

7-Day Seoul Itinerary

Palaces, Bukchon Hanok Village & the DMZ

Seoul doesn't need an introduction anymore — K-pop, Korean dramas, and films like *Parasite* and *Squid Game* have already done that work. What the export doesn't show is how easy the city is to travel once you're on the ground: five-hundred-year-old palaces sit one subway stop from underground malls, hanok tile roofs step down into glass office towers, and the DMZ — the most heavily fortified border on Earth — is a 90-minute drive from your hotel breakfast. This week covers the Joseon-dynasty palaces and Bukchon's hanok lanes, a street-food crawl through Korea's oldest market, a DMZ day trip, a full day built around the K-culture machine itself, and a countryside day trip to close it out.

DURATION

7 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

Apr–May & Sept–Nov

cherry blossoms, fall foliage,
mild temps

FROM

\$1,690 USD / person

for 2 people

Day 1 Arrive in Seoul

Land at Incheon and settle into Gwanghwamun, steps from Gyeongbokgung Palace — then ease in with dinner at one of the city's most famous night markets.

Private Transfer — Incheon Airport (ICN) to Hotel

~1–1.5 hours · From \$49.60 USD one-way per vehicle (van, up to 4–5 people)

A private van with real-time flight tracking and a driver holding a name sign in arrivals — 90 minutes of free waiting time is built in, so a delayed bag claim won't cost extra.

Trazy · trazy.com

Check-In — Four Seasons Hotel Seoul

From \$394 USD / night, for 2 people

A five-star base in Gwanghwamun, Jongno-gu — walking distance to Gyeongbokgung Palace and Bukchon Hanok Village, and the hotel for the entire week.

Four Seasons Hotel Seoul · +82 2 6388-5000 · fourseasons.com/seoul

Dinner at Myeongdong Night Market

Est. \$10–20 USD / person

On your own — a short taxi from the hotel, Myeongdong's street stalls run late with skewers, hotteok, and Korean fried chicken; come hungry and graze rather than sit down.

Day 2 Gyeongbokgung Palace & Bukchon Hanok Village

The grandest of Seoul's Five Grand Palaces in the morning, then the hanok-roofed lanes of Bukchon in the afternoon.

Gyeongbokgung Palace & Changing of the Guard Ceremony

~2.5–3 hours · KRW 3,000 (~\$2.20 USD) / person; ceremony free to watch (10am & 2pm)

The main royal palace of the Joseon dynasty, rebuilt after the Japanese invasions and again after the Korean War. Time your visit for the Sumunjang changing-of-the-guard ceremony at Gwanghwamun Gate, then walk the throne hall and Gyeonghoeru Pavilion pond before the afternoon crowds build.

Bukchon Hanok Village

~1.5–2 hours, self-guided · Free

A ten-minute walk from the palace into a hillside neighborhood of traditional hanok houses, many now cafes and craft studios. Residents still live here, so keep to the marked lanes and lower your voice — locals have asked visitors for exactly that for years.

Dinner in Insadong

Est. \$20–30 USD / person

On your own — Insadong's main strip and side alleys mix traditional tea houses, galleries, and restaurants serving hanjeongsik (set-course Korean meals).

Day 3 Changdeokgung, Jongmyo & Gwangjang Market

A UNESCO-listed palace garden and a Confucian shrine in the morning, then a street-food crawl through Seoul's oldest market in the evening.

Changdeokgung Palace & Secret Garden (Guided)

~2.5 hours · KRW 3,000 palace + KRW 5,000 garden (~\$6 USD total) / person

The best-preserved of the Five Grand Palaces, and the only one with UNESCO World Heritage status. The rear Secret Garden — Huwon — is guided-tour-only and books out, so reserve an English-language slot before you go.

Jongmyo Shrine

~1 hour, guided (required on weekdays) • KRW 1,000 (~\$0.75 USD) / person

A Confucian shrine holding memorial tablets for Joseon kings and queens — plain, dark-wood halls set among old pine trees, and one of the calmest sites in central Seoul. Weekday visits require a timed guided tour; Saturdays allow free self-guided entry.

Gwangjang Market Food Tour

~4 hours • From \$73 USD / person, includes lunch

A guided crawl through Korea's oldest covered market, open since 1905 — mung bean pancakes (bindaetteok), soft tofu, mayak gimbap, and raw beef tartare (yukhoe) with a local guide who knows which stalls to queue for.

Viator (Private Street Food Tour of Gwangjang Market) • viator.com

Day 4 DMZ & JSA Day Trip

A full day at the most heavily fortified border on Earth, an hour and a half north of the palaces you walked two days ago.

DMZ & JSA Day Tour

~5 hours • \$52.50 USD / person

Imjingak Park and the Freedom Bridge, the Third Infiltration Tunnel dug beneath the border, the DMZ Exhibition Hall, and an observatory with binoculars trained on North Korea. Passport required; book at least a few days ahead as slots fill quickly.

Klook (DMZ Tour from Seoul) • klook.com

Free Evening in Seoul

Self-guided • Free

Tours return to central Seoul by mid-afternoon — rest at the hotel or wander Gwanghwamun Square before dinner on your own.

Day 5 K-Culture Day — Hongdae, HYBE Insight & the Han River

A day built around the machine behind the exports — a K-pop museum, Hongdae's street culture, and a fountain show over the Han River at night.

HYBE Insight Museum

~1.5–2 hours · KRW 39,000 (~\$29 USD) / person, timed entry

An immersive museum in Yongsan tracing HYBE's roster — BTS included — through stage costumes, choreography breakdowns, and interactive exhibits. Tickets are timed and sell out on weekends; book online in advance.

HYBE Insight · hybeinsight.com

Hongdae Street Culture

~2–3 hours, self-guided · Free

The streets around Hongik University are Seoul's live-music and street-performance district — buskers, indie shops, and photo-booth chains cluster around the main playground square, especially on weekend afternoons.

Han River Park — Banpo Bridge Moonlight Rainbow Fountain

~1 hour, evening · Free

The world's longest bridge fountain lights up after sunset, spraying colored water off both sides of Banpo Bridge — watch from the riverside park below with snacks from a nearby convenience store, a Han River evening tradition.

Day 6 Nami Island & Petite France Day Trip

A countryside escape by train and ferry — a tree-lined island made famous by a Korean drama, and a French-village theme park nearby.

ITX-Cheongchun Train — Seoul to Gyeongju

~1 hour each way · From \$8 USD round-trip / person

Reserved-seat commuter rail from Yongsan or Cheongnyangni Station out to Gyeongju County — book seats on the Korail app or at the station a day ahead in high season.

Korail · letskorail.com

Nami Island

~2–3 hours · Ferry + entry ~\$9 USD round-trip / person

A crescent-shaped island of towering metasequoia trees, made famous by the drama *Winter Sonata* — rent a bike or walk the tree-lined paths and lakefront on your own.

