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Sleeping ■

Sleeping

Seoul is bursting with accommodation – backpacker guesthouses, budget motels under W50,000, homestays and a stack of midrange and top-end hotels and serviced apartments. Accommodation is invariably charged per room, with little or no discount for singles, although homestays and guesthouses can be a little more generous. Hotel rooms with Western-style beds are most common, but for the same price you can often opt for a Korean-style room where you sleep on a *yo* (padded quilt) on the *ondol* (heated) floor. Gwanghwamun, Insadong and Myeong-dong are central, but it doesn't matter too much where you stay as long as it is near a subway station as although the palaces are downtown, many other tourist sights are scattered further afield and have to be visited by subway. A handful of top-end hotels are not near a subway station so guests there rely on hotel shuttle buses and the city's reasonably priced taxis.

Accommodation Styles

GUESTHOUSES & YOUTH HOSTELS

Seoul has a handful of small, friendly guesthouses/backpackers that cater specifically for budget-conscious foreigners. Dorms are around W15,000 a night, single rooms around W27,000 and double rooms around W37,000. Rooms tend to be small, but the staff speak English and facilities usually include a TV and video lounge, a kitchen, a free washing machine, a free breakfast and free Internet access. Toilets and showers are usually shared. The two youth hostels, Olympic Parktel and Dreamtel, are far from the city centre.

MOTELS & LOVE MOTELS

Motels (*yeogwan*) are small, family-run budget hotels and there are thousands scattered throughout Seoul. Don't be put off by dimly lit corridors and the proprietor napping in a cubicle at the entrance. The rooms are always a bit small but offer a good deal as they are packed with facilities – en suite toilet and shower, TV, video, telephone, fridge, drinking water, air-con and heating, even toothbrushes, lotions and hairdryers. Nearly all the rooms have beds, but some also offer Korean-style rooms with a *yo* on the floor. The staff rarely speak any English so expect to be greeted with a look of alarm rather than a warm welcome.

The motels have no communal facilities – you just get a room, which is why prices are low. Room prices start at W30,000 for a room and those in the upper range (W45,000) are smarter and merge into the love-motel category. Sometimes looking like fairyland castles, love motels cater for daytime, pay-by-the-hour couples, but also accept conventional overnight guests. They provide a good option, especially if you fancy a round bed, satin sheets and a boudoir décor with stars painted on the ceiling.

HOTELS & SERVICED APARTMENTS

There is no shortage of midrange and luxury hotels, and new serviced apartments are springing up everywhere and providing tough competition, as they provide more home conveniences such as kitchen and laundry facilities. They all add 21% to their rates for service and tax, but the trend is to include this in the quoted prices. Unless tourist numbers zoom upwards, hotel prices will remain soft, so rack rates are normally heavily discounted, particularly at slack periods (eg August). Luxury hotel rooms often go for around W200,000 or up to W250,000 for the best ones. Broadband Internet connection is always available as is air-con. Rooms can lack character, but the gym/sauna/spa

facilities and restaurants are often excellent. Hotels and apartments with character and style are rare but Seoul's top hotels rate with the best anywhere in terms of facilities and services. See p162 for online discount booking services.

HOMESTAYS

Some Korean families in Seoul offer *minbak* (homestay) to foreign visitors who can experience Korean food, customs and family life at close quarters. The cost for bed and breakfast is W30,000 a night for a single person and W50,000 for a couple. Some offer pick-ups and dinner, and rates are greatly reduced if you stay long-term. Book online at least two weeks before your arrival date.

Korea Homestay (www.koreahomestay.com) Small scale.

Labostay (☎ 736 0521; www.labostay.or.kr) Long-established.

Price Ranges

Top luxury hotels are coy about their discount rates, which often depend on the occupancy rate, but you can generally ignore the rack rates, and discount rates range from under W200,000 to W250,000. Some offer special deals if you book through their website or at slack times. Midrange hotels are often discounted to around W100,000. Plenty of hotels under W100,000 offer a good deal, while the ones over that figure offer more facilities – restaurants, bars, health clubs and the like – rather than better rooms. New serviced apartments range from good-value modern studios that can be discounted to W60,000 a night up to large and luxurious apartments at W200,000. Motels provide excellent-value rooms for

LONG-TERM ACCOMMODATION

Renting an apartment can be tricky because of the traditional payment system. *Jeonse* is when you loan W30 million to W500 million to the landlord and get it all back at the end of the rental period. *Weolse* is when you pay a smaller returnable deposit of W3 million to W10 million (usually referred to as 'key money') plus a monthly rental fee. However, some accommodation in Seoul is available to foreigners on the Western system with a small returnable deposit and a monthly rent. Other options include the increasing numbers of modern serviced-apartments (from W75,000 to W230,000 a day). Browse some real estate websites for what's on offer – try www.nicerent.com and www.ace-realty.co.kr. In Seoul real estate is measured in *pyeong* (1 *pyeong* is 3.3 sq m).

Apartment sharing is another option, although spare rooms can be hard to find – view www.englishspectrum.com or click on 'Community' at <http://english.seoul.go.kr> or try the newspaper websites (p169).

INCHEON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ACCOMMODATION

A cluster of new hotels and restaurants has been built in Airport Town Sq, less than 10 minutes by taxi or bus northeast of the airport. A transit hotel is inside the airport terminal.

Air Garden Transit Hotel (Map p150; ☎ 032-743 3000; www.airgardenhotel.com; 6hr s/d incl tax & service from W49,500/61,500; 🚗) On the departure side of immigration, the small but smart modern rooms are perfect for a stopover snooze, although ones with a view are generally snapped up by airlines. A minimum 12-hour stay is required after 6pm and an American breakfast costs W14,000. Up on the 4th floor, the hotel is in two parts at both the east and west ends of the terminal. Rejuvenate after your flight with a **massage** (☎ 032-743 3004; W50,000-W120,000; 🕒 8am-7pm).

Guesthouse Korea (Map p150; ☎ 032-747 1872; www.guesthousekorea.co.kr; Airport Town Square; d & tw W45,000; 🚗) This quite luxurious guesthouse has large, light, modern motel-style rooms with their own fully equipped kitchens. It's on the 10th floor of a high-rise building opposite New Airport Hotel. Free Internet and a free pick-up from the airport are available.

