

Republic of Korea

Business Travel Guide

Compiled by:

Swiss Business Hub Korea

Seoul, March 2024

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Foreign nationals are required to have a valid passport for a minimum period of six months from the date of entry into Korea. Swiss citizens can stay up to 90 days for business and tourist purposes without needing a visa. However, they are required to register for the [Korea Electronic Travel Authorization \(K-ETA\)](#) through the designated app, available on both [Android](#) and [iOS](#). Passengers should complete this registration at least 72 hours prior to their flight departure.

As part of the Visit Korea campaign 2023-2024, Swiss and Liechtenstein citizens are exempt from K-ETA until 31.12.2024.

Korea has different types of visas tailored to specific social activities and residency purposes for foreigners. Any foreigner residing in Korea for longer than 90 days must ensure they have the appropriate visa for their intended activities. Engaging in other activities than those permitted under their visa requires permission from the relevant authorities.

For more information, please visit the [Korea Visa Portal](#) or contact:

Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Switzerland

Kalcheggweg 38

3006 Bern

Tel. +41 31 356 2444 (8:30 – 12:30, 14:00 – 17:00);

E-Mail: swiss@mofa.go.kr

overseas.mofa.go.kr/ch-en/index.do

At present, there are no mandatory health requirements in effect. For updates regarding the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination status and related requirements, please check the [Embassy website](#). Currently, PCR test, health form and quarantine measures are not mandatory.

Transfer from the airport to the city center:

The largest international airport is located around 60 km from Seoul city center. Various modes of transportation connect the airport with the main areas of Seoul.

- **Taxi:** Taxis in various sizes are readily available in front of the airport's arrival hall at both terminals. International taxis with English-speaking drivers can be pre-booked online.
 - Duration: approx. 60-90 minutes
 - Cost: KRW 50'000 - 65'000; additional late-night charges apply
- **Airport Railroad Express (AREX):** The airport railroad express connects both terminals directly with various stations in Seoul. Both local (all stop) and express trains (non-stop to Seoul station) run at regular intervals between 5:00 – 00.00.

Express Train		Local Train	
Duration	43 minutes from Terminal 1 51 minutes from Terminal 2	Duration	59 minutes from Terminal 1 66 minutes from Terminal 2
Interval	every 20 – 40 minutes	Interval	every 5 - 10 minutes
Cost	KRW 9'500 (one-way)	Cost	KRW 4'150-4'750 (one-way)
Tickets	at designated ticket booths (B1 floor in both terminals)	Tickets	at single-use ticket vending machines

- **Airport Limousine Buses:** Airport Limousine buses are located outside the arrival halls at **both** terminals and provide a convenient alternative to taxis and AREX and stop in walking distance to major hotels and tourist attractions.
 - Duration: approx. 60-90 minutes
 - Cost: KRW 5'000 – 18'000 (depending on operator)
 - Ticket purchase: at designated booths (cash, major credit cards)

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

No vaccinations are required, but the following are recommended:

Recommended vaccinations	Starting
Routine vaccines: measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio, yearly flu shot	
Diphtheria	1 day
Tuberculosis	6 weeks
Hepatitis A (infectious hepatitis)	1 week
Hepatitis B	3-4 weeks
Tetanus	1 day
Typhoid	1 week
Japanese encephalitis	3 weeks

It is not mandatory to show a certificate of medical insurance upon entry.

If you require medical assistance during your stay, English-speaking doctors are available 24 hours a day to assist foreigners and can provide you with relevant medical information in emergencies. Hospitals and clinics are equipped with modern medical equipment and the quality of the medical care is quite high.

International health care centers:

Seoul National University Hospital	+82 2 2072 0505
Samsung Hospital	+82 2 3410 0200 / 0226
Severance Hospital	+82 2 2019 3600 / 3690
St. Mary's Hospital	+82 2 2258 5745
ASAN Medical Clinic	+82 2 3010 5001
Seoul International Clinic	+82 2 790 0857 9

For emergencies, call **119**.

PUBLIC SECURITY / RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS

The inner-political situation remains stable. However, tensions on the Korean peninsula persist to the present day despite the armistice agreement signed in 1953. Missile tests and military exercises occur regularly and can potentially affect the security situation on short notice. We recommend consulting the [FDFA Travel Advice page](#) to stay informed about any changes and developments before your travel.

