

TRAVEL REPORT

NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
SINGAPORE

SPRING TERM, 2025



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JULY 1, 2025



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Introduction

Hello there!

Welcome to my travel report from my time at Nanyang Technological University (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 still consider an exchange, go for it! I'd argue that Singapore is a perfect place for this, with the traveling possibilities and highly ranked universities, however I'm sure that you won't regret it wherever you decide to go. You'll be able to travel, meet a lot of new people, and experience new cultures.

For an exchange at NTU (or in Singapore in general), I hope that my report can help you – especially regarding preparations. This was probably the most confusing part of the exchange, and it's covered in the first chapter. Moreover, apart from the preparations, I'll also discuss the everyday life at NTU (e.g., housing, economy, and spare time 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 exchange budget 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 



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

Preparations

As you might understand, there was some preparation work you had to complete before traveling across the globe. However, just like my experience with Swedish and Chalmers culture, I found that Singapore and NTU were very well 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 my understanding. Either way, I hope that the following sections make the application process smoother and provide some additional tips and tricks. I tried to write 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 shouldn't 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 the CoS suited us best. It wasn't 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'm not sure if this was checked in the end (probably not, as I believe that I failed to achieve that). Nevertheless, as a Physics student, I was happy with my decision (the other Chalmers students were nominated to the CoE), as the most relevant courses for me were offered at the CoS. For most MSc programs at Chalmers, I'd assume that the CoE is the ideal choice, and it would likely work for physics-related MSc programs as well.

Additionally, whether you were nominated as a graduate or an undergraduate student also came with some catches. If given the choice, I'd recommend asking to be nominated as an undergraduate (which I believe is the default), as this allowed you to apply for both post- and undergraduate courses. This wasn't the case if you were nominated as a postgraduate student. As a postgraduate nominee, you'd likely face issues when applying for undergraduate courses. Moreover, during my exchange term, there weren't 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 queries, e.g., entering your “race”, the application form mostly asked for basic information: contact information, medical status, special needs etc.. You also needed to provide a photo of the bio-data page in your passport (i.e. the “hard” page 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 your 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 from my understanding, these only served as a “check” that you’d done some research on the NTU coursework – you could 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. Although, NTU demanded these to have the Chalmers seal, which the electronic sign didn’t provide. Make sure to check if this is still the case for you! I know some students who didn’t want to wait for the coordinators to fix this, so they printed their ToR and went to Chalmers Servicecenter to sign them. So, this is definitely an option if this applies to you and the coordinators are slow for some reason. Overall, the instructions made the application 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/Study Abroad Portal (SAP) was granted in the beginning of November. This portal contained essentially everything you needed 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’d 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 of getting 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 were 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 in the [Housing](#) section in the next chapter. After accepting the offer, you could also activate your NTU email and network. From that point onwards, NTU recommended using that email for all future communication to avoid ending up in spam. Next, you had to apply and appeal for additional courses beyond the 10 selected in your initial application and also submit your Student’s Pass (STP) application. You can read more about this in the two following subsections. Moreover, something I couldn’t find explicitly stated in the SAP (at least not clearly), was that you also had to submit your Singapore Arrival Card (SGAC) 3 days prior to your arrival, 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 (see below), collecting your matriculation card (essentially like the Chalmers Kårkort) and paying the NTU registration and miscellaneous fees. However, as in the general case, these steps were well instructed and easily done.

Student's Pass Application/VISA

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

1. First, you had to download the “SOLAR form” from the SAP, which contained your personal credentials to access the STP application interface on [ICA’s website](#).
2. Next, you had to log on to the STP application page and complete the “eForm16 form”. Many 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’d probably fill this in as well.
3. Then, you had to upload the eForm16 together with a photo of yourself and the bio-data page of your passport, hence why you should save these during your initial application (don’t delete them after this either though, as they’ll probably come in handy some other time during your exchange, eg., while traveling). However, the photo dimension requirements differed (at least for me) from those in the initial application. Thus, I used an online [photo cropper](#) to resize my photos.
4. Before your application was processed, you had to pay a processing fee. For me, this was 45 Singapore dollars (SGD). Then, if and when your application was approved (which took a few days), you had to log on again and print your so-called IPA-approved STP, which you might have to show when entering Singapore.
5. Lastly, you were able to complete two of the final three steps. First, you had to approve, download and then upload the form of conditions and terms regarding the STP. When this had been processed (this also took a couple of days), you had to pay the second processing fee (which for me was 90 SGD). The third and last step was completed after arriving in Singapore, see below.

The IPA-approved STP could be used to enter Singapore *once*, and was then finalized after arriving at NTU, by booking a meeting with ICA when they visited campus during the first week. For this occasion, you needed the E-pass you receive when entering Singapore, a physical passport photograph (for which I used a photo booth in Sweden), your passport, proof of your payments, your IPA and a Singaporean phone number. How to get the latter is covered below in the [SIM Card](#) section. After completion, you could travel in and out of the country as you wished and also create your Singpass. This was needed for creating a local bank account, as described in the [Economy](#) section (however, it was convenient having this even if you didn’t apply for a bank account, since it essentially worked as a digital ID in Singapore, much like BankID in Sweden).

Course Selection and Registration

This was probably the part that gave me the most headache during the whole application process. I'd say that our Swedish "Antagning" system suddenly seemed very simple and effective after going through what appeared to be the Singapore (or at least NTU) equivalent. However, I should add that if you did everything calmly and as instructed, there most likely weren't 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) questions I had then would've been crystal clear, thus I think that this is an appropriate way to describe this.

- i) First, you had to choose 10 courses during your initial application (as mentioned before). These are just a first centerpiece of courses you'd like to attend, and you could easily add more later on.
- ii) Then, when you got access to the SAP (or closely afterwards), you knew
 - a) which of the 10 courses you got approved for, and
 - b) which of these that were actually offered.

Don't worry if you get many rejections at this time – that's what the following steps are for (as for me, I was only approved for one course at this stage).

