

South Korea Ecotourism Market Size, Share, Trends and Forecast by Traveler Type, Age Group, Sales Channel, and Region, 2026-2034

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Abstracts

The South Korea ecotourism market size was valued at USD 4,668.03 Million in 2025 and is projected to reach USD 11,914.67 Million by 2034, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 10.97% from 2026-2034.

As the country places a high priority on low-impact travel experiences and sustainable tourism growth, the South Korean ecotourism business is growing gradually. Demand for health retreats, forest healing programs, and conservation-focused travel is rising in both domestic and foreign visitor groups thanks to government initiatives. Additionally, increased environmental consciousness among passengers, together with the rise of eco-friendly hotels and nature-based attractions, is speeding investments in green tourism infrastructure, contributing to the South Korea ecotourism market share.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND INSIGHTS:

By Traveler Type: Group travelers hold the largest market share at 81.06% in 2025 , driven by corporate wellness programs, educational nature excursions, and organized ecotourism packages that leverage South Korea's extensive national park networks and forest therapy centers.

By Age Group: Generation Y leads the market with a 59.5% share in 2025 , as millennials increasingly seek authentic cultural experiences, sustainable travel options, and wellness-oriented nature retreats aligned with their environmental values.

By Sales Channel: Travel agents dominate with a 77.3% share in 2025 ,

reflecting the continued preference for professionally curated ecotourism packages that provide expert guidance, multilingual support, and seamless access to protected natural areas.

Key Players: The South Korea ecotourism market features a competitive landscape with tour operators, national park authorities, and hospitality providers investing in sustainable infrastructure, digital booking platforms, and specialized wellness tourism services to capture market share and enhance visitor experiences.

The South Korea ecotourism market continues to expand as the country leverages its diverse natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage to attract environmentally conscious travelers. Government investments in healing forests and therapeutic programs have positioned South Korea as a global leader in nature-based wellness tourism. For instance, the National Center for Forest Therapy in Yeongju offers comprehensive overnight programs featuring forest immersion activities, meditation sessions, and therapeutic treatments that attract both domestic and international wellness seekers. The integration of smart tourism technologies in national parks further enhances visitor experiences while promoting responsible environmental practices, supporting the South Korea ecotourism market growth.

Integration of Smart Technology in Ecotourism Experiences

The market is experiencing significant technological transformation as digital tools enhance visitor engagement and environmental sustainability. Since December 2023, Seoul Metro has implemented AI-powered real-time translation services at 11 high-traffic tourist stations using transparent OLED screens for seamless communication. In protected areas like Seoraksan and Bukhansan National Parks, smart systems provide real-time data on trail congestion, weather conditions, and ecological sensitivity to promote responsible tourism behavior and minimize environmental impact.

Growing Interest in Wellness and Forest Healing Tourism

Rising interest in wellness-oriented travel is giving a lift to experiences centered on forest healing and nature therapy, drawing more visitors seeking stress relief and restorative environments. This momentum grew further when the Jincheon Declaration on Forest Therapy was signed on October 29, 2024, during the World Forum on Forest Therapy, providing shared principles and guiding practices that support the global

growth of these healing programs.

Expansion of Community-Based Ecotourism Initiatives

Community-led sustainable tourism projects are gaining traction across South Korea's rural and island regions. The village of Seonheul on Jeju Island has established the 'Social Cooperative Seonheulgot' to manage the Dongbaekdongsan Wetland Center and operate ecotours, local product sales, and community eco-education programs. The Jeju Olle trail system connects various villages, enabling travelers to discover local culture, agriculture, and natural attractions while supporting regional economic development through sustainable footpath tourism.

The South Korea ecotourism market generated a revenue of USD 4,668.03 Million in 2025 and is projected to reach a value of USD 11,914.67 Million by 2034, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 10.97% . Government investments in regional tourism infrastructure, expanding forest therapy networks, and the integration of digital technologies in protected areas are expected to drive sustained market expansion. Continued emphasis on sustainable development, wellness tourism, and community-based ecotourism initiatives will attract environmentally conscious travelers seeking authentic nature experiences.

