



My Travel Experience in Taiwan

By Jason Wagner

I do not know if it is because I am from another part of the world where I have never seen a work of nature in this particular form, or because I have not travelled to many other countries, but whatever the reasons might be, what I do know is that the Yehliu Geo Park in Northern Taiwan is certainly among one of the most beautiful coastal work of nature that I have ever seen. The waves of the sea have sculpted from a rock near the sea side human-size dazzling mushroom like figures, among other amazing forms, such as the famous "nipple rock," which has the distinct shape of the female breast. These spectacular creations of nature neither fear nor fancy the tidal surges of the sea that continue to carve their shapes. One gets this feeling of calmness by being next to the endless splashing of waves rushing upon this giant boulder of rock, while looking at the beauty that the wrath of these very waves have created.

During my travels to Taiwan nothing will be more electrifying than my visit to the Livestock Auction Market where live pigs are auctioned. This Market is located next to the Chaishan Meat & Foods Co. Ltd. in Taipei County. I have read about livestock auction markets, I even saw some photos of a few of these places, but here in Taiwan, I certainly saw the real deal. Unimaginable, unbelievable, these are not even the words to describe the sights unfolding before me, as I recall my visit to this place. How and why should I have ever taught that such a place like this would exist somewhere in the world? What was even more impressive was the computerized auctioning system at this facility, all benches where bidders are seated, is equipped



with a button that once pressed signals that a bidder is accepting the current announced bid. Recalling the entire process from when the pigs are presented to commence the auction, to the eventual sale, is something that up to this day still impresses

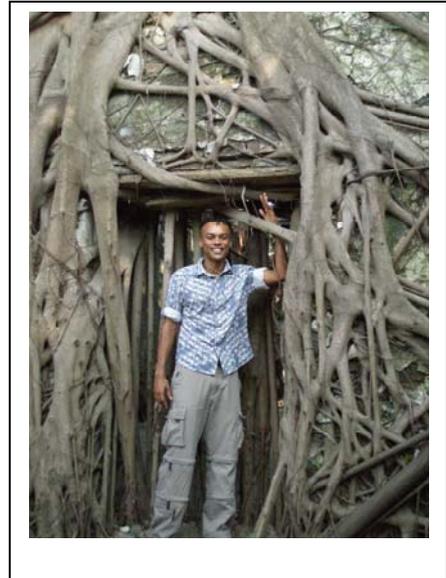
me. When we were leaving the Livestock Auction Market, outside was a big chubby pig strolling by the entrance. I taught he had gotten away from the Auction area, but it so turns out that he is the ambassador of the Auction Market, everyone was playing with him, we even took photos with this big chubby fellow. You might be wondering why I have decided to highlight my visit to this place, my program of studies is in agriculture, and therefore needless to say this sort of stuff "rocks" my world.



Tainan City is steeped in cultural history; its canal might someday become the “Venice” in Asia. Yvonne our tour guide made us fall in love with Tainan, the same way that she has, and it only took her one day to do this. My class mates and I visited Tainan two days before the TICA Tournament, and on the second day of our visit Yvonne took us on an unforgettable tour of the historical part of Tainan City. She showed us the area where Koxinga (or Cheng Cheng-kung) defeated the Dutch settlers in 1662 to reclaim Taiwan. At the Chihkan Tower formerly known as Fort Provintia we saw the nine stone tortoises each carved from



a solid granite slab carrying on their backs giant royal stele written in both Chinese and Mandarin. Nearby the imposing Chihkan Tower with its vase shaped doors and various Pavilions dedicated



to the god of wisdom, among others is a stunning reminder of the distinct architectural, artistic and cultural identity of Tainan’s past inhabitants. Yvonne took us to the Confucius Temple, the Guan-Gong Temple, the Koxinga Shrine, and the Official God of War Temple, her insights into the history and symbolism behind these monuments allowed us to not only see, but understand what these buildings meant to the people that made them and those that visit them until this day.

Travelling to the various counties in this country has shown me that Taiwan is not only about the metropolitan lifestyle of Taipei. The warmth of the Taiwanese people is everywhere. Regardless of language barriers, in areas such as Miaoli, where we spent a day to attend an Indigenous Festival, the people truly know how to make us feel special at their home. One learns that communication is not only by words, but it can also be delivered by gestures, and nothing is more powerful than the art of dance with music. We had an experience where they were talking to us in Chinese for more than two hours and we understood only a few words that were spoken. Not understanding what the topic is all about, yet understanding that they were talking about something is kind of how I would describe this situation. I don’t know if I am making sense? Anyways let me leave it at that.



The little of what I have seen of Taiwan makes me so eager to experience what is yet to be seen. I especially thank the Department of Agricultural Economics of the National Taiwan University and Taiwan’s ICDF for providing me with this unique opportunity to not only study in Taiwan, but to be able to visit and explore the charms and beauty that this nation holds.