

Stories

Zhongxin New Village, Beitou (central axis road to hot spring)

Up the hill from Xinbeitou metro station, away from the bustling Beitou Hot Spring District, is a tranquil area filled with greenery and buildings: Beitou Zhongxin New Village. Passing under the arched gate entrance that restores the character of the old military dependent village, the visitor steps onto the village's main thoroughfare, which like the rest of the village is defined by a distinctive color scheme of red doors, cement tiles, and green wooden windows. Row upon row of buildings showcase the unique architectural adaptations of former military dependents, who ingeniously expanded their homes within the constraints of the narrow living environment.

Zhongxin Village is also Taiwan's only military dependent village with hot springs. At the end of the main road lies the village's most iconic feature—the hot spring bathhouse. In the past, the water in the pool was shared, so people could not immerse themselves but had to use a ladle to scoop water over themselves. Modern bathing habits did not exist in the past, and residents often found the sulfurous smell of the hot springs unpleasant.

But taking it in turns to bathe created a social window for adults and children alike. The scene of villagers lining up according to age remains etched in people's memories. Visitors to Zhongxin Village can explore the abundant exhibits and listen to stories of lives past. As you stroll through the winding alleyways, it's worth slowing down to experience the power of healing as you are enveloped in the mist of the hot springs.

Shuicheliao Trail

Just twenty minutes' walk along this Taipei trail, and you can feast your eyes on mountain scenery, wild streams, forests, and rice paddy-like landscapes, all within a drop of only about thirty meters in altitude, making it quite accessible for children and old people.

Located in Yangmingshan's Zhuzihu, the Shuicheliao Trail is famous for its calla lilies, which bloom from March to April. Apart from the well-known white calla, red, green, pink, and purple colored varieties abound. Each year, when the calla lily season comes to an end, vibrant hydrangeas take the spotlight from around May to early June.

In its early days during the Qing Dynasty, Zhuzihu was planted with rice, and today's Shuicheliao Trail was a path that locals used to transport rice. After irrigation canals were dug, a farming village was established. During the Japanese colonial period, the government decided to use this area to cultivate a new type of rice preferred by the Japanese, which was later named "Penglai rice". Subsequently, farmers also tried growing alpine vegetables, but as transportation in Taiwan improved, other mountain areas began to replace Zhuzihu. Latterly, it has become renowned for its calla lily plantations, whose vibrant colors leave a vivid impression on the residents of Taipei.

Sanjiaodu Ferry Terminal

Some Taipei residents may be unaware of Sanjiaodu. Formerly a terminal for ferrying people among three locations crossing the river, it also served as a transportation hub connecting villages and providing a harbor for the boats local residents needed to make a living. However, after the first engineering works to straighten the Keelung River in 1965, use of the terminal gradually declined and the structure disappeared. Nevertheless, local fishermen still refer to this place as Sanjiaodu.

During Sanjiaodu's heyday, over two hundred ships, some as large as 40,000 tonnes, would transport large quantities of coal upstream to Xizhi. Local residents here practically grew up drinking water from Keelung River and activities such as washing clothes, duck farming, clam digging, fishing, and shrimp catching were all part of daily life. But industrial pollution meant the community gradually moved away from the river.

Master craftsman Liu Qingzheng, a national treasure-level dragon boat maker known as Master Zheng, once said, "When the Kuomintang government came to Taiwan, thirty to forty warships lined up below the Grand Hotel, including the Yang destroyers."

Visitors will see several sampans and dragon boats quietly moored by the terminal, testament to the changes that have come to Sanjiaodu and the Keelung River. This space is rich in historical meaning and is one of the rare docks in Taipei where sampans can still be seen docking.

Abode of Maya (Chang Dai-chien Residence)

Visiting the Abode of Maya of renowned painter Chang Dai-chien is like traveling through time. Visitors can browse through the stories of the last five years of his life and stroll through the rooms, which include a reception hall, dining room, large studio, and small reception room on the first floor. Outdoor spaces include a front courtyard, central courtyard, and back garden. This venue offers a genuine experience of Chang Dai-chien's outstanding artistic achievements. All of the exhibits were donated in line with the artist's wishes and are currently managed by the National Palace Museum.

