



## Keng Been, Singapore

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The pace of life here in Baden-Württemberg is similar to my home country Singapore: Very fast! When you come into a foreign country, there are things that are familiar and things that are strange. Both can be very interesting. And for me as an international student in Stuttgart, everything is exciting, even the unknown and the unusual.

For instance I think it is strange that shops are closed on Sundays. Although this is the day when most people have time to go shopping. At home, nobody would miss this opportunity to make money . . .

And then – the cold: I simply couldn't imagine how cold it can be in Germany. When I arrived in January I had to unpack my suitcase first and grab all warm clothes I could find.

Another oddity is, how Germans deal with heat: When it is 30 degrees Celsius in the summer, the German students still go outside into the sun, instead of staying in the cool house. This took me by surprise at first (in Singapore they would laugh at such a behaviour), but now I sometimes in the evening go outside myself and read a book in the park. I think I have adjusted. Actually I very soon felt at home in Baden-Württemberg.

Having taken up the German language at the Goethe Institute in Singapore, I got along here in Stuttgart very quickly. My education in Singapore was conducted in English and I didn't have difficulties to get accepted in the WASTE programme in Stuttgart. I enjoy the international community on campus in Vaihingen. That is the reason why I accepted the election as a class speaker of my year in the WASTE programme. The social life among the students is very exciting and colourful, although we all work a lot. I'm always very much impressed how professional the people are here. The academic system in Baden-Württemberg just works! The straight way of doing things here appears very effective to me. The small classes in WASTE of course contribute immensely to the academic brilliance of this programme.

When I will have done my thesis by the end of the year, I would like to stay in the field of academic research – to improve the technical components for the protection of air quality in my country.

Back home I will miss the cheesenoodles in the students' cafeteria and the friends from all over the world I made here. But since the world gets smaller and smaller I'm sure there will be a time for a reunion. The WASTE alumni club keeps us in touch. I think that is very important. So we can build a network of alumni and help each other.

Where I learned about WASTE? There was a poster hanging in Singapore's Goethe Institute. I saw it only by coincidence. Before that, I had been to educational fairs, but Germany presented only few universities. I think it is a very good idea that Baden-Württemberg International now regularly attends educational fairs all over the world to give interested young people the opportunity to learn about the exciting study programmes Baden-Württemberg offers to international students.

I wouldn't want to miss the great experiences I could make here and recommend everybody to spend some time in a foreign country. In today's rapidly globalising world, having an understanding of and appreciation for a broader international context is a critical component of education. Personally, the benefits are 2 folds; to learn about the different cultures, and also the language. These benefits outweigh the cost, and the experience of learning from another culture cannot truly be taught unless lived through first hand. Also, what better way to learn German then by using Germany as a classroom? It is a worthy contribution to my personality for a lifetime.

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Baden-Württemberg

The German Southwest.