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Coming to Taiwan is an experience I never even thought about before this year. However, thanks to the amazing feedbacks I had of two people of my school, I decided to discover this country with its culture so much different from mine. Coming from France, in the city of Lyon, a classmate friend of mine and myself are doing an engineering school in computing and networking. As we have a mandatory two-month internship to do, we decided to choose to go to Taiwan, the first Asian country we were about to visit. From people's mind to the environment and landscapes, everything here is different from what I was used to. And that is exactly what I was looking for.

After a long travel journey of more than 24hours and 10000km, we finally landed at Kaohsiung air-

port. Hardly have we crossed the doors to go outside that I almost could not breathe: I expected humid weather but not at this point. Thankfully, almost everyplace here have air-conditioning, even the subway! That was a great surprise, as we do



My friend (on the right of the picture) and myself at the Lotus Pound, Kaohsiung, July 2018

not have this in our French city. Moreover, with time, we could adapt a little to the temperature. I was completely amazed by the buildings and the wide avenues as we went outside the first night. The number of high buildings, the amount of advertisements and the number of scooters were crazy! It looked as impressive as unreal: the cultural shock was well operating.

The discovery of the country began with the city we were living in, Kaohsiung. As we did not drive scooter, we learnt how to use the MRT and it was incredibly simple.



Kaohsiung in the evening, July 2018



From left to right: me, the student who met and my friend, July 2018

Everything is translated in English and is very well indicated and well done: one dock for both directions (south and north), safety walls everywhere not to fall on the tracks, drawn lines on the ground to create waiting lines, etc. I really enjoyed the MRT for all these aspects and its cleanliness. As the price depends on the travel distance, it was cheap My friend (on the right of the picture) and myself at the Lotus Pound, Kaohsiung, July 2018 Kaohsiung in the evening, July 2018 to get into the city centre for us, which was a good point. Over all, the thing I liked the most was the safety feeling and the respect that people have everywhere and not only in the subway. People do not push and wait their turn to take the

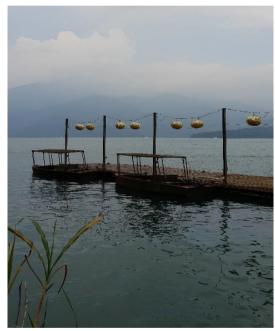


Sun Yat-sen University of the left, sunset at the beach on the right, August 2018

escalators. I think I twill be one of the main thing I will miss when I will be back in France.

Kaohsiung is a nice city combining the sea, the sun, the mountains and all the advantages of a big city without being overpriced and unsafe. I think this is one rare place where you can have all these aspects together. The Sun Yat-sen University is ideally placed, next to the beach.

A huge place is also given to the religion: we can find many temples all across the city and outside, even it was sometimes surprising to see shops or restaurants stuck to them. To learn more about the culture of the country, we decided to visit the surroundings of Kaohsiung by going Fo Guang Shan and then later to make a tour of the island to



The Sun Moon Lake, July 2018



Taipei view from the 101 Tower, July 2018

discover more of its secrets.

By visiting different places around Taiwan, we could learn how people live, how the capital is but also we could also explore the nature part of the country. The first stop would be Taichung, which is incredibly well served by the THSR. From there, the purpose was to reach the famous Sun Moon Lake. which impressed me by its beauty and its calm. Even if it seems to be a quite touristic place, it was a truly place of relaxation. The vegetation next step would be the opposite of calm with the capital: Taipei.

Taipei was exactly what I ex-





pected from it. A big city with lots of people, crowded streets, and impressive buildings. We had the chance the meet a local student who made us visit the city with the most important things to do. Meeting him was a great experience as he taught us historical facts about Taiwan but also told us about the life of Taiwanese people.

I was amazed by the hardworking of the Taiwanese people all over the country. Students who take extra-courses until late hours, proximity markets opened 24h/24, the late



closing of the shops, etc. Europeans almost seem to be slackers next to them. Going back to Taipei, despite it is the capital, all is very organized and you still feel very safe, which is unbelievable related to the number of people. Finally, the last step of the trip was Hualien, city we chose to visit for the Taroko Gorge. This time, all the trains were full to go our destination, thing that surprised us. Indeed, it seems that West coast train can carry passengers with "no seat" ticket but not the East ones, weird fact. Thanks to the help of our local friend, we finally could take a bus then a train to reach Hualien. This is a truly great thing here in Taiwan: if you need help or you are lost, people will help you as much as they can, and it is very appreciable.

Taroko Gorge only confirmed the reputation of the beauty of this



island. The water was absolutely gorgeous and limpid, the path well done. It was an amazing experience, even if this could have been even better if accessing to the river was possible.

Finally, it was a fantastic experience that going into this country I did not know anything on it. The people here impressed me with their respect and their kindness, while the landscapes and the environment constantly surprised me. It is not impossible I will come back here someday.

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