

S5B Group 1
Grand Tour
Report



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Class: 5B

Destination: Seoul, Korea

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Introduction

The grand tour to Seoul, Korea has finally come to an end. We are truly thankful for the opportunity given to broaden our horizons as well as to investigate further towards different cultures and customs. We chose Seoul as our destination, as we wanted to get in touch with the Korean culture, to understand the history behind, and more importantly, to learn to be a more independent and mature person.



Day 1:

Hongdae Street

Spot description:

Hongdae is different from the famous spot Myeong-dong. The shops in Hongdae are mostly local shops but not brand-name stores. Most of the shops are selling street food, clothes and decorations; the place is as popular as Myeong-dong. Most of the shop owners there know Putonghua, it is easier for us communicate with them. Actually, there are still some brand-name shops such as Sixty8 and new balance.

Reflection:

Even when we were at the Incheon airport, we just could not believe that we had arrived in Korea already until we felt the chill outside the airport. Although the cold did not affect our excitement, we were still being careful about it since the temperature of Korea varies much from day to night, also from outdoors to indoors. We needed to keep putting on and taking off our coats between the cold and warm temperature.

In recent years, the Korean trend had stormed Hong Kong. It is not difficult to find the Korean brand stores in Hong Kong, but while we were hanging out in Hongdae, it was totally different. Some individuals said that Hongdae was similar to Mong Kok in Hong Kong, perhaps it was because both of them are the youngsters' favorite places and Hongdae is as lively as Mong Kok. The streets were full of the latest make-up products and clothes. What is more, Hongdae had plenty of featured food over every street. The Koreans were really nice, even though we had language barrier, they would use some simple English and body language to communicate with us when we were waiting for the food. We became more willing to talk with the locals so as to respond to their enthusiasm.

Photos:



Day 2:

Kyung Hee University

Spot description:

Kyung Hee University is a private research institute founded in 1949. It has a comprehensive education system covering all grades from kindergarten to graduate school. Kyung Hee is comprised of three campuses, which are the Seoul Campus, the Global Campus and the Gwangneung Campus. It also has a large global network, cooperating with 434 sister schools in 69 countries around the globe. In Kyung Hee University, there are 24 colleges, 71 departments and majors, 65 master and 63 doctorate programs, 18 professional and special graduate schools and 43 auxiliary research institutions.

Reflection:

When we first entered Kyung Hee University, there was a talk introducing the university. We found that the style and design of the University was magnificent and westernized. The grand and gorgeous view really surprised us, as in Hong Kong we seldom have such style of building.

Then we went to the library in the university. The high ceiling and red carpet made the whole building full of elegance, we could feel the strong atmosphere of learning embracing the whole library as students were all diligently working on their studies. The students there told us some benefits and feelings of studying in Korea; they encouraged us to gain more exposure and study overseas. Through the conversation with the students, we could tell that the Koreans are really polite, showing a cultural diversity.

Photos:



Sinchon Road and Yanghwa Road

Spot description:

Sinchon is a region surrounding Sinchon-dong and Daeheung-dong. Numerous famous universities including Yonsei University, Ewha Womans University, Sogang University, Hongik University and Myongji University are nearby. In Sinchon and Yanghwa, there are many small stores alongside which are all about clothes, bags, skin care products and cosmetic products, to name but a few.

Reflection:

Sinchon road and Yanghwa road are streets selling cosmetic and decorative products. We went there to experience the atmosphere of shopping streets in Korea.

Different from Hong Kong, streets in Korea provide spacious areas for citizens to walk through and for shops to do business. Salespeople and shop owners display their products out of their shops, making a competitive atmosphere with different kinds of goods. What is more, in Hong Kong, we usually shop in an indoor shopping mall with air conditioners. It was a fresh practice for us to shop in a deserted outdoor shopping zone.

When it came to communicating with the locals, it was a hard time, as we did not share a common language. However, salespeople there showed their eagerness to offer a helping hand. For example, they used their limited facial expressions and body language to give detailed explanation, in an attempt to provide us assistance for finding our favourite products. Although the whole process was a bit awkward, still we enjoyed a great time and we did learn from them, especially the professionalism that we appreciate a lot.

