STORIES FROM THE CAPITAL

27
ISSUE

SPRING 2022

Keeping It Colorful

COVER STORY

Vibrant Taipei:
Day Tours with the Colorful Metro Lines

TAIPEI 台北

TAIPEI 台北

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EDITOR'S
INTRODUCTION

COLORS OF SPRING

Spring in Taipei is much like the blooming of the season's perennial flowers. The city experiences a palpable and visible change, as the weather warms and the cool gray of winter is replaced by vibrant colors and upbeat attitudes.

To experience Taipei in the springtime is to see this diverse, inclusive capital through lenses of countless different shades, and in this issue, we present to you these many-splendored viewpoints.

Much like the city itself, Taipei's clean and convenient metro mass transport system is bursting with color. Wandering the city in springtime is as simple as choosing your favorite color-coded line, hopping on, and consulting our spring cover story, with tours for every hue Taipei's MRT has to offer.

The cityscape, too, comes alive with color during the spring season. From the yellow sulfur of the Beitou hot springs that heal body and mind, to the blue-ribbon waterways that crisscross the metropolis, and on to the various flower-viewing spots Taipei has to offer, we've got colorful features for all your can't-miss springtime explorations both indoor and out.

Moving on to all things both colorful and cultural that arrive with this season of rebirth and renewal, we check out the glinting gold of the costumes and the origins of Taipei's Golden Lion Group Ta-Long-Tong, and the charming red brick of the historic Minnan architectural marvels. And not to forget the most important color of spring — green — we also head for the verdant fields of a sustainable farm in Gaundu, snuggled contentedly within all the hustle and bustle.

When it comes to springtime food favorites in Taipei, it's very black and white. Check out our article on a couple who has made silky-white tofu their life's work, and dive into a story on one company with a mission to promote Taiwanese coffee both at home and abroad.

Finally, a carpenter brings us deep into the city both literally and figuratively, on the lookout for old houses decorated with the warm texture of wood.

If you're a spring arrival to Taipei, count yourself lucky. There is no such thing as a bad time to come to this multi-colored, multicultural city, but springtime might just be the best of all.

COVID-19 ALERT

- Please wear a mask and follow the epidemic prevention regulations imposed by the government when going out during the pandemic.
- There are many private profile pictures published in this issue, hence no masks are worn by the figures present.

► Join our lucky draw to win a prize by completing *TAIPEI*'s online questionnaire!

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Vibrant Taipei: Day Tours with the Colorful Metro Lines

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Since the inauguration of the first line in 1996, the Taipei Metro has served as the keystone of Taipei's transportation network. It carries travelers and Taipei residents alike around the city quickly and safely, making both work and leisure a breeze.

Today, the Taipei Metro boasts a veritable rainbow of color-coded lines. The Red Line (Tamsui-Xinyi Line, 淡水信義線) runs from the north coast to Xiangshan (象山, Elephant Mountain), the Blue Line (Bannan Line, 板南線) and Green Line (Songshan-Xindian Line, 松山新店線) traverse the heart of the city from east to west, while the Brown Line (Wenhu Line, 文湖線) and Orange Line (Zhonghe-Xinlu Line, 中和新蘆線) cut from north to south. The Yellow Line (Circular Line, 環狀線) and Purple Line (Taoyuan Airport MRT, 桃園機場捷運) mostly serve Greater Taipei, connecting the city with its suburbs.

Each line offers a bevy of day trip opportunities, from the traditional to the modern, or the urban to the outdoorsy. There are as many options as there are colors: all you need to do is decide which shade of the rainbow you want to explore that day.

O Exploring the City with the Orange Line

Taipei is as much a cultural and historic capital as it is a business hub. A day trip on the Orange Line connects passengers to some of the cultural sites that help give Taipei its vitality and elegance.

DAYTIME **Zhongxiao Xinsheng Station**

Huashan 1914 Creative Park 華山 1914 文化創意產業園區

A short walk from MRT Zhongxiao Xinsheng Station, there's a spot where bustling traffic gives way to open space, with gnarled trees and vintage factory buildings covered in greenery. Built in 1914 as a sake and ginseng wine factory, the site was renovated and converted into a cultural park in the early 2000s. Thanks to the efforts of many people from the fields of art and culture, it's now home to numerous shops selling products made by local designers, eateries, indoor and outdoor exhibitions, venue spaces and a theater. Creative markets, concerts and various events also take place here every now and then. A daytime visit might include an exhibition, shopping, having a meal or simply enjoying the outdoor park areas.

01

AFTERNOON **Xingtian Temple Station**

Xingtian Temple and Fortune Telling Street 行天宮 & 命理大街

Dedicated to Holy Emperor Guan (關聖帝君), also known as Lord Guan (關公), a deified Han Dynasty (漢代, around 200 A.D.) general and patron god of businesspeople, military and police officers, Xingtian Temple is said to bring good luck to visitors and is one of the busiest places of worship in Taipei. The design is minimalist by Taiwanese temple standards, allowing the snake-like dragons at each end to stand out. The censer in front boasts still more dragons ornamenting the handles and sides.

Immediately outside Xingtian Temple, there is an underpass for pedestrians beneath Minquan East Road (民權東路) and Songjiang Road (松江路), which is locally known as Fortune Telling Street. Although most fortune tellers ply their trade in Mandarin, some do speak foreign languages such as Japanese and Korean. All are welcome here to have their futures predicted!

02

01. Featuring a tranquil park along with repurposed factory buildings, Huashan 1914 Creative Park is a popular destination in Taipei. (Photo/Huashan 1914 Creative Park)

02. As one of the main religious centers in Taipei, Xingtian Temple welcomes countless visitors every day. (Photo/Wei-Te Wong)

03. From braised pork rice to *guabao*, Yansan Night Market has various authentic street foods on offer.

EVENING **Daqiaotou Station**

Yansan Night Market 延三夜市

In the evening, hop back on the Orange Line to Yansan Night Market. This is one of the more local night markets in Taipei. Food offerings include everything from the comfort of lamb hot pot to beef noodle soup, *guabao* (刈包) or stinky tofu. And don't miss out on the street foods that have made the Taipei Bib Gourmand list, such as the savory rice cake (米糕), savory meat-stuffed *tangyuan* (湯圓), cabbage rice and pork rib soup. End your day with these simple yet delicious snacks, creating an unforgettable experience for your taste buds.

03

R Chill Out on the Red Line

Whether you live in Taipei and want to wind down from the stress of daily life or you are a visitor who just wants a relaxing day, the Red Line offers plenty of opportunities to slow down and enjoy spring in this colorful city.

DAYTIME **Yuanshan Station**

Taipei Expo Park and Taipei Fine Arts Museum 花博公園 & 台北市立美術館

The sprawling parks around MRT Yuanshan Station provide lots of options for chilling out. On weekends, head to the Taipei Expo Farmer's Market (花博農民市集) next to MAJI Square (集食行樂), where you can get fresh products directly from farmers from all over Taiwan. We recommend visiting in the morning before it gets too crowded, enjoying a picnic on the open grass field in the park. There's no shortage of play areas for kids and Instagrammable spots around the Expo Dome (花博爭豔館) for adults. On weekends especially, the park reveals the vitality of Taipei, with couples, families and groups of friends spending time together.

At the north end of Taipei Expo Park, you'll find the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. The museum opened in 1983, and its architecture is inspired by the Japanese post-war "Metabolist" style. Having recently undergone renovations, the museum is one of the best destinations for locals and visitors alike to take in an art exhibit, especially in springtime. The museum mixes fine art with the occasional modern installation, with a strong focus on works by Taiwanese artists. These range from vintage classics to modern pieces, showcasing Taiwan's thriving art scene.

04

05

04. Take a visit to the Taipei Fine Arts Museum to feel the creativity of local artists.

05. Fresh fruits and vegetables can be found at the Taipei Expo Farmer's Market on weekends. (Photo/Taipei Expo Foundation)

06. You can find piping hot local favorites alongside a busy shopping street at Linjiang Street Night Market.

07. Shopping malls and restaurants in Xinyi District are always filled with fashionable people and chill vibes. (Photo/Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government)

EVENING/NIGHT **Xinyi Anhe Station**

Linjiang Street Night Market 臨江街夜市

Situated in the heart of east Taipei, Linjiang Street Night Market is popular for its balance of food and shopping. The vendors come and go, so you might even find something unusual: someone hawking fresh tiramisu or handmade rings made from seashells, for instance. There is no end to the eating options, from Uyghur-style lamb skewers to teppanyaki, Taiwanese oyster omelets and fresh Vietnamese banh mi.

06

EVENING/NIGHT **Taipei 101/World Trade Center Station**

Xinyi Commercial District 信義商圈

Aside from visiting the night market to grab some food and shop, you can also end your chilled-out day with a drink at one of the many bars, lounges and gastropubs in Xinyi District. The pedestrian areas between the department stores are a popular hangout spot as well. You can see many stalls displaying handmade creative products, while street performers provide live entertainment. The area also offers an array of nightlife options, from nightclubs to loud bars to chill hangouts. Most nightlife is found inside larger complexes, such as department stores and hotels. Choose before you go — some of these offer outstanding views of Taipei 101 lit up at night.

