

Gyeongju National Park

GYEONGJU NATIONAL PARK

Comprehensive information
English



Three-story Stone Pagoda in Yongjongsagok Valley, Namsan Mountain, Gyeongju



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Gyeongju National Park —in the bosom of a 1,000-year capital Cultural & Historic Sites

Wherever you go in Gyeongju, Silla's capital for a millennium, you will see beautiful cultural and historic sites where Korea's ancestors can still be "seen" and "heard." These heritages of our brilliant history are priceless assets to be handed down to future generations.

Bulguksa (Historic Site) & Seokguram (National Treasure)
Buddhism and are part of the UNESCO World Heritage (listing in 1995). Bulguksa was established in 751 by chief minister Kim Dae-seong during the reign of Silla's King Gyeongdeok. The temple has seven National Treasures, including Dabotap and the Three-story Stone Pagoda. Seokguram Grotto, the ROK's representative cave temple, is a man-made grotto in granite and covered with soil.



Samneung in Bae-dong (Historic Site)

Samneung refers to three royal tombs situated side by side at the western foot of Namsan Mountain in Gyeongju. They are believed to be the final resting places of King Adalla, King Sindok, and King Gyeongmyeong, the 8th, 53rd, and 54th kings of Silla, respectively. Samneung is known for the dense forest of twisting pine trees that surrounds it. This forest creates a magnificently mystical scene, especially when shrouded in morning mist.



Gyeongju National Park, set in Gyeongju, the beautiful capital of Silla for nearly a millennium, is divided into eight districts: Tohamsan Mountain with Bulguksa Temple and Seokguram Grotto, the highlight of Buddhist culture; Namsan, called a "museum without walls" with plenty of Buddhist sites from the past: Seok with the Tomb of King Muyeol; Hwarang with the Tomb of Kim Yu-sin; Sogeumgang with Baengnyulsa Temple; Daebon with the Gameunsa Temple Site; Danseoksan, where Hwarang ("Flower of Youth," an elite youth military corps) used to train; and Gumisan with the birthplace and tomb of Choi Je-u, the founder of Cheondoism, a native religion.



Three-story Stone Pagoda in Yongjongsagok Valley of Namsan Mountain (Treasure)

This three-story stone pagoda can be found near the top of Namsan Mountain, reachable via Yongjongsagok trail. It uses the natural rock there for the lower layer of its stylobate, suggesting that the entire rocky mountain serves as its foundation. This is why it is called the highest pagoda in Namsan Mountain. Eunjeokgol Valley, near the trail, is where Kim Si-seup (1435-1493) lived in hiding to maintain his loyalty to the usurped King Danjong. Kim is believed to have authored Geumo sinhwa, the first novel written in Chinese characters in Korea, here.

Rock-carved Buddhas at Chilburam Hermitage in Namsan Mountain (National Treasure)

These Buddha figures situated below the top of Bonghwagol Valley are regarded as the most exquisite carved rocks in Namsan Mountain. The Buddhas of the Four Directions seated on lotus flowers are carved on the four sides of a pillar of rock, while the images of the Buddha triad are on a rock behind it.

Stone Seated Buddha in Samneunggye Valley of Namsan Mountain (Treasure)

This Buddha in Samneung Valley wears a topknot-like ushnisha (protrusion on the top of Buddha's head) and a pleated robe worn only on the left shoulder, simply but beautifully expressed. In view of the lotus flower and panel designs carved on the octagonal lotus pedestal, and the Buddha's majestic and calm pose, it appears to have been carved between the 8th and 9th centuries AD (Unified Silla period).



UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Gyeongju National Park

Gyeongju National Park is a combination of outstanding historic and cultural heritages, evidence of our ancestors' wisdom, with an exquisite ecological landscape. Bulguksa Temple in Tohamsan District embodies the land of Buddha in its architecture and presents the quintessence of Buddhist art during Silla. Recognized for their exceptional value, Bulguksa was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1995 together with Seokguram Grotto, the ROK's representative cave temple. Gyeongju, the capital of the Silla Kingdom for nearly 1,000 years, rich in history and culture, remains with us today and into the future.

To be conserved together with the history of 1,000 years Ecological Resources

Gyeongju National Park is home to a total of 3,833 species of life—1,211 species of plants, 34 species of mammals, 138 species of birds, 1,459 species of insects, and 980 other species. The area's flora and fauna include 25 endangered species such as Eurasian otters, white-tailed sea eagles, martens, leopard cats, *Pedicularis ishidoyana* Koidz. & Ohwi, and Siberian flying squirrels.