Traveler Type Insights:

Solo

Group

Group travelers lead with a share of 81.06% of the total South Korea ecotourism market in 2025.

Group ecotourism in South Korea is thriving as corporate clients increasingly utilize forest therapy programs for employee wellness and team-building activities. The National Center for Forest Therapy in Yeongju offers specialized overnight programs featuring forest immersion, stretching classes, and therapeutic treatments designed for group participants. Furthermore, educational institutions organize nature-based learning experiences in national parks and ecological preservation areas to promote environmental awareness among students.

Solo travelers represent a growing segment as independent tourists seek personalized nature experiences and cultural immersion opportunities. The expansion of hiking tourism centers, such as the Seoul Tourism Hiking Center near Bukhansan National Park, provides multilingual support and trail guidance for individual visitors exploring South Korea's extensive mountain networks and forest healing destinations.

Age Group Insights:

Generation X

Generation Y

Generation Z

Generation Y dominates with a share of 59.5% of the total South Korea ecotourism market in 2025.

Generation Y travelers are driving ecotourism growth through their commitment to environmental stewardship and wellness-oriented travel choices. Research indicates that 68% of millennials actively seek destinations demonstrating environmental sustainability and community benefits. This demographic is particularly attracted to South Korea's fusion of K-culture experiences with nature-based tourism, including temple stays, forest bathing programs, and farm-to-table culinary experiences that combine cultural authenticity with sustainable practices.

Generation X travelers represent a substantial market segment, often participating in family-oriented ecotourism activities and wellness retreats. Generation Z visitors increasingly engage with ecotourism through social media-influenced travel decisions and seek immersive experiences that support environmental conservation efforts.

Sales Channel Insights:

Travel Agent

Direct

Travel agents command a share of 77.3% of the total South Korea ecotourism market in

2025.

Travel agents maintain market dominance by offering curated ecotourism packages that simplify access to South Korea's protected areas, healing forests, and cultural heritage sites. Global and local online travel agencies, including Yanolja and GC Company, are strengthening their presence through personalized services, advanced booking systems, and comprehensive travel solutions. Tour operators increasingly develop specialized packages emphasizing K-culture, culinary experiences, and wellness programs for both domestic and international visitors.

Regional Insights:

Seoul Capital Area

Yeongnam (Southeastern Region)

Honam (Southwestern Region)

Hoseo (Central Region)

Others

The Seoul Capital Area leads as the primary gateway for ecotourism activities, with accessible urban mountain parks like Bukhansan attracting substantial visitor numbers. The Seoul Tourism Hiking Center reported foreign visitors reaching 7,944 as of late 2025, more than four times the 2022 figure.

The Yeongnam region offers diverse ecotourism attractions including Gyeongsangnam-do's wellness tourism sites, Donguibogam Village herbal medicine park, and Seoraksan National Park's dramatic landscapes with extensive hiking trail networks.

The Honam region features Naejangsan National Park, renowned for spectacular fall foliage, and emerging ecotourism destinations that combine natural beauty with cultural experiences in traditional villages.

The Hoseo region hosts the National Center for Forest Therapy connected to Sobaeksan National Park, offering comprehensive forest healing programs and therapeutic accommodation facilities.

Other regions include Jeju Island, designated as a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site, Geopark, and Biosphere Reserve, featuring the extensive Jeju Olle trail system and community-based ecotourism initiatives.

GROWTH DRIVERS:

Why is the South Korea Ecotourism Market Growing?

Government Investment in Regional and Sustainable Tourism Development

Government initiatives are significantly accelerating ecotourism market expansion through strategic infrastructure investments and policy support. From 2024 to 2033, approximately KRW 3 trillion will be invested in Busan, Gwangju, Ulsan, Gyeongnam, and Jeonnam through the 'Southern Region Mega-Tourism Development' project to enhance cultural, maritime, and recreational tourism infrastructure. The South Korean government has established ambitious targets of attracting 30 million foreign tourists by 2027, with specific emphasis on promoting regional tourism, sustainable practices, and eco-friendly travel options.

