

Editors Column



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Seoul's Sweet Side: Sanrio-Themed Cafes

Seoul is known for its food, shopping, and nightlife, but its themed cafes offer another way to explore the city —desserts! A trip to Seoul can quickly become a checklist of familiar stops: shopping and trying all of the food stalls late at night in Myeongdong, wandering the streets of Hongdae, grabbing tteokbokki from a street vendor, or ending the night with Korean barbecue. But tucked among the city's busy shopping districts are cafés that turn a simple coffee break into an experience.

For Sanrio fans, three cafes in particular stand out: Hello Kitty Apple Cafe, Sanrio Lovers Club, and Cinnamoroll Sweet Cafe.

My favorite was the Hello Kitty Apple Cafe, located in Myeongdong. The area is one of Seoul's busiest shopping destinations, with fashion and beauty stores packed alongside restaurants and a lively street-food scene. The Hello Kitty cafe occupies the first and second floors of the building, while the entire third floor is dedicated to Sanrio merchandise. I sat on the second floor and ordered two desserts: the Hello Kitty Mousse Cake and Hello Kitty mango cake. The mousse cake is a cream-filled, Swiss-roll-style cake decorated with Hello Kitty's face. The mango cake was shaped like



Hello Kitty desserts served at the Hello Kitty Apple Cafe in Myeongdong were as wonderful as expected.
[Source: Author, Sora Ju]

a mango, and it had a crisp, candy-like shell filled with rich cream and mango purée. I also ordered a strawberry milk drink topped with whipped cream, with fresh strawberry purée at the bottom. Korean strawberry milk is hard to beat, and this was one of my favorite drinks of the trip.

Meanwhile in Hongdae,

Sanrio Lovers Club has character-themed seating areas featuring Hello Kitty, Kuromi, Cinnamoroll, My Melody, Pompompurin, and Pochacco, along with merchandise and photo spots. I tried limited-edition apple pancakes created for Hello Kitty's anniversary, although the food itself was not as memorable as the desserts

at the Apple Cafe.

My final stop was Cinnamoroll Sweet Cafe, located inside AK Plaza Hongdae. Designed to resemble Cinnamoroll's home, the cafe uses soft blues, mint greens, and pastel pinks throughout the space, complete with dozens of pictures of Cinnamoroll and his friends. Here, the chocolate cake was good, but the Cinnamoroll waffle was my favorite: crisp on the outside with a chewy, mochi-like texture inside. I also ordered a latte, complete with custom character latte art!

Each cafe offered merchandise areas that gave visitors the chance to take home adorable souvenirs, in addition to them all fitting perfectly into a day of exploring Seoul. Hello Kitty Apple Cafe is surrounded by Myeongdong's shopping and street-food scene, while Cinnamoroll Sweet Cafe is inside AK Plaza, a popular shopping complex in Hongdae. Both can easily be added to an existing Seoul itinerary.

For anyone who loves Sanrio or simply enjoys creative cafe culture, these three spots offer a fun break from the usual sightseeing. The desserts may be designed for the camera, but the best part is discovering which ones are actually worth eating.

