

# Arts & Architecture ■

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## CINEMA

Since the late 1990s, the fast-improving Korean movie industry has been producing an amazing 50 films a year and is providing a real challenge to the dominance of the commercial Hollywood blockbusters. Around 45% of the market is taken by locally produced films – a much higher percentage than most countries achieve. Protected by a quota system that forces each cinema to show Korean films on at least 146 days of the year (reduced to 73 days in July 2006), commercial success has been achieved by a string of action, drama and comedy films.

### KOREAN WAVE

*Hallyu* (the Korean Wave) is the name given to the increasing popularity of Korean popular culture in other parts of Asia, from Mongolia to Malaysia. Korean TV dramas (broadcast with subtitles) such as *Winter Sonata* and *Daejanggeum* have gained millions of fans, while Korean movies, pop singers and fashion designers are riding on the Korean Wave along with Korean food, beauty products and electronics gadgets. This fad for all things Korean has led to more Asian tourists visiting Seoul to experience Korean culture at first-hand.

Korean films have snapped up numerous festival awards, and the industry's profile was raised when the country's greatest film director, Lee Chang-dong, was made Minister of Culture. An excellent website ([www.koreanfilm.org](http://www.koreanfilm.org)) covers all aspects of the industry and has reams of film reviews.

Korean films are not shown with English subtitles in cinemas, so the best way to see them is on DVD. Numerous DVD *bang* (rooms where you can watch DVDs) offer small private rooms with comfortable armchairs and a large screen, where you can watch Korean DVDs with English subtitles.

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### TOP TEN FILMS

- *The President's Last Bang* (2005) – Set in Seoul, this vivid and controversial satire directed by Im Sang-soo portrays the dramatic final day of military dictator Park Chung-hee, whose 18-year rule ended in 1979 when he was assassinated. In the confused aftermath, the conspirators find themselves being hunted down.
- *Marathon* (2005) – Based on a true story, a devoted Seoul mother battles prejudice and indifference as she struggles to bring up her autistic son. Funny, moving and well-acted, the movie is directed by Jeong Yun-chul and is full of unpredictable twists and turns.
- *Oasis* (2002) – Directed by Lee Chang-dong, brilliant acting and a tight script make this in-your-face movie about severe disability memorable and thought-provoking.
- *Peppermint Candy* (2000) – Also directed by Lee Chang-dong, this bleak, dramatic and sometimes brutal film turns time around to reveal how an innocent young man was corrupted by the military regimes that ruled the South after the Korean War.
- *JSA* (2001) – A taut and realistic thriller directed by Park Chan-wook depicting a dangerous friendship that develops across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between soldiers from South and North Korea.
- *My Sassy Girl* (2001) – This role-reversal comedy directed by Kwak Jae-young involves a girlish boy and his bossy girlfriend.
- *Untold Scandal* (2004) – A historical drama directed by EJ Yong about a philandering Confucian nobleman and a young and virtuous Catholic woman, which has the idealised sets, intrigues and love-story theme typical of the genre that's currently wowing all of Asia.
- *Crazy Marriage* (2002) – Directed by poet Yu Ha, this light-hearted movie with a message reveals the ups and downs, in and out of bed, of a modern couple who enjoy breaking every Confucian rule.
- *The Way Home* (2002) – This unsentimental low-budget study of a rural grandma and her selfish and rude city-bred young grandson, written and directed by Lee Jeong-hyang, was a deserved but surprise hit with local audiences.
- *A Little Monk* (2003) – This poetic and sometimes humorous fable, directed by Ju Gyeong-jung, is about a nine-year-old boy growing up in a remote temple who longs for a mother. Every scene in the beautifully photographed film offers insights into the Buddhist philosophy of detachment.

## DANCE & THEATRE

Modern dance is active in Seoul, with at least two annual modern dance festivals (p102). For the last 10 years Kim Young-hee has been a leading dancer, melding old and new styles. *Contemporary Dance Scenes of Korea* (2001) is a comprehensive, chronological study of Seoul's modern dance scene. For more information log on to [www.korea.net](http://www.korea.net) and follow the link from the Culture section.

Korean folk dances include dynamic *seungmu* (drum dances), satirical and energetic *talchum* (mask dances) and solo improvisational *salpuri* (shamanist dances). Most popular are *samullori* dance troupes, who perform in brightly coloured traditional clothing, twirling a long tassel from a cap on their heads. Participants dance, twirl their heads and beat a drum or gong at the same time. See p100 for details on traditional dance venues. Every year, elegant court dances accompanied by an orchestra are performed in front of Jongmyo (p50) on the first Sunday in May.

Seoul also has a thriving avant-garde theatre scene based mainly around Daejangno (p100), where more than 50 small theatres put on everything from rock musicals and satirical plays to opera and translations of Western classics, all firmly aimed at a youth audience. The shows are all in Korean but drama fans should still enjoy the experience.

### A NEW TRADITION

*Samullori* is a 'traditional' Korean farmer's dance that is popular with tourists who enjoy its party spirit, yet it has a very short history. *Samullori* was the name adopted by four musicians who formed a band in Seoul in 1978. They played four traditional Korean percussion instruments, the *kkwaenggwari* (small gong), *jing* (large gong), *jangu* (hour-glass drum) and *buk* (large barrel drum) and attempted to recreate traditional folk music and dances that had died out.

## LITERATURE

Seoul has always been a city of poets – a tradition that goes back into the mists of time. Part of the Joseon government-service exam (*gwageo*) involved writing a poem. Perhaps if this tradition was revived, it would produce more imaginative civil servants.

During the term of the Joseon dynasty, literature meant *sijo*, short nature poems that were hand-written (using a brush and ink) in Chinese characters even after the invention of *hangeul* (the Korean phonetic alphabet) in the 15th century. Joseon kings were all poets. Folk tales reflect Joseon society from the point of view of the peasants and slaves. The goblins are cute – tall and skinny, they come out at night and have magic mallets that turn everything into gold. They generally reward good people and punish the bad, but being goblins, they can't always be trusted.

After 1945 there was a sharp turn away from Chinese (and Japanese) influence of any kind. Western ideas and ideals took hold, and existentialism became the guiding cultural philosophy. Novellas came into vogue and an excellent series of these has been published in English (₩5000 each). Korean writers are as talented as the film makers, but have not yet received the international recognition they deserve, partly because of some poor translations.

Log onto [www.korea.net](http://www.korea.net) and click on 'Directory', 'Arts & Culture', 'Literature & Language' and 'Korea Literature Today' to access translated Korean poetry, novels and short stories. Other links go to traditional Korean folk tales and ancient legends.

