



Where in the World Is South Korea?

Annyŏng haseyo (ahn-yong ha-seh-yoh) from South Korea! That's how we say "hello." My name is Wook-jin. I'll be your tour guide, along with my little sister Yu-na. We welcome you to our beautiful country.

South Korea is in Asia. It is located on the Korean **Peninsula**. Our country also includes more than 3,000 islands. Two of them have volcanoes. There are many fun and interesting places to see. Let's get going!

Fast Facts:

- South Korea covers 38,502 square miles (99,720 square kilometers).
- South Korea is surrounded by three bodies of water: the Yellow Sea, East Sea (other countries call it the Sea of Japan), and West Sea (or East China Sea).
- North Korea lies to the north.
- Mountains cover 70 percent of the country. The Sobaek Mountains are in the south. The Taebaek Mountains are in the north.
- South Korea's longest river is the Nakdong River. It is 325 miles (523 km) long.
- Jeju Island is the largest island in South Korea. It is more than twice the size of New York City, but with a fraction of the population.





Families here usually have one child, sometimes two.

Home Sweet Home

We are from Seoul, the country's capital. My sister and I live in a big apartment building with our *emoni* (uh-muh-nee, mother) and *aboji* (ah-buh-jee, father). Our parents work for high-tech companies. They bring

home lots of fun tech gadgets for my sister and me to play with and use.

If you visit our home, I recommend wearing clean socks. And make sure they have no holes! We take off our shoes before entering our home.

Last Names

Our family name is Kim. In South Korea, we say our family name first. So, my official name is Kim Wook-jin. My sister's is Kim Yu-na. It's like you saying "Smith Jack" instead of "Jack Smith." But you can call us Wook-jin and Yu-na.

About 20 percent of South Koreans have the last name Kim. About half of all Koreans have one of these last names: Kim, Lee, Choi, and Pak (also spelled Park).



Verandas

Our apartment has front and back verandas. A veranda is a type of porch. Our family often sits on the front veranda. The back veranda is off the kitchen. We use it for storing items and washing clothes.

Many South Korean homes are heated by a system located under their floors. It's called an *ondol* (on-dohl). Ondols have been used for 3,000 years! Our family sleeps on mats on the floor, and the ondol keeps us warm. Some of our friends, however, have beds in bed frames



Clay and wood house

with legs, like many kids in other countries have.

Older homes are made of clay and wood. Our grandparents live in one of these homes. My little sister prefers their home to our apartment.

Being Polite

Manners are very important here. It is common to give gifts to friends. We also bow to those older than we are. And losing your temper is a big no-no!



In Korean barbecue, you can cook the meat just the way you like it.

Let's Eat!

When it comes to food, we like spicy! Red pepper, green onion, soy sauce, bean paste, garlic, ginger, sesame, and mustard are favorites. Every meal includes white rice and a pickled vegetable called *kimchi* (kih-m-chee). Kimchi is our national dish. There are more than 100 different kinds. It might be made from cabbage, cucumbers, or radishes. Our family eats together at a low table. For breakfast many days, my sister and I eat bean sprout soup and white rice with steamed vegetables. For lunch, *bi bim bap* (bee bihm bahp) is a favorite. It is a bowl of rice covered with

vegetables and served with an egg. We also eat juicy watermelon. For dinner, our mom likes to make simple dishes such as beef and radish soup.

At the Table

- The oldest person is the first to start eating.
- Never use your fingers to tear food.
- Do not leave your chopsticks in your rice bowl.
- Don't blow your nose at the table.
- Everyone stays until the oldest person is finished.

If you ever visit, try *pulgogi* (pul-goh-gee), Korean barbecue. It's popular all over the world. Meat is cooked at the table on a hot plate or small grill. We also love *kimbap* (kih-m-bahp), or seaweed rolls. Our mom makes them for picnics. To end the meal, you should have *yakgwa* (yahk-gwah). It's a fried cookie made with honey, ginger, sesame oil, and pine nuts. My sister can't stop eating them! My favorite treat is *songpyeon* (song-pyung). That's rice cakes shaped like half-moons and stuffed with sweet seeds, nuts, or a tasty paste.

Forget about forks and knives when eating in South Korea. We use spoons to eat soup and rice. We eat everything else with chopsticks. You'll need to practice. It can be tricky at first!

