

NIGHT MARKETS AND THE HIGH MOUNTAINS

Taiwan

Which night market beats the famous one, whether Taroko or Alishan wins your one mountain day, and the loop you ride by bullet train.

p. 27 The night-market food map, with the six dishes to order first

p. 33 The round-island route, drawn as a transit map

p. 39 What a day really costs, printed as a till receipt

46 PAGES

TWD PRICES

VISA-FREE 90 DAYS

EDITION 2026.06

Start here

the shape of a Taiwan trip, what it costs, what to sort first



Taiwan is a single island the size of the Netherlands, and a trip here is a loop, not a sprawl. Most people come for two reasons that sit side by side: the night-market food, which is some of the best in Asia at a dollar a plate, and the mountains, which rise to nearly four thousand metres an hour inland from the coast. This guide is built around the loop that links them, what each stretch costs, and the handful of things to lock in before you fly.

The shape of a trip

A clockwise loop runs Taipei, Taichung, Tainan, Kaohsiung, then up the east coast through Hualien and Taroko Gorge. The bullet train does the west side in hours; the slow train hugs the east. Ten days does it justice.

What a day costs

Backpacking runs about 40 USD a day, mid-range around 80. Taiwan is dearer than mainland Southeast Asia but the food stays cheap. The full receipt, bed to nightcap, is on page 39.

Sort before you fly

Most EU and US passports enter visa-free for 90 days, no advance form. Add travel insurance and an eSIM. Page 41 lists the four bookings worth doing early.



DINNER, MOST NIGHTS



AN HOUR FROM THE COAST

HOW THE LINKS WORK

Some booking links earn Pack Lightly a commission, at no extra cost to you. Full disclosure is on the last page.

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tap a line to jump straight there

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QUICK JUMPS

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Your trip on one page

10 days • 40 to 200 USD/day • best Nov to Apr

If you read nothing else, this page is the trip. The round-island loop runs Taipei down the west coast by bullet train, then back up the slow east coast through Hualien and Taroko Gorge. Ten days is the sweet spot. Budget from the bars below, not from hotel rack rates. Book the three things at the bottom right before you fly; everything else is cheaper and easier once you are on the ground, where the EasyCard and a frequent train network make moving almost frictionless.

THE ROUTE

Taipei

day 1-3

1h THSR

Taichung

day 4-5

1h THSR

Tainan

day 6

30m TRA

Kaohsiung

day 7

train via south

Hualien

day 8-10

BUDGET PER DAY

Backpacker

40 USD

Standard

80 USD

Comfort

200 USD

BOOK FIRST

01

International flights, 6 to 8 weeks out

Aviasales

02

East-coast trains, weeks and holidays out

12Go

03

eSIM, install before departure

Saily

BEST MONTHS

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

Nov

Dec

best: cool and drier

shoulder: hot or plum rains

typhoon season

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pack-lightly.com

Taiwan at a glance

scores 0-100 · pack-lightly country-comparison data

SCORECARD

Friendliness

95

Safety

90

Food and drinks

90

Tourist infrastructure

85

Culture

80

Nature

75

Budget travel

40 USD/day

Mid-range

80 USD/day

Luxury

200 USD/day

FOOD

MOUNTAINS

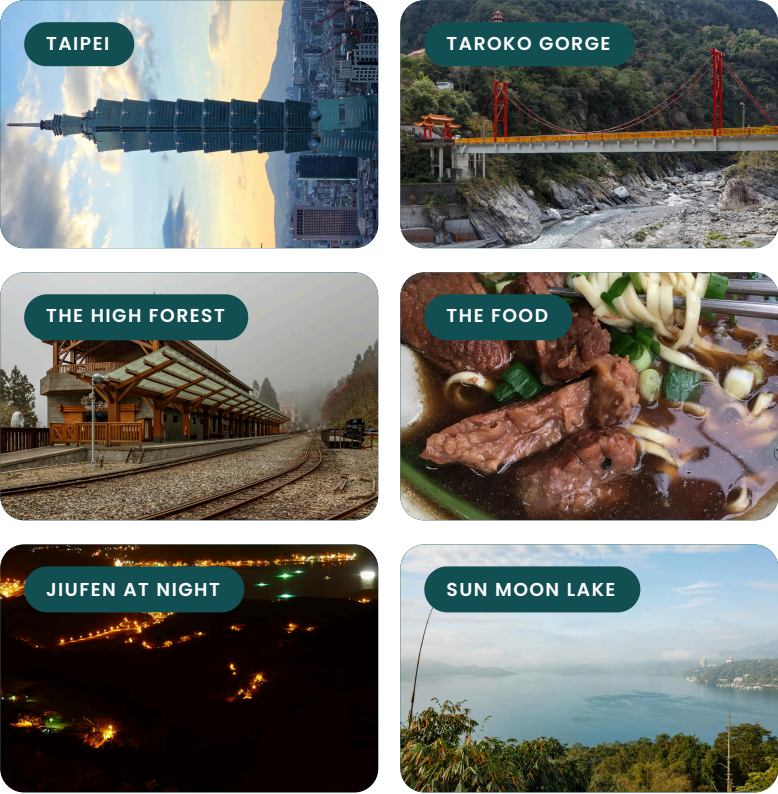
CITY

CULTURE

HOT SPRINGS

source: country-comparison tool, 2026-06

SIX FRAMES OF THE TRIP



01

The country

What Taiwan is, who goes, and the four corners of the island you need to picture before you pick dates: a compact loop, a friendly one, with mountains down its spine.

IN THIS CHAPTER

One island, four corners, four readers

07

What Taiwan is

23.4M people · one island · the friendliest entry to East Asia

An island of 23.4 million people off the southeast coast of mainland Asia, roughly the size of the Netherlands but two-thirds mountain. Taipei is the capital and the gateway: about 2.6 million people, the main airport, and where almost every trip starts and ends. Taiwan is the easiest and friendliest entry to East Asia. The transport works to the minute, the EasyCard taps you onto every train and bus, signage is bilingual in every city, and the food economy is world-class at street level. The flip side is the weather: summer is hot, humid and storm-prone, and the typhoon season runs roughly July to September. Time it for the cool, drier months and the island rewards a tight loop better than almost anywhere.

CAPITAL

Taipei

~2.6M people

POPULATION

23.4M

Mandarin + Taiwanese

CURRENCY

TWD

1 USD = ~32 NT\$

BEST MONTHS

Nov-Apr

cool and drier

FOUR CORNERS, FOUR CHARACTERS



North: Taipei, Jiufen, Yehliu

hub · night markets · day-trip country

Where every trip starts. Taipei plus easy day-trips to the lantern-lit hills of Jiufen, the rock formations at Yehliu, and the hot springs of Beitou.



East: Hualien and Taroko

marble gorge · slow coast · ocean cliffs

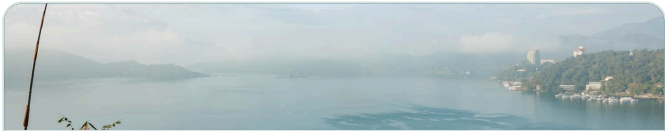
The wild side. Hualien is the base for Taroko Gorge, a marble canyon cut by a turquoise river, with the Pacific on one side and the high mountains on the other.



South: Tainan, Kaohsiung, Kenting

old capital · harbour city · warm beaches

The warm, historic south. Tainan is the old capital and the food heartland, Kaohsiung the easy harbour city, Kenting the beach end of the line.



Centre: Taichung, Sun Moon Lake, Alishan

lake · alpine forest · tea hills

The cool interior. Taichung is the base for Sun Moon Lake and for Alishan, where a narrow-gauge railway climbs into cypress forest for the sunrise above a sea of cloud.

WHO THIS GUIDE IS WRITTEN FOR

First-time East-Asia

10 days, mid-range, the round-island loop by THSR and east-coast train.

