



Taiwan



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

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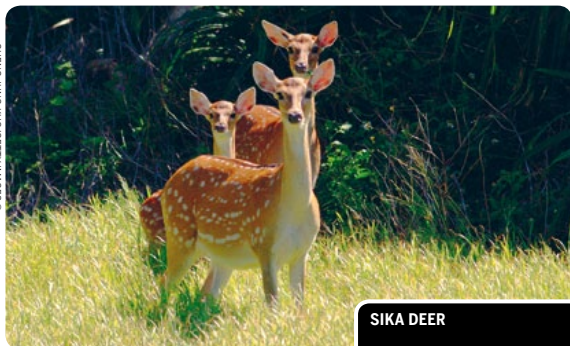
BAO'AN TEMPLE (P65),
TAIPEI

ON THE ROAD



TAIPEI, P52

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SIKA DEER

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On the Road



Itineraries



1
WEEK

Taipei & the North

Start with four days in **Taipei** being awestruck by the National Palace Museum collection, sensory-overloaded at Longshan and Bao'an Temples, over-caffeinated at gourmet cafes, as well as shopping and snacking at night markets and local design shops.

Activities abound. If you like tea, take the gondola to mountainous **Maokong** and its traditional teahouses. For hot springs, historic **Beitou** is just an MRT ride away. For fun, go on a stinky tofu tour along the restored old street of **Shenkeng**. To burn off calories, rent a bike and ride along the river paths in Taipei or hike the trails in **Yangmingshan National Park** or **Wulai**, a mountainous district with pristine jungles and natural swimming pools.

On day five, bus further afield to the old mining towns of **Jiuken** and **Jinguashi**, used for historic movie settings and music videos. The next day head to nearby Ruifang and catch the **Pingxi Branch Rail Line** down an 18km wooded gorge to photograph the old frontier villages, and hike paths cut into steep crags.

On day seven round off the trip, head back up the coast, stopping at the bizarre rocks of **Yeliu** and renowned sculptures at **Juming Museum**. From **Tamsui**, a seaside town with beautiful colonial houses, the MRT takes you back to Taipei.



3
WEEKS

Ultimate Taiwan

Start with a few days in **Taipei** to see the sights and catch the groove of this dynamic Asian capital. It has the best Chinese art collection in the world, a thriving street food and coffee scene, a living folk-art heritage, and some world-class cycling and hiking in **Wulai** and other on-the-doorstep locations.

Then hop a train to **Hualien** and spend two days wandering the bedazzling marble-walled **Taroko Gorge**. More scenic delights await down Hwy 9, which runs through the lush Rift Valley. Take a train to **Yuli** and hike the nearby **Walami Trail**, an old patrol route running deep into subtropical rainforest, then recuperate at **Antong Hot Springs**. Next, head to **Taitung** and catch a flight or ferry to **Lanyu**, an enchanting tropical island with pristine coral reefs and a unique indigenous culture.

Back on the mainland, another train ride – across Taiwan's fertile southern tip – takes you to **Kaohsiung**, Taiwan's buzzing second-largest city. For beaches or scootering along beautiful coastline, head down to **Kenting National Park**. In winter take a two-day side trip to **Maolin Recreation Area**, home of Rukai aborigines and where millions of purple butterflies await spring.

Continue by train up the coast to the old capital of **Tainan** for a couple of days of temple touring and snacking on local delicacies. Rent a car or scooter for the drive up the winding **Dongshan Coffee Road** then spend the evening in rare mud hot springs in **Guanziling**. The following day continue up into the wild expanse of mountain ranges in the **Alishan National Scenic Area**. Check out sunset and sunrise, then hike around **Tatajia** in the shadow of Yushan, Taiwan's highest mountain.

The drive from Yushan to **Sun Moon Lake** the following morning passes some sublime high-mountain scenery and should be taken slowly. At the lake, stop to sample oolong tea and maybe catch a boat tour. Heading north, fans of traditional arts and crafts will enjoy the following day's stops in **Lukang**, home to master lantern, fan and tin craftsmen; **Sanyi**, Taiwan's woodcarving capital; and **Yingge**, a town devoted to ceramics.



Top: Taipei 101 (p75)
as seen from Elephant
Mountain (p77)
Bottom: Tea leaf picker,
Alishan (p213)



2
WEEKS

A Cross-Island Tour

After **Taichung** your first stop is the Chung Tai Chan Temple in **Puli**, an amazing centre of Buddhist art and research. After Puli the highway rises into the Central Mountains, where one gorgeous landscape after another begs to be photographed. For a side trip head to **Aowanda Forest Recreation Area**, a top birdwatching venue, and spend a night in little cabins among cherry and plum trees.

