**Korea, South**

**Risk Ratings**

1. LOW MEDICAL RISK for Korea, South

**Risk Summary**

South Korea is a safe travel destination. In general, crime, particularly violent crime, poses a low risk to business travellers. City-centre protests and demonstrations occasionally end in minor clashes with the police. Periodic surges in anti-US or anti-Japanese sentiment very rarely provoke harassment of individual foreign visitors. Occasional provocations from North Korea, along with persistent threatening rhetoric, periodically lead to increased tensions between both countries. However, they are highly unlikely to pose any direct security risks or to lead to wider conflict.

This information is intended as a summary of the travel security environment; however, the risks can change at short notice during a crisis or evolving situation. Please check our travel security alerts to ensure you are informed of the most recent developments.

**STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE**

**Alerts**

1. Urban centres: Anticipate disruption, avoid protests during nationwide strike by private sector workers

View All Alerts

**Vaccinations For Korea, South**

- **Hepatitis A**
  - Recommended for all travellers and expatriates,
  - [Read more](#)
- **Hepatitis B**
  - Recommended for most travellers and expatriates,
  - [Read more](#)
- **Japanese encephalitis**
  - Vaccine is recommended for people who will
  - [Read more](#)
- **Typhoid fever**
  - Recommended for adventurous and long-term
  - [Read more](#)

**Routine Vaccinations**

- All routine vaccinations should be current: these include [Measles-Mumps-Rubella](#), [Polio](#), [Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis](#), and [Varicella](#).

**Other Medical Precautions**

- **Before you go - See your doctor and dentist and ensure you are in the best health before you leave. Other preparations:**
  - [Malaria](#)
  - [Zika Virus](#)
  - [Health Threats](#)

**Before You Go**

See your doctor and dentist and ensure you are in the best health before you leave. Other preparations:

- **Check your routine vaccinations**
  - Check your routine vaccinations are up to date (polio; varicella; measles, mumps and rubella; tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, seasonal influenza). See a travel health practitioner 6 to 8 weeks before departure for destination-specific health preparations. You may need additional vaccinations, some of which require several doses, or be recommended malaria medication which may need to be started a week or more before arriving in the malarial country.

- **Documentation:** Arrange a copy of your personal health record to carry with you when you travel. Include a letter from your doctor explaining your need for all medications you are carrying, including any over-the-counter medications, in English and the language of your destination(s). Make sure you have copies of your prescriptions.

- **Medication:** Check the regulations of your destination country regarding importation of your medication, as some drugs may be strictly prohibited (especially narcotics and psychotropics) and may result in severe penalties. Take any medicines you require in their original packaging, including any information leaflets, with them clearly labelled with your name (matching your passport name), and your doctor’s name. Have enough to cover the trip, and extra in case of delays, however note that many destinations limit quantities of certain drugs to a 30-day supply. Carry medication in your hand luggage, with copies of your prescriptions.
Vaccinations for Korea, South

Recommendations may vary for short-term visitors. Always consult your travel health advisor or contact International SOS to discuss your specific needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccination</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Hepatitis A** | Recommended for all travellers and expatriates, especially:  
  - For long-term or frequent visitors.  
  - For adventurous travellers who travel to more remote locations or stay in areas with poor sanitation.  
  - For men who have sex with men, people who use illicit drugs or those with liver disease. |
| **Hepatitis B** | Recommended for most travellers and expatriates, especially:  
  - For long-term or frequent visitors, and health-care workers.  
  - For adventurous travellers who travel to more remote locations.  
  - If possibility of new sexual partner, needle sharing, acupuncture, dental work, body piercing or tattooing during visit.  
  Many travel health professionals recommend hepatitis B vaccination for all travelers, regardless of destination. |
| **Japanese encephalitis** | Vaccine is recommended for people who will participate in ‘higher risk’ activities while in an area where Japanese encephalitis risk exists.  
  You are engaging in a ‘higher risk’ activity if you:  
  - Travel during the peak Japanese encephalitis season (consult the “Health Threats” section of the International SOS country guides to see specific season details for this country).  
  - Spend a significant amount of time outdoors, particularly in the evening and night-time, in areas outside of cities, (ex. camping, trekking, biking, fishing, hunting, farming).  
  - Stay in accommodation that will likely have mosquitoes indoors, ex. lacking air conditioning, window screens, and bed nets.  
  - Spend a month or more in a risk area during transmission season.  
  Japanese encephalitis vaccine is not available in many of the risk countries. Have the complete vaccine series before departure. |
| **Typhoid fever** | Recommended for adventurous and long-term travellers, especially those who will:  
  - Visit friends and relatives.  
  - Eat from local vendors or restaurants.  
  - Be exposed to conditions of poor sanitation.  
  - Visit smaller cities or rural areas. |

**Malaria**

**Threat from: Bites and Stings**

**Limited risk of malaria is present in South Korea:** rural areas in the northern parts of Kyonggi (Gyeonggi) and Kangwon (Gangwon) provinces, Incheon (towards the Demilitarized Zone [DMZ]).

