

Korea JoongAng Daily

YOUR WINDOW ON KOREA

PAGE 2 NATIONAL

TRAVELERS FROM CHINA TO BE TESTED FOR COVID FROM TODAY

PAGE 4 BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

COMPANIES GEAR UP FOR UPCOMING CES 2023 TECH SHOW

PAGE 10 CULTURE

TAKE A LOOK BACK ON THE UPS AND DOWNS OF BTS'S 2022

In association with

The New York Times

& koreajoongangdaily.com

SEOUL, KOREA



Low -9°C High -1°C

Monday, January 2, 2023

No. 6,658



A group of Singaporean travelers pose for a picture at Gyeongbok Palace during their visit to Seoul on Dec. 28. They say their favorite part of the tour in Seoul was trying on *hanbok* (Korean traditional dress) and taking photographs around the royal palace.

Travelers returning to Korea this year

BY YIM SEUNG-HYE

With regulations eased on foreigners entering Korea and short-term travel visas being issued for the first time in two years, the country's popular tourist attractions, especially the shopping district in central Seoul's Myeongdong, are beginning to vibrate once again with tourists' rolling suitcases.

"Where are all the K-beauty shops that used to dot the streets here?" asked Tracy Wu, a traveler from Hong Kong, who was visiting Myeongdong on Dec. 29. It was her first return to Seoul and her first overseas travel since the pandemic began. She says she's visited Korea several times before the world was devastated by the virus to refill her

makeup pouch with popular K-beauty items.

"I usually get my sheet masks here in Myeongdong because the shops used to sell them in large bundles for really cheap prices for travelers," said Wu. "But when I asked people where can I get the masks that used to be sold here, they all directed me to a convenience store or a pharmacy where they sell K95 masks. I don't think people are aware how much K-beauty shops dominated this area three years ago [...] I heard Myeongdong was hit hard by Covid. Now that we are back, I hope the shops that cater to foreign travelers come back as well."

Korea was indeed hit hard during the Covid-19 pandemic. Social distancing was enforced to varying degrees, quarantine was mandatory and the economic downturn was inevitable. But during nearly three years of the pandemic, Korea has also experienced a cultural explosion as consumers around the globe turned to virtual spaces to seek solace in the arts.

Director Bong Joon-ho's film "Parasite" (2019) earned four awards

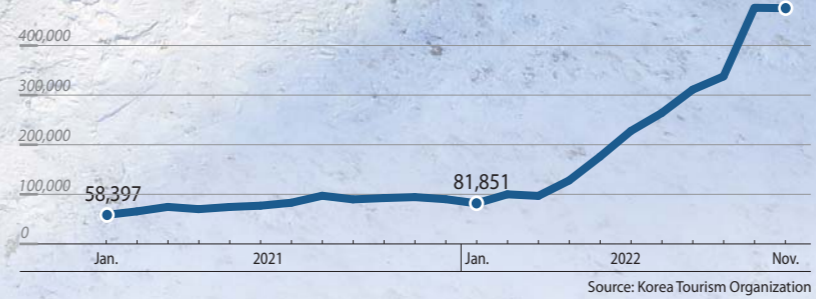
at the 92nd Academy Awards in February 2020 and K-pop boy band BTS continued to soar to new heights, rewriting the history of K-pop on countless occasions. Then there was "Squid Game" (2021), which became the most-watched Netflix content ever and actor Yoon Yuh-jung received staggering attention for her role in the film "Minari" (2020), which also won a number of awards at the Oscars, including Best Actress in a Supporting Role for Youn.

All these factors led to Korea being marked as one of the top destinations for travelers to visit as soon as the pandemic allowed.

According to Airbnb on Nov. 30, Seoul was the fourth most searched for travel destination on the travel and booking app between the first and third quarters of 2022. It said that peaking interest in Korea is mostly due to the rise in popularity of Korean culture.

Onion Anguk says it has been seeing an increase in foreign travelers visiting its *hanok* (traditional Korean house) cafe in Anguk, central Seoul, since last May.

Travelers to Korea



"The number of foreign customers these days is higher than when we just opened in 2019. I think more than 70 percent of our sales at the moment comes from foreigners," said Yu Zu-hyung, CEO of Onion. "From the opening hour until we close, you'll witness a unique scene here at Onion Anguk. Foreigners from at least a dozen different countries sit around a traditional Korean *hanok* and drink coffee all day long. It's so cosmopolitan. I think they are here to enjoy Korea's popular cafe culture, try on Korean rubber shoes known as *gomushin* and experience *hanok* and take tons of photos."

Ru Wang, who arrived in Seoul for the first time on Christmas Eve from New Zealand, was taking selfies with the *hanok* as her backdrop on Dec. 27. She said she waited for an hour to get a seat near the courtyard, known as *jungjeong* in Korean, in the cafe.

"I saw the cafe on Instagram and really wanted to experience *hanok* and the courtyard and all the delicious-looking pastries. Korean cafe culture is really hot right now," said Wang. "I'm going to go around different cafes in Seoul, and then visit HYBE headquarters and Line and the Kakao Friends shops."

Wang says she wants to visit other areas of Korea to discover more about Korea and its history when she comes back next time, since there's "definitely going to be a second and third time."

Asha Freeman, who was waiting for a seat on the same day, is from Atlanta, Georgia. She came to Korea last August to study at Hanyang University after falling in love with Korea and its culture in recent years. She was visiting the cafe to introduce Korea to her mother and sister who were visiting the country to see her for Christmas.

"I am so overwhelmed to be finally here," said Freeman. "During my stay, I hope to travel around different areas of the country."

Myeongdong is no longer barren either. Kwon Sang-soo, director of Stanford Hotel Management in Korea said its Myeongdong branch that recently opened in the area is 98 percent full with travelers from all over the world.

"Around Christmas a year ago, See TRAVEL, Page 2.

PARK SANG-MOON

Newsstand Price 2,000 won | Email nytd@joongang.co.kr

For subscription information call 1577-0510



SAMSUNG

새로운 출발

모두의 꿈과 상상을 현실로 만드는 한해가 되길 기원합니다
미래를 위해 끊임없이 도전하는 당신을 응원합니다