MELISSA
Bachelor of Architectural Design, 2nd Year

COURSES

Architectural Design 3
I enjoyed practicing and building upon the skills I acquired at home and putting them to use in a different context. Working in the studio with them provided me with the chance for collaboration, to share ideas, and see how others undertake the exact same tasks using different methods.

Sustainable Design and the Environment
There was much more reading and textual information to absorb than I have been accustomed to at UQ. Although it may not seem to be particularly appealing to those who absolutely hate studying and reading, it was BY FAR the most valuable out of all the courses I chose.

History of Southeast Asian Architecture
The diverse cultures in Singapore has allowed for this course to become extremely rich, because you can see the building prototypes for yourself without travelling out of the city-state. Weekly readings were overwhelming at first, due to some Hindu and Buddhist terms. (I mean, what on earth is a “Mahaprasada”?) Similar to “History of Western Architecture” at UQ, it allows you to immerse yourself in a completely foreign history.

ACCOMMODATION
I stayed at the Graduates Residence and that allowed me to meet people from other countries, through sharing a common area with 3 flatmates. NUS has created a Facebook group specifically for exchange students and sends heaps of emails regarding the many events social events that are hosted around campus. The accommodation I stayed at was in U-town – a vibrant place that is supposedly off campus, but seems more like a “UQ courtyard” and “Food court” placed off campus through sharing a common area with 3 flatmates.

THINGS I LEARNT THE HARD WAY:

Understanding Singaporians:
Singaporians have a completely different set of vocabulary they call “Singlish”:
- To “bon” class means to skip class
- When my friends went to Starbucks without asking one of the other guys, he asked “Bo jio” (sounds like “bor jor”), meaning “Why wasn’t I invited?” or “Why didn’t you ask me to go?”
- Usually if you ask a local if they can help you do something, instead of saying “Yeah, sure” or “Ok”, they say “Can!” (sometimes more than once)

There are more, but I find those are the most commonly used.

Transport and Where to Buy Essential Items:
- The free campus buses usually allowed me to get to places much faster than by foot, but they were extremely packed during the afternoon (close to lunchtime).
- Buy an “ez-link card” when you get to Singapore! It is the equivalent of a go-card in Brisbane.
- I bought groceries from a shopping mall about 10 minutes bus ride away called Clementi Mall. The walk to the bus stop can be quite hot and sunny during midday, so go in the late afternoon. The shops open to a later hour than in Australia, so do no worry about them closing at 6!
- Instead of Woolworths and Coles, the Singapore people buy their international groceries from “Fairprice” (or the pricier “Cold Storage”). However, streetside markets at Clementi sell cheap goods. Stationery and personal hygiene items are all much cheaper when bought from these street stores than in the shopping complex.

Discounts:
- Although I did not use them, my friends enjoyed using “Groupon”, vouchers you obtain through a website that you can get discounts at various stores with
- “Hawker Centres” are basically food courts where very cheap local foods can be enjoyed, so make sure you try the food there!