

THE BUFFALO HORN

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the travel issue





So, where are you off to next?

Hmmm... Australia two years from now. However, my husband and I are thinking of traveling somewhere else during Christmas! Both of us would love to spend Christmas in the Middle East; This is usually when nobody goes overseas during that period. Last year, we left for Israel on the Eve and spent Christmas night in Paris, which was wonderful! Interestingly, when we were in the Middle East, no one was celebrating Christmas, as though it was just another day. It felt so unique!



A final question! What advice would you give students who are saving up to travel?

That's a great question! When I was in graduate school, I was making very little money. My husband and I wanted to pay for our own wedding and our month-long honeymoon. In order to save money, we decided to stop eating out. If anyone of us recommended to eat out, we would call the other out, and place the money we would otherwise spend into our savings.

If we had to make an exception, we would go somewhere inexpensive and share a meal. That would mean \$15 saved, and the other \$5 into food. Being thrifty this way turned it into a game, and I personally feel this will help motivate you into saving more money.

Tales of Deception

Words by Sng Ler Jun

For many college students, Summer is a time to let loose and relax. In SIM-UB, the hustle continues as most undergraduates begin embarking on a 12-week short semester. Intensive (and disheartening) as it may seem, SIM-UB's Summer semester is nothing short of fun.

In Summer '18, Professor Zachary Carr was one of the many guest lecturers who left the UB main campus for Singapore to teach. For those who were taught under him, many would agree that Professor Zachary is a man of many things: a doctoral candidate of UB, a specialist in reading faces, and a freelance jazz singer.

Sitting down with him, Professor Zachary sheds light on his class (COM 205: Research Methods), the prospect of a Communication major, and his travel muses.

What can students look forward to in your class?

Students in my class can look forward to understanding how we, as communication scholars or researchers, conduct research. In my class, I like to draw the parallels between the real world and how it matters, what we see in our everyday lives.

What is the number one thing you advocate students to do when they take up your course?

Try. Put in effort and come for classes. That's all I ask. I don't agree with the idea that grades are the end-all, or that our GPA matters most. Don't get me wrong, however, GPA certainly matters but my goal is for students to walk away with something they can apply in real life. If I don't achieve that, I've failed as a teacher. So, try. That's my currency.

Why go into Communication? Why Non-verbal Communication? Why Deception?

Communication, in general, I think, has become one of the most applicable majors for undergraduates right now. Not only from a social scientific standpoint of study, but from a professional standpoint. If you have a Communication degree, you can do so much more. You can do public relations or go into writing. More importantly, you can get a job in so many fields. I guess that was how I started out. I really wanted to get a job then.



Photo courtesy of University at Buffalo

**“We all lie
because it keeps our society fine,
and I can’t think of a cooler
topic to study than that.”**

— Professor Zachary Carr on his choice of specializations

The reason why I chose researching Non-verbal Communication and Deception was largely due to my childhood. I had a rough childhood. There is someone in my family who is an outstanding liar. When I was younger, he could be so nasty of an individual to my family, yet still fool everyone else there. I was so fascinated by it. I eventually heard of Dr Paul Ekman’s work and Dr Mark Frank’s work, and I was continually fascinated.

But also, everybody lies. I could go around asking, “Hey, how are you doing?” You’d likely say, “I’m fine,” but you are not always fine, right? Everybody lies, and it is not malicious always. We all lie because it keeps our society fine, and I can’t think of a cooler topic to study than that.

You mentioned how you are a pro at detecting lies from body languages, especially through facial expressions. How much of that skillset have you applied in real life?

When I first started learning how to understand facial expressions, the amount of information I was getting was so much that I would go on dates and I would be reading my dates’ facial expressions. I would pry and ask about topics they weren’t ready to talk about yet. So, I ended up having a lot of dates go bad in the first couple of years because I couldn’t keep my mouth shut.

Do you like traveling? How do you travel?

The reason why I love traveling is very different. Whenever I travel, I never stay in the big city; I love staying in the suburb. I want to see how each neighborhood functions, how each town does things differently, what the local food is like, and what their take on things is. Everyone likes making fun of me for that.

When it comes to crafting your travel itinerary, what do you look for while you research?

I look for the cultural aspect of the country.

