

Gwangju and South Jeolla International Magazine

GWANGJU *News*

September 2025 #283



It's Back!
The Design Biennale
With Director Choi Sooshin



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From the Editor



Have you noticed? The intensity of the “tropical nights” seems to be abating. The chorus of the cicadas seems to be waning. And even the buzz of air conditioning units has softened. On Korea’s farmer’s calendar of 24 seasonal terms, Cheoseo (the Lesser Heat) is coming to an end to be followed by Baengno (the White Dew). These are all signals of the arrival of the first of the autumn months: September. And synchronous with the arrival of this new month is the publication of the September issue of the *Gwangju News*! We hope it measures up to what you have come to expect from this magazine.

The cover announces the return of the Gwangju Design Biennale for a two-month run. Learn more about this year’s exhibition from our extensive interview with Design Biennale Director Choi Sooshin. Our second feature is on Farhana Binte Jigar Farina, one of the major speakers at the 2025 World Human Rights Cities Forum. Read about her efforts in the recent struggle to bring true democracy to Indonesia.

Our History and Tradition section features frequently asked questions (FAQ) about Chuseok. Test yourself – see how many of the Chuseok questions you can answer and what is new. Next, our Travel and Discovery section takes you from the heights of Mudeung Mountain to the Silla tombs of Gyeongju and to an island (yes) in mountainous Gangwon Province. Then take a short trip for a relaxing sip at the Damyang Café Migak or at the Damyang Coffee Farm.

As more somber reading, we bring you a report on a local university graduate student’s death, and another on a migrant worker’s abuse involving a forklift. Additional distressing news is that of recent flooding in the city – again.

We bring you a report on the recent Gwangju Future Industry Expo 2025 by one of its organizers. As well, read our report on this month’s World Archery Championships, also being held in Gwangju. With this issue, we are planning a series on Gwangju’s numerous sister and friendship cities around the world, beginning with Friendship City Torino, Italy.

Read about getting started with high-rise gardening; peruse our book review (bicycling round the world); absorb our creative writing piece (city mosquitoes?); get to know better our Environment column writer, Chung Hyunhwa. Learn about one of the fastest-growing sports in Gwangju: cricket! And as always, visit our Area Sports Round-Up (and the Asani saga), as well as our September Upcoming Events list. All this in just one issue!

David E. Shaffer

Editor-in-Chief
Gwangju News





Petals of Resilience

Beneath South Korea's blazing summer sun, the vibrant lotus blooms – whispering a gentle reminder to rise with grace and stay nourished in the heat.



The Photographer

Neha Bisht is a native of India, pursuing her PhD at Chonnam National University. She loves to travel and likes capturing historic and scenic views in her memories.

Photographed at Yongji Lake on the Gwangju Campus of Chonnam National University during the summer season.

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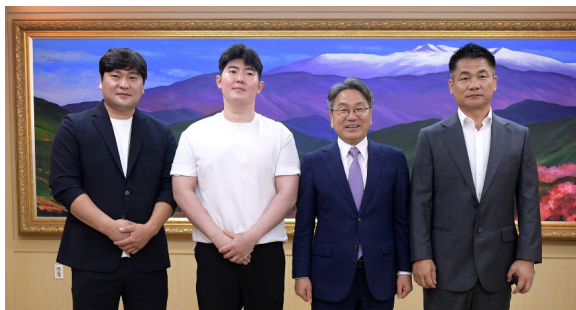
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From left: Jung Soo-yeon, Lee Jang-bok, Mayor Kang Gi-jung, and Choi Seung-il. (Gwangju Metropolitan City Hall)

Gwangju Honors Seven for Heroic Rescues During Torrential Rain

Gwangju City recognized five citizens and two firefighters as “righteous citizens” for saving lives during record-breaking rainfall on July 17, when over 400 mm of rain caused severe flooding across the city.

Citizens Choi Seung-il, Kim In-jung, Jung Soo-yeon, and Lee Jang-bok rescued an elderly man trapped between asphalt slabs and submerged in water, working for over 20 minutes in dangerous conditions. Moon Jong-jun saved three women in their 80s by navigating floodwaters and carrying them to safety.

Firefighters Choi Won-il and Lee Kang-jun braved waist-deep currents to free a woman trapped in her car and continued rescue operations until dawn. The city plans to continue its Righteous Citizen commendation program to promote a culture of community safety and courage in disaster situations.

Rulings Finalized in Hak-dong Building Collapse

The Supreme Court has finalized prison sentences for those responsible for the 2021 collapse of a building being demolished in Gwangju’s Hak-dong area, which left 17 people dead or injured,

concluding criminal proceedings more than four years after the tragedy.

The court upheld prison terms of two years and six months for Baeksol Construction’s CEO, two years for a subcontractor’s site manager, and a suspended one-year-and-six-month sentence for the demolition supervisor.

The first and second trial courts found that the main causes of the tragedy were not dismantling the upper floors first as planned, not installing supports throughout the building and below, neglecting safety reviews, and failing to relocate the bus stop.

Jeollanam-do to Operate “Safe Hospitals for Foreigners”

For the first time in the nation, Jeollanam-do has launched the operation of Safe Hospitals for Foreigners (외국인 안심병원). Designated hospitals will offer a 30 percent reduction in medical fees for uninsured foreigners, easing their financial burden for treatment.



Safe hospitals for foreigners in operation. (Jeollanam-do Provincial Office)

The program is open to foreigners with short stays, such as seasonal workers, as well as those unable to visit medical institutions due to visa expiration. The hospitals offer treatment costs comparable to national health insurance rates and provide phone-based language interpretation

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services including Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, Nepali, Indonesian, Thai, Uzbek, Sri Lankan, and Filipino. Jeollanam-do has designated 71 hospitals in the province as “Safe Hospitals for Foreigners” and plans to gradually

Chinese Tour Groups Gain Visa-Free Entry

South Korea will temporarily begin offering visa waivers for Chinese visitors starting in September. Group tours from China will be allowed visa-free entry from September 29 to June 30 next year to boost domestic demand and revitalize the local economy, as the post-pandemic resurgence of international visitors continues. China has extended visa-free entry to South Korean nationals since November of last year.

In addition, the government said it plans to expand the scope of preferential screening and simplify immigration inspection procedures, or so-called fast-track benefits, for foreign visitors participating in international conferences.

The St. Thomas Choir Comes to Gwangju

The German St. Thomas Choir, once conducted by the “Father of Music,” Bach, will hold a concert on September 11 at Gwangju Culture and Arts Center. The St. Thomas Choir is a boys’ choir from the city of Leipzig, Germany, which signed a friendship and cooperation agreement with Gwangju Metropolitan City in 2012. The choir was founded in 1212 and is a representative choir in Germany with a history of over 800 years.

The choir’s primary repertoire encompasses choral music from all eras, from Bach to Gregorian chant and contemporary music. They perform weekly worship music at St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, attracting an audience of over 2,500.

For more information, see Upcoming Events (this issue) or contact 062-613-8235.

Gwangju Hosts 2025 World Archery Championships

Gwangju Metropolitan City will host the 2025 World Archery Championships this September. Archers from around the world will come together to compete and build friendship under the slogan “The Echo of Peace.” This marks the first time in 16 years that the World Archery Championships will be held in South Korea. In 2009 the archery championships were held in Ulsan.

The championships consist of the Hyundai World Archery Championships (September 5–12) and the World Archery Para Championships (September 22–28). Hosting both events at the same venue marks only the third time that this has happened in the history of the championships and the first time in Korea.

Approximately 900 athletes from 90 countries are expected to compete in the archery championships. The preliminary and main rounds will be held at the Gwangju International Archery Center, and the finals will be held at the May 18 Democracy Square in front of the Asia Culture Center.

Compiled by Charlene Lee.



Charlene Lee is the founder of Charlene English Institute. Having lived in many different countries, she loves to explore and experience diverse cultures. She hopes to contribute to making Gwangju a more vibrant city.



광주광역시
GWANGJU CITY

How Design Embraces Humanity

The 2025 Gwangju Design Biennale and a Conversation with Prof. Choi Sooshin

By Luis Andrés González

Gwangju welcomes its 2025 Design Biennale this month, promising art, innovation, and purpose. This year's edition is titled "You, the World: How Does Design Embrace Humanity?" ("너라는 세계: 디자인은 어떻게 인간을 끌어안는가?"), which resonates deeply with the democratic and increasingly diverse spirit of Gwangju. This year's Design Biennale focuses on inclusive design, emphasizing the creation of a future that serves everyone. The exhibition stands out not only as a significant event in South Korea but also as a key gathering for East Asia and beyond.

For those unfamiliar, biennales are international exhibitions that follow a "world fair" format for contemporary art, starting with the Venice Biennale. The term *biennale* itself comes from the Italian word meaning "biannual" – occurring every two years. There are a variety of biennales covering everything from film to sculpture to design. These events aren't just about showcasing art; they also serve as platforms for promoting artistic values in society, education, and more. The true beauty of a biennale lies in its purpose to reflect the spirit of the host city – and the Gwangju Design Biennale nails this every time.

Since its inception in 1995, the Gwangju Biennale (not to be confused with the Gwangju Design Biennale) has been dedicated to promoting democracy and human rights in remembrance of the May Uprising of 1980. As the first and one of the largest biennales in East Asia, it has grown to become a milestone for contemporary art in Korea. Yet, its dedication to inclusion and its challenge to the dominance of Western art have



Prof. Choi Sooshin. (Autocar Korea)

made it a space for voices from Latin America, Southeast Asia, and other regions of the Global South.

The Gwangju Design Biennale was founded in 2004 and has taken place in odd-numbered years, while the Gwangju Biennale is held in even-numbered years. Both biennales are organized by the Gwangju Biennale Foundation, ensuring not only the quality of each exhibition but also the preservation of the city's unique spirit.

The 2025 Gwangju Design Biennale centers around inclusion, aiming to demonstrate that design for current and future societies should focus not only on aesthetics and utility but also on accessibility for all. To achieve this, the exhibition is broadly divided into four main perspectives: the world, life, mobility, and the future. These themes recognize the natural diversity of our societies, the need for participation beyond challenges, the constant demand for space and movement, and the collective intention to overcome differences, inequalities, and boundaries as we move forward.

Portraying this message requires a titanic effort from all those involved in the curation and arrangement of the exhibition. The Gwangju Biennale Foundation, therefore, is relying on the immense talent and experience of Prof. Choi Sooshin to lead this enterprise as artistic director.

Prof. Choi is not only currently chair of Industrial Design at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), but he also has rich experience in senior positions at companies like P&G, LG, and Boeing. He studied at Seoul National University, Hongik University, the Royal College of Art in the UK, and Ohio State University in the US. With a lifelong dedication to user-centered production systems, the values of inclusion and empathy are deeply embedded in his work and the curation of the Design Biennale.

I was honored to ask a few questions to Prof. Choi about what we should expect to see in the Design Biennale and the core knowledge, experiences, and purposes that guide his work in the design and art scene in Gwangju and beyond. Here is that interview:

Luis Andrés: Your career spans design leadership, education, and research across Korea and the United States. How have your international experiences influenced your vision for the Gwangju Design Biennale?

Prof. Choi: Design is inherently not local but interdisciplinary and global in nature. My experiences, spanning academic studies and careers in Korea, the UK, and the United States, have played a pivotal role in shaping the

vision for the Gwangju Design Biennale. These international experiences have enriched the planning process, ensuring that it incorporates a global perspective. While international events in Korea have often been centered on domestic concerns, this biennale is poised to be genuinely global, with a significant impact on the world. I hope my diverse experiences will contribute positively to this vision.

Luis: The theme for this year's Design Biennale is "You, the World: How Does Design Embrace Humanity." What personal values or beliefs inspired your focus on inclusive design?

Prof. Choi: I accepted the invitation to be the artistic director of the Gwangju Design Biennale for three main reasons. First, it presents an opportunity to contribute to the Korean design community with the experience I gained during my 25 years abroad. Second, it allows me to bring attention to inclusive design, a field I have researched and practiced for many years, both domestically and internationally. Lastly, the fact that this event will be held in Gwangju makes it even more meaningful.

Over the past 30 years, I have worked as a designer in fields such as automotive design, system furniture design, and medical device design. Through this experience, I came to realize that the true focus of design should not be products but people, particularly those in diverse and vulnerable situations. This realization led me to develop a deep interest in inclusive design. Inclusive design, at its core, is about creating products and environments that care for and embrace all people.

The Gwangju Design Biennale will be a rare opportunity to showcase inclusive design projects that have been developed and considered from various perspectives around the world. I look forward to presenting these projects and spreading the values of inclusive design through this remarkable event.

Luis: Inclusive design has become a significant direction in contemporary design. What, in your view, are the key difference-makers that

set inclusive design apart from universal or accessible design principles?

Prof. Choi: Inclusive design is undoubtedly an important concept, yet its widespread adoption remains limited. It is for this reason that we have chosen inclusive design as the central theme for the Gwangju Design Biennale, aiming to raise awareness and spark interest. Universal design mainly focuses on improving the accessibility and usability of objects or buildings. In contrast, inclusive design is built on a broader foundation that centers on the people who use these objects or spaces. It goes beyond just the physical environment or the objects themselves, placing importance on acknowledging the diversity of individuals and their experiences.

These two concepts are not mutually exclusive; their focus differs. Through this biennale, we aim to raise awareness across industries, governments, societies, and individuals about the importance of understanding and embracing perspectives different from our own. Ultimately, we hope that this will lead to the creation of a truly inclusive society, guided by the principles of inclusive design.

Luis Andrés: The Design Biennale is organized around four perspectives: world, life, mobility,

and future. How did you determine these categories, and what does each mean to you in the context of inclusive design?

Prof. Choi: Inclusive design originated in Europe and the U.S., significantly impacting society and industry. While Korea has been a relatively latecomer in recognizing the importance of inclusive design, we aim to reflect global progress and development while fostering a uniquely Korean interpretation of it. Thus, the category of “Inclusive World” was created to showcase the global significance of inclusive design and envision how it can evolve within Korea’s cultural and social context.

Inclusive design directly impacts individuals’ lives. It addresses overlooked inconveniences in our daily lives, the understanding of marginalized people, and the role designers play in resolving these issues. The “Inclusive Life” exhibition explores how design can address these challenges, improving the quality of life for all people, particularly those often left out.

“Inclusive Mobility” is a category that resonates deeply with our daily lives. It addresses the difficulties people face when moving, especially those with permanent or temporary disabilities, and presents solutions like autonomous



Prof. Choi Sooshin addressing the theme at the March press conference. (The Gwangju Biennale Foundation)

driving technology. This exhibition will also highlight inclusive redesign projects for the Gwangju subway system, demonstrating how transportation can be made accessible to all.

Finally, “Inclusive Future” tackles the critical theme of technological progress and the protection of human dignity. In this exhibition, we will explore the future through the lenses of artificial intelligence, robotics, nature, and well-being, showcasing how technology can advance while ensuring it remains human-centered and aligned with dignity. This exhibition aims to present a vision of the future where technology serves humanity without compromising fundamental human values.

Luis Andrés: Can you share a specific project from your career – perhaps during your work with global organizations such as P&G, LG, or Boeing – that embodies the principles of inclusive design?

Prof. Choi: For over 25 years, inclusive design has been at the heart of my collaborations with global companies. While I can’t share specific details from these collaborations due to confidentiality, I can highlight examples such as working with P&G on travel-related products, LG on family-centered activities and mobile device use at home, and Boeing on addressing discomfort during long-haul flights. Many of these design solutions have been implemented in actual products.

What’s fascinating is that while each project was rooted in the principle of inclusivity, they all led to innovative design outcomes. This counters the common, yet mistaken, perception of “inclusive design” as being only for the elderly or disabled, or “unattractive design.” Instead, these projects demonstrated that inclusive design can result in solutions that are not only functional but also appealing and exciting to businesses and people alike. As a result, most of these projects were protected by patents, proving that inclusive design can truly be competitive in the marketplace.

Luis Andrés: Collaboration appears central to your approach, both academically and

professionally. How are you facilitating collaboration among designers, artists, and the community for this year’s Design Biennale?

