





# SEOUL EXCHANGE

*“One blue-eyed boy in a sea of rice, kimchi, K-POP and mobile phones.”*



# Introduction

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If you are reading this on the Christmas Eve, then my plan worked out perfectly. If not, then please accept my apologies, because something beyond my control messed up. But for now I will assume that everything went fine.

This small book represents the 4 months I spend in Seoul on my exchange at KAIST Business School. The content is based on my blog S(e)ouleXchange that I managed to keep alive and running for the whole 4 months

I was there. I really appreciated that some people were actually reading the blog on a regular basis, as it is easier to write for some audience. I hope that my posts were interesting for you and that I succeeded in capturing my experiences and thoughts about Korea. Unfortunately, as always, some of the experiences were simply impossible to record with words and blogposts, so unless you manage to get into my brain, they will stay only as memories forever.

The idea to create this book came from my sister, that told me during one Skype conversation “*I really like what you are writing, you are the awesomest brother in the world, you should publish it and make tons of money*”. Or something along that lines. When my little nephew supported it with his “*Gaga onga bugubu*”, I realized that it’s not a bad idea, and that it would actually make a nice Christmas present.

I do not want to bother you with technical details, so just note that I used Python to get the posts from the blog and L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X for typesetting. And honestly, I really enjoyed doing it, as it brought me back to my geeky self, that likes to tinker with scripts and typesetting and fonts etc. I started compiling the book sometime in October and finished it in December, when I wrote this introduction and the closing part, did the last clean-ups and fixes and sent the file to the printshop. It was really nice to go through the book, read parts of the posts and remember all the nice moments. Well, see for yourself...

Merry Christmas



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*“So it begins...”*

# September 2011

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안녕하세요 • *Explanation* • *Trip tomorrow!* • *A fortnight* • *Study time again* • *Eden or Hell* • *The best city tour ever and the tower of love* • *Autumn in Seoul* • *Finally mobile* • *Lotte World...*  
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## 8.9.2011 ... 안녕하세요

Writing a diary does not work for me. The longest time I was able to regularly update a diary was about 2 weeks. The problem is not lack of interesting stuff to write down. The problem is either too much stuff to write down or good ol' laziness. Especially the latter, which also causes that there is still no post about my Kenyan adventure, even though those 15 days were überawesome. Anyway, here I will try to write down some interesting points about my 4 months in Seoul, South Korea. Btw. I have no idea what "soul exchange" could possibly mean, I just liked the joke in it. And if you don't consider it funny...

### 28.8.

- Emirates cabin crew's portfolio of languages is very impressive
- The last Pirates of Caribbean are boring. On the other hand, The Best Movie Ever Sold is hilarious.
- Dubai Airport is boring. Everything is supersized and full of bling. And there is not enough space to sit down. Seriously, people, 30 seats at the gate are not enough for a flight that is operated by 500+ Airbus A380. However, the airport is quite cheap. A McD menu is 24 of their funnymoney (United Arab Emirates Dirham, to be precise), which is around 4,60 Euros. And you don't have to pay extra for ketchup.
- Airbus A380 is H-U-G-E! It's like a A320 after three years on steroids. And the ICE on-board entertainment system is supercool. They did not have Fight Club or Bring Me The Horizon on it, though.
- Incheon airport has a cool train between the terminal and main building.
- It was supercool that my mentor picked me up at the airport. I was just a little disappointed that he did not have a big sign with my name:)
- Seoul is less dense than I expected. It perfectly fulfills the idea of an Asian supercity, though.

- Kia, Hyundai, Kia, Daewoo, Hyundai, Samsung (!), Kia, Ssangyong, Chinese Mercedes rip-off, that's how the streets look like. Ah, there is one BMW, nice. The import tax on non-Korean cars is so high that people can't afford them (I heard).
- I think I might be a little too old for a shared room in a dorm, where toilets and showers are shared with another 10 people. Makes me miss my spacebox...
- Korean TV shows are just insane!

## 29.8.

- Cold noodles for lunch. Seriously?
- KIMCHIIII!

## 30.8.

- Rice + soup + Kimchi = Korean breakfast. No, thanks, once was more than enough.
- No internet access for us yet. Sad sad situation. Thanks god for Kim's network.
- Orientation!
- Mobile phones everywhere. IM-ing or watching TV, everybody plays with his phone.
- Once you get used to their kind of beauty, Korean girls are pretty.
- Immigration office is a bureaucratic mess. Thanks god we had an appointment set by the uni.
- A/C everywhere. It's quite uncomfortable to change environments so often, because outside it's hot and humid and inside it's freezing.
- Lunch with the dean. Free food!
- Mentor-mentee meeting. My mentor absent, though. Took that opportunity to join the group with the pretties mentor around.

### 31.8.

- This uni has some cool spots at the campus.
- My registration for the school portal does not work.
- Korean culture demonstration. Trying on clothes and eating some sweets.
- Internet in the dorm. Amazing!
- Bud Bar in the evening. A 3L pitcher of Cass for 11,000 KRW (less than € 6). First late night return to the dorm. Welcome, exchange.

### 1.9.

- School starts. Well, no classes for me yet, but still...
- The portal registration still does not work for me.
- Party night in Hongdae. Dinner (very spicy), beers and then Cocoon club. Sweet dance moves, me being the second tallest guy around, our group dominating the stage (hell yeah!), coming back at 6AM.

### 2.9.

- Hangover.
- Still no portal access.

### 3.9.

- Being touristic – visiting the National Museum of Korea and taking zillions of photos.

## 4.9.

- Lazy sunday
- First time to the KAIST gym. It has several advantages - it is 24/7, it is close and it is for free. /me likes it.
- First week in Seoul is done. And it was awesome. Another 15 to go!

... Published on 8.9.2011 at 23:45:41

## 9.9.2011 ... **Explanation**

Just to make sure that everybody knows what's going on...

As you might know, I am doing my MSc. in The Netherlands, at the Delft University of Technology. Last year I found out that our faculty has several agreements with universities all around the world regarding exchange programs. Well, that naturally caught my attention so I started thinking about going further abroad for another semester. I have decided to go to Asia, because Europe does not make sense for me and I did not feel like going to the USA or another English-speaking country. Moreover, the Asian culture is so different from Europe that any experience with it might be very valuable. There were basically three choices – Harbin in China, Tokyo in Japan and Seoul in Korea. Because Harbin was only for two months and Japan is quite expensive and maybe a little too weird different, I have decided to come to KAIST Business School in Seoul, which is a MBA oriented part of the otherwise technically oriented KAIST university in Daejeon.

The application and organization was a bit of a struggle, but luckily everything worked out fine and I was admitted to the Fall 2011 Exchange program. I am focusing mainly at Information and Media MBA, which is in line with my planned master thesis direction. I will spend 4 months here and then come back to Delft to start working on my master thesis. So, that's why I am here and not in Europe. Simple, right...

... Published on 9.9.2011 at 13:25:57

## 10.9.2011 ... **Trip tomorrow!**

“

*If your energy begins to flag, consider taking a swig of the Korean hiker's friend: pine-needle soju (local vodka-like brew). One mouthful should be enough to help you make it to the top. Well, that's what Koreans claim anyway.*

*-Lonely Planet guide entry for Bukhansan National Park*

Yep, that's where we go tomorrow!

... Published on 10.9.2011 at 1:20:56

## 13.9.2011 ... A fortnight

Splendid! Two awesome weeks that felt like at least a month. Last week the classes have (finally) started. In the first half of the semester I am taking 4 classes – two “real” (Growth Strategy and Valuation of IT Media Business) and two “exchange” (Korean for Foreigners I and Korean Business and Culture). This should keep me relatively busy, but still leave some time for fun and traveling and other things exchange students usually do. The class schedule here is quite interesting. Classes are only 80 minutes long, and there are usually two each week (Mon+Wed or Tue+Thu). Out of class work seems to be less extensive than in Delft so in general the workload might be lower. However, it has still been only a week, so I don't want to make premature conclusions.

I have to say that I am more than happy with my choice of subjects. I picked the courses so they would support my current direction, because I did not want to spend this semester doing meaningless courses just to bring some ECTS home.

Enough of school, though. As announced earlier, on Saturday we went to the Bukhansan National Park for some hiking. Well, Korean hiking is certainly different from the European. It all started with about 300m of altitude of stairs. Yes, steep stairs like in a mall. On the left from the stairs there was a wall, on the right there was a fence and a military area with forbidden access. Fun fun fun. Unfortunately, thanks to all the smog, the view on Seoul was not very god either, so we just had to keep climbing up.



*Tha hikin' gang*

Funny thing about this national park is that since it is close to some military facility, every visitor has to fill out a entry form and gets a badge. In the form there is a list of rules such as “Photographs can be taken only at designated spots” and “No alcoholic beverages can be consumed inside the park” etc. We kept climbing until we got to the top, where there was a small platform with a lot of Koreans, that were having lunch, and few security guards that were taking care that no one is breaking the aforementioned rules.

The rest of the trip fortunately went better. Even though the path was still between a fence and a wall, the nature around was more interesting and once we even reached some kind of a pine groove that allowed us to walk next to the stairs like real hikers. Yeah!



*The badge*



*Lunching on the top*



*Keep dancing till the world ends...*

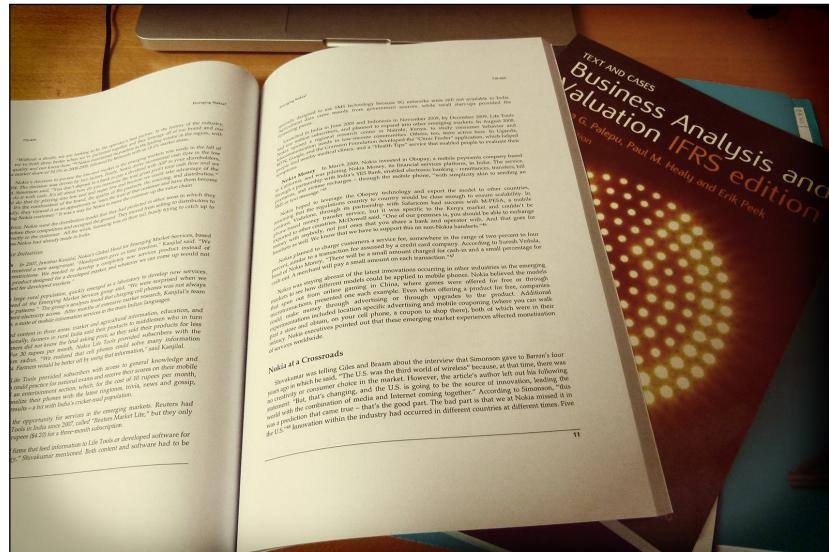
In the evening we were planning to go clubbing to Gangnam's Club Eden. Eden is supposed to be the biggest/most famous/bestest club in Seoul / Korea / Asia / World / Universe, so we wanted to experience it as well. Our plan did not quite work out, because we ended up in Itaewon in Club Volume, where we did not have to pay the cover to get in. Well, the party was nice, even though I liked the Cocoon Club a little more. From unknown reasons I prefer mostly Korean clubs, because otherwise I feel like in some European city. Since Itaewon is quite an international part of Seoul, the club was full of int'l's, including a Dutch girl from R'dam, who's parents were living in Prague. After coming home at 7am we had a quick breakfast with Rik and Lauriane at the roof of our dorms and

then off to bed for 9 hours of well deserved sleep. It's quite funny that I basically went to bed in European time, since 7am here is 12pm in Europe.