Food traveller

Night markets nightly. Tainan for the old dishes, a cooking class in Taipei.

Solo backpacker

40 USD a day, hostels, very safe, 2 to 3 weeks with the offshore islands.

Couple or family

Taipei plus Taroko and Sun Moon Lake. Easy trains, calm beaches in Kenting.

02

Taipei and the north

The capital is the easiest city in Asia to land in cold, plus a ring of day-trips that turn three nights into the strongest stretch of the trip.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Taipei	09
Taipei after dark, the night markets	10
Day-trips: Jiufen, Yehliu, Beitou	11
Where to stay in Taipei	12

Taipei

capital • 3 nights minimum • year-round



Taipei is the rare big Asian city you can land in jet-lagged and still navigate by dinner. The metro is clean, signed in English, and tapped with the same EasyCard you use on buses and at convenience stores. The skyline runs to Taipei 101, for years the tallest building on earth, with an observatory and a damper ball you can walk around. At ground level the city is temples, tea houses, and an eating culture that peaks after dark.

Three nights makes it click. Day one is the set pieces: Taipei 101 and the Xinyi district, then Liberty Square for the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial and its hourly guard change. Day two is old Taipei: Longshan Temple at dawn, the lanes of Wanhua, Dadaocheng for tea and dried goods along the river. Day three goes up: the Maokong gondola to the tea hills, or the Beitou hot springs a short metro ride north.

Taipei 101 + Xinyi

The tower observatory, then the malls and food halls of the modern district below.

Longshan + Wanhua

The 18th-century temple at first light, then the herbalists and old lanes around it.

Dadaocheng

Dihua Street tea and dried-goods houses, riverside sunset, the slow-coffee crowd.

Maokong gondola

Cable car to the tea terraces above the zoo; a teahouse view over the whole basin.



Buy an EasyCard at any metro station or 7-Eleven. It taps you onto trains, buses, the gondola, and pays at convenience stores islandwide.



The Taipei 101 observatory is calmest right at opening or in the last hour before close. Clear days follow a passing front, not a hot afternoon.

GO DEEPER

Ten picks ranked in the [Taipei rundown](#), the tower visit in the [Taipei 101 observatory page](#), and the cable car in the [Maokong gondola write-up](#).

Taipei after dark: which night market

the famous one is not the best one · go hungry, go early



Shilin is the famous one, the size of a small town and the first night-market most people are sent to. It is worth one visit for the scale, but it is also the most touristed and the most uneven on price. The locals' answer is smaller and tighter. Raohe, by the Songshan train station, runs a single covered lane anchored by a temple at one end and the black-pepper bun stall at the other, and it beats Shilin on quality at half the crush.

The move is to treat dinner as a crawl, not a meal. Arrive at six before the queues set, share everything, and pace yourself across six or eight stalls. Ningxia is the compact food-first option in old Taipei, Tonghua a quiet local favourite near the 101 district. Wherever you land, the stall with the long local queue is the one to join.



A long local queue is the rating system. Join the line of office workers, skip the stall with laminated photos and an empty front.



Cash for the markets. Most stalls do not take EasyCard or card. Carry small NT\$ notes and coins.

Raohe

The local pick. One covered lane, a temple at the end, and the pepper-bun stall worth the queue.

Shilin

The famous, sprawling one. Go once for the scale; the basement food court is the real draw.

Ningxia

Short, dense, food-first. Oyster omelette and taro balls in old Taipei, no carnival stalls.

Tonghua (Linjiang)

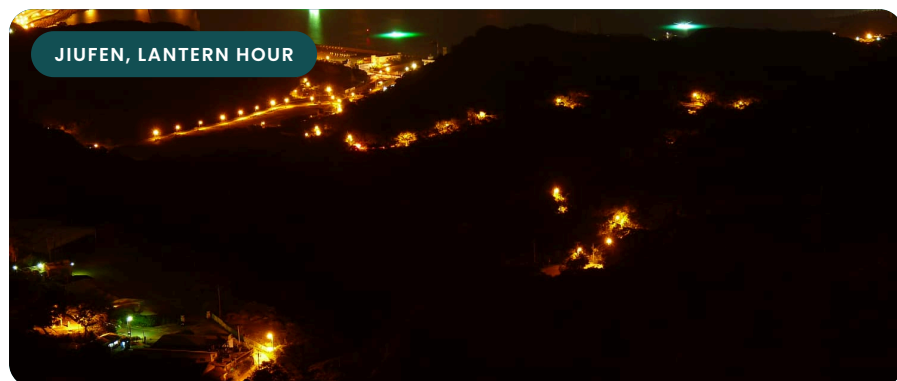
The quiet local one near the 101 district; where Xinyi office workers actually eat.

READ ON

The market in the [Shilin night market page](#), and what to order across the island in the [food and drinks breakdown](#).

Day-trips: Jiufen, Yehliu, Beitou

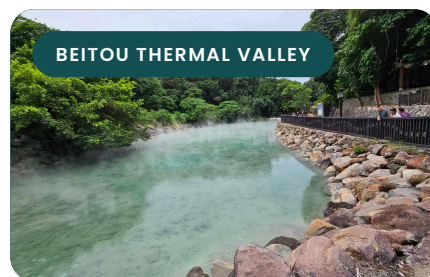
three half-days that justify a third night in Taipei



JIUFEN, LANTERN HOUR

The north packs its best day-trips within an hour of the city. Jiufen is the old gold-mining town in the hills above the coast, a maze of stepped lanes and tea houses strung with red lanterns that glow after dusk. It is busy, so go late afternoon, let the day-trip buses leave, and stay for the lanterns and a pot of mountain oolong looking out to the sea.

Yehliu Geopark runs the other way: a low cape of wind-carved sandstone, the famous Queen's Head among hundreds of mushroom rocks, best in the soft light of early morning before the tour groups. Beitou is the easy one, a hot-spring valley at the end of a metro branch, with steaming sulfur creeks, public and private bathhouses, and a thermal valley you can walk to. All three are doable in half a day each.



BEITOU THERMAL VALLEY

»»

Beitou's public hot springs ban swimwear in some pools and require it in others. Read the sign at the door; staff will point you right.

Jiufen

Lantern lanes and tea-house balconies. Arrive at four, stay past the bus crowd for the glow.

Yehliu Geopark

Wind-carved rock on a sea cape; the Queen's Head before the coaches at nine.

Beitou

Sulfur springs at the end of a metro branch; public soak, private rooms, the steaming valley.

MORE ON THE SITE The lanes in the [Jiufen Old Street page](#), the rock cape in the [Yehliu Geopark page](#), and the soak in the [Beitou hot springs write-up](#).

Where to stay in Taipei

prices per night, double room • pick a metro line, not a star rating

In Taipei the only rule that matters is be near a metro stop; the network reaches everywhere you want, so a cheaper room two stops out beats a pricey one in the wrong district. Zhongzheng around the main station puts the trains, the THSR and the airport link on your doorstep. Ximen is the night-out base, Da'an the quiet, leafy one near the food.

Taipei (Zhongzheng / Main Station)

hostel **18 USD** mid **55 USD** comfort **120 USD**

Sleeping by the main station means every onward train, including the bullet train and the airport line, is a short walk. Compare what a room runs around the station in the [live Taipei map](#); for a dorm bed near the action, [Hostelworld](#) has the deeper review pool.

Mid-range hotels and serviced rooms across every metro line, most with free cancellation while your dates are still moving.

Find Stays on Booking.com

TOURS WORTH PAYING FOR

Taipei after-dusk food tour with night-market flavours

from 50 USD

5.0 (20 reviews)

3 hours

Xiao long bao and bubble tea cooking class

from 65 USD

5.0 (25 reviews)

2.5 hours

Street-food cooking class: gua bao, lu rou fan, boba

from 79 USD

5.0 (25 reviews)

2 hours

Live Viator tours, prices captured June 2026, ratings from verified bookings. Tap a card to book.

