOC announcement that PyeongChang was decided as the host of the 2018 Winter Olympiad.

Korea has also become a major power in sports, especially soccer, archery, ice-skating and baseball. Kim Yu-na, the gold medalist in figure skating at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, and Park Ji-sung of England’s Manchester United football club are only two of many Korean athletes who are distinguishing themselves in the world of sports.

The Republic hosted the 1988 Olympic Games, 2002 FIFA World Cup and the 2011 Daegu IAAF World Championships in Athletics and is organizing the 2018 Winter Olympic Games. The country is among only half a dozen nations that have achieved a “grand slam” of playing host to the four major international competitions mentioned above.

3 The film “Poetry” won the Award for Best Screenplay at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival. 4 Many Korean TV dramas are sought out for broadcasting overseas even before they are produced. Increasing number of people are becoming fans of Korean dramas all over the world. 5 Park Ji-sung of the British soccer team, Manchester United. 6 Kim Yu-na conquered the Olympics and all other major international figure-skating championships.



A VARIETY OF TRAVEL OPTIONS

Every year, an increasing number of foreign tourists are discovering the exciting and diverse attractions of South Korea. In 2010, more than 6 million international tourists came to see what Korea has to offer. Fashionistas will rejoice in the wide variety of options, from the bargains of Namgdaemun Market to the vibrant youthful look of Myeongdong area to the high-end department stores of Apgujeongdong.

Many exciting cultural festivals are held in Korea each year. Fans of traditional culture enjoy the International Mask Dance Festival in Andong, the Boryeong Mud Festival and over one thousand other festivals around the country. Even those people who need medical attention can participate in the “medical tourism,” taking advantage of first-class medical treatment at reasonable prices. The country has half a dozen “slow cities” designated by the Cittaslow International network in addition to countless farming and fishing towns.

Those looking to satisfy their intellectual curiosity about Korea’s history and culture can visit the majestic National Museum in Seoul. There are many other museums and art galleries ranging from the Samsung Leeum Museum of Art and quirky smaller museums like the Kino Toy Museum.

1 It is not only the big cities that are worth visiting in Korea. There are beautiful islands, mountains and countryside with easy access. (Cheongsando) 2 Boryeong Mud Festival is extremely popular among foreign tourists. 3 Insadong in Seoul is always crowded with foreign travelers who are interested in Korean culture. 4 There are many places in Korea where culture meets tourism. A variety of museums await travelers. (National Museum of Korea)



For those who don’t mind some walking and trekking, the country provides an infinite number of hiking and mountain climbing courses. One of the most famous such paths is Jeju Island’s Olle hiking trails. Authors of Seoul’s Historic Walks say about the capital city, “Whether it is Seoul Fortress high in the mountains or the quaint alleyways of Bukchon, there is always something to discover if you are willing to do the exploring.”



EXPERIENCE KOREAN HOSPITALITY

Koreans have a long history of hospitality, ensuring that guests receive the warmest welcome and the best of everything. From amazing homemade meals to fine restaurant dining, Korean hosts are always eager to make sure their guests are well fed. Whether visitors are treated to a fancy hotel room or temple stay or lodged in a Hanok, a traditional Korean house where they can try sleeping on the heated Ondol floors, they can always expect the highest standards of hospitality.

For international travelers, Korea offers a wide range of restaurants that are comparable to those in the most cosmopolitan cities around the world. Healthful Korean food is the most popular. Whether the establishment serves Western beefsteak or Vietnamese noodles, you will be welcomed there with open arms.

Korea has many kinds of sauna/spa facilities. Jjimjilbang is the most popular type. They are often equipped with hot/cold tubs, sleeping rooms, restaurants, barbershops and much more. Admission is not expensive unless you want to use special services like massage.

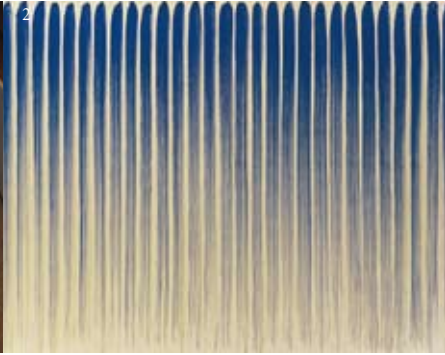
Recently, Korea has had many “medical tourists” who seek medical treatment at affordable fees. Most hospitals are staffed by highly trained professionals. Nonetheless, make sure to choose a reputable medical organization and even get a second opinion.



