

Host institution: Hanyang University at Erica campus Korea
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Preface

As a student of Copenhagen school of Design and Technology studying multimedia design and communication (Danish line) I will share my experiences about being on exchange study in Korea.

In this report you can find dive into my thoughts and get a view of my Exchange in Korea. I will go into detail about life in South Korea, the culture and the education system at the Hanyang
I hope you enjoy reading this report and that it gives you a sense of the atmosphere I felt being there. All information below is my personal view and other people may have completely different experience.





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Introduction

To understand my experiences in South Korea, first you need to know a little bit about me. I am born and raised in New Zealand, growing up in a town of 45000 and spending my holidays out in nature. Then I moved to Denmark learnt the language and began my studies at KEA. My main hobby is running, where I have represented NZ on the world stage. I love gaming, watching anime and everything inbetween. I am very quiet by nature, I feel uncomfortable speaking in groups, so it's something I really want to get better at.

After hearing about the exchange program at KEA, I looked at all the possible countries I could go to. There were so many cool places to go to, but one country caught my eye straight away. South Korea. In my opinion an exchange should push your boundaries and open your eyes to new ways of thinking. Korea is by far the most polar to NZ and Denmark, so off I went.

The whole process of signing up went very smoothly, I had no problems. But during the KEA briefing before going I heard 2 other students' experiences of Korea. This really helped me mentally when I arrived.

The host University has two campuses: Hanyang University Seoul Campus, Hanyang Erica Campus in Ansan. I was situated at the latter. This campus specializes in Engineering and Design. It is around an hour to Seoul depending on where you want to go. There is lots of space and it is a very open area and quiet. I will talk more about this later on.





Experiences at the host university

The first week was definitely the hardest. The dormitory I was staying in was brand new, as in they were still making adjustments to the building when I arrived. The room was nice, but they didn't offer bedding. So the first night was with just the mattress.

The next day was the official first day, so I met everyone and my assigned 'buddy', who was a big help. My buddy helped me shop for everything I needed and helped me with my subject selection.

In Korea subject selection is a little different. They have an online system where you have to choose your subjects, but it is very competitive. So it is likely you won't get the subjects you want.

The first week is a trial and error week to find out what subjects work for you.

I had a little bit of trouble here. I went to three classes that I signed up for but either it was too easy or the teacher said they didn't speak english, so you should find another class. So in the end I just walked into classes and asked if I could join. It turned out great.





Digital Typography I-D2041, Professor jin kyung hong is about playing and understanding fonts, It is a very practical course where I had to hand in projects every week. The projects are fun and I had to stand up and talk about my work every week. Since all other students were Korean and weren't comfortable speaking English they spoke Korean when they presented their work. So 90% of the course was in Korean and 10% English. For my Mid-term and final project I had to make a typeface and incorporate into the digital world. For this, I made a coin typeface and then incorporated into websites and infographics. This turned out to be very challenging, but I learned a lot from the course despite it being a little boring in lectures sometimes.

Web Design 2, APA3029 ,Professor J Yunn Chin was pretty easy, this course begins from the ground up, so I knew everything beforehand, but it was still good for enforcing the basics. My Professor was very nice, but was always challenging me to do better, so despite the technical aspect being easy, I got a lot better with the design aspect of web design.

Brand Design 3,I-D4080 ,Professor Albert Inyoung Choi was with the head of Department, The professor had a lot of knowledge and experience so I feel like I got a lot from the quality of the teaching. In this course we had to choose a brand and globalise it/ introduce it to another country. I did mine on a small NZ brand and expanded it to South Korea. We go through the process step by step, it was a pretty relaxed class, but I had to work hard at the end.

Audience & Media Strategy, AP430, Professor Hye-Jin Paek, this was my favourite class, my professor was really fun and I found the course material really interesting. It was more focused on Public Relations and learning the theory used in the field. We had to research cases/campaigns and analyse why they were successful/failure. For the final project we had to choose a bad case and develop strategies to improve it as well as give evidence to support the strategies success.





If I took one thing out of everything I learned from my classes, it is how important process is for a designer. Each professor drilled the importance of process.

With my studying at Hanyang, I found it very easy and relaxed for the first half of the semester, I had a lot of free time, but afterwards I had a lot of work to do. This is because my courses were project based instead of theory based, so I didn't have any exams. But I had to work like a dog at the end of the semester to get everything finished on time.





Social and cultural experiences

There weren't many exchange students, around 20 in total. Usually there are a lot more. Most were from China, a couple from Europe and one American. My roommate was from Holland, so it was very easy to get along with him. All the exchange students did the Survival Korean course together twice a week, and afterwards we would go to a Chinese restaurant, where we got very good service. Once a month we would do a special activity with all of the exchange students.

