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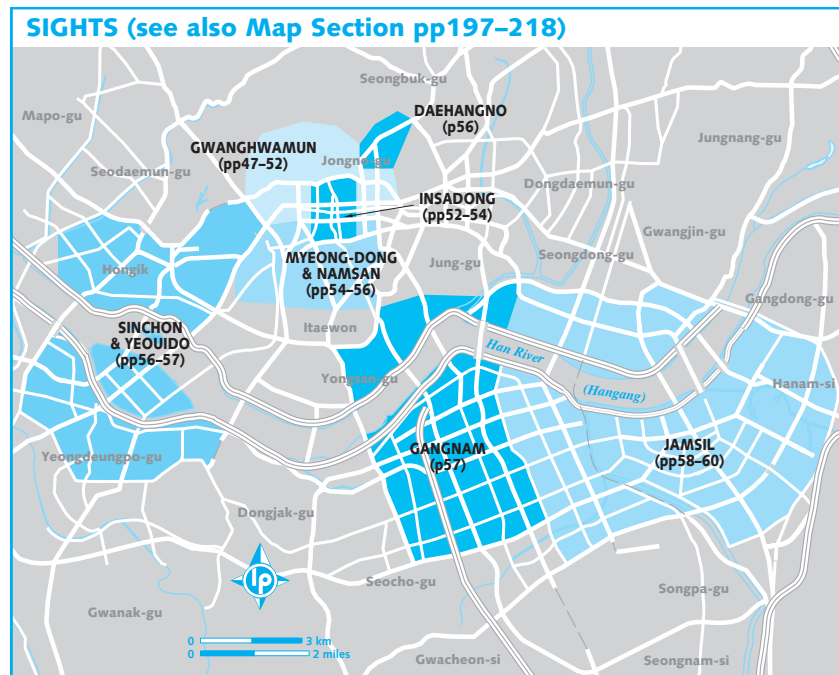
Sights

The main historical and sightseeing area of Seoul is the bustling downtown area of Gwanghwamun, which includes arty Insadong. To the north lies Bukhansan National Park. The fashion and shopping area of Myeong-dong, the traditional Namdaemun market and Namsan (South Mountain, with the landmark Seoul Tower perched on top), all lie to the south of downtown. To the east is a host of markets, including the busy Dongdaemun, and the student and theatre district of Daehangno. The tourist shopping and expat entertainment area of Itaewon, and the student neighbourhood of Sinchon/Hongik, with its bars, clubs and indie live music venues are both south of Namsan. The Han River winds through the city and midriver is the island of Yeouido (dubbed Seoul's 'Manhattan'), an important financial and administrative centre. South of the river, the upmarket Gangnam district includes Apgujeong with its brand-name boutiques and department stores, and top hotels. Further east is Jamsil, home to the giant COEX Mall and Conference Centre, the multifaceted Lotte World and Olympic Park.

ITINERARIES

One Day

Start at **Gyeongbokgung** (p49), Seoul's grandest palace that also contains two museums. Lunch in **Insadong** (p89) and explore the craft shops and private art galleries before sipping tea in a **teashop** (p107). Look round Seoul's major Buddhist temple **Jogyesa** (p53) and the nearby Buddhist shops before strolling to and around **Jongmyo** and **Changgyeonggung** (p50). Spend the evening in Daehangno – eat at **Nolbooji** (p94) then hit the bars or the **live jazz venue** (p108).



FOR CHILDREN

COEX Aquarium (p58) and **Sea World Aquarium** (p56) are the best. Near the COEX Aquarium is a zone with free PlayStation games, and near the Sea World Aquarium is an IMAX cinema.

Cycle (p115) along the Han River cycle path.

Everland (p155) has a popular Disney-sized amusement park as well as a world-class aquatic centre that's great fun in summer.

Lotte World (p59) is a mainly indoor Disneylandish amusement park with restaurants, a folk museum, scary rides and musical parades. The complex includes an ice-skating rink, cinemas, ten-pin bowling, fast food outlets and a swimming pool with slides.

Noraebang (karaoke rooms; p103) are fun even if you can't sing and will never make an *Idol* final.

Seoul Grand Park (p65) and **Children's Grand Park** (p61) both have large zoos. The former has a dolphin and seal show, while the latter has chimpanzee, parrot, seal and elephant shows. Both also have amusement parks with scary rides and fairground fun.

Ski resorts (p114) near Seoul provide skiing, snowboarding and sledding fun in winter.

Swimming pools (p115) open in July and August at hotels or in the parks along the Han River, or cool off at beaches on the **West Sea islands** (p150) off Incheon.

Three Days

Next day shop for clothing at bustling **Dongdaemun market** (p122), or health foods and ginseng tea at **Gyeongdong market** (p122), before touring the new **National Museum of Korea** (p62). Spend the evening among the ethnic restaurants, expat bars and nightclubs of **Itaewon** (p104).

Day three is the **Between the Palaces Walk** (p77) followed by a trip to the massive **War Memorial & Museum** (p63) and then back to **Deoksugung** (p54), a palace with art galleries inside and outside its walls. In the evening enjoy a fun live show at **Nanta Theatre** (p101) or something more traditional at **Chongdong Theatre** (p100).

One Week

On day four dive into the rugby scrum that is **Namdaemun market** (p123), followed by a visit to Myeong-dong's fashion boutiques and the **Catholic Cathedral** (p55). Look around **Namsangol Hanok Village** (p55) and walk or take the cable car up **Namsan** (p80) to the renovated Seoul Tower. In the evening, hang out with the students in **Hongik** (p105), enjoy some live bands and then go clubbing until dawn.

Next day start with another market – choose between **antiques** (p123), **electronics** (p123) or **fish** (p126), and then visit chilling **Seodaemun Prison** (p62). Hike up **Inwangsan** (p78) to a shamanist shrine and Seoul's fortress wall. At nightfall, relax in a sauna (p116), a pool hall, a DVD *bang* (a room where you can watch DVDs) or a game café.

On day six join a tour round **Changdeokgung** (p48), a palace with a World Heritage secret garden, followed by a **cycle ride** (p115) along and across the Han River to the **World Cup Stadium** (p64) with its mall, cinemas and parks. In the evening enjoy a **Han River cruise** (p57) followed by a buffet dinner in the **63 Building** (p97) on Yeouido.

There is no rest even on your seventh day, so take the subway south of the Han River to **Olympic Park** (p59), the **COEX Mall** (p58) and the **royal tombs** (p60). Spend the evening in **Lotte World** (p59) or listen to live jazz or rock in smart **Apgujeong** (p110).

There is plenty more to see and do, including all the excursions (p147). Check out the Activities listing (p112) for other options.

CLOSED ON MONDAY

Most palaces and major museums are closed on Monday, but Gyeongbokgung, Jongmyo, Changgyeonggung and Namsangol Hanok Village close on Tuesday and the Agriculture Museum closes on Sunday. Some public art galleries as well as the Buddhist temples are open every day.

ORGANISED TOURS

If you join a tour, ensure it has an English-speaking guide. Tours usually include lunch and shopping stops. View www.triptokorea.com or www.starttravel.co.kr for examples of tours and prices, and visit the KTO tourist information office (Map pp202–3) for tour leaflets. An **Icheon Ceramics Village tour** including a pottery class costs W75,000 to W120,000, and an all-day **Ganghwado tour** (W120,000) are a good idea as both these places are difficult to access using public transport. In winter numerous package tours to **ski resorts** (one day/overnight W75,000/270,000) are available.

Hyundai Asan has been operating overland tours (W230,000 to W350,000) to the scenic **Geumgangsan** (spelt Kumgangsan in the North) mountains inside North Korea since 2003. Coaches leave from the northeastern province of Gangwon-do in South Korea, cross over the highly fortified Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and drive through North Korea to Geumgangsan. Phone ☎ 3702 2344 for more information or find a travel agent that handles these tours. A new tour to **Gaeseong** (spelt Kaesong in the North), a historic town just over the border and much nearer to Seoul, may be available.

ABC TOURS

☎ 363 9877; www.abckoreatour.com
This new tour company specialises in backpacker tours to Gyeongju and Andong (W75,000).

IT'S FREE!

- Look around some great **markets** (see the boxed text, p124)
- Wander around the traditional houses in **Namsangol Hanok Village** (p55)
- Check out the Buddhist temples **Jogyesa** (p53) and **Bongeunsa** (p58)
- Go on a **walking tour** (p76) or a **hiking trip** (p81)
- Enjoy traditional music and dance on weekend afternoons at **Seoul Norimadang** (p102)
- View art and crafts in **Insadong** (p119)
- Explore **Olympic Park** (p59), including the sculpture garden and Mongchon Museum
- Visit the brand new **Agriculture Museum** (p54)
- Log on to the **Internet** (p167) at KTO or the many other free providers
- Watch ice-skaters at **Lotte World** (p59)

PANMUNJEOM TRAVEL CENTRE

Map pp206–7
☎ 771 5593; www.koreadmztour.com; 2nd fl Lotte Hotel; subway Line 2 to Euljiro 1-ga, Exit 8
In this tour to the DMZ, you'll have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to question a defector from North Korea with help from an interpreter. The tour costs W58,000, but doesn't include a cross into the DMZ at Panmunjeom.

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY KOREA

BRANCH Map pp202–3
☎ 763 9483; www.raskorea.org; ☎ 10am–noon & 2–5pm Mon–Fri; Room 611, Korean Christian Bldg; subway Line 1 Jongno 5-ga, Exit 2
Founded in 1900 the society is still very active with over 1000 local members, and organises tours to all parts of South Korea, usually at weekends. Log onto their website for the busy schedule. Nonmembers can always join in and all tours are led by English speakers who are experts in their field. The tours are reasonably priced, costing from W6000 to W50,000 to nonmembers, who pay a bit more than members. Membership costs W40,000 for a calendar year or W20,000 after 1 July. Free lectures are organised twice a month.

