

PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

The activity will be held at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, Institute of Advanced Studies at NTU (see: <http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ias/>), at Yunan Campus (for directions to IAS at NTU, please refer to:

http://www3.ntu.edu.sg/oad2/website_files/NTU%20Map_2010.pdf

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is a research-intensive university with globally acknowledged strengths in science and engineering. The university has roots that go back to 1955 when Nanyang University was set up. Today, NTU has four colleges with 12 schools, and four autonomous entities, the National Institute of Education, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Earth Observatory of Singapore, and Singapore Centre on Environmental Life Sciences Engineering. NTU provides a high-quality global education to more than 33,500 undergraduate and postgraduate students. The student body includes top scholars and international olympiad medallists from the region and beyond.

The Lecture Hall at the Nanyang Executive Center where the school will be held will be equipped with white boards and projectors.

ACTIVITY UPDATINGS

Additional information, Programme, etc, will appear on <http://agenda.ictp.it/smr.php?2504>.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Ms Chris Ong Lay Hiong

Institute of Advanced Studies at NTU,

Nanyang Technological University,

Nanyang Executive Centre #02-18 60 Nanyang View Singapore 639673

Tel: +656790 6491

Fax: +6567944941

Email: ChrisOng@ntu.edu.sg

VACCINATIONS

Visitors from countries with a high incidence of yellow fever will need to show immunization records on arrival. Health care in Singapore is excellent, but also very expensive; health insurance is recommended. For entry into Singapore a valid yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers (over one year of age) who, within the preceding six days, have been in or have passed through any country where yellow fever is endemic (most tropical African and South American countries - please see <http://www.ica.gov.sg/page.aspx?pageid=95&secid=94> for details).

TIME ZONE

GMT + 8 hour.

CURRENCY

The unit of currency is the Singapore dollar, locally referred to as the 'singdollar', which is made up of 100 cents. Singapore uses 5¢, 10¢, 20¢, 50¢ and \$1 coins, while notes come in denominations of \$2, \$5, \$10, \$50, \$100, \$500 and \$1000. Singapore also has a \$10, 000 note - not that you'll see many. The Singapore dollar is, not surprisingly, a highly stable and freely convertible currency.

Currency Exchange

Local transaction will typically be done in Singapore dollars. Banks can be found all over the city. Exchange rates tend to vary from bank to bank and some even have a service charge on each exchange transaction - this is usually \$2 to \$3, but can be more, so ask first. Most banks are open from 9.30am to 3pm Monday to Friday, and to 11.30am Saturday.

Moneychangers do not charge fees, so you will often get a better overall exchange rate for cash and travellers cheques with them than at the banks. You'll find moneychangers in just about every shopping centre in Singapore. Most shops accept foreign cash and travellers cheques at a slightly lower rate than you'd get from a moneychanger.

Credit/Debit Cards and ATMs

Most ATMs will accept Visa, MasterCard and cards with Plus or Cirrus. ATMs can be found in most large shopping centres and MRT stations.

Visa & MasterCard.

Visa is accepted at most ATM. All major banks have ATM available.

Banking Hours

9.30am to 3pm Monday to Friday

Tipping

Tipping is not usual in Singapore. The most expensive hotels and restaurants have a 10% service charge, in which case tipping is discouraged.

LANGUAGES

Throughout Singapore the official language is English.

VOLTAGE, TELEPHONE AND INTERNET

Electricity

Singapore uses the British BS1363 three-pin rectangular socket (230V/50Hz). Plug adaptors are available at any hardware store. To use a 110/120 volt appliance (U.S. appliance) where there is only 220/240 power available, you must use a step down or combination converter.

Dual Voltage Appliances are recommended. They are designed to work with both 110/120 or 220/240 volt electricity and tend to work better than using a converter with an existing appliance.

Telephone

Singapore country code is +65

Internet

Wireless Internet is available throughout the University Campus.

PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

It is advisable to carry some form of identification at all times (either a residence permit or a certified copy of your passport).

TRANSPORTATION

Cars

A car is not necessary in Singapore as there is an excellent public transportation system. If you decide on using a car, rentals can be obtained from any of the international firms, or from local car hire firms. You will need both a national and international license. The law requires driving on the left side of the road and wearing a seat belt. Parking is expensive in the city.

