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South Korea

Official Name: Republic of Korea

LAST UPDATED: DECEMBER 15, 2016

Embassy Messages

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Quick Facts

- **PASSPORT VALIDITY:**
Must be valid at time of entry
- **VACCINATIONS:**
None
- **BLANK PASSPORT PAGES:**
One page per stamp
- **CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR ENTRY:**
None
- **TOURIST VISA REQUIRED:**
None required for stays under 90 days or less
- **CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR EXIT:**
None

[Collapse All](#)

Embassies and Consulates

U.S. Embassy Seoul

188 Sejong-daero, Jongno-gu,
Seoul 03141, Korea

Telephone: +(82) (2) 397-4114 (from within Korea, dial 02-397-4114)

DSN:721-4114

Fax: +(82) (2) 397-4101

seoulinfoACS@state.gov

U.S. Mailing Address:

American Citizens Services

U.S. Embassy Seoul

Unit #9600

DPO AP 96209

U.S. Consulate in Busan

Lotte Gold Rose Building #612, Jungang-daero 993, Jin-gu

Busan 47209, Korea

Telephone: (+82) 51-863-0731

Email: BusanConsulate@state.gov

The Embassy and Consulate are closed on weekends and on [American and Korean holidays](#). Emergency After-Hours Telephone: +82 (0)2-397-4114.

Destination Description

See the Department of State's [Fact Sheet on the Republic of Korea](#) for information on U.S.-Republic of Korea relations.

Entry, Exit & Visa Requirements

- Passport valid at time of entry.
- No visa required for stays less than 90 days for tourism or business.
- Visa required for all other purposes, including employment, teaching English, and for stays longer than 90 days.

Exceeding your authorized stay or not possessing a valid visa may result in detention and fines.

- In the event of an overstay, apply for a visa extension from [the Korea Immigration Service \(KIS\)](#) before attempting to leave the country. Also consult with KIS regarding changes in visa category.

Military Personnel/DOD and their families on orders:

- Consult [DOD Foreign Clearance Guide](#), and follow all instructions.
- Enter Korea with DOD identification and travel orders.
- Do not transit other countries such as China without a passport and appropriate visas.
- Family Members/Dependents of Military Personnel/DOD on orders must present upon arrival passports valid for a least six months and an A-3 SOFA visa.

U.S. Government Executive Branch personnel on official business and DOD personnel assigned to the U.S. Embassy (Including family members/dependents):

- Enter Korea with a diplomatic or official passport and a diplomatic or official ROK visa obtained through your sponsoring agency.
- Obtain country clearance using [Department of State's eCC system](#) or [DOD APACS system](#).

HIV/AIDS Restriction: The Department of State is unaware of any such entry restrictions for visitors or foreign residents in Korea.

Visit the [Embassy of Korea](#) website for current visa information. Please read our [Customs Information page](#).

Safety and Security

Public Demonstrations: Demonstrations are common in Korea. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational. Avoid demonstrations and exercise caution if you find yourself caught up in one.

North Korea (DPRK): An armistice agreement, monitored by the United Nations, has maintained general peace on the Korean peninsula since 1953. Tensions occasionally flare up because of provocative acts by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), including ballistic missile and nuclear tests and limited armed incursions into ROK-held territory. Some provocations have escalated into geographically limited skirmishes. The Republic of Korea routinely conducts military training exercises and civil defense drills. The DPRK often issues strongly-worded and threatening messages, frequently in connection with these exercises. Please see our [Fact Sheet on North Korea](#).

Weather related Events: Heavy rains and flooding may occur during the June – August monsoon season or the May - November typhoon season. See general information about natural disaster preparedness at the U.S. [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#) website.

Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP): To receive security messages by email and make it easier to locate you in an emergency, register in STEP.

If the Embassy becomes aware of any specific and credible threat to the safety and security of U.S. citizens, we will inform you through our website, social media, and email.

Crime: For most visitors, Korea remains a very safe country. Common crimes occur more frequently in major metropolitan areas, tourist sites, and crowded markets.

- Take routine safety precautions.
- Pay attention to your surroundings.
- Report any concerns to local police.

Violent crime is not common; however, remain vigilant:

- Exercise caution in crowded entertainment, nightlife, and shopping districts.
- If traveling at night, consider traveling in groups.
- Use legitimate taxis or public transportation only.

