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dt DISCOVER TAIPEI

60

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BIMONTHLY 2007
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COVER STORY

Summertime Fresh
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Travel back as Taipei celebrates its 40th anniversary as a directly administered city

Awakening to the past! The year 2007 marks the 40th anniversary of Taipei City being a directly administered city under the Executive Yuan. In order to witness the progress and development of these four decades, the Taipei City Archives Committee is featuring at Discovery Center of Taipei, City Hall, a special event, "Taipei as a directly administered city—40th Anniversary Show—Recollecting memories as a city progresses."

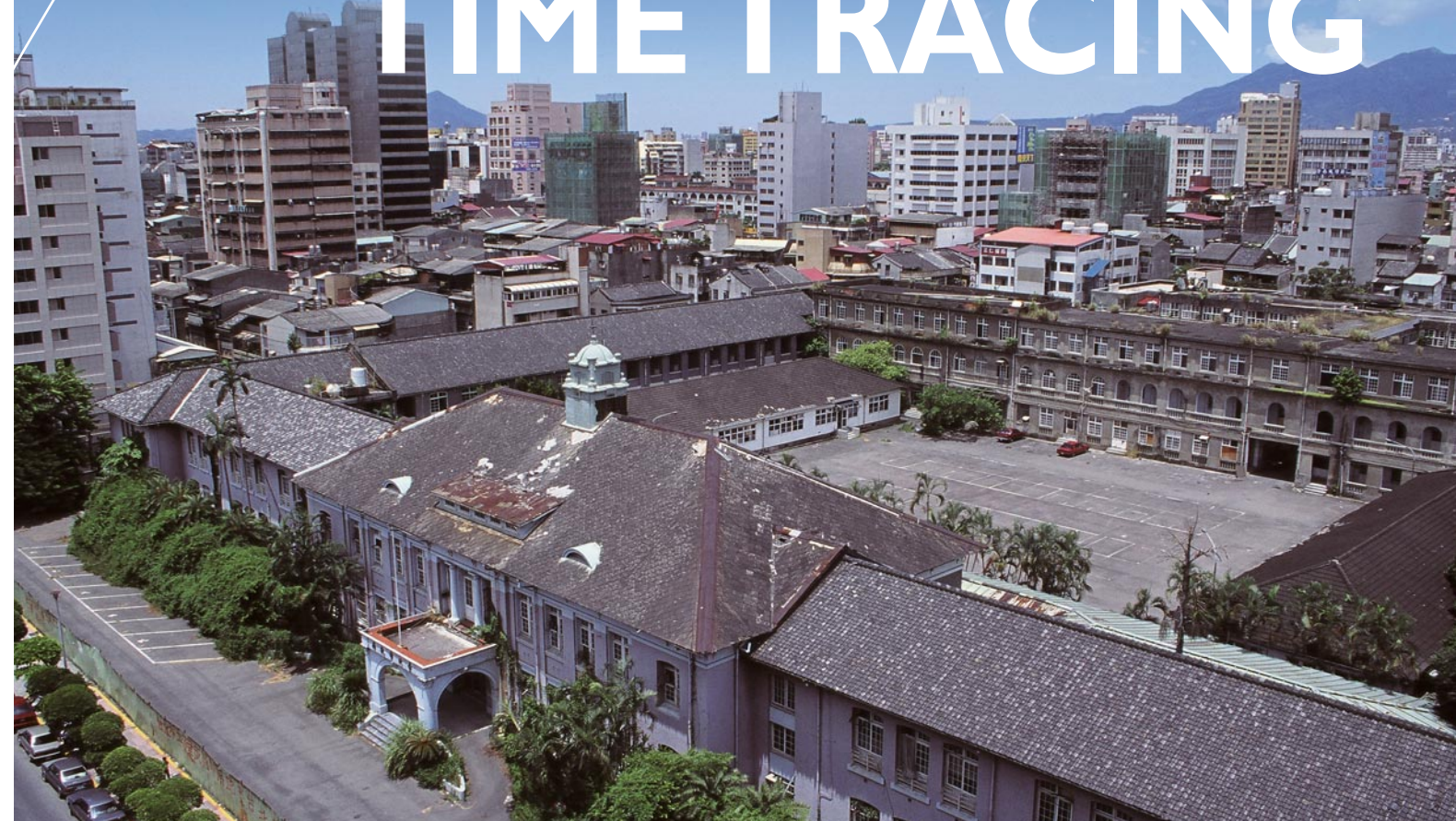
This multimedia show plugs visitors into the people, artifacts, and relics of the past. It's here where one can politically head back to bygone years and experience the capital as it moved from martial law to democracy and from appointed to elected mayors. It traces Taiwan's progress on the road to democracy, as well as economic development.

And during these years mass rapid transportation has reduced distances between city and county, while the electronic highway has let Taipei become a "New Internet City." Change has swept through daily life as personal incomes have soared to spur changes in consumer tastes and styles. The traditional family shops have largely been replaced by 24-H convenience stores and supermarkets have been challenged by shopping malls.

Yet the past lingers as the city strives to bring new dynamism to past historic structures by redesigning them to double up to be leisure and artistic sites. All these endeavors combined reflect an international capital that embraces the best of technology and the human spirit.

Finally there's a media area where one can take in A/V documentary films that present successive city mayors reflecting on their achievements in developing the city. These videos document the vast differences within the city toward what is "Progress" and "Development" and maps out how Taipei, for better or worse, has become a modern metropolis.

TIME TRACING



What might be your dream-in-hand come true on a hot and steamy summer's day? A glass of frappuccino, or a slurpee? Why not try some fresh juice made from locally grown and in-season fruits? On almost every corner of this city you'll spot a drink or fruit stall. Then, to let the cooling continue, make your way to the Taipei Museum of Drinking Water. If you have children, the museum's water park and bubble pool will have them bathing in joy. These treats and retreat are sure to help you beat the heat and quench your summer thirst.

Here's another option for spending the steamy hot summer: heating things up by going to the rock concerts held in the city. Join us at the end of July and mid-August for the Formoz Festival and Taipei Pop Music Festival, respectively, to capture the largest indie-music performances in town and the magnificent fireworks above Dadaocheng Wharf!

When walking the streets of Taipei, not only will this modern metropolis bedazzle you, but the Taipei-style expressions of fashion will distract you just as much. Our feature writer, Laura Noggle, in this issue ponders the local high-fashion industry and what Taipei is offering to creative,

and especially new, island talent. But you don't need to be in high fashion in order to attract the spotlights; Taipei offers wholesale bead stores that enable you to design your own signature jewelry. Still not sure how to go about making your own fabulous accessory statements? Voila, darlings, DIY classes are available that are sure to save you oodles of money.

Bead shopping not enough to satisfy your salivating for shopping? Then check out the Camera Market, Guanghua Computer Market, Wufenpu--or all of them! Sean Scanlan, our gadget expert, has prepared some tips that will save you time, trouble, and your hard-earned cash.

Looking for loyal companionship in Taipei? We mean the pet kind. The process of getting a pet may be mysterious enough you've been deterred from owning one. Daniel Mojahedi has organized a handy list of what-to-do's, ranging from the search to caring for your new best pal(s) in the city.

Hope you enjoy reading this issue of DTB.

If you have any suggestions, don't hesitate to email or fax us.

Email: qa-kymberly@mail.tapei.gov.tw / Fax: (02) 2720-5950

Your Summer Escape to the Island of Fruits!





Photo by Chih-jen Yang

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DISCOVER TAIPEI

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Roaming the Roads of Taipei—
Full of Miscommunication, Misdirection,
and Loads of Fun

By Monideepa Banerjee



Photo by Michael Yang

Busy lifestyles mean that few people have time to eat a healthy diet with some nutritionists recommending eating 5 servings of fruit every day. Fortunately, Taiwan's subtropical climate and abundant rainfall make for year-round production of fruit. According to the Taiwan Yearbook, over 30 varieties of fruit are produced in Taiwan; the higher elevations such as the Central Mountain Range produce apples, pears, and peaches while the lower plains produce oranges, lemons, wax apples, bananas, pineapples, lychees, mangoes, papayas, and guavas are grown.

According to the most recently available data, 2.74 million metric tons of fruit were grown in Taiwan in 2006, and estimates say that only 5 percent of Taiwan's total fruit output is exported with the vast majority consumed by the local market. With all of this fruit around, there's no good reason to avoid fresh, domestic fruit. In fact, Taiwan has even become the grower of choice for Japanese gourmards seeking some of the very best lychees, grapes and pineapples in the world.

Before Taiwan's industrialization—a period which began with the OEM production of sneakers and western clothing before becoming a PC powerhouse—Taiwan was a successful agricultural economy known for a robust sugar cane and pineapple crop with summer traditionally being a peak season for delicious fruit around the island.

Summertime Fresh Fruit and Drinks

Text by Sean Scanlan • Photos by Joanna Rees

Mango

This fruit has one of the longest seasons of all fruit on the island, with harvestable fruit available from May to November. Mangoes grow in low altitudes and have been popular throughout Taiwan since the Japanese occupation of the island. Farmers have steadily improved production techniques to make this fruit an important crop in the middle and southern parts of the island. Two types of mangoes are produced in Taiwan, the smaller Irwin variety which grows to just 500 grams and the Gin Hwan (金黃芒果) which can reach a size of 2 kilograms according to the Council of Agriculture. Mangoes are hardy, disease resistant plants, perfect for export, and quite popular in foreign markets such as Singapore, mainland China and Japan. On the sweetness scale, with 5 being the top, this local fruit rates a 5!

Pineapple

Pineapple is a fruit which is much loved in Taiwan and is particularly sweet and tasty because of a number of cross-breeding programs undertaken by the government. Though the fruit can be found throughout the Asian tropics, pineapple was specially promoted in the area of Chiayi County (嘉義) as the fruit is resistant to high temperatures and can live through periods of drought. There are a wide variety of pineapples that are known by colloquial names such as winter honey pineapple, ice cream pineapple, fragrant apple pineapple, perfume pineapple and others according to the Council of Agriculture. Pineapples also have a long shelf life, and can be harvested early with no change in taste and quality. On the sweetness scale, this fruit rates a 4!

Lychee

Lychee fruit is indigenous to China, and is known historically through the tale of Yang Gueifei (楊貴妃) who was known to love this fruit so much that she arranged for express delivery of this fruit from Southern China. It was no easy task as lychee fruit does not travel easily, and can quickly fall off the stem after just a few days. In fact, lychee's harvest season is very short, meaning that prices plummet during early June as the fruit typically comes into season around the Dragon Boat Festival every year. For rest of the year, one has to be content to eat canned or preserved lychee.

According to the Council of Agriculture, there are over one hundred varieties of lychee, and Taiwan is home for one especially delicious variety of lychee called Silk Brocade Purse (玉荷包) which fetches prices of up to NT\$100 per catty. This high-end lychee accounts for nearly 10% of the market, while cheaper strains costing NT\$50 per catty occupy another 80% of the market.

Lychee is thought to have been introduced to Taiwan

An abundance of mangoes is available from May to November. Its sweetness level is strikingly high! (Photo by Michael Yang)



Lychee is a precious fruit that is only harvested in early summer. (Photo by Joanna Rees)



Fruit stalls can be found easily on the streets of Taipei. (Photo by Joanna Rees)

Via efforts in agricultural technologies, new species of wax apples are produced and can be enjoyed all-year-round. (Photo by Michael Yang)

300 years ago, and many communities in central Taiwan have old lychee trees that reach upwards of 20 meters into the air. These trees are similar to evergreens and the fruit is high in vitamin C, though its nut-like seed is not edible and is, in fact, poisonous. Lychee is also known to be a fruit that is frequently mixed with other vegetables to make a wonderful drink. It can also be eaten on top of a plate of shaved ice as sometimes with a harvest season of just two weeks. Lychees are very difficult to maintain and are sometimes canned and dried. At its best, there is nothing sweeter than lychees making it a 5 on the sweetness scale!

Starfruit

Native to India and surrounding countries, starfruit or carambola is another fruit that is perfect for the summertime, because of its high concentration of sugar. Many know this fruit for its distinctive star-shape, though some find the fruit difficult to eat with a distinctive taste that often makes it perfect for pickling and eating with other foods. Here in Taiwan, many local people know that the juice from this fruit can be good for a sore throat, and it's virtually packed with multi-vitamins. There are sweet and sour varieties of this fruit and the most famous area for the cultivation of this fruit is in Changhua (彰化). Cultivation of this fruit began in Taiwan 300 years ago and the fruit is produced on an evergreen type bush. Recently Taiwan has begun to export this rare and unique fruit to foreign locations such as Russia and Australia.

This fruit is similar to the grapefruit in terms of nutritional properties. Consuming this fruit, however, comes with a warning as the fruit is not recommended to those with kidney stones and other urinary tract problems because of the presence of oxalic acid which can cause renal failure and other problems. In fact, every year a few people in Taiwan end up in the hospital with exactly this type of problem. In all honesty, this fruit is an acquired taste with some believing it is too bitter to be consumed directly, and better eaten with a dash of sugar or consumed as fruit juice. On the sweetness scale, starfruit ranks 2!

Wax Apple

Wax Apple is grown throughout Taiwan year round, making it one of the best known fruits to both locals and foreign guests. The wax apple or custard apple is particularly famous in Pingtung (屏東), with an outer skin which is crunchy and a sweet inner fruit. In winter, there is a slight drop off in production, though in summertime, the island is virtually



The undisputed king of summer, watermelon, is one of the best ways to quench your thirst. (Photo by Joanna Rees)

abundant with this tasty fruit.

This fruit originated in the Malaysian Peninsula and the Andaman Islands and around 300 years ago it is reported that Dutch colonists introduced the species to Taiwan. In the beginning the shade from this tree was prized and the fruit itself was overlooked as being sour rather than sweet, though in subsequent generations, there was a cross-breeding, change in cultivation techniques and new species of wax apples. Some have even used parts of the plant to treat illnesses such as wax apple flowers for diarrhea and the fruit can be stewed into a soup to treat a cold.

Wax apples vary in sweetness with some varieties dipped in sugar to bring forward a sweeter taste. However, when ripe and in season, with some turning to a dark shade of red at the tips, this fruit can be pretty sweet on its own. On the sweetness ranking system, the fruit rates a 3!

Watermelon

Finally, we come to the beloved watermelon which is the undisputed king of summer. This fruit is up to 92% water and a terrific thirst quencher on a hot summer day. The watermelon can range in size such as the palm of one's hand to varieties that range up to 40 kilograms. Watermelon flesh can range in color from the traditional red to orange, yellow, and white flesh. The first watermelons came from Africa and were popular with the Egyptians who recorded their presence in hieroglyphics. Later, the fruit traveled to the Mediterranean region arriving in China around the 10th century.

Taiwan's watermelon production has been boosted by Chen Wun-yu (陳文郁) who was known as the island's "watermelon king". At 81 years old Chen was born into a farming community and pledged to help farmers by starting his own



Ready-to-go fruit juice is often made from 100% real fruit, either squeezed or blended on the spot, therefore, a convenient way to replenish your body with essential vitamins and minerals. (Photo by Neng-yu Wang)

seed company, Known-You Seed (農友種苗公司). Since this humble beginning in the late 70's, his company has developed more than 600 hybrid varieties of watermelons—some of which are resistant to flooding, with some even being named after England's Princess Diana. His seeds are so successful that his company is now the single largest watermelon seed supplier in the world.

