

TIPS AND TIDBITS

A fact sheet about your
SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN

Adventure

Walking Adventures International plans and guides walking adventures that combine international travel with walking. Our itineraries blend historic, cultural, and scenic highlights of the regions we're traveling through with walks in the area. Our trips are fast-paced; they are designed as overview tours to expose travelers to as much of the region's significant highlights as we can manage, and still maintain a reasonable daily schedule. Even though most walkers find it easy and natural to enjoy our style of travel, we want to ensure that we've afforded every opportunity for travelers to know what to expect, in advance! Listed below are a series of questions and answers to help you develop accurate expectations of this Adventure and make plans to maximize your enjoyment. Please feel free to call us with any additional questions you have.

Questions & Answers

Q: Do you have more detailed information than is available in the Adventure brochure?

- A: About four weeks before departure, a final packet will be mailed to each participant. This packet will include:
- * Hotel listing (including address and phone information of all hotels)
 - * Traveler List
 - * Daily schedule
 - * Adventure t-shirt & nametag
 - * Adventure map
 - * Reusable luggage tags for first-time travelers

Q: Do I need a passport or visa?

- A: **South Korea is one of an increasing number of countries that requires a passport that does not expire for at least 6 months from the date you leave the country. Japan requires a passport that does not expire for at least 3 months from the date you leave the country.** A passport can usually be obtained by applying at your town's main post office. It generally takes at least six weeks to process, however, so don't delay.

IMPORTANT: Please make a copy of your passport and birth certificate and keep them in your luggage separate from where you keep your passport. In case your passport gets lost, having these copies really speeds up the replacement process.

Neither country requires a visa for the length of time we will be in-country.

Q: Do you have any suggestions to help with flights to South Korea and Japan?

- A: **We have an arrangement with Debbi Custer, a travel agent who is familiar with the South Korea & Japan Adventure. Debbi would be happy to help you make your flight arrangements. She has all of the details for this travel program and would be happy to help you find the best schedule and fare from your hometown into South Korea or Japan. Debbi can be reached at (888) 276-0925 –OR– (503) 231-9507 and email: debbi@wtpdx.com.**

There are two flights within the South Korea itinerary that are included in the program. Airfare from South Korea to Tokyo, Japan, is also included for travelers who are participating in the entire *South Korea & Japan Adventure*.

Other options for booking the international flights include using your own travel agent, or AAA if you are a member, or booking online. If you have access to the Internet, we've discovered several web sites that may be helpful in finding the best fares. To start your planning, www.kayak.com is a good site on which to find flights that are available on the days of travel. For the best fares, we've found it's better to go to the web site of the specific airline serving your home and destination. Often you can leave your e-mail address, and they'll contact you when they have specials flying to cities that interest you most. There are also sites that offer tour planning services and claim to find all the sales and specials. Sites to check out include:

Airline sites:

www.continental.com
www.southwest.com
www.united.com
www.aa.com (American)
www.alaskaair.com
www.usairways.com
www.delta.com

Planning sites:

www.kayak.com
www.travelocity.com
www.expedia.com
www.orbitz.com
www.onetravel.com
www.bestfares.com
www.priceline.com
www.qix.com

MERITS OF DEPARTING EARLY: We encourage you to consider departing for South Korea or Japan a day early (arriving in Seoul, South Korea, on May 5 or into Tokyo, Japan, on May 10). Airline on-time reliability has improved slightly during 2008, but there is still a likelihood of a cancelled flight or missed connection. Starting a trip a day late or without luggage is not the kind of "Adventure" we are promoting. Departing one day early 1) gives you a hedge against missed connections—more time to get to Asia, 2) gives any lost luggage issues an extra day to be resolved before we depart for our next hotel, and 3) gives your system an extra day to recover from jet lag before we begin our action-packed schedule! WAI can help you book the extra hotel night if you give us advance notice.

A word (or two) on jet lag: Much has been theorized

NOTE: Some information is generally true for most of our Adventures. Text in bold represents information that is specific to this Adventure only.

about the best way to fight jet lag. One small booklet we've added to our library is *Jet Smart* by Diana Fairchild. An oversimplified summary of her book would suggest that you:

- 1) eat as little as possible while in transit, avoid alcoholic beverages, and eat high carbohydrate foods if you must eat,
- 2) get up and walk around the plane when you can,
- 3) do isometric exercises (flex and relax your muscles) occasionally during the flight,
- 4) adjust your sleep schedule to the local time as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT: We particularly recommend no's. 2 and 3. Over the years, we've had several travelers who have experienced circulation problems during the Adventure due to the long flight.

