

國立東華大學
National Dong Hwa University
姐妹校國際交換交流學生心得報告
International Inbound Exchange Student Report

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Introduction

Taiwan is a small country with cheerful and kind people, coming here from gloomy and often rude culture was a big surprise and cultural shock at the same time. We as a people tend to be more straightforward and full of dark humor so I will keep those traits while writing my report. So you can take it as a feedback. First this report is supposed to contain 1500 words, and it does not specify the language it is supposed to be written in. That means I can write it in Czech language right? Obviously not. The point is that 1500 words in Chinese contain far less information than 1500 words in English, because each Chinese character is counted by MS word as a word, it does not seem fair to me.

Weather

Hot and damp, hot and damp, hot, hot, hot. It is not raining here so often as they say, the air humidity is high just naturally high. Here you will understand what apparent temperature really means. Even people from countries close to equator say that Taiwan feels much warmer, thanks to the humidity. Sun is also supposed to be stronger here, but I'm not so sure about that.

University

Dong Hwa is overwhelmingly big and beautiful, it feels more like holiday resort than a university, especially with all that interesting and unique architecture and open-door policy. By that I mean you can pick any building and get almost anywhere you like. There are tons of unused places which are basically abandoned, every building has a towers, roof and balconies, which you can explore and access. There is even a small pool on a top of Management building. School has park-like places everywhere, where you can have a picnic, big lake filled with fish, with muddy bottom and lots of chairs thrown inside (it is officially not allowed to swim there, and I totally do not understand why would someone want do that, it is even rumored to be dangerous O.o). There is also a lot of small jungle patches, with small lakes hidden inside of them... they are hard to reach and not so interesting or beautiful. Local swimming pool is almost always empty, and the gym is almost always overflowing with people. Food rations you can get inside campus are usually smaller or more expensive than stuff you can get outside. Bike is a must here. Beware of school email and newsletters, it is pure spam. 552

emails in 135 days, 95% of them are in Chinese. I have read like 20 of them and still survived, so they are not important.

Dorms

I have been living in new dorms, 2 people per room. Roommate is nice guy, he can speak English well enough so we can understand each other, he spends most of his time doing “something” on the computer, as they all do. Room itself was not super clean when I arrived, we had to clean it properly at the beginning – and we will have to pay a fee if we don’t manage to clean it at the end (those fees are ridiculously high by the way). If someone tells you not to flush toilet paper at the dorms, just ignore them, they just want to make your life harder. Shower and toilet are okay, they are in the same room, not separated by anything, so you can shower on the toilet, but it also means you shower the toilet even when you are standing in the shower, but don’t worry plastic curtain covers the entrance door, so the water will not get outside the bathroom. The tiles are small and far from each other so they can retain water longer and help the mold develop easier, it is convenient, because then you have to keep the ventilator and the light on so you don’t save on electricity, otherwise the dampness will just stay there forever, or until it spreads to the room itself. Also hair-loss is a common thing for foreigners. If you love cooking, just forget it. Once you find your favorite restaurant, you will realize that it is not worth it. Food costs like 75-95Ntd, per meal. If you cook for yourself, you can manage a meal for like 40-50Ntd and your time has value as well. People you are sharing kitchen with are just stupid. They say that some students here never cooked for themselves before. Well, the place is dirty as... In the shelves you can find rotting food and thousand years old appliances, that someone just left there. There are no trash bins in the kitchen so you need to take all your trash back to your room, which is not really convenient, so locals just leave it all there on the tables or in the sink. I tried to introduce trash bins to them... some understood, some did not. For two months someone kept throwing plastic bags into organic waste, I have always taken them out and sorted to the right place, secretly wishing to catch the person that does that, so I can strangle him on the spot. I just gave up on cooking later. There are big trash bins only for recyclable stuff, common trash or organic trash must be stored thrown directly into the trash car that comes at least once a day (13:10) – which is exactly the time I had classes. Being lazy and not throwing out the organic waste daily is a bad idea it starts to swarm with flies and worms in three days. If you place organic trash bin to the kitchen you are the one who needs to throw it out, no one else will do it. By the way if you will ever see a public trash bin in Taiwan, take a picture of it, because it is as rare as a wild Pikachu. Tap water is not good for drinking, there are water machines (cold, warm, boiling) spread around the dorms and campus, they are pretty cool and convenient. There are also washing machines (20Ntd) and driers (10Ntd).

Classes

Don’t expect Taiwanese students to be active during a class, they just are not. Lot of people sleep during classes. Teachers will not tell anyone directly that they did something wrong. Breaks are cellphone-zombie time. Teachers will love you if you respond to their questions. English taught classes are super easy -> at least mine were. You do some group work, presentations and/or write an exam. Chinese is hard, you can still manage to pass it with a little learning and a bit of cheating, but if you want to be good or decent at it, you just need to learn and learn and learn. I personally gave up after

second lesson-chapter when I realized that it does not stay in my long-term memory and there is just little logical structure. You got to memorize, memorize and memorize, so you can later realize that you cannot hear the tones. If you mess up the tones you can basically bring upon yourself anything ranging from ordering yourself a wrong food, offering someone a kiss, challenging someone to duel or declaring war on a whole country. One character usually has multiple meanings, some characters share same pronunciation, and one meaning can be expressed in multiple way. It is hard.

People-Students

They bike around the campus, but they do not know how to use a bike properly. They do not repair stuff just throw it away and buy a new. They work slow in a group. They don't swim. They hide from the sun and they hide from the rain – even when it is just drizzling. They tend to be super safe and not really adventurous. They are shy. They are able, to be warm and sweating whole day, just because of fashion and beauty. They will randomly wave and honk at you just to greet you as a foreigner. They think you are American. They do not steal. They are honest, kind and warm-hearted. They are hardworking. They are polite. They would share with you their meal and invite you to your house even if you re total stranger. They will try to help you even when they do not know how. They will never openly shame you or others.

Poetic ending

In general, every second I have spent here was worth it. It is not hard to study or survive here as a foreigner, you basically can spend your whole study period without leaving the Dong Hwa campus. But it would be shame, because nature around here is really beautiful. Do not count with a lot of parties and drinking here... it is just not a thing among locals, well among foreigners, it really depends, the same applies for adventurous people. Beware of locals and foreigners, and various signs telling you that something is forbidden or dangerous, most of them don't know what they are talking about or the dangers are just seasonal. Especially NO-swimming signs. Always asses the dangers yourself, you are the one responsible for your health and your experiences, not the others. When looking at suffering of local stray dogs, realize that shorter life in freedom might be better than lifetime in a cage.