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안녕하세요 from South Korea!

This semester, despite the complications presented by COVID-19, I took a leap of faith and committed to studying abroad in Seoul. After a month and a half of life in Korea, I would love to share my experience and advice to fellow students aspiring to join the Peace Corps.

This experience can benefit you and prepare you for Peace Corps service in a variety of ways. If you practice a foreign language while you are away, you will gain invaluable experience and progress towards proficiency in that language (the Peace Corps favors more widely spoken languages in their

host countries such as Spanish and French, so keep this in mind, although learning any language will show evidence of your ability). Beyond that, though, and arguably more important, are the skills gained in intercultural competence through your interactions with locals and other foreigners. Besides Koreans, I've met students and travelers from 30+ other countries. It forced me to question the culture and values I know in the US, and expanded my cultural understanding and openness 10 times! A broadened and open intercultural perspective is exactly what the Peace Corps is looking for.

If this sounds like something you would like to do, I 100% recommend it, although hopefully you can fit it in after the threat of COVID has faded. If you can't wait that long (there's no guarantee it will end soon), my advice is to select a country with a good chance of continuing to allow Americans to study there. Japan and the EU were not allowing us when I made my decision, whereas South Korea only required a 14-day quarantine. Keep tabs on the news regarding travel restrictions to make an informed decision that suits you.



Other than that, make sure to get your VISA application in early and allow enough time for delays and hurdles, which will almost surely pop up given the circumstances. Do your research on how other countries are handling the virus and what level of risk you are OK with undertaking. South Korea is at a relatively very low risk compared to other developed nations, which influenced my decision. If you are intent on studying abroad before you graduate, even amidst the pandemic, it is entirely possible and, in my opinion, well worth it.

