Exchange Report

Studying Abroad at City University of Hong Kong

My partner university for my exchange was City University of Hong Kong. My major is in business and I entered the College of Business at the university. I studied in Hong Kong during Semester B 2014/15, which was from January 5, 2015 to May 17, 2015. Going to Hong Kong for my exchange was my top choice because I have always wanted to visit Hong Kong since I was young. I would always watch Hong Kong TV shows and wanted to visit the places I have seen in those shows. I also chose Hong Kong because it was close to other Asian countries I wanted to visit, like South Korea. I was also able to use and improve my Chinese during my exchange there.

Preparation for Exchange

There were a few things I regret not doing more research on when I was preparing for my exchange. I should have checked the weather history and asked more people about the weather in Hong Kong. By not doing the research, I ended up packing a lot more clothes than I needed to. I was initially told that it may be very cold in Hong Kong between January and February and as a result, I packed a lot of winter clothes. However, it turned out that it began getting warm around late January and I did not wear one-third of the clothes I packed. I also regret not finding more information about the check-in procedure at the student residence and finding a map online for the campus. When I first arrived at the university, I had a hard time finding the student residence since it was separated from the campus. Looking up directions online prior to my arrival would have made my first day in Hong Kong a lot easier.

Some important items to pack are a lot of summer clothing, sun screen, an empty luggage, mosquito repellant, and anything you want to personalise your room. The international exchange club organized a few trips to IKEA during the week before classes began for students to buy a blanket, pillow, or any other items they will need for their room. A big mall, Festival Walk, is also connected with the university. Therefore, you do not have to worry if you forgot to pack anything. There is a canteen in the middle of student residence and it offers good food at a really cheap price. Cost of living at the residence was roughly 3-4 times cheaper than living in Vancouver. Transit in Hong Kong was very easy to use and about 4-5 times cheaper than Vancouver. The Student Octopus Card gave students 50% off MTR rides and it was important to apply for this as soon as possible. I have a bank account at HSBC in Vancouver, which is why I used primarily cash in Hong Kong since I can just withdraw from the many available HSBC atms.

During Exchange

The university suggested each student to arrive a week before classes started for orientation. Orientation consisted of a guide leading a group around the school, informing students of activities that we could sign up for, and a welcoming party for all exchange students. I was really satisfied with how the university helped me find my way through the school and setting up events for exchange students to meet one another.

Lectures were not very different from lectures in SFU. However, most of my classes had mandatory attendance and the university has a policy where a professor can fail a student if he/she misses 3 or more lectures in a semester. I thought this was a good policy to encourage students to attend more classes and the professors seemed lenient to students that had a legitimate reason to miss class. I feel that the grading in City University of Hong Kong was a
little easier than SFU. Most classes also had a group project, which was a good opportunity to meet and work with the local students.

Hong Kong has a relatively high population density and a different culture from Canada. There are a lot of people everywhere you go and everyone always seems to be in a rush. There were a lot of pushing and shoving when entering the MTR stations and in the streets. It was a little uncomfortable at first, but by the end of the semester, I felt like I was one of them. The weather became very humid and hot around March. I found myself wearing a t-shirt and shorts everywhere I went, even when it was raining. Typhoon season starts around April where there were periods of heavy rain that made going outside impossible.

Hong Kong’s skyline is one of the most beautiful things I have seen and I highly recommend going to Victoria Peak at least once. Central is a major shopping district where there are many brand name stores. It is also close to tourist attractions such as the Avenue of Stars, Temple Street, and many museums. Lan Kwai Fong is a very famous bar and clubbing area in Hong Kong and it is certainly worth a visit. There was also a bar near the university that many local students go to drink and play games. Sham Shui Po and Mong Kok are great places to go to get electronic goods, food, bubble tea, anime figures, clothes, and many other items.

Reflection After Exchange

Studying abroad in Hong Kong was my first experience of living on my own and traveling by myself. I learned to become more independent and handling my own problems without having my parents there to help. It was a great experience to meet students from all over the world and learn about their own cultures. I learned a lot about the culture in Hong Kong from speaking with local students and from the events I attended that were offered by the school, such as the Chinese New Year party. It was difficult at first since I was in a foreign country where I did not know anyone. But when I decided to initiate conversations with other exchange and local students, I developed a lot of new friendships and now have friends from all over the world. I explored Hong Kong with my new friends and it was nice sharing the experience with people who were in the same situation as I was. My advice is to start conversations with the local students since they may be a little shy. Also have an open mind and be prepared for the fast-paced culture in Hong Kong.
Restaurant in Tai Wai
View from Cheung Chau Island
Ocean Park