

2 [ENTHUSIASM] SANGAY TEMPA

College Degree Program: Sports Management

Study Abroad Program: Kyungpook National University, South Korea (Exchange study)

"Studying abroad was an opportunity that I did not want to miss at all; to be able to study abroad while studying abroad."





As an international student, I am already studying abroad. From the very beginning of my time at the University of Oklahoma, I told myself that I did not want to stay in one place for four years, although I love living here with my weird and annoying friends. I had an opportunity that I did not want to miss at all – to be able to study abroad while studying abroad.

One of the most important values that I gained from my study abroad experience in South Korea was my enthusiasm for traveling. I will share only on my enthusiasm about traveling because this was one trait that was sorely missing in my life. Studying abroad in South Korea turned the table to enrich my whole life experience.

Despite having been to three or more countries before Korea, I used to only travel for study purposes. There was no real fire burning inside my stomach for the passion of “traveling.” After South Korea, I learned that I have missed out on so much of what I could have learned and experienced from traveling. I always tell everyone that I traveled to more places while in South Korea for a semester than I have in two years of my stay at OU, or before that when I lived in the Netherlands for two years.

While in South Korea, I met a group of friends who loved traveling. We were about a 10- to 12-person group who always traveled together. In the beginning, I did not want to join them, which was just me being in my comfort zone. I wanted to lock myself in a room or do other things I loved doing like playing soccer. However, after seeing two of my friends travel from one end of South Korea to another with just a rucksack bag and a tent, I was jealous of all the cool things they had done and places they had

visited. Their stories inspired me to start traveling. So, I decided to give it a try and join them.

Every weekend, we traveled to different places within South Korea. We traveled to Goeje Island in the southeast of the country and climbed up to one of the highest peaks in the northern part of the country. On the way to the peak we spent our nights in a tent in the middle of the park (it was legal) and by the sea. The feeling of waking up to the view of the sea was just marvelous. We visited the capital city of South Korea (Seoul), popular places like Busan and more interesting places like Gangnam. While traveling, I spent nights in a jimjilbang, where we enjoyed pools and saunas of different temperatures naked (gender separated), without anyone bothering us, and slept with a towel and block of leathered wood as a pillow. I have never experienced time passing quicker than my stay in South Korea. I loved traveling and I wanted to travel more. Now that was not who I used to be.

I started hanging out with my friends in the bar, which I would never do before, and having a great time either sitting or playing volleyball by the sea with people I traveled with and people who formed a big part of my life. Without traveling I could not have met these people or have gotten to know these great people so close. I realized that traveling does not only let you see places, but also gives you the opportunity to connect more closely, as I got to know all of my friends better through conversation and time spent together. We can always learn from others. I am glad that I was willing to step out of my cave and explore the world and connect with people.



Not only did I travel within Korea, but I also decided to join my friends in the Philippines during our week-long break. Before I realized, my enthusiasm for traveling suddenly exploded, and I have been to so many places and enjoyed so much great time. As expected, I did not only travel while in South Korea with the friends I was comfortable with, but also by myself afterwards. From South Korea, I traveled to Bangkok by myself and stayed there for a week. I couchsurfed and stayed with a Thai family for three days, where an elderly lady cooked authentic home Thai food, while they also gave me tours to places that tourists normally do not get to see.

After Bangkok, I went to Kolkata in India for my visa renewal, although I could have gone to Delhi where I have been before and where I was more comfortable going. When I came back to OU, despite my bank account being very thin, I went to New York City with my great friend here. One thing is for sure: if I had not gone to South Korea and developed my enthusiasm for traveling, there was no way in the world that I would have gone to New York City, Bangkok or to the Philippines. And best of all, I love traveling, and it has given me so much opportunity to learn and to get closer to friends.

As I traveled, my enthusiasm to see the world was not only from my own perspective, but I started

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seeing it from the lens of my peers I traveled together with, as we see the world from different angles. I have made traveling an important part of my life today. I want to see more places, meet different people and learn more about others through experience.