Buddhism
A Storehouse of Treasures
Geumgangnyeong, a Vajra Bell that Delights Buddhas and Awakens Sentient Beings

Among a temple’s Buddhist instruments sounded by shaking them is the *yoryeong* or hand bell. Mostly used by monastics when chanting, the *yoryeong* resembles a tiny bell with a handle. When one grasps the handle and shakes it, the clapper strikes the inside of the bell and makes a clear sound. Among the various kinds of *yoryeong* is one called a Geumgangnyeong (Diamond bell or Vajra bell). It is shaken to produce a clear sound for the purpose of pleasing many Buddhas and inviting many bodhisattvas to awaken sentient beings. The Geumgangnyeong has different names based on the number of rings attached to the handle. A Dokgoryeong has one ring, a Samgoryeong has three, and a Gugoryeong has nine. In Korea, the Samrogyeong and Gugoryeong are often used. Inscibed on most bells are various guardian deities. The one in the picture was unearthed in 2014 from the ruins of Dobong Seowon Confucian academy in Seoul. Inscibed on its body are the five great guardian kings and the four heavenly kings, giving it an extravagant appearance.

Length: 19.5 cm (7.7 in), weight: 621.8 g (22 oz). Goryeo era. © Seoul Institute of Cultural Heritage
The Octagonal Nine-Story Stone Pagoda of Woljeongsa (National Treasure No. 48) is one of the important multi-sided, multi-storied pagodas from the Goryeo era. The wind chimes, hung at each of the eight corners, make a beautiful sound when the wind blows. — © Ha Ji-gwon
Live Detached and Carefree

For us
Wealth, honor, worldly stature and pride
Are like specks of dust.
They are transient illusions
That cloud the human eye
In comparison with spiritual pursuits.

Text by Ramakrishna Paramahamsa
Photography by Yü Dong-yeong
Of the countless treasures from Korea’s past, a sizable portion of them are Buddhist in origin. In particular, the whole city of Gyeongju can be said to be a huge storehouse of treasures. The entire area of Namsan Mountain is dubbed an outdoor museum, around which a variety of cultural heritage is scattered all over the city. The reason Gyeongju has such a colorful heritage comes from the fact that it was the capital of the Silla Kingdom and the Unified Silla Dynasty for about 1,000 years. Of course there are other cities in the world which have a longer history than Gyeongju such as Athens, Rome, Xian and Kyoto. However, Gyeongju is distinctive in that the whole mountain is a living museum. Let us embark on a journey to this historic city of Gyeongju and discuss some of the museums located at a few major temples.
Feature Stories
A Journey into the Past

Gyeongju, a Treasure Storehouse of Buddhist Relics

Since olden times when it was called Seorabeol, Gyeongju has always preserved a brilliant cultural heritage. Its superb heritage is recognized not by Korea alone but also by UNESCO, which registered the “Gyeongju Historical Heritage Region” on its World Heritage List in December 2000. Dubbed “a museum without a roof,” Gyeongju reveals in all corners of the city the beautiful cultural heritage of Korea that is steeped in history and tradition.
The Gyeongju Historical Heritage Region is divided into five districts. Covering the largest area and preserving a number of historical regions and cultural properties is the Mt. Namsan District. The other four are: the Wolseong Palace District with its ruins of royal palaces; the Daereungwon Tomb Complex District where Silla’s kings are laid to rest; the Hwangnyongsa Temple District with the ruins of Hwangnyongsa and Bunhwangsa, deemed the pinnacle of Silla Buddhist culture; and the Sanseong Fortress District which aided in the defense of the city. In Gyeongju you can enjoy various tours lasting half a day up to several days.

Moonlit Walk through Seorabeol City of a Thousand Years Ago

What were nights in Seorabeol like, the capital of Silla, 1,000 years ago? One must-see destination is the Wolseong Palace District where Cheomseongdae Observatory and Gyerim Forest are located. Emanating a mysterious charm from its harmony of straight and curved lines, the beauty of Cheomseongdae is augmented at night with lights illuminating it from various angles. Built as an astronomical observatory based on Silla’s scientific technology, Cheomseongdae reveals the mystery of the stars at night. Also given new life at night with gentle landscape lighting are Donggung Palace, Wolji Pond and the Daereungwon Tomb Complex. It is a touching act of love to the ancient capital Gyeongju that has stood over 1,000 years to be given new life in this way. The walking path recommended for maximum appreciation of the city’s classical grace begins from Donggung and Wolji, continues to Wolseong Palace, Gyerim Forest, Cheomseongdae and Daereungwon, including the tomb complexes at Noseo-ri and Nodong-ri.

Donggung and Wolji belonged to the ancient palaces of Silla. The scenes reflected on the pond at night exude supreme beauty. Leaving Donggung and Wolji, you then walk to Cheomseongdae. Established by Queen Seondeok, the first queen to ever rule in Korea, Cheomseongdae stands on flat land with an open unhindered vista all around. Standing 9.17 m (30 ft) tall, it is wide at the base but narrows toward the top. It was built with cut granite stones layered in an offset pattern. A square window is at the midriff, and two courses of longer granite stones sit atop the tower arranged in the shape of the Chinese character “井.”
After Cheomseongdae you walk to the Daereungwon Tomb Complex. Walking around Gyeongju, you will find many tombs in the shape of a mound or hill. They are royal tombs wherein lie the kings, queens and nobles who once ruled Silla and Unified Silla. In size they resemble small hills rather than tombs. Referring to a district which entombs groups of Silla kings, Daereungwon includes the tomb complexes at Hwangnam-ri, Nodong-ri and Noseo-ri, as well as Oreung. Especially interesting is the Cheonmachong Tomb, from which 11,500 relics were unearthed, including a gold crown, many ornaments, weapons, glass bottles and dishes. Officially named “Ancient Tomb No. 155,” it is more often called by its popular name, “Cheonmachong (Flying Horse Tomb),” after a picture of a flying horse, drawn on birch bark, was discovered within. A moonlit stroll down this scenic path through Silla’s past will be the highlight of your Gyeongju experience. As you leave the noise and lights of the city farther behind, you become one step closer to the city of Seorabeol of 1,000 years ago.

All of Gyeongju is a Buddhist Historic Site

After the introduction of Buddhism to Silla, many Buddhist sites were established in Gyeongju. It is true that many temples were also established in the capitals of Goguryeo and Baekje, but no city has as many remaining sites as Gyeongju. The reason can be found in the devout and profound faith in Buddhism among the Silla people. Silla kings also promoted Buddhism to unite its citizens under one belief system. Silla sent many monks to China on state-sponsored trips and studies and established numerous temples within Silla. In short, the whole city of Gyeongju was a Buddhist site.

As you walk this path viewing historic Buddhist sites, you may even sense the essence of ancient Silla Buddhism. There may be no other place except Gyeongju where a tour lasting more than a half day can be organized exclusively to temples and their ruins. You can begin your pilgrimage of temples from Seokguram Grotto, Bulguksa Temple, and continue on to the Gameunsan Temple ruins where two stone pagodas and other traces of the temple are well preserved. Then you can proceed to Girimsa, Golgulsa and Bunhwangsa. In particular, studying Seonmudo, a traditional style of Korean Buddhist martial art, during a Golgulsa Templestay is especially popular with foreigners who find it interesting and worth learning.

Silla Buddhism gave the people solace in this life and hope for the next life. Buddhism was a powerful and intangible force that sustained the authority of the state and royal family. That’s why most of the Silla cultural heritage in Gyeongju is related to Buddhism. With active support from kings and royal families, numerous

★ Moonlit Travel Course
Gyeongju’s Donggung and Wolji (formerly Imhaejonji and Anapji) ↵ Wolseong ↵ Gyerim ↵ Cheomseongdae ↵ Daereungwon ↵ Daereungwon region
1— Bulguksa, a temple having numerous national treasures
2— Possessing both physical and aesthetic beauty, Bulguksa’s Dabotap (National Treasure No. 20) is considered the epitome of Unified Silla’s stone craftsmanship.
3— Stone Buddha Bas-Reliefs at Chilburam (National Treasure No. 312). Seven Buddhas are carved on two rocks located next to Chilburam Hermitage.
temples were established, including major ones like Hwangnyongsa, Bunhwangsa, Bulguksa and Seokguram. Bulguksa has many national and other treasures including the two pagodas, Seokgatap and Dabotap. Bulguksa attracts millions of tourists every year who want to see the superb works of Buddhist art.

