

Exchange Semester report
Selina Schröter- Winter term 2017
NTPU National Taipei University- Taiwan

Due to the international partnership of the University of Innsbruck with the National Taipei University, I had the chance to study and live for one semester in Taiwan. The administrative effort was not very much as I only had to write a motivation letter and a CV. The organisation of the visa was very easy and I didn't even have to go to the embassy in person. Only the long waiting time for a positive response was a little bit annoying. I got my acceptance in June, which was very late as the University started in September.

I am studying my master degree in "Strategic Management" at the University of Innsbruck and went abroad in my third semester.

I definitely recommend to spend your exchange semester abroad in Taiwan. It is a very beautiful and unfortunately underrated country, which is not on everyone's list, when thinking about going to Asia.

First of all the National Taipei University (NTPU) is not in the city centre of Taipei, it's located in New Taipei City, but the public transportation is very good and cheap. However there is everything important around the University campus. You will find many local and cheap restaurants, supermarkets, drug stores, convenience stores and also western food chains like Subway, McDonalds or Starbucks. Everything you need in your daily life is located close by.

I lived in the dormitory on the campus, which had the advantage of being very cheap. (400€ for the whole semester) Also it is very nice to be close to the University, if you have classes in the morning, which is most of the time the case. In addition to that you meet a lot of people in the dormitory and it's easy to make new friends.

Surely it wasn't a luxury place, as I had to share my room with two other girls: one from Thailand and one from Taiwan. Luckily we got along very well and became good friends. Every room has bunk beds and its own bathroom. Generally the standards are not as high as in Europe but you get used to it. With some decorations and private pictures the place felt like home after a few weeks. Some exchange students preferred to live in Taipei, which is definitely better for the weekends as the night transportation can be a little bit tricky. Nevertheless the prices for a room are similar to Innsbruck and they paid around 350€ to 400€ every month. The rules are quite strict in the student dormitory. Boys and girls are separated and every visitor has to sign in. Therefore if you have the money and you are looking for a bit more freedom as well as privacy it's better to move into a shared flat outside of the campus.

In my case the living situation in the dormitory gave me a good insight in the Taiwanese culture and the people itself.

In addition to that the campus is very big and nice. There is a gym, a big football field, a stadium, tennis- and basketball courts as well as a lake and lots of trees. It's very nice to walk over the campus or to sit with friends in the grass or at the lake after school or in the night.

I also joined the "Toastmaster international club"- a student associations, which you can find all over the world. In this club I met a lot of international students and made many friends- local ones and foreigners. I definitely recommend you to join a club at the University, which serves your interest.

Generally Taiwan is not as cheap as Southeast Asia and as mentioned rental prices are similar to Innsbruck. Nevertheless the costs you are going to spend highly depend on your living standards. If you are okay with eating Taiwanese or Asian food you can live quite cheap. A meal will cost you around 2€ to 3€. Western food is much more expensive as well as drug store articles and luxury articles.

When coming to NTPU, I was a bit worried that the teaching level is not the same as in Innsbruck. In the end I was positively surprised with my master courses. The amount of work changes from course to course, but in general I did learn a lot, especially about businesses in the Asian region. I had to choose

three courses to get enough ECTS: I took "Strategy Management", "Staffing and Recruiting" as well as a "Research Method Course". For each course I got credited 10 ECTS in Innsbruck.

All courses were completely in English and the professors did speak very well English, as most of them studied in the USA. The grades were combined of some group tasks, the class participation and a midterm as well as a final exam. In addition to that I took a mandarin class, which was a lot of fun and made daily life a little bit easier.

Generally the University is not as good structured as the University of Innsbruck. However everyone, especially the International Office of Affairs is always willing to help and every problem I had, concerning some official documents or my course selection was solved quickly. In addition to that, the OIA did organize a lot of trips for exchange students around the country, which were a lot of fun and always for free.

