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Study Program: Psychology
Exchange semester: 1
Academic year: 2014-2015
Host University: Nanyang Technological University
Country: Singapore

I GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Singapore is very clean and safe, with all the beautiful big buildings it really is a breathtaking city. The island is not very big, the airport (Changi Airport) is located in the east of Singapore, the city center is in the south and NTU is located in the west. By MRT, which is the metro transfer system, it will take you around 2 hours to travel from the airport to NTU, and around 1-1,5 hour to get from NTU to the city center. Traveling by MRT is very easy and not really expensive, but in my opinion I would have liked it better if the university was closer to the city center, because the center is amazing and it was always kind of an effort to go from NTU to the center. My favorite place in Singapore is a spot where you get the best view of the skyline, I found out about this place 2 weeks before I left unfortunately, it is located all the way in the back of Gardens by the Bay, it's called Marina Barrage and it's a green rooftop and the view is absolutely overwhelming. There are also a lot of good places to eat in Singapore, one of those places is Lao pa sat, and at almost every MRT stations there are big shopping malls with food courts.

II Practical Information

A month before the start of my semester I received pre-arrival information from the host university. You have to read everything carefully, although it is all very clear what steps you need to take, it is a lot of important information and you cannot forget anything.

You do not need a visa for Singapore, but you do get a Student Pass. You will get all the information about the Student Pass and I didn't experience any difficulties with this. There was nothing organized for my arrival, there is no one to pick you up or anything.

Orientation Day

Surprisingly there was only this one Orientation Day, it basically was a three hour lecture where they explained things about how to register for courses but most of it was about safety and all of Singapore's rules. I was expecting more of an introduction week where you can get to know other exchange students, like in Tilburg, but there was nothing like that, not even one day. We didn't have a student mentor or buddy, a buddy would have been really nice, because the campus is very big and at the beginning I got lost several times. So overall I definitely missed certain things that in my opinion should have been arranged by the NTU.

Housing

You can apply for on-campus housing at NTU, I did but my application was unsuccessful. Only a few people are getting on-campus housing, for the people who don't there is really no help with searching for accommodation, they do give you a few links with websites where you can search for housing but they weren't helpful. I really had a hard time with looking for accommodation, at first I tried to get in touch with other exchange students to look for accommodation together, but it was difficult to search when you're not in Singapore so nobody really knew what to do. I was lucky my dad knew someone in Singapore who helped me with searching for accommodation. I eventually found a room for my own in a condo, which is an apartment complex with generally a swimming pool, gym and security, but I paid a lot for it (900 SGdollar). Singapore is expensive for living and it's normal to share a room with another student. On-campus you also have to share a room with another student, you don't have a kitchen, and if you want a fridge you have to buy one your own, but for the room you pay almost nothing compared to off-campus housing. In the first month I found out that I didn't like the place where I lived because there was no one to talk to when I was at home and it was expensive, so I wanted something else. Eventually I found 6 people with whom I could live, we rented an apartment at a condo it was called The Floravale, I paid around 600 SGdollar, but I shared a room with 2 other girls, which was definitely not the best way of living, but at least it was less expensive and more fun. In the end I was really happy with my accommodation, I had a really nice time with my roommates, and the condo was nearby a supermarket, NTU and a bus station. So if your on-campus application is unsuccessful, my

advice is to contact other exchange student (through Facebook) and try to find a condo together.

Living Costs

I financed my exchange period mostly by my own savings and partly from my parents. Singapore is a bit more expensive in living costs, except on food which is really cheap, especially on campus every eatery is subsidized there. I spent most of my money on housing and traveling, but I think it's definitely worth it to spend your money on traveling. And I think it is not worth to spend a lot of money to have your own room (if your on-campus housing application is unsuccessful), I shared a room with two other girls and it saved me a lot of money.

Monthly Budget:

- Housing: 600 SGDollar
- Food: 120-150 SGDollar
- Transport 50 SGDollar (depends on where you live and how often you go to the center)
- Books 40 SGDollar
- Miscellaneous 60 SGDollar (most on travelling)

Academic Calendar

I arrived on the 31st of July, which was early because I wanted enough time to search for accommodation. The orientation day was on the 7th of August and the semester started on the 11th. In the middle of the semester we had a recess week which was from 29 September till the 5th of October. The last day of class was on the 14th of November, after that we had a reading week in which you could study for your exams and finally the examination period which was from 24th of November till the 6th of December.

Social Activities

There is an organization for exchange students which is called Singapore Uni (this is not from NTU), they organized a lot of parties for all the exchange students for the three universities in Singapore. Especially in the beginning this was a perfect way to get to know other exchange students. Even before the beginning of the semester I went to the Explore Singapore trip, this was a really nice way to discover the city and I met a lot of people there. It is really easy to meet new people, because in the beginning that's what everyone is looking for. Unfortunately I did not have much contact with local people during my exchange, a lot of them are kind of shy or modest, but the local people I met were really friendly and helpful.

