

# ARE YOU READY FOR AN ADVENTURE THAT MIGHT JUST CHANGE YOUR LIFE?



Teaching English overseas has rapidly become one of the most common ways to get abroad and live the adventure of a lifetime. It's not hard to understand the appeal – for one year you can earn a great salary, travel to exciting countries, build your resume, and broaden your cultural horizons. Best of all, while many of your peers are choosing the status quo, you'll be having experiences and making memories that will last a lifetime!

*WHAT OTHER OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WHERE YOU CAN:  
MAKE AN IMPACT. INSPIRE A GENERATION. EXPERIENCE ANOTHER CULTURE.  
EXPAND YOUR COMMUNITY. LIVE THE ADVENTURE.*

## IS SOUTH KOREA CALLING YOU?

Whether you enjoy quiet nights at home or exploring the city until the sun rises, South Korea has a multitude of options for every lifestyle preference. South Korea has a unique and inspiring culture and story. There is also an expat population from all over the world who have brought with them their perspectives, trends, menus and entertainment. Not only can you get lost within the ancient ruins of South Korean historical sites or in the amenities of its budding urban life-style but you can explore so many more aspects of life than you ever thought possible.

There are 10 cities with more than 1 million people in them in Korea.

## WHY TEACH IN SOUTH KOREA?

It's a really popular choice for first time and experienced teachers. South Korea offers incredible food and drink, sightseeing and compensation packages.

The job market for teaching English is currently one of the largest in the world. It's estimated that there are around 20,000 English teachers. Seoul has a population of 25 million people and over 1,000 language institutes. English teaching contracts in South Korea are typically one year. Because of their positive experience, many teachers choose to extend their time teaching either at the same school or moving to a new school.

### *Typical Teaching Opportunity in South Korea:*

Salary: 2.1 - 2.5 million Won (\$2,000 - 2,300 USD)

Working Hours: 40 Hours a week:

Teaching Hours: 22-30 Hours a week

Benefits

- Paid round-trip airfare
- Housing provided
- Pension plan
- 50/50 medical plan
- Severance Bonus equivalent to one month's salary
- 2 weeks paid vacation and government holidays
- Only 3-7% tax.

Although the salary may seem low compared to what you would make in North America, the reason that teaching in Korea is such a strong financial opportunity is the minimal number of costs. You don't pay rent, the taxes are low, the medical coverage is inexpensive yet excellent, and your airfare is included. Can you imagine how much money you'd save at home if you didn't have to pay rent or expensive medical insurance? The bonuses like one month's salary at the end of your contract (severance pay) can literally go directly to savings or travel! On a median teacher salary it is not uncommon to save \$500-\$1,000 a month.

*Before you get too excited though, the following are required by the Korean government to get an E2 Teaching Visa:*

- Citizenship from 1 of the 7 countries recognized as English-speaking by Korean (USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa)
- University Degree in anything
- Clean Criminal Record
- Clean Bill of Health
- TEFL Certification (not mandatory, but highly valued)

*If you don't meet the criteria above, but still want to teach abroad, check out opportunities in these countries:*

- Cambodia
- Nicaragua
- Spain
- Argentina
- Mexico
- Russia

### **Is this you?**

Please email [info@thearrivalstore.com](mailto:info@thearrivalstore.com) and let us know and we can connect you to a partner.

## **DO I NEED A TEFL?**

The current job market in South Korea is extremely competitive for teachers which allows for schools to be very choosy. While this can make it more challenging for some teachers to find positions, most teachers who are successful at signing contracts meet one of following criteria:

- 1. Experience teaching ESL,
- 2. Degree related to teaching, or
- 3. TEFL Certification.

## **RECOMMENDED TEFL PROGRAMS**

Taking TEFL is highly recommended for your personal development and to make you stand out to potential employers! Korea recognizes the 100 hour program, but a 120 hour program is internationally accepted. There are many TEFL courses available for teachers to take part in. The most recommended TEFL courses can be found through the following sites.

- [TEFL Source](#)
- [International TEFL Academy](#)

## WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GET A JOB?

One of the great things about Korea, is that you can leave pretty much any month of the year. The biggest changeover happens when the school semesters change in February and August but there are job openings every month of the year. May is actually a great time to find a job. No need to wait 6 months for the next hiring season! Private school positions open every month of the year.

