

MAY/JUNE 2025

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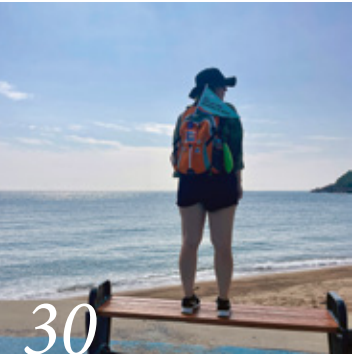
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## Snap, Travel, and Eat: A Journey of Flavor and Culture in Bangkok

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# UNITED ON THE ROK

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Oriental Press

**Editor in Chief**  
Jetta Allen

**Co-Editors**  
Robyn Connell / Candace Nuñez /  
Melissa Edwards-Whittington / Mini DeLamarter-Lefebvre

**Social Media Marketing Manager**  
Melissa Edwards-Whittington

**Web Manager**  
Naomi Suguitan

**Strategic Content Editor**  
Tyrese Cook

**Art Director**  
Eric Young-Seok Park

## **Writers**

Jetta Allen  
James T. Canter  
Tyrese Cook  
Melissa Dawley  
Bianca Del Carmen  
Jason Ebersole  
Darlene Hernandez  
Kelly Karwel  
Krystal Key  
Eunwoo Kim  
Jonathan Kim  
Sia Ko  
Heather MacLeod  
Joanna Mae Marshallsay  
Naomi Nubin-Sellers  
Candace Nuñez  
Taehee Park  
Lisa Peck  
Keri Pennie  
Dan Romano  
Cord Scott  
Cat Son  
Sarah Symbalisty

## **Photographers**

Jetta Allen  
Kymbirly Bernett  
Amanda Gray  
Courtney Johnson  
Hana Pong  
Dan Romano  
Linda Shin  
Cristine Smith  
Bryan Watkins Photography  
Photos by Annie Lou

## **Contributors**

Chef Christophe Mazeaud  
Chef James T. Canter  
Chef Sophia Kim  
Dewdrop Café  
Goddess Taco  
Guerrilla Gourmet  
Humphreys Welcome Wagon of Korea  
Humphreys Youth Orchestra  
Keystone Club  
Korea Tourism Senior High School  
Pure Balance Korea  
South of Seoul  
South of Seoul Public Health Program  
USAG Daegu BOSS

*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.

## **Oriental Press**

**Chief Executive Officer**  
Charles Chong

**Chief Operating Officer**  
Joseph Shim

**Senior Adviser**  
Hyun Jong Shin  
Sang Sil Kim

**Marketing Director**  
Jay Park  
Kye-Hwan Pak

**Interns**  
Ho Cheol Shin  
Nguyen Thi Bich Loan

**Southern West District**  
Jong Kwon Noh  
Gyeong Ho Lee

## **Commercial Advertising**

Phone: 010-5005-8611 / DSN (315)738-2222 ext. 6815 / 02-6903-6815

E-mail: [unitedontherokmag@gmail.com](mailto:unitedontherokmag@gmail.com)

Mailing address: PSC 450, Box 758, APO AP 96206-0758



Cheonjiyeon Waterfall, Jéju Island.  
Captured by Cristine Smith.



# C

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MAY/JUNE 2025

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- Pediatric Director, Twinkle Pediatric Dental Clinic (2018-2021)



### DR. LEE, MINKYUNG (ENDODONTIST)

- Endodontic Specialist, Certified by the Ministry of Health and Welfare
- DDS, School of Dentistry, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea
- Specialty in Endodontics, School of Dentistry, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea
- BS, Chemistry, Korea Advanced Institute of Science & Technology (KAIST), Daejeon, Korea
- Member, Korean Academy of Conservative Dentistry

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

*Dear Readers,*

As the days get longer and the weather starts to warm up, many of us feel that pull to head outside, excited to explore, connect, and make new memories together. May and June are the ideal time to dive into adventure, and this month's issue of *United on the RoK Magazine* is filled with inspiration to help you along the way—whether you're exploring Korea's beautiful Dulle Trails, uncovering hidden treasures beyond Asan's ginkgo trees, or preparing for your next camping trip.

Late spring and early summer in South Korea are truly something special. With clear skies, lingering blossoms, and festivals lighting up towns and cities across the peninsula, this season invites us to embrace the outdoors. Whether you're strolling along peaceful trails, exploring local markets, or sharing new flavors with friends and family, this time of year encourages us all to reconnect with the world around us and with each other.

This marks my eighth summer living in South Korea, and I'm still discovering new places, learning new customs, and tasting new flavors. From coastal getaways to mountain hikes to the tiny mom-and-pop shops tucked away on side streets, there's always something waiting just around the corner. One of the joys of living here is that every season brings something new to experience—and that's why I'm especially excited to share this May/June issue with you.

Inside, you'll find stories that celebrate both adventure and resilience. In *From Korea to the Arctic: A Military Spouse's Adventure in Remote Medicine*, we follow one woman's incredible journey from life on the peninsula to practicing medicine in one of the most remote and demanding environments on Earth.

One of my personal favorites is *Exploring South Korea's Dulle Trails: A Journey Through Scenic Landscapes, Cultural Heritage, and War History*. These winding paths take you through mountains, villages, temples, and historic landmarks, offering a more meaningful way to experience Korea's breathtaking natural beauty and depth of history.



Our cover story by Joanna Mae Marshallsay, *Snap, Travel, and Eat: A Journey of Flavor and Culture in Bangkok*, captures the vibrant essence of summer travel through culinary discovery. You'll be swept away to the streets of Thailand, where adventure, culture, and flavor meet in every bite.

From LA-style tacos in Daegu to the heartfelt story of a legacy café in Pyeongtaek, this issue also celebrates the unique local businesses and flavors that shape our communities. We offer practical advice, too—like where to shop for outdoor gear in Korea and how to advocate effectively for yourself and others.

We're also thrilled to feature the stunning photography of Dan Romano, whose images from *Osan Air Base's Power Day 2025* bring this dynamic event to life with vibrant energy and community spirit. And in honor of a major historical milestone, we proudly present Dr. Cord Scott's compelling article, *The 75th Anniversary of the Korean War*, which offers a meaningful perspective on this pivotal chapter in Korean and American history.

You'll also find helpful resources, including a beginner's guide to navigating over-the-counter medications in Korea and a myth-busting look at chiropractic care, Pilates, and massage to support your wellness journey. Together, these stories reflect the strength, curiosity, and diversity of our military-connected community.

Wherever your summer adventures take you—whether it's a weekend hike along the Dulle Trails, a spontaneous road trip to a hidden coastal town, or simply trying a new dish at a neighborhood café—I hope this issue inspires you to step outside, try something new, and thoroughly enjoy the beauty and richness of life in Korea and beyond. May you find joy in the small moments, courage in new experiences, and a deeper connection to the people and places that make this season so vibrant. Adventure doesn't always require a passport or a packed suitcase—sometimes, it starts just outside your front door.

Here's to a season filled with adventure, flavor, and purpose.

Warmly,

Melissa Edwards-Whittington  
Co-Editor, *United on the RoK Mag*





LIVE MUSIC&ARTS

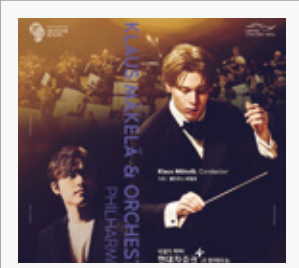
Events & Festivals



**JUN13**

**2025 Yuhki Kuramoto Concert**

Lotte Concert Hall  
lotteconcerthall.com/eng



**JUN14-15**

**Klaus Mäkelä & Orchestre de Paris Philharmonie**

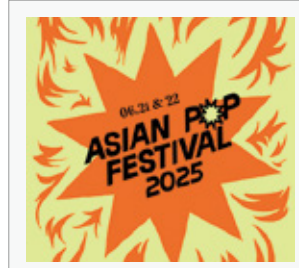
Lotte Concert Hall  
lotteconcerthall.com/eng



**JUN14-15**

**2025 World DJ Festival**

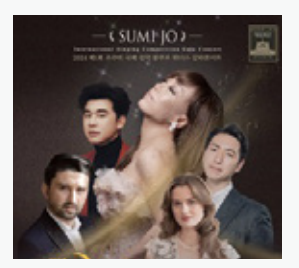
Seoul Land  
globalinterpark.com



**JUN21-22**

**Asian Pop Festival 2025**

Paradise City  
globalinterpark.com



**JUN22**

**The Magic, Sumi Jo and Winners**

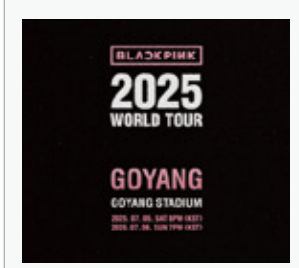
Lotte Concert Hall  
lotteconcerthall.com/eng



**JUN28-29**

**Seoul Park Music Festival 2025**

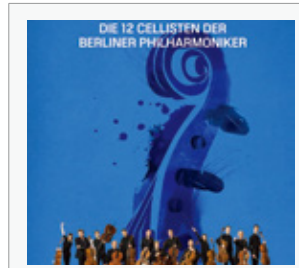
88 Garden Olympic Park Seoul, KSPO DOME  
globalinterpark.com



**JUL05-06**

**Blackpink World Tour <Deadline> In Goyang**

Goyang Stadium  
globalinterpark.com



**JUL17**

**The 12 Cellists of the Berlin Philharmonic Concerts in Korea**

Lotte Concert Hall  
lotteconcerthall.com/eng



**JUL19-27**

**2025 SAC Universal Ballet <Swan Lake>**

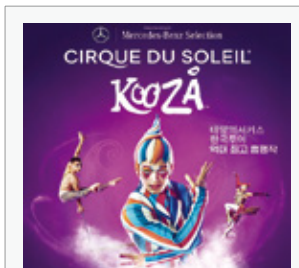
Seoul Arts Center, Opera Theater  
ticket.yes24.com



**AUG01-03**

**Incheon Pentaport Rock Festival 2025**

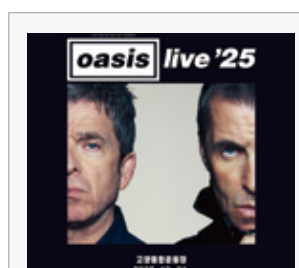
Songdo Moonlight Festival Park  
globalinterpark.com



**OCT11-DEC28**

**Cirque du Soleil KOOZA**

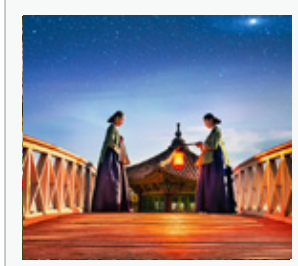
Big Top in Jamsil Sports Complex  
ticket.yes24.com



**OCT21**

**OASIS Live '25**

Goyang Stadium  
globalinterpark.com



**APR11-JUN16**

**Gyeongbokgung Palace Moonlight Tour**

- Venue: Gyeongbokgung Palace
- Address: 161, Sajik-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul
- 15-minute walk from Exit 4 of Gyeongbokgung Station on Subway Line 3
- Website: <https://triple.global/en/content/festas/019665a2-db79-7ce9-b151-cea103a75611>
- Operating hours: 09:30-20:30 (Monday Closed)

Enjoy a traditional Korean music performance at Gyeongbokgung Palace, savor the royal cuisine, and embark on a beautiful night tour of the north side of Gyeongbokgung Palace with expert commentary. This journey through the north side of Gyeongbokgung Palace, only permitted during the Gyeongbokgung Starlight Night Tour, will allow you to fully experience the serene atmosphere of the royal palace.

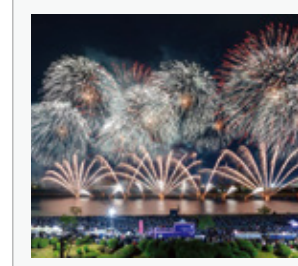


**JUN11-15**

**Eumseong Pumba Festival**

- Venue: Area of Eumseong Seolseong Park
- Website: [pumba.kr](http://pumba.kr)
- Inquiries: +82-43-871-3415
- Performance time: 09:00-21:00
- Fees: Free

Pumba was the word repeated in the songs of street singers, especially when Korea was once impoverished. They strolled around marketplaces or villages seeking food, money, or anything they could get. Pumba doesn't have a specific meaning but is a language mechanism for keeping a rhythm. These days, the word pumba generally refers to gakseori, a type of performance by performers who do not beg for food or money, but simply sing at events or festivals for entertainment. The Pumba Festival is held in Eumseong every year to celebrate this important part of Korea's modern history.



**JUN20-22**

**Pohang International Fireworks Festival**

- Venue: Hyeongsangang Sports Park and throughout Pohang
- Inquiries: +82-54-289-7852
- Performance time: 14:00-22:00
- Fees: Free

The Pohang International Fire & Light Festival is an internationally renowned event themed around the images of "light," symbolizing the global steel city of Pohang, and "fire," representing the hot blast furnaces. Performers and local citizens dress up in all sorts of costumes and masks to join in the Fire & Light Parade, which marks the colorful beginning of the festival. The festival culminates in the International Fireworks Show, the highlight of the evening. The world's best teams participate in the festival every year to give a spectacular show of fireworks against the backdrop of Yeongilman Bay.



**MAY22-OCT20**

**2025 Seoul International Garden Expo**

- Venue: Borame Park, Seoul
- Address: 33, Yeouidaebang-ro 20-gil, Dongjak-gu, Seoul
- 7-minute walk from Exit 1 of Sinlim Line Boramae Park Station
- Theme: Seoul, Green Soul
- Website: [festival.seoul.go.kr/garden/introduce/introduce2025](http://festival.seoul.go.kr/garden/introduce/introduce2025)
- Fees: Free

Last year's Seoul International Garden Expo, held at Ttukseom Hangang Park, will be held this year at Borame Park. This year's theme is "SEOUL, GREEN SOUL", and various programs such as diverse 'garden exhibitions' and 'garden industry exhibitions' will be prepared so that citizens can enjoy gardens in their daily lives.



**ONGOING -JUN08**

**JUNJI ITO Horror House**

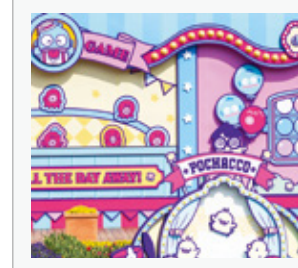
DUEX Busan  
globalinterpark.com



**JUN13-15**

**Taehwagang Maduhee Festival**

Areas of Taehwagang Sports Park & Sigyetap 4-way Intersection  
[ulsanmaduhee.co.kr](http://ulsanmaduhee.co.kr)



**ONGOING -JUN15**

**Everland Flower Carnival with Sanrio Characters**

Everland  
[www.everland.com/gateway](http://www.everland.com/gateway)



**ONGOING -JUN29**

**2025 Seoul Outdoor Library**

Seoul Plaza, Gwanghwamun Plaza, Cheonggyecheon



# Empowering Soldiers, Strengthening Communities:

## *The Impact of the BOSS Program at USAG Daegu*

By SGT Darlene Hernandez, Area IV BOSS NCOIC,  
and Jetta Allen

*The* Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) program is more than a calendar of events—it's a platform where single and unaccompanied Soldiers shape their Army experience, improve their quality of life in Korea, and positively impact their community. BOSS empowers Soldiers to take an active role in shaping their environment and experiences. At U.S. Army Garrison Daegu, the BOSS program serves its community through its four core pillars—Quality of Life, Community Service, Recreation and Leisure, and Life Skills.

### Building Bridges: The E-World Event

A recent highlight of the BOSS program at USAG Daegu was the collaboration with the Good Neighbor Program at the Daegu Seogu Youth Center. On April 5th, BOSS members joined Korean students for a day at E-World, a local theme park, where they engaged in mentoring activities and cultural exchange. This event allowed Soldiers to practice English with students eager to improve



their language skills, while immersing themselves in Korean culture. The shared experiences—ranging from educational interactions to enjoying amusement rides and the petting zoo—strengthened the bond between the U.S. military and the local community. Events like these, through the Good Neighbor Program, allow Soldiers to connect with others in a relaxed but engaging environment. The event was truly enriching for both Soldiers and the local students.

### A Critical Component of the Military Community

Beyond offering recreational activities and community service projects, BOSS plays a pivotal role in addressing critical issues such as suicide prevention, sexual harassment, and overall mental health. By facilitating peer-to-peer leadership, mentorship, and open communication, the program helps commanders gauge morale and implement solutions that directly



impact Soldiers' lives. Participation in BOSS also provides Soldiers with valuable leadership experience and enhances their professional development, contributing to retention and combat readiness.

### Mutual Benefits: Personal Growth and Community Impact

For the Soldiers, participating in such events offers more than just a break from routine; it provides opportunities for personal growth and achievement of their Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, cultural understanding, and the development of life skills. Engaging with Korean residents fosters a sense of belonging and purpose, while also enhancing leadership abilities and interpersonal communication. For the local community, these interactions promote goodwill, understanding, and a positive perception of the U.S. military presence in Korea, bolstering the Alliance.

### A Model for Community Engagement

The BOSS program at USAG Daegu exemplifies how military initiatives can transcend their primary objectives to create lasting, positive impacts on both Soldiers and the communities they serve. Through advocacy, service, and cultural

exchange, BOSS not only enriches the lives of single Soldiers but also strengthens the ties between the U.S. Army and its Korean hosts. As the program continues to evolve, it remains a testament to the Army's dedication to fostering resilient, well-rounded Soldiers and harmonious international relationships.

*“The USAG Daegu BOSS program remains committed to its mission of enriching the lives of its Soldiers while fostering positive relationships with the local community. BOSS is the embodiment of our motto to ‘Make A Difference’ every day.”*  
— USAG Daegu, Command Sgt. Maj. Asgar Kamaludeen

### Becoming a BOSS Member: A Path to Resilience and Recreation

Joining the BOSS program offers Soldiers a unique opportunity to enhance their quality of life, gain practical knowledge, and build resilience. Through BOSS, Soldiers can participate in a variety of activities that promote mental and physical well-being, such as horseback riding, water park and theme park visits, travel within Korea, and outdoor adventures like rafting and snowboarding.

Beyond recreational activities,

BOSS provides a platform for Soldiers to engage in community service, fostering a sense of meaningful contributions that make a difference. By volunteering for events and projects, Soldiers can develop leadership skills, build camaraderie, and make a positive impact on their local communities. Participating in BOSS also gives Soldiers a healthy, rewarding way to relax and enjoy their time in Korea.

For more information on the BOSS program at USAG Daegu, visit [daegu.armymwr.com/programs/boss](http://daegu.armymwr.com/programs/boss).

Visit USAG Daegu BOSS on Facebook and Instagram at [USAGDaeguBOSS](https://www.facebook.com/USAGDaeguBOSS).



### About the Authors

SGT Darlene Hernandez currently serves as the Area IV BOSS NCOIC. Since 2023, she has been an integral part of the BOSS team—first as a representative, then as a president, and now leading the program to ensure her fellow Soldiers make the most of their time in Korea. A passionate artist, she enjoys drawing and painting in her free time. She's also an avid athlete who loves playing soccer, volleyball, and softball.

Jetta Allen is the Editor in Chief of United on the RoK. Over the past few years, she has worn many hats: writer, poet, photographer, and editor. She loves nature, travel, and culture, but most of all, making memories with her family. As a military spouse, Jetta knows the importance of community and how being connected can help one find the resources and networks that help them thrive.



# God, Family, and Military Life:

## *Faith-Based Resilience*

By Tyrese Cook

*Life* as a military family is filled with constant transitions—PCS moves, deployments, separations, and the unique challenges of being stationed overseas. It's a lifestyle that demands resilience, flexibility, and an unwavering sense of purpose. Through every season, one thing has remained constant for my family: keeping God at the center.

Being stationed in South Korea has been a transformative experience for us in many ways. It's given us the opportunity to immerse ourselves in a new culture, build friendships that feel like family, and grow deeper in our faith. Finding a spiritual community here wasn't just a hope—it was a necessity. And by God's grace, we've found just that.

### **Faith-Based Resilience in the Midst of Military Challenges**

Military life can stretch you in ways you never expected. It teaches you patience when orders change at the last minute, en-



duration when your spouse is away, and trust when the future feels uncertain. But faith is what anchors us through it all.

One of the biggest challenges military families face is the feeling of instability. Every few years (or sometimes months), we are uprooted and planted somewhere new. While the excitement of a fresh start is real, so is the grief of leaving behind friendships, familiarity, and the community we've built. In those moments, I've learned that true stability isn't found in a duty station—it's found in something greater.

### **Finding and Building a Spiritual Community in South Korea**

When we arrived at Camp Humphreys, one of my biggest prayers was to find a strong, faith-filled community. As an introvert, I tend to be thoughtful about the spaces I engage in, but I knew that if my family was going to stay spiritually grounded, we had to be intentional about connecting with other believers.

The military offers many opportunities for spiritual growth, but it's up to us to take that step to seek them out. For my family, that meant finding a church home on post and getting involved in ministries that align with our values.



One of the most impactful experiences has been worshipping at the Burning Bush Gospel Service. From the moment we stepped into the sanctuary, we felt the warmth and love of a congregation that truly embodies the heart of Christ. The worship is powerful, the messages are convicting, and the sense of belonging is undeniable. My children have flourished in the youth ministries, finding joy in serving and participating in various church activities. These moments remind me that community is so important—because faith is not meant to be walked alone—it grows stronger when nurtured through fellowship.

### **How Faith Strengthens Our Family**

Faith isn't just something we practice on Sundays—it's the foundation of our home. My husband and I have always been intentional about making Christ the center of our marriage and parenting, but being in South Korea has made that even more important.

With the distance from extended family, we've had to rely on each other and on God more than ever. We pray together, study the Word together, and teach our children the importance of faith in everyday life. Whether it's through bedtime Bible stories, worshipping





as a family, or getting our children involved in ministry, we want them to know that faith isn't just something we talk about—it's action, commitment, and a way of life—the foundation of how we live.

Being part of a faith-based community has also given our children a sense of belonging. They have friends who share the same values, and a church family that loves and genuinely supports them. That sense of community is invaluable, especially in a lifestyle where friendships can sometimes feel temporary.

