

Taiwan: Taipei

Chapter 41 - Dec. 26, 2015-Dec 31, 2015



Taiwan ... “The Heart of Asia” ... and Taipei, its capital, has come a long way from being originally settled by the Ketagalan tribe before 1709, then being settled by the Han Chinese and now evolving to its high-tech image. Taipei City, approximately 307 years old, reminded me of Chiang Mai where I now reside in many ways, especially the many restaurants and street vendors offering very good food and the narrow sidewalks, fraught with steps and unevenness. But Taipei in

its short history in sharp contrast to Chiang Mai has excelled dramatically in its modernism, infrastructure and economy.

We arrived in Taipei on 28 December via train after our visit to Taroko National Park. After checking in at the Nihao Taipei Hotel, we ventured out via subway and bus to the National Palace Museum. Entry fee for the museum was NTD \$250 (approx. \$8 USD). The campus is expansive and the main building is touted as contains the largest collection of Chinese artifacts and art (some 700,000 items). Unfortunately, due to photo restrictions, I could not take any photos inside. Photos below are of the main

entrance /
esplanade
leading up to
the Museum.





Our time in Taipei was limited so we had a lot of ground to cover in one day. After leaving the Museum we headed via bus



then subway (Bus 255 to Shilin Sta.; subway to Ntu Hospital Station) to the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall. Entry area to the left. The inscription at the top of the entry gate translates to 'Liberty Square'.



This building is the National Concert Hall on the North side flanked on the South by the National Library. To the East stands the Memorial Hall.

As one might expect, the campus is very large to accommodate the mass gatherings that occur including

demonstrations and rallies. The foreground of the Memorial Hall is a large landscape garden area. Chiang Kai-shek (October 31, 1887 – April 5, 1975)



was a Chinese political and military leader who served as the leader of the Republic of China between 1928 and 1975. This Memorial Hall was completed in 1980 in his honor.



Inside the Hall is the main Chamber where a moment of Chiang Kai shek presides. In the Chamber we watched the changing of the Honor Guards (Republic of Chian Armed Forces) which occurs precisely on the hour. After observing this, we ventured onto the many exhibits featuring the life and times of Chiang Kai-shek including his Cadillacs!



To the right, his office. (Picture taking was limited).



Outside, we walked the beautiful gardens before departing to our next destination. Along the way some of the local residents stopped to pose for a photo.





Next stop was the Xiangshan (Elephant Mountain) Hiking Trail. We got there by walking to the CKSMH Station & boarded the subway to Xiangshan Station then



walked about 1km to the railhead. The trail leads one to one of the best views of Taipei City and Taipei 101. The reason for the name is because of its external shapes I understand. The climb up to the viewing area was via a series of steep steps & a bit tiring but I did accomplish my mission ... fortunately there are handrails in most places where needed but not always.



This was at the beginning of the trail upwards ... it was like this all the way up with a few landings along the way strategically placed I thought as I gasped for air ...

and of course the view from the top was spectacular and well worth the effort put forth.





Afterwards we made our way back down and proceeded to take the subway to a night market near the

Longshan Temple. We ordered some traditional Taiwanese food at a small restaurant that was packed (a sign that the food is very good).

Afterwards we stopped to listen to some music, after all, it's not everyday one gets to be treated to a harpist in a public venue.





Then we made our way to the Mengjia Longshan Temple to check it out.

The temple was built in Taipei in 1738 by settlers from Fujian (a province on the

southeast coast of mainland China).

It served as a place of worship and a gathering place for the Chinese settlers. It is a temple of the Chinese folk religion for worshipping deities such as Guanyin, Mazu and Guan Yu.



The hanging lantern ceiling was indeed impressive.



Outside there is a very nice waterfall feature & ponds, etc. Makes for a nice ambience in a rather peaceful setting.



The following morning we made our way to the airport and began our trek back to Chiang Mai to celebrate New Year's Eve, Thai-style.

My overall impression of Taiwan was very favorable & my thoughts on the way home took me to thinking about possible plans for a return trip to explore other areas such as Kenting National Park, Spring and Autumn Pavilions, Kaohsiung City & Shei-Pa National Park.

In conclusion, I'm reminded of a quote by Andrew Zimmern, a popular American TV personality ... *"Please be a traveler, not a tourist. Try new things, meet new people, and look beyond what's right in front of you. Those are the keys to understanding this amazing world we live in."*

With each new adventure, this is exactly what I try to do to the best of my ability.

Chiok lí kin á jít/lít chin hó ê jít chí ! (Have a nice day)