

# Baekdudaegan Masil-gil

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## **1. About the Course**

Today we will take a stroll along this historical and cultural trail through Muju, Jinan, and Jangsu regions. Jangsu, where we will begin our journey today, is known for both its remoteness and its water. As you walk along the trail, you'll hear the story of the kingdom that existed for five hundred years prior to Korea's independence from Japan. The trail takes four hours on foot but these stories will entertain you every step of the way.

## **2. Tteunbongsaem Spring**

This spring that wells up at the top of the mountain is the source of the Geumgang River. Starting its journey here, the river flows hundreds of kilometers to the Yellow Sea to the west of the Korean Peninsula. The thirst you must have worked up while walking through the rough mountain terrain can be quenched by this spring.

There is also a legend about the spring that relates to the foundation of one of Korea's great kingdoms, the Joseon Dynasty, which was established in 1392. When the general who founded the dynasty was having difficulty making decisions, he wandered from mountain to mountain offering sacrifices to the heavens. It wasn't until he arrived here that he received a revelation. A rainbow appeared in the sky and legend has it that a bird rose up from the ground by the spring and took flight. This is how the general came to notice the spring. After receiving his revelation here, it is said that the general made his decision to establish a new nation. So it may be a small spring, but its role in the birth of the new dynasty was rather important.

## **3. Tteunbongsaem Ecological Park**

If you pass the spring and face towards the bottom of the mountain, you will see a lovely, well-maintained park. There are many attractions relating to water here at the park, including a water experience hall you can visit.

The "Water Square" has a model demonstrating how the spring becomes a river and flows into the ocean, allowing you to appreciate the long journey the water makes.

A small building in the shape of an apple might attract your attention, but it is just a quirky restroom facility! The significant diurnal range, clear water and clean air of this region make it ideal for growing fruit. The region is particularly known for producing delicious apples so maybe that's why the restroom is shaped like an apple!

#### **4. Geumgang Water Experience Hall**

At the Geumgang Water Experience Hall located inside the park, you can see how water first formed and learn about Korean river systems and the current status of water resources. In addition to the water-related educational exhibits, there are also displays featuring prehistoric culture and artifacts from this region and rare insects specimen on display.

#### **5. Subun Village**

The small village that you can see from the experience hall is located at the head of Geumgang River as it begins to flow in earnest. The current name of the village means, “where water divides,” and the old name meant “source of water”. One branch of the stream courses into Geumgang and the other flows into another large river called Seomjingang.

The village is designated an “exemplary village” due to its outstanding natural ecology, so you may enjoy taking a walk around and experiencing the clean, pure environment.

#### **6. Catholic Church Building**

If you take a walk around the village, you will see a building with a reddish-colored roof. On top of it stands a white cross. This is the town’s Catholic church. Although there is no priest in residence, the church provides a prayer space for local people.

When Catholicism was introduced to Korea some hundred years ago, persecuted Catholics gathered here in this remote village and constructed its first church. Because the village is so small, a priest comes to visit the parish just once a month. Recognized for its historical importance, this place has been designated as a cultural heritage.

In order to preserve the inside of the building, the door is kept locked but if you are interested in taking a look inside, you can make a request at the community hall. The original interior is still preserved and although it is not too spacious inside, it reflects European style.

## **7. Subullyeong Pass**

Having passed through the village, you will come to one of the well-known passes on this trail. It is where two mountain ranges come together and the stream that you saw flowing through the village divides into two branches at this junction. Although only a pass, it stands high like a mountain with an elevation of 539 meters.

In use since the olden days, this was a pass travelers had to go through to get to other regions or to the capital, so there were many taverns and inns nearby. Even now, there is a rest stop here.

After passing over the pass, you will have to climb another pass. Even though the road is paved with asphalt, the steep ascent is still quite difficult. When you get to the top, the road down the other side winds around the pass and descends to the valley. If you continue down the pass, you will come to the next section of our journey.

## **8. Banghwadong Family Holiday Village**

This is a family holiday village, ideal for a short break. It is surrounded by natural forests, mountains with elevations close to 1000 meters, and you can catch a glimpse of scenic, flowing water.

With beautiful scenery that differs every season and convenient, well-equipped facilities, the holiday village is a great place for camping. It has a large nature education center, excellent campsite, a picnic area, a water park, a communal kitchen and restroom facilities. At night you can have a barbecue, relax with your family, and watch the stars in the night sky.

## **9. Banghwadong Natural Recreation Forest**

If you follow the valley from the family holiday village for about ten minutes, you will arrive at the natural recreation forest. This place has accommodation facilities so if camping isn't your thing, you may prefer to spend the night here.

The therapeutic forest and a "house-in-the-forest" are ready for you to explore with your family. There is a path next to the house-in-the-forest that leads to the valley floor. It is the most therapeutic walking path that you could possibly take! If you walk along the path in the morning, when trees release therapeutic oils and other elements, on a clear, windless day between early summer and fall when the growth of trees is most vigorous, you might just feel your body and mind becoming stronger and healthier.

## **10. Deoksan Valley**

If you follow the road next to the house-in-the-forest for about one kilometer, you will come to a valley, and if you follow that valley for a while into the forest, you will come to another picturesque road. This road, through dense forest and alongside clear water, has been designated as one of the “most beautiful roads” of the region.

Compared to the rugged mountain terrain, this road is rather flat. Your walk is accompanied by the pleasant sound of flowing water year round, even in the winter as the snow melts. Since the water is icy cold even in the summer, you can take a break and cool down by dipping your hands and feet into the water.

Walk a bit farther on and you will see an artificial waterfall. The water falling from the tall rocks offers a pleasant sight.

## **11. Pool under the Waterfall**

If you follow the valley road for about 30 minutes, you will soon reach a wooden boardwalk. After traversing some rough terrain, from this point on you can relax, stroll at your leisure and enjoy the surrounding environment.

At the end, you will arrive at the deep pool under the waterfall, which is the final destination of our course. From here you can enjoy spending time in the lush forest, relaxing by the clear water, and marveling at the strange-looking rocks. The water cascading over the rocks is deep blue in color.

Legend has it that this pool was created when a dragon ascended to the heavens. The local residents are very proud of this place and in the olden days, writers gathered here to write poems and enjoy the natural environment.