

Travel in

TAIWAN

2021
SEP & OCT

No. 107

GOOD FOOD

FOODIE PARADISE TAIWAN

CYCLING IN TAIWAN

FROM YINGGE TO DAXI ALONG THE
DAHAN RIVER

LOCAL LIFESTYLE

A STYLE ALIKE BLOG

NORTH TAIWAN

Tourist Attractions in Hsinchu •
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Welcome to Taiwan!



Publisher's Note

Dear Traveler,

The vast majority of foreign visitors to Taiwan enter via Taoyuan International Airport, a short distance from Taipei, and either spend all their time in the greater Taipei area or use the capital as their main base. This issue we supply you with a cartload of valuable information to use for travel forays around the northern region, which can be defined as beautifully hilly or mountainous with a patchwork of large flat areas – plains, basins, river-valley flatlands, and plateaus.

In the main article of three special *North Taiwan* articles, we visit the Hsinchu city/county region. We explore from the coast on the Taiwan Strait up through the thick hill-country region to where the hills give way to high mountains. Your journey will include such joyful pursuits as a long coastal cycle-path jaunt and a tourist-train ride on a heritage branch line deep into hill country and Hsinchu history.

Our second feature file is spent conducting “small cultural-creative travels” in the main urban area of Taoyuan City, which has a sprawling rural region. We’ll be your guide while taking in an ensemble of intriguing cafés, shops, creative hubs, and other tourist-inviting ventures. Our third feature is more sedentary – a tour of budget accommodation possibilities while you’re in Taipei, with a trio of its best hostels. What type of accommodation theme might entice you most? Green sustainability? Capsule accommodation? Rejuvenated heritage architecture? Party palace?

Moving now out of our special feature section, in our *Local Lifestyle* segment this issue you’ll meet Liesl and Tienieke, two South African ladies living in Taipei who’ve grown a loyal following for their *A Style Alike* online platform, dispensing valued advice on ultra-chic fashionable living in Taipei and around the island. In *Cycling in Taiwan* you’re off on a pleasant easy-grade bike outing along the Dahan River, whose waters flow through Taipei and out to sea. This excursion travels along an upriver section between the tourist-popular towns of Yingge (ceramics) and Daxi (heritage architecture and beancurd).

After so much exploring you have quite an appetite, and we whet your gastronomic expectations in *Good Food* with a buffet-style intro to classic breakfast treats, rice-based foods, beef noodles, and night-market treasures. These are all parts of “foodie paradise” Taiwan.

I wish you happy days here with us in Taiwan, and even better memories!

TAIWAN TOURISM BUREAU
MOTC, R.O.C.

Chang Shi Chung

ON THE COVER



Frog Rock Waterfall
(Photo courtesy of Hsinchu
County Gov't)

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CONTACT	International Division, Taiwan Tourism Bureau Add: 9F, 290 Zhongxiao E. Rd., Sec. 4, Taipei City, 10694, TAIWAN Tel: 886-2-2349-1500 Fax: 886-2-2771-7036 E-mail: tbroc@tbroc.gov.tw Website: http://taiwan.net.tw
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E-MAIL	
GENERAL MANAGER	David Hu
EDITOR IN CHIEF	Johannes Twellmann
ENGLISH EDITOR	Rick Charette
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & EDITING DEPT	Joe Lee
MANAGING EDITOR	Anna Li
EDITORS	Masako Takada, Sophia Su
CONTRIBUTORS	Rick Charette, Twelli
PHOTOGRAPHERS	Chen Cheng-kuo, Ray Chang, Aska Chi
DESIGNERS	Ian Tsai, Hsieh Yun-jhen
ADMINISTRATIVE DEPT	Lily Wan, Hui-chun Tsai, Xiou Mieng Jiang, Sophie Chen



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The A Style Alike Blog

Your English-Language Window
into Living Chic in Taipei



Because of the ongoing pandemic, festivals and events might be cancelled or postponed; please check official websites for confirmation.

AUTUMN FUN

Exciting Events and Happenings

Photo courtesy of Taipei City Dept. of Cult. Affairs



1 CHIAYI CITY

December 17, 2021 ~ January 2, 2022

CHIAYI CITY INTERNATIONAL BAND FESTIVAL

嘉義市國際管樂節

First staged in 1993, this year's will be the 30th edition of the Chiayi City International Band Festival, the most anticipated cultural extravaganza in the city each year. Organized by the city government, the festival has a rich program that includes a street parade, a grand evening show, indoor and outdoor concerts, a brass band theater, and other events centered on marching band music. Because of the ongoing pandemic, this year there will likely be no foreign troupes participating; individual conductors and musicians from abroad are being invited instead to provide continuance with two important parts of the festival: international cultural exchange and joint performances by local and foreign musicians.

Website: www.chiayi.gov.tw (Chiayi City Government)



2 TAICHUNG CITY November ~ December

XINSHE FLOWER FESTIVAL

新社花海節

Large fields of flowers are commonly described in Taiwan as “seas of flowers,” and there are many locations around the island where you can enjoy these feasts for the eye throughout the seasons. Perhaps Taiwan's best flower-theme event featuring seas of flowers is the Xinshe Flower Festival in Taichung, held at the end of each year on a 40-hectare farm operated by the Taiwan Seed Improvement and Propagation Station. The vast colorful fields of numerous types of flowers are perfect backdrops for photo taking. Visitors also have ample opportunity to get to know other types of Xinshe produce as well, try local specialties, and visit other tourist attractions in the area.

Website: travel.taichung.gov.tw
(Taichung Tourism and Travel Bureau)





3 TAIPEI CITY October 2~3

NUIT BLANCHE TAIPEI

臺北白晝之夜

Taipei's version of the annual nighttime arts festival Nuit Blanche was first staged in 2016 after the city government was invited to host a local edition of the event by the Bureau Français de Taipei, which represents France's interests in Taiwan. Since the first-ever Nuit Blanche (2001 in Paris, France), similar events have been organized in well over 100 cities around the world. It's a fun celebration of the arts jam-packed with exciting street theater, music, and dance performances, sophisticated light and laser shows, light-art sculptures, and much interaction between performers and revelers to ensure all have a great time.

Website: english.culture.gov.taipei
(Taipei City Dept. of Cultural Affairs)

4 NEW TAIPEI CITY November

THE SILVER GRASS FESTIVAL OF CAOLING HISTORIC TRAIL 草嶺古道芒花季

The global pandemic has significantly disrupted Taiwan's festival and event calendar this year, but it's safe to say that celebrations of nature's beauty are being affected the least. In November the slopes of many a mountain in northern Taiwan will appear even prettier than during other times of the year, with their tall silvergrass blooming and its feather-like flowers gently swaying in the wind. This is a great time to go for a hike in Yangmingshan National Park or along the Caoling Historic Trail on the Northeast Coast, both known for the abundance of silver grass covering their mountain slopes.

Website: www.necoast-nsa.gov.tw
(Northeast and Yilan Coast National Scenic Area)



5 TAINAN CITY November 1~30

KUNSHEN WANGYE'S SALT FOR PEACE FESTIVAL 鯤鯓王平安鹽祭

For more than 300 years, producing salt from seawater was an important industry in the southwest of Taiwan. The industry ceased to exist in 2002, after Taiwan's WTO entry, but the Jingzaijiao Tile-paved Salt Fields in Tainan City's Beimen District remain in place as a popular tourist attraction. In 2004, the annual Kunshen Wangye's Salt for Peace Festival was held for the first time by the Southwest Coast National Scenic Area Administration to celebrate the old industry and to highlight the region's traditional beliefs and rituals related to salt. Activities take place at the salt fields and at the Nankunshen Daitian Temple (about 5km away), including a procession between the two places, captivating dragon dances, and the giveaway of thousands of auspicious sachets filled with salt.

Website: swcoast-nsa.travel
(Southwest Coast National Scenic Area)



Photo courtesy of SW Coast Nat. Scenic Area Admin.

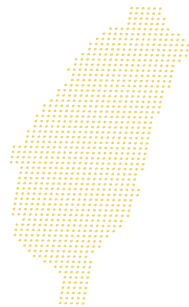
臺灣觀光年曆
Time for Celebration
TAIWAN TOURISM EVENTS



Taiwan Tourism Events
Calendar Website

HAPPENING

in TAIWAN Now



Worldwide travel in 2021 continues to be hampered by the global pandemic. If you want to find the latest info about current Covid-related rules and regulations in Taiwan, visit the website of the Taiwan Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov.tw/en). Hopefully we'll soon be returning to the travel freedoms enjoyed pre-2020!



THINGS TO DO OCTOBER~DECEMBER

1. If you like **eating crab**, head to the North Coast's **Jinshan-Wanli** area and order some of the fattest crabs of the year at restaurants right by the fishing harbors!

tour.ntpc.gov.tw/en-us

2. **Go hiking** and appreciate the beauty of mountain slopes covered with **silvergrass** in **Yangmingshan National Park**.

www.ymssp.gov.tw/main_en

3. Head to **Hsinchu County's Xinpu** village for the **persimmon harvest season**. Persimmons are very delicious, and the bright-orange fruits drying on racks in the sun is an unforgettable sight.

travel.hsinchu.gov.tw/en

Pingtung Harvest

There is a new cluster of shops selling indigenous crafts and art in Pingtung City, named **Pingtung Harvest**. Opened this year, the shops are located in a former military dependents' village to the north of Pingtung Railway Station. A project realized by Pingtung County's Department of Indigenous Peoples, this new indigenous-culture hotspot in the city gives visitors a chance to learn about the county's indigenous tribes and purchase some of their unique products.

www.facebook.com/pingtungharvest



Photo courtesy of Pingtung Harvest



Photo courtesy of Chaojing Aquarium

Chaojing Aquarium in Keelung

When the world-class National Museum of Marine Science & Technology was opened in 2013, not only a modern state-of-the-art museum was established. At the same time, a former waste dump area on the peninsula just to the north of the museum was turned into a beautiful seaside park. One of this park's attractions is the Chaojing Ocean Center, run by the museum. This facility has recently been remodeled, and now includes the **Chaojing Aquarium**, a place where you can marvel at the wonders of marine life with the help of modern technology, such as immersive VR and AR displays. www.nmmst.gov.tw (NMMST)

Opening Soon +

Here are some interesting major construction projects around Taiwan that are now approaching completion.



Photos courtesy of respective operators

1. Taipei Performing Arts Center

Location: Just outside MRT Jiantan Station in Taipei; construction to be completed 2021; projected opening July 2022.
www.tpac-taipei.org

2. Mitsui Outlet Park Tainan

Location: Close to Tainan High Speed Rail Station; projected opening end of 2021.
www.mop.com.tw

3. SKM (Shinkong Mitsukoshi) Outlet Park Kaohsiung

Location: Site of former Taroko Park near Kaohsiung Int'l Airport; projected opening early 2022.
www.skm.com.tw

4. Chengqing Lake Maze Garden

Location: On southern side of Chengqing Lake in Kaohsiung City's Niasong District; projected opening this year

Cartoon Artist Jimmy in Jiaoxi

If you've ever been outside Yilan Railway Station and walked through the Jimmy Park you'll be familiar with the cute sculptures created by famous local cartoon artist Jimmy Liao. There is now another park with more of his work in Yilan County, right beside the bus station in the well-known hot-spring town of Jiaoxi. This time Jimmy has focused on a bunch of mischievous rabbits enjoying their time in Jiaoxi, three of them indulging in a hot-spring soak, five others riding a teeter-totter. www.jimmyspa.com (Chinese)



Photos courtesy of Yilan County Business and Tourism Department

Weather

Mostly mild and dry, the autumn season is known as the most comfortable period of the year in Taiwan, with perfect conditions for outdoor adventures like hiking in the island's amazing mountains and forests! Before heading out, however, always check the weather forecast on the website of the Central Weather Bureau. www.cwb.gov.tw



Because of the ongoing pandemic, festivals and events might be cancelled or postponed; please check official websites for confirmation.

Culture

Concerts, Theater, Exhibitions,
Festivals, Shows

Exhibition

Tim Walker: Wonderful Things

蒂姆·沃克：美妙事物

British fashion photographer Tim Walker has had a highly successful career shooting for magazines like *Vogue*, *W*, and *Love*. With this exhibition, realized in cooperation with London's Victoria and Albert Museum, he has created a fantastical world surrounding his pictures, the largest show of his work of the past 25 years. There are 10 rooms designed by art director and designer Shona Heath, showing photographs by Walker that were inspired by the V&A, a museum he has called a "palace of dreams."

www.chimeimuseum.org

Until February 6, 2022
Chimei Museum
(Tainan City)

★★★
EDITOR'S
CHOICE

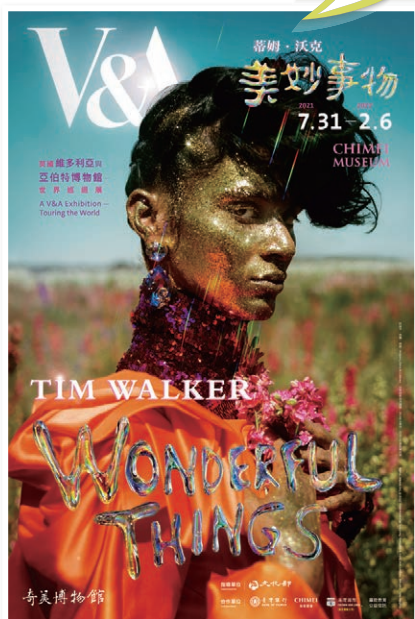


Photo courtesy of Chimei Museum

Photo courtesy of CKS Memorial Hall



Exhibition

Aesthetics in Transparency – The Infinite Possibilities of Glass Art

光透美學 – 玻璃藝術的無限可能

Until December 20
National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (Taipei City)

One of the more popular tourist attractions of Hsinchu City is its Glass Art Museum; the city became a center for glass production, including daily-use items such as glassware and light bulbs as well as refined glass art, in the 1920s during the Japanese colonial era. This exhibition presents some of the most outstanding and representative glass art pieces created in Hsinchu, giving you a glimpse of what's in store at the museum and perhaps giving you even more reason to make the trip to this northwest Taiwan city (for more about Hsinchu, see this issue's feature article). www.cksmh.gov.tw

Photo courtesy of Taipei Fine Arts Museum



Exhibition

Shiota Chiharu – The Soul Trembles

塩田千春：顫動的靈魂

Until October 17
Taipei Fine Arts Museum
(Taipei City)

A room full of red threads seemingly gushing out from rowboat skeletons on the floor and splashing onto walls and ceiling is the centerpiece of this fantastic exhibition by Berlin-based Japanese performance and installation artist Shiota Chiharu. In another room the threads are black, covering a piano burned in a fire. There is also a room with hundreds of windows and doors collected in Germany's capital after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and another with hundreds of suitcases floating in the air. This exhibition gives you an unforgettable look at the artist's creations and her relentless quest in exploring the meaning of life and death. www.tfam.museum

Virtual Museum Tours

During times when museums are closed as part of preventive measures to fight the global pandemic, your only option to visit a museum might be the virtual way. Luckily, many of Taiwan's fine facilities have excellent websites with tons of images and videos about their collection. Another trend among state-of-the-art museums is the implementation of VR and AR to make an online visit even more realistic. Here are a few examples:

National Palace Museum

Being the foremost museum in Taiwan, the NPM excels not only in its real-world exhibition halls, but also in its online museum. You can walk through the museum virtually (720-degree Google Street View style; tech2.npm.edu.tw/720vr/museum/views.html), and examine some of its best treasures from all angles with the help of 3D models (theme.npm.edu.tw/3d).



