

TAIPEI GUIDE



Trip planning you'll love

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Essential Information

This enchanting metropolis always seems to be busy, never slowing down or taking time to relax. Taipei has all the typical characteristics of a contemporary Asian global city: an excellent public transportation system, a glitzy central business district with signature skyscrapers, overwhelming shopping malls and busy nightspots.

Despite the erratic traffic, overcrowded streets and pollution, Taipei has also an amiable face of night markets, back streets, beautiful temples and friendly people – your days here will pass unusually quickly and very pleasantly. And when you get tired of the urban chaos, there are plenty of outdoor options in the areas surrounding the city – mountains, gorges and hot springs resorts.

Time Zone

CST (UTC/GMT +8 hours), no daylight saving time.

Contacts

Tourist Contacts

- Tourist information hotline: +886 2 2717 3737
- Travel information hotline (toll-free, 24/7): 800 011 765
- Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport: +886 3 383 2194
- Kaohsiung International Airport: +886 7 805 7888

Currency: New Taiwanese Dollar (TWD/NT) = 100 cents.

The easiest way to get Taiwanese money is to use the ATMs that are literally on every corner or in 7-Elevens (part of the international Plus or Cirrus networks). You can also exchange money in the banks (second most common option) or in hotels, but the rates are not as good there. Private exchange offices are not widespread in Taiwan.

Major cards (Visa, Master Card, JCB) are widely accepted and paying with them is very convenient in Taiwan. Amex and Diners club are accepted at fewer places – always check the stickers on the door.

Tax Refunds

Foreigners are eligible to apply for a VAT refund (5%) for goods that were purchased at shops and department stores registered as a part of the Tax Refund Shopping (TRS) chain in the minimum amount of 3000 NT per single day and store. Keep in mind that you need to fill in a tax refund form and have it confirmed in the store, and then present the goods together with the forms at the customs office upon your departure.

Prices

By Asian standards, Taiwan is an expensive country and Taipei an expensive city. Budget travellers can save a lot of money by sleeping in dorms and eating on the streets in the night markets and local noodle shops.

- Meal, inexpensive restaurant – 80 NT
- Meal for 2, mid-range restaurant, three-course – 600 NT
- Combo Meal at McDonalds – 117 NT

- Bottle of water at supermarket (1.5 liter) – 30 NT
- Domestic beer (0.5 liter, draught) – 50 NT
- Cappuccino – 80 NT
- Gasoline (1 liter) – 32 NT
- Hostels (average price/night) – 400 NT
- 4* hotel (average price/night) – 4000 NT
- Car-hire (medium-sized car/day) – 3000 NT

Tipping

Tipping is not customary in Taiwan. The restaurants usually include a service charge in the bill. However, it is usual to tip bellhops in good hotels (around 100NT) or staff in expat bars/clubs.

Electricity

The standard electricity supply in Taiwan is 110-120V, 60 Hz. You should check your electronic devices carefully to see if you need a voltage transformer. The most common socket types are North American Non-Grounded and North American Grounded with one round and two flat pins. You might need this adapter even if coming from the US/Canada as the grounding and polarisation can differ – check your devices in advance.

Languages

The main spoken language is Chinese, namely several dialects – Minnan / Taiwanese (Fujian province) and Hakka (southern China). In the larger cities, many younger people can speak English at a conversational level. Expect the staff of tourist-related businesses and attractions to speak English fairly well. Many people are also proficient in Japanese, given the numbers of Japanese tourists coming to Taiwan and the history of the island.

Mobile Phones

The standard mobile network (GSM/GPRS/3G) has a very good coverage across the whole country including the mountains. Check with your operator in advance regarding compatibility if coming from a non-GSM standard country.

In case you need a phone with a Taiwanese number, there are several solutions: first of all, pre-paid SIM cards are readily available at street vendors (try 7-11). If you don't want to use your own phone, you can buy one very cheap at the countless markets or phone shops – but check thoroughly if it really works. You can also rent a phone, which is most easily done at the airport in the myfone kiosks.

The country code for Taiwan is +886, the city code for Taipei is 2.

Internet

Getting connected has never been easier: there's a brand new system of free Wi-Fi hotspots all around the city centre covering all the important hubs. All you need to do is to set up an account at Taipei Free (www.tpe-free.taipei.gov.tw) If you need a regular Internet café, those are plentiful and easy to find too. However, these look more like 'gaming cafés' since most people visit them to play online games on a steady connection.