- iii) Next, the course E-request opened for the first time. This was your first time to shine, i.e. you could now *request* for additional courses. If a course had prerequisites, you could add links and contents of courses you'd read at Chalmers, ensuring that you met these. At this time, the definite course schedule had been uploaded, so you could be sure which courses were actually available.
- iv) By the same time as iii), you could also *appeal* for rejected courses until the end of the notorious Add/Drop Period, see vii). This meant that you could be approved for courses marked as "rejected" in the SAP, if you sent an email(s) to the college(s) offering the course(s) as instructed. This will most likely be the case for some of your 10 initially chosen courses, as discussed above.
- v) Then, after the first E-request period had closed, you were asked to rank your (at that time) approved courses. This allowed 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.
- vi) The E-request period then opened a second time closer to the start of the term, at which you could send in requests for even more courses as described in iii).
- vii) Lastly, at the same time as vi), the two-week-long Add/Drop Period started. You might've heard horror stories about this, but if you did everything as instructed, you were most likely fine. Here, you could add and drop approved courses freely to your schedule through STARS (link below), and appeal for rejected courses as described in iv). If you were lucky, you were happy with your schedule after the first E-request period. Then, you could sit back and relax during this time (after you'd added the courses to your schedule, of course). However, if you ended up like me, you had to spend some time during this period to get the schedule you wanted.

I know that the different terms used here can be very confusing. I think that the most usual (and important) misunderstanding was the difference between an “*approved*” and a “*registered*” course. An *approved* course was one that you’d been accepted to, while a registered course was one that you’d added to your schedule in STARS and for which you’d been allocated a spot. The latter was the holy grail of attending a course – and you achieved it by adding an approved course to your schedule during the Add/Drop Period.

Finally, I’d recommend maintaining close communication 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 your study plan (containing the courses you plan to attend) to your DoS. Since we didn’t receive any information about this, I must thank my friends for reminding me on this (you know who you are). The study plan could be downloaded under “Forms and manuals” [here](#). I sent the first version of this when I was nominated back in September. At this time, the definite course list and -schedule usually haven’t been released for the upcoming term(s). However, you could use the course content website (link below) to check which courses were given the corresponding term(s) previous years as an indication of which courses will be available to you. As the course selection process starts and progresses, you can use the study plan to update your DoS about this, assuring that the courses you choose are valid for your program.

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

- **General coursework information for exchange students.** This site contained all the necessary links and information when it came to choosing courses – from the course catalogue (containing courses from previous years) to lists of restricted courses.
- **STARS.** Note that this was only available after you’d activated your NTU account. Here, you could build and customize your own schedule for the upcoming term(s). This was also where you built your schedule during the Add/Drop Period.

Vaccinations

When staying for longer periods in Singapore, there were definitely some recommended vaccines worth considering (especially if you intended to visit other parts of Asia). 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 procrastinate on this. I received my first doses in mid-November, i.e. about one and a half months before I left, which was – expressed in pure Swedish – “lagom framförhållning” (literally “sufficiently good timing”). I also recommend buying 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’d heard, the pills were cheaper in Sweden, and you also avoided potential scams by not buying them somewhere in Asia.

Insurance

As a Chalmers student, you were insured through Kammarkollegiet ([Student UT](#)). This insurance covered essentially everything while you were in Singapore (including travel to and from the country). However, if you planned to travel beyond Singapore, additional travel insurance was recommended. Most home insurance policies, if you had one, included 45 or 60 days of travel coverage, so you might've needed to purchase extra insurance to cover the remaining period. Then, you were basically faced with two options:

- a) buy 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 option b), using ERV's "[Reseförsäkring Ung](#)", which cost me a few thousand SEK. I was happy with this decision, as it likely saved me the trouble of buying insurance every other weekend. From my calculations, the price would've been around the same for option a), though I can't assure that my calculations were correct :). This, of course, also depends on how much you intended to travel, but if you planned to travel a lot, chances were that you'd save money if you bought only one insurance (and as said, you also saved some extra work before each trip). I know from previous travel reports that many have followed option a) though, so this probably would've worked as well. Either way, you should always check the conditions and what's covered before buying insurance.

SIM Card

Some other students from Chalmers and I chose to buy a SIM card directly at the airport. Since you hadn't received your STP at this point, you were only allowed to buy a 30 day prepaid SIM card. After you'd fixed your STP, you could buy a postpaid plan. However, buying the SIM at the airport definitely wasn't the cheapest alternative, as we payed 50 SGD for 100 GB of data (some roaming included) and one of our peers got the same deal for 14 SGD at campus. So, if you were able to make it to campus without internet (which you should be able to, either by Grab or MRT), this was definitely the most economic option. As for the choice of network operator, I initially used M1 (most people I've talked to did as well), that had OK connection, but not more. When I received my Singpass, I switched to an eSIM from Simba that offered a great deal with 100 GB of data, including 7 GB of roaming in other Asian countries (this was later increased to 500 GB of data and 18 GB of roaming) for 12 SGD per month. However, the connection was on the same level as with M1, i.e. not great. I know that some students used Singtel, and experienced a better connection (the roaming and total data probably wasn't as generous as with Simba though). As a final note, if your SIM doesn't include roaming in a specific country while traveling, I'd recommend using [Roamify](#). This allowed you to buy eSIM data packages for most countries, and worked great for me in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, where my Singaporean SIM card through Simba didn't include much roaming.

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 (on December 1st), tickets are still available – though at a higher price. That said, 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 STP applications before booking the flights, I don't think that many students actually followed this recommendation.

Nevertheless, 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 continue 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 entire round trip), but I know that some Chalmers students flew with Turkish Airlines at a (assumingly) similar cost. Many airlines, including Lufthansa and TA, also provided student discounts and benefits, so be sure to check for those as well. From the airport to campus, there were essentially two options: Grab or MRT/bus. We used the MRT, which worked fine and was the cheaper (but slower) option. However, you had to change to the campus bus (at Pioneer station) or 199 bus (at Boon Lay station) in order to get to campus. Still, Grab was most likely the best option (especially if you could share one), since you had lots of luggage and were new to town (Grab was also available 24/7).

