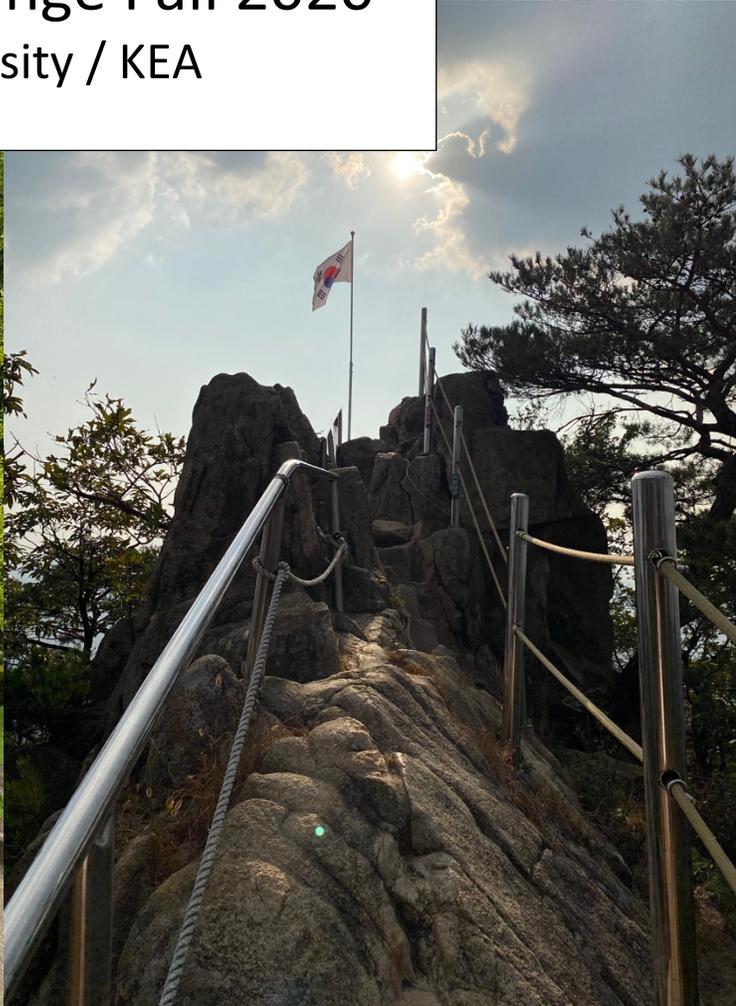




South Korea Exchange Fall 2020  
Hanyang University / KEA



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## Introduction

This report is an account of my Fall 2020 exchange semester experiences in South Korea as well as tips and tricks for students and other travelers. I overall enjoyed my exchange semester in South Korea very much and I recommend everyone to go, this was mainly due to my travels to the countryside, mountain and coastal cities, temple stay experiences, many mountain hikes and a few good friends. South Korea is a very beautiful country with many opportunities to experience its beautiful nature and rich culture. I will always recommend people to travel, since it is an amazing experience few have the opportunity to do. When travelling you learn three times as much about yourself and others than you would at home, and I find it to be when you get out of your comfort zone and into the nature and culture of others is when you achieve this 'enlightenment'.

Covid-19 affected the trip very much though, sadly mostly negatively, and with a poorly managed university (Hanyang) with little focus on its exchange students and the Hanmille program, no group/introductory/meet and greetings events, no sports gatherings, only non-related and poorly spoken English ONLY ONLINE classes, there were little to gain there. We were not able to play sports, we had to be in quarantine for two weeks, many restaurants and bars, karaoke and nightclubs were closed, travels around Asia or having visits from family, friends or girlfriend/boyfriend were impossible, which were huge reasons for me going in the first place. The list goes on. A positive aspect of the pandemic was the limited number of tourists, which made my travels around SK a bit more enjoyable. I am very appreciative that I was so fortunate to have the opportunity to do an exchange semester in South Korea. The country is amazing and beautiful, and it was sunny 99% of the time, which is so nice and I miss it very much. It is a bit weird to stand out at first as a foreigner, but you will get used to it quite quick. The percent of foreigners in South Korea is around 3.4, which is very low, which means that they are not used to experience people of different colors and ethnicities like we are in Denmark (13.3 %).