Chimei Museum

Like the National Palace Museum in Taipei, the Chimei Museum in Tainan City can be explored online. Walk through this palace-style fine arts repository using Google Street View (<https://bit.ly/3eBvERV>).



National Museum of Taiwan Literature

While on a virtual tour of this museum in Tainan, you'll see a small map on your screen showing you where you are inside the building (www.tlvm.com.tw/VirtualTour/2020). Information is provided in Chinese only.



Shihsanhang Museum of Archaeology

Even more advanced (and cool) than that of the literature museum is the virtual experience for this museum. Instead of a map you will see your current virtual location in a 3D cutout model of the building (sshm.vvm.ntpc.gov.tw/sshmmatterport).



Photos are screenshots from the museums' websites

National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts

Using a similar approach to that of the Shihsanhang Museum, the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts offers a highly advanced virtual experience for selected exhibitions. Click on the icons near artworks to open information in Chinese/English and play audio guides (Chinese) (www.ntmofa.gov.tw/links_1208.html).


Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts

Kaohsiung's premier museum for the fine arts allows you to visit selected exhibitions the virtual way. Go to www.kmfa.gov.tw/onlinegallery/ARVRlive (Chinese) and select one of the exhibitions. While the provided information is in Chinese, you can still get a good understanding of the featured artworks by taking a close look.

A Hsinchu Journey

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE PHOTOS | VISION

From Intertidal Mudflats to (Almost) High-Mountain Peaks



From the sky-searching, thick mountains that define its deep interior all the way down right to water's edge along its Taiwan Strait coast, the Hsinchu region is beautiful hill country – in most areas away from the coast well forested and sparsely populated, with strips of flat, fecund land along the narrow river valleys and coast.

In this article let me serve as your guide on an introductory tour that will help you grasp Hsinchu's special character. Our focus is on outdoor fun and cool places perfect for selfie captures/mementos. We'll be zipping all around the region, so a fair bit of DIY youthful enthusiasm and energy is required. The itinerary is targeted at those young in fact and those still young at heart – youthful in spirit as well as, crucially, "in body" as well.

We'll spend time along the coast, with a long seaside bike foray as one outing. We'll spend time in this region's one big urban agglomeration, the cities of Hsinchu and Zhubei, exploring cultural-creative attractions. And we'll spend time up deep in the high hills, coming very close to high mountain peaks, doing zesty things like hitting the trails in a "discovery forest" and riding on a quaint narrow-gauge railway in one of the colorful trains used by both local residents and neck-craning tourists.

Offshore wind power park in Hsinchu County



Hsinchu City/County

First, a clarification. Hsinchu City is officially separate from Hsinchu County, but for our travel purposes here, when I said “region” above and say “Hsinchu” hereafter I mean county and city together.

Coastal Hsinchu City has a population of about 450,000. Next-door coastal neighbor Zhubei City, inside Hsinchu County, has about 200,000. The two are separated by a wide, generally mostly-dry riverbed. If spending time in the area, what many travelers do is use the two cities as their hub for day-trips to outlying destinations such as those I’ll mention, thus getting to enjoy the thriving nightlife scene on their return, notably the night markets. This is especially true if self-driving. However, I strongly suggest you try to overnight in whichever outlying areas you visit, to get fuller exposure to the respective local cultural and scenic attractions. Each locality is remarkably distinct and there are many intriguing fine-quality homestays in the Hsinchu countryside.

Hsinchu City is a place of dual and deeply contrasting character. It’s best known as Taiwan’s international high-tech powerhouse, home to such esteemed island-grown names as TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor) and Acer. It’s also northern Taiwan’s oldest city, presenting deep traditions and many physical manifestations of its richly textured history for the visitor’s edification and entertainment.

Hsinchu County’s population is mainly Hakka. This is a Han Chinese minority that, following a common theme throughout imperial times, was forced from more fertile lowlands into rugged upland areas. The countryside is dotted with old towns and villages of strong Hakka personality, with many tourist-friendly Hakka-theme draws.

Note that there is also an indigenous minority concentration, primarily in the county’s southeast, from the Atayal and Saisiyat tribes.

DISCOVERY FOREST

The forested hills and mountains of Hsinchu are rich in natural, scenic, and even cultural treasures waiting to be discovered by the intrepid traveler

NORTH TAIWAN • *Hsinchu*

Photos by Dribs & Drabs



Photo by Mawudu Discovery Forest



Mawudu Discovery Forest

This scenic area is in a heavily forested high-hills region in the county's northeast sector, east of the town of Guanxi, one of Hsinchu's most tourist-rewarding Hakka settlements. It is about an hour's drive from Hsinchu City, and is located about a kilometer down along a side road off Hsinchu County Route 118. The paved dead-end side road, just wide enough for two cars to pass each other, snakes inland (east) along a scenic river valley. You'll pass just a few simple farmer-folk residences along the way, including a couple of traditional Hakka-style *sanheyuan* (three-sided courtyard residences), as well as a very good upscale Zen-theme restaurant found just before the forest attraction's rustic roadside wood-built ticket kiosk. The discovery forest is laid out alongside the last stretch of road past this point.

Mawudu Discovery Forest is a family-oriented leisure park with rustic basic structures and facilities that is a well-designed nature classroom. Home to a splendid diversity of plant and animal life, it's in a tribal area with about 50 Atayal households. "Mawudu" is an Atayal term meaning "people and materials collection area" – in the past hunters would gather

here, and the valley waterway brings highly valued driftwood down from on high during periods of heavy rain.

Measuring 450ha in size, it is spread out from 600m to 1,300m above sea level. This forested terrain is at the end-point of the reach of the annual northeastern monsoons, and features both subtropical-zone and temperate-zone biodiversity. The dominant tree species is soaring secondary-forest Japanese cedar, aged up to 40 years. The park's most compelling draw is a collection of well-maintained trails that together form a broad loop, beginning and ending around the visitor center. The full loop, without stops, takes about 90mins. There are many ups and downs, but the walk is not strenuous, the grades not challenging.

Among the highlights of your on-foot meander through the thick forest are two national-treasure Chinese bayberry (*yangmei*) trees. "Grandma Yangmei," nearly 500 years in age, and "Grandpa Yangmei," a sprightly 300, stand shoulder to shoulder like an affectionate elderly couple. Nearby, a viewing platform provides a fine view over forest and valley. Other favorite selfie backdrops are the ethereal waterfalls and

stream-leaping arch bridges.

Among the facilities near the visitor center is a café, bee ecology area, BBQ area, alfresco movie theater, and the Sunshine Country Ecological Mushroom Garden. The garden is a delightful window into the wondrous world of wild wood mushrooms, teaching you all about their ideal environment, growth process, cultivation techniques, nutritional value, and how they're sustainably harvested.

Many visitors, from around Taiwan and around the region, come specifically because the park gained fame as the shooting location for a highly popular Taiwan TV-drama series entitled *Green Forest, My Home*, released in 2005. The wood-built "Green Light Elementary School" featured in the series, purpose-built by the production company, is a much-in-demand selfie attraction.

MAWUDU DISCOVERY FOREST

(馬武督探索森林)

☎ (03) 547-8645

📍 No. 138-3, Neighborhood 12, Jinshan Borough, Guanxi Township, Hsinchu County (新竹縣關西鎮錦山里 12 鄰 138-3 號)

🌐 discovery-forest.com.tw (Chinese)



Neiwan Branch Line

The Neiwan Branch Line, a long-time favorite with Hsinchu County day-trippers, takes you on a clackety-clack rollicking fun tour southeast from Hsinchu City up into the hills and the heart of Hsinchu County. You'll enjoy a far deeper experience, however, if you overnight in the hills and come back next day. The terminus settlement for the short line's unhurried trains is Neiwan village, a destination with a rich history. It takes about an hour from Hsinchu Station to Neiwan Station (27.9km). Looking at a timetable for the Neiwan Line, you will notice that most trains departing from Hsinchu are actually

terminating in Liujia, a station close to the Hsinchu High Speed Rail Station. If you take one of these trains, you need to get off at Zhuzhong Station and switch to another train that travels from Zhuzhong to Neiwan.

The branch line has been modernized in many ways, including station facilities, but what trippers love most are the old-timey elements. Between Zhuzhong and Neiwan the line remains single-track and the choo-choos on this stretch are old-style diesel-electrics, compact and squarish things, brightly painted with themed exteriors and interiors, that are oh so cute

in comparison to the sleek younger electric counterparts that now dominate Taiwan's system.

The trundling journey is bursting in photo-taking opps. As mentioned, the rich history is a key draw, but here I'll mention a number of more cultural-creative spots with more youthful vibes. On the way either to or from Neiwan, jump-offs/jump-ons at some of the other stations is highly recommended, especially at Hexing.

Hexing Railway Station has also been christened the "Love Station." The old Japanese wood-built station and the surrounding area's Japanese wooden

SLOW RIDE

The Neiwan Branch Line train takes you on a journey through peaceful countryside at a moderate pace



Hexing Railway Station

NORTH TAIWAN · Hsinchu

Love Plaza train carriage café



single-story buildings have been transformed into the **Love Plaza**, the buildings renovated and creatively decorated, cutesy public artworks found all about outside. The theme is the settlement's old-time 1940s era of resource-extraction prosperity. Perhaps most photogenic of all are two heritage rail carriages that have been converted into shops selling ice cream and other tasties.

Neiwan, a Hakka settlement, was once a town rich from timber and coal (the rail line's *raison d'être*), with its own film theater and other "modern" places of entertainment. A stroll down its tourism-focused **Neiwan Old Street** area today is a stroll into the Taiwan of yesteryear. Be sure to hunt down the King Kong, ET, and other whimsical sculptures.

Among the town's younger hipster allurements is the **Migration Café and B&B** (three guestrooms) where the owners have overhauled a heritage residence and given it a dynamic funky retro chic personality. **The New Hakka Cultural Park** is a mini-cluster of delightful eclectic buildings with cultural-creative homey interiors providing triple service as a café, live-demo stage where traditional Hakka handicrafts are proudly celebrated, and kiddie playstation.

MIGRATION CAFÉ AND B&B (遷徙咖啡民宿)

☎ 0983-332-511

📍 No. 18, Heping St., Neiwan Village, Hengshan Township, Hsinchu County
(新竹縣橫山鄉內灣村和平街 18 號)

🌐 migrationbb2015.wixsite.com/migrationbb2015 (Chinese)

NEW HAKKA CULTURAL PARK (好品好客希望工場)

☎ (03) 584-9569

📍 No. 139-1, Neiwan, Neiwan Village, Hengshan Township, Hsinchu County
(新竹縣橫山鄉內灣村內灣 139-1 號)

🌐 necupark.com (Chinese)



Photo by Migration Café and B&B



Photo by New Hakka Cultural Park

Jianshi Township

Head further inland, past Neiwan, along winding, scenic County Route 120, and you enter large Jianshi Township, which takes up the county's full eastern region. Here, you transition from high-hills country to mountain country. Despite its size, the township's population is only about 9,500 hardy souls, the majority Atayal tribal members.

The much-photographed **Beijiao Suspension Bridge** is not far out of Neiwan, right beside the 120. It spans the **Youluo River**, which also runs through Neiwan. The 120 follows this river valley and ends abruptly high up in the long valley's cul-de-sac denouement, the peaks above crowded in close on the north, east, and south. There are a number of quality campgrounds in this bowl-like final area.

The Beijiao bridge has a single-span design and measures 220m. Its two towers are painted bright red; their bases sport dual-culture artwork, both indigenous totems and auspicious protective Chinese *qilin*. This footbridge was originally built as a connection with a small native settlement on the far side, which today has road access out. Be sure to sit down for a cuppa and some ice cream (mango, green tea, etc.) at the simple artsy-craftsy alfresco-seating café **Feng Beijiao** right beside the far-side tower, owner of a great view of river and bridge.

