

Busan – Colorful Mix of City and Sea

Busan is the 2nd Korean City which has the World's Top 5 port, and one of the best vacation spots in Korea. Over 45 million people visit the city in summer, while in autumn, people also go for the BIFF (Busan International Film Festival), one of the biggest film festivals in Asia. As such, when people think of Busan, an image of a big modern seaside city come to their minds.



[Fig. 1, 2] Busan New Port, Haeundae (the Biggest Beach of Korea)
(Source: Encyclopedia of Korean Local Culture)



[Fig. 3, 4] The Busan Cinema Center(BIFF Theatre), Night View of Busan
(Source: Encyclopedia of Korean Local Culture, <http://blog.naver.com/dj2600/30137743455>)

Apart from those, it was also the last refuge during the Korean War in the 1950s. Thus, many refugee houses were built on the hillside during this period. You can still see many of these villages until today. However, most of these villages are lagging behind. Some villages have been redeveloped into high-rise apartments, but other villages couldn't reinvent themselves.

One of the more successful ones is Gamcheon Culture Village. It is famous for undergoing urban regeneration while still retaining its historical, cultural, and artistic features with the help of its own residents and local artists.

Gamcheon Village was built and established by Korean War refugees and followers of *Taegeukdo*, one of the minor religions in Korea. This terraced village is situated on the hills of Busan with colorful houses filling its dense blocks, and running along its narrow alleys. It is also known by several monikers such as the *Korean Santorini* or *Korean Cinque Terre*, and the *Lego Village*.

In 2009, new sculptures and wall paintings were installed on vacant spots and empty walls within the village as part of the Machu Picchu of Dreaming Busan Public Art Project, and in the following year, more were added by the MiroMiroⁱ Alley Project, which further enhanced the environment for residents and visitors alike. These ongoing public art projects urged the residents and artists to think deeper about the village's cultural value. This resulted into the establishment of the *Culture Village Management Association*, who then took on culture-related *machizukuri* activities.

Also owing to this perspective shift, an increase in the transformation of vacant houses has been observed. Most of these have been converted to art studios, galleries, book-cafes, restaurants and accommodations, which contributed to the local economy and promoted a friendlier atmosphere.

With concerted efforts of the residents, Gamcheon Village reinvented itself from its forsaken image to a village where people can enjoy antiquated alley walks with exotic views.



[Fig. 5] The View of Gamcheon Culture Village (Source: Wikimedia)



[Fig. 6, 7] Sculpture of Gamcheon Culture Village and Wall Painting
(Source: <http://blog.daum.net/redactor/385>)



[Fig. 8] Alley of Gamcheon Culture Village

(Source: http://blog.daum.net/_blog/BlogTypeView.do?blogid=0E1jj&articleno=11264489
Wikimedia)

ⁱ *Miromiro* loosely translates to a “beautiful maze”