

WELCOME TO MY

Taiwan

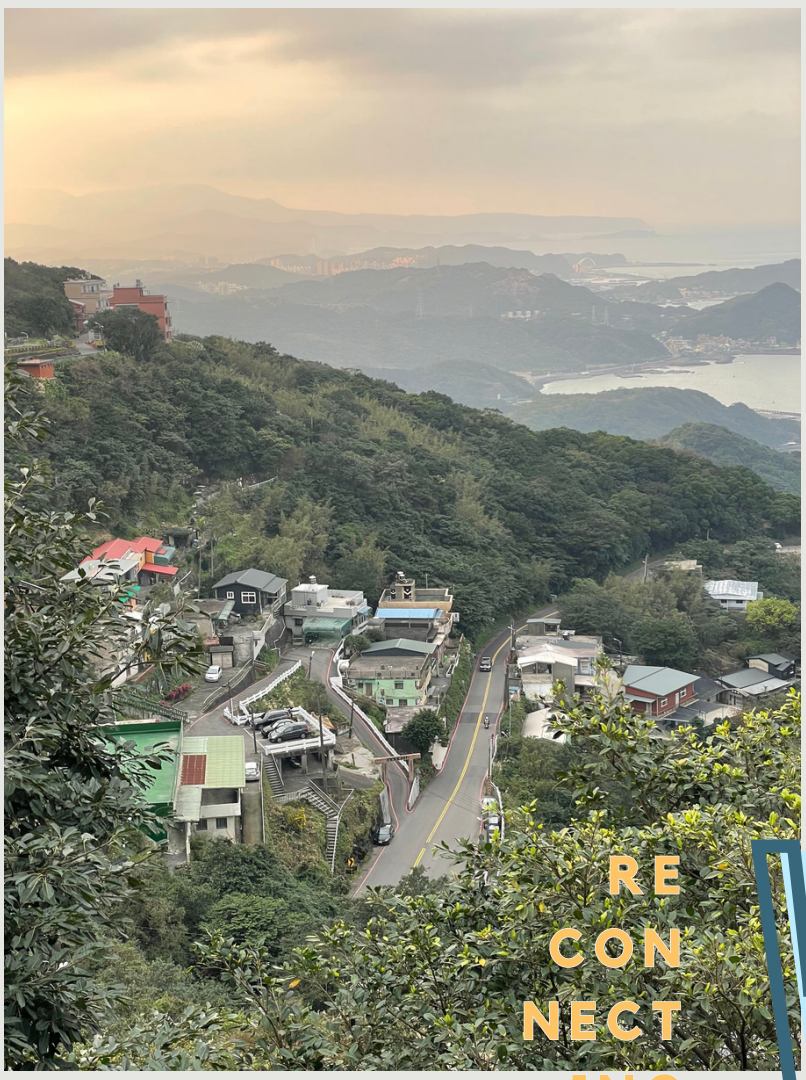
EXPERIENCE



hi, my name is heien.

I took a trip to Taiwan following my Vietnam Trip (check out the previous blog) the beginning of this year. I'd like to share my experiences with you, especially the beautiful scenery of mountains and ocean that the diverse island holds. I also want to share a little bit of the culture and way of life in Taiwan. The bustling city surprisingly yielded really nice individuals leading peaceful lives.





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NATURE



"BREATHTAKING VIEWS"



is probably the most common reply I have when people ask how my Taiwan Trip went. I don't know why, but it never really appeared to me how nice the geography of Taiwan is. I suppose it would have to be great enough for nations to go to war for, but it never clicked just how beautiful the small island could be with its crystal clear shores and green mountains. The air pollution was much lower than that of Vietnam. You would wake up and actually see the clear sky as you walk to get breakfast. During my 4 day trip, I was able to go from land to sea. We climbed mountains with hidden night markets with hundreds of food stalls ready to choose from, each station with its own unique tastes. Even though the city was technologically advanced with skyscraper buildings, everything somehow had a way of tying nature into its architecture. Looking back on these pictures now, I can't believe how serene the landscape was. I can't believe I was there and took these photos myself with my iPhone 12 pro, it just doesn't seem real. From the culture to the physical landscape, Taiwan was truly a beautiful experience with wonderful scenery every direction you looked.



