

The Queen Mary Expedition Fund Report: Seoul, Korea



I had the pleasure of spending 4 weeks of my 2018 summer in Seoul, Korea as part of the IFMSA (International Federation of Medical Students' Association) medical exchange. It was an experience I will forever carry with me and so, I am very grateful to the Queen Mary expedition fund for the financial support provided. Though it did not cover the entire trip, it definitely eased the burden.

During the 4 weeks, I rotated between 4 specialities. These included orthopaedics, general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, and emergency medicine. In addition to getting a taste of what each speciality entailed, the diversity of these placements allowed me the opportunity to meet a wider range of staff and medical students as I rotated between the different teams. Everyone was extremely friendly and helpful and contributed to such a great experience. During my general surgery rotation, the professors and doctors insisted on taking myself as well as the other exchange student out on a Korean culture night and it was one of the most memorable nights of my entire trip! It involved a lot of singing, Korean barbeque and perhaps most importantly, Soju! The students were wonderfully kind as well, and I spent a number of evenings with them as they introduced me to their very delicious (and often times very spicy) local cuisine.

My days usually started at 8am. There would be a teaching presentation given by one of the students. This was followed by a ward round and then we were off to theatres. The theatre list would be given to us early in the morning and I had the freedom to choose which

surgeries I wanted to watch. This freedom was great as I could pick the ones I was most interested in as well as ones I hadn't seen before. The emergency department was slightly different as there were no ward rounds. Instead, it involved shadowing the A&E doctors.

For me, Seoul was more than just a clinical exchange. On my flight back to London, I wrote a small paragraph about what my time in Korea meant to me:

I write this as I am sat on the plane waiting for take-off, with all the memories clear in my mind, and all the feelings strong in my heart

Seoul,

You've been so good to me. You've given me back so much of what I had lost.

I came to you alone and not in the best frame of mind. I was broken, hurt and overwhelmed. I was in struggle. You were so kind to me. Your people were so kind and I am grateful.

On my first night, I met a stranger on your streets. He invited me into his house. I met his family and they shared their dinner with me. In my last week, I went on a solo hike up one of your peaks; Bukhasan. It took me 3 hours to get to the top. There were many friendly smiles as I journeyed upward, but it was at the peak when I met Max. A Russian who lives in China and was in Korea as a tourist. It rained just as I got to the top, which made the trek back down slippery and dangerous. But Max was right there with me, holding my hand when I needed.

From the first person to the last person and everyone in between; I am grateful. From my Canadian roommate, Annie who I shared a few mini-adventures (and many bingsu) with to my contact person, Heeyon.

Seoul, I'm going to be ok. I have faith in that again. You've given in to me.