07

BL Discover Innovations in Old Taipei on the Blue Line

The key to Taipei's vitality is that it's always reinventing itself, while staying true to its roots. A day trip on the Blue Line offers cultural activities in renovated heritage buildings, making the old new again.

DAYTIME **Longshan Temple Station**

Longshan Temple and U-mkt 艋舺龍山寺 & 新富町文化市場

Longshan Temple has long been considered one of the most vibrant places of worship in Taipei. It's well worth a visit to appreciate its age, artwork and lively throngs of visitors. It may not be apparent at first, but Longshan Temple has reinvented itself over the centuries, having been built in 1738, then destroyed and rebuilt several times due to both natural and man-made disasters. However, the intricately carved dragon-shaped copper columns still stand along with Guanyin (觀音/觀音佛祖), the main goddess worshiped here, who continues to protect and bless people in Taipei.

The Longshan Temple area is the heart of Wanhua (萬華), also known as Bangka (艋舺), Taipei's oldest district. Many heritage buildings and neighborhoods in this area have been revitalized, but one place in particular truly stands out. The U-mkt, or Xinfu Market, is the only building of its kind in Taiwan. The original structure was completed in 1935 in an unusual U-shape, with a narrow, curved inner courtyard. Although it was a bustling spot for decades, the area declined in the 1990s and commercial operations ceased in the building.

Now, U-mkt hosts a permanent exhibition on the building's history, as well as lecture and kitchen spaces. Unique cafés can also be found here. There is one café operating at the back of the market, in the curve of the original U, and another running in the old market office, which combines cycling culture and workshops. The atrium of the building enables natural light to flow in and has become a popular spot for photography.

08

09

08. With its unique U-shaped building, U-mkt has become a new go-to spot in Wanhua. (Photo/Yengping)

09. Filled with ancient artworks, Longshan Temple has long been a place for locals to seek inner peace.

AFTERNOON **Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall Station**

Songshan Cultural and Creative Park 松山文創園區

10

This site was originally built in 1937 as a tobacco factory, shutting down only in 1998. In 2001, it was designated by the city government as a heritage site, and in 2010 it was restored and renamed Songshan Cultural and Creative Park. Now redeveloped with the mission of nurturing creative talent in Taipei, it's a fantastic place to visit on a warm spring day.

The park occupies 6.6 hectares of indoor and outdoor space, including walkways, paved squares and an ecological pond. Lush with subtropical greenery, the park is popular with residents and visitors, drawing bustling crowds on the weekends. Indoors, the park boasts the Taiwan Design Museum (台灣設計館) and other exhibition spaces, cafés, shops and a design library in the old bathhouse. All of these show that the park has been transformed into one of Taipei's foremost creative hubs.

10. Songshan Cultural and Creative Park displays many locally-designed products. (Photo/Songshan Cultural and Creative Park)

11. As a new gathering place in Taipei, POPOP Taipei plays host to several markets and events. (Photo/POPOP Taipei)

AFTERNOON **Nangang Station**

POPOP Taipei 瓶蓋工廠台北製造所

Compared to Huashan 1914 and Songshan Cultural and Creative Parks, POPOP is a fairly recent addition to Taipei's cultural landscape. Built in 1943 as a bottle cap factory, the site was scheduled for demolition in 2013, until the city government decided instead to redevelop it into a creative hub. POPOP opened officially in 2020 and is gaining momentum as a space catering to makers and innovators.

POPOP features a large multifunctional maker and co-working spaces. Bottle cap designs dot some exteriors, adding visual appeal. Visitors can enjoy the outdoor spaces, a café with indoor and outdoor seating, a sake bar and a small selection of shops, including an antique store with vintage goods from Taipei's past.

11

An Energetic Day on the Green Line

One of Taipei's greatest features is an abundance of choices for people seeking for high-energy activities. From short hiking trails within city limits to the bright clamor of pedestrian shopping districts, Taipei Metro's Green Line affords endless opportunities for day trippers to get moving.

12

DAYTIME **Jingmei Station**

Xianjiyan Hiking Trail 仙跡岩步道

Behind Jingmei Night Market (景美夜市), a narrow set of stairs climbs up from Jingxing Road (景興路). The trail is steep at first, mostly stairs passing by older buildings. Ascending further, however, the buildings give way to nature. This is Xianjiyan, a name referencing a dented boulder near the summit. The legend goes that these dents are the footprints left by the immortal Lu Dongbin (呂洞賓) while vanquishing a demon that was terrorizing the villagers.

Xianjiyan offers scenic viewpoints over Taipei City, a face carved in an odd stone — see if you can find it — and a temple, which is dedicated to Lu Dongbin, before ascending over the top of the Xinhai Tunnel (辛亥隧道). This short hike is an excellent place to enjoy the freshness of springtime in a sea of greenery without leaving the city. Acacia confusa, an evergreen tree species, is one of the most common trees found along the trail, providing cool shade for hikers, shining with yellow blossoms in May. The trail has several exits and is manageable for most ages and fitness levels — a great choice for a day hike.

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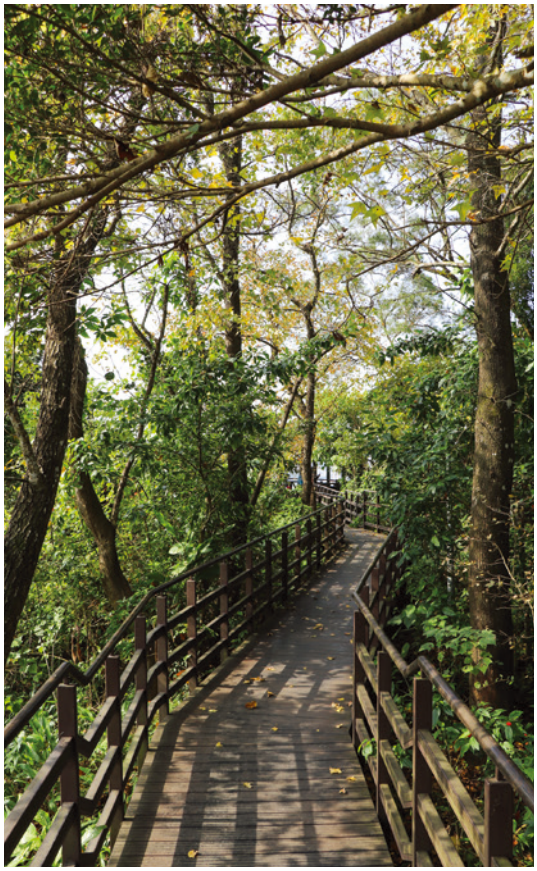

DAYTIME **Gongguan Station**

Taipei Water Park 台北自來水園區

After your brisk morning hike, take the MRT to Gongguan (公館), where a thriving food scene offers up endless choices for lunch. From here, get your Instagram on at Taipei Water Park. In the spring, visitors can enjoy the Museum of Drinking Water (自來水博物館) and restored pumping station, built in 1908 and re-opened in 2000 with exhibits showcasing the original equipment. When summer arrives, families come here for the wading pools, waterslides and sprinklers.

The Water Park is a popular spot not just for families, but also wedding photos, especially around the vintage buildings. While the children burn off energy running around, adults can take photos, relax and people-watch.

14

EVENING **Ximen Station**

Ximending 西門町

The Ximending pedestrian shopping district is where you can see Taipei at its most lively. It is the oldest pedestrian shopping area in Taiwan, with a distinctively different flavor from the one across town in Xinyi District. A small square near Exit 6 of MRT Ximen Station leads into a tangle of footpaths lined with shops and restaurants. It's a popular spot for shows, street performers, cosplayers and even the occasional political rally. This is also where you'll find Taipei's iconic rainbow crosswalk, showcasing Ximending's history as a center of the city's LGBTQ culture. Across the street, you can visit The Red House (西門紅樓), where you can learn about the history of the octagonal building and enjoy an exhibit or the craft market on site.

Diving into the shopping district, there's almost nothing you can't find. You can catch a movie at one of the area's many cinemas, shop for clothes or accessories for your body or electronic devices, or get a tattoo on the famed tattoo street.

15

12. Head for the hills of the southern edge of Taipei to get a panoramic view of the city.

13. You can bask in the lush greenery when exploring the trails on Xianjiyan in springtime.

14. The Museum of Drinking Water inside Taipei Water Park is an insight into the old infrastructure for the city's water systems.

15. The Red House, one of the iconic landmarks of Ximending, once operated as a theater. (Photo/The Red House)

BR Relax Outdoors on the Brown Line

Unlike many cities of similar size, Taipei boasts a number of possibilities for outdoor activities within the city limits. In addition to hiking Xianjiyan or one of the other nature trails in Taipei City, there are plenty of places where one can simply enjoy being outside, and the Brown Line can get you there.

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16. Sika deer are one of the many native Taiwanese animals with habitats at Taipei Zoo.

