



South Korea & Japan: Seoul to Tokyo

15 days | 19 days with Hokkaido & Tokyo extension

On the global pop culture scene, South Korea's star has steadily risen in recent years. That's thanks in part to sensationally popular Korean TV shows and films, foods, beauty trends, and pop bands that have taken the world by storm—and piqued travelers' curiosity about the country in the process. Korea's easterly neighbor, Japan, offers up rich history, cultural immersion, and impeccable hospitality that's always in high demand. Spend two weeks getting to know these neighboring Asian nations, from their neon-lit cities to their rural villages to their serene, natural landscapes. If you want to venture a little farther off the beaten path, extend your tour and explore Hokkaido, Japan's mountainous, northernmost island.



Your tour package includes

- 13 nights in handpicked hotels
- 13 breakfasts
- 2 lunches
- 4 dinners with beer or wine
- 1 tasting
- 11 sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Directors & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach
- 1 on-tour flight
- 3 train rides

Included highlights

- Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul
- Visiting with Buddhist monks at Girimsa Temple
- UN Memorial Cemetery in Busan
- Gamcheon Culture Village in Busan
- Nagasaki Peace Park
- Golden Pavilion in Kyoto
- Meiji Shrine in Tokyo

Tour pace

On this guided tour, you'll walk for about 2.5 hours daily across mostly flat terrain, including paved roads and gravel paths, with few hills. You may need to climb stairs when visiting temples.

Group size

15–35

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Overnight Flight → 1 night

Day 1: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to Seoul today.

Seoul → 3 nights

Day 2: Arrival in Seoul

Welcome to South Korea! Settle in to your hotel this evening.

Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Seoul

Included meals: breakfast, tasting, welcome lunch

Meet up with your local guide and get to know South Korea's capital city, Seoul. Situated in the northwestern reaches of South Korea, the thriving metropolis is home to modern skyscrapers, ornate Buddhist temples, grand palaces, and nearly 10 million residents. It's also the perfect place to experience many of the fun and dynamic Korean cultural trends—from K-pop music to novelty foods—that have flourished around the world throughout the last decade.

- Step inside the 14th-century, 7,700-room Gyeongbokgung Palace, which was built by King Taejo and is widely considered the most beautiful of Seoul's five grand palaces.
- Watch the Palace Royal Guard Changing Ceremony, a reenactment of the guard-changing procedure that took place during the Joseon dynasty; the ceremony features colorful reproduction costumes, as well as instruments and weapons, based on historical records.
- Visit the National Folk Museum of Korea to learn about traditional ways of life, which are rapidly disappearing as a result of modernization and urbanization.
- Enter bustling Gwangjang Market, the city's oldest traditional market, where you'll find everything from street food to silks to hanbok—traditional Korean clothing whose origins date back more than 2,000 years.
- Enjoy a tasting of the market's not-to-be-missed street food, followed by free time to shop and explore on your own.

- Get to know your fellow travelers over an included welcome lunch, served with beer or wine.

Enjoy a free evening in Seoul or add an excursion.

+ Kimchi-Making Class & Dinner

Day 4: Free day in Seoul

Included meals: breakfast

Enjoy a free day in Seoul or add an excursion.

+ History of the Korean War: DMZ Visit

Gyeongju → 1 night

Day 5: Train ride to Gyeongju & Bulguksa

Temple visit

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Board a high-speed bullet train bound for the city of Gyeongju. Often referred to as the "museum without walls," Gyeongju is home to several impressive archaeological sites and three UNESCO World Heritage sites.

- Climb aboard your coach for a short transfer to Bulguksa Temple; the treasured head temple of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism was established on the slopes of Mount Toham in the eighth century.
- Meet with the monks and learn about their monastic lifestyle before watching a traditional dance demonstration.

After freshening up at the hotel, join your group this evening for an included dinner served with beer or wine.

Please note: On some departures the visit to Bulguksa Temple may be replaced with a visit to Girimsa Temple due on availability.

Busan → 2 nights

Day 6: Daereungwon Tomb Complex, transfer to Busan & UN Memorial Cemetery

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Spend the morning exploring the Daereungwon Tomb Complex, the final resting place of nobility of the Silla Kingdom, or Golden Kingdom, which

ruled from 57 B.C.–935 A.D. You'll have a chance to enter one of its burial mounds and view some of the 11,000 artifacts and royal crowns that showcase the lavish lifestyles of Korean royalty.

Later, travel to the mountainous, seaside city of Busan, where you'll visit the United Nations Memorial Cemetery. Learn about the history and impact of the Korean War, and pay your respects to those buried in the cemetery.

Enjoy an included dinner this evening served with beer or wine.

