

South Korea

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South Korea, officially the **Republic of Korea** (**ROK**, Korean: 대한민국, pronounced [tɛːhanminguk] (listen[ⓘ])) and sometimes referred to simply as **Korea**, is a state in East Asia, located on the southern portion of the Korean Peninsula. It is neighbored by the People's Republic of China to the west, Japan to the east, and North Korea to the north. Its capital is Seoul. South Korea lies in a temperate climate region with a predominantly mountainous terrain. Its territory covers a total area of 99,392 square kilometers^[5] and has a population of 50 million.

Archaeological findings show that the Korean Peninsula was occupied by the Lower Paleolithic period.^{[6][7]} Korean history begins with the founding of Gojoseon in 2333 BC by the legendary Dan-gun. Following the unification of the Three Kingdoms of Korea under Silla 668 AD, Korea went through the Goryeo Dynasty and Joseon Dynasty as one nation until the end of the Korean Empire in 1910, when Korea was annexed by Japan. After liberation and occupation by Soviet and U.S. forces at the end of World War II, the nation was divided into North and South Korea. The latter was established in 1948 as a democracy.

After the invasion of South Korea by forces from the North on 25 June 1950, the resulting war between the two Koreas ended in an uneasy cease-fire, and the border between the two nations is currently the most heavily fortified in the world.^[8] After the war, the South Korean economy grew significantly and the country was transformed into a major economy,^[9] a full democracy, and a regional power in East Asia.

South Korea is a presidential republic consisting of sixteen administrative divisions and is a developed country with a very high standard of living. It is Asia's fourth largest economy and world's 15th (nominal) or 12th (purchasing power parity) largest economy. The economy is export-driven, with production focusing on electronics, automobiles, ships, machinery, petrochemicals and robotics. South Korea is a member of the United Nations, WTO, OECD and G-20 major economies. It is also a founding member of APEC and the East Asia Summit.

<p>Republic of Korea 대한민국 <i>Daehanmin(-)guk</i></p>	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: <i>Benefit all mankind</i> (홍익인간) (unofficial motto)	
Anthem: <i>Aegukga</i> (애국가) The Patriotic Song	
	
Capital (and largest city)	Seoul 37°35′N 127°0′E
Official language(s)	Korean
Official scripts	Hangeul
Demonym	South Korean, Korean
Government <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">- President- Acting Prime Minister</div>	Presidential republic Lee Myung-bak Yoon Jeung-hyun
Legislature	National Assembly
Establishment <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">- Independence declared- Provisional Government- Liberation</div>	March 1, 1919 April 13, 1919 August 15, 1945

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 - Constitution	July 17, 1948
 - Government proclaimed	August 15, 1948
Area	
 - Total	100,210 km ² (108th) <div>38,691 sq mi</div>
 - Water (%)	0.3
Population	
 - 2009 estimate	48,758,000 ^[1] (24th)
 - Density	491/km ² (21st) <div>1,271/sq mi</div>
GDP (PPP)	2009 estimate
 - Total	\$1.364 trillion ^[2]
 - Per capita	\$27,978 ^[2]
GDP (nominal)	2009 estimate
 - Total	\$832.512 billion ^[2]
 - Per capita	\$17,074 ^[2]
Gini (2007)	31.3 ^[3] (<i>low</i>)
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.937 ^[4] (<i>very high</i>) (26th)
Currency	South Korean won (₩) (KRW)
Time zone	Korea Standard Time (UTC+9)
 - Summer (DST)	<i>not observed</i> (UTC+9)
Date formats	yyyy년 mm월 dd일 yyyy/mm/dd (CE)
Drives on the	right
Internet TLD	.kr
Calling code	82
 ¹ Mobile phone system CDMA, WCDMA, HSDPA and WiBro	
 ² Domestic power supply 220V/60 Hz, CEE 7/7 sockets	

History

Before division

Main article: History of Korea



Jikji, the first known book printed with movable metal type in 1377. Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.

Korean history begins with the legendary founding of Joseon (often known as "Gojoseon" to prevent confusion with another dynasty founded in the 14th century; the prefix Go- means 'old' or 'earlier') in 2333 BCE by Dangun, according to Korean foundation mythology.^[10] Gojoseon expanded until it controlled northern Korean Peninsula and some parts of Manchuria. After numerous conflicts with the Chinese Han Dynasty, Gojoseon disintegrated, leading to the Proto-Three Kingdoms of Korea period.

In the early centuries of the Common Era, Buyeo, Okjeo, Dongye, and the Samhan confederacy occupied the peninsula and southern Manchuria. Of the various small states, Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla grew to control the peninsula as Three Kingdoms of Korea. The unification of the Three Kingdoms by Silla in 676 led to the North South States Period, in which much of the Korean Peninsula was controlled by Unified Silla, while Balhae succeeded the northern parts of Goguryeo. In Unified Silla, poetry and art was encouraged, and Buddhist culture flourished. Relationships between Korea and China remained relatively peaceful during this time. However, Unified Silla weakened under internal strife, and surrendered to Goryeo in 935. Balhae, Silla's neighbor to the north, was formed as a successor state to Goguryeo. During its height, Balhae controlled most of Manchuria and parts of Russia. It fell to the Khitan in 926.

The peninsula was united by Emperor Taejo of Goryeo in 936. Like Silla, Goryeo was a highly cultural state and created the Jikji in 1377, using the world's oldest movable metal printing press.^[11] The Mongol invasions in the 13th century greatly weakened Goryeo. After nearly 30 years of war, Goryeo continued to rule Korea, though as a tributary ally to the Mongols. After the Mongolian Empire collapsed, severe political strife followed and the Goryeo Dynasty was replaced by the Joseon Dynasty in 1388 following a rebellion by General Yi Seong-gye.

King Taejo declared the new name of Korea as "Joseon" in reference to Gojoseon, and moved the capital to Seoul. The first 200 years of the Joseon Dynasty were marked by relative peace and saw the creation of Hangul by King Sejong the Great in the 14th century and the rise in influence of Confucianism in the country.



Gyeongbok Palace is the largest of the Five Grand Palaces built during the Joseon Dynasty.

Between 1592 and 1598, the Japanese invaded Korea. Toyotomi Hideyoshi led the forces and tried to invade the Asian continent through Korea, but was eventually repelled by the Righteous army and assistance from Ming Dynasty China. This war also saw the rise of Admiral Yi Sun-sin and his renowned "turtle ship". In the 1620s and 1630s, Joseon suffered from invasions by the Manchu who eventually conquered all of China.

After another series of wars against Manchuria, Joseon experienced a nearly 200-year period of peace. King Yeongjo and King Jeongjo especially led a new renaissance of the Joseon Dynasty.

However, the latter years of the Joseon Dynasty were marked by excessive dependence on China for external affairs and isolation from the outside world. During the 19th century, Korea's isolationist policy earned it the name the "Hermit Kingdom". The Joseon Dynasty tried to protect itself against Western imperialism, but was eventually forced to open trade. After the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, Korea came under Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945). At the end of World War II, the Japanese surrendered to Soviet and U.S. forces who occupied the northern and southern halves of Korea, respectively.



