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Entertainment

Seoulites of all ages love going out and socialising, whether it's with classmates, work colleagues, friends or dates, so entertainment areas are humming every night of the week until late. On Friday and Saturday the revels continue all night. The usual thing is to choose a neighbourhood, eat and drink, then go to a live music show or sing in a *noraebang* (karaoke room), then drink some more, and finally hit a dance club until the subway system starts up again at 5.30am. Student haunts like Hongik, Sinchon and Daehangno are swarming with bars, live music venues, *noraebang*, DVD *bang* (a room where you can watch DVDs) and dance clubs. The expat Itaewon area has a party atmosphere on Friday and Saturday nights.

THEATRE, DANCE & CASINOS

Plenty of theatres present traditional music, dance and drama, while modern local musicals like *Nanta*, *Tokebi Storm* and *Taekwon* can be enjoyed by foreigners since there are few or no words. Western-style opera, ballet, modern dance and musicals are regularly staged. The Kim Yun-gyu dance company melds traditional and modern styles.

Daehangno (Map p208) is home to a lively drama scene with 60 small theatres. Ticket prices are a reasonable W11,000 to W25,000, but everything is in Korean. The **discount theatre ticket booth** (Map p208; ☎ 1pm-7.30pm Tue-Sun), behind the open-air stage in Marronnier Park, sells W12,000 theatre tickets for W7000, but you need ID and you may have to queue.

Top local bands and famous groups from Western countries often perform at **Jamsil Sports Complex** (Map pp214-15). Ticket prices generally range from W40,000 to W70,000.

CHONGDONG THEATRE Map pp206-7

☎ 751 1500; www.chongdong.com; ☎ 8pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 2

This well-regarded and well-established theatre is centrally located and puts on 1½-hour performances of traditional music, singing and dancing. The shows are targeted at foreign visitors and English subtitles appear on a screen. After the show you can take photographs of the performers in their traditional clothing. The ticket office opens at 7pm. Tickets cost W30,000 to W40,000 with discounts for students.

TOP FIVE BARS

- Top sports bar: Time Out Sports Bar (p104)
- Top bartender: Bar Bliss (p104)
- Top dark-beer bar: Santana (p105)
- Top garden bar: 360@ (p105)
- Top loud rock-music bar: Woodstock (p106)

DONGSOONG ARTS CENTRE Map p208

☎ 7413391; subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 1
This complex has a theatre that puts on modern drama (all in Korean) and a cinema that shows foreign festival-style movies from all around the world, including ones on North Korea.

HAKCHON GREEN THEATRE Map p208

☎ 763 8233; www.hakchon.co.kr; tickets adult/student W28,000/22,000; subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 2

The smash-hit rock musical *Line 1* takes a satirical look at Seoul – the 'Ladies of Gangnam' song and dance is a memorable highlight. The nearly three-hour show has English subtitles on a screen on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

KAYAGUM THEATRE Map pp198-9

☎ 455 5000; Sheraton Grande Walkerhill Hotel; show/show plus dinner W60,000/99,000; ☎ 4.30-7pm, 7.30-10pm Thu-Tue; subway Line 5 to Gwangnaru, Exit 2

These entertaining and lavish 1½-hour shows include traditional Korean music and dance followed by a glitzy Western/Asian cabaret revue. The hotel theatre is over 1km from the subway, so take the hotel shuttle bus or a taxi.

KOREA HOUSE Map pp206-7

☎ 2266 9101; www.koreahouse.or.kr; tickets W29,000; subway Line 3 or 4 to Chungmuro, Exit 3
This intimate 150-seat theatre stages one-hour performances after their fine dinners (p92). Put on by a large troupe of top musicians and dancers, the shows have some commentary in English on a screen. Show items include elegant court dances, *pansori* (Korean opera), a crowd-pleasing fan dance, a spiritual shamanist dance, and female drummers standing up and acrobatically banging on three drums each. The finale is *samullori* (traditional farmers' dance), with swirling dancers trying to outdo each other as they dance to fast and furious percussion rhythms.

MARRONNIER PARK Map p208

Subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 2
This free performance area in Daehangno usually has something happening on warm weekend afternoons. Student artists draw portraits in one corner while high-school rock bands crank it up on the glass-roofed outdoor stage, and a *samullori* troupe bang their drums and gongs while dancing around under the chestnut trees. 'Mr Guitar', a musician and comedian, regularly performs in front of a large and appreciative audience.

MUNYE THEATRE Map p208

Subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 2
This large red-brick theatre in Daehangno puts on a varied dance-oriented programme of events and shows as well as hosting the annual Modern Dance Festival (p102). Posters around Daehangno advertise what's on.

TOP SPOTS FOR ROMANCE

- Listen to live jazz over cocktails in **Top Cloud Restaurant & Bar** (p90) with a million flickering lights spread out below you. Pedal a tandem bicycle along the **Han River** (p115) as the sun sets.
- Sip fruit teas together in the tiny but incredibly atmospheric **Yetchatjip** teashop (p107), with little birds flying around.
- Share a bottle of wine while cosily watching a movie at the exclusive Charlotte Hall in **Lotte Cinema** (p103).
- Dance to irresistible Latin rhythms at **Bahia** (p111) or **Macondo** (p111) in Hongik.

NANTA THEATRE Map pp202-3

☎ 1588 7890; tickets W20,000-60,000; ☎ shows 4pm & 8pm Mon-Sat, 3pm & 6pm Sun; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 2
Set in a kitchen, this long-running, high-energy show mixes varied ingredients – magic, circus tricks, drumming with kitchen utensils, comedy, dance, martial arts and audience participation – to produce a clever and enjoyable musical pantomime.

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR KOREAN TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ARTS

Map pp198-9

☎ 580 3300; www.ncktpa.go.kr; subway Line 3 to Nambu Bus Terminal, Exit 5

Next door to the Seoul Arts Centre, the **Yeokdang theatre** (☎ 580 3300; tickets W8000 and W10,000) puts on a programme by top performers every Saturday from March to December at 5pm. The 1½-hour show is a bargain and usually contains eight items including court dances, folk songs, *pansori* and drumming. A three-day festival is held at the end of October.

Between early May and early December, at the smaller **Umyeondang theatre**, younger performers put on a similar show every Thursday (same ticket prices). Other traditional performances are held here too. Take the shuttle bus (W500) from the subway exit or walk (15 minutes).

NATIONAL THEATRE Map pp206-7

☎ 2274 3507; www.ntok.go.kr; subway Line 3 Dongguk University, Exit 6

On Namsan, this complex is home to the national drama, national *changgeuk* (Korean opera), national orchestra and national dance companies. Venues include the main hall and outdoor stages where free concerts and movies are held in summer. It's a 15-minute walk from the subway exit or take the yellow bus No 2 (W500, every 10 minutes) from the bus stop just behind Exit 6.

SEENSEE MUSICAL THEATRE Map p208

☎ 745 1987; tickets W30,000; subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 2

This theatre specialises in musicals that can be enjoyable even if you can't understand Korean (or take a Korean-speaking friend along with you). Some shows are adaptations of Western musicals, while others are home-grown.

SEJONG CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Map pp202-3
☎ 399 1111; Sejongno; subway Line 5 to Gwanghwamun, Exit 1

Centrally located, this newly renovated centre is a leading arts complex that puts on major drama, music and art shows, including an annual three-day international drum festival in early October. It has a grand hall, small theatre and three art galleries.