Day 7: Sightseeing tour of Busan

Included meals: breakfast

Meet up with your Tour Director to explore Busan, a thriving port city at the southern tip of the Korean Peninsula. Home to roughly 3.5 million people, Busan is the country's second-largest metropolis. Here, visitors will find a little bit of everything, from the go-go-go of city streets to scenic beaches and teeming night markets.

- Travel to the Gamcheon Culture Village and learn how it evolved from a downtrodden destination for Korean War refugees to a must-see destination known for its colorful dwellings and labyrinthine alleyways.
- Head back to the city and visit the vast (and pungent!) Jagalchi Market. You'll find an extensive array of shellfish, octopus, and seaweed, as well as food stalls preparing this just-caught fare.
- Enjoy free time for shopping and lunch along the Gwangbok-dong Cultural & Fashion Street. Keep an eye out for handmade Korean crafts like pottery, fans, and Busan-style anchovy sauce or shop for luxury goods.

Spend the rest of day discovering Busan at your own pace, or add on an excursion.

+ Busan Harbor Cruise & Korean Barbecue Dinner

Fukuoka → 2 nights

Day 8: Flight to Fukuoka & sightseeing tour

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

Today, fly to Fukuoka, the largest city on Japan's Kyushu Island. Upon landing, you'll enjoy an

included lunch before heading out this evening with your Tour Director leading the way through the city, which was formed in 1889 when the castle town of Fukuoka and the port city of Hakata merged.

- Drive to the neighboring city of Dazaifu to visit the ancient Tenmangu. Built atop the grave of the ninth-century poet Sugawara no Michizane, this Shinto shrine venerates his deified form.
- Learn about the history and lore surrounding the temple, then stop outside for a tasting of umegae mochi—a red bean-based snack inextricably tied to the legend of Michizane.
- Walk along the Naka River and view Nakasu, Fukuoka's bustling entertainment district. Set atop a small island, the quarter's also famed for its food scene: Yatai—open-air food stalls—abound, selling favorites like Hakata-style tonkotsu ramen and yakitori.

Day 9: Sightseeing tour of Nagasaki

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

Travel to Nagasaki this morning and meet up with your local guide. Set out to explore the area, which was Japan's early gateway to trade with the West, as well as the target of an atomic bombing by the United States in 1945. Today, the area's unspoiled beaches and islands attract swimmers, divers, and sea kayakers.

- Visit Nagasaki Peace Park, which serves as both a symbol of hope and a reminder of the horrors of war.
- Explore the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum's exhibits, which shed light on the city's devastating history and post-war life.
- Sit down for an included lunch this afternoon at a local restaurant.
- Set off on a walking tour through the city, including its cosmopolitan center, as well as historic neighborhoods, like Dejima, which was constructed in the 17th century as a man-made island to segregate Portuguese residents from the Japanese population.

Kyoto → 2 nights

Day 10: Train to Kyoto & sightseeing tour

Included meals: breakfast

Board a high-speed bullet train to Kyoto this morning. Then, get to know the city that served as the capital of Japan for more than 1,000 years and is still considered its spiritual capital.

- Start in western Kyoto's historic Arashiyama district, which is known for its temples, shrines, and stunning natural beauty.
- Step inside the UNESCO-listed Tenryū-ji temple, which was originally constructed in the 12th century and is considered one of Kyoto's most important sites.
- Wander through the famous and photogenic Arashiyama Bamboo Grove, whose towering, 160-foot-tall bamboo stalks flank a singular pathway.
- Take in views of the rolling, tree-covered hills that surround the Hozu River.
- Cross the wooden Togetsukyo Bridge, which was originally built more than 1,200 years ago and stretches nearly 170 feet across a river that's known as the Hozu to the west and the Katsura to the east.
- See the famous, 14th-century Kinkaku-ji temple, widely known as the Golden Pavilion, which sits at the edge of a tranquil reflecting pond and is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Day 11: Free day in Kyoto

Included meals: breakfast

Enjoy a free day in Kyoto or add an excursion.
+ Fushimi Inari Walking Tour & Tea Ceremony

Tokyo → 3 nights

Day 12: Train to Tokyo & sightseeing tour

Included meals: breakfast

Board a high-speed bullet train to Tokyo, then spend the afternoon exploring Japan's bustling capital with your Tour Director leading the way.

- Drive to the iconic Shibuya Crossing. Climb a nearby vantage point for a bird's-eye view and watch as 3,000 people scramble across the junction. This dash happens every two minutes, rightfully earning the crossing the title of the world's busiest pedestrian intersection.
- Stop inside Shibuya Station to view *The Myth of Tomorrow*, Japanese artist Tarō Okamoto's famous avant-garde mural depicting the explosion of an atomic bomb.
- Ride an elevator to the top of the Metropolitan Building—a soaring structure with twin towers and observation decks—to enjoy bird's-eye views of the city.

Day 13: Sightseeing tour of Tokyo

Included meals: breakfast

Join a local guide and get to know more of Tokyo, from its historic past to its vibrant present.