Further along the 120 the junction with County Route 60 is reached. This snakes up another river valley, again headed inland. After making the turn, you arrive at the **Frog Rock Trail** entrance after about 5km. This is a trail that combines waterfall-viewing and eco-exploration, about 500m long with a wooden boardwalk design along most of its length. Atayal tribal members run a small, theme market near the trailhead. The pathway brings you into a canyon to the impressive Frog Rock, with the iridescent 40m-high **Frog Rock Waterfall** hurtling down behind it. The rock is indeed amphibian-esque; according to an Atayal legend a frog turned to stone after following mosquitos up into the deep valley and becoming trapped. At this trail point an attractive glass-floor viewing platform, 6m long with the shape of a three-leaf clover, extends dramatically outward, seeming to float mid-air.

FROG ROCK TRAIL

The best-known scenic attraction in Jianshi Township this is a cool spot with a glass-floor viewing platform facing a pretty waterfall

6 GARDEN (六號花園)

☎ 0932-178-177

📍 Lahao Buluo, Xinle Village, Jianshi Township, Hsinchu County (新竹縣尖石鄉新樂村拉號部落)

🌐 www.6garden.com (Chinese)

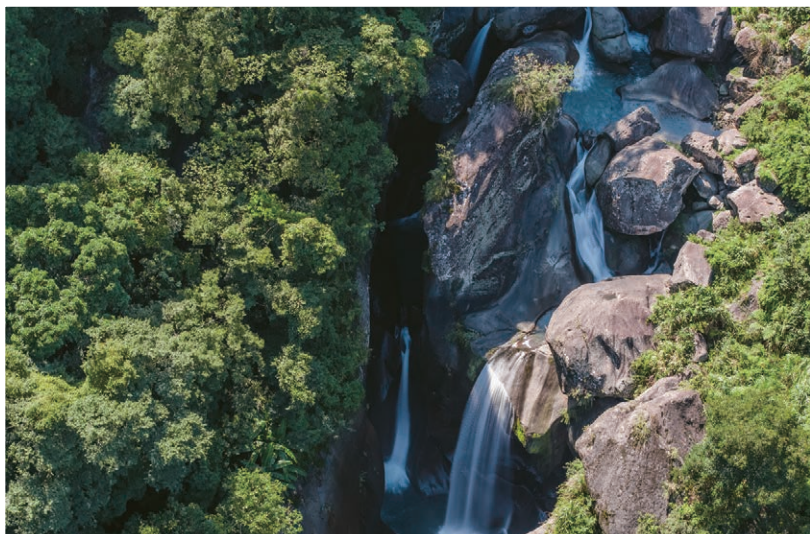


Photo courtesy of 6 Garden



Next up, a gorgeous mountainside forest-surrounded café/restaurant (Western/Chinese) operation called **6 Garden**. Go back to the 120 and head further inland. It's up a long, twisting side road on the north-facing face of the massif that stands between the 120 and 60. The views are tremendous. The side-road neighbors are small farms, campgrounds, and fellow pastoral-stylish food-and-beverage purveyors. The comfort-inducing architectural/décor keys for the two-floor 6 Garden building are exposed red brick, dark-stained wood, ceramic tiling, and outdoor decks and patios.

Those whose taste for mountain adventure is still not sated can venture even deeper into the Hsinchu mountains to visit **Smangus**, a small Atayal settlement about 1,500m in elevation known as Taiwan's remotest village. To see and experience all of its jewels, including a long, spiritual hike to a grove of sacred giant cypresses, you'll need to overnight; it's about a 3hr drive from the Hsinchu City area, and there's no local-bus service. To overnight, book online (www.smangus.org; Chinese). The community co-op packages include simple homestay accommodations, small-restaurant dining (native/Chinese), village and trail tours, and other services.

Photo courtesy of Hsinchu County Gov't



Beijiao Suspension Bridge

Xiangshan District

And now for something completely different. After time in a space with mountain peaks seen all about, time for a close-up look at the Taiwan Strait coast. The destination is Xiangshan, the largest of Hsinchu City's three districts, taking up its southwest sector. Largely rural, its two main developed areas are along the coast and in its north, the latter zone merging with the city's urban core.

The tiny **Xiangshan Railway Station** is an adorable little work of architecture that dates to 1928, built by the Japanese. The last station on the West Coast line before entering Miaoli County, this lovingly maintained city-designated heritage site is Taiwan's sole remaining Japanese-era station built using cypress from the Alishan region high in the central mountains. Step inside for a time-travel timeout, checking out the old-style wooden benches and compact ticket counter. Drainpiping on each side of the sloping roof is cleverly designed to resemble strings of wind chimes.

The station is just a short distance from the coast and Xiangshan's other main tourist fascination, the **17km Coastline Scenic Area** and its breezy 17km-long seaside bikeway. And it just so happens that, if you've indeed arrived by train, a YouBike public bike-rental station lined with two-wheeled steeds awaits you right outside the train station.

The scenic area (and bikeway) stretches from **Nanliao Fishing Harbor** in the north to just past the **Nangang Bird Watching Area** and **Xiangshan Sand Dunes** in the south. Xiangshan's railway station is off the southern section. There are bike-rental facilities along the bikeway itself, concentrated in the north section closer to the city center.

This is a place of superb photo-opp views of wetlands, mangroves, estuarine mudflats, intertidal zones, twirling wind turbines, and teeming birdlife. And of stunning sunsets. And of delicious and unbeatably fresh harborside seafood.

The Coastline Scenic Area is bisected north to south by the **Gangnan Canal**, which is spanned in four locations by Chinese-style arch bridges, creating an especially picturesque picture in the evening. The bikeway also brings riders over the **Little Rainbow Bridge** and three other close-by "rainbow bridges" that have animatedly painted steel-frame arches above their biker-friendly flat decks.

The **Xiangshan Green Tunnel** is a long tree-lined bikeway stretch with an intertidal zone on its west and long, thin grid of aquafarm ponds on its east. This is a shady section much appreciated by pedalers and walkers out on the bikeway for more than a short period, for there is only limited protection from sun and wind elsewhere.

The tunnel section is alongside part of the expansive **Xiangshan Wetland**. Just south of this, "head out to sea" on the long, serpentine 250m-long **Wetland Crab Viewing Path** when the tide is in, and when it's out, head out on the mudflats. One split trail section is shaped like a traditional heart-shaped stone weir, perfect as a "foredrop" for the glowing sunset backdrops.

The **Xiangshan Sand Dunes** provide a good opportunity to observe and shoot the different types of vegetation that make dunes their home, stabilizing them. There is a watchtower here to facilitate both observation and pic-taking. There are also foot-wash facilities so you don't inadvertently take sand-dune grain babies home with you.

Lookout tower near seaside bikeway



SEA & SUNSET

Riding along the windy Hsinchu coast you'll see the Taiwan Strait, with a good chance of great sunset scenery in the evening

Wetland Crab Viewing Path

Xiangshan Sand Dunes



Xiangshan Green Tunnel



17km Coastline Scenic Area





Hsinchu City

Founded in the early 1700s, Hsinchu City today has a population of about half a million. Its popular nickname is “Windy City.” Check the Google Map satellite view and you’ll see why. The land it’s on juts out into the Taiwan Strait, and the city is laid out on coast-side rising land and up onto a plateau. In yesteryear times its particular enviro-circumstances led to “branding” in such traditional industries as glass- and rice noodle-making; both still thrive. The noodle industry, specifically, was built on the pristine local waters and drying winds.

This city is very laid-back, with much leafiness and a fecund repertoire of heritage architecture. Yet at the same time this inheritance-hugging city has another side to its character, a love of the futuristic and cultural-creative. The font of this passion is globally renowned Hsinchu Science Park, founded on the plateau in 1980.

OrCraftLife is located in the city’s old section, in a multi-story heritage commercial building that has been alluringly renovated. In 2019 a local cultural-creative non-profit enterprise took over the premises, redesigning it as a “craft window.” The first and second floors have theme displays of crafts, sometimes renowned Hsinchu arts such as glassworks, sometimes overseas works. The third floor has exhibits, performances, and special workshops following the curatorial theme on the lower floors. The menu at the intimate fourth-floor café serves as a Hsinchu culinary window.

Other interesting projects by the local **Grand View Culture and Art Foundation** (grandview.org.tw; Chinese) you should check out, to experience how new life has been brought to old spaces, is the OR Bookstore, OR Veggie restaurant, and OR Inn.

OrCraftLife



ORCRAFTLIFE (或者工藝櫥窗)

☎ (03) 522-0500

📍 No. 75, Zhongyang Rd., East District, Hsinchu City
(新竹市東區中央路 75 號)

🌐 www.orlifestyles.com/craftsmanship (Chinese)

WINDY CITIES

Strong winds of cultural heritage preservation can be felt in the streets and alleys of Hsinchu and Zhubei cities

Zhubei City

Zhubei is one of Taiwan's fastest-growing urban centers. Key reasons are the location of the Hsinchu High-Speed Rail Station here, and convenient transport access to the Hsinchu Science Park and two younger zones in Zhubei, a biomedical science park and high-tech industrial park

A historical side foray – the “chu/zhu” in “Hsinchu” and “Zhubei” means “bamboo.” In China's imperial past, secondary cities would be surrounded by less-expensive thick walls of nigh-impenetrable thorny bamboo. Hsinchu City got proper walls in the early 1800s. “Zhubei” literally means “north of the bamboo (city).” You've already spent time in Zhudong, or “east of the bamboo (city),” in the Neiwan Branch Line section.

Houshi Village (www.facebook.com/hohmarket) is an iconoclastic venture, an open-air market hidden away like an oasis amidst the surrounding Zhubei concrete and busy-ness. This is a co-op run by young cultural-creative indie entrepreneurs, their various healthy and natural food-and-beverage enterprises clustered around a courtyard dripping with foliage and brimming with shade and breezy seating. The courtyard is unpaved; you'll be walking au naturel, on bare earth and gravel (plus a few small wooden-deck areas). The architectural and interior-decor

design of the compact-size establishments is best described as industrial chic, with much exposed concrete and strategic rustic-style wood use. For even more quiet, sit a spell in the cool – literal and figurative – aboveground “cave” created with bamboo, earth, and other natural materials.

Your money-spending choices – note there is a heavy Hakka presence: a place that creates plant-based oils; an eatery specializing in healthy plant-based foods; a shop that crafts myriad fermented foods; and a Western-style bakery where, among his many delish treasures, the young confectioner offers his unique interpretation of his baker father's traditional Chinese mung-bean pastries. **T**

Houshi Village



PRACTICAL INFO

Hsinchu City and Zhubei City can be conveniently reached by High-Speed Rail, conventional railway (TRA), and intercity buses. Xiangshan and Neiwan stations are served by local trains only. Since public transport in mountainous areas of Hsinchu (Jianshi Township) is infrequent, using your own means of transport is recommended.

For general info about Hsinchu, visit tourism.hccg.org.tw (Hsinchu City) and travel.hsinchu.gov.tw (Hsinchu County Government).



ENGLISH AND CHINESE

17km Coastline Scenic Area
17 公里海岸風景區
Beijiao Suspension Bridge 北角吊橋
Feng Beijiao 楓北角
Frog Rock Trail 青蛙石步道
Gangnan Canal 港南運河
"Grandma Yangmei" 楊梅阿嬤
"Grandpa Yangmei" 楊梅阿公
Green Forest, My Home 綠光森林
Hexing Railway Station 合興車站
Houshi Village 厚食聚落

Jianshi 尖石
Little Rainbow Bridge 彩虹小橋
"Love Station" 愛情火車站
Neiwan Branch Line 內灣線
Neiwan Old Street 內灣老街
qilin 麒麟
sanheyuan 三合院
Smangus 司馬庫斯
Sunshine Country Ecological Mushroom Garden
陽光國度生態菇園
Wetland Crab Viewing Path 濕地賞蟹步道
Xiangshan 香山
Xiangshan Green Tunnel 香山綠色隧道
Xiangshan Railway Station 香山車站
Xiangshan Sand Dunes 香山沙丘
Xiangshan Wetland 香山濕地
Youluo River 油羅溪
Zhubei 竹北

Small Cultural-Creative Travels

Innovative Cafés,
Shops, and Creative
Hubs in Taoyuan City

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE
PHOTOS | VISION



This photo, photo on far right, and insert below courtesy of Come True Coffee



"Tourist days in Taoyuan City WHY?"

My dear readers, let me explain! Not so long ago, this would be something readily expressed both by local and in-the-know foreign travelers. No more. The "Taoyuan City" brand is becoming a tourism marketer's dream. In a moment you'll be hankering for days-to-be-spent in this flourishing city just west/southwest of the Taipei metropolis – read on!

First – Taoyuan City ate up its surrounding countryside, i.e., Taoyuan County, in 2014. This means city tourism marketers now get to claim many longstanding county favorites as their own, such as the scenery and seafood restaurants of Zhuwei Fishing Harbor on the coast, the heritage Old Street Baroque-style shophouses of Daxi town in the hills, and the giant sacred trees, magnificent views, and honey-peach orchards of the mountain region's Lalashan.

