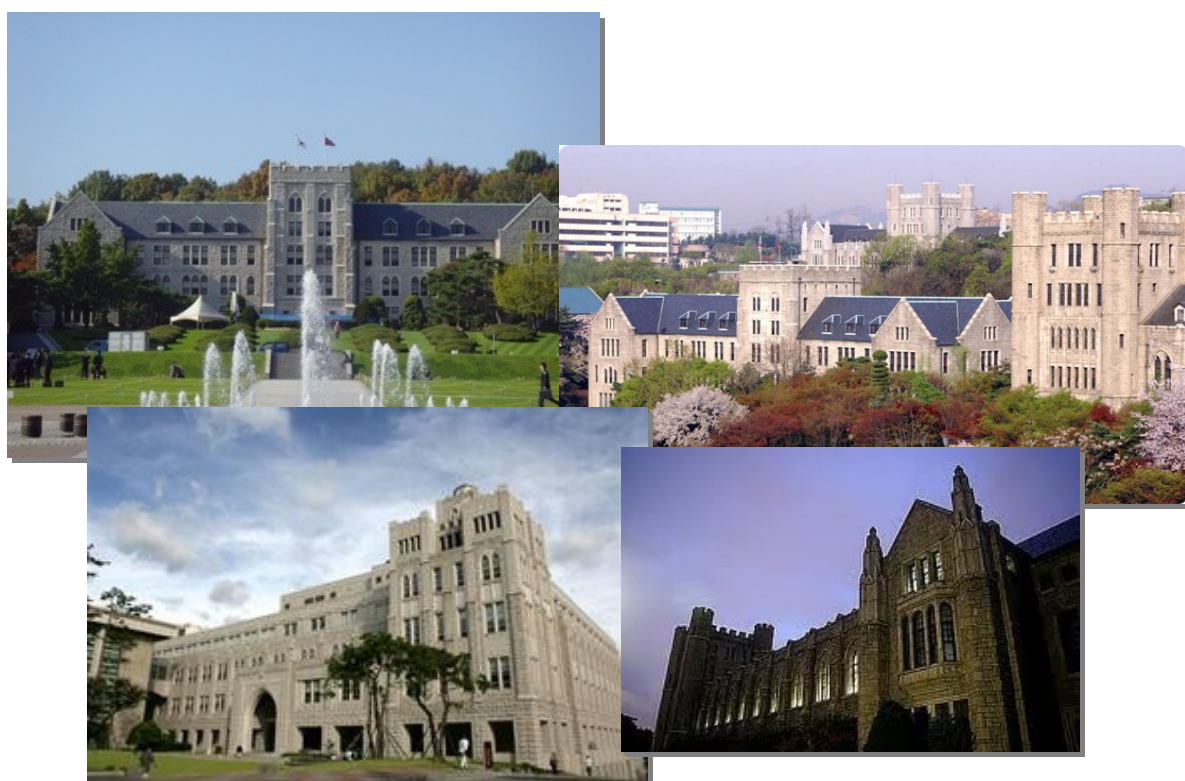


# International Summer Campus at **Korea University** 30 June—11 August 2012



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM



# A little about myself

My name is Monica Quach and I've just finished my first year studying Business Management at the University of Birmingham. I was given the amazing opportunity of studying at Korea University for its International Summer Campus (ISC) from June 30 to August 11 2012.

## Academics

In terms of learning, I chose three courses that I wouldn't have the chance to study here at Birmingham; 'Korean Wave in a Global Perspective', 'Korean Language' and 'Business Culture in Korea and East Asia'. The teaching and assessment styles for each one were very different to those I was used to at UoB. The professors were much more interactive as each class consisted of about 30 students rather than the 200 or more in the lectures I receive back at UoB.

I would definitely recommend taking the Korean Language course, especially as it would help you as you explore around Seoul. The teachers are all very skilled – everyone in my class was able to speak, read and write Korean at a basic level by the end of the course! Also, English is not as commonly spoken as you would expect so I recommend you learn some basic Korean before you arrive or invest in a phrasebook.

