

# Changing of the Royal Palace Guard

During the Joseon Dynasty, the Sumunjang (gatekeeper) was the official responsible for guarding the gates of the capital city (such as Heunginjimun and Sungnyemun) and the palace gates where the king resided, including Gyeongbokgung Palace. The Sumunjang opened and closed the gates according to established procedures and, through guard rotations, played a role in protecting the nation's safety by escorting the king and the royal family.

According to the Annals of the Joseon Dynasty (Joseon Wangjo Sillok), the Sumunjang first appeared in 1461 (the 7th year of King Sejo's reign). As the importance of palace security was emphasized, the Sumunjang system was established in 1469 (the 1st year of King Yejong's reign). Subsequently, guarding the palace and the capital city was recognized as the most critical task for the safety of the royal family. Therefore, the Sumunjang was appointed through a procedure where military officers of the Western Military Command (Seoban) holding a rank of the 4th grade or higher were recommended by the Ministry of War (Byeongjo), and then ultimately selected and appointed by the King.

The Sumunjang system was formally codified in the Gyeongguk Daejeon, the legal code of the Joseon Dynasty. Through this codification, the duties of the Sumunjang were specifically defined and implemented. Beyond simply guarding the gates, their responsibilities included managing passersby using state-designated tokens (pyosin), and taking charge of opening and closing palace gates and holding the keys to the palace doors when a vacancy occurred due to the king's procession. The Korea Heritage Agency has reconstructed the Royal Guard Changing Ceremony (Sumunjang Gyodaeuisik) based on the early Joseon period of the 15th century, when the Sumunjang system was well-established. Furthermore, they produce and utilize attire, weapons, and ceremonial objects based on various historical records such as the Byeongjeon (Military Affairs) section of the Gyeongguk Daejeon (National Code), the Oryeui (Five Rites) section of the Sejong Sillok (Annals of King Sejong), and the Joseon Wangjo Sillok (Annals of the Joseon Dynasty).

Experience the essence of Joseon royal guard culture through the Royal Guard Changing Ceremony (Sumunjang Gyodaeuisik) reenacted at Gyeongbokgung Palace, the primary royal palace of the Joseon Dynasty.



# Special Events



### Distribution of New Year's paintings

Visitors can receive a *sehwa* (literally, "New Year's painting"), which were traditionally exchanged on the first day of the year and represent people's desire to enjoy good fortune and expel evil spirits.

Date: Lunar New Year holiday  
Venue: Gyeongbokgung Palace area



### Children's Day event

Guard duty performance by royal guard mascots and guard selection exam experience