## Tips for future exchange students

### Trips, nature and hiking

1. Use the intercity bus terminal: Get a Korean friend to help you get the bus times from the Korean website beforehand, since they sometimes go twice a day and the schedule is difficult to predict. The bus often goes directly to the destination. They are also very comfortable and clean.
2. Always bring snacks (food, rice ball, sandwich) and water along on hikes: A bag to have it in is nice.
3. Consider investing in some cheap hiking shoes on discount (Merrell or similar brands), it was definitely worth it.
4. I do not recommend going as a big group or more than 4-5 people. It makes it very difficult to get out the door on time, difficult to find living space, people complain, everyone has to agree and does not show appreciation. I have several instances where this happened, and it ruined the overall mood.
5. Utilize the mountains, nature and rivers as well as the cultural/religious temples, shrines, museums etc. while you are there. Try not to postpone trips, since time goes very quickly. And do not be afraid to travel alone, on some of my favorite trips, I was alone.
6. Look after temples when hiking: Usually some very beautiful and idyllic temples on the hiking paths.
7. Do not be afraid: The hiking routes and paths are very 'friendly' and it is 'mostly' senior citizens whom hike them, so even you can do it.
8. Make sure that the 'tall' mountains are open when you are thinking of hiking them, since some of them are closed in late November till mid-December, due to forest fire precautions.



