

Seoul 서울



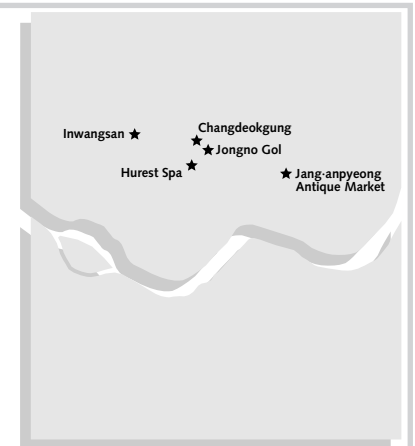
To get the most out of this fascinating, at times frustrating, city you have to accept Seoul for what it is: the world's largest company town. The company – Korea Inc – is not a commercial enterprise in the conventional sense but a *gemeinschaft* of hypercapitalism with 10 million employees dedicated to the pursuit of capital accumulation, conspicuous consumption and social, educational and corporate ladder climbing.

Art, urban panache and public amenities are on a par with what you'd expect in an iron-ore-mining community somewhere in the hinterland – in dramatically short supply – but there are pockets of world-class quality like the Leeum Samsung Museum of Art and the War Memorial Museum. Getting workers from point A to point B is what drives municipal organisation, with little thought given to what lies between. The result is an efficient subway and inoffensive, grey urban landscape that borders on bland. There are notable exceptions, like the Jongno Tower and nearby bell pavilion, which together constitute the city's most attractive architectural juxtaposition.

Like any mining town, Seoul's precious goods are below the surface and hard to reach. If you're going to tap into this city's rich culture, which is built on 600 years of Confucius sediment, it's essential to become an explorer. Dare to stroll neighbourhoods like Samcheong-dong, where English is hardly spoken. Experiment with unusual food like crispy *bindaetteok* (반대떡; green-bean pancake) in the Gwangjang market accompanied by a bottle of *makgeolli* (막걸리), a milky rice wine. Most importantly, challenge yourself by trying things you never imagined possible, like the public bath, the quintessential Korean experience.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Satisfy your urge for meat barbecued at your table at **Jongno Gori** (p124)
- Reflect on the possibilities of an afterlife while listening to the shaman's chants on the hills of **Inwangsan** (p116)
- Experience a euphoric sense of cleanliness at the **Hurest Spa** (p115) public bath and *jjimjilbang* (sauna)
- Behold the majesty of the Secret Garden at **Changdeokgung** (p101)
- Test your bargaining skills at the **Jang-anpyeong Antique Market** (p135)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 02

■ POPULATION: 10.4 MILLION

■ AREA: 605 SQ KM

HISTORY

With a population of almost 100,000, Seoul became the capital of Korea following the establishment of the Joseon dynasty in 1392. Confucianism was the ruling system of social order, Buddhism was banished and in the 19th century Catholics were executed. Until 1910, when Japanese colonial rule began, the rigid feudal system of kings, aristocrats, peasants, slaves and outcasts changed little. The nasty and brutish colonial masters destroyed much of the city's historical legacy. Korean culture nearly suffered a similar fate, as the country was unable or unwilling to fight against Japan's bid for regional domination. Since 1948, Seoul has been the capital of South Korea after the peninsula was formally divided into two states. Today, with a population of 10.4 million people, Seoul is one of the world's largest cities. It's also the country's centre of cultural, economic and political power, which Koreans living outside the city half-jokingly refer to as the Republic of Seoul.

NATIONAL & PROVINCIAL PARKS

On Seoul's northern boundary, **Bukhansan National Park** (p141) is known for granite cliffs, a stone fortress and lots of people at weekends. With five million annual park visitors, the easier trails leading to peaks like Insubong can be congested. Insubong is also a popular destination for rock climbers who prefer bouldering to walking.

Just 25km southeast of Seoul, **Namhan Sanseong Provincial Park** (p144) is a popular day trip from Seoul, with great hikes past ancient temples, large stone gates, tiny villages and an ancient fortress that used to guard the southern access to Seoul.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Most international travellers arriving by plane land at Incheon International Airport; there are a couple of international flights from Japan to Gimpo Airport, but that facility now handles mostly domestic connections. From Incheon heaps of buses run into the city, with an express bus service to Gimpo if you need to make a domestic flight connection.

Most trains to Seoul terminate at Seoul station but there are two others: Yongsan and Cheongnyangni. All train stations are adjacent to subway stations.

The city's subway network is easy to use. Every station has English-language signs and

the trains run frequently, though they stop around midnight. The bus system is satisfactory for people staying long enough to make sense of the routes. For short-term stays, it's tough to figure out. See p138 for transport details.

ORIENTATION

Downtown consists of Jongno, Gwanghwamun and Insadong, the city's premier tourist district. Myeongdong, Namsan and N'Seoul Tower are just to the south and easy to reach on foot if you're up for a walk. Bars, restaurants and shops of varying interest are on the other side of the mountain in Itaewon, a popular tourist district that's fast becoming the armpit of Seoul thanks to an overabundance of booze, testosterone and grime. During the day, the sidewalks are filled with shifty characters, suspicious street hawkers and an endless stream of annoying tailors who never stop asking if you want a made-to-measure suit (even though you've replied 'no' to the same person five minutes before). In the evening, there's no shortage of hookers promising to love you for a long time, drunken expat English teachers and just enough fights to warrant comparisons with a British soccer match.

Further south, the Han River cuts horizontally through the city with a mid-river island called Yeouido. South of the river, Gangnam is the city's hub of ostentation with expensive housing and Apgujeong, called the Rodeo Drive of Korea. The COEX Mall, Lotte World and Olympic Park are also south of the river and within reach of the subway.

April is not an especially good month for outdoor events in Seoul because periodic yellow dust storms reduce visibility and hamper breathing. These storms are thought to originate from China's Gobi desert. Sand, combined with air-born particulates of industrial pollution – including heavy-metal concentrations of lead and copper largely emanating from China's booming manufacturing sector – form a potent witch's brew that on occasion requires pedestrians to wear a cloth mask over the nose and mouth to minimise health risks. Over the past few years, storms appear to have intensified, with particulate levels occasionally reaching 2000 parts per million (ppm) in a cubic metre of air, a level of pollution that is downright awful given that 300 ppm is considered hazardous.

Maps

The Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO) office (Map pp88–9) has an extensive selection of free maps.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Bandi & Luni's (Map pp98–9; ☎ 6002 6002; 11 9.30am–10.30pm) The biggest selection of English-language books and mags is in the COEX Mall. There's also a branch in the Jongno Tower basement (Map pp88–9).

Kyobo Bookshop (Map pp88–9; ☎ 3973 5100) Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 4.

Seoul Selection Bookshop (Map pp88–9; ☎ 734 9565; www.seoulselection.com; 11 9.30am–6.30pm Mon–Sat) Books, CDs and DVDs about Korea.

Emergency

Ambulance (☎ 119)

Fire Brigade (☎ 119)

Helpline for Foreigners (☎ 790 6783)

Police (☎ 112)

SEOUL IN...

Four Days

Walk the trails around **Inwangsan** (p116) and you might come across a shaman uttering sounds that do not seem of this world. For a spiritual journey of a different kind, go window-shopping in **Samcheongdong** (p134) and then try the *sujebi* (dough flakes in shellfish broth) at **Samcheongdong Sujebi** (p125). Catch a taxi to Changdeokgung to join the day's last tour of the **Secret Garden** (p101). After the tour, it's a short taxi ride to Daehangno for *shabu shabu* (DIY beef and vegetable casserole) at **Opseoye** (p127) and music at **Live Jazz Club** (p132).

On day two go antiquing in the **Jang-anpyeong Market** (p135). For a different perspective on old things, head to **Leeum Samsung Museum of Art** (p104), the city's only must-see gallery. After viewing masterpieces of art, try one of two classic meals in Myeongdong: *bosintang* (dog-meat soup) at **Gye Sunok Bosintang** (p126) or *samgyetang* (ginseng chicken soup) at **Baekje Samgyetang** (p126). As long as you're in the area, take a bath at **Hurest Spa** (p115). Afterwards, enjoy the theatrical antics at **Nanta** (p133).

The third day's theme is reflection. Explore the **War Memorial Museum** (p113), which has terrific Korean War exhibitions. Then wander the streets in **Itaewon** (p104) and ask yourself why it's such a popular place. Subway over to Hapjeong and tour **Joldusan Martyrs' Shrine & Museum** (p104), pondering the extent of man's inhumanity. You've fed the spirit, now take care of the flesh in Sinchon, with a steak dinner cooked by a chef who worked in Paris at **Le Petit Paris** (p127). Close out the night at nearby **Noree Hanun Saramdul** (p128).

On day four explore **Seodaemun Prison** (p104) for a graphic presentation of Korean history. Then subway over to Insadong for an afternoon of browsing and drinking tea at one of the many **teashops** (p129). Dinner is barbecued pork at **Jongno Gol** (p124). In the evening tour the city's old and new sights on a **walking tour** (p117). The cable car and **N'Seoul Tower** (p103) are nearby, time and energy permitting.

Seven Days

Follow the suggested four-day plan, and...

On day five spend a few hours browsing **COEX Mall** (p113). Just be sure to be at **Bong-eunsa** (p113) in time for the two-hour temple tour if you're around on a Thursday. For good eats and drinks, head over to Gangnam and sample the home-brew at **Platinum Microbrewery** (p130).

On day six, Apgujeong is quiet in the morning so fill the time with a trip to the **National Museum of Korea** (p104). Afterwards, explore Apgujeong's Rodeo Drive and upscale department stores. Dinner is decidedly less fashionable, but the all-you-can-eat chicken wings at **Shwing** (p127) are irresistible. Be sure not to drop anything on your shirt because the next stop is **Once in a Blue Moon** (p132), the city's premiere jazz joint. When it's time for a cigar and port, walk over to the **Tribeca building** (p129).

Finally, spend the day at the track. The **Seoul Racecourse** (p143) has a lounge for international guests and is well set up for a day at the races. After, it's an easy subway ride to the **Millennium Seoul Hilton Casino** (p130).

It's unlikely that emergency service operators will be able to communicate in English, but the police department may have an interpreter available. Phone ☎ 1330 (24 hours) to contact an English-language speaker in a tourist information centre.

Internet Access

Internet rooms are on almost every street – look for the 'PC 방' sign. Most are open 24 hours and charge W1000 to W2000 per hour; after 11pm rates can be as low as W500. PC rooms are frequented by internet gamers and are often thick with smoke. Many backpacker guesthouses, hotels and cafés offer free internet access, as do these locations:

City Hall (Map pp92–3)

Gimpo domestic airport (Map pp84–5)

Incheon international airport (Map p140)

Itaewon subway station tourist information

centre (Map p91)

KTO information booth (Map pp88–9)

KTO information centre (Map pp88–9)

Internet Resources

<http://english.seoul.go.kr> About 130,000 foreigners live in Seoul, of which 60% come from China. Learn more cool facts about Seoul on the city's website.

www.knto.or.kr Good travel information about Korea divided by region.

www.nearsubway.com An apartment locator with interactive maps.

www.rjkoehler.com The Marmot's Hole has mostly intelligent social and political commentary about Korea.

Laundry

Backpacker guesthouses usually provide free use of a washing machine with hang-dry facilities. If you stay in a *yogwan* (budget motel), you may have to do your washing in the bathroom. Dry-cleaning shops are fairly common, but expect a hefty bill to clean your panties.

Left Luggage

Most subway stations and bus terminals have lockers. Small lockers cost W1000 a day and the ones large enough for a backpack are W2000.

Medical Services

Medical care in Seoul isn't quite on a par with western countries, but it's better than what you'll find in most Asian cities. Patients requiring hospitalisation can make their stay

more bearable if friends and family visit on a regular basis, because food and room-cleaning services are minimal. Most facilities don't accept international insurance so bring cash or credit cards.

Dr Park's Dental Clinic (Map p91; ☎ 794 0551;

☎ 10am–6.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat) Above Seoul Pub.

International Clinic (Map p91; ☎ 790 0857; www.internationalclinic.co.kr; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat, closed noon–2pm) In the Hannam Building.

Samsung Medical Center & International Health Service (Map pp84–5; ☎ 3410 0200; 50 Ilwondong, Gangnam-gu; ☎ 8.30am–noon, 1–5pm Mon–Fri) Line 3 to Irwon station, Exit 1 and ride the shuttle bus.

Severance Hospital (Map p94; ☎ 2228 5810,

emergencies 012 263 6556; www.severance.or.kr/en;

☎ 9am–12.30pm, 1.30–4.30pm Mon–Fri, 9.30–11am Sat)

The International Health Care Centre is on the 3rd floor of the large building beside Yonsei University. Line 2 to Sinchon station, Exit 3.

Money

Banks are open from 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Friday and most will exchange foreign currencies. Licensed moneychangers in Itaewon keep longer hours. Near Insa-dong, there is a moneychanger in front of the Nakwon Arcade; look for the 'Money Exchange' sign. Compare rates and commissions before using any of these services. Expats working in Korea may be required to show a copy of their employment contract and alien registration card to open a bank account and to wire money overseas. Some banks stamp passports with the amount of remittance.

Post

Gwanghwamun post office (Map pp88–9; ☎ 9am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–6pm weekends & holidays) Has extended hours. Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 5 and walk around the corner.

Toilets

Free public toilets are available throughout the city. In a pinch, it is acceptable to enter a restaurant to use the washroom. Always carry tissue, as most restrooms do not supply this vital product. Older facilities are equipped with an oblong porcelain hole that requires users to drop their knickers and squat. Steady balance and the ability to hit the target are two skills needed to avoid a messy situation.

Tourist Information

Insadong Tourist Office (Map pp88–9; ☎ 734 0222; ☎ 10am–10pm)

Itaewon Tourist Information Centre (Map p91;

☎ 3785 2514; www.enjoy.itaewon.com; ☎ 9am–10pm)

KTO (Map pp88–9; ☎ 729 9496; www.knto.or.kr;

☎ 9am–8pm)

Seoul Station (Map pp92–3; ☎ 2392 1324;

☎ 4.30am–11pm)

Other tourist information booths include Incheon international airport, Gimpo airport, Korea City Air Terminal (KCAT), Deoksugung and the Namdaemun and Dongdaemun markets. There are also three in Itaewon and two near Lotte Young Plaza in Myeongdong.

Travel Agencies

Travel agents often advertise discounted fares in the country's English-language newspapers.

Apple Tours (Map pp86–7; ☎ 793 3478; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat) The USO's overseas travel service.

Omega Top Travel (Map pp88–9; ☎ 723 6142;

☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri) On the 5th floor of a grungy building in Insadong. Walk down the lane between the YMCA and a convenience store.

Shoestring Travel (Map p94; ☎ 333 4151; www.shoestring.co.kr; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat) Lonely Planet books are sold here.

Time Machine Travel (Map pp88–9; ☎ 778 1887;

☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 11am–5pm Sat) Room 436 of the Royal Building. Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7. Turn left at the street before the Sejong Center for Performing Arts and walk to the corner.

Withus Travel (Map pp88–9; ☎ 720 1123; ☎ 9am–6.30pm Mon–Fri, to 2pm Sat) On the 2nd floor in the same building as Omega Top Travel.

Xanadu Travel (Map p91; ☎ 795 7771; www.xanadu.co.kr; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 11am–3pm Sat) On the 5th floor of the KEB building in Itaewon.

SIGHTS

Gwanghwamun 광화문

GYEONGBOKGUNG 경복궁

At one time, this palace (Map pp88–9; ☎ 732 1931; adult/youth/child W3000/1500/free; ☎ 9am–6pm Wed–Mon Mar–Oct, closes 1hr earlier Nov–Feb, open to 7pm Sat & Sun May–Oct) may have been a place of pomp and ceremony. Today the uniformly brown buildings with a dirt compound in front may leave travellers with the impression that the sight is undergoing restoration work. This was the country's principal royal residence until the palace was destroyed in 1592 during the *Imjin Waeran* war with Japan. But it was not the

Japanese that razed the palace. The citizens of Seoul did that dirty deed. As the Japanese marched across the country, the king and *yangban* (aristocrats) abandoned Seoul to save their own skins. Angered by the desertion, a mob burned down the palace. It lay in waste for nearly 300 years until Regent Daewon-gun, father of King Gojong, began to rebuild it in 1865. King Gojong moved into the palace in 1868. Nearly 30 years later, the king's wife, Queen Myeongseong (Queen Min), was murdered in her bedroom by Japanese assassins. King Gojong fled the palace to sanctuary in the Russian legation.

English-language tours (☎ 9.30am, noon, 1.30pm & 3pm, not Tue) are conducted free of charge four times daily. The ceremonial changing of the guard takes place six times (not on Tuesday), though the length varies (10am for 25 minutes, 11am, noon, 1pm and 2pm for seven minutes, 3pm for 20 minutes).

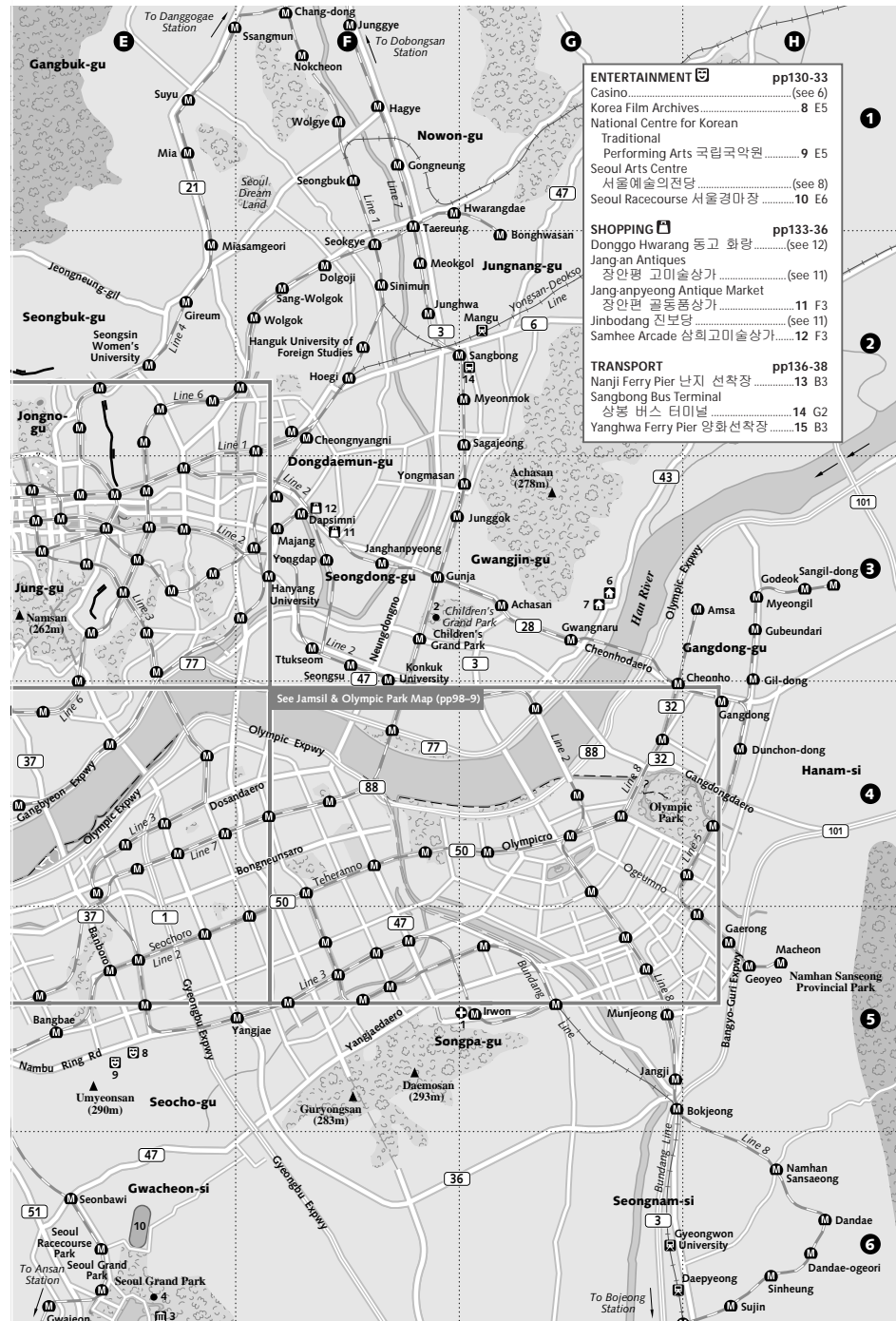
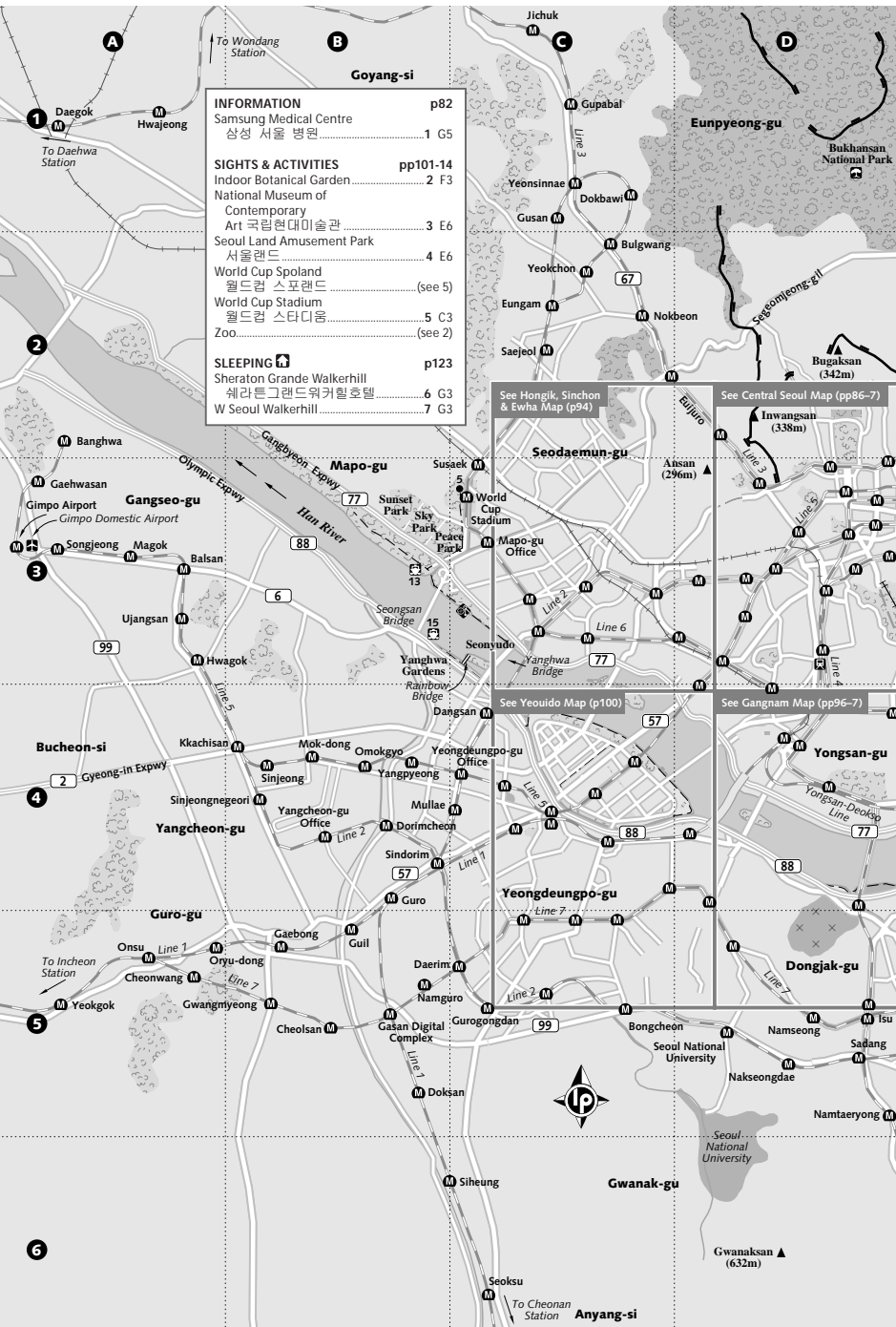
Paid admission to the palace includes entry into the **National Palace Museum** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 3701 7500; ☎ 9am–6pm Tue–Fri, 9am–7pm Sat & Sun). Small and blasé, it contains clothing, furniture and artefacts from the Joseon period.