... Published on 13.9.2011 at 1:48:46

# 15.09.2011 ... Study time again

Assignments, cases, tests, here we go again...



"Emerging Nokia?" and other interesting stories

... Published on 15.09.2011 at 19:08:18

16.9.2011 ... **Eden or Hell**

“

*If Eden looks like Club Eden, than I really don't know what religion is for...it was more like Hell...*

... Published on 16.9.2011 at 16:47:46

## 17.9.2011 ... **The best city tour ever and the tower of love**

City tour. We have all been there. Unknown city or place, a bus full of people, boring commentary (stupid jokes included). Well, since we are not only students, but also tourists here, we have decided to give it a go. Well, Karin has decided and few of us joined her. We had nothing to do anyway, since it was Chuseok Monday and most places were closed. The plan was to take the night tour, which is a 1:30h bus tour through the Seoul city center, including the N Seoul Tower. And the plan failed big time. Now we know that it can take more than a hour to get from our campus to the Gwanghwamun station. Yes, despite our heroic effort and a subway transfer sprint, we missed the bus. Well, both of them, actually – OK, Time For Plan B. We have decided to roam around the neighborhood, look at the statue of King Sejong and other things. And it was really nice.

We saw a Chuseok celebration with some acrobats/dancers, which was awesome. Since we were quite close to the “cozy part of Seoul”, which we discovered after our “hiking” trip, we decided to go there and try find some nice place to get food and drinks. That proved to be quite difficult, because nearly all places were either closed because of Chuseok or were closing because it was already around 9:30pm. Eventually we found a nice place, where we got delicious dumplings. Huge and delicious. They are filled with minced meat and some veggies, and fill you up immediately. And they are not that spicy!

Tuesday was more exciting. Not only the shops and restaurants were open again, but we also decided to go to the N Seoul Tower, which is, for unknown reasons, portrayed as a love tower. Supposedly, the Namsan Mountain, where the tower is located is some kind of a “first love” place. Some say, that you should go there with your first love and put a lock with some personal message on the fence there. The fence is just packed

with locks, and they even have to take some away every year, otherwise the whole thing would be too heavy and there would not be any place for another firstlovers.

I was quite surprised by the number of people around the tower. I honestly expected that it would be nearly deserted place, but the park around the tower was packed with people, mostly Koreans. Seems like Namsan is a favorite place to hang out in Seoul. Anyway, the view was terrific and we even managed to locate our campus. Or at least the black spot where the campus was supposed to be. Guess we should have told someone to light a bonfire at the roof for better identification.

Anyway, sometimes it is nice to be a tourist, especially when you know the place a little. There are still thousands of places in Seoul that are worth visiting, from the Dongdaemun market to the War Museum. We also want to visit the DMZ and some other places in Korea, of course. But we'll see, school is getting more and more intensive and even though this is an exchange, one has to work as well.

... Published on 17.9.2011 at 1:20:17

## 24.9.2011 ... Autumn in Seoul

No, wait, sorry, it's still summer...the weather is going quite crazy. Long pants, short pants, sweatshirt, t-shirt, shirt, you never know what to wear. I was quite happy that we finally got the real autumn weather, when t-shirt is still OK but sweatshirt is fine as well, however, today the weather proved me wrong, because it is around 25°C again. Well, that does not really help me not feel sick.

Apart from the crazy weather, the school is getting more and more intense as well. Assignments, presentations, here we go. On top of that, I still have to finish our report from Kenya (duh!) and work on a project for one course in Delft. And have fun, right:) Talking about schoolwork. Almost every course has some group project associated to it, which is quite similar to Delft. The only difference is, that the groups here are usually selected by teachers, so you can't really influence the team composition. For increased variety and "multiculturality" exchange students are in most cases assigned to different groups, which is fine, because you at least get the chance to see how Korean groupwork works (?). And that is the problem. Why? Let me explain something about Korea first.

The Korean culture is very much based on hierarchy and status. Are you older? You are superior. Do you have a better job than me? You are superior. Are you a young foreign student? Go screw yourself. Ok, that is a little exaggerated. The point is that the group dynamics are soooo different compared to Europe, and The Netherlands in particular. Over there, all the group members are equal. You have something to say? Then go for it. If it's crap we will tell you, never mind. All the little fights inside the group are expected and even induced, because they lead to a better result. In Korea, however, the discussion is much more "civilized". Everybody is so respectful, that they are not able to criticize other's ideas. Every idea is good, only some are better. And every

idea has to be approved by the eldest person in the group, otherwise it is not considered acceptable. I find this rather annoying, because I am used to “say stuff”. Throwing ideas, comments, feedback, criticism at others, and letting them do the same. Here it is not possible. Not only that criticizing older people is not acceptable, but since I am usually the youngest in the group, no one expects me to do so.

I know that now you might think how unadaptable I am, but it is really hard to switch to a completely different behavior. I am trying, trust me. Thinking twice before saying something and trying to obey the rules they have. I am in fact happy about this experience. I think it will really help me in dealing with people, because until now, I always had the advantage of the home environment and this is the second time (after Kenya) I am an alien in a completely different cultural environment.

And in Korea I am literally an Alien – I have finally received my Alien Registration Card, which is quite essential if you want to do something here. Not only you need it to open a bank account or to get a mobile phone, but it also serves as a multientry visa, so you don't have to pay additional \$50 when you want to go to China or Japan and then come back.

Since I was sick and I had stuff to do, last week was quite dull. The highlight was Mark's B-Day party, which started with a pre-game at the 7th floor (soju + beer) and then continued in Hongdae in Cocoon. It was fun, even though some people suffered from a premature ending and went back to the dorms before we reached the club. I managed to retain my sobriety, so the morning was pretty acceptable.

However, I hope that the true highlight, the summit, the peak, the apex of this week is still ahead, because tomorrow, my friends, tomorrow we are going to conquer the LOTTE WORLD!

... Published on 24.9.2011 at 21:18:34



*The birthday boy*



*Me and Florian in Cocoon Club*



*Crazy Riki*



*Lotte World*



*Lotte World*

## 26.9.2011 ... Finally mobile

As pathetic as it might sound, in a country with mobile phone penetration of almost 99%, until today, I was offline. Well, I had my EU phone, which perfectly works here (it's a Samsung, btw.), but roaming is quite expensive for everyday use, so I wanted to get a Korean phone. Before coming here, my good friend Roman gave me the phone he used while he was on exchange here, so I just needed to get it registered on my Alien ID. Therefore, when our uni arranged some phones for us, I politely declined the offer, thinking that I will simply register the phone I already had.

Now you might think “*Registered? What do you mean?*” or simply “*WTF, dude?*”, but bureaucracy rules Korea, and every Korean phone needs to be registered with their Ministry of Telecommunications or something like that. And registered means that the S/N of the phone is paired with the SSN of the owner. Do you also feel a little bit of 1984? Because of that, some phones do not even have SIM cards, but function merely on this registration basis with regular pre-paid plan.

Unfortunately, Roman forgot to deregister his phone before leaving Korea. And since his Alien ID has already expired, the phone is basically a useless piece of ancient electronics unless he comes here and deregisters it.

Since everything is easier when you speak Korean, I took my buddy Hojoong with me and went phoneshopping. Despite his negotiation efforts, all the offers were too expensive for me. I really don't need to buy another phone, *감사합니다* (*kamsahamnida*). Fortunately, thanks to Jin from the KBS International Center, I managed to contact the company that gave other students the phone deal (which is much cheaper, since they only rent the phone instead of buying it) and today, their guy came to KAIST and handed me my brand new Korean phone. Awesome!

The phone is quite cool actually. It is a Ever (KT Tech) EV-W450 phone, that is manufactured exclusively for KT Telecom (hence, KT Tech). It is a “slider”, which is currently the most popular kind of phone, apart from touchscreen smartphones, and it is a regular featurephone, so it has Bluetooth and other useful thingies, however, it lacks WiFi or other internet connectivity. And it has, wait for it, Mobile TV a.k.a. DMB! I can watch gameshows and soap operas 24/7, for free! Frankly, I think I won't use it even once, but whatever. Who can say he has a TV in his phone, right:)



*My collection of Korean phones – Samsung SGH-i600, Anycall (Samsung) SCH-C320, Ever EV-W540*

... Published on 26.9.2011 at 21:19:5

## 29.09.2011 ... Lotte World...

*...a place where your dreams come true and where unsuccessful Russian ballet dancers perform in ridiculous costumes.*

Lotte World is a theme park. According to Koreans, it is the biggest indoor theme park in Asia, which does not surprise me, because they are simply obsessed with superiority. As one presenter told us today during the Korean Business and Culture lecture, Koreans do not have fast food, they have aster food. The park is located in Gangnam-gu (강남구), close to the Olympic Park. It has two parts – one big hall and the Magic Island, that is literally an island with a castle. Since this castle also dominates the Lotte World logo, when you see it, you can't stop wondering "Hmm, this seems familiar!". A little hint – Disney.



I won't spend time describing the park, since it is a typical theme park with roller coasters, merry-go-rounds, thrill rides, water rides, big looping thingie, free fall tower, lots of junk food and little screaming kids. The hall with an indoor roller coaster is cool, especially because they managed to squeeze a lopping inside it. The sightseeing balloon ride around the hall was also fun – a nice way to calm down after the endorphin and adrenaline shots on the roller coaster. The best attractions were on the Magic Island, though – Gyro Swing and Atlantic Adventure really made my day. The first one is a giant pendulum with a rotating platform at the end, while the latter is a roller coaster with a launch start and few steep drops.

It was a nice day, I have to admit. Theme park is exactly the kind of activity that allows you to shut down your brain and just enjoy the thrill. You are screaming like a little kid, eating hamburgers for both breakfast and lunch and just having a good time. It is even better when you do it with a group of friends, because a shared experience is always better:)

Btw. there was one thing that really surprised me. LW was full of couples. That's not that surprising, right, but these couples were in many cases wearing the same clothes, or at least t-shirts/sweatshirts. I can't imagine that a European guy would do something like that. Not talking about the headbands with ears that both girls and guys were wearing. I guess that's simply Korea.

