

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLMOUCI

Filozofická fakulta

Katedra asijských studií

MAGISTERSKÁ DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCA

2023 Andrea Annie Kubiřanová

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**Hiking culture in South Korea**

Turistická kultúra v Južnej Kórei

OLOMOUC 2023 Andrea Annie Kubiňanová

**Vedúci práce: Mag. Andreas Schirmer, Dr.**

## **Prehlásenie**

Prehlasujem, že som diplomovú prácu na tému Turistická kultúra v Južnej Kórei vypracovala samostatne a uviedla všetky použité pramene a literatúru.

V Olomouci dňa 30.4.2023

.....  
Andrea Annie Kubiňanová

## **Anotácia**

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## **Anotácia**

Táto diplomová práca skúma úlohu a význam turistickej kultúry v súčasnej Južnej Kórei, pričom pojmom ‘turistika’ rozumieme pohyb v prírode. Úvodné kapitoly, ktoré slúžia na kontextualizáciu, obsahujú všeobecný prehľad juhokórejských hôr a pohorí, Národných Parkov a iných súvisiacich geografických prvkov. Ďalším dôležitým pozadím sú mýty, legendy a ľudové rozprávky, ktoré sa často uvádzajú ako dôkaz osobitného vzťahu Juhokórejcov k horám a prírode. Venujem sa taktiež diskusii o seba obraze Juhokórejcov ako ľudí milujúcich hory, čo je bežným stereotypom v rámci populárnych konceptov “kórejskosti”<sup>1</sup>. V podobnom duchu sa nesie aj tvrdenie o zvláštnom spojení lásky k prírode a budhizmu, preto sa v práci venujem aj tomuto diskurzu.

Ďalšiu časť mojej diplomovej práce tvorí prehľad spôsobov, akými sa konštruje turistika ako primárna voľnočasová a spoločenská aktivita, a téma horskej turistiky ako socio-ekonomického faktoru v živote Juhokórejčanov. Deje sa tak na základe štúdia odbornej, ale aj populárnej literatúry a iných zdrojov.

Nakoniec, praktická časť tejto práce pozostáva z vyhodnotenia a predstavenia výsledkov vlastného výskumu zameraného na zvyky, tradície, motiváciu a preferencie obyvateľov Južnej Kórei v súvislosti s pohybom v prírode, a ich následné porovnanie s postojom Európanov k danej veci. Výskumu formou dotazníku sa zúčastnilo 26 Juhokórejčanov a 44 občanov krajín Európy vo vekovom rozmedzí 18 až 60 rokov.

**Kľúčové slová:** turistika, kultúra, Južná Kórea, príroda, koncept, výskum, dotazník

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<sup>1</sup> Vlastnosť alebo stav, kedy niekto alebo niečo je Kórejské.

## **Annotation**

This MA thesis explores the role and meaning of hiking culture in contemporary South Korea, while under the term ‘hiking’ we understand movement in nature. The introductory chapters, that serve for contextualization, comprise a general overview of South Korea’s mountains and mountain ranges, National Parks, and other related geographical features. Another relevant background consists of the myths, legends and folktales that are often cited as proof of South Koreans’ special relationship with mountains and nature. I also review the discourse on the self-image of South Koreans as mountain-loving people which is a common stereotype within popular “Koreanness”<sup>2</sup> concepts. In a similar vein, there is the claim of a special connection between the love for nature and Buddhism. This concept is often referred to as one of the reasons for South Korean hiking culture. Thus, I also research this discourse.

The next part of my thesis consists of an overview of the ways how hiking is constructed as a prime leisure and social activity and hiking as a socio-economic factor in the lives of South Koreans. This is done based on studying academic, as well as popular, literature and other sources related to the topic.

Finally, the practical part of this work consists of evaluation and presentation of the results of own research focused on the habits, traditions, motivation, and preferences of the people of South Korea in connection with movement in nature, and their subsequent comparison with the attitude of Europeans to the matter. 26 South Koreans and 44 citizens of European countries between the ages of 18 and 60 took part in the research in the form of a questionnaire.

**Keywords:** hiking, culture, South Korea, nature, concept, research, questionnaire

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<sup>2</sup> The quality or state of being Korean.

## **Pod'akovanie**

Rada by som týmto poďakovala vedúcemu práce Dr. Andreasovi Schirmerovi za jeho cenné rady, čas a odborné vedenie pri vypracovávaní mojej diplomovej práce.

## Table of contents

Transcription.....	7
Introduction.....	8
1. State of research.....	9
2. Hiking.....	10
3. Korean natural wealth.....	11
3.1 Geographical features.....	12
3.2 National Parks.....	12
3.2.1. List of National Parks of Korea.....	13
4. Hiking as a leisure activity in South Korea.....	13
4.1 Hiking tours.....	15
4.2 Day hikes.....	16
4.3 Multiple day treks.....	16
4.3.1 Baekdu Daegan.....	17
4.3.2 Jeju Olle Trail.....	18
4.4 Camping.....	19
5. Hiking as a religious activity in South Korea.....	20
5.1 Buddhism.....	20
5.1.1 Temple stay.....	21
5.2 Christianity.....	22
5.2.1 Seoul Catholic Pilgrimage Route.....	23
6. Hiking as a spiritual activity in South Korea.....	24
6.1 Korean mountain Spirits.....	24
6.1.1 The Myth of Tangun.....	25
7. Hiking as a socio-economic concept in South Korea.....	26
7.1 Social relevance.....	27
7.2 Economic relevance.....	28
8. Hiking habits, traditions, motivation, experience, and preferences of South Koreans as opposed to Europeans.....	29
8.1 Method.....	30
8.1.1 Participants.....	30
8.1.2 Stimuli.....	30
8.1.3 Procedure.....	31

8.2 Results.....	32
8.2.1 Results of South Korean participants.....	32
8.2.2 Results of European Participants and comparison of the results of both target groups.....	42
Conclusion .....	52
Annexes.....	56
References .....	59

## **Transcription**

The Revised Romanization of Korean is used to romanize the Korean text in my thesis. The Revised Romanization of Korean system is one of the two most common Korean romanization systems along with the McCune-Reischauer romanization. In addition to this romanization, I also write the original wording of the transcribed text in Korean in parentheses when the romanized word or text is mentioned in the text for the first time. For universally used names, such as “Seoul”, the McCune-Reischauer romanization is not used; their commonly used form is used instead.

## Introduction

As a country blessed with an abundance of natural beauty, treasures and wonders, South Korea has something to offer all nature lovers. From the breathtaking inland mountain structure, through lakes and waterfalls to the volcanic landscapes of Jeju Island (제주도), South Korea's natural wealth does not cease to overwhelm. The rugged peaks and valleys of Seoraksan National Park (설악산 국립 공원) and Hallasan National Park (한라산 국립 공원), both UNESCO Biosphere Reserves (UNESCO, 2021), offer stunning views and countless hiking opportunities, while others are cradles to culture, religion, and folklore. These natural wonders, in combination with Korea's rich cultural heritage, make for a truly captivating destination.

South Korea's natural and cultural heritage are tightly intertwined. Among others, Buddhism is believed to be one of the main bridges between man and nature, proof of which can be found scattered deep in the mountains in the form of Buddhist shrines. Many of these gems are located, for example, in Jirisan National Park (지리산 국립 공원) offering visitors a glimpse into the country's religious history. Many of these shrines are still being actively used and some even offer accommodation possibilities where mountain huts are scarce. Following religion, spirituality, too, is a solid motive to visit nature as it a mixture of beliefs and folk tales passed down through generations, often containing natural elements. The most prominent is the tale of Tangun (단군왕검), the father of the Korean nation, associated with Mount Teaebaek (태백산) which is now a popular hiking destination.

It is safe to say that in South Korea mountains are ubiquitous, with Bukhansan National Park (북한산 국립 공원) located directly in the country's capital. Thus, it is no wonder that hiking is increasingly becoming an integral part of many people's lives. This leisure activity, however, has gradually evolved into a socio-economic concept, reflecting many of South Korea's social pressures. Not only has its increased popularity made way for the development of new trails and facilities, but it has also become a status symbol to portray affiliation to a social class by investing in high-end gear.

The individual chapters on South Korea's hiking culture contained in this thesis can generally be divided into four sections. The first section serves for contextualization and provides an overview of South Korea's geographical features. Further, this work discusses the cultural aspect of hiking such as religious or spiritual relations and socialization. The third section provides an insight on the contemporary topic of hiking

as a socio-economic concept and the way South Koreans' fast-paced lifestyle is reflected in their favorite pastime. At last, the practical segment of this thesis focuses on the current true attitude and experience of South Koreans towards hiking and other movement in nature and its presentation to the reader on the basis of own research conducted in the form of a questionnaire. This data is further compared to the attitude and experience of Europeans who have participated in the same research.

## **1. State of research**

Although there is limited research available specifically about the hiking culture in South Korea and the contemporary phenomenon of a close relationship between spending time in nature and social status, books about the country's nature and hiking guides are abundant. While maps, hiking guides and nature content are largely produced by mature authors, the former topics rather seem to be the subject of research of Korean university students, who have respectively produced a large amount of material in forms of theses and dissertations, or freelance journalists producing content for various newspapers and online platforms.

Theses such as “(A) Study of Nature beliefs of Korea” (Kim, 1985), “A Study on Korean Shamanistic Mountain Spirit Paintings” (Hwang, 2011), or “Future of South Korean National Parks – a Delphi Study” (Lee, 2003) are a sizeable representation of South Koreans' love for nature and the nation's cultural heritage. These, and others, mention the existence of Baekdu Mountain (백두산) and its importance in the context of religion, spirituality, natural wonders and national treasures, which further connects us to numerous books and articles dealing with the fast development of hiking as a leisure and spiritual activity, particularly in relation to the Baekdu Daegan mountain range (백두대간) (Chung, 2008), the longest and most well-known mountain range on the Korean Peninsula.

Although all East Asian countries share their love for and connection with nature, it is South Korea in particular that caught the interest of some western enthusiasts. Names such as David Mason, Matt Lemke, Bob Difley or Mark Brazil dominate the scene of South Korean nature-related publications, ranging from hiking guides all the way to detailed descriptions and collections of spiritual art and folklore from the depths of the mountains.

I began my research hands on with the RISS International database among others. For that reason, much of my thesis is based on articles, theses, and dissertations, while

other sources include articles published on various websites, blogs, or online newspapers and books published by western authors specializing in the topic of Korean mountains.

## **2. Hiking**

Hiking in its recreational form may seem rather commonplace today, but historically this was not the case. It emerged as a pastime first in Europe in the late 1700's as a result of various cultural, technological and social changes. Before this time, walking itself was first practiced in the form of marching armies or coming-of-age tribal ceremonies, and later associated mainly with poverty and homelessness. The Romantic era brought a significant shift as artists, authors, musicians, and other intellectuals exalted passion, autonomy, and nature. With the Industrial Revolution and massive urbanization, people desired to escape the congested cities more and more. No longer linked with poverty, taking a walk in the nature became a luxury largely enjoyed by affluent European intellectuals. As the interest in spending time in the nature grew it allowed for the creation of hiking clubs which undertook to bring like-minded people together and improve access to natural areas. It made its way to eastern Asia in the late 1900's rooting itself in Hong Kong (Ralph S., 2021). Today Asia is one of the most prominent destinations for hikers from all over the world.

Nowadays, hiking is generally viewed as an inexpensive leisurely pastime that involves a day excursion or a brief stroll along a designated trail. Almost every setting, including urban parks and mountain ranges, is suitable for it. Thus, it can be defined as an "activity of going for long walks" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Although no particular gear or training is necessary for hiking on most publicly accessible trails, it is advised to wear suitable clothing and footwear, carry water and food, and stick to well-marked trails to prevent getting lost.

Hiking is often associated with or mistaken for trekking, "walking long distances" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.), which involves longer journeys and more challenging terrain. A trekking trip typically lasts several days or even weeks, and it frequently requires camping or overnight stays in mountain huts. Trekking is more physically demanding than hiking since it frequently includes steep ascends, high altitudes, and unpredictably changing weather.

Although camping frequently accompanies trekking trips, it can also be done for the purpose of holiday. Spending one or more nights in a wilderness area, other than a mountain range, such as a forest, seashore, or National Park, is the definition of camping.

It most often involves pitching a tent but can also be done in other ways. Some of the popular alternatives, especially among South Koreans, include car camping where spends the night in their car without the use of a tent, or glamping, a luxurious form of camping in well-equipped large tents with all the unnecessary facilities such as a TV or internet connection.

