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Home > Luxury Travel > Luxury Travel > Luxury Travel: Korea

Luxury Travel: Korea

Written by Elyse Glickman



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Page 1 of 2

From the streets of Seoul to the laid-back elegance of Jeju-Do, Korea's appetite for luxury is a reality in everyday life.



The first thing that may strike you about Seoul is that South Koreans know a thing or two about fashion and effective branding. The streets may not be paved with gold, but they are ablaze with the world's great designers and popular brands, from Armani to Zara. Local labels, such as Ralph Lauren-esque Bean Pole and Armani Exchange-ish Giordano, thrive because they know what modern Koreans want...Western chic with a flair that is still very definitively Korean and unquestionably upscale. Even with all this minty fresh modernity, however, Seoul has a rich history to draw upon. Even The Ritz Carlton Seoul (great views, great fresh-market breakfast bar and indulgent bedding) captures the convergence of nonstop glamour and respect for history.



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The soul of Seoul can be found by day, beyond its seductive retail maze, via the many temples and palaces that can be found in every corner. They are laid out and preserved so effectively that stepping onto the grounds is almost like stepping back in time. Bosingak Bell Pavilion, Jogyesa Temple and the complex housing the Gyeongbokgung Palace, National Folk Museum of Korea and National Palace Museum of Korea are full-on cultural immersions into Korean history, anthropology, landscape and architecture, where the modern skyline of Seoul almost seems to vanish. To get immersed gastronomically in Korean culture, take a seat Kook Soon Dang Brewery's casual bistro or Yongsusan for a more formal multi-course experience.

When it comes to shopping back in the modern world, prepare to be overwhelmed. The city offers temptations at all prices, from funky open-air flea markets near local universities (Yonsei and Hongig), to vendor-lined shopping streets of Myeong-Dong, Namdaemun and Dongdaemun. Those whose standards are shaped by Neiman-Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue will be impressed with Shinsigae, its luxury-crammed departments and floors spinning up to dizzying heights. Lotte has its name on department stores akin to Macy's or Dillard's, mixing high end and more moderately priced labels.

