

SEPTEMBER 2025

# UNITED ON THE ROK

**Beyond  
the Walls  
of Suwon  
Hwaseong  
Fortress**

***The Life and  
Legacy of  
Chaplain  
(Capt.) Emil  
J. Kapaun***

**ARMY LODGING  
AT CAMP WALKER  
LODGE IN DAEGU**

***BITTERSWEET  
GOODBYES  
AND BEAUTIFUL  
BEGINNINGS***





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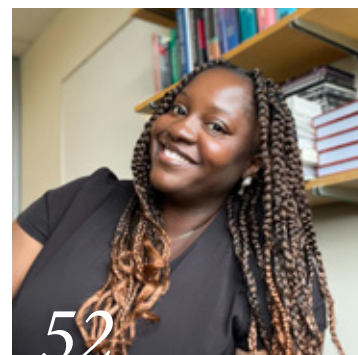


## Beyond the Walls of Suwon Hwaseong Fortress: A Cultural Guide to the City's Historic Heart

Suwon, a city south of Seoul in Gyeonggi-do, is renowned for UNESCO-protected Hwaseong Fortress, which offers visitors year-round historical and cultural beauty in every season.

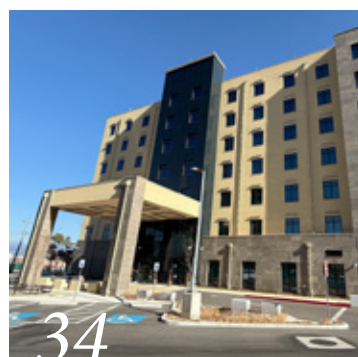
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Cover photo: An inside look at the western Hwaseomun Gate at the Suwon Hwaseong Fortress. (Captured by Jetta Allen)



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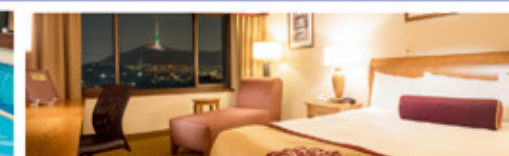
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## The Life and Legacy of Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun



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# UNITED ON THE ROK

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*United on the RoK Magazine* is a magazine with a military community focus that is distributed to United States Forces Korea installations within the Republic of Korea. This magazine aims to connect readers to the diversity of our communities and showcase what South Korea has to offer from culture and travel to food and family, and more. Contents of *United on the RoK* are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the United States Government, the Department of Defense, or Oriental Press. All content within *United on the RoK Magazine* is written by non-paid, volunteers within the military-connected communities across the RoK. Articles within *United on the RoK* are written independently and non-sponsored, with no monetary compensation or products received in exchange for the author's opinions, reviews, or mentions in the magazine.

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A panoramic view of the western Hwaseomun Gate at the Suwon Hwaseong Fortress, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Korea's most impressive historic landmarks.  
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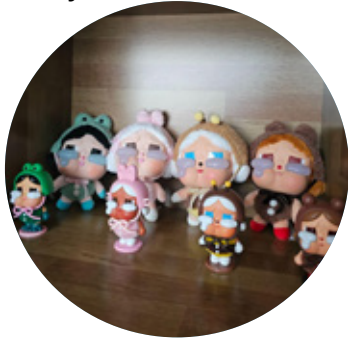


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## EDITOR'S NOTE

*Dear Readers,*

September always brings a quiet kind of shift, the heat softens, routines take shape again, and there's a collective sense of starting fresh. It's also my birthday month, which tends to make me a little more reflective about the ways we grow, stretch, and find grounding with each new chapter.

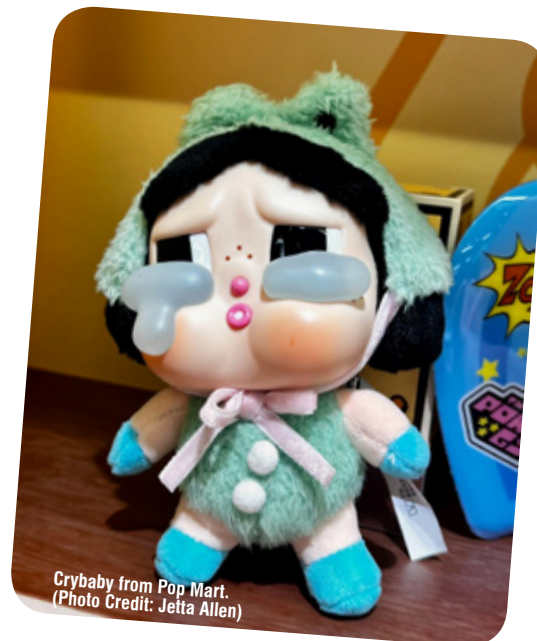
This issue of *United on the RoK* leans into that spirit of transition, exploring the many ways our community navigates life overseas with resilience, creativity, and heart.

You'll find personal stories that dig deep, reminding us it's okay to be vulnerable, to feel deeply, and to say bittersweet goodbyes as new beginnings unfold. One story explores how something as simple as a collectible toy became a surprising catalyst for emotional growth, while another reflects on what it means to leave behind a place and/or people that have shaped you.

We're also spotlighting the places and people that make Korea such an incredible place to live. Whether it's discovering a whimsical café tucked into the countryside, exploring historic neighborhoods beyond the fortress walls of Suwon, or connecting through language exchange meetups in your local city, there's inspiration in every corner. And as we move into early autumn, you might notice cafés adding seasonal drinks like sweet potato lattes or pumpkin spice lattes, or the first pojangmacha carts serving odeng and hotteok on cooler nights — small reminders of the rhythms that make life here so special.



Melissa celebrating her birthday at Mountain Restaurant in 2024.



Crybaby from Pop Mart.  
(Photo Credit: Jetta Allen)

Because life here isn't always easy, especially for military families, we're also diving into topics like adjusting to physical and mental health challenges overseas, finding support in local wellness options, and understanding what resources are available when you need them the most.

This month's travel and lifestyle content offers a little something for everyone, whether you're planning a long-haul flight, settling into a new routine, enjoying riverside walks in the crisp evening air, or just looking for a cozy new recipe that feels like home.

Wherever you are in your Korea story, just arriving, preparing to leave, or building something in between, we hope this issue brings comfort, curiosity, and connection.

Thank you for being here with us.

Warmly,

Melissa Edwards-Whittington  
Managing Editor, *United on the RoK* Magazine



Hiking Mt. Apsan in Daegu.  
(Photo Credit: Sarah Symbolist)



Melissa and Chuck with their shih tzus.  
(Photo Credit: Photos by Annie Lou)



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Events & Festivals

**20th ANNIVERSARY**  
**NOTRE DAME DE PARIS**  
**SEP03-27**  
Notre-Dame de Paris French Original Tour - the 20th Anniversary  
Sejong Center for the Performing Arts  
globalinterpark.com

**CHROMAKOPIA**  
THE WORLD IS YOURS  
**SEP13-14**  
2025 Tyler, The Creator  
KINTEX Exhibition Center 2, Halls 10  
globalinterpark.com

**SEP17**  
Ilya Rashkovskiy, Rachmaninoff Three Piano Concertos  
Lotte Concert Hall  
lotteconcerthall.com/eng

**YEFIM BRONFMAN**  
PIANO RECITAL  
**SEP21**  
Yefim Bronfman Piano Recital  
Lotte Concert Hall  
lotteconcerthall.com/eng

**MARC CHAGALL**  
Beyond Time  
**ONGOING -SEP21**  
Marc Chagall Exhibition: BEYOND TIME  
Hangaram Art Museum  
Gallery 1, Gallery 2  
sac.or.kr/site/eng

**CIRQUE DU SOLEIL**  
KOOZA  
**OCT11-DEC28**  
Cirque du Soleil KOOZA  
Big Top in Jamsil Sports Complex  
ticket.yes24.com

**JARASUM**  
Jazz Festival  
**OCT17-19**  
The 22nd Jarasum Jazz Festival  
Jarasum  
ticket.yes24.com/eng

**oasis live '25**  
**OCT21**  
OASIS Live '25  
Goyang Stadium  
globalinterpark.com

**GUSTAVO DUDAMEL**  
& Los Angeles Philharmonic  
**OCT21-22**  
Gustavo Dudamel & LA Philharmonic  
Seoul Arts Center, Concert Hall  
ticket.yes24.com/eng

**ALAN GILBERT & NDR ELBPHILHARMONIE ORCHESTER**  
**OCT22**  
Alan Gilbert & the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra with Joshua Bell, violinist  
Lotte Concert Hall  
lotteconcerthall.com/eng

**WICKED**  
**ONGOING -OCT26**  
Musical <WICKED>  
BLUE SQUARE Shinhancard Hall  
globalinterpark.com

**TOUR MA VIE**  
**DEC13**  
Doja Cat - Ma Vie World Tour  
KINTEX Exhibition Hall, Ilsan  
globalinterpark.com

**2025 Yeongdong World Gugak Expo**  
**SEP12-OCT11**  
2025 Yeongdong World Gugak Expo  
• Venue: Yeongdong Rainbow Healing Tourist Zone, Chungbuk-do  
• Website: yeongdongexpo2025.or.kr/eng/

**Seosan Haemi Eupseong Festival**  
**SEP26-28**  
Seosan Haemi Eupseong Festival  
• Address: 143 Nammun 2-ro, Seosan-si, Chungcheongnam-do  
• Website: www.haemifest.com  
• Inquiries: +82-41-660-2696

**Mokpo Port Festival**  
**SEP26-28**  
Mokpo Port Festival  
• Venue: Areas of Mokpo Port & Samhakdo Island  
• Fees: Free  
• Inquiries: +82-61-270-8441

**TAEAN 2025 AUTUMN FLOWER EXHIBITION**  
**SEP19-NOV04**  
Jeongseon Arirang Festival  
• Venue: Jeongseon Gongseol Sports Field  
• Website: en.koreallowerpark.com  
• Inquiries: +82-33-560-3013

**Busan International Rock Festival**  
**SEP26-28**  
Busan International Rock Festival  
• Venue: Samnak Ecological Park  
• Website: busanrockfestival.com  
• Inquiries: +82-51-713-5000

**Suwon Hwaseong Cultural Festival**  
**SEP27-OCT04**  
Suwon Hwaseong Cultural Festival  
• Address: 825 Jeongjo-ro, Pal-dal-gu, Suwon-si, Gyeonggi-do  
• Website: shfestival.com  
• Inquiries: +82-31-228-3920

**Cheonan World Dance Festival**  
**SEP24-28**  
Cheonan World Dance Festival  
• Address: 208 Beonyeong-ro, Seobuk-gu, Cheonan-si  
• Website: cheonanfestival.com  
• Inquiries: +82-41-900-7020

**Bucheon International Comics Festival**  
**SEP26-28**  
Bucheon International Comics Festival  
• Venue: Korea Manhwa Museum  
• Website: www.bicof.com  
• Inquiries: +82-32-310-3071

**Sancheong Medicinal Herb Festival**  
**OCT02-12**  
Sancheong Medicinal Herb Festival  
• Venue: Donguibogam Village  
• Website: scherb.or.kr  
• Inquiries: +82-55-970-6670

**Jeongseon Arirang Festival**  
**SEP25-28**  
Jeongseon Arirang Festival  
• Venue: Jeongseon Gongseol Sports Field  
• Website: www.arirangfestival.kr  
• Inquiries: +82-33-560-3013

**Andong Maskdance Festival**  
**SEP26-OCT05**  
Andong Maskdance Festival  
• Address: 200 Chukjejang-gil, Andong-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do  
• Website: www.maskdance.com  
• Inquiries: +82-54-840-3400

**Gimje Horizon Festival**  
**OCT08-11**  
Gimje Horizon Festival  
• Address: 442 Byeokgolje-ro, Buryang-myeon, Gimje-si, Jeonbuk-do  
• Website: festival.gimje.go.kr  
• Inquiries: +82-63-540-3037





# BEYOND THE WALLS of SUWON HWASEONG FORTRESS

## A Cultural Guide to the City's Historic Heart

By Jetta Allen  
Photography by Jetta Allen, Kim Hakri, and Leslie Preddy



South of Seoul and just a bit north of Pyeongtaek sits the city of Suwon. Located in the Gyeonggi-do province, Suwon is most notable for containing the Hwaseong Fortress (수원 화성), a famous site protected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Hwaseong Fortress wraps through the center of the city of Suwon and is accessible to visitors year-round. There is no “right” time to visit, because the fortress grounds have a unique beauty in each season, especially spring and winter. No matter the season, it offers stunning views by immersing visitors in Korean history, culture, and art with every footstep.

### What Is Suwon Hwaseong Fortress? A UNESCO Cultural Treasure

In the Joseon dynasty, Suwon was a place of regional government with political centers throughout. With the need for government security, the Hwaseong Fortress was built in 1794. The plans and architectural style were influenced by both European and Chinese fortresses, walls, and strongholds. The Hwaseong For-

ress was completed in 1796, and its walls span over 5.7 kilometers and took over two years to complete. Much of the fortress wall still exists!

### The Legacy of King Jeongjo and the Fortress Built for a Father's Honor

King Jeongjo built the fortress to protect his father's tomb, which had been relocated to Suwon and re-named Yungneung, making the site both a royal resting place. It was also built as a strategic stronghold to protect the temporary palace of Hwaseong Haenggung, which is found in the middle of Suwon, present day. Lastly, over time, the fortress city would prove to be crucial in the protection of the capital city, Hanyang, today's Seoul. Built to endure time and battle, the fortress still stands 229 years later thanks to restoration efforts that started in 1970 after the Korean War.

### Inside the Walls: Architecture and Strategic Design of Suwon Fortress

The structures of the Suwon Hwaseong Fortress areas are varied, including walls of various heights,





Gongsimdon, an early form of a brick watchtower, allowed defenders to monitor and protect the fortress from an elevated position with a wide field of view. At night, its structure and the connected fortress wall are beautifully illuminated, highlighting the strength and elegance of Hwaseong's design. Captured by Leslie Preddy.



Paldalmun Gate, the southern entrance to Suwon Fortress, stands proudly in the middle of a busy roundabout, blending historic grandeur with the pulse of modern city life.

artillery pavilions with cannons, multiple guard gates, lookouts for soldiers, watchtowers, and pavilions. The fortress wall follows the natural curves of Suwon, connecting gates, pavilions, and guard towers that once defined its defenses.

### Paldalmun Gate and Beyond: Discover the Gates and Watchtowers of Suwon

Personally, the gates are my favorite structures of the fortress. Each one feels like a doorway between centuries that you anxiously approach, wondering where it will take you. Of the four gates of the fortress, the most notable one is the south gate, called the Paldalmun Gate. "Paldal" means "to lead in all directions" and was the purpose of this particular gate. Through the gate, trade and travel could take place. Currently, it is the only gate nestled right in the center of a bustling roundabout. It's a beautiful contrast, striking depictions of dragons, ancient stone, and wood structures standing firm amid the modern city life. Paldalmun once served as the main entrance to the fortress and remains a powerful symbol of Suwon's resilience and grace. Whether you pause for a photo or simply stand in awe beneath its



An inside look at the western Hwaseomun Gate at the Suwon Hwaseong Fortress.

archway, it's a moment that lingers. Just make sure to watch for buses and cars!

### UNESCO Recognition and the Ongoing Preservation of Korean Heritage

Today, the fortress still wraps around Suwon, providing the backdrop to cultural heritage and modern city design. Due to its cultural significance, it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site on December 12, 1997. Sites like this are cultural and national treasures that cannot be replaced. When a site is given the distinction of a "cultural heritage site," it becomes a protected landmark that will continue to be preserved through conservation efforts through the UNESCO program. Our family has visited the fortress grounds many times. Each visit we are left in complete disbelief that something so massive, yet old, could withstand the tests of time and war. It is truly incredible.

On each side of the fortress wall lie parks, city buildings, restaurants, and museums. As with most cultural destinations in Korea, there are seasonal events and performances, including dances, parades, and light shows.



The vibrant dancheong patterns adorning Hwaseong Haenggung's buildings feature rich reds, greens, and blues, colors traditionally reserved for royal palaces and temples, symbolizing protection, prosperity, and harmony.





Walking the walls of Suwon Fortress is a peaceful way to experience the city's historic heart and its timeless charm.



Yuyeotaek served as King Jeongjo's private residence within the temporary palace, offering a quieter space for personal affairs during his visits.



The throne room of Hwaseong Haenggung, Bongsudang, was King Jeongjo's main audience hall, featuring the iconic Irworobongdo painting behind the royal throne.

## Tickets, Tours, and Things to Do at Suwon Hwaseong Fortress

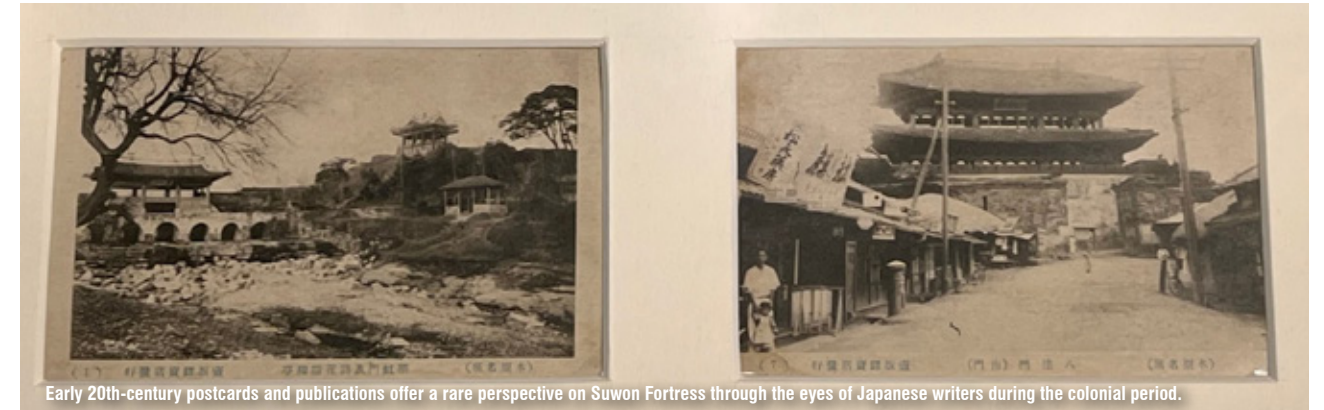
It's recommended to pay the entrance fee for full access, even though parts can be viewed for free. For less than 10,000 won, visitors can take advantage of an integrated ticket that includes entry for the Suwon Fortress, Hwaseong Haenggung (temporary palace), the Suwon Museum, and more! There are also several experiences at an additional cost. For example, trolley rides, Korean traditional archery, and ringing the Bell of Hyowon for health and prosperity are great experiences to add to your visit.