View of Seoul's Gangnam district today

After division

Main article: History of South Korea

Despite the initial plan of a unified Korea in the 1943 Cairo Declaration, escalating Cold War antagonism between the Soviet Union and the United States eventually led to the establishment of separate governments, each with its own ideology, leading to Korea's division into two political entities in 1948: North Korea and South Korea. In the North, a former anti-Japanese guerrilla and communist activist, Kim Il-sung gained power through Soviet

support, and in the South, an exiled and right-wing Korean political leader, Syngman Rhee, was installed as president.



The Seoul Olympic Stadium, seen from the Han River, hosted the 1988 Summer Olympics.

On 25 June 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea, sparking the Korean War, the Cold War's first major conflict. At the time, the Soviet Union had boycotted the United Nations (UN), thus forfeiting their veto rights. This allowed the UN to intervene in a civil war when it became apparent that the superior North Korean forces would unify the entire country. The Soviet Union and China backed North Korea, with the later participation of millions of Chinese troops. After huge advances on both sides, and massive losses among Korean civilians in both the north and the south, the war eventually reached a stalemate. The 1953 armistice, never signed by South Korea, split the peninsula along the demilitarized zone near the original demarcation line. No peace treaty was signed, resulting in the two countries remaining technically at war. At least 2.5 million people died during the

Korean War.^[12]

In 1960, a student uprising led to the resignation of the autocratic President Syngman Rhee. A period of political instability followed, broken by General Park Chung-hee's military coup (the "*5–16 coup d'état*") against the weak and ineffectual government the next year. Park took over as president until his assassination in 1979, overseeing rapid export-led economic growth as well as severe political repression. Park was heavily criticised as a ruthless military dictator, although the Korean economy developed significantly during his tenure.

The years after Park's assassination were marked again by considerable political turmoil as the previously repressed opposition leaders all campaigned to run for president in the sudden political void. In 1980 there was another coup d'état by General Chun Doo-hwan against the transitional government of Choi Kyu Hah, the interim president and a former prime minister under Park. Chun assumed the presidency, triggering nationwide protests demanding democracy, in particular in the city of Gwangju, where Chun sent special forces to violently suppress the Gwangju Democratization Movement.^[13]

Chun and his government held Korea under a despotic rule until 1987, when a Seoul National University student was tortured to death.^[14] On 10 June, the Catholic Priests Association for Justice revealed the incident, igniting huge demonstrations around the country. Eventually, Chun's party, the Democratic Justice Party, and its leader, Roh Tae-woo announced the June 29th Declaration, which included the direct election of the president. Roh went on to win the election by a narrow margin against the two main opposition leaders, Kim Dae-Jung and Kim Young-Sam.

In 1988, Seoul hosted the 1988 Summer Olympics. It became a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996.^[15] It was adversely affected by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. However the country was able to recover and continue its economic growth,

albeit at a slower pace.

In June 2000, as part of president Kim Dae-Jung's "Sunshine Policy" of engagement, a North–South summit took place in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. Later that year, Kim received the Nobel Peace Prize "for his work for democracy and human rights in South Korea and in East Asia in general, and for peace and reconciliation with North Korea in particular."^[16]

In 2002, South Korea and Japan jointly co-hosted the 2002 FIFA World Cup, however South Korean and Japanese relations later soured due to conflicting claims of sovereignty over the Liancourt Rocks (referred to as Dokdo in Korea, and Takeshima in Japan), in what became known as the Liancourt Rocks dispute.

Government

Main article: Government of South Korea



The National Assembly of South Korea

Like many democracies,^[17] South Korea's government is divided into three branches: executive, judicial, and legislative. The executive and legislative branches operate primarily at the national level, although various ministries in the executive branch also carry out local functions. Local governments are semi-autonomous, and contain executive and legislative bodies of their own. The judicial branch operates at both the national and local levels. South Korea is a constitutional democracy.

The South Korean government's structure is determined by the Constitution of the Republic of Korea. This document has been revised several times since its first promulgation in 1948 at independence. However, it has retained many broad characteristics and with the exception of the short-lived Second Republic of South Korea, the country has always had a presidential system with an independent chief executive.^[18] The first direct election was also held in 1948. Although South Korea experienced a series of military dictatorships since the 1960s up until the 1980s, it has since developed into a successful liberal democracy. Today, the CIA World Factbook describes South Korea's democracy as a "fully functioning modern democracy".^[19]

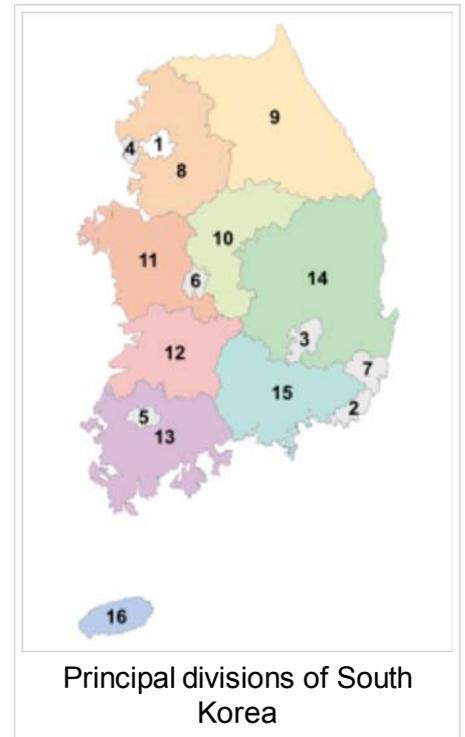
Administrative divisions

Main article: Administrative divisions of South Korea

See also Special cities of Korea and Provinces of Korea

The major administrative divisions in South Korea are **provinces**, **metropolitan cities** (self-governing cities that are not part of any province), and one **special city**.

	Name ^a	hangul	hanja	population
Special city (<i>Teukbyeolsi</i>)^a				
1	Seoul (Special City)	서울특별시	서울特別市	10,421,782
Metropolitan cities (<i>Gwangyeoksi</i>)^a				
2	Busan	부산광역시	釜山廣域市	3,635,389
3	Daegu	대구광역시	大邱廣域市	2,512,604
4	Incheon	인천광역시	仁川廣域市	2,628,000
5	Gwangju	광주광역시	光州廣域市	1,415,953
6	Daejeon	대전광역시	大田廣域市	1,442,857
7	Ulsan	울산광역시	蔚山廣域市	1,087,958
Provinces (<i>Do</i>)^a				
8	Gyeonggi-do	경기도	京畿道	10,415,399
9	Gangwon-do	강원도	江原道	1,592,000
10	Chungcheongbuk-do (Northern Chungcheong)	충청북도	忠清北道	1,462,621
11	Chungcheongnam-do (Southern Chungcheong)	충청남도	忠清南道	1,840,410
12	Jeollabuk-do (Northern Jeolla)	전라북도	全羅北道	1,890,669
13	Jeollanam-do (Southern Jeolla)	전라남도	全羅南道	1,994,287
14	Gyeongsangbuk-do (Northern Gyeongsang)	경상북도	慶尙北道	2,775,890
15	Gyeongsangnam-do (Southern Gyeongsang)	경상남도	慶尙南道	2,970,929
Special self-governing province (<i>Teukbyeoljachi-do</i>)^a				
16	Jeju-teukbyeoljachido (Jeju-do)	제주특별자치도	濟州特別自治道	560,000



^a Revised Romanisation.