TIME ZONE

Time difference between Switzerland and Korea:

Zurich	Central European Time (CEST) UTC+01:00
Seoul	Korean Standard Time (KST) UTC+09:00

Korea does not observe daylight saving time. The time difference between Switzerland and Korea is seven hours in summer and eight hours during wintertime.

BUSINESS HOURS

	Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays and Nationals Holidays
Government Offices	09:00 – 18:00	closed	closed
Banks	09:00 – 16:00	closed	closed
Supermarkets	10:00 – 22:00	10:00 – 22:00	10:00 – 22:00
Retail shops	10:00 – 23:00	10:00 – 23:00	10:00 – 23:00

Some large supermarkets close on certain days of the month, usually on a Wednesday or Sunday. ATMs provide cash 24 hours a day but charge higher fees after bank closing hours. Restaurants and cafés usually do not have off days (except on some national holidays). Many restaurants remain open until the late night or early morning hours but have a break time between 15:00 – 17:00.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Holiday	2024	2025
New Year's Day	1 January	1 January
Lunar New Year's Day (Seollal)	9 – 11 February	28 – 30 January
Independence Movement Day	1 March	1 March
Children's Day	5 May	5 May
Buddha's Birthday	15 May	15 May
Memorial Day	6 June	6 June
Independence Day	15 August	15 August
Thanksgiving (Chuseok)	16 – 18 September	5 – 7 October
National Foundation Day	3 October	3 October
Hangul Proclamation Day	9 October	9 October
Christmas	25 December	25 December

Lunar New Year (Seollal) and Thanksgiving (Chuseok) are the two most important holidays in Korea. As people often use their vacation days to visit family or travel abroad, it is better to plan business trips outside these holiday times.

NATIONAL TRADE FAIR CALENDAR

Obtain the dates of the main trade fairs in Korea [here](#).

TELECOMMUNICATION

To dial from Korea to Switzerland: + 82 (Korean country code) – area code – phone number.

To dial to Switzerland from Korea: Access code – 41 – area code – phone number.

Access codes: 001 (KT), 002 (LG U+), 00365 (Sejong Telecom), 00700 (SK Telink)

Prepaid USIMs are available at airports and in convenience stores or on [Egsmcard](#). Additionally, Esim cards or a WiFi router egg provide good alternative to getting a physical sim card if there is no need for a Korean phone number. Many businesses, major corporations, public places, and restaurants and cafés also provide free WiFi service.

Rental companies for sim cards and WiFi routers at the airport or for online purchase before travel:

SK Telecom	skroaming.com
KT	roaming.kt.com/ib/eng/main.asp
LG U+	lguplus.com/ib-roaming/pc/eng

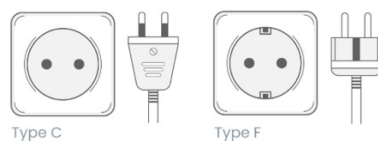
Important phone numbers:

Police	112
Fire department and ambulance	119
Foreign traveler hotline	1330

Korea is one of the most connected countries in the world, both in terms of usage and connection speed. The internet is for the most part freely accessible. The government blocks websites that violate the law or social norms, including threats to national security and public morality. Spreading rumors or leaving negative reviews online can lead to criminal charges as defamation is considered a criminal offense.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

The electrical outlet in Korea has two round holes: Type C Euro plug and Type E/F.



Source: world-power-plugs.com

The standard voltage is 220 volts with a frequency of 60 Hertz.

If the plug of your appliance does not fit the sockets, you will require a travel plug adapter to match the socket type you need. It is advisable to bring adapters for all three types if plugging in is essential for you.

Many cafés provide phone charging services upon request or have outlets at seating areas for customers to plug in. If you find yourself running low on battery during the day, you can purchase pre-charged power banks for one-time use for all phone models at convenience stores.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

The national currency is the Korean won (KRW). Korean won notes are available in KRW 1'000, KRW 5'000, KRW 10'000, and KRW 50'000 denominations. You can exchange foreign currencies at Incheon International Airport upon arrival or at all major banks and foreign exchange offices.

The exchange rate as of March 1, 2024: CHF 1 = KRW 1'508

The import of foreign currency is unlimited, provided amounts greater than USD 10'000 (including traveler checks) are declared on arrival. Export of foreign currency is limited to the amount declared on arrival.

Credit Cards

Visa, Master Card, Plus and Cirrus are among the most widely accepted cards in Korea. Some places even accept international cards China UnionPay, Maestro, Electron, and JCB cards.

