

February 2019



# Kari

from Burlington  
Central  
to  
Taiwan

Almost 6 months into my exchange and I can't believe it. In my district this topic is basically the topic that shall not be named because no one wants to believe that we are already over half way through our exchange. In the past three months I have gone through almost every emotion possible and I never been more grateful for every single one of them.



I have done so many things in the past three months, I'm surprised I had time to sleep. In December all the exchange students were anticipating Christmas with excitement and sadness as this would be most of our first Christmas without our families. In the beginning of the month Rotary hosted a Chinese talent contest, where every exchange student would have to show a talent that involved Chinese. I paired up with an American and an Italian to sing a traditional Chinese song. Unfortunately, we did not win, but we got to witness a remake of Ariana Grande's thank you, next to about the Taiwanese metro. That was talent!

Later in the month Rotary took us back to Yilan for a Christmas celebration because this would be the closest thing to Christmas that we would get. There we exchanged gifts, saw Christmas lights and got to facetime our families back home. (My parents called and showed all the exchange students what bagged milk was.) In this month I also got to move to my second host family. They put up a Christmas tree and took me out for a Christmas dinner. I was so grateful I got to spend my Christmas with them. Although my family wanted to celebrate Christmas with me the rest of Taiwan was not as willing; alas, I still had to go to school with the rest of my classmates.

The next week was New Years Eve. That night all the exchange students in Taiwan came to Taipei to watch the firework at Taipei 101. As soon as the clock struck midnight fireworks started exploding off of Taipei 101 for a solid 5-10 minutes. Though it was raining, it was an amazing night that I will not forget.

Two weeks later we started winter break. At the beginning My Rotary club hosted a few people from Korea. Throughout the week I got to travel to many places in Taipei that I haven't been to before and meet amazing new friends.



The next week my family took me on vacation to the south of Taiwan. There we saw a beautiful blue ocean, amazing rock formations and cliffs and a lot of rain. We also went to the beach. This was a little surprising because Taiwanese people believe that the ocean is dangerous. For that reason, they refuse to go in the water or to the beach.

The next week was Chinese New Year. This is the celebration of the Lunar New Year. Every year in the lunar calendar has a different animal to represent it. This year is the year of the pig and, because of this, there are pigs everywhere to celebrate. Another tradition during Chinese New Year is the colour red. The colour red in Chinese culture is a sign of good luck, therefore everything is the colour red. During Chinese New Year families will get to celebrate the new year. (Similar to Christmas for us). They have plates full of food and plenty of fruits. Later the adults will give all the children red envelopes. These are a congratulation for the hard work the children have done in school. During this time people will wish others happy new year by saying 新年快樂 Xīnnián kuàilè; this will be said to everyone. Then at midnight fireworks go off and don't stop for a week. The next day many families will go to temples to pray for a lucky year.



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Another festival they have in Taiwan is the lantern festival. Every year Taiwanese people go to different cities in Taiwan to release lanterns into the sky. During this people will write their goals and aspirations on the lantern then release it in hope that they will come true. I got the chance to go to a town named Pingxi to release lanterns with a few other exchange students.



I would like to thank Burlington Central Rotary club and Rotary district 7080 for giving me this opportunity to experience this amazing culture. I would also like to thank Rotary District 3480 for including me in your culture and introducing me to many new things. Lastly I would like to thank my host family for embracing me in your family and showing me all the amazing things Taiwan has to offer. 嘻嘻

*Kari*

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