

## 2,600 next-generation Koreans from 70 countries visit homeland to trace their roots

Next Generation Compatriots Home Country Invitational Training hosted by OKA begins June 17

The 2025 Next Generation Compatriots Home Country Invitational Training officially began June 17, with more than 2,600 next-generation Koreans living in more than 70 countries around the world visiting the homeland to discover their roots through historical and cultural experiences.

The program is hosted by the Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) and organized by its affiliate organization, the Overseas Korean Cooperation Center (Director Kim Young-geun). More than 240 next-generation Koreans from 26 countries attended the opening ceremony of the first training program at the Hyatt Hotel in Yeongjongdo, Incheon. More than 2,600 next-generation Koreans from more than 70 countries around the world are expected to participate in this year's training, which will continue until Aug. 17.

### Nine one-week training sessions will be held until Aug. 17

The nine one-week training sessions for overseas

Korean youth (ages 15 to 18) and young adults (ages 18 to 25) will be held for a total of 270 participants per session.

In particular, this year's training will be held on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonization and will feature a variety of programs to help participants grow into the next generation of talented individuals who will contribute to the development of the global Korean community, based on the three core values of Koreanity (Korean identity), "globality" and connectivity.

Identity is about fostering Korean identity and pride, globality revolves around promoting the bond between overseas and domestic Koreans, and connectivity focuses on contributions to the empowerment of global Koreans and the shared prosperity of humanity.

### OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk: 'You will be leaders of next generation'

In his opening remarks, OKA Commissioner Lee said: "The 7 million overseas Koreans around the world have not been as well networked as the Jewish, Chinese and Indian communities, but now that Korea is doing well, you have grown up on the foundation that your fathers and grandfathers struggled for. It is time to grow our influence as a people, and that is also the purpose behind the establishment of the OKA.



Participants pose for a photo with the Korean flag in both hands at the opening ceremony.



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk gives opening remarks.

“The Future Leaders Conference held in May is also organized by the OKA,” Lee added. “In the near future, you will be the next generation of leaders.

“Making friends during the training program is the beginning of network formation. I wish you a successful and safe event without any accidents.”

Kim Young-geun, director of the Overseas Koreans Cooperation Center, said: “We hope that through this training, you will be able to see, hear and experience the history and power of Korea firsthand, enhance your understanding of your home country and grow into global talents with pride as Koreans.”

### Korean youth discover ‘roots of identity’ on Korean soil

The next generation of overseas Korean youth from more than 70 countries around the world embarked on a six-day, seven-night journey to Korea to discover who they are and where they came from. The program consisted of visits to major historical sites and industrial sites in the Chungcheong, Gangwon and Seoul metropolitan areas.

On June 18, the sun was beating down on Cheonan Independence Hall in South Chungcheong Province. Youths dressed in matching uniforms stood side-by-side, their faces filled with reverence. In front of a large flag, they honored their country’s independence and sacrifices.

The teenagers who visited the Seodaemun Prison History Hall in Seoul were also deeply moved. “It was heartbreaking to look through the records of the inmates,” said Nam Hye-rin (18) from Mexico, with tears in her eyes.

On the 80th anniversary of Korea’s liberation, they were reminded of the footsteps of those who sacrificed themselves for the country’s independence.

Visiting Jeongnim Temple’s stone pagoda and the tomb of King Muryeong in Gongju, the youth were awed by the beauty and refined cultural heritage of ancient Baekje.

### Inspirational classroom formed not by factories and exhibition halls but by Korea itself

The delegates were able to experience not only the history but also the current technology and industry of Korea. At the Samyang “ramen” factory in Wonju, Gangwon Province, the group toured an automated production line for “buldak” fried noodles. At the Songdo biocluster in Incheon, they saw a laboratory for vaccine research and a bioreactor, dozens of meters high, which caused some attendees to say, “I want to be a bioscientist rather than a doctor in the future.”

At Hyundai Motor Studio, they experienced autonomous driving technology firsthand in an electric car and said: “I didn’t realize Korean automotive technology was so advanced. It made me see Korea differently.”

In Gangwon Province, they visited the Hanji Theme Park to experience making traditional “hanji.” The youth showed off their palm-sized pieces of traditional patterned hanji to each other and felt the history and soul of the paper through the experience. Participants who visited Ojukheon and Seorak Mountain were fascinated by Korea’s traditional spiritual culture that blends nature, history and religion.

The youth toured the Incheon port during their trip to the Seoul metropolitan and surrounding areas, where they were reminded of their diasporic identity by feeling the vestiges of the late Joseon Dynasty’s enlightenment period. At the Incheon Maritime Museum, they experienced the development of Korea’s maritime logistics through a 3D simulator, and the cutting-edge research facilities at the Songdo Biocluster shocked and inspired them.

### A trip that connects identity with the future

On the last day of the program, a high school in Incheon, South Korea, became a lively place of interaction as students played traditional games with their peers. “I feel like I’ve made genuine friends,” they exclaimed, symbolizing that this was not just a visit but the beginning of a connection.

The 2025 Invitational Training is not just a tourist program; it is an educational journey to engrave “unified roots” in the hearts of Korean youth living in various countries and to connect their identity and future. Korea is no longer just their home country but a “homeland with which to build the future together.” 장