

# Daehwanggang Ecological Trail

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### **1. Amnok Recreation Area, Where Two Rivers Meet**

We will now begin our journey through the driving attraction that brings history and culture together, the Daehwanggang Trail. The trail begins at Amnok Recreation Area, where the Boseonggang River and Seomjingang River meet. They call the relatively fast-flowing Boseonggang the man's river, and the slower flowing Seomjingang is known as the woman's river. The name Daehwanggang itself means "a fiercely flowing river". The Amnok Recreation Area is particularly famous for almost 100,000 square meters of white sand beach, and during the summer season many people make use of its camping grounds. What's more, go take a look at the nearby Amnok station. Although at the moment it's an empty station without a train service, you can see the famous pine tree that appeared on a TV drama.

### **2. Bukso Fishing Site, the Angler's Resting Place**

This is the Bukso Fishing Site. This fishing area has long attracted many fishermen thanks to the plentiful catch of sweetfish and Chinese mitten crabs. But since the construction of the dam upriver, the catch of marsh snails has been greater than the fish or crabs. The water by the bank near to the road is shallow enough to see right to the bottom, but it pays to be careful in the area on the other side near the bamboo grove where the water is deep and the current strong. The roads around this area are famous driving routes thanks to the beautiful scenery. We strongly recommend that you check them out.

### **3. The Beautiful Forest Trails of Taeansa Temple**

This is a Buddhist temple called Taeansa. It contains various cultural artifacts such as stone pagodas, bronze bells and hermitages. However, this area is more famous for its beautiful forest trail than for the temple. The trail is an unpaved natural path formed of dirt and gravel, and is perfect for taking walks. Shall we go ahead and pass through the One Pillar Gate, to make our way into the temple?

### **4. The Memorial of the Nation's Protectors**

In 1950, during the Korean War, South Korean police constructed a military base camp within the temple compound to prepare for combat with the North Korean forces. While they achieved a stunning victory on the battlefield thanks to their detailed operations, they were also hit by an ambush. Ten years later, the survivors and the families of those who fell in battle held a joint memorial service here, and with government support and donations from fellow war veterans they erected a memorial tower. Harmonizing well with the surrounding mountains, the view of this amazing tower that reaches toward the sky is beautiful.

### **5. Honoring the People's Poet**

Next to the building with the small pond is a literary museum built to honor the local poet Jo Tae-il. He published a magazine specializing in poetic literature, and spent time as the dean of a university art department. He is a representative poet of the people, who generally composed poetry in a strong realist style. For the sake of freedom of expression and democracy, he actively participated in the literary man's association activities in opposition to the dictatorship during the 1970s.

The building of this museum may appear simple from the outside, but if you look just behind, it offers an amazing view of the mountains. Inside the exhibition hall, keepsakes and photographs from his life are displayed alongside his poetic works.

## **6. Scenery from throughout Korea, on the Seomjingang River**

This is the Seomjingang Culture School. Here you can see not just the beautiful scenery of the Jeolla-do area but also picturesque scenery from all over the country.

Although we call it a school, it's not an educational facility but an exhibition hall. This building was formerly used as a school, but when it was closed a photographer personally organized and orchestrated its transformation into an exhibition hall. So, currently, more than 600 photos are on display here.

The photographer was active for 40 years in his profession, and took many photos of the mountains and fields of Korea, as well as of the cultural artifacts of the southern provinces. Also, he began taking photographs of islands while working at a travel agency. He was particularly fascinated with capturing Dokdo Island located to the east of Korea, and even today still takes many photos of the island.

Outside the building are sports facilities, a camping ground and pension motel. There is also a valley behind the school. This place is popular because visitors can explore the valley, the mountains and the fields on one trip.

## **7. General Sin Sung-gyeom**

The place you're seeing now is the setting for a story about a general who is still regarded with great pride by the local people. He played an important role in the establishment of the ancient kingdom of Goryeo during the early 10th century. He was a brave, resourceful individual with a massive frame.

In order to commemorate his achievement, the cultural heritage site 'Yongsanjae' was built around his birthplace in 1960, and a statue of him was erected in 2004 by his descendants. It is said that he dreamed of establishing a nation while he perfected his martial skills at a training camp near this site.

## **8. Beauty that Protected the Scholars**

During the Joseon Period, women carried a silver knife for self-protection. Likewise, classical scholars also carried a knife for self-defense, but the sheath and hilt of their knives were made of bamboo. It was valuable not only as a means of protection but also as a work of art. The traditional skill to make these knives is designated as one of the important intangible cultural heritages of Korea, and here at Gokseong we can find the master craftsman who holds the skill.

These ornamental knives are about a hand's span long, and are made using diverse types of materials, such as bamboo, persimmon heartwood, pinewood, cow's leg bone, pine resin, gold and silver. Bamboo with seven knuckles is often used, because the number seven represents good luck. After making the sheath with bamboo, images and characters are engraved by burning them on the surface using heated irons.

You can feel the classical scholars' appreciation for the arts by seeing these gorgeous knives, finely engraved with Chinese poetry, literary expressions and images of orchids, plum-blossoms and chrysanthemums.

## **9. Rest at the Daehwanggang Park**

The Boseonggang River was formerly known as Daehwanggang River. This river flows from south to north, from a topographical perspective, which is very rare in Korea. Fish are bountiful in the clear waters and there is great aquatic biodiversity. It is amazing to watch people fish by torchlight in the summer months. This torch fishing is regarded as one of the eight must-see sights in Gokseong.

You can find a camping park and exercise facilities as well at the Daehwanggang Park. This is a great place for walking, with cherry blossoms blooming in the spring and cosmos and reeds in the fall. This area is also famous for its grilled pork. There has always been an inn renowned for its grilled pork here, but it has become so famous that it attracts customers from all over the country. Grilled pork has become the specialty of the region. Why don't you try it for yourself ?