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The Korea that I have experienced, especially the capital city Seoul, has various cultural assets. Seoul was able to become rich in culture by incorporating the culture of the world, not just its own country. Therefore, I came up with the hypothesis that Seoul's dynamism originates from the world culture, and searched all over Seoul to prove it.

Now I will share my story of world travel in Seoul with you. Are you ready? Let's begin.

Do you think I'm too curious? I can't help it! Asking questions is my job.

I'm Julie Watson, the travel reporter for Living & a popular lifestyle magazine.

World Travel in Seoul Get a Glimpse of the World in Seoul!

Do you know how many different cultures of the world exist in Seoul?

Myeong-dong and Itaewon are representative places to visit in the world tour in Seoul. Korea does not have a Chinatown although it has a long history of exchange with China. But there used to be one. You will be able to find traces of the former Chinatown in Myeong-dong. Itaewon was called the foreign district for many years and a place where international culture coexists. It is the No.1 place where world culture resides in Korea. If you want to experience the world in Seoul in a short period of time, visit Myeong-dong and Itaewon.

However, world culture not only lives in Myeong-dong and Itaewon. There are cultures from Asia, Americas, Europe, Africa and Oceania, the 5 continents of the world, all throughout Seoul. Use the guidebook as a guide to travel through the world in Seoul.

Do you want a special journey? Then enjoy the theme travel courses of Seoul. The places where world stars visited and places with world-class architecture designed by renowned architects are included.

What do you think? Are there too many places for you to go? Look through the guidebook and make your travel plans. And make your own story of World Travel in Seoul.
Meeting Place of the World
Myeong-dong · Itaewon
1. Center of Chinese Nostalgia, Chinatown in Myeong-dong

Story Course


The most expensive place in Seoul, Myeong-dong. Myeong-dong is the central commercial district of Korea and a favored tourist destination. Many tourists who visit Myeong-dong are Chinese tourists, also known as youke. However, before the Chinese tourists coming to Myeong-dong, their ancestors were settling here. 1882 was the most important year for Chinese-Koreans. What might have happened that year? Let’s head to Myeong-dong right away. What may be awaiting us?
As one enters Myeong-dong, the bustling streets lined with numerous shops catch one’s attention. Backpack-toting tourists carrying shopping bags in both hands are hopping from shop to shop. Chinese and Japanese conversation fills the air, and signboards with English and Chinese are everywhere. Myeong-dong is the preferred shopping district for Chinese tourists. The crowds of excited Chinese are a sure sign that one is in Myeong-dong.

A kind-looking man with neatly combed hair extends his hand for a handshake. This is Hou (候, 35), my guide to Myeong-dong. Hou is a third-generation Chinese-Korean who runs a small shop in Myeong-dong. His grandfather was the first member of the family to settle in the area.

“As you can see, Myeong-dong is a great place to shop from a tourists’ perspective. However, that is just what you can see from the outside. If you learn about the history, you will gain a new appreciation for Myeong-dong. Now we’re going to look for the traces of Myeong-dong’s history one by one.”

Hou walked in front of me with confidence. I wondered if I would be able to gain a new perspective on Myeong-dong.
If you walk along the streets of Myeong-dong, you may think you are walking in downtown Beijing, Wangfujing. There are Chinese signs in front of numerous shops and cosmetic stores, and popular Korean Wave stars’ posters are placed in front of the stores to lure Chinese customers. Sales staff speak fluent Chinese and Japanese to greet foreign customers.

“That building is the UNESCO House, built about 50 years ago. It’s older than it appears, right? Let’s take a look.”

I walked towards the building with Hou. As one can infer from the name, the building is closely connected with UNESCO.

“The Republic of Korea joined UNESCO on June 14th, 1950, but the Korean War (1950~1953) erupted on June 25th the same year. Even during the war, the Korean government established the Korean National Commission for UNESCO to carry out UNESCO programs. The UNESCO House opened in 1967, thanks to the efforts of the Korean government. The Korean National Commission has been actively involved in various projects using this building as its home base.”

When I emerged onto a rooftop covered with a relaxing garden, the entire area was surrounded by skyscrapers. Hou told me that the area was once almost completely owned by Chinese.

“In 1882, when the soldiers who received new training and those with traditional training clashed in Korea, China dispatched troops to subdue the conflict, which was called the Imo Incident. Procurement merchants came to Korea with the soldiers, and some of them settled in Seoul and opened stores selling silk and other items. The central district for Chinese merchants was Myeong-dong.”

I tried to recall the Chinese merchants who dominated the area while gazing at the present-day concrete jungle. At that time, Myeong-dong was the commercial and residential home base of Chinese merchants.”

**Qing merchants**

At the end of the 19th century, the number of Qing merchants, called qingshang (淸商), in the Myeong-dong, Sogong-dong, and Gwansu-dong areas increased rapidly. In 1923, Chinese were the biggest private taxpayers in Gyeongseong (modern-day Seoul). The founder of the taxi company that had a 70% market share in Gyeongseong during the 1920s was also Chinese.
After walking for some time among the crowds of tourists, I found myself facing a grand cathedral. It was Myeongdong Cathedral, the symbol of the Catholic Church in Korea and one of Myeong-dong’s major tourist attractions. Built in the Gothic style of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, its pointed spire, red brick walls, arched windows and stained glass catch people’s attention. If Notre Dame Cathedral is arranged horizontally, Myeongdong Cathedral is a vertical building with the tall spire in front.

“My ancestors practically built this cathedral.” Hou explained while caressing the aged walls of the cathedral.

“Myeongdong Cathedral was Korea’s first large Gothic church. Back then, Koreans did not know how to build Western-style buildings. Thus, coolies participated in the construction.”

I had also heard about coolies. The term was used to describe laborers from China and India in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is said to have originated from a Hindu word that means day laborer, but that has not been confirmed.

“Coolies had experience building Western-style buildings, so they were employed at numerous construction sites. Myeongdong Cathedral, the Bank of Korea, and the Hansung Overseas Chinese Primary School were all built with the help of coolies.”

Hou said that there are numerous buildings in Seoul that were built by coolies, one of which is Myeongdong Cathedral. Built on the sweat of coolies, Myeongdong Cathedral is the center of the Korean Catholic Church and a beloved tourist attraction.
Myeong-dong is like a huge shopping mall. Various clothing shops specializing in suits and sportswear, shoe shops, accessories and cosmetic shops beckon people to stop by. Then a thought passed through my mind. How did Myeong-dong turn into a shopping district?

“In the 1880s to early 1890s, silk shops owned by Chinese merchants were very popular. Seoulites liked the fancy print and soft texture of Chinese silk. Western-style tailoring and hair styling were brought to Korea by Chinese merchants”

According to Hou, Myeong-dong in those days was a place where one could meet Western fashions and hairstyles before others, and this still holds true today. Many clothing stores, hair salons and massage shops are filled with tourists. Myeong-dong, a place where new fashions and hairstyles bloomed, is now one of Korea’s best-known shopping districts.
Alma Mater for Chinese-Koreans

Seoul Chinese Primary School

After passing the KT headquarters, I walked through a narrow alley. There were stalls along the wall selling old Chinese goods.

“When I was young, there were many stalls like these. Back then, people who were looking for Chinese goods came here.”

I was browsing the Chinese tea and spices in the stalls when I heard children laughing nearby. The sound was coming from the old building beyond the wall.

“This school is Seoul Chinese Primary School. It was established in 1909 and is a significant place for Chinese-Koreans. As it was built by Chinese-Koreans, it follows the curriculum of the Republic of China (Taiwan), not Korean. All the students in this school are of Chinese descent.”

On October 10th, which is National Day for the Republic of China (Taiwan), a festival is held at the school, featuring performances of the fan dance from the mainland and dances by ethnic minorities. At least under the roof of this school, teachers and students are united as overseas Chinese.
After passing the Hansung Primary School, I turned left and noticed a savory aroma. This was the Chinese Food Street, where a cluster of famous Chinese restaurants can be found. China is a country renowned for its diverse cuisines. Chinese food prepared with various ingredients and spices has captivated the taste buds not only of Asians but also of people around the world. This is the place to go for gourmet Chinese in Seoul.

“Most of the Chinese who settled in Korea were from Shandong. They used to eat fried noodles with chunjang (black bean paste), but the dish was changed to adapt to Koreans’ preferences, becoming jajangmyeon. Jajangmyeon is the joint creation of Chinese and Koreans.” You can taste various Chinese dishes here, from jajangmyeon and Chinese moon cakes to Shandong-style dumplings. Hou told me that the best part of the street is the fact that you can enjoy authentic Chinese dishes.

“There are Chinese restaurants all over Korea, which shows how popular Chinese food is here. However, most of the Chinese food in Korea has been adjusted to suit the Korean palate. So in a strict sense, you can’t say those dishes are authentic Chinese. But it’s different here. Chinese-Koreans cook themselves, so the food is not localized but true Chinese.” I found myself nodding in agreement. It has been over 100 years since Chinese food entered Korea. It’s only natural that the food has changed to suit the residents’ taste. However, in Myeong-dong, the Chinese-Koreans who put down their roots here have been able to maintain the authentic cuisine of their home.
Where the Essence of Chinese-Korean Spirit Resides

Hanseong Overseas Chinese Association (Former Jungjeong Library)

On the 4th and 5th floor of this grey building housing numerous Chinese restaurants is the Hanseong Overseas Chinese Association of Seoul. The association works to protect the rights and promote the unity of Chinese-Koreans, also known as Hwagyo living in Seoul.

“Jungjeong Library opened in 1975. Jungjeong is the courtesy name of Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石, 1887–1975), the leader of China’s Kuomintang. The library used to serve as a cultural council under the Embassy of Taiwan. Jungjeong Library is not just a library, but a treasure house of knowledge, where Chinese-Koreans could indirectly experience Chinese history, culture, and customs. Second-generation Chinese-Koreans could reaffirm their Chinese identity through the library. I remember going there with my grandfather when I was little.”

In 2013, the Hanseong Overseas Chinese Association renovated the former Jungjeong Library building. The newly refurbished building rekindled the dwindling Chinese spirit among Chinese-Koreans.
Living History of Korea-China Exchange

Walking left out of Hansung Overseas Chinese Primary School, I came to a grand gate with a red-tiled roof, a gate befitting a Chinese castle. This building, the most quintessential Chinese building in Myeong-dong, is the new Chinese embassy in South Korea, which opened in 2014.

“The Chinese embassy is the biggest embassy in South Korea. In fact, it’s the second largest Chinese embassy in the world after the embassy in the US. As you probably know, Korea and China have a long history of political, cultural, and economic exchange. In 1885, powerful Chinese leader Yuan Shikai (袁世凱, 1859~1916) built an official residence at the present-day Chinese embassy and lived there for 10 years. ”

The entrance of the Chinese embassy is packed with people. Chinese tourists make funny poses in front of the grandiose wall as they take pictures. Their expressions are all cheerful. Why are they taking pictures here? Is it because they are glad to see their embassy in a foreign country? Or are they trying to commemorate the long years of close friendship between Korea and China?