03

Around the island

The loop past Taipei: the marble gorge on the east coast, the old capital in the south, a lake and an alpine railway in the cool centre. Each earns its stop for a different reason.

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Hualien and Taroko Gorge

east coast • 2-3 nights • the one landscape everyone remembers



Taroko is the single image most people leave Taiwan with: an eighteen-kilometre canyon of grey-white marble, cut so deep and narrow that the river glows turquoise far below the road. Hualien, an hour and a half down the coast from Taipei by train, is the base. From there a half-day gets you the headline stops, the Swallow Grotto where cliffs close overhead, the Eternal Spring Shrine, and the suspension bridges, but a full day with a guide or a rented scooter lets you walk the trails the buses skip.

A word on access. Taroko sits in an active seismic zone and trail and road closures after quakes or typhoons are normal, so check the park status before you commit and keep the day flexible. Hualien itself rewards the overnight: a relaxed coastal town with its own night market, a long Pacific shoreline, and the start of the slow, beautiful east-coast rail line south.



Trails close after quakes and typhoons. Check the national park status the day before, and wear the helmet the rangers hand out at rockfall sections.



East-coast trains sell out around weekends and holidays. Book the Hualien leg well ahead through 12Go rather than at the station.

TOURS WORTH PAYING FOR

**Private Taroko Gorge
English-guided day tour
from Hualien**

from 127 USD

5.0 (573 reviews)

8 hours

**Taroko Gorge tour with
cultural stories, 8 hours**

from 119 USD

4.8 (33 reviews)

8 hours

**East Coast and jade-
hunting private tour from
Hualien**

from 137 USD

5.0 (16 reviews)

8 hours

Live Viator tours, prices captured June 2026, ratings from verified bookings. Taroko runs mostly as private day tours; split the cost across a group. Tap a card to book.

KEEP READING

Eight stops mapped in the [Taroko rundown](#), the cliff trail in the [Swallow Grotto page](#), and the coastal town in the [Hualien write-up](#).

Taichung and Sun Moon Lake

centre • base for the lake • is the detour worth it?



Taichung is the relaxed second city and the natural break in the west-coast run: an hour from Taipei by bullet train, with an easy art-and-cafe culture, the Rainbow Village murals, and a night market of its own at Fengjia. Most travellers use it as the springboard for two things inland, Sun Moon Lake and Alishan.

Sun Moon Lake is the honest question of the trip. It is the largest lake in Taiwan, ringed by a flat cycle path rated among the world's prettiest, with temples on the hills and a gondola over to an aboriginal culture village. On a clear, cool morning it earns the detour easily. In summer haze or a crowded holiday weekend it can feel like a coach-tour lake. The verdict: go if you have ten days or more and the forecast is clear, cycle the loop early, and skip it if your trip is tight and Taroko already covers your nature day.



The lake's cycle loop is flat and rentals sit at the Xiangshan visitor centre. Ride it at first light, before the tour boats and the heat.



Reach the lake by bus from Taichung's THSR station, about 90 minutes. No train runs to the water itself.

03

Sun Moon Lake loop

The flat lakeside cycle path, Wen Wu Temple, and the gondola to the culture village.

Rainbow Village

A tiny settlement painted top to bottom by one veteran; a 20-minute photo stop in Taichung.

Fengjia night market

One of the island's biggest, student-priced and full of new snacks before they reach Taipei.

THE LONG VERSION

City picks in the [Taichung rundown](#), the lakeside ride in the [Sun Moon Lake cycling page](#), and the murals in the [Rainbow Village write-up](#).

Alishan: the railway into the cloud

centre • 2,200m • sunrise over a sea of cloud



Sleep on the mountain. Sunrise tickets sell out and the dawn train is the whole reason to come; a day-trip misses it.



It is cold and damp at altitude even in summer. Pack a warm layer and a rain shell; the cloud sea is literally cloud.

If Taroko is the gorge, Alishan is the alpine half of Taiwan's nature story. A narrow-gauge forest railway, built by the Japanese to bring cypress down the mountain, now hauls visitors up through tea terraces into a high-altitude forest of giant red cedar at around 2,200 metres. The classic move is the early train to a viewing platform and the sunrise above a sea of cloud, with the peaks of Yushan, the tallest mountain in Northeast Asia, catching the first light across the valley.

Reach it by bus from Chiayi on the west-coast line, about two and a half hours of switchbacks. Stay a night at the top: the day-trip from Taichung is a long way for a few hours, and the point of Alishan is to be there at dawn and again at dusk when the crowds drop and the forest trails empty out.

The forest railway

The narrow-gauge climb and the short sunrise line; book seats, not just the entry ticket.

Giant tree trails

Boardwalks through thousand-year cedar, near-empty between the dawn and day-tour rushes.

High-mountain tea

The terraces on the way up grow some of the island's best oolong; buy it at the source.

ON THE WEBSITE The mountain in the [Alishan rundown](#), the train in the [Alishan Forest Railway page](#), and the summit climbs in the [five-mountains write-up](#).

Tainan, the old capital

south • 1-2 nights • where the food is oldest



Tainan was the capital for two centuries before Taipei existed, and it wears that history lightly: Dutch forts, the oldest Confucius temple on the island, and lanes of shophouses that have been feeding the same families for generations. For a lot of Taiwanese this is the food capital, the place where the classic dishes were invented and where they are still done best. It is a half-hour south of Kaohsiung by local train, so many travellers day-trip it, but an overnight lets you eat properly.

Come hungry and graze. Tainan's signatures are milkfish soup at breakfast, danzai noodles in a tiny broth, coffin bread, and shrimp rolls, eaten across a string of legendary stalls rather than in any one restaurant. Between meals, the Anping district holds the old fort, a tree-swallowed warehouse the banyans have reclaimed, and the lane-side temples that give the city its calm, lived-in feel.

Anping district

The Dutch fort, the banyan-roofed Tait warehouse, and the oldest street in the city.

Fort Provintia + Confucius Temple

The historic core: a 17th-century tower and the island's first place of formal learning.

The food crawl

Milkfish soup, danzai noodles, coffin bread, shrimp rolls, spread over a morning of stalls.



Many famous Tainan stalls open only for breakfast and lunch and close by mid-afternoon. Eat early; the queues are the locals, not tourists.



Anping is a short bus or scooter from the centre. Pair the old fort with the banyan-swallowed Tait warehouse next door.

MORE DETAIL

Eight picks in the [Tainan rundown](#), the design collection in the [Chimei Museum page](#), and the island's syncretic temples in the [religious landmarks write-up](#).

Kaohsiung

south · 1-2 nights · harbour city, easy pace



Kaohsiung is Taiwan's harbour city and the warm, unhurried end of the west-coast line. After the density of Taipei it reads as wide and easy: a redeveloped waterfront at Pier 2, the dragon and tiger pagodas you walk through on Lotus Pond, a ferry to the old island of Cijin, and the Fo Guang Shan Buddha museum with its giant seated figure on the outskirts. The metro and a light rail make it simple to cover without a car.

It works best as the southern hinge of the loop: a night here breaks the run between Tainan and the long ride back up the east coast, and it puts the beaches of Kenting within a couple of hours by bus. Spend the evening at the Liuhe or Ruifeng night markets, both food-led and far less crowded than Taipei's.



Enter the Lotus Pond pagodas through the dragon's mouth and leave through the tiger's. Doing it the other way is the local bad-luck joke.



Kaohsiung is the southern THSR terminus. Buses to Kenting leave from near the station; allow about two hours to the beaches.

