

## International Program: After the Training in Taiwan

Haruka Ueno

When I first enrolled at Kyushu University, I had been eagerly applying for the International Program with the hope of definitely studying abroad during my time at the university. However, due to the enrichment of my clubs and the rapid decrease in opportunities to come into contact with English, my motivation to study abroad which I had for last 2 years had been dispersed. However, after going to Taiwan for the training program, I realized the joy of international exchange and the significance of gaining experience by plunging oneself into a different culture, and my desire to study abroad was strengthened once again. For me, the training in Taiwan was such a memorable experience and a place where I could learn a lot. To be honest, I would even go so far as to say that I wish I had participated in the international program just for the sake of going to this training program. I can't begin to count what was so fascinating, so I'll just write a few highlights of the trip.

First of all, I was really surprised at how nice the Taiwanese students were. All of them were really kind. Even though I wasn't very good at speaking English, they were always willing to talk to me and took me to places they recommended, even after school or on days when there was no school. From ordering from stores to booking cabs to giving directions, they took care of everything with a level of kindness that I don't think I would have been able to do if I were in the same position. He installed BeReal, which is not that popular in Taiwan, just to stay connected with us, and still updates and reacts to us almost daily. There were a few students who could speak Japanese and they translated for us during our discussions, so we had little difficulty communicating with them.

I was happy to have a really enjoyable trip with Japanese members who stayed in an airbnb together and shared a lot of time with me as a result. I am the type of person who needs alone time, and I often come back from trips with some kind of stress, but that was not the case at all on this trip. I would have been afraid to stay at this hotel by myself (torn clothes of the owner who was cleaning, yellow feet for some reason, walls with the sky painted on them, golden microphone and karaoke set, curtains that could not be partitioned, intense humidity that made me feel clammy no matter how dry I was, etc.), but since there were six of us staying there, I could enjoy even that. We enjoyed ourselves so much that we opened all the windows every day to play karaoke until the batteries run out, played mahjong all night long, used the bathroom at the Mitsukoshi next door before going home, did fortune-telling, and so on. I felt that the reason I was able to have so much fun and become such good friends with some of the members, who I had little to do with just taking classes in Japan, was definitely because I was blessed with the right people. I am really glad that I participated in the International program, as I don't think I would have had the chance to meet people like this if I had not participated in the program. I also feel that staying with boys was really good for security. They always made sure that the girls would not be left alone, and for some reason I was very dependent on them.

I was also surprised at the high level of education in Taiwan, versus the fact that the infrastructure is still not well developed at all. In Taiwan, STEAM education (a class format that integrates science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics to study academics from multiple perspectives) is well developed, and even public elementary and high schools are equipped with a very high level of education and facilities (I actually observed a public elementary and high school). They were more authentic than the facilities in private schools in Japan. The National Taiwan Normal University has

more full-fledged and large-scale facilities than Kyushu University. There was an art museum inside the university, and the library facilities were truly student-friendly. Also, many libraries and station plazas were designed in such a way that the entire space was connected to contemporary art. On the other hand, I felt the most difference from Japan in the sense that there were no bidet toilets, toilet paper could not be flushed in any restroom, and there was a frequent smell of sewage on the streets of the city. Since I had heard that Taiwan is a country with which Japanese people are relatively easy to get on with, I had no idea that the fields in which the country is focusing its efforts were so different. I was impressed by the fact that Din Tai Fung, a restaurant serving dumplings, had a bidet toilet, and I have good memories of going to sit down more than once each and feeling grateful for it.

Of course, the sightseeing was really fun. We stayed two days longer than our original itinerary and toured each of the places we wanted to go. The places that left a strong impression on me personally were the lanterns in Jiufen, the scenery in Jiufen that was the setting for *Spirited Away*, the teahouse, the pleasure QQ balls at the Shilin Night Market, the Longshan Temple, Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, the National Palace Museum, Din Tai Fung's dumplings, modern art at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, breakfast at Yonghe Douguan, mango shaved ice, the view from Zhaoshan, etc. I recommended this tour to my Taiwanese students. I was disappointed that I could not visit Tamsui, a place recommended by a Taiwanese student, but I decided to save it for another visit.

There were many other surprises and discoveries, but every moment of these experiences was fresh, and I truly felt from the bottom of my heart that I was glad to have gone. The nine days passed by so quickly that it seemed as if my anxiety before

going was not true. It was a long but short trip, but it is an unforgettable and vivid memory for me that cannot be compared to a trip of four days and three nights.



Lungshan-temple



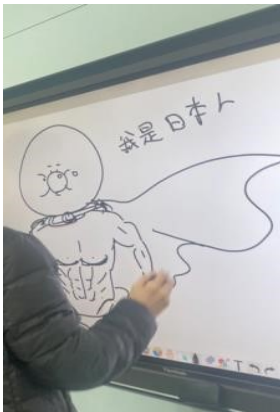
Jiufen



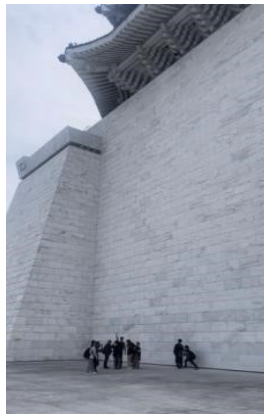
Din Tai Fung's dumplings



View from Zhaoshan, 101



Electronic blackboard



Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall



Roasted whole chicken