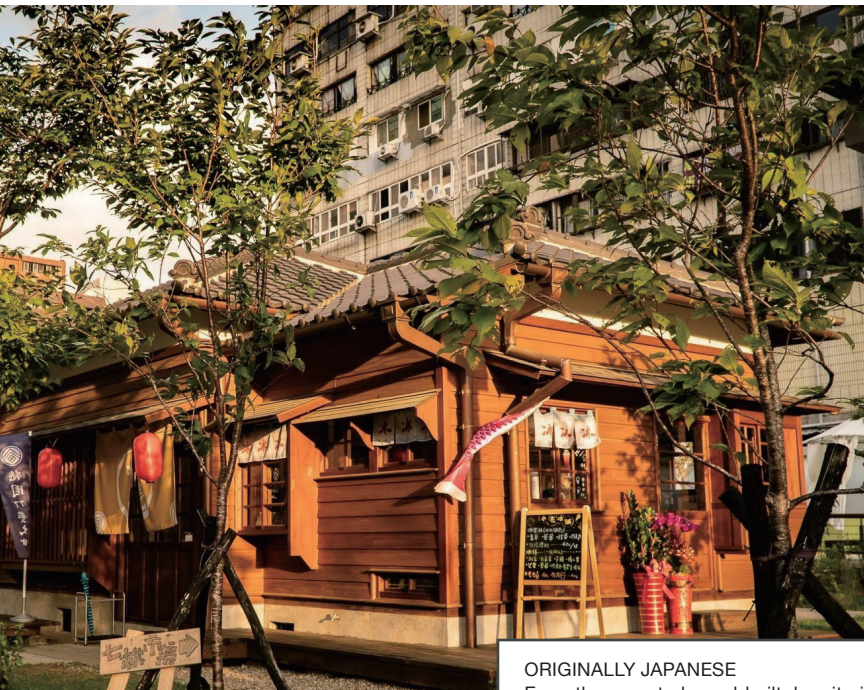
Second – Tremendous creative energies, both large-scale government-driven and small-scale individual, have been unleashed in the urban core over the past decade-plus, with

both homegrown and incoming talent transforming what at best could be called a "nondescript" heavily industrialized landscape into an ever more visually and culturally compelling one, bringing an ever-increasing tourist flow. At the large-scale end are Smart City projects such as the Taoyuan Metro's Taoyuan Airport MRT line (connecting with Taipei) and the massively ambitious Taoyuan Aerotropolis urban-planning project.

Despite the rapid growth, however, the urban core and immediate surrounding area still offer many oases of culture and calm. Such places of tourist interest are the focus of this article – particularly, unique small-scale cultural-creative projects such as cafés, shops, and creative hubs. Enjoy!

Taoyuan District

The city's urban agglomeration sits on a roughly fan-shaped plain that is open to the Taiwan Strait its full width. Its fulcrum can be said to be old Provincial Highway 1, the island's main north-south road link before National Freeway 1 was born in the 1970s. This agglomeration's nucleus is the original Taoyuan City area, now called Taoyuan District.



ORIGINALLY JAPANESE
Expertly renovated wood-built dormitories from the Japanese colonial area are at the core of Taoyuan 77 Art Zone

This and photo below courtesy of Taoyuan 77 Art Zone



Taoyuan 77 art zone is in the shopping district before Taoyuan Railway Station, a short walk northwest. This moderately-sized cultural park is home to a complex of immaculately renovated wood-built dormitories and other buildings for Japanese police personnel dating to the 1895-1945 period of Japanese rule. Today, a former police office houses the visitor center, a prayer pavilion is a rest pavilion, and dorm facilities house a cultural-creative merchandise shop, handicraft-experience workshop, exhibit/performance venue, café, etc. There's also a regular weekend market selling cultural-creative handmade goods, art, and eco-friendly food products.

The stained-wood exterior of the “**Little 壳 Cultural-Creative Shop**” is prettily decorated in the festive manner of old-style Japanese shops, with hanging decorative lanterns and banners carrying prominent calligraphy. “壳” is an ancient Chinese character and still-used kanji character meaning “sale/selling/retail,” both pronounced “mai.” The interior is also decked out in retro-rustic Japanese style. This enterprise specializes in handcrafted cultural-creative items and souvenir items from well-known Taoyuan brands.

Entry is free to the **Six Arts Gallery** (www.facebook.com/Artworkstationrt) exhibit and performance space, where original Japanese-dorm elements such as the woodwork, sliding wall/door panels, and window frames have also been maintained. The permanent exhibit explains the police-dorm cluster's history and architecture. Activities include artistic performances, concerts, and special-theme exhibits.

Come True Coffee (www.cometrue-coffee.com; Chinese) is part of a local high-end chain, with 14 outlets island-wide. Here, the interior's original woodwork has all been left intact, complemented by Taiwan-theme flourishes such as countertops made with Hualien marble and seating made with Taiwan high-mountain cedar. The menu, which has English, includes over 20 coffee selections, sweet and savory “souffle pancakes,” and Japanese-theme pizzas and rice-based dishes.

TAOYUAN 77 ART ZONE (桃園 77 藝文町)

- ☎ (03) 332-1969
- 📍 No. 5, Lane 77, Zhongzheng Rd., Taoyuan District, Taoyuan City (桃園市桃園區中正路 77 巷 5 號)
- 🌐 www.77artzone.com (Chinese)

Taoyuan 77 Art Zone weekend market



Banana soufflé

Longtan District

The town of Longtan is the urban heart of primarily rural Longtan District, which is located at the higher, south end of the Taoyuan plain where flat land transitions to hills. It is an exurb of Taoyuan's main urban region. This district has a strong Hakka population (the Hakka are a Han Chinese minority that, for historical reasons, has long lived in hilly/mountain areas) and possesses an attractive old/new cultural mix, with old-time tea plantations and tea factories now turned into tourist destinations existing alongside young high-tech hubs. There are now also many other types of modern-style tourist-factory experiences available, such as for traditional Chinese cakes and pastries and beancurd products.

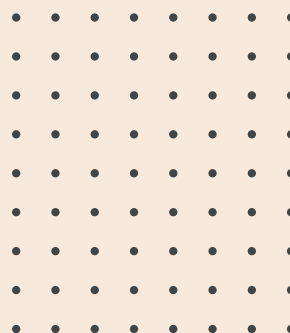
The place name “Longtan” means “dragon pool,” referring to **Longtan Lake**, measuring over 18ha, at the town's center. It is today a major tourist attraction (more on this momentarily). Originally created for irrigation use by Han Chinese immigrants in imperial times, old legend had it that an auspicious yellow dragon dwelled at its bottom, its presence always ensuring ample water supply.



OLD PLACE, NEW LIFE

Once dark and dirty, Longtan's Lingtan Street now attracts visitors with colorful shops and plenty of nostalgia

Photos of Lingtan Street courtesy of Lingtan Street Creative Hub



LINGTAN STREET CREATIVE HUB (菱潭街興創基地)

📍 No. 45-31, Longyuan Rd., Longtan District, Taoyuan City
(桃園市龍潭區龍元路 45 之 31 號)
🌐 www.facebook.com/lingtanstreet



Lingtan Street Creative Hub, a street-market-style attraction, is one of Longtan's great "old place, new life, new purpose" success stories. It's a walk of just a few hundred meters from Longtan Lake. The short roof-covered street here was once home to the long-thriving Longtan First Market, opened in 1937, hit by fire in 1973, and almost dead thereafter until young cultural-creative entrepreneurs rejuvenated the street in 2017, fixing everything up with the help of appreciative locals.

Today this once dark, dirty, and avoided artery is bursting with bright beckoning colors, the approximately 50 booths festively painted and the overhead space festooned with hand-painted decorative lanterns carrying quintessential Longtan images. The creative hub does duty as a cultural-creative market and community classroom, with the stress among the former's entrepreneurs on local original brands. There are small artist studios, local-produce vendors, a confectionery, a café serving sweet treats and light meals, a dried-flower vendor, a picture-book shop, and ventures of many other types.

Foodies take note that because Longtan is very much a Hakka town, the culinary adventures here, where cultural-creativity and new-meets-classic expressivity is emphasized, have a strong (though hardly exclusive) Hakka focus. Perhaps most delicious among the many innovative comestibles is a newfangled marriage of old-time *guabao* with salmon and fried apple. Classic *guabao*, oft called the "Taiwanese hamburger," is Taiwan-style braised pork belly in a chewy steamed white bun with pickled mustard greens, cilantro, and peanut powder. Another specialty worth trying is traditional Taiwanese egg cake (sweet) with salted fish (very not sweet).

On the community classroom front, among your varied possible Longtan DIY experiences are handicraft activities, a cooking class on traditional Hakka food, and a fun *erhu* teaching session (an *erhu* is a classical Chinese two-string bowed instrument).

If you visit the creative hub you must visit pathway-surrounded **Longtan Lake**, and if you haven't visited Longtan Lake you haven't visited Longtan town. The Taoyuan tourism authorities have also dubbed this the *Longtan Large Tourist Pond*. An elegant old temple stands on a small island in its middle, which can be reached by two scenic footbridges. The older bridge zigzags at sharp angles – beyond the navigation mobility of ghosts and demons, according to traditional belief. This lake is the stage for Longtan's annual dragon-boat races.



Photo courtesy of Taoyuan City Gov't

DRAGON POOL

A yellow dragon at the bottom of Longtan's irrigation pond is believed to ensure ample water supply



A GOOD FIT?

You won't see this combination often, a hardware fittings shop combined with a designer-style café!

Guishan District

Guishan District is in Taoyuan's northeast, adjacent to Taoyuan District. It's outside the Taoyuan plain; the hills area off the plain is largely rural, and its easternmost section is on the Linkou Plateau, a defining geo-feature between the Taoyuan plain and Taipei Basin. The rapid development here is an extension of the expanding Taipei metro area. Collectively, Guishan is an area of tourism tea gardens, leisure farms, two golf courses, and numerous post-secondary educational institute campuses.

A specially recommended Guishan cultural-creative enterprise is **RULU Hardware Fittings & Café**. It's on the Linkou Plateau, a short walk from Linkou Station on the Taoyuan Airport MRT line, across a quiet residential wide-sidewalk street from a pleasant neighborhood park.

Who'd have ever dreamed that shopping for hardware fittings could be so fun? This is a combination fittings store and café showcasing designer fittings so artsy-beautiful in handsome displays that it feels more like a 1960s Mod-revival art gallery. Even if not intent on buying anything other than food and beverages, java-savoring lingerers can spend hours admiring the endless inspired imaginings-made-reality. Among this little universe of treasures are such brainchildren as brass/cast-iron door hinges shaped like strolling bears, closet/cabinet knobs that echo Taiwan's treasured traditional majolica-tile craftsmanship, and nifty stainless-steel briefcases embossed with "TOOLBOX" containing a wine opener, mini coffee grinder and such things or mini Black & Decker drill, hammer, tape measure and such things.

Oh! And yes, the coffees, teas, Taiwan fruit-starring sodas, and cakes and desserts are just as sensory-stimulating!

RULU HARDWARE FITTINGS & CAFÉ

(鹿麓復古五金專門店)

☎ (03) 397-5357

📍 No. 22, Lane 638, Sec. 2, Zhongyi Rd., Guishan District, Taoyuan City (桃園市龜山區忠義路二段 638 巷 22 號)

🌐 www.facebook.com/rulu1212



Photos on this page courtesy of RULU Hardware Fittings & Café





Photos on this page courtesy of Friend in Café

CAMPGROUND CAFÉ

Fine food and drink is served in this one-of-a-kind cafe in Taoyuan's Luzhu District

PRACTICAL INFO

For all the practical info you need about traveling in Taoyuan, visit travel.tycg.gov.tw.



ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Come True Coffee 成真咖啡屋

Daxi 大溪

guabao 割包

Guishan District 龜山區

Lalashan 拉拉山

Linkou Plateau 林口台地

Longtan District 龍潭區

Longtan Lake 龍潭大池

Longtan Large Tourist Pond 龍潭觀光大池

"Little 壳 Cultural-Creative Shop" 小壳文創商店

Luzhu District 蘆竹區

Nankan 南坎

Six Arts Gallery 六藝展覽坊

Taimall 台茂購物中心

Taoyuan District 桃園區

Zhuwei Fishing Harbor 竹圍漁港

Luzhu District

This district is also in Taoyuan's northeast. Its south end borders both the Taoyuan and Guishan districts. Its neighbor on the other side of its north-end boundary is the Taiwan Strait. On its east side it runs up the hills off the plain to the Linkou Plateau ridgeline; this area is predominantly rural, and among its various attractions are four uplands golf courses.

Over the past two decades the south end's Nankan area has become a high-density high-rise suburb for Taipei and Taoyuan District white-collar workers. Taimall is its bosom – Taiwan's first large-scale combo shopping and leisure center, opened in 1999 – a weekend destination for day-trippers from as far away as Taipei and Hsinchu.

Our specially recommended cultural-creative Luzhu port of call is **Friend in Café**, found deep up a long, shallow side valley in Luzhu's east area, backed by healthy deep-green forest and standing amidst rice-paddy farmland. This is an outdoor café masquerading as a campground. Guests choose one of many tents arranged around the ground, and your drinks and meals are brought from a small pyramid-shaped glass-wall kitchen kiosk centrally located. Food selections include cakes, set meals centered around quiche, chicken with rice, etc., and beef cuts you can BBQ yourself, with house sauces provided.



Cozy safari tent

Each open-faced tent is decorated differently, like a comely mini safari tent, with small tables and lawnchair-style seating and patterned outdoor rugs for those who want to sit on the ground. Among the genteel non-necessity decorative accouterment touches are items like wicker picnic baskets, wine racks – and ukuleles. At night hanging strings of white lights bathe the ground in a warm glow.

Just to confirm, no, there is no overnight camping. **T**

FRIEND IN CAFÉ (露營咖啡館)

📍 No. 50-1, Alley 51, Lane 377, Sec. 3, Shanlin Rd., Luzhu District, Taoyuan City (蘆竹區山林路三段377巷51弄50-1號)
🌐 www.facebook.com/Friend-In-Cafe-105899374749779

North Taiwan on a Budget

A Trio of Taipei's Best Hostels

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE

The tourism industry in Taipei (and Taiwan) has flourished over the past two decades, putting the city firmly on the international backpacking map of choicest destinations, especially in East Asia. Ever more budget-accommodation enterprises have opened up, and the intense competition has seen operators impressively and continuously up their game, to your benefit.



Backpacking forges deep bonds and lifelong friendships with likeminded adventurous souls who thrill at broadening their world by traveling the globe. Two of my four best friends were met in Taipei hostels way back in ancient Taipei history – i.e., before the Taipei Metro, YouBike public bike-rental, and Taiwan High Speed Rail services existed.

