

South Korea - OVERVIEW

Updated: March 10, 2014



Country Name Long Form: Republic of Korea

Government Type: Republic

Languages Spoken: Korean, English

National Flag



South Korea is a Tier III Country. Significant security measures are necessary.

	Overall Assessment	Political Violence	Crime	Terrorism	Travel Safety
South Korea	L	L	L	L	L
Key: (L) Low – (M) Medium – (H) High – (C)Critical					

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Political Violence is rated at LOW

Political demonstrations are extremely common. In recent years, there has been a marked decrease in violence associated with political demonstrations, but even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational quickly. In most cases, rallies and demonstrations are so frequent and so quickly arranged that the U.S. Embassy in Seoul will not send out messages to U.S. citizens regarding them.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is assessed as LOW

While Americans in South Korea are subject to the worldwide threat from international terrorism, no information suggests any specific terrorist threats directed at Americans or U.S. interests. While there has not been a terrorist incident against U.S. interests in South Korea in recent history, the possibility of al-Qaida or other transnational terrorist organizations attempting to operate there cannot be ruled out.

South Korea - OVERVIEW

RULE OF LAW / CORRUPTION

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2013 gave South Korea a score of 55, indicating that the country has medium level of corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in their public sector, with the least corrupt country receiving a maximum score of 100.

CRIME

Crime is assessed as **LOW**

Crime rates throughout the Republic of Korea are low by U.S. standards. While infrequent compared to the U.S., street crimes do occur. There have been few incidents involving Embassy, U.S. military or expatriate victims. Most crimes reported by expatriates involve pickpocketing in tourist areas and crowded markets or non-confrontational property theft; and most crimes are non-violent in nature, although there are occasional reports of more serious crimes, such as sexual assaults.

Street crimes involving foreigners usually consist of robberies and pick-pocketing/purse slashing in tourist areas and crowded locations such as markets, buses, subways, hotels, and department stores. Such encounters are predominantly non-violent. The crimes that occur most frequently occur more often in major metropolitan areas.

Criminal's perpetrators are usually deterred by the risk of confrontation and engage principally in crimes of stealth; burglaries of occupied residences are also rare. While crimes involving firearms are extremely rare due to stringent gun control laws, violent crimes sometimes occur, often involving the use of knives.

KIDNAPPING

Kidnappings are rare, but they do sometimes occur. Government statistics indicate an average of 3-5 reported kidnappings annually. In late 2011, a Korean-American dual citizen was kidnapped and reportedly murdered by a Korean relative because of an inheritance dispute.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

There are occasional reports of sexual assaults.

NATURAL DISASTERS

South Korea experiences its rainy season from July to August and is also prone to tropical storms. The tropical storm season generally runs from June to November and can bring heavy rainfall and strong winds; the resultant flooding can cause significant damage and travel disruptions, particularly in rural areas.

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

South Korea - OVERVIEW

- It is customary to bow slightly when shaking hands for the first time. If meeting a new acquaintance, wait to be introduced by a third party.
- Stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads.
- Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary.
- Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security.
- Intercity travel after dark anywhere in should be avoided.
- It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.
- Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking.
- Official taxis are a suitable means of travel in daylight hours in urban areas. It is highly recommended that taxis be arranged through your hotel, or program office. Negotiate the price in advance.
- Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without a trusted male escort.
- Make sensible security precautions to mitigate the risk of petty crime, particularly pick pocketing and bag snatching.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling to avoid losing it in a robbery.
- Do not resist if you are being robbed and avoid eye contact and to not make any sudden movements. Victims have been killed when they resisted attack or refused to give up their money or other valuables.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile.
- Never leave your food, drinks or belongings unattended.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fasteners are secure.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry or valuables.
- Leave all important documents in a safe or safe deposit box at your hotel and only carry certified copies.
- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the situation.

Important Contact Details

International Dialing Code: +82

International Dialing Prefix: 001 or 002

Victims of crime in should contact the following phone numbers for assistance

POLICE: The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line in is: 112

FIRE DEPARTMENT: 119

AMBULANCE: 119

South Korea - OVERVIEW

Note: Police, ambulance or fire department response may be unreliable in some parts of the country.

TRAVEL & ROAD SAFETY

- South Korea has well-developed and modern infrastructure across the country.
- The road network is extensive and well-maintained.
- South Korea's public transportation network is excellent.
- The provision of electricity, water, and fuel is reliable across the country, and shortages are rarely reported.
- Telecommunication services, including cellular and internet coverage, are available in urban as well as rural areas.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- No ATM use after dark.
- No traveling alone after dark.

HEALTH

Hospitals and clinics in South Korea's main urban centers are of a high standard and well equipped. However, such facilities are limited in rural areas. Pharmacies are available and are normally well stocked. Not all doctors are proficient in English and an interpreter may be required.

- Tap water is generally not considered safe to drink in South Korea and travelers should only drink bottled water or water that has been properly purified.
- Pasteurized milk can normally be found in major cities, hotels and resorts.
- Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative.
- Fruit and vegetables should only be consumed if they have been peeled or cooked.
- Undercooked meat and fish should not be consumed.

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if traveling to South Korea:

- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Japanese encephalitis (recommended)
- Typhoid (recommended)

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

SIGNIFICANT DISEASES –

South Korea - OVERVIEW

- **Malaria** – A life-threatening parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitoes. It is present in South Korea, particularly in the Demilitarized Zone and rural areas of the Kyunggi and Kangwon provinces.
- **Tick-borne encephalitis** – A viral infection of the central nervous system that is spread by Ixodes ticks. It occurs in the forested and rural areas, particularly in the spring and summer months.

HOSPITALS –

Asan Medical Center

International Clinic
2-388 Pungnap-dong
Songpa-gu
Seoul 138-736
Tel: +82 (0)2 3010 5001/5002
Fax: +82 (0)2 2224 5004
Website: <http://medical.amc.seoul.kr/medservice/main/main.do>

Hangang Sacred Heart Hospital

94-200 Youngdungpo-dong
Youngdungpo-gu
Seoul 150020
Tel: +82 (0)2 2639 5446
Fax: 82 (0)2 2678 4386
Website: <http://www.hallym.or.kr/~hgburn/>

US EMBASSY – CONSULATE LOCATIONS

UNITED STATES EMBASSY SEOUL

188 Sejong-daero
Jongno-gu
Seoul 110-710
Tel: +82 (0)2 397 4114
Fax: +82 (0)2 397 4101
Email: seoulinfoacs@state.gov
Website: <http://seoul.usembassy.gov/>

USF INTERNATIONAL HOTLINE

USF 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 813-317-5815

AXA Assistance 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 1-877-577-9504 / +1-203-399-5130 (Call collect from abroad)

ASSIST ID #: GLMN 04983932. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/resources/>

South Korea - OVERVIEW

* Information derived from CIA World Fact Book, US Department of State, OSAC, and Travel Guard. This travel overview summarizes some of the most important concerns; however, it does not negate the need for detailed trip planning.