Student Reporter

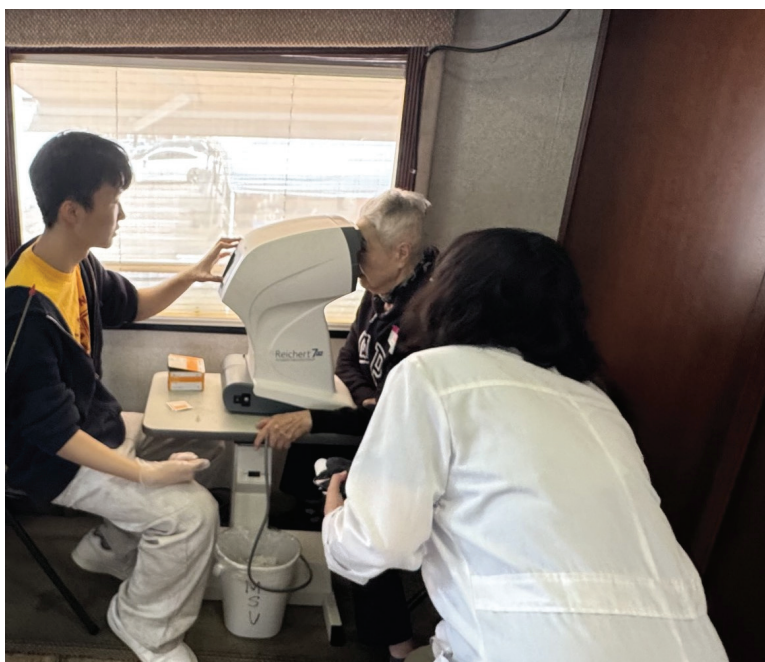


Yulkwon Lee
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LA Eye Camp Matters to Everyone

Imagine struggling to see objects in the distance or having blurry vision that makes reading, driving, or completing everyday tasks difficult. Regular eye checkups play an important role in our daily lives by detecting vision problems before they become serious. However, many people are unable to receive the eye care they need because of financial or accessibility barriers. LA Eye Camp helps address this problem by providing free eye examinations and health screenings to members of the community. These screenings can help identify potential issues early, allowing people to seek treatment before they lead to serious vision problems.

LA Eye Camp is a community outreach program organized by Vision Care Service West. At the event, people can receive free eye examinations, visual acuity tests, eye pressure tests, and cataract screenings. They can also receive blood pressure and diabetes checks. For those who need them, reading glasses and eye drops are provided at no cost. Doctors and nurses work together to provide these important health services to people in the community, making it easier for individuals who may have difficulty accessing regular healthcare to receive the care



Helping out communities that are in need by providing free eye care through volunteering is a great way to spend a weekend.
[Source: Author, Yulkwon Lee]

they need.

As a student volunteer with the LA Unified Leo Club, I have participated in LA Eye Camp for three years, attending the event twice a year. LA Unified Leo Club is an organization that helps people who are in need and works with others to organize events for kids with special needs. This

year's event was held on September 12, 2026, in the parking lot of the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Los Angeles. I helped with vision and eye pressure screenings and also interpreted for Korean-speaking patients who had difficulty communicating in English. Through these experiences, I realized that even simple screenings can make

a meaningful difference by giving people an opportunity to learn about their health and identify problems early. Helping patients understand the process and communicate with doctors and nurses has been especially rewarding for me.

One of the greatest strengths of LA Eye Camp is that it provides important healthcare services directly to people in the community. Many people may not realize that they can receive free eye and health screenings through this program. Since LA Eye Camp is held twice a year, I hope more people will learn about the event and take the opportunity to have their health checked. Greater awareness can help more individuals and families benefit from these free services.

A single eye examination can be a life-changing moment for someone, even though some people may think it is not a big deal. I hope LA Eye Camp will continue to reach more people and provide accessible healthcare to those who need it. By spreading awareness about this event, more members of the community can take an important step toward protecting their eye health and overall well-being.

Student Reporter



Kaylyn Wee
Grade 11
Ayala High School

Ayala Girls Tennis: Baseline Champions

Recently, I had the opportunity to compete in the Baseline Girls Tennis Tournament with my varsity team, Ayala Girls Tennis. In the tournament, we played against Rancho Cucamonga, JW North, Alta Loma, and Upland in the final round. The tournament brought together the four teams to play against each other, creating an exciting yet competitive atmosphere. This opportunity allowed players to put their skills to the test while also learning from their mistakes. Players were pushed to their full potential and were able to interact with other athletes and coaches. This tournament was about growth, and we made a lot of memories by winning the tournament!

To prepare for the tournament, my team and I attended daily practices and worked on our skills so we could play our best. During practice, the team did many practice matches in both doubles and singles; executed drills with our coach to solidify fundamental skills and improve our weaknesses; and discussed strategies such as key targets and different shots. With this prepa-



Ayala Girls Varsity tennis takes the first-time win for their school, earning the title of Baseline Champions.
[Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]

ration, the team entered the tournament ready to try our best and push ourselves to grow as players. Although we entered Baseline to improve before the season began, our practice and preparation ultimately helped us end the tournament with a win.