Returning to Hwy 14, continue to the end to find the **Nenggao Cross-Island Historic Trail**. You can walk the whole thing or just hike in and spend a night in the cabin before heading north up Hwy 14甲. Prepare for an endless windy road and numerous washouts – and a stunning landscape of receding blue-tinged mountain ranges.

After Wuling Pass (3275m), the highest bit of road in Northeast Asia, stop in **Hehuanshan Forest Recreation Area** to photograph (and maybe stroll over) the treeless hills of Yushan cane. Then head up Hwy 8 to Hwy 7甲 and follow this north to **Wuling Forest Recreation Area**, an area of thick forests, high waterfalls and cool mountain streams, some of which are home to the endangered Formosan landlocked salmon. If you have a few days to spare, climb **Snow Mountain**, Taiwan's second-highest mountain.

Past Wuling the road winds down the mountains past aboriginal villages, with their trademark churches and steeples, to the Lanyang River plains and one very large cabbage patch. From here it's a seamless connection with the **North Cross-Island Hwy**. First stop: **Mingchih Forest Recreation Area** and its nearby forest of ancient trees. More ancient trees can be found a couple of hours later at Lalashan, or you can continue on to enjoy stunning views of high forested mountains and rugged canyons. Stop for lunch at **Fusing** and then explore Chiang Kai-shek's legacy at nearby **Cihu**. At Daxi head north towards **Sansia** and stop to look at the masterful Tzushr Temple before connecting with National Fwy 3 to **Taipei**.



2
WEEKS

The East Coast Loop

From **Hualien**, a low-key coastal town with good eating and seaside parks, it's a quick hop to **Taroko Gorge**, Taiwan's premier natural attraction. After a couple of days hiking, biking and marvelling at the marble walls, head up Hwy 11 to the **Qingshui Cliffs**, among the world's highest.

Return to Hualien and take Hwy 11 to Taitung. It's three days on a bike alongside some of Taiwan's best coastal scenery; otherwise rent a car or scooter. Plan to stop often, but in particular at **Shitiping** for seafood and jaw-dropping views, and **Dulan**, Taiwan's funkier town, for an art scene centred around a reclaimed sugar factory. From Taitung, catch a ferry or flight to **Green Island** and/or **Lanyu** for a few days of snorkelling, hot springs and exploring the island culture of the aboriginal Tao.

To head back north, take Hwy 11乙 west and connect with 東45 and later County Rd 197 for a scenic drive up the Beinan River Valley, with the crumbling **Liji Badlands** on one side and the jagged cliffs of **Little Huangshan** on the other.

The 197 drops you off on Hwy 9, near **Luye**, a bucolic pineapple- and tea-growing region with a stunning plateau. Just north, connect with the **South Cross-Island Hwy** for some yodel-inducing high-mountain scenery, and the chance to hike to **Lisong**, a wild hot spring that cascades down a multicoloured cliff face.

For more scenic eye-candy, stop at the organic rice fields of **Loshan** and the flower fields of **Sixty Stone Mountain**. Spend the night at **Antong Hot Springs** so you are fully rested for a cycle the next day out to historic **Walami Trail**, a Japanese-era patrol route.

Opportunities to indulge in local foods are numerous along this route, but don't miss aboriginal **Matai'an**, a wetland area with some unique dishes. You'll be well fed for the final stretch back to Hualien, which you should do along quiet County Rd 193. For one last adventure, veer off before Hualien and ride up the wild **Mugu River Gorge** for a dip in a marble-walled natural swimming hole.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Robert Kelly

Coordinating Author; Taipei, Northern Taiwan, Taroko National Park & the East Coast

Robert Kelly has been living in Taiwan continuously since 1996 and to say this place is now home would be quite the understatement. This permanent resident has helmed the *Taiwan* guidebook three times now (his ninth title for Lonely Planet), and has written about the Beautiful Isle, and other topics, for publishers such as the BBC, Wall Street Journal and The South China Morning

Post. An avid hiker, cyclist and road-trip enthusiast, there are precious few places on this island he hasn't been (and even fewer he wouldn't go back to in a second). Robert is currently writing the script for a documentary on Taiwan's outstanding but little-known temple arts.



Chung Wah Chow

Yushan National Park & Western Taiwan, Southern Taiwan, Taiwan's Islands

From her base in Hong Kong, Chung Wah can't help but be repeatedly lured back to Taiwan, where she spends part of every year revelling in its wonderful landscape and culture. Researching this book provided her with the opportunity to join many colourful, only-in-Taiwan festivities and hop over to some of the country's most beautiful islands. Chung Wah has previously co-authored other Lonely

Planet titles, including ones on China and Hong Kong.

Chung Wah also wrote the *Eat & Drink Like a Local*, *Religion in Taiwan*, *The Landscape of Taiwan* and *Taiwan Wildlife Guide* chapters.

Read more about Chung Wah Chow at:
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