



Taipei

02 / POP 2.6 MILLION

Includes »

Sights	41
Activities.....	63
Tours	65
Festivals & Events.....	66
Sleeping	66
Eating	71
Drinking	78
Entertainment.....	80
Shopping	85
AROUND TAIPEI	91
Beitou	91
Yangmingshan National Park	94
Danshui.....	97

Best Places to Eat

- » #21 Goose & Seafood (p74)
- » Shilin Night Market (p59)
- » Xiangyi Vegetarian Heaven (p71)
- » Wu Hua Ma Dumpling House (p77)
- » Celestial Restaurant (p75)

Best Places to Stay

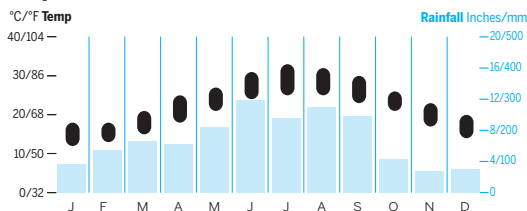
- » \$\$\$: Grand Hotel (p68)
- » \$\$: Dandy Hotel (p67)
- » \$ Holo Family House (p66)

Why Go?

Once the ugly duckling of East Asia, Taipei (台北) has undergone a transformation over the last two decades that has turned the city into one of the region's most dynamic, sophisticated, exciting – and yes, even beautiful – metropolises. Taipei offers a huge variety of sights and attractions, from temples dating back to the Qing dynasty to wide, noisy neon-lit avenues that offer shopping malls as gaudy and exclusive as any you'll find in Shanghai or Tokyo. The city's restaurants and street-food scene are second to none (save perhaps Singapore, whose famously food-obsessed citizens flock to Taipei for a taste of something different). With places to go, culture to experience and things to eat, Taipei is particularly well suited to exploration, so make sure you leave yourself some time to investigate this truly dense and often unexpectedly strange city.

When to Go

Taipei



January/February

Though often chilly, the weeks around Lunar New Year are a great time to visit Taipei.

June

Xindian's riverside park is a prime spot for watching the Dragon Boat Festival races.

October/November

Hot summer gone and winter chill yet to begin: the perfect time to explore Taipei.

Orientation

Central Taipei is constructed on a grid, with major streets running east–west and north–south. These streets are named according to direction and broken up further into sections, numbered according to the distance from the central axis (roughly speaking, Taipei Main Station). The lower the section number, the closer to the centre of the city the address tends to be; Zhongshan N Rd Sec 1 is close to Taipei Main Station; Sec 7 is in the wilds of Tianmu, 25 minutes by taxi in good traffic.

But wait, it gets more complicated. Taipei also has numbered ‘lanes’, which generally run perpendicular to the main streets. Major sights, hotels and restaurants are located along the main streets, but many addresses include lanes. So if you’re looking for, say, Grandma Nitti’s restaurant (p73), at 8 Lane 93, Shida Rd, you need to first find Shida Rd, then look for where number 93 would be. But instead of finding a building, you’ll find the lane where you’ll find Nitti’s.

Then there are alleys, which are to lanes as lanes are to streets. Though the system’s a bit complicated, it’s actually quite logical. But before you head out, there’s one more thing you should know: though Taipei is an increasingly English-friendly city, with all street signs featuring both Chinese and English lettering, over the past few years there have been a number of, er, interesting developments concerning the spellings of nearly every street name in the city. But visitors to the city should be aware that the Taiwanese approach to English translation is in no way rigidly dogmatic. As a result, don’t be surprised to find a restaurant whose business card address reads Chunghsiao East Rd under a street sign reading Zhongxiao E Rd.

Sights

OLD TOWN CENTRE, DA’AN & SHIDA

萬華區、大安區、師大區

The first part of the city to be developed, this proto-Taipei (also known as Wanhua) was once encircled by a wall (the last Qing-era city to get one). Though the wall is gone, four of its five gates still stand, adding to the historic character of this district. It’s in and around this area where you’ll find sights traditional (Longshan Temple), contemporary (Ximending) and historically edifying (2-28 Memorial Museum). It’s in the Old Town Centre where you’ll find the government district. Da’an and Shida, meanwhile, are home to Da’an Park, the

Shida Night Market, and the weekend jade and flower markets.

Ximending

NEIGHBOURHOOD

(西門町; Ximéng; Map p44;  Ximen) Like Tokyo’s Ginza, Ximending is the ultra-consumerist heart of Taipei’s mainstream youth culture. This eight-branched intersection dates from the Japanese era and is now chock-full of shops selling fashion, fast food, sneakers, sunglasses, scarves, Sanrio, Sony and spaghetti. If it’s young and trendy, it’s here. The pedestrian streets northwest of the main intersection (between Chengdu Rd and Wuchang St) is more or less the epicentre, but for the full Ximending experience you’ll really want to explore the smaller alleys. It’s here you’ll find the edgier side of Taiwan’s youth culture, the places they hang out and the stores in which they work and shop.

There are restaurants for all tastes in Ximending, from coffee shops and steakhouses to sushi bars both cheap and expensive, and plenty more. Though there are gift shops aplenty in Ximending, you may want to bring home something a bit more permanent to remember your Taiwan trip. Hanzhong Lane 50 is where you’ll find your tattoo parlours and piercing joints. If it can be inked, pierced or otherwise modified, chances are good you can get it done in Ximending.

While it’s busy most of the time, nights and weekends are prime time, especially Friday and Saturday nights. You might catch a musical act on a temporary stage set up on the streets and if you want to see a film, Wuchang St is home to many cinemas, as well as some fine examples of Japanese-period architecture, notably the **Red Pavilion Theatre** (紅樓劇場; Hónglóu Jùchǎng; Map p44; ☎2311 9380; 10 Chengdu Rd; admission free except during events; 🕒1-10pm Mon-Fri,



TAIPEI TRAVEL ONLINE

The Taipei city government has really tried to make a couple of fun and usable websites to help people find their way around the city. Typically, they’ve sacrificed some usability (at least for English speakers) in the name of adorability. Still, if you can figure your way around the interface, www.taipei.gov.tw can be helpful in trip planning.