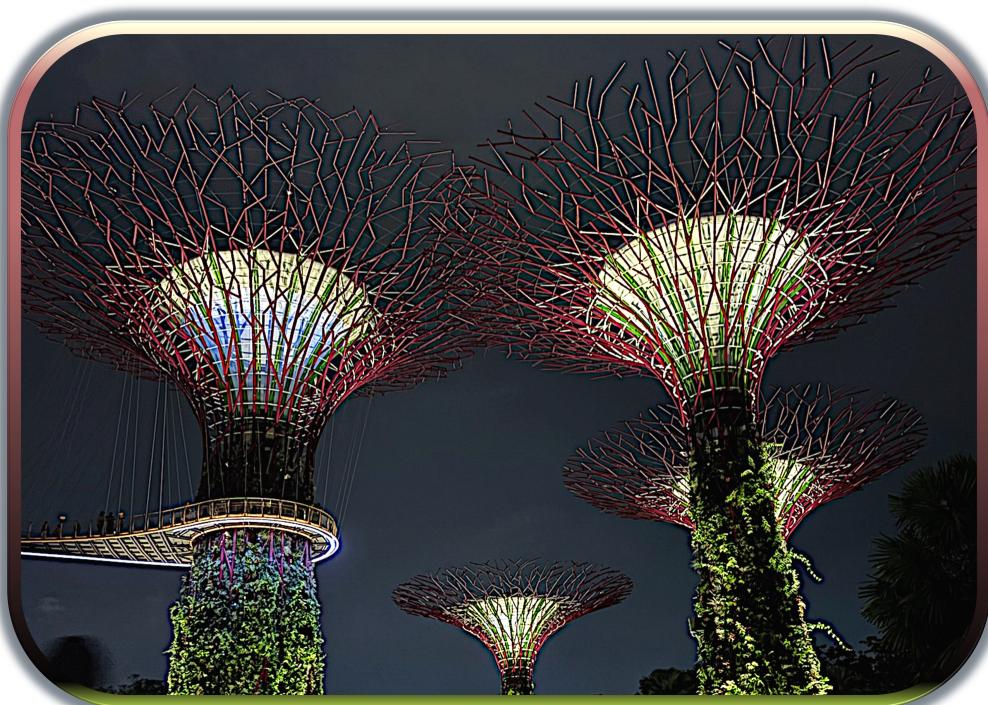


Travel Report

NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (NTU)
SINGAPORE

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OSCAR STOMMENDAL

B.Sc. ENGINEERING PHYSICS | M.Sc. PHYSICS (MPPHS)

CONTACT: [EMAIL](#) | [LINKEDIN](#)

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**NANYANG
TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**
SINGAPORE



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Introduction

Hello there!

Welcome to my exchange report from my time at NTU in Singapore. I assume that you're reading this because you consider going on an exchange to Singapore, or perhaps you've already been accepted (to NTU or elsewhere) and are looking for some information about the university, Singapore, Asia, or just what an exchange in Singapore is like in general. In the latter case – congratulations! You have an amazing time ahead of you. And if you're still considering an exchange, go for it! I would argue that Singapore is a perfect place for this, with the traveling possibilities and highly ranked universities, however I'm sure you'll not regret it wherever you decide to go. You'll be able to travel, meet a lot of new people and friends, and experience new cultures.

For an exchange at NTU (or Singapore in general), I hope that my report can help you, especially regarding preparations. This was probably the most confusing part of the exchange process, and it is covered in the first chapter. Moreover, apart from the preparations, I'll also discuss the everyday life at NTU (e.g. housing, economy and activities), the courses I attended and some traveling tips for both Singapore and Asia. At the end of the report, you'll also find my budget from the exchange along with some (hopefully) helpful links and apps for surviving an exchange in Singapore.

If you have any questions about the exchange, whether it's about the preparations, the school and coursework, or traveling in Asia, I'm happy to help! :) You can find my contact information on the title page.

Best Regards,

Oscar ü



Me eating “Stinky Tofu” in Taiwan, the last stop of my exchange adventure.

Preparations

As you might understand, there's some preparation work you need to complete before traveling across the globe. However, just like my experience with Swedish and Chalmers culture, I found that Singapore and NTU as well are very organized (except for the course selection process, which I'll address later). All the necessary steps in the application process were clearly outlined. I have friends who went to other countries where equivalent processes seemed less straightforward, from what I understood. Either way, I hope that the following sections make the application process smoother and provide some additional useful tips and tricks. I wrote this as I completed each step to ensure that the information was fresh in my mind. That said, keep in mind that things can change from year to year, so this guide should not be treated as the "definitive truth". Always follow the official instructions from NTU, and if you notice any discrepancies between my explanations and NTU's, assume that their version is correct. Lastly, note that the deadlines I mention below may differ depending on whether your exchange starts in autumn or spring.

The Application Process

I was nominated by Chalmers in early September and received an email from NTU shortly thereafter. As an Engineering Physics student, it was somewhat unclear to the Chalmers coordinator whether to nominate me to the College of Engineering (CoE) or the College of Science (CoS). Ultimately, another physics student and I decided that CoS suited us best. It was not entirely clear what being nominated to a specific college actually meant. From what I understood, the main requirement was to ensure that at least 50 % of your course credits came from the college you were nominated to. However, I am not entirely sure this was checked in the end. Looking back, I am happy with my decision to be nominated to CoS as a Physics MSc student. I found that the most relevant courses for me were offered there (the other Chalmers students, e.g. from I or M, were nominated to CoE). For most MSc programs at Chalmers, I would assume CoE is the more appropriate choice, and it would likely work for physics-related MSc programs as well.

Additionally, whether you are nominated as a graduate or undergraduate student also comes with some catches. If given the choice, I would recommend asking to be nominated as an undergraduate (which I believe is the usual case). This allows you to apply for both postgraduate and undergraduate courses, which is not the case if you are nominated as a postgraduate student. As a postgraduate nominee, you will likely face challenges applying for undergraduate courses. Moreover, during my exchange term, there were not many postgraduate courses available to exchange students at all, which further supports being nominated as an undergraduate.

Going back to the application – in the said email received after the nomination, NTU provided a link to the application portal together with accompanying instructions. Apart from some weird instances of queries, e.g. entering your “race”, this form mostly asked for basic information: contact information, medical status and special needs etc. You also needed to provide a photo of the bio-data page in your passport (i.e. the pages with your photo, make sure to save this for later!) and a photo of yourself cropped to a specific size (also save this!). For the latter, I used a “passport-photo-maker”-app ([link here](#)), which seemed to work well. You also had to provide you English certificate (I received mine a couple of months earlier via my Chalmers email) and your transcripts of records (ToR). Lastly, you were asked to enter 10 courses that you found interesting. You might hear otherwise, but to me, these only served as a “check” that you have done some research on the courses available – you can easily swap freely among more courses later on (see [Course Selection and Registration](#)).

Regarding the ToR, Chalmers Servicecenter started signing these electronically some time before our application deadline. However, NTU demanded these to have the Chalmers seal, which the electronic sign did not provide. Make sure to check if this is still the case for you! I know some students who did not want to wait for the coordinators to fix this, so they printed their ToR and went to Chalmers Servicecenter to get them signed. So, this is definitely an option to get them signed with the seal if the coordinators are slow for some reason. Overall, the instructions made the form rather easy and straightforward to complete, and if these were followed, your application was most likely approved.

After Being Accepted

If you’d done everything correctly in your application, access to the Exchange/Studie Abroad Portal (SAP) was granted in the beginning of November. This portal contains essentially everything you need to know and prepare prior to your exchange. There was also a pre-arrival meeting held on Teams in the second half of November. I would argue that, as I claimed, the portal itself provided all the necessary information, however the meeting was a nice way of hearing everything at once. Also, a link to a Telegram group was provided, where all incoming exchange students to NTU could ask each other questions about the application process. However, this later evolved into a way to get in touch with potential travel partners or maybe find some people up for a beer.

