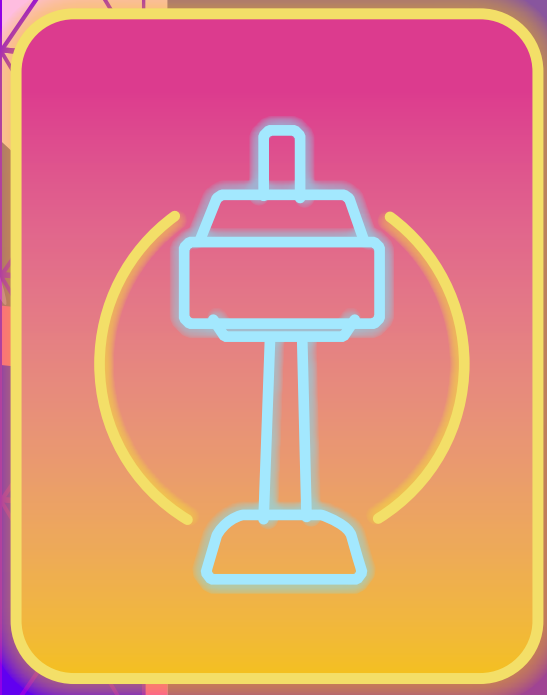


# SAWASDEE



{CITY GUIDE}

## THIS IS SEOUL

SOUTH KOREA

1

**Catch the  
K-Wave**  
*Pop Culture*

2

**Find your  
coffee vibe**  
*Café Hopping*

3

**Korean cuisine  
with a twist**  
*Fine & Fusion*



## CURATOR'S NOTE

Seoul is a city of contradictions – enduring traditions and constant evolution. The ancient outlines stand out proudly, but looming over the royal palaces and old city wall is a much newer Seoul – an ever-evolving landscape of architectural landmarks, convenient transportation networks and park space. It can be hard to keep up with the constant changes. While the country's tallest building, Lotte World Tower, was completed just six years ago, the Hyundai Global Business Center may end up being even higher when construction ends. Meanwhile, the gigantic former US Army garrison in central Seoul is steadily being converted into green space for the public. While it's guaranteed that the old Seoul will be honored in museums and cultural reenactments, it's just as certain the new Seoul will continue growing more modern, fashion-forward and globalized.

– *Matthew Crawford*

Ancient traditions  
and ambitious urban  
development co-  
exist in the South  
Korean capital







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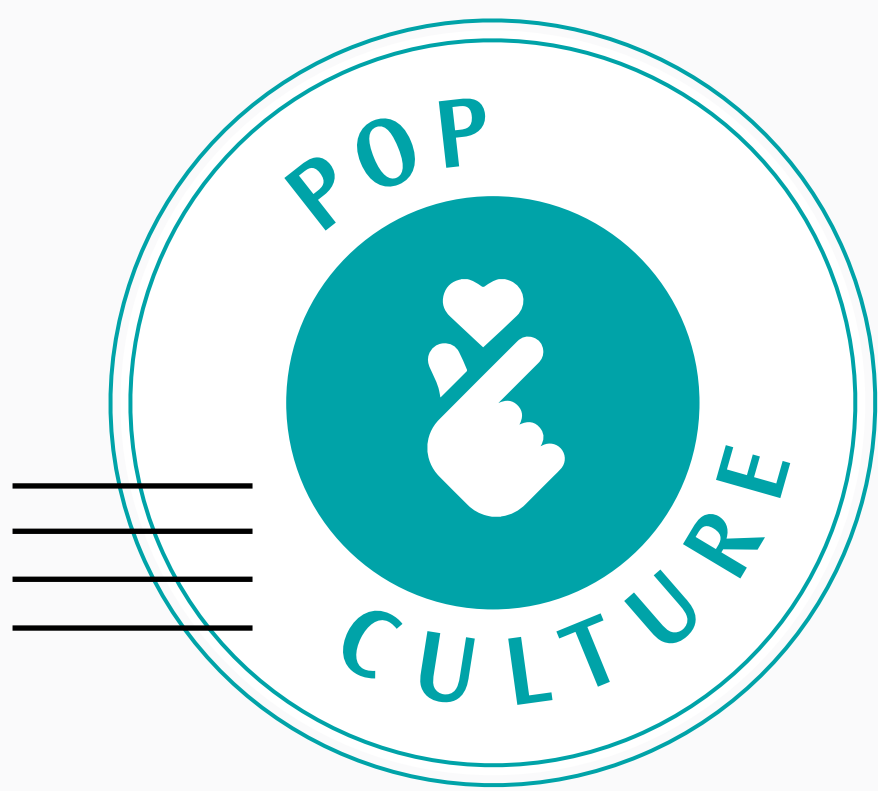
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## IN THIS ISSUE