Prof. Choi: The design process is never a monologue or soliloquy; it is a dialogue, and this dialogue involves a multitude of voices and perspectives. Design is not for an individual alone; it is for a broad audience. Therefore, the process involves not only designers but also many other experts who contribute their insights and ideas, creating a dynamic exchange. This process is a continuous conversation with society, with design serving as a bridge that connects us all.

This year’s Design Biennale will showcase efforts from not just designers and companies, but also social enterprises, government bodies, and various other participants. This collaboration goes beyond just different fields of expertise coming together; it merges their efforts and values to create a force capable of driving social change. Through this biennale, you will experience how design can have a positive impact on society by highlighting different models of collaboration.

Luis Andrés: The Design Biennale will host an international symposium and a design challenge for students. What outcomes do you hope to achieve through these events in highlighting the importance of inclusive design?

Prof. Choi: The international symposium at this year’s biennale will serve as a key opportunity to highlight the importance of inclusive design from a global perspective. Experts from academia, education, and industry who have led inclusive design initiatives around the world will gather to discuss its significance, role, and impact.

Additionally, the 72-hour design challenge for students will bring together students from various design disciplines both domestic and international. Under the guidance of five expert mentors, these students will explore and analyze local problems from an inclusive design perspective, presenting creative solutions to create more inclusive environments. The outcomes of this challenge will be shared at the biennale’s venue and on the World Design Organization’s

website. We are excited to share these results with the global design community.

Luis Andrés: With technologies like robotics and AI featured in this Design Biennale, how do you see advanced technology helping to break barriers in inclusive design?

Prof. Choi: Robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) have the potential to evolve in ways that may inherently aim for the dehumanization of tasks. However, from an inclusive design perspective, these technologies can be understood and applied to enhance human experiences and break down barriers. This Design Biennale will showcase efforts to demonstrate that technology is not about replacing humans but about creating environments that make people more human. Inclusive design focuses on using technology to provide equal opportunities for a diverse range of people, enriching their lives. At this biennale, you will see how these technologies can move beyond functionality to create better, more inclusive experiences for everyone.

Luis Andrés: Gwangju has a unique historical and cultural background, noted for its spirit of democracy and equality. How has the city's character influenced your curatorial approach?

Prof. Choi: Gwangju holds significant importance to me as the ideal place to discuss inclusive design. Its unique historical and cultural background influenced my decision to take on the role of general director. Known as the cradle of democracy and equality, Gwangju has embodied these values through numerous historical events. At the heart of inclusive design lies respect for humanity. Despite the diverse differences we may have – be it in disability, aging, origin, culture, education, or language – the essence of inclusive design is about making people feel valued as individuals.

This philosophy aligns perfectly with Gwangju's legacy of democracy and the spirit of Mudeung, which has endured for thousands of years. Furthermore, the warmth and empathy of Gwangju's people, who never ignore the struggles of others, deeply connect with the core

of inclusive design. For these reasons, Gwangju is the most fitting stage for talking about and practicing inclusive design. In this city, we have the opportunity to explore how to build a world where everyone can live together, through design that acknowledges and respects our differences.

Luis Andrés: How would you measure the success of this Design Biennale in shifting public perceptions or industry practices toward more inclusive design?

Prof. Choi: This year's Design Biennale has been prepared under significant constraints, including a delayed appointment of the general director, limited budget, and changes in the organizing institution. Despite these challenges, we anticipate a considerable impact on public awareness and industry practices. The launch of a new government focused on inclusivity, the aging society, and the increasing foreign population all underscore the urgent need for inclusive design.

The goal of this biennale goes beyond being just an exhibition. Visitors will experience a sense of agency as they explore the Intro Zone, where they will realize that they are not mere observers but active participants in creating an inclusive society. The success of this event will be measured by the increased civic awareness, the design of policies that make Gwangju a more inclusive city, and the growing interest and practical adoption of inclusive design by companies.

Thus, the success of the Gwangju Design Biennale will be gauged by the heightened awareness of inclusive values among Gwangju citizens, the incorporation of these values into city policies, and the active implementation of inclusive design practices by industry. This will mark the beginning of a broader societal shift towards sustainable, inclusive design.

Luis Andrés: As an educator and academic leader, what advice do you have for emerging designers who want to champion inclusivity in their work?

Prof. Choi: Emerging designers, particularly in Korea but also globally, often tend to focus on corporate success. As a result, they become



Prof. Choi Sooshin at the August unveiling event. (The Gwangju Biennale Foundation)

engrossed in utilizing new technologies, creating more aesthetically pleasing forms, and developing competitive characteristics, often losing sight of the people who should be at the center of design.

To become a competitive designer, understanding design techniques, new technologies, and aesthetic abilities is crucial. However, these are essentially “mechanical” qualities, and much of it is already being replaced by artificial intelligence. As we look toward the future of design, it is clear that these technical skills alone will not be enough. To lead in the design world, future designers must develop a philosophy and sensitivity to the diversity of people – qualities that others may not possess. And at the heart of this is inclusive design.

Inclusive design goes beyond just designing for diverse people; it involves considering social, cultural, and physical differences in the design process. Designers must not only provide technical solutions but also present a vision and values that create positive changes in people’s lives. Therefore, emerging designers must establish their own philosophy and, through a commitment to understanding diverse social contexts, practice inclusive design in their work.

Luis Andrés: Looking to the future, what legacy would you like the 2025 Design Biennale to leave for both the city of Gwangju and the global design community?

Prof. Choi: In the past, when international exchanges were limited, design biennales played a crucial role in showcasing art and design from other parts of the world, introducing new artists and designers to global audiences. However, in today’s world, where art and design from the

other side of the globe are shared in real-time, the role of a design biennale has shifted. It now needs to present important issues and provoke interest in relevant topics.

The 2025 Gwangju Design Biennale will take a significant step by declaring the Gwangju Inclusive Design Manifesto, which will also be shared through global design associations. Through this manifesto, I hope Gwangju will be remembered as a city that sets forth a crucial design agenda for both designers and society to pay attention to. I look forward to seeing this role continue in future Gwangju Design Biennales, ensuring that it remains an important event that influences the global design community.

Luis Andrés: I would like to finally thank you deeply for your time and for your responses.

Through the 2025 Gwangju Design Biennale, we can see that inclusion should be part of everything. From public policy to art to design, inclusion is a principle that touches every part of our society. We sometimes take for granted the inclusion we benefit from – the human rights others fought for us to enjoy, or the tools we use every day. It’s time to make sure that these advances are accessible to everyone through inclusion. 

The Author



Luis Andrés González is a Mexican Global Korea Scholarship scholar and master’s degree student in cultural anthropology at Chonnam National University. He advocates for LGBTQ+ rights and gender equality, and explores global affairs through pop culture. He is the founder of *Erreizando*, a digital magazine. Instagram: @luisin97 / @erreizando

WHRCF: Bangladesh's July Uprising Finds a Voice in Gwangju

Celebrating Gwangju's May Uprising with the Spirit of Our July Uprising

By Farhana Binte Jigar Farina

Speaker at the 2025 World Human Rights Cities Forum



Farhana Binte Jigar Farina (right) speaking during a plenary session at WHRCF 2025.

From being targeted as a criminal by the fascist government to becoming one of the frontliners of the July uprising and representing Bangladesh at the World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) in 2025, there are several interesting twists in my story. As a politically woke student, I, along with my fellow mates, were always keen to learn about various revolutions and uprisings. These events inspired us to speak out against the fascist government, knowing of the possible horrible consequences.

The invitation to WHRCF 2025 being held in Gwangju, approximately 10 months after

our historic uprising, made it such a magical experience for me to witness how a country looks so many years after their uprising. Could they actually bring about the changes they fought for? How do they celebrate? How did they gain legitimacy, and everything else?

The political turbulence and constant need for stability after our emancipation on August 5, 2024, was not easy to deal with. To break out of the old shackles that enabled the government to turn fascist, to change an ineffective constitution, to bring about a paradigm shift in our country's political scenario, we, the student leaders, had



Farhana Binte Jigar Farina (left) participating in a panel discussion at WHRCF 2025.

to face challenges from a variety of dimensions. Amidst such a situation, when I came to Gwangju, it was wonderful to see that even though it took time to attain ultimate legitimacy for their May uprising, Gwangju was able to do it.

“To break out of the old shackles that enabled the government to turn fascist ... we, the student leaders, had to face challenges.”

It was inspiring to see the memorial park and the May Uprising Plaza. Every tiny detail of how the uprising took place: how the bullets were shot into the newspaper office building and onto students, bullets shot from helicopters, women helping the protesters by making food for them – everything was portrayed in several ways. Having similar experiences and many more, I strongly aspired to preserve our Bangladeshi uprising in such a way – demonstrating how the government killed innocent students, how its investigative police secretly tortured our coordinators, how female students broke the curfew and built resistance.

I wasn't a political student, yet I was politically adept and could understand the ethical and

moral discrepancies that were coming to light in my country. As an activist from my childhood, I always wanted my country to truly develop and enrich itself with what we already had. I never aspired to have capitalistic technological equipment, rather I dreamed of innovation in our agricultural sector and proper conditions for our rural people. Among all our political leaders, most of whom were constantly craving for power or being in government, there was one person with an enormous amount of knowledge and aura, skill and ideas much needed by our country. He was Dr. Mohammed Yunus, the present interim leader of Bangladesh. It was meticulously designed by all student leaders that we were going to have a new country free of greedy political leaders. We now have the gem of our country, the only Noble Prize winner from Bangladesh, as the interim leader to take care of our country. **GN**

The Author



Farhana Binte Jigar Farina is a Bangladeshi student activist. She participated in anti-deforestation campaigns, the 2018 road safety movement, and coordinated the 2024 quota reformation movement. Realizing politics was the root of every societal problem, she entered political life while studying at Jahangirnagar University's Institute of Business Administration. She enjoys debate and chess tournaments.

Photographs courtesy of the World Human Rights Cities Forum.

Chuseok FAQ

Your Holiday Questions Answered

By David Shaffer

Though it is considered one of the most important holidays in Korea, Chuseok's origins and traditional practices are not widely known among the international community in Korea. This article of FAQs (frequently asked questions) hopes to make more transparent the particulars of this significant autumnal observance.

FAQ 1: Is “Chuseok” the same holiday as “Hangawi”?

■ Yes, “Chuseok” (추석, 秋夕) and “Hangawi” (한가위) are two different names for the same holiday. It is also often rendered in English as “Korean Thanksgiving Day.” I never really liked “Korean Thanksgiving Day” as a moniker for the holiday in question because adding “Korean” seems to suggest that whatever follows is not actually Korean. Also, Thanksgiving Day in the

U.S. is a post-harvest celebration, whereas in Korea, it is a pre-rice-harvest observance. I much prefer “Harvest Moon Festival” as the English rendering, since it was the harvest moon – the biggest and brightest full moon of the last half of the year – to which supplications were offered for a bountiful harvest.

When I first came to Korea, “Chuseok” was the term in use. Since then, however, there has been a trend to use pure Korean terminology whenever an alternative is available. “Chuseok” is derived from Chinese characters (see above), while “Hangawi” is not. “Chuseok” is still the more common term in spoken language, but in writing both are common nowadays.

Over the centuries, this observance has gone by a variety of other names: Gabae (Silla Kingdom,



Visiting ancestral graves on Chuseok. (Busanpedia)

1st century C.E.), Gabae-il, Gawi (derived from “Gabae”), Jungchu (“mid-autumn”), Jungchu-jeol, and Jungchuga-jeol.

FAQ 2. Why does Chuseok occur on a different date from year to year?

- It depends on your perspective. If your perspective is Gregorian (solar) calendar-based, Chuseok’s date will vary from mid-September to early October (on Oct. 8 this year). However, Chuseok follows the Oriental lunar calendar, where it is always on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, which is always a full moon. Though the lunar calendar has twelve months like the solar calendar, the lunar year is usually a few days shorter. In order to recalibrate with the seasons, an extra month of 30 days is occasionally added to the lunar year, causing Chuseok’s solar calendar date to vary.



Table of a food offering to the ancestors. (Nesnad)

FAQ 3: What are the origins of Chuseok?

- Chuseok’s beginnings most certainly date back to long before recorded history – back to early agrarian society where reverence was paid to that occasional large, bright orb appearing in the dark, night sky. With time, this developed into shamanistic ritual.

According to popular belief, the first official recognition of this observance took place during the reign of King Yuri of the Silla Kingdom in the early part of the 1st century C.E. The court in the capital organized a competition of two groups of womenfolk to determine which could weave the most cloth in 30 days. The event was known as “Gabae,” which later morphed into “Gawi,” and

to this, “han” (meaning “great”) was later added, giving rise to “Hangawi.”

FAQ 4: How is Chuseok observed?

- Present-day Chuseok traditions are rooted in the Neo-Confucianism of the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910), where filial piety to one’s elders and reverence to one’s ancestors was paramount. In 1412, King Taejong performed a Chuseok rite at the gravesite of his father, Taejo, the founder of Joseon. In 1419, King Sejong made his first offerings to his father, Taejo, and a decade later, declared Chuseok as an important holiday. In 1504, King Yeonsan-gun performed rites at the graves of his ancestors, held a banquet for his senior ministers, and directed other ministry officials to “find a cool place to observe the moon” on Chuseok. The commonfolk soon followed suit, with extended families gathering for meals together and performing rites to their ancestors.

Charye – In the wee hours of Chuseok morning, extended family members would gather in the home of the head of the family to perform a rite offering a table of foods to their most recent departed generations of ancestors. This is *charye*, performed twice a year – on Chuseok and Seollal, the lunar new year’s day. Notable is the specified arrangement of the foods on the table: rice and soup placed to the north, fruits and vegetables to the south, meat dishes to the west, and rice cakes and drink to the east. These days, with family heads living in smaller homes – city apartments rather than more spacious countryside homes – fewer people can be accommodated at one time.



Chuseok *charye* ritual. (National Folk Museum of Korea)

This means fewer people to prepare the foods for charye and fewer people to perform the rite.

Seongmyo – Later on Chuseok day, members of the extended family would trek to the mountain burial sites of one or more departed ancestors to present an offering of foods at the gravesite in a rite known as *seongmyo*. After bowing and paying they respects, the family members would often retrieve the foods for a brief picnic before making their way back to the home of the family head. Related to seongmyo is *beolcho*, a trip made to the ancestor's hillside grave to cut the grass, remove unwanted materials, and make the graveside appear more presentable for the seongmyo rite. A small offering of food and drink was often offered on this visit also. Today, more and more interments take place in large cemeteries, where burials are made or cremated ashes are inurned, rather than at individual or family hillside plots. This has changed and simplified the nature of the seongmyo rite, making the visits shorter, with small groups of family members visiting separately.

FAQ 5: There are always special foods associated with Korean holidays. What are the ones associated with Chuseok?

■ There are a multitude of foods associated with Chuseok. Many appeared on the charye and seongmyo offering tables. Interesting, though, none of these foods contained the red pepper paste or red pepper powder that Koreans are so well known to love. This is apparently because it was believed that spirits feared red; for example, the king wore red robes to ward off evil spirits. And since family members wished to invite their ancestors' spirits to the offering tables, they freed the foods of red.

Three representative Chuseok foods are *songpyeon*, *yakgwa*, and *cheon*.

Songpyeon – Chuseok isn't Chuseok without songpyeon rice cakes. These steamed rice cakes are crescent-shaped or round and filled with beans, bean powder, adzuki bean paste, mugwort, chestnuts, or honey. They were originally white

or green, but today they come in many colors, thanks to the availability of food coloring.



Songpyeon. (Korean Culture and Information Service)

Yakgwa – This traditional confectionery is a sweet honey cookie made of fried rice-flour dough, formed into a flat, round shape with a flower design on it.



Yakgwa. (Korean Culture and Information Service)

Jeon – These savory “pancakes” are made with a flour or egg batter and often contain vegetables, such as scallions, garlic chives, and even kimchi, and then skillet fried.

