

OUTLINE

1. Living in Korea
 2. What we like
 3. What we dislike
-

CHING

Wassup guys, we are Ching and Xing! Welcome to another episode of The DAMN RANDOM Podcast. Eh Xing.

XING

Yes?

CHING

한국에 얼마 동안 있었어?

XING

네?

CHING

Don't pretend you don't know Korean lah. How long were you in Korea?

XING

Hmm... I was in Korea for 6 months in 2013, and then from Summer 2015 to early 2017... so that was another 18 months. And then last year, I was in Seoul for another 3 months, so I guess in total about 2 years plus?

CHING

Wow, that's long.

XING

You?

CHING

Actually, I think it's about the same. Over two years, maybe close to three years. Not very long, considering there are people who complete their language studies in South Korea, followed by undergrad studies and then maybe masters, before proceeding to get a job here.

Let's talk about how it's like living in Korea. What do you like about living in Korea?

XING

I like living in Korea because of the weather LOL. I think you know what I mean.

CHING

Definitely.

XING

Singapore can be a little boring because it's summer all year long, and so ridiculously hot and humid 365 days a year.

CHING

Yah, no snow, no nothing. I WANT MY SNOW!!! And cold weather!

XING

Yah lor, I love autumn, so I keep finding myself wanting to go back to Korea.

CHING

Me too. But why Korea? I mean I'm sure there's a lot of other countries that have four seasons, and maybe even more beautifully so. Actually, the winter in Hokkaido is so much more beautiful.

XING

I think also partly because it feels like a second home already? And also because we know Korean, so there's less of a language barrier. I think if I were to try living in Japan for a month, things might get a little more difficult. 日本語できない

CHING

Yeah, I can't Japanese now too. It's so funny because every time I go to Japan, after my Yonsei days, I cannot stop 네-ing when I'm in Japan. Like, I can understand what they're saying, but I just cannot piece a sentence together in Japanese without the interference of Korean. Korean just comes more naturally to me now. Even though in the earlier days of my time in Yonsei, I couldn't stop thinking in Japanese. I'm not sure if it's the same for you.

XING

Hahaha I feel you! Just last week, I was working at a place where there were many Japanese, and one of them came to me and spoke Japanese. I sort of know what she was asking, so I directed her to the exit but I kept "네-ing" instead of saying "hai"!

BTW, I like living in Seoul, because it's just so convenient, and I can rent an officetel and have my alone time. It's just something that I cannot have in Singapore lah.

CHING

Mmhmm.

XING

I also like that you know, when we have days off, we can just take the KTX or bus out of Seoul and do a day trip, or even a 3D2N trip without leaving the country. In Singapore, we'll have to fly out somewhere. The only place we can do a day trip is maybe JB, and then for 3D2N trips, it's also quite limited to Southeast Asia, otherwise the time spent flying will be longer than we're in the country itself.

CHING

Yah lor. I guess that's why Singaporeans like to travel. I mean, there's really nothing much in Singapore, except shopping malls. Okay lah, I guess we have Gardens by the Bay and Jewel Changi Airport now. But we can't be going to the same places over and over again, and still find it THAT interesting right?

XING

Exactly. You know, it's weird that travelling from, for example, West to East of Singapore can be such a pain and we complain so much about how far it is? But if I travel the same distance in Seoul, like maybe Hongdae to Jamsil, I feel otherwise. I don't know why.

And Singapore is so hot that I don't even feel like going out. Like these days the weather has been so crazy to the extent that I sweat at home. What even!

CHING

You know I actually quite like summer in Korea?

XING

Siao. So hot.

CHING

It's hot but it's not as humid. Although the UV is quite crazy lah. Definitely need sunblock. But I just like that there's so much to do in summer. There's different types of flowers to see, like the hydrangea and sunflowers. Then there's all sorts of festivals and events. You know, like the beer festival and water

gun festival held yearly at Sinchon. It's just so much more exciting lor. Not that I drink beer.

XING

You can probably see the same kind of flowers at the Flower Domes too. LOL

CHING

... I know you know it's different.

XING

HAHAHAHAHA. Yah lah. But I think other than that there's really nothing else that we super like about Korea. Oh maybe the cafe culture.

CHING

Oh yah. The cafes. Singapore lacks that.

XING

I mean I like how Singapore has, you know, those hipster cafes where people usually go there for expensive food and insta-worthy pictures... But most of them are usually located at ulu places and they close at like what, 5pm?

CHING

Actually, there are a few cafes in Upper Thomson that usually close later in the evening. But in the other areas, they usually close quite early.

XING

In Seoul, it's like a cafe heaven man. I don't have to worry which cafe I can visit because they are really EVERYWHERE. The best part is, since they are everywhere, so it's not crowded and you can sit there for as long as you like.

