

TV

The best time travel K-dramas — and why there are so many of them

You don't need a time machine to watch these, just a rewind button.



Korean fried chicken nuggets with gochujang sauce: Get the recipe!

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By Jae-Ha Kim

When you think of shows about time travel, what pops up in your mind? Maybe “Doctor Who,” “Outlander,” or “Quantum Leap”? But what about “Reborn Rich,” “A Time Called You,” and “Lovely Runner”?

If you haven't heard of the latter three, you are not caught up on your K-dramas.

Many shows out of South Korea incorporate time travel elements, but they tend to do so in a way that prioritizes relationships and plot over science fiction elements. Even the offerings that are heavy on sci-fi and fantasy stress the relationships not just between the leads, but between their core group of friends and family.

This does beg the question: why is the time travel trope so popular in Korean series? Besides adding a relatively unique element that differentiates the storylines from other shows, there is also a very visceral component. K-drama story arcs excel at telling tales of love and revenge. And what better way is there to get these points across than depicting how love and revenge transcend all boundaries, including time?

Below, find 12 of the best K-dramas about time travel to watch next.

'Lovely Runner' (2024)

Lovely Runner | Official Trailer | CJ ENM



The sleeper hit of this year is “Lovely Runner,” which stars Kim Hye-yoon (“SKY Castle,” “Extraordinary You”) and Byeon Woo-seok (“Record of Youth,” “Strong Girl Nam-soon”) in his breakthrough starring role.

“Lovely Runner” is full of action and intrigue, but at its core, it’s a story of undying love and sacrifice. Sun-jae (played by Byeon) is an isolated superstar, and Im-sol (Kim) is an uber fan who would do anything to support him. Both are 34 and wishing their lives had played out differently. The plot reveals that the unlikely pair has a history together that is centered on doing whatever it takes to protect each other. This includes traveling through time, knowing they may not be able to return home, or even see each other again.

Unlike many K-pop idols who also act (IU, Bae Suzy, Rowoon, Yoona, Cha Eun-woo, D.O.), the male lead here is not a trained singer. But Byeon portrays the leader of the fictional boy band Eclipse well enough that “Sudden Shower,” the drama’s recurring OST song that he sings, charted on Billboard in real life.

Where to watch: Viki

‘Signal’ (2016)

Signal (2016) 시그널 Trailer



In this time-traveling crime series, two police officers (played by Lee Je-Hoon and Choi Jin-woong) communicate with each other while living decades apart. With one in the past and the other in the future,

they are able to prevent tragedies and close cold cases that had seemed unsolvable. Kudos to Kim Hye-soo (“Hyena”) for her portrayal of the first female police officer in the squad. Initially viewed as little more than the department’s coffee maker, she grows to become a fierce and effective leader.

Where to watch: Netflix, Paramount+

‘Reborn Rich’ (2022)

Reborn Rich (2022) Official Trailer 3 | Song Joong Ki, Shin Hyun Been



This was the most-watched K-drama of 2022 in South Korea, and with good reason. Song Joong-ki’s time travel and reincarnation series explores the world of chaebols, the family-owned businesses that

dominate the country's economy, from the point of view of a diligent employee who tries to do the right thing, but gets whacked for his troubles. Though he should be dead, he awakens in the past. He has the awareness of his former self, but is in the prepubescent body of the youngest member of a privileged chaebol family. As he grows into his role, he uses his knowledge of the future (investing in “Titanic” before it opens) to reinvent himself in the past. Each day he spends with his new “family,” he plots out revenge against them for orchestrating his previous self’s death. All of this is complicated by his relationship with his difficult “grandfather,” who he has grown to respect.

Where to watch: Viki

‘Go Back Couple’ (2017)

[Go Back Couple] Ep 1_The Moment When You Feel Embarrassed About Your...



After 14 years of marriage, college sweethearts Jin-joo (Jang Na-ra) and Ban-do (Son Ho-jun) bicker more than they talk. Through a series of misunderstandings, they wonder why they ever wed and decide to divorce. After tossing their rings aside, they wake up in their respective childhood bedrooms. At first, they are ecstatic being young and carefree again, seeing parents who haven't yet died. But by reliving their youth, they realize that their college years weren't as idyllic as they had remembered.

Where to watch: Viki, Kocowa, Prime Video

'A Time Called You' (2023)

A Time Called You | Official Trailer | Netflix [ENG SUB]



This remake of the Taiwanese show “Someday or One Day” has it all — time travel, body jumping, doppelgangers! Jeon Yeo-been and Ahn Hyo-seop each portray two sets of characters whose past and future are controlled by an old cassette player with a pop song on it, which allows them to have an input on what their lives are meant to be. There’s a lot going on, including a serial killer subplot. The ending was selfless and beautifully poetic. But be forewarned: viewers of happily-ever-after finales may be frustrated by the lack of finite closure.

