



Post



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Apr 6, 2023 · 6 min read

Men in dresses - April 7, 2023

Updated: Apr 9, 2023

SUMMARY

Rode on a train to Jeonju, a very lovely, prosperous town south of Seoul. It's full of old buildings in the Korean style, very similar to Japanese. Tons of young couples, young women and quite a few older women and children are strolling around in period costumes available for rent in a rainbow of beautiful colors and fabrics. Checked into our hanok, an old traditional inn. The outside was charming with an award winning garden. The room was not charming and was fairly lacking in creature comforts. Good lunch at a noodle resto followed by a walk around town then a hands-on kimchi making class and kimchi pancake sampling. Free time followed by a dinner where we were able

to sample about 15 Korean "Tapas". I liked about 4 of them. :-O Walked through a market of food stalls and found room for one delicious candied strawberry. Off to bed on the floor (on a thin mattress). - Karen

[Photos](#) | [Previous](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

DETAIL

My brain has trouble dealing with the seeming paradox of being two time zones closer to the "west coast" (e.g. San Francisco, and such) and yet being two hours further east. But we were. It means if we try to go to bed at 11 pm our bodies think it's 9 pm and are still ready to party. It all works out and we sleep and wake early. No breakfast today, but we do have coffee in the room. We're checking out and moving on, out of Seoul, today so we pack and are in the lobby, sitting like a boss, at 8:30.

It's a beautiful blue sky and slowly the whole group gets together in the lobby, checked out. Some come down from their rooms, some return from coffee shops down the way. Dennis verifies we're all there and off we head, dragging our suitcases behind us, back to the metro. With the luggage we use the elevator to get underground, but that's smooth.

At the train station we're early for our departure, so we group our luggage and head off, Dennis on guard and a required reconvene time in mind. I find a wonderful (and thankfully ubiquitous here) French pastry shop. I get a ham and cheese croissant, a pain au chocolate, and a crunch Carmel almond wheel. Oh, and a big coffee latte. I saunter back to the group, to find Karen, and learn she's done pretty much the same thing. So much for comparing plans.

The train is taking us to Jeonju. It looks like the trains in France. It's new and comfortable. It has wifi and a tray table at each seat. There's a TV silently showing ads and features and at each infrequent station it says "This is the XYZ station" in very big letters in English. The metro had the same along with an arrow showing on which side of the car you exit. Very nice.

In Jeonju we haul our luggage off the train and head down the platform. It's cool and we add layers and hats. At the street we see our bus for the trip and we also see four taxis, at the curb, surprisingly close to one another. Apparently, just before we arrived the fourth taxi had slammed into back end of the third taxi and started a chain reaction. None of the drivers looked any too pleased.

The bus dropped us off on a quiet street in the (walking) center of town. We wheel our bags a few hundred yards, turn left and right as we marvel at the old style architecture of the single story buildings and the variety of flowers in bloom. At our sleeping accommodations for the night, each of the couples is shown to their room. It's very clean and traditional. We take our shoes off and head inside. The heated floor feels great.

The first floor is empty save for a small refrigerator on the floor, and a long, low table below the TV. There's a door to a small bath and a wooden ladder leading to the sleeping loft. There are two pads on top of two wooden heated sleeping pads, maybe three feet by four feet. We test out laying down to sleep and find that I have to hang my feet slightly over the railing to fit. This is going to be interesting, not to mention negotiating the ladder once or more in the night to pee. Hm.

Back outside Nathalie mentions she's set up her bed and positioned it correctly for the best Fung Schway, per Dennis. We take a look and realize we're NOT supposed to sleep up in the loft, but rather on the floor of the main floor. We feel better.

Being hungry, we're happy to abandon our luggage and lodging and head to lunch. On the way we encounter an inordinate number of school kids of varying ages. Some are on the street, walking around. Others are in photo shops, set up with props and backgrounds for the ideal instagram photos. Even others - so many others - are dressed in period costume! It's the dress, but also makeup (which they don't need) and jewelry in their hair, handbags. It is amazing. And there are entire families dressed up like this. The city is incredibly picturesque and the girls, and everyone, are taking the best pictures of themselves for TikTok or Instagram or whatever.

Eventually we get to where we have lunch. It is (of course) a traditional place, serving noodles and dumplings. We have cold noodles, which Dennis cuts up and mixes expertly with a number of other ingredients. We also have hot noodle soup and two types of steamed dumplings, all washed down with water. We all agree it's very good. After lunch we walk some more, see oodles of more girls and ladies and families in costume. We get coffee and see where we'll be having dinner. A business nearby is one of many, many in town that rent out these costumes. Two of our own group decide to do it! They get all dolled up as we do more town walking and soon we're reunited. It was a hoot.

Next stop is class. We're going to learn to make Kimchi! From the master. It's a short walk to the classroom, and Emily and Nathalie will be learning the art of Kimchi making in costume! We apron up and introductions are made. Our instructor will be speaking Korean and Dennis will be translating. It's fun and before long we have gloves on and we're massaging kimchi paste into Chinese cabbage and some other green vegetable. It's going to need to age for a while, so we won't be eating that, but we will be eating some kimchi pancakes our teacher whips up. She even flips them in the air, much to our delight.

After class we take tea on the floor at a formal tea house. It's great. Two of our group are still in costume as are some of the other clients. We're all smiling at each other and taking pictures. Everyone here is so friendly. More walking around town and the girls go give up their costumes before dinner.

At our dinner restaurant we all sit down. There are small plates of food already on the table. There are propane (butane?) burners with dishes with water and whole cooked chickens. As we wonder what's going on more and more food arrives. There are twelve of us, so there's multiple dishes of everything. After a while we start eating as more food and rice wine get put on the table. We get to where there's truly no more room.

And more food arrives. In the end we tried/ate eighteen different dishes. Some were good, some (sliced loaf of pig's face) we didn't try. I did try the still wriggling octopus and the fish that was so smelly that you had to put some sauce on it and wrap it in a kimchi leaf before you put it in your mouth. By the end we weren't hungry any more and had learned a lot.

Wait, we're not done yet?? We then walk, in the oh so cold, to the night market. It's covered but it's open at many ends, so it's outdoors. We see many amazing things, but thankfully Dennis only has us sample one, strawberries dipped in hardened sugar. The strawberries were so sweet and the whole thing was really good.

Exhausted we head back home to make our beds on the floor and crawl in. Bags packed and on the front porch at 7:50. Breakfast delivered to the rooms at 8:00.

Photos



On the train



Making kimchi



The master flipping a kimchi pancake



Me, contemplating how my night is going to go



Karen finding the bedding (and the 'beds')



Our basic bathroom



So many schoolgirls in costume



And husbands and wives



And men. Some in dresses.



At the tea house



So much food for dinner



oh so much food



Walking to the night market. So pretty!



Another night. Another night market visit.

[Previous](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

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