

**KOREA RISK SUMMARY: RISK LEVELS**

<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>LOW</b>
POLITICAL	<b>LOW</b>
ARMED CONFLICT	<b>LOW</b>
TERRORISM	<b>LOW</b>
CRIME	<b>LOW</b>
CIVIL UNREST	<b>LOW</b>
MARITIME & PIRACY	<b>LOW</b>
HEALTH	<b>LOW</b>
ENVIRONMENTAL	<b>LOW</b>

**THE ROAD TO PYEONGCHANG...**

- 16 Oct 2009 ○ Pyeongchang submits bid to host games
- 06 Jul 2011 ○ Pyeongchang selected as winner
- 24 Oct 2017 ● Olympic Torch Relay commenced
- 09 Feb 2018 ● Olympics Opening Ceremony
- 25 Feb 2018 ● Olympics Closing Ceremony
- 09 Mar 2018 ● Paralympics Opening Ceremony
- 18 Mar 2018 ● Paralympics Closing Ceremony



**Remember**

- Insurance:** Ensure your travel insurance covers ALL activities.
- Travel & Accommodation:** Book in advance.
- Passport:** Ensure your passport is valid for 6 months.
- Book Ahead:** Planning your journey is important.
- Vaccinations:** Check your vaccinations are appropriate and up to date.
- Language:** Learning some Korean will help you to get around

**OPERATING ENVIRONMENT KEY FACTS**

<b>Estimated Population:</b>	43,703 (Pyeongchang County, as of 2014) 219,274 (Gangneung Metropolitan Area, as of 2012)
<b>Geographic Area:</b>	1,464 Km <sup>2</sup> (Pyeongchang County) 1,039.99 km <sup>2</sup> (Gangneung Metropolitan Area)
<b>Language:</b>	Korean
<b>Religion:</b>	Non-religious/traditional beliefs, Christianity, Buddhism
<b>Weather:</b>	Cold & temperate (Pyeongchang) Warm & temperate, heavy rainfall (Gangneung)
<b>GMT:</b>	+9
<b>Capital:</b>	Seoul
<b>Currency:</b>	South Korean Won
<b>Emergency Services:</b>	119 (Fire & Medical) 112 (Police)

**COUNTRIES**



**94**

A record 94 countries are sending athletes to the 2018 Games. With North and South Korea competing under one flag. The Korean women's ice hockey team will feature athletes from both countries. 2018 has seen a thawing of inter-Korean relations, after high tensions throughout 2017.

**ATHLETES**



**2,900**

More than 2,900 athletes will compete at the Games. Russia has been banned from attending but more than 160 Russians will compete under the Olympics flag. The United States will send the most athletes, with nearly 250 planned competitors.

**TICKETS**



**1.07 MILLION**

1.07 million tickets for the Games will be on sale. So far, about 75% have been sold. The figure is lower than in comparison with Sochi 2014. Security is the most prominent factor contributing to a lack of sales, though the Russian doping scandal and a lack of local interest have also been contributing factors.

**SECURITY**



**5,000**

North Korean unpredictability remains the most obvious security challenge. 5,000 members of the military will be deployed for the Games. There are also plans for 15,000 volunteers to support the running of the Games.

**OLYMPIC VENUES**



**13**

The events for the Games will be in Gangwon Province. Specifically in the Pyeongchang Mountain Cluster (snow events), Jeongseon (alpine speed events), and Gangneung (ice events).

## LOCAL ETIQUETTE

- Business dress is strictly formal; men generally wear dark suits, and women, typically modest dresses. Although this may later be relaxed, adherence to this code is advisable for early meetings. Dressing well is considered a sign of respect.
- It is customary to greet people with a bow from the waist. A handshake may also be a substitute. More established acquaintances typically abbreviate the bow to a nod of the head.
- When taking something from an older or senior person always use two hands; if you must use one hand, you should support your right arm with your left hand. This extends to the exchange of business cards. Another convention is to support your right arm with your left hand when shaking hands with somebody older or more senior. When talking to someone older, direct eye contact should generally be avoided.
- Korean society places great emphasis on “face”. Embarrassing situations are to be avoided, or downplayed, as much as possible. This also makes it unusual to receive an apology if someone bumps into you.
- Buddhist temples often display Swastikas. It originates as a local religious or spiritual symbol and has no connection to the Third Reich or Nazism.
- Initial conversations are likely to cover a great deal of breadth rapidly; this may include questions about family, career, age, and education. This is not seen as intrusive, however brief answers are acceptable if you do not wish to divulge excessive detail.
- Tipping is not expected in South Korea (but is welcomed), however a service charge of around 10% may be charged (compulsory) by hotels.
- Bargaining is acceptable at open markets, but not so welcomed in shops and stores.
- At some restaurants, you are required to take off your shoes before entering the dining area (usually a wooden floored area). If going to the bathroom, you should use sandals which are usually provided.
- If you are an important guest, it can be considered rude to pour your own drink, and this must be poured for you by the person sitting next to you. If you are not an important guest, you should pour another’s drink before pouring your own.
- Do not raise bowls to your mouth when eating. Leave the table to blow your nose and do not make any loud noises at the table.
- The number four is considered unlucky (tetrachophobia) due to its similarity to the Chinese character for death (common in East Asian nations). Even giving gifts in multiples of four is inadvisable. Contrarily, the number seven is considered lucky.
- Kissing in public is discouraged, especially around older Koreans, as it is considered highly immodest.
- Physical contact can be considered a personal violation, this includes back slapping and patting. Unless you have a very close relationship with someone, it is advisable not to touch them.