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

- (Obviously) Your passport
- The Letter of Enrolment
- The IPA letter from your STP application

However, I only had to show my passport as usual, and also submit the Singapore Arrival Card (SGAC) as explained in [The Application Process](#) section.

Scholarships

This part actually emerged as a big (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 wouldn't receive any of them. This was – drum-roll – not the case! I received several of the scholarships I applied for. That said, I don't want to make it sound too easy – I did put effort into writing personal letters and gathering the necessary documents for each application, though I also used some tricks to make the process more time-efficient.

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

- A personal letter – introducing myself, explaining the reason behind my application, and why I'd be a good candidate.
- An updated version of my CV.
- 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 had a nice summary [here](#). However, as I provide my budget in the end of this report, you can also use that as a reference.

I must praise myself here – preparing these turned out to be extremely smart, and it definitely saved me lots of time when the applications opened. This was crucial, since I had several other things on my mind during this time – 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 on if you travel during autumn or spring. So, I'd definitely recommend to check the different options as quickly as possible to put the due dates in your calendar and adjust your application-writing process 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](#) (try [this link](#) if the first one doesn't work)
- [Doktor Felix Neuberghs Stiftelse](#)
- [Stiftelsen AAA](#) (send an email to receive information regarding the application procedure)
- [Sveriges Ingenjörer](#) (“Understöds- och stipendiefonden för utlandsstudier”, also note that you must've been a member for at least 6 months at the time of your application, so if you aren't a member, apply for a membership ASAP)

I also knew that [ASEM-DUO](#) had a partnership between Singapore and Sweden that provided financial help 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 some more potential scholarships that you can apply for. Lastly, note that if you receive a scholarship, you might have to report back to the organization after your exchange. This is usually done by writing a short report about how you've used the scholarship. In some cases, you might also have to show receipts, so I'd recommend saving these for bigger expenses.

Life at NTU

Living at NTU and in Singapore was a great experience (and adventure), and I'd say that it was a perfect place for an exchange. Campus was huge and beautiful, with lots of nature built into it, and the city was very clean and safe. Moreover, the locals were friendly and the food was amazing. Also, NTU – like other universities in Singapore – accepted *lots of* exchangers, which enabled you to not only experience and learn about the culture in Singapore, but cultures from all over the world. I met people from virtually every corner of the globe. However, there were things that you might've wanted to know before leaving Sweden, which I'll try to cover in this chapter. Hopefully, it'll decrease the culture shock (if you get one) and make you more prepared for your studies at NTU.

Everyday Life

Despite being on the other side of the globe, you'll sooner or later find your personal routine at NTU. 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 change. A general tip is to find friends (either locals or other exchangers) so that you can navigate the new surroundings together, which will be more fun and probably easier. Of course, many things weren't that different from your usual life back home. Nevertheless, there were things that were substantially different from those in Sweden.

For starters, Singapore was *hot*. The temperature during day was around 30 – 35°C, and the humidity was very high. The sun was also very strong, so sunscreen and water were your new best friends. On the contrary, the evenings were nice with a temperature around 25°C, and you'll notice that the locals generally are more active at night, likely due to the climate. Eventually, you'll probably get somewhat used to the heat – not like the locals though, who considered 28°C "cold". Moreover, the weather was also very unpredictable, and the rain could be very heavy, but usually didn't last for long. For this reason, I'd recommend always having an umbrella close at hand. 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 were air-conditioned, which initially made these my favorite spots on campus.

Secondly, the cooking culture was completely different from Sweden. As I'll also explain in the [final chapter](#), a large part of the food culture in Singapore was based on the so-called hawker centers (or canteens at NTU). These were basically large food courts, where you could find dishes from all over the world. This made it cheap and easy to eat out, and I'd say that most students at NTU took advantage of this.

In fact, the facilities for cooking your own food were very limited at NTU, and I'd say that it wasn't worth the effort to cook. However, if you were a fan of cooking, you could use the pantry in your hall, which (in most cases) was equipped with some hotplates. However, this was where the canteens at NTU entered the picture, and I'd recommend trying all of them and finding your own favorites (the same goes for the dishes). Generally, I'd say that food was cheaper in hall canteens, while the larger ones were more expensive but offered a wider range of dishes. Below, I've listed my favorite canteens at NTU:

- **Canteen 2:** Strategically placed in the middle of campus with (in my opinion) some of the best meals. It was also cheaper than the North and South Spine canteens, with the downside that no stall accepted cashless payments.
- **North Hill Canteen:** Here, you could find a wide range of nice dishes and it was usually not too crowded. However, here you had to rely a bit more on cash.
- **North and South Spine Canteens:** The largest canteens on campus, which were usually near your lecture halls. They had a wide range of dishes, but were often crowded and a bit more expensive. Most stalls here accepted cashless payments.
- *Honorable Mention:* The Indian food at my canteen (Tamarind Hall). This explains itself, probably the best Indian food on campus (and my favorite dish).



Bottom right: Canteen 2 – one of my favorite canteens. Center was my go-to meal on campus, Chinese La-mian noodles and chicken. Soups (in all forms) were also common to see. Bottom left was another personal favorite which seemed weird at first – chicken omelette rice. Lastly, top right was my favorite dish, Indian food at Tamarind Hall.

Lastly, since campus functioned much like a small town, there were some grocery stores and shops where you could buy essentials, e.g., near Canteen 2 and in North Spine. For accessing larger malls and grocery stores, you could take the campus bus to Pioneer MRT station and go to Jurong East. However, a closer option was to take the 199 bus from campus, which took you to Jurong Point – a large mall with lots of stores and food stalls (here, you could also access the MRT at Boon Lay station).