When it comes to dominating the global contemporary culture, South Koreans are going from strength to strength. Here's what to enjoy when you are in the capital of entertainment



### CATCH THE K-WAVE

Revel in your K-pop and K-series fantasies at these spots



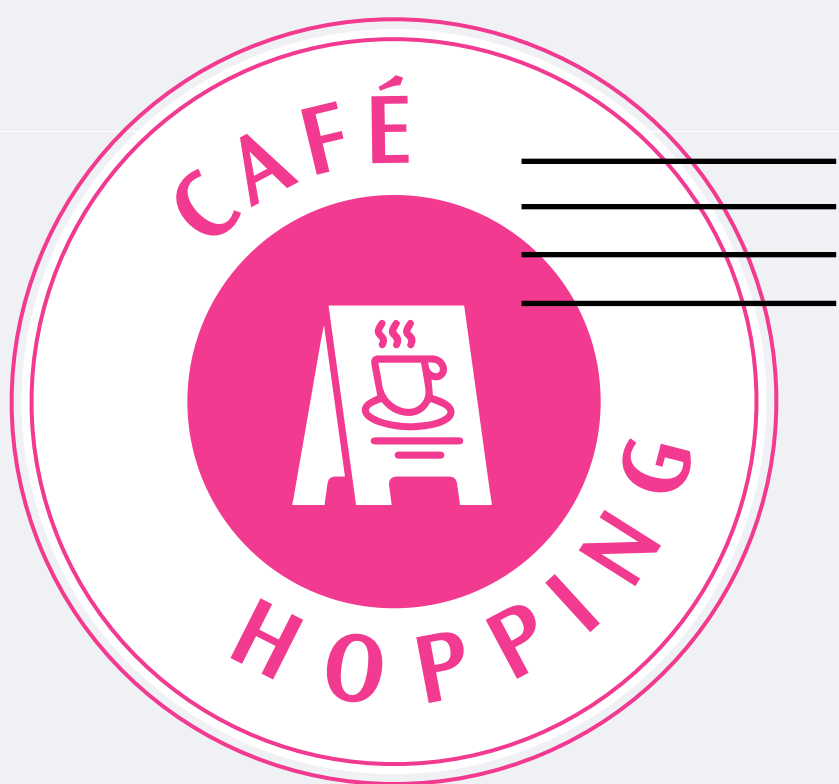
### Seoul's stunning structures

An expert recommends the top old and contemporary landmarks to check out



### Ones to watch

These Korean film talents are a force to be reckoned with



### FIND YOUR COFFEE VIBE

Visit these cafés for their striking concepts and divine coffee



### A day in Seoul by Jangmin Jangster Choi

Pointers from the founder of the subculture magazine VISLA



### The trendiest spots on Garosu-gil

A guide to Seoul's coolest neighborhood



### KOREAN CUISINE WITH A TWIST

Must-visit upscale restaurants for a traditional or fusion Korean experience



### Where to stay

Modern stays with stunning views of nature and tree-lined streets







# CATCH THE K-WAVE

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Seoul is the beating heart of the Korean Wave, where all of Korea's major entertainment companies and broadcasters are based. Visit these points of interest linked to larger-than-life idols and actors