Boramae safety center

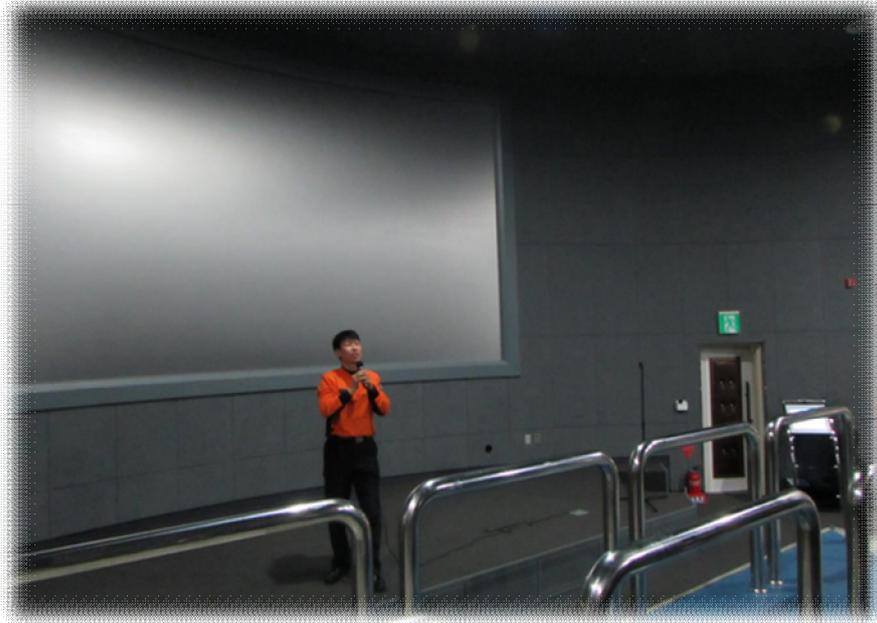
Spot description:

The Boramae safety center is an ideal spot for us to experience the safety culture and where we could learn the importance of safety. It provided us a platform and an opportunity to enjoy very various hands-on programs such as fire, car accident, earthquake, typhoon, emergency care, fire fighting equipment practice, museum of the fire-fighting and children's fire safety experience program.

Reflection:

We had a chance to learn how to handle disasters and earthquakes; it was memorable to have a centre introducing the various safety facilities and equipment. Learning the skills is important, if natural disaster appears out of expectation, self protection will be the only thing we can do first. We appreciate that the Korean government is aware of the issue. During the lesson, we learned new knowledge with fun and enjoyment.

Photos:



Myeong-dong

Spot description:

Myeong-dong is one of Seoul's main shopping and tourism districts. It was listed as the ninth most expensive shopping street in the world as well. It is a particularly popular area for us as a center for fashion and sight-seeing. There are mid-to-high priced retailing stores and international brand outlets, like Lacoste and Forever 21, as well as Korean cosmetics brands such as Nature Republic, Innisfree, Etude House and Skin Food.

Reflection:

Myeong-dong is very famous to tourists; it is a huge outdoor shopping centre with local flavor. Most of the salespeople and shop owners there have high standard on the usage of Mandarin; in this case we found it easier to communicate. Some of them realized that we were students from Hong Kong, they offered us a lower price when purchasing goods, it was a touching experience for us to feel the human kindness, which was hard to see in Hong Kong. It was exciting for us to try some local snacks such as tornado potato, fried hot dog, octopus stand, red rice cake and massive ice cream cone; Koreans have their own style of snacks. There were really a large number of shops; they had to push the new product out to win the competition between stores.

Day 3:

The Lotte World

Spot description:

The Lotte World is one of the world's largest indoor and outdoor theme parks, which consists of two zones – the indoor "Adventure" part and the outdoor "Magic Island" part. Not only is the theme park equipped with numerous exciting amusements and beautiful attractions like the Balloon Ride and an artificial lake, but it also includes an ice skating rink, a folk museum and regular traditional Korean dance performance.

Reflection:

Our first impression to the Lotte World was a complex. Although the area of the theme park might not be as large as others in foreign countries, the attractions in the park were far beyond our expectation. We were all surprised by the design of the indoor "Adventure" part as there were dozens of attractions, shops and restaurants combined on one floor. It totally displayed the sanity of using interior space.

Another thing that made it unique and distinctive from other theme parks was the energy saving measure adopted in the indoor part of the park. No matter during daytime or at night, there were no chandeliers or luxurious lights. The light sources mainly depended on the sunlight from the transparent dome-shaped ceiling and lights from the shopping mall.

Unlike Hong Kong, Seoul was an environmentally friendly city, this could be told by such energy-saving design in the theme park. We strongly appreciate the design and the energy conservation in the theme park. We truly enjoyed a wonder afternoon in the Lotte World.

Photos:



Korean Folk Village

Spot Description:

The Folk Village uses the Joseon period-styled village as the background. There are traditional Korean housing and facilities. Those houses were relocated from various regions in Korea and conserved by the Korean government. From the furniture displayed in the houses, the simple tools imply that the houses belong to the working class in the past. The Folk Village mainly displays objects in the farmers' houses and shows the life style of labors in the past Korea. The houses of middle classes were also displayed.

Reflection:

The Korean Folk Village was a quite special place when comparing with other destinations in our itinerary. It is a conservation site of the Korean culture and history, it provided a precious chance for us to learn and experience the Korean culture and history. We all appreciate the conservation work done by the Korean government. On one hand, this Folk Village can be a tourist spot. On the other hand, it provides a good learning medium for locals and foreigners to explore more about the Korean history and culture. In addition, it is not usual to see a country to leave an area for carrying conservation work instead of having development.

