



For the first week of the winter holidays, my family and I left for a vacation in Taiwan. We visited two of the 14 counties in Taiwan, Taipei and Hualian. There, we met up with my classmate and his family who is native to Taiwan. In Taipei, I noticed that the buildings aren't that tall or fancy and the streets are narrow. You can hardly hear car horns beeping and the pedestrians walk in a slow pace and patiently wait for the traffic light to turn green. I also realized that I had quite some trouble when reading the street signs since I would have to skip the most of the traditional Chinese characters.

Most of the people in Taiwan all speak in a leisurely manner and seldom seemed to get into arguments. Especially in stores, the sales person will always be willing to explain things to you and show you around with a smile on their face whether you're buying their merchandise or not. The subway in Taipei is very crowded. In every car, there are two seats reserved for the people with special needs like kids, elderly, handicapped or pregnant passengers. During the rush hour, people can hardly find a spot to stand, but no one would take those two seats even though they were empty. One time, we were struggling to find a subway exit at the train station. My dad stopped and asked a middle-aged man who was walking towards us. Right after my dad finished asking, the man pointed to his ears and pulled out a notebook and a pen for my dad to write on. Three of us realized that the man was hearing impaired. The gentleman patiently waited for my dad to finish the question and nodded his head. There are more than ten subway exits at the train station and each one is placed quite far from the other. Before then, the man was rushing towards the opposite direction from us. He politely turned around and guided us halfway to the exit so that we would be very clear of where it was. We had met many friendly people during our trip in Taiwan, but that gentleman's actions did mean a lot to us.



Taipei has many night markets. There, you can find many food booths, clothing and souvenir stores. Before I visited any of the night markets in Taipei, I had an image in my mind of what it might look like: so many people that you squish into others when trying to walk down the road; all different aromas in the air challenging your sense of smell; plastic bags and napkin littering the ground and overflowing trash bins all over the place. My classmate took us to Shilin night market which is very

famous in Taipei. Yep, there was a ton of people down that street like I expected. But as I walked down the street, I could hardly see one piece of trash on the ground and there were no trash cans around. I couldn't help but ask my mom where all the trash goes if there isn't even a place to put it? Not long after, I found out that people hold their trash until they reach the next booth and ask the owner to throw it away for you in their own trash bins behind their counters. So I figured that in Taiwan, trash is meant to be kept "hidden". ☺ After that we all began realizing that there were no trash cans on the sidewalks so we always had to remember to bring a plastic bag with us to collect our own trash.



In Taiwan, most of the people speak Mandarin and I have no difficulties with understanding them, but the reading is quite challenging to me. Taiwan uses *traditional* Chinese characters while China uses *simplified* ones. One night, my family and my friends went to the movie theatre to watch the new movie: Snow Piercer. The movie was in English but the subtitles were in Traditional Chinese. Usually, when my parents and I watch a movie in Nanjing, my mom likes to look at the subtitles to see how they translate it. But in Taiwan, she had no way of doing that since every time she read the subtitles, she would have to guess some characters and even leave blank spaces in the writing and that wouldn't make much sense. One night, we also visited a 24 hour book store in Taipei. When I opened a book, I found that the author's words didn't make sense at all. I later found that it was because I read the text from left to right, like I'm used to, though it was supposed to be read from up to down! I'm glad that I'm not attending an International school in Taiwan as writing simplified Chinese is already challenging enough to me ☺

Taipei isn't as modern as Shanghai and it isn't as big as Beijing, but we feel that Taipei is like a mini China with all of its delicacies, traditions and the kindness of the people compressed into that one island. Being there makes me and especially my parents feel relaxed, urging us to visit again.