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Gyeongju, Korea's Ancient Capital for a Thousand Years

-By Kim Juhee (CIR from Korea)-

When you think of tourist destinations in Korea, what comes to mind? Seoul, Busan, or Jeju Island?

Of course, these are all wonderful places with plenty to see and enjoy.

Today, I'd like to introduce a destination well-known to Koreans but less familiar to many in Japan.

That place is **Gyeongju**.

Gyeongju was the capital of the Silla Kingdom, and because it remained the capital for about a thousand years, it is often referred to as "the Ancient Capital of a Thousand Years."

You can think of it as having a similar atmosphere to Kyoto in Japan, which may make it easier to picture.

It is such a beloved city that many elementary school trips from across the country (outside Gyeongju) are held there. The historical value of Gyeongju is so significant that much of the city is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

I'd like to introduce a few places you should definitely visit when you go to Gyeongju.

1. Daereungwon (Tumuli Park)

Daereungwon in Gyeongju is an area where burial mounds from the Silla Dynasty are concentrated, with 23 tombs of various sizes gathered in one place.

The most famous among them is Cheonmachong (the Heavenly Horse Tomb), where a gold crown and many other artifacts were unearthed,



▲ Entrance to Cheonmachong

Photo credit: Korea Tourism Organization



▲ Panoramic view of Daereungwon

Photo credit: Korea Tourism Organization

offering a glimpse into the sophistication of Silla culture.

Here, you can experience the grandeur of Silla's history and its ancient funerary traditions.

2. Donggung Palace and Wolji Pond

Donggung Palace and Wolji Pond served as a secondary palace where the princes of the Silla royal family once lived.

The site is especially famous for the breathtaking beauty of Wolji Pond when it is illuminated at night. The garden surrounding the pond and the traditional buildings reflect the palace culture of the Silla period.

This place evokes the luxury and tranquility of royal life in ancient times and offers beautiful scenery throughout all four seasons.

As a spot where history and nature blend harmoniously, it is cherished by many visitors.



▲ Donggung Palace and Wolji Pond
Illuminated at Night
Photo credit: Gyeongju Cultural Tourism

3. Bulguksa Temple and Seokguram Grotto



▲ Dabotap Pagoda at Bulguksa Temple
Photo credit: Gyeongju Cultural Tourism

Bulguksa Temple is a representative Buddhist temple from the Silla period, renowned for its beautiful architecture and intricate Buddhist carvings.

In 1995, Bulguksa Temple, together with Seokguram Grotto, was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site—the first in Korea.

Seokguram Grotto is a Buddhist site of outstanding artistic value, featuring a Buddha statue and intricate carvings inside an artificial cave.

Both Bulguksa Temple and Seokguram Grotto represent the essence of Silla Buddhist culture and are regarded as important heritage sites in the history of Korean Buddhism.

It is a place where visitors can experience tranquility within a peaceful and solemn atmosphere.



▲ Main Buddha Statue of Seokguram
Photo credit: Gyeongju Cultural Tourism

4. Hwangnidan-gil

Hwangnidan-gil is a lively district where young people and visitors gather in Gyeongju. Traditional Korean houses, *hanok*, line the streets, and the area is filled with charming craft shops, stylish cafés, and plenty of delicious food—perfect for strolling and snacking as you explore.

Korea, with a climate similar to Japan's, is an ideal destination in autumn, offering beautiful fall foliage throughout the season.

Gyeongju can be reached from Kagoshima in about two and a half hours: approximately an hour and a half by direct flight to Incheon Airport, followed by a one-hour ride on the high-speed KTX train from Seoul Station.

Why not make Gyeongju your next destination in Korea?



▲ Hwangnidan-gil Street View

Photo credit: Korea Tourism Organization

02 Activities of the Governor

12 Oct: Governor's Middle East Top Sales

– Visit to the Embassy of Japan in Saudi Arabia

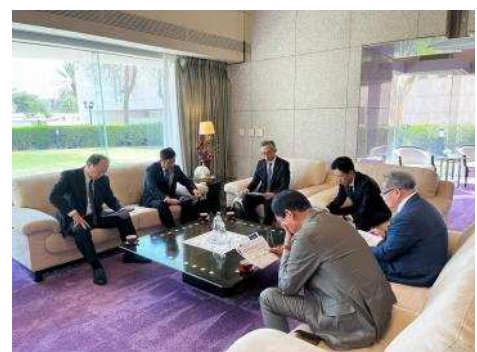
We paid a courtesy visit to the Embassy of Japan in Saudi Arabia, where we exchanged views with Ambassador Yasunari Morino and the JETRO Riyadh Office on the country's economic situation, the spread of Japanese cuisine, and the potential for exporting products from our prefecture.