TOURS WORTH PAYING FOR

Private custom Kaohsiung day tour

from 115 USD

4.9 (93 reviews)

8 hours

Classic Kaohsiung sights private day tour

from 115 USD

4.9 (21 reviews)

8 hours

Kenting PADI Open Water dive certification course

from 564 USD

5.0 (151 reviews)

3 days

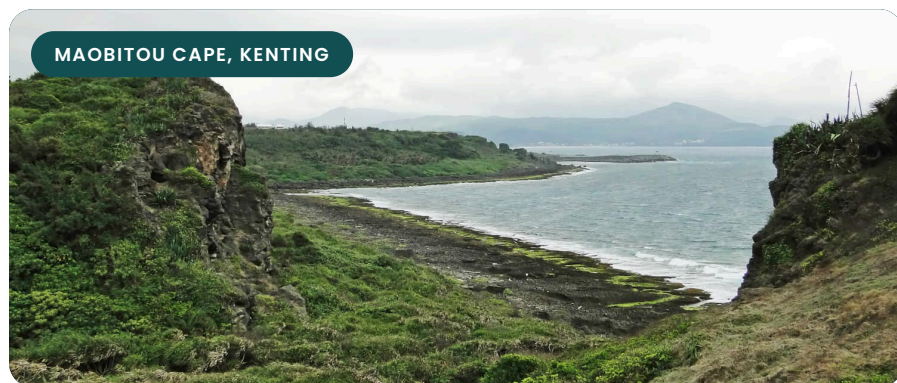
Live Viator tours, prices captured June 2026, ratings from verified bookings. The dive course is a multi-day certification, not a day out. Tap a card to book.

WORTH A READ

Eight picks in the [Kaohsiung rundown](#), the lakeside temples in the [Dragon and Tiger Pagodas page](#), and the giant Buddha in the [Fo Guang Shan museum write-up](#).

Kenting, the south coast

the tropical end of the line • beaches, reef, and a national park



Kenting is where Taiwan turns tropical. The island's oldest national park covers the southern tip, a mix of headlands, white-sand bays, coral reef, and a forest recreation area on the uplifted limestone behind the coast. It is the closest the island has to a classic beach holiday, popular with Taiwanese in summer and quieter, if cooler, in the shoulder months. Two and a half hours from Kaohsiung by bus puts it at the far end of most loops.

Manage expectations on the beaches: they are good, not Thai-island spectacular, and the small Kenting town strip can feel like a busy resort high street in peak season. The reason to come is the mix, a morning snorkel over reef, an afternoon at Maobitou or the lighthouse at Eluanbi, the southernmost point, and the strip's own night market after dark. Surfers find the island's most reliable waves on this coast.

Eluanbi + Maobitou

The southern lighthouse and the cat-nose cape; the island's land's-end coastline.

White Sand Bay

The best swimming sand in the park; snorkel the reef edges early before the day crowd.

Forest recreation area

Limestone caves and lookouts above the coast; the cool, green half of a Kenting day.



Reef-safe SPF for the snorkel bays, and check the surf forecast before you commit; the south coast catches the swell the rest of the island misses.



Kenting is the warmest, wettest corner in typhoon season. Worth the trip in the cool months, skippable on a tight loop.

SEE ALSO Eight picks in the [Kenting rundown](#), the swimming sand in the [White Sand Bay page](#), and the island's best breaks in the [surf-spots write-up](#).

The offshore islands

for trips of two weeks plus • basalt, reef, and military history

If your trip runs past two weeks, the outlying islands add a side of Taiwan most visitors never see. They split into two groups with very different characters, and all of them depend on weather: ferries and short domestic flights cancel readily in wind, and most close down outside the warmer half of the year.

The Penghu archipelago, in the strait to the west, is the scenic one: columnar basalt cliffs, fishing villages, quiet beaches, and a windsurfing reputation. Green Island and Lanyu, off the southeast coast, are the wild, volcanic pair, ringed by some of the island's best coral and, on Green Island, a saltwater hot spring on the shore and the sobering remains of a martial-law-era political prison. They reward the traveller who has already done the main loop and wants a slower, stranger few days.

Reach Penghu by ferry from the southwest or a short flight; Green Island and Lanyu by ferry from Taitung or, in calm weather, a small plane. Build in a buffer day either side: the sea, not your schedule, decides when you leave.



Ferries and island flights cancel on short notice in wind. Never plan an offshore island for the day before your international flight home.



Most island guesthouses and rentals run only April to October. Outside that window, check the boat schedule before you book a bed.

Penghu

Columnar basalt coast, old fishing villages, calm beaches, and reliable windsurfing.

Green Island

Volcanic reef, a rare seaside hot spring, and a preserved white-terror prison.

Lanyu (Orchid Island)

Indigenous Tao culture, flying-fish season, and the wildest coast in the country.

DIG IN

All eight outlying islands in the [islands rundown](#), the short hops in the [domestic flights page](#), and reef conditions in the [snorkeling breakdown](#).

04

What to do

The two reasons most people come: eating their way through the night markets, and getting into the mountains. Plus the temples and the hot springs that fill the days between.

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The night-market food map	24
The six dishes to order first	25
Temples and folk culture	26
Mountains and hiking	27
Hot springs	28

The night-market food map

which market in which city · matched to what you want from the night

Night markets are the single best reason a lot of people come to Taiwan, and every city has its own. The trap is treating them as interchangeable: the famous ones draw the crowds, but the local favourite a stop away is usually better and cheaper. The matrix below sorts the headline markets by what each does best. Pick the column you care about, read down, and go hungry at six before the queues set.

MARKET	CITY	FOOD	SCALE	LOCAL	VALUE
Raohe	Taipei	● ● ●	● ● ○	● ● ○	● ● ○
Shilin	Taipei	● ● ○	● ● ●	● ○ ○	● ○ ○
Ningxia	Taipei	● ● ●	● ○ ○	● ● ●	● ● ○
Fengjia	Taichung	● ● ○	● ● ●	● ● ○	● ● ●
Liuhe	Kaohsiung	● ● ○	● ○ ○	● ● ○	● ● ○
Garden / Flower	Tainan	● ● ●	● ● ○	● ● ●	● ● ○

● filled dots = stronger fit (3 = built for it)

assessment: pack-lightly food cluster, 2026-06



Markets run roughly five in the evening to midnight, busiest from seven. Tainan's daytime stalls are the exception; eat those at lunch.



Order in small portions and share across stalls. One plate each at six stalls beats a full plate at two; that is the whole craft of a night-market crawl.

THE FULL
PICTURE

The full island food map in the [food and drinks rundown](#), and the Taipei flagship in the [Shilin night market page](#).

The six dishes to order first

your calibration menu • roughly 2 to 7 USD a plate

Taiwanese food is its own thing, not a milder China and not Japan: a layered, comforting style built on braises, soy, and the island's own snacks, the xiao chi or "small eats". Order these six early and they become your bar for everything after. Prices are street-stall, in US dollars, and almost everything below comes from a market stall or a counter shop rather than a sit-down restaurant.



Beef noodle soup niu rou mian
USD 4-7 • everywhere

The unofficial national dish: braised shin, hand-pulled noodles, a dark broth with star anise. The test is the beef falling apart at a chopstick's nudge.



Gua bao gua bao
USD 2-4 • markets

A folded steamed bun around braised pork belly, pickled mustard greens, and crushed peanut sugar. The original of the bun the West rediscovered a decade ago.



Lu rou fan lu rou fan
USD 2-3 • everywhere

Minced braised pork over rice, the everyday comfort plate the whole island agrees on. Cheap, fast, and the quickest read on whether a stall can cook.



Oyster omelette o a jian
USD 2-3 • night markets

Small oysters in a sweet-potato-starch batter with egg and greens, finished with a pink sauce. Gloopy by design; the texture is the point.



Stinky tofu chou dou fu
USD 2-3 • night markets

Fermented, deep-fried, served with pickled cabbage. It smells far stronger than it tastes; the crisp-fried version is the gentle way in.



Mango shaved ice mang guo bing
USD 3-6 • summer

A mountain of soft shaved ice under fresh mango and condensed milk. A summer ritual; the dessert that ends a hot night-market crawl.