Foreign relations

Main article: Foreign relations of South Korea

South Korea maintains diplomatic relations with more than 188 countries. The country has also been a member of the United Nations since 1991, when it became a member state at the same time as North Korea. On January 1, 2007, South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon assumed the post of UN Secretary-General. It has also developed links with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as both a member of *ASEAN Plus three*, a body of observers, and the East Asia Summit (EAS).

Beginning in May 2007, South Korea and the European Union have been negotiating a free trade agreement to reduce trade barriers.^[20] South Korea is also negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with Canada,^[21] and another with New Zealand.^[22]

In November 2009, South Korea made its accession to the OECD Development Assistance Committee marking the first time a former aid recipient country has joined the group as a donor member. South Korea has also agreed to host the G-20 Summit in Seoul in 2010.

China

Historically, Korea has had relatively close relations with China. Before the formation of South Korea, Korean independence fighters worked with Chinese soldiers during the Japanese occupation. However, after World War II, the People's Republic of China embraced Maoism while South Korea sought close relations with the United States. The PRC assisted North Korea with manpower and supplies during the Korean War, and in its aftermath the diplomatic relationship between South Korea and the PRC almost completely ceased. Relations thawed gradually and South Korea and the PRC re-established formal diplomatic relations on August 24, 1992. The two countries sought to improve bilateral relations and lifted the forty-year old trade embargo, and^[23] South Korean-Chinese relations have improved steadily since 1992.^[23] The Republic of Korea broke off official relations with the Republic of China upon gaining official relations with the People's Republic of China.^[24]

Japan

Although there were no formal diplomatic ties between South Korea and Japan after the end of World War II, South Korea and Japan signed the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea in 1965 to establish diplomatic ties. There is heavy anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korea due to a number of unsettled Japanese-Korean disputes, many of which stem from the period of Japanese occupation. During World War II, more than 100,000 Koreans were forced to serve in the Imperial Japanese Army.^{[25][26]} Korean women were lured to the war front to serve the Imperial Japanese Army as sexual slaves, called comfort women.^{[27][28]}

Longstanding issues such as Japanese war crimes against Korean civilians, the visits by Japanese politicians to the Yasukuni Shrine honoring Japanese soldiers killed at war (including some class A war criminals), the re-writing of Japanese textbooks related to Japanese acts during World War II, and the territorial disputes over Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo in Korean)^[29] continue to trouble Korean-Japanese relations. Although Liancourt Rocks are claimed by both Korea and Japan, the islets are currently administered by South Korea, which has its Korean Coast Guard stationed there.^[30]

In response to then-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, former



President of South Korea Lee Myung-bak, with former U.S. President George W. Bush.



Liancourt Rocks has become an issue known as the Liancourt Rocks dispute

President Roh Moo-hyun suspended all summit talks between South Korea and Japan.^[31]

North Korea

Both North and South Korea continue to officially claim sovereignty over the entire peninsula and any outlying islands. With longstanding animosity following the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, North Korea and South Korea signed an agreement to pursue peace.^[32] On October 4, 2007, Roh Moo-Hyun and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il signed an eight-point agreement on issues of permanent peace, high-level talks, economic cooperation, renewal of train services, highway and air travel, and a joint Olympic cheering squad.^[32]

Despite the Sunshine Policy and efforts at reconciliation, the progress was complicated by North Korean missile tests in 1993, 1998, 2006 and 2009. As of early 2009, relationships between North and South Korea were very tense; North Korea had been reported to have deployed missiles,^[33] ended its former agreements with South Korea,^[34] and threatened South Korea and the United States not to interfere with a satellite launch it had planned.^[35] North and South Korea are still technically at war (having never signed an armistice after the Korean War) and share the world's most heavily fortified border.^[8] On May 27, 2009, North Korea declared that the ceasefire treaty, signed post Korean War, is no longer valid due to the South Korean government's pledge to "definitely join" the Proliferation Security Initiative. To further complicate and intensify strains between the two nations, the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan in March 2010, killing 46 seamen, is as of May 20, 2010, claimed by a multi-national research team^[36] to have been caused by a North Korean torpedo, which the North denies. South Korea agreed with the findings from the research group and President Lee Myung-bak declared in May 2010 that Seoul would cut all trade with North Korea as part of measures primarily aimed at striking back at North Korea diplomatically and financially.^[37] As a result of this, North Korea severed all ties, completely abrogated the previous pact of non aggression and expelled all South Koreans from a joint industrial zone in Kaesong.^[38]

United States

The United States engaged in the decolonization of Korea (mainly in the South, with the Soviet Union engaged in North Korea) from Japan after World War II. After three years of military administration by the United States, the South Korean government was established. Upon the onset of the Korean War, U.S. forces were sent to defend South Korea against invasion by North Korea and later China. Following the ceasefire, South Korea and the U.S. agreed to a "Mutual Defense Treaty", under which an attack on either party would summon a response from both. Currently, the U.S. Eighth Army, Seventh Air Force and U.S. Naval Forces Korea are stationed in South Korea. The two nations have strong economic, diplomatic and military ties, although they have at times disagreed with regards to policies towards North Korea. There has also been strong anti-American sentiment during certain periods, most of which has calmed recently. In 2007, a free trade agreement known as the Republic of Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) was signed between South Korea and the United States, but has not yet been approved by the legislative bodies of the two countries.

Military

Main article: Republic of Korea Armed Forces

A long history of invasions by neighbors and the unresolved tension with North Korea have prompted South Korea to allocate 2.6% of its GDP and 15% of all government spending to its military, while maintaining compulsory conscription for men.^[39] Consequently, South Korea has the world's sixth largest number of active troops,^[40] the world's second-largest number of reserve troops^[40] and the

eleventh largest defence budget. The Republic of Korea, with a regular military force numbering 3.7 million regular personnel among a total national population of 50 million people, has the second highest number of soldiers per capita in the world,^[40] after the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.^[41]

The South Korean military consists of the Army (ROKA), the Navy (ROKN), the Air Force (ROKAF), and the Marine Corps (ROKMC), and reserve forces.^[42] Many of these forces are concentrated near the Korean Demilitarized Zone. All South Korean males are constitutionally required to serve in the military, typically for a period of two years. Previously, Koreans of mixed race were exempt from military duty if they "look distinctively biracial", but such policy is potentially up for abolition pending further review by the Ministry of Defense.^[43]

In addition to male conscription in South Korea's sovereign military, 1000 Korean males are selected every year to serve two years in the KATUSA Program to further augment the USFK.^[44]

In 2010, South Korea was spending ₩1.68 trillion in a cost-sharing agreement with the US to provide budgetary support to the US forces in Korea, on top the ₩29.6 trillion budget for its own military.