Internet Resources

- Official Tourist Website (www.taipeitravel.net)
- Travel Information (eng.taiwan.net.tw)
- Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org)

- January 1 – Founding Day
- Chinese New Year (1st day of the 1st lunar month)
- February 28 – 228 Peace Memorial Day
- April 4 – Women's Day & Children's Day
- 15 days after the spring equinox – Tomb Sweeping Day
- Dragon Boat Festival (5th day of the 5th lunar month)
- Mid-Autumn Festival (15th day of the 8th lunar month)
- October 10 – National Celebration Day
- Chinese New Year's Eve (the last day of the 12th lunar month)

State-owned companies and government offices close on these days but the majority of the shops remain open, at least for limited hours. Everything shuts down during the Chinese New Year celebrations.

Opening Hours

The usual business hours for banks and post offices are 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. during the week and 9 a.m. to midnight on Saturdays.

Shops and malls usually stay open until late, at least to 9 p.m. The night markets start up at 6 p.m. and stay busy well into the night.

Museums are generally open from around 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., but the precise opening hours mostly vary.

Public Transportation

Taipei public transportation system is amazing indeed, it is fast and convenient. There's one downside to it, though: it is not integrated and various payment methods are in use. The fares are based on distance and there are two ways how to purchase a ticket. You can get regular one-way tickets at ATMs located at every MRT station – these tickets are valid for the MRT only. When taking a bus, the fare is based on the zone system and you need to buy your ticket on board.

If staying in Taipei for more than a few days, you might consider purchasing the **TaipeiPass** that is valid in MRT as well as in buses regardless of the company – they will carry an identification sticker on the door. The pass is very easy to use – you just tap the machine at the entrance of paid area/when getting on the bus. It can be purchased in every MRT station in the information center. A one-day pass costs 180 NT, a two-day pass 310 NT and a five-day pass 700 NT.

Metro Taipei (Mass Rapid Transit) (english.trtc.com.tw) – a convenient system that will take you around the main sights and beyond the city centre. The system is rapidly expanding – there are five lines and six more under construction or planned. Be sure to get the newest map of the system from the information center. You can purchase a token for a single ride – the price varies according to the actual distance.

Buses (www.taipeibus.taipei.gov.tw) – Taipei bus service is just as efficient as the MRT. The buses have all the information about schedules, routes and destinations in English so it is very easy to plan your trip. There are several companies operating the buses but it doesn't make any differ-

ence. The payment system is a bit complicated – you may be required to pay when you get on or off the bus. Just follow the way locals do it. You also need to hail the bus as it is coming. A single bus ride costs 15 to 30 NT depending on how many zones you travel through.

Taxis

Taxis are a quick, easy and relatively cheap way (when compared to other countries) of getting around the city. Just search for the distinctive yellow cars. All are equipped with meters stating the exact fare.

The starting fare is 70 NT for the first 1.25 km and 5 NT for every subsequent 250m. The fare can also vary according to the area and there are several routes that are charged at a fixed price. Surcharges for luggage (10 NT), phone booking (10 NT), late night travel (20%) or holidays (variable) apply.

Don't expect the drivers to speak English – always have your destination written down in Chinese.

Phone numbers:

- Sunrise Taxi, +886 23397575
- Chung Tai Radio Taxi Service, +886 22213000
- Chin Yin Taxi Radio Service, +886 27467811
- Big Taipei Radio Taxi Service, +886 87872001

Regional Transportation

- **Taiwan High Speed Rail** (HSR) (www.thsrc.com.tw) – bullet train system connecting Taipei with the West Coast all the way to Kaohsiung. You need to book your tickets online/by phone up to two weeks in advance.
- **Taiwan Railways** (www.railway.gov.tw) – regular railway routes, tickets can be booked in

advance and it is recommended to do so when travelling on weekends or prior to holidays.

If you need to travel only to nearby cities, the commuter trains are the best option – they run on a very frequent schedule and the tickets can be purchased right on board.

- **Buses** – there is a state-owned bus service as well as private companies that offer a more convenient service (usually). Unfortunately, the system is not very comprehensible and can be sometimes chaotic, with only Chinese maps and schedules at the stops.

Driving

If you plan on staying in Taipei only, car rental is not recommended – public transport is very easy to use and efficient while the streets are often congested and chaotic.

You can drive in Taiwan with your international licence for 30 days, then you must apply for a permit. The road system is great, comprehensible and well-signposted, with the roads in very good condition. Therefore it is not surprising that you must pay a toll every 30 kms on the highway – the best way is to purchase prepaid tickets at the toll-booths or convenience stores.