SEOUL CITY TOUR BUS

☎ 777 6090; www.seoulcitytourbus.com; adult/child day pass W10,000/8000; ☎ Tue–Sun
Comfortable and colourful tour buses run between Seoul's top tourist attractions north of the Han River every 30 minutes and you can hop-on and hop-off anywhere along the two routes – downtown (9am to 9pm) and around the palaces (9am to 5pm). Bus times and routes can change so check the schedule. Ticket holders are entitled to considerable discounts on tourist attractions along the route. Take the tour bus if your time is limited and you want to see as much as possible. The routes cover the palaces, Insadong, Namdaemun and Dongdaemun markets, Itaewon and Namsan. You can buy the tickets on the bus, which can be picked up outside Deoksugung.

UNITED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Map pp200–1
USO; ☎ 795 3028; www.uso.org/korea; ☎ 7am–5pm Mon–Sat; subway Line 4 & 6 to Samgakji, Exit 11
The US military's entertainment wing organises tours for American troops but

LOST IN SEOUL

Most streets in Seoul have no name, or if they do, there is no street name sign and hardly anyone knows its name (*no* or *ro* means road, while *gil* is a lane). Using street names and consecutive numbers is a Western idea that has not been adopted, so the traditional system is still used. Thus Seoul is divided into 25 large districts (*gu*) and 522 smaller neighbourhoods (*dong*). Every building has an official number, but they are assigned as they are built, so building No 27 could be next to building No 324. Thus, an address like 104 Itaewon-dong, Yongsan-gu, means building No 104 in the Itaewon neighbourhood of the Yongsan district. However, you could wander around Itaewon for hours in search of this building with no hope of finding it, even with the help of a Korean friend. This is the time to make a phone call to the place you are looking for and get directions.

This guide gives street names where useful, indicates the nearest subway station and which exit to take, and gives directions to places that are tricky to find. But you're still going to get lost sometimes unless you're a human compass. Don't worry about it and don't be afraid to ask. Seoulites get lost too and know what it's like. Try to navigate around Seoul using landmarks rather than street names and numbers, just as the locals do.

Writing down the name and address of your destination in *hangeul* (the Korean phonetic alphabet) can be helpful for taxi drivers or if you need to ask a shopkeeper or a passer-by for directions. Many larger buildings have names – knowing the name of the building is more useful than knowing the number. Always check the neighbourhood map on the wall at every subway exit to orientate yourself before venturing out.

civilians from any country are welcome to join in. Twice a week the USO runs the best tours to the DMZ and Panmunjeom (p147). Other all-day tours include the historical and unspoilt island of Ganghwado (US\$24) and white-water rafting excursions (US\$35). In winter, skiing trips are organised. On the USO premises is a US-style diner and a travel agency, Apple Tours (p173).

prices are a bargain – all seven palaces can be visited for less than W10,000.

ADMIRAL YI SUN-SIN'S STATUE

Map pp202–3
Sejongno; subway Line 5 to Gwanghwamun, Exit 4
This statue is a downtown landmark. Seoul-born Yi Sun-sin (1545–98) designed a new type of metal-clad warship called *geobukseon* (turtle boats), and used them to help achieve a series of stunning victories over the much larger Japanese navy that attacked Korea at the end of the 16th century. A *geobukseon* replica can be seen in the War Memorial and Museum (p63). A greatly admired hero, he is also featured on the W100 coin.

BUKCHON MUSEUM

Map pp202–3
☎ 747 3957; adult/child W2000/1000;
☎ 10am–7pm Mar–Oct, 11am–6pm Nov–Feb;
subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 3
This *hanok* (traditional Korean one-storey wooden house with a tiled roof) is packed with curios and collectables, but is more of a shop than a museum as everything is for sale. Entry is free if you make a purchase, or buy a W3000 cup of homemade tea.

TRANSPORT

An alternative to walking and the subway is provided by the Seoul City Tour Bus (opposite). Taxis are inexpensive and don't expect a tip, but finding an available one can take time.

TOP THREE IN GWANGHWAMUN

- Gyeongbokgung (opposite)
- Changdeokgung Biwon (below)
- Jongmyo (p50)

BUKCHON CULTURE CENTRE

Map pp202-3

☎ 3707 8388; admission free; 🕒 9am-6pm

Mon-Fri; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 3

A small exhibition about *hanok* in Bukchon, housed appropriately in a Bukchon *hanok*.

CHANGDEOKGUNG

Map pp202-3

Palace of Illustrious Virtue; ☎ 762 8262;

adult/teenager ₩3000/1500; 🕒 closed Mon;

subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 3

You can't look around this World Heritage palace on your own, but must join a 90-minute tour. Tours run by an English-speaking guide are available at 11.30am, 1.30pm and 3.30pm.

Changdeokgung was originally built in 1405 as a secondary palace, but when Gyeongbokgung (Seoul's principal palace) was not rebuilt after its destruction in the 1590s, Changdeokgung became the primary palace until 1896, a period of nearly 300 years. Like all Joseon palaces, it has a mountain behind it and a small stream in front – good feng shui. The palace has large public halls and smaller private ones that are divided into 'his' and 'her' sections.

The modern world appears in the form of electric lights that were installed in 1908 in some buildings, and a restored Daimler and Cadillac in the garage. Buildings of note are the main hall, the **blue-tiled royal office** and **Nakseonjae** (originally built by King Heonjong for one of his concubines, Lady Kim), which was home to descendants of the royal family up until 1989.

But the highlight is the **Biwon** (Huwon), the rear, secret garden. In the midst of trees is a large lily pond surrounded by little pavilions. This tranquil garden is more nature than garden and was where the Joseon kings relaxed, studied and wrote poems. The large two-storey building was the royal library (its nameboard written by King Jeongjo means 'Gather the Universe') with books on the lower floor and study and discussion rooms upstairs. A smaller pavilion, Yeonghwadang, was where the king or officials sat when overseeing the all-important civil service examination, *gwageo* (see the boxed text, below).

Behind the secret garden is **Yeongyeong-dang**, built in the 1820s in the style of a rich nobleman's house, complete with a library, servants quarters and a two-hole toilet.

CHEONGWADAE

Map pp202-3

Blue House; ☎ 737 5800; www.president.go.kr;

subway Line 3 to Gyeongbokgung, Exit 5

The Blue House is Korea's answer to America's presidential residence the White House. Back in 1968 a squad of 31 North Korean commandos was caught just 500m

from the Blue House on a mission to assassinate President Park Chung-hee. The threat from the North has diminished but still remains, so security is tight. To see Cheongwadae, visitors must join a tour (Korean language only; passports required), which is free and lasts 80 minutes, but does not venture inside any important buildings and only visits the palatial grounds and Chilgung – small locked shrines that contain the spirit tablets of seven royal concubines whose sons became kings during the Joseon dynasty.

Tour times vary and you must pre-book online and pick up your tickets at the **ticket booth** (🕒 9am-3pm four days) in Gyeongbokgung. A tour bus takes you the short distance from the car park to Cheongwadae.

GYEONGBOKGUNG

Map pp202-3

Palace of Shining Happiness; ☎ 732 1931; adult/

youth/child under 6 ₩3000/1500/free; 🕒 9am-6pm

Wed-Mon Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Feb;

subway Line 3 to Gyeongbokgung, Exit 5

Originally built by King Taejo, the founder of the Joseon dynasty, the grandest of Seoul palaces served as the principal palace until 1592, when it was burnt down during the Japanese invasions. It lay in ruins for

nearly 300 years until Heungseon Daewongun, regent and father of King Gojong, started to rebuild it in 1865. King Gojong moved in during 1868, but the expensive rebuilding project nearly bankrupted the government.

On 8 October 1895, Queen Myeongseong (also known as Queen Min) was killed in her bedroom by Japanese assassins who then burnt her body. It is said only one finger survived the fire. Four months later King Gojong fled from the palace to the nearby Russian legation building and never returned.

During Japanese colonial rule, most of the palace was destroyed. The Japanese governor general's ugly office block was built inside the walls, but was demolished in 1996, and work on restoring the palace to its former glory is likely to continue for decades.

Two of the grandest architectural sights in Seoul are here. The first is the two-storey, ornate **Geunjeongjeon**, the main palace building where kings were crowned, met foreign envoys and conducted affairs of state. It is best viewed from the imposing second entrance gate, Heungnyemun, which is guarded by soldiers in Joseon uniforms. With its double-tiered stone platform,

EXAMINATION HELL

It's not just recently that Korean students have had to study 12 hours or more every day to squeeze themselves into a high-status job. In the past *yangban* (aristocratic) sons had to torture their brains learning Chinese characters and memorising Confucian classics in order to pass through the very narrow *gwageo* gate, the examination that gave them access to the all-important government jobs. From over 10,000 hopefuls, only the top 30 or so were offered high-ranking posts.

The kings took a personal interest and role in the exam and the final stage was held in the secluded Biwon garden and lasted from 8am until sunset. The scholar King Sejong even set some of the questions: Are identification tags a good idea? How should a census be organised? Should the number of slaves be limited? Students who passed returned to their hometown in triumph like an Olympic gold medallist.

