

New Report Analyzes South Korea's Medical Tourism Market 2025–2033 : Advanced Care and K-Wave Fuel Demand

Growing demand for cosmetic, fertility, and affordable treatments to push South Korea's medical tourism market to USD 3.1B by 2033.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The South Korea medical tourism market reached a value of USD 2.0 billion in 2024 and is projected to grow to USD 3.1 billion by 2033, expanding at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.93% between 2025 and 2033. This steady growth is attributed to South Korea's advanced medical infrastructure, affordable treatment options, and its increasing global reputation for excellence in healthcare delivery.

Defining Medical Tourism and Its Relevance to Korea

Medical tourism involves traveling across international borders to obtain medical care that is either unavailable, too expensive, or less advanced in one's home country. Patients typically seek cosmetic, orthopedic, cardiovascular, ophthalmic, dental, and bariatric treatments, as well as advanced procedures like fertility therapy, gender reassignment, and stem-cell transplants.

South Korea has positioned itself as a leading medical tourism destination by offering not only



world-class treatments but also integrated services that enhance patient experience and convenience. In addition to improving individual health outcomes, medical tourism contributes to the national economy by creating healthcare-related jobs, encouraging knowledge exchange, and increasing foreign revenue.

Market Drivers and Emerging Trends

One of the primary forces driving South Korea's medical tourism market is the steady influx of inbound patients seeking high-quality and cost-effective care. South Korea is internationally recognized for its state-of-the-art hospitals, cutting-edge equipment, and medical professionals trained in both local and global institutions. Patients from regions such as China, Russia, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia frequently travel to Korea for services that may be more expensive or less accessible in their own countries.

Elective medical procedures—particularly those not covered by insurance—represent a fast-growing segment of demand. These include fertility treatments, cosmetic surgeries, gender affirmation procedures, and dental reconstructions. South Korea has emerged as a leader in these areas, especially in cosmetic and plastic surgery, with many patients drawn by the country's reputation for natural-looking outcomes and clinical safety.

The South Korean government has been a key enabler of the medical tourism industry. Through the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW), policies have been introduced to safeguard the interests of international patients. Two notable measures are the mandatory registration of medical institutions that serve foreign patients and the requirement for medical malpractice liability insurance—both of which aim to reinforce patient safety and institutional accountability.

In addition to regulation, the government and healthcare providers have launched comprehensive medical tourism packages, which include hospital care along with logistics such as flight booking, accommodation, translation services, and post-treatment care. These packages appeal to foreign patients by offering a seamless and stress-free experience, which is especially important when undergoing elective or complex treatments abroad.

A growing trend shaping the market is the integration of wellness and traditional Korean medicine (TKM) with modern healthcare services. Patients increasingly seek holistic healing experiences that combine evidence-based Western practices with centuries-old Korean approaches such as acupuncture, herbal therapies, and balance-oriented treatments. This fusion offers a unique value proposition for medical tourists seeking both physical and mental rejuvenation.

Market Segmentation

The South Korea medical tourism market is segmented by type and treatment type, enabling a granular analysis of growth areas and patient preferences.

By Type:

- Inbound: Refers to international patients traveling to South Korea for treatment; the dominant

segment.

- Outbound: Involves Korean nationals traveling abroad for care.
- Inbound: Refers to domestic patients traveling within Korea for specialized treatment, though this segment is less relevant to international medical tourism.

By Treatment Type:

- Cosmetic Treatment: Includes procedures such as plastic surgery, dermatology, and anti-aging therapies.
- Dental Treatment: Covers implants, orthodontics, and full-mouth restorations.
- Cardiovascular Treatment: Encompasses bypass surgery, stents, and heart diagnostics.
- Orthopaedic Treatment: Includes joint replacement, spine surgery, and sports injury management.
- Bariatric Surgery: Weight-loss surgeries such as gastric bypass and sleeve gastrectomy.
- Fertility Treatment: Covers IVF, ICSI, egg/sperm donation, and reproductive endocrinology.
- Ophthalmic Treatment: Includes LASIK, cataract surgeries, and retinal procedures.
- Others: Includes oncology, stem-cell therapy, neurology, and more specialized procedures.

Among these, cosmetic and fertility treatments are particularly popular among international visitors due to South Korea's advanced clinical expertise and high success rates.

Government Initiatives and Policy Support

The success of South Korea's medical tourism sector is closely linked to governmental support and policy development. In addition to regulatory protections, authorities have invested in marketing campaigns, international expos, and medical tourism platforms to raise awareness and build credibility. The Korea Health Industry Development Institute (KHIDI) and other agencies have played active roles in coordinating with hospitals and travel providers to ensure service quality and patient satisfaction.

Efforts are also being made to digitize the patient journey, including pre-travel teleconsultations, electronic medical records in multiple languages, and AI-assisted diagnostics. These improvements reduce barriers for patients and increase trust in Korea's healthcare ecosystem.

Future Outlook

Looking forward, South Korea is expected to maintain its position as a top-tier medical tourism hub in Asia. Opportunities for growth include further leveraging digital health tools, targeting new inbound markets such as Europe and the Americas, and expanding into adjacent sectors like wellness retreats, mental health recovery, and preventive medicine.

Moreover, continued emphasis on sustainability, cultural hospitality, and patient-centered care is likely to differentiate South Korea from competing markets. With a projected market value of USD 3.1 billion by 2033, the sector remains ripe for investment, innovation, and strategic partnerships.

□For more details, please visit:

[South Korea's Medical Tourism Market 2025–2033](https://www.marketreport.jp/eng/south-korea-medical-tourism-market-2025/)

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