SEOUL ARTS CENTRE Map pp198-9
☎ 580 1300; www.sac.or.kr; subway Line 3 to Nambu Bus Terminal, Exit 5

This sprawling arts complex has a circular opera house, with a roof shaped like a Korean nobleman's hat, which also houses the 700-seat Towal Theatre and the smaller Jayu Theatre. The national ballet and opera companies are based here. Music House consists of a large concert hall and a smaller recital hall and is home to the national choir, the Korea and Seoul symphony orchestras and the Seoul performing arts company.

The arts centre is 600m from the subway exit – walk straight on from the subway exit and turn left at the end of the bus terminal, or take the frequent shuttle bus (W500).

SEOUL NORIMADANG Map pp214-15

☎ 410 3168; admission free; ☎ shows 3pm & 4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct; subway Line 2 or 8 to Jamsil, Exit 3 This covered outdoor arena with seats hosts entertaining traditional music and dance performances that are enjoyed by the mainly elderly local audience who may get up and start dancing. If you are in Lotte World walk through Baby World and go up the stairs for a short cut to the lakeside venue.

SHERATON GRANDE WALKERHILL CASINO Map pp198-9

☎ 456 2121; ☎ 24hr; subway Line 5 to Gwangnaru, Exit 2

This casino offers the usual ways of losing money – one-armed bandits, roulette, poker, blackjack, baccarat, big wheel and tai-sa. Snacks are free, and free drinks can be ordered at the gaming tables. Minimum bets are W2500 or W5000. There is no dress code and Korean nationals are not allowed inside.

A second casino is opening in May 2006 at the Millennium Hilton Hotel. Called Seven Luck, it will be open 24 hours.

FESTIVALS

Seoul hosts a festival almost every week (p8). A well-established, two-week international **Modern Dance Festival** (www.modafe.org) is held every spring. It's based at Munye Theatre in Daehangno (Map p208). The two-week **Seoul Fringe Festival** takes over the student area in Hongik in late August with art, dance, drama and street performances. The National Theatre (Map pp206–7) hosts a 10-day **Traditional Dance Festival** in late August, while the three-week **Seoul International Dance Festival** (www.sidance.org) in October is held mainly at the Seoul Arts Centre.

TOKEBI STORM THEATRE Map pp202-3

☎ 739 8288; tickets W20,000-80,000; ☎ shows 8pm Tue-Sat, 3pm & 6pm Sun; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 2

Tokebi Storm is an energetic and fun drumming show with a goblin theme (every culture seems to have its goblins), which is all-action and mime with no dialogue, so will appeal to a global audience.

CINEMAS

Luxurious new multiplex cinemas with large screens and the latest sound equipment are opening all round Seoul. Films are usually shown from 11am to 11pm. English-language films are shown in cinemas with their original soundtrack and Korean subtitles. Unfortunately Korean-language movies shown in cinemas don't have English subtitles, but you can see them in a DVD *bang* (see p103) with English subtitles. Cinema and DVD *bang* tickets usually cost W7000.

CINE CUBE Map pp202-3

☎ 2002 7770; tickets W7000; ☎ 10am-11pm; subway Line 5 to Gwanghwamun, Exit 6

This well-respected art cinema near Deoksugung screens international festival films, which are usually shown in their original language with Korean subtitles. Interest in world cinema is growing, especially amongst young Seoulites.

COEX MALL MEGABOX Map pp214-15

☎ 6002 1200; tickets W7000; ☎ 9am-midnight A mega popular 17-screen multiplex cinema with over 4000 seats that screens some films at midnight, when most other

cinemas have closed for the night. Queues can build up at busy times.

KOREA FILM ARCHIVES Map pp198-9

Seoul Arts Centre; ☎ 521 3147; www.koreafilm.or.kr; admission free; subway Line 3 to Nambu Bus Terminal, Exit 5

The archives screens classic Korean films with English subtitles. The seasonal programmes provide a rare opportunity to see films that are not normally shown.

LOTTE CINEMA Map pp214-15

☎ 1544 8855; tickets W7000; ☎ 11am-11pm; subway Line 2 to Euljiro 1-ga, Exit 8

This new multiplex has five state-of-the-art cinemas plus **Charlotte Hall** (Mon-Fri W25,000, Sat & Sun W30,000), a luxury cinema with 34 reclining plush red armchairs where you can sip beer (W4000), wine (W3000) or a soft drink (free).

MMC CHEONGDAEMUN MULTIPLEX

Map pp200-1

☎ 2628 9111; tickets W7000; ☎ 24hr Another mecca for film goers, this one is in Dongdaemun market and shows films 24 hours a day.

DVD BANG

A DVD *bang* is the best place to see Korean movies, as they can be shown with English subtitles. See p23 for reviews of some excellent Korean films. DVD *bang* are all similar: you watch the film sitting on a comfortable sofa in your own private room. The usual cost is around W7000 per person (the same as a cinema ticket) but can be cheaper in student areas. They're popular with dating couples and most are open all night.

CINE CASTLE DVD Map p208

☎ 741 1580; tickets W6000; ☎ 12.30pm-2am; subway Line 4 to Hyeheha, Exit 2

Watch DVDs on a big screen, sitting on a sofa in your own little room up on the 4th floor. There is no need to book, just turn up.

DVD CINETIQUE Map p211

☎ 5418005; Rodeo St; s/d W8000/13,000; ☎ 24hr; subway Line 3 to Apgujeong, Exit 6

Up on the 3rd floor is this typical DVD *bang*, which is open all night and is popular with couples.

NORAEBANG

Seoul has thousands of *noraebang*, where friends and work colleagues sing along to well-known songs, including ones in English. Every Seoulite seems to sing well, and many can sing in English better than they speak it. Most *noraebang* open from 2pm to 2am and prices start at around W15,000 an hour, although luxury ones cost more. No alcohol is served, but a few have hostesses to help patrons have a good time by holding their hand and singing a duet with them, and applauding enthusiastically after each song. The best way for a foreign businessman to impress his Korean hosts is to belt out a heartfelt version of Frank Sinatra's 'My Way'.

LUXURY NORAEBANG Map p213

☎ 332 5204; room per hr W10,000-36,000; ☎ 24hr; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 Sing along with the video songs in a range of mostly palatial rooms in this new breed of *noraebang*, which is open all night and provides a more luxurious setting for acting out those rock star fantasies.

OPERA HOUSE NORAEBANG Map p208

☎ 766 5198; small/big rooms per hr W15,000/30,000; ☎ 2pm-5am; subway Line 4 to Hyeheha, Exit 2 Sing as loud as you want in these basement karaoke rooms, which feature a bank of four screens, a tambourine, a disco light and hundreds of English songs.

THIS IMAGE
NOT AVAILABLE
IN PICK & MIX

BARS

Seoul has an unbelievable number of bars so competition is strong. Most of Seoul's expat and gay bars and clubs can be found in Itaewon, which caters to the US troops stationed nearby (although they'll be moving to bases further south by 2008). Most bars have English-speaking staff, and only get busy around 10pm or later, even on Friday and Saturday. It's the only area where you see lots of foreigners and it has a different atmosphere from the rest of Seoul.

