**Holidays in South Korea**

If you're planning on doing anything during the vacation periods or national holidays in South Korea you better plan ahead.  The two biggies, Solal and Chussock are absolutely nuts.  The highway from Busan to Seoul is like a parking lot.  That being said, plan ahead, be prepared for masses of people, and you'll have an amazing time.

**List of Holidays in Korea**

All schools are closed for Korean national holidays and most schools close for a week in summer and a week at the end of the calendar year between semesters.  
  
Very seldom are you able to take discretionary vacations. If you're planning to attend a wedding at home or need specific vacation time we highly recommend informing your employer well in advance, if possible even before you sign the contract.

Standard contracts offer one to two weeks of paid vacation per year. This time is usually between semesters, thus you can expect to have a week of vacation in the summer and a week of vacation in the winter. In addition there are 12-14 Korean national holidays per year.

**Standard national holidays in** [**Korea**](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/teaching-jobs-in-asia/teaching-jobs-in-korea) **are:**

* January 1 New Year’s Day
* End of January or Early February Lunar New Year
  + known in Korea as "Solal" - this holiday is the first day of the first moon. Most of Asia comes to a screeching halt on this day, which is usually in late January or early February. Usually there are 2 or 3 days off for this special day.
* March 1 Independence Movement Day
  + this is the anniversary of the 1919 independence movement against the Japanese, who colonized Korea from the late 19th century until the end of WWII.
* April or May Buddha's Birthday
  + the ‘Feast of the Lanterns’ or "puchonim oshinal" this holiday is on the eighth day of the fourth moon, which is normally in early May. Solemn rituals are held at Buddhist temples across the country. The day's festivities reach their climax when monks and laymen march through city streets with beautiful and often very elaborate paper lanterns. This holiday is always one working day and is fixed (no long weekends of convenience). Buddhist temples are packed with Buddhists (what did you expect, Catholics?) offering prayers for their loved ones.
* April 5 Arbor Day
  + everyone from school children to businessmen plant trees on this day. Korea was largely stripped of its forests during the Japanese occupation, and recently Korea has become a leading nation in reforestation. However, since 2006 it`s not national statutory holiday anymore.
* May 5 Children’s Day
  + this is an official holiday. Children receive gifts from parents and are taken on family outings. This may be one of the few days of the year you actually see fathers playing with their children outside – many Korean men work insanely long hours and have little time to spend with their children.
* May 8 Parents' Day
  + this is not an official holiday; however, most families observe it with children giving parents carnations and letters of appreciation. Do not expect a day off work.
* May 15 Teacher's Day
  + Ironically, this day is not a holiday for most teachers in Korea. However, you can expect to be showered with gifts from parents; some may be surprisingly substantial.
* June 6 Memorial Day
  + this is like our Remembrance Day or ANZAC Day. Veterans of the Korean War and honoured as well as those who fought for freedom from Japanese occupation and all other forms of imperialism throughout Korean history. You'll be amazing how many flags fly from Korean apartments. If you get a moment, visit the National Korean Cemetery. Listen for a siren at 10am. EVERYTHING - traffic included - stops.
* July 17 Constitution Day
  + this day celebrates the establishment of the first Korean constitution on July 17, 1948. The Republic of Korea (South Korea) was officially established about a month later.
* August 15 Independence Day
  + unlike the United States, where one might celebrate Independence Day by quaffing a 12 pack of Bud Light and attending a Monster Truck Rally, Independence Day in Korea is often a somber affair when Koreans commemorate the injustices done during the Japanese occupation. August 15 is VJ day- the day the Japanese surrendered to Allied forces in 1945, marking the end of WWII.
* October 3 National Foundation Day
  + the day when Dangun (the mythical "first Korean.") was supposed to have founded the Korean. Check out the Korean Culture section for more on this myth or ask a Korean friend or student.
* December 25 Christmas Day
  + Christmas Day is an official holiday. Christianity is the faith of choice for more than half the Korean population. Quite differently from the West, young people go out to parties on December 25

**List of Cultural Festivals in Korea**

Although these holidays are not considered national holidays, if you have the opportunity to observe them you will be rewarded with a unique perspective on Korean culture. ****

* Sokchonje
  + This holiday is observed twice a year according to the lunar calendar, usually in March and August. Only staged in the courtyard of the Confucius Shrine at Sunkyunkwan University in Northern Seoul, performances are given by a traditional court orchestra and fully costumed court rituals are enacted. Take the subway to the Hyehwa stop on the blue line and ask for directions to Sunkyunkwan University (Sunkykunkwan daehak odishimnika?) It is only a short walk away.
* Harvest Moon Festival
  + The Korean thanksgiving festival, or Chuseok, is perhaps the most important holiday in [Korea](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/teaching-jobs-in-asia/teaching-jobs-in-korea). This holiday is on the fifteenth day of the eighth moon, and usually falls in mid to late September. Major cities are deserted as urban dwellers return to the country side to clean ancestral tombs and make offerings to their ancestors. If you like traffic jams, try driving or taking a bus somewhere during Chusok. Depending on which day of the week Chusok falls, you should get several days off during this holiday. If you are lucky enough to be invited to a Korean household to observe Chuseok you will be treated to a delicious feast and tteok for dessert - sweet rice cakes filled with honey.
* Chyongmyo Taeje
  + This holiday celebrates the kings and queens of the Chosun Dynasty. Costume parades are held with court music. It takes place in Chongmyo Shrine on the first Sunday in May.
* Tano Festival
  + This festival is held throughout South Korea on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month (usually June) and features processions of shamans and mask dances.
* National Folk Arts Festival
  + This usually takes place in September and is a great opportunity to see traditional Korean festival antics including but not limited to wagon battles and torch hurling.
* Cherry Blossom Festival
  + This week long festival is held in the Southern city of Chinhae, (and a smaller festival also takes place in the city of Masan- near Pusan) usually in early to mid-April. An exact date is hard to predict because those darned cherry trees don’t always bloom on the same day each year.