Smoothies and Fruit Drinks

With all of this abundant fruit around us, Taipei citizens



Fruit smoothies may be a terrific bargain in Taiwan since they are typically made from fresh fruit. (Photo by Joanna Rees)


should be encouraged to consume fruit either peeled and chilled from a local fruit stall, or prepared as a 100% pure fruit juice drink, or as a topping on a plate of shaved ice sweetened with a little condensed milk. As it turns out, nearly every corner of Taipei offers these three tantalizing choices.

Many people choose the most convenient, ready-to-go option which is 100% real fruit juice, either squeezed or blended on the spot. Some say that drinking such juices can fill the body with much needed vitamin C, vitamin A, calcium, fiber and potassium. Others might choose “fruit smoothies” which are all-natural drinks comprised of 100% real fruit juice, ice, sometimes mixed with a little milk or fructose depending upon one's tastes. According to one fruit juice vendor in the Tunghwa Street (通化街) night market, the top fruit smoothies she serves include watermelon and milk, papaya and milk, and banana and milk. Depending upon the availability of these fruit, prices can be as cheap as NT\$30.

Fruit smoothies may be a terrific bargain in Taiwan because they are typically made from fresh fruit while in other countries such as the US and elsewhere they are made from frozen fruit. Taiwan's abundance of fruit throughout the year makes it perfectly easy to get a fruit smoothie on nearly any street corner in Taipei. Also, because the fruit is fresh, this means that the true fruit taste comes forward, with none of the hard crunchy, frozen fruit taste that is the norm elsewhere.

Additionally, local stalls prefer to use milk and either sugar, fructose or honey when making a smoothie. Few will use fresh yogurt which is more common in the US. The simple fact is that milk is cheaper and more readily available, and it does not overpower or alter the wonderful taste of fresh fruit.

One enterprising fruit juice shop in the Vie Show Cinemas in the Xinyi District (信義) of Taiwan, takes fruit juice one step further by offering it with special multivitamin supplements and other health enhancing additives. The drinks don't come cheap as a vegetable drink can cost upwards of NT\$100; this is money well spent, however, and your body will definitely thank you, especially when one considers the alternatives which are carbonated soft drinks and other sugary drinks made from concentrate.

Finally, if you are in for a real taste sensation then try a smoothie made from bitter melon (also known as bittergourd). Typically, it is sweetened with a little honey and perhaps a piece of apple to make it more palatable. For some this may be a tough drink to swallow but it offers many wonderful benefits such as cooling the body, curing painful hemorrhoids and other curative properties. Also, you will see many local people ordering this drink at the local juice stand. 

Taiwan's abundance of fruit throughout the year makes it perfectly easy to get a fruit smoothie or juice on nearly any street corner in Taipei. (Photo by Chih-jen Yang)

Hot Rocking Summer

Text by Sean Scanlan

Photo by Tsan-hsien Kao

Summer is the peak season for outdoor concerts, giving music fans many opportunities to rock out this summer. Two of the top music festivals in the Taipei area are the Formoz Festival (July 27-29), which features independent and alternative music and the more commercial, pop-oriented Taipei Pop Music Festival (August 19).

The Taipei Pop Music Festival promises to be even more exciting this year because it will also include a 30-minute fireworks display. The spectacle is due to the fact two events have been merged into one, bringing the festival together with the Taipei Dadaocheng Fireworks Festival. The two events were sponsored by the Taipei City Government last year, and their relative proximity in terms of calendar date made combination logical.

With the addition of fireworks, the event will be bigger than ever, continuing on its past track record of being a showcase of musical groups, dancers, and lots of celebrities. Last year's festival was also held at Dadaocheng, earlier editions in front of Taipei City Hall, annually drawing crowds upwards of 50,000.

Noted international performers such as Avril Lavigne graced the stage in 2004, and the venue is the perfect spotlight for local mando-pop artists such as Sun Yanzi (孫燕姿), Jay Chou (周杰倫), and others. Last year's headliners were Pan Wei Bo (潘偉柏), an ex-VJ for popular Channel [V], and Stanley Huang (黃立行), founder of the group L.A. Boyz with older brother Jeff and cousin Steven Lin. Stanley Huang has garnered multiple Golden Melody Nominations, including Best Male Artist, and continues to perform with his older brother's hip-hop group, Machi.

While music is the big festival draw, the Dadaocheng event's fireworks have also been a grand spectacle. Held 10 days after the Taipei Pop Music Festival, coinciding with Chinese Valentine's Day, the seventh day of the seventh month in the lunar calendar, last year's show drew 300,000 people according to official city estimates.



More children are expected to attend this year's Pop Music Festival, which also means better safety measures have been considered. (Photo by Neng-yu Wang)



Each year, musical events have drawn larger crowds, thereby providing a healthy ground for musical talents. (Photo by udndata)

Taipei Broadcasting Station

Combining the events will ensure an even larger turnout, and will also mean the two sponsors (Taipei County Government and Taipei City Government) will share the expenses, potentially paving the way for even greater showcases in future.

Managing this enormous event is a formidable undertaking for Taipei Broadcasting Station, operated by the Taipei City Government. The radio station provides regular programming for a diverse audience, broadcasting throughout Northern Taiwan as well as to faraway locations via the world wide web. The station helps the city government communicate information to the general public. It has been enlisted this year to assist in the arrangement of performers and media broadcasting, and is in negotiations to team up with a television station.

"This year, we have the goal of attracting more children to the event. We would like to create an event that will bring more small children together and broaden our appeal to families," says Kenny Wu (吳適義), supervisor at Taipei Broadcasting Station. Wu says the event will begin at 7PM and last until 10PM.

Wu says the fireworks display is limited to just 30 minutes due to restrictions imposed by the Air Force, which believes that any longer displays could compromise commercial-aircraft flight patterns and national security. Last year's spectacular display was divided into six segments and included 7,000 individual fireworks. This year promises to be just as fantastic, and Dadaocheng Wharf's convenient access to nearby Shuanglian MRT station will facilitate a large crowd.

This will be the first major event this radio station has organized, its relevant experience focused on industry-oriented seminars and forums for broadcasters. This riverside event will also bring more attention to Taipei's improving environment, helping more citizens take advantage of local riverside areas now coming back to life and becoming the settings for incredible events.



Although music industry in Taipei has been inevitably going through dramatic changes, audience has also become more diverse. (Photo courtesy of TRA)

Formoz Caters to Indie Music

At the other end of the musical spectrum is the annual Formoz Festival, taking place this year at two locations in downtown Taipei, the Children's Recreation Center and Zhongshan Soccer Stadium.

Now in its 12th year, the festival is poised for exponential growth, both in terms of budget as well as the roster of performers. The addition of the soccer stadium is seen as a necessary move according to Freddy Lin (林昶佐), Formoz organizer, who says that the Wind Stage hosting headline acts over the past two years was packed to capacity, necessitating a larger venue.

"We felt it was time to take the next step, and expand to the next level," he says. "Also, we are working with more organizers who are helping us manage different stages, such as local nightclub Luxy as well as a group which specializes in aboriginal music."

This year, the biggest acts will be New York's Yo La Tengo

and Mercury Rev and a full line-up of Japanese artists such as Buffalo Daughter and Spangle Call Lilli Line. Of course, the majority of the performers will be local, homegrown Taiwan bands, who will be performing on some 10 different stages.

The festival began as an alliance of college-based musical groups from around the island. With the emphasis upon community and shared resources, it grew and expanded, and eventually looked overseas to bring exciting musical acts to the island.

Lin says there will be 120 bands performing this year, around the same number as a year ago, but there will be more foreign acts, doubling the budget. He is confident the extravaganza can be successful, though he admits the hardest part of organizing such a festival is selling tickets. "We don't have a healthy environment here in Taiwan so we need to undertake lots of education to build a healthy industry."

Lin is committed to the indie-music scene and refuses to sell title sponsorship for the festival, meaning he has to rely

primarily on ticket sales for funding. This is proving difficult in a time when major corporations such as 7-Eleven are getting involved in the concert-promotion industry.

Fortunately, he says, Taiwan's music industry is becoming more diverse, with no mainstream style anymore, meaning more and more artists can fill 3-5,000-seat shows. Also, he says it is now easier for his organization, TRA, to recruit foreign bands than when it started doing so 5 years ago. Success with previous festivals means hiring foreign artists comes quite easily, and Lin often has the pick of the best talent available in the region.

More Festivals on the Way

Jimi Moe, the organizer of Spring Scream, arguably Taiwan's first island-wide music gathering, says the Formoz Festival is moving towards "the next echelon" by adding Zhongshan Soccer Stadium to the list of venues. He also believes the diversity in venues will help attract a varied audience as well as give past festival-goers something to look forward to watching. Also, it won't be the first time that some of these headline acts have performed in Taiwan, as old favorites such as Yo La Tengo will be returning.

Moe estimates there are approximately 1,000 musical groups throughout the island. He says nearly 450 bands applied to perform at Spring Scream.

Moe says the biggest trend in music in the past few years has been non-musicians entering the field, such as hip-hop



acts, DJs, and laptop-based musicians. "Music is getting easier to make and becoming a hobby for kids, who don't need to put out a CD because they just want to play and hang out with their friends."

The transition, he says, is impacting the music industry in Taipei, where "many live houses are still struggling to stay in business, independent record labels are falling away, and big record companies are leaving for China so they can get something going."

He describes Taipei's music scene as evolving, and is planning on introducing a number of new festivals to northern Taiwan, the first of which will take place in late August. "We are considering doing something on the north shore, maybe Baisha Beach (白沙灣), a sort of multi-stage thing with



(Top Right) An increase in festival goers has also shown an increasing acceptance in music tastes. (Photo courtesy of TRA)

(Right) Organizers in Taiwan have successfully invited musicians from all over the world, as well as encouraged local artists to participate. (Photo by udndata)



A number of festivals have been introduced to northern Taiwan, and efforts between cities are constantly under discussion. (Photo courtesy of TRA)

many bands, daytime/early evening.” Details are still under discussion, as are plans to introduce an “avante-folk, world-music” event in mid-October, which would take place in two locations, Taipei and Taichung.

Local Acts to Watch

8mm Sky

Formed in 2002, this band is at the forefront of the post-rock music scene, with music that veers from beautiful melodies to crisp bass lines that rise to an ear-splitting crescendo. A debut album released in 2006 was a major hit, and earned the band favorable comparisons to more accomplished US indie groups such as Explosions in the Sky. This band is certain to play many of the stages at local music festivals this summer.

Fire E.X


This band can legitimately claim to be Taiwan's best punk band, with a polished sound that draws from Green Day and Rancid, with all of the modern touches such as staccato guitar work that will get the crowd jumping. Fire E.X has been a fixture at local clubs and the festival circuit for many years now, and have an act worthy of the main stage.

LTK

Long before every band had a myspace.com site or a posting on YouTube, this band made its reputation the old-fashioned way. LTK shows are spectacles involving performance art, theater, and most importantly, a catalogue of some of the catchiest pop songs in Taiwan. Previous concerts have included flag-waving and lots of onstage props, and the band continues to bring a tongue-in-cheek attitude to every show.

Tizzy Bac

After winning the best indie-music award a few years ago at Hohaiyan (A similar effort as Spring Scream, however, is held in the northern Taipei County), it has been nothing but big stages and large crowds for this band, led by a female singer-songwriter and keyboardist. Their songs verge on the sentimental and whimsical, but then again, isn't this an emotion felt by every teenager in Taipei? Tizzy Bac may be the best-known band among this generation, and they deliver a very satisfying onstage performance.

For more information about the Formoz Music Festival, visit www.formoz.com. For the Taipei Pop Music Festival, visit www.radio.taipei.gov.tw 

Together with the Taipei Dadaocheng Fireworks Festival, the Taipei Pop Music Festival this year is expected to receive a bigger crowd. (Photo by unddata)



Taipei Museum of Drinking Water

Text by Andrew Wilson
Photos by April Lee

Following the suggestion of William K. Burton, a Scottish engineer, who had undertaken surveying work for the Japanese colonial government in 1896, construction of a waterworks at the foot of Guanyin Hill and close to Xindian Stream began in 1907. Water from the stream was purified, then pumped upward to a distribution reservoir on the hill; from there it was piped using gravitational force to households in the Mengjia and Dadaocheng areas of Taipei (present day Wanhua, the commercial and residential center of the city back then). As the Taipei Water Department website says “In 1908, the water intake and a pump house (both the building and the equipment installation) were finished. The next year, all service piping, the purification plant, and the distribution

reservoir became ready and began to produce 20,000 tons of potable water daily to serve 120,000 users in Taipei.”

This is how Taipei acquired its first modern water system, providing valuable potable (pure enough to drink) water to the city; the waterworks would later become the Taipei Museum of Drinking Water.

Looking for an easy-to-get to place to take a break from the bustle of Taipei? Want to know something about an important, albeit unheralded chapter in the city's development? Try the Taipei Museum of Drinking Water and the adjacent water park. Perhaps the name doesn't resonate at first hearing, but the Taipei Museum of Drinking Water is really worth a visit. Firstly, it is a quiet refuge just a few minutes walk from the busy city



The adjacent water park is another great summer destination for anyone who would like to stay cool and wet! (Photo by Neng-yu Wang)



Understanding the vital role of the once state-of-the-art water treatment technology from the early 20th century can be quite a fascinating experience.



The Baroque style building houses the modern waterworks system during the Japanese colonial period. (Photo by Neng-yu Wang)

and, secondly, because it tells the story of an important part of the city's development and will remind you, perhaps, of how important drinking water is and how we take it for granted. In summer, what could be better than cooling off in a place where there is "water, water everywhere?"

Quietly hidden away from view for years

After being superseded by a new waterworks system next door some years ago, the pump room was left unattended until someone had the bright idea of turning it into a museum. After some time it had become dilapidated, but after renovation work costing NT\$80 million it recovered its former glory. Since it opened as museum in 2000, it has become popular with visitors, especially school parties and wedding picture-taking couples.

If you haven't seen a photograph of the museum (or seen it on TV—it has appeared several times in commercials masquerading as a Parisian ballet theater or other historic European building,) you may be surprised to see such a fine building suddenly appear in front of you when you enter the grounds. Invisible from outside the waterworks wall, not many people have had any reason to wander into the waterworks before. It was, basically, close to a busy part of the city, but effectively hidden away for decades. This was until it began to make appearances on TV and in advertisements.

The Baroque style building, with its domes and arches and decorations, is smaller than it first appears, but it still is one of the most attractive historic buildings in Taipei. Strange to think that this elaborate building was actually a humble pump room for a waterworks when it was built. It is one of the interesting features of buildings from the early Japanese colonial period that their design now seems excessively elaborate (and expensive), at least in this case, where even the pump room looks like a miniature European palace. The Japanese wanted a modern waterworks to give the developing city clean water and also it seems they thought that only elaborate and relatively expensive buildings would impress the locals and anyone else who would see that Japan was making a big effort to modernize Taiwan. Other examples still with us today are the Presidential Office and the Taipei Guesthouse, which at least had a function that necessitated a certain amount of splendor.