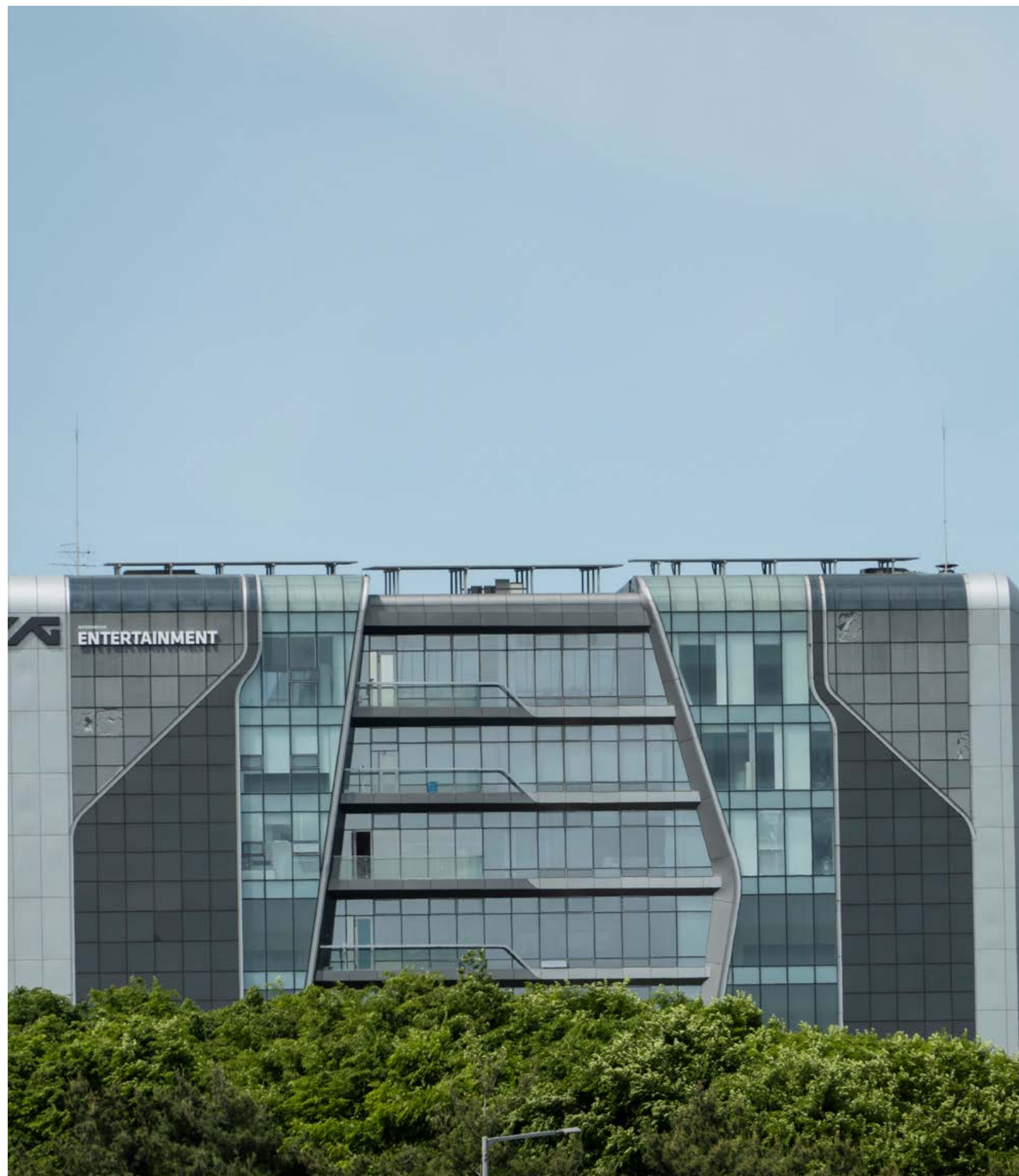




## K-STAR ROAD

The K-Star Road is a pilgrimage trail for fans of K-pop groups, including Super Junior, SHINee, Girls' Generation, Kara and BTS. By following the roughly 1km route through the Apgujeong area, you'll encounter mascot statues representing artists, as well as agency headquarters and cafés and other spots where idols have dropped by.

PHOTOS BY KOREA TOURISM ORGANIZATION (K-STAR ROAD),  
SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (YG ENTERTAINMENT)



## YG ENTERTAINMENT

The YG Entertainment headquarters, near Hapjeong Station, is an architectural attraction of special interest to fans of BigBang, Winner, Blackpink and others. The building looks like a futuristic stereo, with curving glass and aluminum panels as well as solar paneling. The building was designed by the Dutch architecture firm UNStudio and completed in 2021.







## DIGITAL MEDIA CITY

Digital Media City, a hub of Korea's biggest broadcasting companies, is the fertile breeding ground of Korea's popular dramas. Some dramas have even been filmed in this neighborhood of skyscrapers, open plazas and public art. Visit around noon, and you'll rub shoulders with scriptwriters, drama producers and others on their lunch break.

PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (DIGITAL MEDIA CITY,  
KOREA TOURISM ORGANIZATION (STARFIELD COEX MALL))



## STARFIELD COEX MALL

Outside the Starfield COEX Mall is a monument dedicated to Psy's megahit song *Gangnam Style*. Scenes in the music video (still one of the most-viewed on YouTube) were shot outside and within the iconic mall. The monument — a giant pair of hands doing the horsedays movement — can be reached by walking straight from Exit 6 of Samseong Station.







# DEOKSU PALACE STONE WALL PATH

The Deoksu Palace Stone Wall Path, running alongside Deoksu Palace, has served as a background in countless Korean Wave works, including the K-drama *Goblin* and the movie *Sunny*. Even a K-pop music video has been filmed here. But be careful: a local superstition has it that couples who walk beside this wall are destined for a break-up.