Oh yeah, I nearly forgot the Russian thing. Apparently, some Russian/Ukrainian dancers are working in LW as, well, dancers and performers. It was quite surprising to see white people performing in a Korean theme park, but I guess there is simply a limited market for ballet dancers in Europe:)



... Published on 29.09.2011 at 22:04:12

## 30.9.2011 ... **Apology to Korean culture**

I just realized that in my previous post about the group work here I might have been too European, too mean and self-centered. And that is bad. I greatly admire the respect Koreans show to each other, and I am convinced, that European, or Western culture has a lot to learn from them. We will never be able to be like Koreans, and at the same time, Koreans will never be like us, however, both cultures should try to exchange the positive aspects, because that would bring them closer. Consider this an apology to all my groupmates that might have been offended by my “Westernity” – I’ll conform and absorb instead of fighting with the culture.

... Published on 30.9.2011 at 2:26:42

*"I wonder if you know, how they live in Tokyo..."*

**October 2011**

---

*Strikeout • fml • NRB • We didn't start the fire... • It's raining in paradise • Culinary adventures I.*

## 2.10.2011 ... Strikeout

The last time I have been to a baseball match was two years ago, when Kotlářka played at Markéta. And that was only as a spectator. I don't even remember the exact date of my last game as a player – I only remember it was the final game of the 2004 Czech championship, where we played against Králové, and despite our underdog position, we managed to keep up until around 7th inning. We lost, unfortunately, but for me the silver medal was nearly as valuable as the gold one from the previous year, because we had a “weaker” team. Hmm, I think I got carried away a little.

Anyway, me and other intl students from KAIST decided to go see baseball game at the Jamsil Stadium. You might not know that, but baseball is one of the most favorite sports here. The professional league comprises 8 teams, and since now it's getting into its post-season phase, it is one of the hottest topics among sports fans in Korea.

We went to see a derby between Doosan Bears and LG Twins. The teams in KBO league are named after a sponsor instead of a city, and they sometimes take inspiration from the MLB (Twins, Lotte Giants, Kia Tigers). This two teams don't stand a chance getting into the post-season, so it was merely a game of honor for them, because both come from Itaewon and both have the Jamsil Stadium as their home ball park. Because the Bears part of the stadium was already sold out long before the game, we had to get seats in Twins' section. As it turned out later, that was the only glitch of the game.

Baseball in Korea is not only a sport, but also a show. People come to watch the game and have a tremendous amount of fun. Each team has own cheerleaders and an entertainer that tells people what to do. Since everybody has a cheering stick, the stands turn into a sea of red/white/...every time people go crazy. It's impressive. Moreover, (almost) every player has it's own song that is played through the PA when he's at bat, and of course, all the people know these songs, so with every new player the stadium (or at least half of it) turns into a huge karaoke. Every good action leads to another wave of craziness, even if it's just a single hit. You can't even imagine what happens when someone scores a homerun.



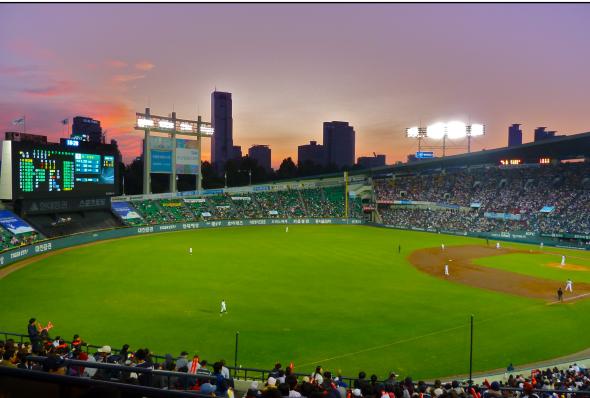
Doosan fans with white cheering sticks

As I said, our location was not perfect. From unknown reasons the Twins fans are not as crazy as the ones of Bears, so our side of the stadium was rather lame. This was also caused by the development of the game, because even though the teams were tied in second, from fourth on Bears started kicking Twins' ass. The main reason were the Twins' pitchers, giving BBs and serving nice hitting material to Doosan hitters. I was quite surprised by the eventual humiliation (9:1), because Bears are the second to last team while Twins are 5th, the first team not to go to the play-offs. Despite the loss, I have really enjoyed the match. Watching nice baseball after so may years really brought back my baseball memories and reminded me of all the nice moments of my career.

... Published on 2.10.2011 at 22:5:6



*The stadium*



*Beautiful sunset*



*The game is on*



*"Our" cheerleaders*

5.10.2011 ... **fml**

“

*Dear professors,*

*thank you for piling up all the crap into one week. I really, really appreciate it.*

*Your sincerely*

*Jan Ustohal*

*... Published on 5.10.2011 at 14:50:17*

## 07.10.2011 ... NRB

NRB stands for Norebang (노래방), which is a combination of song (노래) and room (방). So, who knows what a song room is? You? Or you? Nobody? OK, I'll tell you...it's KARAOKE!



On one September night we have decided to go for some karaoke. South Korea is, as almost all Asian countries, crazy about karaoke and singing. There are about 35,000 Norebangs in Korea, and they are an integral part of South Korean culture. A typical evening might start with a Korean BBQ (bulgogi) with few bottles of soju or makkoli, then a “Soju and hof” bar (basically soju and beer) and when everybody is drunk and nearly unconscious, they go to a Norebang to sober up and have some fun. We chose the more direct way – from our dorm directly to the norebang. Even though our campus is located in not that cool part of Seoul, there are about 6 karaoke places within the walking distance, which is awesome.

We were quite a big group (approx. 15 people), so it was guaranteed that we will have a good time. And we indeed had.

The karaoke room was quite “normal” – sofa, table, TV, speakers, remote control. And 3 books with songs in English, Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Russian and quite a few other languages.

At the beginning, when everybody was sober, nobody wanted to sing. That is understandable, though, since we did not know each other that well and embarrassing yourself in front of other people requires either big

balls or big bowls of alcohol. We chose the second way, so we started ordering beers and soju to get the party started. If I remember correctly, the first volunteer was Simone or Mario, however, soon after the first performance everybody got into the right mood and the hell has broken loose.



KAIST Business School rockstars

We planned to spend around 2 hours there. We ended up singing for 4 hours straight, before our vocal cords gave up and turned us into a group of whispering rockstars. During the evening, we went through all the “classics” such as Queen, The Grease, ABBA, U2 or Backstreet Boys (“I Want It That Way” by Mark and me was simply the best performance of the evening.), as well as some contemporary crap such as Justin Bieber (“Baby, Baby, Baby, Oooooooh!”), Wiz Khalifa or Justin Timberlake. We also drank a ridiculous amount of beer

and soju, but that's just what you do.

At 2am we finally finished, partly because we were tired and partly because there was no more beer in the place. Yes, we drank it all. Each of us paid 20,000KRW (€12), which is fairly cheap for the amount of fun (and alcohol) we had, and went home or to the Burger King for a little snack. The next day I was barely able to speak, but it was definitely worth it, because:

“

*Am I your fire,  
your one desire,  
believe when I say,  
I want it that way*

... Published on 07.10.2011 at 23:45:37

## 11.10.2011 ... **We didn't start the fire...**

“

*Lots of work  
Take a break  
Fireworks  
Boom bang bang!*

*I couldn't resist to put this little pop-culture reference here, even though I doubt that someone will recognize it:)*

On Saturday we went to see the annual Seoul International Fireworks Festival, that took place in the Yeouido Hangang Park, at the bank of the Han river. It is a one day event, organized by a explosives company called Hanwha, and this year there were teams from Korea, Japan and Portugal showing their fireworks skills.

Our Korean friends told us that it is going to be crowded. And they were right. When we saw the masses of people in the subway we realized that leaving the dorm at 6pm was maybe a little too late, considering that the first show was scheduled for 7:30pm. After getting to the subway line 5, we quickly found out that "crowded" was a mere underestimation of the situation. Everybody in Seoul went to see the fireworks. Or at least it seemed so.

Inside of the trains it was like a frotteur's dream. As more and more people were pouring in at each station, it was getting more and more uncomfortable, with people pushing from all sides, trying to get through. This crowd



*The whole population of Seoul gathered at one subway station*



*Crowding out the escalator*

had one advantage, though. Since we were not sure where to get off the train, we simply waited until the sea of people washed us out. At the station the situation repeated – people, people, people. Fortunately, Koreans have anticipated this situation, so the vestibule was full of people in reflective vests with shining cheering sticks, that were managing the crowd, trying to distribute the mass of human bodies equally between the subway exits. And honestly, they managed quite well. We were still moving forward, without unnecessary waiting.

The situation outside was fortunately better – some streets were closed for traffic, so there was enough space for all the people to spread out. Soon after we left the subway, the first show started, so we just found some place where we could see the sky and watched the fireworks. I don't know if it was the Japanese one or the Portuguese, though. After the first one we moved to the bridge, close to which was the pier the fireworks was launched from. The police was trying to keep the traffic going, however, since only one line was open and

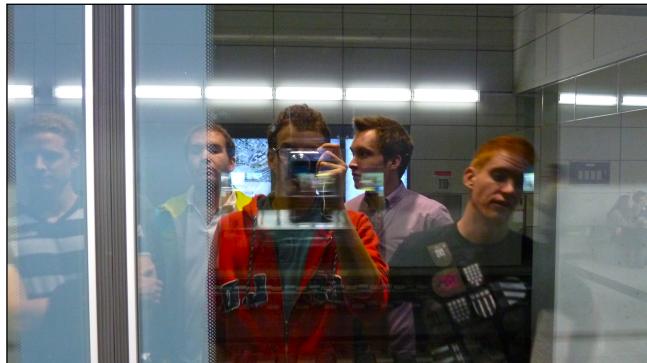
there were people running across the bridge all the time, it was quite difficult. Later on we managed to get across the bridge, which really gave us nice view on the fireworks. I tried to take some pictures, however, it would require a tripod and a SLR to make it look awesome. So it is just nice...



*The fireworks*

After the fireworks we went to the building “63”, which used to be the tallest building in Korea, or even Asia, where we had a dinner and then we set off for home the dorm. The problem was that there was still a lot of people, so when we came to the subway station, the entrance was simply closed and guarded by police

and subway officials. To prevent overcrowding of the subway, they let people in only when there was enough space. They also distributed people between the different entrances, so none would get clogged. Well, it worked quite well. I have to admit, Koreans are so orderly and well organized!