#### Spiritual Resources at Camp Humphreys

No matter where you are in your spiritual journey, there are resources available to help you stay connected and grow. If you are new to Camp Humphreys or looking for ways to build your faith or find community, here are some great places to start:

- USAG-Humphreys Religious Support Office Facebook**
  - This account is dedicated to informing the com-

munity of services of a variety of faith backgrounds, their times, and their locations.

**Chaplain Services** – Whether you need guidance, counseling, Bible studies, or are interested in various faith-based programs for military families, the chaplains are here to provide support for individuals and families from all faith backgrounds.

**The Military Life Center** – A welcoming hub that offers workshops, fellowship, and events that are designed to strengthen families.

**PWOC (Protestant Women of the Chapel)** – A women's Bible study and fellowship group that provides spiritual encouragement and community.

**Four Chaplains Memorial Chapel (BLDG 2230):**  
 AGAPE (CONTEMPORARY) | First Service, Sundays at 9:30 a.m.  
 AGAPE (CONTEMPORARY) | Second Service, Sun-

days at 11 a.m.  
 ROK & CFC | Worship Service, Sundays at 1:30 p.m.  
 JEWISH | Shabbat Evening Service, Fridays at 6 p.m.

**Pacific Visitors Chapel (BLDG 6360)**  
 PROTESTANT | Christ The King Liturgical, Sundays from 9 a.m.  
 PROTESTANT | Church of Christ, Sundays from 11 a.m.  
 PROTESTANT | Spanish Service, Sundays from 1:30 p.m.  
 PROTESTANT | KATUSA Service, Wednesdays from 6 p.m.  
 ISLAMIC | Jumah Service, Fridays from 12:35 p.m.  
 PAGAN | Fellowship, Fridays from 6 p.m.

**Warrior Chapel (BLDG 6800)**  
 PROTESTANT | Burning Bush Gospel, Sundays from 10 a.m.  
 BUDDHIST | Service, Thursdays from 6 p.m.  
 HEATHENS | HAVA Fellowship, Fridays from 6:30 p.m.  
 SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST | Service, Saturdays from 11 a.m.

**Freedom Chapel and Family Life Ministry Center (BLDG 695)**  
 CATHOLIC | Adoration/Confession, Saturdays from 4 p.m.  
 CATHOLIC | Rosary/Benediction, Saturdays from 5 p.m.  
 CATHOLIC | Vigil Mass, Saturdays from 5:30 p.m.  
 CATHOLIC | Mass, Sundays from 9 a.m.  
 CATHOLIC | Daily Mass, Monday-Friday (except on Eighth Army Training Holidays/DONSAs) from 5:30 p.m.  
 PROTESTANT | Common Ground (Traditional), Sundays from 11 a.m.  
 LATTER DAY SAINTS | Worship Meeting, Sundays from 2 p.m.

No matter where you are in your faith journey, there is a place for you here. If you're feeling disconnected or struggling to find your spiritual footing in a new duty station, I encourage you to take that first step. If you're not at Camp Humphreys, check out your local installation's Religious Support Office to see what is offered in your military community. Get involved, join a study, reach out to a chaplain, and surround yourself with a faith-filled community.

#### Final Thoughts

Being stationed in South Korea has been a blessing beyond what I could have imagined. It has strengthened my marriage, deepened my faith, and given my children a spiritual foundation that will carry them wherever life takes them. In the midst of the constant change that comes with this lifestyle, God remains my family's constant. And as long as we keep Him at the center, we can face any challenge with confidence, knowing that He is with us every step of the way. If you're struggling to find that sense of community or feel spiritually disconnected, I encourage you to step out in faith. Find a place of worship, get involved, and allow God to plant you where He wants you. You never know how He might use this season to grow and strengthen you.

**No matter where the Army sends us, one thing remains true: We are never alone. God is with us, guiding, strengthening, and equipping us for the journey ahead.**

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight."  
 – Proverbs 3:5-6

*\*The information provided in this article is for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended to replace professional mental health treatment or to serve as a diagnosis or treatment for any health condition. This article does not establish a client/therapist relationship between the author and the reader. Readers should consult their own licensed medical or mental health providers for personalized advice and treatment for any concerns related to their health or well-being. Always seek the guidance of your own qualified professionals regarding any specific questions or concerns you may have regarding your health.*

#### 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. Recently featured with her family on CNN, *United on the RoK*, The OCONUS Project, and The Goode Show. Tyrese's life and work reflect 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 Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram at @AuthenticallyRe.





# A Beginner's Guide to Over-the-Counter Medication in South Korea

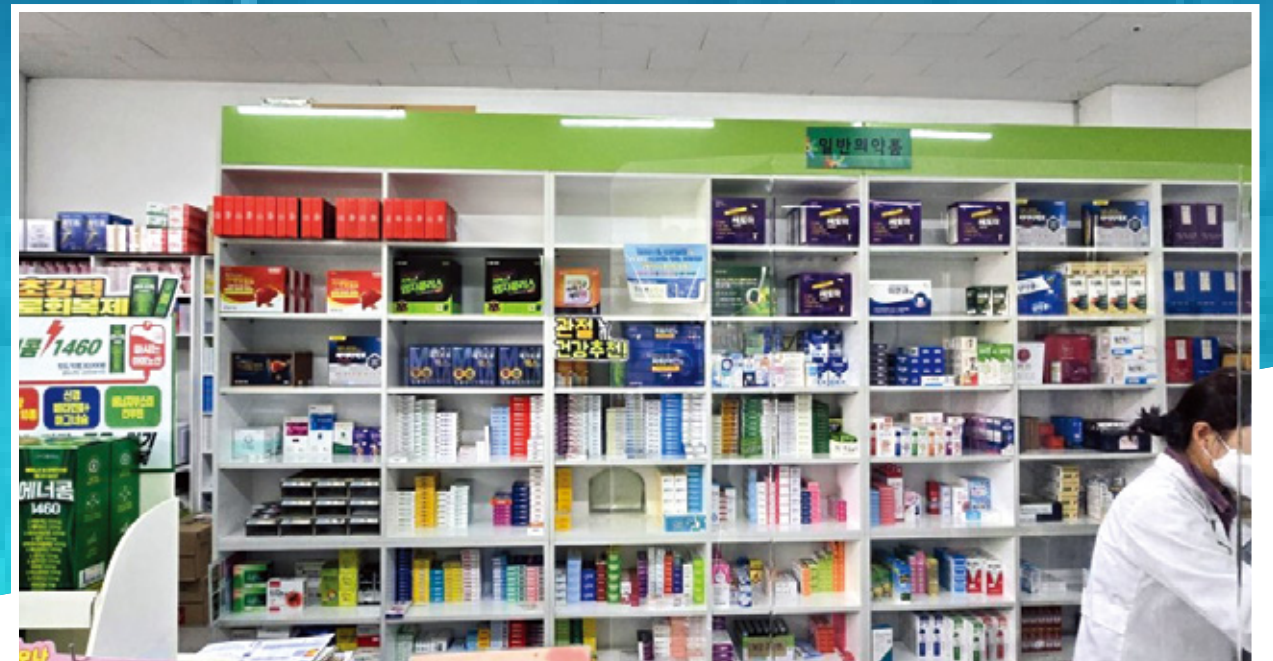
By Lisa Peck, MPH, CPH



*When* living in South Korea, understanding how to find over-the-counter (OTC) medicine might feel a bit daunting at first. Pharmacies (약국, yakguk) are the main place to go for most OTC medications. However, the availability and process may differ slightly from what you're used to in your home country. This blog post provides an overview of commonly used OTC medications in Korea and products and tips for finding what you need.

While we hope this guide helps you get started, please remember that pharmacists and doctors should always be your primary source of information regarding your health.

The information provided in this article is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not intended to replace medical treatment or to serve as a diagnosis or treatment for any health condition. This article does not establish a client/doctor relationship between the author and the reader. Readers should consult their own licensed medical or health providers for personalized advice and treatment for any concerns related to their health or well-being. Always seek the guidance of your own qualified professionals regarding any specific questions or concerns you may have regarding your health.



## How Do Pharmacies Work in Korea?

Pharmacies in South Korea operate a bit differently from some other countries. Let's take a look at some of the common areas points of culture shock for international residents when they first use Korean pharmacies.

### *Medicine Behind the Counter*

Instead of browsing aisles for what you need, the pharmacist keeps pharmaceutical medications behind the counter (pictured below) and gets what you need on request. That's right, in Korea, many pharmaceutical medicines are not displayed on open shelves where you can pick them up like in some other countries. This includes common OTC products like pain relievers, cold medicine, and even bandages in some cases. Vitamins are often available to browse, but not pharmaceuticals. To get OTC medications, you can either ask the pharmacist for a specific medication or you can describe your symptoms to them and ask what they recommend.

### *Language Barrier*

Once again, you must communicate directly with the pharmacist (약사) even if you don't speak Korean. Thankfully, many pharmacists understand some English and a surprising amount even speak English. However, if they do not, translation apps like Papago or Google Translate exist to help you with direct translation. Or, for more specific support utilize AI tools like the South of Seoul AI Intern (look for the dialogue icon in the bottom right of this blog post) or Chat GPT.

### *Different Prescription Requirements*

Some OTC medicines in other countries may not be OTC in Korea and require a prescription. Additionally, some medications which are prescribed in other countries may be OTC in Korea. You need to do your research on how to access the medications you require. This could include visiting a local doctor's office.

### *Korean Medicine Alternatives*

Some pharmacists are trained in both Western and Traditional medications. This means they offer both pharmaceutical and traditional OTC medicine options. If you offer up your symptoms, they may ask you which type of medication you prefer.



Corporate Affiliations

Keep in mind that clinics and pharmacies have relationships with certain drug manufacturers. For the purpose of OTC medications, this means that not every pharmacy offers the exact same brands of medications.

Locations

Pharmacists can be found near medical facilities in most neighborhoods in South Korea. Look for the green or red cross sign with the Korean word “약” in your neighborhood to find a pharmacy nearby. Sometimes it feels hard to find a pharmacy at first when you aren’t used to looking for the term 약.

Often Closed on Sundays

Although this is slowly changing, most pharmacies are closed on Sundays and some are closed all weekend. Especially in quieter or more rural areas. Look on Naver to find pharmacy hours and to find the closest one to you that is open.



Are Brand-Name Medicines the Same Across Countries?

You may notice familiar brand-name medicines like Tylenol (타이레놀) and Zyrtec (지르텍) on pharmacy shelves in Korea. However, just because you can’t find the brand name it doesn’t mean they don’t have the medication. You may simply need to ask for the primary active ingredient in order to find a reliable alternative. For example, if you wanted to find Pepcid AC, you would look for 파모티딘 (Famotidine). You can use ChatGPT to find the generic names of brand-name medications. Such alternative medicines generally contain the same active ingredients as their U.S. counterparts.

Presentation

Some differences in the presentation of OTC medications may exist in Korea. This can feel uncomfortable at first. Such differences could include packaging (often blister packs instead of bottles), dosage amounts, number of pills packaged together, and availability can vary. For example, in South Korea, Tylenol dosages start at 500mg but in the US the over-the-counter dosage starts at 325mg so you need to read dosages carefully. Know what dosages you generally take and how they might differ in Korea to avoid overdose issues.

More Generics

Korean pharmacists may also recommend generic alternatives or local brands, which can often be more affordable. If unsure, ask for the medicine by its active ingredient or consult the pharmacist for the closest equivalent. For unique medicines or specific formulations (e.g., extended-release), it can be helpful to bring a small supply from home. Have your language tools such as Papago ready if you don’t speak Korean. To help you get comfortable with your search, let’s learn what OTC medicines and products are available in Korea.

Common Over-the-Counter Medicines

Below are examples of OTC medicines found in South Korea that you might find helpful. Keep in mind, that this list is not comprehensive. Cost, availability, and brand names may vary between pharmacies. For those affiliated with United States Forces Korea (USFK), including service members, DoD civilian employees, invited contractors,

technical representatives, and dependents residing in, or transiting through Korea, there are some considerations for over-the-counter medicines. According to USFK Command Policy Letter #6, Prohibited Substances from 2022, “over-the-counter medications when used in a manner contrary to their intended medical purpose, in excess of the prescribed dosage, past the expiration date, or belonging to another individual” may be considered prohibited substances. When taking over-the-counter medicines, make sure you are using them correctly and following the directions on the label.

OTC Pain Relievers and Fever Reducers (진통제, jintongje)

Pain relievers are some of the most frequently used OTC medications for headaches, minor pains, or fevers. The most commonly used pain relievers found in pharmacies are listed below.

| Name (Korean)     | Use                       | Cost Range    | Prescription Needed?   |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| *Tylenol (타이레놀)   | Pain, fever relief        | ₩2,000–₩5,000 | No (higher doses: Yes) |
| Ibuprofen (이부프로펜) | Pain, inflammation relief | ₩2,000–₩5,000 | No (higher doses: Yes) |
| Aspirin (아스피린)    | Pain, fever relief        | ₩2,000–₩4,000 | No                     |

- \*Some pain relievers, such as Tylenol, may also be found at your local convenience store.*
- Considerations
- For stronger doses of ibuprofen or Tylenol (e.g., Tylenol 650 mg), a prescription may be necessary.
  - If unsure, you can describe your symptoms to the pharmacist, and they may recommend a suitable option.

OTC Cold and Flu Medicines (감기약, gamgiyak)

If you’re dealing with cold or flu symptoms, there are OTC combination medicines available that address multiple symptoms.

| Name (Korean)  | Use                            | Cost Range    | Prescription Needed? |
|----------------|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Penzal Q (펜잘큐) | Headaches, fatigue, mild colds | ₩4,000–₩8,000 | No                   |
| Panpyrin (판피린) | General cold and flu symptoms  | ₩4,000–₩8,000 | No                   |
| Decolgen (데콜진) | Nasal congestion, cold relief  | ₩4,000–₩6,000 | No                   |



Panpyrin Sample Image  
Image Source: <https://namu.wiki>



Buscopan Sample Image.  
Image Source: <https://www.dailypharm.com>

OTC Digestive Aids (소화제, sohwaje)

For minor stomach discomfort or digestion issues, OTC digestive aids can be very useful.

| Name (Korean)        | Use                | Cost Range      | Prescription Needed? |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Buscopan (부스코판)      | Stomach cramps     | ₩4,000–₩6,000   | No                   |
| Buscopan (부스코판)      | Stomach cramps     | ₩4,000–₩8,000   | No                   |
| Probiotics (프로바이오틱스) | Gut health support | ₩10,000–₩30,000 | No                   |



Considerations

- If you are sensitive to new foods, digestive aids might help you adjust to Korea’s diverse cuisine.

OTC Antihistimines (항히스타민제, hanghistaminje)

South Korea experiences significant seasonal changes, so OTC allergy medications can be helpful for managing symptoms. There are also numerous less expensive Korean brands that have the same ingredients and results.

| Name (Korean)   | Use                   | Cost Range     | Prescription Needed? |
|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Zyrtec (지르텍)    | Sneezing, rash relief | ₩6,000–₩10,000 | No                   |
| Claritin (클라리틴) | Sneezing, rash relief | ₩6,000–₩10,000 | No                   |
| Xyzal (지르텍 D)   | Severe allergy relief | ₩6,000–₩12,000 | Sometimes            |

Considerations

- You can ask for “알레르기 약” (allergy medicine) to describe your needs.



Zyrtec (지르텍)



Birth Control Pills Sample Image.  
Image Source: <https://blog.naver.com>



Generic Pregnancy Tests  
Image Source: <https://www.11st.co.kr>

OTC Birth Control (피임약, pi-imyak)

Birth control is available OTC without a prescription in South Korea, but emergency contraception requires a doctor’s approval.

| Name (Korean)                    | Use                           | Cost Range      | Prescription Needed? |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Regular Pills (머시론)              | Prevent pregnancy             | ₩6,000–₩15,000  | No                   |
| Emergency Contraception (사후 피임약) | After unprotected intercourse | ₩20,000–₩40,000 | Yes                  |
| Condoms (콘돔)                     | STI prevention, contraception | ₩5,000–₩15,000  | No                   |

Considerations

- For emergency contraception, visit a nearby OB-GYN (산부인과) or hospital quickly, as timing is essential.

OTC Pregnancy Tests (임신 테스트기, imsin teseuteugi)

Pregnancy tests are a common OTC product sold at pharmacies and convenience stores.  
Pregnancy Test Sample Image.

| Name (Korean)                     | Use              | Cost Range     | Prescription Needed? |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Generic Pregnancy Tests (임신 테스트기) | Detect pregnancy | ₩2,000–₩10,000 | No                   |

Consideration

- Pregnancy tests are often located near the counter at pharmacies for convenience.

Finding a Pharmacy (약국, yakguk)

If you need help finding a pharmacy, Naver Maps (네이버 지도) is one of the best tools to use.

- Open the app and copy/paste 약국 (yakguk) in the Naver search bar.
- Add your location or neighborhood for more specific results (e.g., “신장동 약국” for Sinjang-dong pharmacies).
- For 24-hour pharmacies, search “24시 약국.”
- For late-night pharmacies search “심야 약국.”



Final Considerations

Pharmacies in South Korea are reliable, affordable, and well-stocked with options for minor health concerns. However, availability may differ depending on the pharmacy, and some items might require a prescription even if they’re OTC in your home country. If you’re ever unsure, don’t hesitate to ask the pharmacist for advice. As always, if symptoms persist or worsen, please visit a doctor or hospital for professional care.



Follow SOS Public Health for More Resources

Follow on Instagram or Facebook to stay updated on SOS Public Health Initiatives. If you have questions about healthcare in Korea, visit the Health and Wellness in Korea Facebook Group, or feel free to message SOS Public Health with any questions or concerns.

About the Author

Ms. Peck graduated from the University of Utah Asia Campus (UAC) in Incheon with a Master’s in Public Health and her Certification in Public Health (CPH). Ms. Peck also holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Linguistics and one in International Studies with a Global Health emphasis. Ms. Peck is Korean American and speaks both English and Korean. She has moved between the US and Korea since childhood, finally settling in Korea after graduating from UAC. In 2021 Ms. Peck founded the South of Seoul Public Health Program which focuses on research and initiatives regarding the health and wellness of multinational residents in South Korea. Additionally, Ms. Peck oversees the SOS Public Health Graduate Student Practicum Program



which provides mentorship and training for Master’s in Public Health students. The program works with two students a semester with a focus on ethical UX research design, survey development, and initiative implementation.





# Rice bran enzyme therapy facility with the largest scale and maximum facility in the country!

The facilities of ChorokMisoMaeul, which are comfortable and convenient to use, can accommodate 40 people a time, up to 120 people a day.

## ChorokMisoMaeul is already popular and its benefits have been widely introduced and broadcast by word of mouth!

This state-of-the-art facility has been widely recommended in various broadcasting programs with excellent results and is famous for treating 20,000 visitors from across the country every year.



Patent registration  
patent 10-1524852 | patent 10-1850143



ChorokMisoMaeul

### The Strength of ChorokMisoMaeul Rice Bran Enzyme Therapy!

#### 1. Enzyme therapy using 100% rice bran!

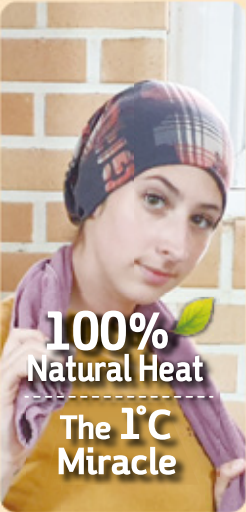
Rice bran is a microscopic layer of rice that has more than 95% of rice nutrition elements, and has the best conditions for microorganisms to live in. There are alternatives such as enzyme steaming with sawdust, mugwort, herbs, charcoal, etc., but they insist on rice bran to provide customer convenience with soft touch due to the function and effect of enzymes.

#### 2. Do not preheat the body before enzyme therapy starts.

ChorokMisoMaeul rice bran Bio enzyme therapy can be individually steamed after 15 minutes of full-body massage, and provides an easy recovery time and 60 minutes to relax.

#### 3. It increases the metabolic rate and has a body temperature-rise effects.

Unlike normal steaming therapy, it delivers warmth from every nook and cranny of the body for 30 to 40 minutes of shower. It increases your metabolism, such as sweating in your body, which increases your body temperature.



The Age of Healing  
The Rediscovery of the Rice Bran Enzyme

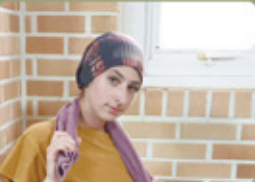
The co-existence of natural and eco-friendly rice bran and fine microorganisms has created innovative enzymes that benefit our bodies.

Innovation of ChorokMisoMaeul Experience  
Rice Bran Enzyme  
Golden Therapy Experience!

A unique experience that can only be enjoyed in ChorokMisoMaeul

## Introducing Rice Bran Enzyme Golden Therapy

Come to "Golden Therapy, ChorokMisoMaeul."



When useful microorganisms are added to rice bran, naturally fermented heat and far-infrared rays of 55 to 80°C are released as microorganisms multiply. By covering the whole body for about 15 minutes with the fermentation heat of eco-friendly rice bran, it helps to complete the natural healing power of the human body by activating the physiological use of human cells. In addition, the various nutrients (vitamin A, B1, B6, iron, phosphorus, and minerals) found in eco-friendly rice bran can help make skin more beautiful.

The enzyme is like an orchestra conductor who plays or conducts the health of the body

Even though we can't see it with our eyes or hear it with our ears, while immersed in rice bran the vibrations of enzymes that produce the heat stimulate our blood vessels, muscles, bones, as well as our inner bodies.

Did you know that raising your body temperature by 1°C increases your immune system by 5 times?  
Anyone can maintain their health easily and joyfully with rice bran enzyme therapy. Now you can experience this 1°C miracle at the Golden Therapy in ChorokMisoMaeul!

Immune  
Enhancing  
Action

Chronic  
Pain

Atopy  
Psoriasis

Toxin  
Removal

### The 1°C Miracle



www.misovillage.co.kr



An enzyme is a teacher  
who instructs a healthy body.

The enzymes produced in a state of natural fermentation at 60 to 70°C teach the body to maintain a healthy body temperature. In addition, the antioxidants are naturally transmitted to show their original health.