1,2 A wide spectrum of practical experiences are available for foreign travelers in Korea. Some international tourists act out Lunar New Year's Day greetings between young and older family members, while others enjoy complete relaxation in a Jjimjilbang. 3 “Medical tourism” facilities provide complete, professional medical services. 4 Travelers interested in the calm, peaceful Asia are often mesmerized by Korean traditional buildings and tea culture.



CREATIVE ARTISTS BRING BEAUTY INTO PEOPLE'S LIVES



Many artists in Korea are actively engaged in a broad spectrum of creative endeavors, ranging from fine arts and music to dramas and avant-garde and experimental arts. The late Nam-june Paik was a pioneer in contemporary video arts. A group of Sookmyung Women's University students has popularized a fusion of Western music and the Gayageum, a traditional Korean stringed instrument. The innovative non-verbal comedy Nanta has entertained international audiences for more than 10 years now, setting a record by combining physical comedy with traditional Korean drumming. The country's break dancers have come to

dominate the international b-boy scene, winning one top prize after another in international competitions. All these artists are reaching out to global audiences and are actively communicating with the international arts community.

1 The More the Better by Nam June Paik. The pioneering video artist installed 1003 TV monitors for this work. (National Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea) 2 From Line by Lee U Fan. The renowned artist has a private museum in Naoshima, Japan. 3 The age-old Korean music has developed unique genres featuring vocalists and traditional instruments. The hourglass-shaped drum shown is called a Jangu. 4 Using the traditional instrument Gayageum, Sookmyung Gayageum Orchestra plays Western classical music creatively. 5 Non-verbal comedy Nanta has been running more than 10 years non-stop. 6 Odyssey by Korea's B-boy crew Last for One received enthusiastic reviews from international fans.





SEOUL, THE SOUL OF ASIA

Seoul is the country's largest city with a population of 11 million in the city proper, and 23 million people live in the greater metropolitan area. The ancient yet fully modernized city has been the capital of the country for more than 600 years. Its long history makes Seoul a fascinating and revealing destination for any serious traveler. Located in the middle of the Korean Peninsula, Seoul is surrounded by beautiful mountains on all sides, offering city dwellers hiking and rock-climbing opportunities throughout the year. The Han River is one of the longest rivers in the country and runs through the heart of Seoul, providing water-skiing, yachting and sailing opportunities. Traffic congestions can often be a

problem, but the sprawling city is well served by a sophisticated system of buses, taxis and particularly the very efficient subways and commuter trains.

Seoul is the center of Korea's political, economic and cultural activities. It is the seat of the national government, and home to numerous royal palaces and shrines from the Joseon Dynasty, museums, theaters and sleek shopping centers. Over the years, the city of Seoul has become a major hub of international finance, logistics, tourism and culture. The city has successfully held the Asian Games in 1986, Seoul Olympics in 1988, the FIFA World Cup in 2002 and the G20 Summit in 2010.

1 Changgyeong-gung palace is contrasted with modern buildings in the background. 2 Cutting across the center of Seoul, Han river provides an ideal environment for water sports and leisurely activities. 3 An alpinist climbs a steep rock at night against the backdrop of downtown Seoul. The capital city is surrounded by half a dozen beautiful mountains. 4 Myeongdong district in the city center is filled with fashion houses, restaurants and entertainment businesses.



TRADITIONAL COSTUMES, CUISINE AND HOUSES

The Korean people have their traditional costumes. Women's upper wear, called Jeogori, looks somewhat like bolero. Women's skirts are called Chima, and are full-length, high waist wrap-around pieces. Men's upper wear is also called Jeogori, and their roomy trousers are called Baji. Both men's and women's overcoats are called Durumagi. The elegant, graceful costumes are now made in diverse colors although ancient Koreans liked to use five basic colors—yellow, blue, white, red and black. The chief characteristics of Korean costumes are their smooth curving lines, except for the collar and knot of Jeogori, which are designed in straight lines. Traditional clothes are made with natural fabrics and colored with natural dyes.

