



Tel Aviv University
TAU Recanati

The Leon Recanati Graduate School of Business Administration

Exchange Summary, Daniel Shemesh, National University of Singapore 2014

My exchange semester at the National University of Singapore (NUS) was a perfect blend of education, culture, and travel. It was a four month period in my life that I will forever be grateful for and that brought me in touch with a part of the world I was previously clueless towards. I am very thankful for the opportunity and would not have changed very much about the experience.

Upon arriving in Singapore on July 30th, about a week before commencement of the exchange activities, I arrived at the campus to apply for my Student Pass. I was able to do this once in the country and not before arrival because I my American Passport afforded me a traveler's visa at immigration. All that was required to apply for the Student Pass were some basic documents that were to be printed and signed as well as a passport photo and proof of residence. I picked up the student pass one week later and this served as my identification card both at the university and while traveling in and out internationally.

Housing in Singapore was a relatively easy proposition for me fortunately. My roommate in Tel Aviv who previously lived seven years in Singapore found me accommodations off campus through a connection, in a small suburb called Bukit Batok. Rent was relatively affordable for the size of the place, compared to what my classmates were paying for smaller places (850 SD/Month) and the commute was a manageable 20 min bus ride from campus (though a bit far from the night life, if one is so inclined). Aside from rent I incurred some additional expenses for groceries and basic necessities. I would say that I ate most of my meals outside however as eating at the Hawker centers (food courts) is relatively inexpensive, 4-5 SD per meal. All bus and MRT (metro) rides can be paid for with an EZ Link pass that can be acquired at any metro station and charged with currency as desired. I would estimate this expense was about \$80-100 SD a month.

A large part of my exchange however was travel. Singapore being the ideally located travel hub that it is, I was able to travel relatively inexpensively throughout Southeast Asia. I arranged my courses as best I could to make this possible (I only studied on Wed and Thurs). During my time I traveled to Vietnam twice (once for five days and once for 12 spanning our one week break), to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for 5 days, to Indonesia for a long weekend, and to Thailand and Cambodia for a week each after completing the semester. Being that the semester began and ended early it really afforded us the opportunity to travel freely before returning to our obligations and in hindsight I would have booked my stay for a little longer to take advantage of this.

In addition to travel externally I did my best to also explore Singapore internally with the other exchange students. We visited the various parks and districts, planned hiking trips and explored the nightlife and cuisine whenever we were free and not travelling. There were

many night outings/events and trips organized through the exchange groups that one could take advantage of if so inclined. The university gym in "Utown", a very pleasant area for studying and hanging out was also a place we frequented. We also made a point to attend career events put on by the business school and investigate potential career opportunities at the career center, as we were interested in the options.

Finally the courses. Unfortunately, this was the least stellar part of the experience. Of my three courses; Transformational Service Innovations, International Finance, and Managing Negotiations, only the last one was really good. In the negotiations class I felt the professor and class were all engaged into making the course both educational and enjoyable and a fun place to be. The other two classes (which I ironically did better in) were both drab and lifeless for the most part, mostly due to the content and professor temperament.

Overall I think things worked out quite well for me considering I went in with little advice as to how to handle the exchange.. In hindsight I would recommend to future students to be aware of the layout of the island and the University and choose their housing location strategically based on what they want to do most often. While travel is clean and convenient in Singapore it does take a significant chunk of time to commute even small distances. Living arrangements can be made after arrival as looking for a place is often easier once you have a few days to acclimate and perhaps meet some of the other exchange students that could be your future roommates. To do this it's easiest to just spend the first few days in a hostel until accommodations are arranged. I would also suggest that classes are bunched as much as possible on 2 or 3 days of the schedule (as I did) to allow for travel and long weekends, there is no reason not to take advantage of the affordable travel and culture that surrounds the country. Singapore is expensive, but can be manageable if one makes wise decisions as far as transportation, housing, and food...and quite frankly it is all worth it when considering the culture and travel that you can soak in while there.