FAQ 6: Korean traditional holidays are also associated with games and entertainment. What are the main ones associated with Chuseok?

■ Representative Chuseok games and entertainment are *jul-darigi*, *ssireum*, *ganggang-sullae*, *neol-ttwigi*, and *yut nori*, among others.

Jul-darigi – This is a large-scale version of tug-of-war. The long, thick rope is made of rice straw, with the two teams often being neighboring villages or east and west sides of the same village. The winning team is assured that their upcoming harvest will be bountiful.

Ssireum – Ssireum is a type of wrestling somewhat similar to Japanese sumo. Menfolk from different teams were pitted against each other in outdoor Chuseok tournaments. These tournaments live on today as made-for-television broadcasts, with the overall winner receiving a trophy with the figure of an ox on top. This is a remnant of the practice of originally awarding the winner a live ox.



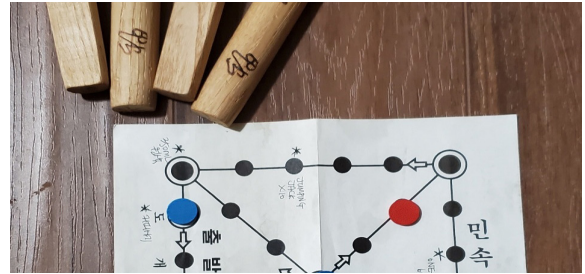
Ssireum, by Kim Hongdo.

Ganggang-sullae – This combination of song and circle dance was performed by the womenfolk of the village under the light of the Chuseok full moon. It originated along the south coastal area of Jeollanam-do and is said to have been used by Admiral Yi Sunsin as a deceptive tactic in his battle with the invading Japanese fleet.



Ganggang-suwollae by Lee Eok-yeong. (National Folk Museum of Korea)


Neol-ttwigi – This form of “see-saw jumping” was enjoyed mainly by girls. The equipment consisted of a wooden plank and a rolled-up straw bag as the fulcrum. One girl would stand on each end of the plank to see who could jump the highest.



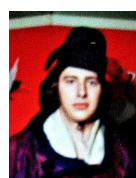
Yut Nori. (Dominiquedo17)

Yut Nori – This board game today consists of a small paper or rubbery playing board and sticks to serve as dice. The game, however, has shrunk in size and popularity from the time I saw it played in the countryside decades ago – not by children but by the menfolk. They rolled out a large, two-meter-square straw mat with the yut playing board marked on it. The wooden sticks were rather short and stubby; the playing pieces were somewhat rounded stones. And of course, the game involved gambling and drinking.

FAQ 7: Is the traditional Korean hanbok worn on this traditional Korean holiday?

■ Yes, and no. When I came to Korea, the hanbok was commonly worn among adults – particularly on traditional holidays, though more commonly among older adults and more commonly among women. As wedding attire for both bride and groom has shifted from away from hanbok to Western-style suit and wedding dress, fewer people had their own hanbok to wear. Today, however, Western-clothed parents often clothe their young children in colorful hanbok to allow the traditions of Chuseok to live on. 

The Author



David Shaffer, PhD, has spent more than 50 Chuseok holidays in Gwangju. He has eaten more than his share of *songpyeon* rice cakes and consumed more than his share of Chuseok libations. Dr. Shaffer is the author of *Seasonal Customs of Korea* (2007, Hollym) and is the editor-in-chief of the *Gwangju News*.

From Campfires to Island Trails

A Holiday to Remember

By Neha Bisht

Holidays are precious. They become a necessity when work and routine start to drain every ounce of energy from you. In Korea, long holidays are rare treasures. Most people count down the days to the two major festivals – Chuseok and Seollal (Lunar New Year) – when extended breaks finally allow for proper rest, travel, and family time.

Like everyone else, I wait eagerly for these moments. Last year, when Chuseok fell in late September, my friends and I decided to make the most of it. We wanted something different, something that would pull us far away from the noise, traffic, and gray walls of the city. The answer was clear – a camping trip. The catch? None of us had ever been camping in Korea before.

Day 1: Into the Mountains – First Night by the River

We searched online for free camping spots and eventually found one that looked promising – Mogok Recreational Area (모곡유원지) in Gangwon-do. It was far from Gwangju, but the idea of camping by a river, surrounded by mountains, felt worth the drive.

Packing was a mix of excitement and mild chaos. We rented a car, loaded tents, cooking gear, bags, and enough food to survive a small apocalypse. Delays were inevitable – getting everyone ready, securing the gear, and figuring out the GPS – so we left later than planned.

The drive took us through winding forest roads and long stretches of highway, with occasional stops for snacks and stretching. By the time we



The author making preparations for the dinner at the campsite.

reached Mogok, night had already fallen. The scene took our breath away – dozens of glowing tents lined the riverbank, the scent of barbecue filled the air, the sound of laughter, and the gentle rush of the river. Some campers were quietly chatting, others were deep into late-night drinks, and a few had already retreated to their sleeping bags.

We managed to find a spot close to the water, pitched our tents, and lit a small fire. Exhausted but happy, we brewed the ultimate Indian comfort drink – masala chai. There's something magical about sipping hot tea outdoors under the stars, with cool mountain air brushing your face.



Traditional Korean pavilion glowing warmly in the night on Nami Island.

Hunger soon called, and we prepared dinner together – grilled meat, vegetables, and snacks. Between the laughter, music, and the rhythm of the river beside us, it felt like we had stepped out of our everyday lives into another world. We talked and ate late into the night before finally collapsing into our sleeping bags.

Day 2: From River Games to Nami Island Adventures

We woke up lazily around noon. Despite it being summer in most parts of Korea, here the air was fresh and slightly cool, with sunlight filtering gently through the trees. I made tea for everyone, and we sat by the riverbank, enjoying the peaceful view.

It didn't take long before someone suggested we dip our feet into the water. That "quick splash" turned into an all-out water fight. Soon, we were all in the river – swimming, sitting in the shallow parts, or simply letting the cold water rush past us. A Korean couple camping nearby even sent

their little daughter over to join our games. Hours passed without us noticing.

When our stomachs finally reminded us they existed, we cooked breakfast together, then packed up. Our plan was to head somewhere new, though none of us knew exactly where. The only clue came from one friend who said, "We're going to Nami."

After about an hour's drive, we arrived and realized Nami was not just a place but an island in the middle of a river. To reach it, we had to take a ferry. Excitement built as we bought our tickets and waited in line. When we finally boarded, it was my first-ever ferry ride – the cool breeze, the hum of the engine, and the slow approach toward the island made the short journey feel special.

Stepping onto Nami Island felt like walking into a postcard. The wide tree-lined paths, charming wooden structures, and gentle river views seemed almost unreal. We started, of course, with a round

of photos – every corner begged to be captured. Then came the island's famous treat: a tall swirl of soft-serve ice cream, creamy and refreshing.

To make the most of our visit, we rented two-seater bicycles and split into small groups, pedaling our way across the island. The ride was pure joy – the cool breeze on our faces, the crunch of leaves under the wheels, and the freedom to explore hidden corners at our own pace. We stopped often, taking videos and photographs, collecting little snapshots of this unexpected adventure.

As the sun began to lower, we found a cozy cafe tucked among the trees. Over coffee and snacks, we relaxed, chatted, and watched the soft light fall across the island. Eventually, it was time to take the last ferry back.



Ferries adorned with colorful flags dock at Nami Island, welcoming visitors against a backdrop of serene water and lush mountains.

Once back on the mainland, we had dinner at a nearby restaurant, savoring warm, hearty dishes before making the drive to our campsite. We arrived late at night, but that didn't stop us from lighting another campfire. We sat in a circle, talking quietly, laughing at shared memories from the day, and simply enjoying the stillness of the mountains.

Day 3: Farewell to the Campfire – Journey Home

On our final day, we woke late once again, our bodies happily surrendering to the slow pace of camping life. After a leisurely tea, we wandered

around the area, taking in the scenery and capturing our last photographs. The air was fresh, the river still whispered in the background, and everything felt calm.


By afternoon, it was time to pack up. We folded tents, loaded the car, and began the long drive back to Gwangju. We made a few stops along the way for rest and dinner before finally rolling into the city close to midnight. We were tired – the kind of exhaustion that comes from both travel and happiness – and ready for the deep sleep we all craved.



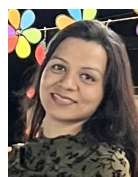
Riverside camping amid the lush green mountains at Mogok Recreational Area.

A Trip to Remember

That three-day journey was more than just a holiday; it was a joyful pause from everyday life. Camping by the river, cycling through Nami Island, sharing meals under the stars – each moment stitched itself into a memory I will always cherish.

If there's one thing I learned, it's that everyone should take a trip like this at least once – to disconnect from the constant noise, breathe in fresh air, and remember what it feels like to simply be present. 

The Author



A native of India, **Neha Bisht** is pursuing her PhD research at Chonnam National University's School of Materials Science and Engineering. She loves to meet new people and make new friends. Neha endeavors to contribute to the well-being of society in whatever way she can.

Photographs by Neha Bisht.

Gyeongju

The Silla Capital, 2025 Edition

By Dhivyaa S. P.

They call it the “city of the open museum.” A place where history doesn’t just sit behind glass.

I’m not talking about prehistoric dinosaurs here. This is a few centuries after that. Welcome to Gyeongju, South Korea’s living time capsule.

Last June, I suddenly decided to take a trip from Gwangju to Gyeongju. No overthinking, just a quick booking of bus tickets through the T-money app.

The ride was three hours and 20 minutes long as I watched the scenery shift from city bustle to

peaceful countryside. The moment I stepped out of Gyeongju Intercity Bus Terminal, something caught my eye. Burger King, Starbucks, and other big-name franchises... all in *hanok* style structures.

A short local bus ride took me to Sogeu-gangsan Guest House, run by a sweet grandma who welcomed me like family. It was actually her home, turned into a guest house. She cooked, fussed over me, and chatted for at least 40 minutes about her son.

I had a full itinerary planned, but I put it aside. Sometimes, travel is about moments like these staying in, listening, and being present.



Woljeong-gyo night view.



Hanok style Starbucks café.



Sogeu-gangsan Guest House.



Songdaemal Lighthouse.



Geumgwan-chong Ancient Tomb.



Gyeongju Tower.



Daereungwon Ancient Tombs. ▶

Loneliness among the elderly in Korea is real, and that evening, I was happy to simply keep her company.

Day 1: Tombs, Villages, and Museums

The next morning, I set out to explore Gyeongju's ancient tombs and cultural spots.

Day 1 Itinerary

- Breakfast at Isaac Toast, Geumni-dang Trail
- Geumgwan-chong Ancient Tomb – 3,000 won
- Daereung-won Ancient Tombs, Gyeongju Historical Park – free
- Cheongsu-dang Gyeongju – a picturesque, Instagram-famous café
- Hwangnam-dong Ancient Tombs
- Sungmun-dae – media art space, perfect for cooling off in early summer heat
- Hanok Village near Gyeongju – pottery painting & traditional activities
- Woljeong-gyo Promotional Hall (월정교홍보관)
- Gyeongju National Museum – free admission

Day 2: Heat Wave to Seaside Breeze

The next day, I almost stayed in, thanks to a summer heat wave. But after lunch, adventure called, and I hopped on a local bus to the East Sea.

It took about an hour and a half, but when I saw the blue waters, I forgot all about the heat. After 2.5 years in Korea, it was my first time to see the East Sea.



Solgeo Art Museum.



Cheongsu-dang Gyeongju Café.



Famous exhibit in Gyeongju National Museum.



Day 2 Itinerary:

- Songdaemal Lighthouse
- Songdaemal Light Exhibition – interactive heritage art
- Gyeongju Expo Grand Park & Gyeongju Tower – 12,000 won; highlights included:
 - ▶ Solgeo Art Museum (visited by RM of BTS)
 - ▶ A top-floor video experience where projector screens lift to reveal a breathtaking real-life view
- Donggung (Palace) and Wolji (Pond) – night view, entrance 3,000 won (very crowded!)
- Royal Tomb of King Naemul
- Cheomseong-dae Observatory at night – peaceful stroll in cool evening breezes

I planned to leave in the afternoon, but work pulled me back early. The grandma prepared a healthy, traditional Korean breakfast and teased me: “Next time, bring your boyfriend!”

It was the perfect send-off.

Gyeongju is more than its famous tombs, temples, and museums. It's a living storybook. I learned how ancient Koreans built their burial mounds, but I also learned that history isn't just in the stones. It's in the people who live there today.

Next time, I'll return in early spring, when the cherry blossoms turn the city into a pink dream. Until then, Gyeongju will stay in my memory – still open, still alive. GN



Donggung (Palace) and Wolji (Pond) sunset view.

The Author



Dhivyaa S. P. believes that every action, no matter how small, contributes to the bigger picture of change. Now beginning chapter three of her academic life, she steps into her PhD journey with curiosity and resolve, knowing that each page she turns brings her closer to shaping new knowledge for the world.

Photographs by Dhivyaa S. P.

◀ Cheomseong-dae Observatory.

Seeing Gwangju from Above

Mudeung-san's Lift and Monorail

By **Fatimah Muthiah Irbah**



Sunset, merging Gwangju's cityscape with Mudeung-san's natural scenery.

Gwangju may not be on every traveler's list when visiting South Korea, but this city has plenty to offer. As one of the country's six largest cities, Gwangju is more laid-back than sardine-packed Seoul or beachfront Busan. Some people know it as the hometown of BTS's J-Hope, but it's also a city full of charm. One of its standout attractions is Mudeung-san (Mudeung Mountain). From here, visitors can enjoy a unique way of viewing Gwangju from above by taking the lift and monorail at Jisan Amusement Park (지산유원지).

The Lift

Getting there is easy. From downtown Gwangju, take a city bus to the Jisan Recreation Area stop, then walk 7–10 minutes until you reach Mudeung Park Hotel. If you are driving, parking is available around the hotel.

Next to the hotel is an E-mart with a sign reading “Lift” (리프트), where visitors can purchase tickets. Prices vary by service: one-way or round trip, adult or child. The most expensive option is a round-trip ticket, which uses both the lift and monorail, and costs 19,000 won for adults. The full price list will be at the entrance of the mart. More info is available at Naver Map.

The boarding area is on the second floor. The lift ride takes about 20 minutes, offering different sceneries depending on the season. When I was there in November, it was already fall and transitioning to winter. The leaves were falling, creating a romantic, almost melancholy atmosphere.

After getting off the lift, the Gwangju landscape awaits, city views to the right and mountain

panorama to the left. Before moving to the monorail, take a moment to enjoy the view and take photos. Love padlocks are seen hanging on the fence with messages and names adding a romantic touch to the scene. From here, it's a short walk to Bitgoeul Station (빛고을역), the monorail boarding point.

The Monorail

There are times when the monorail has a queue. A round trip takes about 30 minutes, and the wait is worth it. The ride blends nature and city sights of Gwangju and Mudeung-san. Sunset is the ideal time to board, when the skyline, mountains and trees, and the city best complement each other. Autumn is the best time to visit. The leaves are colored brown, orange, and green. The cooler temperatures felt nice after summer's heat.



The Mudeung-san lift and its surroundings.

While the monorail track rises high above the ground, it is safe and suitable for all ages. However, parents with young children and those with a fear of heights should take note.

The People

Most visitors are locals of all ages, making this a good spot to visit with your loved ones. Few


people speak English here. However, the signage is clear and includes English translations, making the area relatively easy for foreign visitors to navigate.

Tips

There is no food stall in sight after the lift, and the cafe on site was closed during my visit. The E-mart where tickets are sold offers limited snacks and drinks, with many items out of stock. Visitors should bring their own refreshments.

Google Maps is unreliable in South Korea, so downloading Naver Map is recommended. The app provides comprehensive information and is available in English, though some location names appear in Korean script. Being able to read it will greatly help your trip. For translations, most locals use Papago rather than Google Translate. At times, it offers more accurate Korean-English results.

Although the lift and monorail are the easiest way to reach the top of Mudeung-san, wear proper shoes and prepare for seasonal weather conditions.