The elegantly furnished first-floor reception hall is adorned with the Chiang Kai-shek Order of Brilliant Star, which Chang received in 1982, as well as a group photo with two major painters from the Chinese and Western worlds, Pu Xinyu and Pablo Picasso. In the dining room, visitors can see Chang's handwritten menu "Feast Invitation", depicting banquets held for General Chang Hsueh-liang and his wife and old friends. The large studio is the scene of his creation of the magnificent ink-and-color masterpiece "Panorama of Mount Lu", with a lifelike wax figure of Chang painting with a brush. The walls are adorned with commemorative photos, like one with him standing in front of the Dunhuang Caves, as well as photos of his elder brother and calligraphic works and paintings by his mother and his teachers.

In the garden, the meandering streams murmur, koi fish swim in the pond, and the ambiance of playful monkeys and crane calls seems to be revived. The courtyard is further adorned with the plum trees beloved by Chang, and the landscaping with flowing water, stacked stones, and bonsai reveals his elegant taste in gardening. On a massive rock in the backyard, the words "Plum Hill" are carved in his own handwriting, marking his final resting place. The small path by the Ying'e Pond in the backyard leads to two pavilions, from where one can take in the distant mountains and nearby waters of the Waishuangxi area, showcasing the ingenious "borrowed scenery" design. Visiting here, one can appreciate the elegant taste in garden landscaping, which is another manifestation of Chang Dai-chien's aesthetic philosophy, beyond his diligent painting practice.

Bazhilan Fanzi Well

Most people's deepest impressions of Tianmu are likely centered around the area near Shidong Road, such as Tianmu Baseball Stadium, Shidong Market, and Dayeh Takashimaya department store. However, what is often overlooked is that by heading north from the bustling streets, in less than 10 minutes, you can feel a significant change of landscape and environment, becoming quieter and more understated. At the very end of Tianhe Park, you can see a stone monument and a crystal-clear pool of water. This is no artificial pond, and in fact it debouches into an ancient well of great historical value.

When Fujianese immigrants arrived in this area in the early 18th century, this ancient well, which still has an abundant water flow today, had already been constructed, meaning that it has a history of three hundred years or even longer. Because the Han Chinese people knew that the well had been constructed by the indigenous people, they referred to it as *Fanjing* ("barbarian well"), while the Ketagalan tribe's own term for it was *Pattsiran* (meaning "hot spring", which is also the origin of the ancient place name Bazilan). Besides understanding its cultural significance, visitors can enjoy the park's abundant lush greenery, with wild ginger lilies, Britton's wild petunia, and fire spikes, making it an excellent destination for nature lovers and those interested in cultural heritage.

Zhishan Shrine Site (Yunong Library)

Visitors to Zhishan Park are advised to dress casually, wear comfortable sports shoes, and bring a good book because this is a park worth spending an entire afternoon in.

Millennia of weathering have created a rich geological landscape, but the jewel of the park, amid the many old trees, is a 300-year-old camphor tree at the end of the park trail. The park is also the excavation site of several prehistoric cultural relics and also historical relics like the West Fortified Gate and Huiji Temple that witnessed the lives of Han Chinese immigrants during the Qing Dynasty. The West Fortified Gate was born out of armed conflicts between communities, while the Huiji Temple was the site of religious rituals within settlements. Although the Zhishan Shrine from the Japanese colonial period no longer exists, still remaining is the 120-step staircase that was a vital path for worshippers back then, testing the physical strength of believers and also symbolizing the glory of the shrine.

The shrine's original site has now become the Yunong Library, established by the post-war government to commemorate Dai Li. Also known as Yunong, Dai Li was a key figure in founding the intelligence unit of the Republic of China and a crucial confidant relied upon by President Chiang Kai-shek during the Second Sino-Japanese War. After the war, Dai Li was honored with a variety of commemorations in the Zhishan area, including the library, Yunong Road, Yunong Elementary School, Yusheng Street, Yusheng Elementary School, and Yusheng New Village. Today, the Yunong Library is a comfortable reading space where you can quietly enjoy both nature and culture in a serene environment.