Inside the pump room there are displays telling the story of Taipei's first modern waterworks and you can walk amongst the old pipes and US and Japanese machinery, long deactivated, of course. While these may not appeal to most people anyone interested in technology will find the collection of machinery, some from the early 20th Century, fascinating. It is interesting to think that these old machines were once state-of-the-art water treatment technology.

The pump room is not the only attraction. The gardens are also very pleasant and, if you go at the right time, you can find yourself alone amidst the bird songs and insect calls, with the bustle of Taipei seemingly miles away.

Clean water vital for the city's development

When the Japanese took over Taiwan in 1895 one of the biggest problems they faced was illness caused by unsanitary conditions. Realizing the importance of an ample supply of clean water, they set about building a modern waterworks a few years into their rule, when the city's development was gaining pace. It is no exaggeration to say that the waterworks, (and the pump room) played a vital role in the early development of Taipei—without clean water the Japanese colonial government could not have functioned (more of the colonists died in the early years due to disease than any other reason) and Taipei could not have grown as it did. The reliable clean water supply helped it improve the people's, both Taiwanese and Japanese, health situation significantly. Whether it is likely that the colonialists were not motivated by humanitarian reasons to undertake the building of the water plant, it was nevertheless a significant development in the history of Taipei

as a modern city. How many other Asian cities at that time, including Japanese cities, had such a modern water plant piping clean water to 120,000 citizens?

Be sure to walk up the path up Guanyin Hill to the old water storage tank. Notice that even the small buildings housing machinery around the hilltop storage tank were also done in Baroque style and painted crimson. This hill is only about 50 meters high, but, when you get to the pavilion at the top, on a clear day you have a good view of the Xindian Stream below, Yonghe across the river and the mountains in the far distance.

Keen-eyed observers may also notice that the vegetation on the hill is quite different from what usually can be seen at lower altitudes in the Taipei area, where most lower slopes have been cleared or developed, or at least have someone cutting the overgrowth occasionally. Parts of the museum garden have been left to do their own thing for years. You can see hanging vines and broad-leaved plants that wouldn't be out of place in a jungle and give you an idea about how the low altitude flora of Taipei used to look like before the area was heavily developed.



The water pump was once an essential part of the city development which provided potable water to 120,000 citizens daily.

One can notice the elaborate decorations on the museum, as well as other European buildings such as the National Taiwan University, the Presidential Office and the Taipei Guesthouse.



Going up the Guanyin Hill, one is to notice the small Baroque style building that's painted in crimson which houses the old water storage tank.

Adjacent to the museum is the Taipei Water Park, offering fun water activities for the young and the young at heart and also information about drinking water. The museum and water parks are not just places to pass the time, they also have educational value and serve to remind people about a resource many take for granted, clean water. As the Chinese proverb says "When you drink water, think of the source."


Tickets cost NT\$50. From November to the end of March, the museum and water park (one ticket for both) open 9am to 6pm. For the rest of the year the opening time is 9am to 10pm (last ticket is sold an hour before closing.) It is closed on Mondays.

The museum has, unfortunately, become too popular as a venue for soon-to-be married couples and their wedding picture crews so the relatively small museum and grounds easily become quite crowded. So, if you want a bit of tranquility, avoid visiting on the weekend. If you prefer your museum visits to be quiet, times for solitary reflection on times past, you might consider visiting on a rainy day.

The Taipei Museum of Drinking Water is an accessible quiet oasis on your doorstep that also tells the story of a vital part of the city's history. It is suitable for everyone, young and old, individuals, couples, families and groups. It is definitely worth spending a few hours enjoying. Obviously, on a warm summer day the museum and, especially, the park, which offer a chance to paddle and cool off, will be packed. The

museum and park can be visited in daytime and night. In the daytime you can enjoy the view from Guanyin Hill, cool off in the paddling area and view the flora and fauna, or relax in a quiet spot with a book. In the evening the pump room and park are attractively illuminated and the view from the top of Guanyin Hill changes to a view of the river and Yonghe by night.

If you have some more time to spare, another interesting local place, also from the Japanese colonial era, that you can consider visiting in combination with a visit to the water museum, is the campus of National Taiwan University, established in 1928, just a few hundred meters away. This is another place of historical, architectural and natural interest that many people overlook.

Clear information for the museum is provided and English-speaking guides can be booked for groups. Check out the museum and water park on-line at waterpark.twd.gov.tw. (Tel: 8733-5678). 


Getting there

Address: No. 1, Siyuan Road (思源街)

The museum is very easy to get to and is only a few hundred meters from the MRT station. Take the Xindian MRT and get off at Gongguan station. (Or take any one of the many buses that pass through Gongguan, numbers 74, 284, 254, 280 etc) From the MRT station, leave by the Campus Books exit, (opposite direction to National Taiwan University) and go down the short road that goes between the bookshop and the Starbucks. Cross over Dingzhou Road (汀洲路) and walk up Siyuan Road (思源街) past the new water-themed park that, together with the museum, now makes up the Taipei Water Park. After about 300 meters you will see a sign saying "Taipei Water Park," take a left and in a few steps you'll be in front of the museum ticket office. It should take only about 5 minutes to get there from the MRT.

The path that leads up to Guanyin Hill will give you a good view of the Xindian Stream and Yonghe, Taipei County.





Taipei Fashion: The Cutting Edge

Text by Laura Noggle

Photo courtesy of the Taiwan Textile Federation

As any foreigner is bound to notice, clothing and fashion in Taipei is somewhat...unusual. Perhaps not unusual; it just incorporates such a vast range of different trends, patterns, colors, brands, and global styles. Local fashion trends are a hodge-podge of seemingly every single element of fashion and clothing you could possibly think of. From European fashion, American, Asian, Russian, it's all here, even non-fashion fashion, meaning unlucky individuals lacking in color-coordination abilities. For anyone that has been to Paris, Barcelona, New York, or London, there is no doubt that these cities have distinct style and are at the cutting edge of what's hot in today's fashion world. Taipei, however, is a city with a unique fashion blend and a style all its own. By looking at such institutions as the Taiwan Textile Federation, the Taiwan Design Center, and new designers here in the city, one gets a better grasp on how Taipei is coming to the forefront with its own fashion statement.

If you walk around the Taipei 101 area, you'll find the higher end of Taipei fashion and all of the most famous international brands. Not only are you among stores such as Gucci, Prada, Luis Vuitton, and Chanel, but the people are usually dressed to the nines as well, smothered in Burberry and Dior. This is the newest section of town and therefore it is not surprising to see the most famous and recognizable fashion names here. However, depending on the city area, you see all kinds of unrecognizable and interesting styles of clothing.

Clothing markets such as Ximending, Shilin, and Wufenpu contain a myriad of fashions. From Asian rock, Japanese chic, and Euro rugged to American casual, any fashion era your heart desires can undoubtedly be found tucked away in some city corner, and at a very cheap price. Taipei is a bustling metropolis, an international gem that draws talent and attention from all over the world, which



naturally includes fashion and other aspects of clothing and style. But what about Taiwan's own take on fashion, its exclusive style statement? That's where institutions such as the Taiwan Textile Federation (TTF) come into play.

The Mighty TTF

The TTF was established a little over thirty years ago, initially to handle issues concerning textiles and the related manufacturing industry. Over the years, however, it has grown, and its influence now reaches, "to market promotion, product design, fashion information, and other textile-related services," as

its website notes. The TTF secretary general, Mr. Justin Huang (黃偉基), filled me in on some of the body's "fashion"-related aspects.

A non-profit organization, and a representative body for a large local service sector, the TTF is recognized and sponsored by the government, which asks it to promote textiles, including via fundraisers and exhibitions. Exhibitions are financially supplemented by the government, and TTF uses the money to organize trade shows, inviting media and retailers to be represented to help industries develop trade opportunities, and creates foreign interest in the shows.

Taiwan imports clothing and brands from around the world, but what the TTF helps facilitate, is establishing people and institutions here in Taiwan that can create a finished fashion product. Mr. Huang informed me that part of TTF's goal is to help encourage the voices of Taiwan's fashion designers, and broadening consumer choice. With TTF's help, students from Taipei Design School and other young designers can launch and display their own lines and ideas out of the studio and into stores.

TITAS, Anyone?

The chance for recognition as a designer comes at the trade shows. Two main exhibitions focus on cutting-edge fashion and design, and of course the textiles used to make them. "TITAS," the Taipei Innovative Textile Application Show, is the number-one trade event in the world for functional textiles. The next TITAS will be held October 24-26.

This show is primarily for the cutting-edge use of synthetic special fibers, incorporated into everyday clothing, making them more useful, healthy and, of course, functional. This includes breathable sportswear with extremely thin fabrics, materials that won't rip, tear, or stain, and also functional styles made especially with specific sports in mind. Mr. Huang showed me a mini-exhibition featuring some of these specially-

(Top) Various institutions sponsor events like the "Taipei in Style" to promote local fashion activities and bring Asian fashion trends together. (Bottom) Little do people know that many different kinds of fabrics are made and designed right here in Taiwan. (Right) TITAS provides a platform where new textiles can be showcased and purchases can be made.



Taipei IN Style.

Local talents and designers come together to exchange ideas and display their latest works of art.



designed fabrics and outfits.

Among the display were mountain-climbing clothes, specially made to keep you warm at all altitudes, clothes for joggers with special pockets for iPods and phones, biking outfits, lace underwear and negligees, and more. What impressed me most was the fact all of the many, many different kinds of fabrics were made and designed right here in Taiwan, start to finish. Mr. Huang pointed out some of the patterns and designs on the clothing, informing me that some of the color and design inspiration comes from native aboriginal culture. The wild color mix was very bright, some patterns very busy and ethnic looking. Definitely a good example of local tastes—but what about the more, um, fashion forward?

Taipei in Style

For the more modern-style-conscious, there is the “Taipei in Style”

exhibition for brands and designers. The next one will be August 30-September 2 at Taipei World Trade Center Exhibition Hall #2. This event spotlights not only Taiwanese designers, but also designers from around the world, especially Asia. This is only the event's second year, but TTF has worked very hard to generate international interest, sponsoring media coverage, putting up press affiliates and fashion critics, and working hard to tie China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan together in a joint presentation of Asian fashion.

This event showcases finished products and new apparel lines. It is important for Taiwan to have its own base of people who can produce affordable clothing, as not everyone can rush out to buy the latest Fendi or Versace items. “Young people need more choices and better quality in those choices,” Mr. Huang told me. Part of the reason the show was launched is because so many of the major Taipei department stores sell

the same brands and lines.

This exhibition is geared to attract original ideas and fresh talent, specifically local talent and designers who know the culture. That way they have the ability to fuse style and technique and interpret international design for Asian bodies. Not all Western clothing lines are suited for the Asian body, and local designers can create clothes more suited to Taiwanese. Floor-space at the show is very cheap to help attract young new designers, enabling a wider range of individual and local styles in the market.

The TDC

Giving Taiwan its local voice and creative statement is what the Taiwan Design Center (TDC) aims to do. With globalization and the Asian economic boom, culture and traditional knowledge have become even more important to helping a country distinguish itself. The TDC helps Taiwan “actively promote

innovation-inspired industries with cultural traits.” The TDC views the design industry as an important national/economic entity to be cultivated and advanced, and this, of course, includes fashion.

In order to help promote advancement in design, the TDC has dedicated itself to extensive efforts in “raising the creativity of designers on a par with international standards; increasing the population of people employed in the design industry to meet demand for design services; raising industrial competitiveness and helping manufacturers build up their own brand; nurturing design with a Taiwan flavor to win worldwide prestige and consumer recognition; propagating aesthetic education so people will learn to appreciate innovation and design; increasing designer’s population; and creating cross-field design integration in order to create new services, values, and overall effectiveness.” TDC facilitates almost all aspects of design, from the

technology, industry development, international focus, product development and cultivating local talent.

As a kind of nurturing establishment, TDC further helps in the fashion realm by “training promising designers disciplined by solid overseas experience,” and increasing their influence with media attention. It has also dedicated itself to developing Taiwan-styled design products, and allowing Taiwan designs to achieve international influence by helping businesses in Taiwan and holding international creative competitions. In simple terms, the TDC’s main focus is to help give Taiwan an international voice, and part of this includes establishing a strong statement in fashion design.

Roll Call

What kinds of local designers can be helped by such institutions as the TTF and TDC? Have you heard of Yuwen (昱雯)? If you haven’t yet, you are sure to

(Top) In the laboratory, you can observe the pattern of the color boards under the influence of various light sources. (Photo courtesy of TDC)

(Bottom) Taiwan Design Center (TDC) delivers the latest trends in designs and colors to the fashion addicts and designers by providing state-of-the-art color and material equipments in their laboratory. (Photo courtesy of TDC)





A recent line designed by a local designer, Ms. Pun Dai Lee.

soon. An up and coming Taipei designer, her works are for women aged 23-32. Yuwen has an incredible resume. Born in Taiwan, she went to a fashion and design college in Japan, was an assistant at Chanel, went to Paris for more school and to work in high-end fashion and runways, then to Shanghai, and now she is back in Taipei to promote her own line.

Her style is a beautiful mix of whimsical fantasy and womanly femininity. Her clothes are a little sexy, but as she told me, “to make the person wearing it feel sexy, not for those observing,” and indeed the soft fabrics and slowing materials look extremely comfortable as well as stylish. Inspired by her childhood, her clothes have an innocent childlike purity combined with adult sophistication, and a common shape or geometrical pattern can be seen in many of the clothes. Her style, inspired by Europe, but also Japan and Taiwan, has a modern twist that works for the trendy Taipei social butterfly or businesswoman.

Yuwen does the more complicated

sewing on detailed pieces all by herself, and is thinking of starting a line of handbags. As of now, most of her clothes are bought by stores in Japan, but she is working on placing her name brand into more stores here in Taipei. When I asked her how her style has been accepted here in Taipei, she admitted that it was a little slow going at first, but as more and more people seek variety it has gotten easier, with rising demand for something different from the mainstream.

“Being a designer is not as easy as people think,” she noted. “There are lots of technical issues and obstacles to work around, but if you are determined and have the passion, you stick to it and don’t give up.” Hopefully, Yuwen’s time for fame is finally here, with events such as “Taipei in Style” to help showcase new talent such as hers, new and different styles are gaining popularity. Previously, the major barrier to fresh fashion in Taipei was the hesitancy of stores and designers to fully express themselves and Taiwanese brands, afraid that top

consumers would not pay attention. That is changing, however, and with the Asian economic boom, and institutions such as the TTF and TDC to help encourage the local voice, there seems to be more freedom and pride in expressing a unique and specifically Oriental identity—not just China and Hong Kong styles, but a truly Taiwanese style.

Although it has been a slow start, the “Taipei style” is off and running on a track all its own, giving Taiwan yet another individual element in the international community. Yes, you can still find all the “normal” mainstream clothing lines here, styles and brands from all over the world, but now you can also find clothes unique to Taiwan. Opportunity for new talent and new designs seems to be opening up, and the world will be able to see the latest ideas at this summer’s “Taipei in Style.” Clothes and fashion can be anything you want it to be in Taipei—all you have to do is look. ☺



(Left and right) Taiwanese style inspired by Europe and Japan. (Photo courtesy of Yuwen Ho)

Want to Look Like a Star?

