

Final Report
1-semester stay in Singapore

I stayed abroad via: Fonds ECTS-punten Buitenland (FEB)

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Subject of your studies abroad: coursework in Ethics (Issues in Moral Philosophy,
Ethics & The Public Official) and Public Policy (Politics and Development)

Period of stay: July – December 2007

Name institution abroad: National University of Singapore (NUS)

City and country: Singapore, Singapore

1. Preparation and financial matters

Application

If you wish to apply for an exchange in Singapore, please see this website (non-graduating students): <http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/edu/ng.html> Applying for the NUS always seems a bit tricky, since you can get in only when you've been approved at least one course. It is wise to apply for a few more just to be sure (you can always change courses once you're there). Also, some faculties are can be strict in the modules that you are allowed to follow as an exchange student, but my experience is that most of the times, electives are possible (starting with digits 12, 22, 32, 42 or 52).

However, the most tricky part of the application is that it is very well possible that you get a response back not sooner than one or two weeks before you plan to depart. As the latest application date is somewhere in April, they use May and June (and July) for the processing of the numerous amount of applications that the NUS receives.

Though no one has ever been refused in the past, I still got a ticket with a cancellation option. Tickets vary between EUR 800 and EUR 1200, depending on how early you book of course.

One note on the courses: websites of the different faculties are not always up to date. It is wise to contact the faculty on whether a course will be given in a certain semester. Or better still: try to get a full list of the courses of that semester to be up to date.

Vaccination

Get your vaccines at least 3 months in advance. This is recommended by the GGD, because sometimes you have to come back for a second vaccine, but also because many people are getting theirs for their summer holidays.

Financial

Get a creditcard. It comes in handy when you want to book trips, hotels and stuff. Also, it is wise to keep some cash stuck away somewhere at all times, just in case you get pickpocketed (like I did). It can be very much of a hassle getting new cash cards, so it's nice to have some cash in reserve.

Funds

You can apply for the Fonds ECTS-punten Buitenland (FEB) the TU/e. You might also want to look whether faculty specific funds exist. Furthermore, you can get a compensation for your 'OV jaarkaart' at IB Groep.

2. Accommodation

I have applied for Prince George Residences (PGP), the student hall that accommodates most of the international students, but unfortunately did not get in (the other student halls are named Kent Ridge, Eusoff, King Edward VII, Raffles, Shaeres and Temasek, which

accommodate more locals). Alternatively, the Office of Student Affairs offered me off-campus accommodation in the neighborhood Boon Lay. It is about 30 minutes away with the NUS shuttle bus and about 45 minutes with public transport.

Although it is off-campus and a bit out of the center, the nice thing about it is that you live next to a small shopping center (including a supermarket) where you can basically get everything you need, something that the campus does not have. Also, you will have to share your living unit with three other people from the same sex. Friends are easily made since everyone can just walk in and out of each other's houses. You can choose between air-conditioned (AC) or non-air-conditioned rooms (you'll be provided a fan). I've had a room with AC, which is slightly more expensive. Accommodation in Boon Lay was also slightly more expensive than the halls on campus. Overall room rates vary between EUR 500 and EUR 1000 per semester, depending on your demands. Rooms are also provided with a closet and a few drawers that can be locked. All in all I've had a very good time at Boon Lay. See here for the application for accommodation:

<http://www.nus.edu.sg/osa/housing/acc/ngd.html>

Room rates for the yoHa student hostel in Boon Lay can be found here:

<http://www.yoha.com.sg/xls/Price%20List-100108.pdf>,

Room rates for on-campus halls can be found here:

http://www.nus.edu.sg/osa/housing/acc/ngd_rates.html.

(Roughly estimated, Singapore \$100 is about EUR 50, more or less.)

3. Language and culture

Singapore consists largely of Chinese people, for a smaller part Malay and Indian people, and a few Eurasians. Many religions can be found amongst them (almost all Malay are Muslim) and people are getting along with each other.

English is the official language, but no one speaks it properly. Most people speak Singlish, which basically English, but with the speed, grammar and intonation of Chinese. It takes some time to understand it as Singaporeans also drop the last consonant of each word. The most spoken languages among the people are Mandarin (Chinese official language), Malay and Tamil (Indian language).

Geographically, most Chinese people are located in the West and the center of the city. The Malay mostly live in the North (in the Woodlands) or in the East (Paya Lebar, Geylang Road). The Indians can be found in Little India (somewhat in the center of the city).

Moreover, people are very polite in general. However, foreign (Asian) women can get stared at a lot, especially when you find yourself in poorer (and less educated) neighborhoods. Another remarkable thing is that the two main hobbies of Singaporeans

seem to be having food and shopping, as you will find food courts and shopping malls everywhere.

4. Free time and travelling

Singapore has excellent public transportation. You can get basically anywhere with the bus and the MRT (subway) which both go very frequently during daytime and it is very cheap. Be sure to get an EZ Link card (sort of 'OV chipkaart') the moment you get in Singapore.

Depending on your schedule, it should be possible to travel a lot (both in and outside Singapore). In Singapore there are numerous places to visit. Some recommendations:

- Sentosa Island
- Chinatown
- Bugis and VivoCity (affordable shopping), Orchard Road (expensive shopping and worth a visit during Christmas because of the decorations)
- Botanic Gardens

For trips outside Singapore, you can check the airlines Tiger Airways, JetStar, and AirAsia for cheap tickets. In case of other airlines, please check whether they are listed on EU's black list, since there have been a couple of accidents last year. However, the ones mentioned above are of good quality, safe and reliable.

Also, bus transport to Malaysia is very cheap. Also, do not forget to check the flights from Johor Bahru (just over the border in Malaysia) for even cheaper flights. Some recommendations:

- Pulau Bintan (Indonesian resort island)
- Laos
- Hong Kong

Nice clubs in Singapore: the clubs at Clark Quay, St. James Powerstation, Zouk, Zouk Out (major annual dance event on Sentosa beach) and Boat Quay (for cheap beer).

5. Contents of your project abroad

I have done three courses in Singapore:

- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences:
 - Issues in Moral Philosophy (bachelor course)
- Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy:
 - Ethics & The Public Official (master course)
 - Politics and Development (master course)

6. Experiences

What was your best experience?

The best experience was to meet people from many Asian countries and to explore their cultures and their foods. If you get the chance to experience 'eid' ('suikerfeest'), I would definitely go for it. It was really nice to visit local people's homes and have real good food. You might also want to visit the numerous food stalls on Geyland Road (MRT station Paya Lebar) during Ramadan.

What was your worst experience?

My worst experience was the arrangement of my courses in the beginning. As you're never sure which courses you're allowed to follow and which you're not, it is wise to contact or visit the involved lecturers to get approval (that often works). Waiting for a systematic (dis)approval emails takes too much time. Do not forget to communicate the change in your courses to your home university.

I also had bad experiences with the ICA (the immigration office) when my wallet was stolen with my ID still in it. Singaporean institutions are very bureaucratic and to get a new ID was very much of a hassle and took a lot time. If you depend on them, it can be a major source of annoyance.

7. Others

Important things that are easily forgotten:

- Authorize someone at home for your financial matters at the bank, so he/she can sign for your credit card/cash card since you are not able to do it in person. It comes in handy when someone can settle financial matters (back home) for you in your name if something goes wrong with your cash cards.
- Don't forget your vaccinations.
- If possible, bring DEET 20% or above as you can only get up to 15% in most of the stores in Singapore.
- Make sure that your passport is valid at least 6 more months after your return from Singapore.
- Do not forget to return your 'OV jaarkaart' to IB Groep in time.