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MY EXPERIENCE:

My semester at National Dong Hwa University (NDHU) was one of the best decisions of my undergraduate studies. Taiwan is a fascinating country with great people and new experiences to be made every day. In this report I try to list information that was helpful to me when arriving and living in Taiwan. For more general information on the country, culture and National Dong Hwa University as an institution.

Why Taiwan?

Why I am choose Taiwan for my experience?

Whether you're interested in studying abroad for a semester, year, or summer, or if you're looking for internship or volunteer opportunities, Taiwan might have just what you're looking for. Taiwan is an attractive option for those who want to learn or strengthen their Chinese skills. Taiwan primarily speaks Mandarin, though unlike mainland China, utilizes the beautiful and more complex characters of Traditional Chinese instead of Simplified. Taiwan is also a religious and culturally diverse country, with notable representations of Taoism, Confucianism, Muslim, Buddhism Chinese folk religions, as well as Christianity.

Taiwanese Food:

In Taiwan, it is difficult to identify the archetype of a typical Taiwanese meal, as influences from other food cultures, i.e. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese and even Western are ubiquitous and the variety is immense. What stands out is the great number of small little restaurants, where locals eat on daily basis as well as the street food stands offering the famous xiaochi 小吃, i.e. Asian fast food. As far as I realized, it seems really uncostumary to prepare food at home, especially given the mentioned abundance and also the surprisingly high supermarket price for staple food. Thus testing new restaurants and new meals is like the unofficial national sport in Taiwan. My personal favorites were the steamed buns filled with sesame, called 'baozi 包子', its smaller version, the xiaolongbao 小籠, whose best can be enjoyed at Din Tai Fung restaurant and last but not least the famous Taiwanese bubble tea. The Hualien night markets also shouldn't be despised, and offer of multitude of fascinating specialties such as the notorious stinky tofu: I do not want to anticipate the reader's judgment and instead advice to approach the Taiwanese cuisine with a healthy dose of curiosity. It is worth it!

Free time:

After submitting all the required documents for NdhU you could apply for a room in the dorms. But we didn't choose the room of the residence so my friends and I took a shared flat in Taipei.

The housing company required two month's rent as a deposit along with the first month's rent which I was required to pay beforehand.

They also offered the possibility of paying the whole period's rent at once but I didn't do this so I don't know if they would have still required the deposit.

The deposit was given back when moving out after the room was checked and was clean enough according to their standards.

The electricity in the room is paid using a prepaid card which could be loaded with 500NTD a time. The room was ok for the price even though they do have some limitations concerning visitors (no overnight visitors, all visitors had to be signed in), no cooking facilities beyond microwave and hot water provided in the common areas, and the provided internet connection proved to be slightly unreliable.

To me the dorm was an easy and good enough choice for such a relatively short period of time. When I arrived in Taiwan in September the weather was abnormally hot at around 25 degrees the weather was closer to 35 degrees and the air conditioner in the room came really handy. There was a 7-Eleven next to the dorm which was open 24h where you could get some food and drinks and basic necessities. There was also a small burger restaurant and a Japanese style deep-fried pork restaurant right next to the dorm. For more varied restaurants you needed to take the bus, bike, or walk a bit farther. A lot of the local restaurants close at around 3PM and then reopen at around 5.30 or 6PM which can be annoying depending on your class schedule.

The locals:

The locals in here are so polite and helpful, if we got some problem in campus they will help us to fix our problem. For example, I went to library to find some article but I cannot find it, so I asked some people how to find a book by computer, and they helped me and gave some sample how to find a book in there, and also showed me the way to get those books and journals and that is so helpful and I can more easily find a book for the next time. My first time traveling in Hualien is went to Taroko National park with all international students and exchange students at National Dong Hwa University, we went to Taroko by bus, that place is so beautiful and so naturally, in there it's a lot of mountains and so fresh, with a high mountain and dangerous side of hill, but I was enjoying and I can stay in their long time to enjoy the nature, I hope I can go back to Taroko because I want to explore all of part of Taroko and enjoy it for a long time than my first time in there.

Taiwan Security

Taiwan is much, much safer than I was expecting. Knowing that we would be in a large city on the other side of the planet conjured images of seedy streets and human trafficking. At no point in the entire three weeks did I ever feel even remotely unsafe or find myself in a sketchy situation, I wish I could say as much for three weeks in the US! Also, I was surprised to learn that Taiwan has a thriving night culture. Students are at school until 4 or 5pm, and then attend free courses in important skills, like English until 9 or 10pm it is really only after school for the day that people have time to socialize and unwind. Most stores are open until well into the night hours, and night markets thrive in most cities.