

Roaring the Friendly Flames



Kathleen Chen (R) and her two friends pose for a picture at the annual San Gabriel Taiwanese Lions Club banquet. Attendees dressed in their best clothing for the special occasion.

Photo courtesy of Kathleen Chen

Kathleen Chen
Editor

People dressed in their finest clothes entered the hotel lobby of the Doubletree Hotel in San Gabriel with such finesse and walked with such elegance. They headed towards the banquet room, but there was one group of people that looked different from the others. Each member of this group wore a dark blazer bedazzled with eye-catching pins. This group is known as the San Gabriel Taiwanese Lions Club. The club was holding their annual installation banquet at the hotel on June 26.

The night started off slow, but it was still full of life. The banquet was filled with all these bubbly and cheerful people. Lively chatter spread through the room like wildfire. Minutes passed by, and before everyone knew it, the banquet officially started. Some opening words were given and special guests were introduced. In a short while, dinner was provided - soup, salad, salmon, a choice of either chicken or beef,

and a fruit tart. With the dinner already over, the banquet was still not done. The installation process had still yet to begun. Each person who held his or her own new position was called up to the front of the room. Each position was explained briefly and each person was asked, "Are you ready to take on this position?" Each person replied with confidence in his or her own "I do's".

After the entire installation process, here was the part of the night that everyone else was waiting for, the raffle. Hoping that his or her number would be called, everyone held tightly onto his or her own ticket. Now the golden jewel of all the prizes was free tickets to a trip to Taiwan. What an amazing prize! The winner of that beautiful prize was kept secret because none of the interns knew who the winner was.

Full of color from beginning to end, the Taiwanese Lions installation banquet was a success and filled with entertainment. Next up, the TACL Community Scholarship Ceremony in August.



A scenic view from one of Kenting National Park's hiking trail.

Photo courtesy of Eric Hsu

RETURN TO TAIWAN

Eric Hsu
Editor

This June, I completed my annual pilgrimage to the holy land of Taiwan. On my trip, I accomplished many impressive feats: consuming the meat of a giant sea snail, visiting the former president's nuclear shelter, hiking in Kenting during a typhoon, and eating poop shaped ice cream at a toilet themed restaurant. I will explain how I arrived at these interesting places if you are interested in my story.

The restaurant where you eat the sea snail is in Danshui. It is located in a metal building and the restaurant name is "Da Lu Mei" or "Mainlander Girl." Here you get to pick the seafood that you want to eat while it is still alive, and the chef cooks and cuts it up for you to eat. This is not a restaurant for the animal lover. I have to say that the giant sea snail tasted quite good; its meat was chewy and the chef was considerate enough to cook some of its strangely shaped internal organs for me. If you are interested in eating weird things, then check out this restaurant.

To visit the former dictator Chiang Kai-Shek's personal nuclear shelter is an experience all everybody should have. The nuclear bunker, built in 1961, is located in Cheng Cing Lake Park in Niasong District, Kaohsiung. After the end of the Cold War and the death of

Chiang Kai-Shek, the shelter was converted into an aquarium. The aquarium is filled with some of the weirdest creatures I have ever seen in my life, like "E.T.," a fish so strange that scientists dubbed it after the alien protagonist in Steven Spielberg's movie.

My parents and I decided to drive down to Kenting next to go hiking. Despite the fact that it was raining heavily, I still got a good experience out of Kenting National Park. While hiking, I was stalked by a troupe of monkeys as they hid in the canopy above the trail. Worst of all, I could hear their primitive grunting noises and see their terrifying red faces.

When I finally got back to Taipei, the rain stopped and the day became hot instantly. My parents and I decided to go to Ximending to eat shaved ice at a restaurant named "Modern Toilet." You sit on toilets to eat poop-shaped ice cream and pee-colored shaved ice out of toilet-shaped bowls. I know that many people are disgusted by the notion of eating out of toilet-shaped bowls, but I highly recommend the restaurant for its experience.

When people visit Taiwan, they usually shop and eat at night markets. But Taiwan has a lot more to offer than shopping and good food. If you have got what it takes, then be bold and experience the less-travelled path. Go discover the true soul of Taiwan.

Adventures in Belize



Leeann Mao next to a waterfall at Cockscomb Creek, Belize.

Photo courtesy of Leeann Mao

Leeann Mao
Editor

When I first heard of the opportunity to go to Belize at my high school, my first thought was "Huh? Where?" My second thought, after hearing that it was a Central American country, was "Too scary, too many weird animals." But after hearing more about the trip and the adventures that it guaranteed, along with the fact that it was "Senior year, bro!", I decided to enroll for the trip along with a few of my friends.

The trip was offered by the AP Environmental Science teacher at Temple City High, Mr. Scott Randles. Three years ago, he had gone with his own church youth group, along with two previous groups from the high school. However, because his Belizean hot sauce supply was running low, he announced at the beginning of the academic school year that he would take fourteen students from his present and past AP Environmental Science classes to the country.

The group, consisting of nine seniors, three juniors, and two chaperones, arrived at the Belizean airport on April 2. We then departed to the van, chauffeured by our very own Mr. Randles. The road that we were taking, he informed us, was one of the four main highways in the country. Although I knew that the country was about the size of Massachusetts and was inhabited by a mere 320,000 people, I had not realized the extent of the difference between Belize and America.

We arrived at our home for the next few days, Jaguar Creek. It was a gorgeous campsite, complete with its own lagoon, hiking trails, classrooms, and dorms that could house almost sixty inhabitants at once. The staff of Jaguar Creek consisted of a mix of Mayan people and Creoles, people with mix of Dutch and Black ancestry. This diversity in people reflected the diversity of races found in the country. Along with these two races, there were also the Mestizos (European/ Native American), Spanish, and the Garifuna (African).

During our stay at Jaguar Creek, we explored Mayan ruins at Xunantunich, searched for jaguars at Cockscomb Creek, and swam at the Blue Hole, a collapsed cave. On our inflatable donut-shaped floaties, we paddled down into mythical places under the wild of the rainforest.

However, none of those adventures topped our homestay. After spending a day of community service, which was to make stairs, the group was divided into pairs and sent to stay with one of the families in a nearby village for a night. My partner and I were sent to a home of a restaurant owner with six children.

Upon arriving, my partner and I were dragged around for a tour around their village. The two girls, five and seven years old, insisted that we piggyback them around while the boy, nine, took pictures of everything that moved with our digital cameras. We spent most of the night, playing with them and their versions of "catch" and "tag" and even had an impromptu Easter Egg hunt. Their house was small, but they had many pets, including chickens, turkeys, and puppies running through their backyard. The house had neither showers nor sinks, just a bucket of clean water in the backyard. Despite this, it was a magical night from the exposure of a completely different culture.

We left Jaguar Creek for Southwater Cave, a small island off the coast of Belize, for the rest of our stay. The next three days were just a blur of snorkeling, stargazing, and relaxing on this "beach paradise". The island was extremely small, about the size of Temple City High school. The island was ran by a woman, a former marine biology teacher, and she wanted to teach students about the importance of marine life. Along with our frequent snorkel trips, we were educated on the importance of the caves and their ecosystem of marine life.

I could go on and on about the ten-day trip, but there is not enough space to talk about that life changing trip. All I can say is: If you get a chance to explore Belize, take it. All the adventures that you take will stay with you for a long time.