Time Travel to the Land of Baekje

The Seoul Baekje Museum exhibits the ancient history of Seoul and more

Looking for an exciting way to learn about Korean history – one that doesn’t involve a textbook? Head to the Seoul Baekje Museum, which covers the history of Baekje, the first kingdom of Korea to occupy the Han River during the Three Kingdoms Period.

The Seoul Baekje Museum exhibits Seoul’s ancient history, the main focus being on the Hanseong period of Baekje, which was the first state in Korea to choose Seoul as its capital. Along with Baekje’s history, the museum displays the ancient history of the Korean peninsula with a large and fascinating collection of relics and materials.

Based on Hanseong (Seoul) Baekje, the museum also focuses on the history of Ungjin Baekje (when Baekje’s capital was in Ungjin, which is now the city of Gongju) and Sabi Baekje (when Baekje’s capital was in Sabi, which is now Buyeo County).

According to Baekje’s foundation myth, the name of the kingdom was derived from baekgajehae (“numerous people crossed the sea to reach the land”) or baekseongnakjong (“people followed happily”).

Baekje was founded by King Onjo, who originated from Goguryeo and whose mother was So Seo-no, who re-married Goguryeo’s founder, Jumong. Onjo’s stepfather Jumong established his position by marrying the daughter of a powerful native tribe. Although Jumong cared for So’s sons Onjo and Biryu, he handed over the throne to his own son, Yuri, who came from Buyeo to find his father. Then, Onjo and Biryu left their hometown to found their own kingdoms – Biryu settled in Michuhol (now, Incheon) and Onjo in Saekriguk, which was part of the Mahan confederacy.

Starting from the land of Mahan, Baekje developed quickly around the Han River region and the surrounding fertile lands by trading with other countries, such as Japan and China. The first capital of Baekje was Wiryeseong (the old name for Hanseong). Hanseong included Bukseong (i.e. Pungnapseong Fortress, where the palace was) and Namseong (i.e. Mongchontoseong Fortress, where the royal villa was) as well as cities outside the two fortresses and areas neighboring the ancient royal tombs in Seokchon-dong. Those two fortresses were so well built that they have survived for many centuries. The first relic visitors to the Seoul Baekje Museum will see is a cross-section of the wall taken from Pungnapseong Fortress.

After passing by the lobby with this cross-section of the fortress, you get to Exhibition Hall 1. Here you can learn about Seoul’s ancient history, from the Paleolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Ages to the establishment of the Three Han States (Mahan, Jinhan and Byeonhan).

Exhibition Hall 2 displays the capital city of Hanseong, along with detailed explanations of Baekje’s history. The hall is focused on the period of fierce rivalry between the Three Kingdoms. Hall 3 displays various relics, including a replica of a trading ship. After the Three Kingdoms Period, the exhibition moves on to the epilogue, where you can learn the story of Seoul, which has been the capital of the Korean peninsula in one form or another for some 2,000 years.

Admission to the Seoul Baekje Museum is free. The museum also shows a movie or a musical every weekend. Hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays, and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Nov - Feb) and 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. (March – Oct.) on weekends and public holidays. The museum is closed every Monday.

Information

Seoul Baekje Museum
Address: 71, Wiryeseong-daero, Songpa-gu, Seoul (inside Olympic Park)
Contact: +82-2-2152-5800

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http://english.visitkorea.or.kr