Date: Children's Day (May 5)  
Venue: Gyeongbokgung Palace area

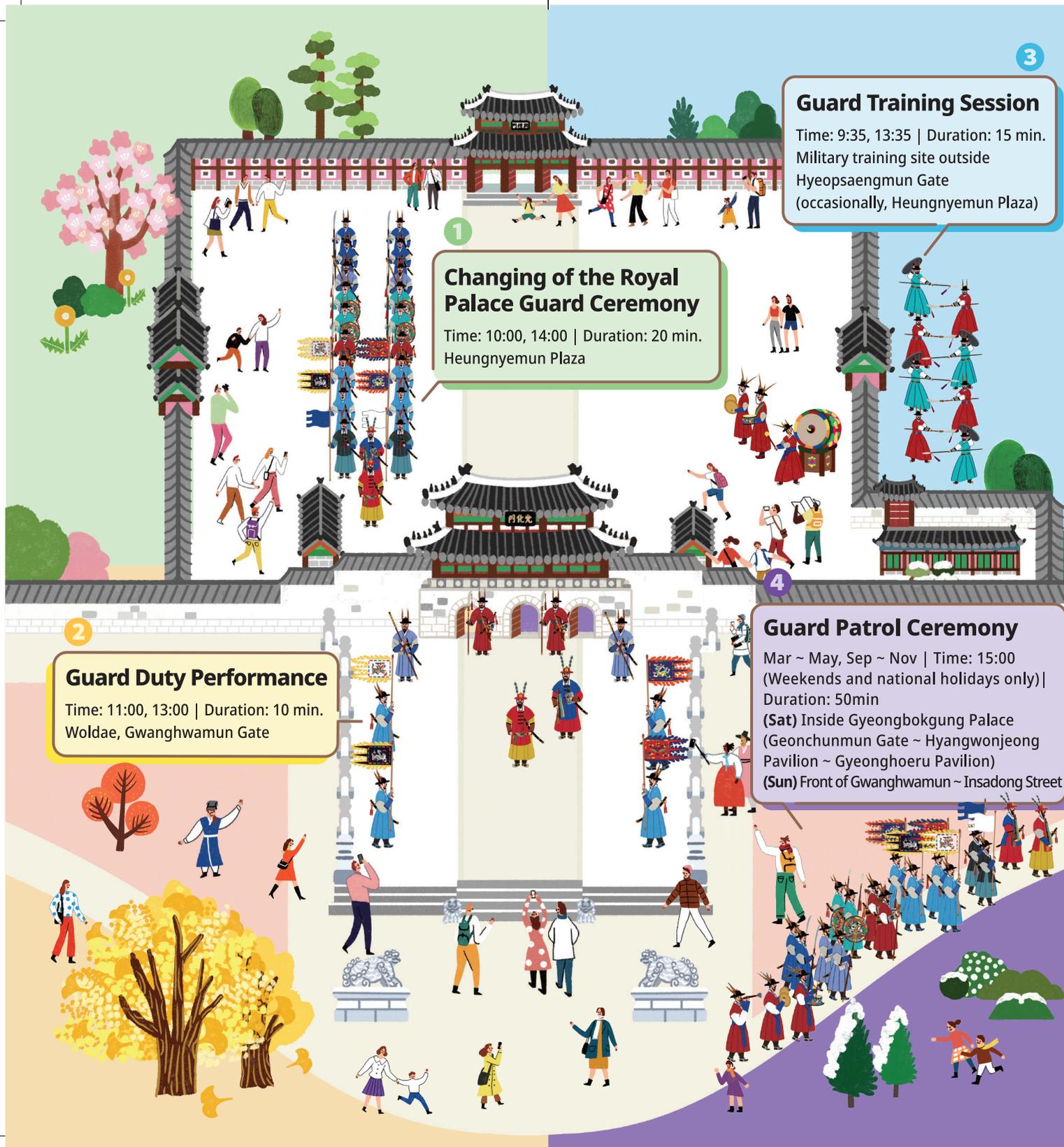


Korea Heritage Agency



Information on the palace event Instagram

# Changing of the Royal Palace Guard Ceremony



### 1 Changing of the Royal Palace Guard Ceremony

This traditional ceremony reenacts the process of the current *sumunjang* and the *sumunjang* who has come to relieve him, confirming one another's identity and changing shifts. The royal palace guards, whose attire and ceremonial items are based on sources from the 15th century, offer a vivid picture of what soldiers would have looked like in early Joseon.

### 2 Guard Duty Performance

Visitors can see how the soldiers guarding Gwanghwamun changed shifts. The *chwirachi* uses the *tak*, a small signal bell, to convey the *sumunjang's* orders. *Jeokgan* is a ritual through which the *sumunjang* checked whether weapons were being properly managed as well as the soldiers' conduct.

### 3 Guard Training Session

Visitors can see how royal palace guards trained.

### 4 Guard Patrol Ceremony

A reenactment of how soldiers patrolled Hanyang to ensure safety inside and outside the city's walls. The patrol soldiers march in a procession that is accompanied by the music of the *chwitadae*, soldiers who played music for official purposes in the Joseon dynasty.

- Times and/or venues may be subject to
  - The ceremonies/events may be canceled due to inclement weather (e.g. heavy rain, heat wave, extreme cold, fine dust).
  - The guard changing ceremony, guard duty performance, and guard training session are held year-round except when Gyeongbokgung Palace is closed.
- \* Days that Gyeongbokgung Palace is closed: Tuesdays and as otherwise indicated on the Cultural Heritage Administration's website (<https://royal.khs.go.kr/gbg>)

**1 Changing of the Royal Palace Guard Ceremony**  
 Time: 10:00, 14:00 | Duration: 20 min.  
 Heungnyemun Plaza

**3 Guard Training Session**  
 Time: 9:35, 13:35 | Duration: 15 min.  
 Military training site outside Hyeopsaengmun Gate (occasionally, Heungnyemun Plaza)

**2 Guard Duty Performance**  
 Time: 11:00, 13:00 | Duration: 10 min.  
 Woldae, Gwanghwamun Gate

**4 Guard Patrol Ceremony**  
 Mar ~ May, Sep ~ Nov | Time: 15:00 (Weekends and national holidays only) | Duration: 50min  
 (Sat) Inside Gyeongbokgung Palace (Geonchunmun Gate ~ Hyangwonjeong Pavilion ~ Gyeonghoeru Pavilion)  
 (Sun) Front of Gwanghwamun ~ Insadong Street