17. Take a ride on the Maokong Gondola to access the lavish green views as you climb ever higher. (Photo/Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government)

MORNING **Taipei Zoo Station**

Taipei Zoo 台北市立動物園

Stand outside the entrance to Taipei Zoo on any pleasant day when there's no school, and you'll get a taste for how much clamor Taiwanese children can make! School days are quieter, but Taipei Zoo remains one of the most popular outdoor destinations in the city. Taipei Zoo is both one of the largest city zoos in Asia and one of the most acclaimed. Many of the habitats are outside, including the Formosan animal area, featuring animals native to Taiwan, the Children's Zoo, and quarters for Australian and African animals. There are indoor options as well, including the popular Koala and Penguin Houses. A tram and guided tours help visitors get around and enjoy the zoo.

While the Taipei Zoo's pandas are popular, a lesser-known treat is visiting the pangolins. Despite being difficult to breed in captivity, Taipei Zoo has boasted a rare pangolin habitat for some years now.

AFTERNOON **Taipei Zoo Station**

Maokong Gondola 貓空纜車

Taipei Zoo is situated at the base of Maokong, a mountain with slight folds said to resemble cat scratches. One popular story behind the mountain's name is that it means "cat scratch" in Taiwanese.

After a morning at the zoo, continue your outdoor adventure by taking the Maokong Gondola. On the gondola, you'll float over the mountain's undulating folds and ridges, getting a bird's-eye view of the city as verdant tea farms appear as you ascend.

Those who want to enjoy the outdoors without a workout can walk to any of the numerous teahouses that dot Maokong's main road. Most offer outdoor seating, some on pavilions and some under umbrellas. Many offer food or light meals as well.

17

AFTERNOON/EVENING **Dahu Park Station**

Dahu Park 大湖公園

Near the other end of the Brown Line, Dahu Park is big enough to warrant its own MRT station. Despite being far from the city center, it's a popular spot to enjoy a relaxed day outside as winter turns to spring. The park is famous for its large lake, covering an area of about 13 hectares! Visitors can take it easy and enjoy the views from Jindai Bridge (錦帶橋) or the pavilion, which are both constructed in the Chinese traditional style. Capturing the crescent-shaped Jindai Bridge with a full moon at the center is a popular choice for photographers. Although the lake takes center stage, Dahu Park is also at the base of Bailusishan (白鷺鷥山, White Egret Mountain), where those seeking a more energetic day outdoors can take a short hike.

18

18. Surrounded by mountains, Dahu Park quickly makes people forget they are in the midst of the city. (Photo/Vũ Nguyễn Xuân)

01

Taipei's Hot Spring Hot Spot

Author Richard Williams
Photographer Taiwan Scene, Yengping, Fu Lu Culture Foundation Beitou Museum, Hotel Royal Beitou, Parks and Street Lights Office, Public Works Department, Taipei City Government, Taipei Beitou Health Management Hospital

There are not many cities around the world that have active volcanoes on their doorstep, but Taipei is one of them. At the foot of the Datun Volcano Group (大屯火山群) is the neighborhood of Beitou (北投), an area with a history as long as the settlement of Taiwan itself, and long a go-to place for entertainment, relaxation, and above all, healing.

Just north of central Taipei, Beitou is abundant in geothermal activity. Hot spring bath houses dot the neighborhood as if they were convenience stores, while rivers running through area parks and along the streets steam and bubble.

Soaring above the neighborhood are the 1,000-meter-high peaks of Yangmingshan National Park (陽明山國家公園). Throughout those peaks are miles and miles of hiking trails with everything from pink spring blossoms to vibrant yellow sulfur pits and their steaming fumaroles.

The neighborhood is therefore synonymous with well-being and health. Locals and tourists alike flock here for medical stays and vacations among the healing waters, fresh air, and stunning natural scenery. Packages combining healthcare and staycations are also popular options. No wonder, then, that Beitou is a hot spot in more ways than one.

02

03

Beitou's Volcanic History

One of Taiwan's numerous indigenous groups, the Ketagalan (凱達格蘭族), were the first to discover Beitou as a center of healing and well-being. In fact, the name Beitou comes from the Ketagalan name — *Kipatauw* — which means "witch" or "wizard," hinting at the magical powers of Beitou's rocks and waters.

During the Japanese colonial era, Beitou boomed. Railways were quickly built to cater to the area's burgeoning sulfur industry. Nowadays, just across from MRT Xinbeitou Station (捷運新北投站), guests can easily grasp the importance and charm of the old railway, with carriages sitting on what remains of the track and the station building, reconstructed according to its original design and style using age-old materials. Now the station building, known as the Xinbeitou Historic Station (新北投車站), gives train enthusiasts an interesting insight to the development of locomotive transport in the area.

As the sulfur industry thrived under the Japanese, so too did the hot springs. The colonizers built lavish bath houses to cater to Japanese and Taiwanese looking for a soak after a hard day's work. Some of these Japanese-era houses are still in operation for bathing services, such as Long Nice Hot Spring (瀧乃湯), established in 1907.

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01. The bubbly Sulfur Valley is the origin of Beitou's hot spring thermal activity.

02-03. The historic Long Nice Hot Spring retains a memorial of a past visit from none other than the Crown Prince of Japan.

04. The Xinbeitou Historic Station has been restored to its former glory to remind people of the good old days in Beitou. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)

Another hundred-year-old hot spring hotel is the Kazan Hotel (佳山溫泉旅館), now known as the Beitou Museum (北投文物館). This stunning Japanese-style structure is the place to immerse yourself in the area's incredible history. Artifacts detail the development of Beitou's sulfur industry, its time in the sun as a top Japanese tourist destination, and its modern development into a place of health and well-being. There's an impressive café/restaurant with a terrace overlooking the Beitou Valley. After enjoying a meal, take time to explore the historic building and sit in a hot spring tub that both Taiwanese former President Chiang Kai-shek (蔣中正) and the emperor of Japan both soaked in (though not at the same time).

Another grand colonial structure in the heart of Beitou Park (北投公園) is the Beitou Hot Spring Museum (北投溫泉博物館). This impressive building was built in 1913, and was the largest bath house in Asia at the time. It was deserted for many years after the Japanese period ended, and in 1998 was converted into a museum. It now forms one of many enticing attractions in Beitou's famous park, sitting alongside the public hot springs and the Taipei Public Library Beitou Branch (台北市立圖書館北投分館), which is one of the most eco-friendly libraries in Asia, featuring both a green roof and a rainwater recycling system.

Also giving a good snapshot of the area's local history is Beitou Heart Village (北投中心新村). Originally built as a health care center for wounded soldiers during the Japanese colonial era, the place was then transformed into a residence for military retirees by the Nationalist government. Recently it has been converted into museums, galleries and art spaces that host performances, salons, and other cultural events. While enjoying the cultural and artistic atmosphere, visitors can also admire the residences built in different periods and the historical footprint of the hot springs retained in the village.

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05. Transformed into the Beitou Museum recently, Kazan Hotel retains its authentic Japanese style. (Photo/Fu Lu Culture Foundation Beitou Museum)

06. Beitou Hot Spring Museum is a historical bath house exhibiting the hot spring history of the area. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)

07. Old-style houses are well preserved in Beitou Heart Village, taking visitors through different periods of the past. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)

08. The foot bath in Fuxing Park is a free facility, drawing hot spring fans to soothe their feet and mind.

08

Hot Springs

As soon as you exit the metro station or jump out of your taxi in Beitou, the heady smell of sulfur hits you. From upmarket hotels with private tubs, to foot spas in public parks, hot springs are as ubiquitous in Beitou as 7-Elevens and temples in the rest of Taiwan.

For those wanting to jump right in, the public hot spring in Beitou Park is the place to, as the locals say, "*pao* (泡)," meaning "take a bath." These open-air hot springs in the heart of the park are the best place to immediately immerse yourself in the local way of life.

Favored by the city's aunties and uncles, the mixed-gender pools are staggered up the hill, with the hottest and purest water right at the top. They are incredibly good value. With an entrance fee of just NT$60, you can meet those that know the neighborhood best while gazing up and around at the Beitou surroundings.

If you'd rather just "dip your feet in," other parks in Beitou include foot spas. The one in Fuxing Park (復興公園) is particularly popular, and just a stone's throw from some of the town's best eateries. Here, you can take off your shoes, roll up your pants and soak your feet in the warming waters.

Other options abound. There are fancy bath houses like Shan-Yue Hotspring Hotel (山樂溫泉), just across from Xinbeitou Historic Station, and extravagant resorts such as Villa 32 (三二行館). At the edge of Yangmingshan National Park are some of Beitou's most renowned classic bathhouses, including Emperor Spa (皇池溫泉御膳館) and Kawayu Spa (川湯會館), where you can treat yourself to heartwarming local dishes such as crab congee after taking a bubbling bath.

Food Glorious Food

As a time-honored leisure destination, Beitou has developed a dining scene sure to please even the most discerning palate. Its banquet cuisine — dishes designed to accompany beer and liquor — is famous citywide. One of the restaurants cherished by locals and visitors alike is Peng Lai (蓬萊餐廳). Included in the Michelin Guide, the must-try dishes are the tofu roll and the deep-fried pork ribs.

In another nod to Beitou's Japanese colonial past, the neighborhood is dotted with cozy and atmospheric izakayas — or Japanese pubs. The Niao Shao Izakaya (蔦燒日式居酒屋) is one of most popular spots, serving up barbecued skewers, fried rice and cool glasses of draft beer.

