

## Omi-Nandong Section

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## **1. About Omi-Nandong Section**

The Omi-Nandong Section of Jirisan Dulle-gil is about 18km long. It's not a short walk, but the terrain is flat and friendly most of the way. The path will take you along Seomjingang River, offering a great view of Jirisan Mountain in the distance. Many hikers take this path especially in the spring because of beautiful cherry blossoms.

For a long time, the Gurye has been known to have three big things and three beautiful things. The big things are the mountain, river, and plain, while the three beautiful things refer to the scenery, abundant crops, and friendly people.

Are you ready to go see the big and beautiful things in Gurye?

## **2. A Ravine Where Hot Water Flows**

The name of this village means a 'ravine where hot water flows'. It must be because there is a hot spring nearby, but you won't see any in the vicinity. There is an interesting story about how the village came to have a name related to hot springs.

A long time ago, there used to be a hot spring in a ravine on the opposite side of this village. Its medicinal effects on skin diseases were so great that people with various skin problems could recover from their disease simply by taking a bath in it, so lepers who heard the news came to this place from all over the country with great hope. The villagers got worried because they thought leprosy was a contagious disease, so they ended up covering up the spring with dirt and stones.

The story holds some truth, since the mountain actually has a number of hot springs still popular among tourists.

## **3. The Hill Where People Had to Hush Up**

In the past, there used to be a hill where people had to hush up while passing. The hill is no longer there since the terrain has changed, but there used to be a hill going down to the town.

Then why did they have to hush up while going down the hill? It's because there lived a large family right below the hill, and the family was so powerful that even noblemen had to be careful what they said or did while on the hill.

But that was in the past. Today, you can say whatever you want without having to worry about some powerful people overhearing you. And while you're there, it won't be a bad idea to stop by the Korean Wheat Research Center where the hill used to be.

#### **4. The Pavilion for Cleansing the Mind**

The name of this pavilion means to 'cleans the mind', and it was built by a prestigious noble family living in this area. There is a wide plain with a river in front of the pavilion, making it a great place to rest and entertain.

There are still signs of columns on top of the large rock in front of the pavilion, and they're an indication that there used to be a number of small resting areas where noblemen in the past drank and entertained themselves.

Take a close look at the top of the rock, and you'll see a Chinese sentence engraved on the surface of the rock. Roughly translated, it means "get drunk and live without wanting anything." Chances are, it was engraved by someone who enjoyed a life of leisure.

The stream in front of the pavilion is not as clean as it used to be due to the construction of hot springs and reservoirs, but it's still clean enough for otters, which can only live in clean water.

#### **5. The Collapse of a Noble Family**

A long time ago, there used to be a very powerful family living in this village. But the family lost all their wealth and power in a relatively short period of time, and there is an interesting story that explains what happened.

In the mountain on the opposite side of the village, there used to be a little Buddhist temple, and the family members hated the sound coming from the temple. So they decided to get rid of the temple, and hired a team of laborers to do the job. The monks at the temple heard what the family was up to, and they came up with a plan to ruin the family to protect their temple.

Posing as a fortune-teller, one of the monks visited the family. The monk fortune-teller told the family that they should have a water mill built at the village entrance, and the family members did what they were told. But for some reason, the family began to lose their wealth and power after building the water

wheel.

It's because the good *feng shui* energy flowing in from the village entrance was interrupted by the water mill. Thanks to the monks, the once powerful family completely went bankrupt in just 30 years.

### **6. A Traditional Marketplace Where Firewood was Dealt**

This village is where you want to shop if you need anything, because it's the biggest commercial district in the area.

Since the 19th century, this village has served as a center of trade where merchants and people did their business. It was the first marketplace in the village, and people would come to this place to trade grains, seafood, livestock, and even firewood. But the traditional market closed about 20 years ago. It's because a majority of the villagers moved out to the city, and the marketplace became a thing of the past.

Today, this place serves as a resting place for the locals, so people still come here to mingle. The zelkova tree in front of the resting place has been there as long as the town has.

So, why don't you take a short break under the zelkova tree before you go?

### **7. Archaeological & Cultural Artifacts Lost in the Urbanization**

This village is called 'the town that looks like a boat' because of its resemblance to a sailboat.

In Korea, many villages are named in accordance with the shape of the terrain. It's because of the superstitious belief that the village name should match the shape of the terrain in order for the villagers to live a prosperous life.

At one time, there used to be five or six sites with many dolmens right next to the village. So many archaeologists and students came to this village to study them. But being located in such a remote village, it took a long time for the government to list them as cultural heritage sites. And by the time they were about to be designated as cultural heritage, all of the dolmens were buried during a land consolidation project in the 1970s. They could have been important archaeological finds, but now they're forever lost due to urbanization.

## **8. Jirisan Dulle-gil Gurye Center**

The Jirisan Dulle-gil Gurye Center is in charge of managing the Dulle-gil sections in Gurye. The place is usually packed with people visiting Dulle-gil, since it provides information, organizes events, and offers resting areas.