★ Buddhist Historic Site Course
Gameunsa Temple Ruins → Girimsa → Golgulsa → Seokguram
→ Bulguksa & Bunhwangsa → Hwangnyongsa Temple Ruins → Buddhhas Carved on the Four Sides of Stone at Gulbulsa Temple Ruins → Baengnyuls

Namsan Mountain, a Huge Outdoor Museum
Even before Buddhism’s introduction to Silla, Namsan Mountain was deemed sacred. Upon Buddhism’s arrival, Namsan became regarded as sacred as Mt. Sumeru, and many temples, Buddha images and pagodas were built on it. As a result, Namsan has now become a huge outdoor museum. On Namsan are 13 royal tombs, 150 temple ruins, 120 Buddha statues, 96 stone pagodas and 22 stone lanterns, in addition to many other Buddhist sites and relics. Gyeongju’s Namsan can generally be divided into a southeastern and southwestern walking course.

Preserving top quality cultural properties, the eastern course has sophisticated and well-preserved relics. Major relics are mostly stone pagodas and Buddha statues. Some examples are the Seated Sakyamuni Buddha of Mireukgok enshrined at the Borisa Temple ruins, the Stone Buddha Bas-Relief at Chilburam Hermitage and a Stone Bodhisattva Bas-Relief at Sinseonam Hermitage.
The Seated Sakyamuni Buddha of Mireukgok at the Borisa Temple ruins is still in excellent condition. Its detailed lines still stand out, unlike other Silla Buddha statues. With eyes gently closed and a facial expression immersed in meditation, the Buddha sits on a lotus pedestal. It established a new standard for Silla Buddha statues.

The Stone Buddha Bas-Relief at Chilburam, a designated National Treasure, consists of seven Buddhas carved into two rocks located next to Chilburam. The three Buddhas carved on the rock called Byeongpung-bawi range from 1 to 2.7 meters (3.3 - 8.9 ft) in height and are collectively called *samjonbul* or the Buddha triad. Next to it stands a cube-shaped rock, and a Buddha is carved on each of its four sides; they are the *sabangbul* or Buddhas of the four directions. Of all the carved Buddhas at Chilburam, each with different features, the most beautiful is the Buddha triad, their faces smiling beatifically while sitting on luxurious lotuses.

Farther above Chilburam is the Stone Bodhisattva Bas-Relief at Sinseonam Hermitage, dubbed the most mysterious Buddha on Namsan Mountain. The bodhisattva is wearing a jeweled crown decorated on the front, left and right sides. Carved with sophisticated and elaborate craftsmanship, the bodhisattva appears to be floating in the clouds in early morning or on foggy days.

On the southwestern course, major relics are found in valleys and on mountain ridges. You may first visit the Samneung Valley on this course. Having the tombs of three kings (Adalawang, Sindeogwang and Gyeongmyeongwang) the Samneung Valley is also called Naenggol because
a refreshing breeze blows through it even in mid-summer. Renowned for its pine forest, Samneung has the Baeri Standing Stone Buddha Triad at its entrance. Featuring a Buddha at the center flanked by two bodhisattvas, the triad lacks any sophisticated beauty and is rather blunt in shape. It may date to the early Silla era. Walking the mountain trails that run parallel to Samneung Valley, you will see many Buddha statues with their heads or hands cut off. You will also see a Standing Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, a Seated Stone Buddha and the Six Line-Engraved Buddhas. Continuing to the summit, you will see a Stone Seated Sakyamuni Bas-Relief engraved on a large rock.

Standing 6 m (20 ft) high, this bas-relief is the largest Buddha statue on Namsan Mountain. Carved into natural rock, its line-engraved body leans backward a little and the face has distinct three-dimensional features. With slits for eyes and a benevolent smile, it looks down at those who have climbed all this way to see it. Even now devout Buddhists come here and tell long-hidden secrets to this Buddha.

From here, moving southeast along the mountain ridge, you will find the Three-Story Stone Pagoda at the Yongjangsa Temple ruins. Despite its location at the tip of a cliff, it exudes a sense of stability that embodies harmony with nature, a characteristic cherished by Korean sensibilities. You may also see many other Buddhist relics while hiking this fairly easy course. It is also a meaningful journey for foreigners as they can see and experience living Buddhist art along the way.

Tip

Don’t miss Gyeongju National Museum!

At Gyeongju National Museum you can see diverse cultural works and relics spanning the history of the Silla Kingdom, the Unified Silla Dynasty and even earlier periods. Gyeongju National Museum consists of both indoor and outdoor exhibition areas. Indoor exhibition halls include the Archeological Hall, Anapji Hall, Art Hall and Special Exhibition Hall. The Archeological Hall, the jewel of the Gyeongju National Museum, exhibits comb-pattern earthenware, a gold crown unearthed from a royal tomb in Gyeongju, and murals. Anapji Hall exhibits a wooden boat, diverse daily necessities and relics. Sophisticated, luxury ornaments and gold garments reveal the glorious life of Silla royalty. The large outdoor exhibition area is filled with splendid relics, including the Bell of King Seongdeok. Also on exhibit are diverse Buddha statues unearthed from the Namsan region and a Three-Story Stone Pagoda from the Goseonsa Temple ruins, now submerged under water.
Sacred Treasure Museums at Temples
Showcasing Buddhist Cultural Properties

Museums exist to preserve precious cultural heritage in good condition. Sacred Treasure Museums located at temples also protect monastic cultural properties from theft and damage. They hold not only permanent exhibitions but also special exhibitions related to Buddhism. Here are introductions to some such museums, worth a visit to get better acquainted with Buddhist culture.
Small but Full of Substantial Buddhist Heritage

Jikjisa’s Sacred Treasure Museum
The Sacred Treasure Museum at Jikjisa is a Buddhist museum that collects, preserves, exhibits and researches Buddhist cultural properties from many temples in the northern regions of North Gyeongsang Province. Opened on October 18, 1995, it marks its 20th anniversary this year. Beginning with 300 relics at its opening, now the museum has over 8,000 items. Among these, 16 pieces are designated cultural heritage pieces, including: a Hexagonal Gilt-Bronze Sarira Case from Dorisa (National Treasure No. 208); a Bronze Bell Cast by the Buddhist Monk Sain at Gimnyongsa (Treasure No. 11-2); a Stone Seated Medicine Buddha from Jikjisa (Treasure No. 319); Gilt-Bronze Locks and a Bronze Temple Gong unearthed from Hancheonsa (Treasure No. 1141); Yenyeom-mitadoryang-chambeop, a sutra on the repentance ritual performed before Amitabha Buddha (Treasure No. 1241); Collected Vows Written with Gold Ink on White Paper (Treasure No. 1303); and Lotus Sutra (Treasure No. 1306).

The Hexagonal Gilt-Bronze Sarira Case was unearthed from the Dorisa ruins, the first temple built in the Silla era. Estimated to have been produced during the Unified Silla era, and in the shape of a hexagonal monk’s stupa, the case is made from bronze and plated with gold. The lid is decorated with flowers at each corner. Originally, brilliant ornaments were thought to hang from each of the six corners, but they are missing. A careful look at the body reveals a beautifully-carved Indra, Brahma and four heavenly kings standing in armor as if to protect the cremains of the Buddha. The three Gilt-Bronze Locks unearthed from Hancheonsa are the only two such examples in Korea, along with others at the Hoam Museum. They are small in size - the biggest one 13 cm long - but the scroll design of peony and other plants, carved on the surface, is so elaborate and detailed that onlookers naturally utter a sigh of admiration.
The dramatic increase in size of the museum’s collection owes much to many Buddhists’ love of Buddhist cultural properties, prayers and efforts, including the staffs at many temples and museum directors. In 2015, this museum secured a Buddhist scroll painting depicting Byeokdok Geumgang, a type of vajra warrior, through an art auction in America. The painting was mistakenly passed off as a Chinese work, but was actually painted by Ven. Yuseong, who played a key role in producing the Buddha statues enshrined in Cheonbuljeon (now Birojeon) in Jikjisa. Thus, this small temple museum in a remote city was able to recover their own cultural property from abroad. It was a rare case in Korean art circles and a great feat only possible with the Buddha’s blessings. Among their yearly feature exhibitions and special exhibitions over the past 20 years, most memorable are two special exhibitions in 2000 and 2008. The 2000 exhibition featured “ink-rubbings made from Korean temple bells,” and the 2008 exhibition featured “ink-rubbings made from Mongol rock carvings, deer stones and monuments.” These exhibitions impressed not only the Buddhist cultural community but also all art lovers.

★ Information : +82-54+429-1720

Gilt-Bronze Locks unearthed from Hancheonsa (Treasure No. 1141)

Hexagonal Gilt-Bronze Sarira Case of Dorisa (National Treasure No. 208)
Dharma Jewel Temple Enshrining the Teachings of the Buddha

Haeinsa’s Sacred Treasure Museum

Haeinsa Temple on Gayasan Mountain has a historical record of its establishment. *Samguk sagi (The Chronicle of Korea’s Three Kingdoms)* records it being in August 802, the 3rd year of King Aejangwang’s reign. Under formidable support of the Silla royal family, Haeinsa was established by two monks: Yi Jeong who was a disciple of Uisang Daesa and Suneung Hwasang. Respecting the spirit of “concentration like a calm ocean,” one of the essential teachings of the Hwaesam Order, Haeinsa became one of the ten major temples in the order. Later, large scale renovations and expansions were undertaken by Huirang Daesa in the Goryeo era and Hakjo Daesa in the Joseon era with the support of Queen Insu and Queen Inhye. Haeinsa has fulfilled its duty as the Dharma Jewel Temple enshrining the Buddhist canon titled *Tripitaka Koreana*. 

Yeongsan-hoesangdo, a painting of Buddha teaching at the Vulture Peak Assembly (Treasure No. 1273)

A life-size wooden statue of Master Huirang (Treasure No. 999)

Garments of King Gwanghaegun
Throughout its long history, Haeinsa has preserved much Buddhist and royal heritage. For safer and better preservation of these precious cultural properties, Haeinsa monks decided to build a museum. The construction began in 1997 and was completed in 2000. The inauguration ceremony was held on July 5, 2002.

Major relics owned by Haeinsa’s Sacred Treasure Museum include: Yeongsan-hoesangdo, a painting of Buddha teaching at the Vulture Peak Assembly (Treasure No. 1273); a life-size wooden statue of Master Huirang (Treasure No. 999) produced using the hollow dry lacquer technique; and a Bronze Bell with an inscription saying “the 4th year of the Hongzhi era (1491).” In addition, the museum has garments that belonged to King Gwanghaegun, his wife and one court lady, which were discovered in 1965 in Sudarajangjeon Hall when the printing woodblock repository was repaired.

Open Cultural Space for Experiential Programs

Woljeonsa’s Sacred Treasure Museum

The Sacred Treasure Museum at Woljeonsa protects Buddhist cultural properties from theft as well as from natural or manmade damage. Items in their collection came from 60 temples within the 4th religious district of the Jogye Order. The museum’s objectives include: to efficiently protect their collection from biological and chemical contamination; to perform systematic research on their cultural properties in order to provide accurate information about them to the academic community and the public; and to provide an open cultural space to exhibit relics to tourists and Buddhists alike.

In 1974, Great Master Manhwa established Bojanggak and equipped it with display cases and preservation facilities. That was the beginning of Woljeonsa’s Sacred Treasure Museum. As the interest in preserving Buddhist relics increased and the necessity for safe storage grew, Ven. Hyeonhae, then abbot of Woljeonsa, planned the construction of the museum. It was completed in December 1997.

Seated Stone Bodhisattva at Woljeonsa (Treasure No. 139).
Facing the Octagonal Nine-Story Stone Pagoda, the bodhisattva appears to be presenting an offering to the pagoda while kneeling on his right knee. He is wearing a high crown and has a full face with a broad smile. Standing 1.8 m (6 ft) tall, it is now on display in Woljeonsa’s Sacred Treasure Museum.
Furnished with proper preservation and exhibition facilities, the museum opened on October 13, 1999. Since then it has come to store and maintain hundreds of Buddhist cultural properties such as four national treasures — including the Octagonal Nine-Story Stone Pagoda (National Treasure No. 48) — and six other treasures, including a Seated Stone Bodhisattva (Treasure No. 139).

The museum also operates a cultural college, which has conducted cultural and educational programs tailored to the regional populace and devotees for the past 10 years. As part of its community education program, Woljeongsa conducts a “Humanities on the Road” program in conjunction with its Templestay programs. Every year on the Buddha’s Birthday, and during the spring and fall festivals, Woljeongsa conducts a “Making Traditional Cultural Products” program for visitors.

★ Information : +82-33-339-6633

The Donation Registry for Sangwonsa’s Renovation (National Treasure No. 292) is the oldest manuscript owned by Woljeongsa. In December 1464, the 10th year of King Sejo’s reign, a large scale renovation was undertaken by Sangwonsa Temple. Hand-written by King Sejo, the registry also records many names of those who promised donations. The registry has the original Chinese text and a translation written in Hangul. As it was written not long after the development of the Korean alphabet, Hangul, it is a valuable resource for studying the Korean writing style of the early Joseon era.
Murals, Another Source of Joy from a Temple Visit

Article by Kang So-yon
Photos by Ha Ji-gwon
One can see many different kinds of art at a temple; sculptures, paintings and craftworks, symbols of the spiritual world, all patiently withstanding the passage of time. Unlike artifacts in museums or art galleries where objects are displayed outside of their original environment, in temples they coexist with the daily lives of monastics. In particular, most temple murals are painted on both the interior and exterior walls of Dharma halls, encircling them. As visitors walk around the halls, these paintings attract their attention and generate interest.

— Some favorite themes of temple murals include: *Palsangdo* that depict the eight main events in the Buddha’s life; *Simudo*, the ten “ox-herding pictures” that symbolize the journey of finding one’s true self; *Mongnyeon-gumo* in which Moggallana saves his mother who was reborn in hell; and other events in the lives of past eminent Seon (Zen) masters.

**The Origin of the Wooden Fish and Wooden Hand Bell**

“Mom, why does the fish have a big tree on its back?” a child asks pointing to a mural in a Dharma hall. Yes, the picture may appear quite bizarre. In the picture, a fish rides on top of the waves but has a tree rising from its back. This fish is a regular theme depicted on the inner and outer walls of a Dharma hall.

Once there was a monk of great virtue who lived with his disciple in a temple. However, the disciple often did as he pleased, took light of the precepts and lived a rather worldly life. Then one day he fell victim to a terrible disease and died. As retribution for his prodigal life, he was reborn as a fish. However, because of a big tree protruding from its back, he suffered much. One day, his teacher was traveling on a boat and saw this fish crying. He immediately recognized his deceased disciple. Feeling sorry for the fish, the teacher held a Water and Land Ceremony so that the fish could be reborn in a higher realm in the next life. That night, the disciple appeared in the teacher’s dream, expressed his gratitude for the teacher’s great kindness, and vowed to practice diligently in his next life.

“Putting a burning brazier on his head”

A mural of Haeinsa Temple

Ven. Hyetong established the Jineon Order during the Silla era. One day, before entering monastic life, he caught and ate an otter and threw away its bones in the backyard. The next day, the bones had disappeared and there was a blood trail, which he followed. He arrived at a cave and found the otter’s skeleton embracing five baby otters. As he stared blankly at this scene, the value of life sank deep into his mind. He then renounced the secular world to seek the path of truth. The mural depicts Hyetong asking for teachings from an eminent Tang monk named Subha. According to a principle that says seekers of truth must be willing to sacrifice even their life, he put a brazier filled with burning wood on his head and resolved to die if he could not learn the Dharma.

ⓒ Kang So-yon
“He received the teachings by cutting off his left arm.”

A mural of Songgwangsa Temple

Upon hearing of Bodhidharma’s reputation, Huike (the 2nd Seon Patriarch) visited him and sought his teaching. Bodhidharma didn’t move an inch but kept facing the wall. He didn’t answer or even turn to look at Huike. One day a heavy snow fell, but Huike stood there persistently until the snow reached his knees. Finally, Bodhidharma asked, “You have stood so long in the snow. What on earth do you want?” Huike answered, “I want to save sentient beings.” Bodhidharma yelled at him, “There is the profound Dharma of impermanence. How can you hope for great Dharma with such little virtue?” Huike cut off his left arm to prove his resolve. At that moment, a plantain grew from the snow and held the severed arm. That legend is the origin of the transmission of the Dharma lamp by one Seon master to another.

The disciple then asked the teacher to remove the tree from his back, carve it into a fish and use it as an instrument. His hope was that upon hearing the sound of the wooden fish being struck, sentient beings might alert themselves to practice more diligently and attain liberation. And that is the origin of the wooden fish, one of the four Buddhist instruments housed in the Bell Pavilion. The other three are the temple bell (cast from iron or bronze), the Dharma drum made of animal skin and the cloud-shaped gong. The temple bell is intended to save all sentient beings, the Dharma drum saves land-dwelling animals, the cloud-shaped gong saves creatures of the air, and the wooden fish saves water-borne creatures. The solemn sound of the four Buddhist instruments can be heard before the dawn and evening Buddhist services. When we listen to them with knowledge of their meaning, we naturally offer prayers saying, “Each and every life should be free from suffering and walk the path to liberation!” Thus, we should cultivate a sense of community and compassion not only to people but also to animals, insects and all beings.

The Buddhist Tradition that Frowns on Laziness

Fish sleep with their eyes open. That is why monastics strike a wooden fish before the dawn and evening services. For convenience and ease of carrying, the wooden fish gradually evolved into the moktak or wooden hand bell (although the wooden fish is still used). The moktak is an essential implement used to keep rhythm while chanting during Buddhist services, sutra recitations and recitations of the Buddha’s names (also to announce certain occasions).
Manjusri Bodhisattva and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva are favorite themes of temple murals. These two bodhisattvas are often seen flanking the Sakyamuni or Vairocana Buddha. Manjusri symbolizes wisdom while Samantabhadra action. The essential quality of the main Buddha at the center, which are wisdom and action, is embodied in these bodhisattvas. Originally depicted as bodhisattvas, as time passed they evolved into more friendly beings to the public in the Joseon era, such as Child Manjusri and Child Samantabhadra. Symbolizing wisdom, Manjusri rides a lion, while Samantabhadra, symbolizing the action of the will to save sentient beings, rides an elephant.
It is not easy to overcome sleepiness during meditation. That’s why sleep is also called the “demon of sleep.” One legend says Bodhidharma cut off his eyelids and threw them on the ground when he became drowsy during meditation. A tree grew from where his eyelids landed. He then picked the leaves from the tree, boiled them and drank the water. His sleepiness was gone and he had a clear head. That is the origin of the tea plant.

Vinaya Master Jinpyo is known for his fervent repentance practice. At first, he decided to practice for seven days. When the Buddhas and bodhisattvas did not respond, he pounded himself all over with a rock, breaking his knees and elbows. With renewed determination he decided to practice another seven days. With a resolve to escape his body, he cultivated undaunted practice. Finally, on the last day, Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva appeared and gave him the precepts.

The habits of the mind and body that torment us have penetrated layer by layer deep into our being. Thus, it is not easy to overcome them. Moreover, if we listen to all the demands of our lazy bodies, our practice won’t progress much. There is no need to abuse our bodies deliberately, but if we set a goal for a certain period, we should valiantly pour ourselves into practice. ¶
Which Buddha is Enshrined in Which Buddha Hall?

A temple compound usually features a Main Buddha Hall enshrined with the main Buddha image at the center of the compound and a pagoda in front of the Dharma hall. Many other Buddha halls are also built around the Main Buddha Hall, and each Buddha hall is named after the Buddha enshrined within. So the question arises, “Which Buddha hall enshrines which Buddha?”

Article by Kim Gyeong-mi
Illustrated by Han Kyung-eun
Sakyamuni Buddha in the Main Buddha Hall (Daeungjeon)
The Main Buddha Hall enshrines Sakyamuni Buddha. It is also called the Great Hero Hall because in the *Lotus Sutra* Sakyamuni is referred to as the “great hero.” Sakyamuni Buddha is usually enshrined in the middle and is flanked by Manjusri Bodhisattva on the left, who symbolizes wisdom, and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva on the right, who symbolizes action. Behind this Buddha triad hangs a scroll Buddhist painting, a feature usually seen in Korean temples.

Vairocana Buddha in the Vairocana Hall (Daejeok-gwangjeon)
Dedicated to Vairocana Buddha, the Vairocana Hall is also called the Hall of Great Tranquil Light as Vairocana Buddha spreads the light of truth in every direction to all sentient beings. Vairocana Buddha, who symbolizes truth, is enshrined at the center and is flanked on the left by Nosanabul Buddha, one of Vairocana’s “reward body Buddhas” and Sakyamuni Buddha on the right.

Amitabha Buddha in the Paradise Hall (Geungnakjeon)
Paradise Hall enshrines the Amitabha Buddha who teaches Dharma in his paradise called the Western Pure Land. In his previous incarnation, Amitabha was Bhikkhu Dharmakara who abandoned his throne and wealth and became a monk. After making a vow to save sentient beings, he cultivated all kinds of virtues and performed bodhisattva deeds, ultimately becoming Amitabha. As his light is infinite and shines in all realms of the Buddha, he is also called the Buddha of Infinite Life, and his hall is also called the Infinite Life Hall (Muryang-sujeon), sometimes shortened to Mitajeon.

Medicine Buddha in the Medicine Buddha Hall (Yaksajeon)
Birth, aging, sickness and death are the source of most human suffering, and the Medicine Buddha heals sickness. That’s why his left hand holds a medicine jar or case that has medicine to help sick sentient beings.

Compassionate Avalokitesvara in the Avalokitesvara Hall (Gwaneumjeon)
Avalokitesvara saves sentient beings by removing fear and bestowing compassion. He often holds lotuses or water bottles in his hands and manifests in various forms to edify sentient beings. The Thousand-Hand Thousand-Eyed Avalokitesvara is a bodhisattva who sees the difficulties of sentient beings with a thousand eyes and helps them with a thousand hands.

Ten Kings Who Judge the Dead in the Dark Realm Hall (Myeongbujeon)
The Dark Realm Hall (or Judgment Hall) enshrines Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva and the ten kings who judge the newly dead and decide a fitting punishment for them and the realm into which they will be reborn. Upon the death of a family member, the family offers the Forty-Nine Day Ceremony (Sasip-gujae) in the Dark Realm Hall so the deceased may have a good rebirth.

Enlightened Disciples of Sakyamuni Buddha in the Arhat Hall (Nahanjeon)
Arhats are disciples of Sakyamuni who have severed all their afflictions and attained enlightenment. Generally, 16 arhats or 500 arhats are enshrined in this hall.
The Moon that Shines in One Thousand Rivers

After receiving teachings from Vasumitra and Veststhira, Sudhana again set out to find a teacher. His next teacher was to be Avalokitesvara. Sudhana heads south to the rugged mountain of Potalaka in the coastal area of southern India. After crossing rough oceans and cliffs, he reached the deepest of the valley where he encountered the most beautiful and sublime scene in this world.