Whenever I visit a city, I’d always make it a point to look at the local theater scene. I want to see how local actors interpret things. When I was here in Singapore, I managed to catch a play here. For me, watching the performers, being in an Asian context, interpreting certain themes in English — it was so amazing. They did a marvelous job. There were little nuances, even in the emotions and how they portrayed the characters differently, from what I would expect the Americans would portray in a similar play.

I make it a point to go and see how different places represent the arts. I’d visit museums, local music scenes, and plays. Everyone has a unique interpretation on things no matter where you will go.

What is the worst travel hack that you have tried or heard?

I don’t like getting travel advice from anyone because I feel like no one gives good advice. I prefer relying on my experiences and what I logically would predict would happen. Everyone told that when I came here, I would suffer from jet lag on my first week, but that wasn’t the case — it was only until the second week when I lost my sh*t. No one told me that and no one prepared me for that. I felt like death.

Tips on saving money?

Cooking at home saves me so much money. Buy your groceries and plan out your meals. If you want to eat out, which is often expensive, force yourself to walk to the nearest supermarket and get the freshest food you need.

What were some culturally inappropriate blunders you made while you were here?

Oh, this happened in class. I said, “10 to 6” and you guys had no idea what I was talking about; I meant 5,50pm. Another instance was that someone actually told me the wrong way to hail a taxi here. That person said that in Singapore, I’m supposed to hail a taxi with my hands pointed down. When I tried it, the professor I was with went, “What are you doing?” It was so embarrassing. But as it turns out, hailing a taxi is supposed to be the same everywhere. I vowed to never make the same mistake again.

Have you told a sad, sob story to get additional discounts on a pair of socks or anything?

No, but I did tell a sob story when I lost my wallet in Las Vegas. I was starving, and I had no money. So, I went up to the shop and told them that I was all alone, lost my wallet, could not find my family, had not eaten for four days (it was a lie), and I asked for a sandwich to eat. The shopkeepers gave it to me. That was six to seven years ago, and I was on vacation.

Wrapping up, would you mind sharing some traveling tips?

Do your research. Be prepared. Read up on the articles on what people have written about the area. I didn’t know what a hawk center was until I read it up. Read as much as you can, so that when you leave the plane, you’d be feeling as if you have been to this new location before. A lot of people do that, but often in a very limited way. They’d be Googling up “Where are the best places to eat” and that’s it.

Never be afraid to ask questions. Ask so many questions. You’ll run into situations and you need to ask somebody. You might be afraid of the cultural differences and stereotypes, but if they speak English, you’ll know you’d be okay. There might be some communication barrier, but at the end of the day, the locals are often always able to help you.



The Allure of Travel

Words by Sng Ler Jun



LEFT: Rowing a boat down the Ganga River in Varanasi, India

BELOW: Cherie Sim (left) with her boyfriend and fellow co-founder, Hendric Tay (right), on a trip to Iceland in 2016

Photos courtesy of Cherie Sim

From witnessing the *hanami* (cherry blossom viewing) season in Japan to catching a glimpse of the *aurora borealis* in Norway, SIM-UB alumna Cherie Sim leads a life that leaves many green with envy. In 2016, together with local travel blogger and current boyfriend, Hendric Tay (better known as Pohtecktoes), she co-founded The Travel Intern, a Singapore-based online travel publication offering aspiring content creators the internship of a lifetime — to get paid while traveling around the world.

I managed to catch up with the 27-year-old globetrotter in her newly established office along Jalan Kilang, and she spilled the beans about her college life, The Travel Intern, and the many takeaways traveling has provided.

What was your biggest takeaway from UB?

No one owes you a living, and it's your responsibility to determine how colorful your life in school could be. Going to UB straight out of secondary school was a big leap for me back then. If I could turn back time, I'd love to have been more proactive in planning out my time in UB. There are always opportunities available and students should seek them out.



What was your favorite class? Why?

I wouldn't say it's my favorite, but the most memorable was Public Speaking. I was deathly uncomfortable with public speaking, but we had to do a speech every week! Our American professor was also pretty brutal with the feedback, so the course really pushed me out of my comfort zone. Surviving that with an A- was something I least expected.