There are courses in a variety of different subject areas from Business to Biology. I suggest that you take courses that you are unable to take at UoB. It definitely broadens your knowledge in general which would help in relation to employment prospects. The assessment style for each course is slightly different too – for example, some courses depend heavily on class participation whilst others depend on exams. Before choosing the courses, a syllabus is provided for each one detailing the course outline and the assessment type. One thing to note is the grading is much stricter – a pass is 60%, anything below this is a fail. Whilst 60% is classed as a credible 2:1 at UoB, during the ISC you should aim for something higher so it actually appears on your transcript.

I learnt many new ways of learning and completing assignments through my professors but also through my classmates. I had several group projects and presentations, therefore, I had to interact with a lot of different people in a short amount of time. Each group taught me different things such as the amazing online software, called GoogleDocs! I don't know how I completed group projects without it!



Woodang Hall



During Korean Wave class

<http://view.koreaherald.com/kh/view.php?ud=20120729000422&cpv=0>

An article written by Korea Herald about Korean summer schools including the ISC!



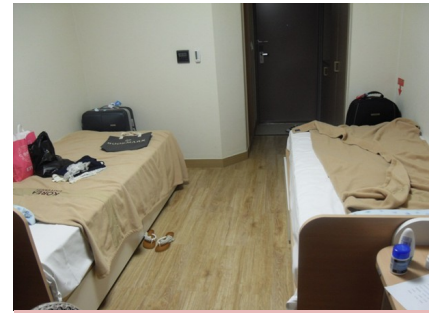
# Accommodation

There are two places of accommodation to choose from CJ-I House and Frontier House. At CJ-I House you are able to choose between a single room and a double room (similar to the one on the left). However, the single rooms in CJ are very limited and are usually the first to go.

I applied about mid-March and there was only places left in Frontier. The double room on the left is the one I stayed in. The staff on the ISC will try their best to match you with someone that you will get along with but it is not always possible. Luckily, I got on very well with my roommate (maybe too well at times!) and personal space was not an issue. Each room (in both CJ and Frontier) has a bathroom which is on your right as soon as you walk in.

Sheets and blankets are provided in Frontier, not in CJ but you can rent out bedding on your first day. The temperature at night is as hot in the night as it is in the day which means the thin blankets they provide are suitable. Also, there is an air conditioner in each room where you can control the temperature.

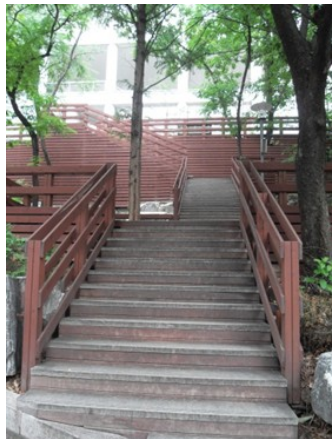
Both accommodation halls are only a 10 minute walk from Korea University. However, for CJ, there is a very steep hill to walk up so you should have comfortable shoes or else you will get hurt! For Frontier, there are over 100 steps to walk up to get there or you can choose the steep hill that CJ use. Either way, there is a lot of energy needed to get to your dorms!



Typical Frontier Double Room



Out into the street



Up the dreaded stairs!



The beginning of the hill....



Amazing view from my window



The halls



# Climate

Whilst I was staying there in Korea, the temperature reached a high of 36°C which actually remained for the last 3 weeks. The lowest was probably 29°C which is still pretty high compared to British weather! The humidity is the next problem you will encounter; during the day it will get more and more humid. It eventually comes down, but very late in the night. Also, the monsoon weather is not as bad as it sounds; just make sure you bring an umbrella!

In terms of clothes, I suggest you pack very light. For the men, t-shirts, shorts and flip-flops/sandals are probably best. For women, t-shirts, shorts/skirts, flowy dresses and flip-flops/sandals are ideal. Shoes that are comfortable to walk are also essential for when you go exploring. I made the mistake of bringing long pants – it just made my luggage heavy for no reason!