## Step into Royal Life at Hwaseong Haenggung Palace

Hwaseong Haenggung, the temporary palace nestled within Suwon Fortress, was built specifically for King Jeongjo in the late 18th century and stands as a unique symbol of his reign. Unlike older royal palaces, it was never used by earlier kings like King Sejo or King Sejong. At its heart is Bongsudang, the main audience hall where King Jeongjo held official ceremonies, its throne beautifully framed by the traditional Irworobongdo painting of the iconic sun, moon, and five mountain peaks. Nearby, the Yuyeotaek structure served as the King's private residence and a quieter space for personal meetings. The palace's vibrant red pillars and emerald-green roof beams, adorned with intricate dancheong patterns, reflect the artistry and symbolism of the Joseon dynasty, capturing the spirit of a palace created for one King's vision.

## Discover History in Action at the Suwon Fortress Museum

The Suwon Fortress Museum features a comprehensive exhibit on the construction of Hwaseong, detailing every phase from design to execution. It highlights the work of Jeong Yak-yong (Dasan), a pioneering scholar of the Silhak (Practical Learning)



Early 20th-century postcards and publications offer a rare perspective on Suwon Fortress through the eyes of Japanese writers during the colonial period.



A cross-section model reveals the layered structure of Suwon's fortress wall, showcasing its engineering and durability.

movement, who applied science and engineering to real-world problems. One of his most remarkable innovations was the Geojunggi, a crane-like device that drastically reduced the physical burden on workers by allowing them to lift heavy stones and materials with precision. The exhibit also explores labor organization, logistics, and the sourcing of materials from surrounding regions, showing just how advanced the project was for its time. Alongside this are displays of ceremonial uniforms and ornaments worn by the Jangyongyeong, King Jeongjo's elite royal guards. The museum also preserves rare books and postcards featuring the fortress as described by Japanese writers during the colonial period, offering a contrasting historical viewpoint. For families, the interactive children's area brings these stories to life through hands-on exhibits and creative crafting.

## Plan Your Trip to Suwon: When to Go and What to See

A trip to Suwon to visit the fortress would be well worth your time! See the fortress, visit a



The ceremonial uniforms and ornaments of the Jangyongyeong reflect the honor and discipline of King Jeongjo's elite guard unit.

museum, and eat some of their famous chicken. The area is the perfect place for a stroll alone, with friends, or on a date. Hiking along the fortress wall is also great for families and those with accessibility needs, as many places are stroller and wheelchair friendly. Explore the grounds, peer over the walls, and imagine stepping back into time. Take in the scenic views of the city during the day or night and immerse yourself in a living piece of history!

Plan your visit to Suwon, and discover how centuries of history still shape the city's heart today.





The Suwon Museum of Art showcases contemporary Korean art in a modern space near the historic fortress.

## Maps, Directions, and Suwon Travel Resources for Visitors

Hwaseonghaenggung Street Public Parking Lot  
52-8 Namchang-dong Paldal-gu, Suwon-si Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/5CW4hmmD>

Hwaseong Temporary Palace Plaza  
363-31 Sinpung-dong Paldal-gu, Suwon-si Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/>

Suwon Hwaseong Museum  
49 Maehyang-dong Paldal-gu, Suwon-si Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/GPdW9uuQ>

Suwon Museum of Art  
238-1 Sinpung-dong Paldal-gu, Suwon-si Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/Fmf5JsTC>

Paldalmun Gate  
138 Paldallo 2(i)-ga Paldal-gu, Suwon-si Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/IgJnC0ZS>

Hwaseomun Gate  
334 Jangan-dong Paldal-gu, Suwon-si Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/513oyhCN>

Suwon Cultural Foundation Website  
<https://www.swcf.or.kr/>

Visitor Information and Pricing  
<https://www.swcf.or.kr/english/?p=38>

Introduction to Suwon Hwaseong Fortress Structures  
<https://www.swcf.or.kr/?p=59&listGubun=list&page=1&view-Mode=view&idx=41>

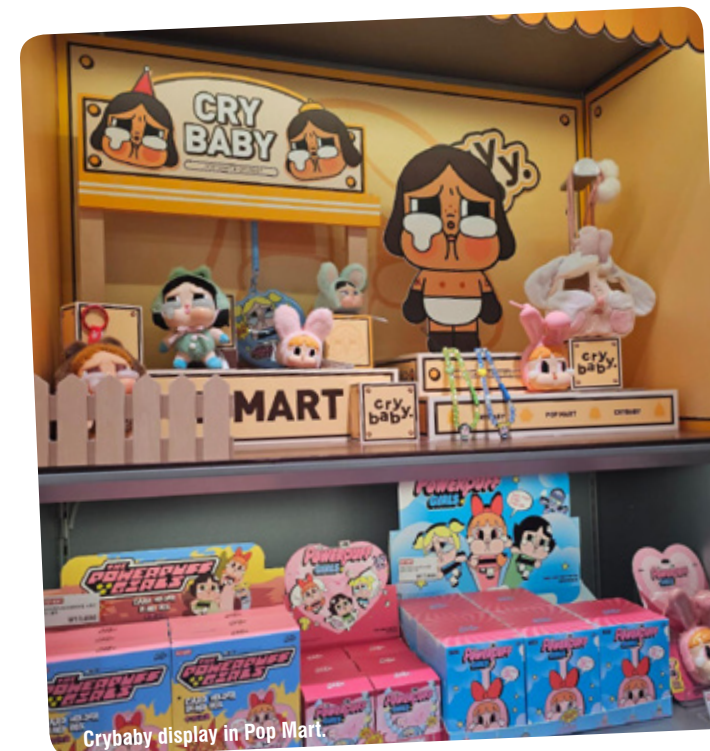
Suwon Fortress Architecture Tour  
[https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/web\\_book/architecture\\_tour/lan-en/page41.html#s24](https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/web_book/architecture_tour/lan-en/page41.html#s24)

### About the Author

Jetta Allen is the Editor in Chief of *United on the RoK* Magazine and the 2025 Armed Forces Insurance Military Spouse of the Year for USAG Humphreys. Since arriving in South Korea in 2019, she has dedicated herself to storytelling, photography, and community advocacy that bridge military life and Korean culture. With a passion for connecting military families to resources, support, and cultural experiences, Jetta uses her platform to celebrate resilience, foster belonging, and empower others to thrive wherever life takes them. Her work honors the rich traditions of Korean culture while amplifying the voices of those who serve behind the scenes. Whether writing, photographing, or volunteering, Jetta's mission is to build community and make lasting memories with her family.



▲ ▼ Interactive exhibits in the children's zone let young visitors explore fortress history through fun creations.



## Meet Crybaby: The Pop Mart Figure That Embraces Emotion

In a world that often praises strength, hiding tears, and pushing through without pause, one tiny vinyl figure dared to say: It's okay to cry. That figure was the Pop Mart Crybaby, a soft-spoken icon of emotion and resilience. This quietly powerful character has found its way into collectors' hearts since its creation in 2017 by Thai artist Molly Yllom.

### The Artist Behind the Tears: Molly Yllom's Vision

Crybaby was created in 2017 by Molly Yllom, who intentionally flipped the script on what "crying" means. Molly's inspiration for Crybaby came from something deeply human yet often overlooked—the beauty of vulnerability. She envisioned a character that wasn't afraid to feel, a little one with glistening tears and soft colors, radiating raw emotion in the most comforting

# TEARS THAT SPEAK

## How Pop Mart Crybaby Helped Me Embrace Vulnerability

By MaryAnne Clark

way. Crybaby reminds us that crying doesn't make us weak. It means we're alive, empathetic, and honest with ourselves.

### Why Crybaby Spoke to Me as a Military Spouse and Creator

That message hit home for me personally. I first discovered Crybaby around the same time I stumbled upon Labubu, the mischievous little creature with big ears and even bigger personality. While Labubu made me laugh and drew me in with its quirky wildness, Pop Mart Crybaby spoke to my heart.

As someone who juggles being a mom, a military wife, a creator, and a woman constantly adapting to life overseas, I often found myself quietly absorbing the





MaryAnne with Crybaby Plush figures.



My Crybaby collection.



Excited for the unboxing of my new Crybaby.

pressures of daily life. Crybaby reminded me that it's okay to let the tears fall—to FEEL fully and unapologetically. In a world that often hides emotion, these emotional collectibles speak truth through silence.

### Every Crybaby Figure Tells a Story

Each figure in the Pop Mart Crybaby series carries its own unique expression and theme. From heartbreak and healing, to dreams and wonder, they're not just toys. They're deeply expressive vinyl art toys. These tiny emotional snapshots that hold space for feelings we often bury.

### Fun Facts That'll Make You Cry (in a good way):

- Crybaby was created in 2017 by Thai artist Molly Yllom or Nisa "Mod" Srikamdee, inspired by her beloved pet dog, Somchum.
- It was designed to challenge the stigma around crying, celebrating vulnerability instead.
- The first Crybaby figures were handmade in limited quantities.

- Crybaby quickly rose to fame as one of Pop Mart's most loved characters in Asia.
- Rare figures like "Rainbow Tears" and "Starry Night" can fetch high prices—and deeper emotional meaning—for collectors.
- In 2021, Molly Ylom was the first Thai artist to enter into a partnership with Pop Mart.

### Pop Mart Crybaby's Popularity Across Asia

It quickly grew in popularity across Asia, becoming one of the most beloved Pop Mart collectibles. Soon,

Crybaby ranked as the second most favorite Pop Mart character in Southeast Asia, just after Labubu.

As I dove deeper into the world of Crybaby, I discovered just how vast and emotionally layered the collection really is. Some of the rarest Crybaby figures, like "Rainbow Tears" or "Starry Night," are known to fetch high prices in the resale market—and even higher levels of emotion for collectors.

But Crybaby's appeal isn't just regional or commercial—it's deeply personal for many of us who see ourselves in those tiny, tearful eyes.

### More Than a Toy: Crybaby's Lasting Impact on Mental Health and Identity

What draws so many fans to Crybaby—and many other designer toys from Asia—is not just the cute aesthetic, but the emotional connection they offer. For me, Crybaby became more than a collectible; it became a gentle reminder. It let me know during hard days that I don't have to be perfect or strong all the time. So yes, I proudly admit I'm in love—with a little teary-eyed vinyl figure. Because Pop Mart Crybaby helped me rediscover something I'd forgotten in the chaos of life: It's okay to cry, it's okay to feel, and it's more than okay to treasure characters that reflect that truth.

Sometimes, strength isn't loud or bold—it's quiet, tear-streaked, and tender.

Crybaby is more than a figure—it's proof that even the most miniature Pop Mart collectible can carry a powerful emotional message. After all, some of the strongest souls are the ones who aren't afraid to let the tears fall—and wear them like a badge of courage.



My Crybaby figurines.



Crybaby for your tote bag.



Crybaby fits perfectly as an accessory for your purse.

### About the Author

A proud Army wife, devoted mother of two, and seasoned medical professional, MaryAnne Clark is also a passionate digital content creator with a love for travel. Her journey has taken her family across the globe—first to Germany and now to South Korea—where each new duty station fuels her sense of adventure. Inspired by life overseas, she launched a YouTube channel to document the unforgettable places the Army sends them. Whether she's exploring hidden gems or sharing the realities of military family life, MaryAnne brings heart, humor, and authenticity to every story she tells.

Follow her here:  
Instagram: b3ing\_maryanne  
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@Clarkvlogz>







# American-Style Chiropractic Care in Pyeongtaek: *What You Need to Know*

By Melissa Edwards-Whittington

If you're seeking holistic, non-invasive care for back pain, posture issues, or injury rehabilitation in South Korea, you'll be pleased to know that chiropractic care in Pyeongtaek is not only available, it is thriving. Three clinics stand out for delivering American-style chiropractic care in the area: Pure Balance Korea, Inspire Wellness Center, and 365 Chiropractic & Sports Rehabilitation Clinic. Each brings its own approach and specialty to help military families, expats, and locals feel their best.

## PURE BALANCE KOREA: Personalized, Integrity-Driven Care

Founded in 2021, Pure Balance Korea specializes in personalized, hands-on chiropractic care. Located in Pyeongtaek, this clinic was established with a heartfelt mission: to support U.S. military service members, their families, and the surrounding community through non-invasive treatments that relieve pain, restore balance, and promote long-term wellness. Their care philosophy is rooted in integrity, detail-oriented treatment, and genuine compassion for each individual who walks through their doors.



**Core Values and Philosophy:** Guided by three core values: genuine care, integrity in every interaction, and a sharp attention to detail, their holistic approach treats the whole person—not just symptoms—by combining manual therapy with supportive wellness practices. Every treatment begins with soft tissue work to release tension, improve comfort, and prepare the body for gentle, effective adjustments.

Dr. Peter Lee emphasizes that each patient is heard, respected, and cared for. By listening carefully to each person's unique story, lifestyle, and goals, the clinic provides tailored treatment that supports long-term healing. Their patient-first philosophy includes clear communication, gentle techniques when needed, and a commitment to helping people move better and feel better in daily life.

**Additional Wellness Services:** In addition to traditional chiropractic care, Pure Balance Korea offers complementary services to promote total wellness and accelerate recovery. These include:

- Therapeutic massage therapy – to relieve muscle tension and support physical recovery
- Pilates-based rehabilitation – designed to improve core strength, flexibility, and posture
- Drop-piece technique – a gentler adjustment method that enhances precision and comfort
- Flexion-distraction table for decompression – used for spinal decompression and disc issues
- Myofascial active release techniques – to improve mobility and reduce soft tissue restrictions

These services are integrated with chiropractic care to create a well-rounded, personalized plan for each patient.

**Who They Treat:** Pure Balance welcomes patients from all walks of life, including:

- U.S. military personnel with service-related injuries or long-term musculoskeletal concerns
- Office workers dealing with posture-related discomfort or repetitive strain injuries
- Pregnant women seeking safe, natural pain relief and better alignment
- Toddlers and older children with growing-body concerns
- Seniors and active adults looking to maintain mobility and prevent injury

Every treatment is adapted to suit the patient's stage of life and physical needs, ensuring comfort and effectiveness across all age groups.

**Unique Qualities:** What sets Pure Balance Korea apart from other clinics is their integrated, detail-oriented approach to care. Key distinguishing features include:

- Gentler adjusting options for patients who are nervous about manual adjustments, including the Activator Method and drop-piece techniques
- Soft tissue work before adjustments to improve comfort and response
- Combination of chiropractic, massage, and Pilates to support comprehensive healing
- Skilled assessment and personalized plans that consider each patient's body, goals, and lifestyle
- Trusted by military families and international residents who value honest, effective care

Their team's commitment to integrity, skill, and patient education has helped them build a strong reputation within the Pyeongtaek community.





**Quote from Dr. Peter Lee:** "When you walk into our clinic, I want you to know that you'll be genuinely cared for. Whether you're dealing with pain, working on your posture, or just want to move more comfortably in daily life, we're here to support you with honesty, skill, and a personalized approach. Your health and comfort are always our top priorities."

Pure Balance actively engages with the Pyeongtaek community, providing care to both Korean and international residents, including many U.S. service members and their families. The clinic is recognized as a welcoming space that fosters strong, trusting relationships with patients. They sponsor military teams and prioritize trust-building through personalized care. While they don't currently host large workshops, they regularly share health tips and resources during their visits, and they look forward to offering more community-focused events in the future. In addition, they participate in South of Seoul's Fab 4 Rewards program, offering rewards to monthly winners in the Pyeongtaek Food & Fun group for their contributions to the community.

**Challenges and Growth:** Pure Balance Korea has worked to bridge cultural gaps in understanding chiropractic care, particularly among local Korean patients unfamiliar with the practice. Through patient education and clear communication, they've built trust and helped more people embrace safe, non-invasive wellness solutions. As interest in preventative care grows, the clinic has expanded its services to support posture correction, rehabilitation, and long-term health.

**Advice for New Patients:** If you're new to chiropractic care, Dr. Lee recommends choosing a provider who truly listens and takes the time to explain the treatment process. There's no need to fear adjustments—there are many gentle techniques available that prioritize comfort without compromising effectiveness.

"Chiropractic care is a safe, natural way to support your body's healing. The most important thing is to find someone who listens and tailors the care to what feels right for you."

Whether you're struggling with pain or simply want to move and feel better in your daily life, Pure Balance Korea offers a welcoming environment, a skilled team, and a patient-centered approach grounded in care, integrity, and results.

Facebook: Pure Balance Korea  
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Email: purebalancekorea@gmail.com

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## INSPIRE WELLNESS CENTER: Functional Rehab Meets Chiropractic

Operating since 2017, Inspire Wellness Center offers a comprehensive, U.S.-style rehabilitation model that combines chiropractic care, physiotherapy, and massage. In 2023, it transitioned from a franchise to an independent center led by a team passionate about long-term functional recovery.

**Core Values and Philosophy:** They emphasize treating the root cause of chronic pain, dysfunctional movement. Their goal is to empower patients with the tools and knowledge for lifelong wellness.



### Additional Wellness Services

- Physiotherapy with licensed U.S. and Korean providers
- Therapeutic and relaxation massage therapy
- Movement assessment and posture correction training
- Chronic joint pain diagnostics
- Functional anatomy education

**Who They Treat:** Patients of all ages: athletes, military personnel, families, pregnant women, and chronic pain sufferers, especially those who haven't found relief elsewhere.