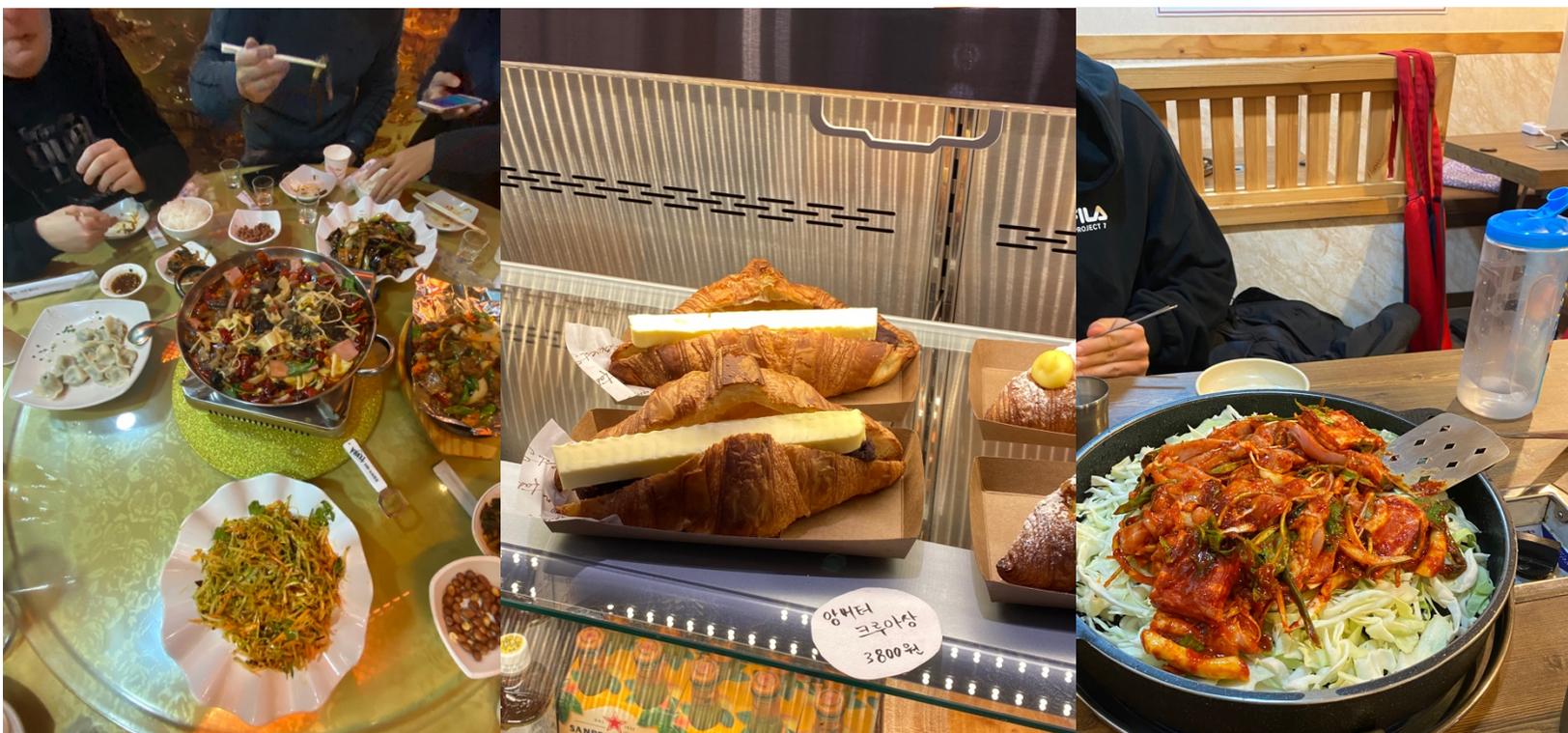
## Ansan-si city

1. For good food, shopping and outdoor BBQ, go to **Gojan** (25 min walk from dorms). Walk around Gojan and experience this amazing area, full of people and good restaurants. I wish I had spent more time in Gojan and tried all the restaurants.
2. For entertainment and nightlife, bars, clubs, restaurants etc. go to **Jungang**. Try going into the building and take the elevator to one of the higher floors. In Asia, it is usually the best restaurants that are higher up in the building I find. There is a small back street that goes parallel with the big street, with a lot of nice bars, you should definitely try that.
3. For Asian food go to the district around **Ansan Station**, we had some really good Chinese, Vietnamese food there.
4. **Russian town** is the area right outside of campus, there are some really nice cafes (Urban place, Lazy ground etc.) There are also some fine restaurants and a good pc bang we often went to. Your best friend here will definitely be a burrito place called plan b, where you can get a good burrito to around 17 DKK, we went there at least 1-2 times a week.



## Food and drinks

1. Try some of SK's amazing food markets. (Namdaemun Market, Dongdaemun Market, Gwangjang Market, Noryangjin Fisheries Wholesale Market, Seogwipo Maeil Olle Market, Gukje Market etc.)
2. The food in SK is usually very good and very cheap, which means that you can have a complete dinner for 50 DKK. I will never go out for dinner in Denmark again. Everyone should try some of these amazing food concepts: 'Chicken and beer', still living squid, Bulgogi, Kimchi (you will learn to love it), Ddukbokki, Bibimbap, Japchae, Naengmyeon, Korean BBQ, Dak Galbi (Korean Chicken stir fry) etc. The food is very meat based though, and vegetables and fruits are usually very expensive in comparison.
3. Your age has a bigger importance in Korean culture, if you for example are older you are either a Oppa or Unnie, and 'should' traditionally pay for dinner.
4. Korean traditional food is often cheap, and western food (pizza) is relatively expensive.
5. Soju (traditionally made from rice) is the main alcoholic choice in South Korea, it is cheap and has a high percentage. You can mix it with a lot of different tastes/soda etc. and it tastes surprisingly fine. They also have beer, but the Korean beer tastes like American beer (water), and the beer is usually 'expensive'. Wine is not an option; everything is important and not worth the huge stack of money you have to throw after it.
6. The Korean bakeries are not that good. It is as if they trying to experiment with how many different things you can add to bread and pastries, and the bread is always so white. Melon bread is amazing though. I have tried almost all the pastries in Paris Baguette and the other bakeries, and they are never worth it. Except one place in Gojan, where you sometimes can get a really good croissant for 5 DKK.