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'd recommend taking a peek at some of the previous travel reports (e.g., that from Filip in 2022/23). However, in short I can say that I was 110 % happy with my decision to live on-campus. In my opinion, these were 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 lived here	–	–	More complicated
Engage more in the NTU life	–	–	–

As the table suggests, I believe that you'd 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, room and facility standards were most likely better off campus, but at a higher price. Moreover, I'd say that the procedure for securing off campus accommodation was generally more complicated than on campus. Lastly, before sharing my own housing experience, I'd like to mention that I didn't hear of a single person who applied for campus housing and didn't get it (which I know can be a concern).

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 a single room and were assigned a double and vice versa, but this must've been rare. Anyway, I was satisfied with my dorm and hall, which was one of the newest at NTU. For the whole semester, I paid around 20 000 SEK, which wasn't cheap considering the standard, but much cheaper than living off campus (also, the AC cost around 0.4 SGD per hour of use). From my experience, the standard was more or less comparable all over campus. You probably saw lizards, bugs and cockroaches independently of where you lived, and eventually you got somewhat used to it. The shared bathrooms weren't exactly first class either, but I never had any trouble using them. In my hall (and I think that this applied to most of them), we also had access to a small pantry with cold and hot water, some hotplates and a microwave. There were also washing and drying machines on certain floors, where each program cost 1 SGD coin (this made these coins extremely precious, so make sure to not waste them). For the latter, you could either ask to get some extra 1ers when buying food, if you payed a little extra. Or, if you had a lot of small coins laying around, you could use the vending machines to exchange these for 1ers.



My room at Tamarind Hall.



The shared bathroom and pantry on my floor.

Something I haven't seen in previous travel reports (maybe for obvious reasons) is the problem with mould in the halls. This was a common problem in Singapore due to the high humidity, and I along with many others (mostly guys, actually) experienced issues with this during the first months. For example, some of my clothes (!) had white mould after I got home from a week of traveling. 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 along with some vinegar in the washing machine (this, washing your clothes often, also seemed like an effective precaution against mould). 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, but you could probably find them in the malls at Jurong East and Jurong Point as well.

Economy



The large financial district in downtown Singapore.

Relative to other Southeast Asian countries, Singapore was expensive. Clothes, electronics, and groceries were approximately at the same price level as in Sweden, if not higher in some cases. Alcohol was very expensive at bars and clubs, but there were areas downtown (e.g., Boat Quay, similar to 2a lång) where you could buy a beer for around 50 SEK. When it came to food, you already know about the hawker centers, where you could get a proper meal for around 30 – 50 SEK. Only NTU had 10 – 15 of these.

Nevertheless, I'd argue that the greatest concern – and difference from Sweden – was the cash situation. This was mostly an issue at hawker centers, where many food stalls didn't accept card payment. As mentioned, once you complete your STP, you'll receive your matriculation card, which had a NETS functionality (a local payment method). This could be topped up through an app (disclaimer: I didn't try this), and used in many places where card payments weren't accepted, which made it an alternative to cash.

However, I went for an alternative solution, which I believe was the best one – namely opening a Singaporean bank account, which I'll explain below. This way, you didn't have to worry about cash, or your matriculation card and you could pay directly from your phone. Before opening my bank account, I solely relied on cash and my [Wise](#) card. This worked smoothly, however if you're as allergic to cash as I am, I'd recommend that you get a bank account ASAP. Regarding using Wise or [Revolut](#) as your travel card (which seemed to be the two options that offered the best exchange rates and lowest fees), I had a great experience using Wise. However, there were pros and cons with both (I found more pros with Wise though) and I know that most Swedish exchangers used Revolut.

Opening a Singaporean Bank Account

Once you got your STP, you could apply for Singpass [here](#). This was basically the BankID of Singapore, and after approval, you could reach this through the [Singpass app](#). Then, you could easily apply for a bank account at [DBS](#), one of the major banks in Singapore (there were other options, but I can't say much about their application processes). This was done in the [DBS digibank app](#), where you later also managed your balance, made payments, etc.. Apart from Singpass, you needed proof of your residential address in Singapore, which you could get from your hall's office. You also had to provide proof of your Swedish tax liability (I used an English Personbevis from Skatteverket, which could be retrieved [here](#) after login, by choosing "*Utdrag om folkbokföringsuppgifter – engelsk text*"). Then, your application was processed for a few days before you got a confirmation email from DBS. They also sent a debit card to your address.

This made life much easier, as you also gained access to the Singapore equivalent of Swish – PayNow. Similarly to the NETS functionality of the matriculation card, PayNow worked through QR codes accepted almost everywhere in Singapore. Another bonus of getting a bank account in Singapore was that if you did need cash, the withdrawals were free, unlike if you used your Swedish card (of course, they weren't totally free, as you paid some exchange fees when sending money from Sweden to your DBS account). DBS also offered some great features for travelers, e.g., allowing account openings in different currencies and fee-free transfers between them (similar to Wise and Revolut). Lastly, to transfer money from my Swedish account to my Singaporean one, I used Wise (Revolut was also an option), which had the best exchange rates and lowest fees.

As a side note, you might experience issues trying to type decimal numbers when using PayNow. In this case, change your phone's decimal format to “.” from “,”. On an iPhone, this was done under General settings → Language & Region → Number Format.

Education – Chalmers vs. NTU

Despite being almost 10 000 km apart, Chalmers and NTU shared a lot when it came to the studying experience. All in all, you'll be a university student regardless of where you wake up in the mornings, 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'll definitely be some differences.

To begin with, the NTU campus was huge (and beautiful), and the surroundings made you feel like you were in the middle of a Jurassic Park movie, with large trees and plants. In the beginning of your exchange, you'll definitely be overwhelmed by its size and use Google Maps *a lot*. But as time goes on, you'll find that it isn't too large and that you often can get around by foot. Although walking was possible, the heat (or rain) often made [the free buses](#), that ran frequently throughout the day (less frequent in the evenings) a better alternative. Despite the availability of buses, they tended to be very crowded during school hours, making walking a viable alternative if the distance wasn't too long.



