

Summer Programme in South Korea

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I have always wanted to go on a Student Exchange Programme (SEP) since I entered NUS. When I was finally in Year 3, I was dejected after I had attended the SEP briefing to learn that I needed to have a sizable sum of money (which I did not have) in order to survive the whole semester overseas. As a result, I signed up for the Summer Programme module as an alternative for a short overseas experience.

I was overjoyed when I heard that this year's summer programme was to be conducted in South Korea – the land of K-pop, pretty Korean girls and awesome barbecued meats. Two weeks before the trip, Professor Ong Seow Eng and Dr Lee Kwan Ok gave us a few lectures and assignments to prepare us for the field trip. At first, we did not understand why we had to have the week-long preparation sessions. However, we eventually got to know the intentions. With some background knowledge of, and information on South Korea, such as the country's planning policies, we appreciated and understood some of the things that were shared with us by the wonderful corporations and people that hosted us when we were there.

For the five-day programme, we visited a couple of places. We had an overview of Incheon airport and the major development of the surrounding regions. Seoul National University gave us a briefing on Seoul housing policies and challenges over the past decades. In addition we had a tour at the Signature Towers Seoul, and were given insights on office development and management. We visited a mega underground shopping mall. This was followed by a visit to the Raemen Housing Gallery where we saw a model of a future high-end residential development by Samsung.

At the Seoul City Planning Office, the senior officials gave us an account of the vision for Seoul City where CBRE gave us a comprehensive market overview of office and logistic properties. Rounding off the trip was a visit to GIC Real Estate, where we were given insights into GIC investment policies in Korea.

Another wonderful take-away from this module was "learning-made-fun" and fostering bonding with peers and professors over a few cups of soju or Korean barbecued meat. I learned a lot from this summer programme, both about the real estate market in Korea and the soft skills that I picked up. Coupled with the fact that Korea is such an awesome country with nice people and really good food, this summer trip will forever be etched in my mind. I am really glad that I took this module, and grateful to our professors who made the effort to plan the module during their summer holidays.