In the first round, we played an away match against Rancho Cucamonga High School. We ended up with a tie, but won the round based on overall points. The next team we played was JW

North on Alta Loma's campus. Although the weather was hot, we again won that round to move on to the next school. The next day, we played against Alta Loma on their campus again, and we ended the match with another win; we were even able to go home a little earlier. Because we made it to the final round, we played against Upland and won, even with almost half of our team being absent. Being awarded the giant trophy and becoming the tournament's second-year winners reminded us

that effort and practice are worth it in the end.

Besides the wins and the learning experiences, the team was also able to have a small bonding experience at the end. Our coach allowed us to go to Yogurtland for a sweet treat and as a reward for all of our hard work. Because of this tournament, all of the returning varsity players were able to get to know the new players on the team; there were 13 new ones! Many bonds and memories were made, even before the official season began.

Overall, the Baseline Tournament was a memorable experience for the Ayala Girls Tennis Team. Whether a player won or lost a match, each experience contributed to our growth as athletes and individuals. While playing against strong opponents, we learned many lessons, and the tournament served as a bonding experience as well. We will remember this tournament as a step in our team's journey, a first-time win for our school, and proof that tennis is more than just a score.

Student Reporter



Elizabeth Kim
Grade 10
Beckman High School

Classical music is a stage for many musicians with skillful talent, hours of hard work, and an appreciation of the arts, all working together to create beautiful music that transcends generations. Playing the clarinet, I have been able to perform many beautiful, thrilling classical pieces this past weekend with the youth orchestra group OCCYO. Bonding through shared experience of struggling with music, meeting new people, and playing a concert to end the night with all my friends has been one of the best memories of the year so far.

Oftentimes, however, money dictates who gets to be in these classical music spaces. Instruments are very expensive; most run for thousands and thousands of dollars to purchase, not to mention countless repairs. From there, education for guidance and practice is also highly costly. Private lessons can run over a hundred dollars an hour, and programs can also be expensive to join.

There is also a high sense of elitism and pride in classical music spaces. There are precon-

OCCYO Summer Concert



Playing in a concert over the weekend, I was not only able to make fun memories and appreciate the arts but also inspire others to join the world of classical music. ~
[Source: Author, Elizabeth Kim]

ceived notions of status a person has to meet in order to be accepted into these places: an expensive instrument and a prestigious audition, just to name a few. Many musicians also treat everything as a competition, constantly wanting to score high, place higher, ultimately, to prove they are better than others rather than enjoying the process together.

As a result, the space of classical music severely lacks diversity. This creates an unfortunate compounding effect: when people

don't see themselves represented in spaces, they are less likely to want to join. There are so many potential ground-breaking musicians that are not given a chance to be in classical music because of the gated environment.

Youth groups play a monumental role in increasing accessibility and early exposure to music education and these spaces. They offer aspiring young musicians a much lower-barrier entry into the stage of classical music. This can be the turning point in

people's lives, or an introduction to partaking in classical music. This exposure early on also dramatically increases the likelihood of people pursuing an interest in the arts, whether it's a sustained hobby throughout adulthood or one's entire livelihood, later on in life. Through the increase in these youth programs, diversity in classical music will hopefully expand and overcome the elitist spaces.

With easier entry, youth music groups are a lot more diverse and can attract more people to join classical music groups. In fact, I invited a friend of mine to come watch my concert on the weekend to catch up and hopefully give her a great performance. Leaving the concert, she said, "I realized how impactful music is, being able to feel the emotions and strength in every note. I came to this concert curious and passionate, but when I left, I immediately knew this is something I wanted to be part of."

Together with increased accessibility in youth music education programs, problems of elitism in classical music can hopefully dwindle, leaving the heart of beautiful music to stay.

Student Reporter



Grace Song
Grade 9
Cypress High School

Art can bring people together regardless of age, background, or ability. For artists with disabilities, opportunities to showcase their creativity are a chance for their voices and perspectives to be recognized. The Korean American Special Education Center (KASEC), works to create these opportunities while supporting families living with developmental disabilities. Through events such as its recent Dream Art Contest, KASEC helps bring together and community and celebrate the artwork of many.

Founded in 2000, KASEC is a nonprofit organization that provides support programs for families and students. Its programs include inclusive basketball and the Harmonia Orchestra, along with events such as the Dream Art Contest. This year's contest theme at the event was "What I Love in Nature," and artists with disabilities expressed their connection to nature through art.