Taipei's hostel community has traveled a long way since then. Today there are scores of budget accommodations to choose from, sparkling clean, solid quality, government-vetted, ranging from budget-austere to budget-luxury. Many are attractive "concept" operations, centered around themes – green sustainability, capsule accommodation, rejuvenated heritage architecture, bike-friendly, poshtel

Taipei does not have a "hostel epicenter" neighborhood, in the vein of Bangkok's wonderful and wonder-filled Khao San Road area, catering to the necessities and non-necessity whims of globe-trekking budget travelers. However, Taipei Main Station-area accommodations predominate. The station-and-environs-facilities form Taipei's main transport hub, and the city's west, its older less-expensive side, has seen a tremendous rejuvenation in the past decade-plus.

And now, as promised, we present to you three of Taipei's very vetted best.



HOSTEL CENTRAL

Star Hostel has a very inviting commons area with a touch of Zen

STAR HOSTEL – TAIPEI MAIN STATION (信星青年旅館)

☎ (02) 2556-2015

📍 4F, No. 50, Huayin St., Datong District, Taipei City (台北市大同區華陰街50號4樓)

🌐 www.starhostel.com.tw



Star Hostel – Taipei Main Station

Let's start off with a statement that says, "Nuff Said!: Star Hostel Taipei Main Station won Hostelworld's HOSCAR award as the world's Best Large Hostel two consecutive years, in 2018 and 2019." City-hopping travelers, note that there are now five stars in the expanding Star Hostel galaxy, distributed in Taipei and central Taiwan's Taichung City. All work as green-sustainability model operations.

Neighborhood : This hostel, Taipei's largest, occupies the upper floor of an older four-story mixed commercial/residential building complex in the Taipei Rear Station Commercial District, the area immediately behind (north of) Taipei Main Station. Old-timey shops, including many inexpensive eateries, line

the arcaded sidewalks in this neighborhood. In days gone by, because of its convenient location, this area became a gathering place for wholesalers and enterprises with self-created brands. Today it's a wholesale distribution center for creative materials, from decorative accessories, leather goods, toys, and gift items to packaging materials and even hardware. Individual retail sales are also standard. The Chinese New Year lead-up shopping season is crazy-happy in this district.

Layout and Personality : Though a "hostel," there are both shared and private rooms. Private rooms sleep one to four guests, while shared rooms sleep four to 8. Private rooms feature a desk and ensuite bathroom. There's a Basic

Female Dorm, Standard Dorm, and Deluxe Dorm.

Guests make use of a common kitchen, and there is an inviting commons area designed with Zen character, featuring much use of green foliage and light woods, that has a heart-comforting multi-level treehouse and a greenhouse corner, both with seating. Outside one high glass-panel wall of the calming commons is a rooftop garden.

Each day features different social activities, such as video-game nights and movie nights. Each night the kitchen corner becomes a bar, with local craft beers served. One English online-review site has declared this the "Best Party Hostel in Taipei" (www.roadaffair.com/best-hostels-in-taipei-taiwan).

All photos on this page courtesy of Star Hostel



Taiwan Youth Hostel & Capsule Hotel

In the same online English-language review link mentioned for Star Hostel, the reviewer lauds this facility as “among the best backpacker hotels in Taipei.”

Neighborhood : This hostel is in the area immediately in front (south of) Taipei Main Station, which is home to many government and office buildings. It's also, famously, home to Taipei's oldest and largest *buxiban* (cram school) cluster, taking up floors in the neighborhood's older commercial buildings. At street level around the cluster are many inexpensive eateries, catering to the office crowd weekdays and student crowd weekday nights/weekends. Immediately south of the hotel is the heritage-architecture National Taiwan University Hospital complex and the large 228 Peace Park, with the heritage-architecture National Taiwan Museum just inside its main gate. Hospital, park, and museum were all established during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945).

Layout and Personality : Located on the B1 level of a younger commercial building on a street that gets very quiet in the evening, this hostel stresses safety. There is a separate female dorm area, a mixed dorm area, and private rooms, public spaces have CCTV security, and personal lockers are provided in rooms. All areas are well and brightly lit, creating a sense of space and eliminating any underground claustrophobic inclinations.

There's a wide range of accommodation choices: private bunkbed rooms with double beds and shared bathroom, double bed in mixed-dorm room, single bed in mixed-dorm room, double bed in female dorm room, and single bed in female dorm (shared room). Each sleeping space has a simple table-cum-desk, and there are electrical outlets aplenty. Your personal locker, behind/beside your bed, fits a carry-on backpack.

Perks include a gratis snack bar, blu-ray movies, and PS4 gaming. There's also a regular schedule of art, music, and cultural activities staged in the inviting, spacious commons area. There are “Nights of the Arts,” cooking classes, dance classes, talent shows (open to in-residence and general Taipei talent), music nights, and much more.



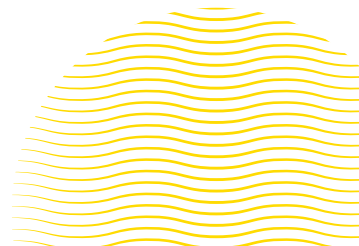
Photos on this and opposite page courtesy of the two hostels

TAIWAN YOUTH HOSTEL & CAPSULE HOTEL (台灣青旅膠囊旅店)

☎ (02) 2361-3000

📍 B1, No. 11, Qingdao W. Rd., Zhongzheng District, Taipei City
(台北市中正區青島西路 11 號 B1)

🌐 taiwanyh.com/en



MODERN AND YOUNG

Taiwan's top hostels are praised for their stylish and ingenious designs



OwlStay FlipFlopHostel

One online reviewer praises this hostel (and its nearby FlipFlop sister) as among “7 of the Hippest Hostels in Taipei” (theculturetrip.com/asia/taiwan/articles/7-of-the-hippest-hostels-in-taipei). “The ... décor ... adds a real summer vibe to your stay From live music to food challenges, (staff) know how to liven up the place and get everyone involved.”

By the way, Star Hostel also made this list.


Neighborhood : This hostel is also in the Taipei Rear Station Commercial District, and is also just a short walk to the adjacent district on the east, Tiaotong Commercial District, an enclave of completely different character. It's laid out in the side lanes and alleys off Linsen Road, north and south of Nanjing Road. Often called either “Japantown” or “Little Tokyo,” it percolates with a fun-times-with-friends aura, bubbling with izakayas, karaoke bars, ramen shops, and other Japan-focused entertainment and retail ventures. During the Japanese colonial era this was a high-end residential area for expatriate Japanese officials, afterwards morphing into a Japanese-culture nostalgia center. “Tiaotong” is from a Japanese term meaning “small lane/alley.”

Layout and Personality : This hostel occupies a small, comprehensively remodeled four-story heritage commercial building that dates to the 1940s/1950s. It's diagonally across from a key Taiwan arts-

scene destination, MOCA Taipei, also in a heritage building.

Adding to the spirit of sunny cheeriness is the wealth of light streaming into a quiet central courtyard through a large roof skylight, along with a roomy-yet-cozy sunray-rich common room and common kitchen. Many guestrooms look directly into the skylight/courtyard zone, through floor-to-ceiling glass panes, and have balcony space. Gleaming-white is much the dominant color throughout, in both rooms and common areas, adding to the relaxed, upbeat ambience. However, much appealing original terrazzo work has been left exposed on courtyard-facing walls.

There's an unusually wide array of accommodation choices, far too detailed to list here, ranging from an economy single room to shared women's dorm (4 beds) to shared mix dorm (6 beds), all with shared bathroom, to a triple room (3 twin beds) with private bathroom.

(One note of caution – there is no elevator, making healthy stair-use requisite.) 

PRACTICAL INFO

Details on almost 600 places of accommodation vetted by the Taiwan Tourism Bureau, including many hostels and budget hotels, can be explored at taiwanstay.net.tw.



OWLSTAY FLIPFLOPHOSTEL (故事所夾腳拖的家)

☎ (02) 2258-5050

📍 No. 122, Chang'an W. Rd., Datong District, Taipei City
(台北市大同區長安西路 122 號)

🌐 flipflopshostel.com

🇬🇧 ENGLISH AND CHINESE

228 Peace Park 二二八和平公園

buxiban 補習班

MOCA Taipei 台北當代藝術館

National Taiwan Museum 國立臺灣博物館

Taipei Main Station 台北車站

Taipei Rear Station Commercial District 台北後車站商圈

Tiaotong Commercial District 條通商圈



TAIWAN, *Foodie Paradise*

Classic Breakfast Treats, Rice-Based Foods, Beef Noodles,
Night-Market Treasures

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE PHOTOS | VISION



Beef noodles paired with
luwei ("braised flavors")



Doujiang (soybean milk) with *youtiao* (deep-fried dough sticks)

What follows is a tasty romp and chomp through four stations of the vast, seemingly limitless Taiwan kitchen: traditional breakfast choices, rice-based hot snacks, beef noodles, and night-market icons. As Taiwan has gained its now-global reputation as a “foodie paradise,” more and more international culture-trekkers are arriving on its shores intent on exploring this land’s places and zesty cultural mosaic via their palates.

It’s very special geographical position has made Taiwan a crossroads of humanity, and given it a wondrously distinctive history. A sub-story in this delicious and still-unfolding tale is its flourishing as a unique culinary crossroads as well. This has led, among many recognitions, to a dedicated Michelin Guide edition, an Asia rarity – first Taipei alone, now with Taichung included. Another recognition is that a large component of the international travelers who choose Taiwan list its culinary fertility as a key draw, with its boisterous night markets the key seductive siren call.

Over the past century, newly defining ingredients have been added to the savory (and sweet too!) Taiwan culinary pot, building on its age-old indigenous foodways and centuries-old Taiwanese creativity. Japanese traditions during the 1895-1945 colonial period; all of China’s regional-cuisine knowledge, brought by master chefs and humbler folk with the late-1940s Nationalist exodus to Taiwan; Southeast Asia traditions introduced at inexpensive eateries by an immigrant influx over the past few decades; top-level talent from further-flung lands, including Michelin-starred European chefs, recognizing Taipei’s emergence as a global gastronomic capital and setting up high-quality restaurants; and young, modern-minded homegrown talent with a searching, unquenchable passion for fusion artistry.

Today our travels are on the humble side of the kitchen, not to the lavish banquet-dining chef stations you’ve no doubt heard about – “regular-folk” breakfast foods, rice-based fare, beef noodles, and night-market favorites.

frequently involved). Elsewhere, *danbing* is a crepe-style flour pancake with a thin layer of egg inside.

The Taiwan sandwich is unlike others. Between two white-bread slices, squared with crust cut off, come a fried egg, tomato slices, baby-cucumber slivers, your choice of pork floss, ham, tuna, etc., and ketchup.



Shaobing (flatbread) and *youtiao*

FUHANG DOUJIANG (阜杭豆浆)

☎ (02) 2392-2175

📍 2F, Huashan Market; Sec. 1, Zhongxiao E. Rd., Zhongzheng District, Taipei City (台北市中正區忠孝東路一段 108 號 / 華山市場 2 樓)

QINGDAO DOUJIANG (青島豆漿店)

☎ (02) 2392-2175

📍 139-3, Sec. 1, Hangzhou S. Rd., Zhongzheng District, Taipei City (台北市中正區杭州南路一段 139-3 號)

Breakfast

In cities and towns throughout Taiwan, simple traditional hole-in-the-wall breakfast shops and sandwich shops are ubiquitous. You’ll find that Taiwan’s streets, urban parks, etc. start getting busy verrrry early – and so do these iconic, beloved sustenance-supplying neighborhood joints, steady streams of regulars stopping by.

Doujiang is soybean milk, served either savory or sweetened, taken cold in summer, warmed in winter. *Shaobing* are charcoal oven-baked, unleavened, layered flatbreads. *Youtiao*, “Chinese crullers,” are deep-fried dough sticks. These three are eaten separately (*shaobing* alone can also feature savory/sweet fillings), but *doujiang* with *youtiao* (*youtiao* chunks and other savory enhancers in warm *doujiang* soup) is also breakfast-quintessential, as is *shaobing youtiao* (cruller strips inside sliced-open *shaobing* with fried egg and scallion



Danbing (pancake)



Rice bowl cakes



LIANG JI CHIAYI CHICKEN RICE (梁記嘉義雞肉飯)

☎ (02) 2563-4671

📍 No. 19, Lane 90, Songjiang Rd., Zhongshan District, Taipei City
(台北市中山區松江路90巷19號)

MA DOU ZHU RICE BOWL CAKE (麻豆助碗粿)

☎ (06) 215-7079

📍 No. 704, Sec. 1, Ximen Rd., Central West District, Tainan City
(台南市中西區西門路一段704號)

YUAN HUAN DING VEGETABLE ZONG (圓環頂菜粽)

☎ (06) 222-0752

📍 No. 40, Sec. 1, Fuqian Rd., Central West District, Tainan City
(台南市中西區府前路一段40號)



Chicken rice

Rice-based Foods

As a general culinary rule, wheat-based foods such as *youtiao*, *shaobing*, and *danbing* are from China's drier north, rice-based creations from the warmer, wetter south. Thus, most rice-based traditional foods date back to Chinese imperial times and the southern regions from which Taiwan's original Han Chinese settlers came.

Rouzhong/zongzi, or "glutinous-rice dumplings/tamales," is glutinous rice with various tasties (generally pork chunk, peanut, shiitake mushroom, salted duck egg yolk, etc.), wrapped in large flavor-lending leaves and steamed/boiled. There are also sweet versions. *Lurou fan*, often translated as "braised meat rice," is minced pork braised in a stock of soy sauce and various aromatics, then dolloped atop a bowl of steaming-hot rice. *Uánn-kué* (Taiwanese spelling), or "rice bowl cakes," comprise a small plain-tasting rice-paste "cake" served with a savory mixture of things delicious like minced pork, shiitake mushroom, salted duck egg yolk, and sweet/savory gravy. *Jirou fan*, "chicken rice," also often stars turkey; deceptively simple, it's richly textured, featuring shredded chicken/turkey with fried almost-caramelized shallot on steaming rice.



