

Yonsei University, South Korea
Fall 2007

The experience as an exchange student at Yonsei University in Korea was an amazing one with an opportunity to face entirely new culture. I was both very excited and scared when I was preparing to spend six months of my life at a place I wasn't familiar with. I had researched thoroughly about Korea and contacted a student who went to Yonsei University previously. With a friendly advice, I set out to challenge myself with a different way of life. As time went on, I found myself absolutely enjoying the life in Korea. It was such a learning experience with so much fun.

As school started, I found many similarities and differences between college life here in the States and the college life in Korea. I had taken Korean language course before going to Korea in preparation. Therefore, I wanted to take courses that are taught in Korean, but I found it too hard. I was disappointed that I had to settle with courses taught in English. However, it was really surprising that many current Yonsei students took courses that are taught in English. My worries of not being able to make any Korean friends went away after meeting some of my classmates who were very welcoming of the exchange students.

Also, the school had a buddy program which matched an exchange student with a Yonsei student for different activities. I had such a great time with my Buddy by going to different parties such as a Halloween party. Also, we regularly had lunch with each other between classes. She took me to famous Korean restaurants, and showed me around the places to hang out. Also, Yonsei University had a school festival which was just amazing. All the restaurants and bars around the school opened up their doors and gave free food and drinks for that day. Many of the classes were cancelled and professors and students all enjoyed themselves like a huge holiday.

Besides all the partying and playing, I took classes mostly about Korean and East Asian cultures. I took history and philosophy classes because I was always very interested in learning about East Asia. The classes turned out to be really great. Especially, I really did enjoy my philosophy in East Asia literature course. It sounded like a boring class at first. However, it was something totally new and shocking. The course

explained the different philosophies East Asians lived by. Professors and Yonsei students were very helpful in understanding harder concepts.

The weather in Korea was much like Harrisonburg while food was something very different. I really liked the Kimbop and the different soups however; some of my friends found it hard to get used to the food. Eventually, they found their ways out with many of the fast food restaurants around town such as McDonald's, KFC, and Pizza Hut. Also, Yonsei University is in middle of a huge city. So as soon as I walked out of the main gate, I was facing an extremely busy street lined with thousands of restaurants and bars full of college students. Then, Korea had very developed public transportation system. But it was a bit hard at first to find my ways around places because I didn't know where to get off. I had to pay extremely close attention to where I was and how far of a distance is left until I get off. Also, my friends and I chose to travel a lot when we were in Korea. Korea, itself, had many places to visit with so many different things to see, but we also traveled to near Asian countries. Because Korea is in middle of South East Asia, it was really easy and cheaper to find plane tickets to go to Japan and China.

It really was one of the most memorable college experiences I had. The amount of things I have learned during the experience was beyond my expectation. I learned of different people and their ways of life, having so much fun during the process. I strongly recommend to have any exchange program experience for what it can provide. However, do expect and prepare for the things to come because it really is something totally new and different. By just accepting and understanding their culture, one would be able to have a fun and unforgettable learning experience.