Inside the portal, the first things you had to do before a deadline was to accept the NTU exchange offer, download the Letter of Enrolment (print this, since it might be needed when entering Singapore) and apply for campus housing (if you wanted). Regarding housing, you can read more about my experiences under the [Housing](#) section in the next chapter. After accepting the offer you could also activate your NTU Email and Network. From this point on, I would recommend (and I also believe that NTU does) that you use this email for all future communication with NTU in order to not end up as spam. Next, you had to apply and appeal for additional courses apart from the 10 chosen in your initial application and also submit your Student’s Pass (STP) application. You can read more about this in the two following sections. Moreover, something I couldn’t find explicitly stated in the SAP (at least not clearly), was that you also need to submit your Singapore Arrival Card (SGAC) before you arrive, which was easily done on [ICA’s](#) website.

Some things also had to be completed after arriving in Singapore. This included completing the STP application, collecting your Student Card and pay the NTU registration and miscellaneous fees. However, as the general case, these steps were well instructed and not hard to complete.

Student's Pass Application/VISA

From mid-November until mid-December, you must submit your Student's Pass (STP) application. This will serve as proof of your legal stay (similar to a VISA) and is mandatory for all international full-time students. The instructions on how to do this is clearly described in the SAP. I will summarize the steps below for an overview:

1. First, you need to download the “SOLAR form” from the SAP, which contains your personal credentials to access the STP application interface on [ICA’s website](#).
2. Next, log on to the STP application page and complete the “eForm16 form”. Many of the queries in this reminded much of those in the initial application. I also know that one query demanded your signature. However, I missed this and my application was approved anyway. But to be safe, I would probably fill this in as well.
3. In the next step, you must upload the eForm16 together with a photo of yourself and the bio-data page of your passport, hence why you should save these photos from your initial application (I wouldn’t delete them after this either though, as you might need them for later, especially the passport photo). Although, note that the requirements on the photo dimensions might differ from the initial application. Thus, I used an online photo-cropper to resize my photos.
4. Before your application can be processed, you must pay a processing fee (for me it was S\$ 45). If your application was approved (this took a few days for me), you can log on again and print your so called IPA-approved STP, which you might have to show when entering Singapore.
5. Next, you are able to complete two of the three final steps. First, approve, download and then upload the form of conditions and terms regarding the STP. When this has been processed (this also took a couple of days), you must pay the second processing fee (which for me was S\$ 90). The third and last step is then completed after arriving in Singapore, see below.

The IPA-approved STP could be used to enter Singapore *once*, and the STP was then finalized after arriving at NTU, by booking a meeting time when ICA visit the school during the first week. For this occasion, you will need the E-pass you receive when entering Singapore, a physical passport photograph (i.e. not the whole bio-data page, only of yourself), passport, proof of your payments and your IPA and a Singaporean phone number. The latter is covered below under the [SIM Card](#) section. After completion, you could travel in and out of the country as you’d like and also create your Singpass, which essentially works as BankID in Sweden. This is needed for creating a local bank account, as described in the [Economy](#) section.

Course Selection and Registration

This was probably the part that gave me the most headache during the whole application process. I would say that our Swedish “Antagning”-system suddenly appears very simple and effective after having gone through what seems to be the Singapore (or at least NTU) equivalent. However, I should add that if you do everything calmly and as instructed, there will most likely not be any issues. To make everything as clear as possible, I’ve listed everything that had to be done below. If I’d gotten a list like this when I was going through this process, I believe that some (if not all) queries I had then would have been crystal clear, thus I think that this is an appropriate way to describe this.

- i) First, you’ll choose 10 courses during your initial application. These are just a first centerpiece of courses you’d like to attend, and you can easily add more later on.
- ii) When you get access to the Study Abroad Portal (or closely after), you will know
 - a) Which of the 10 courses you got approved for, and
 - b) Which of these that are actually offered.

Don’t worry if you get many rejections at this time, as this is what the following steps are for.

- iii) Next, the course E-request opens for the first time. This is your first time to shine, i.e. you can now *request* for additional courses that you’re interested in. If a course has pre-requisites, you can add links and contents of courses you have read at Chalmers, ensuring that you meet these. At this time, the definite course schedule is uploaded, so you can be sure which courses are actually available.
- iv) By the same time as iii), you can also *appeal* for rejected courses until the end of the Add/Drop period (see vii)). This means that if courses show up as “rejected” in the Study Abroad Portal, you can send an email(s) to the college(s) teaching the course(s) as instructed to get them approved. This will most likely be the case for some of your 10 initially chosen courses (of which I was only approved for one).
- v) Then, after the first E-request period has closed, you’re asked to rank your (at that time) approved courses. This allows you to be allocated (registered) for (up to 5) courses prior to the semester start, which could decrease the amount of work during the Add/Drop period (see vii)).
- vi) The E-request period then opens a second time closer to the start of the term, at which you can send in requests for even more courses as described in iii).
- vii) Lastly, at the same time as vi), the Add/Drop period starts. You might have heard some horror stories about this, but if you do everything as instructed, you’ll most likely not have any issues. This is the time when you can add and drop courses freely, and you can also appeal for rejected courses as described in iv). This period is usually open for about two weeks, and you can add and drop courses as you like during this time and customize your schedule as you wish. If you’re lucky, you will have a schedule that you’re happy with after the first E-request period, and you can just sit back and relax during this time. However, if you end up like me, you’ll have to spend some time during this period to get the schedule you want.

As a final note, I recommend that you have a close conversation with the Director of Studies (DoS) at your MSc program, in order to make sure that you actually can accredit the courses you choose. Don't forget to send the DoS your study plan with courses you plan to attend. This was something I have to thank my friends for reminding me on, since I did not receive any information about this. The study plan can be downloaded under "Forms and Manuals" [here](#). I sent the first version of this when I was nominated back in September. At the time of your nomination, the definite course list and -schedule usually haven't been released for your upcoming term(s). However, you can use the course content website to check which courses were given the corresponding term(s) previous years as a pointer to which courses are available for you. As the course selection process starts and evolves, you can use the study plan to update your DoS about this and assure that the courses you choose are valid for your program.

Below, I've listed two useful websites to survive the somewhat frightening journey of the course selection process:

- [General coursework information for exchange students](#). This site contains all necessary links and information when it comes to choosing courses – from the course catalogue (containing courses from previous years) and lists of restricted courses.
- [STARS](#). Note that this will only be available after you have activated your NTU account. Here you can build and customize your own schedule for the upcoming term(s). This is also where you add and drop courses during the Add/Drop period.

Vaccinations

When staying for longer periods in Singapore, there are some recommended vaccines worth considering. Especially since, I assume, you'll also travel to countries nearby. I received Twinrix (Hepatitis A & B), Typhoid, Dukoral (against Cholera) and Japanese encephalitis. However, I strongly recommend that you visit a health- or vaccine-center to get a tailored recommendation based on your personal travel plans and medical needs. I visited [VaccinDirekt](#) at Heden and they were very friendly and professional. They also had student discounts on almost all vaccines. Note that some vaccines require additional doses for full protection, so I wouldn't postpone this to the very end. I received my first doses in mid-November, i.e. about one and a half month before I left, which was – expressed in pure Swedish – "lagom framförhållning" (read "good timing"). I also recommend to buy Malaria pills if you plan to travel to areas affected by Malaria. This was also provided by VaccinDirekt and I bought 12 pills (enough for one trip to a Malaria-affected area). From what I've heard, the pills are cheaper in Sweden and you also save yourself from potential scams if you would buy them somewhere in Asia.

Insurance

As a Chalmers student, you are insured through Kammarkollegiet ([Student UT](#)). This insurance covers essentially everything while you are in Singapore (including traveling to and from Singapore). However, if you plan to travel (which I guess that you do), you should get an additional travel insurance. Most home insurances, if you have on, includes 45 or 60 days of travel insurance, thus you might want to buy one to cover the remaining time. Then you are essentially faced with two options:

- a) Buy a travel insurance before every trip separately, or
- b) Buy one travel insurance to cover the whole period from the end of your home insurance's coverage.