The civil exam had the highest status because Joseon society valued the scholar above the soldier (with unfortunate consequences when samurai-dominated Japan attacked in the 1590s). For military protection, the kings relied on regional superpower, China, to help them when necessary. But there was a military exam, *mugwa*, which included horse-riding and archery (a high-status sport that kings took part in and in which Koreans excel today). The third exam, *japgwa*, was for technical specialists such as doctors, astronomers, lawyers, linguists and accountants. Their status was low, but they were far better off than the artisans who were slaves and could never escape their low-born status.

THIS IMAGE
NOT AVAILABLE
IN PICK & MIX

flagstone courtyard and surrounding open-sided corridors, Geunjeongjeon is an impressive sight. Then walk left to **Gyeonghoeru**, a large raised pavilion resting on 48 stone pillars and overlooking an artificial lake with two small islands, which is almost as grand a scene. State banquets were held inside.

Behind these imposing structures are smaller meeting halls, and behind them are the king's living quarters with a master bedroom the size of a ballroom, surrounded by eight small rooms that were used by ladies-in-waiting, concubines, servants, slaves and guards. Altogether the palace had up to 3000 staff, including 140 eunuchs, to serve the royal family.

On the right is **Gyotaejeon**, the separate but large living quarters for the primary queen, and behind that is a terraced garden with *ondol* (underfloor heating) chimneys decorated with longevity symbols. Also on the eastern side is **Jeonseondang**, the quarters for the Crown Prince, who spent his mornings, afternoons and evenings reading, studying and listening to lectures. But at night he could relax with his wife and his concubines who were graded into four ranks (the king naturally had more and they were graded into six ranks). One canny Crown Prince tutor married the Crown Prince off to his daughter and put his family members into top government positions.

At the rear of the palace King Gojong built an ornamental pond with an attractive hexagonal pavilion on an island, where a heron can sometimes be spotted.

An audio guide is available (₩2000) and gives brief comments. More useful are the free guided tours (in English) that begin at 9.30am, noon, 2pm and 3pm from the ticket gate near Gwanghwamun, the front entrance gate. From 1 March to 31 December the **changing of the guard ceremony** takes place on the hour from 10am until 3pm daily except Tuesday.

The **National Folk Museum** (☎ 3704 3114; www.nfm.go.kr; admission free with entry to the palace) takes at least an hour to walk around. This major museum, built in 1939, has modern displays in three large sections and uses models to illustrate the official version of Korea's history, culture and traditional lifestyle. You have to visit museums in North Korea to learn about cruel slave masters and the exploitation of the peasants. Clothing revealed your status in the 'good old days'.

A glance at somebody's clothes, shoes and hat and you could tell exactly where they stood in the fixed Confucian hierarchy, which stretched from the king at the top of the pyramid to the slaves, low-born and untouchables at the bottom. It has a fun hands-on section for children and an audio guide (in English) is only ₩1000 but doesn't add much to the exhibit labels.

The new **National Palace Museum** (p52) is in the front courtyard.

GYEONGHUIGUNG Map pp202-3
Palace of Shining Celebration; ☎ 724 0274;
admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun; subway Line 5 to Gwanghwamun, Exit 6

This detached palace was completed in 1623 and used to consist of a rabbit warren of courtyards, buildings, walls and gates that spread over a large area. But it was destroyed during the Japanese annexation (1910-45) when a Japanese school was established here. Only the main audience hall, **Sungjeongjeon**, and the smaller royal bedchamber behind it have been restored along with a few paved courtyards, walls and corridors. The entrance gate, **Heunghwamun**, has toured around Seoul including a stint outside the Hotel Shilla, but was moved to its present site in 1988.

STATUE OF HAMMERING MAN

Map pp202-3

Subway Line 5 to Gwanghwamun, Exit 6
 The moving metallic shadow of a hammering man towers five storeys above the street. Funded by a local insurance company, the superhero of a blacksmith has been silently hammering since 2002. It was made out of 50 tons of steel by American artist Jonathon Borofsky whose art is humanist but mechanical, monumental but intriguing, simple but thought-provoking. It work just a meaningless ritual that we allow to dominate our lives?

JONGMYO & CHANGGYEONGGUNG

Map pp202-3

☎ 765 0195/762 4868; adult/child ₩1000/500;
 ☎ 9am-6pm Wed-Mon Mar-Oct, 9am-5.30pm Wed-Mon Nov-Feb; subway Line 1, 3 or 5 to Jongno 3-ga, Exit 11
 Surrounded by dense woodland are the impressive buildings of **Jongmyo** (www.jongmyo.net), which house the spirit tablets of

the Joseon kings and queens and some of their most loyal government officials. Their spirits are believed to reside in a special hole bored into the wooden tablets.

Near the entrance is a square pond (representing the earth) with a round island (representing the heavens). The main shrine, **Jeongjeon**, originally constructed in 1395, is a very long, stately and austere building with a large stone-flagged courtyard in front of it. Inside are 49 royal spirit tablets in 19 small rooms but they are usually locked. On the right-hand side of the main entrance is **Gonsindang**, which houses the spirit tablets of 83 meritorious subjects who served their kings well and were rewarded with their spirit tablets sharing the royal compound – the highest honour they could hope for. On the left side are shrines to Chilsa, the seven gods who aid kings.

The smaller shrine, **Yeongnyeongjeon** (Hall of Eternal Peace), originally built in 1421, has 34 spirit tablets of lesser kings in six rooms. These include four ancestors of King Taejo (who founded the Joseon dynasty in 1392) who were made kings posthumously. An English-speaking guide may be available at 10am and 3.30pm (free, one hour).

On the first Sunday in May the peaceful atmosphere is shattered by the crowds who come to watch the World Heritage ceremony, **Jongmyo daeje**, when a grand royal procession precedes a seven-hour Confucian ritual that is performed by the many living descendants of the royal family, who pay homage to their distant ancestors. 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. During the Joseon dynasty the ritual was performed five times a year and led by the king. Nowadays it usually starts at 3pm at Yeongnyeongjeon, with the royal procession at 5pm and the ceremony at the main hall starting around 8pm.

From Jongmyo walk over the footbridge to **Changgyeonggung** (Palace of Flourishing Gladness). An English-speaking tour guide should be available at 11.30am and 4pm at the main gate. This palace was originally built in the early 15th century by revered King Sejong for his parents. Like all the palaces it was destroyed twice by the Japanese – first in the 1590s and then during the colonial period from 1910 until

1945, when the palace suffered the ultimate indignity of being turned into a zoo. Only a fifth of the palace buildings survived or have been rebuilt so far. The oldest surviving structure is the 15th-century **stone bridge** over the stream by the main gate.

The main hall, **Myeongjeongjeon**, with its latticework and ornately carved and decorated ceiling, dates back to 1616. The stone markers in the courtyard show where the different ranks of government officials had to stand during major state ceremonies. The smaller buildings behind the main hall were where the kings and queens lived in their separate households.

Near the ponds, the Joseon-dynasty government service examination (*gwageo*) is re-enacted every October. Behind the ponds is a **botanical glasshouse**, which was completed in 1909 and is still full of plants. It takes 25 minutes to walk from here back down to the entrance to Jongmyo. In the small park at the entrance to Jongmyo, especially during the summer, a crowd of pensioners gathers to discuss politics, play *baduk* (Asian chess), picnic, chat, nap and even dance.

KOREAN COMFORT WOMEN

PROTEST Map pp202-3

Outside Japanese Embassy; ☎ noon Wed;
 subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6
 Every week a handful of elderly Korean comfort women, who were forced into prostitution during WWII, gather outside the Japanese embassy. Together with their supporters they wave placards and shout slogans. One of them, Hwang Geum-joo, says she will never give up: 'Our numbers are dwindling every year, but we are still full of anger and they should apologise for what they did to us!' The protest started in 1992 but the ladies are still waiting for a heartfelt apology and compensation for their suffering.

MUSEUM OF KOREAN BUDDHIST

ART Map pp202-3

☎ 766 6000; adult/student ₩5000/3000; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 3
 The permanent exhibition is displayed in one section, and 50m down the street is the second section which hosts changing exhibitions. The entry price includes admission to both. The permanent exhibition is small

but the paintings and carvings, many 200 years old, suggest that Korean Buddhist art is undervalued by the global art scene. The **Yeonam teashop** (☎ 742 999; tea with museum entry W4000; 🕒 10am-7pm) has homemade teas – hibiscus petal tea is worth trying.

NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM

Map pp202-3

☎ 3701 7500; www.gogung.go.kr; adult/child W2000/1000; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun; subway Line 3 to Gyeongbokgung, Exit 5 This spacious new museum is in the front courtyard of Gyeongbokgung, but is run separately. It closes on Monday while the palace closes on Tuesday. English descriptions are brief but an audio guide is W1000. The museum provides the usual uncritical look at certain aspects of the lives and significance of the 27 Joseon kings, including scientific inventions and Jongmyo ritual metalware. Displays highlight the wonderful artistic skills of the Joseon era – royal seals, illustrations of court ceremonies, and the gold-embroidered *hanbok* (traditional Korean clothing) and exquisite hairpins worn by the queens and princesses.

SEJONG GALLERY

Map pp202-3
☎ 399 1111; Sejongno; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm; subway Line 5 to Gwanghwamun, Exit 8 It's worth popping into this gallery, which is divided into three sections: on two floors in the building south of the main theatre and in the subway station behind. It exhibits its changing modern art shows.

SEOUL MUSEUM OF ART ANNEXE

Map pp202-3
☎ 2124 8800; <http://seoulmoa.org>; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 2 Two large hangar-like structures make up this unusual art gallery.