# Transportation

When arriving at Incheon airport, I chose to use the airport service the university offered. As I came through the arrival gate, I saw my name on a piece of paper with a phone number to call. The staff at the information desk will happily phone for you – someone will come to pick you up along with anyone else who may have been arriving at a similar time to you. I suggest you bring a slip of paper detailing the address hall of residence you have chosen (in the student handbook sent to you by email), as the taxi driver did not understand English and did not know of Frontier House (as it was still relatively new).

During my time at the ISC, we were allowed to explore on our own whenever we didn't have class. This was very easy especially with the efficient subway system that Seoul has. The 'T-Money' card which is similar to the London Underground 'Oyster' card can be purchased for 2500₩ which is about £1.50. Each journey is only about 1000₩ and will not surpass 2000₩ at most. The subway system is in English which is very helpful! There is a smart phone application from the Apple App store and the Android Marketplace with a detailed map of all the stations with directions to get from one station to another.

Unfortunately, the subway system ends at around midnight and the first train isn't until 5am which means you will need to take a taxi. From my own experiences, as long as you share the taxi, it will not cost that much at all. The few places that most people are travelling from after midnight are Hongdae, Gangnam, Dongdaemun and possibly Itaewon. From these places, it costs a total of 15000₩, which when divided between 4 people, is under 4000₩ a person (£3).

When I was going back to the airport (on my way home), I was able to take a taxi from the Frontier dorm to the Korea University Station where I boarded an airport bus. The airport bus takes you directly to Incheon Airport and only costs 14,000₩ (£8.40). The same bus also operates in the opposite direction, however, I do not recommend taking it when you arrive as you will not be aware of where you are going and it will be safer for you to take the airport service they provide.



# Attractions

From Monday to Thursday, there are classes from morning to early evening depending on the number of courses you choose. On Friday, there are several day trips or events which had been organised by the ISC staff. For the first Friday, a welcome party was organised at a local bar where you were given the chance to meet your buddy and other people on the programme. It was a great chance for me to get to know the people I had met in the first week even better and meet more people. The second trip was to Lotte World! The ISC program offered a free admission to the amusement park for the day which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone that attended. Unfortunately, the temple stay that was organised for the third week was cancelled due to the typhoon that was forecasted for that weekend. However, many students used that time to explore on their own! They presented a cultural performance for our fourth week which was very interesting as they included b-boy, traditional and k-pop acts. The event for the fifth week was a Nanta performance. Nanta is basically an interactive cooking show/musical where they cook actual food as a performance – it was very entertaining! The last week was graduation!



Welcome Party!



Lotte World



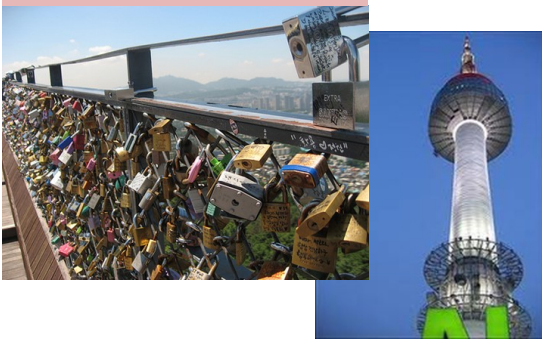
# Attractions

Other than the day trips organised by the ISC, me and my friends visited other places and attractions such as the Gyungbok-gung palaces and the Dongdaemun river. All the attractions, other than the DMZ and army base, are reachable via subway. As mentioned above, the map will help as it is in English. Also, the staff in the subway stations are able to speak basic English so by asking them will also be helpful.

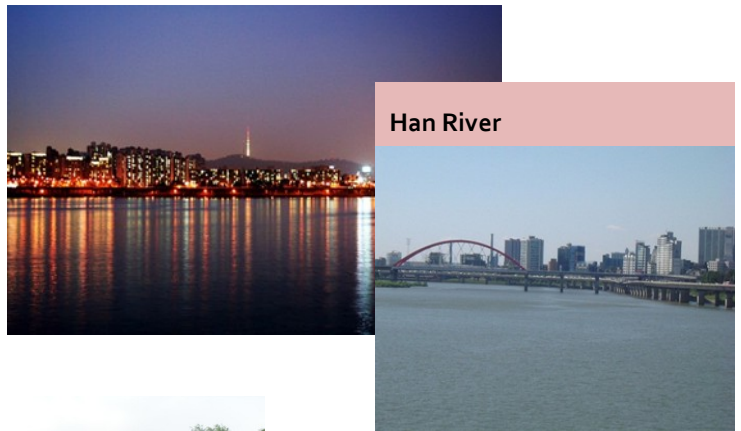
There is something for everyone! A few things you should try is the noraebang (karaoke) and the hot springs. Also, there are plenty of bars and clubs in Hongdae and Gangnam for you to explore! They are relatively cheap and an experience that you won't be able to find in the UK!

