

Exchange Semester at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Singapore



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Study program: School of Computer Science and Engineering (SCSE)



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The city



Singapore is a beautiful city, offering stunning architecture, beautiful temples from various cultures, along with plenty of nature (there's a reason it's called the "Garden City") as well as beaches and parks to relax. If you like it organized and clean like I do, you would probably love Singapore. However, if you prefer a more chaotic environment, it might not be for you—except perhaps in Little India.

In Singapore, three nationalities come together: Chinese, Malay and Indian, and they share the country harmoniously. You can visit Chinese Temples, Hindu temples and celebrate festivals like Chinese New Year, when the whole city is beautifully decorated.

It was amazing to see how considerate people were toward each other—not only respecting other nationalities and cultures, but also supporting others. For example, in public transport, every time an older person or someone who possibly needed a seat got on, several people offered theirs. Many times, the specially marked seats remained free the whole time. Since there are also some European people integrated in the city, I was able to blend in quite easily.

Due to the regulations in the city, there was also no point where I felt unsafe – even when walking alone in the middle of the night.



Chinese New Year (Supertrees)



Hindu Temple

The university



NTU is located in the west of Singapore, approximately one hour from the city center. It has a very huge campus with accommodations, restaurants, food hawkers, shops, three bus routes and (of course) many classrooms and learning hubs. The campus also features impressive architectural buildings like The Hive and The Arc, which are not only great for taking pictures but also for offering a change of perspective for learning. For a first-time visit, it's recommended to look at the [NTU map](#) carefully, as there are many interconnected levels leading to different destinations. Many exchange students struggled to find their very first lecture room.

Courses

As a Master's student, I could choose from a list of courses, which was considerably smaller than the options available to bachelor's students. However, the process of securing the courses you want was much smoother, while bachelor's students had to register for courses with no guarantee of being allocated a spot, as it was done randomly.

Regarding my courses, they were held once a week for three hours, physical attendance was not mandatory but appreciated. The online learning materials were very well organized, every lecture was recorded automatically and could be rewatched throughout the semester. Also, the learning materials/slides were accessible to the students.

Virtual Reality

This course was meant to teach the mathematical version of VR, mostly solving problems using parametric functions. Starting with defining curves, the course progresses with equations for planes, volumes, colours and animations. It was easy to make mistakes, as you only received points for a task if the result was correct—either all or nothing. Every week, I had to complete a 'Tutorial,' where I could earn 1 point if more than 60% of the answers were correct. There were 10 Tutorials in total. Every 3 weeks, I needed to complete a 'Lab,' which could earn me up to 12 points, with 5 Labs in total. The remaining 30 points came from an exam at the end of the semester, which involved completing a task in one hour (and it was pretty tough). Overall, as someone with limited experience in mathematical subjects, I found the course difficult but manageable.

Human Computer Interaction Theory & Practice

The second subject I took was more creative and focused on practical work. The HCI course covered principles, methods, and interaction styles through lectures, tests, and assignments. During the semester, we had two exams and were tasked with creating a low-fidelity prototype, writing a review of another student's work, and developing a high-fidelity prototype. For the prototype, we designed an interface for a kiosk at an amusement park to help visitors plan their activities. Overall, the subject wasn't very difficult for me since I already have a background in design, but it was still a valuable addition to my portfolio.

Accommodation



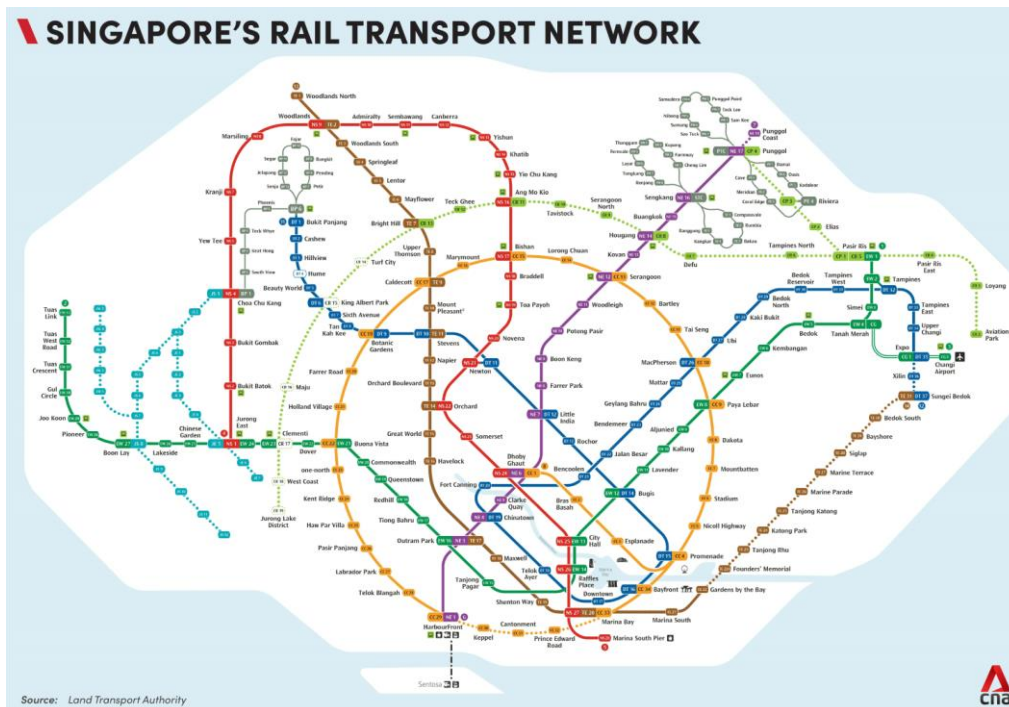
Most students lived on campus in one of the many halls, either alone or with another student. Since living in Singapore is very expensive (especially for short stays like one semester), on-campus accommodation is probably the best option. When I was there, it cost about 300€ per month, depending on whether you had a single or shared room.

