

FEBRUARY 2025

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Romance
Alive**

*Embracing
Slow and
Mindful Travel*

*A Love Story in Every Bowl:
Tuscan Tortellini Soup*



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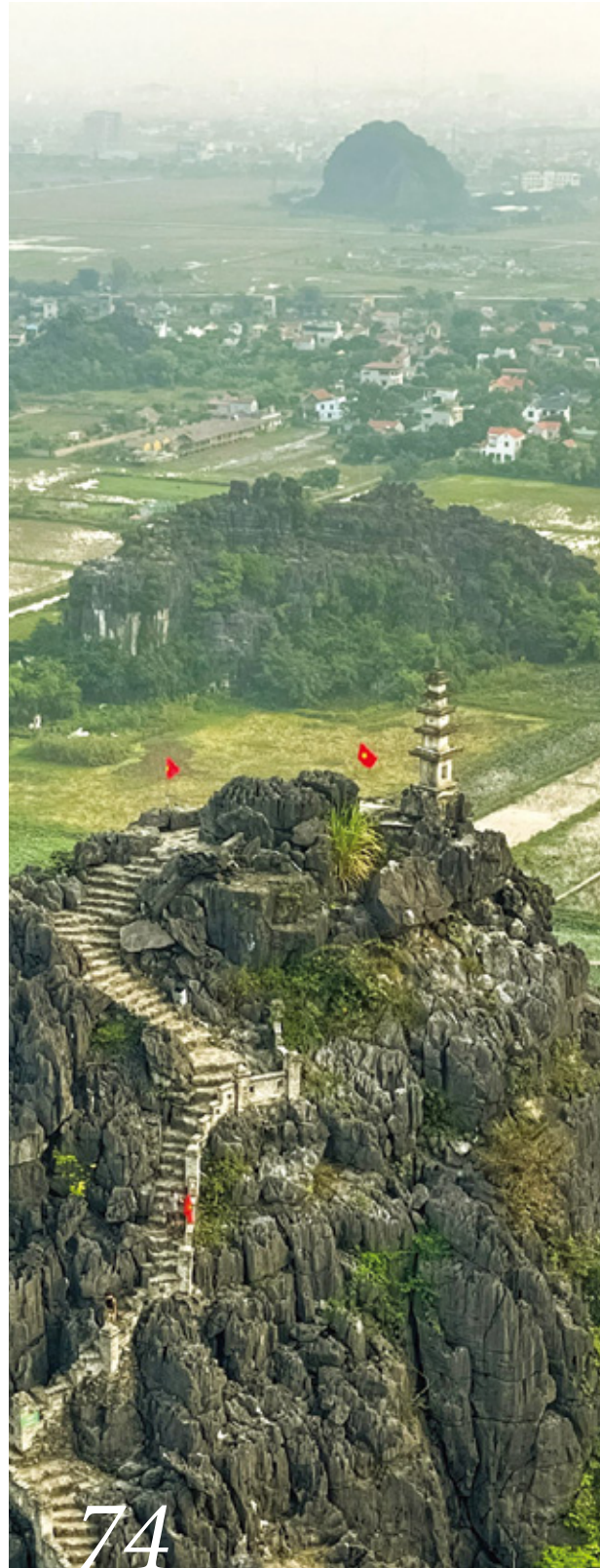
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Slow travel focuses on immersing yourself in local culture and nature, creating meaningful experiences while supporting sustainability. It's about savoring the moment, like in the Dolomites, rather than rushing through.

Cover: Celebrating Our Friendship, Relationships, and Family. (Captured by Jill Wellington)



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Keeping the Romance Alive with Five: Balancing Marriage, Intimacy, and Parenthood as a Military Family



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A Love Story in Every Bowl: Tuscan Tortellini Soup

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Dosage 3 capsules, twice a day

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UNITED ON THE ROK

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United on the RoK Magazine is a magazine with a military community focus that is distributed to United States Forces Korea installations within the Republic of Korea.

This magazine aims to connect readers to the diversity of our communities and showcase what South Korea has to offer from culture and travel to food and family, and more. Contents of *United on the RoK* are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the United States Government, the Department of Defense, or Oriental Press. All content within *United on the RoK Magazine* is written by non-paid, volunteers within the military-connected communities across the RoK. Articles within *United on the RoK* are written independently and non-sponsored, with no monetary compensation or products received in exchange for the author's opinions, reviews, or mentions in the magazine.

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Frozen forests at Osan Air Base.
(Captured by Amber Lindsay,
Lens N See Photography)

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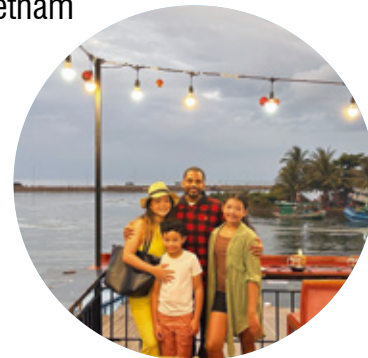
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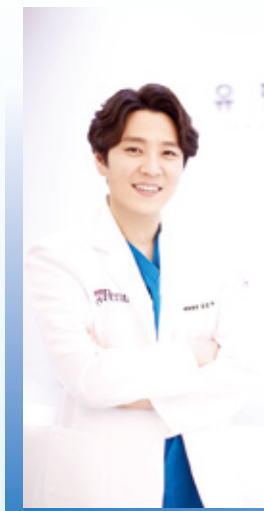
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 Sat 10am-3pm • Sun/Holidays Closed



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

As we embrace February, a month often associated with love and connection, I reflect on the profound impact that meaningful relationships have on our lives, especially within our unique military community here in Korea. This month's edition explores the multifaceted nature of human connections - from deep friendships to romantic partnerships, and the vital community bonds that sustain us.

Our contributors share authentic stories about building relationships far from home, reminding us that creating meaningful connections requires intentional effort and often takes us outside our comfort zones. As one of our featured writers beautifully puts it, "If someone far from home needs help, you show up." This simple yet powerful principle underlies the strongest communities.



Within these pages, you'll find practical guidance for nurturing new friendships, maintaining long-distance relationships, and creating spaces for authentic connections to flourish. We've included stories about food-sharing traditions, travel, community gatherings, and the small yet significant moments that transform strangers into friends.

February isn't just about romantic love - it's about all the ways we build and maintain our support networks. Whether you're seeking new friendships, strengthening existing bonds, or looking to engage more deeply with your community, this issue offers insights and inspiration for your journey.


Remember, as we navigate life abroad, our shared experiences create bonds that transcend cultural boundaries. Sometimes the strongest connections begin with a simple invitation to dinner, a shared cup of cocoa on a cold day in our pajamas, or the courage to show up when someone needs support.

Here's to building meaningful connections and creating communities that feel like home,

Jetta Allen, Editor in Chief
United on the RoK Mag


LIVE MUSIC&ARTS

Events & Festivals




FEB04-MAR25
Musical Vanishing

Link Arts Center Payco Hall
ticket.yes24.com




FEB28
KYGO Live in Seoul

Inspire Arena
globalinterpark.com



MAR01
keshi: Requiem Tour in Seoul

Olympic Hall
globalinterpark.com




MAR01
Zedd Telos Tour in Korea

Inspire Arena
globalinterpark.com



MAR04
Jonas Kaufmann Recital

Lotte Concert Hall
lotteconcerthall.com/eng




MAR06
KEHLANI - CRASH WORLD TOUR in Seoul

Olympic Hall
globalinterpark.com



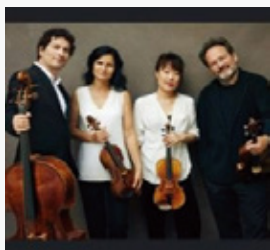
MAR09
Ghibli OST Concert : The Orchestra

Lotte Concert Hall
lotteconcerthall.com/eng



MAR22-23
Kenshi Yonezu 2025 World Tour / Junk

Inspire Arena
globalinterpark.com



APR04
Belcea Quartet World String Quartet Series III

Lotte Concert Hall
lotteconcerthall.com/eng




APR05
Russell Peters Relax World Tour in Seoul

Myunghwa Live Hall
globalinterpark.com




APR16-25
Coldplay : Music of the Spheres Delivered By DHL

Goyang Stadium
globalinterpark.com



OCT21
OASIS Live '25

Goyang Stadium
globalinterpark.com



NOV16-FEB20
E-World Illumination

- Venue: E-World
- Address: 200 Duryugongwon-ro, Dalseo-gu, Daegu
- Website: www.e-world.kr
- Inquiries: +82-70-7549-8112
- Operating hours: 10:30-22:00 (Hours subject to change)
- Fees (One-day ticket): Adults 49,000 won / Teenagers 44,000 won / Children 39,000 won

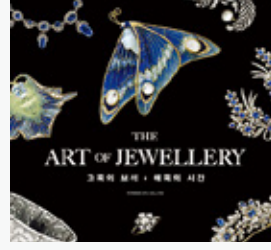
E-World Illumination sets E-World, Daegu's largest theme park, aglow each winter with Christmas-themed performances and New Year's Day events. Visitors can take in the brightly lit view from one of the 30 amusement park rides or from the observatory in 83 Tower. Photo zones are set up in front of popular attractions such as the red double-decker bus and the merry-go-round to capture memories of your time here.



OCT27-FEB29
Seokchon Lake and Luminarie

- Venue: Seokchon Lake area
- Address: 166, Songpanaru-gil, Songpa-gu District, Seoul
- Website: yudeung.com
- Inquiries: +82-2-2147-2100

The festival Autumn and Winter of Seokchon Lake and Luminarie is underway at Seokchon Lake under the theme "Lake of Light, Connecting Hearts." The venue features landscape lighting, light sculptures and photo zones to produce an illuminated event that creates or decorates buildings with lighting and light sculptures.

DEC06-MAR16
The Art of Jewellery

Lotte Museum of Art
globalinterpark.com



DEC14-JUN08
JUNJI ITO Horror House

DUEx Busan
globalinterpark.com



DEC01-FEB28
2025 Winter Wonder Nami Island

1 Namiseom-gil, Namsan-myeon, Chuncheon-si, Gangwon-do
namisum-en.imweb.me



DEC01-MAR16
Garden of Morning Calm Light Festival

- Address: 432 Sumogwon-ro, Sang-myeon, Gapyeong-gun, Gyeonggi-do
- Website: morningcalm.co.kr
- Inquiries: +82-1544-6703


The biggest festival of lights in Korea! The annual Lighting Festival at The Garden of Morning Calm covers over 330,000 sqm and 30,000 lights, turning the snowy ground into a winter wonderland on sunset. The Garden of Morning Calm, nestled against the splendid backdrop of Chungnyeongsan Mountain, is a horticultural haven that blends the essence of Korean beauty with a diversity of themed gardens. Designed by Professor Han Sang-kyeong from Sahmyook University, this arboretum, which opened in May 1996, offers a tranquil retreat with forest paths and a dense pine nut grove for those escaping the bustle of the city.



NOV27-MAR03
Deoksugung Palace Special Exhibition

- Address: 99, Sejong-daero, Jung-gu, Seoul
- 10-minute walk from Exit 2 of City Hall Station (Subway Lines 1 & 2)
- Opening hours: 09:00-17:30
- Fees: Free

The Deoksugung Palace Dondeokjeon Special Exhibition, 'Modern Light, Korean Empire Imperial Lighting,' allows you to explore the history of modern lighting that illuminated the palace in the darkness of the late 19th century. Over 100 modern lighting fixtures are on display, including the 'hwamun Chandelier' returned to its original location after 100 years, glass lampshades, and candle holders. Revisit the significance of light from 100 years ago and experience the beauty and value of lighting!



JUN14-15
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Hey You, Daegu!
Here's the news in Area IV

dodea
PACIFIC
WEST

SY 24-25 Reading Battle 4th & 5th Grade

- 1 War Stories by Gordon Korman
- 2 A Boy Called Bat by Alana K Arnold
- 3 Squished by Megan Wagner Lloyd
- 4 When You Trap a Tiger by Tae Keller
- 5 The Lost Library by Wendy Mass and Rebecca Stead
- 6 Parker Inheritance by Varian Johnson
- 7 Last Fallen Star by Gracie Kim
8. From the Desk of Zoe Washington by Janae Marks
9. Yummy: History of Desserts by Victoria Grace Elliott
- 10 Heroes by Alan Gratz

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COMM: 0503-363-5126, DSN: 763-5126 or
EMAIL: alejandra.m.morenoalomar.ctr@army.mil

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Mar 6 2025, 1 pm - 2 pm

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Camp Walker Soldier Support Center RM 315
Please contact: 763-4426 or 0503-363-4426

HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS

Discover the incredible talent within our Area IV Community at our inaugural ARTIST SHOWCASE! Don't miss this celebration of creativity and artistry.

WHEN:
Showcase: March 17-21
Meet & Greet: March 21 & 22

WHERE:
CAMP WALKER-COMMUNITY CENTER

WHAT:
Experience a diverse collection of artwork created by the talented military community of Area IV. From paintings to sculptures and everything in between, this showcase highlights the creativity within our community

POC Katie Burson - katiejoburson@gmail.com

Overseas Military Services Coordinator OMSC

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VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Welcome Wagon of Korea

Volunteer Initiative

Welcome Wagon of Korea: A new volunteer program that greets new PCSers arriving to Korea at USAG Humphreys.

Mission: To welcome 10,000 Soldiers and family members to Korea each year.

Goal: To create a positive first impression for Soldiers and dependents as they arrive at their new overseas home after a long and tiring journey.

Volunteer Activities: Greeting each bus of new PCSers arriving to Maude Hall, providing them with information, snacks, and a warm welcome.

- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Six times per day, seven days a week – Incheon Arrivals. Mondays and Wednesdays - Patriot Express Arrivals.
- **Log Volunteer Hours in VMIS*:** Search for "19th HRC Welcome Wagon of Korea" to register as a volunteer.

Support Needed: To sustain the initiative, **more spouse and Soldier volunteers are needed**, as well as donations for welcome bags.

For more information contact:
Kelly Karwel-Welcome Wagon of Korea Coordinator:

EMAIL
w.w.ofkorea@gmail.com

FACEBOOK
Camp Humphreys Welcome Wagon Volunteers



* VMIS (Volunteer Management Information System) is a tool used by the U.S. Army to manage and track volunteer activities and hours.

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15 APRIL 25

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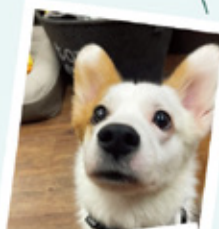
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- Homewardboundosan@gmail.com
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Diamonds in the Rough: Finding Our Power After the Holidays

By: Naomi Nubin-Sellers

After the holiday season has passed, we often find ourselves with a new opportunity to reconnect and embrace new beginnings. With the festivities, joy, and laughter that characterize the season fading away and the new year in full swing, some of us may be experiencing the “post-holiday blues.” Transitioning into the new year can sometimes bring about feelings of melancholy or isolation, commonly referred to as the post-holiday blues. Overcoming the holiday blues begins with acknowledging our feelings. Admitting how easy it can be to feel isolated (especially when living abroad) while remembering that these emotions may be shared by many of our friends and neighbors can help us progress. By connecting with our communities and forming new connections with those around us who understand what we’re going through, we can foster a renewed sense of belonging as we prepare to move forward in our lives.

The Power of Setting New Habits

Sharing your feelings with others or seeking the support of friends and family can help you foster deep-



Exploring your local community can lead you to the most beautiful cafes!

er connections with those in your community, but if necessary, seeking professional help can also provide additional space for personal growth. In either instance, when we acknowledge our shared struggles, we can find solace in the understanding that we are not alone in this journey. As we shift away from holiday cheer, let’s embrace gentleness towards ourselves, acknowledging that everyone’s journey to reclaim or reestablish patterns after the holiday season is unique. As the seasons change, mentally preparing can be a decisive step in establishing new routines or rekindling old traditions that bring fulfillment to our lives. This is the perfect time to develop new habits that bring joy and reinforce our sense of agency—whether it’s exploring a local café, reading a new book, pursuing a new hobby, or engaging in the breath of community events that celebrate our diverse backgrounds. Engaging with our surroundings and creating positive experiences can also help us to regain a sense of control over our lives.

The Power in Our Created Communities

Throughout our lives, we frequently grapple with a handful of profound questions that shape our reality. At the heart of these inquiries often lies a quest for power—specifically, the various forms that power can take and the influence it wields over our lives. Power is an incredible resource in the battle against the holiday blues. So, we must delve into one of the most pivotal avenues through which power flows: our communities. As we move past the festive season and towards the Spring, we must view our created communities (families, friends, neighbors) as a vital source of strength, especially in the face of the unique challenges of military life. Whether we seek friendships, maintain our long-distance relationships, or are forming new intimate rela-



Right outside Camp Humphreys's walk-in gate is 2YU Cafe and Bar. Enjoy a delicious Affogato while reading a good book!

tionships, building and nurturing these meaningful connections must be a priority in our lives. Many of us have encountered the complexities of CONUS military moves (PCS, rotations, deployments), but relocating to an unfamiliar country introduces a new layer of challenges that can feel daunting. Among these hurdles, one of the most universally recognized struggles is building and sustaining meaningful social connections. These social networks are essential for numerous reasons—they provide support, foster a sense of belonging, and enhance our overall well-being. Still, we each have to do the legwork of forming our created communities. Ultimately, our communities are an indispensable part of navigating life’s ups and downs, particularly when in unfamiliar environments. Being ‘United on the Rok’ creates a deep bond among us all, with our shared experiences revealing that we share far more connections than differences, so ven-

ture out and forge new friendships within your communities. I believe in you!