If you would rather not commit to one restaurant, then perusing the restaurants and vendors in and around Beitou Market (北投市場) is the best way to hedge your bets. One of the most popular street foods here are the oyster dishes at A-Zong (阿宗蚵仔煎), serving up crispy pan-fried oyster omelets. If you are prepared to queue, then the utterly unctuous braised pork over rice at Ai Zai Cai (矮仔財) is a very comforting meal option, particularly in the cooler months. If all that eating gets you thirsty, pick up a fresh tea from Kao's Tea (高記茶莊).

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09. Multiple delicious local dishes can be found near Beitou Market, including the famous braised pork rice.

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Natural Delights

In the neighborhood of Beitou itself, there are plenty of ways to enjoy nature. At the furthest end of Beitou Park is the Thermal Valley (地熱谷), a mysterious and magical spot where azure waters steam and bubble against a backdrop of leafy mountains. At the other end of town, Ki-Pataw Shan-Tseng-Chi Park (北投社三層崎公園) is famous for its fields of colorful flowers. Silver ragworts, wax begonia and other varieties bloom on the slope like ribbons until the end of March, creating fascinating views from every angle.

Another hot destination — quite literally — is the Sulfur Valley (硫磺谷). Here fumaroles bubble, geysers steam and spurt, and guests can wander around the remnants of Beitou's sulfur mining industry. As with much of Taipei, YouBike stations abound in Beitou, making it easy to catch all these sights in an afternoon.

Where to Stay

Hot spring hotels to suit all budgets crowd Beitou Park and the surrounding hillsides. One of the most popular options is the Hotel Royal Beitou (北投老爺酒店). This Muslim-friendly hotel is cooperating with Taipei Beitou Health Management Hospital (台北市北投健康管理醫院), combining a one-night stay in the luxury hotel with a health check at the hospital. Visitors can enjoy the comforting facilities and accouterments, including hot spring baths in the rooms and delicious yet healthy cuisine designed by the chef and expert dietitians. Working with hospitality and medical professionals, the team at Hotel Royal Beitou provides innovative service and attentive care for those who are searching for a holiday retreat in Beitou.

10. Colorful flowers blanket the fields in Ki-Pataw Shan-Tseng-Chi Park in spring. (Photo/ Parks and Street Lights Office, Public Works Department, Taipei City Government)

11-13. Cooperating with a nearby hospital, Hotel Royal Beitou offers retreat packages combining hot spring spa treatments and medical examinations. (Photo/Left: Hotel Royal Beitou; Right & Bottom: Taipei Beitou Health Management Hospital)

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Blue Ribbons: A Riverside Guide to Taipei

Author Seb Morgan
Photographer Samil Kuo, Ken Marshall

Mountainous as it may be, Taipei is a city on the water, and the city would have never been the same if not for its two main arteries, the Tamsui (淡水河) and Keelung Rivers (基隆河).

Encircling much of the city center, it was these coursing bodies that helped open the area up to Spanish exploration in the 17th century, and later brought prosperity to the area's first Chinese settlements. To this day, memories of the Tamsui and Keelung Rivers' thriving commercial past and distant indigenous heritage continue to murmur along their historic banks. Here's what to see around every bend.

Tamsui River

Taiwan's third-largest river, the Tamsui River runs for over 150 kilometers, flowing past some of Taipei's most historic districts. North of Ximen (西門), the vast waterway's unbroken views out toward New Taipei City lend to excellent sunsets, whether you're watching from the riverbank or a yacht rental.

Some of the river's best treats can be found with a couple of free hours and a YouBike, following the bike path north all the way up to Shezidao Daotou Park (社子島島頭公園), passing tiny shrines and temple gardens along the way.

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01. Meandering through Taipei, the Tamsui River has long been a source of vitality for the city.

02. No longer serving as a transportation hub, Dadaocheng Wharf now offers river cruises for people to enjoy.

03. Start your chill evening at the food stands made from shipping containers at Dadaocheng Wharf.

03

Dadaocheng Wharf 大稻埕碼頭

When the weather is good, Dadaocheng is many Taipeiers' favorite weekend hangout, packing a double punch of historical interest and trendy places to sit out with a beer and a snack.

The area's colorful history as a commercial and cultural center dates back some four centuries, actually predating Taipei itself. During the Imperial Chinese era of Taiwan, Twatutia, as it was then known, was an export hub for Taiwan's booming tea trade. All that caffeinated wealth stimulated an architectural boom in the area, and strings of elaborate red-brick townhouses from this era are immaculately preserved throughout the neighborhood.

Every good afternoon in Dadaocheng ends at PIER5, a trendy cluster of pop-up bars and food stalls operating out of converted shipping containers. Beer drinkers will appreciate the selection of local craft brews, and the container-top seating is a must at sunset.

A slightly more elevated experience is dinner aboard the Great River Queen, an elegant Mississippi River paddleboat that runs regular sunset cruises. The cruises take people all the way to Guandu (關渡), which offers the most stunning sunset view of Guanyinshan (觀音山, Mt. Guanyin).

DRINK RESPONSIBLY

Guandu Wharf 關渡碼頭

Perched at the intersection of the Keelung and Tamsui Rivers, Guandu Wharf has a history that stretches deep into Taipei's past. Originally known as Kantou by the local indigenous people, the wharf prospered as a port during the Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1636 A.D. – 1912 A.D.), and was the main landing point for Chinese settlers arriving in northern Taiwan.

Guandu Wharf declined commercially during the last century, but was recently restored as a breezy green space, popular with runners and cyclists. The wharf itself is a charming enough place for its views of downtown Taipei, but it's Guandu Temple (關渡宮) that captures most people's attention.

Built in 1712, this ornate multi-level complex is one of Taiwan's most important shrines to the sea goddess Mazu (媽祖). If you're feeling adventurous, head for the orange storefront just outside the temple to try Guandu salted duck eggs, one of the area's most popular traditional snacks.

To the south of Guandu Temple, roughly 57 hectares of protected wetland stretches out along the Keelung River, offering shelter to more than 230 bird species. Part of this patchwork of paddies, marshes, and wooded areas can be partly explored on foot at Guandu Nature Park (關渡自然公園), or traced on the bicycle path that tracks south away from the wharf, passing mangroves and strings of tiny waterfront cafés.

Keelung River

The Keelung River slices horizontally across northern Taipei, marking the southern boundary of Neihu (內湖) and Shilin (士林) districts. It's perhaps best known as the location of the Taipei International Dragon Boat Championships (台北國際龍舟錦標賽), which tears along the waterway in late June.

For the rest of the year, the Keelung River is the city's peaceful backyard, with roller skating rinks, children's play areas, and the only official cricket pitch in Taiwan all found along its grassy banks.

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04. Standing at the estuary for more than 300 years, Guandu Temple continues to bless the region. (Photo/Ken Marshall)

05. The riverside facilities at Guandu Wharf were recently reconstructed, making the surrounding area perfect for a relaxing walk.

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Dajia Wharf 大佳碼頭

In late spring, Dajia Wharf buzzes with activities such as kayaking and dragon boat training as the nerve center of the upcoming summer events. Year round, the area is a great place to visit with kids, featuring adventure playgrounds and a geyser fountain that shoots jets of water 75 meters into the air.

Just south of the Dajia Riverside Park (大佳河濱公園) out Watergate No. 8, Airplane Alley backs onto the runway of Taipei Songshan Airport (台北松山機場), making for some great photo opportunities as aircraft take off and land.

To the west of the park, the Lin An Tai Historical House (林安泰古厝) is a lavish 19th-century mansion built in the Southern Fujian style, worth exploring for its large garden, moon doors, and idyllic lotus pond.

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Meiti Wharf 美堤碼頭

Just up and across the river from Dajia, this is the main riverside area in Neihu District. Meiti Wharf is located just around the corner from the Miramar Ferris wheel, restaurants and shopping center, yet despite this, it is one of the most peaceful stretches along the Keelung River.

The riverside park is pretty expansive, with plenty of room for picnics, bike rides, and other outdoor activities, and boasts a view of Taipei 101. Down by the water, Cheers Aboard (碼頭乾杯) can arrange yacht rentals for private parties as well as riverside events at their trendy beach-themed venue.

Xikou Wharf 錫口碼頭

Further upstream, Xikou Wharf is located near Rainbow Bridge (彩虹橋), a series of colorful structures that crisscross the river near Songshan Station (松山車站). "Xikou," which means "mouth of the stream," was in fact the name of the whole Songshan area during the Imperial Chinese era, which was also when the grand Songshan Ciyou Temple (松山慈祐宮) was first constructed.

After exploring the temple, take some time to explore nearby Raohe Night Market (饒河夜市), which runs parallel to the wharf for a few hundred meters and is a must-visit for its lively late-night food scene and traditional souvenirs.

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06. Many people enjoy activities such as cycling, jogging or even water sports at Dajia Riverside Park.