During my exchange I travelled to Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, it's very cheap and easy to plan this because Singapore is in the middle of a lot countries.

Culture and Language

I think I did experience a culture shock at some point during my exchange, I think it was somewhere in the middle of my exchange. All the food didn't taste me anymore, I was annoyed by small things and I didn't want to go out of the house because of the heat. It was not that I didn't know how to adapt or there was something bad going on. I don't know how to describe it more specific but I was just not feeling well. Singapore is a multicultural society, but most of the people living in Singapore are Chinese. Singapore is modern and kind of western and most of the people are very friendly, helpful and polite and not really outgoing, but more modest. What I learned about my own culture is that the Dutch are very direct and the Singaporeans are definitely not used to that. What was different in Singapore that I didn't expect was the relation between teachers and students which was actually the same as in the Netherlands. I was also surprised about how the Singaporean students compete with each other, they see each other as a concurrent for later working life. I cannot precisely describe the Singaporean culture, because Singapore is multicultural and I didn't get the chance to fully get to know many Singaporeans. Chinese Singaporeans are mostly Buddhist and Indian Singaporeans are mostly Hinduistic. It is nice to visit the temples in the center of Singapore.

When I travelled to Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand it was different from Singapore because Singapore is more modern, good organized, clean and very safe and the people are more calm and neatly.

I did have language difficulties with students in Singapore because in 'Singlish' they use several non-English words and due to the accent it was sometimes hard to hear/understand them. Firstly I thought it

was just me but other exchange experienced the same thing.

Personal Development

I think my exchange gave me a broader view culturally, while travelling I notice that it became easier to adapt to the different cultures. I also became more interested in exploring other cultures. On a social point of view I think I became more open-minded in meeting new people.

An exchange can influence your future career possibilities in a positive way because I think someone who went on exchange knows how to deal with a challenges and is open-minded.

I didn't learn any specific thing from the people I met, but it's nice to compare your country, culture and everything with other exchange student. You explore differences you never knew about.

My best experiences were while traveling, exploring new surroundings and cultures is the best thing ever. My worst experience was at the dentist in Singapore and at the doctor in Bali, because I found it difficult to trust these things abroad.

I learned a lot about myself during my exchange, I became more independent and I now know that I can adapt easier in a different surrounding.

III ACADEMIC INFORMATION

The courses are all offered in English. Before my exchange I had selected two courses I really wanted to take and on those courses I partly based my choice for NTU. After I got in at NTU they sent me a form about courses that are not available for exchange students, unfortunately my two favorite courses were included in that form. It was really hard to get in the courses I wanted because you first need approval from NTU and also from your home university, and that takes some time. I recommend to ask approval for a lot of courses as soon as possible at both universities otherwise you'll get in trouble after the start of the semester.

I chose the following courses: Psychology of Crisis Stress Management, Are you OK? Mental Health in Singapore, Abnormal Child Psychopathology and Cognitive Psychology. I recommend the course '*Psychology of Crisis Stress Management*', because it is a very interesting course and the teacher made the course really fascinating by telling all these stories about his own experiences and explained the theory based on disasters and crises happened in Singapore or to Singaporeans. I also enjoyed the course '*Are you OK? Mental Health in Singapore*', because it was about the mental health system in Singapore which is different from the system in the Netherlands. There was not a huge difference in academic level compared to the level in Tilburg University. All of my courses included lectures, in one of my courses we did weekly group work and had to do a group presentation. In another course we had several group activity meetings and we had to make online assignments/discussions. I expected a huge difference between the hierarchy in students and teachers, but that was not the case. There were a lot of students coming late and playing on their phones and talking in class during lectures and when you wrote an email most of the teacher responded informal.

Most of the exams were written exams and they included MCQs and essay questions. Although I was afraid I wouldn't pass all my exams because of the essay questions, I did pass all of them so I'm satisfied with my achievements. There is a university library on campus but the computers available are very old and slow so I didn't make use of the

Course	Prerequisites	Exam	ECTS	Comments
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HP8006 Psychology of Crisis stress management	None	Written	5,5	Mid-term, Final exam
HP8003 Are you OK? Mental Health in Singapore	None	Written	5,5	Mid-term, Final exam
HP3702 Abnormal Child Psychopathology	None	Written	5,5	Many assignments, Group activity and Final exam
HP2600 Cognitive Psychology	None	Written	5,5	Mid-term, Group presentation, Group activity and Final exam

Tips for the future students:

I would definitely recommend an exchange period to other students, there is so much you'll learn and experience that you'll never forget. Although it can be difficult to arrange everything and be away from home for a long time, in the end it is all worth it! Going on exchange is a unique and great experience, I think no one would regret it.

Pictures:



