

Travel in

TAIWAN

2025
MAR & APR

No. 128

EXPERT TALK

CREATIVE BEER BREWING

GOOD FOOD

MICHELIN-RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

CITY WALKS

CHANGHUA CITY

Miaoli

Exploring Nanzhuang and Shitan Townships
Recreational Farms in Zhuolan Township
Themed Tours in Hakka Country



交通部觀光署
Tourism Administration, MOTC

Issuu



Website



Taipei, a City Passionate about Sports

Get Ready for the 2025 Professional Baseball Season!

Baseball reigns supreme in Taipei and across Taiwan. *Team Taiwan's* victory in the WBSC Premier12 tournament last year solidified Taiwan's status as a baseball powerhouse. Fittingly, some of those games were held at the new, state-of-the-art Taipei Dome. This 40,000-seat arena is a premier venue for baseball and other events, including games of the Chinese Professional Baseball League (CPBL). In 2024, the dome hosted 38 CPBL regular-season games, attracting nearly 800,000 fans – an average of about 20,000 per game.

Taipei is also a great city for extreme sports like skateboarding, rock climbing, and BMX. The Taipei Extreme

Sports Training Center in Nangang has excellent facilities, including Taiwan's largest half-pipe, plus quarter pipes, rails, ramps, a foam pit, and other features. For indoor rock climbing, the comprehensive facilities at Double 8 Dadaocheng and Y17 stand out.

During the upcoming 2025 World Masters Games, the Taipei Dome, and also Tianmu Baseball Stadium, will host international amateur baseball competitions. 2025 promises to be a big year for sports!

Discover more about Taipei's vibrant sports culture in the Spring 2025 edition of TAIPEI Quarterly (see link below)!



TAIPEI
Magazine

TAIPEI is a quarterly English magazine published by the Taipei City Government, presenting foreign residents and overseas tourists with useful information on major events, tourist attractions, fine-food options, history, and cultural customs and practices.

• • •
Online reading:
www.travel.taipei/en/pictorial/list



Publisher's Note

Dear Traveler,

Spring, glorious spring! The strengthening sun is out with a smile, waiting to provide you with embracing warmth during your Taiwan travels from the seaside to the high peaks, and wherever you venture, the flowers and butterflies are out in strength to provide you with dancing welcomes. What special places is *Travel in Taiwan* taking you to this issue, you ask?

The destination focus in our feature articles is Miaoli, an undulatingly hilly county in the island's northwest. Our main feature brings you to the "gentle loveliness" of Shitan and Nanzhuang townships, a quiet domain of "storied trails, seasonal blossoms, fruit orchards, hot springs, and cultural cross-pollination between its majority Han and minority Hakka and indigenous residents."

Next up is a "pick-your-own Miaoli adventure" exploring Zhuolan Township's leisure agriculture attractions; many small-scale farm operations here supplement their income with agritourism experience activities. Then it's a concentrated probe into Miaoli's strong and fascinating Hakka character in the contiguous southwest townships of Tongluo, Sanyi, and Yuanli, at such cultural windows as a massive dedicated Hakka culture museum, tea farm/factory, wood-sculpture museum, and Taiwan's sole brick-and-tile tourist factory.

In our regular *City Walks* file we're your host for walkabout touring in the medium-sized city of Changhua, in the island's middle, taking in its most renowned attractions. The Roundhouse Railway Park showcases how the railway sector has been key to the city's history, and the Mt. Bagua Great Buddha Scenic Area, which has a splendid treetop skywalk, is home to a famed giant Buddha statue that has become the city's most iconic emblem.

In our *Good Food* and *Expert Talk* sections, you're in the far north's big and busy Taipei/New Taipei City conurbation, the island's main gateway for international travelers. In the former, tour four Taipei Michelin Bib Gourmand and Green Star restaurants serving up "everything from innovative fusion to creative plating and environmental sustainability." In the latter, dive into the blooming ferment of the local craft beer scene with a visit to New Taipei City's Ugly Half Beer, where the founders combine international brewing craftsmanship with iconic local ingredients and cultural references to produce such unique Taiwanese creations as Guava Gose and TOASTea.

A hearty welcome to you in this newborn Year of the Snake – enjoy your stay with us!

TAIWAN TOURISM ADMINISTRATION
MOTC, R.O.C.

TAIWAN
WAVES OF WONDER

Travel in
TAIWAN



Liyutan Reservoir
(photo by Ray Chang)

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Taiwan Tourism Administration

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Ministry of Transportation and Communications

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台灣觀光雙月刊
Travel in Taiwan
The official bimonthly English magazine of the
Taiwan Tourism Administration (Advertisement)
MARCH/APRIL, 2025
Tourism Administration, MOTC
First published Jan./Feb. 2004
ISSN: 18177964 GPN: 2009305475
Price: NTS200

中華郵政台北雜字第1286號執照登記為雜誌交寄
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MAGAZINE IS SOLD AT:
1. Wu-Nan Culture Plaza, No. 6, Zhongshan Rd., Central
Dist., Taichung City 40043 886-4-2226-0330
<http://www.wunanbooks.com.tw/>
2. National Bookstore, 1F., No. 209, Songjiang Rd.,
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1 ©Lan-Yang Agricultural Development Foundation



2 ©Miaoli County Govt.



1 ©Lan-Yang Agricultural Development Foundation



3

Late-Spring & Early-Summer Fun

Happenings and Events in Taiwan

1 YILAN COUNTY Mar 30 – May 12

YILAN GREEN EXPO
宜蘭綠色博覽會

The annual Yilan Green Expo is a lively event combining education and entertainment. Held at the Wulaokeng Scenic Area in Suao Township, Yilan County, the expo offers a diverse array of activities, from thrilling rides and engaging games to close-up farm animal encounters and entertaining stage performances. It's a fantastic event designed for the whole family.

igreen.ilantravel.com.tw (Chinese)

2 MIAOLI COUNTY Mar 1 – Apr 30

NANZHUANG FLOWER FESTIVAL
南庄花卉節

First held by the administration of the Tri-Mountain National Scenic Area in 2018, the annual Nanzhuang Flower Festival showcases a wide variety of blooming beauties alongside landscape art, Hakka and indigenous cultural elements, local cuisine, and musical entertainment. Floral displays can be found in the main settlement of Nanzhuang at popular spots like Osmanthus Alley, the Nanzhuang Old Post Office, and the Nanzhuang Visitor Center, as well as at other locations in the township (see page 16 for more on Nanzhuang).

miaolitravel.net, www.trimt-nsa.gov.tw

3 KAOHSIUNG CITY Mar 28 – Apr 5

KAOHSIUNG NEIMEN SONG JIANG BATTLE RITUAL
高雄內門宋江陣

This annual event in Kaohsiung's rural Neimen District is a fascinating blend of traditional religious rituals and thrilling martial arts competitions. Hosted by one of the three main local temples, it features a grand banquet and lively evening stage performances leading up to the main attraction: the battle array showcase. Martial arts troupes from across Taiwan compete, striving to outshine their rivals with acrobatic feats, innovative choreography, and striking costumes and makeup.

www.facebook.com/kaohsiungwhoa

4 TAOYUAN CITY Apr 19

LONGGANG RICE NOODLE FESTIVAL
龍岡米干節

This festival highlights a lesser-known aspect of Taoyuan City's diverse cultural makeup: the members of minority groups who migrated to Taiwan from the Golden Triangle (Yunnan, Thailand, and Myanmar) in the late 1940s and settled in the Longgang area of Zhongli District. Largely belonging to the Muslim Hui minority, these immigrants brought their unique cultural traditions and cuisine, which are highlighted during this annual celebration.

travel.tycg.gov.tw/en

5 PINGTUNG COUNTY Apr-May

PINGTUNG BLUEFIN TUNA CULTURAL FESTIVAL
屏東黑鯧魚文化觀光季

Now in its 25th season, the Pingtung Bluefin Tuna Cultural Festival introduces the unique fishing culture, traditions, and cuisine of Donggang, a fishing port in Pingtung County. Visitors flock to Donggang to savor its “three culinary treasures” – nutritious bluefin tuna, calcium-rich sakura shrimp, and flavorful smoked and grilled oil fish roe – while enjoying a rich cultural program.

www.i-pingtung.com/en

6 TAIPEI CITY Mar 27-31

TAIPEI FASHION WEEK
臺北時裝週

Highly anticipated by Taiwan's fashion scene, Taipei Fashion Week ranks among Asia's four major fashion weeks, alongside Tokyo, Seoul, and Shanghai. A collaborative effort of the Taipei City Government Department of Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, it presents Taiwan's unique design talent and cultural heritage through fashion.

tpfw.com



4 ©Taoyuan City Govt.



©Ministry of Culture



5 ©Pingtung County Govt.



©Ministry of Culture

Tofu, Tea, and Mountains of Trees

Three Recommended Day Trips South/Southeast of Taipei City

TEXT & PHOTOS | VISION

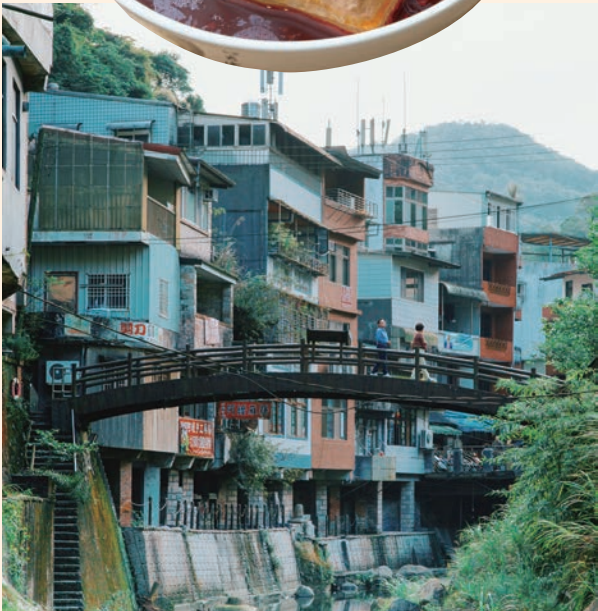
Situated in a basin, Taipei City is surrounded by lush green mountains, naturally curbing urban expansion outward. While this may pose challenges for city planners, it's a major boon for those seeking respite from the city and a quick escape into nature. Below are three recommended destinations for exploring the areas south and southeast of the city.



Heritage building on Shenkeng Old Street



Spicy stinky tofu



Riverside houses in Shiding

Shenkeng and Shiding Districts

A short bus ride from MRT Muzha Station brings you to **Shenkeng Old Street**, renowned for its tofu eateries. Running parallel to Route 106, the main road through Shenkeng District, the 300m-long Old Street is lined with beautifully restored historic red-brick buildings, the result of a successful 2012 revitalization project. Weekends and holidays see the street teeming with visitors, most drawn to the diverse array of tofu delicacies, including the pungent stinky tofu, a unique culinary experience for foreign tourists. You'll also find shops offering a variety of refreshments, such as ice cream, and gift shops showcasing local handicrafts.

Shiding Old Street, located about 5km southeast of Shenkeng Old Street, offers a more tranquil experience. Nestled amidst lush mountains, it retains the charm of a peaceful village. For an invigorating scenic stroll to Shiding Old Street, consider disembarking at the Shuangxikou bus stop and following the **Wai'an Historic Trail** south along the Shiding River, which runs through the settlement. Shiding highlights include charming old residences – such as the **100-Year Stone House** – many situated directly beside the river and traditional shops selling tofu, mochi, tea leaf, and other local delicacies.

Getting there: For Shenkeng Old Street, take bus no. 660, 666, or 795 (Taiwan Tourist Shuttle Muzha Pingxi Route) from MRT Muzha Station on the Wenhu (Brown) Line; for Shiding Old Street, take bus no. 666



Yinhedong Waterfall

Xindian and Pinglin Districts

Before venturing southeast from MRT Xindian Station (south in our Wulai District section, below), explore nearby **Bitan**, a scenic lake formed by a weir on the Xindian River. Enjoy the picturesque views from the historic 187m-long **Bitan Suspension Bridge** (built in 1937) or take a relaxing swan boat ride on the lake's calm waters.

Leaving Bitan behind, a short bus ride along Highway 9 takes you to the **Yinhedong** (Yinhe Cave) bus stop. From there, follow Yinhe Road to the Yinhedong trailhead (approximately 1km). The short but steep and often slippery trail leads to the small cave, dramatically situated behind a silky waterfall. Inside the cave, you'll find a small shrine. From the waterfall, the trail continues uphill, connecting to Taipei City's Maokong area, famous for its tea gardens and tea houses.

Further along the highway, you'll approach the **Feicui Reservoir**, the primary source of drinking water for Taipei City. Sometimes compared to Thousand Island Lake in China's Zhejiang Province, the reservoir rewards visitors with breathtaking views, especially from lookout points such as the **Crocodile Island Viewing Platform**.

