

Love in Chaoyang 2023: Pedaling in Taiwan

It has now been two years since my arrival here in Taiwan as a student. While it has been tough and challenging adapting to a new environment, I started my journey here as an optimistic student. It helped that I have been to Taiwan multiple times before although I was just limited to Taipei and only for a few days. Regardless, I always wondered what it would be like to study in this place being a student before when I visited. What peaked my curiosity were the locals. Compared to other countries I have visited, I feel that people here were very friendly and light hearted as they would always smile and be very polite. Secondly, it was excellent for me as a student to venture into my research agenda here at the time, and until today, my research agenda was about bikes (cycling) and the landscape. In this article, I would like to share some bike experiences that I had with very fortunate interactions with locals:

1. First sight of Sun-moon Lake

It took me just a few days upon my arrival to hear about this place. It was so popular that it was an easy mention during the small talks I've had with fellow students and teachers while adapting to the CYUT environment. Of course, my next goal was to see this place. As a Landscape Architect, I really enjoy nature and this lake was definitely top of my bucket list.

When I checked google maps for directions, I realized that I could easily bike this distance from the third dormitory. I've been a long distance road cyclist for a few years now, and 60km from Wufeng doesn't look so bad. So, upon the earliest opportunity to take a long vacation, I decided to do a bikepacking trip to the area, with accommodations made in Puli, Nantou.

Unfortunately, my travel date was a rainy day. It was still alright because I can ride a bike in the wet, but if I can, I would refrain myself from doing so. Since the hotel was already booked, I decided to push on. What I wasn't ready was the wind. Rain was something I was familiar with from my Philippine experiences, but the cold wind was something else. It made it extremely difficult as I didn't have any gear for riding in colder temperatures such as rain jackets, leg warmers, etc.

I still decided to push on. It was a fun ride, and since I was a beginner with route selection, I didn't know that I could just take route 14 and 21. Instead, I tortured myself by passing through 131, if I recall correctly. Anyways, this route I selected was a route into some mountainside with great views. As someone who enjoys the landscape, I still found it to be great overall.



When I arrived at the lake, rain was getting heavier so I sat by the lake side bench. I just wanted to take pictures of the lake. It was amazing to see it for the first time with the three signature islets of reeds and the sort of foggy atmosphere the lake gave. As I was doing my own thing, on the table beside me were a group of women eating lunch. It was quite sweet when out of nowhere, they invited me to join them and they gave me some food, including soup that warmed my chilly body. We got to talk a little, though they were limited with their English and I with mandarin, I would like to think that when I recall this, we had a happy conversation.

2. CYUT cyclists

I arrived in CYUT in the middle of the semester due to travel restrictions of the pandemic. During my “first” actual semester when I get to experience school from the very beginning, I saw the club fair, and during this activity I was drawn to join the CYUT bike club. It was fun to hangout in the club room surrounded by bikes and youth. Rides were great as they introduced me to road culture and route selection for bike activities. Unfortunately, nowadays, the Phd work and actual work has made it difficult for me to participate in activities, but I hope to have more time in the future to join them again.



Another interaction I had was with a student I met during a micro-course on cleaning the environment. It was an activity set in Dakeng where we had to hike and pick up litter around the trail. We needed to find partners and this guy asked me if we can be a pair. It was cool and nice talking to him so we decided to keep in touch through social media. When he saw my profile, he asked if I am a cyclist to which I replied “yep.” Apparently, he was also a cyclist, and it has been two years that we ride regularly to different routes near Wufeng like Zhongxingling, 136, 139 and even twice to Sun-moon lake.

3. GuangFu on a lazy morning

I’ve been biking a lot when I realized I haven’t explored the nearby areas as much around Wufeng. It’s just like the irony of being around an area where one is so familiar that the tendency is for one to not go to those areas..? (I hope I’m making sense). Anyways, it was a lazy morning, probably tired from the weeklong studying, I decided to explore the road beyond GuangFu village (road beyond the 921 museum). It was fun, because of all the “baby climbs” it presented and it was a very quiet day, with very minimal traffic. I was cycling hard and was tired after going around maybe two temples.

In one temple at the base, there was a group of people having a Sunday feast. When they saw me, they suddenly invited me. At first they offered me some water, and though I am shy and reluctant, I was grateful for their hospitality. Suddenly they gave more and more food. I was really worried because my phone died (it was a lazy day after all and I didn’t bother even charging it) meaning that my google translate would not be available.

What happened next was just amazing. The head of the family I guess found some liking to me because of my bike. I realized this because he shared photos of him riding a bike and we talked about cycling, what I was doing here, routes, etc.



Taiwan has been great to me and my bike. I can't wait for the next cycling adventure to take! 😊

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