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【校園焦點】游忠煌老師榮獲2013 NI GSDAA生命科學組全球亞軍

校園點滴

A Taiwanese Experience (II)

by Pascal Geschwill

Taipei is a very convenient city and its transport system does not differ from that. You can get almost everywhere by MRT and bus and if you feel like it, it is very easy to rent a bike and drive along the Danshui river on the new and very modern bike paths. Since I really enjoy nature and going hiking, I was very pleased to find that the Taipei area offers a lot of hiking possibilities for short day trips. Walking up to Battleship Rock early in the morning which is very close to NYMU turned out to be a great decision because it provides a great view over the city. Another remarkable trail I found was the Four Beasts trail consisting of four peaks named Elephant, Lion, Tiger and Leopard Mountain. Elephant Mountain provides a spectacular view on the city's landmark building, the Taipei 101. Taiwan's capital really has a lot to offer for all kinds of people and I would strongly suggest taking your local friends or colleagues to the city to explore it together with them.



Another very important and interesting city in Taiwan is Kaohsiung at the south end of the island. It is different from Taipei in many ways one of which is that life appears to flow much slower there for whatever reason. It offers a very nice contrast to the busy and rushed life in the capital. Unfortunately, I only spent one weekend there but I still had some very unique experiences there. One of which was going for a

hike in the adjacent mountain area which is highly populated by Formosan Macaque monkeys. I was told before to watch out for my belongings especially food items because they are really clever animals that will steal it directly from your hand. I have to admit that I did not take these warnings seriously and had to learn for myself! While offering a bag of cookies to my friend a particularly smart and insidious monkey jumped between us, snatched the bag right out of my hand and immediately disappeared in the jungle. My initial shock was quickly replaced by ridicule of my own stupidity! At least now I have a funny story to tell.

Another highly modern area of Kaohsiung is the former harbor which has been transformed into an artistic paradise which regularly offers art exhibitions and flea markets. The area is usually filled with people and displays many interesting art pieces which were crafted from old machines like gears, hooks and chains underlining the creative potential of the city.

Although Kaohsiung has, like Taipei, its own MRT system, it is surprisingly not very heavily used. When using the Taipei MRT, it is next to impossible to find a seat during

the daytime whereas I remember entering an almost completely empty train in Kaohsiung felt a little spooky. Nonetheless, the MRT stations in Kaohsiung are very beautifully designed and contain a lot of artwork. However, one of my highlights in Kaohsiung was eating the local seafood. I went for dinner at a popular seafood restaurant on Cijin Island which is right off the coast of Kaohsiung City and can easily be reached by ferry. Needless to say, I ate so much that I could barely move afterwards. All in all, I can say that Kaohsiung is a very calm and relaxing alternative to Taipei and definitely worth visiting. But be prepared to sweat a lot especially if you are used to Taipei's temperatures because the difference in heat and humidity is surprisingly large!

The last trip during my stay in Taiwan was directed to Hualien on the east coast of the island. Before I arrived in Taiwan I read a lot about popular sights and almost everywhere I found information about Tailuge (Taroko Gorge) which is supposed to be one of the most beautiful scenic areas in the country. Our first destination was the Mugumuyu canyon area which can only be entered with a permit. During the day it was pretty foggy and this contributed greatly to the mysteriousness of the region. In some places you are completely alone and can enjoy the landscape to the fullest and it is also possible to step down into the canyon and actually cool down your feet in the crystal clear mountain rivers. Some tracks should however be followed with great care especially when it is raining because they can be quite dangerous. The following day was entirely reserved for visiting Tailuge and it was absolutely worth the wait! I was blown away by the rugged rock formations and the lush green forest areas.



You can also take a closer look at the white marble rocks in the valleys of the gorge or enjoy the small canyon rivers. It is truly a unique place in the world and I would recommend it to everyone who has the opportunity to visit Taiwan. Almost everybody told me that the Taiwanese east coast actually has a lot more to see than just Tailuge and I would have loved to explore it a little more.

In conclusion, I have to say that my trip to Taiwan will always be a very special memory for me because it is a very charming country with highly diverse places and people. Even though I only spent three months on this splendid island, I have a feeling that I will miss a lot of things and I hope that it will be possible to return to finish my Formosan experience.

(Pascal Geschwill,exchange student of Institute of BioMedical Informatics)

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