There are also a lot of clubs you can join. I wanted to join a running club but they didn't have that so I thought I would go out of my comfort zone a little bit. I joined a Dance Club and Crossfit club. Each club is twice a week and it was really fun! They didn't speak much English, but they were very welcoming and tried their hardest to keep me involved. I am a terrible dancer, but they loved seeing me try and were always willing to help me. At the beginning of the Semester I gave myself the challenge of performing on stage at the Spring Festival. The dance club mainly does Korean Pop music, so I danced to one of those songs. For me it was really difficult to learn the moves. One, I am not talented at dancing. Two, the choreography kept changing and it was hard for the others to communicate with me. The end result was that I performed on stage in front of thousands of people, One of the scariest things I've ever done in my life!



What to do in the city.

As I said earlier Erica Campus is a an hour away and a suburb of Seoul. It is a relaxing space. If you like partying, then Seoul would be a much better place for you to go.

For me this place was perfect, I love running, and there are a lot of nice trails to run around. On the trails you will always encounter older Koreans walking around listening to the radio or just enjoying the nature. They are all very friendly and loved seeing me running up and down the hills. Being in Korea, I have definitely gotten stronger overall. There are workout stations everywhere! I made a rule that I had to do a least 5 pull ups every time I went past one as well as the other exercises.





The great thing about Ansan is that it is much cheaper than Seoul. During the week I would be running in the morning, have class, have a nap, do a club activity, then eat at a restaurant.

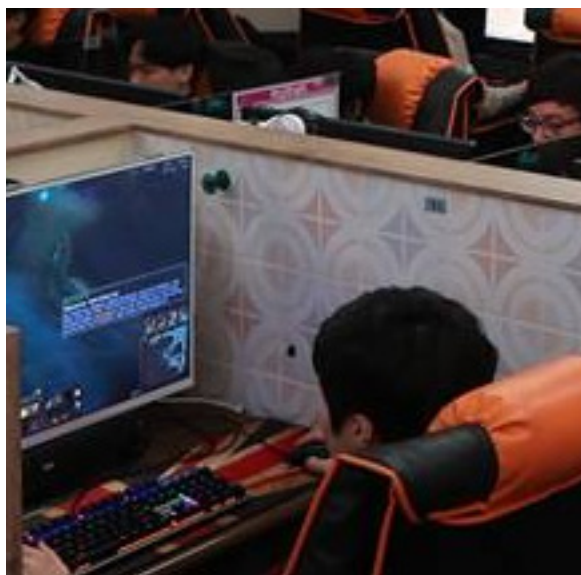
Other activities to do in Ansan:

Kareoke: If you like singing, this is the place for you. Unfortunately there aren't a lot of English songs, but you can bring songs on USB to sing and it is very cheap. 1 Euro for 4 songs.

Arcade: In Korea, there are a lot of arcades, especially plushy toy pick up machines. I never thought I would do that, but they are surprisingly addicting....

PC Bang(Internet cafe/Computer room): If you have ever wondered why Koreans are so good at computer games just come here.

Restaurants: There are many restaurants to choose from. It is a very competitive business, so the prices are good and the restaurants are always changing. My suggestion is to try every restaurant you can the first month and then be a loyal customer to a couple afterwards. That way you will get VIP service and usually extras or discount.





How to find friends and how to network.

The best time to network and make friends is without a doubt the first month. I found the first month was really easy to talk to people and hang out since everyone is relaxed. But after midterm exams everyone is too busy so there is a lot less socialising. I made a lot of friends just by sitting by the main pond. Koreans would just approach me and wanted to be my friend. Another thing you will find is that when they first meet you, they will want to pay for meals to make you feel welcome.



Practical experiences

How did you travel to the country and city of study, where did you stay, where did you eat.

I flew to Seoul with Air China, and I stayed in a dormitory with a Dutch Roommate. I ate in the school cafeteria and at restaurants around campus.

Costs and expences

When it comes to money, I found that SU was more than enough. I was able to live very comfortably with that much.

Return Flight Air China: 5500 DKK (You can get cheaper if you book earlier)

Accommodation for whole semester: 5600 DKK

Food per month: 3000 DKK

Miscellaneous expenses over whole semester: 2000 DKK

Fun: 500 DKK per weekend away

Total cost for me: 25-30,000 DKK

There is no fridge, there is only microwaves and Hot water for instant noodles, or ready to eat meals. I never did that so food cost a little more. I ate rice every single day I was in South Korea.

I usually ate twice a day:

Cafeteria: 20 DKK

Restaurant: 29 DKK - 58 DKK



Conclusion

To what extent were your expectations met, both professionally and culturally?

I didn't know what to expect coming to South Korea, but now I am very glad I came! If I look at how I was, compared to now. I've changed a lot! I feel like I am more open to embracing new things. I never thought I would be listening to kpop everyday. I feel more confident speaking in front of groups of people than before. I can still improve a lot, but Korea was a great practise ground. Professionally, I was a little disappointed at first, but that completely changed as I did more throughout the semester. I was way out of my comfort zone at times and I came out the other side, a more resilient and happy person. =D