GO DEEPER Soup dumplings, bubble tea and oolong in the [food and drinks rundown](#); what the same plate costs across styles in the [budget breakdown](#).

Temples and folk culture

one religion under one roof • the living kind, not the museum kind



LOTUS POND PAGODAS

Taiwanese temples are not quiet museums. They are working community centres where Buddhism, Taoism and local folk belief share the same hall, the air thick with incense and the clatter of moon-block divination as someone asks the gods a yes-or-no question. You will find a sea goddess, Mazu, watching over the coast; the war-god Guan Gong in his red face; and small neighbourhood shrines tucked between shophouses everywhere you walk.

You do not need to be a believer to visit, only to be a polite guest: step over the threshold, not on it, dress with shoulders covered, and follow others rather than blocking the worshippers. The most striking sites span the island, from Longshan in Taipei to the lakeside pagodas in Kaohsiung and the giant seated Buddha at Fo Guang Shan. Time a visit to a temple festival and you get processions, firecrackers, and performing troupes for free.

Longshan, Taipei

The city's oldest temple and its most atmospheric at dawn, when the chanting starts.

Fo Guang Shan, Kaohsiung

A modern Buddhist complex with a giant bronze Buddha and a serious art museum.

Lukang old town

A preserved port town of guild halls and temple lanes; the island's craft heritage in one walk.



Two red crescent blocks tossed on the floor are a divination ritual, not litter. One up and one down means yes; watch, do not interrupt.



The Mazu pilgrimage and the Pingxi sky-lantern release are festival highlights; check the lunar dates before you book around them.

READ ON

Fifteen landmarks in the [religious landmarks page](#), traditions and etiquette in the [culture write-up](#), and the heritage walk in the [Lukang old town page](#).

Mountains and hiking

two-thirds of the island is mountain • from a city stair-climb to Yushan



The surprise of Taiwan is the altitude. More than two hundred peaks top three thousand metres, and the tallest, Yushan ("Jade Mountain") at 3,952 metres, is the highest in Northeast Asia. You can sample that range without committing to an expedition. Inside Taipei, the Elephant Mountain stair-climb gives the postcard skyline view in twenty sweaty minutes. An hour out, the Pingxi and Maokong trails wind through tea hills and old rail towns.

Go higher and the rules change. The serious peaks, Yushan and the Snow Mountain massif, need a permit applied for in advance, often by lottery, plus a mountain hut booking and sometimes a guide. Plan those weeks ahead and treat the weather as the boss; the same mist that makes the cloud sea at Alishan can close a summit ridge in minutes. For most visitors the right dose is the alpine forest trails at Alishan or a guided day in Taroko, with the big climbs saved for a return trip.

Elephant Mountain

The 20-minute city stair-climb to the classic Taipei 101 skyline view; go at dusk.

Alishan trails

Boardwalks through giant cypress at 2,200m; the easiest taste of the high country.

Yushan (Jade Mountain)

3,952m, the regional high point; a permit-and-hut climb for a planned-ahead return.



Yushan and the high peaks need a permit and a hut booking weeks ahead, often by lottery. Day hikes at Alishan and Taroko need neither.



Mountain weather turns fast and cold. Carry a warm layer and a shell even on a clear morning, and start early before the afternoon cloud.

MORE ON THE SITE

Five summit climbs in the [mountains write-up](#), the eight parks in the [national parks page](#), and quieter trails in the [off the beaten path rundown](#).

Hot springs: where it is worth it

a volcanic island • soaks from a city metro stop to a riverbed



Taiwan sits on a volcanic seam, and the hot-spring habit it inherited from the Japanese era runs deep. The water comes in two main flavours: the milky sulfur springs of the volcanic north, and the clear carbonate springs in the mountains and on the east coast. A soak after a cold mountain day is one of the genuine pleasures of a winter trip here, and most of the worthwhile ones sit on the route you are already travelling.

The verdict on where it earns the stop: Beitou, a metro ride from central Taipei, is the easy and historic one, with public pools, private rooms, and a museum in an old bathhouse. Wulai, in the hills south of the city, adds an aboriginal village and a riverside setting. Out east, the resorts around Jiaoxi in Yilan and the cold-and-hot springs of the deep south round it out. Soak in the cool months; in summer heat the appeal drops fast.

Beitou

Milky sulfur springs at the end of a Taipei metro branch; public soak, private rooms, museum.

Wulai

River-valley springs and an aboriginal village in the hills south of the city.

Jiaoxi, Yilan

Clear carbonate springs on the east coast, an easy stop on the way to or from Hualien.



Public pools usually require swimwear and a cap; some traditional nude baths are gender-split. Shower first, and read the sign at the door.



Wulai and Beitou are both short rides from Taipei. Pair a half-day soak with a day-trip rather than burning a whole travel day.

KEEP READING The soak in the [Beitou hot springs page](#), the valley village in the [Wulai rundown](#), and the east-coast base in the [Yilan write-up](#).

05

Routes and itineraries

The island is a loop, and the trains make it easy. Find your trip in one look, see the route as a transit map, then follow it day by day.

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Pick your trip	31
The loop, as a transit map	32
10 days, the full round-island	33
7 days, the short loop	34

Pick your trip

three dimensions, eight paths • find yours, jump to the matching loop

Who you travel with, how long you have, and what you spend per night decide the route before any list of sights does. Find your row below; the full round-island loop and the short loop on the next spreads cover the two most common paths in detail.

SOLO • 7D • BACKPACKER

Taipei, Taichung, Hualien short loop

USD 600 • hostels + trains

- Taipei 3n: markets + day-trips
- Taichung 1n: Sun Moon Lake
- Hualien 2n: Taroko

SOLO • 10D • BACKPACKER

The full round-island

USD 900 • clockwise by rail

- Taipei 3 • Taichung 2
- Tainan 1 • Kaohsiung 1
- Hualien 3: Taroko + coast

COUPLE • 10D • MID

Round-island, hotels

USD 3,200 for 2 • 3-star

- Taipei 3 • Sun Moon Lake 2
- Tainan + Kaohsiung 2
- Hualien 3: Taroko private tour

COUPLE • 7D • COMFORT

Taipei + Taroko, no rush

USD 3,400 for 2 • 4-star

- Taipei 4: hotel + day-trips
- Hualien 3: Taroko + hot spring

FAMILY • 10D • MID

Taipei, lake, Kenting

USD 5,000 • family of 4

- Taipei 4: zoo + gondola
- Sun Moon Lake 2
- Kaohsiung + Kenting 4: calm sea

FAMILY • 7D • COMFORT

Taipei base, day-trips out

USD 3,800 • family of 4

- Taipei 5: one hotel, no packing
- Day-trips: Jiufen, Yehliu, Beitou

FOODIE • 8D • MID

Taipei and Tainan, eat the island

USD 2,400 for 2 • markets nightly

- Taipei 4: market crawl + class
- Tainan 3: the old dishes
- Kaohsiung 1: night-market hop

HIKER • 14D • BACKPACKER

Loop plus the high country

USD 1,400 • permits ahead

- Loop in 9 days
- Alishan 2: forest + sunrise
- Yushan 3: permit + hut climb

The loop, as a transit map

west by bullet train, east by the slow coastal line

One ring covers almost every first trip. The west side runs on the THSR bullet train: Taipei to Kaohsiung in under two hours, stopping wherever you like. The east side is the slower, prettier TRA coastal line through Hualien and Taitung, with the mountains on one side and the Pacific on the other. Book the east-coast legs a few days ahead, more around holidays, through [12Go](#); the bullet train you can buy on the day outside peak weekends.