Classification		Main resources
Flora	Plant	Maehwamunum, <i>Pedicularis ishidoyana</i> Koidz. & Ohwi, <i>Utricularia yakusimensis</i> Masam. large-flowered cyrtipedium
	Mammal	Eurasian otter, leopard cat, marten, Siberian flying squirrel
Fauna	Bird	Eurasian hobby, Chinese sparrowhawk, Japanese lesser sparrowhawk, Eurasian sparrowhawk, northern goshawk, Eurasian eagle-owl, black paradise flycatcher
	Reptile	Reeve's turtle
	Insect	<i>Copris tripartitus</i> Waterhouse
Higher fungi		<i>Dictyophora indusiata</i> f. <i>lutea</i> (Liu & L. Hwang) Kobayasi, <i>Russula mariae</i> , panther cap

Flagship species

Animals and plants that represent the ecological, geographical, and cultural characteristics of national parks and which are recognized as needing protection. They are designated "flagship species" as a way to draw attention to the need to preserve biodiversity.



Mandarin duck *Aix galericulata*
Natural Monument No. 327, the mandarin duck nests in tree holes in mountain valleys where broadleaf forests grow. These ducks can be seen in Gumisan and Tohamsan Districts in Gyeongju National Park in every season.

Korean red pine *Pinus densata*
The ROK's representative evergreen needleleaf tree, the Korean red pine has long symbolized the lives, culture, and history of Korea's people, as well as fidelity, perseverance, and determination. They spread across the largest area in Gyeongju National Park.

Traces left in the city that was a capital for a millennium

Eight Districts in Gyeongju National Park

Namsan District

The Mount Namsan Belt, one of the Gyeongju Historic Areas which constitute a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is known as an "open-air museum." It is home to 36 Buddhist statues, 13 pagodas, and 109 temples sites. Stretching 10km north to south and 4km east to west, the oval-shaped district consists of some 40 ridges and valleys coming down from the two peaks of Geumobong (468m) and Gowibong (494m). Korea's ancestors during Silla regarded the mountain as a pure land where Buddhist deities resided and protected their wellbeing. Namsan is still a celebrated mountain in Gyeongju today.



Stone Seated Buddha in Yongjongsagok Valley Five-story Stone Pagoda at the Sixth Temple Site in Poseokgok



Stone Seated Buddha in Mireulgok Valley

Sogeumgang District

Sogeumgangs Mountain was known as Bukak ("North Mountain"), one of the five mountains where Silla used to perform national rites before unification of the three kingdoms. Although not very high, it commands a bird's eye view of Gyeongju City. According to legend, Lee Cha-don was martyred here for spreading Buddhism during the reign of King Beopheung, making the spot a sacred place for Silla Buddhism. Baengnyulsa is an illustrative example of efforts to pay tribute to his sacrifice. In addition, Sogeumgangs Mountain is rich in historic sites from Silla's founding period, including the Stone Buddhas in Four Directions at Gulbuls Temple Site (Treasure) where different Buddha images are carved on all four sides of the rock, and the Tomb of King Talhae (Historic Site).



Baengnyulsa Stone Buddhas in Four Directions at Gulbuls Temple Site

Seoak District

Seondosan Mountain (altitude: 380m) is situated in the center of Seoak District to the west of Gyeongju City. This mountain provides the backdrop to the legend of Lady Saso who gave birth to Hyeokgeose, the founding monarch of Silla. The Tomb of King Muyeol (Historic Site) can also be found here, marking the final resting place for the king who laid the foundation for unification of the three kingdoms. On a rock cliff near the top of the mountain is the Rock-carved Standing Buddha Triad in Seoak-dong (Treasure). The district also features sites related to King Jinheung, King Jinji, and other historical figures familiar to Koreans.



Tomb of King Muyeol Rock-carved Standing Buddha Triad in Seoak-dong

Danseoksan District

The name "Danseok" ("rock cut with a single stroke") is from a legend that General Kim Yu-sin, trained in martial arts, cut out a large rock with one stroke of his sword. At an altitude of 827m, Danseoksan is the highest mountain around Gyeongju. A strategic military point due to its location as a gateway to Gyeongju, the mountain was regarded as sacred and named "Jungak" ("Middle Mountain") among the five major mountains. Halfway up the mountain are the Rock-carved Buddhas of Sinseonsa Temple in Danseoksan Mountain (National Treasure), which show the original form of Korean cave temples.