Tell me The Travel Intern story!

After graduating from SIM-UB in 2012, I worked for four years straight in the same company. Feeling jaded, I decided to quit and took up a 3-month Yoga Teacher course in India. Hendric joined me for the first two weeks.

Despite thinking we were considerably open-minded, experiencing India for just two weeks changed all the stereotypes and perceptions we once had. That's when we realized traveling makes us interns of the world, because there's always something to learn on the road.

Initially, Hendric and I wanted to bring people on adventures and find ways to create content that would help people discover how travel can broaden minds. Today, we have six batches of interns and three full-timers who all share a passion for traveling.

What was one memorable experience you have had when you toured with The Travel Intern?

It was my first time traveling with the interns without Hendric. We were on board the *Sunrise Izumo*, an overnight train from Osaka to Tokyo in eight hours, which passes Mount Fuji at sunrise. We had set an alarm to wake up at 5am to view the sunrise, and headed straight back to rest right after catching it.

We had forgotten to set a second alarm, so when I woke up, I heard the announcement that we would be arriving in Tokyo soon. I panicked, for we had yet to pack our gear, but somehow I managed to collect them in time. Unfortunately, when I went into the train once more to check, the train doors closed and I was locked inside.

One of the interns ran to the front to get the train conductor for help, but he did not understand English. I think an elderly couple saw the situation and assisted us. I wanted to thank them after the ordeal, but they had disappeared into the crowd by the time I made it out.

What does The Travel Intern mean to you?

Everything! Okay, something more grounded, TTI is a community more than anything — a belief that travel truly is one of the best teachers, and that we're gaining real-life experiences when we travel. That's why we're all interns of the world!

What does Travel mean to you?

Travel helps me to see things in a different light. You'd start to realize what you have isn't a given in many countries. At the same time, you appreciate having the luxury to experience the beautiful places you won't get to see back home. You'd start to see the grander scheme of things and realize how fortunate you really are.



Photo by Sng Ler Jun

It's tough juggling between work and travel. While most assume you are living the high life, this profession is far from that. In fact, there is a lot going on behind the scenes. Would you mind sharing what some of those works are, and how you managed to do it?

Besides liaising with clients, making sure the payroll is in place, and ensuring that the right person is assigned to do the job, the actual content creation is the bulk of it all. I mean, the less you've prepared on the trip, the more you need to scramble when you're back. We try to get as much preparation done before the trip and more parts assembled during the trip itself.

It's a struggle to balance it all, but at the end of the day, it always helps to remember that this is more-fun work and not less-fun travel. When you look at it that way, the work that goes into content creation doesn't seem so bad. One day, when your memories of these times aren't as vivid, you can look back at the scraps of memory left as an article or a video, and reminisce about the experience of these adventures.

Tell me more about this "less-fun travel and more-fun work".

It's a lot more tiring than the usual holidays people take: we wake up at dawn, chase trains, buses and ferries, struggle with bad weather and worry about capturing a place in its best light. When we're traveling to gather content for a client, we can't just rely on happenstance. Other than planning down to the minute, there's also a lot of scrambling for Plan Bs.

"Travel helps me see things in a different light. You'd start to realize what you have isn't a given in many countries while at the same time, appreciate having the luxury to experience the beautiful places you won't get to see back home."

Once, we were sent to the Maldives during the monsoon season, but had been told the rains were usually passing. Yet out of those six days, it poured on five full days! When we got that one window of opportunity, we went into overdrive to make last-minute plans happen. In the end, 90% of the footage came from that one half-day. We were so close to giving up!

Solo traveling is a trend that has been gaining traction in recent years. What are your thoughts on it, and what are some tips – besides detailed planning and saving up – for anyone planning to embark on one?

You don't need a midlife crisis or a life-changing moment to spur you onto a soul-searching solo trip. You'll eventually realize you're more independent and open to different experiences and people when you're alone.

For me, the best thing about being able to travel solo is you no longer need to rely on a companion to experience the adventures you want to. For those who are curious, a short weekend getaway in Southeast Asia can be a great taste test as to whether you would enjoy it.

Finally, what are some travel hacks you personally vouch for?

Stay in hostels. They're the best way to save money and meet like-minded travelers! Walk when you can — not only do you save money on transport, you get to see a lot more too. Finally, get out of the city.

