

Travel in

TAIWAN

2022
JAN & FEB

No. 109

GOOD FOOD

TEAHOUSES IN TAIPEI

EXPERT TALK

TAIPEI XIAHAI CITY GOD TEMPLE TOUR

LOCAL STAY

ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS IN
CHIAYI CITY

Chiayi

Charming Old City in the Southwest
Alishan's Northern Corridor
Alishan Forest Railway

Issuu



Website



TAIWAN EVERYTHING

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TRAVELING IN TAIWAN!



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Welcome to Taiwan!



Publisher's Note

Dear Traveler,

A new year has dawned, meaning a new beginning for each of us. And what better way to set off down a new path for yourself than with new Taiwan explorations? In this inaugural issue for 2022, we trailblaze for you presenting helpful reports on numerous places and themes.

Our feature section focus is on **Chiayi City/Chiayi County**, in Taiwan's central-south region. We dive deep into the small, easy-going city of Chiayi, where the people revel in tradition while at the same time – the younger generation especially – thrill at the wave of cultural-creative dynamism that has swept the city in the past decade. This is a city filled with national-grade heritage architecture (much related to the island's railway and forestry history); old-time family-run shops and eateries; newfangled cultural-creative cafés, homestays, hostels, and other ventures where vintage architecture has been given new purpose; and a growing legion of innovative public-artwork statements.

In this article we also show you a number of intriguing destinations on the city's edge or just outside, the best-known being the glorious Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum. Then it's on to three accompanying articles. In one you're given a special private tour of two of the city's best young cultural-creative places of accommodation, plus intros to nearby attractions reachable on foot. Then it's off on a train ride of memory-searing scenery from the city up to the fabulous Alishan National Scenic Area, high in the central mountains, on one of Taiwan's historical crown jewels, the Alishan Forest Railway. And finally, a multi-day adventure expedition in Alishan's north sector, a region of *"steep-slope tea plantations, bamboo forest, scenic heritage trails, soaring waterfalls, indigenous-culture experiences, and much beyond."*

Our other two major articles in this issue keep you in the island's far north, escorting you around capital city Taipei. In our **Expert Talk** department you'll be taken on a guided tour *"meeting the gods of Taipei Xiahai City God Temple,"* the pulsing heart of Taipei's history-rich Dadaocheng community, built in the 1850s. And this issue's **Good Food** department delivers you to new-approach stylish teahouses promoting and celebrating top-quality **artisanal Taiwanese teas**.

New travels in Taiwan – virtual on our pages and then live when you hit the road. What better way to launch your new year? Enjoy!


ON THE COVER



Chiayi Botanical Garden
(photo by Chen Cheng-kuo)

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Chang Shi Chung

Travel in TAIWAN

台灣觀光雙月刊 Travel in Taiwan

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A DATE WITH THE DIVINE

Meeting the Gods of Taipei
Xiahai City God Temple



A NEW YEAR! Exciting Events and Happenings

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



1 KAOHSIUNG CITY FEB. ~ MAR.

SONG-JIANG BATTLE ARRAY IN NEIMEN, KAOHSIUNG

高雄內門宋江陣

Not much of interest to tourists goes on in Kaohsiung's quiet rural district of Neimen for most of the year, but there is one exception, the annual Song-Jiang Battle Array event. This week-long festival, a mix of religious rituals and sports-like competition, brings together groups of young performers from around Taiwan, who converge on Neimen to show off their troupe-array martial-arts skills and compete against each other. The festival is a fantastic spectacle, packed with exciting and at times highly acrobatic performances that are accompanied by the sound of drums and other traditional instruments. www.who-ha.com.tw

2 KAOHSIUNG CITY FEB. ~ MAR.

TAIWAN LANTERN FESTIVAL IN KAOHSIUNG

台灣燈會在高雄

It's been 20 years since the last time the city of Kaohsiung hosted the Taiwan Lantern Festival, which alternates between different cities and counties each year. There will be two venues for the event, the Love River Bay and the National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwoyung). This grand annual festival of colorful lights uses state-of-the-art technology to create displays on the ground, water, and sky and is expected to attract more than 12 million visitors and generate NT\$20 billion in revenue. With the festival the city government hopes to highlight port-culture attractions close to the venues, including the brand-new Kaohsiung Music Center, Pier-2 Art Center, Warehouse No. 2, and other tourist magnets. At almost 100 hectares in total size, this year's festival area will be by far the largest ever for the Taiwan Lantern Festival. The organizers aim to make this edition an extra-special one, filled with eye-popping highlights and a focus on sustainability, including the use of green shuttle vehicles.

khh.travel

3 MIAOLI CITY FEB. 19~28

BOMBING THE DRAGON IN MIAOLI

苗栗炸龍系列活動

The "bombing of the dragon" is one of the big events in Taiwan during the Lantern Festival period. It takes place in front of Yuqing Temple in Miaoli City, and is widely known as one of the most important celebrations by the local Hakka communities. The paper dragons used during the event are created before the Lunar New Year. On the 9th day of the new year they are "brought to life" in a grand "eye-opening" ceremony, during which visitors can walk under them to be blessed by their spirits. On the day of the festival the dragons are paraded to the temple square and elaborate dragon dancing begins with teams competing against each other. The teams then head out to perform in front of shops as firecrackers are set off, with shop owners hoping to receive blessings. On the 17th day the dragons are burned and sent to the heavens. miaolitravel.net

4 TAICHUNG CITY FEB. 12~28

WULING FARM SAKURA SEASON

武陵農場櫻花季

Wuling Farm, located in the northeastern corner of Taichung City at an elevation of 1,740~2,000 meters above sea level, is a popular high-mountain recreational farm. During the summer, many visitors come here to escape the stifling heat in the low-lying regions of the island, and in winter many are drawn by the wonderful tableaux of blooming cherry trees. The planting of cherry trees started in 1993, and now, almost 20 years later, there are more than 16,000 of them, dotting the hills in pastel hues of pink and crimson in January and February.

www.facebook.com/WulingFarm0510/

5 LIENCHANG COUNTY (MATSU) FEB.

BAIMING FESTIVAL IN MATSU

馬祖擺暎文化祭

During the winter months it can get quite cold on the islands of Matsu, located within sight of mainland China's Fujian coast. But there is one good excuse you can make for paying the islands a visit in February, the Baiming Festival. This islander version of the Lantern Festival is held throughout Taiwan two weeks after the Lunar New Year and is listed as one of Taiwan's 21 important folk customs. During the weeks-long event, the islanders make offerings to the deities and decorate their houses with elaborate lantern arrangements. Statues of local gods are carried through villages in sedan chairs with stops made along the way at temples. The festival gives you an excellent taste of the local culture and beliefs, instilling warmth in your heart during the chilly winter weather.

www.matsu-nsa.gov.tw



1



Photo courtesy of Taichung City Government

4



聚光台灣
高雄發光

2



3



Photo courtesy of Matsu NSA Administration

5

臺灣觀光年曆
Time for Celebration
TAIWAN TOURISM EVENTS



Taiwan Tourism Events
Calendar Website

HAPPENING in TAIWAN Now



What will Year 2022 bring? Hopefully the end of travel restrictions caused by the global pandemic and a normalization of international tourism. Taiwan is a particularly alluring destination in East Asia with a constantly improving travel environment and new tourist attractions sprouting up all around.



DON'T MISS JANUARY ~ MARCH

- Lantern festivals and related events in various locations around Taiwan (especially the Taiwan Lantern Festival in Kaohsiung)
- Blooming cherry trees and blossoming flowers (especially Yangmingshan National Park, Alishan National Scenic Area, and Wuling Farm)

Matsu-themed Railway Station

Mazu, goddess of the sea and protector of seafarers, is by far the most revered deity in Taiwan. There are more than 500 temples dedicated to Mazu on the main island and the offshore islands, and now there is even a railway station with a Mazu theme: **Baishatun**, a tiny station on the west coast in Miaoli County. The decoration was created in reference to the annual Mazu procession that starts each year after the Lunar New Year period at Baishatun's Gongtian Temple, seeing pilgrims marching all the way to Chaotian Temple in Yunlin County. There are Mazu statues and images of the goddess in various locations around the station, stimulating travelers' interest in learning more about local religious practices.

miaolitravel.net

Photo courtesy of Miaoli County Gov't



Photo courtesy of Penghu County Gov't

New Campsite on Yuanbei Island

Yuanbei is one of the smaller islands of the Penghu archipelago. Located about 2km east of Baisha island (take a ferry from Qitou Harbor to Yuanbei), it is known for beautiful basalt rock formations on its north coast. On the northwest side of the island are the remains of Yuanbei's primary school. Opened in 1946, the school was in operation until 1995, when it was closed due to dwindling student numbers (only 15 students in 1994; total population of Yuanbei is today about 300). Last year, the county government established the **Yuanbei Campground**, giving the site of the former school a new purpose. Visitors can choose between setting up tents on wooden platforms and sleeping in simple wooden huts with slanted roofs. Among the facilities are washrooms, a kitchen, and a multifunctional eco classroom. www.penghu-nsa.gov.tw



Photo courtesy of Taitung County Gov't

New Batfish Mailboxes on Green Island

The experience of diving to an underwater mailbox and sending a postcard was introduced to Green Island in southeast Taiwan in 2018 with the installation of a mailbox in the shape of a pygmy seahorse, common in the waters around the island. The mailbox, located at a depth of 11.5m (a world record) inside the Shilang Diving Area on the island's southwest coast, has been a huge success, with 40,000 special postcards sold on the island so far. Last October, another underwater mailbox was installed on the north coast, inside the Chaikou Diving Area. Located in calmer waters and at a depth of 6.4m, the new mailbox is easier to reach, allowing more divers to have fun sending postcards. For those visitors who are not able to dive, there is another mailbox on land. Both of these boxes were designed in the shape of the Teira batfish, a species known to interact with divers in the waters off Green Island. tour.taitung.gov.tw

New Hotels +



Photos courtesy of hotels

1. Dai Hotel (承億酒店)

Location: Qianzhen District in Kaohsiung City, close to the 85 Sky Tower; grand opening in early 2022

www.hotelday.com.tw

2. WYNDHAM Sun Moon Lake (日月潭力麗溫德姆溫泉酒店)

Location: Sun Moon Lake in Nantou County; will be first 5-star hot-spring hotel at the lake; grand opening scheduled for summer 2022

lealeahotel.com

3. Just Sleep Tainan Ten-Drum (捷絲旅台南十鼓館)

Location: Rende District in Tainan City, close to the Ten Drum Culture Village and Chimei Museum; opened in summer 2021

www.justsleep.com.tw/ten-drum/en

New Indigenous Cultural Market in Yilan



Photo courtesy of Yilan County Gov't

There are numerous places around Taiwan where you can buy handicrafts and art created by members of local indigenous tribes. While going to the source – indigenous villages in mountainous areas where many tribal artists live – is the obvious choice, there are a number of markets selling indigenous arts and handicrafts in more convenient locations. One is a recently opened market in Yilan City on the northeast coast. The market, named **Yilan Style**, is right next to Yilan Railway Station, in repurposed buildings that once functioned as dormitories of the local government. The market is a place where visitors can buy unique items with indigenous flair, try tribal culinary specialties, and take part in workshops and other events. www.facebook.com/yilanstyle/

Transportation News



Photo courtesy of StarLux Airlines

StarLux Airlines Now Flies to Singapore

Taiwan's newest carrier, Starlux Airlines, now offers flights to Singapore three times a week using its Airbus A321neo aircraft. Singapore has become the airline's tenth destination since the Taipei-based airline launched its inaugural flight in January 2020. The other routes are to Macau, Penang, Bangkok, Tokyo, Osaka, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, Manila, and Danang.

www.starlux-airlines.com



Photo courtesy of Lion Travel

Blue Diesel Trains Run Again

Retired in December 2020, the blue-colored diesel-powered trains that were once a common sight on Taiwan's railway tracks have made a bit of a comeback less than a year after the island's railway system became fully electric. To the delight of railway fans and tourists, once a week one of these old trains (no air-conditioning; windows can be opened) will ply the South Link Line in Taiwan's far south, connecting Fangliao Railway Station in the west with Taitung Railway Station in the east. This route is well-known for its attractive mountain and coastal scenery. A one-way ticket is priced NT\$299. event.liontravel.com/zh-tw/railroad/breezyblue/index (Chinese)

Culture

Concerts, Theater, Exhibitions,
Festivals, Shows

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

Exhibition

Object/Self – Hsu Yunghsu Solo Exhibition

物／我—徐永旭個展

Until August 28

Juming Museum (New Taipei City)

Hsu Yungshu, recipient of the Taiwan Ceramics Awards' Excellence Award, the highest honor for ceramic artists in Taiwan, and winner of the Grand Prix at the 8th International Ceramics Competition in Mino, Japan, is one of Taiwan's leading contemporary sculptors. In this solo exhibition the artist explores his relation with his work, a relationship that can at times feel like a conflict, at other times like a duet. He chooses simple white and black clay and applies the most primitive coiling, pinching, and shaping techniques to create his sculptures.

www.juming.org.tw

★★★
**EDITOR'S
CHOICE**



Exhibition

Bus of Divine Teammates

神隊友巴士

Until February 20

Museum of World Religions
(New Taipei City)

In its Hall of Life Journeys, the Museum of World Religions provides learning resources for contemporary life education. Continuing with its series of exhibitions about life journeys that was started in 2019, this year the focus is on mid-life, which is for most people, regardless of cultural and religious background, a time of partnership and marriage. The exhibition presents "five bus stops," each stop showing how relationships and marriage are approached differently in various cultures around the world.

www.mwr.org.tw



Exhibition

LIAO: Frontline / Frontier

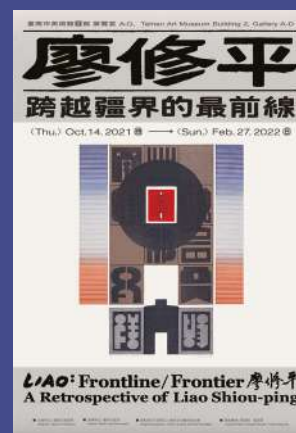
廖修平：跨越疆界的最前線

Until February 27

Tainan Art Museum
(Tainan City)

This exhibition is a retrospective of Taiwanese artist Liao Shiou-ping featuring more than 150 works from his oeuvre, spanning more than 60 years. In addition, sketches, manuscripts, documents, publications, and video and photographic materials from the artist are shown side by side with the exhibited works, allowing a comprehensive analysis of his art. While the artist has excelled using a variety of media, he is best known for his prints. In the 1970s, Liao started a printmaking studio at National Taiwan Normal University, introducing the most advanced printmaking ideas and technologies to Taiwan, earning him the moniker "Father of Modern Print-Making."

www.tnam.museum



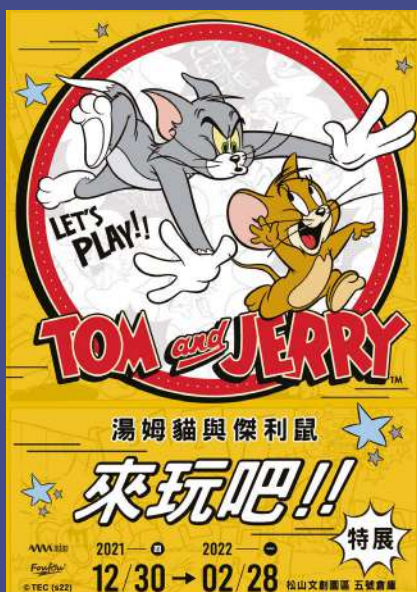
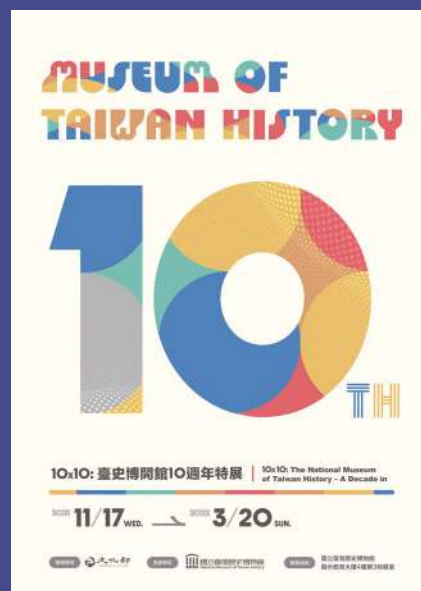
Exhibition

10 X 10: The National Museum of Taiwan History – A Decade In

10X10: 臺史博開館 10 週年特展

Until March 20
National Museum of Taiwan History
(Tainan City)

If you are interested in the history of Taiwan, a good place to start is the old capital, Tainan, in the southwest of the island. Apart from visiting the many sites of historic significance, which have witnessed the tumultuous times this land and its people have gone through, you also want to head to the National Museum of Taiwan History, to the north of central Tainan. Currently celebrating its 10th anniversary, this modern museum is a treasure trove for historians, with many life-sized mock-up scenes vividly introducing you to key historic events and the traditional culture of Taiwan. www.npac-weiwuying.org



Exhibition

Tom and Jerry: Let's Play!

