

Treasure Hunt in Singapore

Waseda University

It's been two weeks since the Social Innovation Forum in Singapore, but it's still like a dream that I had yesterday. Too many things experienced and learnt, 4 days in Singapore was like 4 months. Please allow me to take you to this treasure hunt tour in Singapore through this photo journal.

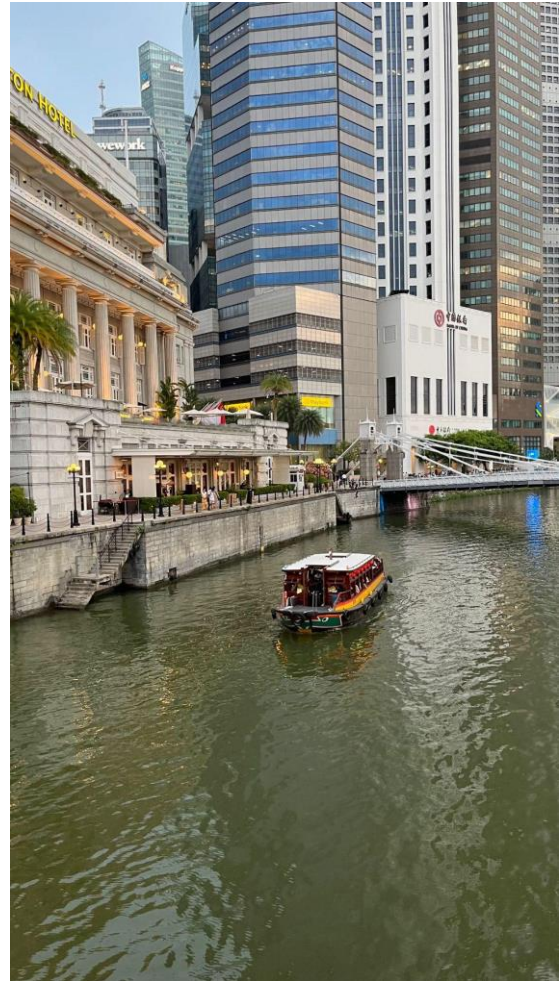


Day 1

After meeting with students from PKU, KU and NTU, we were separated into groups. Each group consisted of students from all of the four universities. Guided by an NTU student, we started our journey with an NTU campus tour. I was amazed at the fact that most NTU buildings are carbon-emission free. Besides, the campus has been beautifully landscaped with greenery, giving students a good learning environment.

Subsequently, we went on a “Treasure Hunt Tour” around Singapore. Though we needed to follow the designated route of Katong→Raffles→Jurong, it was up to us to decide which places or restaurants to travel to. Hence, different groups had various experiences. In addition, we were not just traveling around; Before the tour, we were given the task of finding social innovation and how different cultures coexist in Singapore. With this task, I managed to discern intriguing things that I would have never noticed if it were just a normal trip. It made my trip much more colorful and meaningful. One of the interesting places that we went to was the food court (or stalk center). In it there were a lot of stalls selling foods from different cultures, which surrounded a center dispersed with tables. People could get any kind of food they wanted and share it around the table. I suppose that it's a typical feature of Singapore culture, where various cultures were mixing together. It provides a perfect platform for residents from different ethnicities to experience food from other ethnicities. Once they accept 'visible cultures' like food from other cultures, it's more likely for them to embrace, or at least respect others' 'invisible cultures' (cultures concerning mindset). Hence, I would argue that it can help avoid contradiction among cultures to a large extent.





The other unforgettable scene was the view along the Singapore river. As it is shown in the picture, there was an amazing mixture of different cultures: A Malayan-style boat floating on the river, China bank adjacent to a traditional European-style hotel, some modernized buildings scattered along the river... I was amazed by the harmonious blending of different cultures. Discussing with other group members on the way back home, we came up with the idea that such successful mixture was probably due to the fact that Singapore does not have a ‘local culture’ or dominant culture. Unlike other countries with local cultures, which may form cultural exclusion with the intention of protecting their own cultures, Singapore doesn’t need to accustom different cultures to ‘local culture’; Thus it tends to keep those cultures as they are originally and respect the essence of them.

Day 2

On the second day, we were happy to listen to four lectures given by professors from KU, PKU, NTU and Waseda. The lectures covered topics like international relations, conflict resolution, cultural identity and so on. It was such a unique experience to receive teaching in different styles within one day. After each lecture, we were assigned questions related to it and discussed them in groups. Through these discussions, we were enlightened to hear opinions from different perspectives and had a better understanding of knowledge taught in lectures. After discussion, each group had one representative to demonstrate the group's effort. I became one of them and it trained my capability of generalization and expression.

Aside from that, we also made presentations in groups to report about what we learnt during the Treasure Hunt Tour on Day 1. Since our schedule was rather tight, it was indeed a big challenge for us to present without enough preparation. Thankfully, the presentation went smoothly and we were surprised to find that different groups' experiences varied and hence our findings were quite different. As a result, we were also able to learn about other areas that we hadn't noticed.



Day 3

After the exhausting day 2, we had a Heritage Tour on day 3. NTU invited two local guides who led us to different cultural districts including Kampong Glam, Little India and Chinatown. Traveling in these districts was like traveling to different countries. We were able to see traditional architecture and eat traditional foods there. During the tour, they also told us about the history of Singapore so that we got to learn more about the country.



The afternoon was our free time. Instead of going to internet-famous spots as I planned, I was invited by a student from KU and a student from NTU, who are friends that I made during Social Innovation Forum, to visit National Museum of Singapore. This museum tour was like experiencing the entire history of Singapore. It was such precious memory that we often stood in front of one period of history and discussed it from three countries' perspectives (China, Korea and Singapore) I was surprised to find that by hearing information from different sources, we could shed prejudice formed previously.

Day 4

On the last day, we had a brief lecture by Professor Koyama. We listened to presentations by students who had joined the exchange program in Campus Aisa, sharing their experiences and fun things they had during their stay in universities they went to. We also discussed how we could promote Campus Aisa so that more excellent students

(especially the method to attract non-English-speaking students) could join us. By discussing, we came up with many innovative ideas. Following that, we said farewell to each other. Though only 4 days together, we had developed a deep friendship with each other and we all hoped to see each other again in the future.



In a nutshell, it was such an unforgettable experience of joining Social Innovation Forum held by Campus Asia Program. Every minute in Singapore was like hunting treasures. Through these 4 days, not only had I learnt about Singapore thoroughly, but also I felt so lucky to have this opportunity to meet excellent students from different countries, from whom I gained a lot of knowledge that I didn't have the chance to learn in university classes. I was also more aware of the importance of intercultural communication, as it made me less biased and consider things more holistically. If you are still hesitating whether to join us or not, come and you will find that it's more terrific than you have imagined!