There's a downside to it, too. Especially in the cities, the drivers (regardless the type of vehicle they drive) tend to be reckless, aggressive, unnecessarily fast and neglect the traffic rules. The presence of scooters is a great pain too – they zigzag between the cars and never stick to the motorcycle lane. Be careful, drive slowly and never mess with the drivers.

As everyone tends to ignore any and all traffic rules, the state of the traffic might be best described as anarchy. There are some general practical guidelines, though:

- the urban speed limit is 50 km/h
- always check both mirrors and both lanes when you turn
- a light flash means: "I'm coming through"
- wait a moment when the light turns green at an intersection – drivers often run the red lights.

Walkability

Taipei is an amazingly walkable city that can be easily explored on foot. And when you get tired, you're never far from some public transport station. Be especially vigilant for cars and bikes on the pedestrian crossings. Getting around on a bicycle can be a memorable experience, though a bit dangerous maybe: there are no separate lanes protecting bikes from vehicular traffic.

All the major Taipei sights, amenities and MRT stations are wheelchair-accessible. Some areas can be very crowded which makes access more difficult, however.

Food vendors at the night markets:

- Tianbula (Taiwanese tempura)
- Stinky tofu
- Fried pork buns
- Taiwanese sausage
- Mango ice
- Cong you bing – scallion pancakes
- Oyster omelet
- Braised soy bean and tea eggs
- Ba-wan – dough filled with pork, bamboo and mushrooms

Other dishes:

- Spareribs with herbs
- Aiyu Jelly
- Sanbeiji – chicken in thick sauce
- Eel noodles
- A-gei – fried tofu with surimi and noodles
- Jiaozi – dumplings with ground meat

Drinks:

- Bubble Tea – milk tea with tapioca pearls
- Sea-salt coffee
- Kaoliang – the most popular alcoholic beverage, distilled from grains

Legal Age

The legal age for buying and consuming alcohol is 18. Smoking is forbidden in all indoor public places.

February

- Chinese New Year
- Lantern Festival (www.taipeilanternfestival.com)

June

- Dragon Boat Festival

August

- Ghost Festival (en.wikipedia.org)

November

- Taroko Gorge Marathon (www.sportsnet.org.tw)
- Taipei International Flora Expo (en.wikipedia.org)
- Art Taipei (www.art-taipei.com)

Free Things To Do

- Elephant Mountain – provides great views of the city and Taipei 101
- Night markets
- Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall
- Beitou Hot Springs
- Longshan Temple
- Yangmingshan National Park

Shopping

Wherever there's no price displayed, you are expected to bargain. There's a great variability of shopping experiences, from night markets to huge department stores and upscale boutiques.

Good souvenirs: jade bracelets, Chinese herbs, tea, keychains, dried pork floss, handmade products by the native peoples.

- DO always have the names of streets and sights written in Chinese – it will come in handy when asking for directions or taking a cab.
- DO share meals in restaurants – it's the Chinese way of dining – order two more dishes than the number of guests and share from the middle of the table.
- DO a double-check before you cross the street – the traffic is crazy.
- DO bring mosquito repellent with you.
- DO reserve enough time for the National Palace Museum – it is full of treasures.
- DO NOT stick the ends of your chopsticks into your food – this is how the offerings are made to the ghosts of ancestors.
- DO NOT discuss politics or relations with mainland China in general.
- DO NOT throw away your receipts – they are numbered and there's a huge lottery every few months.

Safety

Taipei is among the very safest cities in Asia. Common sense should be always applied, though. Keep a close eye on your belongings in crowded areas, especially the night markets – pickpocketing is common there and tourists are the primary targets.

Solo women travellers should not hail taxis on the streets; it's much safer to book one through a company.

The typhoon season lasts from July to early fall – always be sure to check the weather reports before heading to the mountains. In the wilderness, there are many poisonous snakes. When you hike, try to make as much noise as possible to give the animals plenty of time to notice your presence and get out of your way.

You also need to take care on the streets – the Taiwanese driving style is reckless and erratic. Always look twice before crossing the road, and when cycling or driving, be very careful.

In Taipei, the tap water is safe to drink. In the countryside it's best not to rely on what locals say and buy bottled water instead. Always buy reputable brands of bottled water – the lesser-known ones are sometimes only bottled tap water!

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Shilin Night Market / 士林夜市

The largest and most popular night market in the city. Join the locals and taste the amazing variety of Taiwanese snacks!