SEOUL MUSEUM OF HISTORY

Map pp202-3
☎ 724 0114; www.museum.seoul.kr; adult/student/child W700/300/free; 🕒 9am-9pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 10am-7pm Sat & holidays Mar-Oct, 9am-8pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 10am-6pm Sat Nov-Feb; subway Line 5 to Gwanghwamun, Exit 7 Opened in 2002, this museum is disappointing with a mishmash of disorganised

displays, many of which are so dimly lit that they are hard to see. It focuses on Joseon-era Seoul when the city was called Han-yang or Hanseongbu and was confined to north of the Han River. Downstairs is a café (drinks and snacks W1000 to W4000) and special exhibitions are put on which may be more worth a visit.

TAPGOL PARK

Map pp202-3
Admission free; subway Line 1 or 5 to Jongno 3-ga, Exit 1 or 5 'Tapgol' means 'pagoda', which refers to the 10-tier, 12m-high stone pagoda in the park that is all that remains of Wongaksa, a temple that stood here but was destroyed in 1515. Constructed in 1471, the pagoda is adorned with wonderful Buddhist carvings, but unfortunately the ugly protective glass box around it spoils its ancient beauty and charm.

Opened in 1897, Tapgol was Seoul's first Western-style park and is a symbol of Korean resistance to Japanese rule. On 1 March 1919, Son Byeong-hui and 32 others signed and read aloud a Declaration of Independence. Many of them were high-school teachers, 16 were Cheondogyo followers, 15 were Protestant Christians and two, including poet-monk Young-un, were Buddhists. All were arrested and locked up in the notorious Seodaemun Prison (p62). A torrent of protest against Japan followed in Seoul and throughout Korea, but the *samil* (1 March) movement was ruthlessly suppressed. Hundreds of independence fighters were killed and thousands arrested. Ten murals in the park depict scenes from the heroic but unsuccessful struggle.

INSADONG

The small, compact Insadong district is one of the few parts of Seoul to retain an atmosphere of the past. The narrow alleys are packed with 50 art galleries (most of them small), as well as traditional restaurants and teashops selling a wide range of Korean food and drinks. Craft shops sell fans, hand-made paper boxes, masks, lacquerware, pottery and antiques.

BOSINGAK

Map p205
Jongno; subway Line 1 to Jonggak, Exit 4 Situated in Jongno (Bell St), Seoul's main street during the Joseon period, this pavilion

TRANSPORT

Take the subway to Anguk or Jonggak and after that walking is the only way to get around this small district.

houses a modern version of the city bell, which was originally forged in 1468. The bell is rung only at New Year, when crowds gather here to celebrate. In Joseon times, the great bell was struck 28 times every night at 10pm to ask the heavens for a peaceful night and to signal the closure of the gates and the start of the nightly curfew, which was enforced by club-wielding watchmen. It was struck 33 times for the 33 Buddhist heavens at 4am, which signalled the start of the new day when the gates were reopened. It also sounded when fire broke out.

CHEONDOGYO TEMPLE

Map p205
☎ 732 8991; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6 On the outside the headquarters of this Korean fusion religion is a handsome baroque-style, red-brick and stone church with a tower and spire, but inside it looks like a plain meeting hall with a piano but no altar, statues or paintings. It was completed in 1921 and was used as a centre of opposition to Japanese rule.

JOGYESA

Map p205
☎ 725 6641; www.jogyesa.org/english; Ujunggungno; 🕒 4am-9pm; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6

The largest Buddhist shrine in Seoul, Daeungjeon was built in 1938, but the design followed the late Joseon-dynasty style. Murals of scenes from Buddha's life and the carved floral latticework doors are two of its attractive features. You can follow the tradition of lighting a candle or incense stick and then walking around the seven-tiered pagoda to make a wish. Jogyesa is the headquarters of the Jogye sect, the largest in Korea, which emphasises Zen-style (*Seon*) meditation and the study of Buddhist scriptures as the best way to achieve enlightenment.

Behind the main shrine is the modern **Amitabha Buddha Hall** where funeral services are held. The statues are the 10 judges who pass judgement along with the Amitabha Buddha, 49 days after someone's death, to decide if they go to heaven or hell.

The **belfry** houses a drum to summon earthbound animals, a wooden fish-shaped gong to summon aquatic beings, a metal cloud-shaped gong to summon birds and a large bronze bell to summon underground creatures. They are banged 28 times at 4am and 33 times at 6pm.

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The **Information Centre for Foreigners** (☎ 732 5292; 🕒 9.30am-6pm) can provide a guide and help with booking a **temple stay** (p164).

Around the temple are shops that sell Buddhist images, beads, candles, incense, music, paintings, lanterns and clothing.

KNIFE GALLERY Map p205

☎ 735 4430; Eoreumgol-gil; admission W1000; 🕒 10.30am-8pm; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 6 In a basement is a weird and wonderful global collection of swords and knives along with other army equipment.

UNHYEONGUNG Map p205

Cloud Hanging Over the Valley Palace; ☎ 766 9090; www.unhyeongung.com; Samilro; adult/youth W700/300; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb; subway Line 3 to Anguk, Exit 4 The modest and plain natural-wood design of this minor palace reflects the austere tastes of Heungseon Daewongun (1820-98), King Gojong's stern and conservative father whose policies included massacring Korean Catholics, excluding foreigners from Korea and closing Confucian schools. Gojong was born and raised here until 1863 when he ascended the throne aged 12 with his father acting as regent. Rooms are furnished and mannequins display the dress styles of the time. An hour-long re-enactment of the marriage of King Gojong to Queen Myeongseong (Queen Min) is held here, where the actual event took place in 1867 when he was 15 and she 16.

MYEONG-DONG & NAMSAN

Myeong-dong is a compact, traffic-quiet zone packed with fashion stores that attract mainly young shoppers. Nearby Namdaemun market attracts all types. It's a 15-minute walk south to either Namsangol Hanok Village or the cable car to the summit of Namsan.

AGRICULTURE MUSEUM Map pp200-1

☎ 2080 5727; admission free; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Sat; subway Line 5 to Seodaemun, Exit 5 A brand new museum that has imaginative displays such as glass floors, a mock-up of a painted tomb, and a traditional village complete with voices. It's a worthy effort

but has no chance of persuading the young generation to become farmers, so the outlook for the industry is bleak despite the upbeat tone of the museum.

ANGLICAN CHURCH Map pp206-7

☎ 738 8952; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 3 An imposing Renaissance-style church, built in the shape of a cross with Korean-style tiles on the roof – it's a fine example of architectural fusion. Work on the church began in 1922 but the full design was not completed until 1996.

BANK OF KOREA MUSEUM Map pp206-7

Currency Museum; ☎ 759 4888; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; subway Line 4 to Hoehyeon, Exit 7

It is worth a quick visit to see the old coins and banknotes as well as the grand hall of the chateau-like Bank of Korea building (constructed in 1912 by the Japanese) where the exhibition is displayed.

DEOKSUGUNG Map pp206-7

Palace of Virtuous Longevity; ☎ 771 9951; adult/youth/child W1000/500/free; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 2

Originally an aristocratic villa, Deoksugung became a palace in 1593 when King Seonjo moved in (after all of Seoul's other palaces were destroyed during the Japanese invasion). Despite two kings being crowned here, it became a secondary palace until 1897 when King Gojong moved in after leaving the nearby Russian legation. Although he was forced to abdicate 10 years later by the Japanese, Gojong carried on living here in some style until he died in 1919. He lost his kingdom but he kept his harem. His son, Sunjong, reigned as a puppet emperor until 1910 when he too was forced to abdicate by the Japanese, who then annexed Korea, bringing the Joseon

dynasty to an undignified and abrupt end after more than 500 years.

The palace contains small gardens and ponds amid an extraordinary mixture of architectural styles that include a grand wooden audience hall in traditional Korean style and a fusion-style tea pavilion, **Heongwanheon**, which has pillars, a veranda and metal railings decorated with deer and bats – both auspicious creatures. This is where King Gojong drank the soothing beverage while discussing current affairs and poetry with his visitors. The stone mythical creatures in the main courtyard are *haetae*, who are supposed to protect the palace from fire but in 1904 they must have fallen asleep because most of the palace burnt down.

King Gojong's living quarters, **Hamnyeongjeon**, was where he died in 1919, an event which sparked off nation-wide protests against Japanese rule. Two large Romanesque buildings now house art galleries – **Seokjojeon** (built between 1900 and 1909) houses art and craft exhibitions (usually free admission), while the other houses the **National Museum of Contemporary Art Annex** (☎ 779 5310; www.moca.go.kr; admission around W2000). With four large galleries on two levels, the exhibitions vary but concentrate on pre-1960 modern art. Tea or coffee in the café is W2000.

The **changing of the guards** (🕒 10.30am, 2pm & 3pm Tue-Sun 15 Feb-31 Dec) is an impressive ceremony that involves 50 participants, who dress up as Joseon-era soldiers and bandsmen. It takes place either around the main entrance gate or over the road on Seoul Plaza.

MYEONG-DONG CATHOLIC

CATHEDRAL Map pp206-7

☎ 774 1784; subway Line 4 to Myeong-dong, Exit 9 This elegant brick Renaissance-style cathedral was constructed between 1894 and 1898 by Chinese bricklayers. Inside, the traditional vaulted ceiling and stained-glass windows contrast with the modern air-conditioning and the TV screens that help worshippers at the back see what is going on. The cathedral provided a sanctuary for student and trade-union protestors during the long period of military rule after the Korean War, and is a national symbol of democracy and human rights. English-language Sunday worship takes place at 9am in the Cultural Centre.

