

## Nur Ameera Bte Azman



*Nur Ameera among blooming tulips at Keukenhof in Lisse, Netherlands.*

### **Why did you choose to apply to the Netherlands, and specifically Utrecht University?**

Going on exchange in countries beyond Asia would allow me to gain more knowledge regarding other economies and their relations with the rest of the world, as well as a deeper understanding on the type of policies implemented outside of Singapore. I also have a deep interest in art, hence the Netherlands would allow me to experience a rich assortment of art exhibitions and museums that I have always wanted to visit. Being an illustrator myself, I was inspired by prominent artists from Europe such as Van Gogh and Claude Monet, more so the meanings behind some of their paintings. Knowing how much thought was put into their craft makes me more motivated to continue illustrating!

### **How were your classes at Utrecht University different from that at NUS?**

Classes at UU place more emphasis on collaboration with others, as well as interaction and rapport with the professors. Every tutorial involves discussions on the topics learnt, allowing students to voice different opinions and learn from each other, promoting a more fruitful learning experience. The students are also very vocal and not afraid to ask questions, something I should definitely learn from and try to adopt! The semester was also split into two periods of 10 weeks each, with two modules at a time in each period instead of the regular 5 at NUS. This meant I had more time every week to rest and revise, and enjoy my exchange in general!

### **What was the best decision you made during your exchange abroad?**

Travelling! Being in the Netherlands made it much easier for me to travel to other nearby European countries due

to cheaper flights and extensive bus and train networks. I also managed to do things I would never have done or experienced in Singapore. One of my most memorable moments was when I travelled to Rovaniemi, Finland with a few of my friends. We got to see the Northern Lights in -22 degree Celsius weather, go husky sledding and try traditional Finnish cuisine which includes salmon soup and Finnish cheese with cloudberry jam!

### **What was something unexpected that you did in the Netherlands?**

Learning how to cycle! Cycling is a norm in the Netherlands, and I came with zero knowledge on how to ride a bike. As transport fees are quite high here, using a bike to get to classes or to do grocery shopping does save a lot of money! I definitely struggled the first few weeks, especially with the cycling rules and etiquette. For example, it is compulsory to indicate with hand signals which direction you want to turn, which was evidently difficult for a newbie like me! Nonetheless, as I gained confidence and experience, I can now meander through Dutch streets without much of a problem.

### **What was your favourite dish there, and how does it compare to Singapore food?**

I do enjoy the different varieties of cheese that the Netherlands has to offer! Their cheese is locally produced in many of their cities, such as Gouda and Volendam. They even come in interesting flavours, such as cumin, lavender and pesto!

Dutch food is definitely milder compared to Singapore, I do miss the spicy kick in my dishes! Something interesting that I found was that most, if not all eateries, always ensure that they have vegan options in their menu. That is uncommon in Singapore.