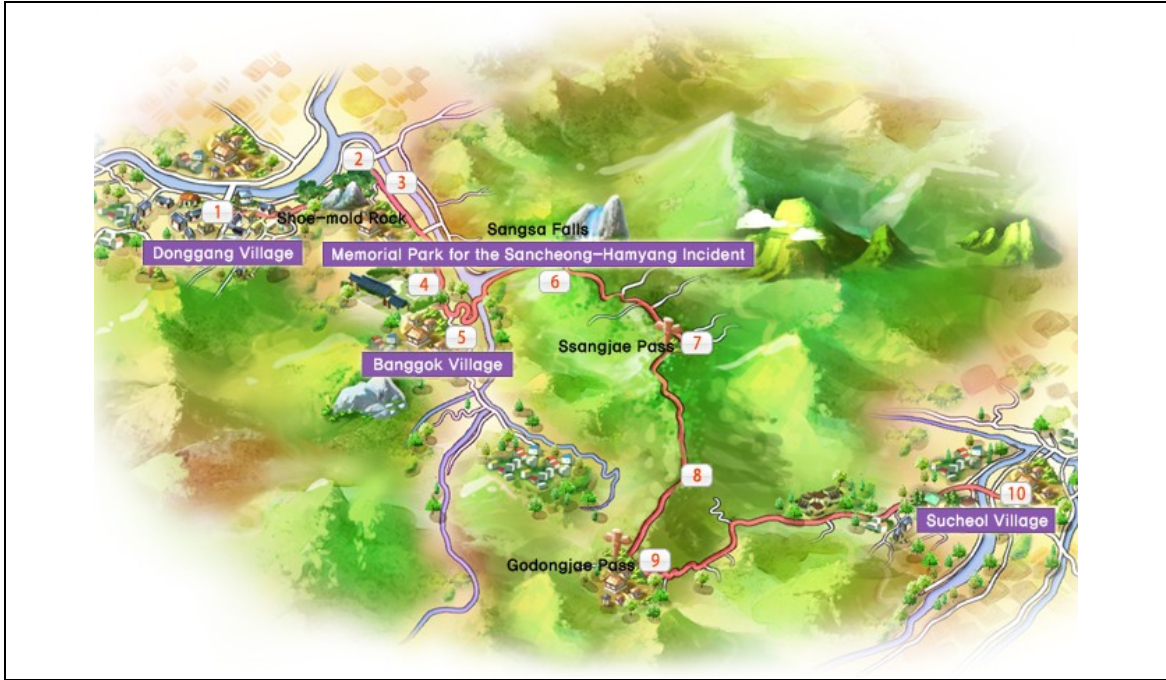


Donggang-Sucheol Section

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1. About Donggang-Sucheol Section

This is the part of the trail that connects Donggang Village and Sucheol Village. The landscape here still has scars of the Korean War. While walking along this trail, you will hear an old story about a tragedy that befell a village and its people. You will also be able to listen to many other stories that hint at the character of these country villages, and their identity that has become intertwined with the beautiful landscape of Jirisan Mountain. This route consists entirely of mountain trails, so before heading out, it'd be a good idea to make sure you've got everything ready for the trail. Are you ready to head out?

2. Donggang Village

This village with many trees is located on the bank of a small stream that flows into a nearby river.

On the mountainside behind the village is a rock that is said to preserve the peace of the village. Amusingly, the rock is shaped to resemble a man's genitals. The people of the village at one time believed that the boulder, representative of fertility, was responsible for their economic prosperity. They also believed that the rock prevented any misfortune coming their way during the Korean War.

Since the old days, the people of this famous village were known for their diligence. They not only raised livestock, but fished, caught marsh snails, set off logging on the mountain, and undertook a huge range of activities in order to eke out a living on the mountainside.

This diligence was well-rewarded and at one time, the village was quite prosperous.

3. A Shoe-mold Rock

Across from the farm, there is a rock the size of a small house. People in the old days made their everyday shoes out of straw. This rock resembles the device used to shape the straw material in order to make shoes, so it is simply known as the "Shoe-mold Rock".

Footwear made of leather is tougher and more durable, and so people who were either wealthy or from the cities preferred leather footwear. However, in this poor farming village, finding leather shoes was a difficult and formidable task, so instead of leather, people had no choice but to wear straw shoes.

In addition, as most villagers made their living by working on the farms, their shoes often got very dirty and wet. The straw shoes were a good choice of shoes for farmers as they were very breathable and dried out very quickly.

Nowadays, it's become hard to find such shoes worn in Korean farming villages, but during village festivals or ancestral rites, the custom of wearing traditional straw shoes is still very much alive.

4. The Stone Grave of an Ancient King

If you walk along the trail following the small stream, far ahead you will see a high mountain.

