

Yonsei University

Semester 2 2016

BCom, International Business

I went into Korea with very little idea of the culture, food, or language and whilst that would seem to be a recipe for disaster I felt like it added to my experience as everything was unexpected and incredibly interesting. If you feel that you are too unprepared for the cultural differences or don't have a lot of interest in K-pop/K-dramas etc. I wouldn't worry at all.

As for Yonsei University itself it surpassed my expectations. The students are friendly and many speak English and are willing to talk to you. I was initially worried as the Korean education system doesn't exactly have a reputation for being easy and while I did have to spend one or two all-nighters finishing assignments the Uni was about on par with Otago's difficulty, at least for business courses. I would suggest doing 4 classes (12 credits) or fewer to be able to enjoy your time in Seoul.

One thing I would highly, HIGHLY, recommend is to learn the Korean alphabet (Hangul) before arriving in Korea, even if you intend on studying Korean while in Yonsei. It allows you to read any English words in their alphabet, order anything easily, and find important places such as bathrooms! I found the friends I made in Korea who did not make an effort to learn the basics of Korean had the hardest time getting by. Luckily the Korean alphabet is said to be the easiest to learn in the world and I learned it in a matter of 2 weeks, there's plenty of resources online to help you.

My experience of the drinking culture in Korea was that almost every meal at a restaurant was with large groups and accompanied by a healthy amount of "Soju", a Korean alcohol that at first tastes like nailpolish remover but you may get such a taste for it you're searching Otago for it (Henry's has it btw). If the sound of nailpolish remover doesn't entice you there are flavoured versions which simply taste like juice as well.

Housing is a crucial factor. Dorms are available, both SK Global and International House, with double or single room options. Dorms have the benefit of allowing you to make friends and be very close to all your classes. There are also student apartments called "goshiwon" which have the benefit of not having the restrictive rules of the dorms but are further away from Uni and have less opportunities to socialise. I picked the double room as I knew it would allow me to have a roommate to socialise and have fun with but along with that it can bring quite a bit of turmoil when it comes to sleeping and studying if you're sensitive to noise. Either way Yonsei has many programs that allow foreigners to meet with new people and I would suggest going to all of them as it's super important to socialise.

All in all I fell in love with Korea during my exchange and plan on working there in the future. It feels like a second home and while I can't guarantee it will be exactly your

experience, hopefully it will set you at ease a little if you are contemplating an exchange there.