



King Ling
College

Grand Tour

26 March 2015 - 29 March 2015

Destination:

Seoul, Korea

Class: 5E

Group: 2

Alumnus-in-charge:

Miss Lilith Ng

Group members:

Lee Wai Lam

Chan Ka Long

Leung Chui Ting

Yip Ka Ki

Chan Ka Ho

Chung Man Kit

Wan Chun Yu

Yeung Wing Tat

Yung Pui Hoi

Introduction

Korean Wave has been around the world; without doubt, it captivated eyes from every part of the world. For that reason, we, students of 5E, picked Seoul, Korea as our Grand Tour destination to see how this city with half of Hong Kong in size can strike a balance between traditions and pop culture, making it a travelling hotspot and hotbed of tradition, shopping and entertainment.

In this four-day trip to Seoul, our group aims at learning Korean culture in person, broadening our horizons, as well as reflecting the room for improvement of Hong Kong by comparing the similarities and differences of Hong Kong and Seoul.

This trip with contentment and excitement began.



Our group photo captured in the Hong Kong International Airport

Day 01

Dinner

Hongdae Street

Dinner:

Once our class arrived in Seoul, we had tried a Korean traditional cuisine called Korean Ginseng Chicken Soup. Koreans emphasize the importance of health, and hence most Korean cuisines are nutritious and nourishing. Among those dishes, Korean Ginseng Chicken Soup is the most famous which boost one's energy and improve the immune system.

When it comes to regimen, Koreans understand its importance much better than Hongkongers; Koreans treat eating their nutritious cuisines as a habit, whereas Hongkongers often eat fast food and consume salty and high cholesterol food. Without paying enough attention to health, many Hong Kong citizens face health issue. Seoul and Hong Kong are both busy cities, yet Koreans have time to take care of their health. This, indeed, deserves our reflection.



↑ *Korean Ginseng Chicken Soup*



←

The Restaurant that we were in



Night View of Hongdae Street

Hongdae Street:

Hongdae Street is the place to enjoy Seoul nightlife; with its clean and broad avenue and shops selling goods at affordable price, it attracts youths for a visit. Indeed, the unique goods sold and enthusiastic salespersons entertain every one of us. Moreover, music and dance performance full of Korean characteristics also make Hongdae Street unique and enjoyable.

The nightlife in Korea is magnificent as that in Hong Kong. Yet, Koreans outperform Hongkongers in terms of politeness and courtesy. We should be alerted, and improving, in order to keep the name of 'Shopping Paradise' for Hong Kong.

Although there is no garbage bin on the street, people would not litter everywhere due to inconvenience. Their self-discipline deserves our admiration and practice.

Koreans have their own unique culture, in which teenagers can create their own music, dance, and even creative products. However in Hong Kong, teenagers lack spaces to create their own pop culture, which is very unfortunate.



Our class assembled in Hongdae Street

Day 02

Namsangol Hanok Village

Insa-dong

Sungkyungkwan University

Myeong-dong

Namsangol Hanok Village:

Namsangol Hanok Village is the restoration of five traditional Korean houses, a pavilion, a pond and a time capsule. The preservation of the original atmosphere makes it a perfect spot to take a walk.

What interested us are pots which were used to store Kimchi. In the past, the more pots the family had, the richer they were. Kimchi can be kept for more than half a year with temperature under 4°C. Without refrigerator, it is hard to keep Kimchi at such temperature nowadays. For that reason we admire Koreans in the past who dug holes to keep Kimchi underground in order to preserve it.

Old is not equivalent to useless and outdated. However, people nowadays try to invent machines to replace and simplify old traditions. There is no doubt that machines would bring us convenience, but we believe it is of paramount importance to learn the old traditions, for which it helps our ancestors to solve daily problems and we should pass this knowledge to our next generation.

According to Ms. Mira, our tour guide, the flag of Korea contains ideas from China, for example, the eight trigrams shape and the diagram of cosmological scheme on the flag. The design and architecture of Korean houses are also similar to the Chinese one. It can show that Korea was deeply affected by the Chinese culture in the past.

Actually, our country had developed a unique system of culture for more than a thousand year. Not only Korea, but also many nearby countries learnt from our culture. This, undoubtedly, unveiled the preciousness of our culture. However, because of the importation of western culture and thoughts, our own culture seems to be disappearing in the development of the whole country. Worse still, we might need to visit nearby countries like Japan and Korea to learn more about our own culture, like the traditional architecture in the future. Isn't it an irony?

