



A once in a life time Cycling Trip

Director, Wijko Farnholt, of Cycle Classic Tours in the Netherlands talks to us about a once in a life time cycle holiday in South Korea.

Text: Wijko Farnholt Director of Cycle Classic Tours & Bruce Robinson Director of Cycle Tours Global

These days, South Korea's bike paths are among the best in the world. You will cycle through spectacular and quiet countryside roads on perfect paved bike paths completely separate from the main roads. This great Cycling Tour in South Korea includes unique features and highlights including entrances to museums and temples. Your journey will start in the capital of Korea; Seoul. This Olympic city of 1988 is the perfect location to get accustomed with Korean history and culture. Visit the Namsan Tower, the Seodaemun Prison history museum or get a glimpse of the Buckton Hanok Village. Seoul is an ideal starting point to go out cycling and discovering the perfectly paved bike paths along the Han River. You cycle through Yeouido Park, a large recreational park located on Yeouido Island in the central part of Seoul. The bike path along the Han

River brings you up to the waterways and it's full of excitement in all seasons. All roads are perfectly paved and the exclusive bike paths leading you all the way along the Han River, the major river of South Korea. Some cities are on the route, but there is a welcome change after many hours of riding through quiet rural landscapes as you pass and visit cities like Chungju, Yeosu, or Yangpyeong. The bike trail along the river is in close proximity of Mungyeong and Yeongcheon where you will cycle through old charming villages surrounded by the impressive natural wonders of South Korea. Following the trails along the South Han River waters are unique opportunity for all lovers of two wheels.

SOUTH KOREA IS A PARADISE FOR ADVENTUROUS CYCLISTS!
The investment of South Korea's bike paths was largely part of the Four Rivers project.

Opening up the countryside for recreational use has rightly allowed Korea to show off its spectacular scenery, landscape and culture to locals and the rest of the world. And they are still building – the east coast path is scheduled to open in 2015.

Approximately 70% of the cycling network is completely separated from roads with the remainder mainly being quiet country roads – the result being a quiet and peaceful tour with rarely a car in sight. The paths are wide with smooth paved surfaces and are mostly adjacent to Korea's magnificent rivers, which means they are generally flat. Even when you move from one river valley to another the paths are joined seamlessly, although there are some hilly sections particularly in the central regions of the country. But who said variety was bad?

Riding along the bike paths you'd be forgiven for forgetting that you could be quite close to a large town or city. This also means that another important aspect of cycle touring is relatively accessible most of the time – of course I mean food and accommodation.

In Seoul, like other big cities around the world, it is a challenge to maintain this fantastic infrastructure and network with all the competing uses for space

and facilities. However the Han River, its tributaries and the canals all have great bike paths alongside, usually on both banks. This makes the city very accessible and traversable by bike – and you do see a lot of Koreans out riding.

So given all this praise and plaudits, are there any downsides? In my opinion probably not – communication is an issue as English is not commonly spoken and signs and information are often in Korean only. But, we come as guests to their country to experience Korea – and that is why we use a guide! Korea strikes a good balance and I have no hesitation in recommending it as a cycle touring destination – I can't wait to go back!

There are temples and 'historical' buildings all around the country. People experience it in their own individual way – that is the beauty of travelling. A week only gave me a taste but what an experience, and what better way to do it than on a bike!

INFORMATION:

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