

## Cost savings seoul

I haven't been to many places where I've felt such a cohesive blend of old and new, but South Korea is one of them. Steeped with 5000 years of culture and history, but integrated with modern music, technology, and infrastructure, it's a country that surprised and delighted me at every turn.

And Seoul? It's one of my favourite cities in the world. If you think New York City is the place that never sleeps, just wait until you arrive in Seoul. During my first visit to the country, I landed in the South Korean capital expecting to spend three or four days in town, but ended up leaving after three weeks. Yes, I loved this city so much that I simply couldn't bring myself to leave.

I'd be walking the bustling streets of popular neighbourhood Hongdae in the early hours of the morning and realise that there was nowhere on earth quite like it. Street performers are sharing their best routines to the latest K-pop songs, shops are bright and open, karaoke is everywhere, and clubs have lines out the door. Talk about a sensory overload, but in the best possible way.

From the colourful houses in Busan to the scenic coastal views and tea plantations on Jeju Island to the towering mountains of Seoraksan National Park: I loved each and every destination I visited in the country. Get ready to be swept away by all that Korea has to offer, from Korean BBQ, K-pop, karaoke, palaces, temples, and arcades.

I've been recording every single dollar, peso, and baht that I've spent on my travels since 2011 (I now have over 65 budget breakdowns on the site!), aiming to give you an accurate picture of how much you can expect to spend in every country around the world. Today, it's South Korea's turn and I'm so excited to start sharing.

The amounts in the guide are listed in U.S. dollars, simply because the vast majority of my readers are from the U.S. I've also included prices in the South Korean won (KRW) – the local currency – as you'll be using that throughout your time in the country.

Yes, this does make calculating the prices of things rather tricky when you're in South Korea! For me, I kept in mind that 10,000 KRW is roughly 8 USD (EUR7, ?6, or 11.50 AUD) and it made figuring out the prices of things far easier.

One quick note I do want to make about travel in South Korea is that it's kind of complicated to pay for things! Korea is, these days, a cashless society – everybody pays with cards and there aren't a lot of places that are happy to accept cash.

Now, that would be all well and good if it wasn't for the fact that the vast majority of payment



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terminals don't accept foreign bank cards. Apple Pay is very limited and Google Pay doesn't exist at all.

I'd say that we were able to successfully use our debit/credit cards 30% of the time in South Korea; and it made no difference whether we were using our U.K., Australian, or New Zealand cards.

Honestly, there isn't an elegant solution. Expect that every time you try to buy something, you might need to try four cards until one of them works. Carry a lot of cash with you in case none of your cards are accepted. It didn't end up being a huge problem for us, as we were able to pay with cash whenever our cards were declined, but it was frustrating to have to continually deal with payment rejections everywhere we went!

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