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# Leaping toward Asia's Top Tourist City

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## Direction

- **Promote tourism revitalization strategies to normalize Seoul's tourism, disrupted by the pandemic, and enhance its competitiveness to achieve a global top 5 ranking.**

### **Efforts to Normalize Seoul Tourism**

- **In response to the full-scale resumption of international tourism in 2023, the Seoul Metropolitan Government(SMG) initiated projects to recover and rebuild Seoul's tourism sector. These projects included hosting global festivals and events and providing industry support. Although the recovery was slow in early 2023 (40% in January and 54% in March), a recovery rate of 79.4% was achieved by November.**
- The SMG organized several global tourism events, creating opportunities for visitors to experience the city. For instance, in May, the "Seoul Festa 2023" was held with the slogan "Feel the Real Seoul." This event, occurring during the peak tourism season, featured a series of large-scale events showcasing Seoul's attractions in K-pop, beauty, fashion, and gastronomy. The festival attracted approximately 1.6 million attendees over eight days, with more than 30 events spread across the city. Notably, 40% of the attendees at the opening ceremony were international visitors, highlighting the event's global appeal. Additional festivals, such as the Summer Festival (July-August), Beauty Travel Week (September), Seoul Gourmet Week (September), and Winter Light Festival (December), were also organized to consistently attract visitors and showcase Seoul's diverse seasonal attractions.
- Furthermore, to normalize and elevate Seoul's tourism industry post-pandemic, the SMG supported the workforce (51 companies benefited from Seoul-style employment incentives and employment support centers were operational) and provided financial aid (130 companies received employment retention support and 143 companies were covered by foreign tourist safety insurance). Comprehensive measures were implemented (in July) to eliminate frivolous charges at tourist destinations. Special inspections were also conducted in the Myeongdong Special Tourism Zone (July-August) to improve tourist satisfaction, aligning with the heightened status of Seoul due to the Korean Wave.

### **Promoting the Future Vision of Seoul Tourism: Beyond Normalization to a 30 Million Tourist City**

- **The SMG is actively promoting the '3377 Seoul Tourism Future Vision Strategy' to**

capitalize on the increased overseas interest in Seoul, fueled by the global Korean Wave craze. The strategy aims to elevate Seoul beyond post-pandemic normalization and establish it as a top 5 global tourist destination.

- **The '3377 Seoul Tourism Future Vision' sets specific goals: attracting 30 million foreign tourists, targeting an expenditure of 3 million won per tourist, achieving a 7-day average stay, and a return visit rate of 70%. It outlines 10 key commitments to reach these objectives.**

- ① **Ease of Solo Travel:** In response to the trend towards smaller, personalized travel, the SMG will significantly enhance traveler convenience through improved transportation and payment systems. 'Seoul-type Blue Plaques' using smart technology will be installed at major tourist sites to enrich visitors' experiences with historical and cultural narratives of Seoul.
- ② **High Value-Added Tourism:** Leveraging Seoul's strengths, the SMG aims to attract tourists who stay longer and spend more by focusing on developing medical/wellness and MICE/Bleisure tourism. The SMG will also expand into sports and education sectors by hosting international sporting events and attracting overseas educational tour groups.
- ③ **Experiential Tourism Content:** Transforming Seoul from a work-centric city into a globally enjoyed 'Fun City,' the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) is infusing every corner of Seoul—from everyday spaces to mountains and alleys—with diverse experiential tourism content. The aim is to transition the city from being predominantly focused on work, characterized by strictness, severity, and seriousness, to a 'Fun City' that delights visitors from around the world.
- ④ **Top 3 Gastronomy Tourism Destination:** The SMG organizes large-scale gastronomic events, such as Seoul Gourmet Week and the Seoul Barbecue Festival, to establish Seoul as a premier gastronomy city. Additionally, the SMG plans to promote Seoul's culinary culture through food markets at key locations such as Sejong-ro and the Han River.
- ⑤ **Night Tourism:** To extend tourists' spending time, we are activating night tourism. Offerings include the 'Seoul Moon' gas balloon for views 150m above Yeouido, and night view spots at the Han River Bridge and Cheonggyecheon, complemented by the permanent 'Han River Drone Light Show.'
- ⑥ **Investment in Tourism Infrastructure:** The SMG is developing innovative landmarks, such as the Ferris Wheel and Nodeul Global Art Island, to attract tourists. Additionally, SMG is continuously enhancing infrastructure to support high value-added tourism industries, including the Korean Wave, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions), and

sports within the city.

- ⑦ **Accommodation Infrastructure:** In the short term, the SMG is utilizing idle facilities to meet additional accommodation demands. In the long term, the SMG will expand accommodation options, incentivizing new and larger facilities through floor area ratio benefits. New concepts like event pop-up hotels and floating hotels on the Han River will also be introduced.
- ⑧ **Aggressive Marketing:** The SMG is establishing tourism offices in high-growth Southeast Asian markets like Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam, and the years 2025-2026 have been designated as the Visit Seoul Years, during which public and private sectors will collaborate to attract international tourists.
- ⑨ **Strengthening Tourism Business Growth Foundations:** The SMG aims to expand the number of tourism professionals through the Seoul Tourism Academy. It will also operate the Employment Support Center, a job search site dedicated to tourism in Seoul, and enhance and restructure the functions of the Tourism and MICE Enterprise Support Center to assist companies in managing their businesses.
- ⑩ **Establishing a Sound 'Tourism Market Order' for Tourists and Citizens:** The SMG is developing various institutional frameworks to eliminate low-quality and low-cost tourism. This includes the establishment of a 'Seoul-style standard contract' to prevent unfair transactions and the introduction of a 'tourism ombudsman system'. Additionally, the existing excellent tourism product certification system has been expanded and refined to include certifications for companies, aiming to identify and nurture outstanding businesses in Seoul and improve the quality of tourism products. Moreover, to mitigate the side effects of excessive tourism, such as resident inconvenience, measures will be prepared and implemented to minimize disruption to local communities. Protection of residents' rights to live will also be strengthened by designating 'special management areas' under the Tourism Promotion Act.