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

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

Academically, NTU emphasized continuous assessment, with midterms and quizzes playing a significant role in most courses. Unlike at Chalmers, where finals often constitute a large percentage of the final grade, NTU's exams rarely accounted for more than 60 % of the grade. This structure encouraged students to engage with the material consistently throughout the semester, which I actually believe was a better way of learning. Another key difference, which I wasn't as happy with, was the academic calendar. At NTU, all courses ran concurrently throughout the semester, without the distinct reading periods used at Chalmers. This structure required students to manage multiple subjects simultaneously over a long period, which I generally disliked. Regarding academics, the quality of teaching, course content, and overall level of difficulty were generally good. However, given NTU's high global rankings, I expected an even higher level. In comparison, I found that many courses I've attended at Chalmers were more challenging in terms of depth and difficulty – though, of course, this depends on the total effort you put in.

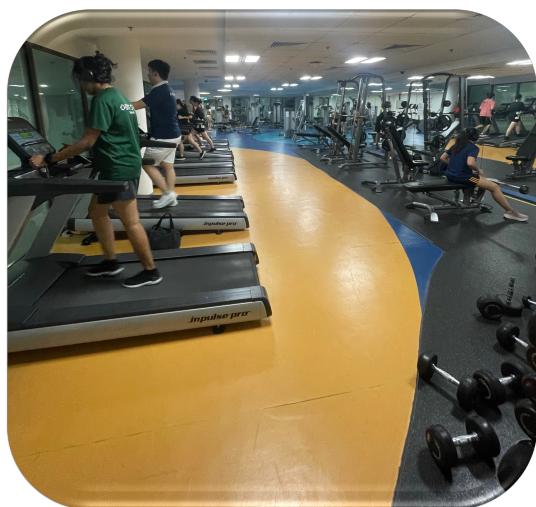


Great study facilities: Lee Wee Nam Library and outside at North Spine Plaza.

Moreover, the grading system at NTU differed from that at Chalmers. The highest grade was A+, while the lowest was F, and grades were generally assigned based on a bell curve (I'm not entirely sure that this was applied to exchangers though). This meant that students weren't 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 was essentially no need to aim for the highest grade (instead I believe that you should focus on traveling, exploring new cultures, and personal development).

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

Free Time and Activities



The gym at my hall.

After school hours, there was a lot to do around campus. As I mentioned earlier, campus felt like a small town, and there were many activities and events to engage in. For example, there were many sports facilities, such as gyms, swimming pools, and sports courts, which were free for students. During my exchange semester, the only swimming pool open was the one at NIE, which was nice and never seemed too crowded. Concerning gyms, many halls had their own (including my hall), but these were mostly small with limited equipment. The most easily accessible large gym — and the one that I used most during the semester — was at North Hill. However, this got very crowded during the evenings (not to the extent that it became unusable though). You could also look into getting a membership at a gym outside of campus, but this would be a bit of a hassle.

Regarding other sport facilities, you could engage in most sports at NTU. I frequently played table tennis, badminton, and floorball. For racket sports, there was a large multi-purpose hall at North Hill (this was where I played the most), where you often had to book your time (could be done [here](#) after login), and for some sports, especially badminton, available times were rare. However, there were also many sports clubs at NTU, which you could join for a small fee. I joined the NTU Floorball Club for 5 SGD 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.

In addition to sports, there were many other types of clubs, focusing on for example music or dance. Most halls also arranged different activities for its residents, which were often communicated via the NTU email. For example, one of my friends and I attended a session of Muay Thai at my hall. Also, there were many events for exchange students arranged by NTU in the start of the semester, which I definitely recommend in order to meet other exchangers. There were also several parties arranged for exchangers (and non-exchangers) throughout the semester (mostly in the beginning though). For this, I used the [Aentry app](#), where you could find and buy tickets to many bars and clubs. Lastly, studying in Singapore was, of course, the perfect ground zero for traveling in Asia, which I'll cover in the [final 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 (where I played rugby) at NIE, and the volleyball court outside Canteen 2.

Coursework

Generally, I believe that NTU offered a wide range of interesting courses. So, my first tip here is to consider courses outside of your major's subject (i.e. "vidja vyerna"), e.g., from Nanyang Business School (NBS), National Institute of Education (NIE, for sports modules) or others depending on your interests. This especially applies to students from MPPHS, where the mandatory courses were done in LP1. As for me, I was happy with my course selection. I believe that I found the perfect fraction between amount of workload and interesting courses (although I had to drop some due to scheduling conflicts).

Regarding the optimal schedule, most exchangers tried to minimize the amount of classes close to the weekends due to traveling purposes. However, I had at least one lecture every day, but the courses on Thursdays and Fridays often didn't require attendance. I do believe that the attendance policy differed much between the different colleges, where courses from, e.g., NBS often had mandatory attendance and courses from SPMS (School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences) often didn'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. So, a tip here is to ask the lecturer if the classes are mandatory, before adding a course to your schedule. From my experience, most lecturers answered quickly and were very helpful. Also, I'd recommend minimizing the number of exams. That way, you'll have more continuous assessment, and thus more time to travel when school ends. So, in short, I'd say that an optimal schedule for a travel-interested student was to have classes three days a week (which was definitely possible), e.g., on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, while minimizing the number of exams and focusing more on continuous assessment.

Finally, as I was the first MSc student from MPPHS at NTU ever (or at least in a long time), I hadn't much to go on regarding relevant courses for my program. However, the [CoS website](#) provided useful information about the courses available, so this was never an issue. Furthermore, the accreditation was made such that $4 \text{ AU} = 7.5 \text{ hp}$, and NTU recommended students to study between 15 – 20 AUs per semester (I did 18). In practice, the accreditation 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 for each course along with your ToR 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 with my DoS in person to show how I retrieved this since it wasn't signed). If you're more patient than me though, NTU sent your coordinator (and possibly also your DoS) a signed version that arrived in the mid or end of July. Anyway, at last your request was reviewed (and hopefully approved) by your DoS, see [this page](#) for more information.

Course Descriptions and Impressions

Below, I've listed the courses I attended during my exchange, along with their syllabus descriptions and my personal impressions.