New Airport Hotel (Map p150; ☎ 032-752 2066; www.hotelnewairport.co.kr; Airport Town Sq; r regular/deluxe incl tax & service W90,000/99,000; 🚗) Smart new regular rooms have Internet access while deluxe rooms have a computer, and a discount should be possible as a bunch of similar hotels are nearby. A golf driving range is on the roof. See p151 for accommodation on the beach just a few kilometres from the airport. Take bus No 202 (W900, 20 minutes, half-hourly) or a taxi to Eurwangni Beach.

TOP FIVE LUXURY HOTELS

- Westin Chosun (p136)
- Grand Hyatt Seoul (p137)
- Grand Inter-Continental (p142)
- Hotel Shilla (p135)
- JW Marriott (p140)

around W35,000, which lack only space, while guesthouses provide not such good rooms but a priceless friendly ambience with communal facilities and free services at a similar price. Guesthouses also have dorm beds that range from W11,000 to W19,000, while the two youth hostels charge W22,000. For something different, *hanok* (traditional Korean house) guesthouses and homestays are available for W50,000. Half the listings are midrange, 20% are in the top-end bracket and the Cheap Sleeps are all under W50,000.

BUKCHON HANOK EXPERIENCE

Anguk Guesthouse (Map pp202-3; ☎ 736 8304; www.angukhouse.com; off Byeolgunggil; s/d/tw/f W40,000/50,000/60,000/70,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 1; 🚶) Soak up the historical atmosphere in this *hanok* with gorgeous varnished wood that nevertheless has all mod cons – every room has its own toilet and shower as well as a computer. This excellent choice has a young owner who speaks English, and beds rather than *yo* mattresses are supplied. Guests can use the kitchen and washing machine, and the simple self-serve breakfast is free. The owner also has dormitory accommodation (only W11,000) in a modern house nearby.

Bukchon Guesthouse (Map pp202-3; ☎ 743 8530; bukchon72@yahoo.co.kr; s/d W35,000/50,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 3; 🚶) Experience a vanished age of unostentatious elegance in this fine *hanok* built around a courtyard with wooden ceiling beams and paper windows. The communal bathrooms are modern and tiled, and guests can relax in the TV lounge, log onto the Internet, and use the small kitchen and washing machine.

Guesthouse Woorijip (Map pp202-3; ☎ 744 0536; woorijip@hanmail.net; d incl breakfast W50,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 3; 🚶) This *hanok* is more like a homestay where you share the ups and downs of family life with the Parks, their two young children and a Jindo dog. Sleep as the *yangban* (aristocrats) did on a *yo* (padded quilt) in *ondol* (underfloor-heated) rooms with sliding paper-screen doors that are furnished with authentic traditional wooden chests and paintings.

Seoul Guesthouse (Map pp202-3; ☎ 745 0057; www.seoul110.com; s/d/f W35,000/50,000/100,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 3; 🚶) Owner Mrs Lee is very kind, speaks English well and was the first person to open her *hanok* to foreign guests. It's a delightful one down a quiet alley and built around a peaceful garden, with other more modern *hanok*-style buildings dotted around. Guests sleep on a *yo* on an *ondol* floor in a bare room with shared facilities (except in the more expensive rooms), and share a TV lounge, kitchen, free Internet and washing machine.

GWANGHWAMUN

The downtown area has budget motels and guesthouses as well as hotels and *hanok* guesthouses. Other downtown hotels are listed under the Myeong-dong & Namsan section.

HOTEL LEES Hotel

☎ 762 4343; www.leeshotel.com; r incl tax & service W85,000; subway Line 1 to Jongno 5-ga, Exit 1; 🚶

The smart rooms in this modern and clean hotel usually go for as little as W65,000, which makes them a deal worth grabbing. The immediate area is nothing special, but the subway is just a short stroll away. Rooms are fine except for a chair shortage and the receptionist is welcoming and helpful. The bar/restaurant/coffee shop is subterranean, but stay here if you want something fairly central, better than a motel but budget-priced. Free Internet is available on the 11th floor.

KOREANA HOTEL Hotel

☎ 2171 7000; www.koreanahotel.com; r from W215,000; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 3; 🚶 Right in the thick of things, the marble lobby, with its friendly staff and jazzy artworks, is a good start. The recently renovated and well-kept rooms are comfortable enough but nothing special and are usually discounted to W170,000. A handful of restaurants offer global grazing, and male guests can de-stress body and mind in the luxury sauna and exercise room. The main attraction though is location, location, location.

NEW KUKJE HOTEL Hotel

☎ 732 0161; fax 732 1774; r incl tax & service W127,000; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 4; 🚶 The size of the rooms is okay although they are beginning to look slightly tired and the business centre is just a cubicle under the stairs. The cheerful restaurant serves appealing buffet spreads (W11,000 to W16,500) and you can relax those sightsee-

ing and shopping muscles in the 24-hour sauna (non-guest W11,000, closed Sunday). The hotel is within shouting distance of City Hall and this is reflected in the price.

NEW SEOUL HOTEL Hotel

☎ 735 8800; www.bestwesternnewseoul.com; s & d/tw/ste W140,000/160,000/290,000; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 4; 🚶

This quality hotel makes more effort on the service front than the others and has a perfect downtown location, a bar, a new Italian restaurant called Room 201, and the 24-hour men's sauna (W11,000 for non-guests) is a Little Tokyo. Rooms have light-coloured décor and aren't large but the absolute downtown location more than makes up for that.

CHEAP SLEEPS

BEEWON GUESTHOUSE

Map p205 Guesthouse

☎ 765 0607; www.beewonguesthouse.com; dm/s/tw & d W17,000/27,000/37,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 4; 🚶

This new budget option is located in an orange-tiled building down a street behind the G5 gas station, opposite Changdeok palace. It sets new standards combining motel-style rooms with guesthouse-style communal facilities. The owner keeps it clean and works hard to please her guests. Rooms have air-con, satellite TV and video, fridge, hairdryer, towels and toiletries. Breakfast, Internet and the washing machine are free and discounts are given for longer stays. Dorms contain only one double bunk, the kitchen is large and the lobby has greenery and a mini chandelier.

GUESTHOUSE KOREA

Map pp202-3 Guesthouse

☎ 3675 2205; www.guesthouseinkorea.com; dm/s/d & tw W15,000/27,000/37,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 4; 🚶

Rooms and windows are small and this centrally located backpackers can be a tad untidy, but Internet, laundry and breakfast are all free. Rooms are air-con and have private bathrooms and non-dorm rooms have a TV and fridge. It spreads over three floors and has a laid-back, homely atmosphere. The kitchen has a one-ring cooker and a microwave. The management is (like their dog Kuma) friendly.

BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at www.lonelyplanet.com. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

GWANGHWA MOTEL

Map pp202-3 Motel

☎ 738 0751; r W38,000; subway Line 5 to Gwanghwamun, Exit 7

The helpful owner speaks a little English and takes great pride in her motel where rooms and bathrooms are immaculate and larger than most. The 31 rooms all vary so look around a few if you are choosy. A few, such as room 205, have a touch of class with ornate furniture similar to the luxury Lotte Hotel. A bagel breakfast awaits just over the road at Witch's Table and a super-market is next door.

JONGNOWON MOTEL Motel

☎ 763 4249; www.jongnowon.com; s/d W25,000/35,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 4; 🚶

Next to Seoul Backpackers, staff at this motel are used to dealing with foreigners, and the price includes free Internet, breakfast and laundry. Not as well maintained as some, there's a matchbox-sized kitchen and handkerchief-sized garden, but the small rooms are fully equipped.

INSADONG

Insadong is not the place for party animals but is the cultural heart and soul of Seoul and the most pleasant place to stay. The area is overflowing with traditional restaurants, teashops, private galleries and handicraft shops that can be browsed day after day.

FRASER SUITES Serviced Apartments

☎ 6262 8888; www.fraserhospitality.com; 1/2-bedroom apt incl tax & service per day W242,000/297,000, per month W5m/6m; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 5; 🚶

The apartments still look new and are modern, light and airy thanks to large windows and the splendid inner atrium. All are fully equipped and feel like a home away from

home – heat up food in the space-age microwave, listen to the stereo, throw your dirty clothes in the washer/drier, fill the large fridge with beers, watch TV in the bedroom and work-out in the gym. Priceless babysitters (W10,000 per hour) can liberate your evenings. Monthly prices quoted include discounts, which may not always be available.

HOTEL CROWN Map p205 Hotel

☎ 3676 8000; www.hotelcrown.com; r incl tax & service W80,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 4; 🚶
The reasonably priced, pleasant rooms in this slightly plush hotel are light-coloured with ornate mock-Regency furniture being their main feature. The bathrooms may be a tad small and old-fashioned, but there's a two-desk business centre and restaurant/bar/coffeeshop.

HOTEL SUNBEE Map p205 Boutique Hotel

☎ 730 3451; www.hotelsunbee.com; off Hoenamu-gil; r incl tax & service W77,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6; 🚶
Hidden away next to the Korea Exchange Bank is this classy but virtually unknown boutique hotel, which offers a touch of luxury at a reasonable cost. Breakfast is included. You can view the room options on a screen and pick a design but all are large with big windows, huge TVs, DVD players, free computers and even free soft drinks. Toilets are separate from the showers or spa baths. If you're happy with just a good room, head to Hotel Sunbee.

CHEAP SLEEPS

MOTEL RITZ Map p205 Love Motel

☎ 764 6353; r Mon-Fri W40,000, Sat & Sun W50,000; subway Line 1 to Jongno 3-ga, Exit 1; 🚶
Looking for a love nest? If circular beds and starry skies painted on the ceiling turn you on then stay at this love motel, with its space-age exterior. It's near Tapgol Park, set amidst a medley of love motels that have plastic drapes screening their guests' cars and number plates. It has a lift to conserve your energy, and a room with a computer costs no extra.

MOTEL SARANGBANG Map p205 Motel

☎ 733 3033; r W35,000-40,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6; 🚶
Smart, fair-sized, facility-filled rooms can be found in this new motel, a chopstick's

throw from 50 traditional restaurants and a teashop aviary. Some rooms have a table and chairs, while room 201 has a whirlpool bath for an extra W5000.

SAERIM HOTEL Map p205 Motel

☎ 739 3377; Eorumgol-gil; r W40,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6; 🚶
An excellent deal is offered by the Saerim, with spotless, well-equipped and reasonably sized rooms that have fully tiled bathrooms that contain electronic bidet toilets. Some rooms even have a computer at no extra cost. If you want a quiet haven that is value-for-money and no hassle, stay here.

SEOUL BACKPACKERS Map p205 Guesthouse

☎ 3672 1972; www.seoulbackpackers.com; dm/s/d W17,000/27,000/37,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 4; 🚶
Every room and dorm in this popular and modern purpose-built backpackers has its own bathroom, air-con and *ondol*. Dorms have two or three double bunks. The price here and in the annex includes the usual guesthouse communal facilities and freebies and the youthful staff speak English. The deluxe annex next door has motel-style rooms (dm/s/d W19,000/32,000/42,000), which have everything including fridges, videos and hairdryers, and the bathrooms are big and have windows. But the deluxe moniker is misleading as the place needs redecorating.

SINGUNGJANG Map p205 Motel

☎ 733 1355; Insadong 3-gil; r W30,000; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6
Elderly owner, Mr Ryu, speaks a little English and has a friendly smile as well as the lowest price. His small but well-kept motel rooms are available here in an Insadong alley, and one English teacher stayed for a year, which must mean something.

SIX OF THE BEST

- Best cheap sleep: Beewon Guesthouse (p133)
- Most stylish hotel: W Seoul Walkerhill (p143)
- Best *hanok* (traditional Korean wooden house): Anguk Guesthouse (p132)
- Poshest hotel: Imperial Palace Hotel (p139)
- Best hidden gem: Hotel Sunbee (left)
- Least culture shock: Hamilton Hotel (p137)

MYEONG-DONG & NAMSAN

The traffic-quiet streets of Myeong-dong are thronged with young people every evening, and the place is a shopping mecca for locals and foreigners alike. Close to downtown, the area boasts some top hotels.

ASTORIA HOTEL Map pp206-7 Hotel

☎ 2268 7111; fax 2274 3187; Toegyero; d/tw/ondol incl tax & service W90,000/100,000/120,000; subway Line 3 or 4 to Chungmuro, Exit 4; 🚶
The Astoria deserves a pat on the back for chucking its rack rates out the window and just quoting a reasonable price that includes one breakfast. White and pine-effect décor make for pleasant, clean rooms (a few have Seoul Tower views) and the hotel has a two-desk business corner, bar, restaurant and coffee shop. Twins are bigger than doubles and are variously shaped, so look at more than one. This friendly hotel is just outside Myeong-dong, but near Korea House and Namsangol Hanok Village where you can see, hear and taste traditional Korean culture.