The Chinese-Koreans who used to live in this area spread out to Yeon-nam-dong, Daerim-dong, Garibong-dong and other areas. However, a few of them have remained in Myeong-dong to safeguard their livelihood and their mother culture. Today, many Chinese tourists are flocking to Myeong-dong. The first impression of Myeong-dong to me was a shopping district. However, after my historical tour with Hou, visiting historical sites of Chinese-Koreans, my perspective on Myeong-dong changed. I think Myeong-dong is a place where the Chinese spirit and culture lives and breathes.

Studio 1981, A Photo Studio that Creates Memories

Studio 1981 is located across from the Chinese embassy. This place was closely connected with the Kuomintang, the political party led by Chiang Kai-shek, but today it is a photo studio. One can take memorable pictures with the help of a wide selection of clothes, props, backgrounds, accessories, and makeup. A recommended choice is the international costume shoot.
2. A Place of Freedom that Never Sleeps,

Itaewon

Story Course
① Itaewon Entrance - ② Fashion Street - ③ 1 World Food Street, ③-1 Gyeongnidan-gil (Hoenamu-gil) - ④ Usadan-gil - ⑤ Club Street


Strangers of different colors and their cultures have collided and coexisted to create the Itaewon of today.

It’s a place offering the charm of numerous races and languages. Let’s discover the thousand faces of Itaewon.
Itaewon Entrance

Passing under the huge arch leading to the main road in Itaewon, I encountered a completely different world that I didn’t know existed in Korea. On the weekend, Itaewon was crowded with people from all over the world, strewn with signs and placards in different languages such as English, Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic.

Gazing blankly at a street that reflected a jumble of nationalities, a young man approached and tapped me on the shoulder. It was Kevin, who was going to help me on my visit to Itaewon. Kevin (27) who used to be an indie musician in the US, fell in love with Itaewon on a trip to Korea three years ago and has lived here ever since.

He gave me a brief overview of the history of Itaewon.

“In the past, lodgings for travellers were located in Itaewon, and I guess foreigners have known about the area since then. But it was in the 1950s, after the Korean War, when Itaewon as we know it came into being. After the US Army base was established in Yongsan, stores and shops mostly catering to American soldiers appeared around the area north of where Noksapyeong Station is today.”

I entered the main road of Itaewon with Kevin. According to him, market dynamics and commercial trends in the area have changed over time and that businesses have moved to this main Itaewon road.

“In the 1980s, Itaewon was a must-visit shopping destination for foreign tourists. In the 1990s, it became a center stage for foreign workers from the Middle East, Africa, and other Third World regions.”

The dynamic changes in Itaewon were quite interesting but I couldn’t fully picture it. As if reading my mind, Kevin smiled and made the following statement:

“There’s a saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. Now I’m going to show you one by one all the different cultures hidden in Itaewon.”

Haebangchon where the history of Itaewon began

The area of Yongsan-dong, north of Noksapyeong Station, is also called Haebangchon. Stores and shops for American soldiers came into being in this area after the Korean War, and until quite recently, Haebangchon was a residential area for ordinary Koreans. In 2000s, it has emerged as a new commercial district for Itaewon, home to many restaurants, pubs and cafes run by foreigners. HBC Art Village in Haebangchon also attracts people with its vibrant, eye-pleasing murals and structures. Haebangchon – a place where the old landscape of Seoul blends harmoniously with exotic Western culture.
Getting a Glimpse of Itaewon’s history of Fashion

Fashion Street

While walking on the main Itaewon road, a round white object on the side of the street caught my attention as I walked by. As I approached it wondering what it was, it turned out to be huge spool of woolen yarn. At first, I had trouble understanding why this would be lying here, but I realized why as soon as I turned onto the main street. Numerous clothing shops lined the street. There was a fabulous selection of cheap non-branded clothing stores, well-known designer brand shops, custom-made shoemakers and tailors, and even shops selling plus-size clothing only.

“Fashion Street, as it is called, was instrumental in making Itaewon a major shopping destination for foreign tourists in the 1980s. Although time has passed, it is still considered an important shopping area in the neighborhood along with Antique Furniture Street, which is nearby.”

Kevin pointed to a custom-made shoe store on the side of the street and told me that it is famous for having many customers who are Hallyu stars. Hallyu, or “Korean wave,” refers to the increase in popularity of South Korean culture around the world.

“All of these people making handmade products here are artisans who have been developing their skills for a long time. In addition, the designs are very creative, unlike the less exciting and more monotonous name-brand products.”

I nodded in agreement. People who had fallen in love with the unique charm that branded products could not provide were coming to Itaewon’s Fashion Street.

Antique Furniture Street Offers a Taste of the Middle Ages

This Itaewon street is filled with shops selling antique furniture as well as a large selection of wall clocks, tea sets, and interior design items not readily available elsewhere. A flea market called Antique Vintage Fair is held each year in October on the Antique Furniture Street. At the fair, you can buy various vintage and antique furniture and interior pieces at a reduced price.
While we were walking across the road and toward the Hamilton Hotel, we noticed a gigantic fork standing right next to the street, a rare sight indeed. We figured this must be a sign that leads to a bunch of restaurants. We were right! The long alley behind the Hamilton Hotel was filled with restaurants serving cuisine from all around the world.

“This is ‘World Food Street,’ one of the best-known parts of Itaewon right now.”

Looking around the restaurants, we settled on an Indian place that was packed with lunchtime customers. We came with few expectations, just wanting to fill our bellies, but the taste of the curry served at the restaurant was a pleasant surprise.

“This curry tastes exactly like the one I had in Pakistan a few years ago!”

“Exactly. This restaurant serves authentic Pakistanis-style cuisine. Most of the staff here—including the cooks—are native Pakistanis. Not just this one but many of the restaurants in the area follow the traditional recipes used at home.”

After the delicious lunch, we came back out on the World Food Street. After walking along the street for a while, looking around the restaurants and at the sheer number of people in an American brunch restaurant, a Thai restaurant, a Chinese dumpling place, and so on, we walked up the low hill at the end of the street.

**Suitcase-Shaped Tourist Information Center**

If you go to the front part of the Hamilton Hotel right next to Itaewon Station Exit 1, you can see a suitcase-shaped tourist information center. During the Joseon Dynasty, a lot of lodgings for travelers were located in Itaewon, and after the liberation of Korea in 1945, the area became a shopping hot spot for unique items. Then in the 1970s and 80s, foreign travelers visited Itaewon to buy huge suitcases.
Walking down the hill, we found small restaurants, cafés and pubs lining each alley along the way. This was “Gyeongnidan-gil”, a hugely popular alley with young people in Korea.

“The original name of this area is Hoenamu-gil, which is also known as Gyeongnidan-gil as it is located near the Financial Management Corps (former ROK Army Central Finance Corps) or Gyeongnidan in Korean. This place is famous for craft beer. You can enjoy the authentic taste and aroma of European craft beer here.”

We didn’t want to miss the chance to taste quality craft beer so we dropped by a place on the side of the alley. The unique taste and aroma of the beer reminded me of enjoying the tasteful beer in England.

Of course, not all international restaurants in Itaewon stick to traditional cuisine. According to Kevin, there are also a number of restaurants that adapt international food to the Korean palate. But the many stores and restaurants on World Food Street and Gyeongnidan that offer authentic cuisine from around the world are the jewel of Itaewon, allowing us to experience the taste of the world without leaving Korea.
As the sun set slowly and the day darkened into night, I climbed up the hill behind the Itaewon Fire Station with Kevin. As I passed the street lined with a bustling mixture of restaurants, nightclubs, and pubs and arrived at Usadan-gil, the spicy smell of herbs wafted up to me. Arabic gentlemen with well-groomed mustaches were enjoying halal food, sitting around a table on the terrace at a restaurant. Here and there along the street, I spotted shops with an Islamic atmosphere such as Muslim shops displaying chador and hijab as well as bakery stores selling Moroccan bread.

I took a closer look at Usadan-gil as I walked along the Islamic Street. I wondered why Muslims came to settle in this old neighborhood filled with walls with cracks and peeling paint, narrow and steep stairs, complex, maze-like alleys and roofs with rust spots everywhere.

“People from developing countries in the Middle East, Southwest Asia, Southeast Asia, and India started coming to Korea in 1993 in search of jobs. These people, who were mostly Muslims, settled down near Usadan-gil, where the Seoul Central Mosque is located.”

As I entered the Seoul Central Mosque, the fortress-like grand mosque in front and the towering twin minarets to the sides caught my attention. Koreans visiting the mosque stood out among the Muslims wearing hijab and turbans. Most of them were wearing clothing with exotic patterns.

“People wearing short-sleeve shirts, short skirts, or pants are forbidden to enter the Seoul Central Mosque. That is part of Islamic doctrine. Clothing with exotic patterns is provided by the mosque for visitors to wear while looking around the place.”

As I left the Seoul Central Mosque and entered the alley in the back listening to Kevin’s explanation, we came to a wide stairway crowded with young people. The Stairway Flea Market, which sells unique handicrafts and handmade clothes, was being held on top of the long stairs along the steep road. The interesting fact was that the entire event was held on the stairs.

“It’s my first time to see a flea market held on a set of stairs. The Camden Market in London is held in an exclusive space while the Soho Flea Market in the US is held on the roadside.”

“Isn’t it an interesting idea? This flea market was planned by a youth community called ‘Usadandan (Usadan Society)’ which carries out ac-
activities in this neighborhood. Most of the members of the Usadan-dan are artists and shop owners in this neighborhood and they revitalize it by holding events like the Stairway Flea Market as well as the Dong Dong Tour, which takes visitors on a tour of the neighborhood. Although Usadan-gil was considered an underdeveloped shanty town in the past, it is now in the spotlight as a warm, nostalgic neighborhood thanks to the collective efforts of young artists and shop owners in this area. On weekends, many people come to visit the small yet unique restaurants, handicraft workshops, and cafés located on Usadan-gil even when events like the Stairway Flea Market don’t happen. The interest and efforts of the area’s young people have turned the long-forgotten old neighborhood into a new Itaewon attraction.

Stairway Flea Market and Dong Dong Tour: When a Simple Humble Neighborhood Meets Youthful Energy

The Stairway Flea Market is held on the last Saturday of each month on the stairways located behind the Seoul Central Mosque.

https://www.facebook.com/wosadan

(Facebook page for Usadan Village)

The Dong Dong Tour is carried out for people with advance reservations on the day of their visit to the Stairway Flea Market.


