

## Premier's One World Scholarship 2013: Experience Report



I arrived in Singapore at 6 a.m. on a Thursday, entirely jetlagged after a cross-Pacific journey, a cancelled flight, and an unexpected overnight layover in Hong Kong. As the descent began, Jake Bugg music filled my ears, with exceptionally relevant lyrics: “Fill my head with the future/ fill my eyes with the sky/ the whole of my life being left behind/ but I’ve never felt more alive.” Touchdown. Though all I could think about was sleep, I instead had to navigate my way to the National University of Singapore to check into my residence building, shower, and determine out how to find the separate law faculty campus for a mandatory exchange student luncheon. Little did I know, within my first 48 hours in Singapore, I would spend time touring Singapore with local law students who would become close friends; have a crash course on the etiquette of eating at “hawker centres” (Singapore’s famous outdoor food markets, where a tissue on the table means the spot is reserved); navigate public transit; eat Chinese food in a basement with Singaporean law students who wanted the North American and European students to have “real Chinese food”; see the light show at the famous Marina Bay Sands buildings; explore Little India and Chinatown; try the infamous, potent durian, which is so widely enjoyed in South East Asia (yet banned from most public buildings and transportation); and meet incredible international friends with whom I would explore Malaysian Borneo, Vietnam, Laos, Indonesia, Cambodia and Myanmar.

I studied law at the National University of Singapore from January to May of 2014. Singapore: the land where everything is exorbitantly expensive with the exception of incredible food from hawker centres. The most direct impact of this scholarship was that it enabled me to partake in this exchange semester. I could never have afforded to live in Singapore otherwise. It's hard to capture in writing exactly what I would have missed had I not studied in Singapore.



The classroom experience was exceptionally different from my first year and a half of law school in Canada. Instead of one, 100% final at the end of a term, most of my classes in Singapore required papers, presentations and participation. My courses were fascinating—from studying the legal aspects of global social movements to comparative freedom of speech laws, my interest in international and human rights laws were both affirmed and invigorated. Further, the classrooms were more diverse than any educational institution I have attended. In my Public International Law lecture, there were students from Singapore, India, China, Malaysia, Canada, the US, Switzerland, England, Australia, and Nigeria. This led to an incredible sharing of the variance across global legal systems, but also anecdotal stories about how the legal system shapes and impacts the experiences of locals in those countries. A discussion about whether flag burning should be protected as free speech invoked passionate and diverse debates from students in countries where the symbolism of their flag had varying meanings. As I learned more about legal systems and cultures around the world, I was in turn able to share aspects of Canada's legal system and culture with fellow students. I even made Nanaimo Bars to share with my new international classmates, as none of them had heard of this sweet treat of British Columbian origin.

As many of my classes focused on regional and international law, my studies became directly applicable through travel. For example, haze has been a huge issue in Singapore in the past years. In Public International Law, we learned about Singapore's recently passed law which criminalizes the creation of extra-territorial smoke that originates in another country and then crosses into Singapore's territory. The smoke largely comes from the burning of palm fields in Borneo. On one of my trips, I travelled to Malaysian Borneo. As we flew over the island, we could see the burning palm fields

from the plane. We also felt first hand the impacts of the burning on air quality both in Singapore and Borneo. These experiences led to lively discussions with my classmates about the ability of a country to control the actions of non-citizens who live extra-territorially.

My travels also brought to life past experiences I have had. During my undergraduate degree, I interned for the Nobel Women's Initiative in Ottawa. This NGO, comprised of female Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, seeks to create peace through justice and equality. During my internship, the organization sent a delegation of female Nobel Peace Prize Laureates to the Thai-Myanmar border. I became engaged with issues of the persecution of political protesters in Myanmar, and was in contact with local NGOs about this issue. During my exchange term, I was able to spend time travelling in Myanmar and learning more about the political situation on the ground. This was, without question, the most impacting experience of my trip.



I have now returned to the University of Victoria for my final year of law school. After completing my J.D., I will clerk at the Federal Court of Canada for one year. Beyond that, I have my eyes set on The Hague. I want to work in the field of international law and stay true to my reasons for entering law school. My experiences on exchange have absolutely refuelled me for the work that comes ahead.

During my exchange term, I learned more about a field of law in which I wish to base my career. I climbed mountains and volcanoes. I explored ancient temples of the Pagan dynasty by bike. I hiked through rice paddies in Northern Vietnam. I met people entering the legal profession in countries from most of the continents in the world. I watched the Canadian men's Olympic hockey team win a gold medal from a pub in Laos filled with Canadians. I celebrated Chinese New Year in Kuala Lumpur, became a regular at a food stall at a hawker centre in Little India, and smiled through daily language barriers. I reaffirmed for myself why I am in the legal profession. The only way this was possible was because of the generosity of strangers. I hope that through this report, my gratitude for being selected for a Premier's One World Scholarship is evident. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

With gratitude,

Victoria More