

# Strange Bans in South Korea That May Surprise Tourists From Other Countries

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Before going to an unfamiliar country, you need to know about its culture. Especially if you are going to Asia where the society still follows certain traditions and has a hierarchical structure. One of these traditional countries is South Korea with its frightening characteristics and unusual taboos.

We collected the **oddities** and bans of South Korea so that you won't spoil your trip to the land of morning freshness.

## 1.....

There are many taboos associated with chopsticks in Korean culture. For example, if you puncture your food with chopsticks (like you would with a fork), then the hospitable host or cook will consider it a personal **insult**. Holding sticks in the vertical position or sticks stuck vertically in rice are associated with death in South Korea because, at funerals and **wakes**, smoking sticks stuck in the sand are a must.

## 2. Don't show your tattoos.

In South Korea (as in other Asian countries) there is a special attitude towards tattoos. The work of tattoo artists is illegal here, and only medical workers are allowed to deal with the "painting of the body." If you have tattoos, you may be treated unfriendly in public places or not be recruited for jobs.

## 3.....

It is considered too open and sexy among Koreans. They almost never wear t-shirts and jumper dresses without **layering** something underneath. But it's the opposite situation with mini-skirts. Girls actively wear minis and try to cover themselves with bags or magazines when going upstairs and on **escalators**.

## 4. Don't leave tips in cafes.

If you leave tips for a waiter in South Korea, they will take it as an insult. Hostesses here are paid very good salaries, and by tipping you can actually **offend** the staff. However, if you go to an American or European bar where the owner and staff are not Korean, it's a totally opposite situation — all tips are always welcomed.

## 5. Don't leave food on your plate.

Koreans have a very special attitude towards food. The memories of the war between the North and the South, as well as the Japanese annexation, are still fresh. Here portions are large, seasoned, and often spicy.

When visiting someone's home, it's not acceptable to refuse refreshments, and especially to not finish the food. In **canteens**, cafes, and restaurants you can also get reprimanded for leaving food on your plate.

## 6.....

Koreans perceive this as an intrusion into personal space. Also, don't try to photograph the locals without asking. It's not even about personal discomfort — you can actually pay a fine or spend time at the nearest police station trying to prove that the photo was taken without **malice**.

## 7.....

In Korea, the age hierarchy is very strong. The younger must **obey** their elders and not be rude. Older aunts (ajummas) have a scandalous character, but in no situation are they to be **contradicted**, even if they are wrong and have started the conflict themselves. In general, all conflicts in South Korea are solved in favor of local residents. And this fact is actively **abused** by **scammers**.

## 8.....

There is no taboo **potty** talk in South Korea. People freely discuss their poo and pee. A girlfriend, for example, can easily tell her boyfriend that she has **diarrhea**. Also, these types of discussions can happen while having lunch or hanging out with friends. In fact, your friends will often ask if your poos are ok. A network of free clean public toilets is well developed here. And in Seoul, they've built a park dedicated to the culture of the toilet. As they say, natural things can't be ugly.

## 9.....

There is a special attitude towards alcohol in Korea. Koreans work hard and drink a lot. It doesn't happen every day, but usually at the end of the work week. They usually drink together with their coworkers collectively, and it's **inappropriate** to reject a request from your boss (remember the point about the hierarchy). Actually in some mini-

corporations going out with the boss can get you a promotion, a profitable project, or an increase in salary. After these events, well-dressed but drunk men and women lie on the streets and in the metro of Seoul. There is no need to touch them, try to wake them, or bring them home. Don't worry, they won't be robbed and police officers will see to it that they get home.

#### **10. Don't smoke wherever you want.**

You are allowed to smoke in Korea, but not everywhere. There are special smoking areas where the smoke of cigarettes will not disturb anyone. It could be a special room or even a simple **rectangle** on the asphalt saying that smoking is allowed here. There are many places for smoking in Korea, especially in crowded places. And remember, if you decide to light a cigarette in the wrong place, get ready to pay a **fine**.

INTERNET SOURCE: [brightside.me/wonder-places/10-strange-bans-in-south-korea-that-can-surprise-an-inexperienced-traveler-478060](https://brightside.me/wonder-places/10-strange-bans-in-south-korea-that-can-surprise-an-inexperienced-traveler-478060)

#### **EXERCISES:**

##### **1. Match the headings (A-E) with the corresponding paragraphs:**

- A. Don't get involved in conflicts, especially with the elder generation
- B. Don't touch people lying on the streets
- C. Don't stare at local people
- D. Don't get confused with 'toilet' topic
- E. Don't play with chopsticks
- F. Don't wear a deep neckline

##### **2. Try to guess the meaning of the highlighted words from the context. Check with a dictionary.**

##### **3. What are the legal and cultural "bans" in Poland? Make a list and write the corresponding paragraphs.**

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