



Name : RETANA VARGAS FATIMA

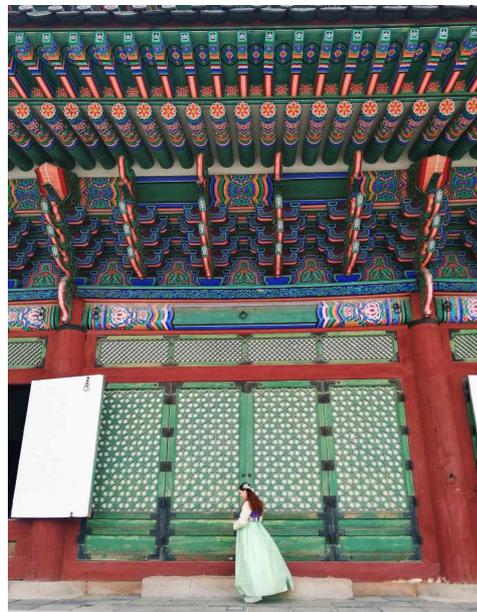
Major : The Liberal Studies Major

Nationality : Costa Rica

Home University : University of Costa Rica

Q1. Reasons for applying for Chungbuk National University Exchange Student Program

I wanted to experience a new culture and study style. So, I chose Chungbuk National University since it was one of my home university's partners, I thought the location was great, had excellent benefits and accessibilities for the students and overall, a great reputation as a national university.



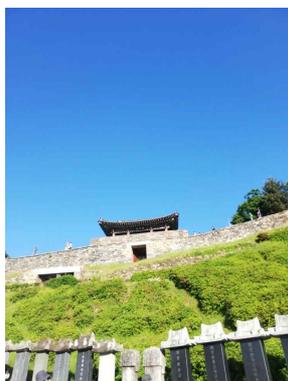
Q2. Good points as CBNU exchange student

Being an exchange student can open your horizons not only as future a professional graduate but also as a person. Experiencing a new way of living, language and new places can be very motivating for your studies. It will enrich the way you think and develop, you will find yourself overseeing many new but interesting responsibilities and challenges that allow you to grow in a better version of yourself.



Q3. Characteristics and strengths you would like to introduce to other friends

Chungbuk National University really cares about their students, they have many accessible services in case you require help, but also to help you meet new people! Like the buddy program, language tutoring if you need it, counseling and clubs and activities for you to be able to exchange time with those around you outside of class! The clubs are a great option to join try new things and be able to meet Korean students outside of the exchange students. There are also a lot of accessible services like the meal plan, the sport center and gym, as well as the student ID card that can help you move around easily. The international student office is always very attentive to your needs and ready to help, they will help you with the most administrative and complicated parts of the process so you can really trust them.



Chungbuk university is in Cheongju, it's maybe not a very well know city for foreigners but it has a great location to travel to other parts of Korea! Public transport it's very accessible and cheap, and there's a KTX station near for you to travel even quicker! But for itself Cheongju already has some very nice places for you to visit and see. People are sweet and always ready to help. And if you want to truly challenge yourself with your language experience and a different place it is the perfect place to do so.



Q4. How do you feel about living in Korea

It has been incredible, the culture although very different to mine, it's very welcoming to everyone. Korea is truly a very beautiful country so rich in culture and experiences. The food is delicious! I've been truly inspired by how it's a culture full of determined and strong people always moving forward. Cultural shock will be inevitable but if you are open minded, understanding and ready to engage with a different lifestyle from yours then I'll be a beautiful experience and easier for you to start meeting new people. For me coming from a very small country everything has been super impressive and different. Maybe one of the most wonderful things and experiences to happen to me since I got here has been thanks Korean people and how kindhearted, honest, and warm Korean people can be! Since I've heard all my live that Korean people are stern and cold, being here I've found out they are just timid, shy people who maybe are a little embarrassed to talk to you at first, but once you get past that they are truly always ready to help you. At a café once I broke down crying over some sad and stressful situation back in my home country and the very kind owner sat down to talk to me brought tissues and gifted me some goodies to cheer me up out of the kindest of her heart. A worker at a touristic destination helped me get a refund after he found out I had paid incorrectly my entrance. People will constantly remind you or keep your things safe if you forget things like your phone or card...etc.

Something that will forever be in my mind is this one time got lost late at night because I took the wrong bus, and I was super scared since it was the last bus of the night, and despite the language barrier the bus driver did everything possible to help me get back home and calm me down, he took me to a place where I could get a taxi, got off the bus with me talked to the driver for me and even gave me money to pay the taxi even if I hadn't asked for it and wouldn't let me give it back to him even if I told him I had money to pay it myself, he knew nothing from me and expected nothing in return. I couldn't believe how selfless and goodhearted he was I just couldn't stop crying after that because of how grateful I was for him. Korean people have been the reason for me to fall in love with how beautiful this country is.