Portrait Photography Taiwan-Style Is the Answer

Text by Flora Ho

Photo courtesy of Flower Wave

Every weekend around Taiwan soon-to-wed couples have their photographs taken at historic buildings and scenic spots, Taipei favorites being National Taiwan University (NTU) campus and the Museum of Drinking Water. Most island couples will spend quite a lot on a set of wedding photos. The studio and outdoor shots depict the happy couple in their wedding outfits and other costumes, for example traditional dress. Taipei's main clusters of wedding-photo salons have grown up near Zhongshan and Zhongzheng districts. Young people also have portraits taken in so-called portrait-photography salons, just for fun and to

have a record of them looking good.

We're not talking old-style single shots of someone sitting soberly in a chair. We mean full service in a luxurious salon offering both wedding photos and portraits, or the Ximending portrait salons popular with the young crowd providing professional but more limited service. It all depends on your pocketbook capacity and service desires. Get made up like a film star, dress up in costumes, have romantic pictures taken with a spouse/lover. Have an album to show to friends and family or keep for your own enjoyment, in years to come saying, "Wasn't your granny pretty when she was younger?"

Opinions on Portraits Differ

Taiwan's main market for portrait photographs is young women. Having a series of portraits taken is probably not a crucial "must-do" for non-Asian foreigners in Taiwan, unless they are prospective models. However, quite a few have undergone the process at the behest of their islander wife or partner. Says Brit Neil Morrison, 44, "I would never have had the portraits done myself. I thought it silly and grimace when the album is passed around, but my then-girlfriend, now wife, who is Taiwanese, really wanted us to have them taken. We had a series of studio pictures taken in formal attire, in lovey-dovey poses, even in traditional dress. It was actually quite a laugh."



Wedding portraits done in Taiwan style have attracted many soon-to-be married couples. (Photo courtesy of Very Taipei)

Xie Wei-ying (謝蔚穎), 30, of Taipei, a big fan of salon portraits, had a 20-pose set taken a few years ago, spending a fair chunk of her monthly salary in the process. In the photos she can be seen in party gown, traditional Chinese *qipao*, and swimming costume, with the photographs taken in the studio and outside. She had the portraits taken because she liked the idea of looking like a film star, and preserving her youthful beauty for posterity. She says the service has improved quite a lot since she had her portraits taken, about seven years ago; it was quite hard work posing all day then, whereas now it's much easier and enjoyable and if she has a chance she would like more photos—if her boyfriend pays, of course.

Florrie Ho, 25, of Keelung doesn't intend to have portrait photos taken. She finds it artificial and too "show off," not worth spending money on. Satisfied with the photographs friends and family take of her, she doesn't feel comfortable posing for others.

An increasing number of people are visiting Taiwan, primarily from Japan and Hong Kong, either specifically to have wedding photos taken or to take advantage of the superior service in Taiwan while here. These numbers are expected to grow strongly, reflecting the quality all-round service the salons offer and the real bargain compared to, say, Japan or Hong Kong



Portrait photography can give you whatever look you would like to have. The difficult part rests on making a decision of the style you want. (Photo courtesy of Very Taipei)



Photographs can be arranged either in the studio or outdoor to achieve a natural look.

Tempted to try it out? Paying visits to studios and negotiation are highly suggested as prices may range differently.





Photographers are highly skilled that they can easily capture the moments and make you look like a star.

Where to Go

Calvin Chen is a 39-year-old freelance photographer based in Taipei, specializing in portraits. Most of his clients are young women, students, and working women. Clients handle make-up and clothing themselves (otherwise this is charged extra). He doesn't have a studio and prefers outside shoots (however, a popular indoor location for couples is the "luxury" hotels seen all over Taiwan) wherever the client wants—at the coast, outside a famous historic building, in the country, etc. But he can rent a studio when needed. He charges around NT\$8000 for a day's shoot, from which the client will receive 30 photographs. He has colleagues who've been asked to do nude portraits, but he sticks to the clothed kind to keep things simple.

Flower-waves is one of a number of portrait-photography salons offering portraits taken in Taipei's favorite playground for the young and trendy, Ximending. Customers include female students, working women, middle-aged women, and a sprinkling of Taiwanese men, mostly young. They also have quite a few Japanese customers (portrait-photo taking is a bargain must-do for many young, female Japanese visitors to Taipei). The service includes makeup and costumes. For a day's shoot to produce a 20-photo album, with a number of styles and poses, the charge is NT\$10,000-20,000. Taking "sexy" pics is acceptable, but if you want nudes you'll have to look elsewhere.



Wardrobes are often complimentary to the photography packages. All you need to bring is a great smile. (Photo courtesy of Calvin Chen)

Going back in time and capturing the moments of nostalgia.

Very Taipei is a "luxury" wedding-photo salon, with a portrait-photo service, for those who really want 5-star service and are willing to pay. The experience of portrait-photo taking is today a relaxing experience in a luxury environment where you are pampered, given one-to-one service, and even provided with food and drink. The price of a day's shoot is NT\$30,000-45,000. This includes hair, makeup, jewelry, costumes, a 20-photo album, and food and drink. "We aren't worried the client won't be able to find any photos they like, we only worry they will want every one," says Very Taipei. They also handle nude portraits, but insist on a confidentiality contract.

Why not take advantage of what Taiwan's photography salons have to offer? "When in Rome, do as the Romans do...." For limited expense you can impress your family and friends with impressive photos of yourself looking like a model or film star, or at least get a laugh dressed in traditional Chinese clothing or in silly poses. A bargain compared to what it can cost in other countries—so why not treat yourself? Struggling for an innovative gift for a wife/partner? Want to be reminded of the fun times you had in Taiwan in a series of high-quality professional photos in various locations and poses? Want to make your friends and relatives back home giggle? Give this kind of portrait photography a try. ☺

Fragrant Foods from the Fragrant Harbor

Text and photos by
Mark Caltonhill

Hong Kong offers the best of foods from around the world, and its citizens are proud of this complex food culture and the many international cuisines from which it draws. Most associate Hong Kong with Cantonese food. One of China's largest and most-populous provinces, Guangdong (廣東; Canton is a French transliteration), to Hong Kong's north, has both vast arable lands and a long coastline. These attributes means its cuisine (廣東菜; literally "Guangdong vegetables") is characterized by a wide choice of meats and vegetables,

plus a rich selection of marine foods. Guangzhou (廣州), the provincial capital, long ago became southern China's preeminent port, giving access to ingredients from far beyond the nation's borders.

Guangdong's geography, and the relatively short distances that land and marine foodstuffs must travel, means Cantonese food is, above all, characterized by freshness. This, in turn, means it is less-heavily seasoned or spiced than cuisines of China's more remote areas. Chilies are used far less than in the northern (Beijing), western

(Sichuan), and even eastern (Zhejiang/Shanghai) cuisines, and similarly garlic and other strong flavors are generally absent, making southern food somewhat insipid to those familiar with other Chinese cooking styles. The Cantonese claim that the spiciness of a dish tends to be inversely proportional to its freshness.

Typically, Cantonese cuisine makes more use of ginger, white pepper, scallions, rice wine, soy sauce, and so-called five-spice powder (五香粉), but even then only sparsely.



Enjoy a hearty Cantonese meal with the family is a wonderful treat at any time of the day. (Photo by udndata)



Cantonese Five-Spice Powder

The philosophy of Chinese cooking identifies five flavors: sweet, sour, bitter, spicy, and salty, and five-spice powder is said to bring all of these into play. It is commonly composed of Sichuan pepper, cinnamon, star anise, cumin, and cloves, though alternatives may be used.

(Middle Left) Cantonese cooking usually makes extensive use of steaming and stir-frying, therefore, locks the flavors in the ingredients. (Photo courtesy of Ambassador Hotel) (Bottom Left) The most common Cantonese-style food in Taipei is the various barbequed and cooked meats. (Photo by udndata)



Cantonese Cuisine Done Better in Taipei

As in Taiwan, chicken, pork, and fish are the main meats, followed by beef. It is commonly held that Cantonese people will eat just about anything, and, indeed, a wide variety of exotic animals and creepy-crawlies have found their way onto menus. In the name of freshness, cows and pigs heading for the pot are ideally killed the day they are eaten, and, again like in Taiwan, chickens and fish are best killed just before being cooked.

In spite of this emphasis on freshness, Cantonese cuisine makes extensive use of dried and preserved foodstuffs. This might be attributable to the dietary habits of the Hakka people (客家人), who tended to inhabit more marginal and less accessible mountain areas of Guangdong and other provinces, and whose cuisine may have influenced Cantonese cooking as a whole. Commonly used dried and preserved goods include dried shrimp (蝦米), salted fish (鹹魚), dried abalone (乾鮑魚), dried sea cucumber (海參), dried mushrooms (冬菇), preserved vegetables (梅菜), salted eggs (鹹蛋), and egg preserved in lime, a.k.a. "thousand-year egg" (皮蛋).

Cantonese make extensive use of steaming and stir-frying, which are fast and alter flavors least. Thus, famed dishes include steamed fish (清蒸魚),

stir-fried leafy greens (炒菜), stir-fried beef with flat, wide rice noodles (乾炒牛河), and fried noodles (炒麵), which gave rise to the chow mein of Western Chinese cuisine.

Where to Go

According to well-known food writer Brian Asmus, the best place to sample this kind of Cantonese fare is the San Want Hotel at 2F, 172 Zhongxiao E. Road, Sec. 4, though book well in advance. Many other major hotels include a Cantonese restaurant among their eating options.

By far the most common Cantonese-style food available in Taipei are *shao la* (燒臘) and *dim sum* (點心) restaurants. The first are usually small establishments with various barbequed and cooked meats hanging in their windows. Most sell honey-barbequed pork (叉燒; *cha siu*), roast duck (烤鴨), and chicken (油雞), as well as things like crispy roast pork (燒肉) and sausage (臘腸). These are usually served with rice and side dishes, topped with a spoonful of scallion sauce (蔥油). Although some order a meal with just one meat, such as barbequed pork with veggies and rice (叉燒飯), it is more common to order a combination of two or three, the classic being "three treasures rice" (三寶飯), featuring barbequed pork, roast duck, and chicken.



Dim sum choices include the Star City (京星) chain and a local branch of Hong Kong's Sweet Dynasty (糖朝). The Zhongxiao Road outlets of both are open late. For more exotic Cantonese food, "Burma Street" (actually Hua Xin Street; 華新街) in Zhonghe has a number of restaurants catering to the local 10,000-strong population of overseas Chinese from Southeast Asia. Their arrival helped populate the city with authentic Cantonese chefs; the next wave of upmarket restaurants awaited the island's economic boom.

Dim sum is generally a light meal served with tea; in fact, Cantonese refer to it as "drinking tea" (*yam cha*; 飲茶) rather than "eating dim sum." Although there is much debate over translation of the latter term, it possibly means something like "selecting to one's heart's content," and, indeed, that is traditionally the approach diners take, selecting small dishes off passing trolleys, rather than ordering from a menu in advance.

A wide range of such delicacies are available, many served in miniature steamers. Common *dim sum* include shrimp dumplings (鮮蝦餃), *siu mai* (燒賣; a kind of open pork dumpling with shrimp or other additions on top), "little cage" dumplings (小籠包), "soupy" dumplings (湯包), spring rolls (春捲), seafood rolls (海鮮捲), deep-fried shrimp rolls (炸蝦捲), and "phoenix claws" (鳳爪; actually chicken feet).

Like the "phoenix claws," many foods go by exotic-sounding non-descriptive names.

Irene Yang, a Hong Konger who has lived in Taiwan two decades, says her compatriots can generally judge the quality of a *dim sum* restaurant on two items: cha siu steamed buns and shrimp dumplings. She adds that the most popular tea drunk with dim sum is Chrysanthemum *pu-er* (菊花普洱).



Honey Barbequed Pork (叉燒)

Cha siu (*cha shao* in Mandarin) literally means "fork roasted," aptly describing the traditional method of using forks to cook marinated pork over a fire. The meat is marinated for three or more days, turning the outer layers red. In addition to being consumed as strips of meat with rice and vegetables, cha siu is also in dim sum such as pastries (叉燒酥), steamed buns (叉燒包), and "intestine" rice sheets with cha siu stuffing (叉燒腸粉).

Cha siu is a little tricky to make, but worth the effort.



Ingredients:

600g pork fillet, 2 tbsp honey or maltose (dissolved in a little water), 6 cloves garlic, 3 scallions, 3 slices ginger, 1 tbsp brown sugar, 2 tsp five-flavor spice, 2 tbsp soy sauce, 2 tbsp rice wine, 2 tbsp oyster sauce, 1 tsp sesame oil

Method:

1. Mince garlic, scallions, and ginger, mix in sugar, soy sauce, rice wine, oyster sauce, and sesame oil to create a marinade.
2. Cut pork into pieces 15-20 cm pieces, marinate in covered dish in fridge 3 days, turning twice daily.
3. Remove pork and drain. (Reserve the marinade.)
4. Preheat oven to 220 degrees Celsius, place baking tin containing 500 ml water at bottom.
5. Using s-shaped hooks, hang pork strips from top rack of oven. (For small ovens, pork can be placed on a barbeque rack.) Roast 10-15 min., then baste with marinade, and roast again at 180 degrees Celsius 8-10 min.
6. Remove from oven, cool for 5 min., then brush with honey (or maltose). Brown under medium grill 5 min, turning occasionally.
7. Serve hot or cold.
8. Remaining marinade can be used for gravy with dripping caught in water under meat.



Pork Ribs with Black Bean and Chili Sauce (豉椒排骨)

Ingredients:

500g chopped pork ribs, 1 tbsp fermented black beans, 4 cloves garlic, 3 slices ginger, 1 scallion, 1 tbsp soy sauce, 2 tbsp oil, 1 red chili, 1/2 cup chicken broth, 1/2 tsp sugar, few drops sesame oil

Method:

1. Rinse black beans, mix with minced garlic and ginger.
2. Chop and de-seed chili.
3. Heat oil in wok to medium-high temp, add ribs and stir-fry until browned (5+ min.). Remove.
4. Heat oil in wok, stir-fry chili and bean mix.
5. Add ribs and mix. Add broth (or water) and bring to boil. Add soy sauce and/or sugar to taste.
6. Lower heat, cover and braise until meat is tender (10 min.+).
7. Turn off heat, mix in sesame oil, garnish with scallion chopped into short lengths. Cover to allow to "humid" a moment. Serve.

Pearl Balls (珍珠丸)

Ingredients: (Makes around 20 medium-sized pearl 'balls')

150g glutinous rice, 250g pork or ground pork, 2 tbsp water chestnut, 2 scallions, 2 slices fresh ginger, 1 egg (or egg white), 1 tbsp soy sauce, 1/2 tbsp rice wine, 1/2 tbsp starch, 1 tsp sesame oil, 1/2 tsp pepper, as well as sugar, salt, and MSG if desired.