HOTEL SHILLA Map pp206-7 Hotel

☎ 2233 3131; www.shilla.net; r from W430,000; subway Line 3 to Dongguk University, Exit 5; 🚶 🚶
This well-run 500-room hotel on the foothills of Namsan and close to the subway is the spacious and luxurious flagship of the mighty *jaebeol* (family-run corporate conglomerate), Samsung. Everything impresses, from the vast lobby to the free use of a mobile phone (Samsung of course), from the sculpture garden and duty-free shop to the restaurants and the lift with CNN on a small screen. The Shilla retains a Korean flavour with local artworks, blind masseurs and a traditional building in front of the hotel. Staff pride themselves on catering to guests' every whim. Clever technology means that incoming room calls cause the TV volume to decrease and can be transferred to the mobile phone. The discount price hovers around W230,000.

LOTTE HOTEL Map pp206-7 Hotel

☎ 771 1000; www.hotel.lotte.co.kr; old/new wing incl tax & service from W471,000/520,000; subway Line 2 to Euljiro 1-ga, Exit 8; 🚶 🚶
Public areas are palatial and live classical music by a waterfall adds melodic tones

to the lobby lounge, where a coffee and sandwich costs a cool W31,200. The floral arrangements are spectacular, and a flower rather than a TV screen can be found inside the lift. The giant hotel has 1318 rooms and as many staff, but new manager Mr Lee is vowing to improve the personal touch as well as keeping all the facilities up to scratch. Rooms in the new wing have a laptop, mobile phone and walk-in shower and are worth paying more for if you can find a room with a clean carpet. In an enviable location and surrounded by upscale fashion shops, expect 50% discounts and look out for special deals that can start at W190,000.

METRO HOTEL Map pp206-7 Boutique Hotel

☎ 752 1112; www.metrohotel.co.kr; behind the Bridge Bldg; s/d/tw incl tax & service W108,900/121,000/145,200; subway Line 2 Euljiro 1-ga, Exit 5; 🚶
A hop and a skip from the subway is this brand new, modernist 75-room hideaway. Splashes of style abound starting with the flashy, metallic-style lobby and its smart laptop computers. Room size and design vary, but ones with large windows and glass walk-in showers are best. Over smaller ones with a brick-wall view. Prices cover a buffet breakfast in the soothing

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NOT AVAILABLE
IN PICK & MIX

art gallery café and in the evening you can relax in the all-white bar with a view (beers W5500), or let off steam in a karaoke room.

MILLENNIUM SEOUL HILTON

Map pp206-7 Hotel

☎ 753 7788; www.millenniumseoulhilton.co.kr; d/ste from W390,000/510,000; subway Line 1 or 4 to Seoul Station, Exit 10; 🚶 🚗

The Namsan-facing Hilton has all the bells and whistles of a luxury hotel from an eight-desk, three-meeting-room business centre to the flashy Areno's nightclub and a casino (opening in spring 2006). Standard rooms have large windows but a mixed-bag of furnishings and are usually discounted to around W230,000. It's a climb up from the subway station, but nearby Namsan (262m) is perfect for serious joggers, with uphill paths and traffic-free roads around the green hillside.

PACIFIC HOTEL

Map pp206-7 Hotel

☎ 777 7811; fax 755 5582; d/tw incl tax & service W131,000/140,000; subway Line 4 to Myeong-dong, Exit 3; 🚶

Following renovations, bathrooms have electronic bidet toilets and the 135 rooms are pleasant, clean and well-lit, with natural wood décor and a simple but modern style – except for those that have old-fashioned blankets on the beds. Ask for a room with views of Namsan. Set back from the main road, the hotel lacks a bar (maybe that's why the atmosphere is subdued) but the greenery, artworks and small circular glass business centre combine to create a stylish ambience.

SEJONG HOTEL

Map pp206-7 Hotel

☎ 773 6000; www.sejong.co.kr; Toegyero; s/d/ste W180,000/240,000/420,000; subway Line 4 to Myeong-dong, Exit 10; 🚶

This university-owned luxury hotel near the subway in Myeong-dong boasts 20 types of rooms. Namsan-facing rooms are on the small side but those facing the city are bigger. New room décor is pastel shades, the staff are helpful and the general impression is plush and elegant. The fitness centre and men's sauna are great but closed on Sunday. See p92 for their Eunhasu buffet. Prices are usually discounted to W180,000.

SEOUL PLAZA HOTEL

Map pp206-7 Hotel

☎ 771 2200; www.seoulplaza.co.kr; s/d from W340,000/360,000; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 6; 🚶 🚗

As central as a bullseye, the Plaza matches other top hotels with its facilities and service. The lobby has a chandelier, every room has a laptop and you can munch around the world in its stylish restaurants. Staff make a special effort to greet you and remember your name and a posse of them in the lobby are primed to aid new arrivals. Some rooms are on the small side and not as perfect as they should be. Prices are usually discounted to around W200,000.

WESTIN CHOSUN HOTEL

Map pp206-7 Hotel

☎ 317 0404; www.westin.com; s/d from W440,000/470,000; subway Line 2 to Euljiro 1-ga, Exit 4; 🚶 🚗

Seoul's first hotel (the original building opened in 1914) keeps up with the times and so every guest receives free use of a mobile phone and a few rooms have their own gym equipment. Choose your room style after seeing the options on a screen. It's not the most luxurious hotel in Seoul but it has the best location, good atmosphere and well-trained staff. All this means the discount price might stick higher than elsewhere.

The Compass Rose lounge (beers W10,000) is has live jazz at 8pm every evening except Saturday. It has a quality business centre, laptops in the rooms and a lap pool but no lap dancers. The traditional-style barber is a memorable experience. In the garden outside is a pavilion built for King Gojong when he proclaimed himself an emperor and had an altar built to give thanks to heaven. See p104 for O'Kim's bar.

CHEAP SLEEPS

MYEONG-DONG GUESTHOUSE

Map pp206-7 Guesthouse

☎ 755 5437; bravoinn@yahoo.co.kr; r W30,000-50,000; subway Line 4 to Myeong-dong, Exit 2; 🚶

Retired English-speaking bank manager Mr Park will take care of you in his clean and tidy budget guesthouse that is tucked away on a quiet road. The 19 rooms in this converted motel vary and, though small, have all the usual facilities plus free Internet and laundry. It can fill up with young Asian tourists who love the nearby Myeong-dong shopping.

ITAEWON

Popular with American soldiers and expat English teachers, the mix of stalls, shops, pubs, gay bars, nightclubs and ethnic restaurants gives lively Itaewon a different atmosphere to the rest of the city. Stay here and you can party late without having to get a taxi home. Locals here are more likely to speak English, but a few parts are seedy.