### Course Guide Of Rice Bran Enzyme Therapy

#### Counselling

1 If you're new to this, we help you to experience systematic health care through counselling.

#### Detox Tea

2 Before the enzyme therapy starts, warm tea relaxes the body, encouraging improved circulation throughout the body.



#### Rice Bran Enzyme Golden Therapy (15 minutes)

3 Natural fermentation of rice bran enzymes helps circulate our bodies. It takes care of waste matter and helps to strengthen blood vessels.

#### Full Body Massage

6 A full body care massage immediately relieves fatigue.



#### Shower

5 Using rice bran while you shower makes your skin clean and moist.

#### Recovery (60 minutes partial steaming)

4 You can take a partial massage and rest and relax so that your body temperature can be normalized by drinking tea provided by Golden Therapy.

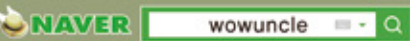


Get closer to a healthy life

## Healing Lounge

Rice bran enzyme golden therapy

Hours of Operation  
9:00 am ~ 6:00 pm  
Last Order 4PM  
Closed Tuesdays  
Reservations Required  
031)683-1888



ChorokMisoMaeul Traffic Usage Guidance

44-14 Sin1 Rigil, Oseong-myeon, Pyeongtaek-si, Gyeonggi-do  
Pyeongtaek-Jecheon Expressway via highway/Seohaean Expressway → PyeongtaekHwaseong Expressway → Oseong IC, 300m right turn towards Pyeongtaek, Route 38

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# The Power of Learning a New Language

By Bianca Del Carmen



In the middle of a busy life—especially for military families adjusting to new environments, pursuing a personal goal like learning a language can feel overwhelming. But in my experience, it's one of the most eye-opening and meaningful things you can do.

As a Korean language teacher living in South Korea, I work with students from all walks of life, many of whom are part of the military community. Some come to class wanting to connect with local culture and learn how to be respectful while living here. Others, like my own mother, want to speak Korean to their grandchildren. Some simply fall in love with the language and want to understand the heart behind their favorite songs or shows.

But no matter their starting point, they all discover

something similar: Korean is a deeply nuanced language, full of emotion and meaning. Some words and expressions in Korean don't have exact English equivalents. Through learning, they're not just memorizing grammar—they're gaining insight into a rich history and a beautiful culture.

There have been many times when I've seen my students feel discouraged when they weren't seeing progress. We've all been there. Then we take a step back and realize that every time they leave class and hear something out in the Korean community—at a store, on the street, or in a conversation—they understand just a little bit more. That's growth. On days when the progress feels slow, we pivot. We make new game plans, whether that means studying Korean music or sending voice notes to find and work on



figuring out our knowledge gaps. I'm so proud of all my students, and I can't wait to see them reach a new understanding of the language.

Coming to Korea—and at first not being able to understand the language at all—made me more aware of language in general. Not just how I learn languages but how I explain myself in English, too. It made me more empathetic, more open, and more curious. It gave me a deeper understanding of why people do things differently and helped me see many new things about the world. Even when things don't always make sense from an American perspective, being here has reminded me that there's always another lens through which you can view a situation.

One thing is for sure: Korean grammar can be intimidating. It's complex, and at times, it feels like it makes perfect sense—and at other times, nothing makes sense. With that said, it is easy to get discouraged. But that's also what makes language learning so powerful. It teaches you that setbacks aren't failures but part of the process. When you work through the challenges of learning a language, you grow stronger in your understanding of the entire culture.

Sometimes people focus mostly on vocabulary and grammar, and yes—those are important. It is good to remember that language learning is also about breaking things down into patterns and making sense of the logic behind them. Korean, in particular, is surprisingly logical once you start seeing the structure behind the words. That logic can actually rewire how we think, not just about language, but about many situations we might encounter while living in this country that are very different from our own.

Living abroad comes with its own challenges—adjusting to food, navigating traffic, and settling into a new pace of life. It can be overwhelming and even isolating. Remember, language can help bridge that gap. Saying a few words to someone in a café, greeting a neighbor, or understanding an announcement on a bus—it all adds up. If your kids are joining local clubs or schools, learning Korean can help them build real friendships and create memories they can be proud of. It's not just about survival—it's about creating a sense of belonging.

In my own life, learning different languages also made me a better communicator in English. It's helped me pause, choose my words with intention, and really listen. Whether I'm teaching, parenting, or just having a meaningful conversation, those skills show up again and again.



If you've ever hesitated to start learning a new language—maybe because you're afraid it'll take too long or you'll never be fluent—I get it. Keep in mind that fluency isn't the only measure of success when it comes to languages. Learning even one phrase daily can shift how you see the world around you. You don't need hours. You just need a willingness to begin.

My favorite word in Korean is 보람 (Boram). It means "rewarding"—the feeling of something being worth the effort. To me, that's what learning Korean is all about. It's not always easy, but it is always meaningful. The name "Boram" was actually given to me by my first Korean friends, and it's meant a lot to me ever since. It reminds me that hard work will lead to something more meaningful—and that we're never alone on the journey.



## About the Author

Bianca Del Carmen was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico. As a military-connected child, she grew up all around the world, allowing her to experience many cultures. Bianca graduated from the W. P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University with a major in Business Marketing.

Bianca has lived in South Korea for over 12 years now and resides with her husband in the Daegu area with their three children. As the founder of the Boram Language Institute, Bianca offers Korean lessons online.

- Website: [www.boramlanguageinstitute.com](http://www.boramlanguageinstitute.com)
- Hangul Course: <https://www.boramlanguageinstitute.com/hangul>
- Facebook group: Korean Language Support (for the RoK Military Community & Friends)
- YouTube: Boram\_in\_Korea
- IG: Boram\_in\_Korea





# Exploring South Korea's Dulle Trails:

## A Journey Through Scenic Landscapes, Cultural Heritage, and War History

By Sarah Symbolist



Gohulgae Beach in Donghae — a serene stop along Korea's East Coast Dulle Trails.

### When

you think of hiking in South Korea, you likely envision trekking the iconic mountain trails of Seoraksan, Jirisan, Bukhansan, or Hallasan. However, did you know that you can actually hike the entire perimeter of the South Korean peninsula? The Korea Dulle Trail is an ambitious 4,500km long-distance path that stretches across the entire coastline of South Korea's peninsula, including the border area in the DMZ. It's divided into four distinct sub-trails: the Haeparang Trail, the Namparang Trail, the Seoharang Trail, and the DMZ Peace Trail.

The construction of the Korea Dulle ('dulle' meaning perimeter in Korean) Trail began in 2009, with the Haeparang Trail opening in 2016, followed by the Namparang Trail in 2020 and the Seoharang Trail in 2022. In September 2024, the completion of the DMZ Peace Trail marked the official start of the 2024 Korea Dulle Expedition. While the Korea Dulle Expedition takes place annually, 2024 was especially significant, as it was the first year foreigners were specifically chosen to participate to help promote the Dulle Trail to an international audience through our social media accounts. I was incredibly fortunate—and beyond ecstatic—to be selected as one of 17 foreigners to join this remarkable journey with the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO)!

### THE DULLE TRAILS

Opened in 2016, the Haeparang Trail stretches along the east coast of South Korea, from the Unifi-



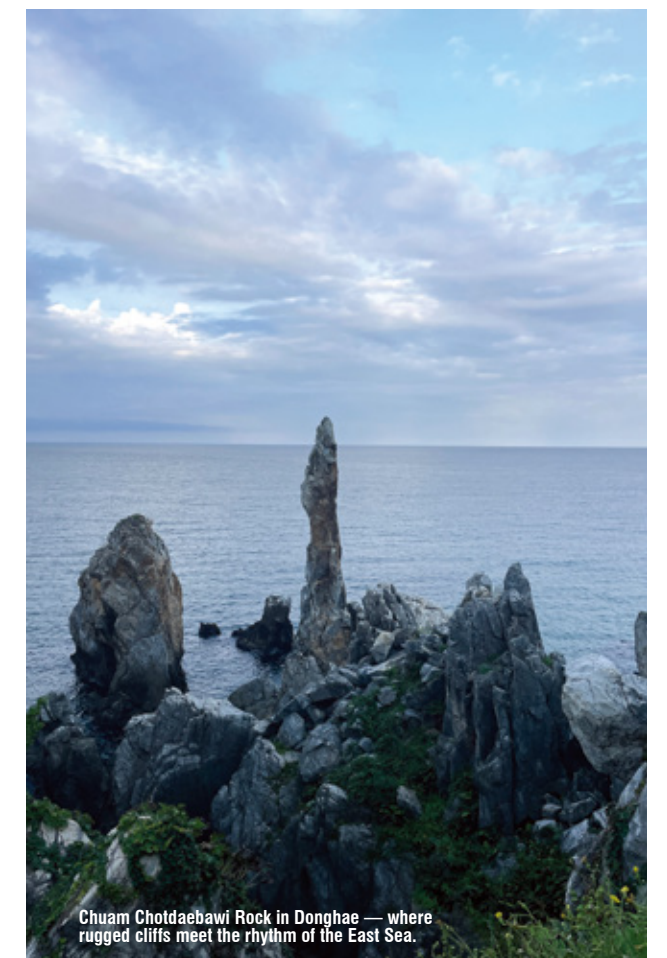
cation Observatory in Goseong to the Oryukdo Sunrise Park in Busan. The trail spans 750 km across 50 courses and offers stunning views of the East Sea's endless blue waters, scenic forest paths, and vibrant, colorful cliffs. The trail is well-marked and includes signs in both Korean and English, making it relatively easy for international visitors to follow. Along the way, numerous amenities, including guesthouses, hotels, and convenience stores, provide plenty of options for rest and refreshment. With its well-maintained paths and variety of services, the trail suitshikers of all skill levels, from beginners to seasoned adventurers.

The Namparang Trail spans 1,470 km over 90 courses, connecting Oryukdo Sunrise Park in Busan to Ttangkkeut Village in Haenam. The Namparang Trail takes hikers through scenic landscapes, including rugged coastal cliffs, serene beaches, lush forests, and rural villages. The Namparang Trail is considered a moderate to challenging hike, with some sections requiring good physical fitness. The terrain varies, from easy walks along the coastline to demanding stretches with steeper climbs through hills and forests. While it is accessible to most hikers, some parts may require more stamina and preparation.

The Seoharang Trail opened in 2022 and is a 1,800 km walking route of 109 courses, linking Ttangkkeut Tower in Haenam to Ganghwa, Incheon. The Seoharang Trail offers a chance to see South Korea's diverse eco-

systems, including wetlands, coastal areas, and forests. It's an excellent spot for nature lovers, offering chances to spot various wildlife species and enjoy the tranquil environment. Of the four Dulle trails, the Seoharang Trail is the most challenging for foreigners to complete, primarily because it lacks many modern conveniences along the way, such as frequent rest stops or accommodations. Many Koreans prefer not to hike long stretches at once. Instead, they often take buses to and from different sections of the trail, making it easier to enjoy the hiking experience over long weekends without committing to the entire route length at once.

The DMZ Peace Trail, recently completed in September 2024, is a 510 km walking trail with 35 routes built along the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea. Separated into two sections, the DMZ Peace Trail is unlike the other three trails, with a central route visitors can explore freely and 10 theme routes that require a reservation for access. The theme routes offer a deeper, more focused exploration of the DMZ's historical and cultural significance, which are available



Chuam Chotdaebawi Rock in Donghae — where rugged cliffs meet the rhythm of the East Sea.





through advanced bookings. There are also alternative routes available for visitors who cannot secure a reservation for the theme route, ensuring that everyone can still experience the DMZ's unique historical and cultural aspects. Since much of the DMZ Peace Trail passes through or near military installations, video and photography are not allowed to ensure security and privacy in these sensitive areas. In addition, participants must be 7 years or older for most of the themed routes.

#### MY WEEK LONG ADVENTURE WITH KOREA TOURISM ORGANIZATION (KTO)

Our expedition aimed to promote the Haeparang Dulle Trail to international audiences through our social media accounts. Our week-long itinerary was carefully planned, with one trail to hike each day, complemented by local cultural activities to enhance the overall experience. KTO (the Korea Tourism Organization) put much time and effort into crafting these itineraries to ensure they were both informative and exciting. From hiking every section of the trail to capturing the most stunning scenic views to organizing unique activities like tofu making and a private tour of the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Korea, every detail was thoughtfully



planned to offer a memorable experience.

We kicked off the week at the Opening Ceremony of the DMZ Peace Trail. We had the rare privilege of walking part of Course 50, from the Goseong Unification Observatory to the Jejin Checkpoint, to celebrate the trail's completion. As much of this route will remain closed to the public, walking it alongside several Ministry Heads was an unforgettable experience and the perfect way to begin our week. Before heading to our hotel for the night, we had the chance to visit the Castle at Hwajinpo, which served as a summer retreat for Kim Il-sung, the former leader of North Korea from 1948 to 1950. One of the notable features of the site is a photograph on the front stairs showing a young Kim Jong-il sitting with his cousins. As a foreigner, it's easy to forget that the Korean War occurred only a generation ago, but being so close to this piece of history and learning about the evolving landscape of the battle for the Korean Peninsula was a powerful reminder that it's not as distant as it might seem.

While hiking Course 45 around Yeongnangho Lake, we had the chance to walk along the Hwangtot Road (황톳길), a barefoot clay trail. Barefoot clay trails are becoming more popular across Korea, and if you ever get the chance to try one, I highly recommend it! The trail

can be slimy and slippery, but it's a fun experience that leaves your feet feeling exfoliated and refreshed. This course is conveniently located near Sokcho, a popular tourist destination, making it an easy and accessible hike. With plenty of accommodation options, restaurants, and activities nearby, it offers a perfect balance of outdoor adventure and local amenities to keep you entertained.

Another convenient course is Course 39, which passes right through the popular tourist area of Gangneung. This mostly flat course features trails through the Pine Tree Forest, located just off the sandy beach, and is rich in historical sites and relics. A major attraction along the trail is Anmok Port Cafe Street, a vibrant spot that draws many tourists with its charming cafés, just a short walk from the trail.

As you head south toward Busan, you'll notice the ocean's colors gradually changing, becoming more vibrant with each step. We hiked Courses 33 and 21, and while these two courses were the trip's highlights for me, I only imagine that the ones in between were equally stunning. These peaceful routes pass through fishing villages, BTS music video filming location markers, and cliffside forest trails. They offer endless views of the East Sea, making for an unforgettable experience. On Course 33, you'll pass through Donghae Station, where you can take a scenic seaside train ride. Course 21, on the other hand, is more remote, so it's essential to plan ahead and bring snacks and water, as amenities along the route can be scarce.

One of the most somber stops during our week was visiting the Jangsa Landing Operation Victory Memorial Hall, where we learned about its significance as a pivotal moment in Korean War history. Military leaders designed this operation to distract North Korean forces while South Korea launched the invasion at Incheon. Although it was successful, it was heartbreaking to learn that most of the casualties were middle and high school-aged students who sacrificed their lives for their country.

On our last day, we planned to hike Course 1, another excellent destination trail, thanks to its prime location. This course connects Haeundae Beach to Oryukdo Sun Park, the starting point of the Namparang Dulle Trail. Similar to the previous two days, we walked along wooden platforms and bridges that lined the coast, offering stunning views of the rocky cliffs and the East Sea. Located in the bustling Haeundae area, it was no surprise that this turned out to be the busiest trail we hiked all week. If you're unsure about hiking remote trails, courses like this offer a perfect blend of nature

and the city, allowing you to enjoy the outdoors without straying too far from the urban center.

#### DURUNUBI - YOUR DIGITAL BEST FRIEND ON THE TRAILS

The Durunubi website and app are valuable resources for hikers in South Korea, offering comprehensive information about the country's extensive trail systems. The name 'Durunubi' translates to 'trailway' in Korean, and the platform guides hikers through South Korea's various hiking routes. The Durunubi app offers a comprehensive range of trail information, including suggested walking times, difficulty levels, and course lengths. It also provides transportation details, such as where the trailhead starts or which bus will take you closest to the trail.

At the start of each trail, you'll find color-coded flags indicating the trail you're on, along with a small wooden house containing a physical stamp and a QR code to scan to open the Durunubi app for additional trail information and resources. To receive your digital trail stamp and mark the course as complete, you must hike at least 40% of the trail.







Beach trails on Korea's Dulle Trail — scenic wooden platforms and bridges that allow hikers to experience the coast up close.

For convenience, the app includes lodging options, such as nearby hotels or campgrounds, and food recommendations, highlighting areas where you should pack your own meals if no food options are available. In addition to hiking logistics, Durunubi focuses on cultural activities near the trails, like the clear-bottom canoe rides we enjoyed and our walk through Abai Village, enriching the overall hiking experience.

#### SAFETY ON THE TRAILS

Hiking offers a fantastic way to explore nature, but safety should always be a top priority. Before hitting the trail, take time to research the route, check the weather forecast, and ensure you have the right gear. While regular tennis shoes may be sufficient for paved or coir rope mat-covered trails, mountain hikes or winter excursions require hiking boots and poles for added stability and support. A trail pack is a must-have for bringing along water, snacks, a first aid kit, a phone battery pack, and, importantly, keeping your trash contained to avoid littering. Dressing in layers helps you stay comfortable

as the weather shifts, and opt for moisture-wicking fabrics to stay dry. Always prioritize your well-being—know your limits and listen to your body while hiking.

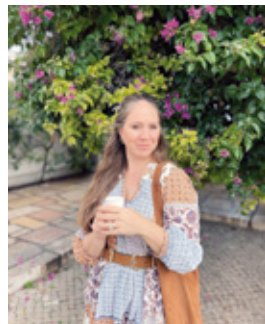
#### TRAILS OF BEAUTY, HISTORY, AND ADVENTURE

South Korea's extensive network of hiking trails, from the vast Korea Dulle Trail to the unique Jeju Olle Trail, offers something for every adventurer. Whether you're seeking coastal beauty, historical exploration, or a deeper connection with nature, these trails provide incredible opportunities to experience the country's diverse landscapes and rich culture. With the help of platforms like Durunubi, planning your hike has never been easier, offering detailed maps, accommodations, and cultural experiences to enhance your journey. South Korea's trails aren't just paths to follow; they're gateways to discovering the heart of the peninsula, from the serene East Coast to the historic DMZ. Whether you're a seasoned hiker or a first-timer, these trails will surely leave you with unforgettable memories.

#### PLAN YOUR OWN DULLE TRAIL ADVENTURE

If you're planning to explore the Korea Dulle Trail, check out the Durunubi app by the Korea Tourism Organization. It's packed with helpful info on each route. Plus, it's got real-time navigation and a fun online stamp system to track your hikes. For more information on the Dulle Gil Trails, visit the website at <https://www.durunubi.kr/> or download the app.

If you want a deeper look into the experience, I've shared a comprehensive blog post filled with practical tips and personal highlights. From hotel recommendations and nearby activities to helpful Naver Map pins, it's a one-stop resource for making the most of your hike. You can read the full post on my website: [www.sarahsymbalisty.com/home/korea-dulle-gil](http://www.sarahsymbalisty.com/home/korea-dulle-gil).



#### 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 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.sarahsymbalisty.com](http://www.sarahsymbalisty.com)

# Dewdrop Café: A Family Legacy Brewed with Passion in Pyeongtaek

By Krystal Key



*Nestled* in the heart of Pyeongtaek, Dewdrop Café stands out not only for its artisan coffee and delectable pastries but also for the heartfelt story behind its founding. What began as a shared passion between siblings has blossomed into a community favorite, loved by locals and expats alike.

A family of baristas and culinary professionals founded the café, bringing unique expertise to the table. "Actually, all of our siblings and my husband. We are baristas," shared Boyoung Kim, the general manager of Dewdrop Café. "My two sisters are baristas, my brother is the roaster, and my husband is the pastry chef. That's why we started this as a family business."

At the heart of Dewdrop's culinary excellence is Chef Christophe Mazeaud, the head pastry chef and café manager, whose refined skills and international recognition elevate the entire bakery section. "He is really famous worldwide," Kim noted proudly. "That gives us a competitive edge. His pastries speak for themselves." Chef Christophe also teaches pastry classes at a university, bringing professional standards and ongoing innovation to the café.

Bokyoung Kim, Chef Christophe's wife, welcomes every guest with warmth and care as the barista and front-of-house manager. And serving as the roaster and head of coffee and beverage innovation, Yong Jin Kim leads the café's unique coffee roasting and menu development.





### ***Rooted in Tradition, Growing with Purpose***

Dewdrop Café has been serving its community for approximately eight years. Since its humble beginnings, it has evolved into a vibrant space known for good food, specialty coffee, and a welcoming atmosphere. Chef Christophe explains, “We started very small. But with support from my sous chef and our team, we’ve expanded the menu by over 75%. Now, we have a full display of baked goods and seasonal treats.”

Their secret? A blend of seasonal ingredients and reimagined French classics. “We often revisit traditional French recipes and give them a new twist, depending on the season,” said Chef Christophe.

### ***Signature Delights & Café Vibe***

Among the most beloved menu items are their mochas, vanilla lattes, and Americanos, alongside the apple pie and lemon pound cake that have become crowd favorites. “Some people love our apple pie so much, they come in and buy out the whole case,” Chef Christophe laughed. Their French-style croissants, pain au chocolat, and turnovers are equally in demand, made fresh and crafted with care.

When it comes to ambiance, the café hits all the right notes. “Good music, good food, good service, and a



beautiful mix of cultures and customers. That’s what makes our vibe special,” he added.

### ***A Space for Everyone***

Dewdrop Café is not just family-owned; it’s family-friendly. The location features a large backyard park where children can play, swings for photo ops, and even a nearby pet park. “We welcome pets, especially certified guide dogs,” Kim mentioned. “We really wanted to create a space for everyone.” The thoughtful layout of the café makes it accessible and enjoyable for families, pet owners, and solo visitors alike.

### ***Serving with Heart and Vision***

Despite occasional language barriers, the team makes it a priority to connect with their community. Chef Christophe regularly steps out to chat with customers. “It’s about building relationships. That’s why people come back.”

The café also collaborates with local institutions in Pyeongtaek to offer baking classes and community workshops. “We’ve even partnered with the local government for educational programs,” Chef Christophe shared. “And we hope to expand those offerings.”



### ***Advice for Aspiring Café Owners***

When asked what advice he’d give others looking to start a café, Chef Christophe said, “Build a solid team you can trust, people who contribute creatively and stay loyal. That’s the real goldmine behind a successful business.”

