

Title: My Beloved Seoul

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For as long as I can remember, I always felt strangely close to Seoul though I had never set foot in South Korea. I think my love for Seoul grew when I became an avid fan of Korean TV dramas after watching the KBS drama, 'First Love.' The Seoul portrayed in the media was a large, modern city that had also kept intact traditional aspects. When I was young, every time my friends and I talked about our biggest dreams, I'd always say my biggest wish was to visit Seoul. Like falling in love, my affection for Seoul came to take a special place in my heart quietly and naturally. And finally, one day, my dream came true.

I got on a flight to Seoul late at night. Once morning came, I could see Incheon International Airport through the fog. As I stepped out of the airport, I looked up at the sky and breathed in fresh air. I decided to take the subway to get to the city. As I was running toward the subway station with my heavy luggage, a young man approached me and offered to help me with my bag. I was cautious at first but decided that the man was just being considerate. He told me that he was a college student majoring in tourism and that he had just gotten back from a training program abroad. He told me about a guest house where I could stay and places I could check out in Seoul.

The accommodation that the man recommended was a traditional Korean guest house called 'Anguk Guest House' in Bukchon Hanok Village. Bukchon is a place where you can check out 600 years of Seoul's history. I was grateful to the college students for introducing me to a place where I'd be able to feel the

traces of history and where I could experience traditional Korean culture. After unpacking at the guest house, I took a walk and by chance was able to take part in a kimchi-making program. After having lunch with kimchi I personally made, I participated in a tea ceremony. Wearing a hanbok, I listened closely to the sounds in my mind and savored the deep aroma and taste of Korean tea. I felt calm and content as if all my troubles had disappeared after the tea ceremony. In the afternoon, I visited Gyeongbok Palace and Changdeok Palace located near the Anguk Guest House. In the evening, I enjoyed Seoul's scenery on a sightseeing boat cruising in the Han River. The scene of a Seoul filled with spectacular lights was breathtaking.

On my second day in Seoul, I decided to take the bus. Outside my window, I saw Seoulites and they seemed to be full of energy. When I got off the bus, someone called out my name. It was the man who had helped in the airport. He told me that his name was Lee Hyuk-chan. That afternoon, Hyuk-chan and I went to see a traditional cultural performance to listen to the traditional Korean folk song, Arirang, which I had heard once in the past. Arirang is sung by all Koreans, young and old, men and women alike. At the stage, I heard Korean classical musicians of various ages sing the folk song. In particular, I was deeply impressed by a performance by a girl aged around 13 or 14. The lyrics of Arirang have the power to reach deep into the hearts of people. 'Ari' in Arirang means beautiful and 'rang' means darling. Hyuk-chan told me that the Arirang mountain pass symbolizes the joys and sorrows of life that Koreans endured.

After watching the performance, we headed to Mount Nam. Hyuk-chan took me to a restaurant. He told me that the restaurant served what he called Korean-style pizza. The waitress brought to our table a huge plate with a large round food that looked like the full moon. By appearance, the dish looked like a pizza

but I could tell there was something special about the dish by the ingredients and aroma. When I took my first bite, I was overwhelmed by the crispiness and delightful aroma. Hyuk-chan told me the name of the dish was ‘nokdubindaetteok.’ After dinner, we went to N Seoul Tower where fresh breezes greeted us. Seoul’s night scenery, with its neon lights, was truly beautiful. It seemed as if the streams of the Han River brought warmth to the dreary city.

On my last day, I went to Insa-dong to buy souvenirs. After looking around various souvenir shops, I came across a shop that sold diverse masks. The expressions on the masks were funny and lovely. I bought five for my friends. I also went to Namdaemun Market. The scale of the market was huge as I had imaged. Shops selling all kinds of items and souvenirs stood in an endless line. I bought three t-shirts that are popular among Korean women. I also bought famous Korean ginseng for my grandparents. Hyuk-chan came to the airport to see me off. He gave me a thick travel guide book on Korea and told me he would welcome me every time I come back for a visit. I could feel tears in my eyes as I got on the plane heading back home.

The three days in Korea were simply heaven. Once I return to Vietnam, I will write about Korea, another dream I have had for a long time. I’ve already decided on a title, ‘My Beloved Seoul.’ I will write about the beautiful memories and feelings I felt during my trip to Seoul. Then a new wish pops up in my mind. That wish is to visit my beloved Seoul again someday.