## MUSIC

Korean traditional music (*gugak*) is played on stringed instruments, most notably the *gayageum* (12-stringed zither) and *haegum* (two-stringed fiddle) as well as on chimes, gongs, cymbals, drums, horns and flutes. Court music (*jeonggak*) is slow and stately while folk music such as *samullori* is fast and lively. Buddhist music (*bulgyo eumak*), mainly monks chanting, is another genre and cassettes and CDs of this music can be bought outside Jogyesa (p53).

Similar to Western opera is *changgeuk*, which can involve a large cast of characters. An unusual type of opera is *pansori*. It features a solo storyteller (usually female) singing in a strained voice to the beat of a drum, while emphasising dramatic moments with a flick of her fan. Only a few *pansori* dramas have survived so the repertoire is limited, but *Chunhyang*, the story of a faithful woman, is the most popular.

Western classical music is played in a number of concert halls in Seoul. Live jazz bars are common, and rock, punk, hip-hop, electronic and other genres all have their followers. Crying Nut is a sassy Seoul band that started off in a Hongik club and

### TOP FIVE NOVELS/NOVELLAS

- *A Dwarf Launches a Little Ball* by Cho Se-hui (1976) – A poetic novella about the victims of Seoul's urban redevelopment.
- *Appointment with My Brother* by Yi Mun-yol (2002) – The theme of two brothers divided by the DMZ and the complexity of North–South relations are explored in this brilliant novella.
- *Playing with Fire* by Lee Chong-rae (1997) – A powerful and dramatic revenge saga that begins during the Korean War but continues for generations. It grabs you on page one and never lets go.
- *My Innocent Uncle* by Chae Man-shik (1936) – A shocking colloquial short story about attitudes to Japanese colonial rule in Seoul.
- *Three Days in that Autumn* by Pan Wan-so (1988) – This original and forthright tale reveals the quirky life and views of a woman who becomes a backstreet abortionist in 1950s Seoul.

loves whipping up fast and furious punk riffs with the aid of an accordion. For something quieter Kim Hyun-chul is a jazz and ballad singer who often collaborates with Western musicians, while Jo Sung Mo is a long-lasting ballad singer with a unique voice.

Some unusual musical instruments are on view in the Museum of Korean Traditional Music (p65), next door to the Seoul Arts Centre. View [www.ncktpa.go.kr](http://www.ncktpa.go.kr) for information on Korean percussion, woodwind and string instruments.

## SCULPTURE, PAINTING & CALLIGRAPHY

Seoul has an active modern art scene, and local artists tend to follow Western trends while incorporating Korean motifs and themes. The best of them combine traditional techniques with a modern vision. The top Korean artist Paik Nam-june, who died in January 2006, has some excellent and imaginative installations in the National Museum of Contemporary Art (p65). Another icon of Korean modern art is Kim Tschang Yuel, who is obsessed with raindrops.

Stone Buddhist statues and pagodas such as the one in Tapgol Park (p52) are among the oldest artworks in Seoul. Cast bronze Buddhas were also common and some marvellous examples can be seen in the National Museum of Korea (p62). Zen-style, Buddhist art can be seen inside and outside Seoul's temples, Jogyesa (p53) and Bongeunsa (p58), as well as in the small Museum of Korean Buddhist Art (p51). Stone and wooden effigies of shamanist spirit guardians can be seen outside the National Folk Museum (p50) in the grounds of the main palace, Gyeongbokgung.

Chinese influence is paramount in traditional Korean painting. The basic tools (brush and water-based ink) are those of calligraphy, which influenced painting in both technique and theory. The brush line, which varies in thickness and tone, is the most important feature. The function of traditional landscape painting was to be a substitute for nature. The painting is meant to surround the viewer and there is no fixed viewpoint as in traditional Western painting. A talented artist who painted everyday scenes was Kim Hong-do (1745–1816). Court ceremonies, portraits, flowers, birds and the traditional symbols of longevity – the sun, water, rocks, mountains, clouds, pine trees, turtle, cranes, deer and a herb – were popular subjects. *Spirit of the Mountain* by David Mason (1999, ₩30,000) is an exhaustive study of the relatively unknown folk genre of shamanist art.

Calligraphy can be written in either traditional Chinese characters (*hanja*) or in *hangeul*. The Seoul Calligraphy Art Museum (p65) at the Seoul Arts Centre has examples of traditional and modern calligraphy. To buy some calligraphy head to Insadong (p52).

## CERAMICS & POTTERY

Archaeologists have unearthed Korean pottery that dates back some 10,000 years, although it wasn't until the early 12th century that it reached a peak as skilled potters turned out wonderful celadon pottery with a green tinge. Visit the National Museum of Korea (p62) for one of the best displays. Original celadon fetches huge sums at auction, but modern copies are widely available, particularly in Insadong (p52) and Icheon (p46).

The pottery business took a turn for the worse during the 13th-century Mongol invasion and the Koreans started to produce *buncheon* ware, which was less-refined pottery decorated with simple folk designs. But it was much admired by the Japanese, and during the Imjin War in the 1590s entire families and villages of Korean potters were abducted and resettled in Japan to produce *buncheon* for their new masters. Some are still there.

### TOP FIVE TRACKS

- *Gayageum Masterpieces* by Chimhyang-moo – quiet and relaxing raindrop sounds
- *Beautiful Things in Life* by Jeong Soo-nyun – haunting melodies played on the *haegum* (two-stringed fiddle)
- *The Fragrance of Bamboo* by Lee Saeng-kang – a retrospective album by a flute master
- *a day* by Cho Moon-young – crossover music including an Irish ballad played on a rarely heard 25-string *gayageum*
- *Seumusarui Eumakjeonji* – a sampler of modern Korean rock, pop, punk, ballads and rap

### TOP THREE POETS

- Original poet So Chong-ju's *Unforgettable Things* (translated by D McCann) is a wonderful collection of poems that reflect the author's varied life and unusual philosophy.
- Environmentalist poet Kim Kwang-kyu's *Faint Shadow of Love* (translated by Brother Anthony) contains poetic protests about ecological degradation and sad reflections on people who have lost the dreams and idealism of their youth.
- Christian Buddhist Ku Sang's *Eternity Today* (translated by Brother Anthony) features poems that reflect and reconcile his philosophy of life.

# ARCHITECTURE

Although Seoul is dominated by dull concrete-and-glass skyscrapers, there are a couple worth looking at. The gold-tinted 63 Building (p56) on Yeouido, and the downtown Jongno Tower (Map p205) are two of the more stylish ones with excellent views from the top floor.

The best examples of traditional architecture are found in Seoul's renovated palaces and temples. Their unique style is characterised by wooden structures set on stone foundations that are held together by notches rather than nails. A prominent feature are the roofs, which are made from heavy clay tiles with dragons or other symbols embossed on the end-tile. The strikingly bold, predominantly green and orange paintwork under the eaves is called *dancheong*. Ceilings are often intricately carved and coloured. Palaces were warmed during the bitterly cold winters by *ondol* (underfloor heating).