湯姆貓與傑利鼠：來玩吧！

Until February 28
Songshan Cultural and Creative Park
(Taipei City)

Created back in 1940 by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, the two cartoon characters Tom and Jerry have stood the test of time. With their comic cat and mouse fights, mostly ending in a win for Jerry, the mouse, they are still able to make people of all ages laugh today. This exhibition, divided into five areas, comes with plenty of three-dimensional exhibits and fun interactive devices and games for hands-on experiences. Visitors can see how the characters have evolved over the years and take advantage of the many backdrops perfect for taking selfies.

www.songshanculturalpark.org



Musical

CATS

貓

Feb. ~ Mar.
35 shows in different venues around Taiwan incl.
Taipei Arena

No introduction is required for this world-famous musical, the score of which was composed by the legendary Andrew Lloyd Webber, including the timeless hit song "Memory". Together with a fantastical oversized set, inspired choreography, and mischievous costumes, CATS is a brilliant song and dance extravaganza not to be missed. Since its world premiere, CATS has been presented in over 30 countries, translated into 15 languages, and seen by more than 73 million people worldwide.

english.arena.taipei

Chiayi City

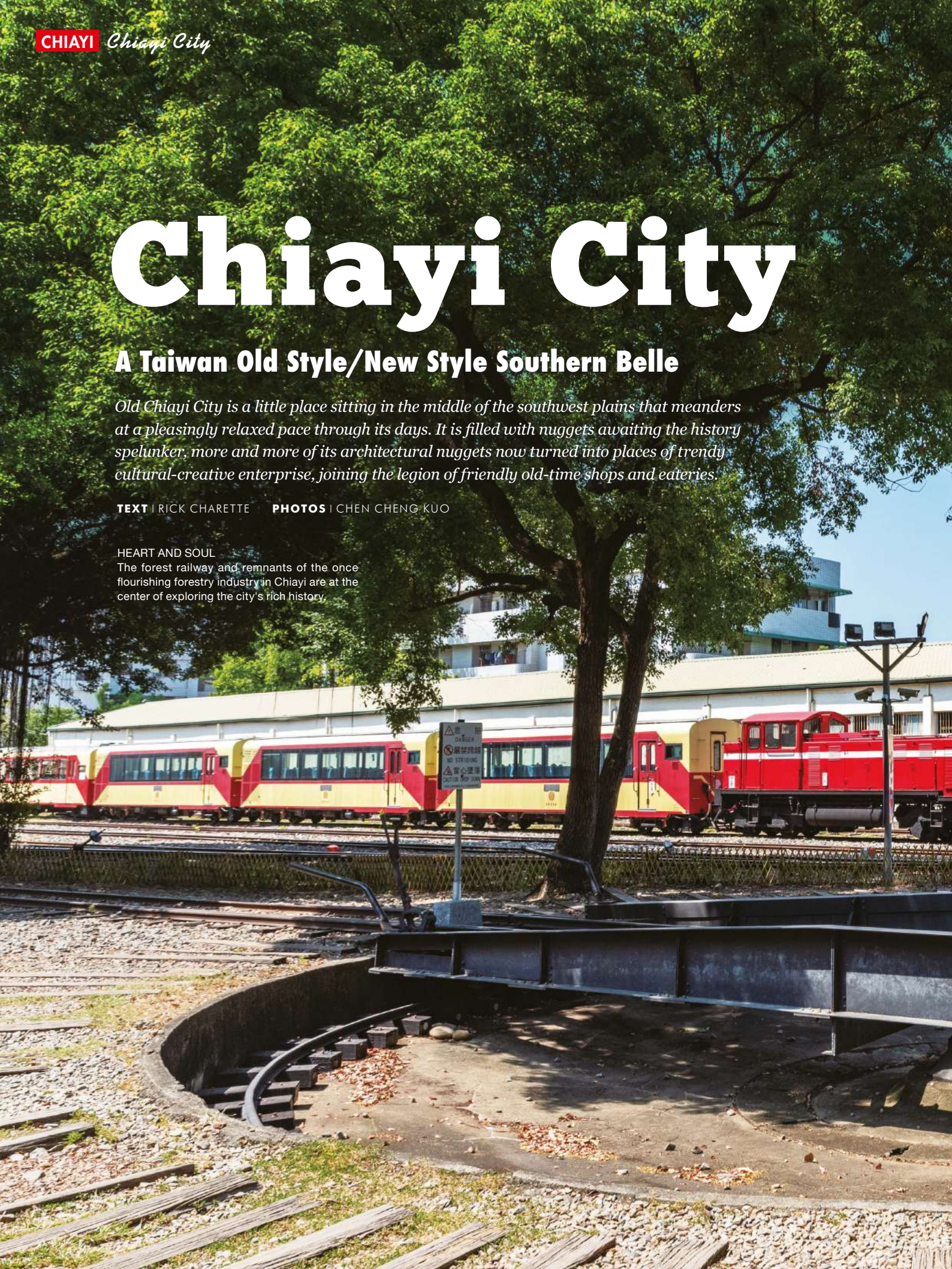
A Taiwan Old Style/New Style Southern Belle


Old Chiayi City is a little place sitting in the middle of the southwest plains that meanders at a pleasingly relaxed pace through its days. It is filled with nuggets awaiting the history spelunker, more and more of its architectural nuggets now turned into places of trendy cultural-creative enterprise, joining the legion of friendly old-time shops and eateries.

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE **PHOTOS** | CHEN CHENG KUO

HEART AND SOUL

The forest railway and remnants of the once flourishing forestry industry in Chiayi are at the center of exploring the city's rich history.





Chiayi City is on the western plains not far from the lofty central mountains. Its fortunes flourished when the Japanese built the round-island railway system and Alishan Forest Railway in the early 1900s, connecting them here, and developed the Jianan Plain irrigation system, which nourished an explosion in regional agricultural production.

For tourists, the easy-paced city was long considered not a destination itself worth spending time in, but as a jumping-off point for trips to more illustrious destinations, notably the soaringly beautiful Alishan National Scenic Area in the mountains directly east.

This city is a place of proud tradition. Family-run shops in place for generations continue to sell the homegrown snack treats Chiayi is famed for, and the city is filled with old works of architecture, from sites of national historic importance to countless beloved residences. Yet at the same time it is filling up with projects of forward-looking creative energy, from heritage-site architecture renovated and given new missions to stylish cafés and homestays in reinterpreted old homes to bold modernist public artworks in prominent locations.



ALISHAN FORESTRY VILLAGE (阿里山林業村)
 ☎ (05) 276-1601
 📍 No. 4, Linsen W. Rd., East District, Chiayi City
 (嘉義市東區林森西路4號)
 🕒 Outdoor area all day; indoor exhibition halls 10am ~ 6pm
 🌐 bit.ly/3GwA9sh (Forestry Bureau); afrch.forest.gov.tw/En
 (Alishan Forest Railway and Cultural Heritage Office)

Alishan cypress on narrow-gauge railway tracks

Forestry History

Beimen Station, long an iconic tourist attraction in Chiayi, was the original launch-point for the Alishan Forest Railway (see page 22). It's not far northeast of Chiayi Railway Station. The Japanese-built station and scores of other Japanese-era forestry-related heritage structures in the area have been devotedly renovated over the last decade-plus, and the neighborhood has become a major tourist draw. The full area is easily covered on foot. Note that the wood used in all renovated heritage structures in this section is invariably Alishan cypress.

One block west of the station is the **Alishan Forestry Village**, part of which is the **Chiayi Sawmill complex**, consisting of both renovated wood-frame and concrete-frame structures. Completed in 1914, this was the Japanese empire's most extensive sawmill operation. Among the public-access structures here are the sawmill building, boiler room, and drying room.

As visitors enter the sawmill complex corner of the village area they are greeted by a prototypical monster specimen of logged Alishan cypress sitting on a section of narrow-gauge railway. On the north side behind the complex is a large open grassy area. In days past this was the site of a massive timber pond. Now filled in, it is being filled up with themed installation artworks. Two examples are *Elves of the Forest* and *Bamboo Ripple*, celebrating the cypress and bamboo forests in the Alishan region.



Song of the Forest



In the western corner of the village's grassy area is a semi-detached park area home to the towering **Song of the Forest** outdoor artwork. This work is a complex symphony of symbolisms, most referencing Alishan's sacred trees and the forest railway. The thick timber pieces running up the exterior simulate the "giant old trees towering over and embracing the hovering clouds." The two rattan footpaths giving entry to the work's interior symbolize the forest-railway tunnels providing entry to the Alishan "wonderland."

The **Alishan Forest Railway Garage Park** is just across a road south of the forestry village. Remember that the Chiayi Railway Station, just southwest of here, is where the Alishan Forest Railway journey now starts. The forest-railway trains run through this park and on past Beimen Station, and regular-railway trains run along the north perimeter of the forestry village. A good spot to take photos of these latter trains is from the high-raised Song of the Forest interior platform.

The garage park contains the former headquarters repair/maintenance garage and an impressive outdoor-display collection of well-maintained antique U.S., English, German, and Japanese locomotives and other rolling stock. If lucky you'll see one of the locomotives being

fired up to head out for forest railway service, or see personnel working on rolling stock in the garage if the large east-end portal, through which two sets of tracks roll in, is open.

TIP

Take photos of passing trains on the main railway line from the high-raised *Song of the Forest* interior platform



Alishan Forest Railway Garage Park



TRAIN LOVER'S DELIGHT
Inspect trains from different periods of the Alishan Forest Railway's history close up in the railway garage park



PHOTO OPPS GALORE
You will find it easy to find unique backdrops for memorable photos in the Alishan Forest Village

ALISHAN FOREST RAILWAY GARAGE PARK (阿里山森林鐵路車庫園區)

☎ (05) 267-9200

📍 Intersection of Linsen W. Rd. and Zhongxiao Rd., East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區林森西路與忠孝路口)

🕒 9am ~ 5pm



One block south of Beimen Station is the **Hinoki Village**. This is a complex of classical Japanese-style landscaping and about 30 faithfully restored Japanese-built structures, most of these wooden bungalow-style buildings originally used as dormitories for forestry-industry workers. There is also one pretty two-story Western-style building with high sloping roof, Tudor-style exposed timber beams on the white-painted second level, and bright yellow-painted cottage-style clapboard on the first. This was originally a clubhouse for Japanese forestry officials; today it is the **Forestry Club Exhibition Center**, housing history displays. Other buildings with history-related displays are the **Alishan Forest Museum of History** and the **Official Residence of Director Gallery**.

The current title for each building is given in English, Chinese, and Japanese on mapboards posted around the complex. In the Cultural and Creative Bazaar Area is the **Aboriginal Tribes Theme Store**, selling indigenous handicraft and art, and two wooden-articles stores, selling traditional-

style wood items, including works made with Alishan woods. In the Time Tunnel section is the **Insect Museum**, focused on regional wildlife, two nostalgia-theme teahouses, and the **Yukata Experience** building. You'll see tourists walking around the complex in their colorful rented yukata, providing fetching photo opportunities.

Among the many other buildings of note are the **Agricultural Products Sales Center**, in the Beverage & Snack section, which specializes in agriproducts from the Chiayi region and fresh-made hot snack treats; **Horseradish Hall**, in the Souvenir area, offering processed-horseradish products – the Japanese, missing their wasabi, introduced Japanese horseradish to Alishan during the colonial era; and the **Shell Ginger Story House**, in the Life & Creative Area, explaining and selling shell ginger products – shell ginger is everywhere in traditional Taiwanese life, the seed a traditional Chinese herb, the leaf sheaths used to weave shoulder bags and hats and to wrap and flavor rice-based foods.



LIKE A CENTURY AGO

Rent a yukata in Hinoki Village and pose for pictures, feeling a bit like the Japanese during colonial times



Hinoki Village



Sun-Shooting Tower



Chiayi Botanical Garden

Chiayi Botanical Garden

Large, pleasant **Chiayi Park** occupies a broad, low-elevation hill in the east side of the city. It has two sections, an arboretum on its north side and a landscaped area on its south. The park was established by the Japanese in 1910.

Plying the wide and narrow pathways through the **Chiayi Botanical Garden**, all through the day, are locals exercising amidst the dense forest of tall, majestic trees. This site was developed by the Japanese as an experimental station focused on commercialization of tropical trees brought in from around the planet. Plaques identify the 140 on-site species, which include Chinese firs and Brazil rubber, Indian devil, and mahogany trees.

The landscaped section runs uphill in tiers, a broad walkway with stair sections running through the middle. This originally led to the large Japanese Shinto Shrine for the city – today the 62m-high **Sun-Shooting Tower** stands in its stead. The island's Shinto shrines were systematically destroyed after the Chinese Nationalist government took over Taiwan in the 1940s. The tower's shape symbolizes Alishan's giant sacred trees. Long, brown aligned aluminum strips run up the facade, mimicking the wood grain of the mountain area's trees. A 24m-tall interior bronze sculpture visualizes the well-known Taiwan "Sun Shooting" legends (there are many variants) in which brave warriors shoot down "extra" suns scorching Earth. At the tower's top is a café and an observation deck with superb views of the city.

On a lower tier is the elegant **ChiaYi J 18 – Chiayi City Historical Relic Museum**, housed in two exquisitely renovated wood-built buildings constructed by the Japanese. These originally housed the shrine's offices and fasting rooms. Visitors enjoy displays on the city's history and yukata rentals.



FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

There is an amazing variety of tree species in the Chiayi Botanical Garden

CHIAYI BOTANICAL GARDEN

(林業試驗所嘉義樹木園)

📍 No. 270, Shanziding, Wangtian Borough, East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區王田里山子頂 270 號)

🕒 All day

🌐 cptfri.tfri.gov.tw (Chinese)

SUN-SHOOTING TOWER (射日塔)

☎ (05) 275-1357

📍 No. 46, Gongyuan St., East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區公園街 46 號)

💰 NT\$50

🕒 8am ~ 5pm (Sat. & Sun. until 9pm; closed on Mon. & Tue.)