Hiking, which first emerged as such in old Egypt or native America, has also recently been popularized in the form of doing a pilgrimage, which can be understood as going to a sacred place or landmark with religious importance, most commonly for spiritual or cultural reasons, though it is not always the case. Pilgrimages can be brief or extensive depending on the distance from and customs of the destination, and they frequently incorporate a particular ritual or prayer. Some pilgrimages, however, focus more on cross-cultural exchange than a spiritual journey, while other reasons for embarking on one can include weight loss or a need for adventure. Long distance walking can make such trips physically demanding, yet mentally rewarding. Some internationally renowned pilgrimages include the Spanish Camino de Santiago or Kumano Kodo in Japan.

Finally, it is worth mentioning, that South Korean hiking trails are extremely well maintained. Often paved with wooden pathways or lined with railing, South Korean government ensures that the beauty of the country's nature will remain the same for everyone to come, forbidding the creation of shortcuts, widening of designated paths or littering.

For the purpose of this thesis all four of these activities will be discussed and referred to simply as hiking throughout the text, unless specified for a necessary distinction. The practical section of this work focuses mainly on the survey participants' attitude towards and experience with these four activities.

### **3. Korean natural wealth**

Nature has a remarkable ability of captivating us and providing us with a feeling of wonder. From breathtaking mountain ranges through forests and hills to pristine beaches, the natural world is full of diversity and beauty. It is a source of rejuvenation and South Korean nature is no exception. Whether one seeks new experiences or simply wishes to escape the demanding fast-paced city life, the natural wealth of South Korea is a treasure waiting to be explored.

### **3.1 Geographical features**

South Korea is an East Asian country recognized for its diverse geographical features. It lies on the southern half of the Korean Peninsula and is surrounded by the East Sea to the east, the Yellow Sea to the west, and the Korea Strait to the south (Google Maps, 2023).

The country's terrain is predominantly mountainous with the Baekdu Daegan mountain range running north to south across the entire peninsula. Thus, it is oftentimes referred to as 'Land of High Mountains and Sparkling Streams' as, in addition to its mountainous terrain, the country is also home to several rivers and lakes. In numbers, approximately 70 percent of Korea's landscape is mountainous (Korean Overseas Culture and Information Service, 1999) with the highest peak being Jirisan (지리산) (excluding Hallasan on Jeju Island). According to David Nemeth (2003), "there are so many mountains on the peninsula that only one fifth of the land can be cultivated." This all is topped by none other than the volcanic island of Jeju located just south of mainland Korea. Its rich geological history demonstrates itself through unique landscape, craters and crater lakes, and volcanic caves.

### **3.2 National Parks**

South Korea is also home to several national parks and nature reserves which cover a total of 6,7% of the land. These are protected areas that serve to preserve the country's valuable natural, cultural, and spiritual heritage. They are designated and managed by the government of the Republic of Korea (KNPS, n.d.).

South Korea's first ever National Park, Jirisan National Park, was designated in 1967, long before the Korea National Park Service (KNPS) was established. It is home to Cheonwangbong (천왕봉), the third highest peak in South Korea, and well-known Buddhist temples such as the renowned Hwaeomsa (화엄사). 21 additional areas have been designated National Parks of Korea since then, the majority of which fall under the management of KNPS with the exception of Hallasan National Park (KNPS, n.d.).

Much like elsewhere, Korean National Parks, too, seem to have faced certain obstacles in terms of nature preservation and customer satisfaction. At the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Korean National Park Policy Forum in 1998, Korean park experts attempted to establish a new direction for Korean National Park policy. Their proposal included resolving the tension of the overuse of Korean National Parks and their preservation. The 'National Park Concept' was one action that stood out. Some Korean National Parks are overrun with visitors nearly to the same extent as U.S. National Parks like Yosemite or Grand

Canyon (Lee, 2003). Visitors who struggle with the materialized city life view the National Parks as locations of relative isolation (Yun, 1998), when in reality, Korean national parks are misused due to tourists, concessions and a lack of a National Park ideology (Lee, 2003).

Due to the parks' poor administration, rapid expansion in visitor numbers and lack of staff, they are currently exceedingly crowded. It gets worse due to heavy use of private vehicles and paid bus tours into the park. The visitors do not, however, see the crowding as a problem, unlike their park specialist counterparts (Lee, 2003).

### 3.2.1 List of National Parks of Korea

A total of 22 areas are currently designated National Parks in the Republic of Korea.

#### A) Mountain National Parks<sup>3</sup>

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| - Jirisan (지리산)     | - Woraksan (월악산)   |
| - Gyeryongsan (계룡산) | - Bukhansan (북한산)  |
| - Seoraksan (설악산)   | - Sobaeksan (소백산)  |
| - Songnisan (속리산)   | - Wolchulsan (월출산) |
| - Hallasan (한라산)    | - Mudeungsan (무등산) |
| - Naejangsan (내장산)  | - Taebaeksan (태백산) |
| - Gayasan (가야산)     | - Chiaksan (치악산)   |
| - Deogyusan (덕유산)   | - Juwangsan (주왕산)  |
| - Odaesan (오대산)     |                    |

#### B) Marine & Coastal National Parks

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| - Hallyeohaesang (한려해상) | - Dadohaehaesang (다도해해상) |
| - Taeanhaean (태안해안)     | - Byeonsanbando (변산반도)   |

#### C) Historical National Parks

- Gyeongju (경주)

## 4. Hiking as a leisure activity in South Korea

People of all ages and fitness levels benefit greatly from hiking as a kind of recreation. It offers a special blend of outdoor adventure and physical activity that is both difficult and gratifying. Hiking offers the chance to discover stunning natural scenery, breathe fresh

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<sup>3</sup> San (산) - Korean for mountain - can be found in each of the Mountain National Park's names respectively.

air, and take in the tranquil sounds of nature. It doesn't matter if one is hiking in their neighborhood park or a far-off wilderness area, there is always something interesting to find along the trail. In addition, hiking also provides a huge mental relief.

Hiking is a terrific social activity in addition to its health and mental benefits. It is a chance to connect with loved ones and friends while getting away from the stresses of everyday life. Hikers can share the joy of overcoming a difficult trail or taking in a breathtaking view. Additionally, hiking has become popular in the business environment as well, offering the perfect teambuilding retreat. Further, since only basic equipment is needed and many locations charge little to no entrance fees, hiking can be a reasonably inexpensive sport. Overall, hiking is a fantastic leisure activity because it helps one stay active, appreciate nature, and socialize with others.

Many South Koreans often go on solo or group hikes, making hiking a well-liked pastime in the country. First of all, hiking is seen as a means of maintaining one's health and physical condition. It is regarded as an excellent way to keep active and enhance one's general well-being in South Korea, where a great priority is placed on health and wellness. This explains why hiking is extremely popular especially among the middle-aged population. While in total a half of the South Korean respondents to the 2020 *Statista* survey enjoyed hiking in 2019, a jaw dropping near 70 percent of the same survey respondents in their 50's went hiking the previous year.

Second, hiking is regarded as a way to unwind from the pressures of daily life and maintain a connection with nature. Korea is a mountainous country, and its beautiful trails draw hikers from all over.

Additionally, hiking can be a social activity that fosters relationships with loved ones, friends, and acquaintances. Many Koreans like engaging in hikes with others, frequently with coworkers or members of community organizations, to strengthen bonds and encourage camaraderie.

Last but not least, South Koreans see hiking as a method to develop resilience and character. It can be difficult, which can push one beyond their comfort zone and help develop mental toughness. If difficult terrain is involved, it might also call for teamwork and problem-solving skills, which are highly prized in South Korean society.

We can almost say that Koreans hike in droves. Their love and enthusiasm for hiking is greatly supported and enabled by numerous hiking clubs, the most well-known including Seoul International Hikers Club, The Seoul Expat Global Meetup Group or Seoul Hiking & Nature Group.

## 4.1 Hiking tours

A common approach to appreciate nature while learning about the history, geology, flora, and fauna of the area is through guided hiking tours. These trips offer a fantastic opportunity for individuals to engage with the nature in a safe and educational way and cater to a range of fitness levels, from short walks to demanding treks. For those who have a strong interest in the natural world, some guided hiking tours even offer specialist themes, such as bird watching or wildflower identification. Additionally, for people who are unfamiliar with the area or who might be hesitant to venture out on their own, a guided hiking tour can be a terrific opportunity to explore new hiking destinations within one's comfort zone.

Numerous guided hiking tours are available in South Korea, with popular locations being Bukhansan Peak, Seoraksan National Park, Jeju Island, and others. In fact, these have been growing so much in popularity that their providers are becoming ever so creative with offer and program variety in order to satisfy even the most demanding of requirements.

While most tour companies focus on day tours, some of which can last only a few hours, some, like Bergen Travel, provide multi-day hikes. A local guide who is familiar with the area, imparts knowledge about the flora and fauna, and guarantees the groups' or individuals' safety typically leads a guided hiking excursion in South Korea. Additionally, transportation, food, and lodging might be offered to customers with higher standards with some tours being nothing short of luxury (Tripadvisor, n.d.).

Companies like Outdoors Korea, Honey Trail or Here Korea Travel will gladly plan a tour to accommodate the customers' every need including Buddhist temple stays, rich restaurant lunches, and Korean spa<sup>4</sup> evenings. Some will even go as far as offering a sauna scrub service and Korean barbecue<sup>5</sup> group dinners for a hefty price (Tripadvisor, n.d.).

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<sup>4</sup> Korean spa, called *jjimjilbang* (찜질방), is a “large sex-segregated public bathhouse furnished with hot tubs, showers, *hanjeungmak* (한증막) – traditional Korean kiln saunas, and massage tables (...) It often features, sleeping rooms, lounging areas with heated floors and food service and an entry to such establishment is not time-restricted” (Wikipedia, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Korean barbecue, also known as *gogi gui* (고기구이, ‘meat roast’), is a “popular method in Korean cuisine of grilling meat (...) dishes are often prepared [by the customer themselves] on gas or charcoal grills built into the dining table itself” (Wikipedia, 2023).

## 4.2 Day hikes

Mountains make up almost 70% of South Korea's area, and its outstanding transport infrastructure makes these mountains extremely accessible. The majority of hikes can be completed in a day, if not only in the matter of a few hours, which is an excellent option for those who are not yet ready or willing to commit to a longer trip. Just like lengthier treks, day hikes, too, offer all the benefits - beautiful views, fresh air, and a sense of accomplishment.

While Mount Seoraksan and Mount Jirisan are the most frequently mentioned, the Mount Hallasan summit is referred to as the most beautiful day hike throughout many blogs and hiking-dedicated websites. Mount Hallasan is an active volcano located within the National Park of the same name (although it has not erupted in over a millennium (Watson, 2020)). With an altitude of 1 950 meters above sea level (Visit Jeju, n.d.) it is South Korea's highest mountain. It is also referred to as Yeongjusan (영주산), meaning "Mountain high enough to pull the galaxy" (Truong, 2023). It has a unique ecosystem combined with volcanic geology.

Like on Halla Mountain, one cannot physically access a hiking trail before or after a certain hour (valid for one day hikes). This is an additional intriguing aspect about many hiking trails. Season-specific climbing time constraints apply, and hiking rangers won't let a hiker through and continue their summit attempt if they haven't arrived at the uppermost shelter by a specific deadline (Truong, 2023). This is done to ensure the safety of the hikers and give everyone adequate time to return to the trailhead safely.

## 4.3 Multiple day treks

One of the most recent global trends in tourism is trekking. It enables people to discover and learn more about their own capabilities - both physical and psychological. It is mostly considered a contemporary adventure tourism phenomenon. It is primarily associated with mountains and wilderness due to the challenging environment where it may be practiced, and the adrenaline rush it offers. There are, however, routes that traverse through settlements and offer a chance for cross-cultural interaction (Różycki and Dryglas, 2014).

Trekking inevitably includes lodging, whether it be in the form of pitching a tent, a temple stay, or staying overnight in a mountain hut. Some treks, however, do not offer such luxury and oftentimes camping remains the only option. Camping while trekking is further linked with other obstacles such as the lack of services, meaning no toilets,

showers, or even food and water available for a multiple-day period. It is, therefore, necessary that one carries a sufficient amount of food and water and other equipment often unnecessary for a day hike, which requires a more thorough preparation for such trip.

Hiking can be a mission, an intensive exercise, or a social gathering, and while there are distinct hiking cultures in different regions of the world, and trekking in particular is typically linked with Europe or North America, Korea also has a lot to offer in this regard. Although most only know the beautiful Baekdu Daegan, it will be further introduced with one other less popularized but equally as stunning Korean trek.