Carved lattice doors are something to look out for in the Buddhist shrines, and the outside walls are painted with murals of the Buddha's life or illustrate Buddhist parables about self-liberation. Inside the shrines are paintings of Buddhist heavens (and occasionally hells). By temple entrance gates are paintings or statues (sometimes both) of the fierce-looking guardians of the four directions who protect Buddhists from harm.

Seoul's great fortress gates, Namdaemun and Dongdaemun, are worth a look, but visit Suwon (p153) to walk around the most impressive fortress. Nineteenth-century Christian churches, built in an elegant West-meets-East fusion style, are among the few buildings to have survived the Korean War and subsequent modernisation – Myeong-dong Cathedral, Chungdong Methodist church and the Anglican church are all on Map pp206–7-00.

Namsangol Hanok Village (p55) and the Buckchon district (p77) in Seoul and the Korean Folk Village (p154) near Suwon have the best collections of *hanok*. The best-selling *Hanoak, Traditional Korean Houses* (1999, W30,000) is a fully illustrated book on the exterior and interior design of Korea's traditional one-storey wood-and-tile houses.

*Joseon Royal Court Culture* by Shin Myung-ho (2004, W28,000) gives the facts about the unique Confucian royal-court lifestyle. Based on primary sources, the superbly illustrated book gives a human context to the now bare and empty palaces.

## OUTDOOR SCULPTURES

Seoul has more outdoor sculptures than any other city on the planet. Olympic Park (p59) has an ever-expanding collection of over 200 sometimes wacky modern sculptures created by artists from around the world, some bigger than a house. Plenty are clever and intriguing while others prompt thoughts of 'why?' or simply a chuckle. The east side of the main street in Daehangno (Map p208) is also lined with quirky modern sculptures. Every high-rise building must, by law, have a sculpture outside, so keep an eye out for them. The most amazing one is Hammering Man (p50), just off Sejong St.

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# Food & Drink

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# Food & Drink

## HISTORY

Every spring the Joseon kings headed to Seonnonngdan (p62), an altar where they prayed for a good harvest. After the ritual, a special beef and vegetable soup (*seolleongtang*) was served to the assembled peasants. *Seolleongtang* is still popular today.

When Japan abolished the Korean monarchy in 1910, the palace *tteok* (rice cake) makers were sacked, so they opened small shops around the Nakwon Arcade (Map pp202–3), just north of Tappol Park, and sold their *tteok* to the public. The shops are still run by their descendants.

*Budae jjigae* or *Johnsontang* is a unique dish that originated in the hungry years after the Korean War when tins of ham, sausages and baked beans were bought on the black market around American army bases (such as Yongsan) and mixed with noodles and vegetable scraps to make a meal. Try it at Nolboo (p96) in Hongik.

The royal court was based in Seoul for over 500 years and royal cuisine dishes include *gujeolpan* and *sinseollo*. Generally the cooking style is less spicy than usual and requires elaborate presentation.

## CULTURE

### ETIQUETTE

The custom in Seoul is that the host pays for everything and if you are invited out by Korean colleagues or friends, you will find it difficult to pay the bill or even contribute towards it. Going Dutch is as rare as a W20,000 note. Arguing about who should have the honour of paying the restaurant bill is a common scene at the cashier's desk.

### HOW KOREANS EAT

A traditional Korean meal (breakfast, lunch and dinner) typically consists of meat, seafood or fish, which is served at the same time as soup, rice and a collection of dipping sauces and *banchan* (side dishes, such as *kimchi*, shellfish, acorn jelly, quail eggs and cold vegetables). Meals are usually eaten communally, so side dishes are placed in the centre of the table and diners eat a bit from one dish, a bite from another, a little rice, a sip of soup and so on.

At some traditional restaurants, diners sit on cushions on the floor (the *ondol* heating system is beneath). Before stepping up, always remove your shoes. Nowadays most restaurants have a table-and-chairs option.

Nearly every restaurant in Seoul serves bottled or filtered water free of charge when you arrive.

## DOS & DON'TS

### Dos

- Do pour drinks for others if you notice that their glasses are empty. It is polite to use both hands when pouring.
- Most people use a spoon for the rice and soup, and chopsticks for the side dishes.
- Knives are not used at the table, so if you're trying to cut something and your spoon or chopsticks are not up to the job, ask for a knife or scissors.

### Don'ts

- Don't start (or finish) your meal before your seniors or elders.
- Don't touch food with your fingers (except when handling leaves for wrapping food).
- Don't pick up bowls and plates from the table to eat from them.
- Don't blow your nose at the table.
- Don't pour your own drinks but allow someone else to do it.
- Don't tip.

## STAPLES BARBECUES

The many barbecue restaurants have a grill set into the tables, on which you cook slices of beef (*bulgogi*), beef ribs (*galbi*), pork (*samgyeopsal*), chicken (*dak*), seafood or vegetables. Often your server helps out with the cooking. The inexpensive *samgyeopsal* is like bacon and can be fatty. These meals are usually only available in servings of two or more.

*Bulgogi*, *galbi* and *samgyeopsal* are served with a bunch of lettuce and sesame leaves. Take a leaf in one hand (or combine two leaves for different flavours), and with your other hand use your chopsticks to load it with meat, side dishes, garlic and sauces. Then roll it up into a little package and eat it in one go.

## BIBIMBAP

*Bibimbap* is a mixture of rice, vegetables and meat with an egg on top, which tastes much better than it sounds. Thoroughly mix it all together with your spoon before digging in. It comes with a generous dollop of *gochujang* (red chilli paste) so remove some if you don't want it too hot. *Bibimbap* is often served with bean sprout soup but don't mix that in too! *Sanchoe bibimbap* is made with mountain-grown greens while *dolsot bibimbap* is served in a stone hotpot.

## BREAKFAST

Traditional Korean breakfasts usually consist of soup, rice and *kimchi*. Western breakfasts are available in hotels, fast-food outlets, cafés and the ubiquitous bakeries, some of which have a few tables and chairs. Most convenience stores sell the basics – coffee, tea, sandwiches, fruit and pastries.

## CHICKEN

*Samgyetang* is a small whole chicken stuffed with glutinous rice, red dates, garlic and ginseng and boiled in broth. *Dakgalbi* is pieces of spicy chicken, cabbage, other vegetables and finger-sized pressed rice cakes, which are all grilled at your table. *Jjimdak* is a spiced-up mixture of chicken pieces, transparent noodles, potatoes and other vegetables. Many informal *hofs* (pubs) serve inexpensive barbecued or fried chicken to accompany the beer.

## DESSERTS

Desserts are not common in Seoul, but you may be served a piece of fruit, coffee or traditional tea at the end of the meal. Ice-cream parlours such as Baskin Robbins are everywhere, while the 'wellbeing' wave means that yogurt, fruit and red-bean concoctions are widely available at Red Mango and similar outlets.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO KOREAN FOOD

Sampling all the quirky delights of Korean food and drink is one of the joys of visiting Seoul. *The Wonderful World of Korean Food*, published by the Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO), is a free booklet that provides an illustrated introduction to the food and snacks you are likely to come across.