The Power in You

The often-touted phrase, "You are not your circumstance," is meant to remind people that you are an individual. What makes it uniquely insightful is that it reminds us that personal, professional, and situational realities are not fixed and can always change. As such, the holiday blues represent one type of fickle circumstance. Similar to other defining features of the season, it can invoke feelings and behaviors that can be unproductive to reaching our goals. Hindering our ability to reap the fullness of what life has to offer. The silver lining is that the holiday blues remind us that we are all just fundamentally human. We have complex emotions that sometimes feel overwhelming, so it is crucial that you allow yourself space to navigate these emotions profoundly and authentically.

Ultimately, overcoming the post-holiday blues is about reconnecting with ourselves and our communities. By nurturing meaningful relationships, embracing new experiences, and practicing self-kindness, we reclaim our power and pave the way for new beginnings. As we move forward, we should continue to practice patience, allowing ourselves the opportunity to process our complex emotions as we navigate the various seasons of life. Having self-compassion is crucial in overcoming the post-holiday blues, but it is even more central to the "big picture" journey of life. It's essential to recognize that cultivating connections through community building in any capacity takes time. Whether you are cultivating romantic relationships or platonic friendships, it's okay to take small steps as long as you are trying to move forward. This does not mean that you are meant to be friends with everybody, but we are social creatures by nature, and very few of us harbor the ultimate goal of isolation (and if you do, no judgment here!). However, there is power in community building, as it provides us with valuable

resources and social networks to reach out to our created communities. So, do remember to celebrate the victories in building your own community, no matter how small. Embracing gentleness towards ourselves and allowing ourselves the grace we often freely give to others is a necessary first step. Ultimately, this holistic approach to navigating the post-holiday blues enriches the overall tapestry of our lives, paving the way for a brighter and more connected future. With this, we should all look forward to the Spring, excited to embrace the full spectrum of what life has to offer!

About the Author

The column "Diamonds in the Rough" is about embracing the challenges of family, career building, and all the possibilities in life. The author, Naomi Nubin-Sellers is a current PhD Candidate, holding Bachelors and Masters degrees in the social sciences. In addition, she is a current instructor for a program housed at the University of Michigan. Her career aspirations include data-driven policy research, higher education, and non-profit services tailored to young mothers. She currently resides in Pyeongtaek, South Korea, with her active-duty spouse and four beautiful children who range from ages 6 to 17.



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Keeping the Romance Alive with Five: Balancing Marriage, Intimacy, and Parenthood as a Military Family

By Tyrese Cook



Marriage can be challenging to nurture under the best circumstances. Add in five children, two demanding careers, and the complexities of military life, and it might seem inevitable that romance would take a back seat. But I've learned that maintaining intimacy in a marriage isn't just possible—it's essential. A thriving marriage isn't a luxury; it's the cornerstone of a healthy family.

Keeping the spark alive takes intention, creativity, and prioritizing each other even when life gets hectic. The goal isn't perfection but connection. Small, consistent efforts are the building blocks of a lasting bond. Here's my take on how to balance marriage, intimacy, and parenthood as a military family while nurturing a relationship that flourishes.

The Power of Communication

Communication is the foundation of any healthy relationship, but in the whirlwind of parenting and military life, it often becomes purely logistical. Conversations about schedules, school drop-offs, or what's for dinner can dominate, leaving little room for meaningful connection. To combat this, my husband and I carve out time for intentional conversations. Our weekly "check-in" is a simple yet effective tool to reconnect.

During this time, we reflect on three key questions:

- What went well for us this week?
- What's one area we can improve as a team?
- How can I support you better?

These questions foster openness, helping us celebrate wins, address concerns, and build a sense of partnership. It's not about fixing everything but about staying in tune with each other's needs.

For military families, communication during deployments or separations is even more critical. When my husband is away for training or missions, we use platforms like FaceTime, WhatsApp, and even simple text messages to stay connected. Sharing photos, videos, and funny moments from the kids allows us to bridge the distance emotionally. It's not just about staying informed but about preserving the emotional closeness that sustains our relationship.

Keeping the Playfulness Alive

It's easy to lose sight of the lightheartedness that once defined your relationship. Yet, laughter and playfulness are essential to maintaining intimacy.

My husband and I intentionally find ways to laugh together, whether it's through sharing memes, watching a comedy, or reminiscing about funny memories from our early dating days. Laughter isn't just good for the soul; it's a powerful way to reconnect.

As parents of young children, we've learned to infuse playfulness into the rhythm of our everyday tasks. One of our favorite ways to playfully connect is by cooking meals together, often to the soulful

backdrop of 90s R&B. We love teaching each other new recipes and holding each other while dancing in the kitchen. Small, silly moments like these remind us why we fell in love and help us rediscover joy amid the busyness.

Sometimes, keeping the playfulness alive means stepping outside your comfort zone. Whether it's joining the kids in a backyard game, attempting a new hobby together - we recently started learning to play the saxophone, or planning a spontaneous family

dance-off, shared experiences bring joy and deepen your connection.

Prioritizing Intimacy

Physical and emotional intimacy often take a backseat when life feels overwhelming. Between late-night feedings, career demands, and the ever-changing needs of our kids, it's easy to let exhaustion take over. But intimacy—both physical and emotional—is the glue that holds a marriage together.

Rethink what intimacy looks like in your marriage. While physical

closeness is vital, intimacy is also found in the small, meaningful gestures that create connection. A lingering hug, holding hands during a walk, or cuddling together in quiet companionship after a long day can be just as powerful as a romantic date night.

Scheduling time for connection, even in small increments, can make a big difference. In our home, we set aside at least 1 hour every evening to reconnect. Whether we're sharing our thoughts, talking about future dreams, or simply enjoying each other's pres-



ence, these moments help us stay emotionally close.

If physical intimacy feels out of reach during certain seasons, prioritize emotional intimacy. Vulnerability—sharing your thoughts, fears, or joys—can deepen your bond in powerful ways. If you're feeling disconnected, approach the conversation with love and understanding. Saying something like, "I miss feeling close to you. Can we set aside time for just us this week?" opens the door to connection without placing blame.



Marriage as a Team Effort

In the unique challenges of military life, a thriving marriage requires teamwork. Parenthood, career demands, and military responsibilities can often feel like competing priorities. But by approaching your relationship as a partnership, you can navigate even

the most demanding seasons together.

When my husband and I tackle challenges as a team, we lean on each other's strengths. For example, I'm more detail-oriented, while he's better at seeing the big picture. By dividing tasks based on our skills, we ease each other's burdens and create a sense of shared accomplishment.

Part of being a team is knowing when to lean on external support. For military families, resources like chaplains, counseling services, and community programs can provide valuable tools to strengthen your relationship. Don't hesitate to seek help when needed—it's a sign of strength, not weakness.

Setting an Example for Your Children

One of the greatest gifts you can give your children is a healthy, loving marriage. When they see you prioritize your relationship, they learn valuable lessons about love, partnership, and resilience.

Children thrive in environments where their parents' relationship is strong. A connected marriage creates a foundation of stability and warmth that ripples through the entire family. By showing your kids what it looks like to communicate openly, resolve conflicts respectfully, and nurture intimacy, you're setting them up for healthy relationships of their own.

In our home, we make a point to let our kids see us enjoying each other's company. Whether it's stealing a kiss in the kitchen, laughing over an inside joke, or sharing a family hug, these moments reinforce the love that holds us together.

I asked my husband recently what he thinks is the key to balancing life within a marriage and he stated:

"Effective communication is key, especially in front of the kids. It requires being receptive and adaptable to the unpredictability of military life. Not everything needs to be an argument. Sometimes, staying flexible and understanding helps maintain peace at home. I remember a time when I asked you to pack up the kids to pick me up from work, only to not be released. Your calmness and patience in that moment set an example for



our kids, showing them how to handle challenges with grace and understanding." — SGT. Terry Cook Jr., Information Technology Specialist/Communications Representative to the 21D Commanding General with Sisco Company

Embracing Imperfection

Some days, the to-do list feels endless, and romantic gestures take a backseat to survival mode. That's okay. What matters is the effort you put into nurturing your relationship, even in the small, quiet ways.

For military families, life is often unpredictable. PCS moves, deployments, and long hours can strain even the strongest bonds. But with intention, creativity, and a shared commitment to each other, your marriage can thrive in any circumstance.

Remember, intimacy isn't just about grand gestures—it's about showing up for each other daily. It's in the laughter shared over a silly joke, the warmth of a hug after a long day, and the quiet moments of connection before falling asleep. These small efforts build a foundation for marriage that stands strong, no matter what life throws your way.

Final Thoughts

Juggling children, careers, and military life is no easy feat. But prioritizing your marriage is worth every ounce of effort. When your relationship thrives, it not only strengthens your bond but enriches your family as a whole.

As a fellow military spouse, I encourage you to embrace the journey of balancing marriage, intimacy, and parenthood. Perfection isn't the goal—connection is. By investing in each other and staying intentional about your relationship, you're building a love that can weather any storm and a family foundation that will flourish for years to come.

About the Author

Tyrese Cook, also known as Re, is a devoted military spouse and proud mother to five daughters—including two sets of twins—who brings warmth, insight, and a touch of humor to every subject she explores. Tyrese, a non-denominational Christian with a master's degree in social work, is a licensed social worker in Ohio and Kentucky. Drawing on her faith and expertise, she is passionate about mental health and committed to helping others reach their full potential with compassion and understanding. Recently featured with her family on CNN, *United on the RoK*, *The OCONUS Project*, and *The Goode Show*. Tyrese's life and work reflect her deep commitment to family, love, and resilience. Outside of her work and family life, she delights in cooking creative meals, diving into captivating books, and experiencing the world's diverse cultures. Follow her journey on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram at @AuthenticallyRe.



Building Lasting Friendships *Through* Shared Adventures

By Jetta Allen

When you step outside your comfort zone with others, something magical happens. As the saying goes, you never truly know someone until you travel with them – and there's profound truth in this wisdom. Drawing from my travels with friends, let me share why these adventures create some of our strongest bonds.

Something about facing new things together breaks down barriers and creates authentic connections between friends. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins says, "I'm going on an adventure!" When he said this, he didn't know that adventures with friends and family are usually the most memorable! You step into the unknown together, sharing thoughts of the journey, and overcoming challenges together. Facing these challenges together builds trust in ways that regular social interactions rarely do. The more trust and learning involved, the more invested we all get in each other as people. Whether it's trying local foods, attempting to communicate in a new language, or participating in unexpected local festivals, these become stories you'll tell for years to come.

The power of shared adventures lies in their ability to create what psychologists call "peak experiences" - those memorable moments in our life story. You are creating a core memory that might be one of the best moments during your time in Korea. It may stand out above all others when you look back on your time here. This unique narrative becomes part of your

friendship's foundation allowing you to continue to build on it, wherever you may go.

And while it's tempting to pack your itinerary with endless sightseeing, the most meaningful moments often happen between destinations. It's the laughter over a failed attempt to have all your supplies or phone chargers, picking out the fun snacks or giant ramen packs at the GS25, or maybe it's the search for the yummy pork cutlet that stands out. For me, it is often the conversations in the car along the way that truly cement friendships.

How to Balance Sightseeing with Relationship Building: The Art of Meaningful Travel

Treating life as an extended holiday often makes building the community you need difficult. Travel isn't just about the destinations, it is about memories. Here's how to strike that perfect balance between exploring new places and nurturing meaningful connections through travel-forged friendships.



Jetta and her friend Laura explore antiques and art in Insadong.



Yeonmisan Nature Art Park with Jam and Laura.



Christie, Mini, Jetta, and Robyn at Incheon Airport ready to board a plane to Bali for a Girls '24 Trip.



Mini and Jetta dressed in their best for their Bali Ubud Swing Adventure.

Create a "Two-Track" Itinerary

- Active Exploration Time:
 - Dedicate specific hours for sightseeing
 - Plan your itinerary together so all interests are incorporated into your plans
- Leave room for spontaneous decisions
- Connection Time:
 - Reserve quieter moments for deeper conversations

- Plan regular meals together during the trip
- Don't forget to plan down time too

The Power of Regular Spots

- Find a "home base" café or restaurant to return to regularly where it feels like "home"
- Create familiar touchstones in new places, like a new favorite shop or park

Quality Over Quantity

- Start with small local adventures, expanding to half-day or overnight journeys
- Instead of rushing to see everything, choose fewer destinations but explore them deeply
- Combine high-energy sightseeing with relaxed activities, allowing time for organic conversations
- Plan down days if going for more than a day trip

Practice Mindful Travel

- Be present in the moment
- Listen to each other's needs
- Adjust plans based on group energy

Making Memories That Last

- Focus on taking time to process experiences together

- Documenting your journey together
- Share photos and memories from your trips by creating a photo book together
- Create traditions that remind you of your travels
- Schedule regular meals back home and pick a cuisine had on your trips for a special touch
- Start planning the next adventure together

Travel friends are special because they've seen you at your most vulnerable and adventurous. They've witnessed your reaction to flight delays, your joy at discovering hidden gems, and your resilience in navigating unfamiliar territories. They have seen you without make-up or your creature comforts. Maybe they helped you through a panic attack or you've helped a friend through a food allergy that resulted in an Epi-pen to the leg (true story). All of these moments surpass regular friendships because, through all of this, we still choose to be close companions in life.

If someone is far from home and needs help, the military community will always show up. We are all far from our homes, but time with friends offers emotional support during homesickness and helps solve life's practical problems because you have given yourself permission to breathe and take a moment to yourself. Now that you are in Korea, do you have a travel friend? If not, what is stopping you? Maybe you don't know where to start, but I can help with that too!

For Everyone

- Utilize Facebook for local travel groups or groups based on shared interests like comics, K-beauty, fishing, etc.
- Check out your installations' clubs that meet monthly and facilitate a space to form friendships
- Take advantage of in-country and international travel through Osan Information, Ticking and Travel, Discover Seoul, or HANA Express Travel with Daegu FMWR
- Get involved in Korean hiking groups as they often carpool or travel as a group, making it perfect for those traveling around Korea
- Consider volunteering in your community as a door to new friendships

For Soldiers and Sponsors

- Ask if your unit/workplace has any social groups or planned activities

- Contact Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers and get connected with their volunteer opportunities and trips with other soldiers like yourself

For those in the Seoul Area

- Join the United States Embassy Association in Seoul at USAG Yongsan
- Join the American Women's Club of Korea to make friends from home

For those in the Pyeongtaek and Suwon Area

- Join the Doin' Stuff With Robyn & Dana Facebook group which plans day outings at an affordable price
- Join Team Osan Spouses' Club or Humphreys United Club to make friends and explore together
- Take advantage of in-country travel through Osan Information, Ticking and Travel or Humphreys Discover Seoul

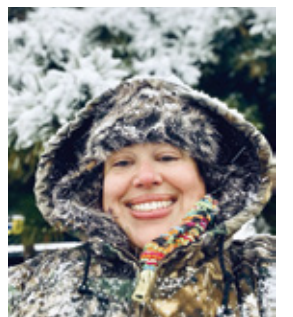
For those in the Daegu Area

- Take advantage of international travel made easy with HANA Express Travel with Daegu FMWR
- Join the Daegu Civilian & Spouses Club to make friends in your area
- Join the DIWA Daegu International Women's Association to bridge connections with international friendships

Don't be afraid to get out there and find a friend! I have been so blessed to find so many in Korea, but it wasn't by chance. These friendships have brought out the best in me and helped me thrive here. That is what I want for you too. Who knows what adventure is ahead, but make sure to take a friend along with you!

About the Author

Jetta Allen is an Army spouse stationed at USAG Humphreys. Since she arrived in 2019, she has contributed to numerous organizations in a volunteer capacity. She began her journey with *United on the RoK Magazine* in 2022 as an author of a support column for adults and children enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program. Two years later, she is an accomplished author, photographer, and content creator fulfilling the role of Editor in Chief at *United on the RoK Magazine*. She loves nature, travel, and culture, but most of all, making memories with her family. As a military spouse, Jetta understands the importance of community and how being connected can help one find the resources and networks that help them thrive.



Memories were made at the local theatre as Carolyn and Jetta saw the Barbie Movie.



Robyn and Dana running a trip to Seoul.



The Humphreys United Club luncheons helped Jetta meet some of her best friends like Robyn!

