Introduction

University: Korea University (KU)
Country: South Korea
Major: Communication
Term: Fall 2013

Preparation for exchange

Plane Ticket: $1,600 (Round trip from Vancouver to Incheon Airport in South Korea)
My acceptance letter from Korea University came early. As a result, I booked my ticket early. Booking tickets early is cheaper. Further, there are cheap plane tickets at certain seasons. Make sure you ask at least couple of different agencies before purchasing the ticket. Compare prices! I am aware that flight tickets are cheaper if you go to the States first and wait couple of hours for another plane heading to Incheon Airport.

The Climate: South Korea has four distinct seasons.
Summer- The climate of South Korea is humid and hot. The average August temperature range is 22 to 30 °C. There is a short heavy rainy season called jangma. The starting date for jangma varies; but it usually begins mid of July and end of August. Jangma can last couple of weeks or just a few days.

Winter- Winters are extremely cold in South Korea. The minimum temperature can drop below -20 °C in the inland region of the country.

Packing (what to bring):

Seasonal clothing- It depends on what season you are coming for exchange. Summer is extremely hot and humid; as a result, you should bring light clothes. Those coming in the winter season should bring thick parka and warm boots.

Medicine- Bring your medicine. If you are on medication, try to bring the amount you will need (I would suggest, bring extra) for your stay. However, if it is a mild cold symptom, there are numerous stores where you can purchase medicine.

Food- If you are a big fan of almonds, peanuts, etc, nuts are extremely expensive here; as a result, I suggest you bring a pack of your own. Most exchange students, including myself ate out. Food is less expensive here except Western food. Western food are expensive compared to Korean traditional food. You will see food sold on streets. They are usually good!!

Travel: Visiting Jeju Island is recommended! It is around 64 kilometers south of the Korean Peninsula and it is the largest island in Korea; thus, you have to get there by plane. Jeju Island is a focal point of international affairs and offers tourists with numerous recreational activities. The scenery is absolutely beautiful. I suggest that you visit there before it gets too hot and before or after jangma (short heavy raining season).
Transportation: Transportation is great in Korea. There are 9 subway lines it even tells you when it will arrive and where the train is at. You can find the information just about everywhere near the train station. It is important to emphasize that there is a gate where you touch the train ticket to get in and out of the subway. This way, it prevents people from trying to get into the train for free. This system is the same for the bus. Although there is no gate at the bus, there is a system where you can pay by a transportation credit card or by cash. There is no monthly pass in Korea.

Tip: Go to 7 eleven convenient store and ask for a “cash-bee” card. To get this card, it will be 2,000 won (approx. $2). You can charge this card. I usually charged it around 50,000 won ($50) so I would not have to charge every week. If you used all of your money, you can go back and charge it again. The amount you spend will show on the system when you get into the gate of the subway and out. It will be the same for the bus as well. Another tip for going on the bus is that you should touch the system with that card when you get on and touch the other system by the exit when you get off. By doing this, you will not pay more but pay lower when you are transferring to another bus or to a train.

Financial details: In Korea, most people use credit cards to not carry coins. During orientation, you will make your student id card. The student id card is joint card with Hana Bank. You can use this at school when you are buying food and it works as a transportation card. Thus, you do not have to purchase the card or recharge the card if you prefer to use the student id card. The student id card that is joint card with Hana Bank is not a credit card, it is a debit card; thus, you have to transfer you money into the account.

Note. It is vital to note that you will not get your student id card until late September. As a result, I suggest you bring enough cash for you to survive till you get a bank account. To save interest fees, when you are taking the money out! Also, you can bargain if you have cash on you when you are shopping, at least at markets. Never bargain at department stores; shopping malls because it is a fixed price.

During Exchange

Arrival and orientation: There is airport pickup service on set dates. You should try to contact the school and arrange it. Or you can get to the resident building by airport bus or taxi. You must go to orientation. During orientation, you will be assigned to a buddy from Korea University. The buddy will take care of you for the whole semester.

Tip: the buddy will contact you before you come so ask questions! They are very Kind!

Accommodation and living: I am not living on campus, so I am not aware of the facilities. However, I heard that the room was clean.

Academic details: Upper division courses in Korea and at Korea University are all 3 credit course. They rarely have tutorial for arts class. I did not take any science courses; hence, do not know if they have tutorial. For more information about academics, you will learn about it at the first day of orientation. If, you cannot make it to the orientation, I suggest that you should and must ask your buddy.

Social and extra-curricular activities: KUBA is excellent for organizing activities for their group. Students from Korea University (buddies) will arrange numerous social and extra-curricular activities for exchange students to experience Korean culture. If you want to explore Korea to the fullest, I suggest go to KUBA events.
Reflection After Exchange: My experience at Korea University was fruitful. Even though it was often difficult to become friends with local students, there was at least one group project per course; as a result, it was great to meet and get to know them. Professors are extremely friendly and encourage students to come and visit them during office hours. As mentioned before, the bank card (debit) will not be available until almost first-second week of October. Thus, my advice is to bring enough cash to last until that time. Some exchange students had a hard time because the bank card came out too late. Also, I noticed that students rarely eat in class. Coffee or water is fine, but I did not see anyone eating their snacks or something big (sandwich).

Photos:

![Image](image-url)

Picture taken after midterm, in front of Inchon Memorial Hall
NamSan Tower- key locks per couple, promising their relationship