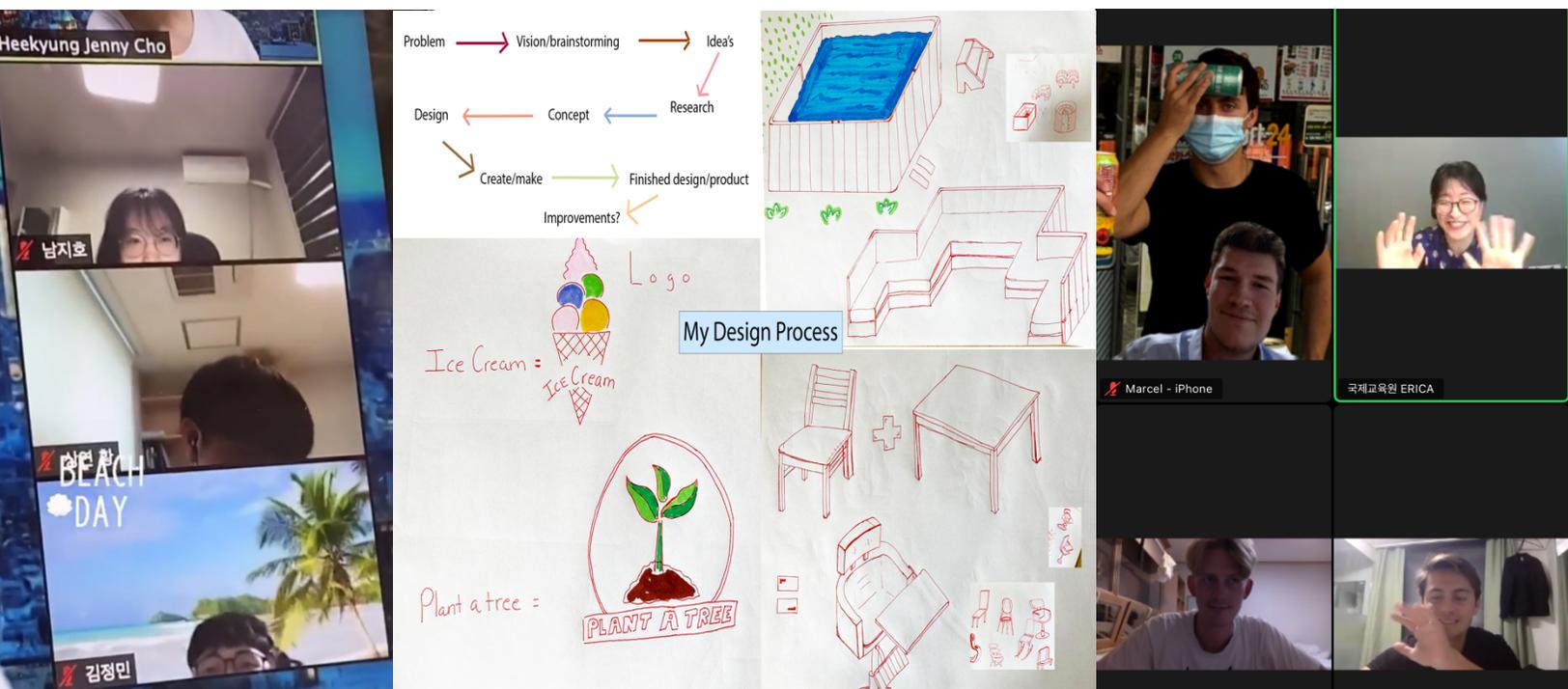
## Erica Campus and living

1. Choose **Changei Injaewon Dormitory**, which is slightly more expensive, but A LOT nicer rooms and also has the cafeteria, coffee shop, gym and convenience store etc.
2. Get an **ARC card** as quickly as possible (Call/go to the immigration center), you need the ARC for a lot of things (bank account, bike rental, fridge rental, QR code etc.)
3. Ask early for a **single or double room alone**, we were lucky to get double rooms alone and it was not that much more expensive. Others who weren't so lucky had to live with some difficult roommates.
4. Try to get a room on the **highest (18<sup>th</sup>) floor**: amazing view and it is more private.
5. Utilize the food from the **cafeteria**, it is really cheap and quick, except the chicken place, and you can eat as much kimchi as you want, and it is better than the CU (convenience store).
6. When arriving, go to the **Homeplus** (or similar stores) in Gojan (approx. 25 min walk from campus) and buy **instant coffee and oats** (and more), it will save you a lot of money on breakfast and from buying coffee from the convenience store or coffee shops.
7. There are a few mountains behind the dorms which are very nice and easy to hike, there is also parks not far away called 'Ansan Reed Marshy Park', and 'Ansan Lake Park' where you can follow the stream through the city, which is very cool and relaxing. A bit further away is Anyang art park, **Gwanaksan Mountain** and **Surisan Mountain** and many more which are very nice hikes and nature experiences. I utilized the nature and good weather a lot and hiked all the mountains in the area, and it is amazing, each can be done in a couple of hours.
8. I recommend you to buy some hand soap, body soap, shampoo, a bowl, a dishwashing brush, and spoon for your breakfast (oatmeal), and a cup for your instant coffee. This will save you quite a bit of money and time.



## Classes, Hanyang University:

1. Studying a language while residing in the country is definitely the best method and experience of in which you will learn a new language, so I definitely recommend taking the Korean classes. Korean is an amazing and interesting language with some really fun characters and expressions, and it is not a lot of people who can speak it in the western world. The characters in itself is not that difficult to learn, but the associations and pronunciations of words that takes some time to master. I can recommend starting early, learn the basics and slowly learn more and more vocabulary. The best way to learn a language is to actively use it with people you meet, native Koreans and your friends, on a daily basis. You should not expect a lot from your Survival Korean teacher, neither in the English language proficiency area, or the friendly or professional area, so expect to learn a lot of it yourself.
2. It is far from normal in a lot of Asian countries to be able to speak English, so do not expect that your teachers speak very well English, and you might have to listen to quite a bit Korean.
3. I am very appreciative for Hanyang University that we were able to study there, even during the pandemic. When that has been said, the class selection and availability of classes are unnecessarily complicated. It is a very hard process for exchange students, since it is 'first come first serve' for the classes, which means that we had to get up at 3 am. to 'fight' the other students for the classes. They were all gone within 10 seconds, so there should be a better system where there were a specific number of spots saved for exchange students. If you do not get the classes you wish, there is a process later where you can contact the professor for each class and hope he lets you join and attend.
4. The subjects were not all that related to my degree, even though my coordinator and I tried very hard. I would try to study some more related topics along with your work here (ask danish teachers?)