I chose to buy one travel insurance to cover the remaining time after my home insurance had expired using [ERV's](#) option “Reseförsäkring Ung”, which costed me a few thousand SEK. Looking back, I'm happy with this decision, as it likely saved me the trouble of purchasing an insurance every other weekend. From my calculations, the price would have been about the same for buying an insurance for each trip separately, though I cannot assure that my calculations are correct :). This of course also depends on how much you intend to travel, but if you plan to travel a lot, chances are that you will save money if you buy only one insurance (and as said, you also save some extra work before each trip). I know from previous travel reports that many have followed option a), so that probably works as well. Either way, you should always check the conditions and what is covered before buying your insurance.

SIM Card

Me and some other students from Chalmers chose to buy a local SIM-card directly at the airport. Since you don't have your STP yet, you're only able to buy a SIM-card which will last for 30 days. After you've fixed your STP, you can extend the plan. However, buying the SIM at the airport definitely wasn't the cheapest alternative, as we payed S\$50 for 100 GB of data (some roaming included) and one of our peers got the same deal for S\$14 at campus. So, if you're able to make it to campus without internet (which you should be able to, either by Grab or MRT), this is definitely the most economic option. As for the choice of network operator, I initially used M1 (and most people I've talked to did as well) which had OK connection, but not more. When I received my Singpass, I switched to a e-sim from Simba, which offered a great deal with 100 GB of data (including 7 GB of roaming in other Asian countries, this was then increased to 500 GB and 18 GB roaming) for S\$12 per month. However, the connection was on the same level as M1, i.e. not great. I know that some students used Singtel, and they experienced a better connection (although the roaming and total data probably wasn't as generous as with Simba).

Traveling to and from Singapore

I bought my flight tickets with Lufthansa in mid-October together with two other students from Chalmers and traveled on the 6th of January. By October, there were only a few tickets left on that particular flight (at least according to Lufthansa). However, as of writing this (1st of December), tickets are still available – although at a higher price. I strongly recommend buying your tickets as early as possible, as this will likely secure a better price and give you peace of mind knowing at least one problem is solved. While NTU advised us to wait until completing our student's pass applications before booking flights, I don't think many students actually followed this recommendation.

We opted for a round-trip ticket with a flexible return (i.e., reschedulable) to allow more freedom for any potential travel plans before heading home. This actually came in handy for me, as I decided to stay and keep exploring Asia for another 10 days after my initial return date. From an economic perspective, this seemed roughly equivalent to buying a return ticket closer to the return date. In terms of price, Lufthansa offered the cheapest tickets at around 8 000 SEK (for the whole round-trip), but I know that some Chalmers students flew with Turkish Airlines at a (assumingly) similar cost. Many airlines, including Lufthansa and Turkish Airlines, also provide student discounts and benefits, so be sure to check for those as well. From the airport to campus, there are essentially two options: Grab or MRT. We used the MRT, which worked fine and is the cheaper (but slower) option. However, if you have a lot of luggage, Grab might be more convenient, especially if you can share one to minimize the cost.

According to NTU, you'll need the following when entering Singapore (in printed form):

- (Obviously) Your passport
- The Letter of Enrolment
- The IPA letter from the Student's Pass application

You also need to submit the Singapore Arrival Card (SGAC) as explained in [The Application Process](#) section.

Scholarships

This part actually emerged as a large (positive) surprise to me. When reading previous travel reports I stumbled upon multiple tips of scholarships that one as an upcoming exchange student could apply for. However, I was almost 100 % certain that I probably wouldn't receive any of them. This was – drum-roll – not the case! I received multiple of the scholarships I applied for. Though, I don't want to make it sound too easy – I did put some work into writing personal letters and collect the necessary documents for each application, but I used some tricks to make everything more time-efficient.

As I traveled in the spring term, most of my applications were due during autumn. That made summer the perfect time for me to complete the skeleton of my scholarship application. I prepared the following documents:

1. A personal letter – introducing myself, explaining the reason behind my application, and why I'd be a good candidate.
2. A preliminary budget – including expenses and incomes during the exchange period. Here you must do what we physicists call an *order-of-magnitude estimate*. I mostly studied previous travel reports, and for the everyday living expenses in Singapore, NTU has a nice summary [here](#). However, as I provide my budget in the end of this report, you can also use that as a reference.
3. An updated version of my CV.

I must praise myself here: preparing these turned out to be extremely smart, and it definitely saved a lot of time when the applications opened. This was crucial since I had a lot of other things on my mind during autumn – from quantum mechanics and computational physics to the whole NTU application process.

Although, I'd raise a finger of warning here, as the scholarship organizations are very strict with their application due dates and these might vary depending if you travel during autumn or spring. So, I would definitely recommend to check out the different options as quickly as possible to put the due dates in your calendar and adjust your application-writing processes from there.

In total, I applied for six scholarships:

- [SOS-stipendiet](#)
- [Anna Whitlocks Minnesfond](#) (both for “Masterstudier i utlandet” and “Postgymnasialt i utlandet”)
- [Carl Erik Levins stiftelse](#)
- [Doktor Felix Neuberghs Stiftelse](#)
- [Stiftelsen AAA](#) (send an email in order to receive the application procedure)
- [Sveriges Ingenjörer](#) (“Understöds- och stipendiefonden för utlandsstudier”, also note that you need to have been a member for 6 months at the time of your application, so if you aren't a member, apply for a membership as soon as possible)

I also know that [ASEM-DUO](#) have a collaboration between Singapore and Sweden, providing financial funding for exchange students. However, I missed the deadline on this one so I can't say much about the application process. In [Appendix B](#), I've listed more potential scholarships that you can apply for.

Life at NTU

Living at NTU and in Singapore is a great experience (and adventure), and I'd say that it's a perfect place for an exchange. The campus is huge and beautiful with a lot of nature built into it and the city is very clean and safe. Moreover, the locals are friendly and the food is amazing. Lastly, NTU and Singapore as a whole accepts *a lot* of exchangers, which enables you to not only experience and learn about the Singaporean culture, but cultures from all over the world. I met people from essentially every corner of the world. However, there are some things that you might want to know before going here, which I'll try to cover in this chapter. Hopefully, it will decrease the culture shock (if you get one) and make you more prepared for your studies at NTU.

Everyday Life

As said, you'll sooner or later find your personal routine at NTU, despite being on the other side of the globe. For me, I believe that I found mine after some weeks or so, but I'm sure that this varies depending on how used you are to changes. A general tip is to find friends (either locals, other exchangers or Swedes) so that you can navigate the new surroundings together, which will be more fun and probably easier. Many things will of course not be that different from your usual life back home. Nevertheless, there are things that is substantially different from Sweden.

For starters, Singapore is *hot*. The temperature during day is usually around 30 – 35°C, and the humidity is very high. The sun is also very strong, so sunscreen and water are your new best friends. On the contrary, the evenings are nice with a temperature around 25°C, and you'll notice that the locals generally are more nightly active, most likely due to the climate. Eventually, you'll probably get somewhat used to the heat, although not like the locals who consider 28°C "cold". Moreover, the weather is also very unpredictable, and the rain can be very heavy, but usually doesn't last for long. For this reason, I would recommend to always bring an umbrella. To escape the heat, you'll probably spend a lot of time in the AC. At NTU, many canteens along with most study rooms and libraries are air-conditioned, which initially made these my favorite places on campus.

Secondly, the cooking culture is completely different from Sweden. As I will explain in the section about Singapore as a whole, a large part of the food culture is based on the so called hawker centers (or canteens at NTU). These are basically large food courts, where you can find dishes from all over the world. This makes it cheap and easy to eat out, and I would say that most students at NTU take advantage of this.

In fact, when living on campus, the facilities for cooking are very limited, and I would say that it's not worth the effort to cook. However, if you're a fan of cooking, you can always use the pantry in your hall, which has some hotplates and a microwave. For the different canteens at NTU, I would of course recommend to test them all and find your own favorite (the same goes for the dishes). Generally, I would say that the food is cheaper in hall canteens, while the more public ones are more expensive but have a wider range of dishes. Below, I've listed my favorite canteens at NTU:

- **North and South Spine Canteens:** The largest canteens on campus that usually are close to where you have lectures. They have a wide range of dishes, but are often crowded and a bit more expensive. Most stalls here accept cashless payments.
- **North Hill Canteen:** A wide range of nice dishes and usually not that crowded. Here, you must rely a bit more on cash.
- **Canteen 2:** Essentially in the middle of campus with (in my opinion) some of the best meals. It is also cheaper than the North/South Spine canteens, with the downside that no stall accepts cashless payments.
- *Honorable Mention:* The Indian food at my canteen (Tamarind hall). This explains itself, probably the best indian food on campus (and my personal favorite).



Bottom right: Canteen 2 (one of my favorite canteens). Center displays my go-to meal at campus – a chinese chicken-noodle dish. Soups (in all forms) are also common to see. Bottom left is another personal favorite which seems weird at first – chicken omelette rice. Lastly, top right is my favorite dish, Indian at Tamarind Hall canteen.

Lastly, as campus is like a small town, there are many small grocery stores and shops where you can buy essentials, for example close to canteen 2 and in North Spine. For accessing larger malls and grocery stores, you can either take the free campus bus to Pioneer MRT station, where you can take the MRT to Jurong East. However, a closer option is to take the 199 bus from campus, which takes you to Jurong Point – a large mall with a lot of stores and food stalls.

Housing

After I was accepted to NTU, I applied for campus housing in the second half of November. Regarding living on- or off-campus, I would recommend to peek at some of the previous travel reports (e.g. that from Filip in 2022/23). However, in short I can say that I'm 110 % happy with my decision to live on-campus. In my opinion, these are the main pros and cons with each option:

Living On-campus		Living Off-campus	
PROS	CONS	PROS	CONS
Cheaper	Room & facility standard lower	Better facilities (not guaranteed)	More expensive
Closer to NTU	Far from downtown	Closer to downtown	Far from NTU
Most exchange students live here	–	–	More complicated
Engage more in the NTU life	–	–	–

So, I think that you will meet more exchangers and soak up more of the NTU student life (e.g. eating in the canteens and engaging in hall activities) living on-campus. Of course, the room and facility standard would most likely be better living off-campus, but more pricy. Moreover, I would say that the procedure of getting an off-campus residence is in general more complicated than getting it on-campus. Before I get into my own housing, I'd like to say that I didn't hear about one person that applied for campus housing and didn't get it, since I know that this can be a concern for many.

Now, I applied for a single room with AC and was assigned this at Tamarind Hall (or Tama) in the north-west of campus. I heard some weird stories from my friends who applied for single rooms and was assigned a double and vice versa, but this must be very rare. I was satisfied with my dorm and hall, which is one of the newest at NTU. For the whole semester, I paid around 20 000 SEK, which isn't cheap considering the standard, but much cheaper than living off-campus (also, the AC costs around 0.4 SGD per usage hour). However, from my experience, the standard is more or less comparable all over campus. You'll probably see lizards, bugs and cockroaches independently of where you live, and eventually you'll probably get used to it. The shared bathrooms are maybe not of first class either, but I never had any trouble using them. In my hall (and I think that this applies to most of them), we also had access to a small pantry with cold and hot water and some hotplates. There were also washing and drying machines on certain floors, where each program costed 1 SGD-coin (so make sure to keep these if you get them). For the latter, you can either ask to get some extra 1ers when buying food, if you for example pay a little extra. Or, if you have a lot of small coins laying around, you can put these in the vending machines, cancel the purchase and hope that it spits out some 1ers (which it often does).



My room in Tamarind Hall.



The shared bathroom and pantry on my floor.

Something I've not seen in previous travel reports (maybe for obvious reasons) is the problem with mould in the halls. This is a common problem in Singapore due to the high humidity, and I along with many other exchangers experienced issues with this during the first month. For example, after coming home from a week of traveling, some of my clothes (!) had white mould. I reported this to my hall and they sent two women to "educate" me on the Singaporean climate. However, their tips actually seemed to work, as I didn't get much more mould after that. Their advice was to keep the ceiling fan off while keeping the window and ventilation open when being away for a longer period of time. As for the clothes, I used vinegar and hot water to clean them, and then I washed them using regular detergent with some vinegar in the washing machine, which did the trick. You could also buy a dehumidifier (I didn't though), which should lower the humidity in your room. I know that some students bought these at North Spine, otherwise you can probably find them at the malls in Jurong East or Jurong Point.

Economy



The large banking district in downtown Singapore.

Nevertheless, I'd argue that the greatest concern and difference from Sweden is the cash situation. This is mostly an issue at hawker centers, where many food stalls don't accept cashless payments. When completing your STP, you'll receive your *matriculation card* (essentially like the Chalmers *kårkort*). This has a so called NETS-functionality (a payment type in Singapore) which can be used at many places where card payment isn't accepted. This can be topped up through an app, making it a good alternative to cash.

However, I went for an alternative solution, which I believe is the best one – namely opening a Singaporean bank account, which I'll explain below. This way, you don't have to worry about topping up your matriculation card and you can pay directly from your phone. Before opening my bank account, I solely relied on cash and my [Wise](#)-card. This works smoothly, however if you're as allergic to cash as I am, I'd recommend you to get a bank account as soon as possible. Regarding Wise or [Revolut](#) (which seems like the two alternatives for the best exchange rates and lowest fees), I had a great experience using Wise during my time. However, there are pros and cons with both (although for me, there were more pros with Wise) and I know that most Swedish exchangers used Revolut.

Opening a Singaporean Bank Account

Once you have got your STP approved, you can apply for Singpass through [this](#) link. This is essentially the BankID of Singapore and you should after approval be able to reach this through the [Singpass](#)-app. Then, you can easily apply for a bank account at [DBS](#), one of the major banks in Singapore (there are other options, but I don't know if they require more documents). This was done in the [DBS digibank](#)-app, which will be where you manage your balance, make payments and so on. Apart from Singpass, you'll need a proof of your residential address in Singapore, which you can get from your hall's office. I also had to provide proof of my Swedish tax liability (I used an English Personbevis from Skatteverket). Then, your application will be processed for a few days before you get a confirmation email from DBS. They will also send a debit card to your address.

This makes your life much easier, as you also get access to the Singapore equivalent of Swish – PayNow. Like the NETS-functionality of the matriculation card, PayNow works via QR codes everywhere in Singapore. Another bonus of getting a bank account in Singapore is that if you do need cash, the withdrawals will be free, unlike if you use your Swedish card. DBS also provides some nice features when traveling, as you can open accounts in different currencies and transfer money between them without any fees (similar to Revolut and Wise). To transfer money from your Swedish account to your Singaporean account, I would recommend using Wise (Revolut is also an option), as they have the best exchange rates and lowest fees.

As a side note, you might experience issues while trying to type decimal numbers when using PayNow. In this case, change your phone's decimal format to “.” instead of “,”. On an iPhone, this can be done under Allmänt → Språk och region → Numeriskt format.

Education – Chalmers vs. NTU

When studying at NTU, you will definitely notice many similarities to Chalmers. All in all, you'll still be a university student and once you hit your daily routines, you'll probably almost forget that you're on the other side of the world. However, as soon as you escape the classroom or your dorm (and the AC), there will definitely be some differences.

To start with, the NTU campus is huge (and beautiful), and the surroundings make you feel like you're in the middle of the jungle, with large trees and plants. In the beginning of your exchange, you'll definitely be overwhelmed by the size and use Google Maps *a lot*. As time goes on though, you'll find that it isn't that large and that you often can get around by foot. Although walking is possible, the heat (or rain) often makes the free bus system, which run frequently throughout the day (less frequent in the evenings) a better alternative. Despite the availability of buses, they tend to be very crowded during school hours, making walking a viable alternative if the distance isn't too long.



The campus voted as one of the most beautiful in the world: Gaia (NBS building), The Hive, Yunnan Garden, walkway to my resident hall and the view from this.

