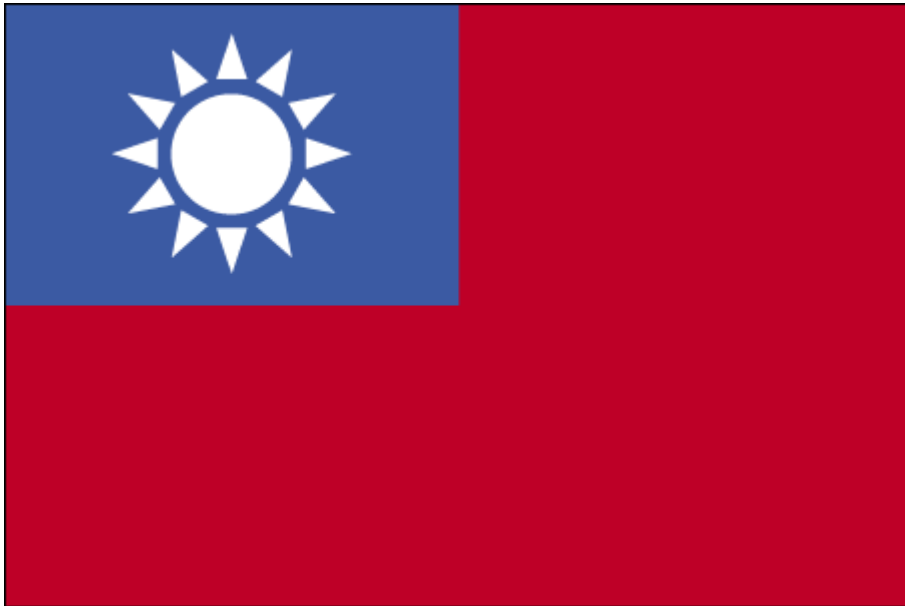


Taiwan

台灣



NAME: Republic of China
CAPITAL: Taipei
LANGUAGE: Mandarin
RELIGION: Buddhism & Others
CURRENCY: New Taiwan Dollar

Getting Started

When to Visit

There are a few seasons in [Taiwan](#), the short and cool winter, the wet and rainy typhoon, and the long, hot, and tropical summer. Winters run from about November to February, but winter in this context is not like much of the northern hemisphere as temperatures only drop to about the 70s°F (21-26°C) during the days, but nights can fall to the 50s°F (10-15°C) and if it rains can feel very cold. Taipei and the north is generally cloudy during the winter, as the south is generally sunny and clear. Beginning in about March, the country becomes hot and tropical as temperatures rise to the 90s°F (30°C) if not hotter. These temperatures continue to be hot until about November, but this season also brings in the rains, humidity, and beginning in about June and lasting until as late as November, typhoons are also possible. During this time a few typhoons are common and in the inland mountains, rain is common.

A final point to consider before planning your travel is local holidays. Holidays can make travel either more attractive, such as for large festivals, or less attractive due to tourist site closings and more expensive transportation options, so make sure you look into this before booking your trip. Here is a list of [Taiwans' Holiday Schedule](#).

Weather

Although weather can be generalized based upon years past, for more up to date weather patterns and predicted future weather patterns, visit weather websites like [weather.com](#); many local news sources also have information for international weather forecasts.

For more travel information & tips visit [www.SafariTheGlobe.com](#)

Tours & Cruises

If you're looking for a pre-arranged trip, that involves little effort on your part, then you should consider going on an organized tour or cruise. Organized tours and cruises vary from all expenses included to only daily tours and perhaps hotels included in the price, but all the options below will help you arrange all the details so you don't have to worry about finding the best deal or right hotel.

[Celebrity Cruises](#): High end cruise line catered to adults who enjoy the luxury treatment celebrities enjoy.

[Oceania Cruises](#): Oceania boasts "intimate and luxurious ships" with an emphasis on service and luxury.

[Princess Cruise Lines](#): Cruises for all ages and families.

