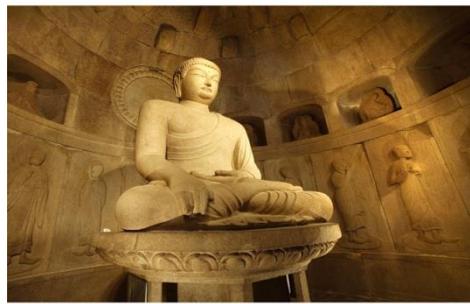


## History of Gyeongju

Gyeongju, located in southeast Korea, was the capital of the Silla Kingdom for 992 years (BC 57-935), the longest surviving kingdom in the history of Korea. Not only is it astounding that it was ruled by 56 kings spanning a period of almost a thousand years, it is equally remarkable that the kingdom of Silla originally started as a small tribal state and later expanded to occupy more than half of the Korean peninsula. The area was initially known as 'Seorabeol' or 'Gyerim', and it wasn't until the end of the era in 935 that it was first referred to as 'Gyeongju.'

Living up to its former glory as the capital of the longest-surviving kingdom in Korea, Gyeongju still shines today, more than a millennium after the kingdom's demise. Buddhism was introduced in Silla in the 6th century and played a significant role in strengthening royal authority and unifying the people, becoming the foundation of the area's art, tradition, and culture. Consequently, Gyeongju is the home of the greatest Buddhist art treasures in Korea, and is the nation's most popular fieldtrip destination.



## Gyeongju Tour Program

### 1. Bulguksa Temple



Bulguksa Temple was built in 528 during the Silla Kingdom, in the 15th year of King Beop-Heung's reign (514-540). The temple was originally called 'Hwaeom Bulguksa Temple' or 'Beopryusa Temple' and was rebuilt by Kim Dae-Seong (700-774), who started building the temple in 751 during the reign of King Gyeong-Deok (in power 742-765) and completed it in 774 during the reign of King Hye-Gong (in power 765-780). Upon completion, the temple's name was changed to 'Bulguksa.'



Bulguksa Temple has a unique design that is believed to reflect the ideal world of Buddha. One of Korea's most cherished remnants of the Silla Dynasty (57-935 BC), the temple embodies the mysticism and beauty of Buddhism, which served as the spiritual and cultural backbone of the Silla Dynasty. Along with its deeply significant cultural roots, Bulguksa Temple is also valued as the pinnacle of architecture and art in the 8th century. Together with the Seokguram Grotto, Bulguksa Temple was officially designated a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage in 1995.

## 2. Gyeongju National Museum



Gyeongju National Museum began storing and exhibiting Silla-era relics and artifacts following the founding of the Gyeongju Historic Site Preservation Society in 1913. In 1945, it was officially launched as a branch of the National Museum of Korea. When a new museum building was constructed in 1975, it received the status of a national museum.



With its well-organized collection of superlative Silla-era artifacts, Gyeongju National Museum serves as a good guide, laying out systematic knowledge and information relating to Gyeongju. Since it allows visitors to discover at a glance the history of the Unified Silla Kingdom as well as the charm of Gyeongju, it is considered a must-see stop for tourists.

The museum's holdings include approximately 79,000 artifacts, 13 national treasures, and 26 treasures, with exhibits displaying some 2,400 artifacts as of 1998.

### 3. Anapji Pond



According to the historical records of 'Samguk-sagi,' Anapji Pond was built during the 14th year of King Munmu (in power 661-681 AD) of the Silla Kingdom (57 BC-935 AD). Small mountains were created inside the palace walls, beautiful flowers were planted, and rare animals were brought in to create an exquisitely exotic garden fit for royalty. The pond was originally built in Wolseung Fortress (erected in 101 AD during the Silla period), but the fortress was destroyed and now lies in ruins. In 1974, an excavation project revealed large spherical shapes (measuring 200 meters in diameter and 180 meters in height) which indicated that 3 islands had been located in the pond. Thanks to these important findings and existing historical records, Anapji Pond has been restored to nearly its former glory.

When you are looking round Anapji, the remarkable thing is that the scale is not huge but it is hard to watch the whole pond at a look. This is the creativity of Silla people to make people feel a narrow pond as a huge ocean. And there are skillful and meticulous equipment such as drain facility in the pond.

Also the lotus fields around Anapji are beautiful like a painting and the canola blossoms around Cheomseongdae make a spectacular backdrop. At night, the beautiful lighting makes it perfect for nighttime sightseeing and the evening performances at Anapji will make for a unique experience.