Indoor Water Parks Near Pyeongtaek for Winter

By South of Seoul



Looking for some summer fun in the middle of winter? South Korea offers indoor water parks that are perfect for staying warm and active year-round. Whether you're stationed at Camp Humphreys, Osan Air Base, or living nearby, you can find water parks ranging from small, local spots to massive attractions.

Before you head out the door for some winter relaxation, there are a few things to know so that you don't feel the heavy weight of culture shock when you arrive and things aren't quite like they were back home.

What to Wear at a Korean Indoor Water Park

The first big surprise for many people at Korean pools or water parks is what you need to bring to wear:

- Swim caps/Baseball Caps and goggles: Head covering and eye protection are often mandatory. Some parks may allow baseball caps instead of swim caps and some parks don't require goggles. However, we recommend having both on hand just in case. Don't fret if you don't have the items yourself, parks generally have a shop where you can buy caps and goggles.
- Full-coverage swimwear: Some facilities may require rashguards over swimsuits. Even if some facilities don't need swim shirts, most attendees will use them. Bikinis or board shorts

are less common and may not be allowed on certain rides due to safety. If you don't have rashguards, you can often purchase them year-round on Coupang.

Discounts for Local Residents

Some water parks and pools in South Korea offer discounts for those who live in the same administrative district. To qualify, you'll need to show proof of residence. Across Korea, proof of residence means presenting a Korean Foreign Registration Card (FRC). This proves you are a legal resident and verifies your address. US Military IDs may not be accepted as proof of residence. Be sure to check the specific requirements at each location and have your FRC ready if you're hoping to save on entry fees.

Water Parks and Exposed Tattoos

Some new international residents have read older articles and worry that they can't go to water parks if they have tattoos. As culture continues to change and many young people now have tattoos, rules also change. Some places may allow all types of tattoos,

others may allow tattoos under a certain size, and others may simply require you to cover the tattoos.

You can also double-check tattoo policies by using 1330. You may be asked to share a photo of your tattoos when they check on the policy. If you do need to cover your tattoos here are two common options:

- Cover with rash guards or swim shirts: Full-coverage swimwear is widely accepted and often required.
- Use waterproof tattoo covers: These can be purchased online or at some local stores.

5 Winter Friendly Water Parks or Spas Near Pyeongtaek

Awesome Plex



A small indoor kids' water park that opened in 2021. They focus on younger kids and families.

General Rules and Information

Reservations Required

- The water park operates on a reservation system.
- Reservation Times
 - Open to Pyeongtaek residents: Every third Tuesday of the month at 2:00 PM.
 - Open to the general public: The following Wednesday at 2:00 PM.
- Reservations can be made through the official website.

Operating Hours

The water park is divided into two sessions per day:

- Session 1: 09:30 AM - 12:30 PM
- Session 2: 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Dress Code

- Swimwear or rash guards are required. Cotton clothing is not allowed.

- Swim caps or baseball hats must be worn while using the water facilities.

Tattoo Policy

- Since this location focuses specifically on children, they may not allow you to enter with tattoos or may require you to fully cover them.

Life Jacket Policy

- Children under 140 cm in height must wear a life jacket, which can be rented onsite.

Prohibited Items

- Large inflatables (over 100 cm), food and beverages, beach balls, and water guns are not allowed inside the water park.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

- Cancellations made 6 days or more before the reservation date are fully refundable.
- Cancellations made 1-5 days prior are subject to a 50% refund.
- Same-day cancellations are non-refundable.

Additional Notes

- Parking: Free parking is available for visitors.
- Personal Items: Toiletries such as shampoo, conditioner, and body wash are not provided and must be brought by visitors.

Location Information

[NAVER Map]
5SOMEPLEX
1266 Haechang-ri Godeok-myeon
Pyeongtaek-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/Ghbgv9cA>

Asan Spavis5

This is a resort-style spa with restaurants, a water park, and facilities for other sports like badminton and snow sledding. Discounted entry fee for Asan and Cheonan residents.



General Rules and Information

Facilities

- Indoor and Outdoor Pools: Including treatment pools utilizing hot spring water for various therapies.
- Event Pool: Featuring 23 different themes throughout the year.
- Kids Park: Designed for children's safety and enjoyment.
- Additional Amenities: Snow sledding area, sports massage center, and skin care treatment center.

Visitor Guidelines

- Attire: Proper swimwear is required. Wearing a swim cap or hat is mandatory in pools and water attractions. (Rashguards and no cotton)
- Tattoo Policy: Generally speaking, tattoos are allowed. We have seen both staff and attendees with large leg and sleeve tattoos.
- Prohibited Items: Outside food and beverages are generally not allowed. Specific prohibited items may vary; please check the official guidelines or inquire upon arrival for a comprehensive list.

Safety Measures

- Life jackets are available for rent and may be required for certain attractions, especially for children below a certain height. Children should be supervised by guardians at all times.

Recommendations

Advance Reservations: During peak seasons, it's advisable to purchase tickets in advance due to high demand.

Location Information

[NAVER Map]

Name: Asan Spavis (아산 스파비스)

Phone: 031-8092-1900

Address: 288-1 Sinsu-ri Eumbong-myeon

Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do

<https://naver.me/FxFW51PM>

Aquafield at Starfield Anseong

A spa located in the Starfield Mall in Anseong. The facility offers both spa activities and an indoor water play area for winter. Great for families looking for a way to relax.

General Rules and Information

Dress Code

- Water Park: Proper swimwear is required. Hats,

aqua shoes, and goggles are permitted. Use of flippers and large water play equipment is not allowed. (Rashguards and no cotton)

- Sauna (Bath): Swimwear is not permitted. Please shower before entering.
- Tattoo Policy: Unknown

Prohibited Items

- Outside food, burners, glass bottles, and similar items are prohibited to maintain water quality, prevent fire hazards, and ensure a pleasant environment. Water and beverages in PET bottles are allowed.
- Mobile phones are prohibited in lockers and saunas. Taking photos, videos, or making video calls is strictly forbidden.

Safety Measures

- Children under 10 years old and the elderly must be accompanied by a guardian.
- Children over 48 months old cannot enter the opposite-gender bathing area, in accordance with the Public Health Control Act. Children under 48 months and above 95 cm can enter the opposite-gender bathing area with proof of age.

Additional Services

- Lockers: Available for rent to store personal belongings.
- Food and Beverages: On-site restaurants and snack bars offer a variety of options.
- Rental Services: Items such as towels and swimwear are available for rent.

Recommendations

Advance Reservations: During peak seasons, it's advisable to purchase tickets in advance due to high demand.



Location Information

Name: Aquafeld Anseong (아쿠아필드 안성)

Phone: 041-539-2000

Address: 경기 안성시 공도읍 서동대로 3930-39
스타필드 안성 3층

<https://naver.me/FIZn2WAR>

Caribbean Bay Water Park

A large water park with both indoor and outdoor facilities. Open year-round. Inside they have an infant pool, indoor wave pool, indoor pirate adventure pool with jungle gyms and water features, poolside slide, indoor diving pool, a quick-ride side with an intertube, and a quick-ride body slide.



General Rules and Information

Dress Code

- Swimwear: Proper swimwear is required for all water attractions. (Rashguards and no cotton)
- Swim Caps: Wearing a swim cap or hat is mandatory in pools and water attractions.
- Footwear: Aqua shoes are recommended for safety but are not mandatory.
- Tattoo Policy: They have no specific policy regarding tattoos. If you have violent tattoos they may ask you to cover them but generally can't force you to cover them.

Prohibited Items

- Outside food and beverages are generally not allowed.
- Large inflatables (over 1 meter in size) and cer-

tain water toys may be restricted.

- Glass containers and sharp objects are prohibited for safety reasons.
- Note: Specific prohibited items may vary. It's recommended to check the official guidelines or inquire upon arrival for a comprehensive list.

Safety Measures

- Life Jackets: Available for rent and may be required for certain attractions, especially for children below a certain height.
- Supervision: Children should be supervised by guardians at all times.
- Health Restrictions: Some attractions may have height, weight, or health restrictions.

Additional Services

- Lockers: Available for rent to store personal belongings.
- Food and Beverages: On-site restaurants and snack bars offer a variety of options.
- Rental Services: Items such as sunbeds, towels, and swimwear are available for rent.

Location Information

[NAVER Map]

Name: Caribbean Bay (캐리비안베이)

Phone: 031-320-5000

Address: 310 Jeondae-ri Pogok-eup Cheoin-gu

Yongin-si Gyeonggi-do

Link: <https://naver.me/FLybJgtx>

Cheonan Sangnok Water Park

Sangnok Resort Aquapia, located in Cheonan, South Korea, is a water park offering both indoor and outdoor facilities. The park features attractions such as wave pools, lazy rivers, slides, and spa facilities. Operating hours and available facilities may vary depending on the season.

General Rules and Information

Admission Fees

- Vary by season and day of the week. Discounts may be available for local residents, public officials, and special groups.

Attire Requirements

- Swimwear: Proper swimwear is required (Rashguards and no cotton)
- Swim Caps: Wearing a swim cap or hat is mandatory.

- Aqua Shoes: Recommended for safety.
- Tattoo Policy: No policy regarding tattoos and tattooed people can comfortably enter. You will still need rashguards.

Prohibited Items

- Outside food and beverages are not allowed.
- Large inflatables and certain water toys may be restricted.

Facilities

- Indoor Pools: Include wave pools, lazy rivers, and slides.
- Outdoor Pools: Feature children's pools, wave pools, and additional slides.
- Spa Areas: Available for relaxation.

Safety Measures

- Life jackets are available for rent and may be required for certain attractions, especially for children under specific height requirements.
- Lifeguards are stationed throughout the park, but parental supervision is essential for children's safety.



Additional Services

- On-site snack bars offer light refreshments.
- Rental services for sunbeds and other amenities are available.

Recommendations

Advance Reservations: Due to potential capacity limits, especially during peak seasons, it's advisable to check availability and make reservations in advance.

Location Information

[NAVER Map]

Name: Sangnok Aquapia (천안상록리조트아쿠아피아)

Phone: 041-560-9114

Address: 669-1 Jangsan-ri Susin-myeon Dongnam-gu Cheonan-si Chungcheongnam-do

Link: <https://naver.me/Gj6gaQ5S>

Helpful Tips

- Call Ahead: Use 1330 to confirm details like opening hours, prices, and parking.
- Read the Rules: Use Papago or ChatGPT to read the rules posted at each Waterpark upon arrival. It's better to be informed instead of caught off guard by differences.
- Observe and Adapt: Assume you know nothing. Take some time to watch how others around you interact with the park and try to match their energy. Be open to feedback and keep a smart-phone ready for translation if necessary.



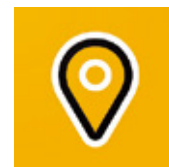
Discover More Water Parks

If these don't suit your needs, search "워터파크" on Instagram or Naver for more options. Share your favorite spots with us on social media!

Join the Pyeongtaek Food & Fun Facebook Group

You are also welcome to join the South of Seoul's Pyeongtaek Food & Fun Facebook Group or Pyeongtaek Travelers to learn more about things to do in South Korea. This South of Seoul moderated community of active and friendly Pyeongtaek international residents makes moving to Pyeongtaek easier. With so many different voices and opinions, it is always refreshing to see everyone's adventures in our local community. In addition, all of the posts shared introduce our community to new places and old places that can feel new all over again.

About the Author



South of Seoul: Founded in 2015, the South of Seoul team consists of volunteers on three continents working together to support English-speaking people traveling or living in South Korea. South of Seoul volunteers work with organizations and individuals across South Korea to improve equitable access

to information across South Korea. Much of South of Seoul's information focuses on Pyeongtaek, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea. Blogs published under the authorship of "South of Seoul" include blogs compiled by multiple volunteers to improve access to standardized information unrelated to individualized personal experiences.

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VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Benefits Administration

Post-9/11 GI Bill: Transferability

What Is Transferability?

The Post-9/11 GI Bill allows Service members to transfer unused education benefits to immediate family members. This applies to officer or enlisted, active duty and Selected Reserve. Qualifying immediate family members are spouses and children. The Service member must have at least six years of service and commit to an additional four years in order to transfer benefits. This policy is set by the Department of Defense because this benefit impacts recruiting and retention.

For more information:

- Visit <https://www.va.gov/education/transfer-post-9-11-gi-bill-benefits/>
- Visit <http://www.defense.gov>. Search "Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits." (non-VA Link)
- Transfer Process - While in the armed forces, transferors will use the milConnect website to designate, modify, and revoke a Transfer of Entitlement request. <https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/> (non-VA Link).

Eligible Individuals

You must first be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. You must also be a member of the Armed Forces (active duty or Selected Reserve, officer or enlisted) on or after Aug. 1, 2009, and:

- Have at least six years of military service (active duty or Selected Reserve) on the date of election.
- Members must be eligible to be retained for 4 years from the date of election and not be precluded, prior to approval, by either standard policy (Service or DoD) or statute.
- Transfer requests can only be submitted and approved while on active duty.

Eligible Family Members

If you are approved to transfer your educational assistance benefit, you may transfer to:

- Your spouse
 - One or more of your children
 - Any combination of your spouse and children
- A family member must be eligible for benefits and enrolled in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System (DEERS).



Budget-Friendly Shopping in Korea: Daiso

다이소

By Jason Ebersole

For most soldiers, life in Korea can mean living on a budget and possibly arriving light due to weight restrictions. Back in the States, local dollar stores supply cheap essentials often in cramped stores that weren't always the best for looks. Korea is a little different.

Whenever a newcomer asks where they get essential household items on any number of forums, the common refrain is a Korean gem – Daiso. This chain of stores takes the dollar shop concept and elevates it. Daiso, or 다이소, is actually a Japanese business (which is another place to visit when in Japan) but has branches all over the world, including the United States. As of 2023, Daiso Korea separated from the original Daiso Japan though, making Korean Daisos all fully Korean-owned.

The Daiso stores in South Korea can vary in size from a single floor, like the one in Paengseong outside

USAG Humphreys, to underground locations like the largest Daiso at the Gangnam Express Bus Terminal Branch, to the 7-story Daiso in Hongdae, or the tallest, the 13-story Daiso in Myeong-dong. All stores are well-lit, very clean, and organized by type of items and their use. Using Naver, finding the nearest Daiso (or DaiSo) is pretty simple, and most are even located on or near public transportation for those with limited off-installation mobility.

Now, what might one find at Daiso? Well, almost anything short of major fashion, electronics, and appliances. Wandering a Daiso can be a fun excursion to just see what you might find. Each store is has a varied inventory that is organized into areas, so finding items for your kitchen, bath, or even campout, is relatively easy. Naturally, smaller stores may be more limited in selection, but even the small one outside Osan Air Base's main gate packs a lot in a little space.



Shoppers can easily build a complete serving set for a family of any size at Daiso, including plates, bowls, silverware (both Western and Korean), cups, and even cooking utensils on a budget. Stocking your bathroom with most things you might need is easy at Daiso too. Other sections include beauty supplies, office supplies, crafts, toys, and even snacks. The stores even have special themes throughout the year with limited items. If you're interested in keeping up with these limited items and special promotions, follow the Korean Daiso chain on Facebook and Instagram as they announce information frequently.

So how much does it cost? Most items run between 1,000 and 5,000 won (₩). That's roughly \$0.60 to \$3.50, depending on exchange rates. Not entirely a 'dollar' shop, but still very affordable compared to items at Exchange or other Korean stores like eMart or HomePlus. Items must be cheap then. Not exactly. Many of the items are decent to good quality and

should last most tours in Korea, maybe even longer.

Daiso also has a few interesting surprises in store. If you enjoy the outdoors, Daiso carries some decent small items such as smaller utensils for lightweight camping and even warm covers for the more common camping chairs. Besides the limited-themed items, the stores can carry branded items for some of your favorite pop culture characters such as Marvel and Disney brands and even BTS! Best advice, find one and explore sooner rather than later.

Shopping at Daiso is not much different than any other store in Korea. Now there is one quirk about checking out at Daiso – which barcode to use. The register will ask you to scan the "2D barcode", which is a small QR code usually next to the price. After a few trips, you'll learn what to look for with ease. Some items, mostly non-Daiso brands like drinks, will use the usual barcode.

Bringing your own reusable bag is a plus, as it will save you a few won. If you don't have one, there are plenty of bags to purchase at the checkout, from small ones that will fit in a purse or backpack when folded, to larger ones that border on airline carry-on size. Most stores will have a cashier, but self-checkout is more common now. The terminals all have an English option, so no worries there and they take American credit cards. The registers can be small, but don't fret as they





are still easy to use.

For those assigned to Korea, Daiso is an essential first stop that is convenient and budget-friendly, offering both practicality and comfort. It is a treasure trove of essentials with an accessible and affordable shopping experience. Visit today if you are looking to create a comfortable living space without breaking the bank.