Itaewon's hostess bars are concentrated on the hill (known as Hooker Hill), across the main road from the Hamilton Hotel. Step inside one and a drink for yourself may cost only W5000, but a drink for one of the scantily clad girls plastered in make-up could set you back W20,000 or more. These bars have signs outside that read 'Sweetheart Club – Drink Food Woman', 'Woman & Cocktails' or the slightly more subtle 'For Gentlemen'.

GWANGHWAMUN

BUCK MULLIGAN'S Map pp202-3

☎ 3783 0004; B2, Seoul Finance Centre; meals W22,000-30,000; ☎ noon-12.30am Mon-Sat; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 4
Guinness is W8000 and live pop and rock music can be enjoyed at 7.30pm and 9pm in this Irish-themed bar with a pool table.

TIME OUT SPORTS BAR Map pp202-3

☎ 3783 0233; B1 & 2, Seoul Finance Centre; lunch W9900, dinner W15,000-28,000; ☎ 11.30am-2am Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 4

A monster collection of signed sporting memorabilia adorns the walls of this sports bar with screens and differing zones to relax in. Beers start at a reasonable W2500, and the fusion-style food includes steaks. An organic salad buffet is available at lunch time.

TOP FIVE BARS FOR ATMOSPHERE

- 3 Alley Pub (right)
- Mu (p106)
- Gecko's Terrace (right)
- US 66 Bar (p112)
- Bier Halle (opposite)

MYEONG-DONG & NAMSAN

O'KIM'S Map pp206-7

☎ 317 0388; Westin Chosun Hotel; meals W18,000-45,000; ☎ 3pm-2am; subway Line 2 to Euljiro 1-ga, Exit 4

Guinness at this green-themed Irish sports bar costs a hefty W18,000, but other beers are W9000. Live music (currently a Bulgarian duo) is on every night at 8.30pm and you can play darts, pool and (wonder of wonders) bar soccer.

ITAEWON

3 ALLEY PUB Map p209

☎ 749 3336; meals W8000-14,000; ☎ 4pm-1am Mon-Fri, noon-1am Sat & Sun; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 1

Mixing together an English pub atmosphere (darts, pool and a trivia quiz every Thursday night) with top-notch European-style pub grub and seven draught beers is a formula that makes this an expat magnet.

ALWAYS HOMME Map p209

☎ 798 0578; ☎ 8pm-4am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3

Beer is W4000 and cocktails are W5000 at this homely gay bar with a touch or two of style. The music is not so loud that you can't talk and the staff are friendly.

BAR BLISS Map p209

☎ 749 7738; ☎ 6pm-1am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 4

English-speaking, motorbike-riding gay gypsy Ted Park welcomes everyone to his smart wine bar. The armchairs, the music, the good house wine and the cheese and crackers are all so tempting you may never want to leave this bar that's hidden behind Reggae Pub.

GECKO'S TERRACE Map p209

☎ 749 9425; cnr Itaewonno & Pokwangdonggil; meals W9000-23,000; ☎ 11am-2am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 4

This comfortable and popular 2nd floor bar and restaurant has a global menu, lunch specials, six draught beers and lots of bottled ones plus the obligatory-in-Itaewon darts and pool. It can get like a rugby scrum at peak times.

NASHVILLE SPORTS BAR Map p209

☎ 798 1592; Itaewonno; ☎ 2pm-1am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 4

A scruffy Itaewon institution with a jukebox, pool, darts and a view. Beer costs W2500 and cocktails W5000. In summer the rooftop garden bar opens except when it's raining. In the basement is an American-style diner and above the sports bar is Club Caliente (p110).

OUR PLACE Map p209

☎ 792 7884; Itaewonno; meals W9000-12,000; ☎ 4pm-3am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3
Spread over the three top floors with a terrace and rooftop section, this engaging wine bar with candles serves fusion food and is run by Seoul's most famous gay icon, TV actor Hong Seok-chun.

QUEEN Map p209

☎ 793 1290; ☎ 8pm-4am Sun-Thu, 11am-4am Fri & Sat; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3

This comfortable bar attracts a mixture of Korean and Westerners, and welcomes visitors of all orientations. It has chandeliers and bright red chairs, and beer is W4000.

REGGAE PUB Map p209

☎ 749 1533; Itaewonno; ☎ 3pm-2am Mon-Fri, 1pm-3am Sat & Sun; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 4

Reggae rhythms on the sound system are the main attraction at this Jamaican outpost, but there is the usual pool and darts. Jah beef *jigae* (stew) is W8000, Jamaican chicken barbecue is W10,000, a beer is W2500 and a mug of Jamaican punch or *soju* (local vodka) is W6000.

SEOUL PUB Map p209

☎ 793 6666; Itaewonno; meals W4000-13,000; ☎ 3pm-3am Mon-Thu, noon-4am Fri-Sun; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 4

A friendly, laid-back pub with W2000 beers, pool, darts, music and occasional pub games.

SOHO Map p209

☎ 797 2280; ☎ 8pm-4am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3

Another smart and friendly gay bar with some glitter around that holds special

events and attracts an older clientele, and lesbians. Beer is W4000 and you can sit at the bar discussing sexual orientations, or relax in armchairs.

DAEHANGNO

BIER HALLE Map p208

☎ 744 9996; meals W9000-13,000; ☎ 3pm-midnight; subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 2
This lively and cheerful bare-brick cellar-style bar lures customers with its cheap beer – W2500 a glass or W12,800 for a giant 2.7L pitcher – and its Euro menu of sausages and smoked meats.

BOOGIE BOOGIE BAR Map p208

☎ 744 3626; meals W13,000-19,000; ☎ 3pm-2am; subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 2
Homesick Americans can be found here in Daehangno surrounded by icons and paraphernalia of the US of A, including part of a Cadillac above the entrance. Beer is W4000 and cocktails W8000.

SANTANA Map p208

☎ 763 9933; meals W9000-14,000; ☎ 3pm-2am; subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 2

Dark beers are the big attraction in this bar that has stacks of room and sells draught Guinness, Becks Dark, Heineken Dark and Miller Dark for W14,000 for 2L. A dozen different bottled dark beers cost W9000 to W14,000 each.

HONGIK

360@ Map p213

☎ 323 2360; ☎ 11am-3am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

Dip your feet in the pool, sunbathe on a sunlounger, sit in a garden swing seat or relax in a hammock outside or on a bed inside this bar, which is full of relaxing ideas and has an all-white upstairs floor. Drinks start at W5000.

GOLD 2 BAR Map p213

☎ 333 9129; ☎ 5pm-6am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

Up on the 2nd floor, the bar has wood cabin décor, bar food and, best of all, a 500ml beer costs only W1900. No need to say any more.

LABRIS Map p213

☎ 333 5276; ☎ 3pm-2am Sun-Fri, 1pm-5am Sat; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6
Take the elevator up to this comfortable, quiet and relaxed women-only lesbian bar that has sofas, a big screen showing music videos and friendly staff. Beers cost ₩5000.

QUEEN'S HEAD Map p213

☎ 3143 0757; meals ₩12,000-20,000; ☎ 5pm-3am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6
Five European beers (₩5000 to ₩7000) are on tap here in this English-style pub with an outdoor garden bar that draws crowds in the summer.

