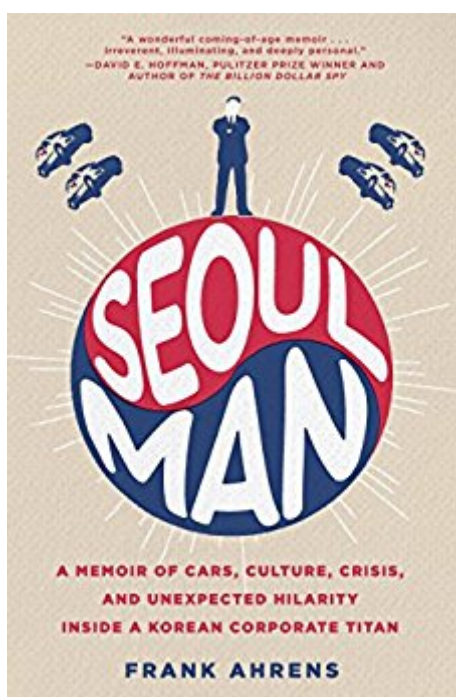


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# Seoul Man: A Memoir Of Cars, Culture, Crisis, And Unexpected Hilarity Inside A Korean Corporate Titan



## Synopsis

Recounting his three years in Korea, the highest-ranking non-Korean executive at Hyundai sheds light on a business culture very few Western journalists ever experience, in this revealing, moving, and hilarious memoir. When Frank Ahrens, a middle-aged bachelor and eighteen-year veteran at the Washington Post, fell in love with a diplomat, his life changed dramatically. Following his new bride to her first appointment in Seoul, South Korea, Frank traded the newsroom for a corporate suite, becoming director of global communications at Hyundai Motors. In a land whose population is 97 percent Korean, he was one of fewer than ten non-Koreans at a company headquarters of thousands of employees. For the next three years, Frank traveled to auto shows and press conferences around the world, pitching Hyundai to former colleagues while trying to navigate cultural differences at home and at work. While his appreciation for absurdity enabled him to laugh his way through many awkward encounters, his job began to take a toll on his marriage and family. Eventually he became a vice president—the highest-ranking non-Korean at Hyundai headquarters. Filled with unique insights and told in his engaging, humorous voice, *Seoul Man* sheds light on a culture few Westerners know, and is a delightfully funny and heartwarming adventure for anyone who has ever felt like a fish out of water—all of us.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I found this fish out of water story fascinating and well written. The anecdotes were usually good for a chuckle but also illuminated telling differences between the cultures. The book was also edited well so there was little of the repetition that often afflicts third type of book. Recommended.

One of the best business/travel/personal journals I have ever read. Funny, incisive, and surprisingly simple in its ability to explain the ascent of a global business behemoth. Frank Ahrens was really a "Connecticut Yankee" in Korea (or in this case, a West Virginia Mountaineer). His journey from clueless to clear understanding is fascinating and fun. Read it!

I lived in South Korea around the same time the author did, and I can tell you that he nailed many aspects of the culture and atmosphere. While there are a lot of books these days about Korean history, North Korea, and East Asian politics it is hard to find a good book written by an expat about actually living in South Korea. This is in stark comparison to countries like Japan where there are a variety of expat perspectives to explore. Anyone who is interested in living abroad in Asia will enjoy this book, as some of the challenges are universal to the region. All in all highly recommended.

I enjoyed the book very much for its well-written, entertaining and educational look at Korean culture from the point of view of an ex-pat American. So why didn't I give it five stars? I deducted a star because I did not care for the character of the author as revealed in the book. Despite his claims that, once he met his wife-to-be, Rebekah, he became a more caring, compassionate, generous person, his behavior seemed anything but. A less self-centered person would not have abandoned his team to spend four months in the US, would not have left his then pregnant wife alone and would certainly not have left his wife and baby daughter to fend for themselves in Jakarta while pursuing his career in Seoul. He eventually did decide to do the right thing by leaving Hyundai but not before causing a lot of pain to his wife and child. It would have been nice to have seen some self-reflection from the author along those lines.

Just finished reading Frank Ahrens' new book Seoul Man and what a fun ride it is. Former reporter with the Washington Post, Frank moved to Seoul to live with his diplomat bride, becoming the highest-ranking non-Korean executive at Hyundai in their PR group. The book is part travel journal

complete with fun-filled anecdotes on the Korean culture; part business and PR study on Hyundai's challenges and opportunities in the car space. Frank's a great writer and pulls it all together with hilarious fish-out-of-water observations. Check it out and remember to buckle up!

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