Taisho Town Art Festival Mural

Crossing the bustling junction on Civic Boulevard into alleys planned during the Japanese colonial era is like travelling through time into a distinctly Japanese atmosphere. When the Kuomintang government came to Taiwan, this area became the residential district for high-ranking elites and government officials, such as former President Chiang Ching-kuo, the Lin family of Banqiao, and Dr. Tu Tsung-ming, the dean of National Taiwan University Medical College. During the USAID period, the presence of US military led to many bars opening in this area, which gradually transformed into a commercial district. The Taiwanese drama “Light the Night” is set in the 1980s, a time of economic resurgence in Japan, when many Japanese businesses were setting up companies in Taipei. The Hikari Bar scenes were filmed at the entrance of the Sugar Bar in the alleys of Linsen North Road. Walking through these streets, you may wonder if you’ll cross paths with characters like Rose and Sue.

Strolling through this area formerly known as Taisho Town, you will see a fusion of different cultures and an array of unique shops. As you revisiting the historic sites, perhaps you will encounter even more mural stories and deepen your understanding of local businesses and cultural narratives in the area.

Jiantan Mountain (Yuanshan Water Shrine)

In the bustling Shilin Night Market lies a hidden gem: A secret entrance to the Yuanshan Water Shrine trail is right here, tucked away in the car park of the Yangming Branch of the Taipei Water Department. Just five-minutes' walk down this path leads you to the old water facilities built during the Japanese colonial period that once helped supply water to the greater Taipei area. Most of the structures have since rusted away, and on the building next to the equipment, you'll find the three characters 活水頭 ("active water source"), marking the location of the former Yuanshan Reservoir.

As the path continues, it leads to the Yuanshan Water Shrine, where you'll immediately notice familiar elements of Japanese shrine culture: guardian lions, a purification basin, and stone lanterns. The colonial settlers who originally built the shrine have long since departed and the shrine is now abandoned, but it still possesses an air and scenery that cannot be experienced elsewhere, even in Japan itself. Without crowds of worshippers and tolling bells, there is a certain tranquility, even a hint of desolation, reminiscent of when Chinese literati witnessed the ancient battlefield of Chibi, evoking sentiments such as, "Where is that once mighty figure now?" and "The departed are gone, never to return." Unlike Taipei's most familiar historical sites, spaces like this evoke a deeper contemplation about time and history.

Moving on and up towards Jiantan Mountain, you reach the Breeze Platform and the Northern Eye Platform, which offer panoramic in all directions.

Taiwan Presbyterian Church in Dadaocheng

As everyone in Taipei knows, when visitors come from out of town, they must visit Dadaocheng. Stretching from Ganzhou Street to Dihua Street, the district is full of shops selling a variety of snacks, pastries, and dry goods, making it an iconic site for Taiwan's popular food culture.

For travelers interested in Taipei history, the Taiwan Presbyterian Church is a must-visit. Located on Ganzhou Street, the church building was constructed during the Japanese colonial period by tea magnate Li Chunsheng, at his own expense, to provide a new home for the church founded by Rev. George Leslie Mackay. For the devout, wealthy connoisseur Li Chunsheng, religious devotion meant using the best materials and the most beautiful designs. The church building is constructed of red brick in a predominantly Gothic style, with symmetrical windows, small spires, and gables. The terrazzo facade even incorporates traditional Taiwanese motifs.

Morning visitors coming on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month can even enjoy a guided tour of the interior. Inside the chapel is the large forty-stop pipe organ, crafted by Swiss craftsmen, that accompanies the congregation in their hymns.