SINCHON & YEUIDO**BEATLES** Map p210

☎ 323 6385; ☎ 7pm-3am; subway Line 2 to Sinchon, Exit 2

An enviable record collection of over 10,000 LPs fills a wall in this basement log cabin 'old music bar' where beers cost ₩3500. The host is laid-back and the atmosphere is quiet and relaxing.

BLUE BIRD Map p210

☎ 332 3831; ☎ 6.30pm-2am; subway Line 2 to Sinchon, Exit 2

Young couples are attracted to this bar, which has a romantic ambience with comfortable chairs around tables that are adorned with flickering candles, while soft jazz plays moodily in the background.

MU Map p210

☎ 010-9236 9745; ☎ 4pm-4am; subway Line 2 to Sinchon, Exit 2

Probably the most amazing bar interior in Seoul, it has overhead waterways, and a sinuous white creeper design that creates individual cubicles for patrons. Imagine a Star Wars bar designed by an Inuit. It feels strange even when you're sober.

WALLFLOWERS Map p210

☎ 3142 5234; ☎ 6pm-3am; subway Line 2 to Sinchon, Exit 2

A classy black-and-chrome interior sets the tone for the generally cool jazz in this 2nd floor bar, where beers are ₩5000. It's perfect for a quiet chat with a date rather than somewhere for a raucous night out.

WOODSTOCK Map p210

☎ 334 1310; ☎ 3pm-3am; subway Line 2 to Sinchon, Exit 2

Years of scribbles have built up on the walls, tables and chairs in this bar where the big attraction is the loud rock music selected from their huge collection. Beer is ₩2000 a glass or ₩10,000 a pitcher.

GANGNAM**DUBLIN** Map p211

☎ 561 3281; meals ₩13,000; ☎ 4pm-2am; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 7

This large 'Irish' pub has indoor and outdoor seating, five draught beers including Guinness, and bottled Newcastle Brown (₩12,000).

JUJU TENT BAR Map p211

Dosandaero; meals ₩12,000-20,000; ☎ 6pm-6am; subway Line 3 to Apgujeong, Exit 6

Popular in summer, this outdoor bar near Apgujeong has a retractable roof. Beer and *soju* is ₩4000 but the food, such as chicken gizzards or feet, grilled eel, stews and fish, is relatively expensive.

PLATINUM MICROBREWERY Map p211

☎ 2052 0022; Teheranno; all-you-can-eat-&-drink buffet Sun & Mon ₩17,500, Tue-Thu ₩18,500, Fri & Sat ₩19,500; ☎ 6pm-8.30pm; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 8

Feeling in a party mood? Ten metres from the subway exit is this smart good-deal restaurant that offers the chance to eat and drink too much at the same time. The buffet has 17 items such as salads, sushi, shellfish, *bulgogi* (barbecued beef slices and lettuce wrap), spaghetti, soup and fruit. The on-site brewery produces six beers including a brown ale and a stout. The décor is modern with black furniture and fairy lights.

ROCK'N'ROLL BAR Map p211

☎ 545 4163; meals ₩10,000-30,000; ☎ 8pm-5am; subway Line 3 to Apgujeong, Exit 6

A small museum of personal mementoes adds atmosphere to this three-storey log-cabin bar in Apgujeong where the cocktails (₩9000) are a better deal than the beers (₩8000).

TEASHOPS

Teashops cluster mainly in Insadong, but a few are scattered elsewhere. Many owners put a lot of effort into creating a special atmosphere for their customers with traditional décor and music. The medicinal hot and cold teas are made from roots, leaves, herbs or fruit. A cup of tea costs around ₩6000 (as much as a cheap meal), but it's a quality product and often served with a rice-cake snack.

GWANGHWAMUN**SIPJEON DAEBOTANG** Map pp202-3

☎ 734 5302; teas ₩4000-5000; ☎ 11am-9pm; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 1

This tiny two-room medicinal teashop northeast of Gyeongbokgung serves wonderful thick *danpatjuk*, red-bean porridge with ginseng, chestnut and peanuts.

INSADONG**BEAUTIFUL TEA MUSEUM** Map p205

☎ 735 6678; teas ₩5000-8000; ☎ 10am-10pm; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6

This is not a traditional Korean teashop, but instead offers the chance to sip teas from around the world in the pleasant covered courtyard of a modern *hanok* (traditional Korean one-storey wooden house with a tiled roof), with tea sets on display.

DALSAENEUN DALMAN SAENGGAK HANDA Map p205

Moon Bird Thinks Only of the Moon; ☎ 723 1504; Insadong 4-gil; teas ₩6000; ☎ 11am-11pm; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6

This special, poetically named teashop is packed with plants and rustic artefacts, and bird song, soothing music and trickling water add to the atmosphere. Huddle in a cubicle and savour one of the many teas, which include *gamnipcha* (persimmon-leaf tea). *Saenggangcha* (ginger tea) is peppery but sweet.

JEONTONG DAWON Map p205

☎ 7306305; off Seokjeong-gil; teas ₩6000; ☎ 8.30am-9.20pm; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6

Sit outside under the shady fruit trees in the very pleasant courtyard hideaway or inside a 19th-century *hanok* decorated with

scribbles on the walls. Small art exhibition spaces surround the courtyard. In summer sip delicious *omijacha hwacha* fruit punch (*omija* are tiny dried berries said to contain five flavours). The *nokcha* (green tea) is unusual, as it's served with milk.

SINYETCHATJIP Map p205

New Old Teashop; ☎ 732 6678; teas ₩6000, wines ₩10,000-15,000; ☎ 10am-10pm; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6

The fascinating décor created in this teashop includes a live squirrel, live birds and even live crabs. Thankfully the monkey has departed. The *maesilcha* (plum tea) is deliciously sweet and sour.

YETCHATJIP Map p205

Old Teashop; ☎ 722 5019; teas ₩6000;

☎ 10am-10.30pm; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6
Seoul's most famous teashop features half a dozen little birds flying around freely. More atmosphere is added by haunting music, water features, candles and unique toilets. Antique bric-a-brac so clutters this goblin-sized teashop that it's hard to squeeze past and find somewhere to sit. The nine hot teas and seven cold ones are all special – try the hot *mogwacha* (quince tea) with a subtle fruity flavour or the cold nashi-pear tea drunk by Joseon kings and queens.

MYEONG-DONG & NAMSAN**O'SULLOC TEAHOUSE** Map pp206-7

☎ 774 5460; green-tea items around ₩4000; ☎ 9am-10.30pm; subway Line 4 to Myeong-dong, Exit 6

Impeccably presented green-tea drinks, cakes and ice creams are created here in this smart modern teahouse, but prices are not cheap. Everything is produced from the green tea picked on the company's tea plantation on Jeju. Green-tea ice cream is recommended as are the homemade green-tea chocolates (₩1000) but the green-tea latte tastes like hot milk.

TODAM TEASHOP Map pp206-7

토탈; ☎ 753 5124; teas ₩4000; ☎ 10am-10pm; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 1

This rustic den next to Chongdong Theatre serves up genuine homemade teas including ones made from apricots, pine needles and even deer antler. Try *sipjeon daebotang*,

which has 13 ingredients and is sweetened with honey quince syrup and served with Korean green tea, candied ginger and light-weight rice crackers.

HONGIK

CHASARANG Map p213

차사랑; ☎ 3141 8601; teas around W5000;

☎ 10am-midnight; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

This traditional teashop brings a relaxing and rustic Insadong atmosphere to Hongik's youthful clubland. Unusual teas include those made from mountain berries, pine needles and even bamboo.

