People gravitate to the natural comfort of the woods or the sea when in need of a break. In these moments of exhaustion, Seocheon offers the best of both.

First stop: The Seocheon Maryang-ri Camellia Forest, where you can catch a whiff of the Seomyeon ocean nearby. Though pine forests are usually used as windbreakers on beaches, Maryang is filled instead with camellia trees. They're beloved for their resistance to the cold and their dazzling late-summer blooms. They also bear fruit as red as their blossoms from the end of summer through autumn. Beyond the camellias are an expansive colony of pine trees. Benches offer rest stops in the shades of these trees while a small seaside road outside the forest leads to an observatory.

Designated Natural Monument 169, the Maryang-ri Camellia Forest is a grove of 80 trees, all of which have maintained their slight heights for the past 300 to 400 years. Although known to grow up to 7 meters, Maryang-ri camellias only grow 2 to 3 meters to withstand the sea winds. Stop by the Camellia Pavilion, which is in the forest, for a magnificent view of the Yellow Sea. Recommended time? Sunset. Travelers watch the sun fade into the ocean before returning home.

Another great sun spot is Maryang Port. Thanks to the slightly curved shape of the area, which resembles a fishing hook, you can catch the sun rise at Maryang Sunrise Village, which faces the ocean, and watch it set at the Maryang-ri Camellia Forest. Hardly a better way to bookend a day.

You'll also want to stop by Hongwon Port, a tourist attraction famous for its stretching seawall, charming red lighthouse and seafood restaurants. The walk from the seawall to the lighthouse is a favorite among young photo-takers. It's beautiful in all weathers. And the sunsets from this stretch look almost exotic: Clear days end with a dramatic orb over the ocean while cloudy skies are stained a dim red.

Finally, gizzard shad fans, take note: Seocheon holds the Hongwon Gizzard Shad & Blue Crab Festival every fall. Visitors this year had the opportunity to catch gizzard shads with their bare hands, taste various gizzard dishes, play traditional games, participate in the Hongwon Port treasure hunt, go gizzard shad fishing and hit the gizzard shad marketplace and local specialty stores. The oily gizzard shad is said to pair well with the local Seocheon alcohol of choice, the Hansan Sogokju.

If you're looking for a break from the exhaustion of daily life, head to Seocheon. With its ocean sunsets and seafood delicacies, it just might do the trick.

Source: Korea Tourism Organization
http://english.visitkorea.or.kr

Travel Information

Seocheon Maryang-ri Camellia Forest
Address: Chungcheongnam-do Seocheon-gun Seomyeon Maryang-ri San 14
Contact: Seocheon Culture & Tourism Bureau, 041-950-4256

Hongwonhang
Address: Chungcheongnam-do Seocheon-gun Seomyeon Hongwon-gil 130-3
Contact: Seocheon Culture & Tourism Bureau, 041-950-4256