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## Smart Meetings Heads Far East

BY DAN JOHNSON ON JUNE 11, 2018



*Smart Meetings* will be in one of the world's hottest, most dynamic meetings destinations —[South Korea](#)—from June 10 to 15. Managing Editor Dan Johnson will be in Seoul, Busan, Gyeongju and Incheon, visiting several of the country's top hotels, cultural attractions, historical sites and restaurants, and participating in Korea MICE Expo on June 15 at COEX, Convention and Exhibition Center in Seoul. Follow our daily adventures in words and pictures on this page!

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## Day 6

After our usual breakfast buffet, we checked out of Orakai hotel in Incheon and boarded our bus to Seoul. Our first stop there was Coex, known to the meetings industry as Seoul's main convention center, with four main exhibition halls and 64 meeting rooms. But it also contains Asia's largest shopping mall, the city's only airport terminal, three multinational-office skyscrapers and two theaters, among other things.



**Dan Johnson**  
@SmartMtgsDan



Coex, Seoul's largest convention center, contains this 1,080-seat auditorium, four exhibition halls and 54 meeting rooms. [@miceseoul](#)

2:25 PM - Jun 15, 2018



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We then had a Korean lunch at SMT Seoul restaurant, where the CVB also gave a presentation about Seoul's elite status as a meetings destination. Next, we visited Seoul Dragon City, South Korea's first Hotelplex, consisting of four hotel brands from Accor Ambassador Korea. It contains convention facilities that accommodate some 4,900 people and the Sky Kingdom entertainment facility.



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Stylish Some Sevit (Floating Islands) in Seoul offers meeting spaces--including a domed banquet hall--for a wide array of events. [@miceseoul](#)

2:46 PM - Jun 15, 2018

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Our last site visit was to Some Sevit (Floating Islands), offering stylish meeting facilities, including a banquet hall that can accommodate up to 500. Some Sevit also provides spectacular views of the Nangang River.



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The farewell dinner for the visiting meeting group included outstanding Korean barbecue. [@miceseoul](#) [@koreantravel](#)

2:46 PM - Jun 15, 2018

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Later, we checked into our rooms at Novotel Suites Ambassador Seoul Yongsan, and then went to our farewell dinner, hosted by Korea Tourism Organization's MICE Bureau. It featured excellent Korean barbecue, made right at our tables, as well as Korean side dishes. It was a rousing affair, enjoyed by all, and a fitting conclusion to a truly unforgettable fam trip.



## Riding the Korean Wave of Hallyu at Meetings

Not so long ago. Hallvu. or the "New Wave"

cultural phenomenon in South Korea was a passion isolated to the young. But the movement that started with music and television is now seeped so deeply into daily life that the country's main meetings event focused on how Hallyu can be integrated with the industry.



Smart Meetings



## Day 5

Today, after enjoying the breakfast buffet at Orakai, where we are staying, we went to Songdo ConvensiA for Korea MICE Expo. We briefly roamed the floor—I surveyed all of the booths, picking up resource materials and briefly making connections.



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Soyeon Kim greets visitors at a booth that offers craft-making at Korea MICE Expo 2018. [#KME2018](#) [#meetinKorea](#)

12:03 PM - Jun 14, 2018



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Then, we attended the opening ceremony, which included a keynote address, “Hallyu: the Competitive Edge of Korean MICE,” by Ahn Siwook, managing director of SM Entertainment. His talk was consistent with the focus of the conference—finding ways to blend Hallyu (Korean pop culture, which is very hot) into the meetings industry by including it in visiting groups’ itineraries.







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Diana Kim (left) and Young Kim served at a booth that provided information about South Korea's ever-popular markets. [#KME2018](#) [#meetinKorea](#)

12:12 PM - Jun 14, 2018

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We then were free to roam the floor. I interviewed staff from Gyeongju (one of the cities we visited) and Temple Stay, a nationwide program that enables individuals and groups to customize experiences at South Korean Buddhist temples. I also connected with dozens of other people at booths that represented South Korean destinations and culture.





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Kim Yong Hee (left) of Cultural Corps of Korean Buddhism met with Smart Meetings' Dan Johnson at Korea MICE Expo. [#KME2018](#) [#meetinKorea](#)

12:18 PM - Jun 14, 2018



4



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We had a traditional Korean lunch at Caisson24, and then went to G-Tower Observatory, offering panoramic views of the local area. We also visited Gyeongwonjae Ambassador Hotel—it features traditional aesthetics, providing a bit of a balance to the technologically saturated surrounding area.



**Dan Johnson**  
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Groups wanting a traditional hotel in the densely technological Incheon-Sando area opt for Gyeongwonjae Ambassador Incheon. [#meetinKorea](#)

12:43 PM - Jun 14, 2018



4



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In the early evening, we went to the Korea MICE Expo Networking Party. It lasted a couple hours, and featured food, drink, socializing and K-Pop entertainment.





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@SmartMtgsDan



Members of world-famous boy band Shinee, flanking an official, were honored at [#KME2018](#) in Incheon on Thursday. [#meetinKorea](#) [#SHINee](#) [#Kpop](#)

2:21 PM - Jun 14, 2018

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## Day 4



The group boarded our bus to visit Hwangnyongwon, shaped like a pagoda-style wooden temple, that was designed and built in collaboration with Buddhist monks. Its more than 40 guest rooms are intended for people who are participating in prayer and meditation practice there, but the attractive auditorium and garden can be rented to host events for up to 450 people—and there are nice hotels nearby.