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## GIMBAP

This inexpensive item, Korean sushi, is popular for lunch, and is cold rice rolled in dried seaweed with strips of carrot, radish, egg and ham in the centre. 'Nude' *gimbap* has no dried seaweed wrap. A recent food fad are Californian-roll restaurants, which sell *gimbap* in fancy dress at three times the usual price. *Samgak gimbap* (three-sided *gimbap*) contains fillings such as marinated beef, tuna or *kimchi*, but is only sold at convenience stores.

## HANJEONGSIK

Head to Insadong for a *Hanjeongsik* banquet for two or more people that includes fish, meat, soup, *dubu jjigae* (spicy tofu stew), rice, noodles, steamed egg, shellfish and lots of cold vegetable side dishes.

## HOETJIP

Seafood (*haemul*) and fish (*saengseon*) are generally served broiled, grilled or in a soup, but raw fish has many fans. Visit Noryangjin fish market, or the West Sea islands to indulge in raw fish, blue crab and shellfish meals. *Haemultang* is a seafood soup that contains so much chilli that even Seoulites have to mop their brows.

## JJIGAE

These stews are thicker than soups and served in a stone hotpot with plenty of spices. Popular versions are made with tofu (*dubu jjigae*), soybean paste (*doenjang jjigae*) and *kimchi*. *Beoseotjeongol* is a less spicy but highly recommended mushroom hotpot.

## KIMCHI

Traditionally, *kimchi* was made to preserve vegetables and ensure proper nutrition during the harsh winters, but it's now eaten year-round and adds zest and a long list of health benefits to any meal. A side dish of the spicy national food is served at nearly every Korean meal whether it's breakfast, lunch or dinner. Although generally made with pickled and fermented cabbage seasoned with garlic and red chilli, it can be made from cucumbers, white radish or other vegetables. *Mul kimchi* is a cold gazpacho-type soup and not so spicy.

## MANDU

An inexpensive and non-spicy favourite with visitors, these small dumplings (*wangmandu* are large ones) are filled with minced meat, seafood, vegetables and herbs. They are often freshly made to a special recipe by restaurant staff during quiet times. Fried, boiled or steamed they make a tasty snack or addition to a meal. *Manduguk* is *mandu* in soup with seaweed and makes a perfect light lunch.

## NOODLES

*Naengmyeon* is chewy buckwheat noodles in an icy, sweetish broth, garnished with shredded vegetables and half a hard-boiled egg on top – add red chilli paste or *gyeoja*

## METAL CHOPSTICKS

Although surrounded by nations that use chopsticks made of plastic or wood, Seoulites use stainless steel chopsticks. Why? One explanation is that the Joseon kings, ever vigilant about security, insisted on using silver chopsticks as silver would tarnish in the presence of toxins. The tradition caught on and was passed down to the *yangban* (aristocrats) and copied by the common people who substituted cheaper base metal for silver.

(mustard) to taste. It's popular in summer and can be eaten after a meat dish as a kind of dessert.

*Japchae* is a foreigner-friendly dry dish of transparent noodles stir-fried in sesame oil with strips of egg, meat and vegetables. *Kalguksu* is wheat noodles in a bland clam and vegetable broth.

*Ramyeon* is instant noodles often served in a hot chilli soup. Seoulites believe in fighting fire with fire and claim it's a good cure for hangovers.

## SNACKS

*Hotteok* is a kind of pitta bread with a cinnamon and honey filling that comes in various shapes. *Delimanjoo* are freshly baked, custard-filled, machine-made minicakes that are sold in subway stations. Waffles, *churros* and red-bean paste snacks are also common snacks in Seoul.

In Insadong try *kkultarae*, fine threads of honey and cornflour wrapped around a nut sauce, and *daepae saenggang yeot*, a huge slab of toffee, which is shaved off in strips and served on a stick.

Savory *tteokbokki* are finger-sized pressed rice cakes and other items in a sweet and spicy orange sauce. Other street-stall food includes marinated chicken kebabs, plain roasted potatoes, roasted honey-coated sweet potatoes and 20 types of hot dogs, including fishy ones. *Tteok* (pronounced 'dock'), rice cakes, are a bland, unsweetened and healthy alternative to sickly Western cakes.

Convenience stores offer cheap snacks such as a bowl of instant *ramyeon* noodles – just add hot water from the water-boiler and eat it at the stand-up counter. Other options include *gimbap*, *samgak gimbap*, egg salad or a sandwich. For dessert, buy fruit, pastry, ice cream or coffee. You can even buy alcohol – beer, wine and *soju* (local vodka).

## SOUPS

Soups (*tang* or *guk*) are a Seoul speciality and vary from spicy seafood and tofu soups to bland broths such as *galbitang* and *seolleongtang*. *Gamjatang* is a spicy peasant soup with meaty bones and a potato. And a hint if a soup is too spicy – just tip in some rice.

## FOR DAREDEVILS

- *Beondegi* (silkworm larvae)
- *Bosintang* (dog-meat soup)
- *Doganitang* (cow kneecaps soup)
- *Sannakji* (live baby octopus)
- *Yukhoe* (seasoned raw minced meat)

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## VISITORS' FAVOURITE FOOD

- *Galbi* (beef ribs)
- *Bulgogi* (slices of barbecued beef wrapped in lettuce)
- *Bibimbap* (rice, egg, meat and vegetables with chilli sauce)
- *Dolsot bibimbap* (*bibimbap* in a stone hotpot)
- *Mandu* (filled dumplings)

## VEGETARIAN OPTIONS

Seoulites love meat, fish and seafood and very few are vegetarian, although rice and vegetables make up a considerable part of their diet. Seoul's best vegetarian restaurants include Sanchon (p90), Dimibang (p89) and Sosim (p90) in Insadong and Pulhyanggi (p98) near Apgujeong. Department store food courts and Indian restaurants always offer some vegetarian meals.

It can be a struggle for vegetarians in ordinary restaurants, but you can order *bibimbap* or *dolsotbibimbap* without the meat (or egg), *beoseotjeongol*, *doenjang jjigae*, *dubu jjigae*, *jajangmyeon*, vegetable *pajeon* or *dotorimuk*. But check before you order that these meals don't have any meat, seafood or fish as fragments are sometimes used to add flavour. Some *gimbap* is vegetarian or ask for it without ham (or egg). If all else fails you can eat a meal of rice and vegetable side dishes.

## DRINKS

Usually every diner is presented with good old H<sub>2</sub>O (*mul*), bottled or filtered, when they first arrive. Beer, *soju* (the local firewater) and variously flavoured rice wines are often drunk with meals.