A small disclaimer is that Singapore's new MRT line, Jurong Region Line, is under construction. This makes a lot at campus look like a construction site, although it doesn't affect the everyday life at campus much. The good news is that future students won't be equally dependent on the MRT station at Pioneer (which is only accessible by bus) in order to go downtown, as the construction is planned to be finished in 2029.

Academically, NTU emphasizes continuous assessment, with midterms and quizzes playing a significant role in most courses. Unlike at Chalmers, where final exams often constitute a large percentage of the final grade, NTU's exams rarely account for more than 60 % of the total course grade. This structure encourages students to engage with the material consistently throughout the semester rather than relying on final exams, which I actually believe is a better way of learning. Another key difference, which I'm not as happy with, is the academic calendar. At NTU, all courses run concurrently throughout the semester, without the distinct reading periods used at Chalmers. This structure requires students to manage multiple subjects simultaneously over a longer period, which I generally dislike. Regarding academics, the quality of teaching, course content, and overall difficulty level are generally good. However, given NTU's high global ranking, I initially expected an even higher level. In comparison, I find that many (if not all) courses at Chalmers are more challenging in terms of depth and difficulty.



Great study facilities: Lee Wee Nam Library and outside at North Spine Plaza.

Also the grading system at NTU differs from that at Chalmers. The highest grade is A+, while the lowest grade is F. Grades are assigned based on a bell curve (though I'm not entirely sure that this was applied to exchangers), meaning that students are not only assessed on their individual performance but also in comparison to their peers. However, as Chalmers students in general can't transfer grades from NTU to Chalmers, there is essentially no need to aim for the highest grade (instead I believe you should focus on traveling, exploring new cultures and personal development).

Lastly, the student culture at NTU is notably different from that at Chalmers. There's a strong academic focus, with almost no partying. The student-led clubs are almost always of a more serious nature, often focused on academic or professional activities rather than the "sexmästerier" common at Chalmers. A unique aspect of student life is the hall culture. Each residential hall has its own traditions, events, and even sports teams. One of the most notable traditions is the Hall Olympiad, held in the autumn semester, where different halls compete against each other in various sports.

Free Time and Activities



The gym at my hall.

After school hours, there's a lot to do around campus. As I mentioned earlier, campus is like a small town, and there are many activities and events to engage in. For example, there are many sports facilities, such as gyms, swimming pools, and sports courts, which are free for students. During my exchange semester, the only swimming pool open was the one at NIE, which was nice and never felt too crowded. Concerning gyms, many halls have their own (including my hall), but these are mostly small with limited equipment. The largest gym easily accessible, which I used mostly during the semester, is the one at North Hill. However, this gets really crowded during the evenings (though not

to the degree of it being useless). You could also look into getting a membership at a gym outside campus, but this would be a bit of a hassle.

Regarding sport facilities, you can engage in most sports at NTU. I frequently played table tennis and badminton during my time. However, you often need to book your time (can be done [here](#) after logging in), and for some sports (especially badminton), available times were rare. Nevertheless, there are also many sports clubs at NTU, which you can join for a small fee. I joined the NTU Floorball Club due to my history with the sport, and they arranged game-play two times a week. This was a great way to meet locals while also maintaining my floorball skills. There's also many clubs outside of sports, such as music or dancing. Most halls also arrange different activities for its residents. Also, as an exchange student, there are many events arranged by NTU in the start of the semester, which I definitely recommend (mostly to meet other exchangers). There are also many parties arranged for exchangers (and non-exchangers) in Singapore. For this, you should use the [Aentry](#) app, where you can find and buy tickets to many bars and clubs. Lastly, studying in Singapore of course is the perfect ground-zero spot for traveling in Asia, which I'll cover in the [last chapter](#).



Great sports facilities: The running track at The Wave, the multi-purpose hall at North Hill with badminton courts and table tennis, the swimming pool and hockey pitch at NIE, and the volleyball court outside canteen 2.

Attended Courses

In general, I'm happy with my course selection, as I believe that I found the perfect fraction between amount of workload and interesting courses. I had to drop some courses that didn't fit my schedule, but I think that I found good alternatives. Generally, I believe that NTU offers a wide range of interesting courses in many areas, so a great tip (especially for students from MPPHS, where the mandatory courses are done in LP1) is to check out courses from for example Nanyang Business School (NBS), National Institute of Education (NIE) or other colleges depending on your interests.

Regarding the optimal schedule, most exchangers try to minimize the amount of classes close to the weekends (for traveling). However, I had at least one lecture every day, but the courses on Thursdays and Fridays often didn't require attendance. So, a tip here is to contact the lecturer and ask if the classes are mandatory before adding a course to your schedule. From my experience, most lecturers answer quickly and are very helpful. I do believe that the attendance policy differ much between the different colleges, where courses from e.g. NBS often have mandatory attendance and courses from SPMS often don't. Nevertheless, keep in mind that if you have classes on, say Thursdays or Fridays, there might be mandatory assessments on these days. I experienced this in PH4418, where I had a test every 3rd week on Thursdays. Also, I'd recommend to minimize the number of exams. That way, you do more continuous assessment and have more time to travel in the end of the semester. So, in short, I'd say that an optimal schedule for a travel-interested student would be to have classes on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and then have the rest of the week free, while having as few exams as possible.

As I was the first MSc student from MPPHS at NTU ever (or at least for a long time), I hadn't much to go on regarding relevant courses for my program. However, the [College of Science website](#) provided very good information about the courses available, so it wasn't an issue to find interesting courses within the physics subject. Lastly, the accreditation was made such that 1 AU = 2 hp. In practice, this was done by logging on to the [Chalmers MEX portal](#) and create a request for accreditation of your attended courses. Here, you had to attach the syllabus of each course along with your transcript of records from NTU. For the latter, I used the [Self-help Transcript System](#) to generate a non-signed version of this when I'd gotten my grades in the beginning of June (I had to meet my Director of Studies in person to show how I retrieved this since it wasn't signed). If you're more patient than me, NTU also sends you an email with an official, signed version in the end of June (I also believe that your Chalmers coordinator receives a hard-copy of this, if this email doesn't reach you). However, your request was later reviewed (and hopefully approved) by your Director of Studies, see [this page](#) for more information.

Course Descriptions and Impressions

Open Quantum Systems | PH3406

Accredited as:

4 AU

Exam: Yes

LECTURER/EXAMINER: *Dr. Koh Teck Seng*

Content

This course covers key concepts, including density matrices, the interaction picture, the Born-Markov and Lindblad master equations, decoherence, relaxation, dephasing, and linear dynamical maps. It explores canonical models (collisional, spin-boson, spin-spin) and connects quantum error correction to the Kraus representation theorem.

Impression

I really enjoyed this course, as it was a good mix between theory and practical applications. Dr. Koh is very nice and a great lecturer, and he's very passionate about the subject. The course was very well organized and assessed through one homework assignment, one project report, a midterm and an exam in the end. The homework and project were great for understanding the material and involved coding, which made the course closer to quantum computing, which I found very interesting. The midterm and exam were quite hard, but I only strived for a pass, so the amount of extra work I put down was more from my own interest than from necessity. I'd recommend this course to anyone interested in quantum mechanics, as it is a great introduction to the open quantum systems.

Physics in the Industry | PH4418

Accredited as:

4 AU

Exam: No

LECTURER/EXAMINER: *Prof. Lew Wen Siang & Dr. Leek Meng Lee*

Content

This course explores major industries in Singapore where physics plays a key role. It provides an overview of diverse applications, helping students understand career opportunities and make informed employment decisions after graduation.

Impression

This wasn't one of my favorite courses. The course is divided into four topics: semiconductors, photonics, food physics and biomedical physics. Each topic is taught by a different lecturer, and the course is assessed through an in-class test after each topic and a final report and presentation (which can be done in pairs). The tests were rather easy, however the final report and presentation demanded some extra work. However, the topics and lecturers didn't catch my interest, and I didn't learn much from the course. I'd probably only recommend this course as a filler course, as the workload isn't too high.