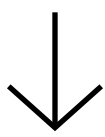
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## ROMANTIC SETTINGS

eTour’s 1-Day K-Drama Tour packs various attractions into a full day of sightseeing, from 9am to 6pm. It includes shooting locations for *Descendants of the Sun*, *Goblin* and *My Love from the Star* and concludes with a cable car ride up to Seoul N Tower.



**Even more essential stops for K-Wave fans at [Sawasdee.thaiairways.com](http://Sawasdee.thaiairways.com)**







## Seoul's stunning structures

German-Korean hanok architect Daniel Tändler recommends five special buildings to see in Seoul

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### **Joseon treasures**

Start with Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) architecture. Changdeok Palace is one of Seoul's two main palaces and was recently reconnected to the royal shrine Jongmyo (previously cut off by a main road built during the Japanese occupation). The palace is considered more "Korean" as it diverges more from the Chinese counterparts. It's less symmetrical and harmonizes more with the geography. The ancestral shrine Jongmyo is arguably the most elegant of all traditional Korean buildings.

.....

### **Jangmyeon Gaok**

Move forward in time to the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945). The owner of this small residential building was Chang Myon, who went on to serve as prime minister after liberation from colonial rule. It was erected in 1937, during the final years of the Japanese occupation and combines traditional Japanese and Korean architecture with Western influences.





## Sewoon Sangga

Sewoon Sangga was built from 1967-1972, during the days of military rule. It is a noteworthy Brutalist megastructure in the heart of Seoul, stretching between the Jongno and Jung districts. It is one of the first structures in Korea with both residential and commercial units, stretching over 1km and is probably one of the biggest buildings of its kind in the world.

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## Dongdaemun Design Plaza

Dongdaemun Design Plaza was designed by Zaha Hadid and represents Seoul's ambition to become an international metropolis. To build it, the city sacrificed the historic Dongdaemun Stadium. As with all of Hadid's works, the DDP stands out from its surroundings with its futuristic curved shape. It's worth keeping up-to-date on all the events and exhibitions taking place here.

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## Lotte World Tower

This is currently the highest building on the Korean Peninsula. Designed by Kohn Pederson Fox, it prides itself on having 123 stories and an additional six underground. The need for such extreme buildings is debatable, but the observation platform at the top offers breathtaking views of Seoul and is worth a visit.





## LIGHT IT UP

The Seoul International Fireworks Festival happens in early October, illuminating the night sky (and the Han River) with blazing colours. The event draws over 1 million attendees, so arrive early at the riverside or at one of the river's islands. Yeouido Hangang River Park has the best views.



## Star gazing

South Korea is riding a cultural high point, with Oscars in cinema (*Parasite* and *Minari*) and Emmys in television (*Squid Game*). Their success streak is far from over as a new set of rising stars has emerged to carry it forward



### Park Eun-bin

The actress won the Grand Prize at the 2023 Baeksang Arts Awards for her performance in *Extraordinary Attorney Woo*, a Netflix show about an autistic lawyer. Last fall, she held fan meeting events throughout East and Southeast Asia. Viewers can look forward to seeing her in *Road to Boston*, a Korean film to be released this September.





## Na Hong-jin

It was recently announced that the Korean director will direct a movie named *Hope* starring the married actors Michael Fassbender and Alicia Vikander. His terrifying film *The Wailing* (2016) first screened at Cannes, and he collaborated with Thai filmmaker Banjong Pisanthanakun for *The Medium* (2021). Several of Na's films are on Netflix.

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## Young Mazino

Before the Korean-American actor auditioned for the 10-episode series *Beef*, he was a complete unknown in the acting world. To play Paul Cho in the series, which starts with a road rage incident, Mazino had to get in serious shape, and his new muscles have even caught the attention of *Men's Health* magazine. He is currently looking forward to the second season of *Beef* on Netflix.





## KING OF THE HILL

At the top of Nak Mountain, which is only 125m high, is Naksan Park. This is a splendid spot for taking in city views and walking along the well-preserved city wall, which is boldly illuminated at night. It's no wonder that scenes from several Korean dramas have been filmed in Naksan Park. The best way up is through the colorful, photogenic Ihwa Mural Village.