Medicinal tea may be served after the meal. *Nokcha* (green tea) is grown in the southern provinces. Other teas not made from the tea plant include *boricha* (barley tea), *insamcha* (ginseng tea), *omijacha* (berry tea) and *yujacha* (citron tea). For a country with a tea tradition, Korea has taken to coffee in a big way. Decaf drinkers may be out of luck but it never hurts to ask.

Cans of soft drinks include unique Korean choices such as *sikhye*, rice punch with grains of rice inside, and a grape juice that contains whole grapes. Health tonics, available in shops and pharmacies, are made with fibre blends, ginseng and other medicinal herbs, and are supposed to boost your virility, vitamin level and alertness, or cure (or prevent) a hangover.

For something alcoholic, popular Korean lager-like beer (*maekju*) brands are Cass, Hite and O.B. Imported bottled beers are widely available, and new microbreweries have widened the choice still further.

*Soju*, with an alcohol content over 20%, is often likened to vodka in that it's clear, nearly flavourless, has a kick and is cheap to produce. It comes in all sorts of flavours including lemon.

*Makgeolli* and *dongdongju* are fermented from rice and have a cloudy appearance. They taste something like fermented *lassi*. With a lower alcohol content than *soju*, they used to be popular with peasants and slaves, and were served in a kettle and drunk from bowls.

In recent years imported wine has caught on in a big way and can be found in Italian restaurants as well as department and convenience stores.

Seoulites consider it unhealthy to drink on an empty stomach, so most bars serve bar snacks (*anju*) such as nuts, dried squid, rice crackers or barbecued chicken. Some nightclubs serve large platters of *anju*, but they can cost an arm and a leg, and are a kind of cover charge.

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## EAT YOUR WORDS USEFUL WORDS & PHRASES

We'd like nonsmoking/smoking, please.

*geumyeon seogeuro/heupyeon seogeuro juseyo*

금연석으로/흡연석으로 주세요

Do you have an English menu?

*yeong-eoro doen menyu isseoyo?*

영어로 된 메뉴 있어요?

Do you have seating with tables and chairs?

*teibeul isseoyo?*

테이블 있어요?

Is this dish spicy?

*i eumsik maewoyo?*

이 음식 매워요?

Could you recommend something?

*mwo chucheonhae jusillaeyo?*

뭐 추천해 주실래요?

Excuse me! (please come here)

*yeogiyjo!*

여기요!

Water, please.

*mul juseyo*

물 주세요

The bill/check, please.

*gyeansseo juseyo*

계산서 주세요

Bon appetit.

*masitge deuseyo*

맛있게 드세요

It was delicious.

*masisseosseoyo*

맛있었어요

I don't eat meat.

*jeon gogireul anmeogeoyo*

전 고기를 안 먹어요

I can't eat dairy products.

*jeon yujepumeul anmeogeoyo*

전 유제품을 안 먹어요

Do you have any vegetarian dishes?

*gogi andeureogan eumsik isseoyo?*

고기 안 들어간 음식 있어요?

Does it contain eggs?

*gyerani deureogayo?*

계란이 들어가요?

I'm allergic to (peanuts).

*jeon (ttangkong)e allereugiga isseoyo*

전 (땅콩)에 알레르기가 있어요

## MENU DECODER

### Chinese Dishes

*bokkeumbap*

*jajangmyeon/jjangmyeon*

*tangsuyuk*

볶음밥  
자장면/짜장면  
탕수육

fried rice  
noodles in black bean sauce  
sweet and sour pork

### Fish & Seafood

*chobap*

*gwang-eohoe*

*jang-eogui*

초밥  
광어회  
장어구이

raw fish on rice  
raw halibut  
grilled eel



boiled rice with steamed barley  
*bimbap* in stone hotpot  
hotpot rice  
hotpot rice and lettuce wraps  
*bimbap* made with mountain vegetables  
meat, fish and vegetables in broth cooked at your table  
assorted ingredients with rice and wraps

fish-shaped cake with red-bean filling  
pitta bread with sweet filling  
rice cake  
pressed rice cakes and vegetables in a spicy sauce

beef-rib soup  
meaty bones and potato soup  
spicy assorted seafood soup  
ox tail soup  
soup with meat-filled dumplings  
duck soup  
ginseng chicken soup  
beef and rice soup

ham-and-scrap stew  
soybean paste stew  
tofu stew  
octopus hotpot  
spicy uncurdled tofu stew

mung bean pancake  
pork cutlet with rice and salad (Japanese *tonkatsu*)  
acorn jelly  
eight snacks and wraps  
Korean-style banquet  
rice porridge  
filled dumplings  
dumpling soup with side dishes  
omelette with rice  
green onion pancake  
banquet of meat, seafood and vegetables  
DIY beef and vegetable casserole  
countryside-style meal  
budget-priced banquet  
dough flakes in shellfish broth  
noodle and vegetable sausage  
uncurdled tofu  
seafood and vegetables fried in batter  
large steamed dumplings

보리밥  
돌솥비빔밥  
돌솥밥  
돌쌈밥  
산채비빔밥  
신선로

쌈밥

붕어빵  
훈떡  
떡  
떡볶이

갈비탕  
감자탕  
해물탕  
꼬리곰탕  
만두국  
오리탕  
삼계탕  
설렁탕

부대찌개  
된장찌개  
두부찌개  
낙지전골  
순두부찌개

빈대떡  
돈까스  
도토리묵  
구절판  
한정식  
죽  
만두  
만두국정식  
오므라이스  
파전  
산차림  
샤브샤브  
시골밥상  
식사  
수제비  
순대  
순두부  
튀김  
왕만두

*boribap*  
*dolsot bibimbap*  
*dolsotbap*  
*dolssambap*  
*sanchae bibimbap*  
*sinseollo*

*ssambap*

## Snacks

*bung-eoppang*  
*hotteok*  
*tteok*  
*tteokbokki*

## Soups

*galbitang*  
*gamjatang*  
*haemultang*  
*kkorigamtang*  
*manduguk*  
*oritang*  
*samgyetang*  
*seolleongtang*

## Stews

*budae jjigae*  
*doenjang jjigae*  
*dubu jjigae*  
*nakji jeon-gol*  
*sundubu jjigae*

## Other

*bindaetteok*  
*donkkaseu*  
*dotorimuk*  
*gujeolpan*  
*hanjeongsik*  
*juk*  
*mandu*  
*manduguk jeongsik*  
*omeuraiseu*  
*pajeon*  
*sangcharim*  
*shabu shabu*  
*sigol bapsang*  
*siksa*  
*sujebi*  
*sundae*  
*sundubu*  
*twigim*  
*wangmandu*

rice porridge with abalone  
razor clam  
steamed blue crab  
mixed raw fish platter  
octopus  
processed seafood cakes in broth  
stuffed squid  
grilled fish  
grilled prawns  
grilled mackerel  
raw fish