Another very important attraction of Korea is that the British pound is much stronger than the Korean won; therefore, most things are much cheaper! So for those who enjoy shopping as much as I do, there is plenty to buy! For souvenirs, Dongdaemun, Namdaemun market and Insadong are all great places to go. Whilst for clothing, cosmetics and accessories, Myeongdong is the best place. All the shopping districts are accessible by subway from the University dorms. They are also very busy! Some areas such as Dongdaemun, are open until 4.30am which means you can go shopping all day and night!

Seoul (Namsan) Tower



Han River



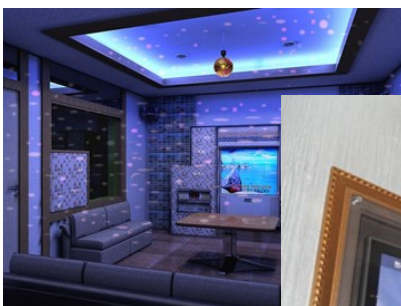
Dong daem un River



Gyungbokgung Palaces



Namdaemun Market



Noraebang (Karaoke)



Myeong-dong



Jimjilbang (hot springs)



# Food

If you are not a fan of hot and spicy, you may find it difficult to enjoy the food! I did have a few friends who began crying as soon as they had a few bites of the food. Korea's most famous delicacy, kimchi, is fermented cabbage in a hot chilli sauce. Kimchi, is found as either a side dish or within your meal in nearly all dishes. There is a variety of different foods such as kimbap (rice, vegetables and meat wrapped in a seaweed), budaejigae (a huge spicy stew with everything from hot dog pieces to mozzarella cheese rice balls), mandu (kimchi or meat dumplings) and many others!



Street food



Korean BBQ



Shabu shabu

Dim Sum

Curry and rice

Seafood Jjampong

Korean BBQ



Spicy Galbi Rice



Fried Mandu



Juk (Rice Porridge)

Another point I should make is that the food is very, very inexpensive. £5 is enough to feed 4 people for lunch whilst £10 could fill a whole table of people for dinner! As Frontier dormitories did not have kitchens, we were forced to eat out for every meal. For the days when money was tight, the convenience stores (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) sold food for even cheaper prices – cup noodles were only 50p (900₩)!



One of many convenience stores!

# Other General Points

## Money

Most places, including the markets and stalls, accept most debit and credit cards but there is almost always one place which will reject your card. The best card to have is probably HSBC as they do have a few branches in and around Seoul. The best medium of money to hold is still cash – I recommend that you exchange some money before you arrive in Korea as it can be difficult to find money exchange places in your first week.

## Health and Medication

Unfortunately, I was already slightly ill when I arrived in Korea and the time difference and change in climate made it much worse. After a few days, I had lost my voice completely and I felt very tired. Luckily, the pharmacies in Seoul sell very cheap medication which works almost immediately. The pharmacist I visited was only at the end of the road from the accommodation and they were able to speak enough English to understand my symptoms. I was given a course of medicated tea and tablets to help my cough. After one day, all my problems had become much better! Nearly all my friends became ill during the six weeks and each one became better after taking some Korean medication.

# Conclusion

The 6 weeks I spent on the ISC program were amazing and I couldn't have asked for a better experience! Not only were the courses enjoyable but the people I met made the experience probably the best I've had so far. I made friends with people from the US to people in Singapore and I now know that there is someone to be my tour guide in many places around the world!

The ISC program definitely demonstrated another perspective of university education and it has taught me valuable skills that I will use to my advantage!

