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2022-23 Postcards

Postcards from Abroad

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12-30-2022

## 22 Days Left

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Kelsi Otto

Fall 2022

Hong Kong

December 8, 2022

### Twenty-two Days Left

It has come to the last week of classes. Next Tuesday is my last class, and then the rest of December, until the 22<sup>nd</sup> when I depart for home again, is dedicated to finals. No matter my initial uncertainty about studying abroad and being so far away from home and everyone and everything I have ever known, I now find myself very uncertain and melancholy at the thought of returning home, although I'm excited to see my family, friends, and cats.

As a very introverted person, I was concerned about making friends abroad, but I have found amazing friends here, with whom to laugh, to learn about and explore Hong Kong and each other's cultures, share about our different experiences... It's a difficult thought of making friends while abroad knowing that, at the end of the semester, everyone will go their separate ways, and that even if one keeps in contact over WhatsApp, that you might never see those friends in person again. But I suppose life takes you that way with people you meet whether or not there is a definite deadline assigned to your relationship. I know I will always treasure the experiences and friends I have made here in Hong Kong.



*View from Cheung Chau, an island that my friends and I visited earlier in the semester*

Change as a person is a hard thing to define as it is something that occurs in slight degrees and shifts, ups and downs, over weeks and months and years. I can't say with certainty in what ways I have changed this last semester, but I know it has changed my perspective on life in many ways. It has changed my worldview, for one. There's something about living on a different continent, some 7,000 miles away from home, interacting constantly with people from different places than you (although I do have a few friends who are from the U.S.), that makes the world seem so much smaller and closer.

I have been fortunate enough to travel abroad prior to coming to Hong Kong, but traveling around for a couple weeks, and mostly to visit historical sites, didn't give me the same sense of perspective that studying abroad in Hong Kong for over three months as of now, has given me. I remember how I felt looking out the window of the bus to take me to my quarantine hotel on the day I arrived. After midnight, after my 24-ish hours of travel from Portland to Hong Kong, looking out at the lights that we passed, the bridges we passed over, the signs in English

and traditional Chinese. The buildings taller than I had ever seen before; the crowdedness; the markers of a big city; the anxieties of knowing no one and nothing; being handed a bunch of papers after arriving at the quarantine hotel; and being sent to my hotel room for the next three days of quarantine.



*A beautiful park near campus*

Now I see the beauty of the multiplicity of buildings reaching to the sky, the lush green of the trees that are plentiful around Hong Kong, which I wouldn't have expected in a big city (Hong Kong has more greenery than I'm used to seeing at home).



*View over Hong Kong from Victoria's Peak*

I have to admit a certain uncertainty about returning home after this experience abroad. And while I plan to enjoy every second I have left in this beautiful city and culture, I'm not sure how to fit who I am now into the place of who and where I was before. This experience has certainly given me a perspective on who I want to be in life, and how to move forward.

Talk to you again soon!

Kelsi