🌐 www.facebook.com/sunshootingtower

CHIAYI J 18 – CHIAYI CITY HISTORICAL RELIC MUSEUM

(昭和十八 J18-嘉義市史蹟資料館)

☎ (05) 277-0518

📍 No. 42, Gongyuan St., East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區公園街 42 號)

💰 NT\$50

🕒 8am ~ 5pm (closed on Mon.)

🌐 www.facebook.com/ChiaYiJ18

Outside the City

The **Lantan Scenic Area** is in a rippling hilly area a short distance southeast of Chiayi Park. Its heart is a reservoir, which locals simply call “Lantan” or “Holland Lake.” The reservoir was created by the Dutch, who ruled a good portion of Taiwan for a period in the 1600s, to provide water for area farms set up by the Dutch East India Company.

Among the scenic area’s other attractions are an in-lake fountain that shoots color-lit waters up to 50m high, wood-area trails, and the striking lakeside installation **Rippling Moonlit Talk**. Referencing the reservoir’s busy bird community, the artwork is a see-through structure of knitted aluminum plates designed to resemble, in stylized form, a waterside bird nest.

The large, quiet, heavily wooded National Chiayi University campus is off the east side of the reservoir. Its spacious **NYCU Insect Museum**, Taiwan’s largest such facility, is a tourist draw. Its three most popular sections are a giant “butterfly pillar,” glass-dome butterfly conservatory, and insect-petting area. Signage is limited, so joining one of the regular free guided tours is strongly advised.

The glass pillar is filled with thousands of richly colorful butterfly

Rippling Moonlit Talk
was designed to
resemble a waterside
bird nest



Rippling Moonlit Talk



NYCU Insect Museum



Giant bug

specimens arranged in a spinning double-helix design, symbolizing “the beginning of life.” The conservatory is home for rehabilitated Taiwan butterflies from up to 25 species. In the insect-petting area, get personal with such harmless residents as a mighty forest-dwelling Madagascar hissing cockroach, one of the world’s largest.

The **Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum** is in the countryside just 3km from Chiayi’s high-speed rail station. Set on 70ha of land, in addition to the massive and imposing museum facility there is a large scenic manmade lake and Asian-style gardens. The ancient Chinese culture was not developed in isolation, and the Southern Branch is a showcase celebration of the almost ceaseless cross-pollination that has added to the luster of each civilization across Asia, with particular focus on the Chinese, Indian, and Persian.

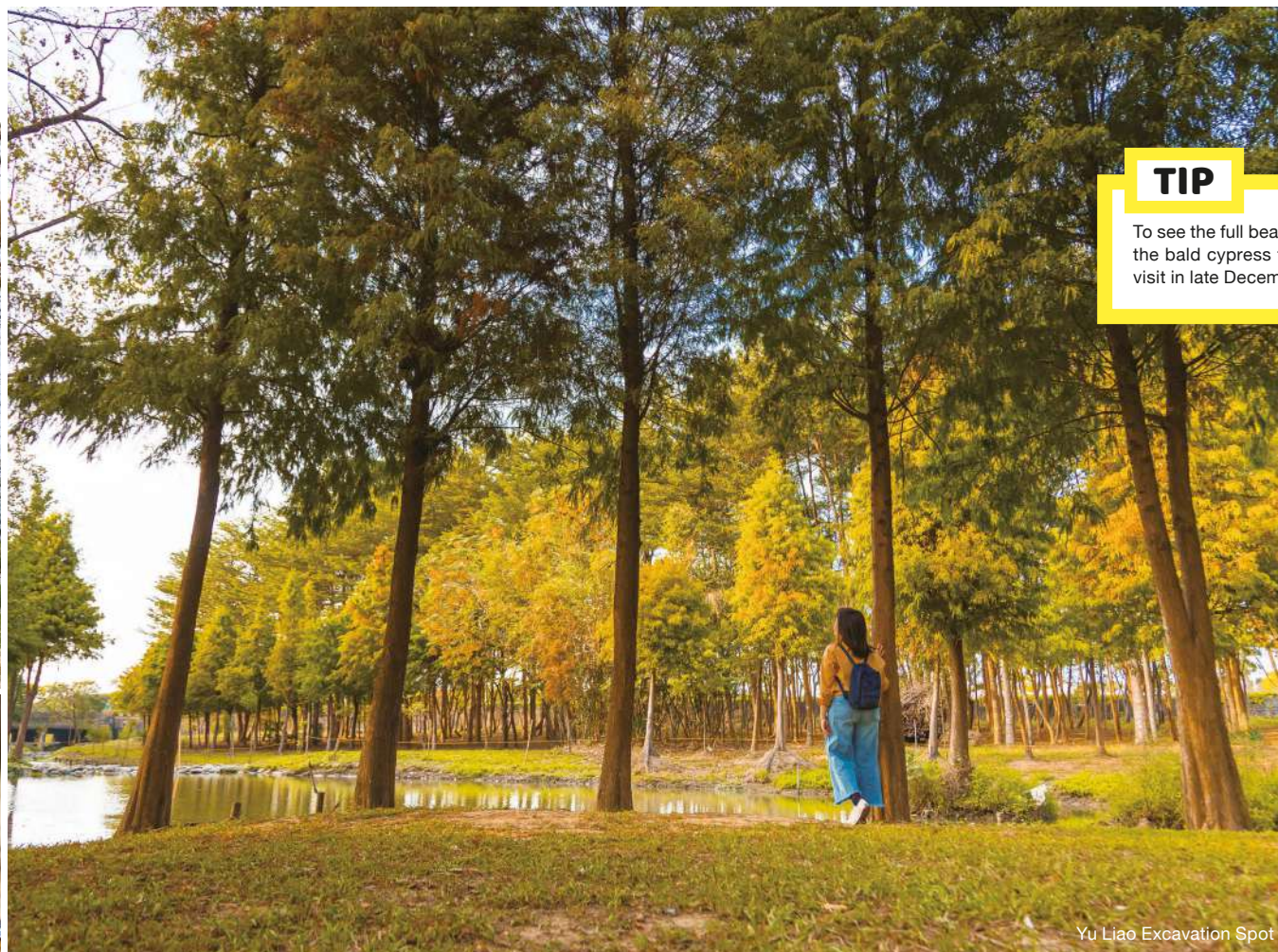
The museum facility itself is a work of art. The main museum in Taipei is in classical Chinese-palace style. The Southern Branch, though showcasing ancient cultures, is sleek and ultra-modern. The Chinese, Indian, and Persian cultures

NCYU INSECT MUSEUM (新嘉大昆蟲館)

- ☎ (05) 275-0360
- 📍 No. 300, Xuefu Rd., East District, Chiayi City (嘉義市東區學府路 300 號)
- 💰 NT\$150
- 🕒 9:30am ~ 5:30pm (closed on Mon. & Tue.)
- 🌐 www.newncyu300.com (Chinese)
- 📘 www.facebook.com/NCYU300

SOUTHERN BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM (國立故宮博物院南部院區)

- ☎ (05) 362-0777
- 📍 No. 888, Gugong Blvd., Taibao City, Chiayi County (嘉義縣太保市故宮大道 888 號)
- 💰 NT\$150
- 🕒 9am ~ 5pm (Mon.-Fri.; until 6pm on Sat. & Sun.); outdoor area 5am ~ 12 midnight
- 🌐 south.npm.gov.tw



TIP

To see the full beauty of the bald cypress trees, visit in late December

Yu Liao Excavation Spot



are reflected in the three integrated primary shapes of the museum structure. They form an allegory – the stylized, streamlined shapes of a dragon, elephant, and horse, respectively – symbolizing the communication and interaction that continues today.

The museum has good English information, and English service is readily available (including for guided tours). There is regular shuttle bus service from/to the high-speed rail station.

Also close to the High Speed Rail station, just off Provincial Highway 18, the main route from the station into Chiayi City, is the **Yu Liao Excavation Spot**. This young attraction has become an IG check-in and photographer hotspot. The local community has transformed an old irrigation-canal section into an idyllic landscaped oasis with a serene lake-like waterway and planted lines of bald cypress and tallow trees. Jet-black goats (chained), roaming geese and bantam roosters add color to the scene. You won't see an "excavation spot" (now covered over) – this is the site of one of the earliest prehistoric spots (late Neolithic) discovered in the Chiayi region.



MORE THAN CHINESE ART

The Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum showcases ancient civilizations across Asia



Southern Branch of the NPM

Chiayi Cafés

A big dose of cultural-creative entrepreneurial dynamism is being injected into the city by younger-generation locals and transplants from elsewhere around Taiwan who have fallen for the city's small size and easy neighborly feeling everywhere you meander. Here we see how dynamic types are using old places to create chic new cafés. In an accompanying article (page 32) we visit old places in Chiayi now home to chic homestays.

Along with the other cafés introduced in this section, **Jiou Café** is consistently praised in online voting as one of Chiayi City's top places to enjoy coffee. It is beautiful to look at from the outside, especially in the evening. Located in a single-story structure built over six decades back, its long façade is fully glass, and the interior looks like a framed painting, filled with clean lines and green plant life, including wooden pallets hanging from the recessed rafter-exposed ceiling with dried flowers and ferns dripping down. Though on a major road, the soundproofing is solid, leaving the interior garden-like quiet.

The specialty is ice-drip and cold-brew coffees with imported and Alishan single-origin beans featured. Especially inventive libations are the delicious Brandy Caramel Latte and the house-crafted fermented coffee "beers" (no alcohol), which are poured from taps like draft. Beyond being a coffee master, the owner has also undertaken baking studies, and the result is a sweet-things menu that constantly turns over. Be on the lookout for the tiramisu, made with three types of Western alcohol, peanut Basque cake (made with cream cheese), and mulberry cheesecake.

Ferns Coffee is on a narrow side street off a major road lined end to end both sides with a winsome mix of long-in-biz shops and trendy new ventures. The small café announces itself prominently with a wood-plank step-up platform outside the narrow shopfront, adorned atop and above with, yes, ferns

Photos on this page: Jiou Café



in planters and ferns hanging. Sunlight streams in through the full-front glass. In the compact bright-color, minimalist-decor interior ferns again have a starring role, climbing up a wall.

The owner's goal in opening this little oasis was to provide the area's office crowd with a place to stop in and chat over high-quality coffee with friends 30 minutes before, during, or after work, or simply dropping in to pick up their fave coffee choice to go. Two of the most popular are the Rose Latte, especially liked by female customers, and the intriguingly textured cold and carbonated Lemon Coffee, made with sparkling water. The Waffle menu is also a big hit (served weekends only); the owner studied waffle-technique under a French master who spent time in Taiwan. The two most-in-demand options are the Honey (honey cooked inside the waffles) and Three Berry (berry jam atop). Sandwiches and delectable lemon cake are also available.

Shimo sora, in a renovated residence from the Japanese era, is filled with simple Japanese antique and retro-style furnishings and decorations juxtaposed with minimalist modernist decorative flourishes. The compellingly stark interior-décor color theme is walls and ceilings of pure white, staff dressed in pure white, countertop/tabletop machinery, packaging, and tableware pure white, and most all below attractive light-stain wood.

Café on the Island is a quiet place with, inside, something of the feel of a comfy old cottage in an English forest, filled with wood and stucco basics and old-time furniture and decorations and plentiful nooks and crannies. You can even sit under a big fake bird nest, on a branch of a real tree, filled with teeny teddy bears.

JIOU CAFÉ (玖咖啡)

☎ (05) 216-2626

📍 No. 387, Yedong Rd., East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區興業東路 387 號)

🕒 1pm ~ 10pm (Mon., Tue., Wed., Sat.; until 11pm Sun.)

🌐 www.facebook.com/jiouce

FERNS COFFEE (蕨醒咖啡)

☎ (05) 225-8191

📍 No. 138, Zhongyi St., West District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市西區忠義街 138 號)

🌐 www.facebook.com/FernsCoffee.138

SHIMO SORA (霜空咖啡)

☎ (05) 225-5507

📍 No. 123, Guohua St., West District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市西區國華街 132 號)

🕒 1pm ~ 8pm (Mon.~Fri.; from 12noon on Sat. & Sun.; closed on Thu.)

🌐 bit.ly/3GtrR4s

CAFÉ ON THE ISLAND (島上西西)

📍 No. 603, Dongyang Xincun, East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區東洋新邨 603 號)

🕒 11am ~ 6pm (Mon., Tue., Sat., and Sun.)

🌐 www.facebook.com/cafeontheisland



NEW AND CHIC

Sit down in one of the many cool cafés run by young entrepreneurs and enjoy their taste in interior design as well as their fine coffee and cake creations





Turkey rice

Local Specialties

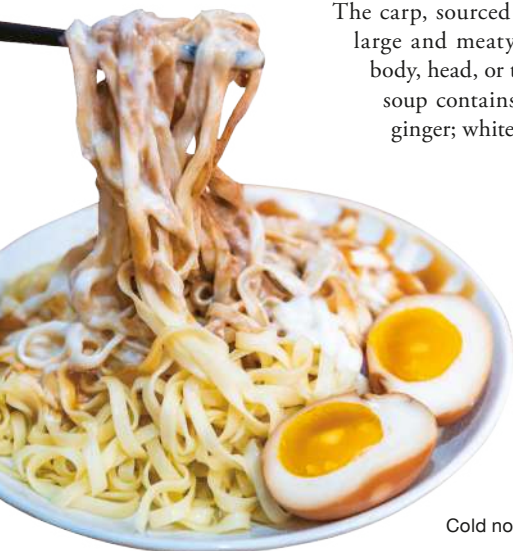
Chiayi's delicious snack-food culture is celebrated around Taiwan, with many eateries and night-market vendors enjoying island-wide reputation. Here's a taste-test tour of some of the tastiest creations and recommended spots to sit yourself down at. As a general snacking rule, in Chiayi you'll eat well and eat much for often less than NT\$100.

The "congee" in the name of **Zheng Lao Pai Grass Carp Congee** is misleading. What you are served is **grass carp soup**, a popular Chiayi snack that in truth is a filling meal.

The carp, sourced from a local reservoir, are very large and meaty. You have the choice of main body, head, or tail in a soup. The delicious clear soup contains generous doses of scallion and ginger; white rice is added just before serving.



Grass carp soup



Cold noodles



SNACKING HEAVEN
Visiting an old city like Chiayi, you want to try the many traditional snack-food options

Turkey rice is Chiayi's most iconic snack treat, offered by many market vendors and hole-in-the-wall eateries. After WWII, US military personnel stationed locally introduced turkey meat and breeding. The hand-pulled meat strips, soft and tender with a hint of sweetness, are placed atop steaming white rice and a savory house-recipe sauce drizzled atop. The key sauce ingredients are turkey/chicken stock, soy sauce, and sugar. **San He Turkey Rice** is considered among Chiayi's top turkey rice choices.

The much-loved eatery **Smart Fish** created another iconic Chiayi specialty, **fish head stew**, in 1953. The



Fried fish heads

“Smart” in the name is actually the given name of the founder. The chub fish for this very filling dish, which are first deep-fried, are from a local reservoir. Hearty stew accompaniments include Chinese cabbage, golden needle mushroom, black fungus, and tofu. Fish head stew enthusiasts, however, agree that the key is each house’s broth; the Smart Fish original is concocted with large pork bone, three-layered pork, scallion, dried shrimp, and chilies.

