

General information

I spent my exchange at Yonsei University, Seoul during the fall of 2017.

Preparation

Before coming to Seoul, you will have to do some necessary preparations. The most vital of these is getting your visa. For your exchange you will need a D-2 visa, i.e. a student visa. This visa can be got from the Korean embassy in The Hague. Before going there, make sure you take the necessary documents with you. These can be found on the website of the Korean embassy (<http://nld.mofa.go.kr/english/eu/nld/visa/Types/index.jsp>). The necessary documents at the time of this report were the following:

- A completed application form
- Original Passport with remaining validity of at least 6 months
- 1 passport photo (color photo 3.5 X 4.5 cm)
- Certificate of Admission (Original, Official Letter from Korea)
- Letter of Acceptance (From the Korean University)
- Certificate of Business Registration (Of the Korean University)
- Certificate of Admission (the Current or Last School Attended)
- Documents proving Financial affordability : Recent bank statement showing at least 3000 euro (Optional)
- Application fee

Most of these documents should be easy to get. The application form can be found on the website of the embassy, while the certificates will be sent to you by Yonsei. The application fee should be paid in cash, so don't forget to take cash with you.

Apart from the visa, you will also need insurance. I remember getting insurance from Interpolis, but there are numerous options to get insurance from. Just make sure to ask the insurance company for an English statement outlining the specifics of the insurance, because Yonsei will ask you to send this at some point of the application process.

After getting the necessary documents you will want to get housing. Yonsei will send you several mails on what kind of housing they provide, but generally international students will be in either SK Global House or International House. SK Global offers both single rooms and double rooms, while International House only offers double rooms. Personally I stayed at a single room in SK Global House, which I don't have too many complains about. The rooms in SK were fairly small (15 m² for single rooms, 18 m² for double rooms), but contain a shower and a toilet. The rooms in International House have shared showers so if you prefer personal facilities, I would recommend SK. There is a lot of competition for the rooms so make sure you apply at exactly the time the application opens, because the rooms will be gone in minutes. In case you do not get a room in one of the two houses, you can find housing outside of campus or you can be placed in Muak. Muak is the dorm in which Korean students live but it's located quite far from the main part of campus. Besides that, unlike SK/International, Muak has a curfew from about 1 to 5 (you cannot enter between those times), so it might be better to find housing outside of campus if you cannot get into SK/International.

If you get into a dorm on campus, the dorm will ask you to hand in a tuberculosis report. You can get this in Korea, but I would recommend getting it in the Netherlands. You can make an appointment at the GGD and they will tell you that the cheapest tuberculosis test is a Mantoux-

test. This is a test where they inject some stuff in your arm, which will create a spot that has to be checked a few days after the injection. Therefore, if you don't want to pay too much, make sure you make an appointment a few weeks before going to Korea.

Course registration is a relatively obvious process. Look for the kind of courses ESE requires (economics/econometrics courses) and make sure you get at least 6 Korean credits in those courses. Course registration used to be on a first-come first-serve basis, but it is not anymore. Now it works on a mileage system, which will be explained in a mail sent by Yonsei. Read this carefully.

Arrival

On arrival you can get to campus in several ways. The three most common ones are (i) airport bus, (ii) metro and (iii) taxi. I took the airport bus when I arrived, because it is fairly cheap (10.000 won, which equals about 8 euros). The bus you will need to take is bus 6011. If you are going to live in either SK or International House, get out at the Ewha stop (NOT at Yonsei). If you get out at the Yonsei stop you will have to walk a lot, so make sure to follow this advice. There will probably be a lot of exchange students going out at this stop, so follow them to get to the dorm. If you take the metro you will have to transfer at Hongik station (from the airport line to the green line), get out at Sinchon station and walk to SK/International House. This is quite a walk, so it might not be a good idea with a lot of luggage. If you take a taxi and the taxi driver does not know SK/International, tell them to go to the Yonsei east gate (Yonsei dong mun in Korean).

After getting settled, you can explore Sinchon. Make sure to go to the orientation and sign up to some events to meet people. I personally joined mentors' club, in which you get assigned a Korean mentor to guide you a bit on your Korean journey. A lot of people enjoyed this club a lot, but it is relatively badly organized, so you might want to join some other clubs as well.

Make sure to get your ARC (Alien Registration Card) within 90 days. The process to get this card is really freaking annoying, so do it in time. You will have to make an appointment on the website http://www.hikorea.go.kr/pt/main_en.pt which might be one of the most outdated sites in the existence of mankind. Yonsei will send you a list of necessary documents to apply for your ARC. If you don't do it in time (90 days), you will get a fine. A Spanish friend of mine got fined about 400 euros, so don't be late.