Continue your journey by bus to the **Pinglin Old Street** area. Pinglin District is renowned as a significant tea-producing region. Learn all about its tea industry at the **Pinglin Tea Museum**. Along Pinglin's short but charming Old Street, you'll find interesting shops and restaurants. Also, consider a leisurely walk or bike ride along the village's two rivers and by some of Pinglin's picturesque tea gardens.

Getting there: From MRT Xindian Station, take bus GR12, which follows Highway 9, the Beiyi (Taipei-Yilan) Highway, to Pinglin. To get to the Crocodile Island Viewing Platform, get off at the Xiaogetou bus stop and walk for about 1.8km downhill.



Gift items sold inside the Wulai Atayal Museum



Wulai cable car

Wulai District

Directly south on Highway 9A, Wulai is the closest village to Taipei City with a significant indigenous population (Atayal tribe). It has long been a popular day-trip destination, attracting visitors with its rich indigenous culture and scenic landscape. To learn more about the Atayal people, visit the **Wulai Atayal Museum** located on **Wulai Old Street**. On the Old Street, you can also savor traditional indigenous delicacies.

Continuing south in Wulai, you'll reach the station of the **Wulai Scenic Train**, a charming mini-train that takes you to Wulai's waterfall area (1.5km). The majestic 80m-high **Wulai Falls** is a sight to behold and a photographer's dream. In this area, you can also enjoy indigenous cultural performances and take a scenic cable-car ride to a small park above the falls for breathtaking panoramic views.

Getting there: Wulai is served by bus no. 849, which starts at MRT NTU Hospital Station in Taipei City and can also be boarded at several MRT stations along its route, including Gongguan, Dapinglin, and Xindian. 📍

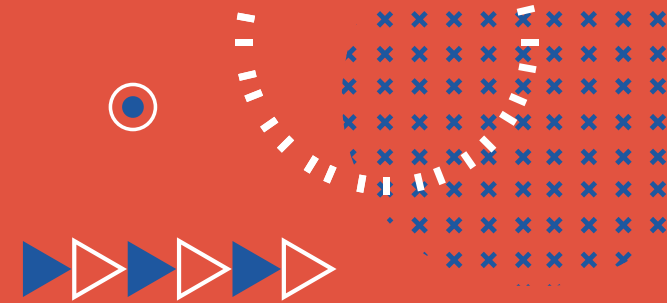
📍 ENGLISH AND CHINESE

100-Year Stone House | 百年石頭屋
Atayal tribe | 泰雅族
Bitan (Suspension Bridge) | 碧潭 (吊橋)
Crocodile Island Viewing Platform | 鱷魚島觀景平台
Feicui Reservoir | 翡翠水庫
Maokong | 貓空
Pinglin Tea Museum | 坪林茶業博物館
Shenkeng | 深坑
Shiding (River) | 石碇 (溪)
Shuangxikou | 雙溪口

Thousand-Island Lake | 千島湖
Wai'an Historic Trail | 外按古道
Wulai Atayal Museum | 烏來泰雅民族博物館
Wulai Falls | 烏來瀑布
Wulai Old Street | 烏來老街
Wulai Scenic Train | 烏來觀光台車
Wutu River | 烏塗溪
Xiaogetou | 小格頭
Xindian River | 新店溪
Yinhe Cave | 銀河洞

Culture & Art

Concerts, Theater, Exhibitions,
Festivals, Shows



1 Exhibition

THOMAS DEMAND – THE STUTTER OF HISTORY

托瑪斯·德曼：歷史的結舌

Jan 18 – May 11
Taipei Fine Arts Museum
[Taipei City]

This is the first solo exhibition in Taiwan of works by German conceptual artist Thomas Demand. Born in Munich in 1964, and based in Berlin and Los Angeles, Demand is known for his large-scale photographic and video creations. Often drawing on reportage of historical or social events for his art, Demand meticulously recreates real-world scenes as paper models before photographing them. The exhibition features large-scale photographs, wallpaper installations, and video works, highlighting Demand's exploration of the complex relationship between photographic images and reality.

www.tfam.museum

2 Music/Dance

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE: SIBYL

威廉·肯特里奇《女先知》

Apr 11-13
Taipei Performing Arts Center
[Taipei City]

William Kentridge's large-scale solo exhibition at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (2024) drew acclaim for its diverse media and poetic explorations of history. Among the featured works, the visually compelling music and dance performance *Sibyl* – presented through objects and images in the exhibition – now takes the stage at the Taipei Performing Arts Center. Integrating the artist's paintings, writings, and videos, this captivating performance reimagines ancient myth in a contemporary context, where AI and algorithms act as modern-day oracles, predicting everything from lifespans and political leanings to loan approvals.

tpac.org.taipei

3 Exhibition

KUSAMA YAYOI 1951-2005 FROM W COLLECTION AND MORE

草間彌生的軌跡與奇跡

Until May 4
Museum of National Taipei University of Education
[Taipei City]

Japanese artist Kusama Yayoi (b. 1929) is a leading figure in contemporary art, renowned for her vibrant and immersive works. Spanning painting, sculpture, performance, and installation, her diverse practice is showcased in this exhibition of creations from 1951 to 2005. Featuring 70 works, including *Dots Obsession*, the exhibition invites visitors into Kusama's world of infinite dots, exploring her artistic journey and celebrating the transformative power of art.

montue.ntue.edu.tw

4 Festival

NTT ARTS NOVA

Mar 7 – Jun 8

This year's NTT Arts NOVA program is full of exciting stage performances blending dance, music, and cutting-edge audio-visual technology. Highlights include *Blur*, a mixed-reality theater experience from an international collaboration between Riverbed Theatre (Taiwan), PHI Studio (Canada), and Onassis Culture (Greece); *Deep Lake Man*, a music and theater performance about a fisherman's friendship with a lake ghost; Akram Khan's choreography of the Romantic ballet masterpiece *Giselle*; and the highly entertaining opera-circus show *Slam* by Robert Lepage, Ex Machina, and FLIP Fabrique.

www.npac-ntt.org/ArtsNova

5 Dance

WANT TO DANCE FESTIVAL

艋舺國際舞蹈節

Apr 11-13
Wan Theater (main venue)
[Taipei City]

The Want to Dance Festival, featuring performances in locations around Taipei's Wanhua District, celebrates diversity by bringing together people from various backgrounds. It showcases the district's unique cultural vitality, fostering a dynamic collision of social trends and contemporary creativity. Artists from Taiwan and abroad (Greece, Germany, Spain, and Lithuania) share their stories, providing audiences with a rich experience and strengthening the community's connection to the arts. Beyond the live performances, the festival hosts opening/closing events, workshops, and a trade market.

www.wantodancefestival.com

6 Peking Opera

JING WEI: FEATHERS AGAINST THE TIDES

國光劇團 X 翹舞製作《精衛》

Apr 26-27
Taiwan Traditional Theatre Center
[Taipei City]

To celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2025, the GuoGuang Opera Company presents a brand-new production. Written by artistic director and playwright Anqi Wang, this work breaks novel ground for the company, fusing traditional Chinese opera with contemporary dance. Directed by Tai Chun-fang in collaboration with the internationally acclaimed Hung Dance contemporary dance troupe, this innovative, cross-disciplinary performance explores the controversial figure of Jing Wei, shrouded in historical mystery.

tttc.ncfta.gov.tw

Wrapped in a Rural Embrace

Reveling in the Gentle Loveliness of Miaoli's Shitan and Nanzhuang Townships

TEXT | AMI BARNES PHOTOS | RAY CHANG

Bounded by Hsinchu County on the north, Taichung on the south, the Taiwan Strait to the west, and the towering central mountains on the east, Miaoli is a quiet, primarily rural county. Home to storied trails, seasonal blossoms, fruit orchards, hot springs, and cultural cross-pollination between its majority Han and minority Hakka and indigenous residents, even at its most urban it feels a far cry from the clamor of Taiwan's big modern cities — and that's exactly why you should visit.

Despite the attractions mentioned above, Miaoli usually flies under the tourism radar. Taken individually, its various draws seem pleasant, albeit something of a hard sell for travelers short on time. However, when considered cumulatively, they create an ideal base for slow travel — less whistle-stop highlights touring, more marinating in the landscape, allowing its cuisine to nourish, its culture to delight, and its trails to unfold beneath your feet. Indeed, the region has so much to offer for visitors who want to sink into their surroundings that you'll soon find yourself needing to narrow down the options. Shitan and Nanzhuang — the two townships being spotlighted here — present more than enough of Miaoli's unhurried loveliness to capture your attention.

Xiangtian Lake in Nanzhuang Township

Shitan Township

Raknus Selu Trail

Nothing epitomizes slow travel more than making your way from place to place on foot, as is the goal for those taking on the Raknus Selu Trail. Snaking its way down from rural Taoyuan, through Hsinchu, Miaoli, and over the border into Taichung, this long-distance walking route is one of three national greenways threading through Taiwan’s verdant hills. The Raknus Selu Trail traverses land home to both Hakka and two of Taiwan’s 16 officially recognized indigenous groups, the Saisiyat and the Atayal, and its name is drawn from this blend of cultures. “Raknus” is the Atayal name for camphor trees (once found in abundance along the way), while “Selu” means “small roads” in Hakka, and much like the name, the route itself is a patchwork stitched together from historic trails, farm tracks, rural backroads, and stops in wayside towns.

With the main trail coming in at around 220km, a seasoned thru-hiker might expect to complete the route in a little over a week, but in reality, it deserves about a fortnight. This trail has been conceived as a cultural journey as much as a physical feat, so to crack through a crushing 30km a day would entirely miss the point. This is something I can speak to from intimate personal experience, since I’ve recently completed a hike of the entire route broken up into several 2- or 3-day sections, falling totally in love with the region’s mellow appeal along the way.

Mingfeng Ancient Trail



Raknus Selu Trail marker



Xinfeng Suspension Bridge

For those seeking a shorter taste of the trail, several sections have been singled out as being enjoyable and especially representative of the region’s scenery, one of which is the **Mingfeng Ancient Trail**. In its original iteration, this section was used by hunters from the Saisiyat tribe before later becoming a trading route between the Shitan and Touwu areas. These days the path is popular with weekend hikers, and since 2019 it has also shouldered a diplomatic role after becoming the first internationally twinned trail in Taiwan, in a sister-trail relationship formed with the Jeju Olle Trail in South Korea.

The walk starts close to **Shitan Yimin Temple** in Xindian Village, not far from Shitan Xindian Old Street (see next page). From the temple’s carpark head to Xindian Creek, and you’ll soon find yourself standing in front of the **Xinfeng Suspension Bridge**. To one side, you can find one of the trail’s 22 passport stamps in the backyard of the **Little Blue House**, a community classroom that doubles as one of the Raknus Selu’s six workstations. (The second-generation passports have just been published and can be purchased online at www.tmitrail.org.tw/publication/2015.)

After crossing the bridge, yellow Raknus Selu signage leads you through an oil-seed camellia orchard before heading uphill into a lively mixed forest. Mature camphor trees and whispering bamboo preside over a lush understory full of ferns, and from April to May each year the old stone steps of the trail are carpeted with white tung flowers and tiny yellow acacia pom poms.

Along the route, there are a few points where walkers can pause to catch their breath and enjoy the scenery. The most interesting of these is **Lovers’ Valley**. Previously a boundary between indigenous and Han peoples’ lands, it saw occasional bloody scuffles, but standing in the shady hollow now, you’d never guess it was the site of such unrest. The new name was selected in part to erase the memory of this painful history, and also because two small creeks merge here like lovers coming together. Further up, the trail eventually brings you to **Yundong Temple**, where you can fill up your water bottle and greet the resident gods before heading back down the same way.



Lovers' Valley



Raknus Selu Trail Passport



New pavilion along the trail

Xindian Village

Seen on a map, Shitan Township forms a lopsided skinny rectangle encompassing land on both sides of north-south Provincial Highway 3. Xindian Village sits at the center, a sleepy settlement home to **Shitan Xindian Old Street** and a population just shy of 1,000. You should get some sense of the kind of place it is when I say that one of the village’s premier sightseeing spots is the **Century-Old Longan Tree**, which once provided shade to Dr. George Leslie Mackay as he wielded his dental forceps.

Mackay was a Canadian Presbyterian missionary, doctor, and beloved adopted son of Taiwan who arrived on the island in 1871, married a local, and gained proficiency in Mandarin and Hokkien. He became known for walking from town to town pulling teeth and proselytizing, and in one diary entry, Mackay noted that between them, he and his local trainees regularly extracted more than 100 teeth within an hour of setting up an open-air treatment station. Mackay’s longan can be found up a painted side lane, tucked into the courtyard of a private residence. Beside it, a board bears an age-faded photo of the bearded, pith-helmeted practitioner treating a patient on one of his travels through the Taiwanese countryside.

