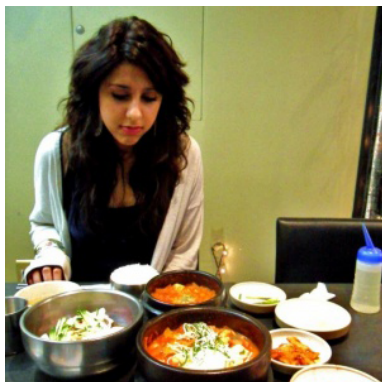


# Learning & Leading Gap Year Scholars

## ● Alina Khan

Dates	January to September 2010
Locations	Seoul, South Korea
Activities	Learning Korean



### ***What did you do on your gap experience?***

I studied three semesters of Korean language at the Korean Language Institute (KLI) at Yonsei University.

### ***What did you find easy and challenging?***

What I found most challenging was living in a non-English speaking country openly presented situations where I cannot communicate as well with other individuals, – circumstances such as problems within a bank, restaurant or train station. As my language skills improved, these situations became less challenging. Learning the Korean language proved challenging in itself.



I found getting the hang of transport easier as in Seoul the transport very similar to that of London. As my language skills increased, so did my ability to communicate with people became easier. Additionally, making friends didn't prove difficult as Korean people are very friendly and welcoming. Also, my school was full of students in the same position as me.

### ***What impact has your gap experience had?***

My knowledge and understanding of South Korea has increased tremendously. I learnt a lot about myself, including realising the things I'm good at and not so good at. My independence levels before this gap experience were not as high as I would have liked, but through my time abroad I was put in situations that I cannot choose and had to overcome. This helped me become more confident and showed me that I am capable of doing things alone. In the future I would definitely like to live and work abroad.



Through my time studying abroad, I was very motivated to come back and apply my time abroad and experiences to my geography study at university. I was ready and excited to come back to begin the completion process of my degree.

### ***What were the highlights of your gap experience?***

Meeting new individuals from numerous countries around the world, and studying together was the highlight for me. The ability to speak and even think in a new language was such an invigorating experience for me as I have never been able to



understand another language well. This highly inspired me to study another language at university (I am currently studying Japanese as an extra choice subject).

***How do you think this experience will help you?***

I learnt to become independent. I learnt a new language in depth and have been keeping up my language skills since my arrival back home. When I began my first semester at university, I was determined to find part-time work, whereby luckily enough a Korean restaurant located close to my university accommodation was looking for Korean speakers to work as a waiter/waitress.



***What do you plan to do next?***

I am studying geography at Manchester University. In addition to gaining a new part time job (a direct result of my new language skills), I hope to teach English abroad in Asia after my degree.

***What is your advice for anyone thinking of taking a gap experience?***

1. I would strongly advise to plan out a gap experience based around personal interests, such as the activities you would want to undergo. It is important to make this parallel to the particular skills you want to achieve/develop and hope to apply to your own specific future.
2. It is crucial to create a detailed budget and try your best to stick to it.
3. I also feel that it is important to make your gap year different from usual gap experiences, in order to stand out from the entire standard gap year participants – this may prove more beneficial to undergo something more different for the future.