Rouzhong (glutinous-rice dumplings)

Lurou fan ("braised meat rice")

Beef Noodles

Proof of Taiwan's modern-day love affair with niurou mian, "beef noodles" (in fact, beef noodle soup), an ancient-pedigree dish with variations throughout China, is the hugely popular annual Taipei International Beef Noodle Festival. Taiwan ate little beef until the latter 20th century, because its almost-revered bovine denizens were priceless farm-field laborers.

Beef noodles come in two primary categories: clear broth (commonly with salt/herb flavorings) and spicy soy sauce-based broth. It's said the spicy granddaddy progenitor of Taiwan's distinctive variety, today the definition of "beef noodles" abroad, was created in the late 1940s by Nationalist military personnel originally from hot-and-spicy-loving Sichuan. Essential ingredients are soy-braised ("red-braised") beef slices, spicy bean paste, scallion, ginger, star anise, rock sugar, rice wine, bok choy, cilantro... and of course chewy fresh-made noodles. There are several Taiwan red-braised beef noodles variations, such as herbal medicine, garlic and, especially, tomato. The last features soft tomato chunks in a rich red-colored tomato broth.



Clear-broth
beef noodles



Soy sauce-based
beef noodles



SPOILT FOR CHOICE

In Taiwan, beef noodles come in myriad flavors and are served in different ways

SHI JI AUTHENTIC BEEF NOODLES

(史記正宗牛肉麵)

☎ (02) 2563-3836

📍 No. 60, Sec. 2, Minsheng E. Rd., Zhongshan District, Taipei City (台北市中山區民生東路二段60號)

PIN CHUAN LAN (品川蘭)

☎ (02) 2523-3890

📍 No. 78-2, Sec. 2, Zhongshan N. Rd., Zhongshan District, Taipei City (台北市中山區中山北路二段78-2號)

🌐 www.facebook.com/rulu1212

MAZENDO (麻膳堂)

☎ (02) 8772-2069

📍 B1, No. 39, Sec. 1, Fuxing S. Rd., Da'an District, Taipei City (台北市大安區復興南路一段39號B1)

🌐 www.mazendo.com.tw



— Night Market Foods —

International travelers consistently list night markets among the top five reasons for deciding to visit Taiwan. Unlike Singapore's hawker centers, Taiwan night markets are not in purpose-built facilities – an exception is the purpose-built hub at Taipei's Shilin Tourist Night Market. Instead, hawkers take over designated open spaces or blocked-off streets in the evenings, creating a crowded festive country fair-like atmosphere.

If you ain't done "stinky tofu," well, you ain't done Taiwan. Stinky tofu – *chou doufu* – has been fondly dubbed "Chinese (blue) cheese." Fermented beancurd squares are taken cold, stewed, steamed or, most commonly, deep-fried, and accompanied with chili or soy sauce. "Manna!" say half, "Disgusting!" say the other half, you decide. *Luwei*, literally "braised flavors," are foods braised in a master stock of soy sauce, spices, and other savory items. You fill a small basket with desired meats, veggies, and other local ingredients; these are then stock-boiled, chopped, and plated.

"Little sausage in big sausage" – *dachang bao xiaochang* – is a pork sausage sandwiched in a glutinous-rice sausage, usually chargrilled and with such condiments as pickled bokchoy/cucumber, garlic, hot peppers, wasabi, and thick soy sauce. *Xiansu ji*, literally "salty crispy chicken," is commonly translated as "salt and pepper popcorn chicken." Small chicken pieces, generally thigh, are first marinated in a special mixture (soy sauce, garlic, ginger, and five-spice powder, the last an East Asia icon), then dipped in potato or sweet potato starch and deep-fried to crispy nugget-sized perfection.

Shengjian bao are pan-fried pork-filled steamed wheat-flour buns. The buns, about golf ball-sized, are crisp on the outside, with a golden base, and soft-textured inside; the broth-yummy filling has minced pork, spring onion, and various seasonings. The wheat-based *runbing*, often translated as "popiah" in English, is a type of non-fried spring roll; standard ingredients include pork slivers, bean sprout, Chinese cabbage, egg slivers, and sweetened peanut powder. 🍴

Shilin Night Market



Shengjian bao
(steamed buns)



Xiansu ji ("salty crispy chicken")



Luwei ("braised flavors")



Little sausage in big sausage

MUST VISIT
Night markets are always near the top of the most popular places to visit in Taiwan



Run bing (non-fried spring roll)



Stinky tofu

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

chou doufu 臭豆腐
dachang bao xiaochang 大腸包小腸
danbing 蛋餅
doujiang 豆漿
doujiang with youtiao 豆漿油條
jirou fan 雞肉飯
lurou fan 滷肉飯
luwei 滷味
niurou mian 牛肉麵
red-braised 紅燒
rouzong 肉粽
runbing 潤餅
shaobing 燒餅
shaobing youtiao 燒餅油條
shengjian bao 生煎包
uann-kué 碗粿
xiansu ji 鹹酥雞
youtiao 油條
zongzi 粽子





Sanying Longyao Bridge

Along the Dahan River

TEXT | TWELLI PHOTOS | TWELLI, VISION

A Bike Ride Connecting the Towns of Yingge and Daxi

The town of Yingge in New Taipei City is well known as Taiwan's most important center for ceramics production. The town of Daxi in Taoyuan City is well known for its Old Street area and dried tofu. Both settlements sit on the same river, the Dahan, and are connected by riverside bikeways and minor roads that make it possible to visit them on a one-day bike outing.

Taipei City and New Taipei City both have excellent riverside bikeway systems, which are interconnected. All major rivers in the Taipei Basin – the Tamsui, Keelung, Xindian, Dahan, Shuangxi, and Jingmei – are lined with riverside parks and well-paved bike paths on both banks that allow residents and visitors alike to enjoy carefree bicycling, away from busy streets with motorized vehicles. An outing on the riverside bikeways of Taipei can easily be expanded by going further southwest. The Dahan merges with the Xindian at the southwestern corner of Taipei City to form the Tamsui, which flows north to meet the sea. It is possible to ride from the Dahan-Xindian confluence all the way upriver to the town of Yingge (about 18km) and then even further southwest. In this article, however, we start our ride in Yingge. To get there from Taipei you can hop on a local train, which takes less than 30 minutes.

■ Tip:

It's possible to take your own bicycle onto a local train; please find related information on the Taiwan Railways Administration website (www.railway.gov.tw). If you want to rent a public bicycle, there are several docking stations of the YouBike system (www.youbike.com.tw) both in Yingge and Daxi.

◆ Starting in Yingge

There are two must-visit tourist attractions in Yingge, the **Old Street** area and the **New Taipei City Yingge Ceramics Museum** (www.ceramics.ntpc.gov.tw). In the Old Street area you'll find a cluster of shops selling pottery items that make great souvenirs, such as teapots and ceramic cups. The modern-design museum has displays of fine pieces of ceramics art. You can easily spend half a day exploring Yingge town, but since we'll be focusing on riverside bicycling today, let's move straight to the west (or left) bank of the Dahan River.

From Yingge Railway Station, it's just a 15min walk or a short ride (if you've brought your own bike) to the **Sanying Art Village**. After exiting the station (rear entrance), turn right and follow Wenhua Road; before reaching the ceramics museum take Lane 371; upon reaching Guanqian Road you will see the "village," which is a park with ceramics-themed art installations perfect for taking selfies. The centerpiece is a 15m-tall reddish-brown leaning tower that looks a bit like what you'd expect to see on the potter's wheel of someone who tries pottery for the first time. If you haven't brought your own bike, there is a **YouBike** docking station in the park, right beside the **Yingge Civil Sports Center**.

Before starting your journey southwest along the Dahan you'll first have to cross the tunnel-like, 85m-long **Sanying Longyao Bridge**, which spans the small Yingge River. This stylish structure was designed to resemble a "dragon kiln" (*longyao*), a large elongated kiln traditionally used in commercial pottery making.

After leaving the bridge behind, for a short stretch you'll be following Huanhe Road before turning left and entering the **Nanjing Ceramics Riverside Park**. This is one of the most pleasant sections of the route down to Daxi, with many lush trees providing shade. On the left-hand side you'll soon spot a bright-red multiple-arch water pipe bridge and behind, on the opposite side of the river, tree-covered **Mt. Yuan** (300m high).

After reaching the southern end of the ceramics park you'll pass under a National Freeway 3 bridge and then will soon come close to a large dam spanning the river, the **Yuanshan Weir**. Built in 1983 and operated by the Taiwan Water Corporation, this weir is used to catch water released by the Shimen Reservoir, about 19km upstream, for diversion to the Banxin Water Treatment Plant. After processing there, the water is then piped to the households of about two million people living in Taoyuan City and New Taipei City.



Sanying Art Village

Blocked by the weir, the river is much wider to the south. In the evening the lake-like body of water here becomes especially enchanting as the sun sets. The stretch of riverside bikeway west of the weir is thus also known as the **Yingge Central River Sunset Trail**.

Further on, the bikeway remains flat and well-paved. There are pavilions and lookout platforms along the way where you can stop for a rest and enjoy the pleasant river and mountain scenery, with a good chance of spotting waterbirds in the wetland areas by the river.

◆ Down in Daxi

After entering Taoyuan City's Daxi District, you'll be riding through large open spaces and you can choose to take one of several different paths; just make sure to follow the river. There is a strong rural countryside feel, with rice paddies and vegetable fields along the way. If you come in September, there's the chance of seeing fields of blooming garlic chives, the white blossoms making the fields appear as if covered under a layer of snow.

Next up is another large manmade body of water, the **Zhongzhuang Retention Basin**. Built in 2013, this basin is used for storing clean water needed as backup in case the water inside the Shimen Reservoir becomes too turbid during/after typhoons because of heavy rainfall. Shooting out over the water at the basin's southern end is a small glass-bottom lookout platform (only open weekends/holidays), which has become a popular photo-taking spot.

After passing through a riverside area lush with shrubs and bushes, you'll arrive at the **Daxi Riverside Park**. Separated from the river by a massive dike, this is a fun place for children, complete with playground areas and a baseball field. There is also a square pond featuring two unusually tall floating goals facing each other, and you might wonder about their purpose. The answer: The pond is a playing field for canoe polo, a rare sight in Taiwan.

■ **Tip:** There is a YouBike docking station right outside the park, making this a perfect location for taking a break. Return your bike here at the station, relax in the park, and rent a new bike to continue the ride.

Next you'll come to a Provincial Highway 3 bridge that spans the river. While you could ride across this bridge to reach central Daxi town, you'll certainly prefer to go on for another few hundred meters or so and take the much prettier pedestrian **Daxi Bridge** instead. Built in 1934, this is a beautiful suspension bridge adorned with Baroque-style elements.

YINGGE-DAXI

This is an open-space bike route along bodies of water featuring both natural and cultural beauty