### **4.3.1 Baekdu Daegan**

Despite not being the longest in South Korea, the trail is the one of the most cultural significance and resonance. When President Moon Jae-in (문재인) of the Republic of Korea and “upreme leader” Kim Jong-un (김정은) of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea met at the summit of Mount Baekdu on September 20, 2018, it marked one of the most significant occasions in Korean history. This encounter was viewed as a sign of hope since it signaled that political conversations between the Koreas regarding economic aid, military situation, and a nuclear weapons program had advanced (Mason, n.d.).

Respectively, Mount Baekdu marks the beginning of the Baekdu Daegan, a 1500-kilometer network of mountains that extends from it and traverses the entire Korean peninsula before coming to rest at Jirisan Mountain. The world’s deepest crater lake Cheonji (천지), translated as “Heavenly Lake”, which is regularly refilled by snowmelt, and the highest peak of Northeast Asia (2744 meters above sea level), make Baekdu Daegan a geographically distinctive massif that no body of water ever crosses (Shepherd and Douch, 2011).

The large Siberian tigers that made Baekdu Daegan their home and hunting ground are undoubtedly the reason for the alleged lack of exploration of the Baekdu Daegan Crestline until the late 20th century; Koreans had to carry weapons and take extreme precaution when crossing the mountains, and there was no tradition of recreational hiking at the time. Today, it provides hikers with an amazing outdoor experience. The trail that runs along its crest in South Korea has developed over the last three decades into a lucrative adventure hiking and religious/cultural tourism route (Mason, n.d.).

Before a research project carried out in 2007 by Sejong University (세종대학교) professor of cultural tourism David Alan Mason and his two partners from New Zealand, publications about the Baekdu Daegan were incredibly scarce and English sources were practically nonexistent. This project produced a trekking guidebook for the main trail of the Baekdu Daegan as well as other related online sources (Mason, n.d.). Mason initially started educating westerners about the Baekdu Daegan trail through his website [www.san-shin.org](http://www.san-shin.org). Later, he contributed as an editor to the first edition of Roger Shepherd and Andrew Douch's *Baekdu-daegan Trail* guidebook (Shepherd and Douch, 2011). In 2011, he was appointed National Honorary Ambassador of the Baekdu-daegan Range for his efforts in promoting Korean cultural, spiritual, and natural heritage (Mason, 2019).

#### 4.3.2 Jeju Olle Trail

As for South Korean treks, we definitely must not forget to mention the Jeju Olle Trail (제주올레길<sup>6</sup>) encircling the island of Jeju. The executors of this hiking tourism project undertook to reunite broken trails, locate long lost ones and recall vanished ones to complete the Jeju Olle circuit. Today's trail is a 130-kilometer-long defined and well-maintained walking path comprised of 21 main segments that encircle the entire circumference of the island. It offers hikers unique experiences that are frequently overlooked by those traveling at the speed of a car. The five other sub routes are completed by the inner hiking trails of Jeju and smaller surrounding islands, bringing the total number of hiking routes to 425 kilometers (Jeju Olle Foundation, brochure).

The Jeju Olle Trail is designed so that hikers can tackle each stretch separately based on their preferences or time constraints. Also, in order to increase the appeal of the trek to tourists visiting Jeju, its designers appear to have drawn inspiration from the globally known Spanish Camino de Santiago<sup>7</sup> pilgrimage stamping system by allowing hikers to purchase a Jeju Olle Passport. A stamping sheet for each stage of the circuit is included in the passports, which may be purchased at the Jeju Olle Tourist Center, or the Jeju Olle Trail Information Center located at the start of various stages. (Jeju Olle, N.d.).

The Jeju Olle Trail is also clearly signposted and well-maintained. The Jeju Olle Foundation runs the [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) website, which has all the crucial information hikers may require, including a thorough description of each of the 26 trail segments, and

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<sup>6</sup> Gil (길), Korean word for trail, road, street, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Also known as Saint Jacob's Way.

sends pamphlets with detailed maps to each Information Center on the island (Jeju Olle, n.d.). Additionally, the Jeju Olle Foundation hopes to foster friendships with other nations by promoting their shared love of the outdoors, hiking, and cultural exchange. It has established a system of so-called “Friendship Trails,” the most well-known of which is none other than a section of the Spanish Camino de Santiago. Arca do Pino is a Friendship Trail to Route One on the Jeju Olle Trail and is the final stage to the Santiago Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Arca do Pino crosses Monte do Gozo, a peak with pilgrim statues right next to a signpost for Jeju Olle’s Ganse<sup>8</sup> (간세), (Jeju Olle, n.d.).

#### **4.4 Camping**

Korea has some of the world’s least-appreciated mountain ranges, natural swimming holes, and ocean fronts. There are thousands of opportunities for the ideal and reasonably priced vacation, even for the most demanding individuals, with expansive campsites under pine forests by the sea, flat, white sandy beaches with crystal-clear water concealing beautiful coral reefs, and mountain plateaus that overlook vast rice fields (Hanger, 2020).

For many years, camping had been a popular pastime in South Korea. Yet, in recent years, its popularity has soared with camping equipment imports having increased by more than 105% in 2020 compared to 2019. The COVID-19 outbreak, which has made international travel problematic and encouraged greater outdoor activity, is believed to be responsible for this sudden explosion on the camping equipment market (Yonhap, 2021).

Chabak (차박), which translates to “spending the night in a car,” is unquestionably the most frequently practiced form of camping among South Koreans. Chabak is popular predominantly among young folks because it offers the ideal affordable weekend getaway with the best price for comfort value. Among standard tent camping and car camping, a popular American trend called “glamping,” translated freely as glamorous camping, has made its way into South Korea. Glamping typically refers to spending one or more nights in a large luxurious tent within a private campsite with high end amenities and services such as restaurants, television or internet connection to ensure maximum comfort in the middle of the wilderness. (Park, 2018).

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<sup>8</sup> Ganse (간세) is “the name of Jeju’s pony. The word comes from Ganse-dari [간세다리], meaning slow idler in Jeju [dialect].” It is the symbol of Jeju Olle and leads the hikers’ way (Jeju Olle, n.d.).

While camping out in the wild in South Korea is illegal, camping sites are abundant. One can search for all authorized campsites on the websites of individual National Parks. Many websites, blogs, or videos with camping-related content might be used to find additional ones. The best approach to find the ideal location, though, is to join one of the numerous social media camping groups, where one may find like-minded individuals in addition to getting helpful camping advice.

## **5. Hiking as a religious activity in South Korea**

Each religion has a distinctive relationship with the natural world. Thanks to its ever-increasing global appeal, spending time in the nature has also come to hold a special place in contemporary spirituality. Some people feel that hiking brings them closer to the divine when roaming the crests and peaks of the stunning mountains. But this is not a recent occurrence; rather, it is a resurgence of the remnants of a long-standing concept of coexistence between nature, religion, and mankind.

Hiking and other outdoor activities are also a common part of many religious rituals. For instance, hiking mountains such as Mt. Everest is also a way to connect with one's faith as the Himalayas are regarded as a holy location in Hinduism. Since the natural world is frequently seen to be a representation of the divine, hiking can also be viewed as a kind of devotion or prayer.

### **5.1 Buddhism**

Buddhism accounts for nearly half of the population in South Korea, and thus it has a significant impact on the lives of many South Koreans. A large portion of the Buddhist population finds religion present in many areas of daily life, one of which includes Koreans' relationship with the nature, which is anchored deeply in the virtues and values of Buddhism. The environmental philosophy of Buddhism is grounded in the concepts of circulation, value of nature, and symbiosis among others.

Reincarnation, often regarded as the "rebirth of life," is one of the major concepts in Buddhism and denotes a fresh incarnation of an earlier being or entity. Buddhists hold that after a living or non-living entity ceases to exist, it can reincarnate within another such entity, but not necessarily the same one, and that "oneself in the future is determined by behaviors of oneself at the present" (Yamamoto, 2001). Additionally, all such entities are recognized as having an equal value in Buddhist teachings because all living things and non-living things share the Buddha-Nature. This implies that people and the natural

world are both equally dignified. Given that, we can assume that everything in our world is interconnected in some way. The key factor in maintaining our planet is the symbiosis of nature and living creatures, including humans (Yamamoto, 2001).

According to Yamamoto (2001), it is because of these values that Buddhists experience a unique connection with the nature, which they frequently demonstrate by spending their time outdoors engaging in activities like trekking or hiking, among others, that allow them to “e one” with the nature. With that in mind, the belief that nature and humans are mutually prosperous can be considered the reason for treating the nature as one’s own home in South Korea. One can rarely encounter littering or trespassing, Koreans rather maintain the nature they visit in the purest of states.

### **5.1.1 Temple stay**

It is no surprise that Buddhism has ingrained itself so firmly into contemporary Korean culture given that it first appeared in Korea in the fourth century. Also, with over 900 traditional Buddhist temples, the nation has no shortage of places for spiritual and religious pilgrimage and adventure tourism.

Temple stay is a unique culture-oriented tourism niche which originated in South Korea in 2002 during the FIFA World Cup tournament as an affordable accommodation option for foreign visitors. The South Korean government has been nurturing this form of tourism ever since. By staying for a few days in a functioning, active Buddhist monastery in the mountains, Korean as well as international tourists can discover their “true selves,” become immersed in cultural and natural heritage, and learn about Buddhism. We are talking about another unique way to enjoy the outdoors combined with an intense cultural experience.

Temple stay allows one to experience the daily lifestyle, traditional rituals, and spirituality of Buddhist monks. Typically, it involves a long-term stay in a Buddhist monastery and partaking in daily monastic activities with Seon<sup>9</sup> (선) meditation and 108 Prostrations<sup>10</sup> being among the most frequently practiced ones. Further, visitors can also participate in Darye (다례) – a traditional tea ceremony where one can develop their concentration and mindfulness skills by brewing and sipping their own tea (Templestay, n.d.). Moving on, visitors can engage in the preparation and consumption of Baru

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<sup>9</sup> Seon is Korean for Zen (Zen Buddhism). Seon meditation is “a practice of concentration, mindfulness, and enquiry” (The University of Melbourne, n.d.).

<sup>10</sup> 108 Bows of Repentance.

Gongyang (바루 공양) – a formal monastic meal eaten from a “baru” (a wooden bowl). This environmentally responsible dining practice ensures that no natural resources are wasted. Rice, soup, a side dish, and water are served in four bowls, and by only eating what is necessary, this method creates the ideal selfless dining experience in alliance with the nature (Korean Temple Food, n.d.).

This tourism product’s growing popularity also demonstrates itself in the increase of the number of participating temples by 108 from the original 33 founding locations by 2021, and the number of visitors by over 200 000 by 2019 (Ministry of culture, Sports and Tourism, 2021).

## **5.2 Christianity**

In contrast to Buddhism, it is not the divine relationship with nature that binds Christianity and the natural world; rather it is the pursuit of deepening one's relationship with God that lures believers outdoors. Christianity has a strong tradition of pilgrimages. These, often lengthy, journeys made predominantly on foot represent one’s desire and effort to reach a location of religious significance. It is typical for pilgrims to go through phases of varying terrain and environmental and social circumstances on their way to such destinations, which are typically associated with Apostles, Saints, Christian martyrs, or miraculous apparitions. The marked paths often pass through high mountains, fields, and strenuous terrain without the possibility to refill food or water.

In recent years, however, non-believers, individuals with religious beliefs other than Christian, or simply outdoor enthusiast have found their way into the world of pilgrimages, as well. The number of reasons other than religious for doing pilgrimages is steadily increasing as is evident, for example, from the statistics of the most renowned pilgrimage worldwide – the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage – where the number of pilgrims participating for other than religious reasons has increased to over 36 000 individuals in 2021 from the slim number of only 31 individuals in 2004 (Oficina del Peregrino, 2005 and 2022). This proves that not only are pilgrimages spiritual journeys, but they also provide a unique opportunity for cultural or natural enrichment and a healthy form of systematic exercise. Many individuals’ motivation includes cultural exchange, weight loss or simply being disconnected from their everyday routine.

Although the word ‘pilgrimage’ is predominantly associated with globally renowned sites such as Jerusalem, Palestine, Rome or Santiago de Compostela, other

equally as significant pilgrimages can be found elsewhere in the world, including South Korea, and not necessarily crossing high mountains or deep valleys.

### **5.2.1 Seoul Catholic Pilgrimage Route**

South Koreans' participation in pilgrimages around the world is worthy of mentioning, since it is clear from the 2021 Camino de Santiago statistics that South Korea has the highest number of participants out of all of Asia (Oficina del Peregrino, 2022). This, however, is not the nation's only preeminence in the Christian world. They are also the proud ambassadors of Asia's first official international pilgrimage.