### ***Family, Food, and Future***

Despite being a family-run business, the work environment remains professional and respectful. “We don’t argue. If there’s an issue, we talk it out directly. And as the chef staff, I always try to address problems personally and privately to keep things on track,” Christophe explained. The family works as a strong unit, openly communicating and supporting one another, creating a positive environment both behind the scenes and at the counter.

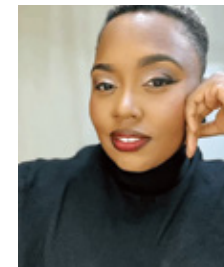
In every croissant, every pour of coffee, and every warm greeting, Dewdrop Café reflects the dedication, talent, and unity of the family behind it. For those in Pyeongtaek seeking a comforting, high-quality café experience, Dewdrop is a must-visit gem.



**DewDrop**  
369-10 Anjeong-ri Paengseong-eup Pyeongtaek-si Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/FY3kFF6T>

- Hours: Monday - Friday: 7am-10pm  
Saturday - Sunday: 10am-10pm
- Parking: Free street parking available
- Seating: There is seating on 3 levels. There is inside seating for a variety of sized groups. Seating outside in the park area is available as well as the rooftop.
- Accessibility: The floor level is accessible. The second level has a restroom. The second and third levels are accessible only by stairs.
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/dewdroproaster>
- Instagram: dewdrop\_cafe

### ***About the Author***



Krystal Key is a digital content creator, lifestyle influencer, and proud military spouse living in South Korea. With a BS in Computer Information Systems and an MBA in Business Administration, she masterfully blends technical expertise and creative storytelling to support military families and newcomers navigating life overseas.

As the founder of Adventure Awaits Us Now, Krystal crafts practical guides on South Korea’s public transportation, local attractions, and expat life, empowering others to embrace new adventures with ease. From exploring Korea’s vibrant café culture to uncovering the latest K-beauty trends and culinary gems, she highlights the best of Korean culture while supporting local businesses.

You can follow Krystal’s journey as she inspires her audience to explore South Korea with confidence and curiosity across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube: @adventureawaitsusnow



## Honoring the Giants in Your Life

By Naomi Nubin-Sellers

The ache of losing those we cherish is a universal experience that touches us all at some point or another. It leaves a permanent mark on our hearts and (sometimes) an unfillable space in our lives. Among the most heart-wrenching losses are those of the extraordinary figures who play pivotal roles in our lives—the ones who shape our very identities. With the passing of my mother, older brother, and big mama, I am thinking about the people who shape us all. Or, in my case, the phenomenal individuals who have helped make me who I am. Amidst the overwhelming highs and lows of grief, I ponder:

how do we summon the inner strength necessary to forge ahead, to honor the memories of those we've lost while still embracing life?

### Grace and the Grieving Process

This question is not just about grief but about giving yourself the grace, time, and care necessary to muster what is already inside you. And before you ask, yes, the ongoing struggle of grief can amplify feelings of sadness. Sadness is a normal and necessary part of grief. But remember that we are human and deserve to experience all the feelings on the emotional spectrum that define our lives. Whether your loss was recent or years have passed, we all share in the journey towards reclaiming normalcy after loss. For me, the grieving



process for the loss of my mother continues. She was a force, and her enduring legacy lives on through me. My memories with her often make me smile at their reflection, while the lessons she taught me continue to be my most incredible educational experience to date.

### A Season of Reflection

I have been enjoying a great deal of reflection lately. As the seasons transition from Spring to Summer, I am reevaluating my life for the first time ever. For the past few months, my articles have focused on the search for balance, finding new ways to connect to

my community, and facing rejection, all of which are byproducts of my revisiting process. Thinking of those who shaped me is a continuation of this process triggered by the beginning of an exciting new chapter in my life. This month, I accomplished what so few do in their lifetime: I completed my Ph.D degree.

### Grief and Groundbreaking Milestones

What does this have to do with grief? When you come from a background similar to mine, you don't often come across many individuals with Dr. in front of their names. And if you did encounter them, it was unheard of for them to be familiar with the experience of teenage motherhood, former high-school dropouts, married women, mothers of any status, or any of the

numerous identities I have possessed in my young life. This did not matter to my mother; she was one of one. Well, even if it did, I would never have known. My mother was kind; she encouraged me to go to college and pushed me to take a chance on my life by taking a chance on myself. She taught me that regardless of your life situation, it can always change if you decide to take control of it.

### The Power of Love and Legacy

Taking control of your life, pursuing your passions, and loving on your family while trying to build a career for yourself are all no small feats. Oftentimes, these can feel like goals that are counterproductive to one another. After some reflection and writing these past months, I can see that all I am would not have been possible without the individuals who shaped me. Care, compassion, patience, and laughter are not how most people would characterize their Texas upbringing. But for me, they have been staples throughout my life—all of those features and, of course, the consideration of a loving mother. Love is the glue that holds us all together. Whether they are friendships, relationships, or families, we are social creatures, and we all need love to thrive. Therefore, because of loss, our grieving processes often reflect on the fond memories of our loved ones, conjuring feelings from all places on the emotional spectrum. Thus, life has me contemplating the love, people, and accomplishments I have experienced, concluding that I owe an outstanding debt to my loving community, old and new.

### Community as a Healing Force

Much like my upbringing, a common theme of my life surrounds the significance of community. Whether they are my family, friends, school, church, or an organization, my created communities allowed me to connect. They reminded me that I was not alone. Our communities are especially critical when we are processing grief. Of course, numerous professional resources can help our military community deal with grief. Still, it is also nice to have our created communities and share in an experience that unites us all, processing loss.

### A Legacy of Empowerment

As you all move forward, please remember my mother's words, "Don't let life live you; you have



to live life." You have a life to live that only you can. You are a gift, one that is sometimes polished through painful experiences. Life is a gift, especially if you can use it to help somebody. I promised long ago that if I could make a way for myself, I would use my accomplishments to uplift others, and I intend to fulfill that promise each day. Go forth to try to help someone and build a legacy that your giants, yourself, and your loved ones can be proud of.



**About the Author**  
The column "Diamonds in the Rough" is about embracing the challenges 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 four beautiful children who range from ages 6 to 17. She currently holds a Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD degree in the social sciences. In addition, she is a current instructor for a program housed at the University of Michigan. Her career aspirations include data-driven policy research, higher education, and non-profit services tailored to young mothers.





# Gear Up for the Outdoors

## A Guide to Shopping for Camping Supplies in Korea

By Jason Ebersole

**Korea** is a land of many natural wonders, making the outdoors a very pleasant and popular place during your time here. Day activities like hiking and picnics are very common, but so are things like camping. Most of us have likely spent a few nights under the stars back in the United States, not counting field exercises. Koreans also enjoy camping, albeit a more refined version aka “glamping.”

Korea’s love of the outdoors makes camping relatively common. As a result, adding to or building your camping closet can be relatively easy during your tour in the Land of the Morning Calm. In this article, we’ll explore some of the options for gear shopping, from glamping to more technical to little gems in places you may not expect.

We’ll start with the more common types of stores, which focus more on the typical Korean style of camping. This style tends to focus on creature comforts and is best described as car camping, glamour camping, or simply put, glamping. If you like your outdoors to be enjoyed in a comfy chair with lights and even entertainment, this is for you.

### Car Camping/Glamping Stores

The first store we’ll explore is a chain called *Gorilla Camping*. These are interesting stores, often defined by two separate showrooms – one with tents, the other with all the other gear. My first experience with *Gorilla Camping* was at the Pyeongtaek location. As



mentioned, one building focuses on tents, usually large family-sized ones with multiple rooms. If you like having a covered common area but separate sleeping areas, these are for you. Sometimes, you can find smaller tents mixed in, even ones that fit on top of cots. The other building usually has all the other gear.

This is where the real fun begins as you explore everything from sleeping bags to several styles of chairs, cooking tables, and everything you need to equip the tent you saw in the other building. In most cases, the various items tend to focus on car camping, less the more technical backpacking style. Even so, you may find small items such as utensil sets that compact down or little tools and gadgets. In most cases, the gear tends to be fairly affordable as well, especially given exchange rates at times.

A similar store, at least in the Pyeongtaek area, is a place off the beaten path called *Camping Trunk*. I first came across this one while on a Scout hike between Pyeongtaek City Hall and Camp Humphreys. I eventually found my way back while on one of many gear hunts. Unlike *Gorilla*, *Camping Trunk* is all one building but has similar gear to outfit a typical Korean campsite. Large tents are displayed at one end, while shelves at the other hold various bits of gear. As with *Gorilla*, most gear is pretty affordable and appears to be pretty decent quality. I’ve often found myself stopping at both while looking for gear.

Another one I found in the Cheonan area is a smaller store called *Camping Cody*. This one is located on the 4th floor of a building with lots of sports-related businesses. Similar in many ways to *Gorilla* and *Camping Trunk*, *Camping Cody* offers a variety of gear for mostly car camping/glamping, but also some items suitable for backpacking. They certainly pack a lot of stuff into their showroom as well.

These stores are great places to start for general camping gear or even just good backyard gear, each carrying a variety of Korean brands. I would make a small word of caution – just remember your weight limits, as it could be easy to stock up, but make the scale a little tight when you leave Korea.

Moving to a different store, Korea does have a few







of its own local brands with their own showrooms. One of the more common ones I've seen is a branch called *Snowline*. *Snowline* has some decent gear covering most needs. For tents, their lines range from car tents to large family tents, all the way down to one to two-person tents. While their stores may not have as much gear as *Gorilla* or *Camping Trunk*, they still have very good gear that spans the car camping crowd to the more technical crowd. One thing to note about *Snowline* is that they tend to be seasonal, with some products switching based on the current catalog season. This means things, especially tents, will change, sometimes making it hard to find specific products year to year. In one case, one of our Scout leaders found a nice two-person tent, which is now "out of season." Having visited two stores, you may also find slightly different components at different stores, such as a vestibule for one of the smaller tents. You may also find *Snowline* products at other stores.

#### Technical Camping

For this category, I'll start off by defining this as more focused on weight and size such as backpacking or even cycle camping, compared to car camping where larger tents, for example, are fine. I've found this type of gear a little harder to find, at least around Pyeongtaek.

While on a hunt for new one and two-person tents for my gear, I stumbled across a store near Suwon that truly fit the bill for the more technical crowd. *Yaho Camping* is a wonderland for those needing lightweight, high-end gear. With more common international brands, this



store has almost everything a backpacker would need, at least for the camping components. I was able to finally find a good two-person tent here, choosing from the largest selection of such tents I've found in Korea. I will caution shoppers, though. Unlike *Gorilla* and *Camping Trunk*, the prices reflect the quality. That said, they do have sales, and I highly recommend getting a membership, as some prices will drop between 10% to almost 50% depending on the item. All they need is your name and phone number. *Yaho* does also carry gear suitable for more car or family camping as well, with some different gems compared to other stores.



#### Hidden Gems

The specialized stores are the best places to start, especially for things like tents and larger items. However, there are a few places where you might find little gems of camping gear. I previously wrote about Daiso stores here in Korea. Surprisingly, each one typically has a small section for outdoor/camping items. These are usually things like plates, small pans, utensils, and cases for spices and such. With good prices, it's the place to add affordable gear.

Other places to look are EMart and HomePlus department stores. For example, the HomePlus near Songtan has a small outdoor gear shop on the second floor with backpacks, tents, cooking gear, and even apparel. I visited another HomePlus, which did not have the same shop-within-a-shop though. EMart is a little more hit and miss, and seasonal, but sometimes you can find a few things.

First Village outlet mall towards Asan has several outdoor stores on the first floor. Most of these will be dedicated to apparel and shoes, but a few may have some gear tucked away. AK Plaza in downtown Pyeo-

ngtaek also has some higher end stores, again most for apparel, but at least one had actual camping gear, albeit some of it was on the higher end of the budget.

Korea has many options for camping while you are here. Even if you didn't come prepared to camp, either from saving PCS weight or just not being sure what to expect, there are many shopping options. If you are into camping or just want to explore, I would check out the many stores and see what you find.

#### Camping Store Locations

*Camping Cody*  
780 Sinbang-dong Dongnam-gu, Cheonan-si  
Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/GEuhOwSr>

*Camping Trunk Pyeongtaek Anseong Branch*  
175-11 Hapjeong-dong Pyeongtaek-si Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/FXrowzmF>

*Gorilla Camping Cheonan Branch*  
1112 Sinbang-dong Dongnam-gu, Cheonan-si  
Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/F5Frm3H0>

*Gorilla Camping Pyeongtaek Branch*  
486-13 Jukbaek-dong Pyeongtaek-si Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/xXD5VxnZ>

*Snow Line Cheonan Branch*  
427-1 Sinbang-dong Dongnam-gu, Cheonan-si  
Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/FCBtNBPh>

*Snow Line Pyeongtaek Anseong Branch*  
251-1 Oegacheon-ri Wongok-myeon Anseong-si  
Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/FaSE3Xlh>

*Yaho Camping Dongtan 2 New Town Branch*  
807-4 Jangji-dong Hwaseong-si Gyeonggi-do  
<https://naver.me/x0hPoqO7>

#### About the Author

Jason is a scout leader and Eagle Scout at USAG Humphreys. His troop, including his son, is pretty active with camping, spending one weekend most months outdoors. Jason has previously written about other shopping options in Korea. Jason, his wife (a fellow contributor), and their son have been in Korea for three years now.





Goddess Taco Al Pastor



Chef Sophia Kim from Goddess Taco

# Goddess Taco

## Bringing LA-Inspired Street Tacos to Daegu

By Candace Nuñez

They say necessity is the mother of invention and that couldn't be truer for Sophia Kim, the owner and chef behind Daegu's newest taqueria, Goddess Taco. Though it has only been open for a couple months, this small but mighty restaurant is already making waves in the city's growing Mexican cuisine scene.

Conveniently located, just a seven-minute walk from Banwoldang Station and Bongsan Culture Street, Goddess Taco is the perfect casual stop for anyone heading downtown. Whether craving a quick bite or looking for a new go-to taco spot, this place promises a taste of something special.

### From LA Streets to Daegu's Food Scene

A Daegu native, Sophia fell in love with street tacos while living in Los Angeles. Inspired by King Taco, a California staple, she dedicated herself to perfecting her signature flavor—one that could hold its own against the best.

When she returned to South Korea, she found herself searching for that familiar, bold Mexican taste but realized only a handful of restaurants truly captured it—and they were all in Seoul. Seeing an opportunity to bring authentic, LA-style tacos to her hometown, she took matters into her own hands and thus, Goddess Taco was born.

### The Vibe: A Late-Night Taco Stand, Reimagined

Step inside Goddess Taco, and you'll immediately notice a few things.

First, the décor is minimal yet stylish, blending sleek, modern design with the warmth of a cozy Mexican eatery. There's a touch of American flair in the details, making it feel like a place where street food meets sophistication.

Second, the menu is simple—intentionally so. Much like an authentic taco stand, Goddess Taco focuses on a select few offerings, ensuring that each dish is crafted to perfection.

And finally, the seating is intimate. There are no large communal tables, reinforcing Sophia's vision: a dining experience reminiscent of a late-night taco stop, where the food takes center stage and the vibe stays casual.

### What Sets Goddess Taco Apart

What truly sets Goddess Taco apart is its commitment to authenticity and quality. Unlike many places that rely on store-bought alternatives, Sophia grinds corn herself to create handmade corn tortillas, ensuring a fresh and traditional base for every taco. The fillings are just as special—each cut of meat is seasoned with Mexican chilies and a signature house recipe, delivering bold, unmistakable flavors. The menu features a carefully curated selection, including carne asada, al pastor, chorizo, and shrimp tacos, each bursting with its own distinct flavor profile. For those craving something extra cheesy, these same delicious fillings can also be enjoyed in warm, melty quesadillas.

The chorizo and al pastor tacos stand out as



The interior of Goddess Taco is fun and vibrant, a homage to California vibes.



Goddess Taco Carne Asada





customer favorites, offering rich, savory flavors that keep people coming back for more. But the menu isn't stopping there—exciting additions are on the way. This summer, Goddess Taco will introduce a unique fusion cocktail inspired by horchata, the beloved Mexican rice-based drink. Blending that creamy, spiced essence with makgeolli, Korea's traditional rice wine, this refreshing new creation will be a must-try. Additionally, burritos will soon make their debut, giving taco lovers yet another reason to return.

For those looking to make the most of their taco experience, Taco Tuesday at Goddess Taco comes with special perks. Every Tuesday, guests can enjoy a "Buy 1, Get 1 Free" deal on Corona, making it the perfect time to stop by with friends. On top of that, the restaurant is currently holding a review event—customers who participate can receive one free drink per table as a small thank-you for sharing their experience.

#### Looking Ahead: The Future of Goddess Taco

As Goddess Taco continues to grow, Sophia has big plans for the future. Though still in the early stages, she is considering opening a second location in Pyeong-taek, expanding her vision beyond Daegu. With this potential new spot, the menu will also evolve, introducing additional items to further satisfy taco lovers.

Beyond expansion, Goddess Taco is also eager to collaborate with other local businesses, strengthening

Daegu's food and culture scene. One such partnership is already in the works with SoMyeong, a nearby café run by a passionate young owner. This spring, Goddess Taco and SoMyeong will host a special collaboration event, blending their unique flavors and creativity into something exciting for the community.

When reflecting on her journey, Sophia shares what drives her passion for Goddess Taco:

"When I lived in the U.S., I often missed the flavors of home. I believe food is culture, and it's also a form of communication. Tacos are a dish that everyone loves, and at Goddess Taco, we've worked hard to recreate the authentic flavors. I hope it becomes a place where guests who miss the taste of home can find satisfaction, enjoy great food, and connect with one another."

With its dedication to authenticity, exciting menu plans, and a growing presence in Daegu, Goddess Taco is just getting started—and there's plenty more to come.



#### GODDESS TACO

919-3 Namsan-dong Jung-gu Daegu

<https://naver.me/5k7UpHGO>

Instagram: @goddess taco

Hours: Tuesday - Saturday: 12:00-21:00

Sunday: 12:00-20:00 Breaktime: 15:00-17:00

Closed Mondays

Parking Unavailable



#### About the Author

Candace Nuñez is a co-editor for United on the RoK. As a military spouse and former English teacher in Virginia and Seoul, she loves learning, traveling, and sharing her experiences with others. In her free time, you can find her reading, writing, or learning new recipes to cook for her family.

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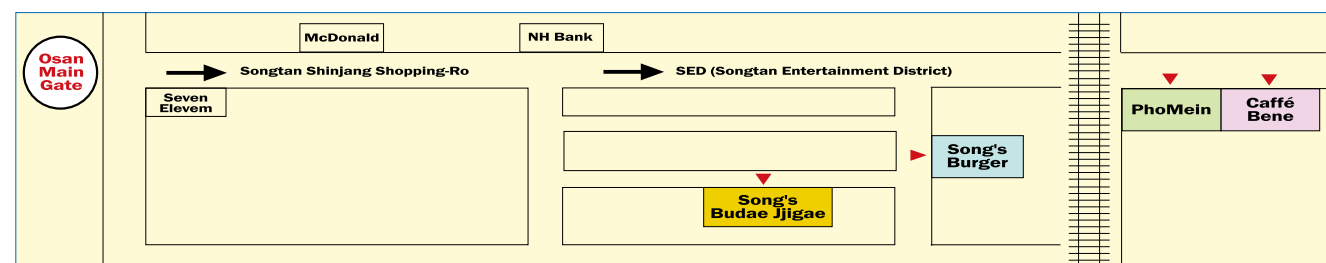
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# Busting Myths & Unlocking Wellness

By Pure Balance Korea

## *The Truth About Chiropractic Care, Pilates, and Massage*

In today's online information and social media world, it's easy for myths to spread faster than the truth—especially regarding health and wellness. Chiropractic care, Pilates, and deep tissue massage are often misunderstood, leading many to miss their benefits. At Pure Balance Korea, we believe all patients should have the knowledge to make informed health decisions. Let's break down some common myths and reveal the truth behind these effective practices.



### Top 3 Myths About Chiropractic Care

#### **Myth #1: Chiropractic Adjustments Are Painful**

**Truth:** Many people assume that chiropractic care is painful because it is associated with cracking noises. Adjustments, however, are typically gentle and most often provide immediate relief. Chiropractors adjust their techniques based on the patient's needs to provide a comfortable experience. Patients usually claim pain relief, reduced tension, and better mobility after an adjustment.

#### **Myth #2: Once You Start, You Have to Go Forever**

**Truth:** Treatment plans vary based on patients' needs. While some people choose to receive regular chiropractic care for maintenance, some patients only require a few sessions to address an issue. Chiropractic care is about providing solutions, not creating dependency.

#### **Myth #3: Chiropractors Only Treat Back Pain**

**Truth:** Chiropractic care is well-known for treating back pain. However, chiropractors also treat headaches, joint pain, sciatica, posture issues, and even nervous system function. Chiropractic care is a valuable therapy beyond just back pain.



### Top 3 Myths About Pilates

#### **Myth #1: Pilates Is Just for Women**

**Truth:** Pilates is for everyone, regardless of gender. Joseph Pilates originally developed it for injured soldiers and athletes, focusing on core strength, flexibility, and balance. Today, many professional athletes, including men, use Pilates to enhance their performance and prevent injuries.

#### **Myth #2: Pilates Is Only for Flexibility and Core Strength**

**Truth:** While Pilates does improve flexibility and core strength, it also enhances posture, coordination, joint mobility, and overall muscle endurance. It's a full-body workout that builds strength in a controlled and intentional way, benefiting people of all fitness levels.

#### **Myth #3: You Need Expensive Equipment to Do Pilates**

**Truth:** While reformer Pilates equipment can be beneficial, many Pilates exercises use just a mat and your body weight. Mat Pilates is highly effective and accessible, making it an excellent option for those looking to build strength and mobility without investing in specialized equipment.



Photo captured by Photos by Annie Lou.



# Top 3 Myths About Deep Tissue & Trigger Point Massage

## Myth #1: Deep Tissue Massage Has to Be Painful to Work

**Truth:** While deep tissue massage applies firm pressure, it should never be unbearably painful. Skilled massage therapists adjust their techniques to your comfort level, ensuring effective treatment without unnecessary discomfort. Patients should always communicate openly with their therapist for the best results in their massage.

## Myth #2: One Massage Session Can Fix Everything

**Truth:** While massage therapy can provide immediate relief, long-term issues like chronic pain or tension require consistent care. Like chiropractic and Pilates, clients may need multiple sessions to fully address deep-seated muscle tension and dysfunction.