THSR bullet train TRA local / express bus to the interior ferry / island flight

[Plan the legs on 12Go](#)

WHAT EACH LEG COSTS

Taipei to Taichung THSR · 1h ~22 USD	Taichung to Tainan THSR · 50m ~18 USD	Tainan to Kaohsiung TRA local · 30m ~3 USD
Taipei to Hualien TRA express · 2h ~14 USD	Chiayi to Alishan bus · 2.5h ~9 USD	Kaohsiung to Kenting express bus · 2h ~12 USD

fares: 12Go and operator snapshot, 2026 · indicative one-way per person

10 days, the full round-island

clockwise · Taipei down the west, back up the east

The complete loop, refined for a first trip and valid for a second. Book the Hualien legs and any holiday-weekend trains through [12Go](#) a few days ahead; the bullet-train legs can be decided on the day.

1 Arrive Taipei EasyCard + first market	Airport line into the city, buy an EasyCard, drop bags. Ease in with Raohe night market for dinner.
2 Taipei set pieces 1h • Liberty Square	Taipei 101 observatory, Liberty Square and the guard change, Longshan Temple at dusk.
3 Arrive Taipei EasyCard + first night	Into the city. EasyCard, a gentle first evening at Niasxian or Raohe market.
4 Taipei core THSR to Taichung 1h • Rainbow Village	Taipei 101, Liberty Square, Longshan and Wanhua. Maokong gondola at sunset. Bullet train south by mid-morning. Rainbow Village, then the Fengjia night market.
5 Jiufen + Beitou Sun Moon Lake bus + cycle loop	Beitou soak in the morning, Jiufen lanterns in the afternoon and into the bus to the lake, cycle the flat shore loop early, gondola and Wen Wu Temple after.
6 Taichung + the lake Tainan, the old capital THSR • food crawl	Bullet train to Taichung, bus up to Sun Moon Lake, cycle the shore, sleep South to Tainan. Anping fort and the food lanes: milkfish soup, danzai noodles, coffin bread.
7 Cross to Hualien Kaohsiung 30m TRA • harbour	Down to Taichung, train north and across to Hualien. Arrive for the night local train down. Lotus Pond pagodas, Pier 2 waterfront, Liuhe night market by dark.
8 Taroko Gorge Cross to Hualien train via the south	The marble canyon all day, then the slow coast road and a Pacific sunset. The long, scenic ride up the east coast. Arrive Hualien for the evening, settle in.
9 Home via Taipei 2h express + airport	Morning express up the coast, last bites in Taipei, evening flight out.
9 Taroko Gorge guide or scooter	Full day in the marble canyon: Swallow Grotto, Eternal Spring, the suspension bridges.

Tight on time and skip the lake? Swap day 4-5 for two nights straight in Hualien and slow down on the east coast instead.

A week is plenty if you treat it as a loop, not a checklist. The trains are the trip; nothing here needs a flight.

Two weeks? Slot Alishan in after Taichung (sleep on the mountain for sunrise) and add a night on an offshore island from Taitung.

Keep the last day train-light. The east-coast express is reliable, but leave the buffer between Hualien and your flight, not none.

06

When to go

One clear answer (the cool, drier months) and two seasons to plan around: the plum rains of early summer and the typhoons of late. Plus what a day actually costs.

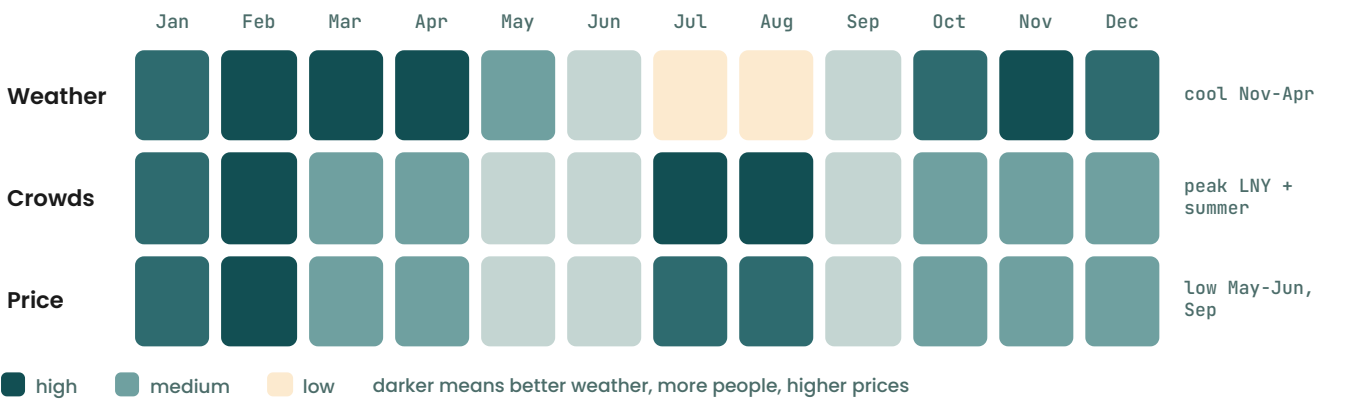
IN THIS CHAPTER

Weather, crowds, price	37
What a day costs	38

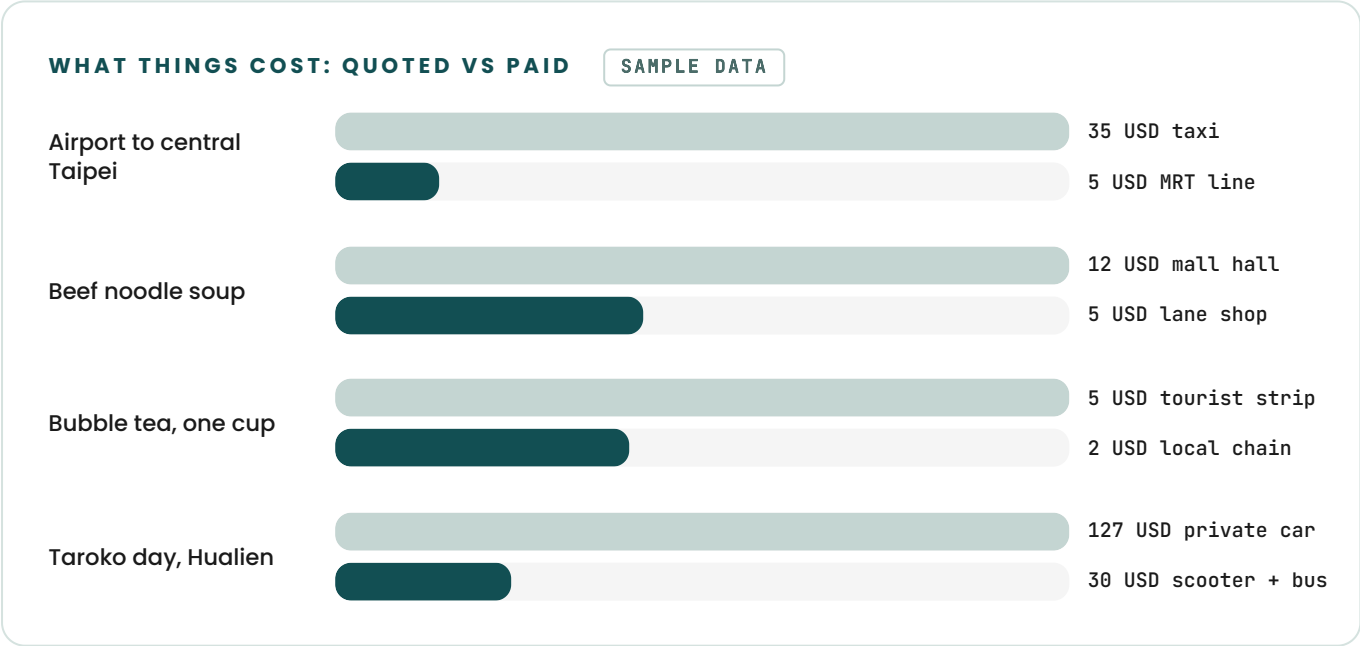
Weather, crowds, price

12-month calendar · the cool months win

Taiwan's year has one clear answer and two caveats. The cool, drier months from November through April are the best time to visit, comfortable in the cities and clear in the mountains. The first caveat is the plum rains of May and June, a few weeks of warm, persistent drizzle. The second is the bigger one: the typhoon season runs roughly July through September, when a storm can shut transport and the east coast for a day or two at a time. Crowds spike around Lunar New Year and the summer holidays; the rest of the year stays manageable.



source: best-travel-time dataset and Open-Meteo averages · captured 2026-05-17



What a day costs

three travel styles · printed the way the day spends it

Taiwan costs more than mainland Southeast Asia but the food stays cheap, so the budget lives in the bed and the transport, not the plate. Here is the day itemized: a bed, three meals, getting around, one thing worth doing, and the drink at the end. Three real versions of the same Tuesday, captured June 2026.

