

Title : Trip of My Dream

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Trip of My Dream

My dream can't be expressed in words.

The dream lives in me.

With tears and an anxious heart

I believe the dream will come true soon.

It's morning. A new day has begun. I'm alone in the office which means I have some time to leisurely surf the Internet over a warm cup of tea. I read a lot of news on Korea these days. I surf the Internet here and there, look at photos and get lost in thoughts. Then one day, I come across a notice about a Korean travel essay contest on the KBS WORLD Radio homepage. That was how this all began.

Contest. Essay. Korean travel. I read each and every word of the instructions, again and again. What should I do? What? I asked myself the same question every five seconds. Finally I banged my fist on the table and made up my mind to give it a try. Big deal, I'll give it a try. Even if the odds of me winning are one million to one, I'll give it a go. No harm in that! I encouraged myself. I grabbed a pencil and began brainstorming ideas. Coworkers began to show up for work one by one but all I could think of was the essay.

Someone asked: "Are you okay today?"

- I'm fine. I just have something to think about.....

– I should put off this essay deal until evening. I do need to focus on work.

I'm home after work. Curtians cover the window, the room is dark. In tranquility, my thoughts again zero in on the essay contest. What do I know about Korea? I begin to jot down notes.

The land of the morning calm located on the Korean Peninsula. Technologically advanced and a country that's achieved astonishing accomplishments in all areas of culture and economy.

Wait, everyone knows these facts! This isn't an exam..... Let's write something of my own.

After a great deal of meandering thoughts, I slip into my imagination.

Onset

The start of a trip is boarding the plane.

Plane ticket, visa, the anticiation before takeoff.

Not all dreams may come true,

But may not this path end for a very long time.....

It's takeoff. Koreans are known for their diligence and hard work. I even see their efforts in the plane to accommodate and serve passengers.

I walk down the isle slowly but in resolute steps as if I'm going up a podium. I put my bag in the upper cabin and plunge into the cushiony seat.

As the plane rises in altitude, so does my thrilled heart. I still can't

believe I'm actually on my way toward my long-held dream. The sun is bright. The blue sky is like a huge ocean and clouds passing by look like small islands. I could have burst with happiness, and I have little idea how I passed the long flight.

I arrived at the oh so famous Incheon International Airport. Incheon is close to an airport metropolis, as it the world's best service and facilities.

First Destination: Heavenly Island of Jeju

After going through customs, I buy a bus ticket to Gimpo Airport. It's still surreal that I am actually in Korea. Someone give me a pinch!

I take another flight at Gimpo, off to my first destination in Korea. Finally arrived! Stepping out of the airport, I view the clear sky and dazzling sunlight. Hurrah! It's Jeju Island!

Molded by mother nature

The Heavenly Jeju Island,

The wearisome receive rest,

The depressed receive hope.

Dragon-shaped lava opens its mouth

Welcoming foreign tourists.

Those who witness the Cheonjiyeon Waterfall

Become one with nature.

Jeju Island is home to a number of different attractions: oddly shaped lava beaches, stunning sandy beaches, uninhabited islands, the magical underwater world, tangerine fields, palm trees, green tea, extinct volcanoes,

and the clear blue sea. Its mild subtropical climate attracts numerous newlyweds and tourists.

Jubilation and heartfelt emotions fill my spirit. Out of joy, I leap around. I'm finally in heaven on earth!

Island Symbols

The friendly Dol Hareubang (Stone Grandpa)

Makes us happy.

The grandpa statue made of lava

Is kind and wise.

The lava Dol Hareubang hides quietly in the bush. The stone statue is the guardian of Jeju and is spotted all across the island. The hearty grandfather defends the island from evil spirits and enemies. Rubbing the nose of the Dol Hareubang, I make a wish in my heart. I pray that I can return to Jeju one more time! That's right! The minute I arrived here, I prayed to return again!

The symbol of perserverance and diligence

The women divers of Jeju.

The underwater treasure hunters

Guard every nook and corner of Jeju.

I have for a long time wanted to eat Jeju's specialty seafood. It is the 'women of the sea,' female divers who skillfully pick and gather the seafood from underwater. They continue their trade in the deep seas even as they grow old. They have perserverence and a strong body as good as as

any young person. They dive deep into the water without an oxygen tank. All that they're equipped with is a black diving suit, webfoot, helmet, mask and a net to hold their gathered seafood. These brave elderly ladies plunge into the water at the beat of a musical melody and tourists watch them in awe, speechless. After quite some time under the water, the divers emerge to the surface with a catch of various seafood. They reach the shore and show their catch to people around them. Spectators are utterly impressed. The ladies go on to cook up dishes with their catch then and there on the spot. It's so good!

Another Jeju symbol is the tangerine. Tangerines grow all across the island. Tangerine trees are lined up on lawns, in parks and even on streets. Jeju people grow all kinds of this fruit ranging from the tiny ones edible with the skin on called kumquats to the Hallabong tangerine whose aroma fills the entire room.

For me, the sun, ocean and beaches of Jeju present an heaven on earth. I do my share of swimming and sunbathing before going off to other tourist spot in Jeju.

1. Miniature Theme Park - Soingook

This theme park for children is the very first place I wanted to check out. The fairy tale park will take me down memory lane and bring back childhood memories. I am excited as the kids galloping around the park.

I browse around the park and sight a miniature of the famed Saint Basil's Cathedral in Russia. It looked exactly like the one I saw in Moscow.

