



SMU CONNEXION

EXCHANGE REPORT

SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

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1. MONTHLY LOG

January	<p>The first time I touched down in Singapore, the feeling was quite surreal and nervous at the same time. It was raining cats and dogs while the plane was landing but the country still looked extremely pretty from above. Upon landing I directly went to my accommodation after taking a taxi from the airport.</p> <p><u>Airport to Accommodation:</u> Really easy commute, could find a “GRAB” which is the Uber for Singapore pretty easily and since everyone spoke in English it was easy to tell the driver my address as well.</p> <p>I was living in Novena Hall which is an international students hostel in Novena. I spent the first week mostly getting accustomed to the place, settling into my room and finding places to eat that suit my vegetarian palette.</p> <p>Then on 5th Jan 2023 we had our orientation ceremony and that’s when I visited the Campus of SMU for the first time ever. It was easy to commute in Singapore because I had the EZ Link card which is their octopus equivalent. In the orientation we were made familiar with the courses, type of studies and curriculum, extra-curriculars we can join and general rules. After the orientation SMU also took us on a subsidised Singapore city tour which was very interesting. We saw the Marina Barrage, National Museum of Singapore, Maxwell Food Centre, Chijmes and ended finally at the Singapore’s famous Merlion. After orientation, we also got our VISAs in person.</p> <p>Gradually our semester started on 9th Jan and the campus was filled with students going to their classes. I usually used to grab a quick breakfast at Chijmes or in the SMU Canteen called Koufu and then go to my morning classes. Classes in SMU are 3 hours long with a 15 minute break in between but I soon got used to the same. I was taking 4 courses at SMU which is the maximum amount you can take as an exchange student.</p> <p>Fun fact* Chijmes is the church from the famous movie - Crazy Rich Asians and it is right 2 minutes walk from SMU. It has great cafes and restaurants to eat. My go-to was Prive (Italian food restaurant) there!</p> <p>Highlights from January: SMU took us to Skyride and Luge activity adventure in Sentosa where we had a lot of fun with entire exchange student cohort. Subsequently, I also explored around Bugis (famous shopping street), Haji Lane (Greek/Turkish/Arabic places to eat and buy), Little India (for Indian food cravings) and used to go to Clarke Quay with friends quite often.</p>
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<p>February</p>	<p>By February, I was fully accustomed to living in Singapore and knew everything by heart. I usually spent my mornings taking a walk for 45 mins from Novena to Orchard and back. It was to keep myself physically active while enjoying the beauty of Singapore. Me and my exchange friends used to eat at Little India a lot and then spend evenings chatting at the Marina Bay Sands Waterfront. It reminded me of Victoria Harbour in Hong Kong and was quite a delight to just sit there and talk. SMU had a mid-term break from 24 February to 5 March so I went back to India to visit my parents. A lot of students also used this time to explore around South East Asia.</p> <p>Highlights of February: Cycling at the East Coast Park with my friends, Flying drones for the first time in my life at Marina Bay Sands (because one of my friends was a drone enthusiast so he brought one with him), Visiting gardens by the bay, Singapore Zoo, Trying Lau Pa Sat for the first time, and rising the Singapore Flyer which had amazing views.</p>
<p>March</p>	<p>After everyone came back from their trips during the Mid-Term break, the workload seemed to drastically increase because usually the weeks were filled with group meetings and project submissions. Being from HKUST, it was not much of a shock to me because of being used to the workload back at HKUST and I believe with some scheduling and effective time management one can manage SMU's workload as well.</p> <p>After my classes I usually used to catch up on studies and meetings and during the weekends I used to spend my days going to different places in Singapore. Since I planned my time table in such a way that I had classes only on 2 days of the week, rest other days were quite balanced to get some rest, hit the gym, go out with friends, and work on projects.</p> <p>Highlights of March: In this busy month of March I still had time to explore Singapore and went to fine dine at Lavos which is at the top of Marina Bay Sands. The views were immaculate and we enjoyed a relaxing time there with friends. I also visited Art and Science Museum of Singapore which featured the famous exhibit from teamLab. I spent an afternoon visiting the Botanical Gardens of Singapore which was indeed worth it because of the colourful and wonderful plants that I got to see. I also went to Capita Springs Rooftop, Ce La Vie, Newton Food Centre, Universal Studios Singapore, and 27 Rooms limited time exhibition.</p>
<p>April</p>	<p>April was extremely packed with final project submissions and presentations. All my classes were quite heavy in terms of group project workload and I spent my first week working on those only.</p> <p>I finished my first two presentations on 3rd April and concluded two big group projects. Then on 6th April I had my other two presentations one after the another and they also went well. The week felt hectic because</p>