The Seoul Catholic Pilgrimage Route was the result of collaboration between the Roman Catholic Archdiocese and Seoul city and was originally designed to coincide with the 2014 arrival of the Pope. Five years later it earned the Vatican's approval as a World Official Pilgrimage. Nowadays, however, the route has developed a new purpose. Once designed for Catholics, the pilgrimage now gets both locals and foreigners of all beliefs onto their feet and walking through parks, alleys, and busy streets on a quest to explore Old Seoul with some of its most spiritual sites and other intriguing cultural landmarks along the way (Park, 2021).

The pilgrimage is comprised of three distinct, yet interconnected, itineraries that together cover a distance of more than 44 kilometers by foot. The pilgrimage's first leg concentrates on the Catholic Church's beginnings in Korea and passes relevant landmarks. The pilgrims visit sacred locations along their 8.7 kilometer route, including Myeongdong Cathedral (명동 대성당), Jongno Catholic Church (종로 성당), and the home of Thomas Gim Beom-u, Korea's first evangelist. The next and shortest stage with only 5.9 kilometers of walking path. This route preserves the remains of Catholic persecutions for upholding the authority of the Bible over governmental decrees. Pilgrims are challenged to think about what is most important in their own lives as they pass by sites marked with the death of those who put their faith before their own. The most prominent landmark, thus, must be the Seosomun Martyrs' Shrine (서소문 순교 성지) – the site of the beatification of 124 Korean martyrs. The longest stage passes even more martyr sites; this 29-and-a-half-kilometer path also features a leisurely stroll down Han River (한강) and makes for a full-day spiritual, cultural, and leisure activity combined (Park, 2021).

## **6. Hiking as a spiritual activity in South Korea**

The maintenance of both physical as well as mental well-being is considered a favorable byproduct of spending time in and with the nature. We now know that hiking, walking, and other forms of movement in the nature, too, can be rooted deep in religious beliefs. However, we must not omit the other nearly forgotten type of spirituality that still continues to inspire some people to connect with nature to this day. In a world where modern civilizations plow over agrarian cultures and universal religions replace traditional ones, South Korea remains one of the few, if not the last, nations to still practice its mountain worship culture giving it an almost aboriginal feel. Thousands of years of traditions and beliefs are woven into folk tales regarding the relationship between mankind and the natural world. Sanshin (산신), mountain spirits inhabiting South Korea's majestic mountains, overlook and protect the South Korean nation in the eyes of many. Yet, likely the most important spiritual entity to mention is Shamanism. Although often confused for or believed to be a religion, Shamanism is a matter of life and culture and deals with the existence of the soul rather than the existence of man (Açıkgöz, 2021).

A name repetitiously appears surrounding this topic and it is not a Korean one. A United States scholar David A. Mason deserves a special mention in this chapter for his long-lasting investment in the uncovering and preservation of South Koreans' spirituality, particularly its nature-oriented branch. Mason has dedicated much of his adult life to research about the mountain spirits of South Korea and any and all forms of natural worship. The output of his efforts, his groundbreaking book "Spirit of the Mountains: Korea's San-shin and Traditions of Mountain Worship", which was published in 1999, won him the Best Book on Korean Culture Award by Korea's Academy of Sciences in 2002.

### **6.1 Korean Mountain Spirits**

Mountains are worshiped in all forms in South Korea – public or private ceremonies, shamanistic chants or hikers adding stones to cairns along trails, but "at the very center of mountain worship is sanshin, the personified mountain spirit," said Mason during a 2011 interview with the *Korea Herald* (August 25). "Korean people", he found out, "seem to believe that every mountain has a spirit, and those who live on or climb the mountain receive that spirit and experience a deepening of their humanity."

Having compiled over 300 photographs of spiritual paintings and representations of sanshin and their shrines all over the country and seen many more, Mason describes the spirits as follows:

The sanshin spirit is always portrayed with a long, white beard, carrying a cane in front of a pine tree, next to a Korean tiger. It is sometimes accompanied by servants holding symbolic items, animals, plants, or, very rarely, its wife.

Mason also attributes the existence of sanshin to Korean religious, natural, and historical folklore. On this basis it can be believed that the legend of Tangun (단군왕검), Korean's primordial father, may have played a role in the growth of mountain mythology and the flourishing of folk tales (Choe, 1999).

Since the 21st century has brought new roles for sanshin in the areas of national identity, ecological protection, and reunification, mountain spirits are still relevant in contemporary South Korea. Not only has their worship presented itself in the preservation of nature for the Koreans of today, but it has also been bringing people together with the nature and each other. Additionally, for all we know, being a shared element of both North and South Korea's cultural identity it may as well play a role in the countries' reconciliation process in the future.

### **6.1.1 The Myth of Tangun**

The myth of Tangun narrates the tale of the birth of the first Korean King, the Korean nation, and the interaction between nature, humanity, and spirituality. It is the cradle of all Korean myths and folktales and the primary narrative of Korean national origin.

One of Hwan-in (환인)'s sons, Hwan-ung (환웅), requested that Hwan-in, the King of Heaven, send him to Earth to rule his own land. Having examined all of the world's mountains Hwan-in determined Mount Taebaek (태백산), translated as "Grand White Mountain," to be the ideal location, opened Heaven and sent down his son. Here Hwan-ung established Shinshi (신시) a sacred spirit city. A tiger and a bear went to Hwanung and prayed to become people. Only the bear was able to endure the process and transform into a human woman despite Hwanung giving them both a chance under challenging conditions. In response to this bear woman's prayers, Hwanung transformed himself into a human man and gave the woman a son. Tangun, their son, established the first Korean kingdom after being born. After 1500 years of rule, he retired to the mountains, where he transformed into the ancestor sanshin, the first mountain spirit (Grayson 2001, 30–52).

To this day, Mount Taebaek remains a popular hiking destination with multiple routes leading to its summit, and many tourist organizations organize guided tours to the first home of who is often referred to as “The Founder of Korea,” confirming the immense influence of spirituality on the relationship between man and nature. Further, following Tangun’s transformation into a mountain spirit, hundreds of other sanshin remain the subject of worship, drawing hikers and tourists not only to Mount Taebaek but also to countless other peaks across the Korean Peninsula.

## **7. Hiking as a socio-economic concept in South Korea**

Nowadays it is ever more obvious that South Korea’s most popular pastime reflects its social pressures. Even though South Korea is ranked high in education, economy and technological development, its society is dominated by stress creating immense social pressures that can be unfamiliar to those coming from a different cultural background. If we consider academia and the business environment in particular, nothing better expresses South Korea’s “bballi, bballi” (빨리, 빨리) culture than these two areas of life. South Korean culture and society have put such high demands on students and working class that a nationwide work culture that translates as “hurry, hurry” has inevitably been created. “People here want to get things done as soon as possible and move on to the next project...,” said Lee Tae-jay, the FCB Seoul executive creative director when asked by *Global Creative* about South Koreans’ work culture in a 2017 interview. Thus, it is evident that the “bballi, bballi” concept is based in great time management, efficiency, and most of all discipline, leading to long working and/or study hours (Chen, 2017).

Considering South Koreans’ unique bond with the natural world, whether it be through spiritual, religious, social or lifestyle reasons, it is almost a given that people of all ages will rely on their most beloved pastime to provide a mental as well as physical escape from their fast-paced life. The 21<sup>st</sup> century South Korean hiking culture, however, poses a question as to whether this really is the case. What began as a relaxing hobby has now evolved into almost a competition with one’s very self and time. A large number of individuals and entire hiking clubs no longer take relaxing walks, appreciate beautiful views, stop to rest or have picnics with their companions; it is quite the contrary. Countless hiking trips begin early in the morning by a car ride or catching the first subway to a designated pick-up location. Upon arriving at the beginning of the hiking trail, there is no time for anything other than to begin the summit. The hikers’ day off has now become a race. They will continue to hike at a fast pace for hours on end to reach the

summit as quickly as possible, only to turn around and begin their descend. After arriving at home in the late evening hikers are content with their daily effort and efficiency, proving how deeply the “bballi, bballi” culture is embedded not only in the business environment, but in the everyday life of South Koreans. Unfaced by this “issue” as many might consider it, more and more South Koreans are drawn to the mountains every year, suggesting not only this outdoor activity’s social relevance but also an economic one.

## **7.1 Social relevance**

Let us consider other social factors that may play into South Korea’s hiking culture. South Korea is by far not the only Asian country that accentuates social status, but this idea is extremely present there. In all areas of life, South Koreans have a tendency to define themselves by group membership rather than their individual traits. This means that connections and associations can be crucial in a pursuit of a job opportunity, academic goals, and social membership. This pressure can easily result in pretense, in other words attempting to appear as a member of a particular group or class from the outside despite not having the personal traits to claim that membership in reality.

Such ordinary activity as hiking can serve as the perfect example. We can take for a fact that the majority of South Korean hikers will be equipped with good quality gear in vibrant neon colors and matching outfits, although they have never hiked more than 5 kilometers at a time in their lifetime, treating their hiking trip more like a social event than a sport. The reason for this is that good quality equipment and offshore brands suggest wealth, and thus higher social class, even though their use is oftentimes unnecessary. A walk in the park or attempting a difficult summit ... it is easy to feel underdressed among many dressed to sparkle in this North Face vs. Red Face fashion show. However, mountains are not the only place where South Koreans sport their “Olympic hiker” style looks.

We are no longer talking about young people wearing track suits or leggings to school, but middle-aged people with no hiking plans on their minds dressed in hiking apparel in the middle of bustling cities. Most Koreans, influenced by the “bballi bballi” culture, place the most value on utility while selecting a product; form has become secondary to function. Therefore, the “athleisure” look is dominating the fashion scene with South Koreans wearing brightly colored athletic clothing to offices in the hearts of cities. “The comfort of mountaineering clothing makes the stress a little more bearable,” said an anonymous middle-aged respondent in a 2018 interview with *The Korea Herald*.

In fact, this trend has come so far it has developed a stigma surrounding Korean travelers to Europe as well. In 2018, a *Korea Herald* journalist wrote: “When you are lost in Europe, look for people dressed in hiking clothes, they are likely to be Korean” (Im, 2018). The “athleisure” fashion peaked in 2016, when an unnamed travel agency messaged its customers saying, “Europe is a place to visit beautiful cities, not a place to go hiking. Please don’t wear hiking clothes” (ibid.), suggesting it is inappropriate to wear mountaineering clothing to cathedrals and museums. Thus, it is evident that, for South Koreans, hiking has made itself present not only at the weekends, but also in everyday lives and on vacation.

## **7.2 Economic relevance**

Hiking has gained so much popularity in South Korea, especially in recent years, that it is safe to say that mountains are now giving back to the people, the communities and the nation. Amid the temporary closure of gyms and restriction of indoor social activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, hiking emerged as a new workout and gathering option, attracting many first-time hikers and bringing visitor numbers up by around 15 percent for various National Parks (Shim, 2020).

First, this phenomenon has led to an increase in the maintenance and improvement of hiking trails and facilities, public transport connections to and from national parks, and the foundation of many new hikers’ associations, clubs and agencies providing the ultimate hiking experience for nationals and foreigners alike. Due to this, marketing has also played a major role in the promotion of this outdoor activity in an attempt to attract new hikers, inevitably creating countless new jobs in the tourism, marketing, sport, and transportation sectors.

Further, with the growth of the number of hikers, the demand for mountaineering apparel in South Korea skyrocketed in 2020, jumping anywhere from 20 to as much as 60 percent for various outdoor clothing brands on South Korea’s market in the span of one year. According to a 2021 *Statista Research Department* survey, South Korean hikers’ favorite outdoor clothing brand K2 notes a 25 percent increase in sales on the South Korean market in one year (Statista, 2021). At the same time, the U.S. brand The Northface recorded a staggering 60 percent increase in sales in 2020 compared to the previous year after drafting Suzy, a former JYP Entertainment’s MissA Kpop group member for their pandemic campaign (Shim, 2020).

## **8. Hiking habits, traditions, motivation, experience, and preferences of South Koreans as opposed to Europeans**

People from different cultural backgrounds tend to have different relationships with the natural world of various levels of significance. While it is safe to say, however, that nature in any shape or form is an integral part of our life on planet Earth, for the purpose of this experiment, we will focus purely on the physical and mental fitness it offers to the humankind. Retrieving to nature for physical and/or mental exercise is not a new phenomenon, yet hiking, trekking, camping, and other movement in nature has been gaining new depths and people have been accommodating its function to their particular communities. This causes there to be extreme differences between people's attitude towards nature across the world.