Ah E (“Grandma E”) Soy Milk Tofu Pudding is a stand in the renowned Wenhua Road Night Market. Tofu pudding, called *douhua* in Mandarin, is a sweet snack ubiquitous in Taiwan. It’s eaten cold in summer to cool off, warm in winter. The Chiayi-version difference is the substitution of soy milk

冷凍豆花 花豆羹 60多年歷史 老店 下午2:30營業 阿娥



Tofu pudding

for sweetened water, a creative divergence launched by Ah E herself six decades back. Another key Ah E stand difference is that the family continues grandma’s tradition of making their silky-smooth tofu slabs themselves, using no additives.



Another Taiwan summer favorite is thin **cold noodles**, drenched in a piquant sauce built on sesame paste, rice vinegar, and soy sauce, with salad-style accompaniments such as pulled-chicken strips and slivered veggies. Instead, in Chiayi the noodles are broader and chewier and are drenched with sesame sauce, then mayonnaise. Mayonnaise was introduced by US servicemen, but Taiwanese prefer a sweetened, lighter version. **Huang Cold Noodles** is a pleasantly neat and tidy eatery visually defined by interior/exterior walls of spanking-white tile and brick and light-wood flooring and counters/tabletops.

Despite the name, **Yuan-Sing Tea House** is a tea-drink shop, not a traditional-style teahouse. **Tea-drink shops** have become hugely popular in Taiwan in the past two decades, and Yuan-Sing and other Chiayi establishments celebrate the teas of Alishan and Chiayi-region fruits – a nickname for fecund Taiwan is the “Kingdom of Fruit.” Specially recommended Yuan-Sing concoctions are the grapefruit green tea with dried sweetened plum and the sucrose lemon alpine tea. ⑦

ZHENG LAO PAI GRASS CARP CONGEE
(正老牌草魚粥)

☎ (05) 233-8910
📍 No. 13, Sec. 2, Bo'ai Rd., West District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市西區博愛路二段 13 號)
📱 bit.ly/33e4FJ3

SANHE TURKEY RICE (三禾火雞肉飯)

☎ (05) 278-6846
📍 No. 97, Minquan Rd., East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區民權路 97 號)
🕒 10am~8pm
📱 www.facebook.com/TCSHHJRF

SMART FISH (林聰明砂鍋魚頭)

☎ (05) 227-0661
📍 No. 361, Zhongzheng Rd., East District, Chiayi City (嘉義市東區中正路 361 號)
🕒 12noon~10pm
📱 www.smartfish.com.tw

AH E SOY MILK TOFU PUDDING (阿娥豆漿豆花)

☎ (05) 224-3016
📍 Yanping St., East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區延平街)
🕒 2pm~12midnight

HUANG COLD NOODLES (黃記涼麵)

☎ (05) 224-0620
📍 No. 361, Xingzhong St., East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區興中街 6 號)
🕒 9am~8pm
📱 www.facebook.com/Huang.cold.noodles.inchiayi

YUAN-SING TEA HOUSE (源興御香屋)

☎ (05) 225-3828
📍 No. 321, Zhongshan Rd., West District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市西區中山路 321 號)
🕒 10am~8pm (until 10pm on holidays)
📱 bit.ly/3dvtP7X



📍 **ENGLISH AND CHINESE**

Beimen Station 北門站
Chiayi Botanical Garden 嘉義試驗所嘉義樹木園
Chiayi Park 嘉義公園
Chiayi Sawmill 嘉義製材所圍園
douhua 豆花
Hinoki Village 檜意森活村
Lantan Scenic Area 蘭潭風景特定區
Rippling Moonlit Talk 月影潭心
Song of the Forest 森林之歌
Yu Liao Excavation Spot 魚寮遺址



Fruit tea drinks

The Alishan Forest R

A TOURIST TRAIN CLIMB FROM THE PLAINS UP TO ALPINE COUNTRY

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE

PHOTOS | VISION

ALISHAN NATIONAL SCENIC AREA ADMINISTRATION

Constructed over a century ago, this heritage narrow-gauge railway branch line, today plied by tourist trains, is one of just three steep-gradient alpine railways on the globe. The others are, no surprise, also located in exotic locations off the beaten tracks: a line in India that runs through the Darjeeling tea-plantation region and one in Chile-Argentina that traverses the high Andes.

railway

The most **interesting part** of the journey is looking out the window and **witnessing how the scenery changes**, dramatically



Beimen Station



A train bound for Alishan at Chiayi Station

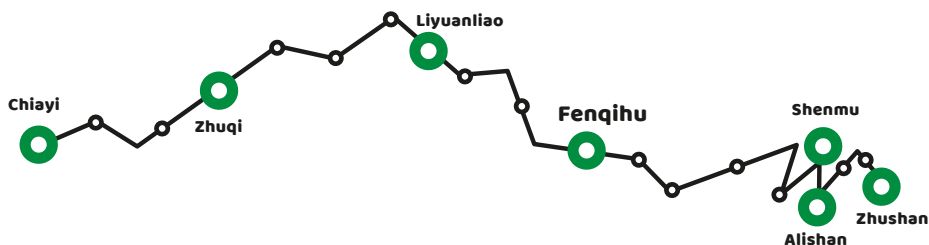
Alishan Forest Railway

The famed Alishan National Scenic Area (www.ali-nsa.net) and the Alishan National Forest Recreation Area (recreation.forest.gov.tw) at its heart are in the high mountains due east of flatlands Chiayi City, featured in our main article in this issue. Instead of heading up to the region by highway, many choose the popular Alishan Forest Railway, an iconic tourist attraction. The ride begins at Chiayi Railway Station and ends in the forest recreation area, starting at 30m above sea level and climbing to 2,216m. It is 71.6km in length, and trains trundle through 47 tunnels and over 72 bridges on their way through changing subtropical, temperate, and alpine habitats. Period locomotives and carriages are used to heighten the experience for riders.

The Japanese opened this line in 1912 to bring Alishan's prized cypress and cedar down to the plains, and passenger traffic was also handled. Trains travel 14.2km from Chiayi City along comparatively flat terrain before the long mountain climb begins. In one section

they corkscrew around Mt. Duli, climbing hundreds of meters over 5km of track. From Pingzhena Station trains zigzag upward on Z-shaped switchbacks, reversing direction on each new section of line on an ascent up the face of another mountain. The Japanese decided this mountain was too big to use the Mt. Duli technique.

For more information on the railway, including timetable/ticket info, visit www.forest.gov.tw/en and go to the "Alishan Forest Railway Ticketing System" section. Visit afrc.forest.gov.tw/en for a map showing all of the many stations, plus brief introductions on each, including elevation and distance markers. There is one other station in Chiayi City itself, Beimen Station, a wood-built station constructed by the Japanese that was the original launch-point for the line (see this issue's feature article). There is one train each way daily on weekdays, three on weekends and holidays. The trains run a tight schedule, so riders may not disembark and reembar at any of the stations along the way.



Fenqihu and Shizilu Stations

The station at the lovable little town of Fenqihu is at the 45.52km mark, elevation 1,403m. This compact settlement sits up on a mountain slope, the lowest buildings significantly below the highest, looking down into a deep basin formed between bracketing mountain hulks on the left and right.

The ride from Chiayi City to the base of the mountains is characterized by small farm plots, fruit trees cultivated on many. You are in Taiwan's banana belt. After this, on the lower-mountain uphill climb, you'll swish past such forest denizens as camphor trees, banyan trees, rubber figs, moso bamboo, and elephant grass. The trees sometimes crowd in so close their foliage "swishes" the carriage tops.

The Alishan world changes as **Fenqihu** is approached. The tracks penetrate cool, dark forest, often mist-pierced, densely populated with tall evergreens. You've entered the bewitching realm of the Taiwan cloud forest, its most enchanting specimens the soaring Taiwan red cypress, Taiwan yellow cedar, and Japanese cedar.

Scenic Fenqihu has a trio of *raisons d'être*. This spot was close to some of the great timber stands the Japanese wanted to exploit, and was chosen as a (roughly) halfway point for a railway storage and repair depot and for necessary engine water and coal replenishment. Along the tracks you'll find the attractive old Japanese wood-built station and the old train depot (free entry), which houses logging-era engines and a model showing the railway's amazing

engineering. Fenqihu Old Street runs just down-slope and parallel to the tracks. Lined tightly with heritage shops selling iconic local foods and crafts, at points it is covered and so narrow that it's more corridor than street. Two of the biggest Alishan-theme sellers are the locally grown Oolong tea and wasabi.

At the present time, the tourist train run ends short of the forest recreation area, at **Shizilu Station** (1,534m, 55km mark). The remaining track section up to the recreation area, currently under repair, is expected to be reopened in a year or two. This unfortunately means the thrilling aforementioned mountain-face zigzag section is not part of the experience. Travelers complete their journey to the forest recreation area by catching a bus (there is regular service) at the side of Provincial Highway 18, just about 100 meters from the railway station. This highway, which starts in Chiayi City, runs through the national scenic area's central corridor.

Tiny Shizulu has a forgotten-in-time ambience, especially when the alpine-forest mists roll through. There are numerous historical buildings track-side – in fact, the entire hamlet is trackside – including former Japanese worker dormitories. "Shizilu" means "crossroads." The settlement sits on a ridgeline looking down into two deep valleys on either side; two old native-blazed trails cross paths here, leading down into the valleys to different Tsou tribe settlements.

The **Alishan Forest Railway** was built in the early **1900s** by the Japanese to bring logged timber down to the plains



Traversing one of 72 bridges



A GLIMPSE OF HISTORY
Old locomotives are on display
in Fenqihu's old train depot



Today they're popular hiking trails, and invariably you'll see hikers sitting down with a cup of steaming Alishan coffee at the quaint **Ming Xin Coffee** café (www.facebook.com/maxwucoffee), facing the tracks right at the trail crossroads. Alishan, long famed for its tea, now also grows high-quality Arabica beans. There's also a trackside lookout platform, facing into the Northwest Corridor, which has info signboards and historical photos.



FOOD AND FOREST
Two things to do when
spending time in Fenqihu
is buying a traditional
railway lunch box and
going on invigorating
walks through the forest



Sacred tree area

TIP

➔ If you plan to watch the sunrise, make sure to check the departure times of the trains a day before you go, online or at Alishan Station. Times change with the changing time of the sunrise.

The forest recreation area is **1,400 hectares** in size, has an average annual temperature of **10.6 degrees Celsius**, and averages about **250 foggy days** per year



Alishan sunrise

Alishan Forest Recreation Area

Alishan Station (elevation 2,216m, 71.6km mark) is beside the forest recreation area's large service area. Buses plying Provincial Highway 18 from Chiayi City bring you to this point, which is the route terminus.

The service area is a busy complex of eateries and retail outlets, the former focused on Alishan/Chiayi County produce, the latter primarily selling Alishan-theme goods. There is also a dedicated visitor center here, and hotel accommodations just outside. The forest recreation area is 1,400 hectares in size, has an average annual temperature of 10.6 degrees Celsius, and averages about 250 foggy days per year.

From the service area, you launch into a latticework of pathways and eco-friendly raised boardwalks uphill and downhill (there are also many longer trails outside of this area). Among the many images of natural beauty that will become part of your album of life memories will be the decorative cherry trees in **Zhaoping Park** (planted throughout Alishan by the Japanese), the now-laid-to-rest old **Sacred Tree**, a huge red cypress estimated to be over 3,000 years old and long revered by the area's Tsou people, the **Giant Tree Plank Trail**, featuring dozens of massive, ancient red cypress trees, the forest-surrounded and interconnected **Sisters Ponds**, one prettified with two wooden "love pavilions" built on Formosan red cypress bases (said to be named, in one of the various versions of the legend, after two lovely native sisters who long ago drowned themselves to avoid a joint forced marriage to an evil chieftain), and the fantasy-like **Three-Generations Tree**, which has one tree growing from the dead trunk of another, which originally grew from the dead trunk of a third, the first generation being 1,500 years old.



Some of the trains have traditional wooden cars



There are three tourist train runs within the forest recreation area itself, all starting from Alishan Station, with return service. One is from Alishan Station down one stop to **Shenmu Station** (elevation 2,138m, 69.94km mark, 7min run). “Shenmu” means “sacred tree” – the key scenic sight around this station is the aforementioned Sacred Tree. Another is up one stop to **Zhaoping Station** (elevation 2,274m, 72.7km mark, 6min run). The aforementioned expansive Zhaoping Park, which has a walkway/lookout platform above the park treetops, is directly before the station.

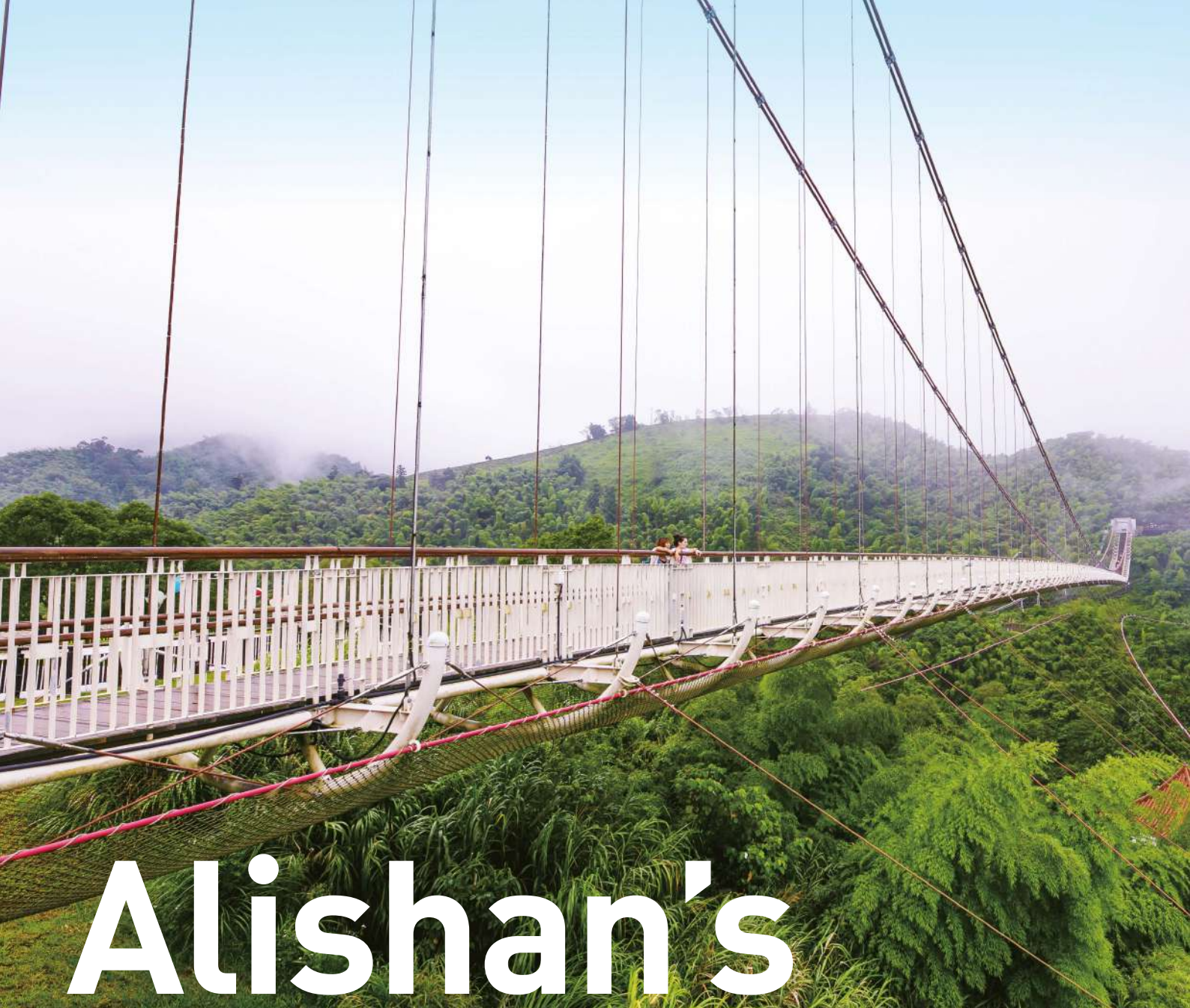
The **Zhushan Sunrise Watching Train** run is longer than the others. Your train travels up-mountain from Alishan Station to a high plateau from which the glorious sunrise over the distant 11-peak Yushan (Jade Mountain) massif is enjoyed. There is also return service. Normally the terminus is **Zhushan Station** (elevation 2,451m, 77.55km mark, run about 25mins), Taiwan’s highest railway point. This facility is currently being repaired, so trains stop at the penultimate station, **Duigaoyue Station** (elevation 2,405m, 75.7km mark), and sunrises then walk 25 minutes up a paved service road. The Zhaoping-Duigaoyue-Zhushan section is a branch line built in the 1980s.