They explained that the country's large youth population is emerging as a key driver of consumption and that health-conscious trends are growing.

Japanese cuisine is recognized as a form of high-end dining, and while interest in wagyu beef and matcha is strong, the differences between authentic Japanese products and those from other countries are not yet widely recognized.

With upcoming events such as the World Expo and the FIFA World Cup in Saudi Arabia, further economic growth is anticipated.

We felt that high-quality products from our prefecture—such as wagyu beef, farmed yellowtail, and tea—have promising potential in this expanding market.



▲ Meeting with Ambassador Yasunari Morino
at the Embassy of Japan in Saudi Arabia

– Visit to the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture of Saudi Arabia

At the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture of Saudi Arabia, we met with Deputy Minister for Agriculture **Suliman Al-Khateeb** and exchanged views on potential collaboration with our prefecture and the prospects for exporting our local products.

The Deputy Minister explained that the country is working to improve its food self-sufficiency and expressed strong interest in the production techniques of our agricultural and marine products. He also noted that wagyu beef and matcha from other countries are already available in the Saudi market.

I conveyed our intention to deliver properly certified wagyu beef, farmed yellowtail, matcha, and other products from our prefecture to Saudi Arabia.

The meeting gave us a clear sense of Saudi Arabia's expectations for strengthening cooperation with Japan in the fields of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.



▲ With Deputy Minister for Agriculture
Suliman Al-Khateeb



▲ Exchange of views at the Ministry of
Environment, Water and Agriculture

– Attended a Japan Food Promotion Event

We attended the opening ceremony of the “**Japan Delicious Food Festival 2025**”, hosted by the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Zenkokuren), held at the large Riyadh supermarket **Wemart**. At the ceremony, we joined the ribbon-cutting ceremony alongside Wemart President Sun, Ambassador Yasunari Morino, Zenkokuren Chairman Yoshihisa Mori, and others.

At the reception that followed, I introduced our prefecture as Japan's top producer of globally popular foods such as wagyu beef, farmed yellowtail, and tea.

The event featured selected products from across Japan, including wagyu beef and specialty confectionery from our prefecture.

In particular, the tasting of Kagoshima wagyu drew long lines of local visitors, creating a lively and vibrant atmosphere.



▲Ribbon-cutting ceremony



▲Venue scene (live wagyu tasting)

13 Oct: Governor's Middle East Top Sales – Hosted a Prefectural Product Promotion Reception at the Official Residence of the Consul-General of Japan in Dubai

With the cooperation of Consul-General **Jun Imanishi** of the Consulate-General of Japan in Dubai, we hosted a reception at the Consul-General's residence to showcase our prefecture's products—focusing on tea, farmed yellowtail, and wagyu beef.

Approximately 80 guests attended, including representatives of local trading companies, restaurant buyers and chefs, and travel industry professionals.

At the reception, we set up booths where local businesses also participated.

Guests enjoyed tastings that included a demonstration of organic matcha preparation, Western-style dishes featuring yellowtail and striped jack, and a live cooking demonstration of wagyu steak by a chef.

The strong interest shown by attendees toward our prefectural products reaffirmed the strong potential of our prefectural products in the local market.



▲Commemorative photo with Consul-General Jun Imanishi



▲Scene from the PR reception venue

15 Oct: Visit by the Ambassador of Viet Nam to Japan

Ambassador **Pham Quang Hieu** of Viet Nam paid a courtesy visit to the Kagoshima Prefectural Government.

The Ambassador expressed his desire to further strengthen the relationship between Viet Nam and Kagoshima in various areas, including human resource exchange, regional cooperation, and the operation of air routes between Viet Nam and Kagoshima.

I conveyed my gratitude for Viet Nam's support in promoting exchanges with our prefecture to date and expressed our commitment to further deepening bilateral and regional ties moving forward.



▲With Ambassador Pham Quang Hieu of Viet Nam



▲Commemorative photo with members of the Embassy of Viet Nam

15 Oct: Visit by the Consul General of India in Fukuoka

Consul-General Ramakumar of India in Fukuoka, who visited Kagoshima to deliver a lecture at the prefecture-hosted *"Indian Human Resources – Opportunities for Japan,"* paid a courtesy call on the Kagoshima Prefectural Government.

The Consul-General noted that India has many skilled individuals who could play active roles in various fields in Kagoshima, and expressed his intention to support both the expansion of opportunities for Indian talent in the prefecture and the promotion of Kagoshima products in the Indian market.

