SLEEP

US Travellers: How to Plan a Seoul Walking and Jjimjilbang Reset Week — K-ETA/e-Arrival, Medicines Rules (MFDS Permits), Vaccines, Jet Lag, Sauna Safety and Coaching (Planning Guide)

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Short answer: Seoul suits a reset week built around walking, hills and riverside paths, an easy subway, early nights, simple Korean food and time in a jjimjilbang (a Korean bathhouse with hot pools and heated rooms). The things that most often trip up US travellers are paperwork and medicines. South Korea controls some medicines that are common in the US, including some ADHD stimulants, and they may need approval before you travel. Plan those, plus jet lag and safe sauna use, before you book. Talk to your own doctor if you have a medical condition or take regular medicines.

This is a planning guide, not medical advice. We do not sell or promote medical or cosmetic treatments abroad.

Entry and paperwork

Entry rules change, so check official sources shortly before you travel. As of this guide, the Korean Embassy in the US says US citizens are temporarily exempt from the K-ETA (Korea Electronic Travel Authorization) for short visits through **31 December 2026**, and travellers who skip K-ETA must complete an online **e-Arrival Card** before arrival ([Korean Embassy notice](https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/us-en/brd/m_4500/view.do?seq=761106); [e-Arrival Card](https://www.e-arrivalcard.go.kr/); [K-ETA](https://www.k-eta.go.kr/)). Use only the official government sites, and watch out for look-alike sites that charge fees. Make sure your passport is valid for your whole stay. Consider enrolling in the State Department's [STEP programme](https://step.state.gov/) so the embassy can reach you in an emergency. Check whether your travel insurance covers medical care abroad, because US health plans often cover little overseas.

Medicines: the part people get wrong

CDC's [South Korea traveller page](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/south-korea) warns that some prescription drugs may be illegal in South Korea and advises checking with the Korean embassy before you travel. The US Embassy in Seoul has a page on [bringing controlled medicines](https://kr.usembassy.gov/services-controlled-substance/). Some medicines, including some stimulant ADHD medicines, may need approval from Korea's Ministry of Food and Drug Safety ([MFDS](https://www.mfds.go.kr/eng/index.do)) before you arrive. Allow plenty of time, and check the current process and quantity limits on official pages. Practical steps: 1. Ask your prescriber or pharmacist which of your medicines might be controlled abroad, including sleep aids, strong painkillers and some cold medicines. 2. Check the embassy, MFDS and [Korea Customs Service](https://www.customs.go.kr/english/main.do) pages, and apply early if a permit is needed. 3. Keep medicines in original labelled packaging with a copy of the prescription and a doctor's letter in English. 4. Carry medicines in your hand luggage, and only bring what you need for the trip. Do not plan to buy prescription medicines, injectables or "wellness" products in Korea to bring home. US rules on importing medicines apply on your return.

Vaccines and health checks

CDC recommends that travellers be up to date on routine vaccines, and lists hepatitis A and hepatitis B for most travellers to South Korea. Japanese encephalitis vaccine may be considered for some longer or rural trips, and there is a limited seasonal malaria risk in some rural northern areas near the border, including the DMZ, which is not usually part of a Seoul city reset ([CDC South Korea page](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/south-korea)). Book a travel-health visit four to six weeks before you go, especially if you are pregnant, older or have a long-term condition.

Jet lag

Seoul is 13 to 17 hours ahead of the continental US, depending on your home time zone and daylight saving. That is a big shift. CDC's jet lag guidance ([archived CDC Yellow Book page](https://web.archive.org/web/20261013120110/https://www.cdc.gov/yellow-book/hcp/travel-air-sea/jet-lag-disorder.htm covers shifting sleep before travel, timing daylight exposure and staying hydrated. Plan the first two days as light walking days. Ask your doctor before using any sleep medicine or melatonin, especially with other medicines.

Jjimjilbang and sauna safety

Jjimjilbang usually have gender-separated bathing areas, plus shared heated rooms where everyone wears the provided clothes. Rules on tattoos, photos and etiquette vary by venue, so read the signs and follow staff instructions. Long-term observational data from Finland link frequent sauna bathing with lower cardiovascular and all-cause mortality ([Laukkanen et al., 2015](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25705824/)), but that is an association in one population, not proof that a sauna week improves health. Safety basics: - Start with short sessions, cool down between rounds and drink water. - Avoid alcohol before and during bathing, and do not bathe straight after a heavy meal. - If you are pregnant, have heart disease, low or high blood pressure, or take medicines that affect heat tolerance, ask your doctor before using hot rooms or hot pools. - Leave at once if you feel dizzy, faint, nauseated or unwell. - Clients on GLP-1 medicines who are eating and drinking less may tire faster in heat; plan water and a snack, and ask the prescriber about heat if unsure.

Building the reset week

- **Days 1–2:** short walks in daylight, an early night, and a light meal. Riverside paths along the Han are flat and easy. - **Days 3–5:** longer walks, for example along the Cheonggyecheon stream or up one of the city's hill trails, plus one jjimjilbang visit with short rounds. Add two short strength sessions in your room: sit-to-stands, push-ups against a wall, split squats and bridges. - **Days 6–7:** a day trip or a long walk, a slower evening, and a plan for the flight home. Simple Korean meals often include rice, soup, vegetables, tofu, fish or meat. Many dishes are salty or spicy, so adjust if your doctor has asked you to limit salt. Korea's tourism board ([VisitKorea](https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/)) has walking-route ideas.

Be cautious about medical add-ons

Seoul is known for cosmetic clinics and "wellness" packages, including IV drips, injections and fast-track treatments. This guide does not recommend any of them. If you are considering a medical or cosmetic procedure abroad, discuss it with your own doctor first, check the clinician's credentials, and understand what follow-up care you will have at home. FDA's [health fraud page](https://www.fda.gov/consumers/health-fraud-scams) explains warning signs for "miracle" claims.

When to get help

Chest pain, fainting, breathlessness, severe heat illness, or any serious symptom: seek emergency care at

once. In South Korea, the emergency number for ambulance and fire is 119. Keep your insurer's 24-hour number and your hotel address in Korean on your phone.

After you get home

Expect a few days of jet lag going back east to west. Keep the walking habit going: schedule two strength sessions and a daily walk for the first week home, and note what worked so you can repeat it.

How a coach can help

A coach can help you plan the habit side of a reset week: a daily walking target, a sleep plan for jet lag, simple strength routines and a post-trip plan to keep the habits going at home. Coaches do not give medical, medicine or travel-medicine advice; they refer those questions to your doctor and pharmacist. Scope reference: [NBHWC scope of practice](https://nbhwc.org/scope-of-practice/).

Want to coach this? LetsGo Academy

Start free with [Level 1](/academy), or create your coach profile at /coach. Level 3 (US$300) covers evidence quality and scope, and Levels 4 and 5 (US$500 each) cover working alongside clinicians and case work. We do not promise income or client results. *Education only. Not medical advice. LetsGo Academy is not a licence to practise.*

Safety note

If you have a medical condition, are pregnant, or take prescription medicines, check with your own doctor before booking heat, cold, cryotherapy, hyperbaric, or float sessions.

Disclaimer

Education only. Not medical advice. No business listed here has paid for placement.

Confirm services, prices and supervision with the provider directly. This guide is education only.