There is a good lookout platform beside Duigaoyue Station, and one with much better views immediately above Zhushan Station. But best of all is the **Mt. Ogasawara Viewing Lot** (also called the Xiaoliyuanshan Lookout), about a 20-minute walk modestly uphill from Zhushan Station. Enjoy unobstructed views in all directions, taking in peaks among all three of Taiwan’s major ranges – Central Mountain Range, Yushan Mountain Range, and Alishan Mountain Range. As well, watch for the resident Mikado and Swinhoe’s pheasants around this plateau summit and just lower beside the service road at **Mountain Ali Tea No. 35** (www.facebook.com/alishan1835), a large two-storey chalet-style teahouse. ㊦

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Alishan Forest Railway 阿里山林業鐵路
Alishan Station 阿里山車站
Beimen Station 北門車站
Duigaoyue Station 對高岳車站
Fenqihu Old Street 奮起湖老街
Fenqihu Station 奮起湖車站
Giant Tree Plank Trail 巨木群道
Mountain Ali Tea No. 35 茶田 35 號
Mt. Ogasawara Viewing Lot 小笠原觀景台
Mt. Duli 獨立山
Ming Xin Coffee 鳴心咖啡
Pingzhena Station 屏遮那車站
Shenmu Station 神木車站
Shizilu Station 十字路車站
Sisters Ponds 姊妹潭
Three-Generations Tree 三代木
Tsou tribe 鄒族
Zhaoping Park 沼平公園
Zhaoping Station 沼平車站
Zhushan Station 祝山車站
Zhushan Sunrise Watching Train 祝山觀日列車





Alishan's Bonny Northwest Corridor

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE
PHOTOS | VISION

Days in One of Three
Major Alishan National
Scenic Area Sectors

The magnificent big-mountain Alishan National Scenic Area, producer of iconic Taiwan sunrise, narrow-gauge alpine railway, and “seas of clouds” images, is divided into three main corridors, north, central, and south. Here we spend time in perhaps the quietest of the three, a region of steep-slope tea plantations, bamboo forest, scenic heritage trails, soaring waterfalls, indigenous-culture experiences, and much beyond.

The Northern Part of Alishan

The Alishan NSA is in Chiayi County. Its central corridor is by far its busiest, pierced through west-east by Provincial Highway 18, which climbs quickly and dramatically up from the western plains to Alishan's high-mountain world.

The northwest corridor mountains are lower than in the center, though still filled with grand visual drama. There are two routes in from the western flatlands, County Route 162A and County Route 166, which meet in the Ruili village area. Many farms are passed in the elevated areas about 1,000m and higher, notably tea and fruit orchard operations, the former picturesquely neat-rowed, the latter pastels-colorful. The two key scenic draws on the drive up are on the 162A, located close to each other, the Taiping 36 Bends and Taiping Suspension Bridge.

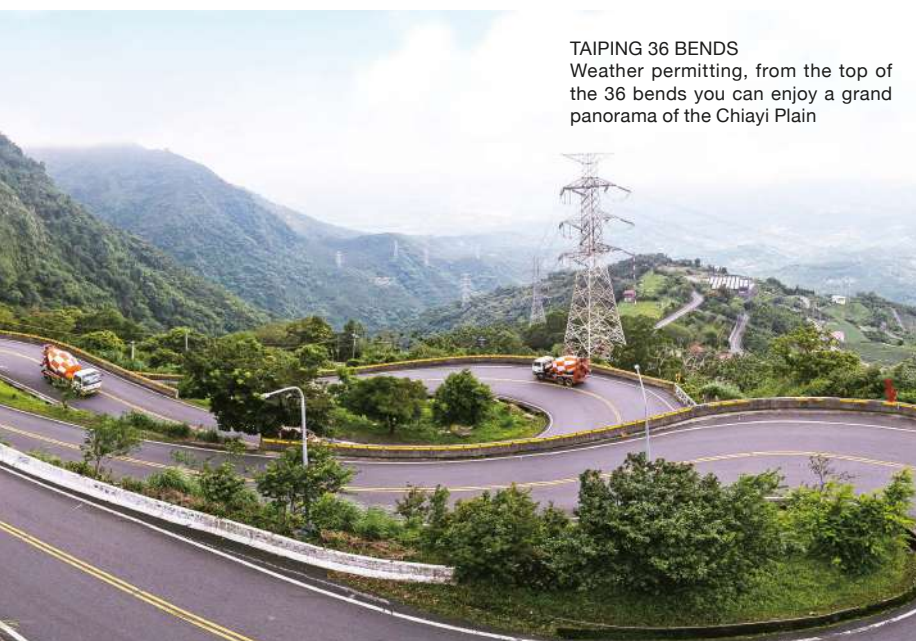
The **Taiping 36 Bends** is a close-knit cluster of, yes, 36 hairpin turns that lift you skyward about 900m. Each is clearly numbered on a maroon-



Taiping Suspension Bridge



TAIPING 36 BENDS
Weather permitting, from the top of the 36 bends you can enjoy a grand panorama of the Chiayi Plain



background sign. As you'd expect, the vistas get better and better as road and numbers climb. Stop at a few of the roadside lookout platforms for even clearer views. Waiting at the top is a lofty panorama of the wide coastal plain beyond the thicket of rolling hills you've just conquered.

Up just further along the highway, the **Taiping Suspension Bridge** is a thrilling engineering artwork. It spans two near-top mountainsides, fastened to land with thick cables, over a deep valley that slopes steeply away westward. At 281m in length, this is one of Taiwan's longest and highest suspension bridges. Grating along much of its length gives you looks straight down to the ground, and on clear days you'll see west all the way to the Taiwan Strait.

TAIPING SUSPENSION BRIDGE (太平雲梯)

🕒 9am - 4:30pm (holidays and weekends until 5:30)

💰 NT\$100

🌐 alishan.welcometw.com/taipingbridge (Chinese)



AIR LIBRARY (空氣圖書館)

☎ (05) 257-2366

📍 No. 2-12, Xiakengzai, Taiping Village, Meishan Township, Chiayi County (嘉義縣梅山鄉太平村下坑仔 2 號附 12)

🕒 9am~6pm (closed on Wednesdays)

Taiping Village

This small long-in-place and seemingly lost-in-time community, slumberous on non-holidays, is just beyond the suspension bridge. This area is around 1,000m in elevation – i.e., once you're beyond the bridge you've entered the corridor's up-country region. Tea plantations abound, making for even more compelling up-close and far-away mountain-slope photos.

"Taiping" means "great plateau." The slopes above the large flat area on which the village sits are covered by dense forest. On narrow, winding **Taiping Old Street** the pavement is appealing red brick, and traditional red-brick walling, wood-frame windows, and wooden doors are prominent among the old-timey shops and residences. Many storefronts have also been fixed up with attractive

stained-wood planking, including a number of chic cafés. The street serves up a wide-range menu of local agri-product specialties and old Taiwanese cuisine favorites.

In the short distance between the Old Street and suspension bridge are two commercial enterprises well worth exploring. The **Air Library** is a hotspot hotspot that also offers afternoon tea and sweet dessert-style treats. A bright, high-ceilinged, airy operation, the "library" in the name refers to the treasured trove of secondhand materials that the owners have given new life to, all telling stories of times past. Old radios now do duty as plant holders, dressers as display stands, etc.



Okasan Coffee is an arty-crafty café with seating in its cozy interior and in an adjacent garden area. Complementing its beverages are such unusual sweet-tooth creations as feathery egg cakes with a sweet mochi filling. Also yummily recommended are two faithful old-style offerings most appropriate in this tea-production region, winter melon tea and tea eggs.

OKASAN COFFEE (黑咖賞)

☎ 0933-655-706

📍 No. 39-7, Taiping, Taiping Village, Meishan Township, Chiayi County (嘉義縣梅山鄉太平村太平 39-7 號)

🕒 8am~7pm



OLD STREET, NEW CAFÉS

Taiping Village has an interesting mix of traditional houses and businesses run by younger entrepreneurs



Suspension Bridge on Youth Ridge Trail

Ruili Scenic Area

The Ruili Scenic Area encompasses all the natural and manmade scenic attractions around the aforementioned Ruili village, which is on the 166 just west of the 166/162A junction. The two roads provide access to all scenic-area attractions. This is also a farming area, with thick swathes of bamboo forest now added to the tea plantations. The village is at about 1,000m in elevation, but there is far greater elevation variation here than in the Taiping area.

Climbing up the high slope above (north of) Ruili is the long **Green Tunnel**. This is a narrow dead-end, gentle-graded farm road (few vehicles) through thick bamboo forest. Local folk use this route for their daily constitutions. In late winter/early spring you'll also see them happily going "off-road," digging up bamboo shoots to sell or eat.

The village looks down into a deep gorge on its south, bottom unseen. Head down to the base via the **Youth Ridge Trail**. The trailhead is beside the 166 across from Ruili Elementary School. In the past this was an important trade route. The steep 250m-long Haohan ("Hero") Slope has an average grade of 60 degrees, and porters who could tackle it without stopping were praised for their "youthful bodies" – origin of the "Youth Ridge" moniker.

The gorge bottom has a lost world Jurassic Park-like atmosphere. The countless bat-roost holes in the **Bat Cave**, shallow and 200m wide, were formed over millions of years by river erosion. The deep grooves in the mesmerizingly striated **Swallow Cliff** are also erosion-etched, the softer sandstone levels wearing away faster than the harder shale. In spring and summer the cliff is alive with roosting migratory Asian house martins. 📍



Green Tunnel



Swallow Cliff

For more information about the Alishan National Scenic Area, visit the official website at www.ali-nsa.net.

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Bat Cave 蝙蝠洞
Green Tunnel 綠色隧道
Haohan Slope 好漢坡
Ruili village 瑞里村
Swallow Cliff 燕子崖
Taiping 36 Bends 太平 36 彎
Taiping Old Street 太平老街
Taiping village 太平村
Youth Ridge Trail 青年嶺步道



CHIAYI SLOW

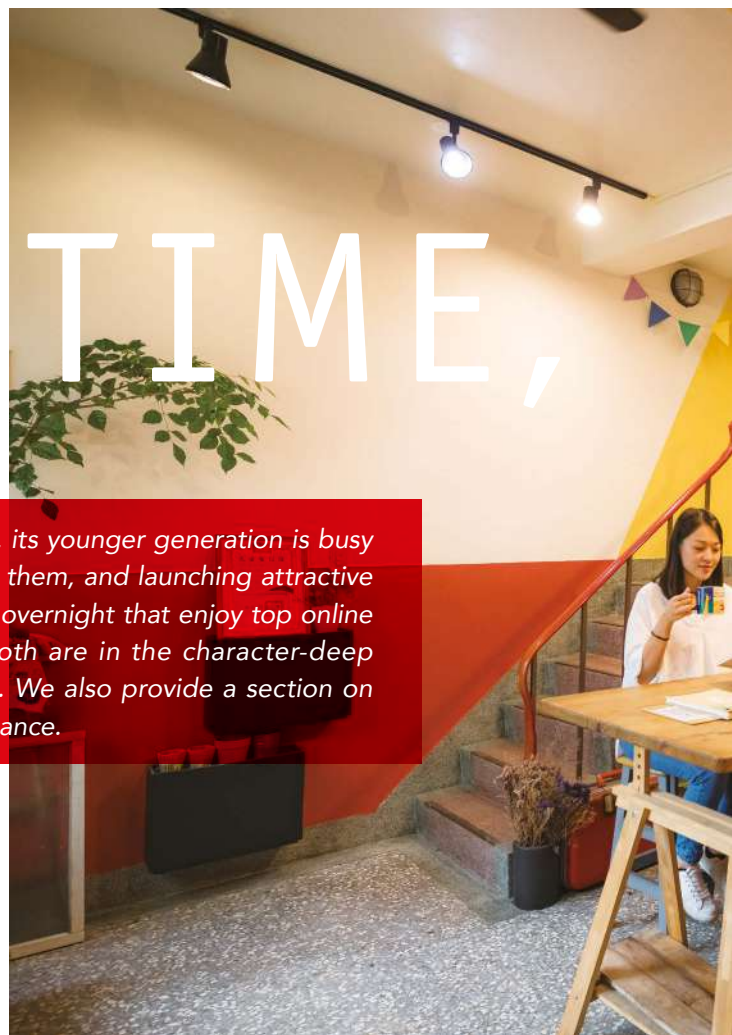
As you were informed in our main article on Chiayi City, its younger generation is busy as beavers taking old residences and shops, renovating them, and launching attractive cultural-creative adventures. Here we visit two spots to overnight that enjoy top online public-polling results – one hostel, one homestay. Both are in the character-deep old quarter before Chiayi Railway Station and its yards. We also provide a section on recommended historical/cultural sites within walking distance.

CHIAYI

FUN TIME

NEW CULTURAL-CREATIVE PLACES OF ACCOMMODATION

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE PHOTOS | CHEN CHENG-KUO, VISION





SLOW DOWN

This cozy and exceedingly homey two-story homestay is located along a short residential street that is more like an alley, just wide enough for two scooters to zoom along side by side, so narrow that with homestay windows open you can clearly hear people talking in the surrounding abodes. There is a decidedly quaint ambience to this old neighborhood, filled with two/three-floor residences built toward the middle of last century.

This is indeed a “home”-stay, but not in the usual manner. This was the family home of the owner – i.e., she grew up here – but she now lives elsewhere. She has redesigned the exterior and interior, and if you rent all three rooms you get a full old-community Chiayi home all to yourself.

