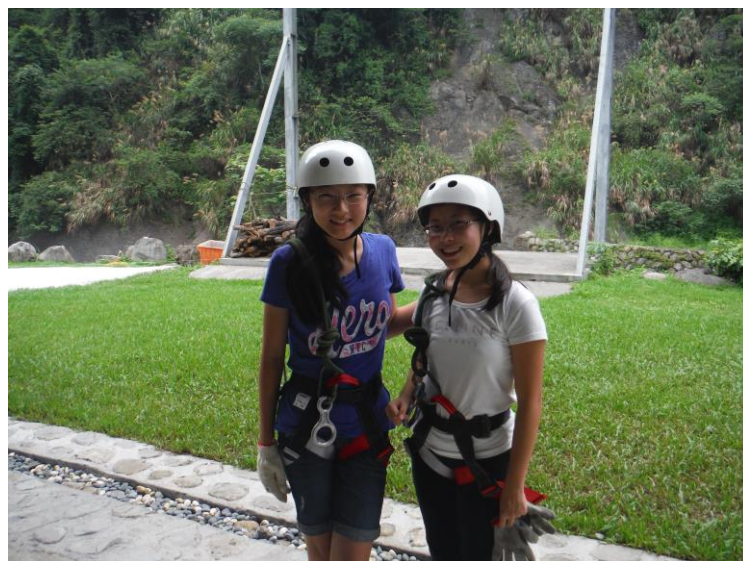


Blog 43 – Summer Camp in Taiwan (Part One)



As I settled into the sturdy harness, the fright finally started creeping in. What if I threw up? What if my helmet or shoe flies off? What if... what if... what if... But I was already in and there was no going back. The other kids were pulling the rope on the other side of the pulley and I was being slowly raised high up into the air on this giant “swing set”. Then suddenly, BANG! I was off. The wind slammed into my face as I swooped down and up again --- hundreds of feet above the river. Good thing I don’t have a fear of heights. I felt all the fear and doubt fly away with the wind and I finally began actually soaking it all in. The rush of the wind, the smell of a sharp and crisp evergreen forest, the roar of the river and the emerald mountains standing before me, yet slowly disappearing into the distance. Even though it was the first day, I knew I made the right choice coming to this summer camp, even if I did get twenty or so mosquito bites.



This summer camp was introduced to us by my friend from Taiwan who also attends Nanjing International School. He went to the camp once two years ago and decided to go again

this year. The camp's name is Wu Lin Tie (武林贴) and was a 5-day sleep away summer camp in the mountains of Taiwan providing activities such as learning to survive in the wilderness, paintball, tightrope walking, and a river adventure. Straight away, we looked at the website and it immediately grabbed my attention! I hadn't attended any sort of sleep away camp and neither have I gotten a chance to do any of those seemingly exhilarating activities when I was in the US. With a great opportunity like this, what reason do I have not to take it and why not share this experience with my friends from the US? The decision was made and we were off to Taiwan. My mom was also very fond of Taiwan herself; it could give her some time for extra sightseeing and summer fun with the other moms. Just like that, my summer kicked off to a great start.

On the first day of camp, our two families met up with some of the other kids departing for the summer camp at the Taipei train station. I've never even heard of having to take a train to attend a summer camp, so I knew this was definitely going to be a special experience. We also made the acquaintance of one of our coaches whose nickname was Monster, a retired officer in the army. But he isn't as scary as he sounds, not to girls at least. The first train we took was more like a subway, stopping frequently every minute or so. It lasted a long two hours but I didn't feel like it took so much time, since my Florida friends and I were talking (in English) the whole way. Sure we got some shocked stares but who could stop us from sharing good stories with each other after a whole year of separation? Getting out of the train, I thought one ride was enough to get us hiking distance from the campsite, but it turned out that we were only changing platforms and boarding yet another train. My mom told me that we were going to take a train, but little did she know we had to make connections. As if one connection wasn't enough, we made one more and boarded once again, another train. We were all a bit tired from all three rides and from waking up early in the morning, so everyone had drooping heads and drowsy eyes. But when the coach announced we were finally there, we all lit up with a new adventurous excitement. There, at the (finally) very last stop, we joined the other group of kids who came from other parts of Taiwan for the same camp and hopped onto a car that took us straight through the mountain range, all the way to the campsite.



There were 29 kids in the entire camp ranging from 10 years of age all the way to 16, and only nine of those were girls. I had to admit that the lot of us was definitely quite the amusing group. There were girls who were so fierce, boys obeyed them at their presence (but it was only meant for fun); there were younger boys who had a problem saying farewell to their phones for even a day, and after five days, the camp turned out to be pretty chaotic. But still it was probably the most fun I've ever had with any group of *former* strangers. Even though it had all just begun

I was already feeling close with these *campmates* and there were still loads of activities coming our way.

To be continued...