Gwangju is often overlooked by tourists who visit South Korea, but it leaves lasting memories found nowhere else. I recommend paying a visit and seeing nearby places in the city, such as Chungjang Street, or exploring a bit further to Damyang's bamboo forest, Juknokwon. If there is a next time, I would like to visit Jisan Amusement Park again to see its beauty in every season. 

The Author



Fatimah Muthiah Irbah is a management major at Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia. She spent the Fall 2024 semester as an exchange student at Chonnam National University, where she explored Korean culture and nature. She is up to challenges and loves trying new things. Instagram: @fatimah.irbh

Photographs by Fatimah Muthiah Irbah.

“I Can’t Hold On Any Longer”

What the July 13 CNU Suicide Reveals About Korea’s Labs

A master’s degree researcher in CNU’s College of Engineering died on July 13, 2025. He left notes alleging pressure and mistreatment by superiors. One year after a foreign student’s death on the same campus, what has changed, and what has not?

“I can’t hold on any longer,” read the message that would echo through Chonnam National University’s halls in the days after a young student’s life was cut short. At 5:54 p.m. on July 13, 2025, campus security found a graduate researcher unresponsive near Dormitory 9 at Chonnam National University. Police soon confirmed what students feared. He had left multiple notes. In one digital memo, later shared by his family. He wrote, “I can’t hold on any longer” (더 이상 버틸 자신이 없다) and warned, “I hope others learn from me and aren’t gaslighted or made into sacrifices.” He named two senior lab members, telling them, “You are killing a person. Remember that.” (1, 2)

By July 16, the university suspended two professors from duty and convened an investigation committee that included the Graduate School dean and the Human Rights Center chief. Investigators began collecting computers and project files. The case passed from a local station to the Gwangju Metropolitan Police. Yet for many students, the sense of déjà vu was overwhelming – just a year earlier, another student’s death had sparked promises of reform. This time, they wonder if anything will be different. (3, 4)

Timeline

July 13, 2025. 5:54 p.m., a CNU master’s-course researcher is found dead near Dormitory 9. Police



Chonnam National University entrance. (Vibhanshu Maurya)

open an inquiry. (1, 5)

July 16. CNU says it has excluded two professors from duty and launched an internal committee including the Graduate School and Human Rights Center. National outlets report that the notes cite pressure and mistreatment. (4)

July 18–22. Forensics begin on the student’s phone, laptop, and lab tablet. Gwangju police take the lead. (5)

Early August. Police start summoning named faculty and related witnesses. (7)

Status at Publication. Police and the university committee continue separate investigations, with materials seized from implicated labs. Results pending. (7)

What We Know

Multiple Korean outlets converged on the basic facts. The victim had finished his bachelor’s degree the prior August, then worked as a master’s-course researcher in the College of Engineering. He reportedly spent weekends handling research-

project paperwork, accounting, and non-academic tasks. Messaging logs cited by reporters show supervisors pinging him at 3:50 a.m. and 1:32 a.m. during a week he traveled to Seoul for a job interview. (1, 2, 3)

The location and time are specific. Reporters place the discovery at Dormitory 9, 5:54 p.m., on a Sunday. The first internal step, according to CNU and national coverage, was to remove two professors from duty, then set up a committee anchored by the Graduate School and the Human Rights Center. Police escalated to a metropolitan unit. By late July and early August, investigators were imaging the student's devices and summoning professors named in the notes. (3, 4, 5)

Patterns and Policy

CNU's formal response in July 2025 came quickly, at least on paper. Two professors were sidelined, a cross-unit committee formed, and digital evidence gathered. (4)

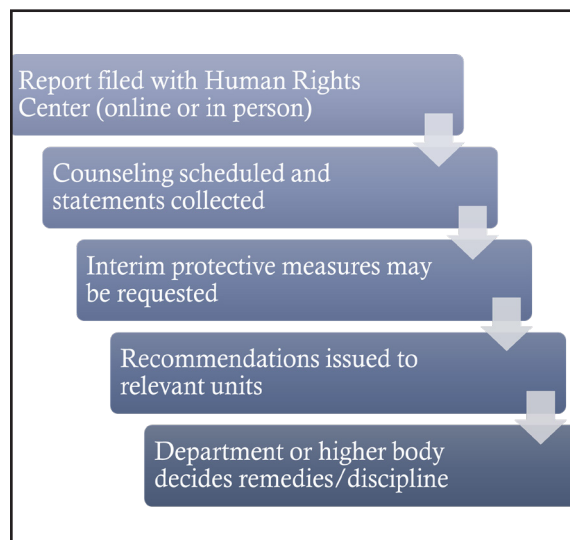
But pattern matters. In May 2024, a foreign student who had become the focus of campus gossip died in a CNU dormitory the day after a minor on-campus incident. International students held a memorial walk and petitioned leaders for clearer mental-health protocols and non-punitive support. Local broadcast coverage highlighted the lack of a consistent crisis manual for foreign students. (8, 9)

Across Korean campuses, grievance routes often center on human rights offices that provide counseling and recommendations. At CNU, the Human Rights Center lists intake, counseling, and reporting steps, and the Graduate School guidebook repeats those channels. Recommendations, however, do not necessarily bind departments, and the center's past handling of cases has drawn criticism from civic groups and the press. (10, 11, 12, 13)

Elsewhere in Korea, some universities have tried to solve the enforcement gap with independent ombudspersons who mediate conflicts and

nudge administrators to act. KAIST publicizes a president-affiliated ombudsperson office that accepts confidential complaints. Seoul National University operates an ombudsperson and an expanded Human Rights Center with a defined petition-to-remedy pathway. Those are not cure-alls, as critics at SNU frequently point out, but they are attempts to separate complaint handling from departmental hierarchies. (14, 15, 16, 17)

Figure 1. CNU Grievance Flow, Public-Facing



Source: CNU Human Rights Center, Graduate School guidebook. (10)

Culture and Power

Students talk about *jangyu-yuseo* (장유유서), the Korean norm that juniors must quietly follow what seniors say. In labs, it can harden into micro-hierarchies where doctoral seniors and postdocs act as gatekeepers, and master's students carry invisible loads. Messages sent in the early morning can look like devotion to the project, until it looks like control. The victim's notes, as relayed by national media, point directly to that line. (1)

A wider body of reporting describes graduate students as "student-workers," subject to long hours, pressured to perform, yet outside formal labor protections. Surveys by research institutes and newspapers over the past decade paint a consistent picture, from heavy after-

hours expectations to economic precarity, with unionization levels still low. (18)

In that climate, speaking up can feel like closing doors. Master's students have tight graduation clocks. Doctoral students build reputations in networks their advisors help control. Even when universities advertise reporting lines, students weigh the risk that a quiet word from a professor will shadow them into the job market. SNU's own public debate this spring, critical of its Human Rights Center's practices, captured how skepticism grows when complaint systems lack visible teeth. (19)



Students gathered at the College of Engineering in May last year to remember a student whose death sent shockwaves through Chonnam National University. (Kim Dong-gyu)

Human Impact

In the week after the July 13 death, comment sections on Korean portals were filled with conflicting views. On Daum under early reports, some readers urged patience, arguing that investigations should run before judgment. Others wrote about their own lab years, describing late-night messages and work that bled into personal errands. A smaller group defended professors as overworked, saying everyone in the chain suffers under grant cycles. These paraphrased reactions are drawn from comments attached to Daum and Naver postings of reports between July 16 and July 22. (3, 20)

Among CNU's international students, last year's memorial was not only about grief, it was about structure, from counseling access

to anti-stigma messaging. Their petition asked for an independent channel to report abuse without fear of academic retaliation, and for staff training to spot students in crisis. KBS framed the gap bluntly, noting "a lack of consistent crisis protocols" for foreign students. (9)

Zooming out, official statistics do not break out "graduate students," yet they show the pressure cooker around youth and young adults. Suicide has remained the leading cause of death for Korean teens for over a decade, and national suicide numbers stay stubbornly high. The latest government youth briefs and KOSIS dashboards are a sobering backdrop for any campus policy. (21, 22)

Comparative Lens

Korean campuses have wrestled with this for years. Some invested in neutral ombudspersons, published step-by-step complaint routes, and ran faculty training on power abuse and research ethics. KAIST's ombudsperson sits near the presidency and takes confidential submissions. SNU's ombudsperson is paired with an active Human Rights Center that publishes process diagrams and phone lines. Even there, journalists and student papers argue that recommendations too often stop short of enforceable orders. The lesson is not that a single office fixes culture, it is that clear authority and transparent metrics matter. (14, 16, 23, 24)

For CNU, the July case lands on top of a reputation bruised by earlier ethics controversies, including public disputes over how complaints were handled. That history will make the committee's transparency, and any disciplinary follow-through, as important as the final findings. (12, 13)

Solutions and Accountability

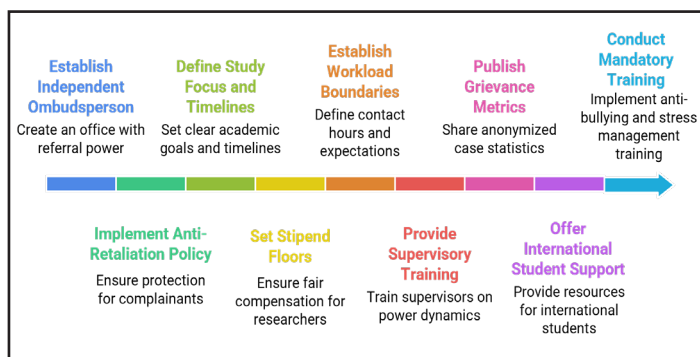
Many professors and departments already show what good mentorship looks like: open communication, fair expectations, and real guidance. But those bright spots are still too rare. To make them the norm, the following changes are essential:

1. **Independent ombudsperson with referral power.** Move beyond counseling only. Establish an ombudsperson office that can demand timelines, trigger interim protections, and publish anonymized quarterly metrics on cases opened, resolved, and pending. KAIST and SNU provide domestic models that CNU can adapt. (14, 16)
2. **Anti-retaliation policy with teeth.** Guarantee that research supervision, thesis evaluation, and recommendation letters cannot be wielded against complainants. Violations should carry specific sanctions and a right of appeal outside the department.
3. **Define study focus and enforce graduation timelines.** Departments should ensure students are enrolled to complete their studies, not to work indefinitely as general lab labor. On admission, the professor, department, and student should agree in writing on a specific thesis topic and a realistic time frame for completing coursework, research, and thesis submission. This agreement should be reviewed annually. Professors who need support on unrelated projects should hire postdoctoral researchers or research staff, not divert students from their core thesis work.
4. **Stipend floors tied to policy reality.** When the statutory minimum wage rises each year, labs cannot function on unpaid expectations. CNU should set a stipend floor for full-time graduate researchers and require departments to document compliance when accepting external grants. If a lab cannot provide a living wage (current minimum wage in South Korea is about 2.1 million won per month) or if the scholarship amount is not enough, students should be allowed to take part-time work alongside their research to survive. (25, 26, 27)
5. **Workload and messaging boundaries.** Require lab charters that cap contact hours, define weekend expectations, and ban non-research errands. Messaging logs featured in this case show how boundaries blur without written rules. (3)
6. **Mandatory supervisory training.** Before taking students, principle investigators and

senior lab members should complete training on power dynamics, feedback, and mental-health referral. Retraining should be cyclical and tied to eligibility for grant overheads.

7. **Transparent grievance metrics.** Publish anonymized case statistics each semester, including average days to interim protection and to final decision, and counts of faculty discipline. Numbers are not a cure, yet they make denial harder.
8. **International student support.** Translate crisis protocols, run active outreach, and provide named staff who can navigate immigration, medical privacy, and counseling. Last year's memorial and broadcast coverage were clear about this gap. (9)
9. **Mandatory anti-bullying, psychological hygiene, and stress-management training.** Graduate students are already required to complete online anti-sexual abuse education modules. The same infrastructure could be used to deliver annual mandatory education on anti-bullying practices, psychological hygiene, and stress management. These trainings should cover recognizing toxic dynamics in labs, self-care techniques, and how to seek help without fear of retaliation.

Figure 2. Implementing Solutions and Accountability at CNU



Fact Box. What Has Changed Since Last Year's Memorial?

Promised: Clearer crisis handling and an internal look at lab culture, according to petitions and campus statements reported at the time.


Implemented: In 2025, rapid suspension of two

professors and setting up of an investigation committee with Graduate School and Human Rights Center participation.

Not Implemented: Visible stipend floors or a published anti-retaliation regime. No public evidence found.

Unknown: Whether CNU developed a dedicated ombudsperson function or released anonymized grievance metrics.

Resources Available

If you or someone around you needs support, Korea's suicide prevention hotline is **1393**, available 24 hours a day. Additional help includes **1588-9191** (LifeLine) and **1388** for youth counseling. Government and public pages list channels and availability. (28, 29, 30, 31) 

Methodology Note

This article draws on Korean-language reporting from national and regional outlets, CNU institutional pages, and government statistics, accessed on August 10, 2025. All non-obvious claims are sourced online. Public reactions are paraphrased from comment sections on Daum and Naver postings of the July 13 case between July 16 and July 22, 2025. Identifying details are not included. Some university policies were inferred from official pages, which may not reflect internal, non-public rules. Where evidence was incomplete, items are marked as “unknown.”

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Li Aoding, originally from China, is a PhD student at CNU. She loves to live a vivid life and cares about lives. She has lived in South Korea for more than seven years, and she lives a happy life with four cats.

Migrant Worker's Rights

Forklift Abuse in Naju Sparks National Outcry

By Yousra Ferial Drioua



Migrant worker bound to a forklift. (Yonhap News)

A disturbing case of workplace abuse in Naju, Jeollanam-do, has sparked national outrage, drawing attention to what advocates describe as systemic flaws in South Korea's migrant labor policies. In February, a Sri Lankan migrant worker in his 30s was bound with plastic to a stack of bricks and hoisted by a forklift at a local brick factory. Video footage shows other workers laughing and filming as the man was lifted and moved like cargo. The incident remained hidden for months until it was obtained by the Gwangju-Jeonnam Migrant Workers Network and released in late July, prompting widespread condemnation.

Migrant rights groups argue that this was not an isolated incident. In a statement on July 25, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) described the Naju abuse as “the product of structural violence,” citing other recent tragedies such as the February suicide of a Nepali worker

at a pig farm in Yeongam after beatings, verbal abuse, daily roll calls, and pressure to return home, and the July heat-related deaths of a Vietnamese worker in Gumi and a Nepali worker in Pohang, both of whom were forced to work outdoors until late afternoon despite extreme temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius. The statement also pointed to a July case in Gangneung, where a Filipino worker had his passport and bankbook confiscated, was falsely accused of phone fraud, kicked by his employer, and coerced into signing away severance pay.

Advocates point to the Employment Permit System (EPS) as a central problem. The system ties E-9 visa holders to a single employer, sharply restricting job changes and making it difficult to leave abusive conditions. “Without the freedom to leave a workplace, harassment becomes a weapon for employers,” said Udaya Rai, chair of the Migrants’ Trade Union, in interviews with

Yonhap News and during a joint press conference on July 29. “This is forced labor by design.”

The press conference, held outside the Presidential Office in Yongsan, brought together more than 100 organizations, including KCTU, the Justice Party, Lawyers for a Democratic Society, and migrant advocacy groups. Speakers such as Justice Party leader Kwon Young-guk and Minbyun lawyer Choi Jung-kyu called for abolishing EPS restrictions, introducing a labor permit system, granting workers the right to extend their own contracts, and strictly punishing discrimination, violence, and harassment. Activists criticized the government’s proposal to ease transfer rules only after three or more years as “inadequate” compared to earlier discussions of full freedom after one year. The rally’s five key demands included abolishing all workplace change restrictions, scrapping discriminatory migrant visa systems, granting contract extension rights to workers, enforcing strict penalties for abuse, and creating a labor–government consultation body for systemic reform.