Daiso Information

Website: www.daisomall.co.kr
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/daisolife>
 Instagram: <http://instagram.com/daisolife>
 Naver: <https://blog.naver.com/daisoblog>
 TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@daisolife>
 Daiso Hauls Community Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/daiso.hauls.korea>

Top Daiso Locations in Seoul

Largest Daiso in Korea

Daiso Gangnam Express Bus Terminal Branch
 19-4 Banpo-dong Seocho-gu Seoul
<https://naver.me/xeASwxjw>

7 Story Hongdae Store

Daiso Hongik Univ. 2 Ho Branch
 167-29 Donggyo-dong Mapo-gu Seoul
<https://naver.me/G8suaeKq>

13 Story Myeong-dong Store

Daiso Myeong-dong Station Branch
 13-25 Namsan-dong 3(sam)-ga Jung-gu Seoul
<https://naver.me/5Rhi2W27>

Top Daiso Locations in Pyeongtaek Area

Daiso Pyeongtaek Segyo Branch

406-2 Segyo-dong Pyeongtaek-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/GKU2c2Yn>

Daiso Asan First Village Branch

17-3 Sinhang-ri Dunpo-myeon Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do
<https://naver.me/Fmf5F6nq>

Daiso Asan Dunpo Branch

1377 Seokgok-ri Dunpo-myeon Asan-si Chungcheongnam-do
<https://naver.me/5XJyP1eo>

Daiso Pyeongtaek Sosabeol District Branch

1090-2 Bijeon-dong Pyeongtaek-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/FCAfn8Rh>

Daiso Pyeongtaek Godeok Beuriti Si Branch

2618-3 Godeok-dong Pyeongtaek-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/x4Fe0H72>

Top Daiso Locations in Daegu Area

Daiso Daegu Myeongdeok Ne Street Branch

1791-1 Daemyeong-dong Nam-gu Daegu
<https://naver.me/FMAqZ9gr>

Daiso Daegu Bolli Branch

343 Gamsam-dong Dalseo-gu Daegu
<https://naver.me/FK5IkQCV>

About the Author

Jason is a DoD civilian assigned to USFK. His family, including fellow author Christie, have been in Korea for three years. Jason likes to explore, including various stores across Korea. He also dabbles in graphic design and photography.



Humphreys United Club is pleased to offer financial assistance to our base community through community grants and scholarships.

For clubs and organizations seeking financial assistance, our Community Outreach Committee reviews grant applications on a quarterly basis in September, November, January and March. The Humphreys United Club is eager to support endeavors with a substantial impact on the community.

Community Outreach Grants FAQ

• When are the application deadlines?

- September 22
- November 1
- January 2
- March 1

• When must funds be used by?

Any funds received as a result of this request must be used within 30 days and for the intended purpose as outlined on the request form. Exceptions to the 30-day policy must be requested in writing prior to the deadline.

• When do recipients of grants submit receipts?

Recipients of Community Outreach Grant funds are required to submit their receipts to the United Club no later than 30 days after the funds have been expended. Any unused funds must be returned to the United Club immediately.

• Important recipient requirement:

Share digital photos of the grant in action with outreach@humphreysunited.org and consent to HUC publishing photographs in any publication, electronic and print, presentation, report, and HUC-related websites and social media sites and any other similar ways deemed appropriate by HUC.



For more Information:
Outreach@humphreysunited.org

www.humphreysunited.org



Cute is a Compliment

By Kate Nelson

In Western society, “cute” brings to mind youth or a diminutive size. Children are called cute. Baby animals are cute. A relatable, approachable person can also be called cute. Yet here in South Korea, the attitude of “cute” seems to hold more value and is more widely accepted. Any person of any age can be called cute and appears to be even more important than the tribute “beautiful” in Korea.

While speaking with a RoK

soldier in his 30s, I noticed he had an adorable figurine hanging from his backpack. It was similar to many of the keychain characters one can find in Korea, but this adornment looked like a friendly robot. His family may have given it to him or he may have purchased it himself. When I asked him the character’s name, he followed up with the encompassing explanatory phrase, “It’s cute.” It was a conversation closer where I should have easily understood that it

held value because it was cute. Cute represents a high value in a group-related society.

Collectivism culture can be identified by the priorities of the group taking precedence over the goals of the individual. South Korea is unique in its collectivism as it is a country that believes the blood of a Korean makes one part of a large family. The word for older sister is used, even if the Korean lady herself is not known, as a reminder that all Koreans should relate to and care for one

another as extended family. So then, when someone or something is called “cute” in a collectivist society, the person or object is useful, relatable, and can contribute to the greater good with humility. The social hierarchy is built largely upon the family model, which impresses upon people that good manners include behavior that is acceptable around children and elders. A willingness to serve the family and become integral to the family’s routines and needs is central.

Within the code of “cute,” people are immediately seen as collaborative and synergistic. For example, one should dress and act modestly to function positively around family. There is less date-night behavior and more familial conduct. Immodesty would be offensive to grandmothers and children alike. How could a woman attend a family event and participate fully if her standards were disrespectful? In the same way, manners are also of the utmost importance. If a man were to act proudly and rudely to others, he would not be able to relate well in a group environment. His actions would not contribute daily towards the common good.

In South Korea, cute has a deeper significance than in Western culture: cute is not merely decorative and pleasant. In Korea, cute embraces and is part of the society that encircles all. A graceful movement of dress, manners, and adaptability lends one to bend and merge with the crowd. It gives and takes with care and a bow to the traditional order of the society in which it functions. It understands hierarchy, submits when necessary, and directs others when chosen. Cute brings energy and life to the whole in which it resides. Cute is a heart attitude that guides the entire way of life and is a way to express playfulness and joy in the warmth of the collectivist framework.

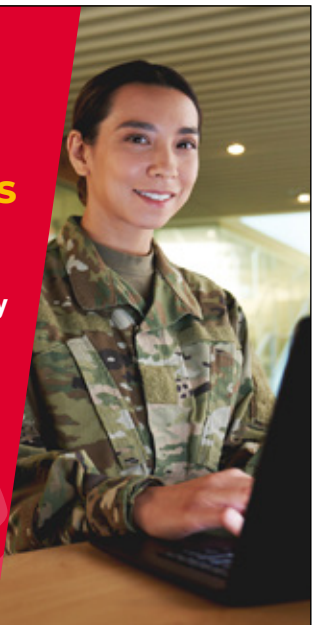
About the Author

Kate enjoys experiencing new cultures and worldviews while sharing the love of God. As a military spouse, she encourages her children to bloom where planted and enjoy the ‘now’ moment in their lives. She is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite and Liberty University.



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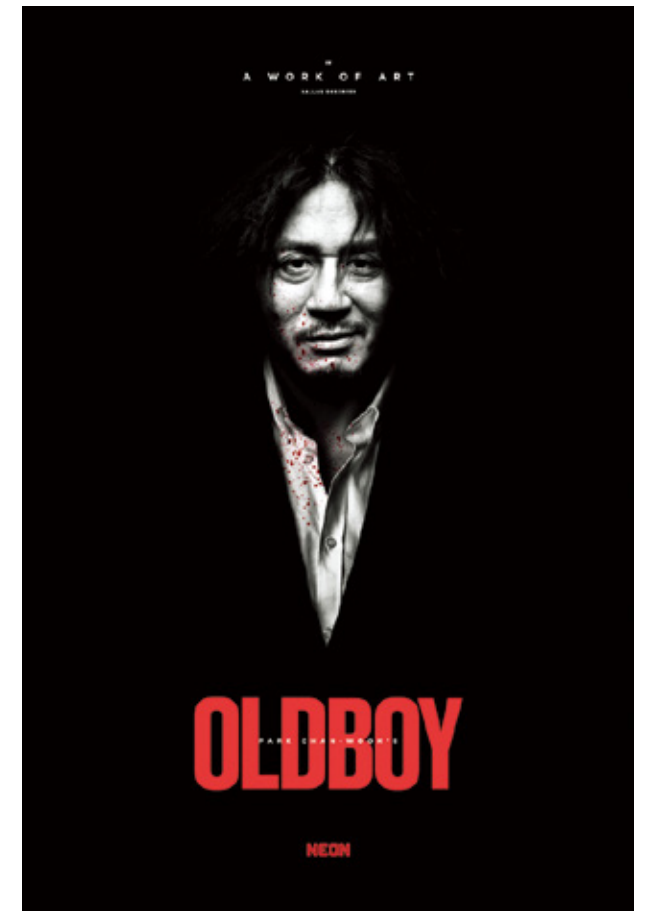


KOREAN CINEMA

By Cord Scott

In this era of constant entertainment, Hollywood, and the seemingly endless cycle of sequels and tired concepts, Korea has offered a new, fresh approach to the entertainment industry. While there have been movies made in Korea for decades, the current TV shows and movies offer a variety of entertainment.

Much of the present trend started with two significant movies in recent years. The first was the international phenomenon *Train to Busan* (Korean title *Busanhaeng*, 2016), which took the zombie movie and amplified it substantially. Based on an original story by Park Joo-suk, the claustrophobia of a train is combined with zombies and a general sense of confinement. While zombie movies in the US tend to be gory (think *Walking Dead*) the Korean variations are more based on psychological barriers. The movie inspired an animated prequel *Seoul Station* (2016), a sequel *Peninsula* (2020), a graphic novel *Hellbound* (2020), and a



forthcoming US remake of the movie, and a South Korean sequel written by the original director Yeon Sung-ho.

The second movie to really bring Korean entertainment to the forefront was the 2019 movie *Parasite*. This movie is hard to categorize as it is part horror, part comedy, and part social commentary on the disparity of social classes within Korea. This movie generated such interest that it was nominated for several awards and was awarded the Best Picture Oscar for 2019. This was not the best foreign picture, but the main category that is usually dominated by American pictures. If you have not watched it, please give it a go.

Korean movies have often made an impact that they are often remade. The 2013 movie *Oldboy*, directed by Spike Lee, was based on the original movie from 2003 of the same name, directed by Park Chan-wook. While the





remake was okay, the original had more original scenes and did not quite fall into the Hollywood trap of adding in gratuitous sex and or violence to gain more viewers. The original was great and should be viewed.

As with anything Hollywood produces, there are some interesting films on a variety of historical topics. *The Admiral* is based on Yi Sun-shin and looks at the late 1500s when Korea was invaded by Japan. This was where famous "turtle ships" were developed. In more recent terms, the movie *Northern Limit Line* centered on the real-life attack on the Chamsuri 357 boat in 2002, during the 2002 World Cup semi-finals. A replica of the real ship is at the Korean War Memorial, and the actual boat is at the RoK Navy Headquarters in Pyeongtaek port.

Even the 1970s Hollywood staple of the disaster movie has been taken on in more recent Korean cinema. Two movies that center on this theme are *Pandora*, on a nuclear power plant meltdown, and *Tunnel* on a tunnel collapse of a Korean expressway. Both movies deal with the disaster itself and the concept of survival, but also

the bigger issue of greed at the expense of safety protocols.

Even TV shows have expanded the viewing pleasure. Some TV shows that have had success include *Kingdom* (a historical zombie drama), *The Glory* (bullying, classism, and the idea of revenge), *Move to Heaven* (autism, death, and a disjointed society where generations are alone or forgotten), and perhaps the most significant in recent history, *Squid Games*, which centers on classes, greed, and societies centered on entertainment. With the recent release of Season Two on Netflix, and season three being filmed now, it still has a popularity that prevails.

Some Korean movies have even attained cult stature. One movie in this realm is the North Korean kaiju movie *Pulgasary*. This movie has mythology, a discussion of power and the masses, and a hokey, movie monster that is controlled by others. The story behind the making of this movie is even more crazy. It was produced by a South Korean director Shin Sang-ok, and the whole story – including kidnapping, filming, and escape - of the making has been the subject

of the graphic novel *Madame Oh and the Monsters*.

Regardless of the format in which we might watch, Korean cinema and TV are quite interesting and engaging to watch. Many of the shows mentioned here are available on streaming platforms such as Netflix. They also allow the viewer to experience other cultures.



About the Author

Cord A. Scott has a Doctorate in American History from Loyola University Chicago and currently serves as a Professor of History for the University of Maryland Global Campus for Asia. He is the author of *Comics and Conflict*, *Four Colour Combat*, and *The Mud and the Mirth: Marine Corps Comics of WWI*. He has written for several encyclopedias, academic journals such as *The International Journal of Comic Art*, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, *The Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, and several books on aspects of cultural history. He has lived all over the Pacific and currently resides in Okinawa, Japan.

Gisaeng

A Group of Artists Who Preserved the Art of the Joseon Dynasty

By Seung-Kook Kim,
Traditional Culture Columnist



Shin Yun-bok's *Double Sword Dance*, by the famous late Joseon Dynasty painter, depicts a banquet where music and sword-dancing women come together.

A gisaeng (妓生) or ginyeo (妓女) is a woman whose profession was to entertain at banquets or drinking parties with music, dance, or other forms of performance in Joseon Dynasty. Gisaengs were distinct from women involved in prostitution, as the latter were often referred to as "yunyeo (遊女)." High-ranking gisaengs owned their own homes and wealth, and some even married. The most prestigious gisaengs had access to the royal palace. They were sought after by the elite, who would invite them to perform at their homes or in the countryside, where they enjoyed music, dance, poetry, and intellectual discussions.



Shin Yun-bok's *Portrait of a Beauty*. Through this painting, one can imagine the appearance of Gisaeng Hwang Jini from that time.

It is said that the origin of gisaeng began in the ancient Three Kingdoms period, when women from conquered territories were reduced to yunyeo. The Joseon Dynasty, after its founding, established a centralized system and appointed gisaengs to the government offices in both central and local areas. Gisaengs were necessary to entertain at official events and to comfort government officials for their hard work, so most gisaengs during the Joseon Dynasty were "gangi" (官妓), or official gisaengs.

Gisaengs: Systematic Education in Poetry, Calligraphy, Painting, Dance, and Song

Gisaengs typically began their formal education at around 15 years of age, after they were initiated into the "Jangakwon" (a training institution) where they received

systematic training. They were taught to specialize in at least one musical instrument. Given that their future clients were often royalty, high-ranking officials, and scholars, their education included calligraphy, painting, dance, song, playing musical instruments, poetry, reading books, conversation skills, and proper dining etiquette. They had to be well-versed not only in etiquette but also in writing and communication.

It is well known that some women of high-ranking noble families during the Joseon era, like Heo Nanseolheon and Yi Okbong, were skilled in poetry and literature. In addition to these noble women, many gisaengs, such as Hwang Jini, were also proficient in poetry, calligraphy, and painting. Gisaengs like Hwang Jini from Songdo (Kaeseong), Hongdo from Gyeongju, Maechang from Buan, and Iljihong from Seongcheon became famous not only for their beauty but also for their skills in literature and the arts. Gisaengs were skilled in poetry, calligraphy, and painting, as well as other forms of entertainment, and from today's perspective, the gisaeng group could be regarded as a group of intellectuals and artists who led and passed down the art of the Joseon Dynasty.

The gisaeng Hwang Jini, whom we have encountered in textbooks, novels, and dramas and films, may have been a low-class citizen by social class, but she was highly skilled in entertainment, poetry, and painting. She was also an intellectual and romantic woman who even overwhelmed the educated Joseon aristocrats. For this reason, Hwang Jini is not viewed as a crude woman who engaged in prostitution.

Classification of Gisaengs: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Class Gisaengs

After completing their education, gisaengs were classified into three ranks based on their appearance and abilities: 1st class (1pa), 2nd class (2pa), and 3rd class (3pa). A 1st class gisaeng was the highest-ranked, performing at royal courts and high-ranking government officials' gatherings, showcasing dance, song, and various other talents such as poetry, calligraphy, painting, and scholarship. The 2nd class gisaengs were divided into "gangi" (official gisaengs) and "mingi" (civilian gisaengs). Gangi entertained government officials, while mingi performed for ordinary noblemen, singing and dancing for them. Gisaengs like Hwang Jini were classified as 2nd class. The 3rd class gisaengs were the lowest-ranked, entertaining commoners at



Gisaengs excelled in literature, arts, and performance. (Photos from the early 1900s.)

drinking parties and performing low-class songs and dances while often engaging in prostitution.

Gisaengs were skilled not only in literature, poetry, calligraphy, and painting but also in performing arts. From today's perspective, they can be regarded as the group of artists who led and preserved the art of the Joseon Dynasty. Many gisaengs also took courageous actions to save the country in times of peril. For example, during the Japanese invasions of Korea, the gisaeng "Nongae" from Jinju famously lured a Japanese general to embrace her and then jumped into the Namgang River, sacrificing herself for her country. Other gisaengs such as "Eoran," who contributed to the victory at the Battle of Myeongnyang, "Gyewoelhyang," who played a decisive role in beheading a Japanese commander at the Battle of Pyongyang, and "Sanhong," who refused to become a mistress to the traitors of the Joseon Dynasty and chose death instead, are also well-known for their heroic deeds.

The Decline of the Image of Gisaeng During the Japanese Occupation

As the Korean Empire fell to Japan, the gisaeng system inevitably came to an end. During the Japanese occupation, the gisaengs' educational institutions and the gisaeng unions that supervised their work and received payment for their services kept the tradition alive. However, some gisaengs were involved in prostitution, which led to the perception that all gisaengs were part of a crude and unethical group. This view tainted the very folk performances

and cultural traditions they carried out.

The Japanese colonial period was a time when many aspects of Korean culture were disrupted, distorted, and degraded. The aftereffects of Japanese gisaeng tourism in the 1970s and 1980s continue to linger in the dark corners of modern Korean society, leaving a persistent stain on every area of life.

In conclusion, the image of the gisaeng has evolved significantly throughout Korea's history. While originally a respected class of intellectuals and artists who contributed to the preservation of culture and even the defense of the nation, the modern perception of gisaeng has often been clouded by negative associations. It is crucial to recognize the complexity of their legacy—these women were not merely entertainers or prostitutes, but skilled artists and intellectuals whose contributions shaped the cultural and artistic landscape of the Joseon Dynasty. The tragic distortion of their image highlights the importance of understanding history with nuance, and honoring the true dignity and talents of these women who were once central to the cultural fabric of Korea.



About the Author

Seung-Kook Kim is currently Head of the Traditional Cultural Contents Research Center and a contributing cultural columnist to *Monthly Guest* and other publications.

Formerly, he was Chairman of the Nowon Foundation for Arts and Culture, CEO of Suwon Cultural Foundation, President of Korea Cultural Arts Center Association and he has served as Chairman of the Seoul Cultural Heritage Committee.

A Love Story in Every Bowl: Tuscan Tortellini Soup

By Melissa Edwards-Whittington



Nothing warms my husband’s heart more than a steaming bowl of my Tuscan Tortellini Soup when the temperatures drop and the air turns crisp. I’ve been making this dish for years, and while the origins of the recipe are a little hazy, its ease of preparation and versatility have earned it a cherished place in our home.

With February being the month of love, it feels like the perfect time to share this comforting recipe and the enchanting legend of tortellini pasta. Prepare this dish for your loved ones and pair it with the captivating tale of how tortellini came to be.

The Legend of Tortellini

Deeply rooted in Italian folklore, the story of tortellini is one of romance and divine beauty. As the tale goes, the goddess Venus (or, in some versions, Aphrodite) and Bacchus, the god of wine, were traveling through Emilia-Romagna. They stopped at an inn in Castelfranco Emilia, between Bologna and Modena. Enchanted by Venus’ beauty, the innkeeper tried to catch a glimpse of her through the keyhole of her room.

Through the keyhole, he saw her navel—a vision so perfect and inspiring that he rushed to his kitchen to recreate its shape. The result was tortellini, a small, ring-shaped pasta that captures the essence of her beauty.

Why I Love Making Tuscan Tortellini Soup

Cooking this soup has become a tradition in our

home, especially during the colder months. It’s not just about the warmth it provides or the incredible flavor—though those are reasons enough to love it. Making Tuscan Tortellini Soup is a way to slow down and reconnect with what matters most: family, comfort, and a little bit of fun in the kitchen.

When I start sautéing the sausage and chopping the vegetables, the fantastic smells enchant me. By the time it is ready, the whole house is filled with the irresistible aroma of garlic, tomatoes, and spices. It also reminds me of the times that I have made this dish for my mother. She loves this recipe so much that when we moved to Korea, I had to share it with her so she could make it while we were abroad.

This soup is more than just a meal; it symbolizes the love and laughter we share as a family. When I serve it topped with croutons or paired with crusty sourdough bread, it feels like giving a warm hug to everyone at the table.

Main Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ pound spicy Italian sausage
- ½ pound sweet Italian sausage
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes (or 1 (750 g) carton finely chopped tomatoes)
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- ½ teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 (9-ounce) package refrigerated or frozen cheese tortellini
- ⅓ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup croutons (or sourdough bread)

Optional Add-Ins

- 1 bell pepper, diced
- 5-6 white button mushrooms, sliced





Instructions

1. Sauté the Sausage and Vegetables: Heat a drizzle of olive oil in a large stockpot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the Italian sausage and cook until browned, about 3-5 minutes, breaking it into crumbles as it cooks. Drain any excess fat.
2. Add the garlic and onion to the pot. Stir in optional ingredients like bell pepper or mushrooms, if desired. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, about 3-4 minutes.
3. Prepare the Broth: Whisk in the chicken stock, crushed tomatoes, basil, oregano, and red pepper flakes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add 1 cup of water for a thinner broth. Bring the mixture to a boil.
4. Cook the Tortellini: Stir in the tortellini, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Let it cook until tender and cooked through about 5-6 minutes.
5. Finish with Cream and Cheese: Stir in the heavy cream and Parmesan cheese until well combined and heated, about 2-3 minutes.
6. Serve and Enjoy: Ladle the Soup into bowls and garnish with croutons or serve alongside warm sourdough bread for a hearty finish.

Properly Store Your Tuscan Tortellini Soup

To enjoy leftovers at their best, follow these tips:

- **Cool the Soup Quickly:** Allow the soup to cool to room temperature before storing. This prevents condensation and bacterial growth. Avoid leaving it out for more than 2 hours.
- **Separate the Tortellini (Optional):** Remove the pasta from the broth before storing it to prevent it from becoming overly soft and mushy. Alternatively, cook the tortellini only in the portion of soup you'll eat immediately.
- **Use Airtight Storage Containers:** Store the Soup in the proper airtight containers. This preserves its flavor and prevents it from absorbing other odors.
- **Refrigerator and Freezer Options:**
 - Refrigerator: Store for up to 3-4 days.
 - Freezer: Freeze the Soup (without tortellini) for 2-3 months. Use freezer-safe containers or heavy-duty bags, leaving room for expansion.



- **Reheat Properly:**
 - Thaw: If frozen, thaw the soup in the fridge overnight.
 - Reheat: Place in a pot and warm up on the stovetop over medium heat. Alternatively, you can heat it in the microwave using short intervals and stirring frequently. If your soup needs thinning out, add a splash of chicken stock or water to adjust the consistency.

Building the Best Tuscan Tortellini Soup

This soup is as versatile as it is delicious. Want a milder version? Omit the red pepper flakes and use only sweet Italian sausage. Would you prefer more heat? Swap the sweet sausage for spicy and double up on the red pepper flakes. Bell peppers and mushrooms add a lovely depth of flavor but are entirely optional.

This Tuscan Tortellini Soup is a delicious winter warmer and a beautiful way to celebrate love and culinary heritage. Enjoy the flavors, share the legend, and create cherished memories with every bowl!

About the Author

Melissa Edwards-Whittington has been in Korea for over 7 years. She and her husband have a YouTube channel, "KimchiRednecks", where they share about life in Korea, places to eat and visit in Korea, and cooking. They also have a YouTube channel, Shining With KimchiRednecks, dedicated to their hobby of making whiskey and brandy at home. They are also parents to three precocious senior Shih Tzu daughters, Minion, Sookie, and Mayhem who are featured often in their social media.

As Social Media Marketing Manager for United on the RoK Mag, Melissa brings her passion for the military community to life through compelling digital content. Her expertise spans content creation, social media marketing management, and community engagement through connectedness.

Melissa further extends her community impact through the South of Seoul, a local organization enhancing expatriate life in Korea. Through her online media management with South of Seoul, original content, established blog presence, and fostering multiple groups for language exchanges and content creators, she offers unique insights into life in South Korea. She has also volunteered for Pyeongtaek Insight as part of their content creation team. Her work consistently bridges cultural gaps while fostering connections within the international community.

Follow Melissa and her family here:

YouTube: @kimchirednecks
 @shiningwithkimchirednecks
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Unemployed and Abroad: My Path to Healing, Growth, and Self-Discovery

By Mary Lane Montoya

If there's one thing that has overshadowed much of my time in South Korea, it's confronting something I feared the most—unemployment.

I arrived at Camp Humphreys with a job I loved: it was remote-friendly, and my supervisors let me work in a different time zone while traveling back to the States for events and meetings as needed. Through employment, I could express my creativity by designing graphics, writing social media posts and blogs, and collaborating with a fantastic team to produce top-notch events.

For two years, I thrived in that role and felt like I was finally able to feel accomplished—until November 2023, when I was laid off along with 40 others due to the company's financial troubles. It had nothing to do with my performance; it was simply a cost-cutting measure that would supposedly fix any financial hemorrhaging.

In the aftermath of that fateful Zoom call that I was dumb enough to answer at the gym, I experienced every stage of grief. First came anger directed towards myself for not challenging the layoff, and I desperately searched for someone to blame or beg for a second chance.



The job hunting started immediately, wishfully thinking it would help me move on. But each rejection email and unreturned message only increased my self-doubt. Despite knowing I was a strong candidate, the constant silence and canned responses chipped away at my confidence.

Soon after the layoff, I received a small severance, and due to mismanaged tax reporting at my previous company, I couldn't file for unemployment. With the severance dwindling, I took on low-paying freelance work stateside just to

cover major bills, while my spouse shouldered more financial responsibility. "This would only be temporary" I kept telling myself, but as the weeks turned into months, my hope felt thinner than paper.

In the past, I've dealt with anxiety and postpartum depression, but never did I think I'd fall so deeply into despair over a job. Some days were so dark I wondered if simply fading away might be easier. Living in another country can magnify feelings of isolation—especially when your primary support system is thousands of miles away. Eventually,

I realized that a job can become an enormous part of our identity—often without knowing it. When it's lost, everything feels unstable, and it's easy to spiral into self-doubt. Yet, as dark and as painful as that period was, it became a turning point where genuine growth and healing could begin.

My goal was to first prioritize my mental health by reaching out to a counselor and opening up to trusted friends. These honest conversations helped me see that unemployment didn't equate to a lack of worth. Each day I also tried to find small victories: volunteering for creative projects purely for fun, rediscovering old hobbies, or simply walking around Seoul whenever my family and I had a chance to visit. Each act of self-care reminded me that my value extended beyond my résumé.

Over time, things began to stabilize. More consistent freelance opportunities came, I launched a business from scratch, and I accepted a job on base to acquaint myself with in-person office work after such a long stint at home. I hadn't realized how much I missed face-to-face interaction. Relearning those daily rhythms played a huge role in helping me feel "normal" again.

Throughout this journey, I learned several key lessons:

Acknowledge Your Feelings

It's normal to grieve the loss of a job you loved. Let yourself feel sadness, frustration, or disappointment. Recognizing your emotions is the first step toward processing them.

Seek Support

Whether it's friends, family, mental health professionals, or online

communities, don't isolate yourself. Talking openly with someone who genuinely listens—without judgment—can be transformative.



Reframe Your Perspective

It's easy to measure your worth by your job performance. Remember that you're so much more than a title on your business card. Reflect on what brings you joy, where you excel, and what truly motivates you. This mindset shift can open doors to new possibilities.

Take Small Steps Forward

Trying to fix everything overnight is overwhelming. Believe me, I tried to justify sleepless nights with some kind of progress. Instead, focus on

manageable tasks—like updating your résumé, applying for a few positions a week, or pursuing a passion project. Each step, no matter how small, counts.

Practice Self-Care

Make time for activities that nourish your mind and body—meditation, exercise, journaling, or simply taking breaks to do something you love. Self-care isn't a luxury; it's a necessity for your well-being.

Ultimately, I found hope. By facing anxieties head-on and allowing myself the time and space to heal, I managed to rebuild my confidence and envision a new direction for my life. This chapter reminded me that setbacks can pave the way for fresh starts, and I'm stronger for having gone through it. If 2024 was the year I struggled, 2025 would be my year to become the hero in a new story, taking on challenges with strength and courage.

If you're in a similar situation—unsure of what comes next—please know that help is out there, and you're not alone. Keep sharing your story, lean on the people who care about you, and remember that your worth isn't tied to a single role or workplace. You have so much to offer, and this difficult moment is just one part of your story.



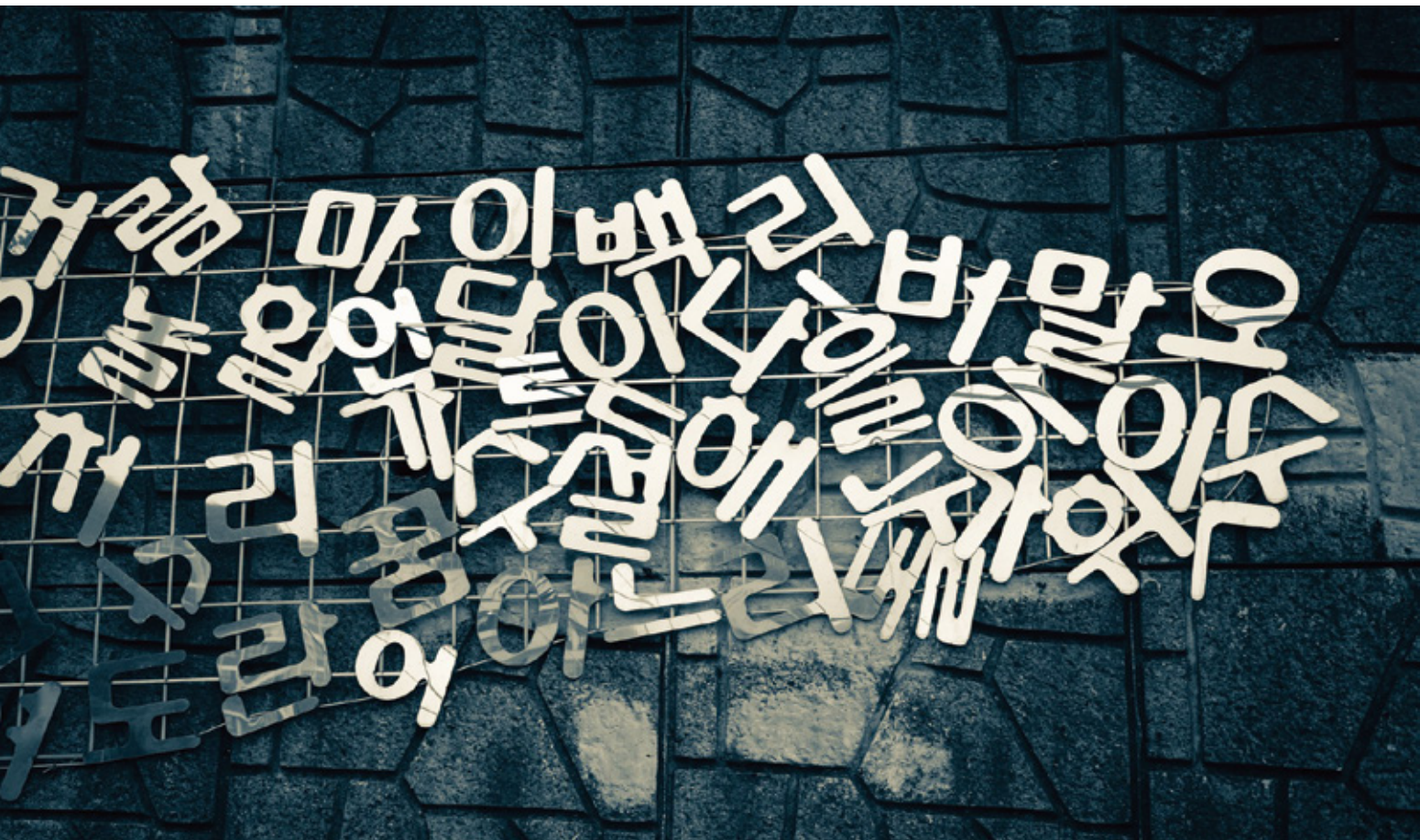
About the Author

Mary Lane Montoya is a dynamic digital marketing expert with a heartfelt commitment to supporting others. Her journey towards making a difference was sparked by personal challenges encountered during an overseas military relocation. Following a tumultuous period marked by the trials of a rough PCS move, unemployment hurdles, and child-care struggles, Mary recognized a common thread among military spouses facing similar obstacles associated with overseas living. Thus, she embarked on a mission to enact positive change, birthing The OCONUS Project to address the unique needs of military families like hers.

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Unlocking Korean: The Secrets to Learning the Language

Written by Bianca Del Carmen and Evelyn Chai
Photography and Images by Evelyn Chai, Y.H. Lee, and Ysamar Gómez



Learning a new language can feel overwhelming, especially when the language has its own alphabet and when the sentence structure is so different from English. What if I told you that learning Korean is not only manageable but can also be incredibly fun? Today is your lucky day because I'm going to share a couple of secrets to mastering Korean. It all boils down to two things: finding your motivation and a solid learning platform.

Finding Your "Why"

Before diving into grammar rules or vocabulary lists, take a moment to ask yourself...Why do you want to learn Korean? Maybe you want to connect more deeply with Korean culture, communicate better with locals during your time in Korea, or enjoy your favorite K-dramas and K-pop without relying on subtitles. Whatever your reason, that motivation will be the driving force that keeps you going when the learning process feels slow or challenging.

Living in South Korea gives you a unique advantage. You're surrounded by the language every day, so why not use that to your benefit? Greet your local convenience store clerk in Korean, read street signs aloud, or practice ordering your meals in Korean. These small efforts may not seem like much at first, but each exposure builds your confidence and strengthens your connection to the community around you.

