Summer 2014: Summer Exchange Program

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Hong Kong, China
Partner University: The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Country: Hong Kong, China

Major/faculty: Communications

Exchange Period: Summer 2014 (June-August)

Preparation:

Preparing for my trip to Hong Kong was very easy even though a bit tedious. There is a lot of preparation and paperwork involved with getting accepted to go on the SFU formal exchange, choosing your host institution, and getting a visa.

Tip: Do your research and begin preparing early! There are instructions for everything so read them carefully, be aware of deadlines, and don’t leave anything until the last minute!

Packing:

Summers in Hong Kong are extremely hot! I brought mostly warm climate clothing (and not too much because I planned to shop in Hong Kong).

Don’t forget to bring...
- Mosquito repellent
- TISSUE PAPER (restaurants usually don’t give out napkins, and trust me, you’ll be sweating a lot because Hong Kong’s weather is very humid)
- Souvenirs of Canada for the new friends you meet :)
- Umbrella- typhoon season comes with LOTS of rain

Traveling:

Roundtrip airfare was about $1300, and getting around Hong Kong is super convenient and efficient. Get an Octopus card to ride the bus and MTR (train) line.
The Chinese University of Hong Kong is the only university in Hong Kong that has its own MTR train station so it is very convenient.

Taxis are common and generally safe.

Bring cash as it is the most common form of payment. Many shops do not accept $1000 HKD bills because of counterfeits, so make sure to have bills smaller than this.

$1 Canadian Dollar = Around $7 Hong Kong Dollars

Cost of living is pretty similar to Vancouver, but you save on the tax!

**During the exchange:**

My arrival to Hong Kong was great! The long bus and MTR ride allowed me to get to know the city and the beautiful scenery Hong Kong has to offer.

I did not personally live on campus, but heard great things about it. 2 people share a dorm, and the buildings are new! Air conditioning, internet and phone access included in each room.

The variety of food in Hong Kong is incredible and everything is delicious! However, the same cannot be said for the university’s cafeterias. The food is mediocre and there are not a lot of vegetarian options. Your best friend will be the *Maxim’s Restaurant* (HK style cafe) at the university MTR train station. Two train stations from the university is the biggest mall of the area called *New Town Plaza* which has all the stores you can think of PLUS lots of food choices including: Pizza Hut, Japanese Food, Dim Sum restaurants, McDonald’s, Ruby Tuesday, and Chinese food restaurants.
There is a must-try, very famous Lemon Pie at the University that students rave about.

The classroom environment was small (SFU tutorial style) and very fast paced. The professor was enthusiastic, engaging, and very encouraging. We had quizzes every week, weekly assignments, and a final exam. I took a language course in Cantonese (lower division elective). The professor taught in English and Cantonese. Classes were 3 times a week for 2.5 hours each.

My schedule was: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:30am-12pm

Extra-curricular activities were planned every Saturday for the university students. We embarked on buses every Saturday morning and visited Hong Kong’s famous landmarks, beaches, and islands. We also went to the Big Buddha Temple and Ocean Park/Disneyland.

There are a lot of social and extra-curricular activities you can participate in, and a bit of everything for everyone’s taste. Make sure to explore the city! Especially SoHo and Central district.

**Reflection:**

*Last Tips:* Be prepared to do a lot of walking and get used to the huge amounts of people you will be seeing everyday. Carry your student ID and a copy of your Canadian passport with you at all times (and TISSUE PAPER). Try new foods (especially HK style milk tea and desserts!) and try to learn some Cantonese expressions to use everyday. Stay hydrated (7/11 will be your best friend)! Respect the rules of the dorms and university (very strict about non-smoking rules for example).
My Summer exchange trip to Hong Kong was one of the main highlights of my university career at SFU. I’m very thankful I was able to learn a language in a new city and university, while meeting so many international students and making new friends. My trip to Hong Kong made me realize how much I love the fast-pace of the city and that I want to continue my career there one day.

I highly recommend coming to The Chinese University of Hong Kong for an exchange program and exploring the amazing city of Hong Kong.