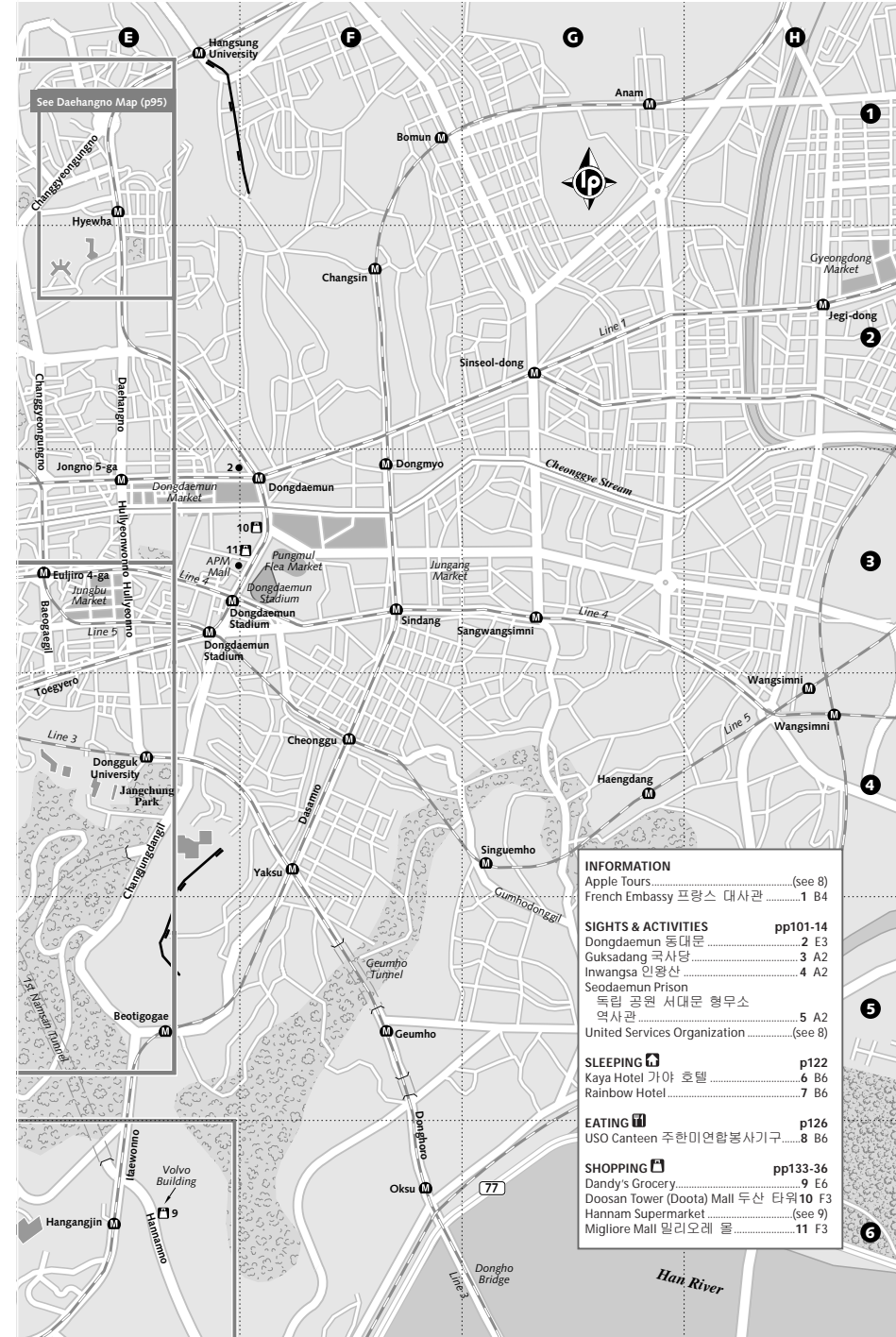
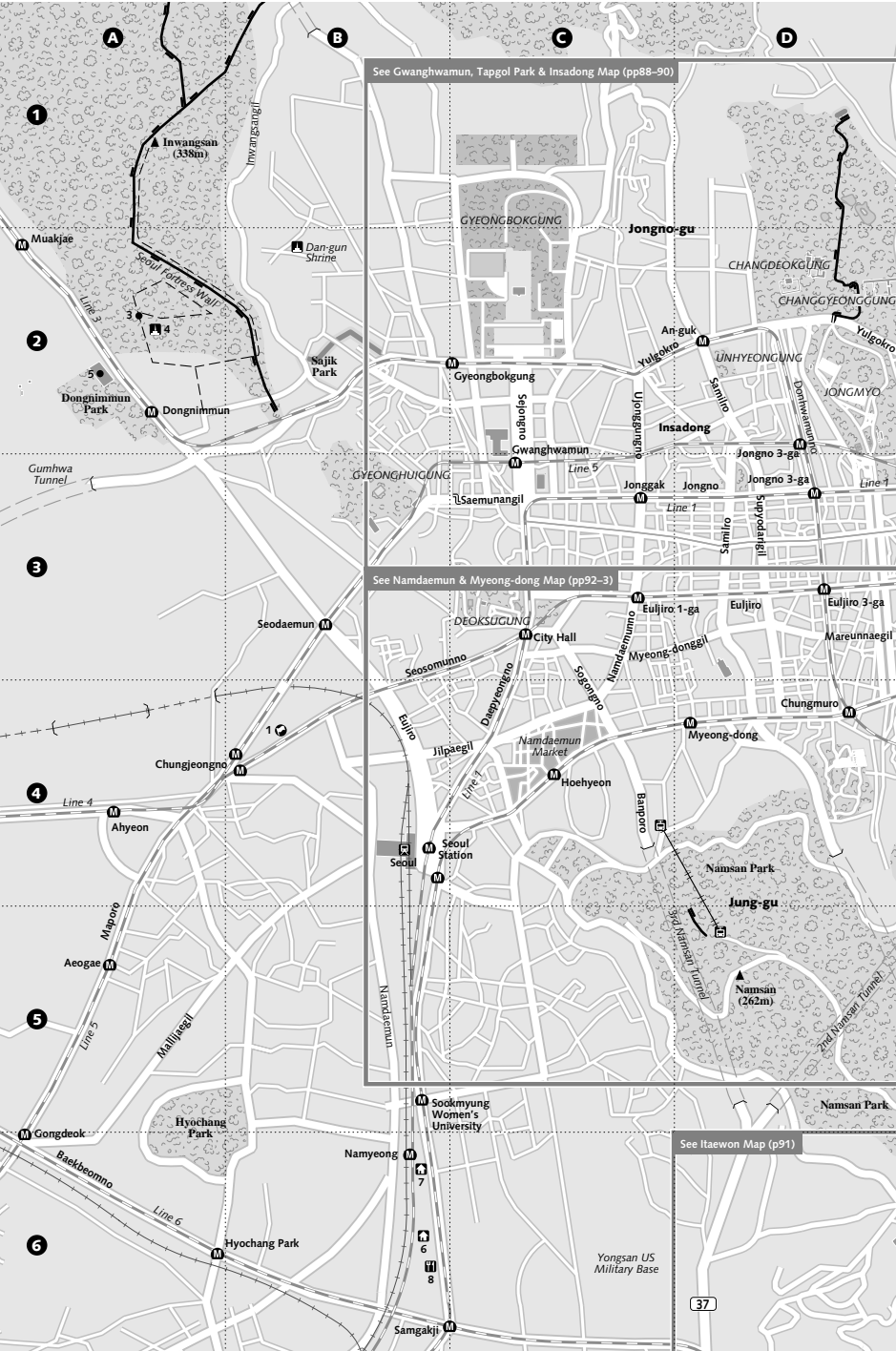
On the other side of the compound, the **National Folk Museum** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 3704 3114; www.nfm.go.kr; admission free with entry to Gyeongbokgung; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon & Wed–Fri Mar–Oct, to 5pm Nov–Feb, 9am–7pm Sat & Sun) re-creates everyday Joseon life. Farming implements, clothing and a *kimchi* display are here along with an exhibition of scholarly thought. Advanced Joseon thinkers believed the sun revolved around the Earth, heaven was round and Earth was square. Although few people subscribe to this belief system today, its impact is evident in some of the city's architecture, like the Jongno Tower, an attractive but befuddling structure until viewed through the eyes of a Joseon scholar. Take Line 3 to Gyeongbokgung station, Exit 5.

GYEONGHUIGUNG 경희궁

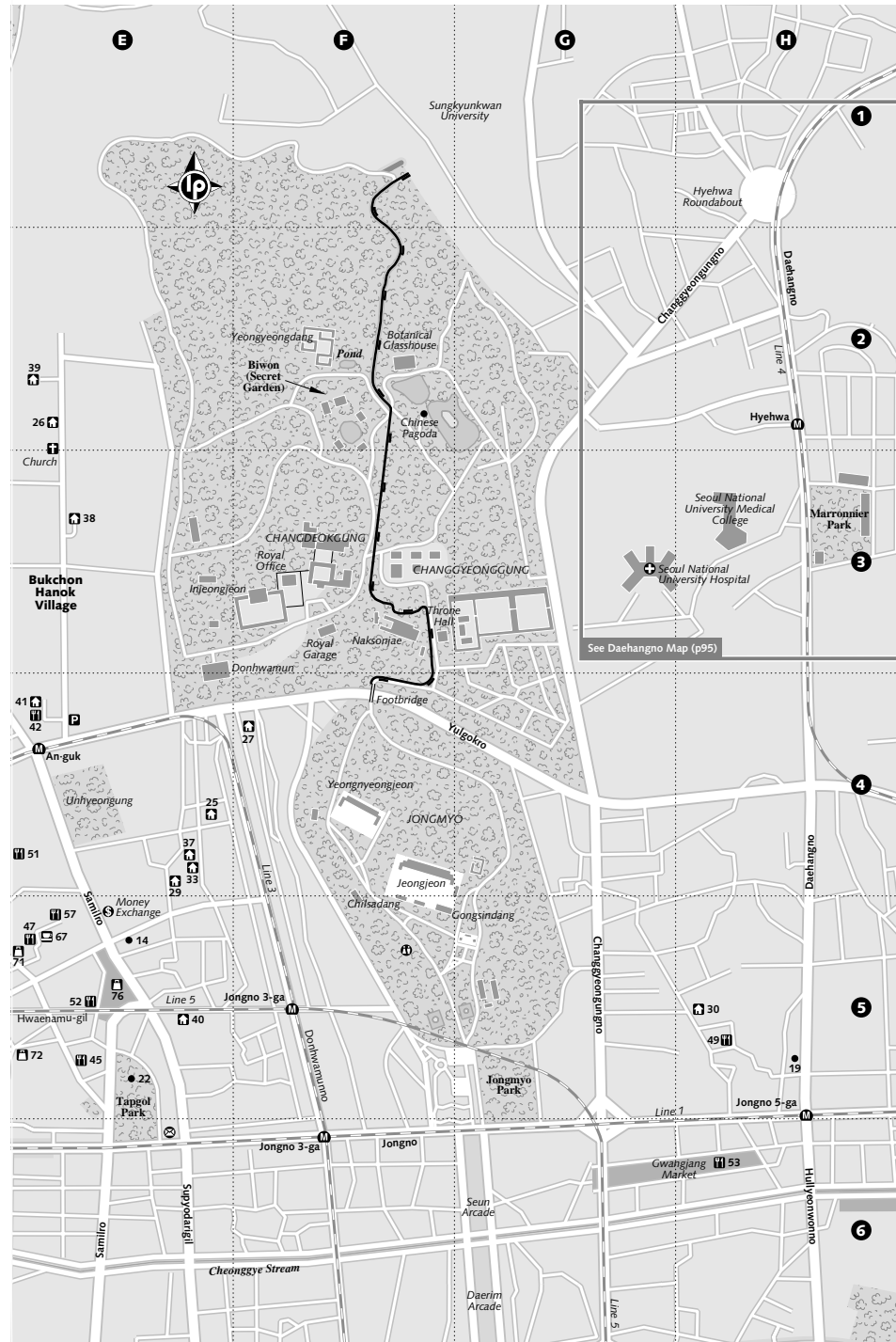
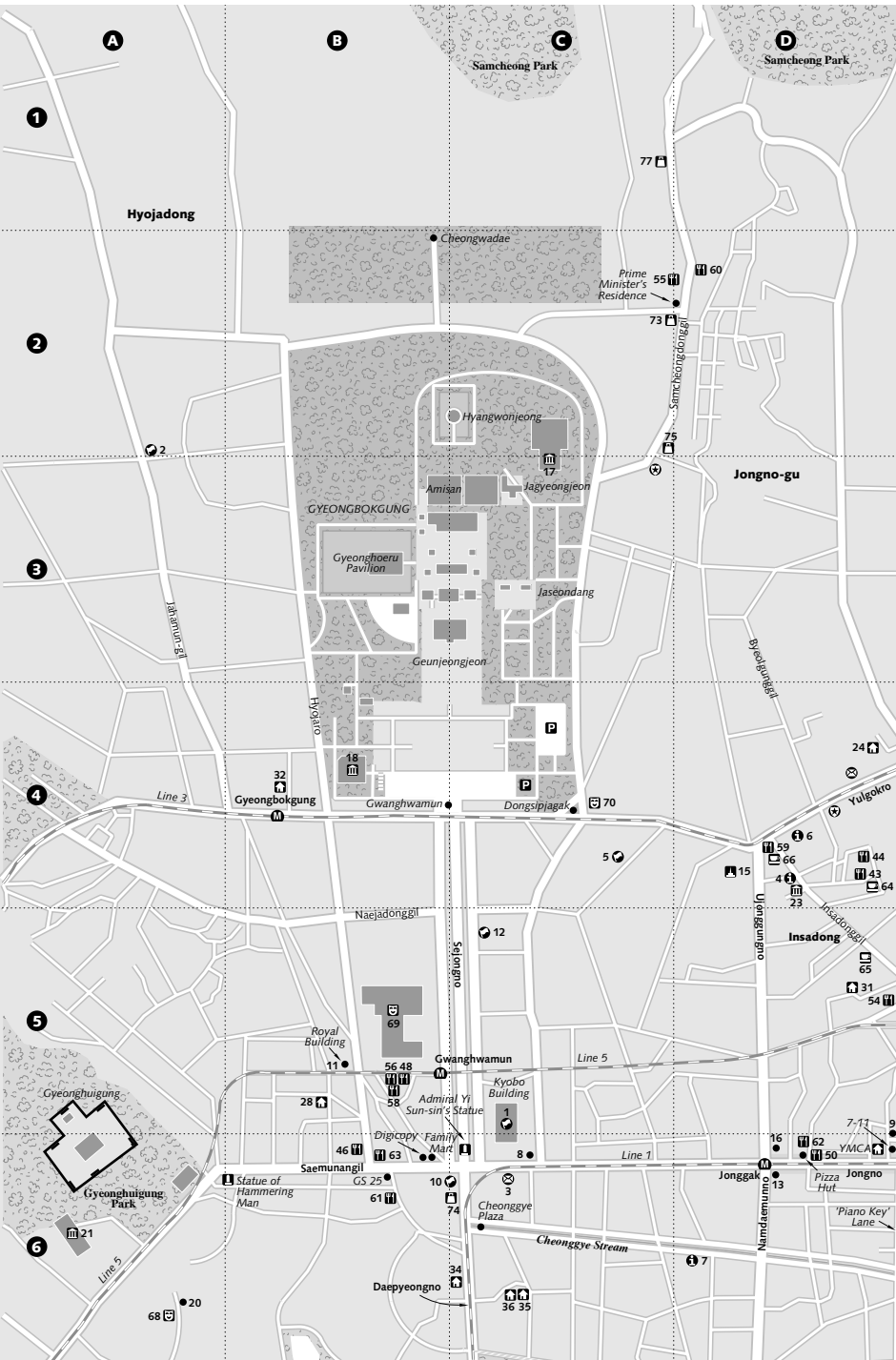
There are no guided tours, audio systems or admission fees at this lonely palace (Map pp88–9; ☎ 724 0274; admission free; ☎ 9am–6pm Tue–Sat, 10am–6pm Sun & holidays) that once served as a villa for Joseon royalty. Restored and reopened in 2002, the quiet compound blends nature with attractive architectural sightlines, created by black-tiled roofs climbing stepwise up the backside of a hill. Approach the palace at just the right angle and you'll be

(Continued on page 101)

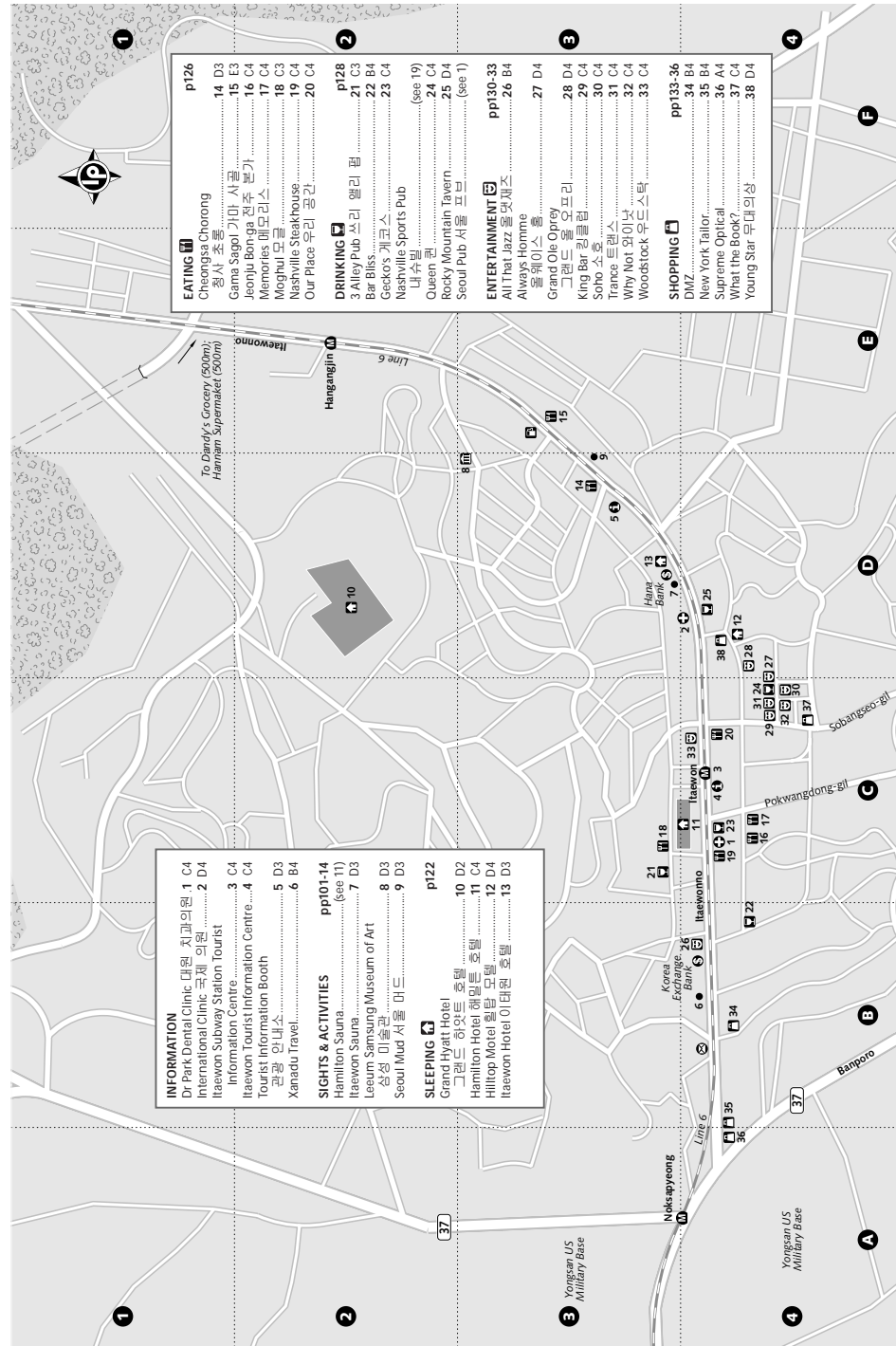


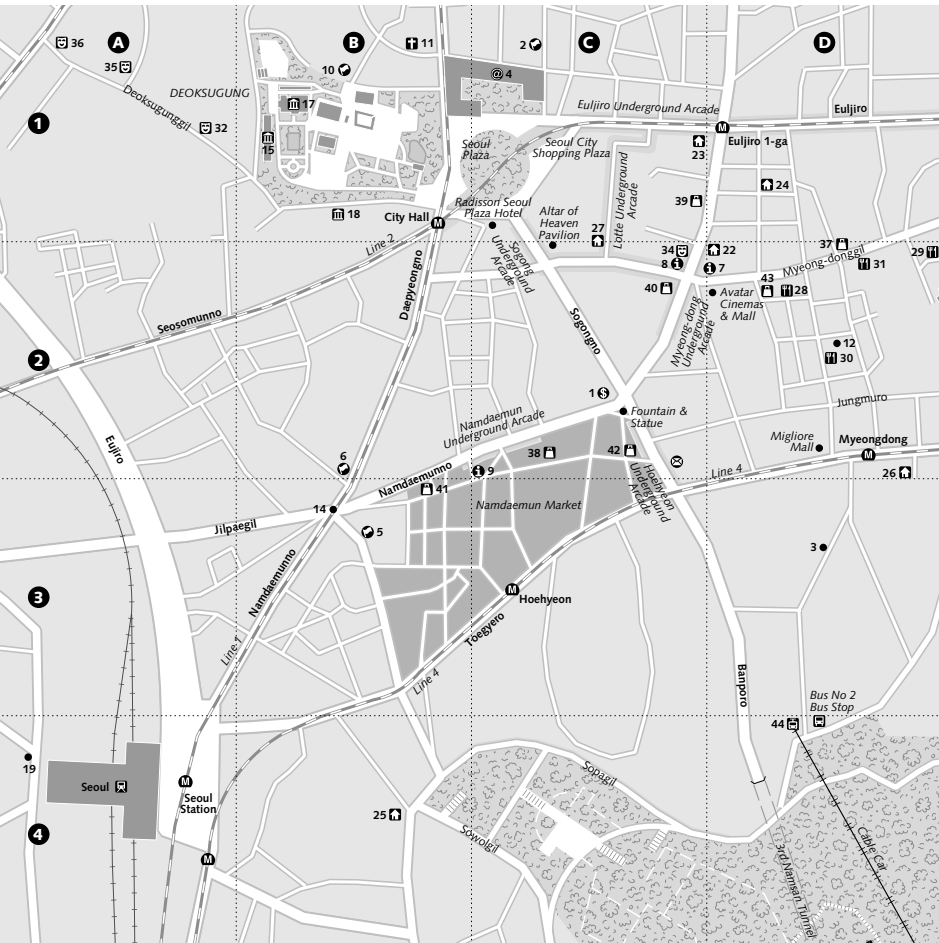


INFORMATION	
Apple Tours	(see 8)
French Embassy 프랑스 대사관	1 B4
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES pp101-14	
Dongdaemun 동대문	2 E3
Guksadang 국사당	3 A2
Inwangsa 인왕산	4 A2
Seodaemun Prison	
독립공원 서대문 형무소	
역사관	5 A2
United Services Organization	(see 8)
SLEEPING p122	
Kaya Hotel 가야 호텔	6 B6
Rainbow Hotel	7 B6
EATING p126	
USO Canteen 주한미연합봉사기구	8 B6
SHOPPING pp133-36	
Dandy's Grocery	9 E6
Doosan Tower (Doota) Mall 두산타워	10 F3
Hannam Supermarket	(see 9)
Migliore Mall 밀리오레몰	11 F3

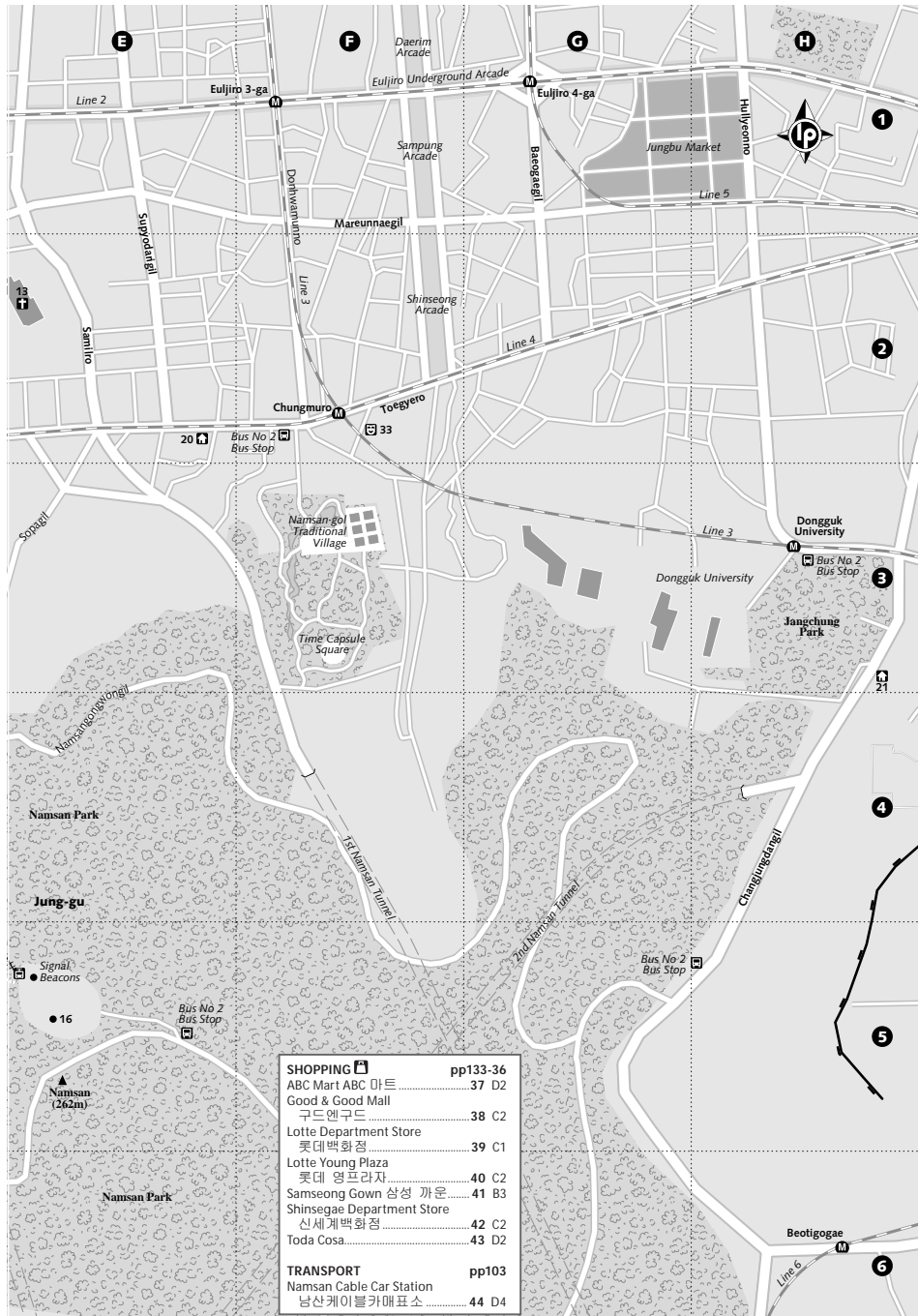


INFORMATION	
Australian Embassy 1 C5	Bukchon Guesthouse 26 E2
Bandi & Luni's 반디앤루니스 (see 16)	Guesthouse Korea 게스트하우스코리아 27 F4
Chinese Embassy 2 A2	Gwanghwa Hotel 광화장 28 B5
Gwanghwamun Post Office 광화문우체국 3 C6	Holiday In 29 E4
Insadong Tourist Office 관광 안내소 4 D4	Hotel Leon 30 H5
Japanese Embassy 일본대사관 5 C4	Hotel Sunbee 31 D5
KTO Information Booth 관광 안내 6 D4	Inn Daewon 대원여관 32 B4
KTO Tourist Information Centre 한국 관광 공사 7 D6	Jongnowon Motel 중로원모텔 33 E4
Kyobo Bookshop 교보문고 8 C6	Koreana Hotel 34 C6
New Zealand Embassy (see 1)	New Kujje Hotel 뉴극제호텔 35 C6
Omega Top Travel 탐 항공 9 D5	New Seoul Hotel 뉴서울호텔 36 C6
Taiwan Mission 타이완영사관 10 C6	Seoul Backpackers 서울백팩커스 37 E4
Time Machine Travel 11 B5	Seoul Guesthouse 서울게스트하우스 38 E3
US Embassy 미국대사관 12 C5	Tea Guesthouse 39 E2
Withus Travel 위더스 (see 9)	Tomji Hotel 40 E5
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES (p83, 101-14)	Woori Jip Guesthouse 게스트하우스우리집 41 E4
Bosin-gak 보신각 13 D6	EATING (pp124-5)
Han's Culinary Academy 한정혜 조리대학 14 E5	Anjip 안집 42 E4
Jogyesa 조계사 15 D4	Chon 춘 43 D4
Jongno Tower 종로타워 16 D6	Dimibang 디미방 44 D4
National Folk Museum 국립민속박물관 17 C3	Dolkemaetul Tofu House 돌quemaul 두부 45 E5
National Palace Museum 국립박물관 18 B4	Goryeo Supermarket & Food Court 고려슈퍼푸드코트 46 B6
Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch 로얄아시아협회 19 H5	Jagun Chajib 작은 집 47 E5
Russian Legation Tower 구러시아공사관 20 A6	Jongno Bindaeddeok 종로 빈대떡 48 B5
Seoul Museum of Art, Gyeonghuigung Annex 서울 시립미술관 경희궁별관 21 A6	Jongno Gol 종로골 49 H5
Tapgol Park Pagoda 22 E5	Jongno Woodong 종로 우동 50 D6
Toto 토토 23 D4	Min's Club 민스클럽 51 E4
SLEEPING (pp120-1)	Minsok Jip 민속집 52 E5
Anguk Guesthouse 24 D4	Park Ganae Maetdol 박가네 맷돌빈대떡 53 H6
Beewon Guesthouse 25 E4	
	Park-ssi Mulgo On Jebi 박씨 물고 온 제비 54 D5
	Samcheong-dong Sujebi 삼청동 수제비 55 C2
	Samjeon Hoejeon Chobap 회전초밥 56 B5
	Sanchon 산촌 57 E5
	Seolleongtang 설렁탕 58 B5
	So Sim 소심 59 D4
	Son Mandu 손만두 함흥 냉면 60 D2
	Todam 토담 61 B6
	Top Cloud Restaurant 탑클라우드 (see 16)
	Tosok Maeul 토속 마을 62 D6
	Witch's Table 위치스테이블 63 B6
	DRINKING (pp128-30)
	Dawon Teashop 다원 64 D4
	Insadong Teahouse 인사동 찻집 65 D5
	Meosi kkeokjeong inga? 머시 객정인가? 66 D4
	Top Cloud Café 탑클라우드 (see 16)
	Yetchatjip Teashop 옛찻집 67 E5
	ENTERTAINMENT (pp130-3)
	Nanta Theatre 난타극장 68 A6
	Sejong Centre for the Performing Arts 세종문화회관 69 B5
	Seoul Selection Bookshop 서울선택선문고 70 C4
	SHOPPING (pp136-8)
	Antique Watch 71 E5
	Beautiful Tea Museum 아름다운 차 박물관 72 E5
	Comble 공불 73 C2
	Donghwa Duty-Free Shop 동화면세백화점 74 C6
	Lamove 라 모베 75 C2
	Nakwon Arcade 낙원상가 76 E5
	Vintage 수입명품 & 빈티즈 77 C1

