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Report Semester abroad

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Study period SP51 February – June 2014
Introduction
As I am studying International Business at DHBW in Lörrach it is not only part of the study programme but also an obligation to go abroad for one semester. This experience will help to improve your language skills and also your understanding for different cultures, which is nowadays one of the basic requirements in daily business in an international working environment.

The main reason why I decided to go to Asia was because I travelled to Asia the year before and fell in love. So I wanted to see more. Why Singapore? Well, Singapore does not really count to those countries that are typical Asian. But that is actually the interesting thing about it... It is somehow Asian but very Western and you can still speak English, more or less 😊

Preparation
Looking for a suitable university is quite “easy” in that way as Singapore is a really small country, which gives you some choices but not too many. The downside is that studying in Singapore is really expensive, which limits your choice nearly to zero.

After getting denied for NUS because DHBW is not a partner university, my hopes to study in Singapore were destroyed as the other universities like SMU are not affordable. But then my uncle met someone from the marketing department of JCU during his business trip in Singapore.

I had the first contact to JCU about one year before my semester abroad should start. It was enough time to prepare everything. Gostralia was very helpful during the whole process, e.g. preparing all the documents needed for the students pass as well as applying for Bafög in order to finance this semester. I also applied for the DAAD-Promos scholarship, which I also received in order to finance my flight ticket.

Consider the following:
- Requirements: Abitur, TOEFL or equivalent language certificate
- Auslands-BAföG
- Visa (students pass) will be done together with JCU in the university
  - Don’t panic if you don’t have your students pass before going to Singapore
  - Entry Singapore with tourist visa
- Bring all your original documents with you that you handed in (Passport, TOR, DAAD, birth certificate etc.)
As I already mentioned, Singapore is very expensive but not only when it comes to tuition fees but also in general. Therefore: Save a lot of money!!! You are not allowed to work in Singapore with your students pass in order to earn extra money.

**Accommodation**

In my case finding an accommodation was very easy because my uncle checked for me in Singapore, so I did not had to stay in hostels like my fellow students did. I got a really convenient condo only 1km to the JCU Campus at Upper Thomson road. So I could walk to school every day, which was amazing because I did not have to pay for busses and MRT. The price of course is not so cheap but still ok for Singapore. I paid 1,100 SGD for a single room with an attached bathroom. I was also allowed to cook in the kitchen – it is not usual that there is an equipped kitchen and even if there is, mostly only light cooking is permitted. The apartment owner was a single Chinese lady and she was very nice. The condo included a swimming pool with a BBQ place, tennis court and a gym. It was a really good deal because some of my fellow students paid the same price without having any extras or privacy (sharing 2 bathrooms with 10 other students). JCU is assisting you finding a suitable accommodation.
Country

Singapore is a city-state with a mere 5.5 million inhabitants whereas a high percentage is expatriates. There are 4 official languages, which are Mandarin, English, Malay and Tamil. Therefore there is a high cultural diversity consisting out of mainly Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, and Hindus.

During the whole year the temperature is very warm and it is humid, so the Climate is not for everybody! Singapore is known for the strict laws and rules and it is really true. So you better don't break them as there are high fines waiting for you. Some students got fined for smoking in the wrong area or for crossing the road at redlight. Generally I never felt limited in my freedom as I could do whatever I wanted to. In contrast I never felt saver than in Singapore, so I was able to go out at night by myself. At the beginning you might find some rules exagerated but then you realise why Singapore is actually one of the savest and cleanest cities in the world. The infrastructure in Singapore is very good. For example they have a modern MRT and bus system. And even at night when the MRT is out of service, taking cabs is much cheaper than in Germany. But it is different as well, you will see 😏. In case you get sick that is also no problem as there are very good doctors but consider that they are expensive as well. So of course you should get an international health insurance e.g. Envivas Krankenversicherung.
The university is well organized and very helpful with international students in terms of looking for apartments and other inquiries. Choosing subjects in order to create the time table was quite hard as popular courses are full immediately. Compared to other universities (NUS, SMU or Polytechnic) JCU is quite cheap. Last year there were two campuses of JCU; the main campus was situated in Bishan and the other one in Ang Mo Kio. Beginning of this year JCU merged both campuses together and moved to the east of Singapore in order to cover the increasing numbers of students. As there is high percentage of international students from all over the world you can really learn during group presentations and assignments what it means to do “intercultural management”. The atmosphere at JCU is very nice and friendly because students are not that competitive to each other in contrast to other Asian universities. There are lots of events like the JCU beach party or other activities, which makes it easy to get to know new people and just have fun. Even now after Singapore I am still in touch with people from JCU and they organize a lot of alumni events, which gives you the possibility to stay in touch.

- Winter semester: February – June 2014
- Good infrastructure, restaurants, parcs (bishan parc) etc.
- Offer different language courses and clubs to join
- Up to 50 % international students
- Strict attendance policy (electronic fingerprint to attend classes)
- Campus activities
- Canteen with fresh food from different cultures (Chinese, Indian, European)
Hanging out at Sentosa with JCU students after the beach activities in the orientation week
Life outside of campus

- Good restaurants with food from all over the world (Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, German, French, Italian etc.)  →  Cheap (food courts) to expensive (restaurants)
- Amazing rooftop bars and clubs
  →  Alcohol is very expensive (Ladies night on Wednesday)
- Sentosa Beach (Beach parties)
- Plenty of shopping malls
- Convenient possibilities to travel around in Asia (Jetstar, Air Asia, Tiger Air etc.)
- Zoo, night safari, aquarium

Singapore is a country, which offers a lot of possibilities to enjoy life besides studying. There are plenty of restaurants, bars, clubs, museums and sights. You will find out soon enough. As Singapore is located in the heart of South East Asia it is very convenient to travel on the weekend. So it is not unusual that you go for a trip to Bali or Thailand. Singapore also has plenty of shopping malls and opportunities to spend your money at. So don’t bring too many clothes, otherwise you will not have enough space to bring everything back home. But do bring your individual care products, as these are very expensive and different to what you get here. Sentosa beach is also very close to the city, so whenever you feel like hanging out at the beach, you can do that at any time. What I loved most about this city was the availability of all kinds of food to low prices. When I felt having Indian or Spanish food, I could just get some. I had the best pizza in my life at Timbre substation – Yummy! This bar has awesome live bands every day.
Although life in Singapore is very costly, especially alcohol (it is hard as a German to pay 30.00 SGD for a bottle of wine) but you will get used to it and you enjoy every sip of wine in a totally new way. That is why mostly you are going out on Wednesday (Ladies Night!) where you get free entry or drinks.

So in total I would say that I had the best time of my life in Singapore. I met a lot of wonderful people, which also became close friends. I learned a lot about different cultures and religions, especially those that I have never been in touch with e.g. Indian people. It is really true that during your time abroad you discover yourself in a completely new way and you are reflecting a lot about your environment. I came back as a new person with a new mindset and unforgettable memories. I would always choose Singapore again as destination to do my semester abroad.
Gerne verwirklichen wir auch deinen Traum von einem Studium in Australien, Neuseeland oder Asien!

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