## HOW LONG SHOULD YOU PLAN FOR THE PROCESS TO TAKE?

The process of gathering visa documents usually takes between 1 and 2 months. It depends on whether you are using a channeler for your criminal background check or not. The process really depends on how diligent you are at collecting your visa document. It also depends on your location and how ambitiously you pursue the visa process. Another factor to consider is whether you will be completing the process in person or by mail. Completing the process by mail adds significant wait times.

*The documents that typically take the most time and effort to prepare are:*

- Your passport (should be valid for at least 6 months beyond your proposed arrival date in Korea)
- Your diploma with notarization and apostille/verification
- Your nationwide Criminal Record Check with apostille/verification

Once you've gathered all your necessary visa documents it usually takes about 30-40 days to complete the visa process after you've signed a contract with a school. If the process is rushed, things can potentially be completed a few days faster; but it is always best if you can have your documents gathered ahead of time to save yourself and your school unnecessary stress.

The following chart lets you know when you will need to have all of the required documents ready to send to Korea, to be eligible for a specific start date.

HIRING SEASON (Arriving in South Korea)*	BEGIN GATHERING	HAVE DOCUMENTS READY (AT THE LATEST!)	INTERVIEWING WITH SCHOOLS IN SOUTH KOREA
FEBRUARY	OCTOBER 1	DECEMBER 1	DECEMBER- JANUARY
MAY	JANUARY 1	MARCH 1	MARCH - APRIL
AUGUST	APRIL 1	JUNE 1	JUNE - JULY
NOVEMBER	JULY 1	SEPTEMBER 1	SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER

*Jobs are available in between these hiring seasons, there are just not as many available. If you are aiming for a date that is outside a hiring season, then you should aim to have your documents ready 2 months before your estimated start date.*

## WILL I BE ALONE?

### *Teacher Community:*

One of the major benefits of private schools is that there are usually between 2 – 15 foreign teachers at each school depending on the size. Having other expats around for your first experience teaching abroad is a huge benefit because someone can show you the ropes and understands the ins and outs.

Although more foreign teachers live and work in the large cities, the teacher communities and relationships are often stronger in smaller towns.

### *Location preferences:*

Private and Public schools are located in almost every town in South Korea. Whether you're looking for a job in a large city or small town you can likely make it happen. It's important to consider that being very specific about your location, depending on your qualifications may limit your options. Often the largest cities like Seoul and Busan are the most popular locations and therefore the most competitive. Seoul and Busan definitely offer a lot and one of the reasons they are most popular, is because they are the most well known. Be sure not to overlook locations outside these areas. There are more than ten cities in Korea that have around 1 million people or more!

#### *These include:*

Seoul	Daejeon
Busan	Daegu
Incheon	Suwon
Ulsan	Changwon
Gwangju	Goyang

To put this in perspective, the US only has 7 cities with 1 million or more people in them. In addition to the above, there are 62 cities that have populations of 100,000 people or more.

The point here is that there are a lot of people in Korean cities that are often overlooked by those seeking jobs. Our theory is that this is because they are unfamiliar with these less popular cities.

Most people find benefits of any area they are placed. Sometimes it's easier to make friends in smaller towns. Often better job opportunities exist a little further outside the main metropolitan centers. We highly recommend considering options in a lot of different locations instead of only big cities. We strongly encourage first-time teachers to consider many locations instead of getting set on the largest. Some of the best opportunities are in less known places, yet the teacher community is typically very strong in these areas!

## TYPES OF ENGLISH TEACHING JOBS / PROGRAMS IN KOREA

There are two main types of positions in South Korea: Private Language Institutes and Public Schools. The following will help you get an overview of the types of opportunities available.

### Public Schools vs. Hagwons *Still not sure which is the best fit for you?*

Overview: We'll start by stating the obvious – there are pros and cons to both. The following information is designed to help teachers decide which type of school will be the best option for them.

#### ***Most hagwons and public schools in South Korea provide the following benefits:***

Airfare reimbursed upon arrival in Korea,  
one-way flight home provided at the end of your contract  
Housing (utilities not included)  
50/50 medical insurance through the  
National Health Insurance Corporation (NHIC)  
Paid time off  
Severance bonus upon completion of 1 year contract  
Pension - only US, Canadian, and Australian citizens are eligible for the lump-sum  
refund at the end of their contract

#### ***Public School: Pros***

##### **Work Hours and Class Size:**

- Daytime hours; 8:30a – 4:30p; 20-22 teaching hours/week
- Korean co-teacher in the classroom with you
- Curriculum provided, but it's a monotonous curriculum and it gets really boring to teach (more below).

