Exchange Report
National University of Singapore
Fall 2014 + Spring 2015

Introduction

I attended the exchange program at National university of Singapore (NUS) for two semesters, Fall 2014 and Spring 2015. As a Communication student at SFU, I got enrolled to the department of Communication and New Media under Faculty of Arts and Social Science.

Preparation for Exchange

VALUABLE RESOURCES

Three resources from NUS were super helpful in my pre-departure. They are the registration guides for exchange students, International Students Guide, and NUS Academic calendar for 2014-2015.

PACKING

1. Clothing for Humid & Tropical Weather
2. Umbrella & Rain Jacket
3. Sunscreen
4. Travel Adaptors and Electronics
5. Mosquito Repellent
6. Swimwear

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

The Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system is probably the fastest way to get around Singapore besides taxis. Besides being one of the cleanest transport systems in the world, the MRT provides scenic views of Singapore heartland and city areas, with great access to almost every part of the city. You can also travel by bus and cabs. Cabs are only allowed to pick up or alight passengers at designated taxi stands in the city centre. The cab booking fee via phone or online varies in range from S$3 to S$8. Hotels and shopping centre taxi stands are always good places to hail a cab.
FINANCIAL DETAILS

I did not apply for the local bank card as many troublesome documents and appointments were required for the application. I withdraw money from my debit card account when it ran out. I usually use my own credit card to pay for groceries and shopping. Cost of living is not as expensive as Vancouver. Accommodating on campus also helps control the budget. For example a meal in school only costs S$3-5. My accommodation of first semester is Prince George’s Park Residence (PGPR). The accommodation fee was around S$2,000. My second semester residence was in U-Town, which costs S$2,200. On average I paid S$600/month, which is similar to Vancouver’s renting price.

During Exchange

After all had been prepared the day I had been anxiously waiting for arrived, I flew to Singapore on July 31, 2014. The first thing I noticed when I got out of the airport was the warmth, it wasn’t like summer in Vancouver, but it was somewhat tropical. I felt a little lost, but luckily my NUS student buddy was waiting for me at the airport, we later on became the best of friends. The scenery from the taxi on the way to the university was so different to that of Vancouver. The city was filled with modern buildings but was strangely in harmony with the tall tropical trees dotted throughout the streets, and the Marina bay sands simply took my breath away.

We arrived at Prince George’s Park Residence, my first hostel for my stay. The hostel was slightly older than alternatives such U-town residence, but was peaceful, comfortable, and made me feel at home. Around half of the residents in Singapore are exchange students and the rest are local students who prefer to stay in a quiet living place. In fact most local students live in halls of residences. One of the best features of residing on campus is that there are always other students around, which makes life interesting and making friends almost inevitable.

Although Singapore is a small country, the life in Singapore is enjoyable and vibrant. As a design student myself, I love exploring art-related places outside of school. There’s many amazing art galleries (figure 1), exhibitions and concert (figure 2) that are free of charge. I go to as many as possible in my spare time.
Ladies’ night every Wednesday is also a highlight of my nightlife in Singapore. If you were to ask me which club you should go to, I would certainly recommend club KUDETA (figure 3) which is located on the top of Marina Bay Sands hotel. The music and view are as good as in luxury bars.

Reflection After Exchange

Despite all these wonderful times of Singapore, I certainly confronted challenges in my academic life. As the top university in Asia, classes in NUS are graded in Bell Curve system, and everyone has to study so hard for better grades. As exchange student, I also have to study hard to avoid a D or an F grade. The second semester I took a Japanese course, and the workload was super intense. As you can tell from my weekly schedule (figure 4), Japanese was taking over 75% of my class schedule with 2-hour lecture and 5-hour tutorials every week. Not to mention we have many vocabulary to memorize and homework to complete right after each tutorial. Among all classes I have taken in NUS, Japanese is the only class with final exam (other communication courses do not have final exam). The last few minutes when I was sitting in the exam room and thinking back to the days I spent in Japanese, I was so proud of my hardworking and language growth.
When it comes to this question “What you wish you knew before you left”, I do not know how to answer this. Before my departure to Singapore I did not know much about this city. Many people say Singapore is a tiny country, so I thought it should be a little smaller than Japan. What I did not expect is that Singapore is a nation-state, so every travelling from Singapore is considered travelling abroad. That being said, this is my style of living life. I literally did not know anything about this place, but when I am leaving this beautiful city, I gained far more than I could have ever expected. This has been the best year of my life. I made life long friends from different parts of world, I had great roommates with whom I could share everything, and I learned how to appreciate things and enjoy every minute of life. I am even amazed by how much I have been changed from this experience.

Tips for incoming students

* Be social. Meet people! Make international friends! You will have a lot more friends this way.
* Be brave. Have REAL experiences. You might never return, so don’t wimp out of anything, or you might regret it for the rest of your life.
* Be open-minded and beware of expectations.
Photos

THE LARGEST STARBUCKS IN SINGAPORE
(AT NUS CAMPUS)

THE CLOSEST CITY OR TOWN CENTRE
(ORCHARD SINGAPORE)

FUN OR UNIQUE ACTIVITIES THAT YOU CAN
PARTICIPATE IN ON CAMPUS OR NEARBY

A PHOTO OF YOU (OR YOU WITH
FRIENDS/ROOMMATES)