(Facebook page for Dong Dong Tour)
As I walked toward the Hamilton Hotel with Kevin, we came across nightclub marquees covered with dazzling neon lights. In front of the club, there was a long queue of young people waiting to get in. Looking around, I could see establishments bustling with people, what were obviously clubs.

“When it comes to talking about Itaewon nightlife, you can’t forget about clubs.”

According to Kevin, Itaewon’s clubs date back to the 1950s.

“Back then, the clubs were open to American soldiers and played the latest pop songs from the US. For nearly 50 years, Itaewon’s clubs have played the role of introducing the latest Western music to Korea. All kinds of different genres of music—from rock’n’roll to disco, jazz, hip hop and electronic music—were introduced to Korea through Itaewon. The clubs in Itaewon were not simply a place to dance and have fun. They served as a cultural space for encountering new music.”

I stopped by a lounge club that was popular with young people. Inside, many people were moving their body to the rhythm under the flashing lights. As I jumped into the crowd and started dancing, I felt like I was at some wild festival. I got a vague sense of where Itaewon’s air of excitement and enthusiasm...
originated. In Itaewon, the night begins at the clubs, with their rich history and tradition, filled with the excitement of music and dance and the energy of youth.

A long time ago, Itaewon used to be a shelter for foreigners who came to visit Seoul. Foreigners from around the world came and settled down with their own cultures, allowing diverse cultures and traditions to collide and blend into a unique way of life. And Itaewon’s thousand faces were created as a result of different races and cultures mingling so freely together, which cannot be fully expressed with words or writing. Only those who have experienced both the lively and dynamic day and the free yet passionate night here can feel the true colors of Itaewon.

Meet the World in Itaewon through Three Itaewon Festivals

★ HBC Music Festival
HBC Music Festival is held twice every year in May and October. Foreign musicians residing in Korea perform with Korean indie musicians at cafés and pubs located in the Haebangchon area.

★ Itaewon Global Village Festival
Itaewon Global Village Festival is held on the main road of Itaewon in October each year. It provides the chance to experience traditional cuisine and cultures from all around the world. One can also watch a massive costume parade, engage in traditional Korean cultural programs and enjoy many other fun events.

★ Halloween Festival
Celebrated annually on October 31, the Halloween Festival in Itaewon is a spontaneous festival that attracts thousands of locals and foreigners dressed up in costumes. Clubs across the area throw Halloween parties and other various events.
Travel around the World in Seoul

Asia · America · Europe · Africa · Oceania
3. Travel to Asia in Seoul

Since long time ago, Seoul has enjoyed close relations with neighboring countries, such as China and Japan. And since the 1990s, people from Southeast Asia and Central Asia came and settled down here with various cultures of Asia flourishing side by side. Now, let’s travel to Asia in Seoul.

Home of Chinese-Koreans

Yeonnam-dong

Location
Yeonnam-dong, Mapo-gu

Directions

As I walked out of Exit 3 of Hongik Univ. Station with Hou, who graciously offered to be my guide again, a busy street packed with people caught my attention. Streets lined with trendy cafés, brunch places, and Spanish pubs were filled with young people who have come out to enjoy the weekend evening.

“I’m going to take you to present day Chinatown. As I already ex-
plained, Chinese-Koreans in Seoul spread out to many places in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1969, Hanseong Middle and High School moved to Yeonhui-dong, which is close to Yeonnam-dong. A lot of Chinese-Koreans moved to this area then. Many of them were in the clothes retailing and trade business. It’s a 15 to 20-minute ride to Gimpo Airport from here. Because of the advantageous location, many Chinese entrepreneurs favored this place.”

Despite Hou’s explanation, Yeonnam-dong seemed similar to any other downtown area. Because of its proximity to Hongik Univ., trendy cafés and pubs that cater to young people line the streets. Where are the Chinese-Koreans? As my doubt started to escalate, signs with Chinese characters appeared. Amidst small shops and standing bars were Chinese restaurants. Now I felt I had come to the right place.

“There were many Chinese restaurants in Sogong-dong and Buk-chang-dong area until the end of 1960s, and many of them moved to Yeonnam-dong and neighboring Yeonhui-dong.”

The Chinese restaurants in Yeonnam-dong are different in the dishes they sell and the ambience they have. There is a restaurant that is popular for its traditional dumplings, one well-known for its Chinese skewered lamb, and one for its Taiwanese dishes.

“Most of the Chinese restaurants in Yeonnam-dong have been around for a long time. There was a time when only people in the know came here, but now as Hongik Univ. commercial area has extended to Yeonnam-dong, it has become a happening place. Chinese home meal, bar snacks and traditional dumplings are some delicacies you can only find here and that lures people to the area.”

After getting a tour of Yeonnam-dong, we stopped by a Chinese supermarket called Daehwa Mart. Ingredients, spices and sauces used in Chinese cuisine are sold here. There is even a small café inside. We continued our chat over a hot coffee.

“There are about 8,000 Chinese-Koreans in Seoul and 3,500 of them live in Yeonnam-dong. However, other than the concentration of Chinese restaurants, it’s no different from other residential areas in Seoul.”

Yeonnam-dong is more of a home, a place where your family waits for you, than a commercial area. The Chinese-Koreans who settled down in Yeonnam-dong have worked hard to become prominent members of this society since leaving their homes in China.
As I walk out of Daerim Station and enter a big alley, older stores greet me. There is a dizzying array of marquees of advertising employment agencies, money exchangers, travel agencies, and skewered lamb restaurants.

“Many Chinese-Koreans who were living in Seoul moved here. The rent was cheaper than other areas. Many mainland Chinese who came to Korea at the end of the 1980s settled down in Daerim-dong.”

As Hou had explained, the deeper we went into the alley, the more Chinese the area seemed. Red signs with Chinese characters filled the streets and more people were speaking Chinese. According to Hou, Chinese love the color red, so many make their signboards red.

“Many Koreans from China settled here as well. They are the descendants of Koreans who moved to the northeastern regions of China during the 19th century due to poverty.”

As I was listening to Hou’s story, we passed the alley and reached a big market. Hou told me this was Jungang Market. The market was full of exotic stores, from produce shops with the names and prices of vegetables and fruits in Chinese, shops selling Chinese products, shops selling Chinese ingredients and spices, Chinese pancake stores, to stalls selling snacks made of pig noses and ears. Hou told me that the market was the center of a vibrant Chinese-Korean community.

“Not a lot of Koreans live in Daerim 2-dong where Jungang Market is located. Most are Chinese-Koreans and Koreans from China. So the area is more Chinese than Korean. During the Lunar New Year (春節), the market is packed with Chinese-Koreans. Lunar New Year is the biggest holiday in China. Chinese come to the market to buy holiday foods and ingredients. This is the only big Chinese market in Seoul. It is one of a kind.”

Daerim 2-dong has a different atmosphere from Myeong-dong and Yeonnam-dong. If Myeong-dong is an older area where one can trace the history of Chinese-Koreans and Yeonnam-dong is an area where the Chinese presence is more subtle than overt, Daerim 2-dong is just like China and makes visitors imagine they are in China.
Dongbuichon-dong in Yongsan-gu is located east of the north end of Hangang-daegyo Bridge, which is on the Hangang River crossing the center of Seoul. I reached the Japanese neighborhood known as Little Tokyo as I walked through apartment blocks after coming out of Exit 4 of Ichon Station. A Japanese guide, who was introduced to me by a friend, greeted me warmly and introduced Dongbuichon-dong to me, which was where he was living.

“This is where I live now. It used to be a wide sandy beach here and people came here for sunbathing and water sports. However, in 1971, the land was reclaimed and Hangang Mansion was built. Back then, this was a luxury apartment. Japanese expatriates and diplomats from the embassy lived here with their families, turning it into a Japanese village. It is the oldest and biggest foreign neighborhood in Seoul.”

Hangang Mansion still exists, but many new high-rise apartments have been built around it, so it seems small now. However, unlike the cutting-edge skyscrapers, Hangang Mansion has plenty of room between buildings, making it cozy and leisurely compared to the new ones.

“Japanese were well-off at that time, so many settled down in the Dongbuichon-dong apartments, which were located in a clean neighborhood with convenient transportation. At one time, 2,000 Japanese lived here, but after the Japanese school moved to Sangam-dong in 2011, that number decreased to about 1,300.”

As I walked along the apartment complex, new buildings in the complex caught my attention. The street seemed no different from other streets with apartment complexes in Seoul.

“It’s difficult to find the differences with other communities in Seoul at first. But on a closer look, you can see Japanese characters on signboards.”

After listening to his explanation, I found stores in the 1st and 2nd story buildings. There were handmade udon shops, sushi shops, taiyaki (fish-shaped cake) shops, Japanese pubs known as izakaya, markets, and Japanese bakeries with Japanese signboards located here. It felt quieter and more relaxed than other residential blocks in Seoul. As a cosmopolitan city, Seoul warmly embraces today’s Little Tokyo.
The 10-story New Geumho Tower is also called the Mongolian Tower. Signs written in the Cyrillic alphabet fill the building starting at the entrance. The first Mongolians to settle here were the family of the Mongolian ambassador. They opened a cell phone store and provided consulting to Mongolians whose Korean skills were shaky. Afterwards, many Mongolians came here. Restaurants, cafés, markets, hair salons, delivery companies, and wire transfer companies became tenants of the tower, and thus, the Mongolian Tower was born. During the weekends, the place is full of Mongolians coming here for Mongolian food and daily necessities.

I went into a restaurant called Jalros. Lured by the savory smell of lamb chops, I was pleasantly surprised by the lean taste of the meat. A regular of this restaurant describes Mongolian cuisine as follows.

“In the wild plains of Mongolia, food is about survival, not taste. Mongolian food seems plain, but it is great for boosting energy. In Mongolia, green vegetables are considered food for animals, so there aren’t a lot of vegetables in their food. Also, they use very few spices. They enjoy the taste of the food itself. Restaurants in this building keep true to such Mongolian culture.”

Seoul is the city with the second most Mongolians after Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. Still it should not be easy for the nomadic Mongolians to live in a bustling, jostling city, especially a foreign city like Seoul. However, as the descendants of Genghis Khan, they are adapting to the unfamiliar city of Seoul and preserving their culture in Korea.

Naadam Festival, where Mongolian Culture and Traditions Come to Life

The greatest festival in Mongolia is the Naadam Festival, which is held in July around the anniversary of the Mongolian Revolution. Many of the 30,000 Mongolians living in Korea celebrate the Naadam Festival at the Mongolian School for Overseas Mongolians (http://www.mongolschool.org). They enjoy sports such as wrestling, arm wrestling, archery, a game of shooting a sheep’s ankle bone in a basket, a singing contest, a children’s camel race, and eat traditional dishes such as khuushuur (fried dumplings) and horhog (steamed lamb).
Nepalese Food in Seoul

At Nepalese restaurants on this street, Nepalese eat dal bhat tarkari (steamed rice, vegetables, cooked lentil soup and curry) and cooked potatoes. Moreover, you can enjoy chia, the milk tea the Nepalese drink like water, and masala chia, the tea mixed with spices including cinnamon and cardamom, that you don’t want to miss.