Open Quantum Systems | PH3406

Accredited as: MCC180 (compulsory elective) 7.5 hp

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 was very nice, a great lecturer, and very passionate about the subject. The course was very well organized and assessed through one homework assignment, one project report, one midterm, and one final exam. The homework and project were great for understanding the material and involved coding – aligning the course with 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 in was more from my own interest than from necessity. I'd recommend this course to anyone interested in quantum mechanics, as it was a great introduction to the open quantum systems.

Physics in the Industry | PH4418

Accredited as: Elective 7.5 hp

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 course was divided into four topics: semiconductors, photonics, food- and biomedical physics. Each topic was taught by a different lecturer, and the assessments consisted of in-class tests after each topic, and a final report and presentation (which could be done in pairs). The tests were rather easy, while the latter demanded some extra work. However, the topics and lecturers didn't really catch my interest and I'd probably only recommend this as a filler course. Nevertheless, if you find the topics more interesting than I did, you might learn a lot and possibly also discover a future career path.

Leadership in the 21st Century BU5642	3 AU
Accredited as: MTS-Course with HY0001 (elective) 5.6 hp	Exam: No
LECTURER/EXAMINER: <i>Assoc. Prof. Jing Zhu</i>	

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 with MTS-credits at Chalmers, which was very convenient for me. However, in contrary to HY0001, this course actually contained valuable content (in my opinion). The lecturer, Jing, was very driven, kind and wanted everybody to succeed and gain something from the course. I personally believe that everyone would benefit from this course, even those that don't aspire to become leaders in the future. Much of the content could be boiled down to "knowing and understanding people", often in a setting where leadership played a role. If you put your whole heart and effort into this course, I believe that you'll grow much, both as a person and as a leader, and you'll be well-equipped for your future career. The assessments consisted of two quizzes and a team project with a written report and presentation, and I wouldn't say that the workload was heavy by any means.

Ethics and Moral Reasoning HY0001	1 AU
Accredited as: MTS-Course with BU5642 (elective) 1.9 hp	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

In this course, all content was delivered online – even the assessments. You had to go through a number of lectures, each ending with a quiz. The quizzes were very easy, as you could do them up to three times using all available resources. Except for these, you also had 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 fell into the "common sense" category, and I didn't learn much from the course. However, it was a solid filler course, and most importantly, it gave me MTS-credits at Chalmers, which was great for me since my Bachelor's didn't provide me with these. So, if you need MTS-credits, this course is a great option together with BU5642, but otherwise I wouldn't recommend it.

C & C++ Programming | SC1008

Accredited as: Elective 5.6 hp

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

In this programming course, the lectures were conducted online, and there was also a mandatory lab/tutorial session each week. The course was divided into one C part and one C++ part, which 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 (no tools were allowed for these). For the C part, this contained both coding and multiple choice questions (MCQs), and for the C++ part, 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 was basic and the organization of the course fit the exchange life very well.

Rugby | SS5205

Accredited as: Elective 5.6 hp

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 definitely one of my favorites during the semester. And before you reject it due to the physicality of regular 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 (I kind of looked forward to the physical aspects though). 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 was more on ball handling, rules and tactics. Then, during the last four or five weeks, each lesson essentially contained only gameplay with short breaks in between. Furthermore, Coach Harrie was very nice, experienced and passionate about the sport. I'd definitely recommend this course to anyone interested in sports, especially while on exchange, as it was fun, social, and had a minimal workload.

Course Rankings

Here, I've summarized my impressions of the courses I attended and ranked them by workload, content, and teaching quality.

OPEN QUANTUM SYSTEMS

Workload	Content	Teaching	Total
█ █ █ □ □	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

PHYSICS IN THE INDUSTRY

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

LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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

ETHICS AND MORAL REASONING

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

C & C++ PROGRAMMING

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

RUGBY

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

Discovering Asia and Singapore

One of the best things about studying abroad, especially in Singapore, was the opportunity to travel and explore new places. As a country, Singapore didn't have that much to offer. Still, there were some great places to visit and things to explore, which I've described below. When I asked local students, they often agreed that the best thing about Singapore was its location, as it made 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 must agree on this. The country is small, but the location was perfect for exploring the rest of Asia, which I'll also cover in this chapter.

Singapore – City and Country in One

Even though campus was large, beautiful and had a lot to offer, you'll eventually want to explore what's behind the doors of NTU. Singapore is a small country (and city), and you could easily explore most things in a few days. The public transport system was great, and you could get around easily. The MRT (the subway) was very cheap and easy to use, and you could also use buses to get around. I believe that you could get some sort of card for the public transport, but I'd recommend using your regular bank card (or Apple/Google Pay) to pay for the rides. This was very convenient, as you didn't have to worry about getting a card or topping it up. Of course, you could also use Grab (the Uber of Southeast Asia) to get around, which was relatively cheap and available 24/7 in contrary to the public transport (the MRT and most bus lines closed around midnight).

As for things to see and explore, there were some places that shouldn't be missed. Below, I've listed some of the most popular ones to visit sorted by category. Regarding the hawker centers, those mentioned here were probably the most popular and touristic ones, but there were essentially an infinite number of hawker centers to explore in total.

Nature:

- **Sentosa Island:** A small island in the south of Singapore, known for its beaches, resorts, and attractions (e.g., aquariums, shops, and Universal Studios Singapore).
- **Gardens by the Bay:** A park with futuristic gardens and structures. The Supertree Grove was a must-see, especially at night when the trees were lit up.
- **MacRitchie Reservoir:** A large nature reserve with hiking trails. Here, you could also find the famous treetop walk – a suspension bridge with a great view.

Culture:

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

Hawker Centers:

- **Maxwell:** A popular hawker center (and one of the largest) with lots of great food. Here, you could find the famous Tian Tian Hainanese Chicken Rice.
- **Lau Pa Sat:** A historic hawker center in the central business district.

Nightlife:

- **Clarke and Boat Quay:** A popular nightlife area with lots of bars. This was basically the “Andra-Lång of Singapore”, with cheap beer and great vibes. The bar Georgetown was 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 here, or you’ll be financially ruined).
- **Zouk and Marquee:** Nightclubs.