The South Korean army has 2,500 tanks in operation, including the K1A1 and K2 Black Panther, which form the backbone of the South Korean army's mechanized armor and infantry forces. A sizable arsenal of many artillery systems, including 1,700 self-propelled K55 and K9 Thunder howitzers, and 680 helicopters and UAVs of numerous types, are assembled to provide additional fire, reconnaissance, and logistics support. South Korea's smaller but more advanced artillery force and wide range of airborne reconnaissance platforms are pivotal in the counter-battery suppression of North Korea's over-sized artillery force, which operates more than 13,000 artillery systems deployed in various state of fortification and mobility.^{[40][45]}

The South Korean navy has made its first major transformation into a blue-water navy through the formation of the Strategic Mobile Fleet, which includes a battle group of Chungmugong Yi Sun-sin class destroyers, Dokdo class amphibious assault ship, AIP-driven Type 214 submarines, and King Sejong the Great class destroyers, which is equipped with the latest baseline of Aegis fleet-defense system that allows the ships to track and destroy multiple cruise missiles and ballistic missiles simultaneously, forming an integral part of South Korea's indigenous missile defense umbrella against the North Korean military's missile threat.^[46]

The South Korean air force operates 840 aircraft, making it world's ninth largest air force, including several types of advanced fighters like F-15K, heavily modified KF-16C/D,^[47] and the indigenous F/A-50,^{[48][49]} supported by well-maintained fleets of older fighters such as F-4E and KF-5E/F that still effectively serve the air force alongside the more modern aircraft. In an attempt to gain strength in terms of not just numbers but also modernity, the commissioning of four Boeing 737 AEW&C aircraft, under Project Peace Eye for centralized intelligence gathering and analysis on a modern battlefield, will enhance the fighters' and other support aircraft's ability to perform their missions with awareness and precision.



ROKN Sejong the Great (DDG 991), a *King Sejong the Great* -class guided-missile destroyer

From time to time, South Korea has sent its troops overseas to assist American forces. It has participated in most major conflicts that the United States has been involved in the past 50 years. South Korea dispatched 325,517 troops to fight alongside American, Australian, Filipino, New Zealand and South Vietnamese soldiers in the Vietnam War, with a peak strength of 50,000. In 2004, South Korea sent 3,300 troops of the Zaytun Division to help re-building in northern Iraq, and was the third largest contributor in the coalition forces after only the US and Britain.^[50] Beginning in 2001, South Korea had so far deployed 24,000 troops in the Middle East region to support the War on Terrorism. A further 1,800 were deployed since 2007 to reinforce UN peacekeeping forces in Lebanon.

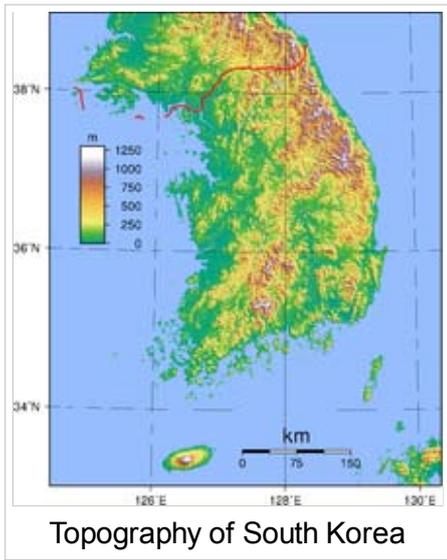


ROKAF F-15K strike fighters

The United States has stationed a substantial contingent of troops in South Korea since the Korean War to defend South Korea in case of East Asian military crises. There are also approximately 28,500 U.S. Military personnel stationed in Korea,^[51] most of them serving one year of unaccompanied tours. The American troops, which primarily are assigned to the Eighth United States Army are stationed in installations at Osan, Yongsan, Dongducheon, Sungbuk, and Daegu. A still functioning UN Command is technically the top of the chain of command of all forces in South Korea, including the US forces and the entire South Korean military – if a sudden escalation of war between North and South Korea were to occur, as of currently, the United States would assume control of the South Korean armed forces in all military and paramilitary moves. However, in September 2006, the Presidents of the United States and the Republic of Korea agreed that South Korea should assume the lead for its own defense. In early 2007, the U.S. Secretary of Defense and ROK Minister of National Defense determined that South Korea will assume wartime operational control of its forces on April 17, 2012. U.S. Forces Korea will transform into a new joint-warfighting command, provisionally described as Korea Command (KORCOM).^[52]

Geography and climate

Main articles: Geography of South Korea and National parks of South Korea



South Korea occupies the southern portion of the Korean Peninsula, which extends some 680 miles (1,100 km) from the Asian mainland. This mountainous peninsula is flanked by the Yellow Sea to the west, and Sea of Japan (East Sea) to the east. Its southern tip lies on the Korea Strait and the East China Sea.



Boseong tea field

The country's total area is 38,622.57 square miles (100,032.00 km²).^[53]

South Korea can be divided into four general regions: an eastern region of high mountain ranges and narrow coastal plains; a western region of broad coastal plains, river basins, and rolling hills; a southwestern region of mountains and valleys; and a southeastern region dominated by the broad basin of the Nakdong River.^[54]

South Korea's terrain is mostly mountainous, most of which is not arable. Lowlands, located primarily in the west and southeast, constitute only 30% of the total land area.

About three thousand islands, mostly small and uninhabited, lie off the western and southern coasts of South Korea. Jeju-do is located about 100 kilometers (about 60 mi) off the southern coast of South Korea. It is the country's largest island, with an area of 1,845 square kilometres (712 sq mi). Jeju is also the site of South Korea's highest point: Hallasan, an extinct volcano, reaches 1,950 meters (6,398 ft) above sea level. The most eastern islands of South Korea include Ulleungdo and Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo), while Marado and Socotra Rock are the southernmost islands of South Korea.^[54]

South Korea has 20 national parks and popular nature places like the Boseong Tea Fields, Suncheon Bay Ecological Park, and the first national park of Jirisan.^[55]

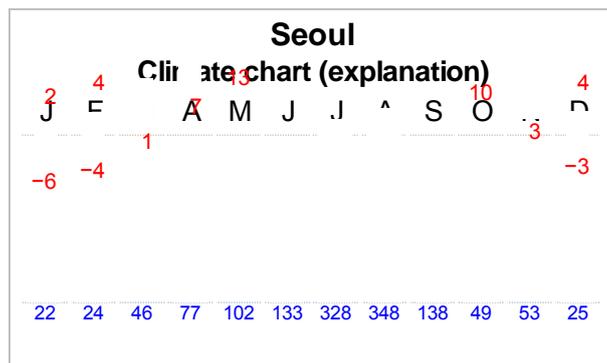
Climate

Main article: Climate of South Korea

South Korea tends to have a humid continental climate and a humid subtropical climate, and is affected by the East Asian monsoon, with precipitation heavier in summer during a short rainy season called *jangma* (장마), which begins end of June through the end of July. Winters can be extremely cold with the minimum temperature dropping to −20 °C in the northernmost part of the country: in Seoul, the average January temperature range is −7 °C to 1 °C (19 °F to 33 °F), and the average August temperature range is 22 °C to



National parks of **South Korea** (twenty) Land-based parks are in red and marine parks are in blue.



30 °C (71 °F to 86 °F). Winter temperatures are higher along the southern coast and considerably lower in the mountainous interior.^[57]

Rainfall is concentrated in the summer months of June through September. The southern coast is subject to late summer typhoons that bring strong winds and heavy rains. The average annual precipitation varies from 1,370 millimeters (54 inches) in Seoul to 1,470 millimeters (58 inches) in Busan. There are occasional typhoons that bring high winds and floods.