## Culture and South Koreans

1. Do not get mad or offended if an old Korean person pushes or walks into you. Happened often to us.
2. Act with caution: It is a completely different culture and system, do not mess with the police or break the law, I have heard of exchange student being arrested, going to prison, being sent home, being driven around for 20 min and just dropped off somewhere randomly.
3. Danish people often feel entitled to a lot of things, since we come from a relatively socialistic country, which is not the same in South Korea. So use politeness and be friendly and humble when trying to get help. Acting entitled will get you nowhere, they just do not give a freak.
4. You will most likely be yell at, at some point. Do not let it get to you.
5. You will most likely also be told that you are handsome, they are just being polite, and you look different.
6. You will be asked if you can teach someone English. It is okey to say no.
7. They are not big fans of their neighbors. Which really 'shows' the tense relationship between the east Asian countries.
8. Some are also very friendly, and will come up to you and say hi and talk to you and take pictures with you, which is a lot of fun.



## My Trips

### Gangneung:

**The trip:** Gangneung is SK's Largest east coast city. I stayed here for around four nights while doing daily trips up and down the coast to beautiful natural wonders, hiking spots, tall mountains, beaches, waterfalls, skiing resorts, caves and national parks. I had already travelled quite a bit, and wanted to save some money, so I stayed at this hostel named Aark House. It was very nice, had great reviews and the owner is very sweet, helpful, speaks a bit of English and makes traditional Korean breakfast, which is included in the price. If you love hiking, nature, shrines, mountains, the coast and amazing food then you should definitely go to SK's east coast area. Recommended time: at least 4 days. Always google or ask your Korean friend about the sightseeing spots in the area before going or the way there.

**Sightseeing:** Gangneung Seongyojang, Naksansa Temple, Songjeong beach (very nice cafés along the beach), Gangneung Jungang Market (Amazing food), Seoraksan National park (Towangseong Pokpo Waterfall, a cave, Gwongeumseong fortress, Ulsanbawi Rock, Sinheungsa temple, Seoraksan Mountain), Odaesan mountain and more. (I never got to experience everything the areas had to offer)



Guinsa Temple / Taebaek (mountain city 'close' by):

**The trip:** I went to Guinsa temple, which is the largest Buddhist temple in South Korea and positioned in the beautiful Sobaek-mountains. There were experiences and activities such as Buddhist ceremonies (3am.), vegan 'monk' food, meditation, tea ceremony, etc. Go during fall if possible, when the seasons are changing and the leaves changes colors. I was recommended this temple by a Korean guy who had tried a lot of different temple stay experiences. It did not disappoint, and I highly recommend trying it. (covid-19 helped a lot since there weren't many tourists). You can find all the temple stay locations at the link below. I would advise you to wake up early and join the 3 am. Buddhist ceremony, (I was the only one who did it) but it was an experience I will not forget. You can grab a bus to the temple from Seoul (remember to plan it all in advance, makes it a lot easier). The experience costed around 400 DKK, which is the average price of the temple stays, some are a lot more expensive though. (everything is included, food, the clothes etc., except transport)

Link: [https://eng.templestay.com/temple\\_info.asp?t\\_id=guinsa](https://eng.templestay.com/temple_info.asp?t_id=guinsa)

**Sightseeing:** Hiking, caves (Maybe combine it with the Gangneung trip – close to the east coast)



Yesan / Deoksan-myeon (Hotspring 'town'):

**The trip:** Yesan was one of my first trips and I enjoyed it very much. I took a direct bus there from the intercity bus station in Ansan near Jungang station. Yesan is known as a hot spring town, with beautiful landscapes, fields, farms and much more. I went to Yesan to experience the countryside, which I definitely got to. If you like the nature, the countryside and mountains, then I definitely recommend you to go to Yesan. It is not the most exciting place to go though, in this report, so if I only had one weekend, I would choose one of the other places I have mentioned such as Gangneung or Guinsa.

**Sightseeing:** Hike Gayasan Mountain, Seongmunbong and Wonhyobong peak on one hike. Also experience the huge reservoir, Sudeoksa, Gwangdeoksa temple, Resom Spa Castle, the many hotsprings/bathhouses, a huge park/museum/light land close to (55, Oncheondanji 1-ro, Deoksan-myeon, Yesan-gun, Chungcheongnam-do) Not far from there is the Yedangho Sculpture park, 'Yedang Lake/Reservoir, which you can walk along, (Largest 'lake' I've seen in Korea) and walk across SK longest suspension bridge (Yedangho).