A stream winds through lush forest of trees. High on a rock, sitting half-lotus on cushion of fragrant leaves was Water-Moon Avalokitesvara, deep in Samadhi. Avalokitesvara wears a crown engraved with the Amitabha Buddha. Garment is splendid and decorated with gems, flowing from the shoulders down to the feet. Above it, transparent silk again wraps the divine body that shines in light. The light is reflected at the surface of the water. At a breeze coming through two green bamboos, Avalokitesvara opens eyes and gazes upon Sudhana. Across the water is Sudhana, attentive, reverent and palms together.
The Seo Gubang Pil Suweol Gwaneum Do of the Goryeo period captures the moment of encounter between a bodhisattva and a sattva (being). No other moment could be more profound and inner for a human. Around Avalokitesvara are depicted waves, willow branch in bottle, a pair of green bamboos and birds; however all are absorbed into silence and tranquility. Only the bodhisattva is over-proportionately enormous, filling up most of the frame. Sudhana is tiny in front of the divine being but he is absolutely indispensable in the composition of the painting; for Sudhana is the human that found this beauty.

Onlookers of the picture share the perspective of Sudhana and look up at Avalokitesvara. When a natural or man-made object is huge and powerful, it mostly arouses fear in us. However the enormity of Avalokitesvara does not overpower the spectator. The scene is much too gentle and tender to make us feel any threat. In western aesthetics, when a gargantuan and overwhelming object poses no threat but rather awakes a feeling of divinity, such aesthetic state is called “sublime.”

However Avalokitesvara paintings of Goryeo period evoke more of the feelings of gentleness, kindness and softness rather than sublimity. As we look up at Avalokitesvara through the eyes of Sudhana; we all become a child just like Sudhana in front of this great bodhisattva.

Avalokitesvara is well-known to people as a being that will run to the rescue of anyone that calls out the name. Avalokitesvara appears in numerous Buddhist texts such as Heart Sutra, Lotus Sutra, Flower Garland Sutra, Shurangama Sutra and many more. It has many different names like Self-accomplished, Full Moon, Water-Moon, Thousand Hands, Pure Mother, etc. Water-Moon means “Moon in the water”; meaning that even though the moon does not come down to the water on earth, it appears in a thousand rivers at the same time. The pure dharma-body of bodhisattva is everywhere in the universe; light of compassion is emitted to every corner of the world, boundless, always tending to the needs of the sattvas indiscriminately.

Water-Moon Avalokitesvara is probably at its peak beauty in artworks of the Goryeo period. Avalokitesvara resides by the sea of nirvana; located there yet saving beings all over the world. Water-Moon Bodhisattva is one of the thirty-three manifestations as explained in the Lotus Sutra but the one that Sudhana meets is the one from the Flower Garland Sutra and this is the one painted in the Water-Moon Avalokitesvara pictures of Goryeo.

Water-Moon Avalokitesvara, with its unique message, was particularly loved by Buddhist artists of Goryeo. Most paintings that illustrate Avalokitesvara alone choose the Water-Moon Avalokitesvara. Unfortunately, not many are left in Korea; some in Leeum Museum and Horim Museum. Most of them have been taken out of Korea in the tragic days of our history to end up in Japan or other countries.
We are all Sudhanas in front of Avalokitesvara

According to Chapter 25 of Lotus Sutra, Avalokitesvara takes on any of the thirty-three incarnations including seaman, lady, and child; in different forms, this bodhisattva of compassion will go anywhere in the world to save the people. But actually, Avalokitesvara does not move one step from his seat yet saves.

Sea with its high and mighty waves renders us helpless like children. We have nowhere to rely on. It is through suffering that we face the truth of our life. We are finally able to encounter ourselves as we are; regardless of what we possess, what status we have achieved. Facing pain, we become children. It may sound ironic, but suffering allows us to return to our most pure state.

What makes us return to our child-like pure state other than suffering? Mother. In the presence of this most sacred name “mother” all people become anything but children. Within her love, there is no need to pretend to be someone we are not, no need to act with affectation. Even in our state of utmost deprivation, poverty, and shabbiness, we know we can rest in mother’s bosom. When we are sick and diseased, mother’s hand will take care of us. When we have failed in all the worldly challenges, we know that it is mother we can turn to. We are forever children in front of the motherly love.

Just as motherly love turns us into children, Avalokitesvara’s compassion turns us into Sudhanas. The boundless compassion makes us children once again.

Sudhana is, in reality, us. It is us in our purest form. And what purifies us is not some overwhelming or enormous power, but this breeze-like, air-like softness of motherly compassion. Because the source of this compassion stems from the strongest of all beings, an all-mighty bodhisattva, we do not simply become children to nag for something; rather we return to our childhood to become pure beings again.

Water-Moon Avalokitesvara is soft and gentle like the air. As if non-existing, it walks the deepest of Samadhis, detached from all worldly matters. Avalokitesvara’s dreaming eyes seem to be looking at Sudhana; its upper body even seems leaning toward him. However, one should be aware that Avalokitesvara’s eyes do not stare into a fixed spot; its direction is forever inward.

The Seer and the Seen Become One

To the people of Goryeo, compassion must have been something like air, something soft and enveloping, always there. Every single detail of the Avalokitesvara uniformly depicts the feeling of compassion, be it its luxurious crown, decorative garment, soft hands and feet, gentle posture, or peaceful sitting. Its glaring decoration is not of worldly embellishment but a symbol of true inner beauty. This scene is a depiction of Sudhana’s encounter with his twenty-eighth teacher, and this scene is breathtakingly beautiful. Avalokitesvara is only sitting, only resting in Samadhi, but to Sudhana, the very sight would have shook him. Avalokitesvara is still, yet Sudhana is in emotion; his palms gathered and in tip-toe.
Avalokitesvara sits in the background of sky, sea, and rock. It seemingly conveys a much more friendly and human atmosphere than the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha whose land is decorated with splendid palaces, trees, numerous Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas. It represents something more “inside” of us. Nothing is man-made; we meet upon this great being in pure nature. There are some symbolic objects such as the bottle, dragon and bead, however, the very residence of Avalokitesvara is outside the artificial world. It is a revelation of what exists in its pure state.

In the Amitabha Buddha’s Land of Bliss or Ksitigarbha and Ten Kings’ Hell, therein lie human meanings such as like or dislike, sin and punishment, happiness and suffering. Whether it be heaven or hell, they still carry in them the meanings and importances that we bestow in our human world. But it is different in Potalaka Mountain surrounded by the sea where Avalokitesvara sits among the clouds and rocky cliffs. This is wholly outside the world of human scope and dimension. Avalokitesvara exists only in existence’s purest form.

Hell is depicted, but does not convey the feeling of threat, fear or suffering; it is only there to show how trifle hell is when matched with the greatness of Avalokitesvara’s compassion. The Four Heavenly Kings salvage the world by destroying the evil with fear; Water-Moon Avalokitesvara, with compassion, saves us by turning us back into childhood where there existed no fear.

This world of compassion, this universe full of love was what the Goryeo people believed in. They had such faith in the Buddha that they turned to this enormous project of engraving the entire Tripitaka into eighty-thousand wood blocks when the country was invaded by the powerful Mongolians. Some might think such action is not the wisest of choices. But as György Lukács had put it, “Happy are those ages when the starry sky is the map of all possible paths — ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars.” We should not be too hasty in judging the Goryeo people; for they themselves might have been truly happy by relying completely in the Buddha in face of fear and insecurity in the approaching army of Mongolians.

How true a child am I? Do I sincerely believe that the Avalokitesvara’s compassion fills the universe? How much of myself am I filling with my compassion? Avalokitesvara in front of Sudhana is larger than the mountain but is only quietly looking down upon us. There is a sense of complete entrustment. Because of this wholesome refuge, Sudhana becomes one with Avalokitesvara, the seer with the seen; the self-power and other-power.

This is how we become the practitioners of the Bodhisattva path. If I am full of Avalokitesvara, there is a dharma talk where questions are not asked but asked, where answer was never given yet acquired.