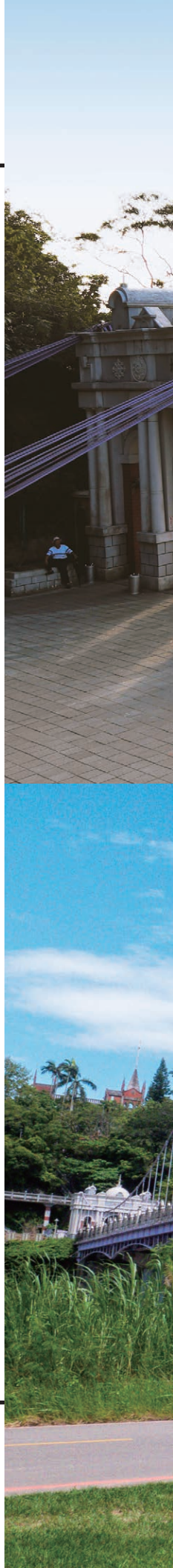
Zhongzhuang Retention Basin



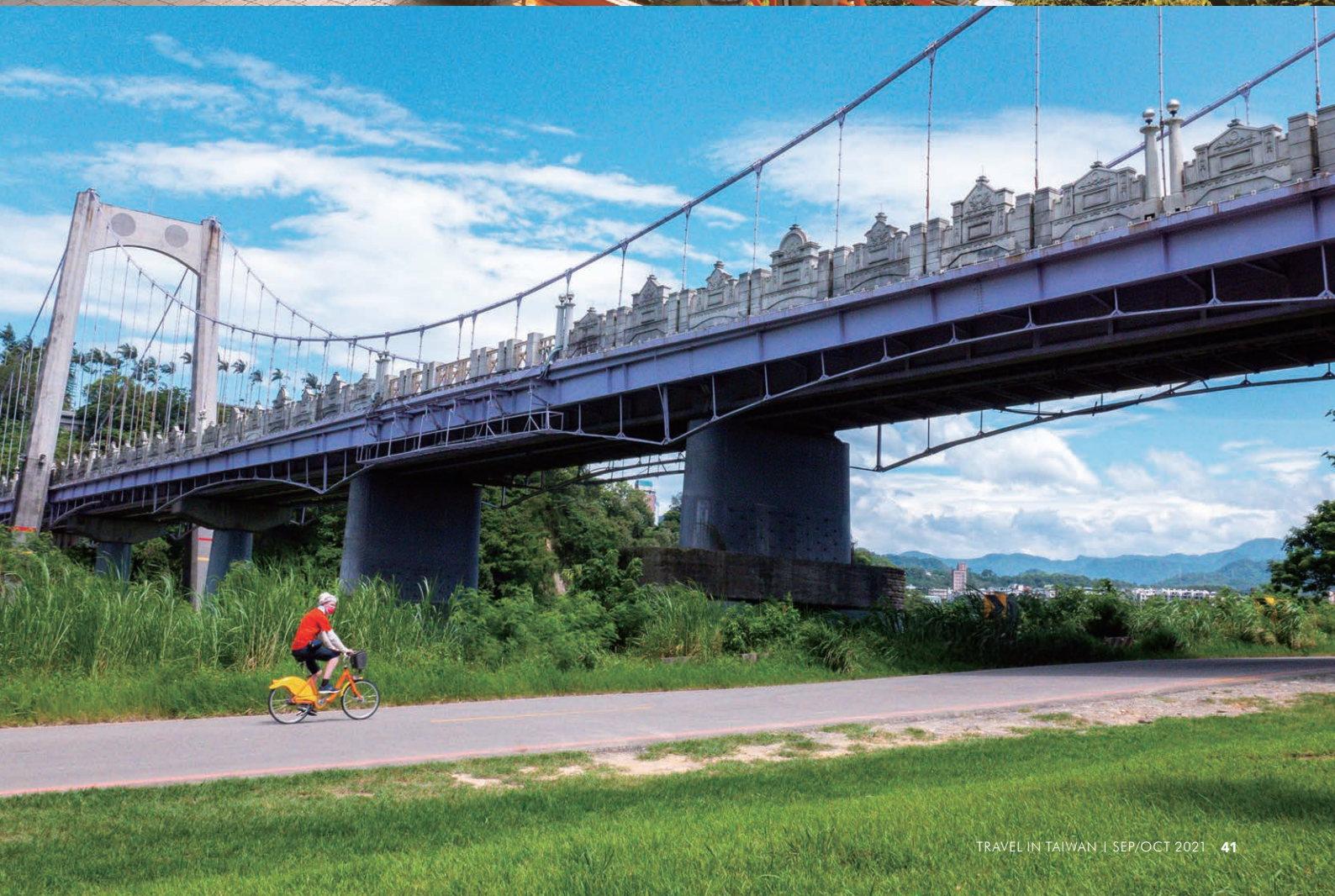
Garlic chive flower



Daxi Riverside Park



Daxi Bridge from above and below



At the far end of the bridge, you can either take the steep stairs uphill (not recommended, especially if hauling a YouBike; they are heavy!) or take the elevator (most certainly recommended), which will deliver you right inside old **Zhongzheng Park**. During the 1895-1945 Japanese colonial era, this park (established in 1912) was the site of Daxi's Shinto Shrine. While the shrine is long gone, you can still find numerous stones with inscriptions from the colonial days inside the park and, added more recently, Japanese-style stone lanterns and even an outdoor Sumo dohyō (wrestling ring).

■ **Tip:** If you want to explore the town of Daxi on foot, there is a YouBike docking station just outside the park.

If you have an interest in history, just to the south of the park is one of the many residences used by late R.O.C. President Chiang Kai-shek during his time in Taiwan. The residence's two main buildings are now part of an interesting museum project in Daxi called the **Daxi Wood Art Ecomuseum** (wem.tycg.gov.tw). Informative exhibitions about wood art can be visited in a number of heritage buildings in different locations around town, including the former presidential residence buildings, now named **Wooden Life Hall** and **Wood Furniture Hall**, and the beautiful **Daxi Martial Arts Dojo** close by.

The town's main attraction is its **Old Street** area, at the heart of which is Heping Road, a narrow street lined with old shophouses sporting beautiful façades. Look up and you will see a mix of Western-inspired Baroque-style and traditional southern Fujianese architectural elements, such as intricate carvings of birds and bats, along with the occasional shop name in English.

Having worked up an appetite on your way from Yingge, this is the place where you'll want to replenish those lost calories. There are numerous shops and eateries to choose from. The town's specialty is dried tofu, especially the "black dried beancurd" variety. Have a dried-tofu lunch and remember to buy a bag or two for the road or for friends and family back home.



Sumo wrestling ring



Old houses in Daxi



Daxi's Old Street



Tofu pudding and dried beancurd





Eco pond with bald cypress trees

◆ North of Daxi

After spending some time in this lovely historic town, let's head back north, now on the east (or right) bank of the Dahan. Rent a new YouBike, if needed, and get back down to the riverfront, then follow the bike path north, first passing through the tiny **Daqing Tunnel**. There is a nice pedestrian boardwalk close to the river here, but you have to take some steps down to get to it and then push your bike along, since the path is rather narrow. Hop back onto your bike after passing the aforementioned highway bridge.

Just to the north of the bridge you come to the **Yuemei Recreational Farm Area**. If it's the right time of the year (**Taoyuan Flower Festival** in November), you'll be presented with colorful "seas of flowers" in the fields surrounding the Hakka-style **Lee Teng-fang Old Residence**, which is also part of the Daxi Wood Art Ecomuseum project mentioned earlier.

Further north you can make a stop at the **Shanzhuhu Hydro-Ecology Park**. This new park, established by the Taoyuan City Government, has six natural ponds with a plethora of insects and plants. Go for a walk and enjoy being surrounded by the sights and sounds of nature. Beloved by photo takers are the bald cypress trees surrounding one of the ponds, especially beautiful when the trees turn orange-brown during the winter months.

Unfortunately, the riverside route ends here and does not go further north. If you feel you have done enough riding for the day, return your YouBike at the **Yuemei Parking Lot** docking station and then walk to the **Guanyin Temple bus stop** (at the gas station on Prov. Hwy 3, close to the highway bridge). From there, you can take a bus back to Yingge (No. 5101) or to the Taipei Metro's Yongning Station (710). You can, of course, also retrace your route and ride all the way back to Yingge. If it's late in the afternoon during a sunny day, you might even catch one of those glorious sunsets seen from near the Yuanshan Weir. **T**

Flowers in Yuemei Recreational Farm Area



ENGLISH AND CHINESE

"black dried beancurd" 黑豆干

Daqing Tunnel 大慶洞

Daxi Bridge 大溪橋

Daxi Martial Arts Dojo 大溪武德殿

Daxi Riverside Park 大溪河濱公園

Daxi Shrine 大溪神社

Daxi Wood Art Ecomuseum

大溪木藝生態博物館

Heping Road 和平路

Huanhe Road 環河路

Lee Teng-fang Old Residence 李騰芳古宅

Mt. Yuan 鳶山

Nanjing Ceramics Riverside Park

南靖陶藝河濱公園

Old Street 老街

Sanying Art Village 三鶯藝術村

Sanying Longyao Bridge 三鶯龍窯橋

Shanzhuhu Hydro-Ecology Park

山豬湖生態親水園區

Taoyuan Flower Festival 桃園花彩節

Wood Furniture Hall 木家具館

Wooden Life Hall 木生活館

Yingge River 鶯歌溪

Yingge Central River Sunset Trail

鶯歌環河日落步道

Yingge Ceramics Museum

鶯歌陶瓷博物館

Yingge Civil Sports Center

鶯歌國民運動中心

Yuanshan Weir 鳶山堰

Yuemei Recreational Farm Area

月眉休閒農業區

Zhongzhuang Retention Basin

中庄調整池



BIKE RENTAL

Do's and Don'ts

How to Ride a Public Bike in Taiwan Safely

TEXT & PHOTOS | VISION

You can see them everywhere on the streets of Taipei City and other urban areas around Taiwan, bright-orange YouBikes. Beloved by local residents and foreign visitors alike, these public bikes are easy to rent, ride, and return. In order to make each jaunt a memorable one free of regrets, please make sure to follow all applying rules and recommendations.

Tired of what sometimes feel like endless walks between places of interest in the city? Want to get around quicker, without taking the bus or metro? Why don't you bike? Public bike-rental stations are almost always no more than a 15-minute walk away in the Taipei urban core; who knows, there might be one right around the corner. Actually, the YouBike app knows. Download it and check the station map. Signing up and renting a YouBike is easy and convenient. You'll find all the necessary information on the system's bilingual website (www.youbike.com.tw).

Following are a few further tips and recommendations, answering some of the questions YouBikers might ask themselves before or while on a ride.

What is the difference between the orange and the white bikes?

.....

In Taipei City you will see two types of YouBikes, orange ones (version 1.0) and predominantly white ones (version 2.0). The city introduced a new generation of bikes with version 2.0 a few years ago, but unfortunately the old and the new bikes are docked at different stations, meaning the bikes of one version cannot be returned at a station of the other. As well, the new-version bikes and docking stations were not introduced in the New Taipei City area. Therefore, before renting one of the white bicycles, make sure there is a suitable station available in the area where you intend to return the bike if you do not intend to return to your original location. Currently the two versions co-exist in Taipei City and Taichung City, while other cities/counties use one of the two versions exclusively.



Can I take a YouBike on the metro?

You can, but you have to pay extra (NT\$80 per ride) and most likely there is no need for it, because chances are that there is a YouBike station close to the MRT station you are going to exit. So, why not just rent a new bike there?



Photo courtesy of Taoyuan Airport MRT



Can I return the bike in another city?

YouBikes are meant for short rides within a city, and each bike is the property of one city. This means that bikes that are moved across city borders need to be returned to their “home city” eventually by the YouBike company. However, since Taipei City, New Taipei City, and Taoyuan City are in such close proximity to each other, renting and returning is allowed across these cities’ borders (like we did for our *Biking Fun* article on page 38).

What if I lock my bike and lose the key?

Each YouBike comes with a front-wheel lock chain and key. If you need to step away from your bike (for example to go into a shop or restaurant), you can lock the bike and take the key with you. Should you lose the key, the first thing you want to do is call 1999 and ask for help/instructions. Apart from paying for the key (NT\$200), you’ll also have to pay for the transportation of the bike to a YouBike service center (unless you’re able to return it yourself).

What if someone steals my bike?

In the unlikely event that your YouBike is stolen, you have to call 1999 immediately and report the missing bike to the police. You have to pay for the rental period until the bike is recovered, or pay for the bike itself (NT\$9,000–15,000) should it still be missing after three months.

Can I ride on sidewalks/in pedestrian areas?

You are only allowed to ride a bike on sidewalks and in pedestrian areas that are clearly marked as designed for bike + pedestrian usage. Pedestrians always have the right of way, even on clearly marked bikeways.

Do I have to wear a helmet?

It is not mandatory to wear a helmet while riding a bicycle in Taiwan, but it’s certainly recommended to wear one as protection in case you have an accident.

Can I switch bikes at a station?

You can switch bikes at a docking station, but you have to wait 15 minutes between returning a bike and renting a new one.

Is there a minimum age for riding a YouBike?

There is no minimum age for riding a YouBike, but there are height restrictions. Riders have to be between 140cm and 190cm in height to be allowed to ride a YouBike. **T**

Bikes with a Bit of Umpf

The Taipei City core is mostly flat, and riding a 3-speed YouBike is most likely adequate for moving about without exerting yourself too much. The areas surrounding the core, however, are another story. The limitations of a YouBike will be evident as soon as you start riding through the hilly parts of greater Taipei.

“Let’s Moovo!” says the website for an e-bike rental system recently introduced in New Taipei City. Launched in 2020, this system provides sturdy bikes that are pedaled but have electric motors that give riders an additional boost for uphill stretches or times when there is a strong headwind. Unlike YouBikes, the Moovo e-bikes are not docked at physical stations but need to be rented and returned at fixed locations demarcated with thick yellow-line boxes painted on the ground.

Using the *Ride Moovo* mobile-device APP (currently in Chinese only) is required for registering and renting the bikes. At time of writing, there were stations in Tamsui, Banqiao, Sanchong, and Xindian districts of New Taipei City. www.ridemoovo.com (Chinese)





The *A Style Alike* Blog

Your English-Language Window into Living Chic in Taipei

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE PHOTOS | A STYLE ALIKE

A Style Alike, the lifestyle blog of two young South African ladies who have been living in Taipei well over a decade now, is an invaluable guide for living well and living chic in the city, also covering places beautiful further afield. Both Taiwan expats and international travelers turn to it for learning about the best cafés, boutiques, places to stay, and other need-to-know recommendations.

Part and parcel of Taipei's emergence as an international-caliber metropolis in recent decades is its quest to become a world design capital and Asia's leading design city. Initiatives on this front run the gamut from large-scale public projects to small private ventures, notably the beautification of local private-enterprise interiors/exterior. One great spot providing formal learning about local design prowess is the Taiwan Design Museum (www.songyancourt.com) in the popular Songshan Cultural & Creative Park, a heritage tobacco-factory complex revived as a thriving cultural-creative hub.

You'll find another invaluable design-showcase gallery online – *A Style Alike*, curated by two passion-for-fashion friends and lifestyle bloggers from South Africa, Liesl and Tienieke, who call themselves “style sisters” because of the “twin sister” similarity of their fashion preferences. They have become a go-to source for fashion-minded expats and visitors to Taiwan on what is trending in Taipei, from cafés to indie-designer boutiques to beauty salons to gift shops featuring local designers to much else. They also head out on travels around the island, among other things introducing the hippest hotels, inns, and B&Bs/homestays.

Travel in Taiwan recently had the chance to ask them a few questions about life in Taiwan and their blog project.



Where did you grow up? When/Why did you come to Taiwan?

[Liesl] I grew up in a small town in South Africa close to its southernmost tip. I came to Taiwan in 2008 after graduating from university. I'd always known I wanted to live/work abroad for a year or two in my early twenties, and decided on a whim to come to Taiwan when a close friend said she was looking for a buddy to join her to teach English for a year. I didn't know much about Taiwan, and that was exciting to me. Obviously I loved it, so that one year has turned into twelve.

When/How did you get to know each other?

We actually went to the same university and were in the same classes, but we didn't know each other (those were big classes!). We randomly bumped into each other here in Taipei one night while out with mutual friends, and after chatting

for only a bit we just clicked and have been inseparable since.

How did you adjust to life in Taiwan?

[Liesl] In the beginning I felt that everything was different from where I grew up. But I loved that aspect, and I saw it as one big adventure. It didn't take me long to adjust, I'm pretty flexible.

