



Dominic

from

Burlington Lakeshore

to

Taiwan

“Taiwan: The Heart of Asia”

台灣: A small, but astonishingly diverse island. Although Taiwan can literally fit inside Lake Superior, the size does not stop it from being one of the liveliest places in the world. From night markets to convenience stores on every street, from the beautiful mountains to the ocean view, from huge city centres to small villages, Taiwan is truly amazing. Taiwan has so much to offer, which not only makes it the heart of Asia, but it also ensures that Taiwan has won a place in my heart.

三個月: Not trying to sound like every exchange student ever, but time flies! It feels like just yesterday I arrived in Taiwan. So many things have happened since then, it is unbelievable. Every day is filled with new and exciting opportunities which make this exchange truly amazing. In two weeks it will be three months in Taiwan, and before I know it, it will be ten! So many rewarding and exciting things have happened since I came, so I would love to share them with you all.

學校: One of my favourite parts of my exchange has been school. My High School is a school in preparation for university. It is one of the best schools in Hsinchu County, which ensures that it has a wide diversity of activities to take part in. As my school is in preparation for university, a large majority of my courses are academic. There are a few courses which you can choose, so I also have a couple of fun classes like calligraphy and drama! I am also part of my school orchestra. We practice every lunch break (no naptime for me) and Tuesday nights 5-7:30 p.m.. It is quite an experience being in a real Taiwanese school! I also have Chinese class on Tuesdays and Thursdays with other exchange students. On those days, we all get together and improve our Chinese. Both normal school (8 a.m.-5 p.m.) and Chinese school (8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.) are rewarding experiences which make sure that every week is a fun one!

朋友: Having Taiwanese school, Chinese school, and Rotary, I love the friends I

have made! At school, I have a lot of great friends. The classes do not rotate like in Canada, so I am with the same group of people all day. We have definitely bonded a lot, especially after I went with them on a class field trip in the mountains. Everyone from my school is really welcoming, which makes it a really good time! I also love my friends from Rotary. Not only exchange students, but Rotarians themselves. My Rotary club is relatively small, so I have gotten to know everyone really well. In Mandarin everyone is “大家” which directly translates to ‘big family’. It truly is a big family, as everyone is so welcoming and hospitable.

寄宿家庭: Talking about families, my host family is also amazing! I have a host mother, father, and brother. They are very nice people. They immediately accepted me as a member of their family, which has really helped me on the exchange so far. My host family and I do a lot of activities together. On Friday nights, we always watch a movie together, family tradition! On Sundays, we usually go out and do activities. These vary from going on a 10 km run, to visiting a Hakka village, to going to sulphur springs. Every week is a little different, which always keeps it interesting! My host family also does not speak any English, so it is a great opportunity to improve my Chinese.

中文: Not to be confused with my name, 中庸! Chinese has definitely been quite an experience to learn. The exchange students always make jokes that we have to learn three languages! For example, 中文 (Chinese) has a pinyin equivalent: zhong1 wen2, and a zhuyin equivalent: ㄓㄨㄥˊ ㄨㄣˊ. Taiwanese people use zhuyin, but it is easier to remember pinyin, so we have three things to always remember: characters, pinyin, and zhuyin! As well, the tones of Chinese make it quite difficult. For example, sleep is 睡覺 (shui4 jiao4) while dumplings is 水餃 (shui3 jiao3).

Although Chinese is quite tricky, I definitely feel I have made a lot of progress. My speaking ability is quite good as my host family does not speak English. Due to the Chinese class, my writing and reading ability is also improving. Every day I improve a little, in all aspects, writing, reading, and speaking. I was quite proud that I got 100% on my Chinese unit test at Chinese school; I can see that my hard work is paying off, both in Chinese school and out!

地方: Taiwan definitely has a lot of different places to visit and things to see. One of my favourite Taiwanese places to go is ‘old streets’. A lot of old towns have main streets where you can walk and buy many different items. There are multiple food stands set up, so there is always something delicious to buy! I have had the pleasure to visit many towns with these ‘oldstreets’. One of the most memorable was Neiwan. This is an old town deep in the mountains. The food was so scrumptious, it is impossible to forget! Near Neiwan is also a camping site where my host family and I went. It is breathtaking to camp on top of a mountain, and to wake up to the sunrise is a sight that I will never forget!

新竹市: I personally have not visited too much of Taiwan, other than my county. Although I may not have experienced all of Taiwan yet, being mainly in my county has

made me realize how many things there are to do. These include going shopping downtown to a Shopping Mall (which also has bowling, a movie theatre, and batting cages) and biking over nearby rivers to be able to see the ocean. That is what I love about Taiwan: the diversity. In my city, Hsinchu City, we not only have an ocean view, we have a beach, a temple, a huge downtown area, a university, and a flower market! There are so many things to offer. Even though I have not yet been all around Taiwan, getting to know my own city and county has been just as great!

I have so much more to explore and to do in Taiwan. Next week, there is an exchange student trip down to the southern tip of Taiwan. I also will be going to Taipei for a huge biking event in two weeks. Taiwan: The Heart of Asia is not a phrase that I made up (it is actually the Taiwan Tourism Bureau slogan!), but it is a truthful phrase. Taiwan is so diverse, so welcoming, and so outstanding that it has touched my heart. I could not be happier to be able to spend my exchange in Taiwan. There are hard times, but the good times of the exchange make you forget those bad times. This exchange is an opportunity of a lifetime.

謝謝:I would like to thank the Rotary Club of Burlington Lakeshore and the Rotary Youth Exchange Committee of District 7080 for making this exchange possible. It has been an amazing exchange so far and I know that it will continue to be so. 我很開心可以在台灣!

Three months down, wow! I have so much more to do, see and learn! I know that these upcoming months will also be ones for the book.

Bye for now! 再見!

-Dominic Haas 蘇中庸

Pinyin: Su1 zhong1 yong1

Zhuyin: ㄙㄨˊ ㄓㄨㄥˊ ㄩㄥˊ