

FFWPU UK: Learn About Gwangbokjeol, The National Liberation Day Of Korea

Michael Balcomb
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August 15th is one of the most meaningful days to Koreans. It is a national holiday in Korea and the National Liberation Day of Korea, Gwangbokjeol.

In Korea, National Liberation Day, also referred to as Korean Independence Day, is called 광복절 (gwangbokjeol), which literally means "the restoration of light day." This is in reference to the end of a dark time in Korean history when the Japanese occupied the Korean peninsula.

The celebration marks the day when Korea was liberated from the Japanese colony in 1945. The Korean government was established in 1948 after overcoming the commotion that resulted from the liberation.

Gwangbokjeol is annually celebrated on the 15th of August. Since August 15th is on a Sunday this year, there will be a substitute holiday on August 16th. On this day, you will get to see buildings and streets with Korean national flags called "Taegeukgi".



Furthermore, Koreans who are descendants of independence activists can visit museums and ride public transport for free on this day.

It is one of the few public holidays that are shared with North Korea who also celebrate "Liberation Day" on August 15th too.

Gwangbokjeol is made up of three Korean characters:

광 (gwang) = meaning "light"

복 (bok) = meaning "restoration"

절 (jeol) = meaning "holiday"

Under Japanese rule, Koreans were forced to have Japanese names, and many Koreans were forcibly conscripted to provide labour for Japan.

They were also forcibly drafted into the Japanese army towards the end of the Second World War. During Japanese oppression, many Koreans stood up against the Japanese and often paid for their defiance with their lives.

Korean Liberation Day is a statutory holiday in South Korea so most schools, businesses, government offices, and banks are closed during the day, however many hotels, restaurants, and places of interests remain open.

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