*tuna gimhap*  
assorted *gimbap*  
triangular *gimbap*

cabbage *kimchi*; the spicy classic version  
cubed radish *kimchi*  
cold *kimchi* soup

barbecued beef slices and lettuce wrap  
*bulgogi* with side dishes  
pan-fried chicken  
spicy grilled chicken on skewers  
barbecued pork ribs  
beef ribs  
spicy chicken pieces with noodles  
steamed pork hocks  
barbecued pork  
large minced patty  
barbecued bacon-type pork  
roasted chicken

cold buckwheat noodles with vegetables, meat  
and sauce  
noodles with vegetables, meat and sauce  
stir-fried noodles and vegetables  
thick handmade noodles in broth  
noodles in cold soy milk soup  
buckwheat noodles with vegetables  
buckwheat noodles in cold broth  
instant noodle soup  
thick white noodle broth

boiled rice  
rice topped with egg, meat, vegetables and sauce

전복죽  
키조개  
꽃게찜  
모듬회  
낙지  
오징어  
오징어순대  
생선구이  
새우구이  
삼치구이  
우럭

참치김밥  
모듬김밥  
삼각김밥

배추김치  
깍두기  
롤김치

불고기  
불고기정식  
닭갈비  
닭꼬치  
돼지갈비  
갈비  
찜닭  
족발  
목살 소금구이  
너비아니  
삼겹살  
통닭구이

비빔냉면  
비빔국수  
잡채  
칼국수  
콩국수  
막국수  
물냉면  
라면  
우동

밥  
비빔밥

*jeonbok-juk*  
*kijogae*  
*kkotge-jjim*  
*modeumhoe*  
*nakji*  
*odeng*  
*ojing-eo sundae*  
*saengseon-gui*  
*saengui*  
*samchigui*  
*ureak*

## Gimbap 김밥

*chamchi gimhap*  
*modeum gimhap*  
*samgak gimhap*

## Kimchi 김치

*baechu kimchi*  
*kkakdugi*  
*mulkimchi*

i

## Meat Dishes

*bulgogi*  
*bulgogi jeongsik*  
*dakgalbi*  
*dakkochi*  
*dwaeji galbi*  
*galbi*  
*jjimdak*  
*jokbal*  
*moksal sogeumgui*  
*neobiani*  
*samgyeopsal*  
*tongdakgui*

## Noodles

*bibim naengmyeon*  
  
*bibimguksu*  
*japchae*  
*kalguksu*  
*kongguksu*  
*makguksu*  
*mul naengmyeon*  
*ramyeon*  
*udong*

## Rice Dishes

*bap*  
*bibimbap*

**Drinks****NONALCOHOLIC**

*cha*  
*daechucha*  
*hongcha*  
*juseu*  
*keopi*  
*kolla*  
*mukapein keopi*  
*mul*  
*nokcha*  
*omijacha*  
*saenggang cha*  
*saengsu*  
*seoltang neo-eoseo/ppaego*  
*sikhye*  
*ssanghwacha*  
*sujeonggwa*  
*sungnyung*  
*uyu*  
*uyu neo-eoseo/ppaego*  
*yujacha*

차  
 대추차  
 홍차  
 주스  
 커피  
 콜라  
 무카페인 커피  
 물  
 녹차  
 오미자차  
 생강차  
 생수  
 설탕 넣어서/빼고  
 식혜  
 쌍화차  
 수정과  
 송봉  
 우유  
 우유 넣어서/빼고  
 유자차

tea  
 jujube (red date) tea  
 black tea  
 juice  
 coffee  
 cola  
 decaffeinated coffee  
 water  
 green tea  
 berry tea  
 ginger tea  
 mineral spring water  
 with/without sugar  
 rice punch  
 herb tonic tea  
 cinnamon/ginger punch  
 burnt-rice tea  
 milk  
 with/without milk  
 citron tea

**ALCOHOLIC**

*dongdongju*  
*insamju*  
*maekju*  
*makgeolli*  
*sansachun*  
*soju*

동동주  
 인삼주  
 맥주  
 막걸리  
 산사춘  
 소주

fermented rice wine  
 ginseng liqueur  
 beer  
 unstrained rice wine  
 rice wine  
 vodka-like drink

# History ■

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## A CITY OF KINGS & NOBLES

It was King Taejo, founder of the Joseon dynasty, who moved Korea's government to the valley of Hanyang (later to become Seoul) in 1394. The valley was already known to be an auspicious location, with the Han River supplying Yin force and access to the sea, and the Pukhan mountain range supplying Yang energy and protection from the north. In the 6th century, the ancient Shilla kingdom had put an outpost here, near the boundary with the northern state of Goguryeo. Later, the kingdom of Goryeo had maintained a regional capital in the valley. Taejo's advisors needed a site for the new capital that possessed maximum potential for strong and effective rule. They considered several, but none could match Hanyang, the Yang side of the Han River.

For his palace, King Taejo used the principles of Chinese geomancy, or feng shui (*pungsu* in Korean), to find the focal point of the valley's Yang potential. He chose the foot of Bugak Mountain, a spot protected on the east by the dragon force along the ridge of Naktasan and on the west by the tiger force in Inwangsan Mountain. From this spot, Seoul's central axis – the main artery of its power then, as now – ran southward down the broad avenue now known as Sejong Blvd to Namsan (South Mountain), on the valley's opposite side. The city's walls followed these natural barriers, their heights marking the distances between the city's eight gates. In the heart of town, at what is now the Jonggak intersection, a great bronze bell was struck each morning and evening to signal the opening and closing of the city's gates. Beyond, in the mountains and on the coast, fortresses watched over the approaches to the city.

King Taejo named his palace Gyeongbokgung (Palace of Shining Happiness). The reference was to a line in the Chinese *Book of Songs*: 'May the king forever enjoy shining happiness in abundance!' For 200 years it stood as home to a succession of 14 dynastic rulers. Of these, the greatest was King Sejong (1418–50), a scholar-king of unmatched abilities who sponsored many cultural projects, consolidated border defences, and served as a model of Confucian probity. At his direction, court scholars devised the phonetic *hangeul* alphabet, a simple system of writing the Korean language that made it possible for anyone to learn to read. Though it took a while to catch on, King Sejong's alphabet is one reason why Korea enjoys universal literacy today. Present generations have acknowledged their debt to him by attaching his name to Seoul's main street, a university, a luxury hotel, and numerous other places and institutions.

The fortunes of Gyeongbokgung, however, were not always happy. In 1592 the Japanese warlord Hideyoshi invaded Korea on a quest to establish his hegemony on the mainland. The invading armies headed for Seoul and took the city in an orgy of fire and pillage. By the time they arrived, King Seonjo (1567–1608) was far from the palace, heading for the Manchurian border. No-one knows exactly who burned the Palace of Shining Happiness during the fighting. Some say it was the invaders; some say it was slaves who wanted to destroy the government's status records; others say that Seoul's own citizens put it to the torch to show their anger at having been left behind.

