

## Return Report

### Winter Short-Term Exchange Program – TEC de Monterrey, Querétaro

University of Seoul

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#### 1. Application and Preparation

Before graduation, I wanted to experience a different academic and cultural environment beyond Korea.

As a student majoring in Urban Sociology and Urban Engineering, I have been interested in how cities are shaped by people's memories, emotions, and everyday life. Therefore, I applied for the winter short-term exchange program at TEC de Monterrey, Querétaro, to observe a different urban culture and social atmosphere in Latin America.

After being nominated and accepted by the university, I prepared essential documents such as my passport, insurance, and flight tickets. I also researched local safety, transportation, and living conditions in advance.

Through this preparation process, I realized that participating in an overseas program requires not only academic readiness but also responsibility for personal safety and cultural understanding.

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#### 2. Academic Experience and Learning Environment

During the program, classes were conducted in an interactive and discussion-based format.

Unlike lecture-centered classes in Korea, students were encouraged to express opinions freely and share cultural perspectives. This environment helped me develop confidence in speaking English and communicating with international students.

What impressed me the most was the **diversity of viewpoints**.

Students from different countries interpreted the same topic in completely different ways, and this experience broadened my sociological imagination about cities, culture, and society.

Rather than simply gaining academic knowledge, I learned **how to think, how to communicate, and how to understand differences**.

This became the most valuable educational outcome of the program.

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### 3. Daily Life in Querétaro

Life in Querétaro felt very different from Korea.

The weather was warm and pleasant even in winter, which created a relaxed social atmosphere.

Because of this climate, people seemed more patient, friendly, and emotionally expressive in everyday interactions.

From a sociological perspective, I realized that **climate and environment can influence social behavior and collective mood.**

Transportation and time management were sometimes slower than in Korea, but this was not simply inefficiency.

Instead, it reflected a cultural attitude that values the present moment and human relationships over speed.

Experiencing this rhythm changed my own perception of time and daily life.

Food, streets, music, and spontaneous conversations with strangers all contributed to a vivid cultural experience that cannot be learned from textbooks.

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### 4. Cultural Experience and Personal Reflection

Outside the classroom, I explored the historic city center, local markets, and nearby cultural sites.

Walking through the city allowed me to observe how **history, architecture, and everyday life coexist** in one urban space.

One meaningful realization was that **a city is not only built by infrastructure or real estate value, but by memories and shared experiences of people.**

This insight is closely connected to my academic interest in urban sociology and my long-term dream of storytelling through media production.

I also experienced moments of uncertainty, such as concerns about safety, language barriers, and unfamiliar environments.

However, overcoming these situations helped me grow emotionally and become more independent.

Travel, in this sense, became a process of self-discovery rather than simple movement between places.

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## 5. Conclusion

Participating in the winter exchange program at TEC de Monterrey, Querétaro was one of the most meaningful experiences of my university life.

Academically, I learned new ways of discussion and communication.

Culturally, I encountered a different rhythm of life and social relationships.

Personally, I gained confidence, independence, and a broader perspective on cities and people.

Most importantly, this experience strengthened my belief that **cities should be understood not only through economic value but through human memory, emotion, and shared life.**

This realization will strongly influence my future academic research and my dream of becoming a producer who tells meaningful stories about society and urban life.