**Prevention:**  
- mosquito bite avoidance
Malaria is transmitted by mosquitoes that usually bite from dusk to dawn. Symptoms can develop as early as seven days or as late as several months after exposure. Early malaria symptoms are flu-like and can include fever, sweats/chills, headache, and generally feeling tired and unwell. People also sometimes feel nauseous and vomit or have diarrhoea. Untreated, malaria can cause serious complications like anaemia, seizures, mental confusion, kidney failure and coma. It can be fatal.

Follow the ABCDEs to minimise malarial risk:

A: Awareness - Be Aware of the risk, the symptoms and malaria prevention.
B: Bite Prevention – Avoid being Bitten by mosquitoes, especially between dusk and dawn.
C: Chemoprophylaxis - If prescribed for you, use Chemoprophylaxis (antimalarial medication) to prevent infection and if infected reduce the risk of severe malaria.
D: Diagnosis - Immediately seek Diagnosis and treatment if a fever develops one week or more after being in a malarial area (up to one year after departure).
E: Emergency - Carry an Emergency Standby Treatment (EST) kit if available and recommended (this is the kit which contains malaria treatment).

Zika Virus

There is no Zika Virus in Korea, South.

Standard of Care

Emergency Response

Always try to call International SOS whenever medical care or advice is required, especially in emergencies.

South Korea has an excellent public ambulance service. The ambulances are well equipped, reliable and staffed with trained Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). Patients will be transported to the nearest emergency center. Serious cases will be transferred to a facility with the appropriate capability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Numbers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambulance</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard of Health Care

Let International SOS assist you.

International SOS will assist you to find suitable inpatient or outpatient care, will provide language assistance and may be able to pay your medical expenses.

Inpatient care

Medical care in South Korea is of an international standard. There are no major differences between the public and private sectors. However, private hospitals tend to be more service oriented.

Generally, nursing care may differ from what is practiced in other countries. Family members or privately hired care-giving aids are usually expected to assist the patient for non-medical support (such as feeding, bathing etc...).
Many physicians in the major hospitals speak English. If there is a language barrier, most hospitals are able to facilitate language assistance services through interpreters. International clinics will have English speaking staff.

OutPatient Care

Seek outpatient care from international clinics, private hospitals and university hospitals. Many of the doctors practicing at the international clinics are internationally trained and familiar with providing medical care to international travellers and expatriates.

Walk-in outpatient care is also available at some hospitals. The usual practice is to arrive at the hospital, register, pay and then wait to be called.

Paying for Health Care

Payment is usually expected in advance. All hospitals and clinics accept major credit cards. Foreign insurance plans are generally not accepted.

Do not defer medical treatment because of financial concerns. Contact International SOS, and if our terms allow, we will make financial arrangements on your behalf.

Dental Care

High quality specialist and sub-specialist dental services are available. Dental surgeries are clean and efficient.

Blood Supplies

Blood supplies are fully screened and are safe. All blood types are usually available, though Rh-ve can sometimes be in short supply.

Even in areas where the blood supply is considered safe, it’s best to avoid blood transfusions if possible. Screening cannot detect every blood-borne disease, and immune reactions can vary from minor to life-threatening. If a blood transfusion is recommended and circumstances permit, seek a second opinion from International SOS or your health advisor.

Medication Availability

Most medications are available at pharmacies in South Korea. Whenever possible, consult with a doctor and get a prescription.

Since brand names vary, know the generic (chemical) names of your medications. It is always advisable to bring an adequate supply of prescription and other medications from your home country. Check the expiration date on all medications.

Clinics & Hospitals

Medical Providers

No matter where you are, contact International SOS first if you are sick, injured or need medical advice.

Our medical staff will advise you, help you select the correct doctor, hospital or clinic, and make any necessary appointments on your behalf. If our terms allow, we will also make financial arrangements for you.

It is recommended that you contact International SOS before accessing medical care in Korea, South

Hospitals / Clinics

If you are unable to contact International SOS, the following list of hospitals and clinics is provided in case of medical emergencies.

