

## Studying Abroad in Taiwan 2018: Nikolette Manna



Studying abroad has always been a dream of mine, and it has been simply that- a dream that I never thought could happen. Listening in awe, I have heard about trips that classmates have taken around the world and wished it could be me. I found that it is the most *fulfilling* opportunity.

I was able to talk with my former professor, Miranda Lin, about study abroad experiences that ISU offered. She shared with me the countless years she had spent going to Taipei, Taiwan every summer with a small group of students. In my mind, I was thinking, *Taiwan?? Where even is that? Why Taiwan?* It never crossed my mind to consider places that I was not familiar with. After speaking with her, listening to her stories, and finding out that the most inexpensive study abroad trip was to Taiwan, I started doing my research and I was intrigued! Taiwan is a small island in Southeast Asia with a population of around 23 million people, which is about double the population of Illinois. I had never been out of the country before, but I took a risk and picked Taiwan!



Even though I could barely keep up with paying school expenses, I knew that there had to be a way to make it happen! Besides budgeting and watching my expenses, I applied to every single scholarship that ISU offered. Hard work paid off because in January 2018, with less than 5 months until departure, I was chosen as the Franson Anderson Endowed Memorial Scholarship recipient and I was able to study abroad in Taiwan with the College of Education in the summer of 2018! I never thought in a million years I would ever win a scholarship- you won't get one unless you apply!



There were only 7 total ISU students on this trip, and we all became so close by the end! That is what is so great about it being a small program. We all studied at The University of Taipei's lab school where we observed, shadowed, and taught in classroom settings that were very different than what we were used to. Some students knew zero English, and some students were fluent in English. These interactions helped me develop my professional goals into skills that have pushed me into becoming a successful citizen and teacher in a global context. Comparing the

teaching practices, instructional techniques, curriculum models, and assessment strategies that they use with children in Taiwan with the United States was astonishing; I learned so much about teaching diverse children from this trip.

The people of Taiwan are so genuine, caring, and always willing to help even if they don't speak English! I lived with one other student in our group and our host mother treated us like her real children! She was protective of us, made us *tasty* home cooked Taiwanese meals, and was always a text away if we needed her. The best part of my experience with my host mother was that she spoke *zero* English! I learned so much as a person by communicating with someone who doesn't understand the same language as you. It was a very fun month in Taiwan with her and she taught us so much! One time, we followed her around on the MRT (subway). We transferred three different



times, and the whole time we had no idea where we were going; we would just follow her. When we asked her where we were going in Google Translate, she responded back with "A very beautiful place." The unknowingness made our adventures even more exciting. When we arrived, she showed us around an area with gorgeous greenery with water and a bridge. We rode in a swan boat together and took a relaxing ride in the water. On the way back, we passed through a local market where host mom grabbed some fresh produce.

I cannot emphasize how much this trip has completely changed my views on life. Studying abroad changed the way I interact with and perceive others. It has sparked new personal and professional goals that would not have developed without this opportunity.