07. With the Keelung River passing languidly by, Xikou Wharf and the surrounding area have developed and prospered.

08. Songshan Ciyou Temple and Raohe Night Market are vital parts of the local history of Songshan.

A Quest for Spring Flowers: Purple Blossoms Throughout Taipei

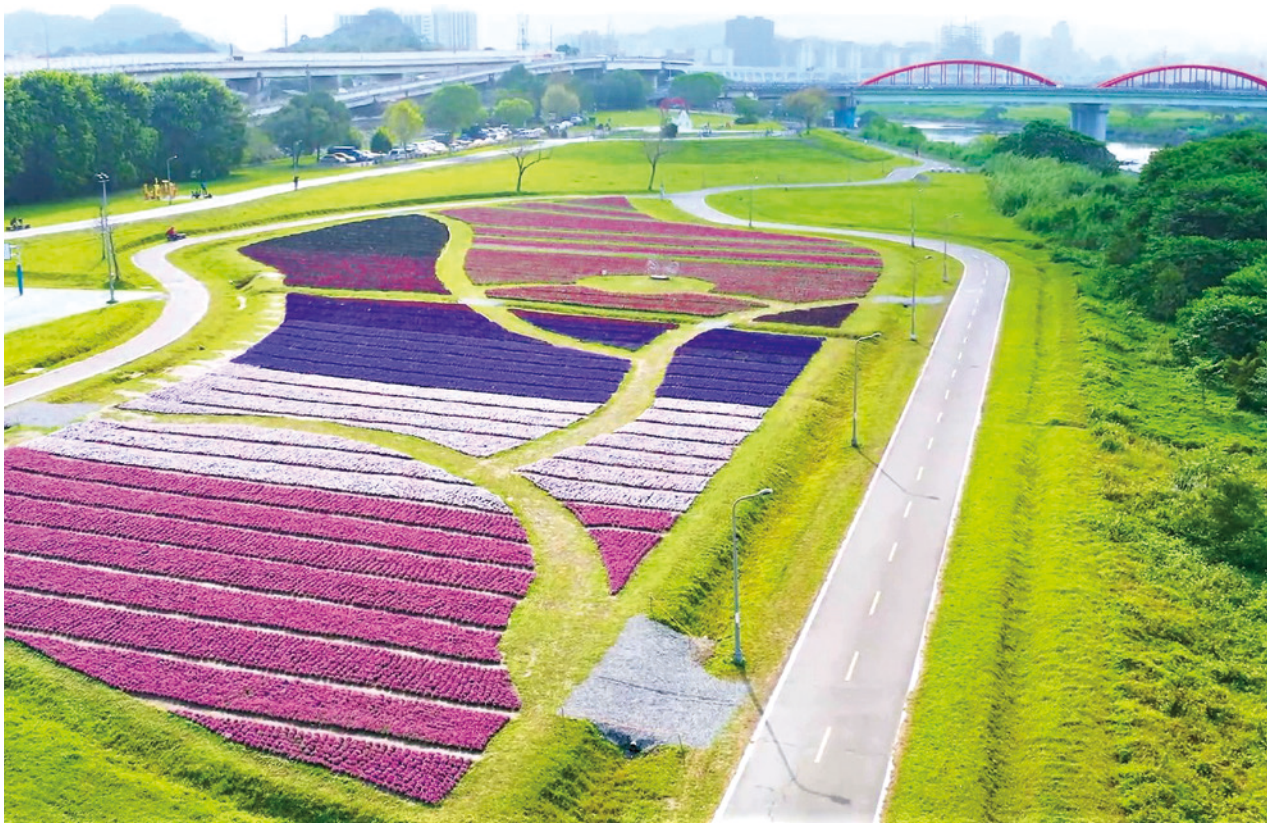
Author Catherine Shih
Photographer Geotechnical Engineering Office and Hydraulic Engineering Office, Public Works Department, Taipei City Government, Beitou Farmers' Association

Former First Lady of the United States Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson once said, "Where flowers bloom, so does hope." Although she was likely referring to the season of spring as a whole, images of Taipei's myriad of blossoming spring flowers inevitably come to mind. Nestled in the heart of a rich, lavish valley, residents and visitors to Taipei alike can enjoy viewing not only pink cherry blossoms and azaleas, but also gorgeous purple flowers during this special time of year.

In this special feature, we have handpicked three of the most famous purple flower scenic spots in Taipei — ranging from the rich violets and hydrangeas in early spring to mesmerizing African lilies and lavender in the latter portion of this season of rebirth and renewal.

01. The arrival of spring is marked by lovely purple flowers bringing a romantic vibe into Taipei.

01



02

✿ Guting Riverside Park

An Ever-Flowing Sea of Purple Flowers

Unbeknownst to many, a secret scenic spot for enjoying flowers exists right at the heart of Taipei, and is usually in full bloom from mid-January to mid-March. Located in Guting Riverside Park (古亭河濱公園), not far from Yongfu Bridge (永福橋), over 320,000 pots of flowers and plants are lined up in row upon row, covering an area of about 23.9 basketball courts, forming a seemingly endless sea of flowers. Here locals and visitors alike can enjoy rich purple flowers such as violets and lavender decorated with seasonal pink grass, making for a magnificent sight.

Violets, known for their unique aroma, are small in size and consist of many small heart-shaped petals. This view, coupled with the upright string of purple, feather-leaved lavender, only serves to add further texture and layers to the sea, distinguishing this particular site from other famous riverside flower scenic spots. Together with the surrounding green space and romantic art installations with the names of The Love Arch and SWEET-KISS, it is enough to make one's heart marvel and blossom at the sight alone!

Not only is this destination easily accessible by public transportation, it is also open to the public for viewing on national holidays and weekends, so everyone can enjoy the beautiful atmosphere of the spring. Be sure to pay a visit in March, when the flowers are at their peak!

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02-03. Violets and other purple blossoms proliferate in Guting Riverside park, making it one of the must-see flower viewing spots in Taipei.

Zhuzihu

Spring Festival of Purple-Blue Hydrangeas

Located in the central core of Yangmingshan National Park, Zhuzihu (竹子湖) rests at an altitude of 670 meters, and is surrounded by hills, including Mt. Qixing (七星山), overlooking the Taipei Basin. When a volcanic eruption occurred in the distant past, a depression was formed, turning the area into a wetland habitat. As the area was found covered with bamboo forest, people called it Zhuzihu with "*zhuzi* (竹子)" meaning bamboo, and "*hu* (湖)" referring to muddy land in Taiwanese.

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The acidic soil formed by the volcanic eruption and the chilly temperature of Zhuzihu make it a perfect place for growing flowers. When the season approaches late May, the calla lilies from the previous winter season begin to fade, evoking an inviting atmosphere for the purple-blue hues of the hydrangea to shine and blossom. Throughout the late springtime, you will find a spectrum of periwinkle colors created by layers of hydrangeas, forming a dreamy, wondrous expanse.

In Zhuzihu, there are approximately seven to eight varieties of hydrangeas planted throughout, with diverse colors ranging from pure white, pink with red edges, and pink, to red-purple, light blue, royal blue, and many other vibrant colors. Plumerias can also be found scattered throughout the garden, with hues just as rich and striking, further adding to the ever-changing scenery amongst the hydrangeas and creating an ideal spot for taking pictures.

04-05. Hydrangeas of different varieties render Zhuzihu with dreamy colors. (Photo/Beitou Farmers' Association)

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06-07. Purple African lilies blooming in Neishuangxi Nature Center create a virtual forest of violet and blue. (Photo/Geotechnical Engineering Office, Public Works Department, Taipei City Government)

Neishuangxi Nature Center

Purple African Lilies

As the temperature rises, the flowers begin shedding their old winter coats and putting on a new blue-purple veil, ushering in a feeling of blossoming romance all around. In May, various flowers bloom in Taipei's largest forest nature park, Neishuangxi Nature Center (內雙溪自然中心), among which African lilies and lavender are the most eye-catching. The African lilies, otherwise known as "Agapanthus africanus," consist of brilliant blue-violet bell-like clusters and stand magnificently on tall stems — sometimes reaching a height of 1.2 meters! The seemingly magical feeling of the flower really embodies the old saying of "Love is in the air." Speaking of the air, you can also smell the aromatic scent brought forth by lavender, whose purple blossoms roll out like a carpet upon the field.

The flower season of the nature center also happens to coincide with Mother's Day, offering a once-a-year opportunity to bring our mothers to this special spot to further show our appreciation for all they do. Many local events and activities are also held, where one can take home seeds for planting or even create one's own DIY scented sachets of dried lavender. Aside from families, friends and couples can also gather here and enjoy the splendid view of the flowers, offering a chance to slow down and really "Stop and smell the flowers."

07

Bright neon reflections cascade upon the water, enlivening the colorful nighttime scenes of Taipei.
@ Songshan Rainbow Bridge

© Samil Kuo

Ancient Gold in Modern Taipei: The Golden Lion Group Ta-Long-Tong

Author Rick Charette
Photographer Samil Kuo, Golden Lion Group Ta-Long-Tong

The spectacle-filled Baosheng Cultural Festival (保生文化祭) is one of the biggest annual religious events in Taipei, a time of uproarious fireworks and pulsating pomp and pageantry. It is centered on the large and magisterially ornate Dalongdong Baoan Temple (大龍峒保安宮) in Datong District, Taiwan's only temple bestowed with a UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation.

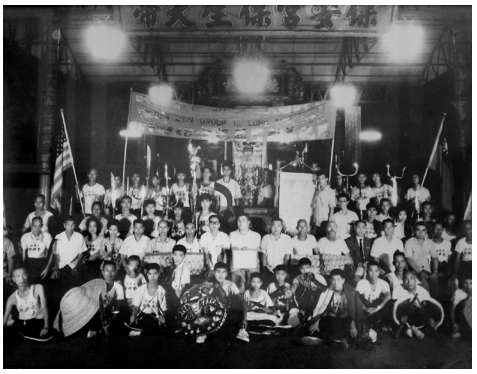
One of this festival's most eye-riveting and popular spectacles is the lion dance performances presented by the internationally celebrated Golden Lion Group Ta-Long-Tong (大龍峒金獅團), a troupe born over 200 years ago. It is based in the miniscule He An Temple (和安宮), at the end of old flagstone-paved Hami Street (哈密街), the short street that Baoan Temple anchors, lined with heritage shops.

According to an old Chinese aphorism, "In the past every village had a protective lion." This referred to the ubiquitous lion-dance troupes that protected the home turf of their members. Their fierce lions frightened off evildoers from both this world and the netherworld. Troupe members, overwhelmingly members of the local militia, melded martial arts skills into their performances.

The Golden Lion Group has been protecting Taipei's Dalongdong (大龍峒) community since its days as a flourishing town in Chinese imperial times. Among the troupe's many laurels has been the bestowal of a Taipei Master of Traditional Arts Award (台北市傳統藝術藝師獎) by the city government, recognizing the group as a priceless cultural asset.

01

01. Lions without ears are the main feature of the Golden Lion Group Ta-Long-Tong in Taipei.



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Protecting and Passing On a Noble Heritage

Master Lee (李世澤) is the general director of the non-profit foundation that officially oversees the troupe. His clan has been intimately involved for multiple generations. "Our lion dance troupe was the first formed in Taiwan history," he states, "and we are one of the last remaining in Taipei passing on lion dance cultural traditions from generation to generation."

The troupe is referred to as the "old lion ancestor (老獅祖)" among lion dance troupes in northern Taiwan, having passed on their expertise to many other troupes. Its exalted status is evidenced in its leading position in temple festivals and other major traditional culture celebrations.

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02. An old photo of the Golden Lion Group that performed for the U.S. army in the 1950s.

03. The Golden Lion Group aims to pass down the lion dance that combines martial arts, religion and culture. (Photo/Golden Lion Group Ta-Long-Tong)

04. He An Temple, in which the Golden Lion Group is based, is the oldest temple for worshiping the Earth God in the area.

05. Lee has dedicated his life to proactively promoting his family legacy of the lion dance tradition.

Today, Golden Lion is passing on lion dance heritage in three primary ways. First, says Lee, is simply through its efforts to survive and thrive. As with other traditional arts and crafts in developed countries around the globe, the younger generation is interested in more modern pursuits. Recruitment of new blood is a challenge, and under Lee's leadership the troupe has taken decisive steps toward this, while also having begun to proactively participate in domestic and international events. Second, the troupe has transformed its performances into educational sessions to provide more foundational knowledge to today's public, which may have a limited understanding of what they are watching. As performances unfold, all is explained using loudspeakers. Third, the troupe cooperates with other troupes, directly passing on its knowledge.

A key element in the troupe's cultural heritage preservation and dissemination mission is its entry into formal cooperation with Chinese Culture University's Department of Combat Sports and Chinese Martial Arts (中國文化大學技擊運動暨國術學系). The department's professional instructors and martial arts talent have helped the troupe hone and further develop its formation and martial arts system, and helped develop a systematized training regime. In turn, all troupe knowledge has been passed on to the school, meaning there is now a formal base from which to disseminate its cultural traditions and techniques to talent around the island and further abroad.

Lee now contributes as a lecturer at the university, and the department's talent will fill out the troupe's ranks when staging longer performances, which require larger numbers. A full Golden Lion presentation can last up to 90 minutes, he says, but nowadays many event organizers ask for "highlight" routines — i.e., the most action-packed segments — lasting 20 minutes or so. The minimum number of performers will be 30, Golden Lion can muster around 70, and for the largest demonstrations the university will contribute about 30.

05

Golden Lion Group Special Performance Features

The troupe is famed for its "earless lions (無耳獅)." Their lions, says Lee, have been earless since the late 1800s. At the time, two lion dance masters from China's Hunan province, visiting Dalongdong, professed the troupe's martial arts routines to be too action-oriented and acrobatic, lacking the aesthetics and artistry of the Hunan form. They thereafter taught these to the troupe, but left for China after the Japanese took over Taiwan in 1895. There was factional turbulence in the community afterward about whether to reject or accept the new Dalongdong-Hunan synthesis, and to quell the mutterings the troupe leader symbolically cut off all their lions' ears, demonstrating he wanted no more murmurings disturbing them or the community peace. The then-new synthesis of acrobatics and artistry today remains at the core of the troupe's repertoire.

Lion dance methods are primarily divided according to how the lion's head is positioned. There are three categories: high head/high road lion (上路獅), middle, and low. The Dalongdong troupe is one just a few in Taiwan to use the "high head" technique, which it does at all times. Most Taiwan troupes use the "low head" method, simply because it's easier. Here's why. The "high head" technique means the heavy lion's head is held aloft, with the performer's arms extended, which is exhausting and makes it difficult to carry out the martial arts and dance movements properly. Symbolically, this leaves the lion "vulnerable in defense," says Lee. "Thus, your performers must be stronger and practice longer to perfect the routines. The 'high head' method also demonstrates the pride of your troupe's lions, which never lower their head before anyone no matter how their heads move while they jump around."

Another type of skill that sets the Golden Lion troupe apart is insistence that its members learn how to craft their own lion heads. Other troupes will delegate this to the island's dwindling corps of craft masters. Beyond

06

the aforementioned lack of ears, Golden Lion heads also have a number of other unique features. "We place seven small shiny mirrors on our lions, symbolizing the Seven Stars of the Northern Big Dipper (北斗七星)," says Lee. Demons and other netherworld ne'er-do-wells are also frightened off upon seeing their reflections. Their lions' bright red nose is the mark of a "lion king(獅王)." In the north, it is recognized that only this troupe has this status.

Lee poses a test for those fortunate enough to take in the troupe live on more than occasion. Can you spot the most obvious difference between the lion heads seen on the troupe's home turf and when performing on away turf? The answer is the mouth. The troupe has full sets of home/away lion heads. The home lions feature mouths with two lines of even teeth and even lips, indicating calm and friendliness. The away lions have lips pursed under the nose, indicating ferociousness. It is not that "away turf" is considered enemy territory, says Lee. This is simply a demonstration of the Dalongdong lions' territorial dominance.

07

Where to See the Troupe Perform

Golden Lion has had an intimate relationship with Dalongdong Baoan Temple that stretches well back into imperial times. Since he became the troupe's head in 2007, Lee states, Baoan Temple has provided new performance equipage as well as financial support, and when needed opened its grounds for Golden Lion training.

During the annual Baosheng Cultural Festival, the troupe performs a number of times. Among the thrilling highlight events are the Baosheng Dadi Deities Parade (保生大帝聖誕遶境), featuring deity palanquins and many performance troupes. This is an inspection procession around Dalongdong, with the deities bringing the community peace and blessings. The Golden Lion Group heads this small army, driving off all baleful influences.

For the Fire-Walking Ritual (過火儀式), the troupe first "clears the field (淨場)" before the temple to drive away dark-world evildoers, and is then the first group to conquer a long path of burning coals while wielding lion heads, weapons, and other paraphernalia.

Beyond the Baoan Temple extravaganza, the troupe also takes part in the grand inspection processions for two other temple festivals, staged by Bangka Qingshan Temple (艋舺青山宮) and Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple (台北霞海城隍廟), which make up the "Taipei Three Great Temple Festivals." It also performs at other temple festivals around the island and at major government-organized cultural celebrations.

06. The intricate details and skill of making the lion heads carry with them the history and beliefs of the area.

07. The shining mirrors inserted on the lion's head represent the Northern Big Dipper, and are believed to scare away demons and evildoers.

► Check out the performances of the Golden Lion Group Ta-Long-Tong

Brick by Brick: The Spirit of Minnan Architecture in Taipei

Author AYCC
Photographer Taiwan Scene

Red is a color that symbolizes enthusiasm and positivity. In Taipei, it is also a color of times past and the memories therein. A distinctive symbol of traditional Minnan architecture, countless red brick buildings in the city record the changes this place has experienced and bear witness to the evolution of Taipei from generation to generation.

This spring, we take you on a journey through time and trace the origins of traditional Minnan-style architectural culture, walking you through three brick houses in Taipei to experience these nostalgic scenes of this modern city.

01. Red is the representative color of Minnan-style buildings and a telltale sign of the historical beauty of traditional architecture in Taipei.

01

The Origin of Minnan Architecture

Minnan-style architecture, also known as Hokkien architecture, is an architectural style originating in Fujian (福建), a province of southeastern China. When Taiwan was incorporated into the territory of the Qing Dynasty in 1684, people from the southeastern coast of China migrated to Taiwan to seek new lives. As such, Hokkien culture gradually took root in various parts of Taiwan and became the local mainstream culture. The cityscapes, including the architectural style, was of course "Minnanlized" after people settled down.

