



Gangwon-do

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Why Go?

Mountainous Gangwon-do (강원도) gives you some of South Korea's most spectacular landscapes, up-close Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) experiences, and laid-back coastal towns and beaches on the East Sea. This is where many Seoulites escape – to get lost in the mountains, to chow down on Chuncheon's fiery chicken dish *dakgalbi* or the raw fish of the coastal towns, or to leap into a frenzy of sports such as skiing in Pyeongchang county, host of the 2018 Winter Olympics.

While the province may not have that much by way of cultural antiquities, what it does have – Gangneung's 400-year-old Dano Festival, for instance – it celebrates with zest. And Gangwon-do can be quirky too. Near Samcheok you'll find a park full of unabashed phallic sculptures standing cheek by jowl with a humble fishing village, while Gangneung has a museum dedicated to its founder's lifelong obsession with all things Edison.

Best Places to Eat

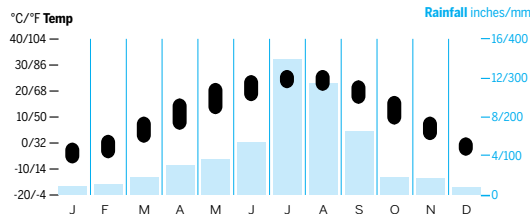
- 88 (p126)
- Byoldang Makguksu (p122)
- Todam Sundubu (p137)

Best Places to Stay

- House Hostel (p125)
- Kensington Stars Hotel (p133)
- Chuncheon Tourist Hotel (p122)
- Haslla Museum Hotel (p139)

When to Go

Chuncheon



Jan–Mar This is the best time to hit the ski slopes at Yongpyong and Alpensia.

Jun–mid-Aug Head to Gyeongpo from mid-July to enjoy beach season.

Oct–Nov Feast your eyes on the autumn colours at Seoraksan National Park.

History

Gangwon-do is the southern half of a province that once straddled the border (the North Korean half is romanised as Kangwon-do). Some areas north of the 38th parallel belonged to North Korea from 1945 till the end of the Korean War, and it's not

uncommon to come across families with relatives in North Korea.

During the war this province saw many fierce battles for strategic mountaintops. Subsequently its rich natural resources, such as coal and timber, were industrialised, spurring the development of road and rail links. When many coal mines closed in



Gangwon-do Highlights

1 Climbing through the stunning, misty mountains of **Seoraksan National Park** (p129).

2 Peering into North Korea at **Goseong Unification Observatory** (p127), the northernmost point of the DMZ.

3 Getting your fill of quirky at the **Chamsori**

Gramophone & Edison Museum (p135) and of phallic sculptures at **Haesindang Park** (p144).

4 Crawling around in a real North Korean submarine at the **Unification Park** (p138).

5 Marvelling at the limestone wonders of cathedral-like cave **Hwansongul** (p144).

6 Making a pilgrimage to the mountaintop altar to Dangun in **Taebaeksan Provincial Park** (p144).

7 Taking the kids skiing at the 2018 Winter Olympic venues in Pyeongchang's **Yongpyong** (p140) and **Alpensia** (p139) ski resorts.