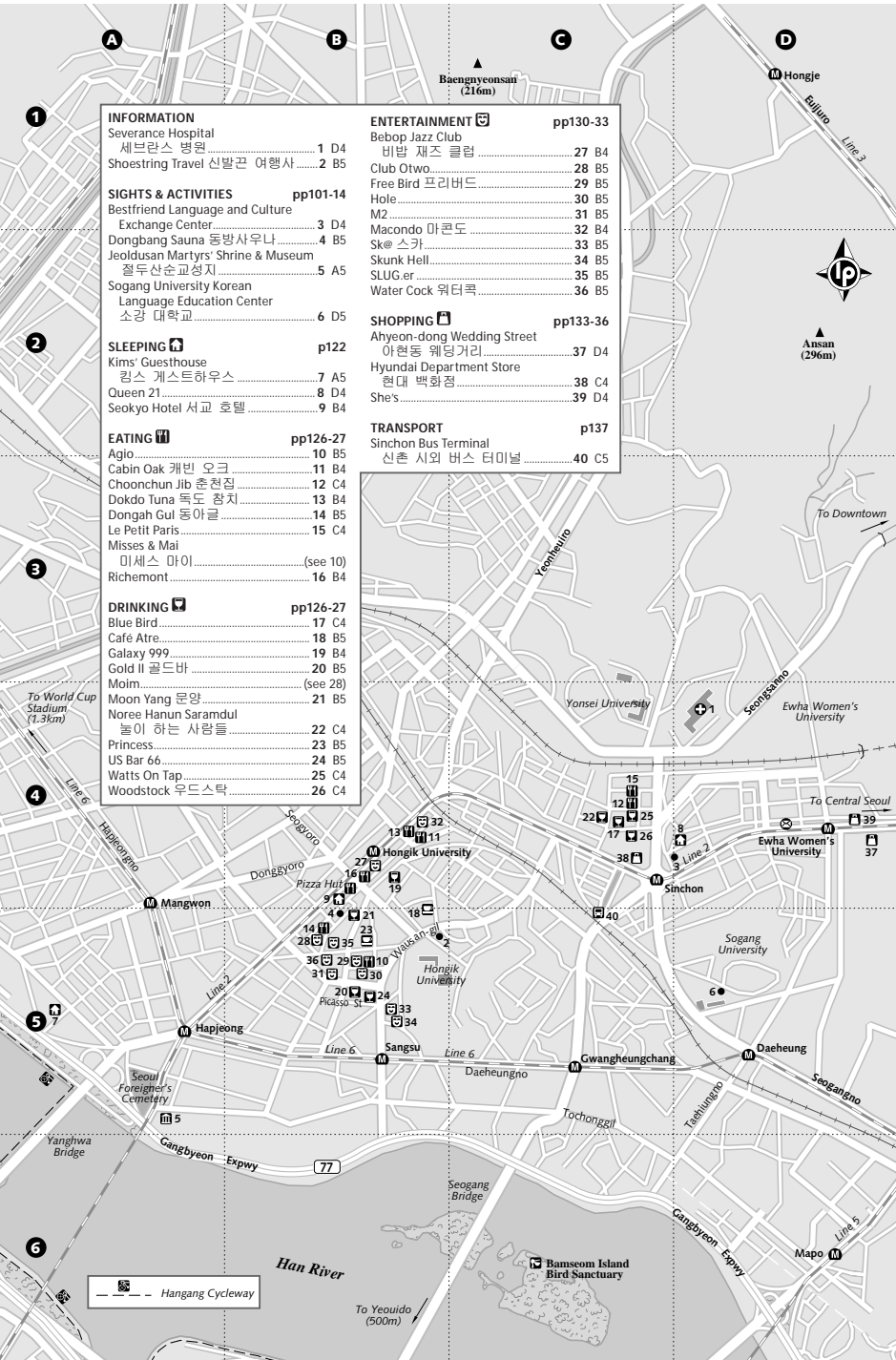




INFORMATION		Myeongdong Catholic Cathedral 명동성당 13 E2		Millennium Seoul Hilton 힐튼호텔 25 B4	
Bank of Korea 한국은행 1 C2	Canadian Embassy 캐나다대사관 2 C1	Namdaemun (Great South Gate) 남대문 14 B3	National Museum of Contemporary Art, Deoksugung 국립현대미술관덕수궁분관 15 B1	Myeongdong Guesthouse 명동 게스트 하우스 26 D2	Westin Chosun Hotel 조선호텔 27 C1
Chinese Consular Section (Visa Issuance) 3 D3	City Hall 서울시청관광안내소 4 C1	Irish Embassy 아일랜드대사관 5 B3	Singapore Embassy 싱가포르대사관 6 B2	EATING	p126
Tourist Information Booth 관광 안내 7 D2	Tourist Information Booth 관광 안내 8 C2	Tourist Information Booth 관광 안내 9 C2	UK Embassy 영국대사관 10 B1	Seokjejeon Hall 경복궁물전시관 17 B1	Baekje Samgyetang 백제삼계탕 28 D2
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES pp101-14	Daehan성공회대성당 11 B1	Hurest Spa 휴레스트 웰빙센터 12 D2	SLEEPING	Astoria Hotel 아스토리아호텔 20 E2	Hotel Shilla 신라호텔 21 H3
Anglican Church 11 B1	Metro Hotel 메트로 호텔 24 D1	ENTERTAINMENT	pp130-33	Chongdong Theatre 충동극장 32 A1	Korea House 한국외점 33 F2
Hurest Spa 휴레스트 웰빙센터 12 D2		Lotte Hotel 롯데호텔 23 C1		Lotte Cinema 롯데 시네마 34 C2	Nanta Theatre 난타 35 A1
				Nanta Theatre 난타 35 A1	Tokebi Storm 도깨비 스톰 36 A1



SHOPPING		pp133-36	
ABC Mart ABC 마트 37	Good & Good Mall 굿&굿몰 38	Lotte Department Store 롯데백화점 39	Lotte Young Plaza 롯데 영프리카 40
Samsong Gown 삼성 가운 41	Shinsegae Department Store 신세개백화점 42	Toda Cosa 43	
TRANSPORT		pp103	
Namsan Cable Car Station 남산케이블카역소 44			

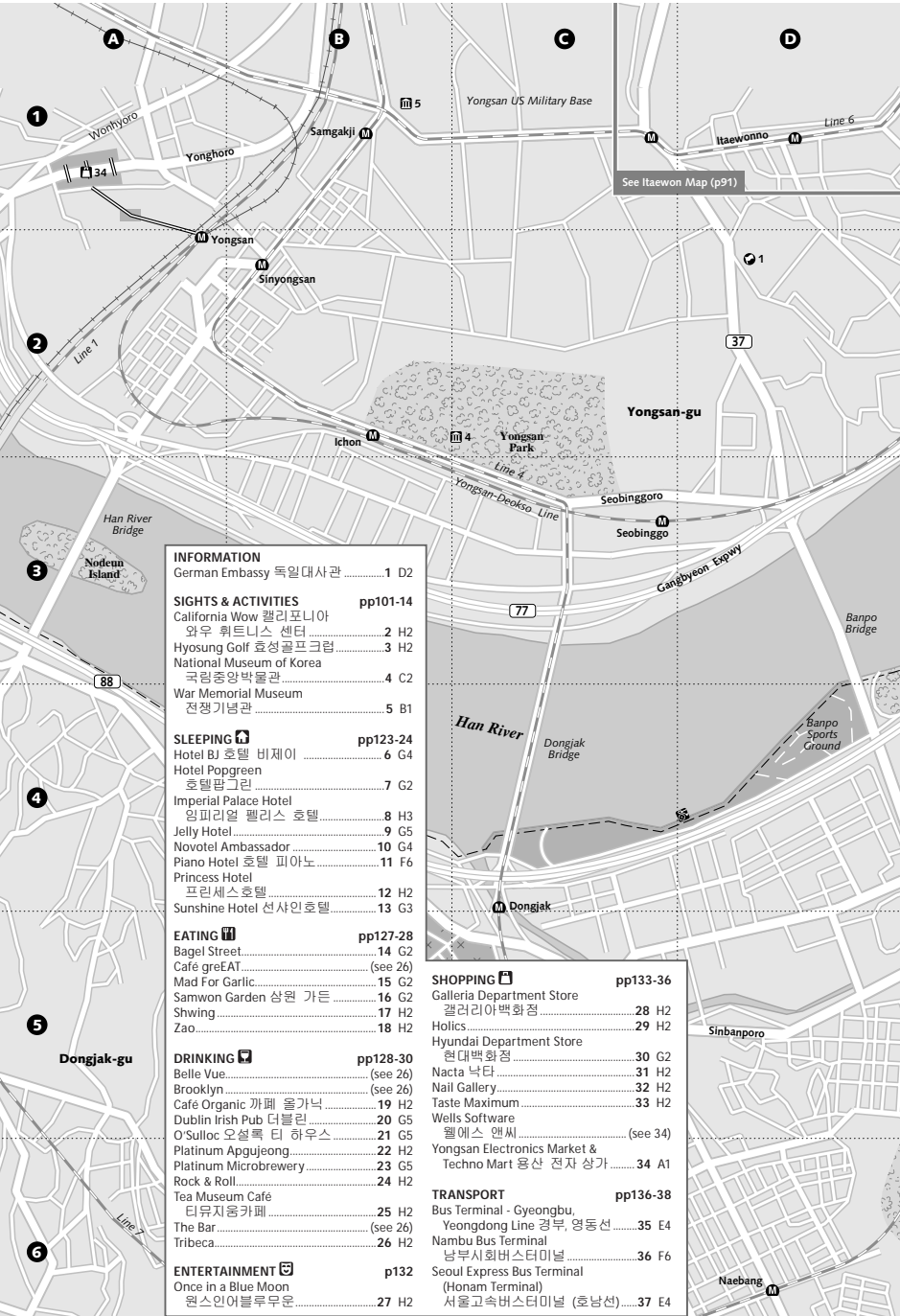


INFORMATION	
Severance Hospital	
세브란스 병원	1 D4
Shoestring Travel 신발끈 여행사	2 B5
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES pp101-14	
Bestfriend Language and Culture Exchange Center	3 D4
Dongbang Sauna 동방사우나	4 B5
Jeoldusan Martyrs' Shrine & Museum 절두산순교성지	5 A5
Sogang University Korean Language Education Center 소강 대학교	6 D5
SLEEPING P p122	
Kims' Guesthouse	
퀸스 게스트하우스	7 A5
Queen 21	8 D4
Seokyo Hotel 서교 호텔	9 B4
EATING P pp126-27	
Agio	10 B5
Cabin Oak 캐빈 오크	11 B4
Choonchun Jib 춘천집	12 C4
Dokdo Tuna 돛도 참치	13 B4
Dongah Gul 동아골	14 B5
Le Petit Paris	15 C4
Misses & Mai	(see 10)
Richemont	16 B4
DRINKING P pp126-27	
Blue Bird	17 C4
Café Atré	18 B5
Galaxy 999	19 B4
Gold II 골드바	20 B5
Moim	(see 28)
Moon Yang 문양	21 B5
Noree Hanun Saramdul 놀이 하는 사람들	22 C4
Princess	23 B5
US Bar 66	24 B5
Watts On Tap	25 C4
Woodstock 우드스탁	26 C4

ENTERTAINMENT P pp130-33	
Bebop Jazz Club	
비밥 재즈 클럽	27 B4
Club Otwo	28 B5
Free Bird 프리버드	29 B5
Hole	30 B5
M2	31 B5
Macondo 마콘도	32 B4
Sk@ 스카	33 B5
Skunk Hell	34 B5
SLUG.er	35 B5
Water Cock 워터콕	36 B5
SHOPPING P pp133-36	
Ahyeon-dong Wedding Street 아현동 웨딩거리	37 D4
Hyundai Department Store 현대 백화점	38 C4
She's	39 D4
TRANSPORT p137	
Sinchon Bus Terminal 신촌 시외 버스 터미널	40 C5



EATING p127	
Bongchu Jimdalk 봉추 찜닭	1 D4
Mama Food	2 D4
Omyeo Gamyeo 오며 가며	3 D5
Opseoyo 옵서예	4 D4
Ttokssam Sidae 떡삼 시대	5 D4
DRINKING p129	
Bier Halle 비어 할레	6 C4
Esmeralda Coffee	7 D5
Mindeulle Yeongto Café 민들레 영토 분관	8 D4
Sanata 산타나	9 C4
ENTERTAINMENT pp130-33	
Hakjeon Green Theatre 학전 그린	10 D3
Live Jazz Club 라이브 재즈	11 C4



INFORMATION

German Embassy 독일대사관 1 D2

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES pp101-14

California Wow 캘리포니아 2 H2
 와우 휘트니스 센터 2 H2
 Hyosung Golf 휴성골프클럽 3 H2
 National Museum of Korea 국립중앙박물관 4 C2
 War Memorial Museum 전쟁기념관 5 B1

SLEEPING pp123-24

Hotel BJ 호텔 비제이 6 G4
 Hotel Popgreen 호텔팝그린 7 G2
 Imperial Palace Hotel 임피리얼 팰리스 호텔 8 H3
 Jelly Hotel 9 G5
 Novotel Ambassador 10 G4
 Piano Hotel 호텔 피아노 11 F6
 Princess Hotel 프린세스 호텔 12 H2
 Sunshine Hotel 선샤인호텔 13 G3

EATING pp127-28

Bagel Street 14 G2
 Cafe greEAT (see 26)
 Mad For Garlic 15 G2
 Samwon Garden 삼원 가든 16 G2
 Shwing 17 H2
 Zao 18 H2

DRINKING pp128-30

Belle Vue (see 26)
 Brooklyn (see 26)
 Cafe Organic 카페 올가닉 19 H2
 Dublin Irish Pub 더블린 20 G5
 O'Sulloc 오설록 티 하우스 21 G5
 Platinum Apgujeong 22 H2
 Platinum Microbrewery 23 G5
 Rock & Roll 24 H2
 Tea Museum Cafe 티뮤지움카페 25 H2
 The Bar (see 26)
 Tribeca 26 H2

ENTERTAINMENT p132

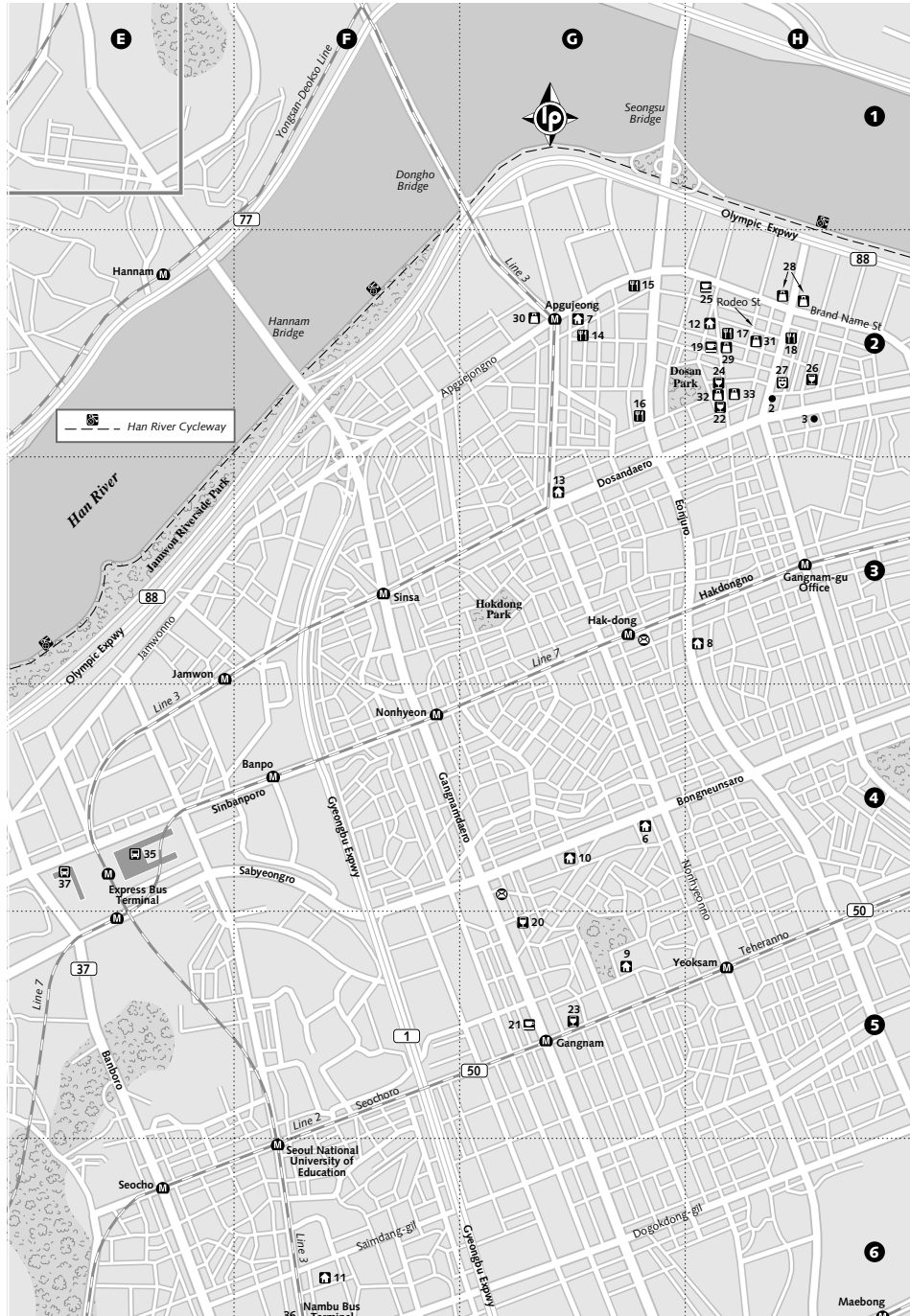
Once in a Blue Moon 원스인어블루무운 27 H2

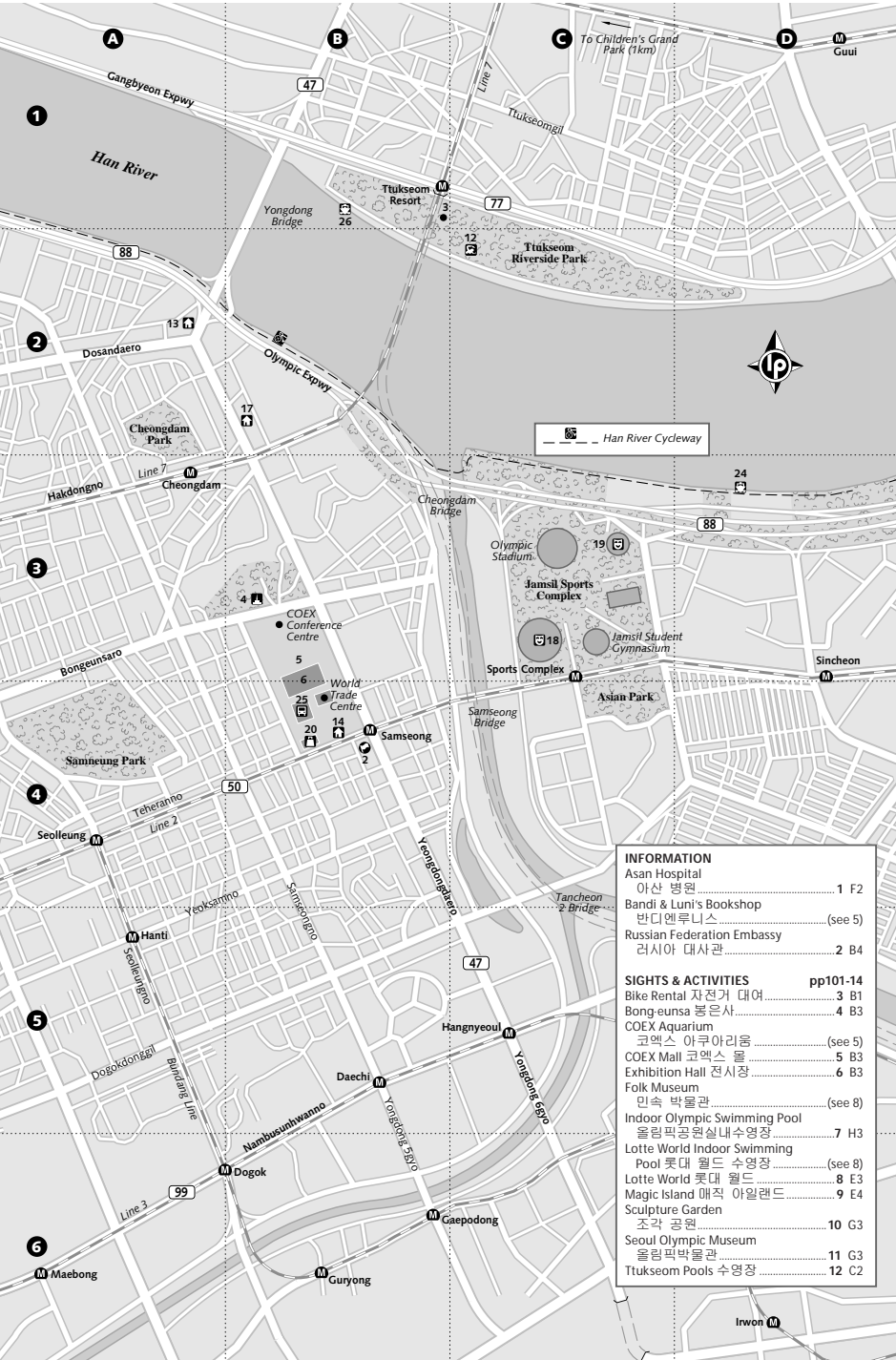
SHOPPING pp133-36

Galleria Department Store 갤러리아백화점 28 H2
 Holics 29 H2
 Hyundai Department Store 현대백화점 30 G2
 Nacta 나타 31 H2
 Nail Gallery 32 H2
 Taste Maximum 33 H2
 Wells Software 웰스 소프트웨어 (see 34)
 Yongsan Electronics Market & Techno Mart 용산 전자 상가 34 A1

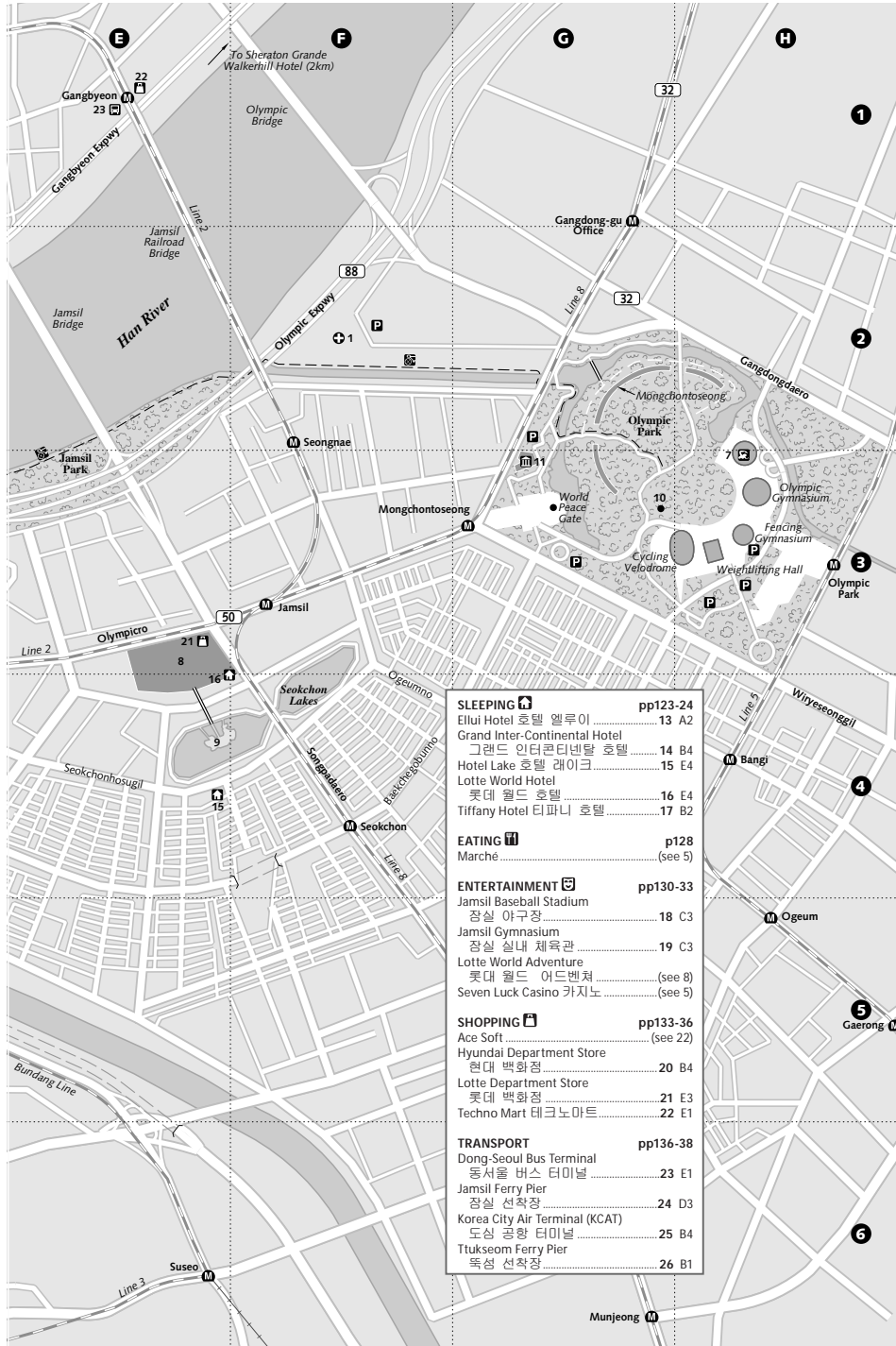
TRANSPORT pp136-38

Bus Terminal - Gyeongbu, Yeongdong Line 경부, 영동선 35 E4
 Nambu Bus Terminal 남부시외버스터미널 36 F6
 Seoul Express Bus Terminal (Honam Terminal) 서울고속버스터미널 (호남선) 37 E4