Environment

Main article: Environment of South Korea



Cheonggyecheon, a stream running through downtown Seoul, was restored after being paved over for a motorway.

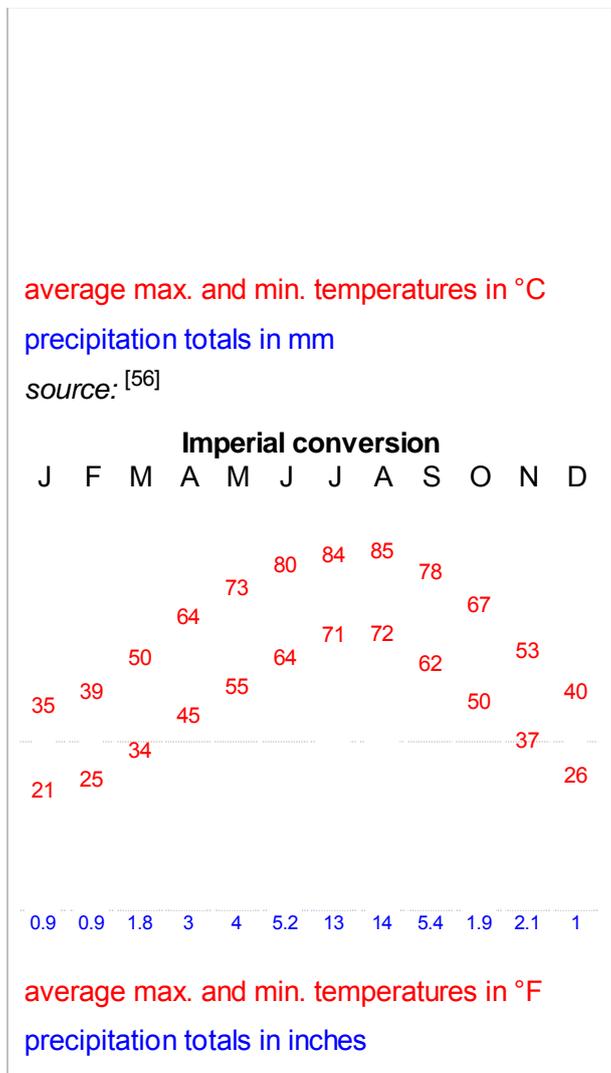
During the first 20 years of South Korea's growth surge, little effort was made to preserve the environment.^[58] Unchecked industrialization and urban development have resulted in

deforestation and the ongoing destruction of wetlands such as the Songdo Tidal Flat.^[59] However, there have been recent efforts to balance these problems, including a government run \$84 billion five-year green growth project that aims to boost energy efficiency and green technology.^{[60][61]}

The green-based economic strategy is a comprehensive overhaul of South Korea's economy, utilizing nearly two percent of the national GDP.^[60] The greening initiative includes such efforts as a nation wide bike network, solar and wind energy, lowering oil dependent vehicles, backing daylight savings and extensive usage of environmentally friendly technologies such as LEDs in electronics and lighting.^[62] The country – already the world's most wired – plans to build a nationwide next-generation network which will be 10 times faster than current broadband facilities in order to reduce energy usage.^[62]

Seoul's tap water recently became safe to drink, with city officials branding it "Arisu" in a bid to convince the public.^[63] Efforts have also been made with afforestation projects. Another multi-billion dollar project was the restoration of Cheonggyecheon, a stream running through downtown Seoul that had earlier been paved over by a motorway.^[64] One major challenge is air quality, with acid rain, sulfur oxides, and annual yellow dust storms being particular problems.^[58] It is acknowledged that many of these difficulties are a result of South Korea's proximity to China, which is a major air polluter.^[58]

South Korea is a member of the Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic Treaty, Biodiversity Treaty, Kyoto Protocol (forming the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG), regarding UNFCCC,^[65] with Mexico and Switzerland), Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection,



Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, and Whaling.^[66]

Economy

Main article: Economy of South Korea

South Korea has a market economy which ranks 15th in the world by nominal GDP and 12th by purchasing power parity (PPP), identifying it as one of the G-20 major economies. It is a high-income developed country, with an emerging economy,^[67] and is a member of OECD. South Korea is one of the Asian Tigers, and is the only developed country so far to have been included in the group of Next Eleven countries. South Korea had one of the world's fastest growing economies from the early 1960s to the late 1990s, and South Korea is still one of the fastest growing developed countries in the 2000s, along with Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, the other three members of Asian Tigers.^[68] South Koreans refer to this growth as the Miracle on the Han River.^[69] The South Korean economy is heavily dependent on international trade, and in 2009, South Korea was the eighth largest exporter and tenth largest importer in the world.

Despite the South Korean economy's high growth potential and apparent structural stability, South Korea suffers perpetual damage to its credit rating in the stock market due to the belligerence of North Korea in times of deep military crises, which has an adverse effect on the financial markets of the South Korean economy.^{[70][71]} However, renowned financial organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, also compliment the resilience of the South Korean economy against various economic crises, citing low state debt, and high fiscal reserves that can quickly be mobilized to address any expected financial emergencies.^[72] South Korea was one of the few developed countries that were able to avoid a recession during the global financial crisis,^[73] and its economic growth rate will reach 6.1% in 2010,^[74] a sharp recovery from economic growth rates of 2.3% in 2008 and 0.2% in 2009 when the global financial crisis hit.

Transportation and energy

Main articles: Transport in South Korea and Nuclear power in South Korea



The KTX-II high-speed train can travel at 350 km/h (220 mph).



Incheon International Airport is the largest airport in South Korea.

South Korea has a market-oriented economy with technologically advanced transportation network consisting of high-speed railways, highways, bus routes, ferry services, and air routes that criss-cross the country. Korea Expressway Corporation operates the toll highways and service

amenities en route.

Korail provides frequent train service to all major South Korean cities. Two rail lines, Gyeongui and Donghae Bukbu Line, to North Korea are now being reconnected. The Korean high-speed rail system, KTX, provides high-speed service along Gyeongbu and Honam Line. Major cities including Seoul, Busan, Incheon, Daegu, Daejeon and Gwangju have subway systems.^[75] Express bus terminals are available in most cities.^[76]



Banpo Bridge connects the

Construction of South Korea's largest airport, Incheon International Airport, was completed in 2001. By 2007, the airport was serving 30 million passengers a year.^[77] Other international airports include Gimpo, Busan and Jeju. There are also seven domestic airports, and a large number of heliports.^[78]

Korean Air, founded in 1962, served 21,640,000 passengers, including 12,490,000 international passengers in 2008.^[79] A second carrier, Asiana Airlines, established in 1988, also serves domestic and international traffic. Combined, South Korean airlines currently serve 297 international routes.^[80] Smaller airliners, such as Jeju Air, provide domestic service with lower fares.^[81]

South Korea is the world's fifth largest nuclear power producer and the second-largest in Asia as of 2010.^[82] Nuclear power in South Korea supplies 45% of electricity production and research is very active with investigation into a variety of advanced reactors, including a small modular reactor, a liquid-metal fast/transmutation reactor and a high-temperature hydrogen generation design. Fuel production and waste handling technologies have also been developed locally. It is also a member of the ITER project.^[83]

