Chungcheongbuk-do

**Why Go?**

The only landlocked province in the South, Chungbuk (충청북도) as it’s known informally, is largely mountainous and agricultural. The province is a sleepy sort of place and its major cities are not particularly compelling, though bibliophiles may be inclined to make a pilgrimage to Cheongju, where in 1377 Buddhist monks printed the world’s oldest extant book with moveable metal type.

The province’s charms can better be appreciated in its smaller towns and three national parks, which are also home to an assortment of intriguing Buddhist sites. There’s plenty to see and do here: climb the azalea-covered peaks of Sobaeksan, descend into the otherworldly caverns of Gosu Donggul, or simply savour the views along the river and at nearby Chungju Lake. Visit Guin-sa, a Buddhist temple ensconced in a tight valley, as imposing as the mountain slopes on either side of it. If you have a few days to while away, this is the place to do it.

**When to Go**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Temp</th>
<th>Rainfall</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>-20/14</td>
<td>4/100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>-10/14</td>
<td>8/200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>10/50</td>
<td>12/300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul</td>
<td>20/68</td>
<td>16/400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>30/86</td>
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</tbody>
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**Best Places to Eat**

- Sangdangjip (p291)
- Satgatchon (p296)
- Doljip Sikdang (p299)

**Best Places to Stay**

- Birosanjang (p294)
- Hotel Lin (p291)
- Rivertel (p299)

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Like most provincial capitals, Cheongju (http://english.cjcity.net) - not to be confused with nearby Chungju - is not terribly captivating. Its primary claim to fame is as the place where the world's oldest book was printed using moveable metal type.

As a modern city it’s somewhat redeemed by a youthful vibe, thanks to its universities, but if not for its proximity to Songnisan National Park and presidential villa Cheongnamdae, there’d be little reason to stop here.

Chungcheongbuk-do Highlights

1. Wake up to glorious mountain views in Danyang (p298)
2. Hike up nearby Sobaeksan (p300), where azaleas bloom in May
3. Sign up for a Templestay at bustling Guin-sa (p300), a modern but awe-inspiring hillside temple complex
4. Admire the gold-plated Buddha at Beopju-sa in Songnisan National Park (p293), then overnight at a charming yeogwan (motel) beside a burbling river
5. Meditate on ancient Buddhist carvings and the evocative ruins of Mireuksaji at Woraksan National Park (p297)
6. Soothe your stresses at an oncheon (hot-spring spa) in Suanbo (p296)
7. Admire the scenery as you cruise down Chungju Lake (p295)
8. Learn all about the Jikji, the first book printed by movable type, in the province’s capital of Cheongju (p293)