Q: What type of hotels will we be in?

A: We use good quality, tourist class, 3-star or better accommodations. In South Korea and Japan, most hotels will be 4-star, full service facilities with restaurants on site, though we will likely eat many of our dinners at local restaurants. When making reservations, we request as many non-smoking rooms as possible. Non-smoking rooms are not always available, but due to standards of cleanliness, we have seldom had complaints in this regard from prior travelers.

Q: What will our walks be like?

A: Walks will provide an insightful blend of rural and nature venues along with city sightseeing. We have been promised IVV stamps for all walks except Nikko, Japan.

The walks in South Korea will be led by a local representative of the walking organization in South Korea. The terrain for the South Korea walks is mostly flat in Seoul and a mix of road and trail surfaces in hilly and coastal areas on the island of Jeju.

We will have a club representative with us on all walks except on the IVV Olympiad days (see right column). Our hosts will be walking enthusiasts, not tourism professionals. We are familiar with the walks in Kyoto and Nara and know that they will not be physically demanding. Tokyo is a basically flat city and should be very easy walking. The walk in Nikko is new and could be more demanding.

Using the American Volkssport Association's (AVA) difficulty rating system of 1 to 5, with 1 representing flat, smooth walk routes and 5 representing very difficult hikes, these walks are rated between 1 and 3, as listed in the Adventure brochure. Here is the description of ratings used by the AVA:

1. An easy walk on pavement or well-maintained trail with no significant hills. Probably suitable for wheelchairs and strollers.
2. A moderately easy walk, may be on pavement or on trails. No significant difficulty with hills. May not be suitable for wheelchairs and strollers.
3. A moderate walk in any setting with some difficult terrain, one or two substantial hills and/or steps. Strollers and wheelchairs questionable.
4. A more difficult walk. Most likely in a natural setting with poorly maintained paths and steeper or hilly inclines. Not

likely to be wheelchair or stroller accessible. Participants with certain health problems should take caution.

5. A very difficult walk. All in rough fields or woods. Many steep hills or high altitude trails, or very rough uneven terrain, steep or unstable inclines. Not suitable for any person who is not in good health

If you are walking for IVV credit, you may use the same event and distance books for this Adventure that you use here in the States. We will have a supply of extra event and distance books along if your books get filled up en route.

In planning the program, we allow 3 to 3¼ hours to complete a standard 10 km (6.2 mile) walk, unless the walk is intended to allow for shopping and sightseeing time. Of course, none of the walks are mandatory. If you need to take a day off, or don't feel like doing the entire walk, just let your WAI guide know and he'll help you make plans to do a partial walk or find some other interesting things to do.

Carrying a water bottle on the walks is highly recommended. If you often use a walking stick at home, we would advise that you also make plans to have your walking stick with you in South Korea and Japan.

11th IVV Olympiad: We will be attending the 11th IVV Olympiad in the Fuji Five Lakes area south of Tokyo and north of Mt. Fuji. The walks and events are conducted in the proximity of two of the five lakes: Lake Kawaguchi and Lake Yamanaka. Current literature from the Japan Walking Association indicates that there will be several walks plus bicycle and swimming events at each of the two venues: Lakes Kawaguchi and Yamanaka.

We are still awaiting data on shuttles that may be available between the two lakes but for now, there appears to be plenty of activities available at the Lake Yamanaka site where our hotel is located. If shuttles are provided, WAI walkers will have access to both venues, though it is doubtful that anyone is capable of exhausting the event options at Yamanaka!

Your Adventure price includes the Olympiad registration fee, which provides you with the 4-day admission to the Olympiad. Upon arrival at the Olympiad site, each walker will decide what events they would like to participate in, including walk routes ranging from 5 to 42 kilometers, cycling events of 25 and 27 km, and swimming or aqua-walking events. Each walker will register for the events of their choice on-site and pay the event credit fee at that time. Event fees have not yet been published, but we expect them to be comparable to fees in the USA, which are \$3 per walk. Marathon fees will likely be higher.

Past experience with Olympiads tell us that managing events of this magnitude with little previous experience can produce a certain level of happy chaos. The Japanese Walking Association, however, is well-practiced at hosting International Marching League events that attract in excess of 30,000 walkers per day, and they are well organized. We are ex-

pecting quality events that are clearly marked.