# FIND YOUR COFFEE VIBE

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Seoul's coffee scene boasts cafés on every block, with drink options including flat whites and Einspänner. Global players have moved in, but Korean chains and small independent shops are thriving too







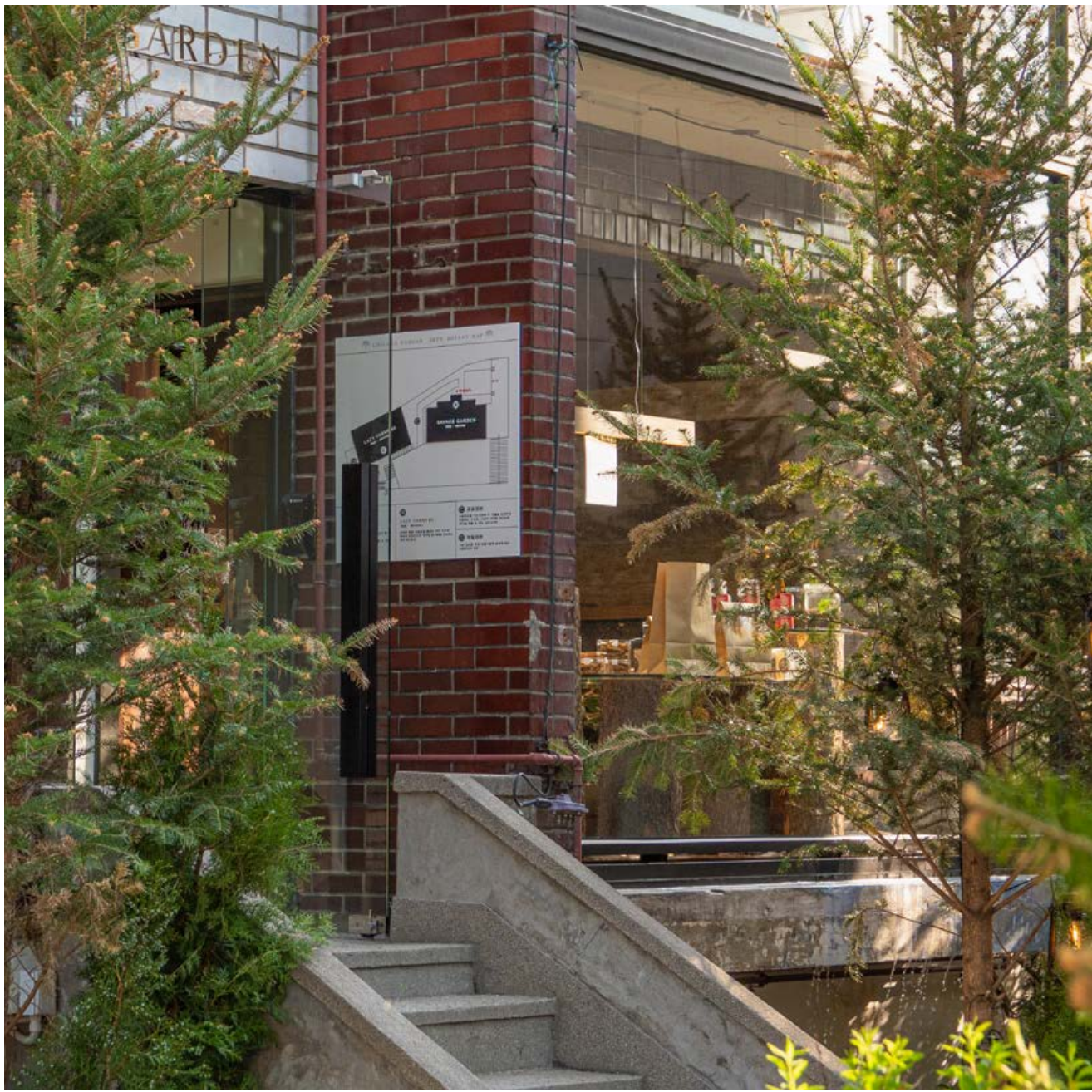
## ANTHRACITE COFFEE

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Located in the trendy Hapjeong area, this café led the trend of partially refurnishing an industrial space to create a cool, atmospheric café. The building was once used as a shoe factory — there are still winches outside and a conveyor belt inside. Three other branches have sprung up in the Seoul area.







## SAVAGE GARDEN

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Located just below the forested slopes of Nam Mountain, the café has a remarkable nature-inspired interior, with a seed collection on one wall and an indoor pond. Its menu is completely vegan, with such drinks as sesame cream oat latte and treats like mugwort brownies. Be sure to take a stroll in the vibrant garden outside.



PHOTOS BY SAVAGE GARDEN







## COFFEE HANYAKBANG

This former traditional Korean apothecary is hidden in a tight alley downtown, near Cheonggye Stream. The building's history is well-preserved, with all sorts of interesting nooks to sit in and design elements to admire, including a tank of long-tailed white carp. The coffee is hand-dripped. For desserts, step right across the alley to their partner shop Hyemindang.







## OSULLOC TEA HOUSE BUKCHON

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This sleek landmark in the Bukchon area of traditional Korean houses specializes in green tea drinks, with the tea leaves harvested from its farm on Jeju Island. Head to the Tea Atelier for a personalized tea blend service or try some non-alcoholic tea cocktails at Bar Sulloc on the second level.