South Korea is not allowed to enrich uranium or develop traditional uranium enrichment technology on its own due to US political pressure,^[84] unlike most major nuclear powers such as Japan, Germany, and France, providing a noticeable impediment to South Korea's indigenous nuclear industrial undertaking that has sparked occasional diplomatic rows between the two allies. It has sought unique technologies such as pyroprocessing technology to circumvent these obstacles.^[85] The US has recently been wary of South Korea's burgeoning nuclear program which South Korea insists will only be for civilian use.^[82]

Science and technology

Main article: Science and technology in Korea

Aerospace research

Main article: Korea Aerospace Research Institute

South Korea has sent up 10 satellites from 1992, all using foreign rockets and overseas launch pads, notably Arirang-1 in 1999, and Arirang-2 in 2006 as part of its space partnership with Russia.^[86] Arirang-1 was lost in space in 2008, after nine years in service.^[87]

In April 2008, Yi So-yeon became the first Korean to fly in space, aboard the Russian Soyuz TMA-12.^[88]

In June 2009, the first spaceport of South Korea, Naro Space Center, was completed at Goheung, Jeollanam-do.^[89] The launch of Naro-1 in August 2009 resulted in failure,^[90] and the second attempt in June 2010 was also unsuccessful.^[91] The government plans to investigate the problems and develop Naro-2 by 2018.^[92]

South Korea's efforts to build an indigenous space launch vehicle is marred due to persistent political pressure of the United States, who had for many decades hindered South Korea's indigenous rocket and missile development programs^[93] in fear of their possible connection to clandestine military ballistic missile programs, which Korea many times insisted did not violate the research and development guidelines stipulated by US-Korea agreements on restriction of South Korean rocket technology research and development.^[94] South Korea has sought the assistance of foreign countries such as Russia through MTCR commitments to supplement its restricted domestic

rocket technology. The two failed KSLV-I launch vehicles were based on the Universal Rocket Module, the first stage of the Russian Angara rocket, combined with a solid-fueled second stage built by South Korea.



Albert HUBO, developed by KAIST, can make expressive gestures with its five separate fingers.

Robotics

Robotics has been included in the list of main national R&D projects in Korea since 2003.^[95] In 2009, the government announced plans to build robot-themed parks in Incheon and Masan with a mix of public and private funding.^[96]

In 2005, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology developed the world's second walking humanoid robot, HUBO. A team in the Korea Institute of Industrial Technology developed the first Korean android, EveR-1 in May 2006.^[97] EveR-1 has been succeeded by more complex models with improved movement and vision.^[98] Next models are scheduled to be completed by 2010.



Android EveR3 in a traditional *hanbok*

Plans of creating English-teaching robot assistants to compensate the shortage of teachers were announced in February 2010, with the robots being deployed to most preschools and kindergartens by 2013.^[99] Robotics are also incorporated in the entertainment sector as well; the *Korean Robot Game Festival* has been held every year since 2004 to promote science and robot technology.^[100]

Biotechnology

Since the 1980s, the Korean government has actively invested in the development of a domestic biotechnology industry, and the sector is projected to grow to \$6.5 billion by 2010.^[101] The medical sector accounts for a large part of the production, including production of hepatitis vaccines and antibiotics.

Recently, research and development in genetics and cloning has received increasing attention, with the first successful cloning of a dog, Snuppy, and the cloning of two females of an endangered species of wolves by the Seoul National University in 2007.^[102]

The rapid growth of the industry has resulted in significant voids in regulation of ethics, as was highlighted by the scientific misconduct case involving Hwang Woo-Suk.^[103]

Education

Main article: Education in South Korea

Education in South Korea is regarded as being crucial to one's success, and competition is consequently very heated and fierce. In the 2006 results of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, South Korea came first in problem solving, third in mathematics and eleventh in science.^[104] South Korea's education system is technologically advanced and it is the world's first country to bring high-speed fibre-optic broadband internet access to every primary and secondary

school nation-wide. Using this infrastructure, the country has developed the first Digital Textbooks in the world, which will be distributed for free to every primary and secondary schools nation-wide by 2013.^[105]

A centralised administration in South Korea oversees the process for the education of children from kindergarten to the third and final year of high school. South Korea has adopted a new educational program to increase the number of their foreign students through 2010. According to Ministry of Education, Science and Technology estimate, by that time, the number of scholarships for foreign students in South Korea will be doubled, and the number of foreign students will reach 100,000.^[106] The school year is divided into two semesters, the first of which begins in the beginning of March and ends in mid-July, the second of which begins in late August and ends in mid-February. The schedules are not uniformly standardized and vary from school to school.

Demographics

Main articles: Demographics of South Korea and Koreans

South Korea is noted for its population density, which at 487 per square kilometer is more than 10 times the global average. Most South Koreans live in urban areas, due to rapid migration from the countryside during the country's quick economic expansion in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.^[107] The capital city of Seoul is also the country's largest city and chief industrial center. According to 2005 census, Seoul had a population of 9.8 million inhabitants. The Seoul National Capital Area has 24.5 million inhabitants making it the world's second largest metropolitan area and easily the most densely populated city in the OECD. Other major cities include Busan (3.5 million), Incheon (2.5 million), Daegu (2.5 million), Daejeon (1.4 million), Gwangju (1.4 million) and Ulsan (1 million).^[108]

The population has also been shaped by international migration. Following the division of the Korean Peninsula after World War II, about four million people from North Korea crossed the border to South Korea. This trend of net entry reversed over the next forty years due to emigration, especially to the United States and Canada. South Korea's total population in 1960 was 25 million.^[109] The current population of South Korea is roughly 50,062,000.^[110]

South Korea is ethnically one of the most homogeneous societies in the world with more than 99 per cent of inhabitants having Korean ethnicity.^[111] The Koreans call their ethnic homogeneity of their society using the word, 단일민족국가 (*Dan-il minjok gook ga*, literally means the single race society.)

In terms of the foreign nationals, although small, the percentage has been increasing.^[112] As of 2009, South Korea had 1,106,884 foreign residents. This number covers approximately 2 percent of the entire population of South Korea; however, more than half of the foreign nationals have Korean ethnicity with a foreign citizenship. For example, Migrants from the People's Republic of China (PRC) make up 56.5% of the total, but approximately 70 percent of the Chinese citizens in Korea are *Joseonjok* (조선족 *in Korean*), PRC citizens of Korean ethnicity.^[113] Regardless of the ethnicity, the Korea National Statistical Office^[114] counts that there are 28,500 US military personnel currently serving in South Korea for one year of unaccompanied tour.^[115] In addition, about 43,000 English teachers from the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and South Africa temporarily reside in Korea.^[116]

South Korea's birthrate is the world's lowest.^[117] If this continues, its population is expected to decrease by 13 percent to 42.3 million in 2050.^[118] South Korea's annual birthrate is approximately 9 births per 1000 people.^[119] The average life expectancy in 2008 was 79.10 years,^[120] which is 34th

in the world.^[121]

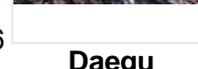
Cities of South Korea

Main article: List of cities in South Korea

See also: Eight Provinces of Korea and List of regions of Korea

The figure below lists the twenty largest cities within administrative city limits;