I highly recommend you to travel during your stay in Taiwan. This country has a lot to offer and the nature is very stunning. If you like hiking you should not miss Sun Moon Lake and Taroko National Park. If you are more a beach person Kenting, Kaohsiung, Green Island and Liuqiu Island are the places to go. Especially the diversity of the nature fascinated me. You have high mountains, deep jungles, many waterfalls and amazing hot springs in the north and central part of Taiwan. If you go to the south you will find nice and sandy beaches with crystal clear water. Even though Taipei is a big city it is surrounded by beautiful nature, which is easy to reach for a day trip. In addition to that it is very easy to explore other Asian countries as flights are very cheap. You can go e.g. to Japan, Hong Kong, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand or China.

All in all, I really fell in love with the country and the people. Taipei is a very modern and super clean city. The people are very helpful and friendly and everywhere I went, I was nicely welcomed. Surely the language barrier is sometimes a problem, especially in small stores or taxis. You will definitely have some culture shocks at the beginning of your stay. You may not understand all of the behaviours but you will get used to it and accept things like e.g. wearing a surgical mask if you have a cold to prevent other people to get sick. Taiwanese people avoid the sun and they are carrying an umbrella during a sunny day, which was a bit strange for me at the beginning. There will be some days, where you are going to miss European standards or certain food but in the end your stay will be more than worth it.

I had a wonderful time at NTPU and I will definitely go back to Taiwan someday.

Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions!

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I was at the National Taipei University (NTPU) – known as Táiběi Dàxué in Chinese – for one semester in fall 2016, coming in as an exchange student of Economics from the University of Innsbruck, Austria. The first thing to mention here: the university is not in Taipei, but in New Taipei City, which is the area around actual Taipei. There is a “downtown campus”, but most courses are held in Sanxia at the main campus of NTPU. From there, it takes between 40min and 1 hour to get into the center of Taipei, with transportation being a little tricky at night. In general, however, public transport is well organized, convenient, and cheap, so getting around town or the country is easy.

The Campus is quite big and includes everything you need for everyday life: A gym and a sports stadium are part of it, as well as lawns, a lake, and some forest areas for relaxing. Supermarkets and restaurants are close by, which makes it easy to spend most of the time in Sanxia, with visits to Taipei or other parts of Taiwan always possible if you need a change. Generally it is a very nice place – if only the dorm was in better condition and basic needs like some kitchen equipment or a place to gather in groups were fulfilled, one could call it “Home” for some time.

Life in Taiwan is a very interesting mixture of “following the rules” and “easy going”: On the one hand, the rulebook of the dorm was the longest I’ve ever had to live with, with many of the procedures not seeming too logical, and it was surprisingly strictly enforced. Believing in peoples’ ability to apply rules rationally does not quite pay off if they see breaking the rules as a personal offense... As long as you don’t publicly offend or mock people, on the other hand, life in Taiwan is great, and you will find friends everywhere. The Taiwanese are awesomely friendly, always try to help you – don’t worry about language barriers! –, and not too stressed out about most things. They invite you for tea to their homes, join you for trips or give you advice, and whatever question you have: They will find someone to answer it. As everywhere, university life fits the same description as life in Taiwan generally. If you follow the rules (which does not restrict you in using your head, to say the least), there is always someone to help you, even if coordination between different departments is missing in some aspects.

Concerning my courses, however, I have mixed feelings, but I’ve had these ever since I started my studies. Most of my classes were well organized and dealt with the topics I was expecting, offering solid education without big surprises. There was an exception where reading the slides would have made more sense than sitting in class and in which I felt as bored as my Taiwanese and International classmates, but there was also a course that I enjoyed a lot, fostering discussions and critical thinking, analyzing current developments, and giving me the impression of really learning something relevant.