The honorable mentions and winning pieces were to be displayed at Source Mall OC during an awards ceremony. I attended this event as a volunteer, arriv-



KASEC's Dream Art Contest brought together artists with disabilities, families, and volunteers through creativity and art.
[Source: Author, Grace Song]

ing at 7:30 am, two hours before the event officially began.

After changing into volunteer shirts, everyone began preparing the space. We set up easels, carefully placed the artwork on display, and added name tags with information about each artist. We also walked around Source Mall in small groups, putting up posters to promote the event. By 9:30 a.m., people began arriving. Families, artists, and community members took

pictures, viewed the artwork, and talked with one another. It was amazing to see strangers connect with each other while talking about the various pieces. Each one had its own unique interpretation of the theme, some of the ocean, others of animals and flowers, and each gave visitors a chance to see nature from someone else's perspective.

At 10 a.m., the awards ceremony took place. Speakers, including Congressman Derek

Tran, Cypress Mayor Leo Medrano, and KASEC co-founder Rosa Chang, all who addressed the audience before presenting awards to the artists. "KASEC is doing the truly good work of promoting greater awareness, inclusivity, and appreciation," Congressman Derek Tran explained.

Volunteering at this event allowed me to connect with people I otherwise might not have met. As I walked around viewing the different pieces, I was able to ask the artists about their work and the stories and ideas behind it. Seeing so many people gather to celebrate art showed me how events like the Dream Art Contest can create inclusion and bring together the community. One mother described the importance of events like these, saying, "Art is just universal; it's not limited to people with disabilities or not. I was just glad to see people come together and support each other." Cleaning up and reflecting after the event, I felt grateful that I had the chance to see firsthand how something like art could bring together so many people, no matter their ability.

Student Reporter



Olivia Seok
Grade 9
The Rectory School

For many international students, studying abroad begins with a simple change of scenery. A new country introduces unfamiliar classrooms, different academic expectations, and the daunting challenge of building social circles in a second language. Yet, the true impact of living abroad extends far beyond test scores and GPA. For many, it fundamentally reshapes how they view themselves and the world around them.

At Rectory School, international students report that personal growth often happens in subtle, unexpected ways. While some find that living abroad streamlines their everyday communication, others discover a renewed sense of academic drive, a commitment to physical well-being, or a stronger foundation of independence.

Sophia Ku, an international student who has attended schools in both Korea and the United States, notes that living abroad significantly boosted her confidence when reaching out to others. Over time, she became far more comfortable engaging in casual small talk and less anxious about external judgment. "Before, I would sometimes hesitate to approach someone because I was



Students enjoy a meal together at Rectory School, building friendships and a sense of belonging while studying abroad.
[Source: Rectory School]

worried about what they would think," Ku explained. "Now, I feel much more comfortable starting a conversation." Though seemingly minor, this shift plays a vital role in an international student's daily life. Navigating interactions with unfamiliar people, asking questions without hesitation, and participating actively in discussions allow students to cultivate a genuine sense of belonging within their new communities.

For another student, the most profound transformation occurred in her approach to academics. While attending school in Korea, she occasionally struggled to find purpose in her studies and lacked clear motivation. However, after moving to the United States, witnessing the commitment of her peers sparked a new sense of determination. "Seeing students here, especially seniors, who are truly dedicated to their goals in-

spired me to work much harder," she shared. Her experience highlights that studying abroad influences students not just through formal coursework, but through the people they meet. Exposure to a new environment introduces different mindsets, encouraging individuals to re-evaluate their personal ambitions.

Similarly, MJ Kim discovered personal growth through athletics. Since moving to the U.S., she has maintained a disciplined routine of exercising for an hour and a half each day. As a result, she has built significant physical endurance and improved her competitive swimming times.

These diverse experiences demonstrate that studying abroad is not merely about adapting to a new educational framework. It serves as a catalyst for self-discovery—empowering students to become more confident, self-motivated, and resilient. While adjusting to life in a foreign country naturally brings challenges, stepping into the unfamiliar ultimately creates invaluable opportunities for lifelong growth. For international students, finding a new home abroad often means discovering entirely new facets of themselves.