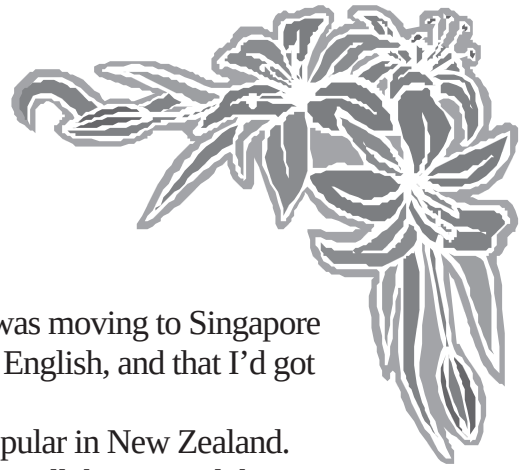


Thoughts



My friends thought I was crazy when I told them I was moving to Singapore for University – until they heard that classes were taught in English, and that I'd got a full scholarship.

Student loans are both very common and very unpopular in New Zealand. They still do think I'm a bit crazy, especially when I tell them all the unusual things about NUS and being in Singapore. No one will believe that NUS is an alcohol-free campus, as the students' pub is the center of most of the universities back home.

Also they don't understand that the only vegetable I ate all first semester I couldn't name, because my hall-mates told me it had no name in. However, they were incredibly jealous when I posted back photos of my mid-semester break in sunny Bintan, right in the middle of the New Zealand winter.

After being here just over one year, I've certainly found NUS different from what I expected university to be like back home. For a start, A-level Maths is probably equivalent to our first-year university maths, and trying to catch that up while being heaped with new work all the time definitely isn't easy!

Everyone seems to work much longer hours here than at home – kiasuism doesn't seem to have reached New Zealand yet. At home they're lucky enough not to have a CAP system, so only your final two years of university count towards your honors class. For me, the long nights studying have always been compensated for by the midnight suppers at the Prata place behind Eusoff Hall.

Being in Singapore has been a great experience. Eternal summer is the dream of most New Zealanders, so whenever I feel homesick I go for a swim, which makes me really glad to be here. If I'd never come here I would never have eaten prata, and more importantly, got to meet so many different people with a completely different outlook on life.

The only time I wish I'd gone home is when the conversation switches to Chinese – I end up feeling a bit isolated, and more than a little ignorant for only being able to speak one language. I read somewhere that if you don't speak Chinese by the time you're three you'll never be able to speak it properly because your ear isn't sensitive enough. So there's no point telling me to learn it cause I can't!

Well it's cool to be here – hopefully I'll get to know more of you in the next two and a half years, minus my one semester skiing trip (oops, I mean student exchange), to Calgary, Canada.

Cheers,
Tessa

