

FINAL REPORT OF STUDIES ABROAD

Personal and exchange data

Family name	First name
Lecklin	Tuomas
Degree programme	Specialisation
Degree Programme in International Business	eBusiness Management
Exchange period (dates)	Host country
3.8.2008-3.1.2009	Thailand
Host university	Exchange programme
Kasetsart University	Self-acquired/other – Asia Exchange Oy program

Before departure

<p>What information did you receive of the country and locality? Where did you find the information best?</p> <p>Finding information about Bangkok and Thailand for me was based on both previous experience, and what other people have told me on either the internet or personally. Thailand is really a phenomenon in Finnish travel, and getting information is very easy. There are numerous dedicated forums, and others sources of reliable information online.</p>
<p>What kind of information did you receive of the host university and study possibilities? Where did you find the information best?</p> <p>The information I received about the host university was provided by the company (Asia Exchange Oy) through which I acquired my exchange spot. They provided information on the courses I could take, and in addition they provided information on the host university.</p>
<p>Which departure orientation did you participate in TAMK orientation, Asia orientation,
joint orientation for all Tampere region university students?</p> <p>I participated in the TAMK orientation and the Asia Orientation in Helsinki.</p>
<p>How did you find the exchange application process in TAMK? Improvement suggestions are welcome.</p> <p>The exchange application process in TAMK was simple, and there were no problems. However I find that BBA students are not taken into consideration enough. We have a mandatory exchange and practical training abroad, and these take up in reality our entire third year. The third year is the most logical, and often the only possible, time to complete our studies aboard. This situation forces us to apply for exchange places during our second year; the problem is that people who don't have mandatory exchange usually apply during their third or fourth year, and due to their current study points they automatically rank above us in the application process. In reality at the moment, without for example interviews, BBA students get the spots that are left after third and fourth year students.</p>

Studying

<p>Did studies in the host university differ from your studies at TAMK?
 (Standard of teaching, study methods, amount of work, group size, facilities etc.)</p> <p>The studies in Kasetsart University differed greatly from studies in TAMK. We had smaller groups, around half that of the size we have in TAMK. The study methods were more lecture-based, in TAMK we usually have more hands-on projects. The facilities were very different as well, with the exception of our building most were run down compared to what you'd see in Finland. Still, we had access to computers, libraries and everything required. The processes in accessing them were simply more complex than in for example TAMK. Everything is usually more complicated in Thailand, and patience is useful. The standard of teaching varied from very good to satisfactory, and usually problems were only related to language barriers.</p>
--

How did you manage with the language of tuition? Did the host university offer language training?

Our tuition was in English, so that was not an issue. The host university offered Thai-language basics but this was not meant for any practical use related to studying in Kasetsart University.

Other exchange-related matters

Did the host university arrange an orientation for exchange students?

Kasetsart University together with Asia Exchange Oy arranged for us an orientation day. The day consisted of presenting to us: the courses, the lecturers, the people available for answering our questions, and of course each other.

What was the local price level? How many €/month were needed for basic living expenses (food, transport, etc.)?
How was housing arranged and what were the accommodation expenses?

The price level in Thailand in general is very low. Prices in Finland are often 3-5 times more than in Thailand. The area (15km north of the city center) where Kasetsart University is located is even cheaper; the city center is more expensive.

If you do not account for extra activities (such as travel), you can pay your rent and eat for as low as 500 euros a month. Transportation is also very cheap; public buses cost from 0.2-0.4 euros a trip, and 15km in a taxi without traffic is around 2 euros. It was perfectly affordable to take a taxi to and from school every single day.

Accommodation we had to find ourselves, although the University did have some sort of dorms to offer. However, for someone from Finland they are probably not quite up to par; also considering what they were like they cost relatively much.

There are many apartments in the area, but probably the best considering the location is Sawasdee Place. Here, a 48 square meter two bedroom apartment near the university cost approximately 250 euros a month including internet and electricity. There were other options available like a 36 and 76 square meter apartment, at 220 euros and 300 euros (including internet and electricity) respectively. Cheaper accommodation does exist, it depends on what you can live with.

Did the host university have any mandatory payments?