Courses

As I am a student in BSc² Econometrics/Economics, I took both economics and statistics courses. One Korean credit is equal to two ECTS so you will have to get 6 Korean credits in Economics/Econometrics. In total you have to get at least 12 Korean credits. Important to note is that all courses at Yonsei have obligatory attendance. The courses I took were:

Statistics of General Insurance (6 ECTS)

This course is a general introduction into the statistics of general insurance (hence the name). The course goes into relatively advanced probability theory and was probably my hardest course at Yonsei. The professor spoke good English, because he had studied in Canada for quite some time and liked joking about how 'easy' his exams were. Besides me, there was only one other non-Korean in this class and it might therefore be a bit harder to meet people here. If your main goal in Korea is to have fun (and not study as much), you might not want to take this course. One thing to note is that the professor does not use slides, so you will have to write down all his

notes, which makes the course even more annoying. The course is graded based on two homework assignments, participation (attendance), a midterm and a final exam.

Money & Banking (6 ECTS)

This course was really popular among foreigners, because the professor got his PhD from Harvard. Although this makes it sound like a good course, it wasn't. The professor's English was somewhat lacking and similarly to the insurance course, the professor refused to use slides. The contents of the course are pretty similar to those of the ESE course Finance 1, although the pace is quite a bit lower. The course is graded based on a paper, a few simple assignments and a final exam. The paper was only required to be about 3 A4's so the required work for this course is not a lot.

Survival Analysis (6 ECTS)

Survival Analysis concerns the statistics relating to survival rates. This course answers questions like 'how do we model the life time of a human being' and 'what's the probability of dieing within two months if someone gets a certain kind of disease'. It introduces concepts like the Kaplan-Meier Estimator and proportional hazard models. Although I did not meet many people in this class, as I was the only non-Korean, I enjoyed it a lot. Just like the aforementioned professors, this professor had studied in North-America for some time. His English was quite good and he also used clear slides. The course is relatively intensive, as there are bi-weekly homework assignments, but the assignments aren't too difficult and the course was still easier than most econometrics courses at ESE. I would recommend this course if you are interested in statistics.

KLI (Korean Language Intensive) Level 1 (12 ECTS)

This course was an intensive course in Korean, with daily classes. The course can take up a lot of your time (as you will have 2 hours of Korean class every day), but it was an extremely fun experience for me. As the groups are small, it is a good way to get a bunch of good friends that you see every day. The course is split up in two kinds of classes, grammar classes and reading classes. You will have grammar classes 3 days per week and reading classes 2 days per week. Every two weeks you will be quizzed on vocabulary so you might have to study quite a bit. Besides the quizzes, there are a bunch of midterm exams and final exams. In my case this course was fairly easy as I had studied Korean before, but if you have no experience with Korean, this course could take up more time than you would want it to take.

Finances

As there are pretty detailed budgets lined out in reports of other students, I will keep this short:

	Monthly Costs
Rent	400-500 euros
Food	200-300 euros
Transport	30-40 euros
Going out (drinking, club entrance, etc)	150-200 euros

I don't remember my exact spending but the estimates above are close to what I spent. A meal at the university cafeteria will generally cost you about 2-3 euros, but most exchange students eat out almost every day. In Sinchon/Hongdae you will be spending about 6-7 euros for a meal,

which is still relatively cheap, but the costs add up fast. Transport is cheap, but can become more expensive if you want to visit other cities in Korea (Ulsan, Daejeon, Busan, etc). One metro ride will cost you about 1 euro, which is comparable to the Dutch metros. Drinks in Sinchon/Hongdae are about 2-4 euros for a beer and the same price for soju. I don't know about the costs of a mobile phone subscription or sports facilities, as I did not use those. Make sure you book your flight early because I saw people spending ridiculous amounts on flights (some people spent 2000 euros on a roundtrip). I got a roundtrip for about 700 euros using flight price comparison sites, which I'd recommend using. If you don't know when you are going to fly back, still book a roundtrip as changing the date usually doesn't cost nearly as much as the extra costs for two single trips.

Daily life

My exchange experience was unlike any other experiences in my life. The first few weeks were fairly tough, as it took some time to get used to eating out every day, ordering in Korean and finding a bunch of friends to hang out with, but after that it was probably the best experience in my life. Unlike any city in the Netherlands (maybe even Europe), Seoul is alive 24/7 and offers a lot in terms of going out. Generally, I went to my obligatory lectures during the day, met up with friends after KLI (around 6 PM), had dinner and then we would do differing things. What makes Seoul so much fun is the huge variety of things you can do. You can drink soju while listening to a busker in the Hongdae park, you can drink soju while dancing to EDM/Korean rap in a club, you can drink soju while singing to your favourite Korean songs in a karaoke bar (noraebang) or, in case you cannot sing Korean, scream DIEEEE while listening to Chop Suey and finishing a bottle of, of course, soju.

Besides my favourite beverage, one can also enjoy the nutrients provided by a healthy meal of fried chicken. Unlike any other fried chicken in the world, this fried chicken will make your teeth move like no other (provided there are no bones in the fried chicken). The fried chicken is available in many variants and is usually supplemented with beer (and soju). After this meal, you will be desiring more, but you might want to check out some other, obviously healthy, food; Korean BBQ. Several places will offer you all-you-can-eat Korean BBQ for about 10 euros per person. Although the BBQ fills quite fast, this is definitely worth the money.

Jokes aside, it is hard to explain in words what makes Seoul so special, therefore I'd recommend applying for an exchange to Yonsei University and experiencing it yourself! In case you have any questions, you can send a mail to my email address:

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