

Report on my Exchange Semesters at the National Taipei University of Technology

The decision to spend my year abroad in Taipei, Taiwan was based on several factors: I had visited a number of Asian-based classes, taught by Mrs. Liu-Gerhards at the Hochschule Trier, which sparked my interest in the Asian continent in general. Knowing that China would play an increasingly important role in the future, especially regarding global economics, I decided that it would have to be a Chinese speaking country. However, at that point of time I had no knowledge of Mandarin whatsoever and wanted to begin my stay in Asia with a rather approachable Asian culture. Therefore, my choice quickly fell on Taiwan. While researching, I discovered that Taiwan inherited much of China's culture and architecture which had previously been destroyed to a great degree in Mainland China. Furthermore, it is a democratic and liberal-minded nation, on a rather small island that would make it easy and accessible to explore over the weekends. Hence, I applied for the NTUT and ended up studying there for two semesters.



I was timely nominated by Mr. Lex and shortly after received the required forms. These were easy to understand and did not pose any problems. Getting a visa for my duration was a more complicated matter and, as I know now, was not strictly necessary. As a German citizen one is allowed to stay in Taiwan for 90 days, the very same duration a visa provides. After 90 days, one simply leaves the country and receives another 90 days upon re-entering. As most exchange students will want to visit other countries anyways, this has become a common habit.

The fall semester commenced on **September 3rd, 2018** and ended on **January 31st, 2019**. I arrived in Taipei on September 1st and was welcomed by my assigned study buddy who was so kind to take me to my apartment. As I had no experience with finding lodgings in Taiwan, I simply booked an apartment over AirBnB which was close to the university. After the first semester and having made some good friendships, I moved into a cheaper apartment situated in a better location. For



reference, I ended up paying 12.000 NTD (340€) for a 12m² room in a shared apartment around Guting Station in Taipei. My advice for future students would therefore be to stay in a hotel or AirBnB for a few weeks and ask classmates if anyone knows of a vacant room. There were no tuition fees at the NTUT, however it was necessary to continue paying those at the Hochschule Trier. The overall cost of living in Taiwan is lower than in Germany. Large meals are available almost everywhere for 3€ a single Metro-Ticket costs 0.45€ and taxis only cost a few euros. On the other hand, alcoholic drinks cost roughly the same as in Europe, which is rather expensive compared to the Taiwanese average

income. Therefore, I decided it would be more economical to eat out daily, rather than to cook for myself.

I was assigned to the department of Business Management and the list of classes for Bachelor students was fairly small with only 6 courses in English. Furthermore, these were classes that I had already completed in my previous semesters, which is why most of us had to partake in Master, or even Ph.D. courses. These were however no problem concerning the level of difficulty. To the right you can find a list of the courses I visited at the NTUT. Most of these classes were interesting and knowledgeable, however the teacher's English skills varied greatly, sometimes affecting the quality of the class. Presentations or smaller tasks had to be handed in on a regular basis which, especially in "Chinese" encouraged the learning effect. At the end of the semester, during the exam phase, we often had to present our final essays or other works; I actually only had written exams in 3 courses. English is spoken to a small degree in Taipei, but only very scarcely outside of the capital. Even ordering a meal can sometimes be difficult, which is why I encourage to definitely make use of the free Chinese classes that are provided at the NTUT.

- Chinese
- Consumer Behaviour
- Entrepreneurship & Business Planning
- History & Culture of Taiwan
- Introduction to Entrepreneurial
- Project Management
- Product Innovation Strategy
- Quality Management
- Start an Enterprise



The second semester stretched from **February 15th, 2019** to **June 21st, 2019**. Courses are always selected in the first two weeks of the respective semester. One has the possibility to test classes in this time frame and drop courses afterwards. It is therefore not necessary to arrive early in Taiwan and worry about what courses to choose. The Office of International Affairs is very supportive and helpful; However, one should discuss all this beforehand with the study buddies. They are required to help exchange students and will be very glad to assist in any way. On-campus extracurricular activities include the possibility to join one of the many available student clubs, or use facilities such as a gym, tennis, basketball, piano and guitar rooms, and many more activities.

Winter in Taiwan is, contrary to the summer season, relatively bearable. Though one gets used to the hot temperatures in summer, I do however recommend bringing a warm waterproof jacket for the winter season, as 14 degrees Celsius might suddenly feel colder than in Germany. An umbrella is a must and can be purchased almost everywhere in Taiwan. On weekends and holidays, it is extremely easy to explore the island. Public transport is very inexpensive and easy to navigate. Trains and busses are always punctual, and





scooters can be rented everywhere for about 15€ a day. It is recommended practicing on the scooter before riding in bigger cities or on difficult terrain; many exchange students ended up in hospital after scooter trips, so a big word of caution there! Even though Taiwan is a rather small island, it offers very diverse landscapes. The south has white beaches with turquoise waters, the centre of the country consists of mountains ranging up to 4000 metres, and the north and east parts of the country are covered in tropical forests.

All considered, Taiwan was a great choice and I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to live here in Taipei for a year, getting to know its people, culture and nature. I highly recommend anyone who is interested in studying in Asia to visit Taiwan for at least one semester within the framework of the IB-Studies.

Sean Wegmann

(sean.wegmann@gmx.de)