



Student Exchange NANYANG Singapore, July 2015

Being an exchange student, what an amazing experience!

I was lucky I could afford to spend three months of study abroad.

There is so much to learn about Singapore: its size, politics, history and people. Singapore is always being compared to Israel and they really do have a lot of similarities (and many differences too). You can find a lot of information online so I won't go into that here.

I think the specific place of study in Singapore does not matter. There are plenty of places to study here (SMU, NTU, NUS, INSEAD) and in the end I think you get more or less the same learning experience. Therefore, I suggest concentrating on why Singapore. I think education is recommended here for those who wish to be exposed to the East and do it in an advanced and developed country. This is a gateway to the East. Whoever has done business here or sees himself doing so in the future, this is the place.

From an academic standpoint, Singapore is certainly a very attractive destination, but I think that it has some drawbacks to consider.

Logistics:

I tried to register for courses over two months before the official start of the semester, but there was no one at the university to help out and make things go smoothly. It very much depends, of course, on who is responsible for coordinating at the university. No matter how hard the registration process is, however, the goal as I see it is to get here and after the first week, you will manage.

Achieving a student pass begins in Israel over the internet and the university will help you complete the process when you are here. Logistics are firmly set in Singapore and one must work within the given framework.

There is an orientation day when NTU shows the university and classes to the students. All the exchange students for that semester will be there so it's a good time to meet everyone. On this day you also pay for all the services and books for the semester.

There are special days when the University helps student get a student pass. (It's impossible to fly abroad from Singapore between the filing of an application for a student pass and receiving the card, which takes around two weeks.)

Accommodations:

Unfortunately, exchange NTU students who come for one semester are not allowed to live on campus, just full year students, so finding a residence is a task.

It is very expensive to live in Singapore and I think it is very important to know what you expect to get from your time here. If it's mainly studies and you have a lot of courses, it's better to live in the campus area. If it's more cultural and lifestyle aims, then it is better in

the central area (Chinatown, Orchard, Central, Clarke quay). It takes about 50 minutes to get to the university, but I think it is better to live in the center because it takes the focus off of studying and puts it on other experiences where all the "action" is.

If you come with other people, then of course look for an apartment together. I came alone and there are a number of options:

1. Apartment from AIRBNB, the problem is that it costs a lot of money, around \$ 2,000 per month
2. HDB is actually living with a family in their 1 empty room (it costs \$ 1,000 per month)
3. Enter an apartment as a roommate with EASYROOMATE and similar sites, most of them want a contract of six months, but you can talk to them and work it out
4. Rent an apartment in PROPERTYGURU- you can find affordable places, depending on your budget
5. Living in hostels: that's what I did and I ran into some people who also found a hostel they liked and just lived there. The drawback of course is living with another 3-5 people, but there are also advantages: flexibility—being able to fly for a week in Asia and not have to pay rent, meeting more people, breakfast, the location is usually central and more.
6. Hotels: you can find simple rooms for around \$ 75 per night

Transportation:

First thing, buy an EZ-LINK Card that allows you to use all buses, trains and even vending machines. Just load it and start to click, it's very convenient. It is very easy to get trains anywhere.

No matter where you live you will find a way to get to the university. I took the green line to PIONEER station and from there CAMPUS RIDER bus that takes you to the campus (you'll have to find out yourself where to get off).

Travel:

Like I said, it's the "Gate to the East": there are a lot of cheap flights at \$ 100 to different destinations. My studies were from Thursday to Saturday so I could fly during the week. I flew to Hong Kong (amazing), Philippines (amazing), and Thailand (Thailand).

Studies:

The academic environment is completely different than in Israel.

The students are very nice, polite, and passionate about studying and the learning environment is very different.

PART TIME- people like us, those who are working who come in to learn, businessmen with families

FULL TIME- mostly very young (there are exceptions), they come to learn the entire year and are on campus all day, and therefore can also meet on Sundays (day off) and are very competitive and school-oriented.

EXCHANGE- like us, they come for the experience, and I have found much in common with them. Of course, each has different objectives. For example, there was a South Korean guy who came to find work here, so obviously he was not interested in school.

I came across a number of very interesting phenomena regarding competitiveness and standards of the students. One group went to inform on a student who didn't participate in the project and the professor kicked him out of the course. Participation is required and students speak up even if they have nothing to say (just to show their participation, which may be 30% of the final grade). They sometimes ask questions even after the class is supposed to be finished. (I have stayed after a few classes for over 30 minutes because of questions.)