Authentic Korean cuisine is nutritious and healthful, combining medicinal philosophy, exciting flavors, and aesthetic considerations. Daily meals have long been treated as more of a restorative medicine and are prepared with fresh vegetables and seasonal ingredients. The most striking feature of Korean food may be its fermentation. Almost all of the Korean side dishes are made with at least one fermented condiment—soy sauce, bean paste or hot pepper paste. Even more famous Korean food is kimchi,



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1 Hanok, Korean traditional house, stays very close to nature by using wood and soil as its basic material. These houses are not flashy, but accentuate the beauty of simplicity and restrained use of space. 2 Whenever there is a special guest or occasion, Koreans prepare a dinner by filling up a large dining table with numerous dishes made with all sorts of ingredients. They believe that they can share their hearts by sharing their food. 3 Bibimbap, a colorful traditional dish, is a bowl of rice with different kinds of sautéed vegetables on top. It reflects the philosophy of “universal harmony”.

fermented vegetables, which was chosen in 2006 as one of the five most healthful foods in the world by Health magazine, an influential periodical published in America. Kimchi contains numerous nutrients, including vitamins A, B, C and lactic acid.

Historically, Korean houses were built using yellow mud, wood, stones and mulberry paper, and had both one of the world's most effective “central heating systems,” called Ondol, for winter and the ability to bring in cool breezes into the house during summer.

Homes are made to accommodate nature as much as possible rather than trying to alter it or control it arbitrarily. In this way, Korean clothes, cuisine, and houses are made with practical functions and natural aesthetics in mind. Today Korea is modernized and globalized, and many people live in Western type apartments and condominiums and wear traditional dresses only on special occasions. Yet, traditions essentially are evident in people's daily lives.



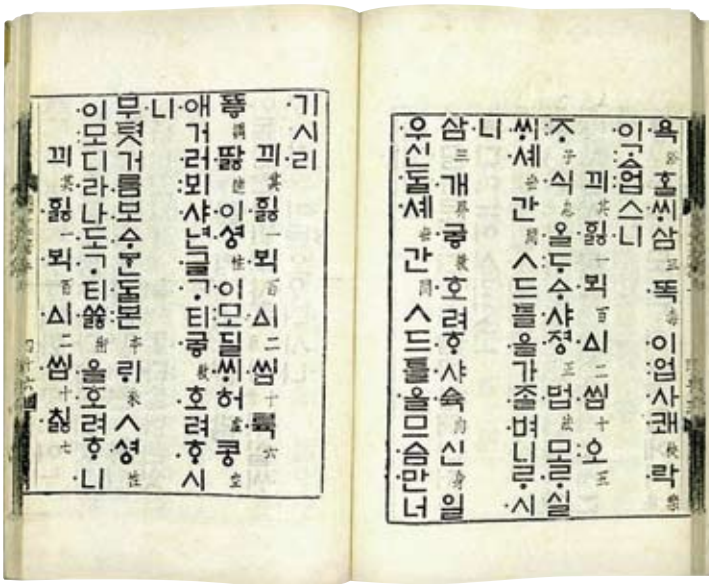
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The 18-kilometer Incheon Bridge connecting Incheon International Airport and the New Songdo International City.

KOREAN ALPHABET SYSTEM AND NATIONAL FLAG



Korea has its own language and a unique writing system comprised of 10 vowels and 14 consonants. The alphabet, called Hangeul, was invented in the 15th century by prominent scholars at the behest of King Sejong the Great. Because it is quite easy to learn, Hangeul has helped Korea reach one of the highest literacy rates in the world.

The Republic's national flag is called the Taegukgi, and has been used since the end of the 19th century. It is designed to reflect Asian philosophical traditions, including the I Ching. Korea's national flower is the Rose of Sharon. The flowers blossom repeatedly and vibrantly during their season, and symbolize the perseverance of the Korean people.

1 Wolin-cheongang-jigok, an epic poem about the life of Buddha, was printed in original Hangeul alphabet of the 15th century. 2 King Sejong (Reign: 1418-1450) of Joseon Kingdom led a group of scholars to create the Korean alphabet system. His statue is in the Gwanghwamun Square, Seoul.

3 The Rose of Sharon, the Korean national flower, symbolizes diligence, resilience and pure hearts 4 Taegukgi, the flag of South Korea, is made of patterns that symbolize the philosophies of yin and yang, and of the five primary substances.



