

Home university: University of Freiburg

Host university: National Taiwan University

Period of the exchange: February-July 2023

Creation date: 30th June 2023

Final Exchange Report

While an exchange semester in Taiwan may sound more adventurous than one in Europe, the truth is that it is almost just as easy. The application and preparation process is smooth, facilitated by the NTU and the University of Freiburg. Once you receive your acceptance, the Office of International Affairs (OIA) provides you with all the necessary information and a to-do list before your arrival in Taiwan. I personally waited for the official acceptance from NTU before booking my flight in December, which was about two months prior to the exchange. Although it may seem late, most of the required arrangements can be done quickly. I received my visa three days after submitting my application. However, it's worth noting that as an EU citizen, the multiple entry visa may not be necessary, so I recommend checking the requirements before paying an extra 50€ for it.



Accommodation:

I was offered a single room at Prince House, located near the campus, which is the first choice for most people. However, not everyone was as fortunate, and those who were offered a bed in a four-person room often looked for alternative options on their own. The dormitory is a bit far from the city center, requiring around 40-60 minutes to commute to the university. Whether you enjoy the experience or not largely depends on your roommates. Nevertheless, you have the option to request a room change if you find it unsuitable. Simply contact them via email to inquire. For exchange students staying for one semester, if you are searching in the private market, expect to pay around 400-500€ per month.

Finances:

While Taiwan is generally cheaper than Germany, there are still some expenses that should not be underestimated. It's important to note that you may not have access to a kitchen, resulting in dining out for every meal. Although cheaper than eating out in Freiburg, the costs can add up, especially since certain items like coffee can sometimes cost 5€. If you plan to apply for Bafög (a German student grant), I strongly advise doing so as soon as possible. I made the mistake of delaying my application, and even now, after completing my exchange semester, I still haven't received the money. Fortunately, I was fortunate enough to receive the Baden-Württemberg scholarship, which allowed me to explore Taiwan and have many experiences during my time abroad.

NTU and studies:

I can confidently say that the campus is the best aspect of NTU. The university boasts a vast sports center, multiple convenience stores, cafeterias, and numerous student clubs. Personally, I chose to play squash with friends whenever possible. I recommend joining a sports club or enrolling in a sports course, but be aware that these options fill up quickly. Regarding the academic experience, opinions vary when comparing the Taiwanese and German education systems. NTU feels more akin to a school environment than universities in Germany. Some courses have mandatory attendance, while all require homework and presentations. I enrolled in two economics courses, namely *Spatial Economics* and *Advanced Applied Econometrics and International Trade*, and in General Chinese, each worth 3 NTU credits or 6 ECTS. While I was excited about the economics courses, I must admit that I was somewhat disappointed. The courses demanded a significant amount of time but lacked the depth I had anticipated. Nonetheless, I am still pleased to have achieved good grades. I highly recommend taking the Chinese language course as well, as it can be quite enjoyable if you have an interest in learning new languages. As an exchange student, NTU strives to make your life easier. Although there is sometimes more bureaucracy than in Germany (such as the need to obtain various stamps for

deregistration from NTU), the OIA provides clear instructions, and if you ever forget something, the WhatsApp group with over 300 exchange students will definitely remind you.



Life in Taiwan:

I've saved the best section for last: Taiwan, especially Taipei, offers the highest quality of life I have ever experienced personally. Despite being a big city, Taipei surprisingly isn't overly dense, leaving ample space for green areas. I lived near the river, which allowed me to go for runs and enjoy numerous riverside parks while escaping the hustle of traffic lights. Returning to Dreisam will feel like a significant step back in comparison. Additionally, Taiwan is a paradise for hikers. If you have even the slightest enjoyment of hiking, I highly recommend doing it as much as possible! In and around Taipei alone, there are plenty of excellent hiking trails. It took me a while to figure out the best way to find them, but I discovered that using Google Maps and searching for "hiking trails" is the most effective method. When you search online in English, you often don't find much information except for a few routes on AllTrails. On Google Maps, you'll find the starting point of the trail and, under the reviews, an estimate of the typical duration. Once you arrive, the trail is well signposted, eliminating the need to constantly check your phone. Hiking in Taiwan offers the perfect blend of stairs and climbing. If you're up for it, I also recommend climbing Yushan, Taiwan's highest peak. Considering the altitude, it's a relatively easy hike. Keep in mind that you'll need to apply for a hiking permit for Yushan and many other peaks in Taiwan. However, there are numerous online blogs that provide detailed explanations. My group

completed the two-day hike, but the one-day hike should be quite manageable, and obtaining a permit for it is easier. Regarding food, unless you have a particularly sensitive stomach, you need not worry much about food poisoning.

Having said that, if you're considering applying for a semester in Taipei or Taiwan, I wholeheartedly encourage you to do it! I was truly delighted to be in a country with such a fascinating history and to gain insights into its current political dynamics. I would also like to express my gratitude to the state of Baden-Württemberg for providing financial support through the scholarship, which made my semester abroad memorable.