

EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE SHARING

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My Profile



Host Institution: National University of Singapore

Department: Biology and Chemistry

Program: Applied Biology

Exchange Period: Year 2 Semester B

Overall experience

My overall experience in NUS and Singapore is enriched and busy. Apart from study on campus, I immerse myself mostly in exploration of new places in Singapore and Malaysia. There is a recess week in the mid-semester which allows students to have a break. For exchange students, it is a great opportunity to travel around!



Activities

- Many activities specially for exchange students are well-prepared by passionate local students, which helps exchange students to learn better about the country. For instance, you will be led to local museums or historic places to learn the local history. Also, local friends may take you to have variety of local delicacy. The host family program is also attractive, through which you could spend some time with local people (might be NUS alumni), taste and enjoy local life style



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My Pre-departure Checklist

The host university NUS will send every exchange student a guideline for all kinds of preparation including student visa and program registration. There will be also a concise checklist for you to prepare all the supporting documents for visa application and registration.

It is quite easy to prepare everything simply by following the guide provided by NUS. So what you need to do is regularly checking emails before departure.

Just Arrived...

The first day didn't go very smoothly. Upon arrival I took a taxi to the on-campus student residence before the easy check-in. However, after settling down everything, I got lost in the large campus when I went out for dinner. Some warm-hearted and helpful local students led me the way back to the student hostel finally. They told me the locations of shuttle bus stops and how students take good use of campus shuttle bus which is pretty useful for campus life there.



Some Tips

You may apply to join the buddy scheme. If successful, a local student will guide you to the campus and have a campus tour with you. In this way, you may easily get yourself familiar with the campus.

Plus, you could download an application of campus map from apple store prior to arrival in case you cannot find your way to the hostel.

Orientation



The orientation held by NUS is quite helpful. They provided plenty of information on campus life as well as the city. For instance, you get to know how to take transportation in the city and on the campus, where you can ask for help concerning academic and daily life issues.

In addition, you may make some friends during the orientation as all the participants are exchange students like you.

My Place

The hall I lived in was quite safe and the hall-mates are really friendly to exchange students. The dorm is similar to that of student residence in CityU. There is a common room in each floor where you can put your food and drinks in the fridge very safely.

Surprisingly, most of the residents open their doors when they are staying in the room or even when they are outing. They really have very close contact and relationship with each other in the hall.



My First Class

The first lecture I attended shocked me as the whole extremely huge lecture theatre is fully occupied, which is totally different from CityU. The teaching style is quite similar to that in CityU except for the tutorial sessions. One of the tutorials I attended was quite interactive, mainly based on project. A few groups have one tutor. Each time of the tutorial is like a discussion meeting for a group, during which students are required to share the ideas to the groupmates and report the progress to the tutors or the lecturer. The tutorial seems slack, but indeed students need to be well-prepared before class, otherwise, one could hardly learn anything through the tutorial.

People I Met

I made some friends in the hall through the hall activities. So call Singlish is not easy to follow and made me confused at the very beginning. It took some time for me to adapt to their language. Anyway, they are quite nice and active people, always very helpful. In addition to the language, there is little cultural difference for me.



People I Met

The first friend I made was a CityU senior and we went outings together with others quite often

The Singaporean host also became my friend. She was so nice to us that every time we met she would prepare hand-made food for us. I was so touched that she was willing to share her life stories with us.

I also made friends with my group-mates during classes. They are also very considerable and nice. I missed an important meeting during the recess week because of travelling and they kindly helped me to catch up with their progress.



Out of Classroom

Some societies are there for exchange students to join in, such as Japanese culture society, dancing groups, etc, which are organized by students from all faculties.

Besides, there are some activities held in the halls such as Chinese new year celebration, formal dinner, live music concert by student bands etc.

There are indeed some voluntary projects though not especially for exchange students. However, I haven't heard of internship opportunities for exchange students.

Out of Classroom

- Personally, the Music Conservatory of NUS was one of the reasons I chose NUS.
- There are a great number of concerts, music/arts festival as well as live shows on campus, which are sufficient and diverse enough to satisfy you no matter you are interested in music including classical music, jazz, folk, rock, punk, electronic music, alternative music genres or dance, theatre and photography, etc.
- Following link is for NUS arts festival 2013 and you may check it out

http://nus.edu.sg/cfa/NAF_2013/index.html

Out of Classroom

From my perspectives, the standard of classical music performance is pretty high, at least top of Asia. This is the poster for a concert I have attended, performed by the head of cello studies of NUS who is also the top cellist around the world with one of my favorite violinists.

More importantly, the concert was FREE. Concerts of this standard at least cost you \$120 in Hong Kong.



Food

- A mix of Asian food, including Chinese, Thai, Malay and Indian food
- Overall you will be quite familiar with the food, not uncommon in HK
- Indian food would be more genuine, especially in the place called Little India
- Plenty of canteens on campus, with different styles, but 'food court' type is dominant
- One meal in canteen costs SGD 3-8 per person
- One meal in pretty good restaurants costs more than SGD 30 per person
- Definitely cheaper than HK unless you go to high-class restaurants regularly.

Food

- Easier to find delicious food if you have local friends
- There are chains of café near campus e.g. near Eusoff and Temasek Halls
- There will be compulsory meal plans including food which is not good
 - ▣ Solution 1: skip the meals and eat outside
 - ▣ Solution 2: choose PGP student residence or U-town to live instead of any halls, but might be difficult to get in

Travelling

- Only travelled to Malaysia (Penang, KL, Melaka), but seems Thailand, Vietnam as well as some islands of Indonesia also worth a try
- Local travel agencies are not always reliable and sometimes costly
- The best way is to travel with local friends!
- Keep eyes on safety all the time while travelling especially in KL
- Personally recommend Melaka and Penang

Travelling



Penang



Travelling



Melaka



Money

Daily expenses would be a little higher than Hong Kong due to travelling and shopping.

Can easily handle your money issues in local banks and there are quite a number of ATM on campus

Goodbye

It was a little sad to say goodbye to the friends whom you spent time with during the exchange period although you promise you will be meeting someday.

The most challenging thing during the exchange period was balancing between travelling and study. The workload in NUS is quite heavy, to be honest, especially when you study major electives courses, and it's important to do well in time management.

The most exciting thing for me is the travelling, through which I became more independent and I made good friends with other exchange students.