THE CULTURE



One of the largest religions in Taiwan is a mix of Buddhism and Taoism which is characterized by the upholding of deities and gods, alongside Buddha. Temples like the one of the left can be seen all across Taiwan, large or small. These temples are free admission and anyone can come to pray. There, many deities of different specialties are set up all around the temple and you make your round praying your wishes to each deity. On this particular Saturday that I was there, many mothers patiently sat in line to get a custom reading and talisman from a fortune teller for their sons and daughters to find a partner and get

married soon. I found this a bit funny as I knew the Asian generation today hate to be rushed in this matter and often see these actions from their parents as a bit annoying. In a fortune cookie kind of way, you can pick your own fortune reading at the temple as well. There is a cup of sticks with different numbers on them from 1-100 and you close your eyes to pick a stick. The number that you pick corresponds to a cabinet with that number and inside is your fortune paper. Whether you chose to believe the paper or not is up to you. You can also purchase charms at the temple exit. There are many charms ranging from good studies, good luck, and strength in love (to find a significant other soon). It is important to note that you MUST enter at the entrance and exit at the designated exit, never the other way around. If you ever find yourself accidentally entering at the exit, your luck may be as good as gone as it symbolizes a reverse in luck.



transportation

Though Taiwan also has the regular cars that we see as well as motorcars, the major mode of transportation for the average citizen is by subway or metro, especially for long distances. Since the island is so small, having a car would be a bit of nuisance to find places to park every time you go out, along with the traffic. Since Taiwan is one of the leading countries in technology, their subway/metro systems are extremely advanced



and fast, often traveling up to 185mph. Following the respectful culture, Taiwan trains/metro/ subway cars always have designated seating for pregnant women and the elderly as these rides can get quite forceful



when stopping (think about the Atlanta airport train). You will almost never find others sitting in these seats and will keep them empty even if there are no expecting mothers or elderly on the train at the time. Unlike American subway culture, subways in Taiwan prohibit eating, drinking, and even chewing gum on board. If cameras catch you doing any of the three, expect penalty papers

to show up in your mailbox. This usually is a fine of about NT\$1,500 or about \$50USD. Once on board, you can also find that everyone is quiet and mind their own business. There is no loud music or street acts you would usually see in the New York subway stations. I think a large part of this is due to the culture of respect for others in Asia, but especially Taiwan. Though loud in creative aspects such as fashion, the people of Taiwan are quite reserved and tend to think about others more than in the United States. I believe this is also contributed from the gentle Buddhist-Taoist environment they grew up in. Much of the religion focuses on karma and having good intentions to others.

eating habits

I found that Taiwanese people really value breakfast as a great start to their day. With a very holistic approach to their health, they truly prioritize eating well to boost their health. Though not as much as Vietnam, many shops are open early in the morning selling dumplings, donuts, and the famous Taiwanese soy milk. This soy milk is concentratedly pressed from a special strain of soybeans not typically used in the States, which gives it a more refreshing flavor. To tag along, Taiwan is also know for its xiao long baos (小笼包) or soup dumplings.



TAIWANESE

xiao long bao

soup dumplings

cooks make dumplings fresh every hour!
(these two places are famous Taiwanese chains famous for their soup dumplings)



DING TAI FUNG



XING FU TANG



**CUTE HONG KONG STYLE
BREAKFAST SHOP!**



And of course, FOOD

Night markets are nothing unfamiliar to Asian culture as they can be found everywhere in Asia.

Taiwan is no stranger to this industry and is actually famously known for its own unique markets. In English, these markets can be considered "hawkers" and they go on every night, usually starting from 5pm to midnight. These markets are more popular with the younger generation as they have a heavier focus on snacking than the older generation, though you can find that the people selling these snacks are older. Taiwan is famously known for its Stinky Tofu that has a very pungent smell but an extremely umami flavor. I personally didn't try it this time because I'm not a big fan of the smell. They're also known for their crispy chicken and pork cutlets that have the most special, addictive flavor. It's also the size of a small child's face for some reason... Food in these markets are usually quite affordable with each type of snack costing as low as \$1 but can also go up to \$30 depending on what you buy. They sell all types of food from fried chicken nuggets to wagyu beef. Aside from this, boba milk tea as;sp originated from Taiwan so this island holds some of the best boba in the world!



grilled mushrooms



chicken cutlet



boba custard cake



tanghulu



first cup of boba!!



beef noodles

more custard cakes!



as you can tell,

ASIDE FROM VISITING FAMILY, OUR WHOLE INTENT OF THIS TRIP WAS THE FOOD!