Leadership in the 21st Century | BU5642

Accredited as:

3 AU**Exam: No**LECTURER/EXAMINER: *Assoc Prof. Jing Zhu****Content***

The Leadership in the 21st century course takes an evidence-based approach to leadership theory, frontier research, and real-world applications. Through interactive seminars with role-plays, case studies, and discussions, students develop leadership skills for managerial, consulting, or personal growth.

Impression

Together with HY0001, this course provided me MTS-credits back home at Chalmers, which was very convenient for me. However, in contrary to HY0001 (in my opinion), this course actually contains very valuable and important content. The lecturer, Jing, is very driven, kind and wants everybody to succeed and benefit from the course. I believe that everyone would benefit from this course, even though they don't aspire to become leaders in the future. Much of the content can be boiled down to "knowing and understanding people", however often in a setting where leadership plays a role. If you put your whole heart and effort into this course, I believe that you will grow much, both as a person and as a leader, and you'll be well-equipped for your future career when it comes to leadership. The assessment consisted of two quizzes and a team project with a written report and presentation, and I wouldn't say that the workload was heavy in any way.

Ethics and Moral Reasoning | HY0001

Accredited as:

1 AU**Exam: No**LECTURER/EXAMINER: *Jacob Mok****Content***

This course introduces key moral values like benevolence, impartiality, and integrity through major ethical theories. It fosters critical thinking on complex moral issues, explores academic integrity and research ethics, and examines the role of ethics in environmental sustainability.

Impression

There's really not much to say about this course. All content was delivered online, even the assessments. You need to go through a number of lectures, where each lecture ends with a quiz. The quizzes are very easy, and you can do them up to three times using all available resources. Except for the quizzes, you also need to write a short text on one of the topics, and a peer-review on another student's text. From my experience, most of the content in the course fall under the "common sense" category, and I didn't learn much from the course. However, it was a good filler course, and it also gave me MTS credits at Chalmers, which was very convenient.

C & C++ Programming | SC1008

Accredited as:

3 AU

Exam: No

LECTURER/EXAMINER: *Assoc Prof. Hui Siu Cheung*

Content

This course introduces foundational concepts in C and C++, focusing on system programming, embedded systems, and performance optimization. It covers applications in gaming engines, virtual reality, web browsers, databases, and blockchain technology.

Impression

This was an introductory course to C and C++ programming. The lectures were conducted online, and there were also a mandatory lab/tutorial session each week. The course was divided in one C and one C++ part. Each part contained assessed assignments that were due every other week (all tools were allowed for these). Apart from these assignments, the course was assessed through a final test at the end of each part. For the C-part, this contained both coding and multiple choice questions (MCQs), and for the C++ only MCQs. I'd probably only recommend this course for two reasons – either if you like programming and want to add to your repertoire, or as a filler course, as the level is basic and the organization fits the exchange-life very well.

Rugby | SS5205

Accredited as:

3 AU

Exam: No

LECTURER/EXAMINER: *Harrie Desianto Hussien*

Content

This rugby course teaches fundamental skills, strategies, and game principles through tag and touch rugby. It combines theory and practice using the Sport Education and Games Concept Approach (GCA) to enhance understanding and gameplay competency.

Impression

This course was one of my favorites during the semester. And before you reject the course due to the physicality of usual rugby, you should know that this was a non-contact course (touch rugby). This changes the game a lot, as you don't have to worry about receiving brutal tackles or getting injured (though I kind of looked forward to the physical aspects, so if you're into that, you might want to look for a different course for that reason). However, it was probably for the best to avoid injuries while abroad, and I still believe that you'll learn a lot about rugby as a sport, as contact- and touch rugby are similar in many ways. We met once a week for three hours, and the course was assessed through an easy theoretical quiz and a practical assessment that took place during the last two classes. In the beginning, the focus is more on ball handling, rules and tactics. Then, during the last four to five weeks, each lesson basically only contains game-play with short breaks in-between. Furthermore, Coach Harrie is very nice, experienced and passionate about the sport. I'd definitely recommend this course to anyone interested in sports, especially on exchange, as it's fun, social and comes with minimal workload.

Course Rankings

OPEN QUANTUM SYSTEMS

Workload	Content	Teaching	Total
■ ■ ■ □ □	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

RUGBY

Workload	Content	Teaching	Total
■ □ □ □ □	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Workload	Content	Teaching	Total
■ ■ □ □ □	★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

C & C++ PROGRAMMING

Workload	Content	Teaching	Total
■ ■ □ □ □	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

PHYSICS IN THE INDUSTRY

Workload	Content	Teaching	Total
■ ■ □ □ □	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

ETHICS AND MORAL REASONING

Workload	Content	Teaching	Total
□ □ □ □ □	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆	★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

Discovering Asia and Singapore

One of the best things about studying abroad, and especially in Singapore, is the opportunity to travel and explore new places. As a country, Singapore doesn't have much to offer, which most locals also agree on. However, there are some nice places and things to do and explore, which I'll cover in the chapter. When asking local students, they often agree on that the best thing about Singapore is the location, making it easy to leave the country and explore the rest of Asia. This might sound strange and a bit sad, but after almost half a year in Singapore, I can agree on that. The country is small, but the location is perfect for exploring the rest of Asia, which I'll also cover in this chapter.

Singapore: City and Country in One

Even though the campus at NTU is large, beautiful and has a lot to offer, you'll eventually want to explore your new country (and city). Singapore is a small country, and you can easily explore most things in a few days. The public transport system is very good, and you can get around the city easily. The MRT (subway) is very cheap and easy to use, and you can also use buses to get around. You could get some sort of card for the public transport, but I would recommend to just use your bank card (or Apple/Google Pay) to pay for the rides. This is very convenient, and you don't have to worry about getting a card or reloading it. And of course, you can also use Grab (the Uber of South-East Asia) to get around, which is also cheap and available 24/7 in contrary to the public transport.

As for things to explore and see, there's some places that shouldn't be missed. Below, I've listed some of the most popular places to visit sorted by category.

Nature:

- **Sentosa Island:** A small island just south of Singapore, known for its beaches, resorts and attractions. You can easily spend a whole day here, and it's a great place to relax and enjoy the sun.
- **Gardens by the Bay:** A park with futuristic gardens and structures. The Supertree Grove is a must-see, especially at night when the trees are lit up.
- **MacRitchie Reservoir:** A large nature reserve with hiking trails. Here, you can also find the famous treetop walk, which is a suspension bridge that gives you a great view of the forest.

Culture:

- **Chinatown:** A famous Chinatown with a lot of history and culture.
- **Little India:** A colorful neighborhood with a lot of Indian culture. Here, you can find temples, markets and a lot of great food.
- **Orchard Road:** A famous shopping street with a lot of malls and shops.
- **Raffles Hotel:** A historic hotel where you can find the famous Singapore Sling cocktail at the Long Bar.

Hawker Centers:

- **Maxwell Food Center:** A popular hawker center in Chinatown with a lot of great food. Here, you can find the famous Tian Tian Hainanese Chicken Rice.
- **Lau Pa Sat:** A historic hawker center in the central business district. Here, you can find a lot of great food and a lively atmosphere.

Nightlife:

- **Clarke and Boat Quay:** A popular nightlife area with a lot of bars. This is essentially the “Andra-Lång” of Singapore, with cheap beer and great vibes. The bar Georgetown is a popular place among exchange students.
- **Cè La Vie:** A popular nightclub with a great view of the city from the top of Marina Bay Sands (don’t drink too many beers though, or you’ll be ruined).
- **Zouk and Marquee:** Nightclubs.



Despite its small size, Singapore has some must-do activities and places to visit. Clockwise from the top left: Juwel Changi Airport, Gardens by the Bay, Sentosa Island, Buddha Tooth Relic Temple, Marina Bay Sands and the view from Cè La Vie nightclub.