A DAY IN TAIWAN	A DAY IN TAIWAN	A DAY IN TAIWAN
* backpacker *	* standard *	* comfort *
hostel dorm18.00	3-star double, half40.00	4-star double, half110.00
breakfast + coffee3.00	cafe breakfast5.00	hotel breakfastincl.
lu rou fan lunch3.00	sit-down lunch8.00	restaurant lunch16.00
night-market dinner6.00	dinner with drinks14.00	dinner, good table28.00
metro + EasyCard3.00	THSR leg, share6.00	private driver, half day30.00
temple / sight entry2.00	gondola or museum4.00	hot-spring privateincl.
bubble tea + beer4.00	tea house + boba3.00	roomabove
7-Eleven snacks1.00		cocktails x216.00
TOTAL / DAY~40 USD	TOTAL / DAY~80 USD	TOTAL / DAY~200 USD
country-comparison data · 2026-06	country-comparison data · 2026-06	country-comparison data · 2026-06

Run the same numbers for your own dates, group size and currency in the free budget calculator on pack-lightly.com.

Open the Budget Calculator

- 📅

The gap between tiers is the room and the transport. Eating well costs almost the same at every level; the night-market dinner does not get cheaper than great.
- 🔗

Keep the EasyCard topped up: it pays for trains, buses, the gondola, and most convenience-store and night-market change.

07

Practical

Visa, trains, money, eSIM, etiquette. The boring parts you only read once. Taiwan makes most of them easy; done right, you never think about them again.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Book in this order	41
Getting around	42
Money, signal, entry	43
Etiquette: do and do not	44

Book in this order

four things before you fly • everything else on the ground

Taiwan rewards light planning: most hotels, trains and tours are cheaper and easier once you are there. Only four things genuinely reward booking ahead, and they have a natural order. Most EU and US passports enter visa-free for 90 days, so the visa step is a five-minute check, not an application.

8 wk
before

International flights

Fares to Taipei bottom out six to eight weeks ahead, and around Lunar New Year and summer they climb fast. Midweek departures shave another slice.

Compare fares
on Aviasales

4 wk
before

Insurance + visa check

Buy travel insurance with solid medical cover and scooter riding included if you plan to ride. Then confirm your entry rule: most EU and US passports get 90 days visa-free with no advance form, but check your nationality's current window.

Check entry
rules per
passport

2 wk
before

East-coast trains

The Taipei to Hualien express and any holiday-weekend seats sell out. Book those, plus your first two hotel nights; the rest of the beds can wait.

Book the train
on 12Go

1 wk
before

eSIM

Install before departure, activate on the plane. The welcome text lands before your luggage does. 10 to 15 GB covers two weeks of maps and uploads.

Set up a Saily
eSIM



Passport rule: at least six months validity beyond arrival. Check it now; renewals run slow in peak season.



Tell your bank the dates or bring a second card. Some smaller-town ATMs reject foreign cards; the convenience-store ones rarely do.

Getting around

one card, two railways · the easiest transport in Asia

Taiwan moves on rails and one tap. The EasyCard, bought at any station or 7-Eleven, works on every metro, most buses, the bullet train (as stored value), the Maokong gondola, the bike-share, and as a wallet at convenience stores. Top it up at any machine and you can travel the whole island without queuing for a ticket.

MODE	BEST FOR	ROUGH COST
THSR bullet train	the west coast, fast	Taipei to Kaohsiung ~45 USD
TRA local + express	the east coast, scenic	Taipei to Hualien ~14 USD
Metro (Taipei / Kaohsiung)	inside the cities	~1 USD a hop, EasyCard
Intercity + interior bus	the lake, Alishan, Kenting	9 to 12 USD a leg
Scooter rental	Hualien, the coast, day-loops	~15 USD a day, licence needed

indicative 2026 fares · per person, one-way unless noted

WHAT BEATS WHAT

For the west-coast run, the THSR is the obvious choice: Taipei to Taichung in an hour, to Kaohsiung in under two. For the east coast, the TRA express through Hualien and Taitung is slower but far prettier and the only rail option, so book it ahead. Inside cities, the metro plus EasyCard replaces the taxi argument entirely. To reach the interior, Sun Moon Lake, Alishan, Kenting, you take a bus from the nearest train city, and a scooter (with an International Driving Permit) unlocks the coast roads and the Taroko valley. Plan and book the rail legs through [12Go](#).



Scooter traffic is the real road risk here, not crime. Carry the International Driving Permit, wear the helmet, and stay out of the bus blind spots.



THSR runs a discounted early-bird fare booked weeks ahead. Worth it for the long Taipei to Kaohsiung leg if your dates are fixed.

THE LONG VERSION

Road rules and the IDP in the [driving page](#), the short island hops in the [domestic flights write-up](#), and the full cost model in the [budget breakdown](#).

Money, signal, entry

cash still rules the markets • cards in the cities • 90 days visa-free

MONEY

The New Taiwan dollar runs about 32 to the US dollar. Cards work at hotels, chains and department stores, but Taiwan is still a cash society at street level: night markets, small shops and temple offerings all want NT\$ notes and coins, and the EasyCard covers most of the small change. Pull cash from a convenience-store ATM, which almost always takes foreign cards, and skip the airport exchange desk.

Signal. Buy the eSIM the day before you fly and activate it on the plane; coverage is strong even in the mountains. A 5 GB plan covers a week, 10 to 15 GB two working weeks. For stays over a month, a local Chunghwa SIM from any convenience store is cheaper (bring your passport).

[Set up a Saily eSIM](#)

ENTRY

Most EU and US passport holders enter visa-free for 90 days, with no advance authorisation needed for short tourism. You need a passport valid for the length of your stay and, in principle, proof of onward travel. There is no arrival fee. If your nationality is not on the visa-free list, an eVisa or a visa-on-arrival route may apply, so confirm your own case before you fly.

ON THE WEBSITE

Plans compared in the [eSIM write-up](#), exchange notes in the [currency rundown](#), and the entry rules in the [visa breakdown](#).

Etiquette: the short list

a famously polite, orderly place • the easy way to fit in

Taiwan is welcoming and forgiving of foreign fumbles, but a handful of habits mark you as a considerate guest. None of these cause deep offence; together they are simply how the island runs.

DO

Queue and stand right on escalators

Lines are orderly and escalators keep the right side for standing. Follow the flow; nobody pushes.

DO

Sort your rubbish

Recycling is taken seriously and street bins are rare. Carry your trash to a 7-Eleven or your hotel.

DO

Take shoes off where asked

In homes, some guesthouses and temples. Watch for the rack of shoes at the door and follow suit.

DO

Use both hands for cards and gifts

Passing a business card, a gift or money with two hands reads as respectful, especially to elders.

DO NOT

Eat or drink on the metro

It is banned and fined on the Taipei and Kaohsiung metro, even water. Finish it on the platform.

DO NOT

Stick chopsticks upright in rice

It mimics funeral incense. Rest them on the bowl edge or the holder instead.

DO NOT

Tip in restaurants

It is not expected and can confuse. A 10 percent service charge is added at sit-down places automatically.

