March 11, 2014

Dear EAP Korea Students,

A warm welcome from Yonsei University and Seoul, Korea! I’m Hyungji Park, the Director of the EAP Seoul Study Center since 2007, and every semester and every year we have an ever-more exciting group of students, and an ever-more exciting program with which to welcome you! We’re very much looking forward to having you with us in 2014-15, and here’s a quick peek at what you’ll experience with us.

1. Seoul is a bustling, vibrant, cosmopolitan, high-tech, fast-paced metropolis. If you haven’t experienced life in an Asian metropolis lately, you’re in for a real treat. Seoul has its own mix of traditional culture and food, and modern skyscrapers and dizzying urbanscapes. You’ll roam open-air fish markets and ride in air-conditioned express trains, eat at outdoor market stalls and extravagant buffet restaurants, all within walking distance of each other, and a short bus ride from campus. Seoul is an extraordinary mix of the traditional and the contemporary, the Internet-wired and the family-oriented, and you’ll experience it all with us.

2. Korean food is amazing. From bulgogi to bibimbap to kimchi to live octopus, you’ll experience food that’s fiery hot, food that’s a spectacular mix of colors, comfort home-cooked food, as well as pizza with toppings unimaginable in California (guess what dduk-galbi pizza is?). It’s all a treat, and eating must be the national sport in Korea, because there are tons of restaurants, fancy and simple, open early and late, right around the corner. You may even get a chance to make your own kimchi!

3. Yonsei University, your host university, is Korea’s highest-ranked private university, and the most internationalized, outwardly oriented university in the nation. Yonsei is a picturesque, sprawling research university, with top-rated courses by world-renowned faculty, taught in English, offered in all fields across all departments, from literature to economics, philosophy to political science, biology to chemical engineering, business to music, and everything in between. At Yonsei, you’ll also be taking Korean language courses at the prestigious Korean Language Institute, Korea’s premier Korean language educator for international students. Yonsei is also ideally located, just a few bus or subway stops away from downtown Seoul.

4. Need I mention hallyu and K-pop? Korean music, singers, films, TV shows, and its ever-so-handsome actors and actresses (hey, everyone in Korea really does look like that—just kidding!) are sweeping the world, and here’s your chance to get up close and personal with the K-pop phenomenon. And while you’re at it, Korea also has some really cool traditional performances and music, and a really active street and concert culture. Come catch some hallyu at its source!

5. Our EAP Study Center is gaining quite a reputation for the amazing cultural activities program that we offer. We’ll go on an overnight field trip to explore areas beyond Seoul—Busan during summer, with its beaches and traditional markets, is always a favorite option!—watch Nanta (drumming), get together for informal gatherings on campus, visit Seoul tourist attractions, and much more. In fall, we will go to Donggang for the white river rafting! Don’t worry if you miss
Thanksgiving Day while you are here at Yonsei. You will celebrate TWO different Thanksgiving Days including Korean Thanksgiving Day, Chuseok. Yonsei partially matches your activities fee while here, so you get much more bang for your (activities) buck here, and as an EAP student you’ll also be the envy of your non-EAP exchange student peers. Our Study Center and its staff have become quite notorious for our amazing activities programming, so you’ll really fall in love with our Study Center and Korea while you’re here!

6. Oh, and if you need help figuring out what to do after college, or are looking for some great out-of-the-classroom academic experiences, our Study Center has numerous for-credit internships and volunteer opportunities. Every semester, our students have career-determining and sometimes life-changing experiences (and also receive academic credit for) at internship programs with corporate and other partners (recently, we’ve had EAP students at a marketing firm, Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), a public relations firm, a consulting firm, etc.) We also encourage students to get off campus and into our community through for-credit volunteer programs such as interacting with North Korean defectors, reading stories to preschool and kindergarten children, doing arts and crafts with terminally ill children at the Yonsei Medical School hospital, and volunteering at our neighborhood elementary school. Get out and learn about the “real” Korea! Starting from summer 2014, Yonsei offers the Korea Summer Internship Program to exchange students, so you’ll have summer internship opportunities as well.

One of the crowning highlights of our program is the Farewell Banquet at the end of our semester. We have quiz shows and music, amazing food and take-home prizes, and lots of hugs and tears and smiles and good-byes.

A final note about security on the Korean peninsula. I know that North Korea has been in the international media quite a lot recently (and more so in Seoul media!), and while we remain on alert about the possibility of an escalation of tension with North Korea, we remain cautiously optimistic that life will be as usual, as it is for Seoulites right now.

Join us and we guarantee we’ll make it hard for you to leave us. I look forward to meeting all of you!

Best wishes,

Hyungji Park
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