

# ***STUDENT EXCHANGE REPORT***

## **SCHOOL: NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY (TAIPEI, TAIWAN)**

Going on exchange to an Asian country was one of my aims of 2015, and through some deliberation and research I chose the National Taiwan University (NTU) in Taipei. I must admit that overall I had made the best possible choice of university and country. Not only did I look forward to the experience of studying at a foreign university, but also encountering a completely new culture and ways of living.

### **-ARRIVAL AND FIRST MONTH IN TAIWAN**

Before departure it was very easy to receive a student visa to Taiwan, of course once all the right documentation was presented. It took a full working week for the visa to be issued, which is considered to be quite quick in comparison to other visas.

I decided to arrive nearly two weeks before class started in order to have time to settle down and also in order to explore some of the city. I flew from Dublin to Taipei with a layover in Istanbul. The plane landed late during the night which didn't help to see the sights out of the windows of the taxi, yet the never ending sea of neon lights near the city centre illuminated the whole sky. It is also possible to get a bus from the airport which is considerably cheaper, but it may prove to be more hassle. This is due to the fact that in order to arrive at the dorms after taking the bus at the airport one must also take the metro from the final bus stop. In addition, I would advise anyone going to Taiwan to make sure that they always have the address of their final destination in Chinese most people in Taiwan don't speak English.

For the duration of my stay I lived in the NTU Prince House dorms, which provide single en-suite rooms for students. They are perfect sized rooms for any student and are located just outside the main gate of the university. In comparison to the other dorms, the prince house dorms are definitely the best both for the standard of living in the area as well as student activities. There are separate dorms for male and female students with also one building which provides shared room dorms.

Taipei is a very modern and large city which provides many sights to visit. For a foreigner it is without a doubt the easiest to follow the tips provided on trip advisor, yet in my view a little interaction with the locals can prove to provide the best experiences Taiwan has to offer. The Taiwanese people are extremely polite and sometimes shy, however they always try their best to be helpful.

The first month in Taipei of course had certain downsides. Firstly, if you do not like humid and very warm climates I would not encourage you to study in Taiwan as the first days can be challenging due to trying to climatize.

Nonetheless, this is also an advantage as the first two months provide a perfect opportunity to enjoy oneself at the local aqua-park which is located just around the corner from the dorms. The second difficulty of the exchange is definitely the administration system of NTU, as it is confusing and outdated. The most important thing is to make sure you do not panic when experiencing difficulties

with the Taiwanese university as it is frequent but also easily resolvable ,just make sure to be very firm and not be blinded by the local politeness.

#### -EXPERIENCE LIFE WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF N.T.U.

The university provides a reasonable range of courses in English for exchange students. Most of these courses are taught by visiting professors or guest lecturers outside of Taiwan. Mainly the professors come from America, and most importantly provide a very high standard of teaching. Personally, I had the privilege of being taught by professors who worked for the UN or were well established lecturers at their home universities as well as leading legal scholars in their respective countries. Furthermore, NTU provides a free introductory Chinese course for exchange students for their whole exchange period.

The campus of the University is also quite impressive. It is very contrasting to the city incorporated campus of RUG, as it is somewhat of its own district of Taipei. Many shops, cafeterias and even post offices are located in various activity centres across the campus. Additionally, there are many extracurricular activities available for exchange students such as sports team or dancing classes. During my time I joined the university football team of which I became captain. We had a tremendous run of games throughout which we won the Taipei university Olympics and remained undefeated which resulted in a congratulatory letter from the university president.

Outside the scope of university life I had also experienced the countless night markets and various historic landmarks the city and island in general have to offer. Due to the population of Taipei itself, the city is quite vibrant during the evening and night time. Contrastingly, the night life is definitely more scarce than in Groningen. I found this to be a result of the culture which is not too keen on using mood altering substances, still night clubs and bars are easily found in the city centre near the business district thanks to the ever-growing western influence. Besides the nightlife, Taiwan is a beautiful island which offers some stunning views and innumerable traditional temples which represent the religious and historic values of the country and its people.

#### -CONCLUSION

All in all, my student exchange to National Taiwan University in Taipei was fantastic. I would encourage anyone considering an exchange in Asia to choose Taiwan. It was a unforgettable life time experience and one which I will most definitely cherish . It was a fantastic learning curve not only academically but also personally. It has certainly added a lot of positive weight to my resume which will come in handy once I join the workforce.