I conveyed my appreciation for his lecture at the prefecture's event and requested his continued cooperation in further strengthening relations between Kagoshima and India. I also mentioned my wish to deepen my understanding of the characteristics of India's diverse states, given the country's vast geography.



▲ With Consul-General Ramakumar during the courtesy meeting

▲ Commemorative photo with Consul-General Ramakumar

25 Oct: Participated in the International Summit on Grey-Faced Buzzard 2025 Ukenson in Amami Oshima

I attended the **International Summit on Grey-faced Buzzard 2025** in Ukenson, Amami Oshima on October 25.

The summit, held for the first time in Kagoshima Prefecture, aimed to promote the conservation of the grey-faced buzzard, a rare migratory bird that crosses the sea. The event was a great success, attracting many researchers and representatives from related municipalities both from Japan and abroad, as well as numerous local residents.

Various booths from local businesses were also set up, allowing visitors to experience and enjoy the many charms of Amami Oshima.

Through this summit, I hope that international and domestic collaboration for the conservation of the grey-faced buzzard will deepen, and that efforts to protect rare species and biodiversity on Amami Oshima will continue to progress.



▲ Scene from the summit venue



▲ A grey-faced buzzard

03 International Relations of Kagoshima

19 Oct: “Asian Kagoshima 2025” event held

Today, Asia accounts for roughly 60 percent of the world's population and is an economically vital region. The 21st century is often referred to as the “Asian Century.” In this context, exchanges with Asian countries and regions—which have deep geographical and historical ties with Kagoshima City—are becoming increasingly important.

Since 2006, the Kagoshima Asia Youth Arts Festival Executive Committee has been hosting the “Kagoshima Asia Youth Arts Festival,” which brings together young people from Asian countries and regions, as well as youth from Kagoshima City. Through music-centered artistic exchange, the festival aims to nurture international awareness among young people, foster pride in their hometown and strong aspirations for the future, and promote international exchange among local citizens.

(Quoted from *the Kagoshima City International Exchange Promotion Center website*)

On the day of the event, the venue featured regional folk dances, traditional musical instruments, choral performances, and stage presentations themed on Asia, along with numerous food stalls and hands-on activity booths.



▲ Scene from the venue ▲

04 Events Happening in Kagoshima

25–26 Oct: Myoenji Mairi(a pilgrimage to Myoenji Temple)

Myoenji-mairi is a traditional event in which participants walk about 20 kilometers from Kagoshima City to Ijūin in Hioki City to visit the temple.

This practice began when samurai in Kagoshima, honoring Lord Yoshihiro—who broke through enemy lines and struggled to return home after the Battle of Sekigahara—made a pilgrimage to Myoenji Temple, his family temple.

On the night of September 14 (old calendar), the eve of the battle, they would walk the 40-kilometer round trip in full armor, through the night, as a way to honor him, strengthen their morale during peacetime, and cultivate discipline.

It eventually became one of the three major annual events in Kagoshima.

Today, more than 50,000 people take part, enjoying local performing arts, martial arts demonstrations, and a family-friendly walking rally.



● Photo courtesy of the Kagoshima Prefectural Visitors Bureau Foundation.

Editor's note

(International Affairs Division, Kagoshima Prefecture, Tourism, Culture and Sports Department)

In Kagoshima, the mornings and evenings have grown noticeably colder.

At the Senbon Ginkgo Garden in Tarumizu City, nighttime illuminations have begun, offering visitors to enjoy a magical, glowing landscape. 🌟

Ginkgo trees are classified as male or female. Female trees produce orange ginkgo nuts, which ripen in autumn and emit a distinctive odor. To prevent streets from getting dirty with fallen ginkgo nuts, male trees are now commonly chosen for planting as street trees. 🌲

With the year-end and New Year season approaching, it's a busy time for everyone. This period can also be challenging for one's health, so please take good care of yourselves.

We hope you enjoy the next issue as well! ★

The Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings is accepting submissions on the following topics:

☆**Kagoshima Photo Gallery**

We are looking for photos that have a Kagoshima feel to them, or photos of Kagoshima you have found overseas. Please send them with a brief description of the photo (e.g., Mountain of volcano ash collection bags).

We are also accepting any other information or stories you would like to share with our readers.

▲▽ Submissions · Inquiries ▼▲

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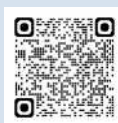
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-Discover Kagoshima- Official Travel Guide:

<https://www.kagoshima-kankou.com/>



Kagoshima Prefectural Office



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