Lastly, if you’re in Singapore during autumn, don’t miss [the Singapore Grand Prix](#) (a Formula 1 night race). Unfortunately, as I was there during spring, I didn’t get to experience this. For the general sports nerds, the [LIV Tour](#), as well as a large Rugby tournament, was hosted in the city during my time there.



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

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

Asia – a Student-Friendly Continent

In many ways, Asia was the perfect continent for students. The cost of living was usually low, the food was amazing and there was lots to see and explore. When your base was Singapore, you could usually find lots 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've shortly summarized my trips and added some tips for each destination. Note that cash still was king in most Asian countries, so I'd strongly recommend to always carry some cash with you, especially in the Southeast Asian countries.

Malaysia: I visited Kuala Lumpur for a short time, but I really liked the city, which was both modern and packed lots 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 a great place for a day trip (this was actually many Singaporeans favorite weekend destination for shopping and eating out). Malaysia was also very cheap in general, and the food was amazing.

Thailand: I went to Koh Lanta and Koh Phi Phi in Krabi for a week of “studying” and relaxing. Thailand was one of my favorite countries – it was cheap, had amazing food and people, and the weather and beaches were great. Apart from Koh Lanta and Koh Phi Phi, there were lots of other alternatives to choose from, such as Phuket, Koh Samui, and Koh Phangan. Nevertheless, I'd recommend to visit Koh Lanta, which felt chill and relaxed. Koh Phi Phi was a bit more touristy, but had some amazing beaches and views. I've also heard that Bangkok is great, and also Chiang Mai in the north. Unfortunately, I didn't have time for these.



Beach on Koh Lanta.

Vietnam: I was in Vietnam for a week during recess, and visited Hanoi, Ninh Bình, and Hội An. Vietnam was also one of my favorites, with friendly people, amazing food, and lots of culture. Hanoi was very busy and lively with culture, history, and lots of great food. On the contrary, Ninh Bình was more nature-focused. There, we went on a canoe trip through the many caves and mountains in the area. Hội An was a small historical town known for its 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 also went to Hong Kong for a weekend and really liked it. In many ways, the city felt similar to Singapore, but I believe that HK had more to offer and the city felt more lively. For instance, I visited Victoria Peak, which had 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'd recommend exploring the city and finding your own favorite spots. We had a very interesting experience at Mr. Wong's, a restaurant in the city. For 100 Hong Kong dollars, you got to eat (and drink) as much as you wished, and the place was popular among exchange students.



The Hong Kong Island skyline. For 100 Hong Kong dollars, you got to eat (and drink) as much as you wished, and the place was popular among exchange students.

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 was very cheap, and we had a great time just relaxing and studying in a large villa. I also visited Bali for a week with my family. Here, we first explored Ubud, known for its nature (try the river rafting!), many waterfalls, rice terraces, and temples. Then, we went to Nusa Penida, a small island with amazing views and beaches (Kelingking is the Instagram king of beaches), and later Seminyak, a beach town in the south. Here, we tried surfing which was lots of fun (but hard). We also visited the Uluwatu Temple (beware of the monkeys!), where we witnessed a weird local play. If you want a mix of culture, relaxing, and adventure, Bali is probably the perfect place.



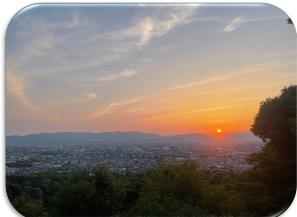
Kelingking Beach.

Laos: My first stop after school ended was Laos. I believe that Laos is one of the most underrated countries in Asia. It was very cheap, the people were very friendly, and the nature was incredible. We flew to the capital Vientiane and spent half a day there (this city didn't offer too much, so I 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 was a must-do!). We also rented a motorcycle for a cheap price, which without a doubt was the best way to explore the area. The local taxi service [Loca](#) was an alternative, but this gave you less freedom. We explored caves (where you could try water tubing), blue lagoons (the best places to chill and cool off in the heat, there were several of these in the area), and hiking spots. Lastly, we took the train to Luang Prabang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its temples and culture, where we spent two nights. 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 could also swim in the turquoise water. I also recommend the night market and the bowling alley, where you could play bowling and drink beer for a cheap price. As a side note, the railway was actually very modern and efficient in Laos, mostly due to Chinese investments in the country.



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 unique country, with a mix of modern and traditional culture. The public transport system was creepy good, and you could easily get around using the Shinkansen (bullet train) or subway. For the latter, I'd recommend the Suica card (you should be able to access this through Apple Wallet, just tap “add card – travel card” in the app) which could be topped up via Apple Pay. We started with four nights in Tokyo, which, except for being the largest city in the world, was very busy and lively with lots of culture and amazing food. Some of the highlights include the Senso-ji Temple, Shibuya Crossing (the world’s busiest pedestrian crossing), Imperial Palace, Meiji Shrine, Tokyo Skytree (for a view of the endless concrete), Takeshita Street, and the different parks. You should also check out Golden Gai, a small area with lots of bars and restaurants, and the [teamLab Planets museum](#).



Sunset over Kyoto from Fushimi Inari Shrine and incredible ramen in Tokyo.

In general, I'd recommend exploring the cities, finding your own favorite spots and experiencing the culture. Regarding food, you should probably try everything (since it was all great), such as okonomiyaki (a savory pancake), takoyaki (octopus balls), sushi, nigiri, ramen, and wagyu beef (we tried an A5-ranked wagyu beef

in Osaka, which was expensive, but probably one of my best food experiences ever).



From the left: Shinjuku Gyo-en National Garden in Tokyo, Nara Park, okonomiyaki in Kyoto, and A5-ranked wagyu beef in Osaka.



The view from Tokyo Skytree (it was the same in every direction).

