

Passport? Check. Visa? Check. Art material? Check. Busan! Here I come!

On the 30th of July, 2018, I embarked on the trip of a life time to Busan, South Korea to attend the juvenile art competition there – a culture-exchange program that would bring together students from India, Japan and Korea. 18 of us from Chennai had been blessed with this wonderful opportunity.

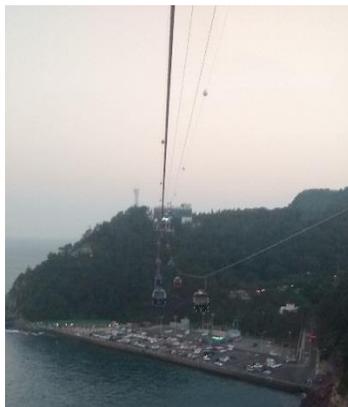
When I stepped out of the Busan airport, I was nothing short of awed! Perfectly laid roads, lined with beautiful flora, beaches so very clean, bridges spanning over vast bodies of water, rolling hills and towering buildings co-existing in perfect harmony; the city was planned to perfection. The people too were no exception; ever-smiling and always ready to help. Our hosts made sure that accommodations were comfortable and that we were always catered to.



← A shot of the city from the mountain observatory



On the first day of our stay, we visited the royal tomb of King Suro (whose wife interestingly had Indian roots) and later taken around the city in a bus and to the Haeundae beach. Beomsa temple and the mountain observatory were on the agenda for the second day. On the third, we were taken to Busan’s UN peace memorial, the sea life aquarium and for a ride in the Songdo cable car (the only cable car over the sea





And of course, we visited a fair share of Buddhist temples, for that is where we were served lunch and dinner every day. The dish comprising usually of sticky rice, traditional kimchi, sweet rice balls, fruits, vegetables and lentil soup was a completely new experience for our seasoned indian palates!



And finally - the day of the competition. It was also the day we met our Japanese and Korean counterparts. From posing in traditional hanboks, to participating in a traditional tea ceremony, to the competition itself and finally culminating in a fantastic culture-exchange program. It was during this part of the trip where performances were staged, we got the chance to interact with each other (thank god for google translate!), played games and exchanges gifts.

The trip was everything I could have asked for and more. It showed me what it was like to be completely responsible for myself, that feeling of tasting independence for the first time, I will never forget. To be a part of so many cultures and to try and understand them was a humbling experience, but at the same the value of our own culture became so evident. But of course, the stay wouldn't have been half as exciting if wasn't for the company. I am lucky to have made such amazing friends in such a short while and I owe them this wonderful experience. In the end, we were all left wishing for more, reluctant to leave behind the wonderland that was Busan and return to reality. Though now only a vivid memory, it is one that I will forever cherish.

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