The river in front of the Center is home to thousands of migratory birds that come to this place every year. Winter migratory birds in particular breed around this place and Seomjingang River while spending the winter. The abundant food supply like fish in the river is the reason why migratory birds come to this place.

The section of Dulle-gil around the Center is beautiful with cherry blossoms in the spring and orange daylilies in the summer. The place is covered with orange daylilies in July, and they host a walking event in July so more people can see the flowers.

Another attraction of the area is the observation platform on the rooftop of the Center. On a clear day, you'll get a clear view of Jirisan Mountain on the rooftop of the building. They even have binoculars for the visitors to get a closer look at the mountain.

## **9. A Memorial of Modern Tragedy**

(1) Go into the Seosicheon Sports Park, and you'll see a special sculpture. It's a memorial tower built to commemorate the tragic incident that took place in Yeosu and Suncheon in the 1940s.

(2) Soon after the liberation of Korea from Japan in 1945, there was a heated confrontation between righties and lefties. Conflicts between them led to battles in Yeosu and Suncheon in 1948, and soon spread across the nation. Many were killed in the battles, particularly here in Gurye.

Korea wasn't the only country that went through an age of ideological confrontation, but Korea is one of the countries that lost the most number of lives. The locals have been holding an annual memorial service in October since 2008 in the memory of the victims, in hopes to stop making the same mistakes again.

## **10. The Gurye Marketplace with the Warmth of People**

There is a saying that you should go to a museum if you want to see the past of a country, a library if you want to see its future, and the marketplace if you want to see its present. The traditional marketplace on Dulle-gil is where you can get a real feel of Korean traditions.

The Gurye Market is a five-day market, held on the 3rd and 8th days of every month. This is not the only place where a five-day market takes place. Most rural villages have always had a five-day market, mainly because that's how long it took for peddlers to get from one marketplace to another.

It can be alarming or annoying to see people arguing in high-pitched voices, but it's commonplace in a place like this. That's how people usually bargain in Korea. They may seem arguing, but oftentimes it's just the way they talk. Old ladies can grumble and say they're not making any money by giving a discount, but they often end up giving you something extra despite all that grumbling. Nowadays, you'll witness scenes like these only in traditional marketplaces.

### **11. The Stream Visited by a Subject of Qin Shi Huang**

This section is along a stream called Seosicheon most of the way.

A very long time ago, Qin Shi Huang sent one of his loyal ministers to bring the "herb of immortality" from Jirisan Mountain after hearing a rumor that the mountain is where such herbs grow. His loyal subject led a group of people on nine boats to this stream and then walked into the mountain, but he couldn't find the herb he was looking for. Later, the stream was named after the loyal subject, whose name was 'Xi Shi, or 'Seo Si' in Korean pronunciation.

It used to be a big river, and it was big enough for nine large boats to sail up. But it became more like a stream after the construction of reservoirs and hot springs in the area.

### **12. Dam & Fishway with Otters**

There is a giant fish sculpture right next to the river, and an underwater dam in front of it. This underwater dam was built to control the water level so that fish can pass through.

They say the area used to be much more beautiful before the dam was constructed. Instead of concrete embankment, the riverside was filled with chestnut cottonwood trees, and the locals used to have their cows graze here and enjoy swimming in the river.

Most of the fish disappeared after the urbanization and embankment construction, so they built an underwater dam to make the river fish-friendly again, but it wasn't enough to form a nature-friendly environment.

Thanks to the effort of the locals, however, endangered otters were recently found to be living around the river again. Otters are like a barometer for a clean environment, since they only live in clean estuaries where there is enough food for them. That's why otters are designated and protected as a natural monument in Korea.

### **13. A Beautiful Pavilion with a Sad Story**

Follow the path into the pine grove for about 100 meters, and you'll see a beautiful pavilion. Step into the pavilion, and you'll get a panoramic view of the small peaks of Baegunsan Mountain and Seomjingang River. There are many strangely shaped rocks around the river. One in particular looks like the head of a dragon.

The pavilion is a beautiful sightseeing point, but it has a sad story. This is where a renowned poet killed himself shortly after the Japanese Colonial Rule of Korea in 1910, because of his grief over losing his country. His students formed a society of poets to commemorate his beliefs and death, and built this pavilion as a place of gathering.

The tradition is still observed today, as people still come to this place in June every year to hold a poem recital.

### **14. A Dragon Head-shaped Village**

The name of this village means a 'place that looks like the head of a dragon'. The topographic features viewed from Jirisan Mountain resemble the head of a dragon, and that's why people started calling it the 'dragon head village'.

In the past, before the village was formed, merchant ships used to make a stop at this place while sailing up and down Seomjingang River. But today, it's a rice farming village.

Many historical artifacts were unearthed while cultivating the land in the 1980s. The artifacts included earthenware, and some of them were designated as National Treasures for their historical value.

It would be interesting to note that national treasures could still be buried somewhere around the very path you are on.