

Blog 10

Gwangju – Local Flavour

Sometimes the long week of the World Championships allows a day here and there where we are able to have a wander to nearby places to enjoy the local atmosphere and food.

Tea Korean Style

They say that Korean green tea is far better than the Chinese or Japanese teas that we have been accustomed to - deeper and richer. In late spring, the fresh leaves have a bright green colour. To make green tea, the leaves are dried within a few hours of picking. Tea is a staple of the hillsides of the south west – the Gwangju area. The tea makers are meticulous about hand-drying the leaves of the best and most expensive teas. The 3 teas offered on local menus are Ujeon, Sejak and Jungjak. Tea connoisseurs should taste them all and become experts. Have fun. Maybe next time, we will consider other brews.

Around Gwangju

Gwangju, South Korea's sixth largest city, is an ancient place which stands tall for its reputation as the best (and most) food in the Republic.

The long history of good food stems from 2 factors:

1. The food from nearby Honan plain is of top quality
2. In the past, local landlords realised the necessity of keeping standards high.

Traffic in the evening tends to decrease and streets become more pedestrianised – a bit more like Europe's piazzas, where people can stroll and socialise, as well as EAT!

Nearby are listed a few places close by if you have time to spare to get out of town.



Mudeungsan Mountain overlooks the city and is worth a visit. The word means “peerless” and it seems that its tranquillity is its reason for being. There is a temple called Jeungsimsu and nearby, the monks cultivated green tea for its purity and because it helped their concentration. It also is supposed to purify the blood. The small, tender leaves must be cut at an early growth stage, steamed and dried nine times in the early morning dew and mist. I guess the monks had a bit of time on their hands and the everlasting patience to do it. I can't wait to try it and I don't even like tea.

Damyang is the hub of bamboo-growing and is about 30 minutes by bus north of Gwangju. On market days – dates ending in (2 or 7) – the village comes alive. (editor's note – *I am not sure whether it is dead on other days*). It is made into chopsticks, carved into spoons, made into ornaments, harvested for its tender roots and immortalised in paintings and poetry. JUST DON'T PLANT IT NEAR MY PLACE!!!! There is even a Bamboo Museum there.

Naejangsan National Park

Another 30 minutes away is the park – a peaceful area and gateway to the Baegyang Temple, built in AD632 and poised like an oasis in the lush countryside.

Gwangju itself is a centre of culture. This may be why FINA decided that we all needed a bit of a cultural kick by sending us all to this far-flung outpost.

New information from FINA.

Please find below a few updates and pieces of information which will be valuable for you. This has come from FINA to me.

Credit card payments

We have taken into account your comments about transfer fees and have set up a system of credit card payment for accommodation reservations. When booking accommodation, masters participants will simply have to specify to the agency that they wish to pay by credit card instead of bank transfer. Please note that, unfortunately, the remittance fees that have already been paid will not be refundable.

“Home Visit Program”

Gwangju city government in coordination with the Gwangju International Center is running the Home Visit Program, in which foreigners visit Korean families’ homes and experience Korean culture first-hand. This program has been in operation since 2009, and the host families have attended various culture understanding programs held each year. Join this program while taking part in the 18th FINA World Masters Championships Gwangju 2019. Detail & Registration: <https://bit.ly/2Gnly4O>

Updated “transportation” information page

The section of our website dedicated to transportation information has been fully updated and should now contain all the information you and your communities will need: http://www.fina-gwangju2019.com/masters_eng/contentsView.do?pagelId=masters_eng44
Please feel free to share this link!



Which information for your needs and those of your community?

What would you like to hear more of? What are the frequently asked questions within your community? Please share these with us – we will then do our best to tailor the information we provide you with to tailor your needs as well as those of other masters participants! Finally, in order to ensure the best welcome possible to all masters athletes this summer, it is important that we know as accurately as possible how many they will be. Please remind your communities that registration is open and, the earlier they sign up and organise their travels to Gwangju, the better for them too!