Rock-carved Buddhas of Sinseonsa Temple in Danseoksan Mountain Stone Standing Maitreya Bodhisattva



Tohamsan District

Tohamsan Mountain (altitude: 745m) surrounds Gyeongju on the east. The name "Toham" means coughing up and harboring clouds and mist coming in from the East Sea. One of Silla's five major mountains, it was held as a sacred guardian mountain for the nation. On its slopes can be found Bulguksa Temple (Historic Site) and Seokguram Grotto (National Treasure), which together constitute a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Seokguram area is also a popular spot to watch the sunrise.



Banyeyeonji Pond at Bulguksa Cheonwangmun Gate at Bulguksa



Janghang-in Temple Site

Daebon District

This place is imbued with the patriotic spirit of King Munmu (r. 661-681), who completed unification of the three kingdoms. To protect the nation as a guardian dragon even after his death, he had his tomb submerged away from the shore of the East Sea, presently the Tomb of King Munmu (Historic Site). His son, King Sinmun (r. 681-692) also built a temple here to memorialize his father for his service to the nation, known today as the Gameunsa Temple Site—not much is left except for the East and West Three-story Stone Pagodas at Gameunsa Temple Site (National Treasure). Igyeondae Pavilion, a modern-day structure marking the spot where legend says King Sinmun witnessed a dragon, is a popular spot for viewing the sunrise.



East and West Three-story Stone Pagodas at Gameunsa Temple Site Tomb of King Munmu

Hwarang District

In the eastern part of Hwarang District and surrounded by a rich forest with a great view is the Tomb of Kim Yu-sin (595-673), a general who contributed significantly to the unification of Baekje and Goguryeo under Silla. This magnificent tomb, 30m in diameter, is a round earthen mound surrounded by stone slabs and railings and adorned with relief carvings of 12 Oriental zodiac images. It demonstrates the typical form of royal tombs during the Unified Silla period.



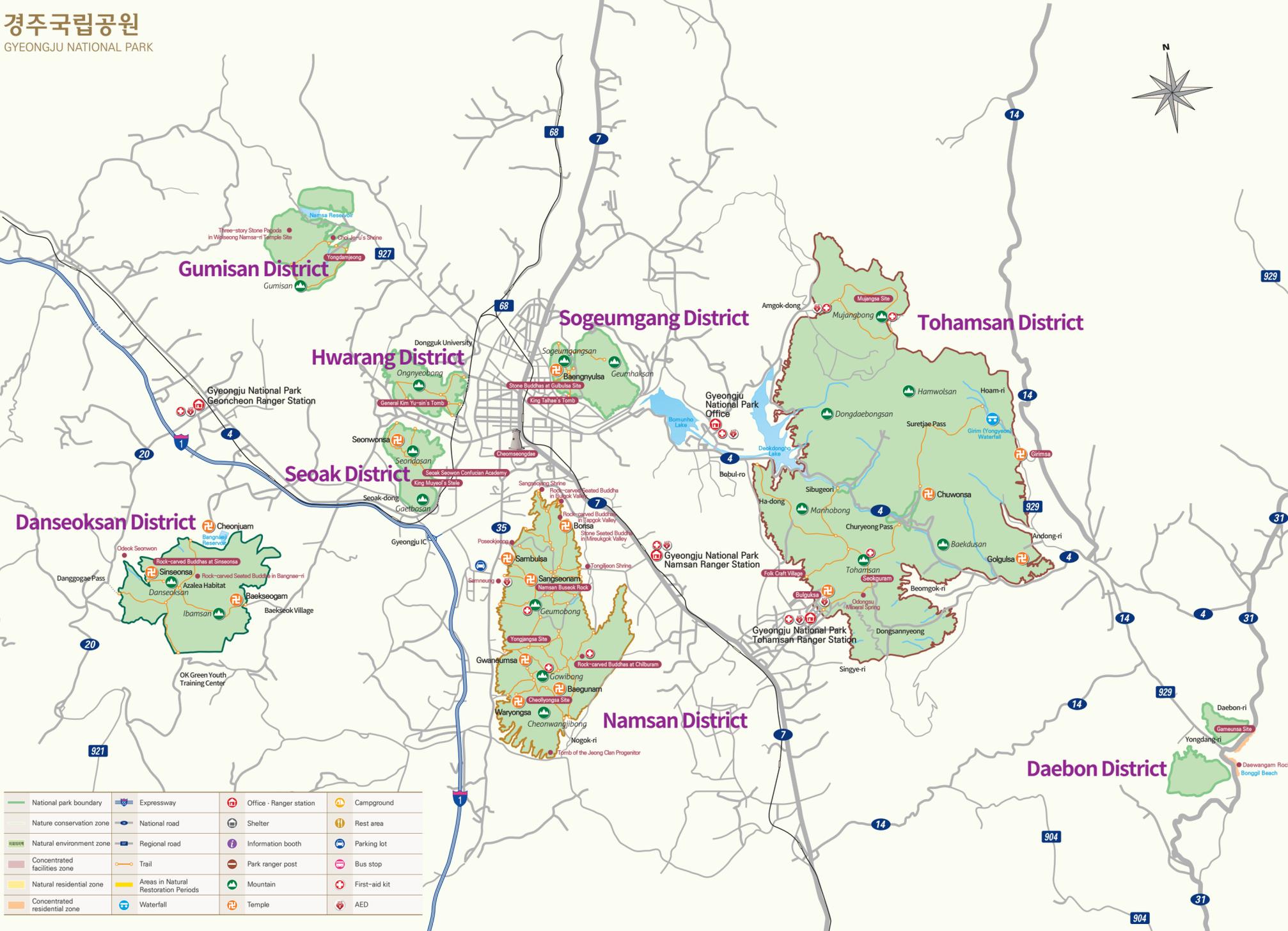
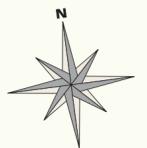
Tomb of Kim Yu-sin 12 Oriental zodiac images on the Tomb of Kim Yu-sin

