

Gwanghalluwon Garden

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1. About the Trail Course

The Gwanghalluwon Garden is the background of “The Story of Chunhyang”, a Korean love story about a young couple named Chunhyang and Mongnyong. It’s also a traditional garden of Korea, with the place landscaped in a way to take the shape of an original garden of the Joseon Period.

Traditionally, gardens in Korea have been landscaped to blend in with the natural surroundings, and they usually included a wooden pavilion, trees, and lake. The trees and other parts in a garden were carefully arranged and located in a way to form a representation of people’s idea of a utopia, or in some cases, loyalty to the king.

As for the Gwanghalluwon Garden, it’s a representation of a utopia. So this can be your chance to see and stroll in the Korean version of utopia.

2. Wanwoljeong Pavilion

The first thing you’ll see when you step into this garden is Wanwoljeong Pavilion. Its name roughly means “a pavilion for enjoying the view of the moon”. If you come to this pavilion at night, you’ll see the moon rising over the pond and the garden submerged in the moonlight.

While the Gwanghallu Pavilion is off-limits to the public, this pavilion is open to everyone throughout the year. That’s why this is where the Chunhyang Festival is held, in the spring of every year.

Okay, it’s time to go see the Gwanghallu.

You’ll have to cross the ‘Bridge of Crows and Magpies’ to get to the place. I’ll explain why it’s called like that.

3. Ojakgyo Bridge

The name of the girder bridge between Wanwoljeong and Gwanghallu is ‘Ojakgyo’. This name literally means “the bridge of crows and magpies”, and this bridge was mentioned in a Korean folk story that’s been told for many centuries.

The story goes something like this: Once up a time, a married couple was punished by a god to live on the opposite sides of the Milky Way. They were allowed to meet only once a year, on July 7th, in the middle of the Milky Way. But they couldn’t be reunited even on the promised date, because they didn’t have a bridge between them. Their sad story was known to all, even the crows and magpies. So the birds flew up to the Milky Way to form a bridge with their bodies. And people started calling the bridge ‘Ojakgyo’.

Then what’s the bridge doing here? The ancient people regarded this garden as the palace on the moon, and

called the nearby lake the Milky Way. So they started calling this bridge 'Ojakgyo', because it's built over this little Milky Way.

A legend has it that couples who cross this bridge will have healthy children and love each other forever.

4. Gwanghallu Pavilion

Just across the Ojakgyo Bridge is the Gwanghallu Pavilion, which is located right at the center of the garden. Again, this garden means the "Moon Palace" of people's imagination. The scenery of the place is as beautiful as its name implies. No wonder the author of *Chunhyangjeon* chose this place as the main scene.

The original pavilion was built in the 1400s, but it was burned down in a war. So this is actually a reconstructed version of the original built in the 1600s. It's still the oldest building in the garden.

5. Chunhyang Shrine

The Gwanghalluwon Garden is where Chunhyang and Mongnyong fell in love, so they built a special building dedicated to the heroine of the novel.

It's called the Chunhyang Shrine, and the main theme of the place is to praise her loyalty to her lover.

Shortly after they fell in love, Mongnyong left town, promising her that he would come back for her. After he left, however, the new magistrate coerced her to be his mistress. When she refused, the furious official went as far as torturing her. The love story ends with a happy ending when Mongnyong comes back for her, as none other than the evil official's superior.

The local people say the Chunhyang Shrine was built during the Japanese Colonial Period, so the structure is more like a metaphor for their secret desire for national independence.

6. House of Wolmae

The last stop you'll make is the House of Wolmae. Follow the path on the left side of the front gate to the garden, and you'll see an adult-sized swing. Go past that, and you'll reach a small straw thatched house where Wolmae lived. Wolmae is the name of Chunhyang's mother, so this is also Chunhyang's home.

Can you see the life-size dolls designed to look like Chunhyang and Mongnyong?

You'll see them in the middle of the pond, with a stone jar in front of them. The jar is there for visitors to toss a coin into, and wish for long-lasting love. A song will be played if your coin goes into the jar. But it won't be easy to score a goal.

This house is the last destination of your tour of the Gwanghalluwon Garden. We hope you have enjoyed your tour of a traditional Korean garden. Thank you.