

Joanne Mak: Chinese University of Hong Kong (Semester 1, 2010)

UQ Program: Bachelor of Business Management/Commerce

For my last semester in my undergraduate degree, I applied to go on exchange to The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). It was by far one of the best decision I have ever made. Being of Hong Kong descent but having grown up in Australia, I have always been interested in experiencing the vibrant Hong Kong lifestyle firsthand. What's more, with Hong Kong being one of Asia's leading business hubs, I found this study abroad to have complemented my major in International Business and was certainly an invaluable opportunity for me to widen my horizons. It was the perfect finale to my degree.

At CUHK, I pursued my interest in learning Putonghua and took on two beginners courses; one focussing on oral skills whilst the other concentrated on the application of vocabulary and grammar. As for my remaining two courses, I selected an economics course '*Economy of Hong Kong*' and an anthropology course '*Chinese Culture and Society*'. This combination of elective courses helped me to expand my knowledge and gain rewarding insights to both Hong Kong and Mainland China. Just a word of advice, the enrolment system at CUHK is fairly different to that of UQ and has not been centralised so make sure you fully understand their process at the beginning or else you could miss out on some of their highly demanded courses. As for obtaining your academic transcript, should you require it urgently, just mention it to your friendly exchange advisor and they should be able to organise something with you.

Throughout the whole semester, I continuously met a number of other fellow exchange students originating from all over the world. Within my college alone, I knew people from the USA, Germany, Singapore, Canada and Sweden. Each college (there are four) organises a wide range of activities for their students to partake in (eg. cooking competition, making Valentine's Day chocolate, carnivals). I opted to share a room with a local student and through my roommate I learnt a lot about their culture and was even directed to many delicious restaurants in the city. Day in day out, you will also no doubt bump into the locals in your hall. They may be shy at first, but definitely do take the initiative to get to know them. It sure made my experience far richer and memorable.

What I loved the most about Hong Kong was that you are guaranteed to never be bored! Whether it is the bars and clubs in Lan Kwai Fong, Central or the shopping malls and street markets in Mongkok, there will always be something to keep you entertained. Being a food lover myself, I looked up and ventured into all kinds of popular restaurants. During the mid-semester break and long weekends, my friends and I also planned mini trips to places like Taiwan, Korea, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Guilin and Yangshou. Additionally at the end of the semester, I took the opportunity to travel around China for three weeks. I was able to visit Beijing, Xi'an, Xuzhou, Hangzhou, Shanghai and Suzhou. The whole exchange experience was absolutely thrilling, unforgettable and has enriched me with life-long memories.

Tips. The semester will fly by faster than you think so definitely try to make the most of your time; use every spare moment to accomplish all that you want to do and visit. Should you ever wish to be pampered, jump on the MTR train and cross the border to Shenzhen, China where you can enjoy all sorts of massages and spa services for a real bargain. *Queens Spa* was a popular location amongst exchange students. If you are a sushi lover, go to *Sushi One* (一壽司) in Mongkok for 50% sushi and sashimi after 10pm every night (the queue starts around 9pm). The desserts at *Tong Pak Fu* (糖百府) are also

a must eat. I highly recommend the guava flavoured fine shaved ice (番石榴雪花冰); absolutely delicious! To find out all the best places to eat in HK, just go to www.openrice.com/english. Lastly, sign-up for the English High Table dinners organised by New Asia and/or Chung Chi colleges. Here you can enjoy a free dinner and simultaneously meet lots of new people (other exchangers, locals and international students alike).



(First on the right) Dim Sum for breakfast at a Dai Pai Dong in Shatin Wai



(Second from the right) At the Ten Thousand Buddhas Monastery in Shatin



(First on the right) At the Nan Lian Garden in Diamond Hill



The Chinese University of Hong Kong