"I cannot tear myself away from Taiwan in my heart! All my joy in life is here," said Rev. Mackay. He also said that he had found his "final home for life" in Taiwan. He left the church he established with a beautiful home, in which it has continued to pass on his legacy for over a hundred years. In May 2002, then-Director-General of the Department of Cultural Affairs Lung Ying-tai and others intervened to prevent the church from being demolished. It was decided to relocate and restore the building.

Jiahe New Village (Mayday Wall)

Following the riverbank from the bustling Shida shopping district, passing along the busy Tingzhou Road, you arrive at Yongchun Street, located behind the Tingzhou Branch of Tri-Service General Hospital. This street hides a hidden gem called Jiahe New Village.

In 1932, the Japanese planned this area as parkland, but it was repurposed as a Japanese military artillery unit camp during the war. The Japanese-style buildings visible today are thought to be former guesthouses. When the Kuomintang government moved to Taiwan, the military set up a logistics communication repair plant here, together with the Army Supply Command's military law division. Initially, only employees of the repair plant and their families lived here. When the plant relocated, the area was renamed Jiahe New Village. The air-raid shelter at the entrance of the village bears witness to the military tensions of the 1950s. It also served as a space for storing communication equipment and files.

Today, these historical traces have become a treasury of memories for the newer generations. The red gates, brick walls, and old trees in the alleys have drawn film crews for many movies and TV series, such as Mayday's "People Life, Ocean Wild" and the dramas "They Kiss Again", and "The Way We Were". The so-called "Mayday Wall" has become a prominent Facebook check-in spot, and the alleyway in front of the wall was once the "General's Alley" that surrounded high-ranking generals' residences.

General Sun Li-jen Residence

With its long corridors, courtyards, and greenhouses, this Nanchang Road mansion now exudes an air of grandeur and tranquility, elegant without being ostentatious. People gather here to enjoy afternoon tea, art exhibitions, a meal, or a wedding or banquet.

During the Japanese colonial era, this was the official residence for high-ranking colonial officials and was sometimes used to host foreign guests. Today, this sophisticated building is open to the public to explore.

However, the transition from an exclusive residence for colonizers only to a public possession to be enjoyed by all has not been as straightforward as it may seem. After the Second World War, the mansion first became the residence of the Chief of the General Staff of the Army, with the first general to reside here being legendary General Sun Li-jen.

Often hailed as the “Rommel of the East”, Sun Li-jen was one of the few early R.O.C. generals to study in the United States. His remarkable military feats in the Second World War even led to his being decorated by the United Kingdom and the United States. As early as 1947, Sun Li-jen moved to Kaohsiung for military training and held positions such as Chief of the General Staff of the Army and Commander-in-Chief of Taiwan’s defense. However, he was eventually stripped of his military authority by the president and falsely accused of “harboring Communists”, leading to his 33-year house arrest in Taichung. Consequently, the mansion in Taipei was converted into an Army Officers’ Club, only opening to the public after democratization in the 1990s.

Rishan (Air Raid Shelter) Park

To the people of Taipei, Ka-làh is both unfamiliar and familiar. Located in southern Wanhua, Ka-làh is one of Taipei's earliest developed settlements and is known for its hospitality. During the Kangxi era of the Qing Dynasty, Ka-làh consisted of six communities, known as the "Six Villages": Bazhangli, Houcuzai, Xiazhuangzai, Gangzaiwei, Juezaitou, and Kezaicuo. According to historical record, the soil of Ka-làh area was very fertile, and early settlers cultivated sugarcane, flowers, and other agricultural products. Production of jasmine and gardenia flowers, used for making scented tea, was particularly abundant. In the 1930s, after a glut of jasmine flowers, cultivation shifted to include bamboo shoots and bean sprouts, together known locally as the "Three Treasures of Ka-làh".

As time passed and industries evolved, the farmland disappeared, leaving only remnants within Rishan Park's natural landscapes. Stepping into the park feels like entering a microcosm of Ka-làh history. During the Second World War, Taiwan became a target of Allied air raids. Between 1944 and 1945, around 15,900 air sorties were made and around 120,000 bombs dropped. Older residents recall how locals would make dummy airplanes out of bamboo to deceive the American forces.

