Korea University (International Summer Campus), South Korea, Sociology,
Summer 2019, June 25 - August 1

Preparation for exchange

Since the exchange period was only for six weeks, I did not have to apply for a student visa so there were no complications there. When planning for my exchange, I only packed a week of clothes for my six-week program knowing that I would go shopping for more clothes in Korea as Korea is a popular place for shopping with its cheap prices. From a price range of 10,000 KRW to 50,000 KRW ($10-$15 CAD), you can easily find good quality and stylish clothes there. Since I went to Korea before during the summer, I knew the weather was going to be hot and humid, around 25 to 35 degrees and someday hitting up to 40 degrees Celsius. So, I brought short sleeves and pants with me.

I recommend students to pay cash for most of their payment. Alongside, there will be a high interest rate paying with an international credit card so paying with cash is a better option. Overseas citizens can also request for a tax refunds with payments over 30,000 KRW with a show of a passport, however, payments over 30,000 KRW for meals and dining does not apply. This process can be done at Incheon International Airport before departure or at any global tax refund machines found in Seoul. A meal in Korea cost around 10,000 KRW ($10 CAD) or less depending on which area you choose you dine in, so it is possible to spend 20,000 KRW ($20 CAD) or less in a day on food. No tips or tax is required to be paid in Korea.
During Exchange

Before the start of school, there will be orientation day for students to get a better understanding of the campus. I strongly recommend students to attend this day as it is a good opportunity to meet new people.

During my study at Korea University, I stayed at the Frontier House dormitory that is located in campus. The cost is around 100,000 KRW (1,000 CAD) and the room is shared with another suitemate. The dormitory provided mattress cover, pillow, and a blanket. Other accessories are for the students to bring include shower cap, toilet paper, towel, and etc. These can be bought at the convenient stores near the dormitory. There are other dormitory available for students including Global house and the CJ International House but make sure to apply and pay in advance so your spot is guaranteed and reserved. If unluckily, there are no more rooms available, guesthouses and Airbnb is available nearby as well which can be searched online.

As mentioned earlier, the weather during the summer in Korea is very hot and humid so short sleeves and pants, and sunscreen or some sort of protection from the sun is recommend. But despite the heat, don’t be afraid to go outdoors! Some of the places I recommend visiting are Ihwa mural village, Gyeongbokgung, trick-eye museum, Lotte World, and Han River. Aside from these places, there are lots of indoor places to sit and relax too; coffee shops, dog cafes, and shopping malls are great places to experience.
Reflection After Exchange

What I wish I knew before I left my host country was a bit of Korean or at least some basic phrases. For the first few weeks, I had trouble communicating with the people in Korea. For example, getting taxi rides or trying to order food at local restaurants was a struggle for me because of the language barrier. Luckily, I took a Korean class as part of my elective course so it was helpful during my stay.

This exchange program was an eye-opening experience for me. Studying and vacationing away from home was something I never imagined I would do. From this experience, I learned to do things without the guidance of my parents. If I didn’t step out of my comfort zone and go on this trip, I would not have known what I can do without the guidance of my parents. This made me realize how small of a world I actually lived in and I should spend more time realizing and observing what is around me.
Photos

Street food in Myeongdong:
An intersection near Korea University:
Seafood Market:
Lotte World: