

FACT SHEET

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE Bureau of Consular Affairs

Yeosu Expo 2012, Yeosu, Republic of Korea

Expo 2012 will take place in Yeosu, Korea, from May 12 through August 12, 2012. It features national, themed, and corporate pavilions (building-sized exhibitions). The organizers expect 8-10 million visitors from all over the world. If you are among the U.S. citizens planning to travel to Yeosu during this three-month period, please review this information carefully.

The United States of America is an official participant in the Yeosu Expo, joining more than 100 other national and international exhibitors. The USA Pavilion is made possible through a public-private partnership, with funding from the private sector and other partners. National Days and other special celebrations for exhibitors will occur throughout the 93 days of the Expo. Wednesday, July 4, 2012, is the USA National Day at the Expo.

[The Yeosu Expo web site](#) provides information about events, tickets, and transportation. [The USA Pavilion web site](#) provides information about the USA National Pavilion. The [CDC Travelers' Health](#) web site provides health-related information for U.S. citizens planning to travel to South Korea.

Note: Some of the information in this Fact Sheet applies to travel anywhere in South Korea and -- except where noted -- is not specific to Yeosu or to the Yeosu Expo 2012. Please refer to the State Department's [Country Specific Information](#) web page for South Korea.

Security Assessment:

Threats to Safety and Security: When you travel, you should be alert to any unusual activity around your home, hotel, or business, and report any significant incidents to the local police. For emergency assistance in the Republic of Korea dial 112, or from a cell phone 02-112.

Public Demonstrations: The Republic of Korea (ROK) is a modern democracy with active public political participation, and political demonstrations are common. While in recent years, there has been a decrease in violence associated with political demonstrations, even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational. You should avoid demonstrations whenever possible and exercise caution if you find yourself in an area with active demonstrations.

North Korea (DPRK): An armistice agreement, monitored by the United Nations, has maintained general peace on the Korean peninsula for the past 58 years. Tensions have occasionally flared up because of provocative acts by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including ballistic missile tests, nuclear warhead tests, and limited armed incursions into ROK-held territory. Some of these provocations have escalated into geographically limited skirmishes taking place primarily around isolated islands off the northwest coast of the ROK.

The Republic of Korea maintains a high level of readiness to respond to any military threats from the DPRK. Military training exercises are routinely conducted throughout the Republic of Korea during the year and include civil defense drills, which are normally held four times a year. U.S. citizens should stay informed through local media about upcoming military exercises and civil defense drills that sometimes occur at short notice. The DPRK often issues strongly-worded and threatening messages in connection with these exercises.

Emergency Preparedness: The U.S. Embassy in Seoul maintains a page on its website with local information about [emergency preparedness](#). Travelers can stay informed by bookmarking this site and following local current events during their time in Korea. During the monsoon season from June - August and the typhoon and hurricane season from May - November, heavy rains and flooding sometimes occur in the Republic of Korea. See general information about natural disaster preparedness at the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website <http://www.fema.gov/>. If the Embassy becomes aware of any specific and credible threat to your safety and security, we will inform you of the threat as soon as possible through our enrollment and local email systems.

Crime: The crime rate in the Republic of Korea is low. However, pick-pocketing, purse snatching, assault, hotel room and residential burglary, and residential crime occur more frequently in major metropolitan areas--such as Seoul and Busan--than elsewhere in the Republic of Korea. Itaewon, Shinchon, Myeongdong, and Hongdae are well known entertainment and shopping districts in Seoul in which crowds, alcohol, and a higher prevalence of drug activity can also present a higher risk for crime. Please use caution in all crowded entertainment, nightlife, and shopping districts throughout Korea. Recently, a small number of incidents involving U.S. citizens have included allegations of physical and sexual assault, drugs slipped into drinks, and thefts of purses or wallets. Bar and street fights, as well as occasional harassment of Westerners, have also been reported in nightlife districts in Seoul. Exercise caution when traveling alone at night and use only legitimate taxis or public transportation. Reduce the likelihood of becoming a crime victim by exercising the same type of security precautions you would take when visiting any large city in the United States.

Don't buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only is buying bootleg goods illegal in the United States, you may be breaking local law, too.

Victims of crime: If you or someone you know becomes the victim of a crime abroad, you should contact the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. We can:

- Replace a stolen passport.
- Help you find appropriate medical care if you are the victim of violent crimes such as assault or rape.
- Put you in contact with the appropriate police authorities, and if you want us to, we can contact family members or friends.
- Provide you with the on-line help for American victims of crime in South Korea.
- Help you understand the local criminal justice process and direct you to local attorneys, although it is important to remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in the Republic of Korea is "112" or 02-112 from a cell phone.