All in all, it is our obligation to understand and promote our culture. We should pay more attention to conserving the traditional Chinese culture.



Group photos taken in Namsangol Hanok Village



Insa-dong:

Insa-dong is a street famous for Korean traditions and arts in Seoul. It has a large number of art galleries, antique and craft shops. We walked through the whole street and visited a shopping mall called Ssamziegil.

In Insa-dong, we could peek through the ancient part of Korea. On the street, there were a lot of shops selling traditional arts items, like Hanji (Korean paper) and dolls wearing Hanbok. In Hong Kong, there is no streets like Insa-dong; the government and tycoons develop old streets and transform them into more business areas and skyscrapers, but seldom do they keep the traditional parts of

Hong Kong, which in fact might have a chance to become a tourist spot like Insa-dong.

Besides, in Ssamziegil, we could see there are small shops selling handicrafts. This mall is just full of arts and decoration. It is a good idea to develop a mall for artworks as it provides artists a space to create their products and sell them to gain money while tourists and local people could visit there for relaxing.

It looks like Insa-dong is a really old place. However, it is actually a mix with both the traditional and the modern parts of Korea. Despite antique and crafts shops lying on the sides of the street, there are also some snack shops which sell ice-cream made in the way like how Korean rice cake is made, making the ice-cream elastic and sticky. These prove that mix-and-match can also be a good thing; on one hand it preserves the traditions, and on the other hand modernizes it.

Our classmates buying souvenirs in a shop of Insa-dong



In our trip, we had a lot of spots that show the modern and young face of Korea. However, we could know another side - the ancient side - of Korea in Insa-dong while it was not boring at all.

Sungkyunkwan University:

Sungkyunkwan University was founded in 1398. It now has two campuses, one in Seoul and one in Suwon. We had listened to an introduction about the university from students there. Then, we visited Myeongnyundang which was the old campus for students years ago.

When we were listening to the introduction from the Korean students, we were surprised that they have a natural accent and are able to speak English fluently.

Before the visit, we thought that most Koreans could not speak English or could speak in a Korean accent which sounds freaky and is hard to understand. However, this visit had changed our mind entirely and alerted us.

Hongkongers are usually proud of their ability to speak Cantonese, English and Putonghua which allow them to communicate with other people easily. However, it was pointed out that the English standard of Hongkongers is worsening in recent years, compared with other Asian cities.

Not only had this visit to Sungkyunkwan University changed our mind about Koreans, but it also reminded us the importance of brushing up our English and any other languages so as to increase our competitiveness in the world.

Group photo taken in Sungkyunkwan University



All in all, this short but impressive trip to Sungkyunkwan University gave us an important lesson. It was also a precious chance for us to see another side of Korea and it provided us on more choice for further study after graduation.

We have visited Minglunhol, an old campus of the University.



Day 03

Lotte World

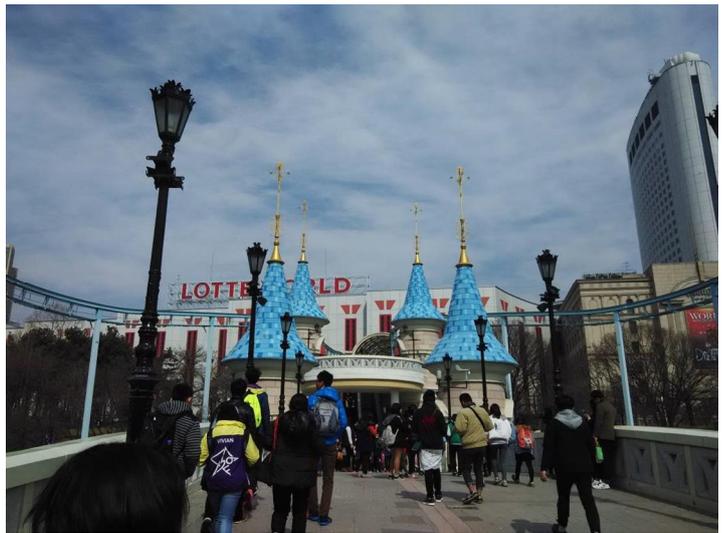
Dongdaemum Market

Lotte World:

Being a major recreational complex in Seoul, Lotte World is a perfect amusement spot for entertainment which has been entitled to be the world's biggest indoor theme park. Filled up with lofty attractions such as stimulating adventures and roller coasters, it attracts locals and tourists, especially couples and families. It has been one of the famous spots for traveling in Korea.