Since I did the exchange program during my fourth semester (Master's), I only needed one course, which is why

I looked for an apartment closer to the city center. Due to the extremely high rent prices, my partner (who joined me for three months) and I decided to rent a co-living apartment. We shared the kitchen, washing machine, and dining room with three other people, but we had our own bedroom and bathroom. Those two rooms cost about 3000S\$, which is approximately 2100€ per month.

However, the apartment was in a very quiet area (One North), which is mostly a business district, about one hour from the university and 30 to 40 minutes from the center of Singapore. Within a 10-minute walking distance, there were two food hawkers, a MRT station, and two shopping centers, which is common in most areas of Singapore.

Transportation



Singapore has one of the best public transportation systems I have ever experienced, and I can say that even though I live in Vienna. You can reach almost every part of the city by metro or bus, which is well integrated with Google Maps and easy to navigate. Each bus stop is labeled either A or B, depending on the travel direction, and for even more precise time management, you can track the bus and its arrival time live on the app.

Even faster are the underground trains. Singapore has six MRT lines, connecting most of the city. What can I say? They do everything you could want from public transportation—punctual, fast, and air-conditioned (which you will definitely appreciate after being outside for more than five minutes).

I would recommend buying an EZ-Link card at the airport (not the Tourist Pass!), which costs 10 S\$, of which 5 S\$ is stored value for use. From there, you can also install the SimplyGo app, where you can link the card to see your travel routes, fares, and recharge the card via online payment.

Regardless of whether you're taking the bus or the MRT, you tap the card when entering and tap it again when exiting—that's all there is to it. If you forget to tap when exiting, the maximum fare will be charged (which is about 3 S\$). If you don't have the card with you, you can also pay by credit card, although it was a bit more expensive when I used my Wise account.



Generally, every time you use public transportation, you pay a 1 S\$ fare plus a distance-based fee. When changing lines (i.e., exiting and entering another line), the additional fare is not charged if done within 15 minutes.



It is almost impossible to make a mistake when using public transportation in Singapore, every path is marked, where you should go, where you should stay if you want to get on the train and even the MRT itself show you the way!

To see more of the city, also renting a bike is a valid alternative. There are two Share Bike options (at least when I was there), we used Hello Ride most of the time. Especially riding to the beach and beneath the cost with view to the Marina Bay Sands and the Supertrees is a nice experience. Using those bikes is almost as easy as using the MRT, just scan a QR code with the app and swipe when you're finished.

Shopping

Food



Pineapple Rice (5S\$)



Oyster Omelette (6S\$)



Salmon & Steak Menu (10S\$)

Eating can be either expensive or cheap in Singapore, while restaurants offer very good food at prices comparable to prices in Vienna, Food Hawkers provide a local, inexpensive, and brilliant alternative. Many food stalls are placed next to each other, offering a variety of freshly cooked food for very little money. You can get tasty food starting at 3S\$, which is not only cheap but also diversified because of the cultural differences in this country. I would recommend using the Food Hawkers instead of frozen pizza, since ready meals (except noodles/soups) are proportionally expensive.

Shops

Singapore offers a variety of shopping options, from streets like Orchard Road with brand-name products to the small shops in Chinatown and the numerous malls. Due to the hot weather, Singaporeans love to escape into the sometimes overly air-conditioned shopping malls, many of which are connected underground and lead from one MRT station to another. I sometimes entered one mall and exited at another, walking underground - it's easy to lose your sense of direction in those underground shopping corridors (Google Maps cannot really help you at that point).

Useful Notes or Tips / Remarks

Singapore has many rules to follow, better look them up beforehand. ALWAYS prepare for a monsoon and take an umbrella with you – it can come out of nowhere! Almost everyone from Europe I know got a cold about 1 week after arrival, likely because of the climate change and AC (since I am not used to that) – maybe keep that in mind.

Organize a Sim card before landing in Singapore, if you have one the rest is pretty straightforward – internet is very fast throughout the city (I got mine from Simba – around 10S\$ per month for 100GB).



It is also very easy to visit nearby countries from Singapore within a 2 to 3 hours flight time like Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam... - if you plan in advance, the flights are quite cheap too.

And probably the most important thing **NO LITTERING!**