A Sudhana statue located at Sangwonsa Temple on Odaesan Mountain. Avalokitesvara’s compassion turns us into Sudhanas. The boundless compassion makes us children once again. © Sangwonsa
My Lessons at Guinsa Temple

Traditional Setting, Modern Practice

Article by Mary Ann Conlin
Photos by Choi Bae-moon
“I didn’t know what to expect when I came here”

Those were the words heard across the room during Sunday morning tea with our teachers. I was at one end of a line of tables, where I was seated with the Korean-speaking Templestay participants. At the other end was a circle of English speakers, mostly Samsung employees. Those words may not seem very significant, but they stuck with me as I tried to decipher my own experience at Guinsa Temple. Many times we don’t know what to make of life’s simplest excursions, in this case a weekend Templestay. But I am certain that you can gather some interesting insights at Guinsa.
Upon arrival at Guinsa Temple, I changed into their training uniform. Along with Amy, a friend who came to the Templestay with me, I had a good time looking around the temple compound.

I happened to visit Guinsa during the Cheontae Order’s 13th Tea Culture Conference. I was able to visit many tables where various teas from around Korea were brewed, and drink many different kinds of tea.

— My journey to Guinsa started with an invitation from my friend Amy Goalen, a volunteer in a program that connects foreigners with Templestay programs and other events around the country. Guinsa, located in North Chungcheong Province on Sobaeksan Mountain, is the headquarters of Korea’s Cheontae Order of Buddhism. Winding mountain roads and scenic spots abound on the way there, which in itself offers a lesson even before reaching the temple. When is life going to take an unexpected twist?

Upon our arrival we were led to our room in Gwanseongdang Hall. The room’s only furnishings are a shoe cabinet and a small table with a phone. The bathroom was simple yet newly renovated. We were provided with the standard issue Templestay clothes and name tags, a little dull at first but comforting when you realize you don’t have to be concerned with your physical appearance here. With over 50 buildings clustered along a steep mountain slope, Guinsa looks as if it could have been plucked from a Himalayan hill station and dropped onto the mountainside. The views and the lifestyle are simply breathtaking.

**Lingering Taste of Tea Served at Guinsa**

On this particular weekend, the temple was holding their traditional tea festival. We made our way to Gwangmyeongjeon Hall and walked through the doors into another place and time. On either side of the hall were rows of low tables and seated behind each of them beautiful women, elegantly dressed in traditional hanbok. On each table was a new taste sensation, tea leaves lying upon shiny serving platters, transformed before our eyes in tiny ceramic tea pots and tea bowls. At the first table was a Korean nun who introduced
Guinsa is the headquarters of the Cheontae Order of Korean Buddhism. Daejosajeon Hall is a three-story wooden structure where a statue of Sangwol Wongak, the temple’s founder, is enshrined.

Fall in Korea is most fascinating when the foliage turns colorful reds and yellows. Freezing beautiful moments into photos, Amy and I have beautiful memories of Korea.

I embarked on a hike along the forest path. Though the hike was not easy, I was thrilled to see the breath-taking sunset from the top of the hill.

Onto the Higher Hills via Forest Trails
After several cups of tea and a few bites of various sweets, we departed and made our way to the Golden Temple, one of many buildings there that one could meditate upon for hours, given all the fine artistic and architectural details layered on top of one another. But as the late afternoon sun began to set, we decided to take a short hike to Nirvana Palace. Of course, the first thought that ran through my mind was our destination, again not taking into consideration the lessons in the journey. Although I observed many small details on that hike, the most poignant was a Korean man who was trying to catch his breath. I was also walking slowly due to having a cold, so we started walking together.

He spoke little English, and my Korean is fairly basic. But that didn’t matter as we started walking side by side, in perfect step, two strangers heading in the same direction. The sound of my pounding heart and our footsteps in sync were trance-like,
Before the Buddhist service, I lit a candle in the Dharma hall and prayed that my remaining days in Korea would be happy and productive before going back to Canada.

At the Bell Pavilion, as part of the evening service, monks sounded the Dharma drum, temple bell, wooden fish and cloud-shaped gong in that order. The solemn yet pure sound of each instrument resonated in my heart.

When we reached the top, I found my friend Amy, along with our photographer and editor. And beyond them was one of the most brilliant sunsets I’ve ever had the honor to lay my eyes on. And once again, time expanded. All thoughts, worries, doubts and negativity were carried away on a soft breeze, and the sun filled me with its last rays of the day. Nothing heavy…. Just light.

We walked back down, and my walking companion, Mr. Lee, went on his way. The evening ceremony of drumming and chanting once again took me to that weightless, expanded place in time. We made our way to the dining hall for our vegetarian temple meal (which is always nourishing and never disappointing). These meals called “gongyang” or “offerings” in Korea, for which I am always grateful, are typical at most Templestay programs. However, it was the evening program that was the most interesting aspect of the weekend.

**Meditation Session to Hear My Inner Voice**

The Templestay schedule said that from 7:30 to 9 p.m. there would be yoga and meditation. When I walked into the room there were lined rows of participants sitting cross-legged on the floor. The lights were dimmed. The sound of water drops falling reverberated through the room. The English-speaking nun was standing at the front, leading us in a guided meditation:

“Imagine someone in your life that you hate, feel disdain for, who has caused you pain. Take that person and hold them in your arms. Hug them. Tell them you forgive them. Allow your anger towards them to slip away”.
At most Templestay programs you’re taught how to walk, how to bow and how to sit in silence. But this seemed more like an exercise offered by self-help gurus on Youtube channels. It didn’t seem to fit the framework in my mind. Then she proceeded to lead us in a variety of group activities that were meant to help us practice focus and mindfulness. We tossed multiple stuffed animals around a circle. We did human waves similar to baseball games. We sat together as if we were on a bus, moving in unison when the driver in front of us moved. These seemed like ice-breaking activities at a corporate event. I didn’t get it. I was expecting a meditation.

My friend Amy informed me that this particular Buddhist order was practicing exercises like these as a new way to convey mindfulness to their students. I then set aside my assumptions and truly began to appreciate what their goal is. They have the courage to try new things, to give us different tools to help us discipline our minds. Time expanded again.

**Guinsa, a Cherished and Beautiful Korean Temple**

I didn’t quite receive what I had expected from this Templestay, but I received exactly what I needed. I experienced ceremony and ritual that I hadn’t at other temples. I learned different techniques that changed my perspective on mindfulness. I gained experiences that helped me see my assuming nature more clearly so that I may come to a deeper understanding and appreciation for what things are now, in this moment. Guinsa is a beautiful place to see the unexpected.

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After dinner, I participated in a meditation program. It was a time to calm myself while thinking of the people I love, the people I hate, and investigating the changes in my body.

I shared tea with a monk. While savoring the tea, I felt my mind becoming calm and settled.

Guinsa had especially beautiful roads. At the top of one stairway, a bridge appeared. After crossing the bridge, the roofs of the ornate temple buildings stretched out before us.
Temple Food of the Ancients

Neither the Five Pungent Vegetables Nor Meat can Win Over the Mind

— On ipchun day, the first day of spring by the lunar calendar, the common folk of Korea used to eat the five pungent vegetables forbidden to Buddhist monastics; they were collectively called osinchaes or osinban, though these five vegetables could differ by region.

Koreans of olden times consumed the five pungent vegetables on the first day of spring based on their belief that they would enhance the five virtues and also so their internal organs would be brought into balance and harmony, thereby making them healthier. The households that could not afford all five vegetables followed this spring tradition by simply having winter scallions with gochujang (red chili paste).

On ipchun day, kings sometimes presented the five pungent vegetables to his ministers. To coincide with the five directions, the gift box had yellow vegetables at the center surrounded with blue, white, red and black vegetables. Ministers combined these five vegetables into one seasoned vegetable dish which also had a deeper political meaning, and that was to harmonize and fuse all different factors and unite as one with the king at the center. In this respect, bestowing the five pungent vegetables has a historical connection to the dish called tangpyeongchae.
Layman Yi Gyubo Abstains from the Five Pungent Vegetables

These strong-scented vegetables were not eaten by the Buddhist community. The “five pungent vegetables” Buddhism forbids generally refer to: green onions, garlic, Korean wild chives, chives and Chinese squill. They are prohibited by monastics as they stimulate discursive thoughts and thus obstruct Buddhist practice. In addition, monastics do not eat meat. This is based on the concept of cyclic existence. One has to take a life in order to eat meat, and this severs the seeds of compassion.