GRAND HYATT SEOUL HOTEL

Map p209 Hotel

☎ 797 1234; www.seoul.grand.hyatt.com; r city/mountain view W240,000/225,000; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 2; 🚶 🚗

Perched on top of a hill, the Hyatt makes the most of the stunning views – nearly everywhere in the hotel, even the outdoor pool, has a condor's view of Seoul. The duo playing classical music in the lobby add a touch of class. American presidents choose to stay here and it's hard to find fault with the service, the facilities or anything else. Though far from the subway, there are shuttle buses (10am to 9pm).

The new, lighter, green-themed décor has freshened up the rooms, although some bathrooms are on the small side. The deli and the nightclub (p110) are excellent as are the sports facilities – an indoor and outside pool, masses of high-tech exercise equipment, plus squash, tennis, yoga and aerobics classes. In winter you can ice-skate on the pool. Exact prices depend on the occupancy rate.

HAMILTON HOTEL

Map p209 Hotel

☎ 794 0171; www.hamilton.co.kr; Itaewonno; s/d, tw & ondul W100,000/135,000; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 1; 🚶 🚗

Summer discount rates for a double can go down to W90,000 at this 150-room Itaewon landmark with an adjoining shopping centre. The subway and Partytown are on its doorstep. The best features are the refurbished 24-hour sauna and the rooftop outdoor pool (adult/child W10,000/7000; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-June-end Aug), which is free to guests and is surrounded by sunloungers but lacks greenery. Rooms are nothing flash and have a quaint, old-fashioned feel, but stay here to reduce culture shock as the atmosphere is more American than elsewhere.

HOTEL CROWN

Map p209 Hotel

☎ 797 4111; www.hotelcrown.com; Banporo; r regular/deluxe incl tax & service W100,000/145,000; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 4; 🚶

Away from the main Itaewon area, the lobby and well-worn, quiet rooms are decorated in an ornate mock-Regency style. Guests can eat in the restaurant, work in the business centre, improve their golf swing and recuperate in the saunas, which offer both invigorating and soothing treatments. Windows are triple glazed but the hotel lacks finishing touches, and the more expensive rooms are hardly worth the extra cost.

ITAEWON HOTEL

Map p209 Hotel

☎ 792 3111; www.itaewonhotel.com; Itaewonno; r incl tax & service W120,000; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 2; 🚶

Ideally located on the main Itaewon strip, 200m from the subway, rooms here have large windows, modern bathrooms and are decked out in neutral tones. Everything is up to standard, but the hotel atmosphere is underwhelming and rooms are often discounted to under W100,000. Stay here if you want a quiet and comfortable oasis to retreat to after a hectic day.

CHEAP SLEEPS

HILLTOP MOTEL

Map p209 Motel

☎ 793 4972; r Sun-Thu W25,000, Fri & Sat W30,000; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 3

Perched on top of Hooker Hill, the main hostess bar area, and next to Itaewon's most luxurious sauna, is this motel with larger and cleaner rooms than other Itaewon motels (which tend to be seedier). Recently redecorated, it offers a good deal if you want to party in Itaewon without having to take a taxi home.

SEOUL MOTEL

Map p209 Motel

☎ 795 2266; fax 797 0300; Itaewonno; d/tw Mon-Thu W40,000/70,000, Fri-Sun W45,000/80,000; subway Line 6 to Itaewon, Exit 4

Twin rooms are overpriced but the modern, fully-equipped rooms are the best budget option in Itaewon. The motel attracts long-term male guests who prowl around the Itaewon nightlife. Located right above McDonald's, you only have to walk downstairs for breakfast, and the receptionist speaks English.

SEOUL TOWER HOSTEL

Map p209

Guesthouse

☎ 745 8202; www.towerhostel.com; dm/s/d W14,000/24,000/34,000; subway Line 6 to Noksapyeong, Exit 2; 📍

A 12-minute walk from the subway and away from the Itaewon strip is this backpackers. The premises are shared with a rough-and-ready bar and a sandwich and muffin shop, and a Mexican eatery is nearby. Dorms have two or three double bunks, and one double has its own bathroom. Prices include free breakfast. The hostel has communal rooms and a terrace, but all rooms have fans, not air-con.

SINCHON & YEUIDO**HOTEL BENHUR** Map p210

Hotel

☎ 783 2233; r incl tax & service from W80,000; subway Line 5 to Yeouinaru, Exit 1; 📍

This flashy new business hotel is on soulless Yeouido but near the Han River. It offers a good deal as the 60 neutral-toned rooms have a youthful vibe and are well-stocked with jazzy electronic gear such as wide-screen TVs, computers and DVDs, as well as having big beds, whirlpool baths and steam saunas. Ask for a free breakfast.

YOIDO HOTEL Map p210

Hotel

☎ 782 0121; fax 785 2510; standard/deluxe r incl tax & service W140,000/163,000; subway Line 5 to Yeouinaru, Exit 1; 📍

The recent renovation makes this a reasonable Yeouido option, with a more relaxed and refined air than the brasher and flashier new business hotels nearby. Competition is hot so request a hefty discount. The deluxe rooms are bigger with bigger TVs and bathrooms, while river-view rooms cost no extra. The so-called business centre is an office shared with the hotel staff, and there's a grill restaurant.

CHEAP SLEEPS**GUESTHOUSE KOREA** Map p210

Guesthouse

☎ 3142 0683; www.guesthousekorea.com; dm/s/tw W15,000/25,000/35,000; subway Line 2 to Hongik University, Exit 2; 📍

It's a 15-minute walk from the subway so ring for a pick-up at this small backpackers with laid-back youthful staff and a casual

atmosphere that's within walking distance of Hongik's kicking clubbing zone. The two dorms each have two double bunks and the one single and two twin rooms share two bathrooms. The kitchen, dining room and lounge have air-con, although bedrooms only have fans. Internet, breakfast and laundry are free.

KIMS' GUESTHOUSE Map p210

Guesthouse

☎ 337 9894; www.kimguesthouse.com; Huijeong 4-gil; dm/s/d W17,000/27,000/37,000; subway Line 2 or 6 Hapjeong, Exit 8; 📍

Helpful Ms Kim speaks good English and has been running this popular guesthouse, now spread over two modern houses, for some years. Located in a quiet residential area and near the Han River, rooms with shared bathrooms vary in size, but both houses have air-con, a courtyard and balcony, as well as the usual guesthouse facilities and freebies. Ring for a pick-up as it's hard to find.