Choosing the Right Platform

Once you've tapped into your motivation, the next step is finding a learning platform that works for you. Fortunately, there are plenty of resources to help you on your Korean learning journey. If you like longer-form content, YouTube channels offer great content on everything from basic phrases to advanced grammar. YouTube is great when you're on the go, and you just pop in your headphones and multitask while learning Korean!

If you're seeking some interaction while learning Korean, social media platforms like Facebook have groups dedicated to language learners. If you are looking for a more personalized approach, it is my pleasure to invite you into our supportive Korean learning Facebook community! To help support Korean learners, I run a Facebook group called, "Korean Language Support," which focuses on helping the military community master Korean basics! Additionally, if you prefer short-form content, you'll find countless social media accounts like mine, dedicated to teaching Korean in fun and memorable ways.

Looking for something even more tailored? Check out my free Korean 101 course at the Boram Language Institute, which provides a solid foundation for understanding the basics of the language. What is Boram? The word Boram (보람) in Korean means a sense of reward, fulfillment, or satisfaction that comes from achieving something meaningful and is often

used to describe the feeling of accomplishment after hard work. Whether you're just starting or need a refresher, the classes at the Boram Language Institute are designed to help you feel confident and motivated as you learn. We want you to feel self-confident with the new skills you are learning.

The Magic of Hangul

One of the most fascinating aspects of learning Korean is discovering just how accessible the language can be if you take the time to practice. Unlike some other Asian languages, Korean uses an alphabet called Hangul. It's phonetic, logical, and designed to be easy to learn. With just a few days of focused practice, you can learn to read and write in Hangul. Understanding what you're reading takes a bit more time, but mastering the alphabet is already half the battle.

2025 Is Your Year!

This year, I encourage you to focus on mastering the basics: starting with the 14 consonants and 10 vowels of Hangul. Once you've got those down, you can start forming syllables and building words. Think of it like solving a puzzle—it's challenging yet satisfying, and your progress will feel like a huge success.

Once you're able to read Hangul, you'll also start to recognize Konglish words—terms borrowed from English but pronounced with a Korean twist. These words can be your best friends when building vocabulary and getting used to Korean pronunciation.

A Little Effort Goes A Long Way

At first glance, this might seem like a lot to unpack, but once you get used to seeing Korean on a more regular basis, you begin to see how easy and fun it is for foreigners living in Korea.

As we kick off this new year, it's the perfect time to stay consistent with your learning goals. It's easy to get overwhelmed and feel tempted to give up, but remember, slow and steady wins the race. Break your goals into small, achievable steps. Learning just a few key phrases can significantly improve your experience in Korea.

And don't be afraid to make mistakes. Language learning is all about trial and error. The next time you're out and about, challenge yourself to use a new phrase, even if you're unsure about it. Most Koreans



King Sejong the Great (1397-1450) is credited with inventing the Korean alphabet.

appreciate the effort and will often help you improve. Learning Korean is one of the most rewarding things you can do during your time in South Korea. With the right motivation and tools, you'll be amazed at how quickly you can go from zero to speaking Korean! If you are looking for a personal and interactive way to learn a new language and to gain a sense of "Boram/보람", contact Bianca and join the Boram Community.

About the Author

Bianca Del Carmen was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico. As a military-connect child, she grew up all around the world, allowing her to experience many cultures. Bianca graduated from the W. P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University with a major in Business Marketing. Bianca has lived in South Korea for over 12 years now and resides with her husband in the Daegu area with their three children. As the founder of the Boram Language Institute, Bianca offers lessons in English, Korean, and Mandarin to students online.



Website: www.boramlanguageinstitute.com
 Blog: <https://www.boramlanguageinstitute.com/blog>
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Love Across Timezones: Strengthening Military Marriages

By Tyrese Cook

Military life is a world of contrasts—where great rewards are often accompanied by great challenges. For military spouses, one of the most significant challenges is maintaining a strong and healthy marriage during long periods of separation. Whether it's due to military schools or an unaccompanied assignment, the distance can feel overwhelming.

Distance doesn't have to weaken your connection. In fact, with intentionality, creativity, and the right tools, long-distance separations can help deepen your relationship, foster new levels of trust, and strengthen your bond in ways that carry over into your time together. As a fellow military spouse, I've compiled five tried-and-true strategies, rooted in the five love languages, to help you keep the love alive, no matter how far apart you are.

Understanding the Challenge

When your service member is away, it's not just the physical absence that impacts a relationship. Emotional and logistical challenges often arise, including:

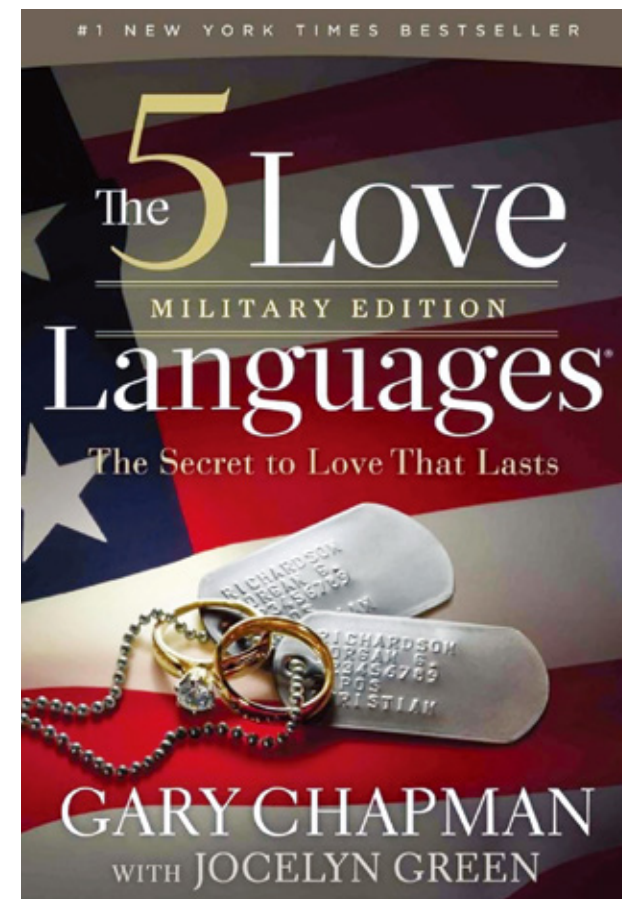
- Increased stress on the spouse managing home life
- Limited communication due to time zone differences or training restrictions
- Emotional distance caused by misunderstandings or unmet expectations
- An overwhelming desire to handle everything independently to avoid burdening the service member

The key to overcoming these challenges is to intentionally nurture your marriage. Long-distance relationships require effort from both partners, but when approached with purpose and care, they can strengthen your bond in unexpected ways.

A Brief History of the Five Love Languages

The concept of the five love languages was introduced in 1992 by Dr. Gary Chapman in his book *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*. Dr. Chapman, a pastor and marriage counselor, developed this framework after observing patterns in how couples expressed and received love during his counseling sessions.

The five love languages—Words of Affirmation,



I made a scrapbook of my husband's Basic Training journey, filled with letters we exchanged, encouragement from family and friends, and photos from his company that we got to see online along the way to surprise him at graduation!

Quality Time, Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, and Physical Touch—represent unique ways people feel loved and appreciated. By identifying your and your partner's primary love language, you can communicate more effectively and build deeper emotional connections.

In addition to love languages, Dr. Chapman also introduced the Apology Languages framework, which helps couples resolve conflicts by understanding how each partner prefers to receive apologies. This is especially helpful for long-distance relationships where misunderstandings can escalate quickly without clear communication.

Why the Five Love Languages Are Applicable to Military Marriages

Long-distance military separations magnify the importance of intentional communication. Without daily in-person interactions, couples must rely on other ways to express their love and support. Understanding your partner's love language ensures your efforts are meaningful. Let's dive into how each love language can be expressed long distance.

Words of Affirmation: Speak Life Into Your Love

Words hold immense power, especially when physical presence isn't an option. Share daily affirmations, texts, or heartfelt emails to remind your spouse of their value and importance. Record voice messages for

milestones like anniversaries or achievements, or keep a shared digital journal to exchange positive reflections about your day.

Long-distance ideas to incorporate Words of Affirmation

Daily Messages: Begin and end the day with thoughtful texts. A simple "Good morning! I hope today goes well for you" or "Goodnight, I'm so proud of you" can set a positive tone.

Emails or Letters: Writing a heartfelt letter or email allows you to express your feelings deeply and reflectively. Handwritten letters can be especially meaningful, as they add a personal touch that feels tangible.

Voice or Video Messages: Hearing your partner's voice can make the distance feel smaller. Leave a voice message or short video expressing appreciation or recalling a favorite memory.

Quality Time: Connect Despite the Distance

Though miles apart, you can still create meaningful moments together. Schedule virtual dates where you watch the same movie, cook the same meal, or play online games. Take time for video calls to discuss goals or reminisce about shared memories. Being fully present in these moments, even digitally, helps bridge the emotional gap. Quality time doesn't require physical proximity—it's about being present and intentional with the moments you share. Even when separated by time zones, there are countless ways to prioritize quality time.



For my first Mother's Day in 2019, my husband surprised me with a custom blanket featuring our family pictures and some chocolate-covered strawberries. It was such a thoughtful gesture that made me feel so loved and appreciated.

Long-distance ideas for Quality Time

Virtual Date Nights: Schedule a movie night using platforms like Teleparty or plan a dinner date where you both cook and eat the same meal over a video call.

Reading Together: Choose a book to read at the same time and discuss it during your calls.

Daily Check-Ins: Commit to a regular call time where you can talk about your day, share your feelings, or just enjoy each other's company without distractions.

Shared Hobbies: Engage in an activity together, like online gaming, a fitness challenge, or learning a new skill virtually.

Acts of Service: Go the Extra Mile

Finding ways to serve your spouse—even from afar—shows you care. For example, you could surprise them by arranging a home cleaning service or sending a care package with thoughtful items. On the flip side, the service member can ease their partner's stress by sharing a detailed holiday or deployment schedule (keeping OPSEC in mind) or handling tasks remotely, like organizing bills or sending reminders for special occasions.

Long-distance ideas for Acts of Service

Support Systems: Arrange for help with tasks your partner might be concerned about while they're away, such as childcare, home repairs, or bills.

Surprises: Send care packages with their favorite snacks, photos, or handwritten notes. For the spouse at home, consider surprising them with a delivered meal or a pre-arranged service, like house cleaning or lawn care.

Helpful Communication: If you're a service member, provide clear details about your schedule and expectations. Transparency can help your partner at home feel more secure and supported.

Receiving Gifts: Thoughtful Tokens of Love

Small, intentional gifts can speak volumes. Consider personalized photo books or items that represent inside jokes or cherished memories. For a modern twist, send digital gifts like audiobooks, e-gift cards, or playlists that capture your shared taste in music. These gestures remind your spouse that they are always in your thoughts.

Long-distance ideas for Meaningful Gifts

Personalized Keepsakes: Create custom items like engraved jewelry, photo books, or a journal filled with shared memories and future plans.

Care Packages: Send themed care packages—like a "self-care kit" with candles and snacks for your spouse at home or an "on-the-go survival kit" with protein bars and useful gadgets for your service member.

Digital Gifts: Purchase a subscription to a stream-

ing service, audiobook platform, or online course they've been interested in.

Physical Touch: Get Creative with Connection

Physical touch may be the most challenging love language to fulfill during long separations, but it's not impossible. Send items that evoke physical connection, like a scented pillow or a blanket they can wrap themselves in. Video calls, though not a substitute, can help bridge the emotional gap by offering face-to-face interaction.

Long-distance ideas to simulate Physical Touch

Symbolic Items: Send a blanket, sweatshirt, or pillow with your scent on it to provide comfort and a physical reminder of your presence.

Virtual Hugs: Use video calls to create moments of virtual intimacy. Although not the same as physical touch, seeing each other's faces and expressing affection can still foster closeness.

Shared Sensory Experiences: Engage in activities that stimulate the senses, like listening to the same music or watching the same sunset from different locations.

The Bigger Picture: Building a Resilient Marriage

Military marriages are built on resilience, sacrifice, and a deep sense of commitment. Long-distance separations are never easy, but they can also be an opportunity to grow closer, improve communication, and demonstrate the depth of your love. With creativity, effort, and the right support, you can turn these challenges into stepping stones for an even stronger relationship. While these tips can help keep your connection strong, don't hesitate to seek professional support when needed.

Remember, you're not alone in this journey. Lean on your community and reach out for resources. Check out the Army's Family Advocacy Programming for classes on healthy partner communication, resiliency, and the five love languages. Many classes are offered on your Navy and Air Bases too across the RoK. Never underestimate the power of small, consistent acts of love across time zones.

To discover your and your partner's love languages, you can take the official quiz at www.5lovelanguages.com.

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No More Suffering In Silence: Prenatal and Postpartum Mental Health Matters

By Serena Hanlon

As a mother of one, then two, and now three, I can confidently say that motherhood is my calling and where I have found my purpose. Within motherhood, I have myself. In motherhood, I have also healed and been triggered to reveal what still needs healing, all while I feel happiest and most fulfilled. It is in motherhood that I have also found myself in dark times and had to pull myself out.

I was a blissful and dare I say it, naive “this is too easy” first-time mother. When I just had one child, I could never understand other moms’ struggles. God saw I was getting too confident and humbled me real quick. During my second pregnancy, I experienced prenatal and postpartum depression for the first time. The transition from one to two children was such a hard one. The feelings of being extremely alone and without support weighed heavily on me. There was an intense feeling of guilt seeing my first baby be such a baby herself still while her mommy was recovering from her c-section and caring for our new baby.

There were many heavy things in my life I was navigating during that time that continued to weigh me down even more. My middle child’s infant months were such a blur for quite some time. It’s hard for me to look at old pictures and videos of my oldest and middle child because I get so emotional wishing I could go back to those days and relive them with a clear mind. Those tender moments remain a blur, lost in the fog of pure survival mode when each breath felt like a victory. It’s cruel how much mental health takes away from your motherhood.

When my middle child was about 8 months old, we suffered a miscarriage, but then became pregnant with our rainbow baby. By this pregnancy, I knew I had prenatal depression that then carried into postpartum depression again. My nights were spent using Google for hours, searching each and every thought or feeling I had, just hoping to get some answers or feel like it wasn’t just me. I felt so scared and so ashamed to admit it to my OBGYN during the depression screening, I was afraid if I answered truthfully, it would reflect on me as a mother. It felt impossible to share, so I lied and said I didn’t feel like I was drowning in depression and dark thoughts. This led to anger towards myself for feeling this way, how could I feel this way when I had beautiful and healthy children calling me mommy? What possibly could make me feel like this? Our family prayed for this life, I prayed to become a mother, and those prayers were met with suffering and depression.

Looking on the outside, there was no reason, but if only you could have sat with me and my mind for a minute, then you’d understand. My depression and dark times had nothing to do with my children, I felt the heavy weight drift away

the moment my kids hugged me or told me they loved me. So why couldn’t it be that easy to fight my way out of the dark hole my depression was sucking me in? My baby was diagnosed with a heart condition, which in turn spiked my anxiety. I bought an owlet sock monitor while I was with him in the ICU for a few days. Target drive-up was our first stop after he was discharged, and his sock monitor lived on his tiny foot until it grew into a one-year-old foot. I bought a stethoscope to monitor his heart rate



every 30 minutes to an hour. He was on heart medication three times a day for a year and a half. Until he was weaned off his heart medication I felt like I couldn’t breathe. Every night I would be checking his heart rate and oxygen levels on the Owlet app. This experience left me an anxious emotional mess.

Change is an area of growth for me and something I have had to work through because as a military spouse, we all know, change is inevitable. Moving across the

world and experiencing such a drastic change in my life did not help. I let my depression and anxiety consume me for our first couple of months in Korea. I was scared to go out and explore which meant a lot of staying home. I'm a stay-at-home homeschool mom who doesn't like to stay home, so when I stay home too long it affects my mental health. It took me a while to involve myself in the community. The move was such a drastic hard change from living in a home with a porch and yard to living in an apartment. The



idea of an Early Return of Dependent was something heavily on my mind for my kids and me, so we could just go back to the comfort of the known in America.

One day I had a change of heart and perspective, what kind of experience was I giving my kids who came across the world as well by being depressed by it or not taking full advantage of this experience? As an introvert, you have to force yourself to get out of your comfort zone and put yourself out there to find a community for your family. Korea seemed to be the easiest to find community out of the other bases we've been at. Maybe it was only because this was the first time I actually sought out the community and put myself out there or maybe it's because everyone is in the same boat being so far from family we all seek family within friendships.

When I began to make friends and talk about life experiences, we would share our postpartum experiences. Many mothers silently endure prenatal and postpartum depression. Had I known this years ago, the journey wouldn't have felt so solitary. If I had known it was normal, and that it didn't reflect on me

as a mother, I would have reached out for help or support when I needed it most.

