

## Ilia's Diary

(106.10.3~106.10.11)

Day 1, Tuesday - On Tuesday the 3rd of October at 5:30pm, flight EK366 arrived at Taipei airport. My first impression of the people of Taipei was a welcoming one, with Kate and Joyce, coming to pick me up waving bright red, hand-crafted 'Welcome' signs. After a quick introduction, we rode the MRT to Zhongping Junior High, where we met up with Jessica, my extremely gracious host mother for the next 4 months, the Headmaster of Zhongping, and the soon-to-be new Head of PTA, Atchi! I was next given my first taste of authentic Taiwanese food, which was still amazing, despite how exhausted I was by this point. Once we had finished our dinner I headed home with Jessica, and was taken on a brief tour of my new home, which I was very impressed with, before falling unconscious on my new bed.

Day 2 Wednesday - Fortunately today was a public holiday, celebrating the moon festival, as I woke up at 12 o'clock. As soon as I had tidied myself up sufficiently, I met my new host family. They were all extremely lovely and welcoming, and could all speak great English to my relief! That night, to celebrate the moon festival accordingly, they had a barbecue at their home, which made my arrival well-timed as I was introduced to their whole family. I tried more different, alien foods that night than I have in my life, making for a truly fantastic first day in Taiwan, and Asia for that matter.

Day 3 Thursday - Today was my first day at a Taiwanese school. However (also for the first time) I wasn't there to attend classes like a regular student. For most of the day I was introducing myself or being introduced to teachers and students alike. Otherwise, I marked a couple of English Self-Introductions written by some of this year's exchange students, wrote my own self-introduction, started preparing a Presentation on Scotland and tried to keep up with what everyone was saying in Mandarin/Taiwanese. I also realised how overdressed my entire wardrobe was going to be for the next couple of months, in the traditional Western style, but I don't have any other clothes so it'll just have to do.

Day 4 Friday - this morning at school, I practiced more Mandarin, learned about 2 more presentations I will be doing and started off with those before heading back to my place. In the evening I went on my first scooter ride into town with my host mother, Jessica, to pick up some fresh food. One of these foods was a Taiwanese ice-cream thing without the cream. It was basically frozen ice milk with red beans, and tasted surprisingly good!

Day 5 Saturday - I just got back from a barbecue/party/gathering at the coast. A small inflatable swimming pool had been set up in the harbour alongside the boats, with jet skis available to take out as well. Unfortunately it was too cold for me to want to go swimming, but of course I had to try out the jet ski! Driving it was probably just as exciting as it was terrifying, me not being very good at it, but I loved it all the same. On the way back home, we stopped off at a night market, where we had some interesting food and played a couple of games in the arcade. Every one of us returned to the apartment with at least one stuffed animal.

Day 6 Sunday - Again, I had quite a few new experiences today. The first of them was, that I attended a Church meeting. I'm not sure what I was expecting, but it certainly wasn't that. Don't get me wrong, I've been inside more churches than I can count, but only for the scenic aspect of them. However, this church meeting was held in a room above a garage. But whatever it lacked in attractiveness, it certainly made up for in spirit. I have honestly never met a more cheerful group, and really enjoyed the atmosphere they created. I was here with Kate, and we had lunch with the everyone before heading out on a short tour of Xinchuang. We went on a walk through the main park, and took a look at the sports centre, the baseball field, the athletic ring and everything else too. I bought some new trainers, Taiwanese snacks and super noodles and other little necessities, before heading home on the back of Kate's scooter.

Day 7 Monday - My host family and I went out to lunch at 12.30 to a lovely buffet and hot-pot restaurant. Everything looked amazing, however there were some options, such as duck blood and fish eggs, that I was definitely not brave enough to try. Afterwards, we went to an outside saxophone busking concert, which was an amazing experience, not just because of the music, but also by how gorgeous the surroundings were, as the stage was set underneath a huge willow tree. At around 7.40pm I headed out with Kate to a woman called Jean's house, who was hosting a gathering with the church group. I came along and introduced myself again to everyone, for those who hadn't been to the previous Sunday's meeting. Once everyone had chatted a bit they went on to sing a couple of hymns, whilst Kate helped me to write down the characters phonetics. We stayed for a few hours before I headed back home with a couple extra songs to translate.

Day 8 Tuesday - Today we went for a hike up ....., which was extremely tiresome, seeming as it was also a very hot day, and I definitely did not have the right outfit for climbing in this weather. We made it halfway, before everyone decided to try again another day, and we headed back down for dinner. To celebrate Jessica's birthday we went out for dinner to another lovely restaurant, and each had a five-course meal.

Day 9 Wednesday - Apart from going to Zhongping, and carrying out a lot more research for my presentations, then coming home and continuing to do so, I haven't really done much today. I did realise that I only have 6 days left to complete my Alien Resident Visa.