PRINCE HOTEL Map p210

Motel

☎ 363 4700; r W38,000; subway Line 2 to Sinchon, Exit 3

Amidst a cluster of *yeogwan* (small, family-run hotels) and love motels in student-thronged Sinchon is this plain and simple 48-room hotel-cum-motel with an elevator and prices you can't argue with. Clean rooms are well-maintained, have a table and chairs, and feature all facilities although bathrooms are smallish. Over the road is a stack of restaurants and bars – don't miss the surrealist Mu bar.

GANGNAM

This is the best area for midrange and top-end hotels. The cluster of accommodation on Bongeunsaro is around 800m from a subway station but only a short taxi ride from COEX. South of the river is more of a business than sightseeing area, but the subway can whisk you to all the sights.

BEST WESTERN PREMIER GANGNAM

Map p211

Hotel

☎ 6474 2000; www.bestwesterngangnam.com; Bongeunsaro; s/d/ste W160,000/200,000/320,000; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 7; 📍

This new business hotel is a step above most Best Westerns and has straightforward but smart rooms with large windows

and TVs. Head to the sauna, spa and health club to lose what you gained at the fusion restaurant and bar. Ask for a decent discount or you might as well swan around in the luxurious embrace of the Ritz Carlton across the road.

DORMY IN SEOUL

Map p211

Serviced Apartments

☎ 6474 1515; www.dormy.co.kr; Bongeunsaro; studio incl tax & service W121,000; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 7; 📍

Opened in 2003, these well-equipped studio apartments have pleasing light colours and a modern look that feature smallish bathrooms with a walk-in shower. With all the conveniences of home, it's a good choice and week-long stays receive a discount. Ask for a free buffet breakfast.

HOTEL DYNASTY Map p211

Hotel

☎ 540 3041; www.hoteldynasty.co.kr; Bongeunsaro; r incl tax & service W85,200; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 7; 📍

The price is the attractive feature given the Gangnam location. Rooms have paper screens as well as curtains but lack character and bathrooms look a bit old-fashioned. You can eat, drink and steam in the hotel facilities. Half a dozen adjacent hotels grapple with each other on this street, so good deals are usually there for the asking.

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HUMAN TOUCH VILLE

Map p211

Serviced Apartments

☎ 553 0050; www.humantouch.co.kr; Nonhyeonso; standard/deluxe studios incl tax & service W120,000/150,000; subway Line 2 to Yeoksam, Exit 6; 📍

The reception staff are friendly and the apartments are fully equipped with novel features such as a balcony and a dishwasher. The only problem is that even the deluxe rooms are surprisingly plain, bordering on basic. A lick of paint would do wonders. Discount prices dip below W100,000 for weekly stays and include breakfast. A royal cuisine restaurant is on the first floor and a convenience store is in the basement.

IMPERIAL PALACE HOTEL Map p211

Hotel

☎ 3440 800; www.imperialpalace.co.kr; Eonjuro; r/ste W350,000/750,000; subway Line 7 to Hak-dong, Exit 1; 📍 📍

Aptly named and totally renovated with no expense spared, this is more of a stately home than a hotel, and blends traditional European style with modern high-tech. At quiet times prices drop to W210,000. The luxurious lobby lounge features wood panels, a classical water feature and European-style furnishings, and a pianist plays up in the minstrel's gallery. The superb rooms feature genuine king-sized beds

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and walk-in showers. Just push a button to raise or lower the seat or lid on the Dobi-dos toilets. Ask for a river view. From the organic-food café Amiga and the porcelain displays (children could prove expensive here) to the health club everything is almost perfect. The outdoor pool is small but has plenty of foliage and sunloungers. A buffet banquet is served at *Familia* (p97).

JELLY HOTEL Map p211 Love Motel

☎ 553 4737; www.jellyhotel.com; incl tax & service short stay W40,000-100,000, overnight W70,000-150,000; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 8; 🚗
The corridors are as dark as a coalmine (to safeguard the anonymity of guests), but the rooms of this upscale love motel are spacious, exotic and classy, with wide-screen DVDs, laptop computers and spa baths. Jelly is as hip as its name suggests, although the receptionist could be friendlier. Every room is different – one is Chinese style while another has a pool table, but must be booked well ahead. Love motels only provide a room (no coffee shop, restaurant or bar) but the rooms are often better than you'd expect for the price.

JW MARRIOTT HOTEL Map p211 Hotel

☎ 6282 6262; www.marriott.com; r incl tax & service from W300,000; subway Line 3 or 7 to Express Bus Terminal, Exit 7; 🚗 🚗
Opened in 2000, this is one of the most recently built luxury hotels and it shows – rooms, bathrooms and beds are all spacious

and modern, and large windows provide plenty of light. Marble bathrooms have walk-in glass showers and a bath. The rest of the hotel lives up to the standard set by the rooms starting with a four-floor lobby atrium. The smart business centre, state-of-the-art spa, fitness club and pool, and the stylish restaurants all have a feel-good factor. The popular new Central Mall is just a few footsteps from the lobby, but for everything else you'll need to hop on a subway train.

M CHEREVILLE Map p211 Serviced Apartments

☎ 553 9600; www.mcherville.com; studio/1-bedroom apt incl tax & service W132,000/154,000; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 6; 🚗
Opened in 2003, just 100m from the subway station and with a lively entertainment district on its doorstep, this is one of the new breed of smart and convenient serviced apartments. It offers 23 floors of light apartments decked out in plain colours with all mod cons. You can watch DVDs, listen to CDs, throw washing in the machine, and soothe tired muscles in the steam sauna showers. All that's lacking is artwork on the walls. Free Internet is available and breakfast is included.

NOVOTEL AMBASSADOR Map p211 Hotel

☎ 567 1101; www.ambatel.com; Bongseungro; r/business fl/exec fl W310,000/325,000/360,000; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 7; 🚗 🚗
The impressive lobby is open plan and looks out on a waterfall, while the bar has

live music nightly except Monday. The service, food and gym are all impressive, but it's best to avoid the standard rooms (discount price W190,000) unless they've been renovated as the business and executive rooms have warmer colours and are more stylish with pleasant meeting rooms and free soft drinks and cakes.

POPGREEN HOTEL Map p211 Hotel

☎ 544 6623; www.popgreenhotel.com; Apgujeong; r incl tax & service W157,000; subway Line 3 to Apgujeong, Exit 2; 🚗
Near Apgujeong subway station, 80-room Popgreen has some style and is almost a boutique hotel with artworks, greenery and a metallic décor theme. After a hard day of sightseeing and shopping you can sink into an armchair and relax in your contemporary-style room with white décor, mood lighting and Internet access. More expensive rooms are bigger. Beside the cubicle business centre is Katharsis, a minimalist café-cum-bar (drinks from W7000), designed to appeal to the style-conscious gentry of Apgujeong.