[Road Scholar](#): For older adults, Road Scholar offers tours with an educational emphasis; formerly known as Elder Hostel.

[Royal Caribbean](#): Cruises for all ages and families.

Guidebooks

If you are just traveling on business and have little free time or are already familiar with [Taiwan](#), you may not need anything more than this guide! However, if you need more detailed and up to date information, there are a couple guidebooks available for travel in Taiwan.

[Lonely Planet](#): Great maps and updated often with comprehensive housing information, restaurants, & transportation options. Backpackers and adventurers love these guidebooks.

[National Geographic Traveler](#): Almost more of an information book about Germany, than a guidebook; offers great pictures, maps, history,

and culture. Popular with armchair travelers and history buffs on organized tours.

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Culture

Personality, Culture, & Identity

[Taiwan](#) or the Republic of China? Chinese, Taiwanese, both, or aboriginal? Democratic on paper or in reality? Taiwan is a country (or just an island) that is confusing to both locals and foreigners alike. Politically it claims mainland [China](#), while mainland China's government claims Taiwan. The people are primarily ethnic Chinese, but they identify in many ways. Many people aren't even sure if Taiwan can (or should) be considered a country. After all, didn't they lose recognition due to mainland China's power rather than their own faults? Or was it a combination of both?

Politically, historically, culturally, and geographically, [Taiwan](#) is and always has been somewhere on the periphery of [China](#), although never completely integrated with the mainland. Today little has changed; most of the people are now of Han Chinese descent, but in their opinion they still remain on the periphery of the mainland, not sure if they truly are a part of the mainland, something attached in a way, or something entirely removed.

Each [Taiwanese](#) identifies differently; in some cases it is based on politics. Ethnic minorities identify by their ethnicity, but the majority of the people in Taiwan are ethnic Han Chinese. These people primarily identify as "Chinese," "Taiwanese," or both. Those who only identify as only Chinese or Taiwanese are essentially making a political statement in their personal beliefs of rejoining mainland [China](#) politically or strongly identifying as a separate political identity. Most people in Taiwan identify as both; recognizing their ethnicity, while also pledging themselves to the Taiwanese island and government; these people generally understand the relationship between themselves, their culture, their food, their history, and the politics between Taiwan and mainland China.

History

The aboriginal people of [Taiwan](#) are ethnically similar to the people of Malaysia and the south Pacific and they remained fairly isolated on Taiwan until the 1600s. Although the world was aware of the island of Taiwan, there was little to no interest in colonizing or trading with the island for centuries.

In the 1600s the Han Chinese began arriving on [Taiwan](#), but didn't arrive in large numbers at first. For the most part, the Chinese and aboriginals intermarried and over time Chinese slowly overcame the aboriginal languages and customs. Also in the 1600s the Dutch arrived in order to safeguard their trading routes in the [Far East](#). They established some outposts and introduced missionaries, but never truly altered the culture or ventured inland. What the Dutch did do was emphasize the importance of the island's location.

In the mid-1600s with the collapse of the Ming Dynasty in mainland [China](#), much of the government fled to [Taiwan](#) to find refuge. This pushed the Dutch out and began a stronger Chinese influence. The new government in China was the Qings and they sought both the Ming leadership and further control so took much of Taiwan in the late 1600s. Even at this time though, most of the island was aboriginal, with only the coastal areas being dominated by ethnic Chinese. Due to the Qing discouraging emigration to Taiwan, this aboriginal domination on Taiwan continued.

The 1800s saw many changes to [Taiwan](#) as Qing central control faltered and domestic groups began fighting for power. This instability and the importance of trading routes led to attacks by the [French](#), [British](#), and [Japanese](#), before China's Qing Dynasty clamped down on controlling the island in the late 1800s.