### Unique Qualities

- Highly skilled, interdisciplinary team
- U.S.-level care in chiropractic, massage, and physiotherapy
- Evidence-based manual therapies and posture/movement training

**Quote from Dr. David Lee:** If you're experiencing pain, discomfort, or limited movement in your spine, shoulders, hips, or knees, chiropractic care is a great starting point. Spinal adjustments are incredibly effective at restoring normal joint motion, which not only relieves pain but also helps retrain your body's movement patterns. At Inspire Wellness Center, we go beyond adjustments, our deep understanding of physiology and functional anatomy allows us to help you optimize how your body functions. Our focus is on functional rehabilitation, empowering you to move well and maintain healthy posture for lasting wellness."

Inspire Wellness is deeply connected to the Pyeongtaek community, frequently collaborating with Camp Humphreys personnel, local businesses, and educational platforms. The clinic's providers regularly conduct workshops and seminars upon request, and they actively share educational content online. Their physiotherapist also teaches functional anatomy and related subjects, helping to foster health education within the community. The clinic also takes part in South of Seoul's Fab 4 Rewards program, providing monthly rewards to contributors in the Pyeongtaek Food & Fun group.

Challenges and Growth Transience in the military community requires consistent outreach. They're expanding the physiotherapy space and launching facial skin therapy soon.

**Advice for New Patients:** Chiropractic care isn't just for pain relief, it restores movement and function. Inspire Wellness provides comprehensive strategies for long-term improvement.

Facebook: Inspire Wellness Center  
Instagram: @inspirewellnesscenter  
www.inspirewellness.co.kr  
Email: askinspirewellness@gmail.com

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365 CHIROPRACTIC & SPORTS REHABILITATION CLINIC: Sports-Focused and Preventative Care

Located within Camp Humphreys, 365 Chiropractic has been serving the military and athletic communities since 2005. With a foundation in sports injury management and a philosophy centered on prevention, it delivers high-level chiropractic care aligned with international standards.

Core Values and Philosophy: They believe in treating the whole person—body, mind, and soul—through education, movement, and proactive care.

Additional Wellness Services:

- Physical therapy (including TENS and ultrasound therapy, heat & cold modalities, balance and proprioception training, and individualized strengthening programs.)
- Diet and nutrition counseling
  - Exercise education and posture correction programs designed to proactively prevent injuries and maintain optimal spinal health.

Who They Treat: Primarily military members, athletes, pregnant women, and individuals with musculoskeletal or movement limitations.

Unique Qualities:

- Located on-base with a deep understanding of military demands
- Leading expertise in soft tissue rehabilitation, utilizing advanced techniques such as Graston Technique, manual therapy, corrective exercise, and tailored mobility programs.
- Actively pursuing Primary Care Center accreditation from JCI, with processes well underway to become the first overseas chiropractic clinic to achieve this standard.
- HIPAA-compliant digital records and comprehensive insurance coverage

Quote from Dr. Daniel Han: “At 365 Chiropractic & Sports Rehabilitation Clinic, our mission goes beyond treating injuries—we’re committed to preventing them and helping our patients live healthy, active lives with optimal movement and function. We’re proud to be actively working toward becoming the first overseas chiropractic clinic with Primary Care Center certification from JCI. Above all, patient safety and quality care are at the core of everything we do.”

Community Engagement Through their Good Neighbor Program, they deliver free spinal screenings, ergonomic workshops, and injury prevention education to over six military units each year. They also host community workshops, on-base events, and provide online health education resources.

Challenges and Growth They’ve faced staffing and patient education challenges, but continue growing through technology, upgrades, awareness campaigns, and ongoing care system development.

Advice for New Patients: Don’t wait. Chiropractic care can restore movement and prevent future injuries. It’s a drug-free, surgery-free way to address root causes and enhance long-term health.



Facebook: 365 Chiropractic  
Instagram: 365chiropractic.k6  
Website: www.365chiropractic-k6.com  
Email: 365chiropractic.k6@gmail.com

365 Chiropractic & Sports Rehabilitation Clinic  
Bldg 400, Sentry Mini Mall, Camp Humphreys  
Website : www.365chiropractic-k6.com  
Phone : 031-655-1446  
Business Hours : Mon - Sat, 10AM - 7PM

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Chiropractic Care in Pyeongtaek: Your Next Step

Whether you're dealing with chronic pain, recovering from an injury, or seeking to improve your posture and mobility, these clinics represent the best of American-style chiropractic care in Pyeongtaek. Each offers a unique approach to chiropractic care near Camp Humphreys, English-speaking staff, and a dedication to whole-body wellness. Explore your options. Find your fit. Take the next step toward a healthier, more active life.

*\* The information provided in this article is intended solely for educational and informational purposes and should not be considered medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. It is not a substitute for consultation with a licensed healthcare professional. This article does not create a doctor-patient or therapeutic relationship between the author and the reader. Individuals should always seek the guidance of their own qualified medical or mental health providers with any questions or concerns they may have regarding a medical condition, treatment options, or overall health and well-being. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you have read in this article.*

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Wondering what the best movie theater snacks in South Korea are? Let's just say you have far more options than you might think, and in many cases, you can even bring your own food. Thanks to flexible outside food policies in Korean theaters, moviegoers can customize their snacks for the perfect cinema experience.

### Outside Food Policies in South Korean Movie Theaters

If you've ever wondered whether you can bring your own movie theater snacks in South Korea, the answer might surprise you. Local cinema chains are surprisingly flexible, letting you customize your movie night in ways you might not expect.

Tourists and international residents from countries like the United States, South Africa, Canada, and the United Kingdom are often surprised that most major Korean theater chains, CGV, Lotte Cinema, and Megabox, allow you to bring outside food into their theaters. You heard that right, most major Korean theater chains allow outside food as long as:

- It doesn't have a strong smell (e.g., no kimchi or garlic-heavy food).
- It doesn't make noise (e.g., no crunchy or overly

- packaged snacks).
- Alcohol is usually not allowed unless it's sold within the theater.

This outside food policy in Korean theaters means you can bring a taste of home or something special from a nearby convenience store, all while enjoying the latest blockbuster.

### Packing Movie Theater Snacks in South Korea

When we go to the movies, each person usually brings their own bag of snacks. We either pack things from home or stop by a convenience store before heading to the theater. Bringing your own snacks is convenient and more affordable than buying food at the theater.

Still, following South Korea movie theater etiquette is key: choose snacks that won't disturb others with noise or strong odors, and pack them in quiet, easy-to-open containers.

### Best Movie Theater Snacks in South Korea

Sometimes the best part of the movie isn't on the screen, it's in your snack bag. Whether you're craving



Photo Credit: Lotte Cinema

something sweet, soft, or simple, these treats will keep you satisfied without distracting your neighbors.

Here are movie theater snacks that are easy to eat quietly and unlikely to disturb others:

- Drinks – Bottled water, juice, or tea with a screw cap (avoid cans or crinkly plastic).
- Candy – Soft candies like gummies, chocolate bars (unwrapped beforehand), and hard candy (out of noisy wrappers).
- Pastries – Bread, cookies, and muffins.
- Sandwiches – Simple sandwiches without strong sauces or fillings.
- Ice Cream – Small ice cream cups with spoons (avoid cones, as they can be messy).

### Snacks to Avoid in South Korean Movie Theaters

Not all snacks are created equal when it comes to movie etiquette. Some can overwhelm the senses or pull people out of the story faster than a plot twist. Here's what to leave at home.

To be respectful of others, avoid bringing movie theater snacks that create strong smells or loud noises.

Smelly Foods. What constitutes "smelly" varies by culture, but it's best to avoid anything with a strong or lingering odor:



▲ Snack on pasta and tteokbokki for the perfect movie-time flavor combo. (Photo Credit: Megabox)

- Fast food (like burgers and fries)
- Kimbap and sushi (due to seaweed and fish smells)
- Foods with strong spices or sauces (like curry or kimchi)
- Smelly cheese-heavy snacks (blue cheese)
- Garlic, onions, or heavily seasoned meats

Keep in mind that many snacks offered in Korean theaters may have a strong smell to you. This can feel a little unfair, but it's part of moving from one country



to another. When you live in different areas, you become desensitized to different scents—and smells you once enjoyed may suddenly become unappealing. For example, Korean food only smells delicious to me now, but I feel sick from the scent of Cheese-Its or Doritos.

Tips for Enjoying Movie Theater Snacks in South Korea

Movie nights in Korea can be a little different from what you’re used to. These tips will help you navigate local customs, keep things considerate, and make the most of your snacking experience.

- Loud Movie Snacks That Disrupt the Experience
- No one wants to hear you crunching or rustling a bag during a quiet scene:
- Chips and popcorn in loud bags
  - Foods wrapped in crinkly plastic
  - Canned drinks (the opening sound is loud)
  - Hard candy in noisy wrappers

How to Pack Quiet, Odor-Free Movie Theater Snacks in South Korea

- If you’re not sure about the smell, err on the side of caution. It’s better to pack mild, neutral movie theater snacks. Of course, you don’t need to pack snacks. You can simply buy food and drinks at the movie venue. Here is what to expect.
- Pre-open any snacks with noisy wrappers at home.
  - Use small containers or soft pouches to reduce noise.
  - Keep liquids in bottles with secure caps to avoid spills.

Military Installation Movie Theater Snack Rules

Attending movies on the military installation is just about the same as any other, but don’t get too comfortable when you first arrive and get too settled snacking.

At the beginning of each movie, before previews, people are requested to stand and face the screen showing the flag. Across the screen will first be scenes of the Korean flag waving, photos of locations across the country, and the singing of the Korean national anthem will play. For

the Korean national anthem, it is appropriate to keep your arms at your side, not over your heart. Directly after, the United States national anthem will play. It is customary to place your right hand over your heart.

It’s best to wait until after the anthems have been played to open your snacks and get settled. If you start unwrapping food or organizing your treats before the anthems begin, you may find yourself scrambling to put everything down so you can stand respectfully during the national anthems. Taking a moment to pause until they’re finished ensures you can enjoy your snacks without rushing and still show proper respect.

Popular Food Options in South Korean Movie Theaters

- From savory tteokbokki to caramel-and-cheese popcorn, Korean cinema snacks offer flavors you won’t find in your average cinema, far beyond the usual soda-and-popcorn combos. Whether you’re checking out CGV snacks, indulging in a Lotte Cinema specialty, or exploring the menu at Megabox, you’ll find everything from street-food favorites to gourmet bites in VIP lounges.
- Examples of food items you may find at Korean theaters:
- Tteokbokki (spicy rice cakes)
  - Fried squid
  - Bulgogi burgers
  - Sweet and savory popcorn (including flavors like



- caramel and cheese)
- Specialty drinks like bubble tea, milkshakes, and flavored lattes
- Hot dogs
- Fried chicken and chips (in some premium theaters)
- Alcohol (in premium theaters)

Planning Your Movie Theater Snack Experience in South Korea

- Whether you’re sticking with comfort food from home or diving into something new, a little planning can make your movie night even better. Following local South Korea movie theater etiquette ensures you enjoy the experience without disturbing others.
- Here’s how to choose the perfect snack lineup. During your next movie theater experience in Korea, here is what to consider as you make your snacking plans:
- Comfort Food Allowed: If you want to help manage your homesickness by bringing your own snacks, you can certainly do so within reason.
  - Cultural Influence: The variety of snacks reflects local culinary preferences, enhancing the movie-going experience by offering the chance to try something new.
  - Premium Experiences: The availability of alcohol and gourmet snacks is often linked to premium or VIP theater options, catering to audiences seeking an upscale experience.

Why Movie Theater Snacks in South Korea Are Worth the Experience

Whether you’re a long-time resident or just visiting, catching a film at a Korean movie theater is more than just a night at the movies; it’s an unforgettable cultural experience. From the freedom of bringing your snacks to the chance to try tteokbokki, fried squid, or caramel-and-cheese popcorn, the options make every visit a little adventure. So grab a ticket, step inside, and let the big screen and the bold flavors show you why movie nights in Korea are worth savoring.



▲ Movie magic, Korean style—popcorn and soda meet juicy, crispy fried chicken! (Photo Credit: Megabox)



▲ Don’t be surprised if you spot specialty-branded snacks born from partnerships between popular food brands and movie theater chains. HBAF’s Mala Popcorn and Peanuts pack a bold, tongue-tingling spice that’s hard to forget. (Photo Credit: Lotte Cinema)



**About the Author**  
Founded in 2015, the South of Seoul team consists of volunteers on three continents working together to support English-speaking people traveling or living in South Korea. South of Seoul volunteers work with organizations and individuals across South Korea to improve equitable access to information across South Korea. Much of South of Seoul’s information focuses on Pyeongtaek, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea. Blogs published under the authorship of “South of Seoul” include blogs compiled by multiple volunteers to improve access to standardized information unrelated to individualized personal experiences.

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# Army Lodging at Camp Walker Lodge in Daegu

## A New Era of Comfort

By Jetta Allen

The new Camp Walker Lodge is officially open, making a significant upgrade to the lodging facilities available to the military community in South Korea. Pet-friendly accommodations, modern amenities, and improved accessibility make this lodge a welcome addition for service members and their families. After nearly seven years of planning and construction, its completion symbolizes the end of a project that began in 2018. The new lodge, with a final cost of over \$46.6 million, introduces state-of-the-art amenities and accommodations designed to better meet the needs of military families.

### Family Suites, Pet-Friendly Rooms, and ADA Options

The new Camp Walker Lodge boasts 79 rooms, including 47 Family Suites and 32 Extended Stay Rooms, surpassing the 58 rooms in the previous lodge. Notably, there are 19 pet-friendly rooms, an increase from the old lodge's 11. This increase from 11 rooms reflects a growing commitment to provid-

ing pet-friendly lodging at Camp Walker. They have also added five ADA-compliant rooms, ensuring accessibility for all guests. With 52 rooms featuring adjoining rooms, larger families can enjoy the convenience of connected accommodations, which is crucial during the PCS season.

In addition to these expanded features, the Camp Walker Lodge offers several amenities that weren't available at the old facility. Each Family Suite now comes with a sofa bed, and all rooms are equipped with cooking utensils and an induction cooktop, providing greater flexibility for families. Additionally, the larger parking lot includes 40 guest parking spaces, a marked improvement over the old lodge's 15.

### 24/7 Pantry, Gaming Room, Parking, and More

Service members and their families now have 24/7 access to a Market Pantry, offering not only snacks but also refrigerated and frozen items for added convenience. Guests can grab ramen and ice cream whenever they want, showing that convenience for guests is a priority at the new lodge! For gaming enthusiasts, the Orchard Room offers a 24/7 gaming space, adding a modern touch to the lodge's lineup of amenities.

Additional convenience features include two ATMs available onsite.

### Breakfast Options & New Dining Plans

While the breakfast service at the new lodge will initially mirror the offerings of the old lodge, guests can look forward to exciting changes. USAG Daegu has been selected as a test site for a new and improved breakfast soon, featuring more hot items in addition to the traditional continental breakfast.

### A Bright Future for Customers

The Camp Walker Lodge sets a new standard for military lodging in South Korea. With improved accommodations, more amenities, and enhanced accessibility, the project has been a significant investment in the well-being of military families. Creating an updated, comfortable, and functional space to rest, recharge, and reconnect, visitors to the Camp Walker Lodge can now enjoy a more convenient and enjoyable stay.



▲ Stay at the new Camp Walker Lodge in Daegu, South Korea—pet-friendly Army lodging with family suites, modern amenities, and easy access to local attractions.

### Things to Do in Daegu Near Camp Walker Lodge

The military community visiting Daegu will find many unforgettable adventures! The city has something for everyone! Start your trip with a hike up Apsan Mountain for stunning panoramic views of the city and surrounding landscapes. Immerse yourself in the rich history and culture at the Daegu National Museum, or explore the vibrant Seo-



mun Market, one of Korea’s oldest traditional markets, where you can sample delicious street food and discover unique treasures.

For some relaxation, head to Duryu Park to unwind by the lake or enjoy a peaceful walk along the trails. Music and art lovers will enjoy strolling down Kim Gwangseok-gil Street, dedicated to the iconic Korean singer, while history buffs can find tranquility at the Pagye-sa Temple. Be sure to savor Daegu’s famous local dishes, including makchang and tteok-bokki, before heading to Gayasan National Park for more breathtaking nature hikes. For those with an appreciation for art, the Daegu Art Museum is a must-visit, showcasing local and international contemporary works. And if you're a sports enthusiast, the Daegu World Cup Stadium offers exciting events.

After a day of exploration, relax at the Camp Walker Lodge, which offers modern, pet-friendly accommodations, excellent amenities, and easy access to both adventure and comfort. Come to Daegu for a unique mix of culture, nature, food, and relaxation!

Army Bus and Public Transport Tips

The US Army in South Korea offers free inter-garrison bus services on a priority-based system, providing a convenient and affordable transportation option for military personnel traveling to Daegu. The bus schedules can be found online or at the My Army Post App. These buses make it easy to commute between installations and key cities, especially for our service members on the peninsula without a personal vehicle.

Alternatively, Daegu's efficient public transportation system—including buses, subways, and trains—offers a cost-effective way to explore the area. Whether using military bus services or Korea’s transit network, both provide reliable and budget-friendly options for getting around.

Resources For Your Trip

- Military DSN: (315)763-1492  
From Cell: 0503-363-1492
- Address: Camp Walker Lodging, Building 850, Camp Walker, USAG Daegu, Korea
- Email: usarmy.walker.imcom.list.usag-daegu-dfm-wr-lodging@army.mil



- Department of Defense Lodging Website: <https://army.dodlodging.net/property/Camp-Walker-Lodging>
- Camp Humphreys Bus Schedule: <https://home.army.mil/humphreys/my-usag-humphreys/inter-garrison-bus-service#qt0:6>
- USAG Daegu Bus Schedule: <https://home.army.mil/daegu/my-fort/all-services/base-maps-and-bus-schedules>
- USAG Yongsan Bus Schedule: <https://home.army.mil/yongsan/My-Fort/all-services/bus-schedule>
- Read the South of Seoul’s Guide, “Tmoney Card Guide for Residents of Korea”:
- <https://blog.southofseoul.net/tmoney-card-guide-for-residents-of-korea/>

**About the Author**  
Jetta Allen is the Editor in Chief of *United on the RoK* Magazine and the 2025 Armed Forces Insurance Military Spouse of the Year for USAG Humphreys. A writer, photographer, and advocate, she believes travel and connection are powerful tools for widening worldviews and building resilient communities. Through storytelling and cultural exploration, Jetta helps military families feel seen, supported, and inspired, no matter where they're stationed.



