

Welcome to the International House Turku podcast, your guide to living, working, and studying

in Turku

We are your hosts, Jonathan Murphy

And Rosa Pamukkanen

Hello

Hi

This week, we're answering your questions, as well as sharing your experiences of the

topics we have been talking about in the series so far

And then later in the episode, we will be looking ahead to the Christmas season in Turku

Finland's official Christmas city

Sounds great

Let's get started

Let's go

So Rosa, I'm afraid I have some bad news for you

Oh no

This will be the final episode of series one of the International House Turku podcast

Please don't cry

How do you feel?

That makes me feel very sad, very devastated, honestly

But yeah, another season, another episode

Absolutely

And we'll just think back to all of the topics that we have covered during season one so

far

We have had advice for newcomers

We have had starting a business

We've had Suomen kieli, of course, the Finnish language

Very important one

And studying as well

And of course, job hunting

So yeah, I was thinking that we would maybe take some time in this final episode to reflect

on those topics and also hear from our listeners, because apparently we do have some

Yes

And thanks to all of you who took the time to send us your questions and comments

So we will go and answer

Hmm

Yes

Hopefully we can do them justice

I will try

We will try

So let's just jump in

I think the newcomers episode, episode one, which, you know, was kind of an interesting

topic for many of you, seemed to really, there's a lot of kind of strong reactions to that

episode because our first two questions are really related to topics for newcomers

But the first question we have is from Junior

Hi, Junior

Hi, Junior

You very kindly wrote in to talk about your experience of cycling to discover Finland

as a newcomer

Maybe I can share your story

So you moved actually from Turin in Italy to Turku, quite a culture shock, I imagine

And coming from a big city, you said that cycling was maybe not something that you would

normally do

There was a lot of car and truck traffic, 70 kilometers per hour

I understand totally where you come from

But you mentioned that Turku makes you feel brave enough to start cycling

They have good cycle paths here in Turku and there is generally less traffic

You mentioned that Finland taught you that your rusty bike is perfectly good for day

trips and most importantly, you do not need to wear a Lycra jersey to consider yourself

a cyclist in Finland

I totally agree with your comments that cycling in both suburban and rural areas can be a

great activity to connect yourself with a new place if you are a newcomer, a joyful

and healthy activity that has a very low threshold and you don't really need much to start with

Rosa, would you agree?

How is your cycling experience in Finland?

Yes, absolutely

I feel like you always discover something new about cycling when you move to Finland

For some, they discover better roads

For the others, I won't name the country particularly, it might be a bit of a downgrade because we're

still working on those biking lanes

Sure

But absolutely, I think one thing that a discovery in a way for me was that, ah, people here

actually cycle all year round because back in Armenia, we usually would not think of

cycling in winter

We're like, okay, put the bike away for winter for good

But in here, I see people biking every day, no matter it's snowing, snowing, the wind

snowing and raining and the rest

I still see people

Yeah

Which is a great thing

Absolutely

And maybe one thing that helps with that is that here in Turku, we have the city bikes

So Feli, the transport company, they do offer bikes at different points around the city

So you'll see lots of people, again, any time of year, traveling around on these kind of

yellow bikes that are quite accessible

And for me, when I was a newcomer here and I didn't have my own bike yet, then I was

able just to kind of take the bike to cycle on these shorter trips around and it was very

useful for me

Sounds great

And we actually have another experience of somebody who had to fight their fear

So we heard from Laila, one of our listeners about her experience in ice swimming, a topic

that I would say, yeah, makes a lot of people fear, feel fear

But yeah, an interesting comment she made about that

She didn't really know what got into her when she said yes to the offer when somebody asked

her to go ice swimming

I feel like for many, it's not a thing that you would immediately go like, hey, do you

want to grab a coffee?

Yeah, sure

It's something that, do you want to go ice swimming?

Do you want to plunge yourself into a hole in the ice for fun of like, well

You have just arrived to Finland

How about we take you ice swimming?

Yeah, sure

But yeah, Laila said that that's exactly what she did and she was very fearful to the

extent that she could not sleep the previous night before the experience

But she said that actually it was surprisingly good as soon as you make yourself go into

that ice water and your body undergoes that shock, you think that, hey, actually I can

breathe and you are very, very concentrated into that moment

And she said that she could bravely actually be in the ice water for 10 whole seconds

Wow

That's a long time

Yeah

That's great

And she said that she commented that she even felt more alive than ever before

Okay

So for those who are actually, again, thinking of fighting their fear, maybe first go for

biking and then you can go and try the ice swimming experience

Speaking of which, have you ever tried it?