As for the cultural aspects, Singapore is a very multicultural country with a lot of different cultures and religions. The official language is English, but you'll also hear a lot of Mandarin and other languages. For example, the locals speak a very special version of English called Singlish, which is a mix of English and some other local languages. This can be a bit hard to understand at first, but you'll get used to it. The country is also very safe, and I never felt unsafe or uncomfortable. This can for example be seen in school, where everyone leaves their laptops and bags unattended in the library or canteens, which is something that would rarely happen in Sweden.

Asia: A Student-Friendly Continent

In many ways, Asia is the perfect continent for students. The cost of living is usually low, the food is amazing and there's a lot to see and explore. When your base is Singapore, you can usually find a lot of options for cheap flights to many neighboring countries. I traveled to Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Hong Kong during the school semester, and then Laos, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan before I went back to Sweden. Below, I have shortly noted my experiences and some tips about the countries I visited. Note that cash still is king in most Asian countries, so I would recommend to always have some cash with you, especially in the South-East Asian countries.

Malaysia: I only visited Kuala Lumpur for a short time, but I really liked the city, which is both modern and packs a lot of culture. Unfortunately, I missed the Batu Caves, which I've heard is a must-see, so try to make time for that when in KL. I also spent one day in Johor Bahru (JB), a city just across the border from Singapore, and it's a great place to visit for a day trip (this is actually many Singaporeans favorite weekend-destination for eating and shopping). Malaysia is also very cheap in general, and the food is amazing.

Thailand: I went a week to Koh Lanta and Koh Phi Phi in Krabi for “studying” and relaxing. Thailand is one of my favorite countries – it's cheap, the food is amazing, the people are very friendly and the weather and beaches are great. Apart from Koh Lanta and Koh Phi Phi, there's a lot of other alternatives to choose from, such as Phuket, Koh Samui and Koh Phangan. Nevertheless, I would recommend to visit Koh Lanta, which is a bit more quiet and relaxed than the other places. Koh Phi Phi is a bit more touristy, but has some amazing beaches and views. I've also heard that Bangkok is great, and also Chiang Mai in the north, which I didn't have time to visit.



Beach on Koh Lanta.

Vietnam: I was in Vietnam for a week during recess, and visited Hanoi, Ninh Bình and Hội An. Vietnam is also one of my favorites, with friendly people, amazing food and a lot of culture. Hanoi is a very busy and lively city with culture, history and a lot of great food. Ninh Bình is more nature-focused, for example, we went on a kayak trip through the many caves and mountains in the area. Hội An is a smaller historical town known for its many tailor-stores, perfect for getting custom-made clothes. If I had time, I also would've liked to visit Ho Chi Minh City in the south, known for its food and history from the Vietnam War.



The landscape in Ninh Bình.

Hong Kong: I went to Hong Kong for a weekend, and I really liked it. In many ways, the city feels similar to Singapore, but I believe that HK has a lot more to offer and the city feels more alive. I visited Victoria Peak, which has a great view of the city. We also hiked along the Dragon's Back trail, which is a must-do when in HK (unfortunately, we didn't have the weather gods on our side). Other than that, I would recommend to explore the city and find your own favorite spots. We had a very interesting experience at Mr. Wong's, a restaurant in the city. For 100 HKD, you get to eat (and drink) as much as you want, and the place is popular among exchange students.



The Hong Kong Island skyline.

Indonesia: I went to Batam during a weekend, which is a small island only 45 minutes away from Singapore by ferry. As the rest of Indonesia, Batam is very cheap, and we had a great time just relaxing and studying in a large villa. I also visited Bali for a week. Here, I stayed in Ubud, known for its nature, many waterfalls, rice terraces and temples (try the river-rafting!), Nusa Penida, a small island with amazing views and beaches (Kelingking is the Instagram-king of beaches), and Seminyak, a beach town in the south. Here, I tried surfing which was a lot of fun (but hard). I also visited the famous Uluwatu Temple (watch out for the monkeys). If you want a mix of culture, relaxing and adventure, Bali is probably the perfect place.



Kelingking Beach.

Laos: My first stop after school was Laos. I believe that Laos is one of the most underrated countries in Asia, and I really liked it. It is very cheap, the people are very friendly and the nature is amazing. We flew to the capital Vientiane and spent a half day there (this city doesn't offer too much to see, so I'll probably wouldn't spend more than one or two days here). From here, we took a mini bus to Vang Vieng, a small town known for its nature and adventurous activities, where we spent three nights. Here, we went on a hot air balloon tour (this is a must-do!). We also rented a motorcycle for a cheap price (this is without a doubt the best way to explore the area) and visited some caves (where you can try water-tubing), blue lagoons (the best places to chill and cool off in the heat, there are several of these in the area) and hiking places. Lastly, we took the train to Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its temples and culture, where we spent two nights. As a side-note, the railway is actually very good, modern and efficient in Laos, mostly due to the Chinese investment in the country. Here, we also rented a motorcycle and visited the Kuang Si Waterfalls, which is a must-see when in Laos. The waterfalls are beautiful, and you can also swim in the turquoise water. I also recommend the night market and the bowling alley, where you can play bowling and drink beer for a very cheap price.

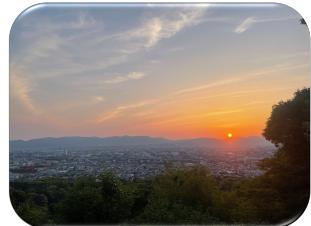


Hot air balloon tour in Vang Vieng.

Japan: After Laos, I spent 10 days in Japan, where we visited, Tokyo, Mt. Fuji, Kyoto, Nara and Osaka. Japan is a very unique country, with a mix of modern and traditional culture. The public transport system is very good, and you can easily get around using the Shinkansen (bullet train) or the subway. For the subway, I would recommend the Suica card (which you for example can access through Apple Wallet, just tap “add card – travel card” in the app). This can be topped up via Apple Pay, which is very convenient. We started with four nights in Tokyo, which, except for being the largest city in the world, is very busy and lively with a lot of culture and great food. Some of the highlights include the Senso-ji Temple, Shibuya Crossing (the world’s busiest pedestrian crossing), the Imperial Palace, Meiji Shrine, Tokyo Skytree (for a great view of the endless concrete), Takeshita Street and the different parks. You should also check out Golden Gai, a small area with a lot of bars and restaurants, and the teamLab Planets museum.



The view from Tokyo Skytree.



Sunset over Kyoto from Fushimi Inari Shrine and my favorite ramen.

After Tokyo, we took the local train to Fuji, where we spent one night. Unfortunately we didn’t have the best weather, but we still got to see the mountain, which is a must-see when in Japan. Anyways, the area is very beautiful, and it can be nice to spend some time in the nature after a few days in the largest city in the world. Next, we took the Shinkansen to Kyoto, where we spent three nights. Kyoto is known for its temples and culture, and some of the highlights include the Fushimi Inari Shrine (the famous red gates), Bamboo forests and Gion district. We also visited Nara, a small city just outside of Kyoto, which is known for its parks with free-roaming deer. Lastly, we took the local train to Osaka, where we spent one night. Osaka is mostly known for its food and nightlife. I really recommend the Space Station bar, where you can play old video games while having a drink.

In general, I would recommend just exploring the cities, finding your own favorite spots and experiencing the culture. Regarding food, you should probably try everything (as it’s all great), such as okonomiyaki (a savory pancake), takoyaki (octopus balls),

sushi, nigiri, ramen and wagyu beef (we tried an A5 wagyu beef in Osaka, which was expensive, but probably one of my best food experiences ever).



Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden in Tokyo, Nara Park, okonomiyaki in Kyoto and A5-ranked wagyu beef in Osaka.

South Korea: After Japan, I flew from Osaka to Seoul in South Korea, where I spent four nights. Here, some of the highlights include the Gyengbokgung Palace, Bukchon and Ikseon Hanok Villages, Seoul Tower (try to get there at sunset), Cheonggyecheon Stream (very nice at night when they turn on the lights by the stream) and the different markets (especially the Myengdong and Gwangjang night markets). I also visited the DMZ, a strip of land that separates North and South Korea. This was a very unique experience, and I would recommend to visit the DMZ if you have the chance. I booked the tour via [GetYourGuide](#), which worked well. Regarding transportation, the subway system in Seoul is very good and efficient. The best option for this is probably to get a T-money card at any convenience store, which you can top up using cash. Moreover, Google Maps works poorly in South Korea, and most locals use [KakaoMap](#) instead. Lastly, the food here is great, and I would recommend to try all the local dishes, like Korean BBQ, bibimbap, gimbap (Korean sushi), buchimgae (korean pancakes) and tteokbokki.