About 1,500 years ago on the Korean Peninsula, the last king of a kingdom saw his kingdom fall into the hands of another. After much research, we now know that this is where the king spent the remainder of his days. Therefore, this mountain is called Wangsan, literally "The King's Mountain".

While accurate historical records do not remain, investigation of the area revealed that this is where the king resided, and the mound of stones here resembles a royal grave. Shaped like a pyramid and over 7 meters in height, the tomb is constructed from elaborately stacked stones. No graves similar to this have been discovered elsewhere throughout Korea.

In a Buddhist temple at the site of the stone grave, important historical documents were once found detailing about the owner of the grave, but they disappeared during the Japanese Colonial Period. However, the shape and the sheer scale of the tomb site strongly hints that it is indeed the grave of a king.

5. Sangsa Falls

Eight meters above the boulder, water flows down over a waterfall. At this waterfall, named for the phrase "Thinking of and missing each other", we will hear a very old, sad story about two lovers and their tragic end.

There was a man and a woman who loved each other very much, but she was a noblewoman, and he but a commoner. As much as they loved each other, the woman could not overcome the opposition of her family to the match. In the end, distraught at this very rock, the young man jumped and committed suicide.

Upon hearing this, the woman went to this spot every night to grieve for her lost love. One evening, as darkness was falling, her lover appeared in front of her, his body now transformed into that of a snake. He told her that he hadn't committed suicide, but rather some unidentified assailant had pushed him off the waterfall and killed him that way.

After hearing his story, the woman grabbed him and jumped off the waterfall, holding the snake tightly against her. On the spot where they both died, they turned to stone. The noblewoman became a boulder and representing her tears, a never-ending stream of water falls onto the boulder. The man became the

stone in the valley that collects and holds the grieving woman's tears.

If you visit the area in the summer, you will see a profusion of wildflowers blooming here, so much so that the scene looks just like a painting!

6. Precious Pottery Clay

Near the top of the hill you will come to a crossroads.

In the past, merchants and people from nearby villages met here then dispersed as they went their different ways. The crossroads was a gateway for the residents of small mountain villages to travel to the larger towns nearby.

From here, you can go beyond the Dulle-gil courses, and take the trail that leads into the mountain itself. Here and there you will notice deep pits covered with grass and leaves. You will find the trail relaxing, even with all the strange holes dug in the ground, although you may be curious and wonder why they are here?

This area is famed for its large quantities of porcelain clay, which is suitable for making traditional Korean ceramic ware. In order to mine the fine clay, one has to dig at least 3 meters underground, so that explains the presence of the many deep holes nearby.

Since only rare, superior quality porcelain clay can be used to make the traditional ceramics, pottery made from this clay is extremely expensive, even today.

7. A Mountain with Two Summits

If you make the effort to reach the peak of the mountain and take a look at the view, you will see the foot of Jirisan Mountain and the peaks of many other smaller mountains around you. Nestled in the foothills of the mountains, you will also be able to make out small villages. Since the view from here is so good, a forest fire observation station was established here.

Wangsan Mountain in the north, strangely enough, has two summit markers. On the highest point of the mountain there is a stone marker erected to indicate the peak. Originally, the mountain had only a single summit and a single summit marker, but recently a nearby point was discovered to be 20cm higher than the original peak, so a summit marker was erected there as well.

8. The Stone Steps of the Dulle-gil Trail

The long trail to the top of the mountain is comprised of both a path and stone steps. The incline of the ascent is rather steep, but if you take the stone steps, it's a little less difficult. Construction of these and other stone steps along the Dulle-gil was completed with the natural environment in mind. In order to avoid environmental damage caused by transporting stones, the stone material required for the steps was sourced within a 50-meter radius.

Although the height of the steps seems only about a palm's width, the stones have been anchored approximately 50cm deep into the ground so that they will withstand heavy rains and the wear and tear of many passing boots.

The most surprising thing about this road is that it was built entirely by hand. The great efforts made to construct this and other similar mountain roads mean that they will be comfortable to walk along and accessible to many visitors.

9. The Village of Iron

This area was the site of much iron production since ancient times, so much so that at one time the kingdom that existed here was known as "the kingdom of iron." If you go to the north side of the village, you'll see that even today there are many boulders full of iron ore deposits.

Since ancient times there were many forges in the village and the craftsmen manufactured traditional vessels and agricultural tools out of cast iron. However, since the development of mass iron production methods and related products in the city's large scale factories, the village's farm forges and products have disappeared.

Its remaining draw is the river. Since by the river flowing through the village was where many of the areas iron ore deposits were found and extracted, it was once polluted and cloudy and even fish couldn't inhabit the water. However the villagers' consistent efforts have revitalized the river, so that once again fish inhabit the waterway.

The government issued the village with an award, acknowledging and thanking the villagers for their efforts, and so now the village has another source of pride. If you walk along the riverbank, you can see for yourself just how clear the water is.