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The demand for this skill you have is high

1 message

The Right Way to Travel
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THE RIGHT WAY TO TRAVEL

Dear Jonny,

Did you know you can learn the Korean alphabet in just an hour or two? While Japanese and Chinese have thousands of symbols, the Korean alphabet is a pretty simple and logical, with just 24 characters total, consisting of 14 basic consonants and 10 basic vowels. And symbols with similar sounds also have similar shapes, making it very easy to learn.

I'm hoping to schedule a Korean language class for attendees at our Seoul Travel Writing Expedition when we're there this April. But today, because most of the population speaks English, I know we'll be fine, even without it, maneuvering around the city.

In fact, as more and more Koreans are learning and improving their English skills, the demand for English teachers is high in Seoul. Jonny Bahk-Halberg explains here below why he loves teaching English there.

Lori Allen
Director, Great Escape Publishing

P.S. Want to try teaching English abroad, no experience necessary? International Living has a program that will show you how to find the paid position that's right for you. [More details here.](#)

THE BEST PART ABOUT LIVING IN SEOUL
By Jonny Bahk-Halberg in Seoul, South Korea

I remember my first day in Seoul like it was yesterday: A river of people flowed down the

steps from the elevated commuter train station to the bus stop where a lime-green neighborhood minibus waited to take me to my glistening employer-provided apartment.

"They're paying us to speak English!" exclaimed Ilisa, a colleague from Minnesota. Ilisa's name : "*Il - ee - sa*" means "1-2-4" in Korean, which was a great nickname for the eager young students to call her. Everyone, teachers included, soon began to refer to her as "one two four."

But the benefits of teaching in Korea went well beyond my apartment, students and colleagues.

A striking feature of Seoul is the fact that, like the entire country of South Korea, it is polka-dotted with small mountains, which have become nature parks since building on them would be so difficult.

Every part of the city has its own mountain or a few, largely free from any development. The crowded neighborhoods swell right up to the edge of many of these small mountain ranges, but their tree-covered rocky slopes, criss-crossed with hiking paths, provide an oasis from the hustle and bustle, even in the city center.

Perhaps the most famous of these mountains is Namsan. Its name means "south mountain" in Korean, since it was south of Seoul's first incarnation some 600-odd years ago. Now, however, with the city surging far beyond its original city walls, Namsan is to Seoul as Central Park is to Manhattan, with the added bonus of being a mountain which offers an invigorating hike.

Perched atop is Seoul Tower, providing a view as far as the hills of North Korea some 30 miles away.

Seoul and I have come a long way since that day in 1995. I've been very lucky to have seen a transformation both in Seoul and myself.

For me, that means I have gotten more qualified and have plenty of teaching and testing work for Korean, American, and British clients on a schedule that I can live with. I can say yes or no to \$60-, \$80-, or \$100-an-hour depending on whether it fits my schedule.

Seoul, also known as "The Miracle on the Han (River)" has become a dazzling gem of future technology at the same time as it remains the biggest small town in the world.

Crime in Seoul is negligible --- almost non-existent - compared to almost every other city in the world. Men, women, and children walk the sidewalks and ride the economical, modern subway system all day long and into the night.

With a spirit that Koreans refer to as *jeong* - a kind of unity or "connectedness," neighbors in this mega-city's many neighborhood communities or *dongs* watch out for each other in a way that seems old-fashioned to those of us who grew up elsewhere.

But the best part of living in Seoul, as Ilisa noted, is getting paid to speak English.

Today, more people than ever use English in Seoul and it is much easier for a foreigner like me to get around on English only. But the demand for teachers continues as more Koreans strive to improve their language skills for career or other reasons.

A native English speaker who wants to put in the effort to get to know a bit about people, teaching, and language to help others communicate still has great opportunities in Seoul and throughout Korea.

[Editor's Note: Korea is just one place on the planet that you could get paid to speak English. Folks all over the world are eager to learn, and if you're a native speaker, you have the fundamentals already. Our colleagues at *International Living* have the best guide there is to finding the position that's right for you – and landing it. Get it [here](#).]

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