## BEAN BROTHERS

For serious coffee lovers, this café brings in different single-origin beans each month and provides detailed tasting notes for each. Its treats are also hard to resist. It has seven branches in Seoul and nearby cities, including one in the mall D-Cube City and another in the elegant food court linked to the Express Bus Terminal.



**More cool cafés around the world at**  
**[Sawasdee.thaiairways.com](http://Sawasdee.thaiairways.com)**







# One day in Seoul by Jangmin Jangster Choi

The founder of the subculture magazine VISLA reveals the hippest spots in Seoul

**10am**

Go for a jog near Banpo Bridge, along the Han River. This is the best way to refresh oneself in this gigantic city.

**1pm**

Lunch at Halmaejip, a less-visited spot in northern Seoul. Historically, northern Seoul was where cultured, artistic people lived. Seochon and Buam-dong are good places to experience high-quality food, beverages and art.

**4pm**

Shopping at Kozel n Ants for vintage fashion. It's located right next to Nakwon Musical Instrument Arcade, in an old part of Seoul. You can purchase many vintage goods and will love the interior.

**7pm**

Drinking at a bar in Itaewon, considered to be the most authentic area in Seoul. Quest is a bar with good-quality music, such as soul, funk and Detroit house. If you love records, this is a must-visit.

**11pm**

Clubbing at Cakeshop, one of the legendary clubs in Itaewon. Cakeshop is the home of the underground club scene. All the energetic clubbers who are looking for new types of music head here.





# Garosu-gil

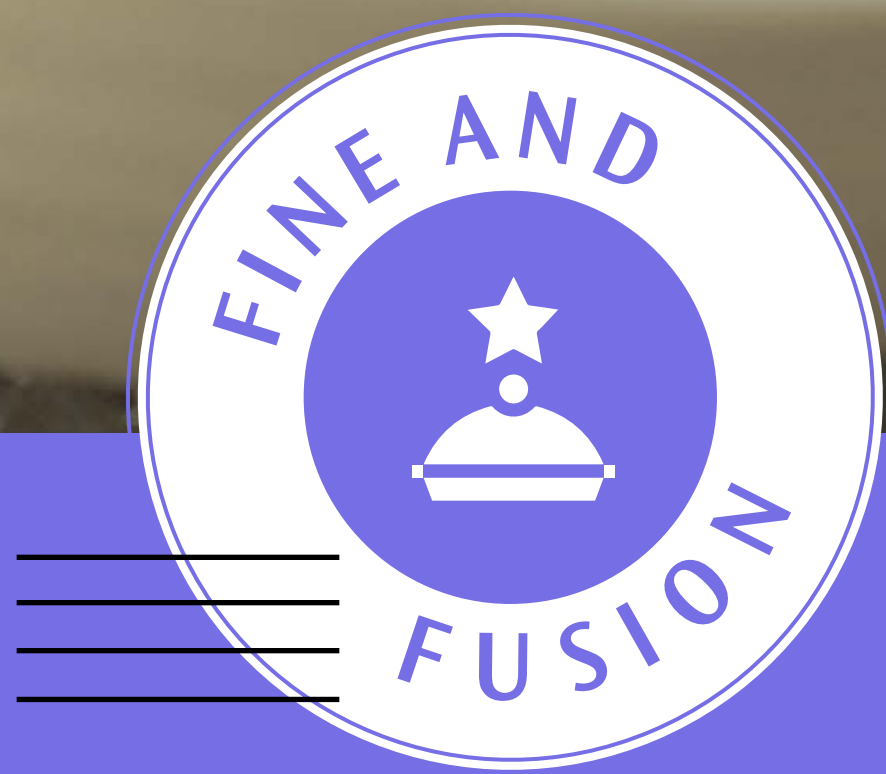
These are the stops to make at one of Seoul's coolest neighborhoods



Located in Gangnam district, this tree-lined, photo-worthy street deserves its own day of exploration, thanks to the many elegant and eclectic boutiques that line the way. Start at the **Original Pancake House**, a short walk west of Garosu-gil, showing up early to avoid the lineup. Follow up with a coffee at **Our Bakery**, right next door, grabbing a table on the second-level balcony. Continue on down the alley to **Nice Weather Market** to browse the hip, eclectic selection of curated goods. Afterward, stop at **Old Ferry Donut**, in the alley across the street, for some take-away treats. Now you're ready to stroll down the main street of Garosu-gil, checking out flagship stores like **MCM** and boutiques like **Victoria Bay**. For lunch, move a few blocks east to **Brooklyn the Burger** or **Chick Peace**, which has the city's best falafel. After dark, head down to the basement-level **Collection Lounge** for elaborate cocktails made using seasonal fruit.



