

PACKING IDEAS FOR SOUTH KOREA

A. Toiletries and Medical Items

***any medicines you really need** (although you can get most things prescribed here—birth control pills, for example, are available over-the-counter and more cheaply than at home). If you take prescription meds it is best to bring the prescription to show customs in case you get asked.

***Advil, Tylenol or other painkiller/headache medicine**

***Claritin, Benadryl, etc.** if you have allergies (Claritin is a prescription drug here)

***vitamins** although vitamins are increasingly available, (there is even a GNC (General Nutrition Centre chain store) in Bundang), they are much more expensive than at home. You should plan on taking at least a multi-vitamin to help relieve the stress of the transition to life in Korea—don't underestimate the transitional stress on your system

***Echinacea, cold medicine, Vick's Vapo Rub, Neocitran**, whatever you really need to make it through a cold (people tend to catch cold more often here, result also of the new environment) (You can, of course, get tons of top-grade ginseng here, which, in Canada at least, they are now selling as the newest thing to help boost your immune system against colds...Canadian hockey teams take it the whole season—not that Don Cherry could convince me to take *anything!*)

***deodorant** (also available, but pricier than home—men are ok if you like "Old Spice" ☺)

***Immodium/Pepto Bismol, Gravol and Senna leaf or other laxative** (your body will need some time to adjust to the food and environment, you may need some or all of these; rice-heavy diet = laxatives become a form of currency between haves and not-haves)

***Acidophilus/Bifidum capsules**: these help keep your stomach from being overly sensitive, and are good to take to help digestion in general, but esp. if you travel to South Asia

***tampons/menstrual products**: Disposable, bleached menstrual pads are still the norm here. It is possible to buy tampons with an applicator, but they are not as readily available as at home. Better to bring your own, especially if you want to use applicator-free or organic cotton tampons. (update: recently the fancy dept. store in Bundang started selling unbleached cotton pads and tampons by Natracare...) They are starting to sell some washable/reusable pads from natural fabrics in some specialty shops in Seoul as well.

***condoms** (they seem to be a different size and consistency here; better safe than sorry; good to bring lubricant as well, as it is not so readily available. If you run out of either, there's always Ebay...you'd be amazed what you can order!)

***toothpaste and dental floss** (there are now some brands with fluoride available, but still most brands are not what we are accustomed to; good to bring a few to start off)

***make-up**: powder and foundation--there are MAC counters at most major department stores, in Bundang and in Seoul, so it's much easier to get colours for different skin tones than in the past in Korea—although you won't find the exact shade range as at home-- all other types of cosmetics are pretty readily available, and inexpensive, and department

stores carry lines like Biotherm and Aveda—although expect to pay more than at home.

***lotions, shower gels, etc:** You may want to bring your favourite to start yourself off, but these things are easy to get here. Johnson and Johnson's products, including Neutrogena, Aveeno and Clean and Clear, are available everywhere in Korea, even in convenience stores. J and J's and other baby products are readily available and gentle on the skin. Body Shop is in Bundang, and all around Korea as well. Shampoo and conditioner is cheap and plentiful.

B. Clothing:

*** Shoes:** If your feet are a women's US size 8 or above, or a men's size 10 or above, you may have some difficulty finding footwear in Korea. (Korean shoes are measured in centimeters...US women's 6 1/2-7 is 23.5 cm in Korean sizing, and a typical store carries up to 24.5). There are some specialty shops around the US army base that might be helpful, but generally, it's better to bring athletic shoes, casual shoes, sandals, work shoes etc. from home. Also, Korean shoes are less comfort-oriented than many of the brands we are accustomed to, especially for women, so bear that in mind as well.

***Undergarments:** It's best to bring your own underwear, and for women, if your bra size is above a B-cup it's almost impossible to find bras, especially attractive ones. For men...lots of funky Calvin Klein boxer brief knock-offs available on the streets, but the XXXL looks more like a North American medium or large! We recommend bringing a good supply from home. Underwear will be easier to find than bras, but sizes are cut differently through the hips and smaller in general. Most of us end up buying them on holiday, or having them mailed from home. Ladies, if you like silky nighties and that kind of stuff...hard to come by, and expensive, although tons of cotton shifts with cartoon characters can be bought on the streets cheaply. Socks are readily available, though often are blended with synthetic fabrics if you are partial to cotton.

***General notes on clothing:** Korea has four different seasons, as well as the rainy season which falls in early summer, so versatility is the key. Summer is unbelievably hot and humid, and the straightest hair will be frizzy during July's rains. Winter can get as cold as -10 in January, though it doesn't linger as long as in Canada! Dress code at SNET is pretty relaxed, although teachers must dress business casual on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, when parents and community members are around. Flip flops shouldn't be worn in class, and, other than during summer vacation, open-toed shoes are better avoided. Just remember that Korea is more conservative than most of our home countries, and that first impression lingers. We are community figures, and we meet kids and teachers from all the schools in Bundang throughout the year.

Women: Women's clothing in Korea is colourful, fashionable, fun and reasonably priced. Large portions of Seoul are dedicated to women's clothing markets and stores. That said, sizes here are smaller than at home, and women wearing anything larger than a size 8-10 will likely have to shop in the stores around the US base, which cater more to non-Koreans. Those of slim build will likely enjoy shopping here more than at home.

Men: Men's clothing is similarly scaled to more lithe body types. That said, the base

area has a variety of tailors where one can have beautiful shirts made to order. For a man from slim to average build, getting clothes won't be too much of a problem, and bigger sizes are around...although colours and styles may be quite different from home. There are places if one takes time to seek them out.

C. Teaching Supplies

While you don't want to carry a whole bunch of things over with you, any or all of the following would come in handy:

- *photos of family, friends, your home, your way of life in your country—**please bring a baby photo of yourself**...we love to do a teacher photo quiz game
- *well-loved story books, especially those that teach about different cultures and ways of life (we have a large but standard library)
- *stickers or stamps from your culture or country; even rolls of pennies make cheap and fun little gifts
- *posters from local travel agency, library, government etc.
- *any texts or books that have helped you as a teacher in the past
- *stationery is cheap and plentiful in Korea, so don't carry anything heavy unless it's unique

D. Miscellaneous

- ***a battery-operated ALARM CLOCK!** (everyone forgets this)
- *minimize electronic equipment...voltage and plug shape is different (220V)—but do pack an adapter for that purpose
- ***USB memory stick for saving and moving files**
- *books: English books are available here, but if you have any unusual reading tastes, good idea to bring some along to start yourself off.
- *credit card if you have one/can get one—always helps for buying needed things online, or in case of emergency
- * food: everyone has different comfort foods, and vegetarians and people with food restrictions for other reasons sometimes find eating in Korea a little challenging. That said, many imported items are available here, albeit at a premium. If you have extra room, stick in some instant oatmeal, cookies or something that will make you feel really happy a few weeks after arriving...
- *water bottle and/or portable mug
- *digital camera: contrary to popular belief, often there are better deals to be had on cameras and electronic items in North America, though I am not sure about UK, Australia, South Africa, etc.
- *dryer sheets: some people have a strong emotional attachment to these, and they don't seem to have them here
- *chewing gum: Korean chewing gum loses its flavour too fast!