He makes a special request to intern here

Despite S'poreans pestering him about when he'll get married, he finds learning here exciting

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Joep Peeters enjoys the best of three worlds here. He is not only a foreign student, but also a foreign worker who also enjoys life as a tourist.

Joep, a 21-year-old third-year student from the NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences in The Netherlands, is here on a six-month internship with Sentosa Leisure Group's communications division. He has been here since March.

Said Joep: "I've been rotated around the different job scopes such as public relations, service quality, sales and marketing. "It's really like a living classroom here."

This little island caught his fancy when he was here on a two-day field trip last year. He then made a "special request" to come to Singapore on an internship.

Said Joep: "With the exciting phase of transformation Sentosa is undergoing, the exposure to the development of a major tourism destination in Asia is more in-depth then I would have experienced somewhere else."

But the cost of such an experience doesn't come cheap. Joep has already spent about $6,400 on air tickets and basic necessities like food and accommodation.

He gets about $800 per month in a grant from the Netherlands government. Sentosa Leisure Group also pays him a salary each month, an amount he described as "decent" and "more than other companies provide".

For Damien Marie, 23, an editorial intern at Charlton Media Group who is from Mauritius, it took a while, but he is now used to people poking fun at his French accent.

Said the third-year student at the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences: "When I first came here, I thought it would be like China. But I was wrong. "Singaporeans are conscious about material goods. They are always trying to outdo each other. "As foreigners, we sometimes have to take the first step. It's hard for us to get to certain people."

Kriti Mirsha, 19, a third-year Thai student at the Singapore Management University and Damien's fellow intern, agreed.

"While working here, I've most certainly learnt to be persistent. It's not only an action, it also impacts the way you behave," said Kriti.

Joep credits his colleagues at Sentosa Leisure Group for helping him adapt to the environment here.

Ms Cynthia Lee, Director of Human Resources at Sentosa Leisure Group said: "Joep's positive outlook has helped him to assimilate into his new environment very smoothly and we have learnt from him too. We hope that the knowledge and experience he has gained here will help him in his future endeavours."

However, Joep found the extent to which Singaporeans focus on planning their lives ahead "shocking."

"When people here ask me when I'm going to get married, or how many kids I'm going to have, I find it difficult to answer them. It's not even remotely on my mind!" he exclaimed.

As for now, Joep plans to complete his Masters and go backpacking in South-east Asia. On his other "future endeavours", Joep said with a resigned smile: "That's enough for now."