

Travel Report – Marius Bjerggaard Nielsen

Host University: Singapore Management University

Study Program at IT-University: B.Sc. Global Business Informatics, 3rd Semester.

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad: Exchange Agreement

Courses Studied abroad: International Business, Marketing, Data Mining & Business Analytics, Management of People at Work.

Exchange Period: Fall Semester 2017.

If you wish to give advice to other students regarding your travels, please state your contact info here:
mabn@itu.dk

My Stay Abroad:

Studying at Singapore Management University was both challenging and quite an eyeopener for me personally. I had to get out of my comfort zone and dive into a completely new environment where I knew basically nobody, however, also academically I faced rightful difficulties as some courses were definitely harder, while others were not as interesting as initially expected. The 4 courses I did at SMU were: International Business, Marketing, Data Mining & Business Analytics and Management of People at Work. While Marketing was pretty much what I expected, I found that I had to put in quite a lot of effort into International Business and Data Mining & Business Analytics, partly because I found it interesting but also due to the fact that the work load was significantly higher (although this definitely depends on the professor). This however, also meant that the yield was significantly better, now that I have completed my studies at SMU, I feel like I can take away a lot of new things academically. I found Management of People at Work rather dull due to it not really being in my primary area of interest, I initially wanted to get the course: Business Negotiation and Conflict Management, however I didn't manage to get it through the biddings.

SMU has a plethora of clubs and activities ongoing all the time. Before departure I joined in on both the Buddy Program and the Host Programme, both of them aiming to create strong relationships with locals, focusing on social gatherings but also to get insight into what past students at SMU are doing professionally. In addition, I also joined the Marketing Club, which facilitated workshops and company visits to companies such as Unilever, Twitter and more, giving real world insight into the role of a marketing employee. The clubs are also a great way for you to interact with local students, which I found slightly harder than initially expected, Singaporean students are surprisingly busy.

Before commencing my studies at ITU, I was already certain that I wanted to go abroad at least once during my bachelor. I started traveling during my 2 gaps years prior to university and I really enjoyed the international exposure and the different perspectives that you acquire when you experience new environments and socialize with people of various backgrounds. If you would've asked me where I wanted to go before I started at ITU, I probably wouldn't have said Singapore, but I'm very glad I went. While Singapore is a relatively young country, it is still a very diverse and multicultural environment. There are a range of different cultures and people with various backgrounds, which makes it a very interesting city to live in. Oh, and the food! You can get basically anything! From western burgers to Nasi Lemak and

Roti, and the 'local' food is superb (my recommendation is sticking to the local! Don't be afraid to try something new). Singapore is an interesting destination as it is kind of a westernized Asian metropolitan, the western influence is obvious, however, the Asian roots clearly remain. Singapore is a great destination for 'Asia beginners'. The language barrier is basically non-existent (I say basically, because Singlish still takes some time to get used to lah). And the cultural difference is negligible compared to other countries in Asia such as Japan. And once you have experience all (or at least most, because let's face it, Singapore is rather small...) it is relatively easy and cheap to fly out to the nearby countries. During my travels I visited the following destinations: Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan and Hong Kong. I felt like I had a decent balance between studying and traveling, however, comparing to some of the other exchange students I felt like I was barely traveling.

During my stay I learned a lot, both personally but also academically. Firstly, I created an even stronger and bigger network both in Singapore with the locals but also in the rest of the world with the other exchange students. Furthermore, the effort I put into the courses resulted in me expanding my knowledge within each area, although I especially have found the knowledge gained in International Business and Data Mining & Business Analytics very relevant to my interests and future education. Additionally, the courses have provided me with new perspectives of my current situation and what I want to be doing professionally in the future.

Arranging my stay

I did as much of the planning possible prior to departure. This included finding accommodation (detailed below), looking into courses and possible alternatives (please have a select few course alternatives if you don't get the ones you want in your bidding! And make sure that you get them pre-approved as well!) In addition to that, I sought help from ITU students who previously studied at SMU, there I was able to gain helpful insight into interesting courses as well as travel tips etc.

For accommodation, I made great use of the official Facebook page created by SMU for incoming exchange students, there I was able to find a group of students in a similar situation as me and then look for possible scenarios for accommodation. We settled with Singaporehousingcompany.com whom provide accommodation mainly for exchange students. The place was rather nice, a 3-bedroom apartment for six people, with pool and all kinds of jazz. However, it was also pretty pricey at around 1000SGD pr. Person pr. Month. There are definitely cheaper options available.

Expenses and Financing

For financing I had some money saved up before going which was supplemented by the SU. The largest expense I had during my trip was accommodation. In total with everything paid including accommodation, travels, food, nightlife, shopping etc. I estimated that I spent a total of around 60000-70000 DKK. Which is a lot of money yes, but for half a year abroad with a bunch of traveling, not too bad.

I did apply to quite a lot of scholarships in order to offset the liabilities, and I did manage to get one, apart from ITU's Travel Pool. I landed a scholarship worth of 10.000 DKK from FDE Fonden, which was a great relief after a bunch of work searching and applying for scholarships.

Additionally, I recommend you guys to get an international/travel payment card in order to minimize fees. I personally used Revolut. Last but not least, if you have any questions to anything I've covered here, or anything I haven't covered feel free to contact me and I'll do my best to answer.