In the early post-war period, the aircraft were relocated to what is now National Taipei University of Technology, and the park set about preserving remnants of Japanese colonial era culture, including stone walls and ruined air raid shelters from the Second World War. In light of the wartime air raids, these historical relics are even more precious. While the park has been transformed into a green leisure space, its historical content add a fascinating dimension to the texture of the Ka-làh area.

Qingyun Building

Navigating along the bustling Huaxi Street, slipping into winding alleys, one unexpectedly encounters the unique townhouse style of Wanhua District, like a graceful exotic lady standing amidst bustling surroundings. The Qingyun Building possesses a captivating architectural style. Besides being a landmark of the red light district during the Japanese colonial period, it was also the largest entertainment venue in Taiwan at that time. Although it has now been transformed into a revitalized space for arts and culture, the building's majestic exterior and meticulous interior details remain intact. The preservation and restoration team has carried out work on many elements of the building in a way that stays faithful to the cultural history behind it.

As one strolls about here, one feels the historical ambience of the past, not one of social discord but the progressive journey towards a diverse and inclusive culture. Moving forward from Qingyun Building, one encounters stony remnants of the Qing Dynasty's city wall, and, further ahead, glimpses of the story of He Nai Zhuang tea house. One can imagine the recreational activities by the waterside. While such scenes are no longer visible, the unique entertainment life here and the development along the river are closely related. Exploring the various facets of Wenhua through the paths of the waterway, one finds numerous charming elements worth a second look.

The Iso Eikichi Hut, NTU Campus

On the curtain of a wooden hut on the National Taiwan University campus are the words “The Story of Taiwan Rice”, printed to tell every visitor and passer-by the story of the most commonly eaten high-yield sticky rice, Penglai Rice, which originated here.

The hut is made from Taiwanese cedar and is currently managed and operated by the Department of Agronomy. It was originally under the jurisdiction of the Taipei Higher Agricultural and Forestry School and later the Agricultural and Forestry Department of National Taiwan University. The developer of Penglai Rice, Iso Eikichi, taught in all three of these institutions, giving a tropical agriculture lecture titled Crop Science Classroom.

During his tenure, Iso and his colleague Suenaga Megumu focused on research into riziculture, often holding discussions in this hut on how to improve rice cultivation. In 1925, they successfully developed Penglai Rice, which changed the face of agriculture in Taiwan and significantly increased farmers’ incomes. After the Second World War, despite Taiwan’s change in allegiance, Iso’s expertise meant he was retained in Taiwan, where he educated a new generation of students for twelve years before returning to Japan.

Later on, the hut gradually fell into disuse, and it was initially scheduled for demolition. Fortunately, students discovered valuable manuscripts left behind by Iso, as well as various records and research documents, which further established the value of this place as a stronghold for the study and showcasing of agricultural history. It was subsequently designated a historical site for preservation. Today, faculty and students from the Department of Agronomy continue various research projects focusing on seed inspection, honoring the founding scholar who contributed so much.

Mongolian and Tibetan Cultural Center

Lobsang Pelden Tenpe Dronme, the Seventh Janggya Hotogtu and one of the fourth great “living buddhas” of Tibetan Buddhism, was born in Qinghai Province in northwest China. In the past, his followers were mainly concentrated in Mongolia and Qinghai. The Seventh Janggya Hotogtu’s life was upended by the wars of modern East Asia and he was forced to migrate eastward and southward until he finally settled in a corner of southern Taipei City. He spent his last eight years in the alleys of Qingtian Street. In accordance with his will, his residence was donated and became the present-day Mongolian and Tibetan Cultural Center.

A supporter of the Kuomintang government, the Seventh Janggya Hotogtu experienced several relocations during the Second World War and the Chinese Civil War. He was titled “Protector of the Nation and Pure Awareness, Supporter of Education Grand Master” and was also appointed as an advisor to the Presidential Office. With his final move from Chengdu to Taipei, he brought with him numerous precious cultural relics such as Buddhist statues and ritual objects, the most renowned of which is the 100-year-old Guru Chöwang Pupa Chu, considered the manifestation of the main Buddha in Tibetan Buddhism. Following restoration by National Palace Museum experts, it is currently on display on the third floor of the cultural center.