After all, I am very glad I got the chance to spend one Semester at the NTPU. Coming there I did not really know what to expect of Taiwan, Taipei, or the university, but after four months I leave this small country on an island with a collection of impressions that could barely be more positive. I’ve dived into cultures I had not even heard about before, I deepened my academic knowledge not only from the “European” view but also got some very new perspectives, and I’ve met a bunch of people from around the world I consider friends for a lifetime.

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Auslandsaufenthalt: September 2016 - Januar 2017

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Erfahrungsbericht Auslandssemester an der National Taipei University in Taiwan

Im Wintersemester 2016/17 absolvierte ich mein Auslandssemester an der National Taipei University in Taiwan. Obwohl ich mich vor Reiseantritt mit Taiwan etwas beschäftigt hatte, war ich doch sehr überrascht über das was mich letztlich erwartete.

Die Anreise zum Campus klappte, dank dem ausgezeichneten „Buddy Programm“ sehr gut. Als ich dort ankam, musste ich erst einmal die ersten Eindrücke auf mich wirken lassen. Einerseits fand ich die Anlage recht ansprechend (grosser Campus mit schönem See), andererseits stellte ich schnell fest, dass man in Taiwan keine europäischen Standards anwenden sollte. Beispielsweise erwartete mich ein heruntergekommenes, sehr dreckiges, spartanisch eingerichtetes Zimmerchen, welches ich mit drei andern Mädchen teilen musste. Es war sehr gewöhnungsbedürftig. Auch meine Mitbewohnerinnen aus Japan und Thailand empfanden dies so. Schon beim Betreten des Zimmers wurde mir klar, warum es so günstig war (Gesamtkosten für alle 4 Monate ca. 350 Euro.). Ich hatte jedoch das Glück, dass meine Zimmergenossinnen im Studentenheim unglaublich nett waren (zumindest die Mädchen die Ratten und Kakerlaken, die uns zeitweise besuchten, waren etwas unangenehm). So machten wir das Beste aus der Situation geteiltes Leid ist halbes Leid. Annehmlichkeiten, wie z.B. ein Fitnesscenter, in dem man gratis trainieren konnte, halfen uns über die eine oder andere Frustration hinweg.

Als Küche dienten uns im Studentenheim eine Mikrowelle und eine Campingherdplatte, was das Selberkochen deutlich einschränkte. Als Erklärung hierfür kann genannt werden: Taiwan wird als „Eating out Country“ beschrieben, was bedeutet, dass sich die meisten Menschen zum Frühstück, Mittagessen und Abendessen irgendwo außerhalb ihrer Wohnung etwas zu essen holen (an einem Straßenstand oder kleineren Essensabfertigungen). An den Geschmack und die Art der Zubereitung (sehr viel Fett und viel Zucker) musste man sich gewöhnen, mit Mut und Durchhaltevermögen findet aber jeder etwas was ihm schmeckt. So gab es auch rund um den Campus verschiedene Möglichkeiten sich etwas zum Essen zu besorgen, was wir – anstatt selbst zu kochen – dann auch meist taten. Ich habe jegliches „Streetfood“ probiert und auch meist gegessen. Probleme mit Magen oder Darm hatte ich keine, denn in Taiwan kann man auch Früchte, Salat und Ungekochtes (z.B. Sushi) essen (natürlich würde ich immer ein bisschen vorsichtig sein aber prinzipiell sollte es gut gehen). In der Stadt selbst findet man natürlich auch europäisches Essen, jedoch zu teuren Preisen, was ich mir dennoch ab und zu gönnte.

Durch eine sehr gut gestaltete Einführungswoche an der Universität fand man sich schnell zurecht und konnte sich recht bald gut orientieren. Ich konnte verschiedene Kurse wählen, die mir alle in Innsbruck für das Studium angerechnet wurden. Alle Kurse waren auf Englisch, wodurch ich meine Sprachfähigkeit deutlich verbessern konnte.

