

5 DAYS IN

Seoul

The city living a decade ahead.

DESTINATION

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

DURATION

5 DAYS

BEST SEASON

SEP TO NOV

BUDGET

\$150 TO \$300 / DAY

FROM THE EDITOR

Walk out of a six hundred year old palace, turn a corner, and you are standing in the future. **Seoul is the most forward looking city I have ever set foot in.** Five days is enough to fall for it. It is not enough to finish it.

FROM THE EDITOR

Why Seoul Rewires You

"You walk out of a six hundred year old palace, turn a corner, and you are standing in the future. Both are real. Both are right there. That contrast is the whole city."

BRANT PINVIDIC, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I was told Seoul would be good. Nobody warned me it would rewire how I think about cities. Within twenty four hours of landing I understood why the people who love this place talk about it like a city they lived in for years. Seoul does not ease you in. It grabs you, pulls you into its current, and expects you to keep up.

The thing that got me is how far ahead it feels. You step out of a thousand year old royal palace, turn a corner, and you are standing in one of the most forward looking design and technology cultures on the planet. Glass towers by Zaha Hadid. Concept stores being built faster than the brands can name them. A subway that tells you which car to board and makes every other metro on earth feel primitive. A city that is essentially cashless and somehow effortless. The Koreans did not bury their history to chase the future. They set the two side by side and dared you to figure out how they coexist. They do. Somehow they completely do.

And yes, the food is extraordinary. I have eaten in more than seventy countries and Seoul is the best food city I have found, top to bottom. But that is the easy headline. The real story is a city living a decade ahead of everyone else and making it look casual.

Five days is enough to fall for it. It is not enough to finish it. Nobody finishes Seoul. Go for the future. Stay for the energy. Come home recalibrated.

— **BRANT**



PHOTO: REJECT AVERAGE — SIX CENTURIES MEETS GLASS

ACCOMMODATION

Where To Stay

You could book a tower suite with a view of the whole city. On another trip, do it. Not this one. This trip you sleep inside the thing you came to see. A traditional Korean hanok in Bukchon... latticed wood and paper walls, a small stone courtyard, heated floors under your feet, and the village going quiet the moment the day tourists leave.

Mornings are the reason. Step into the alleys before eight and Bukchon belongs to you, the residents, and the cats. By ten it is full. By then you have already had it to yourself. You are a ten minute walk from Gyeongbokgung, inside the neighborhood instead of visiting it. That is the entire point.



PHOTO: REJECT AVERAGE — BUKCHON HANOK

Book The Hanok

Bukchon Hanok Village. Book direct on Airbnb. Quiet, well kept hanok stays in Bukchon are limited and they go early. Lock your dates the moment your flights are confirmed... and mention you found it through Reject Average.

→ airbnb.co.za/rooms/875931124062801089

TIMING

When To Go

Seoul runs four distinct seasons and each is a different city. What you see and what you can do depends entirely on when you land.

SPRING

MAR — MAY

Cherry blossoms rewrite the city. Yeouido and Seokchon Lake go unreal. Also the most crowded and most expensive window of the year. Book everything months ahead.

PEAK BEAUTY

SUMMER

JUN — AUG

Hot, humid, a monsoon in July. The city never slows. Rooftop bars, Han River picnics, east coast beach runs. Cheaper and less crowded than spring.

FOR THE COMMITTED

AUTUMN

SEP — NOV

The sweet spot. Bukhansan foliage rivals anything in Japan. Crisp air, perfect hiking, the whole city energized. My pick for a first trip, no contest.

BEST OVERALL

WINTER

DEC — FEB

Cold, dry, manageable. Fewer crowds, lowest hotel prices, and Korean food at its most warming. Jjimjilbang culture comes into its own. Underrated.

HIDDEN VALUE

BRANT'S RECOMMENDATION

October. Every time. The foliage is extraordinary, the palaces hit hardest, and hiking Bukhansan in fall light is one of the great urban hikes anywhere on earth. The air is crisp, the crowds have thinned, and the city is at its sharpest. Spring is the only season that competes, and the crowds and the prices it brings are the trade. Go in October.

— Brant

HOW THE DAYS UNFOLD

The 5-Day Framework

Built around moving between neighborhoods with intent and giving the big experiences the room they earn. Every day below I have personally done. Trust the sequence.

1

ARRIVAL

Land. First Korean BBQ. Sleep In A Hanok.

Incheon to the city is easy. Buy a T-Money card and a SIM at the airport, take the AREX train into Seoul Station, and download Naver Map before you fly... Google Maps does not work here. Drop your bags at the hanok and make the first meal Korean BBQ at a real charcoal grill. Thick pork belly over coals, banchan you run yourself. Early night. Tomorrow starts at a palace gate.



2

PALACES & MARKET

Gyeongbokgung At Open. Hanbok. Bukchon. Gwangjang After Dark.

Be at Gyeongbokgung before the gates open at nine. Rent a hanbok along the palace walls for free entry and a completely different experience. Get there early and a six hundred year old palace is nearly yours while the modern city rises behind it. Walk north into Bukchon while the alleys are quiet, then drift through Samcheong-dong for lunch. Night is Gwangjang Market... eat at the stalls, go hungry.



3

THE DMZ

The Day That Stays With You.

Full day DMZ tour out of central Seoul, leaving around eight. I have stood at a lot of borders. None of them sat with me like this one. Somewhere along the way the history stops being something you read about and becomes something you feel in the air... quiet, heavy, impossible to shake. Back in the city by late afternoon, hollowed out in the right way, you do what Koreans do and vanish into a jjimjilbang. Hot baths, saunas, a few dollars. The contrast is the medicine.



4

MODERN SEOUL

Seongsu. DDP. Fashion. Then You Earn The Big Dinner.

The future half of the city, and the half most people underrate. Spend the afternoon walking Seongsu with no plan... concept cafes, design studios, converted factories, the best coffee anywhere. Work in Dongdaemun Design Plaza, Zaha Hadid's silver spaceship, best at dusk. Dinner is the one you booked before you left... Michelin at La Yeon or Mingles, or the best charcoal BBQ of the trip. Both are correct.



5

THE MOUNTAIN

Hike Bukhansan. Buy The Skincare. Fly Home Planning The Return.

A granite national park sits inside the city limits, a subway ride from downtown. The Baegundae route climbs through forest to bare granite ridges with the whole city spread out below, three to four hours round trip. In autumn light it is one of the most unexpected views in any city on earth. Down, cleaned up, last stop Olive Young for the skincare everyone comes home obsessed with. Buy more than you think you need. Then AREX to Incheon, already planning the return.



MODERN SEOUL

The Future Half

Everyone comes for the palaces. The city that stays with you is the one being built right now. Seoul runs about a decade ahead of the rest of the world on design, technology, and the texture of daily life, and it wears it casually. Spend a day on this side of the river and you stop thinking of Seoul as historic. You start thinking of it as a preview.



PHOTO: REJECT AVERAGE — STARFIELD LIBRARY & THE GANGNAM SKYLINE

Seongsu

THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

A former industrial district turned creative capital. Concept cafes, design studios, independent brands, converted factories, and the energy Williamsburg had before it got predictable. Every major fashion house is opening a concept store here. Walk it on foot with no plan and let it reveal itself. This is where Korean culture is heading, not where it has been.

Dongdaemun Design Plaza

ZAHA HADID · DESIGN & FASHION DISTRICT

A silver spaceship of a building with no straight lines, glowing at dusk, surrounded by 24-hour fashion markets and design exhibitions. The clearest single statement of how seriously this city takes design. Go after dark.