A GLANCE AT KOREA'S HISTORY

According to archeological evidence, humans began to inhabit the Korean Peninsula during the Paleolithic Age. Ancient written records on Korea describe kingdoms that date back to 2333 BC when Gojoseon, the first Korean state was founded. Korea has been through many different dynasties and its borders have changed over the centuries. For more than 1,200 years from 668 through 1910, the country maintained its sovereignty despite large-scale invasions, notably by the Mongols and the Japanese in the 13th and 16th century respectively. But the country was colonized by Imperial Japan from 1910 to 1945. After the World War II, the Allied Powers divided it into South and North. In 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea touching off a three-year war.

From the ashes of the war, the South Korean people rapidly built up their economy, going on to establish a democracy replete with freedom of the press, expression and religion. In the 1990s, Korea joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and in 2010 it successfully hosted the G20 Summit. In just 50 short years, the country transformed itself from an agricultural nation to a digital economy and rose from being one of the world's poorest countries to become an aid donor to other nations.

1 The Republic of Korea Government was formally established in 1948 at a ceremony at the domed government building. 2 The New Community (Saema-eul) Movement that was launched in 1970 was a spiritual and economic campaign. 3 Large-scale pro-democracy demonstrations took place in Gwangju in 1980, paving the way for a completely free democracy. 4 Exports of automobiles, steel and ships played an important role in Korea's drastic economic growth. 5 Korea hosted the G20 Seoul Summit 2010 that yielded many meaningful measures to overcome global economic crisis.



EACH SEASON BOASTS DISTINCTIVE COLORS

1 Yellow canola flowers are in full bloom in spring on Jeju island. 2 Many people visit the clean Garibong valley in the beautiful Mt. Seorak during summer. 3 Autumn at Dosan Seowon in Andong. Yellow and red leaves fills the whole mountain. 4 It snows a lot in the northeastern region of Korea. Many foreigners come to enjoy various winter sports.



Korea is blessed with the beauty of four distinct seasons. The country has numerous mountains and islands, and beautiful coastlines with white sandy beaches. Jeju Island, situated to the south of the mainland, was originally formed by volcanic eruptions and commands breathtaking vistas. It is an international free trade zone and attracts millions of tourists every year.

In the spring, flowers of all kinds and colors bloom around the country, from cherry blossoms to yellow forsythia bushes. Seoul's Han River and seaside resorts draw thousands of sunbathers in the summer. The color of autumn leaves in the mountains is striking, with vivid reds and golds coloring the countryside. Throughout the winter, the high mountains along the East Coast are covered

with heavy snow. Koreans are enthusiastic nature lovers, and hit the mountains in droves all year round for hiking, trekking, and skiing. PyeongChang, the venue for the 2018 Winter Olympics, already boasts several global standard ski slopes and has a complete blueprint for staging the Winter Games.

The Korean people have always tried to live harmoniously with the Earth in the belief that nature gives life and nurtures humans. It is no coincidence that the Korean government has adopted "low-carbon green growth" as the guiding principle for public policies. Green growth is crucial in order to curb undesirable environmental effects stemming from rapid economic development and to preserve the land.





ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

Rising from the rubble of the Korean War (1950-53), Koreans worked hard over the decades to rebuild national economy, and the country was able to succeed through an export-driven policy and substantially raised its GDP. During the breakneck development of the 1970s and 80s, the country became one of

the “Four Asian Dragons,” along with Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. The nation suffered major economic crises in 1997 and 2008, but through the collective determination of the government and the people, Korea was able to regain economic momentum in only a few years.

As of 2010, Korea’s per capita GDP was US\$20,591 according to the IMF. In recent years, the country’s industrial advance in the international market has been remarkable on almost all fronts, particularly in shipbuilding, electronics, automobiles, semiconductors, and construction of nuclear power plants. In 2008, Korea received more than half of all new shipbuilding orders in the global market, and many other Korean firms became category leaders internationally. The country is now the fifth-largest automobile manufacturer, and global market shares of the country’s largest business groups, including Samsung, LG and Hyundai, have increased rapidly. The Republic is now ranked among the top 15 countries in terms of GDP. With the private sector’s ever-expanding operations, coupled with government’s initiatives for green and new growth engines, the nation is expected to find even greater economic progress in the years to come.