Wandering up its little side lanes is the best way to explore Xindian Village, and there’s no need to worry about getting lost – there are only about ten streets. On a recent *Travel in Taiwan* exploratory visit, near Mackay’s tree we came across the stream-fed **Xindian Village Clothes Washing Pool**, where villagers used to gather to wash clothes and have a good gossip. Previously common throughout Taiwan, the arrival of modern washing machines rendered these village hubs obsolete, but a few remain in active use, especially in areas where there are large populations of the famously hardy and frugal Hakka folk.

Another road leads to the village’s religious sites. Temples dedicated to Tudi Gong – God of the Land – are commonly seen in Taiwan, but in Hakka areas, this deity goes by the name Bo Gong, and Xindian has two such places of worship. The one at the northern end of the Old Street is named **Pig Skin Bo Gong Temple** (referencing a Japanese leather-tanning station set up here during World War II), while the second sits a little further back, shaded by a towering Formosan sweetgum. Less than 100m up the street is the **Shitan Presbyterian Church**. The current structure dates back to the late 1990s, but the village’s congregation was established over 150 years ago by Dr. Mackay.



One of many murals in Xindian Village



Local-produce shop of the Shitan Farmers' Association

Another 100m will take you to **Shinong Xiaopu**, a shop run by the local farmers’ association in a converted rice mill. The mill equipment has been preserved in situ, and colorful illustrations detail the rice-milling process, while the adjacent room is given over to shelves full of local produce. For bold snackers, there are many potential souvenirs: preserved peppers, pickled cucumbers, fermented bamboo shoots, sour-plum candy, and freeze-dried mushrooms. If you need something more substantial, however, **Shianshan Shiantsau** is a better bet. This restaurant is located on the Old Street, and its menu centers around a single ingredient: *xiancao* or mesona – a mint relative often featured in herbal drinks and sweets. In addition to the standard teas and grass jelly desserts, Shianshan Shiantsau has found ways to incorporate mesona into a whole range of Hakka-inspired fare. The chewy flat rice noodles and pork dumplings – both tinted ashy-brown by the herb – mesona-infused chicken soup, and deep-fried cubes of grass jelly (the restaurant’s signature dish) are bound to satisfy even the hungriest customer.



Shianshan Shiantsau restaurant



Deep-fried xiancao



Dessert with xiancao, adzuki beans, and other goodies

- SHINONG XIAOPU (獅農小舖)**
☎ (03) 793-1340
📍 No. 125, Neighborhood 11, Xindian Village, Shitan Township, Miaoli County
(苗栗縣獅潭鄉新店村 11 鄰 125 號)
🕒 Tue-Fri 8am-4:30pm; Sat-Sun 9am-4:30pm
🌐 shitan.naffic.org.tw (Shitan Farmers' Association; Chinese)
- SHIANSHAN SHIANTS AU (仙山仙草)**
☎ (03) 793-2318
📍 No. 62, Xindian Village, Shitan Township, Miaoli County
(苗栗縣獅潭鄉新店村 62 號)
📘 facebook.com/shianshan.shiantsau

Two trailheads offer access to the waterside path. One is located by Shangzhuang bus stop, at the north end of the village – it has a designated car park and (on weekends) a few food vendors. The other can be found next to Qixing Temple, and although there is no car park, roadside parking is available. Most people choose to do a there-and-back walk from the north trailhead, but you could easily turn it into a loop by walking back up (or down the road), and whichever option you choose, it's unlikely to take longer than 90 minutes.

Trailside information boards offer brief introductions to the creek and its denizens – many of them written from the perspective of Xiaohua, a cartoonified shoveljaw carp. The waters are full of fish, which are watched over by hungry herons, and on the far bank, we observed a troop of monkeys stripping leaves off a tree and a silent muntjac slipping back into the undergrowth after stealing a drink. Midweek, it was just us and the animals – deliciously quiet.

We made a clockwise loop, starting at Qixing Temple and then walking back along the road, finishing our outing with a stop at **Forest Corner**, a small village-run store. In operation since 2018, it is the fruit of a joint initiative between the Miaoli branch of the Forestry and Nature Conservation Agency (formerly the Forestry Bureau) and Penglai's residents. The initiative involved providing education in subjects such as beekeeping and mushroom horticulture and granted villagers extra rights to earn a living through sustainable stewardship of their ancestral lands. Success was anything but guaranteed. In times past, the two parties had a fractious relationship, so to get the partnership off to an auspicious start, representatives from both groups held a ceremony to appease the spirits of aggrieved Saisiyat ancestors with skewered meats and millet wine.

It seems the offerings were deemed sufficient because if you visit now you'll find the display spaces full of beautifully presented honey, fresh eggs, aromatic botanicals, and dried mushrooms – all locally grown. There are also tables out back where you can sit down for a coffee.

Nanzhuang Township

Penglai Village

From Xindian Village, County Highway 124 has the form of a wobbly check mark, heading southeast past lofty Xianshan Lingdong Temple before bouncing back to cut northeast towards the town of Nanzhuang. This northbound portion is remote and hilly, and the road mostly hews close to the course of the Penglai Creek. Every other property seems to be a campsite or homestay, and here and there, the density of houses increases a smidge as you pass through a hamlet or tribal village, among them Penglai Village. Known as Ray'in in the language of its majority Saisiyat indigenous inhabitants, this village is little more than a straggly string of houses, a police station, a school, and a couple of stores, but what makes it visit-worthy is the **Penglai Creek Fish Watching Trail**, a scenic 1.5km riverside stroll easy enough even for infrequent hikers.

The Penglai Creek story is one I've heard repeated in various communities around Taiwan. For a while in recent times, technological innovations in fishing practices outstripped advancements in ecological awareness, and the delicate balance of river life was thrown into disarray. Realizing this, the villagers banded together to clean and protect the waterway and to educate others on the importance of conservation. Their efforts were successful, and a fish-watching trail was established so that people could come to appreciate the region's natural bounty with their eyes and ears instead of their bellies.

Penglai Creek Fish Watching Trail



Forest Corner shop in Penglai Village



FOREST CORNER (森林小站)

☎ (02) 2773-8913

📍 No. 93-1, Hongmao Bldg, Neighborhood 7, Penglai Village, Shitan Township, Miaoli County
(苗栗縣南庄鄉蓬萊村 7 鄰紅毛館 93-1 號)

🕒 Mon-Fri 9:30am-6:30pm; Sat-Sun 9am-2pm

📱 facebook.com/SaySiyat.pakaSan.Satoyama

Central Nanzhuang

If you’re relying on public transport, **Nanzhuang Old Street** is one of the easiest places to get to for a little taste of Miaoli’s rural character. A direct bus from Zhunan Railway Station (the 5806) in Zhunan, a town near Hsinchu City, takes a little over an hour to whisk you out of the urbanized flatlands into the hilly countryside. Similar to Shitan, Nanzhuang occupies the interesting position of straddling the boundary between Hakka and indigenous peoples, although, unlike predominantly Hakka Shitan, Nanzhuang has sizeable populations of both groups.

The southern end of Nanzhuang’s **Osmanthus Alley** makes as good a place as any to commence an exploration of the town. Here you’ll find a clothes-washing pool – part of a glorified irrigation canal – which has been spruced up with a splash of colorful paintwork. Bright lights entice you into a lane that is just wide enough for three people to walk abreast, both sides lined by shopfronts, and proprietors tempt purchases by offering samples of their wares to each “handsome man” or “beautiful woman” who passes by.

Osmanthus-flavored treats make up a good portion of the souvenirs on offer. The area’s osmanthus wine is much loved, as is the osmanthus-scented honey, but you’ll also find the floral flavor incorporated into all sorts of other snacks such as osmanthus ice cream, *tangyuan* (glutinous rice balls), and sausages. We tried osmanthus egg rolls (with a lightly detectable osmanthus taste) from **Jingguang Osmanthus Handmade Egg Rolls**, where you can watch a machine press dough into thin sheets ready to be curled around metal cylinders.

Hakka food is the second key pillar of Nanzhuang’s culinary landscape, and – not wanting to miss an opportunity to try some – we stopped by **Mama Yang’s Hakka Rice Specialties** on Zhongzheng Road, parallel to Osmanthus Alley, to get our hands on a couple of cold rice cakes and Hakka dumplings (also called “pig cage buns” because they resemble wicker pig cages). The latter are seasoned shredded meat and vegetables encased in a rice-flour skin, while the former are essentially chewy blocks of rice jelly with a subtle brown-sugar aroma – the presentation might look a little different, but texturally they’re not dissimilar to gummy candies.

Of course, as well as sampling the local cuisine, make sure to explore some of the town’s other sights. At the top (end of Osmanthus Alley, just past **Yongchang Temple**, is the reconstructed form of the **Nanzhuang Old Post Office**. First built in 1900 as the Japanese colonial government began expanding coal and camphor extraction operations in the area, the structure was damaged in a 1935 earthquake before being rebuilt, thereafter serving as the town’s post office until 1996.



Cold rice cakes



Osmanthus Alley



Kangji Suspension Bridge

And should you find you’ve had enough of the crowds, note that Nanzhuang is home to three “old streets,” and only Nanzhuang Old Street itself seems to have any tourists. Admittedly, that’s because the other two have few businesses to bring in foot traffic, but it’s still worth taking a quick little wander. **Shisanjian Old Street** can be found on a short riverside stretch of Zhongshan Road – the buildings are a real hodge-podge of eras, with wood-paneled and brick buildings interspersed among the more common concrete façades, while the third old street, **Nanjiang Old Street**, can be accessed by walking across the springy span of the **Kangji Suspension Bridge**. These days, it’s almost entirely residential (most of the town’s Atayal population lives over here), but it retains a few historic touches, including an old well and water pump and the terracotta tiling on the walkways.



Shisanjian Old Street

Xiangtian Lake

Xiangtian Lake (Saisiyat name, Rareme:an) is a 25min drive away from Nanzhuang Old Street. We left the town via Miaoli Township Road 21, then turned right onto a winding, forest-lined roadway that heads uphill and dead-ends at a basin lake surrounded on three sides by green slopes. Cradled within this natural amphitheater is an open grassy area where the Saisiyat tribe holds their most important ceremonies, the Museum of Saisiyat Folklore introducing indigenous culture, and a lane full of vendors selling snacks like barbecued meats and macaw-pepper-steeped tea eggs.

There is also one unavoidable feature that will become apparent to anyone who visits Xiangtian Lake – or other Saisiyat areas for that matter. Anyone who has spent time traveling throughout Asia will likely already have come across a swastika or two adorning Buddhist temples and artworks, but that’s nothing compared to what is on display at Xiangtian Lake. They are everywhere. Left-facing, right-facing, square-on, or tilted diamond-wise. They’re on the bus stop and the toilets, they adorn the museum’s display cases, and they’ve been worked into railing metalwork and embroidered garments. And to add an extra frisson, the predominant color scheme used by the Saisiyat is red, black, and white. Traveling as we were, in a group that included a Brit and a German, it presented quite the

Museum of Saisiyat Folklore



Shenxian Valley



Xiangtian Lake



talking point. Why would this be the case? Well, it transpires that to the Saisiyat, the shape resembles interlocking lightning bolts and is used to represent the relationship between a Saisiyat warrior and Wauan – the goddess credited with teaching the tribe weaving and farming techniques.

Curious artwork aside, a visit to Xiangtian Lake can fill up a pleasant morning – or more. A gentle path encircles the water. At just over a kilometer in length, the journey won’t take long, but you could pause for drinks at the lakeside coffee shop, grab a quick snack from one of the market stalls (many only open on weekends), and learn about the tribe from the museum’s bilingual displays (admission is NT\$30). If looking for something requiring a little more energy, the lake is also the starting point of the Mt. Xiangtianhu Trail – a fabulous 10km trek through misty cedar forests.

Heading back down from Xiangtian Lake, turning right instead of left onto Miaoli Township Road 21 will take you deeper into the hills towards the start of another well-known Miaoli peak, Mt. Jiali, and even if you have no time for a serious hike, it’s well worth undertaking a brief diversion to enjoy a couple of the sights.

The road meanders through a countryside that teeters between pretty and dramatic. We passed **Shibi Tribal Village** (indigenous name, Raysinay), a small Atayal settlement perched on the banks of the Dadong River. Named for the tall cliffs that flank the road, the band is small, with many residents having migrated downstream to nearby Donghe due to risks posed by seasonal storms – mild in winter’s dry season, the waterway swells to a destructive torrent and temporary waterfalls gush forth from the sheer rockface during the rainy season in summer.