4xD + 1xCZ



Crowded Noriangojin station

The ride back was one of the moments when you just wish you were home, because you are tired and the subway is packed and everything is annoying etc. But we made it, and the final walk from Hoegi, with a short stop for a “meat on the stick” was a nice ending to a tiring afternoon.

... Published on 11.10.2011 at 22:50:17

## 15.10.2011 ... It's raining in paradise

*"Thunder and lightning, not so frightening, anymore..."*

After several nice days the hell has broken loose in here. The rain was so heavy that only going from the dorm to the SUPEX building made me wet completely soaked. I have a feeling that it might have something to do with my non-existent umbrella, but that's just me. Me and Marc were planning to go to Lotte Dept. Store, because he needed some clothes and I need some shoes, since my beloved Nike's gave up and fell apart. Since we are no wusses, we decided to walk to the subway station, despite the thunderstorm and rain, so I only had to stop at 7eleven to buy an umbrella (a lovely umbrella, branded "Pierre Balmain – Paris", for 9000KRW), to be able to make it to Hoegi station without melting (because I am such a sweet guy). Since the subway was completely packed, you can imagine the "atmosphere" there, created by wet people and umbrellas. Fortunately, the other train from Wangsimni was less crowded and better ventilated.

Anyhow, there is no point in describing our shopping. I can only say that Marc bought his stuff, while I did not find any nice shoes (except for one Fred Perry sneakers, which were however a little too expensive – I keep them as a last resort backup). The best part of the trip was however the visit to the shooting range. At the Lotte complex at Jamsil station, there is, apart from Lotte World, Lotte Hotel, Lotte Dept. Store, Lotte Cinema and Lotte Mart (damn, there is a whole lotta Lotte!) a small indoor shooting range. Both me and Marc tried the world famous Glock 17, a rather small 9mm semi-automatic gun.

We each fired 10 rounds, Marc scored 97, I did only 91, but it was not about the number. The mere feeling of holding the gun is so awesome and frightening at the same time. When you fire, you just need so little force



*Glock 17*

to unleash a force so much bigger and powerful. I definitely want to repeat this some day, preferably more rounds, but I think I don't want to own a gun. Ever

On a completely different note, we have decided to go to Tokyo after exams, so "YAY!". On top of that, sunny times are supposedly over, since they have already turned on the heating in the dorms. Bye-bye aircon, sun-dresses and shorts. Hello heaters, coats and long pants.

... Published on 15.10.2011 at 22:48:26

## 22.10.2011 ... Culinary adventures I.

One of the basic rules of blogging is: “*Never start a post with ‘I don’t know what to write’. If you don’t know, then just don’t write anything!*”. Sometimes that’s easier said than done. You know, when you get used to blogging about your life and other peculiarities regularly, you miss it when there is nothing interesting going around. For me, blogging became some kind of relax, during which I still do something useful and refresh my mind and brain. Today, I really felt like blogging to take a break from all the pressure and stress about assignments and exams, however, the topic was nowhere to be found. And then it struck me – food! I haven’t told you about food here. And because it is quite an extensive topic, let’s take it easy and slow.

Since there is no kitchen in the dorms, we are not able to cook for ourselves. That implies, that we have to “eat out” for both lunch and dinner. First choice we have to make is whether to go to the cafeteria or not. The KAIST cafeteria is located at the campus in the Union building, and for 3000KRW offers two kinds of meal (international and Korean) for lunch and one for dinner. They also have breakfast, but that is a typical Korean breakfast (i.e. rice, kimchi, soup, ...), which I am not able to process. The quality of the meals in the cafeteria is very unstable. Some meals, such as chicken curry, hamburger or japanese noodles are very good, but in other cases it is really not my kind of tea. From that reasons, I quite hesitate before I go to the cafeteria, because in most cases I pay for food that I 1) don’t like and 2) won’t finish. Not a good deal, right...

The second choice is “eating out out”. The neighborhood around our campus is quite restaurant-rich, so there is plenty of places to choose from. By now, we have established a bunch of places that we go into, and I will quickly introduce each one of these. Please note that in most cases I don’t know the real name of the place, so I will refer to them using our nicknames.

## The regular place

This place was discovered by Marc and it soon became our favorite place to eat. It is just a small room with a counter and a kitchen, where you order your food and get it packed in styrofoam boxes for take away. If you don't want to do take away, they have a room in the basement, where you can eat your meal. Simple, huh?

There are two things that are perfect about this place – it is fast and it is cheap. And it is also good. Most meals are a combination of some meat (pork, chicken, hamburger patty, tuna) and rice, with kimchi and the yellow reddish as side dish. Our most favorite combination is 빅치킨마요 and 군만두 (big chicken mayo and kunmandu), which is rice + chicken + egg + kimchi + mayo and Korean dumplings, filled with a mixture of meat and vegetables. All this awesomeness for only 4400KRW (€ 2.7).



Two weeks ago we have realized that we keep going to the same restaurants over and over again, which gets a little stereotypical. Therefore, Marc and I have decided that every Sunday evening, we will go to a new place in the neighborhood to try something different. I will try to keep you updated about our adventures, as well as describe other “regular” places, such as the curry place, the omelette place, the rice place, the chicken steak place, the dumpling guy or the japanese place. Stay tuned for another episode of CULINARY ADVENTURES with 얀!

... Published on 22.10.2011 at 13:54:59

*“The most expensive month so far...”*

## November 2011

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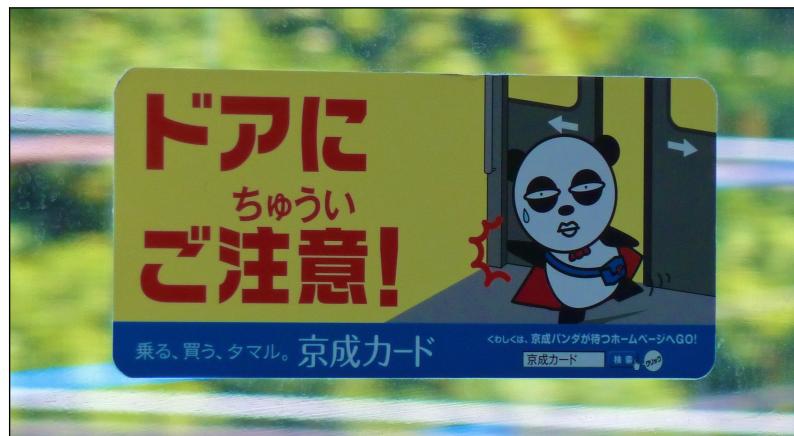
- You know you are in Tokyo when...*
- Between the South and the North • The Best College Day™
  - Fieeeeeeld triiiiiip! • Culinary Adventures II. • Time goes by... • Experience the future (and the past)
  - Shine Your Light

## 01.11.2011 ... You know you are in Tokyo when...

...the banner at the airport says “Welcome to Japan”

(well, technically, this only means that you came to Japan, but whatever)

...a panda in a cape tells you not to put your hands into the doors



...talking on the phone in the subway is highly discouraged.

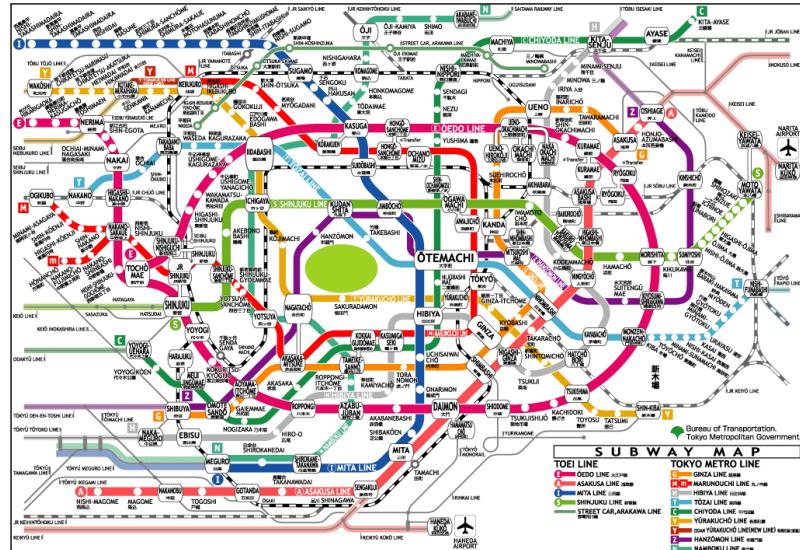
It is not prohibited, but they politely ask you to “refrain from talking on your mobile phone”. I would not risk a ninja cutting my ear...

...the subway system map is one big clusterfuck.

Seriously, that shit does not make sense! While normal subway maps try to at least partially display the real layout, in Tokyo, it is neatly arranged without much connection to reality (OK, not entirely, but it is just laid out in a weird manner). The problem is also the duality of the transport system there. Firstly, there are the Subway Tokyo Metro and Toei, which represent the (mostly) underground parts. Secondly, there is the JR East part, which is a combination of regular trains (even Shinkansen) and commuter trains. These two parts can be used for transport in Tokyo, and in many cases you can transfer between subway and JR, but the maps quite often show either the JR or the subway system. At least they announce the other lines in the train's PA as well.

...everything is more expensive than in Seoul.

I knew that it is going to be expensive, but still, you are unpleasantly surprised when you find out that is really is. Take transportation as example. Upon arrival, we bought a Suica card, which is an alternative to the T-Money



card used in Korea. It was pre-charged with ¥1500 of credit, which is approx. €15. We thought that it would be enough for the whole trip, because in Seoul charging 10,000KRW (= €6.60) is usually enough for up to two weeks. We were wrong – we had to recharge already the second day, and we haven't even used the card for the trip from the airport (¥1400, in Seoul approx. 3500-4000KRW). In total, I spent around €50 only for transport that weekend.

### ...taxis are extremely expensive



Talking about money, due unforeseen events (mixing up the trains and taking the last train in the opposite direction) we had to take a taxi from Kamata to Shibuya. This approx. 30 minute ride set us back with staggering €60 bill, which meant €20 per person. The most I have paid for a taxi in Seoul so far was €5 for a 40 minute ride at 5am from Hongdae. The funny thing is that in Tokyo, the increment per unit is 100, which is the same as in Seoul. Won is, however, worth 10 times less than Yen. Sad story...

The (only) funny part is that the taxis are oooooooooold. Most of them are “ancient” Nissans and Toyotas, with only few modern Priuses. Therefore, they really stand out between all the modern cars, and maybe their age is the reason for the price. Repairing a 20yr old Nissan must be quite financially demanding.

