Queen Mary Expedition Fund Award- Singapore

By Caroline Olabisi

This summer, I was given the unique opportunity to undertake a research project at Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) in Singapore. A last minute application acceptance meant I was able to travel with a friend from my course. The trip got off to a rocky start as when we arrived at Changi Airport after a 14 hour flight, we found our luggage had been lost. We were compensated by Cathay Pacific airlines and made our way to our NYP apartment, where luckily our luggage turned up a few hours later. The jet lag and humidity meant I spent my first few hours in this vibrant country asleep. It was much needed though as we were told our project working hours would be from 8:30am to 6:00pm (with the exception of Friday when we finished at 5:30!)

The next day was time to explore the scenery. A wrong turn landed us on the roof of a shopping mall which gave us a breathtaking and unbelievable view of the Singapore skyline.

![Singapore Skyline](image)

I was in awe of this small country. I had heard it was the size of London but I did not expect it to resemble London so much. The transport system is very similar to the TFL Tube, but better. Singaporeans benefit from more spacious carriages equipped with air conditioning and fully functional mobile phone signal.

The next day was Monday and time to start work in the labs. The working culture of Singapore was the most difficult thing to get used to. I was required to be in the lab during working hours regardless of if I had any experiments to conduct or not. This is obviously not the case in universities in the UK and many of the other students sat on Facebook or slept
on slow days. Despite this, I really enjoyed my project and it has defiantly given me a strong advantage in carrying out my dissertation. My supervisors were amazing and made sure I got the most out of this experience.

A Singaporean friend from Queen Mary was in the country visiting family and informed me of the Ladies Nights that take place across the country on Wednesdays. These nights included free entry and free drinks into top clubs and bars all night. This was handy as Singapore has a heavy sin tax on alcohol and is already an expensive country compared to its neighbours in Asia.

I also made quite a few friends in the lab who invited me to various events such as cinema trips, barbeques on the beach, karaoke and even Eid celebrations. I found the students to be quite shy at first but eventually they opened up and I made some really good friends.

My project lasted nine weeks and although Singapore is a remarkable country it is limited in size and things to do. The main pastimes are eating and shopping which I fully indulged in. The busy Orchard Road, Haji Lane and Bugis were my favourite places and were equivalent to Oxford Street, Brick Lane and Camden. Like I mentioned before I found Singapore to be a city very similar to London.

Food in Singapore is very cheap as the best most authentic food can be found in Hawker centres and food courts. My friend and I took this opportunity to explore the best hawker centres with only the occasional trip to McDonalds or Nandos.

We were able to explore Malaysia a little towards the end of our trip which bought a fresh perspective to an Asian country. The journey from Singapore to Malaysia by bus was quick, easy and extremely cheap.

I really enjoyed my trip and this was an amazing life experience. It has further fuelled my passion for travel and discovering new places. I am sincerely grateful to the Expedition Fund for helping me fund this trip.