We made a final stop just short of **Luchang Tribal Village**, where the Luhu and Fengmei creeks converge to form the Dadong River. Here, a short trail leads steeply down to a platform overlooking the confluence – a spot deemed so beautiful that is called the Shenxian Valley ("Valley of the Gods") or **Fairy Waterfall**. At the time of writing, the suspension bridge spanning the gorge was closed for maintenance, meaning the view was somewhat obscured, but if you dine in the restaurant at the top of the steps you can enjoy home-cooked indigenous dishes as you watch water cascade down the elegant tiered waterfall. ㊦

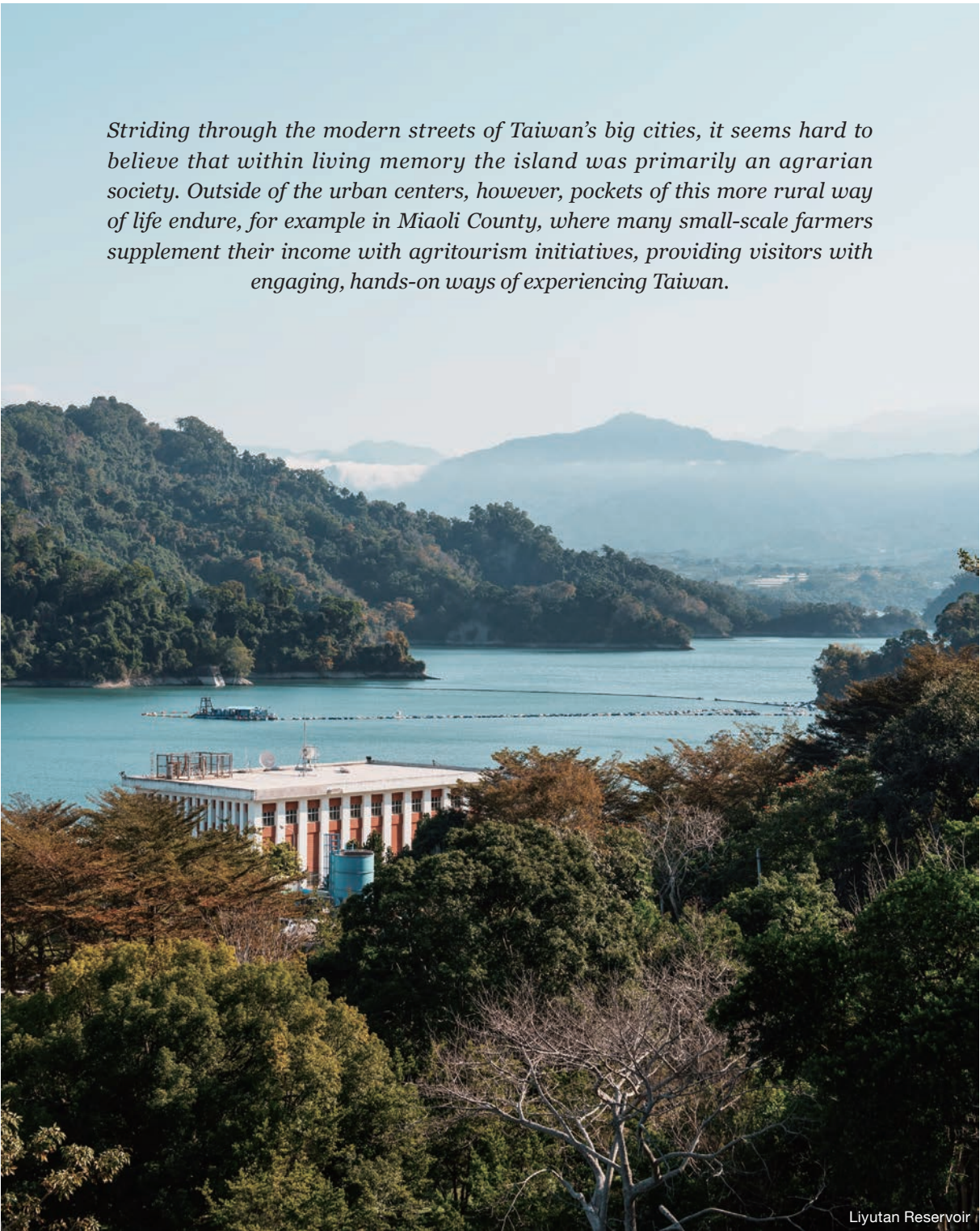
🗺️ ENGLISH AND CHINESE

- Atayal | 泰雅族
- Bo Gong | 伯公
- Century-Old Longan Tree | 百年龍眼樹
- Fairy Waterfall | 神仙谷瀑布
- Kangji Suspension Bridge | 康濟吊橋
- Little Blue House | 藍色小屋
- Lovers' Valley | 情人谷
- Mingfeng Ancient Trail | 鳴鳳古道
- Museum of Saisiyat Folklore | 賽夏族民俗文物館
- Nanzhuang [Old Street] | 南庄 [老街]
- Nanzhuang Old Post Office | 南庄老郵局
- Osmanthus Alley | 桂花巷
- Penglai Creek [Fish-Watching Trail] | 蓬萊溪 [護魚步道]
- Penglai Village | 蓬萊村
- Pig Skin Bo Gong Temple | 豬皮伯公
- Qixing Temple | 七星宮
- Raknus Selu Trail | 樟之細路
- Saisiyat | 賽夏族
- Shangzhuang bus stop | 上庄公車站
- Shenxian Valley | 神仙谷
- Shibi Tribal Village | 石壁部落
- Shisanjian Old Street | 十三間老街
- Shitan | 獅潭
- Shitan Yimin Temple | 獅潭義民廟
- Shitan Xindian Old Street | 獅潭新店老街
- tangyuan | 湯圓
- Tudi Gong | 土地公
- xiancao | 仙草
- Xiangtian Lake | 向天湖
- Xindian Creek | 新店溪
- Xindian Village [Clothes Washing Pool] | 新店村 [洗衫坑]
- Xinfeng Suspension Bridge | 新鳳吊橋
- Yongchang Temple | 永昌宮
- Yundong Temple | 雲洞宮



MAP

Striding through the modern streets of Taiwan’s big cities, it seems hard to believe that within living memory the island was primarily an agrarian society. Outside of the urban centers, however, pockets of this more rural way of life endure, for example in Miaoli County, where many small-scale farmers supplement their income with agritourism initiatives, providing visitors with engaging, hands-on ways of experiencing Taiwan.



Liyutan Reservoir

Pick-Your-Own Miaoli Adventure

A Visit to Leisure Agriculture Operations in Zhuolan Township

TEXT | AMI BARNES PHOTOS | RAY CHANG



Main path through Flower Home



Flower garden

■ Flower Home

Miaoli County does much to keep the country’s day market stalls full. Year-round, you’ll see straw-hatted farmers hunched over rows of crops or clambering up stepladders to tend to their orchards. Scattered throughout this pastoral paradise, several areas have been designated leisure agricultural zones – places where visitors can go to learn about and experience local farming practices, taste regional produce, and enjoy the enchanting rural scenery.

One such location is the **Lixiping Leisure Agricultural Area**. Occupying a river terrace on the right bank of the Da’an River, just north of Miaoli’s border with Taichung, Lixiping was once the site of a wartime airport but is today home to leisure farms, camp- and glampsites, coffee shops, and other such genteel tourist attractions. Among them is **Flower Home**. Part garden center, part botanical gardens, it’s ideal for anyone who enjoys strolling through photogenic flowers without exerting too much energy. Cute flourishes abound, and if your idea of a good trip involves heading home with a camera reel of colorful shots, you’ll have plenty of backdrops to work with here.



FLOWER HOME | 花露農場
☎ (04) 2589-3280
📍 No. 43-3, Xiping, Xiping Borough, Zhuolan Township, Miaoli County
(苗栗縣卓蘭鎮西坪里西坪 43-3 號)
🌐 flowerhometw.com (Chinese)



Roses Bar

The space is broken up into several discrete zones. Some, like the orchid pavilion, change little throughout the year, but others, such as the exhibition area – which, at the time of *Travel in Taiwan*’s recent visit, contained a vibrant display of poinsettias – host seasonal exhibits. Drinks and sit-down meals are available at the Roses Bar and the indoor-outdoor Rainforest Café, and near the main entrance, you’ll find a huge greenhouse full of plants. One of Flower Home’s specialties is staghorn ferns, and these dramatic epiphytes, which have recently been enjoying something of a moment in Taiwan, are on sale in every size from teacup to moose head.

Towards the rear of the property is a final point of interest – a retail gallery showcasing the establishment’s house-crafted essential-oil products. There are facemasks and air diffusers, hand creams and conditioners – and for those who prefer experiential souvenirs, a DIY activity is also offered at the facility in which you get to make your own natural insect repellant. Or, if the experience you fancy is a spot of pampering, you could opt for an aromatherapy foot spa.

Admission to the Flower Home is NT\$200 per person, but NT\$100 of that is offsettable against the cost of any purchase made at the facilities mentioned above.

Mama Dou Leisure Farm/ Lixiping Visitor Center

Mama Dou Leisure Farm and the Lixiping Visitor Center sit a 3min drive west of the Flower Home. Although separate entities, the farm and visitor center occupy adjoining plots of land and cooperate in running a selection of DIY and produce-picking activities.

Before our visit, we had arranged to take part in a tomato cake class, and when we arrived, trays containing the necessities had already been set up in preparation. Since we were the only guests, we quickly got at it, mixing our flour, milk powder, coconut milk powder, and butter until smooth. Once done, we were shown how to shape the resulting dough into rough ovals, wrap each around a sausage of candied tomatoes, and press the whole thing into little molds. The process took less than ten minutes and was easy enough to be suitable even for junior bakers. (Pre-booking is needed, particularly if English instruction is required.)

While waiting for the oven to do its thing we headed to the greenhouses, where Mama Dou was hard at work



Freshly picked mini tomatoes

Picking tomatoes in the greenhouse



Cakes with tomato filling

and all bundled up in the traditional uniform for Taiwanese farmworkers, protected head-to-toe against the winter’s combination of bright sun and biting winds. The farm, which uses environmentally friendly farming methods, produces tomatoes year-round along with Asian pears and a few other seasonal products. Mama Dou – who also happens to be the area’s *lizhang* (village or borough chief, the lowest rung in Taiwan’s bureaucratic hierarchy) – showed us how tomatoes ripen in sequence depending on their proximity to the main stem and explained the differences between seasonal varieties. Winter-ripening cultivars like oriental beauty and *yunü* (“jade girl”) are petite, thin-skinned, and sweet. Summer’s *shengnü* (“female saint,” aka cherry tomato), in contrast, have thicker skin and are meatier, making them suited to being candied and used in baking.

Speaking of which, upon returning to the visitor center, our oven-fresh cakes were ready for the taste test. On paper, I know candied tomato encased in a lightly coconut-flavored pastry does not sound like it should work, but all I can say is, don’t knock it until you’ve tried it – the pairing is surprisingly successful.

MAMA DOU LEISURE FARM | 荳媽媽休閒農園

☎ (04) 2589-6923

📍 No. 109-20, Neighborhood 9, Xiping Borough, Zhuolan Township, Miaoli County
(苗栗縣卓蘭鎮西坪里 9 鄰 109-20 號)

Show May Fruit Garden orchard



Snipping oranges from a tree

Different types of oranges



Show May Fruit Garden

This fruit orchard operation can be found beside Miaoli Township Road 52 just to the south of Liyutan Reservoir (see box). From the start of November to the end of February, the boughs of the orchard’s many citrus trees hang low, weighed down by fat fruits, drawing urbanites in search of an easy introduction to farm life. A total of seven cultivars are grown here: Chinese honey orange, southern mandarin (eaten salted and warmed in the oven to ward off colds), emperor mandarin, muscott tangerine (so exceptionally sweet that after trying it, everything else will pale in comparison), sugar mandarin, and two others that defy translation.

After paying NT\$100 each to enter the orchard, we were shown how to identify each of the varieties using shape and skin characteristics and then turned loose with buckets and scissors. So long as you dump the peel in one of your buckets, you’re allowed to consume as much fruit as is humanly possible while you’re picking – something we took full advantage of. Each thumb dug into soft skin sent out a fine mist of citrusy perfume, and the sweet-sharp scent of oranges soon filled the air. The winter sun warmed our backs as we made our way from tree to tree, fingers glistening with sticky juice – overall, a delightful multisensory treat.

Once you’ve eaten your fill, anything you’ve picked to take home is weighed and priced by the catty at prices comparable to market rates, so be sure to take a few for the journey. 📍

SHOW MAY FRUIT GARDEN | 秀妹果園

☎ 0919-723-258

📍 No. 128-8, Xiping Borough, Zhuolan Township, Miaoli County
(苗栗縣卓蘭鎮西坪里 125-8 號)

📘 facebook.com/ShowMayFruit

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Da'an River | 大安溪

Dahu Township | 大湖鄉

Lixiping Leisure Agricultural Area | 歷西坪休閒農業區

Lixiping Visitor Center | 歷西坪遊客中心

Liyutan Reservoir | 鯉魚潭水庫

lizhang | 里長

shengnü | 聖女

yunü | 玉女

Zhuolan Township | 卓蘭鎮



MAP

Sawtooth weir at Liyutan Reservoir



Liyutan Reservoir

Liyutan Reservoir straddles the border between Dahu and Zhuolan townships and has been supplying water to Taichung City and Miaoli County since 1992. There’s space to park up beside the roadside reservoir lookout, and trails lead through a shady park to the water’s edge, where you can see the sawtooth weir and dam. It’s the perfect place to stop for a picnic with all your hard-earned spoils from your Miaoli leisure farm visits.

