

STUDYING ABROAD SUSTAINABLY *in* SINGAPORE



QUICK TIPS

- Gain insight.
- Observe innovations.
- Bring your own straw.
- Spend consciously.
- Support local business.



PRELIMINARY NOTES:

Hi! We are the Singapore Squad who all studied abroad at the National University of Singapore in the spring semester of 2019. Linda is a Computer Science (MBB) concentrator, Karen is a Statistics concentrator with a secondary in East Asian Studies, and Ethan is a Computer Science concentrator with a secondary in Statistics. From its expansive and effective public transportation system (way better than the T in Boston)

to its beautiful sprawling gardens, we were honestly all very impressed with Singapore's great efforts in being a global leader in sustainability. For good reason, the country has been named "Asia's Greenest City" and we hope that through our experience can provide some valuable insight into how this wonderful country is paving the way for a more sustainable future.

MAJOR SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES:

SUSTAINABILITY @ NUS



The Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum on campus.

While we were at NUS, they installed "Smart Shower Heads" on campus that would change color from green to yellow and finally to a flashing red (that was honestly quite annoying) when the water usage for the shower exceeded predetermined limits.

Electric scooters were a new initiative on campus as well while we attended the university. They were an eco-friendly alternative to the bus system on campus, and were also fun to ride. Make sure to be safe!

The food stalls at NUS all agreed not to provide straws for drinks! So, you could either bring your own reusable straw, or just drink out of the cup directly.

"Green buildings" such as the one in the picture above were being built to further NUS's efforts in sustainability.

SUSTAINABILITY IN SINGAPORE



Gardens by the Bay, Cloud Forest

We were surprised by how environmentally friendly Singapore was; the country is very much a leader in this aspect in the Southeast Asia region.¹ Gardens by the Bay is a flagship example of this, as it waters its entire greenhouse system with collected rain and powers its supertrees with solar energy.

¹ https://e360.yale.edu/features/singapore_takes_the_lead_in_green_building_in_asia

Not only is Singapore leading the world in architecture, but it is also paving the way for sustainability to be interwoven into this. For example, many buildings are doubling as hosts for a variety of greenery, whether that be green roofs or a vertical garden, such as CapitaGreen's new building that also harvests rainwater and runoff. In general, the country impressed us a lot with their focus on environmental impact—the prime minister specifically set a 'Greening Programme' and vision for the country to be a 'city in a garden,' and this was reflected in the lush greenery all around us. The only caveat with this was that, at times, it did feel a little weird because so much of the nature was 'artificial,' such as the forests and even beaches being all man-made, but it was very inspiring to see how the government was reconciling its fast growth with a sustainable future.



The Nanyang Technological University's green roof

SUSTAINABILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

While studying abroad in Singapore, we had the opportunity to travel to a majority of the countries in Southeast Asia. While in some countries, we found it difficult to practice traditional sustainability habits such as using refillable water bottles or choosing eco-friendly modes of transport; however, backpackers

and travellers in Southeast Asia can still keep many tips in mind as they travel through the region:

THERE ARE COUNTRIES AND CITIES THAT PRACTICE SUSTAINABILITY MORE THAN OTHERS.

Bali, Indonesia—There has been significant progress in reducing plastic waste. Many cafes have opted for metal or paper straws, demonstrating a commitment to the goal of reducing single-use plastic.

Thailand—Reusing water bottles is a common practice and some stores will even collect bottles for recycling.²

BE AWARE OF WHERE YOUR MONEY IS GOING.

Ecotourism: Don't ride the elephants! Do not support tours or companies that allow elephant riding. Elephants in riding camps are abused, whipped, and worked tirelessly. There are elephant sanctuaries all around Southeast Asia that allow tourists to interact with elephants in their natural setting. These shelters continue to rescue elephants from riding camps. If you are thinking about supporting elephants, the shelters are the way to go!

Support local businesses!—This ensures that the maximum amount of money that you spend goes back to the local economy rather than multinational or Western brands.

Don't buy things from street children—it fuels the poverty cycle!—Parents will keep their children out of school if they find that it is effective for them to be in the streets selling food or souvenirs.

² www.madmonkeyhostels.com/h2o_blog/5-easy-ways-engage-sustainable-travel-southeast-asia/

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