Victims of Crime: Call 112 for emergency assistance or to report a crime to local authorities. Call 02-397-4114 to contact the U.S. Embassy. We can:

- Help you find appropriate medical care;
- Assist you in reporting a crime to police;
- Contact relatives or friends on your behalf;
- Explain Korean judicial procedures in general terms;
- Provide an emergency loan for repatriation to the United States and/or limited medical support in cases of destitution;
- Help you find accommodations and flight arrangements to the United States;
- Replace a lost or stolen passport.

Sexual Assault: In 2015, the Embassy received 19 reports of sexual assault from U.S. citizens. Most cases involved young women assaulted by

acquaintances after drinking alcohol socially. Specialized hospital units and police are available in Korea to assist victims.

Women Travelers: See our travel tips for [Women Travelers](#).

Domestic Violence: Victims may contact the Embassy, tel. (+82) 2-397-4114, for assistance.

Lost or Stolen Passports: If your passport is stolen, file a report at the nearest police station.

Don't buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if widely available. It is against Korean law to purchase these goods and against U.S. law to bring them into the United States. The [Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Division in the U.S. Department of Justice](#) has more information.

Avoid fraud and scams: See [Department of State](#) and [FBI](#) websites for more information.

For further information:

- Follow the [U.S. Embassy Seoul's "Americans in Korea" Facebook page](#) .
- Call us in Washington at 1-202-501-4444 (8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST, M-F).
- See the [State Department's travel website](#) for [Worldwide Cautions](#), Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts.
- Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) .
- See [traveling safely abroad](#) for useful travel tips.

Local Laws & Special Circumstances

Criminal Penalties: While in Korea, you are subject to local laws. If you violate Korean laws, you may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Be aware that:

- Immigration violations can lead to arrest, fines, and deportation.
- There is little tolerance for illegal drugs.
- If you mail illegal drugs to/ from Korea, you will be prosecuted.
- Commercial disputes may lead to criminal charges being filed under local laws.

Be aware that some crimes are prosecutable in the United States, regardless of local law. For examples, see our website on [crimes against minors abroad](#) and the [Department of Justice](#) website.

Arrest Notification: If you are arrested or detained, ask officials to notify the Embassy. See our [webpage](#) for further information.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Dual Nationality and Military Conscription: Dual national males (including U.S. service members) may be subject to compulsory military service. If you have family ties to Korea, consult the nearest Korean Embassy or Consulate or the [Korean Military Manpower Administration](#) regarding potential citizenship obligations **before entering Korea**.

Passport Seizures and Exit Bans: If you are involved in a criminal investigation or commercial dispute, authorities may seize your passport and/or block your departure. While we may reissue a passport, we cannot lift an exit ban.

Exit Permits: Exit permits are not generally required. However, if a parent requests a travel restriction on his/her child, Korean authorities may prevent that child from departing even when traveling with the other parent.

International Child Abduction: See our website for information related to the [prevention of international child abduction](#).

Teaching English: The [U.S. embassy Seoul consular website](#) has detailed information about obtaining an E-2 visa to teach English. Prospective teachers must submit a criminal records check (only FBI checks accepted) and a health certificate. The Embassy does not provide criminal records checks or fingerprinting services and does not authenticate criminal records checks or health certificates. Have these documents prepared before coming to Korea.

Complaints by English teachers:

- Contract disputes, misrepresentation of benefits, no insurance
- Working conditions/hours, living arrangements
- Threats of arrest/deportation
- Sexual harassment, racial prejudice

Complaints about English teachers:

- Fraudulent applications/documents
- Lack of professionalism
- Use of illicit drugs

Working in the Republic of Korea: If working, including teaching or modeling, you must enter with the appropriate work visa. It is not possible to change your visa status without leaving the country. If you begin work without the appropriate visa, you may be arrested, fined, and/or deported. If you are working without a valid work permit and get into a contractual dispute with your employer, you have little legal recourse.

Students: See our [Students Abroad](#) page and [FBI travel tips](#).

ROK National Security Law: Authorities may detain, arrest, and imprison persons believed to have committed acts intended to endanger the "security of the state," including statements deemed to praise the political system and/or officials of the DPRK.

Customs Regulations: There is strict enforcement of regulations on importing and exporting items such as firearms, narcotics and prescription drugs, non-prescription health supplements, radio equipment, and gold. Importation of materials deemed to be obscene, subversive, or harmful to the public peace is also restricted.