Seoul:

**The trips:** Seoul is about 1-1.5 hours from Ansan with public transport, depending where you are going, of course. You can take a bus directly from the dorms (by the tennis courts) to Gangnam. Seoul is a great place for experiencing SK sprouting nightlife and amazing food, which the other exchange students utilized quite a bit, but was not my main interest. Seoul is very nice though, it is huge, with a lot of people and a lot of things to do. 3 of the other danish guys chose to live there instead of Ansan, and at time I wish I had done the same due to Hanyangs Covid-19 restrictions.

**Sightseeing:** Namsantower, Gyeongbokgung, Bukhansan Mountain, Bukchon Hanok Village, Changdeokgung, Dongdaemun Design Plaza, Dongdaemun street food market (a lot of markets), The National Folk Museum, The Met, The blue house, Seoul City Wall Trail, National Museum of Korea, Walk along the river, Starfield Library etc.

**Partying:** Hongdae and Itawon are nice, Gangnam is a bit more expensive, but amazing as well.

**Entertainment:** PC bang, dart bars, animal cafés, Arcades, Karaoke, Clubs, restaurants, museums etc.



## Jeju (Big Group Trip)

**The trip:** We flew a big group of people to Jeju Island in November for about 4 nights. It was a lot of fun, Jeju is an amazing island destination and is a must for travelling around South Korea. It is known as a summer travel destination, especially for Chinese tourists. Fondest memory was when we bought fireworks and use it at the beach at night (Legal all year around in SK – can be purchased in Convenient stores) and also the day where my friend Nicklas and I biked around Udo Island on electric bikes. The tallest mountain in South Korea is actually on Jeju, and It was much fun to hike it.

**Sightseeing:** Hallasan Mountain/national Park (Tallest in SK), Jeju Loveland, Seongsan Ilchulbong (vulkano), Udo Island (electric bike around it), Manjanggul Cave, Halim Park, Spirited garden, mandaring gathering farm, Mazes.



### Busan (Very Big Group Trip):

**The Trip:** Busan is a MUST GO, it is beautiful, really good nightlife, a lot of fun, and has some amazing dishes. We took a bus there with 'another' community (Kims Community) whom is a very nice guy, he has a community (living space/apartment) where a lot of exchange students stay while studying. There were positives and negatives going as such a big group (2 big busses full), and I recommend you consider the sleeping, sleeping etc. situation, how long you want to spend and how much you want to experience and see when deciding. We saw some amazing temples, beaches and towns on the way there and back. I definitely want to go back to Busan to experience it again, maybe with just a few people this time, being able to decide for yourself what you want to experience, get a good hotel maybe. Busan is known as the Miami of South Korea, and that comparison definitely fits. You could definitely spend a week+ there – you should go in summer.

### Sightseeing:

Haeundae Beach, Haedong Yonggungsa, Gwangalli Beach, Jagalchi Market, Busan tower and Yongdusan Park, Gamcheon Culture village, Oryukdo Skywalk, BIFF Square, Taejongdae Resort Park.



## DMZ (Small Group Trip)

The Trip: The DMZ - Demilitarized zone is a 250 km stretch between North and South Korea, which works as a 'bufferzone' and a border, and was the main front line during the war, still containing lots of land mines today. It is a very interesting area since North and South Korea technically are still at war.

We went there on a trip planned by a Korean student. We took a train and a bus to the main DMZ are, and then another one, which took us to an underground tunnel tours and a viewpoint point into North Korea. This trip was kinda boring. We actually thought we were going to the JSA (Joint security area), but during the trip he said we were not, because it was 'too expensive'. I do not know when I will be going back to SK, so I think and was told it was worth it to go to the JSA. I therefore recommend you going to the JSA, the fee is a bit higher and you have to go with a tour bus from Seoul to the JSA.

At the JSA you get to see North Korean soldiers, the blue buildings on the border and it is there where Kim and Trump and other leaders meet. I plan to do the real DMZ / JSA tour when going back to SK, and it should be an amazing experience, from what I have heard.

Link: [https://www.veltra.com/en/asia/korea/ctg/110790:korea\\_jsa\\_tour/](https://www.veltra.com/en/asia/korea/ctg/110790:korea_jsa_tour/)



## Korea and Quarantine

Quick Korea facts: South Korea also named the Republic of Korea has a population of approx. 51 million people, where about 50% are 'not religiose', 20% believe in Protestantism and 15% believe in Korean Buddhism. South and North Korea are technically still at war since a peace treaty was never signed. South Korea is a spectacular country due to their ability to achieve somewhat stability and transform itself to a modern industrial state within an amazingly short period of time. This feat was achieved in spite of very limited natural resources, political instability, an ongoing war, high military costs, geopolitical threats, poverty, 35 years of colonization etc. Their currency is won, 1 DKK is around 180 SK won. When a Korean baby is born, he or she is already one year old. Number 4 is bad luck, and if you write a person's name in red, it means they are dead or will die soon. Koreans love their alcohol, couples spend Christmas together and new years is when you gather the family.