Method:

1. Wash glutinous rice, soak for 6-8 hours. Wash, strain, dry, and place on flat plate.
2. Soak water chestnuts 3 hours. Strain and mince.
3. Cut scallions and ginger finely.
4. Mince the pork. Mix the pork, egg (or egg white), soy sauce, sesame oil, rice wine, pepper, and starch thoroughly (5 min).
5. Add chopped chestnuts, scallions, and ginger (and any other seasonings) and mix thoroughly.
6. Take a soup-spoon-sized amount of mix and form into ball shape (tricky, as the mix is quite wet and sticky).
7. Roll the ball in the rice (another opportunity to properly shape) until evenly covered in rice grains.
8. Place in steamer and cook 10-15 minutes until firm to touch.
9. Serve with soy sauce or other condiments.

(can be stored in freezer)

Other ingredients such as dried shrimp or shitake mushrooms can also be added.



Most visitors to Taipei who have time for a tour will visit the former CKS Memorial Hall. The Martyrs' Shrine is not so high on the must-see list but is also worth visit.

It has majestic Chinese imperial style architecture, having more than a passing resemblance to the buildings in Beijing's Forbidden City, and beautiful, tranquil, and spacious grounds, ideal to relax in and enjoy a quite moment. It enjoys an excellent natural position, located on mountain slopes and overlooking the Keelung River. If you want to see

some pomp and ceremony, and learn something about the history of China in the early 20th century, anti-Japanese War and civil war period, or just fancy somewhere accessible to sit and think quietly or read away from the city bustle, a visit to the Martyrs' Shrine is for you.

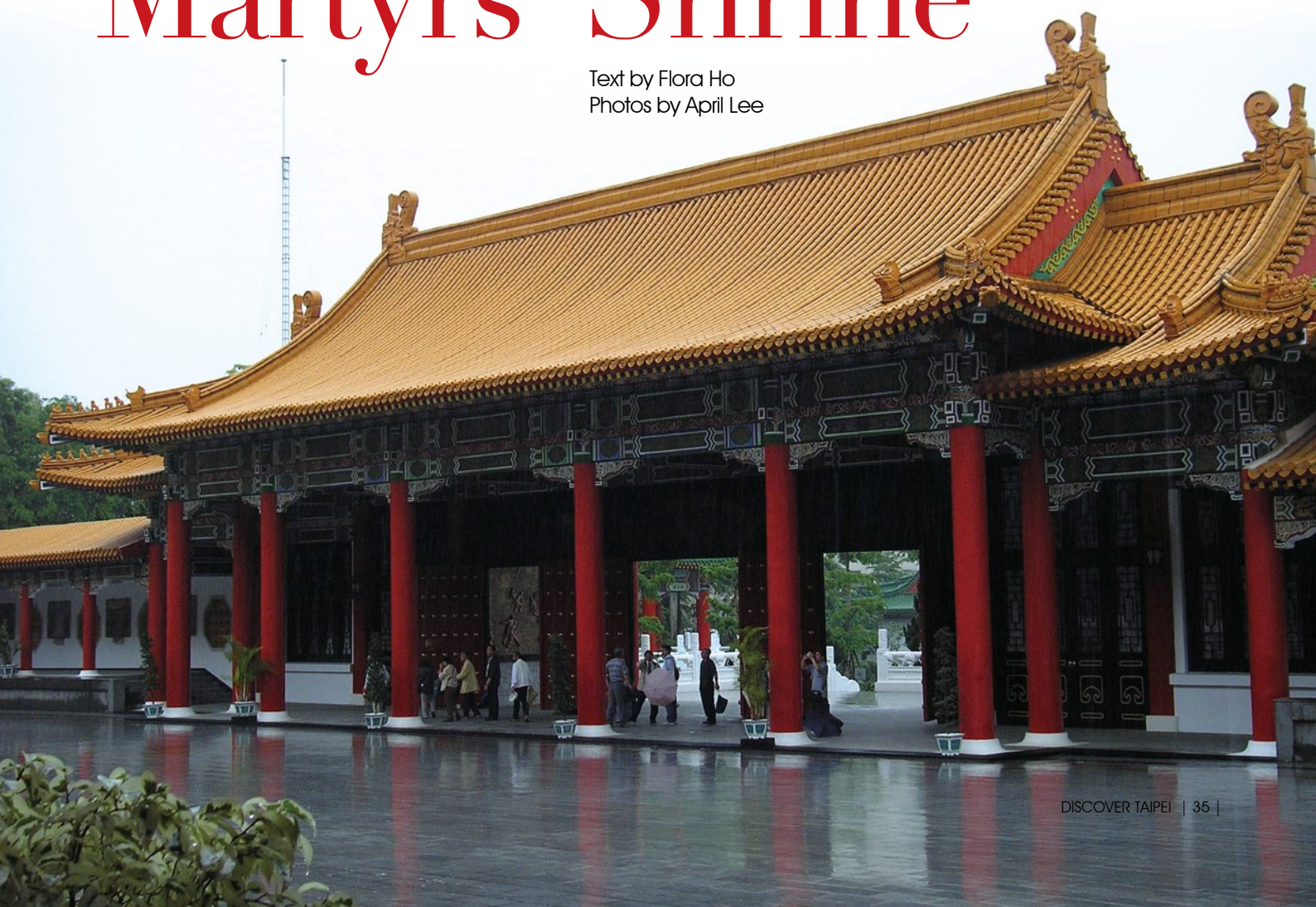
The site of the shrine was originally a Shinto shrine in the Japanese colonial era. Instead of being a place for worshipping Shinto gods, the site was transformed in 1945 into a place to commemorate the heroes, military and civilian, who sacrificed their lives in

the struggle to establish the Republic of China, the fight against the Japanese and in the Chinese civil war.

Until the shrine that exists today was erected the heroes of China were commemorated in the old Japanese shrine which was built in 1942 to house the plaques (and spirits) of Japanese military and government dead. This became the Martyrs' Shrine in its first incarnation in 1945 after Retrocession (when the island was given to the ROC). President Eisenhower commented on a visit to Taiwan in the 1950s how inappropriate it was for the heroes of China, many of whom died fighting against the Japanese, to be commemorated in a building that was a Japanese religious place, which may have encouraged Chang Kai-shek to build a new martyr's shrine on the same site.

Taipei Martyrs' Shrine

Text by Flora Ho
Photos by April Lee



The changing of the guard is the highlight of the visit to the shrine. Make sure to witness the show of military pomp and discipline in the Taiwanese style!



The shrine was designed by Yao Yuan-zhong. His northern Chinese palace style design was selected by Chiang Kai-shek as the design for the Martyrs' Shrine when he was just 36 years old. It was opened in 1969.

The buildings are characterized by numerous red pillars, elaborate decoration and curled-up tiled roofs. Overall, the effect is majestic and elegant. The plum blossom, officially the ROC national flower since 1964, features heavily in the Martyrs' Shrine, both in the decoration of the buildings and as real flowers in the gardens.

Wooden plaques have been inserted into the four walls of the main building to commemorate the martyrs' heroic deeds. They also, according to Martyrs' Shrine

staff, represent the spirits of the dead martyrs. The atmosphere is solemn and respectful and reflects the veneration in which these fallen heroes are held. Large murals depict famous scenes from history and one to watch out for depicts the historically-significant Northern Expedition, a military campaign in the 1920s which brought the KMT to power and which produced quite a few martyrs.

Just like the guards who stand impassively outside England's Buckingham Palace while tourists try to catch their eye and make them smile, the guards at the main gate of the shrine are highly-trained and maintain their composure and discipline at all times. One thing the visitor shouldn't miss is the changing of the guard. It is an interesting

show of military pomp, ceremony and discipline Taiwan-style as the guards go through their well-drilled moves in their pristine uniforms.

The shrine is open to the public all year round, except for March 28th and 29th, September 2nd and 3rd every year. The reason for the March and September temporary closure to the public is that on these days the President, officials and martyr descendants pay their respects to the fallen. The March dates coincide with Youth Day and Tomb Sweeping Festival and the September days coincide with Soldier's Day. This tradition began in 1969 and continues to this day, with the president, accompanied by other senior officials in the government and military, paying his respects to the martyrs twice a year.

Chiang ordered the shrine to be completed in time for the March 29th ceremony and the architect achieved this. It was completed on March 27th 1969, the following day it was tidied up and then on March 29th the first ceremony was held, with Chiang leading the people in honoring the fallen martyrs.

Selection Criteria

What were the selection criteria for being commemorated in Martyr's Shrine? The main requirement for a person to be admitted to the Martyr's Shrine is—without being facetious—that they have to be dead. Second, the candidate must die in battle for the country or die while on a dangerous special mission. In the latter case to be declared a martyr required the president's recommendation. For many years, with no fighting between China and Japan or between the ROC and the People's Republic of China, no new martyrs have been added for many years and probably, hopefully, never will be.

These are some of the more famous of the thousands of martyrs who are commemorated in the Martyrs' Shrine. The martyrs are divided into soldiers and literati martyrs.

Qiu Jin (秋瑾)

Qiu Jin was an early feminist and revolutionary, committed to overthrowing the Qing dynasty and making China a better place. She is famous for saying, when threatened with execution if she didn't reveal secrets and betray others, the words "The autumn wind and the autumn rains bring tremendous sadness to me." She went to her death in 1907 bravely, taking her secrets with her.

Xie Jin-yuan (謝晉元)

Colonel Xie achieved fame as the commander of Chinese forces fighting the Japanese in Shanghai in 1937. The Chinese troops were surrounded by Japanese forces and besieged for several days in the Sihang Warehouse on the north bank of Shanghai's Suzhou Creek. After suffering a series of setbacks the Chinese public was

cheered to see their troops—"The 800 Heroes"—resisting bravely in a no-hope situation. Xie and his troops became national heroes and their heroic struggle in Shanghai is depicted on a mural in the Martyrs' Shrine.

Luo Fu-xing (羅福星)

Born in Guangdong, Luo Fu-xing was a Hakka, who moved to Miaoli in 1903. He was a member of the Tongmenhui, the main anti-Qing revolutionary organization which fought to make China a republic. He wanted Taiwan to return to Chinese rule and was executed with 200 followers, after a failed uprising against the Japanese in Miaoli, in 1914. He wrote before his death: "I do not die at home, to be worshipped by generations of my descendants, I die in Taiwan, always remembered by the people of Taiwan."

Lin Jue-min (林覺民)

He was executed at 24 after the failed Huanghuagang (Guangzhou) uprising of 1911. Not only is he remembered as a patriotic and revolutionary hero but also for the poignant "Last letter to his wife" he wrote his wife and son the day before the uprising, which has moved millions of people in China, Taiwan and overseas.

Liang Dun-hou and the "500 Perfect Men of Taiyuan" (梁敦厚)

As the communist forces closed in on one Taiyuan in 1948 and the situation for the KMT forces was hopeless, commanding officer Liang committed suicide together with 500 of his officers and men outside the Shanxi city government building and their bodies were then burned as they had instructed.



The buildings are characterized by red pillars, as well as the statues that line up against the walls.





These wooden plaques are inserted to commemorate the martyrs' heroic deeds.

Information

The address of the Martyrs Shrine is No. 139, Bei-an Road (北安路), Zhongshan District, Taipei.

It is open between 9am and 5pm (except for the times stated previously when it closes for the memorial ceremonies in spring and autumn).

Changing of the guard

This begins at 9am each day and then takes place on the hour. However, the last changing of the guard is at 4:40 pm.

Traffic

Bus: 208, 213, 247, 267, 287, 21, 42.

Alight at the Martyrs' Shrine stop.

MRT: Take the Danshui line to Yuanshan station, then walk down Bei-an Road. Walking will take about 15 minutes.

Car: Take Zhongshan North Road to Bei-an Road and you will reach the shrine soon after the roundabout.

The shrine is not far from one of Taipei's most prominent landmarks, the Grand Hotel. If you have time, you can consider having a wander around the hotel grounds when you visit the Martyrs' Shrine. The hotel, built in the early 1970s, was the site of Taiwan's most important Shinto shrine in Taiwan's colonial era. You can see a magnificent bronze dragon in the hotel taken from the shrine when it was demolished. It is also quite close to Taipei Story house and Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

Note: in addition to this martyrs' shrine there is a separate Taipei City Martyr's Shrine in Nangang which commemorates the brave citizens of Taipei who gave their lives for others, including policemen who died bravely on the job, people who died saving others from drowning and a teacher who lost her life trying to save the children under her charge in a bus fire in the early 1990s.

(Top) The changing of the blue guards makes the majestic building seems even more grand and pompous. (Left) The entire building comprises of the majestic Chinese imperial style architecture that sits in the tranquil and spacious grounds of northern Taipei. (Right) Highly-trained guards who stand at both inside and outside of the gates maintain their composure and discipline at all times.



DIY

Text by Monideepa Banerjee
Photos by Joanna Rees

The Art of Making Bead Jewelry

A couple of months back, a Taipei Times article proclaimed the popularity of made-in-Taiwan glass beads worldwide. Moving from the closed circuit of wealthy aboriginal families, the Paiwan and Rukai tribes are famous for their beautiful glass beads, and the craft has gained the status of a booming cottage industry, serving the growing demands of home and abroad, mainly Japan and Europe.

I was pleasantly surprised at the coincidence when my friend Aylin Brimo, a Taipei European School teacher, mentioned her 'newfound love' and invited me to see her collection of glass-bead jewelry. Very creative, her artworks are first-rate, but what left an indelible mark in my mind was the fascinating use of glass and crystal beads in the jewelry. While a few of the beads are imported from her homeland, Turkey, she asserted that most of the beads and other accessories like crystals, stones, and metallic figures used in the jewelry are bought locally from stores in and around Taipei Main Station.

Within the week I met three other ladies as far removed from each other as chalk and cheese, but united by their common love for made-in-Taiwan beads and the desire for trying their hand at the craft of bead jewelry. Ilana Plopsky, an electronic engineer from Israel, however, stated firmly that, "It's

more than a craft, it's an art. And to me, it's a culmination of artistic sensibility and inner creativity." Mary, an overseas Taiwanese who owns Mary's Crystal Collection, a very popular costume-jewelry store in Tianmu, is a thoroughbred business professional, yet you couldn't miss the passionate tinge whenever she spoke of beads and crystals. Then there was Shreng Labru, a dancer and long-term Taipei resident. "Learning to make jewelry using these vibrant beads is a very satisfying experience for me as they add so much warmth and color to my routine life."



An array of various beads can be found at many bead stores in Taipei.

So when I began researching this article, I was not at all surprised to find that many ladies from the expatriate community are involved in this craft, directly or indirectly. There is a very good market for amateur glass-bead jewelry, mentioned both Ilana and Aylin, in the form of flea markets, food fairs, book fairs, Christmas bazaars, and so on.

All Shapes, Colors, and Sizes

Glass beads are regarded as the oldest human art and technology, dated back to the Roman and Egyptian eras, when beautiful queens and royal ladies adorned themselves with a spectacular motley of glass, stones, and gems wonderfully set in gold. In Taiwan, the commercial glass-bead industry has sprung up in the past two decades, producing glass beads using the latest technology and styles. Now, you can get glass beads in all shapes, sizes, colors, and lusters, from tiny flecks to large, round, oval, star, teardrop, square, rectangle, pyramid, opaque, translucent, transparent, smoky, brilliant...the variety seems endless. Be forewarned that you may go crazy at the astounding variety and can spend hours surfing.

