

Study Abroad Report 2019/2020 - National University of Singapore - Vicky Zhang

Introduction

I never thought I would be able to go on such an unforgettable exchange programme, I'm writing this report to summarise my year abroad and some information that I think might be useful to know before going on exchange. I went to the National University of Singapore(NUS) for my year abroad. As we all know Singapore is a multicultural country with the population made up mostly by Chinese, Malay, and Indian. There're four official languages: English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil, however English is used as teaching language schools and universities in Singapore.



NUS Utown

Academics

NUS has two semesters per academic year(Sem 1 from August to early December, Sem 2 from January to mid May) with 2 recess weeks each semester which made up to 17 weeks per semester. Exchange students are required to take 16MCs per semester(most modules give you 4MCs upon completion), please bear in mind that the module registration could be a bit fussy cause they do prioritise local students. Each module consists of 2 two-hour lectures and an one-hour tutorial per week. For the modules I took in maths department, the class size is actually quite small so it feels more like seminars instead of lectures. A wide range of different language classes for all levels are also available in NUS. Personally I took Japanese 4 and 5 during my year abroad, the language courses are much more intensive compare to the courses provided at Warwick language centre. There're a lot of presentations and projects going on during term time and of course essays and reports, but it was really fun and rewarding.

Living

The cost of living is relatively cheaper comparing to the UK, I've been staying in the student accommodation on campus during the term time, you can also apply for the vacation stay if you want to stay in hall during winter break.

The on campus accommodation of NUS consists of student residences and halls, although most exchange students are placed in student residences, I chose to stay in hall where most local students stay. Here are some pros and cons of staying in halls:

Pros:

- The rent is really cheap - 121SGD per week(around £67)
- Two Meals are provided during weekdays
- There's an orientation camp that you can join to get to know local students at the start of semester 1
- There're lots of hall bonding events and inter-hall sports games(IHG) going on
- You get welfare event at hall every single week, free food and performances
- everyone is really kind and warm-hearted and they always put on a big smile!



Kent Ridge Hall photo

Cons:

- The hall that I stayed in(Kent ridge hall) is a bit less convenient to travel to maths department compare to Utown residence and PGP, it could take up to 20 mins to get to the department although I'm living on campus
- It could be a bit noisy at night if you're trying to work or rest cause people might be singing, gaming, screaming for random bugs(?)
- There're endless trainings for sports when it comes close to the IHG, it's not compulsory but the pressure is there. It's important to find a balance between uni works and hall activities.
- No air cons

Food

Except for the meal plans at hall, hawker centres are also a really good choice to get food for lunch. There're food courts at every single faculty and the price is really cheap as well, you can get a pretty good meal for 5SGD(less than £3)! There's a wide range of different food options Asian/Indian/Western, and vegetarian option is also available.

Other than food courts on campus, you can easily take a bus to clementi mall or west Coast plaza for some fancy food. There's also a big supermarket called FairPrice at clementi mall, you can buy all kinds of

household supplies, snacks, and cooking ingredients there although generally speaking eating out is actually much cheaper.

Fun facts:

- 1.Asian food is super cheap in Singapore whereas western food is much more expensive
- 2.Mandarin101 is really helpful to talk to those aunties and uncles at the food court although English itself is perfectly fine!(most exchange students from western countries take Chinese 1)
- 3.The fruit juice at Science frontier is a must try, you can also get blessings from the uncle

Shuttle buses on campus

The NUS Kent Ridge campus is actually quite big, but luckily there's shuttle bus services on campus and it's absolutely free! There's also an App called NUSNextBus that you can see the live map of buses. It might takes long to wait for a bus during off-peak period and weekends though.

Transportation

MRT(Mass Rapid Transit) and buses are the best way to travel across the entire city, the nearest MRT station to NUS Kent Ridge campus is Kent Ridge station. The shuttle bus service A1/D2 also stops at Kent Ridge station so it's really convenient.

Sports facilities

All sports facilities on campus are free to use for NUS students, you can make the booking online. There're gyms and swimming pools in both utown and sports hall, and several multipurpose hall for badminton/table tennis/basketball etc. Since it's free, it could be a bit busy through out the day so you might want to wake up early for a workout.

Student welfare

NUS has a lot of student welfare, you get welfare from your department, your faculty, even your residential halls! Although the uni work is tough, they never failed to make my day by surprising me with all those welfares. I'll definitely miss it after I get back to Warwick.

Travelling

Singapore is a small city-state in South East Asia, if you want to explore this city during weekends, besides those famous tourist places, the southern islands and old Changi airport village is really recommended where you can take a ferry from HarbourFront MRT and the ticket is only 15SGD.

For the recess week, exchange students tend to travel overseas since Singapore is quite close to all the countries in South East Asia, there're quite a lot of travel options like Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand etc. You may want to book early for cheap flight tickets at the start of the semester. Sadly due to the Coronavirus outbreak, my travel plans were screwed, but I still managed to explore Singapore as much as I could.



Wrapping up

This ends my report on my exchange in NUS, it was such a fabulous experience and I couldn't recommend it more. I hope this report has been useful. If there's any questions regarding studying in Singapore, please feel free to email me at v.zhang@warwick.ac.uk