### ...girls are not wearing skirts.

Technically, they are. But it does not seem so, since their skirts are merely belts. Well, I think I have even seen a wider belt. We were surprised despite being used to Korean girls, that dress up in heels and miniskirts even for taking out the trash. These nanoskirts, combined with knee-high socks and a lot of makeup makes Japanese girls look like dolls. Or sluts prostitutes, you choose. I guess it's just the culture, but it is quite funny when you see such girl walk with her mother (even young girls dress like that) and no one seems to care. No judging looks or remarks, slutty girls are simply part of the society. Not that we would complain about that, but it just feels weird.

### ...you go to a Maid Café.

This is one of the things that you somehow expect to see in Japan. It is weird, it is crazy, it is to some extent perverted and regular Japanese would never go there. Maid Café is a café, where you are waited by girls dressed as French maids, with short skirts and in many cases with little tails and ears. Seriously. Even though it sounds like something I just made up, Akihabara is full of such café, which are targeted at Otaku, Japanese nerds (often grown man) that like anime and manga, and a French maid is one of their biggest fantasies. Don't ask me why. These guys go to these café, drink, eat, talk to their waitress, that really treat them like their master.

We got caught by a maid directly on the street, and since we wanted to go to a café anyway, we went with her. She was German, but assured us that she is the only non-Asian there, which made us feel even creepier than before. In the café, we got seated, received water and waited. Since this particular café did not have any cover charge (they normally do), the prices were higher than one would expect (coffee € 6, beer € 15). Their specialty was an omelette, on which they drew a picture with ketchup.



I have to admit that the whole experience was quite uncomfortable. Even though at first we thought that it is hilarious, over the time we began to feel creepy and perverted, watching these young-ish girls in their short dresses, talking to older Japanese guys. Btw. before leaving we found out that during their tour, even Backstreet Boys came to this café to see maids and have a cup of coffee and an omelette. Well, I don't want it that way.

### **...people use three alphabets and you can't understand either of them.**

Kenji, Hiragana, Katakana. Each one has different purpose and looks different. In real world, they are, however mixed up together, so one word or phrase can contain all three of them. Thanks God for Hangul!

### **...everything is überclean.**

The Japanese pursuit for perfection is materialized in the cleanliness of streets, cars, buildings and the environment in general. Since almost everybody has a job in Japan (unemployment rate < 5%), some people simply clean the streets and everything. I don't know if it's simply because there are more cleaners than in other countries, people do not litter that much or the cleaners are perfectionists, but the streets in particular look like they have been cleaned with a vacuum cleaner. Even the traffic signs on the road look fresh and new. I really admire that, because what you can sometimes see here in Seoul is quite gross. Well, cultural difference is cultural difference:)



*...you sometimes feel like you are a part of a big freak show.*

Even though we did not see the masses of cosplay people at Harajuku, the above pictures speak for themselves.

*... Published on 01.11.2011 at 00:05:23*

## 05.11.2011 ... Between the South and the North

I did it. I went there. North Korea, officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the evil twin of South Korea, the loser clenched in between the two Asian superpowers. Today, I, for the first time, stepped on the North Korean territory. The story behind it is not special, so I apologize to those of you who expected something from a lame action movie with explosions, car chases, spy gadgets and hot girls.

As we planned earlier, today we went on the “DMZ trip”, i.e. trip to the demilitarized zone, which lies between North and South Korea. Despite its name, DMZ is the most militarized border in the world, with permanent military presence on both sides, and it stretches across the whole Korean peninsula in a 4km wide corridor. For a regular mortal it is merely impossible to cross the border, because DPRK does not allow anyone from the South Korean side to cross the border. However, the DMZ, and the associated Joint Security Area (JSA) are partially opened for public through numerous agencies offering tour packages.



Our bus picked us up at the campus at 7:10am. Waking up so early was extremely painful, especially due to previous night at Indy Pub. My efforts to sleep in the bus were hampered by my slightly nauseous state, which fortunately got better 30 minutes into the trip. After picking up the rest of our tour group at Lotte Hotel, we set off for the DMZ, which is about 1hr drive from Seoul.

Our first stop was at the Freedom bridge, which was used as a place for trading prisoners of war after the Korean War in 1950s. As a first stop, it was not that interesting because it was simply a bridge. At least we got some breakfast, though:)

The second stop was the 3rd infiltration tunnel, also called the Third Tunnel of Aggression. It is one of the tunnels that North Koreans were planning to use for their invasion to South Korea. So far, there have been 4 tunnels revealed, however, rumors say that there are many more unfinished. The fun fact about this tunnel is that in order to explain the existence of such tunnel during a cease fire time, North Koreans painted the walls of this tunnel black and claimed they were mining coal. The tunnel is still “open”, i.e. it would theoretically be possible to go to the other side, however, there are 3 concrete barricades to avoid access from NK. The tunnel is 73m underground and access for tourists is realized by a very steep 300m shaft. The tunnel ceiling is quite low, which means you have to walk bent forward in order not to bang your helmet protected head into the ceiling. Even though there is nothing interesting to see at the end of the tunnel (no light, folks, sorry), I was curious what could possibly be at the other side of the barricades. I wonder if NK has some soldiers stationed there or if they had simply closed the tunnel at their side.

After the tunnel we climbed up the Dora Mountain, which offers a observatory from which you can see North Korea, including their fake propaganda village and the monstrous flagpole. Photos are again not permitted,



even though you can take pictures while standing behind a photo line approx. 10 m from the edge of the observation deck. The village comprises few “houses”, that are demonstrating the advanced development of North Korea. While that might have worked in 1950s, telescopic lenses revealed that the houses are in fact not inhabited and without any household equipment or even window glass or doors.



The last stop of our DMZ tour was the Dorasan Train station, which is the last SK railroad station before North Korea. For a short period of time, the railroad was used to transport cargo to and from the Kaesong Industrial Region, however, because of “*Kim Jong-Il's frikkin mind*” our tour guide said, the border crossing was shut by NK in 2008. Nowadays, the station serves as a touristic attraction, even though there are few trains coming in every day. For 500KRW you can buy a “ticket” to Pyongyang and go wait on the platform. The train won’t come though, so do not spend too much time waiting.

After lunch, which was a very disappointing bulgogi, we moved to a different bus and set off for the second part of our trip, the JSA. Before that, we were warned that the security measures and rules are much stricter than in the DMZ. First thing: No Koreans. For security reasons, Koreans are not allowed to participate in the JSA visit. Secondly, there is a dress code, which prohibits army-like clothes, shorts, flip-flops etc. Thirdly,



no communication with North Koreans is allowed. This includes both verbal and non-verbal means, such as waving. Moreover, pointing is prohibited, as it may look like pointing a gun. Lastly, photography is even more restricted than in DMZ.

The JSA is a military facility that lies directly on the Military Demarcation Line. Half of it belongs to South Koreans, that operate it together with U.S. forces, and the second half is North Korean. It is the only place where the two sides directly face each other. It is understandable that the security precautions are so strict. Each bus got its own armed "guard", that was taking care of our security during the visit. Our guy was a U.S. paratrooper named Muniz. After an ID check we went for a short briefing about the history of JSA, which was a little boring. The interesting part came afterwards. We embarked a military bus and went to visit the Freedom House.



Some of you might have seen the JSA before. There are two main buildings – the Freedom House (SK) and Panmungak (NK). Between them is some sort of neutral zone, that is dissected by the Military Demarcation Line. In the center there are several blue buildings that serve as negotiation rooms for the representatives of the two sides. These houses are permanently guarded by elite soldiers and despite the terrible weather, the four SK soldiers were standing there in the rain, partially hidden behind the building, their shades on.

South Korea has pretty strong requirements on the JSA guards. Firstly, they have to be taller than 1,77m. Secondly, they have to have a black belt in either Taekwondo or Judo. The height serves as an intimidation tactics against North Koreans, that are generally smaller. Moreover, SK guards stand in a modified Taekwondo posture, that demonstrates power. They all wear black shades to increase the intimidation factor. Frankly, these guys look really scary, with their angry facial expressions and latent power, that is so apparent despite them standing absolutely still.

When we were waiting outside the negotiation building, there was no NK personnel on guard. However, one guy was standing in front of the Panmungak, observing us through binoculars. It was such a weird feeling, being watched by a North Korean guy, while taking pictures of him. I really wonder what was going through his head at the moment. It was quite a bizarre experience, and it seriously gave me chills – I was standing some

50 meters from North Korea, one of the currently most feared countries, chatting with friends and being all excited about seeing a “real North Korean”. Weird.

The grand finale of the JSA visit was the negotiation building, which was at the time guarded by South Koreans, which allowed us to go to the North Korean side, effectively stepping on their territory.

After that we returned to our bus and went home. I managed to sleep all the way to Seoul, partially reducing my sleeping debt.

So, DMZ+JSA, thumbs up or down? I have mixed feelings about that. The first part (DMZ) was not really exciting. Yes, we got to see a bridge and a tunnel, but that is not really connected to the current reality, which devalues the experience for me. Especially because all the places are “tricked out” for tourists, so it is not even something pure and raw. On the other hand, the JSA was quite amazing. We all felt that there is a latent threat in the air, that probably won't be realized, but you never know. Two armed soldiers in each bus and a jeep with few more in the front showed that everybody takes the situation seriously. After all, I am happy that I went on this trip. It was expensive, I have to admit that, but it was also quite a unique experience. And honestly, who had been to North Korea, huh?



... Published on 05.11.2011 at 01:02:37

## 8.11.2011 ... The Best College Day™

*Writing a blog is sometimes quite hard. Yesterday, this post had almost 1100 words. Then I realized it is boring and too “iterative” (I did this and then that and after that something else), and I deleted it, because I promised to myself that I won’t write in this “diary” style. You are not interested in my daily life, right...so instead of writing a lot of stuff about The Best College Day™, I will try to keep it short so you have enough time to do your own things. So watch a movie afterwards. Or walk your dog. Or something...*

There are few things that you need to have the best day. The weather has to be nice. There has to be some activity that you like. There have to be your friends. There has to be some good food. There have to be drinks. There has to be the right mood. Combine all that, and you have the best recipe for an awesome day. Just do not overcook it, please.