There once was a layman who abstained from not only the five pungent vegetables but also meat. He was Yi Gyubo (aka Layman Baegun; 1168-1241), a celebrated literary man during the Goryeo era. As his lifestyle was closely tied to Buddhism, he left many literary works related to it. One of the poems recorded in his published works is titled “Upon Quitting the Five Pungent Vegetables for the First Time.” In it he says, “With a firm will, would it be difficult to quit eating the five pungent vegetables? / I request from the Buddha a teaching to sever all my ties to them.” He asked for the Buddha’s aid because he found it difficult to give them up. It was probably also about this time that he stopped eating meat. In the poem titled “Quitting Beef,” he left a footnote saying, “Once I wrote a poem after I quit eating the five pungent vegetables when I also quit eating beef. However, though my intention was to quit eating beef, upon seeing it I couldn’t help but eat it. Thus I couldn’t mention that fact in the poem. Now I don’t eat beef anymore even if I see it, and that’s why I write this poem.”

Cattle are good at plowing a large field. They help us harvest a variety of grains. Sustaining our life is unthinkable without grains as our life depends on them.

Cattle carry heavy loads for us, and supplement manpower in short supply. Though called “bulls” or “cows,” they shouldn’t be regarded as lowly animals. How can we eat their meat to fill our stomachs?

Although he had resolved to quit eating meat, he wasn’t successful at first. However, it was not long before he was able to give it up, thus proving his firm resolve. Giving up certain foods is a daunting task as well. However, there is nothing we cannot achieve when we rely on the Buddha. Yi Gyubo, who previously often had wine and meat, gave up the five pungent vegetables and then meat not long afterward. No matter how pleasing it was to his taste buds, his taste buds could not win out over his mind. What we eat also depends on the mind. About this time, Yi Gyubo began to learn the Surangama Sutra and often read it lying on the floor. Here are some lines from another poem.

Growing old, I quit studying Confucian literature.
I began to learn the Surangama Sutra instead.
Because I recite it even lying down at night,
Under the blanket is a Buddhist sanctuary.
Utmost Care and Genuine Sincerity Complete Temple Food
The Temple Food Experience Center was newly opened this year at Donghwasa Temple in Daegu. Gyeongil Seunim, the Center’s guiding teacher, prepared a table for us, the reporting crew, so that we might sustain good health during the cold winter. Emphasizing that temple food is not simply something to fill a hungry stomach but a part of Buddhist practice, she says it is important to prepare food with a mindset of warm consideration and utmost sincerity.
Many people often think that temple food is purely vegetarian and doesn’t use the five pungent plants that are said to hinder Buddhist practice with their spicy taste and nature. That is not totally wrong but not right either. She reiterates that attitude is important, saying, “The common perception is that eliminating meat and the five pungent plants constitute temple food. However, Buddhists pursue much more than that. Confined to mountain temples, monastics are busy with their practice. As markets are far away in town, they grow and harvest their own garden. They don’t use pesticides but let insects eat their fill. They do so not simply to eat healthy, uncontaminated food but also in consideration of the insects.”

Thus, vegetables are grown in an unpolluted environment thanks to her kind consideration for tiny insects invisible to our eyes. We were served a warm meal prepared with a pure heart. Gyeongil Seunim says love for life and sincerity toward those who eat her food constitute genuine temple food.

Preparing a Satisfying Meal is Part of Buddhist Practice

“Sincere care and concentration are important. I cook with utmost sincerity so the food I have made with concentration and pure intentions can be like medicine for those who eat it,” says Gyeongil Seunim.

True to its reputation as a major temple in the Daegu area, Donghwasa opened the Temple Food Experience Center at the beginning of this year for laity who have a keen interest in temple food. Gyeongil Seunim teaches the theory and practice of temple food to about 90 students here. Recalling her early days as a temple cook, she says, “I was ordained at age 24. When I was a student at a monastic college, my duty was cooking. That experience opened a brand new world for me.”

She emphasizes that the objective of temple food is not simply to fill an empty stomach, and said: “Upon their first encounter with temple food, many people ask, ‘How can I survive eating this food?’ However, temple food is not for satiating hunger. We should cast aside the thought that we must eat well, and take food as part of our practice.”
The Harmony of Moist Crepes and Spicy Gimchi 
Gimchi Memil Jeonbyeong 
(Gimchi Buckwheat Crepes)

In the past, buckwheat was used in many recipes by the people of Gangwon-do Province and North Korea, especially during the winter when food was in short supply. Rich with dietary fiber, buckwheat is known to prevent constipation and hardening of the arteries, and to relieve hypertension. As buckwheat has a “cold” attribute (according to oriental food theory), it is good to have buckwheat crepes with a gimchi filling, which has a “warm” attribute. As gimchi has plenty of “warm” ingredients like ginger and hot chili powder, gimchi buckwheat crepes have a balance of warm and cold energy.

Sweet, Sour and Crispy 
Sagwa Mu Saengchae 
(Julienned Apple and Radish Salad)

The radish has been praised as the “second ginseng” in Korea, and fall radishes are better for cooking than winter radishes, which have a higher water content. Fall radishes taste sweeter, spicier and are more refreshing. Storing fall-harvested radishes underground, you can enjoy radish all winter long and invigorate your health from their rich supply of Vitamin C and calcium. Radish salad should be eaten immediately after preparation to relish its crispy texture.
Ingredients (3 servings)
400 g (14 oz) glutinous rice flour, 1/3 of a sweet pumpkin, 3 tbsp cooking oil, 1 tsp salt, some pine nuts and Korean dates for garnish

Directions
1. Sift the glutinous rice flour through a sieve to get rid of any lumps. Add salt.
2. Steam the sweet pumpkin in a steamer for 10 minutes and crush it finely. Mix the glutinous rice flour to the crushed pumpkin and make dough by adding hot boiled water.
3. Wrap the dough in wet cotton cloth and let sit for 10 minutes.
4. Peel Korean dates from the top and circle down to the bottom. When the peel comes off in one piece, pound it with the tip of a knife handle to flatten it. Roll the peel into a flower shape.
5. Roll the dough into 5-6 cm (2 in) diameter balls and flatten them into 0.5 mm (0.02 in) thick cakes. Arrange dates and pine nuts on top in the shape of flower buds.
6. Put the prepared cakes into an oiled pan and cook over low heat. Serve on a plate with fruit syrup

Tip: When the dough is wrapped in a wet cloth for 10 minutes, its elasticity increases. As a result the dough won’t crack and has a more chewy texture.
**Tender and Savory Goguma Gyeongwaryu Jorim**  
(Braised Sweet Potatoes and Nuts)

**Ingredients (3 servings)**

1 sweet potato, 1 tsp black sesame seeds, 30 g walnuts, 30 g almonds, 30 g cashew nuts, 2 tbsp perilla oil, 1 tsp salt, 1 tbsp rice syrup (or oligosaccharide)  
(30 grams equals one ounce)

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**Directions**

1. Wash the sweet potato and nuts. Cut them into cubes and set them in a strainer to drain.

2. Put the perilla oil in a preheated pan and add the cubed sweet potatoes. Fry them and add salt to taste. Lower the heat and cook them with the lid on.

3. Put the perilla oil in another preheated pan and fry the nuts by adding almonds, walnuts and cashew nuts, in that order. Add a pinch of salt.

4. Mix the cooked sweet potatoes and fried nuts, and add the rice syrup. Mix them well so the surfaces appear glossy. Sprinkle black sesame seeds over them and serve on a platter.

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**Tip** If you use roasted nuts, there is no need to wash them. However, if you use raw nuts, it is better to disinfect them by blanching them in boiling water.
A Day in a Mountain Temple, a Time of Tranquil Reflection

Templestay programs are largely divided into rest-oriented programs and experiential programs. A rest-oriented program allows one to stay in a temple and rest one’s exhausted mind and body. An experiential program will differ at each temple, but consists of basic programs such as Buddhist religious services, Seon (Zen) meditation, 108 prostration practice, a tea ceremony, hiking in the mountains, making lotus lanterns and offering prayers. Let us take a look at a typical schedule of a day in a mountain temple.