NAMDAEMUN Map pp206-7

Great South Gate; Sungnyemun; subway Line 1 or 4 to Seoul Station, Exit 3

The Great South Gate of Seoul fortress was originally constructed in 1398, rebuilt in 1447 and has often been renovated since then. Designated as National Treasure No 1, it's an impressive sight, especially when floodlit at night, and is a reminder of the once-mighty Joseon dynasty. The soldiers in Joseon uniforms that guard the gate (🕒 10am-4pm Wed-Mon) march around every 30 minutes, but are there for photographic rather than defence purposes. The famous day-and-night Namdaemun market (p123) that starts at the gate is also centuries old.

NAMSANGOL HANOK VILLAGE

Map pp206-7

☎ 2266 9101; admission free; 🕒 9am-8pm Wed-Mon May-Sep, 9am-6pm Wed-Mon Oct-Apr; subway Line 3 or 4 to Chungmuro, Exit 4 Five differing *yangban* (aristocratic) stone, wood and tile houses from the Joseon era have been moved here from different parts of Seoul. The architecture and furniture are austere and plain, and conjure up the lost world of Confucian gentlemen scholars who wielded calligraphy brushes rather than swords. Scenes from the drama movie *Untold Scandal* were filmed here. Weavers, calligraphers and kite-makers can be spotted at the weekend and the occasional festival livens the place up.

One *hanok* has become the **Dasahon Restaurant** (meals W4000-8000; 🕒 9am-8pm Wed-Mon), which serves up *bibimbap* (rice, egg, meat and vegies with chilli sauce), noodles and traditional liquor in a yester-year atmosphere. A pleasant park and Time Capsule Square adjoin the village. The time capsule of 600 items was buried in 1994 and will be opened in 2394.

RODIN GALLERY Map pp206-7

☎ 2259 7781; www.rodin.co.kr; adult/child W5000/3000; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 8

This unusual glass pyramid building has two large sculptures by French sculptor Rodin on permanent display plus changing contemporary art exhibitions in another two galleries.

TRANSPORT

Walking to Myeong-dong and Namdaemun market from Gwanghwamun is possible, but you can take a taxi or use the subway. If you don't fancy walking up 262m-high Namsan take the cable car or hop onto the frequent and handy yellow No 2 bus.

SEOUL MUSEUM OF ART Map pp206-7

☎ 2124 8800; adult/youth/child W700/300/free;

🕒 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun Mar-Oct & 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat Nov-Feb; subway Line 1 or 2 to City Hall, Exit 2 Ultra modern, bright galleries hide behind the brick-and-stone façade of the 1927 Supreme Court building. Opened in 2002, displays in this major public gallery change regularly and are generally worth visiting.

SEOUL TOWER Map pp206-7

☎ 772 1626; adult/youth/child W7000/4000/3000;

🕒 9am-midnight; subway Line 1 or 4 to Seoul Station, Exit 10

Take the cable car, yellow bus No 2 or walk up from Seoul subway station (p80) to reach this recently revamped Seoul icon. The observation deck is located at the top of the tower along with a revolving grill-restaurant and a Korean restaurant.

DAEHANGNO

This student hang-out is thronged with young people and features many small theatres, a performance park, outdoor restaurants, plenty of bars and a live jazz venue. Street sculptures can be found all the way along the eastern side of the main street, Daehangno.

LOCK MUSEUM Map p208

☎ 766 6494; admission W5000; 🕒 10am-8pm

Tue-Sun; subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 2 For people who like visiting unusual, small museums, up on the 4th floor is a well-lit display of antique locks. In the same rusty-looking building are two (free) exhibition halls that usually display metalwork.

MARRONNIER ART CENTRE Map p208

☎ 742 2274; admission free-W3000; 🕒 11am-

8pm Tue-Sun; subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 2 Avant garde art of all shades is assembled here in three small galleries to the north of Marronnier Park.

TRANSPORT

Take a subway (or taxi) – don't try to walk here from downtown.

MUSEUM OF KOREAN STRAW**HANDICRAFTS** Map p208

☎ 743 8787; admission W3000; 🕒 10am-5pm; subway Line 4 to Hyehwa, Exit 4

The masks, human figures, torches, bird catchers, bags, mats, cradles, chicken nests, rope, egg holders, and human and cattle shoes are all made of straw.

SINCHON & YEUIDO

Yeouido (known as Seoul's Manhattan) is a 3km long and 2km wide island in the Han River where skyscrapers house the headquarters of many media, finance and insurance companies. The Stock Exchange and the National Assembly are on the island, but the gold-tinted 63 Building is the main tourist attraction. Along the southeastern side of the island Cherry Tree Park is popular in mid-April when the cherry trees blossom, but it's nothing special during the rest of the year.

63 BUILDING Map p210

☎ 789 5663; www.63city.co.kr; 🕒 10am-9pm; subway Line 5 to Yeouinaru, Exit 4

The 63 Building, the tallest and most stylish skyscraper in Seoul, is not as popular as it used to be. It's a 15-minute walk from the subway, and has three major attractions. **Sea World Aquarium** (adult/teenager/child W10,500/9500/9000; 🕒 10am-8.30pm) has penguins, reptiles and seals as well as turtles, sharks and other fish. The **IMAX giant screen cinema** (adult/teenager/child W7000/6500/6000; 🕒 10am-9pm) provides headphones with an English-language version. The **Observation Deck** (adult/teenager/child W6000/5500/5000; 🕒 10am-9pm) is up on the 60th floor. A ticket for all three costs W19,000/17,500/16,000. The best dining is at **Plaza Fountain Buffet** (p97).**EWHA WOMANS UNIVERSITY****MUSEUM** Map p210

☎ 3277 3151; admission free; 🕒 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, closed 1-31 Aug & 21 Dec-1 Mar; subway Line 2 to Ewha Womans University, Exit 2

This modern museum in Sinchon has three floors of displays that vary but usually include traditional *hanbok*, centuries-old pottery, the history of the university and student art.**TRANSPORT**

Take the subway to both Sinchon and Yeouido, although you can arrive at the latter on a Han River ferry.

HAN RIVER FERRY Map p210

☎ 785 4411; adult/child W9000/4500;

🕒 11.30am-10.30pm; subway Line 5 to Yeouinaru, Exit 3

The five ferry piers are at Yeouido (Map p210), Yanghwa (Map pp198-9), Nanji (Map pp198-9), Ttukseom (Map pp214-15) and Jamsil (Map pp214-15). You can take one-hour trips to any of the piers or take a round trip back to where you started. The boats run all year, hourly from June to August, but every one or two hours during the rest of the year. **Evening cruises** (adult/child W13,000/6500) have a buffet and live music and leave from Yeouido pier.**JEOLDUSAN MARTYRS MUSEUM & CHAPEL** Map p210

☎ 323 1950; museum admission by donation;

🕒 10am-noon, 1-5pm Tue-Sun; subway Line 2 or 6 to Hapjeong, Exit 7

Jeoldusan means 'Beheading Hill' and this site is where up to 2000 Korean Catholics were executed in 1866 following a decree, signed by Regent Heungseon Daewongun (King Gojong's father), to kill all Catholics. The victims' bodies were thrown into the nearby Han River and today, less than 40 of their names are known. A memorial to the martyrs, a garden overlooking the river, a small museum, a stark memorial chapel and a statue of the first Korean priest, St Andrew Kim Daegeon (1821-46) make up the site.

The museum has very little in English but has relics of the many Catholic martyrs, and downstairs are miniature models of scenes from the early church together with souvenirs of Pope John Paul II's visit here in 1984. Steadfast early Christian converts faced waves of government persecution, but refused to recant their new faith. Inside churches, *yangban* nobles and ordinary folk sat together as equals in the sight of God, which challenged the rigid Confucian hierarchy of Joseon society. Many faced cruel tortures before they were executed.

Visit on a Sunday afternoon to attend the 3pm service at the stark white modernist chapel – the beautiful voices of the choir and packed congregation is a highlight. Female worshippers still wear a white veil on their heads. The chapel is open every day.

From the subway exit, take the second turning left and follow the covered railway line for 700m – it's less than 10 minute's walk. On the way back take a look at the well-kept **Foreigners Cemetery** (🕒 9am-5pm) where early Protestant missionaries are buried.**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY** Map p210

☎ 788 3804; subway Line 5 to Yeouinaru, Exit 1

The pillared building with a green roof was completed in 1975. Free tours (Korean language only) take only 15 minutes although they can take longer if the country's 299 elected representatives are in session. Full meetings are held in February, April and June, and from September to December.

GANGNAM

Gangnam is a modern business district south of the Han River, which is more noted for its numerous bars and restaurants than for its tourist sights.

MUSEUM OF KOREAN**EMBROIDERY** Map p211

☎ 515 51114; 4th fl Sajeon House; admission free; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri; subway Line 7 to Hak-dong, Exit 10

Only a small amount is on show, but it includes exquisite examples of a neglected female craft. In the 'good' old days nearly everything was embroidered – clothes, shoes, boxes, pillow-ends, screens, pin cushions, toys and thimbles. Delicate patchwork *pojagi* (wrapping cloths) had many uses and some were made out of silk or ramie (cloth made from pounded bark). Items are not described but illustrated books on Korean embroidery (in English) are on sale.**TRANSPORT**

Use the subway to travel to and around Gangnam.

JAMSIL

Jamsil is a modern area of offices and apartments south of the river, but also contains an ancient Buddhist temple and some 500-year-old royal tombs. The COEX Mall, Lotte World and Olympic Park are the other major attractions. Teheranno is the heart of Seoul's thriving IT industry.

