

Korea 101: Shopping

Shopping Options in Korea

TIP

Want more information on shopping in Korea?

Visit the 'Visit Korea' website run by the Korea Tourism Organization, select the language of choice and go to [Shopping] and [Where to Shop]. You can check detailed information such as the address, website address and phone number of various shopping venues in Korea. Choose places close to your location and suitable to meet your shopping purpose.

Website: <http://www.visitkorea.or.kr>

Languages: 14 languages including English, Japanese and Chinese

(1) Traditional Markets

Traditional markets in Korea are traditional-style markets with a unique ambience and generous merchants. They offer a variety of goods including food, clothing, and much more. In addition to permanent traditional markets, there are five-day and seven-day traditional markets that regularly move from place to place every five or seven days.

There are many specialized traditional markets, too, largely for seafood, agricultural products, fruits and vegetables, and traditional herbal medicine. One of the many perks of traditional markets is that prices there are negotiable. You can also shop various items at nearly half prices in the evening before merchants there close their shops for the day.



(2) Discount Stores

Korea has many discount stores that sell almost all the items customers need in their everyday lives. Note that they regularly close. In Seoul, most of them close every second and fourth Sundays of the month.

Discount stores are gaining in popularity because consumers can save time and money on the back of reduced prices and frequent promotional events.

Checkout can be a time-consuming experience there during particularly busy hours. You might as well reconsider going there just for a couple of items.



(3) Department Stores

Department stores in Korea stock all kinds of products from luxury fashion items of famous international brands to daily necessities. They are widely known for excellent customer service, too.

Most of them also offer foreign language services in English, Japanese and Chinese. Foreign tourists find shopping there very convenient and pleasant. Almost all of them run food corners in their basement floors, which offer a 50-70 percent discount on their semicooked and fully-cooked foods in the evening (usually between 18:00-20:00).



(4) Outlet Malls

By outlet malls, Koreans refer to a couple of different shopping facilities. Most frequently, they mean stores that sell 'carryover' brand items at much lower prices.

These stores offer their merchandise at even lower prices during sale periods.

An increasing number of people visit outlet malls to buy top brand items while spending their free time with their loved ones as the malls have evolved from a mere shopping venue to a space rather closer to a theme park.



(5) Convenience Stores

Most convenience stores are open 24/7 so you can pick up instant foods and various everyday items. The stores are mostly small so you won't find any difficulty locating what you want there.



(6) Supermarkets

By supermarkets, Koreans refer not only to midsize stores but also to small neighborhood stores, as opposed to large discount stores. They mostly target customers in an apartment complex or a neighborhood.

The variety of items they carry depend on the size of the store. Their prices vary significantly, too as some of them offer discounts while others do not.



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