There are seven restaurants and five Nepalese goods stores 100m down this alley.

Location Where You Can Feel the Taste of Nepal

Changsin-dong

Location
Changsin-dong, Jongno-gu

Directions
Subway Line 1,4, Dongdaemun Stn. Exit 3.

Countless people have dreamed of climbing Mt. Everest, the highest point on Earth. The country of the Himalayas, the roof of the world, and Mt. Everest, the highest mountain, is Nepal. South Korea and Nepal have had diplomatic relations for 40 years, but the Nepalese only started coming to Korea in earnest in the 1990s. Currently, 3,000 Nepalese live in Korea.

On weekend mornings, they gather at Changsin-dong, behind exit 3 of Dongdaemun Station. They started to flock here since many of them settled here after opening shops selling imported accessories or getting jobs at small sewing factories. As the sewing industry declined, the Nepalese spread out to other places. However, they still gather here on weekends. Changsin-dong is a busy area full of small sewing factories, leather wholesalers, old tenements, and motels. There are famous Nepalese restaurants, such as Namaste, which opened in 2000, Himalayan, Everest, and Yamuna, which sells traditional Nepalese food. Many Nepalese chefs grind up spices to make a traditional seasoning called masala.
From 10 am to 5 pm every Sunday, a street in Hyehwa-dong (in front of Dongsung Middle and High School near the Hyehwa-dong traffic circle) comes alive. Covered with green tents, the market is filled with various daily items, fresh food, and tropical fruit from the Philippines. Street snacks, such as sugar-coated bananas, coconut juice, longganisa (Filipino sausage), and tocino (cured pork), lure passers-by. Filipinos who meet at the market share in their native languages some news and trivia obtained from living in the foreign city of Seoul, eat food together and have a jolly time together.

While wandering around this area, I met Steve (37) who came here to quench his thirst for Filipino food.

“I lived in the Philippines for a long time so whenever I feel like Filipino food I take a bus or the subway here.”

The reason the Filipino market is held here is allegedly the Tagalog mass at the Hyehwa Catholic Church, located nearby. The Filipino mass had begun in Jayang-dong in 1995, but it moved to Hyehwa Church the next year for various reasons, including the convenient location, spacious hall, and religious authenticity. Small markets held near the Church gradually became the present-day market.

### Filipino Market on the Street of Arts

**Hyehwa-dong**

**Address**
Daehak-ro 156, Jongno-gu (front of Dongsung Middle and High School)

**Directions**
Subway Line 4, Hyehwa Stn. Exit 1. Walk 3 min.

**Opening Hours**
10:00~17:00 every Sunday

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**Filipino Mass**

**Time/Date**
1:30 pm - 3 pm every Sunday

Hyehwa Catholic Church (http://www.hyehwa.org) is where a priest from the Philippines holds mass every Sunday. Filipinos, Vietnamese, Bangladeshis, and Mongolians come to the mass, but more than 80% are Filipinos. On Sundays, a free medical clinic for foreign immigrants operated by Raphael Clinic (http://www.raphael.or.kr) opens at the nearby Raphael Center (43-gil 7, Changgyeonggung-ro Seongbuk-gu).
It isn’t difficult to meet Vietnam in Seoul. There is hardly a street without Vietnamese restaurants and Vietnamese and Koreans ride the subways together. Since the two countries established diplomatic ties in 1992, Vietnamese flowed into Korea, which has risen as an economic powerhouse. There are some 6,000 Vietnamese women who immigrated to Korea to marry Korean men, 10,000 children from Vietnamese multicultural families, 3,000 students, and 70,000 immigrant workers living in Korea. Korea also sent many workers to Vietnam and made an enormous investment, making it the number one investor to the country.

Yejin Lee, who runs Asian Mart in Wangsimni, is a Vietnamese woman who has been married to a Korean for 11 years.

“When you first come from Vietnam, it’s difficult to adjust. However, you get to meet people from your hometown here, share information and love, and are consoled and energized by your compatriots. I think my husband and I offer a hopeful example for Vietnamese immigrants, since we are leading a happy life.”

Yejin smiles at her husband next to her. There are a few more restaurants run by Vietnamese near Asian Mart. If you want to taste true Vietnamese cuisine, come here and have some pho.

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Vietnamese Gathering Place
Wangsimni

Location: Near Asian Mart in Seongdong-gu Doseon-dong
Directions: Subway Line 2 and 5, Wangsimni Stn. Exit 2. Walk 5 min.

Asian Mart, Vietnamese Market in Seoul

Address: 103 Cherevil Arcade, 50 Muhak-ro 6-gil, Seongdong-gu

Asian Mart is located near Seongdong Global Migrant Worker’s Center, near Exit 2 of Wangsimni Station. Originally opened by a volunteer at Seongdong Center, Asian Mart was taken over by Yejin Lee from Vietnam. 300 Vietnamese in Seongdong-gu come here on the weekend to buy food and other products.
4. Travel to America in Seoul

In the late 19th century, Seoul started to be exposed to strangers who came from across the ocean, giving birth to the modernization of Korea in the fields of education, religious and medical practices. In particular, the US led the advancement through missionary activities. Today in the 21st century, Seoul is proactively embracing the cultures of South and North Americas.

Let’s go travel to America in Seoul.

The Trail of American Missionaries

Jeondong-gil

**Location**
The area around 46 through 2-1, Jeongdong-gil, Jung-gu

**Directions**
Subway Line 1, City Hall Stn. Exit 1 or 2. Walk 10 min.

If you come out of Exit 1 of the City Hall Station and walk along the road that skirts the stone wall of Deoksugung Palace, you will find Jeongdong-gil in which old historic Western buildings and church reside. Here you can follow the footsteps of American missionaries who introduced Western-style education institutions, religious and medical facilities in Korea.

At the end of the stone wall, there is the site of the former American Legation. Without mentioning the legation, one can't truly talk about the history of Korea-US relations. It was established in Jeong-dong in 1883, and later, this area became a diplomatic district and served as a gateway to introduce Western culture into Korea.
Across from the Seoul Museum of Art, you can find a red brick building. This is the Appenzeller Noble Memorial Museum, the Korea’s first Western school. Some of the graduates of this school are Rhee Syngman (1875~1965), Korea’s first president; Na Do-hyang (1902~1926), Korea’s best-known novelist of the 1920s; and Kim So-wol (1902~1934), a poet renowned for his lyricism. It is now used as a memorial building for Henry Gerhard Appenzeller (1858~1902) and his wife. Appenzeller was a Methodist missionary from the US who came to Korea to carry out various missionary services, including educational and medical activities. He made a great contribution to modernizing Korea by introducing advanced Western culture into the country.

You can find the trail of Appenzeller in the Chungdong First Methodist Church at the entrance to Jeongdong-gil, which he used to have his residence there. Overall, the church, which was the first Methodist church in Korea, follows the Western architectural style, but Korean sentiments converged in the building. If you walk around 200 meters from the church, you will arrive at the Ewha Museum, the first women’s educational institution in Korea. When Ewha Hakdang opened in 1886, there was only one student. Korean society at the time was not open to women’s education. But the school managed to increase the number of students and became a stepping stone for Korean women.

There were also many missionaries based in the Jeongdong-gil area who were not able to return to their homes in the US and buried in this foreign land. In the Yanghwajin Foreign Missionary Cemetery, a number of American missionaries and their families who served for the advancement of Christianity and education for Korean people rest in peace. I guess it’s worthwhile to visit and follow their trail in Jeongdong-gil and at the cemetery.

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**Appenzeller Noble Memorial Museum**

**Address**
East Building of Paichai Hakdang, 19, Seosomun-ro 11-gil, Jung-gu

**Opening Hours**
10:00 ~ 17:00 (Tuesday~Sunday)

The name “Paichai Hakdang,” which means a house of learning for talented people, was chosen by Gojong (1852~1919), the emperor of Korea at the time. This building is now used as a memorial building for the founder. On display in the memorial hall are pictures of 1930s school activities and information about the activities and lives of the missionaries.

**Chungdong First Methodist Church**

**Address**
46, Jeongdong-gil, Jung-gu

The first Methodist church in Korea established in 1887. This was the only church building from the 19th century still standing today and the first church to hold services complete with a pipe organ and choir. It was also one of the inspirations of the Korean independence movement. One of the 33 representatives who launched the March 1st Movement was Reverend Pilju Lee (1869~1942) from this church. Gwansoon Yu (1902–1920), a well-known female freedom fighter, once hid in this church as well. Church members mimeographed the national flag and the Declaration of Independence in the basement of this church.

**Ewha Museum**

**Address**
26, Jeongdong-gil, Jung-gu

**Opening Hours**
10:00 ~ 17:00 (Monday~Saturday)

Established in 1886 by Mary Flecher Scranton (1832~1909), an American and the first female missionary in the Methodist Church, Ewha Hakdang was a private institution for women’s education. Empress Myeong-seong (1885~1895) endorsed the education project and provided the name Ewha (梨花), which means pear blossoms in Korean, with an aspiration to bear beautiful, innocent and sweet fruit in women’s education in Korea. When you enter Simpson Memorial Hall, which is used as a museum, you can get a glimpse of what its old classroom looked like in the permanent exhibition hall on the 1st and 2nd floor, with donated artifacts exhibited on the 3rd floor.

**Yanghwajin Foreign Missionary Cemetery**

**Address**
46, Yanghwajin-gil, Mapo-gu

**Directions**
Subway Line 2 and 6, Hapjeong Stn. Exit 7. Walk 5 min. toward the Hangang River

**Opening Hours**
10:00 ~ 17:00 (Monday~Saturday)

This place became a cemetery starting with the burial of John W. Heron, a medical missionary who died of dysentery. The Yanghwajin Foreign Missionary Cemetery, an important site in modern Korean history, is where the bodies of numerous foreign missionaries and their families are buried. These people helped Korea modernize by improving its system of education and medicine, preached the gospel, loved Koreans, and supported Korean independence movement.
The farthest point from Korea is South America. It takes about 30 hours to get there from here.

When Koreans think about South America, they think of coffee, samba, salsa dancing, wine, and football. Korea first established diplomatic ties with South American countries in the early 1960s. Brazil was the first migration destination for Koreans after the establishment of the Republic of Korea. There are about 60,000 overseas Koreans living in Brazil, 26,000 in Argentina, 2,000 in Chile, and 1,000 in Peru. Seoul has signed friendship treaties with Central and South American cities such as Sao Paulo, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and Brasilia.