I went through an organization which arranges these exchange programs, and hence there was a cost. Everyone in my program paid a bit under 1000 euros for the spot. In addition to this some materials and field trips in the school cost us, but they probably totaled less than 100 euros during the entire program.

How were the travel connections in the study town?

Bangkok has a relatively poor public transportation system considering the sheer size of the city. There is only one metro line and it doesn't even reach Kasetsart University which is on the edge of the city; in addition the skytrain (metro above ground overshadowing the streets) only has two lines and these also are quite short. For anyone studying in Kasetsart these transportation methods are relatively pointless, because you have to first reach the closest stop by taxi or bus meaning you have to go through traffic anyway. Traffic in Bangkok is ridiculously bad, and it's a shame the metro and skytrain are such stumps.

Travel connections out of Bangkok elsewhere however are a thing of wonder. Bangkok is a huge flight hub, and AirAsia (low cost airline) flights are cheap to almost anywhere in Southeast Asia. There are also daily buses to nearby countries which cost nearly nothing (20-25 euros), and of course connections to destinations in Thailand are readily available as well.

What kind of extracurricular activities did the school offer? What kind of other hobby possibilities did the region offer?

The school had a wide offering of extracurricular activities; however these were not really advertised to us. If you happened to find out about some sports club or other activity you then had to ask about it yourself whether you could join. There were however many facilities and these were shown to us. There were: a soccer field, a rugby field, tennis courts, badminton courts, basketball courts (indoor+outdoor), swimming pools, aerobics classes, yoga classes, a gym, indoor sports hall (for e.g. volleyball and basketball), a Thai boxing ring, track and field stadium, a Budo-hall (for e.g. Judo), music halls, movie theater(s)(small-scale), and probably many others I have not seen.

Hobby possibilities in a city of 10+ million like Bangkok are endless. You can find every imaginable club/organization in Bangkok, and they are quite well advertised. Hobbies which require special surroundings (rock climbing, scuba diving) can be accessed easily through arranged trips.

Where there tutors or buddystudents on behalf of the school? Was the local Erasmus Students Network active? Did the student union of the exchange school arrange free-time activities?

There were no tutors provided, only people we could ask questions if we had any. It has now been planned that some Thai students might interact more with the exchange students to provide some sort of tutoring. However, one problem is the contradictions of timetables between exchange students and Thai students.

Did you get to know other students? If yes, from which countries? Was it easy to get to know locals?

I got to know everyone that was in the same program as me. Most of us lived in the same apartment building, and eventually everyone got to know each other.
All of these people were from Finland, and this is something that defines Asia Exchange as a company through which to get an exchange spot. Finnish people go to another country to study together, and it is entirely up to the university you choose how they incorporate the batch of Asia Exchange students with other exchange students. In our case, most exchange students in Kasetsart do Masters courses and they take place at completely different times such as evening and weekends. So this led to us studying with each other, although Kasetsart aims to change this starting 2009. The locals were quite hard to get to know, and this is because the level of English among students tends to generally be poor. This is the case in most of Thailand, with the exception of tourist locations.

Overall evaluation

What kind of goals did you set, for your international exchange?

The goal for my international exchange was to experience life as a student in another country. In addition to this I aimed to gain experience of how different cultures act differently in for example university surroundings. I also aimed to get a view of international business studies from the perspective of Thailand.

Did you reach the goals? If not, why?

I find that I reached all of these goals. I saw what being a student, or just living, in another country so vastly different from Finland is like. I also learned how very different people are in Southeast Asia, there are very little similarities in day to day processes and it really gives a good idea of how something can be done better or worse. Thirdly, I also received an entirely new perspective on studies relating to my field; business concepts using examples in Asia and especially Thailand.

Experiences/comments

Please, write here your experiences about studying abroad.

My exchange experience was positive. Thailand is an excellent country to experience a culture that is completely different. From this experience I can honestly say that I have examples of doing things otherwise relating to many subjects; I think I now have knowledge of how Asia works in an entirely different manner. If I were to choose again between a European country and Asian country I would again for the Asian choice, not because the weather is nice but because the experience is so far from what we see, hear, and do in Finland.