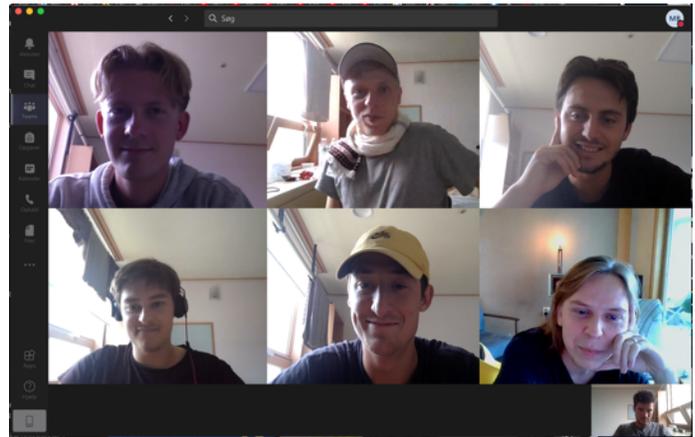
### 14 days Quarantine

10<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> August 2020: We (group of 5+ Danish students) flew from Denmark – Doha – South Korea with Qatar airways, wearing masks and vesir. After 24+ hours of travelling, we arrived in Incheon

Airport, only to spend another 4 hours going through 10 different immigration and pandemic checks, having to write a 100-character long address 7 times and taking our temperature even more, losing 1 man on the way due to his 'a little higher than average' temperature. We finally got out of the airport (one man down) and took a taxi to the dorms, where we were to be quarantined/ jailed in a little room in 35 degrees Celsius weather for 2 weeks. We had no real help or prior knowledge of the complete situation, which did not help the overall situation. It was a very tough and interesting experience I will never forget, full of very hungry exchange students, molded grapes, chocolate muffins for breakfast, emulated group Pokémon run-throughs, 100 pushups challenges, 8 hour team video 'talks', requests for



more water/coffee/fruit etc. It was like sitting at a dinner table, you haven't eaten for weeks and your favorite dish is in front of you, but you are not allowed to touch it. Seoul, freedom, new experiences, everything was right Infront of us, we could see it all from our rooms on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor but for two whole weeks, we were trapped. The complete joy and euphoria we felt when finally released cannot be described by mere words. I have an ambivalent relationship with the quarantine, in that I believe that everyone should try it, since it is such a bizarre experience and at the same time, I do not wish It upon anyone.



## Extra information

### Travel insurance

- Buy travel insurance from university (Cheap)

### Visa

- Takes about 2 weeks
- Remember all the required documents (link below)
- [http://overseas.mofa.go.kr/dk-en/wpge/m\\_7042/contents.do](http://overseas.mofa.go.kr/dk-en/wpge/m_7042/contents.do)
- (SK Embassy is in Hellerup: Svanemøllevej 104, 2900 Hellerup, contact nr. [39 46 04 09](tel:39460409))

### Plane ticket

- (i used) Qatar airways with a stop at Doha takes between 16 – 20 hours normally.
- If you do not know when and if you are flying back to Denmark, then get a one way ticket. Its about 3000 DKK. A return ticket is about 5 k, but a lot of people normally choose to travel around in Asia after or stay for longer.

### **Dorm or apartment?**

If you have to attend classes at Erica, then it is not worth it travelling back and forward from your apartment in Seoul, but if it is online classes (covid), then I would definitely choose an apartment in Seoul.

### **□ Dormitory Address**

<b>Address in English</b>	Changei Injaewon (Dormitory), Hanyang University ERICA Campus, 55 Hanyangdaehak-ro, Sangnok-gu, Ansan, Gyeonggi-do, 15588, Korea
<b>Address in Korean</b>	경기도 안산시 상록구 한양대학로 55 한양대학교 ERICA 캠퍼스 창의인재원 (15588)
<b>Phone No.</b>	031-400-4374~9

### **Hanyang or soul tech?**

Hanyang is the better University and is higher ranked. Even though they are quite unprofessional... Souel Tech is better positioned and might have more relevant subjects (not sure).

### **Classes**

- We had in average around four subjects in total. Each class is about 3 hours per week depending on how many point it gives. So in total about 13 hours of class a week.
- Get as many courses/subjects as you can in the start, it is possible to drop them later. Make sure it is in 'English' (some of the guys chose Korean spoken subjects by mistake).
- You can position the classes (if you are lucky) so you might have a free day or two. I picked so I had class Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.
- There will be taken class attendance, usually.
- Ask/tell your teachers about your trip before going (For shorter/longer trips).