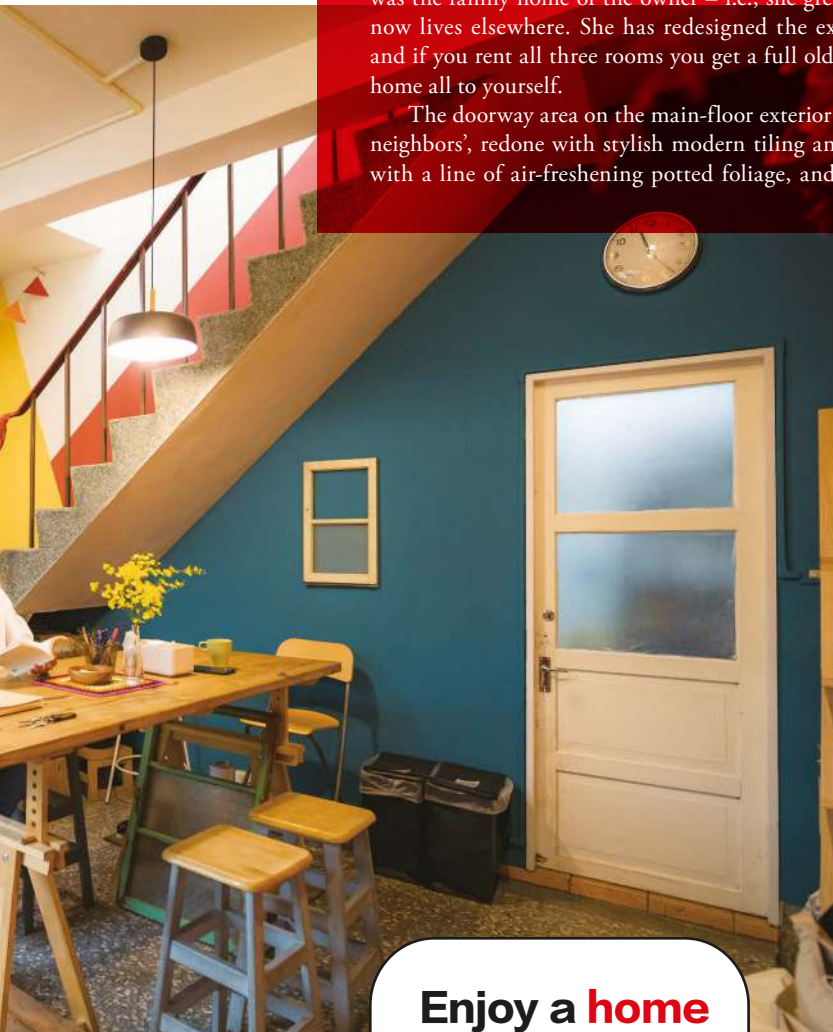
The doorway area on the main-floor exterior stands out from the neighbors’, redone with stylish modern tiling and windows, fronted with a line of air-freshening potted foliage, and invitingly lit up at

SLOW DOWN (嘉義慢漫)

☎ 0973-067-509

📍 No. 23, Ln. 245, Minsheng N. Rd.,
West District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市西區民生北路 245 巷 23 號)

🌐 www.facebook.com/slowdown245



Enjoy a **home
sweet home**
experience
at Slow Down

night with a row of glowing-white string lights. The remainder of the façade is original, featuring exposed-aggregate concrete that is ubiquitous in Chiayi.

Inside, the living room and three bedrooms have been repainted much like a kids’ playroom and kids’ bedrooms, respectively, in a modern home, with vivid splashes of cartoon-like colors on walls. These are complemented well with such decorative vintage-item flourishes as old suitcases and old wooden window frames hung on walls. Centering the living room is a long wooden workbench-style table perfect for workstation use. And best of all are the original house elements left in place – original terrazzo flooring, largely-intact original kitchen, wood-frame kitchen door, and other waiting-for-you discoveries. Home sweet home!

There are two spacious bedrooms with a single large bed each (2F) and one smaller room with a bunkbed (1F). Each of the three has a bathroom with shower. Towels and facecloths are provided and each room has a wall-mount TV.

Breakfast is not provided, but you can use the fridge in the small kitchen. There are also good food-purchase choices at the intersections at either end of this block of the street. Just steps away, right on the nearest intersection, is the gorgeous Mumushan, a café/bakery with gleaming-white façade and substantial sun-inviting glass on two sides. Savory edibles include sandwiches, quiches, and salads; the sweet edibles include Western-style cakes, pies, and pastries. Around the corner at the other intersection is a row of busy old-timey hole-in-the-wall eateries selling myriad hot-snack treats, from turkey rice to noodles to fried rice.



Entrance of the homestay

ALL YOURS
If you rent all three rooms, you have
the house to yourself

FUN TIME HOSTEL

The Fun Time Hostel is an eye-capturing multi-story facility that stands on the corner of two narrow commercial streets of comparatively quiet traffic, its dynamically-colored recessed entryway set at a slant right on the corner. This was originally a commercial building, a purpose-built goods distribution center built approximately 70 years ago. The hostel's elevator uses what was originally the freight-elevator shaft.

The owner is a transplant from Taipei who has fallen in love with Chiayi's easy pace and relaxed friendliness. A passionate international traveler, she wanted to open a hostel because she has loved the homeliness and great personality variety of the hostels she's stayed at throughout the region, and also sought to open a place welcoming to young adventurous folk and promoting Chiayi life and culture. Her dream-come-true launched just not long ago, at the end of July in 2020.

A professional home/business interior designer, she has poured all her emotions into this project. Both the building's exterior and interior have been completely renovated and redecorated. Outside, it announces itself to the eye from far off with bold Mediterranean-style sunny yellow, sea blue, and fruity orange color swathes, plus an imaginative lobby-entry door of reclaimed wood planks that look like brushstrokes of different colors on an artist's palette.

There is an airy sunlit café on the main floor, and three floors of accommodations above. The café is also open to non-guests. There are separate rooms available for guys and gals, plus mixed

SOUTHERN FLAIR

The hostel facade has Mediterranean-style sunny yellow, sea blue, and fruity orange color swathes



BREAKFAST WITH A VIEW

Outside the common room you can have your morning coffee and enjoy the view



Cute decoration in the café/
reception area

FUN TIME HOSTEL (日光輕旅)

☎ (05) 227-5858

📍 No. 655, Zhongzheng Rd., West District,
Chiayi City
(嘉義市西區中正路 655 號)

🌐 www.facebook.com/funtimehostel.655


**Fun times
await in Chiayi!**



Common room on the top floor

rooms and suites for families. Female-only rooms and washroom/shower facilities are protected with digit-code door locks. Rooms are neat and spartan, with pleasant wood flooring, bare bulbs hanging from ceilings designer-style, and liberal use of chipboard and exposed red-brick walling. Bunkbeds are standard, with each space containing a reading light and electrical socket. A TV is also provided in each room, either wall-mounted or tabletop.

Breakfast is free, taken in a perky kitchen-style common room on the top floor, which is adjoined by a wide balcony with comfy seating. The simple range of food/drink items includes teas, coffees, and juices along with cereal, bread/toast, muffins, steamed buns, jams, and peanut butter. Other services include self-service laundry facilities (free use) and bicycle rentals (NT\$10/hour).

The first-floor café has a range of hand-drip coffees, lattes, fruit-based drinks, and teas (including Alishan tea). On the food side are various French-style cakes as well as local-style mung bean and taro cake. Special house recommendations are a single-source Panamanian coffee, a cake and fresh-cut fruit set, and an all-you-can drink coffee deal (3hr limit).



Cubicle bed with light, curtains, and power outlet

CLŌSE BY



Chiayi Art Museum - ChiaYi 1936



WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE

There are a number of historical/cultural sites not far from the homestay and hotel worth visiting

In the **Museum of Old Taiwan Tiles**, literally everything you lay your eyes on is a thing of beauty. This graceful, scent-filled Japanese-era former residence, meticulously restored, was built with high-quality hinoki cypress brought down along the Alishan Forest Railway, which happens to run directly behind the museum.

The most exquisite aesthetics, however, are found in the mesmerizing collection of heritage decorative wall tiles, with thousands displayed. These have come from the exterior and interior walls of traditional Chinese three-sided courtyard-style residences – embedded as decorative flourishes in homes of the better off. Chiayi was long a production center for majolica-style tiles. The proprietor has spent over three decades hunting them – sources are now dear – and decided to share his precious treasures through this museum. He has also designed varied attractive tile-theme souvenir items, such as postcards and coasters.

Chiayi Cultural and Creative Industries Park is a short distance from Chiayi Railway Station, and right beside the yards. It's on the site of the former Chiayi Brewery, closed in 1999, which was established by the Japanese in 1916 to produce sake and other products. In the 21 renovated buildings you'll discover an intriguing heritage-treasure bounty of bottle washers, packaging machines, scales, conveyors, barrels, and other equipment on display.



Chiayi Cultural and Creative Industries Park



Rainbow Fresh Fruit Store



Museum of Old Taiwan Tiles

Today's cultural-creative venture promotes such signature local art forms as Koji pottery and both wood and stone sculpture. Browse the vibrant market-style array of offerings for sale at the many stands run by artists, artisans, and private cultural-creative enterprises. There are also special-theme art exhibitions, gallery-cum-café/teahouses, and a cultural-creative DIY experience area (fee).

The **Chiayi Art Museum – ChiaYi 1936** faces the above-mentioned park across a major thoroughfare. The complex consists of three renovated buildings, built in 1936 by the Japanese, which formed the Chiayi branch of the Taiwan Tobacco and Wine Monopoly Bureau – a main building and two warehouses. This is Chiayi's first major historic site redesigned with a stylish modernistic appearance. The complex now serves as an expansive space for art promotion and education: there are exhibitions, workshops, a library, shops, dining facilities, and a large and very popular landscaped garden.

The **Chiayi Old Prison**, today a museum, is the only one of five prison facilities built in Taiwan by the Japanese that still exists. Opened in 1922, the last inmates were moved out in 1998 and its days as a penal institution were done. The facility housed as many as 300 male and 30 female inmates. The design is a fan-shaped cell complex with a central command station from which guards could watch the entire inmate population. The cells stretch out from the central corridor in three long blocks. The complex is surprisingly well-preserved; the doors and windows, for example, are made of Alishan cypress, ensuring strength and durability.

The **Rainbow Fresh Fruit Store** is a shop beloved by locals, in place over seven decades. It provides all kinds of sweet goodies handmade using the cornucopia of delicious fruits grown in the Chiayi region: fruit drinks, cut-fruit platters, puddings, cold sweetened soups, and more. The popular lotus seed soup is an unusual and highly recommended treat for the palate. A sit-down here also serves up a time-travel experience into yesteryear Taiwan, for the décor is like a museum display, barely changed in 70-some years, with terrazzo flooring and bright-green, plus white bathroom-style tiling climbing the walls to the ceiling. ①



CHIAYI OLD PRISON (嘉義舊監獄)

☎ (05) 362-1873

📍 No. 140, Weixin Rd., East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區維新路 140 號)

🌐 prisonmuseum.moj.gov.tw (Chinese)

📝 Note: Prior reservation required

RAINBOW FRESH FRUIT STORE

(七彩冰果室)

☎ (05) 227-1953

📍 No. 329, Zhongshan Rd., West District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市西區中山路 329 號)

🕒 9am~10pm

🌐 bit.ly/3IULKn0

CHIAYI ART MUSEUM – CHIAYI 1936

(嘉義市立美術館 – 昭和 J11)

☎ (05) 227-9011

📍 No. 101, Guangning St., West District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市西區廣寧街 101 號)

🌐 www.facebook.com/ChiaYiJ11

🕒 10am~8pm

MUSEUM OF OLD TAIWAN TILES (花磚博物館)

☎ 0905-012-390

📍 No. 282, Linsen W. Rd., East District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市東區林森西路 282 號)

🌐 www.1920t.com (Chinese)

🕒 10am~5:30pm

CHIAYI CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES PARK

(嘉義文化創意產業園區)

☎ (05) 216-0500

📍 No. 616, Zhongshan Rd., West District, Chiayi City
(嘉義市西區中山路 616 號)

🌐 www.g9park.com (Chinese)

🕒 10am~8pm



For a country seemingly obsessed with tea-drinking, it's surprising to learn that until the 1970s most of the tea produced in Taiwan was exported. Coffee shops tend to be trendier than artisanal teahouses these days, but local tea aficionados have been trying to change that by opening more relaxed yet stylish establishments.



Drinking Tea in Style



Ways to Enjoy Top-Quality Artisanal Taiwanese Tea in Taipei

TEXT | HAN CHEUNG **PHOTOS** | CHEN CHENG-KUO

Taiwan is world-famous for its high-quality teas, grown in mid- and high-altitude areas all across the island, which has an amenable warm and humid climate. The production and trade of tea has flourished here for over two centuries, and Formosa Oolong (Wulong) was first introduced to the West by Scottish merchant John Dodd in 1869. However, Oolong tea gradually lost its importance starting in the 1890s, as the Japanese colonial government (1895-1945) focused on black tea, while the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), which took control of Taiwan and its offshore islands after WWII, preferred green tea.

Despite the international success of Taiwanese tea, domestically the beverage was mostly restricted to the privileged until the 1980s. In 1975 the export market crashed due to the

global energy crisis, and the government started promoting experimentation and local production and consumption of such now-renowned Oolong varieties as Dongding Oolong and Wenshan Pouchong (Baozhong). The economy was soaring then, and soon tea became one of the nation's favorite beverages. The tea industry also changed drastically, from large-scale export-oriented factories to small farmers who process their own leaves.

Today, tea is ubiquitous in Taiwan, whether it be at roadside counters, convenience stores selling tea drinks, traditional teahouses, or stylish retro-chic tea salons. Demand is so high that much of it is imported these days, with much of this leaf of mediocre quality, but there are a growing number of trendy establishments promoting high-end, artisanal local teas where the atmosphere and decor is just as crucial as the quality of the tea.

■ Liquide Ambré ■

The lacquered stairs leading to this intimate tea salon are designed to appear wet, making visitors pause before heading up.

"We hope that people walk up the stairs carefully," marketing manager Armo Hsieh says. "They may have just come from the bustling streets, but once they arrive here, they can slow down and calm their hearts."

The classy, darkly-lit space has only six seats, with a tea master sitting in front of the guests behind a massive wooden table meticulously brewing and presenting the selected teas with care and precision. The shop area boasts an array of chic designer teaware, and the tea master chooses which utensils to use according to the "personality" of each tea.

Despite this attention to detail, Hsieh encourages customers to relax and enjoy the process however they wish without worrying about rules or rituals. After all, Liquide Ambré was launched to promote the art of Taiwanese tea to a wider audience, especially young people who feel more at ease in cafés and may feel intimidated by traditional-style tea establishments.

The menu contains mostly teas sourced by the owners from across Taiwan, as well as tea cocktails and herbal brews. The honey black tea originates in Chulu (Taitung County in southeast Taiwan), and the Lava Mist is from the Kalon Tea farm in Nantou County (central Taiwan). The flavor profile of the latter is described as "smoked wood, nuts, and cocoa beans."



RELAX AND ENJOY
This tea salon is a place where guests don't have to worry about rules or rituals

LIQUIDE AMBRÉ (琥珀)

☎ (02) 2736-7287

📍 2F., No. 15, Ln. 72, Leli Rd., Da'an District, Taipei City
(台北市大安區樂利路 72 巷 15 號 2 樓)

🌐 www.liquideambre.com

We are served a cold welcome tea before the tea preparation begins. Then the tea master asks us to smell tea leaves, before she carefully transfers them to a cup using a twig, heats them up, and has us smell them again. The aromas are much stronger the second time. The tea is served on a smooth slab of fossilized wood, adorned with a single fern leaflet in a tin holder.

