

Exchange Experience – Hong Kong

1. Visa and Health Insurance

- I applied for my visa through the international exchange office at HKU. It was simple and not too costly.
- As a McGill student, you already qualify for travel insurance that is paid by your student fees. You just have to contact the SSMU insurance company.

2. Cost of Living

- Hong Kong can be expensive, although there are also many less costly options within the city.
- Hong Kong is considerably cheaper than Canada, unless you spend all of your money on travelling to nearby places, which is easy to do!
- Transportation by bus from campus to popular areas is about HKD \$6-12, and there are at least a dozen buses that pass by the university every couple of minutes.

3. Location of institution & housing (including suggestions on effective ways to find housing on site)

- The University will send application form for student housing and will then assign each student to a dorm. If you are interested in finding off-campus housing, I suggest simply using the Internet.
- There is student housing that is extremely inexpensive. The only downside to this housing is that it is a bit far from the restaurants and bars, as well as the main campus; however public transportation is incredibly efficient and very cheap.
- Although you will probably have to share a room since there are very few single rooms, it is very very affordable and convenient and as residences go, this one is quite nice and comfortable. Living in res is also a good way to meet local students.

4. Academic program (selection of courses, workload, etc.)

- There is a large selection of courses, and I was able to attend a few before I made my final selection. The administration was helpful in this process, and the add/drop period is a great time to alter your schedule according to what classes are most pertinent.
- Be prepared for more in-semester work than at McGill such as group projects and presentations.
- The topics were fascinating, because some of the profs were really quite excellent (including a Chinese professor who was trained both in the Mainland, the US and Canada, and a visiting professor from Harvard).

5. Any particularities or peculiarities of your destination

- If you are a vegetarian, you may have difficulty finding Cantonese options, but there is a huge amount of alternative restaurants, groceries stores, and health food stores.
- Most capitalist ("economically free") place in the world. As a result, it is also the shopping capital of the world. Almost everything is tax-free. Most people buy electronics (cameras, cell phones).

6. Suggestions of items to bring

- You can basically get everything you need in Hong Kong. However, while this may sound really strange, it is almost impossible to find deodorant in Hong Kong. Bring enough to last the 4 months on exchange.

- Bring bed sheets if you are living in residence - it is expensive to buy them and worth the space in your luggage.
- An empty suitcase, because undoubtedly you will want to buy stuff.

7. Personal and academic benefits from participating in the program

- I strongly suggest attending a number of courses before making a final course selection. This will allow you to see the very different styles of teaching and curriculum, thereby allowing you to gauge what will provide the optimal academic benefits.
- It was a really great travelling experience so from an adventure standpoint I would really recommend it, and it is a great chance to live in a real international city.
- You might also want to consider spending the summer in Asia – I was able to find an internship in Thailand, something I would never have dreamed of when I was in Canada!

8. Other comments, suggestions, etc. (is there anything you wish you had known in advance?)

- You can sort out the registration for courses once you arrive (at least in the law faculty) so don't worry too much if it is not sorted before you leave for Hong Kong.
- Definitely open an HSBC account in Canada before you leave, because you can make unlimited withdrawals from A TMs in Hong Kong with no extra banking fees.
- Make sure you have plenty of empty pages in your passport – Hong Kong is a travel hub (though most cheap flights leave from Macau), and the stamp that you get each time you enter Hong Kong takes up a lot of space.