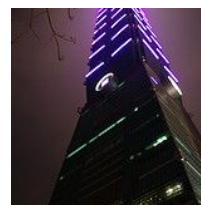
Jǐhé Rd, Shihlin District, Taipei City, Taiwan 111

GPS: N25.08728, E121.52450

Opening hours:

Daily: 5 p.m. – midnight

Opening hours are approximate.



Taipei 101 Skyscraper / Taipei 101

A huge and amazing skyscraper that used to be the highest building in the world between 2004 and 2010. It is bamboo shaped and a must-see place for all who visit Taipei.

GPS: N25.03359, E121.56476

Opening hours:

Daily: 9 a.m. – 10 p.m.

Last entry at 9:15 p.m.

Opening hours during holidays are subject to change.

Admission:

Adults: TWD 500

Children (under 12): TWD 450

Children (under 115 cm): free



Puppetry Art Center of Taipei / 台北偶戲館

A home for the preservation of puppetry culture in Taiwan presenting this traditional subject in a modern setting. Join the puppetry class!

GPS: N25.04727, E121.56196

Opening hours:

Daily: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Admission:

Adults: TWD 50

Students, military: TWD 40

Children (under 3), seniors (over 65): free





Huashan Culture Park

A former winery, now serving as culture center, you can see various exhibitions, exhibitions and performances here.

GPS: N25.04373, E121.52905

Opening hours:

Daily: 9:30 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Times of activities are announced in advance. Check the official website.

Admission:

The park is freely accessible.

Some venues and events may require admission fees.

D



Guandu Natural Park

A natural park consisting of marshes, wetlands and hills. It is suitable for watching birds that are nesting here. Hikers may enjoy trails built here.

GPS: N25.11941, E121.46931

Opening hours:

Apr – Sep:

Mon – Fri: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (no entry after 4:30 p.m.)

Sat – Sun: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (no entry after 5:30 p.m.)

Nov – Mar:

Mon – Fri: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (no entry after 4:30 p.m.)

Sat – Sun: 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. (no entry after 5 p.m.)

Admission:

Adults: TWD 50

Students (elementary and middle schools), seniors (over 65): TWD 30

Children (up to 90 cm), disabled: free

E



Tian'en Temple

It is a center of the I-Kuan Tao religious movement built in traditional Chinese palace style. The temple has 4 floors and is very impressive.

No. 37-2, Ln. 38, Sec. 3, Zhinan Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

GPS: N24.97039, E121.59198

Opening hours:

Daily: 7 a.m. – 6 p.m.

F



Taipei Philharmonic Orchestra

Built in memory of Henry Mazer, a famous conductor. The concerts of philharmonic orchestra take place here and there is a small exposition devoted to him.

No. 7, Sec. 1, Jinan Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

GPS: N25.04275, E121.52193

Opening hours:

Daily: 12:30 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Closed on national holidays.

G



Xinyi Public Assembly Hall

An exhibition and performance hall located in the former Taipei City's Military Dependents' Village. Offers impressive contrast of modern and old architecture.

GPS: N25.03197, E121.56191

Opening hours:

Tue – Sun: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Closed on national holidays.

Admission:

Admission to the hall is free.

H



The Garden

An intriguing project showing a live tree in a cage. It has somehow a peaceful atmosphere. If you have some time, visit this place.

GPS: N25.04012, E121.54911

Opening hours:

The project is a public open space.

I



National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall

A monument built in memory of Chiang Kai-shek. It is an amazing building that shows the respect of Taiwan people towards Chiang Kai-shek.

GPS: N25.03475, E121.52192

Opening hours:

Daily: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Admission:

Admission to the hall is free.

J



Huiji Temple

This temple was built by immigrants from China. It is decorated with very interesting statues and it is not as overcrowded as other temples.

No. 26, Lane 326, Sec. 1, Zhicheng Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

GPS: N25.10334, E121.53088

Opening hours:

Daily: 5 a.m. – 7 p.m.

K



Zhongzheng Mountain and Zhuzihu Area

A charming district of Taipei with Zhongzheng mountain. There are hiking trails, if you want to explore Taipei visit also this place.

GPS: N25.15030, E121.52054

L



Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines

A private museum focused on aboriginal cultures of Taiwan. Its entrance is notable for the large totem pole carved in aboriginal style.

No. 282, Sec. 2, Zhishan Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

GPS: N25.10089, E121.55148

Opening hours:

Tue – Sun: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Closed between Jan 20 and Feb 20.

Guided tour (in Chinese): Sat – Sun: 2 p.m.