Compared with the conservation work done by the Hong Kong government, the one in Seoul is more comprehensive. Since the History Museum in Hong Kong seldom holds experiencing activities and performances to let visitors understand the culture and history, the Folk Village in Korea does better in terms of interaction with visitors. For example, we have learnt to play traditional folk games such as Tuho (a kind of stick-throwing games) in the Korean Folk Village. We believe that exploring culture and history by having first hand experiences is better than second hand experiences from books or magazines. Sometimes it is hard for us to just read and study Korean culture and history through books and the Internet. Real experiences are always more valuable and much concrete.

Photos:



Day 4:

The DMZ

Spot Description:

We visited the Korean Demilitarized Zone on the fourth day. The Korean Demilitarized Zone is a strip of land running across Korea, which is also called the DMZ. It was established at the end of the Korean War as a separation barrier between North and South Korea, it is located at latitude 38°N, hence it is named as the 38th Parallel North as well. In this trip, we went to the Third Tunnel of Aggression, entering by walking down a long steep inclining the tunnel, which has a depth of about 73 meters underground. The staff members working there take everything seriously; individuals could not even bring their mobile phones and cameras into the tunnel. It was called the most heavily militarized border in the world.

Reflection:

When we entered the DMZ, we saw some Korean soldiers stationed in the entrance of the DMZ and they checked our passports to avoid spies and ensure safety, this really showed how serious the Koreans take the DMZ.

Besides, we watched a documentary about the Korean War in the museum there, we understood more about the hostile relationship between North and South Korea, they had fought wars against each other for several times. Koreans suffered a lot from the wars and they really lived in hard times, as the wars brought heavy casualties and loss of lives. We actually doubted why the Koreans did not solve their conflicts by peaceful means. They share the same country, the same culture but totally different ideas in terms of ruling.

Other than the museum, we went down to the Third Tunnel of Aggression. The tunnel was really narrow and small, hardly could some of us stand straightly inside the tunnel, we needed to squat for the whole journey and walk along the whole steep incline. Going deep down the tunnel was really frustrating and exhausting, though we appreciate the perseverance of the Koreans in building four tunnels like this. It was really remarkable as we seldom gain exposure overseas with our classmates.

Photos



The Kimchi School

Spot Description:

The Kimchi School unveils the culture of the Koreans to the tourists. There were two sections in the Kimchi School; they were lessons for making kimchi and traditional Korean costumes dressing. During the kimchi workshop, we had our first-hand-made kimchi there. Then, we grasped a chance to wear the traditional Korean costumes, which had amazed us a lot when passing the costumes shops on our coach. Hence, we feel excited and took lots of nice pictures there. To conclude, we enjoy the nice time at the Kimchi School.

Reflection:

It was interesting to find that the place was named as Kimchi School, there is no such kind of school in Hong Kong. For example, we do not have Fishball School and Dim Sum School in Hong Kong. Schools usually are full of tests, homework and examinations, which may be frustrating to be a student. However, in the Kimchi School, we found the lessons there enjoyable and we had many new trials, making kimchi and wearing Korean costumes. Although we did not taste our kimchi, it was quite rewarding to know that the Kimchi was for the elderly in nursing houses. There we did not take the kimchi, but the memories and photos were what we truly gained.

As tourists, we longed for a trip that brings us exposure to unfamiliar places. During the trip, we always wanted to step out from the comfort zone and try new things. We would like to learn more about the local culture and tradition, which vary from our ones. The Kimchi School was undoubtedly the best alternative for tourists to visit, introducing the making of the traditional must-have in Korean meals.

Hong Kong, as the Food Paradise, includes a diversity of cuisines. Yet, we questioned whether people perceive local food in Hong Kong as an important issue, like the street food, of which we are always proud of. It seems that they are now experiencing a hard time and struggling to survive in the highly competitive society. Perhaps Hong Kong should establish one school that introduces local food, just like the Kimchi School in Korea; this would definitely spread the local culture in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, it is hoped that foreigners would get to know more about the local culture in Hong Kong, other than just chain stores and pharmacy, there are still lots of precious values in the society.

Photos:



Conclusion

The awe-inspiring trip to Korea has eventually ended; this marks a crucial milestone in our secondary school life. Not only did we enjoy sight-seeing, but we also reached all our targets had set before we started our journey. We are now clearer about the Korean culture; the politeness of the Koreans really inspired us to be a better person in the future. Besides, through various destinations, we understood more about the Korean history. Last but not least, the teamwork in writing the report proved to us that working together with partners gives improvement to each other, consequently makes us a better person.

We are very grateful to be granted such a precious chance to broaden our horizons, as well as learning outside the classroom. Other than that, the memories we had together and the laughter we shared together are the things that we cherish as well.

Without the company of our classmates, we could not have been such delighted.

Group Member List:

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