If, for the purpose of this experiment, we focus solely on European citizens, who mostly share their hiking habits, traditions, and motivation, in comparison to the South Korean nation, the gulf between their values, beliefs and traditions is unimaginable. Europeans tend to view hiking as a form of relax. It is not only an escape from the stresses of everyday life, but also a search for beauty and serenity, and an opportunity to slow down. They are drawn to nature mostly in the search of physical exercise and mental well-being. On the other hand, South Korean hiking culture differs vastly. Their motivation is, apart from physical fitness, often engrained deeply in religious beliefs and spirituality, socializing, and even goes so far as reflecting affiliation with a certain group or social class and reflecting social pressures, a phenomenon unknown to western hikers.

As we pose a question regarding, where, when, and how often one hikes, European and South Korean respondents' views are bound to differ. The supposed outcome, regardless of age, is expected to prove that, even though Europeans do have a strong hiking culture, it is South Koreans who retreat to nature any chance they get, making it that much easier by having a designated National Park only a subway ride away in the heart of their capital city, Seoul. A fantastically intricate public transport infrastructure and an abundance of hikers' clubs and outdoor adventure travel agencies ensures for the perfect one-day hiking trip. Conversely, when we consider the type of the outdoor activity preferred in the nature, Europeans are expected to spend longer periods trekking outdoors at a time, requiring more thorough planning, not only due to weaker public transport infrastructure, but also due to the structure of hiking trails in their mountains far higher than their South Korean counterparts.

Another intriguing topic incorporated in the experiment is the contemporary phenomenon of hiking as a socio-economic concept. To put it into context, firstly this phenomenon refers mainly to the promotion of hiking and other outdoor activities in nature as a way to affiliate oneself with a certain social class, and that is through purchasing branded mountaineering gear and apparel to appear wealthier in the eyes of others. Secondly, it has made South Korean hiking culture reflect its social pressures intertwining South Koreans' work culture with their leisure one, creating an "ASAP"<sup>11</sup> hiking style. As this happens to be an East Asian, particularly South Korean issue, the results are expected to be relatively one-sided.

## **8.1 Method**

### **8.1.1 Participants**

The objective of this experiment was to involve 100 participants in the survey, creating a combination of various cultural and religious backgrounds, interests, and experiences. The selection of our target group of participants was conditioned by two main variables, those being nationality as our primary variable and age as our secondary variable. With that in mind, since the purpose of the experiment was to compare results of European versus South Korean participants, 50 percent of the asked participants were South Korean residents, while the other half was comprised of citizens of various European countries. Further, we focused on determining three distinct age groups valid for the experiment as follows: a) our first age group consisted of young adults aged 18 through 29 years old, b) our second age group covered individuals aged 30 through 49, and c) our last age group was comprised of middle-aged respondents 50 years of age and above, occasionally reaching the age of senior citizens. Regardless of the nationality and age variables, all participants were members of a different demographic, meaning not all asked were active hikers or nature lovers, but together they formed a mixture of outdoor enthusiasts as well as businesspeople, students, labor workers, retired individuals, and others.

### **8.1.2 Stimuli**

We determined that conducting the experiment in the form of a questionnaire would be the most efficient way for our necessary data collection and the most practical of ways for data evaluation. The questionnaire was a combination of a total of 14 questions. Only two questions were presented in a YES or NO form, accompanied by seven single choice

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<sup>11</sup> ASAP – shortcut for "As Soon As Possible."

questions along with three multiple choice questions. The questionnaire was concluded with a single open questions titled “Additional remarks” allowing the participant to add anything they might have missed throughout the questionnaire or any additional relevant information which may or may not have ultimately proved valid for the experiment.

The questionnaire was compiled exclusively in the English language, allowing for an equal opportunity to express oneself for each participant, and it was anonymous. Further, the questionnaire can theoretically be divided into three distinct sections. The first section, questions 1 through 5, concentrate on the frequency, motivation, and form of one’s spending time in nature. The following questions up to number 8 ask the participant about their experience with hiking as a socio-economic concept and tackle the topic of hiking realistically reflecting social pressures. Questions number 9 through 13 attend to the level of promotion of hiking, trekking, and camping nationally and worldwide. The concluding open question allows for any additional remarks regarding the surveyed topic any participant might feel compelled to provide.

### **8.1.3 Procedure**

Due to the diversity of nationalities of participants included in this survey, it was determined that distributing our questionnaire in two different ways (personally and online) and two different locations (in the city and in the mountains while hiking) would ensure the perfect mixture of people of different demographic. With that in mind, all data was collected within a period of 1 calendar year in 2022.

As for South Korean participants, the distribution of the questionnaire was slightly more challenging, and all data was collected during a 3 week-long visit to South Korea in August of 2022. Out of the 50 questionnaires intended for South Korean citizens, 15 were distributed personally in the streets of downtown Seoul, with the help of a local, to individuals of random age groups and social status (this could only have been semi-accurately determined by the participants’ outer appearance) and 11 participants were asked to complete the questionnaire while enjoying their hike or trek in Seoraksan National Park and further Jirisan National Park. The remaining 24 were distributed online with the help of two Ewha Womans University (이화여자대학교) students.

The European participants were much easier to attend to, therefore we opted for a maximum personal distribution of the questionnaire with only 6 remaining specimens distributed through social media among Palacký University Erasmus exchange students in Olomouc, Czech Republic. The majority of questionnaires, a total of 33, were handed

out to solo as well as group hikers during multiple hiking trips in the Swiss and the Austrian Alps, and during completing the Portuguese inland section of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in the summer and autumn of 2022. Further 11 participants were approached in the streets of downtown Zurich, Switzerland, and Prague, Czech Republic.

## 8.2 Results

Since we undertook to evaluate and compare data acquired from two distinctly different groups of participants, upon concluding the survey we were left to work with two individual result groups. To first evaluate the very collection of our data, we must differ between personal and online distribution regardless of where the questionnaires were distributed, as that variable did not make a difference in either of the groups. We can say for certain that the results were unexpected with our online questionnaire distribution showing a zero percent return despite our digital era blooming ever more in recent years. At the same time, our offline data collection through personal communication with selected participants proved extremely effective with a 100 percent return rate, which amounts for a total of 70 valid questionnaires: 26 South Korean and 44 European respondents. To be more accurate, 8 respondents aged 18–29, 12 respondents aged 30–49, and 6 respondents aged 50 and above participated for South Korea. Simultaneously 16 respondents aged 18–29, 19 respondents aged 30–49, and 9 respondents aged 50 and above chose to participate in the European part of the experiment.

### 8.2.1 Results of Korean participants

Through evaluating the answers of our South Korean respondents, it is evident that many of their habits, motivation, experience, and preferences align with this experiment’s expectations. These similarities together with any unpredicted findings will be attended to individually further in this chapter. Some findings are attempted to be explained through speculations as it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to carry out such a thorough experiment.

*Question 1: How often do you hike for the purpose of recreation?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
whenever I get the chance	0	0	2
often	6	10	4
sometimes	1	2	0
never	1	0	0

Table 1: Answers to Question 1, SK respondents.

Given four options of frequency, the vast majority, an astounding 77 percent, of South Koreans admitted to hiking very frequently, selecting predominantly the “often” option. Surprisingly, the elderly population was found to be the most active in contrast with the youngest age group responsible for the single negative answer. With that in mind, it is evident that South Korean population is undoubtedly highly active throughout generations. We can only speculate what accounts for the gap between the first and last age groups, but the most likely variable appears to be free time, which South Korean students and young adults at the beginning of their careers are known to lack.

*Question 2: Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected how frequently you hike for the purpose of recreation?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
no, I hike the same amount	1	7	6
yes, I hike more often since the pandemic	6	5	0
yes, I hike only because of the pandemic	1	0	0

Table 2: Answers to Question 2, SK respondents.

During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly the years 2020 and 2021, due to international safety regulations, societies all over the world underwent major changes, the closure of public gyms and sports centers as well as offline to home-office work transition being some of the most significant in terms of lifestyle. Thus, an impact on this area of life was inevitable, proven by our collected data to be true for the South Korean society, as well. While South Koreans had been what we can consider an active nation long before, given by the 54 percent of respondents unaffected by the pandemic, over 40 percent embraced the transition COVID-19 brought and increased their outdoor activity levels.

There is, however, once again a noticeable difference between young adults and people in their 50’s which can possibly be attributed to a couple of social pressures. First, we have the outrageous beauty standards which have earned South Korea the nickname “Plastic Surgery Empire” and drive those who are not willing to or cannot afford it and don’t have time for outdoor activities to spend hours upon hours at the gym (Cho, 2019). However, transition to online classes and home-office work schedules created significantly more spare time for our youngest age group by cutting out commute times, allowing for them to devote more energy to the nationally beloved leisure activity, as mentioned by two of our respondents in the “Additional remarks” section. The question remains why people of progressive ages remain unaffected by this transition. A supposed

answer can be found in the pressure of keeping a healthy fitness level with increasing age. With increasing age, too, and this is especially true for the retired, comes more spare time, allowing one to go and spend time in nature for healthy lifestyle maintenance regardless of COVID-19 public place closure regulations.

*Question 3: What is your motivation for movement in nature? (MA)<sup>12</sup>*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
healthy lifestyle	8	12	6
socializing	4	11	6
cross-culture exchange	1	1	0
Religion and/or spirituality	2	4	4

Table 3: Answers to Question 3, SK respondents.

With all respondents maintaining their health as a primary reason for spending time in nature, there is a hint that this possibly ties into the issue of South Korean beauty standards, though this is utterly a speculation. Following, South Koreans' second most opted for motivation for spending time in nature has to do with socializing, often spending time with friends, family, coworkers, or random strangers met through a hiking club. 21 of our 26 respondents, however, seems like a rather low score, considering South Koreans literally tend to hike "in droves", choosing organized group tours over solo trips for more convenience if nothing else.

Religion and spirituality, too, have their honorable mentions with two middle-aged individuals mentioning Buddhism and visiting Buddhist temples in the "Additional remarks" section in order to further specify their motives. Lastly, cross-cultural interaction-wise, South Koreans remained true to their national and cultural homogeneity, opting mostly not to participate in such exchange.

*Question 4: What form of outdoor activity in nature do you prefer? (MA)*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
walking	3	6	6
hiking	7	12	5
trekking	2	1	0
camping	6	1	0
pilgrimages	1	0	2
glamping	0	4	4

<sup>12</sup> All multiple answer questions are marked with "(MA)" following the question. All other questions are single choice apart from one obviously open question.

Table 4: Answers to Question 4, SK respondents.

To accurately determine the hiking culture in South Korea it is also necessary to distinguish between different outdoor activity variants. Considering that over 70 percent of South Korea’s land is mountainous, hiking expectedly scored first on the preference scale with over 90 percent of fans among our respondents. Trekking, on the other hand, scored as low as 3 points along with doing a pilgrimage, proving one day trips to nature are far more favorable among people of all ages.

As for less physically demanding activities, a solid 27 percent of respondents reported camping to be one of their preferred outdoor activities. Simultaneously, as many as 8 middle-aged respondents and those in their 50’s and above proved that the recent U.S. trend of glamping has certainly been gaining popularity among South Korean citizens, yet seemingly only among the financially stable individuals of progressive ages, unlike its inexpensive counterpart which caters mainly to students and young adults. This way financial stability proves crucial in the question of price versus comfort.

*Question 5: What environment do you prefer for your outdoor activities in nature? (MA)*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
high mountains	7	11	4
parks and forests	8	11	6
pilgrimage across a country	1	1	0

Table 5: Answers to Question 5, SK respondents.

As for terrain, this question, too, prompts age relevance. Nearly a hundred percent of our first and second age groups selected high mountains as their target environment, preferring rugged terrain, the occasional climbing, and long sections of path away from civilization, yet only two thirds of those in their 50’s showed interest. South Korean mountains do not provide many opportunities for seclusion in the wilderness high above sea level, either. Although a fair amount of the country’s land is mountainous its highest point, Mount Halla on Jeju Island, only reaches as high as 1 950 meters above sea level while the altitude of inland South Korea stops even a few meters lower on Mount Jiri in Jirisan National Park. On the other hand, natural forests and man-made extensive city parks are abundant. With amenities such as public bathrooms, street food, and vendors, or sometimes just shade and simple picnic tables and benches they make for the perfect

piece of serenity in someone’s busy schedule. Therefore, predictably, park and forest walks unfolded as the number one choice throughout generations.

Pilgrimages are an exceptionally specific activity which has attracted the attention of hardly 2 of our respondents. As mentioned in Chapter 5, even as pilgrimages gradually permeate the secular world, they are still largely a matter of religion and spirituality, and thus remain in the background for the time being awaiting their era.