The problem extends beyond employers. A Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs study in 2020 found that 31.2 percent of E-9 workers reported experiencing discrimination, with nearly 80 percent enduring it or taking no action. Women respondents reported a 7.1 percent rate of sexual harassment or assault, and 26 percent of all respondents said they experienced depression.

Court records analyzed by the *Hankook Ilbo* reveal multiple cases in which Korean co-workers assaulted migrant colleagues over trivial disputes, such as losing an arm-wrestling match, being served less alcohol, or reporting misconduct. In one 2021 case, a worker threw a metal machine part at a foreign colleague and struck him on the head; the court described the victim’s “great humiliation and mental suffering” but still handed down a suspended sentence.

For Rai and other advocates, the solution is straightforward. “If workplace transfers were truly free, more than 80 percent of these problems

would disappear,” he told the *Hankook Ilbo* and reiterated it at the July 29 rally. In a public message, the Naju victim expressed gratitude for the presidential condemnation but urged deeper change: “I hope for a Korea where foreign workers can work at the company they choose and have their labor rights protected.”

Whether the government’s promised measures will deliver that vision remains to be seen. For now, migrant rights advocates are bracing for a long fight. They say they will keep pressing until this case marks a genuine turning point, one where migrant workers are no longer bound by fear or restrictive laws but can stand on equal footing with their Korean peers. Anything less, they warn, would condemn the Naju incident to join the long list of forgotten outrages in Korea’s labor history and leave us waiting for the next tragedy to occur. **GN**



Migrant rights advocates at the July 29 press conference. (Korean Confederation of Trade Unions)

The Author



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Gwangju Sinks in Rainwater

Flooding Strikes Second Time in Five Years

By Saqib Sharif

Amid a global spike in climate-induced disasters, Gwangju has once again succumbed to catastrophic flooding, this time in July 2025, highlighting the growing risk urban areas face worldwide. This year, devastating floods have wreaked havoc across continents: Central Texas endured one of its deadliest flash floods in history, leaving over 135 dead and sweeping campers off their feet; southern India's Uttarakhand was hit by a flash flood following a cloudburst, killing at least 100 and leaving dozens missing; Pakistan suffered monsoon-driven floods causing more than 300 fatalities as rainfall surged 10–15 percent above normal due to climate change; Brazil's Vale do Aço area was struck by deadly floods and landslides in January, displacing thousands; and in southern China, Typhoon Wutip triggered landslides and forced

the evacuation of 70,000 people, inflicting over 1.81 billion yuan (US \$253 million) in losses. According to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, over 12 million people globally have been affected by flooding so far this year.

In Gwangju, the storm that struck on July 17, 2025, brought a record-breaking 426.4 mm of rain, submerging roads by Chonnam University and halting operations at more than ten stations on Subway Line 1, eerily repeating history from 2020, when Pyeong-dong Station was similarly flooded.

Alarming reports suggest that ongoing construction of Subway Line 2 near Sangmu Station also contributed to the disaster: rainwater may have infiltrated construction zones and



People trapped in their cars in flooding water in front of the Buk-gu Public Health Center in Jungheung-dong, Gwangju. (NewsPim)

flowed underground into Pyeong-dong Station, overwhelming its drainage systems. This failure underscores how subterranean infrastructure, when not integrated with urban flood planning, can aggravate crises.

In response, the Ministry of Environment has rolled out AI-driven flood alert systems in Gwangju. These systems merge real-time data on rainfall, dam discharge, and river levels to deliver 10-minute early warnings, alongside 3D flood mapping. Concurrently, Korea is expanding its network of high-precision rainfall radars, from two to nine nationwide, with one now deployed in Gwangju to bolster detection capabilities.



Cars engulfed in floodwater in Buk-gu, Gwangju, on July 17. (Yonhap)

Nevertheless, technology is only part of the equation. Structural interventions such as upgrading drainage near the university, constructing retention basins, restoring natural waterways, and implementing permeable surfaces are critical. Experts estimate the combined cost of these measures could be in the range of 300–600 billion won.

Complicating matters is Gwangju's tight fiscal situation. The cost of Subway Line 2 has ballooned from an initial 1.9 trillion won to over 3.08 trillion won, a 61.7 percent increase. Two attempts at securing 2.6 trillion won in national matching funds have failed, placing heavy pressure on the city's budget and raising concerns that critical flood resilience measures may be deprioritized.

As climate-related disasters become more frequent and more severe, Gwangju faces a critical

juncture: The city must reconcile ambitious infrastructure development with robust climate adaptation. Without strengthened alignment between transit expansion, flood management, and fiscal planning, neighborhoods like Chonnam University risk being left exposed – and unprepared – for the next deluge. **GN**

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Saqib Sharif is a robotics engineer with a PhD in mechanical engineering, specializing in the design of smart healthcare devices and microrobots. With a strong background in medical technology and innovation, he is passionate about creating solutions that enhance smart healthcare. Dr. Sharif has been living in Gwangju for the past ten years. Currently, he serves as a senior researcher at Shinsung Tech Pvt. Ltd., Gwangju.

Gwangju and Torino Friendship Cities

By Park Yeonju



After signing the Gwangju–Torino Friendship and Cooperation Agreement, Gwangju Mayor Kang Gi-jung and Torino Mayor Stefano Lo Russo exchange gifts at Torino City Hall, Italy.

Located in northwestern Italy, the city of Torino is a central hub bordering France and Switzerland. It has been an important stronghold of the modern Italian Communist Party and a sacred site for the labor movement. It takes at least 14 hours to reach Torino from Korea, yet despite the distance, it shares many similarities with the city of Gwangju. Gwangju and Torino have been interacting for a long time. Their first friendship and cooperation agreement was signed in 2002, and although it expired in 2012, the two cities renewed their agreement in the first half of 2024. This renewal commemorated the 140th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and Italy. Gwangju and Torino share various similarities in both city size and vision.

Gwangju has hosted numerous sports events. And with the World Archery Championships coming up this September, it continues to be a stage for

international competitions. Similarly, Torino has consistently hosted international sporting events. In this regard, the two cities share the common characteristic of being hubs for global sports. In addition, Gwangju is the second-largest automobile-producing city in Korea. Its automotive industry traces its roots back to Asia Motors, a former affiliate of Kia Motors. Its first production model was the Fiat 124, whose manufacturing base was in Torino. This already close economic connection demonstrates the strength of their cooperative relationship.

The two cities have made significant progress in various fields, such as art and science, and through their friendship and cooperation agreement, they expect to create mutual synergy. The Gwangju Museum of Art and the Torino Museum of Art have also signed an agreement to exchange collections and promote exchanges in various areas. Many Koreans live in Torino,

demonstrating that it is a city closely connected not only with Gwangju but also with Korea as a whole.

Torino, the center of Italy's automobile industry, is also a city with strong assets in culture, art, and sports. Through its friendship and cooperation agreement with Torino, Gwangju Metropolitan City aims to promote mutual growth in various fields, such as the economy and culture, while strengthening its capacity for city diplomacy. Specifically, in the cultural field, the goal is to revitalize cooperation between cultural and tourism institutions, enhance activities such as festivals and exhibitions, and encourage the promotion of tourist attractions and programs. In the economic field, the focus is on fostering commercial and economic development through cooperation between economic organizations from both cities.


In addition, Torino plans to promote academic exchanges between students, professors, and universities, with the expectation of building broad and active exchanges with Gwangju.

In June, the city of Torino successfully concluded an artistic exchange with Chonnam National University. On June 5, a special exchange concert between Chonnam National University and the Giuseppe Verdi State Conservatory of Music of Torino, was held at the university's College of Arts. The performance featured the Kreutzer Duo, affiliated with the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory of Torino. The duo, composed of a violin major and a piano major, has won awards at prestigious competitions across Europe. In line with the Gwangju-Torino friendship agreement, this concert will serve as a starting point for inviting students from the College of Arts at Chonnam National University to perform in Torino. It will also help organize exchange programs and strengthen the capabilities of artists in the Gwangju area. This will foster genuine academic and artistic exchange.

Based on the friendship agreement renewed in 2024, Gwangju has been actively continuing

exchanges. In addition to diversifying city diplomacy through the expansion of city-to-city relationships, it has visited Torino, Milan, and Venice in Italy to benchmark urban public design and promote the globalization of the Gwangju Biennale. As a notable example of past exchanges, a delegation from Torino participated in the Gwangju Design Biennale in 2005.

A Gwangju delegation also visited Torino's Lingotto Building, a representative success case in public design improvement, to develop a cultural regeneration model that combines design with arts and culture. The Lingotto Building is a multi-purpose complex that was originally used as one of Fiat's main automobile production plants. In the late 1980s, the plant was closed, and large-scale remodeling began in the 1990s. The successful redevelopment of the Lingotto Building is considered a leading example of urban regeneration, and Gwangju is using it as a benchmark for creating its own urban renewal model.

Italy is a country that showcases a rich past and present in arts and culture. Among its cities, Torino has shared a journey of more than 20 years with Gwangju. With their many similarities, the signing of the friendship agreement has built a bridge of exchange between the two cities. Gwangju is known as the capital of Korea's democratization and as a cultural city, while Torino is one of Italy's prominent cultural cities. Beyond cultural exchange, the two cities are expected to work together toward a shared future in various fields, such as artificial intelligence and climate crisis response. 

The Author



Park Yeonju is an undergraduate at Chonnam National University, majoring in political science and diplomacy as well as Chinese language and literature. Her third major is international development cooperation studies. She was born and raised in Gwangju and wants to promote the colorfulness of the city that she has been a part of for so long.

Photograph courtesy of Gwangju Metropolitan City.

Rooftop Gardening

For Free Time Fun and Fresh Food

By David J. Richter

Living in a big city comes with many advantages and perks. Great public transport, tons of different restaurants with cuisine from all over the world, professional sports teams, and universities are just some of the benefits that come with living in a city like Gwangju.




This season's rooftop mini-garden of tomatoes, lettuce, and chili peppers. (Kim Hyeonji)

One thing that we have to sacrifice, at least to some extent, is private space, both inside and outside, when compared to living in the countryside. While we do have parks in the city and while it is not too hard to get out of the densely populated metropolis and into the countryside, having a home gardening experience while living here is not a given.

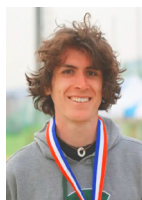
To make gardening as fun and relaxed as possible, having your gardening space within arms reach is ideal. But living in a one-room unit or an apartment does not give one a lot of space for gardening. I resorted to gardening on my balcony, when I had one, and now on the rooftop of my new one-room apartment building. At first, it might feel a bit weird to walk up and down the stairs with watering cans and other gardening supplies, and yes, gardening on the

roof is still limited in terms of space and also in terms of possible plants to grow, but it does work quite well if one commits to it.

Of course, asking the landlord should be the first step, but since the rooftop is usually not used by anyone, it shouldn't be too hard to get them to agree. Getting supplies and seedlings is also really easy. Daiso does have a pretty decent selection of pots, soil, fertilizer, and tools, and so does Coupang, which makes it very cheap and simple to get started. There are also dedicated stores, which are a bit more costly. As for seedlings, markets often have stalls selling them, and again there are stores that offer seedlings too, and neither of them are expensive. For only a few thousand won, you can get a handful of seedlings that you can then simply repot to your rooftop garden, saving you a lot of time and hassle compared to growing them from seeds (which you could get at Daiso, for example).

Once you have the required supplies (watering can, pots, soil, plants), all you need to do is water the plants daily, and wait for them to grow before harvesting what you have planted. From personal experience, I can recommend chili peppers, tomatoes, and lettuce, as well as different herbs. They are easy to take care of and do not require very deep soil. Since they grow more or less neatly, without any vines or anything that the house owner might disapprove of, they are most suited as plants for rooftop gardening. 

The Author

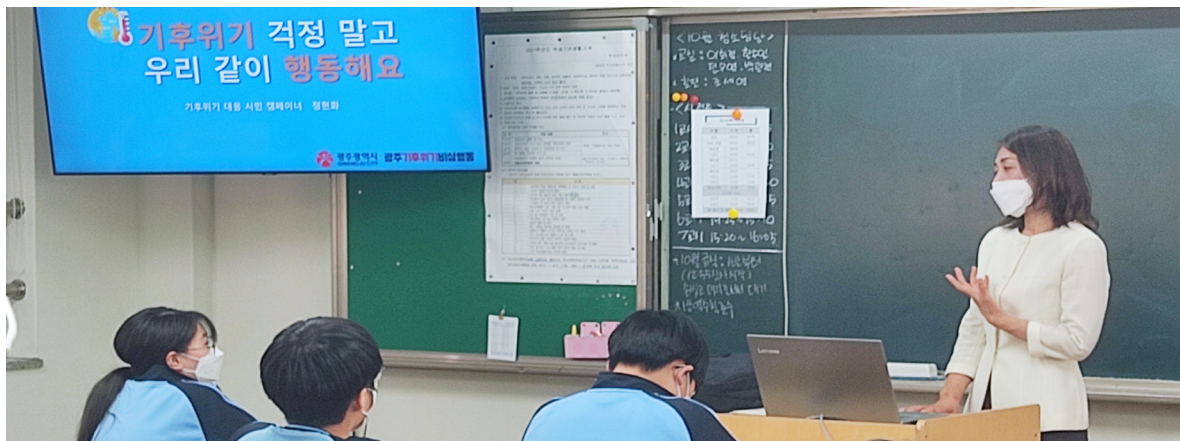


David Jona Richter, born and raised in the extreme south of Germany, is a current graduate student at Chonnam National University. Before coming to Korea in 2022, he spent three years in the U.S. Midwest city of Chicago. Besides his studies, he tries to engage in local communities in Gwangju and elsewhere in Korea.

Inside the Gwangju News

Passion for Our Planet: Writer Chung Hyunhwa

This column features each month one of our regular writers for the Gwangju News for our readers to get to know them better. These windows on writers follow an interview format. This interview features Chung Hyunhwa, writer of our Environment column — Editor



Chung Hyunhwa discussing the climate crisis with a class of secondary school students in 2021.

Gwangju News (GN): Hello, Hyunhwa. Thank you for making time for this interview. To start things off, please tell us a little about yourself.

Hyunhwa: It is my honor to have this interview with the *Gwangju News*. I have been with the magazine since June 2021, so I am in my fifth year as a writer. Before that, I led Gwangju Hikkers – a Gwangju International Center (GIC) community group – for about two years to assist our expat friends to hike Mt. Mudeung together.

GN: I know you have had a dynamic life living in numerous places. Among them, you spent quite a few years working in China. Would you tell us about that experience?

Hyunhwa: My stay in China started in 2004, and I returned to Korea for good in 2014. I worked for two different schools as an English/ESL teacher for expat children there. As a Korean speaker, I also worked as a school translator to help Korean parents. When I left for China in 2004, it seemed like an adventure, but the experiences I had there

broadened and deepened my understanding of different cultures. It was an enriching time for my personal growth.

GN: Your work in Korea has also allowed for you to travel internationally. To what places has your work taken you?

Hyunhwa: My latest job was at a young-plant import company, but most of the communication was carried out through email, so it didn't require so much traveling. However, I did travel to the Netherlands, the U.K, and Japan to visit the correspondents while working there. And the Netherlands especially made a good impression on me in many ways, not to mention their seriousness about dealing with climate change.

GN: You began writing for the *Gwangju News* quite a few years ago, and much of your writing for the magazine is associated with preserving our planet from the injustice that we pour upon it. Though we are all aware of the harm we are inflicting on the earth, you are more passionate

than most. From where did your passion evolve?

Hyunhwa: My eye-opening moment was in early 2021, when a very close friend of mine recommended a couple of books mentioning the urgency of the climate situation nowadays.



Gwangju Hikers in 2020 (Hyunhwa, extreme left).

The first book I read was *Zero Waste Home: The Ultimate Guide to Simplify Your Life by Reducing Your Waste* by Bea Johnson. It was a book about how a family of four left only one pint of waste in one year. It was almost shocking. I thought I was doing enough but realized that I was far from it. The experiments Bea Johnson shared in her book to reduce waste were just beyond my imagination, and it made me reflect on my way of life. I read more books, went to lectures, and studied further. I also participated as an instructor in the environment education program for citizens run by the city that year. Then, I looked for more opportunities. I asked the GIC director, Dr. Shin Gyonggu, if I could write about environment and climate issues – and here I am. I always feel that writing about the environment is really not doing enough, but it is the least I can do. I hope it will have some people stop and think.