Rising Environmental Consciousness Among Global Travelers

Increasing environmental awareness among travelers is driving demand for sustainable tourism experiences and responsible travel options. South Korea welcomed 16.37 Million foreign visitors in 2024, representing a 48.4% increase from the previous year. Nature and travel-focused tourism attracted 344,000 visitors, accounting for 13% of total arrivals, highlighting the growing appetite for outdoor and ecological experiences. In July 2024, the Korea Tourism Organization joined the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), demonstrating the nation's commitment to international sustainable tourism standards. This alignment with global sustainability frameworks strengthens consumer confidence and attracts environmentally conscious travelers seeking certified green destinations.

Expansion of Forest Therapy Infrastructure and Wellness Programs

The systematic development of forest therapy facilities and wellness tourism programs is establishing South Korea as a premier destination for nature-based healing. The Korea Forest Service has expanded the network of therapeutic forests and institutionalized forest healing tourism through specialized training programs and

certified forest therapy instructors. The National Center for Forest Therapy offers comprehensive programs including accommodation in Juchi District with healing gardens, aqua therapy centers, and health promotion facilities. Nine forest trails totaling 50 kilometers connect the facility with Sobaeksan National Park and surrounding mountain areas, providing diverse therapeutic experiences that reduce hospital visits and medical expenses among regular participants.

MARKET RESTRAINTS:

What Challenges the South Korea Ecotourism Market is Facing?

Overtourism and Infrastructure Strain at Popular Destinations

The rapid growth in tourist arrivals has created significant overcrowding at South Korea's iconic natural and cultural sites. Bukchon Hanok Village has implemented tourist restrictions between 5 pm and 10 am with fines for violations to protect resident quality of life. Popular ecotourism destinations including Seoraksan National Park, Jeju Island, and Seoul's urban mountain parks face increasing pressure on transportation, accommodation, and natural resources during peak visitation periods.

Environmental Carrying Capacity and Conservation Concerns

Managing visitor impacts while preserving ecological integrity presents ongoing challenges for protected area management. Jeju Island authorities introduced South Korea's first multilingual etiquette guide with fines reaching 200,000 won for repeat violations of environmental and behavioral guidelines. The rapid tourism growth has contributed to environmental degradation, increased waste generation, and strain on water and energy resources at sensitive ecological sites.

Geopolitical Tensions and Political Uncertainty

Regional security concerns and domestic political developments occasionally impact tourism confidence and visitor arrivals. The temporary declaration of martial law in December 2024 affected domestic tourism spending and created uncertainty among international travelers. Ongoing geopolitical considerations related to the Korean Peninsula require continuous monitoring and effective communication strategies to maintain visitor confidence in South Korea's ecotourism sector.

Competitive Landscape:

The South Korea ecotourism market features a dynamic competitive environment with diverse stakeholders including national park authorities, tour operators, hospitality providers, and wellness tourism enterprises. Key players focus on developing sustainable infrastructure, expanding digital booking capabilities, and creating specialized nature-based tourism products. Competition intensifies as operators invest in forest therapy certifications, eco-friendly accommodations, and technology-enhanced visitor experiences. Strategic partnerships between government agencies, local communities, and private enterprises facilitate innovative ecotourism development while ensuring environmental conservation and authentic cultural experiences that differentiate South Korea in the global sustainable tourism market.

Frequently Asked Questions About the South Korea Ecotourism Market Report

- 1.How big is the South Korea ecotourism market?
- 2.What is the projected growth rate of the South Korea ecotourism market?
- 3.Which traveler type held the largest South Korea ecotourism market share?
- 4.What are the key factors driving market growth?
- 5.What are the major challenges facing the South Korea ecotourism market?

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