



Kari

from Burlington
Central

to

Taiwan

“I’m ready to take the next 7 months by force”

What comes to your mind when you think about Taiwan? Do you think of where all your clothes and gadgets are made, or maybe a tropical island off the coast of China? Well, I’ve learned that Taiwan is so much more. A year ago if you had told me that I would be going to Taiwan for a year on exchange I would have laughed said that you were crazy. However now that I’m here, I can’t imagine being anywhere else.



Almost 3 months ago I started my adventure to Taiwan. On the plane, it surprised me that not a single person questioned why a 16 year old white girl was on a plane to Taiwan by herself. After 15 hours I finally made it to Taipei national airport. There I was met by many

people including my Mom, Dad, Younger brother (8 years old), older sister (22 years old), and my other host sister who is an exchange student in Italy (18 years old). My second host dad and a few Rotarians were there also. I was amazed by how many people showed up at 4 in the morning to pick me up at the airport. Soon I was in a car on my way to Yonghe district in New Taipei city, my new home for the next 4 months.



Two weeks later I started school at Chi Jen private high school (及人體驗營). There I've met so many amazing people who are the sweetest and kindest people in the world. Although I don't understand anything in any of my classes my classmates try to make me feel welcomed in this new country. School starts every morning at 7:30 and then goes to 6:30, lucky I get to arrive at 8:15 and then leave at 3:45.

My school has taken me on so many adventures in the past three months I can't count them all. One of which was a school-wide trip to Yilan (a city on the east coast of Taiwan). There we went to a nearby island, went fishing and went into a green onion field. I became closer with so many of my classmates in a way I never thought I would.

In my District, there are 45 exchange students and even more in Taipei. As an exchange student in Taiwan, you end up spending a lot of time with other exchange students because our classmates are always at school or studying (school is basically their lives).

In Taiwan, most people do not speak English at all, so learning the language has become a necessity. In Taiwan rotary has provided a Chinese class for all exchange students. This class is every Tuesday and Thursday morning. There we learn three ways to read and write Chinese, Traditional (你好), pinyin (nǐ hǎo), and Zhuyin (ㄋㄧˇ ㄏㄠˇ). Though pinyin is the easiest to understand it is only used in mainland China, therefore we have to learn Zhuyin. In Chinese there are also tones so you can say one thing but really mean another. For example, the word Mǎ (馬) which is a horse and Ma (媽) which is a mom. If the tones were to get mixed up you would be calling your mom a horse.



There are many things that are different in Taiwan, for example, there are not many trash cans on the street. Now, this might not seem like a weird thing but I have had so many experiences where I needed to throw something out and I couldn't. Another thing that is different is public transportation. Because I live in the capital of Taiwan there are many people who live here, therefore public

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transportation is really good. You can travel basically anywhere in Taipei in under an hour. The transportation is also very cheap so it makes it convenient for travelling around the city.

I would like to thank all the people in rotary district 7080 for giving me this once in a lifetime opportunity, and the Rotarians in district 3480. You guys gave me a home for the next year and I am eternally grateful. This has been the fastest 3 months of my life and I'm ready to take the next 7 by force. 嘻嘻

何卡莉(Hé kǎ lì)

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