Bicena



# KOREAN CUISINE WITH A TWIST

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Seoul's culinary scene is becoming more fascinating each year, with both upscale traditional and fusion Korean options that wow the palate







# KOJACHA

Kojacha successfully pulls off the challenge of melding Korean, Japanese and Chinese cuisines. The retro-style restaurant was established near the Starfield COEX Mall by Choi Yu-gang and Jo Yeong-du, who both worked at the Shilla Hotel. For their creative use of fresh local ingredients like abalone, they’ve earned a Michelin star.

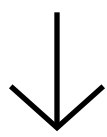
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# SANCHON

Sanchon was established by a former Buddhist monk long before Korean temple food caught attention worldwide. Tucked away in a charming lane of the Insa-dong neighborhood, the restaurant serves all-veg set meals featuring various types of greens, mushrooms and seaweeds. The museum-like interior is filled with Asian artwork, and a traditional dance performance is held daily at 8pm.



PHOTOS BY KOJACHA, MATTHEW CRAWFORD(SANCHON)







# LEE BUK BANG

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Lee Buk Bang is a North Korean-style restaurant specializing in *sundae* (blood sausage). While sundae is typically a street food, Lee Buk Bang has elevated this humble dish to the level of haute cuisine, serving slices of it on tasting boards along with sparkling or red wine. The drink menu also includes traditional alcohols like soju.

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# BICENA

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Bicena, on the 81st floor of the Lotte World Tower, is dedicated to elevating Korean cuisine. Local ingredients, alcohols distilled in-house and understated ceramic dishware enrich the experience at this Michelin-starred establishment. The set meals prepared by Chef Kwang-sik Jun and his team end refreshingly with cool cups of *sujeonggwa*, a concoction of persimmon and cinnamon.



PHOTOS BY LEE BUK BANG, BICENA







# KWONSOOKSOO

Lunch and dinner sets at KwonSookSoo feature Chef Kwon Woo-joon’s thoughtful combination of Korean beef and seafood with indigenous herbs, roots and vegetables (like fatsia shoots), plus European delicacies like Comté cheese. Holding two Michelin stars, the sleek, minimalistic dining space serves as a canvas for the immaculate, vibrantly coloured dishes.



## STREET TREATS

For sensory satisfaction, visit the gigantic Gwangjang Market, which bills itself as “the first regular market in Korea.” The best thing to do here is wander around and sample folk dishes by pulling up a stool at one of the dozens of stalls. Among them, Gohyang Kalguksu was profiled on the Netflix series Street Food. The market also has shops selling traditional products like *hanbok* (traditional Korean outfits).





# Seoul shopping list

We’ve rounded up the best only-in-Seoul purchases and flagship stores

## Beauty

The luxury cosmetics brand Sulwhasoo pioneered the use of ginseng extracts for anti-aging. Its lineup of sought-after creams and serums includes the First Care Activating Serum and Gentle Cleansing Foam. A 30-minute skin-renewal treatment is available on-site at its attractive flagship store in Sinsa-dong.



## Gifts/Stationery

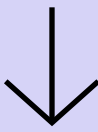
The National Museum of Korea gift shop sells a huge range of tasteful gifts and stationery, including neckties, coasters and stuffed dolls. Especially impressive are their jewellery boxes with mother-of-pearl inlay and mini models of the Pensive Bodhisattva, one of the museum’s famed treasures.