After the colonization of the Qing Dynasty, however, Taiwan was successively ruled by Japan and the Nationalist government. During these subsequent periods, most of the Hokkien-style buildings were destroyed or demolished. Especially in the capital city, a large amount of land was expropriated by the government for urban development. As a result, few Minnan-style buildings remain in the present day, making the existing ones even more precious and special.

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02. Simple red tiles decorated with delicate decorations on the rooftop exemplify the unique style of Minnan houses.

03. The symmetrical architectural style symbolizes the quest for harmony in Chinese culture.

Features of Minnan-Style Buildings

The main features of a Minnan-style building are adobe and, without a doubt, red bricks. Timber is also commonly used as the building's structural foundation. In addition, the sloping roof, covered with tiles and doors, and windows made of wooden boards are also frequent features of a Minnan building.

Another distinctive factor in Hokkien architecture is the upward-curving ridge of the roof, which is usually flat in the middle and slightly warped at the left and right ends.

What's more, Minnan-style architecture pays close attention to symmetry and reflects the concepts of ethical, spiritual, and familial superiority and inferiority in Chinese culture. The closer the room is to the central axis, the higher the status. The center is generally a place of worship, and also a space to welcome guests. As for the left and the right sides of the main hall, the rooms are arranged according to seniority and obey the rule of "left, right, left, right."

Hence, in a traditional Taiwanese family, the eldest brother lives in the first room of the left wing, while the second son stays in the first room of the right wing. The second room of the left wing belongs to the third son, and if there is a fourth son, you'll find him in the second room of the right wing. This shows that the bigger the family, the larger a Minnan family house will be.

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04. Lianrang Estate has the layout of a traditional *sanheyuan* courtyard, extending from the main hall in the center to the left and right wings.

05. Beimen is one of the iconic landmarks in Taipei, and also a classic red brick building.

Traditional Minnan Architecture in the Capital

Longanpo Huang Family Lianrang Estate

龍安坡黃宅濂讓居

Longanpo Huang Family Lianrang Estate, built in 1897, is a typical Hokkien-style *sanheyuan* (三合院, a traditional three-sided courtyard residence) hidden within the grounds of a high school in Taipei City. Originally the private residence of the Huang family, a noble family who settled in Taipei almost 300 years ago, it was expropriated by the government in 1999. After integrating with the campus of Long Men Junior High School (龍門國中), the traditional red brick house has become a designated historic site in Taipei.

The wall of the Lianrang Estate was built from granite shipped from China. The horseback-style roof, Begonia-pattern stone window, and moon-shaped window were all designed in accordance with traditional Hokkien architectural style. The roof is similar to the swallowtail, but lacks the luxurious characteristics of the latter, since it was most commonly made for dwellings of common people.

The Huang family used to be tenant farmers in Taipei, but after generations and generations, they became one of the biggest landlords in the neighborhood. Every year around Tomb Sweeping Day, the Huangs still come back to Lianrang Estate to worship their ancestors. The private house is now also open to the public, allowing visitors and children to picture the scenery of ancient Taipei, where harmony lies in a nostalgic courtyard surrounded by concrete skyscrapers.

Beimen
北門

Beimen, also known as the North Gate, was constructed in 1884. During the Qing Dynasty, it was formally called Cheng'en Gate (承恩門), and served as the northern gateway to Taipei City. Beimen is one of the few remaining official Qing Dynasty buildings in downtown Taipei, and is the only one that completely preserves the original appearance of Minnan architectural features among the five city gates.

The structure is a traditional two-story gatehouse, with its outer wall made of red brick, and the stone of the pedestal stacked with andesite taken from the mountainous area in Dazhi (大直), Taipei. The roof of Beimen is representative of the Xieshan-style (歇山式) roof, which is a common type of roof in Minnan architecture consisting of a hipped roof that slopes down on all four sides. In accordance with urban planning and renewal initiatives being launched in Taipei nowadays, a plaza-like open space around the beautiful city gate was built, making the area one of the best sites to admire this historical landmark in Taipei.

Lin An Tai Historical House
林安泰古厝

Lin An Tai Historical House was built in 1783 during the Qing Dynasty, and is the most well-preserved Hokkien-style residential building in Taipei in the present day. It was originally located in Daan District, but relocated to Binjiang Park (濱江公園) in Zhongshan District as part of an urban planning scheme.

The Lin family was once one of the richest families in Taipei, running a cross-strait shipping business, specializing in the sale of grains, silk and tea. Their wealth is vividly reflected in their family mansion. One of the features of Lin An Tai Historical House is the luxurious "sparrowtail" ridges. "Sparrowtail" refers to the curve of the roof that turns up at the eaves, and is often decorated with lavish ornamentation.

The carvings on the door and wall are also exquisite and gorgeous. For example, there are auspicious symbols such as flowers, a flying phoenix, *Guqin* (古琴, Chinese musical instrument) and *Kuilong* (夔龍, ancient Chinese mythological animal) under the eaves. This magnificent piece of design work, with its meticulous decoration, has become one of the most popular attractions in Taipei, exhibiting the beauty of Minnan architecture from the Taiwan capital to the world.

06. The roof of Lin An Tai Historical House extends upward like a sparrow's tail, which is a characteristic of Minnan architecture that symbolizes a noble family.

06

Ba Sian Sustainable Farm: Leading Taipei's Green Revolution

Author Rick Charette
Photographer Samil Kuo, Ba Sian Sustainable Farm

Following the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set up by the UN, sustainable agriculture is being promoted to end hunger and lessen negative impacts on the environment. In Taipei, people are steadfastly dedicating themselves to the achievement of these goals.

Hermes Wang (王宣智) and Debby Zheng (鄭亦真), a husband-and-wife team who run Taipei's largest paddy field, the acclaimed Ba Sian Sustainable Farm (八仙六代園), are true agri-oddities in Taiwan's advanced economy. For one, they are young urban farmers who farm right in Taipei, a metropolitan city. For another, they practice sustainable agriculture, running their farm as a green-revolution classroom for the public while teaching urban residents about the importance of the land's health, as well as the health benefits and superior taste of sustainably-produced foods.

The couple's farm sits on the fertile Guandu Plain (關渡平原) in Taipei's northwest, which is on the Keelung River's final stretch before emptying into the Tamsui River. The Keelung River is fed by the pristine waters of the mighty Yangmingshan (陽明山, Mt. Yangming) massif, and the Beitou hot-spring resort area is found nearby, at the massif's base. What is in view from the fields is a steady stream of recreational cyclists atop a tall dike, riding this section of the extensive Taipei City and New Taipei City (新北市) riverside bikeway system. A set of access stairs is located right beside the farm.

01. Hermes Wang (right) and Debby Zheng (left) are the sixth generation of the local farming community in Guandu, but the first in their family to practice sustainable agriculture.

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02. Guandu Plain is the largest rice producing area in Taipei, and a rare rice paddy area in the midst of the city. (Photo/Ba Sian Sustainable Farm)

03-04. From radishes to tomatoes, all the crops at Ba Sian Sustainable Farm are grown naturally, as the permaculture approach is applied.

A Green Sustainability Mission

Paddy rice is the main crop at Ba Sian Sustainable Farm, with numerous other crops also grown, including corn, Chinese radishes, bamboo shoots, Romaine lettuce, cherry tomatoes, spring onions, strawberries, guavas, and passion fruit. Wang and Zheng's mission is to serve as a model both for fellow farmers and for the general public, bringing green sustainable agricultural practices to the city and hopefully beyond.

The farm is open to groups by appointment, during which visitors are taught about sustainable agriculture and take part in activities, which vary depending on the season and which crops require planting or harvesting at the moment.

"We are Taipei's largest rice producer, and certainly the only one using a permaculture approach," says Wang. The couple sees themselves as stewards of the land they've inherited, with a responsibility to nurse it back to health and to live in harmony with birds, animals, and insects. "City folk have little knowledge of farm life," says Zheng, "and younger folk especially have little understanding of where their food comes from. We want to give city people the chance to return to the land."

They are constantly asked exactly what sustainable farming is. A short definition, says Wang, is agriculture that finds a good balance between the need for food production and eco-system preservation. Among the goals are water conservation, minimizing or reducing to zero fertilizer/pesticide usage, and biodiversity promotion.

Among the sustainable farming strategies they use, states Wang, are "Rotating crops to minimize pests, because specific pests prefer specific plants, and growing plants that can create their own nutrients, reducing fertilizer usage. All-natural, non-toxic cultivation methods are conducted at Ba Sian, with non-synthetic and 100% pesticide-free fertilizers being used. We also produce just one crop of rice annually instead of the usual two, letting the land rest in between by leaving it fallow or by planting earth-enriching cover crops."

05

Handing Down the Family Farm

This land has been farmed by Zheng's family for six generations. The literal translation of the farm's Chinese name is "Eight Immortals Sixth Generation Garden." The "Eight Immortals" or "Baxian (八仙)" is the placename for the farm's area, and Zheng is from the family's sixth generation. "Our people have in fact been here more than six generations, but details are unclear," she says. "The earlier generations were tenant farmers, working for a large landlord. We formally date our time here from the first firm bit of information we have, that is, the date of building for the family's first *sanheyuan*."

