

# Seoul

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Motaz Othman

Seoul, a city filled with energy and life, is also rich in culture and heritage, having its own distinctive cuisine, and the arts, making it a vibrant and interesting destination that attracts not only leisure visitors, but also business travelers. The city is also home to many Korean multi-national companies (MNCs), with 53% of MNCs headquartered here. A city that sprawls 605 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 10.5 million people, Seoul plays host to an increasing number of events, from the Hi Seoul Festival all year round to the Seoul Open Night. A significant and memorable event hosted by Seoul 20 years ago is the Seoul Olympics Games.

With its wealth of experience in hosting major events, the city is now gearing itself to become the next leading MICE destination. According to UIA annual report, Seoul is ranked as the top 9th convention city in the world. The city has been growing steadily at an average of 13% in the last 3 years. With the recently formed Seoul Convention Bureau - Seoul Tourism Organization (STO), the city is bracing itself for more exciting developments and opportunities to come its way, and aims to be one of the top 5 convention cities by 2010.

In October 2008, STO together with the Korea Convention Association (KCA) established the first Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Chapter in Asia. This milestone marks a significant development in Seoul's effort to become a leading MICE destination. Members of the Chapter can gain access to MPI's network of over 24,000 members to interact, learn and explore business opportunities. Professionals in the industry can look forward to acquiring skills that will put them on par with the



A landscape in Korea

## Korean Music in a restaurant before lunch



best in the field. By undergoing MPIs Global Certificate in Meetings Operation (GCMO) I and II courses, industry professionals will learn best practices and gain the necessary knowledge to prepare for them for the much coveted CMP (Certified Meeting Professional) certification.

In December 2008, STO signed a Partnership Agreement with MPI that enables STO to capitalize on MPIs global meetings and events community through various marketing

platforms. Reaching out to MPIs database worldwide and an even wider audience of over 30,000 through the circulation of MPIs magazine, ONE+, STO is positioning Seoul as the leading MICE destination in the meetings community globally.

While it is important to develop a skilled workforce for the industry, it is even more critical to create a strong service culture amongst these skilled professionals. The delivery of a well-planned and well-executed event must be complemented with excellence

