

Covid 19: My experience as an exchange student in South Korea during the crisis

Bénédicte Cornet is a 3rd year student at the Catholic University of Paris in the History - Political Science program. She went to Sogang University in Seoul for a semester in Spring 2020, as an exchange student. Read about how her host university handled the Covid-19 crisis.



I arrived in South Korea on February 25th, when there was an upsurge of Covid-19 cases in the country and France was still relatively spared. My relatives were worried and many friends there were repatriated by their universities or their countries. I wanted to stay whatever happened, especially as the Korean government was handling the crisis well.

Very quickly, we were advised not to go out and the population respected the instructions. A coronavirus screening center was set up directly on my campus, while others were set up throughout the city. You can get tested at these centers in less than 30 minutes and the country covers all the costs of analysis and hospitalization if necessary. Wearing the mask (KF94 / FFP2, not just surgical masks) was highly recommended, and after a one week shortage, they became easy to find. The government made them available at pharmacies at reasonable prices and there was even a free distribution center at my university.

When the situation calmed down here, the start of the epidemic arrived in France. I kept in touch with my family and friends but the news in the French newspapers was pretty maddening and alarming, it was quite strange to have almost all of my family and friends in France under compulsory confinement while I was going out freely.

All of my courses have been posted online for the entire semester and the dormitory at the university where I live has tightened the exit rules. Other than that, the sports fields are closed and it is strongly recommended not to go in person to the administration to limit contact.



Other than that, life is relatively normal, the city is just a bit quieter than usual, which is not unpleasant, and there aren't anymore tourists. Also, it is impossible to leave the country without having to quarantine (as in most other countries) and traveling within the country is more difficult, the connections between cities being reduced.

Overall, I go out less than expected and my trips are limited to the city but life is normal in the country and we feel safer here than in the rest of the world.

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