Before You Go:

One way to make your foreign travel safer and more enjoyable is to inform yourself about what you will find when you arrive overseas. The Department of State publishes Country Specific Information for [Korea](#) that includes information on usual immigration procedures, health conditions, minor political disturbances, currency and entry regulations, crime and security--including risk of terrorism, and drug penalties. The Country Specific Information presents information in a factual manner so that you can make your own decisions about your travel.

- **Enrollment:** The Department of State urges you to use our [Internet-Based Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP) to enroll with the U.S. Embassy in Seoul (and any other embassies or consulates whose districts you will visit during your travels).
- **Customs:** If you are traveling to or from the Republic of Korea, even if you are just transiting the ROK, you should be aware that the ROK's customs authorities enforce strict regulations about importing and exporting items such as firearms, ammunition, explosives, narcotics and prescription drugs, non-prescription health supplements, radio equipment, and gold, as well as books, other printed material, and videos or audio recordings that might be considered subversive to their national security, obscene, or in any way harmful to the public interest and cultural property.

The same strict regulations apply to items mailed to and from the Republic of Korea. As a result, several U.S. citizens have been prosecuted for participation in drug smuggling via international mail.

Amphetamines are illegal in Korea and even prescription amphetamines and other prescription narcotics will not be permitted into the country without advance permission from the Korea Food and Drug Administration (KFDA) in the form of a "bring-in permit letter." Please contact the Seoul Consular Information Unit at SeoulInfo@state.gov if you would like more information on how to obtain a "bring-in" permit letter from KFDA before arriving in the ROK.

The Republic of Korea has customs laws and regulations to prevent the spread of livestock diseases, such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, known as "mad cow" disease), hoof-and-mouth disease, avian influenza, H1N1 (Influenza A), and more. The products which must be declared to ROK customs officials upon arrival include, but are not limited to: live animals, including dogs, cats, and pet birds; animal products, including antlers, bone, and blood meal; beef, pork, mutton, chicken meat and processed meat products, such as sausages, ham, meat jerky, boiled meat, canned products, and boiled eggs; processed dairy products, such as milk, cheese, and butter; and processed egg products, such as egg, egg white, and egg powder. Further information is contained on the Korean Customs Regulations website or by contacting the ROK Customs Service.

You should also be aware of the items that the U.S. Customs and Border Protection prohibits or restricts from entry into the United States.

- **Travel Insurance:** The Department of State urges U.S. citizens traveling overseas to ensure they have adequate medical insurance, including insurance for medical evacuations. Medicare recipients should know that Medicare does not cover medical

expenses abroad. For more information, see the State Department's flyer [Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad](#). Please note that some private insurance companies do not cover medical care overseas, so do check your policy before traveling and consider purchasing additional insurance. Similarly, some travelers, particularly those who have a chronic illness should consider purchasing medical evacuation insurance. Policies differ regarding their provisions so it is important to read them thoroughly.

For Entry Requirements please see [Country Specific Information](#).

- HIV/AIDS Restrictions: Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to, and foreign residents of, the Republic of Korea. Section 11 of the ROK Immigration Law says that an immigration officer has the right to deny entry to those who may have communicable diseases. Also, particular visa classes such as E-2 (teachers) and E-6 visas (singers, dancers, or other entertainment workers) must submit HIV/AIDS test results in order to obtain these types of visas. Please verify this information with the Embassy of the Republic of Korea before you travel.

While You Are There:

Contact information for the U.S. Embassy in Seoul is listed at the end of this information sheet. U.S. consular officers stand ready to assist U.S. citizens in a variety of emergency situations overseas, including lost and stolen passports, illness, temporary destitution, crime, or arrest. If a U.S. citizen becomes seriously ill or injured abroad, a U.S. consular officer can supply a list of doctors and hospitals to assist the traveler in locating appropriate medical services and can inform family or friends. If necessary, a consular officer can also assist in the transfer of funds from the United States. However, payment of hospital and other expenses is the responsibility of the traveler, and hospitals normally request advance payment. Your medical insurance company can advise you on whether your policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. More information can be found on the health section of State Department's web site.

Note: The U.S. Embassy in Seoul closes for U.S. and some Korean holidays. Please check the website for information on opening hours and other important information.

U.S. citizens who need financial assistance should explore commercial options such as Western Union or other money wire services, credit card advances, or automatic teller machines (ATMs) (please note that not all ATMs accept international credit cards). In emergencies, the nearest U.S. embassy and consulates can help you contact family and friends to have them send money. For more information, please see the Department of State's webpage on Providing Financial Assistance to Americans Abroad and its link to the Department's Overseas Citizens Services Trusts.