Admission:

Adults: TWD 150

Students, seniors: TWD 100

M



Jia Art Gallery

An art gallery focusing on contemporary Taiwanese and Chinese artist's works. It is a place where artists can sell their works but also share their ideas.

1F-1, No.30, Sec.3, Chung-Shan N. Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

GPS: N25.06535, E121.52104

Opening hours:

Daily: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

N



Hu Shih Memorial Hall

A memorial hall dedicated to Dr. Hu Shih, a proponent of liberalism. The memorial hall was established after his death in 1962 and it shows an exposition about his life.

No. 130, Sec. 2, Yanjiuyuan Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

GPS: N25.03992, E121.61725

Opening hours:

Tue – Sat: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Closed on national holidays.

Admission:

Admission to the hall is free.

O



Zhishan Exhibition Hall

An archaeological site and museum, where you can admire human remains that are over 2500 years old. Its exposition is very impressive and shows the prehistory of Taipei.

No. 120, Yusheng St., Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

GPS: N25.10410, E121.53260

Phone:

+8862 8866 6258

Opening hours:

Mon – Fri: advance booking of guides required

Sat – Sun, public holidays: 11 a.m. – noon, 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Admission:

Mon – Fri: guide: TWD 50

Sat – Sun, public holidays: free tours

P



The Ch'ien Mu House

A former residence of Ch'ien Mu, one of the most important historians, philosopher and Confucian of the 20th century China. Nowadays it is serving as his memorial.

GPS: N25.09433, E121.54630

Opening hours:

Tue – Sun: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Closed on national holidays.

Admission:

Admission to the house is free.



Office of Administration Commission / Taiwan Bu-Zheng-Shi-Si

Yamen Taiwan Bu-Zheng-Shi-Si Yamen

An interesting building that was home of government agency when Taiwan received status of Chinese province in 1887.

GPS: N25.03145, E121.51112

Opening hours:

Tue – Sun: 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Closed on Chinese New Year (for five days starting Chinese New Year's Eve), Tomb Sweeping Day, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival.



Jump Sculpture

A modern and thought provoking urban art sculpture in the shape of a kitchen knife. Those who like modern art should go see this sculpture.

GPS: N25.05720, E121.54840

Opening hours:

The project is situated in a public open space.



Bailusi Mountain

This mountain is suitable for cycling and hiking and it offers lots of trails. There is a small pond close to the mountain where egrets have their nesting place.

GPS: N25.07734, E121.60057



Rialto Cucina Italiana

An Italian restaurant with peaceful and cozy atmosphere, if you want to enjoy some Italian food in Taipei this is the right place for you.

GPS: N25.04011, E121.55704

Phone:

+8862 2778 1536

Opening hours:

Daily: 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.; 5:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m.



Alleycat's Pizza

It is said that you can get the best pizza in Taipei here. They also offer amazing cider on the tap.

GPS: N25.03292, E121.52898

Opening hours:

Sun – Thu: 5 p.m. – 11 p.m.

Fri – Sat: 5 p.m. – midnight



Very Thai Restaurant

A very modern Thai restaurant with extensive menu containing lot of seafood, vegetable and meat dishes. One of the best choices for Thai food lovers.

GPS: N25.05915, E121.54441

Phone:

+8862 2546 6745

Opening hours:

Mon – Fri: 11 a.m. – 10 p.m.

Sat – Sun: 11 a.m. – 10:30 p.m.





Bishan Temple

An impressive temple dedicated to the hero Chen Yuan-kuang and his generals Li Po-yao and Ma Ren. The temple is located on the hill so it offers wonderful view of Taipei.

No. 24, Bishan Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

GPS: N25.09555, E121.58767

Opening hours:

Daily: 5 a.m. – 10 p.m.



Taipei Costume and Culture Center

This cultural center and museum is located in the former office building. There was textile industry in the past, nowadays you can admire various exhibitions of clothes here.

No. 9, Sec. 2, Xiyuan Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

GPS: N25.03227, E121.49795

Opening hours:

Mon – Fri: 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Sat – Sun: 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Admission:

The admission varies according to the events.



The Lin Yutang House

A mansion of Lin Yutang, a famous writer and humorist. It is very interesting building that combines eastern and western architecture.

111, Section 2, Yangde Boulevard, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China

GPS: N25.10954, E121.54694

Opening hours:

Exhibition hours:

Tue – Sun: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Dining service hours:

Tue – Sun: 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Admission:

General admission: TWD 30

