



Aalto University

Finland, Fall 2022-2023

YEUNG Wing Ching Vinnici (GBUS & ECON & IS, Year 4)

Sep 2022

I arrived Helsinki in September. I moved into the place that I will stay in for the following few months and I started my class on 5 September. As Aalto University is quite famous for art and entrepreneurship, I enrolled into 2 courses, one media art course and one digital entrepreneurship course for Period 1 (Sep-Oct). There are a lot of orientation and gathering activities for exchange students at the beginning of September, including the societies and clubs orientation fair, exchange students party, pub night and so on. I have met a lot of good friends through these orientation activities. A cruise tour to Sweden was also arranged for exchanged students at a very low price, we spent 2 nights on the cruise and played a lot of drinking games every night together, as well as travelled around Sweden in 6 hours. Besides joining the trip to Sweden, I have also travelled to Riga, Estonia, Germany, Vienna and Prague. We have so much fun in the Oktoberfest, almost all UST exchange students in different European countries attended this beer festival.



Oct 2022

I continued to travel around Europe with my exchangemates. We went to Norway, Denmark, Netherland, France, and Prague again. Besides travelling around, I am also working on my media art course hard. The course is a master level course and there a lot of famous people from around Europe taking this course, some includes famous singer (that appears as the top if you search on Google), famous DJ, famous Youtuber and so on. I am really amazed by the professional profile of my classmates. This also means that I will need to catch up quickly to work on the group project with them as I am from a totally different background. With the help of my groupmates, we produced a video that illustrate an architecture idea as our final project. Upon the end of Period 1, I travelled to the Northern part of Finland, Lapland. Although I was not able to see snow there, I was lucky enough to see moving Aurora called Corona, chat with Santa Claus, and try the Lapland traditional dishes.



Nov 2022

November marked the start of Period 2 (Nov-Dec). I only enrolled into 1 course in this period, an easy beginner level Finnish language course. As it is a self-paced online course, I was able to travel to different places around the world and complete the course during my free time. The Finnish course is very useful for daily life in Finland, I would recommend enrolling into this course in Period 1 if there is quota left, so you can use what you learnt in your daily life. But there was time clash for me in Period 1, therefore I can only enrol it in Period 2.



Dec 2022

As I completed all my courses in Aalto University, I returned to Hong Kong in early December. It is pretty early in compare with other exchange students, but I only studied 3 courses, so I was able to return in early December.

General Study Abroad Information

Visa Procedures

For HKSAR passport holder, you will need to apply for a student visa if you are staying for over 90 days. But I stayed less than 90 days, so I did not apply for visa.

Orientation Activities

There was a lot of physical orientation events for Aalto University exchange students at the beginning of the semester, including societies orientation fair, pub night, exchange students party, light drinking evening and many more. Almost all exchange students join these activities, as it is a good opportunity to meet other exchange students.

International Services & Activities

Beside the orientation activities for exchange students mentioned above, exchange students are also paired up with 9 other exchange students and an Aalto University buddy into a group. And usually 3 groups play together. Most other exchange students are from European countries and US, not many from Asia. Our Aalto University buddy will also pick us up from the airport and help us with dormitory check in.

Accommodations

There is no dormitory especially from Aalto University. Aalto University exchange students can apply for dormitory from the Helsinki centralised dormitory systems called HOAS or AYY Housing. HOAS provides furnished furnitures while AYY does not, so HOAS might be a better choice for exchange students. I lived in my friend's house, so I did not apply for dormitory. Some other friends of mine stayed in Airbnb as well.

Course Registration

Course registration for Period 1 and Period 2 started in early August. It is very different from Hong Kong's course registration system where we need to compete in terms of speed. For Aalto University's course registration, all students will be put on the waitlist during the course registration period. We will then need to attend the first lesson to secure our seats and get enrolled into the course officially. Enrolling into business courses was pretty easy, but it was quite hard for art courses.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

Every course has a different teaching and evaluation method, but most of them do not have exam. We usually end the course with a final assignment or final project. The teaching style is also a lot different from Hong Kong. Aalto University focuses a lot on class interaction and discussion. The learning atmosphere is also very relaxing.

Finance & Banking

Unlike my previous exchange in Korea, where we must have a Korean bank account, we do not need a Finnish bank account to live conveniently in Finland. We use Euros in Finland. Most shops accept international credit/ debit cards. I used HSBC worldmaster debit card (the green vertical one), which includes an Euro account, it worked everywhere I went in Helsinki. You can apply for HSBC One account, then you can apply a worldmaster debit card right away.

Climate

Finland has 4 seasons. The time I arrived Helsinki was Autumn and the time I left was early Winter. The temperature was around 10 degree Celcius in Helsinki and around 0 degree Celcius in Lapland. There was a lot of rainy days in Finland, and it started snowing in mid October.

Health & Safety

Finland is a quite safe, but still, you are suggested to carrying your personal belongings with you all the time.

Food

There are different cuisines in Finland, mostly European cuisines. There are also a few Asian restaurants. Some famous Finnish food are creamy salmon soup, reindeer pie and blueberry juice.

Transportation

We can search for bus and metro and train on an app called HSL. Students can purchase HSL monthly ticket as well. With that, we can travel in a certain zones as much as we like in that month. It cost around 55 Euros for a zone A, B, C monthly ticket. It would be more than enough for you to travel to the school, city centre, and the airport.

Communication

Finnish is the main language in Finland, but people there are fluent in English as well.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

As I love art and craft a lot, I enjoy going to the art street in Helsinki and going to vintage shops. There are also a lot of interesting exhibition inside the art building of Aalto University, named Vare. Most of them are pieces creates by Aalto University Students.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There are a lot of clubs and societies in Aalto University, but I did not join any.

Cautionary measures

Finnish people looks cool and they rarely smile on the street. But when you are in need and when you approach them and ask for help, you will find out that they are actually very friendly and helpful. So do not be afraid to reach out and ask for help, Finnish people are always willing to help.

Items to Bring

- Sweater, jacket, down, winter clothes
- Passport, HKID card, student card and driving licence (visa if you are staying over 90 days)
- Medicines
- Laptop, Hair dryer

Useful Links and Contacts

Sisu – Aalto University Course Registration Website

<http://sisu.aalto.fi>

My courses – Aalto University course portal (like Canvas in HKUST)

<https://mycourses.aalto.fi>

HSL – Helsinki Transportation App

<https://apps.apple.com/kr/app/hsl/id1340229182?l=en>