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# A Shutterbug's Sanctuary:

## Finding Inspiration at Dreamy Camera Café

By Sherry Gordon

*For* those of us who see the world through a viewfinder, some places feel like a pilgrimage. We're not just chasing a great photo; we're seeking spaces that stir something deeper within—places that inspire us to slow down, observe, and capture the world with fresh eyes. Just an hour from the fast pace of Seoul, nestled in the peaceful countryside of Yangpyeong, I found one such place: Dreamy Camera Café (꿈꾸는 사진기).

This camera-shaped cafe in Korea is more than a quirky photo op. It's a heartfelt sanctuary built by dreamers, for dreamers—especially those who've fallen in love with the art of photography.

### Meet the Founders Behind Dreamy Camera Cafe's Iconic Design

The café, a two-story recreation of a vintage Rolleiflex camera, is one of the most iconic camera-shaped cafes in Korea. A delight to the senses, the cafe stands proudly against a backdrop of rolling green hills, creating a surreal sight. It feels like you are stepping into a fantasy. As a photographer, my first instinct was to start shooting as soon as I got out of the car. The building itself is the subject, a bold, whimsical statement of passion. This isn't just a gimmick; it's a love letter to the craft.

### From Pilots to Creators: The Story Behind Korea's Camera-Shaped Cafe

Park Sung-hwan and his wife, Kwak Myung-hee, once helicopter pilots in the South Korean army, traded a life of structure and duty for a new kind of mission—building a space of inspiration and connection.

Their story is as inspiring as the cafe space they brought to life. Before opening the doors to this creative space, they both served as helicopter pilots in the South Korean army, a life full of structure, discipline, and serious responsibility. When they decided to start a new chapter, they didn't just change careers; they built their shared dream from the ground up. Park, a lifelong photography enthusiast and collector, wanted a space to share his passion. Kwak dreamed of a peaceful life in the country. Their daughter wanted to have dogs. The Dreamy Camera Cafe is the beautiful, tangible result of weaving those individual dreams together.

### Vintage Cameras and Creative Details Inside Dreamy Camera Cafe

Walking into the Dreamy Camera Cafe is like entering a time capsule for analog photography lovers in Korea.

As I made my way through the Dreamy Camera Café, something about the place really struck me—I felt this quiet connection to all the photographers who came before me. Stepping inside is like walking into a little haven for photography lovers. The first floor feels like a warm little museum, with glass cases and shelves filled with vintage cameras—each one with its own story to tell and a bit of history tucked inside.

Seeing the intricate mechanics of a Leica, the beautiful form of an old Polaroid, or the very Rolleiflex that inspired the building's design was incredibly inspiring. It's a visual history of the tools that have allowed us to freeze moments in time. The decor is thoughtfully curated, with film negatives embedded in tabletops, and even the restroom's toilet paper holder is designed to resemble a roll of film.

### The Viewfinder Experience: Capturing Yangpyeong's Landscape Light

The true heart of the cafe, for me, is the second floor. Ascending the staircase, you enter the camera's "viewfinder." The room is dominated by a massive, round window, the camera's top lens, that floods the space with gorgeous, soft, natural light. It frames a living landscape painting of the Yangpyeong countryside. For a photographer, light is everything, and this space is a masterclass in it. I spent a long time just sitting there, watching the clouds drift by, observing how the changing light altered the texture of the hills and fields outside. It's a meditative space that encourages you to be present and see the beauty in the quiet moments.

### Bucket Lists and Polaroids: A Dreamer's Tradition at Dreamy Camera Cafe

But the experience goes beyond the visual. The owners have cultivated a unique and deeply signature tradition at Dreamy Camera Cafe in Yangpyeong. With your coffee, you're given a small piece of paper and encouraged to write down your bucket list, your own dreams and aspirations. Taking a moment to reflect on my own passions, both in photography and in life, was a powerful experience. Once you've finished, the owners







take a picture of your list. They print it for you on a Polaroid-style photo to keep as a reminder. Your original list joins a growing archive of dreams from visitors around the world at the cafe.

### Why Dreamy Camera Cafe Korea is a Must-Visit for Photographers and Dreamers

This simple, beautiful ritual encapsulates what makes this café so special. It's more than just a place to enjoy an excellent cup of coffee and a slice of honey bread. Dreamy Camera Café is an interactive art piece, a community hub, and a source of motivation. It's a gentle reminder from Park and Kwak that it is never too late to pursue a passion or build a new dream. For a photographer, it's a place that recharges the creative batteries, reminding me that the best photographs come from a place of genuine curiosity and connection. This destination offers endless subjects to capture, from the macro details of a vintage camera to the sweeping landscapes outside. Still, the most crucial picture you leave with is the one of your own dreams, held firmly in your hand.

### Location Information

- Name of Location: Dreamy Camera Café (꿈꾸는 사진기)
- NAVER Link: Dreamy Camera 341-13 Jung-won-ri Yongmun-myeon Yangpyeong-gun Gyeonggi-do (<https://naver.me/xafhFGAW>)
- Hours of Operation: Tuesday - Saturday, 11:00 AM - 6:00 PM; Closed Sundays & Mondays
- Parking: Small dedicated lot available; Street parking is limited
- Handicapped Accessibility: Ramp not available at entrance



### About the Author

Living in Pyeongtaek as an Army wife and mom of three has been a gift for Sherry Gordon—an unexpected journey of rediscovery set against the vibrant backdrop of Korean culture. A creative at heart, she has found true purpose in her passions for writing and photography. Through her lens and her words, she seeks out the threads of connection that unite a diverse community. Her mission is to tell the stories that matter, celebrating the shared strength and humanity that bring people together in a place far from home.

# K-BEAUTY

## Glowing Skin

BY THE EDITORIAL TEAM



### LEARN THE BASIC SKIN TYPES

#### Healthy skin is for **EVERYONE!**

Know your skin type to understand how to treat it, nourish it, and to make it glow! The 5 skin types are: dry, oily, combination, normal, sensitive. Between each step, allow your products to absorb for optimal outcomes!

01

### CLEANSE AND EXFOLIATE YOUR SKIN



Cleanse your skin with a mild cleanser morning and night. This will remove dirt, makeup, and oils. Oil cleansers followed by a foaming cleanser are popular options in K-Beauty routines.

Use a physical or chemical exfoliator 2-3 times per week. Physical exfoliators use small grains or grit on pads removing dead skin cells through abrasion. Chemical exfoliators use a chemical, usually a type of acid, to help remove dead skin cells. This step should not be ignored. It helps keep your skin looking healthy and bright by unclogging pores and unwanted prevent breakouts.

02

### APPLY TONER

Using a toner further cleanses your skin and prepares it for the application of skincare products while balancing your pH. There are many toners for specific skin types and needs: brightening toner for those with uneven spots on their face, hyaluronic toner to add moisture, or medicated toner as well with healing properties.



03

### APPLY ESSENCE

Much like toner, essence is a lightweight layer of product to nourish your skin. Consistency is thicker than a toner but thinner than a serum and can be used in your daily routine in the morning and night.

04

### APPLY SERUM

Serums are concentrated nutrition for your skin and like many products, are custom tailored to your skin type or needs. Working a serum into your routine will help with your skin's problem areas. After application, serums should be allowed to absorb before your next step. Serums can be used for dark spots, wrinkles, fine lines, or blemishes and breakouts. You can use different serums on different parts of your face or treat specific areas at different times of day to really help treat targeted areas!







## 05 SHEET MASKS

Using a sheet mask once or twice a week can give your skin an intensely hydrating experience. The products on sheet masks are highly concentrated and the fabric linen mask will help your skin fully absorb all the goodness and lock in the products. Sheet masks like all products can be tailored to your needs. Hydration masks with green tea, aloe, or honey are a big favorite in Korea. Pro tip, keep your masks in your refrigerator to add a cooling effect that can help with face puffiness and decrease inflammation.



## ANUA HEARTLEAF 77 SOOTHING TONER

This toner helps to calm and refresh skin by carefully cleansing and hydrating your skin while balancing the pH. This formula is insult free, vegan, and gives a soothing effect to irritated skin. In Korean drugstores, this brand is the top rated facial toner!

## Recommended Products



## BLACK SUGAR PERFECT ESSENTIAL SCRUB

This exfoliating mask & scrub contains black sugar, rice wine, and fruit extracts that gently exfoliate and purify the skin for a brighter and smoother complexion.



## MIXSOON BEAN ESSENCE

Achieve the glassskin look with this vegan formula that exfoliates and hydrates textured skin with zero skin irritation. Fermented bean, barley, pomegranate, and Korean pear make this essence truly unique to Korea.

## TOP SERUMS

The best serums are the ones tailored to your skin's needs!

Anua Peach 70% Niacinamide Serum is great to brighten your skin to give you a glow up.

Torriden DIVE-IN Low-Molecular Hyaluronic Acid Serum is fragrance free and great for dry skin with a super hydrating formula.

COSRX 6X Peptide Skin Booster renews skin by evening skin tone, hydrating, firming and smoothing skin, cleaning pores to decrease sebum, and is an overall skin improving serum.

Green Tangerine Vita C Dark Spot Care Serum targets specifically dark spots including under eye areas dark spots including under eye areas.

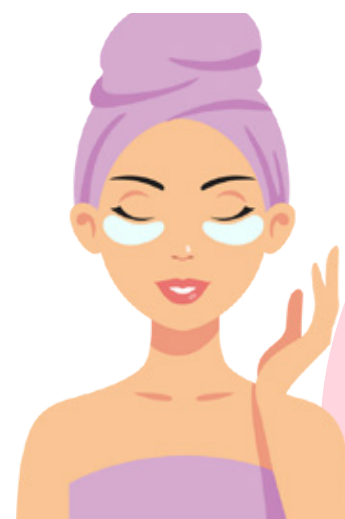
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## 06 EYE CREAM AND EYE PATCHES

Everyone can use a nice eye cream! Eye creams help with fine lines, wrinkles, puffiness, and those dreaded dark circles we know all too well about! Finding an eye cream perfect for you can be a struggle. Look for products with ceramides (fats/oils), vitamins (especially vitamins C and E), retinol (vitamin A), peptides, triglycerides, hyaluronic acid, natural butters and plant extracts.

Under eye patches used once or twice a week can also provide rescue relief to your under-eye area! Remember our pro tip for masks, yeah, put your eye patches in the refrigerator too! Keeping a dedicated space for beauty products is a great way to make sure you have some cooled and ready to use at any time!



## 07 MOISTURIZE DAY AND NIGHT

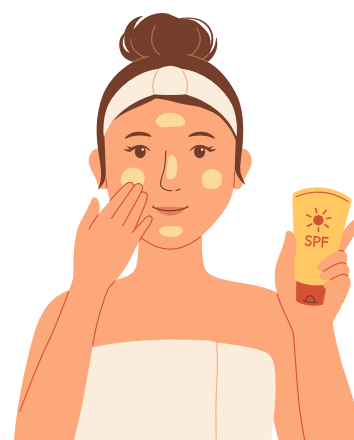
Moisturizing your skin helps combat dryness and oiliness. You should moisturize both day and night, however day time moisturizers are often lighter weight and some even come with SPF. Some are made to go specifically under your foundation and other makeup. Some moisturizers are also tinted to provide moisture and blemish coverage. Your night time moisturizer is usually thicker and provides more nutrition to your skin.



## 08 SPF AND POLLUTION PROTECTION

Fight the harness of the sun with a K-Beauty SPF. It is very important to protect your skin from harmful UV rays and radiation from the sun that can not only be hazardous for your overall health, but can compromise all the work and efforts of a K-Beauty routine.

Many SPF products have specific formulas for sensitive skin, to moisturize, or to even protect against pollutants in the environment.





# Language Exchange in Pyeongtaek

## Building Community Through Culture and Conversation

By Melissa Edwards-Whittington and South of Seoul Meetups and Culture Exchange



Evans Tea House Language Exchange Meetup

Living in South Korea can be a big adjustment. Whether you've arrived on military orders, taken a job as a teacher or contractor, or moved here to be with family, learning to navigate a new language and culture isn't always easy. But one of the most meaningful ways to feel more at home is by joining a language exchange in Pyeongtaek, especially one that also brings in elements of cultural exchange.

In Pyeongtaek, the South of Seoul Meetups and Culture Exchange Facebook group offers a welcoming space where locals and internationals come together to practice Korean and English, share stories, and build friendships. These gatherings go beyond language, they help people feel connected, supported, and seen.

### What Is the South of Seoul Meetups and Culture Exchange Group in Pyeongtaek?

Established in 2016, this volunteer-led program brings people together through informal and consistent opportunities for cross-cultural interaction. Whether it's casual conversation at a café or guided group

discussions, these events help remove the invisible barriers between local and international residents.

The exchange is part of the larger South of Seoul volunteer network. South of Seoul is a nonprofit organization supporting expats and immigrants with resources and programs that help them thrive while living in Korea.

### Why Join a Language Exchange or Cultural Meetup in Korea?

Participating in a language and culture exchange is one of the best ways to grow personally and socially during your time in Korea. These events offer far more than language practice or cultural education—they foster friendships, promote understanding, and turn unfamiliar places into familiar communities. Language exchange groups are also a great way to meet people in Korea, especially if you're new and looking for supportive, welcoming spaces.

Top Reasons to Join a Language Exchange in Korea:

- Practice Korean or English (or another language) in a welcoming, supportive space
- Learn about local customs, holidays, and daily routines
- Build relationships that ease culture shock and feelings of isolation
- Volunteer or help organize events to give back to the community
- Get involved in a flexible, low-pressure environment at your own pace

These gatherings also benefit Korean participants who want to improve their English in a relaxed, social setting while exploring other cultures, and they give expats and newcomers a chance to connect with locals in Korea in a meaningful, low-pressure way. Everyone has something to gain.

They're also a great option for anyone looking for English-speaking events in Korea or wanting to meet new people in a culturally enriching environment.



South of Seoul Language Exchange Meetup



Katie Howell leading a local language exchange



Language exchange friends celebrate a birthday together



Cultural Exchange in Korea: Shared Experiences Beyond Language

Many local language exchanges go beyond conversation practice by creating opportunities to explore and experience Korean life together. These groups often organize:

- Cultural visits to museums or heritage sites
- Meals at local restaurants or cafés
- Community potlucks celebrating international and Korean cuisine

These shared experiences deepen bonds among participants and provide authentic insight into Korean life. Through these gatherings, members are encouraged not only to connect, but to grow.

*“I have hosted and co-hosted several different meetings for many years, and my favorite thing about the discussions I’ve had is that I never walked away from a single meetup without having learned something new. Maybe it was a new Korean word or cultural idea, but sometimes I even learned things about my own culture I simply hadn’t contemplated before. I also never regretted going to a meetup, because they always lifted my mental health—just socializing in this relaxed way—even if the introvert in me was protesting leaving the house before I made myself go.”*

— Katie Howell

That same spirit of curiosity, connection, and encouragement is exactly what Katie brought to her leadership of the South of Seoul Language and Culture Exchange—helping it grow from a small meetup into a thriving, inclusive network of support.

Honoring Katie Howell: Building Language Exchange Community in Pyeongtaek

The growth and ongoing success of the South of Seoul Language and Culture Exchange is largely due to the leadership of Katie Howell, a long-time South of Seoul volunteer and passionate advocate for community engagement.

Katie co-founded the original exchange in 2016 with fellow volunteer Siegrid Pregartner, drawing from their experience with PIEF’s Talk Café program. After a pause during the pandemic, Katie relaunched the exchange and later partnered with South of Seoul to expand and promote similar meetings across the region. Her efforts helped create a centralized hub for diverse language and culture exchanges, giving residents flexible ways to connect, learn, and grow.



“These meetings are a perfect low-pressure, no-commitment opportunity to alleviate the stress of isolation and culture shock,” Katie explains. “I hope more people from the base will take advantage of them, and that we can continue to support new hosts in starting their own meetups.”

These relaxed gatherings offer more than just language practice—they create space for connection, cultural understanding, and personal empowerment in a new environment. Through her dedication, Katie helped foster that sense of belonging, building a



community where people from all backgrounds feel genuinely welcome.

One longtime participant, Morgan Kim, shared: *“At first, I joined to improve my spoken English—but what I truly gained was so much more than language. It was cultural exchange and genuine friendship. Even now, our Wednesday tea time is my weekly dose of comfort and a chance to share from the heart. Dear Katie, by your side, I learned what it means to serve and give with devotion. Our Wednesdays will never be the same without you. I miss you already.”*

Another member, Dah Seul Yoo, reflected: *“More than grammar or vocabulary, language exchange offers something deeper: cultural understanding, friendship, and confidence. It’s a free and meaningful way to connect across borders. Katie and I met through language exchange, but our bond quickly grew beyond language. She always listened with an open mind and shared her own culture with warmth and honesty. Thanks to her, I not only improved my English—I gained a true friend for life.”*

Though Katie and her family recently moved to Hawaii after her husband’s retirement, the community she helped build continues to thrive—thanks to her care, consistency, and heart. We’re deeply grateful for the years she poured into this work and for the lasting connections she made along the way.



How to Start a Language Exchange or Meetup in Korea

If there isn’t an active exchange in your area, or if you’re looking to build something new, consider starting your own group. It’s easier than you might think, and it can make a huge difference for others in your community.

How to Clarify Your Language Exchange or Cultural Meetup Goals

Not all language exchanges are the same—and that’s a good thing. Some groups may focus primarily on conversational English practice, while others may lean more toward cultural exploration, sharing traditions, foods, and experiences from around the world. Understanding the core focus of your exchange and communicating it clearly helps set expectations from the start. This allows participants to know what to expect and decide if your group is the right fit for their goals. Whether your emphasis is language learning, cultural connection, or a blend of both, clarity invites the right people to join and ensures a more meaningful experience for everyone involved.