BONGEUNSA Map pp214-15

☎ 511 6070; www.bongeunsa.org; subway Line 2 to Samseong, COEX Exit

Just north of the COEX Mall, the shrines and halls of this Buddhist temple are spread among a forested hillside and have a quieter, more secluded atmosphere than Jogyesa in Insa-dong, although somewhat marred by the car park. Founded in AD 794, the buildings have been rebuilt many times over the centuries. The oldest hall is **Panjeon**, constructed in 1856, which houses over 3000 150-year-old woodblocks with Buddhist scriptures and art carved into them.

Near the entrance on the left is a small hut where an English-speaking volunteer guide may be available. On the right is a charity shop, **Beautiful Store** (☎ 10.30am-6pm Tue-Sun). Entry to the temple is through **Jinyeomun** (Gate of Truth), protected by four fierce guardians. Beyond the gate you can write your name, address and wish on a roof tile in return for a W10,000 donation.

The main shrine **Daewungjeon**, last renovated in 1982, has lattice doors and is ornately decorated inside and out with Buddhist symbols and art designed to express Buddhist philosophy and ideals. Behind are smaller shrine halls and a large outdoor standing statue – the Maitreya (Future) Buddha.

COEX MALL Map pp214-15

☎ 6002 5312; www.coexmall.com; ☎ 10am-10pm; subway Line 2 to Samseong, COEX Exit This vast underground mall is Seoul's top entertainment and retail zone with a maze

of shops and food courts, a department store, luxury hotels, a handful of bars and nightclubs, a popular cinema multiplex, a free PlayStation games zone and the COEX conference centre.

The **COEX Aquarium** (☎ 6002 6214; adult/teenager/child W14,500/12,000/9500; ☎ 10am-8pm) is the largest in Seoul with 40,000 fish and other sea creatures in 90 tanks. You can see live coral, sharks, turtles, rays and evil-looking piranhas swimming around in large tanks. Exquisitely beautiful small creatures such as pulsating jellyfish, glass fish and sea horses are also on display. Next door, one wall of the **Deep Blue** restaurant is a huge aquarium tank.

The small **Kimchi Museum** (B2; adult/child W3000/1000; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun) is unique – the only museum dedicated to pickled cabbage and its health benefits.

Explex (admission free; ☎ noon-9pm) has free Internet (30 minutes) and board games, while at the popular **PC Zone** (per hr W2000; ☎ 10am-10pm) you'll have to pay to play.

Play **four-ball** or **pool** (per 10 min W2000; ☎ 10am-11pm) in the U-Mille zone or play the latest PlayStation games for free in the **Seejong Game Zone** (opposite Bandi & Luni's). Sing along in the **Karaoke Room** (per hr per room W15,000; ☎ 11am-11pm) or record your own song onto CD for W4000 at **Netian Music** next door. Watch a movie in the **DVD Room** (per 2 people W15,000; ☎ 10am-11pm), play board games in **Jumanji Board Game Café** (☎ 6002 3838; 1st/next hr W3000/2000; ☎ 10am-10pm) or try out the latest iPod gadgets and laptops at the **Apple Experience Centre**. Join the crowds at **Megabox** (☎ 6002 1200; W8000; ☎ 8am-5am), which has 17 cinema screens.

Three of the best stores are **Bandi & Luni's** (☎ 6002 6090; ☎ 10am-10.30pm), which has Seoul's best selection of books and magazines in English, **Evan Records** (☎ 6002 1000; ☎ 10.30am-11pm) where you can listen to the latest releases, and **COEX Duty Free** (☎ 3484 9777; ☎ 10am-7.30pm) where you can shop till you drop.

Hyundai Department Store Food Court (meals W3000-12000; ☎ 10.30am-8pm) has something for everyone at reasonable prices, which means it's always busy. Try the Asian-Spanish fusion paella or the very English *tunggamja* (roast spuds).

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LOTTE WORLD Map pp214-15

☎ 411 4921; www.lotteworld.com; ☎ 9.30am-11pm; subway Line 2 or 8 to Jamsil, Exit 3

A huge complex that includes an amusement park, cinema multiplex, department store, folk museum, shopping mall, ice-skating rink, hotel and countless restaurants.

Lotte World Adventure & Magic Island (adult/teenager/child day pass W30,000/26,000/23,000; ☎ 9.30am-11pm) is a mainly indoor Korean version of Disneyland, complete with a monorail train, 'flying' balloons, 3-D films, musical shows, parades and thrill rides that go down very fast, or round and round and up and down very fast. The scarier the ride, the longer the queue on busy days. The new Atlantis flume/rollercoaster/ghost train ride starts with a bang and doesn't let up. The main section is indoors but Magic Island is outside in the middle of Seokcho lake. The carousel has been popular with dating couples since it starred in the TV drama series *Stairway to Heaven*.

The all-year **indoor ice-skating rink** (B3 fl; adult/child per session W11,000/10,000, skate hire W3200; ☎ 10.30am-9.30pm) is the best in Seoul. Each day is divided into six sessions (check for times as they vary). The **bowling alley** (B3 fl; adult/child W3000/2800, shoe rental W1200; ☎ 9am-midnight) has 16 lanes. The **pool & four ball hall** (B3 fl; pool/four ball per hr

W10,800/9600; ☎ 10am-10pm) is next to the bowling alley.

The **swimming pool** (1st fl; adult/child W8000-10,000/7000-8000; ☎ 1pm-7pm Mon-Fri, 6am-8pm Sat & Sun) has a **king slide**, which costs W500 (W1000 in July and August), and a **cave sauna** (adult/child W4500/3500; ☎ 6am-8pm).

The **Folk Museum** (3rd fl; adult/teenager/child W4500/3000/2000; ☎ 9.30am-11pm) uses imaginative techniques like moving waxworks, dioramas and scale models to bring scenes from Korean history to life. The price is included in the day-pass ticket for Lotte World Adventure & Magic Island.

A **cinema multiplex** (per person W7000; ☎ shows 10.30am-9pm) is next to the **department store** (☎ 10am-8pm), which has the usual high quality but reasonably priced food court. Other eating options include the popular **Marché** (p98), Korean restaurants, a food court on B3 floor, **Pizza Hut** (pizzas from W12,000; ☎ 11am-10pm) and **Sizzlers** (buffet salads & desserts W22,000, with steak W33,000; ☎ 11am-10pm). The **Edinburgh Pub Restaurant** (fusion meals W7000-20,000, beers W3000; ☎ 11am-11pm) has wood panels and tartan-clad staff.

OLYMPIC PARK Map pp214-15

subway Line 8 to Mongchontoseong, Exit 1 This very large park with lakes and pheasants is best visited by bicycle (p115)

TRANSPORT

Subway trains and taxis are the best way to get around, although cycling along the Han River is good exercise.

but the park itself has none for hire. The park contains the **sports stadiums** built for the 1988 Seoul Olympics – the indoor swimming pool (sometimes open to the public), tennis courts, three gymnasiums and the open-air **velodrome** (admission free; 🕒 2-9.30pm Fri-Sun Jul & Aug) where in summer months thousands gamble on the short cycle races.

The **Olympic Museum** (☎ 410 1051; adult/teenager/child W3000/2000/1000; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) has screens showing the exciting highlights of the long ago 1988 Seoul Olympics, together with a brief history of the Olympics. Downstairs are sports games (W500 coins needed for some) and upstairs is a 10-minute simulated ride with moving seats (🕒 10.30am, 11.30am, 1pm, 2pm, 3pm, 4pm and 5pm), unrelated to the Olympics.

Two hundred large **sculptures** are scattered around the park. Designed and made by artists from around the world, the collection was started during the 1988 Seoul Olympics, but has been growing ever since. Most of the artwork is puzzling even after you have read the artists' descriptions of their work.

The new **Seoul Olympic Art Museum** (☎ 410 1062; adult/teenager/child W3000/2000/1000; 🕒 10am-9pm Mar-Oct, 10am-6pm Nov-Feb) puts on unusual, thought-provoking multimedia exhibitions.

A massive Baekje-dynasty earth fortification, **Mongchontoseong**, built in the 3rd century AD, runs through the park. The small **Mongchon Museum** (☎ 424 5138; admission free; 🕒 10am-9pm Mar-Oct, 10am-8pm Nov-Feb) has some precious golden relics of the Baekje kings and an unusual seven-pronged sword.

On warm evenings and weekends hundreds of young people go to the park to rollerblade around the plaza, play rollerblade hockey and do skateboard tricks, while members of the older generation play badminton, jog, eat ice cream, picnic under the trees, or exercise tiny dogs.

A **car-tram** (adult/teenager/child W1000/700/500; 🕒 10.35am-6pm or 7.20pm) runs around a 3km loop approximately every hour.

Food is very limited inside the park – a basic **snack bar** (Gongwon Maejeom Seunek; 공원매점스넥; *ramyeon* W1500; 🕒 6am-10pm) is near the World Peace Gate. Otherwise head to the classy restaurants in Olympic Parktel or bring a picnic.

SEOLLEUNG PARK ROYAL TOMBS

Map pp214-15

Samneung Park; ☎ 568 1291; adult/teenager W1000/500; 🕒 6am-5.30pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 6am-4.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb; subway Line 2 or Bundang Line to Seolleung, Exit 8

The spirit tablets of the Joseon kings and queens are in Jongmyo, but their tombs are scattered all over Seoul. The tombs are elaborate but mostly underground, and were the scene of rituals to remember the dead who were officially mourned for three years according to Confucian rules. The tombs of **King Seongjong** (ruled 1469–94), his third wife, **Queen Jeonghyeon Wanghu**, and his second son, **King Jeongjong** (ruled 1506–44), are in this park. King Seongjong is remembered as a prolific author and father (he had 28 children by 10 concubines), while King Jeongjong ruled for a long time but was a weak king.