PRINCESS HOTEL Map p211 Love Motel

☎ 544 0366; fax 544 0322; r small/large incl tax & service W80,000/120,000; subway Line 3 to Apgujeong, Exit 2
In the heart of Apgujeong is this upmarket, metal-clad love motel with flesh-coloured corridor lighting and 10 room styles to choose from. What turns you on baby? How about lotus-shaped red beds, black-tiled bathrooms and a steam sauna? Windows are small but the TVs are big. If entertainment rather than sleep is your object, short-term rates start at W35,000.

RITZ CARLTON HOTEL Map p211 Hotel

☎ 3451 8000; www.ritzcarltonseoul.com; Bongseungro; r W390,000; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 7; 🚗 🚗
This hotel wraps guests in soothing luxury with high levels of service, every facility and a European atmosphere from the furniture to the food. A pianist provides background music in the cavernous lobby lounge, which has memorable artworks, greenery and a waterfall feature down one wall. Rooms have light-green décor and include a CD player and CDs (ask for more at reception if you don't like the choice). Attention to detail is also shown with a small TV in the bathroom and an umbrella in the closet. Discount prices start at W200,000.

SAMJUNG HOTEL Map p211 Hotel

☎ 557 1221; www.samjunghotel.co.kr; Bongseungro; r incl tax & service W127,000; subway Line 2 to Gangnam, Exit 7; 🚗
Quite grand in some respects but old-fashioned and scruffy in places, this Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde hotel has a choice of three restaurants, but there's nowhere to sit in the lobby. The bar on the 12th floor has a good view and the spa/sauna is open day and night. You may prefer the Korean-style *ondol* rooms, which have more character than the rather plain Western-style rooms. Ask for a discount.

HOTEL SUNSHINE Map p211 Hotel

☎ 541 1818; www.hotelsunshine.co.kr; cnr Dosandaero & Nonhyeonnro; r W115,000; subway Line 3 to Hak-dong, Exit 8; 🚗
Rooms, decked out in white and neutral tones, are on the small side but are pleasant enough. This friendly, unpretentious hotel on the fringe of upscale Apgujeong has a relaxing restaurant and coffee shop, and the corridors are light and even smell nice. Ask for a 30% discount.

VILLE Map p211 Long-term Apartments

☎ 549 4999 (no English); Hakdongno; per month W1.7m (minimum 2 months); subway Line 7 to Hak-dong, Exit 6
Stay in these plain but quite large modern studio apartments and save yourself hassles with real estate agents and pain-in-the-butt key money. Rooms have everything including views and are only a hop, skip and a jump from the subway station exit. The only snag is finding someone who speaks English.

YOUNGDONG HOTEL Map p211 Hotel

☎ 542 0112; www.youngdonghotel.co.kr; Dosandaero; d standard/deluxe W115,000/135,000; subway Line 3 to Sinsa, Exit 1; 🚗
This hotel makes an effort. You can borrow a laptop computer free of charge, the staff are friendly and the reception desk displays the weather forecast – and discount prices dip under W100,000. However, corridors are gloomy and there's no bar. Deluxe rooms are bigger and kitted out with walk-in showers, microwave ovens and toasters. Aromatic Thai massages are available in a luxury spa just down the road.

JAMSIL

COEX INTER-CONTINENTAL HOTEL

Map pp214-15 Hotel
 ☎ 3452 2500; www.seoul-coex.intercontinental.com; r from W350,000; subway Line 2 to Samseong, COEX Exit; 📍 🚶

In an enviable position next to the COEX Mall and Exhibition Centre, this luxury hotel has a modernist functional design with spotless rooms and great service. If you want a youthful vibe, stay here and if you want character, stay at the Grand Inter-Continental, which is also nearer the subway. Rooms offer a choice of five pillows and are decked out in beige with glass-cased showers. The restaurants, the chrome sky-bar, the lobby water feature, and the exercise room, sauna and pool are all up to standard. Expect to pay around W260,000 (75% occupancy) or W220,000 (58% occupancy), although book in advance on their website and prices can drop to W175,000.

GRAND INTER-CONTINENTAL HOTEL

Map pp214-15 Hotel
 ☎ 555 5656; seoul-grand.intercontinental.com; r from W370,000; subway Line 2 to Samseong, COEX Exit

As the name suggests, this has a grander more luxurious style than its more functional and youthful brother COEX Inter-Continental, but with the touch of class comes a touch of snootiness. Book through their website in advance and the price can drop to W200,000. With a cool jazz trio playing in its high-ceilinged atrium lobby, antique-looking furniture, wood-panelled lift and seven restaurants, it has a traditional luxury hotel atmosphere. Lower rooms are a little bigger than those higher up, and rooms feature paper screens (as well as curtains), Korean furniture and a minibar almost as well-stocked as a convenience store. The Hunter's Bar has a live Filipina band from 8.30pm.

HOTEL LAKE

Map pp214-15 Hotel
 ☎ 422 1001; www.hotellake.com; r incl tax & service W95,000; subway Line 2 or 8 to Jamsil, Exit 4; 📍
 Hotel Lake overlooks cherry trees, Seokchon Lake and the Lotte World thrill rides, but it's a 15-minute walk from the subway. Rooms offer big-screen TVs with DVD and

video players and lots of freebie stuff. The bathrooms are large with a separate shower and spa bath. It's off the beaten track with a quiet, relaxed, almost genteel atmosphere – a bit like staying by Lake Geneva.

IBIS

Map pp214-15 Hotel
 ☎ 3011 8888; www.ambatel.com; r incl tax & service W97,000; subway Line 2 & Bundang Line to Seolleung, Exit 1; 📍
 There's a buzz in the air at this new hotel, hidden behind the Posco centre, which is only a 10-minute walk from the COEX Exhibition Centre and Mall. The restaurant, bar, sauna and exercise room are nothing special, but there's nothing wrong with them either. Rooms are a tad on the small side, but all have walk-in showers and everything is smart and brand new. The lobby has free Internet, a handy luggage-storage room and a global ATM. The price is pretty reasonable given its close proximity to the COEX.

