

Don't know what to expect?

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School: Bokju Elementary School

An-nyung-ha-seyo! This will become your most commonly used word in Korea, considering you are going to greet and bow to almost everyone, especially at school, remembering that the principal gets an extra big bow. I have only been in Korea since February 2011, so I am no master of their culture or their way of life, but I definitely know what it feels like to arrive in unfamiliar territory and feel so lost. Learning the language will help you, but that is only a small part of surviving your time in Korea.

It's true, South Korea is so safe! You will soon come to realize the beauty of walking the streets of Korea when the sun sets and feeling safe while being surrounded by flashing lights from the advertising boards, but the one thing that isn't that safe is when it rains. I have been told on a number of occasions to use an umbrella because the air isn't clean. So first thing on your shopping list is an umbrella!

As you might already know, Koreans have inside shoes. Meaning, you take your shoes off and put on other shoes when entering school and other Korean buildings and restaurants. This is purely for dirt, which actually makes sense. I suggest you do the same when entering your own apartment, as it makes it so much easier to keep the dirt out of your apartment and it gets you in to the routine of doing it. You will also realize that Koreans rarely touch their shoes when taking them off. This may be due to the dirt that your shoes carry. Spitting is a common act of the Korean culture. They will spit on stairs, walkways, dustbins, on your foot, basically anywhere possible, so beware and get use to it. Koreans take recycling quite seriously, so do yourself a favor and get the correct dirt bags and recycle. Another little bit of advice, never blow your nose in public, especially at a table. If you need to do so, the bathroom or your own home is the place to do it. Koreans will snort, but blowing your nose does not happen.

Koreans are wonderful and generally willing to help you at anytime. Most co-teachers will go the extra mile for you, wanting you to feel happy at all times. I have had a wonderful time with my co-teacher. She has taken the role of my Korean mom (she prefers big sister). What I'm trying to say is, find something in common and try your best to get on with your co-

teacher as they are the ones who will look after you, taking you to the bank, hospital or anywhere else you may need a translator. You will most likely become part of their family during your time here. If there is anything that you need to remember, remember this, never undermine your co-teacher, support them in and out of classroom. They can make your time at school enjoyable or horrid. There is one word of warning, be prepared to only be told about classes being cancelled, teachers' dinners, fieldtrips excreta at the very last minute. Most of the time the teachers don't even know about these events until you are told, so just keep your eyes and ears open at all times. This is why Korea is referred to as Dynamic Korea.

School life might be different to what you may be expecting. The students are constantly running around, knocking you over and pushing past you. These aren't as bad as they sound, but they do take getting use to. When you see a class for the first time, you are most likely going to be asked to introduce yourself. Another aspect of that PowerPoint should be your rules for the classroom so that the learners know what you expect from them. Lunch at school, now this differs from school to school, but if you don't eat seafood, start getting use to it. Almost every meal at my school consists of something from the sea. There are also no knives and forks at school. A spoon and chopsticks are going to become your best friends. Koreans love it when you can use chopsticks, so learn fast if you are a first timer, and hopefully you will learn to use chopsticks before you get spaghetti for lunch, else you may have more sauce on your shirt than in your mouth.

Try and get as involved as you can with the school. If you are invited out to dinner, attend, if you are asked to go on a camp with the learners, attend, if you are asked to go for a weekend hike, attend. This is all part of the experience and it is up to you on how much you make of it.

All the best for your time in Korea. Travel as much as you can, and see as much as you can of Korea. It is a stunning country with so many amazing hiking trails, temples and palaces.