“Of all the varieties found here I love the traditional ‘wound’ glass beads as they resemble the conventional style more closely,” says Shreng, “probably because I am a dancer of a classic form that originated thousands of years ago in India’s temples.” Looking at my puzzled face, she explains these beads were the earliest variety of true glass beads, made by winding glass at very high temperature around a steel wire or stick coated in a clay slip, releasing particles inside the glass, giving it a mystic touch. Later on, other materials like graphite and stainless steel were used to pronounce the effect.

Aylin loves lampwork beads, popularly known as Italian beads, for their fascinating range – in shape, size, and color. They have a smooth and shiny outer surface and an intricately designed interior. The style originated in Venice in the 19th century, when to increase the market value, delicate multicolored decorations were added later to beads produced in the traditional manner. The fine-tuning was done by women, working from home using oil lamps—source of the name—to re-heat the core and decorate them with fine threads of semi-solid wisps of colored glass. A very tedious process, but it became hugely popular. Even today lampwork beads, now produced en masse in factories outside Italy, are the most popular glass beads.

The most precious glass beads are Swarovski crystal beads, named so for their high brilliance. Perfect for jewelry, Ilana, right now taking lessons in making costume jewelry, confirms that a Swarovski-crystal necklace can fetch over NT\$10,000. Another type of glass bead in high demand, according to Taipei’s Afon Costume Jewelry Parts Company,



Pay a visit to the weekend jade market, where various beads and stones are widely available.



Glass beads are relatively cheaper at the wholesale stores near the Taipei main station area. (Photo by Monideepa Banerjee)

is Japanese seed beads, named for their tiny size. They are usually monochrome, shiny, and go well with all kinds of glass beads in jewelry.

A Treasure Hunt ... for the Perfect Beads

“It depends on what you call perfect,” says Aylin, on one of her regular bead-market hunts. “To me, everything looks more than perfect and I go insane collecting piece after piece.” Usually beads are priced per piece, and range from NT\$5/6 to a staggering NT\$200/225 depending on size, shape, and quality, averaging NT\$20-60 for a good-quality piece. But chances are high that at the end of your shopping spree you’re down by a few thousand bucks, admits Aylin laughingly.

Although you may find some glass-bead stores in your neighborhood, the majority are centered around Taipei Main Station, on Changan West Road, Yanping North Road, and Dihua Street. The underground Metro Mall under Taipei Main Station also has a few stores worth visiting, as you’ll be walking by them anyway on any MRT jaunt to reach Exit 3, which leads to Changan West Road.

Exiting Exit 3, you'll notice a huge bead store, easily recognizable from the hundreds of bead strings hanging outside. Look at the merchandise, in awesome variety, but my suggestion is to wait until you find something truly exceptional. Keep walking along the right on Yanping North Road, and check the shops; there will be at least a handful of shops worthy of browsing till you reach the biggies. The first big store is Afon Costume Jewelry Parts, and a few yards ahead is The Teddy Bear Mama Shop. Both have a fabulous collection of beads and other accessories, ensuring outstanding creations. It's not possible to explain the diversity—you've got to visit yourself, just to get an idea, even if not into beads or jewelry-making. Chances are high you'll get hooked, which has happened in my case. You simply can't ignore the magical spell of the fascinating-colorful-dazzling-elegant-mind-blowing variety.

All these stores offer free classes for DIY – in jewelry and decorative-piece making – unfortunately all in Chinese. However, if you can follow the picture, or understand it by imitating fellow students, go ahead, give it a try. It's worth it.



Many stores also offer jewelry-making classes, so make sure to ask the store management for courses and prices. (Photo by Monideepa Banerjee)

Make sure to dress comfortably while doing bead shopping, because you are most likely going to spend a lot of time browsing through. (Photo by Monideepa Banerjee)



The Art of Making Bead Jewelry

"There is no fixed style to imitate, no set rules to follow. Be creative, be imaginative, be daring, be experimental, and share your ideas and tips with other." This philosophy seems to permeate the DIY glass-bead-making world of Taipei, so ladies discovering an interest in this field often get together to exchange ideas, and the mutual exchange has brought in a huge diversity in approaches and style. Both Ilana and Aylin have done quite a few exhibitions of their collections, which have been appreciated and well accepted. They are willing to share their ideas and views with others and can be contacted at: Ilana (ilangn@yahoo.com) or Aylin (aylinbrimo@gmail.com)

But if you want to learn some fancy techniques for making bead jewelry, join Mary's class, run regularly at the back of her store, Mary's Crystal Collection. An overseas Taiwanese, she speaks very good English.

There are many courses, from 5 classes to 40, spanning one week to six months. Rates are NT\$5000 for 5 classes to NT\$25,000 for a full 40-class course. It's suggested you have a look at her store and visit a couple of other DIY stores before deciding.

Beads Steeped in Myth

If you have a fascination for things tinged with a bit of history or mystery, like me, go for the Paiwan glass beads, with an origin heavily laced in myth. As the folklore goes, a woman was boiling a big pot of millet one day, over a big fire. As the pot began to steam and bubble, the heat pushed the sun away from the Earth. The sun, at being forced to part with its worldly possessions, burst into tears. The teardrops fell on the earth and crystallized into glass beads. Another legend tells the story of a peacock prince who fell in love with the daughter of a Paiwan chief. As a token of his love, he made a grand necklace of colorful glass beads and presented it to her.

Well, I simply adore such folktales, and there does exist a special kind of bead – the peacock beads – among the famed Paiwan beads. The workmanship seen in Paiwan beads, and other aboriginal beads for that matter, is extraordinary, and the beads have a very earthy feel which I find very appealing. As unique works of art, many of these aboriginal beads are collectors' items, and I consider them the best bet for some original "made in Taiwan" artifacts. The best place to buy aboriginal beads is the gift store at Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines, at 282 Zhishan Road (至善路), Sec. 2, Shilin District. The museum is open from 9 am to 5 pm. Another place recommended is the giftshop at Ketagalan Cultural Center in Beitou, at 3-1 Zhongshan Road (中山路); the nearest MRT station is Xinbeitou, a 3-minute walk.



Beads also come in various cute shapes and sizes. You will sure be amazed by their varieties and selections.



Bead crafts can range from simple key chains to hair accessories like the hair pins.

An Experience Worth Trying

Mary, who has taught bead jewelry-making for over ten years, feels the DIY-bead market has never been so popular. A few years back there were only a few shops around Taipei Main Station, selling regular beads. Now there are over ten, selling beads of amazing color, quality, and variety. “They are also great value for money,” says Avni Rama, a former employee of a scientific institute in Israel dealing with cell biology and presently perfecting her expertise in all kinds of DIY activities in Taipei. “You get the best Swarovski beads here at a very competitive price.”

“In Taipei you can find two distinctive branches of bead craft,” says Aylin. “One is jewelry-making, the other making animal figures using colorful beads. Most shops around Taipei Main Station offer free classes in animal-making; you can also use DIY animal-making kits sold in these shops. Although it requires a lot of patience and knowledge of knotting, etc., bead jewelry-making is more satisfying and fulfilling as it allows you creative freedom and a sense of accomplishment. This can very well be “The experience of your Taipei-living experience.” 📍

At a Glance

Afon Costume Jewelry Parts Co., Ltd.
Address: 243 Changan West Road (長安西路)
Tel: (02) 25505898
All kinds of glass beads.

The Bear Mama Shop
Address: 51 Yanping North Road (延平北路), Sec. 1
Tel: (02) 25508899

Mei Jiau Fashion Accessories Co., Ltd.
Address: 294 Changan West Road (長安西路)
Tel: (02) 25584359
Recommended for Japanese seed beads.

Mary's Crystal Collection
Address: 1F, No. 27, Lane 154, Sec. 2,
Zhongcheng Road (忠誠路)
Tel: (02) 2874-1170; 0938801783 (cellphone)
Excellent jewelry collection, good English.
Variety of courses to suit variety of clientele.

When visiting the stores around the Taipei main station, be aware that many of the beads you see come in bulks. However, their prices are relatively competitive.



Taipei offers tourists and long-term residents a complete array of bargains which rival the best shopping cities in the world. If you look hard enough and do your due diligence, you can walk away with more than a few things that can't be found cheaper anywhere else in the world.

For the inexperienced shopper, or those who are new to Taipei, there are a few lessons that one must learn first before heading into the numerous shopping districts around the city. The first lesson is to “do your research” and fully understand the item that you are seeking. For example, if one is looking to buy a new digital camera, one should do a quick price check on the top on-line auction site in Taiwan, yahoo.com.tw, to check current prices, model specifications and details. Armed with this information, you've already narrowed the risk of getting cheated or buying something you don't want.

The second rule is to simply “have fun” when bargaining. Most store clerks won't mind showing you every camera in the display case, and they are more than happy to type a few digits into their calculator to start the bargaining process. Similarly, there's no obligation to purchase an item if you are not 100% satisfied. However, shoppers should be aware of a “you break it, you buy it” policy enforced at most stores, as many of these businesses are operated as small shops which simply cannot cover the cost of a damaged camera, a broken art work, or a carelessly knocked over computer monitor. At the least, many of these shops may ask you to pay repair costs if you don't want to purchase the item and, unfair as it may seem, most Taipei residents, and most definitely the police, tend to rule in favor of the shopkeeper.

Finally, there is both the Chinese and English adage that “you get what you pay for” which is perfectly apt when describing products or items that may be reduced in price because they are



Bargains Abound in Taipei

Text By Sean Scanlan
Photo by Neng-yu Wang

defective, or of inferior quality. This is especially true when it comes to stones which are often passed off as jade. A real jade bracelet starts at around NT\$60,000 and anything cheaper is simply too good to be true. Antiques are often not authentic and few shoppers may know

that Taiwan law forbids taking genuine antiques (items over 100 years old) out of the country but, then again, it's nearly impossible to find a genuine antique in the weekend markets around town.

With this information in mind, let's start shopping.

Camera Market (Boai Road)

This area of downtown Taipei—the cross-section Boai Road (博愛路) and Hankou Street (漢口街)—is a collection of 50 or so camera shops catering to camera enthusiasts, foreign tourists and youngsters looking for a snappy new camera. Shops can be found at street level, on the second floor, and even in the basement. For the most part, each camera shop in this area carry a full range of product, from DV cameras to the latest digital SLRs, and as one might suspect, a wide range of prices are offered as well.

However, it's safe to say that competition amongst retailers in the area keep most prices far below that of retail department stores and some shops are even willing to sell “*swei huo*” (水貨) or cameras that don't come with a warranty and may not have been officially

registered as exported to Taiwan. For many people this is a concern and many do prefer to pay the 10-20% premium to ensure the fact that their camera is under warranty for up to one year.

Bargaining in this part of town is done by punching a calculator, with many camera shops willing to offer package deals including camera case, memory card, camera strap, etc. One should be prepared to understand the cost of each item and not overpay for a memory card that could negate some of the hard earned savings you have made through bargaining.

Also, this area is well known for enforcing the “you break it, you buy it” policy, with shopkeepers more than willing to call the police and review surveillance footage of the store to prove that the customer was the one who dropped the camera on the floor. However, one



The Camera Market around Boai Road has been developing its business area, which means more protections are given to the shoppers.



camera retailer in neighborhood admits that such an accident hasn't occurred in her shop for the past 30 years, though it is a possibility considering the large crowds which push into these shops on the weekend.

In case your newly purchased camera doesn't work you can usually take the camera back to the store you purchased it from and they will deliver it to the manufacturer. Or, you can take it to the manufacturer yourself with Sony and Canon operating a repair shop in downtown Taipei. Larger department



All types of cameras are available in the Camera Market, however, research and negotiation are essential before you make your way out there.

stores may offer you a 7-day return policy though this generous return program may not be available at the camera stores which populate this district.

How To Get There:

Take the MRT Bannan Line (板南線) to Taipei Main Station or Ximen Station (西門站) and the camera district is just a 5-minute walk from either MRT station.

The Computer Market: Guanghua Market

The Computer Market: Guanghua Market (光華商場) is a sprawling DIY computer market that was inaugurated in 1974 underneath a bridge, hosting 196 stalls. At first stalls in the market sold books and magazines before converting to electronic devices and components because of demand from students at nearby National Taipei University of Technology. Gradually stalls would cater to the growing computer interest, flourishing at the invention of

Windows 95, scrapping books sales altogether and catering to computer geeks who demanded computer fans, hard drives, and CPUs.

Last year, a government decision to relocate the market to nearby Civil Boulevard (市民大道) has kept this area bustling and still the best place for computer bargains.

What appears to be three rows of military barracks are really the location of Guanghua Market Retailers Club, a temporary facility constructed at a cost of NT\$50 million.

The success of this market spurred a number of businesses to open branches on nearby Bade Road (八德路), as well as another computer market near the Taipei Railway Station. However, for many people, Guanhua continues to be the best place for electronics, with some shopkeepers paying as much as NT\$80,000 for stalls that have room for barely a few people. The secret to Guanhua's success, says one retailer, is the fact that the market remains the "first stop" for many who are looking to buy new computer equipment.

Finding bargains amidst the crowds and narrow spaces within the market may be more difficult than one might imagine as most retailers keep their pricing within a certain range and a sample of 10 different sellers of the same notebook computer may reveal a price that is strangely similar. Also, there is little

variance in the price of components such as hard drives, computer memory, and CPUs. In fact, most shopkeepers even seem to agree upon which brands are the best and don't stock products that they believe are inferior.

The best way to hunt down a bargain in this environment is to refer to rule number one and "do your research" and know what you want. If you are very clear about what type of CPU you want to install in your computer as well as the size of the hard drive and the memory allocation, you can walk away with a pretty good deal. The pros of buying a computer this way is you will have a "trust" component, and parts that are far superior to what comes already packaged as a complete computer.

As for components and other peripherals, they are in vast abundance at this market. Again, prices may be

comparable from shop to shop, but generally, these items can't be found anywhere else in the city. And just in case you have a problem with that new notebook computer, printer or other product, don't despair as companies such as Epson, Asustek, and HP all have their repair centers located just a few blocks away on Bade Road.

How To Get There:

The closest MRT stop is Zhongxiao Xinsheng (忠孝新生) MRT Station, a 10-minute walk from the market. Head due north and you'll soon start to come across shops selling computer parts. The market's temporary residence faces Civil Boulevard (市民大道).



The temporary Guanhua market does not mean a decrease in the number of shoppers. Finding good bargains amidst the crowds and narrow spaces within is still the same.



Clothing Market: Wufenpu (五分埔)

Across from the Sungshan Railway Station (松山火車站) is a maze of alleys, backstreets and little lanes which are referred to as the Wufenpu Commercial Area. (五分埔). It's a sort of step-back into a time when clothing was traded like a tangible commodity, sold in bulky cardboard boxes rather than the clean, sterile shops that are found in many department stores throughout the city.