Other than that, we're always complaining about Korea, true blue Singaporean style HAHAHAHA.

CHING

But it's legit irritating what, the things we complain about.

XING

IKR

CHING

Find me a person who likes being pushed away on a ridiculously wide and empty walkway or train cabin.

XING

You lor. HAHAHAAAA

CHING

I'm going to push you away the next time we're at the subway together. Just so I can get into an empty train cabin before you. Just so that I can fight for an empty seat. And just because I'm older than you by a few weeks.

XING

HAHAHAHAHA. Don't bully the weak leh.

CHING

Don't pretend to be weak leh. Got so much strength to push me away.

XING

Which do you find more irritating?

CHING

What which. You didn't even give me any options.

XING

LOLOL You know, the one question that our Korean teachers always ask in class? What can't we get used to in Korea?

CHING

Oh, that epically boring question. I bet we have the same answer. You want me to guess your answer or you reveal it yourself?

XING

You guess.

CHING

Dirty streets and no rubbish bin around. Confirm.

XING

HAHAHAHA. How you know.

CHING

Because that's one of the few things that I tell every teacher who asked. The pushing and the dirtiness. One of my teachers, oh I think the teacher I mentioned in the previous episode. The one who

asked me if Singapore is so clean that we can walk around barefooted. She was shocked when I said Korea is dirty. I couldn't believe she actually thinks it's not dirty.

XING

HAHAHAHA. I think because Singapore's standard too high already.

CHING

I think the lack of rubbish bins is also the reason why the streets are so dirty.

XING

[NEWS TIP] Actually, there is a reason why we seldom see rubbish bins around in Korea. In 1995, Seoul implemented a "Pay as you throw" system for waste management. So, you have to purchase trash bags for general waste and food waste, and they come in different colours and sizes. Of course, the heavier or the bigger the bag is, then the more you have to pay. Therefore, the people started to dispose of their trash at public rubbish bins illegally because obviously, they didn't want to pay tax for throwing rubbish, right? As a result, the Korea government decided to remove most of the public rubbish bins in Seoul, which is why we seldom see them around and have to always keep our rubbish in our pockets until we reach home or finally see a public bin somewhere.

CHING

Interesting. Actually rubbish bins are hard to find in Japan and Taiwan too. I think we're too pampered by Singapore haha. Like every hundred metres, there's a green bin. Then in shopping malls, there's almost always one just beside the escalators or lifts. OH. There's one more thing I cannot stand.

XING

What is it?

CHING

You also confirm kena before one.

XING

Really?

CHING

传教 and scammers.

XING

Of course, of course. It's almost like they're everywhere. Especially in Hongdae and Sinchon.

CHING

You have any crazy stories to share?

XING

Most definitely~

CHING

Epic one or not? I only remember this ajumma asked me for directions when I was walking from Ewha to Sinchon. She asked me where Yonsei is. So I pointed her in the right direction. But wow. I don't know what's her point in asking. She went off in the opposite direction. SJB.

XING

HAHAHAHAHA

I've met so many of them. Most of them would pretend to ask for directions as an opening line and then proceed to introduce themselves as some volunteers or dunno what, for some cultural events, and then ask if you have time to visit a place together with them. Like just recently, I was sitting on a bench at the Hongdae subway platform and a guy suddenly greeted me and said something like he wanted to make friends with me, so he introduced himself as a **연구생** (as in a research student) in Psychology. I kind of knew right away what's going to happen next, but I just wanted to see what his tactic was. So, he proceeded to ask if I know stuff like **사주(四柱)** or palm reading that kind of thing. So I told him I'm a foreigner but he was like, "아, 외국인이에요? 근데 한국말을 어느정도 이해할 수 있을지 모르겠지만..." and he started explaining to me about **사주** and all that stuff for a few minutes, which I had no idea what he was talking about lah. Then, he asked to follow him to his study area near **성신여대** Station.

Like hello, who in the right mind would follow a stranger to such a far place? I said I was waiting for a friend and rejected him.

CHING

Were you really waiting for a friend?

XING

And he said, "I know your friend is more important, but... If you could help me today, I would reeeeeeally be very grateful." So I rejected him a second time, third time, and the last time, he

looked at me, feeling stunned, confused, speechless. LOL. Then, he finally left.

So why are they scammers? They are actually "cult recruiters" trying to get you to join them, but they won't tell you their real identities until you follow them to the place, and that's when you may be scammed a sum of money for whatever stuff they are participating in. I'm sharing one of these typical experiences just so the listeners out there will beware of it. You probably may encounter such a case if you are alone.

CHING

Most importantly, just don't talk to them lah. Walk away immediately because I've also heard stories that you could be hypnotised when talking to them...