Largest cities of South Korea					
Cities	Provincial level divisions	Population	Cities	Provincial level divisions	Population
Seoul	Seoul	10,464,051	11 Goyang	Gyeonggi-do	951,001
Busan	Busan	3,574,340	12 Bucheon	Gyeonggi-do	884,976
Incheon	Incheon	2,758,431	13 Yongin	Gyeonggi-do	854,054
Daegu	Daegu	2,509,187	14 Ansan	Gyeonggi-do	739,493
Daejeon	Daejeon	1,498,665	15 Cheongju	Chungcheongbuk-do	648,598
Gwangju	Gwangju	1,445,828	16 Jeonju	Jeollabuk-do	639,922
Ulsan	Ulsan	1,129,827	17 Anyang	Gyeonggi-do	623,511
Gyeonggi-do	Gyeonggi-do	1,098,449	18 Cheonan	Chungcheongnam-do	551,423
Gyeongsangnam-do	Gyeongsangnam-do	1,092,671	19 Namyangju	Gyeonggi-do	530,699
Gyeonggi-do	Gyeonggi-do	979,035	20 Hwaseong	Gyeonggi-do	515,162



Religion

Main article: Religion in South Korea



The Seokguram Grotto in Bulguksa temple, UNESCO World Heritage Site

As of 2005, just under half of the South Korean population expressed no religious preference.^[122] Of the rest, most are Christian or Buddhist; according to the 2007 census, 29.2% of the population at that time was Christian (18.3% professed to being Protestants and 10.9% Catholics), and 22.8% were Buddhist.^{[123][124]}

Other religions include Islam and various new religious movements such as Jeungism, Cheondoism and Wonbuddhism. The earliest religion practiced was Korean shamanism.^[125] Today, freedom of religion is

guaranteed by the constitution, and there is no state religion.^[126]

Christianity is South Korea's largest religion, accounting for more than half of all South Korean religious adherents. There are approximately 13.7 million Christians^[127] in South Korea today, with almost two-thirds of Christians belonging to Protestant churches, while about 37% belong to the Catholic Church. Roman Catholicism has been the fastest growing denomination in South Korea

South Korea religiosity		
religion		percent
No religion(incl. Atheism)		46.5%
Buddhism		22.8%
Protestantism		18.3%
Roman Catholic Church		10.9%
Other religions		0.7%
Won Buddhism		0.3%
Confucianism		0.2%
Cheondoism		0.1%
Islam		0.1%

since the late 1980s.^[128] South Korea is also the second-largest missionary-sending nation.^[129]

Buddhism was introduced to Korea in the year 372.^[130] According to the national census as of 2005, South Korea has over 10.7 million Buddhists.^{[127][131]} Today, about 90% of Korean Buddhists belong to Jogye Order. Most of the National Treasures of South Korea are Buddhist artifacts. Along with Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism was also a state religion during the periods from Three Kingdoms of Korea to Goryeo before suppression under the Joseon Dynasty.^[132]

Islam in South Korea has an estimated less than 30,000 native followers, in addition to some 100,000 resident foreign workers from Muslim countries,^[133] particularly Bangladesh and Pakistan.^[134]

Public health and safety

Although life expectancy has increased significantly since 1950, South Korea faces a number of important health-care issues. Foremost is the impact of environmental pollution on an increasingly urbanized population. According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare, chronic diseases account for the majority of diseases in South Korea, a condition exacerbated by the health care system's focus on treatment rather than prevention. The incidence of chronic disease in South Korea hovers around 24 percent. Approximately 33 percent of all adults smoke. The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) rate of prevalence at the end of 2003 was less than 0.1 percent. In 2001 central government expenditures on health care accounted for about 6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).^[135] The suicide rate in the nation was 26 per 100,000 in 2008, the highest in the industrialized world.^[136]

Culture

Main articles: Culture of Korea and South Korean culture

South Korea shares its traditional culture with North Korea, but the two Koreas have developed distinct contemporary forms of culture since the peninsula was divided in 1945. Historically, while the culture of Korea has been heavily influenced by that of neighbouring China, it has nevertheless managed to develop a unique and distinct cultural identity from its larger neighbour.^[137] The South Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism actively encourages the traditional arts, as well as modern forms, through funding and education programs.^[138]

The industrialization and urbanization of South Korea have brought many changes to the way Korean people live. Changing economics and lifestyles have led to a concentration of population in major cities, especially the capital Seoul, with multi-generational households separating into nuclear family living arrangements.

Art

Main article: Korean art



Celadon from the Goryeo Dynasty

Korean art has been highly influenced by Buddhism and Confucianism, which can be seen in the many traditional paintings, sculptures, ceramics and the performing arts.^[139] Korean pottery and porcelain, such as Joseon's *baekja* and buncheong, and Goryeo's celadon are well known throughout the world.^[140] The Korean tea ceremony, pansori, talchum and buchaechum are also notable Korean performing arts.

Post-war modern Korean art started to flourish in the 1960s and 1970s, when South Korean Artists took interest in geometrical shapes and intangible subjects. Establishing a harmony between man and nature was also a favorite of this time. Due to social instability, social issues appeared as main subjects in the 1980s. Art was influenced by various international events and exhibits in Korea, and with it brought more diversity.^[141] The Olympic Sculpture Garden in 1988, the transposition of the 1993 edition of the Whitney Biennial to Seoul,^[142] the creation of

the Gwangju Biennale^[143] and the Korean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1995^[144] were notable events.

Architecture

Main articles: Architecture of South Korea and Korean architecture

Due to South Korea's tumultuous history, construction and destruction has been repeated endlessly, resulting in an interesting melange of architectural styles and designs.^[145]

Korean traditional architecture is characterized by its harmony with nature. Ancient architects adopted the bracket system and is characterized by thatched roofs and heated floors called *ondol*.^[146] People of the upper classes built bigger houses with elegantly curved tiled roofs with lifting eaves. Traditional architecture can be seen in the palaces and temples, preserved old houses called *hanok*,^[147] and special sites like Hahoe Folk Village, Yangdong Village of Gyeongju and Korean Folk Village. Traditional architecture may also be seen at the nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites in South Korea.^[148]

Western architecture was first introduced to Korea at the end of the 19th century. Churches, offices for foreign legislation, schools and university buildings were built in new styles. With annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910 the colonial regime intervened in Korea's architectural heritage and Japanese-style modern architecture was imposed. The anti-Japanese sentiment, and the Korean War, led to the destruction of most buildings constructed during that time.^[149]

Korean architecture entered a new phase of development during the post-Korean War reconstruction, incorporating modern architectural trends and styles. Stimulated by the economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s, active redevelopment saw new horizons in architectural design. In the aftermath of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, South Korea has witnessed a wide variation of styles in its architectural landscape due, in large part, to the opening up of the market to foreign architects.^[150] Contemporary architectural efforts have been constantly trying to balance the traditional philosophy of "harmony with nature" and the fast-paced urbanization that the country has been going through in



Modern skyline of Seoul and the Deoksugung palace



Hwaseong Fortress, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

recent years.^[151]

Cuisine

Main article: Korean cuisine

Korean cuisine, *hanguk yori* (한국요리; 韓國料理), or *hansik* (한식; 韓食), has evolved through centuries of social and political change. Ingredients and dishes vary by province. There are many significant regional dishes that have proliferated in different variations across the country in the present day. The Korean royal court cuisine once brought all of the unique regional specialties together for the royal family. Meals consumed both by the royal family and ordinary Korean citizens have been regulated by a unique culture of etiquette.

