

Cittaslow International Conference – Jane Trippett- Jones Reports

South Korea is not a country that immediately springs to mind for a brief visit. It's about six thousand miles from the UK and, although I knew it was in Asia, I had to look on a map to check exactly where it was! Nevertheless the Cittaslow international conference was being held there and we were invited to go. There are fourteen member countries and at the conference there were going to be over 200 international attendees. On June 24th Councillor Tony Palmer and I set off for the first part of our long journey to South Korea.

South Korea covers an area of 38,345 square miles with a population of 48.3 million. It's one of the world's major economies and is at the leading edge of the digital revolution. My initial thoughts were, how could this country be embracing the Cittaslow ideology? However, these thoughts were well and truly banished during our stay as we visited three of the six Cittaslow Korea towns.



On the first day we gave our presentation which was a fantastic opportunity to promote Diss in front of an international audience. It is always daunting standing up in front of people and this was no exception especially as the stage was very large! Tony introduced me as the 'new' face of Cittaslow Diss before I continued with the presentation, which was based on a film that had been made for us by Toby Foster, a Diss 6th former. You can never rely on technology and a minute into the film the sound went off! My past experiences with audiences (thanks to Mere Players for that!) helped, as the adrenalin well and truly kicked in. I improvised and managed to talk through the history and attractions of the town.

We were very fortunate as not all countries were able to give presentations. Diss was also promoted on large picture display boards along with all the other towns in attendance. Diss Farmers' Market bags were welcomed and distributed. It is nice to know they will be used in countries around the world, further advertising Diss.

Later that day we went to the first of the evening events where I was asked to say a few words. Nothing like being put on the spot!

The days were jam packed starting early in the morning and finishing late in the evening. During the next two days we visited three Cittaslow towns travelling the length of the country by train and bus. The media were very much in evidence and both Tony and I were interviewed by television and radio reporters. The welcoming committees were wonderful and the people kind and friendly.

It was an exhausting but exhilarating trip and we both came back inspired by the whole experience. The dedication of fellow Cittaslow representatives, which embraces so many different cultures, has motivated me to bring new ideas and a new enthusiasm to Cittaslow in Diss.