

My Pen Pal Journey to Friendship

Natalia Viveros-Lara and Du Jiayi (Frayja)



Introductions

Du Jiayi (Frayja)



“Hi, Natalia Viveros-Lara! I'm excited to study with you. My name is Du Jiayi, or you can call me Frayja. I'm 20 years old, and I grew up in Yantai, Shandong province, where is a beautiful seaside city. I studied English in Qingdao University.

The sea scenes is my favourite thing about my hometown. I have a younger sister, I have three cats at home, a puppy, and my grandmother's puppy sometimes comes to my house to play. The snow in our house is very big and the winter is beautiful, I can share the pictures with you. There are many interesting places in Qingdao, such as Golden Beach, Tangdao Bay and so on.”

“This is me!”





“THESE ARE THE [PICTURES] OF THE SCENERY OF MY HOMETOWN, A BEAUTIFUL SEASIDE CITY.”

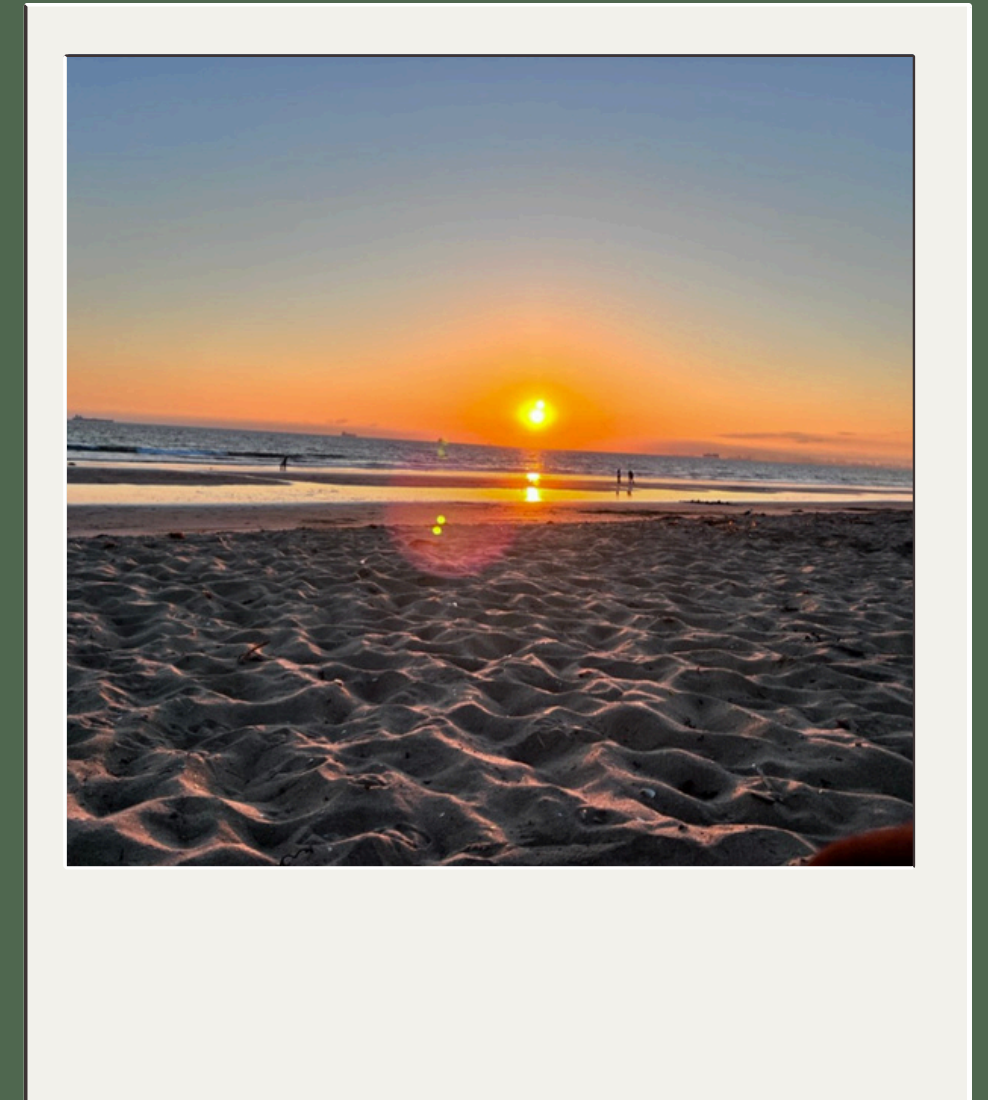
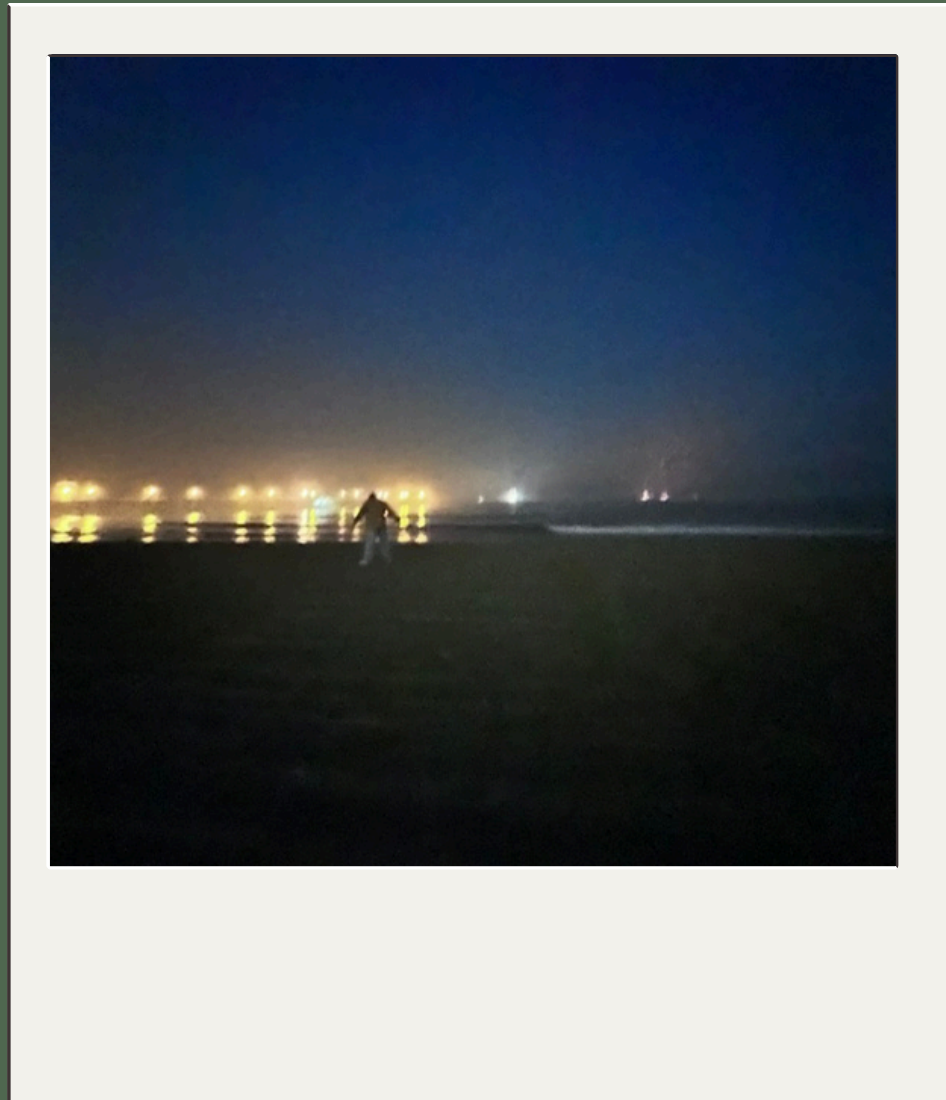
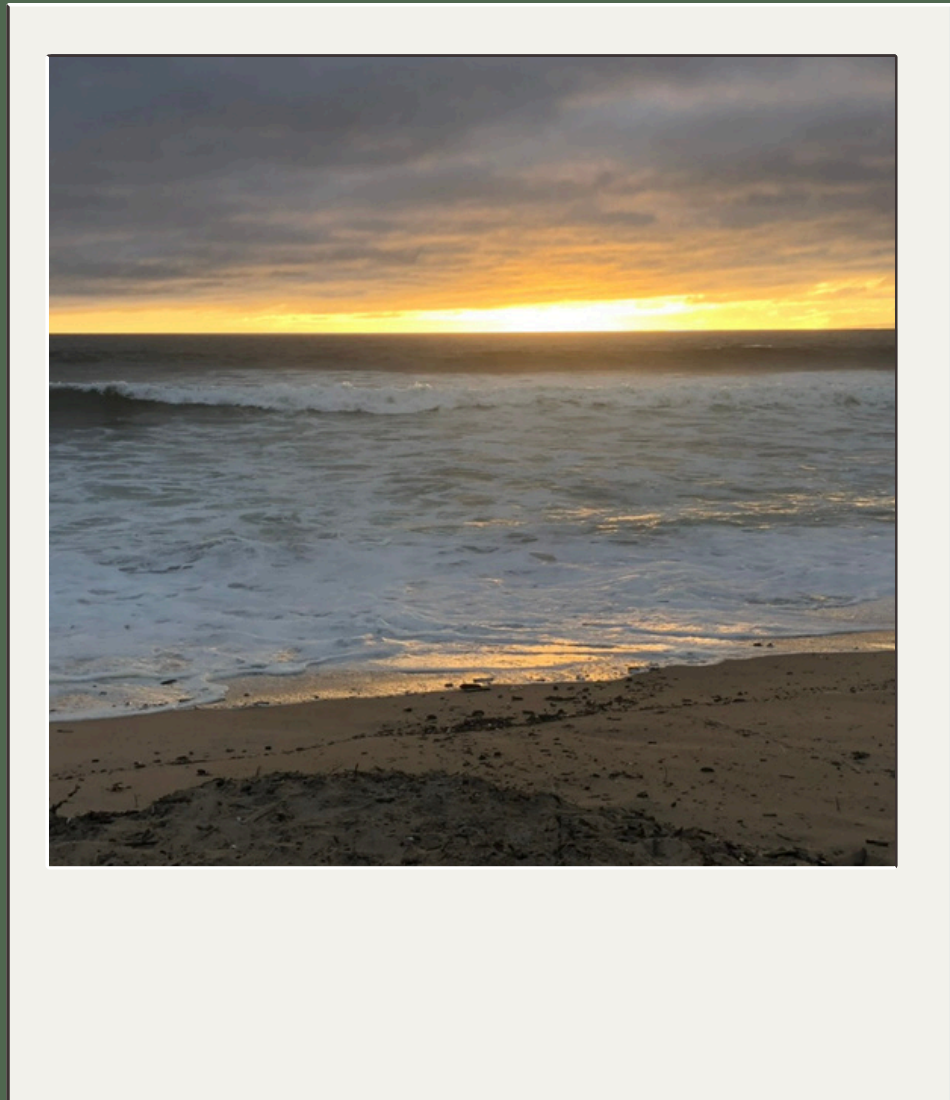