## Myth #3: Massage Is Just for Relaxation

**Truth:** While massage therapy can be relaxing, deep tissue and trigger point massage are also used for pain relief, injury recovery, improved circulation, and muscle rehabilitation. It's an essential tool for both relaxation and functional healing.



# Discover the Benefits for Yourself

Although massage therapy, Pilates, and chiropractic care are surrounded by many misunderstandings, if you do your research you will find the actual advantages of these therapies. Furthermore, these practices offer several advantages when used together.

If you're not located near Pyeongtaek, don't worry—finding chiropractic care, Pilates, and massage therapy near you is still possible! With the growing popularity of these wellness practices, many communities offer a variety of options. Start by researching local clinics and studios that specialize in holistic health services. You can look for reviews and testimonials from clients to gauge the quality of care.

When considering a provider, be sure to ask some important questions before starting care:

- What is the clinic's approach to treatment?
- Are the practitioners experienced?
- What specific services do they offer?
- How are services tailored to your individual needs?

It's also important to inquire about pricing, session lengths, and whether the facility is equipped to address any specific concerns or conditions you may have. Before committing to care, make sure you're comfortable with the team, and don't hesitate to ask about their approach to patient education, so you can fully understand how treatments will support your health goals.

Pure Balance Korea offers expert chiropractic care, Pilates, and deep tissue massage therapy. We take a holistic approach to help you achieve health and wellness. Visit us to learn more and take the first step toward a healthier you!

# About the Author



Located in Pyeongtaek, Pure Balance Korea offers expert chiropractic care, Pilates, and deep tissue/trigger point massage therapy to help you live pain-free. Their personalized approach focuses on spinal health, posture correction, and functional movement to relieve pain and restore mobility.

The centre provides one-on-one and two-on-one Pilates sessions, along with targeted massage therapy to address deep-seated tension and muscular imbalances. Pure Balance believes in empowering clients with effective, evidence-based care to support long-term well-being.

Instagram: [purebalancekorea](#)  
Facebook: [purebalancekorea](#)

# The Humphreys Youth Orchestra: A Summer of Music, Learning, and Memories

By Jonathan Kim

Photography Courtesy of Humphreys Youth Orchestra, Linda Shin, and Hana Pong



*The* Humphreys Youth Orchestra, based in the Pyeongtaek community, is dedicated to developing and inspiring young musicians. They are composed of young musicians from both Humphreys and Osan schools and others from local community schools. Our youth orchestra aims to create an inclusive space where students can cultivate a lifelong love of music and contribute to Korea's cultural enrichment. The best part? Our orchestra is open to all USFK families!

Musicians can work on their skills by joining the Humphreys Youth Orchestra and Pyeongtaek University Music Summer Camp 2025. The camp is open to all instruments, including string, bass, woodwinds, and percussion instruments.

Let's get ready for an amazing week of music camp this summer! Last summer I attended the music camp and we're going to have a blast making music together at this year's summer camp. Whether you're just starting out or are a star musician, you'll find your place here. It's going to be a week of summer filled with great music and new friends. You've got to join me. And if you are wondering what camp is like, keep reading to see a day in the life of a Humphreys Youth Orchestra musician!

As usual, we started off on a Monday—which often signifies a rough start to the week—but since it wasn't a school day, I thought I could manage. As I explored the music room, I discovered that the camp was





alive with young, gifted musicians who wanted nothing more than to improve their skills and have fun. Every morning began with a gathering during which we shared updates and took group pictures. We also split into smaller groups, practiced and participated in lunch-break games. Lunchtime with new friends was the part I cherished most each day. The Humphreys University professors were impressive as they supported us throughout the week with their guidance and motivation. One of my coaches, who also plays the cello, even played Brawl Stars with me after the week was over.

At the end of the summer camp, we were ready to present the fruits of our labor. Our musicians participate in an incredible concert at the end of the week that is open to the community. We work with

professors and strive to create a memorable event for our community! We played exciting songs, such as "Hallelujah." We had pianists impressing everyone and young performers presenting a musical performance featuring K-pop songs, dance, and music. The orchestra brought it all together with the new pieces we had learned.

Colonel Workman, USAG Humphreys Garrison Command, visited us to support the orchestra. He listened to how much we have improved since we first started and offered words of wisdom for reaching our goals.

"Congratulations on your hard work and your growth this week. Your dedication and enthusiasm are truly inspiring. You've embraced the challenges here, and you've created beautiful music here, which we all hope and look forward to hearing." — Col. Workman



The Humphreys Youth Orchestra was able to make donation to the Pyeongtaek University in support of the summer. Each one of us was also given a certificate for our accomplishments at the summer music camp.

It was a great week of music, learning, and fun. If you're a musician looking for a summer activity, then this music camp is the way to go. Instead of just staying home and staring at a screen, get out, enjoy music, meet new friends, and do something wonderful for yourself, like how I learned to communicate better and show cues on when to play to my other teammates. This will be the investment you want to make—not only to improve your skills but also to have a blast. See you at the camp for another week of fun activities!

#### Who Can Join?

- Students in grades 2 through 12 for the school year 2024–2025 are eligible to sign up.

#### Level and Eligibility

- Students must know how to read music if they are playing an instrument.
- A minimum of one year of experience playing the instrument is preferred.
- Campers are expected to bring their own instruments, with the exception of the piano.

#### Cost

- The camp fee is \$300.
- Registration is due by June 20th.

Check out our Facebook at [Humphreys Youth Orchestra](#).  
Email: [humphreysyouthorchestra@gmail.com](mailto:humphreysyouthorchestra@gmail.com)



#### About the Author

Jonathan Kim is a teen writer at USAG Humphreys. He is a member of the Scouts BSA and is working his way through the ranks of Troop 88. His goal is to complete badges through experiences that he knows will make him a better person. He enjoys practicing and performing with the Humphreys Youth Orchestra on his double bass. Jonathan believes the Republic of Korea has many opportunities for people to explore their passions, especially with so many adult volunteers to help the community's youth.



# Snap, Travel, and Eat

By Joanna Mae Marshallsay



Emerald Buddha (Wat Phra Kaew)

## A Journey of Flavor and Culture in Bangkok



Diving headfirst into Thailand's bold flavors at Michelin-starred Thai Niyom.



Under the glowing city lights of Bangkok, we toasted with expertly crafted cocktails.



Tasting Tom Kha in Thailand.

As the year drew to a close, we were ready to trade the familiar for the unknown, seeking adventure, warmth, and a culinary awakening far from home. Bangkok, with its vibrant streets, rich culture, and renowned food scene, beckoned us.

We didn't just want to thaw out under the sun; we wanted to immerse ourselves in the city's rich culture, history, and legendary food scene. As a couple of self-proclaimed foodies, we weren't just there for pad Thai and spring rolls (though we weren't going to say no to those). We were on a quest for something deeper: dishes that told stories, flavors that sparked curiosity, and a culinary journey that would stay with us long after we left.

Sure, we'd had Thai food before—plenty of times. But now, it was time to experience the real thing, straight from bustling street vendors, hidden gems, and renowned kitchens steeped in tradition. What we found in Bangkok was far more than we could have imagined: temples that shimmered in the sun, markets alive with energy, rooftop bars with unforgettable views, and plates that made our taste buds dance.

Spoiler alert: Bangkok didn't just deliver—it stole our hearts. We laughed, sweated through the spice, got lost (on purpose—that's our story and we're sticking to it), and marveled at the vibrancy of this city that never seemed to slow down. And now? We already want to go back!

### First Impressions: An Authentic Taste of Thailand

Our culinary journey began with a bang (of chili peppers, to be exact). We found ourselves at Thai Niyom, a Michelin-rated gem tucked in the Ploenchit area, eager

to dive headfirst into Thailand's world-renowned flavors. The moment we stepped inside, the warm, citrusy aroma of lemongrass and kaffir lime wrapped around us like an inviting embrace, while the lively clatter of woks and the rhythmic chopping from the kitchen set the scene for what was to come. As the first dish arrived, I remembered something crucial about Thai food: it doesn't just play with fire—it invites you to dance in it. We had clearly underestimated how fiery the heat could be, but the flavors were so balanced and layered that it became an addictive experience. My husband and I took turns gasping for air and laughing through the spiciness, our eyes watering but our smiles wide. Thankfully, salvation arrived in the form of a smoked coconut Thai tea, a refreshing twist on the classic that soothed our burning tongues. Was it essential? Absolutely. Was it delicious? You bet. It was one of those moments that reassures you that you've arrived somewhere special.

But the adventure didn't stop with dinner. That night, our love for rooftop bars and speakeasies led us to Lennon's, a sleek, stylish hideaway perched atop the Rosewood Hotel, just a five-minute walk from Thai Niyom. We were greeted by an atmosphere dripping with vintage charm: dim lighting, walls lined with vinyl records, and the soft crackle of jazz playing in the background. From the rooftop, Bangkok sprawled out beneath us like a glittering city of dreams. As we clinked glasses over expertly crafted cocktails and watched the city lights twinkle in the distance, it became clear: this trip was going to be one for the books.

In that moment, Bangkok had already cast its spell. With one incredible meal, a panoramic view, and the promise of countless new flavors and experiences ahead, we were hooked—body, mind, and very, very spicy soul.





Every hand-painted stroke and carefully placed detail tells a story of dedication.



Vibrant Yaksha guardians stand watch, protecting the sacred heart of Wat Phra Kaew.



Fireworks across the night sky of Bangkok.

### Sacred Scenes and Camera Dreams

Our first full day was dedicated to exploring Bangkok's most famous temples: Wat Arun, Wat Pho, the Emerald Buddha (Wat Phra Kaew), and the Grand Palace. These sites are not just architectural wonders but also hold deep historical and spiritual significance. The scent of incense filled the air as worshippers murmured prayers and the golden surfaces of the temples shimmered under the bright Thai sun. Locals and tourists alike gathered, seeking good luck for the new year, adding to the vibrant atmosphere.

The towering spires of Wat Arun, also known as the Temple of Dawn, stood majestically against the river-side backdrop. Its intricate porcelain-adorned facade made every shot breathtaking. A photoshoot at Wat Arun became one of the most memorable highlights of our trip. Wearing traditional Thai outfits added a cultural charm, and working with a local photographer ensured we captured the temple's grandeur effortlessly. Arriving early helped us avoid crowds and take advantage of the soft morning light, though navigating the steep steps in silk attire was a fun challenge. As the golden glow reflected off the temple's surface, it created a picture-perfect moment and lasting memories of Thailand's beauty.

At Wat Pho, home to the massive Reclining Buddha, we were greeted by the sight of an astonishing golden structure stretching 15 meters high and 46 meters long. Each part of the Buddha represents a deeper meaning—prosperity, peace, and enlightenment. The Buddha's reclined position symbolizes calmness and spiritual awakening before passing into the afterlife. Though it was picture-worthy, capturing its entirety proved challenging due to its immense size and the

bustling crowd. Beyond its spiritual significance, Wat Pho is also the birthplace of traditional Thai massage, housing Thailand's first massage school, which still offers classes and on-site massages to this day.

Wat Phra Kaew, the most sacred temple in Bangkok, housed the world-famous Emerald Buddha within the Grand Palace complex. We learned that only the King of Thailand is allowed to touch the Emerald Buddha, changing its attire to match the changing seasons. The shrine was breathtaking, adorned with golden statues, intricate sculptures, and elaborate wall and ceiling paintings. Photography and videography were prohibited inside, preserving the sanctity of the space. Despite the holiday crowds, many devotees paused to pray and offer their respects, reinforcing the temple's spiritual significance.

Nearby, the Grand Palace—though no longer home to the royal family since 1925—remains an important site for official ceremonies and state functions, standing as a testament to Thailand's rich history and regal heritage. One of the most fascinating details about the temple is how every inch of its exterior exudes craftsmanship and devotion. From the soaring poles to the ornate walls, each element is either hand-painted with delicate precision or composed of intricately arranged pieces, placed with meticulous care. The sheer attention to detail is awe-inspiring—you can almost picture the countless hours and steady hands that shaped this masterpiece. It's a living testament to the dedication of the artisans who brought the temple's beauty to life.

### New Year's Eve: A Spectacular Celebration on the River

The highlight of our trip—actually, the main reason we went to Thailand—was New Year's Eve. One of my

good friends had the brilliant (and slightly extravagant) idea to ring in the New Year in Bangkok on a boat with the city skyline as our backdrop. And honestly, who could say no to that? So we booked a river cruise promising breathtaking views, a buffet dinner, and an unforgettable night on the Chao Phraya River.

The Chao Phraya River is the lifeline of Bangkok, historically serving as the city's main transportation route and economic hub. But on this night, it was also the stage for one of the most dazzling fireworks displays we'd ever seen. The sky erupted in a symphony of colors as the sound of fireworks echoed across the water. It felt like the entire city was putting on a show just for us—though the thousands of other spectators might beg to differ.

Every corner of the river had fireworks, each display more spectacular than the last. We ate, we laughed, we toasted, we danced, and we watched in awe as Bangkok lit up in celebration. It was the most incredible New Year's Eve we've ever experienced. And unlike past celebrations where we'd spend half the night stuck in traffic or jostling for a decent view, this time, we had the best seats in the house—floating right in the middle of it all.

### A Relaxing Day – Traditional Thai Massage

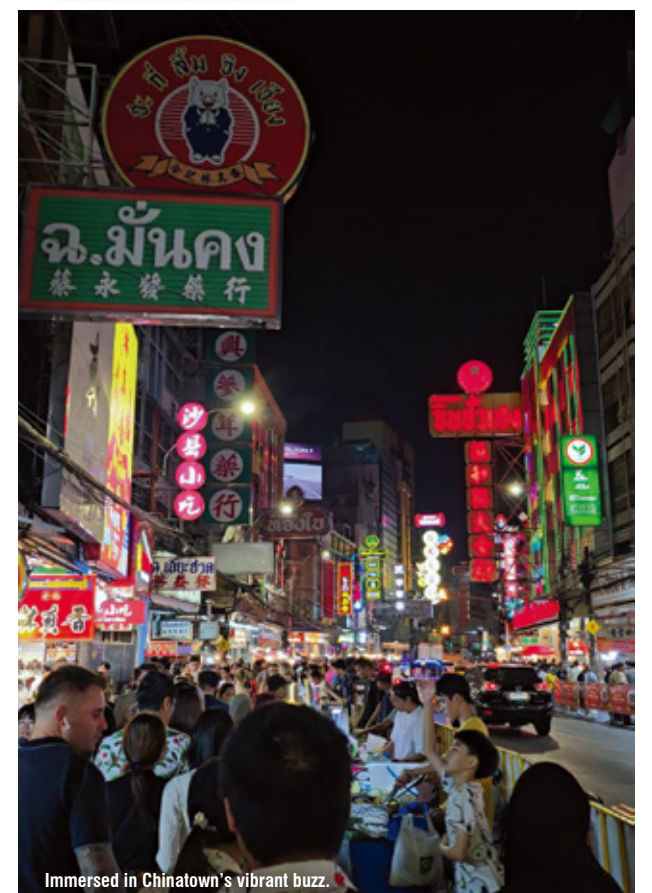
After two days of non-stop exploring (and feeling like we had personally climbed every temple in Bangkok), we decided it was time to treat ourselves to a much-needed traditional Thai massage. And let me tell you—our backs and necks had been sending distress signals.

Thai massage is unique because it combines acupressure, stretching, and assisted yoga-like movements—basically, it's a workout disguised as relaxation. The moment we walked into the spa, we were greeted by the soothing scent of lemongrass and eucalyptus, instantly melting away a layer of stress we didn't even realize we were carrying. The dim lighting and gentle aroma of essential oils created the perfect ambiance for ultimate relaxation. I just wished there was calming music playing in the background, but instead, it was quiet except for the occasional symphony of our joints popping and the deep exhales forced out with every press and stretch.

The therapist skillfully twisted, stretched, and pressed out every knot we had collected over the past 48 hours of temple hopping. There were moments of bliss and moments of "Wow, I didn't know my body could bend that way!" At one point, I questioned whether I had unknowingly signed up for a chiropractic session, but by the end, we felt lighter, looser, and completely refreshed—just maybe in need of a long nap before our next adventure.



Joanna and her husband capture timeless moments at the iconic Wat Arun.



Immersed in Chinatown's vibrant buzz.





Riding the legendary tuk-tuk.



Anyone can find something they love at Bangkok's street markets.



Seconds to clear: watching the MaeKlong train glide through a bustling market is a thrilling dance between chaos and calm.

### Bargains, Bites, and Sky-High Sights

No trip to Bangkok is complete without a little shopping, a little snacking, and a little rooftop revelry. We dove into the chaos of the Chinatown Street Market, where the air buzzed with haggling voices and the scent of sizzling meats, ripe tropical fruits, and mysterious spices. Every stall was a feast for the senses—vibrant fabrics, handcrafted trinkets, and street food that ranged from mouthwatering to downright intimidating (let's just say there were some exotic delicacies that we decided to admire from a safe distance).

Our mode of transport? The legendary tuk-tuk. Imagine a motorcycle with a backseat, a disco ball's enthusiasm, and the speed of a getaway car. Some were decked out with neon lights, others blasted music loud enough to turn heads—it was a thrilling, slightly chaotic ride that felt like a mini rollercoaster through Bangkok's bustling streets.

To cap off each night, we took Bangkok's rooftop bar scene by storm. Every rooftop we visited offered something spectacular—panoramic views, stellar entertainment, and cocktails so fancy they almost made us forget we'd been sweating all day. Akara Sky Hanuman, perched on the 61st floor of One City Centre, stole the show with its 360-degree skyline views and hourly traditional Thai performances. One of their cocktails even came with a scorpion garnish—because nothing says “exotic” like sipping on a drink garnished with a venomous arachnid staring back at you.

Then there was the famous Sky Bar on the 63rd floor of the Lebua State Tower and the chic Pink Bar on the

61st. We may have been slightly underdressed (turns out market-trekking attire doesn't scream “rooftop chic”), but that didn't stop us from sipping, swaying to the music, and soaking in the dazzling city lights. Bangkok truly knows how to elevate a night out—literally and figuratively—and we made sure to enjoy every last drop of it.

### Exploring Beyond Bangkok

Feeling adventurous, we took a bus to visit some of Thailand's most iconic attractions—because what's a trip without squeezing in as many bucket-list experiences as possible?

- **Damnoen Saduak Floating Market:** Picture a chaotic yet charming water highway, where boats double as floating shops and vendors enthusiastically call out their best deals. Bargaining here is an extreme sport, and we were determined to win. After some intense haggling that felt more like a battle of wits, we proudly walked away with silk clothing at a fraction of the original price. (Might as well have earned a trophy for that negotiation!) This world-famous market was featured in numerous travel shows as well as the James Bond movie *The Man with the Golden Gun*—which explains why it felt like something from an action scene.
- **MaeKlong Railway Market:** Have you ever seen a market that disappears in seconds? Neither had we—until we found ourselves standing inches away from a moving train. Vendors casually pull back their stalls as the train rolls through, only to set them

back up as if nothing happened. The sound of the horn slicing through the chatter was surreal, like something out of a thriller movie. And speaking of thrilling moments, this was where my husband tried durian for the first time—a decision that I thought he would immediately regret but he genuinely enjoyed and now wears as a badge of honor.

- **Icon Siam:** Part luxury mall, part cultural experience, Icon Siam is the definition of extra. From its grand interior to the floating market-style food court, this place blends high-end brands with traditional Thai charm. We capped off the day at Baan Khanitha, a terrace restaurant with a stunning view of the Chao Phraya River, where we enjoyed a well-earned meal while watching the city lights dance on the water. It was the perfect mix of indulgence and culture—because after a day of haggling and dodging trains, we definitely deserved it!

### A Culinary Highlight: Unforgettable Dishes

If there's one thing we learned on this trip, it's that Thai food in Thailand just hits differently. It's like hearing your favorite song live—it's bolder, more vibrant, and somehow, everything just makes sense.

Take Kuay Jab, for example. This peppery pork soup with wide rolled rice noodles isn't just a dish—it's a warm hug from Bangkok itself. We found it at the famed Michelin-rated stall, Kuay Jab Nay Lek, deep in the heart of Chinatown. The line stretched so long it felt like we were queuing for concert tickets, but the wait was absolutely worth it. The moment we took that first sip, the rich, steaming broth wrapped us in a peppery embrace so bold it could wake the dead. The noodles were silky and perfectly rolled, soaking up all that intense flavor. It was spicy, comforting, and...gone too soon.

Then there was the stir-fried whole crab with yellow Thai curry at Nara Thai Cuisine at Central Embassy, a mall in the Ploenchit district. This was a dish so decadent it made us question every crab we'd ever eaten before. The crab meat was luscious, juicy, and practically melted in our mouths, drenched in a thick, creamy, golden curry that clung to every bite like it never wanted to let go. We didn't either. Andrew and I locked eyes across the table—this was love, and not just between us, but between us and this crab.

And of course, no trip to Thailand is complete without Tom Kha soup. Or in our case—three bowls of Tom Kha soup because, honestly, once wasn't enough. Each time, we were met with that unmistakable punch of lemongrass, the fiery heat of chili, the bright tang of lime, and the deep umami of shrimp-in-

fused broth. The flavors were so clean, so sharp, so well-balanced, it made every Tom Kha we'd had before taste like an imposter. By the third bowl, we weren't even questioning ourselves anymore—we had fully accepted that we'd never taste Tom Kha the same way again.

Moral of the story? If you go to Thailand, come hungry, come ready, and don't fight the urge to order seconds (or thirds).

### Personal Reflections: The Heart of Bangkok

It wasn't the glittering skyline, the majestic temples, or even the incredible food that made Bangkok feel so special to me. It was something deeper—a feeling of home.

At some point during our trip, between weaving through the bustling streets and catching the scent of sizzling skewers on every corner, it hit me: Bangkok felt just like the Philippines. It wasn't just a city I was visiting; it was a place that, strangely, I already knew.

The rhythm of life here—the sound of tuk-tuks zipping through traffic, the endless maze of street stalls, the distant hum of karaoke echoing from a tucked-away alley—it all felt eerily familiar. The presence of small, family-owned shops, vendors passionately calling out their best prices, and the sight of families gathered in tiny spaces, laughing over a shared meal, reminded me so much of home.