Gyengbokgung Palace in Seoul.

Taiwan: My last stop before going back to Sweden was Taiwan, where I spent five nights in Taipei. Here, you should definitely include the Taipei 101 skyscraper (try to get there at sunset), some night markets (Ninhxia and Raohe night markets were great), Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, Longshan Temple, Elephant Mountain (for a great view of the city) and Maokong district (known for its tea culture and nature) in your itinerary. I also spent a day in Jiufen, a small town in the mountains with a lot of history (the old street is probably the most famous attraction here), culture (try the local tea!) and shopping. Also, you should try the different food options – dumplings, stinky tofu (if you dare, they don't taste that bad in my opinion) and bubble tea. Furthermore, the public transport system in Taipei is very good, and you can easily get around using the subway. I would recommend to get an EasyCard at one of the subway stations, which works similarly to the T-money card in Seoul.



The view from Elephant Mountain in Taipei.

Apart from the countries above, there's of course a lot of other places to visit in Asia. From what I've heard, the Philippines is a great place, as Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Sri Lanka. China is also definitely worth a visit, however as of now, Swedes have to apply for a VISA and I believe that this process isn't the smoothest. Hopefully, this will change for future students. Lastly, Australia and New Zealand are definitely worth a visit, and not too far away from Singapore. However, then you'll have to spend a more time (and money), which I personally didn't have time for.

Appendix A: Budget

As a physicist, there are a lot of things that I find exciting, e.g. space, quantum mechanics, music, food, sports, skiing etc.. However, economic matters are usually not one of these. And as my fellow physicist colleague, Albert Einstein, once said (according to legend)[†]:

“The hardest thing in the world to understand is the income tax”,

the economy usually only result in headache (which is true in many cases). Nevertheless, I am very detailed and planning, so I usually keep a budget. Accordingly, I thought that students alike me (or not alike for that matter, but most students are usually keen about their money), would be interested in how an exchange term in Singapore treats you economically. So, below I provide my result budget from my time in Singapore and Asia. Note that I only show expenses, since these probably are the most interesting and that the exchange rate between SEK and SGD was between 7.4 and 8.2 during my exchange.

Table 1 below presents expenses I had before even setting my foot in Singapore, while Table 2 shows expenses during the actual exchange period. As you know by now, I traveled around a lot, and total expenses for my trips each month are presented on the “Traveling” row in Table 2. However, more detailed budgets for each of my trips are given in Tables 3 and 4. A small disclaimer is that I’m probably not the most representative person when it comes to expenses. For example, you’ll notice that I’m not even close to a shopaholic, but much more closer to a food addict...

Table 1: Budget covering expenses in SEK before the exchange.

Expense	COST [SEK]
Flight tickets (round-trip)	- 7 935
Vaccines (incl. Malaria pills)	- 5 710
Travel Insurance	- 2 521
NTU fees	- 3 304
Student’s Pass	- 1 133
Result	- 20 603

[†]<https://www.forbes.com/quotes/195/>

Table 2: Expenses during the exchange period. All costs are given in Singaporean dollars (SGD). Note that Traveling includes all travel expenses, see Tables 3 and 4 for details.

Expense [SGD]	JAN	FEB	MARS	APR	MAY
Dorm Rental	0	- 2578	0	0	0
Groceries and Food	- 359	- 527	- 536	- 555	- 94
Alcohol	- 59	- 29	- 197	- 190	- 32
Leisure	- 86	- 144	- 4	0	- 10
Shopping	- 44	- 217	- 34	- 34	0
Transport in SG	- 27	- 56	- 63	- 105	- 66
Traveling (all incl.)	- 1 248	- 1 403	- 1 555	- 593	- 2 706
SIM-card	- 50	- 12	- 12	- 12	- 12
Others	- 26	- 129	0	- 73	- 17
Result	- 1 899	- 5 095	- 2 401	- 1 562	- 2 937
					- 13 894

Table 3: Detailed travel expenses in SGD from January to Mars.

Expense [SGD]	Country			
	THAILAND Jan 24th - Feb 2nd	INDONESIA Feb 21th - 24th	VIETNAM Feb 27th - Mar 7th	HONG KONG Mar 27th - 30th
Food	- 293	- 111	- 436	- 187
Alcohol	- 90	- 30	- 83	- 70
Leisure	-60	0	- 46	- 37
Shopping	0	0	- 186	- 18
Housing	- 422	- 52	- 94	- 105
Flight Tickets	- 283	0	- 305	- 304
Other Transports	- 183	- 94	- 58	- 77
Others	0	- 56	0	0
Result	- 1 331	- 344	- 1 208	- 798

Table 4: Detailed travel expenses in SGD from April to June.

APR - JUN	Country			
Expense [SGD]	LAOS May 2nd - 8th	JAPAN May 8th - 18th	SOUTH KOREA May 18th - 23rd	TAIWAN May 23rd - 28th
Food	- 137	- 473	- 136	- 141
Alcohol	- 30	- 89	- 27	- 20
Leisure	- 65	- 43	- 133	- 61
Shopping	- 20	- 69	- 9	- 68
Housing	- 32	- 355	-219	- 234
Flight Tickets	- 139	- 334	- 135	- 135
Other Transports	- 113	- 236	- 104	- 51
Other Expenses	- 84	- 39	- 46	- 35
Result	- 620	- 1 638	- 809	- 745

Appendix B: Links and Apps

Below, I've listed some useful links and apps that I found useful during my exchange semester. I used many of these on a daily basis, and I'd recommend to download them right away. I've also added some additional scholarships not mentioned in the text that might be worth checking out (although I didn't).

Links

- [Aentry](#) – an app to access and buy tickets to various events in Singapore, mostly at nightclubs and bars. Usually students get a discount code for the subscription.
- [Redbus](#) – a website for booking bus tickets in Singapore and Malaysia. For example, I used this to book my bus tickets to Kuala Lumpur and back.
- [12GO](#) – a website for booking train, bus, and ferry tickets in Southeast Asia. For example, I used this to book a ferry ticket from Singapore to Batam.
- [Airbnb](#), [Booking](#), [Agoda](#) – websites for booking accommodation, among other things, which I used for my trips.

Apps

For navigation, Google Maps and Apple Maps works very well (also for the MRT system). However, some of the apps below are great complements/alternatives to these.

- [Grab](#) – basically the Uber (and Foodora) of Southeast Asia.
- [NTU Omnibus](#) – an app for the NTU shuttle buses, the best way to dodge a walk in the heat.
- [Citymapper](#) – an app for navigating public transport in most cities around the world, which becomes very useful when traveling.
- [Blackboard](#) – essentially the Canvas app used at NTU to access all the material for your courses.
- [Telegram](#) – the most popular messaging app in Singapore.
- [Singpass](#) – an app for accessing your Singpass, which is needed for many things in Singapore, such as applying for a Singaporean bank account.

Scholarships

- [Global Grant](#)

Great website for finding scholarships in general. They are also responsible for the SOS-scholarship, which I applied for.

- [Erik och Göran Ennerfelts Stiftelse](#)

This application closes rather early, my year it was in March, hence why I didn't apply.

- [Tekn Dr Marcus Wallenbergs fond för utbildning i internationellt företagande](#)

For this, you need to study for a whole year to apply.

- [Hvitfeldtska Stiftelsen](#)

From my understanding, you need to have completed high school in Gothenburg to apply for this.

- [Rune Ljungdahls Stiftelse](#)

- [Donationsstipendierna Chalmers](#)

- [Uppfostringsfonderna](#)

- [Rådman och fru Ernst Collianders stiftelse](#)