

Campus Asia study abroad Photo Journal

-2025 Fall semester at Korea University-



Introduction

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Campus Asia Program for supporting my meaningful and truly unforgettable study abroad experience. I am also deeply thankful that, within my limited time as a university student, I was able to encounter such a wonderful and enriching program.

In the fall semester of 2025, I studied abroad at Korea University in South Korea as an exchange student through the Campus Asia Program. The six months I spent in Korea were undoubtedly the most fulfilling and intellectually enriching period of my life.

In this photo journal, I would like to look back on my exchange student life at Korea University and share the insights and learning I gained during this experience.

Academics

At Korea University, I enrolled in five courses: *Policy Formation*, *Korean Economy in a Globalized World*, *Financial Economics*, *Intermediate Korean Speaking*, and *Intermediate Korean Reading*.

The Korean language courses were open exclusively to non-Korean students, which

allowed me to engage in cultural exchange in Korean with classmates from diverse countries and backgrounds. As students had varying lengths of residence in Korea and different academic specializations, discussions on a single topic often incorporated multiple perspectives, making the classes both meaningful and intellectually stimulating.

In the *Policy Formation* course, I studied fundamental concepts related to the public policy-making process and applied these frameworks to the analysis of public housing policies. Through group presentations that examined policies in relation to each country's social and political context, I was able to learn firsthand how public policies evolve differently depending on cultural and institutional



structures. This experience contributed significantly to strengthening my cross-cultural understanding.

Finally, I was struck by the academic environment in Korea, where many university facilities remain open 24 hours a day during examination periods. Seeing students study late into the night offered



valuable insight into the intense academic competition faced by Korean youth and the realities of pursuing high academic performance in a challenging employment market.

School events

KUBA

At Korea University, there is an organization called KUBA (Korea University Buddy Assistants), which functions as a support group for exchange students. In this organization, regular Korea University students serve as buddies, providing attentive support for daily student life while also introducing Korean culture.



Through KUBA, I was able to meet not only Korean students but also new friends from a wide

range of countries. In November, KUBA organized a festival called KUBA ISF, where exchange students gathered by their home countries and set up booths to introduce their local cultures. This event provided valuable opportunities for cultural exchange with Korean students.

Through my involvement in KUBA, I was able to interact with students from many different countries and experience diverse cultures in a single community.

Korea–Yonsei Sports Festival

Every September, Korea University holds a major sports event known as **고연전**, a traditional competition between Korea University and Yonsei University. Similar to the Keio–Waseda rivalry in Japan, this event brings together students from both universities to compete through sports.



Over the course of two days, five sports—basketball, ice hockey, baseball, soccer, and rugby—are held, and the university with the higher total score is declared the overall winner for the year. Throughout the event, students gather at the venues, sing their university chants, and show their support with great enthusiasm.

I attended the basketball, soccer, and rugby matches, and what left the strongest impression on me was the deep sense of pride students had in their university. Rather than supporting individual teams, the entire Korea University community came together as one united team and continued cheering passionately.

After the event, many restaurants around the university offered free meals to Korea University students, and numerous food trucks providing complimentary food gathered on campus. I was told that all of these expenses were covered by donations from alumni. Through this event, I was able to experience the warmth of Korean society and the strong spirit of valuing long-lasting connections. This deep sense of care and solidarity is one aspect of Korean culture and one of its greatest appeals.



Hi IPSELENTI

This event was newly introduced this year as the fall semester edition of IPSELENTI, one of Korea University's major festivals. Many well-known K-pop idols and artists were invited to perform on campus, and students attended the live performances wearing red items, the official color of Korea University.

In addition to the artists' stages, the event also included programs in which students sang Korea University's cheering songs together with the current cheer squad and alumni members. Even among students meeting for the first time, everyone linked arms and continued singing the chants in unison.

This moment became an exceptionally joyful and rare experience for me—one that I believe I may never experience again in my lifetime.

Through this event as well, I was able to experience Korea University's strong spirit of valuing solidarity, inclusion, and close relationships among its students.



Everyday Life

Band Concert

I attended two band concerts performed by a friend of mine from Korea University. He belongs to an English interpretation and translation club, within which students form an officially recognized band and hold a performance at the end of the semester.

While I was impressed by the high level of musical quality, what left a particularly strong impression on me was the system that made this band possible. Rather than simply relying on the environment and freedom provided by the club, each student took initiative, and fellow members recognized and supported one another's efforts. This atmosphere closely reflected the kind of university experience I had hoped for and found especially inspiring.

Observing how the club members actively engaged in their activities while showing mutual respect and consideration, I felt that I gained many valuable lessons through this experience.