However, there aren't a lot of South Americans in Korea. Koreans, who have opened up to South American culture, are increasingly leading a passionate life. When you switch on the TV, it is easy to find popular dance programs that deal with Latin dance, while numerous Latin dance communities and dance studios are being created. There are also places where people can enjoy Latin culture and cuisine with South Americans and drink mate tea, one of the top three teas in the world. South America in Seoul is all about passion. Korean passion blends with Latin passion to create a sizzling combination.
Macondo at Hongik Univ. Area Where Passion Dances

Address
B1, 169-21, 20, Yanchwa-ro 18-gil, Mapo-gu

Directions

Inquiries
02-332-5752

Korea’s first salsa bar. Macondo is an imaginary city in the rainforest of Latin America that was the background of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s (1927–2014) Nobel Prize-winning book One Hundred Years of Solitude.

Escola Alegria, a Place to Learn about Latin Culture

Address
20, Wausan-ro 32-gil, Mapo-gu

Directions

Inquiries
02-6082-3533

Website
www.escolaalegria.com

Meaning “school of joy,” Escola Alegria is a cultural space that plays Latin music and allows people to experience Latin culture. On weekdays, a samba choir practices here and batucada rehearsals take place. Batucada originates from the word batuque, which means the sound of drums. Batucada is a percussion ensemble without a melody. On Fridays, singers and bands perform Brazilian music, and on Saturdays, there are parties. You can also learn capoeira, a Brazilian martial art.

Buenos Aires, Cultural Center for Argentina

Jamwon Branch

Address
Daeneung Bldg., 21, Gangnam-daero 107-gil, Seocho-gu

Directions

Inquiries
02-3444-6634

Website
http://www.buenosaires.co.kr

Buenos Aires is an Argentinian cultural center offering tango and wine. It’s a place where you can experience tango, wine, steak, Argentinian food and culture all in one place. It is frequented by the Argentinian ambassador and other employees at the embassy, as well as, businessmen working with Argentina.

Seolleung Branch

Address
B1 Yeonan Yi Clan Bldg., 533, Seolleung-ro, Gangnam-gu

Directions

Inquiries
02-508-3045

Address
B1 Yeonan Yi Clan Bldg., 533, Seolleung-ro, Gangnam-gu

Directions

Inquiries
02-508-3045

Buenos Aires is an Argentinian cultural center offering tango and wine. It’s a place where you can experience tango, wine, steak, Argentinian food and culture all in one place. It is frequented by the Argentinian ambassador and other employees at the embassy, as well as, businessmen working with Argentina.
5. Travel to Europe in Seoul

Though Korea started building its relations with Europe in the late 19th century, it was after the Korean War when cultural exchanges between Korea and Europe began to grow. Cultures of European countries that helped and supported Korea’s unprecedented economic growth, the so-called miracle of the Hangang River continue to exist and thrive in Seoul.

Now, let’s go travel to Europe in Seoul.

Leisure in the City, Petite France

Seorae Village

There is a village in Seocho-gu that exudes the charm of France. It is Seorae Village, also known as the Petite France in Seoul where low-rise buildings line the streets. While I was taken by the charm of the neighborhood, Emilie (28) who was going to help me on my visit here showed up.

She said, “Seorae Village as we know it today exists as a result of the relocation of the French School into this area. In 1985, the French School, which used to be in Hannam-dong, moved to Seorae Village and became the driving force behind the establishment of a Petit France. Along with the relocation of the school, a majority of French people residing in Seoul moved and settled...
here, and the whole village became well known as a French town with exotic cafés, restaurants and grocery stores coming into being.”

Enter Seorae Village and you will see lots of European-style cafés and restaurants that serve authentic French, Italian and other European cuisine. Young couples flock here on the weekend for romantic dates.

If you walk along the Café Street, you may pause to look at the striking building of the French School. People take pictures against the walls of the building with unique design. There are about 1,200 French residing in Korea, and half of them live here near this school.

The biggest attraction in Seorae Village is Montmartre Park, a hill with white rabbits and a big grove of shade trees. 2006 marked the 120th anniversary of the diplomatic ties between Korea and France. That year, the city of Seoul and the Seocho-gu district built this park to provide residents with a place to relax. Since the entrance to the French residential area here was called Montmartre Lane, it was only natural for this park to become Montmartre Park. Strolling around the lawn and the walkway of the park located in the middle of bustling Gangnam in Seoul makes you feel as if you are on Montmartre in Paris.

Seorae Village, the Petite France - a leisurely, quiet and relaxing place in downtown Seoul. You can find France much closer and more friendly here in this far away village from the European country.

Ginkgo Tree Park

**Location** Seorae-ro 10-gil, Seocho-gu

The park was formed around a 300-year-old ginkgo tree at the entrance to the neighborhood. In the past, people performed ancestral rites in front of this tree for the safety of this village. During Christmas, this place becomes a French marketplace. French people living in Seorae Village open a traditional market to raise funds to help people in need.

Stores that serve authentic French cuisine

**Hôtel DOUCE:** HÔTEL DOUCE means sweet hotel in French. It is a Korean dessert brand that captivated the taste buds of French and sells traditional French tea, macaron, eclair and other desserts.

**Gontran Cherrier:** Boulangerie under the name of a French patissier (baker). The boulangerie has been passed down to the 4th generation and has opened stores in Korea after Tokyo and Singapore. It is famous for its croissant, a signature French bread.

**La Saveur:** La saveur means taste in French. It is a 10 year old French restaurant and is evaluated as a store with the 1st generation owner chef who ushered in the era of authentic French cuisine.

**Sur Terre:** Sur terre means on earth in French. One can enjoy French home meal in a la carte not course meal.

Silkworm Bridge

There is a special bridge in Montmartre Park. In the past, there used to be a silkworm facility in this area, which is why the name of the bridge is the Silkworm Bridge. Do you see the two silkworms there? It is said that if you touch the silkworm statue in front of the bridge, your wish will be realized. This bridge that connects the park and the Express Bus Terminal lights up in many colors at night. You feel enchanted when you cross the bridge and think you are in a different world.
Hannam-dong is the neighborhood most preferred by employees of international agencies and foreign companies operating in Korea. In addition, a German school is located here. Around 400 Germans have formed a community around the Deutsche Schule Seoul International (DSSI: German School Seoul International), which provides education from kindergarten to high school. These people live in complete ease in a neighborhood that contains high-end houses with large gardens and panoramic views of the Hangang River.

It was in 1883 that Korea and Germany established diplomatic relations. The two countries have maintained close relations since the 1960s, sharing the common background of being a divided nation. South Korea sent over 200 miners to West Germany in 1963; by 1977, it had sent a total of 8,359 miners and 10,371 nurses to the country. Korea still received financial assistance from developed countries such as Germany through the 1970s and 1980s.

With its reunification in 1990, Germany became the envy of Korea, which remained one of the only divided nations in the world. Bilateral relations between the two have developed further, with Germany sharing its experience with reunification with South Korea.

On the night of November 9 2014, more than 100,000 Germans and tourists released white balloons into the sky along the line where the Berlin Wall used to run to commemorate the 25th anniversary of its fall. On the very same day, a run with Germans was held along the Cheonggyecheon Stream in Seoul to celebrate the same event. Since both countries have experienced national division, the people of Korea and Germany celebrated the peaceful revolution together.

Korea and Germany have developed a strong network of cooperation in the areas of culture and the economy. While Germany has reputation for imposing stringent standards on the activities of foreign companies in its labor market, Korea as well as the US, Canada, Japan and other advanced economies have enjoyed most favored nation status, bolstering economic activities in Germany. Cultural exchange has been led mostly by the private sector. Oktoberfest, a German beer festival that is the largest in the world, is also held here in Seoul.
every year. Leading German companies like Lufthansa, Paulaner and BMW take part in the event at which traditional German food and beer are served.

**Dabang Coffee Originated with a German Lady**

Emperor Gojong, who ruled Korea between 1863 and 1907, was Korea’s last emperor and its first coffee lover. The person who gave the emperor his first taste of coffee was Antoniette Sontag, the German sister-in-law of the Russian minister Karl Waeber (1841–1910). At the time, Emperor Gojong was staying temporarily at the Russian diplomatic legation out of fear for his life. The Emperor, who was quite impressed with Waeber’s housekeeper Sontag (Antoniette Sontag, 1854–1925), went on to put her in charge of his household affairs after he returned to the palace. Later on, the Emperor bestowed on her a hanok, or traditional Korean-style house, of the imperial family in Jeong-dong. Sontag refurbished this house in the Western style and started a hotel business in 1898 (Sontag Hotel, located at 29 Jeong-dong, Jung-gu, the current parking lot at the East Gate of Ewha Girls’ High School). On the first floor of the hotel, there was a restaurant and coffee shop, which was the first coffee house in Korea. As the owner of the coffee shop was the German lady, it sold German-style coffee mixed with cream and sugar, which became the origin of Korea’s unique dabang coffee. (Dabang is a Korean coffee house that serves a Korean instant coffee mix of coffee, cream, and sugar.)
If you come out of Exit 2 of Onsu Station on Subway Line 1 and walk along the street, you will come across the campus of Sungkonghoe Univ., located in an unassuming residential area. With its flowering trees and energetic young people, this beautiful campus is not much different from that of any other Univ. As the name implies, it was founded by the Anglican Church of Korea, though when it was first established in 1914, it was known as St. Michael's Seminary. Anglicanism is a denomination that originated in England and also the source of the Anglican Church of Korea. The Church of England was first introduced to Korea in 1890. Five priests including Bishop Charles John Corfe (1843-1921) and American doctor Eli Barr Landis (1865-1898) planted the Anglican Church in Korea through their vigorous missionary efforts. Anglicanism is an influential Protestant denomination that has spread to Korea and all over the world. But in the case of Korea, Anglicanism is more than just a simple religion. It has played a big role in making the relationship between Korea and England stronger after the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1883.

“At the time, the Church of England concentrated on social work such as introducing modern Western education to Korea and building orphanages for homeless children. Seoul Anglican Cathedral, located in Jeong-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul, was the fruit of years of labor by the Church of England,” said a faculty member of the school who was savvy about the history of the school and the connection between the church and the city.

Though construction of the church began in 1922, more than 70 years passed before it was finally completed in 1996. The church was the second Anglican church in Korea, after the Nae-dong Anglican Church, also known as St. Michael's Anglican Church, located in Incheon.

Thanks to the efforts of the Church of England, Korea and England have long been able to maintain friendly relations. When the Korean War broke out, England dispatched the second most troops after the US and helped Korea achieve economic independence through continued economic support and cooperation. Long ago, the missionaries of the Church of England probably looked like strangers to Koreans. Today, however, England is a close ally and friend to Korea just like the US and China.
They say that the relationship between Korea and Turkey goes back a very long time. The Turkish people call themselves Turks. Turk refers to the Gokturk Empire in Korea. Gokturk and Korea had friendly relations since ancient times and even called each other “brother countries.” In 1950, when the Korean War broke out, Turkey dispatched a large number of troops to Korea. The military force sent by Korea’s old ally was the fourth largest national contingent in the UN forces taking part in the war. And more than a half century later during the 2002 World Cup, Koreans cheered for Turkey.

“Turks watching the game on television shed tears when a gigantic Turkish flag was spread across the grandstands in the semi-finals between Korea and Turkey, which showed once again the depth of the brotherhood between the two nations.” Arriving at Ankara Park in Yeouido, I recalled the story told by a friend of mine from Turkey right before leaving for Seoul. In 1971, the city of Seoul set up sister city relations with Ankara, capital of Turkey, and created a park named after the city of Ankara. In 1992, a traditional house and vineyard was built within the park, and the city of Ankara donated folk crafts and helped decorate the interior of the house before its opening in 1995 under the name of Ankara House. The traditional daily goods displayed at the Ankara House are the real ones used at the grape farms in Ankara, and other household items such as furniture, kitchen utensils, agricultural tools, and various kinds of equipment are exhibited in the house. Handmade products such as mirrors made of silver and the traditional clothing worn at weddings and festivals during the Ottoman Empire in the early 16th century displayed in the house are regarded as rare and valuable items in Turkey as well. This is indeed a place where you can get a genuine view of Turkey in Seoul. Both Turkey and Korea spare no efforts in encouraging and cheering for each other like brothers.

The Basin of the Sultan
Gwangjin-gu, located in the northeastern part of Seoul, also set up sister city relations with Eregli, Turkey, in 2001. When a sister city park was created in Eregli, Gwangjin-gu gave the Turkish town a Cheongsachorong (traditional Korean lantern with red and blue silk shades), while Eregli gave Gwangjin-gu the Basin of the Sultan, representing the Ottoman Empire, as a token of gratitude in October 2008. Today, the item is displayed at Gwangjin Square, located in front of Subway Line 7, Children’s Grand Park Station, Exit 5.
6. Travel to Africa and Oceania in Seoul

Seoul also embraces the cultures of Africa and Oceania. While African culture was introduced by people from Africa who came here for earning money, Oceanian culture was spread by those who came to Korea and fought for this country during the Korean War, sharing strong and genuine friendships with one another. Let’s go find their traces.

Finding Traces of Africa

Ewha Market Street in Itaewon

Location
Bogwang-ro 60-gil, Yongsan-gu

Directions
Subway Line 6, Itaewon Stn. Exit 3. Walk down to the Antique Furniture Street

If you walk down to the Antique Furniture Street from Itaewon Station Exit 3, you can see Africans with their hair in dreadlocks and wearing hip hop fashion. This is Itaewon's Ewha Market Street, also known as African Street or Nigerian Street. It is said that Nigerian merchants who bought fabrics and garments from Namdaemun Market in Seoul to sell back in Nigeria settled here in the early 2000s. Currently, a small African community of about 700 people is living in this area. Until recently, a large number of African nationals lived here, but they are now moving out of the area to settle in Haebangchon or further out on the periphery of Seoul due to rising rents in Itaewon. In the narrow alley, a church and a small number of restaurants, supermarkets, beauty salons, and other shops primarily catering to Africans are still in operation. If you pass by these old, dilapidated buildings and walk up the steep hill, you can find small groups of Africans chatting together. Visiting the neighborhood is recommended for anyone who wants a glimpse of Africa in an Asian city.
Coffee of Tomorrow Reaches out to African Refugees

In Daehak-ro, a leading cultural district in Seoul, there is a café called Coffee of Tomorrow in which Africans prepare African coffee. The café also serves as a job training site for African refugees who have settled in South Korea. The plan to employ refugees at Coffee of Tomorrow was aimed to create social values by promoting refugee employment in the increasingly multi-cultural Korean society.

The name, "Coffee of Tomorrow" implies that the coffee you drink tomorrow would be better than the coffee you drank today, giving refugees from Africa hope for tomorrow.

Gathering Place of Nigerians, Happy Home Restaurant

Happy Home Restaurant was opened in 2003 by a businessman from Nigeria and his wife after traveling to Korea for business several times. More than 250 languages are spoken in Nigeria, and there is a great variety of culinary traditions. One of Nigeria’s signature recipes is pounded yam, which is served with various Nigerian soups. Pounded yam can be prepared by stirring yam flour in hot water, resulting in a substance somewhere between porridge and rice cake in viscosity, which is dipped in African soups. (Grown in tropical and subtropical climates, yam is a tuber and a staple of the Nigerian diet.) Yam is pounded into a thick, un-starched paste with a bland taste. It is fun to tear the dough into small bites to eat. Other dishes like African-style fried rice, plantains (fried bananas) and gbegiri (chickpea stew) are also worth trying.

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Gathering Place of Nigerians, Happy Home Restaurant

- **Address**: 2-10, Itaewon-ro 20-gil, Yongsan-gu
- **Opening Hours**: 12:00~24:00
- **Inquiries**: 02-797-3185
- **Website**: blog.naver.com/happyhome126

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Coffee of Tomorrow Reaches out to African Refugees

- **Address**: 1F, 4 Dongsiung 1-gil, Jongno-gu
- **Directions**: Subway Line 4, Hyehwa Stn. Exit 2. Walk 5 min.
- **Opening Hours**: 10:30~22:00 (closed on Sunday)
- **Inquiries**: 02-6289-9189
- **Website**: http://blog.naver.com/naeil Coffee

In Daehak-ro, a leading cultural district in Seoul, there is a café called Coffee of Tomorrow in which Africans prepare African coffee. The café also serves as a job training site for African refugees who have settled in South Korea. The plan to employ refugees at Coffee of Tomorrow was aimed to create social values by promoting refugee employment in the increasingly multi-cultural Korean society. The name, “Coffee of Tomorrow” implies that the coffee you drink tomorrow would be better than the coffee you drank today, giving refugees from Africa hope for tomorrow.
As most Koreans picture them, Australia and New Zealand are destinations for relaxation, with kangaroos running around, koalas sleeping in trees, and sheep and cows eating grass. They are also the nations that attract young people from Korea who want to improve their lives through various programs such as English language courses, working holiday visas, and immigration programs. Currently, more than 40,000 Koreans have migrated to Australia and 32,000 to New Zealand, creating their own community. The number of people from the two countries who are visiting or living in Korea is growing as well. Australian expat and comedian Sam Hammington and Australian world champion barista Paul Bassett, who set up a coffee chain named after himself, are just a few of these.

But the fact is that people from this part of the world landed on the shores of Korea decades ago. These were soldiers who fought on the side of South Korea during the Korean War in 1950, and many of them died and were buried here. On April 25 each year, a service is held at the War Memorial of Korea to remember the soldiers who lost their lives in the Korean War. For Australians and New Zealanders, the day to remember those who died in war is called Anzac Day. It was originally created to honor members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, or ANZAC, which was formed during World War I. This is a national day of remembrance in Australia and New Zealand that commemorates all Australians and New Zealanders who served and died in wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations around the world.

Korean War veteran John Simmons said, “If I could go back 65 years ago, I would fight for South Korea again. South Korea has always shown the spirit of gratitude in remembrance of Anzac Day in April and the Korean War Memorial Day in June every year, which has touched and moved me so much.” Although ties between South Korea and these two countries began with the Korean War, their continually evolving friendship is based more on their warm affection for one another than the painful memories of their shared past.
The War Memorial of Korea

Opened in 1994 to honor the spirit of those who perished while fighting on the battlefield, the War Memorial of Korea, around 36,000 square meters in area, contains about 9,000 artifacts in the Hogukchumote Exhibit, War History Exhibit, June 25th War Exhibit, Overseas Dispatched Troops Exhibits, and so on. Different kinds of equipment, memorial structures, as well as large weapons and the Peace Clock Tower are exhibited as well, both inside and outside the building.

Anzac Biscuits

It has been claimed that these biscuits were sent to ANZAC soldiers abroad by their wives and that at first they were called “soldiers’ biscuits.” They got the name “Anzac biscuits” after Turkish troops landed on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Notably, the recipe for the highly nutritious Anzac biscuits omits eggs, keeping the biscuits from spoiling when being shipped long distances, which is ideal for naval transportation.

Kia Ora Sculpture

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of sister city relations and ongoing friendship since 2005 between the two cities, the Kia Ora sculpture was given to Songpa-gu, Seoul, Korea, by the people of Christchurch, New Zealand. The sculpture, which is the height of a man, has a face made of stainless steel mounted on a large slab of Halswell Quarry volcanic stone. “Kia Ora” refers to how members of the Maori tribe in New Zealand greet each other. They hold hands and touch nose to nose while saying “Kia Ora,” which means “welcome” and “hello.”
My Love Seoul

World Stars’ Destinations & Buildings
Designed by World Renowned Architects
Following the Footsteps of World Stars in Seoul

“What do Brad Pitt, Hugh Jackman, Jackie Chan, Tim Burton, and Metallica have in common?” The answer is that they are all foreign celebrities who have visited Seoul. Why, out of all the countries of Asia, did they become interested in Korea? Let’s investigate the hidden appeal of Korea that had moved the hearts of these stars.

Jackie Chan, Dream of Becoming an Actor

Myeong-dong

“I recently saw a TV program about Jackie Chan. He did a red carpet event and left his handprints here in 2013.”

I was passing in front of a theater in Myeong-dong with Sally. As she looked closely at the outside of the theater, she started talking about Jackie Chan. Jackie Chan is a famous celebrity who has expressed his interest in and affection for Korea on numerous occasions. Whenever he releases a new film, he visits Korea to meet his fans. In 2008, he was appointed as “Hallyuwood Goodwill Ambassador” to promote Korean culture around the world. He confessed that even before becoming a star, he had adored Korea. When he was young, Jackie Chan stayed in Myeong-dong for two years, playing minor roles in joint productions between Korea and Hong Kong. After accumulating experience as an actor, he went back to China and became a world-renowned star.

“I heard that when Jackie Chan stayed in this area, he was in a relationship with a Korean woman that lasted eight years. The two went on dates in Myeong-dong and Namsan. They were in a committed relationship—serious enough to consider marriage—but they eventually broke up because Jackie Chan’s status as a foreigner meant he couldn’t freely enter the country.”