*Question 6: Have you encountered hiking as a socio-economic concept? (Practicing outdoor activities in nature for the purpose of increasing, maintaining, or flashing one’s social status, or behaving in a manner that reflects one’s social pressures in nature.)*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
yes	2	1	0
no	7	10	6

Table 6: Answers to Question 6, SK respondents.

Moving on to the second section of our survey, only a mere 11 and a half percent of respondents acknowledge the immense effect hiking has on society and economy, and vice versa. The remaining 88 and a half percent seemingly remain unaware of this interconnection, a result which can easily be described as astounding, considering that this phenomenon is extremely present in South Korean society. The majority of the South Korean respondents approached face to face with our questionnaire were dressed in mountaineering clothes including those approached in downtown Seoul, as hiking apparel is an ever-growing trend on the fashion scene. We have already confirmed this fact in Chapter 7 with numerous sources presenting individuals sporting their athletic clothes to offices, restaurants, and even abroad travel. Further, South Koreans’ “bballi bballi” hiking style speaks loudly about their breakneck work culture. Therefore, it raises a doubt as to whether all 23 respondents are indeed unaware or whether they simply refuse to admit their affiliation with this concept.

In terms of age, students and young adults seem to be the most familiar with the concept, with one quarter of the respondents answering positively. This still is, however, only a fraction of those actively participating in it.

*Question 7: What type of equipment do you prefer for outdoor activities in nature?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
equipment does not matter	0	2	0
good quality equipment, brand does not matter	2	2	2
I prefer branded equipment	6	8	4

Table 7: Answers to Question 7, SK respondents.

Practicing outdoor activities in nature such as hiking, camping, and others frequently requires certain equipment or apparel apart from skills. Many conditions such as weather conditions, terrain, comfort of clothing, or plainly the practicality of the items one brings along can affect their experience. It is for that reason that everyone should consider suitable gear and apparel when embarking on a trip to nature however long it may be. By no means does this make hiking trails a catwalk, which may not be so clear to South Koreans as the results of this question appear not to align with those of the previous one. Although we must consider the fact that a brand name is often associated with quality, with more quality attributed to a product the more renowned the brand, this does not necessarily mean all branded goods are good quality items, nor that unbranded goods cannot be of good quality. With that said, nearly 70 percent of respondents across the generations stated they prefer branded equipment with no regard for quality, even though many of them previously stated they did not see the social or economic relevance in hiking. Conversely, good quality with no regard for brand appealed to almost a quarter of all respondents, preferring function over form, both answers unaffected by difference in age. Only two individuals admitted that neither quality nor brand make a difference in their choice of gear.

*Question 8: What hiking style is the most appealing to you from the following?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
hiking as fast as possible, making sure I finish the entire trip at once	6	10	5
taking breaks but managing my time so I can finish the trip at once	2	2	0
taking breaks, enjoying the view, it does not matter if I finish the trip, I can come back next time	0	0	1

Table 8: Answers to Question 8, SK respondents.

Results of Question 8 again suppose South Koreans' clouded judgement. Despite nearly 90 percent of respondents of all age groups stating without hesitation that they do

not see the interconnection between hiking and social pressures in Question 6, when asked about their favored hiking style most of the answers proved it is quite the contrary.

Hiking for the purpose of recreation is the source of happiness for many people worldwide, yet hiking for pleasure is moderately recent and has developed in response to various cultural, technological, and social changes, in Asia as recently as the 1900’s following waves of urbanization which resulted in many people retreating back to the countryside and nature for a temporary escape from the overcrowded cities (Ralph S., 2021). Though, what first emerged as a form of relaxation has gradually become a race with oneself and time for South Koreans as they copy the pressure of time management in their work environments onto their pastimes. Over three quarters of respondents regardless of age prefer a high intensity hiking experience with an inevitable completion of their trip at once which reflects South Korea’s “bballi bballi” culture particular for undertaking one project after another, attempting to finish each one as soon as possible. 15 percent of respondents enjoy the occasional rest stop during their trips, while only a single individual selected an option representing hiking for what its first purpose as a leisure activity emerged to be in Europe in the 1700’s (Ralph S., 2021).

*Question 9: What is your opinion on the marking and maintenance of hiking trails in your country of origin?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
easy orientation and well maintained	7	9	6
could be improved	1	1	0
the use of maps and GPS is necessary	0	2	0

Table 9: Answers to Question 9, SK respondents.

Ensuring hikers’ and other visitors’ safety is a priority of the Kore National Park Service (KNPS), as is the maintenance of the country’s natural wealth. Mountains and forests are home to countless ecosystems and helpless as they are it is our responsibility to keep them safe. South Korea is even home to some endemic species; Korean hare and Korean pine to name a couple. Therefore, KNPS places grave importance on the maintenance of hiking trails and does a remarkable job of preventing littering, creating shortcuts, disturbing the local ecosystems, and stationing amenities such as picnic tables, benches, and public bathrooms to cater to the people while protecting the wildlife. It is evident that nearly 85 percent of respondents acknowledge the KNPS’s efforts and considers publicly accessible natural areas to be well marked and easily navigated. KNPS

even goes as far as denying access to certain more challenging trails past a certain hour to guarantee that every visitor has enough time to make their descend or return trip before the sun sets, and far from all hiking trails are accessible 24/7 – most access points remain closed overnight. However, since it is impossible to perfectly cover such an extensive network of hiking trails in such a mountainous country, there is always room for improvement, with which seven percent of respondents agreed. Only two middle-aged respondents have met with the necessity to use maps or GPS on their trips, both stating it was reasonable for their Baekdu Daegan treks (in the “Additional remarks” section). The Baekdu Daegan has been gaining popularity, more so after David A. Mason explored it with his two New Zealand colleagues which resulted in the issue of the “Baekdu-daegan Trail” guidebook. Navigating one’s way in the wilderness with the use of GPS, a guidebook, or a map is far more challenging than following a waymarked path and, unfortunately, the Baekdu Daegan trail has apparently not reached a sufficient level of popularity to become a relevant project for the KNPS.

*Question 10: How well do you think hiking is promoted in your country of residence?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
extremely well	8	10	4
well on social media but scarce in other mass media	0	2	2
not enough	0	0	0

Table 10: Answers to Question 10, SK respondents.

Hiking is referred to as South Koreans’ most beloved pastime across the Internet, so it is no wonder it is the subject of many social media and blog posts, newspapers, reports, articles, books, and even university theses in the country, with which most of our respondents, 85 percent to be exact, agreed. Due to South Korean social pressures such as extreme beauty expectations, physical fitness, or mentally challenging work culture it is often promoted as the perfect exercise and stress relief, even more so following the restrictions of the COVID-19 outbreak. Social media especially cater to the promotion of hiking and other outdoor activities in the nature as they provide the perfect space for sharing beautiful pictures of landscapes and more of the country’s natural wealth. However, since social media are used predominantly by members of younger generations, only our youngest age group evaluated the overall promotion of hiking as top notch unanimously. A couple of members of the remaining two age groups suggested that such

promotion is disappearing from other media, although its presence on social media is stronger than ever.

To take this to an international scale, even western nations have noticed the importance of nature-related outdoor activities in the lives of South Koreans, and, in response, they have begun scouting South Korean public figures as models for outdoor clothing brands such as The Northface and K2 (Shim, 2020), and thus penetrating deeper into the South Korean market. This also ties into the excessive sales and wearing of hiking mountaineering clothes in places other than the nature.

*Question 11: Do you practice outdoor activities in nature outside of your country of residence?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (8)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (12)</b>	<b>50 + (6)</b>
yes	2	1	0
I would like to but have not had the chance	5	1	1
no	1	9	5

Table 11: Answers to Question 11, SK respondents.

Although South Korea is a lucrative hiking destination thanks to its natural diversity, splendid hiking trails, camping spots and cross-country pilgrimages can be found internationally. Nonetheless, sharing such places can become somewhat tricky for a nation which takes so much pride in its cultural homogeneity, as suggest our results of Question 3 with less than 8 percent of respondents opting for cross-cultural exchange as their motivation for spending time in the nature. When asking about the respondents' experience with hiking abroad we got relatively corresponding results with a vast difference in the mindset of young adults and the rest of the respondents. The majority of respondents above thirty have not even considered traveling abroad to spend time outdoors and merely a single person admitted to such experience. On the contrary, 62 percent of students and young adults stated they would like to visit mountains outside of South Korea, with two of them having already had the opportunity to do so. Although the motivation for all respondents' choices here is unknown, we can conclude that older generations are far more conservative than their younger counterparts.

Question 12: Are you aware of any internationally renowned hiking trails, treks, or pilgrimages?

OPTION ↓ AGE →	18 – 29 (8)	30 – 49 (12)	50 + (6)
no	1	2	1
yes	7	10	5
If YES, please give an example			
1. Camino de Santiago – 15 mentions			
2. GR20 – 6 mentions			
3. The Pacific Crest Trail – 3 mentions			
4. Other – 5 mentions			

Table 12: Answers to Question 12, SK respondents.

Considering 62 percent of students and young adults stated they were interested in visiting mountains outside of South Korea in the previous question, a predominantly positive answer to this one was rather expected. Nonetheless, the remaining respondents' answers were quite the contrary. The majority, nearly 85 percent, of our respondents aged 30 or above admitted to being aware of internationally renowned hiking trails and pilgrimages despite having no intention of attempting to complete one as is evident from the results to the previous question. When we reviewed the examples the respondents mentioned, it became clear that many of them are universally informed about hiking, walking, and camping options.

Some honorable mentions include the Spanish Camino de Santiago, or Saint James' Way, known to all seven students and young adults as well as over half of the middle-aged and senior population who marked "yes" as their answer. The Camino de Santiago is especially popularized among students just before or freshly after attending university now more than ever, which has also helped South Korea earn dominance among all Asian countries in the attendance of the Camino (Oficina del Peregrino, 2022). The GR20 cross-island trek in Corsica, France, scored 6 mentions. Surprisingly, none of them belonged to the youngest age group members, although GR20 is often considered to be one of the most demanding treks in all of Europe due to its daily elevation gain and loss and long-term seclusion. However, in view of South Korean elders' physical fitness levels their interest is justifiable. The third place belongs to the Pacific Crest Trail in western United States with a total of three mentions among the middle-aged respondents.

Question 13: *What do you think could motivate those who do not recreate in nature to become interested in doing so?*

OPTION ↓ AGE →	18 – 29 (8)	30 – 49 (12)	50 + (6)
change of lifestyle	1	3	3
friends and family	0	2	1
stronger promotion of outdoor activities	0	0	0
more free time	7	7	2

Table 13: Answers to Question 13, SK respondents.

From the very first glance it is apparent that marketing regarding spending time outdoors is clearly not an issue when it comes to motivating potential new hikers, campers and so on among South Korean citizens. Although healthy lifestyle and friends and family could be a good motivator according to some respondents, what seems to be a substantial issue is time. This idea was supported by more than 60 percent of respondents across generations with nearly all young adults convinced the South Korean society very much lacks in this area. Spending time in nature doing any activity tends to be time consuming, but with the South Korean work and academic “bballi bballi” culture already consuming the majority of everyone’s time, not much is left for this kind of recreation.

Upon the evaluation of the results of our South Korean respondents, it is safe to conclude that their preferences, motivation, and experience regarding spending time in the nature align, to the most part, with some of our predictions. Most of the South Korean population is exceedingly active outdoors across generations with even the eldest of individuals tending to their health, company, and spirituality. Many prefer one-day trips to longer treks and the younger generations tend to take even those to the extreme. Racing time on forest paths and high peaks, they are seemingly unaware of the presence of their “bballi bballi” work culture in their hiking one.

### **8.2.2. Results of European participants and comparison of the results of both target groups**

We were able to gather data from 44 European participants. Through the evaluation of their results, we learned that their answers aligned with our predictions to a large extent. This data will be further analyzed, each question individually, further in this chapter and simultaneously compared to the already evaluated results of South Korean respondents to determine the differences between South Korean hiking culture and that of citizens of European countries.

*Question 1: How often do you hike for the purpose of recreation?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
whenever I get the chance	0	0	0
often	10	5	0
sometimes	3	6	2
never	3	8	7

Table 14: Answers to Question 1, EU respondents.

The answers to the very first question already suggest that hiking culture can in fact be specific for a nation or community. Nearly half of Europeans confessed they never participate in any outdoor activities in the nature, unlike their South Korean counterparts with three quarters declaring to be avid hikers and keen nature lovers.