Gumisan District

Gumisan Mountain (altitude: 594m) stretches over Geoncheon-eup, Seo-myon, and Hyeonok-myeon districts of Gyeongju City and is closely related to Donghak (the early name for Cheondoism), a religious movement indigenous to Korea. The birthplace and tomb of Choi Je-u, its founder, and Yongdamjeong Pavilion, marking where he propagated the religion, are located in and near the district. Yongdamjeong, where Choi formulated the Donghak ideology that man and God are one and authored Yongdamyusa, is visited by many who still venerate his spirit. It is also a hidden gem as a place to take in the autumn foliage.



Yongdamjeong Statue of Choi Je-u

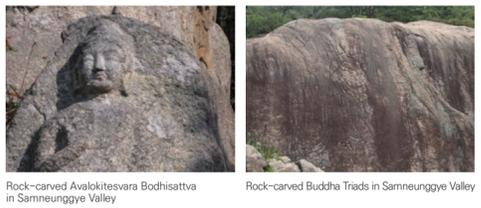
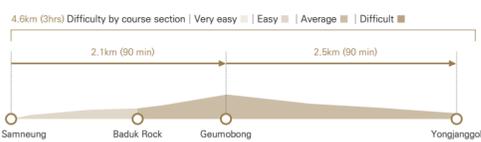


Namsan District

"Open-air" museum where Buddha's teachings can be seen everywhere
Samneung History & Culture Trail

Course Samneung - Geumobong - Yongjaggol
One-way 4.6km Time required Approx. 3 hrs Difficulty ●●○○○

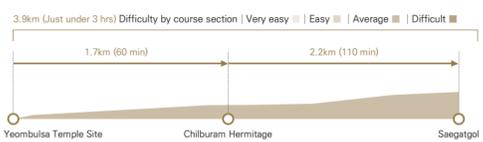
Namsan Mountain in Gyeongju has plenty of historic and cultural sites, and it is described as an "open-air" museum. Befitting the name of the trail ("History and Culture Trail"), this course features the largest number of historic and cultural resources in Namsan District including the Rock-carved Buddha Triads in Samneunggye Valley.



Breath of history in the path of treasures and national treasures
Bonghwagol History & Culture Trail

Course Yeombulsa Temple Site - Chilburam Hermitage - Saegatgol
One-way 3.9km Time required Just under 3 hrs Difficulty ●●○○○

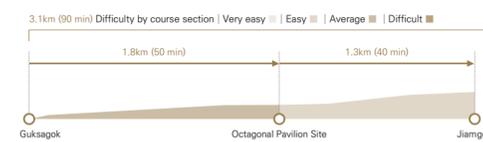
This trail starts at the Yeombulsa Temple Site to the east of Namsan Mountain. According to Samguk yusa, a priest stayed at the temple and called out the name of Amitabha every day, which could be heard even inside the palace even though he never called the name out loud, but only in his heart. Hikers can see the Rock-carved Bodhisattva at Sinseonam Hermitage (Treasure) sitting on a cloud and looking as if deep in thought, and the Rock-carved Buddhas at Chilburam Hermitage (National Treasure).



