

# Experience Report: HSG Asia Term 2015

## Singapore Management University

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This experience report focuses on life in Singapore in general, and will give an overview of the courses I attended at the Singapore Management University.

### **Living in Singapore**

Singapore is a great city for spending an exchange semester, especially for people without much experience with Asia. Everyone knows how to speak English and its location in the middle of Southeast Asia offers many diverse and relatively cheap travel opportunities.

Singapore is a buzzing place and there is always more to discover. It is home to three major ethnic groups (the Chinese, Indians and Malays) and three different religions (Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism). Therefore, despite being a super modern metropolis, Singapore has many cultural facets, which becomes clear when visiting Chinatown, Little India or Arab Street. I recommend taking a walk through those quarters and having a look at the different temples or mosques in order to get to know the cultural background of Singapore a little better. The Singaporeans are very friendly and happy when someone shows interest in their culture.

Apart from that, Singapore offers many different activities. In the city centre, it is basically all about shopping and food. The main shopping street is called Orchard Road, where one huge shopping mall is

next to another. If you manage to orientate yourself in these malls, you can find anything you want in there. But the food is probably the most important part. There are food courts everywhere around Singapore, which offer many different kinds of food and are quite cheap (around CHF 4 – 5 per meal). That's where everyone is going for a quick lunch or dinner, as it is usually cheaper than cooking and the food is good, too. But if you are willing to spend a little more, you will find tons of really nice restaurants offering every kind of food one could think of. It might seem funny, but food represents an important part of life in Singapore and the people are very proud of it.

In the centre, there are also the major tourist attractions like the Marina Bay Sands, the Gardens by the Bay, or the Central Business District, where you can find many nice bars with great views. For the ladies I recommend going there on Wednesdays, as many places offer free entrance (often including free drinks as well) because of ladies' night.

If you get tired of the big city life, you can visit places a little more outside of the centre. The MacRitchie Reservoir, for example, offers some hiking trails through the jungle (but take enough water with you!). Pulau Ubin is another nice place for experiencing some nature in Singapore. It is a small island located in the east of Singapore and accessible by ferry.

In general, life in Singapore is very convenient. Everything works well and the standard of living is high. However, this has also its price. The price level in Singapore is comparable to the one in Switzerland. Even though the food is cheap, you will eat out much more often in Singapore than in Switzerland, as groceries are quite expensive. In general, the bills are cheaper, but more numerous.

## **Courses**

### **Business Consulting – 6 ECTS**

This course is compulsory and offers the chance to get hands on real life projects. Both St. Gallen and SMU students participate in this course. Several companies offer different projects you will have to work on during the semester in groups of five to six students. Additionally, weekly lectures take place. Personally, I really liked this course, as I could learn a lot and gain practical experience. The grading is based on 10% attendance and participation, 10% progress report (a small PowerPoint presentation about your project's overall progress), 30% mid-term presentation and 50% final presentation. Additionally, you have to hand in a logbook with each group member's contribution to the project.

Workload: This course was the most demanding one. We had to work many hours on the project and met regularly. However, the learning effect was greater than with any other course I had during my studies. Of course, we had our ups and downs while working on the project, but overall, it was a lot of fun and I can highly recommend it.

### **Business Development in Asia – 3 ECTS**

This course is also compulsory and takes place in the beginning of the semester and is offered only to St. Gallen students. It is a three-day block seminar and gives a good overview of Asia and doing business

there. The deliverables are a country/case presentation (30%), a pitch (40%) and a learning summary (30%). The country/case presentation has to be handed in before the course starts, as it will be presented during the first two days. On the last day, we had to present our pitches. For the learning summary, we had two more weeks after the course for completing it.

Workload: Like many block seminars, this course is tightly scheduled and quite demanding within those three days. However, it is a good introduction to the whole Asia Term, and after those three days, it is done (except for the learning summary consisting of one page max.).

### **Business Study Mission to Malaysia – 6 ECTS**

This course used to be compulsory, but since the Asia Term 2015, it is optional. Both St. Gallen and SMU students participate in this course. In the first half of the semester, weekly lectures take place that discuss different topics about Malaysia and doing business there. It is accompanied by little assignments each week (e.g. case studies). The highlight of the course is the one-week business study mission to Malaysia taking place either in the recess week in October or after the whole Asia Term in December. This study trip was very interesting and it was surprising to see how developed Malaysia and its business environment actually is. Of course, this course is Malaysia-specific, but we could also learn a lot about different industries in general. Personally, I can highly recommend this course. The grading is based on attendance and class participation (20%), one group presentation taking place during the study mission (40%) and an individual paper (40%).

Workload: In my opinion, the workload was more than fair for 6 ECTS.

### **Finance – 6 ECTS**

This course is offered only to St. Gallen students and is very similar to the Finance course at the University of St. Gallen. It is a typical HSG course taking place each week with several exercises and guest lectures. The grading is based on one final written exam in the end of the semester. I recommend signing in for the HSG Finance course at the same time in order to get access to more material for the exam preparation.

Workload: The course discusses a lot of different topics, therefore, it is quite demanding but doable.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, I am happy that I participated in the Asia Term 2015. I could learn a lot – not only academically, but also culturally. Of course, it sometimes feels like a regular semester at HSG, because of so many St. Gallen students participating in the programme (this year there were 49 students). However, Singapore offers so many diverse things you can do apart from hanging out with HSG students. What I enjoyed most was the travelling during the semester and the group works together with St. Gallen and SMU students. If you are willing to step out of your comfort zone, you will make a lot of great experiences and friends.