How would you compare Taiwan to South Africa in terms of daily life, going out, etc.?

South Africa has more of an outdoorsy vibe and people love spending time outside with friends, whether it's at the beach, a festival, a wine farm, and so on. There's also less of a shopping culture than there is here.



STYLE IS KEY

Liesl and Tienieke have a gift for finding and presenting the hippest spots in the city



When/How/Why did you start your blog?

We started *A Style Alike* in 2017. By that time the two of us were meeting up every Saturday morning to have brunch at the coolest spots in Taipei. We love to take photos, and after posting them on our personal IG accounts we would get so many questions about Taipei (from travelers, expats, and even locals) and places we recommend. We started toying with the idea of starting a blog where we could share our finds in a more structured and detailed way. We built the website ourselves and launched it in the summer of 2017.

How would you describe the style of the blog and your personal style?

We like to keep things simple, beautiful, and cohesive for the blog; we use the same preset (like a photo filter) for all our photos and try to keep everything organized. Our personal style I would describe as simple, classic, and comfortable, with some fun takes on the latest trends mixed in there.

What is your goal with the blog, what audience are you targeting?

Our goal has always been to have an attractive online space where we can share all the things we love about Taipei, our travels, fashion, and beauty. Our main audience is other expats in Taipei and tourists visiting the city. We thought our demographic would be female, but according to analytics we have quite a large male following as well.

How has the blog evolved since the early days?

Our photography has definitely improved. We've become more familiar with how to edit our images in Adobe Lightroom, and have also changed our preset. Lately we've also been including a lot more "baby" content, as we both have become parents in the past couple of years.



"After chatting for only a bit we just clicked and have been inseparable since"



How do you approach the photography?

We usually both take photos and take turns on who will be editing them and writing a specific post. We mostly use our iPhones for photos and edit them in Lightroom.

How do you find/choose the places you introduce in your blog?

We mostly find new cafés and restaurants on Instagram, and sometimes we even spot a new place while we're out and about in the city. Sometimes we also get invited to try out a place, but we only go if it's a place we've been meaning to go to anyway, or if the food and interiors look really good.

What information do you include in each blog post?

We touch on the interior/exterior of the place, the atmosphere, the staff and service, an overview of what's available on the menu (including images of the actual menu), what we ordered and our thoughts on it, and then some general information like the location, business hours, and how people can contact the business.

What kind of feedback do you get from your readers on social media?

Our food posts are definitely the most popular, and readers frequently contact us to thank us for recommending a place that they also then ended up enjoying.

What recommendations do you have for visitors looking for nice cafés/boutiques etc.?

Our favorite cafés in Taipei, and the ones we always recommend, are **Tamed Fox** (www.facebook.com/tamedfox.cafe/), **Sugar Pea** (www.facebook.com/sugarpeataipei/), and **The Antipodean** (www.facebook.com/TheAntipodean/). They have it all – good food, delicious lattes, and gorgeous interiors. For souvenirs and gifts we recommend **Lai Hao** (www.laihao.com.tw), a local gift shop that sells only “Made in Taiwan” products.

How would you describe Taiwan's coffee/fashion scene?

Taiwan's coffee scene is very trendy and fashion-forward at the moment, and the style is very minimalistic. So is the fashion scene (which we love!).

What is fashion-trending in Taipei/Taiwan these days?

I think Instagrammable cafés and coffee shops are a big trend at the moment. People love taking pictures of their ordered food (and themselves!) if there's a pretty backdrop involved.

What are your top things to do in the city? What would you suggest for a two- or three-day itinerary?

There are so many things we can recommend! A visit to **Dihua Street**, shopping in the **Xinyi District**, brunch at a trendy café, strolling around **Fujin Street**, a picnic at **Daan Park**, and so many more! You can follow our Instagram and blog for lots of ideas and things to do in the city!

What challenges are you facing as mothers with young children in Taiwan?

Our biggest challenge is being so far away from family and not really having any support, except for our amazing husbands, of course. It really takes a village to raise children!

Any recommendations for families with youngsters visiting Taipei?

Our go-to is **Daan Park**, the play area is great and you can easily spend a few hours there. We haven't visited any of the play centers in Taipei yet, but many people recommend **Leo's Playland**. 📍

Check out the *A Style Alike* blog at www.astylealike.com; Instagram: www.instagram.com/astylealike.

📍 ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Daan Park 大安森林公園
Dihua Street 迪化街
Fujin Street 富錦街
Lai Hao 來好
Leo's Playland 樂幼屋
Xinyi District 信義區

HOTEL INFORMATION

Northern Taiwan

- Hotel Eclat Taipei.
- THE GRAND HOTEL
- PACIFIC BUSINESS HOTEL
- GLORIA PRINCE HOTEL Taipei

Central Taiwan

- LEMIDI HOTEL CHITOU
- Offshore Islands
- HAIYUE HOTEL & RESORT

Visitors to Taiwan have a wide range of choice when it comes to accommodation. From five-star luxury hotels that meet the highest international standards, to affordable business hotels, to hot-spring and beach resort hotels, to privately-run homestays located in the countryside there is a place to stay that satisfies every traveler's needs. What all hotels of Taiwan — small and big, expensive and affordable — have in common is that service and hospitality are always of the highest standards. The room rates in the following list have been checked for each hotel, but are subject to change without notice. Room rates at the hotels apply.

* Hotel list in alphabetical order from Northern to Southern Taiwan.

THE GRAND HOTEL

圓山大飯店

Taipei 台北



NO. OF ROOMS: 500 (Suites: 57)

ROOM RATES:

Single/DBL	NT\$ 8,800-15,800
Suite	NT\$ 22,000-36,000

(All rates are subject to 10% service charge.)

DESK PERSONNEL SPEAK:

English, French, Spanish, and Japanese

RESTAURANTS:

Western, Cantonese, Northern China Style Dumplings, tea house, coffee shop, steak house

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Grand Ballroom, conference rooms for 399 people, 10 breakout rooms, business center, fitness center, sauna, Olympic-size swimming pool, tennis courts, billiards

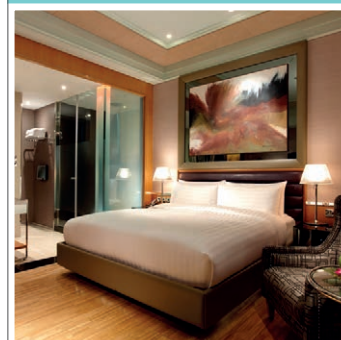
No. 1, Chung Shan N. Rd., Sec. 4, Taipei City
台北市中山北路4段1號
Tel: +886-2-2886-8888
Fax: +886-2-2885-2885

www.grand-hotel.org

Hotel Eclat Taipei.

台北怡亨酒店

Taipei 台北



NO. OF ROOMS: 60

ROOM RATES:

NT\$12,500-NT\$38,000

DESK PERSONNEL SPEAK:

Japanese, English, Chinese

FACILITIES:

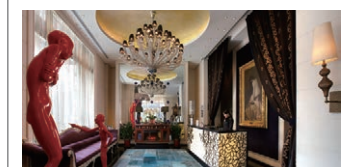
Eclat Lounge, mechanical parking space, meeting rooms

AWARDS:

2021 Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Best of the Best Award

2020 Hotels.com Loved by Guest Award

2019 Michelin Guide Preferred Hotel



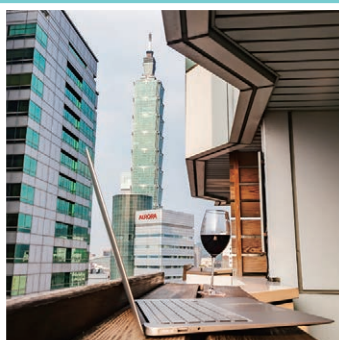
No. 370, Sec. 1, Dunhua S. Rd., Daan District, Taipei City
台北市大安區敦化南路一段370號
Tel: +886-2-2784-8888 Fax: +886-2-2784-7888
E-mail: taipei@eclathotels.com

www.eclathotels.com

PACIFIC BUSINESS HOTEL

太平洋商旅

Taipei 台北



NO. OF ROOMS: 105

ROOM RATES:

Boutique Room	NT\$ 7,600
Business Room	NT\$ 8,400
Junior Room	NT\$ 9,400
Family Room	NT\$ 13,000
Executive Room	NT\$ 10,000

DESK PERSONNEL SPEAK:

Chinese, English, Japanese

RESTAURANTS/FACILITIES:

Ju-Yi Restaurant, Gym, Laundromat (no coins needed) and Lounge

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Free high-speed Wi-Fi, compass and praying mat, crib, luggage storage, city tourist information, business center, balcony, free parking lot, airport shuttle service (fee), meeting room & instant office (for rental)

11F, No. 495, Guangfu S. Rd., Xinyi Dist., Taipei City
台北市信義區光復南路495號11樓
Tel: +886-2-8780-8000 Fax: +886-2-8780-5000
E-mail: pbh.taipei@msa.hinet.net
www.businesscenter.com.tw

GLORIA PRINCE HOTEL Taipei

華泰王子大飯店

Taipei 台北



NO. OF ROOMS: 220

ROOM RATES:

Single / Deluxe / Executive	NT\$ 6,000- 8,500
Suite	NT\$ 9,500-20,000

DESK PERSONNEL SPEAK:

English, Japanese, Chinese

RESTAURANTS:

L'IDIOT RESTAURANT (Western),
CHIOU HWA RESTAURANT (Chinese)

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Coffee Shop, Fitness Center, Business Center, Meeting and Banquet Facilities, Laundry Service, Non-smoking Floor, Parking Lot, Airport Transfer Service



No. 369, Linsen N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist., Taipei City
台北市林森北路369號
Tel: +886-2-2581-8111 Fax: +886-2-2581-5811
www.gloriahotel.com

LEMIDI HOTEL CHITOU

溪頭米堤大飯店

Nantou 南投



NO. OF ROOMS: 243

ROOM RATES:

Classic Double/Twin Room	NT\$ 11,000
Classic Triple Room	NT\$ 13,000
Classic Quad Room	NT\$ 15,000
Deluxe Quad Room	NT\$ 16,000
Media Suite	NT\$ 28,000
Miro Suite	NT\$ 32,000
Midi suite	NT\$ 42,000

(All rates are subject to 10% service charge.)

DESK PERSONNEL SPEAK:

English, Japanese, Chinese

RESTAURANTS:

Lobby Bar, Tea House, Miller Western Restaurant, Qingyuan Chinese Restaurant

SPECIAL FEATURES:

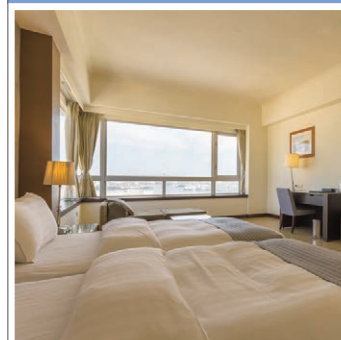
Foot Health Massage Center, Karaoke Room, Spring Water Sauna, Parent-child Play Room, Spring Water Private Baths, Fitness Center, Spring Water Swimming pool, Conference Room, Banquet Halls, Underground Car Park

No. 1, Mitu St., Lugu Township, Nantou County
南投縣鹿谷鄉內湖村米堤街1號
Tel: +886-49-261-2222 Fax: +886-49-261-2000
www.lemidi-hotel.com.tw

HAIYUE HOTEL&RESORT

澎湖海悅飯店

Penghu 澎湖



NO. OF ROOMS: 63

ROOM RATES: NT\$ 3,000 ~ 12,000

DESK PERSONNEL SPEAK:

English, Japanese, Chinese

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Vegetarian Breakfast/Bike Friendly Hotel

AWARDS:

2020 Penghu Excellent-Quality Cultural Accommodation



No.75, Minfu Rd., Magong City, Penghu County
澎湖縣馬公市民福路75號
Tel: +886-6-9269166 Fax: +886-6-9266166
E-mail: hai.yue@msa.hinet.net
www.haiyue.com.tw



PAH JI HUE' Drip Tea Bags

We are fourth-generation tea farmers who inherited the diligence, dedication, and firm sense of mission of our forebears and have developed gifts that combine tea and local cultural and life characteristics, dressing tea in new clothes inspired by Taiwanese culture. Following the idea of healthy, natural, and toxin free, we have given tea a new look to let people of different nationalities and ages have new encounters with different teas.

PAH JI HUE' (meaning "120 years old") is an expectation and is also a blessing: "If it isn't the best, we don't want it." We aim to adhere to our original intention to share the fine tea of our hometown and hope that everyone who receives this gift can live to be 120 years of age.

Unlike the traditional method of brewing tea that required various tea ware items and also didn't guarantee getting the right flavor, PAH JI HUE' is a pioneer of drip tea in Taiwan. The traditional tea brewing process has been condensed into portable tea bags so that you can enjoy a cup of fine Taiwanese tea simply, quickly, and conveniently wherever you are, at any time. Using Eastern tea prepared with a Western style drip brewing method, everyone can enjoy the authentic flavor of Taiwanese tea whenever they want.

PAH JI HUE' has won the Classic Design Award and Innovative Business Award.

Emphasizing purity, simplicity, and taste, using 80% recycled coated paper accompanied by different colors and patterns for each tea, the packaging has a high-quality feel while presenting a minimalist style and meeting environmental concerns. Various tea flavors are provided to wake up and treat your taste buds.



Eastern tea prepared with a Western style drip brewing method to taste the authentic flavor of Taiwanese tea
There are six flavors of drip tea:

1. Taiwan White Tea
2. Alishan Jin Xuan Tea
3. Sun Moon Lake Black Tea
4. Dong Ding Oolong Tea
5. Honey Black Tea
6. Winter Oolong Tea



PAH JI HUE' website
www.pahjihue.com.tw



Drip tea bag gift box