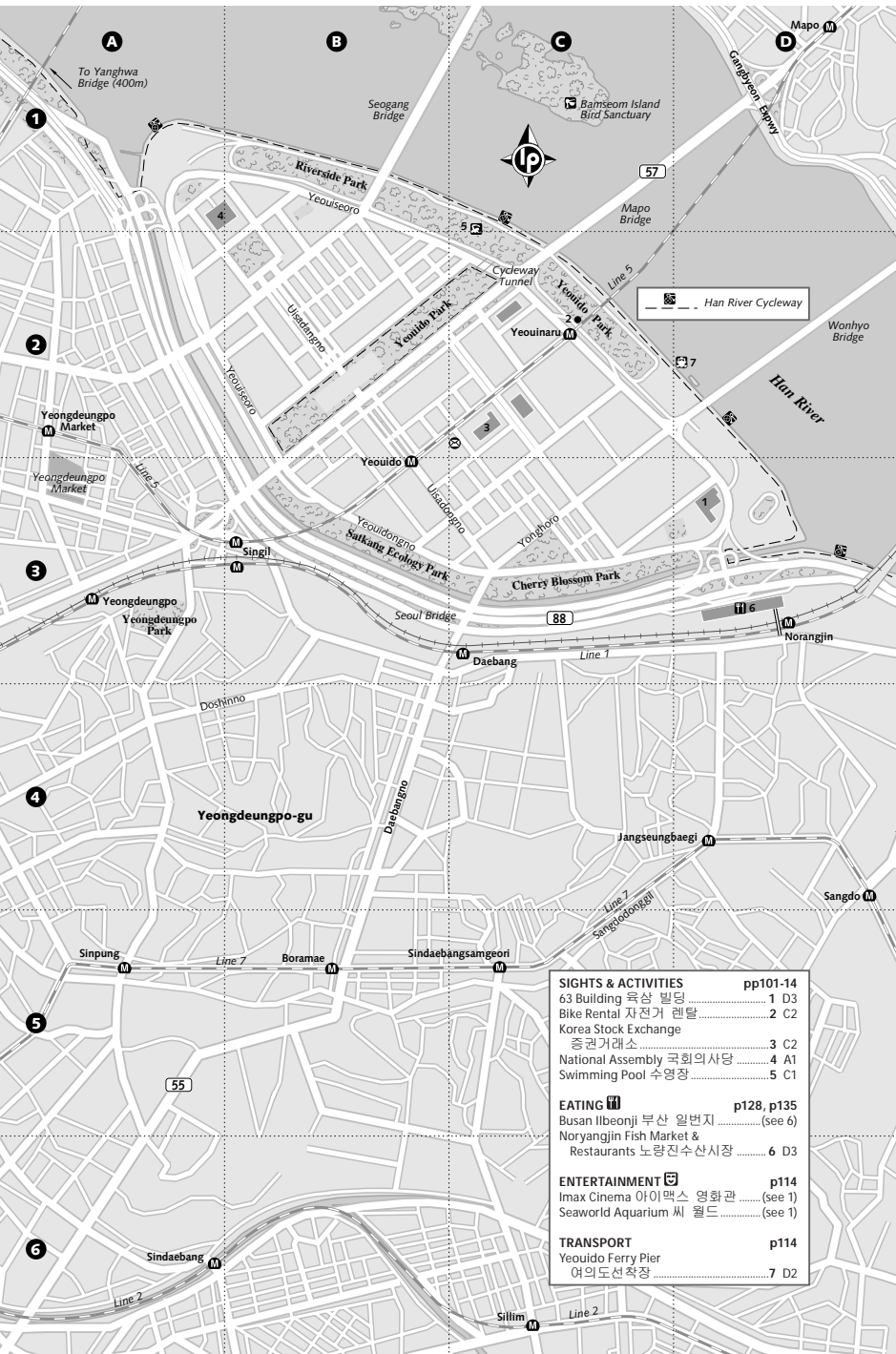




INFORMATION	
Asan Hospital	1 F2
아산 병원	(see 5)
Bandi & Luni's Bookshop	(see 5)
반디앤루니스	(see 5)
Russian Federation Embassy	2 B4
러시아 대사관	(see 5)
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES pp101-14	
Bike Rental 자전거 대여	3 B1
Bong-eunsa 봉은사	4 B3
COEX Aquarium	(see 5)
코엑스 아쿠아리움	(see 5)
COEX Mall 코엑스 몰	5 B3
Exhibition Hall 전시장	6 B3
Folk Museum	(see 8)
민속 박물관	(see 8)
Indoor Olympic Swimming Pool	7 H3
올림픽공원실내수영장	(see 8)
Lotte World Indoor Swimming	(see 8)
롯데월드 실내수영장	(see 8)
Lotte World 롯데월드	8 E3
Magic Island 매직 아일랜드	9 E4
Sculpture Garden	10 G3
조각 공원	(see 8)
Seoul Olympic Museum	11 G3
올림픽박물관	(see 8)
Ttukseom Pools 수영장	12 C2



SLEEPING	pp123-24
Ellui Hotel 엘루이 호텔	13 A2
Grand Inter-Continental Hotel	(see 5)
그랜드 인터컨티넨탈 호텔	14 B4
Hotel Lake 호텔레이크	15 E4
Lotte World Hotel	(see 8)
롯데월드 호텔	16 E4
Tiffany Hotel 티파니 호텔	17 B2
EATING	p128
Marche	(see 5)
ENTERTAINMENT	pp130-33
Jamsil Baseball Stadium	18 C3
잠실 야구장	(see 8)
Jamsil Gymnasium	19 C3
잠실 실내체육관	(see 8)
Lotte World Adventure	(see 8)
롯데월드 어드벤처	(see 8)
Seven Luck Casino 카지노	(see 5)
SHOPPING	pp133-36
Ace Soft	(see 22)
Hyundai Department Store	20 B4
현대백화점	(see 8)
Lotte Department Store	21 E3
롯데백화점	(see 8)
Techno Mart 테크노마트	22 E1
TRANSPORT	pp136-38
Dong-Seoul Bus Terminal	23 E1
동서울 버스 터미널	(see 8)
Jamsil Ferry Pier	24 D3
잠실 선착장	(see 8)
Korea City Air Terminal (KCAT)	25 B4
도심공항 터미널	(see 8)
Ttukseom Ferry Pier	26 B1
독성 선착장	(see 8)



SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	pp101-14
63 Building 옥상 빌딩	1 D3
Bike Rental 자전거 렌탈	2 C2
Korea Stock Exchange 증권거래소	3 C2
National Assembly 국회의사당	4 A1
Swimming Pool 수영장	5 C1
EATING 🍴	p128, p135
Busan Ilbeonji 부산 일번지	(see 6)
Noryangjin Fish Market & Restaurants 노랑진수산시장	6 D3
ENTERTAINMENT 🎬	p114
Imax Cinema 아이맥스 영화관	(see 1)
Seaworld Aquarium 씨 월드	(see 1)
TRANSPORT	p114
Yeouido Ferry Pier 여의도선착장	7 D2

(Continued from page 83)

treated to a pretty view with a great depth of field: open courtyard in front, traditional building in the middle and rugged mountain in the rear. Walk to the far corner of the compound and step up on the rock to get an up-close look at the hip roof gargoyles. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7; the palace is 10 minutes down the road.

BOSIN-GAK 보신각

Opposite the Jongno Tower, this pavilion (Map pp88-9) houses a bell forged in 1468. The bell is only rung at New Year, when crowds gather to celebrate, but during the Joseon dynasty it was struck 33 times at dawn (for the 33 heavens in Buddhism) and 28 times at sunset (for the 28 stars that determine human destiny) to signal the opening and closing of the city gates. It's best viewed at night when it's floodlit. Take Line 1 to Jonggak station, Exit 4.

SEOUL MUSEUM OF ART (GYEONGHUIGUNG ANNEXE)

Finally, an art museum (Map pp88-9; ☎ 723 2491; admission free; ㄱ 10am-5pm Nov-Feb, 10am-6pm Mar-Oct) with a building that makes a statement. We're not sure exactly what that statement is, but the aircraft hangar interior does create a pleasant space. The museum hosts various exhibitions and an annual fine-arts competition.

TOTO

This quirky museum (Map pp88-9; admission ₩1000; ㄱ 10am-9pm) gets two thumbs up from the kids and from 40-something-year-old Koreans. Filled with rare collectibles, it's a trip back in time with 20-year-old plastic model airplanes, Spiderman figurines and Korean memorabilia, like the 30-year-old school textbook that reads, 'Now our country has a highway'. Except for a few Bionic Man postcards, nothing is for sale. This 2nd-floor shop of oddities is a few doors down from the tourist information office on Insadong's main street.

Insadong 인사동
CHANGDEOKGUNG 창덕궁

Seoul has five ancient palaces, which is probably three more than most travellers need to visit. If you have time to visit just one, try to arrange your schedule to visit this palace (Map pp88-9; ☎ 762 9513; tours adult/youth ₩3000/1500; ㄱ Tue-Sun). Originally constructed between 1405 and 1412, it was Korea's centre of power from 1618 to 1896. Changdeok Palace is a World Heritage Site that can only be visited on a guided tour (ㄱ 11.30am, 1.30pm & 3.30pm, Tue-Sun). The highlight of this 2.5km, 90-minute walk is the Secret Garden (비원; Biwon), a magnificent forest with some of the city's freshest air and the Royal Library majestically overlooking a pond. Take Line 3 to An-guk station, Exit 3.

JUST FAX ME THE MAP!

There is a good reason why most hotel business cards in Korea include a map on the reverse side: street addresses are almost impossible to find. One reason why fax machines are still so popular is because Koreans often fax maps to locate a building.

In Korea, an 'address' exists in name only. There are almost no signs labelling street names. Indeed, most streets do not have names at all. Nor do houses have numbers on the outside, although every house does have an official number. Unfortunately, these 'secret numbers' mean little - numbers are assigned to houses when they are built, so house No 27 could be next to house No 324. Many larger buildings have names - knowing the name of the building will often prove more useful than knowing the address.

A *gu* (구) is an urban district in large cities like Seoul. A *dong* (동) is a neighbourhood inside a *gu*. A single *gu* contains many *dong*. An address like 104 Itaewon-dong, Yongsan-gu means building No 104 in Itaewon neighbourhood in Yongsan district. However you could wander around Itaewon for hours without finding this building, even with the help of a Korean friend. It's best to phone the place you're looking for and get directions, find a police station or tourist office - or a fax machine.

The word for a large street is *ro* (로), which is sometimes spelled as *no*. So, Jongno means Bell St. Large boulevards are divided into sections called *ga* (가). On a Seoul subway map there is a station at Euljiro 3-ga and Euljiro 4-ga - these are different sections of Eulji St. A *gil* (길) is a street smaller than a *no* or *ro* - Insadonggil is one such example.

10 GREAT ESCAPES FROM SEOUL

- Feel the heat of the Cold War at the DMZ and **Panmunjom** (p158).
- Get great views and exercise by hiking in **Bukhansan National Park** (p141) or **Namhan Sanseong Provincial Park** (p144).
- Dine on dumplings in Incheon's **Chinatown** (p152) and meander along busy **Wolmido Promenade** (p150).
- Camp in the ancient forests of **Chiaksan National Park** (p185) and hike up to its secluded temples.
- Step back into days of old in the **Korean Folk Village** (p147).
- Pick up some perfect pottery at **Icheon Ceramic Village** (p148), or try your hand at making something yourself.
- Bask in quiet solitude on **Eulwangni beach** (p153) and forget that Seoul is only two hours away.
- Get wet and wild while white-water rafting in **Inje** (p167).
- Meander **Suwon's World Heritage fortress grounds** (p144) and then dine on spicy but delicious *galbi* (beef ribs).
- Head to Ganghwado and hike up **Manisan** (p157) to view an ancient stone altar.



CHANGGYEONGGUNG & JONGMYO

창경궁, 종묘
This palace might fascinate historians but travellers with less-refined sensibilities may find **Changgyeonggung** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 765 0195; adult/youth ₩1000/500; 11am-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Feb) a bore. But the park setting is ideal for a tranquil morning walk. Cross over the footbridge to **Jongmyo**, a shrine where the spirit tablets of Joseon kings and queens are kept. If you visit both places at the same time and use the footbridge between them, you only pay one admission fee. History buffs could attend a lecture (11.30am & 4pm, not Tue & Sat). In October the *gwageo* (Joseon government exam) is re-enacted here.

INSADONG-GIL 인사동길

A charming district, **Insadong** (Map pp88-9) boasts a delightfully confusing mishmash of back alleys. Some of the shops have tried to create an old-world feel with log-beam ceilings, flagstone flooring and wooden doors. Although the commitment to restoration lacks depth, it's a likeable area that could easily occupy a day or more of exploring unusual restaurants, quirky

teashops and brusque antique dealers. Souvenir hunters will have no trouble finding something to take back home if key chains, green-tea sets and handmade paper are on the list of things to buy. It's a busy place after lunch and one of the few areas in the city where shopkeepers speak English. The main street is traffic-free Saturdays (2pm to 10pm) and Sundays (10am to 10pm), when the crowds and street vendors come out in full force.

JOGYESA 조계사

This **Buddhist temple** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 732 5292; 11am-9pm) is an urban oddity. Built in 1938 with murals of Buddha's life, it's an island of spiritual tranquillity surrounded by a sea of capitalism. Jogyesa is the headquarters of the Jogye sect, Korea's largest, which emphasises Zen meditation. It's also the heart of Seoul's annual **Lotus Lantern Festival**, several days of celebrations, exhibitions and educational programmes. The highlight is an evening parade from Dongdaemun to Jogyesa with 100,000 lanterns, usually held on the Sunday preceding Buddha's birthday. Check the website (www.lf.or.kr/eng) for details.

TAPGOL PARK 탑골 공원

This park (Map pp88-9) is a popular resting place for retired people who play cards and *baduk*, a game of strategy using stones. The main point of interest is the 12m-high **pagoda** constructed in the 1470s, with carvings that are difficult to appreciate because they're encased in a protective structure. The park's historical significance dates back to 1 March 1919, when **Son Pyong-hui** (1861-1922) and 32 other nationalists prepared a declaration of independence to protest Japanese rule. The declaration was read aloud here, an act that ignited nationwide protests, known as the *sam-il* (March 1st) movement. Today, March 1st is a national holiday to commemorate the uprising.

East Seoul

DONGDAEMUN

Constructed in the 14th century, **Dongdaemun** (Map pp86-7) served as the Great Eastern Gate of the Seoul fortress. The existing gate was built in 1869 and repaired after the Korean War. This stone gate marks the start of **Dongdaemun market** and, like similar structures in the city, looks stunning at night.

NAMDAEMUN & MYEONGDONG

남대문 남산

N'SEoul TOWER & NAMSAN

서울 타워, 남산
A hip moniker - **N'Seoul Tower** - was adopted to highlight the flashy look of this renovated **tower** (Map pp92-3; ☎ 3455 9277; adult/youth/child ₩7000/5000/3000; 11am-11pm) atop **Namsan** (South Mountain). Daytime views from the T3 observatory are great when the sky isn't filled with smog or yellow dust, and the evening views are outstanding. It's the second-best place to appreciate the scale of this megalopolis. The best view is two decks up in **N'Grill** (☎ 3455 9297; dinner for 2 ₩120,000; 11am-11pm), the tower's revolving restaurant. There are two different seating arrangements: window seats with the clearest view and a ring of tables a little further back.

The easiest and most scenic route to the base of the tower is by **cable car** (Map pp92-3; adult/child 1-way ₩5000/3000, return ₩6500/4000; 10am-11pm). The cable car is a 10-minute uphill walk from Myeongdong station, Exit 1, or a ₩2500 taxi ride from Insadong.

DEOKSUGUNG 덕수궁

This downtown **palace** (Map pp92-3; ☎ 771 9955; adult/youth/child ₩1000/500/free; 9am-6pm Tue & Wed, to 9pm Thu

& Fri, to 7pm weekends & holidays Mar-Oct, to 5.30pm Tue & Wed, to 9pm Thu & Fri, to 5.30pm weekends & holidays Nov-Feb) is an integral part of Korea's rich history of royalty but is short on architectural pageantry. The parklike setting is, however, a welcome change from the traffic in the surrounding City Hall area.

There are no scheduled tours, but a guided walk around the compound can be arranged by calling to make a reservation at least one day in advance. From mid-February to the end of December, a modest musical **changing-of-the-guard ceremony** (11.30am, 1.30pm & 3pm, not Mon) takes place outside the main gate.

Towards the rear of the grounds, there are two neoclassical buildings. The **Seokjojeon Hall** (admission free with entry to Deoksugung) was completed in 1909 and holds a collection of crafts.

Far more interesting is the building next door, which houses the **National Museum of Contemporary Art, Deoksugung** (Map pp92-3; ☎ 2022 0600; adult/youth ₩3000/2000; 9am-5.30pm Tue & Wed, 9am-8.30pm Thu & Fri, 9am-6.30pm weekends & holidays Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun, 9am-8.30pm Thu & Fri Nov-Feb). There is no permanent collection, but the curator has demonstrated an ability to put together imaginative and thought-provoking exhibitions. Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 2.

ANGLICAN CHURCH 대한 성공회 대성당

The most interesting feature of this church (Map pp92-3) is how the Renaissance-style architecture contrasts with every other building in the city. Work began in 1922, but the full design wasn't completed until 1996. The signboard beside the church describes this building's history. Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 3.

NAMDAEMUN 남대문

Constructed in 1398, rebuilt in 1447 and renovated many times, **Namdaemun** (Map pp92-3), the Great South Gate, is an impressive sight, especially at night, and marks the entrance to **Namdaemun market**.

MYEONGDONG CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL

명동 성당

This cathedral (Map pp92-3) is a surprising source of urban eye candy. The Renaissance-style construction is an architectural standout in an area dominated by neon, glass and concrete. Completed in 1898, it gained notoriety by providing protestors with sanctuary during Korea's post-war period of military rule. English-language worship occurs at 9am on Sunday.

SEOUL MUSEUM OF ART (MAIN BUILDING)
International exhibitions are the forte of this museum (Map pp92-3; % 2124 8800; adult/youth W700/300; 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm weekends & holidays Mar-Oct, closes 1 hr earlier Nov-Feb). It's also a popular destination for school outings, judging by the number of children running around the galleries. Take Line 1 to City Hall, Exit 1; turn onto the lane close to the palace gate and follow the road along the stonewall. Opening hours are longer and admission fees are higher (up to W12,000) during special exhibitions.

West Seoul

SEODAEMUN PRISON

독립 공원 서대문형무소 역사관

Fake blood, ear-piercing screams and ingenious torture techniques are on display at this prison (Map pp86-7; % 303 9750; adult/youth/child W1500/1000/500; 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Feb, closed Mon). Built by the Japanese during the colonial period to house independence fighters, visitors can walk through nightmarish punishment chambers and claustrophobic cellblocks. Line 3 to Dongnimmun station, Exit 5. English-language tours are available Thursday (10am to 4pm).

WORLD CUP STADIUM & PARK

월드컵주경기장

What do you do with a \$151-million football stadium in a country with a passing interest in the sport? Well, some clever person turned the World Cup stadium (Map pp84-5; adult/child W1000/W500; 10am-6pm) into a retail complex. There's a Homever, a nine-screen CGV cinema (admission Mon-Fri/Sat & Sun W7000/W8000; 10 screenings 8.50am-12.30am), a gym with a six-lane, 25m pool (10am-11pm), a 24-hour public bath (p115) and a food court. Visitors can enter the seating area but cannot step onto the Kentucky bluegrass pitch. Line 6 to World Cup Stadium station, Exit 1.

JEOLDUSAN MARTYRS' SHRINE & MUSEUM

절두산 순교 성지

Jeoldusan (Map p94; % 3142 4434; admission by donation; 10am-5pm Apr-Nov, 9am-4.30pm Dec-Mar, closed Mon) highlights a lesser-known period of barbarous behaviour in the Hermit Kingdom. It commemorates the murder of thousands of Catholics in 1866, an act put into force by Regent Daewon-gun to cleanse Joseon of the people responsible for bringing international contact. A mob mentality took force and moved Koreans to commit terrible acts against their own. The glass-enclosed show-

case describes the methods used to torture Catholics before they were beheaded in public. Instruments of hate include beating sticks, whips and a chair used to bend shinbones.

Sculptures of haunting human forms dot the park surrounding the shrine, which includes a museum with a modest collection hardly worth mentioning, except for a barely perceptible piece of wood that supposedly comes from the cross used to crucify Jesus Christ. Take Line 2 or 6 to Hapjeong station, Exit 7; go left at the second corner and walk beside the covered railway line, following the brown signs – it's a 10-minute walk.

Itaewon & Yongsan-Gu 이태원

LEEUM SAMSUNG MUSEUM OF ART

If you have time to visit just one gallery, this museum (Map p91; % 2014 6901; www.leeum.org; admission permanent collection adult/youth W10,000/6000, special collection W15,000/11,000; 10.30am-6pm Tue, Wed, Fri-Sun, 10.30am-9pm Thu, closed Mon) should be your first choice. In Museum 1 visitors start on the 4th floor and descend a white staircase, a décor that contrasts playfully with the black galleries. The black-white interplay is particularly effective in the Buddhist gallery, where guests are greeted by a glittering bronze pagoda. Museum 2 has an entirely different look with outdoor lighting, natural construction materials and a collection of 20th-century art. Museum 3 is the Samsung Child Education & Culture Center, a head-scratching title because there's nothing here that deals with children or education. It is, instead, used for special exhibitions.

Entry into this fascinating museum requires a reservation except on Thursdays. Call between 10am and noon at least one day in advance. Take Line 6 to Hangangjin station, Exit 1; walk straight five minutes and follow the road signs. Or, in Itaewon, exit the Hamilton Hotel left and walk 12 minutes towards Hangangjin station.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KOREA

국립중앙박물관

This museum (Map pp96-7; % 2077 9000; adult/child W2000/1000; 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun) hosts a permanent collection of 10,000 artefacts, which includes a small but curious gallery of the history of print with a small metallic printing block. Historians cannot state with certainty when movable metallic type was invented in Korea, but believe it

(Continued on page 113)

(Continued from page 104)

was developed sometime during the Goryeo dynasty, which ended in 1391. If that date is accurate, the evidence suggests Korea developed metallic movable block at least 61 years before Gutenberg, the man credited with the development of that technology in 1452.

The gallery has a replica of the first book printed with movable metallic blocks, a collection of Buddhist teachings. The original is in the French National Library. In 1866, the French launched a naval attack on Joseon and took several treasures, including this historic book. The world's oldest book printed with wooden blocks is also here. Take Line 4 to Ichon station, Exit 2.

WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM 전쟁 기념관

Much like Iraq before the American invasion, there are no weapons of mass destruction here, but this museum (Map pp96-7; % 709 3139; adult/youth/child W3000/2000/1000; 10.30am-6pm Mar-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Feb, closed Mon) does possess a large cache of killing technologies. Starting with rocks, arrows and bronze swords, the history of warfare ends with modern weaponry like a Soviet SCUD missile and the always-impressive B-52 bomber.

There's a substantial collection of Korean War exhibits including a video montage of gun battles, rocket launches and air bombings. English-language audio-visual stations provide descriptive images, footage and commentary on specific aspects of the war such as China's entry into the bloody fray. Glass-enclosed exhibits often lack satisfactory English-language signboards, but an audio guide is available (W2000). The big hardware – such as howitzers, aircraft and tanks – is outside. Every Friday from April to June and October to November, a military band performs at 2pm. Take Line 4 or 6 to Samgakji station, Exit 12.

South of the Han River

COEX MALL 코엑스 몰

It's a mammoth retail underworld and the best hiding place when nasty weather hits. It would be easy to spend two days browsing, eating and playing in this mall (Map pp98-9; www.coexmall.com; 10am-10pm), reportedly the largest underground shopping centre in Asia. Hyundai Department Store, the COEX Conference Centre, Exhibition Hall, a casino, cinema, aquarium and a kimchi museum are here.

BONG-EUNSA 봉은사

In some respects this temple (Map pp98-9; % 3218 4801; 10.30am-9.30pm) is more stimulating and informative than Jogyesa. Bong-eunsa is the country's leading training centre for Buddhist monks specialising in *seon* (선; Zen) meditation. Originally founded in AD 794, it was rebuilt in 1498. The oldest building still standing, constructed in 1856, is a library with 150-year-old woodblocks carved with Buddhist scriptures and art. Twice daily (4.10am and 6.40pm) monks perform a percussion ceremony on four instruments, each designed to awaken and save beings on the ground (drum), underwater (wooden fish), in the sky (cloud drum) and under the ground (gong). English-speaking guides are available free of charge weekdays (9am to 6pm, not available noon to 1pm). Bong-eunsa also hosts a temple-stay programme and a two-hour tour (p114).

LOTTE WORLD AMUSEMENT PARK

롯데월드

A massive entertainment hub, Lotte World (Map pp98-9; www.lotteworld.com; % 411 2000) has eight-million visitors annually. The main attraction is Lotte World Adventure & Magic Island (adult/youth/child W30,000/26,000/23,000, after 5pm W26,000/22,000/20,000; 10.30am-11pm), an amusement park that gets rave reviews from kids. You can swing on the Viking, twirl through rapids, plunge down a log flume and defy gravity on the Gyro Drop. If this busy park isn't enough to fill the day, there are heaps of other attractions including a folk museum, a cinema multiplex and a bowling alley. It also has an indoor ice-skating rink (admission plus skate rental adult/child W11,000/10,000; 10.30am-10.30pm) and a large indoor swimming pool (adult/child W8000/7000 Sep-Jun, W10,000/8000 Jul-Aug; 10.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 6am-8pm Sun). Line 2 or 8 to Jamsil station, Exit 3.