### **Visits**

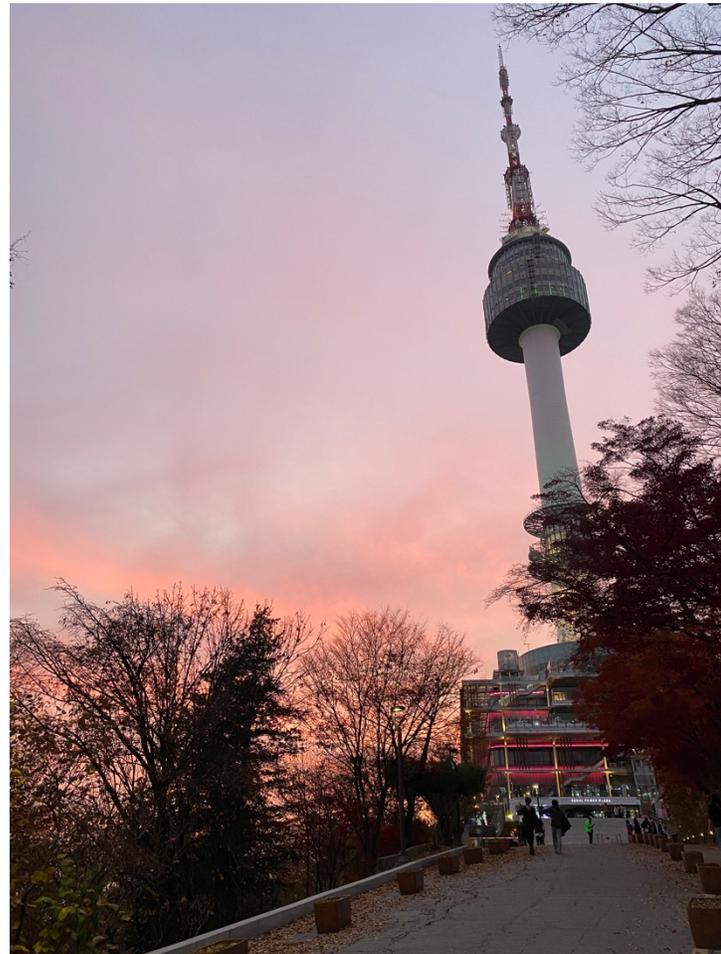
- Girls are not allowed in in the boys dorm: you get 10 penalty points if found out and might be thrown out of the dorm. (some did it anyway though).
- There is a hotel at the campus though, or in Ansan city (Gojan, Jungang etc.) I recommend getting a hotel room in Seoul, and then stay there together.

### **6 positives:**

- Beautiful mountainous country with amazing trails and hiking opportunities
- Amazing cheap food
- Good nightlife (Seoul)
- Big cultural difference
- AMAZING weather/climate (99.9% sunny), warmer summers and colder winters
- Very safe (low crime rate)

### **6 negatives:**

- Bureaucratic
- Not so friendly and not service minded
- Classes (language) and the University
- Public transport and apps (kakaomap, bus app etc.) outside of Seoul
- Lack of English-speaking individuals
- Strict work ethic and schooling



### **Conclusion:**

My exchange fall semester 2020 in South Korea was a very interesting journey which I both loved and hated, but overall enjoyed in spite of all the problems covid-19 brought along. The University disappointed massively with regards to events, sports, classes, general information, Hanmille etc. so do not have high expectations of the university. The trips around South Korea were the highlight of my exchange and I can only dream of how good it would be if we were also allowed to travel around other parts of Asia as well. My interests in South Korean lied as mentioned on hiking mountains, experiencing the Korean culture and I spent many weekends visiting the countryside, mountain towns, coastal towns, temples ect. South Korea also has Seoul, which has all the entertainment and partying you

could ever dream of. This subsequently means that Korea has something for everyone, even if you are an 'old' outdoor, nature and cultural seeking individual such as me, or a young partying, drinking, bar and nightclub loving person. South Korea is cheap, has amazing food, nature, different culture, nightclubs, kpop, hiking, Karaoke, weeb culture, SUN and much more. I would probably have reconsidered the trip and lowered my expectations, having known how long covid-19 would have lasted and how much it would affect the trip. So, if covid-19 is 'gone' I definitely recommend going, but if it is not, I think you might want to readjust your exchange expectations, and still go anyway. Feel free to e-mail me if you have any supplementary questions: [ma@blinkenberg.com](mailto:ma@blinkenberg.com) There is a lot crazier stories and tips and tricks that I cannot and do not have the time to write about in this report. Good luck! PS. A video is on the way.