- Amphetamines are illegal in Korea. Do not bring amphetamines or other prescription narcotics into the country without obtaining advance permission in writing from the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety. See the [U.S. Embassy Seoul, Health Information page](#).
- Traveling with Pets: See [Korea's Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency](#) website.

See the [Korean Customs Regulations](#) website for complete information.

LGBTI Travelers: Consensual same-sex sexual activity is not criminalized. Korea is a conservative country in regards to LGBTI issues. However, there are an increasing number of LGBTI-oriented clubs, festivals and NGOs advocating for LGBTI issues. The ROK National Human Rights Commission Act prohibits discrimination against individuals because of their sexual orientation, but there are no laws specifying punishment for persons found to have discriminated on this basis. Same-sex marriages are not recognized. Korean citizens can legally change their gender identity.

See our [LGBTI Travel Information](#) page and section 6 of the [Department of State's Human Rights report](#) for further details.

Mobility Issues: Korean law mandates access to transportation, communication, and public buildings. Cross walks typically have audio and visual signals. Older buildings and streets are generally less accessible than modern ones. Metro cars and buses in Seoul offer priority seating for the disabled and most metro stations have elevators. Metro platforms include Korean Braille information. Contact individual bus companies and subway associations for specific information. Foreign residents are eligible for disability assistance from local ward offices; assistance varies by ward.

Health

Quality of Care: Western-style medical facilities are available in most large cities. However, not all doctors and staff, are proficient in English. A [list of hospitals](#) and medical specialists who speak English is available on our website. For emergency ambulance service dial 119. For information on medical evacuation from Korea, please see the State Department's brochure on [Air Ambulance/MedEvac/Medical Escort Providers](#).

We do not pay medical bills. Be aware that U.S. Medicare does not apply overseas. Verify your health insurance coverage before traveling overseas. See our webpage for information on [insurance providers for overseas coverage](#). In most cases, health care providers will require payment in advance of treatment or will not release a patient until hospital bills are paid. We strongly recommend [supplemental insurance](#) to include coverage for medical evacuation.

Medication: Carry prescription medication in original packaging, along with your doctor's prescription. Most prescription medications, except psychotropic types, can be obtained at Korean pharmacies (brand names often differ). Local pharmacies will require a prescription from a Korean doctor.

Update [vaccinations](#) recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For further health information go to:

- [World Health Organization](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC)

Travel & Transportation

Road Conditions and Safety: Roads are well-paved, traffic signals functional, and most drivers comply with basic traffic laws. Korea has a significantly higher traffic fatality rate than the United States. Causes of accidents include excessive speed, frequent lane changes without signaling, running red lights, aggressive bus drivers, and weaving motorcyclists. It is recommended that you photo document any traffic accidents.

Be aware that motorcyclists may drive on sidewalks, and drivers do not always yield to pedestrians in marked crosswalks.

Traffic Laws include:

- International driving permit (or ROK license) is required for all drivers.
- Left-hand turns prohibited except with green arrow.
- Seat belts and car seats are mandatory.
- Motorcycle passengers must wear helmets.
- Automobile drivers are presumed to have some fault in accidents involving pedestrians.
- Expect long waits at police stations while police investigate any incidents.
- Police may take your passport or detain you during an investigation.
- Even if negligence is not proven, criminal charges may be filed.
- Blood-alcohol content of 0.05% or higher is considered legally intoxicated.
- Police regularly set up DUI checkpoints. Drivers are required to submit to breathalyzer tests; refusal can result in cancellation of your license.

For information about driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, refer to our [Road Safety page](#). You may also visit the [Korea Tourism Organization \(KTO\)](#) website.

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Republic of Korea's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the ROK's air carrier operations. Further information may be found on the [FAA's Safety Assessment Page](#) .

Please see [Fact Sheet](#) for this country.

Assistance for U.S. Citizens

U.S. Embassy Seoul

188 Sejong-daero, Jongno-gu,
Seoul, Republic of Korea
110-710

- Telephone
+(82) (2) 397-4114
- Emergency After-Hours Telephone
+(82) (2) 397-4114.
- Fax
+(82) (2) 397-4101
- Email
seoulinfoACS@state.gov
- [U.S. Embassy Seoul](#)



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