OLYMPIC PARK 올림픽 공원

It's a wonderful park (Map pp98-9; 10.30am-10.30pm) and one of the few places in the country where people are allowed to walk on the grass. Weekend joggers, cyclists and roller bladers are out in full force, taking advantage of the well-maintained paths that zigzag through a delightfully quirky art park. The park has several attractions, though they hardly qualify as must-see sights.

The Seoul Olympic Museum (% 410 1051; adult/youth/child W3000/2000/1500; 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) commemorates the 1988 games in Seoul.

The **Olympic swimming pool** (₩ 410 1696, 410 1353; adult/child ₩4500/3500; 12.15-9pm Mon-Fri) is open for public swimming, but the schedule changes. Line 8 to Mongchontoseong, Exit 1.

YEOUIDO 여의도

It's only 6 sq km in size, but this island (Map p100) in the Han River is known for parks, power and prestige. High-rise buildings dotting the island are headquarters for media, finance, insurance companies, the stock exchange and National Assembly.

The island's riverfront parks are popular places for walking and rollerblading. You can also go for a swim (opposite) or rent a bicycle (right). At the island's eastern tip, **63 Building** (₩ 789 5663; www.63.co.kr) is the city's third-tallest building (after the 73-storey Tower Palace in Gangnam and the 69-floor Mokdong Hyperion 1 in Yangcheon).

Purchase a package ticket (adult/youth/child ₩21,000/19,500/17,500) and you can feed the fish in the **Seaworld aquarium** (₩ 789 5663; 10am-10.30pm), watch a film at the **Imax cinema** (₩ 789 5663; 10am-8pm) and shoot up to the 60th-floor **Skydeck observation platform** (10am-11pm).

There are five passenger ferry terminals on the Han River: Yeouido (Map p100), Yanghwa (Map pp84-5), Ttukseom (Map pp98-9), Nanji (Map pp84-5) and Jamsil (Map pp98-9). Most tours (₩ 785 4411; adult/child ₩10,000/5000; 11.30am-10.30pm) are one hour, such as the return trip from Yeouido to the Han River Bridge. Tours operate year-round, and run every hour in July and August, and every one to two hours in other months. A 90-minute **night-cruise** (adult/child ₩14,600/7300; 8.40pm) departs Yeouido terminal.

North of the Han River

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Specialising in modern Korean art, this spacious gallery (Map pp84-5; ₩ 2188 6018; permanent collection adult/child ₩1000/500, special exhibitions adult/child ₩3000/1500; 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, 10am-7pm Fri-Sun Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Tue-Thu & 10am-6pm Fri-Sun Nov-Feb, closed Mon) in Seoul Grand Park is home to treasures like the late Baek Nam-june's puzzling multimedia tower. Take Line 4 to Seoul Grand Park, Exit 2. Purchase a ticket for the elephant tram and get off at the museum stop. The museum is just behind the sky lift.

TOP FIVE ART GALLERIES IN SEOUL

- Seoul Museum of Art (Main Building; p104)
- Leeum Samsung Museum of Art (p104)
- Seoul Museum of Art (Gyeonghuigung Annex; p101)
- Toto (p101)
- National Museum of Contemporary Art (left)

ACTIVITIES

Buddhist Temple Programmes

The four-hour temple programme at **Jogyesa** (Map pp88-9; ₩ 732 5292; http://eng.jogyesa.org; W20,000; 10am-2pm last Sat each month) starts with a simple meal, during which time talk (and food waste) are not permitted. A guided tour of the temple is followed by Zen meditation. Everyone sits cross legged and a monk teaches participants to concentrate on breathing. A monk then prepares green tea, which must be served at exactly the right temperature and consumed in three sips. Reservations should be made at least 10 days in advance.

The temple-stay programme at **Bong-eunsa** (Map pp98-9; ₩ 3128 4820; by donation) sees visitors sleep at the temple – reservations are required, as is a minimum of 10 people. A less time-consuming option is the **Temple Life Program** (admission ₩10,000; 12-4pm Thu). This informative two-hour tour with an English-speaking guide includes a description of Buddhist history, an introduction to meditation with a Buddhist venerable and a hands-on demonstration of green-tea etiquette. Attend this worthwhile class and you'll learn why drinking green tea can be a calming experience.

Cycling

Bicycles of some vintage can be rented along the Han River on Yeouido outside Yeouinaru station. Exit 2, from a **rental hut** (Map p100; bicycles/tandems per hr ₩3000/6000; 9am-7pm). Similar hours and prices are found at the rental hut near the ferry-boat terminal in Ttukseom Resort (Map pp98-9). Some form of ID is required to rent a bike, which does not come with a lock or helmet.

Cycling on city streets is tantamount to suicide, but there are two trails along the Han River. The 7km ride to World Cup Sta-

dium (Map pp84-5) takes 90 minutes. From Yeouido, cycle past the National Assembly and cross the river via the Yanghwa Bridge. Walk up the steps of the bridge. Take a look at Seonyudo in midriver – a park that used to be a water-treatment plant. Wheel your bike down the narrow path on the right of the steps on the other side of the bridge, and continue right along the cycleway along the northern side of the river. After 10 minutes turn right at the orange bridge, ride over a small bridge and then turn right again, following the green signs. Ten minutes later, you're at the large park surrounding the stadium.

For a longer ride spin out to Olympic Park (Map pp98-9). The 38km ride along a hill-free path takes four hours. Near the 18km distance marker from Yeouido, turn right (no sign), ride under a couple of bridges and follow the left side of a dry riverbed. At the road, turn left, cross over the minor road, then cross the major road using the pedestrian crossing, turn right, go over the bridge and the park is on your left.

Golf

A round of golf costs ₩200,000 or more with varying degrees of course quality, but it's almost impossible for travellers to book a tee time by themselves – club staff don't generally speak English and courses are busy. Your best opportunity to get into the swing is to try an indoor driving range. They're popular; just look for a large green net.

Hyosung Golf Club (Map pp96-7; ₩ 543 3046; per hr ₩15,000; 5am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 5am-10pm Sat & Sun) in Apgujeong is a typical one. Most indoor driving ranges have several levels of tees. The upper deck is okay for driving but it's not an especially good location to work on your chip shot.

Public Baths & Gyms

Here's the naked truth: you can't really say you've done Korea unless you've been to a public bath. Avoiding it is akin to saying you visited Korea but didn't try the *kimchi*. International hotels have attractive facilities that nonguests can use, but the fees can be high – ₩20,000 or more.

Dongbang Sauna (Map p94; ₩ 332 0481; admission ₩4000; 12 spa 24hr, fitness centre 5am-midnight), near Hongik University, has everything required for a relaxing time: a good selection of hot tubs, a long cold tub and a couple of saunas. The entry fee includes access to a small gym.

Black and grey stones give **Hurest Spa** (Map pp92-3; ₩ 778 8301; adult/child before 9pm ₩5000/3000, after 9pm ₩10,000/7000; 12 24hr) a cosy feel, but late afternoons can be busy as business-people prepare for a night of entertainment. The cold tub is long but it's too shallow for plunges. International travellers can use the fitness centre, public bath and *jjimjilbang* for ₩15,000.

Other recommendations include: **Itaewon Sauna** (Map p91; ₩ 798 5855; admission ₩5000; 12 9.20am-11pm) Ideal for beginners looking for an easy place to get their feet wet. **Silloam Fomentation Sauna** (Map pp92-3; ₩ 364 3944; adult/child 5am-8pm ₩7000/5500, adult/child after 8pm ₩10,000/6000; 12 24hr) In Seoul Station's ticketing area, walk through Exit 3 and go down the steps. At street level, walk right to the large overhead expressway ramp. Cross the street and look right. **World Cup Spoland** (Map pp84-5; ₩ 302 7002; day rate ₩20,000; 12 6am-11pm) Inside the World Cup stadium. The day-rate package gets you into a well-equipped gym and public bath. **Hamilton Sauna** (Map p91; ₩ 6393 1370; adult/child 5am-8pm ₩5000/3000, after 8pm ₩7000/4000; 12 24hr) A small but well-equipped facility with great tubs and scorching saunas. **Seoul Mud** (Map p91; ₩ 749 8012; admission ₩80,000; 12 9am-midnight) You get mud, scrubbing and a massage. **California Wow** (Map pp96-7; ₩ 2106 0999; day-rate ₩25,000; 12 6am-midnight Mon-Fri, 8am-midnight Sat & Sun) Everything you'd expect in Apgujeong: top-notch equipment, rich clients and a stand-offish attitude.

For further information on hot-spring baths, see p76.

Swimming

In July and August outdoor swimming pools in the parks along the Han River fill up with kids. On Yeouido parasols surround separate **swimming pools** (Map p100; adult/youth/child ₩4000/3000/2000; 12 9am-7pm Jul & Aug) for children, teenagers and adults. In the past fights erupted over prime parasol locations, a problem solved with two rules: no knives and no alcohol. Line 5 to Yeouinaru station, Exit 2.

The **Ttukseom pools** (Map pp98-9) have similar prices and hours. Line 7 to Ttukseom Resort station, Exit 2 or 3. Indoor pools are available at **Lotte World** (p113) and **Olympic Park** (p113). Most large hotels have 25m indoor or outdoor pools and some, such as the **Hamilton Hotel pool** (p122), are available to nonguests. **Caribbean Bay** (p147) is the best aquatic centre.

WALKING TOURS

Inwangsan Shamanist Hillside Walk

On this short but uphill walk, you can see Seoul's most famous shamanist shrine, visit small temples and see part of the Seoul fortress wall. The walk only takes an hour if you just want a quick look, but it's sensible to take longer and soak up the unique atmosphere.

Take Line 3 to Dongnimmun station, Exit 2, and turn left at the first alley. This area is undergoing significant redevelopment, but look for the signs pointing to Inwangsa (인왕사). Walk through the temple gate (1) up to the signboard with a map. The text is in Korean, but each building is numbered. Turn left and walk towards building 2 (2). When the path ends, you'll find a small collection of homes and beautifully decorated temple buildings. Walk right up the cement steps and turn right as you weave through a narrow alley. The alley leads to a bronze bell (3) and the door to Inwangsa. Between the bell and door there is a shop that sells drinks and snacks. Beside the shop there is a set of steps leading up the hill. Walk up these steps.

Five minutes up the steps, you'll find a shamanist shrine called Guksadang (4). Originally

WALK FACTS

Start Dongnimmun station
Finish Dongnimmun station
Distance 1.5km
Duration One to two hours

built on Mt Namsan, it was demolished by the Japanese in 1925 and later secretly rebuilt here by Korean Shamanists. The shrine is small, but the altar inside is often filled with food offerings, as shamanists believe spirits need food and drink. Continue up the hill on the left stairs and turn left when you see a surreal collection of rocks. Erosion has transformed these Zen rocks (5) into semi-human forms. Exit the rock collection left and then turn left on the path leading up the hill.

Up the path, eroded rocks, dark crevices and the shaman's haunting chants give the place an *X-Files* feel of otherworldliness. Further up the hill, just past the exercise station (6), there are several outdoor shrines. This is where you'll find a small Buddha rock carving (7), a Sansin statue (8) and a trail that swings right past more rocks. The trail provides a good

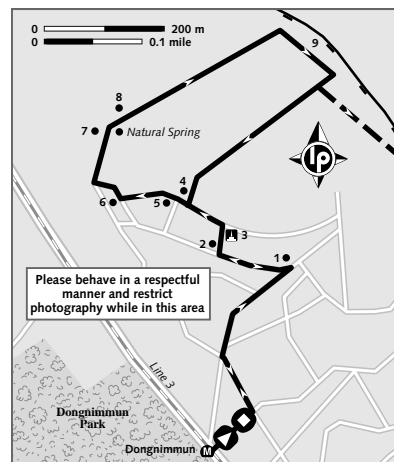
STRIPING DOWN THE PUBLIC BATH

The public bath is more than a place to clean up. It's a social event. Families come here for quality time, businesspeople cultivate commercial relationships and mothers gather to discuss their children's education. Bathhouses in the west may be associated with seedy behaviour, but this most definitely is not the case in Korea.

A public bath (목욕탕), sometimes called a spa or sauna, is a room with warm, hot and cold-water tubs, saunas and a massage area (for a fee). Bathhouses have separate facilities for men and women, and everybody walks around naked. Most bathhouses have a *jjimjilbang* (찜질방), a co-ed room where people watch TV, read or do nothing. There are also specialty rooms like the Cold Room (it's like the inside of your freezer) or the Oxygen Room (O₂ made from thin air!). Everybody wears a loose-fitting uniform. Most *jjimjilbang* are open 24 hours and allow guests to sleep overnight on the floor or in a bunk bed.

Enter the public bath and place your footwear in a locker near the front desk, remove the key and give it to the person at the counter, which is where you pay. The basic fee gets you into the bath. A separate charge gets you a uniform and access to the *jjimjilbang*. After paying you'll receive a locker key. Go to the locker, strip down, place your belongings inside and put the key around your wrist or ankle. Next, shower in the bathing area before jumping into the tubs.

Rotating between the hot and cold tubs is the secret to an enjoyable experience. It stimulates blood circulation, creates a tingling sensation on the skin and produces a feeling of euphoria. Many Koreans prefer to sit on the ledge and dangle their feet in the hot water for 20 minutes or more. This bathing technique slowly warms the body and stimulates a body-cleansing sweat. When you're ready to do nothing, return to your locker, put on the uniform and follow the signs to the *jjimjilbang*. Stay as long as you like. When you're done, return to the bath for another round or get changed, return the locker key and retrieve your shoes. After a few hours, the feeling of euphoria begins to dissipate. That's okay, because you can do the whole thing again tomorrow.



look at the recently restored Seoul fortress wall (9). Follow the trail downhill and you'll end up near Guksadang. Alternatively, continue walking towards the fortress wall and you'll end up at a road that leads to steps (closed Mondays) up Inwang Mountain, or walk downhill through a residential neighbourhood to Dongnimmun station.

Respect is essential during this walk. Taking photographs or making unnecessary gestures or noise could interfere with the performance of important ceremonies.

Old & New Downtown Walk

This 90-minute walk passes through some of the downtown's most attractive and lively districts with contrasting images of Seoul, ancient and modern.

Immerse yourself in different world's of shopping, urban landscape and degrees of pedestrian congestion as you walk past and through some of the city's biggest and flashiest department stores like Lotte, the Namdaemun market (where haggling, shouting and jostling are all part of the old-world market experience) and Myeongdong, a must-visit district if you're looking for a wall-to-wall-people

WALK FACTS

Start Jonggak station
Finish N'Seoul Tower
Distance 4km
Duration 90 minutes

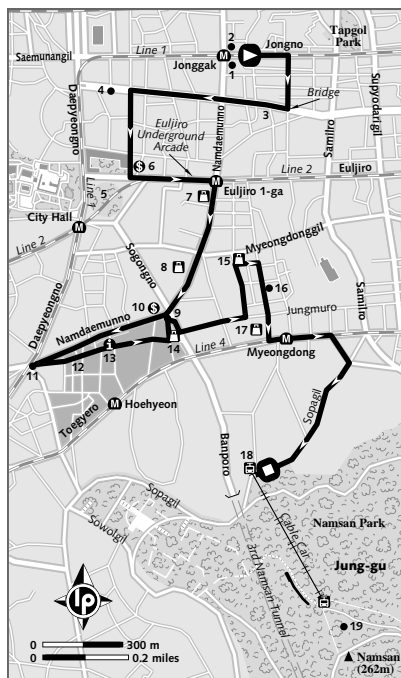
feel. Try the walk at night to get a different urban feel.

Take Line 1 to Jonggak station, Exit 4. At street level turn 180 degrees and you'll see Bosin-gak (1; p101) on one corner and the stunning Jongno Tower (2) on the other. Turn right around the corner and walk past a smorgasbord of street food with goodies like chicken-on-a-stick and *sundae* (순대; pig's intestines stuffed with blood, vegetables and pork).

Turn right at the first main street and you should be on a boulevard covered with giant black and white piano keys. Down the road cross the bridge, walk down the left steps, turn 180 degrees and walk straight. This is part of Seoul's Cheonggye Stream (3) restoration project, a US\$313-million urban-renewal effort to beautify the downtown core. Ten minutes down the cement path, walk up the steps beside the small waterfall and fountain. At street level, near a statue (4) that looks like a giant screw, turn 180 degrees, walk straight and turn right at the first corner. Walk straight along this tree-lined street until Seoul Plaza (5), a circular park with several hotels and Seoul City Hall.

Cross the street at the intersection beside the Busan Bank (6) and walk along the sidewalk opposite Lotte department store (7). Enter Euljiro station Exit 1, pass through the sometimes-boisterous underground arcade and ride the escalator up to Exit 7. Follow the sign pointing to the Namdaemun market. At street level, walk towards Lotte Young Plaza (8) and cross the street at the tourist information booth. Further down the main street, you'll pass a bronze statue (9) with a fountain and the Bank of Korea (10), an old stone building. Five minutes down the road, cross the street at the light and walk left. You should see Namdaemun (11; p103), the Great South Gate, and the entrance to Namdaemun market (12; p135) just around the corner.

Walk straight along the main lane of the market and you'll come across a tourist information booth (13), which usually has a detailed map of the market. Continue walking along the lane past the information booth and Shinsegae department store (14). At the first major intersection near an overpass, walk left for an up-close look at the bronze statue. Cross the street through underpass Exit 1 and come out through Exit 2. Turn left and you're in Myeongdong. At the corner with a Levis store, turn left onto a lane filled with low-cost clothes and accessories. Turn right at the corner with a



Toda Cosa (15) cosmetics shop and right again at the next street. Up the road, in a tall building called Uto Zone, there is a coffee shop and the Hurest Spa (16; p115), which is where you'll find a public bath. Migliore department store (17), at the end of the street, is a busy gathering place in the evening for young people.

Time and energy permitting, the cable car (18; p103) leading to the base of the N'Seoul Tower (19; p103) is a 15-minute uphill walk from here. Enter Myeongdong station and come out through Exit 1. Rotate 180 degrees, turn right at the corner and follow the main road until the cable-car station.

COURSES

Cooking

Itching to make *kimchi*? You can do that and more at Han's Culinary Academy (Map pp88-9; ☎ 742 3567; courses W60,000-100,000; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri), which teaches travellers how to prepare staples like *pajeon*, *kimchi* stew and *bulgogi*. The cost per individual varies with the number of students. Courses are taught in English. Walk upstairs to the 2nd floor office to get more information and register for a class.

Language

Sogang University (Map p94; ☎ 705 8088; www.sogang.ac.kr/~cks) gets good reviews for its student-centred, communicative approach to language learning. New programmes commence four times during the academic year with one-month sessions during the summer and winter vacations. Costs start at W1.3 million. Take Line 6 to Sinchon station, Exit 6.

BestFriend Language & Culture Exchange Center (Map p94; ☎ 016 9499 3353; www.bestfriendcenter.com) is an unconventional language centre that offers Korean language classes (1pm to 10pm) based on a coupon system. Pay for a number of sessions and come when you can. Line 2 to Sinchon station, Exit 3, walk towards Yonsei University and turn right at the first street.

Click on www.seoul.go.kr for a long list of universities and institutes that offer Korean-language courses

SEOUL FOR CHILDREN

Children's Grand Park (Map pp84-5; ☎ 457 7054; adult/youth/child Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct W1500/1000/free; Jul & Aug, Nov-Mar W900/500/free; 9am-10pm) is an enormous playground with room for 50,000 people. It's impossible to imagine a family taking in all the sights and activities available here in one day, which include a zoo, botanical garden and amusement park.

Elephants, amusement rides and contemporary art are available at the big and beautiful **Seoul Grand Park** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 500 7114; adult/youth/child package W5500/3500/3000; 9am-7pm, Apr-Sep, 9am-6pm Oct-Mar). It includes a zoo (p141); shows noon, 1.30pm, 3pm & 4.30pm) with daily animal shows, Seoul Land amusement park and the National Museum of Contemporary Art (p114). There are separate entry fees for each place, though package deals are available. Walking around this expansive park takes time, so ride the elephant tram between sights (every five minutes, adult/youth/child W600/500/400). Line 4 to Seoul Grand Park, Exit 2.

Definitely get the day pass to Seoul's biggest amusement park, **Seoul Land** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 504 0011; www.seouliland.co.kr; day pass adult/youth/child W28,000/24,000/21,000; 9.30am-9pm Mon-Thu, 9.30am-10pm Fri-Sun), a miniature version of Everland. Once here, you can spend all day free falling on the Shot X Drop.

A one-hour bus ride from Seoul, Everland (☎ 759 1408; www.everland.com) has enchanting scenery and an exciting amusement park. A safari ride that passes remarkably sedate lions,

tigers and bears is a hit with the kids. Caribbean Bay (p147) with world-class aquatic rides is next door.

Lotte World (p113; www.lotteworld.com) is a Disney-style amusement park with indoor and outdoor rides, an ice-skating rink and a swimming pool.

COEX Aquarium (☎ 6002 6200; coexaqua.co.kr; adult/youth/child W15,500/13,000/10,000; 10am-8pm) has an amazing collection of sea creatures including piranhas, sharks, turtles and jellyfish. You could also try the Seaworld aquarium (p114) in 63 Building.

TOURS

There are three main types of tours available for English-speaking travellers. For a quick city tour, there are several circuits with stops at most of the popular spots. With a little planning, you can pack a lot of sites into a single day and, unlike the subway, develop a first-hand appreciation for Seoul's sometimes horrific traffic congestion. Travellers looking for a hassle-free escape from Seoul should check out the Royal Asiatic Society, which offers packaged excursions to different parts of the country. Trips are offered once a month, usually on weekends, so a bit of planning and schedule coordination is required.

Numerous organisations offer half-day and full-day Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) package trips, a popular excursion that can be both compelling and underwhelming. Stepping inside a building that straddles the North and South Korean border does come with a certain 'cool factor' but can be disappointing if you're expecting to see a platoon of heavily armed, goose-stepping North Korean soldiers staring down their South Korean comrades, because this type of presentation is rarely on display. On the surface, at least, Panmunjom – the truce village inside the Demilitarized Zone – has a serene, museum-like atmosphere.

Most DMZ trips leave Seoul in the morning and return in the afternoon. On the bus, the English-speaking tour guide provides historical background and a rather long list of do's and don'ts, such as the need to avoid pointing your index finger inside the DMZ (which, in the right light, could be mistaken for a handgun). At times the often repeated rules, strict controls of your movement (eg when and where you can take a picture) and frequent passport inspections (you must bring this with you on the trip) seem like an attempt

to create false drama, though the tour guide is quick to point out that controls are required to avoid an international incident.

The **Royal Asiatic Society** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 763 9483; www.raskb.com; 10am-noon, 2-5pm Mon-Fri) organises weekend tours across Korea that cost up to W60,000. The travel schedule is prepared months in advance so check the website for details. The RSA also holds bi-weekly Tuesday lectures on Korean history and culture. Take Line 1 to Jongno 5-ga station, Exit 2 and walk straight 100m. The office (room 611) is in the tall yellow-orange building (the Korean Science Building but the sign is difficult to see) just past Dunkin Donuts.

United Services Organization (USO; Map pp86-7; ☎ 724 7003; uso.org/korea; 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) runs tours for American troops but civilians are welcome to join. Twice-weekly tours to Panmunjom, the DMZ and Infiltration Tunnel costing US\$42 start at 7.30am and return to the city at 3.30pm. Advance bookings (sometimes a month in advance) are essential.

Panmunjom Travel Center (Map pp92-3; ☎ 771 5593; panmunjomtour.com; 2nd fl, Lotte Hotel; 9am-6pm) has package tours to Panmunjom (W70,000), a one-day tour of Panmunjom and the third tunnel (W110,000) and a chance to speak with a North Korean defector.

Visit KTO (Map pp88-9) for additional tour options or see www.startravel.co.kr.

Seoul City Tour Bus

Designed for tourists in a hurry, these comfortable buses tour Seoul's top attractions north of the Han River. There are three routes: **Downtown** (includes Itaewon and the War Museum; W10,000; departures 9am to 7pm, every 30 minutes); the **Palaces** (the city's five ancient palaces and Insadong; W10,000; departures 9am to 4pm, every 30 minutes); and the **Night Tour** (includes N'Seoul Tower; W5000; departures 7.50pm and 8pm). Tours begin (except Monday) in front of the Dongwha Duty-Free Shop (Map pp88-9) at Gwanghwamun station (Line 5, Exit 6). A W10,000 ticket for the Downtown or Palace tour (available on the bus) allows you to jump on and off the bus all day. Visit www.seoulcitytourbus.com for details.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

There aren't many, but Seoul does have a few festivals worth watching out for if you're in town at the right time. The big four festivals involve lanterns at night, drums, fireworks and street

performances. Visit www.knto.or.kr for locations and dates that vary from year to year.

April

Insa Korean Art & Culture Festival A week-long event with parades, traditional music and even more people than usual packed onto Insadong's main street.

Yeouido Cherry Blossom Festival When the cherry blossoms bloom and the air is clear, the streets of Yeouido look great. Take Line 5 Yeouido, Exit 2 and walk towards the National Assembly.

May

Jongmyodaeye At Jongmyo shrine (Map pp88-9) on the first Sunday in May the royal spirits are welcomed and praised, fed with offerings of cooked meat and rice wine, entertained with solemn music and dance, and then respectfully farewelled.

Buddha's Birthday On the Sunday before Buddha's birthday, a huge parade is held from Dongdaemun to Jogyesa (Map pp88-9) starting at 7pm.

Hi Seoul Festival (www.hiseoulfest.org) It's 10 days of downtown street fun that the organisers believe demonstrates the cultural potential of Seoul. Events include a walking contest and tug of war.

August

Seoul Fringe Festival (www.seoulfringe.net) Mime, punk and art take over the streets, clubs and galleries around Hongik University (Map p94) during the last two weeks in August. The website is in Korean only.

September

Seokjeondaeye This ceremony is staged in the courtyard of the Confucian shrine at Sungkyunkwan University (Map pp88-9) in September.

October

Seoul World Fireworks Festival Fireworks light up the sky in front of 63 Building near Yeouido Riverside park. The two-day festival is often but not always held on two Saturdays, with the pyrotechnic show starting around 8pm.

Seoul Drum Festival (www.drumfestival.org) Three days of beating, banging and bashing in Seoul Plaza and the Seoul Arts Centre.

Sajikdaeje A re-enactment of a royal thanksgiving ceremony at the altar in Sajik Park (Map pp86-7).

SLEEPING Gwanghwamun BUDGET

Inn Daewon (Map pp88-9; % 738 4308; dm/s/d W19,000/25,000/35,000; a i) Much of the charm that made this inn a budget-traveller institution is still here but in a new location. Cramped

quarters, a small courtyard and rooms sharing communal facilities are now housed in a *hanok* (traditional Korean house) building. Take Line 3 to Gyeongbokgung station, Exit 4. Turn 180 degrees and walk left at the first lane.

