

Adrian

Partner University: National University of Singapore (NUS)

Major during the exchange: History

UVic session: Spring 2013

I had the time of my life on exchange. Singapore is a bustling metropolis situated in one of the most beautiful regions on the world, and NUS is a world class university.

A friend was able to pick me up from the airport, so my arrival went very smoothly. Driving past the Marina Bay Sands on the way to NUS was such a surreal moment! Exchange students are able to arrange for a buddy to come and pick them up from the airport during a certain period before the semester begins. It was relatively easy to obtain my student's pass. The Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) held a huge registration day at NUS, so I was able to apply for it on campus. Make sure to pay attention to all of the e-mails that you receive before your arrival in Singapore. If you have any questions the office of students affairs (OSA) at Yusof Ishak House is an excellent resource.

NUS held a general orientation for all exchange students in an auditorium before the beginning of classes. Also, they had many fun activities at the beginning of the semester to help students familiarize themselves with NUS and Singapore. For example, they organized a city tour, and showed us around many interesting sites around the city.

There is a variety of housing options available for exchange students at NUS. Most exchange students choose to stay at U-Town which is the most expensive option and has a mandatory meal plan. U-Town is brand new, and the facilities are beautiful! I chose the stay at Prince George's Park Residences which is the cheapest option, as I wanted to save money for traveling. It's a little rough around the edges, but I got used to it really quickly. I moved in about a week early with no problem. One of the benefits of living in PGPR is that there is no mandatory meal plan. My residence had 2 large canteens with many good food options (Chinese, Indian, Japanese etc.) available. The average meal is \$2-4 SGD. Singapore is known around the world for its food, and I loved it! The best food in Singapore is off campus at the hawker centres, so try and eat out whenever you can.

I found it really easy to make friends! I was able to come out of my shell, and develop really rewarding friendships. I joined two clubs on campus, which really helped me to develop a large network of local friends. I did not find it very difficult to adjust to Singaporean culture. Singaporeans share many of the values that we espouse here in Canada. However, some of my exchange friends had trouble identifying with the Singaporean study culture. Singaporean students are under immense pressure, and this creates a very competitive university environment. I really appreciate how hardworking Singaporean students are. They inspired me to become a better student on my return to Canada. I was generally treated very well by everyone that I encountered (save for one disgruntled Canadian high commission employee, but that is to be expected)

The most important advice I have is to try and stay away from the "exchange student bubble." The majority of my exchange student friends never got the chance to make any local friends because they only hung out with other exchange students. Be sure to join a student society/club. It was one of the best decisions I have ever made! I made so many awesome friends, and I got to experience Singapore from a local POV. Also, Be sure to travel around the region over weekends and holidays. There are many discount airlines including Tiger airways, Jetstar, and Air Asia.

Living abroad has helped me to become more independent and self-sufficient. Also, I can definitely see myself working in South East Asia, particularly Singapore in the future. I would not change a thing about my exchange to NUS, I had the time of my life. If you have the opportunity to go on exchange, go for it!

Pictures first to last : Singapore skyline, my residence, some friends and I at a hawker centre, local desserts, weekend trip to Kuala Lumpur.