One word of caution about this area is that it's best to shop with a friend as two of you won't get lost inside the maze of shops and you may have better bargaining power if you are able to buy a half-dozen shirts rather than just one single item. Wufenpu is clothing on a mass scale, with many of the street-side clothing peddlers sourcing their supply from this area, meaning that what is on display in the shops is always the freshest styles of the season.

There is also the chance that the item you purchased is not of the highest quality and it may not be up to the department store standard. However, you should always spend some time looking through the items' quality and the prints across the chest. But if you are looking for quick, disposable fashion that won't break the bank, this is your place for plentiful bargains.

Expert shoppers says the hot season for finding new clothing in Wufenpu is August/ September, coinciding with the arrival of Fall fashions and back-to-school wear, and then 6 months later in February/March when Spring fashions arrive. Items such as shirts or pants can be had for as much as a crisp NT\$100 bill or even in the single digits, with few items costing more. Also, a vast variety of sizes, colors, and styles can usually be had as many of these store operators are distributors of this clothing and have access to immense boxes of it. Due to Taiwan's high labor costs and general disinterest in the clothing industry, much of the clothing here now comes from other areas such as Hong Kong and China, though Japanese fashions can sometimes be found.

Also, some shops have intimidating signs such as "no bargaining," but you can bet that a few stalls away someone is willing to "bargain" and may be selling the very same pair of pants. Bringing a friend may mean that you have more confidence to try on clothing in this area (however, some shops will not let their customers try on clothes), and purchase something for a friend or two.



Bring along a friend to Wufenpu so that you will not get lost inside the maze of shops, as well as having someone to help you while bargaining!



Store owners usually have enough patience, therefore, spend time going through the stuff ensures quality of the clothes you purchase.

And so, forearmed with a little knowledge and taking along a friend to give a second opinion (and help carry all the bags) you are now ready to grab your share of the many different bargains that are available. Good hunting! 🍀

How To Get There:

Take the MRT Banaan Line (板南線) to Houshanpi Station (後山埤) and take exit 1. Walk to ZhongPo North Road (中坡北路) to the corner of Yongji Road (永吉路). Wufenpu is to the left.



Photo courtesy of Animals Taiwan

Everything about Pets

Text and photos by Daniel Mojahedi

It is a balmy May morning when Sean McCormack, director of Animals Taiwan, walks out of his office and into his yard where the dogs in his care await him. Although there are more than twenty of them scampering around, he calls each of them by name, understanding their personalities as if each was a member of his own family. “Where is



Sean McCormack, director of Animals Taiwan. (Photo courtesy of Animals Taiwan)

Sister?” he asks his colleague among the chaos. “She is able to escape and should be moved to the other yard.” He steps out of the shelter and, responding to a stern-yet-loving call, a medium-sized brown dog runs to him excitedly.

Such intimate

knowledge of and love for animals is not unique or rare. Pets are dear companions to many people. Their loyalty, love, humor, and innocence is a welcomed contrast to the complexities that fill our relationships with people. Most foreigners in Taiwan, only planning on being here for a couple of years, choose not to commit to the long-term care required by a pet. However, for those looking to stay awhile, getting a pet here is a worthwhile experience—though it requires hard work, a little money, and a lot of love.

How to Get One

The two most popular ways of getting a pet is buying one at a pet store or adopting one through an animal shelter. Pet stores, while providing a wide range of adorable puppies, kittens, and other animals, can be a little bit of a risk to buy from. For one thing, there is the price. Buying a cat or kitten from one of these stores can range from NT\$2,000 to NT\$30,000, while buying a dog or puppy ranges from NT\$2,500 to NT\$45,000.

Making matters more difficult is the issue of purebreds.

In mid-May, stories appeared in many local newspapers about the lack of any standards on pedigrees. While this leads to people getting cheated by paying for what they think is a purebred, the greater danger is that many actual purebreds are inbred to promote specific characteristics within the animals. This has led to a virtual pet Appalachia, with animals suffering severe genetic defects that are not always obvious to the buyer at time of purchase. "Breeders are often aware of their animals' genetic defects," observes one source familiar with the topic, who spoke on condition of anonymity, "yet they continue to let the animals breed because they can make a profit off of the offspring."

This is not to say that all animals in pet stores have such problems. However, it is impossible to tell what to expect with an animal just by visiting these pristine retail outlets. The deciding factor in the wellbeing of the animals is the breeder, and it is difficult to get access to them. If you are looking to buy a purebred in Taiwan, be aware that pedigree certificates offered here are not recognized internationally due to the island's problems.

While not always as cute and tidy as a pet store, animal shelters, both private and government-run, provide a very humane and reliable way to find a companion. Most of these potential pets are not the cute little kittens and puppies you see in the pet stores, and practically none of them are pedigreed. But they have been well taken care of and have well-rounded personalities because of it.

One thing to keep in mind is that adoption does not necessarily mean free. Many animal shelters charge for the animals you adopt in order to pay for the cost of taking care of the animal while it was in their care. Please note, however, this does not mean that the longer the animal has been there the more expensive it is. They charge a flat rate, varying from center to center. The animals in most shelters have already been fixed and vaccinated as well.

Three great places to visit for adopting a pet are Animals Taiwan, the Taipei Animal Shelter and Taipei Municipal Institute for Animal Health. If you are interested in adopting from Animals Taiwan, you can give them a call at 2833-8820 or visit their website at www.animalstaiwan.org. The Taipei Animal Shelter is located in Neihu at 852 Tanmei Street (潭美街852號). You can give them a call at 8791-3254, ext. 5, or visit their website at www.tmiah.tcg.gov.tw/html/place.htm#2. As well, Taipei Municipal Institute for Animal Health can be of help. They can be reached at 8789-7158.

Going to the Vet

Regardless of whether you choose to adopt or buy from a pet store, there are a few things that you need to be aware of when getting a pet.



West Highland White Terrier is one the popular pets owned by many Taipei residents.



Chihuahua is an adorable and tiny dog that many women in Taipei enjoy taking care of.



Bichons, a great favourite of Italian nobility during the 13th century, is a smart and playful pet that needs extra care from pet owners.



Many dogs in Taiwan are cross-breeds between many breeds; however, loving care is required to any type of dog you decide to take care.

Potential owners need to find out whether the pet has been vaccinated and spayed or neutered. As stated above, most but not all shelters will have already fully taken care of these responsibilities, though you should ask to be sure. If you buy from a pet store it is most likely that you will have to have these done on your own. Both dogs and cats are required to undergo a series of vaccinations during their first few months. For dogs, these shots cost about NT\$2,300. For cats, it runs about NT\$2,600.

While having your animal fixed is not required by law in Taiwan, it is clearly in the best interests of both the pet and its owner. The island is home to at least several thousand stray animals, and the population will continue to thrive robustly without our pets' help. Animals can be fixed when they reach seven months. This runs about NT\$1,000 for males and about NT\$2,000 for females, depending on the size of the animal.

In addition, it would be a very good idea to have an ID chip implanted in your pet. These chips tell who the animal belongs to in the event it ever gets lost. Unfortunately there are several different kinds of chips out there, and not all vets or caregivers have readers for all different kinds. The most common format in Taiwan is the AVID chip. If you are planning to take your pet abroad at some point, note the most internationally recognized chip is ISO. If you feel it is necessary, it is possible to have both chips implanted in your animal.

A couple of reliable vet clinics in the city are Fengsheng Veterinary Hospital (豐盛動物醫院), located at 46 Guangfu North Road (光復北路46號) and Yang Ming Veterinary Hospital (陽明家畜醫院) in Tianmu, located at 1-6 Tianmu East Road (天母東路1-6號). Fengsheng can be reached at 2578-5605, while Yang Ming can be reached at 2872-6911.

Other Costs

Maintaining a pet costs in the neighborhood of NT\$3,000 a month, including food, toys, vet visits, and other necessities. You are required to have your pet on a leash or in some kind of pet box when taking it out in public. And if your pet relieves itself outside, you are required to pick up the solid waste.

Just like humans, animals must be fed well. According to Chen Jia-jun (陳嘉俊), who runs Fengsheng Veterinary Hospital with his father, the most preventable problems they see animals come in with are food-related. "When people think about eating right," he states, "they think about eating fruits and vegetables. These are not good for cats and dogs though." Despite the recent animal deaths in the United States due to defective pet food imported from China, most if not all of the pet food in Taiwan remains completely safe.

If you are looking for a good place to buy supplies for your pet, there is The Doggy House, located in Neihu at 2 Jiuzhong Road, Section 1 (舊宗路一段2號) and the Catty House, also



It is a good idea to find a reliable vet clinic where you can get your pet to the best and most caring treatment.



There are many vet clinics available around town; however, a thorough communication with the doctors prior to accepting the treatment is crucial.

in Neihu, at 13, Alley 30, Jiuzhong Road, Section 1 (舊宗路一段30巷13號).


And if you are unfortunate enough to have your pet pass away while living in Taiwan, there are also professional-service providers to have your pet cremated. They can be contacted at 8789-7158 (Taipei Municipal Institute for Animal Health).

Taking Your Pet Back Home

Just like with humans, when pets go to another country they have to get permission to both leave the country they are in and enter the one they are going to. For getting out of Taiwan, the animal is required to get an export permit. Getting

one simply requires a health checkup, making sure the animal's vaccinations are up-to-date, and having a chip implanted.

Different countries have different rules on bringing in your pets. For most countries, it is surprisingly easy to bring your pet with you. In most cases the animal needs to have all its vaccinations updated, be free of worms and ticks, and have an ISO chip.

Our pets, while bringing a lot of joy to our lives, are also a responsibility that should be taken seriously. By doing so, we not only offer them better lives, but do much to enrich our own lives as well. 

Taipei city now has completed 6 riverside cycle trails and Mayor Hau has recently made a claim on his future development of a more resident-friendly and recreational arena. Through careful planning, and evaluations of safety measures and environmental protection, he wishes to install more recreational facilities and to encourage outdoor activities, concerts and even just sipping a cup of coffee by the riverside cycle trails. "Riding a bike may not be the residents' intention when they are only coming for the events. However, attracting them to the riverside and having them enjoy the environment will soon make them want to ride a bike," Mayor Hau stated confidently.

Anyone who cycles will know that being the smallest and most vulnerable vehicle on ordinary roads is basically a high-pressure, unhealthy, and sometimes downright dangerous experience. Now you can avoid that kind of unpleasantness by staying off the roads and cycling on the bike-paths. They may not be practical for commuting yet, but at least if you want to exercise or just have a relaxing ride you now have many choices where you can ride in an environment more conducive to your general health and enjoyment, while taking in the local sights. The network is so extensive that there is sure to be a path close by.

Transportation Department Director Leads by Example

The director of the city's Department of Transportation, Luo Shiaw-shyan, (羅孝賢) is an avid cyclist. Every weekend, if the weather is good, he cycles up to 50-60 kilometers, starting at 6 am, with his wife and children. They also tackle difficult hilly routes, such as on Yangmingshan, showing they are quite

accomplished cyclists, keeping fit and also engaging in family activity together. Luo is very enthusiastic about Taipei's network of riverside cycle paths, which offers a good cycling environment and also connects many of the city's (and

Taipei County's) scenic spots. He regards cycling as an excellent way of keeping fit and a fun activity too, so he encourages the public to take up the activity, stressing the need to wear a helmet and to ride sensibly.

Get on Your Bike!

Text by Andrew Wilson
Photos by Neng-yu Wang





Explore the other side of Taipei by visiting a cycle trail of flat, pothole-free surfaces, free of cars, motorbikes, and pollution. (Photo by April Lee)

Cycling is a good way to have fun and keep fit, but attention should be paid to safety at all times. Every year hundreds of cyclists are injured, and a number killed, on the city's roads—a figure the Department of Transportation would like to see lowered. To help achieve this, infringements of traffic regulations are to face a crackdown and, after a period of education, NT\$300-600 fines will be issued from September 1 to cyclists who go through red lights, cross the fast lane, ride in the fast lane, and ride the wrong way. Cyclists should also push their bikes across zebra crossings, not ride them, and give pedestrians priority when riding on the sidewalk. Helmet-wearing is to be compulsory and fines issued for non-compliance; however, the date this rule

comes into force has not been set.

Dangers can be reduced to a minimum by obeying traffic rules, wearing the right gear—especially bright clothes and, most important of all, a helmet—maintaining your bicycle well—especially the brakes—and being aware of what is going on around you as you ride, whether on an ordinary road or a cycle path.

An Inexpensive Pastime

You can acquire a decent-quality bicycle secondhand in Taiwan for a few thousand NT\$. Even a new bike won't cost you much more. You can spend tens of thousands, but you don't have to. If you just want a good-quality comfortable, sturdy bike, that will last for years if maintained, you can acquire

These points have been laid down by the Department of Transportation for the safety of cyclists:

Helmets: a proper cycling helmet that fits properly, with strap fastened, should be worn at all times when cycling. Inexpensive, it is a potential lifesaver and the best NT\$400 you will ever spend.



Bells: your bike should be fitted with a bell so you can warn others of your presence.



Reflective strips: having reflective strips on bike wheels and frame and reflective bands on the rider's wrist or shoes make him/her more visible when it's dark or the light is poor.



Lights: bicycles should be fitted with front and back lights so the rider can see and be seen.



Brakes: always check if the brakes work properly before riding. When riding an unfamiliar bike first familiarize yourself with how the brakes work; for example, is the right-hand brake for the front or back wheel? It is best to apply both brakes together.



Gloves: wearing gloves prevents the hands from slipping and also protects against vibration.



one for around NT\$10,000. The only other accessory needed is a helmet and maybe a puncture-repair kit. You can wear any leisure clothes, preferable brightly colored, but if you intend to cycle regularly it's best to buy cycling shorts (with padding in the right places). You can invest in some fancy cycling gear too, for example a Tour de France-style tight-fitting bright shirt and flashy sunglasses, but the only thing you really need to enjoy cycling in safety is a cycle and a helmet.

What happens if you suffer a mechanical problem or puncture? This might seem a disaster to the uninitiated, but it's not as difficult as it seems to deal with. Fixing a chain is relatively easy, and punctures need not cause distress. It's important to have the right tools but these are inexpensive, compact, and easy to carry. Anyway, the point is that simple repairs are not difficult, and should you have a problem you can't deal with, flag a fellow cyclist down and before too long you'll find someone willing to help (you'll find they are a friendly bunch). Failing this, there are bike shops all over Taipei, so you won't have far to push or carry your bike to get it repaired.

Jingmei Riverside Cycling Path

Want somewhere to ride your bicycle without having to worry much about

traffic? Or just fancy a quiet walk and getting close to the local wildlife? The Jingmei Stream Bikeway (景美溪河濱腳踏車道) is one of a number of (mainly) riverside cycle paths the city now has.

It's easy to get to, has a flat hole- and bump-free tarmac surface, and offers 2.5 kilometers of uninterrupted road. Best of all, motorbikes and cars are banned. It runs along the Xindian River from Yongfu Bridge (永福橋) to Jingmei Old Bridge (景美舊橋) on the Jingmei River. The path started off as a temporary road built about 10 years ago to ease Xindian-Taipei traffic when the MRT was being built on Roosevelt Road. It was later resurfaced and designated a cycle path, and a few years ago was connected to another path that runs along the river to Wanhua and beyond (Danshui for the adventurous). You can choose a longer tour along the river or ride back and forth along the same stretch of path if you just want to have a good workout.