- Drive to Yoyogi Park—one of the city's biggest public parks—and take a short walk to Meiji Imperial Shrine, the final resting place of Emperor Meiji.
- Stroll through the colorful Harajuku neighborhood, where Tokyo's history and present-day pop culture intertwine.
- Explore Tokyo's old town, including the ancient Asakusa Kannon Temple, the city's oldest and most sacred temple.
- Peruse a vibrant variety of handmade crafts and local fare at the centuries-old Nakamise Shopping Arcade.

Enjoy a free afternoon in Tokyo or add an excursion.

+ Japanese Cooking Class & Dinner

Day 14: Free day in Tokyo

Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner

Enjoy a free day in Tokyo or add an excursion. Celebrate your trip during a farewell dinner this evening, served with beer or wine.
+ Mount Fuji & Aokigahara Forest

Flight Home

Day 15: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport to board your flight home, or choose to continue your adventure with a visit to Hokkaido.

+ Hokkaido & Tokyo extension

Thanks to its rugged, mountainous landscapes, Hokkaido—Japan's northernmost island—is sometimes called “the Montana of Japan.” In the island's capital city, Sapporo, slurp bowlfuls of savory ramen (the iconic dish originated here) and wander among manicured rows of trees in a rambling city park. In the harbor city of Otaru, cruise through placid canals, get a behind-the-scenes look at how Japanese beers are made, and raise a toast to your trip with a taste of the velvety smooth spirits. Then, enjoy more time in Tokyo before heading home.

Sapporo → 3 nights

Day 15: Flight to Sapporo & sightseeing tour

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

Today, fly to Sapporo—the capital of Japan's

mountainous Hokkaido island and one of the country's youngest major cities (in 1857, its population clocked in at a mere seven people). The city also played host to the Olympics in 1972. Spend the afternoon exploring the city alongside your Tour Director.

- Enjoy a comforting bowl of Sapporo's famous ramen—the iconic Japanese noodle soup originated here—during an included lunch.
- Walk through Odori Park—the sprawling green space separates the city into north and south—and enter the iconic Sapporo TV tower, which dates back to the 1950s, and take in panoramic views of the city from the observation deck.
- Pass Sapporo's clock tower, the city's oldest building, as you make your way to Niko Market.

Day 16: Sightseeing tour of Otaru & brewery tour

Included meals: breakfast, beer tasting

Travel to the charming harbor city of Otaru. Here, you'll take a short walking tour alongside your Tour Director, cruise along the city's canals, and enjoy free time to explore at your own pace. Later, visit the local brewery and enjoy a guided tour through the brewery where you'll learn how the best ingredients are chosen, view the fermentation process, and see how the beers are manufactured and packaged. End the tour with a tasting of fresh off-the-line beer before enjoying free time for the rest of the day.

Day 17: Free day in Sapporo

Included meals: breakfast

Enjoy a free day in Sapporo or add an excursion.
+ Volcanic Hokkaido

Tokyo → 1 night

Day 18: Flight to Tokyo

Included meals: breakfast

Board a flight back to Tokyo and transfer to your hotel. Enjoy free time for the rest of the day or add an excursion.

+ Sumo Wrestling Show & Dinner

Flight Home

Day 19: Departure

Included meals: breakfast

Enjoy a free morning in Tokyo. Then, transfer to the airport to board your flight home.

Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: <https://www.goaheadtours.com/SKJG> | 1-800-597-0350

Day 3: Kimchi-Making Class & Dinner

From \$165.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (3 hours, departs in the afternoon)

No Korean meal would be complete without kimchi, a traditional side dish of spicy, fermented vegetables. In this hands-on class at the Seoul Kimchi Academy, learn how to make your very own traditional kimchi using ingredients like cabbage, radishes, gochugaru, garlic, and ginger. Make your own kimchi and take a small jar of the beloved garnish as a souvenir. Afterward, head to a local restaurant serving Korean specialties—including more kimchi, of course.

Day 4: History of the Korean War: DMZ Visit

From \$119.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (6 hours, departs in the early morning)

Get an authentic look at the relationship between South Korea and North Korea on a visit to the DMZ, or Demilitarized Zone. Travel out of Seoul and begin your tour at Imjingak, where you'll view the Freedom Bridge. Board a military bus and continue to a theater to learn about the fascinating history of the Korean War and the heavily fortified border that serves as its legacy. While in the DMZ, visit Dorasan Station, the last train station before reaching North Korean territory. Descend into the Third Tunnel of Aggression and learn how North Koreans built it in an effort to launch a surprise attack on the South in the 1970s. Then, take in panoramic views of North Korea's landscape from the Dora Observatory before returning to Seoul. Please note: Soldiers will screen tour participants at the entrance gate. You must bring your passport in order to register at this checkpoint. To enter the tunnel, travelers will need to walk down a steep slope for half a mile. There is no elevator, so travelers must be comfortable climbing stairs in order to enter and exit. This excursion is not recommended for those who are claustrophobic. Travelers should be prepared for a very early morning departure.

