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# LIVING IN SINGAPORE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

## WELCOME HOME!

GETTING SETTLED  
INTO THE NEW  
SCHOOL YEAR

## OH, WHAT A NIGHT!

ALL THE FUN OF  
THE 4TH OF JULY

## THE ROAD TO SINGAPORE

AN AAS MEMBER'S  
BEST MOVE YET



# living in singapore

## The Road to Singapore

By Asif R. Chowdhury

It was Thanksgiving evening in 2013. We had just finished our dinner and were getting ready to watch a movie with friends and family in our home in Middleton, Boston. That's when the phone rang. I answered the phone to a Daniel Cheng calling from Beijing at one of the top global executive search firms to offer me a chance at an executive management position at a semiconductor company. In Singapore. At which point the excitement of such an opportunity was almost immediately dampened. We really couldn't move to Singapore at this point of our lives; we loved our little town around the Boston area, my wife had her friends and a great social life and I was happy at my job. Most importantly, though, our daughter was in tenth grade and we had no intention of moving even to the next town and yank her out of her school, let alone move thousands of miles away. I thanked Daniel for the opportunity and I didn't give the call a second thought.

Daniel was persistent, though. This was the beginning of what would be several long-distance discussions over a couple of months with him. The more I tried to explain the reasons as to why we could not move, the more he insisted we should, emphasizing it would be a great experience for my whole family.

Owing much to Daniel's persuasion, two months later, after numerous interviews, a short visit to Singapore to talk to the company CEO and an offer I couldn't refuse, I accepted the position.

When I initially discussed the move with my family, my wife was not at all thrilled, despite the fact that we had two previous overseas expatriate stints in Korea and Japan. My daughter was ready to disown me. The only person who seemed to show support was my 7-year old son! However, despite all the protests, we moved to Singapore in 2014.

There really is nothing like living in Singapore. It has all the key attributes a family would look for when moving to a foreign country. One of the most important factors is how safe it is here with very little crime. English is widely spoken, albeit sometimes in Singlish. It also has a good infrastructure, transportation and offers excellent medical facilities, something important for families with kids. We moved into a quiet neighborhood in Woodlands area, not too far from the Singapore American School (SAS), giving us a feeling of still living in the suburbs.

On a cultural level, living in Singapore has been a fascinating experience for all of us. We have been lucky to have travelled extensively over the last five years to over a dozen international destinations, some of them exotic.



The international environment has done wonders for both of our kids and we feel that it will make them better prepared to deal with the increasingly global world.

My wife and I love the food here and have concluded that it's one thing we will definitely miss when we return to the US. We have frequented many restaurants, from hole-in-the-wall eateries, to food courts to top-notch steak houses and we have hardly ever been disappointed.

The very reason for which I didn't want to move to Singapore in the first place, not wanting to disrupt our daughter's high school, turned out to be one of the best things that we could have done for her. My kids enrolled at SAS, which is on par with top-notch private schools in the US. Both of them found the educational standard of SAS higher than their respective public schools in Massachusetts. Initially they struggled with the higher standard, but they soon caught up and started to excel.

It was definitely more of an adjustment for my daughter going into eleventh grade, but by the second half of her junior year, she had made good friends and seemed to have fallen in love with the school. It definitely prepared her well for her transition into college a couple of years later. She is now a junior at Purdue University and looks back at her two years in Singapore and SAS fondly.

The move and the transition to Singapore was not a walk in the park for any of us by any stretch of the imagination, despite our two expatriate assignments in the past. However, the move turned out to be well worth the effort. Living in Singapore has, indeed, turned out to be a great experience for the whole family. Daniel was absolutely right, and I am grateful to him for his call on that Thanksgiving Day six years ago.



Asif is part of the executive management at a global semiconductor company and has written for various trade journals. Asif spent four years as an expatriate in Tokyo, Japan in business development, which led him to travel extensively over the country. He currently lives in Singapore with his wife and son, while his daughter is studying for a BSc at Purdue University, Indiana.



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