

Exchange Report – Singapore Management University - Hanna van Holten

General information

I studied at the Singapore Management University in The Republic of Singapore from August 2016 until December 2016.

Preparation

SMU is an extremely student friendly university. Always replying to emails within a few hours. However, there are many deadlines you have to meet for example signing up for courses, online payments and other formalities. In order to qualify for a semester at SMU please check you meet the language requirements or sign up for the appropriate language test. I organized my housing prior to departure with a company called Xchange Housing. Meeting some roommates over Facebook was a great idea, I had some mutual friends from international schools I attended as a child. Together we selected an apartment from a choice of 7-8. I mostly looked at the location and the facilities. All apartments were in excellent condition, freshly painted, cleaned furniture, brand new bathrooms, kitchens etc. Besides this they all came with a cleaning lady, pool, gym, Jacuzzi, tennis courts, just 20 minutes walking away from my university, so a very central location. As you can imagine this is one of the more expensive housing options.



Arrival

Prior to your departure you will receive extensive emails carefully explaining the VISA application procedure. In Singapore this is referred to as a Student Pass. You will receive a letter permitting you to enter Singapore. Then in your first week SMU will provide you with a valid Student Pass/VISA for the semester. We all talked beforehand and arrived at the same time. The housing company met me at the airport, got me a public transport pass and everything I needed for the first few days. They drove me to my apartment and explained how everything worked. The contract was settled a few days later, but I received my keys upon arrival. SMU organizes many welcome activities, I recommend to attend these as they are usually very fun. You meet many new people, enjoy lovely food and take part in awesome activities you wouldn't get to do otherwise.

Courses

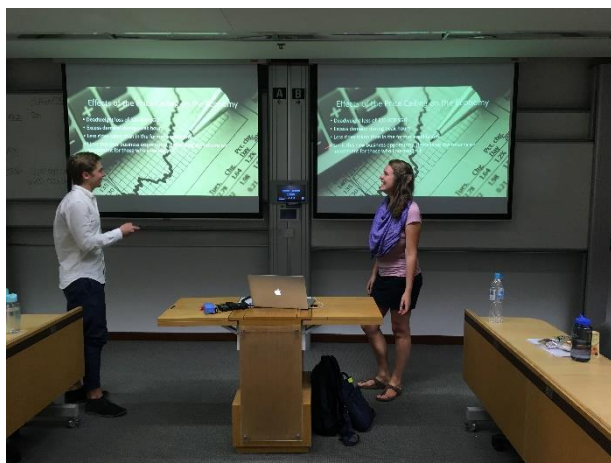
ECON101- Intermediate Microeconomics

This course was challenging as there was a lot of information discussed in only 14 weeks.

However the content suits very well to ESE courses. It is basically delving deeper into Microeconomics and Applied Microeconomics.

Due to the mathematical nature of the course you are allowed to bring a cheat sheet to the exam with all the formulas. The course also includes a presentation. You are allowed to choose any topic discussed and apply it in a practical situation. I personally decided to

estimate, model and calculate the approximate inefficiency generated by the Government of New Delhi, India in removing the surge pricing on alternative taxi services. I worked together with a student from the RSM.



FNCE225- Consumer Banking

This course is definitely one I would recommend, it is all about the successes, failures, developments and trends in the Singaporean banks. Excellent guest speakers with a lot of experience in the field attended our lectures. Many interesting topics were discussed including Fintech, pawnshops, credit card fraud, consumer loans, real estate and many more. The exam is quite challenging as it is based on a few cases and all questions are essay questions.

FNCE102- Financial Instruments, Institutions and Markets

Most challenging of them all! I studied quite hard for this and didn't receive a very high grade. It is very comparable to Finance 2, at the ESE. However, the course is more technical and requires many calculations by hand. It also requires you to design financial instruments, whilst understanding the market of the already existing instruments. I definitely learned a lot here, but the work load is very high!

ECON217- Macroeconomics of Income Distribution

This course is very Singapore oriented. It really allowed me to get a better understanding of the level of development, income redistribution and income taxes in Singapore. Many different models and academic papers were discussed, which made the exam heavy to prepare for. I would compare it to the econometrics behind the International Economics course at the ESE. The professor for this course is a lovely Chinese-Singaporean who is always willing to help. He answers all questions and loves to check if everything is clear. He even invited us to his place for Christmas in case we felt lonely so far away from our family!

All of the courses mentioned above were worth 7.5 ECTS each. I therefore used them as my Minor and Electives courses incorporating them into my bachelors degree.

Finances

The following amounts are approximations in euros.

	Monthly	Total
Housing	700	2800
SMU fees		200
Additional fees apartment		200
Food & Drink	300	1200
Travel	500	2000
Flight		800
Phone	20	80
Transport*	100	400
Social activities	100	400
		8,080

*includes cabs, MRT and busses

As you can see a semester in Singapore can be very expensive. The costs above are based on my four months in Singapore. Not including the extra spending before and after the semester on a month long backpacking trip throughout South East Asia. This was around another 1500 euros. A few tips:

- Rent for only 4 months not the legal 6, therefore rents are paid in cash!
- Bring a lot of euros or USD in cash, as opening a bank account takes two weeks.
- Eat like a local!
- Become a member of Hazel's guest list and Singapore UNI for free entry to clubs. Drinks are usually free for girls too!



Monthly rent of 6000 SGD paid in cash!

Daily life



Pool at City Scape.

I planned my classes on Wednesday and Tuesday evening allowing me to travel as much as possible. I took around 13 trips to Bangkok, Krabi, Ko Phi Phi, Bali, Gili, Lombok, Siem Reap, Tioman Islands, Langkawi, Georgetown, Laos, Myanmar, and North Vietnam. If I wasn't travelling I would spend my days going to the pool, meeting up with friends, studying in the library and exploring all that Singapore has to offer. SMU has many sports events and cultural events I took part in. A great way to meet locals, stay active and find out what Singapore is all about.

My roommates, neighbours and I would all eat at the hawker center behind our house, or at the mall which was just down the road. Meals are available here for 3-10 euros. It is much cheaper than cooking yourself and the food is delicious. Mostly Chinese, Indian, Malay, Japanese and Thai dishes. Western foods are much more expensive and less tasty. However, if you're craving western food Macdonald's does deliver to your doorstep for free!



Chinese food with the roommates at around midnight.

As a city Singapore has loads to offer, national parks, beaches (15 minutes from city center!), museums, zoos, restaurants and incredible nightlife! I think I will let the pictures below do the talking!



Partying at an altitude of 300m!



Sentosa Beach is a few minutes from SMU



SMU Leaving Ball



Exploring the Malay Heritage Site