Age, too, appeared to be a relevant variable aside from nationality. While the results determined the oldest generation to be the most active among South Korean respondents, the number of European respondents aged 50 and above who enjoy spending time in the nature is close to none with only a little over 20 percent of them stating they hike sporadically. This can be attributed to a set of factors such as the difference in terrain, and thus in demand on one’s physical condition. Unlike in South Korea, European mountains are often higher if not double in altitude. Such high altitudes in most of European mountain ranges are characteristic for thinner air, more frequent climbing sections, and paths crossing rock or ice fields, making them unsuitable for most elderly population. At the same time Europeans are proven to have an overall worse physical condition and health than many East Asian citizens. South Korea earned a place in the top 10 healthiest countries by life expectancy in 2023 according to a 2023 *World Population Review* alongside Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore, way ahead of many European countries. Conversely, Europe’s youngest surveyed age group scored first in terms of spending time in nature. This is a reasonable outcome, considering most European students have heaps of spare time – free weekends, holidays, and school breaks – and are keen on taking gap years between their high school and university studies. (See Table 1 for comparison.)

*Question 2: Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected how frequently you hike for the purpose of recreation?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
no, I hike the same amount	4	12	9
yes, I hike more often since the pandemic	10	2	0
yes, I hike only because of the pandemic	2	5	0

Table 15: Answers to Question 2, EU respondents.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a global issue which, to a certain extent, affected every country and community. At one point, spending time in nature was for many the only way to escape the prison of one’s own home, and hiking alongside many other outdoor activities was promoted as the perfect getaway. Thus, it was inevitable that the changes the pandemic had brought would alter certain areas of life, leisure time fulfilment at the top of the charts, as other pleasures such as art, culture, and fitness remained out of reach for months. Its effects on spending time in the nature specifically are quite comparable even across continents. 56 percent of all European respondents remained seemingly unaffected in their hiking habits, and this number is a mere 2 percent short on the South Korean score, while all people in their 50’s or older saw no difference in their outdoor activity preferences regardless of nationality. The two younger age groups did, nevertheless, see a shift, especially among our middle-aged respondents whose suddenly acquired work time and workplace flexibility drew them outside, the numbers nearing those of our South Korean respondents at 43 percent of all European respondents embracing the opportunity. (See Table 2 for comparison.)

*Question 3: What is your motivation for movement in nature? (MA<sup>13</sup>)*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
healthy lifestyle	10	15	2
socializing	5	3	0
cross-culture exchange	12	11	0
Religion and/or spirituality	1	3	0

Table 16: Answers to Question 3, EU respondents.

First, both South Korean and European respondents agreed on good health being their primary motivation for spending time in the nature and participating in outdoor activities. Further results, however, show the contrast in culture. South Koreans selected socializing as their secondary motivation, yet less than 20 percent of European respondents appear to be like-minded. Europeans tend to treat their nature retreats as self-dedicated time rather than a social event, and although some national hikers’ associations exist in individual European countries, they are not plentiful and rarely organize group hikes or trips. Their purpose lies mainly in the voluntary work of their members in the maintenance and cleaning of hiking trails, discounts at government lodging institutions

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<sup>13</sup> All multiple answer questions are marked with “(MA)” following the question. All other questions are single choice apart from one obviously open question.

in the mountains, and health and injury insurance which comes as the biggest perk of membership. Moving on, the second strongest motivation of European respondents happens to be interaction with members of other cultures outdoors, a venture rather unpopular among our South Korean respondents. Such a motivation is more natural for Europeans as mountain ranges often stretch across borders in many cases and as tourists from all over Europe would flock to the Alps. Lastly, religion and spirituality seem on the lower end for Europeans, as only four individuals placed their motivation there, each confessing to having completed the Camino de Santiago in the “Additional remarks” section. (See Table 3 for comparison.)

*Question 4: What form of outdoor activity in nature do you prefer? (MA)*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
walking	3	4	8
hiking	7	11	1
trekking	10	11	0
camping	13	5	0
pilgrimages	7	7	1
glamping	0	0	0

Table 17: Answers to Question 4, EU respondents.

Preference regarding the type of outdoor activities plays a crucial part in the evaluation of a particular hiking culture. Hiking scored first among south Koreans, placing their preference in one day drips, yet Europeans’ habits are contrasting. Due to the higher altitudes and the infrastructure of hiking trails which remain secluded from civilization for days at a time, trekking seems to be a fitting preference for Europeans with 50 percent of respondents selecting it as their number one choice. Next, a little over 40 percent of respondents enjoy camping. The public as well as private campsite infrastructure is known to be well built with a campsite around every corner across all of Europe, more so towards the north. Outside of National Parks and Natural Reserves, camping is allowed virtually anywhere, which is valid for most European countries with only a few exceptions such as Switzerland and others, which makes packing up a retreating to the nature for a couple of days extremely accessible. Glamping, on the other hand, saw not a single supporter among Europeans unlike their South Korean counterpart. It is evident this U.S. trend has yet to penetrate the European market as European nature lovers begin to search for comfort. Walking and doing a pilgrimage share the fourth place on Europeans’ preference list. (See Table 4 for comparison.)

*Question 5: What environment do you prefer for your outdoor activities in nature? (MA)*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
high mountains	10	12	1
parks and forests	2	3	8
pilgrimage across a country	7	7	1

Table 18: Answers to Question 5, EU respondents.

First of all, it is important to remind that the terrain in European versus South Korean mountains differs immensely. What is viewed as high mountains in South Korea does not come near to the rocky peaks and dangerous paths in nearly doubled altitudes in Europe. While forest paths were the most liked among South Koreans, the majority, over 50 percent, of my European respondents opted for high mountains as their preferred environment, working with what they have. Many ascends in the Alps or the Carpathians do not stop at 1 500 meters above sea level, but rather begin at such altitude with a cable car ride preceding the beginning of the tour. Parks and forests did not score even the second place which was taken by pilgrimages. Whether it be the easy accessibility to internationally renowned pilgrimages within Europe or simply a personal preference, 26 percent more Europeans demonstrated interest as opposed to South Koreans, showing once again that Europeans are more likely to spend their time on multiple-day treks or long-term pilgrimages and South Koreans prefer a quick day hike finished in the comfort of their home. (See Table 5 for comparison.)

*Question 6: Have you met with hiking as a socio-economic concept? (Practicing outdoor activities in nature for the purpose of increasing, maintaining, or flashing one's social status, or behaving in a manner that reflects one's social pressures in nature.)*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
yes	12	13	0
no	4	6	9

Table 19: Answers to Question 6, EU respondents.

Work culture having an effect on the hobby of practicing outdoor activities is a phenomenon widely present in South Korea, yet it has not reached such high level, if at all, of presence in Europe. What we did not expect was the fact that although the mutual effect of hiking and society and economy is so evident in South Korea, over 88 percent of their respondents have seemingly not realized this. Simultaneously, over half of European respondents are much aware of this connection. Considering that it is common for South Koreans to wear brightly colored and branded hiking clothes and organized

vacations to Europe, this does not come across as a surprise. We also need to address the age relevance here, as the oldest age group is the only one which allowed for the respondents' views of all nationalities to meet with all South Korean and European respondents over 50 unaware of this trend. (See Table 6 for reference.)

*Question 7: What type of equipment do you prefer for outdoor activities in nature?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
equipment does not matter	5	7	7
good quality equipment, brand does not matter	8	12	2
I prefer branded equipment	3	0	0

Table 20: Answers to Question 7, EU respondents.

Here we have another example of the socio-economic concept proving irrelevant among European hikers. When choosing their gear to accommodate their needs in the natural world, nearly 45 percent of respondents stated that the equipment was not important and prefer their connection with the nature without the conveniences of the modern world. An exact half of respondents rely on the help of their equipment in the nature, and thus prefer quality to form, not focusing on the brand but on the utility instead. Only 7 percent of respondents resort to purchasing branded apparel and gear all of whom are members of the youngest age group which generally tends to be the most immersed in the world of fashion.

Further, over a half of European respondents stated they are aware of the socio-economic concept in spending time in the nature while it is apparent most of them are not active practitioners of this trend. On the contrary, 88 and a half percent of South Koreans did not admit to ever coming across this phenomenon, yet almost 75 percent clearly preferred brand to utility in the question of equipment. (See table 7 for reference.)

*Question 8: What hiking style is the most appealing to you from the following?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
hiking as fast as possible, making sure I finish the entire trip at once	1	2	0
taking breaks but managing my time so I can finish the trip at once	7	5	1
taking breaks, enjoying the view, it does not matter if I finish the trip, I can come back next time	8	12	8

Table 21: Answers to Question 8, EU respondents.

According to the results of Question 8 Europeans seem to be the definition of hiking for pleasure and a complete opposite of South Koreans yet again. 63 percent of respondents confessed completing a hike was less important than enjoying it. This is the reason why, when hiking in Europe, we can most often see people walk slowly, enjoy the views, have picnics, and take longer and more frequent breaks. South Koreans, on the other hand, tend to treat their hikes and other activities as a race which is clearly visible from their results to Question 8. Only 7 percent of Europeans take their hikes seriously enough to focus on their completion rather than enjoyment. With that said, it is clear that, even though Europeans are used to working hard, the pressure is not so grave as to reflect in their free time fulfillment. South Koreans seem to be under so much pressure and stress, that their demanding work culture has almost become their national identity, penetrating every are of their lives including pastime. (See Table 8 for reference.)

*Question 9: What is your opinion on the marking and maintenance of hiking trails in your country of residence?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
easy orientation and well maintained	13	15	8
could be improved	2	2	1
the use of maps and GPS is necessary	1	2	0

Table 22: Answers to Question 9, EU respondents.

When it comes to orientation in publicly accessible natural areas, South Korean and European hiking trails seem to be relatively equally well-maintained. Over 80 percent of European respondents agree that European hiking trails are easy to navigate without the use of maps, phone applications, or any other GPS equipment. Similarly, as in South Korea, European countries’ governments as well as their national tourist associations put the safety of hikers before anything else. Year after year various hiking trails are visibly newly remarked and signposts reinstalled, each including valid mountain emergency services phone numbers in case of an emergency. A little higher amount, 11 percent to be exact, of European respondents suggested that there was room for improvement in terms of waymarking of hiking trails. This number is slightly higher than in South Korea and can be attributed to a variety of reasons. First, the weather conditions high in European mountains can be more unpredictable and are often accompanied by dense fogs obscuring the view ahead. This requires waymarks to be closer in distance, yet that may not always be the case and such conditions may create confusion as hiking trails passing through ice

or rock fields may not be particularly well-visible. Further, unlike in South Korea, hiking trails in European mountains are almost never lined with railing unless there is a high possibility of danger, but even in such cases they are mostly accompanied by chain holds. This creates opportunity for the emergence of shortcuts, in which case one can easily move off the designated path and get lost. 7 percent of European respondents insisted that the use of maps and GPS devices in their mountains is inevitable. This percentage is equal to the South Korean one. Although European hiking trails are extremely well-attended to, some secluded areas wilderness areas are not maintained despite their accessibility. Furthermore, some projects such as the SNP (Slovak National Uprising) trail crossing the entire length of the Slovak Republic have not gained enough popularity for national tourist associations to invest enough funds and effort into their maintenance. (See Table 9 for reference.)

*Question 10: How well do you think hiking is promoted in your country of residence?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
extremely well	0	0	0
well on social media but scarce in other mass media	8	7	0
not enough	8	12	9

Table 23: Answers to Question 10, EU respondents.

When it comes to marketing regarding the outdoors, South Korea and Europe have a different notion of how to handle it. In South Korea, nearly all respondents stated hiking and other outdoor activities have enough coverage in the media and only a few suggested this coverage reaches higher intensity on social media than others. A staggering 66 percent of European respondents, however, believe that there is much room for improvement and that spending time in the nature does not get enough deserved coverage in the media and this is true for 100 percent of those in their 50's and above, possibly because their presence on social media is not as strong. 43 percent of our 2 younger age groups miss promotion of outdoor activities in most media but are content with its coverage on social media instead.

Spending time in the nature was highly promoted throughout Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic peak in 2020 and 2021 when most public establishments were forced to keep their doors closed to visitors long-term. At that time, retreating to the nature was one of few possibilities to escape the confinement of one's own home. Unlike in South Korea, this promotion has disappeared from most European platforms to a large

extent after the restrictions were lifted and we need to keep in mind that this experiment was conducted in 2022, a year after most travel and access restrictions were no longer in place. (See Table 10 for reference.)

*Question 11: Do you practice outdoor activities in nature outside of your country of residence?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
yes	9	10	1
I would like to but have not had the chance	3	4	1
no	4	5	7

Table 24: Answers to Question 11, EU respondents.