Cultural Experiences

As part of my cultural experiences in Korea, I visited a traditional *hanok* village and had the opportunity to wear *hanbok*. Through these activities, I was able to gain a deeper, firsthand understanding of the Korean people's lifestyle and the historical development of their culture.

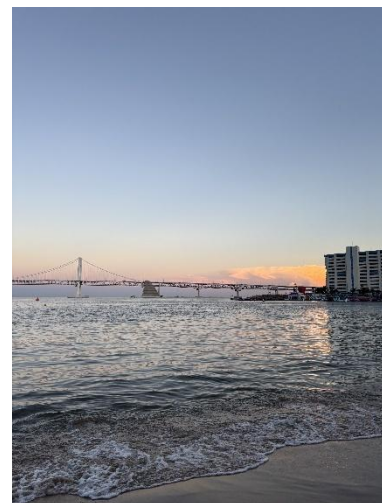
Experiencing aspects of culture that cannot be fully conveyed through photographs, videos, or written materials alone—and gaining insights through interactions with local people—became a significant learning experience for me.



Trip

During my study abroad period, I traveled to three regions in Korea: Busan, Yeosu, and Sokcho. In each of these places, I was able to experience a distinctive charm rooted in traditional culture and local history, which contrasted with Seoul's landscape of high-rise buildings and modern commercial facilities.

Through these travels, I gained insights into Korean culture, history, and the warmth of local communities, experiences that would not have been possible through academic life in Seoul alone. These journeys added an important dimension to my study abroad experience and deepened my understanding of Korea beyond the capital city.



Campus Asia Program Alumni Gathering

I had the opportunity to reunite in Korea with Korean friends I first met at the Campus Asia Café held at Waseda University in the fall semester of 2024. Although we had not seen each other for a long time after they returned to Korea, it was a great joy to meet again in a different country from where we first became acquainted.



This experience reaffirmed for me one of the major strengths of the Campus Asia Program: the active and

lasting connections among its alumni. Through the program, students are able to form friendships that extend well beyond their time abroad.

I was also inspired by how each of them continues to work toward becoming individuals who can contribute to global society. I hope that, as we continue our efforts in different places, we will one day gather again with even greater personal and professional growth.

Social Issues

The social issues in Asia I were aware of prior to study abroad

One of the social issues in Asia that I was aware of even before studying abroad is the mental health challenges faced by young people. In the four countries participating in the Campus Asia Program, there is a shared concern that intense university entrance examinations and strongly credential-oriented educational systems place significant pressure on students in their late teens and twenties, negatively affecting their mental well-being.

In the summer of 2025, prior to my study abroad, I participated in the Social Innovation Forum (SIF) held at Peking University, where I engaged in a group presentation with students involved in the Campus Asia Program that addressed this issue. Through discussions and exchanges with fellow participants, I became acutely aware of the seriousness and widespread nature of this challenge.

In particular, in South Korea, there exists a highly competitive examination culture surrounding university admissions. From an early age, many students attend private cram schools intensively, and due to a challenging employment market, some delay graduation or repeatedly take on internships in an effort to secure future employment. These circumstances highlight the structural pressures that young people face in their academic and professional lives.

What you learned/discovered regarding these social issues

Throughout my exchange experience, I made a conscious effort to actively engage in dialogue with local Korean students. Through these conversations, I came to understand that many students choose

to take a leave of absence for approximately two years in order to pursue law school admission or professional qualifications such as the CPA, with the aim of securing stable employment and a sustainable future.

I was also struck by the dedication with which students approach their career development. In addition to seminars and student organizations, many actively participate in volunteer work and extracurricular activities to strengthen their profiles in an increasingly competitive job market. Despite the significant pressure they face, they strive to spend their time purposefully and meaningfully, which left a strong impression on me.

How the participation in CAMPUS Asia has contributed or will contribute to my future career

Through my participation in the Campus Asia Program, I was able to gain numerous invaluable experiences in cross-cultural exchange that would not have been possible by studying solely at Waseda University. Studying in South Korea allowed me to deepen my understanding of how differences in culture and history shape contemporary Japan–Korea relations, particularly through listening directly to the perspectives of local students and community members.

Most importantly, my study abroad experience through the Campus Asia Program strengthened my interest in Asia’s unique cultures and regional frameworks of cooperation, beginning with Korea. Building on this experience, I aspire to become a globally minded leader who can contribute to cooperation within Asia through global industries, including the aviation sector, which has long been my ambition.

Looking ahead, I also hope to pursue career opportunities in other Asian countries beyond Japan, and I remain committed to further developing my academic and professional skills during my remaining time at Waseda University.