Busan

Inje University Haeundae Paik Hospital
Category: Hospital
Address: 875 Haeun-daero
Haeundae-gu
Busan, Busan 612-896
Telephone: 82 51 797 0564

Pusan National University Hospital
Category: Hospital
Address: 179 GudeokRo
Seogu
Busan, NA 49241
Telephone: 82 51 240 7000
82 51 240 7473

Seoul

Asan Medical Center
Category: Hospital
Address: 88, OLMPIC-RO 43-GIL
SONGPA-GU
Seoul, NA 138-878
Telephone: 82 (02) 3010 5002

Samsung Medical Center
Category: Hospital
Address: 81 Inwon-ro
Gangnamgu
Food & Water

Food and Water Precautions

Travellers have a small risk of developing diarrhoea in any country. It may be advisable to drink bottled water only, especially on short trips. Always wash your hands with soap before eating, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. See the following country-specific recommendations:

Water and Beverages

Tap water is safe.

Food Risk

Food is safe in South Korea, especially in hotels and restaurants. There are many food stalls which are also safe.

More on food and water safety

Health Threats

Health threats present include:

Malaria | Threat from : Bites and Stings

Malaria is transmitted by mosquitoes that usually bite from dusk to dawn. Symptoms can develop as early as seven days or as late as several months after exposure. Early malaria symptoms are flu-like and can include fever, sweats/chills, head and body aches, and generally feeling tired and unwell. People also sometimes feel nauseous and vomit or have diarrhoea. Untreated, malaria can cause serious complications like anaemia, seizures, mental confusion, kidney failure and coma. It can be fatal.

Follow the ABCDEs to minimise malarial risk:

A: Awareness - Be Aware of the risk, the symptoms and malaria prevention.
B: Bite Prevention - Avoid being Bitten by mosquitoes, especially between dusk and dawn.
C: Chemoprophylaxis - If prescribed for you, use Chemoprophylaxis (anti-malarial medication) to prevent infection and if infected reduce the risk of severe malaria.
D: Diagnosis - Immediately seek Diagnosis and treatment if a fever develops one week or more after being in a malarial area (up to one year after departure).
E: Emergency - Carry an Emergency Standby Treatment (EST) kit if available and recommended (this is the kit which contains malaria treatment).

Korea, South

Limited risk of malaria is present in South Korea: rural areas in the northern parts of Kyonggi (Gyeonggi) and Kangwon (Gangwon) provinces, Incheon (towards the Demilitarized Zone [DMZ]).

Prevention:

- mosquito bite avoidance
**Travelers' diarrhea** | Threat from: Food and/or water

Travelers' diarrhea is the most common travel-related illness. It usually occurs within the first week away from home. It is spread through contaminated food and water. Prevention is through choosing safe food and water, and paying attention to hygiene. Select food that is thoroughly cooked while fresh and served hot. Avoid undercooked or raw meat, fish or shellfish. Avoid salad and raw vegetables unless you can wash them with clean (treated) water and you peel them yourself.

Unless you are certain that the tap water is drinkable - choose bottled water and beverages, avoid ice.

**Korea, South** There is a moderate risk of developing travelers' diarrhea when staying outside first class hotels and tourist resorts.

---

**Rabies** | Threat from: Animals

Rabies is a viral disease contracted when bitten or scratched by an infected (rabid) animal, often a dog. Once it enters the body, the virus travels along nerves and causes paralysis. As it reaches important organs like the spinal cord and the brain, it causes coma and death.

In countries where rabies is present in animals or bats, ALL animal / bat bites, scratches and licks to broken skin must be treated seriously. Rabies vaccination is very effective in preventing rabies, even after a bite/scratch by a rabid animal.

**Rabies vaccination**

Pre-exposure vaccination is often recommended for expatriates and long-term visitors to destinations where rabies is present. It's especially recommended if quality medical care may not be available after being bitten or scratched by an animal. Pre-exposure treatment can be especially useful for children, since they may not tell their parents that they have been bitten/scratched.

Pre-exposure vaccination makes it easier to treat a bite or scratch. That's important because some types of rabies treatment can be in short supply in many countries, even in cities.

If bitten, scratched or licked (on broken skin) by an animal:

- Immediately cleanse the wound with soap and water and a povidone-iodine solution if available.
- Seek medical advice from a qualified source or your assistance company.
- Notify local health authorities immediately. You may need post-exposure vaccination, even if you have had pre-exposure vaccination. (THIS CAN BE LIFE SAVING)

---

**Typhoid fever** | Threat from: Food and/or water

**Typhoid fever** is a serious infection caused by a type of salmonella bacteria spread by contaminated food or water. Choosing safe food and water will greatly reduce the risk of developing the disease.

