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HIDDEN GEMS IN SOUTH KOREA

South Korea has always been a nation that can entice, allure, and enthrall all at once. A perfect hybridization of ancient and modern, South Korea hosts a truly splendid palette of luxurious and superb locales that are not to be missed. While many a traveler become enamored with the glitz and glamour of Seoul (we certainly suggest you spend a night or two in Gangnam or Hongdae and peruse the skyline along the Han River), there are countless hidden gems across the peninsula. From Jeju Island to Gangwon province, these hidden sites and scenes are without equal. Read more to discover some of these secretive pearls hidden in the Land of Morning Calm.



GANGNEUNG CAFE STREET — IN GANGWON —

Gangwon province became famous following South Korea's hosting of the Winter Olympics in 2018. Hosted in Gangwon's own Pyeongchang, one can still visit the Olympic stadiums in all their stately splendor. However, the magnificent natural wonders and man-made caffeine delicacies of Gangwon's Gangneung beach could be more enticing in lieu of the bygone Olympic battlegrounds. Take in the breathtaking view of the deep, navy waves as you enjoy artisanal brewed coffee par excellence!



BOSEONG TEA PLANTATION — IN JEOLLA —


In the event that one's desire for caffeine persists, there are a plethora of locales that cater to just that kind of desire! One, in particular, is Boseong in Jeolla province. Known colloquially as the "green tea capital of Korea" Boseong produces a marvelous amount of tea and has done so for nearly 1600 years. If green tea is not your forte come experience the sublime natural splendors of Boseong instead. Verdant tea fields, aromatic plants and trees, and delicacies prepared with the premium green tea produced from this treasure-like destination offer more than just a conventional cup of tea to visitors.



JEJU ISLAND PENSION HOUSES

— IN JEJU —

Once awash with brutalist and mass-produced resorts and hotels, Jeju island has recently been returning to a more laid-back and calmer demeanor. This extends all the way to its tourist industry. While mainland South Korea is known for its hustle and bustle culture ("*bali bali*" or "*quickly quickly*" in Korean), Jeju has been reclaiming its role as a sanguine and languid island paradise. Pension houses, though a bit smaller in scale these days, lack nothing in luxury. In fact, their proximity to azure beachfront or grand yet inviting dormant volcanoes do much to emphasize their high-quality status. Opt for modern design with Jeju Eco Suites, or 'minimalist beachfront' like Jeju Solarsaedo pension houses.



GEOJE ISLAND

— IN GYEONGSANGNAM DO —

Off the coast of South Korea's southern city of Busan, one can find this illustrious gem, Geoje Island. The island, though seemingly small, contains scores of different sites and areas to explore. Take boat tours around the main island as well as some of its smaller satellite islands. Explore fortresses erected as bulwarks against pirate raids. Or stroll in the botanical gardens of this incredible hidden gem.



YONGIN FOLK VILLAGE — IN GYEONGGI —

Located just outside of Seoul in Yongin city, this live museum allows one to enjoy a whimsical trip back in time to South Korea's past. Though a rapidly modernizing nation today, not so long-ago Korea was once the Neo-Confucian state of Joseon. Yongin Folk Village is an all-encompassing trip to the past, with small private tours, performances of traditional dances and plays, hands-on experiences of traditional crafts, and food and drinks from the Joseon era. *Hanbok*, or Korean traditional clothing can also be rented to complete this astounding experiential museum.



HAEDONG YONGGUNGSA TEMPLE — IN BUSAN —

With a grandiose name meaning “Dragon Palace of the East Sea” temple, Haedong Yonggungsa Temple in Busan is as otherworldly as it is historical. Ethereally hovering over the weathered rocks of Busan's sublime coastline, this temple is ensorceling all year round but certainly, it is at its most illustrious surrounding the annual celebrations of the historical Buddha's birthday in Korea. This spring holiday sees not only the blossoming of cherry, peach, and apricot blossoms nationwide but also the adornment of all the temples with colorful lanterns. Haedong Yonggungsa is no exception. The juxtaposition of the colorful lanterns and the natural wonders of the waves and rocks transform this temple into a true treasure of the country.



ANDONG SOJU MUSEUM — IN GYEONGSANGBUK-DO —

No other alcoholic beverage is more ubiquitous in the Republic of Korea than the fabled soju! That infamous green bottle introduces itself to new visitors of Korea almost immediately. But at the Andong Soju Museum, one is treated to the art and subtlety of the Andong region's soju. Consumed for centuries, the soju of Andong, and the museum in its honor are a twofold set of hidden gems. Especially for the more Dionysian among us!



JIRI MOUNTAIN — NORTH AND SOUTH JEOLLA PROVINCES AND GYEONGSANGNAM-DO —

One of Korea's largest mountain ranges, and its tallest after Jeju's Halla mountain, Jirisan or Mount Jiri/Jiri Mountain is one of the most opulent of Korea's natural wonders. The mountains span three provinces and offer parks, breathtaking views, sublime landscapes, temples, and even the opportunity to encounter endangered Asiatic black bears (albeit black bears in a safely enclosed area!). Jiri Mountain is steeped in history, myths, and legends that date back to Korea's rich ancient past. If a mountain climb seems too daunting, rest assured, Jiri Mountain also hosts a luxurious spa resort. A welcomed reprieve after an arduous, but a certainly worthwhile day of hiking. Hiking tours are available for eager, yet unacquainted climbers to enjoy.

ARE YOU READY TO DISCOVER THESE GEMS FIRSTHAND?



State-of-the-art skylines and a nightlife that never sleeps are enticing enough to make South Korea a destination not to be missed. Certainly less so with the aforementioned hidden, illustrious, and pristine gems on our list. Though hidden, these gems often include private groups and tours and a plethora of information for interested seekers. South Korea is known for its hospitable, convenient, and welcoming culture, so please do not hesitate to obtain more information on any (or all) of these 8 hidden treasures by contacting us here at Zorka's Travel today!

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