And then you know this Malaysian youtuber? He actually filmed himself getting scammed. There's also another Korean YouTube channel filming such scammers to warn foreigners about them. The host ran after the scammers around the streets of Hongdae. So funny I couldn't stop laughing.

XING

Sigh. Real life Korean drama. Macam Voice like that. Or Signal. HAAAAHA.

CHING

Yah man. Do you remember this Singaporean who was said to have gone missing after she travelled to Busan?

XING

Oh yah! Did she get found in the end?

CHING

I don't know. But it was said that she was last seen with some cult people. So it was suspected that she got brainwashed...

XING

So scary.

CHING

That's why nowadays when anyone approaches me in Korea, I instinctively ignore them and pretend to not hear them. I just pretend to not know English, Mandarin or Korean HAHA. And I always tell people who travel to Korea to be careful when someone approaches them. Most of the time they can tell that you're a

foreigner, that's why they're approaching you. Is this common in Singapore?

XING

I think there will be scammers and all also lah, but maybe not as many. And maybe we don't hang out at places where they are.

CHING

And corruption and theft are common problems in Korea lor. Together with 몰카. So much for having so many CCTVs. Okay la, let's not make Korea sound so bad. Although most people who've been here long enough would agree.

XING

HAHAHAHAHA. Do you think we'll get roasted for this episode? Like keep dissing korea.

CHING

What? For telling the truths that even Koreans agree is true? Okay lor. Then we better say more nice things about Korea. Okay you go and list ten things you like about Korea. I give you ten seconds.

XING

HUH

CHING

10

XING

WAIT

CHING

9

XING

EH WAIT!

CHING

8

XING

...

CHING

See. You cannot think of anything else beyond what we said.

XING

HAHAHAHAHA. But Korea is a beautiful country lah.

CHING

Of course. Otherwise we wouldn't be coming back for more.

XING

And then there are times when you meet super nice ajummas and ajussis who break the norm and tell you it's alright to sit on the priority seats. We just have to give up the seat when there's someone who needs it more. Usually most young people wouldn't dare to sit down, because sometimes they get scolded. Take the subway station's lift also scared will get scolded lor please.

CHING

Hahahaha. It's like in Singapore, we're so afraid of getting STOMPED please.

XING

Lololol. Seoul's also super convenient lah. One of the most connected countries in the world, in terms of WIFI. Then everything also can be delivered to your house one. Fast and good service.

CHING

You and your delivery.

XING

What, it's really very convenient mah. Normal parcels take as fast as 24 hours and food delivery takes as fast as 15 mins, omg.

CHING

Yah lah. I agree. As long as your internet doesn't break down, you can probably not step out of the house for the whole month. Eh quick leh. List ten things. Otherwise we can't end this episode. HAHAHAHA.

XING

Four seasons, got mountain got sea, cheap alcohol, 치맥, KTV 노래방 heaven, cafe heaven, shopping, DAISO, delivery, naver map.....

CHING

AWESOME. 10 points to Xing!

XING

HAHAHA! But really, how do you think life in Korea has changed you?

CHING

I think I'm more willing to reach out to people when I'm in Korea. Because you know, 人生地不熟, 远亲不如近邻, 在家靠父母, 出门靠朋友. HAHAHA I sound like I just recited a poem.

XING

Hahaha. SAME. For me right... I went to Korea with limited Korean speaking skill, no friends, 人生地不熟... Come to think about it, where did I even find such courage huh? But I became a very independent person because I got pampered so much I always depend on my parents at home, so living alone really helped me grow a lot.

You know how we were talking about no rubbish bins and all earlier? It was really a chore to separate recycling items and food waste, but it naturally became a good habit. I even brought this habit back to Singapore, although I'm not sure if our country is even doing its part lah... Heard stories about those bins hahahah. Another thing is maybe development skills? Like having the chance to explore cooking, the courage to socialise with people, going to the 부동산 real estate to look at houses and sign contracts...

CHING

HAHAHA talking about 부동산, I'm amazed by how they have one under almost every building. But anyway I guess the harsh reality in Korea helped to build my character.

XING

Yeah... So I guess even though we may have some negativity towards Korea, which we'll go into detail about Korean Culture in another episode, we still appreciate Korea after all. Sigh, what a love-hate relationship!

CHING

There's definitely things that we appreciate lah, but you know, sometimes human beings tend to take things for granted and remember the negative experiences more deeply than the positive ones. But as we continue with our weekly podcasts and discussions, I'm sure we'll end up talking about the amazing experiences.

So anyway guys, that's the end of this episode. Do let us know if you have anything in specific that you'd like to know about Korean

culture. If we have anything to say about it, we'll cover that in another episode! Okay. BYE.

XING

Don't forget to subscribe, like and follow. And then share!

CHING

You think you youtuber ah.

XING

LOLOL. Okay, bye! See you in the next episode! Don't forget to tune in! Bye bye!

END