A rising bright light and a new land
Guksagok History & Culture Trail

Course Guksagok - Octagonal Pavilion Site - Jiamgok
One-way 3.1km Time required : Approx. 90 min Difficulty ●●○○○

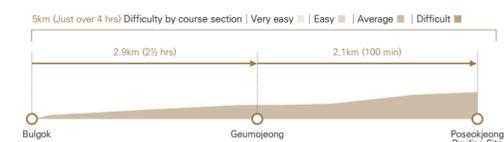
From the Octagonal Pavilion Site here, visitors can enjoy a panoramic view of Gyeongju City, including Namsan and Tohamsan to the east. Cultural resources here include stone pagodas recently restored and other cultural places from the end of Joseon and afterwards.



Following the path of Samguk yusa
Poseokjeong Pavilion Site History & Culture Trail

Course Bulgok - Geumjeong - Poseokjeong Pavilion Site
One-way 5km Time required Just over 4 hrs Difficulty ●●○○○

Convention holds that Poseokjeong (Historic Site) was an entertainment venue for Silla kings and aristocrats as Samguk yusa (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) records that King Heongang held a banquet here. However, it has recently been suggested that it was a place for the performance of rites. On the way to see Namsan Observatory, you can catch the Five-story Stone Pagoda at the Sixth Temple Site in Poseokgok Valley, which stands out on the towering rocky peak.



Tohamsan District

Sacred guardian mountain of Silla
Tohamsan Trail

Course Bulguksa - Seokguram parking lot - Top of Tohamsan - Tapgol fork - Sibugeori fork - Bobul-ro
One-way 10.5km Duration About 4 hrs Difficulty ●●○○○

Tohamsan Mountain (altitude: 745m), whose name signifies that it harbors mist and clouds, was known as "Dongak" ("East Mountain"), one of Silla's five major mountains, and viewed as another sacred guardian mountain for the nation. The maple tree-lined path from Bulguksa's Iljumun Gate to the Seokguram parking lot is a popular path easily accessible to anyone. Hiking along the ridges of Tohamsan affords a view that unfurls out to the East Sea on one side and Namsan on the other.



A path connecting loyalty and filial piety
King's Road Trail

Course Chuwonsa - Suretjae Pass - Bullyeong Bongpyo Stone - Yongyeon Waterfall
One-way 3.9km Duration Just over 2 hrs Difficulty ●●○○○

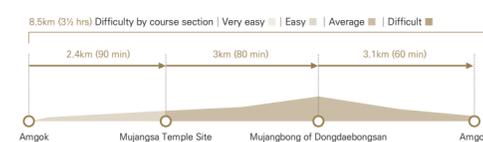
This is a trail where the funeral procession for King Mummu, the first monarch to ever see the Korean peninsula unified, passed to his final resting place and the path King Simmun, his son, took to pay tribute to his father who had become a dragon to defend the nation. This is also called "King Simmun's Procession Road for National Protection." Later, horse-drawn carts that passed through the valleys and crossed over the passes would encounter the Bullyeong Bongpyo Stone, positioned during Joseon to prohibit access and logging, and the site of an old charcoal kiln, which still remain. Also to be seen are Yongyeon Waterfall, associated with the legend of Marpasikjeok, a magical bamboo pipe alleged to have driven away enemy troops with its sound, and the tranquil Grimssa Temple.



Peaceful silvery fields
Amgok & Mujangbong of Dongdaebongsan Trail

Course Amgok - Mujangsa Temple Site - Mujangbong of Dongdaebongsan - Amgok
One-way 8.5km Duration 3 1/2 hrs Difficulty ●●○○○

A trail that is accessible by anyone is laid out along the deep valley on the eastern slope of Tohamsan. Legend says that the Mujangsa Temple Site is where people buried their weapons and helmets and prayed for peace after unification of the three kingdoms. The silver grass habitat that covers Mujangbong Peak (altitude: 624m) offers a superb view. Visitors start and end at Amgok. Visitor access is limited to reservations to help protect the natural environs.



Danseoksan District

Training site of Hwarang-training the warriors of Silla
Sinseonsa Trail

Course Danseoksan parking lot - Sinseonsa - Rock-carved Buddhas of Sinseonsa Temple - Top of Danseoksan
One-way 3.7km Duration Approx. 90 min Difficulty ●●○○○

Hwarang warriors used to train in Danseoksan during Silla. The name "Danseok" came from the story that General Kim Yu-sin, endowed with power by a mountain god, struck a rock with his sword to cut it in two. At 827m in altitude, it is the highest mountain around Gyeongju. The Rock-carved Buddhas of Sinseonsa Temple in Danseoksan Mountain (National Treasure), halfway up the mountain, are a collection of ten Buddha and Bodhisattva images carved on a large rock cliff.