The same process is repeated for the honey black tea, and the difference in flavor profiles is apparent as this one is sweet and light. One doesn't need to be a tea connoisseur to appreciate these contrasts, and the owners hope that people can make tea-drinking part of their everyday lives.

Unique desserts developed in-house are served after the second infusion. We try the peanut tofu, which is surprisingly unsweet; the subtle hints of peanut blend well with the sprinkling of salt and lemon juice. The lotus seed paste inside a crispy Japanese monaka pastry is also on the lighter side – both are refreshing companions that don't overpower the main act of the tea.



■ Xiao Yin Tea House ■

This teahouse is charming enough with its atmospheric Taisho romanticism-style interior that seamlessly blends Eastern and Western aesthetics, but one just can't ignore the ridiculously fluffy and genial house cat Dede (Taiwanese for "Tea Tea"). Dede knows exactly how to be a good host, sitting by but not too close to the customers or lazing around, reminding them to relax and take things easy.

Located on a quiet side street at the foot of Elephant Mountain but just a short walk from the trendy and busy part of Xinyi District, the proprietors of Xiao Yin Tea House hope to offer their customers a place of respite in the big city.

Visitors steep their own tea here, and each table gets a water pot on a mini-stove, a tea-serving pot, and tea cups, their minimalist aesthetic the work of ceramicist Wang Wende.

Store manager Wiola Wen says that they hope to promote tea drinking among the younger crowd that usually prefers hanging out in cafés. Compared to coffee, tea drinking is a slower-moving process, as the leaves can be infused at least three times, with each infusion tasting different.



STEEP YOUR OWN TEA
Tea pots are creations of renowned ceramicist Wang Wende



XIAO YIN TEA HOUSE (小隱茶庵)

☎ (02) 2723-8520

📍 No. 8, Aly 14, Ln. 150, Sec. 5, Xinyi Rd., Xinyi District, Taipei City
(台北市信義區信義路五段 150 巷 14 弄 8 號)

🌐 www.orldifestyles.com/ (Chinese)

📘 www.facebook.com/xiaoyinxinyi

🕒 11am~8pm



Your brew is accompanied by bite-sized traditional sweets and pastries



“We want to make tea more accessible,” she says. “Many young people feel that they have to really understand tea before entering a traditional teahouse. We keep the process as simple as possible here, while still maintaining a sense of ceremony.”

There’s a card provided to customers with suggested infusion times, and staff can also offer detailed instructions to newbies. Wen says the art of tea drinking is quite subjective and they don’t want to impose too many rules, but some behaviors should be avoided, such as drinking directly out of the serving pot.

The offerings here focus on Taiwanese Oolongs, and are given poetic names according to their flavor profile: wild ginger, autumn sun, cloud dance, mountain mist, puffing rice in the courtyard, etc. We order the morning mist, which Wen says carries the fragrance of milk tea. The place also offers a wide variety of traditional-style bite-sized sweets and pastries as well as tea-infused creations such as a Ruby No. 18 black tea pudding.

It’s tricky remembering to keep infusing and pouring the tea while chatting, but it’s also fun to do it ourselves; I’m sure I will get better at it after some practice. Xiao Yin also offers *zhajiang* noodles, dumplings, and other staple Taiwanese dishes.





LIKE IN THE OLD DAYS

⬇ Not much has changed inside this traditional-style teahouse over the decades

■ CHEN WEY TEASHOP ■

Taipei's historic Dadaocheng neighborhood was still an expansive rice-drying field when tea trader Lin Lan-tian built the area's first three commercial buildings in 1851. The area would later become a major center for Taiwan's international tea trade before its eventual decline.

Today, one of Lin's Minnan-style structures houses the Chen Wey Teashop. Run by renowned tea master Lu Li-chen, this classic, traditional-style teahouse offers naturally farmed Taiwanese leaf as well as Pu'er and Wuyi varieties grown under Lu's supervision in mainland China. The shop's renovated interior still looks very much like it did over a century ago, complete with antique tea boxes, furniture, and other intriguing artifacts.

Lu is known for the attention to detail he pays to the production of his teas, and the farmers he works with grow the plants and process the leaves exactly according to his instructions. This quest for perfection is reflected not just in Lu's teas, but in the wares that are used here to make and serve tea as well. Chen Wey is not just a place to enjoy the fruits of Lu's life work, but also to learn about and experience the traditional and historic side of Taiwanese tea.



CHEN WEY TEASHOP (臻味茶苑)

☎ (02) 2557-5333

📍 No. 156, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong District, Taipei City
(台北市大同區迪化街一段 156 號)

🌐 www.facebook.com/Zhen.Wei.Cha.Yuan

🕒 10am~6pm





WINDING STREAM

In the basement guests can drink tea by a "snaking river"



■ STOP BY TEA HOUSE ■

This cozy, unassuming teahouse tucked in an alley in Taipei's Yongkang Street commercial district blends modernity and tradition in a whimsical yet tasteful space that almost feels like a modern art gallery.

The tea is served in various creative ways – for example, the cold brew sampler consists of Oriental Beauty, high-mountain Jin Xuan, and charcoal-roasted Oolong tea served in test tubes, and during special events in the basement the tea masters deliver sample cups to guests through a winding “river” that snakes between the seats throughout the room. This is an ode to the “winding stream parties” of ancient China, where participants waited by a stream and composed a poem before a cup full of wine reached them. There's also a funky seating room made out of plastic cups.

The main draw, however, is still the tea, and the menu is just as eclectic as its decor, ranging from classic Taiwanese varieties and aged bricks to more modern creations and non-tea offerings such as ginseng silver ear mushroom and charcoal roasted orange tea. The oil-less, low-sugar mini Chinese pastries are quite popular, as well as the vegan noodles and dumplings. 7



STOP BY TEAHOUSE (串門子茶館)

☎ (02) 2356-3767

📍 No. 9, Ln 13, Lishui St., Da'an District, Taipei City
(台北市大安區麗水街 13 巷 9 號)

🌐 <https://www.facebook.com/stopbyteahouse/>

🕒 1pm~9pm

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Chulu 初鹿

Dadaocheng 大稻埕

Dongding Oolong 凍頂烏龍茶

Elephant Mountain 象山

Jin Xuan tea 金萱茶

Kalon Tea 開蘭茶

Lin Lan-tian 林藍田

Lu Li-chen 呂禮臻

Pu'er tea 普洱茶

Wang Wende 王文德

Wenshan Pouchong 文山包種

"winding stream parties"

曲水流觴

Wuyi tea 武夷茶

Yongkang Street 永康街

zhajiang noodles 炸醬麵

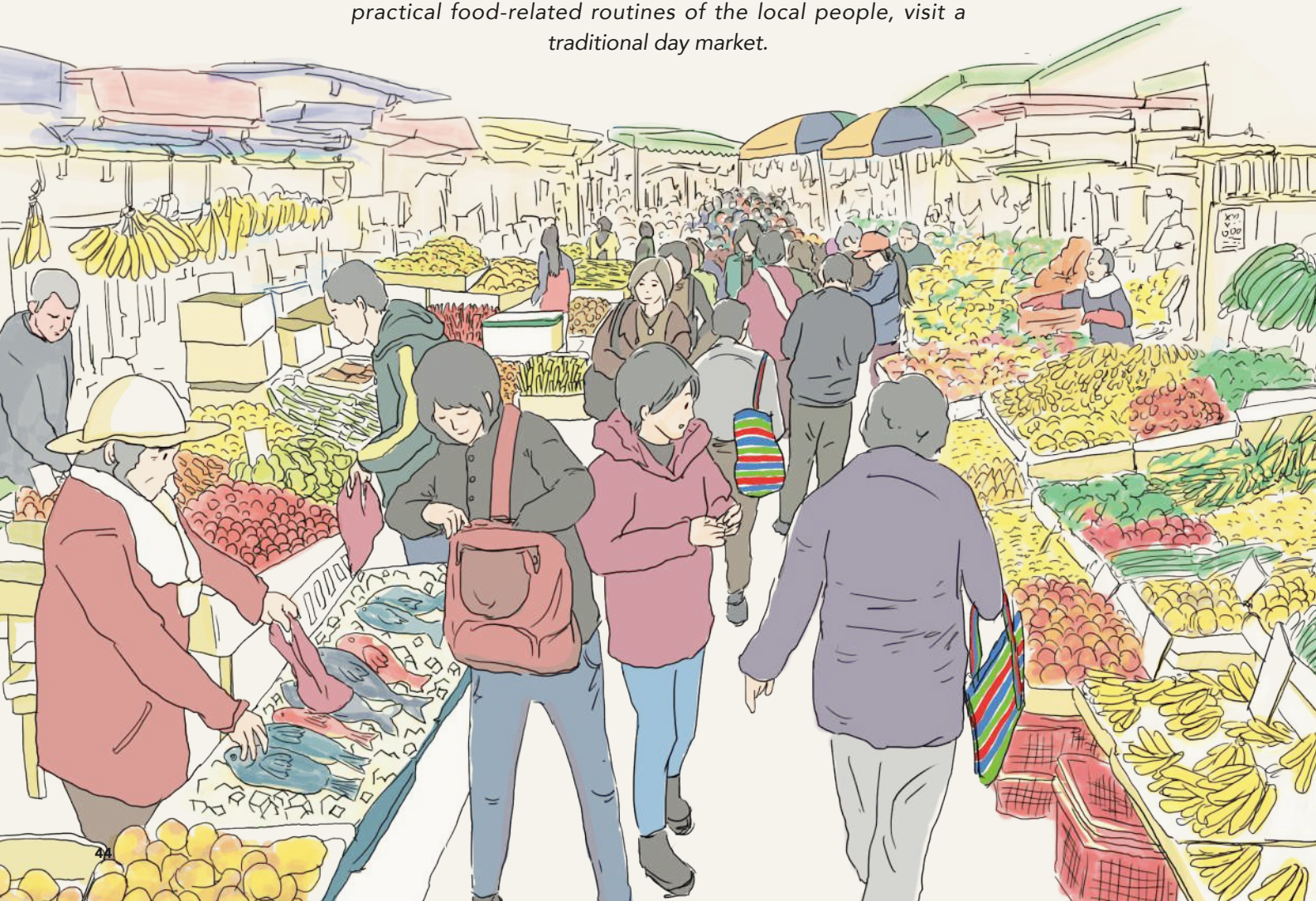
It Can Get Noisy!

TEXT | VISION

ILLUSTRATIONS | IAN TSAI

Walking Through a Taiwan Day Market

If you want to explore the street food scene of Taiwan, head to a night market. If you want to immerse yourself in the daily practical food-related routines of the local people, visit a traditional day market.



When in any busy city in Taiwan during the morning hours, you are probably not far away from a day market (except for Mondays, when most are closed). There are different types of setups, and the scope of produce and value-added products sold can vary widely. The most basic day markets can be found on smaller streets and in lanes and alleys that are turned into markets around 8 in the morning, with vendors opening stalls or simply putting their goods on tarpaulins on the ground. On the other end of the spectrum are large purpose-built multi-level

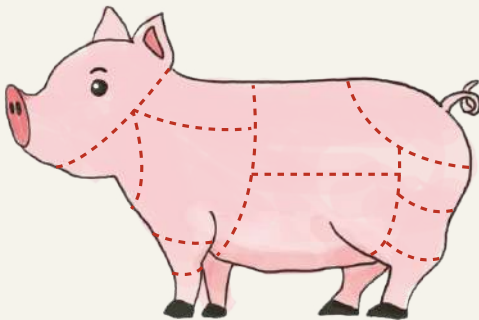
indoor markets, such as Nanmen Market in Taipei. Some streets are used as day markets during the morning hours and turned into night markets in the late afternoon, Linjiang Street in Taipei, for example. Less common but equally popular with buyers are afternoon markets, where the prices of fruits and vegetables tend to be significantly lower than in the morning, especially towards the end of the afternoon when vendors start wrapping things up.

Vendors do Shout

If you're sensitive to noise, be prepared for some intense audio levels in a day market. Some vendors will be promoting their goods at the top of their lungs so that even someone a block away will hear them clearly.

The Whole Pig

If you don't like the idea of looking at the innards of farm animals, you'll want to stay clear of the butcher stands. Vendors like to display every imaginable pig part, for example, very prominently by hanging them out for everyone to see.



Good Cooked Food

If you're not cooking yourself, visiting a day market is a great way to find a wide selection of ready-to-eat foods, from fried rice and noodles to steamed buns and dim sum to soy-braised delectables, including tofu and chicken feet.



Taiwanese Jin

In a typical day market there is hardly any English signage. While it's easy to point to select the meat and produce you wish to purchase, you need to understand how things are weighed to figure out the price. Instead of kilogram, the weight unit more often used in the markets is catty (*jin*), a traditional Chinese unit of mass. One *jin* equals about 600 grams.



Amazing Variety

On a Taiwan day market visit you'll be presented with an amazing variety of goods to buy. Apart from the expected fruit, vegetable, meat, and seafood vendors, you'll also find stalls selling pickles, dried goods, Chinese medicines, massage equipment, kitchenware, clothes, shoes, and toys. There is often no system grouping vendors of the same item types in specific areas of a market, which can mean for example that a fishmonger might be selling fresh seafood right beside a stall selling undergarments.

