

## International Students' Cultural Journey Explores Taiwan's Sustainability and Hakka Heritage

Campus focus

To provide international students with a deeper understanding of Taiwanese culture and local characteristics, the International Student Guidance Section organized the “2025 International Students Cultural Tour: Two-Day Taoyuan – Hsinchu – Miaoli Trip” from November 29 to 30. Centered on Hakka culture, rural experiences, and ESG-focused sustainability education, the event was led by Vice President for International Affairs Hsiao-Chuan Chen and brought together approximately 100 international students and staff. The journey took participants from the Taoyuan coastline into the mountainous towns of Hsinchu, allowing them to experience Taiwan's diverse and authentic landscapes through nature, ecology, culture, and local narratives.

The itinerary began along the Taoyuan coast, where visits to the Xucuoang Wetland and the Guanyin Caota Sand Dunes offered students close-up observations of Taiwan's coastal ecosystems. Migratory birds, intertidal organisms, and the geological significance of dunes enabled participants to directly witness Taiwan's adaptive strategies and conservation efforts in response to its natural environment. For many students from abroad, such landscapes are rarely encountered in daily life, making this experience an essential first step in understanding how Taiwan coexists with its land. After enjoying fresh local seafood at Yongan Fishing Harbor, the group visited the Yongan Conch Cultural Park. Focusing on Hakka fishing village culture and algal reef ecosystems, the park provided insights into the coastal lifestyle of the Hakka community and highlighted the ecological importance of algal reefs. Subsequent visits to the tourist fish market and the Seaview Bridge offered additional perspectives on Taoyuan's coastal industries and daily life, completing the coastal cultural experience. In the afternoon, the journey continued to Hsinchu, where the focus shifted to another significant aspect of Taiwanese culture—Hakka heritage. Beipu

Old Street, with its well-preserved historic settlements and streetscapes, allowed students to experience firsthand the historical development of Hakka culture in Taiwan. Walking through streets where historic landmarks and everyday life coexist helped students gain a deeper understanding of the Hakka people's migration history, lifestyle, and cultural continuity. On the second day, hands-on activities at Mike Farm transformed cultural observation into active participation. Experiences such as earth oven cooking, Hakka rice cuisine DIY, ox cart rides, and ecological tours enabled students to engage directly with the essence of Hakka and rural culture—practicality, diligence, and a close connection to the land. Earth oven cooking required patience and teamwork, rice food preparation reflected traditional culinary wisdom, and farm tours and tractor rides offered a tangible sense of the rhythm of rural life in Taiwan. Through hands-on labor and crafts, students gained insight into how the Hakka community builds relationships with the environment in everyday life. Audrey Leticia Kustanto, a fourth-year student in International Business from Indonesia, shared that her favorite activities were making Hakka lei cha and mochi at the farm. Experiencing the transition from simply eating these foods to making them herself felt both novel and enjoyable. She was also profoundly impressed by the wetlands and dune landscapes in Taoyuan, remarking, “I didn't know Taiwan had such beautiful places.” While visiting Beipu Old Street, she noticed the abundance of traditional snacks, such as mochi and lei cha, which further deepened her appreciation for the distinct characteristics of Hakka culture. She reflected that the most significant takeaway from the trip was discovering the diverse landscapes and lifestyles across Taiwan, describing the experience as “much richer than I had imagined.”

Wee Jing Wei, a fourth-year student in Information Management from Malaysia, noted that he especially enjoyed making Hakka lei cha, vegetable buns, and red turtle cakes at Mike Farm, feeling a strong sense of accomplishment from eating food he had prepared himself. The majestic scenery of the Caota Sand Dunes also left a lasting impression, with the sound of waves and sweeping views creating a calming atmosphere. He also

observed cultural differences in lei cha. In Taiwan, it is typically sweeter and served as a snack or beverage, whereas in Malaysia, it is saltier and consumed as a main dish. This “shared origin, divergent evolution” of food culture struck him as both novel and fascinating. Overall, he remarked that the journey showcased Taiwan’s creativity in transforming traditional culture into engaging tourism experiences—preserving heritage while making it accessible and enjoyable for international visitors.