For withdrawing, depositing, and transferring money, ATMs (automatic teller machines) are available at banks and other sites such as some convenience stores. However, not all ATMs accept international cards but require a Korean bank account. To withdraw cash, seek out ATMs equipped with the “Global ATM” sign, found in banks, many subway stations and some convenience stores. Lotte ATMs in Lotte Department stores also accept international cards.

Acceptance of methods of payment:

	everywhere	almost everywhere	limited	not accepted
Cash (KRW)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cash (US dollar)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International MasterCard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International Visa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
American Express	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apple Pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Google Pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Samsung Pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

TRAVEL / LOCAL TRANSPORT

By Air

Incheon International Airport serves as the main international gateway and is easily accessible by bus, airport express and taxis. Dozens of self-check-in and smart bag-drop machines are available.

Major international airlines offer over 1,400 flights scheduled direct or non-stop flights per week from Korea to key global cities. Both [Korean Air](#) and [SWISS International Airlines](#) (starting on May 8, 2024) offer direct flights from Zurich to Incheon airport.

Korean Air: ZRH – ICN → Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday

ICN – ZRH → Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday

SWISS: ZRH – ICN → Tuesday, Friday, Sunday

ICN – ZRH → Monday, Wednesday, Saturdays

Additionally, Gimpo International Airport, located within Seoul, serves as convenient alternative for travel to and from Japan, China, and Taiwan.

By Sea

Busan, Korea's largest port and second-largest city serves as main entry point for visitors arriving by sea. The Pukwan Ferry, Korea Ferry, and the Korea Marine Express Company provide regular services between Korea and Japan. From Incheon Seaport, several operators provide regular services to China. Passengers arriving by ferry can enter with private cars with proper documentation.

By Road

Due to security restrictions, driving and walking directions on Google Maps are limited. We recommend using the domestic application Naver Map ([Android / iOS](#)) and Kakao Map ([Android / iOS](#)) for navigation (in English) instead. Expressways link Seoul with provincial cities and towns placing any destination within a day's travel. Heavy traffic jams are common during rush hours, on Friday afternoons and during holidays, particularly in the metropolitan areas. Driving and renting a car requires an international driver's license. You can arrange car rental at [Lotte Car](#) (with the possibility to hire chauffeur) or [SK Rent-a-Car](#).

By Rail

Korean National Railroad ([KORAIL](#)) and Supreme Railways ([SR](#)) are the major railway operators. Trains adhere to strict schedules and experience minimal delays. It is advisable to use the KTX high-speed train for intercity travel. You can book tickets in advance through the operators' websites and mobile applications, allowing for seat selection, or directly at all train station ticket offices. For security purposes, the system will request personal details, including passport details.

Subway systems are available in Seoul and its metropolitan area, Busan, Daegu, Gwangju, Daejeon and Incheon. The subway is the most convenient mode of city travel, as signs and station names are indicated in English. It is recommended to download the Kakao Metro app (available for [iOS / Android](#)), which provides easy English navigation for all major subway systems. A map of the Seoul subway is also available [here](#). Ticket vending machines in all subway stations offer single-journey tickets for purchase. Vending machines only accept cash for transactions. You may receive the deposit of KRW 500 back by returning the ticket at a deposit refund machine in any subway station

Ticket usage: → tap ticket on the reader at turnstile → board/disembark subway → tap out by placing ticket on the reader at turnstile

Subway base fare: KRW 1'400 (CHF 0.93)

Bus stop signs are color-coded according to bus type. In Seoul, blue buses connect suburban areas to downtown Seoul and cover long-distance routes, while green buses connect major subway stations and bus terminals outside downtown Seoul. Red buses operate on express routes between the metropolitan area and downtown Seoul. Maeul (local) buses are small buses in residential areas providing access to subway stations. Most buses require passengers to pay the bus fare using a transportation card as cash-based tickets are being phased out. When boarding, tap the card at the machine next to the bus driver. Make sure to tap out when disembarking to avoid additional fees.

Bus base fare: KRW 1'500 (CHF 1.00)

Taxis run on a meter that works on a distance basis but switches to a time-based fare during heavy traffic. Tipping is not customary and not expected. Regular taxis (orange, white or grey color) in Seoul have an initial base fare of KRW 4'800 for the first two kilometers with a surcharge from 22:00 to 4:00. Black deluxe taxis are pricier with a base fare of KRW 7'000 for the first three kilometers but offer a

higher standard of service. The fare includes the addition of expressway tolls. When travelling in rural areas, please check the fare and return services beforehand.