LOTTE WORLD HOTEL

Map pp214-15 Hotel
 ☎ 419 7000; www.hotellotte.co.kr; r W360,000; subway Line 2 or 8 to Jamsil, Exit 4; 📍 🚶
 Near Seokchon Lake and next to Lotte World, Lotte department store and Lotte mart, this luxury hotel, its lobby festooned with chandeliers and Korean art, is typical of Lotte's Asian version of 'Euro palatial'. Natural wood and pastel shades make the rooms less flamboyant than the public areas and cheaper rooms have a shower over the bath. Babysitters are W10,000 an hour, and businessmen can escape from noisy children on the executive floor. Expect to pay W200,000 or less, except on public holidays when discounts may not be so generous.

TIFFANY HOTEL

Map pp214-15 Hotel
 ☎ 545 0015; www.tiffanyhotel.com; Yeongdongdaero; r incl tax & service W65,000; subway Line 7 to Cheongdam, Exit 14
 Near the subway and an Incheon airport bus stop, this simple, no-frills hotel has a helpful receptionist and a restaurant/bar/coffee shop. Offering 50 quite large, light rooms, the shower heads are huge and it's a definite step-up from a motel. Being out-of-the-way helps to keep the price reasonable.

CHEAP SLEEPS

OLYMPIC PARKTEL YOUTH HOSTEL

Map pp214-15 Hostel
 ☎ 421 2111; www.kyha.co.kr; dm W22,000; subway Line 8 to Mongchontoseong, Exit 1; 📍
 This unusual hostel is located on the 7th and 9th floors of a luxury hotel inside Olympic Park, which is a perfect spot for evening walks and people watching, but a long way from downtown. The en suite dorms have plenty of windows with superb views, TV, air-con, heating and a fridge. Each dorm, the size of a hotel room, has two double bunks and two pull-out beds, so can become crowded, and the separate toilet and shower cubicles are tiny and have only vents. Hostel guests can use the hotel facilities at reduced rates. A YHA office (☎ 2202 2585; 2nd fl; 🕒 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri) sells membership (W25,000 a year).

OTHER NEIGHBOURHOODS

The accommodation includes Seoul's most stylish hotel plus good deals near Itaewon and Dongdaemun.

EULJIRO CO-OP RESIDENCE

Map pp200-1 Serviced Apartments
 ☎ 2269 4600; <http://rent.co-op.co.kr>; studio incl tax & service W84,700; subway Line 2, 4 or 5 to Dongdaemun, Exit 12; 📍
 These small but cute ultra-modern studio apartments have wafer-thin TVs and tiny shower rooms. All the studios are clean, bright and stylish – perfect if you don't need a lot of elbow room, especially when the price drops to W58,000. You can make your own breakfast or cook up a meal in the kitchen. A simple business centre, exercise room and coin-operated washing

TOP FIVE GOOD DEALS UNDER W100,000

- Ibis (opposite)
- Astoria Hotel (p135)
- Hotel Rainbow (right)
- Euljiro Co-op Residence (above)
- Hotel Lees (p132)

machine are part of the package, and the staff are friendlier than in some hotels. Near the subway station, the apartments provide a chic nest above the hurly-burly 24-hour shopping at Dongdaemun.

HOTEL AIRPORT

Map pp198-9 Hotel
 ☎ 2662 1113; www.hotelairport.co.kr; d incl tax & service W90,000; subway Line 5 to Songjeong, Exit 2; 📍
 The attraction of this hotel is the free shuttle bus to the close-by Gimpo international airport, which operates mainly domestic flights. Although a bit old-fashioned with rather dark rooms, bathrooms are large and there's free Internet in the lobby. The restaurant and coffee shop/bar mean you don't have to wander the streets searching for fodder and refreshments. Walk straight on from the subway exit for 200m to reach the hotel.

HOTEL RAINBOW

Map pp200-1 Hotel
 ☎ 792 9993; fax 792 9997; r incl tax & service W55,000; subway Line 1 to Namyong, Exit 1; 📍
 Hidden away in a busy area of eateries and stores around Namyong subway station, just two stops south of City Hall, is this small and homely hotel with clean, modern rooms that have all you could expect plus a computer and a few fancy touches. The restaurant and lobby aren't up to much but the rooms are quiet and the price is hard to beat. From the subway exit turn right and then first right.

KAYA HOTEL

Map pp200-1 Hotel
 ☎ 798 5101; fax 798 5900; d/tw incl tax & service W53,000/63,000; subway Line 1 to Namyong, Exit 1; 📍
 Near the US army's Yongsan base and convenient for USO tours (p46), this 50-room, well-priced hotel, with a business centre cubicle and a comfortable restaurant (meals W6000 to W25,000), coffee shop and bar, is used to dealing with foreigners. Rooms are light and pleasant, and downtown is only 10 minutes away on the subway.

W SEOUL WALKERHILL

Map pp198-9 Hotel
 ☎ 465 2222; www.wseoul.com; r from W470,000; subway Line 5 to Gwangnaru, Exit 2; 📍 🚶
 This brand new 250-room hotel sets a new standard for radically modernist design

and 'whatever whenever' service. From the eye-catching exterior – a glass box adorned with dots – to the jaw-dropping lobby with its egg-shaped seats, moving artworks, open-plan bar, Motown music and fabulous river views, this stellar hotel makes a dramatic design statement. The lobby toilets have red sliding doors, electronic bidet controls as complex as a jetliner's, a space capsule interior and a TV screen.

Everything has attitude, even the menus. Regular rooms are called 'wonderful' and have DVDs, CDs and round beds. Red bedding adds a splash of colour to the white décor. 'Spa' rooms have big baths with a view, 'media' rooms are ultimate designer cool, while 'scent' rooms come with a scent of your choice. Welcome to a designer hotel with a sense of humour from the lingo to the staff uniforms – bellboys dressed like gangsters. A casino is next door. The only drawback is that it's 2km from the subway, although there is a shuttle bus. Book through their

website and the price of special deals can drop to W215,000.

CHEAP SLEEPS

DREAMTEL YOUTH HOSTEL

Map pp198-9

Hostel

☎ 2667 0535; www.idreamtel.co.kr; dm/f W22,000/72,000; subway Line 5 to Banghwa, Exit 4; 📍 📍

Dorms and family rooms have a TV, fridge, air-con and en suite but are nondescript and need more airing. The large modern hostel has an institutional feel and is 45 minutes from downtown by subway. A YHA card is necessary and free Internet is available. For exercise walk around the green hillside out the back or pop downstairs to the large swimming pool (W4500), gym and sauna. From the subway exit walk straight, turn left at the end of the road, then go left again at the end of that road and it's on your right – 400m from the subway exit.

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