EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

South Korea Explorer (SKO 2014)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOUR DURATION **12** DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Moderate
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Code: SKO

Tour Highlights - South Korea Explorer

- ✓ Seoul - Explore South Korea's dynamic capital. Visit the Demilitarised Zone and the Gyengbokgung Palace
- ✓ Samwhasa Temple - Spend a night in a monastery learning about a monks traditional lifestyle
- ✓ UNESCO World Heritage Sites - Visit the Hahoe Folk Village, Seoguram Grotto and the Bulguksa Temple
- ✓ Jeju-do - Two-night stay on the volcanic Island of Jeju, home to World Heritage Sites, beautiful waterfalls and a unique native culture

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	10 nights Standard Hotel 1 night Simple Monastery
Included Meals:	11 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 2 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Seoul
End Point:	Tour ends: Gimpo Airport
Transport:	Bus, Flight
Countries:	South Korea

South Korea Explorer

From the cosmopolitan city of Seoul to the ancient Silla capital of Gyeongju, we explore all that South Korea has to offer. We visit the Demilitarised Zone to see the barrier separating North and South Korea. We also take part in traditional tea ceremonies and witness early morning temple rituals. Finally we spend time relaxing on Jeju - the Island of the Gods.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.

Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organization throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Seoul

We begin this exciting adventure in Seoul, South Korea's dynamic capital and one of the world's fastest growing cities. The economic, political and cultural centre of the country, Seoul is a fascinating mix of glass towers, historic temples, parks and museums, spanning the banks of the Han River. Arriving today we have a free evening to relax and settle into the flow of one of Asia's most exciting cities.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 2 Morning orientation tour of Seoul. Afternoon free

This morning we take an orientation tour around the centre of Seoul, walking through the Myeongdong shopping district and down to the market at Namdaemun, before heading past the City Hall to the Gyengbokgung Palace. The largest of five great palaces built by the Joseon Dynasty, Gyengbokgung still remains the grandest and we pay a visit before moving on to the National Folk Museum. Later we walk down into the area of Insadong, famed for its antiques and handicrafts. We stop for lunch here, after which the rest of the day is free to enjoy as we wish.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 3 Visit the Demilitarised Zone

Today we take the subway to Samgaji Station to visit one of the most unique tourist attractions anywhere on earth. Following the end of the Korean War the country was split in half and today the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) that separates North and South Korea remains one of the last frontiers of the Cold War, where over a million soldiers remain on constant vigil. We visit this area as part of an organised group and all visitors must be respectfully dressed, no jeans or sandals are allowed.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 4 Mount Sorak National Park

After breakfast we drive to Mount Sorak National Park on the eastern edge of the Korean Peninsula. Set amongst the granite landscapes of the Taebaek Mountain range, Mount Sorak is the third highest peak in the country and on arrival we have the chance to enjoy some activities around the park. There are a number of walking trails that lead to temples and waterfalls and you can also take a cable car to the mountain's summit.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 5 Drive to Samwhasa Temple via the Osaek Mineral Springs

A different experience today as we make our way to the Samwhasa Temple where we spend the night. Our journey takes us via the Osaek Mineral Springs in Osaekjigu, where we stop for lunch before continuing on to Samwhasa. This afternoon we have an opportunity to partake in a traditional tea ceremony and learn a little more about temple life.

Overnight: **Simple Monastery**

DAY 6 Drive to Suaedang via the Buseoksa Temple

For early risers there is a chance to watch the monks perform their morning rituals before we leave our temple home and head for one of Korea's most beautiful temples. Hidden amongst the wooded slopes of Bonghwangsan, Buseoksa Temple dates back to the latter years of the 7th century and differs from many other temples in Korea because of its huge size. From here we continue to Suaedang via the stone Buddha at Jebiwon, an impressive 11th century carving that sits on top of a rocky outcrop overlooking the Sobaek Mountains. Arriving at our homestay later this afternoon we enjoy a tea ceremony and some local games before dinner.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

DAY 7 Visit the Hahoe Folk Village and Mask Museum. Train to Gyenongju

After a relaxing morning we check out and drive on to the Buyeongdae Viewpoint. From here we then continue to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hahoe, where we find the Hahoe Folk Village and its fascinating Mask Museum. We visit the site with a local guide, spending time wandering through the traditional houses of this early Joseon Dynasty village and exploring the museum, before completing our journey to Andong. In Andong we then board a train on to Gyenongju, arriving in the city in the early hours of this evening.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 8 In Gyenongju