Only few local taxi drivers are fluent in English, so it is best to bring a business card from your hotel and the address of your destination written in Korean. Mentioning a subway station or a nearby landmark (hotels or attractions) close to the destination is also a good idea. Vacant taxis display a red indicator light in the windshield. Taxis with green indicator lights are reserved. A blinking red light or no light indicates that the taxi is occupied.

For hailing a taxi in advance, the following apps (available in English) are commonly used:

Kakao T: [Android / iOS](#) (choose “pay to the driver” to pay in cash or foreign credit card)

Tada: [Android / iOS](#)

i.M.: [Android / iOS](#)

Uber operates as UT in Korea and works as an integrated Korea-specific taxi hailing service for licensed taxis. You can use the regular Uber app to hail a taxi, or you can download the UT app ([Android / iOS](#)).

All public transport across Korea utilizes [T-money cards](#). Users can purchase these cards for a non-refundable fee of KRW 2,500 to 5,000 at any subway station booth, bus kiosk, or convenience store displaying the T-money logo. You can perform reloads at any of these locations as well. Unused funds remaining on the card (up to KRW 20,000 minus a processing fee of KRW 500) are refundable at subway station machines. If you have an Android phone, you can download the [Korea Tour Card T-money app](#) to deposit funds using your Visa or MasterCard credit card. NFC function on your phone allows you to tag it when boarding and alighting buses and subways.

HOTELS

Most hotels have easy access to transportation to the airport (airport shuttle buses) and to popular tourist destinations, as they are located close to a subway station. Rooms should be booked about 3-4 weeks in advance. There is a variety of choices in all price ranges from super-deluxe international hotels to much cheaper accommodations (motels) with comfortable beds for the night.

Conveniently located hotels include:

[Grand Hyatt Seoul](#)

[Four Seasons Hotel Seoul](#)

[Shilla Stay Seodaemun](#)

[Four Points by Sheraton Josun](#)

[Grand InterContinental Seoul Parnas](#)

[Lotte Hotel Seoul](#)

LANGUAGES USED FOR BUSINESS

The official language is Korean, but English is widely spoken for business. The level of English fluency among Koreans is generally high but can differ depending on the context or factors such as age range or geography. In business settings, it is typical to encounter individuals who are either completely fluent or they bring along an interpreter if they do not.

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Meetings and Greetings

When scheduling meetings, it is advisable to set the date a few weeks in advance. Most business meetings are typically arranged for mid-morning or mid-afternoon. Punctuality is highly regarded, so it is important to start and end meetings on time. However, do not be surprised if senior executives arrive a few minutes late or cancel last minute due to their busy schedules or unforeseen circumstances.

When introducing senior-level individuals, it is customary to slightly tilt your head and offer a gentle handshake, although some women may prefer a bow to a handshake. Business cards are exchanged after the introductions.

It is appreciated to make an effort to greet with phrases like "an-yong-ha-say-yo" (hello) or "gam-sa-ham-ni-da" (thank you) in Korean.

Do not expect to dive straight into business negotiations. Initial meetings are often about getting to know each other. You will likely be offered coffee, water, or tea; it is considered polite to accept even if you don't plan to drink them.

Business Cards

Always have your business cards readily available. Typically, they are exchanged after the first introductions at the beginning of the meeting. When exchanging cards, it is considered respectful to stand up. Receive and present the card with both hands as a sign of respect. Avoid treating the business cards casually, such as shoving it into your back pocket. Take a moment to read its content before putting it away. Preparing a dual-sided Korean business card (in Korean letters) demonstrates that you sensitivity to Korean culture.

Names

Many Koreans include an English name on their business card as a courtesy to foreign contacts. You can address them by their English name. Otherwise, use their family name followed by the title and "nim" (like Lee manager-nim). Family names (e.g. Lee, Kim, Min, Choi, Park, Oh etc.) precede first names in Korean language and on business cards. Using first names is usually reserved for friends and family. It is helpful to know your counterpart's Korean name when searching for them among colleagues or within the company.

Business Language

In Korean culture, saying "yes" often means "I understand" or "I'll try and do my best", rather than a direct agreement ("I agree" or "I will do it") as in European culture. It is impolite to say "no" directly, so people might postpone actions or simply not show up, expecting that you will understand that they never intended to come. Consequently, you may find that Koreans sometimes do not fulfill agreements as expected. This is not meant to deceive you; rather, saying "yes" indicates their intention to try their best instead of saying "no" directly.