03:30  Temple Ground Chanting and Wakeup
(Doryangseok)
A monk’s day begins at 3 a.m. with a ritual called “temple ground chanting” or “doryangseok.” Monks walk around the temple compound slowly and chant sutras to the beat of a wooden handbell to tell everyone it is time to wake up. When doryangseok begins, everyone gets up, washes and goes to the Dharma hall where they sit and wait for the morning service.

04:00  Dawn Buddhist Service (Yebul)
At any Buddhist service one should comport themselves with grace and dignity. Offer three prostrations to the Buddha, sit on a cushion and wait for the service in silence. When the doryangseok is over, the temple bell in the Bell Pavilion is sounded 28 times. Then a small bell in the Dharma hall is sounded, which signals the beginning of the service. When the service begins, you join the monastics in offering the service to the beat of a moktak, a wooden hand bell. When the service is finished, offer three prostrations again and leave the Dharma hall quietly.

05:00  Buddhist Practice (Seon Practice or Meditation)
The energizing forests and clean air that envelope a temple will stabilize your body and mind, providing an optimal condition for meditation practice. Seon Practice or chamseon is one of the core practices of Korean Buddhism. Chamseon means to “enter concentration.” In other words, it is to illuminate your “true mind or true nature.” It is an intimate time to redirect your eyes inward, eyes that tend to only look outward, and meet with your “whole self.”

06:00  Breakfast
“Where does this food come from? I’m not worthy to receive it based on my own virtue and practice. Abandoning all forms of greed, I accept this food to sustain my body for practice and to attain enlightenment.” At a temple you think about the process of how every single grain of rice comes to you, be grateful for it and eat every bite, leaving nothing in your bowl.
07:00 - Communal Work (Ulyeok) or Walking
After breakfast Templestay participants usually stroll around the temple or perform communal work called “ullyeok” where they work together in groups. You may practice concentrating on the here and now while washing the bowls (or dishes) you ate from, tidying up your room, sweeping the grounds or weeding the garden.

09:00 - Buddhist Practice (Rest or Pohaeng)
Pohaeng means to walk slowly while practicing Seon meditation. At a traditional mountain temple, walking in the forest and communing with nature is also an important part of one’s practice. In the fragrant and energizing forest you can walk leisurely to the rhythm of a murmuring brook and experience nature with your whole being.

11:00 - Conversation Over Tea with a Monastic
To sit across from a monk or nun who lives a monastic life and converse over tea is a very special experience in most Templestay programs. You may satisfy your curiosity about Buddhist culture, a major part of Korean traditional culture, or you may talk about anything you like in a comfortable atmosphere.

12:00 - Lunch
Everyone at the temple eats together.

16:00 - Free Time (Rest or Visit a Hermitage)
After lunch is a time for leisure. Participants may rest in their rooms, visit a nearby hermitage or just go for a stroll.

17:00 - Dinner (Baru Gongyang)
Baru is a traditional wooden bowl used at temples, and baru gongyang is a traditional ritualized way of eating. As a formal monastic meal, baru gongyang embodies an attitude of gratitude and cleanliness that doesn’t waste even a speck of food. During baru gongyang you eat in silence to experience tranquility of mind.

18:00 - The Four Buddhist Instruments Sounded Before the Evening Service
When evening falls on the Bell Pavilion, the Dharma drum, temple bell, wooden fish and cloud-shaped gong are sounded in that order. The Dharma drum embodies the vow to save all creatures that dwell on land, the temple bell saves beings in hell, the wooden fish saves water-born creatures, and the cloud-shaped gong saves winged creatures. The evening Buddhist service follows the sounding of these instruments.

19:00 - Buddhist Practice (108 Prostrations and Making Prayer Beads or Lotus Lanterns)
After the evening service, there is a short break for rest. Then you may practice 108 prostrations and make prayer beads or lotus lanterns. During the 108 prostration practice, which is to repent and wash away the 108 kinds of afflictions, you let go of each affliction with each prostration and reflect on your past foolishness. At some temples, you may string a bead for each prostration, completing 108 prayer beads. Or you may make a lotus lantern by folding paper petals and gluing them to a paper cup. Afterward, you circumambulate a pagoda holding the lantern.

21:00 - Washing-up before Bed
Night falls early in a mountain temple. After the daily program is done, most Templestay participants go to bed by nine o’clock.

* Programs and schedules may vary at each temple.
A Journey of Happiness for Myself

Templestay

What is a Templestay Program?
It is a program designed to give lay people an opportunity to temporarily experience the tranquil life of a monastic practitioner at one of many beautiful mountain temples where traditional Korean Buddhist culture still flourishes. Why don’t you embark on a special journey today to restore your mind and body, worn down by the complexities of modern life?

01 How do I sign up for a Templestay program?
First, visit the English language Templestay site (http://eng.templestay.com/). Click the “Reservations” tab and read through the temple information. Select the temple you want and make a reservation for the time and date you’d like. Reservations are mandatory.

02 What is the fee?
One adult pays 50,000–70,000 won for a 2-day-1-night program which covers lodging and other expenses. There may be minor differences in fees between temples for their “rest-oriented” and “experience-oriented” Templestay programs.

03 What should I bring to a Templestay?
Most temples provide comfortable uniforms and bedding for an overnight stay. Bring your own toiletries, a towel, underwear and socks. Comfortable sneakers or hiking boots are highly recommended.

04 Can I have my own room?
Most temples provide separate communal rooms for men and women. However, for families or small groups, some temples may assign them their own rooms.

05 How do I greet monastics when I pass them or meet with them?
You should greet them with a half bow and with reverence. That is, you bow from your waist with palms together in front of your chest.

06 What rules should I follow in a Dharma hall?
When entering or leaving a Dharma hall, please use the side doors located on the left or right sides of the hall. Arrange your shoes neatly, facing outward, so that you may put them on with ease when leaving the Dharma hall. Walk gently into the hall without making any noise. For morning and evening Dharma services, offer three prostrations to the Buddha upon entering the Dharma hall, and then do as the monastics do to the beat of the wooden handbell, called moktak.

07 What is the basic etiquette to observe at temples?
As temples are sacred places that enshrine Buddha images, we should be careful in our speech and actions. Any words or deeds that may disrupt the proper atmosphere for Buddhist practice are prohibited, including drinking and smoking. Avoid wearing clothes too loud or too revealing, such as sleeveless shirts and shorts. Please wear socks, as bare feet are not deemed proper in Korean temples.
How to Sign Up for Templestay

- **Online Registration**
  1. Visit the Templestay website (http://eng.templestay.com/).
  2. Read the information provided, including comments of previous participants, and decide which temple you want.
  3. Check the schedule, either on the Templestay site or the website of each temple.
  4. Submit your registration online by filling out the reservation form.
  5. Transfer the fee to the bank account designated. Confirm your reservation by calling the temple and asking any questions you may have.

- **Offline Registration**
  1. Visit the Information Hall on the 1st floor of the Templestay Information Center located across from Jogyesa Temple.
  2. Read through leaflets from the various temples and find the temple you want to stay at.
  3. Or check the Templestay schedule of different temples and find the temple that provides a program on the date most suited to you.
  4. You may sign up online at the computer station provided in a corner of the Information Center. Or you may call the temple on the phone.
Of the countless treasures from Korea’s past, a sizable portion of them are Buddhist in origin. In particular, the whole city of Gyeongju can be said to be a huge storehouse of treasures. The entire area of Namsan Mountain is dubbed an outdoor museum, around which a variety of cultural heritage is scattered all over the city. The reason Gyeongju has such a colorful heritage comes from the fact that it was the capital of the Silla Kingdom and the Unified Silla Dynasty for about 1,000 years. Let us embark on a journey to this historic city of Gyeongju and discuss some of the museums located at a few major temples.