Symptoms usually begin one to three weeks after exposure. Although typhoid fever is often called a diarrheal disease, some patients do not have diarrhea. Persistent, high fever is typical. Other early symptoms are flu-like; body aches and pains, weakness, loss of appetite and a continuous dull headache. A rash with pink spots may appear on the chest and abdomen of some patients. In severe cases, perforation of the bowel can cause severe bleeding or infection in the abdomen, which can be fatal.

Typhoid is cured with antibiotic treatment. Preventive vaccinations are available.
Hepatitis A | Threat from: Food and/or water

Hepatitis A is a viral disease that causes liver inflammation. The virus is present in the faeces of an infected person. It spreads through contaminated food and water, and is common in areas with poor sanitation. Person-to-person spread also occurs, when the virus is inadvertently transferred into the mouth, including during sexual activity. People at higher risk of infection include men who have sex with men, illicit drug users and people with liver disease.

Symptoms begin on average 28 days after exposure (range 2 to 8 weeks), and include fever, chills, fatigue, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, dark urine and jaundice (yellow colour of the skin and eyes). Many infected people suffer only a mild illness. Most cases recover fully after four or more weeks. However for some, the disease can be severe, and occasionally it is fatal. There is no specific treatment and cases are managed through supportive therapy.

Prevention is through vaccination, attention to hygiene, and access to safe food and water.

Japanese encephalitis | Threat from: Bites and Stings

Japanese encephalitis is serious viral illness, spread by mosquitoes. It occurs in most of Asia as well as some parts of the Western Pacific, mostly in rural agricultural areas. Although many people won't have any symptoms, it can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) with permanent brain damage, or be fatal. Prevention is through preventing mosquito bites. In addition, vaccination is recommended for travellers at higher risk.

Korea, South

Occasional cases of Japanese encephalitis can occur in much or all of the country. Transmission occurs from May to October. The last major outbreak occurred in 1982.

HIV, Hepatitis B and C, & STIs | Threat from: Sex/blood/needles

HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C are spread by contact with bodily fluids (especially blood and semen).

- unprotected sex,
- needle sharing during IV drug use, or
- unsafe blood or medical/dental instruments.

Genital herpes (HSV), genital warts (HPV), gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and most other sexually transmitted diseases are spread by genital contact.

Prevention:

- In many countries, hepatitis B is now a routine childhood immunisation and need not be repeated. All non-immune travellers should consider vaccination.
- Always use new condoms (preferably brought from your home country).
- IV drug users should not share needles.
- Avoid having tattoos or piercings done.
- In healthcare settings, make sure that needles and syringes sterile and not shared between patients.
- Call International SOS or your corporate medical department if you are hospitalised.
- Be aware of your risk when assisting anyone with an injury. Protect yourself from contact with bodily fluids.
- Seek medical attention within 24 hours if you accidentally come into contact with someone else's bodily fluids.

Tuberculosis (TB) | Threat from: Coughing/sneezing

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious bacterial disease. The bacteria can be coughed or sneezed into the air by an infected person. Most people who contract TB have had prolonged, close, exposure to an infected person. This means they have spent days or weeks — not just a few hours — sharing the same air space with an infected person (e.g., living in the same house). People who work or live in institutions such as nursing homes or correctional facilities are also at higher risk.

Active TB causes a variety of symptoms that are sometimes vague, but often include cough, fever, night sweats, unintended weight loss and lethargy. Latent (inactive) TB causes no symptoms. Most strains of TB can be treated with antimicrobial drugs. Up to four different types of medicines may be used together to treat a patient. If left untreated, active TB can be life-threatening.

Some forms of TB have become resistant to drugs (MDR TB), and some forms are extensively resistant to drugs (XDR TB). These diseases are hard to treat. People sometimes contract MDR or XDR TB through direct contact with a person who is already infected. Or, in other cases, people with more traditional TB infections develop a drug-resistant strains. This can happen if anti-TB medication is used inappropriately or stopped too soon.

Many countries where TB is common will routinely give the Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine against tuberculosis to babies and children. The BCG vaccine protects these children against severe TB. If you live in an area with higher rates of TB infection, you may also consider vaccinating children up to 16 years old if you plan to live there for 3 months or more.