Gwanghwa Hotel (Map pp88-9; % 738 0751; r W38,000, with computer W40,000; a i) Central and comparatively cheap, this is a decent choice for budget travellers arriving on a late flight. The W40,000 room has a double bed, internet access and an interior that oozes 'down and out'. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7, make a hard left and walk to the first street. It's near the Goryeo supermarket.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Lees (Map pp88-9; % 762 4343; www.leeshotel.com; d/tw/tr W65,000/75,000/100,000; a) Here's a classic example of 'better than we expected'. Travellers who spend the day exploring and only need a clean place to crash might exclaim 'This is okay!' after entering the room for the first time. Take Line 1 to Jongno 5-ga, Exit 1, walk straight and turn right at the second street. Make a quick left and right turn, then walk 150m.

New Kukje Hotel (Map pp88-9; % 732 0161; r W127,000; a i) The Japanese tourists who fill this busy hotel don't mind the less-than-opulent conditions. Perhaps they're impressed by the white bed linen that might have come from a hospital surplus store. Or maybe it's the central location that puts many sights within easy walking distance. Receive a W40,000 discount for taking a room without a window. Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 5 and walk right.

New Seoul Hotel (Map pp88-9; % 735 8800; d/tw/ste W140,000/160,000/290,000; a i) If you're accustomed to US\$200 rooms where location is the best feature, this centrally located Best Western property is a good choice, behind the New Kukje Hotel.

TOP END

Koreana Hotel (Map pp88-9; % 2171 7000; r W215,000; a i) This type-A personality hotel is designed for people on a mission who expect quality on par with their \$1500 suits. The get-busy rooms are neatly decorated in neutral tones with dark woody furniture. There is also a LAN connection, though you had better bring a compact notebook because the workspace in standard rooms is minimal. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 6.

Insadong & Around BUDGET

Holiday In (Map pp88-9; % 3672 3113; www.holidayinkorea.com; dm/s/d & tw W16,000/29,000/37,000; a i) No relation to the hotel chain with two N's in its name, this is one of the newest and nicest budget options near Insadong. The rooms are similar to what you'll find in most backpacker places, but they look cleaner. Get off at An-guk station, Exit 4. It's on a small lane south of Beewon Guesthouse.

Beewon Guesthouse (Map pp88-9; % 765 0670; www.beewonguesthouse.com; dm W17,000, r W30,000-37,000, f W51,000; a i) You thought all comfortable rooms in downtown Seoul were expensive? Well, almost every room now that Beewon is in operation. This likeable property combines motel-sized rooms with friendly staff and free use of the washing machine. If you don't mind stairs, take the *ondol* room on the 4th floor for solitude and quick access to the rooftop. It's a 10-minute walk from An-guk station, Exit 4. At street level turn 180 degrees and walk right around the corner. Turn right at the first gas station and walk straight.

Other recommendations:

Guesthouse Korea (Map pp88-9; % 3675 2205; dm/s/d & tw W15,000/27,000/37,000; a i) A busy inn with a run-down feel. Get off at An-guk station, Exit 4.

Seoul Backpackers (Map pp88-9; % 3672 1972; dm/s/tw W17,000/27,000/37,000; a i) Pay for six nights and get the seventh free. Get off at An-guk station, Exit 4, on a small lane south of Beewon Guesthouse.

Jongnowon Motel (Map pp88-9; % 763 4249; s/d W28,000/35,000; a i) Western travellers say good things about this place, but bring a towel. Get off at An-guk station, Exit 4. It's on a small lane south of Beewon Guesthouse.

MIDRANGE

Tomgi Hotel (Map pp88-9; % 7742 6660; regular/special r W60,000/80,000; a i) Here's that romantic getaway spot you were looking for. Special rooms in this upmarket love motel have couple-friendly features like a steam shower and two-person whirlpool. Take Line 1 or 3 to Jongno 3-ga station, Exit 4.

Hotel Sunbee (Map pp88-9; % 730 3451; tw/d W77,000/88,000; a i) Tired of hotel prices but just can't force yourself into a backpacker guesthouse? There are other options, and this is one of the best. The double bed is huge and the rooms are decorated tastefully. Many rooms come with a wide-screen TV and computer.

Bukchon Hanok Village

This quaint residential neighbourhood between Gyeongbokgung and Changdeokgung used to be home for high court officials. Today, restoration work is returning many *hanok* buildings to their past glory with traditional designs and materials.

Seoul Guesthouse (Map pp88-9Gwanghwamun; % 745 0057; s/d/f W35,000/50,000/100,000; a i) Guestrooms are in a beautiful setting with *hanok* buildings, well-maintained gardens and a 400-year-old tree. If you're awake, join the owner and his two dogs – Nurung and Ssari – for a two-hour walk starting at 8.30am. Take Line 3 to An-guk station, Exit 3 and turn left at the first main street. Follow the road signs.

Other *hanok* recommendations:

Bukchon Guesthouse (Map pp88-9; % 743 8530; s/d/f W35,000/50,000/70,000; a i) Take Line 3 to An-guk station, Exit 3 and turn left at the first main street. It's just past a church.

Tea Guesthouse (Map pp88-9; % 3675 9877; s W35,000, d 50,000-70,000; a i) On the same street as Bukchon Guesthouse but further down the road.

Woori Jip Guesthouse (Map pp88-9; % 744 0536; r W50,000; a i) Stay with Mrs Park's family and their dog. It's on a small lane off the same street as Bukchon Guesthouse.

Anguk Guesthouse (Map pp88-9; % 736 8304; s/tw/d W40,000/60,000/70,000; a i) Take Line 3 to An-guk station, Exit 1. Turn right at the street and right again.

Myeongdong & Namsan BUDGET

Myeongdong Guesthouse (Map pp92-3; % 755 5437; s W30,000, d & tw W35,000-40,000; a) Asian university students come here for bragging rights: 'I slumped in Seoul and spent a fortune on designer labels'. Room quality doesn't quite reach the depths of George Orwell's *Down and Out in London and Paris*, but it comes close. The bathroom's jailhouse motif almost certainly drew inspiration from *Shawshank Redemption* and is the touchstone for any legitimate claim to roughing it in Seoul. Take Line 4 to Myeongdong station, Exit 1.

MIDRANGE

Ibis Hotel (Map pp92-3; % 6361 8888; r Sat W90,000, Sun-Fri W102,000; a) Every city needs a downtown hotel with rooms that look like they came out of a cookie cutter, and Seoul has one thanks to Ibis. Two-minutes from Myeongdong, rooms come with a uniform décor that isn't tedious, thanks to clever touches like the curving line

of the bathroom's exterior wall. Take Line 2 to Euljiro 1-ga, Exit 6 and walk straight.

Metro Hotel (Map pp92-3; % 752 1112; s/d/tw/deluxe W99,000/121,000/W145,000/157,000; a i s) It's hard not to like the Metro Hotel: the colour-coordinated room décor is as attractive as the downtown location. Rooms lean toward small, but they're comfortable: upgrade to the deluxe twin, equipped with a double and single bed, if you need more space. Take Line 2 to Euljiro 1-ga, Exit 5. Turn right at the stone pillar. The hotel is down the street.

TOP END

Lotte Hotel (Map pp92-3; % 771 1000; r from W400,000; a i s) With 1400 rooms and 1300 staff, it's the biggest hotel in Korea. It's also one of the most stylish downtown properties. Prominent guests have included Bill Gates (he stayed in a standard room), Tiger Woods (he didn't stay in a standard room) and Brooke Shields (nobody remembers where she stayed). If it's good enough for Brooke, it should be okay for almost anyone.

Other recommendations:

Millenium Seoul Hilton (Map pp92-3; % 753 7788; package W300,000; a i s) There's a casino here. Take Line 1 to Seoul Station, Exit 8, walk straight and turn right at the street just before the green steps. The package includes a breakfast buffet.

Westin Chosun Hotel (Map pp92-3; % 771 0500; deluxe/executive W370,000/420,000; a i s) Stylish lobby. The executive option includes breakfast and access to the club lounge for an evening drink.

Hotel Shilla (Map pp92-3; % 2233 3131; r W420,000; a i s) Line 3 to Dongguk University station, Exit 5. Past the gate, walk up the stairs beside the waterfall.

Itaewon

BUDGET

Hilltop Motel (Map p91; % 793 4972; r Sun-Thu W25,000, Fri & Sat W30,000; a) Here's that dumpy flophouse in Itaewon's hostess bar district you were looking for. A maximum-security prison most likely inspired the interior of the astonishingly bare rooms. But you do get a private bath and you're within crawling distance of Itaewon's late-night bars. Take Line 6 to Itaewon station.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hamilton Hotel (Map p91; % 794 0171; s/d W121,000/130,000; a i s) The whole place has an attractive look, which is a considerable improvement to what used to be a rather staid property. Families will find the twin room leans toward

spacious. Twin and ondol rooms cost the same as a double. During the summer, guests get free access to the outdoor pool. Nonguests can swim here for a fee (adult/child W10,000/7000; 10am to 6pm, mid-June to August).

Other recommendations:

Kaya Hotel (Map pp86-7; % 798 5101; d & ondol W53,000, deluxe W63,000; a i) Close to the Rainbow Hotel. The deluxe option comes with a twin and single bed.

Rainbow Hotel (Map pp86-7; % 792 9993; d/tw W55,000/63,000; a) Take Line 1 to Namyong station, Exit 1. Walk right and turn right at first corner. Triple rooms are also available for W73,000.

Itaewon Hotel (Map p91; % 792 3111; d & tw/ste W150,000/W200,000; a i) Second choice if the Hamilton is full.

Hongik, Sinchon & Ewha

BUDGET

Kims' Guesthouse (Map p94; % 337 9894; dm W15,000, s W27,000, d & tw W37,000; a i) A great guesthouse experience isn't about facilities – it's about the quality of people you meet. Opportunities to engage a diverse group of travellers make this one of the city's best guesthouses. It's a 12-minute walk from Hapjeong station (Line 2 or 6). Take Exit 8 and walk right: when the road forks, cross the street and stay right. Just past the bend, turn right at the corner and walk straight. Turn left at the beauty shop.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Queen 21 (Map p94; % 312 2556; standard/special W40,000/50,000; a i) Where do students go when they want to get cuddly? They come to Queen 21, an attractive love motel in Sinchon. Rooms are filled with diversions to help pass the time during those initial moments of awkward hesitation, like internet access and a DVD system. When it's time to get horizontal, there's a queen-sized bed. Rates are W10,000 higher on Friday and Saturday. Line 2 to Sinchon, Exit 3. Turn right onto the main road, right at the first street and then a quick left turn.

Seokyo Hotel (Map p94; % 330 7666; s, d & tw W157,000, deluxe W205,000; a i) Location is the selling point of this business-class hotel. Most rooms have been remodelled so they look clean, but the lack of upmarket furnishings gives some a downgraded appearance. The deluxe room comes with a double and single bed. Downtown Seoul is 30 minutes away and a limousine to Incheon airport stops in front of the hotel.

Other Areas North of the Han River

W Seoul Walkerhill (Map pp84-5; % 465 2222; weekday package from W300,000; a i s) What does the W stand for? It could be 'wow', because this fantastic property rates as one of the city's best. The rooms are chic, sassy and oh so modern. Standard rooms, called Wonderful, have a white décor with red accents on the bed cover, cushions and slippers. Other room styles – Scent, Spa, Media and Suites – simply get better. Ignore the stratospheric rack rates and enquire about weekday packages with names like Girl's Night Out.

The 'W' is beside the Sheraton Grande Walkerhill so diversions like a 24-hour casino or theatre show are minutes away. The quickest route to the hotel is a taxi (W3000) from a subway station like line 5 Gwangnaru. A shuttle bus runs between the hotel and Gwangnaru station (Exit 1) every 10 to 20 minutes.

Apgujeong

Princess Hotel (Map pp96-7; % 544 0366; r/ste W80,000/120,000; a i) Here's the love-motel archetype complete with parking-lot curtains and well-worn interior. The property has a sturdy feel, a testament to the steady flow of in-out action that takes place at this busy hotel. There are several suite options available including a spiffy hot-pink number. Take Line 3 to Apgujeong station, Exit 2. Turn 180 degrees and walk around the corner walk. Ten minutes down the road, look for the arch with 'Rodeo' on the right. Turn right at the sign and right at the third lane.

Hotel Popgreen (Map pp96-7; % 544 6623; d W126,000, tw & ondol W136,000; a i) Consider this your best option in Apgujeong if walking distance to upscale shopping and evening entertainment is a priority, but you just can't stomach the idea of a love motel. Rooms have a pleasant décor, most likely inspired by a Martha Stewart manual. Take Line 3 to Apgujeong station, Exit 2. At street level turn 180 degrees; the hotel is around the corner.

Other Areas South of the Han River

MIDRANGE

Tiffany Hotel (Map pp98-9; % 545 0015; s W65,000, tw & ondol W78,000; a i) Like an on old pickup truck, this hotel doesn't look pretty but it gets the job done. Room décor demonstrates a rugged motif, thanks to the red-and-black carpet and metal doors designed to take the heavy punishment that comes with driving a

busy hotel. Take Line 7 to Cheongdam station, Exit 14 and walk 200m.

Jelly Hotel (Map pp96-7; % 553 4737; standard/special/VIP W70,000/100,000/120,000; a i) Have you ever wanted to make love on a pool table? Here's your chance. Special rooms come in a number of quirky motifs including Pocket Ball, equipped with a red-felt billiard table. For women who aren't intimately familiar with the game, here's an opportunity to work on your stroke and learn how to manipulate balls gently. Take Line 2 to Gangnam station, Exit 8. Walk straight and turn left on the lane before the Intellectual Property Office.

Sunshine Hotel (Map pp96-7; % 541 1818; s/d/tw W96,000/139,000/153,000; a i) This sharp hotel is popular with business travellers on a budget who need to be in Gangnam. It's also ideal for travellers accustomed to the comfort and style of a USS100 hotel room. Lower-priced rooms edge towards small, but the tasteful décor, matching furnishings and modern features create a comfortable atmosphere.

Other recommendations:

Piano Hotel (Map pp96-7; % 588 2044; standard/special W60,000/70,000; a i) Make your own fun in the whirlpool and steam shower. Line 3 to Nambu bus terminal station, Exit 6. Turn right at the second street.

Hotel BJ (Map pp96-7; % 553 4100; d/tw/ste W80,000/90,000/170,000; a i) If you like the name, you'll love the modern rooms.

Hotel Lake (Map pp98-9; % 422 1001; d & tw W95,000, ste W145,000; a i) Close to Lotte World and about half the price of Lotte Hotel. Take Line 2 or 8 to Jamsil station, Exit 3, walk right past the bike rack to the second light and turn right.

TOP END

Ellui (Map pp98-9; % 514 3535; d & tw W196,000, luxury 260,000; a i) It's not quite a boutique hotel, but this smart and stylish property does demonstrate verve and creativity. Lower-priced rooms are slightly cramped but the rich décor compensates by creating a welcoming feel. The luxury room comes with a charming walkout patio surrounded by latticework and creeping vines. Take Line 7 to Cheongdam station, Exit 14, and walk 600m.

Imperial Palace Hotel (Map pp96-7; % 3440 8000; superior/deluxe/ste W210,000/390,000/700,000; a i s) If you're going to emblazon the words 'Imperial Palace' atop a hotel, you'd better deliver because expectations run high. This place delivers the goods. From the magnificent lobby to the well-appointed rooms, opulence runs

throughout this fine establishment. Take Line 7 to Hakdong station, Exit 1, and walk straight to the first major street with a light.

Lotte World Hotel (Map pp88-9; ₩ 419 7000; r from W300,000; a i s) You'll like it because ... you believe a pricey room is appropriate compensation for the time you spent away from the family at work; because time is money and you don't want to travel to Lotte World when you could sleep in the same complex; because the W200,000 golf shirt you purchased in Appujeong matches the lush room interior.

Novotel Ambassador (Map pp96-7; ₩ 567 1101; r W340,000; a i s) The calculators at the front desk are a clear indication that this hotel is for dealmakers. Rack rates are negotiable with discounts of up to 50% available at different times. Most rooms come with a decent work station (LAN connection W16,000 per day), a pleasant décor and a wide bed. Access to the pool and gym are included though breakfast is extra, but that's negotiable. Take Line 2 to Gangnam station, Exit 7.

EATING

Gwanghwamun & Around

BUDGET

Witch's Table (Map pp88-9; drinks & snacks W2500-6000; 11 8am-9.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat) Can't start the day without a bagel and cream cheese? You can get that and more at this narrow eatery opposite the Goryeo supermarket. It is one of the few restaurants in the area to open early. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7.

Jongno Woodong (Map pp88-9; meals W3000; 11 24hr) This Korean version of a greasy spoon serves traditional favourites like *kimchi bokkeumbap* (김치 볶음밥; fried rice with *kimchi*) and *tangsu mandu* (탕수 만두; fried dumplings with sweet-and-sour sauce). Take Line 1 to Jonggak, Exit 3.

Park Ganae Maetdol Bindaeddeok (Map pp88-9; meals W4000; 11 9am-10pm) Some Korean food tastes better than its name might suggest. Fried green bean is a good example: *beondegi* (반데기; silkworm larvae) is not. Drop by this busy stall in the Gwangjang market for tasty and filling *bindaetteok* (빈대떡), a fried pancake made from ground green beans, potato, onions and bean sprouts. The stall is crowded at night with locals who wash back their pancake with *makgeolli* (막걸리), a milky rice wine. Take Line 1 to Jongno 5-ga station and follow the signs to the Gwangjang market.

Goryeo Supermarket (Map pp88-9; meals W5000) It's one of the best downtown locations to buy in-season fruit and veggies. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7, turn right at the corner and walk to the first street.

Tosok Ma-eul (Map pp88-9; meals W5000; 11 24hr) Roaming the streets of Jongno in the early hours of the morning can be stressful, especially if you're craving soup. That's why late-night prowlers come to this simple restaurant known for *gamjatang* (감자탕; ham and potato soup). Take Line 1 to Jonggak, Exit 3 – it's behind Pizza Hut.

Seolleongtang (Map pp88-9; meals W5000; 11 Mon-Sat) It's a scruffy restaurant on a hard-to-find lane, but getting a seat at lunch often requires a 10-minute wait. The specialty is *seolleongtang* (설렁탕; beef broth with noodles), a delicious soup ideal for people looking for a non-spicy meal. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7, turn right at the corner and right at the second lane.

Todam (Map pp88-9; meals W5000; 11 noon-2pm & 6-9pm) The exterior looks like crap and it doesn't get much better past the front door, but this simple diner serves great home-style cooking. Korean food aficionados will appreciate the spicy flavour of the *chamchi kimchi jjigae* (참치 김치찌개; *kimchi* stew with tuna), while those with sensitive palates should keep a jug of water handy. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 6.

Jongno Bindaeddeok (Map pp88-9; meals W5000; 11 noon-2am) This is a sterling example of a dumpy-looking restaurant that serves great food. Most people come for the *bindaetteok* with beef (고기빈대떡) or seafood (해물빈대떡). The *sogogigukbap* (소고기국밥; spicy beef soup) is also delicious. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7, walk straight and turn left at the first street.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Samjeon Hoejeon Chobap (Map pp88-9; sushi W3000; 11 11.30am-2pm & 4.30-9pm Mon-Sat) The sushi isn't served on a silver platter, but it does come to you on a silver conveyor belt. Grab a stool and pick a circulating dish. Save yourself the hassle of waiting for the next plate by ordering the W15,000 platter. Take Line 5 to Gwanghwamun station, Exit 7, walk straight and turn left at the lane beside the art centre. The restaurant is down the road.

Jongno Gol (Map pp88-9; servings W9000; 11 11.30am-10pm) Barbecued meat and *soju* (local vodka) –

does it get any better? If you love pork, the answer is no. This outstanding neighbourhood restaurant specialises in *solippgama dwaengi* (슬윽가마돼지; smoked black pig). The meat is ripened in an outdoor barbecue and brought to your tabletop grill for cooking completion. Line 1 to Jongno 5-ga station, Exit 7. Turn right at the second corner. At the end of the street, make a quick left and right turn, then turn right at the first street and walk straight.

Top Cloud (Map pp88-9; ₩ 2230 3000; meals W29,000; 11 noon-midnight) Acrophobes beware: way up on the 33rd floor of Jongno Tower, this tasteful restaurant is ideal for special outings. Order off the menu or go with the lunch (W29,000; noon to 2pm) or dinner (W36,000; 6pm to 8.30pm) buffet. After dinner, the restaurant turns into a candle-lit bar (9pm to midnight).

Insadong

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

Minsok Jip (Map pp88-9; cake W3000; 11 6am-10pm) Under and around the Nakwon Arcade, there are several *tteok* (떡) shops like this one, selling rice cake. Consume a W3000 package of *yaksik* (약식), a brown-rice cake with dates and chestnuts, and you may not eat for the rest of the day.

Park-ssi Mulgo On Jebi (Map pp88-9; meals W5000; 11 10am-2am) It's a quaint and cluttered eatery with *sanchae bibimbap* (산채 비빔밥; fresh mountain vegetables with rice) that's as fresh and flavourful as the spinach lightly tossed in sesame oil. The meal comes with a red squeeze bottle – this is red pepper sauce, not ketchup.

Dolkemaetofu House (Map pp88-9; meals W6000; 11 9.30am-11pm) For a low-cost meal, it's hard to beat *kimchi dubu* (김치 순두부; *kimchi* stew with tofu). Crack a raw egg into the stew and let it sit. Use the ladle to scoop rice out of the stone pot. Pour 1cm of water into the pot. Let that rest with the lid on to make a warm rice drink consumed at the end of the meal.

Dimibang (Map pp88-9; meals W6000-50,000) This restaurant proves vegetarian meals aren't all boring. Many of the set courses (W12,000 to W30,000, minimum two people) use *hamcho* (함초) root and other medicinal herbs to give the meals taste and texture. Single travellers can choose a simple meal like *doenjang jjigae* (된장 찌개; soybean stew) and *bibimbap*.

Jagun Chajib (Map pp88-9; meals W7000) Homemade *juk* (죽; porridge) is the main food served in this teashop. The brilliant orange pumpkin porridge (호박죽) has a silky smooth texture.

Chon (Map pp88-9; meals W7000-50,000; 11 noon-midnight) Unlike most area shops, this one serves *hanjeongsik* (한정식; banquet) to single travellers. By the time the third wave of dishes hits the table, you might find yourself quietly hoping it's the last because there's a lot of food.

So Sim (Map pp88-9; meals W7000; 11 11.30am-10pm Mon-Sat) This quaint restaurant at the north end of Insadong serves vegetarian meals. It's a sedate place, but the full-flavour quality more than compensates for the lack of flash.

TOP END

Min's Club (Map pp88-9; lunch W15,000-45,000, dinner W30,000-75,000; 11 lunch 11.30am-2.30pm, afternoon tea 2.30-6pm, dinner 6-11pm, last serving 9.30pm) Old-world architecture meets new-world cuisine. This attractive restaurant in a restored 1930s *hanok* building isn't the best place to experience traditional Korean cuisine, but it's popular with executives treating clients to a steak dinner.

Sanchon (Map pp88-9; lunch/dinner W19,800/35,200) This famous restaurant serves temple food, but the prices aren't very Buddhist. Sit on floor cushions in a soothing atmosphere with candles on the tables. Set meals – 16 small dishes including *japchae* (잡채; noodles with vegetables) and *pajeon* – don't change between lunch and dinner, but the price certainly does. A traditional dancer performs at 8.15pm.

Bukchon Hanok Village

Anjip (Map pp88-9; meals W6000-30,000; Mon-Sat) Eat in your own private room in this traditional restaurant noted for *hanjeongsik* (한정식), a traditional Korean banquet made for a king. Like most restaurants specialising in this fare, single travellers are not welcome. Take Line 3 to An-guk station, Exit 3, and turn left at the first street. The restaurant is down a lane opposite a parking garage.

Samcheongdong

Samcheongdong Sujebi (Map pp88-9; meals W6000; 11 11am-9pm) Prickly waitresses aside, the outstanding *sujebi* (수제비; dough flakes in shellfish broth) is probably the city's best. It's not spicy, but if you need a little zip, add green pepper-flavoured sauce from the tabletop container.

Son Mandu (Map pp88-9; meals W6000; 11 11am-9pm) High-quality *mandu* (만두; dumpling) is served in this friendly shop. The *jinmandu* (진만두; steamed dumpling) comes with six large balls stuffed with beef, pork, tofu and

vegetables. After receiving your food, let it sit for a few minutes; the outside dough may be cool to the touch but the inside is hot. It's across the street from the *sujebi* restaurant.

Myeongdong

Myeongdong Gyoja (Map pp92-3; meals W6000) If you come for lunch, be prepared to stand in line because this busy restaurant has a reputation for tasty meals. *Mandu*, *bibimbap guksu* (비빔밥국수; spicy noodles) and *kongguksu* (콩국수; noodles in bean broth) are the specialties. Pay the woman walking around with tickets.

Sinseon Seolleongtang (Map pp92-3; meals W6000; 11am-9pm Mon-Sat) Korean men flock here to restore their virility. In business for 50 years, this simple restaurant serves *bosintang* (보신탕; dog-meat soup), a broth thought to possess miraculous healing powers. Apparently there are believers because the place is full at lunch. Standing in front of the Catholic Church, cross the street and walk down the lane, then turn right at the first lane. The restaurant is around the bend.

Gye Sunok Bosintang (Map pp92-3; meals W10,000; 10am-9pm Mon-Sat) Korean men flock here to restore their virility. In business for 50 years, this simple restaurant serves *bosintang* (보신탕; dog-meat soup), a broth thought to possess miraculous healing powers. Apparently there are believers because the place is full at lunch. Standing in front of the Catholic Church, cross the street and walk down the lane, then turn right at the first lane. The restaurant is around the bend.

Baekje Samgyetang (Map pp92-3; meals W11,000) At this impressive restaurant the outside signboard is written only in Chinese characters. The Korean classic *samgyetang* (삼계탕; chicken stuffed with rice and ginseng) is full of rich flavour and tastes even better with *insimul* (인삼술; ginseng whiskey) for W4000. Look for the signboard with the phone number 776 3267.

Itaewon

Jeonju Bon-ga (Map p91; meals W5000; 10.30am-11pm) It's not a beautiful restaurant, which might explain why few travellers come here. Pity, because it's a hub of home-style cooking with great *dolsot bibimbap* (돌솥 비빔밥; vegetables and rice in a hot pot). By the time you've dug down to the bottom, the rice has been baked into a crispy cake, adding a new dimension of texture and taste.

Other recommendations:

USO Canteen (Map p91; meals W4000; 11am-2pm) For ham sandwich and fries. Take Line 1 to Namyong station, Exit 1. At street level, turn right, then right again at the corner and walk 200m.

Gama Sagol (Map p91; meals W6000; 11am-1am) Great *seolleongtang*. Exit the Hamilton Hotel and walk left 10 minutes.