Hill Country, Hakka Culture

*A Foray Through Three Tradition-Rich
Neighboring Townships*

Tongluo

Tongluo is a landlocked township that straddles the Houlong River in its northern sector. An important horticulture center, a key township point of pride is its role as Taiwan's main producer of chrysanthemums – from which such tourism-focused goods as chrysanthemum tea, soaps, and even desserts are crafted.

The monumental, spaceship-resembling **Taiwan Hakka Museum** (www.facebook.com/hakkapark), at the edge of a low-wide plateau, peers down upon a long, shallow farm-carpeted valley through which a small Houlong River tributary flows. Abounding with stimulating interactive experiences, it explores the Hakka people's historical impact in their place of origin – mainland China – and throughout Taiwan and Southeast Asia. The museum's high-ceilinged café/restaurant serves Hakka culinary classics and an appetizing Miaoli-countryside panorama.

The **Tongluo Skywalk** is part of the 8km Tongluo Bikeway, which runs along the steep-sided western edge of the broad plateau on which the museum sits. Along this wide walking/cycling trail are several photogenic rest stops, notably the elevated, treetop-level skywalk, and a cable-suspension sky bridge. The views west over the coastal flatlands and out into the Taiwan Strait are heart-tingling. There's a strong tung tree bloom here each spring; the tung blossom is an iconic Hakka culture totem.

The pleasant 30ha tourist-focused **Tongluo Tea Factory** complex (www.tongluotea.com; Chinese) is on the valley slopes that the Taiwan Hakka Museum overlooks. The main tea type grown here is Dongfang Meiren (Oriental Beauty), primarily grown in Hakka areas in the island's northwest hills at 300~800m altitude. Enjoy tea-tasting sessions, tours of the processing facilities and fields, DIY picking for tour groups, and a meal starring the traditional-style *biandang* (boxed lunch) eaten by Hakka tea-pickers and railroad workers.

The flat-topped geological feature on which the museum and skywalk are perched is Jiuhuashan (Jiuhua Mountain), 383m high. Another mountain-top resident, the large **Daxingshan Temple**, has made the mountain a popular pilgrimage destination for Buddhists, who come to enjoy “peace noodles,” mantra-blessed waters, and comely garden landscaping.

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE PHOTOS | VISION

From the Taiwan Strait shores to the central mountains, Miaoli is a solid swathe of many hills. Through these hills wend long valleys thin and wide, carved by watercourses finding their way to the sea. Pleasant, well-maintained, long, and winding roads pierce these valleys, and along these roads, are old towns and villages and numerous, lesser-known, tourist attractions. In this article, we explore the contiguous townships of Tongluo, Sanyi, and Yuanli, in the county's southwest, which have a heavy Hakka population and compelling Hakka character.

Sanyi

Sanyi is another landlocked rolling-hills township, Tongluo's neighbor on its south. In times past it was a thriving producer of timber, tung oil, and camphor. The abundant wood resources gave rise to a woodcarving industry – Sanyi is dubbed the “Taiwan Kingdom of Woodcarving” – with a related tourism industry blossoming toward the end of the last century.

The best location to begin an exploration of the history and impressive creative talent of the local woodcarving industry is the spacious, modern **Sanyi Wood Sculpture Museum** (wood.mlc.gov.tw), in Sanyi town, where scores of studios/retail operations are also concentrated. Works on display range from traditional Chinese religious art to the bizarrely abstract; of special note are winning efforts from the annual **Sanyi International Woodcarving Art Festival**. There's limited posted English, but an English audio guide is available.

Southwest of Sanyi town is tiny Shengxing, another Hakka settlement, in a narrow, shallow valley through which a mountain railway, constructed by the Japanese and used to haul mountain-region resources, once meandered.

The quaint cottage-look **Shengxing Station** is the prime draw, built using pine in the early 20th century. This once was Taiwan's highest main-line station at 402m elevation.

The station and a 6km section of the old line have been put back into operation as part of the **Old Mountain Line Rail Bike** attraction (www.ohl-railbike.com). During an hour-plus excursion in a hand-operated electric cart, you'll zoom above this hill area's treetops, through tunnels artistically lit with images of past railway days, and past the iconic red-brick-arch **Remains of Longteng Bridge**. The bridge was severely damaged during a powerful earthquake in 1935.

Not far west of Shengxing is **Zhuo Ye Cottage** (www.joye.com.tw; Chinese), a small village-like complex of wooden buildings secreted away in dense undulating-hill forest previously described in *Travel in Taiwan* as “part botanical gardens, part DIY workshop, part boutique inn.” The DIY experience is Hakka-style dyeing of fabrics. There are two restaurants, serving hotpots and baked sweet-tooth goodies as well as teas and shaved-ice treats.

Old Mountain Line Rail Bike

Yuanli

Yuanli Township, in Miaoli's southwest corner, was one of the earliest settled areas in this part of Taiwan. Long known as “Miaoli's granary,” its (roughly) southern half is part of a wide plain through which the major Da'an River flows. Rice is a major crop here, organic-rice cultivation growing in importance. The long-significant rush-weaving craft industry is today primarily oriented toward tourism.

The **Yuanli Triangle Rush Exhibition Hall** showcases how daily-use items have been created using triangle rushes since the early 1800s. The local indigenous inhabitants taught Han Chinese settlers how triangle-rush mats stay cool in summer, and commercial production steadily expanded afterward, with mainland China the key market for bags, hats, and other creations. During Taiwan's 1895-1945 period of Japanese colonial rule, rush-woven products became Taiwan's third-largest export category after sugar and rice. Take home a unique rush-woven work from the gift shop, and be sure to check out how crops of different colors are used to “paint” giant works of art in the nearby fields.

Through much of the 20th century, Yuanli was also a key brick and tile producer in Taiwan. The local hills provide premium gray-color clay. **Jin Liang Shing (JLS) Brick Factory** (www.facebook.com/jlsbrick), founded in 1973, transformed itself into Taiwan's sole brick-and-tile tourist factory in 2004. On a guided tour, learn about JLS and its brick production and view two well-preserved kilns, including a 162m-long monster, witness the firing process via overhead views into hellish-hot furnace interiors, and take in a museum display of both heritage and contemporary bricks and tiles.

Yuanli, as with the other townships still primarily rural, offers travelers a deep bounty of traditional Chinese *sanheyuan*, or three-sided courtyard residences. The tourist-welcoming **Dongli Jiafeng Old Residence** is among Taiwan's best-preserved complexes. This is a Hakka-clan compound, evidenced in the classic façade design – white-painted upper tier symbolizing the senior generation's white hair, middle-tier red tiles the middle generation's blood (plus sweat and tears), lowest-tier rounded stones the hope for bountiful offspring, i.e. “seeds.”

Rush-woven items at the Yuanli Triangle Rush Exhibition Hall

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

biandang | 便當
Da'an River | 大安溪
Daxingshan Temple | 大興善寺
Dongli Jiafeng Old Residence | 東里家風古厝
Houlong River | 後龍溪
Jin Liang Shing (JLS) Brick Factory | 金良興觀光磚廠
Jiuhuashan | 九華山
Old Mountain Line Rail Bike | 舊山線鐵道自行車
"peace noodles" | 平安麵
Remains of Longteng Bridge | 龍騰斷橋

sanheyuan | 三合院
Sanyi International Woodcarving Art Festival | 三義國際木雕藝術節
Sanyi Township | 三義鄉
Sanyi Wood Sculpture Museum | 三義木雕博物館
Shengxing Station | 勝興車站
Taiwan Hakka Museum | 臺灣客家文化館
Tongluo Tea Factory | 銅鑼茶廠
Tongluo Township | 銅鑼鄉
Tongluo Skywalk | 銅鑼天空步道



Railway Roundhouse and Big Buddha

Discovering Changhua City's Best-Known Attractions on Foot



Changhua Roundhouse

TEXT | STEVEN CROOK PHOTOS | VISION

The medium-sized city of Changhua doesn't appear on many "best of Taiwan" itineraries. For those who like nightlife and top-notch accommodation, nearby Taichung City will always have an edge. And for visitors curious about the Taiwan of yesteryear, the old town of Lukang in Changhua County is the region's obvious destination. But anyone willing to walk a bit and explore at a gentle pace will discover that this historic city is a splendid place to spend a day.

If you arrive in Changhua by conventional railway (TRA) – which this writer recommends, since the railway station is far more convenient than Changhua's Taiwan High Speed Rail (THSR) station – and you have an interest in railway history or transportation infrastructure, as soon as you exit the station's main entrance, turn left and take the stairs up to the pedestrian bridge that crosses the railway tracks. From the bridge, you'll be able to see the first stop on this walking tour: the **Changhua Roundhouse**.

You can gain access to this century-old building through the **Roundhouse Railway Park** (about 400m north of the station), where a mini-train and other attractions are sure to keep young sightseers entertained. The roundhouse isn't round so much as shaped like a handheld fan. It contains, you'll notice when you get close, 12 bays in which railway engines undergo maintenance. These bays face a turntable which, in this era of reversible locomotives, isn't strictly necessary, but is still often used to move engines from one stretch of track to another.



Roundhouse Railway Park entrance



Mini-train

ROUNDHOUSE RAILWAY PARK (戶羽機關車園區)
📍 No. 83, Ln. 3, Sec. 1, Zhangmei Rd., Changhua City, Changhua County (彰化縣彰化市彰美路一段3巷83號)
🕒 Wed-Fri 1:30pm-5pm, Sat-Sun 10am-5pm, closed on Mon & Tue (Changhua Roundhouse: Tue-Sun 1pm-4pm; on Tue, when the park is closed, access the roundhouse through the entrance at No. 1, Zhangmei Rd.)
📱 facebook.com/changhuaroundhouse



Changhua Roundhouse

The oldest locomotive normally kept in the roundhouse is named CK124, a coal-fired steam engine that was in regular service from 1936 to 1979. It was restored to working condition several years ago, and still heads out on occasional journeys that are advertised well in advance. These slow but romantic excursions are always a big hit with fans of the Age of Steam.

For the sake of safety, visitors aren't allowed into the roundhouse itself or on the turntable. Nonetheless, it's possible to get very good photos from the building's apron and the viewing platform located to one side. Don't stray where you shouldn't, and keep your ears and eyes open, as even when the site is open to tourists, station staff may be moving a locomotive.

Changhua's turntable is the only one still in use in Taiwan. A somewhat smaller and long-ago pensioned-off turntable still exists next to the Railway Art Village in Taitung City.



Changhua
Food Specialties

When people talk about Changhua meatballs, they’re not talking about something that resembles the meatballs you’ve likely eaten with spaghetti in an Italian diner. More often than not, they’re referring to what some call “crystal meatballs” – a pork filling wrapped in a glutinous translucent mass that’s made by blending sweet potato starch and tapioca starch.

Several eateries in the city serve exactly that, but **Beimenkou Meatballs**, a short walk south of the roundhouse, has come up with a different twist on the old favorite. Just before serving hungry customers, they deep-fry each meatball in hot oil and then dunk it in a house sauce. This gives it a satisfying crunchiness that many foodies think greatly enhances the experience.



BEIMENKOU MEATBALLS
(北門口肉圓)
📍 No. 34, Sanmin Rd., Changhua City,
Changhua County
(彰化縣彰化市三民路 34 號)
🕒 Thu-Mon 11am-5:20pm



ONLY ONE SHOP (不二坊)
📍 No. 293, Sec. 1, Zhongzheng Rd., Changhua City,
Changhua County
(彰化縣彰化市中正路一段 293 號)
☎ (04) 722-5328
🕒 Tue-Sun 9am-12pm, 2:30pm-6pm



Gourmands heading for Beimenkou Meatballs have been confused by local imitators with similar names. To avoid this kind of problem, the proprietors of **Only One Shop**, 600m east of Beimenkou, chose Chinese and English monikers that make it clear their signature egg-yolk pastries aren’t sold anywhere else.

As shops go, this bakery’s interior is as plain as plain can be, but this doesn’t seem to dampen demand for its highly traditional products. They’re so sought-after that, rather than join a very long queue, some people who fail to preorder pay extra and buy from a reseller. If egg yolk isn’t a taste that appeals to you, perhaps try Only One Shop’s pineapple cakes, mung bean-paste mooncakes, sweetheart cakes, or Taichung-style suncakes.