	<p>SMU presentations are usually 30 minutes long and done to real clients (in my case). So we tend to make reports and extra deliverables in quite a lot of detail for those courses which was different from HKUST because I am used to the 15 minute presentation cap. But, SMU's approach was very hands-on and suited the projects we were working on thus we ended up presenting for 30 mins + 10 mins of Q/A and even submitted a 96 Paged report for one of our group projects. I felt it was still manageable if your group works according to the timeline throughout and does not deadline fight the submissions.</p> <p>After my presentations and submissions ended I flew to Philippines with my friend to explore more around Asia. This was the best decision I took from exchange because Philippines was a much needed trip after presentation week at SMU.</p> <p>After I returned from Philippines, it was final exam study break and I usually spent my time studying for the same. I still managed to visit the Ice cream museum (only two are there in the world, one in NYC and one in Singapore) and I also went to Singapore's famous aquarium.</p> <p>After my final exams ended on 28th April, I visited some places I wanted to eat at before leaving for India. I spent most of my time packing thereafter and departed for India on 30th April.</p> <p>Highlights of April: Doing Canyoneering in Philippines, swam with whale sharks, and biking in Philippines. Ate at Koma Singapore in Marina Bay Sands, and clicked pictures with friends around my favourite places on Campus</p>
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2. General Study Abroad Information:

1. Visa Procedures:

- We apply for a student visa to Singapore (also called student pass) online on ICA's website.
- SMU helps send a letter of acceptance and a visa application procedure guidebook for ease of application.
- The VISA is then collected in person on campus after arrival, also arranged by SMU. You can enter Singapore after an approved visa application letter, called the ICA Letter and collect the visa at SMU after orientation.
- The process was easy and there were no complications in between. The visa costs around 60-90 SGD.

2. Orientation Activities: Orientation on 5th Jan (Week 1 of Jan usually, before semester starts) . The orientation day itinerary was as follows:

- 8:30am to 12:00pm – **Orientation**
- 12:00pm to 1:30pm - **Lunch**
- 1:30pm to 2:30pm – **Campus Tour**

3. International Services and Activities: No airport pickup is arranged by SMU but several cultural mingling sessions, resume workshops, and farewell parties were arranged for exchange students.
4. Accommodation: SMU has its own accommodation called the YO-HA Pearl's Hill Residence but they usually get full easily. Most of the exchange students found accommodations not affiliated with SMU. However, SMU sent us a list of accommodations that was quite useful for the housing search. I chose to live at the Novena Hall International Student Hostel from that list.
5. Course Registration: SMU enrolment is called BOSS-Bidding. It is a system quite different from HKUST where every student is given \$100 in e-tokens and we bid this money according to the courses we want. SMU gives us an orientation on how to bid for classes and how to decide the right amount of bid for each class. I managed to get into all the classes that I wanted with the right planning, advice from SMU seniors, and calculations for bidding.
6. Teaching and Assessment Methods: Most assessment methods are similar to HKUST and have a combination of mid-term exam, final exam, group project, essay, presentation, peer evaluation, etc. The teaching style is different because SMU is seminar based teaching which involved extremely heavy focus on class participation and collaboration. Three hour lectures with a 15 minute break in between, classes can go as late as 10 PM as well. Class size is around 30-50 students only.
7. Finances: I carried a foreign exchange card but HSBC/UoB/Standard Chartered/JP Morgan credit and debit cards are accepted everywhere. Exchange Cash/Currency is available at great rates in Little India. I spent around 5000+ SGD including all my residential, food, and touring expenses.
8. Climate: Very hot and humid, rainy days also quite frequent during Jan-April.
9. Health and Safety: SMU has its own clinic on campus which you can access in case of health related matters at a subsidised rate. This was extremely beneficial and the costs are covered under the insurance from SMU.
10. Food: Since my accommodation didn't allow cooking on premises, I used to eat out frequently, some of my go to places are:
 - Prive, Chijmes
 - Maxwell Food Centre
 - Newton Food centre
 - Din Tai Fung
 - Haaji Laane- I am cafe there
 - Lau Pa sat – Touristy Hawker Centre
 - KOI The (Bubble Tea Shop)
 - Acai affair (Healthy Acai bowls)
 - Streets HK Cafe