How to Join a Language Exchange in Pyeongtaek, South Korea

- Start small and stay consistent. Begin with a weekly or biweekly meetup for casual conversation. Word of mouth will help it grow.
- Choose an accessible location. Cafés, parks, libraries, and community centers are all great venues. Look for places with seating, quiet ambiance, and good access to public transportation.
- Add light structure. Use discussion prompts or weekly themes like food, travel, or holidays. Begin with a short group intro before breaking into pairs or small groups.



- Promote your meetup. Share event details on Facebook groups, expat communities, military base pages, Meetup, or KakaoTalk Open Chat.
- Make it inclusive. Focus on creating a safe, welcoming environment for people of all levels, backgrounds, and nationalities. Emphasize connection over fluency.
- Collaborate. Co-organizers can help with planning, bring in new ideas, and prevent burnout.
- Stay flexible. As the group grows, you might add cultural outings, holiday events, or partner with local organizations.

You don't need to be a language expert to start an exchange. Just a bit of initiative and a heart for community can go a long way.

#### How to Join a Language Exchange in Pyeongtaek

If you're interested in joining an existing group, the South of Seoul Language and Culture Exchange Facebook Group is the perfect place to start. Events are free, friendly, and open to everyone, whether you're new to Korea or a long-time resident.

The group regularly shares local meetups happening throughout Pyeongtaek, so you can easily find one that fits your schedule and interests. You're also encouraged to volunteer or host your own gathering, making this community what you want it to be. Whether you're looking for international meetups in Pyeongtaek or a supportive expat community in Korea, there's something for everyone.

Looking for additional options? The Pyeongtaek International Exchange Foundation (PIEF) is another excellent resource for those interested in language exchange opportunities in Korea. In addition to offering Korean language classes to the community, PIEF provides chances for volunteers to participate in their Talk Café program, as well as opportunities to learn Korean in Pyeongtaek through structured yet friendly conversation exchanges. It's a great way to connect with locals, support language learning, and build cross-cultural friendships.

#### Finding Belonging Through Language Exchange in Korea

Language is so much more than grammar and vocabulary—it's about people. When you join a language exchange in Pyeongtaek, you're not just improving your conversation skills. You're forming friendships, learning from different perspectives, and becoming part of a community that makes Korea feel a little more like home.

If you've been craving connection, hoping to better

understand Korean culture, or just want to meet others navigating life abroad, these exchanges are a perfect place to start. They open the door to real friendships, meaningful experiences, and the kind of cultural connection and community you can carry with you long after you've left Korea.



Every meeting brings an opportunity to connect and make more friends and increase language skills.



Touring the Songtan Market as a group to learn more about local traditional markets.

#### About the Author



Melissa Edwards-Whittington has lived in Korea for over eight years and currently serves as Co-Editor and Social Media Marketing Manager for United on the RoK Magazine. Passionate about building community through storytelling, she focuses on connecting military and expat families with meaningful digital content. Melissa is also the Online Content Manager for South of Seoul, where she oversees blogs and supports local engagement through language exchange initiatives.

Together with her husband, Chuck, she shares their life in Korea on YouTube via KimchiRednecks and Shining with KimchiRednecks, featuring travel, food, home distilling, and their three senior Shih Tzus—Sookie, Minion, and Mayhem.

Follow their adventures:  
YouTube: @kimchirednecks | @shiningwithkimchirednecks  
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# Incheon Landing Operation 75th Anniversary: Remembering a Turning Point in the Korean War

By Cord Scott, UMGC Okinawa

By August of 1950, the situation on the ground in Korea was desperate. United Nations forces were pinned down in the Southeast corner, known as the Pusan Perimeter. Gen. Douglas MacArthur, who was de facto head of Japan at this time as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), as well as in command of all US military forces in Asia, wanted a bold move to shift the momentum of the war. While allied forces pushed back along the perimeter line, he wanted a surprise strike to break the North Koreans.

#### Operation Chromite: Planning a Bold Amphibious Assault

To that end, he gathered his staff in late August (20-21) to plan this move. While the plan for what would become Operation Chromite had been in development since late July, it was at this time that the specifics were being put together.

The idea was that while the US Marines and US Army (7th Division) as well as ROK armed forces



Gen. MacArthur statue. (Photo Credit: Cord Scott)



Relief at base of Gen. MacArthur statue. (Photo Credit: Cord Scott)



landed ashore, they would work in conjunction with a major push by UN forces commanded by Gen. Walton Walker, to hammer and anvil the North Korean troops. This became known as Operation Chromite.

**Why Incheon Was Chosen Despite the Risks**

There were three landing beaches considered for the amphibious portion of the campaign. The furthest south was the area around Gunsan, near what is now Kunsan Air Base. This would be the closest area for a link-up. The second landing area was Pyeongtaek (near USAG Humphreys as well as the ROK Navy 2nd Fleet HQ). But Gen. MacArthur wanted a strike near Seoul, and therefore, the port of Incheon was chosen.

**Typhoons, Tides, and Tactical Gamble**

If one has been over the Incheon bridge heading to Incheon airport, the most obvious issue of this area becomes apparent: the tide and the mud flats. Flying Fish channel has a tidal difference of 36 feet from high to low tide. Any landing attempted there would have to be fast and then could not be reinforced until the next high tide 12 hours later. To make matters worse, the US Marines who had gathered in Korea and were embarking for this landing, encountered two typhoons in Japan.

**September 15, 1950: The Incheon Landing Operation Begins**

The landings were set for the morning of September 15. Elements of the 5th Marine Regiment landed on what was designated Green Beach on Wolmi Island. Wolmi Island jutted into the channel and had a North Korean artillery battery there, so it had to be taken first. The landing was a success, and the US Marines held their position until the afternoon, when the additional landings occurred: Red Beach, near Green beach and the causeway (it is here that the famous photo of 1st Lt. Baldamero Lopez leaving the landing craft was taken) and Blue beach, south of the other two, took place.

**Commemorating the Battle: Incheon Landing Historical Markers and Memorial Hall**

All three beaches now have commemorative markers. Green Beach and Red Beach are near the Incheon train station. If one is going to the Chinatown section of Incheon, the Red Beach marker is four blocks to the north, and the Green Beach marker is near the amusement park on Wolmi Island. If one turns left and goes into Chinatown, at the top of the hill is a large statue



of Gen. Douglas MacArthur. While his reputation and ego have led to a variety of opinions about his military actions, the landing was an audacious gamble that did pay off. Gen. MacArthur himself stated the odds were 5000 to 1 of a successful landing.

If one goes south from Chinatown, the Blue Beach marker is a bit harder to find, as it sits next to a gas station a mile inland from the current coast. The most impressive monument to the landings however is the Memorial Hall for Incheon Landing Operation. Situated on a hill overlooking the bay, one gets a sense of the terrain and the conditions by which the combatants had to fight. There are several full-scale items of equipment, 3-D recreations of photos into statues. Inside the museum, visitors can view 3-D recreations of the landing sites, historical maps comparing the 1950 coastline to the present day (attesting to the economic growth of South Korea), as well as a variety of uniforms, weapons, and other military items from the landing and the time.

**Strategic Victory: How the Landings Shifted the Korean War**

The landing proved to be the surprise that Gen. MacArthur hoped. The US and ROK forces pushed north and liberated Seoul by the end of the month, and the landing allowed the UN forces to break out of the Pusan Perimeter in the south and link up with the

landing forces at the same time, ironically not far from the first battle site in Osan.

**Continuing the Legacy: Honoring Those Who Served**

There is also a UN marker dedicated to the Colombian soldiers who fought in the Korean conflict, located in the area. In all, the landings served to change the tide of the war for a third time. UN forces went on the offensive, and by October, the common refrain was that the war would be done by Christmas. For a more descriptive account of the landing sites and a walking tour of the area, please consult my article in Marine Corps History magazine, Summer 2025 edition (<https://www.usmcu.edu/Outreach/Marine-Corps-University-Press/MCH/Marine-Corps-History-Summer-2025/Inchon/>).



**About the Author**  
Cord A. Scott has a Doctorate in American History from Loyola University Chicago and currently serves as a Professor of History for the University of Maryland Global Campus for Asia. He is the author of Comics and Conflict, Four Colour Combat (on Canadian war stories in WWII comic books), the Mud and the Mirth: Marine Corps Comics of WWI, and the forthcoming They Were Chosin: Marine Cartoonists written for several encyclopedias, academic journals such as The International Journal of Comic Art, The Journal of Popular Culture, The Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, and several books on aspects of cultural history. He has lived all over the Pacific and currently resides in Okinawa, Japan.



## Bittersweet Goodbyes and Beautiful Beginnings

By Dr. Naomi Nubin-Sellers



### The Emotional Reality of Goodbyes

Goodbyes often bring mixed emotions for most people, especially in military life, where they come often and without pause. While they can feel sad, they can also signal a growth in your career, family, or a new opportunity. In any instance, military life means that farewells are at the core of the profession. For me, every farewell is both a loss and a beginning, a moment to reflect not just on what's ending, but on the strength of the community that made it so hard to leave.

### Learning the True Value of Community

I typically encourage people not to be sad when we separate, but rather to be grateful for the time we spent together. My perspective on goodbyes is a unique one, one that stems from my upbringing. My mother had many layers, one of which I am sure is responsible for my view on goodbyes. Ever since I was young, she would consistently remind me how

“funny” we all are as people. After years of staying at home, she got a job as a pawnbroker. She would often tell me that she deals in valuables, a concept that can mean different things to different people. At the time, I thought she meant jewelry and trinkets, but I’ve since come to understand her deeper meaning.

### Finding Strength in Created Community: A Life Lesson Reinforced in Korea

However, as I grew, I started to understand that the true value is often not in things, but in the people you call family - those who make up your created community. Moving to Korea reinforced this lesson, highlighting the centrality of finding community wherever you are in the world. Unfortunately, finding the community you didn't know you needed can make for a bittersweet goodbye, one filled with both gratitude and sadness.

### Finding Belonging Through the Humphreys Hoops Club

#### An Unexpected Community Hero

For me, the Humphreys Hoops Club (HHC) has been a major part of my created community. HHC has always reminded me of a good book, one with the classic plot of the underdog striving to be the best. Like a good book, the growth of HHC has been marked by exciting new developments, growth, and a fantastic community of people united by a common goal.

### The Power of Storytelling in the Transitions of Life

Much like the community I have built with HHC, a diverse collection of stories has helped to shape me. I have loved to read and write since I learned I could, devouring all the stories I could get my hands on. Adventures of faraway lands, action-packed tales of unlikely heroes, poems about love and loss, seemingly far-

etched stories of individuals who were forced to muster unimaginable strength, and everything else in between. These tales taught me everything I needed to know, as they helped me put the lessons my mother taught me into perspective. For a young girl who would eventually face impossible odds in her own life, these stories saved me. They helped to raise me, taught me resilience, and eventually proved to me that an essential part of life is finding your most natural voice and surrounding yourself with people willing to listen to it.

### Diamonds in the Rough: Reflecting on Life, Love, and Community

By this philosophy, this very column, Diamonds in the Rough, was my saving grace. In my previous columns, I highlighted the ways love, laughter, and community shape us in extraordinary ways. I emphasized how shifting our perspectives can save us from the inevitable countervailing pressures of life. I underscored that by embracing a gratuitous spirit, we can all make our lives more enjoyable by welcoming the challenges and learning from our failures.

These themes reflect my approach to life and living. They represent the direction I provide to my children and the advice I share with my most intimate relationships when they ask for it. But writing this column has also taught me a great deal. It provided me the space to process my feelings as new challenges unfolded in my life. It provided me with the platform to share the tiny fascinations of life. And most importantly, it became a venue to share my unique life journey. One that has been rife with impediments, perseverance, toil, persistence, wonder, beauty, love, and, most importantly, appreciation for my created community.

### Balancing the Dual Role of Sharing and Processing

The contribution of this column has always been two-sided, a delicate balance between deciding whether to proffer or process. Sharing advice on things I have experienced or questioning something I currently find myself struggling with. The very first column of Diamonds in the Rough was all about work-life balance. I wrote of a fictitious woman who had sacrificed everything for her family. In the shadow of her reflection, I saw myself. Another version of me that feared my unchecked ambitions, dreams, and goals.

I wondered if, were I in that situation, would I become bitter because I was forced to shrink myself, sidelining my passions, all to live an incomplete life. “Not unhappy, just incomplete.” I suggested that women (career-focused women with families) be intentional about their passions, talents, and unique skills. I attested that we do not need to demonize ambitions for the sake of



family. But instead, the goal is to confront our shortcomings so we can all live more complete lives. Postulating that this delicate life dance requires a combined effort of prioritizing, ensuring that the things you hold dear in your life are considered (family and passion), as well as being satisfied with the trade-offs we are destined to make.

### The Juggle-Struggle: Rejecting One-Size-Fits-All Advice

The first of my articles referenced above highlighted a through line for me: the idea that “one-size-fits-all.” This misconception that everyone must follow a set of practices, regardless of their priorities, family commitments, community arrangements, ambitions, and personality types just never sat right with me. When I spoke to other women in similar







family arrangements, I observed three main trajectories: one characterized by complete ambition, another where they felt constricted and shrunken, and a third marked by complete and utter chaos. I knew I wanted neither, but to be present for my loved ones and also be free to pursue my passions and dreams.

#### Honoring the Giants Who Shape Our Journey

In supplemental columns, like *Diamonds in the Rough: Honoring the Giants in Your Life*, I praise those who helped mold me into the individual I am becoming. My giants, my loved ones who have passed on, those who my legacy represents. Without them, my dreams would be nothing more than just that, dreams. They taught me that it is not up to anyone else to decide your fate; we all have to decide for ourselves. So, I decided that my only path to living was to do whatever I want. And I continue to encourage you all to do the same!

#### Saying Goodbye to Korea: New Beginnings

Finally, I encourage you to embrace your created communities, those beautiful, chosen connections that shape your journey in unexpected ways. For me, that means highlighting the Humphreys Hoops Club, a wonderful organization that has wholeheartedly embraced my family. This goodbye is truly sweet and

sour; we will miss the life and the wonderful community we have built here.

But with every goodbye comes a new beginning. We are looking excitedly towards the future as we head east to the Ivy League.

#### Final Reflections: Embracing Change and Looking for Life's Diamonds in the Rough

As always, I encourage you all to stay positive and always look out for life's "Diamonds in the Rough". You can do it! Take control of your life, fight for the life you want, stand on your choices with your chest held high, have fun, and laugh - even in the face of failure.

And finally, thank you all for allowing me to share my perspective. I hope you enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. Take care, until next time.

#### About the Author

The column "Diamonds in the Rough" is about embracing the challenges and lessons of family, career building, and all the possibilities in life. The author, Dr. Naomi Nubin-Sellers, currently resides in Pyeongtaek, South Korea, with her active-duty spouse and their four beautiful children, who range in age from 6 to 17. She currently holds a Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD degrees in the social sciences. Additionally, she serves as an instructor for a current program at the University of Michigan. Her career aspirations include data-driven policy research, higher education, and non-profit services tailored to young mothers. Additionally, she has recently accepted a research position at an Ivy League institution in the Northeast.



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# Maximize Your Layover

## Discover the Luxury of Emirates Dubai Connect Program

By Sarah Symbolist

### Make the Most of Your Layover with a Dubai City Tour

Layover tours are the perfect way to make the most of a long flight connection and explore a new city without the stress of a lengthy detour. Whether you're looking to check off iconic landmarks, indulge in local cuisine, or simply soak up the culture, layover tours provide an efficient and ex-

citing way to enrich your travel experience, all while ensuring you're back in time for your next flight.

### Why We Chose to Fly Emirates Airlines

My husband and I enjoy exploring different airlines whenever we have the opportunity. It's always exciting to experience the unique services, amenities, and features each one offers. On our way to the

Maldives last summer, I noticed that Emirates Airlines had a departure option from Seoul. The moment I saw we'd be flying on a two-story airplane, I couldn't resist. But that was just one of many perks that came with flying Emirates.

We ultimately chose Emirates not only for the aircraft experience, but also for their generous long layover options in Dubai, which made planning our stopover simple.

◀ Sarah and her husband Brandon enjoying their vacation in Dubai with the Emirates Dubai Connect Program



Two decks of unmatched luxury — the Emirates A380 takes flying to the next level



A fulfilling start to the day, breakfast at Copthorne Airport Hotel, Dubai.

### What Is the Emirates Dubai Connect Program?

Beyond the excitement of flying on a two-story plane, Emirates offers additional perks that make long layovers effortless through their Dubai Connect program. This complimentary stopover service allows passengers to rest, recharge, and explore between flights—and it's available to all travelers, whether you're flying economy, business, or first class.

Emirates is the only airline that provides a **free layover hotel in Dubai**, round-trip airport transfers, hotel meal vouchers, and even visa assistance, all at no additional cost. It's a seamless way to make the most of your time in Dubai, combining comfort, convenience, and cultural opportunity in one exceptional travel experience.

### How to Qualify for Emirates' Dubai Layover Hotel Program

After researching various airlines' layover programs, I found that Emirates is the only one that offers all of these benefits—a free hotel stay, airport transfers, meals, and even visa assistance—without any additional fees beyond the price of your flight.

Before applying, it's important to understand the Dubai Connect eligibility requirements, including layover duration, passenger age, and booking restrictions. To qualify, you must be over 18 or traveling with someone who is; there must not be a better connection time between your flights; your layover must be between 10–24 hours; and group bookings of nine or more passengers do not qualify.

For detailed steps on how to

book Emirates Dubai Connect, simply log in to your Emirates account and follow the instructions under "Manage Booking." It was a quick and easy process for us—especially since U.S. passport holders don't require a Dubai transit visa for layovers under 24 hours.

When you check in for your first flight, you'll receive your Dubai Connect vouchers—they look like airplane tickets, so don't lose them! You'll need to present these later to access your hotel and transportation benefits.