Das Unterrichtssystem an der Universität ist im Prinzip wie Schule – kleinere Klassen mit einem Professor der etwas vorträgt, Hausaufgaben gibt sowie Projektarbeiten und Vorträge verlangt. Gesamthaft betrachtet ist es nicht allzu schwierig, den jeweiligen Kurs zu bestehen, aber jeder Kurs ist mit viel Aufwand verbunden, da man ständig kleinere Zwischenklausuren schreiben muss oder ben Einzel oder Gruppenarbeiten zu bearbeiten hatte.

Die Professoren unterschieden sich sehr stark manche sprachen perfektes Englisch und ich habe in diesen Kursen sehr viel gelernt, andere konnten kaum Englisch und der Unterricht fand teilweise auf Chinesisch statt. Ich hatte kaum Chinesisch Kenntnisse als ich nach Taiwan kam und lebte demnach wie in meiner eigenen Gedankenwelt man bekommt nicht so viel von der Außenwelt mit, wenn man keine Schilder lesen kann und auch die Leute nicht versteht. Der Chinesisch Kurs, den ich besuchte vermittelte mir Grundlagen, jedoch bedarf es sehr viel an Übung um wirklich selbständig in Chinesisch einzelne Sätze formulieren zu können. Ich empfehle auf jeden Fall vor Reiseantritt einen Sprachkurs in Chinesisch zu machen.

Mit den einheimischen Studenten freundet man sich schnell an, da diese sehr grosses Interesse an Austauschstudenten haben und gerne mit ihnen Zeit verbringen wollen. Alle waren sehr hilfsbereit und freundlich. An die Arbeitsweise und das Lernniveau musste man sich „herantasten“. Kultur und Mentalität sind schlichtweg anders als bei uns in Europa. In den 4 Monaten meines Aufenthalts habe ich viele neue Freundschaften aus Taiwan und zahlreichen anderen Nationen geschlossen. Es war sehr spannend zu erfahren, wie andere Menschen so leben, wie sie denken und was sie bewegt. Dennoch war es für mich nicht einfach die taiwanesischen Kultur zu verstehen, zumal ich auch zu wenig Einblick in den Alltag der Einheimischen hatte. Was man sagen kann, ist dass sie sehr freundlich und pflichtbewusst, aber auch autoritätsgläubig sind. Was ich sehr geschätzt habe, ist, dass offenkundig so gut wie keine Kriminalität existiert, man fühlt sich überall sehr sicher.

An den Wochenenden machten die meisten Austauschstudenten gemeinsam einen Ausflug um die Insel und die Stadt zu erkunden, was uns natürlich zusammenschweißte. Taiwan hat unglaublich schöne Naturparks und beeindruckende Touristenattraktionen. Egal ob mit Schildkröten schwimmen, mit einem Scooter durch einen Naturpark fahren oder einfach nur einen Tag am Strand verbringen, es gibt immer etwas zu tun und zu sehen. Ich war 4 Monate im Land und viel unterwegs, dennoch habe noch lange nicht alles gesehen.

Andere Länder, wie beispielsweise Japan, Hongkong oder die Philippinen sind nicht weit entfernt von Taiwan. So haben wir auch den einen oder anderen erlebnisreichen Ausflug gemacht. Die Professoren gaben einem zum Reisen gerne einmal ein paar Tage frei, wenn man den Stoff nachholte.

Zusammenfassend kann ich sagen, dass es für mich persönlich eine sehr eindrückliche Lebenserfahrung war. Im Grossen und Ganzen ist Taiwan eine andere Welt, die es sich lohnt kennenzulernen. Natürlich hatte ich des Öfteren Heimweh, doch damit fertig zu werden macht einen schlussendlich robuster für das weitere Leben. Als ich wieder in Europa war reflektierte ich das Erlebte und lernte unsere Standards erneut sehr zu schätzen, vor allem die Hygiene. Ich kann das Auslandssemester an der National Taipei University jedem der abenteuerlustig ist, was erleben will und offen ist, weiterempfehlen.

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