The Mongolian and Tibetan Cultural Center not only preserves existing cultural relics but also organizes various exhibitions and actively solicits contributions related to Mongolian and Tibetan culture. The collections range from the worship of the God of Wealth to festive attire. In addition, the center frequently hosts film screenings and concerts. If you seek to understand these regions beyond what’s depicted in martial arts novels and wish to delve deeper into their religion, art, and daily life, this cultural center is a must-visit.

Huanan New Village

Walking along Section 1 of Xiuming Road toward Zhinan Road, and crossing the Wanshou Bridge, you arrive at the campus of National Chengchi University, a bastion of humanities and academia. As a research-oriented university in Taipei, it holds influence in fields such as humanities, law, and business. The university constructed the Huanan New Village faculty and staff dormitory off the main campus to deal with the large number of students and alleviate transportation inconvenience for teachers and staff.

The most distinctive feature of Huanan New Village is its two-story red brick duplexes, which have served as locations for numerous television dramas such as *A Sun* and *The Teenage Psychic*.

There was much debate about whether to demolish this settlement, but following discussions between local residents and the university, and with the passing of the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act, it was ultimately decided to preserve the entire area.

Humanity, nature, and architecture converge here in an inseparable interwoven fabric of cultural memory. Strolling through the streets, one feels the poetic, picturesque atmosphere. Sunlight spills onto the red doors, and marks of weathering reveal a cultural warmth. This was the first university-managed dormitory to do away with gender-based segregation, breaking down barriers and opening a new chapter in standards of living in Huanan New Village.

Xiaokengxi Literary Trail (Xiaokeng Centennial Tudigong)

Towering by the century-old Fude Temple in Xiaokeng is a remarkable tree, eight stories high and with a canopy spanning up to 250m². The shady area has served as an open-air pavilion for local residents for over a hundred years, with people freely coming and going, chatting leisurely from morning till night. The ancient tree is believed to have been planted during the mid-19th century during the reign of the Daoguang Emperor during the Qing dynasty, and it has since become a symbol of longevity.

The pioneers who first cultivated this land were descendants of the Zheng clan who still reside here today, jointly managing the Tudigong temple with Zhang and Gao descendants. Inside Fude Temple, three divine statues are enshrined, each made from different materials and completed in different eras: a human-shaped stone, a stone-carved statue, and a wooden statue. The human-shaped stone, known as “Stone Tudigong”, was discovered by early settlers. The stone statue was carved by devotees as an offering to the gods. However, the Tudigong did not wish to be replaced, so the stone statue was placed beside him. The last to be completed, the wooden statue, now shares the incense offerings alongside the other two.

This temple is located at the end of a trail known as the Xiaokeng Creek Literary Trail, named for the abundant poetic landscapes on either side. Apart from the natural scenery and wildlife, the trail takes full advantage of its location by the creek with the installation of waterside steps. Occasionally, families with children play in the stream, the clear waters of which are home to schools of fish and shrimp, making this a uniquely attractive trail.

Jingmei Neighborhood Activity Center

Jingmei Old Street has a different air from the bustle of nearby Jingmei Night Market. In this serene environment, your pace naturally slows as you savour the moment. As you turn into Yuying Street's Lane 57, you are greeted by nostalgic sight of military dependents' houses. Perhaps your curiosity leads you to explore the area, and you meet the kindly neighborhood chief, who explains:

"This used to be military dependents' housing. When residents moved out, it became vacant space, and later on it was transformed into the Jingmei Neighborhood Activity Center."

He recalls how the buildings used to be piled high with garbage and how residents worked together to transform it into a hospitable activity center.