Introductions

Natalia Viveros-Lara

“Hi Du Jiayi! I'm excited as well. I am a student at Cal State Long Beach studying Political Science and I am 19 years old. I have two siblings, a brother and a sister. Do you have any siblings or pets? How is it living in Shandong, I've seen pictures and it looks beautiful. I live in Long Beach, which does have very long beaches. I just moved here so I don't know much about it. Your seaside city sounds beautiful, is it good for tourists? Here, it doesn't snow very much and we have to go to the mountains to see a tiny bit of snow.”





**“THESE ARE PICTURES OF THE TOWN MY UNIVERSITY IS IN, LONG BEACH
THE BEACHES ARE VERY PRETTY HERE.”**



Holidays

Du Jiayi (Frayja)

“In Chinese traditional festivals, many of them are like Tomb Sweeping Day, Mid-Autumn Festival, May Day Labor Day, Loong Boat Festival, etc. We all have holidays, but the most important one is definitely the Spring Festival. Of course, the Spring Festival has the most holidays. Before the arrival of the Spring Festival, we need to prepare a lot of things. Firstly, it is necessary to buy New Year's goods. This is our tradition, which is to buy all the things needed for the New Year, such as ingredients, couplets, and so on. The Spring Festival is on December 31st, and on that day, the whole family gathers together for lunch and dinner. On the second day, which is the first day of the first lunar month, we will visit relatives to pay New Year's greetings, and then elders will give red envelopes to younger generations.”



Holidays

Natalia Viveros-Lara

Holidays are very important in the US. The stores start putting out Holiday decorations and toys since Thanksgiving. For Thanksgiving in November, we usually say what we are thankful for and then eat a big dinner. For Christmas, my family and I usually have dinner together on the 24th of December and on the 25th of December we open presents and I watch the Disneyland/ DisneyWorld parade. It is very fun. We all get presents for each other.



A Christmas Tree In San Francisco



My Christmas Tree at Home



My birthday cake, my birthday is close to Christmas

Comparison of Holidays

I've learned that U.S. and Chinese holidays both bring families together but in different ways. In the U.S., holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas focus on food, decorations, and gift-giving. In China, the biggest holiday is the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year), with family reunions, special meals, and red envelopes instead of presents. While American holidays follow a set calendar, Chinese holidays are based on the lunar calendar. Despite these differences, both cultures celebrate with traditions that bring loved ones together.



Food similar to what my family eats





Lessons Learned

I have learned a lot from this pen pal program. Even though we are not from the same country, I discovered how much we share in common despite our cultural differences. My pen pal, Du Jiayi (Frayja) introduced me to aspects of her daily life and traditions which helped my understanding of her culture. Even though Frayja and I were unable to meet in person, a bond was still created and I will continue to message her even after the project is complete :). I could not include everything I learned, as it was so much but I really enjoyed this experience.



Thank you!

Learning about my pen pal was a very educational journey and it was very fun to make a friend in a different country :)