### Hotel Assignment and Arrival: What to Expect with Dubai Connect

Your hotel assignment depends on your travel class. We flew economy and were transported by bus to the Copthorne Airport Hotel. From the time we landed





The vibrant colors and rich aromas of the Old Town Dubai Spice Souk create a sensory journey through tradition and culture, where every corner tells a story.



Everyone loves Starbucks, even in Old Town Dubai.

around four in the morning, walked through the airport, found the Dubai Connect desk, were bused to the hotel, and checked in, it took just under 90 minutes. The main differences for business and first-class travelers are that they receive a chauffeur-driven vehicle (no bus) and are usually booked at either Le Méridien Airport Hotel Dubai or JW Marriott Marquis, depending on availability.

Upon check-in, the hotel will confirm your next flight, check-out time, and arrange your wake-up call. The hotel features a seamless revolving check-in and check-out process, so you don't have to stress about the logistics. Everything is efficiently managed, ensuring a smooth transition throughout your stay. On the morning of our arrival, the bus ride from the airport was nearly empty at 5:30 AM, but at 1:00 AM, it was packed! The driver had to turn away two passengers who would have to wait for the next bus.

Even with our Emirates economy layover benefits, the service and comfort exceeded expectations

#### Amenities and Packing Tips for Your Dubai Layover Hotel

The Copthorne Airport Hotel is a 3-star option that offers all the essentials for a comfortable stay. While the room isn't overly luxurious, it includes two full-sized beds, a cozy couch, a desk, a spacious bathroom, and free WiFi.

One of the great perks of the Dubai Connect program is that your luggage is checked through to your final destination, so you won't need to worry about picking it up in Dubai. That said, it's important to pack your carry-on with essentials you might need for your stay—such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, and a change of clothes.

If you're planning to step outside, especially during the summer months, I highly recommend packing a couple of extra shirts.

With temperatures soaring, there's nothing better than changing into something fresh before your next flight. Trust me—there's nothing worse than sitting in a cooled-down, sweat-soaked shirt on a plane!

#### Breakfast at the Hotel and Exploring Dubai in a Day

At breakfast, we showed our plane tickets and room key and were shown into a buffet breakfast. I thought the spread was impressive, with a mix of European and Western options, a cereal bar, bread, and a fruit and vegetable bar. There was also a variety of drinks to choose from, including coffee, sodas, and juices. We weren't around during the day for the other meals, and even though the hotel meals are included, I strongly recommend venturing out to explore Dubai's iconic sights. There's so much more to see than just your hotel, and a short layover is the perfect chance to experience it all.



Desert vibes and vintage rides, cruising dunes in the open-top Land Rover Defender.





Brandon's steady hand and the falcon's piercing gaze made for a moment I won't forget, a rare connection with Dubai's majestic desert wildlife.



Camels resting peacefully after a long desert day, soaking in the quiet calm of the dunes.

**Top Things to Do During a Short Dubai Layover**

Having a rough Dubai layover itinerary can help you maximize your time without feeling rushed. Planning ahead is especially helpful if you want to make the most of a short stopover in the city. If you're wondering about the best things to do during a Dubai layover—from historic neighborhoods to luxury shopping and desert adventures—this city delivers.

The Copthorne Airport Hotel is conveniently located just 10 minutes from Old Town Dubai, 20 minutes from the Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall, and 30 minutes from The Palm and Dubai Marina. The hotel also makes it easy for layover travelers to explore, offering guided Dubai city tours that can be booked right in the lobby—no need to schedule everything in advance.

Since we were traveling without kids, I decided to take full advantage of our time and booked two

tours ahead of time. I wanted to make the most of every moment during our 23-hour layover.

**A Cultural Tour of Old Town Dubai**

With the freedom to explore without distractions, we immersed ourselves in the city's incredible sights. We started our day with a morning tour of Old Town Dubai. Given that we were visiting in July, we aimed to see as much as possible while avoiding the intense summer heat. Do not be fooled though, the heat in Dubai is unavoidable in July, even at 9am. We came prepared with bottles of water, and our tour guide was thoughtful enough to offer us several more throughout the morning to keep us hydrated in the heat.

**Markets, Museums, and Dubai's Rich History**

This tour offered an immersive dive into the rich history and vibrant culture of Dubai. It took us

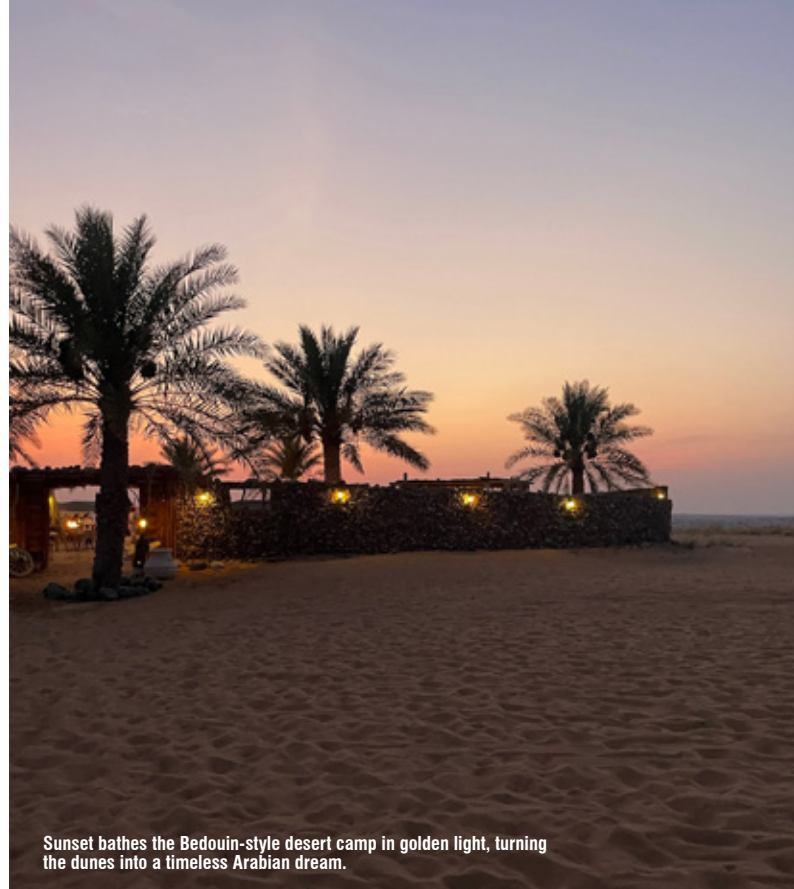
through some of the city's most iconic historic areas, like the Al Fahidi Historical Neighborhood, where we strolled through narrow alleyways flanked by traditional wind-tower buildings. Our guide brought the city's fascinating transformation to life, sharing stories of Dubai's evolution from a small fishing village to a modern metropolis. It was incredibly cool to hear from someone close to my age, who witnessed firsthand how the other side of the creek transformed from dirt roads into the thriving metropolis it is today!

Other highlights included a visit to the Dubai Museum, located in the ancient Al Fahidi Fort, and a scenic abra boat ride across Dubai Creek, offering a unique perspective of the city's blend of old-world charm and modern innovation. The tour also included a stop at the bustling souks, where vibrant markets sold everything from spices to textiles to gold. With its perfect mix of history, culture, and pictur-





Old Town Dubai Wharf, a historic trading hub over a century old, where the city's roots meet the water.



Sunset bathes the Bedouin-style desert camp in golden light, turning the dunes into a timeless Arabian dream.



Arabian Oryx grazing quietly atop a desert hill, a symbol of resilience in the heart of Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve.

esque views, this tour was an ideal way to experience Dubai's past and discover a side of the city that went beyond the towering skyscrapers and luxury malls.

Our walking tour wrapped up after lunch, and we headed back to the hotel for a quick catnap before gearing up for our afternoon adventure. At 4:00 PM, we were picked up for a drive into the desert, where we spent the next seven and a half hours immersed in the stunning landscape of the UAE's first national park—the Dubai Desert Conservation Reserve (DDCR).

Along the way, we spotted the Arabian Oryx, a species that was once on the brink of extinction but has since been successfully reintroduced to the wild through conservation efforts led by the Phoenix Zoo. What began with just nine animals has now grown to over 1,000 thriving in the desert of Dubai.

Our desert adventure—with sunset views, wildlife sightings, and a Bedouin-style dinner—was one of

the best Dubai layover tours we've experienced. It's perfect for travelers looking to see a completely different side of the UAE.

### Dinner, Dancing, and Sunset in the Dubai Desert

Even in the late afternoon, the temperature still hovered around 104°F, so we were given aluminum water bottles to carry as well as head scarves to protect from the sand. Before heading to a Bedouin-style desert camp for dinner, we had an exhilarating ride through the desert in an open-top vintage Land Rover Defender. We stopped to snap photos amidst the sand dunes and watched a captivating falcon show. To top it off, we even had the chance to hold the majestic bird on our arms for a memorable photo!

Arriving at the Bedouin camp just as the sun was setting was stunning, with the camp shimmering in the torchlight under the night sky. Before

dinner, I got a henna tattoo on my arm, and we enjoyed a camel ride around the campground. We were greeted with grilled oysters, and the dinner spread was a feast with camel meat, chicken skewers, and a variety of rice and vegetables. There was also fruit and ice cream for dessert. As we dined, Arabic folk dancing and music filled the air, and everyone was invited to join in the celebration. We made it back to the hotel just in time to shower (again!) before catching our bus back to the airport.

### Layover Travel Tips for Exploring Dubai Safely

We packed a lot into our 23 hours in Dubai, and I can confidently say this would NOT have been feasible with children in tow! Back-to-back tours would've been too much for them, but it gave my husband and me a great sense of what's possible (and what's not) when it comes to layover tours. Needless to say, by the time we dragged ourselves onto

the airplane for the next leg of our journey, it didn't take long for us to fall fast asleep!

### Travel Tips for Exploring Dubai

These essential Dubai layover travel tips will help you stay comfortable, safe, and culturally aware during your visit. Dubai is a cosmopolitan city with a low crime rate and is widely known for being welcoming to tourists. Women can freely explore, enjoy the city's attractions, and navigate public spaces with ease.

That said, it's still important to be mindful of local customs. Dress modestly in public, avoid overly revealing clothing, and respect cultural norms around behavior. Public displays of affection are not widely accepted, so it's best to avoid them. As with any destination, staying aware of your surroundings and using common sense will help ensure a smooth and respectful experience.

### Final Thoughts: Why Emirates Dubai Connect Is Worth It

From start to finish, Emirates exceeded our expectations. The process was seamless, and the Dubai Connect program proved to be an invaluable part of our journey.

The blend of convenience, cultural immersion, and restful accommodations made this a truly luxury layover experience. If you ever find yourself with an extended connection in Dubai, I highly recommend taking advantage of this fantastic program.

Never considered a Dubai stopover experience? Emirates makes it easy to turn a layover into an unforgettable mini-vacation. Whether you're flying economy or first class, the Emirates luxury layover program offers an elevated travel experience that's hard to beat.

### Travel Resources

*Aircraft and Personnel Automated Clearance System*  
<https://apacs.milcloud.mil/>

*Theater Travel Requirements, Travel Tracker/ Individual Antiterrorism Plan (TT/IATP)*  
<https://www.pacom.mil/Resources/Travel-Requirements/>

*US Department of State Travel Advisory*  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/UnitedArabEmirates.html>

### About the Author

Sarah earned her bachelor's degree from the University of North Texas in Fashion Merchandising. She is married to her high school sweetheart and raising two fearless daughters. When she's not busy managing her family life, you can find her browsing thrift stores, biking or hiking to discover new coffee shops, planning her next vacation adventure, and writing about it all on her blog at [www.sarahsymbolist.com](http://www.sarahsymbolist.com).







# Overcoming Mental Health Challenges for Military Families Stationed Overseas

By Tyrese Cook

## The Emotional Load of Being Far from Home

Being stationed overseas is often portrayed as a dream, offering travel opportunities, cultural exploration, and unique experiences for the whole family. We hear it all the time, “You’re so lucky!”, “I’ve always wanted to be stationed there!”, and even “Make the most of it!”

For many of us living it day-to-day, that dream can start to feel like a quiet struggle. One we’re not always prepared for, and one that’s often overlooked. While being stationed overseas can be beautiful, it can also be mentally, emotionally, and socially overwhelming. If you’ve ever felt overwhelmed, emotionally drained, or like you’re watching life happen from the sidelines... You’re not alone, and you’re not doing anything wrong.

If you’re feeling stuck during an overseas assignment, know that you’re not alone. Mental wellness for military life abroad isn’t about thriving every day, it’s about learning how to care for yourself through the complexity.

## Mental Blocks Military Families Commonly Face Overseas

Most of us are prepared for the logistics of an OCONUS move: passports, shipping timelines,

cultural briefings, and housing orientations. But what’s often left out of briefings and what many aren’t prepared for is the emotional weight that can be felt by your entire family.

- You miss events back home
- Time zones make catching up feel like a chore
- Birthdays, milestones, and the special moments in our children’s lives—moments we wish we could share with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and close friends back home—often pass quietly, unnoticed. And just the same, we’re missing out on all the beautiful things unfolding in their lives too. That distance can be so loud. It can leave you feeling invisible, like life is moving on without you on both sides—and your most meaningful moments are happening quietly, unseen by the ones who matter most.
- Holidays hit differently (and sometimes harder)
- Friendships you thought were solid fade out with distance
- You spend more time alone than you’d like to admit

These things build up. And over time, they can become blocks, not just bad moods or off days, but real barriers to your sense of connection, motivation, and mental well-being. For many military families living abroad, the adventure can feel like a double-edged sword, equal parts beauty and emotional exhaustion.

## Mental Health Support for Military Families Overseas: Understanding Common Challenges

A mental block isn’t just having an off day—it’s a real interruption to how you think, feel, and function. And while everyone experiences it differently, living overseas with military life on your shoulders brings

its own set of challenges that can weigh you down before you even realize it. Sometimes it doesn’t hit all at once. It shows up quietly—in your routines, your energy, your mindset.

These OCONUS-related stressors are valid and real. Acknowledging them isn’t a sign of weakness or ingratitude—it’s a step toward caring for your mental and emotional health.

A mental block can feel like:

- Creative shutdown
- Emotional numbness
- Unexplained fatigue
- Loss of interest in things you used to enjoy
- Feeling like you’re stuck, even when everything looks “fine”

Overcoming anxiety overseas doesn’t mean pretending it’s not there—it means finding the tools, routines, and people that help you keep moving forward.

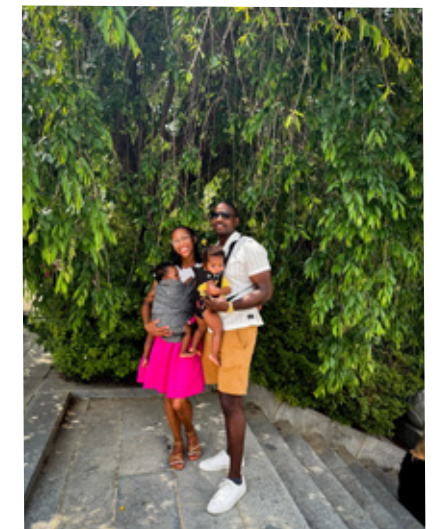
It’s that moment when everything around you says, explore, connect, enjoy, but your inner world quietly replies, I don’t have it in me. Every story is unique, but here are a few mental blocks I see regularly, especially in military spouses and service members navigating OCONUS life.

## Common Mental Health Challenges While Living OCONUS

While mental blocks can be deeply personal, many military families face similar patterns. Below are some of the most common challenges experienced while stationed OCONUS:

### Isolation

The lack of proximity to family and friends can make you feel like you’re doing life in a vacuum. And even when people surround you, you may still feel like no one truly knows you.



## Culture Shock and Adjustment Fatigue

Trying to decode a new language, culture, and lifestyle on top of everyday life can take a toll. The constant “figuring things out” can lead to emotional exhaustion and withdrawal.

## Lack of Belonging

If you haven’t found your “tribe” yet, you might start to believe that you never will. That belief can slowly make you feel more isolated.

## Depression and Anxiety

It’s not uncommon for overseas life to intensify mental health symptoms or exacerbate preexisting conditions impacting your overall health. When routines change and stressors increase, symptoms you’ve previously managed can return. Some may even show up for the first time.

Coping with depression abroad can be especially difficult when you feel pressure to enjoy every moment. You’re not alone in that tension.

## Pressure to Make the Most of It

Many people freeze under the pressure to enjoy everything. The feeling of “wasting” the opportunity or “fear of missing out” can lead to avoidance of activities, of trying



new things, and of socializing.

If any of these resonate with you, know this, you are not failing. You are navigating a complicated experience with strength and intention.

Let me encourage you, there is no right way to “experience” an overseas assignment. You don’t have to become fluent in the language, travel to a new city, island, or country every weekend, or fall in love with your new duty station for your time to be valid. Sometimes, the biggest win is just finding your footing again.



Practical Tips to Support Your Mental Health Overseas

If you’ve been feeling stuck in the mud mentally, emotionally, or socially, here’s what I’ve learned and often remind myself.

Validate the Hard Stuff

There’s a difference between venting and processing. It’s okay to admit that this season is hard. It doesn’t mean you’re weak or ungrateful; it means you’re self-aware. Once we acknowledge the truth of what we’re feeling, we can stop gaslighting ourselves and open the door to start working through it. So many families feel stuck over-

seas—not because they’re weak, but because the weight of constant change is real.

Reclaim Structure

Life overseas can sometimes feel unstructured, especially if you’re not working as a military spouse, you’ve stepped out of your familiar roles back home, or you’re just adjusting to a heightened optempo. That lack of rhythm can lead to restlessness, an adjustment disorder, or even anxiety or depression. One of the best mental health tools is rhythm. Try creating small anchors in your day:

- Morning walks
- Weekly outings (even if local)
- Dedicated downtime
- Weekly check-ins with a friend or partner
- Intentional screen time boundaries

Adjusting to military life overseas doesn’t come with a universal guidebook. It’s messy, unpredictable, and can be lonelier than many people often expect. Consistency in your routine can help settle the nervous system and give your brain predictability, something it deeply craves when everything else feels foreign.