GN: What earth-friendly practices do you observe in your daily life?

Hyunhwa: I am sensitive about food waste, so I order or cook just enough for the immediate need. One funny thing I do that no one around me does is eat the white rind of the watermelon. I eat everything but the green-striped peel. It reduces waste, pays respect to the farmers for their effort, and is actually good for the health, too. The remainder can be composted. I have

a health issue that keeps me from becoming vegan, but I try to be minimal with meat consumption. It is something anybody can do right now, and it is good for you and the environment. I stopped buying single-use plastic bags and reuse plastic bags when I need them. I stopped buying potential trash. I use a bike to travel short and medium distances. I avoid using unnecessary chemical products. I buy second-hand goods first, if available, because I believe the world is engaged in over-production and over-consumption.

GN: So many environment-friendly practices – it's admirable! Do you have any final words for the readers before we close this interview?

Hyunhwa: As for actions to fight the climate crises, everyone needs to start doing something. The problems we have now were caused by human greed and ignorance. If the problems started from greed, we should try to end the problems by controlling our greed. The systems we will need are for controlling that greed more effectively and more quickly. Therefore, politics and the community spirit are important.

I somehow believe that there will be a dramatic breakthrough one day, possibly through new technologies, but it will not come by itself, nor for free. I think it will only become possible when we all together have that common focus and share the responsibilities. Until there is a solution, we should keep doing what we do: Reduce. Reuse. Recycle. Fixing our planet will surely be much easier than finding a new planet and preparing it for humans to live on. I will also look for other things to do in addition to writing.

GN: Thank you, Hyunhwa, for allowing us to get to know you better. And thank you for your passion for our planet! We look forward to many more enjoyable and informative articles from you!

Hyunhwa: Thank you. 

Interviewed by **David Shaffer.**

Photographs courtesy of Chung Hyunhwa.

Gwangju Future Industry Expo 2025

Showcasing Advanced Technologies and Future Visions

By Bae Sangdon

The Gwangju Future Industry Expo was held over four days from June 26 to 29, 2025, at the Kim Daejung Convention Center. This annual event is one of Korea's leading industrial exhibitions, offering a comprehensive look at the latest technologies and trends in next-generation core industries, such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, future mobility, and renewable energy. During the exhibition, domestic and international companies, research institutes, and investors gathered to expand cooperation and exchanges through exhibitions, conferences, and business meetings.

As the exhibition planner for Hyundai Motor Group, I took part in preparing for and participating in this event. Although there were challenges during the preparation process, I felt a great sense of fulfillment after its completion. I would like to share some of the things I saw and felt at the event.

Our Hyundai Motor Group pavilion served as a platform to share our vision for future mobility and advanced manufacturing technologies with the public and partner companies, aiming to build a sustainable future together. In the Hyundai Motor and Kia exhibition hall, we showcased the hydrogen fuel cell vehicle NEXO, the PV5 (PBV, purpose-built vehicle), and the latest electric vehicle models, presenting the direction of future mobility and sustainable transportation.

In particular, Kia's PBV business strategy focuses on supplying simple, modular, and eco-friendly multi-purpose vehicles that can be customized at a low cost to meet customers' business needs. The first model developed under this strategy, the PV5, was designed for a wide range of applications, such as mobility services for transportation-vulnerable groups, pop-up stores, logistics,

leisure activities, ride-hailing services, and more. With its optimized and versatile design, the PV5 attracted significant attention among the many futuristic vehicles on display at the Expo.



The PV5, Kia's purpose-built vehicle.

At the Hyundai Motor Group Tech Hall, a one-third scale model of the Group's future advanced air mobility (AAM) aircraft, the SA-2, was on display. NASA defines AAM as an air transportation system that moves people and cargo between locations underserved or unserved by aviation. This includes both urban air mobility (UAM), which addresses urban traffic congestion by maximizing intra-city travel efficiency, and regional air mobility (RAM), which connects regional hubs.

Future air mobility aircraft are similar to small airplanes but can take off and land vertically, combining features of both light aircraft and helicopters. The SA-2, developed by Hyundai Motor Group's independent subsidiary Supernal, is designed to cruise at an altitude of about 400–500 meters at a speed of 200 km/h. Several other companies also showcased AAM models, making it one of the major highlights of the Expo.

In addition, various innovative technologies were presented, including digital twin technology

(which creates a real-time synchronized virtual replica of a factory), logistics robots, collaborative robots, vision systems, and LiDAR-based application systems. Of particular interest was the logistics robot scheduled to be introduced at Kia's Gwangju plant in 2025. This system mounts a collaborative robot on an autonomous mobile robot (AMR) to automate the process of delivering parts from the warehouse to workers.



The SA-2, the Hyundai Group's advanced air mobility aircraft model.

Since 2024, the Hyundai Motor Group Tech Hall has showcased key technologies, such as autonomous parking robots, the quadruped robot Spot, AAMs, PBVs, and mobile picking robots (MPR). For 2026, an exhibition themed around humanoid robots is planned.



Hyundai Group's mobile picking robot.

Among the various sectors, I believe Gwangju politicians should particularly focus on developing the robotics industry. Robotics integrates advanced technologies such as AI, precision machinery, photonics convergence, batteries, sensors, and control systems. Gwangju, with its industrial foundation in AI, photonics convergence, and future mobility, is in an ideal

position to attract and foster the humanoid robotics industry.

According to global investment bank Goldman Sachs, the humanoid robot market is expected to grow to about US\$37.8 billion by 2035. The global robotics industry is rapidly expanding due to aging populations, labor shortages, and increased demand for manufacturing automation, with humanoid robots showing high potential for applications in manufacturing, logistics, caregiving, healthcare, and national defense systems. Few regions can simultaneously demonstrate and apply such foundational industries, which is why I hope Gwangju City will use the expo as a platform to bring together domestic and global humanoid-related conglomerates, universities, research institutes, and startups, showcasing technologies and attracting investment from large corporations and the government.

Personally, I look forward to a day when Hyundai Motor Group's Boston Dynamics humanoid robot Atlas, along with humanoid robots from around the world, will gather for a competition inspired by the concept of Squid Game to demonstrate their technological capabilities. For this vision to become reality, I believe strong support from Gwangju City is essential.

The Gwangju Future Industry Expo 2026 is scheduled to be held in September, and participation from many industry stakeholders is highly anticipated.

For more information:

<https://www.gjexpo.or.kr/eng> 

The Author



Bae Sangdon works for the Kia Motors Gwangju Plant, being responsible for introducing new technologies to transform it into becoming a smart factory. He is strongly interested in the future automotive industry of Gwangju City. He directed the Hyundai Motor Group Tech Hall at the Gwangju Future Industry Expo and showcased new technologies, including future mobility and automation applications.

Photographs by Bae Sangdon.

Summers Written by Mosquitoes

By Franceska Duong

The summer of my 2023 Gwangju year was one of peace. Aside from the small battles against mold, I was fortunate enough to have an insect-free apartment. As someone that screams at the sight of a large ant, the idea of being stuck in a small one-room apartment with a spider or cockroach was terrifying. Fueled by my knowledge gathered from my years with this borderline phobia, I consistently poured hot water down the pipes and accidentally breathed in toxic fumes of moth balls for over half a year. I believe for those reasons, I was able to survive without a single intruder in my living space.

That same survival instinct carried me through my first year abroad. Whether it was asking for a plastic bag at the convenience store, holding a ten-minute conversation with the *bunsik-jip*¹ owner, or somehow making it home after taking the bus forty-five minutes in the wrong direction, I survived. Actually, I thrived. My experiences piled on top of each other to build me into a more independent and proactive person. With glistening eyes, I looked at the city around me, excited to say “yes” to every new opportunity.

My move to Seoul the next year was motivated by the same ambitions – I wanted to keep growing. After all, a foreigner’s time is limited. Our eyes are constantly on the clock, and we are always aware of our time slowly approaching “0”. Time to us is like a currency, and each decision we make is a transaction that must be weighed. In a place where each decision feels irreversible, I wanted to invest my time in growth, even if it meant embracing uncertainty.



I noticed a sharp decline in “mosquito activity.”

Leaving Gwangju was bittersweet. It had been my first real home in Korea, a city that had quietly stitched itself into my life. But the moment I arrived in Seoul, I was faced with not only the challenge of adapting but also the problem the previous tenant had warned me about: mosquitoes. Unfortunately, they were not exaggerating.

With a hand-me-down mosquito net, I covered my bed and used it as my safety net

when the summer just started. As I laid in bed contemplating my purpose in Seoul and missing the warm faces filled with *jeong*² in Gwangju, I would watch mosquitoes try to pummel their way into the net to reach me. Sometimes we would make eye contact, me and the mosquito. “You’re dead,” I would signal over.

Still, no matter how many I swatted, I ended up with fresh bites every week. On my most successful days, I killed three to seven mosquitoes, only for new ones to appear. My bites here were nothing like the ones back in the States. Instead of fading in a day or two, these ballooned to triple their size, even when untouched. I was not sure if it was due to a lack of immunity to a new regional variety of mosquitoes, the climate, or simply my bad luck, but my irritation grew from fear to full-blown vendetta.


However, just as quickly as they had appeared, they soon disappeared as the green leaves became painted with red and orange. I, too, had been painted by new experiences. I found new hobbies, became deeply involved in my new school’s community, and cultivated new friendships. The initial stuffy, dust-filled air of the city soon became a crisp autumn breeze that was easier to breathe.

Turning the calendar page to 2025, I had already anticipated the resurgence of the mosquito summer infestation. My electric fly swatter was already charged and ready to go. My mosquito net covered my bed even before the first mosquito came out. I had an emergency can of bug spray just in case. If I were a game character, I was power-upped at the highest level.

However, interestingly enough, *The Korea Herald* reported, “The number of mosquitoes in Seoul has more than halved over the past decade, with experts pointing to extreme heat and a shortened monsoon season as key factors behind the sharp decline in mosquito activity.” I noticed it too.

My nightly mosquito battles shrank from five opponents to just one or two. Each time I saw them, I took a deep, exasperated breath and smacked them with the electric fly swatter in one swoop. It was automatic, my reaction. Not a single thought was spared, just reliance on my newfound ability as a mosquito-killing expert.

Similarly, this summer of 2025 marks my third summer in Korea. My Korean flows much more fluently now, enough to chat with the neighborhood convenience store owners and go on day-long trips with my local friends. The convoluted Seoul subway system is now easily ingrained in my mind. I carry with me not only more language but also the confidence that comes from years of navigating a life far from home.

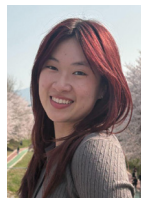
Just like it once was in Gwangju, my days began to feel peaceful and light again. Similar to the quiet buzzing noise of the mosquitoes I could no longer hear, the noise and pressure of the city still existed, but it no longer pressed in on me. Instead, I found comfort in the ordinary. Just like it once was in Gwangju, I felt at home. 

Language Aide

¹ *bunsik-jip* (분식집): Small restaurant serving noodles and other flour-based dishes.

² *jeong* (정): A feeling of familiarity, bonding, affection.

The Author



As a writer, **Franceska Duong** strongly believes in the power of narrative as a platform for truth and discussion. She loves lengthy conversations, being involved in the community, and discovering delicious foods.

Photograph by Franceska Duong.

Around the World on a Bicycle

Reviewed by **Michael Attard**

Around the World on a Bicycle

By **Fred A. Birchmore**

University of Georgia Press, 2020 (Original 1939)

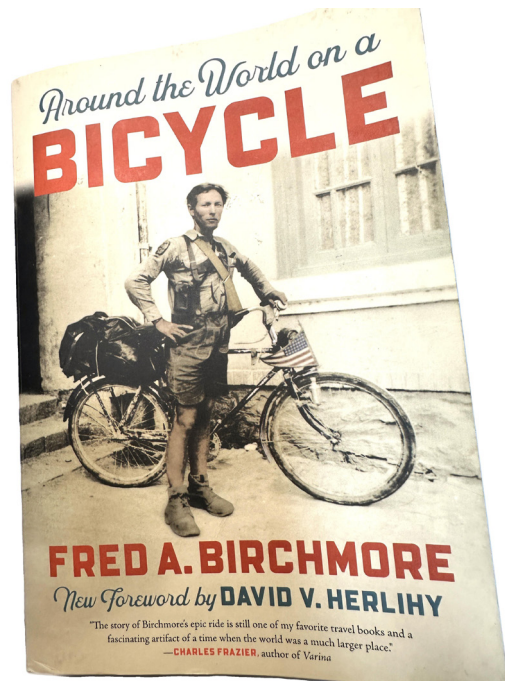
ISBN-10: 0820357286; ISBN-13: 978-0820357287

Around the World on a Bicycle is more than a young man's memoir covering almost two years of his life. It is an exotic adventure over mountains, across deserts, and through jungles by an extremely determined individual with a lust for life rarely seen. The book is a travelogue, written in parts in visionary language, matching the descriptions of the best of writers. It is of significance that the book was originally published in 1939. The honesty of youth is bestowed upon the reader, free of bias or prejudice. The quest began in the summer of 1935.

It is appropriate to refer to the author, Fred Birchmore, as protagonist and hero. Monsoon rains, sand storms, wild animals, snakes, malarial mosquitoes, and humans all appear as antagonistic forces forever creating conflict and seemingly impossible challenges. Additionally, the author's insights and wisdom edify the reader of any generation.

It would be amiss to not give credit to the author's trusted bicycle. While this may seem strange, the reader will see that there was a magical relationship between man and machine. In fact, the author went as far as to name his bicycle Bucephalus, after Alexander the Great's horse. The bicycle, was a Reinhardt bicycle built in 1935 and purchased by the author in Gotha, Germany.

When the journey began, he had no idea that he would travel about 25,000 miles, or 40,000



Cover of Michael's copy of *Around the World on a Bicycle*.

kilometers, on his trusted steed and be gone for so long. He was a foreign student in Cologne, Germany, and it was summer vacation. Thus, off he pedaled through Italy, France, England, Ireland, Norway and more. He did dismount his bicycle to climb both the Matterhorn in Switzerland and Germany's highest peak, Zugspitz. He was a little confused climbing the latter, when two different signs pointed in different directions. To him both routes looked the same, "namely, straight up."

In the 1930s, the Italians were not offering Americans the most amiable of welcomes. At one point, he was detained by Italian soldiers as a possible spy. They let him go, but three different hotels refused him accommodation. He finally found a tavern across the border in Yugoslavia for the night. This was a far cry from the receptions in Ireland, where he was greeted by strangers as a "Prodigal son."

He returned to Italy and boarded a freighter for Egypt. Shortly thereafter he writes, "I caught my first glimpse of the Sahara, rolling like a great yellow sea, in striking contrast to the green vegetation of the Delta of the Nile." And this was not all he caught sight of. At that time, the

construction of the Nile dam at Aswan meant that the holy island of Philae was partially submerged. He decided to swim out to the island. "But when several uninvited guests in the form of crocodiles met me halfway, I decided that it would be just as well for me to return to shore."

Egypt was the turning point in the story. While sleeping outdoors, he was robbed of his money and passport. After a week of hoping that the police might find his passport, he gave up. Then, by the time he received a new passport, it was too late for him to get back to Cologne for the start of the new semester. "I now, for the first time, decided to make my trip around the world on a bicycle." Eager to be on his way, he headed off across the Sinai Desert, dismissing the warning that it was experiencing the worst storm in three years. At one point, he says, "Frantically, I tore rags from my shirt and stuffed them in my ears before the driving sand had time to burst the ear drums." But regret wasn't in his nature. As he said at one point, "The follies of youth are the manna upon which the dreams of old age feed."