## SCAMS

- **Fake Hotel Scams:** South Korea has the world fastest internet connections and the greatest internet penetration. Accordingly, a proportional amount of criminal activity and scams are based online. Travellers frequently are targeted by false websites offering modern hotels at low prices. Upon arrival, the hotel either does not exist, or is poorly maintained or an unregistered bedsit. Travellers are advised to undertake proper due diligence on any accommodation or book through a reputable agency.
- **Begging:** Foreigners in South Korea can be specifically targeted by beggars who may solicit donations forcefully or apply pressure through unsolicited physical contact. Avoid giving any indication of where your wallet or cash is stored in case they are seeking to distract you for a pickpocket.
- **The ‘Taxis Parked in Front of Your Hotel’ Scam:** In front of many four & five-star hotel there are taxis waiting all day. Despite appearances, these taxis are not associated with the hotel. These drivers may not switch on their meters when picking up passengers and instead insist on an excessive charge whilst already in motion. Travellers should be aware of taxis which wait outside of hotels. If you need a taxi, ask your hotel to order one for you from a reputable company and ensure they meter your journey. If the vehicle has a meter, it should be used, if not, agree the price before setting off.
- **The ‘Tour guide’ Scam:** A traveller will be approached by a friendly local who speaks good English and has some anecdotes about the traveller’s country of birth. They offer to take the tourist on a tour for a tiny price. For the whole excursion, they seem genuine and kind, however will make efforts to steer travellers towards businesses owned by relatives or friends, who will then pressure the travellers to purchase merchandise at heavily elevated prices. Travellers should be cautious of strangers with intentions too good to be true; invariably they are. If you wish to take a sightseeing tour, prearrange through a reputable agent.
- **Overcharging:** Travellers should be aware that foreigners can be overcharged while shopping. This can be intentional or unintentional (inability to read or understand labels). In restaurants, adhere to dishes on the menu and check the bill prior to payment.
- **Racism:** Travellers to, and foreign residents in, South Korea have noted a prevalence of racism within the country. Travellers should note that, unlike many countries in the west, South Korea is ethnically homogenous, with more than 99 per cent of inhabitants having Korean ethnicity. The judiciary in South Korea have been accused of being heavily biased against foreigners. If there is a dispute with a local, the law will almost always rule in favour of the local against the foreigner. Even if physically assaulted by a local, it is possible that retaliation will cause significant legal problems. For road traffic accidents or incidents of dispute, it is important that a Korean speaker or Korean local is contacted, in order to get both sides of the story.



## SECURITY SUMMARY

South Korea, or the Republic of Korea (ROK), holds a geographically and politically important position in the region. The country has excellent relations with the United States, China, and increasingly, with Japan. The ROK’s most substantial threat comes from the aggressive North Korea, or the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The ROK’s alliances are mainly used to help manage the continued threat from the DPRK. ROK-DPRK relations have improved somewhat since the beginning of the year, with both Koreas to march under one flag at the opening ceremony.

Both sides of the demilitarised zone maintain some degree of communication. Indeed, President Moon, elected in 2017, has sought to offer an olive branch to South Korea’s northern neighbour, returning to the ‘Sunshine Policy’ (to a large extent) of the post-millennium leadership in Seoul.

Throughout 2017, Pyongyang has tested a series of missiles including those which passed over Japan. More concerning, in early September 2017, the DPRK conducted its most powerful nuclear test to date, causing a 6.3-magnitude earthquake. While low-level border skirmishes have taken place historically, especially over the disputed Yeonpyeong Islands, the chances for an imminent return to full-blown conflict before or during the Olympics remain unlikely. This is due to the present relationships. The US maintains a force of nearly 30,000 personnel in the ROK to assist in the country’s defence. Also, North Korea maintains a largely friendly relationship with China and Russia which are both sending athletes to compete in the Games (the latter under a neutral flag). Moreover, North Korea athletes, including two figure skaters, are due to compete at the Games.

These facts ensure that the risk of a DPRK missile attack during the Games is LOW.



## GENERAL TRAVEL ADVICE

Although South Korea can be considered very safe (especially in terms of crime and terrorist threat), it is advisable to remain aware of your surroundings to at least the same degree as you would in any other developed country.

Take extra care of passports, credit cards and wallets/purses when in crowded or tourist areas. Take extra care when travelling alone or at night, and make sure to use a legitimate means of transport such as public transport or metered taxis.

Be sure to carry a form of ID as well as details of your next of kin. Avoid carrying any valuables in a backpack as this is an easy target for thieves.

When air pollution is high, follow local advice and stay hydrated, indoors, with the windows closed when possible.

South Korean security forces often hold Civil Emergency Exercises in major cities, usually involving evacuation to a safe area such as a metro station. Although you do not have to participate as a foreign national, it is best to follow the instruction of the authorities when the sirens sound indicating an exercise. Be aware that the judiciary has been accused of being biased against foreigners and will nearly always side with locals in any disputes.

There are heavy penalties for drug offences, even for personal use, and foreign nationals can be detained purely on the basis of drug tests.