Say Yes to Imperfect Connection

Building your community overseas can feel daunting. From forced small talk and mismatched energy to being in different seasons of life, it can be challenging to find your network of support. Sometimes, the most powerful thing you can do is reach out for emotional support, especially as a military spouse navigating life far from home.

I encourage you to show up even when you don’t feel like it. Start small. Message someone you met. You don’t have to “click” with everyone. But you’ll never find your tribe if you never try.

Connections at times can build

slowly—but they do build. And you’re worth the effort it takes to feel known again.

Make Space for Joy Without Pressure

Permit yourself to experience joy in small, accessible ways, not just in the grand things. You don’t need to take a distant weekend trip to feel alive again. Instead, try one of my suggestions.

- Visit a new café
- Browse a local market
- Create something—journaling, photography, cooking
- Host a game night with friends
- Plan something just for you, not the whole family

Micro-joys can add up. When we give ourselves freedom to enjoy what’s right in front of us without comparing it to someone else’s highlight reel, our mindset starts to shift.

Talk to Someone—Professionally

If you’re hitting a wall that rest, connection, and routine can’t move, you may need deeper support. There is no shame in that. If you’re wondering how military families can get mental health help abroad, know that there are options—on base, off base, and even online.

Resources for Military Mental Health Support Overseas

Mental health care is available in a variety of ways, even overseas:

- Military & Family Life Counselors (MFLCs): Free, confidential, short-term counseling services for individuals, couples, and families.
- Chaplains
- On-Installation Behavioral Health: Available through your medical facility with your primary care manager or behavioral health department.
- Off-Installation Support: Many clinics outside of your installa-



tion accept Tricare and many other insurances, often with no referral needed for mental health support. Call one close to you and see who is the right fit for your current needs.

- Virtual Therapy: Many U.S.-based therapists offer telehealth that works with your schedule and time zone. Utilize Military One Source to get connected.
- Peer Support Groups: Look for spouse support networks or expat groups in your area.

Therapy and mental health resources for military families overseas aren’t just for when things fall apart, they’re for building resilience too. It’s also a proactive space to unpack, recalibrate, and gain tools to continue moving forward.

If You’re in a Hard Season Right Now

You’re not behind. You’re not invisible. You’re not the only one. This season doesn’t define you. It reveals you. It reveals your capacity to keep showing up, even when it’s difficult to. It reveals the depth of what you’re carrying. And it shows that even if this chapter doesn’t feel “easy,” it can still be worth something. Through a hard season, many find growth, insight, resilience, and perspective. We don’t

always get to control the pace of our adjustment. But we do get to take one step at a time. One connection. One deep breath. One honest conversation.

Final Thoughts: Your Mental Health Matters, Wherever You’re Stationed

After years in the military community and multiple overseas assignments, here’s what I know:

- It may feel like everyone around you is adjusting more quickly, making more friends, or “finding their groove”, but remember comparison will always steal clarity. You aren’t falling behind, you are unfolding at your own pace.
- It’s possible to turn things around, even if it’s slow.
- Discomfort doesn’t mean you’re doing it wrong. That feeling is the birthplace of change; let it speak to you, not shame you.
- There’s power in naming what you’re feeling and asking for what you need.
- Give yourself permission to begin again (as many times as you need).

- Shift your mindset, reconnect, and embrace every season, especially the ones that require a stronger, more resilient version of you.
- You don’t have to figure out every step of adjusting to military life overseas, just focus on taking the next small step.

As a military family overseas, you carry so much of the emotional load. Prioritizing your mental health isn’t selfish, it’s survival. Military life, with all its transitions and relocations, can feel relentless. But in the middle of all the movement, you matter. Your mental health matters. Your overall health and wellness matter. Your experience matters. You don’t have to be the strongest, most adventurous, or most optimistic person on your installation to be doing a good job. You just have to be honest, open to growth, and willing to keep going.

Your time overseas is still yours, even if it hasn’t looked how you thought it would.

It’s never too late to turn the page.

About the Author

Tyrese Cook, also known as Re, is a devoted military spouse and proud mother to five daughters, including two sets of twins, who brings warmth, insight, and a touch of humor to every subject she explores. Tyrese, a non-denominational Christian with a master’s degree in social work, is a licensed social worker in Ohio and Kentucky who practices therapy. Drawing on her faith and expertise, she is passionate about mental health and committed to helping others reach their full potential with compassion and understanding. She was recently featured with her family on CNN and honored as the May/June 2025 cover story for Military Families Magazine. She is also a proud regular contributor for The Military Mom Collective, a vibrant community where military-connected women come together to share stories, offer support, and foster connection. Whether in therapy, motherhood, or ministry, Tyrese’s life reflects her deep commitment to family, love, and resilience. Outside of her work and family life, she delights in cooking creative meals, diving into captivating books, and experiencing the world’s diverse cultures. Follow her journey on YouTube and Instagram at @AuthenticallyRe, and tune in to her podcast Planted in Purpose and devotional series The Garden Bench, streaming on your favorite platforms.



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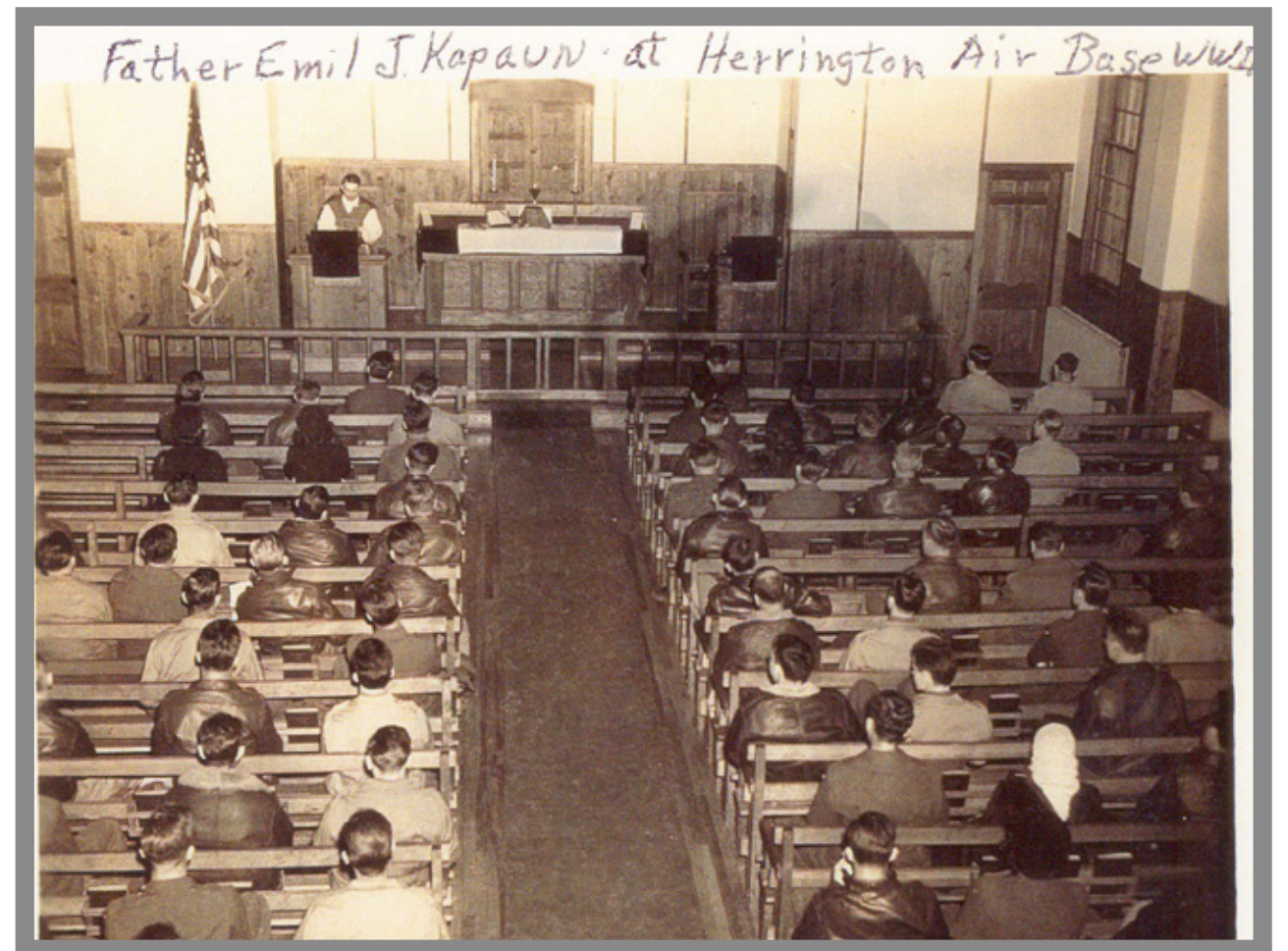
# Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun Honored

## *From Kansas to Korea, A Legacy of Faith and Sacrifice*

By Bill Kim



Portrait of Chaplain (Capt.) Emil Kapaun, post World War II. Kapaun was promoted to Captain on January 3, 1946.



▲ Chaplain (Capt.) Emil Kapaun celebrates Mass for Soldiers at Herrington Air Base, Kansas, circa 1942. It was after Father Kapaun saw the need for military chaplains while serving at the Herrington Air Base that he felt the call to the military chaplaincy.

### Honoring Chaplain Emil Kapaun at Camp Humphreys

On June 5, 2025, the USAG-Humphreys Religious Support Office hosted a Building Memorialization Ceremony in honor of U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun, who heroically gave his life in service during the Korean War. It was the culmination of a process that included the coordinated efforts of the command and religious support personnel from U.S. Army Garrison Humphreys, the Camp Humphreys Roman Catholic Community, Eighth Army, USFK, and the Office of the Chief of Chaplains.

### A Memorial Ceremony Rooted in Faith and Service

Organized by the staff at the USAG Humphreys Religious Support Office, Sgt. Nicole Silong narrated the ceremony. Chaplain (Col.) Chul W. Kim, USFK Command Chaplain, who spearheaded the idea for the building memorialization, provided the invocation. Chaplain (1st

Lt.) Joseph Baltz, with the 41st Signal Battalion, and one of the priests serving the Camp Humphreys Roman Catholic Community, gave the benediction.

The ceremony included inspiring remarks by the ceremony host, Col. Ryan K. Workman, U.S. Army Garrison Humphreys Commander, and a sermon excerpt of Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun's message, titled, 'Blessed Are the Peacemakers,' was originally recorded for the 'Chaplain's Hour' on April 21, 1950, in Tokyo, Japan.

As the chapel takes on Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun's name, it's only fitting to reflect on the extraordinary life of service that inspired this honor. From a small Kansas farm to the battlefields of Korea, his journey was defined by humility, courage, and unwavering faith.

### The Early Life of Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun: From Kansas Farm Boy to Priest

Born on April 20, 1916, Emil Joseph Kapaun grew up on a farm near Pilsen, Kansas. At an early age, he





▲ Chaplain (Capt.) Emil Kapaun writes a letter in Korea, circa 1950. Kapaun spent countless hours writing letters home, both to his family and to the families of fallen soldiers.



▲ Chaplain (Capt.) Emil Kapaun repairs his bicycle on August 11, 1950.

learned the farm trade, which included repairing equipment. Discerning a call to the priesthood, Emil Kapaun entered Conception Seminary, a boarding high school and college, in 1930. He graduated in 1936 and began his theological studies at Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Graduating in 1940, he was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in the Diocese of Wichita, Kansas, by Bishop Christian Winkelmann on June 9. He was the first Pilsen native to be ordained.

Father Kapaun served as an assistant pastor at his home parish, St. John Nepomucene, in Pilsen. In 1943, Bishop Winkelmann assigned him to also serve as an auxiliary chaplain at the Herington Army

Air Field in Herington, Kansas. During those eighteen months, he learned the needs of ministering to soldiers and received a calling to the Army Chaplaincy. In his own words, Father Kapaun felt the need to "spend himself for God."

### From WWII to the Korean War: Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun's Military Journey

Finally receiving permission from Bishop Winkelmann after repeated requests, Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun commissioned in the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps on July 12, 1944, and a month later, attended initial training at the U.S. Army Chaplain School at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. Upon graduation in October 1944, he was stationed at Camp Wheeler, Georgia, where he and others provided religious support to more than 19,000 service members. In March 1945, he served the remainder of World War II in Burma and India. Here, he would often travel great distances through rugged terrain to visit soldiers on the frontlines. On January 3, 1946, he was promoted to the rank of captain, and in July of that same year, he separated from the Army.

After returning to civilian life, Father Kapaun remained deeply connected to the military community, and his sense of duty soon drew him back. In October 1946, utilizing his G.I. Bill, he studied at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. and earned a Master's Degree in Education in 1948. Upon the completion of his studies, he desired to return to the Army, believing that "his conscience told him that his priestly duty was with the men of the Armed Forces." In September 1948, Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun reported to Fort Bliss, Texas, assigned to the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Corps. In December 1949, he deployed to Japan, being assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, a post-World War II peace-keeping force.

### Faith on the Front Lines: Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun's Heroism in the Korean War

On July 15, 1950, Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun deployed with his unit to Korea in support of the Korean War, a brutal conflict that erupted in June 1950 after North Korea invaded the South, drawing in United Nations forces led by the United States to defend the Korean Peninsula. His mission was to provide spiritual and religious support to troops engaged in combat.



Chaplain (Capt.) Emil Kapaun conducts a field Mass on the hood of his jeep, August 11, 1950.

Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun rescued a wounded Soldier while under intense enemy fire on August 2, 1950, near Kumchon, located in the southern part of present-day North Korea. For his heroic and selfless actions, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with a "V" device for valor.

### Captivity and Courage: Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun's Time as a POW

On November 1, 1950, the North Korean and Chinese Armies surrounded Chaplain Kapaun's unit near Unsan. He was captured by enemy forces, but managed to escape when friendly forces shot his captors. His commitment to staying with the wounded ultimately led to his second and final capture. On November 2, 1950,



▲ Chaplain (Capt.) Emil Kapaun (right) and a doctor carry an exhausted Soldier off a battlefield in Korea, early in the war. The photo shows Kapaun to the GI's left. The soldier on the GI's right side was Capt. Jerome A. Dolan, a medical officer with the 8th Cavalry regiment.

Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun was captured for the final time, after refusing to leave those in his care behind.

Chaplain Kapaun spent the remainder of the Korean War in the Sambukol and Pyoktong Prisoner of War (POW) camps, located in present-day North Korea. With complete disregard for his safety and comfort, he showed resistance against the orders of the guards by scouring for food, securing medicine, mediating disputes, digging latrines, building fires, fashioning iron sheet vessels to launder the clothing of the wounded, and purifying drinking water. He also continued providing direct religious support through prayers and worship for the POWs at the risk of punishment from his captors. He was feared by the guards and revered by his fellow POWs. The POW survivors of Pyoktong Camp retold numerous accounts of Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun's actions, crediting him with saving their lives.

Tragically, Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun passed away from malnutrition and pneumonia on May 23, 1951. He was buried by fellow POWs in a single grave. He was one of twelve chaplains to die in Korea. Four U.S. Army Chaplains were POWs in 1950, all of whom died while in captivity.

### Legacy of a Military Saint: Awards, Recognition, and Sainthood Process

Decades after his death, Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun's story continues to move hearts and minds around the world. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Korean War on April 11, 2013. He became the ninth U.S. Military Chaplain to receive it throughout history. At the ceremony, Former Secretary of the Army John McHugh stated:

*"...among recipients of the Medal of Honor, Father Kapaun's story is, in itself, wholly unique, wholly different. He didn't charge a pillbox; he didn't defeat an enemy battalion or brigade or division by himself. Rather, Father Kapaun's only weapons were his steely defiance that inspired his fellow prisoners of war; the words he spoke, which brought comfort to the Soldiers with whom he served; and a simple piece of purple ribbon that he wore around his neck, a mark of his chaplaincy, his priesthood. But don't make any mistake about it; Father Kapaun was a Soldier; and a Soldier in the purest, in the truest sense of the word."*

Chaplain Kapaun was originally interred with the 4,000 other unknown Soldiers from the Korean War at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in





▲ Ray Kapaun poses for a photo with former President Barack Obama while holding the Medal of Honor that was presented posthumously to his uncle, U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun, April 11, 2013, at the White House. Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun, a chaplain who served with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, was recognized for his actions during combat operations in the Korean War. Captured by U.S. Army)



▲ Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun's remains lay in the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception before being entombed Sep. 29, 2021, in Wichita, Kansas. Thousands of people lined the streets of downtown to honor the American and hometown Hero. Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun is originally from Kansas. Captured by Master Sgt. Miriam Espinoza, 1st Cavalry Division.



▲ Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division lead a horse-drawn caisson procession for Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun, to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun served in 3-8 Cav and was taken as a Prisoner of War during the Korean War. He died as a Prisoner of War on May 23, 1951. His remains were identified in 2021 by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and returned home after more than 70 years. Captured by Staff Sgt. Carolyn Hart, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

Hawaii. However, on March 4, 2021, Department of Defense investigators identified his remains. On September 29, 2021, a funeral was held for Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun, and his remains were carried in a horse-drawn carriage to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Wichita, where he was buried with full military honors.

Military awards held by Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun include the Medal of Honor; the Distinguished Service Cross; Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device; Legion of Merit; Prisoner of War Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with one Bronze Service Star for Central Burma Campaign; World War II Victory Medal; Army of Occupation Medal with Japan Clasp; Korean Service Medal with two Bronze Service Stars; National Defense Service Medal; and United Nations Service Medal.

In 2025, Pope Francis bestowed the title of "Vener-

able" to Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun, which is the second stage in the process of reaching sainthood.

### The Emil J. Kapaun Chapel Dedication at Camp Humphreys

At the conclusion of the Building Memorialization Ceremony, a reading of the official proclamation officially renamed Freedom Chapel to the Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun Chapel. The renaming not only honors his legacy but ensures that future generations of service members and families at Camp Humphreys will know the name, and the story, of this humble priest who gave everything in the service of others.

Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun lived the core competencies of the Chaplain Corps: Nurture the Living, Care for

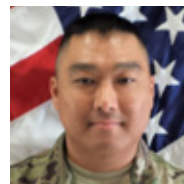


▲ The community gathered to honor Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun's memory and service during the renaming ceremony.

the Wounded, and Honor the Fallen. He set an example for all present-day Chaplains to follow, regardless of faith or background. This memorialization is a fitting tribute, not only because it takes place in Korea, where Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun gave his life for freedom, but also as it coincides with the 250th birthday of both the U.S. Army and the Chaplain Corps, each established in 1775.

### A Lasting Example of Faith, Service, and Sacrifice

The Chaplain (Captain) Emil J. Kapaun Chapel at Camp Humphreys is home to the Camp Humphreys Roman Catholic Community and the Common Ground Traditional Protestant Worship Service. We invite you to visit and take the time to reflect upon the life of Chaplain Kapaun. May his legacy continue to inspire courage, compassion, and faith in all who visit and serve.



#### About the Author

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Bill Kim is a U.S. Army Chaplain and the current Deputy Command Chaplain for Eighth Army at Camp Humphreys, Korea.

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*\*The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.*



▲ Attendees received information about Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun's life, accomplishments, and time in service.



▲ The newly renamed Chaplain (Captain) Emil J. Kapaun Chapel at Camp Humphreys.





# MANAGING PAIN ABROAD:

## *Physical Therapy for Military Families Near Camp Humphreys*

By Minjun Jang PT, DPT

### Living Well Abroad: Understanding and Managing Pain

Being stationed abroad, far from the familiarity of home, surrounded by different cultures, languages, and food, can be both exciting and challenging. Amid all these changes, maintaining your health is one of the most critical factors in making your time in South Korea enjoyable and meaningful, especially when dealing with pain, injury, or movement issues.

In this article, I'll walk you through what pain really is, how we should approach it, and how physical therapy near Camp Humphreys might help. I currently provide care at Inspire Wellness Center, located just outside USAG Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek.

### What Do I Offer at Inspire Wellness Center?

One of my biggest concerns with many physical therapy clinics in Korea is their overreliance on passive treatments, especially electrotherapy. I firmly believe that therapy should align with the functional goals of each individual. For example, if you aim to return to playing pickleball, your treatment shouldn't consist of

lying down with passive modalities, especially if your symptoms occur during activity.

Many people associate physical therapy only with post-operative recovery, but in reality, we can help with any discomfort related to movement, pain, or posture. If lifting weights feels off or you're not moving at full capacity, we can work together to improve your mechanics and get you back to 100%.

### How Much Does Posture Really Matter?

"Posture" often gets blamed for many of our aches and pains. However, research shows a weak correlation between posture alone and pain. As a clinician, I only partially agree with this.

Most research designs are very controlled and don't always reflect real-life scenarios. In practice, it's not that a specific posture is "bad"—it's more about how long we stay in one position. For instance, if you sit for eight hours a day at your desk, your posture will naturally shift over time. The issue isn't how you're sitting; it's that you're not moving enough.

Our bodies are designed to move in many different



ways. If we didn't need these movements, our bodies would have evolved them out of existence. The key takeaway? Move often. Try standing up every 50 minutes and taking a short 10-minute walk. It's simple but effective.

Physical therapy in Inspire Wellness Center can help you assess your movement patterns, reduce strain, and build healthier daily habits—whether you're sitting at a desk, parenting young kids, or in active-duty service. Don't stress over maintaining a "perfect posture." Instead—relax, change positions regularly, and keep moving.

### Military Boots: A Double-Edged Sword

#### Foot pain in Korea? It could be your boots.

Our feet are crucial to how we interact with the world—they provide balance, absorb shock, and adjust to every surface we step on. Think of them as your body's direct line of communication with the ground.

Military boots are excellent at protecting the ankle and foot from external forces. However, their rigidity can also limit ankle mobility and dampen the natural shock absorption provided by the foot's arch.

When one area of the body becomes restricted, another part often compensates for it. For soldiers, this compensation usually leads to discomfort in the heel or arch of the foot, sometimes diagnosed as plantar fasciitis. Whether or not it carries that label, the focus should always be on restoring proper foot and ankle movement with targeted physical therapy for military families in Korea.

### Pain Isn't Always What It Seems: Understanding the Types

#### What is pain, really?

Pain is defined as "an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with, or resembling that associated with, actual or potential tissue damage" (Raja et al., 2020). That definition reminds us that pain is more than just a physical reaction—it's also an emotional and neurological one.

#### 1. Nociceptive Pain (Tissue-related)

Tissue-related pain is the kind that most of us are familiar with. For example, I cut my fingertip while chopping fruit in early May 2025. I had to get stitches. The pain I experienced had a clear cause. Even now, three weeks later, it still hurts when I type—but it's much less than before. That's because tissue takes time to





heal. Whether it's skin, muscle, or joint, the healing process varies between individuals, but the pattern is similar: injury → recovery → resolution of pain.

## 2. Neuropathic Pain (Nerve-related)

Nerve-related pain includes symptoms like burning, numbness, or shooting pain, which many refer to as "radiating pain" into the arms or legs. While it's often caused by nerve compression (e.g., a herniated disc), compression isn't always necessary. Nerves can also be chemically irritated from inflammation or trauma.

If you're experiencing changes in sensation or noticeable weakness in a specific muscle, don't wait—see a physician right away. These signs may indicate a more serious nerve issue. If it's milder, Inspire Wellness Center near Camp Humphreys often helps by restoring spinal movement or finding movement patterns that reduce your symptoms.

## 3. Nociceptive Pain (Central sensitization)

Central sensitization is common in chronic pain. Your nervous system becomes overly sensitive, amplifying pain signals—even when there's no tissue damage. It's like your body's alarm system is on high alert for no good reason.

This kind of pain can persist long after an injury has healed. The pain is real—it's just coming from changes in how your brain and nerves process information. Movement, education, and building body awareness are key strategies we use to treat it at Inspire Wellness Center in Pyeongtaek.

### Key Takeaways on Pain and Physical Therapy in Korea

- Not all pain equals damage.
- Moving often and moving smartly is more important than "perfect posture."
- Your feet—and your boots—might be telling you something.
- Different types of pain require different kinds of care.
- Personalized physical therapy in Korea can help restore function and reduce pain.

If you're dealing with discomfort, whether from your training, your job, or just everyday life, know that you don't have to just "tough it out." We're here to help military families, expats, and residents in the Pyeongtaek area.

### Inspire Wellness: Your Local Clinic for Chiropractic, Physiotherapy, and Massage

Inspire Wellness Center has been a trusted provider of holistic care for the expat community in Pyeongtaek, South Korea for over eight years. With an internationally trained team of U.S. chiropractors, physiotherapists, and licensed massage therapists, the clinic specializes in personalized, evidence-based care that supports your lifestyle abroad. Conveniently located next to Brownstone Apartments, just outside the Camp Humphreys Walk-in Gate, Inspire Wellness offers easy online booking, English-language insurance receipts, and direct billing for eligible patients, making high-quality wellness care accessible and stress-free.



- Hours of Operation:  
Mon - Fri: 10 am - 7 pm / Sat: 10 am - 6 pm / Sun: Closed  
Korea's national holidays: close 2 hours early  
Lunch break: 1 pm - 2 pm
- Address: 경기도 평택시 팽성읍 안정리 110-2
- Phone: 031-647-0749
- Email: [Askinspirewellness@gmail.com](mailto:Askinspirewellness@gmail.com)
- Website: <https://inspirewellness.co.kr/>
- Book an appointment: <https://inspirewellness.co.kr/book-appointment-inspire-wellness-center/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/inspirewellnesscenter>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/inspirewellnesscenter/>

### Source

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### About the Author

Minjun Jang is a physical therapist with a multicultural background and a passion for helping people move and live more comfortably. Having lived in the Philippines, the U.S., and South Korea, he brings a global perspective to his work. A salutatorian graduate with Bachelor level and later completing doctorate level training, Minjun also served as a UN peacekeeper in South Sudan. He now balances clinical practice with ongoing study in movement science and enjoys weightlifting and biking in his free time, bringing the same energy and dedication to those he helps. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you have read in this article.



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# Hearty Broccoli Cheese Soup

## Rich, Cheesy, & Man-Approved Comfort Food

By Charles Whittington and KimchiRednecks



*Let's* get one thing straight, just because there's broccoli in it doesn't mean this homemade broccoli cheese soup recipe ain't tough. This one's a full-on, comfort-food-for-cold-weather kind of deal.

This ain't some frou-frou café snack served with a pinky in the air. No sir. This is hearty, stick-to-your-ribs, belly-warming back porch-eatin' Broccoli Cheese Soup. And when you make it right, like I'm about to show you, it'll slap the chill outta your bones faster than a shot of shine.

I like food that does a job. It's gotta taste good, fill you up, and give you that "dang, I made this" pride when you scrape the bottom of the bowl. This soup does all that and more. It's creamy, cheesy, and it's got your veggies in there, so your wife won't fuss, and it's so satisfying that you'll swear you wrestled a bear and won.

Before you dive in headfirst, here's how to nail that thick, creamy, cheesy perfection like a seasoned kitchen outlaw.

### Chuck's Tips for Thick, Creamy, Cheesy Perfection

Now, listen up, if you want your Broccoli Cheese Soup to hit that next-level creamy, cheesy, belly-hug-ging glory, these tips are non-negotiable.

#### Start with a real roux.

None of that dump-it-all-in nonsense. Melt that real butter, not that margarine stuff, and sauté those onions until they are soft. When you add your flour, give it a good stir. This is the base that thickens your soup like a pro. Don't rush it; treat your roux with the respect it deserves. I like to get mine to a nice almond color.

#### Use full-fat half-and-half.

Don't even think about going low-fat. This is comfort food, not diet food. Full-fat half-and-half gives your soup that rich, velvety finish that clings to your spoon just right.

#### Blend just enough.

If you like your soup with some muscle, like I do, don't liquify the whole pot. Blend just about a cup and stir it back in. You'll get that creamy texture without losing the hearty chunks that make this soup satisfying.

#### Grate your own cheese.

Bagged shredded cheese? Don't even. That stuff's coated in anti-caking powder and won't melt smoothly. Grab a block of sharp cheddar and a block of Colby cheese, and grate them fresh. The melt will be ooey, gooey, and perfect.

#### Turn the heat down when adding cheese.

This one's crucial. If your soup's too hot when you toss in the cheese, it'll break and turn grainy. Drop the temp and stir like your grandma's watching. You want smooth, not scrambled.

#### Add a pinch of nutmeg.

I know what you're thinking, but trust me. Just 1/8 teaspoon of nutmeg takes the flavor from "dang, this is good" to "holy moly, what is that?" It adds warmth and depth without screaming "spice rack experiment gone wrong."

Whether you're whipping up an easy broccoli cheese soup for game day or a cold-weather dinner, these tips will help you master that thick and creamy finish every time.

### Ingredients for the Best Homemade Broccoli Cheese Soup

- 1/4 cup butter (real butter, none of that margarine business)
- 1/2 medium onion, chopped fine
- 1/4 cup flour (for thickening up that base like a champ)
- 2 cups half-and-half cream (go full fat or go home)
- 2 cups chicken stock (homemade if you're feelin' fancy)
- 1/2 lb broccoli (about 3 cups), chopped into bite-size brawler pieces
- 1 cup carrots, julienned (matchsticks so they cook right and look good)
- 1/8 tsp nutmeg (optional, but trust me—it brings the flavor home)
- 8 oz sharp cheddar cheese, grated (get the real block stuff, none of that bagged nonsense)
- 4 oz. colby cheese or mozzarella cheese (gives the soup extra goodness and ooey melty, cheesy goodness!)
- Salt and pepper to taste



### Step-by-Step: Making Broccoli Cheese Soup Like a Boss

**Prep Time: 10 minutes / Cook Time: 35 minutes / Serves 6-8**

1. Get your skillet hot and melt the butter. Toss in the onions and let 'em sweat a bit till they're soft and smelling like heaven's kitchen.
2. Sprinkle in the flour and stir like you mean it. You're making a roux; this step is the backbone of a rich, creamy soup recipe, giving your broccoli cheese soup that stick-to-your-ribs thickness.
3. Slowly whisk in your half-and-half and chicken stock. Bring it up to a boil, then reduce the heat back to medium. No need to rush greatness.
4. Toss in the broccoli and carrots. Let them simmer





over medium-low heat for 20–25 minutes, until the veggies are tender but still have a little grit to them.

5. Salt and pepper it to taste. If you like a creamier texture, blend up a cup of the soup and stir it back in. Me? I like it chunky, like a proper stew, but I do blend up about 1 cup to make a nice, creamy soup to add to my stew!
6. Drop in the 4 oz of cheddar cheese and 4 oz of colby cheese and stir like your life depends on it, but don't turn up the heat too high or that cheese will break and get grainy. Stir in the nutmeg if you're feeling bold. Check again to make sure you have the right amount of salt and pepper. And then serve.

#### Hearty Pairings for Broccoli Cheese Soup That Hit Like a Meal

Ain't no doubt about it, this soup is the main attraction. But even the best show needs a solid opening act. Here's how to turn a bowl of broccoli cheese goodness into a full-blown, belly-bustin', soul-warmin' supper.

##### Crusty Bread or Sourdough

With a hot piece of crusty bread, who needs a spoon? Savoring this cheesy goodness with a delicious chunk of sourdough bread makes the perfect bite. We always stop by our neighborhood hangout, 292 Lu Bakery, to grab a fresh loaf of their sourdough. With that chewy crust and tangy bite, it makes everything better.

##### Smoked Sausage on the Side

Adding a touch of smoky flavor to the broccoli cheesiness takes it to the next level. Cut up some smoked sausage or grilled kielbasa and arrange it on the side, or even better, dip it directly into the bowl. With all that cheese, it gives a great meaty, salty kick.

##### Poured Over a Baked Potato

Watch the magic happen when you pour this soup directly over a hot baked potato. If you're feeling fancy, add extra cheese and bacon bits.

##### Wash It Down with a Cold Beer

This ain't no wine-sippin' situation. Grab a crisp lager, or sharp pilsner, or whatever's cold in the cooler. That cold beer hits just right after a long day and cuts through the richness like a chainsaw through pine.

##### Don't Forget Good Company

This soup's built for sharin'. Perfect for game night, sittin'

around the fire pit, or just wrangling the family to the table. Pull up a chair, pass the bowls, and dig in.

This ain't just soup... It's supper. Whether you're loadin' it on a tater, pairin' it with sausage, or soakin' it up with bread, this one-pot wonder's a full-on man meal that'll stick to your ribs and leave you grinnin'.

#### Put Your Own Spin on It: Try These Broccoli Cheese Soup Variations

Once you've got the base down, don't be afraid to cowboy it up a bit. This soup's like a blank canvas made of cheese, so go ahead and make it your own. Here are a few ways I like to throw some extra kick in the pot:

##### Bacon Makes Everything Better

Let's not pretend otherwise, bacon belongs in this soup. Fry it up crispy, crumble it in, or heck, stir the grease in too if you're livin' dangerously. It adds that smoky-salty magic that'll have folks lickin' their spoons clean.

##### Want It to Bite Back?

Toss in some diced jalapeños, a pinch of cayenne, or a good glug of hot sauce. Spicy and cheesy is a match made in Southern heaven. Just don't cry when it kicks you in the teeth.

##### Got Leftover Chicken? Throw It In.

Shredded rotisserie, grilled thighs, whatever's hangin' out in the fridge, chunk it into the pot and let it soak up all that cheesy love. Turns this bowl into a full-blown meal.

##### Going Green (Kinda)?

If you're tryin' to eat a little cleaner, or fool your body into thinking you are, swap the chicken broth for veggie stock or throw in some cauliflower. It'll still taste like it came straight from Grandma's kitchen, just with a few more veggies sneakin' around in there.

##### Dip It With Chips

Feelin' snacky? Skip the spoon and bust out a bag of tortilla chips. This soup makes one heck of a cheesy broccoli dip, perfect for game night, tailgates, or just sittin' on the couch watchin' reruns.



This ain't just a recipe, it's a choose-your-own-cheesy-adventure. However, you tweak it, just don't skip the cheese. That'd be criminal.

#### Final Thoughts: Real Comfort Food with Grit

This ain't a delicate appetizer. This broccoli cheese soup is a full-on comfort food powerhouse. It is perfect for tailgates, fall dinners, or whenever you need a quick and easy broccoli cheese soup to hit the spot. It's a meal with muscle, not just a bowl of veggies. It serves as a reminder that real men eat anything that's floating in cheese and that comfort food can have grit.

Make it once, and your friends will be begging you to bring it to the next tailgate, campfire, or potluck. Just don't forget the spoon, or the nap afterwards. Tag us @ KimchiRednecks if you give it a go!



#### About the Authors

**Charles "Chuck" Whittington** is an IT professional, content creator, and volunteer living in Pyeongtaek, South Korea. Since 2017, he and his wife, Melissa, have shared their adventures on YouTube as the KimchiRednecks, exploring Korean food, culture, and expat life. Chuck also volunteers with South of Seoul, supporting expat communities through digital content and outreach. When he's not filming, editing, or working, you'll find him in the kitchen, gaming, cruising in his BRZ, or rubbing the bellies of his beloved shih tzus.

**KimchiRednecks** is the husband-and-wife team of Chuck and Melissa Whittington, American content creators who've called South Korea home since 2017. What started as a way to share their adventures with friends and family has evolved into a vibrant platform focused on Korean food, culture, travel, gaming, and expat life. Their YouTube channels, KimchiRednecks and Shining with KimchiRednecks, feature everything from street food tastings and car projects to home distilling experiments with moonshine, whiskey, and brandy. Whether they're diving into a new recipe, sharing dog-friendly cafes, or exploring hidden gems around Korea, Chuck and Melissa bring humor, honesty, and curiosity to everything they do. And, of course, their faithful Shih Tzu companions, Sookie, Minion, and Mayhem, are always along for the ride. Check out their content on YouTube or on social media (Facebook and Instagram).







Tranquility in Stone and Spirit. Nammireuksa Temple captured through the lens of Christine Smith, where centuries-old serenity meets the soft hush of morning mist. Captured by Christine Smith.

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