



HOLY CROSS HIGH SCHOOL

† THE DIOCESE OF SCRANTON †

Ms. Allison Carey Holy Cross High School Class of 2008
University of Scranton

Ms. Taylor Rojek Holy Cross High School Class of 2008
DeSales University

Allison Carey and Taylor Rojek, two recent alumnae, have studied abroad around the globe. Both recently spent time in Taiwan, home country to many of our international students.

What brought you to Taiwan?



Allison: I studied Mandarin in college, and a few of my professors were from Taiwan, so I had always heard great things about the country that sparked my interest. I also wrote about China-Taiwan trade relations as a part of my Honors thesis, which made me want to visit even more. So before graduation, I applied for and was offered a Huayu Enrichment Scholarship from

the government of Taiwan to study advanced Mandarin at one of their universities, which was a really exciting opportunity.

Taylor: I'm a free lance writer and fact-checker for Bicycling magazine. My boss sent me an email saying that the magazine had received an invite to go on a press trip to Taiwan, but all the staff was tied up, and would I like to go? Uh, yes please. The trip was put on by the Taiwan Tourism Bureau, and it was essentially a chance for them to show us journalists the best of their country in hopes that we would be able to spread that to a larger audience through our work. We went all over the country- riding bikes, eating awesome food, and staying in gorgeous hotels

You've both studied abroad in other places (Allison in China and Argentina, Taylor in Italy). What stood out about Taiwan?

Allison: The biggest thing was the friendliness of the people. There were friendly people in China and Argentina as well, of course, but the Taiwanese really stood out. I was once struggling to find my way out of a labyrinthine train station, and when I asked someone to point me in the right direction, she stopped what she was doing, planned my entire route out, and then walked me through the building to the correct exit. Also, I was able to see a lot of the country while I was there, and it is really stunningly beautiful.

Taylor: Everything – I lived in Italy and travelled all over Europe, but Asia was so different. The food, the culture...really everything was unlike anything I've experienced. Asian food was probably the biggest culture shock. In Europe, food is different from home, but it's almost always recognizable. Asian cuisine has a lot of unfamiliar seafood, and they're big on sweet and



sour tastes combined in the same dish. Also I ate a deep-fried worm when I was there. You can tell me you wouldn't think twice about that, but I wouldn't believe you. I'll also second what Allison said about friendly people in Taiwan. I was walking down a street in Taipei trying unsuccessfully to find a puppet museum. I turned

around and started walking the other direction, and a guy on a moped immediately pulled over to ask if I was lost and needed help. No one in New York would ever, ever take time out of their commute to find out if someone was maybe, possibly lost.

Why do you feel it's important to learn another language?

Allison: I feel foreign languages are valuable mostly because of the window they offer into the lives of others. They obviously make communicating around the world easier, and it's great to be able to have friends from other countries, but more than that, language is a good way to begin to understand a different culture and ways of life. It's one thing to travel all over the world, but that is useless unless we try to open our minds to the different ways that people live. Studying language is one of the best ways to do that.

Taylor: Languages are awesome because they're immediately applicable in daily life. You can talk to people that you wouldn't otherwise be able to converse with. Even if you don't learn enough to actually carry on a long dialogue with a native speaker, other languages still teach you a lot about English. English is descended



from several other languages, and others borrow from English, so you have this big exchange of ideas and words and ways of thinking.

How did your Catholic High School Education shape who you are today?

Allison: Attending Bishop O'Hara (and Holy Cross my senior year) helped make me who I am today by instilling in me a love of learning and a strong work ethic - a sense that I could do anything I wanted as long as I was willing to put in the hard work. In addition, I am a Christian before I am anything else in life, and attending a Catholic high school helped deepen my faith and prepared me to live it out in my everyday life.

Taylor: I've always loved to learn and my teachers truly fueled my enthusiasm. I felt like my teachers really cared about me as a person, and what I was interested in, what made me want to know more. English class was

one of my favorites, and I love words. Mrs. Delaney walked into class one day and put something on my desk. "I thought of you when I saw this," she said. It was a book called *The Professor and the Madman*, which is about the creation of the Oxford English Dictionary (it's excellent, you should totally read it when you get the chance). But I was just floored that she would see something in Barnes and Noble that she knew would interest me, and bring it back in order to keep me learning. And Mrs. Delaney wasn't the only one—almost all of my teachers had exactly the same level of care and concern for their students.

Taylor's articles can be found here

BIKE TRAVEL: CYCLING TAIWAN

Do you have someone that you would like to nominate for an alumni spotlight feature? Email alumni@hchspa.org with their current contact information and we would be happy to get in touch with them for one of our features!