NOTE: There will be drinking water along the walk routes, but walkers are expected to BYOC (bring your own cup). A collapsible drinking cup might be a good addition to your packing list.

Q: Will the walks be sanctioned volkswalks?

A: As mentioned above, we expect IVV stamps for all walks except for Nikko, Japan.

Q: What is a volkswalk?

A: Volkssport is a club activity that began in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland in 1968. There are four primary activities: walking, biking, swimming, and cross country skiing. Walking is, by far, the most popular and well developed. A volkswalk is walked at a steady pace through a scenic and/or historic area over a pre-marked route (usually 10 km, which is 6.2 miles). Normally, it is hosted by a local group of volunteer club members. It is noncompetitive, and aims to involve people of all ages. Everyone who participates is declared a WINNER! Presently, there are walks in all 50 states and more than 30 countries worldwide.

Q: What type of footwear should I bring?

A: Two pairs of walking shoes or boots are recommended. The first pair often gets wet or muddy and needs a day off. The increase in the number of light-weight hiking boots is making them a more attractive and practical option. We believe a quality pair of lightweight hiking boots is a good investment for a traveling walker and, if water-proof, can even eliminate the need for a 2nd pair of walking shoes.

Q: Is the water drinkable in the countries we're visiting? Are there any health precautions I should take?

A: South Korea: It is NOT recommended to drink water from the tap in South Korea. Water that is served for meals has been purified and is safe to drink. Japan: Water from the tap is safe to drink in Japan.

One of the realities of foreign travel is that we encounter different bugs and bacteria than we do here at home. Another reality is that group travel involves sharing a lot of things — including germs. As a result, cold nasties can quickly travel through the bus looking for weak immune systems to attack. There are several supplements and behaviors that can make a significant difference in your ability to resist these bugs and preserve a healthy Adventure, including the following:

- * Use Vitamin C, Echinacea, or grapefruit seed extract beginning a week before the trip and during the trip to boost your immune system (check with you doctor for possible allergies to Echinacea).
- * Maintain the use of a good multi-vitamin both before and during the trip.
- * Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently (carrying a waterless hand cleaner is highly recommended).
- * If/when you cough, cover your mouth as completely as possible to avoid the spread of germs in consideration of fellow travelers.
- * Avoid touching your face and rubbing your eyes.
- * Be sensitive to your health and particularly your need for rest.

Guard against fatigue by monitoring your participation in trip activities and allowing yourself necessary "down time."

Q: What shots are recommended?

A: No shots are required but you may wish to consult a physician for the immunizations they advise if you are joining us in South Korea.

Different sources provide varying recommendations on this topic. For South Korea, some sources recommend hepatitis A and B vaccinations in addition to the general health vaccines, and some sources refer to the presence of malaria in the Demilitarized Zone near the border with North Korea. For Japan, only general health immunizations are usually recommended (tetanus-diphtheria, measles, mumps, and rubella).

We are not qualified, however, to give medical advice, so you will need to consult a medical professional. Be aware that many doctors use the Center for Disease Control as the authoritative source for shot recommendations. This information is very broad in scope, grouping together entire regions and recommending immunizations based on the assumption that travelers are visiting all parts of a given area.

We have found travel health clinics to be more reliable sources of information in this matter than general practitioners and the Center for Disease Control. You can find travel health clinics in the yellow pages or online. Two examples are: www.ushealthworks.com and www.passporthealthusa.com. Remember to take your Adventure brochure with you so you can show the medical staff where we are traveling.

Q: How many people do you accept on an Adventure?

A: The South Korea Adventure will have around 25 walkers and we will be close to 40 in Japan. Normally, WAI closes an Adventure at 30 travelers. We make exceptions, however, for Olympiad and AVA Convention tours due to the fact that these trips are one-time only events.

Q: What is the average age of your groups?

A: Most of our travelers fall between 50 and 70 years of age. This seems to be the age bracket that has the time and means to travel. However, we always have travelers that fall outside that range, from the 20's up into the 80's. Walkers are characteristically great traveling companions — positive, cheerful, and appreciative of the opportunity to see the world.

Q: What is the split between men and women?

A: One of the realities of life is that there are more women on the planet than men. Another is that they tend to outlive their spouses. As a result, we do have more women on the trips than men. The percentage of women on the trip can run anywhere from 60 to 80%. We have quite a few couples, a lot of women traveling together or singly, and the occasional single male traveler. We like to see this ratio as even as possible and are always looking for a few more good men!

