

Exchange Student Program Final Report

1. Introduction

I participated in the exchange student program during the 1/5~1/30 at Tecnológico de Monterrey in Querétaro, Mexico. This program provided me with an invaluable opportunity to experience a new academic environment, learn Spanish from the basics, and deeply understand Mexican culture through both lectures and field-based activities.

Before joining the program, I had very limited knowledge of the Spanish language and had never lived in a Latin American country. However, I decided to participate in this program to challenge myself academically and personally, as well as to broaden my global perspective. Throughout the program, I was able to improve my language skills, adapt to a different educational system, and gain meaningful life experiences that could not be learned from textbooks alone.

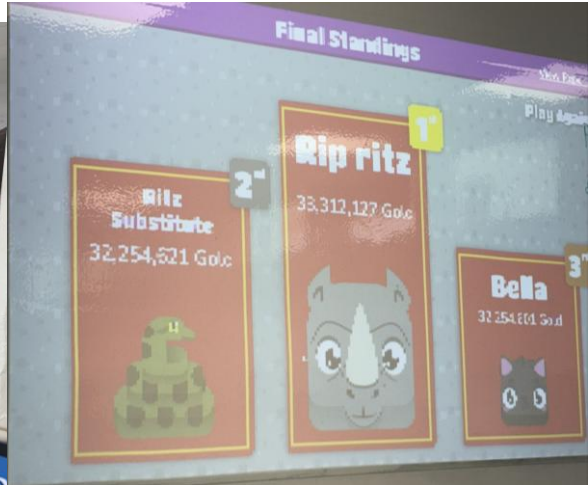
2. Academic Experience

2.1 Spanish 2 Course

The Spanish 2 course was conducted through a variety of teaching methods, including lectures, partner conversations, listening exercises, interactive games using Kahoot, and direct conversations with the professor. This diverse class structure helped students stay engaged and actively participate in the learning process.

One of the most effective aspects of the course was that the professor continuously spoke to students using the Spanish expressions we had learned in class. This naturally encouraged repetition and review, which greatly improved my listening and speaking skills. Even outside of formal lectures, the professor frequently asked questions in Spanish, creating an immersive learning environment.

Although I had almost no basic knowledge of Spanish at the beginning of the program, I consistently attended classes, completed assignments sincerely, and prepared thoroughly for exams. As a result, my Spanish skills improved significantly over a short period of time. On the final day, during the closing ceremony, I was honored to receive an excellence award for my performance in the Spanish course. This experience greatly increased my confidence and motivation to continue studying Spanish in the future.



2.2 Mexican Culture Course

The Mexican culture course was consisted of lectures followed by practical activities or field trips. Each class included short daily assignments, while field trips required group assignments submitted by teams of two to three students.

During the program, we visited various cultural sites and participated in hands-on activities that allowed us to experience Mexican traditions directly. One of the most memorable experiences was during the final week, when each team visited the professor's home and cooked traditional Mexican food together.

There were no written exams for this course; instead, students were evaluated through final projects such as a junk journal and a photo essay. Since many assignments were concentrated in the final week, I would strongly recommend future participants to work on these projects in advance. Although the subject of cultural studies could have been monotonous, the well-balanced combination of lectures, practical activities, and field trips made the class engaging and enjoyable.



3. Housing Experience

Most of the students around me lived either in a dormitory or with a host family. The dormitory fee was approximately 1,000,000 KRW, while homestay costs were around 500,000 KRW.

Homestay students had the advantage of receiving breakfast and dinner at home, and in many cases, lunch boxes were also prepared, which significantly reduced food expenses. In addition, living with a host family allowed students to experience Mexican residential life and form close relationships with a local family. Therefore, I would recommend homestay for students who have a basic level of Spanish. However, some students mentioned issues such as unstable hot water supply and less convenient commuting.

I lived in a dormitory with one roommate. The dormitory environment was very clean, and rooms were cleaned almost daily, which made living very comfortable. One inconvenience was that bedding was not provided unless an additional fee of approximately 150,000 KRW was paid, so students had to purchase bedding themselves. Storage space was sufficient, and the dormitory kitchen was well-equipped, but since all cooking utensils had to be prepared individually, I rarely cooked. Hot water was available through a separate water purifier system on the second floor. Additionally, leisure facilities such as Nintendo games, billiards, and table tennis were available, and students could borrow equipment from the dormitory counter.



4. Campus Life

The campus had several food courts, restaurants, and cafés, allowing students to conveniently eat on campus. Although the prices were not cheaper than outside restaurants, the food quality was acceptable. The campus also had excellent sports facilities, which created a lively and energetic atmosphere. Bicycles were available on campus and could be used freely by students. Smoking and drinking alcohol were strictly prohibited on campus, contributing to a clean and safe environment. Additionally, the campus Wi-Fi was stable.



5. Daily Life in Mexico

During my stay in Mexico, I did not experience any racial discrimination. In general, people were very friendly and showed a positive attitude toward Koreans. Many locals asked to take photos with us; however, I believe it is important to be cautious, as such photos could potentially be misused.

Food prices at restaurants were higher than expected, but since I was not overly sensitive to hygiene issues, I frequently ate street food and did not experience any health problems. Regarding safety, I was initially very concerned, but the area around the school felt relatively safe when moving in groups of two or more. However, in a tourist area, one of my friends was robbed of their phone and Apple Watch, which reminded me that constant caution is necessary.

6. Recommendations for Future Participants

I recommend bringing Korean food such as instant noodles, instant rice, and seaweed from Korea, as Korean markets in the northern area are available but expensive. Since many international students are very interested in Korean culture, bringing Korean snacks as gifts is also highly recommended, as they are always well received. In Mexico, most showers are equipped with overhead showerheads, so shower filters are generally unnecessary. Due to large temperature differences between day and night, it is advisable to bring a variety of clothing, including light clothing for daytime and padded jackets for nighttime. For nearby travel destinations around Querétaro, I highly recommend Guanajuato, San Miguel de Allende, Tolantongo, and Bernal.



7. Conclusion

Overall, the exchange student program was a meaningful and transformative experience. Through academic courses, cultural activities, and daily life in Mexico, I was able to grow both academically and personally. I strongly recommend this program to future students who wish to challenge themselves in a new environment and gain global experiences.