1 Construction of wind turbines is part of Korean government’s strategy for green growth policy. 2,3 Korea is a viable global trendsetter in on/off-line games industry and information, communications technology. 4,5,6 The country is a leading manufacturer of automobiles, smartphones, tablet PCs, ships and many other heavy industrial products.

KOREA'S CULTURE DISTINCTIVE

As one would expect from a nation with thousands of years of history, Korea has rich cultural heritage, including fine art, music, literature, architecture and handicrafts. Contributing heavily to the diverse cultural traditions were Buddhism and Confucianism. The nation has long had ongoing interaction economically and culturally with neighboring countries, including China and Japan. Despite that, a close look will readily reveal distinctive philosophical and aesthetic views of the Korean people.

Korea received Buddhism through China in the 4th century, and has since developed it in a unique way, having a great impact on Japanese Buddhism. Korean literature and architecture evolved into a truly unique form as well. And the nation has Hangeul, a very scientific, easy-to-learn writing system that was invented by King Sejong of the Joseon Kingdom with the scholars in his court.



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The core values of Korean cultural traditions may be summed up as follows: First, the peace-loving Korean people have always tried to live in harmony with nature and other nations. Historically, they were often invaded and occupied by neighboring powers, but have managed to maintain independence with resilience. Second, they have pursued noble causes as a nation, based on the ideology of Dangun, founder of the first Korean state Gojoseon, who advocated “greatly benefiting people.” Third, the Korean nation has a rich legacy of creative arts, literature and ingenious scientific inventions. Even today, creative Koreans are thriving in many parts of the world.

1 Korean language uses its own phonetic alphabet whose 24 letters can be combined to form countless sounds. It is not only scientific and functional, but also aesthetically beautiful. 2 A blue and white porcelain of Joseon era (1392-1910) with bamboo and pine painting. 3 Symbol of the Joseon dynasty itself, Joseon Royal Ancestral Shrine is located in Seoul. It is a culturally and historically significant architecture. 4 Performers of ancient court music. 5 Koreans' love for art, music, and dance has long been recorded in ancient historical texts and tomb murals. Shown here is part of Muyeongchong tomb murals from the Goguryeo Kingdom.



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THE REPUBLIC'S UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE



Since 1972, UNESCO has been designating visible and invisible properties of individual countries as World Heritage in order to preserve elements of outstanding universal value for the sake of all humanity. Korea has a number of World Heritage sites, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Memory of the World listings. They include extensive Buddhist scriptures meticulously carved on 80,000 woodblocks 1,000 years ago and a sacred shrine for the kings of the Joseon Dynasty, where ancestral rituals are still being held by descendants of the royal family. The Jeju volcanic island and lava tubes are also protected as a spectacular example of the riches of the natural world. The well-preserved Joseon-era villages of Hahoe and Yangdong stand as testaments to Korean architecture, and

dolmens scattered around the country attest to Korea's prehistoric heritage.

Included on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage are the Pansori epic chants, the fun-filled Danoje Festival and a variety of exciting religious and folk dances. As world heritage, they exist not only for Koreans but also for humanity as a whole.

1 Musicians perform royal ancestral rites at Jongmyo, the shrine of Joseon Dynasty Kings and Queens. 2 A big Buddha statue made of stone in the Seokguram Grotto, Gyeongju city. 3 Tripitaka Koreaana is Buddhist scriptures carved on 80,000 wooden printing blocks one thousand years ago. 4 Cheoyongmu mask dance used to be performed at the Joseon court occasionally to dispel evil spirits. 5 One of the small volcanic islands close to the main Jeju Island. Such volcanic islands and lava tubes are part of UNESCO's Natural Heritage. 6 The 18th century Hwaseong Fortress in Suwon is noted for a fine city planning and advanced construction technologies.





KOREA FACTS & FIGURES

Official Name of South Korea

The Republic of Korea (ROK)

Capital City

Seoul

Area

Korean Peninsula : 223,343 km²

South Korea : 100,210 km²

Population (2010)

48.87 million

Political System

Free Democracy, Presidential Republic

President

Lee Myung-bak

Language

Korean

(Writing system : Hangeul)

Economic Statistics (2010)

GDP : US\$ 1.014 trillion

Per capita GNI : US\$ 20,759

GDP Growth Rate : 6.2%

Currency Unit (2010)

Won (US\$1 = 1,156 won)

