

Seoul

Under the radar

The twin neighborhoods of Yeonnam and Yeonhui offer a refreshing slice of life you won't find elsewhere in the South Korean capital

If you've watched the black comedy thriller *Parasite* and wondered where Seoul hides its mansions, Yeonnam and Yeonhui will go some way towards satisfying your curiosity. These affluent westside neighborhoods, both with a novel dearth of skyscrapers, offer a more modest version of monied Seoul as compared to garish Gangnam or haughty Jongno. The main thoroughfare connecting Seoul with Incheon International Airport separates the the two areas. South of Seongsan, Yeonnam overflows with funky boutiques and artisanal hubs. North of Seongsan, Yeonhui offers a more reticent charm, with independent establishments tucked into side streets and stairwells. You can reach both spots – best explored during the day – from Hongik University subway station.



Zehnthof 16

This cosy shop displays carefully crafted leather accessories – including wallets, keyrings and laptop cases – on rustic wooden tables and shelves. It also customizes handcrafted cases upon request. "I chose Yeonnam because of its retro atmosphere and inspirational vibes," says designer and director Myungju Choi, who trained as a leather craftsman and provides on-demand workshops. [instagram.com/lab.zehnthof16](https://www.instagram.com/lab.zehnthof16)



Yeonnam Bang A Gan

A band of creatives took over this former mansion, overlooking a disused railway line, to bring together a collection of outlets, including an exhibition room on the first floor and a bookstore as well as homeware store on the second. "We felt immediately attached to the building because it reflects our business identity," the project's communications lead Ok Bin Kim says, referring to the complex's old-school features. yeonnambangagan.com



Cong Ca Phe

Vietnamese culture is trending in Yeonnam and is best exemplified by Hanoi franchise Cong Ca Phe, which arrived in South Korea in 2018. The open brick, olive green interiors are filled with '80s Vietnamese bric-à-brac, including gas lamps, bulging metal kettles and communist literature in Vietnamese. Try the coconut coffee – a decadent mix of Vietnamese drip coffee, condensed milk and iced coconut milk. congcaphe.com →

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Librairie de Nuit

Sheltered in a small alley away from roaring Seongsan Road, this atmospheric bookstore specializes in literature on psychology. It also features an interactive element – place a small item, such as a key ring or sketch, in an envelope in the exchange box and swap it for another from a previous visitor – and a “birthday library” where you can pick up a book by an author who shares your birthday. [instagram.com/librairie_de_nuit](https://www.instagram.com/librairie_de_nuit)



Guem Ok Dang

This new kid on the block is a haven of all things sweet and South Korean. It specializes in delicately wrapped *yanggaeng* (sweet bean cakes), which make for appetizing gifts. Choose from a broad range of flavors, including black sesame, cranberry and pistachio, as well as traditional Korean medicinal herbs. The red brick café has a handful of tables and serves hot tea, the traditional pairing for yanggaeng, as well as *bingsu* (shaved ice dessert). guemokdang.modoo.at



Manufact

In Seoul, Manufact is a name synonymous with quality coffee. Keep your eyes peeled for its café, hidden in an unassuming stairwell, with a small wooden sign at street level. In a space for no more than a dozen customers, bask in the simple, white-washed walls and cosy up behind a large communal table. Try the well-rounded flat white or – if you prefer yours black – sample the hand drip coffee made with beans from Ethiopia, Rwanda or Indonesia. manufactcoffee.com



Yeonhui Gimbal

Gimbal is white rice stuffed with pickled vegetables and meat or seafood, and rolled with seaweed. This humble eatery has been serving the South Korean staple for over 40 years. Yeonhui Gimbal sits on a quiet residential street and its food makes for a quick and satisfying meal to eat while strolling around the neighborhood. **2 Yeonhui-ro 11ga-gil, Yeonhui-dong**



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