GANGNAM

O'SULLOC TEAHOUSE Map p211

☎ 774 5480; Gangnamdaero; green-tea items around W4000; ☎ 9am-11pm; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 5

See p107 for details on this shrine to *nok-cha* (green tea).

TEA MUSEUM Map p211

☎ 515 2350; Apgujeongno; teas around W7000;

☎ 10.30am-9pm; subway Line 3 to Apgujeong, Exit 6

Sip unusual teas from around the globe in this tiny, antique-filled teashop in Apgujeong with over 50 herb, flower, fruit and leaf teas (and teapots) for sale. South African rooibos teas are popular.

LIVE MUSIC

Classy live jazz venues can be found in every entertainment district, and luxury hotels often have a live band in the bar. Itaewon has a live music scene, some of it provided by expat bands. But Hongik is the place for live indie music played in tiny underground venues by student bands with names like No Brain, Lazy Bone and Vaseline. But so far only Crying Nut has made it to stadium status. Concerts usually run from 7pm to 10.30pm. Admission varies from nothing to W10,000, which may include a drink.

The new Sound Day (www.soundday.co.kr) is held on the second Friday of the month from 8pm to 5am. W15,000 gains entry to around 10 live music venues in Hongik and includes a free drink.

MYEONG-DONG & NAMSAN

FEEL Map pp206-7

Rhythm & Blues

☎ 778 2401; admission incl a drink W5000;

☎ 8pm-3am; subway Line 4 to Myeong-dong, Exit 10

This live music rumpus room run by totally eccentric Shin Kyung-so is packed with the mementoes of a lifetime that it's hard to squeeze in. But it's worth it when Shin and his musical friends get together to play anything from jazz to folk rock. Where else can you listen to a Simon and Garfunkel song being played on an accordion?

ITAEWON

ALL THAT JAZZ Map p209

Jazz

☎ 795 5701; Itaewonno; admission free Mon-Wed,

Thu-Sun W3000; ☎ 5pm-midnight; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 1

Local jazz bands have been playing here since 1976 and still play every night at 9pm (from 7pm on Sunday). Beers cost W5000 and meals are W7000 to W15,000.

J BAR Map p209

Jazz, Blues & Rock

☎ 793 9098; admission free; ☎ 6.30pm-2am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 1

This funky subterranean cellar with a youthful vibe and a dance area generally has live music every Friday and Saturday from 10pm to midnight. At other times the bar staff have a choice of 6000 LPs as well as numerous CDs. There is a pool table, an occasional DJ and beers are W4000.

WOODSTOCK Map p209

Rock

☎ 749 6034; Itaewonno; admission free;

☎ 6pm-2am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 2

Up on the 3rd floor expat bands blast out rock music every night from around 10pm, and pool and darts can keep you amused until then. Beers are W4000 but staff are chilly.

DAEHANGNO

LIVE JAZZ CLUB Map p208

Jazz

☎ 743 5555; admission incl a beer W5,000;

☎ 4.30pm-3am; subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 2

The Seoul Jazz Academy (Map p208) is just down the road and three different jazz groups play every weekday night from 7pm until well past midnight, and from 8.30pm

on Sunday. Special concerts are held every Saturday. All jazz genres are featured. Beer is W5000 while food costs W15,000 to W25,000. Don't miss out on this serious jazz venue.

HONGIK

ALICE LIVE CLUB Map p213

All Genres

☎ 3141 6876; admission incl a drink W5000-

10,000; ☎ 6pm-midnight; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

Anything from acid and rock to lounge jazz and pop is put on at this new venue in the heart of Hongik, usually between 9pm and 11pm. Ask at the door about what's on.

BEBOP JAZZ CLUB Map p213

Jazz

☎ 338 4932; admission free; ☎ 6pm-3am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

Up on the 5th floor Bebop caters to an older crowd with its armchairs and cool jazz. A singer or an instrumental band perform from 8pm to 11pm. Beers are W6000 but rise to W9000 during the live music.

BLUE BIRD Map p213

All Genres

☎ 019-388 4234; admission free; ☎ 6pm-2am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 5

The owner is a genuine music lover at this black basement venue where you can relax in armchairs and listen to live music every night from 9pm to late – it could be blues, jazz, folk, rock or pop. Beers cost W4000.

CLUB EVANS Map p213

Jazz

☎ 337 8361; Wausan-gil; admission W5000;

☎ 6.30pm-2am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

Relax at tables and chairs and catch all kinds of jazz from 9pm at this long-running 2nd floor lounge venue that caters to a more mature crowd than other live venues in Hongik.

FREE BIRD Map p213

Rock

☎ 333 2701; admission free; ☎ 6pm-midnight; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

Rock, punk and funk are blasted out every night by young uni bands between 8pm and 11.30pm. Four different bands, with names like Incubator, Scarface and Bum, perform every night generally at a high volume. Beers cost W7000.

MOONGLOW Map p213

Jazz

☎ 324 5105; admission incl 2 drinks W10,000;

☎ 6pm-1am Mon-Sat; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

This large underground venue with red armchairs and candles on the tables features live jazz from 9pm, with a different style every day.

SKUNK HELL Map p213

Punk

☎ 010-7720 9841; admission W5000; ☎ 8-11pm

Fri & Sat; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 Skunk Hell is punk heaven – a black messy dungeon with peeling posters on the ceiling and live, loud punk rock from house band Couch. Saturday is the night to crawl in, but you may have to provide your own drinks.

SLUG.ER Map p213

Rock

☎ 3142 0643; admission W5000; ☎ 6-11pm; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

Live indie rock bands like DNA and N.Fly bring in the customers to this dark underground den of a live venue. Beers cost W4000 and admission includes a drink.

WATERCOCK Map p213

Jazz

☎ 324 2422; admission free-W7000; ☎ 8pm-midnight; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

Located down an alley behind Alice Live, this serious 2nd floor live jazz venue has drinks for W5000. Musicians play from 9pm to 11.30pm. Blue Rain is a tight group consisting of piano, double bass, guitar, piano and a singer.

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SINCHON & YEUIDO

ROLLING STONES Map p210

Rock

☎ 332 9439; next to Sandpresso; admission W8000-12,000; 🕒 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sun; subway Line 2 to Sinchon, Exit 8

This small underground cellar sells only soft drinks but is dedicated to putting on all kinds of live rock music, and it's often standing room only at the weekend. Listen out for Broken Pearl.

GANGNAM

ONCE IN A BLUE MOON Map p211

Jazz

☎ 549 5490; Seolleungno; admission free; 🕒 5pm-2am; subway Line 3 to Apgujeong, Exit 6 A classy venue in Apgujeong with two sessions of quality live jazz daily from 7pm until after midnight. Admission is free but drinks costs W12,000 and food costs even more.

CLUBS

The clubs around Seoul open early but most don't start getting busy until 10pm. Friday and Saturday nights have a real party atmosphere. Most clubs have DJs, dress is informal and food is not available (although luxury hotel clubs generally have live bands, food and a dress code).

