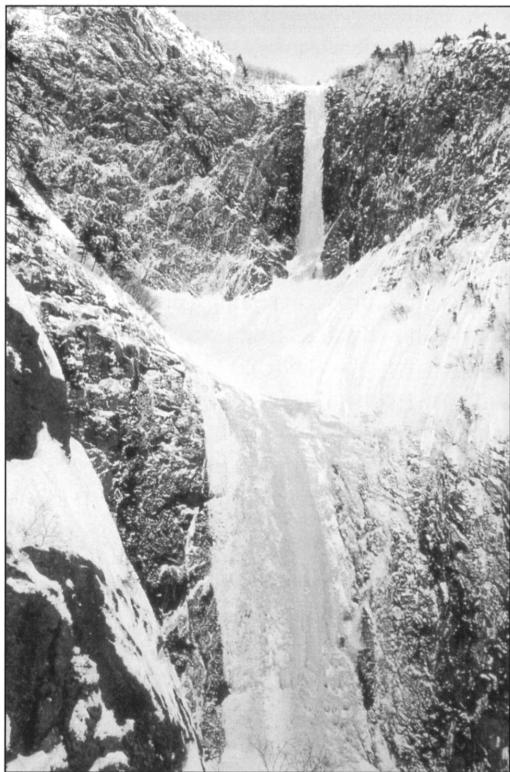


Southeast Asia

KOREA

Towuangseong Falls, Korean ice climbing overview. For climbers in the Seoul area, the usual place to practice rock-climbing is Insu Peak on Bukhan Mountain. No one is exactly sure when the sport of ice-climbing was introduced to Korea, but long-time members of the Korean Alpine Club first ice-climbed in Cheonbuldong Valley located at Mt. Sorak some time during the early sixties. And to help the program develop, the Korean Alpine Club sent some of its youngest members to study at the Ecole Nationale de Ski et d'Alpinisme in Chamonix, France in the early seventies. After learning the more advanced mountaineering skills and techniques used by Europeans, this new and younger generation of climbers helped the Korean ice-climbing scene get on the right track.



The first Korean protégés of the French alpine school have become the benchmark to which all Korean climbers aspire. They pioneered the way for all Korean climbing enthusiasts by venturing out on Korea's first-ever expeditions to the hard "blue" ice of the Himalayan, Eastern European, and North American ranges. Their experiences, knowledge, and techniques learned and practiced on these and other ranges are what have made it possible for Korea's greatest alpinists to accomplish what they have accomplished today.

Korean ice-climbing does not get into full swing until the latter part of December and lasts into February. Each region has its own area of ice-climbing falls. The waterfalls nearest to Seoul include Gucheon-un Falls in Mt. Bukhan, Hwaeryong-gol Falls at Mt. Dobong, Chun-gong Falls at Mt. Sapae, and Eullyu Falls at Mt. Surak. The one most frequented by climbers in the Seoul area is Gugok Falls at Mt. Bonghwa located in the Gangwon Province. Gugok Falls is most popular because it freezes quicker than any of the falls in the Seoul vicinity due to its location on the cooler and shadier western side of Mt. Bonghwa. Gugok Falls stands 70 meters high with an incline ranging from 60 to 70 degrees, making it an excellent practicing ground for scaling Korea's largest and most famous waterfall, Towuangseong Falls.

Towuangseong Falls, which means "Giant Earth Fortress," is located in Sorak-dong at the entrance to the Mt. Sorak National Park, is the main focus of interest among Korean ice-climbers. It is a Canadian Grade V and is the longest flowing icefall in East Asia. Its formidable height and daring grade present a thrilling opportunity and challenge that cannot be passed up and has become the dream of virtually every Korean ice-climber since the 1970s.