Unlike egg-yolk pastries – which are sold by the box – these items are sold individually, ideal for travelers who simply want to try some new flavors.



Changhua’s Great Buddha

After snacking, you may well feel like marching up a hill to burn off some calories. Changhua City residents are blessed by the proximity of the **Mt. Bagua Great Buddha Scenic Area**, which is excellent not only for short hikes but also for birdwatching.

By the vertiginous standards of Taiwan, 97m-high Mt. Bagua is a mere wrinkle. From atop it, however, you can see all of Changhua City and, if the conditions are right, even the Taiwan Strait. Pedestrians can reach the top quickly via a path near the Changhua City Library buildings at the western end of Guashan Road. Those getting around on two or four wheels should follow that road uphill heading east for about 500m until they see a parking lot on the left (NT\$30/hour on weekdays, NT\$40 on weekends).

The big Buddha is also on the left-hand side of the road, but hidden by trees. On the right, directly opposite the archway next to the car park, there’s a visitor information center (open daily 9:30am-5:30pm) where you can get your travel questions answered.

The big brown Buddha himself, 22m tall, is quite a sight. He’s been here since the 1960s and has become an emblem of the city. If you arrived in Changhua from the north, you may even have spotted him before you got off your train. Within the statue, there are waxworks-style depictions of scenes from the Buddha’s life.

Visitors with plenty of time and decent fitness should proceed to the **Mt. Bagua Skywalk**. This

1,005m-long elevated trail begins a stone’s throw from the Buddha and takes you up into the forest canopy. June is an especially good time to spend a while here, as Mt. Bagua’s royal poincianas produce a mass of orange-red flowers.

Two of the skywalk’s seven entrance points were designed with wheelchair users in mind. Thanks to gentle gradients and a complete absence of steps, the facility is ideal for those who aren’t sporty or who are pushing strollers.



Mt. Bagua Skywalk



Places Nearby

There's more to the aforementioned visitor information center than maps and leaflets. The semi-circular building behind it, dubbed **Guashan Village**, houses a dozen or more cultural-creative businesses. Some of these little shops make and sell unique souvenirs; others focus on snacks and beverages. Note that many are closed on Monday and/or Tuesday.

One of these ventures is named **More Little Life**. Located on the second floor of the building, this charming café specializes in handmade puddings and other desserts, cakes, and all manner of baked delights. To make the most of the limited space, the proprietor has created an inviting loft area where you can enjoy your treat.



More Little Life

MORE LITTLE LIFE (野花小姐)
2F-15, No. 8-1, Guashan Rd., Changhua City, Changhua County
(彰化縣彰化市卦山路 8-1 號 2 樓之 15)
(04) 728-5056
Wed-Sun 1pm-6pm
facebook.com/misswildflowers



Guashan Village



Nantian Temple



Torture scene: A man cooked alive in a wok

Less than 100m southwest of Guashan Village as the crow flies, yet requiring a 10-minute walk because there's no direct way down the hillside, **Nantian Temple** is one of Taiwan's more unusual places of worship. Even if its exterior doesn't inspire you to set foot inside, do go on in – so long as you're not of an especially sensitive disposition. Buy a ticket (NT\$50) at the desk on the left of the entrance, then proceed to the second floor. There, Hell awaits!

Many years ago, the managers of Nantian Temple decided that the citizens of Changhua would benefit from visual depictions of the torments that await them if, in this life, they don't stay on the straight and narrow. The **Eighteen Levels of Hell** is part moral teaching, part entertainment. Western visitors may think it's not so different from the "haunted house" attractions in some theme parks. For anyone with a typical Han Chinese religious background, however, the scenes within hold a much more profound meaning.

For well over a millennium, Han people have been raised to believe that wrongdoers who go unpunished in this life are destined to appear before judges in the afterlife who'll sentence them to one of these hells, depending on the nature and severity of their misdeeds.

Utilizing animatronic figures that creak and stagger, ghoulish lighting effects, and a bloodcurdling soundtrack, the displays on the second and fourth floors of Nantian Temple show miscreants getting their just desserts. A demon tugs on a hook that's impaling one man's tongue; another man writhes in agony as the stovepipe to which he's been lashed becomes red hot. Other tortures include being ground into mincemeat, sawn in half, and repeatedly run over by an iron wagon.

Everything is very graphic and quite unsuitable for young kids. Even though there's nothing in English, this just might be the first place you tell your friends about when you get back home.

NANTIAN TEMPLE (南天宮)
No. 12, Ln. 187, Sec. 1, Gongyuan Rd., Changhua City, Changhua County
(彰化縣彰化市公園路 1 段 187 巷 12 號)
(Eighteen Levels of Hell): 8am-6:30pm
(04) 722-2587

If you come away from the Eighteen Levels of Hell resolved to mend your ways, yet peckish, don't worry: In the traditional scheme of things, gluttony isn't a sin. You can enjoy yourself at our final stop with a clear conscience, located back down in the city grid a few blocks southwest of Nantian Temple.

As its name suggests, **Fazi Noodles** isn't a place for those who want rice or dumplings. Options include standard wheat noodles, vermicelli made from rice flour, and glass noodles made using mung bean, all of which can be prepared "dry" (flavored with a pork-based sauce and bean sprouts) or "soupy." For extra sustenance and different textures, order a separate soup and/or a braised egg.

It's little wonder the noodles here taste good and that so many locals are repeat customers. Fazi has been in business almost as long as Mt. Bagua's Great Buddha has been watching over Changhua.

FAZI NOODLES (發仔麵)
No. 145, Sec. 1, Nanguo Rd., Changhua City, Changhua County
(彰化縣彰化市南郭路一段 145 號)
(04) 725-2190 9am-12:45pm, 2:30pm-10pm

ENGLISH AND CHINESE
Changhua meatballs | 彰化肉圓
Changhua Roundhouse | 彰化扇形車庫
egg-yolk pastry | 蛋黃酥
Eighteen Levels of Hell | 南天宮十八層地獄
Guashan Village | 卦山村
Mt. Bagua Great Buddha Scenic Area | 八卦山大佛風景區

Mt. Bagua Skywalk | 八卦山天空步道
mung bean-paste mooncake | 綠豆椪
pineapple cake | 鳳梨酥
Railway Art Village | 鐵道藝術村
royal poinciana | 鳳凰木
suncake | 太陽餅
sweetheart cake | 老婆餅



MAP



A TASTE OF EXCELLENCE

Michelin-Recommended Restaurants Offering Far More than Just Fine Tastes

TEXT | JENNA LYNN CODY PHOTOS | CHEN CHENG-KUO, VISION

Gourmands and fine dining aficionados rejoiced in 2018 when the Michelin Guide began reviewing Taiwan restaurants. Many felt this was long overdue: Taiwan has been on the world foodie map for decades, but had not yet joined the choice list of countries and cities in Asia covered by Michelin, launched with the publication of a Japan guide in 2007.

Taiwan now has 49 Michelin-starred restaurants, 38 of which are in Taipei. That number more than triples when considering all Michelin-recommended establishments, including “selected” restaurants and those that have been awarded the Bib Gourmand label and the rare Green Stars. These distinctions may be less well-known than the classic Michelin stars, but they serve as a reliable guide to some of Taipei’s best food. For this article, we have explored four such options, covering everything from innovative fusion to creative plating and environmental sustainability.



New Taiwanese Beef Soup

3927

At first glance, 3927 looks like any other trendy restaurant in Taipei City’s East District. You’ll immediately note it’s a little larger than its neighbors in the lanes around MRT Zhongxiao Dunhua Station, and sports moody slate-grey walls and an intentionally exposed industrial ceiling. You’ll then start to notice other details, such as the round Chinese-style banquet tables and generously upholstered Queen Anne chairs that patrons can sink into.

This eclectic style informs 3927’s cuisine, which might be described as modern Taiwanese fusion. The restaurant’s name is a play on a combination of Chinese terms meaning the welcoming of guests with tea and wine for a festive “banquet” atmosphere and the creation or remaking of timeless dishes with a twist. This seamless fusion earned 3927 the honor of a recommendation in Taiwan’s 2024 Michelin Guide. It’s not hard to see why: Michelin rewards creativity, and 3927’s innovative take on Taiwanese cooking hits the mark.

Chefs Jacob Wang and Fang Yongming have mastered the art of blending innovation and nostalgia: 3927’s most renowned dish is the **Bread-wrapped Truffle Chicken**, whose name in Mandarin evokes the enveloping warmth of childhood memories. High-quality locally sourced chicken is roasted carefully in a truffle sauce until it is nearly cooked, and then wrapped in French-style bread dough for the final bake. The European influences meld seamlessly with traditional rural Taiwanese cooking methods: the bread wrapping imitates *khòng-iō* (Taiwanese), or cooking in an earthen coal-fired kiln. This dish represents a synthesis of Chef Wang’s rural roots in Taiwan’s Yunlin County and his extensive experience in the United States, Canada, and Australia, where he studied Italian cooking.



Deep Affection
Braised Pork Soup

The East
Becomes the West
Beef Short Rib

Bread-wrapped
Truffle Chicken



Other notable menu items at 3927 include **The East Becomes the West Beef Short Rib** and the **Deep Affection Braised Pork Soup**, the latter being the chef’s signature dish. Braised pork is added to a soup that contains “all the delicacies of the mountains and sea,” from scallops and shark skin to egg puffs and cabbage. The flavors are deep and complex, and it takes eight hours to prepare the dish. The short rib pairs serious heat – each braised and steamed morsel is covered in a Sichuanese sauce and colorful red and green chilis – with the sweet tang of grilled pineapple.

The aesthetic scene-stealer at any 3927 table is the playfully named **Foreign Monks Can Chant Sutras**, a fusion take on the *guabao*, a Taiwanese classic commonly called the “Taiwanese hamburger,” served in a Japanese-style wooden container that recalls Taiwan’s long history with Japan. The **New Taiwanese Beef Soup** is an ode to southern Taiwan – Tainan-style beef soup is cooked by adding slices of fatty, high-quality beef to a bowl of smooth, black river stones, which then sputter with heat as the broth is added. Optional additions of basil, lemon, onion, and chili suggest Vietnamese pho, reflecting the long cultural exchange between Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

3927 (叁酒貳湖)

☎ (02) 2731-0137

📍 No. 14, Ln. 101, Sec. 4, Zhongxiao E. Rd., Da'an Dist., Taipei City
(台北市大安區忠孝東路四段 101 巷 14 號)

🕒 Mon & Tue 5pm-10pm

Wed, Thu, & Sun 11:30am-2:30pm, 5pm-10pm

Fri & Sat 11:30am-2:30pm, 5pm-12am

🌐 3927.com.tw (Chinese)

📍 guide.michelin.com/tw/en/taipei-region/taipei/restaurant/3927



Yangming Spring

Tucked away in a quiet corner in the southern reaches of Yangmingshan National Park, the flagship location of Yangming Spring feels more like a Zen sanctuary than a restaurant. The grounds look like a wild garden but are carefully tended; lichen-covered Buddhas and Japanese stone lanterns, which are older than the buildings around them, peek out from the profusion of foliage. Several buildings, including an art gallery, a hut with a natural-oil press, and a separate dining room, blend into the mountain scenery, and the atmospheric restaurant evokes a Japanese teahouse: tatami mats, low seating, natural-fiber screens, a brazier for heat, iron teapots, and floor-to-ceiling windows showcasing the plant life and the Zen garden outside.

It's not hard to see why Yangming Spring has earned consecutive Michelin Green Stars. These are awarded to restaurants that show exceptional commitment to sustainable gastronomy. This usually involves removing single-use materials from a restaurant's supply chain, working with sustainable foodstuff suppliers, an overall reduction in an establishment's environmental footprint, and a commitment to ethics and accountability in environmental practice. Food at Green Star restaurants is generally seasonal as well as locally and sustainably sourced. Green Stars are rarer than regular stars: only five restaurants in Taipei have been given the distinction.

Yangming Spring's key offerings are two prix-fixe eight-course meals, the Classic Set and the Green Star Set. Both are vegan, change with the seasons, and draw on Japanese culinary techniques and aesthetics, blending local ingredients and international flavors to create something unique. With such a strong reputation, the restaurant has been tapped to craft the vegetarian entrees on Taiwan's national airline, China Airlines.

Wagashi jelly paired with Oriental Beauty tea



A brazier is part of the decor



Vegan sushi

Chef Sean Hsueh is a vegetarian himself. His commitment to sustainable gastronomy and training in Taiwan under a master of the Japanese culinary arts inspired his involvement with Yangming Spring. This is reflected in the dishes for each set. For instance, the Green Star Set we sampled for this article included two delicate morsels of vegan sushi, one made with loofah and the other with braised red bell pepper, served with hand-pickled ginger and tiny bubbles of soy sauce.