Entry costs from W5000 to W10,000 and includes a free drink, but a few clubs charge more on Friday and Saturday nights. The famous Hongik Club Day (www.clubculture.or.kr) is held every last Friday of the month from 9pm to 5am. Pay just W15,000 for a free drink and entry to a dozen clubs, which all feature a bunch of DJs. Take some ID. Clubs that currently participate include Joker Red, Sk@, Saab, MI and M2. A map comes with the Club Day ticket. Clubbers are fickle so venues can blow hot and cold, but the Latin American dance clubs always retain their fan base.

ITAEWON

CLUB CALIENTE Map p209

☎ 798 1592; above Nashville Sports Bar, Itaewonno; admission incl a drink W5000; 🕒 6pm-1am Thu-Sun; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 4 The salsa Latin beats will get you up and dancing around the unusual circular bar as the Itaewon expats show off their moves. Ask about lessons if you want to become a star dancer.

G-SPOT Map p209

☎ 332 2849; admission incl 2 drinks W10,000; 🕒 midnight-6am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3 This late-night cellar disco opens very late and irregularly. It attracts mainly Korean gays but is an experience for the daring as the steps down to it are like entering a catacomb.

GRAND OLE OPRY Map p209

☎ 795 9155; admission free; 🕒 6.30pm-1am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3 This grand ole country-and-western bar and dance hall is still going strong with staff who chat and DJs on Friday and Saturday. Beers cost as little as W2000 and strawberry margaritas are W4000.

JJ MAHONEY'S Map p209

☎ 799 8601; Grand Hyatt Hotel; admission free; 🕒 6pm-2am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 2 Up the hill and inside the Grand Hyatt Hotel is this classy nightclub with nine different zones, and a live Canadian rock band from 9.30pm nightly except Sunday. Drinks are hit with a 34% surcharge, which means a beer costs W13,000 and cocktails W20,000, and there's a dress code. Take a taxi to get there.

KING CLUB Map p209

☎ 794 6869; Sobangseo-gil; admission free; 🕒 6.30pm-4am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3 Beers are W3000 to W6000 and served by young Filipino girls at this venerable, mainly hip-hop, club with DJs and plenty of off-duty grunts getting down and hooking up.

TRANCE Map p209

☎ 797 3410; admission incl a drink Fri & Sat W10,000; 🕒 9pm-5am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3 Pouting drag princesses Ms Nina and Ms Ari entertain in their own completely unique style at this small club with a DJ and a stage. Shows start around 2am and the big night is Saturday.

WHY NOT Map p209

☎ 795 8193; admission incl drink W5000; 🕒 8pm-6am; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3 This small gay dance arena has been expensively revamped with the very latest

lights and lasers. DJs crank it up at this meet market until dawn when the subway trains start running again and the regrets begin.

HONGIK

BAHIA Map p213

☎ 335 1512; admission incl a drink W5000; 🕒 6pm-midnight Tue-Thu, 6pm-2am Fri & Sat; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 A Latin American dance club that is buzzing by 9pm with a friendly atmosphere, great music and W5000 beers. Wednesday is *bachata* (music originating from the Dominican Republic) night.

CLUB FUNKY FUNKY Map p213

☎ 010-6428 0248; admission incl a drink W10,000; 🕒 7pm-5am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 This small club (sometimes called Club FF) combines a live band with a DJ who plays anything from rock and funk to hip-hop. Beers are W5000.

CLUB OTWO Map p213

☎ 3142 9278; Hogok Bldg; admission incl a drink Sun-Thu W8000, Fri & Sat W10,000; 🕒 8pm-5am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 A smart new spacious club with stacks of lights and screens, which is down in the basement on the right side of the Hogok building. They call their dance music 'electro-trance techno'.

CLUB SAAB Map p213

☎ 324 6929; Wausan-gil; admission incl a drink W10,000; 🕒 8pm-4am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 Plenty of hip-hop DJs with a hard attitude play here including the popular Schedule 1, and beers are W6000. It's the nearest thing to gangsta rap in Seoul, but is it for show or for real?

JOKER RED Map p213

☎ 019-345 7122; admission incl a drink W10,000; 🕒 7pm-midnight Wed & Thu, 7pm-4am Fri & Sat; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 All shades of techno are heard in this club, which has some red lighting effects to justify its name. The chill-out room is useful when it all gets a bit too much.

M2 Map p213

☎ 018-285 6972; admission incl a drink W15,000; 🕒 8pm-6.30am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 Deep underground is one of the largest and best clubs. It has a high ceiling and plenty of lights, and plays mainly progressive house. Telephone to reserve a chill-out zone upstairs. Wednesday is ladies night and free admission is only the start.

MACONDO Map p213

☎ 010-8255 5819; admission incl a drink W5000; 🕒 7-11.30pm Mon-Thu, 7pm-5am Fri & Sat; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 5 Like Bahia, this fun and frenetic Latin American dance club in Hongik starts buzzing relatively early, and is soon as crowded as a *Where's Wally?* cartoon. Free dancing lessons are available.

MI Map p213

☎ 3141 2046; admission incl a drink Sun-Thu W8000, Fri & Sat W10,000; 🕒 7.30pm-4am Sun-Thu, 7.30pm-6am Fri & Sat; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 A pioneer of electronic music in Hongik this club's DJs still win prizes and the staff are friendly. Nowadays they play techno and progressive house.

SK@ Map p213

☎ 323 8750; admission incl a drink W10,000; 🕒 7pm-5am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 A scruffy dark den of a club that attracts those who like their sounds mixed and eclectic. It's nothing fancy and the staff are off-hand, but that's how the regulars like it.

GAY & LESBIAN OPTIONS

Itaewon is the only area in Seoul where gay bars and clubs have English-speaking staff who welcome Koreans and foreigners, whether straight or gay. Look through the Itaewon listings for eight of them. Only one bar, Labris (p106) in Hongik, caters specifically to lesbians and is open to women only. Though attitudes in Seoul are changing slowly and becoming more tolerant, TV actor Hong Seok-chun is still the only Seoul celebrity who has come out of the closet.

ST 102

Map p213
☎ 011-9150 0911; admission incl a drink W10,000-15,000; 🕒 9pm-5am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

This brand new smart three-level shrine to hip-hop could blow the competition away with its lounges, bright dance areas, screens, neon and general pizzazz.

US 66 BAR

Map p213
☎ 324 5388; 🕒 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-5am Fri & Sat; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6 This American-style bar is a gathering place for expats prior to launching out into club-land and the staff speak some English. Beers are W5000, while the notorious 'Long Island iced tea' cocktail is W6000.

CAFÉS

DAEHANGNO

JUMANJI GAME CAFÉ

Map p208
☎ 741 1040; per hr W2000; 🕒 24hr; subway Line 4 to Hyehe, Exit 2
Select a board game such as Monopoly or Risk from their global selection and start playing – all night long if you want. Most have an explanation in English or a staff member can get you started.

MINDEULLEYEONGTO

Map p208
Minto; ☎ 745 5234; drinks & meals from W5000; 🕒 10am-midnight; subway Line 4 to Hyehe, Exit 2
Pay W5000 to have basic food and drink for up to five hours, or pay more for special fusion-style meals and drinks. Seven large rooms are furnished with flowery sofas and decorated with fantasy themes, and small alcoves, hideaways and balconies are spread around the five floors. It's a seminar centre designed and named (something to do with dandelions) by New Age hobbits. Downstairs are free movies, there's a piano to practice on and two friendly dogs act as unpaid greeters. *Mindeulleyeongto 2*, just down the road, is similar but only has one canine greeter, so stress levels are higher. Both need new stair carpets.

