

Hadongho–Samhwasil Section

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1. About the Trail Section

The Hadongho-Samhwasil section is relatively short and is not a rugged path for walking. So, this trail is suitable for both beginners and children.

As you follow the trail that meanders along the bank of the downtown stream and cross the stream using the stepping stones, you will arrive at village after village. This region is famous for its bamboo trees, so when you get to the green bamboo grove, take the time to pause for a moment and listen to the breeze rustling through the tall stems. Then continue on your way feeling refreshed.

2. The Village of the Devoted Son

There was a village in this area, but it has now disappeared due to the construction of the Hadong Dam.

In this village, there once lived a man who was famous for his devotion to his father. His story has been passed down through the generations and is still known today. When the man's father became critically ill, the man quit his job in the city, returned to his hometown and tended to his father's every need until he passed away. After his father's death, the man built a small house in front of the grave and maintained the grave site for three years. People near and far heard of the devoted man and his vigil and the government office exempted him from paying taxes. The king himself gave the man rice and meat to eat.

After his death, the village people decided to locate his grave on the mountain behind the village, and erected a monument and a pavilion for the devoted son. The clear, flowing stream and rocky landscape made for beautiful scenery. However, during the construction of Hadong Dam in 1980, the village and its beauty were submerged and can no longer be seen today.

3. Pyeongchon Village

Walking along the trail, you will sense the gradual changes in the landscape. The dirt road you followed along the stream becomes asphalt and large buildings come into sight. Pyeongchon Village is central to this area, and buses to the city come through here. If you need to purchase anything, this is the place to do it!

Nearby there is a historical site related to an ancient king and his subjects, unfortunate figures of Korean history. The royal tomb of King Gyeongsun, the last king of the Silla Dynasty, was relocated here to Pyeongchon due to the construction of Hadong Dam.

4. Village of Stepping Stones

It is unusual to see stepping stones such as these in the city. Before the building of the concrete bridge that we see today, the villagers had no choice but to use stepping stones like these to cross the river. In the past there were stepping stones in several places along the stream, but as time has passed and with heavy rains all but this set of stepping stones has washed away.

There is a concrete bridge beside the stepping stone bridge. But for the people of this village, the stepping stones are not merely a way to cross the stream but are cherished as a symbol and a reminder of the days gone by.

Go slowly and be careful not to fall when crossing the river on the stepping stones. Keeping your balance while stepping from one stone to the next can be fun!

5. Cherry Blossoms

Hadong has long been famous for its cherry blossoms. Every year, Four-kilometer Cherry Blossom Road is inundated with visitors. During the spring, the famous cherry blossom roads are very crowded so in reality you cannot view the flowers well.

Although this village along the Dulle-gil is not large or famous compared to the Four-kilometer Cherry Blossom Road, you will find a great cherry blossom trail here.

The name of this village is actually related to the willow tree. Strangely however, there are not many willows growing here but there is an abundance of cherry blossom trees. What could be the reason for this anomaly?

Originally, this village was home to many, many willow trees, enough to make a forest. However, as the willow trees overgrew and crowded each other out, the harvests were poor. The village people grew desperate and called for a famous shaman. The shaman decreed that the area was not for growing willow trees but rather it was suited to cherry blossom trees. So the people cut down the willow trees and planted cherry blossom trees instead.

Although there are not many willow trees today, the village name remains and reminds us of the history of the village.

6. The Legend of Janggu Rock

At the village entrance, there is a large rock called Janggu Rock. The name comes from its resemblance to *janggu*, a traditional Korean percussion instrument. *Janggu* is a type of Korean drum that looks like an hourglass turned onto its side.

This rock has an interesting story. The rock was originally on the river bank, and if you looked at this rock from the village across the river it was said to resemble male genitalia. Men of this village believed that this rock influenced women to have clandestine love affairs. So, one night, they secretly rolled the rock down the river bank.

Many years later, the rock was restored to its present location and renamed Janggu Rock.