Later, crossing the Syrian Desert, his mind did not change. He tells us, "My lips cracked so greatly that blood oozed from gashes which opened afresh every time I moved my mouth." He continues, "Life is a path of roses, but to appreciate the roses, one must willingly accept the thorns too."

In Persia, he was invited to the home of a professor. Their conversation was interrupted by female laughter, which embarrassed the host, but at the same time revealed the author's "disappointment at not meeting the other members of this Moslem family." This led his host to bestow a great honor upon his wives by allowing them to be in his presence. First, the three wives were told to dress for this reception. This took an hour, and thus our author says, "I naturally expected to find them almost drowned beneath the folds of gold and silver embroidered silken robes and shawls, totally concealing their persons from view." As expected, the women were masked, but this only "seemed to emphasize the almost stark nudity of the rest of their bodies, which were bare of clothing."

Back on his bicycle, he describes the beauty of what he sees: "The mountain slopes of this region were sparkingly green as if showers of emerald paint had freshly fallen from the sky." But the 18,000-foot (5,400-meter) ranges of Afghanistan were not as kindly. "I had scaled many peaks, but never ... had my nose bled because of altitude." Then in a fall, two ribs over his heart were fractured. Next, his passport is taken from him, but he stole it back at night and escaped.

None of the above could break our author's spirit. He refers us to a Confucian saying: "Whatever cannot be overcome must be endured." But he enlightens us: "The secret of the saying is not in seeing how much can be endured but how much can be overcome to keep from having to endure anything!"

In India and Burma, snakes were a constant problem. As the monsoon rains flushed the small, as well as thick and lengthy, reptiles from the jungle onto the road, he had to continually swerve around the creatures. At times, there were so many or they were so long that he drove right over them, lifting his legs high in order to avoid their strikes. One gruesome incident occurred when a cobra struck at him, missed, but caught its head in the spokes of his fast-moving rear wheel.

He had avoided malaria until almost the end of this grand adventure. The trials and tribulations were wearing him down. "The mud seemed a horrible live thing clinging to my legs and wrapping around Bucephalus' wheels, with the sickening suction of octopus tentacles." But our hero would survive to complete the circumnavigation of the globe by bicycle and boat. He claimed to have achieved what no other person had ever done, let alone think possible. Fred Birchmore was to have other adventures, but finally at the age of 100, he passed away. 

The Author



Michael Attard is a Canadian citizen but has lived in Gwangju for over twenty years. He has taught English as a second language in academies and within the public school system. He is officially retired and spends time reading, writing, hiking, and spending time with friends.

Damyang Café Migak

By Dhivyaa S. P.

Tired of cafés in Gwangju?!

Imagine yourself seated by the water, surrounded by soft sounds of bamboo decor communicating with each other and gentle light filtering through leaves. A space that's both artful and calming.

Nestled along Damyang's serene riverbanks, Damyang Café Migak feels like my personal secret spot when I get overwhelmed by deadlines.

Atmosphere

- **Riverside Peace:** Located near the river, the cafe radiates peaceful vibes, ideal for quiet reflection or painting in my case.
- **Child-Free Second Floor:** Need some quiet? Head upstairs! It's a peaceful zone reserved just for adults, perfect if you want to focus, read, or relax without distractions.

What to Try

• Damyang Latte

Start with a first sip. Let the rich, velvety flavors linger. Then, stir gently, blending in silky sweetness. Every stir transforms the latte into a new delight.



• Cheesecake in a Bamboo Cup

Charming and eco-conscious, this cheesecake comes served in a small bamboo cup – creamy, refined, and wonderfully Instagram-worthy.

• Variety of Yanggaeng (Yokan)

A traditional Japanese-style jelly dessert, with a subtly sweet, smooth, waxy texture – perfect when paired with tea.

This cafe is not just a place to grab a drink; it's a sensory experience. From its riverside peace to the ritual of tasting its signature latte and the delicate pleasures of its desserts, every visit feels curated for calm and enjoyment. [GN](#)

Location: 145-15 Manseong-ri, Damyang-eup, Damyang-gun, Jeollanam-do



The Author



Dhivyaa is drawn to Korea's cafe culture, often finding comfort in quiet corners where she can reflect, observe, or simply get lost in her research over a warm drink.

Photographs by Dhivyaa S. P.

Damyang Coffee Farm

Rural Revitalization Efforts and Businesses

By Yousra Ferial Drioua



Café Maehwa Namu Jip.

In a greenhouse tucked among the groves of Damyang County, the scent of freshly roasted coffee mingles with the sound of joyful laughter. Visitors lean over trays of glossy coffee cherries, learning how to sort, roast, and brew under the guidance of Lim Young-ju, a former photojournalist turned coffee farmer.

Lim's interest in coffee began during a 2014 assignment in Kenya and Ethiopia. In an interview with *Hankyoreh*21, he recalled, "The fresh coffee aroma I encountered at the source went beyond being moving, it was addictive." In 2017, Lim returned to his hometown of Damyang County, Jeollanam-do, and established the Damyang Coffee Farm. The farm spans about 400 *pyeong* (approximately 1,320 m²) and houses between 1,200 and 2,000 Arabica coffee plants cultivated in greenhouses to counter Korea's cold winters. The coffee that the farm produces is known as Gold Castle (골드캐슬), named after the literal translation of Geumseong-myeon, his township.

He has earned certifications as a fragrance specialist and Italian barista, applying his expertise to an immersive visitor experience. Guests can observe coffee flowers and cherries, sample coffee flower tea, pick cherries, roast beans, brew hand-drip coffee, and compare Gold Castle coffee with imported varieties. Lim emphasizes freshness as a key differentiator, noting that Korean-grown coffee reaches consumers far more quickly than imported beans. In 2020, he was named a New Knowledge Farmer in the agriculture sector for his role in integrating agriculture, tourism, and education through coffee farming and experiential programs.



Coffee tasting at Damyang Coffee Farm.

One of the rural revitalization initiatives connected to such projects is the Ttobagi Farm Family (또바기팜족) program, run by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) and the Korea Rural Community Corporation. The name combines *ttobagi* ("always" in a local dialect) with "farm" and "family," meaning "a family always with the countryside." Now in its ninth year, the 2025 program includes participants

from various countries. MAFRA describes it as a promotional activity to introduce the traditions, culture, food, and lifestyle of Korean rural areas to a global audience. Participants visit rural villages throughout the year and create content for social media platforms.


During one visit to Moonlight Muwol Village in Damyang County, most houses appeared either vacant or converted into guest accommodations. No public transport was visible, and the only residents encountered were those running experience programs. The itinerary included a stop at Lim's farm and a visit to Maehwa Namu Jip (카페매화나무집, the plum-tree house), a restored *hanok* café in Changpyeong-myeon. There, the owner produces *hangwa* (한과; traditional Korean confections) in a donut form with varied flavors, all made onsite. Situated along the stone-wall alleys of Samcheon-ri, the building doubles as a café and guesthouse, retaining its traditional layout and courtyard garden to offer visitors an extended stay option.

The menu draws on local flavors, such as dried persimmon tea, *ssanghwa-cha* (a traditional medicinal tea), *misut-garu* (a roasted grain drink), and small-batch snacks like oranda, alongside coffee. Most ingredients are sourced from within Jeollanam-do, reflecting the owner's goal of preserving regional tastes for the next generation.

For residents, cafés like Maehwa Namu Jip serve as informal gathering places in towns where shops and social venues have steadily disappeared. For visitors, they provide an authentic encounter with rural heritage, not as a staged display but as part of everyday life. Its dual role as a business and residence reflects a broader adaptation strategy in depopulating areas: diversifying income sources while maintaining the character of traditional architecture.

Such adaptations have become increasingly relevant as South Korea's rural population continues to shrink. Government statistics show the share of people living in rural areas fell from

over 70 percent in the 1960s to less than 20 percent today. In October 2021, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) designated 89 cities, counties, and districts as "depopulation areas" based on eight indicators, including population change, youth net migration, and aging rates. An additional 18 districts were labeled "areas of concern." However, independent analyses, including those by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, note that there is no established evidence linking short-term tourism programs to long-term demographic stabilization. Government evaluations tend to measure implementation and budget execution rates rather than sustained changes in resident population or local economic output.

In Damyang, the coexistence of empty homes, small-scale craft businesses, and specialized farms like Damyang Coffee Farm reflects both the challenges and the variety of local responses in areas facing population decline. The future of such initiatives and their ability to deliver measurable impact remains an open question. 

Damyang Coffee Farm (담양커피농장)

Address: 87 Seokhyeon-gil, Geumseong-myeon, Damyang-gun, Jeollanam-do
Phone: 010-5214-2408

Café Maehwa Namu Jip

(카페매화나무집)

Address: 86 Doldam-gil, Changpyeong-myeon, Damyang-gun, Jeollanam-do

The Author



Yousra Ferial Drioua is a freelance journalist and media enthusiast from Algeria, currently based in South Korea. A former Global Korea Scholarship scholar, she holds an MA in media and communication and writes on issues at the intersection of gender, media framing, sociopolitics, and civic society. In her free time, she enjoys being a barista. Instagram: myyilgi

Photographs by Yousra Ferial Drioua.



The Center of World Archery Moves to Gwangju

From September 5 to 12, the World Archery Championships will take place over eight days in Gwangju, the city of human rights. Outside of the Olympic Games and the Asian Games, this tournament is the largest single-discipline international archery event. Organized by World Archery every two years in rotation across continents, the championships boast a long history dating back to the inaugural event in Lviv, Poland, in 1931. This year marks the 53rd edition of the tournament. For Korea, this will be the third time hosting – after Seoul in 1985 and Ulsan in 2009 – and the first in 16 years, now in Gwangju.

Notably, from September 22 to 28, the World Para Archery Championships will also be held in succession. Hosting both championships in the same city is rare, with Gwangju becoming only the third city to do so following Turin, Italy, and 's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands. This year's events will feature 737 athletes from 77 countries for the World Archery Championships and 426 athletes from 43 countries for the World Para Archery Championships.

Archery, while popular worldwide, does not require large permanent facilities, making the competition to host extremely fierce. Gwangju's successful bid was backed by several factors:

- The international-standard archery stadium built for the 2015 Summer Universiade
- A structured athlete training system spanning

- elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, universities, and professional teams
- Its symbolic status as the home of Korean Olympic gold medalists

To date, Gwangju has produced six Olympic gold medalists, including Seo Hyang-soon (1984 LA Olympics), Ki Bo-bae (double gold medalist at the 2012 London Olympics), and An San (triple gold medalist at the Tokyo Olympics). Thanks to this infrastructure and tradition, Gwangju overwhelmingly beat Madrid, Spain, by a margin of 10 to 1 in the host city vote.

The championships are divided into two disciplines: recurve and compound.

- **Recurve** is the official event for the Olympics, World Championships, and Asian Games. Athletes draw the bowstring with their fingers without mechanical assistance and shoot at a 122 cm target from 70 meters away, without using aiming aids.
- **Compound** uses modern bows with pulleys, cables, and a lever system, combined with a magnifying sight lens, shooting at an 80 cm target from 50 meters. The para archery events also include categories for W1 (severe impairment) and VI (vision impairment).

Until now, only recurve has been an Olympic discipline, but with compound added for the LA 2028 Olympics, the competition this year is expected to be even fiercer.

경기장

예·본선
광주국제아궁장

결승
5-18 민주광장

연습
광주월드컵경기장



* 5-18 민주광장 결승장을 가상으로 구성하였습니다. 실제와는 다를 수 있습니다.



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세계아궁연맹(WA) 총회
2025. 9. 2. ~ 9. 3.
참가규모 170여개국, 400여명

광주 2025 현대세계아궁선수권대회
2025. 9. 5. ~ 9. 12.
참가규모 90여개국, 900여명

광주 2025 세계장애아궁선수권대회
2025. 9. 22. ~ 9. 28.
참가규모 50여개국, 400여명



대회 홈페이지

GWANGJU 2025

The Echo of Peace


평화의 울림



Preliminary and main rounds will take place at the Gwangju International Archery Stadium, while finals will be held at the May 18 Democracy Square. The Gwangju International Archery Stadium, the only urban international-standard venue of its kind in Korea, covers a total floor area of 3,201 m² on a 45,396 m² site, with 1,077 spectator seats. Hosting in the city center offers strong advantages in terms of accommodation, transportation convenience, and local economic impact.

The May 18 Democracy Square will host matches from the quarterfinals to the finals of the individual events. Known as the city of democracy, human rights, and peace, Gwangju has been recognized as a “Global Human Rights City” in AI search results. Just as Paris showcases the Eiffel Tower and the Seine River during the Olympics, Gwangju plans to highlight its human rights image by presenting the May 18 Democracy Square to the world through this event.

The slogan of the championships is “The Echo of Peace.” This represents the idea that the sound of an arrow hitting its target will resonate around the world as an echo for peace. Many around the world, having read Han Kang’s novel *Human Acts* – which recounts the tragic 1980 May Uprising when countless citizens were sacrificed in the fight against military dictatorship in this very square – remember those scenes. By holding the finals here, the organizers aim to showcase the historical site, leaving a lasting impression on both domestic and international visitors and encouraging them to visit Gwangju.

This September, a special festival will unite the world through archery. In Gwangju, the city of human rights, the golden arrows of the world’s top athletes, the moving moments of surpassing limits, and the fierce echoes of peace will unfold anew. 

Text and graphics provided by the Gwangju 2025 Hyundai World Archery Championships Organizing Committee.

Cricket: Echoes of Home

How Cricket Unites Gwangju's South Asian Diaspora

By Saqib Sharif



Members of the Gwangju Cricket Club at the 3025 KSK Championship. (Naveen Palanisamy)

In the bustling city of Gwangju, best known for its cultural heritage, resistance, and passionate embrace of the Kia Tigers, a different kind of sport is quietly taking root – cricket. This bat-and-ball game, with deep roots in England, Australia, and South Asia, is capturing hearts and weekends among the city's growing migrant community, particularly those from countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

A South Asian Obsession

For South Asians, cricket isn't just a sport – it's an emotion, a shared cultural language that transcends borders, politics, and generations. Whether it's a dusty street in Lahore, a college

ground in Delhi, or a flood-lit stadium in Dhaka, cricket is everywhere. In Gwangju, the sport serves as a nostalgic thread connecting expatriates to their homelands.

Weekends at Gwangju's riverside parks or university fields often see makeshift cricket pitches come alive. Groups of young South Asians, many of them students or factory workers, gather with taped tennis balls and worn-out bats to recreate the drama of their favorite sport. The energy is contagious; outsiders often stop to watch the unfamiliar, fast-paced action.

"Cricket is how we unwind, reconnect, and feel at home," says Abid, a Pakistani university student

who organizes weekend matches. “It’s our way of expressing joy and community spirit.”

Cricket’s Global Reach

Cricket is one of the most watched sports globally, second only to football. The sport’s international governing body, the International Cricket Council (ICC), has over 100 member countries, including full members like Australia, England, India, Pakistan, South Africa, and New Zealand, and dozens of associate members like Nepal, the UAE, and the USA.

The game’s history dates back to the 16th century in England but has evolved into a global phenomenon in the 20th century. The sport is played in several formats: Test matches (lasting up to five days), One Day Internationals (ODI, 50 overs per side), and the immensely popular Twenty20 (T20) format, which lasts around three hours.

Cricket’s popularity peaked in recent years during the India vs. Pakistan match at the 2023 ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup, which shattered all previous viewership records. The high-octane rivalry drew over 300 million viewers worldwide for a single match – comparable to the Super Bowl in the United States. This rivalry, fueled by decades of competition and geopolitical tension, is considered the most-watched fixture in the sport.


“For many in Gwangju, cricket is more than a game – it’s identity, nostalgia, and unity in a foreign land.”

Tournaments like those of the Indian Premier League (IPL), Pakistan Super League (PSL), Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) and the Big Bash League (Australia) also attract millions of viewers globally, combining celebrity ownership, short match durations, and international talent.

Cricket in Korea

While South Korea is not traditionally a cricketing nation, the sport is slowly gaining ground, primarily through expat communities and university campuses. The Korea Cricket Association (KCA), recognized by the ICC, has been working to promote the sport with facilities like the cricket ground at Yeonhui-dong in Incheon and events such as the Korea Premier League and inter-university tournaments.