Another Green Star savory dish imitated the look of miniature Japanese sweets. It included beet-pickled daikon in Mediterranean style, an osmanthus jelly, and a tiny spring roll filled with various fresh fruits, vegetables, and other treasures, including slivered apple and peanut powder. Truffle soup was served in a luxurious glazed ceramic vessel adorned with a chrysanthemum, leafy greens, and dry ice. One course took three ingredients known for their somewhat slimy textures – mountain yam, okra, and natto – and turned these into something magical in Chef Hsueh's hands; heaped with edible flowers and red dragon fruit, the fermented tang of the natto came through as a balance to the delicate flavors of the mountain yam and sweet fruit – without a hint of undesirable mouthfeel. The dessert was a refreshing wagashi jelly paired with high-quality Oriental Beauty tea.

In the Classic Set, standout dishes included a vegetable-broth soup featuring goji berries and a carved daikon flower immersed in a beguilingly complex broth. Teriyaki-crusted

mushrooms combined sweet and savory, and a konjac, peanut tofu, and mountain yam salad was a panoply of textures. A large paper-wrapped dish was baked in French style and included non-GMO yellow lentils, smoked vegetarian bacon, and Napa cabbage, flavored with cashew cream and herbaceous citronella leaves. The dessert was *douhua* (tofu pudding) made with frothy almond milk paired with a longan cake and snow lotus jelly.

The main course for both sets was a monkey-head mushroom that had been carefully prepared to attain a perfect creamy texture. For the Green Star Set, this was paired with a sauce reminiscent of Hollandaise, asparagus, daikon stars, truffled alfalfa, and true morels. For the Classic Set, the dish was served with a darker peppery sauce with baby corn, puffed rice, edible flowers, pickled daikon, and persimmon.

YANGMING SPRING (陽明春天)
(02) 2862-0178
No. 119-1, Jingshan Rd., Shilin Dist., Taipei City
(台北市士林區菁山路 119 之 1 號)
Mon 11:30am-2:30pm
Tue-Sun 11:30am-9pm
ymspring.com.tw
facebook.com/ymspring2007
guide.michelin.com/tw/en/taipei-region/taipei/restaurant/
yangming-spring-shilin

Hosu

This Michelin Green Star restaurant is a culinary love letter to Taiwan. Like 3927, Hosu has mastered the art of Taiwanese contemporary cuisine, but with an aesthetic that infers a sense of preservation: antiques, cast iron, weathered wood, Japanese ceramics in muted tones, and an overall wabi-sabi feel. Hosu’s menu includes meat; the restaurant is especially well-known for its char-grilling techniques.

Seasonal, local, and sustainably curated produce form the basis of Hosu’s cuisine, underpinned by an ethos of highlighting environmental issues in Taiwan’s “mountains, rivers, pastures, and seas.” The restaurant’s Chinese name translates as “good island,” and is also a play on words for “good things”; indeed, owner Ian Lee prioritizes sourcing ingredients from “good people” as well. Past seasonal dishes have included unique and local ingredients and tend to read in a similar meter, like song lyrics: imagine black eel with plum and red yeast rice (anka), sweet potato buns with smoked goose fat and balsamic vinegar, goose with black garlic and wontons, pork belly with tamarind and betelnut flower, or suckling pig with fermented bamboo shoots and lily bulb.

Although Hosu’s dishes are not specifically Taiwanese, its use of local ingredients and cooking methods evokes the best of Taiwan, letting slivers of tastebud nostalgia shine through. Perhaps it will happen with the sour herbaceousness of roselle or the muted fishiness of mullet roe. Perhaps it’s to be found in the fattiness of pork belly or the texture of betelnut flower.

Hosu goes beyond sustainable, ethical supply chains to retain its Green Star; QR codes are frequently included on its menus to allow patrons to explore the stories behind various ingredients. Lee and his team also make a conscious effort to maintain knowledge about local and seasonal produce, to counteract the “supermarket effect” of everything being available all the time, regardless of environmental impact or flavor.



Photos © MUME



HOSU (好嶼)
☎ (02) 2862-0178
📍 No. 17, Aly. 20, Ln. 300, Sec. 4, Ren'ai Rd., Da'an Dist., Taipei City
(台北市大安區仁愛路四段 300 巷 20 弄 17 號)
🕒 5:30pm-9pm
📱 www.instagram.com/hosu_tw
📘 facebook.com/hosutaiwan
🌟 guide.michelin.com/tw/en/taipei-region/taipei/restaurant/hosu



MUME

Another restaurant recommended by Michelin, MUME, has taken plating and presentation to a new level. The dark, minimal interior finished with industrial touches serves as the backdrop to a riot of color in each dish.

Owner and chef Richie Lin, a native of Hong Kong, has brought together a team with extensive international experience – from Australia’s Quay to New York’s Per Se to Copenhagen’s NOMA and Hong Kong’s NUR. Together, Lin, along with chefs Long Xiong and Kai Ward, create some of the finest contemporary Taiwanese cuisine in the country.

Beyond Michelin, MUME has been named the “best restaurant in Taiwan” every year but two since 2019 by The World’s 50 Best website, and ranked the 7th best in Asia. As with other distinguished restaurants, Lin and his team prize sustainability and local produce, offering a rotating tasting menu that makes wonderful use of the highest-quality Taiwan ingredients.

Edible flowers and layered flavors are a staple at MUME, as are ingredients that also serve as artistic or sculptural elements. Its current tasting menu includes tartlets topped with French sour cream and trout roe, combining a touch of sour and bitter in one bite. Another appetizer involves crisped towers of crab meat with wild rice shoots and numbing green pepper mayonnaise. Following that is Murray cod prepared in confit with sweet peas and coconut broth. The Mahi Mahi comes with fresh Taiwanese scallops paired with allium spice and lemon thyme oils.

The interior may be pared-back and minimal, but as with all Michelin restaurants, the flavors certainly are not. 🌟

MUME
☎ (02) 2862-0178
📍 1F, No. 28, Siwei Rd., Da'an Dist., Taipei City
(台北市大安區四維路 28 號 1 樓)
🕒 5:30pm-11pm
📱 www.mume.tw
📱 instagram.com/mume_taiwan
📘 www.facebook.com/mume.taiwan
🌟 guide.michelin.com/tw/en/taipei-region/taipei/restaurant/mume

ENGLISH AND CHINESE
Bread-wrapped Truffle Chicken | 童心未泯松露雞
Classic Set | 經典套餐
Deep Affection Braised Pork Soup | 深情款西魯肉
douhua | 豆花
East District | 東區
Foreign Monks Can Chant Sutras | 外國和尚會唸經
Green Star Set | 綠星套餐
guabao | 刈包
monkey-head mushroom | 猴頭菇
New Taiwanese Beef Soup | 新台灣牛肉湯
khòng-iô | 控窯
The East Becomes the West Beef Short Rib | 東成西就牛小排
Yangmingshan National Park | 陽明山國家公園



MAP

What's Your Favorite “Jiao”?

A Short Introduction to the Taiwan World of Dumplings

Taiwan is renowned for its incredibly diverse and flavorful cuisine. This culinary richness is a major draw for both discerning gourmets and casual food lovers. Local chefs are highly innovative, relishing the reimagining of classic dishes and creating of exciting new flavors. This pursuit of culinary excellence ensures a seemingly endless array of delicious options for diners. Below, let's look at the humble dumpling as an example of diversity and creativity.

TEXT & PHOTOS | VISION



LITTLE THINGS



Jiaozi is the general term for dumplings in Mandarin. One legend attributes their invention to Zhang Zhong-jing, a renowned Chinese physician from the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 AD). During a harsh winter, the legend goes, while visiting his hometown he witnessed many impoverished people suffering from frostbitten ears. To alleviate their suffering, he established an open kitchen and prepared a medicinal lamb stew. He then filled small dough wrappers with the ingredients of this nourishing stew and distributed the treats to the needy. This act of compassion was deeply appreciated, and is believed to have given rise to the tradition of eating dumplings during the Lunar New Year festival, which occurs in the winter.

Dumplings can be categorized by their preparation method, wrapper type, and filling. Those boiled in water are called *shuijiao* (“water dumplings”), those steamed are called *zhengjiao* (“steamed dumplings”), and those pan-fried are called *jianjiao* (“fried dumplings”). The most common meat filling for these dumplings is minced pork, often paired with cabbage or leek. However, a vast array of fillings exists. Dumplings of all sorts are readily available in supermarket freezers and dumpling eateries across the island.

Jianjiao bear some resemblance to *guotie* (“pot stickers”), which are typically longer. The primary distinction lies in their preparation: *jianjiao* are pan-fried with more water, resulting in a juicier dumpling compared to *guotie*. *Zhengjiao* typically feature thinner skins, which shorten steaming time, and are generously filled.

Dumpling skins are typically crafted from wheat flour, but *danjiao* (“egg dumplings”) offer a distinct alternative. Their wrappers are made from egg, making them a favored ingredient for hot-pot meals.

Shuijingjiao (“crystal dumplings”) have shimmering, translucent wrappers crafted from starch or sweet-potato flour. They often contain shrimp as their filling, earning them the alternative name of *xiajiao* (“shrimp dumplings”).

A departure from the standard *jiaozi* form, *yanjiao* (“swallow dumplings”) also have a thinner translucent skin. Originating in Fuzhou, China, these dumplings are aptly named, as “swallow” poetically describes the lightness of the skin, reminiscent of the effortless flight of a swallow.

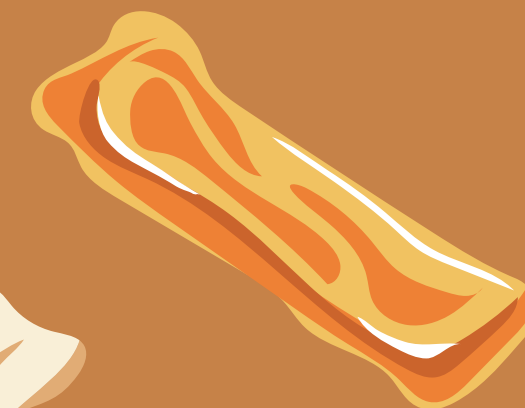
When served in soup, *shuijiao* become *tangjiao* (“soup dumplings”). The broth is often a tangy and spicy *suanlatang* (“sour and spicy soup”), featuring vegetables like carrot and bamboo shoots, and often including pig’s blood.

Finally, *yujiao* (“fish dumplings”) is yet another popular *jiaozi* variety. Filled with a savory fish paste, this type of dumpling is a frequent ingredient in hot pots.

The above represents just a small selection of the many *jiaozi* varieties. The world of this simple food offers endless opportunities for culinary exploration in Taiwan. 🍲

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

danjiao | 蛋餃
guotie | 鍋貼
jianjiao | 煎餃
jiaozi | 餃子
shuijiao | 水餃
shuijingjiao | 水晶餃
suanlatang | 酸辣湯
tangjiao | 湯餃
xiajiao | 蝦餃
yanjiao | 燕餃
yujiao | 魚餃
Zhang Zhong-jing | 張仲景
zhengjiao | 蒸餃



Quality Brews

Taiwan's Very Best Baristas

TEXT & PHOTOS | VISION

Have you heard about coffee makers from Taiwan winning awards in prestigious international coffee competitions? The coffee scene on the island is thriving, with countless café owners striving to brew coffee of the highest quality. Below is an overview of some of the highest-achieving coffee makers in Taiwan.

Over the past decade or so, Taiwanese baristas have consistently achieved global recognition, winning at many of the contests that are part of the World Coffee Championships (WCC), including the World Barista Championship (WBC), the World Brewers Cup (WBrC), and the World Latte Art Championship (WLAC). This consistent excellence reflects the dedication and skill pervasive within the local coffee-making community.

One reason for this success is the widespread availability of coffee – from convenience stores to high-end coffee houses – which has cultivated a discerning consumer base in Taiwan. The growing appreciation for high-quality coffee has driven coffee makers to continuously innovate and refine their products.

A shining star in Taiwan's coffee scene is **Berg Wu Ze-lin**, founder of **Simple Kaffa** (simplekaffa.com). After dominating the Taiwan Barista Championship for three straight years (2013-2015), he reached the pinnacle of his career by winning the prestigious WBC in 2016. Fueled by this success, Simple Kaffa has blossomed into a Taipei institution with multiple branches across the city.

The first female barista from Taiwan to win a world championship is **Sherry Hsu Shi-yuan**, who climbed to the top of the global coffee pantheon at the 2022 WBrC. Originally pursuing a stable but somewhat uninspiring career as a civil servant, she decided

to try something different before turning 30. She began studying the art of coffee making and never looked back. Relentless practice over the years has led to her achieving ultimate success. She is currently part of the barista team of **Coffee Lover's Planet** (www.coffee-lovers-planet.com.tw) in Hsinchu City.