Traveling outside the country in search for outdoor adventure is much easier and less expensive for Europeans. Most major mountain ranges cover the area of not one but two or more countries such as the Alps or the Carpathians. With that said, it can be quite inexpensive to hike across countries when many border crossings are in fact located high in the mountains and are part of many hiking trails near national borders. As for South Koreans, since they cannot cross the border to North Korea due to ongoing military situation, it is necessary for them to fly or take a ferry to reach the next closes country. Furthermore, the south Korean nation is immensely different from those in Europe. South Koreans take extreme pride in their national and cultural homogeneity and many of them do not seek interactions with foreigners. Seemingly for those reasons over half of South Korean respondents refused the idea of participating in a cross-cultural interaction outdoors. Europeans are part of an intricate tangle of nations and cultures across the entire European continent, and thus interactions with members of other nations are not alien to them, on the contrary, they come naturally. While 45 percent of European respondents confessed to already having had the experience, another nearly 20 percent would embrace the opportunity. These ideas are shared among our two youngest age groups relatively equally. (See Table 11 for reference.)

*Question 12: Are you aware of any internationally renowned hiking trails, treks, or pilgrimages?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
no	1	1	2
yes	15	18	7
If YES, please give an example			
1. Camino de Santiago – 20 mentions			
2. GR20 – 15 mentions			
3. Tour du Mont Blanc - 9			
4. Other – 2 mentions			

Table 25: Answers to Question 12, EU respondents.

Although many South Korean respondents admitted they did not wish to hike abroad or interact with foreign hikers, 85 percent of them were aware of internationally renowned hiking trails, treks, and pilgrimages. Even though this came as a surprise, similar results were directly expected from our European respondents, and they did not disappoint. 90 percent mentioned one or more popular hiking trails, leaving not even 10 percent of them clueless.

As among South Korean respondents, among the European ones, too, the most popular destination was Camino de Santiago. GR20, a challenging stretch of path across the mountainous island of Corsica, came second for both research groups. The third place for European respondents took the Tour du Mont Blanc in the French Alps. The remaining 2 mentions were both European destinations. With the abundance of outdoor adventure opportunities within Europe it seems as though our respondents did not feel the need to look elsewhere. (See Table 12 for reference.)

*Question 13: What do you think could motivate those who do not recreate in nature to become interested in doing so?*

<b>OPTION ↓ AGE →</b>	<b>18 – 29 (16)</b>	<b>30 – 49 (19)</b>	<b>50 + (9)</b>
change of lifestyle	4	3	0
friends and family	10	12	9
stronger promotion of outdoor activities	1	2	0
more free time	1	2	0

Table 26: Answers to Question 13, EU respondents.

For our last question the difference in hiking culture between Europe and South Korea is again obvious. Europeans find the biggest inspiration and motivation for first time hikers in their surroundings, particularly their friends and family with 70 percent of participants in favor. It is also important to mention that all respondents aged 50 and over

saw motivation particularly in this area, whereas the rest of the respondents spread their answers among all options. The outdoors is set to generate happiness and serenity for Europeans. For South Koreans, the biggest motivator appeared to be free time, followed closely by change of lifestyle, two issues projected from everyday life onto free time activities. While change of lifestyle could motivate new nature lovers according to 16 percent of European respondents, increased marketing did not make a difference for either group. As for time, we can clearly state a difference in the groups' work cultures. Europeans mostly do not see time as an issue, yet South Koreans note an extreme lack thereof. (See Table 13 for reference.)

Upon the comparison of the data collected from our two target groups, the differences in the two separate hiking cultures are transparent. Not only that, but we have also evaluated differences relevant to age. For the first part of our research, when we focused on the habits of spending time in the nature, the South Korean group appeared to be more active overall, especially relative to increasing age, than its European counterpart. Further, when asked about their affiliation with the socio-economic concept of spending time outdoors, the results were contradicting. South Koreans, who turned out to be active practitioners in terms of this phenomenon were seemingly unaware of it, while Europeans confessed to having met with it, but are not active practitioners thereof. Next, the results have clearly confirmed that when it comes to spending time in the nature abroad and interactions with members of other cultures or nationalities, South Koreans do not reach nearly as high level of interest as their European counterpart. Lastly, based on the experiment, we found that countries of all participating nationalities are doing a great job in maintaining publicly accessible natural areas, while Korea is also greatly dedicated to promoting them.

## **Conclusion**

Although people have had to cross wilderness areas due to a number of reasons for millennia, hiking as a leisure activity was born no sooner than the 1700's with the beginning of the Romantic era in Europe. After that it took another 200 years before this new trend reached East Asia, and thus South Korea. Nowadays, hiking is regarded as a rather inexpensive pastime ranging from hiking itself through walking, trekking, camping, doing pilgrimages, and even enjoying the luxury of glamping.

To understand South Korean hiking culture, which was the purpose of this thesis, we first needed to put into context all factors which could possibly affect the outcome. First, we compiled an overview of South Korea's natural wealth. With 70 percent of the country's landscape being mountainous, 22 natural areas have been designated National Parks by the Korea National Park Service to date. These areas abound with an exceptional diversity of natural wealth including fauna and flora endemic to the country and the volcanic geological features of Jeju Island. With that in mind, it comes as no surprise that hiking and other outdoor activities in the nature are considered the most beloved pastime among South Koreans. Next, when we look at spending time in the nature as a leisure activity, even the eldest of individuals frequently enjoy their time outdoors by themselves or participate in countless organized tours. However, long-term treks are not an exception, either. With the Baekdu Daegan hiking trail running down a mountain range of the same name across the entire length of the Korean Peninsula and the Jeju Olle trail on Jeju Island, South Korean nature has something to offer even the most demanding of hikers. As for camping, though it has been gaining popularity especially among young adults in the form of Chabak – staying outside overnight in a car – the more curious activity is glamping which has made its way to South Korea all the way from the USA. Further we mentioned the impact religious beliefs may have on one's relationship with nature. Christianity and Buddhism are two major religions practiced in South Korea and they both preach a special relationship between man and nature. As such, religious beliefs can often be the motivation for retreating to the nature, whether it be to visit a Buddhist shrine or do a Christian pilgrimage to a site of religious significance. Our next factor was spirituality which does in fact play a major role in South Korean's relationship with nature. The idea of South Korean mountain spirits dates back to none other than Tangun, the supposed founder of the Korean nation, and the legend surrounding his birth. Many still visit Mount Taebaek for its spiritual significance.

Moving onto the important topic of hiking and spending time in the nature as a socio-economic concept in the lives of South Koreans, we have gathered enough data to conclude that South Koreans do in fact reflect their social pressures in their leisure time fulfilment activities. Firstly, South Korean society puts such immense pressure and time requirements on their students and working class that the emergence of the characteristic “bballi bballi” work culture was inevitable. Today, however, South Koreans try so hard to escape to the nature from their fast-paced lives that they do not realize it has led to the creation of a “bballi bballi” hiking culture, as many race time to complete even the most

challenging of hikes in the least amount of time only to move onto the next one. Additionally, with the increasing popularization of hiking in South Korea came the increase in the popularization of hiking apparel which has briskly climbed down from high peaks to city streets. The new “athleisure” fashion trend has people of all ages sporting mountaineering clothes to offices, restaurant dinners, social events, and even abroad travel. This new fashion trend has also led to the outdoor clothes sales skyrocketing, especially during and after the COVID-19 restrictions in 2020 and 2021 which caused most public establishments to close their doors for months.

The second half of this thesis was devoted to an experiment through which we gathered data regarding hiking habits, preferences, motivation, and experiences of South Koreans, and thus determined their hiking culture. We further compared this data with that collected from another target group of citizens of various European countries. First, to determine the hiking culture of south Koreans, based on the experiment we can conclude that South Koreans are highly active people across generations, with even the eldest of individuals actively participating in outdoor activities in the nature. They enjoy day trips mostly to parks and forested areas but are not afraid of the occasional high ascend. With hiking, walking, and camping among their favorite activities they often share this time with others. Otherwise, their motivation also often lies in maintaining health, and religion and spirituality. Spending time outdoors, however, has also begun to merge with their “bballi bballi” work culture, and thus reflect their social pressures. South Koreans tend to take their hikes and other activities to the extreme, racing themselves only to complete a journey as soon as possible to move on to the next one, just like their fast-paced work culture requires them to act in the business and academic worlds. Additionally, outdoor clothes have climbed down from mountains to cities with the new “athleisure” fashion trend causing outdoor clothing brands’ sales to skyrocket, especially during and after the COVID-19 restrictions. The preference of outdoor clothing, however, does not mean opting for cheaper outfits. The demand for outdoor apparel from expensive global brands, too, has risen, as form is slowly becoming secondary to function with many sporting their outdoor looks to offices, cultural events, and even abroad travel. Yet despite these findings, the majority of South Koreans stated they were unaware of this concept. Lastly, South Koreans take great pride in their national and cultural homogeneity, as is evident from the results of the survey. Although most of them are aware of internationally renowned hiking destinations, the majority of them, apart from the youngest age group, confessed they do not seek any interactions with foreign hikers.

Upon comparison of these findings with the data acquired from residents of European countries we can see the South Korean hiking culture clearly defined. Although both groups are highly active outdoors with equally well-maintained publicly accessible natural areas, their preferences and experience differ vastly in many other areas. For example, unlike for South Koreans, for Europeans cross-cultural interaction is a big motivator and they seek to hike and interact with hikers abroad. Also, they prefer to do these activities in a rather different environment, preferring high mountains possibly due to the mountain structure in Europe. Now, surprisingly, Europeans admitted to having met with spending time outdoors as a socio-economic concept, contrary to South Koreans, yet they are not active participants thereof. Opting for utility rather than form, Europeans prefer inexpensive but good quality equipment and focus on enjoying their time in nature slowly and thoroughly.

To end on a good note, it is also important to mention that governments, national hikers' associations, and National Park services of citizens of all nationalities involved in our experiment do a remarkable job in the maintenance of publicly accessible natural areas by placing the safety of all visitors above anything else. Both South Korean and European infrastructures of hiking trails, campsites and so on are well waymarked and signposted, requiring little to no use of maps or GPS equipment.

## **Annexes**

### **1. Hiking Culture (questionnaire)**

#### **Hiking Culture (questionnaire)**

\* For the purpose of this questionnaire the word “hike” in questions refers to all kinds of outdoor activities including hiking, walking, or staying in nature.

\* Please circle the correct answer.

\* Questions marked with “(MA)” can be answered with multiple choices.

Age:

Nationality:

1. How often do you hike for the purpose of recreation?

- a) whenever I get the chance
- b) often
- c) sometimes
- d) never

2. Has the COVID-19 pandemic affected how frequently you hike for the purpose of recreation?

- a) no, I hike the same amount
- b) yes, I hike more often since the pandemic
- c) yes, I hike only because of the pandemic

3. What is your motivation for movement in nature? (MA)

- a) healthy lifestyle
- b) socializing
- c) cross-culture exchange
- d) religion and/or spirituality

4. What form of outdoor activity in nature do you prefer? (MA)

- a) walking
- b) hiking
- c) trekking
- d) camping

- e) pilgrimages
  - f) glamping
5. What environment do you prefer for your outdoor activities in nature? (MA)
- a) high mountains
  - b) parks and forests
  - c) pilgrimage across a country
6. Have you encountered hiking as a socio-economic concept? (Practicing outdoor activities in nature for the purpose of increasing, maintaining, or flashing one's social status, or behaving in a manner that reflects one's social pressures in nature.)
- a) yes
  - b) no
7. What type of equipment do you prefer for outdoor activities in nature?
- a) equipment does not matter
  - b) good quality equipment, brand does not matter
  - c) I prefer branded equipment
8. What hiking style is the most appealing to you from the following?
- a) hiking as fast as possible, making sure I finish the entire trip at once
  - b) taking breaks but managing my time so I can finish the trip at once
  - c) taking breaks, enjoying the view, it does not matter if I finish the trip, I can come back next time
9. What is your opinion on the marking and maintenance of hiking trails in your country of residence?
- a) easy orientation and well maintained
  - b) could be improved
  - c) the use of maps and GPS is necessary
10. How well do you think hiking is promoted in your country of residence?
- a) extremely well
  - b) well on social media but scarce in other mass media
  - c) not enough
11. Do you practice outdoor activities in nature outside of your country of residence?
- a) yes
  - b) I would like to but have not had the chance
  - c) no
12. Are you aware of any internationally renowned hiking trails, treks, or pilgrimages?

a) no

b) yes

If YES, please give an example \_\_\_\_\_

13. What do you think could motivate those who do not recreate in nature to become interested in doing so?

a) change of lifestyle

b) friends and family

c) stronger promotion of outdoor activities

d) more free time

14. Additional remarks

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\* Note: Some publications were accessed via online databases as unpagged sources.