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ESL Teaching in Taiwan

By Jennifer Reeder

Taiwan continues to be touted as a place to get rich. I came here because a normally reliable friend and co-worker rhapsodized that it is possible to “save, not make” \$5,000 a month.

This turned out not be true. However, it is not unreasonable to expect to sock away more money than at home, thanks to a relatively low living cost and an overwhelming abundance of work.

All you need to teach here is a college degree in anything and be a native speaker of English. There is a slight bias that favors women under 35 from North America, though there are plenty of jobs for everyone.

If, like me, it's the experience of living in a traditional culture you're after, head south. Taipei boasts a great nightlife and Starbucks, but Tainan is home to over 200 Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian temples. Also, in the south the traffic is less insane, it rains less, and you are close to mountain camping spots like Maolin. The warmth and generosity of the people is remarkable.

Not only are the locals incredibly friendly, they all want to learn English. Most English cram schools, or “bushibans,” can arrange for work visas and an ARC (Alien Resident Certificate) to make your stay legal. Lucrative private tutoring is technically illegal, but only technically.

At the same time you make money you bring happiness to over-worked Taiwanese kids. Students are listless and exhausted by seventh grade, thanks to rigid academic standards and grueling exams. In addition to the regular school, most of them attend outside classes like math, Chinese writing, chemistry, and English. Anything you can do to make learning English less of a chore for them will be appreciated.

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