My favorite part about any trip is when we get to travel out of the main city, because that usually means more outdoor experiences, less crowds, and more opportunities to live in the moment.

UB in JB

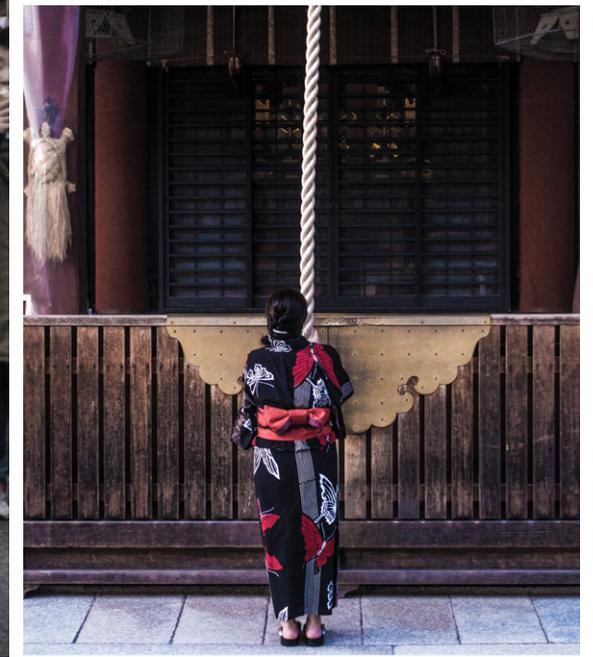


Words by Casia Chew & Cheryl Poh

Say your final paper — or class — ends at 10.30AM. You're restless, but don't want to head home just yet. The notion of a quick getaway seems appealing, so why not take a day trip to Johor Bahru? All it takes is hopping onto buses 52/61/75/184 from SIM HQ (bus stop ID: 12091), then transferring to buses 170/170A three stops away at Shell Kiosk (bus stop ID: 42071) to get there!

Here's a little guide on café-hopping around Jalan Dhoby and Jalan Tan Hiok Nee, only a 10-minute walk from immigration customs.

Tried and tested by the Publications team, it's like spending an afternoon at Haji Lane, sans exorbitant prices and the adjacent modernity of Bugis. Although we recognize it's not easy trying to hit up every café on this list, one can always try to test the limits of their stomach space!



A GLIMPSE OF
Kyoto

Words & Photos by Sng Ler Jun

Unlike generations of yesteryears who send and fervently collect postcards of their travel, sometimes with almost illegible scribbles of “wish you were here”s the millennial generation expresses a similar inclination to share their travel escapades, but on social media instead.

Being in the same demographic, I too, have a penchant for representing my life in photographs on Instagram.

In the realm of Instagram where only the appeal of the visual language matters, evident from the posts of specially curated outfits to the meticulously arranged flat lays of food, it isn't surprising when millennials also use Instagram as a catalog to sieve out their next travel destination.

Yet as much as self-narcissism speaks for itself on the feeds of most millennials' Instagram, I found myself wondering one day: Is there a need for so much self-vanity? On a trip I made to the former imperial capital of Japan earlier this year, I found my answer.

Awash with remnants of her former glory — think *Shinto* Shrines, well-preserved palaces, and Buddhist temples — Kyoto never fails to captivate with her seasonal transitions and rustic charm. In many ways, she is different from anywhere else in the world.

For every first-time visitor to Kyoto, there is this invigorating sense of freedom, a crisp in the air, and a certain zen vibe that overcomes them. In a world where moments are transient and fleeting, and where warm conversations and exchanges are scarce, Kyoto reminds them to slow down and live in the moment.

Kyoto is bound to haunt you. She has a way of imprinting herself onto your soul and altering your beliefs. In doing so, she alters your very existence to aspire to fit into every facet of Japan's personality.

I'd be lying if I said I did not jump on the populist mantra, “If it isn't on the 'gram, it didn't happen”, but I think there is always something to take away from any trip. For me, I hope many who viewed my photographs would feel the same sense of tranquility that had me spellbound on my first trip to Kyoto, and perhaps be reminded to slow down and take life's experiences in stride.