Society has a stigma around mothers whether you're a stay-at-home mom, working mom, or both. There is an intense pressure to be picture perfect on the outside, have a perfectly kept home, and not look like a "hot mess mom". But let's be real, a mom bun is my signature look. During my postpartum years, my house was more than a mess. Cleaning on top of everything else was drowning me to the bottom of the sea and I couldn't seem to swim up for air.

If you have a newly postpartum friend, besides being there supporting and loving her, the next best gift you can give her is to offer her help in cleaning or cooking so she can relax and just focus on her bond with her new baby and recovering. It is a blessing for me to be a stay-at-home, homeschooling mother and to have this role in my children's lives. Some days I don't change out of pajamas until 11 am, however by 11 am I have also fed a homemade from-scratch breakfast, helped three kids get ready for the day, broken apart sibling fights, helped regulate emotions, cleaned the 100th spill and its not even noon yet! I may have also made a second breakfast for them while I'm running off a few sips of tea, started homeschool lessons and read-alouds, but most importantly getting snuggles and love from my kids.

Over the last 3 years, the pressure I felt during my first few years of motherhood no longer consumes me, those chains are breaking. The fog from my postpartum years took away precious moments of my motherhood that I will never get back. I so badly wish I could embrace my postpartum self and tell her she would get through this and that it had nothing to do with who she was as a mother. The love I have for my kids is fierce and I strive to always be better than I was yesterday. I had to fight hard to crawl out of that fog, but now I am so high on my mountain that it will not reach me anymore.

A mother from our community shared her postpartum story with me. Chantal N. shared, "I knew something was wrong when I just felt dirty all the time maybe two weeks ago postpartum. I bought all kinds of soap and felt like I just couldn't get clean. In addition, I couldn't fall asleep for fear of my baby dying if I closed my eyes for a second, so I watched her like a hawk all night. I didn't want anyone to touch her or hold her. Then the hallucinations started (I know now that it was postpartum psychosis). And I just started

to feel so depressed and anxious. Then the panic attacks started and my blood pressure kept spiking. I couldn't get a hold of myself. I was admitted to the hospital several times but everything was checking out as normal. I decided to talk to my psychiatrist and therapist who I had not seen in months. And I was immediately put on Lexapro and then I started going outside. And reached out to my community of women for support."

Chantal then told me that meditation and mindfulness are skills that keep her grounded. My heart goes out to all the mothers. From one mom to another, I believe in you. You were or are never alone. You are so loved. It's heartbreaking to know the number of mothers who truly feel like they are alone and instead of seeking help, we all just suffered quietly. There are resources and help out there for you. As much as society doesn't normalize it, I promise, prenatal and postpartum depression is sadly a normal virus in our brains that we can heal from and not allow it to call our minds a home again.

Being overseas makes dealing with mental health more difficult so far away from our home, friends, and family. There are therapists here, medications available, gyms, a mom workout group, churches, clubs, and communities waiting to welcome you to help you through this. I am sending you so much love.

Mental Health Resources in Korea

If you're struggling with your mental, here are some supports for you.

- Chaplains are religious leaders who work with military personnel and their families of all faiths to support their spiritual and moral well-being. From classes to personal counseling, military chaplains can help you and provide emotional and spiritual support.
- Military and Family Life Counselors (MFLC) provide no-cost, confidential non-medical counseling to service members, military couples, and eligible family members, including spouses, children, and teens, with resources and support to help them cope with stress and address challenges head-on. MFLC contacts and service information can be found at the Army's Community Services, Air Force's Military & Family Readiness Center, Navy's Fleet and Family Support Program, and your military treatment facility.



- Military treatment facilities in Korea offer specific support through their Behavioral Health Department. Here you can find clinical services including support from a psychiatrist, psychologist, social workers, and other services. Some clinics offer support group classes as well. While appointments can be hard to get, don't forget to use their walk-in hours or reach out to the facility's Patient Advocate. Patient Advocates can be your voice, helping you get what you need quicker to help you thrive.
- Off-installation providers also offer services. If you use Tricare, there is no referral required for dependents to see a counselor.

Reach out within your community. Together, we can make it through anything!



About the Author

Serena Hanlon is a homeschool mother of three. Serena runs a children's book club that has been incredibly fulfilling for herself and her kids. She enjoys adventures as well as staying cozy at home cuddled up with a good book with a cup of tea. She enjoys all things hosting and gathering and finds joy in serving others.



South Korea's Winter Hauntings: *The Gwisin and the "Girl in the Red Mask"*

By Raven Atwood

As the chill of winter settles over South Korea, bringing with it longer nights and empty streets, an eerie quiet falls over the countryside and urban areas alike. For members of the United States Forces Korea (USFK) stationed here, winter can be a fascinating time to explore Korea's unique blend of folklore and the supernatural. One of the most unsettling and mysterious tales you may encounter is the legend of the *Gwisin* (귀신)—a restless ghost said to wander the cold night—and her sinister counterpart, the "Girl in the Red Mask."

Whether or not you believe in ghosts, this story is bound to linger with you, especially if you find yourself alone on a frosty night, hearing footsteps that seem just a bit too close...

Who (or What) Are the Gwisin?

Gwisin are Korea's traditional ghosts, often resembling the lost spirits we've heard of in Western folklore, but with a distinct Korean twist. Gwisin are believed to be souls who passed away with unfin-

ished business, usually in tragic or untimely ways, and now find themselves trapped between worlds. In Korea, they are often depicted as women with long black hair, dressed in flowing white funerary robes, moving through deserted places as silent sentinels of sorrow.

Unlike Western ghosts, who may inhabit homes or specific locations, *gwisin* are known to roam freely, appearing anywhere from abandoned buildings to lonely mountain paths and desolate city streets. They're most active during the winter months, when the cold air and long nights are said to give them greater strength to walk the earth.

The Legend of the Girl in the Red Mask

Among the many *gwisin*, one spirit stands out as particularly chilling: the Girl in the Red Mask (also called *Cheonyeo Gwisin* in Korean, meaning "maid-en ghost"). According to legend, she is a young woman who met a tragic and violent end, often portrayed as the result of betrayal or heartbreak, and her restless spirit now seeks something—or

someone—she can never reclaim.

As the story goes, this ghost appears on deserted streets and alleyways, particularly during the colder months around Christmas and the New Year. She's known to haunt areas near Itaewon, Namsan, and even Pyeongtaek. Dressed in red, often with a red mask or scarf obscuring her face, she quietly approaches lone travelers at night, drawn to those who seem isolated or lost.

Some say the Girl in the Red Mask will silently walk alongside you, matching your pace but never speaking. She may ask cryptic questions like, "Do you think I'm pretty?" or "Will you walk with me?" If you ignore her, she is said to curse you, bringing a streak of misfortune that follows you for months. If you answer her, she may reveal a ghostly, scarred face behind her red mask, letting out a wail before disappearing into the night.

An Encounter with the Girl in the Red Mask

For some, this legend is more than just a story. Reports from locals and visitors alike describe sightings of a lone figure in red, especially on icy winter nights when the streets are deserted. One account tells of a young soldier who encountered her late at night while walking back to base from a gathering with friends. He noticed a young woman in a red scarf standing at the end of an alley, watching him intently. Thinking she was lost or in need of help, he approached her, only to find she moved silently away, seemingly gliding.

He quickened his pace, yet she stayed just ahead, glancing back with dark, hollow eyes. When he finally turned to run, he heard soft, haunting laughter echoing through the cold air behind him. Later that night, he reportedly suffered vivid nightmares of a pale face with deep scars hidden beneath a crimson scarf. He awoke feeling a heaviness that seemed to follow him for weeks, casting a shadow over his time in Korea.

The Gwisin in Winter: Warnings for the Unwary

In South Korea, it's said that the spirit world becomes more active as the days grow colder. The *gwisin*, especially those like the Girl in the Red Mask, are drawn to the loneliness that winter can bring. Some believe that winter's chill makes it easier for these spirits to cross over into our world, slipping between shadows as we sleep or moving silently

along empty roads.

For those stationed with USFK, especially those on late-night duty or exploring South Korea's cities during the holiday season, it's wise to keep a few superstitions in mind. Many Koreans advise against lingering in dark or deserted places, particularly after midnight, when the boundary between our world and the spirit world is thought to be at its thinnest.

A Chilling Reminder

Whether you believe in ghosts or not, the story of the *Gwisin* and the Girl in the Red Mask serves as a powerful reminder of Korea's deep respect for the spirit world and its rich history of folklore. For centuries, tales of *gwisin* have reminded people to look out for one another, to seek closure for those who may be suffering, and to respect the unknown.

So, as winter settles over South Korea, take caution on those dark, lonely streets, and remember the legend of the Girl in the Red Mask. Should you find yourself in her presence, tread carefully—and whatever you do, think twice before answering her questions.



About the Author

Raven Atwood is an author dedicated to bringing history to life through the excitement of mystery for young readers. With a captivating storytelling style, Raven crafts tales that explore historical events and figures, blending suspense and intrigue to inspire curiosity and learning. Known for turning history's secrets into adventures, Raven's books, available on Amazon, have quickly become favorites for young readers and parents alike.



Island Adventures with Family in Phu Quoc, Vietnam

By Stella K. Frazier

Looking

for your next getaway from Korea? We love a mix of beachy vibes and cultural aspects for our vacations and this Christmas we chose Phu Quoc, Vietnam! This island in southern Vietnam requires no visa if you travel just to the island and back to your home destination. We frequented the Sonasea market which was a few minutes from our resort and the larger Duong Dong market which was 30 minutes away. For families with younger kids, Vinpearl Safari and Vinwonder Amusement Park was a nice day away from the resort—just book

through the Klook app for hassle-free entry. The best part? Foot, body, and hair spa services are a fraction of Korean prices, averaging \$12-15 USD for full body treatments and \$6-7 USD for foot massages, making Phu Quoc perfect for decompressing.

Flight Accommodations

For our flight, we booked using Jeju Air both ways. From Incheon, Phu Quoc is just a quick 6 hours there and about 5 hours on the return flight. Our return flight was late on December 28th, just a few hours prior

to the plane crash involving Jeju Air in Muan, South Korea. Our flight taxied for 3 hours on the runway and finally deplaned due to plane inspection issues.

It was a blessing in disguise as we later found out about the tragedy. Exhausted, we hurriedly had to figure out lodging for the night at 3am. We were at the mercy of Jeju Air to figure out our flight home the next day. After news of another delayed flight the next day, we decided to book with another airline to get back home. We ended up booking with VietJet Air. The kind lady gave us a free upgrade after hearing our ordeal and we were seated in row 2. We were pleasantly surprised by the legroom and how far back the seats reclined for the night flight. We would definitely fly with them again.

Lodging Accommodations and Resort Activities

We chose the Pullman Phu Quoc Beach Resort. We had previously stayed in Da Nang at another Pullman chain resort and were so impressed that we didn't hesitate to book with them again. This resort also lived up

to our expectations. From check-in, to pick-up to drop-off, our needs were prioritized, making our vacation hassle-free.

This resort offers complimentary amenities including a round-trip shuttle service that picks up visitors from the international airport, just a 10-minute drive away. There is also a daily shuttle to the downtown area to the night markets, which we utilized along with the local Grab app to get around the island.

Kids under 12 stay for free and receive their breakfast buffet for free too! The free Kids Club access allows parents to enjoy alone time without the kids, which we used to roam the markets alone and drink fresh fruit smoothies and get foot massages leisurely without the sound of our kids asking for snacks ;).

For adults, there are also many amenities including a beach volleyball, pickleball court, tennis court, gym, and a spa right on-site. The resort spa offered more of the traditional spa experience we know from the States—more privacy, calming music, and dimmed lights. We tried a body scrub and aromatherapy massage for a fraction of the cost that we are used to in



Korea or America.

Food at the Pullman Phu Quoc Beach Resort is an experience of its own as well. Every day there is an amazing breakfast included with the price of the room. For breakfast at the Salt 'n' Pepper Restaurant you can choose made-to-order eggs, pastries, smoothies, freshly squeezed juices, and the hugest array of breakfast foods you will ever see. At their steak and wine restaurant which was included in the price of our deluxe suite, you can find the best cuts of meat to pair with the perfect bottle of wine.

Dining and Transportation Off Site



If you want to experience local life, visit other destinations, or dine offsite, outside the resort, download the Grab App! The Grab App is a great resource and is used in a variety of Asian countries like here

in Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia. Grab works like Uber. You can use it to order food, book taxis of all sizes, and even have groceries delivered in some places. Delivery options from Grab delivered straight to the hotel, are often cheaper options than hotel and resort restaurants. Try Grab also if you want to try a different variety of food options or for your picky eaters who have had enough of Pho!

This island offers a major advantage for military members. The first is that for Phu Quoc, NO VISA is required when staying less than 30 days and flying directly from Korea and back, saving you valuable leave time and paperwork. Secondly, even in Korea's winter, you'll find warm weather that's a welcome break. Don't forget your budget will stretch far here with incredibly affordable dining, activity, and massage options. While the island boasts numerous wood-fired pizza restaurants (perfect for those missing a taste of home), be aware that seafood dominates the local cuisine - which might be challenging for non-seafood enthusiasts. Phu Quoc offers a more laid-back, resort-style experience





compared to mainland Vietnam, but it might not satisfy those looking for extensive shopping opportunities like you'd find in Hoi An. However, for service members and families seeking an easy beach vacation without visa complications, Phu Quoc delivers a perfect balance of relaxation and convenience.

Pro Tips

- December-March: ideal weather, less rain.
- Download the Grab App before arriving so you can familiarize yourself with the platform.
- We purchased a 10-day eSIM data plan at the airport for about \$10.
- Download Google Translate or Papago as most residents only speak basic English.
- Bring USD for better exchange rates.
- Most places accept card payments but carry cash for markets.
- Bargaining is expected at markets, but less so in established shops
- King Kong Mart is an amazing shop to find so many souvenirs and Vietnamese snacks! Think Daiso where you can wander the aisles for hours :)

- If visiting Vinwonder Amusement Park, many of the rides cater to kids over 130cm.
- Be cautious crossing the streets as motorbikes dominate the roads here like mainland Vietnam.

Trip Resources

- Vietnam Ministry of Public Security Immigration Department E-visa website
<https://evisa.gov.vn/>
- Pullman Phu Quoc Beach Resort
Website: <https://pullmanphuquoc.com/>
Email: ha248@accor.com

Resources

- Aircraft and Personnel Automated Clearance System
<https://apacs.milcloud.mil/>
- Theater Travel Requirements, Travel Tracker/Individual Antiterrorism Plan (TT/IATP)
<https://www.pacom.mil/Resources/Travel-Requirements/>
- US Department of State: Bureau of Consular Affairs
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Vietnam.html>

About the Author

Stella Frazier is a military spouse from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia area. Her family has been in Korea since 2021 and spent the first few years around Daegu in Area IV. In her free time, she loves traveling in and outside Korea and spending time with her husband Antonio, and their two children, Alaya and Jaxon. One of her favorite reasons for being PCS'd to Korea has been the chance to reconnect with extended family—especially her grandparents.

Stella has an affinity for crafting, crime documentaries, iced coffee, and a slight obsession with all things K-beauty. She believes that small acts of kindness can make a huge difference.



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Embracing Slow and Mindful Travel: A Path to Meaningful Journeys

By Kimberly Kephart

Planning

your next big vacation can sometimes feel overwhelming. Have you considered embracing slow and mindful travel? You might be thinking, “Kimberly, I hate to break it to you, but I want to see all the things!” Trust me—I get it. That urgency to fit in as much as possible is real. But here’s a little secret: slowing down and traveling with intentionality might be the refreshing approach you didn’t know you needed.

Slow and mindful travel is about savoring the places you visit and immersing yourself in their culture, people, and environment. It offers an opportunity to connect deeply with destinations, creating meaningful memories while making more sustainable choices. For military families like ours, juggling constant moves and daily stress, this approach can be a way to recharge and strengthen bonds.

Interestingly, a recent Booking.com survey found that 61% of travelers are seeking trips that help them

experience local culture more deeply, while 55% want their travels to leave a positive impact on the environment. These figures highlight a growing desire for a travel philosophy that aligns perfectly with the principles of slow and mindful travel.

And when I think about taking it slow, places like the Dolomites in Italy often come to mind. I remember hearing a guide once say, “The Dolomites aren’t a place to rush through. They’re a place to linger, to watch the light change over the mountains, and to feel time slow down.” That sentiment perfectly captures the essence of slow travel: being present in the moment and embracing the beauty around you.

Let’s explore how these two travel philosophies can transform your journeys.

Fast vs. Slow Tourism

Fast tourism often involves cramming as many destinations into a short time as possible. It’s rushing from one landmark to the next, snapping photos, and moving on. This approach can be exhausting and leaves little room to truly experience a place—not to mention the environmental impact of frequent flights or long car journeys.

Slow tourism, on the other hand, prioritizes quality over quantity. By spending more time in fewer places, you can develop a deeper understanding of a destination. Instead of ticking off top attractions, you can explore markets, take a cooking class, or join a festival, fostering meaningful connections with people and places. As a bonus, it’s more sustainable, encouraging walking, biking, or train travel instead of constant air travel.