The entranceway to the tombs is marked by a red spirit-gate with spikes on the top, and a small hall used for ceremonies to honour the dead. The tombs are guarded by larger-than-life stone statues of warriors and government officials along with smaller statues of horses, tigers and imaginary animals that look like sheep. The stone lanterns, pillars and pathways are there to guide the spirits back home. From subway Exit 8 walk straight ahead for 500m (five minutes) and the entrance is on the right.

TTUKSEOM RIVERSIDE PARK

Map pp214-15

subway Line 7 to Ttukseom Resort, Exit 2 or 3

In the park is a popular outdoor **swimming pool complex** (☎ 3780 1750; adult/teenager/child W4000/3000/2000; 🕒 9am-7pm Jul & Aug), a bicycle rental stall (W3000 per hour, ID required) and a pier where the Han River ferries stop (p57).

OTHER NEIGHBOURHOODS NORTH OF THE RIVER

The major sights outside the downtown area should not be missed and can be easily and quickly reached by subway. These neighbourhoods are uninspiring conglomerations of shops and apartments, so once you've seen the sight, head back to the subway.

TRANSPORT

The subway is the best way to visit the following sights and you can always take a taxi in cases where a short walk is required from the subway exit.

CHILDREN'S GRAND PARK Map pp198-9 ☎ 450 9311; adult/teenager/child Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct W1500/1000/free, Jul & Aug, Nov-Mar W900/500/free; 🕒 9am-10pm Mar-Oct, 9am-6pm Nov-Feb; subway Line 7 to Children's Grand Park, Exit 1

Ask for a free map at the entrance to this large shady park with a rose garden, flower beds and fountains that has plenty to keep children busy and occupied. An **amusement park** (rides W2500) has 30 fear-factor experiences for all ages, but some of the **zoo animals** – which include lions, tigers, elephants and bears – live in enclosures that are small by modern standards.

A glasshouse **botanical garden** has cacti up one end, a tropical jungle and bonsai trees at the other end and a small **folk museum** upstairs. A **wetland eco area** has a boardwalk, and nearby **pony rides** (W3000) and **camel rides** (W4000) are other options. The 30-minute **Anistory Show** (adult/teenager/child W5000/4000/3000; 🕒 11am, 1pm, 3pm, 5pm & 7pm) is fun and features a cute parrot, a chimpanzee act and eager performing seals. The 30-minute **Elephant Theme Show** (adult/child W6000/5000; 🕒 11.30am, 1pm, 3pm & 5pm) has nine elephants that play soccer and basketball and also features six Laotian female dancers.

DONGDAEMUN Map pp200-1

Great East Gate; Heunginjimun; subway Line 1 or 4 to Dongdaemun, Exit 6

Seoul's Eastern fortress gate, Dongdaemun, dates back to the 14th century, but the existing structure was built in 1869 and had to be renovated after being severely damaged during the Korean War when Seoul changed hands four times. Dongdaemun market (p122) starts at this gate.

HONGNEUNG ARBORETUM & SURROUNDS Map p216

☎ 961 2651; cnr of Hoegiro & Hongneung-gil; admission free; 🕒 9am-5pm Sun; subway Line 6 to Korea University, Exit 3

Winding footpaths turn this 38-hectare arboretum, established in 1922 and packed

with many varieties of trees and plants, into a pleasant maze that is popular with dating couples, nature lovers and keen photographers. It is only open on Sunday and picnics are not allowed. On the right is the **Forestry Museum** (☎ 961 2873; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Fri & 10am-1pm Sat Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Fri & 10am-1pm Sat Nov-Feb), which has an original design containing exhibits on native trees and their uses, but little English description.

From the subway exit take the first road on the right (Hoegiro), walk under the expressway and 600m from the subway exit is the arboretum entrance on the left facing Hongneung-gil.

Opposite the arboretum entrance is the rather neglected **King Sejong Memorial Museum** (☎ 969 8851; admission free; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Sun). It has a few galleries devoted to paintings, books, *hangeul* typewriters and musical instruments, but there are no English descriptions. In the garden are some tomb statues and a huge slab of rock carved with praise of King Sejong and his primary wife, Queen Soheon.

Walk 100m down Hongneung-gil to reach the entrance to two **royal tombs** (adult/teenager W1000/500; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun). **Yeonghwiwon** is the tomb of Lady Eom (1854–1911), the favourite concubine of King Gojong after the assassination of Queen Min. **Sunginwon** is the tomb of Yi Jin who died in his first year in 1922 and was Lady Eom's first grandson, the son of King Gojong's fourth son whom the Japanese made Crown Prince. See opposite for more information about royal tombs.

Carry on walking down Hongneung-gil to reach Cheongnyangni station (Line 1, Exit 2), which is only 600m from the tombs.

TOP FIVE OUTSIDE THE CITY CENTRE

- National Museum of Korea (p62)
- War Memorial & Museum (p63)
- Seodaemun Prison (p62)
- World Cup Stadium & Mall (p64)
- Seoul Grand Park (p65)

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KOREA

Map pp198-9

☎ 2077 9000; www.museum.go.kr; adult/child W2000/1000; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun; subway Line 1 or 4 to Ichon, Exit 2

This grand, marble-lined, modernist building cleverly channels plenty of natural light to show off Korea's ancient treasures. The museum took eight years to construct, finally opening in October 2005. Walking past the reflecting pond by the entrance, the west wing of this spacious museum has a hands-on, fun-filled, young children's section and houses the 800-seat Yong (Dragon) theatre which has hosted concerts, musicals and even a circus. In the east wing are the main galleries together with a large shop, café with views and a restaurant.

The national treasures on the first floor are accessed from the Path of History and span thousands of years with outstanding Buddhist pagodas and sculptures, ancient maps and royal artefacts from the Three Kingdoms and Joseon periods. The second floor has calligraphy and other art and the donations gallery includes items from Japanese collectors. The third floor displays Buddhist sculptures, metalwork and the wonderful and celebrated pale-green celadon ceramics. Another gallery puts Korean art into the context of other Asian art with works from China, Japan, Southeast Asia and some surprising ones from Central Asia. Volunteer and audio guides are available.

SEJONG UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Map pp198-9

☎ 3408 3077; admission free; 🕒 10am-noon, 1-3pm Mon-Fri; subway Line 7 to Children's Grand Park, Exit 6

The best of the university folk museums, Sejong has a superb collection, especially the well-displayed *hanbok* that takes up an entire floor and includes outstanding royal clothing. Rarely visited, the museum should be much more popular – the furniture chests, palanquins, shamanist items, and the wooden, leather and silk shoes for the different social classes all present vivid images of the feudal past. English descriptions are poor, but the objects are worthy of the poem that praises the museum as 'a place of wisdom, beauty and virtue' where you can 'listen to the thousand-year-old ancestors whispering quietly'.

SEODAEMUN PRISON

Map pp200-1

☎ 303 9750; adult/teenager/child W1500/1000/500; 🕒 9.30am-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb; subway Line 3 to Dongnimmun, Exit 5

The prison is a stark reminder of the sufferings of Korean independence fighters who challenged Japanese colonial rule (1910-45). It contains an entrance gate, two watchtowers, a wooden execution house, interrogation cells and eight of the original 18 red-brick prison buildings. Built to house 500 prisoners, up to 3000 were packed inside during the height of the anti-Japanese protests in 1919.

Altogether 40,000 freedom fighters passed through the entrance gate and at least 400 died or were killed inside, including Ryu Gwan-sun, an Ewha high-school student, who was tortured to death in 1920. You can see photos and videos of the harsh conditions and go inside the bleak cells of one block. Overcrowding, lack of food, beatings and torture were daily facts of life, and the interrogation cells give a vivid and nightmarish demonstration of what went on there.

The independence fighters were brave but too few to threaten Japan's brutal rule, which attempted cultural genocide – banning the Korean language and forcing Koreans to adopt Japanese names (12% refused). An English-speaking guide (☎ 017-750 8323) is usually available on Wednesday and Thursday and is useful as not everything is translated into English.

Next to the prison is **Dongnimmun Park**, the main feature of which is an impressive Western-style granite archway. Built by the Independence Club in 1898, it stands where envoys from Chinese emperors used to be officially welcomed to Seoul. This ritual symbolised Chinese suzerainty over Korea, which ended when King Gojong declared himself an emperor in 1897. The two stone pillars in front of the gate are all that remain of Yongunmun, the gate near Mohwagwan, the Guest Hall for Cherishing China, where Chinese envoys stayed on their regular visits to Seoul.

SEONNONGDAN

Map pp200-1

Subway Line 1 to Jegi-dong, Exit 1

The altar is not worth visiting (it's usually locked anyway) except for one day in April (which varies with the lunar calendar) – the re-enactment of the ceremony when Joseon kings came here to pray for a good harvest.

A royal procession heads to the altar where food offerings are laid out in special brass containers. Musicians in red robes play traditional instruments, and after the Confucian ceremony the onlookers tuck into *seolleongtang* (beef and veggie soup, originally served to peasants) and *makgeolli* (fermented rice wine) free of charge, just as in Joseon days. From the subway exit, walk straight until you reach the notice board where you turn right. Fork right and the altar is a 300m (five-minute) walk on the right.

TTUKSEOM SEOUL FOREST

Map pp200-1

☎ 3708 2588; admission free; 🕒 24hr; subway

Line 2 to Ttukseom, Exit 8

This new park, a 12-minute walk from Ttukseom station (but don't confuse it with Ttukseom Resort station), is a pleasant area to walk or cycle around and enjoy a picnic or a beer in natural surroundings. The area used to be a hunting ground in Joseon times, then became a horse racing track and sports fields, but is now a regenerating forest. Among the trees and lakes are fountains, a poetic photographic exhibition on the theme of trees, and a mirror pond.