7. Village Guarded by Totem Poles

At the village entrance stand two large stone figures. They resemble the totem poles of the Native Americans in North America. In Korea, the figures in this form are called *jangseung*. They are made from wood or stone, and are traditional Korean folk icons. Usually, they were placed at the entrance to a village to block bad energy from entering.

Of course, according to modern science this would be considered superstition. However, for people long ago who were weak and poor and did not have anything to depend upon, these were the objects of their faith.

Currently, these poles are noted more for their artistic value. From the large, bulging eyes and big, stumpy nose to the gaping mouth baring all its teeth, the expressions on the faces of *jangseung* are exaggerated and sometimes even comical.

In the olden days, despite their reverence for their guardian deities, Koreans thought their guardian deities didn't look and act much different from them. That's why they made the totem poles to look like them, so they would look familiar and the deities would stay among them.

8. The Monk Who Caught a Tiger

At the entrance to this village there stands a wooden totem pole. Wooden totem poles were much more common than those made of stone. The totem pole located here has some unique features. Compared to totem poles elsewhere, this one has large ears and its mouth is gaping from ear to ear, catching the eye of those coming and going.

Since the olden days, this place has been known as “the hill where a tiger was captured”. Long ago, a monk passing through the area suddenly had a stomach ache and went into the woods to relieve himself. Suddenly, a tiger appeared beside him and threatened to attack him. However, without any hesitation or surprise, the monk took hold of the tiger and held him under one arm as he finished relieving himself.

Then, he slung the tiger over the branch of a tree, went down to the village and said, “Up on that hill I captured a tiger and left it hanging in the tree, so if you need it take it,” and left. The doubting villagers climbed up the hill and found the tiger struggling on the branch just as the monk had said. What kind of person could that monk have been?

9. The Flower that Blooms Once Every 100 Years

Walking along the trail through the thick woods, you will abruptly arrive at a green bamboo grove. Bamboo groves are common in Hadong, but a bamboo grove that surprises us like this one is unusual in Korea.

Since long ago, bamboo has been grown in private homes because of its many practical uses. The roots were used medicinally, the young leaves were edible, and the stems were used for making bamboo ware. It was also used as a barrier to keep out marauding tigers that would sometimes come down from the mountains.

This useful bamboo plant only flowers once every 60-120 years. Once the flower falls, the plant begins to wither and die, so it seems to exhaust all of its nutrients to bloom only once in its lifetime. If you happen to see a bamboo flower you should take a picture of it, because the event is so very rare, occurring only once every 100 years.

10. A Stone Grave on the Mountain

If you go up the hill, you will arrive at a pair of wooden totem poles and a small stone grave. After seeing the totem poles at the village entrance, it is surprising to see them here, isn't it?

Totem poles and stone graves are symbols that come from traditional Korean folk religions, and there is evidence that there was once a village or shrine for ancestral worship rituals here on the mountainside.

Totem poles and stone graves were usually made for village entrances or placed on high hills like this one. They had the shamanistic purpose of scaring away evil spirits, disease and bad energy, and also functioned as boundary markers.

As Jirisan Mountain began to undergo modern development, the totem poles and stone graves on the mountains have mostly disappeared. Although the grave here looks like an insignificant pile of stones, it is one of the valuable cultural heritages in the mountain.

11. The Story of Samhwasil

The seven villages in this region are collectively known as ‘Samhwasil’.

Different stories related to this name have been passed down, but the most widely known refers to ‘the valley where three kinds of flowers bloom’. The three flowers are: pear, apricot, and peach flowers.

They blossom in the spring, turning the entire region white and pink. In the autumn, the local villagers harvest pears and peaches.

Dulle-gil is a pleasant trail to take anytime of the year, but it is recommended that you visit Samhwasil in the spring when the flowers are in full bloom along the road. It’s because the flower-lined paths between villages make the scenery so much more beautiful.

Now you have reached the end of the Hadongho-Samhwasil Section.

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In the spring, the trails between the villages are lined with beautiful flowers. The Dulle-gil is enjoyable any time of the year, but this place, Samhwasil, is the most beautiful in the spring when the flowers are in full bloom.