

Exchange Report

2017 Sep – 2018 Jan

National Taiwan University (NTU)

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Overall Experience

Overall experience in Taiwan, I would say, was OK. I did not like the first few weeks in Taiwan because of the relatively poor infrastructure that made my life hard until I began to get adjusted. Making friends was not easy. If I had not actively talked to people in your classes or on the street, I wouldn't have been able to make friends that I hung out with for the rest of the semester. Exchange student orientation was not satisfactory. Some type of excursions that are common in other exchange schools (opportunities to make friends) was not available during my exchange. The process of making student ID card was such a hassle, especially during that hot Taiwan weather. The barrier to adjust to this exchange, I would say, is not low. But once you get used to it, once you go through all the frustrating procedures, the real exciting Taiwan awaits you.

Taiwanese people are really really nice. They are the kindest people you can ever see. Whatever trouble you run into, they are more than willing to give a helping hand. Had it not been for those Taiwanese people I met on the street or at school asking for help, I wouldn't have been able to go through all the complicated and frustrating infrastructure and procedures that I had to go through in the beginning of the semester. Food is AMAZING, and the places for travel are abundant. It was such a good opportunity for me to look at the country with such an interesting history.

My 5 month exchange experience is shaped by three major criteria:

1) Food

I ate A LOT. Taiwan is a food haven. Literally wherever you go, you run into food. GOOD FOOD. And they are cheap. The food that you'd normally pay \$100 HKD for in Hong Kong, you'd pay 100 NTD, a quarter of the price. Taiwan had been a colony from many different countries, which make it a multicultural cuisine heaven. I also hosted a Korean Restaurant Week during my exchange (huge thanks to College of Social Science of NTU for subsidizing funds), attracting lots of local college students to 6 participating Korean restaurants, and in return we would do marketing for them. It was a very fun, busy, and gratifying experience to promote Korean food to Taiwanese people.

2) Classes

I took two Chinese classes, and two normal classes, one of which was conducted in Chinese. But I

barely speak Chinese. But the grading system in Taiwan is quite easy, so I didn't have to worry too much about that. It was quite hard for me to make friends in those normal classes with the local Taiwanese, as there were no group projects, and after class, my classmates would run off right away.

3) Friends

I made some amazing Taiwanese + Korean friends. But I was able to meet those friends because I tried hard (talking to them in the street for asking questions). With them we travelled a lot, ate a lot. The general environment in Taiwan is much more relaxed than in Hong Kong, so it's really easy to chill with friends.

You may not be interested in Taiwan because it's too close. That's up to you. I leave the decision to your preferences. But there definitely is a different culture from Hong Kong. And the atmosphere is so relaxed. If you want to learn Chinese, then it's a perfect place to learn Chinese. If you are thinking about Taiwan for whatever reason, I'd say embrace yourself for some frustration in the beginning stage, but also be ready to enjoy what amazing Taiwan has to offer you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I

Monthly Activity Log

Part II

General Exchange Information

Part III

Items to Bring

Part IV

Useful Links and Contacts

Part V

Best Practices of Host University (Optional)

Part I

September 2017

Arrived in Taiwan, but I had no idea how to get to my dorm. Asked random students around, but they weren't actually from NTU. But they were so kind to actually take me to the dorm using Google Map (Taiwanese people are very nice). For the first few weeks I was on my own, buying the dorm stuff, buying textbooks, taking Chinese level test, etc. But everything in the beginning was very frustrating. 1) You need to walk around the entire campus (which is insanely big) to get stamps from at least 6 different departments to get your student ID card. 2) you need to buy your own mattress for dorm, and those that you can find in Carrefour or whatever supermarket are super thin, I recommend you buy at least two mattress to buttress your weight better. 3) You need to buy your own wifi machine. And internet is quite unstable. 4) school doesn't do anything for you...! You need to get around yourself to learn how to survive.



Bought a secondhand guitar from him (from facebook group), and he kindly helped me out to find all the six different departments scattered across the campus to get stamps.

October 2017

I finally got used to Taiwan, and things became rosier. I hung out with friends, went to a lot of different places, ate a lot of stuff. I made a friend or two from each class, so it became fun to attend classes, too. I went to Thailand with friends, went on an excursion with my classmates from Chinese friend. Ah! I also took my classmates to Korean restaurant.



November 2017

This is my month of travelling. I went to Thailand with my friends, one of the best trips I've been to. We ate a lot, drank a lot, played a lot, talked a lot. You may be in the same place with some people for years, and still not get too close with them. But in Taiwan, with such a relaxing and friendly environment, these people became my best friends in such a short period of time.



December 2017

This is the month when we had the Korean Restaurant Week in Taipei. You can check out details of how we did it in this page:

<https://www.facebook.com/hansikgu.tw/>

I wrote a project proposal, got subsidies from the University, got teammates on board, and convinced Korean restaurants in Taipei to participate in the event. There were six participating restaurants, and for a week, students could enjoy 20~30% discount. In return, we did an extensive marketing for the restaurants to the students in different universities in Taipei. It was a successful event, with an estimated 600~1000 students enjoying the benefits throughout the week. It was a very proud moment to spread Korean culture in an exchange school.





January 2018

It was already towards the end of the semester, and time for final exam. The weather got cold, and spending end/beginning of the year made me homesick. But, there were lots of friends to hang out with, because time was what we had. Successfully passing all the courses, I spent the last time in Taiwan travelling around Taichung, and Tainan.