## Streetwear Fashion

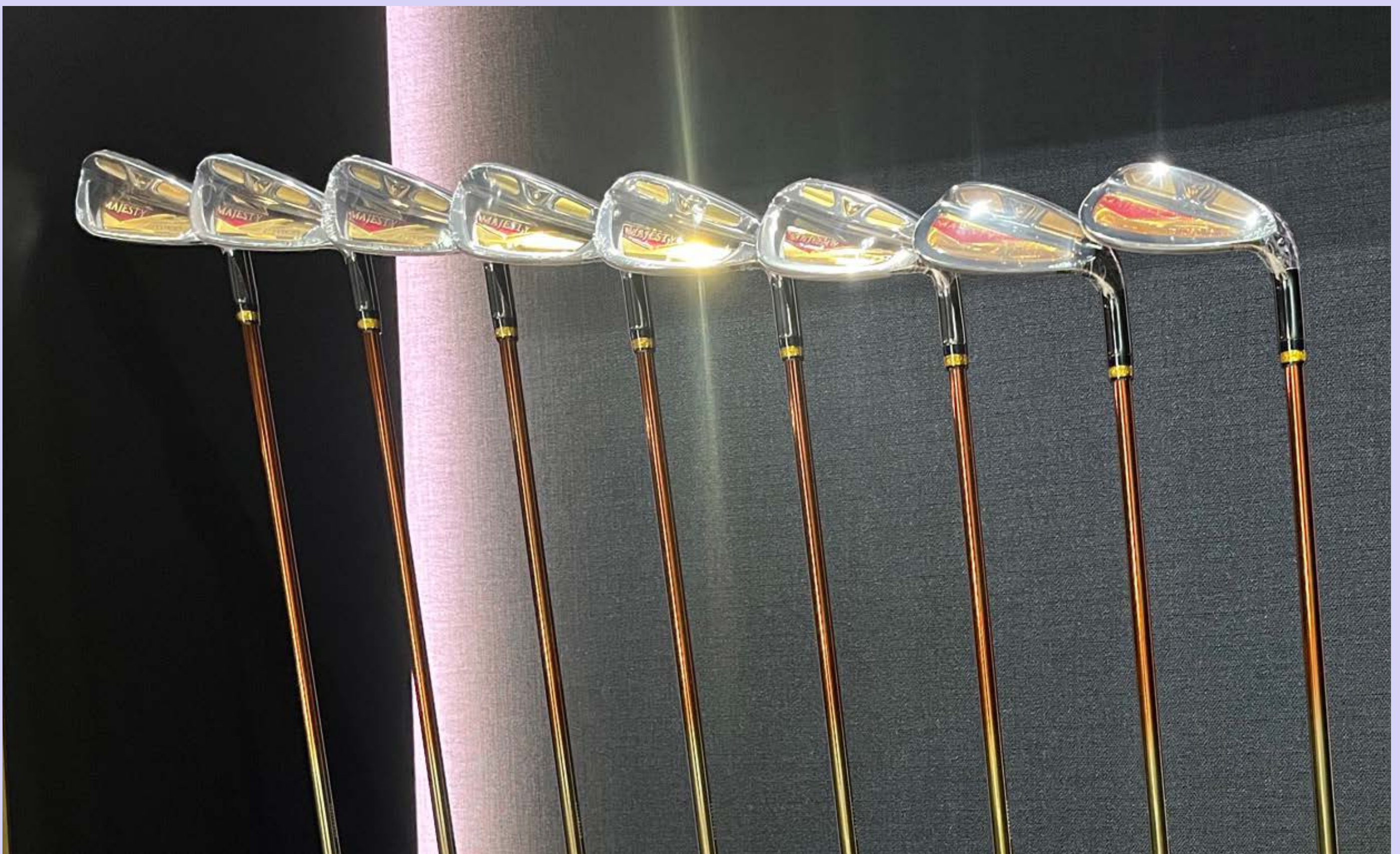
Numerous K-pop stars are fans of the streetwear brand Musinsa. While it has had tremendous success online, it also has a store in the heart of Gangnam, near Sinnonhyeon Station.



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW CRAWFORD (SULWHASOO AND MUSINSA), YOON JI-YOUNG (NATIONAL MUSEUM OF KOREA GIFT SHOP)







### *Golf Gear*

Surprisingly, golf has caught on among millennials in Korea and remains a prestigious obsession for many of the more affluent Seoulites. The Titlist shop in the Jamsil area sells apparel and gear. Meanwhile, gleaming gold and silver Majesty golf clubs are on show at the brand’s Gangnam outlet.

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### *Art Supplies*

Just off the main street of the tourist-friendly Insa-dong shopping area, Koohasanbang Brush Shop has been selling traditional painting supplies since 1915. It was once visited by kings. Along with brushes of all sizes, they sell seals (which are still often used instead of signatures to stamp people’s names on documents in Korea).



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW CRAWFORD (THE TITLIST SHOP),  
KOOHASANBANG BRUSH SHOP

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# Where to stay

Indulge in these modern hotels with stunning views

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## Mondrian Hotel

Flaunting a funky aesthetic, Mondrian Hotel opened in 2020 near the international neighborhood of Itaewon. Its Mediterranean restaurant Cleo is much acclaimed, and its Privilege Bar has rooftop views of the city.

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## Hotel Anteroom

Hotel Anteroom opened in 2020 near the luxury shopping street Garosu-gil. It's filled with carefully curated art, and even has an on-site gallery. For views of both Nam Mountain and the Han River, stay in one of the two Atelier rooms.







## Nine Tree Premier Hotel Insadong

Nine Tree Premier Hotel Insadong, which opened in 2019, is in the heart of central Seoul, next to the royal palaces and Insa-dong souvenir street. Its family rooms come with both a double bed and a bunk bed.

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