



## 12 [COURAGE] SANGITA RAI

**College Degree Program:** International and Area Studies

**Study Abroad Program:** South Korea

I have spent most of my life studying abroad. I finished high school in Norway and then came to the University of Oklahoma to further my studies. Since I am already abroad, I never thought of doing a study abroad until one day when a friend approached me about it. We literally filled out the application three days before the deadline. I was anxious and had limited time to finish my entire application and get the required recommendation letters from my professors. I could not believe what I had done until I was on a plane headed to South Korea. I was really going abroad once again!

I was excited, yet nervous, even though I am used to adapting to new places. I did not know what to expect from South Korea since I did not know much about the place except what I have seen in Korean dramas. Today, looking back at all the memories, I am so glad that I chose to go there. I not only made more international

friends, but also learned a lot about Korea and the people.

Studying abroad not only made me appreciate a new place and new culture, but also helped me find my hidden courage. I applied for an internship program at the Daegu Arts Center in South Korea. I was nervous at first as it was my first internship. The position I applied for had different responsibilities, ranging from marketing to organizing different cultural programs for locals in Daegu as well as assisting co-workers with foreign students who had enrolled in music class at the Center. I still remember going to the internship interview. One of the coordinators from my college took me to the Center and on the way I asked her so many questions. She was patient enough to answer them all without hesitation during our 45-minute bus ride. Sarah, the supervisor, was waiting outside for us, which I thought was very nice of her. We were warmly



greeted and I was directed to an office to begin my interview. The next day I got an email that I had been selected. I was really excited and looking forward to meeting everyone.

I think that internship was one of the best learning experiences I had during my stay in South Korea, even though in the beginning it was a little challenging because of the language barrier. Only my boss and one of my co-workers felt comfortable speaking to me in English. However, everyone was really helpful when I had any questions, always trying their best to make me feel comfortable at work. My internship taught me about work ethic and a lot about Korean culture. Actually, one of the Daegu Arts Center's main focuses was to promote and preserve Korean culture. Through my time there, I had the opportunity to travel with my boss, seeing all the new places where the Center had planned concerts and cultural programs.

There is one other memory from South Korea that always makes me think, "Did I really do that?" It was a trip to the Philippines with seven

others. Before going to the Philippines we were strangers although we were all exchange students from different countries at Kyungpook National University. We communicated through Facebook, using it to plan this 10-day trip— isn't social media amazing? Once again, I did not realize I was really going to the Philippines until I was on a plane with these other friends from Germany, France, the United States and Lithuania. Initially I was nervous, but I am so glad I went with them. By the end of our little vacation, we all became good friends. I still write to some of them on Facebook and we are even planning to meet next summer somewhere in Europe. If I had not overcome the fear of meeting new people and sharing a hostel with them, I probably would not have become friends with them or experienced the beautiful Boracay, Philippines.

Overall, studying in South Korea was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and I am so glad I made the decision to go, even if it was just three days before the deadline.



*A weekend in Busan with my friends from Hungry/Korea, Tibet and Malaysia.*