Stylish Old-Time Bags

If you don't like the idea of using plastic bags to carry home the items you buy at a day market, consider going the Taiwanese traditional route and using a *jiazhi* shopping bag. Made of woven nylon and sporting broad horizontal stripes in red, green, and blue, these sturdy bags, which originated in Tainan's Houbi village, used to be the go-to bags for locals buying their daily necessities at markets. In recent years they have made a bit of a comeback as an eco-friendly alternative to disposable plastic bags, and as a nostalgic souvenir for tourists as well. ①



📌 ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Houbi village 後壁村

jiazhi bag 茄芷袋

jin 斤

Linjiang Street 臨江街

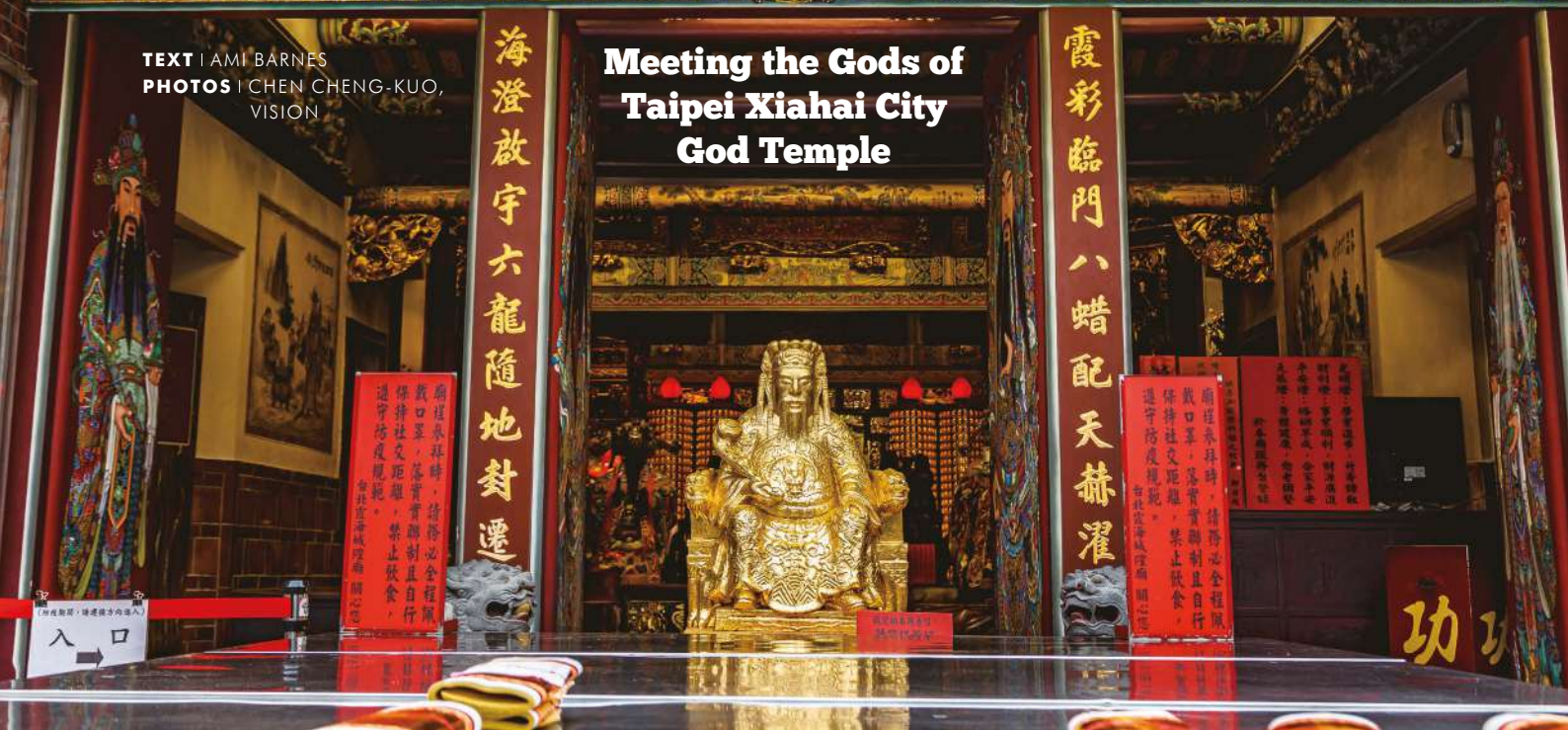
Nanmen Market 南門市場

traditional day market 傳統市場

A Date with the Divine

TEXT | AMI BARNES
PHOTOS | CHEN CHENG-KUO,
VISION

Meeting the Gods of Taipei Xiahai City God Temple



With an almost endless parade of kaleidoscopic temples and folk festivals, it's a safe bet to say that every visitor to Taiwan has at least one religious experience on his or her bucket list. But for love-seeking sightseers, there's a single place that deserves top billing: Taipei Xiahai City God Temple in the capital's Dadaocheng neighborhood.

Temples in Taiwan

One of the first things that most newcomers to Taiwan notice is that there is an abundance of temples and shrines, and it's no exaggeration to say that in many areas there can be several on a single city block. These structures vary in scale from humble, thigh-high Tudi Gong (Lord of the Soil and the Ground) shrines to sprawling complexes with landscaped gardens, tunnels, and several multi-level buildings. For the uninitiated, it can sometimes be daunting to step over that threshold into a temple's smoky interior, and gaining an understanding of Taiwan's unique blend of Daoism and Buddhism wrapped up with a side serving of Confucianism can seem like a tall order. But don't be deterred. Places of worship here are generally welcoming of guests, and paying one a visit can be a rewarding experience for even the most devout of atheists.

More than just an excuse to marvel at an exquisitely decorated building, a trip to a temple can offer a window into the complex layers of Taiwanese culture and history. Taipei landmarks like

Longshan Temple or **Xingtian Temple** have long and colorful stories dating back to Taiwan's Qing imperial era. Such larger establishments often have a symbiotic relationship with their host communities, and over the years their presence has actively molded the city or town around them. It's no coincidence that some of these grand buildings occupy space in busy commercial districts and/or beside night markets. But far from being relics, temples remain a contemporary concern – with upwards of 80% of Taiwan's population reported to subscribe to some form of religious belief, you will encounter folks from all walks of life paying a visit to the gods.

To help visitors get the most out of their experience, several of the better-known temples offer guided tours (some in English). These can be a superb way to gain insights that might otherwise evade the casual observer. One of these tours is available at Taipei Xiahai City God Temple.

Visiting Taipei Xiahai City God Temple

Our guide, **Titan Wu**, approaches us on the small plaza in front of the temple. He has just given a tour of the district to a school group. Wu has been introducing the area to visitors for over a decade, and is adept at making the intricacies of the temple accessible to people of different ages and nationalities.

Starting where he kicks off all his tours, we approach the **golden City God statue** seated just outside the central doors of the temple (the gods are on call 24/7, even when the temple is closed). As the temple's titular deity, says Titan, the City God is akin to a mayor in terms of his role within the celestial bureaucracy. The guide encourages me to touch the statue's gilded robes, and I feel a bit uncomfortable. It seems transgressive. "The god is used to it," Titan reassures me, adding that in times past when access to quality nutrition was limited, believers would rub slivers of gold leaf onto this idol in the hope that the god would assist in curing ailments.

Although this practice has since been abandoned, contemporary worshippers retain a pragmatic relationship with the heavens. Husband has a wandering eye? Take this charm! Big exam coming up? Leave your registration form with us, we'll see to it. All the struggles of daily life have their heavenly fixers, and devotees seek out whichever god is best suited to their needs. An example of this is the beloved **Yue Lao**, oft rendered in English as Old Man Under the Moon, the matchmaker god. Since he arrived at the temple half a century ago, Yue Lao is believed to have woven together the lives of countless singles, and in doing so garnered a loyal following. An altar frequently laden with engagement cookies from those he has brought true love to bears testament to his success.

There's such a myriad of deities here that you could lose a whole day just getting superficially acquainted with them. Among them, **Shennong**, a mythological ruler of ancient China venerated for his understanding of agriculture and medicinal plants, and beside him **Leizu**, a similarly legendary figure credited with being the first silk weaver. Both are of special significance to the Dadaocheng area, since traditional medicine and textile merchants have a strong presence in this community. And tucked away in an adjoining room you'll find a defiant-looking **Liao Tian-ding**. Liao, a Japanese-era dissident (the Japanese ruled Taiwan 1895-1945; Liao was Taiwan's answer to Robin Hood), is reputed to have stashed his ill-gotten gains in the temple before redistributing them to the needy.

When the tour concludes I feel we've barely scratched the surface, but Titan has a parting gift. He hands each of us lucky amulets, instructing us to "activate" them in the temple censer's incense-heavy air – a little something to ensure safe journeys.

TAIPEI XIAHAI CITY GOD TEMPLE (台北霞海城隍廟)

☎ (02) 2558-0346

📍 No. 61, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist., Taipei City
(台北市大同區迪化街一段 61 號)

🕒 6:16am ~ 7:47pm open all year round

🌐 www.tpecitygod.org



GETTING IN TOUCH

Touching the golden statue of the City God is allowed, assures the friendly and knowledgeable temple guide



Offerings made to thank Yue Lao for a successful marriage

Temple Guide

Titan Wu



Exploring Dadaocheng

Taipei Xiahai City God Temple sits towards the southern end of **Dihua Street**. Famed for being home to Taipei's biggest Lunar New Year traditional-goods market, the original prosperity of the street and surrounding district owed much to the proximity of **Dadaocheng Wharf**. Once a vital stop on trading routes between Wanhua, the port town of Tamsui on the north coast, and beyond, the wharf has, in more recent times, been transformed into a popular place for people to exercise, relax, and watch the sunset over drinks and snacks.

Strolling around Dadaocheng's backstreets reveals doorways fringed with sprigs of drying flowers here and storefronts piled high with dried goods there, and you could be forgiven for thinking that this pocket of Taipei has remained peacefully impervious to the winds of change. But it nearly didn't. In the 1980s, as Titan Wu explained to us, plans were afoot to demolish the narrow streets – an investor even proposed moving the whole of Dihua Street brick-by-brick to Japan. Thankfully this fate was escaped when local academics stepped in to argue that this part of Taipei was a cultural asset. The ensuing resurgence of interest in local heritage has sparked a proliferation of new cultural-creative ventures opening in historic buildings.

One such enterprise is **ASW Teahouse**. Occupying a Japanese colonial-era pharmacy (the first Western-style medicine dispensary in Taiwan), this elegantly restored space now has a teahouse operation offering an extensive menu; after dark it moonlights as **Watson Bar**, selling up-market tea-based cocktails. But don't get the impression that it's all hipster hangouts. Although the recent upswell of love for local history has paved the way for investors to breathe new life into these old buildings, there remains an authentic core to the district. For proof, just head to the three-story **Yongle Market**, where you'll find Taipei's largest collection of traditional-style textile vendors, with a lively wet market on the first level, fabric shops on the second, and fabric sellers/tailors on the third. The eighth and ninth floors are home to the **Dadaocheng Theater**, which specializes in traditional stage-arts performances.

With a visit to Dadaocheng, whether you're seeking superior silks, a thirst-slaking brew or aperitif, or even a soulmate, you might just find what you're looking for. 🍵

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

City God 城隍
Dadaocheng 大稻埕
Dadaocheng Theater 大稻埕戲院
Dadaocheng Wharf 大稻埕碼頭
Dihua Street 迪化街
Leizu 嫫祖
Liao Tian-ding 廖添丁
Longshan Temple 龍山寺
Shennong 神農
Titan Wu 吳孟寰
Tudi Gong 土地公
Xingtian Temple 行天宮
Yongle Market 永樂市場
Yue Lao 月下老人



Yongle Market on Dihua Street



Dadaocheng Wharf



ASW Teahouse



Souvenir shop

Shop selling all kinds of dried foodstuffs



HOTEL Taipei

THE GRAND HOTEL 台北圓山大飯店

Situated on Mt. Jiantan in Taipei, the Grand Hotel is a 14-story palace-style building constructed in 1970. There are two underground tunnels, under its east wing and west wing, respectively, which were designed as emergency escape routes for President Chiang Kai-shek. After opening the West Tunnel earlier, receiving enthusiastic response by visitors, now, the 50-year-old East Tunnel has been opened to the public as well. It has a length of 67 meters with a curvy design meant to prevent chasing soldiers from shooting at the fleeing parties, and walls with an uneven surface to enhance sound absorption. Since only a limited number of visitors can be accommodated, the East Tunnel is only open to guests who come on corporate trips, attend state banquets, or opt for a special East Tunnel Room Package.



Guided-tour times:
9:30am, 10:30am, 11am, 2:30pm, and 4pm
Guided-tour hotline:
(02) 2886-1818 ext. 1818 [guided-tour department]



HOTEL Yilan

Fusen Satoyama 馥森里山

- Taiwan's Northeast Coast is a wonderland of ecological and artistic treasures. Enjoy grand vistas of the ocean with Turtle Island in clear sight. Magnificent views and the vibrating sounds of gongs and drums will cleanse your soul.
- Go on a guided tour exploring the rich ecological environment with blue magpies flying high, Reeves's muntjacs howling, and civets appearing mysteriously.
- Satoyama Palate Western Restaurant offers menu-free French-cuisine dishes and Italian-cuisine set meals, while Satoyama Essence Chinese Restaurant uses only the best local ingredients. Fusen Satoyama is a natural-style hotel suitable for day trips, afternoon tea, and two-day vacations. Individual guests and groups are welcome to make reservations.



No. 205, Gengxin Rd., Toucheng Township, Yilan County
宜蘭縣頭城鎮更新路 205 號
Tel: (03) 9772168
Reservation hotline: (02) 2577-1589
www.volandosatoyama.com



FOOD Taipei

CHIOU HWA Restaurant 九華樓

The signature dish of CHIOU HWA is "Roasted Peking Duck." The secret to this delicacy is the selection of fat ducks with tender meat, mainly raised in Yilan. The preparation begins with filling the duck with spices and seasonings, such as ginger, scallion, and star anise. The duck is then stitched up, blanched to tighten the skin, colored with maltose and red vinegar, and hung to dry for a night. Before it is removed from the oven, the duck is slowly and evenly basted to make it translucent and lustrous. The pancakes complement the crispy duck skin perfectly while the pickled ginger inside makes the taste refreshing.



No. 369, Linsen N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist., Taipei City
(台北市林森北路 369 號)
Tel: +886-2-7721-6619 Fax: +886-2-2581-5811
www.gloriahotel.com

BUY Taipei

TenRen's Tea 天仁茗茶

TenRen's Tea provides a friendly environment where you can enjoy delicious food, drink excellent tea, and buy special souvenirs. Taste natural and healthful tea cuisine dishes, and try and buy tea produced in Taiwan.

cha FOR TEA ToGo offers a wide variety of stunningly flavorful tea drinks. Apart from bubble tea ("pearl milk tea"), a must-drink when visiting Taiwan, you also have to try the 913 King's Tea, which is only available at cha FOR TEA ToGo. In addition to the pleasant flavor of high-mountain Oolong tea, you can also experience the sweet after taste of ginseng.



TenRen's Tea Taipei - Ximen Branch (天仁茗茶台北 - 西門店)
Add: No. 76, Xining S. Rd., Taipei City (台北市西寧南路 76 號)
Tel: +886-2-2361-1986
Hours: 10:00~21:30



BUY Yunlin

Jinhu Recreational Farm Development Association 金湖休閒農業發展協會

Kouhu Township is an important source for food ingredients in Taiwan. Natural farming methods are used to allow the revitalization of the earth. You can visit the farm areas to see the cultivation methods and eat food without concerns. There is also processing of mullet roe, breeding of eel, production of clams etc.

The Jinhu Recreational Farm Development Association, winner of the Bronze Medal in the Second Golden Village Competition held by the Council of Agriculture, develops local characteristics and connects attractions along the Southwest Coast tourism route. It provides tour guide services, eco-themed tours, flavorful meals and afternoon tea, and sells souvenirs created by local farmers and fishermen. Enjoy local cuisine and explore the beautiful scenery!



Jinhu Recreational Farm Development Association, Kouhu Township, Yunlin County
(雲林縣口湖鄉金湖休閒農業發展協會)
Tel: (05) 790-6601 E-mail: susun.104@yahoo.com.tw
www.kankujen.com

FOOD Taipei

Hot Pot TAKAO1972 打狗霸

From the stock to the ingredients to the spices, everything is carefully selected and strictly controlled.

In addition to Japanese style, hot and spicy, stone hot pot, and sukiyaki, there are also limited soup bases that are introduced according to the season. Takao 1972 is the first restaurant to combine hot pot dining with Japanese cuisine. In addition to the hot-pot selections, the restaurant serves freshly made Japanese dishes, including black tuna sashimi, temaki, and sushi. Diners can enjoy richer and more diversified choices.



Midtown Branch (德立莊店)
Tel: (02) 2311-1577
Add: No. 110, Yanping S. Rd.,
Zhongzheng Dist., Taipei City
(台北市中正區延平南路 110 號)

Kunming Branch (昆明店)
Tel: (02) 2331-3677
Add: No. 46, Kunming St.,
Wanhua Dist., Taipei City
(台北市萬華區昆明街 46 號)



巴黎 PARIS

基隆 KEELUNG

上海 SHANGHAI

台北 TAIPEI

礁溪 JIAOSI

台中 TAICHUNG

曼谷 BANGKOK

嘉義 CHIAYI

台南 TAINAN

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