MOZART

Map p208
☎ 744 7651; drinks & snacks W3000-7000; 🕒 11am-11pm; subway Line 4 to Hyehe, Exit 2
A European aura and classical music attracts customers to this multizone café.

HONGIK

PRINCESS

Map p213
☎ 335 6703; drinks W5000-8000; 🕒 10am-4am; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6
Candles and chandeliers light the steps down to this winter palace of a café with white curtains around some tables to give privacy, but cigarette smoke sometimes lowers the regal tone.

QUEEN LIZ

Map p213
☎ 337 3843; drinks W3500; 🕒 11am-8.30pm Mon-Sat; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6
Ladies can buy a drink in this beauty café with violet velour armchairs, and then use all their make-up and cosmetics for free. If it all goes wrong you can pay for a professional make-up by Lee Eunim who was trained in France and speaks English. A finger package – nail care and colouring plus a finger massage – is W12,000. It's on the 4th floor above US 66 bar.

GANGNAM

IGLOO

Map p211
☎ 511 0980; drinks around W8000; 🕒 noon-11pm; subway Line 3 to Apgujeong, Exit 1
This extraordinary Apgujeong café is only for dog-lovers – 30 canine breeds roam around freely. Most of them have starred in Korean movies and they relax here in between engagements.

ACTIVITIES

WATCHING SPORT

Baseball

South Korea has had a professional league (www.koreabaseball.or.kr) since 1982, and teams are sponsored by local *jaebeol* (huge family-run corporate conglomerates). The season runs from April to October. The Doosan Bears and the LG Twins play their home matches at Jamsil Baseball Stadium (Map pp214-15).

Basketball

Seoul has two teams, Samsung Thunders and SK Knights, in the 10-team Korean basketball league (www.kbl.or.kr). Matches are played from late October to March at Jamsil

Gymnasium (Map pp214-15). See the website for the schedule of weekday evening matches and weekend afternoon matches. Two foreign players (usually Americans) are allowed in each team.

Horse Racing

SEOUL RACECOURSE

Map pp198-9
☎ 509 2309; www.kra.co.kr; admission W800; 🕒 races 11.30am-5pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun, 1-9pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug; subway Line 4 to Seoul Racecourse, Exit 2

Every weekend thousands head south to the horse racing. The spectators used to be mainly men, but racing authorities have had some success at promoting racing as a family or couple activity. Huge screens on the track show the odds, and close-ups of the horses. Short 1km to 2km races take place every half-hour with evening racing in July and August. Foreigners can make use of a smart and comfortable suite – just walk left into the new Lucky Ville grandstand, take the elevator to the 4th floor and walk to section S. English-speaking staff are on hand, but betting is easy enough. Despite the big crowds (legal gambling opportunities are still restricted in Seoul) everything is well-organised. The only problem is picking the winners.

The **Equine Museum** (☎ 509 1283; admission free; 🕒 9am-6pm) houses some modern displays of historical items relating to horses and some are, quite surprisingly, beautiful.

Meals are limited to budget fast-food outlets, and the track is closed on four weekends of the year – New Year, Chuseok and the last weekend in December and July.

Soccer

Soccer was given a huge boost by the heroic efforts of the talented and spirited South Korean team, which reached the semifinals of the 2002 FIFA World Cup, cohosted by South Korea and Japan. But since then results have been disappointing and two coaches have been sacked. The home soccer league has 13 teams and matches are played from April to October at World Cup Stadium (Map pp198-9).

Ssireum

Ssireum is Korean-style wrestling, which is more similar to Mongolian wrestling than Japanese sumo. Tournament winners are given the title of *jangsa* (the strongest man in the world), and they used to be given a live bull as a prize.

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JANGCHUNG GYMNASIUM Map pp200-1
☎ 2237 6800; subway Line 3 to Dongguk

University, Exit 5

A four-day *ssireum* competition (admission free) is held here around the Lunar New Year.

Taekwondo

KUKKIWON Map p211

☎ 567 4988; www.kukkiwon.or.kr; office ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 8

The Kukkiwon *dojang* (hall) hosts a regular schedule of taekwondo displays, training courses and tournaments. Expect to see graceful movements, acrobatic high kicking that defies gravity and spectacular pine-board breaking. Saturday and Wednesday mornings are when demonstration teams practice, except during university holidays. The museum (admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) has photos, cups, medals and uniforms relating to the sport.

OUTDOOR & INDOOR ACTIVITIES

Adventure Sports

White-water rafting tours are run by USO (p46). Contact the **Adventure Club** (www.adventurekorea.com) for information on caving, rock climbing, white-water rafting and other outdoor activities.

Baseball

You can whack some baseballs from a pitching machine at **Baseball Hitting Practice** (Map p205; Insadong-gil; 10 balls W500; ☎ 9am-midnight) in Insadong and **Baseball Hitting Practice** (Map p211; W500; ☎ 9am-6pm) near Gangnam station.

Golf

Private golf courses are usually for members only, but there are plenty of driving ranges in top-end hotels and elsewhere. A typical one is **Hyosung Golf** (Map p211; ☎ 543 3046; Dosandaero; 1hr W15,000; ☎ 5am-10pm; subway Line 3 to Apgujeong, Exit 2).

Ice-Skating

Lotte World ice-skating rink (p59) is open all year. In winter the swimming pools along the Han River freeze over and become skating rinks.

There's a skating rink (adult W1000, free skates) at the **City Hall Plaza** (Map pp202-3). The **Sheraton Grande Walkerhill** (Map pp198-9) and the **Grand Hyatt** (Map p209) also have ice-skating rinks in winter (entry and skates W30,000), but are only reachable by taxi. **Ttukseom Seoul Forest** and **World Cup Park** both have a **sledding slope** (1hr W500; ☎ 10am-4pm).

Pool & Four Ball

Seoul is full of pool halls – look for the cues-and-coloured-balls signs. The halls usually have both pool tables (pool is called 'pocketball') and tables for four ball. The cost is usually W6000 per hour.

Four ball is played in Belgium and the Netherlands but is most popular in South Korea. There are no pockets and players must hit cannons. Two red balls and two white ones are used. The players (any number) hit the white balls in turn.

Players try to reach a score of zero. It's a handicap system, so beginners start with a score of three points. When you improve you start with five points, then eight, then 10 and so on. When your score reaches zero, to finish you must do a more difficult shot – hit the side-cushion three times while hitting both red balls without hitting the other white ball. A player scores minus one if they're successful and their white ball hits both the red balls without touching the other white ball, and can take another turn. It sounds easy but isn't. Players score nothing for hitting just one red, and plus one for hitting the other white ball or missing everything.

Skiing

The cold winters and mountainous terrain make Korea an ideal country for winter sports. Prices are reasonable and ski resorts offer a range of accommodation from youth hostels and basic *minbak* (private homes with rooms for rent) to condominiums and luxury hotels. The ski season runs from December to February. Ski clothes and equipment and English-speaking instructors can be hired. The dozen or so ski resorts have offices in Seoul and run all-inclusive one-day package tours from W75,000. USO (p46) organises weekend ski trips.

Five ski resorts are shown on the Seoul Vicinity Map (p146), but they can be very crowded, so you may want to go further a field to Korea's best ski resort at **Yongpyong** (www.yongpyong.co.kr) in Gangwon-do.