Korean cuisine is largely based on rice, noodles, tofu, vegetables, fish and meats. Traditional Korean meals are noted for the number of side dishes, *banchan* (반찬), which accompany steam-cooked short-grain rice. Every meal is accompanied by numerous banchan. Kimchi, a fermented, usually spicy vegetable dish is commonly served at every meal and is one of the best known Korean dishes. Korean cuisine usually involves heavy seasoning with sesame oil, *doenjang* (된장), a type of fermented soybean paste, soy sauce, salt, garlic, ginger, and *gochujang* (고추장), a hot pepper paste.

Soups are also a common part of a Korean meal and are served as part of the main course rather than at the beginning or the end of the meal. Soups known as *guk* (국) are often made with meats, shellfish and vegetables. Similar to *guk*, *tang* (탕) has less water, and is more often served in restaurants. Another type is *jjigae* (찌개), a stew that is typically heavily seasoned with chili pepper and served boiling hot.



Various *banchan*



Baechu (napa cabbage) kimchi



Barbecued beef bulgogi



Sundubu jjigae, a Korean uncurdled tofu stew



Sujeonggwa, traditional Korean fruit punch, garnished with nuts

Contemporary music, film and television

In addition to domestic consumption, South Korean mainstream culture, including televised drama, films, and popular music, also generates significant exports to various parts of the world. This phenomenon, often called "Hallyu" or the "Korean Wave", has swept many countries in Asia and other parts of the world.^[152]

Until the 1990s, trot and ballads dominated Korean popular music. The emergence of the rap group Seo Taiji and Boys in 1992 marked a turning point for Korean popular music, also known as K-Pop, as the group incorporated elements of popular musical genres of rap, rock, and techno into its music.^[153] Hip hop, dance and ballad oriented acts have become dominant in the Korean popular music scene, though trot is still popular among older Koreans. Many K-Pop stars and groups are

also well known abroad, especially in Asia.

Since the success of the film *Shiri* in 1999, Korean film has begun to gain recognition internationally. Domestic film has a dominant share of the market, partly due to the existence of screen quotas requiring cinemas to show Korean films at least 73 days a year.^[154]

Korean television shows, especially the short form dramatic mini-series called "dramas", have also become popular outside of Korea, becoming another driving trend for wider recognition. The trend has caused some Korean actors to become better known abroad. The dramas are popular mostly in Asia. The stories have tended to have a romance focus, such as *Winter Sonata*, *Autumn Fairy Tale*, *Full House*, *All About Eve*. Historical/fantasy dramas have included *Dae Jang Geum*, *The Legend*, and *Goong*.^[155]

Technology culture



Digital Multimedia Broadcasting (DMB) on a mobile phone

South Korean corporations Samsung and LG were ranked second and third largest mobile phone companies in the world in the first quarter of 2010, respectively.^[156] An estimated 90% of South Koreans own a mobile phone.^[157] Aside from placing/receiving calls and text messaging, mobile phones in the country are



PC bangs are popular LAN gaming centers in South Korea.

widely used for watching Digital Multimedia Broadcasting (DMB) or viewing websites.^[158] Over one million DMB phones have been sold and the three major wireless communications providers SK Telecom, KT, and LG Telecom provide coverage in all major cities and other areas.

Wide access to broadband has let online games become a significant part of Korean culture in recent years. *StarCraft*, a real-time strategy game, is by far the most popular televised computer game in South Korea.^[159] Game tournaments, recorded in places like the COEX Mall are often broadcast live on TV stations such as MBCGame and Ongamenet. Professional *StarCraft* players can command considerable salaries in South Korea as members of pro-gaming teams that are sponsored primarily by cell phone providers.^[160] PC games are usually played in PC bangs which are basically internet cafes dedicated to online games such as *Aion*, *Lineage II*, *Sudden Attack*, *Kart Rider*, *Maple Story*, *Mabinogi*, *World of Warcraft*, and *StarCraft 2*^[citation needed].

Sports

Main article: Sport in South Korea



A taekwondo practitioner demonstrating *dollyo chagi* technique



World Peace Gate at Olympic Park, Seoul

The martial art taekwondo originated in Korea. In the 1950s and '60s, modern rules were standardised and taekwondo became an official Olympic sport in 2000.^[161] Other Korean martial arts include taekkyeon, hapkido, tang soo do, kuk sool won, kumdo and subak.^[162]

Baseball was first introduced to Korea in 1905 and has

since become the most popular spectator sport in South Korea.^[163] The first South Korean professional sports league was the Korea Baseball Organization, established in 1982. South

Korea finished third during the 2006 World Baseball Classic and second during the 2009 World Baseball Classic. In the 2008 Summer Olympics, South Korea won the gold medal in baseball.^[164]

South Korea hosted the Asian Games in 1986 (Seoul), 2002 (Busan), and will host again in 2014 (Incheon). It also hosted the Asian Winter Games in 1999, the Winter Universiade in 1997 and the Summer Universiade in 2003. In 1988, South Korea hosted the Summer Olympics in Seoul, coming fourth with 12 gold medals, 10 silver medals and 11 bronze medals. South Korea regularly performs well in archery, shooting, table tennis, badminton, short track speed skating, handball, hockey, freestyle wrestling, Greco-Roman wrestling, baseball, judo, taekwondo, speed skating, figure Skating, and weightlifting. The Seoul Olympic Museum is a museum in Seoul, South Korea, dedicated to the 1988 Summer Olympics.

In the 2002 FIFA World Cup, jointly hosted by South Korea and Japan, the national football team became the first team in the Asian Football Confederation to reach the semi-finals. The Korea Republic team (as it is known) has qualified for every World Cup since Mexico 1986, and has broken out of the group stage twice: first in 2002, as above, and second in 2010, where it was defeated by Uruguay in the Round of 16.

South Korean athletes have shown skill in the Winter Olympics as well; after the 2010 Winter Olympics, South Korea, has won a total of 45 medals (23 gold, 14 silver, and 8 bronze). South Korea is especially strong in short track speed skating, however, ice hockey is emerging as Anyang Halla won their first ever Asia League Ice Hockey title in March 2010.^[165]

Seoul hosted a professional triathlon race, which is part of the International Triathlon Union (ITU) World Championship Series in May 2010.^[166]

In October 2010, South Korea hosts their first Formula One race to be staged at the Korean International Circuit in Yeongam, about 400 kilometres (250 mi) south of Seoul. In 2011, the South Korean city of Daegu will host the 2011 IAAF World Championships in Athletics.^[167]

South Korea has three horse racing tracks of which Seoul Race Park in Gwacheon, Gyeonggi-do is the biggest.^[168]

Gaming forums around the world commonly refer to the computer game StarCraft as the national "sport" of South Korea, due to the fact it is televised more than any other sport in South Korea.

See also

Main article: Outline of South Korea

- History of South Korea
- Index of South Korea-related articles
- International rankings of South Korea

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