Firstly, the weather. On Thursday, November 3rd, the weather was amazing. The sun was shining, the sky was blue, the birds were singing. I was walking around just in a t-shirt, because it was so warm. So weather – **check!**

Favorite activities. Hmm, that might be more difficult. I like a lot of things – bikes, music, bass, golf, running, you name it. But I don’t have my bass or my bike here, there are no good concerts around and running on a treadmill is not that exciting either. So what is left? Yep, golf. As a part of the KAIST Autumn Festival, there was a screen golf competition, in which I participated. I sucked, honestly, partly because my golf skills were too big to bring them to Holland and then to Seoul, but I had an awesome time, because I could play a round just for fun – no ambitions, no scorecards, no pressure. **Check!**

Friends. This one is easy. I really like our exchange group here, as well as other full time students. And since no student ever refuses free things, everybody was participating. **Check!**

And that brings me to the food and drinks issue. For the festival, KAIST provided food and drinks for everybody. Chicken wings, kimbap, pancakes, sweets, sours, everything was there. And tap beer as well. And, of course, everything for free. If you consider that the “food court” was located outside, in the middle of the campus, under the sun and the blue sky...so **check** as well!

And now to the difficult part, the mood. You can't influence that. But the state of the world can. It's hard to have a bad mood when you are having a good time. **Check!**

So, to sum it up. Last Thursday was perfect. I think I really had The Best College Day™ so far. Apart from all the things mentioned above, I have also participated in a beer drinking competition, saw a K-POP performance, had a BigMac menu delivered to the campus, went dancing, sang Backstreet Boys and ended up with orange ribbons tied to my glasses. And I won a little mechanical snail in a raffle. Seriously, that sounds like fun, right...

And **check!**



... Published on 8.11.2011 at 1:57:41

## 12.11.2011 ... Fieeeeeeld triiiiiip!

After two months of Korean Business and Culture lectures we finally got to do our first field trip. The destination was a Korean corporation (not as big as a *chaebol*) Kolmar, that specialized on cosmetics and pharma products. We have visited their Sinjeong factory, which comprises a pharma factory, a pharma R&D lab and a skin care factory.

To educate you a little, let me give you a quick review of the history of the company. Compared to big Korean corporations, Kolmar is quite young – it was founded only 21 years ago in 1990. Its parent company was Kolmar Americas Inc., that manages the global network of Kolmar Global. The Korean branch was established as a joint-venture with Kolmar Japan.

At first, Kolmar Korea focused mainly on cosmetics. One of their strategy was “perfection”, which lead to CGMP (Cosmetic Good Manufacturing Practice) certification in 1994. Until 2000, the company continued growing and received several awards and prizes for their results and development. In 2001 they were the first ones to receive the ISO9001 certification (Quality Management certification) in Korea. Year 2002 marked the beginning of the pharmaceutical business, as well as KGMP certification of all facilities. They were also listed at the KRX (Korea Exchange) in the same year. In the following years, they have enlarged the portfolio of manufactured products and strengthened their R&D capabilities by extending the R&D labs and centers. In 2007, a Chinese spin-off, Kolmar Beijing, was established to simplify access to the Chinese market. Between 2000 and 2010, Kolmar was awarded several other certifications, such as Ecocert, Lohas or ISO 14001, and in 2011, they received as the first Korean company the ISO 22716 certification for good manufacturing practices in cosmetics.

Currently, the company focuses on subsidiary manufacturing and R&D for companies such as L’Oreal, Shiseido, P&G, Unilever, Dior or Johnson-Johnson. They also supply local Korean manufacturers (Nature Republic, Beyond, Tonymoly or The FaceShop). The CEO is 윤동한 (Yoon, Dung-Han), and they have approx. 1000 employees.

The field trip began in the morning, when we gathered at the main gate of our campus. Since not all exchange students participated in the trip, the bus was half empty, so almost everybody got the double seat for their own. I assume that the ride was nice, but I can’t tell you any details, because I immediately fell asleep after departing from KAIST and woke up few minutes before arriving to the factory. As mentioned above, we visited the Sinjeong factory, which is about 1:40h from Seoul.

Upon arrival, we had to take off our shoes and take on some slippers instead, however, since my foot is bigger than average Korean (I have 290, which is usually the biggest size they have in shops), it was not very comfortable. What was comfortable, however, was the provided “french coffee” in the presentation room, where we got a formal welcoming speech and a short introduction about the company.

The first stop on our factory tour was the pharma R&D lab. I was really surprised, that there were no security measures at all. We could take any photos and our movement was virtually unrestricted. We were walking through the labs, where various liquids were bubbling or swirling, and different screens were showing different graphs or curves. Fancy stuff indeed! I even got a souvenir – a capsule from a capsule maker. I am not sure what’s inside, but it’s cool. I will give it to someone as a Christmas present, I guess...just kidding, it’s all mine!

The second part was a visit to the skin care factory. For that, we had to take on shoe covers, lab coats and hairnets. It is amazing how a group of MBA students can turn into a bunch of kids when they are given a hair net and shoe covers that you can slide on.

Our excitement levels got even higher when they told us we have to go through an air shower. 8 people at a time went into a sealed chamber, where a set of air jets got rid of particles that could influence the manufacturing process. Even though we could observe the manufacturing process only through a window, we saw the complete filling and packaging process, as well as the storage area for the creams and stuff before packaging.

It is weird to see the big blue barrels full of creams, that are waiting to be packaged into small tubes. I bet many girls would be happy to have access to such barrel. After some more time of sliding through to corridor, we got out through the air shower chamber (no shower this time, though), and went for lunch. The bulgogi was decent, as was the soup and other things.

After lunch we had the last part of our field trip – presentation of Kolmar’s business model in Korea. A big part of it was already presented in the “history” part, so I will just quickly summarize my impressions. Kolmar largely focuses on the quality of their manufacturing process. Multiple certifications clearly show their determination to comply with all different quality requirements given by both Korean (KFDI) and international agencies, and provide leverage for cooperation with foreign subjects. Currently, they are the only ODM (Original Design Manufacturer) in Korea, which gives them great potential for growth on both local and foreign market. By not focusing solely on manufacturing, but also in R&D (in 2009 their R&D-to-sales ratio of 6% was about 3% higher than their competitors’) they also profile themselves as an innovative company with active development, which as well increases their leverage for their customers.

In future, it is possible that Kolmar will launch their own brand of cosmetics (not that probable for pharma), in which they would utilize all the experience gained during partnership with some of the biggest cosmetics companies in the world, as well as in Korea. In my opinion, it would make more sense to target the local market, because I feel like Koreans are still very much inclined toward local products than imported ones.

This is the end of one of the most boring posts on my blog so far. I am sorry if I bored you to death, but there is a reason for this post – I want to use it as a foundation for my report for the KBC class, so I figured that it would be easier to first summarize the trip in more informal manner, and then build the report based on the blogpost than vice versa. So stay tuned, there will be more funny posts soon!

... Published on 12.11.2011 at 22:00:47

## 15.11.2011 ... Culinary Adventures II.

“

*Me: “So, how is the food in Korea?”*

*Roman: “Well, do you like spicy food?”*

*Me: “Yeah, kind of.”*

*Roman: “Then you’ll like it...”*

This was my conversation with my friend Roman few days before coming to Korea. After more than two months here, my response to his question would probably be different. It's not that I don't like spicy food anymore, I just don't like the Korean kind of spicy. And who or what is to blame? The cafeteria! As I realize it now, the only spicy food that I did not like was from the KAIST cafeteria (and the curry place, but that was probably caused by my hangover). It does not matter if it was the “weird meat in a brown sauce” (for my Czech readers, it is like some kind of UHO) or the “kimchi rice”, it was just too spicy and tasteless. I know that you might say “you have to get used to it” or “you are a sissy” or even “OMG WTF, you are lame and you suck, ROFL”, but I just can't help it. I like food that tastes good already the first time, not after 3 months of “getting used to”, especially because there are so many other opportunities to eat good food.

*(The fun part of this post ends here...but there is still some interesting info down there, so just carry on reading...)*

Last time I promised to walk you through some of the places we go to. The problem is, that I find such descriptive writing quite boring. So I will try to keep it as short as possible...I hope you don't mind...

## Fast foods

What would be do without good old fast food chains, right. In the immediate vicinity to our campus, there are several branches of both Korean and foreign fast food chains.

The most famous one is definitely **Burger King**. The only special thing about Korean BK's is the **Bulgogi Burger**, a local specialty with beef and a special bulgogi sauce. Honestly, I prefer the classical Whopper and based on my observations, so do Koreans. As opposed to other FF chains, most BK's in Korea are open 24/7.

Another burger place is a Korean chain called **Young-Cheol Burger**. They do not serve classical burgers, but most of their so called burgers are more like Subway subs with ham and vegetables. I really appreciate that every sub is freshly made, so you are sure it has not been sitting on the shelf for already 20 minutes.

Moving on...**Isaac Toast**. A small but nice place, where they sell toasts. Since their menu is only in Korean and I haven't bothered with translation, I do not know what toasts they have, except for a **M.V.P. toast**, which has a beef patty, egg, radish, cheese and three sauces. The important thing is that it's good, relatively cheap and it certainly fills you up.

And now to the sweet stuff. Right next to our regular place there is **Dunkin' Donuts**, where we usually buy our dessert after eating at the regular place. Across the street from it there is **Baskin Robbins** (ice cream), and a little further up the street there is **Starbucks**, surrounded by dozen other coffeeshop, that are bigger, cheaper and not-at-all ripping off the image of SBs with a round logo and a bold, sans-serif font.

## Tonkatsu!

Tonkatsu with cheese, rice and salad. A little bowl of miso soup on the side. Yum! The Japanese fried pork cutlet (tonkatsu) is surprisingly very popular in Korea, any you can find it in almost any restaurant that does not specialize on some specific cuisine. There are two places that we sometimes go to for tonkatsu – one serves the tonkatsu as described above, as well as some udong noodles, sushi and other Japanese things, while the other one is more inclined towards Italian cuisine, and serves the cutlet with mozzarella and bolognese saucejifydshfnfbchvgwhfkc.

*(And this is the place where I stopped having fun writing this and my head fell on my keyboard...)*

Sometimes I feel the obligation to write informative stuff to educate people and tell them something about Korean culture. It also helps me to better sort out my thoughts and experiences. As you might have noticed, I do like to write stuff. But it has to be something at least remotely interesting for me and for you. And frankly, I don't think anyone is interested in this phonebook of places to eat anymore.

You know, food is quite a difficult thing to write about. It is awesome to eat, in most cases nice to look at and smell, for me also fun to cook, but it is quite boring to write about, especially when I need to remember all the places and food and look it up on Wikipedia to describe it properly. So if you don't mind, I will try to summarize my ad interim Culinary Adventures in one short paragraph.

Korean cuisine is awesome. Bulgogi, Kimbap, Mandu, Galbi, Kimchi, Ramen, Bibimbap, Udong, yellow radish, white radish, chopsticks, meat on the stick, everything. Apart from the cafeteria and a pork intestine place,

everything has been at least acceptable, but in most cases good or delicious. If you ever come to Korea, go for it and try the local meals. You don't have to worry, even though they do eat dogs and live octopus, it's not really common. So go ahead, take your flat metal chopsticks and enjoy your meal. And remember, rice is eaten with a spoon and you should never stick your chopsticks into the ricebowl.

