

## **Alumnus in South Korea: work and travel opportunities for recent grads**

by June Leffler

If you're a brave or wandering soul, there's no reason to start on your arduous career-climbing right out of college. After graduation, in this economy, we're anxious to make any kind of money. Maybe we put aside travel, as we think it will be easier once we've reached a certain point in our career. But for most people, it just makes it harder to take off time from work, then you're on to buying a house or it's time to start a family. If you look around and others are swept up in a career, family or education while you're simply not, take the time to realize how much opportunity you have because of that. And explore it.

There are many different opportunities to take. Mine is just one example of a pretty sensible and lucrative opportunity available to many folks all over the world. I teach at a public high school in Daegu, South Korea.

### **Why would you teach in Korea?**

**The perks, the money and Asia.** You can teach English abroad about everywhere, but Asia is the most lucrative and stable option. Your flight to and out of Korea are paid for. Your apartment is rent free. Almost four weeks of vacation. And a month's worth of pay bonus every year. No taxes. Pay is just under \$2000 a month for most people starting out. You can put half of your paycheck towards student loans or save for international travel. I'm going on a two month trip to southeast Asia and plan to bring home funds to get by for a couple of months. (The way to get most of the jobs in Europe is to arrive without a job, scour for interviews and see what happens).

**Escape your daily hell.** Whatever that may be: your parents' expectations, awful apartment, mundane routine, friends' baby pictures, lack of funds. You'll have a lot of free time and a brand new environment to explore. None of the societal pressures from the States will follow you here. No one will give you lip about spending all your money traveling or all your time half clothed in your apartment.

**Build your resume and confidence.** What can you do with a BA in English? Travel the world teaching English, duh. What can you do with that degree in Louisville? Honestly, there's cool jobs in Louisville too for a recent grad, but the searching and interviewing process can be really discouraging. A lot of us settle for part time work or service gigs. The mediocre town that is Louisville won't give me a job. Let me take a well paying gig in Seoul in the meantime. Later, when you come back, you'll have something outside of bartending on your resume and enough confidence to allow you to not settle for some lousy job. You'll also come back with some starter funds so you can take time with your job hunt. That definitely helps. You deserve more, the poor economy is no excuse.

### **The logistics?**

**Say you've never planned on teaching.** Neither did I. Employers take recent grads from all different degrees, it's understood that this might not be your calling. You're considered a guest English teacher, meaning there is always a Korean teacher helping you in class and you're only responsible for about 10 percent of their grade. Your workload is minimal, only teaching about 20 hours a week with a little prep and almost zero grading. Teaching itself is pretty god-awful for many (including myself), but some love it so much they fawn over their students in a really annoying way. While it isn't most people's calling, I definitely think most people should try it. It's never boring.

**You should do it if...** You got to this part of the article. Any interest you might have should be pursued. Look into it. Also, this is an awesome opportunity for a newlywed couple. Schools will set you up with a place together and you'll work at schools nearby. Without the whole making friends and dating anxiety everyone else faces, you can start the rest of your beautiful life together saving some cash and traveling. Start your journey as a couple, without having to settling down. Sigh, I envy them really.

**You should not do it if...** you're really into drugs (even marijuana). Did you know you can get 30 years of prison for smoking weed? If you're a vegan then it will be really difficult, but manageable. Don't plan on this if you're not ready to be an unofficial foreign ambassador. Basically, we have a sweet gig here, we can't have foreigners coming here and giving us a bad name.

**I'm interested, what should I do?** There are two ways to go about this: private or public. I went the public route, which is operated by the nationwide program, EPIK. Go to [Epik.go.kr](http://Epik.go.kr). There are plenty of private schools that also hire native English teachers. For job listings, check out [waygook.org](http://waygook.org), [eslcafe.com](http://eslcafe.com) or whatever you can find. What's the difference? EPIK has regular hours, more vacation time and a whole network to ensure you're supported( you can tell this was my route). Private schools let you choose your exact location and teach much smaller classes. It's best to be on your toes about accepting a private school job though, ask current teachers at the school how they are enjoying it.