

Beyond the Metropolis: South Korea's Authentic Small Town, Seongju, Sparkling Nights, Trails That Woo

Seongju, South Korea, providing an authentic local alternative to urban hubs with unique heritage, accessible outdoor recreation, and themed evening events.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, October 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- International travelers are venturing beyond urban areas such as Seoul and Busan, seeking South Korea's regional destinations rich in culture and authenticity. According to tourism data from the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), South Korea welcomed 16.36 million foreign visitors in 2024, marking a 48.4% increase over the previous year.

The United States ranked as the fourth-largest source of inbound tourists, suggesting strong North American interest in diverse Korean experiences. An American Express report found that 89% of travelers now prioritize regional hidden-gem destinations. Positioned squarely in this trend, Seongju County has been designated by the Korean government as one of ten Night Tourism Specialty Cities to develop regional nighttime economies and is the only county-level jurisdiction selected. Seongju offers a distinct contrast to urban hubs with its official



Visitors take part in a nighttime walking tour at the Seongsan-dong Ancient Tombs in Seongju, South Korea.



Participants on a night trek on Mt. Gayasan offered as part of the 'Twinkle Seongju!' program in Seongju, South Korea.

night tourism brand, “[Twinkle Seongju!](#)” which provides seamless day-to-night experiences that spotlight the county’s heritage, landscapes, and local culture.

Outdoor Recreation in Seongju

Seongju offers easy access to some of Korea’s most diverse and rewarding outdoor experiences. With hiking rising rapidly in popularity among international visitors, routes through Gayasan National Park provide trails for every level, with varying difficulty, including the advanced Chilbul-neungseon Trail, which reopened in June 2024 after 52 years.



Sunrise from Mt. Gayasan, Seongju, South Korea.

Around Lake Seongjuho, the Floating Trail is bike-friendly and follows a scenic 4.3-mile lakeside route. Travelers can pair it with the nearby Dokyong-sanseong Fortress Trail, where a short ascending trek leads to panoramic views over the lake. The region also offers substantial camping options, from serviced campgrounds to auto camp sites that make staying overnight easy.

Cultural Heritage and Immersive Stays

Seongju’s heritage sites affirm its status as a ‘myeongdang,’ a place many Koreans believe holds auspicious energy. Simply visiting such sites is thought to bring good fortune, an idea that draws pilgrims and travelers alike.

The 600-year-old Hange Folk Village, one of Korea’s eight designated traditional villages, remains a preserved living community where residents still make their homes. The Placenta Chamber of King Sejong’s sons is considered one of the country’s most significant royal heritage sites. Visitors may also visit Seonseoksa Temple, which watches over the Placenta Chamber. Travelers may deepen their cultural experience with overnight stays in historical ‘gotaek’ residences, hanok cafés, or tranquil temple-stay programs.

‘Twinkle Seongju!’ Night Tourism Programs

As a Night Tourism Specialty City, Seongju showcases evening experiences rooted in its history and nature. Seongbaksup Forest, home to ancient royal willow trees, hosts programs such as the “Night Camcnic,” a camping-style picnic event, and the “Night Walk Tour.” Specialized night-trekking programs on Mt. Gayasan, with guided routes inviting hikers to explore after dark, are also integral to the initiative. A signature highlight is the Candlelight Concert, a classical performance illuminated by thousands of candles, set against the backdrop of the 5th–6th-century Gaya-era Ancient Tombs in Seongsan-dong.

Local Identity: Specialty Produce and Heritage

Seongju's identity is closely linked to the chamoe (Korean melon), a fruit unique to Korea. The county produces over 94% of Korea's supply. Visitors can sample the fresh fruit, try chamoe-based desserts, specialty cuisine, and seasonal dishes, and take in sunset panoramas over chamoe greenhouse farms for a distinctly rural Korean scene.

Seongju is also a center of clan heritage, with 28 Korean surnames tracing their origins to the area, which is a strong representation of the foundations of traditional Korean family lineage. Paired with its reputation as a land of 'myeongdang' Seongju offers visitors an authentic, deeply rooted Korean cultural experience.

Accessibility

Seongju is accessible via high-speed rail (KTX). It is approximately a 90-minute KTX trip from Seoul to Gimcheon-Gumi Station and about 70 minutes from Busan. Seongju is roughly a 30-minute drive from Gimcheon-Gumi Station. Additionally, the county is accessible from Daegu, the nearest metropolitan city; the trip from Seodae-gu Station takes approximately 40 minutes. Public buses and taxis connect the Daegu city area to Seongju-eup. With fast rail links, authentic local culture, and a wide array of activities that extend into the night, Seongju is poised to become a leading destination for travelers seeking the authentic South Korea.

Soojin OH

Rustic Korea(PR Agency of Seongju County)

+82 70-4509-2583

[email us here](#)

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