... Published on 15.11.2011 at 22:57:07

## 18.11.2011 ... Time goes by...

Seriously, is it Friday again? That's serious mess. Time flies so fast, and even though one proverb says that "*Time flies when you have fun*", I really did not expect it fly that fast.

Not all stuff is that cool, though. Yesterday some mofo stole some money from my wallet in the gym. I forgot it in my pants in an unlocked locker and someone just seized the given opportunity. I lost approx. 150,000 KRW, which is something like € 96. Yeah, bummer. Since the locker is in the shower room, there is no CCTV and I really do not remember all the people that went to the gym while I was working out. Well, it's gone now, so there is nothing I can do, except for crying and punching someone in the face. Life does sometimes suck...

Today I've decided to do nothing and hopefully catch up on the slack I have with my blog. There are at least two posts that I have on my mind, but did not get to the writing part. I guess I need some (female) assistant to do that for me.

To give you brief heads up – on Tuesday we went on another field trip, about which I will write later, because it was completely awesome. After that I finally got to see the War Memorial, which almost concludes the list of touristic places in Seoul that I wanted to visit. Yeah, check!

On Wednesday me and Marc paid another visit to “our” tailor in Itaewon, where we had the first fitting of our suits. Yep, I am having a suit done here. I was a little nervous about the color, because I was not sure how it would look on the completed suit. Well, the fitting exceeded my expectations. Despite not being completed,

the suit fit me so well. And the color was perfect, too. Damn, I am going to look so hot in that suit! Ladies will go crazy...

Yesterday's night was in the name of love clubbing again. Despite all the heroic statements, we ended up being just 4 – Kate, Morgan, Marc and me. At around 11:20pm, after zero pre-gaming, we took a taxi to Hongdae to Club Naked, where the "School Uniform Party Vol. II" was supposed to take place. Frankly, I have not seen a single school uniform that night. What I have seen, though, was a lot of white faces. The club was packed with foreigners, which seriously sucked. A big part of the people in the club were "stylish douchebags" from prestigious French business schools, that behaved like the club was theirs. Damn, I really got unused to the European testosterone fueled club behavior.

After about an hour in the club, we "took" André and went to Cocoon, which was much better, since there were almost no foreigners and we could dance on the stage and be cool. Yea, this is how we rolled.

Tomorrow, we are planning to go see the Lantern Festival in the city center, which is supposed to be pretty, so I'll try to snap some pictures for your viewing pleasure.

... Published on 18.11.2011 at 20:20:33

## 19.11.2011 ... Experience the future (and the past)

Tuesday was a special day. I got to experience both the future and the past. And no, Dr. Emmet Brown was not involved, and neither was a DeLorean or Marty McFly. But damn, that would be cool if they were. Anyway, on Tuesday, we went to the SK T.um, which is a showroom of SK Telecom, the biggest mobile operator in Korea.

The “um” stands for “*Ubiquitous Museum*”, which just seems like a fancy name, because it does not really make sense. However, the whole place is completely awesome, especially for a geek and techie like me.

Firstly, at the beginning of the tour, you receive a Samsung Galaxy S II, which is in T.um terminology called the *T.key*. The phone is equipped with a special *T.um* app and unfortunately it is otherwise locked up (you can't access the underlying Android). After filling in your name, age group, e-mail and telephone, and taking a picture of yourself, you go to a Pond, where your *T.me* (virtual avatar) drops from the ceiling in a form of a water drop (*fancy stuff!*). The *T.me* then follows you during the whole tour. These things are possible thanks to the integrated ZigBee based short-range communication chip in the phone, which allows it to interact with the objects in the exposition and deliver location based data.



The first part of the tour is called “*Play Dream*”. It is basically a presentation of “*ubiquitous life service*”, i.e. a service that will be fully integrated into our life.

The first part is dedicated to *Communication and Entertainment*, and it is called the *U.home*. I assume that it stands for “*Ubiquitous Home*”, which is, well, something...Nah, that “*U*” shit does not make sense. The room

is equipped with three beamers that form a huge screen. The screen is controlled by gestures, however, since they use an IR strip and a cam, the recognition is a little slow. Such thing would be much better with a Kinect-like technology. That would make it truly Minority Report-like. Just without the murders and Tom Cruise.

The room also includes a “multimedia table”, which is something like the Surface table from Microsoft. It is a big screen, that is NFC enabled, so putting the T.key device/mobile phone on the table enables interaction between the table and the phone. That way you can watch movies or pictures from the phone on the table or the big screen without any cables or docks. We made our tour guide play a Girls Generation music video on the huge screen, which made all the guys much happier...What I really liked was direct transfer of files between two phones laying on the table. The transfer was however done via 3G/WiFi, as ZigBee is not built for high speed transfer between devices.

The second room was focused on *Gaming (U.entertainment)*. That was a little lame, because using the phone's accelerometer for controlling a game via 3G/WiFi/ZigBee is quite sluggish. We were doing some racing and I finished second, so I am not complaining, but still, it would need improvement for real world deployment. Funny thing was when the guide was reading who is on which position and said “On the second position is.....Honza.....is that your real name?”. Umm, no, madam, I just made it up...

Next part was “*U.driving*”, which included a real car mounted on a hydraulic platform. The car was called Spira, which is a new Korean-made sports car. Morgan and Lauriane were the two “volunteers”, so they had to go through a simulated ride. The mobile phone acted as a central controller, displaying information about the car (telemetry), serving as a GPS satnav, allowing to pay for the fuel (ehm, electricity) and do other funny things. Frankly, this part was not that impressive, because this is something that will be quite hard to achieve in larger scale, thanks to the fragmentation of in-car systems, but it is a nice concept, that could make driving easier.

While they were still driving, we moved to the next section focused on content creation (*U.media*). In this part our photos from the phone were used to create a 3D advertisement. Since it was just a 2D picture, the photos were simply used as a texture, so you can imagine how it looked. Moreover, the 3D effect was not that good, so I would say this was the weakest part of the exhibition.

*U.fashion.* Girl's heaven, guy's hell. Through a 3D scanner, Karin's body was scanned, analyzed (height and other things) and digitalized. That allowed her to virtually try on various clothes and outfits. I think this might be quite useful, because it saves time and effort. I don't understand why the virtual avatar was standing in a middle of an intersection, though. As usual, the "app" allowed you to buy the clothes right after trying them on, without having to leave your home. It would be nice if a 3D printer could print them for you instead:)

Last part of the "Play Dream" concept was *U.shopping*. Based on our profile, the system recommended us some goods, which we could directly buy. Every product was associated with some short "game", which allowed you to "try before you buy". This concept does not seem that impressive, considering the recommendation algorithms used by e-shop or the "virtual" shopping mall in the Seoul subway.

Since we were in quite a hurry, we only ran through the second part of the exposition called "Play Real". While "the dream" showcased what will be available in the future, "the real" showcased what is already available. There was an augmented reality app for factory controlling, which is supposedly already used, a dock for the mobile that allowed instant switch from the phone to a big TV (erm, HDMI all the way...) and a CSR thing, which I did not understand, because I really have no idea what does CSR have in common with visually impaired people.

And that was the end of the tour. We did not get the chance to try out all the gadgets and thingies in the Play Real section, so we just returned our T.keys and went home.

Well, only some of us went home...André, Marc and I went for a lunch to Lotteria (Giant Double Burger set FTW!) and then we took a cab to the War Memorial in Yongsan. The WM was the last thing that I really wanted to see among the touristic places in Seoul. And it was also one of the coolest. The memorial, as its name hints, is a museum of all the wars and occupations the Korean peninsula has experienced so far.



*The War Memorial*

The exposition is quite cool, actually. Of course, it is nationalistic and to some extent over-the-top, but that is understandable. This country has been through a lot of wars (almost as much as the Czech Republic), and the scars are still visible. The most notable one is, of course, the DMZ and the separation of the two Koreas. The museum is divided into several rooms, with each one representing different part of Korean military history (Memorial Hall, War History, Korean War, Expeditionary Forces Room, ROK Armed Forces Room, and Large Equipment Room). Each of these rooms displays all the important things, such as uniforms, weapons, paintings

of battles etc. Obviously, the biggest part is dedicated to the Korean war, with 3D battle scenes, models, videos etc. There is even a “Combat Experience Simulator”, which is a simulation of the combat using lights, sounds, smell etc. To absorb all the information in the memorial one would have to spend the whole day there, which we could not since André had a meeting later that afternoon.



*A B-52. I would not light this one on fire, though...*

The memorial also has an outside exhibition space, with different pieces of military vehicles and planes. There are both UN/S. Korean and Chinese/USSR/N. Korean machines ranging from AA guns and Howitzers over tanks, armored vehicles and fighter jets to big bombers, such as B-52. There is also a replica of a guard ship that got involved in a naval battle against North Korea, however, I can't remember the details. We were really excited about it – such place is definitely every guy's dream...:)

*... Published on 19.11.2011 at 14:17:58*

## 23.11.2011 ... Shine Your Light

Writing this post finally made me look up the song I have had in my head since Saturday. I could remember just few lines from it and I could not remember the rest or who it sings. Now I know, it was Roxette – Love Is All (Shine Your Light). And why I had this song in my head? Because of the light!



Until last Sunday, Seoul had hosted the traditional Lantern Festival on the Cheonggyecheon Stream in the City Hall area downtown Seoul. To let some more culture into our lives, we have decided to go there. At first, it was Kate, Marc, André, Rik and me. Since Marc was meeting some friend earlier, it was just Kate, André, Rik and me. Well, and because Kate had some other things to do, it was just...I think you know now.

Upon arriving to City Hall, we have discovered three things. Firstly, there was a huge “Occupy Seoul” demonstration in front of the City Hall. For unknown reasons, these people were protesting against the FTA with the US, which is weird, because I thought that it was generally accepted very well. The second thing was the presence of riot police in the whole neighborhood – police buses, anti-riot vehicles and policemen in full body armor with shields, everything looked like there was going to be a huge fight. The third thing was my SD card,

or rather its absence. As soon as I took out my camera, I realized that the card is still in my laptop, which gave me space for only two or three pictures in the internal memory. Fortunately André was there to save the day, so all the photos in this post are from him. Merci beaucoup!

Before coming to the festival we made a short detour to Lotteria for a Giant Double Burger set (912 Kcal of pure awesomeness) and then straight to the lanterns! Well, not that straight. Since it was the penultimate night, there was quite a queue that was twisting and turning between the barriers. Even though we managed to jump part of the queue by simply walking next to all the people (smart guys), eventually we reached the point where we had to re-join the queue and wait. And wait. And wait. In total, we waited for approx. 20 minutes, which was quite uncomfortable, since it was around 0°C.