##### **Overtime Pay:**

- Anything over the allotted teaching hours (usually 22 hours/week), you are usually granted overtime pay (around 20,000won – 25,000/hour).

##### **Vacation:**

- 15-18 (or more) paid vacation days per year, plus all National Holidays

##### **Less noticeable discrimination:**

- If you've done any research, you'll know that Korean employers are infamous for rejecting applicants based on appearance. This type of blatant discrimination is less common in the public school sector.

##### **Training + Orientation:**

- You'll experience a fully funded, comprehensive, government sponsored 3-day orientation upon arrival in Korea. A great way to meet other new teachers!

##### **Stability:**

- It's easy to appreciate the stability, consistency, and accountability (provided by the Ministry of Education) of public school jobs.

#### ***Hagwon: Pros***

##### **Work Hours and Class Size:**

- Hours vary; 9a – 6p (kindergartens) or 1p – 9p (elem/middle)
- Small classes – between 5-15 students, all typically at the same English level
- You have the freedom of being "in charge" of your own classroom as the sole English teacher

##### **Salary:**

- Starting salary at 2.1 mil won/month (depending on the school, higher if you have BA Ed/Eng or teaching experience).

##### **Year-round hiring:**

- No need to wait 6 months for the next hiring season! Hagwon positions open monthly.

##### **Teacher Community:**

- There are usually 2 – 15 foreign teachers per hagwon, depending on the size of the campus.

##### **Location preferences:**

- We'll search for jobs within your preferred city/area.
- Going with friends, a spouse, or a partner? Awesome. We'll focus on schools that are in the same area, hiring at the same time. Unless, of course, we find a school looking for 2 teachers at the same time (it's rare, but it does happen!).



### **Public School: Cons**

#### **Salary:**

- Starting salary can be as low as 1.9 mil won/month (higher in more rural areas, or if you're more qualified).
- If you don't have a BA in Ed/Eng or 1 year of teaching experience, you'll have to get a 100-hr minimum ESL certificate to even apply for public school jobs.

#### **Teacher Community:**

- 1 foreign teacher per public school

#### **Location Preferences:**

- You can list preferences on your application form, but you will not find out what school you're placed with until after you arrive in Korea.
- Going with friends or a partner? There is no guarantee you'll get placed near each other. Only married couples are given proximity preference.

#### **Seasonal Hiring:**

- Biggest hiring seasons are for February + August start dates. Some rural schools hire throughout the year, but most only hire twice a year.

#### **Application Process:**

- You will wait months to hear whether you've been offered an interview. If the interview is successful, you send in your visa documents. You're sent a contract AFTER your paperwork clears immigration. In other words – nothing is final until 4-6 weeks before your arrival.
- Once your application is rejected (either pre or post-interview), you cannot apply again for 1 full year.

#### **Class size:**

- Can range from 25 – 40 (or higher) students per class, all with varying degrees of English language ability.

#### **Monotonous Curriculum:**

- Same book, same lesson, for every... single... class. Go look on blogs/forums – this consensus is widespread.

#### **Desk-warming:**

- Sure, only 22 teacher hours/week is sweet! But the rest of your working hours (40 hrs/week) will be spent at school (typically monitored by CCTV). You'll ache with boredom.

### **Hagwons: Cons**

#### **"Business First" mentality:**

- Hagwons depend on student enrollment to stay in operation. Many Hagwon directors are less like educators, and more like businessmen/women.

#### **The Korean Mom:**

- Korean parents pay extra to send their kids to English hagwons. If a Korean mom is unhappy with the way you're teaching their kid, they'll go straight to your director.

#### **More Teaching Time:**

- Put simply, you'll be teaching more. Usually between 25-30 hours per week.

#### **Training + Orientation:**

- Training and orientation is not a general requirement, so you may begin teaching a day or two after you arrive. Many hagwons provide a few days of training or job shadowing... it really just depends on the school.

#### **Preferences of Employers:**

- Sure, we will submit you for jobs based on your preferences. Just keep in mind that Employers also choose teachers based on their preferences. If your preferences are too specific, you may find yourself waiting around for a Hagwon Director to request an interview with you.

#### **Vacation:**

- 10 paid vacation days per year, plus all National Holidays

#### **Stability:**

- It's no secret – there are far more hagwon horror stories than public school horror stories. Yes, there are dozens of reliable, stable, fun hagwons in Korea – year after year, we have teachers raving about their jobs in hagwons! But there are definitely hagwons out there that shouldn't be allowed to open their doors, let alone hire foreign teachers!

