

Shopping in Seoul, Korea

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Surrounded by mountains, Seoul is a vibrant and fascinating city with a population of about 10 million. With more than a million registered motor vehicles and dominated by skyscrapers and multi-lane highways, it still manages to maintain a hidden history of ancient temples, palaces, pagodas and peaceful gardens. This ancient city has been the capital of Korea since the 14th century. Weather Seoul's has a distinct four seasons: Spring - nice weather. Temperatures range from 16°C (62°F) to 24°C (75°F). Summer - hot weather and heavy monsoons (as well as typhoons). Temperatures range from 24°C (75°F) to 35°C (95°F). Autumn - blue skies, sunshine and spectacular foliage fall. Little rain. Temperatures range from 12°C (55°F) to 20°C (70°F). Winter - cold and dry. A good time to visit if you like skiing. Very few tourists and freezing weather. Temperatures between -6°C (20°F) to 10°C (53°F) with January bringing the most snow. Shopping Seoul is a heaven for shoppers with numerous mega-shopping centers. You can really shop till you drop. Seoul is famous for high quality goods coupled with excellent and reasonable prices. Only one caution: be prepared for large and massive crowds. Usually people including most tourists are polite, but there can be some pushing and shoving at times in and around the major shopping areas. Namdaemun (The Great South Gate) Market The downtown Namdaemun Market, the biggest traditional market in Korea (covers about 10 acres), offers everything from ginseng to kimchi to military uniforms. Among the popular items for tourists are clothes, shoes, fabrics, tableware, flowers, ginseng products, toys, and watches. It is a world-famous shopping paradise and an attraction that tourists should not miss. Most shops have their own factories and make the products themselves offering both wholesale and retail at an extremely low prices. Prices are generally 10% to 20% lower than prices at other markets. Hours vary by store, so it's advisable to plan out in advance according with a shopping list before you start the actual shopping. Wholesalers operate from midnight to 6:00 a.m., and retailers are open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Although most retailers close their stores on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month, many street vendors operate stalls in the alleys. Near the main street to the north of the market there is also an extensive underground arcade. Visitors can get travel information and interpretation guide service in English and Japanese for free. Yongsan Electronics Market Yongsan Electronics Market was formed by a host of small electronic dealers and has since developed into the greatest electronic shopping town in the East. It covers a whopping 78,650 square meters in size. It has more than 7,000 shops in 24 shopping centers which includes Electronics Land, Najin, Seonin, Wonhyo and a computer wholesale center. Visitors to this shopping town can enjoy shopping for almost all kinds of the latest electronic products and components, including computers, games and lighting equipment. The prices are about 10 to 30% cheaper for Korean made products, while imported items can go as low as 50% lower than elsewhere. Also, it is possible to receive larger discounts at the beginning of the year, at the beginning of the school year or during holidays. Most major stores are open from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm. Shinch'on One of the most famous shopping streets in Seoul, Shinch'on is located within walking distance of 4 universities. The are restaurants, cafes, cinemas and night clubs filled with youths wearing the latest fashions. It was a wild place to be on eve of public holidays. Insa-dong If you're shopping for antiques, Insa-dong is the place. It's a narrow street lined with antique stores, art galleries and secondhand bookstores. Dubbed "Mary's Alley" by foreigners to Seoul, Insa-dong is the best place to purchase antiques, reproductions, calligraphy, paintings, and a wide variety of implements and articles from Korea's past. Traditional teahouses and art galleries are also concentrated in this area. Itaewon Itaewon is famous for bargain hunting. If you like to dig through piles of junk to find hidden treasures, this is the place to go. Here you can find branded goods which were rejected for export at very attractive prices. These items are not bad in quality, they just are of irregular or odd sizes. Apkujong Apkujong-South of the river (Kangnam) is a place of fashion. It's the land of upscale Department Stores, funky cool boutiques and luxury branded shops. This is the happening place for the latest in fashion. If you have the money, they have the goods! Techno Mart Techno Mart, a large shopping center, is occupied by more than 2,000 electronic shops located from the 1st to 8th floor. You can purchase electronic products, computers, sound systems, communication equipment, CDs and much more. Prices here tend to be 10% to 20% lower than other places. Offering a variety of goods from the antiques to the latest in fashion and pricing ranging from bargain prices to top end exclusive prices, Seoul is truly a heaven for shoppers. Marilyn Chew <http://all-about-travelling.blogspot.com...>

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