The lanterns are located directly in the middle of the Cheonggyecheon stream, which is a small artificial creek with pathways on both sides. You were supposed to walk on the right side and return on the left one, which, surprisingly, worked out quite well. The “statues” were lighted using electric bulbs, as fire would be too unstable/dangerous/stupid. It was quite interesting to see all the electric cables in the water, but I guess they just had good insulation. Or insurance.

The whole exhibition was also some kind of contest, however, I am not sure about the rules or where the participants came from. The themes of the lanterns ranged from traditional Korean figures, over some Japanese figures, statues depicting child games, animals or abstract shapes to superheroes. Simply everything.

Approximately in the middle of the exhibition, there was a stand where you could buy your own lantern (real one with a candle) and put it in the stream. This surely looked romantic, unfortunately, these lanterns were stopped after few meters by a metal barrier, where they just kept piling up and setting themselves on fire. Not so romantic anymore.



The festival was really nice. Seeing all those colorful lanterns glow in the dark was amazing, especially in the combination with the creek. Since the creek is below ground level, I felt nicely isolated from the outer world, as well as the cold weather. The only bad thing about it was that we were not able to get any donuts afterwards. C'mon, people, 11pm is not too late for a donut, duh!

... Published on 23.11.2011 at 0:3:5



*“Too bad everything good has to end...”*

**December 2011**

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*I am still alive! • A kindergarten weekend in Hansan • The end is nigh*

## 05.12.2011 ... I am still alive!

No worries, I am still alive! I was not captured by North Koreans, ran over by a crazy bus driver or mesmerized by Girls Generation (just a little), but there is not that much going on. As the exchange progresses, we are doing less and less exciting stuff, because we have simply exhausted all the options for excitement. Moreover, I still have quite a lot of stuff to do, since I have to work at one assignment for my home uni, arrange things for my graduation, try to find some accommodation in Delft, all this while working on presentations and reports for my current school. So yeah, I am quite busy. On top of that, Christmas are almost here, and I have to figure out the presents and other stuff. Crazy shit!

So just quickly, the most exciting event since the Lantern Festival was our trip to Hansan last weekend. We spent the two days in Hansan-myun, Seocheon-gun, Chungcheongnamdo, and I will publish a post about it later (WIP, y'know). The rest of the week was surprisingly unexciting, since we did not even go out (!!!). Guess we're getting old.

Anyway, it's already December 5th here. That means I have about 17 days before having to pack my suitcase and going to Incheon. I seriously wish it was more...

Btw. now I know it, I am on Team Edward!

... Published on 05.12.2011 at 00:24:43

## 5.12.2011 ... A kindergarten weekend in Hansan

Boosting your region's reputation by inviting and subsidizing tourist trips might be useful, however, you have to choose your target group wisely. After this weekend I am convinced that we were not the right one.

The Hansan Treasure Hunting tour – “*A night and a day with starry-starry jewel-like culture and nature of Hansan-myun, Seocheon-gun, Chungcheongnamdo*”. Sounds lovely, right. Well, marketing is one thing, and reality is the other one. The whole trip started on Saturday morning night. Seriously, departing at 8am from Gangnam is an insane idea. Despite catching the only traffic jam in Seoul on Saturday morning we managed to get to the bus on time and even snatch some breakfast and coffee. The bus was fairly empty, as the only participants was our KAIST group and two people from KU – Shafa and Sam.

Hansan is located in the east part of Korea, a little bit under Daejeon, close to Seocheon. It used to be a fairly big city with a big market, however, as people moved to bigger cities, it became just a small and empty city. The initiative that organized the Eco-tour tries to revive the traditional market by attracting tourists into the locality and showing them around. . The trip was highly subsidized by various entities, so we ended up paying only 30,000KRW for the whole weekend.

We started out with a lunch, which was nice. The tofu soup is not my favorite dish of all times, but it is a traditional meal of Koreans, so it was fine. The tour continued to an old pharmacy, galvanizing shop, local market (few stands with fishes and vegetables, one with dog meat), a traditional blacksmith, makkoli factory and a shop with local products.

Next stop was a place where they manufactured the local fabric called (?) (damn, I forgot). The whole complex looked awesome. A grassy square was surrounded by traditional houses with straw roofs, and it looked somehow clean and peaceful. In the interior we were shown how the individual thread are separated from the bigger braid and how the fabric is weaved on the loom.

The part that I was most exciting about before the trip and most disappointed about after was the following bicycle ride. On rented mountain bikes, which were tiny 24" "Tesco-bikes" we went on a short trip to a reed field nearby. To make sure we are safe they tried to make us wear elbow and knee pads, which we all refused and wore only the helmet. To further ensure our safety we got advised not to use the front brake, because we could injure ourselves by doing so. Ehm, the number next to our age was in years, not months...anyway, after approx. 20 minutes of dangerous 10km/h ride we arrived to the "famous" reed field, where the movie JSA was shot. Surprisingly, the only thing we found there was reed. Fun fun fun...

For evening we had planned a dinner, "natural dyeing" and "local drinks and snacks". Personally, I was already dead (or should I say "dyed") and hungry, so I really appreciated the bibimbap (one of the best one I had so far). After dinner each of got a piece of white cloth and two rubber rings. Long story short, we tied the rubber rings around the cloth, submerged the whole thing into onion skin broth and kept it there for 20 minutes. However, because we had to rinse it in the bath with our hands, not only the cloth, but also my hand was completely yellow. And it did not want to go down. After that we put it in yet another bath, this time with some color (I chose khaki) and left it there. And then there was nothing...void...eternal emptiness. 7pm, in the middle of nowhere, no 7-eleven, no bar, not even a weird pub with few patrons. What can you do in such situation...Jump in a car and go shopping. Fortunately, Jin managed to persuade the owners to take us "downtown", so after 30 minutes we had 18 bottles of beer and 10 bottles of soju, snacks, cookies and, of course, better mood:) Yay!

The rest of the evening was quite simple – traditional drinks and snacks, drinking games, more drinking games, karaoke, complaints from neighbors, dormitory, pillow fight (yeah, kinda gay), wrestling (still gay), sleep.

The next day was quite a hell. We still had to do some sightseeing, so we had to wake up quite early to get to the breakfast (=rice). After the breakfast we made some weird green buns, filled with bean paste (not bad, actually) and then went to see the local botanical garden. Blah blah blah, not interesting stuff. After that a visit to a typical house, a fish market and finally the ride home. If we weren't stuck in a traffic jam for most of the ride and if the bus had some functioning aircon, I would be more than happy, however, we were stuck and the bus was hot, so I arrived to Seoul tired and grumpy. The never ending taxi ride to the dorm certainly did not help, so I was seriously relieved when I got back to the dorm and could just sit down and do nothing. And that's all, folks.

Crappy post, I know...

... Published on 5.12.2011 at 1:32:33

## 09.12.2011 ... **The end is nigh**

*"Repent, repent, the end is nigh..."* is a part of the bridge of Bring Me The Horizon's song Chelsea Smile, and even though I took it kind of out of its context (the song continues with *"repent, repent, we're all gonna die"*, which, I hope, won't happen), it really fits into the context of my exchange and my blog. In two weeks, at this exact moment, I will be sitting in an Airbus A330-200 in Dubai, waiting for take off. I might be slightly drunk, as I will share the first three hours of the 5h stopover with Marc, and I'll be preparing for the last stage of my journey, the flight to Prague. After another 5 hours I will land in Prague, and my S(e)oul eXchange will officially end.

*Hey, hold your horses, man, there is still a long way to go...*

Yeah, right, I still have two weeks full of reports, presentations, and exams. To my great disappointment, two of my exams are in the last week, i.e. on the 19th and 20th. That gives me only two nights for final partying and less than two days for packing, buying souvenirs and giving farewell to all my friends here. I guess I just have to try to enjoy it as much as possible...

And speaking of enjoying, past Monday another mentor-mentee meeting was held by the International Office. Even though some mentors turned up for the first part of the event in the Atrium, eventually the event turned into *"Mentees in the Indy Pub"* event. As my good friend Daniel says, *"Fuck weekend, party on Monday"*, and so we did. Wearing the KAIST hoodies we stormed the *Indy Pub* as a perfectly trained commando. And danced, singed and drank. Lovely evening, I would say.

... Published on 09.12.2011 at 16:52:56



*The KAIST commando*



*Central European delegation with an orange girl*



*"All the single ladies..."*



# **Closing**

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I am sorry that there is no closing post, but since I am writing this on December 13th, I still have time to write one next week. Unfortunately, at that time this book will hopefully be in the print shop, so it will be quite impossible to add it there, since I am no Marty McFly.

Anyway, I would like to use this space to thank every body for their attention to my blog and to all the support they provided me during the four months. First of all, I want to thank my parents, because without them, this all would not happen. They always supported my decisions and actions, and I am infinitely grateful for that. They are the bestest!!! Moreover, I want to thank my sister for the idea to publish this book, because I really had fun doing that. I also want to thank the rest of my family for being my family. I can't wait to see you all next week.

From KAIST, I want to thank Jin and Kayla from the international office. They pampered us like babies and really helped us when we had any difficulties. And they went partying with us!

From other exchange students, I would like to thank Marc for everything, Rik for being my roomie and André for proving that not all French people have to have a strong accent in English. Moreover, I want to thanks Karin, Lauriane and Imane for hanging out with us, thus reducing the “sausage factor” of our group. I also want to thank Kate for taking me to see the last Twilight, because it was simply unbelievable. I could not believe how bad it was. Finally, I want to thank Florian, Daniel, Niklas, Till, Morgan, Toy, Mateusz, Piotr, Tomasz, Andrei, Eddy, Mario, Simone, Pierre, Eduard, Canna, Ada, Jenny, Yue, Dieter, Alexa and Elaine for being there and making the whole 4 months legendary.

So...

안녕하세요

## **About the author**

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I am Honza, a 23yr old Czech guy, currently residing in Seoul, South Korea, where I do my exchange semester at the KAIST Business School. When not in Asia, I live in The Netherlands, where I pursue a master degree in Management of Technology at the Delft University of Technology. However, my true home is still in Prague, the most beautiful city in the universe.

When not studying, I like to ride my mountain bike, go running, play golf, play my bass guitar, read a book (paper+Kindle) or watch a movie. I seriously love music, not only as a listener, but also as an artist.

I am a geek and I do not feel ashamed of it. I like modern technologies, innovation and gadgets. I use a Mac, but I know what a command-line is and that `rm -rf` should never be followed by a /.

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