On closer inspection, one finds clever ways old things have been reused here: Flowerpots on low walls were once neighborhood speakers, and a row of decorations beside the main gate were fashioned from a notification lightbox used in the police station over fifty years ago. The Tsuchida-style manual water pump, used in the 1930s and 1940s when there were no electric water pumps, served as the best water source. Standing close by are century-old plum and breadfruit trees, silently accompanying every generation through countless years.

The activity center also provides communal dining and learning services, encouraging the elderly to get out of the house and to enjoy lifelong learning. Local mothers often cook their signature dishes to bring extra portions for the residents. Whenever someone has a birthday, everyone gathers to celebrate. Neighbors care for one another in these many different ways, each adding to the last, creating ever stronger bonds. The palpable affection in Jingmei Neighborhood is a collective effort that comes from everyone coming together.

Xikou (Rainbow) Wharf

Today, Songshan Station is one of the important transportation hubs in the Greater Taipei area, with large numbers of commuters transferring here during peak hours. In fact, Songshan Station has been a crucial transportation junction for two to three hundred years, serving as a gateway between the past and present.

To understand why Songshan became a transportation hub, we must start with the ancient place name “Xikou”, which is difficult to understand literally. Originally, the Basay tribe’s Malisyakkaw village was translated by Quanzhou immigrants into Chinese as “Mao Li Xikou Community”, later shortened to “Xikou”. The original meaning of Malisyakkaw is “the bend of the river” .

At that time, a bustling ferry crossing operated here for trade, second only to the renowned Wanhua. Naturally, when Qing dynasty Governor-General of Taiwan Liu Ming-chuan planned railway routes in Taiwan, he decided to build a station here.

During the Japanese colonial period, the station underwent several expansions. With changes in transportation and industry, river transport ceased to be Taiwan’s main mode of transportation, which led to the decline of the ferry crossing. It wasn’t until recent years, with government-led redevelopment and the creation of surrounding riverside trails, that it became another popular recreational spot for Taipei residents.

Songshan Cultural and Creative Park (Songshan Tobacco Factory Song Monument)

Located in Xinyi District, the Songshan Cultural and Creative Park was recognized by Google Maps in 2022 as one of the world's top ten cultural landmarks. The park, formerly the Songshan Tobacco Factory, has transformed 6.6 hectares of remaining buildings and historical sites into a hub of creative convergence, hosting a variety of cultural and creative events. As an important cultural and historical asset within Taipei's Cultural and Sports Park area, the Songshan Cultural and Creative Park serves as a significant creative hub both domestically and internationally, representing Taipei City as a beacon of creative diplomacy.

The Songshan Cultural and Creative Park still preserves an important relic of the spirit of the Songshan Tobacco Factory: the Songshan Tobacco Factory Song Monument, which stands left of the entrance of the Taiwan Design Museum at the park entrance.

The inscription on the monument was composed by lyricist He Zhihao, who came to Taiwan in 1949 and once held the position of Lieutenant General in the R.O.C. Army. The song consists of 73 characters and celebrates Songshan Tobacco Factory, the shining star in Taiwan's economic history, which achieved a production value of up to NT\$21 billion.

The inscription commends the work ethic of factory employees, highlighting their efforts to increase national production and bring glory to their country. In 2023, during the Original Base Festival, artist Wu Pai-Hsien rearranged the factory song, and dancers Lai Shu-chin and Huang You-fang performed in homage to the tobacco factory era.

Tiaomi Old Trail

Located in the southeast of Taipei City, Wuxing Street can be described as a bustling but atypical street. The front part houses a lively market open from morning till night. However, after a turn, the middle and back sections lead to a tranquil area that resembles a small village. A 500-step stone stair trail leads approximately 700 metres into the mountains. This trail was once a shortcut for the transport of rice to Nangang, Muzha, Shengkeng, Jingmei, and other areas, and is also known as Tiaomi Old Trail.

This ancient trail bears witness to the early history and development of Taipei. Today, modern Taipei goes beyond Tiaomi Old Trail. On this side of the Sanzhangli and Nangang Mountain Range are other old trails such as Tea Road Old Trail, Tudigong Ridge Old Trail, and Quanshan Old Trail, all of which were used by farmers to transport produce.

