

# South Korea 2025: Essential Traveler's PDF Guide

## Part 1: Pre-Travel Document & Packing Checklist

### 1.1. Core Documents (Digital & Physical Copies Recommended)

- [ ] **Passport:** Must be valid for your entire stay. Check for at least one blank page for stamps.
- [ ] **Flight Itinerary:** Confirmed round-trip or onward travel tickets.
- [ ] **Accommodation Details:** Printed or saved confirmation of your hotel, Airbnb, or other lodging, including the full address and phone number in Korea.
- [ ] **Travel Insurance Information:** Policy number and emergency contact information.
- [ ] **e-Arrival Card Confirmation (For K-ETA Exempt Travelers):** A screenshot or downloaded PDF of your submitted form.
- [ ] **K-ETA Approval (If Applicable):** A printed copy of your K-ETA approval notice.
- [ ] **Visa (If Applicable):** Ensure the visa in your passport is correct for your travel purpose and dates.
- [ ] **Prescription Medication Letter:** If carrying controlled or large quantities of prescription drugs, have a letter from your doctor (in English) and the original prescription.

### 1.2. Essential Packing List

- [ ] **Power Adapter:** South Korea uses Type C and Type F plugs (the two round pins).
- [ ] **Portable Power Bank:** Essential for keeping your phone charged while using navigation and translation apps.
- [ ] **Comfortable Walking Shoes:** You will walk a lot. Pack shoes that are easy to take off for entry into temples and some restaurants.
- [ ] **Reusable Water Bottle:** Stay hydrated and reduce plastic waste. Water fountains are common in subway stations and tourist sites.
- [ ] **T-money Card:** While you can buy this in Korea, having one ready saves time. It's used for subways, buses, and even in many taxis and convenience stores.
- [ ] **Navigation & Translation Apps:** Download Naver Maps or Kakao Maps (Google Maps has limited functionality for driving/walking directions) and Papago for translation before you leave.
- [ ] **Basic Medications:** Pain relievers, allergy medicine, and any personal necessities.
- [ ] **Seasonal Clothing:**
  - **Spring (Mar-May) / Fall (Sep-Nov):** Layering is key. Pack light jackets, sweaters, and long-sleeved shirts.

- **Summer (Jun-Aug):** Lightweight, breathable clothing. A small umbrella for rain showers and sun protection.
  - **Winter (Dec-Feb):** Warm coat, thermal layers, gloves, scarf, and hat are essential.
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## Part 2: Arrival & Immigration Guide

### 2.1. Step-by-Step: How to Complete the e-Arrival Card

(To be completed online at [www.e-arrivalcard.go.kr](http://www.e-arrivalcard.go.kr) within 72 hours of your arrival)

1. **Access the Portal:** Visit the official e-Arrival Card website on your PC or mobile device.
2. **Agree to Terms:** Accept the terms and conditions to proceed.
3. **Upload Passport:** Take a clear photo or upload a scan of your passport's main data page. The system uses OCR to auto-fill your details. Double-check that the auto-filled information (name, passport number, date of birth) is 100% correct.
4. **Enter Travel Details:**
  - Date of Entry into Korea.
  - Flight Number.
  - Purpose of Visit (select "Tour" for tourism).
  - Full Address in Korea (the name and address of your hotel or first night's accommodation).
  - A contact number in Korea (your hotel's phone number is acceptable).
5. **Review and Submit:** Carefully review all the information for accuracy and click "Submit".
6. **Save Confirmation:** You will receive a confirmation. Take a screenshot or download the PDF to your phone for easy access upon arrival. No approval is needed; submission is sufficient.

### 2.2. The Immigration Process at the Airport (e.g., Incheon - ICN)

1. **Deplane and Follow Signs:** Follow the "Arrivals" (도착) and "Immigration" (입국심사) signs.
2. **Approach the Correct Lane:** Proceed to the "Foreigners" (외국인) immigration counters.
3. **Present Documents:** Have your passport ready. The immigration officer will scan your passport. They may ask for your fingerprints and take a photo.
4. **Baggage Claim:** Proceed to the baggage claim area (수하물 찾는 곳) to collect your luggage.
5. **Customs Declaration:**
  - **Nothing to Declare:** If you have no items to declare, you can walk through the green channel. You must still hand your completed customs form to the officer (one form per family). The mobile customs declaration app "Korea Customs Service" can also be used.
  - **Goods to Declare:** If you are carrying items over the duty-free allowance (e.g., more

than 2 bottles of alcohol, over USD 800 in new goods), go to the red "Goods to Declare" (세관신고) channel.

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## Part 3: Essential Post-Arrival Information & FAQ

### 3.1. Getting from Incheon Airport (ICN) to Seoul

- **AREX Express Train:** The fastest way. Non-stop to Seoul Station in about 43 minutes. Buy tickets at the AREX counter or Klook/KKday for potential discounts. Seats are reserved.
- **AREX All-Stop Train:** Cheaper option that functions like a regular subway line, making several stops. Takes about 60 minutes to Seoul Station. Use your T-money card.
- **Airport Limousine Bus:** Comfortable buses that go to specific areas and hotels throughout Seoul. A great option if you have heavy luggage and your hotel is on a direct route.
- **Taxi:** The most expensive option. Ensure you use a registered taxi and the meter is running.

### 3.2. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- **Q: Do I need to carry my passport with me every day?**
  - A: It is legally required for foreign visitors to carry their passport at all times. A physical copy is best, but a clear photo on your phone is a good backup.
- **Q: Can I use my credit card everywhere?**
  - A: Yes, major credit cards (Visa, Mastercard) are widely accepted in most stores, restaurants, and hotels. However, it's essential to carry some Korean Won (KRW) in cash for small purchases at traditional markets, street food stalls, and for topping up your T-money card at some machines.
- **Q: What are the duty-free allowances for travelers?**
  - A: As of 2025, the general allowance is goods up to USD 800. For specific items: Alcohol is limited to 2 bottles (totaling no more than 2L and valued under USD 400), and cigarettes are limited to 200 (1 carton). Perfume is up to 100ml.
- **Q: What items are prohibited to bring into Korea?**
  - A: Strictly prohibited items include illegal drugs, firearms, explosives, and most fresh agricultural products (fruits, vegetables, unprocessed meat, and dairy) to prevent the spread of pests and diseases.
- **Q: What should I do in a medical emergency?**
  - A: The emergency number for an ambulance is **119**. Ensure you have travel insurance, as medical costs can be high. Major university hospitals in Seoul have International Clinics with English-speaking staff.