Please note that consular officers in our Embassy in Seoul cannot act as travel agents, banks, lawyers, investigators, post offices, or law enforcement officers. They cannot find you employment, get you residence or driving permits, act as interpreters, search for

missing luggage, or settle disputes with hotel managers. They can, however, tell you how to get help on these and other matters.

U.S. citizens traveling or living in the Republic of Korea are subject to its legal systems and can be arrested for violating local law. The Department of State or U.S. embassies and consulates cannot have a U.S. citizen released from prison. However, U.S. consular officers can provide other types of assistance. For more information, please see the Department's flyer on Assistance to Americans Arrested Abroad.

Despite the best preparation, crises like natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or mass-transportation accidents can occur. For information on what you can do in a crisis and how the U.S. Government can assist you, please see the Department of State webpage on Crisis Awareness.

Health Information:

- **MEDICAL FACILITIES AND HEALTH INFORMATION:** Hospitals in the Republic of Korea are generally well-equipped with state-of-the-art diagnostic and therapeutic equipment. High quality general and specialty dental care is available in Seoul. Western-style medical facilities are available in the major urban areas of Seoul, Busan, Daegu, and a few other large cities. However, not all doctors and staff in these major urban areas are proficient in English. Most clinics in rural areas do not have an English-speaking doctor. A list of hospitals and medical specialists who speak English is available at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. Pharmacies are first-rate, and most prescribed medications, except psychotropic medications, can be obtained with a prescription. See information on importing prescription medication in the Customs sub-section above.

ROK ambulances do not carry sophisticated medical equipment, and the ambulance personnel do not have the same level of emergency medical training as do those in the United States. However, ambulances operated by the fire department (dial 119) will respond very quickly and take patients to the nearest hospital. For medical evacuation information to points outside Korea, please see the State Department's brochure on Medical Information for Americans Abroad.

Good information on vaccinations and other health precautions can be found at the CDC website. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website. The WHO website also contains additional health information for travelers, including detailed country-specific health information.

- **MEDICAL INSURANCE:** Doctors and hospitals in the Republic of Korea generally do not accept foreign medical insurance and expect advance payment for health services in the form of cash or credit cards. You can't assume your insurance will go with you when you travel. It's very important to find out BEFORE you leave whether your medical insurance will cover you overseas. You need to ask your insurance company two questions: Does my policy apply when I'm out of the United States? Will it cover emergencies like a trip to a foreign hospital or an evacuation? If your policy doesn't go with you when you travel, it's a very good idea to take out another one for your trip. For more information, please see our medical insurance overseas page.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions:

- While in Korea, you may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The ROK's roads are well paved, traffic lights are functional, and most drivers comply with basic traffic laws. However, the Republic of Korea has a significantly higher traffic fatality rate than does the United States. Causes of accidents include excessive speed, frequent lane changes without signaling, running red lights, aggressive bus drivers, and weaving motorcyclists. You should be aware that motorcyclists sometimes drive on the sidewalks, and drivers of all types of vehicles do not always yield to pedestrians in marked crosswalks. It is safer to use pedestrian underpasses and overpasses where available.

For more detailed information about Traffic Safety and Road Conditions in the Republic of Korea please see [COUNTRY SPECIFIC INFORMATION](#)

Useful Contact Information:

United States:

- Department of State's Office of American Citizens Services and Crisis Management
 - Within U.S. and Canada: 1-888-407-4747
 - From overseas: 001-202-501-4444
- Department of State's National Passport Information Center
 - Within the U.S.: 1-877-487-2778
 - TDD/TTY from within the U.S.: 1-888-874-7793
 - American citizens overseas should contact the closest [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) for information about passports.

Korea:

- U.S. Embassy Seoul Contact Information
American Citizen Services
U.S. Embassy Seoul
188 Sejong-daero, Jongno-gu
Seoul, Korea 110-710

- or -

American Citizen Services
U.S. Embassy, Seoul
Unit #15550
APO AP 96205-5550

Tel: 02-397-4040 (Passport Inquiry line)
Tel: 02-397-4114 (All other services)
DSN: 721-4114
English: <http://www.asktheconsul.org/>
Korean: <http://korean.seoul.usembassy.gov>
E-mail: Seoul_acs@state.gov
Facebook: www.facebook.com/americansinkorea

Useful Links:

- [U.S. Embassy Seoul's web site](#)
- [The Expo 2012 Yeosu web site](#)
- [The USA Pavilion web site](#)
- [Tourist information hotline from the Korea Tourism Organization U.S. Department of State's web site about travel and living abroad](#)
- [U.S. Department of State's web site for passport information](#)
- [Incheon International Airport's web site](#)

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