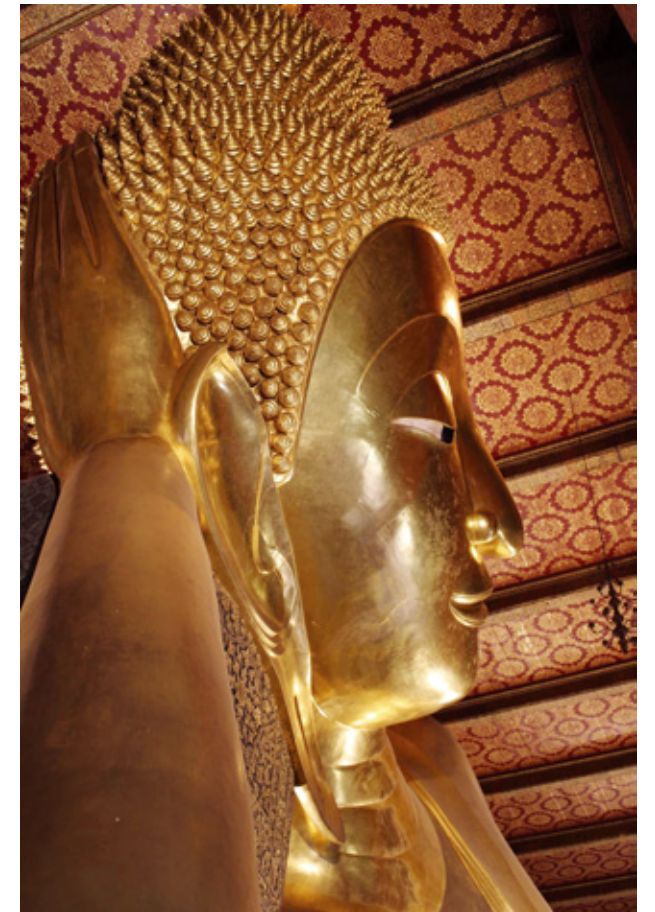
The Principles of Mindful Travel

Mindful travel goes beyond slowing down. It’s about intentionality and care for the people, places, and cultures you encounter. Here are some key principles:

Prioritize Sustainability

The environmental impact of travel is a growing concern. Mindful travelers can:

- Choose eco-conscious accommodations that prioritize renewable energy and waste reduction.
- Opt for trains or buses over a flight when possible.
- Pack sustainably, using reusable containers and avoiding single-use plastics.



- Look for certifications like Green Key or Earth-Check to ensure you’re supporting genuine sustainable practices.

Engage With Local Communities

Supporting locally owned businesses and participating in community activities can enrich your travel experience. Look on the local Tourism webpage and see what they offer and how they often connect to local businesses. Often times when you book through platforms like GetYourGuide, a percentage of your money doesn’t go to the tour operator. Find out if the company has its own website and book from there.

Take cooking classes, explore markets, or join cultural events to gain hands-on experience and foster genuine connections. Ethical choices, such as avoiding exploitative activities, further show respect for the places you visit.

Reflect on Your Intentions

Before your trip, consider what you hope to gain. Are you seeking adventure, relaxation, or personal growth? Aligning your plans with your intentions



ensures a more fulfilling journey. Always think before posting on Social Media. What will this take from the community and what will it leave behind? How do your intentions create ripples?

Why Slow and Mindful Travel Is Worth Considering

Deeper Cultural Connections

When you slow down, you create space to engage with a destination in ways that rushing doesn't allow. Whether it's chatting with a vendor at a local market, learning to make pasta from an Italian nonna, or crafting kimchi with a Korean chef, these experiences deepen your cultural understanding.

Less Stress, More Joy

Life is stressful enough—why add chaos with a packed itinerary? Slow travel embraces relaxation, offering peaceful moments like sipping coffee at a quiet café or strolling through a serene neighborhood. By ditching the rush, you'll feel more connected to your surroundings.

Sustainability and Supporting Locals

Spending more time in one place reduces your carbon footprint and directly supports local economies. Dining at family-run restaurants, staying in small guesthouses, or shopping at markets ensures your travel benefits the community.

Building Stronger Relationships

Staying in a single place allows you to form relationships—with both people and the destination. Imagine a week in a village where the barista knows your order, or chatting with a neighbor who shares local tips. These personal connections can turn trips into cherished memories.

Budget-Friendly Adventures

Slow travel isn't just sustainable—it's often more affordable. Longer stays can mean discounted rates at accommodations, and many slow travel activities, like hiking or attending local festivals, are free or low-cost. Cooking your own meals with fresh, local ingredients saves money while offering authentic flavors.

Tips for Embracing Slow and Mindful Travel

- Stay Longer in One Place: Trade whirlwind itineraries for longer stays to experience daily life and culture.
- Focus on Local Experiences: Seek activities that immerse you in the community, like cooking classes or exploring markets.
- Travel Slowly: Embrace walking, biking, or train travel to soak in the scenery and reduce your environmental impact.
- Be Open to the Unexpected: Leave room in your schedule for spontaneous discoveries and chance encounters.
- Unplug and Be Present: Limit screen time and focus on your surroundings to enhance your connection with the destination.

Looking Ahead

Slow and mindful travel is more than a trend—it's a way to connect deeply with the world around us. For military families, it's an opportunity to explore areas near duty stations meaningfully and sustainably. For all travelers, it's a chance to create lasting memories while leaving a positive impact.

As you plan your next adventure, consider taking it slow and traveling mindfully. The rewards—deeper connections, less stress, and a lighter environmental footprint—are well worth it. Let's make this the year of meaningful journeys. Where will your adventure take you?



About the Author

Kimberly Kephart is a freelance travel writer and destination content creator, collaborating with global brands and destination management offices. Currently, she is based in Vicenza, Italy, and was stationed at Camp Humphreys, South Korea from 2020-2023. Kimberly is passionate about exploring the globe and sharing her insights through her blog, Kimberly Kephart Travels, and on Instagram at @kimberlykepharttravels. As she pursues her Travel Coach Certification with the Travel Coach Network, Kimberly continues to craft comprehensive travel resources that inspire and empower fellow military spouses and solo travelers to embark on meaningful, sustainable journeys.

Pets Are Family

24-Hour Emergency Animal Hospitals in Korea

By Melissa Edwards-Whittington and South of Seoul



Need a list of 24-hour emergency Animal Hospitals? It always feels like our fur babies are sick when their veterinarian is closed. Therefore this list will come in handy if you need to find a veterinarian to see your pet in an emergency.

During an emergency with your fur baby, it can be critical to locate the closest 24-hour animal hospital quickly. We have compiled a list of locations for you to find the help you need.

Additionally, we provide critical information you need in these times to get you the best care possible for your pet.

Types of '24-Hour' Animal Hospitals

In South Korea, the term '24-hour' as it relates to an animal hospital may have a few possible meanings:

- The hospital remains fully open until 24:00 and then closes

until the morning. (In other words, closes at midnight)

- The hospital remains open through the night with doctors on call.
- The hospital is staffed 24 hours with doctors (very rare and usually only in large cities)

Since 24-hour may mean different things in different locations, we recommend visiting your local 24-hour emergency animal hospital to fully understand how they operate. Don't wait until there is an emergency. Let's talk about emergency preparedness.



What To Do Before An Emergency Happens

Since it is crucial to be able to provide information to the doctor for your pet, planning is important. Once the emergency hits you may feel overwhelmed by 1) finding a hospital, 2) finding transportation, 3) navigating to a new place, 4) managing the language barrier, and 5) making decisions for your pet. Therefore, we recommend:

- **A Typed Medical History and Medication List**
Have a list of medications and dosages saved to your phone. Hence, we asked our regular veterinarian to write down the names of our fur babies' medications in Korean (or what they are used to treat). This can be very helpful as some of the drug names are different.
- **Communication Plan**
Have a Communication Plan and practice your plan for asking for help. Use 1330 or BBB Korea regularly so that you feel comfortable using these services to ask for help. You can't rely on friends to wake up to help at 3 am.
- **Practice the Drive**
Visit the 24-hour emergency vet nearest your home before an emergency happens. You need to learn the roads and parking situation in advance. Consider visiting the 24-emergency vet for a regular checkup just so that your information is already in their system.

- **Information Available to Copy and Paste on Your Phone**
Have the 24-hour emergency hospital Korean address saved on your phone. It's very hard to search any app or the internet in a crisis. Have the closest pet hospital to your house saved on your phone or in your phone contacts.

What to Do in an Emergency

Getting the right help for your pet as quickly as possible is essential in an emergency situation. This means that you need to prepare yourself before you experience an emergency.

- **Call Ahead**
Call Ahead to let the 24-hour vet clinic know you are coming. This is an absolutely critical step. You need to contact the 24-hour animal hospital prior to arrival to let them know about the medical issue so they can prepare ahead. Leo Mendoza of Shindogs Air says this phone call can mean life or death for your pet:
"All 24-hour emergency animal hospitals usually only have ONE general attending vet on duty, and that vet may not be the specialist your pet requires. If the hospital gets advance notice, they will ensure the specialist comes in for your pet!"
- **Grab Medications**
Take any medications with you to the hospital. Knowing crucial information about your pet's medical conditions and history can help when making pet care decisions. So, keep a list of any medications and dosages your pet takes regularly on hand.
- **Remember the Translated Medical History on Your Phone**
Since you prepared ahead of time, make sure you remember your pet's medical history, which you have saved to the files on your phone.

Assistance Calling the Emergency Vet

In this stressful situation, you may also want to have assistance calling ahead. Having a language barrier will make this situation more hectic and frustrating. Therefore, if you need assistance calling the 24-hour emergency veterinarian, you can contact:

- **Call 1330**
Simply enter 1330 into your smartphone and call them. They can help you contact the emergency vet and relay information. You can also download their app which will allow you to message them. This can be very helpful when communicating with the vet.
- **Call BBB Korea 1588-5644**
BBB Korea is a phone number (1588-5644) and app

where you can get volunteer interpreters to help you with communication. You need to download this now. When an emergency happens it will be too stressful. If you are currently having an emergency you can call BBB for translation help at 1588-5644



24-Hour Emergency Animal Hospitals

This list has not been vetted nor are they supported officially by United on the RoK, nor is it an all-exclusive list. However, our goal is to provide you with locations that can assist you to get the help you need as quickly as possible when your pet is unwell. Many of the locations listed below have English-speaking staff, but we cannot guarantee that they will have them available 24 hours a day. This list includes locations in the following areas: Pyeongtaek, Dongtan/Hwaseong, Suwon, Seoul, and Daegu.

Pyeongtaek

Bliss Animal Medical Center

- A 3-story animal hospital for both cats and dogs. It also has cat and dog hotel services. This is a 24-hour veterinary clinic.
- [NAVER Map]
617-5 Segyo-dong Pyeongtaek-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/Gdyc1TcR>

Raum Animal Medical Center

- 24-hour vet with surgical, dental, and ophthalmology services.
- Check their NAVER account for scheduling information.
- [NAVER Map]

1103-1 Bijeon-dong Pyeongtaek-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/lFg0Foau>

Godeok Animal Medical Center

- 24-hour vet with in-hospital blood tests, x-rays, ultrasounds, and medicine onsite.
- If thinking of establishing routine care, consider looking at their NAVER account for special event pricing and other specials.
- [NAVER Map]
1975-1 Godeok-dong Pyeongtaek-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/xk18q2cu>

Dongtan/Hwaseong

Dongtan leum Animal Hospital

- 24-hour vet. Check their NAVER account to read about the ground-breaking care in hip treatments for dogs.
- [NAVER Map]
727-4 Sancheok-dong Hwaseong-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/5PVD2YOK>

Suwon

Bon Animal Medical Center

- 24-hour Emergency and Specialty Vet clinic located in Suwon. MRI/CT available. English-speaking staff.
- [NAVER Map]
675-2 Jowon-dong Jangan-gu, Suwon-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/59vQNM84>

Suwon Animal Medical Center

- 24-hour vet with a newly remodeled clinic.
- [NAVER Map]
979-4 Yeongtong-dong Yeongtong-gu, Suwon-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/5eUnT8Lg>

Seoul

SNU Animal Hospital

- 24-hour vet and University Veterinary Hospital
- [NAVER Map]
Animal Hospital Attached to Seoul National University Gwanak Campus College of Veterinary Medicine San 56-1 Sillim-dong Gwanak-gu Seoul
<https://naver.me/GmbhVr2K>

Songpa Smile Animal Hospital

- 24-hour vet serving cats and dogs.
- [NAVER Map]

57-3 Munjeong-dong Songpa-gu Seoul
<https://naver.me/FRLvW0gz>

Haemaru Animal Hospital

- 24-hour vet serving cats and dogs that also specialized in geriatric animals.
- [NAVER Map]
272-5 Seohyeon-dong Bundang-gu, Seongnam-si Gyeonggi-do
<https://naver.me/FxF8Xwbt>

Daegu

Daegu Animal Medical Center

- 24-hour vet serving cats and dogs.
- [NAVER Map]
1051 Jisan-dong Suseong-gu Daegu
<https://naver.me/G4W8LKK6>

Finding Additional 24-Hour Vets

If you are traveling and need to find 24-hour emergency animal hospitals, you can enter the phrase “동물병원 24시간” or “24시간 동물병원” into Naver and it should help you find the closest location to you. However, you can also contact 1330 to assist you with finding the closest 24-hour animal hospital as well.



Useful Phrases for Pet Owners

During an emergency, it is always useful to have a few useful phrases on hand. Therefore, we have compiled this list to empower pet owners to do their best for their fur babies in stressful situations. Always remember, if you don't feel comfortable speaking, you can simply show your phone and point to the useful phrases for pet owners that you need. You can also save these images to your phone for emergencies.

<p>It's an emergency.</p> <p>긴급상황입니다.</p> <p>[gingeubsanghwang-ibnida.]</p>	<p>My pet is not eating.</p> <p>제 애완동물이 먹지않아요.</p> <p>[je aewandongmul-i meogjianh-ayo.]</p>
<p>My pet is not drinking.</p> <p>애완동물이 마시지 않아요</p> <p>[aewandongmul-i masiji anh-ayo.]</p>	<p>My pet is throwing up.</p> <p>애완동물이 토해요.</p> <p>[aewandongmul-i tohaeyo.]</p>
<p>My pet bites.</p> <p>제 애완동물은 사람들을 물어요 조심하세요.</p> <p>[je aewandongmul-eun salamdeul-eul mul-eoyo josimhaseyo.]</p>	

Although ideally, we recommend visiting a vet with strong English skills, we also understand that this is often impossible. You also must remember that even when a vet speaks English or an expat speaks Korean, misunderstandings still occur. South of Seoul has compiled this list to empower pet owners to do their best for their fur babies in a stressful situation. These are just a few of the phrases, for a more complete list, visit “Useful Phrases for Pet Owners” on the South of Seoul Blog. There are about 20 translated phrases that will benefit all pet owners.

Veterinary Services Vary Between Countries

Different cultures and countries care for animals in different ways. For example, Korean veterinarians may not prescribe medications the same way that American veterinarians do. Our family has found this to be the case as we have dogs on medications for arthritis and anxiety. At a recent emergency vet appointment, we learned that the Korean veterinarian we saw was unfamiliar with treating regularly for either of those conditions.

Join the Everything Paws Korea Facebook Group



Looking for a place where pet owners living in Korea can ask questions and share ideas? Everything Paws Korea has information on training, recipes, health tips, and DIY. In addition, there are post links to articles and such relating to our pets. However, please keep in mind, information in this group should never replace the advice of a qualified veterinarian.

Resources

24 Hour Emergency Animal Hospitals

<https://blog.southofseoul.net/24-hour-emergency-animal-hospitals/#Assistance-Calling-Ahead-to-the-Emergency-Vet>

Useful Phrases for Pet Owners

<https://blog.southofseoul.net/useful-phrases-for-pet-owners/>

Everything Paws Korea

(Advice, Tips & Ideas for Pet Owners LIVING In RoK)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/everythingpaws/>

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Wooden hearts hung in Yeosu, South Korea. Captured by Leslie Preddy.

ONE STOP CAR RENTAL

BOOK NOW, PAY LATER

010-2450-4899

ONESTOP CAR RENTAL
99-29, ANJEONG-RI, PAENGSEONG-EUP (17978)

WhatsApp

Website

Category	Model	Price
Economic	MORNING (KIA)	\$ 30.00
	Small Wagon	\$ 35.00
	RAY (KIA)	\$ 40.00
Medium	SONATA (HYUNDAI)	\$ 50.00
	SUV	\$ 70.00
	SANTAFE (HYUNDAI)	\$ 90.00
VAN	CARNIVAL (KIA)	\$ 100.00
	STARIA (HYUNDAI)	\$ 80.00

House for Rent 010-5428-8386

3 rooms and 2 bathrooms (5 minutes walk to Main Gate)



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