One moment, in particular, stood out to me. As we ventured down a small side street on our way to the New Year's festivities, I saw a family gathered outside their modest stall, taking a break from work to enjoy dinner together. The kids were giggling, the parents were chatting animatedly, and an old radio crackled in the background with some classic love song. It was simple. It was ordinary. And yet, it tugged at something deep in my heart. I remembered growing up in the Philippines, where life wasn't about luxury but about togetherness. We didn't need grand spaces—just good food, good company, and, of course, a microphone nearby in case someone felt like belting out a power ballad.

The warmth, the humility, the resilience of the people—Bangkok didn't just remind me of home; it reminded me of where I came from. It was a moment of realization, a quiet appreciation for humble beginnings and the beauty of shared joy, no matter where you are in the world.

And just like that, Bangkok became more than just a destination. It became a place I'd always want to return to, because, in some ways, I never really left.

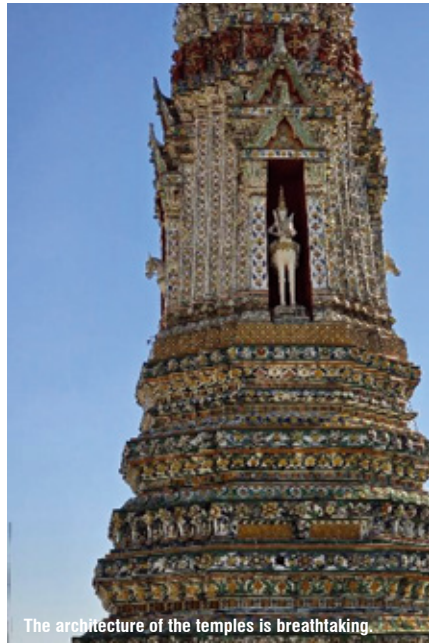




A golden Buddha statue inside Wat Pho.



Exploring Bangkok's culture together, making every moment an adventure.



The architecture of the temples is breathtaking.

### Tips for Visiting Bangkok

Book tours and transportation in advance. – Whether it's a temple tour or a floating market adventure, planning saves you from the chaos, especially during peak seasons. Plus, having everything organized lets you focus on the experience (and not on scrambling for a ride). Check out Klook, Tripadvisor, or even Get Your Guide!

**Pack smart and light.** – Bangkok's tropical heat doesn't play. Light, breathable clothing is your best friend. Don't forget essentials like sunscreen, insect repellent, and comfy shoes (you'll thank yourself after temple-hopping). And most importantly, bring an open mind—Bangkok has surprises at every corner waiting to be explored.

**Use public transportation, especially the BTS Skytrain.** – Bangkok traffic can be intense, so skip the gridlock by hopping on the efficient BTS Skytrain or MRT subway. It's fast, affordable, and offers great views of the city.

**Stay hydrated.** – The tropical heat can sneak up on you. Keep a bottle of water on hand at all times, and cool off with fresh coconut water or fruit shakes from street vendors.

**Master the art of bargaining.** – Bargaining in Bangkok's markets is almost like a sport, and a smile and good humor go a long way. Vendors expect it, so channel your inner negotiator! Don't be shy—it's all part of the experience.

### Respect local customs and dress modestly for temples.

– When visiting sacred sites like the Grand Palace and Wat Pho, you'll need to cover your shoulders and knees. Carrying a light scarf or wrap is a handy way to stay prepared.

**Try the local flavors, over and over again.** – If there's one city that will ruin your favorite takeout forever, it's Bangkok. From tangy, spicy Tom Yum to rich yellow Thai curry, the flavors are fresh, bold, and unforgettable. Don't be afraid to experiment—you might fall in love with a dish you've never even heard of (and you'll probably end up eating it three times, like we did with the Tom Kha). Make sure to research reputable food stalls and restaurants to avoid getting sick.

**Try Bangkok's street food.** – The street food scene here is legendary. Whether it's grilled skewers, pad Thai, mango sticky rice, or banana roti, you'll find some of the best flavors right on the street. Follow the longest lines—they usually lead to the tastiest spots.

**Don't skip the rooftop bars.** – Trust us, there's something magical about Bangkok's skyline at night. Find yourself a rooftop bar, grab a carefully crafted cocktail, and take in the breathtaking views. It's the perfect way to wind down after a day of exploring.

**Be cautious with tuk-tuks.** – While tuk-tuks are fun and iconic, some drivers may overcharge tourists or offer unsolicited stops at tourist shops. Negotiate the fare ahead of time or opt for a Grab ride (Southeast Asia's version of Uber) for more predictability.

**Get a local SIM card, eSIM or portable Wi-Fi.** – Staying connected is key for navigation, booking tours, and finding restaurants. SIM cards with data plans are inexpensive and available at the airport or convenience stores like 7-Eleven. I opted for an eSIM through the Holafly app, which I purchased before arriving. The eSIM is data-only, meaning it doesn't support texts or calls, but it was more than enough for navigating a new country and staying connected through messaging apps. What I appreciated most about Holafly's eSIM compared to others was the flexibility to set it for the exact duration of my trip rather than being forced to pay for an entire month of service. This made it a cost-effective and convenient choice for short-term travelers. Plus, you can use the same app when traveling to other countries.

**Learn a few basic Thai phrases.** – Simple phrases like "Sawasdee kha/khrap" (hello), "Khop khun kha/khrap" (thank you), and "Mai phet" (not spicy) can go a long way in connecting with locals and enhancing your experience. Locals appreciate the effort!

**Visit Bangkok's night markets.** – Bangkok comes alive after dark, and the night markets are a must. Try Asiatique The Riverfront or Chatuchak Weekend Market (which also has a night edition) for shopping, food, and live entertainment under the stars.

**Plan your trip during off-peak season if you can.** – Bangkok during New Year's is unforgettable, but it's also packed. Temples, restaurants, and streets turn into sardine cans. For a more relaxed vibe, consider visiting outside of major holidays.

### Final Thoughts: Why You Should Visit Thailand

If you're on the fence about visiting Thailand, let me tell you this: it's like stepping into a sensory wonderland. The sights, the sounds, the flavors—everything bursts to life in a way that's impossible to ignore. Whether you crave the excitement of city life, the tranquility of beaches, a deep dive into cultural traditions, or a food journey that will redefine your taste buds, Thailand delivers it all—and at a price that won't make your wallet cry.

Now, full disclosure: the hardest part of visiting Thailand isn't the heat or the traffic—it's deciding what to do first. There were moments when I felt paralyzed by choices: Should I try that smoky street vendor's skewers or the famous Michelin-rated stall? Should we explore another temple or head to a night market? Do I want mango sticky rice again? Actually, that's not a question. Yes. The answer is always yes.

Now that we're based in Korea, traveling around Southeast Asia is more accessible, and this trip has only sparked a bigger desire to explore. Thailand didn't just meet our expectations; it exceeded them in every way possible. We're already daydreaming about our return, because some places stay with you long after you leave—and Thailand is definitely one of them.

Traveling through Thailand reinforced something I've always believed: food is one of the best ways to learn about a culture. It's not just about what's on the plate—it's about the stories behind it, the people who create it, and the connections you make along the way—one bite, one story, one destination at a time.

### 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: Bureau of Consular Affairs -- <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Thailand.html>
- Thailand Visa and Digital Arrival Card: No tourist visa is required at this time if your stay is less than 60 days, however, all passengers must complete the Thailand Digital Arrival Card. -- <https://tdac.immigration.go.th/arrival-card/#/home>



### About the Author

Joanna Mae Marshallsay is an Air Force wife currently stationed at Camp Humphreys, South Korea. A dedicated nurse leader with a Master's degree in Nursing Administration, she has a strong background in various fields of nursing. She actively volunteers with the Red Cross and Brian D. Allgood Army Community Hospital (BDAACH), continuing her commitment to service and quality care.

Beyond healthcare, Joanna is passionate about community support and philanthropy. She was featured on WJLA ABC7 News in Washington, D.C. for leading a successful initiative to support the homeless community and victims of domestic violence. Her dedication to supporting others extends to her role as a K-Market Supporter; she was recognized by the Gyeonggi Province Government for promoting local businesses and international cooperation. An avid traveler and foodie, Joanna loves exploring new cultures, experimenting with food, and sharing her experiences through her social media platforms. She helps military families, nurses, and expats navigate life abroad with confidence, providing valuable insights on travel, food, and cultural integration. Whether discovering hidden gems in South Korea or guiding others through overseas transitions, she is dedicated to inspiring and educating her audience while fostering a strong sense of community. Follow her on her socials at @anna Joanna and @jojo\_and\_andrew\_eat





The Welcome Wagon of Korea hosted retired Lt. Gen. Bills. As a board director with the Korea Defense Veterans Association (KDVA), a principal supporter of our organization, retired Lt. Gen. Bills met with our leadership team, including President Kelly Karwel, Senior Vice-President Nicole Keen, and Former Secretary Eric Karwel.

# The Welcome Wagon of Korea

## Hospitality on the PCS Front Lines

By Kelly Karwel

As a mother, homeschool teacher, and Army spouse, I quickly realized the challenges of a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) to South Korea. My family and I arrived here almost two years ago, and I remembered the comfort I witnessed with the “Welcome Wagon” program I started during a previous assignment in Grafenwohr, Germany. Through this program, soldiers and their families saw firsthand how a small gesture of kindness – a snack, a friendly face – can make a world of difference to those feeling tired, hungry, and out of place.

I knew I wanted to bring that same comfort to Camp Humphreys. First, I reached out to other organizations about starting a mission to provide incoming service members and their families with snacks, but many attempts fell through. Determined to make a difference, I began working with Eighth Army G1, 19th Human Resources Command, and USAG Humphreys Garrison Command to set up a volunteer initiative that I believed would provide a much-needed service for our Army community.

### The result was the establishment of the “Welcome Wagon of Korea.”

Back in Germany, our Welcome Wagon was smaller in scale, but I witnessed the benefits and impact just the same. I understand the arduous 24-hour journey and transit wait times that 90% of soldiers (and dependents) experience as they arrive through Osan Airbase and Incheon Airport while they in-process through Camp Humphreys. It impacts morale, and I wanted to do something about it.

### Getting Started

The Welcome Wagon of Korea has been operating since July 2024 and officially became a private organization in September 2024 at USAG Humphreys. Unofficially, however, I started planning the day we arrived in July 2023, seeking out how to make this happen. It took a year to find the right support to finally get it up and running. Since then, we’ve welcomed approximately 5,840 service members and their families, including some pets too! Our organization has said hellos and goodbyes to reception soldiers that we’ve become close to, building relationships with both those arriving and those who help them.



Buses arrive daily from Osan Airbase and Incheon Airport.

The Welcome Wagon of Korea strives to ensure that even during a PCS move, traditions aren’t lost. We host seasonal events, including trick-or-treating for Halloween, Thanksgiving cookie deliveries with 3rd grade classroom letters, Christmas gift bags, Valentine’s Day treats, St. Patrick’s Day fun, and Easter egg hunts – ensuring that families can still celebrate the holidays while adjusting to their new home.

### The Call To Action

We are incredibly grateful for the support we receive, particularly from the Korea Defense Veterans Association (KDVA), which has committed to a five-year partnership. They allow us to meet our goals of providing welcome bags and outreach items. While we gratefully accept donations of snacks and toiletries, our greatest need right now is for volunteers.

Anyone can volunteer – soldiers looking for a rewarding opportunity, spouses wanting to make a difference, civilians, and retirees. Even an hour of your time can have a significant impact. We ask that you greet at least



Costco runs for supplies and snacks for soldiers and their families, made possible through our donors and partnerships.



Often, we have entire families volunteering. Our community’s youth can make an impact through the Welcome Wagon of Korea.

one bus a month to stay active within our volunteer program. Do you have at least one hour to spare a month? Please consider joining our team!

### Future Plans

The Welcome Wagon of Korea plans to stay around for years to come. We are asking the community to step up and spread the word about this organization that brings a friendly smile, a warm welcome, and gives the first positive impression to those coming on a long journey to South Korea.

You can make a real difference by welcoming new community members to Camp Humphreys. Whether it’s a warm smile, helpful info, or simply being there, your time can ease transitions and build lasting connections.

Want to learn more or get involved? Email [w.w.ofkorea@gmail.com](mailto:w.w.ofkorea@gmail.com) and join our volunteer community on Facebook at **Camp Humphreys Welcome Wagon of Korea**.

Together, we can make every arrival feel like a homecoming.



Join our volunteer team and make a difference, one bus at a time.



# Using Your Voice Beyond the Ballot Box:

## Tools and Strategies for Effective Advocacy

Written by Jetta Allen and Keri Pennie  
Photographed by Amanda Gray



In April's issue, we explored the power of your voice in democracy, from the importance of voting to identifying and connecting with your elected representatives. We also discussed how your engagement doesn't end at the ballot box, but can continue through direct communication with lawmakers and active participation in key issues.

Now, in Part 2, we'll take your advocacy to the next level. We'll provide you with the tools and strategies you need to make your voice even more impactful—from crafting powerful letters to leveraging social media and apps. Let's dive into the practical steps you can take to shape the policies that matter most to you and your community.

### Engaging at the Local Level

While the General Elections get most of the fanfare, did you realize that most elections occur in your local area or Home of Record? Governors, Attorneys, Mayors, Town Clerks, Council members, School Board Members, Sheriffs, County Treasurer, and other positions leave a huge impact on our quality of life. Ballotpedia has a comprehensive website with an updated calendar of each local region's election schedule and calendar. Check out the current elections calendar so you don't miss an opportunity to vote in local or federal elections.

#### Ballotpedia Resources

- Website: [https://ballotpedia.org/Main\\_Page](https://ballotpedia.org/Main_Page)
- About Ballotpedia: <https://ballotpedia.org/Ballotpedia:About>
- Local Elections Calendar: [https://ballotpedia.org/Local\\_elections\\_calendar](https://ballotpedia.org/Local_elections_calendar)

### Letter and Email Writing Tips: How and When to Write

Writing a letter to your elected officials is a powerful way to make your voice heard and influence the decisions that impact your community. When drafting your letter: be clear and concise—get to the point early, and stay fo-



cused on one issue. Start by introducing yourself and explaining your constituent connection to that office as soon as possible. Then go into why the issue matters to you personally. Ideally, at the end of the letter, you want them to come to the same conclusion as you, to be your advocate, for your ideas to make sense to them personally. This concept is best taught through Janie Bowman and Pete Wright's "The Letter to the Stranger", a specific concept that can assist in letter writing when you are addressing a stranger, but you want them to help you, see you, and understand your perspectives. While the scope is special education, it is an amazing tool if you really want to learn to craft powerful letters.



It's important to be respectful and professional, even if you strongly disagree with their position. Be specific about what action you want them to take, whether it's supporting or opposing a bill, or addressing a concern in your district. It's also helpful to include relevant facts, but keep your tone positive and constructive. While timing can vary depending on the issue, sending a letter when a bill is being debated or when there's a public call for feedback is often most effective. Your letter can make a real difference in shaping policy and letting officials know what their constituents care about.

#### Resources for Letter Writing:

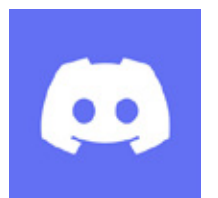
- Writing Your Elected Representatives: <https://www.aclu.org/writing-your-elected-representatives>
- University of Kansas: Writing Letters to Elected Officials: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/direct-action/letters-to-elected-officials/main>
- Tactics & Strategy: The "Letter to the Stranger":

[https://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/Letter\\_to\\_Stranger.html#google\\_vignette](https://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/Letter_to_Stranger.html#google_vignette)

- Action Network: <https://help.actionnetwork.org/hc/en-us>
- Action Network Letter Campaigns: <https://help.actionnetwork.org/hc/en-us/articles/203846415-What-are-letter-campaigns>

### Using Social Media to Advocate

The social media landscape is rapidly evolving and diversifying. There are plenty of ways to stay active and engaged in your community between election cycles while balancing your digital wellness. Staying up to date on town, city, state, regional, and national issues is a challenge. Make an email specifically for civic engagement and sign up for your elected official(s) email newsletters or follow them on social media. Join groups rather than scroll and check them regularly. Take this opportunity to diversify your media toolbox by trying out evolving communication platforms such as podcasts, Substack, Patreon, LinkedIn, or Discord. Follow field experts, local elected officials, human rights advocacy groups, authors, global news outlets, and fact-checking or media bias-checking sites such as Politifact.



### Brushing up on Civic Education

Did your eyes glaze over during civics lessons when you were a teenager? Do you feel the need to brush up on your civics classes? There are lots of ways to self-educate through a plethora of resources. Free micro-lesson courses can get you up to speed and feel confident about how our American government operates on the federal, state, and local levels.

#### Civic Education Resources:

- Civics for Life: <https://civicsforlife.org/civics-101/>
- Civics for Life Microlessons: <https://civics101.civicsforlife.org/>
- iCivics: <https://ed.icivics.org>



## Apps Make Politics and Letter Writing Easy, Plus They Are Free!



**5 Calls:** Contact Your Congress. Calling your Government on the phone can make a difference. Calling is the one of most effective ways to influence your representatives. Spend 5 minutes, make 5 calls.



**The Dome Watch app** is a tool that allows users to track and engage with the activities of the U.S. Congress, specifically focusing on legislation, bills, and government proceedings.



**Pocket Congress** makes information on the actions of your representatives and Congress as a whole much more accessible and searchable. With the app, you can: see recent bills in Congress, find your Representative using your zip code, follow bills & receive updates on their progress, see Congress members' votes on recent bills, read a brief description about them, and view trends about how they vote, and call their office, straight from the app!



**C-SPAN NOW** allows you to watch live and on-demand C-SPAN's coverage of politics around the world through livestreams of floor proceedings and hearings, coverage on current events, podcasts, and more.



**C-SPAN Radio** allows you to listen to commercial-free radio streams from 4 C-SPAN Networks.

## Non-Profit Organizations for the Military-Connected Community

Military-connected communities should be aware of non-profit organizations that align with their political beliefs because these organizations play a

vital role in advocating for issues that directly impact service members, veterans, and their families. By uniting behind these non-profits, voices are amplified, fostering change through collective action. When military-connected individuals come together in support of a shared cause, they strengthen the advocacy efforts of these organizations, helping to influence policy decisions and create meaningful progress in areas such as healthcare, benefits, and veterans' rights. A unified voice is a powerful tool for driving change.

### Military Advocacy Nonprofits:

- **Five & Thrive** brings military leaders, community partners, and military families together to tackle the top five quality of life issues: Childcare, Education, Healthcare, Housing, and Spouse Employment. <https://www.fiveandthrive.org/>
- **National Military Family Association:** Since 1969, NMFA has provided the latest news, information, research, programs, and events relevant to today's military families. <https://www.militaryfamily.org/>
- **Modern Military Association of America:** A united voice for LGBTQ+ military and veteran communities working to uphold and expand the civil rights progress through education, advocacy, support networks, and discrimination tracking. <https://modernmilitary.org/>
- **Secure Families Initiative (SFI):** Nonpartisan organization for diverse military partners, parents, kids, and loved ones to be voters and advocates on big issues that impact all of us. Big emphasis on foreign policy and civil rights. <https://securefamiliesinitiative.org/>
- **Military Kids-Special Education Alliance:** Works to create true positive change for military children in DoD and public education so they can achieve their highest educational potential. Their Facebook group is invaluable to parents! Join the conversation. <https://www.militarykids.net/>
- **Partners in Promise:** Serves as a representative voice for Exceptional Military Family Members (EFMP). <https://thepromiseact.org/>
- **Military Trans Rights:** Resources and information for transgender service members. <https://militarytransrights.org/>

## Stay Informed

Engaging with the political process and voicing your concerns beyond the ballot box is not only a right but a powerful way to ensure that the needs of the military community are heard. Whether you're voting from abroad, reaching out to your elected representatives, or actively participating in the legislative process through tools like letter writing or advocacy groups, your voice can shape policy and make a lasting impact. By staying informed and using the resources available to you, you can become an active participant in the democracy that affects you and those around you. Remember, every letter, every call, and every action counts—so make sure your voice is always heard!

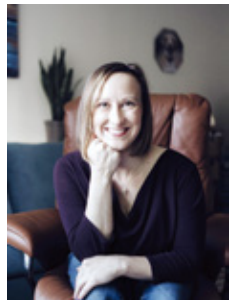
Now that we've explored the importance of using your voice beyond the ballot box, it's time to dive into how you can take action. Look for Part 2 in May's issue where we'll share tools and strategies to make your advocacy even more impactful. From writing effective letters to using apps that connect you directly with lawmakers, we'll guide you through the practical steps to ensure your voice is heard loud and clear. Be sure to check back for the next installment and get ready to amplify your civic engagement!

## About the Authors



**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. She has been a driving force in South Korea's military community since 2019. What began as authoring a support column for the Exceptional Family Member Program evolved into a multifaceted role combining her talents in writing, photography, and content creation. Beyond her editorial duties, Jetta is passionate about advocating for the civil rights of military families, fostering community connections, and exploring Korean culture with her family.

**Keri Pennie** is a New Englander who currently resides in Pyeongtaek, South Korea with her active-duty spouse and two small children. She holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Massachusetts and is enthusiastic about self-empowered, evidence-based healing methods, matrescence, civic engagement, and sustainable living. She holds several credentials in the Health and Wellness arenas including trauma-conscious yoga, personal training, and sacred circle. Keri Pennie is also a Board-Certified Health & Wellness Coach. She loves digging into deep conversations and soil as a community gardener, hosts stroller clubs, is a secular circle space holder, a Key Support Liaison and Resiliency Training Assistant, and creates a garden of community wherever she is planted.



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Photo: Jimmy Galt/International Relief Teams



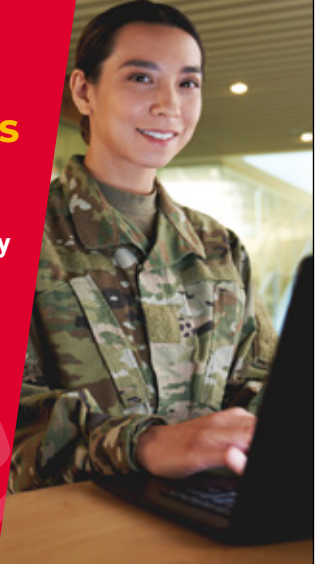
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The Aurora Borealis in Gambell, Alaska.

