

## Gwangmyeong Cave, a Space of Peace

During the Japanese colonial period, Gwangmyeong Cave was a site of exploitation where the human rights of Korean people were ruthlessly violated. The city of Gwangmyeong plans to remember the painful history surrounding Gwangmyeong Cave and create a refuge of peace in the area.

### ◆ Establishing a Refuge of Peace at the Gwangmyeong Cave Area, a Site with a Painful History

The city of Gwangmyeong plans to found a Peace Park within Gwangmyeong Culture Complex, scheduled for development near the cave, and repurpose the Resource Recovery Facility there, which has passed its period of durability, as a Peace Museum. Moreover, it hopes to slowly make progress in reimagining the cave as a space of peace by decorating its interior with peace-related content and gathering public and expert opinions on the city's various ideas and plans on recreating Gwangmyeong Cave as a refuge of peace. The city's long-term goal is to remake the cave into a site of peace where visitors can retrace history and viscerally feel the value of peace, not to simply make the cave into a tourism resource that provides visitors with tourist attractions.



### ◆ Gwangmyeong Cave's Rebirth as a Space of Peace

On May 12, 2021, the city of Gwangmyeong celebrated Gwangmyeong Cave surpassing the 6 million mark for cumulative paying visitors with a ceremony and proclaimed the cave's elevation to 'Gwangmyeong Peace Cave,' announcing internally and externally that Gwangmyeong Cave will be repurposed into Gwangmyeong Peace Cave, a space dedicated to history and peace. Furthermore, the city plans to put aside 1% of the revenue made by Gwangmyeong Cave from collecting admission fees for the 'Gwangmyeong Inter-Korean Exchange Fund' and create a Peace Park near the cave symbolizing history and peace.



## ◆ About Gwangmyeong Cave

### ▶ The Miracle Created by a Dead Mine

Once a Hub of Creation, Now a Refuge of Peace

Developed by the Japanese colonial government in 1912 for the purpose of resource exploitation, Gwangmyeong Cave (formerly Siheung Mine) was a site of forced labor and exploitation during the Japanese colonial period and is an industrial heritage that bears the marks of modernization and industrialization after Korean independence. Since its closure in 1972, the cave was used as storage for salted shrimp for over 40 years when the city of Gwangmyeong purchased the cave and transformed it into a historical and cultural tourist attraction. Gwangmyeong Cave is considered one of the best cave-themed parks in South Korea that combines industrial heritage with cultural value. The cave, once a dead mine, has achieved the awe-inspiring miracle of attracting over 1 million visitors every year.



▶ A Space of Cultural Creation Watched by the World

Its spatial distinction and rarity, combined with its cultural and artistic content, has made Gwangmyeong Cave a space that pioneers new creative cultures. With the Cave Art Center as well as nooks and crannies of the cave that display countless artworks created in collaboration with various artists, Gwangmyeong Cave evokes unimagined inspiration through new media art and light displays that make use of the space's inherent darkness. Even more, the cave's mine shaft, at one time simply considered a site of industrial operation, has been repurposed into a wine cave showcasing new cultural lifestyles. Revived as a cultural and artistic complex, the once dead Gwangmyeong Cave has become a space of cultural creation noticed not just in South Korea but around the world.



► Gold Mine, Gold Cave

Developed as a gold mine, Gwangmyeong Cave had an estimated gold deposit of 19,000 tons in 1950. According to data from the coal corporation at the time, 54kg of gold was mined between 1955 and 1972, and it is estimated that hundreds of kilograms of gold were mined until 1954 from 1912, when mining began there. The mine was closed in 1972 due to environmental pollution caused by flooding and problems related to compensation, so experts predict that there are still large amounts of gold buried within the cave.



▶ Historical Records Bearing Traces of Shackles from Modern and Contemporary Times

The dust-covered scribbles of miners found in Gwangmyeong Cave 40 years after its closure still retain their historical and industrial value. The first historical record of Gwangmyeong Cave was made in May 2, 1903, regarding the establishment of 「Siheung Mine」 in Gahak-ri. With the advent of the Japanese colonial period, the Japanese Government-General of Korea did everything in its power to pressure Emperor Gojong of the Korean Empire to install an ‘investigation agency for mineral deposits’ and monopolize any and every gold and silver mine it discovered. Subsequently, a mine was established in Gwangmyeong Cave in 1912 under the name of Kobayashi Touemon, a Japanese individual. This was probably a result of the Japanese colonial government’s seizure of Korea’s mining rights through the ‘investigation agency for mineral deposits.’ At the time, most workers in the mines were farmers forcibly conscripted and miners who came to the mine to make a living. In its heyday, over 500 miners worked at the mine. Minerals mined during the Japanese colonial period were sent to Japan and used to make weapons for the Pacific War, and a preposterous amount of minerals were plundered from Korea until its independence.



► Gwangmyeong Cave's Merit as a World Cultural Heritage Site (Preservation and Use as a Modern Industrial Heritage Site)

Despite its 110-year history, Gwangmyeong Cave has been impeccably preserved to this day, with its mining history and upper to seven underground levels, the 7.8km-long mine shaft that connects these levels, and the ore separation site located at the exterior still intact. Still remaining at the ore separation site are stone plants, built by stacking one big rock on top of another, and concrete foundations that supported fast-moving machines. They provide valuable academic material that allow scholars to analyze the industrial architectural style of those times and understand how they were used as industrial facilities.

Plus, along with the ore separation site, the underground tunnel within Gwangmyeong Cave is living historical proof that shows through its structure how the mine was developed, as well as the working environment within underground tunnels, such as ventilation. Even more, scribbles by miners covered with dust accumulated from the past 40 years since the mine's closure retain extraordinary historical and industrial merit. From a site of exploitation during the Japanese colonial period to a mine central to

modern industry, Gwangmyeong Cave possesses tangible as well as intangible value through its 110-year-long history. Now, the city of Gwangmyeong aims to recreate Gwangmyeong Cave as a space of peace commemorating painful histories and human rights, and to preserve its modern industrial heritage.



► Statue of Peace

On August 15, 2015, the city of Gwangmyeong erected the Statue of Peace at the Gwangmyeong Cave entrance to commemorate the 70-year anniversary of Korean independence. The construction of the Statue of Peace at Gwangmyeong Cave was especially meaningful, as the cave was a site of exploitation during the Japanese colonial period.





빛을 품은  
광명시

더 이상 아름다운 영산은  
남기지 않기 위해  
이 나라는 온  
지킴이입니다

광명시장  
박승원  
2021. 8. 14

yeong  
ery

ng have  
every