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### **Universities:**

You must be a certified teacher to work at a University and many require master's degrees with at least 2-4 years as an experienced teacher. These are also some of the most difficult jobs to get especially if you have not had experience living and teaching in Korea. Most of these jobs are given to those who have a personal connection or introduction.

### **International Schools:**

Many international schools require you to be a certified teacher in your home country. No prior experience needed, however, a B.Ed is a basic requirement and typically desirable countries like Korea attract very experienced teachers with 10+ years of experience.

## REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

In our experience many people can approach the teaching abroad experience as if they are a “gift or benefit” to the culture they are working in. Although there are portions of this that are true, it’s important to realize that this is an established industry and competitive environment. If you are a first time teacher, it will be nearly impossible for you to get everything you want or desire in a job (ie. location, salary, teaching hours, amazing apartment etc.). You have to get your foot in the door and start building experience, much like you would anywhere else and work your way up into the more desirable positions. Unrealistic expectations can be a huge hurdle for people. For example, they might see an amazing job or few jobs posted online and then weigh all options against that job. The unfortunate thing is that they would never be able to land that job in the first place. Their expectations are completely unrealistic. When interviewing for jobs, bear in mind as well that English schools will see tens if not hundreds of resumes for each opening. Getting an interview is a real victory. Getting a job offer is an even greater victory!

This is important information, approaching jobs as if they are competitive versus guaranteed, you will be far more likely to demonstrate an attitude and characteristics that are attractive and hireable. You’ll put your best foot forward.

There are a lot of unknowns when it comes to stepping into a new work place, let alone into a foreign country. Your work environment in Asia will undoubtedly be unlike any other you’ve experienced before, putting your life and interpersonal skills to the test while giving you diverse and exciting ways to challenge yourself both professionally and personally.

There are a number of expectations that you will be challenged by as an English teacher, many being ones you have never experienced before. But there are a number of expectations that you will have to challenge yourself with. This will often force you to let go of convention, think outside the box and use up as much inner initiative you can muster. Rising to the challenge of your position as an ESL teacher means constantly setting higher standards for yourself, making personal goals and being intentional about exhausting your abilities and resources. Many teachers resort to simply doing the bare minimum when they lack direction and accountability from their employer, somehow using the cultural disconnect as an excuse to be unmotivated and disengaged and are rarely fulfilled in their workplace. Here’s a list of things to consider when thinking about teaching in South Korea. We recommend making the most of your international experience and really diving in!

The adventure of this experience doesn’t come without its fair share of frustrating and uncomfortable situations. If you have researched teaching English in Asia, or talked to people who’ve been there, you’ve probably heard a handful of horror stories that make you a little weary about your decision to be an ESL teacher. The ESL industry in Asia can be full of difficult encounters and conflicts between foreigners and their employers that can taint and even ruin many teachers’ experiences. This is why it’s important for anyone you work with as you consider jobs to not try and sugar coat the challenges that come with teaching abroad. By being up front with the nitty gritty, you’ll have a more realistic approach to teaching abroad in Korea.





## READY TO MAKE THE LEAP? WAYS TO GET A JOB:

There are many ways to get a job in South Korea that range from contacting schools directly to paying a placement service to help you. The biggest breakdown, is knowing who to trust. On-line forums and job boards can post a glowing job description that is drastically different from the reality. Job sites, like Dave's ESL Cafe have a lot of jobs, but many of them are posted by folks who are just trying to make a quick buck by passing you along to a school. They have very little regard for you as the teacher. Reaching out to schools on your own, is like finding a needle in a haystack and your timing needs to be perfect. There are other elements that require industry expertise and diligence to answer questions like: Is the job that was great for someone last year is going to be a great fit for you this year. Or vice versa, what if a terrible school has gone through internal reorganization and now is a great place to work because they have a wonderful manager. It's a tricky business and a big decision. You need a trusted guide.

As a first time teachers the whole process is a lot easier if you work with an organization that knows the industry, the paperwork, and has a strong list of school partners that they have worked with for several years.

There are many organizations that offer to help you find a job. There just aren't very many good ones. After working with heaps of different organizations for many years, we've come to trust [www.AdventureTeaching.com](http://www.AdventureTeaching.com).

They are people of integrity and transparency. Most importantly, they really care! They've been helping teachers connect with great schools for over 10 years so they have a great network of schools that they know very well. It's impossible for them to control the employment experience, but they are committed to doing the best they can possibly do for their clients on both the teacher and school side.

**Our recommendation? Apply to Adventure Teaching first and give them a shot.**