# From Korea to the Arctic:

## *A Military Spouse's Adventure in Remote Medicine*

By Melissa Dawley

I cry every time we leave a duty station. Joint Base Lewis-McChord was no different, but I mourned more than just the move—I grieved leaving my patient panel and team at the Veterans Affairs clinic, our Army organization, and the beautiful Pacific Northwest. As we boarded the Patriot Express for Osan, bound for Camp Humphreys, uncertainty hung like a cloud.

Now, just a year later, my life is split between two places, both vibrant in culture. I spend six weeks on Camp Humphreys as a military spouse and six weeks in the Norton Sound region of Alaska as a traveling medical provider. My work takes me to places few ever see, Gambell and Stebbins, Alaska, villages perched along the Bering Sea where life revolves around tradition and survival.

You never know what surprises your next PCS may hold, and this is a glimpse into my current adventure.

### The Journey to the Edge of the World

Traveling to my assignment is an adventure in itself. On each trip, I fly Incheon to Seattle, Seattle to Anchorage, then Anchorage to Nome, and finally, via small aircraft to the villages. These planes are lifelines to the communities, bringing groceries, mail, teachers, and medical providers like myself. Patients also use these planes to travel to and from appointments and students, athletes, and drummers to games and competitions. Recently, our region suffered a tragic loss—a small plane and its passengers—gone on the arctic ice, a sobering reminder of the risks taken to serve these isolated areas.

Nome is where I buy groceries. The two stores in town will box up your groceries before you head over to Bering Air. Providers normally stay a night on each end of our journey and have a shared home where we exchange stories and last beers before heading out or home. My favorite restaurant, Airport Pizza, is owned by a Korean National from Incheon. This is also the restaurant that will ship a pizza to you via air. The joy of tracking your pizza on the flight app is unrivaled after weeks of frozen chicken and vegetables!

Nome is also the endpoint of the Iditarod, the grueling thousand-mile sled dog race that pays homage to the historic 1925 diphtheria antitoxin run. In many ways, modern healthcare in the Bering region still mirrors that race—an ongoing fight against distance, elements, and time to deliver care.

### Practicing Medicine in the Arctic

The clinics in the villages of Gambell and Stebbins each have several exam rooms, a dental suite for visiting dentists, a trauma room, and a behavioral health room. Our supplies and emergency evacuations are dependent on the weather. If the wind is too strong or the fog too thick, medevacs are grounded, and we hold critically ill or injured patients, sometimes for days.

A typical day is a crash course in adaptability. I may start my morning with a well-child check, perform a well-woman's check-up by lunch, and spend my evening helping stabilize an acutely ill or injured patient(s). There are no set roles here—providers register patients, do vital signs, administer vaccines, start IVs, and cook meals for those we're holding in the clinic. I am a primary care provider but when hands are short, I assist my emergency medicine colleagues, sometimes taking shifts with these patients so they can sleep, other times taking less



Landing in Nome, Alaska to make a grocery run.



Waiting for the plane on the runway.





Exploring a whale graveyard from last year's hunt in Gambell, Alaska.



Grocery store run in Gambell on the Honda.



The clinic in Stebbins, Alaska



Our plane flies at altitudes less than 10,000 feet, making the views epic.



My living quarters in Gambell, Alaska.



Yua before making the trek to Stebbins to Nome, then to Anchorage and his new home in Eagle River, Alaska.

but still critical patients so they can take a more critical patient. Days like these bring me back to my Army medic and ER nurse days.

Before my last rotation, I completed a rigorous trauma certification, something that has profoundly shaped my practice. I am so incredibly grateful for my emergency medicine colleagues who share their knowledge and encouragement so freely and encouraged me to complete the certification. Iron sharpens iron, and it has been a true luxury to be exposed to new concepts, research, and specialties.

### The Real Rockstars of Village Medicine

I want to acknowledge a group of providers unique to Alaska and the Indian Health Service and a pivotal part of the state's current healthcare delivery. Community Health Aides (CHAs) and Community Health Aid Practitioners (CHAPS) are non-degreed medical providers who receive rigorous training (over years) to provide both primary care and emergency medicine in the absence of medical doctors, nurse practitioners, and physician's assistants. These folks are "doc" and just like NCOs, they are the backbone of healthcare in rural Alaska. They manage primary care conditions and emergent injuries. They are professionals who must frequently treat friends and family under the medical supervision of a provider, often hundreds of miles away.

In some of the smaller villages throughout the state, providers only rotate through every few months. In Gambell and Stebbins, I have had the honor to work amongst the CHAs and am forever grateful for their knowledge of both rural medicine and local tradition.

There are also dental and behavioral health aides. The behavioral health aids offer support and counseling, and the dental health aides can do uncomplicated tooth extractions and cleanings in the absence of a dentist.

### Life in the Villages of Alaska

To visit the Norton Sound region is to understand resilience! The people here, predominantly Yupik and St. Lawrence Island Yupik, have survived for generations in harmony with the land and the seasons. Winter brings ice and polar bears, while spring and summer usher in whale hunts—traditions where every part of the animal is used and shared amongst the community. Seals and walrus are harvested year-round and continue to be a pivotal nutrient source.

Transportation is by "Honda"—the term used for all four-wheelers. The runways double as airports; we drive to the edge of the airstrip, wait for our plane, and help load and unload our own bags. In winter, you board fully dressed in Arctic gear, knowing the cabin will be frigid but the views unparalleled.

Keep in mind that 80% of Alaska is not on the road system. In both Gambell and Stebbins, there are no malls, restaurants, or theaters. Life revolves around the essentials: the school, clinic, grocery store, and the single-room USPS mailroom. The cold is relentless—temperatures drop to -40°F with windchill. On the winter solstice, the sun graces us for only about 4 hours. In the summer, it shines for nearly 20 hours.

Despite the harsh conditions, joy thrives. Basketball is the heartbeat of these villages. High school games pack the gym and the whole town plays together at open gym nights. In Gambell, weekly drumming and dancing ceremonies keep traditions alive, and the artists tell stories of these proud warriors' history by way of intricately carved masks, figurines, and jewelry. One of Gambell's famous carvers is a Smithsonian artist, and I am proud to own one of his intricately carved owls made of walrus ivory.

### The Strength of Military Spouses

If military life has taught me anything, it's how to adapt. We learn to rapidly integrate into new communities and roles, and in many ways, that skill has prepared me for this work. The providers I serve with are often prior-service military, military spouses, or military "brats". It takes a certain kind of person to sleep on clinic floors, live in close quarters with strangers, endure frozen pipes, and use honey buckets when plumbing fails.

Every time I leave Korea for Alaska, I pack my life into 150 lbs—clothes, medical equipment, cold-weather gear, and food. And every time I return, I carry more than just my bags. I carry the lessons of resilience, adaptability, and finding joy in the unexpected.

Routine keeps me grounded. I track my nutrition, prioritize movement, and make the most of my small space. My essentials are a yoga mat and a set of dumbbells. I begin my mornings with Spanish lessons on Duolingo, listen to medical podcasts, and carve out time for fitness. These simple rituals remind me that growth is possible, even in the most unexpected places. Growth and routine seem so hard at home when life is busy—silently repeating a lesson I learned early in the military and on medical missions, and one my husband likes to use; "Comfort is the enemy of success".

But sometimes, comfort is just what is needed and can be seen in shared blueberry pancakes on weekends with colleagues. The warmth of the sun on my face after weeks of oppressive wind and snow and village dogs accompanying me on my walks. These small joys make the hard days worth it. Another "Armyism" found in the Arctic—"hunt the good stuff".

"It takes a village" echoes in both of my current worlds. Here on Humphreys, it looks like an Army family checking in on my husband, popping in to take my dogs out during his long duty days and sending me messages of support.





Chasing an Arctic sunset in Gambell, Alaska.

### Beautiful Moments in A Harsh Land

Many moments have etched their way into my heart, praying a medivac would land to take away a septic patient and another to land for a pregnant momma to deliver in a hospital and not in my arms. New Year's Eve in Stebbins, as I stood outside, the Arctic wind biting my exposed skin, watching the northern lights dance across the frozen sky with a celebratory symphony of gunfire from the locals. Peeping Russia from the beach in Gambell on a clear day after a colleague took me on the Honda for birdwatching.

The time I returned after six weeks and was on a walk to the store, all bundled up I felt little arms encircle my waist as I heard, "I remember you; you are 41 and live in Korea". You see, it is important how old you are and where you are from, and it was so humbling to be a guest and positively remembered.

Then there was Yua, the abandoned and frozen puppy who found his way to us in the days before

Christmas. We broke the rules, brought him in, and swiftly coordinated a rescue operation. My sister and brother-in-law fostered him, and he is now living his best life with his forever family in Eagle River, Alaska.

### Alaska's Military History

During World War II, the Alaska Territorial Guard was formed as a volunteer force to protect Alaska from a potential Japanese invasion. The Territorial Guard played a crucial role in securing the region's coastline. Today, Alaska has one of the highest per capita rates of military service in the United States.

Gambell, Alaska, located on St. Lawrence Island, was a strategic location during WWII, serving as a vital early-warning outpost due to its proximity to Russia. The village saw military installations established for surveillance and defense. In subsequent conflicts, Alaska has continued to play a key role in national defense, particularly during the Cold War and modern military operations.



Washateria in Stebbins, Alaska.

### The Unseen Challenges

For all its beauty, life in the Arctic is not without struggle. Current Medicaid cuts threaten healthcare access. Cancer rates are disproportionately high due to chemicals left behind from U.S. military operations on St. Lawrence Island during WWII. Entire communities, like Stebbins, still lack running water other than a shared washateria where everyone does their laundry and showers. Global warming is changing hunting patterns, making subsistence living increasingly difficult.

And yet, these first people remain. They are warriors, balancing modernity with tradition, thriving in two worlds. They are NOT apologetic or willing to back down from traditions that have kept them alive for centuries!

### Finding My Place & People

It's a rare privilege to be a guest in two places and get to experience two very beautiful cultures. My heart is full on both fronts, and it is not lost on me the parallels both of these worlds share. My time in the military and as a spouse has prepared me for so much of life and this professional adventure. I didn't set out to fall in love with the beautiful Yupik and St. Lawrence Island Yupik people or the beautiful frozen tundra, but I did and will carry the lessons I learned from these people and my colleagues forever.

So "Thank You" Uncle Sam, this life is anything but boring!



Grocery store entourage.

### About the Author

Melissa Dawley is a U.S. Army Veteran, an Army spouse of 19 years, and a family nurse practitioner with a Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP). Currently living on Camp Humphreys with her husband, Mike, and their two dogs, Sequoia and Juniper, she embraces the adventure of military life. She is passionate about hiking, plants, functional fitness, and the pursuit of finding the best Mexican food in Korea. She finds joy in the quest for professional growth, exploring the outdoors, and staying active.





# Memorable Cultural Exchange with Osan's Keystone Club Students

By Sia Ko, Eunwoo Kim, Taehee Park

*The* Osan Air Base Child and Youth Programs sponsors a unique program called the Keystone. Youth members of the club participate in events on and off base with other military-connected students and even students like us out in the Korean community. Our school, the Korea Tourism Senior High School, partners with the club members to engage in meaningful cultural exchanges and to make new friends from other countries.

Our first exchange with the Keystone Club was an online exchange in October of 2024. Since Halloween was just around the corner, we all wore Halloween costumes and were excited to meet online with our Keystone Club friends. After forming a total of 4 groups, we explained "Dongji", a holiday similar to Halloween

in Korea, to our Keystone friends on the other side of the camera screen. Our Keystone Club friends talked about Halloween and shared anecdotes and experiences from Halloween, and we learned about each other's similarities and differences. They asked us questions about things they were curious about, and we answered them and were able to teach them about Korean culture.

We were able to have meaningful cultural exchanges, discussing each other's cultures and traditions. By sharing about our unique lifestyles and festivals in each other's countries, we had the opportunity to broaden our cultural perspectives. Although our Korean members did not have enough English skills to express everything we wanted to say,

I think we were able to have fun and interact due to the active and attentive attitude of the Keystone Club friends. Each member of the Keystone Club was focused on our conversations and responded to our questions in English. This first meeting was a great experience, and we made unforgettable memories with each other. Although it was a short time, it was all the more precious because it was short. I think the attitude of the Keystone Club members, who seemed to listen to every single sentence I spoke in English, was really impressive.

Our second online exchange with the Keystone club members was in November of 2024.

In this exchange, we learned about the fun culture in Korea and shared about our daily lives as students at the Korea Tourism Senior High School. Our group had time to introduce Pepero Day, which took place the day before. Unlike the first day, we felt more prepared because we had an activity to introduce in more detail. For this second exchange, unlike the first exchange, we divided into teams and had a video conference with each group.

Since it was an exchange with a smaller group of friends, we started with nervous hearts. At first, everyone was a little awkward, but we learned about Western culture through the Keystone Club and group videos. The Keystone Club members prepared many questions and gave us big reactions to our answers, so we gradually gained more confidence. Those of us who were hesitant to speak English were able to continue the exchange by speaking freely and joking around. It was fun because we could introduce Korean culture to many friends by changing teams every few minutes. Maybe that's why it felt much more comfortable and freer than the first exchange, which was a larger group call.

All the teams in the Keystone Club actively participated and enjoyed their time with friends, but one team in particular was the most memorable for me. That team was the last one I interacted with. When I first joined, they greeted me in Korean. So, one of my teammates said that he would teach them Korean. When the club members heard that, they agreed, so we played a prank on them while teaching

them Korean. I shared that when you greet a Korean person, you have to say "cute" first and then say their name. Something like "cute O.O." One friend didn't seem to believe it, but everyone else was fooled. I was so grateful. The exchange ended with the screen changing while I told them the truth, and they were all laughing. It was a really happy moment between us. Our school's students don't have many opportunities like this, to joke with other students from different countries, but it was both exhilarating and heartwarming as we shared so much laughter. We learned a lot of English expressions while interacting with the Keystone Club, and I felt like our students gained more confidence in English while learning that laughter is a universal language.

In December of 2024, we finally met our Keystone



Club friends in person. We started the day with much anticipation, eager to connect face-to-face instead of through a computer screen. Many of our members, including myself, took extra care in our appearance, knowing we were meeting new people. Perhaps because it was our third in-person interaction rather than a virtual one, we struggled to focus during our morning class due to our enthusiasm.

After lunch, we all waited in front of the school gate for our Keystone Club friends to arrive, holding posters with the names of our friends that we had made in our group the day before and gifts that we had prepared together. After some time had passed, we began to see the cars arriving from afar. When we saw the





memorative photo together. After taking the photo, my friends and I sang the song “Remember Me” from the Disney animation “Coco” while sending off our Keystone friends. It was a beautiful farewell to our friends, and we hope that this memory will be the most memorable one until the end.

When our school first started to participate in this cultural exchange with Osan’s Keystone Club, many of us thought about whether we could express ourselves well in English. However, seeing my fellow students and myself now, unlike how nervous we were at first, I realize this experience has given us confidence in speaking English through the great reactions and exchanges with our

car pulling into our drive, we couldn’t hold back our happiness, with some of our students even screaming in excitement.

Our group consisted of six people, including friends from our school and myself, along with three Keystone Club friends: Caroline, Amani, and Chris. After a brief greeting in front of the school, we headed to our first activity location, the Western Culture Center, to make mother-of-pearl keychains with traditional Korean patterns. While making the keychains, we talked about each other’s school and our school life at the Korean Tourism Senior High School. We all laughed together as we listened to stories about the school life of our Keystone Club friends, which was very different from the culture of Korean schools. It was so much fun to hear their stories about American culture that we had never heard of before, and many of us wanted to hear more stories. We became closer as we spent time together.

Soon, we all were exchanging Instagram messages with one other in attempts to stay connected, grateful for this opportunity to meet new people. We learned that people in the United States use and enjoy TikTok a lot, just like us in Korea! We filmed a dance challenge that is popular on TikTok these days. My friends from other teams also participated in the TikTok challenge, but because they didn’t know how to dance, it was even more fun as we laughed together. After that, we all spent time together having snacks and playing games.

As we wrapped up our event, we all took a com-

Keystone Club friends. This cultural exchange has made us grateful for the opportunity to communicate and interact with friends from the United States who live and study in Korea. As global citizens living in the same global village, we are overcoming language barriers and growing our cultural awareness one meeting at a time. Our school looks forward to more opportunities to collaborate with our military-connected community. We also want to encourage others to engage and get involved with other cultural and language exchanges in their communities. No matter what your age is, the language you speak, or where you are from, we can all learn from one another and make great memories together.

### About Our School

The Korea Tourism Senior High School is the first tourism-specialized high school in Korea, opening in 2000. They are proud pioneers of Korea’s tourism-specialized education, fostering talented individuals in the tourism industry to emerge as a new growth engine in the 21st century.

With an average class size of 25 students, Official Tour Guide Interpretation Training, UNESCO School Membership, and active sister-school relationships with 30 institutions in over 13 countries, the Korea Tourism Senior High School has consistently proven itself to be the premier player in Tourism Education. The Korea Tourism Senior High School will continue to spread into the world through academic training and build an educational environment and mutual trust suitable for new eras now and in the future.

If you would like to learn more about Korea Tourism Senior High School, check out their website at: <https://tourism-h.goepk.kr/tourism-h/main.do>

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# ASAN

## Beyond the Ginkgo Trees

By Cat Son

*Asan* is located just South of Pyeongtaek. Asan's crown jewel is its magical trail of ginkgo trees. You've probably seen your social media inundated during the fall with beautiful gold foliage as far as the eye can see. While it is stunning don't sleep on the other gems that Asan has to offer. Asan, much like Pyeongtaek, has both rural and urban areas. It has a little bit of everything for everyone.

If you are itching to learn about history, the Onyang Folk Museum, Oeam Folk Village, and Hyeonchungsa Shrine will be perfect for you. They provide a creative glimpse of what life was like before Asan became the modern city you see today.

### Culture and History in Asan

The Onyang Folk Museum offers both indoor and outdoor exhibits showcasing traditional farming, games, crafting, and culture. The garden grounds outside the museum have traditional Korean houses as well as Muinseok Statues. These statues are often carved from stone and are intended to ward off evil spirits or bring good fortune, acting as guardians to the communities where they are placed. In Korean culture, guardian figures like the Muinseok statues are usually placed near entrances to homes or public places, where they are believed to offer protection.

The Oeam Folk Village is not to be passed up. It's a perfect place for a family day trip. The village was first established over 500 years ago during the Joseon Dynasty. The traditional style houses have been preserved and offer a clear example of what life during that time would be like. It is enthralling to see how expertly the houses and waterways were constructed.



Traditional straw thatched roofed houses at the Oeam Folk Village



Muinseok Statues at the Onyang Folk Museum

There are period-accurate playgrounds scattered throughout the village offering fun escapes for kids.

The Hyeonchungsa Shrine is only about a twenty-minute drive from the Oeam Folk Village. The shrine is dedicated to Admiral Yi Sun-sin, the fearless leader who designed the famous turtle ships, also known as Geobukseon. During the Imjin War (1592-1598), he went to battle against the Japanese and his iconic warships played a significant role in the defense of Korea. Today his portrait is seen on the one hundred-won coin and countless statues of him are found across Korea. The shrine is in a beautiful garden making it a perfect destination for a nice walk on a beautiful day. There is a museum within the shrine where you can see Admiral Yi's armor and swords as well as depictions of his many difficult journeys.

### Exploring the Outdoors

If you are looking to appease an outdoor enthusiast, Asan has the Asan Railbike, Yeonginsan Natural Recreational Forest, as well as Bongsusan Mountain. Asan Bike rail is a bike car that is attached to an old section of railway. The man-powered ride takes you through scenic countryside. It is great for all ages and very affordable.

Yeonginsan Natural Forest offers a variety of hikes for any level. The two-mile hike called Sangtubong is rated moderately hard due to the amount of stairs. Scheduling extra time for frequent stair breaks might help. The Yeonginsan trail is longer at just over five miles; it also offers a view of the west sea at the summit. There is a small entrance fee ranging from 1,000-2,000 won based on age.

The Bongsusan Mountain recreational forest is perfect if you are looking for an easy stroll. There is a forest bathing path through the rolling woods. The two-mile loop trail will take you to the Bonggoksa temple. While there is a way to drive up to the temple, taking this hike will allow you to stroll through a beautiful juniper pine forest before reaching the temple.

### Traditional Market of Asan

For produce and street food the Onyang Traditional Market is a must while in Asan. It is located very close to the Onyang Folk Museum. I suggest you make an entire afternoon of it while visiting. At the entrance of the market, there is a public hot spring foot spa that is fed



Statue of Admiral Yi Sun-sin



Public Foot Spa at the Onyang Traditional Market



by natural hot springs. The market is packed with street food, produce, and delicious hole-in-the-wall restaurants. One of my favorite thrift stores named Gujay Department Store is located here. It has some of the best prices and selections I've seen in Korea yet.

**Indoor Fun at the Asan Environmental Park and Yi Sun-sin Ice Rink**

If you are desperate to get out of the house with kids but the weather is too hot or too cold to be enjoyed, or maybe the air quality isn't great, try the Asan Environmental Park and Yi Sun-sin Ice Rink. These locations are just the places to visit for some indoor fun.

There are three different attractions worth seeing within Asan Environmental Park, the Jang Yeong Sil Science Center, the Insectarium, and the Asan Green Tower. The Jang Yeong Sil Science Center has interactive displays such as a ball pit, mirror maze, and marble runs. The Insectarium offers a wide variety of insects to look at and even some hands-on interactions with doctor fish and rhinoceros beetle larvae. Above the insectarium is the fifty-story Asan Green Tower. It provides the best views of the Asan landscape. The price to get on the tower is very reasonable and can be even more inexpensive if you purchase it in a combo package with the insectarium and science museum. The hardest part is finding a day when the tower is open. It seems to be hit or miss on any given day.

Lastly, the ever-popular Yi Sun-sin Ice Rink is unbelievably cheap. It is less than 7,000 won for skate rental and entrance fee. It can become extremely crowded on weekends. The earlier you go the less crowded it tends to be. It is the perfect place to take the kids on their day off from school. Inside there are lockers to store your things as well as a small cafe to eat at.

**Discover Asan For Yourself**

Asan is an unexpected delight. From hiking to ice skating, museums to historical villages it is worth a day trip or two. The ginkgo trees are extraordinary but when you take a deeper dive in Asan it has so much more to offer!



