

## Ulli-Deoksan Section

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### **1. The Ulli-Deoksan Section**

This is the Ulli-Deoksan Section, which travels through mountain paths for 13 kilometers. After a short stretch up the hill, you will find yourself in the middle of a small forest. It's an excellent trail to take if you want to see a lot of Jirisan Mountain. While walking on the path, you'll see the mountain's highest peak named Cheonwangbong. The path continues on to Baegun Valley, which is one of the most popular sightseeing destinations in the mountain.

### **2. Fortune-telling Tree**

There is a large tree at the entrance of the village. This tree has been regarded as a village guardian deity, and has long been worshipped by the villagers. The local people claim that they can predict the year's harvest by studying the shape of the tree's leaves. The thickness of the leaves and the location of new buds are the telling signs they say. Based on these the villagers would make preparations for the year.

If the leaves grow fast, it means that the weather would be fair with enough rain. So it's a good sign. But if there are less leaves, it means that there won't be enough rain for their crops. A drought is always bad news for farmers.

### **3. Oak Forest**

This path goes through one of the most popular oak forests in this area. So it could be a good opportunity for you to take a stroll in the forest. In the forest, you'll notice that there are many different types of oak trees, with differently shaped leaves.

Oak trees bear acorns, and Koreans make jelly out of them. In the past, when people didn't have enough food to eat, they came up with the idea to make acorn jelly because there were plenty of acorns in the mountains. Today, good acorn jelly is a healthy delicacy loved by many. You can try it at one of the many restaurants in and around Jirisan Mountain.

Sadly for acorn jelly lovers, there are not many oak forests left in Korea. It's because most Koreans preferred pine trees over oak trees, and used oak trees for firewood for many years.

### **4. Traces of Wild Boars**

Chances are, you'll find some trees stripped of bark while walking in the forest. If you look closely, you'll see that some parts of the trunk were rubbed off by wild boars, because of their hair still on the surface. It's because

after mud bathing, the boars rub their body against the trunk of the tree to get rid of insects that are making them itchy. It's also in their nature to leave their scent to mark their territory.

### **5. Osolgil Path**

This long, narrow path runs through the woods. Paths like this are called *osolgil* in Korean, and there are different stories about how the name originated.

Some say the name comes from a Korean word meaning “lonely”, while others say it actually means "*osori*", or badger in Korean. They claim that it's none other than the badgers that made the narrow, natural trails by going back and forth. Others argue that it may mean a “secret meeting point for lovers,” or “path through a pine forest.”

### **6. Breathtaking Scenery**

You will come across an opening with a beautiful view of the valley on your way through the forest. The valley is called Baegundong, and it is considered to be one of the most beautiful spots in Jirisan Mountain. And it is probably the most beautiful place in the Ulli-Deoksan Section.

There is another path here that leads to Baegun Village, which is a little off from Dulle-gil. It's a 2-kilometer long path to the village on the opposite side of the forest trails.

### **7. Village Surrounded by Mountains**

When you reach the village located at the end of the valley, you will see a towering cliff that surrounds the village like a gigantic folding screen.

A long time ago, there was a populated village at the foot of the summit. Although tucked away in the woods, the mountain village had enough sunlight and open fields for farming. Together with the location and nature's gifts, it was an ideal place to lead a quiet life.

But when the Korean War broke out and soldiers came, a majority of the villagers were forced to move out because it served as an excellent hideout for troops. Unfortunately, this wasn't the only village that was evacuated during the War, as there were many other villages in and around Jirisan Mountain that faced a similar or worse fate.

### **8. Long Thread-like Village**

Traditionally, most Korean villages were named after their appearance or an ideal way of life. So village names often represent how the original settlers wished to lead their lives, while living in harmony with nature. This concept may be hard to understand for non- and young Koreans.

For example, the name of this village means "thread" in Korean, because of the long stretch of the valley next to the village. Here, thread not only refers to the shape of the terrain, but also signifies "longevity". It's because thread has been the symbol of longevity in Korea for hundreds of years. So by naming their village "thread", the villagers expressed their wish to live a long and healthy life here in this place.

### **9. House of Jo Sik**

The traditional Korean house you see before you was once occupied by Jo Sik, one of the most renowned Confucian scholars and politicians of the Joseon Dynasty around 600 years ago. He always stressed the importance of acting upon your beliefs and being sensible at all times. He was respected by many because he didn't hide his opinions on the unreasonableness of social realities. He also taught that one must have good control over the mind in order to achieve true goodness of heart. He built this house when he was 60, to retire in the quiet environs of Jirisan Mountain. While most politicians and scholars tried to get a position where they could serve or influence the King, he was content with what he had and never held back his opinions even when voicing them could harm him.

He even declined the king's request to work at the court and continued his studies in the seclusion of the mountain. He taught many students right here in this small house. It was originally built in 1561 but burned down in a war. The house as it is today was restored during the 19th century.

The apricot tree in the front yard was planted by the great scholar. It is over four hundred and fifty-years old, but it still blossoms in late March. Hundreds of tourists still come to see the house and tree every year.

### **10. Traces of the Korean War**

There are two monuments next to the path near the House of Jo Sik. These black monuments were built to commemorate the soldiers killed in the Korean War. Take a closer look, and you'll see a list of names engraved on the rock.

The site used to be a precinct station during the war. Jirisan Mountain was where some of the fiercest battles were fought during the Korean War. It's because the mountain was a perfect place for guerilla warfare. And this site was also one of the battlefields.

There were hundreds of civilian casualties in the battles that took place in this mountain, but their names are not on the monuments.

### **11. Traditional Market for Dried Persimmons**

A traditional market is probably one of the best places to visit if you want to experience the culture of the country you're traveling in. And there is a traditional market next to Dulle-gil.

It's called Deoksan Market, after the former name of the district. It means, “the place where you can see the highest peak of Jirisan Mountain”. the market is well known for wild vegetables and medicinal herbs harvested from the mountains.

But the market is best known for dried persimmons. While it's a popular fruit across Asia, dried persimmons have been an all time favorite in Korea. Their chewy texture is similar to prunes. It's generally agreed that persimmons from Jirisan Mountain are sweeter and more chewy. It's a unique treat, so you might want to try some while in the market.