

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**

Yuqi Liu

Year and term for exchange2021 1st term**Exchange university**

Aalto University

Degree programme

Interactive Media Technology

Title, one sentence that summarises your exchange studies

Before departure

The initiative of my application for the exchange studies is the curiosity of another Scandinavia culture and my motive of seeking uncomfortableness. I chose Aalto University in Finland because this university has made fruitful achievements in the field of human-computer interaction in a short period of time and I've found several intriguing courses. I've had a wish to visit Finland already before I went to Sweden because I've picked up various attributes of this special country and the purity of the people there from a Youtuber so I would like to experience the country in person. My expectations are simple that is to validate my pictures of this country and to learn what I am interested in. Since Finland is just next to Sweden, it does not worry me to prepare much, instead, I was mainly preparing to say goodbye to my friends in Sweden.

Upon arrival

I arrived about half a month before my studies officially start. There are detailed introductions and various activities prepared for students. Student unions are already listed in emails and introduced during the seminars. They have created groups and tutors specifically for international students and exchange students so we feel deeply warm-welcomed. We were led in a team and it's always a pleasure to communicate with people from different backgrounds. And for the sauna, we definitely enjoyed the most authentic one. It was quite a nice time there.

Financials

I've received the Erasmus scholarship. It is generally less expensive than Sweden. Student housing is generally cheaper and the transportation is also friendly to students. There are student union fees but it is your choice to pay for it. In Finland, there are people donating their furniture on some social media platforms and you can save money from it. Also, remember to look for the student discount if you are using some public service or join some activities.

Accommodation

It didn't feel easy to get my accommodations. I've applied for the student accommodation in June, which is a bit late for exchange students because there's limited accommodations for exchange students to apply to. But the prepared ones seem to be quite decent for exchange students to live in. However, I find the ayy waiting queue being long and hopeless that I have no chance to get one before my study starts. So I turn to find accommodations on Facebook groups. It nearly got me tricked by the fraud. It's necessary to mention here that it's better to join an official group and check your accommodation face to face. Finally, I got a second-hand housing offer from one kind person on Facebook. My lecture has told me to apply for your accommodation as soon as possible and be aware of the people on the internet.

University and studies

The university covers a huge area of an island. The student accommodation on campus is just near the sea so it has quite nice surroundings. They offer a large range of subject areas from designing, architecture to technology. The studies are mostly the same as KTH except for the workload. I personally reckon that Aalto offers a course with fewer credits but heavy workloads in some courses. The regular day of studies consists of reading, lectures, self-reviewing, and homework. I study in English. There are Finnish language courses for free. They also offer many good guidelines for new students to study so they can adjust to the new website. They also offer activities and services if you encounter a difficult time.

Courses

Within all my courses, I would particularly mention the course, computational user interface design. It is a course that brings so many inspirations to me. They utilize computational models in user interface design. Create a model using advanced technology and use it to optimize the user interface so they can get a better solution to the designing problem. The design is no longer only about aesthetics, we could also use deep learning, machine learning to solve the problem.

City and country

Helsinki is a simple city as well as its culture. I would say I really enjoy the facilities in this city. They are very accessible to people and it provides a nice learning environment for people from all walks of life and all ages. I love the trams in the city. They run on the ground and you can have a decent look around the whole city by taking them. I've got to know their history from some videos and I find its culture very inspiring because, after all these years of being ruled by other countries, they finally win their own independence and grow strong and well. I have not experienced culture shock, instead I find Finnish people are quite friendly and easy to talk to. The stereotype of Finnish people that they are quite shy to talk is wiped out by my experience.

Leisure and social activities

I live in Jatkasaari island, which is a newly built artificial island. The architecture there consist of various style and it is very comfortable to live in. You can apply for it from Hoas. They have sauna and balcony to chill. There's also a huge playground and a football ground on that island. In my building, we have access to the gym, music room, movie room, and activity room. Lidl is within a few minutes walking distance. I was lucky enough to meet very friendly people in my building. A musician friend has invited us to join concert with them and we also did music jam together. We also celebrated birthdays for each other, have a sauna date together. The university also offers quite a lot of social groups for people to meet up and connect with. I have joined one debating team, which offers free lectures for participants to enhance their abilities in the depth of thinking.

Sustainability

You can book a flight ticket or a ferry ticket to go to Finland. I chose the ferry ticket because you can get a VIP discount and also a interrail discount as well. There are entertainments on the big ship for you to experience and you can have an astounding sight feast all along the way.

Other recommendations and observations

I recommend putting yourself out of this city by using their facilities, for example, their main library offers free seats to do self-study and a nice separate room to book. There are many small but sentimental coffee to stay in for having Fika or study.

I found Finnish people are really easy to get along with. They treat people with kind hearts. I was taking one free bed from one Finnish person and she and her friend came to help all the way to my place. They also treat people like family and invite them to family parties. It was a really nice experience.

