

**CELEBRITY
TRAVELER RAP
MONSTER (OF BTS)**

Performer suggests river walks in Seoul

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Fresh off a win at the Billboard Music Awards, the K-Pop band BTS (Bangtan Boys) is continuing its sold-out world tour, which included arena dates in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. Based out of South Korea, BTS recently hit No. 1 on the Billboard Twitter Chart, beating out One Direction's Harry Styles and Niall Horan. Rap Monster (ne Nam-Joon Kim), 22, phoned us as the group headed to LA from Las Vegas.

An edited version of our conversation follows.

Q. Was this your first trip to Las Vegas?

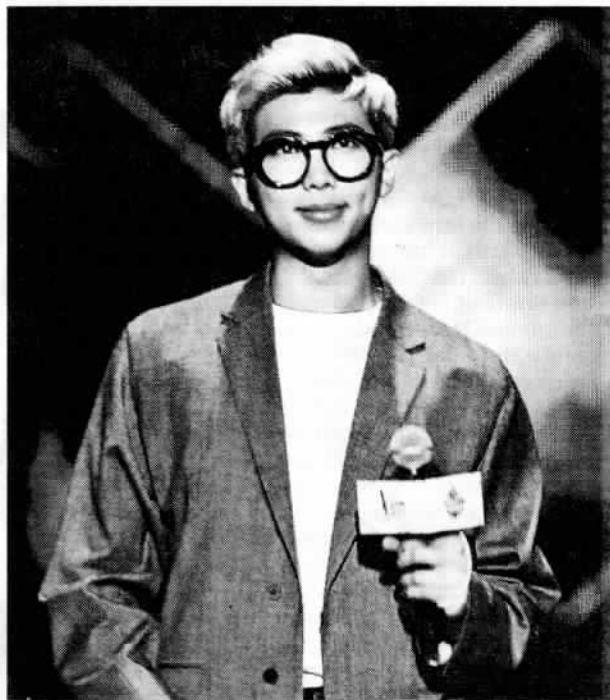
A. For me, it was the second time. For the other boys, it was the first time. I was last here in 2009, when I was 15. What I remember the most was the inside of the Bellagio. It was amazing. I had never seen a hotel like that before, where there was a whole world inside the hotel. It was beautiful. I got to see Cirque du Soleil's "O" show. I remember the night view of Vegas, which was tremendous. I remember all the lights and people having fun.

Q. What did you do in Vegas this time?

A. (We went to see) Cirque du Soleil's "KA." After we won (our Billboard Award), we had a small party for just our band members and the staff. It was really nice.

Q. Which childhood trip stands out for you?

A. My parents always



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took me to areas around rivers in Korea. We would go camping and sleep outside in small tents. That is a great memory for me. I also studied in New Zealand for four months when I was 12 years old. It was exactly 125 days. I remember that because I wrote about it in my diary. Traveling helped with my education. I got to experience so many things.

Q. For newcomers who want to visit Korea, what would you suggest as must-sees?

A. I would recommend that you see at least two places that I love. You should definitely visit Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul. It's a traditional palace that was built many centuries ago, and it is really beautiful. Also, I think you should definitely go walk by the Han River (in Seoul). It's a place I go to at least once a week.

Q. What kind of food do you look forward to eating on the road?

A. Besides Korean food? I don't think my answer is that interesting, but I always eat pasta and steak. (Laughs.) My taste is kind of normal. I love to try the local food wherever I am. But I'm not that adventur-

ous when it comes to eating. I prefer to be safe. I have failed at eating some daring food. (Laughs.)

Q. And speaking of Korean food, how is the Korean food outside of Korea?

A. It's good. There are really good Korean restaurants in Brazil and the United States. They're everywhere. Our company is really good and thinks of our food tastes so much. They always bring us Korean food from restaurants wherever we go. So wherever we tour, I know that we will eat well.

Q. What are your five favorite cities?

A. I love New York. The city means a lot to me. So much of the music I like comes from there. I love the views and the buildings. I've only been there once, but I really loved Moscow in Russia. Tokyo. Berne (Switzerland). And, of course, Sao Paulo (Brazil). I've been there three times and love it so. The fans in Brazil, they are passionate and fun and kind. We are so lucky because all our fans from around the world are great.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.