

## TWEDT Personal Report

I spent my last two semesters (WS23/24 and SS24) at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The University is located at the north of the city, quite close to the border with Shenzhen (China) actually. The campus is absolutely enormous, it is on a mountain and is also very green which everyone seems to enjoy as you can feel that you are not in the city and that you can breathe fresher air. It definitely has a lot to offer, for example there are a lot of canteens which have nice food that is not too expensive. There are also a lot of sport activities available with such things as fields and gyms. The only criticism one could make is possibly the lack of night time entertainment for students. Even though public transport is quite impressive in Hong Kong, the Chinese U is indeed, far from the city center and the last means of transportation usually stop at around midnight-1am so exploring the night life of the city can be a bit complicated.

Academically, the standard is most definitely of a high level. All the professors I had courses with were very enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects which made every lesson informative and enjoyable. I believe that what was demanded of students was appropriate, not too much and not too little.

I liked all my courses at CUHK but I must say the most enjoyable was the 'Culture of Hong Kong' one as it was very interesting to learn about the city, its people and its culture while living there. It gave a whole new level to my experience there and I would highly recommend it to the next exchange students going to CUHK.

Indeed, I gave me the increasing sense that Hong Kong is quite a unique place. Because of its history as a British colony, the city is a bit in a place of its own, almost like a modern City-State. It also stands between being Chinese and being independent. It is weirdly greatly Chinese in culture but very different than other Chinese cities at the same time. The influence of the British can still be strongly felt to this day.

I truly enjoyed exploring the city as much as I possibly could, both in terms of its geography and its culture. There are many ferries that will bring one to outlying islands or one can also go hiking and feel as if he or she is nowhere near such a big city. The 'villages' of the New Territories are also quite interesting to visit and can show another side of the city, which seems a bit more Chinese compared to Hong Kong island itself.

On another note, Hong Kong is well located to visit other parts of (South/East) Asia, something I would highly recommend doing as it is interesting to experience the differences and similarities in culture from country to country in this region. There are rather cheap planes to Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and so on. It's also very easy to go to Shenzhen and to take a train there to other parts of China. Going to Taipei, Japan and visiting some of the Guangdong Province were most definitely some of the most memorable moments of my exchange year.

I would like to conclude this report by putting my two cents in, by giving some advice to potential future exchange students going to Hong Kong and/or to CUHK more particularly. First of all, I should warn that local students, that is, students from Hong Kong can be quite hard to interact with. Most of them do seem to be quite shy about their English level and usually keep conversations to a minimum. I think that most exchange students there were a bit disappointed at the lack of interactions with Hong Kong students and we mostly ended up staying between ourselves. I was personally lucky to be in a room with a local student, who also was willing to spend some time together such as going for dinner for example. I think a lot of other exchange students did not have this chance. One will therefore have to put in a lot of effort in order to hang out with local students, but I think that in the end it will be quite rewarding as there is, of course, no better way to understand the place. I should also note that there are a lot of exchange students from China going to CUHK and these students usually keep between themselves as well which is quite a shame.

Another thing I should warn about is that, English is definitely not spoken all throughout Hong Kong. On the island itself, it is usually not a problem and menus and such are also always translated into English. But when one wants to visit the New Territories or the more northern parts of Kowloon, English can be quite hard to come by and therefore knowing a few characters and a bit of Cantonese can go a long way. Locals appreciate it a lot as well and are always glad to see foreigners speaking their language that is a really important part of their identity and culture. One has the opportunity to start learning either Mandarin or Cantonese at CUHK and it is true that it is more logical to learn the former as it is a language that is more spoken internationally but for one's stay in Hong Kong, Mandarin is almost useless (sometimes even hated but this I will not go into) and as I said, Cantonese is absolutely a must to discover some parts of the city (which would be quite hard without a bit of knowledge of the language).

A few words about living in the hostels of the University have also to be mentioned here. In my own residence, which are called colleges (mine being Wu Yee Sun) there are many facilities for students. For example, there was a small gym, a big canteen, some study rooms and music rooms and things of the like in mine. In my corridor there were about 15 rooms, hosting two students each. We had a big bathroom to share with about 7 showers and 9 toilets. It is of course, not something most of us are used to but I found that it was, maybe even though a bit tiring sometimes, mostly not problematic. The kitchen was quite big but there only were two fridges and two burners. Most students though were not cooking there so I never had to wait when I wanted to make my own food. The only problem was that stealing in the fridges was pretty common, so one should be careful not to put expensive things inside them.

With this I can conclude my personal report. I think that, even though, Hong Kong is a big city, it is still a very nice place to live, especially at the campus. It is a great place to understand more about Asian culture without at the same time being far away from the Western things we might enjoy. Therefore, I highly recommend any student who might be interested in learning more about the East to spend their study abroad there.