The Shrine at Hyeonchungsa



Exploring the different vendors at the Onyang Traditional Market

**Onyang Folk Museum**

403-1 Gwongok-dong Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/Fuzu8sNE>

**Oeam Folk Village**

258-3 Oeam-ri Songak-myeon Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/G1wlbKhV>

**Hyeonchungsa Shrine**

298-1 Baegam-ri Yeomchi-eup Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/55rS6ZYw>

**Asan Rail Bike**

142-1 Sineon-ri Dogo-myeon Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/FpxbSFNi>

**Younginsan Recreational Forest**

san56-1 Asan-ri Yeongin-myeon Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/Fy2zsfEF>

**Bongsusan Mountain**

san116 Songhak-ri Songak-myeon Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do

<https://naver.me/FJbCxop0>

**Onyang Hot Springs Traditional Market**

94-6 Oncheon-dong Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/xdpSBIWT>

**Asan Environment Science Park Asan Green Tower**

15-3 Baemi-dong Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/5l7gqObA>

**Asan Icerink**

114-3 Punggi-dong Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do  
<https://naver.me/lItjebtY>



**About the Author**

Cat Son is a Colorado Native who calls Hawaii home. She enjoys spending as much time outdoors as she can. She loves exploring Korea with her family.

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# Guerrilla Gourmet's Grand Championship Paella

By the Editorial Team



*At* the Humphreys United Club's Cooking Sub Club, Chef James T. Canter from Guerrilla Gourmet taught participants the art of creating Guerrilla Gourmet's Grand Championship Paella recipe, a dish that truly embodies the essence of vibrant Spanish cuisine. The class was a hands-on experience where attendees not only learned the intricate steps involved in crafting this flavorful paella but also got to savor the delicious results of their hard work. As the savory aromas filled the air, participants enjoyed the immersive experience of cooking rabbit and escargot, perfectly searing ingredients in the paella pan, and achieving that signature crispy socarrat crust. Once cooked, everyone gathered to enjoy a tasty, communal dinner that showcased the richness of this beloved dish. Whether you're an experienced chef or a novice cook, this recipe will leave everyone with new skills and a satisfied appetite. Not a fan of rabbit or escargot? You can easily substitute it for chicken! Check out your local markets for fresh snails and other ingredients to make this special dish.

*Serves 10 (approximately 10 oz per serving)*  
*Total Time: About 2 hours*

## Ingredients

### For the Herb and Garlic Marinade

- 2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 tbsp fresh rosemary, chopped
- 2 tbsp fresh thyme, chopped (I also use perilla leaf, basil, mint but these are optional)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste

### For the Paella

- 2lbs cut up rabbit meat(on or off the bone, your option)
- half pint of escargot snails
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 8 oz Spanish chorizo, sliced
- 2 roasted red peppers, sliced
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 large tomato, grated (or 1 cup tomato sofrito)
- 3 cups bomba rice
- 1 tbsp Spanish Paprika
- 1/4 tsp saffron threads, steeped in 1/4 cup warm stock
- 8 3/4 cups of flavorful stock

## Directions

1. **Marinate the Rabbit:** In a large bowl, combine the parsley, rosemary, thyme, minced garlic, olive oil, salt, and pepper. Add rabbit pieces, coating well with the marinade. Cover and let marinate for at least 4 hours in the refrigerator, to allow the flavors to penetrate the meat.
2. **Marinate the Escargot:** Repeat process of marinating for escargot.
3. **Prepare the Paella Pan:** Heat 1/4 cup of olive oil in a large paella pan over medium-high heat. Once hot, add the marinated rabbit pieces and sear them on all sides until golden brown. Remove the rabbit from the pan and set aside.
4. **Cook the Chorizo and Aromatics:** In the same pan, add the sliced chorizo and cook for 2-3 minutes until it releases its oils and becomes slightly crispy. Add the onion and cook until softened, about 3-4 minutes.
5. **Add the Minced Garlic:** Add and cook for another minute until fragrant.





6. **Add the Peppers and Sofrito:** Add the roasted red peppers and the grated tomato (or tomato sofrito) to the pan. Stir and cook for 3-5 minutes until the mixture becomes thick and well incorporated.
7. **Add the Rice and Saffron:** Stir in the bomba rice and mix well with the other ingredients, toasting it for 1-2 minutes. Add the saffron with its soaking water, ensuring it is evenly distributed throughout the rice. Sprinkle the Spanish paprika and season with salt and pepper.
8. **Add the Stock and Rabbit:** Pour in 8 cups of warm chicken or rabbit stock, carefully stirring to combine. Return the seared rabbit pieces to the pan, arranging them evenly throughout the paella. Do not stir the rice after this point to allow a crust (socarrat) to form on the bottom.
9. **Simmer the Paella:** Reduce the heat to medium-low and let the paella simmer gently for 20-25 minutes, uncovered, until most of the liquid is absorbed and the rice is tender. If needed, add more stock in small amounts to ensure the rice is fully cooked.
10. **Add the Escargots and Peas:** About 5 minutes before the paella is done, scatter the escargots and peas over the top. Cover the pan with foil and allow the paella to finish cooking, steaming the escargots and peas.
11. **Create the Socarrat:** For the last 1-2 minutes of cooking, increase the heat to medium-high to develop a crispy, golden crust on the bottom (socarrat). Be careful not to burn it, watch closely.
12. **Rest and Garnish:** Remove the paella from the heat and let it rest for 5 minutes, covered. Garnish with fresh lemon wedges and chopped parsley.
13. **Serve and Enjoy:** Spoon out portions of paella, making sure to scrape up the socarrat for each serving.

**Connect with Chef James T. Canter of Guerrilla Gourmet**

Email: [worldcheff@gmail.com](mailto:worldcheff@gmail.com)  
 Facebook: James T. Canter  
 Guerrilla Gourmet  
 Instagram: [jamestcanter](https://www.instagram.com/jamestcanter)  
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# Navigating the Reasonable Accommodation Request Process: Policies, Procedures, and Resources

By Heather MacLeod

*The* process of requesting reasonable accommodations is an essential right for employees and job applicants with disabilities, ensuring they can perform their job duties and participate fully in the workplace. This guide outlines the steps involved in initiating a request for accommodations, engaging in the interactive process with supervisors, and understanding the key policies and procedures that govern these requests. From understanding Federal and Department of Defense regulations to exploring specific branch-specific policies, this document provides a comprehensive overview of how individuals with disabilities can navigate the accommodation process to ensure they have equal access to employment opportunities.

## Initiating a Request

Employees or applicants can request accommodations verbally or in writing to their supervisor, the EEO Office, or the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC). Clearly specify the type of accommodation needed and the condition requiring it. Sharing the impact of the reasonable accommodation requested can also give your employer insight as to why you are requesting the reasonable accommodation. You can share your ideas for a reasonable accommodation and also as the employer for their possible ideas.

If putting your request in writing or a typed form, be sure to include dates and the names or office you are submitting the request to so that you have documentation of your request. Sending your request via email will also document the request.

## Participating in the Interactive Process

Once you have requested a reasonable accommodation, expect to engage in a collaborative discussion with your supervisor or the EEO Office to identify effective accom-

modations. Expect those at the interactive process to ask questions and remember that it should be a collaborative experience for both parties.

## Awaiting a Timely Decision

After the interactive process, you wait for a decision. Decisions are typically made within 30 calendar days of the request. It is common to receive a response in writing with a formal tone.

## Keeping It Confidential

All information related to the request is kept confidential. This means all information related to your medical need, impairment, disability, religious beliefs, or other needs expressed will not be shared with those who do not have a need to know or who are outside the process for requesting a reasonable accommodation.

## What If My Reasonable Accommodation Request Is Denied?

If your request for reasonable accommodation is denied, follow these steps:

- Request a Written Explanation: Ensure the denial decision is provided in writing, including specific reasons to support the denial. Ask for any alternative accommodations to be considered.
- File an Informal EEO Complaint: Contact the EEO Office within 45 calendar days of the denial or discriminatory action. The EEO Office will assign a counselor to attempt an informal resolution.
- File a Formal EEO Complaint: If the issue is not resolved informally, file a formal complaint within 15 days of the closure of the informal process.
- Request for Reconsideration: Submit a reconsideration request to your chain of command, Human Resource representative, or the Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator.
- File a Complaint with the EEOC: File a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) within 180 days of the denial or discriminatory action.

## Revisiting and Reassessing Your Reasonable Accommodations

A government agency has the right—and in many cases, the obligation—to periodically revisit and reassess your reasonable accommodation. This process is meant to ensure that your accommodation remains



effective, appropriate, and aligned with both your needs and the operational needs of the agency.

Several factors can trigger this reevaluation. Changes to your medical condition, improvements or declines in your ability to perform certain tasks, or updates to medical documentation may prompt the agency to review whether the current accommodation is still the most suitable option. In addition, agencies must also respond to shifts in their operational environment. For example, office space realignments, changes in telework policies, or evolving mission requirements may require the agency to take a fresh look at all accommodations to ensure they remain feasible and effective within the new context.

A common situation that requires a reevaluation is when an employee's job duties change. If your role is modified—whether through a promotion, reassignment, restructuring, or expansion of responsibilities—you may need to request new or updated reasonable accommodations to address those new job functions. Since accommodations are tailored to help you perform the essential functions of your current position, any change to those functions could mean the existing accommodation



may no longer fully meet your needs. In these cases, it is essential to engage in the interactive process again to determine what, if any, adjustments are necessary to continue supporting your ability to perform effectively.

It is also important to note that when accommodations such as full-time remote work are approved, your physical office space could be reallocated. Agencies are tasked with managing resources wisely, and leaving office space unused when an employee is permanently or primarily remote is not an efficient use of government facilities. This space may be reassigned to meet the needs of other staff or organizational functions. However, this decision is strictly an operational consideration and is not a reflection on you or your performance.

Ultimately, the purpose of revisiting your reasonable accommodations is to balance your needs with the evolving needs of the agency, ensuring you can continue performing your duties successfully while the agency maintains operational efficiency and resource stewardship.

**Policies Surrounding Reasonable Accommodaitons**

Remember, the policies governing reasonable accommodation (RA) for Army civilian employees, including those at USAG Humphreys and within the Eighth Army, are primarily based on federal statutes, Army regulations, and DoD policies. There are so many, it can be overwhelming, but knowing your rights is half the battle. Keep in mind that many policies have been removed to comply with the Executive Order regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and are currently being rewritten and reconsidered for approval.

**Federal Laws Protecting Employee Rights in the Workplace**

- Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973: This Federal law requires federal agencies to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. It mandates that agencies ensure equal employment opportunities unless providing the accommodation causes undue hardship.
- Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA): This Federal law updates and strengthens protections for people with disabilities. It clarifies the definition of “disability” to ensure more people are covered under the law. The ADAAA also makes it easier for individuals to qualify for disability protections in areas like employment and public services.
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

Guidance: This Federal law is a set of rules and recommendations that help employers understand and comply with anti-discrimination laws. It provides clarity on how to handle workplace issues related to discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. The guidance ensures that employees' rights are protected and that employers can make fair decisions in the workplace.

**DoD Policies and Programs Protecting Employee Rights in the Workplace**

- DoD Instruction 1350.02 DoD Equal Opportunity Program: Provides additional protections against disability discrimination within the Department of Defense.
- DoD Instruction 1400.25, Volume 1614: This instruction outlines the process for providing RA to civilian employees and applicants with disabilities. It also details confidentiality requirements and the interactive process.
- Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP): CAP is the Department of Defense’s centrally funded reasonable accommodation program that provides assistive technology (AT) and services to DoD civilian employees with disabilities and wounded, ill, and injured Service members. You can complete the Workplace Disability Needs Assessment, request accommodations, and more.

**Branch-Specific Policies**

- Army Regulation (AR) 690-12: Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action: This AR establishes the Army's commitment to EEO principles, including providing RA to individuals with disabilities. It also requires supervisors and managers to engage in the interactive process promptly.
- Army Regulation (AR) 600-7: Unlawful Discrimination on the Basis of Disability in Programs and Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance From or Conducted By the Department of the Army: This AR makes it illegal for programs or activities funded by the Department of the Army to discriminate against people because of their disability. It ensures that individuals with disabilities have equal access to services and opportunities in these programs. It also includes provisions for accommodating disabilities in the workplace.
- Army Policy and Procedures for Reasonable Accommodation and Personal Assistance Services for Individuals with Disabilities:

- Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2706: Equal Opportunity Program: This instruction outlines the Air Force's policies and procedures for promoting equal opportunity, preventing discrimination, and supporting affirmative action efforts for all service members and civilian employees.
- Navy Equal Opportunity (EO) Program OPNAVINST 5354.1F: This former instruction outlined the Navy's policies and procedures for ensuring equal opportunity and preventing discrimination within the Navy. This instruction is currently not available. It has been removed in DONI to comply with the Executive Order regarding DEI. The Navy has stated that they will upload the revision of this directive once it has been approved.

**Other Resources**

- Job Accommodation Network: JAN is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations.
- JAN's Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR): This system is designed to let users explore various accommodation options for people with disabilities in work and educational settings. These

accommodation ideas are not all-inclusive. If you do not find answers to your questions, please contact JAN directly. The staff of experienced consultants is happy to discuss specific accommodation needs in a confidential manner.



**About the Author**  
Born in Trenton, Michigan, and a proud Air Force veteran, Heather now serves as an Army civilian. Passionate about exploring new places, Heather enjoys traveling throughout South Korea, immersing in its rich culture and vibrant landscapes.

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# Osan Air Base Air Power Days 2025: A Community Celebration of Joint Airpower

By Dan Romano

## A Triumphant Return to the Skies

The 51st Fighter Wing, commanded by Colonel William McKibban and his Mustangs, hosted Osan Air Base's first air show in six years. Under the theme of "Respect the Past and Forge the Future," the airshow showcased the U.S.-Korean Alliance and demonstrated their readiness to fight. The airshow was held on May 10-11 and highlights included aerial demonstrations by the ROKAF Black Eagles and U.S. F-16, F-35, and A-10 aircraft. A-10 weapons load demonstration teams, musical entertainment, and many static aircraft rounded out the festivities. The rain was a minor inconvenience on Saturday, then the sun came out, and Sunday was a full house!

## Precision and Power in the Air

The ROK Black Eagles, known as "The Pride of the Korean Air Force," were the star of the aerial show as well as a performance by a U.S. Pacific Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon, both displaying exciting aerial maneuverability. The Black Eagles are Korea's premier aerial performance team and consist of eight KAI T-50B aircraft. Their precision comes from

hundreds of hours of training from December through March, the four months leading up to the air show season, followed by about 50 air show performances annually. The Pacific Air Force's F-16 demonstration team has an equally rigorous training and airshow schedule, and its mission is to inspire goodwill and promote positive relations between the U.S. and partner nations across the western Pacific. The F-35 and A-10 also put on stellar aerial performances.

## Behind the Scenes: Crews in Action

In between aerial performances, there were many things to see on the ground. The A-10 weapons load demonstration team did not disappoint with four demonstrations. The demonstration illustrated the two distinct processes required to properly get a weapon off the shelf to the wing of the aircraft. Munitions specialists prepared the weapon to be ready to load onto the A-10 aircraft. Their work is very meticulous and critical to ensure the weapon is fully functional. The Aircraft Armament Specialists then delivered and loaded the weapon onto the aircraft. In addition to loading weapons, these specialists in their field are responsible for maintaining all the aircraft's weapons systems, such as the weapons attachment racks, gun systems, and other related equipment.







### Exploring the Machines of Airpower

There were several static display aircraft to see, and some spectators could even go inside, offering a rare opportunity to explore the inner workings of military aviation. From modern fighter jets to transport planes and helicopters, attendees had the rare chance to walk right up to the aircraft, go through the inside of cargo planes and helicopters, and engage with aircrew to gain firsthand insight into what it's like to serve in the aviation field.

### Entertainment Takes the Stage

The entertainment was not to be missed! Saturday's performances included the Autumn Kings and Chapel Hart thanks to the Armed Forces Entertainment. Sunday's entertainment included the Korean pop group Clover, and singer Olivia Marsh wrapped up the event with a memorable performance.

### Inspiring the Next Generation

Beyond the roar of the engines and aerial displays, there was a quieter but equally powerful dynamic unfolding on the ground. It was interesting to see the curious spectators, especially the children, watching not only the pilots but also the ground operators. Observing, I wondered what they were thinking. It is easy to







overlook the subtle inspiration a maintainer or members of our security forces might give to a young observer, but they too are a powerful source of inspiration. All the participants in Osan's Air Power Days may well have planted the seed in the minds of the children attending. The weapons demonstrations, a crew chief preparing the cockpit for flight, or security forces simply standing guard may have been that spark for a child to envision themselves in a similar role. Air shows are more for the community than the military, and everyone participating leaves an impression in one way or another.

### A Look to the Future of Airpower at Osan

Osan Air Base was established in June 1952 and the 51st Fighter Wing is the most forward-deployed permanent wing in the Air Force. The aircraft stationed at Osan Air Base have evolved over the decades to reflect changes in strategy, aging aircraft, and modern technology. This air show may be the A-10's final farewell since the Air Force's latest decision to divest all A-10s from Osan not later than the end of September this year. A-10s have been flying the skies over South Korea since 1982, and Osan Air Base is the aircraft's last overseas location.

The vacancy will be filled with the rebasing of 31 F-16s and about 1,000 Airmen from Kunsan Air Base arriving over the summer. At this point, the move is temporary and is the second phase of an operational test and evaluation examining the effectiveness and suitability of consolidating aircraft into a "Super Squadron" to see if combat force generation can still be delivered



effectively and more efficiently. The first phase of the test was successful enough to lead to this next phase, which will conclude sometime in the summer of 2026.

### A Resounding Success and Community Engagement

The 2025 Osan Air Power Days were not just about the display of skilled pilots and technicians, but moreover to forge stronger bonds between the joint forces and the community. The crowds were fascinated by the acrobatics of the Black Eagles and F-16 demonstration, and the precision of the weapons load demonstration. The static displays, bands, food, and tents selling military swag contributed to the lively atmosphere. This event gave the community a chance to gain a deeper understanding, and hopefully, a lasting appreciation for the vital role Osan Air Base plays in defending the 51 million people on the peninsula. The resounding success of this year's show sets a high bar for future Air Power Days, promising even greater opportunities for connection and engagement.



#### About the Author

Dan Romano retired from the Air Force after 30 years of service. Dan was based at United States Forces Korea for several years over two assignments. He recently returned and enjoys living in Korea.

He is a nature lover, photographer, and traveler. His adventures take him to some of the most beautiful places in the world where he captures the beauty of nature both on land and in the water.







# The 75th Anniversary of the Korean War

By Cord Scott, UMGC Okinawa

*This* June 25th marks the 75th anniversary of the start of the Korean Conflict on the peninsula. One of the most asked questions is, “Why is it called a conflict or a police action, rather than a war?”

The answer to that is complicated for a variety of reasons. For all intents and purposes, it will be called a war in this article. The reason why it is not officially called a war by U.S. forces is that it was not declared a war by an act of the U.S. Congress.

So, how did this all come about? Who fought in the war? Why is it controversial to this day?

To understand the situation on the peninsula now, and why there are now two Korean countries, one has

to go back to 1945. Korea at that time had been a colony of Japan, and following the end of World War II on August 15, 1945, Korea declared itself independent. However, being that they had been a colony, Allied forces had been asked to step in and occupy the area. Two US colonels, Dean Rusk (later Secretary of State under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson) and Charles Bonesteel (later commanding general of the 7th Infantry Division) drew the arbitrary line of the 38th parallel across the peninsula. North of the line, Soviet troops would secure the area, while US troops secured the area south of the line. At that time, most of the industry was located north of the line, while much of the south was agricultural in nature. This dividing line would be in

place for the next five years.

North of the line, Soviet troops would secure the area, while U.S. troops secured the area south of the line. At that time, most of the industry was located north of the line, while much of the south was agricultural in nature. This dividing line would be in place for the next five years.

The two men who eventually came to power in their respective areas wanted elections that would favor their own side. In the North, the Russian-educated Communist leader Kim Il-Sung was in power. He felt that the peninsula should be under communist control, and he eventually established the only dynastic government in a communist system. There are all sorts of issues with this, but it occurred.

In the South was a U.S.-trained doctor who eventually became the titular leader. Singman RHEE was his name, and he felt that an anti-communist system was best for Korea. For several years, there was a considerable amount of tension as both sides tried to influence local elections, often with violence and forms of coercion.

By 1949, the Cold War between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. was heating up with two significant events. First was the detonation of the first Soviet atomic bomb in August. Prior to this, only the U.S. had these weapons. The fact that the Soviets had the atomic bomb worried U.S. officials. Six weeks later, on October 1, Chinese leader Mao Zedong declared the People's Republic of China. Now the world's most populated country, and the largest country in size, were both communist, and both shared a border with Korea. By May of 1950, Kim was permitted by Soviet leadership to invade. The North Koreans were equipped by the Soviets, and their attack was launched on June 25, when many ROK troops were on leave.

The initial attack was a complete surprise, and soon civilians and military alike were fleeing south. The South Korean government appealed to the United Nations Security Council, which has the power to commit United Nations (U.N.) troops to a conflict zone. As it happened, the Soviet Union was boycotting the U.N. at the time, and their representative, who could have vetoed the measure, was not there to vote. The U.N. announced that troops would be committed to the Korean peninsula to push the North Koreans back.

Eventually, 16 countries would commit troops and materiel to the fight, and five more would send medical or humanitarian aid.

The conflict itself was chaotic for approximately six

months, when fighting swept most of the peninsula. In the end, 38,000 US personnel were killed, close to 1 million combatants killed, 2-3 million civilians killed or displaced, and entire families split by the eventual truce called in July 1953.



As it was not a formal ceasefire, this has meant that the two sides are still technically at war, hence the reason U.S. troops are on the ROK. It is also a reason why the DMZ still is one of the most heavily guarded borders in the world. Over the next few months, we will take a few moments to note the major events of the month and point out the locations that people may visit, so that we remember the sacrifices of those who paid the ultimate price. As for a general overview of the war, one may want to visit the Korean War Memorial in downtown Seoul. One part of the building focuses on the war in its phases.



## 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*, and *the Mud and the Mirth: Marine Corps Comics of WWI*. He has 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.





Dol hareubang statue, also known as grandfather stone. Captured by Cristine Smith.

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