Singapore is a very metropolitan city, similar to Vancouver in many ways. The weather in Singapore, however, is very warm and humid. The temperature gets up to 30 degrees Celsius every day, with an hour of rain in late afternoon a common occurrence. As such, you will often need to carry both sunglasses and an umbrella! While packing, bring both clothing for a hot climate, as well as light sweaters and pants for air conditioned areas, such as lecture halls. I would also recommend packing necessities for your room on campus. For example, you will need to provide your own bedding, clothing hangers, and any other items besides the basic furniture provided. You may also choose purchase some of these items from malls in Singapore.

Like Vancouver, Singapore is known for being quite an expensive city. The overall cost of living is relatively high. That being said, campus prices and facilities are often not as high as you would find downtown. The average meal on campus may cost $4, depending on your food preferences. Venturing downtown, however, you will experience steeper prices on most things. Alcohol is especially expensive in Singapore due to high taxes. Uber and Grab are popular modes of transportation. These services as well as conventional taxis are cheaper than you find in Vancouver. That being said, you can drive from one end of Singapore to the other in under an hour, so the price likely reflects the distance actually travelled.

Singapore’s public transit system is very developed and reliable. There are 2 public bus lines present on campus. The MRT system runs many lines across the country, with the closest stations to NTU being Pioneer and Boon Lay. The payment system for transit is the same as Vancouver’s compass card scheme. You can buy an EZ-Link card to load money onto and use it for busses as well as the MRT. You simply tap in/tap out with the card. Conversely, you can load money onto your NTU Student card to use on transit, as it has money-loading capabilities. On campus, NTU runs 2 free campus lines – Red and Blue line. They run the same route in opposite directions, 7 days a week.
In Singapore, both credit and cash are widely accepted. Most food stalls on campus will only accept cash. I would recommend withdrawing cash from ATMs on campus for certain payments, and use credit for others. Depending on your particular bank fees for withdrawals/credit transactions, this may vary. There are several ATMs and bank branches on campus.

As of 2017, there were no direct flights to Singapore. Upon arrival at Changi Airport in Singapore, it took about 40 minutes to taxi to NTU. There were 2 orientations in the first week before classes begun. The first orientation was for business exchange students, speaking on course specifics and add/drop period. Following this orientation, they held one for all exchange students. Here, they had speakers talk on our compulsory medical plan, safety, and general tips for NTU. These orientations were very important to attend, as much information was given.

Before classes begun, every exchange student had to register with student support. This is located in the Global Lounge at North Spine. At the Global Lounge, there were students promoting campus tours over the next few days. I recommend signing up for one of them, as they are a great way to get more comfortable with the campus and meet fellow exchange students.
Accommodation on campus was offered to all exchange students for the semester. The hall allocation is done by a random ballot. On the housing application, you can choose a preference of single or double room. This is just a preference, however, and is not guaranteed. Each hall has a study room, laundry facilities, shared bathrooms, and a pantry. In the pantry, there is typically a cold/hot water tank, microwave, sink, and hot plate. Cooking is not common amongst students, but there is a wide range of food options on campus with many canteens and food courts located in the halls. Payment for the halls is done at One Stop in North Spine.

The academic system at NTU is very similar to SFU’s. Courses are held once a week each, usually consisting of 1-3 hour lectures, sometimes with a tutorial lead by a teaching assistant. Business courses are graded on a curve, like SFU. NTU does not hold midterms, but has final exams for most courses. STARS planner is the system through which students add/drop courses and check exam dates. The Hive is a new building at NTU, home to many study areas, a small library, and tutorial rooms.
Singapore’s 3 major nationalities are Chinese, Malay, and Indian. Language barriers typically do not exist as English is primarily spoken. Reflecting this diversity, Singapore has various culturally-inspired sites. For example, Little India in central Singapore is home to Indian restaurants, shops, and Hindu Temples. The Chinese Gardens are relatively close to NTU, and are lovely for an afternoon excursion. Arab street and Haji Lane are also popular spots to visit. I recommend spending a day at the Botanical Gardens. With free entry and so much to see, it is definitely a worthwhile adventure. Many of Singapore’s iconic highlights are located in the downtown area. You can transit down there in just under an hour, or Uber in less than half an hour. Clarke Quay is popular at night, with many bars and restaurants. Marina Bay is also a great destination to check out both day and night. Gardens By The Bay holds a free show every night (below). There is also a free nightly show in front of Marina Bay Sands. The ArtScience Museum is located in Marina Bay, and has special student rates. 1-Altitude is Singapore’s highest rooftop bar, with beautiful views of downtown. There are often exciting things happening downtown, so keep updated with special events!
Although Singapore is an expensive city, it is possible to live on a budget and still enjoy all that Singapore has to offer! Take advantage of the events held at NTU and downtown. As NTU is located at the far west end of Singapore, you may sometimes feel distant from the action downtown. However, being such a small country, you really are not that far out and the transit systems are very efficient. Singaporean students study extremely hard and take their university marks very seriously. If you are placed in a group with local students, be prepared to
meet up on weekends and evenings to work on projects. At the same time, local students are typically understanding of exchange students’ pass/fail position and need to travel. Singapore is the perfect central location to explore Southeast Asia. Travel can be relatively cheap in this region. Remember to do research on the countries you are traveling to, as there are some areas which are dangerous to tourists.

Overall, Singapore is a wonderful, diverse city-state with lots to offer. Its similarities to Vancouver lessen the impact of culture-shock. NTU typically gets a large number of Canadian exchange students, so try to make connections with people from other countries! Be prepared for hot, humid weather with late afternoon showers. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Nanyang Technological University and highly recommend it as an exchange destination!