Memories (Map p91; meals W12,000; 11am-11pm, closed Aug) Authentic German schnitzel.

Our Place (Map p91; meals W12,000; 11am-3am) A romantic setting in Itaewon. Now that's an odd combination.

Moghul (Map p91; meals W15,000-45,000) A Pakistani restaurant with a weekend lunch (W18,000; noon-3pm) and dinner (W23,000; 6pm-10pm) buffet.

Nashville Steak House (Map p91; steaks W26,000; 11am-11pm) Blends the best elements of a basement recreation room and a highway truck stop.

Cheongsa Chorong (Map p91; 794 1177; lunch 7000, dinner from W40,000; 11am-10pm) A popular *hanjeongsik* restaurant with a traditional dance and music show at 7pm.

Hongik, Sinchon & Ewha

BUDGET

Richemont (Map p94; meals w4000; 11am-11pm) When rice and *kimchi* are an impossibility, try this bakery with comfort-food staples like roast-beef sandwiches for a quick burst of energy. There's a wide selection of chocolates including caramel truffles.

Dongah Gul (Map p94; servings W5000; 11am-11pm) In the late afternoon, this is the only busy meat restaurant in the Hongik University area. Budget-conscious students are drawn to this hole-in-the-wall restaurant by the low cost, lean cuts and fun atmosphere.

Choonchun Jib (Map p94; meals W5500; 11am-4hr) The specialty is *dakgalbi* (닭갈비), a boneless chicken dish with chunks of cabbage, leek and carrot smothered in a spicy sauce. The staff cook the food at your table, so there's nothing to do except wait and put on the apron. Line 2 to Sinchon station, Exit 2. Turn left at the lane between Starbucks and the SK Telecom store.

MIDRANGE

Agio (Map p94; meals W9000; 11am-2am) It's not your ordinary, garden-variety pizza joint, but it does serve pizza and there is a garden. Surrounded by leafy trees, it's a romantic setting best experienced in the evening. Simple pasta dishes and pizza are the main menu items.

Misses & Mai (Map p94; meals W9000; 11am-1am Mon-Fri, noon-2am Sat & Sun) Asian fusion is the predominant menu theme in this outdoorsy restaurant next to Agio. Enjoy Pad Thai under a canopy of trees all year. A glass of wine is W8800, so consider getting a bottle, which starts at W35,000.

Cabin Oak (Map p94; meals W11,000; 11am-9.30am Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2am Sat & Sun) Chicken and beer – never has there been a more perfect combination since, well, pizza and beer. This Hongik University chicken outlet is unique because it roasts birds, stuffed with rice, over a spit.

Le Petit Paris (Map p94; 3142 0282; meals W12,000; 11am-9pm, noon-2.30pm Fri & Sat) Sinchon services the food and drink needs of Yonsei University students, reputedly the country's most intelligent young minds. Given the number of crappy restaurants in the area, it seems university students aren't well-educated about food. That's what makes Le Petit Paris special. Run by a chef who worked in Paris, this small restaurant manages to find a balance between quality and budget. Steaks cooked to perfection start around W15,000.

Dokdo Tuna (Map p94; meals W17,000; 11am-2am) Not far from Hongik University (the all-night party zone for 20-somethings) this out-of-place restaurant serves comparatively expensive frozen tuna to a 35+ crowd. Pay one price and you get unlimited servings.

Daehangno

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

Omyeo Gamyeo (Map p95; meals W3500; 11am-10pm) The interior doesn't look like much, but it's been in business forever serving *gongnamul bibimbap* (공나물 비빔밥; bean sprouts with rice) and cutting-edge dishes like *picha chiju* (피차치즈 밥; rice with pizza cheese). One person eats for W3500 but a double order costs just W6000. Take Line 4 to Hyehwa station, Exit 2.

Ttokssam Sidae (Map p95; servings W8000; 11am-1am) This is the place to go for meat and *soju*. The meat is grilled on a slanted plate heated over a flame. Most customers throw *kimchi* on the grill to intensify the saltiness. Place a piece of pork, *kimchi* and garlic on a leaf of lettuce, wash back with *soju* and voila – you've got a gastronomic piece of heaven on Earth.

Mama Food (Map p95; meals W8000; 11am-2am) It looks like an open-air Marché restaurant (p128) without the same selection of food or steep prices. Located above a convenience store, it's a fun restaurant when you have a craving for slightly upscale Korean food under a canopy. Grilled rice with seafood or chicken is the specialty. Live music starts hourly at 8pm.

TOP END

Opseoye (Map p95; servings W10,000; 11.30am-10pm) Flowers lining the front steps and a woody interior make this one of the most attractive restaurants in the area. It's also a great option for people looking to escape spicy food. The specialty is *shabu shabu* (샤브샤브; food cooked in a hot broth) cooked at your table. Great fun with a group, it's a dining experience that should be tried at least once.

Bongchu Jimdalk (Map p95; meals W22,000; 11am-midnight) Don't let the attractive wooden tables and chairs fool you. This deceptively appealing restaurant serves only one thing: flame-thrower-hot chicken. If you can't take the heat, don't come here.

South of the Han River

APGUJEONG

Bagel Street (Map pp96-7; meals W1500; 11am-10pm) It's a long subway ride to Apgujeong, but that's the kind of sacrifice required to find a close-to-authentic bagel and cream cheese. Go the extra mile and you'll be rewarded with choices like onion, garlic or a good old plain bagel. It's behind Hotel Popgreen.

Zao (Map pp96-7; meals W3900; 11am-11pm) Some of Apgujeong's cheapest eats are here. The highlight of this thinly decorated café is the lunch (W5900; 11am to 4pm) and dinner buffet (W8900; 4pm to 11pm). Food options are limited, but it's a good opportunity to load up on fresh salad for the cost of a beer.

Shwing (Map pp96-7; meals W9500; 11am-4pm Mon-Wed, 4pm-1am Thu & Fri, 3pm-1am Sat, 3-11pm Sun) This place claims to serve original Buffalo wings. Well, anyone who's been to the Anchor Bar in Buffalo, New York, will tell you these chicken parts simply don't compare in size, but they are cooked to perfection. The best deal is from 6.30pm to 9.30pm when W15,000 buys all-you-can-eat wings. Be warned, gluttony has a price: eat everything you order or pay a penalty. It's a couple of blocks behind Starbucks.

Mad for Garlic (Map pp96-7; meals W12,000; 11.20am-midnight) With dishes like 'Dracula Killer', you know what to expect. Garlic is everywhere including the air, thanks to the open-concept kitchen that unleashes an appetising aroma in this brick-and-mortar restaurant. Hard-to-find dishes like Gorgonzola pizza are the specialties, but they also serve pasta and steak. Take Line 3 to Apgujeong station, Exit 2.

Café greEAT (Map pp96-7; 3448 4556; lunch buffet W21,000, dinner/weekend buffet W23,000; 10.30am-2am,

lunch buffet 11.30am-2pm, dinner buffet 5-10pm) This eatery tastefully captures the essence of the neighbourhood: it's beautiful and expensive with a dash of snobbery. The outdoor patio is ideal for a two-hour lunch amid a beautiful garden surrounded by a stonewall and greenery. The buffet has about a dozen main dishes, with an emphasis of pasta and fusion. It's on the 3rd floor of the Tribeca Building.

OTHER AREAS SOUTH OF THE HAN RIVER
Marché (Map pp98-9; meals W15,000; 11am-11pm) Inside the COEX Mall, this franchise looks like most others around the world, with food served in a marketlike atmosphere. For big eaters, the best bet is the buffet lunch (W18,900) or dinner (W24,900), which gives you access to everything except steaks, ribs and juice.

Samwon Garden (Map pp96-7; 548 3030; servings W28,000; 11.40am-10.30pm) With seating for 1000 it's the city's largest restaurant and maybe the best place to experience *sutbulgalbi* (숯불갈비; barbecued meat). It's also one of the most expensive: one serving of meat starts at W28,000 but can run up to W49,000. This immaculate facility has seven dining halls, most of which are surrounded by water wheels and lush gardens.

Busan Ilbeonji (Map p100; dinner W40,000) It doesn't look like much, but this modest shop on the 2nd floor of the Noryangjin fish market is a great restaurant. The speciality is raw fish, but it also serves an amazing lunch menu that includes *mae-untang* (매운탕; spicy fish soup); for W5000, you get a good selection of side dishes including a crispy potato cake, a baked-to-perfection fish and a pot of fish soup.

Like many good restaurants, this one requires at least two customers but Mrs Moon, the no-nonsense owner, makes an exception for foreign travellers. Take Line 1 to Noryangjin station, Exit 1, cross the bridge and walk downstairs to the restaurant section above the fish market.

DRINKING Itaewon

Hostess Bars are concentrated on the hill opposite the Hamilton Hotel, known locally as Hooker Hill. They have suggestive names and are easy to find, but with closed-circuit cameras monitoring the streets they can easily find you.

3 Alley Pub (Map p91; drinks W3500; 4pm-1.30am Mon-Fri, noon-12.30am Sat & Sun) This English-style

pub run by a Canadian and a German is popular with the 35+ crowd. Few expat teachers come here, which is fine by the owners. Great beers on tap include Krombache. Darts, pool, good pub grub and friendly people are all here.

Rocky Mountain Tavern (Map p91; drinks W5000; 6pm-2am Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri, 11.30am-5am Sat, to 2am Sun) Hockey sweaters, photos of Mounties and patrons finishing their sentences with 'eh' give this place a down-home feel for Canadian expats. If you're part of the gang, it's fun. If not, the atmosphere is as frigid as a Canadian winter.

Bar Bliss (Map p91; drinks W6000; 6pm-1am Mon-Fri, to 3am Sat & Sun) It's a wine bar with a barbecue. Bring your own steak and put it on the grill. Then enjoy a freshly cooked steak with a bottle of red wine.

Other recommendations:
Seoul Pub (Map p91; 3pm-2am Mon-Fri, noon-3am Sat & Sun) A good place to start a weekend bender.

Gecko's (Map p91; meals W8500-22,000; 11am-2am) Anyone doing the rounds in Itaewon ends up here at some point.

Nashville Sports Pub (Map p91; 11am-2am, to 3am Fri & Sat) There are no team jerseys hanging on the walls, but they have pool tables and darts, which for some people qualifies as a sport.

Hongik & Sinchon

Watts on Tap (Map p94; drinks W3000; 6pm-2am Sun-Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat) Welcoming staff, cheap drinks during Happy Hour (6pm to 9pm Monday to Thursday), when a bottle of Carlsberg costs W3000, and good tunes are a recipe for fun. Take Line 2 to Sinchon station, Exit 2, walk about five minutes and turn left one block past Pizza Hut. It's down the street on the corner.

Blue Bird (Map p94; drinks W4000; 6.30pm-2am, to 3am Fri & Sat) With a collection of 1000 jazz CDs, there's only one kind of music played here. It's run by Mr Cheol, a serious jazz fan who greets international guests with humour and respect. Take Line 2 to Sinchon station, Exit 2, turn left on the lane after Pizza Hut, make a quick right then a left turn.

Noree Hanun Saramdul (Map p94; 7pm-2am, to 5am Fri-Sun) If you can appreciate George Benson's funky cover of 'Take Five' in a Bohemian setting, you'll like it here. Exit the Blue Bird and turn right. At the corner look right and you'll see a wooden signboard with barely legible Korean characters – that's the door to this basement-level bar.

Woodstock (Map p94; drinks W4000; 7pm-3am) This grungy bar plays rock music the way it should be: loud and on vinyl. For rock purists, nothing beats Lynard Skynard on a scratchy vinyl disc. It's across the street from Blue Bird.

Other recommendations:
US Bar 66 (Map p94; 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, 6pm-5am Fri & Sat) A fun bar packed with American memorabilia and expats.

Moon Yang (Map p94; drinks W5000; 11.30am-3am) A 3rd-floor bar with a birds-eye view of the area.

Moim (Map p94; drinks W8000; 4pm-4am) A romantic hideaway on the 9th floor of the Club Otwo building.

Princess (Map p94; drinks W7000; 10am-4am) Almost everything in this odd café has a virgin feel.

Café Atre (Map p94; drinks W5000; 11am-10.30pm) Afternoon lattes and New York cheesecake.

Galaxy 999 (Map p94; drinks W5000; 5pm-5am) Most curious drink? The Dr Pepper, rum and beer set ablaze.

Gold II (Map p94; drinks W2500; 5pm-6am) Cheap drinks and busy crowds but the mandatory side dishes – like the W13,000 fruit platter – are tough to swallow. Also try Gold next door.

Daehangno

Sanata (Map p95; drinks W6500; 3pm-2am) Unfortunately this bar lacks focus. Specialising in dark ales, there are eight beers on tap along with 12 different bottled varieties. The draft in a 1770 cc pitcher for W14,000 is pretty good value. Although the quality beer gives the place an uptown, cool feel, the overall mood is diminished by crappy tunes – from Don Henley to John Denver. Country Roads?

UNUSUAL TEASHOPS

Insadong (Map pp88-9) has many teashops serving traditional hot and cold drinks made from fruit, leaves, herbs and roots. Many teashop owners make a big effort to create a memorable décor. A cup of tea costs W6000, but it's a quality product. Birdsong, running water and ethereal music add to the atmosphere.

Yetchatjip (Old Teashop; Map pp88-9) This has a bric-a-brac décor and little birds that fly around the teashop. Getting a seat in the afternoon can be difficult, as it's popular with Japanese travellers.

Meosi kkeokjeong inga? (What are you worried about?; Map pp88-9) Overflows with plants, flowers and remarkably fresh air. Lights in wicker baskets give the place a soft, relaxed feel, hence the name.

Insadong (Map pp88-9) A simple teahouse in a relaxing setting. The inside seating area has a cosy feel, thanks to the cordwood and pots of tea brewing on the stove. Go straight to the back and you'll discover a small outdoor courtyard surrounded by private rooms with floor seating.

Dawon (Map pp88-9) Opposite Kyongin Gallery. Sit in a splendid courtyard under the trees or on floor cushions inside a 19th-century building. The *omijacha* is a delicious, cold, pink tea made from schisandra berries – it's said to have five flavours.

Bier Halle (Map p95; drinks W3000; 3pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 2pm-midnight Sat & Sun) The plastic food in the front window should be the first hint. On the surface, it looks like a German beer hall, complete with stylized architecture, a large open-air room and sausages. But, there's one thing missing: German beer.

Esmeralda Coffee (Map p95; drinks W2800; 11am-10pm Mon-Fri, noon-9pm Sat & Sun) It's nothing more than a coffee bar with good espresso. Sit outside near the bushes and you can pass the time people-watching.

Mindeulle Yeongto Café (Map p95; meals W10,000; 10am-midnight) Until you sit down, this place can be a little overwhelming. It's a restaurant, café and entertainment hub packed into five floors of pink, with staff dressed in Heidi costumes constantly yelling 'hello' and 'good-bye' as they wave their hands palms up.

Appujeong

Tribeca (Map pp96-7; 3448 4450) This large, grey building has three bars. On the 2nd floor, The Bar (open 7pm to 4am) is an expansive lounge with a Manhattan feel thanks to the high ceilings and long-reaching bar. When it's busy after 9pm, you won't mind paying W12,000 or more for a drink. At other times, it feels like you're in an empty hockey arena. Wine bars on the 5th and 6th floors appeal to cigar smokers looking for a comfortable environment to light up with a bottle of port. The 5th floor, Brooklyn (open 7pm to 2am), is a dimly lit bar with wall-to-wall wine racks. There are 1000 bottles, and customers purchase wine by the bottle. Prices start at W40,000. The upstairs

Belle Vue (open 7pm to 2am) has an uneven, almost kitschy décor. Both bars have a selection of cigars in humidors, including Cohibas and Montecristos starting at W20,000.

Platinum Apgujeong (Map pp96-7; drinks W5000; 11 4pm-4am Mon-Sat, 4pm-2am Sun) It's the second outlet of this notable microbrewery, which, unlike some less-successful micros in Korea, has clear and tasty beer. This basement-level bar has a battleship-grey interior that creates the impression you're inside a brew tank. Quaff back a couple pints of the Morphine brew with 8.1% alcohol and you might imagine you're in most any place. It's 100m from the Rock & Roll bar.

Other recommendations:

Café Organic (Map pp96-7; drinks W5000; 11 11am-11pm) The latte might be the finest in the area.

Tea Museum (Map pp96-7; 11 10.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) A teashop, exhibition room and emporium in one.

Rock & Roll (Map pp96-7; drinks W8000; 11 3pm-5am) Apgujeong's original western bar started in 1990 but still looks good.

Gangnam

Dublin Irish Pub (Map pp96-7; 11 4pm-2am Mon-Fri, 4pm-3am Sat & Sun) Not many Irish people come here, but that's not the point. With a dark woody design and high ceilings, the atmosphere's fine for sampling five imported beers on tap and a good selection of bottled brew, including Leffe. Good taste has a price: pints start at W12,000 plus 10% VAT.

Platinum Microbrewery (Map pp96-7; 96 2052 0022; drinks W7700; 11 11.30am-1am Mon-Sat, 11.30am-midnight Sun) Seven yummy brews on tap but the main draw is the all-you-can-eat-and-drink buffet (W30,000; 6pm to 10pm, except Sunday). Take Line 2 to Gangnam station, Exit 8. Telephone reservations are required at least two days in advance for the buffet.

O'Sulloc (Map pp96-7; drinks W3000; 11 9am-11pm) Green is the dominant design motif and ingredient in this fusion shop that pushes the limits of green-tea experimentation including Carmel Can Panna, a noble idea but a disastrous concoction.

ENTERTAINMENT Casinos & Betting

Sheraton Walkerhill Hotel (Map pp84-5; 96 450 4826; 11 24hr) Seoul's original casino in the offers the usual games including Black Jack and Roulette. There is no dress code, though shorts and slippers are not permitted. Korean

nationals cannot enter casinos. Take Line 5 to Gwangnaru station and catch a taxi (W3000). On the way back to the city, board a shuttle bus to the subway.

The city's two other 24-hour casinos operated by **Seven Luck** (www.7luck.com) are in the Millennium Seoul Hilton (Map pp92-3; 96 2021 6000), Line 1 to Seoul station, Exit 8; and COEX Mall (Map pp98-9; 96 3466 6000), Line 2 to Samseong station, Exit 5 or 6.

Seoul Racecourse (Map pp84-5; 96 509 1221; www.kra.co.kr; admission W800; 11 races 11.30am-5pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun, 1-9pm late Jul - late Aug) If cards aren't your calling, try the ponies at this well-organised facility with a surprising number of English-speaking staff. International guests use the lounge on the 4th floor of the Lucky Ville Grandstand, where interpreters help visitors place a wager. Bets range from W100 to W100,000. Take Line 4 to Seoul Racecourse station, Exit 2.

Cinemas

You will find multiplex cinemas in most malls and busy commercial districts. Tickets cost about W7000 and films are usually screened from 10am to 11pm, though some theatres like Lotte Cinema (Map pp92-3) in Myeongdong screen films after midnight. English-language films are usually shown in their original language with Korean subtitles. Most cinemas sell tickets with assigned seating.

Korea Film Archives (Map pp84-5; 96 521 3147; www.koreafilm.or.kr) Located in the basement of the Seoul Arts Centre, this body occasionally screens classic Korean films with English subtitles.

Seoul Selection Bookshop (Map pp88-9; 96 734 9564; 11 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) This bookshop shows Korean films with English subtitles (W3000; 11am Saturday).

DVD Rooms

The ubiquitous DVD *bang* (room) serves multiple social functions: it is a good place to escape nasty weather and one of the few chances travellers have to watch a Korean movie with English subtitles. DVD *bangs* are also the Korean equivalent of a drive-in theatre: instead of making out in a car, young people come here. The cost is generally W7000 per person. Busy commercial districts around universities have heaps of DVD *bangs*.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

Itaewon has the only openly gay and lesbian bar scene that attracts foreigners and English-speaking Koreans. The small venues are clustered on an alley near Hooker Hill. Not much happens until 9.30pm or later, even on Friday and Saturday.

Trance (Map p91; 11 10pm-4am) Drag-queen shows take the stage every Saturday night at 2.30am or whenever there's a big crowd.

Other recommendations:

Queen (Map p91; 11 8pm-3am, to 6am Fri, closed Mon) Happy hour 8pm to 11pm.

Always Homme (Map p91; 11 8pm-4am, to 6am Fri & Sat) Open every night.

Why Not (Map p91; 11 8pm-6am) A moody blue interior with disco lights.

Soho (Map p91; 11 8pm-4am Tue-Thu, 6pm-4am Fri-Sun, closed Mon) Drinking three Long Island Ice Teas here is like having a temporary frontal lobotomy.

Live Music

ITAEWON

All That Jazz (Map p91; admission W5000; 11 6pm-1am Mon-Fri, 6pm-2am Sat & Sun) This is one of the classier joints in Itaewon, with an interior reminiscent of the Rat Pack days. Live jazz sets take place from 8.30pm to 11pm on weeknights, and from 7pm to 1.30am on weekends.

LIVING IN SEOUL

You've landed your first teaching job in Seoul. Now what? To make your sojourn an enjoyable one, you'll need to tackle three pieces of business as soon as you arrive.

The first is housing. Employers provide foreign workers with an apartment or a monthly stipend. Private-language schools that retain good teachers generally provide housing with a short commute to work. Other schools and most universities offer a monthly allowance of about W400,000, a paltry sum insufficient to rent a studio apartment near a subway station. For this size and location expect to pay at least W600,000 per month plus W50,000 in maintenance fees. Some apartments require a refundable deposit (전세) between W3 million and W100 million, which your employer may or may not provide.

Apartment hunting usually begins online. Websites like nearsbway.com list vacancies by district. The *Korea Herald* online newspaper (www.koreaherald.co.kr) has a small listing of affordable accommodation with many places located in distant areas like Bundang, a suburb just outside Seoul. Work in this quiet, wealthy residential community and you'll enjoy a comfortable, perhaps dull, lifestyle. If you don't work here, it's best to avoid Bundang because long subway commutes into Seoul can be draining. If you have a Korean-speaking friend, walk around any neighbourhood you like and visit a real-estate office (부동산). For proximity to a party zone, Hongik University or Sinchon are good areas (Map p94). If quality of life is important, expats report good things about living south of the Han River in Jamsil (Map pp98-9). It's expensive, but comparatively fresh air and quick access to nearby sights like Olympic Park (Map pp98-9) make life comfortable. Housing with oil heat may look inexpensive, but the winter heating bills can be shocking, so choose gas whenever possible.

Your quality of life will increase exponentially once you're able to make sense of restaurant menus and street signs. Learning the Korean alphabet is easy and the three hours you invest by memorizing word sounds will never cease to yield dividends. Most large bookstores, such as Bandi & Luni's (p81), have Korean-language books. Learning to speak Korean at a rudimentary level is equally advantageous. Some universities offer a language instruction program, though quality varies. For a relaxed atmosphere with a flexible schedule try BestFriend Language & Culture Exchange Center (p118).

Finally, be adventurous. Seoul is a big city with many diversions, but it can also be a lonely place, especially for new arrivals. Avoid the unproductive trap that some expats fall into: go to work, hit the bar, bitch about Korea and hide at home. Start a new hobby or join a travel group like the Royal Asiatic Society (p119). Its weekend programmes are popular with singles interested in travel and meeting new people. Working out is also a great way to meet people. Taekwondo studios and fitness centres can be found in almost every neighbourhood. Small gyms with basic equipment cost as little as W30,000 per month. Seoul is a tough city, but it rewards those who dare to explore.

Woodstock (Map p91; admission free; 11 6pm-4am) Classic rock music lives in this bar. Live music with a Stevie Ray Vaughn and Hendrix bent is on most Fridays, funk on Saturdays. Sets start around 9pm.

HONGIK UNIVERSITY

Hongik's claim to fame is dance clubs and a small indie-music scene. Live shows start around 7pm and finish at 10pm. Entry is usually W5000 to W10,000 and includes a drink, but can jump to W20,000 for special events. **Skunk Hell** (Map p94; www.skunklabel.com/eman.html; admission up to W20,000; 11 8-11pm) Seoul's home for punk with an attitude. Foreigners are welcome, but there are rules: don't trash-talk Korea and don't try to hook up with the local women.

Bebop Jazz Club (Map p94; admission free; 11 5.30pm-2am Mon-Fri, 5.30pm-1am Sat & Sun) Live sets 9.30pm, 11pm and midnight.

Free Bird (Map p94; admission W7000, Sat & Sun W10,000; 11 6.30-11pm Tue-Sun) Check the schedule outside the door.

SLUG.er (Map p94; admission free Mon-Thu, W10,000 Fri-Sun; 11 6-11pm) Indie groups perform 8pm-10.30pm.

Water Cock (Map p94; admission W5000; 11 8pm-midnight Tue-Sun) Live sets 9pm to 11.30pm.

DAEHANGNO

Live Jazz Club (Map p95; admission Mon-Fri W5000, Sat & Sun W8000; 11 7pm-1.30am Mon-Fri, 6.30pm-3am Sat & Sun) In a student ghetto overrun with cute cafés that encourage men to get in touch with their feminine side, there is one den of masculinity, and this is it. Completely done up in black, it's the coolest place in Daehangno and gets busy when the first of three bands takes the stage at 8pm.

APGUJEONG

Once in a Blue Moon (Map pp96-7; % 549 5490; admission free; 11 5pm-2am, 5pm-1am Sun) You're not likely to catch the next Keith Jarrett here, but there is some kicking jazz. Bottled beer starts at W12,000. One-hour sets on stage at 7pm, 8.30pm, 10pm and 11.30pm.

Nightclubs ITAEWON

Grand Ole Oprey (Map p91; 11 6pm-midnight Sun-Thu, 6pm-3am Fri & Sat) It's everything you'd expect from a country-and-western bar: Dwight Yoakam tunes, Jack Daniels posters and a confederate flag. Gets busy on Friday and Saturday nights when the good ol' boys from the US army garrison drop by to square dance.

King Bar (Map p91; 11 6pm-5am Mon-Fri, 6pm-6am Sat & Sun) A GI institution, this bar has a rough-and-tumble feel. If you've been in a bar where two guys scrap because one guy didn't like the way the other looked at the bar girl, you know what this place is like.

HONGIK UNIVERSITY

Samba, techno, hip-hop and whatever else comes along is played in this clubbing area. Entry usually costs W5000 to W10,000 but increases on Friday and Saturday if the club hires a special guest DJ. **Hongik Club Day** (www.clubculture.or.kr) happens on the last Friday of the month: W15,000 gets you free entrance to 15 clubs and a map.

Hole (Map p94; admission W5000 Mon-Fri, W10,000 weeknights; 11 8pm-5am) Break out your best oversized football jersey and twist that baseball cap sideways, because American hip-hop is full on at this smoky basement club. Oh, and don't forget the badass attitude.

M2 (Map p94; admission W10,000-15,000; 11 8pm-5am Mon-Fri, 6pm-6am Sat & Sun) Everybody dances facing the DJ.