I have

I have

on the International House Tour Group social media channel somewhere. Actually, we took

a group last year to the island of Rusalo, which was one of our more interesting Welcome

to Tour Group activities. And again, I am so impressed that 15 people wanted to come

because I was sure that no one would want to go to this event where you just had to

kind of expose yourself to the elements somehow. But yeah, I really enjoyed it. And I'm not

like a huge ice swimmer in general, but the times that I have been, you do kind of, well

like you said, you do feel alive. It's a rush. It's like an endorphin rush. And what I found

most interesting was that when you kind of like, you know, you're in your bathing suit

and then you go out into the cold, it's freezing and then you go into the water and it's even

more freezing. But then when you come out of the water and you're standing in minus

10 snowy conditions, it suddenly feels, hey, this is actually quite manageable

Quite manageable. Yeah. And hey, if you want to, you know, tell people or visually show

people back home in your home countries that you have moved to Finland, well, a selfie

whilst ice swimming is an excellent way to do that

Yeah. And there are several places for ice swimming. So just Google that at this point

Yeah. Yeah

And they're pretty affordable as well, I would say

Definitely

Right. And then we also have some other moving from when you come to Finland as a newcomer

what experiences you can have, what you can try to do. We also had questions from or the

kind of comments from our listeners about the general health in Finland, in Turku. So

what is available to the newcomers?

Yes. And thanks to Ambreen, who left us a comment on our Instagram page, particularly

about this topic and also different kinds of tests or screenings that you can get through

the health services here in Finland. People new here have very little knowledge about

this topic, which certainly, yes, when I moved here, I found the healthcare system slightly

confusing. Maybe you did too

Yeah, it would definitely be different from the country that you are coming from. But

generally, maybe we could say that one thing, as soon as you're registered as a resident

in Turku, then these healthcare services would be available to you. So we would say that

that's the first thing to consider going to and getting your screening or visiting a doctor

Because of course, an alternative is the private doctor, but I would personally not recommend

it because those private services, of course, as great and fast they are, they're not as

budget friendly

No. And I'm coming from someone where we have free healthcare, generally speaking, in the

UK through the NHS. So the idea of paying 15 or 20 euros for a nurse's appointment here

was already enough for me. So I think private healthcare would be a shock to my system

But I mean, I know that registration process is slightly confusing. And again, maybe it's

something that we can cover in a future episode all about either healthcare or these registrations

but in our International House Turku guidebook, this kind of talks you through the full process

from registering with Migri to DVV. And the DVV allows you to get your Keller card, as

you mentioned. And then you kind of remember that actually Keller aren't so much the healthcare

providers, then you have to go to Varha, which Varha is the wellbeing services county of

Southwest Finland. But again, it's something that's maybe not always so accessible to newcomers

or to non-Finnish speakers. I think it's fair to say many of the communications on the website

are currently still in Finnish. But I understand that they are releasing an app quite soon

Yes. They are testing it out actually currently at the moment. If you download and start using

their app, there are two services available, the dental care and the social services. But

they're planning to move all the services from pretty much starting this year to 26

into the app, where it's a lot handier contacting a doctor, starting a check

chat, or let's say booking a time and whatnot. So the idea is to bring these services into your

pocket pretty much, make it more available. That would be great. Because at the moment

actually with anything to do with healthcare in the public sector, the easiest thing I found

is just to call them. So there is a number for the kind of central Turku city health center

You can call that number in English and then speak to a nurse and the nurse will kind of direct you

to either your local health center or the most appropriate service to meet your needs

Yeah, absolutely. And I mean, sometimes if you're not able to reach through immediately

then you can leave a request to get a call back. So I think that's a way to start

Yeah, definitely. Perhaps in the episode description, we can link to the service

the telephone service, because it's also useful. I know that for many of us, when we first move

here and we have so many registrations happening, we're never quite sure, do we have the right

municipality of residence? Do we have the right registrations with Keller in order to use those

services? But sometimes the easiest thing to do is to just ask and then-

Yeah, absolutely. I feel like any question you have, even if you have a slight doubt

just contact and you will get a reasonable reply, I would say, starting from which maybe

polyclinics is the one that you should go to, how you book a time and so on. So just, yeah

call them and get information. And of course, if you are unable to call them or if you need someone

there to kind of reassure you, then you can always contact the soft lending service here

at International Hospital. Yes, we will be happy to go through with you through all those steps

But moving on to our next question and comment. Thank you, Sonarda. We got a bunch of questions

related to finding a job, employment, which we actually covered in one of our episodes regarding

the employment. So maybe you could already find some answers to the questions there. But if not

maybe we could move on to one of the questions related to when you have been in the academia

how do you find a job? Do you have any comments for that, Jonathan?