The hero of the war with Japan was a Korean admiral named Yi Sun-sin, whose statue stands on Sejong Blvd at the Gwanghwamun intersection, the city's main crossroads. While commanding Korean naval defences on the south coast, Admiral Yi outfitted quick, small boats with metal canopies over the decks to protect them from Japanese fire arrows. He used these to trick, lure, trap, ram, shoot and sink so many Japanese supply boats that he did decisive damage to Hideyoshi's campaign on the peninsula. The canopies inspired

the term *geobukseon* (turtle boats) for Admiral Yi's fleet; and though he lost his own life in the Battle of Hansan Island, Yi Sun-sin is remembered still as Korea's greatest warrior.

After the Imjin War, as Koreans call Hideyoshi's failed campaign, Korea's kings reigned in Changdeokgung (Palace of Illustrious Virtue). It was built to the east, and was designed as the residential compound of the crown prince.

Gyeongbokgung was not rebuilt until the 1860s, when the Prince Regent Daewongun nearly bankrupted the treasury by restoring it for his son, King Gojong (1864–1907). Gojong's reign saw the coming of the Japanese, the opening of contacts with the West, and a maelstrom of political conflict that culminated in Korea's subjection to Japan, first as a protectorate and then as a colony. Along the way Gojong lost his consort, Queen Min, who was assassinated by Japanese agents in 1895. No longer safe at Gyeongbokgung, he fled to the diplomatic district where Westerners could offer him quick sanctuary if he needed it; he eventually abdicated in 1907. His son, Emperor Sunjong, a hapless tool in the hands of Japanese 'advisors', oversaw the cession of Korea to Japan in 1910.

Old Seoul was the capital of a nation of villages spread across provinces whose main towns were centres for local judges and tax officials as well as regional farmers markets. Whatever its history, whether auspicious or tragic, Seoul was always Korea's cultural headquarters, not only the home of the royal family and the official *yangban* (aristocrat) class that supported the state and its monarch, but also the centre of Korea's commerce and communications and the pinnacle of its Confucian education system. Korean proverbs attest to the fact that anyone with any ambition needed to get to Seoul by all means. 'Even if you have to crawl on your knees, get yourself to Seoul!' was one. 'Send your ox to market but send your son to Seoul,' was another, as true today as it was in the days of King Sejong.

## SEOUL IN MODERN TIMES

Seoul's modern history is a story of revolutionary change. The 20th century began with Korea's subjection to Imperial Japan. Gyeongbokgung, abandoned in the aftermath of Queen Min's murder, was completely stripped of its dignity. The Japanese removed its graceful gate and razed everything that stood in the front third of the palace grounds to make way for a huge Western-style colonial headquarters. Built in the shape of the character for 'sun', the great stone building with its two grand courtyards completely eclipsed the Korean throne hall, reducing what was left of Gyeongbokgung to a quaint Korean garden in the rear. To the south, across the valley on Namsan, a Shinto shrine for the worship of Japan's national deities was built. Downtown, neighbourhoods were slashed through to make new streets. Royal properties were hard hit. In one case the shrine complex memorialising Joseon's 27 kings was severed from the palace grounds by a new road. Not far away, another palace was turned into a zoo.

Koreans got their city back with the Allied victory in 1945, but there were even greater trials to come. The Allied decision to divide Korea in 1945 soon led to the creation of rival republics – Communist-backed in the north and US-backed in the south. Their two armies skirmished and then went to war, beginning with the North Korean leader Kim II Sung's invasion of the south on 25 June 1950.

Seoul's sudden fall to the North Koreans caught the populace by surprise and sent the government of President Syngman Rhee fleeing southward, destroying the only Han River highway bridge and abandoning the remaining population to face the Communists. During their 90-day occupation of the city, the Communists arrested and shot many who had supported the Rhee government. More refugees fled the terror, adding to the chaos further south.

In September 1950, UN forces led by US and South Korean troops mounted a counter-attack. After an amphibious landing at the port of Incheon, they fought their way into

### TIMELINE AD 569

Kingdom of Shilla establishes control over settlements in the Seoul area

### 1394

Hanyang (Seoul) chosen as the capital of the new kingdom of Joseon

### 1592

Seoul falls to invading Japanese army during the Imjin War; Gyeongbokgung burned

### 1910

Japan annexes Korea

supply routes) rather than as arteries for commerce or public transportation. Economic development took a back seat to national defence, and much of the aid that came from the outside world was for military projects.

As Seoul's population slowly returned to pick up the pieces, they found little to give them hope. Misery, hunger, disease and crime were elements of daily life for hundreds of thousands. On the slopes of Namsan a wretched village called Haebang-chon (Liberation Town) housed tens of thousands of war refugees, widows and beggars. Prostitutes lined up at the gates of the Yongsan military bases in a desperate effort to earn a few dollars. 'Slicky-boys' stole and a black market flourished. Unemployment sapped morale and diseases weakened even working people. Good education was so hard to get that Koreans compared college admission to 'plucking a star out of the sky'.

Desperate times begat every imaginable form of corruption. The Rhee regime, never democratic, rigged its own reelection several times until it was overthrown by a popular rebellion led by unarmed students. On 19 April 1960, the day of reckoning, thousands of high schoolers and collegians filled the streets of downtown Seoul and marched on Rhee's residence. As they advanced up Hyoja-ro (Filial Piety St) beside Gyeongbokgung, the police opened fire. By dusk nearly 200 people – both students and police – had been killed. Rhee's right-hand man committed suicide, as did his family. Rhee himself resigned a few days later and was spirited away to exile in Hawaii by the US Air Force.

During the year of democratic experimentation that followed Rhee's ouster, corruption and crime worsened while inflation raged. Student associations, emboldened by their eviction of Syngman Rhee, proposed solving the reunification problem by marching north to embrace their counterparts in North Korea. South Korean conservatives – property owners, anti-Communist refugees from the north, and the military – began fearing for their own future. On the morning of 16 May 1961, Seoulites awoke to news that army units had seized the main intersections of the city. Seoul fell under direct military rule and the civilian government was removed from power.

The coup leader, General Park Chung-hee, promised military efficiency to restore order. He proclaimed his intention to create a 'new Korean man', meaning one that was honest, hard-working and sacrificially devoted to the community. His junta went to work defining national goals and finding ways to achieve them. In some cases they followed patterns set by Imperial Japan, such as fostering big businesses (known in Japanese as *zaibatsu*) as engines of growth. Conglomerates such as Hyundai and Samsung were encouraged to emulate Japan's prewar *zaibatsu* (like Mitsubishi), using the same word, *jaebeol*, in Korean. The government put strict controls on workers rights and wages. General Park 'retired' from the army and ran for president, backed by a political party, an administration to do the party's bidding, and an internal police system that included a 'Central Intelligence Agency' capable of instilling terror in any aspect of the state system.