Today, Myeong-dong is much different from when Jackie Chan used to go on dates there, but the Myeongdong Cathedral, the UNESCO Hall, and the street in front of the old Chinese Embassy remain largely the same. No doubt, Myeong-dong remains an unforgettable place of happy memories in the heart of Jackie Chan.
I had seen the photo that Sally mentioned. In 1998, Metallica vocalist James Hetfield, who was in Korea for a concert, took a photo kissing a pig head. This photo received a lot of attention in the West, where pig heads are not considered edible. Although it came to the attention of the West because of pig heads, Namdaemun Market has long been Korea’s leading traditional market. Not only is it large in scale, but it is also the oldest traditional market in Seoul. The most noteworthy feature of Namdaemun Market is the wide range of goods that can be found here. The market sells everything under the sun, and indeed you can find stable goods such as clothing, bedding, and kitchenware, along with miscellaneous products ranging from interior accessories to imported cookies from around the world, along with souvenirs for international tourists. The children’s clothing shopping district, which accounts for 80% of the market for children’s clothing in the country, is also well-known. 

On this visit, Namdaemun Market seemed quite different from the past. Instead of pig heads, visitors were greeted with clean, tidy restaurants. The alleys of the market, lined with shops selling all sorts of different goods, were crowded with tourists pulling along suitcases. I could hear people speaking Japanese and Chinese from time to time. Namdaemun Market is no longer merely a leading traditional market; it has managed to transform itself into a major Seoul destination for visitors.
Michael Jackson and the Statue of Mother and Four Children
Seoul Children’s Grand Park

Address
216, Neundong-ro, Gwangjin-gu

Directions
Subway Line 7, Children’s Grand Park Stn. (Sejong Univ.) Exit 1. Walk one min.

Open Hours
09:00~22:00

Admission Fee
Free of charge

Inquiries
02-450-9311

Website
www.childrenpark.or.kr

As I entered the main entrance of Seoul Children’s Grand Park, a densely wooded trail appeared before my eyes. Animal cages placed here and there, rare flowers and trees, and simple but charming rides caught my attention. Although smaller than St. James’s Park in London or Central Park in New York City, Seoul Children’s Grand Park seemed adequate for anyone who wants to take a break from the stress of the city and enjoy a relaxing moment in a natural setting.

“As you can see from the name, this park was originally made for children. It has quite a long history—it opened in 1973.”

As I walked around the park listening to Sally’s explanation, I discovered a musical fountain that sprays water to the beat of the song that is playing. Sally and I stopped for a moment to enjoy the fountain, which was when I spotted some beautiful statues. The statues depicted a happy image of a mother and her children.

“Michael Jackson is said to have been quite fond of these statues. When he first visited Seoul for a concert in 1996, the first stop he made was this Seoul Children’s Grand Park. When he saw these statues, he instantly fell in love with them and wanted to install one in his house as well.”

Despite its simple and modest features, Seoul Children’s Grand Park was filled with warmth and charm reflected in the mother and son statues. Although park is not that large, it provides a full spectrum of activities for visitors to enjoy, such as an animal petting zoo, ecological activities, and various festivals and performances. This is a place to visit if you want to take time off of your hectic itinerary in Seoul to relax and enjoy a moment of ease.
Foreign Students Culture Festival, held in the summer, is a celebration for international students residing in Seoul. One can enjoy the traditional culture and cuisines of various countries and get information about studying abroad.

“The Cheonggyecheon Stream is a place frequently visited by international celebrities during their stay in Seoul. Hugh Jackman held a fan meeting at the Cheonggye Plaza in 2009.”

As Sally said, many celebrities from overseas such as Hugh Jackman, Brad Pitt, and David Beckham have visited the Cheonggyecheon Stream. David Beckham actually spent time with his fans here, demonstrating his famous free kicks. For both Seoul citizens and celebrities visiting the city, the Cheonggye Plaza is a place for meeting up and having a good time.
Find Tim Burton’s Scribbles
Gwangjang Market

After a long walk, I became hungry. Sally led me to Gwangjang Market, saying that this is the perfect place to visit when you need a bite to eat. Gwangjang Market, which recently became famous with foreign tourists as a top stop for tasty food, was the first permanent market in Korea. The market was founded way back in 1904, and it has continued to flourish in the century that has passed since then.

“Gwangjang Market is famous for selling hanbok, the traditional Korean attire. There are still many retail and wholesale stores specializing in hanbok products, along with stores selling textiles, bedding, and kitchenware. But there is another reason why crowds of people frequent Gwangjang Market these days.”

As I entered the market with Sally, the aroma of delicious food piqued my appetite. The restaurant alley on the ground floor of Gwangjang Market is a huge draw for Seoul foodies. Throughout its 40-year history, people have been visiting the spot for finger-licking good food. At the market, you can try gimbap rice rolls that are called mayak, or “drug,” because they are so addictive; yukhoe, or Korean-style raw beef; bindae-ttok, or mung-bean pancakes; and many other authentic Korean dishes. At night, the market’s food alley is flooded with tourists who want a taste of traditional Korean food. What is most impressive about the market, however, is how friendly and natural the merchants are when they interact with their foreign customers. The merchants help the foreign visitors relax and enjoy their time as they laugh and chat with the vendors.

“In 2014, the Chinese version of the famous Korean TV variety show Running Man was filmed at Gwangjang Market. The market swarmed with bystanders who wanted to catch a glimpse of Chinese stars such as Angela Baby and Deng Chao who were there for the filming. Sightings of the stars at the market spread across the web, making headlines in China.”

Aside from these Chinese stars, there is another celebrity who has received a lot of attention for visiting Gwangjang Market—Tim Burton, director of popular films such as Edward Scissorhands. In 2012, on his first visit to Korea, Tim Burton reportedly enjoyed a night out in Seoul drinking makgeolli, or unrefined rice wine, and eating bindaettok. We searched for the bindaettok place where the film director had eaten. Sally found a message and drawing that Tim Burton had left on the wall there. We had a good time, taking a photo in front of the mark left by Tim Burton and adding our own doodles to the wall. Other foreign guests who entered the restaurant later recognized Mr. Burton’s work and seemed quite surprised. Finding the trace of a celebrity where you least expected it—this is truly one of the unexpected joys of traveling.
The Night Market Beloved by Jessica Alba
Dongdaemun Market

Location
Dongdaemun Shopping Complex, 266 Jongno, Jongno-gu

Directions

Inquiries
02-2262-0114

Website
www.ddm-mall.com

It was late at night, and I was standing on the roadside after coming out of Dongdaemun History and Culture Park Station. I could see a plethora of brightly illuminated shopping malls surrounding Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP), the new landmark at Dongdaemun Market. The shopping malls were filled with tourists enjoying the night shopping, and many people with suitcases and shopping bags could be found.

“Dongdaemun Market is one of Seoul’s leading night markets. Although it’s open during the day, it really comes to life at night. Namdaemun and Dongdaemun Markets are some of the best-known traditional markets in Seoul, right? One difference between the two of them is that Dongdaemun specializes in clothing.”

As Sally said, Dongdaemun Market was filled with many stores selling clothing as well as miscellaneous items such as hats, shoes, and bags. This is not the only area that specializes in fashion in Seoul, but unlike other famous shopping locations, Dongdaemun Market is a place where you can spend the entire night on a shopping spree.

“You know what? Jessica Alba popped up here at the night market one time. A photo of her at Dongdaemun night market grabbed a lot of attention when it was shared on social media sites. I guess Dongdaemun Market is an interesting place for movie stars as well.”

I learned about Jessica Alba’s visit to Korea from an article I had read online. In fact, Jessica is a frequent visitor to the country. In 2012, she was seen drinking soju with her husband and friends at a bar in the Gangnam area, and in 2013, she visited Dongdaemun Market to try the food and enjoy night shopping. She told the media that she was interested in Korean culture in general, and she in fact was spotted enjoying Korean food and touring old palaces with her family.

“I remember the wife of Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Peng Liyuan, also visiting Dongdaemun Market. I heard that she bought Korean hot peppers and looked around stores selling ginseng, ceramics, and handmade crafts.”

There’s a reason why world-famous figures from Jessica Alba to Peng Liyuan drop by Dongdaemun Market when they stop in Seoul. Night markets that come to life after dark can be found in other countries as well, but it’s hard to find a market that offers the vitality and the optimal shopping environment of Dongdaemun. If you want to experience the unique night life of Seoul, consider visiting Dongdaemun Market. A shoppers’ paradise that stays open all night awaits you.
Where International Stars Get a First-Hand Experience of Korean Culture

Insa-dong

Location
Insadong-gil, Jongno-gu

Directions

"That hotteok stand! That’s where Reese Witherspoon ate a hotteok!" Sally ran toward a hotteok stand located on the side of the street in Insa-dong. Many foreign tourists had queued up to buy a hotteok, a Korean pancake filled with brown sugar, cooked in sizzling oil.

“You probably know this, but this is where tourists drop by when they visit Insa-dong! This even applies to stars that come to Korea. Reese Witherspoon has been to Insa-dong before, and Japanese actor Joe Odagiri is said to frequently drop by. He starred in a Korean film once and rented a room in Insa-dong while on location here.”

I had heard that many stars visit Insa-dong. The front man of Black Eyed Peas, Will.i.am, is said to have fallen in love with bulgogi after trying it in a restaurant here. Tang Wei, who received a lot of attention for marrying a Korean movie director, also caught the public’s eye for making numerous visits to a bar here selling makgeolli, or unrefined rice wine. So what makes so many popular foreign stars visit this neighborhood?

With a toasty hotteok in my hand, I roamed the streets of Insa-dong. Along the long main road, I could find art galleries selling Asian paintings and ceramics as well as galleries in a modern style. There were also stores that sold fans or souvenirs in a Korean design, shops with hanji, or traditional Korean paper handmade from mulberry trees, writing brushes and ink sticks on display, and Korean restaurants offering traditional Korean dishes.

“A lot of items with distinctive Korean features can be found in Insa-dong. There is a shopping mall named Ssamji-gil that sells a variety of items with a traditional Korean design. Most of the restaurants, tea houses, and bars here are decorated in the traditional Korean style, and some shops are located in traditional Korean houses known as hanok.”

I nodded my head while listening to Sally. The reason that many popular foreign stars visit Insa-dong is probably because of the unique Korean ambience of the neighborhood. The food they enjoy and the items they buy in Insa-dong contain the unique flavor and charm of Korea.
On a Friday night, exit 9 of the Hongik Univ. subway station was crowded with young people. From students in school uniforms to well-dressed young adults and even foreign tourists, various people filled the streets. Sally told me that this is one of the best-known rendezvous points in the Hongik Univ. area, usually referred to as Hongdae. Following the crowd, we walked towards the front gate of Hongik Univ. Brightly illuminated pubs and cafés were swamped with people who wanted to have drinks from early in the evening. Shops selling clothes, food or cosmetics lined the streets in a quite disorderly manner. Crowds surrounded street vendors selling small and cute accessories. I could spot Chinese tourists with travel trunks walking in groups. Living up to its reputation as one of the hottest streets in Seoul, the Hongdae area was inundated with swarms of people.