Well, certainly I identify with that experience quite strongly. I was, you know, it feels like

I've been studying throughout my time in Finland, but certainly for the first two or three years

I was either on a Finnish language course or I was doing my master's degree at the University

of Turku. So it was slightly difficult to juggle those kind of daily studies and the fact that I

wanted to get good grades and kind of, you know, go somewhere, but also with kind of keeping my

eyes open to different opportunities and also having to kind of manage the job applications

and job interviews and internships at the same time. I can't recall if I said this tip in the

last episode or not, but like for me, when I was a student, you know, even though it was quite a lot

of work to balance both of these lives, the studying and the job applications, you know

you are, have to be open to all different kinds of opportunities. And actually when you are

studying in these places, both from the institutional level and also from being in a

class of, you know, other people, maybe in a similar situation to you, actually you are quite

well-placed in my opinion, to hear about different opportunities or to learn about different

whether it's an internship, whether it's different kinds of recruitment opportunities

like I think compared to just, if you were just at home job seeking, then in some ways

actually it might be sort of slightly easier to develop those networks that we always talk about

And that's what I tried to do during my time at university. You know, I tried to make sure that

I was meeting the right people on the right mailing lists. And certainly the, many of the

interns, many, I didn't have that many internships, but some of the internships that I did when I was

a student, I think at least one of them was only available to Turku University students. So in that

sense, I was able to really kind of make the most of my status as a student. But how about you?

Do you want to have an idea? Yeah, I would also say that actually while you're studying, while you are

in the academia, like you mentioned, of course, it's a great possibility, first of all, to find

out about a lot of projects, because a lot of projects are also done in collaboration, let's

say with other organizations. So it does not need to be only in the academia, kind of like you can

slightly sidetrack into already the working market through those projects, and the information

is best available while you are already studying. So I would say being active, finding out what

other projects there are outside of also of your department, because sometimes you might easily

still join as you're studying. But another thing, yeah, like you mentioned, finding a job placement

or kind of like a job practice while you're studying, while you're in the academia, considering

it as a future placement of a job is important. So I think that what's happened to you in a way

and to me also, that while we were doing the work practice, it kind of led to the current job that

we have. So I would say that that's the biggest advice. But other than that, again, I think you

can find more tips in our episode as well. Maybe more sort of concrete. Yeah, I really like that

here compared to certainly in the UK, where your studying experience is quite linear. You know

you go to school, then you go to university, then you go to the work, like the labor market

That's just the path. And then here, you know, it seems to be slightly more intertwined

this kind of lifelong learning and studying. And yeah, sometimes it's possible to study and then

find a job and then run away from any responsibilities with your master's thesis

But let's move on very quickly from that topic in case my supervisor is listening

Sonata also is asking about professions and particularly kind of speaking of the labor

market, industries which Finland needs workers in. Do we have any tips or comments about that?

And this is also a question that came up in, if anyone went to the study and stay in talk recently

and I think you can watch that recording back on YouTube, then this was also something that

came up and many people are very interested. If you're moving and graduating in Finland and

in Turku specifically, what type of work do we have here? What are the fastest growing industries

in Southwest Finland? Yeah, I think like not only in Southwest Finland, but generally in Finland

of course, like healthcare is something that is always demanded. So that would be one of the top

on the list. But again, tech, what else do we have in the area? Sure. I think you're right

that generally speaking, healthcare and tech would be the fastest growing. Although of course

speaking is on neither of us have that kind of experience. So we can't say that everyone has to

go into those industries, of course, like you can find jobs through many different channels

But here in Turku, actually in the episode description, we can maybe link to the Invest

in Turku website, which is run by our friends at Business Turku, which has a really nice overview

of the regional strengths of Southwest Finland, which currently are clean technology

pharmaceuticals, maritime and tech and digitalization and AI. And like I said

we're not saying that if you want to find a job here, you have to be in those four areas. But of

course, if you do have a background in those four things, and I think many of the international

master's programs at our higher education institutes are somehow linked to these kind

of companies in these fields, then usually many of the bigger companies operating in these fields

are on our doorstep. So there are regional strengths, but don't panic if you, like me

are a philosophy graduate who doesn't have any idea about pharmaceuticals or AI or building

ships. Of course, there are often different channels that you can find other opportunities

Yes, absolutely. And a lot of times, even if you do have the background

a lot of times you have to make your own pathways, you have to build it. So it is not a given that if

you have a degree or a diploma from these areas, you're immediately going to be placed in the work

market. So yeah, it's something always to think about and plan. But I believe we have another

question, don't we? Sure. Yes. We have been sending throughout the series

our roving reporter, Daniel. And yeah, I understand that Daniel has a question for us too. So let's

hear from him now. Hi, Rosa and Jonathan. I also have a question for you. What makes Christmas in

Turku so special? Maybe you could share some tips with us on how to make the most of it

Thanks, Daniel, for that very festive question. And that's a good transition from the job market

job hunting topic into the Christmas holidays, time with family, festive presents, food

Definitely. And I think it's fair to say that Christmas is one thing that Turku does really

well. Turku is, well, officially the Christmas city of Finland, the Joulu-Kaupunki, as they say

here. And there are a lot of different Christmas traditions, including one that I believe dates

back to the 1300s. Yes, there is