Where to watch: Netflix

‘The King: Eternal Monarch’ (2020)

The King: Eternal Monarch | Official Trailer | Netflix [ENG SUB]



Set in parallel universes, this K-drama was Lee Min-ho's comeback after completing his mandatory military duty in 2019. He stars as the monarch of the Kingdom of Corea, a unified country whose capitol is in Busan. The other universe is set in Seoul, where Tae-eul (Kim Go-eun) works as a detective. After discovering a portal that allows him to travel between the two cosmos, the king sets out to discover who saved him from being killed by a traitor. Was it Tae-eul who traveled back in time? Or someone else who isn't who they seem to be?

Where to watch: Netflix

'Tomorrow With You' (2017)

TOMORROW WITH YOU Trailer #1 | Drama Korea Terbaru



After almost dying in an accident, So-joon (Le Je-hoon) finds that he has the ability to go back to the future (and return home in the past) via a subway ride. This means that he can invest in sure-thing stocks and real estate deals that will ensure that he becomes a very wealthy man. When he meets and falls in love with Ma-rin (Shin Min-a) — whose claim to fame as a childhood star hasn't served her well — he foresees her impending death. He uses his time-traveling abilities to protect her, but with a life saved comes death for one of the show's characters.

Where to watch: Tubi, Roku

'Again My Life' (2022)

[Trailer] Viu Original, Again My Life ft Lee Joon Gi | Coming Soon (2022)



Lee Joon-gi excels in this action thriller playing Hee-woo, a fearless prosecutor who is murdered early on in this K-drama. When an omnipotent being brings him back to life as a college student, he patiently bides his time. Of course, he is the smartest student thanks to time he has already spent as a skilled attorney. His memory also serves him well in making decisions based on what he already knows about the future. Hee-woo has years to go before he can put all of his knowledge into practice. But when he lands a position of power, he uses his newfound connections to take down the man who orchestrated his destruction. A bonus for martial arts fans is that Lee, who has a black belt in taekwondo, does most of his own fighting

Where to watch: Viki

‘Sisyphus’ (2021)

Sisyphus | Official Trailer | Netflix



Tae-sul (Cho Seung-woo) is a brilliant inventor and Park Shin-hye is a warrior from the future whose mission it is to stop him from creating a time machine that will ultimately destroy South Korea. The characters go back and forth to find allies (and enemies). But there's a catch. Each character exists in all eras and they can't exist in the same proximity. If they get too close to their past or present selves, they can be erased from reality.

Where to watch: Netflix

'Twinkling Watermelon' (2023)

Twinkling Watermelon | Official Trailer | CJ ENM



This delightful series tackles the question every teenager wonders: were my parents always this annoying? For Eun-gyeol (Ryeoun), the answer is yes and no. After fighting with his father Yi-chan (played as an adult by Choi Won-young and as a teen by Choi Hyun-wook), who does not want the boy to pursue a career in music, Eun-gyeol (Ryeo Un) finds himself taken back to an era when his hearing-impaired dad was a high school student. Eun-gyeol cringes at how desperate his dad is to date another girl (who isn't his mom!) and comes up with a scheme to push him towards the right girl. Just as importantly, he makes it his mission to prevent his father from getting into the accident that will leave him hearing impaired.

Where to watch: Viki

‘Tale of the Nine Tailed 1938’ (2023)

Tale of the Nine Tailed 1938 | Official Trailer | Amazon Prime



This sequel to 2020’s “Tale of the Nine Tailed” finds our charismatic gumiho — a mythological nine-tailed fox with superpowers — transported to 1938, an era when Imperial Japan occupied Korea. While he’s impatient to return home, our hero joins the freedom fighters trying desperately to liberate their country. All the action, backstabbing and swashbuckling make for an intriguing K-drama. But the softening relationship between alpha guimho Lee Yeon (Lee Dong-wook) and his half human brother Lee Rang (Kim Bum) makes this K-drama stand out.

Where to watch: Prime Video

‘Marry My Husband’ (2024)

Marry My Husband Official Trailer | Prime Video



The K-drama queen Park Min-young plays a mousy woman who’s bullied by her cheating husband (Lee Yi-kyung) and gaslit by her best friend (Song Ha-yoon). She dies, but mysteriously wakes up a decade earlier. She figures out soon enough that she can change her destiny by transferring her misery to someone else. In this case, she needs to get another woman to marry the man she married. There is a subplot involving a wealthy and handsome man (Na In-woo), who has secrets of his own. But the best part of the series is watching our heroine use what she knows from the future to rectify her past and, by doing so, creating a life worth living.

Where to watch: Prime Video

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