- Kaya Toast
- Lavo, Marina Bay Sands
- Koma, Marina Bay Sands
- Pasta Express, SMU Campus
- Supply and Demand, Orchard
- Kailash parbat
- Komala Vilas
- Le Matin Patisserie
- Poke Theory (Healthy Poke bowls)
- Monochrome café (an aesthetic 2-D Café)
- Simpleburger
- Wing stop
- Level 33
- VeganBurg

11. Transportation:

I used to take the MRT in Singapore and bus services. You can also take GRAB which is the Taxi app for Singapore. You can pay using EZ link card or your VISA debit/credit card at the MTR Stations. I recommend buying an EZ Link Card for a better forex conversion rate. Singapore is quite walkable and you can save up on transport money if you live near Bencoleen, Dhoby Gaut, or Orchard MRT stations as all of these are just 20 minutes walk away from campus and the city centre.

12. Communication: WhatsApp calling and Facetime is the main mode of communication with friends and family abroad. For local communication, I bought the Singtel Sim for local calling and data. I got 15 GB data/month for 19 SGD. Point to note, you will have to download telegram because a lot of professors make Telegram groups for important information to be distributed amongst students.

13. Sports and Recreation Facilities: SMU has its own gym on campus which is quite big with all the necessary equipment. Cardio was on floor 2 and weight lifting was on floor 1, both with a great view of the SMU garden.

14. Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities: Very diverse as compared to HKUST when it comes to social clubs, for example these were the clubs that caught my attention:

- SMU K-pop Dance Club
- SMU Trekking
- SMU Japanese/Thai/Malaysia/Indian, etc. Student Societies
- SMUX Cycling
- SMU Marketing/Finance/Accounting/Law student association
- SMU Valentines Day Events
- SMU OBHR Student Society
- SMU Symphonia
- SMU AISEC

- SMU RotaractAnd many more...

15. Cautionary Measures:

- Please be reminded to return your student pass when leaving Singapore after concluding exchange
- Scams in Singapore are quite common and we were told not to book Airbnb's as an accommodation to avoid being scammed
- Don't make fun or copy the Singaporean Accent
- Don't Jaywalk because Singapore is a fine city and you can be fined pretty high for many things
- Sale of Chewing Gum is not allowed in Singapore
- No eating or drinking in the MRT
- Many clubs like Ce La Vie have an age restriction of 21 years old for entering, please be mindful of the local rules

Items to Bring:

- Clothes
- Shoes (formals, trainers, sneakers and slippers)
- Electronics
- No travel adapter needed (as same pin plug as in HKG)
- Water Bottles
- Cutlery
- Medicines
- Sunscreen (Singapore is extremely sunny)
- Umbrella/Raincoat (for the unannounced rains)
- Storage Containers (to be organised)
- Bedding (if not provided by your accommodation)
- Hair Dryer
- Toiletries (soap, facewash, shampoo)
- Power Bank
- Local Currency for when you land (in case your card doesn't immediately work)

Rest I believe you can buy everything in Singapore because it is quite shopper friendly like Hong Kong.

Useful Links and Contacts:

- Visa: <https://www.ica.gov.sg>
- Things to do: <https://www.timeout.com/singapore/things-to-do/101-things-to-do-in-singapore-sightseeing>
- Book using: KLOOK (a lot of discounts at times)
<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiTsPPH5aSAAxXQ-mEKHV30CZ4QjBB6BAgrEAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.klook.com%2Fen-SG%2Fcity%2F6-singapore-things-to-do%2F&usg=AOvVaw0bOHETp0HO4w8lzhkbFbmy&opi=89978449>

Best Practices of Host Institution:

- SMU group projects are usually done for real clients either under the SMU-X program or otherwise in courses as well. I believe that to be a great approach because as students get to work on real life applications of our learnings in courses for a real client not just a hypothetical case, we learn from scratch and research is much more meaningful. I liked their hands on approach a lot. Clients range from LVMH to small and medium enterprises and they benefit from the free consultation as a partnership with SMU and also offer job opportunities in some cases to the best presenting teams, so it's a win-win.
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