

Report: Studying at National Taiwan University of Science and Technology (NTUST)

Home country: Germany

Studies: Business Administration

Semester abroad: 5th semester

Time frame: September 2014 - January 2015 (WS 14/15)

Destination: Taiwan

Host institution: National Taiwan University of Science and Technology (NTUST)

Preface

"Taiwan? Why Taiwan?" That's how my friends began to ask me, when I decided to spend a semester abroad in Taiwan. And after a semester there I can just say, Taiwan is a great unknown country with friendly and deeply polite people. A time I will not forget in my life.

Introduction: Why Taiwan and why I wrote this report?

First, I want to answer the question why I choose Taiwan to spend my semester abroad. I wanted to visit an Asian country for my exchange semester, because I have never been to central Asia before in my life and found it fascinating to experience the daily life and everything it has to offer.

So, I gathered some information which universities in Asia are partners to the RWTH. I found out that Taiwan has two universities that established a connection to the RWTH for exchange students. After the registration process I got accept to NTUST and prepared for my time there. My semester at National Taiwan University of Science and Technology (NTUST), also called Taiwan Tech, was one of the best decisions of my undergraduate studies. Taiwan is a fascinating country with great people and new experiences to be made every day. In this report I try to list information that was helpful to me when arriving and living in Taipei. For more general information on the country, culture and National Taiwan University of Science and Technology as an institution I'd like to point to other great reviews from former exchange students at Taiwan Tech.

Accommodation: Where to stay?

International students may either live in the private flats or dormitory. All you need to do is check a box during the registration process to reserve your room in a dormitory. Dormitories cost about 1000 NTD (25€) per month. Prices for a room in a private flat start from 5000 NTD (125€). If you are going to stay in the dormitory, you don't have to worry, the coordinator will arrange everything. The Dormitory is not really luxurious, but acceptable. Five to six students live in one room. Everybody will have his/her own bed, table and cupboard, there will be several fans and air conditioners (you will have to buy a prepaid card to use it though). Wireless and wired internet are available.

However, I decided to live in a shared flat along with three Taiwanese people. I found this opportunity by posting a request in the NTUST Facebook group, stating that I need a room for 5 months during my stay in Taiwan. A lot of different persons replied to me and offered their help to find what I was looking for. This can be done before you arrive in Taiwan, but it is easier to look for a room outside the dormitories when you are already in Taiwan to take a look at the offered rooms. I had to pay 8000 NTD (200€) for one month in which everything was included except for electricity for the A/C, which I had to pay around 200 NTD (5€) per month. My flat mates were really kind people and took me to different places in Taipei. They also helped me to arrange the contract with the landlord, which I had to sign for my stay. The contract was written in Chinese and they translated it into English, so that I could know what I signed.

Money: How to pay things?

Most transactions are cash based so you need a credit card to withdraw money at one of the many ATMs. For Germany, Deutsche Kreditbank (DKB) or any other bank that offers a free account and free credit card with no international withdrawal fees works best. You can also pay with your student ID for small purchases in 7/11 or the metro ticket. You can transfer money onto your student ID at 7/11.

Prepare to pay two to three month's rents in cash as deposit. As Taipei ranks among the world's safest cities you do not really need to worry about getting robbed or valuables being stolen.

Food: Where to eat?

In the common area of the dormitories, students can use a rice cooker, small stove, pots, microwave and small oven to prepare or reheat food, because it is not allowed to use these in the flats of the dormitory. Compared to the many cheap restaurants and night markets, groceries are relatively expensive. Wellcome grocery stores are often a cheaper option than convenience stores. The 7-11 on the campus is open 24/7 like almost all other convenience stores but gives 10% discount for students with NTUST student ID.

There are many food options just minutes from the campus. Many different soups (including Taiwan's famous and delicious beef noodle soup) as well as various styles of dumplings, fried chicken, any rice dish imaginable, Thai food, McDonalds and even the famous stinky tofu are available. My favorites were Gongguan night market and the Gongguan market hall (blue building) next to it. Many small vendors sell different kinds of authentic take-away dishes that are typical for Taiwan's famous snack culture. Other delicious classics sold throughout the city are milk tea and bubble tea – there are few things better on a hot day than an iced oolong tea with milk and slimy tapioca bubbles.

Even though I had a kitchen with a stove in my shared flat, I barely used it and decided to try out the various and delicious meals throughout the city of Taipei. I have never gotten sick from buying foods on the streets and there is something to be found for every taste.

Transportation: How to get around Taipei City and Taiwan?

Taipei City and Taiwan as a country have almost perfect public transportation. In Taipei, you will find yourself almost always to be close to a MRT (metro) line. They end their service at midnight, but taxis are very affordable starting at only 70-90NTD (~ 2€). There is also a big network of ubike bike sharing stations. After you have registered with your easy card (student ID) and phone number you can rent a bike (first half hour is always free) and return it at another station. For many students, this was the preferred form of transportation back to the flats after a night out. Many students also buy their own bike. I bought a bike mainly to get to the university in the morning, because the ubike station near my house was highly frequented and sometimes you had to wait 10 to 15 to minutes to get a free bike to ride to class. Also, the ubike station at the university was most of the time full, meaning you had to wait to return your ubike to the station.

You can buy a new one for 2000NTD (50€) or used bike (if you can find one). For traveling the island, you can take long distance busses, rent a car or scooter (international driver's license is required) or take the high-speed train which runs from Taipei City in the north all the way down to the south of Taiwan. The journey from Taipei to the south (Kaohsiung) takes around two hours and costs 1500 NTD (37€).

Communication: How to stay in touch with new and old friends?

There is free Wi-Fi for NTUST students on the entire campus. All kind of electronics including smart phones, which are cheap compared to German prices can be repaired or bought new at the multi-story Guanghai electronic market. For calling and mobile data, Chunghwa telecom is said to provide the best network coverage. The prepaid package has per-minute prices for calls comparable to German prepaid deals but 1GB of mobile data is only around 120 NTD (3€). Everywhere I went in Taiwan I had good signal and fast and reliable network speeds.

National Taiwan University of Science and Technology: What is studying at NTUST like?

At Taiwan Tech both students and staff are very proud to be part of one of the nation's top University. At the same time, everybody is extremely welcoming and helpful towards international students. The student volunteer "buddy" program is excellent and very helpful for orientation during the first weeks and a great opportunity to make new friends and learn more about the Taiwanese way of life. Teachers also generally try to accommodate special requests e.g. international students leaving before the end of the semester or students having problems with course registration. The first week of the semester was an orientation week and the people from the Association of International Affairs (AIA) helped the foreign exchange students to register for the courses and complete all the paperwork that was required. Our buddies showed us around the campus and were always there if we had any questions.

Conclusion

Studying in Taiwan is a priceless experience. When I arrived there in September I felt like I was in a different world. However, I got used to the life in Taiwan very fast, mostly because of the extremely friendly Taiwanese people. They are nice, welcoming and always willing to help foreigners. Asian people have a different way of thinking, culture and manners; therefore, it

will be a perfect chance to broaden your horizon and expand your knowledge. I believe that there is no better way to do this, than to live there. The Taiwanese education system is much different from the European system, teachers teach in a different way. Studying in Taiwan is a perfect chance to travel around Taiwan and central Asia as well. Architecture, nature, history, museums are so amazing, that you won't be able to be indifferent. Studying in Taiwan was one of the brightest parts of my life. Taiwan touched my heart and my soul, I will never forget that experience.

Benedikt