In 2024, **Chang Kai-hao** emerged victorious at the Taiwan Barista Championship, thus securing his place as Taiwan's representative at the upcoming WBC. **Coffee Underwater** ([instagram.com/coffeeunderwater](https://www.instagram.com/coffeeunderwater)), a stylish café nestled in a tranquil side street off Taipei's Nanjing East Road, Section 3, is the proud home of this talented barista.

Fine coffee is more than just taste and aroma; presentation is paramount. The foamy surface of a freshly brewed latte provides the perfect canvas for baristas to showcase their artistic talents. One of Taiwan's leading latte artists is **Yi-Chen Xie**, who finished first in the 2024 World Latte Art Championship (WLAC). His latte art is truly remarkable. Crafting intricate details, he brings animals to life. He won the contest by creating images of a whale, a moose, and a dragon. His depictions are so delicate you might well hesitate to disturb these specially created masterpieces with your first sip. Xie runs **Style Café** ([instagram.com/coffeestyle_2017](https://www.instagram.com/coffeestyle_2017)) in the city of Yilan. ☪

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Berg Wu Ze-lin | 吳則霖 Chang Kai-hao | 張凱皓 Hsu Shi-yuan | 徐詩媛
Simple Kaffa | 興波咖啡 Xie Yi-chen | 謝溢宸

TAOYUAN INTERNATIONAL

Things to See and Do Close to Taiwan's Most Important International Hub

TEXT & PHOTO | VISION

Before the 2017 opening of the Taoyuan Airport MRT line, intercity buses were the primary mode of transport for travelers to reach central Taipei and other urban areas from Taoyuan International Airport. The metro line's introduction has significantly enhanced travel options for airport users. This includes transit passengers, allowing them to explore Taiwan beyond the airport during layovers, rather than simply waiting in the terminals.

If you have a layover, consider exploring a bit of Taoyuan. Take the metro a few stations south from the airport towards central Taoyuan City. Three stations are worth a stop: Linghang (A17), Taoyuan HSR Station (A18), and Taoyuan Sports Park (A19).

The area surrounding the Taiwan High Speed Rail (THSR) Taoyuan Station, known as the Taoyuan Qingpu HSR Special Area, is currently being developed into a modern business zone, administrative center, shopping district, and transportation hub for Taoyuan City. Of particular interest to both international tourists and local visitors is the **Gloria Outlets** shopping mall, a one-stop destination for shopping, dining, and entertainment. Located just outside the THSR Taoyuan Station complex, which includes the metro's Taoyuan HSR Station, the mall features a variety of shops offering many international brands. There is also a food court with a wide range of local and international cuisine options. To the north of the mall, visitors can enjoy entertainment at **Shin Kong Cinemas Taoyuan Qingpu** and at the **Xpark** (www.xpark.com.tw), a large aquarium that is home to a diverse collection of exotic fish.

Two recently developed parks are further north and south of the THSR station area, respectively. To the north, close to MRT Linghang Station, is the **Hengshan Calligraphy Art Park**, which features an artificial pond, and the Hengshan

Calligraphy Art Center, where visitors can admire exquisite calligraphy works. The center, which opened in 2021, is part of the Taoyuan Museum of Fine Arts system (tmofa.tycg.gov.tw). Both the park and the museum's buildings were designed with calligraphy in mind. Looking from above, the buildings resemble inkstones, and the pond an inkwell.

To the south, near MRT Taoyuan Sports Park Station, you can take your little ones to the recently opened **Taoyuan Children's Art Center** (tmofa.tycg.gov.tw), housed in an architecturally interesting edifice sporting a sleek slanted-roof design. From the children's art center, you can look down to the **Green Pond Park**, a new park with an artificial pond and a striking footbridge. Just across the road from the art center is the site of the Taoyuan Museum of Fine Arts, which is currently under construction (slated for completion in 2026).

MRT Taoyuan Sports Park Station is named after the 12,000-capacity **Rakuten Taoyuan Baseball Stadium**, located nearby. Here, you can catch games from Taiwan's professional baseball league. The stadium is home to the Rakuten Monkeys team. The station itself has a distinct baseball theme, with the floor designed to resemble a baseball field – perfect for photo ops.

Another attraction is the **Global Mall Taoyuan A19**, a shopping mall, located directly across from the metro station exit. ☪

ENGLISH AND CHINESE

Global Mall Taoyuan A19 | 環球購物中心 桃園 A19
Hengshan Calligraphy Art Center | 橫山書法藝術館
Rakuten Taoyuan Baseball Stadium | 樂天桃園棒球場
Taoyuan Children's Art Center | 桃園市兒童美術館
Gloria Outlets | 華泰名品城
Green Pond Park | 青塘園
Hengshan Calligraphy Art Park | 橫山書法公園
Shin Kong Cinemas Taoyuan Qingpu | 桃園青埔新光影城
Taoyuan Qingpu HSR Special Area | 桃園青埔高鐵特區



Max Gilbert, co-founder of Ugly Half Beer

FROM GUAVA GOSE TO TOASTEA

TEXT | JENNA LYNN CODY
PHOTOS | RAY CHANG

The Creative Beers of Local Brewer Ugly Half

Tucked away in New Taipei City, Ugly Half Beer produces a unique brand of Taiwanese craft beer. Founders Max Gilbert and Harn Sun blend international brewing expertise with local ingredients and cultural references, resulting in innovative brews like Guava Gose and TOASTea. Let's explore the world of Ugly Half and discover Taiwan's exciting craft beer scene.

Just off a main thoroughfare through an industrial area in Wugu District, New Taipei City, a building with purple and yellow graffiti monsters stands out among the chockablock furniture wholesalers and factories. The purple one is holding a hop – as in the hops used to make beer – and looks a bit tipsy; the yellow one shows off purple and green teeth in a mischievous grin.

Behind these punk rock door gods, the brewers of Ugly Half Beer are busy creating seasonal and small-batch experimental beers with unexpected Taiwanese twists. The result is an innovative and often-changing lineup of beers that are as creative and full of local references as they are tasty.

Since Taiwan Beer – originally Takasago Beer – was first brewed in 1920, locally produced beer has been a staple of Taiwanese culture. Although the flagship light lager remains the nation's bestselling brew, in recent years several Taiwan-based craft brewers such as Ugly Half have been experimenting with local ingredients and cultural connections.

The founders of Ugly Half Beer, husband-and-wife team Max Gilbert and Harn Sun, built their business in Taiwan with intentionality supported by a wealth of experience. The couple, from New Zealand and the United States respectively, met in Shanghai, and their relocation to Taiwan was both a business and personal decision.



"We always liked coming to Taiwan, and Harn has been coming here since she was a kid," says Gilbert. "There was a pretty international community of youngish locals who would be open to the product, and a great food and beer scene overall.... We were starting a family as well, and Taiwan is a great place (for that)."

Both have extensive international backgrounds in food and beverage: Sun in hospitality and restaurants, and Gilbert in food and beer. They've brought in a wide range of talent, with experienced professionals from both New Zealand and the United Kingdom working alongside Taiwanese brewers.

"We bring an international understanding... but the personality of the brand is very Taiwanese," Gilbert emphasizes. "You can't do that with the material so much because hops don't grow here, but one of our biggest (sellers) is Guava Gose – involving local guava, local wheat, and local coral reef salt."

Ugly Half's **Guava Gose** indeed combines local wheat and guava with coral reef salt from Houwan village in Pingtung County in a lactic acid fermentation; the final product has a unique and complex fruitiness balancing the sour and salt. Each bottle comes with a packet of plum powder – just as sliced guava is sold in Taiwanese market stalls – for creating a rim on the drinking glass.

This commitment to Taiwan shows in all of their core offerings. Their **TOASTea** is an amber lager with a "Taiwan breakfast shop concept." It's brewed with Assam black tea, and 5% of the malt content is replaced with bread crust from a local Mei Er Mei breakfast shop, resulting in a smooth caramel flavor with a hint of toast and sweet black tea, as the name implies.

Ugly Half also celebrates Taiwan through aesthetics – all but one of its label artists are Taiwanese, and their designs all draw on cultural touchstones. In addition to plum powder, the Guava Gose label, created by local artist Chen Kayn, uses bright neons to evoke a fruit stand at a local night market. **TOASTea** comes packaged in a paper bag reminiscent of Taiwanese breakfast sandwiches.

Another core beer, a hazy IPA whimsically named **Through The Mist I See The Fairyland**, boasts a label created by celebrated Taiwanese master puppet theater stage painter Chen Mingshan. The design resembles the color-soaked backdrop for a local puppet theater troupe putting on a play about Penglai, a heavenly mountain in Chinese mythology. The mist surrounding Penglai is metaphorically tied to the idea of a "hazy" IPA.



The core beer selection at Ugly Half also includes their bestselling **Hoppy Apple Cider**, which balances the sweetness of apples with the bitterness of hops, and the **Endless Summer Saison**, a traditional Belgian-style saison that pairs well with food. Their offerings are rotated seasonally; one may find unique flavors such as **Oyster Stout** in cooler months. The Oyster Stout is made with calcium carbonate and amino acids from oysters harvested in coastal Chiayi County's Dongshi Township.



Graffiti monsters outside the brewery



Tasting room with production area view



Ugly Half Beer products

Please drink responsibly

“The Oyster Stout is a little briny, a bit of soy sauce... have that with raw oysters, if you can,” Gilbert suggests. “Guava Gose is the best overall food beer, a bit of a surprise, a dark horse. But great with a classic Taiwanese fried chicken. Sometimes you get pickles, like with Korean fried chicken; it kind of takes the place of the pickles.”

These core offerings are complemented by small-batch “R&D” beers. The purpose of the R&D series is to experiment – to try new things and see what works. One of their current offerings, an **Espresso Sour**, is available at select bars and restaurants in Taiwan. Fundamentally a sour beer, it combines the earthiness of espresso with tart, juicy pineapple, along with creamy coconut, providing a unique drinking experience.

With R&D, Gilbert says, Ugly Half is “trying to change the way people think about beer. The fine line between what people are used to and what’s new, and how to nudge people in a certain direction. But we don’t want to make any beer that we wouldn’t happily drink ourselves.”

Although Ugly Half tends not to distribute its products in supermarkets, they can be found in most establishments with a large or curated beer selection, especially in Taipei but also to some extent across Taiwan. These include most ABV Bar & Kitchen locations, Fake Sober in Taipei’s Xinyi District, and Highballers’ Bar near MRT Shuanglian Station.

Sun and Gilbert have faced their share of challenges, from delays in importing the necessary equipment to increases in the price of malt. “Beer like this is expensive to make in general,” Gilbert observes, noting that it’s difficult to “make something people can afford but still... what you want to make.”

Ultimately, however, all creative endeavors come with such challenges, some unique to the beer industry, some to all businesses, and some unique to a place. For Ugly Half, creativity is a core element of the duo’s purpose. “It’s an incredibly flexible beverage,” Gilbert remarks. “You can explore a range of styles – do you want to add fruit, do you want to add spices? (Do you want to) go in a vegetal direction, like green onion? Age in a barrel, (or) ferment spontaneously with whatever’s lurking in the air? You can do a million different things....”



Labels are created by local artists



UGLY HALF BEER (西鬼啤酒)
● www.uglyhalfbeer.com
● uglyhalfbeer
● facebook.com/uglyhalf

ENGLISH AND CHINESE
Chen Kai-en | 陳楷恩
Chen Mingshan | 陳明山
Dongshi | 東石
Guava Gose | 芭樂鹽小麥
Houwan | 後灣
Mei Er Mei | 美而美
Through The Mist I See The Fairyland
撥雲霧見蓬萊仙島
TOASTea | 吐司去 (掉的) 邊大冰紅
Wugu Industrial Area | 五股工業區



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FOOD Taipei City

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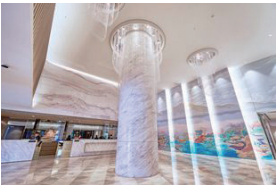
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STAY Taipei City

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FOOD Taipei City

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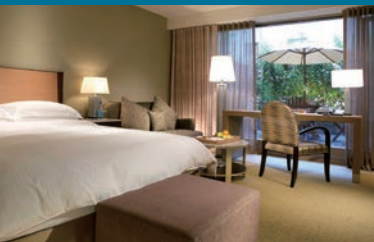


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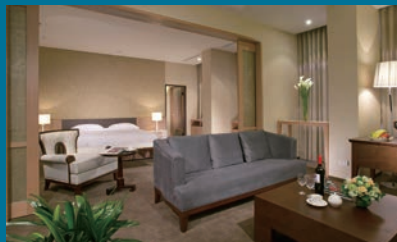
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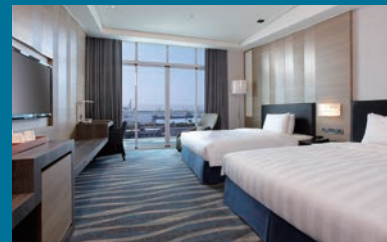
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