Leadership, efficiency and fear combined to deliver impressive results. The economy started to grow, and Korea's main patron, the US, which had been wary of Park at first, soon came around. US support for Park's programme was clearly visible in the twin buildings built largely by American aid funds on Seoul's Sejong Blvd – one for Park's Economic Planning Board, the other for the US Embassy.

By Park's third presidential term in the mid-1970s, Seoul was well on its way to becoming a major world city. Ambitious mayors, including one famously known as 'Bulldozer Kim', launched public works and expanded housing in the form of apartment towers to replace the shantytowns that had blighted the city since the war. The city spread in all directions, vaulting hills and even mountains and jumping the Han River to establish vast new bedroom districts of apartment buildings that seemed to line up like dominoes as far as the eye could see. Expressways and ring roads connected these communities. A network of subway trains was started, which has since grown to eight lines built over a quarter of a century (and more are under construction), carrying more than eight million people in and out of the city each day.

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IN PICK & MIX

Seoul from the west and south. During days of bloody battles, whole city districts were bombed and burned in the effort to dislodge Kim II Sung's Korean People's Army. When at last the UN forces succeeded in reclaiming the city for Syngman Rhee, much of it lay in smouldering ruins.

In January 1951 the Chinese People's Volunteers, who had entered the war and routed the UN forces up north, captured Seoul a second time for the Communist side. This time the invaders found a nearly empty city. Even after the UN regained control in March 1951, only a fraction of Seoul's population returned during the two years of war that raged along the battlefield until the armistice in July 1953. During that time Seoul's population lived with relatives in villages and in miserable camps in Busan and other safer cities.

The end of the monarchy, Japanese rule, and the ordeal of the Korean War completely distorted Korea's passage from a traditional Confucian agrarian society to a nation with modern laws and institutions. Japan exploited Korea's resources while keeping tight control over the people. Opportunities for Koreans remained scarce. There were schools, but only 20% of Koreans ever got to start elementary school. Western missionaries made up part of the shortfall with a network of schools including colleges such as Ewha and Yonhi (now Yonsei), but these were not enough to enable Koreans to rise above second-class citizenship in their own land.

## THE LONG ROAD BACK

The Korean War created conditions for dictatorships in both the North and the South. In the city of Seoul, militarisation was obvious in the omnipresence of military personnel, vehicles, buildings and bases, both Korean and Allied, mostly American. The US took over the former Japanese army headquarters in the southern suburb of Yongsan and transformed it into their own headquarters, continuing to occupy the base even as the city spread around it and grew far to the south. Major roads and highways were constructed as MSRs (military

1945

Korea liberated from Japanese rule

1948

Republic of Korea founded; city officially named Seoul

1950

North Korean invasion; Communist occupation of Seoul (June–September)

1960–61

Revolutionaries oust President Syngman Rhee and military junta installed under General Park Chung-hee

## COMING INTO ITS OWN

Military rule continued after General Park's assassination in 1979, existing in various forms until 1993. Economic growth continued, as two generations of Koreans worked hard and sacrificed for the future. By the 1980s Koreans were hungry for notice and respect. Their products – textiles, shoes, electronics, and small cars and trucks – gained ground in the world market and Korea began showing signs of becoming wealthy. In the middle of the Han River, a large sandbar was transformed into a major business district (dubbed Seoul's Manhattan). More than 20 bridges were built across the Han, with a new one every year or two. The city's population had grown from 300,000 in 1953 to more than 11 million in 1990.

World sports gave Seoul its chance to showcase what the Korean people had accomplished since the war. The Asian Games came first, in 1986. Next came the 1988 Olympic Summer Games, for which the city built an impressive Olympic Park. In preparation, the Han River underwent a major facelift, with clean water and parks on both sides and an Olympic Expressway to whisk visitors from the airport to the stadiums. The games were a triumph for Korea, not least because they brought teams from Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China, creating contacts that blossomed before long into valuable trade and diplomatic relations.

Seoul's best coming-out party was the celebration that came with the 2002 FIFA World Cup championships, which Korea cohosted with Japan. Seoul built a magnificent stadium beside the Han River. World Cup mania gripped the city as soccer fans came from around the world. The Korean national team, entitled as hosts to one of the 16 slots in the first-round elimination, surprised everyone by advancing to the quarterfinals. 'Korea Team Fighting!' was the chant. Korean fans filled the stands wearing the team T-shirts emblazoned with 'Be the Reds!' in English. As the Korean team won once, twice, and then a third time, the country rang with the victory song 'Oh Pilsung (Victory to) Korea!' After a close victory over Spain, a million soccer fans massed in Seoul's City Hall Square for a rock concert and a wild celebration. It didn't matter that Korea was defeated by Germany in the semifinals. No Asian team had ever done what the Koreans did in the World Cup. The world had come to Korea and seen them triumphant. The effort, at long last, seemed worth it.

## TRACING HISTORY IN SEOUL'S NEIGHBOURHOODS

The World Cup celebration has passed and Koreans have long since gotten back to work. But as they build their future, working out their differences with North Korea and adjusting to the emerging order in East Asia, the past still lingers on in the streets and neighbourhoods of Seoul. In Pukchon (Northtown), the neighbourhood between Gyeongbokgung and Changdeokgung, remain the traditional mansions, called *hanok*, of the Joseon-era noble families. Descendants of these *yangban* still live here, and there is hardly a corner, street or alley in the area that is not associated with a famous story from centuries past.

The Japanese colonial headquarters was torn down in the 1990s, but in the southern wards of the old city there are still relics of the Japanese colonial period. Along Namdaemun-no (South Gate St), which was the main thoroughfare of occupied Seoul, colonial landmarks are still in use: the original Mitsukoshi and Chojiya department stores are now the Shinsegae and the Midopa. The old Bank of Chosen is now the Bank of Korea. And the Japantown shopping districts of Meiji-machi and Honmachi are now Myeong-dong and Chungmuro.

Between these older districts, however, new Seoul is all about the future. From the Gwanghwamun crossing east along Jongno, and from City Hall Plaza east along Euljiro, rise the towers of Korea as a world economic power. These are still Seoul's most prestigious business addresses. Through the heart of this district, the clearing of a blighted expressway strip has enabled the city to uncover the Cheonggye stream that drains the valley of Seoul. Along its banks a river walk has been constructed. Decorative bridges have been built to span it. The beautification of the stream district marks a major achievement in environmental quality for Seoul's people, who are seeing their 'Clear Clean Stream' become one of the city's best attractions.

1988

Seoul hosts the Olympic Summer Games

2002

Korea cohosts the FIFA World Cup; Korean team does well and Seoul celebrates

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