Travellers and expatriates may be able to reduce their chance of contracting TB by limiting the amount of time they spend in crowded places. Avoiding people who are coughing also minimizes risk. Consider TB screening of local staff who live with you — especially if you have young children in your household.

Korea, South

South Korea falls in the "moderate incidence" range for tuberculosis as per the World Health Organization (WHO), with between 50 to 299 new cases per 100,000 population diagnosed each year. BCG vaccination is given between birth and one month and is included in the country's immunisation schedule.

Expatriates or frequent travellers should consider consulting their doctor as TB screening may be offered.
Scrub typhus | Threat from: Bites and Stings

The bacterial disease scrub typhus is also known as tropical typhus or "chigger fever". Humans become infected when bitten by disease-carrying mites. A lump develops at the bite site. It ulcerates and forms an eschar (like a cigarette burn). Glands near the bite swell. Sudden onset symptoms progress, including high fever, headaches and sore muscles. About a third of those infected develop a rash.

Complications, such as pneumonia and nervous system impairment, can occur. Treatment with timely appropriate antibiotics will cure the disease. Untreated, mortality can be as high as 30 percent. No vaccine is available. Prevent infection by avoiding mite habitats (such as rodent infested areas, recently cleared forests clearings and rice paddies) and by preventing mite bites.

Hantaviruses | Threat from: Animals

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses that belong to the bunyaviridae family. They can cause two different types of illness in humans: hemorrhagic fever with renal failure syndrome (HFRS) and hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). The latter also known as hantavirus cardiopulmonary syndrome (HCPS). It is a widely distributed disease and occurs across Americas, Europe and Asia.

Regardless of which illness they cause, hantaviruses are carried by infected rodents that can carry the virus for their entire lives without any signs of illness. Virus is present in the animal’s saliva, urine and feces. Humans become sick when they inhale the aerosol droplets of these excretions.

Although not clearly known, symptoms of HCPS appear about one to eight weeks after exposure to the virus. Early symptoms include fatigue, fever, and muscle aches. About 50 percent of all patients also experience headache, dizziness, and abdominal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, pain). Late symptoms are cough/shoartness of breath and a feeling of overall tightness in the chest. Heartbeat and breathing may both become rapid at this stage. Most people recover from the disease. The overall case fatality rate is about 30 percent; and most deaths occur rapidly - within 24 hours of hospitalization.

The incubation period for HFRS is usually 2 to 4 weeks, but could be as short as a few days. Patients usually experience a fever that begins suddenly, headache, muscle pain, gastrointestinal upset, eye pain and blurred vision. Patients may later develop hemorrhage, including bleeding from the skin, conjunctiva of the eye, and mouth. Complications include kidney failure. Most patients fully recover. The overall mortality ranges from 5-15 percent, depending on the strain of the virus.

The best way to avoid infection is to eliminate rodents from your living space and worksite, and/or avoid contact with them. Keep food tightly contained, clean dishes immediately after use, do not let pet food out all day, and seal holes to the outside – generally, make your environment inhospitable to rodents. When in an area known to be infested with rodents, avoid activities that can stir up dust, like vacuuming or sweeping, as there may be virus-containing rodent feces, urine, or saliva present. Do not sit in meadows, on haystacks, or woodpiles where rodents are likely to nest.

Treatment is supportive. Ribavirin has improved the chances of surviving HFRS although its effectiveness has not been proven in HCPS. A vaccine is available to protect against certain viruses that cause HFRS, most especially those that are prevalent in mainland China.

Korea, South

Cases of hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS) are known to occur although primarily in rural areas. Peak disease activity is observed during autumn and winter.

Air Pollution | Threat from: Environment

Poor air quality, also known as "haze", "smog" and "air pollution", can negatively impact one's health. Some groups are especially vulnerable to problems caused by polluted air. These include children, the elderly and anyone with underlying chronic health problems such as heart disease, emphysema, bronchitis or asthma.

The chemicals in polluted air can affect the lungs resulting in wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath and even pain. Polluted air can also irritate the eyes and nose, and may interfere with immune system function. Long-term exposure can result in reduced lung function, particularly in children. It can also lead to lung cancer.

Limiting exposure to polluted air is the best way to avoid these problems. When air quality is poor, it may be advisable to avoid outdoor physical activities. While inside, keep doors and windows closed, and use an air conditioner on 'recirculate' if possible. If the air quality is frequently problematic, consider using an air cleaner. During particularly bad periods, you may want to wear a mask while outside. Ask your healthcare provider before using a mask, especially if you have underlying health conditions.

See the International SOS Air Pollution website - use your membership number to log in.