2. Cool Relaxation at Cheonjiyeon Waterfall

Cheonjiyeon is the pond of the King of Heaven. According to legend,

seven celestial maidens serving the king stayed at the pond. When midnight struck, they came down from heaven and bathed in the pond with a mandolin and a stringed instrument playing in the backdrop. The waterfall originates from a river flowing in the deep valley. Following the sound of the fall, you find the Seonin Bridge with images of the maids drawn on its sides. Standing on this high, arch-shaped bridge, you view the striking harmony of lush subtropical plants and the blue ocean.

This also testifies to great success made by Koreans in the art of landscaping.

3. Jusang Jeolli Cliffs – Jusang Jeolli is a cluster of stone pillars made of lava. I stand on a pile of flat stones and observe the eccentric geographic features created by the hexagonal stones. The wind tingles my hair. The sound of waves eases my heart and peace fills my soul. I utterly enjoy the sea and the display of rocks. The stone pillars standing along the beach glitter in a silvery hue under the sun but they turn pitch black when the sun sets.

Traveling the heavenly island has ended. You may wonder why I don't tour Jeju even more. But I want a good reason to come back to this beautiful island again.

Now I'm off to Seoul.

Seoul

Mountains and mountain ranges protect the nation

A country with a great history. .

With an open heart and bright smile

The dream city welcomes me.

Finally the capital.

Where do I start? Yes! The City Tour Bus! Fun and very practical.... I'm filled with excitement waiting for the bus. My Seoul travel begins with the purchase of the city tour bus ticket. I can tour around all the major landmarks in downtown Seoul with this one ticket!!

There are so many places of interest in the capital city. The Cheonggye Stream located at the center of Seoul is a beloved walk trail for tourists and locals alike. There's so much to see here including the area around the stream, lighted fountains, murals depicting rituals of ancient dynasties, art works of modern Korean artists and historic bridges laid across the flowing water.

The Cheonggye Stream started out as a place of residence for Seoul folks but then turned into a dirty nuisance. Thereafter it got covered with asphalt and roads for many years until the current Cheonggye Stream came into being as a refuge for Seoulites. The history of the stream goes beyond an interesting anecdote.

There are markets, stores and restaurants galore in the Cheonggye Stream area. In particular, the Gwangjang Market, the largest food market in Seoul, is bustling until late at night.

What food should I try? Korean food is known for its array of tastes and has great appeal to foodie foreigners. I have no fear of even the hot and spicy dishes sprinkled with hot pepper powder. I want to try the real, authentic Seoul food. The mammoth city of Seoul brims with restaurants, cafes and eateries..... In Korea, there are areas and alleyways specializing in certain dishes.

In one food alley, I order a whole bunch of different dishes and am shocked by the variety. What I taste:

- Skewered fish cakes (eomuk) served with soup.
- Ddeokbokki (rice cake slices cooked in hot pepper paste sauce). Eomuk and boiled eggs can also be added to ddeokbokki.
- Bibimbab (riced mixed with colorful vegetables and red pepper paste). Fried egg, sunny side up, is placed on top.
- Stirfried chicken with veggies and spicy sauce is also highly recommended!
- Samgyetang, chicken stew with ginseng, is said to be the best thing for recovering stamina. For real?

I'm also interested in traditional Korean tea. Travelers often discover a quiet and cozy cafe in a back alleyway of a bustling metropolis. I drink hot tea, prepared with heartfelt effort, and also desserts and other specialty treats characteristic of Korea.

I walk toward the Insadong and Samcheongdong area where modern cafes and traditional coffee places are lined up. At a hanok (traditional Korean-style house) teahouse, I taste a number of different drinks, jujube tea, citron tea, ginger tea, persimmon punch and sweet fermented rice drink.

The taste and scent of traditional Korean tea can't be expressed in words. While savoring the tea, I all of a sudden feel the urge to visit a tea museum. At the museum, I take part in a tea ceremony and sample one type of aromatic tea. The scent and taste are impressive. I bought a couple of bags of tea at a store next to the museum.

The N Seoul Tower is located at Mount Nam. I took the cable car up the

mountain. The tower, glowing in the evening lights, emanates rainbow color shades. I take the elevator to the top floor for a bird eye's view of the Seoul scenery. I get a seat at the observatory restaurant, which rotates a full circle every 48 minutes, and watch over the entire city.

The beautiful night landscape comes into full view! The dazzling beauty takes my breath away. I'm suddenly reminded of a scene from the Korean drama *Boys Over Flowers*, in which the characters Geum Jan-di and Gu Jun-pyo meet up at the tower.

- Here's a coffee! It's 30,000 won! (Jan-di)
- What a rip-off! You fool people as well? I don't drink that kind of garbage! (Jun-pyo)
- Give it a try. It's tasty. (Jan-di)
- Do you wanna see what a 30,000 won coffee really looks like? Follow me.

Korean drama fans recite the lines of this scene to the tee. I would also love to taste a 30,000 won coffee. The beautiful Seoul night view, a warm cup of coffee..... what is there more to happiness?

In the plane, I wave my heart's hand to Korea: «Seoul, I'll be back by all means. Wait up~~!»

My imaginary journey has ended.

<A great life starts from a great idea and a great idea comes about during a great travel>.

I hope what I feel and go through during an actual trip to Korea will be much more than what I assume in my imaginary journey. My heart is so hopeful that this dream will soon come true. My hope will become a reality in the near future.

I thank KBS World Radio for this opportunity to express my dream in writing. No wonder they say if you want your dream to come true, you should write it out.

Thank you!