Macondo (Map p94; admission free Mon-Thu, W5000 Fri & Sat; 11 7-11.30pm Mon-Thu, 7pm-5am Fri & Sat) Free meringue and salsa lessons (7.30pm to 8.30pm, Monday to Thursday, and Saturday).

Club Otwo (Map p94; admission W10,000; 11 9pm-2am Mon-Fri, to 4am Sat & Sun) Features a DJ booth modelled after the bridge of the *USS Enterprise*.

Sk@ (Map p94; admission Sun-Thu W5000, Fri & Sat W10,000; 11 6pm-5am, to 6am Sat & Sun) The volume may cause ears to bleed.

Sport

Seoul has two pro basketball teams, the SK Knights and the Samsung Thunders. Home court for both is the Jamsil Gymnasium (Map pp98-9); take Line 2 to Sports Complex station, Exit 8. Seoul's professional football club, FC Seoul, plays in the World Cup Stadium (Map pp84-5).

Baseball is supposedly Korea's number-one sport but that's hard to figure because weeknight attendance can be thin. The LG Twins and Doosan Bears play at Jamsil Baseball Stadium (Map pp98-9); take Line 2 to Sports Complex station, Exit 5 or 6. Advanced ticket purchases are almost never required. Walk up to the ticket booth on game day (adult/youth W8000/6000 weekdays, add W2000 weekends) and you might be asked what team you prefer: boisterous home-team fans sit on the first base line, more sedate visi-

tors near third base. Food options outside the stadium include *pajeon* and dried squid, and inside the stadium a cup of frothy draft beer costs W3000.

Most weekday and Saturday games begin at 6.30pm. Sunday and holiday games start at 2pm in April, May, June and September, and at 5pm in July and August.

Theatre Restaurants

Korea House (Map pp92-3; % 2266 9101; www.koreahouse.or.kr; 11 lunch noon-2pm, dinner 5.30-7pm & 7.20-8.50pm Mon-Sat, 6.30-8pm Sun) Dining like royalty isn't cheap. Choose the dinner-show package, which includes a one-hour dance, *pansori* (traditional opera) song and music spectacle in a *hanok* building, and pay between W59,000 and W100,000 per person. Skip the meal and attend the show for W29,000. Performances begin at 7pm and 8.50pm except Sunday (one show at 8pm). Lunch is available in the *hanok* building, but there's no performance. Take Line 2 or 3 to Chungmuro station, Exit 3.

Sheraton Grande Walkerhill Hotel (Map pp84-5; % 455 5000; walkerhill.co.kr) This glitzy 1½-hour show hits the stage in the Gayagum Theatre at 6pm and 8.40pm (except Wednesday, every night in December), with traditional Korean music and dance and a Western-style cabaret. Dinner and show costs W90,000 to W130,000; the wine-and-show option costs W65,000.

Theatres

Nanta Theatre (Map pp92-3; % 739 8288; nanta.co.kr; ticket W20,000-60,000) This long-running percussion show set in a kitchen blends drumming, audience participation and slapstick comedy. Shows start at 4pm and 8pm (Monday to Saturday) with an extra performance at 1pm on Saturday and two shows Sunday and holidays (3pm and 8pm). Take Line 1 to City Hall, Exit 1, turn onto the lane close to Deoksung's gate and follow the road along the stonewall.

Chongdong Theatre (Map pp92-3; % 751 1500; www.chongdong.com; ticket W30,000-40,000) Traditional Korean music, *pansori* singing, *samul-nori* (Korean percussion) and fan-dancing take the stage six days a week (not Monday). The 70-minute performance starts at 8pm (April to November) and 4pm (December to March). English subtitles on a screen explain the songs. It's on the road to Nanta Theatre.

Tokebi Storm (Map pp92-3; % 739 8288; www.tokebi-storm.com; ticket W40,000-50,000; 11 8pm Tue-Sun, 4pm

& 8pm Sat, 3pm Sun & holidays, closed Mon) What do producers do when they see a nonverbal, percussion show become a hit? They make another one. Looking like Nanta, which looks like Stomp, this show uses spirits from another world. It's in a newspaper building past Nanta Theatre.

Other recommendations:

Seoul Arts Centre (Map pp84-5; % 580 1300; www.sac.or.kr) You can see *Carmen* and *The Nutcracker* here. Take Line 3 to Nambu bus terminal station, Exit 5, walk straight to the second light and turn left. The centre is five minutes down the road.

National Centre for Korean Traditional Performing Arts (Map pp84-5; % 580 3300; www.ncktpa.go.kr/eng/index_eng.jsp; tickets W8000-10,000) Holds weekly performances Tuesday (7.30pm March to December except mid-July to mid-August), Thursday (7.30pm March to July, September to December) and Saturday (5pm weekly). It's down the road from the Seoul Arts Centre.

Sejong Centre for the Performing Arts (Map pp88-9; % 399 1700; www.sejongpac.or.kr) The sopranos regularly appear at this attractive downtown complex along with baritones, mezzo-sopranos and, if you're 'lucky', Michael Bolton.

Hakjeon Green Theatre (Map p95; % 742 8454; www.hakchon.co.kr; W28,000; 11 7.30pm Tue-Fri, 4pm Sun, 4pm & 7.30pm Sat) Mostly Korean musicals with English subtitles on a screen (Wednesday, Friday, Sunday).

SHOPPING

Are you struggling with this year's fashion decisions? Answers to all your stylish questions can be found in Seoul's classy and unabashedly over-the-top department stores. One Galleria department store (Map pp96-7) in Apgujeong wasn't sufficient to meet the demand for W200,000 golf shirts so they built another across the street. Running low on Coco Chanel? Skip over to Lotte department store (Map pp92-3) in Myeongdong where a bottle of scent costs W154,000.

It's never too early to get the kids hooked on the Lotte brand, so walk across the street to **Lotte Young Plaza** (Map pp92-3; 11 11.30am-9pm). Comparatively downmarket Hyundai department stores are in Apgujeong (Map pp96-7), the COEX Mall (Map pp98-9; 11 10am-10pm) and Sinchon (Map p94). In Namdaemun, there's a Shinsegae department store (Map pp92-3).

Duty-free shops are scattered around Seoul with the usual perfumes, cameras, watches, cigarettes and souvenirs. Centrally located **Donghwa** (Map pp88-9; 11 9.30am-8.30pm) has a wide choice of luxury items. It's in the tall building

near the corner. Line 5 to Gwanghwamun, Exit 6.

If you're after electronics, head to **Techno Mart** (Map pp98-9; ㄱ 10am-8pm), which has eight floors filled with digital cameras, TVs, computers and software. Most major brand names are represented here. The Microsoft dealer, **Ace Soft** (% 3424 7911), on the 7th floor sells OEM XP in English (home W120,000, professional W160,000). Take Line 2 to Gangbyeon station, Exit 2.

Ahyeondong Wedding Street

It's probably a coincidence that this street (Map p94) of fairy-tale dreams, with 200 wedding outfitters, is located next to Ewha Women's University. Stroll down the street and you've got yourself a free fashion show. One of the more unique shops is **She's** (Map p94; % 393 9925; ㄱ 10am-8pm, closed 2nd & 4th Tue), where Rococo dresses cost up to W1 million. Line 2 to Ewha Women's University station, Exit 4.

Apgujeong

This posh area (Map pp96-7) has deluxe department stores, boutiques and high-class hairdressers as well as a dazzling array of nail boutiques and plastic surgeons all promising to beautify, tonify and electrify.

Nail Gallery (Map pp96-7; % 549 0101; ㄱ 10.30am-10.30pm) When was the last time you took a good look at your cuticles? If you frequent Apgujeong with any regularity, the answer is probably last week. Manicures cost W20,000, pedicures W45,000. Men are welcome, but they have bigger digits, so add W5000.

Nacta (Map pp96-7; % 512 9947; ㄱ 11am-10.30pm) Getting a tattoo is *verboden* in Korea, so the next best thing is piercing. You can get just about any body part stuck, including the navel (W40,000).

Holics (Map pp96-7; % 3444 0599; frames W250,000; ㄱ 11am-10pm Mon-Fri, to 9pm Sat & Sun) Walk around Apgujeong for an afternoon and it will become obvious that the most fashionable ladies are sporting gaudy frames like Jackie Onassis used to wear. If you simply must have the latest in eyewear, Holics is the choice.

Taste Maximum (Map pp96-7; % 3444 7021; ㄱ noon-10pm) With designs by up-and-coming Korean designer Kim Gyu-sik, this is the vogue boutique for Korean-Americans looking to spruce up their nightclub wardrobe. Jeans start at W100,000 while a custom-fitted vest starts at W300,000.

Insadong

Small art galleries display paintings, while art-and-craft shops sell pottery, antiques and calligraphy brushes. Cassettes of chanting and clothing can be bought in shops around Jogyesa.

Antique Watch (Map pp88-9; % 735 2700; ㄱ 10.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) Hey buddy, wanna buy a watch? Then step inside this curio of eclectic timepieces. Some time machines date back to 19th-century France including the 2m-high swing clock that costs W35 million. Cuckoos, grandfathers and mantelpieces are available as well as a sizeable collection of pocket and wristwatches dating from around the early 20th century.

Beautiful Tea Museum (Map pp88-9; % 735 6678; ㄱ 10am-10.30pm) This exquisite building houses a delightful collection of tea paraphernalia. It's also a place to learn about the surprisingly complex world of green tea. Premium tea – which can run as high W18,000 per pot – is as full bodied as good wine. Sets of premium tea cost W30,000 to W80,000.

Samcheongdong

The shops here are so interesting men often find themselves unexpectedly engrossed in a feminine form of behaviour: window shopping. One-of-a-kind clothing, funky jewellery and antiques are all part of the mix, with prices that sometimes make Apgujeong look affordable.

Vintage (Map pp88-9; % 722 2509; ㄱ noon-9pm) Clothing, furniture and jewellery imported from Europe are found here. Some items, such as the W700,000 dress, appear overpriced, while the stunning cameo looks like a bargain at W150,000.

Comble (Map pp88-9G; % 720 1146; ㄱ 10.30am-8.30pm) Here's a fun hat store. These beautiful pieces designed by Choi Hye-jung cover the spectrum of headgear, from flappers to straw brims. Most cost between W100,000 and W300,000. Customers are welcome to try on a hat and admire themselves in the mirror.

Lamove (Map pp88-9; % 736 4067; ㄱ noon-7pm) One-of-a-kind accessories are available in this artsy shop with an avocado décor. Jewellery, bags and brooches are priced between W45,000 and W500,000.

Itaewon

Dandy's Grocery (Map p91; % 796 2390; ㄱ 9am-8pm) Craving macaroni and cheese? Then this shop

TOP MARKETS

Dongdaemun Market

This massive collection of traditional markets, street stalls and department stores (Map pp86-7) has a dizzying array of choices that would take most serious shoppers a week to plough through. The eastern side of the market generally caters to the wholesale trade and opens late (10.30pm), while stores in the western section, such as Migliore and Doota, open early and close late (10.30am to 5am). A market map is available in the tourist information office near the old baseball stadium (9am to 10pm). Take Line 1 to Dongdaemun station, Exit 7.

Jang-anpyeong Antique Market

If it's old and Korean, you'll probably find it in this delightful antique market (Map pp84-5) spread out over several buildings. Just outside the subway exit, Samhee buildings 5 and 6 contain ceramics, paintings, stone statues and more all piled up in small, cluttered shops. Interesting pieces include a stunning 1m swinging bell in a wooden frame at **Donggo Hwarang** (% 927 7650; stall 131, Samhee Bldg 6; ㄱ 10am-9pm, Mon-Fri). The asking price is W5 million.

Down the street, the Jang-anpyeong building has a wider selection of large pieces including a 3m stone pagoda at **Jinbodang** (% 2249 0002; stall 112; ㄱ 10am-7pm, closed 1st & 3rd Sun), costing W4 million. Upstairs, there's a collection of Chinese medicine cabinets with 40 or so drawers, each with a different Chinese inscription. At **Jang-an Antiques** (% 2244 1922; ㄱ 10am-7pm, closed 1st & 3rd Sun) reproductions cost W250,000, while the asking price for a 150-year-old piece is W7.5 million.

Take Line 5 to Dapsimni station, Exit 2. At street level, look left and you'll see a sign pointing to Samhee 5 and 6. Walk straight for 10 minutes to the Jang-anpyeong building; it's just past the German-car dealership. Many shops are closed weekends and most shut down for summer vacation, which usually runs from the end of July to mid-August.

Namdaemun Market

It doesn't have the same range of goods as Dongdaemun, but this fun market (Map pp92-3) is easier to navigate, which makes for a more interesting day of exploring. There's a good mix of traditional shops as well as day-and-night retail and wholesale markets, fashion malls and **Shin-segae department store** (ㄱ 10.30am-8pm). Souvenir hunters looking for a gift for someone who likes to cook should visit the **Samseong Gown** (Map pp92-3; % 752 0081; ㄱ 6am-6pm Mon-Sat), where a Japanese sushi-chef jacket costs W24,000. A market map is available from the tourist information booth (8.30am to 6pm).

Noryangjin Fish Market

Every kind of marine life is swimming around in tanks, buckets and bowls at this large fish market (Map p100). It's like a free aquarium show, except you can eat the animals. Giant octopuses, stingray and mussels along with a selection of unknown sea creatures are on view and on sale. A kilogram of prawns costs W20,000, while a king crab goes for W17,000 per kilogram. Take Line 1 to Noryangjin station, Exit 1, cross the bridge and walk down the stairs to the fish market.

Yongsan Electronics Market & Techno Mart

It would take several days to fully explore the merchandise available at this market (Map pp96-7; ㄱ 9.30am-7.30pm, closed 1st & 3rd Sun), thought to be the largest in Asia. There are hundreds of shops spread around 22 markets, though the biggest collection is concentrated in a few buildings such as Terminal Electronics Market, Sonin, Najin and iPark Mall. The latest computers, mobile phones, cameras, DVD players and wide-screen digital TVs are here. Be sure to enquire about warranties and inspect your purchases carefully because not everything is on the up-and-up.

English-language computer software is available at **Wells Software** (% 701 8188; ㄱ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri), which stocks OEM XP Home (W120,000) and Professional (W180,000). It's located on the 4th floor of the Terminal Electronics Market building. Take Line 1 to Yongsan station, Exit 3.

of imported goods in front of Hannam Supermarket is a must-visit. Cereals, Quaker Oats, Crisco shortening and impossible-to-find salt-and-vinegar chips are here. Expats outside Seoul can phone in an order (minimum W50,000), which will be shipped by Mr Kim. Before shipment, you pay through a bank transfer. You also pay transport costs COD.

Hannam Supermarket (Map p91; ☎ 702 3313; ㄱ 8.30am-8pm) The selection of Western food is not exceptional, but they have hard-to-find items like lasagna pasta. It's a 20-minute walk from Itaewon, or take Line 6 to Hangangjin station, Exit 2, turn right at the corner and mount the overhead crosswalk steps, then walk right – it's in the basement of the Volvo building.

YoungStar (Map p91; ☎ 795 1939; ㄱ 9am-10pm) Men struggle to find meaningful souvenirs. Ornamental key tags look good but usually end up in the trash. That's why intelligent male shoppers come to Young Star to buy their partner a handmade belly-dancing outfit. There are heaps of options including a stimulating aqua-blue number. It's the gift that keeps on giving. English is not spoken here, so you'll need measurements in hand. It's located at the top of the staircase opposite the International Clinic.

New York Tailor (Map p91; ☎ 749 8222; ㄱ 10am-8pm) You may wonder why there are so many photographs of generals and admirals – this is where US military heavy hitters come for a civilian suit. A 100% wool, made-to-measure jacket and two pants start at W390,000.

What the Book? (Map p91; ☎ 797 2342; www.whatthebook.com; ㄱ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun) A good selection of new and second-hand English-language titles is available here. This shop also operates a reliable online service with access to thousands of titles.

Supreme Optical (Map p91; ☎ 795 6423; ㄱ 9.30am-8pm, closed 2nd & 4th Tue) You've heard that Korea has great prices on glasses – check it out for yourself because seeing is believing. The selection isn't large, but the staff speak English. Frames start at W30,000 and you can get an eye examination onsite.

DMZ (Map p91; ☎ 794 7930; ㄱ 9.30am-9pm, closed 2nd & 4th Wed) Need a WWII German tank helmet? How about a Korean War compass watch? You'll find both and a lot more in this musty military surplus store. MP helmets, military insignia and an LA police badge are also here. From the Hamilton Hotel, cross the street and walk right, turn left at the street just before McDonalds.

Myeongdong

If it's got a label, you'll probably find it in Myeongdong (Map pp92-3). The streets fill up every evening with shoppers, hawkers and people shouting out the latest sale into a megaphone. It can be an overwhelming experience that borders on sensory overload, as street vendors take over a couple of roads offering unusual snacks – like peanut-butter-flavoured squid – and an inexhaustible selection of plastic accessories.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

For details of airline companies and flights in and out of Seoul, see p395.

INCHEON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Spacious Incheon International Airport (Map p140; ☎ 032 741 0114; www.airport.or.kr), 52km west of Seoul, handles most of the country's international flights with limited domestic connections to Jeju, Busan and Daegu.

International arrivals are on the 1st floor, where you'll find tourist information centres (ㄱ 7am-10pm), ATMs and foreign currency exchange booths (ㄱ 5am-9pm); a currency-exchange booth near the baggage-claim area inside the arrivals terminal is open until the last flight arrives. Mobile phones can be rented at KT (ㄱ 24hr) and LG Telecom (ㄱ 24hr) – hire rates are W3000 per day plus a local calling charge of W600 per minute. If you lose the phone there's a W600,000 replacement fee. Outside the airport doors, buses depart for destinations in Seoul and elsewhere. In the basement, **Inha University Hospital** (☎ 743 3119; ㄱ 24hr) charges W20,000 for a consultation. A **dentist** (ㄱ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) is also available.

The 3rd-floor departures area has places to eat and drink. Banks in the retail section beyond immigration control allow you to exchange *won* before leaving the country. To obtain a tax refund on goods purchased at shops participating in the tax-refund scheme, show the goods and receipts to a customs officer at the check-in counter. Once past immigration control, take the stamped receipt to a **Global Refund counter** (ㄱ 7am-9pm) to get your money.

Incheon Airport Transit Hotel (☎ 743 3000; www.airgardenhotel.com; 6hr r/deluxe/ste W45,000/55,000/80,000; a i) rents nonsmoking rooms to transit passengers on a short-term basis. Add 21% for tax and service and W12,000 for double occupancy.

GIMPO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Direct flights link **Gimpo International Airport** (김포국제공항) (Map pp84-5; http://gimpo.airport.co.kr), 18km west of the city centre, with 11 cities via Korean Air and Asiana. The 1st floor is for arrivals, the 2nd floor is for checking in and the 3rd floor is for departures. The **tourist information centre** (ㄱ 9am-9pm) offers free internet access. Airport services include banks, car-hire counters and restaurants. The **First Aid Centre** (ㄱ 6am-10pm) has a doctor available or on call.

KOREA CITY AIR TERMINAL

Check your luggage and go through customs and immigration procedures at the **Korea City Air Terminal** (KCAT; www.kcat.co.kr; ㄱ approx 5.30am-6.30pm). Located in the COEX Mall's (Map pp98-9; ☎ 551 0077) World Trade Centre, this service is available only for Korean Air and Asiana passengers. Passengers with goods to declare at customs that are stored inside checked bags may use this terminal: anyone with goods to declare in a carry-on bag must check-in at the airport. Nonstop buses run every 10 minutes to Incheon (W13,000) or Gimpo (W6000) airports. Allow 90 minutes to get from KCAT to Incheon and 60 minutes to Gimpo airport.

Bus

There are three kinds of buses. Inter-city buses are usually older vehicles and may make frequent stops. The major differences between express and deluxe buses are price and comfort: deluxe buses have fewer but wider seats, ample legroom and more expensive tickets. Some deluxe buses depart after midnight, which comes with a 10% surcharge.

The Seoul express bus terminal (Map pp96-7) connects with major cities and has two buildings: the Gyeongbu-Gumi-Yeongdong terminal and Honamseon terminal. The former connects with cities like Busan (W20,000), Daegu (W14,000) and Daejeon (W7600); the latter – connected to the Central City complex – has routes to the Jeolla provinces and southern coastal area. Destinations include Mokpo (W16,000) and Jeonju (W10,000). Take Line 3 to Express Bus Terminal station and follow the signs for the Gyeongbu or Honamseon line.

Seoul's other bus terminals include the following:

Dong-Seoul Bus Terminal (Map pp98-9) Has connections to some major cities and communities in the eastern part of the country. Take Line 2 to Gangbyeon Station, Exit 4.

Nambu Bus Terminal (Map pp96-7) Services towns south of Seoul. Take Line 3 to Nambu Bus Terminal station, Exit 5. **Sangbong Bus Terminal** (Map pp84-5) Has limited service to cities north and east of Seoul. Take Line 7 to Sangbong station, Exit 2. It's opposite an E-Mart store. **Sinchon Bus Terminal** (Map p94) Has services to Gwanghwado, an island northwest of Seoul. Take Line 2 to Sinchon station, Exit 7.

Train

There are three major train stations in Seoul, all close to a Line 1 subway station. Most trains leave Seoul station (Map pp92-3), which has high-speed Korea Train Express (KTX), **Saemaul** (express) and **Mugunghwa** (semi-express) services to many parts of the country. KTX destinations and one-way fares from Seoul station include Busan (W44,800) and Daejeon (W19,500). Current KTX trains take about two hours and 40 minutes between Seoul and Busan. If the last leg of track construction is completed on schedule in 2008, that ride will take less than two hours.

Yongsan station (Map pp96-7) handles KTX and train connections with South Chungcheong and the Jeolla provinces; KTX fares include Gwangju (W33,300) and Mokpo (W38,000). There is no KTX service from Cheongnyangni station (Map pp84-5), but there are **Saemaul** and **Mugunghwa** connections. **Saemaul** services include Wonju (W9000) and Andong (W21,000). For current fares and detailed schedules visit the Korea National Railroad website (www.korail.go.kr).

Yeongdeungpo Station (영등포역) near Yeouido is a major **Saemaul/Mugunghwa** station for those south of the river (like the other three, it's also a short walk from a Line 1 subway station). Yeongdeungpo was, until recently, a KTX station as well, but the government is pushing people to use the Gwangmyeong Station built exclusively for KTX service. Gwangmyeong is technically outside Seoul city limits, but it is accessible to those in the southwestern part of the capital (but not on Line 1).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Two types of buses run from Incheon international airport to Seoul: standard city limousine buses (W8000) operate from 5am to 11pm, KAL deluxe limousine buses (W13,000) take passengers to major hotels. Buses usually run every 15 minutes and take up to 100 minutes.

Regular taxis to Seoul cost around W40,000, while a deluxe could cost W80,000 depending on traffic. Expect an expressway toll of W6700 to be added to the fare, and if you travel after midnight a 20% premium.

Buses run between Incheon and Gimpo airports (W4500, 30 minutes, every 10 minutes) along a special road. If your accommodation in Seoul is near a subway station, you could take a bus to Gimpo airport. Walk 10 minutes and you've got access to Line 5 and a 50-minute ride to downtown. A regular taxi ride from Gimpo to the city centre costs W20,000, while a deluxe taxi could set you back W30,000.

At the time of writing, a rail link promising to simplify travel to and from Incheon airport was under construction. Stage 1, scheduled for completion during the first half of 2007, will establish a 41km train connection between Incheon and Gimpo airports, while Stage 2 will connect Gimpo airport and Seoul station, with trains travelling up to 150km/h. The projected completion date for Stage 2 is 2009.

CITY LIMOUSINE BUS ROUTES

Limousine buses from Incheon International Airport are listed below, with bus numbers, route names and major stops.

- 600** (Jamsil) Seoul express bus terminal, Samseong station, Lotte World
- 601** (Dongdaemun) Hapjeongdong, Sinchon, City Hall, Jongno, Dongdaemun
- 602** (Cheongnyangni) Hapjeong station, Seokyo Hotel, Sinchon station, Gwanghwamun, YMCA
- 602-1** (Sungshin Women's University) World Cup Stadium, An-guk-dong, Daehangno
- 603** (Guro) Mokdong Ogeori, Guro station
- 604** (Geumcheon-gu Office) Nambu cargo terminal, Novotel Hotel
- 605** (City Hall) Mapo, Seoul station, City Hall, Gwanghwamun
- 606** (Jamsil) Seoul express bus terminal, Samseong station, Lotte World, Olympic Park
- 607** (Songjeong station)
- 608** (Yeongdeungpo station) Dongsan station
- 609** (Daechi station) Seoul express bus terminal, Gangnam station, Yangjae station

KAL LIMOUSINE BUS ROUTES

- KAL1** (City Hall) KAL Building, Lotte Hotel, Koreana Hotel
- KAL2** (Namsan) Seoul Station, Hilton Hotel, Shilla Hotel, Holiday Inn
- KAL3** (Gangnam) Renaissance Hotel, Grand Inter-Continental Hotel, COEX Inter-Continental Hotel

KAL4 (Jamsil) Sheraton Grande Walkerhill Hotel, Dong-Seoul bus terminal, Lotte World

Direct (KCAT) Korea City Air Terminal

Direct (Seoul express bus terminal)

Direct (Seoul station)

Itaewon 63 Building, Itaewon Hotel

Dobong & Nowon Gireum station, Hagye station, Sofia

Public Transport

BUS

The bus system is good but it's complex and ill suited for travellers who don't understand Korean. Buses have different colours indicating different travel areas: yellow buses circulate downtown; red buses travel in the metropolitan area; green buses connect subway stations with downtown; blue buses travel to the suburbs. Fares start at W800 and increase depending on the distance travelled. Bus fare can be paid using the rechargeable transport card called the T-Money card, which can be bought for W2500 at any subway station booth; add credits in multiples of W1000. You can also use it at stores that display the T-Money sign.

SUBWAY

Seoul's subway system (www.seoulsubway.co.kr, www.smrt.co.kr) is reliable and cheap. Trains run every few minutes from 5.30am to around midnight and many subway stations have lifts or stair lifts for wheelchairs. Lockers are available, though most are too small to take a full-sized backpack. Every station is well-signed in English and the system is very user friendly. The basic one-way subway fare is W900 and covers most of Seoul. Hour-long trips cost around W1500. The T-Money card provides a small discount on fares and saves the hassle of buying a ticket for each trip.

Taxi

Regular taxis are a good deal for short trips. The basic fare for 2km is W1600 and rises W100 for every 168m or 41 seconds after that. A 20% surcharge is levied between midnight and 4am. Deluxe taxis are black with a yellow stripe and cost W4000 for the first 3km and W200 for every 205m or 50 seconds, but they don't have a late-night surcharge. Few taxi drivers speak English, but most taxis have a free interpretation service whereby an interpreter talks to the taxi driver and to you by phone. All taxis are metered and tipping is not required.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'