Taxis

Taxis can be hailed from the street or, for an additional cost, called on the telephone. Taxi drivers are not given tips.

Trains

Singapore's Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system is a new, clean and easy way to travel. The train consists of two main lines that run north-south and east-west. Coin-operated ticket-dispensing machines are located inside the main doors at each station. Money-changing machines for changing paper money to coins are located opposite the ticket machines. Enter the platform through the gates marked with green arrows. There the ticket is inserted, arrow first (and facing up). The machine will open the gate and return the ticket. The same procedure is followed at the destination, except that the ticket will not be returned.

Buses

There are two types of buses in Singapore: the Singapore Bus Service and the Trans-Island Bus Service. You can purchase a Singapore Explorer ticket that will allow you to travel anywhere for up to three days. The ticket comes with a useful map with details on major tourist destinations and which service to use to get there. For more information, pick up the "See Singapore by Bus" pamphlet from the STPB (Singapore Tourist Promotion Board) in Raffles City.

Ships and Ferries

Ferry and water taxi services depart from Cliff Pier, Jardine Steps and the World Trade Centre for travel to Singapore's outlying islands.

Bukit-Panjang LRT (LRT)

This automated elevated people mover line started operation on 6 Nov 1999 and connects the MRT station at Choa-Chu-Kang with the new town of Bukit Panjang. Service is provided on a double track loop line every 6 minutes (2-4 minutes during rush hours) from 5:00 to 1:00. The lines are operated by SMRT (Subway operator).

Apart from station names shown in English, stations are also numbered. Between City Hall (C2) and Raffles Place (C1) there are four tracks, both stations allow comfortable transfer between lines on the same platform, City Hall in direction north/east and Raffles Place south/west. Trains operate 5:30am - 12:30am.

Airport

Changi Airport in Singapore is 10 miles (6km) from the city center and is accessible by shuttle, bus and taxi.

Its two terminals, connected by the Skytrain monorail, are modern, efficient and air-conditioned. The airport boasts a 24-hr post office and telephone service, hotel reservations counters, day rooms, saunas, and business and internet centres. There's also a McDonald's, a Swenson's ice cream parlour and, in Terminal One's basement, a food court.

However, there isn't usually enough time to take advantage of these many amenities. Baggage comes through so quickly at Changi that you can be on a bus or in a taxi within fifteen minutes of arrival. Be sure to pick up one of the free maps and weekly "What's On" guides that the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (STPB) leaves at the airport.

Bus departure points in the basements of both terminals are well marked, but make sure you have got the right change before you leave the concourse, as Singapore bus drivers don't give change. Take the #16 bus (every 10min, 6am-midnight; S\$1.10-1.40).

Taxis from the airport levy a S\$3 surcharge on top of the fare. Again, pick-up points are well marked: a trip into downtown Singapore costs around \$15 and takes twenty minutes. There are also car rental agencies at the airport, though you'd be advised not to travel around Singapore by car.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Singapore is clean, orderly, safe and people are polite and helpful. Food and Water are safe everywhere. However, you are advised to be careful with your valuables in crowded places.

SIGHTSEEING

Singapore is a city-state founded in 1819 as a British colony. It is a modern city with many skyscrapers, a microcosm of Asia populated with Chinese, Malay, Indian and a significant group of foreign workers and expatriates from all over the world as well as a melting pot of cuisine from all over the world.

Sights in Singapore are covered in more detail under the various districts. Broadly speaking:

- Beaches and tourist resorts: Head to one of the three beaches on Sentosa or its southern islands. Other beaches can be found on the East Coast.
- Culture and cuisine: See Chinatown for Chinese treats, Little India for Indian flavours, Kampong Glam (Arab St) for a Malay/Arab experience or the East Coast for delicious seafood, including the famous chilli and black pepper crab.