DO NOT

Talk politics loudly

Cross-strait questions are sensitive. Locals will discuss it warmly one-on-one; do not lecture or broadcast.



A little Mandarin goes a long way; "xie xie" for thank you and a smile cover most exchanges. English is common in the cities, patchier in the country.



Convenience stores are the country's unofficial public service: ATMs, bill payment, ticket pickup, hot food, clean toilets, all night.

MORE DETAIL Traditions and the festival calendar in the [culture write-up](#), and a survival vocabulary in the [language page](#).

08

Safe and smart

One of the safest, friendliest countries in Asia. The real risks are weather and traffic, not crime. Plus the live tools, the cards for your wallet, and the sources behind every number.

IN THIS CHAPTER

How safe is Taiwan	46
Take the live tools with you	47
Print cards: cut, fold, take	48
Sources and methodology	49
A note on the links	50

How safe is Taiwan

very · the dangers are typhoons, scooters, and mountain weather

Taiwan is consistently rated one of the safest countries in the world for travellers, and it earns it: violent crime against visitors is rare, solo and female travel is comfortable, and a dropped wallet is often handed in. Scams are minor compared with the rest of the region. That frees this page to spend its space where the real risk sits, which is the weather and the road, not other people.

THE THREE THAT ACTUALLY MATTER

- ☐ **Typhoons (Jul-Sep):** a storm can close transport, the east coast and the mountains for a day or two. Watch the forecast, build buffer days, and never plan an island or a summit right before your flight home.
- ☐ **Scooter and road traffic:** city traffic is dense and scooters swarm. As a rider, carry an International Driving Permit and ride defensively; as a pedestrian, cross only on the signal and watch for turning scooters.
- ☐ **Mountain weather:** the high country turns cold, wet and foggy fast. Carry layers, start early, respect permit and closure rules, and turn back when the cloud comes in.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

POLICE

110

nationwide

FIRE / AMBULANCE

119

medical + rescue

TRAVEL HOTLINE

0800-011-765

English · 24/7

HEALTH LINE

1922

epidemic + health



Tap water is treated and safe in most cities, though many locals still boil or filter it. Hospitals and clinics are excellent and affordable.



Save the 0800-011-765 tourist hotline now. It handles lost property, directions and emergencies in English around the clock.

WORTH A READ

The full picture in the [safety breakdown](#), road rules in the [driving page](#), and clinics in the [hospitals and pharmacies write-up](#).

Take the live tools with you

scan to open · data updates after this PDF was printed

This guide is a snapshot; the tools behind it keep updating. Scan a code or type the short URL. Each one is preloaded with the same Taiwan data this guide was built from.



Trip Budget Calculator

Taiwan: ~40 USD/day backpacker, ~200 USD/day comfort.

[pack-lightly.com/
tool/budget-calculator/](https://pack-lightly.com/tool/budget-calculator/)



Country Map

Taiwan spots mapped, from Taipei to Taroko to Kenting.

[pack-lightly.com/
tool/country-map/](https://pack-lightly.com/tool/country-map/)



Best Time to Travel

Best: Nov-Apr. Month-by-month weather for 140+ countries.

[pack-lightly.com/
tool/best-travel-time-worldmap/](https://pack-lightly.com/tool/best-travel-time-worldmap/)



What to Eat and Drink

Beef noodle soup from 4 USD, plus more dishes with prices.

[pack-lightly.com/
tool/local-food-and-drinks/](https://pack-lightly.com/tool/local-food-and-drinks/)

Print cards: cut, fold, take

print at 100% scale • credit-card size, 85 x 54 mm

Print this page on A4 or US Letter at 100 percent (no fit-to-page), cut along the dashed lines, and the two cards live in your wallet for the trip. The form fields are interactive in Acrobat and iOS Preview if you would rather type than write.

MANDARIN • ESSENTIALS

Hello

ni hao

Thank you

xie xie

Yes / No

dui / bu dui

How much?

duo shao qian?

This one, please

zhe ge

Where is the toilet?

ce suo zai na li?

Help!

jiu ming a!

Sorry

dui bu qi

pack-lightly.com

EMERGENCY • TAIWAN

Police

110

Fire / Ambulance

119

Travel hotline (EN)

0800-011-765

Health line

1922

My hotel:

Address:

Insurance #:

Left card front, right card back: print double-sided on the short edge and they fold into one.

Lost the guide, kept the card?

The QR opens the live Taiwan hub with every page this guide links to, plus updates published after this edition went to print.

pack-lightly.com/taiwan/





Photograph both cards before you cut. A phone copy of the emergency card still works when the wallet is back at the hotel.



Ask reception to write your hotel name and address in Chinese on the back. Taxi and bus drivers read it in one glance.

Sources and methodology

every number traces to a dated source

WRITTEN BY

Wouter van Kemenade

Founder of Pack Lightly. Twenty-plus countries on the ground, with a data-led approach to travel writing built on a performance-marketing background. Every number in this guide is verified against a source listed below; if a price moves more than 15 percent, the next edition flags it.

SOURCES USED IN THIS EDITION

1. Hostel and hotel pricing: Booking and Hostelworld snapshot 2026-05, central Taipei, Taichung and Hualien.
2. Currency rates: ECB reference rates, 2026-05-25 (1 USD = ~32 NT\$).
3. Visa policy: Taiwan Bureau of Consular Affairs (boca.gov.tw), retrieved 2026-05-15.
4. Fares: THSR, TRA and operator schedules plus a 12Go snapshot, 2026.
5. Travel advisories: FCDO and US State Department, last update 2026-04-30.
6. Climate: Central Weather Administration and Open-Meteo 10-year averages, captured 2026-05-17.
7. Pack Lightly Taiwan cluster pages, retrieved 2026-06-19: [visa](#) · [budget](#) · [safety](#) · [best travel time](#) · [eSIM](#)

Methodology. Pack Lightly's country scores aggregate eleven dimensions into the 0-100 scorecard on page 5, re-scored every six months. Daily-cost figures come from the country-comparison dataset (40, 80 and 200 USD per day), and climate verdicts from the best-travel-time dataset, both stamped with their capture date where they appear.

What changed in edition 2026.06: first release on the v2 design standard. Next planned update: December 2026. Not covered in depth here: a diving deep-dive (it has its own [write-up](#)), the offshore islands beyond an overview, and long-stay logistics.

Photo credits. Every photograph is sourced from Wikimedia Commons under a Creative Commons or public-domain license. The full per-image list, with each photographer and license, is on the next page. The cover shows Taipei 101 from Xiangshan. Tour data and prices come from the Viator Partner API, captured June 2026.

Image credits

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3. **Dragon and Tiger Pagodas.** Wikimedia Commons contributor, CC BY-SA 3.0.

4. **Fort Provintia historic site exterior, Tainan.** Wikimedia Commons contributor, CC BY-SA 3.0.

5. **Gua bao.** Wikimedia Commons contributor, CC BY 2.0.

6. **Jiufen hillside.** Wikimedia Commons contributor, CC BY-SA 3.0.

7. **Lu rou fan bowl.** Wikimedia Commons contributor, CC BY-SA 2.5.

8. **Mango shaved ice dessert, Taipei.** Wikimedia Commons contributor, CC BY-SA 4.0.

9. **Maobitou Cape rocky headland coastline, Kenting.** Wikimedia Commons contributor, CC BY-SA 3.0.

10. **Shilin night market alley.** Wikimedia Commons contributor, Public domain.

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The pick comes before the partner. A hotel area or a transport platform is chosen for the trip it makes, and where a partner link exists for it that link is used; where none does, the plain link still points there. An overrated sight is still called overrated, and a cheaper option that beats the famous one keeps the slot. The commission funds the guide, it does not choose for it.

Questions, corrections, or a place you tested that belongs in the next edition: write to hello@pack-lightly.com.

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