Q: What if I don't have a roommate?

A: It's always best to register for the trip with your own roommate. Though we cannot guarantee a roommate, we do offer to help match travelers up with others needing roommates. We provide contact information for potential roommates and allow travelers to contact each other and make their own decisions.

Q: What will the motorcoaches be like?

A: We will be traveling in several different coaches but will not be spending a significant amount of time on the bus. We normally employ a seat rotation system but do not plan to use this system in South Korea and Japan due to the limited amount of time on the bus and the lack of continuity with any one bus. We do ask that you "rotate" on a voluntary basis so that everyone gets a chance to be near the front of the bus.

Q: How much money should I take along?

A: The Korean currency is the Won. The rate of exchange at the time of this printing is about \$1 = 1400 Won. The Japanese currency is the Yen. The rate of exchange at the time of printing is about \$1 = 90 Yen.

Over the past few years, ATM's have become the most practical means of managing cash needs when traveling. In Asia, however, using cash machines (ATM's) is not a foregone conclusion. It's been several years since we've traveled in Japan and Korea, so we are relying on stale history, asking our in-country partners, and doing internet research. It appears that in both countries, ATMs are available, but will not consistently work with "international" cards. The best places to use ATMs appear to be at the airports and in the big cities where tourists are more common.

With that in mind, we propose the following:

Plan A: Bring along a supply of US dollars that will meet your needs for both countries. Keep those dollars in reserve as much as possible and use the ATM's as much as possible. ATM's generally give the best exchange rates. If/when you can't find ATM's when you need them, use your US dollars and exchange them at hotels or exchange offices. Hotel rates are not great, but if you are only using the hotel to "tide you over" until you can find an ATM, the exchange rate difference will not amount to much on the small amount you are exchanging.

Plan B: Purchase the foreign currency you expect to need for the entire trip here at home before leaving. The exchange rate at home is generally not as good as in-country. However, the hassle factor will be lower. You'll have your money before you go and will not be in search of ATM's along the route. Bring an additional \$200—\$300 cash as reserve.

Cash Needed:

South Korea: Since all meals are included in South Korea, you will "need" very little cash here. A minimum which should cover only beverages that are not included and a postcard or two along the way would be \$50. We recommend, however, that you bring no less than \$100 (140,000 Korean Won) for

the South Korea segment. Of course, shopping will increase this amount. Many travelers take double or triple this amount.

Japan: Lunches are not included in Japan and everything tends to be a bit more expensive here. For our 10 days in-country, we therefore recommend \$20 per day, or \$200 minimum (18,000 Japanese Yen). Again, it is wise to pad this minimum recommendation.

Because we are depending more on cash than we usually do, we need to place an even greater importance upon safeguards such as money belts and discreet handling of currency in public places.

Keypads on ATM's tend to be only in numbers, so be sure that your PIN number is given to you by your bank in numerals and not letters.

Q: What type of clothing is appropriate?

A: Casual tourist attire will be the norm for the entire trip. Most of the time, we will be dressed in our walking clothes. Our own strategy is to take two or three pairs of quick-dry pants with zip-off legs along with several quick-dry t-shirts and nylon or tri-blend travel shirts. We supplement this with a quality set of breathable raingear (e.g. Goretex) which we also wear for warmth when the temperatures are a bit cool. Additionally, we also take along a light jacket and/or silk or high performance fabric undershirts to use as additional layers. In any case, we have found that packing lightweight layers of clothing is the most practical strategy.

You may wish to bring along a set of casual non-walking clothes (slacks or nice jeans for the men and a skirt or dress for the ladies) for the odd occasion when you feel like wearing something other than walking attire or the couple of evenings when we have special dinners.

Weather:

Weather should be pleasant for our visit to South Korea and Japan in May—looks like great walking weather! As always, be prepared for rain. Here are the average high and low temperatures in Fahrenheit over the past few years.

	High	Low
Seoul	71	51
Tokyo	69	59
Kyoto	75	59

Other Important Information

MEALS:

All breakfasts and dinners and most lunches are included in the trip price. Breakfasts will be mostly American-style buffets, and dinners will be a blend of local cuisine and western food. You will definitely get your fill of Asian-style fare, but may be surprised at the variety and quality of the food. Chopsticks are the standard eating utensils but western-style cutlery will also be available.

CALLING/MAILING HOME:

Calling home from overseas can be complicated. Internet cafes and business centers in hotels that have internet are

usually a more practical way to stay in touch with loved ones back home.