There are a lot of similarities between Disneyland, Ocean Park in Hong Kong and Lotte World in Seoul. However, differed from Hong Kong theme parks, Lotte World consists of an indoor amusement park, which cannot be found in Hong Kong. No matter how bad the weather is, it will never reduce our enthusiasm of having fun.

With the increasing age and the busy schedule, seldom do we go to theme park or even other places with a large group of friends. Despite studying all the time, a suitable relaxation is also needed so as to release ourselves from stress. Bumping cars, riding monorail, crane games and some others, we all felt excited when playing and forgot about the pressure. Having fun in the Lotte World became the most memorable memory on the third day.



View of the LOTTE World and group photo captured there





Groupmates were going to the assembly point with their goods.

Dongdamum Market:

Since 2002, Dongdaemum Market, a popular shopping and tourist destination, has been entitled to be the Special Tourism Zone in Seoul. Many large shopping malls with many clothes shops were constructed. With reasonable price and different style of clothes, it attracts locals and tourists.

Due to different mother languages, communicating with Koreans is difficult. Although we have heard that Mandarin is common in Korea, it is not a must that everybody knows how to speak. However, languages are not a problem in Seoul. In spite of different languages, Korean shop owners would hear our needs patiently and try their best to communicate with us.



View of Dongdamum Market



Day 04

Military Demarcation Line / DMZ

Kimchi Making

Military Demarcation Line:

The Military Demarcation Line separated Korea into two parts, North Korea and South Korea, and it meant the Korean War has temporarily stopped, from the past century up to now. Because of the war, many Koreans have been suffered from famine and a lot of Korean soldiers died in the war.

It provides opportunities for foreigners to know more about the war from 1950s up to the “cold war” in which Korea is facing nowadays. We got a great chance to watch a 7-minute video in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) which inform us about the history of the four tunnels dug by soldiers of North Korea during the Korean War.

We felt unpleasant to know that those tunnels were used to invade South Korea. Although it may be unappealing, we got to have a chance to walk through the Third Tunnel, which links between Seoul and the border of North Korea. It was, undoubtedly, a rare chance to understand the dark side of a war.

When we looked at holes of dynamite, we perceived how dangerous a war actually was. Realizing that a war can take away not only properties and tangible items, but also lives of millions, we, as secondary students in Hong Kong, were blessed with the peace in Hong Kong. Yet, we should not take our peace as granted; millions were dead in order to realize our peace.

We should treat every war as moral lessons; we should bear in mind the importance of keeping the world peaceful. “From me to we,” and indeed we should not break the peace we are enjoying because of our own interest.



Symbol of DMZ



Group photo taken in the DMZ

Kimchi making:

Kimchi is a traditional Korean food and it has a long history. Lacking resources, Koreans pickled the vegetable and it would become Kimchi after a period of time. Koreans eat Kimchi every day and they take eating Kimchi as a part of their daily behaviour.

Compared with Koreans, we, Hongkongers, are luckier because we have different kinds of resources, a diverse range of cuisines and we enjoy better quality of life. However, in others' eyes, we are enjoying luxury lives as it is not everyone's opportunities to live in a peace and a highly advanced city. Because of this, we should thank our families and society, as well as paying back to our parents and contribute to our society for providing these privileges such as free educational chance and freedom of speech.

Group photo taken in the Kimchi making school, in Korean costumes



Conclusion

We are all delighted after this remarkable trip, in which we understand the Korean culture, we have fun with our dearest classmates and gain unforgettable memory.

Unlike Hong Kong, Korea faces threat every moment. Haunted by wars, Korea was regarded as the most destitute country until its significant development in 1970s. Working hard and developing Korea effectively, Korea has been turned into a bright star which captivated eyes from every part of the world in just 40 years. We must admire their hard work and learn from them. Preserving cultures and tradition conscientiously, serving customers cordially and innovating ideas creatively are the keys to Korea's success. By learning from Korea, Hong Kong must have a stronger competitiveness.

We would like to express our gratitude to all teachers involved in the preparation of Grand Tour 2014; without their endeavour, it would not be realizable. This rare chance of travelling with classmates may not happen again in the future, that's why we take this valuable trip in heart and will never forget how gratifying this trip is.



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