

# Exchange student in South Korea

Hanyang University ERICA Campus at Ansan, South Korea

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## Preface

This report has been written to make you, as a potential exchange student more aware of what it is like to live and study in South Korea.

I certainly hope this will give you the needed information and encourage you to choose this as your exchange destination.

Everything written in this report is based on my own experience and personal views.



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# Introduction

Before even starting my studies at KEA I was looking at their potential countries, ranging from all over Europe, America and a few in Asia.

The thing about me though is that I have been traveling around in Asian countries for several months during my gap year after high school. Therefore it was destined for me to go on an exchange when I saw the opportunity to study and travel in South Korea. It was a country I had not been to yet.





## **Experience at the host university**

Being a student at Hanyang University at ERICA Campus was a less challenging experience compared to my expectations of what I have been told by friends in China, about long nights with no sleep and having to do plenty of homework.

It was quite the opposite for me, of course, it all depends on who your professor is going to be and if you really want to stay up and make your work perfect.

Before even starting to talk about the classes, I need to share the process of signing up for them. They do it in a rather competitive way online through their website.

You can see all of the potential classes way before you have to choose so you can get the idea of which ones to pick and if they even fit together in a weekly scheme.

A few weeks or so before they open up for the registration of classes they send out a reminder, telling you at what time it opens. Being in Denmark I had to wake up during the night in order to register. I needed five classes to get enough points transferred back to KEA, so when the registration opened I was quick to apply for as many as possible, yet I only got one out of five.

### **They are gone within seconds!**

This is the way it is since it is so competitive.

Luckily they have one more date where you can try again, that time I got one more.

So when the first week of school started I only had two classes on my schedule. This is where you begin to meet up and take some of the other classes you would like to add to your list, attend the class and talk to the professor about it afterward and they will help you to sort it out and by the end of the week, I had all of my classes.

Here are the five courses I attended during my semester and a brief description of them:

**Social Marketing** - Course code: APR3025

(Disclaimer: This has nothing to do with social media and the professor will also make you aware of it)

This course was about how we as human beings are being nudged by small changes to our daily lives. Through campaigns aimed at specific target groups, to solve problems like, how kids in an African city is going to wash their hands more often, to avoid diseases and bacterias spreading. This is one of many examples you are going to analyze and discuss in class.

**Web Design II** - Course code: APA3029

Most likely the easiest of the five, yet you can set the difficulty yourself.

Professor Chin helped me a lot with the design principles of web design since I already knew a lot about HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. Which are the three main things we are being taught.

She challenged me to focus on design tasks and gave me plenty of online resources to gain knowledge.

**Entertainment Design Workshop** - Course code: I-D3102

I was very confused the first time I entered this class to sign up for it, the professor was half an hour late and his voice was so low, plus he spoke 80% Korean during the classes. So I actually did not know what I signed up for until we started our group project. It turned out we had to design a new logo, slogan and a character for an area in Seoul called Dongjak-Gu.

**Visual Communication** - Course code: JMC3021

This class was the least interesting to attend, but the easiest to get a high grade, so you had to go through hell to enjoy the sunlight. It is basically split into 4 quarters during the semester. The professor is going to talk non stop from his black and white standard power point show during the whole class. Once the chapter is over we got a test with 40 questions about the chapter. This occurs 4 times after each chapter is over.

## **Survival Korean**

This class was a way for me to learn more about their fascinating language and culture. Hangeul, which is the name of the Korean language is build up in a very simple way that for some are easy to learn. I am saying this now and I will mention it again later, please do yourself the favor of watching YouTube videos of how to pronounce the characters. It is going to help you a lot and will give you a good head start. It is way easier than you might think. Our teacher was patient and spent enough time to teach us the basics, before starting to have conversations with us.

This is a class you have to pay close attention to, otherwise, you will fall behind and everything is going to seem difficult.

One major difference from the Danish school system is that the professor is above the students and you should respect them as such. That does not mean you can not joke or have a good time during class. But they demand silence and attention during their classes.





## **Campus life**

Living on campus made everything so easy. In our dorm, we had a washroom on every fifth floor, microwaves everywhere and machines supplying hot and cold water.

A 7/11, cafeteria, cafe and a restaurant were also to be found in our dormitory.

The whole area is very quiet and nearly no traffic, so you can easily walk wherever you want, having a bike helps a lot to get around since it could take me 15 minutes of walking to get to class.

## **Social and cultural experiences**

Here is the part where I am going to share all about what things are like in South Korea. First of all, as many people will say and might be aware of. The first week is the best one to meet everyone and get to know each other. That is the bottom line.

Everyone is in a new environment and trying to figure out what is up and down, so we are all in the same boat. So make sure to say yes to the events during the first period of time. Going out drinking is a big thing that really helps you to meet people.

Just outside of campus there are many and I mean many different restaurants and bars. My recommendation would be to try out as many as possible, during the first few weeks and then stay loyal to the ones you liked. You might end up getting benefits from them or special treatment.

If you like to sing there are plenty of karaoke bars you can visit, they are very cheap and do offer English songs as well. If you are more into playing PC, you will also find plenty of PC bangs where you can play all you want.

Early during the semester, there will be an opportunity to see all of the potential clubs you can join, ranging from Music to sports to magic. This is a great way to hang out with the local students and get to know them even better.

I have been playing football for many years, so for obvious reasons, I ended up playing for Hanyang FC.

Unfortunately they only trained once per week and I wanted more, so I tried to find out if I could play with others and to my luck a local was also playing for a team every Sunday morning at 5am, so I joined them in a different part of town and ended up playing with people who were not even a part of the campus.

The other club I joined was the Hip Hop club, which basically was all about meeting at a restaurant once per week, eat and drink alcohol the whole night.



## Practical experiences

Going to South Korea means you will have to take a flight from Denmark and transfer somewhere. Since they do not have a direct flight yet.

If you are under the age of 25/26, I got some good news for you. Use SAS Youth Tickets to book your flight, Choose either Beijing, Shanghai or Hong Kong as your destination. Then buy a flight from either of those cities, depending on which one you choose and fly to Seoul.

Let me lay out the expenses for you:

Flight from Denmark to Hong Kong and back: **2500dkk**

Flight from Hong Kong to Seoul and back: **1200dkk**

This is what I did and I don't think you can find a cheaper option.

Once I arrived at Incheon International Airport in Seoul I had to somehow get to Ansan.



The university offered a pickup service you could book before you got there, but I found it too expensive, so I decided to take the direct bus from the airport to Ansan and then a taxi to campus.

When I arrived at the dormitory I had to register my arrival, I was met with some people who could barely speak English, we did manage to figure out what I needed to know and where to go, so I could find my room.

The dormitory I lived in cost me 1500dkk per month.

## **Food**

When it comes to Korean food, I did not really know what to expect. Certainly not that it would be spicy everywhere you go. You will get accustomed to it at some point.

You better get used to the taste of kimchi as well, they serve it everywhere.

A good tip would be to try out the many dishes the restaurant in the dorm offers, it is super cheap and the portion sizes are big enough.

(My personal favorites would be the kimpab with tuna, Spicy pork with rice and curry rice.)

Get yourself used to eating rice on a daily basis.

Price wise you could buy lunch or dinner for anything between 20dkk and up, depending on how fancy you wanted your meal.





## Conclusion

Going to South Korea turned out to be a great decision for me personally, the local people are friendly and always ready to help you if there are any problems or questions. It made me realize even more how important it is to leave your safe zone and get out there to explore the big world we live in. It helps you to open your eyes to new perspectives and opinions since you are going to share and hear many of them.