The next stop was Seokguram Grotto, which includes Bulguksa Temple. Some of the finest Buddhist sculptures in the world can be found in this complex, which is a Korean National Treasure and a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site. It was built from granite, in the eighth century.



We had an excellent traditional Korean lunch at San Chuk Hyang restaurant and then traveled to Cafe Dayeon, situated in Gyeongju's Gyochon Hanok Village, where Kim Yang Hee led us through a Korean tea-making session. The group then had time to roam around the village, which is full of shops and family-friendly cultural activities.







**Dan Johnson**  
@SmartMtgsDan



Gyochon Hanok Village offers plenty of Korean cultural activities for groups, and fun for people of all ages. [@KoreanTravel](#)

7:19 AM - Jun 13, 2018

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Then, we left for the railway station to catch a high-speed train to Incheon. Gyeongju and Busan are in the southeast part of South Korea, while Incheon and Busan are in the northwest portion. So, the train ride cut diagonally across the country.



**Dan Johnson**  
@SmartMtgsDan



This display at the railway station honors one of the city's world-renowned attractions--Gyeongju Teddy Bear Museum! [@KoreanTravel](#)

7:38 AM - Jun 13, 2018

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We are staying at Orakai Hotel. The 2018 Korea MICE Expo Welcome Reception Dinner featured traditional music and dance, along with remarks from South Korean officials. This MICE Expo is drawing meetings professionals from 41 countries; it's the largest

annual MICE event in South Korea.



**Dan Johnson**  
@SmartMtgsDan



Korean drummers provided a lively opening to the 2018 Korea MICE Expo's welcome reception dinner in Incheon on Wednesday. [@KoreanTravel](#)

1:33 PM - Jun 13, 2018

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## Day 3



**Dan Johnson**  
@SmartMtgsDan



The media group arrived in Busan on Monday. The bay area is one of the city's most popular places. [@KoreanTravel](#)

1:39 PM - Jun 12, 2018

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Today started off with a breakfast buffet at our leisure, at Paradise Hotel in Busan, where we were staying. The group then headed to the Hilton Hotel in Busan for a property tour. It's a very nice, spacious hotel with attractive meeting space.



**Dan Johnson**  
@SmartMtgsDan



A view from the top of Haedong Yonggungsa Temple grounds.  
[@KoreanTravel](#)

2:05 PM - Jun 12, 2018



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Our next stop was Haedong Yonggungsa Temple, an extraordinary attraction with a traditional Korean feel and stunning views. Built in 1376, it's one of the few waterfront, as opposed to mountain, temples. We had a traditional Korean lunch at Vin d'el Olive and then traveled to Gamcheon Cultural Village—a fun, interesting place filled with shops and museums focusing on Korean culture.



**Dan Johnson**  
@SmartMtgsDan



Gamcheon Cultural Village is filled with shops selling crafts, clothing and other traditional Korean items. [@KoreanTravel](#)

2:15 PM - Jun 12, 2018



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We also visited Busan Cinema Center, a modern facility that hosts international film



festivals and other events. It has rental spaces available for group gatherings.



**Dan Johnson**  
@SmartMtgsDan



World-famous Jagalchi Market, Korea's oldest and largest fish market, is always hopping. [@KoreanTravel](#)

2:21 PM - Jun 12, 2018

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Next, we boarded our bus—which has become like a second home to us—to travel about 80 minutes to Gyeongju, a relatively small but historically and culturally significant city. We had an excellent traditional meal there. The group then went to Donggung Palace/Wolji Pond, a perfect place for a slow evening stroll.



## Korean Summit Could Open Doors to More Meetings on Peninsula

The historic summit bringing together President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore on Tuesday could be a catalyst to eventually provide a major boost for the meetings industry. The summit has the potential to strengthen relations between the two countries that could result in more travel.



## Day 2

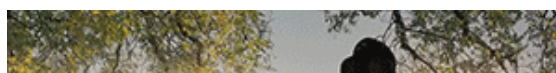


I enjoyed breakfast at Four Season Hotel Seoul's Market Kitchen, which offers a buffet with international cuisines. It was then time to check out and move onward to our next destination aboard a bus.

## K-Style Hub



K-Style Hub in Seoul is a great resource, with travel information about South Korea. It has displays, such as these traditional earthen jars.







I also got to play dress-up in traditional Korean kingly attire.

## Korea House



The next stop was Korea House, a kind of cultural center offering traditional Korean cuisine, performances, immersive activities and more.

## Korean Cuisine Cultural Center







Groups of up to 10 people can participate in Hansik Cooking Program at Korean Cuisine Culture Center in Seoul.

## Day 1



After landing at about 5:40 p.m. local time at Incheon International Airport, I was transported to Four Seasons Hotel Seoul, where I was greeted by this floral display in the hotel's lobby. I enjoyed dinner on my own and then went up to my room to sleep off my jet lag.

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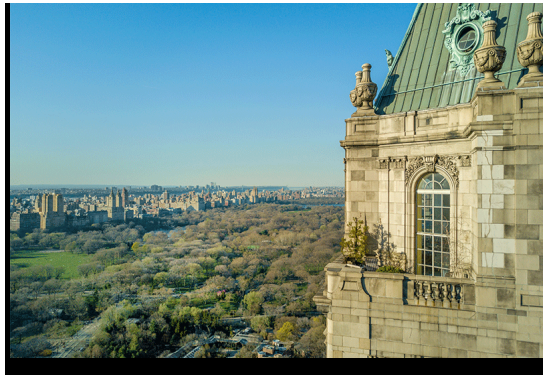
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*July 19, 2018*





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