Classrooms and lectures:

I think the school environment is very well adapted for learning: classrooms with laptops for all students, speakers so everyone can hear what everyone else has to say, a monitor that shows what the prof writes, internet blogs, remote controls so students can respond to questions and the level of knowledge in the classroom is displayed; a big library with computers and software and books for every need.

For every class, there is reading material that everyone has to read, and reads! (very different than in Israel), everyone participates.

I took three courses:

Technology & E-business course tries to show 12 different areas of technology and how they have grown and mostly try to think about where they will go in the future (Apple, Facebook, Kayak, Zappos, Google, Abacos, Netflix, Airbnb)

Economy & Markets- very nice course, talking about the economy and the stock market over the years. A bit like a history class that talks macro (oil crisis, the Asian crisis, the high-tech bubble, and the subprime bubble) does not teach many new things but mainly gives you a macro perspective and shows that "history does not repeat itself but it does rhyme".

Operations- course outside of the university campus at their external campus "One North" (Buena Vista) - talks about BMI and Strategy. It was a technical course with excel and equations related to supply and demand and bottlenecks, and since it took place in the evening, dinner was included.

Entertainment in Singapore:

Although there is a lot to see in Singapore, after two weeks you've seen it all (a tiny island).

I recommend to register on Facebook to your university groups and other groups of parties and exchange, which organize weekly student parties. Usually there's free entry, but you should know the magic word: "EXCHANGE".

Sentosa Island - many attractions, almost the only beach, a lot of things to see like Universal Studios (shows and roller coasters), there is a casino for those interested

Marina Bay and gardens by the bay - worth going up to see the view (there are sometimes parties that include a drink for \$ 28) and the gardens are worth seeing at least once; the light show of the trees is at 19:45, 20:45 daily.

Clarke quay - central entertainment place, bars, restaurants, clubs. Every day of the week it is full of tourists and full of life.

Safari and the night safari - nice attraction

Botanical gardens - they say there's a huge botanical garden for those who are interested.

Useful Tips:

Singapore food is relatively expensive everywhere! But there are food courts, at least one in every neighborhood that are relatively cheap (\$ 5 per meal).

The cleanliness of the restaurant –A, B, C – there are three levels and they must present them up front (I ate only at A, B) but I don't even know what they mean.

Cell Phones - The first few days go into a "seven eleven" or anywhere else and buy a prepaid sim with the package you want; there are Data packages. I ordered an internet package for 7 days of 1 GB for 7\$. After that I added a week at \$ 1 so I extended the package until I finished it and then ordered a new 1 GB.

Shopping - there are so many shopping malls and so many stores, there is no problem finding anything (lots of luxury brands)

Pool - my new hobby here, first of all after the school day on campus there is a pool and gym and whatever sports you are doing. Singapore public pools cost \$ 1 entrance
<http://www.swimminglessons.com.sg/singapore-swimming-complex.htm> list+map

Sites like Booking / Agoda / hotwire help to find hotels and hostels all over the place and for any destination of your choice

Sites like kayak / Skyscanner are very good here in Asia for flights

Singapore Dollar exchange rate is NIS 2.8 you can pay in many places here in credit and can take money out from ATM scattered everywhere.

The electricity is 220V but the Electrical outlet is with three pins so bring an adapter

Uber is very useful and saves a lot of money, cuts the initial rate of \$ 4 for taxi, I recommend using it here, very convenient and safe.

SG app-worth downloading "SG MRT MAP" always know how to get around

"PSINOW"- haze application, once a year there's an unhealthy haze (people walk around with masks) because of forest burning in Indonesia and the winds (usually around October). It helps to plan if you can hang out / do sports.

Of course what I wrote is very helpful to those who come for 3 months (one semester); longer than that (six months exchange) requires more logistics (medical certificate), but also will be more convenient in other ways (can open bank accounts, find an apartment with a six-month contract).

Conclusion:

It has been a really amazing experience, being exposed to a new world I did not know about at all: people, culture, places, other ways of looking at the world and business. I really enjoyed the academic experience and also the external ones. I would not recommend Singapore to everyone, but mostly to students with a good reason for coming to Singapore (have friends here, want to do business here or move here in the future, or you have not been in Eastern countries before). If so, then I'm sure you can get the maximum out of your semester.

I will be happy to answer any questions any time by e-mail: weizmandd@gmail.com

I know that you might feel uncomfortable, but it will remind me of the time I was on vacation and had the time to do as I pleased. That will take my mind off my busy daily routine, so please do me that favor.

Good luck and best regards,

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