“Since the entrance to Hongik Univ. is located in the Seokyo-dong area, people in Seoul refer to it as “Hongdae ap,” which means “in front of Hongik Univ.” This is because a large commercial district has emerged with the university at its center. Starting a few years ago, the commercial district near Hongik Univ. started to expand as many restaurants, cafés, and bars popped up in Hapjeong-dong, Sangsu-dong, and Yeonnam-dong. A shopping center targeting tourists from the greater China region and a Nanta performance hall were built here. This has in fact pushed up the number of Chinese visitors significantly.”

I walked passed Hongik Univ. towards the Far East Broadcasting Station with Sally. Hip hop tunes filled the air, and a long queue of young people in sexy attire waited their turn in front of the entrance to a club that was illuminated by bright neon signs.

“I guess you may know this already, but the Hongdae area is well-known for its clubs. Along this street, there are many clubs specializing in hip hop and electronic music. There are also live clubs with performances by indie bands. There’s even a lounge pub that only plays Korean pop music from the 90s.”

Some of the clubs here looked similar to those in Itaewon. How are the Itaewon clubs different from those in Hongdae? Sally said the main difference is the atmosphere.

“Clubbers in Itaewon range from their 20s to 40s, so the age group is quite broad. Clubbers in Hongdae, though, are usually people in their twenties and thirties. Also, although there are some foreigners, most of the club-goers here are Koreans, so the songs played here are usually ones that are popular with young Koreans.”

Hongdae is a place that foreign stars drop by while visiting Korea. American R&B singer Beyonce came to a party at a club in Hongdae back in 2007, and American pop singer Jason Mraz held a small concert at a café in the area in 2013. Because of his interest in indie musicians performing in Hongdae, Jason Mraz earned the nickname “Hongdae Mraz.” Perhaps the reason that these stars visit Hongdae is because they want to see what is in vogue with young Koreans today.
While Sally and I were walking in Gangnam, the area south of the Hangang River, I found that it had more skyscrapers than Gangbuk, the area north of the river. I was particularly impressed by a twin building with a red brick façade: the Kyobo Tower, a landmark in Gangnam. The twin towers were connected by a transparent glass bridge.

“This building was designed by Mario Botta. As you may know, he is a world-renowned architect who designed the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Évry Cathedral in France. Isn’t Kyobo Tower as brilliant as his other masterpieces?”

According to Sally, the architect reflected the human shape and form in the design of the space. The solid-looking twin building symbolizes the human body, while the transparent, open glass bridge symbolizes the human heart.

“He wanted to create a powerful building to be a landmark in Gangnam and he came up with this idea for the unique structure of the building.” The Kyobo Tower in Gangnam turned out to be a strong, solid building, exactly as he had planned.
Entering the main road after just a few minute’s walk from Dongdaemun History & Culture Park station, a gigantic building caught my eyes. The grandiose, curved exterior resembled a huge UFO.

“That is Dongdaemun Design Plaza, which was designed by Zaha Hadid,” Sally said.

I was familiar with the architect Zaha Hadid, too. She was the first female recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, architecture’s equivalent of the Nobel Prize. The powerful, curving forms of her structures—which can be seen in the Heydar Aliyev Cultural Centre in Baku, Azerbaijan, and the Glasgow Transport Museum in Scotland—are one of the distinctive features of her architectural style. This is a feature that figures prominently in the recently opened design plaza in the center of Seoul.

“Zaha Hadid got the inspiration from the ever-changing, dynamic movement that occurs in the Dongdaemun area from dawn to dusk.” I was able to notice the visual changing dynamics of this magnificent space, even without her explanation. With its countless curves and flowing lines in space, DDP is also the biggest three-dimensional atypical building in the world.
As in any other metropolis in the world, tall buildings line Jongno, at the center of Seoul, the way that trees line a forest, providing texture to the landscape. Amongst the skyscrapers, Jongno Tower, a landmark in the middle of the street, catches people’s eyes with its striking structure of three pillars supporting the top floor, as if the roof were floating on air.

“Jongno Tower was designed by Rafael Vinoly, an architect who ensures the building harmonizes with the surrounding cityscape.” She explained that the architect Rafael Vinoly is famous for his philosophy of eco-friendliness and communication. There was something liberating about looking at the hollow space between the top floors of Jongno Tower, located in the middle of tall rectangular buildings.

Sally decided to take me to the Galleria Department Store in Apgujeong as our next stop. While I imagined it would just be an ordinary department store, I was stunned by the vivid and colorful lights displayed on the exterior of the store, lighting up the night of the Apgujeong street.

“Isn’t this beautiful? The façade of the Apgujeong Galleria Department Store was designed by Ben van Berkel. You know him, don’t you?” The mastermind behind this transformation of the originally bland façade of the Galleria Department Store was Dutch architect Ben van Berkel. He took on the renovation project of the store in 2003 and changed its façade into a beautiful LED light show. Ben van Berkel, who designed the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart to resemble two interweaving spirals is famous for his atypical architecture. The façade of the Galleria Department Store, which is completely covered by a series of frosted glass discs that are backlit by more than 4,500 color-changing LED lights, provides a magnificent night view of Seoul.
My Note for World Travel in Seoul

Here in My Note of World Travel in Seoul, you can keep note of your story of world travel in Seoul. You can write or draw anything you want on this note, such as your travel course, places to visit again, people you met in Seoul and dishes you want to try again. You can record your story in whatever way you want.

MAKING A MARK IN SEOUL!

My World Travel Course in Seoul

I want to feel the energy of the Filipino Market again!
Where should I go today?

Please write a note at the back of this book, tear along the perforate line and submit it to Myeong-dong Tourist Information Center (see page 9) or Seoul Tourist Information Center located at Incheon and Gimpo International Airports. A small souvenir will be presented to you and what’s written in your note will be reflected in the development of Seoul tourism resources (see the map on page 125 for the exact location of the Seoul Tourist Information Center at the airports).
I’VE GOT TO COME BACK HERE!

Places to Visit Again

It’s perfect to take a stroll along the Cheonggyecheon Stream and drop by Gwangjang Market for tasty Korean-style pancakes during the day and walk down from there to Dongdaemun Market at night!
If you need help out on the street, keep your eyes open for RED - that is, the Mobile Tourist Information Center I found in Itaewon. Kind and nice Korean people in red uniform.
I won’t forget the craft beer I had with Kevin at Macpie in Gyeongnidan-gil.
NAME

AGE

GENDER

NATIONALITY

ASK SEOUL

Questions I Had during My Trip in Seoul
Location: Seoul Tourist Information Center, International Lines (1F), Gimpo International Airport

Hours
07:00 - 22:00

Inquiries
+82-(0)32-743-3270 (East), 3272 (West)

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Location: Seoul Tourist Information Center (East/West), Passenger Terminal (1F), Incheon International Airport

Hours
10:00 - 22:00

Inquiries
+82-(0)2-2660-2486

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Location: Seoul Tourist Information Center, International Lines (1F), Gimpo International Airport

Hours
10:00 - 22:00

Inquiries
+82-(0)2-2660-2486
Discovering the Seoul Story is the name of the Seoul City’s tourism program designed to provide storytelling about major tourist sites in Seoul. Through this program, we aim to develop the city’s tourism resources including the “World Travel in Seoul” and offer a lot to see and enjoy in Seoul. Keep an eye on what’s coming up!

A Glimpse of Around the World in Seoul

Chapter 1. Meeting Place of the World
1. Center of Chinese Nostalgia, Chinatown in Myeong-dong
2. Itaewon, A Place of Freedom that Never Sleeps

Chapter 2. Travel around the World in Seoul

Travel to Asia in Seoul
1. Home of Chinese-Koreans, Yeonnam-dong
2. Bustling Chinese-Korean Market, Daerim-dong
3. Little Japanese Village, Dongbuichon-dong
4. World’s Second Mongolian Town, Gwanghui-dong
5. Location Where You Can Feel the Taste of Nepal, Changsinn-dong
6. Filipino Market on the Street of Arts, Hyehwa-dong
7. Vietnamese Gathering Place, Wangsimni

Travel to America in Seoul
1. The Trail of American Missionaries, Jeondong-gil
2. South American Cultural Spot, Hongik Univ. Area

Travel to Europe in Seoul
1. Leisure in the City, Petite France, Seorae Village
2. Place Where German Culture Flourishes, Hannam-dong
3. Close Friendship Forged through Religion, Sungkonghoe Univ.
4. Destination of Traditional Turkish Culture, Ankara Park

Travel to Africa and Oceania in Seoul
1. Finding Traces of Africa, Ewha Market Street in Itaewon
2. Thanks Oceanial, War Memorial of Korea

Chapter 3. My Love Seoul

Following the Footsteps of World Stars in Seoul
1. Jackie Chan, Dream of Becoming an Actor, Myeong-dong
2. Metallica, Kissing a Pig, Namdaemun Market
3. Michael Jackson and the Statue of Mother and Four Children, Seoul Children’s Grand Park
4. Hollywood Stars Meet the People, Cheonggye Plaza
5. Find Tim Burton’s Scribbles, Gwangjang Market
6. The Night Market Beloved by Jessica Alba, Dongdaemun Market
8. Destination of Choice by World-Renowned Musicians, Hongdae Club Street

World-Class Architects in Love with Seoul
1. Kyobo Tower designed by Mario Botta
2. Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP) designed by Zaha Hadid
3. Jongno Tower designed by Rafael Vinoly
4. Galleria Department Store in Apgujeong designed by Ben van Berkel

Seoul City Walking Tours

Come and join our Seoul City-Walking Tours and discover the beautiful sceneries of Seoul with its rich history and culture. Enjoy this free city tour with our cultural tour guides - the best storytellers of the city.

• http://dobo.visitseoul.net

Mobile Tourist Information

Tourist information guides wearing red uniforms with letter “I” printed on their chests walk around the streets of popular tourist destinations in Seoul and offer service in person. This includes tourism information, introductions to various tour routes, restaurants, shopping items, accommodations and advice for the loss of personal belongings.

Tourist Police

The tourist police officers patrol major tourist areas in Seoul such as Myeong-dong, Itaewon, Dongdaemun, Insa-dong, Hongik Univ., Cheonggyecheon Stream, and the City Hall. Aside from maintaining law and order and cracking down on overcharging merchants and taxi drivers, the officers provide tourist assistance in multiple languages.

• Operating hours: 9am – 11pm, all year round
• Contact Number: +(82 (0)2) 1330 (Tourist Information Call Center)

Tourist Complaint Center

Tel
• Seoul City Call Center +82 (0)2 120
• Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) +82 (0)2 1330

Email
• Seoul City Tourist Complaint Center (complaints about overcharging taxi/call van drivers, etc.) : happyride@seoul.go.kr
• KTO Tourist Complaint Center : tourcom@knto.or.kr
• When complaining via email, please make sure to write your (the reporter’s) name, contact number and the specifics about your complaint (e.g. name of the shop/car plate number of the taxi in question, date/time of use).