Recently, the Gwangju Cricket Club (GCC) proudly represented the city and finished as the runner-up in the 2025 KSK Championship, a major tournament that drew teams from across the country. Their performance marked a milestone for cricket in Gwangju, showing that local passion can compete with established teams from Seoul and Incheon.

Though still played mostly in informal settings, cricket in Korea is evolving from a weekend hobby into an organized, competitive sport – with Gwangju emerging as one of its most passionate hubs. 

Web Sources

- ICC Global Fan Research. (2018). The International Cricket Council’s first-ever survey revealed cricket has over 1 billion fans worldwide, with approximately 90 percent located in the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka). <https://www.icc-cricket.com/media-releases/first-global-market-research-project-unveils-more-than-one-billion-cricket-fans>
- Gupta, S. (2023, October 16). India vs Pakistan viewing figures break record for Disney+ Hotstar streaming platform. *Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/cricket/india-pakistan-world-cup-hotstar-record-fans-b2430423.html>

The Author



Saqib Sharif is a robotics engineer with a PhD in mechanical engineering, specializing in the design of smart healthcare devices and microrobots. With a strong background in medical technology and innovation, he is passionate about creating solutions that enhance smart healthcare. Dr. Sharif has been living in Gwangju for the past ten years. Currently, he serves as a senior researcher at Shinsung Tech Pvt. Ltd., Gwangju.

Asani Transfer Saga Leaves Gwangju FC in Turmoil

By Zhang Jiuzhou (Julius)

The transfer of Jasir Asani has turned into an off-field drama, throwing Gwangju FC into a difficult predicament.

Iranian giants Esteghlal FC recently announced via official channels that they had signed the Albanian international on an 18-month deal, a move confirmed by Asani himself on social media. The 29-year-old forward's contract with Gwangju FC expires at the end of this year, and he is set to officially join the Tehran-based club in January.

Gwangju signed Asani from Hungarian side Kisvárda in January 2023 for 700,000 euros. Under head coach Lee Jung-hyo, he enjoyed an impressive debut K League season, scoring

seven goals and providing three assists in 33 league appearances. While he struggled in the 2024 campaign with just three goals, his current form has been strong, tallying eight goals and two assists in 21 matches. He also made club history in last season's AFC Champions League Elite tournament, netting a hat-trick in a 7-3 win over Yokohama F. Marinos and scoring twice in the Round of 16 against Vissel Kobe to seal a quarterfinal berth.

His performances earned him a regular starting role for Albania and a key part in their Euro 2024 campaign in Germany.

However, Gwangju's financial troubles have forced the club to consider selling their star player. In



Jasir Asani (left) with head coach Lee Jung-hyo. (K League)

June, the K League disciplinary committee fined Gwangju 10 million won and imposed a one-year player recruitment ban for breaching financial stability regulations. The ban's enforcement has been suspended for three years, but will be activated if the club fails to recover from complete capital erosion or implement a league-approved financial improvement plan by 2027.

With his contract set to expire at season's end, Gwangju hoped to offload Asani this summer to reduce cumulative losses, including transfer amortization and salary costs. He was one of the most talked-about names in the transfer market, but when the K League summer window closed without an official move, it appeared he was staying put – until Asani announced his next destination hours later.

Legally, there was no breach, as Bosman ruling provisions allow players with six months or less on their contracts to sign pre-contracts with other clubs. Still, the move blindsided Gwangju officials. “We had no idea,” one club representative admitted.

“Gwangju now faces a lose-lose choice.”


Reports suggest Esteghlal later offered a transfer fee to bring Asani in immediately, but the amount was far below Gwangju's valuation. With the K League window shut, any departure would leave the squad weakened without a chance to reinforce.

This was not Asani's first near-move this summer. He was close to joining Japan's Yokohama F. Marinos before the J League window shut on July 24. The two clubs had agreed on a transfer fee, but negotiations collapsed over what was reportedly an excessive salary demand from Asani's agent.

Coach Lee Jung-hyo voiced his frustration: “I think Asani made a mistake. It could have been a win-win for both him and the club, as he had an offer from a stronger team with better conditions.” He also revealed that the player had promised to stay after the July 24 registration deadline – only to later threaten, “If you don't let me go, I'll refuse to train and play.”

The fallout has been ugly. Once hailed as a club hero, Asani is now branded a traitor by sections of the Gwangju fan base. He has deleted all references to the club from his social media profiles.

Gwangju now faces a lose-lose choice: keep a disgruntled star for the remainder of the season and risk damaging team morale, or sell him immediately for a fraction of his market value. Club officials also worry about the precedent his actions could set for other foreign players in the league. “If we had the squad depth of Jeonbuk Hyundai, we could just leave him out to make a point,” one K League executive remarked. “But Gwangju doesn't have that luxury.”

A late twist has reshaped the saga. After being sidelined against Pohang, Asani made a surprise return to the pitch in Gwangju's home clash with Daejeon, playing a key role before the club confirmed his \$1 million move to Esteghlal (quite a notable fee). Before leaving, he thanked supporters, closing a chapter that began in turmoil and ended in resolution – though how it shifted so quickly remains a mystery that only Asani may truly understand. 

The Author



Zhang Jiuzhou (Julius) is from Harbin, China. He began writing in 2022 and has contributed to the Chinese media in Gwangju. He concurrently serves at a sports data company. He is pursuing a master's degree in media and communications and is responsible for the Chinese Students Association at Chonnam National University.

Area Sports Round-Up

A monthly overview of local sports, featuring area teams and brought to you...

By Zhang Jiuzhou (Julius)

Kia Tigers Lose Kim Do-yeong for Remainder of Season

Kia Tigers star infielder Kim Do-yeong has been ruled out for the rest of the regular season after suffering his third hamstring injury of the year. The incident occurred on August 7 during an away game in Busan against the Lotte Giants. In the bottom of the fifth inning, Kim felt pain in his left hamstring while fielding a ground ball and asked to be substituted. Medical examinations the following day revealed a left hamstring muscle injury.

Given the recurrence and the remaining schedule, the Tigers have decided to prioritize Kim's rest and rehabilitation to prevent overexertion this year. The club has not yet determined whether he will be available for the postseason.

Kim first injured his left hamstring on opening day, March 22, against the NC Dinos, sidelining him for a month. After returning on April 25, he suffered a Grade 2 strain in his right hamstring while attempting a steal against the Kiwoom Heroes on May 27, keeping him out for over two months. He made his latest comeback on August 2, only to be injured again after just three games.

The 23-year-old was a breakout star last season, hitting .347 with 38 home runs in 141 games and earning the KBO MVP award. However, this season has been underwhelming, with Kim appearing in just 30 games, hitting .309 with seven home runs and 27 RBIs.

The setback could also impact Kim's long-term MLB ambitions. While he cannot be posted until after the 2028 season, repeated hamstring injuries could hurt his value, and scouts are likely aware of his medical history.

In a separate move to strengthen their bullpen ahead of the trade deadline, Kia completed a three-for-three deal with the NC Dinos, sending outfielders Choi Won-jun and Lee Woo-seong, along with infielder Hong Jong-pyo, in exchange for pitchers Kim Si-hoon and Han Jae-seung, plus infielder Jeong Hyun-chang. The move comes as the Tigers' relievers have struggled with fatigue and late-game ERA spikes.

Despite regaining key injured players recently, Kia's road performance remains inconsistent. The gap between their home and away results is particularly stark, a concern the club must address to maintain their title challenge.

Gwangju FC Bring in Icelandic Striker

Iranian champions Esteghlal FC have announced the signing of winger Jasir Asani,



Gwangju FC's new signing, Fridjónsson. (Gwangju FC)

who will join the club following the expiration of his contract with Gwangju FC. Esteghlal stated they will work to bring him to Tehran as soon as possible.

In response to Asani's departure, Gwangju FC have signed Icelandic forward Hólmbert Aron Fridjónsson to fill the attacking void. Standing at 196 cm and weighing 85 kg, Fridjónsson brings a combination of strength and agility to the squad.

Fridjónsson began his career with HK Kópavogs in Iceland before moving to Scottish giants Celtic, and later gaining experience on loan at Denmark's Brøndby IF. He enjoyed a prolific spell in Norway with Aalesunds FK, scoring 39 goals in 71 appearances over three seasons. He has also played for Brescia in Italy's Serie B and Holstein Kiel in Germany's Bundesliga 2.

An Iceland international since 2015, he has six caps and two goals. Speaking to the media, Fridjónsson said, "I'm excited to take on the challenge of playing in Korea. I want to experience the high level of the K League and its culture, and I hope to contribute by scoring goals for Gwangju."


Gwangju FC hope Fridjónsson will spark a turnaround in the second half of the season. His arrival comes as another foreign attacker, Gabriel, departs the club. Gabriel joined Gwangju in January 2024 and made an immediate impact, scoring on his K League debut against FC Seoul. The Brazilian forward scored eight goals and registered six assists in 34 appearances last season before undergoing knee surgery. He returned this year but failed to score in eight appearances, leading to his release.

AI Peppers Overhaul Roster Amid Uncertain Rebuild

American outside hitter Zoe Weatherington has arrived in South Korea ahead of the 2025–26 V-League season, joining the AI Peppers to strengthen their attack. Weatherington, who stands 184 cm, was selected by head coach Jang So-yeon during the KOVO women's foreign

player draft held in Istanbul on May 9. Known for her athleticism and explosive power, she will be a key addition for the team.

Speaking upon her arrival on July 29, Weatherington said, "I'm very happy, grateful, and honored to join AI Peppers. The long flight was tiring, but I'm excited to meet my teammates and the fans, and I can't wait to step onto the court." She began training with the team on August 1.

Weatherington is expected to make her first appearance for the AI Peppers in the KOVO Cup, scheduled for September 21–28 in Yeosu. The club hopes she will play a pivotal role in their bid for a stronger showing this season. 



AI Peppers' new recruit, Zoe Weatherington, arrives in Korea. (AI Peppers)

The Author



Zhang Jiuzhou (Julius) is from Harbin, China. He began writing in 2022 and has contributed to the Chinese media in Gwangju. He concurrently serves at a sports data company. He is pursuing a master's degree in media and communications and is responsible for the Chinese Students Association at Chonnam National University.

September Upcoming Events

EXHIBITIONS

Special Exhibition in Celebration of the ACC's 10th Anniversary: "Masters of New York: The Generation of Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, and Krasner"



Dates: July 18 (Fri.) – October 9 (Thu.)

Time: Tuesday to Sunday
10:00 a.m. – 6 p.m.

*Last admission at 5 p.m.;

Wednesdays & Saturdays
10:00 a.m. – 8 p.m.

*Last admission at 7 p.m.
(Closed on Mondays)

Venue: ACC, Space 6

Ticket Prices: Adults 13,000 won, Teenagers & Children 10,000 won, Free for children under 48 months

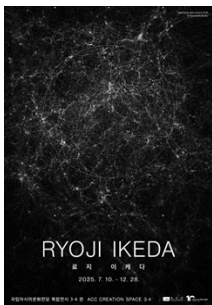
Admission: All ages admitted

Reservations: ACC Foundation website,
TicketLink, Interpark

Inquiries: 1899-5566.

*For group reservations (20 people or more),
contact 02-312-7613

2025 ACC Focus "Ryoji Ikeda"



Dates: July 10 – December 28

Times: Tuesday to Sunday

10:00 a.m. – 6 p.m.;

Wednesdays & Saturdays

10:00 a.m. – 8 p.m.

(Closed on Mondays)

Venue: ACC, Space 3 &
Space 4

Admission: Free, all ages

*This exhibition features intense light, high-frequency sounds, and rapid video transitions that may cause strong sensory stimulation. If you are sensitive to light or have photosensitive or auditory conditions, please take special care when viewing the exhibition.

A World Unveiled by Monsoons: Port Cities of Southeast Asia



Dates: January 30, 2024 –
February 1, 2026

Times: Tuesday to Sunday
at 10:00 a.m. – 6 p.m.;

Wednesdays & Saturdays

at 10:00 a.m. – 8 p.m.

(Closed on Mondays)

Venue: ACC, Asia Culture

Museum Permanent

Exhibition Room 1

Admission: Free, all ages

Inquiries: 1899-5566

2025 National Science Museum Joint Special Exhibition: "The Amazing World of the Brain"



Date: July 24 – September 21

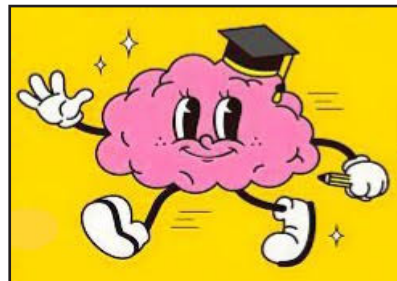
Venue: Gwangju National
Science Museum, Special
Exhibition Hall

Ticket Prices: Adults 6,000
won; Ages 7–19, 6,000
won; Children under 6,
4,000 won (Free for
infants under 36 months)

Admission: All ages admitted

Reservations: Not required. Onsite ticketing.

Inquiries: 062-960-6210/6122



2025 Gwangju Design Biennale



Dates: August 30 – November 2
Times: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
*Last entry 5:30 p.m.
(Closed on Mondays.
*September 1 & October 6 open as usual)
Venue: Main Exhibition Hall,
Gwangju Design Biennale

Ticket Prices: Adults 16,000 won; Teenagers 8,000 won; Children 5,000 won (Free admission for children 3 and under)

Admission: All ages admitted

Reservations: Interpark

Inquiries: 062-608-4114

CINEMA

ACC Noblesse Cinema



Date: September 11 (Thu.)
Time: 10:30 a.m.
Duration: 122 min
Venue: ACC, Theater 3
Ticket Prices: Free
Admission: 15 or older
(those born in 2010 or earlier)

Reservations: No booking required. First-come, first-served basis (Onsite registration)

*On-site entry on the day of the event is allowed depending on seat availability.

Inquiries: 1899-5566

FESTIVALS

The 5th Gwangju Boys & Girls Choir Festival



Date: September 6 (Sat.)
Time: 5:00 p.m.
Venue: Gwangju Culture and Arts Center, Grand Theater
Ticket Prices: 5,000 won
Admission: Age 4 and up
Reservation: TicketLink
Inquiries: 062-613-8246

The 7th GAC Art Festival Graje Children's Pool & Archery Experience



Date: September 13 (Sat.)
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Venue: Gwangju Culture and Arts Center, Lawn Area in front of the Grand Theater
Admission: Free, all ages
Inquiries: 062-613-8333

The 7th GAC Art Festival Graje Children's DJ Party Boom Boom Show & Bubble Magic Show



Date: September 13 (Sat.)
Time: 4:00–5:40 p.m.
Duration: 100 min.
(incl. 20 min. break)
Venue: Gwangju Culture and Arts Center, Grand Theater Lobby
Admission: Free, all ages
Inquiries: 062-613-8333

The 7th GAC Art Festival Graje "Leipzig Thomanerchor"



Date: September 11 (Thu.)
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Duration: 85 min. (No intermission)
Venue: Gwangju Culture and Arts Center, Grand Theater
Ticket Prices: R Class 50,000 won; S Class 30,000; A Class 10,000

Admission: Elementary school students and up
Reservations: Gwangju Culture and Arts Center website, TicketLink (1588-7890)

Inquiries: 062-613-8235

Compiled by Charlene Lee.



Charlene Lee is the founder of Charlene English Institute. Having lived in many different countries, she loves to explore and experience diverse cultures. She hopes to contribute to making Gwangju a more vibrant city.

2025 광주디자인비엔날레 GWANGJU DESIGN BIENNALE 2025 8.30.-11.2.

너라는 세계 YOU, THE NEW WORLD

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GWANGJU CITY

 광주비엔날레
GWANGJU BIENNALE



광주비엔날레
GWANGJU BIENNALE

Venue: Gwangju Biennale Exhibition Hall

Hosts: Gwangju Metropolitan City / Gwangju Biennale Foundation