LAUNDRY:

It is highly unlikely that you will find self-service laundry facilities in any of the places we visit. Most of our hotels will have laundry service available for a fee, which can be quite substantial. We have two laundry strategies: 1) pack a few feet of clothes line and do your laundry in your room, or 2) pack tightly and bring enough essentials so that you don't need to do laundry until you return home. Because of the luggage restrictions mentioned below, we recommend you travel light and do your laundry in your room.

ELECTRICITY:

Household current in Asia varies. South Korea uses both 110 (with American-style plug-ins) and 220 voltage (with European-style round 2-prong plug-ins). Japan runs on 100 volts AC, similar to the U.S., and uses our 2-prong plug-in.

TIME ZONES:

Both South Korea and Japan are on the same time zone, which is Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) plus 9 hours. They do not have a daylight savings time adjustment which means that they will be 16 hours ahead of the Pacific Time Zone and 13 hours ahead of the East Coast Time Zone during the month of May. When it is noon in Seoul or Tokyo, it will be 8 pm on the prior day in Seattle and 11 pm on the prior day in New York.

GRATUITIES:

Gratuities for group meals and lodging are included in the cost of the Adventure. In addition, the Adventure price also includes the tip for the driver and any local guides that serve us.

LUGGAGE:

As you will notice in the General Tour Conditions sheet originally inserted with your Adventure brochure, we request that you limit your luggage to one suitcase per person plus carry-on type luggage. Porterage will likely be provided at most hotels but will be accompanied by the expectation of the usual tip from the bellman. Most airlines are now limiting travelers to 1 piece of checked luggage. Make sure you check on the weight limitations of the airlines you are using to get to South Korea and Japan.

CULTURE SHOCK:

Since North American culture is linked closely with our common European heritage, South Korea and Japan presents us with a fascinating opportunity to see into a very different culture. There are aspects of this Adventure that will amaze and delight you. Undoubtedly there will be other aspects that will confound and frustrate you. We recommend that you pick up a travel guide like *Lonely Planet* or *Fodor's* and become aware of some of the differences you can expect to encounter.

Toilets: The traditional Asian toilet is not what they laughingly refer to as a "throne" (our style). Rather it is a fixture (a.k.a. squatty potty) lying flush with the ground that the user must squat on their haunches to utilize. Western-style toilets will be available, of course,

in all the hotels and in most places we visit. You may find yourself, at some point in the trip, however, faced with the uncomfortable decision of either using a squatty potty or waiting until the next opportunity to use a throne. In all fairness, we have to agree with the Asian argument that squatty potties may be more hygienic than thrones in that a squatty potty requires no part of your body to make contact with the fixture (unless you count your feet on the floor).

In addition, toilet paper is not provided in public toilets. Rather the user is expected to BYOTP (bring your own toilet paper). Not to worry, however, toilet tissue is available from many outlets, including vending machines in many Japanese restrooms.

Crowds: Though traveling as a group provides a certain degree of insulation from the masses of humanity on this continent, you will certainly feel this unique characteristic of Asia at times during our travels. You may find that our hosts have different societal norms with regard to personal space. In Japan, we'll be taking a train several times, so you may feel the crush of the crowds, which will be part of the thrill of the Adventure.

TRAVELER'S PERSPECTIVE:

As with most things in life, the benefit you receive from this experience will depend to a large degree on the frame of mind you have at the outset. If you've not traveled outside the U.S. before, there are a few things you should be aware of:

- Though we attempt to eliminate it as much as possible, travel always contains an element of uncertainty. Being ready to adjust will enhance your experience.
- To varying degrees, hotels, food, and local customs are different in other countries. This can be uncomfortable...and exciting!
- Though we continue to look for ways to slow the pace of our "Adventures," we still believe in providing a full day's opportunities for our travelers. On some days, we spend a significant amount of time on the bus.
- Group travel, by its nature, involves giving up a certain degree of individual convenience. Though we strive for added flexibility for the individual, much of the time we all need to be "headed in the same direction."

We hope we've covered most of your questions. If not, feel free to contact us and we'll be glad to fill in the gaps. We look forward to walking South Korea & Japan with you!



"Come walk with me!"

Walking Adventures
INTERNATIONAL

PO Box 871000 • Vancouver, WA 98687-1000 • USA
(800) 779-0353 • FAX (360) 260-1131

Email: fun@walkingadventures.com

Web site: www.walkingadventures.com