Just after solidifying control over [Taiwan](#), the Chinese entered a war with the [Japanese](#) and transferred control over Taiwan to the Japanese. Taiwan remained under Japan's control through World War II (WWII). During this time some Taiwanese groups fought this rule and the

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Wushe Uprising in the 1930s best represented this fight. The aboriginals that led this resistance lost decidedly, but it symbolized that power remained out of the hands of the still large majority of people, the aboriginals

Despite protests, the [Japanese](#) extended healthcare, communication, and infrastructure in [Taiwan](#) and these changes were well received. Before WWII, war broke out between [China](#) and Japan and the Taiwanese were divided on which side to support then and during WWII.

At the conclusion of WWII, the [Japanese](#) gave [Taiwan](#) to [China](#), but China remained in the middle of a civil war. A couple years later, as the Chinese communists proved victorious in mainland China, the defeated nationalists retreated to Taiwan, much like Ming leadership did centuries earlier.

This wave of Chinese immigrants forever altered the aboriginal way of life as the Chinese came in large numbers and intermarried locals. While most [Taiwanese](#) claim to be ethnic Chinese, most are actually a combination of Chinese and aboriginal as pure aboriginals primarily live in the mountains.

After the late 1940s, with this immigration, the political situation in [Taiwan](#) became a strong leadership with power held firmly at the top. Despite this, much of the world recognized Taiwan, officially called the "Republic of China" as the legitimate ruling government of China and they held a seat on the United Nations (UN) for years. This changed in 1971 with the UN's recognition of the [Democratic People's Republic of China](#) (mainland China) and offering the two a joint seat to represent China, an offer that Taiwan refused to accept.

The 1980s were better for [Taiwan](#) as the government focused on internal issues and improved the people's rights, allowed greater political freedoms, and expanded rights to the small minority of aboriginals. In 1996 Taiwan had its first democratic election and the ruling nationalist party lost power. Since that time, focus has remained

domestic and the country continues to improve, particularly in terms of economic growth.

Dress & Behavior

There are few dress restrictions in [Taiwan](#). Although few locals wear shorts, especially men, there is no discourtesy involved in wearing them. Also, unlike many beaches in [Europe](#), sunbathing naked is rarely permitted; check with locals before doing so.

Behaviorally, the [Taiwanese](#) people are very proud people and insulting them or putting a person down in anyway can be very offensive as the person will feel "shamed." In much the same way, the Taiwanese will rarely give you critical advice or insult you in fear of "shaming" you. This is especially true in business. Turning down a business offer in the wrong way may, unknowingly be an insult and could force your contact to feel so shamed that he will actually quit his job; if all hope is lost on a deal, allow your Taiwanese counterpart to gracefully exit the situation so he can save "face."

However, some locals will stand up in defense of an insult, even if unintentional. In these cases the person feeling insulted may stand up for his honor and shout back at the other. Fortunately, this is only common among locals arguing with each other.

Dinning etiquette in [Taiwan](#) has a number of customs; to learn about dining etiquette in Taiwan, continue reading below.

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Food

Dining Etiquette

Dining in [Taiwan](#) is very similar to many countries in the [Far East](#). If you've never been to the Far East, etiquette, habits, and customs in Taiwan will seem very odd, and perhaps even rude, however there is good reason for the way they eat.

Arrive to the meal on time and let your host seat you. Once seated you'll notice you have little more than chopsticks, a spoon, and a saucer. The chopsticks are obviously for eating (never place these sticking up in the rice, it's a sign of death), but most locals will understand if you request a fork and knife. The spoon is for the soup, and the saucer is reserved for bones and shells that you pick out of your food.

When the meal arrives, the dishes (including the soup) are generally placed in the middle of the table. Before dining begins you may be offered a drink accompanied by a toast. The [Taiwanese](#) enjoy toasting and if you do toast over a meal, make sure you finish the entire glass when you drink. If you're asked to reciprocate with a toast, be sure to thank your hosts. After that first toast, eating will begin in order of honor so don't begin until you're directed to do so by your host.

