

LEARN ENGLISH, THEN LURE TOURISTS - JEJU ISLAND'S GLOBAL FOCUS



Jeju Province is one of South Korea's most precious holiday destinations. The 'Hawaii' of Korea is attracting tourists from nearby countries, though plans to go global. It however faces a major obstacle: language.

Jeju Island is a self-governing province of South Korea. This wonderful island of moderate size (73 km wide and 41 km long) features the country's highest mountain, Mt. Halla (1,950 m) of volcanic origin and a huge crater lake, Baekrok-dam. Jeju is a striking island with many hidden waterfalls, traditional villages, fascinating volcanic rock structures and much more.

So far, it has attracted tourists from mainland and surrounding countries, though local authorities plan to expand. **One major issue hindering the progress is the fact that locals have developed a very specific dialect of Korean and do not speak any other languages.** And without communication, tourism is not going to boom.

The recently introduced plan is very simple - teach the locals Mandarin, Japanese and English. The first ones to undergo the intense ten-month course are civil servants. The course will hopefully produce about 100 capable employees specializing in the three languages. Future plans include educating 60,000 locals within a decade in order to make the island more approachable and friendly to foreign visitors.

As locals believe, Jeju has a lot of tourist potential. **The volcanic activity has created many hiking and biking opportunities; lava tubes are a very popular attraction and the island now features many trails and roads cutting through the wilderness.** The matriarchal society still survives together with unique cuisine, traditions and many festivals. The year's highlights include the penguin swimming contest in winter, the Fire Festival and the Cherry Blossom Festival in spring.

With so much determination and will to improve, the world is likely to hear of Jeju again - hopefully very soon.

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