RIVERSIDE CYCLING TRIPS

Cycle paths, sports fields and flower gardens line both banks of the Han River and bicycles can be rented in parks along the river. The cycle paths are shared with pedestrians and flocks of flying rollerbladers. Both cycle rides start from Yeouido Park. Take subway Line 5 to Yeouinaru station and leave by Exit 2. Walk to one of the two **bike hire huts** (Map p210; bicycles/tandems per hour W2000/5000; ☎ 9am-7pm). ID is required and padlocks and bicycle helmets are not supplied.

Yeouido to the World Cup Stadium

This route is 7km return and takes 90 minutes, but lasts longer if you explore the stadium and surrounding parks.

From Yeouido cycle west past the green-domed **National Assembly** (p57) and after about 1km you reach Yanghwa gardens. Five minutes beyond is Yanghwa bridge, which you can use to cross the river. Walk up the steps of the bridge pushing your bike up the little bike path on the right of the steps. Stop to have a look round **Seonyudo**, an island in the middle of the river, which is being transformed from a water treatment plant into an eco park.

Wheel your bicycle down the narrow path on the right of the steps on the other side of the bridge, and then turn right along the cycleway on the northern side of the river. After 10 minutes, turn right at the orange Seongsan bridge, ride over a small bridge and then turn right, following the green signs. After another 10 minutes you should arrive in the large **Pyeonghwa (Peace) Park**, south of the impressive **World Cup Stadium** (p64) and its shopping malls and cinemas.

For a 6km (30-minute) detour, cycle around what is now an attractive green hill but used to be a mountain of garbage. Cross the major road to **Nanjicheon Park** (Map pp198-9; ☎ 6am-7pm) and keep going. Then return to Yeouido retracing the same route.

Yeouido to Olympic Park

This is a long trip, 38km return, and takes four hours cycling, but virtually all of it is on a cycleway and there are no hills.

Along the way are flower gardens, sports fields and lots of bridges. Herons, geese and other birds live near the river. At Banpo and Jamsil, windsurfers (W10,000), water-skis (W15,000) and jet-skis (W100,000) can be rented by the hour in July and August.

Near the 18km distance marker, turn right, ride under a couple of bridges and follow the left side of the usually dry riverbed. At the road, turn left, cross over the minor road, and then cross the major road using the pedestrian crossing. Then turn right, go over the bridge, and **Olympic Park** (p59) is on your left. It takes at least an hour to tour round Seoul's best park with its museums, stadiums and outdoor sculptures.

Swimming

Outdoor swimming pools only open in July and August. Six swimming pools with the same opening hours and prices can be found along the Han River including the **Yeouido Hangang swimming pool** (Map p210; ☎ 785 1093; adult/teenager/child W4000/3000/2000; ☎ 9am-7pm) and **Ttukseom swimming pool** (Map pp214-15).

The **Hamilton Hotel** (p137) has a popular pool on its roof-top, which is also open to non-guests. The outdoor pools at the **Sheraton Grande Walkerhill Hotel** (Map pp198-9; ☎ 453 0121; adult/child incl buffet lunch W55,000/35,000; ☎ 10am-6pm; subway Line 5 to Gwangnaru, Exit 2) are the best but the hotel is 2km from the subway and lunch is compulsory.

Lotte World (p59) and most top-end hotels have indoor pools. Caribbean Bay (p155) is Seoul's best water park. See p151 for Seoul's nearest island beach.

Taekwondo

This traditional Korean martial art developed out of *taekyon*, which can be traced back to ancient tomb murals in the Goryeo dynasty. Taekwondo is now an Olympic sport and is increasingly popular with martial arts fans all over the world. All Korean army personnel receive taekwondo training and five million people worldwide have reached certificate standard. See opposite for Kukkiwon, the HQ of taekwondo.

HOKI TAEKWONDO

☎ 236 3361; www.taekwontour.com; 1½ hr/3hr courses W35,000/70,000

A 1½-hour introductory programme at the War Memorial & Museum gymnasium costs W35,000 and usually starts at 10am. The best thing about the programme is that you have the opportunity to break a 2cm-thick wooden board. Longer courses are also possible. Contact Hoki first before turning up at the gymnasium.

Tenpin Bowling

Tenpin bowling is available all over the city at around W3000 a game plus W1000 shoe hire. Seoulites take the sport seriously.

LCI Bowling (Map pp206-7; ☎ 771 2345; per game W2900, shoe hire W1000; 🕒 10.30am-1am; subway Line 4 to Myeong-dong, Exit 3)

Lotte World Bowling (Map pp214-15; B3 fl; adult/child W3000/2800, shoe hire W1200; 🕒 9am-midnight; subway Line 2 or 8 to Jamsil, Exit 3)

HEALTH & FITNESS

Bathhouses & Saunas

Don't leave Seoul without experiencing an *oncheon* (public bath) and a sauna where you can simmer or steam yourself like a *mandu* (dumpling). Spartan saunas cost only W5000, but *jjimjilbang* (upmarket saunas with Internet cafés, and luxury décor and facilities), cost from W7000 to W14,000. Most are open 24 hours, and some offer unusual green-tea baths or mugwort herbal saunas.

Undress in the locker room and then take a shower, as you must clean yourself thoroughly before getting into the public bath. Soap and shampoo are supplied, as well as toothpaste and toothbrushes, and the ladies section usually has hairdryers, foot massagers, lotions and perfumes. You can often have your hair cut as well as your shoes shined.

The water temperature in the big communal baths varies from hot to extremely hot, but there may also be a cold bath (including a 'waterfall' shower). Relaxing and turning pink in a hot bath is good therapy, especially on a cold winter's day. The heat soaks into weary bodies, soothing tired muscles and minds.

Saunas vary but all are as hot as a pizza oven, and to suffer more you can be pummelled by a masseur. Afterwards take a nap

lying on a wooden floor with a block of wood for a pillow. You can even spend the night in the dormitory, sleeping on a *yo* (a padded quilt that serves as a futon or mattress on the floor).

DONGBANG SAUNA

Map p213
☎ 332 0481; B1, Seogyo Plaza 서교플라자;
day/night W5000/4000; 🕒 24hr; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 6

This clean and spacious sauna in Hongik offers separate sections for men and women. Facilities include an exercise centre, two sleeping rooms (one with bunks), a TV room, a green-tea pool, clay and crystal saunas and massages.

ITAEWONLAND SAUNA

Map p209
☎ 749 5115; www.itaewonland.co.kr; day/night rate W7000/10,000; 🕒 24hr; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3

This new luxurious *jjimjilbang*, spread over five floors, is the best in Itaewon. With separate sections for men and women, every customer is loaned a towel and T-shirt. A long list of pools, spa baths and massages is available including a green-tea beauty treatment.

SEOUL MUD

Map p209
☎ 747 8012; Itaewonno; 🕒 9am-11pm; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3

Foot massages, mugwort steam treatment, special soft mud packs and a ginseng bath cost from W20,000 to W82,000. It's a cheap price to pay for beauty if it works.

THAI SPIRIT

Map p211
☎ 515 0973; Dosandaero; massages from W50,000;
🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; subway Line 3 to Sinsa, Exit 1
Try aromatic Thai-style foot, facial and body massages at this luxury spa. Afterwards sip exotic tea sitting on a swing seat in the stylish upstairs tearoom.

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