The Everyday Future

HOW THE CITY ACTUALLY RUNS

Essentially cashless, tap and go everywhere. A subway that tells you which car to board and which exit to take. Starfield Library rising three stories of open shelves inside a mall. Convenience stores that double as late-night kitchens. The future here is not a showpiece. It is just how Tuesday works.



WATCH THE ADVENTURE

See It For Yourself

One reel from the trip. The palace mornings, the glass towers, the city moving at a speed you have to see. Watch it before you book... it makes the sequence in this guide make sense.

▶ WATCH ON INSTAGRAM — [INSTAGRAM.COM/P/DJI-U9VYZD](https://www.instagram.com/p/DJI-U9VYZD)

GOOD TO KNOW

Practical Reality

GETTING THERE

Incheon (ICN). Roughly 14 hours nonstop from New York. The AREX train runs 45 minutes into Seoul Station. Buy your T-Money card and a SIM at the airport before you leave arrivals.

VISA & ENTRY

US visitors need K-ETA approval before boarding. Apply online at k-eta.go.kr well ahead of time. Passport valid six months plus. Do not leave this to the airport.

TIPPING

Do not. Anywhere. Restaurants, taxis, hotels. The price is the price and the service is already excellent. Pay the bill, say thank you. That is the whole transaction.

THE SUBWAY

Over 300 stations, spotless, about \$1.20 a ride any distance. Naver tells you which car to board and which exit to take. It makes every other metro on earth feel primitive.

NAVIGATION

Google Maps does not give directions in Korea. Download **Naver Map** before you fly. Add Papago for translation, KakaoT for taxis, and CatchTable for reservations. Those four replace what Google does everywhere else.

MONEY

Around ninety percent card accepted, tap and go almost everywhere. Carry some won for markets and street stalls. No ATM drama in the city.

JJIMJILBANG

The Korean bathhouse. Ten to fifteen dollars, open 24 hours, hot and cold baths, saunas, heated sleeping rooms. Dragon Hill in Yongsan, or Siloam near Seoul Station.

SAFETY

Among the safest big cities on earth. Watch the crossings, traffic does not stop on instinct. Bukhansan trails close at sunset, so time your descent and check the weather before you climb.



PHOTO: REJECT AVERAGE — THE CITY YOU CAME TO NAVIGATE

Ready To Go?

Book the Bukchon hanok the moment your flights are set... the good ones go early. Everything else in this guide is tested, sequenced, and ready for you to follow. Tell us Brant sent you.

[BOOK THE HANOK](#)

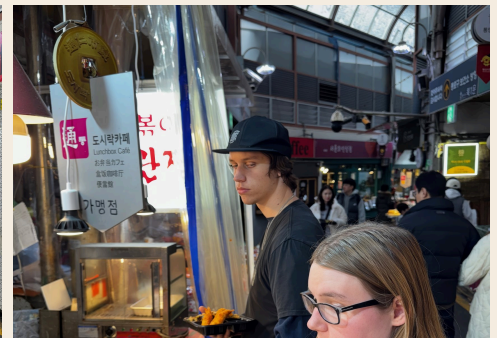
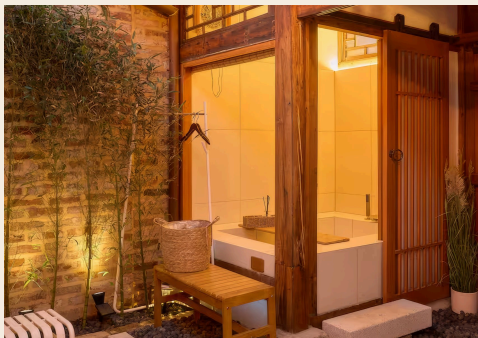
[PLAN WITH BRANT](#)

airbnb.co.za/rooms/875931124062801089 · brant@rejectaverage.com

rejectaverage.com | [@rejectaverage](https://twitter.com/rejectaverage)

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Gallery



PHOTOS: BRANT PINVIDIC / REJECT AVERAGE

SEOUL · SOUTH KOREA