Decision-making processes are typically hierarchical and top-down. Therefore, you may find that actions often take more time than you are accustomed to. Try to be patient and avoid showing signs of dissatisfaction.

Dress Code

While the formal attire for men includes dark suits, ties, and leather shoes, and for women, simple and modest business suits or dresses, business casual attire is becoming increasingly acceptable. If you have any tattoos, it is advisable to conceal them for your business meeting.

Traditional meals and social gatherings often involve sitting on the floor. Thus, it is advised to wear clean, conservative-style socks and wear shoes that are easy to slip on and off.

Business Relations

In Korean business culture, personal relationships hold significant importance, often nurtured through gifts, greeting cards and shared meals. You do not have to give expensive gifts. Instead, traditional gifts such as chocolate, wine, or practical items are appreciated. A small gift giving is customary at the initial meetings with the aim at building rapport and gain favor. For a small meeting, it is recommended to prepare small gifts for everyone with a different, more elaborated gift for the highest-level person. For a meeting with many attendees, one general gift sufficient. Also, consider thoughtful wrapping and packaging. When presenting the gift, use both hands. Do not expect it to be unwrapped in front of you, unless explicitly requested.

It is important to convey a long-term commitment to the market and the relationship. Maintain good body posture during meetings; avoid slouching or overly excessive body gestures, as they could be perceived as disconcerting.

Personal questions like age, marital status, education are common in Korean culture and are not considered impolite but rather serve to build a closer relationship. Family, hobbies, and sports are suitable topics of conversation, depending on personal relationship.

Eating and drinking are an important part of relationship building. Although it is not common to drink alcohol during lunch, sometimes Soju (Korean liquor), makgeolli (fermented rice wine), beer or wine will be served. If you do not want to drink, it is acceptable to excuse yourself for religious or medical reasons.

BUSINESS RISKS

Korea ranks at 25 worldwide on the Global Corruption Index with a score of 23.36 ([Global Corruption Index](#)). The volatility of the Korean won is currently at a minimum after an extended period of turbulence as the country recovered from the pandemic and the U.S. central bank's hawkish rate policy. [Swiss Export Risk Insurance \(SERV\)](#) designates Korea as a high-income country with minimal associated risks.

SERV insures political and *del credere* risks involved in exporting goods and services. The full range of services and products offered by SERV to exporters, service providers and financial institutions can be obtained at www.serv-ch.com.

Your contact person in Lausanne

Dominique Aubert

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Phone +41 21 613 35 84

E-mail dominique.aubert@serv-ch.com

IMPORT OF SAMPLES AND CATALOGUES

Goods recognized as samples with a dutiable value of not more than US\$250 are exempt from duty imposition, while those with a dutiable value exceeding US\$250 are subject to duty. For more information, see the website of the [Korean Customs Service](#). Printed materials such as catalogues are also not subject to import taxes. Additionally, Korea is a signatory to the ATA Agreement and recognizes the ATA Carnet.

USEFUL SMARTPHONE APPS

Korea is one of the most digitalized countries in the world that has built its own search engines and online portals: Naver is number one and far ahead of Google. To ensure a smooth stay in Korea, it is recommended to download the following applications:

Kakao Talk	Android / iOS
Kakao Metro	Android / iOS
Kakao T (taxi)	Android / iOS
KorailTalk(railway)	Android / iOS
Kakao Map	Android / iOS
Naver Map	Android / iOS
Naver Dictionary	Android / iOS
Papago (translator)	Android / iOS
Shuttle (food delivery)	Android / iOS
Visit Korea (tourism)	Android / iOS

ADDRESSES OF THE EMBASSY AND CONSULATE OF SWITZERLAND IN KOREA

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03165 Seoul, Republic of Korea

Phone + 82 2 739 9511

(Mon – Fri, 09:00 – 12:00)

Fax + 82 2 737 9392

Web www.eda.admin.ch/seoul

E-Mail seoul@eda.admin.ch

Consulate of Switzerland

104 Gurak-ro, Suyeong-gu,
48214 Busan, Republic of Korea

Phone + 82 51 757 3530

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ADDRESS OF THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA IN SWITZERLAND

Embassy of the Republic of Korea

Kalcheggweg 38, P.O. Box 301, 3006 Bern 15, Switzerland

Phone + 41 31 356 24 44 (08:30 – 12:30, 14:00 – 17:00)

Fax + 41 31 356 24 50

Web overseas.mofa.go.kr/ch-en/index.do

E-Mail swiss@mofa.go.kr

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