Q5. Advice to your juniors before entering Korea

I really recommend you learn basics of the language before coming here no matter what you are here to study. Learn how to read hangul, how to say thank you, hello, sorry, basic food phrases and how to ask for directions. Always have supporting language tools near you like a dictionary, translator...etc. Most Korean people can understand English but cannot speak it, especially in Cheonju there is not many people who speak English so knowing some basics will really really help you move around. (And it will be great for you to practice and learn faster!)

Check the seasons you'll be coming in, the weather and come prepared, specially if you are not used to very cold weather or very humid climate. Bring at least 1 warm coat just in case.

Always have 2 extra copies of your most important papers (passport, visa, admission letter and certificate...etc.) as well as a digital version of each.

Cash is very important here (especially if you don't have a Korean bank account), some foreigner cards don't work in some places as well, but mostly in ATMs can be a problem, so for you to be able to use laundry card, public transportation card, buy bus tickets or if your card doesn't work correctly or simply go out with friends and split the bill, it's important for you to have a good amount of cash with you from before you even leave the airport, just to be prepared for anything. Specially since for some important transactions like to get your alien ID card, student ID, national insurance payment...etc the bank will ask you to pay in cash if you don't have a Korean bank account.



Q6. Recommended places in Korea and Cheongju

There are many beautiful places in Korea! I'm sure you've heard of maybe some very well-known destinations as Seoul, Busan...etc and although I personally love Seoul and there's a lot to do up there and so much to see and visit, I'd like to recommend closer places to Cheongju that maybe are not as well known! In Cheongju be sure to go to the Early Printing Museum, Sandang Fortress and National Cheongju Museum. Near Cheongju there are also the beautiful cities of Daejeon, where you can visit beautiful parks and have a great night life. Gongju it's a very beautiful city maybe not as well known, I recommend everyone to go have a day over there as it was the old capital of the Baekje kingdom and it's unique. Sejong and Cheonan are also very nice! And of course, go to Jeonju!

Q7. What is your favorite food and what food you can't eat in Korea

All Korean food so far has been incredible! I love bbq because you get to share it with people around you, tteokbokki is delicious specially if you like spicy food, I find its quite comforting and my favorite desert has to be chapssaltteok I love the texture and the variety of flavours and fillings.

I am not a picky eater and I love spicy food! But I absolutely cannot eat Sundae, it is a blood liver sausage and I despise the texture.



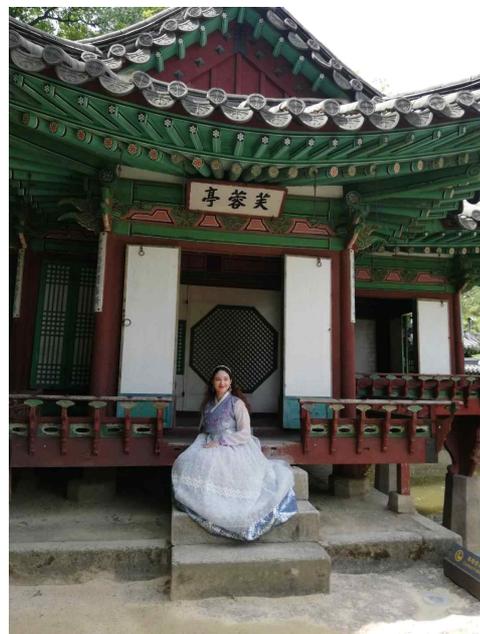
Q8. What is the most memorable event during exchange student programs? Or what event do you recommend?

Cherry blossom season and festivals are truly something to see and enjoy! Buddah's birthday festivities are also very fun and if you go to the temples you can maybe join in to build lanterns for the big lantern festival's they hold. I really recommend you to join the university's clubs as well because you'll make a lot of new friends and will be easier for you to meet new people.



Q9. Difficulties as a foreign exchange student in Korea

Definitely feeling alone. At first it will be very hard to make friends and being away from your home can be very hard, specially the first weeks but once you start getting to know the city and the other students, things will get so much better! Don't feel discouraged if you feel like it's hard to meet new people, and honestly at times being alone is not that bad, it just can be hard for us to make best friends of ourselves.



Q10. Other things that you want to say

If you want to become a better professional, grow as a person and are willing to let yourself be absorbed by a new culture it will be an incredible experience! Don't be afraid to take the risk and always keep in mind to be kind, respectful and open minded.