

# SONGNISAN NATIONAL PARK

**Songnisan National** is located in the center of the Sobaek Mountains range, on the border between the provinces of Chungcheongbuk-do and Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea. The area comprises the valleys of Hwayang, Seonyu, and Ssanggok and the 1,058-metre (3,471 ft) mountain Songnisan, which has given the park its name. It was designated as the country's sixth national park in 1970. The park's most popular attraction is one of Korea's largest temples, the Buddhist temple Beopjusa, initially constructed in 653.



Songnisan (the Korean letters spell out "Sokrisan" but the name is actually pronounced "Songnisan") became a national park in 1970. It is the sixth-largest of Korea's mountain parks with an area of 275 km<sup>2</sup>. The name means "Remote from the Ordinary World"—a reference to its somewhat isolated position in the very center of South Korea. The mountains belong to the southern arm of the greater Sobaek Range, and the park lies on the border between North Chungcheong and North Gyeongsang Provinces.

In 1999, someone decided to cash in on the name of a famous set of mountains in Europe by dubbing the ridge that connects Gubyeongsan, Songnisan, Gwaneumbong and Sanhakbong the Chungbuk Alps. The name is a little misleading, as the highest mountain here is only a humble 1,058 meters. On the English brochure available at the tourist center in the Songni-dong Bus Terminal building, it states: "A hiking path was opened and transformed into a commercial product." This perhaps says something about how Koreans view their mountains and is a hint that hiking here might not always be peaceful and relaxing. The park gets about 1.5 million visitors a year.

Songnisan is very scenic. On wet days clouds often catch in the valleys between the mountains, creating a dramatic layered effect. In the spring, the area is known for the brilliant pink azaleas that bloom on the mountainsides. The mountains have a craggy look, with many interesting granite outcroppings and cliffs.

Songnisan National Park was designated as the sixth national park in Korea in 1970 and was called “Second Geumgang” or “Sogeumgang (Small Geumgang)” because of its spectacular beauty. This rocky mountain is located across many areas in Chungbuk and Gyeongbuk provinces and spans across a total area of 274.541 km<sup>2</sup>. The main peaks Cheonwangbong, Birobong, and Munjangdae are connected along the baekdudaegan mountain ranges (Backbone of Korea) with well developed stone peaks and ridges. Songnisan is connected to other adjacent mountains, and based around Cheonwangbong (1,058 m) in the south, eight peaks are stretched out like a bow including Birobong, Munjangdae, and Gwaneumbong.



Songnisan has natural treasures such as the Jeongipumsong (a pine tree that, in Korean legend, was awarded the rank of minister by King Sejo), otter, flying squirrel, and mandarin duck. In addition, there are many bird species that are designated for the purpose of protection by the Ministry of Environment as well as endangered animals such as the small-eared cat and marten. Moreover, a variety of native fish species live in the streams flowing into Geumgang, Nakdonggang, and Hangang.

## PARK DETAILS

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The park total area is 234.5 km<sup>2</sup> and is divided into three areas. These are Beopjusa, Hwayang, and Hwabuk. Over 1000 species of fauna live in the park and there are at least 830 species of flora. There are a total of 9 peaks, and 17 known temples.

The Beopjusa Buddhist temple is the largest temple in central Korea and home to several Korean national treasures and the world's largest bronze Buddha.

Before the entrance, and on the hillsides above the Beopjsua temple there are many sculptures of turtles. One can be seen in the river just down stream of the temple and it is made from three boulders. One boulder with carved eyes representing the head and two representing the front flippers.