- History and museums: The Bras Basah area east of Orchard and north of the Singapore River is Singapore's colonial core, with historical buildings and museums.
- Nature and wildlife: Popular tourist attractions Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, Jurong Bird Park and the Botanical Gardens are all in the North and West. Finding "real" nature is a little harder, but the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve (located in the same district as the zoo) has more plant species than that in the whole of North America. Pulau Ubin, an island off the Changi Village in the east, is a flashback to the rural Singapore of yesteryear. City parks full of locals jogging or doing tai chi can be found everywhere. Also check out the tortoise and turtle sanctuary in the Chinese Gardens on the west side of town for a great afternoon with these wonderful creatures. \$5 for adult admission and \$2 for leafy vegetables and food pellets.
- Skyscrapers and shopping: The heaviest shopping mall concentration is in Orchard Road, while skyscrapers are clustered around the Singapore River, but also check out Bugis and Marina Bay to see where Singaporeans shop.
- Places of worship: Don't miss this aspect of Singapore, where Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Baha'i faith, Christianity, Islam and even Judaism all exist in sizeable numbers. Religious sites can be easily visited and welcome non-followers outside of service times. Particularly worth visiting include: the vast Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery near Ang Mo Kio, the colourful Sri Mariamman Hindu temple in Chinatown, the psychedelic Burmese Buddhist Temple in Balestier and the stately Masjid Sultan in Arab Street.

Check out: <http://www.yoursingapore.com/content/traveller/en/experience.html> or <http://wikitravel.org/en/Singapore>

WEATHER

As Singapore is located a mere 1.5 degrees north of the Equator, its weather is usually sunny with no distinct seasons. Rain falls almost daily throughout the year, usually in sudden, heavy showers that rarely last longer than an hour. However, most rainfall occurs during the north east monsoon (November to January), occasionally featuring lengthy spells of continuous rain. Spectacular thunderstorms can occur throughout the year, any time during the day, so it's wise to carry an umbrella at all times, both as a shade from the sun or cover from the rain.

The temperature averages around:

- 32°C (86°F) daytime, 25°C (76°F) at night in December and January.
- 33°C (92°F) daytime, 26°C (81°F) at night for the rest of the year.

The high temperature and humidity, combined with the lack of wind and the fact that temperatures stay high during the night, can take its toll on visitors from colder parts of the world. Bear in mind that spending more than about one hour outdoors can be very exhausting, especially if combined with moderate exercise. Singaporeans themselves shun the heat, and for a good reason. Many live in air-conditioned flats, work in air-conditioned offices, take the air-conditioned metro to air-conditioned shopping malls connected to each other by underground tunnels where they shop, eat, and exercise in air-conditioned fitness clubs. Follow their example if you want to avoid discomfort in the searing heat and humidity of Singapore.

EATING in SINGAPORE

Singapore is a melting pot of cuisines from around the world, and many Singaporeans are obsessive gourmands who love to makan ("eat" in Malay). You will find quality Chinese, Malay, Indian, Japanese, Thai, Italian, French, American and other food in this city-state.

Eating habits run the gamut, but most foods are eaten by fork and spoon: push and cut with the fork in the left hand, and eat with the spoon in the right. Noodles and Chinese dishes typically come with chopsticks, while Malay and Indian food can be eaten by hand, but nobody will blink an eye if you ask for a fork and spoon instead. If eating by hand, always use your right hand to pick your food, as Malays and Indians traditionally use their left hand to handle dirty things. Take note of the usual traditional Chinese etiquette when using chopsticks, and most importantly, do not stick your chopsticks vertically into a bowl of rice. If eating in a group, serving dishes are always shared, but you'll get your own bowl of rice and soup. It's common to use your own chopsticks to pick up food from communal plates, but serving spoons can be provided on request.

SHOPPING

Shopping is second only to eating as a national pastime, which means that Singapore has an abundance of shopping malls, and low taxes and tariffs on imports coupled with huge volume mean that prices are usually very competitive. While you won't find any bazaars with dirt-cheap local handicrafts (in fact, virtually everything sold in Singapore is made elsewhere), goods are generally of reasonably good quality and shopkeepers are generally quite honest due to strong consumer protection laws. Most shops are open 7 days a week from 10AM-10PM, although smaller operations (particularly those outside shopping malls) close earlier — 7PM is common — and perhaps on Sundays as well. Mustafa in Little India is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We hope you will enjoy your stay!