Day 7: Busan Harbor Cruise & Korean Barbecue Dinner

From \$155.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (5 hours, departs in the afternoon)

Take to the water for a panoramic cruise of Busan's harbor. As you sail along, view landmarks such as the double-decker Gwangan Bridge and the city's famous skyline. After disembarking, join your fellow travelers for a family-style Korean barbecue feast. Grill your own marinated meat at your table, then eat it on its own or wrapped in crunchy lettuce and served with a variety of garnishes. Please note: The meal served is pork and substitutes are not readily available.

Day 11: Fushimi Inari Walking Tour & Tea Ceremony

From \$95.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (4 hours, departure time varies)

Discover some of the Kyoto's sacred spots and traditional flavors on today's excursions. Enter Fushimi Inari, a Shinto shrine that's famous for its thousands of orange Torii gates and was a filming site for the 2005 movie "Memoirs of a Geisha." Make your way up the steps, follow the pathway of gates up the mountain to the Yotsutsuji intersection, and take in the panoramic views of Kyoto. Once back at the base of the shrine, you'll have free time to explore the area and to enjoy lunch. Afterwards, join a tea master, who will demonstrate the steps and customs of a traditional tea ceremony and explain the function of the various utensils involved. Then, discover the meaning of the symbolic gestures you'll make as you try matcha. This form of green tea is ground into a powder and is known for its bright hue. Sip tea and snack on wagashi, Japanese sweets often made from red beans, which nicely balance the bitterness of the matcha tea. Please note: Foot traffic through Fushimi Inari Shrine flows in one direction—visitors aren't permitted to turn back and must complete the walk once you've entered. Depending on the number of travelers, you might be split into two groups for the tea ceremony.

Day 13: Japanese Cooking Class & Dinner

From \$125.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (3 hours, departs in the evening, dinner included)

Tonight, join an experienced chef at a local restaurant for a cooking lesson and dinner. Grab your apron and watch as the chef demonstrates how to make traditional Japanese cuisine such as sushi rolls, rolled omelette, sesame spinach salad, and a chicken teriyaki bento box. Then, try your hand at crafting your own authentic meal before sitting down to enjoy the cuisine for dinner. Please note: It may not be possible to accommodate requests related to food allergies.

Day 14: Mount Fuji & Aokigahara Forest

From \$95.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (8 hours, departs in the morning)

Join your Tour Director and make your way to one of Japan's most breathtaking natural icons: the 12,388-foot-high Mount Fuji. En route to this UNESCO World Heritage site, stop in Aokigahara Forest, which boasts such lush foliage that it's earned the nickname the Sea of Trees. Take an hour and a half hiking tour of the Fugaku Wind Cave with a local guide. Lava flows from Mount Fuji formed the cave, and the cool temperatures in the cave helped preserve silkworm cocoons used to make the traditional textile. You'll learn about the flora and fauna as you walk along the Tokai Nature Walking Path between the two caves. Then, head out to find the perfect views of the breathtaking Mount Fuji with panoramic vistas of the surrounding lakes and charming villages. Please note: Views of Mt. Fuji are weather-dependent.

Extension excursion options

Day 17: Volcanic Hokkaido

From \$99.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (9 hours, departs in the morning, includes lunch)
Spend the day exploring Hokkaido's impressive landscapes and understanding locals' love for nature. Begin with a visit to Shikotsu-Tōya National Park, which features caldera lakes, volcanic mountains, and hidden hot springs. Enjoy stops throughout the park to take in beautiful views of the surrounding area before moving on to Jigokudani, or Hell Valley, for a walk. Follow the boardwalk through dramatic landscapes, which consist of steam vents and sulphuric hot springs. Visit Oyunuma River and, if you'd like, dip your feet in its warm, mineral-rich waters (those who do will understand why the river is often referred to as a natural foot bath). Sit down for an included lunch before heading back to your hotel in Sapporo.

Day 18: Sumo Wrestling Show & Dinner

From \$199.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (3.5 hours, departs in the evening, includes dinner)
Ever wondered what it takes to compete as a sumo wrestler? On today's outing, you'll get a closer look at the traditions and techniques behind Japan's national sport. Begin with a hearty serving of chanko nabe—a hot pot stew packed with protein and veggies that wrestlers eat to bulk up. Belly full, you'll then take in a live demonstration, put on by former pros and their students. Listen as they illustrate basic maneuvers and finishing moves, then watch as they grapple their way through several training bouts.

*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. Go Ahead Tours accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at <https://www.goaheadtours.com/about/terms>.