South Korea: After Japan, I flew from Osaka to Seoul, where I spent four nights. Honestly, South Korea felt like Japan's little brother (as we Swedes know, little brother < older brother when it comes to countries – but to be fair, most things would feel like a downgrade after Japan), however it was still well worth a visit. Here, some of the highlights include the Gyengbokgung Palace, Bukchon and Ikseon Hanok Villages, Seoul Tower (try to be there at sunset), Cheonggyecheon Stream (especially at night when they turned on the lights), and the different markets (especially Myeong-dong and Gwangjang). I also visited the DMZ, a strip of land that separates North and South Korea. This was a very unique experience, and I'd definitely recommend going there if you have the chance. I booked a tour via [GetYourGuide](#), which worked well. Regarding transportation, the subway system in Seoul was very good and efficient. The best option for this was to get a T-money card at any convenience store, which could be topped up using cash. Moreover, Google Maps worked poorly in South Korea, and most locals used [KakaoMap](#) instead. Lastly, the food here was great, and I'd 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. In my opinion, Taiwan felt like a less developed version of Hong Kong, with lots of Chinese-influenced culture (I suspect that is as close as you get to China without actually going there). Here, you should definitely include the Taipei 101 skyscraper (try to get there at sunset), 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 the 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 lots of history (the old street is probably the most famous attraction here), culture (try the local tea!), and shopping. Also, you must try the different food options – dumplings, braised pork, stinky tofu (if you dare, it didn't taste that bad in my opinion), and bubble tea. Lastly, the public transport system in Taipei was great, and you got around easily using the subway or buses. I'd recommend getting an EasyCard at one of the subway stations, which worked 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 is 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 more time (and money), which I personally didn't have. As for the countries I visited, I really liked all of them, and I think that they all had something unique to offer (i.e. visit them all if you can!). However, if I had to choose three favorites (extremely hard), I'd say Japan, Vietnam, and Laos, with all others in a close fourth place. These countries were very different from each other, but they all had amazing food, culture, and nature.

Appendix A: Budget

As a physicist, there are lots of things that I find exciting, e.g., space, quantum mechanics, music, food, sports, skiing etc.. However, economic matters aren't usually 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”,

they usually only result in a headache anyway (which often is true). Nevertheless, I'm very detailed and planning, so I always have a budget. Accordingly, I thought that students like me (or not like me, for that matter, though 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 the exchange rate SGD/SEK was between 7.4 and 8.2 during my exchange and that I only show expenses, since these probably are the most interesting.

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 (all incl.)” row in Table 2. However, more detailed budgets for each of my trips are given in Tables 3 and 4. Lastly, a small disclaimer is that I'm probably not the most representative person when it comes to spending money. For example, you'll notice that I'm not even close to being a shopaholic – but much closer to being a food addict...

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

Expense [SEK]	COST
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 SGD. Note that “Traveling (all incl.)” includes all travel expenses, see Tables 3 and 4 for details.

Expense [SGD]	JAN	FEB	MAR	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 & MALAYSIA Jan 24th - Feb 2nd	INDONESIA Feb 21th - 24th	VIETNAM Feb 27th - Mar 7th	HONG KONG Mar 27th - 30th
Food	- 305	- 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	- 150	- 58	- 77
Result	- 1 343	- 343	- 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
Others	- 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 for the apps, I'd recommend to download them right away. I've also added some additional scholarships not mentioned in the text that might be worth applying for (although I didn't).

Links

- [Study plan](#) – on this page, under “Forms and Manuals”, you could download the study plan, which you should fill out and submit to your MSc program’s DoS.
- [General coursework information for exchange students](#) – contained all the necessary links and information when it came to choosing courses.
- [STARS](#) – the NTU course selection system, where you could select courses and study your timetable (only available after you had activated your NTU account).
- [Booking system for NTU facilities](#) – here, you could book study rooms, sports facilities, and other things at NTU. I used this to book table tennis and badminton sessions (login needed).
- [Chalmers MEX Portal](#) – used to accredit your courses at NTU after your exchange.
- [Aentry](#) – a website (and an app) to access and buy tickets to various events in Singapore, mostly at nightclubs and bars.
- [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 (among other things) in Southeast Asia. For example, I used this to book ferry tickets from Singapore to Batam and back.
- [Airbnb, Booking, Agoda](#) – websites for booking accommodation, among other things (these sites went extremely warm for me before and during my travels).
- [ICA](#) – no, not the Swedish supermarket chain, but the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority of Singapore. This was the authority that issued your STP and where you submitted your SGAC when traveling.

Apps

- [Google](#) and [Apple Maps](#) – explain themselves, and were great for navigation in Singapore (also for the MRT system) and Asia (except for South Korea).
- [Grab](#) – basically the Uber (and Foodora) of Southeast Asia.
- [NTU Omnibus](#) – a scheduling app for the NTU bus system, and the ultimate tool for dodging a walk in the heat.
- [Citymapper](#) – an app for navigating public transport in most cities around the world, which became very useful when traveling.
- [Blackboard](#) – essentially the Canvas app of NTU, used to access all the material for your courses.
- [Telegram](#) – the most popular messaging app in Singapore.
- [Singpass](#) – an app for accessing your Singpass, which was needed for many things in Singapore, such as applying for a Singaporean bank account.
- [Roamify](#) – an app for buying eSIMs with data plans covering most countries in the world, which I used during my trips to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. [Saily](#) also seems to be a solid option, although I haven't tried it.

Scholarships

- [Global Grant](#)
Great website for finding scholarships in general. They were also responsible for the SOS-scholarship, which I applied for.
- [Erik och Göran Ennerfelts Stiftelse](#)
The application for this closed rather early, for me it was in March, hence why I didn't apply.
- [Tekn. Dr. Marcus Wallenbergs fond för utbildning i internationellt företagande](#)
For this, you had to study for a whole year to apply.
- [Hvitfeldtska Stiftelsen](#)
From my understanding, completion of high school in Gothenburg is required to apply for this.
- [Rune Ljungdahls Stiftelse](#)
- [Donationsstipendierna Chalmers](#)
- [Uppfostringsfonderna](#)
- [Rådman och Fru Ernst Collianders Stiftelse](#)