Part II General Information

1) Visa:

For Visa issues, interested students may check out this website:

All students except Chinese and HK/Macau passport holders:

https://visawebapp.boca.gov.tw/BOCA_MRWeb/subroot/MRVWeb0_form.jsp

HK/Macau passport holders:

<https://coa.immigration.gov.tw/coa-frontend/overseas-honk-macao>

Chinese passport holders:

http://www.bjgaj.gov.cn/web/detail_getWsgsInfo_219149_col1361.html

2) Orientation Activities:

The only orientation activity was a Welcome Mixer party, but it was not very helpful in making me interact with students. It was just an endless watching of professors' speeches, some performances, then go back home. I suggest you to take courage to take initiatives in talking to people, or else it'd be hard to make friends.

3) International Services & Activities

There wasn't any international service or activities in particular provided by NTU. But if you need help, you can always visit your designated advisor, who will be very kind and warm in helping you.

4) Accommodations

You will have choice to select some dorms, but Shui Yuan Dorm, above all, is the best dorm you can choose. It is the closest to school, and the facilities are quite good. If you make sure you buy two+ mattress to stay cozy for the semester, everything's fine about the dorm. Shui Yuan A Dorm is single rooms dorm for girls, Dorm B is single rooms for guys, and Dorm C is double rooms for both guys and girls.

5) Courses Registration

You may check out this document:

http://140.112.36.98:10080/uploads/archive_file_multiple/file/5950b4e948b8a10ae900323e/106_2017-2018_Course_En_20170707.pdf

It may be outdated, but you can get a sense of what kind of courses you can take. But for business students, there aren't that many options, especially for marketing. I could only get 3 credit transfer from this school. If you are a finance major, maybe it's a different story, but there is NO marketing course except for marketing research in this university.

6) Teaching & Assessment methods

The school is quite old, and the classrooms remind me of high schools. They have a classic style of teaching, with the black board and chalks. Not much participation from students, and professor talking one way. Nothing like PRS, no technology involved at all. In terms of expecting quality business courses in NTU, I advise you against it, unless you speak fluent Chinese, as there are more options in courses taught in Chinese.

7) Sports & Recreation Facilities

There is a gym and swimming pool in University, and one area where you can do running machine in Shui Yuan Dorm. But the gym has only one bench press, and most of the equipments are running machines. So especially for guys, it is

recommended you make some investment and go to World Gym around the campus. Swimming pool is okay. You need to pay a small fee to enter, but it is really cheap, and the facility is quite clean.

8) Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

Living expense in Taiwan is quite low. The currency is NTD, and its about a quarter of HKD's worth. If you don't think about saving much on living, 10,000NTD per month can do. But since it's cheap, you'd have tendency to spend more in restaurants. Also, in the beginning of the semester, there are some mandatory expenses like mattress, wifi connecter, textbooks, etc, so bring some extra cash for the first month in Taiwan.

9) Social Clubs & Networking

There are a lot of societies in NTU. For me, unfortunately, my classes clashed with the society gathering time, so I could not join any. But there are many many different types of societies like guitar society, travel society, judo society, violin society, Japanese culture society, and even gay society!

10) Health & Safety

Taiwan is safe. Just like Hong Kong, just like Korea. As for health insurance, you have the following requirement before entering Taiwan "Please provide a proof of accident and medical insurance worth a minimum of TWD 1,000,000 (approx. USD 34,000) valid for the entire exchange period. Only those who have submitted the proof will be officially registered. Present it when reporting to us. Please buy insurance prior to arrival at Taiwan. NTU COSS will not offer medical insurance policies to exchange students." But other than that, there are hospitals around. I never got sick myself, but in terms of safety and health issue, you don't have to worry too much about it.

11) Food

Talking about Taiwan and omitting food is a big mistake. Taiwan has many

different types of restaurants in a very affordable price, and they are good! Especially if you go to night markets (there are many many night markets), you can enjoy all the good popular night market foods.



That's me eating in Shilin Night Market. Things are cheap, and tasty. Ah, at this moment I am craving that bubble tea.

12) Transportation

Their metro is called MRT (not MTR), and it is as convenient as the one in HK. I especially like the music they have when the train is about to arrive. For campus, you can rent U-Bike at a real time basis, so you can borrow for 5 minutes, or for days if you want (but that's gonna be very expensive). Or you can buy second hand bike. Taxis are everywhere. Uber is also available. Bus is very convenient to use too. For bus and MRT, you can use your student ID card to pay.

13) Climate

Same as Hong Kong. Absolutely no difference

14) Communication

Mandarin Chinese. But people speak okay English. So even if you don't speak Chinese, you'll survive.

15) Cautionary measures

Nothing outstanding. Not a caution, but an acknowledgment I want to make is that Taiwan has a big gay & lesbian community. And there are many gays and lesbians. That doesn't make any difference in your living there, but if you are not used to having LGBT people saying that they are gay in your face, you may be surprised in the beginning. But it was a good opportunity for me to make friends with LGBT, and listen to their lives.

III ITEMS TO BRING

Nothing in particular. Make sure you buy an umbrella since it rains a lot there. I really can't think of anything special that you should bring. Just make sure to buy two + mattresses for your dorm.

Part IV Useful Links and Contacts

The links I provided above are the useful links! You are going to have a different advisor, so I cannot provide my own advisor's contact, but you are free to contact me if you have any questions. Since I am not allowed to share my contact here, ask SBM office for my contact if you want to hear more.