The **bicycle rental stall** (per hr W3000; 🕒 9am-10pm) behind the visitors centre at the entrance is useful if you plan to

explore the further reaches of the park. The **Turri curry restaurant** (☎ 465 1194; meals W5000-9000; 🕒 10am-2am) serves Korean-style curries on a big plate and you can sit outside on a shady deck overlooking a carp-filled pond. Just a 10-minute walk from the visitors centre it's also a relaxing spot to enjoy a beer (W2700).

WAR MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

Map pp200-1

☎ 709 3139; www.warmemo.co.kr; adult/child W3000/2000; 🕒 9.30am-6pm Tue-Sun; subway

Line 4 or 6 to Samgakji, Exit 12

This huge museum documents the history of warfare in Korea and has a specially good section on the Korean War. It takes at least three hours to look round everything so arrive before 3pm. Only snacks are available. To try to cover this museum and the National Museum of Korea in one day is too exhausting.

Downstairs are paintings and panorama displays illustrating many fierce battles fought against invading Mongol, Japanese and Chinese armies, which focus on Korean victories. Many items are only vaguely dated, but there is a replica of one of Admiral Sun-sin's famous turtle warships.

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SEOUL ARTS CENTRE Map pp198-9

☎ 580 1300; www.sac.or.kr; subway Line 3 to Nambu Bus Terminal, Exit 5

The centre is a 600m, 10-minute walk from the subway or else you can take the frequent shuttle bus (W500). This huge arts complex includes an **Opera House**; the **Music House**; the **Hangaram Art Museum** (☎ 580 1234; admission W3000-10,000; 🕒 11am-7pm, closed last Mon of each month), which contains three major galleries that host changing exhibitions; the **Hangaram Design Art Museum** (☎ 580 1490; www.designgallery.or.kr; admission around W3000; 🕒 11am-7pm, closed last Mon of each month), which has worthwhile design-oriented exhibitions; and the **Seoul Calligraphy Art Museum** (☎ 580 1282; admission free-W5000; 🕒 11am-7pm Tue-Sun).

Also part of the complex is the **Korea Film Archives**, with a cinema that sometimes shows programmes of classic Korean movies with English subtitles. The archives has film magazines from around the world and a library of books, videos and DVDs. Upstairs is an **arts library** with more books, CDs, videos and DVDs.

Clustered together next door is the **National Centre for Korean Traditional Performing Arts** (see p101) and the **Museum of Korean Traditional Music** (☎ 580 3300; admission free; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Sun), which exhibits unusual musical instruments including *eo* (a wooden tiger with 27 indentations on its back that is played by passing a stick over them), *chuk* (a wooden box that is hit with a stick), *pyeongyeong* (16 stone chimes) and *pyeonjong* (16 bronze bells). Mainly Korean instruments are on show at this old-fashioned museum.

SEOUL GRAND PARK Map pp198-9☎ 500 7114; www.grandpark.seoul.go.kr; adult/teenager/child W600/500/400; turn right to catch the sky chairlift (adult/teenager/child W4500/3000/2500) or walk (10 minutes) to the entrance of **Seoul Grand Park**. Another 15-minute walk takes you to the National

centre that has been built over the site. The 6000-year-old artefacts include pottery with comb designs – the Neolithic stone culture seems to have been remarkably uniform on different continents.

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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART Map pp198-9

☎ 2188 6000; www.moca.go.kr; adult/youth/child W700/300/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb; subway Line 4 to Seoul Grand Park, Exit 2

This large and impressive art gallery is spread over three floors and also has sculptures in the garden. The outstanding exhibit is 'The More the Better' – a 1988 installation of 1000 flickering TV screens piled up into a pagoda shape by leading Korean artist, Paik Nam-june. The gallery of figurative art includes Kim Tschang-yeol's famous drops of water while the circular international gallery has a sequinned Buddha. Make of that what you will. Other styles include abstract, minimalist and pop art, but the landscape art section is the most impressive.

Overall, the art is slightly disappointing considering the gallery is the national showcase for modern Korean artists. There always seems to be underused or wasted space, and galleries don't show the development of particular artists. The café (drinks W1500 to W2000) has a pleasant balcony area. See right for the next-door zoo and amusement park.

WORLD CUP STADIUM & MALL

Map pp198-9

☎ 2128 2002; subway Line 6 to World Cup Stadium, Exit 1

Costing US\$151 million, the spectacular 64,000-seat World Cup Stadium was built to stage the opening ceremony and some of the matches of the 2002 World Cup soccer finals, which Korea cohosted with Japan. Under the stadium is **CGV** (☎ 1544 1122), a five-screen cinema multiplex that shows films from 10am to after midnight. Also in the mall are lots of small shops, a food court (meals W3000-9000), Starbucks (drinks W4000) and **Carrefour** (🕒 9.30am-midnight), a giant hypermarket with food and household goods on the lower floor. Around the stadium are large parks that have been cleverly reclaimed from landfill sites and returned to a natural state. To arrive by bicycle see p115.

OTHER NEIGHBOURHOODS SOUTH OF THE RIVER

Seoul's southerly neighbourhoods are dormitory suburbs with little of interest except for the Seoul Arts Centre and the major zoo, amusement park and art gallery complex built amid forested hillsides near the horse-racing track.

AMSA-DONG PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT SITE Map pp198-9

☎ 3426 3867; adult/teenager/child W500/300/free; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb; subway Line 8 to Amsa, Exit 1 (bus or taxi), Exit 4 (walking)

It's a 20-minute walk – just go straight from subway Exit 4 – or else catch a bus (No 02 or 05; W500; every 10 minutes) or taxi (W2000) to reach Korea's largest Neolithic site. Set in a park frequented by woodpeckers, you can see a thatched village of pit houses and look around the exhibition

TRANSPORT

Take the subway to the nearest stop, but then you may need to take a shuttle bus, normal bus or taxi.

THE FORGOTTEN WAR

During the Korean War (1950–53) 21 countries took part in the UN operation to save South Korea after it was attacked by the North, including five countries which sent medical teams. North Korean and Chinese troops suffered huge casualties, estimated at 215,000 and 400,000 killed respectively. Civilian casualties on both sides added up to two million. It was a massive conflict involving millions of troops and many desperate battles, yet it is often referred to as the 'Forgotten War' – the name of a book (and film) on the Korean War. Few people know much about the war, and many Korean War veterans feel that they have been forgotten. The Republic of Korea lost 152,279 killed in action, America 33,642, UK 1086, Turkey 724, Canada 516, Australia 332, France 269, Colombia 213, Greece 186, Thailand 130, Netherlands 124, Ethiopia 122, Philippines 112, Belgium 106, New Zealand 43, South Africa 35, Luxembourg 2 and Norway 2.

Upstairs in the museum, black-and-white documentary film footage, photos, maps and artefacts give an insight into the dramatic events of the Korean War (1950–53). The surprise 4am attack from the North (spearheaded by 240 Russian-made tanks), the build-up of UN (mainly American) forces in Busan, the daring amphibious landing at Incheon, the sweep north followed by the surprise Chinese attack all took place in 1950. It was followed by fiercely fought but fruitless battles, and a two-year stalemate that was finally ended by an armistice in 1953. On the left of the museum entrance are the names of UN soldiers killed during the war (see the boxed text, above).

Other displays cover Korea's involvement in the Vietnam War, where 4700 Koreans died. The Combat Experience Room is just that and lasts five minutes (every 30 minutes from 9.30am to 4.30pm).

Outside is more military hardware including a B52 bomber (the wings are so long that they need landing wheels on the tips), Russian-made tanks, a Cobra helicopter and missiles. Children love climbing on or into them.

Every Friday at 2pm from March to June and in October and November a military band performs, and a marching parade culminates in an awesome display of military precision and weapon twirling by an honour guard made up from the army, navy and air forces.

OTHER NEIGHBOURHOODS SOUTH OF THE RIVER

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OTHER NEIGHBOURHOODS SOUTH OF THE RIVER

Museum of Contemporary Art or to Seoul Land Amusement Park.

The excellent and extensive zoo (Seoul's best) is set among forested hillsides and families picnic along the shady banks of a stream that runs through the park. You can hike along a number of marked trails that stretch for 2km to 6km. The zoo is home to a long list of exotic creatures, including the popular African ones. A huge aviary contains cranes, swans, pelicans and other large birds, and an indoor botanic garden houses a forest of cacti, numerous orchids and carnivorous pitcher plants. Ants and swimming beetles are on display in a 'miniature creature' exhibit. An entertaining **dolphin and seal show** (adult/child W1000/300) is held at 11.30am, 1.30pm, 3pm and 4.30pm in summer but only at 1.30pm and 3pm in winter.

SEOUL LAND AMUSEMENT PARK

Map pp198-9

☎ 504 0011; www.seoul.land.co.kr; adult/teenager/child W12,000/8000/7000, day pass W26,000/22,000/18,000; 🕒 9.30am-10pm; subway

Line 4 to Seoul Grand Park, Exit 2

Keep the children happy all day at Seoul's biggest and best amusement park with five themed areas, special events (the Sky Pirates show with stuntmen leaping from high-up into a small pool is heart-stopping and spectacular) and adrenalin rides – the Sky-X bungy swing, the shot drop and the two rollercoasters are wicked. See p65 for Seoul Grand Park, the extensive zoo next door, and earlier in this section for the adjacent National Museum of Contemporary Art.