This cycle path, like many Taipei paths following a river and adjacent park, is a good place to observe waterbirds such as herons and egrets. At dusk, where the path runs close to the river, you can see the birds fly in from all around from daytime roosts to feed on the abundant fish (yes, the water is still quite clean here).

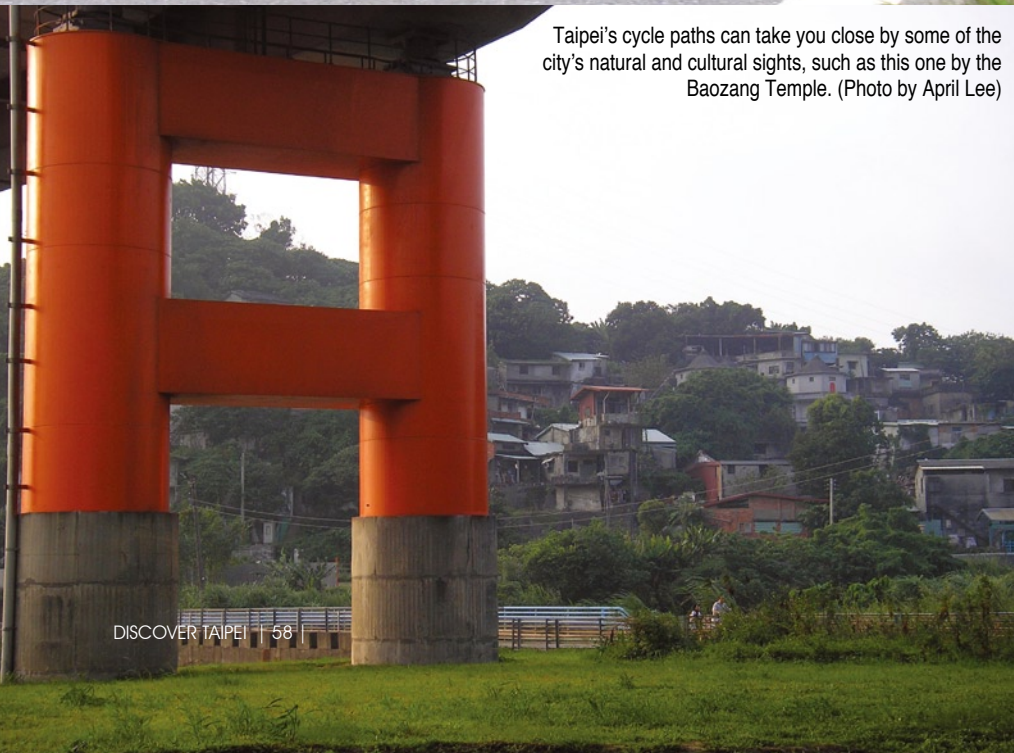


A decent-quality bicycle secondhand in Taiwan can be acquired at a few thousand NT dollars.



Biking on the city cycle path during the weekend has become a popular activity for many city residents, especially working men and women.

Taipei's cycle paths can take you close by some of the city's natural and cultural sights, such as this one by the Baozang Temple. (Photo by April Lee)



Baozang Temple (寶藏巖), near Yongfu Bridge, is also worth a visit when you want a rest from your exertions. It is tucked away in a hillside community not far from the cycle path, showing that Taipei's cycle paths are not just places to exercise in a traffic-free environment; many also take you close by or even past some of the city's natural and cultural sights.

Getting There

The cycle path is very easy to get to. Take the Xindian MRT line and get off at Gongguan station. Leave by the Campus Books exit, go past the Taipei Museum of Drinking Water (自來水博物館) and proceed for about 400 meters, and you find the path along the river. It can also be accessed by the gates in the floodwall along Dingzhou Road (parallel to Roosevelt Road) or at its other end next to Jingmei Old Bridge.

Useful Information

Bikes can be hired on some Taipei cycle paths for a reasonable cost. Better still, they can be hired in one place and returned to another, which means you don't have to finish where you start.

Cycles can be taken on MRT trains at selected MRT stations for NT\$100. The bikes are carried in the first or last carriage and stay under the supervision of the owner. Also, to meet the increased need for parking space as more people use cycles to ride to and from MRT stations, more cycle-parking spaces have been added and the MRT now has over 9000 bike spaces. For more information about cycles and the MRT see the MRT-produced leaflet or check the website <http://www.trtc.com.tw/c/>

The good news for Taipei cyclists is that over the next few years the city government plans to substantially extend the cycle-path network. As usual, Taipei City leads the way in forward-looking urban development in Taiwan. While the



A snapshot of the beautiful sky and overpass at Jingmei Stream Bikeway. (Photo by April Lee)



A sign like this one designates Taipei's cycle paths.

present situation, with 100 kilometers of cycle paths and more on the way, is commendable, and a big, big improvement on the dark days of the not-so-distant past when cyclists were forced to use ordinary roads and face the traffic or go out of their way to get on to a cycle path, making leisure cycling more accessible and safer means improvements can be made—for example, by connecting the various paths. Looking to the future, while there are now a limited number of bicycle lanes in the city that can be used by cycle commuters, commuting by cycle is still not as easy as it might be and one looks forward

to the day when Taipei is as bike-friendly for commuters as some cycle-friendly European cities. The benefits—reduce pollution, keep people healthier, and also give Taipei an image as an environmentally-friendly city. These are targets worth spending money and surmounting related problems to achieve.

Improving the environment for cyclists is one of the many improvements that Taipei has seen over the last few years. We may not be at the stage where the necessary funds are spent to make cycling a safe and feasible intra-city commuting option, but at least in terms of leisure cycling Taipei now has over 100 kilometers of good-quality designated bicycle paths all over the city, taking in some of the finest sights of the city, and offering an accessible respite from the city bustle.

So what are you waiting for? Cycling is a healthy exercise and it doesn't cost much to do. Do yourself a favor and get out on your bike—and take your friends and family with you. Be sure, though, to wear a helmet.

For more information about cycling in Taipei see the TCG Department of Transportation website <http://www.dot.taipei.gov.tw> or pick up its cycle-path information leaflet. ㊦

Cycling also creates opportunities for enhancing social interactions.



My Taipei Fun Experience

Roaming the Roads of Taipei—
Full of Miscommunication,
Misdirection, and Loads of Fun

By Monideepa Banerjee
Illustrated by Jia-huei Chen

Whoever coined the phrase “Morning shows the day”—excuse my ignorance for not knowing—couldn’t be more wrong as far as my Taipei Experience goes. Like the Taipei weather, my feelings have undergone a complete shift from initial disliking to being head-over-heels-in-love with the city and its people. No, I am not referring to the usual unsettling experience that one faces at leaving the safety net of home and stepping into an unknown world. The day we started off for Taipei, problems brewed early when the flight was delayed indefinitely, then finally cancelled, and we were rerouted after umpteen hours of delays, harassments, and flight changes, to reach Taipei in the dead of night amid a heavy downpour, only to discover that most of our baggage was lost.

With such an inauspicious beginning, and then being stuck in the hotel for an indefinite period as the rains continued and continued, you know those Taipei showers;



I was more than upset, and depressed. And the children were not doing well. However, on my first outing, some five days later, the sunnier side of the city was unfolded before me, both literally and metaphorically, as the passersby gave me warm smiles, helped me read the map and find my way amid the lanes and by-lanes. When I got lost, a septuagenarian shopkeeper, who earlier had spent hours patiently explaining various ritualistic and artistic objects in a halting Chinese-English mix, accompanied me all the way to my hotel, which was some twenty minutes away, leaving his shop unattended. I was simply amazed, and felt very welcome and accepted, initial reservations all forgotten. Since then, it has been a roller-coaster fun ride all the way.

Entangled in the Web of Names....

My early Taipei experience is a long list of 'lost and found' incidents where I lost my way innumerable times—I still do—to be pleasantly rescued by my Taipei '*Peng you*' (friends). My road sense is '*Hai hao*' (OK), but I somehow inherited Marco Polo's wandering feet. Moreover, the city is generally safe and there's no shortage of Good Samaritans waiting at corners to help a distressed '*waiguo ren*' (foreigner). So I am forever experimenting and exploring the surroundings, venturing outside of familiar neighborhoods, and discovering fantastic temples, restaurants, cafes, parks, and nature trails in the bargain. Some of these stories are quite interesting, some outright funny, but all are prominent parts of my Taipei memoir.

Most of my confusion, however, has arisen from the inconsistency in the English spelling of road names. Many of you would agree that even five years back, the same road name was spelt in different ways for different sections of the same road, following different English naming systems. For instance, Zhongshan North Road was spelt as Jhongshan, Chongshan, Jongshan, and so on. Early on in my stay I once spent hours trying to find section six of Zhongshan North Road, standing right at the cross section of sections five and six, as the section six part of the road was named Jongshan. Just a day before, I received a good lecture from my Chinese teacher for mixing up 'ei' and 'ai' and was specifically told that in Chinese every vowel or consonant counts, and it usually means a new word, not a spelling mistake, which I thought originally. So how was I to know that they were 'one and the same'? I walked round and round, as if on a merry-go-round, and by the end of it all was thoroughly mixed up. Imagine my frustration when a lady told me that I was right there. Has any reader been in a similar situation?

On another occasion I mistakenly landed up at Keelung, the port town. I had an appointment to check some furniture stores with my husband, whose office was on Taipei's Jilong Road, also written as Keelung Road. By then, I was well conversant with the MRT network, so I wanted to try the bus. My local friends told me that I could get one from the depot near Taipei Main Station. When I saw a bus with 'Keelung' written on the front nameplate, I was very excited and thought 'This is easy,' and boarded it without clarifying anything. Fifteen minutes on my excitement evaporated as the bus took some turns, and I could make out that it was going out of the city. Instead of panic, it tickled my funny bone and I decided to make the most of a bizarre situation. Keelung Harbor—I located the name and its English translation in a guidebook—was the final destination. It was a nice day and the sea looked lovely and I had a great time, my only regret not having my camera with me. Needless to say, I had to give some arbitrary reasons to my husband for not being able to make it.





Keelung Road remained as elusive as ever, for a long time. During my initial days with Discover Taipei, I always managed to lose my way while trying to reach Taipei City Hall from the City Hall MRT station, which was just a short distance away. Every time, I had to call the then editor to bail me out. This was quite an embarrassment. So once, to avoid all that, I took a taxi from the station, and instructed him to go via Keelung Road, not wanting to look like a stupid *'waiguo ren'* hiring a taxi for such a short distance. Little did I know that there was another road somewhere around that locality with a pronunciation similar to 'Jilong' Road. I found I could not backtrack from there, and in their attempts to help passersby and shopkeepers confounded me, giving contradictory directions of *'you zhuan'* (right turn) and *'zou zhuan'* (left turn). Finally, I exited the cab. A lady, who was there in a shop where I was asking for directions, called my editor, took the directions from her, and then dropped me at the doorstep. So much for self-esteem!!!

Tones....Those Killer Tones....

Anybody who has ever learnt/tried to learn Chinese will unanimously agree with me that the tones are killers. They are also the building blocks of all sorts of confusion, frustration, and the resultant chaos. Six months into 'Survival Chinese' study you begin to practice your Chinese right, left, and center believing that your tones are just perfect... well, almost perfect. Every day a new situation pops up, and an endless series of miscommunication ensues that later becomes nice living-room chitchat material. Here are a few samples.

The first time I ordered a full meal in Chinese, not referring to the menu's accompanying pictures, I was ecstatic. So when the waitress asked whether I needed anything else, I smartly said *'Gou le,'* meaning 'enough' in Chinese, but my tones said otherwise. When the meal came with a tall glass of chilled Cola (Coke), I assumed it to be complimentary. Imagine my surprise, when I was charged some NT\$120 extra for the Cola that I never ordered.

However, with the worst embarrassment I've suffered the tones were at it again, while trying to improve my communication abilities chatting with a group of elderly people in Tianmu Baseball Stadium. After exchanging some pleasantries like *'Ni hao'* (hello), *'Taipei hen hao'* (Taipei is very good), and *'Wo xihuan Taipei ren'* (I like Taipei people), I asked one gentleman, *'Wo yao wen ni'* (literally translating the English for 'I want to ask you') and there followed a pin-drop silence. Suddenly one man laughed aloud, and the rest joined in. I could never finish my question, as each time I tried to say *'Wo wen ni'* there was a chorus of laughter. The next day, in my Chinese class, when I discovered the truth, I too was laughing. Apparently the word *'wen'* in Chinese means both kiss and ask, depending on tone used. The wrong tone and combined with the *'yao'* (want), expressed an entirely different meaning. That is why you need to always say *'Qing wen'* when asking a question (literally, 'please to ask'), pointed out my teacher.

Going to the American Club Taipei on Beian Road was, and still is, a continuous hassle. This is also true for many other places. As you struggle to get the tones right, often trying well over a dozen intonations, the taxi driver stares dumbfounded, nothing registering in his mind. Suddenly, as if receiving some heavenly enlightenment, they will blurt out, 'Oh! There!' and then you feel like screaming at the top of your voice, decibels be damned!

One thing I would like to mention, however, is that the cab drivers have never charged me extra for the detours I've taken them on when not clearly understanding the address or place names; rather, they've taken less than whatever the meter reading was.

It's the People Who Make/Break a Place

I am a firm believer of this philosophy, and Taipeiites score highly in this regard. My Taipei memoir will remain incomplete if I fail to mention those friendly, honest, and polite people who have welcomed us so warmly, making our stay a very comfortable and enjoyable experience, despite the barriers imposed by language. After five years, it feels like a second home to us.

Early on in my stay, my family was invited to a friend's home turf in Xindian to attend a family barbecue during the Mid-Autumn Festival. Like any large family gathering, it was loud and noisy. But amid all the commotion, her mother, a petite lady well over seventy, took the

trouble to prepare some special food for us as we have some food restrictions. She showed so much motherly affection. It was hard to explain, but we felt a strong affinity towards each other and later spent hours going over the family album together, sharing fruits and iced tea and laughing to our hearts' content. I was missing my mother, and she somehow sensed it. I hadn't felt so good in months. It was almost three in the morning when we finally left. No matter how much we argued and requested them not, my friend's husband insisted on driving us all the way to our Tianmu home.

This is just one of the numerous incidents that have enriched my stay. Through this article, I pay tribute to those numerous friends, many of whom I have met only once but who have given me so much warmth in that short time, reserving a permanent berth in my memory

compartment.

Is there anything that I don't like about Taipeiites? Yes, I don't appreciate their asking my age outright, which they seem to be doing all the time. After all, I am not sweet sixteen anymore. Be forewarned, my readers, anybody, anywhere can pop that question on you! I was so shocked when a cabbie once asked me that. So when he asked me to guess his age, I replied 70, although he didn't look a day older than fifty, which he was. So mean you may think, but I'd really had my fill. The outcome? He was flabbergasted and paid more attention looking at his reflection in the mirror than to the traffic, and I had to caution him twice. Finally, he excused himself and requested I take another cab, stating that he was not feeling well. Sorry, friend, wherever you are, please accept my apology for that little joke. ☹





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