IT University Travel Report

**Host University:** Singapore Management University

**Study Programme at IT University:** Global Business Informatics

**Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad:** Exchange Agreement

**Courses studied abroad:** Global Mega-Trends, Business Negotiation & Conflict Management, Leadership Seminar with CEOs, Supply Chain Management

**Exchange Period:** 2015 autumn

**Your stay abroad**

What was it like to study at Singapore Management University (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?

After I came back, many people asked if it was worth it. Definitely! Despite all the extra effort, loads of paperwork, stressful days and times when I really missed my family, it was an amazing experience. The university is very nice and much bigger than ITU, and has several faculties, so you can choose from hundreds of courses. The lectures are run in a very interactive manner, and students are expected to actively participate, ask questions and make comments. That usually counts for 10-20 percent of the final grade. It was quite good practise to speak more during the lectures, even though it took some time to get used to it. I was very happy about the choice of my courses, although the process of obtaining them is quite stressful and you might end up with very different courses then you though you would like to take. Both ITU and SMU were really helpful throughout the process and helped to clear out all the issues. I would recommend taking your time and understanding the bidding process very well, also researching about all the courses you are interested in.

I am already an international student here in ITU, so adapting in a different environment wasn’t a new thing for me. Also, Singapore is a very different Asian country, and in many ways it reminded me of a Western country. For example, most of the people talk English all the time, so it is very easy to communicate. Also, the country is very well developed and offers great infrastructures, differently from what you would see if you decide to travel around Southeast Asia.

Most of the people I met and interacted with were other exchange students from all over the world. Generally, Singaporeans are very hard-working and focus on their studies very much. They also have their friend circles and getting into one might be a difficult task.
However I met many friendly and sweet people from Singapore as well, who showed me the city and told many interesting things about their diverse culture.

What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?

I was interested in going on exchange from the very first semester, and having this idea in the back of my head helped me to be better prepared. I always had the desire to experience new cultures, to travel to different places, meet new people and learn from them. I am also active member in student initiatives and going on exchange seemed to be a good source for inspiration for how ITU student environment could be improved. Lastly, I wanted to try a different school than ITU, and attending a business school was a great idea. Like many others, I had doubts whether I should go or not due to practical reasons, but I am very happy that I did.

Please describe what you got out of your stay, both personally and academically, and how do you expect it to contribute to your further studies?

Going to Singapore gave me a lot, both personally and academically. Firstly, I attended very interesting and high quality courses, which gave me a better understanding of the world, Asian business, leadership, cultural implications in negotiations and workplaces overall. Now I also know much more about Asia, its culture and people. I got to know different cuisines, and met people from literally all over the world. It really showed me how little I know and how much there is to learn and see. It was a great inspiration! Also, I was very unsure regarding what should I do after my bachelor, but exchange semester helped me to understand myself better and gave me a better direction.

Arranging your stay

Please give a short description of the process of arranging your stay:

SMU is very helpful in terms of arranging your stay, and they provide a lot of information by email which you should read carefully as well as follow the deadlines - they are very strict about that. Also, there was a Facebook group for all the exchange students, and it was a great platform to chat with people beforehand, arrange groups for accommodation or travelling, as well as clarify different issues. It was relieving to know that you are not the only one having some kind of struggles.

What resources did you find helpful in planning your stay and which people did you use (if any)?

As mentioned, Facebook group was a great resource and should be used. If you have practical questions about doing exchange in SMU, I would suggest finding a Facebook group
for previous exchangers and ask questions there. Also, Rikke was extremely helpful when we had issues with our courses. I also talked with some students who been in SMU before and they provided me with some good tips. I would advice to always do information search, learn about the place you are going, talk with people who been there or are living at the moment, watch some videos, read articles. In this way you will be much better prepared for any new experience.

How did you arrange practicalities such as accommodation?

Finding accommodation in Singapore is relatively easy. Finding the right accommodation for you, in terms of location, price, amenities and etc, might be a difficult task. There are different types of accommodation: long-term hostels, which usually are cheap but you are sharing the room with 3-5 other people, and the amenities are poor. SMU offers to stay in Evans hostel, which is quite cheap but far from the university. Also, you can arrange your stay throughout different agencies - that would be more expensive option and most likely you would share a tiny room with another person. You can also find accommodation through various online portals, and for this option I would suggest arriving to Singapore early to have time for visiting the apartments. Two other ITU students and I were lucky to find accommodation through the SMU Exchange Facebook group, and together with few other people we lived in a spacious apartment. This type of accommodation was called condominium, and I would definitely recommend it as condominium usually have great facilities such as swimming pool, sauna, gym, bbq pit and etc.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

Singapore is an expensive city, maybe even more then Copenhagen. I have saved up money prior to my trip and had some support from my relatives. I think that everyone can spend very different amount of money depending on their accommodation, course requirements, eating habits, and travel plans. Food in the supermarkets is very expensive, and many people find it cheaper to eat in food courts which has a wide variety of Chinese, Malay, Indian, Singaporean and other food. I would say that it is worth to spend a little bit more, and go to museums, concerts, F1, and travelling. If you plan to travel, you could save a lot of money by booking the airplane tickets in advance.

Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular?

I did not apply for any particular scholarships and therefore cannot comment on this question.
Recommendations for other students:

Firstly and most importantly, enjoy your stay! Even if you have a difficult day, remember that everything you do will enrich your personality and make you stronger. Go, study, learn, eat, try, meet new people, explore Singapore and travel around - the semester is much shorter than you think and there is no time for doing nothing. Some little tips would be - ask locals about food and try different dishes; always have at least some cash because in most of the food courts they don’t take credit cards; if you plan to travel throughout the semester, do that before the midterms, because just after the recess week it gets very busy; don’t take courses on Thursday mornings - there are great parties happening on Wednesdays; if you can, stay in a condominium and you will love all the facilities such as the swimming pool. And if you are doubting whether you should go on exchange or not - the answer is yes! Just go and you will have the time of your life!