As you eat the soup, suck it into your mouth so you make a slurping sound; this will cool the soup and all locals use this technique to prevent burning. The food shall be picked at with your chopsticks and in some cases may be eaten directly from the communal plates, as will the soup. If one of those communal dishes is fish, don't flip the fish over (locals believe it will flip over the boat of the fishermen).

When the starch, typically rice arrives, you should pick up the entire bowl and shovel it into your mouth bite by bite. Unlike mainland [China](#) however, you should leave a little rice and food on your plate at the end of your meal to indicate your host's generosity. When finished,

join the locals with a tooth pick in hand to clean any remaining food from your teeth and get ready to indulge in tea as a dessert. Once the tea is finished however, you are expected to leave immediately. You won't be asked to leave, but you are expected to thank you hosts and depart at that time.

Most [Taiwanese](#) will order only as much food as is needed, however for business dinners or for celebrations, an excess of food should be ordered and the number of dishes ordered must always be even. In Taiwan the host must always pay for all those present.

History & Influences

[Taiwan](#) is an island and therefore the base of their diet is on seafood and locally available ingredients. Rice grows well in many part of Taiwan as do fruits, spices, and herbs. The indigenous people of Taiwan primarily ate this diet and it is still commonly consumed today.

The Chinese began arriving in [Taiwan](#) in the 1600s, but took years to immigrant in large numbers. None-the-less, this initial contact began the change in the Taiwanese diet. The new immigrants spread the popularity of pork and soy among others, but their numbers were too small to truly alter the indigenous people's diet.

The 1800s welcomed a number of foreigners on [Taiwanese](#) soil, but again few made a lasting impact on Taiwanese cuisine. The [British](#), [French](#), and Dutch arrived and left. The [Japanese](#) however came and although they didn't stay around for too long, they more substantially altered the local's diet.

Despite these very slight foreign influences from the [British](#), [French](#), and [Japanese](#), what makes [Taiwanese](#) cuisine what it is today is from the constant wave of Han [Chinese](#) immigrants from the 1600s through the 1900s. These immigrants brought with them the food of their homeland and today Taiwanese cuisine is very similar to southern Chinese or Cantonese cuisine. Many of the Canton's popular dishes are

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also found in Taiwan, however many have slight alterations. *Xiao-chi* is similar to [Hong Kong's dim sum](#) as soy and oyster sauces have become popular in Taiwan as well. One of these aspects that differentiate Taiwanese food from Cantonese food is in the popularity of pickled vegetables in Taiwan.

Staple Foods

Rice: a common base for foods in [Taiwan](#)

Regional Varieties & Specialties

Ba-wan: a Changhua regional dish of fried dough stuffed with pork and vegetables

Beef Noodle Soup: the national dish, with an English name that's self-explanatory

Stinky Tofu: fermented tofu that smells and is often served as street food

Xiao-Chi: small plate foods, similar to [Hong Kong's dim sum](#)

Drinks

A unique drink in [Taiwan](#) is "boba" or "bubble tea," which is often served with milk and tapioca balls. If you're seeking out a familiar drink and reach for coffee, be aware that it is usually served with salt.

[Taiwan](#) has access to nearly every alcohol as beers and rice wines are very common. For a more authentic beverage, reach for *kaoliang jiu*, which is a local sorghum wine.

Practical Information

Visas

Many foreign nationals need a visa to enter [Taiwan](#), however the requirements for citizens of different nationalities varies. To learn more about who need visas, what type of visa is needed, what requirements are needed to obtain a visa, and visa costs, please visit the [Official Website of Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) or your nearest Taiwanese Embassy.

Health & Insurance

Every part of the world has different health concerns and diseases, including [Taiwan](#). Before traveling, consult with a physician to learn more about your destination and what steps you can take to prevent illness. At the time of writing, Taiwan didn't have any health immunizations that are required prior to arrival, although a number of immunizations are strongly recommended.

Many health insurance providers don't cover health care that is provided outside your home country. Before going abroad check with your health insurance to see if they cover international care. If not, consider purchasing an international medical insurance option, preferably from a company that specializes in international medical insurance.

Transportation

Unless you're on an organized tour or working with a travel agent, you will have to arrange some transportation. The below links can greatly help you start your planning, first by finding a flight to [Taiwan](#), then with domestic airlines and car rental agencies. If you don't know where to begin, try the "Flight & Rental Car Search Sites" to learn competitor's prices during your trip.

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Largest International Airlines: [Air France](#), [American Airlines](#); [British Airways](#); [Cathay Pacific](#); [China Southern Airlines](#); [Delta](#); [Emirates](#); [KLM](#); [LAN](#); [Lufthansa](#); [Qantas](#); [Singapore Airlines](#); [United Airlines](#).

Largest Taiwanese Airline: [China Airlines](#)

Flight & Rental Car Search Sites: [Expedia.com](#); [Farecast.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

Housing

Housing options are numerous in most tourist destinations, but every individual seeks out something different when it comes to housing. The below links should help you get started, with low- to high-end hotels, hostels, and camping options.

Popular International Hotel Conglomerates: [Accor Group](#) (various price ranges); [Choice Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range); [Hilton](#) (various price ranges); [Hyatt](#) (high-end to resorts); [InterContinental Group](#) (mid- to high-price range); [Marriott Family](#) (various price ranges); [Starwood Hotels](#) (high-end); [Wyndham Hotels](#) (low- to mid-price range).

Hotel Search Sites: [Expedia.com](#); [Kayak.com](#); [Orbitz.com](#); & [Travelocity.com](#).

Hostels: Although there are many hostel websites, some of the most popular and reputable include [hostels.com](#), [hostelworld.com](#), & [hostelbookers.com](#).

Camping: Camping is still a foreign concept in Taiwan. Although there are movements to change this, currently there are few organized and official options.

Opening Hours, Expenses, & Tipping

[Taiwan](#) is on the same time schedule as much of northern [Europe](#). Shops and tourist attractions tend to open at about 8:00-9:00 am and close at about 5:00 pm, but inconsistencies are everywhere. Most places close an hour or two for lunch, while shops and attractions may open late, close early, or shut down mid-afternoon. Most places close on weekends, which are Saturdays and Sundays in Taiwan, although most restaurants and some public institutions are open seven days a week.

Restaurant hours vary; most [Taiwanese](#) eat three meals a day, although if they are busy they may only have two larger meals; this is especially common in the rural areas during busy farming seasons. In tourist locations restaurants tend to be open all day or are on the Northern [European](#) or [North American](#) eating time schedule (lunch at about 11:30 am-2:00 pm and dinner anywhere from 6:00-9:00 pm).

[Taiwan](#) is relatively inexpensive on [European](#) standards. Hostels and even decent hotels can easily be found for about 450 Taiwanese new dollars (\$15) a night per person (make sure they have air conditioning included during the summer), while business and western hotels, particularly in Taipei can be well over 5,000 new dollars (\$175). Food can range greatly from street food for about 50 new dollars (\$2) to local restaurants for about 150 new dollars (\$5). While western restaurants begin at about 400 new dollars (\$13). Local transportation costs are also fairly reasonable if you take buses and the subway.

Generally there is no tipping in [Taiwan](#), however there are a couple exceptions. Taxi drivers and restaurants catered to locals don't expect a tip. Western hotels expect a tip for the bell hops, about 50 new dollars (\$2) a bag is generous. Western restaurants also expect a tip; sometimes a 10% service charge will be added to the bill, but if not, tip up to 10%.

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Crime & Safety

[Taiwan](#) is a relatively safe place to visit, however has its share of crime. Taipei, tourist locations, and public transportation have their share of petty theft so keep your passport and wallet protected at all times. Violent crime is rare, especially against foreigners, but is increasing.

There are also numerous scams, particularly among fake travel agencies and black market money exchangers so be careful before putting yourself in these situations.