

UNCW PLS STUDENTS ABROAD

Student: Cara Bridges

University: Kyung Hee University

Countries: South Korea

Duration: Fall 2009



Above: The mysterious popularity of Hello Kitty in Asia
Cara (right) and Korean friend at a photo booth

Why did you decide to study abroad?

Since I was a freshman at UNCW, I knew I wanted to study abroad. I knew it would be the only time in my life that I would be able to pick up and move to a foreign country for four months. I am also interested in International Relations, and I thought that experiencing a different culture and lifestyle first-hand would be a great experience.



Above: Cara (right) and her roommate with students from the mentor program (see above for description), Suwon, South Korea.

How did you pick Korea?

My advisor, Dr. Seo, told me about a Mentor Program at Kyung Hee University [in Seoul, Korea]. The school reimbursed me for my flight and then paid for my dormitory expenses for the semester. In return, I was signed up as a mentor for a freshman seminar class. I thought this sounded like a great opportunity. Also, I have always had an interest in Asian countries. After doing some research online, it seemed like Korea would be an exciting place to live.

What did you love about study abroad?

It's hard to pick one thing, because I really loved every aspect of studying abroad! However, if I had to choose one thing it would be the friendships I made. I became friends with other Americans, as well as students from France, Germany, Russia, Brazil, Uzbekistan, Guatemala, and, of course, Korea! Sharing the experience of studying abroad (being in a new place, not knowing the language, etc...) brought us together so fast. Also, the Koreans that I became friends with were so helpful and really went out of their way to show me and the other exchange students a good time. By the end of the semester none of us wanted to leave! I know that I will remain in touch with a lot of the people I met there.

What did you do there that you couldn't do here?

At home I have to worry about the responsibilities of a job and other extracurricular activities. In Korea, my only real responsibility was class. Almost every weekend I would visit new parts of Korea. You could also get fairly cheap flights to nearby countries. The opportunity to go visit new places every weekend is a luxury that I don't have here in America.



Above: Cara (left) and her roommate at the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea

How do you think study abroad changed you?

Studying abroad in Korea has opened my mind up to new experiences. Before I went abroad, I would always think about the reasons why I shouldn't do something new or risky. Now, I am more willing to just go out and do it! Even if things aren't exactly what I expected, I know that the experience itself is going to be fun. Also, I have become a lot better with directions and reading subway maps!

Anything else you'd want to share with future PLS students?

I think that every single person in the PLS department (and at UNCW) should study abroad. The school offers a lot of great opportunities, whether you want to go for just a summer or for a whole year. I used to be worried that I couldn't afford it, but there are a lot of ways to get financial help. College is the best time to do something like this and there is really no excuse to NOT go! It was such an amazing and unforgettable experience!



Dinner with the Dean of the Graduate School, Kyung Hee University (center). Cara is to the Dean's right with the peace sign.