Following renovation, Tiaomi Old Trail is smooth and well-lit, lined with trees and offering fresh air. Along the way are surprises such as ponds and other small scenic spots. Also along this short stretch are temples dedicated to the God of Wealth, the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha, and Tudigong—fundamental elements of Taiwanese folk religion. These small temples are closely associated with the community and industry, proof of the footprints left in the past by traders frequently moving along this ancient trail.

Hu Shih Memorial Hall

Hu Shih, one of the founders and leaders of the New Culture Movement in China, is known from Taiwanese school textbooks for having a mother who had a profound influence on his approach to life. However, less well known is that during the last three years of his life, this important figure in the intellectual history of the Chinese-speaking world actually lived in a Western-style house in Taipei (the house which subsequently became the Hu Shih Memorial Hall).

Hu Shih's former residence was jointly funded and built by the Presidential Office and Academia Sinica and uses the common American layout of the time. It still retains the appearance it had during Shih's final three years of life. After his passing, it was converted into the present-day Hu Shih Memorial Hall. Next to the former residence are a cemetery and exhibition hall, the latter primarily showcasing Hu Shih's writings, manuscripts, photographs, personal belongings, and memorabilia.

In Europe and America, the rooms of famous people are often seen as important landmarks where visitors can imagine how these figures thought, wrote, and lived. Cemeteries and museums dedicated to famous figures often receive visitors paying their respects. In Taipei, Hu Shih's residence and the cemetery and museum are all in one place, so whether you want to understand the historical period he represented or simply want to learn more about this famous figure, it is an ideal destination.

Xinfu Main Pit

As you may know, mountains often conceal many secrets: trees, insects and birds, as well as remnants of past industries and settlements nestled among the hills. But is just knowing enough? Wouldn't you like to see these hidden treasures with your own eyes?

The Bihu Mountain Trail in Neihu is now an easily accessible and excellent choice for tourism. With a change in elevation of less than 50 m., the journey can be completed in under 30 minutes. During the flowering season, you can spot various species of butterfly along the trail, such as purple crows, striped blue crows, common grass yellows, and common bluebottles. Along the way, you'll come across Formosa acacias, large-leaved nanmus, and various ferns. There is even a dedicated pavilion for watching Taiwan blue magpies.

In terms of cultural landscape, you'll come across the Xinfu Main Pit, which bears witness to a century of mining history. Following refurbishment, you can explore the railway carts and tracks, allowing you to embark on a mini adventure and imagine yourself as one of the hardworking miners.

Like many mines in Taiwan, operations here came to an end after a mining disaster, this one claiming thirteen lives. Even though Taipei today gives the impression of modernity and prosperity, its rapid economic growth was built on many tales of sorrow. The mine is a reminder of the sacrifices of those who went before us.

Tianshui Yuanyang Lake

Located on Da Lun Tou Mountain in Neihu, Tianshui Yuanyang Lake presents such a lush and abundant expanse of water that it is hard to imagine that less than 20 years ago, it was a muddy, weed-infested pond.

This lake used to be the highest water source in the Neihu area, as indicated by its other name, Da Pi Tou, suggestive of its former use for irrigation. Apart from providing residents with ample water, the area was also home to many flocks of Mandarin ducks. However, in 1983 leaks began to occur in the area, causing the pond to temporarily dry up, and the flocks of ducks left.

Since the pond was no longer the primary source of water for residents, it was abandoned, and no-one visited it or cared about it until 2008, when the city government embarked on a two-year project to clean up the area. Instead of using conventional cement, which is easy to use but bad for the environment, they opted instead for a highly waterproof and environmentally friendly bentonite liner to repair the water bed. The restoration was a success, and the restored pond was transformed into a secluded haven known only to a few.

Why not bring a loved one or your crush here for a hike? You may even have the opportunity to see pairs of Mandarin ducks swaying gracefully on the lake, adding a touch of romance!