We enjoy a full day tour of South Korea's second largest city today. Once the capital of the ancient kingdom if Silla, Gyenongju ruled over much of the Korean Peninsula between the 7th and 9th centuries. Our first visits this morning are to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Seoguram Grotto and the Bulguksa Temple. We also visit the Silla Kiln and the city's National Museum, a rich repository for the relics and artifacts of the Silla kingdom, one of the longest dynasties in Asian history.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 9 Morning free for optionals. Drive to Busan, flight to Jeju.

This morning we have a few options available to make the most of some free time before we leave. One is a hike on Mount Namsan with our local guide. Other possibilities include a boat trip on the lake, cycling around the surrounding countryside or a final look around Gyenongju. After lunch we then pay a visit to the Tongdosa Temple en route to Busan, South Korea's largest port. After a chance to have a look around Busan's fish market, we fly to Jeju-do, lying off the southern tip of the peninsula in the Korea Strait.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 10 Sightseeing around Jeju island

This morning we begin our exploration of Jeju. Korea's largest island, this volcanic outcrop is home to three UNESCO World Heritage Sites and a distinctive culture that has developed in isolation to that of the Korean mainland. After a chance to settle in and have breakfast, we then head out to explore the island, visiting the Seonggeup Folk Village and the Manjanggul lava tubes, before heading along the coastal road to Ilchubong Peak. From here we drive back to the hotel to relax and enjoy some free time.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 11 Free on Jeju-do

We have a free day to make the most of this unique island. You could visit the Cheonjeyeon and Cheonjiyeon Waterfalls, explore some of the Jeju Olle (hiking trails) that crisscross the island, or perhaps take a ride out to the Sangumburi Crater. As well as it's natural attractions and World Heritage sites, the island's culture sets Jeju-do apart from the mainland. It is blessed with a number of museums dedicated to the myths, legends and folklore of the island, providing us with a fascinating insight into the culture, beliefs and traditions of the local people.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 12 Tour ends Seoul

After an early breakfast we catch an internal flight back to Seoul, where our tour ends at the Seoul-Gimpo domestic airport. Those of us flying back to London then transfer to the Incheon International Airport by shuttle bus for the onward flight home.

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 11 breakfasts, 0 lunches,2 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Gyeongju
Outdoor Theater- No fee for admission (opening dates variable depending on the seasons)
Mt Namsan- No fee for admission.
Bike rental- US$ 5 per person
Pedal boat ride- US$ 10 for 2 passengers

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £25 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Foreign Exchange

South Korea

ATM Availability: All major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance: Most major restaurants and stores.

Travellers Cheques: We do not recomend to take travellers cheques as these can be difficult to exchange.

Local Currency: Won

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Either EUR, USD or GBP.

Where to Exchange: In all towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a ‘flight inclusive’ package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on **'Land Only'** arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate **'Joining Instructions'** for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining **any** of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Visa Information

South Korea: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens for a stay of less than 90 days. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

South Korea

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, infectious hepatitis, typhoid, tetanus and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Travellers may wish to take immunisation against Japanese Encephalitis. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

South Korea

South Korea has four distinct seaons: long, cold winters; short summers which tend to be hot and humid; autumn and spring offer pleasant weather but tend to pass quickly. Jeju Island tends to have a wamer climate due to its southern location, temperatues usually reach up to 25 degrees during the summer months. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at http://www.explore.co.uk/weather. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Upto-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Clothing

Lightweight raingear is required all year round. For winter departures warm sweaters, gloves, scarf, hat, warm coat, thermal underwear will be required.

Footwear

Please bring comfortable shoes and sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

Please bring a suitcase/soft holdall and rucksack for the day.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive. The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

South Korea

Lunch £: 8.00

Dinner £: 15.00

Drink

South Korea

Bottle of Beer £: 3.00

Water £: 0.50

Country details

South Korea

Population: 48,875,000

Size of Country: 100,210 sq km

Major Language: Korean

Religion: Buddhist, Christian

Time Difference to GMT: +9

Electric Supply & Plugs

South Korea

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2014 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2014. 2015/16 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2015.

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