In the past, neither Wang or Zheng were in any way involved in farming, both working regular city jobs. It wasn't until a few years ago that the couple decided to take over the family farm for Zheng's aging grandfather. "We've learned on the go," says Wang, "learning much from our family elders and also branching out on our own, taking classes, attending agriculture lectures, and engaging in other formal studies to learn both basics and new techniques."

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05. In addition to paddy rice, Ba Sian Sustainable Farm also produces all kinds of seasonal vegetables.

06. As no pesticide is used, Wang and Zheng have to bring in web covers to protect the crops from insects.

07. Located ten minutes away by car from Ba Sian Sustainable Farm, Guandu Wharf used to be an important point on the water for transporting rice.

08. Despite having a higher cost, elevated beds for strawberries is one of the experimental agriculture approaches at Ba Sian Sustainable Farm that target high-value yields.

Taipei Farming Historical Development

Wang, who studied history in university and remains a history buff, says that "If you want to go way back to the farm's earlier generations, one big change is that Taipei farmers used to transport their rice to Dadaocheng in western Taipei for processing." In Chinese, "Dadaocheng" literally means "large open space for drying rice in the sun." To ensure all rice can be well-dried, Zheng's ancestors sent their rice by boat, using nearby Guandu Wharf, which today is used as a launch for what are called "Blue Highway (藍色公路)" river-tour cruises. However, today all rice processing is done on-site, using natural sun-drying.

Another major change is the slow and steady disappearance of flatland farms in Taipei. The Taipei Basin is small, meaning great pressure on land for residential and commercial development. "We still have some flatland farming on the Guandu Plain," says Wang, "but Taipei's farms are now mostly found up in the surrounding mountains, and pretty much all have turned to tourism to survive, such as the fruit-picking farms in Neihu District and tea farms with teahouses in Wenshan District's Maokong area." Another key reason for the withering away of flatland farms, he adds, is the simple fact that here, as in all developed economies, young people don't want to farm anymore.

07

Challenges in Green Sustainability Efforts

In terms of obstacles faced in Wang and Zheng's sustainability efforts, "In truth, the biggest has been the senior members of our clan," says Zheng. "Elderly farmers are slow to change, and they are set in their ways, initially only grudgingly accepting our new course. However, now that we've clearly demonstrated we're able to 'keep putting food on the table,' they've come around."

Another obstacle is the lower yields that are an inevitable part of sustainable farming. The work is much more labor-intensive, with constant weeding by hand, for example, meaning the family has not yet been able to commit all their available land to sustainable practices. "Our healthy crops are bringing back more birds, small animals like squirrels, and insects, who take their share," says Wang. They usually don't do much to prevent the visits of the animals other than putting up sticky strips in their crop rows to keep the insects down. The lower yields — "remember, we also only produce one rice crop annually" — mean higher prices, and there is strong price resistance among the general public.

"Generally, those who understand the health value of foods sustainably produced come to us, meaning they accept the higher prices," says Zheng. "We sell pretty much everything right from the farm. We don't do things like participating in farmers' markets, because it requires higher production volume to do that, and we have to deal with constant haggling over price."

08

Green Experience Sessions

Experience sessions at Ba Sian Sustainable Farm are held at irregular times, generally on weekends and holidays. These change in accordance with the planting/harvesting needs of the four seasons.
The goal is to bring city people into intimate contact with Mother Nature, planting a thirst in them to interact ever more closely with her, bringing these desires back into their everyday city lives and, over the long term, changing the nature of city life itself. "As part of this, we want to present to Taipei City folk the beauty of the farming ways of their own forefathers," says Wang, "which produces crops that are not only healthier but in fact also look more beautiful, the more vibrant colors clearly indicating the presence of more nutritional goodness. Awareness of the health of the earth leads to awareness of the health of one's body, of better 'cultivating' yourself — and for the city at large, better eating, purchasing, and living habits."

The farm's key times of year are the planting of paddy rice in February/March, the rice harvest in June/July, the bamboo shoot harvest in September, and the Chinese radish harvest starting in November. Such plants as corn and even flowers will be planted on plots in between main crop rotations to replenish the earth. "The farm is by far at its most beautiful in summer," says Zheng, "when the rice is richest in color and our flowers in greatest bloom."

"The most popular sessions are our rice-planting sessions and Chinese radish harvesting sessions," says Wang. "The kids are always tentative at first about getting in the rice-paddy muck, having been taught by their parents to avoid all things dirty, but once they

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begin, they don't want to stop, having a great time squishing around and learning not all 'dirt' is bad. And both adults and kids love the treasure hunt atmosphere of the Chinese radish harvest, learning how to identify where the biggest and best — not the same, by the way — specimens might be dug up." Also popular are the DIY agri-foods sessions, notably the jams and preserves experiences.

"We are city people," says Wang, "but in truth we never felt comfortable with city life. We now are city people living in healthy harmony with nature. We've found our path for healthier interaction with the land, and though our days are busy, we could not be happier living in our urban oasis. Our goal is now to give guidance to Taipei's ever-growing population of people seeking better in-city manmade/nature-made balance."

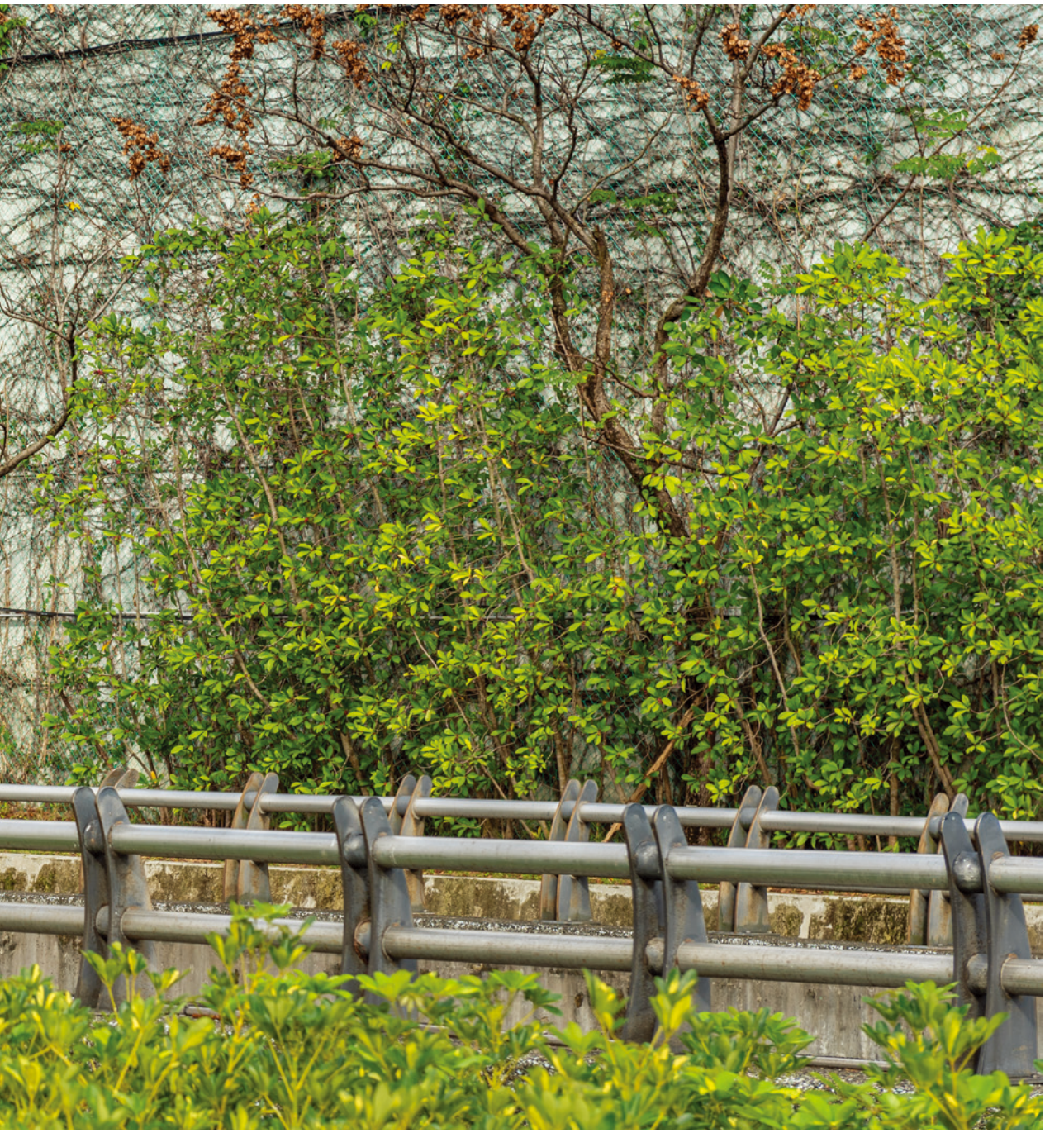
10

BA SIAN SUSTAINABLE FARM

ADD	551, Ln. 401, Sec. 7, Chengde Rd., Beitou Dist.
HOURS	9:00am – 5:00pm
WEBSITE	facebook.com/beitoubaxianfarm

09-10. During the sowing season, Ba Sian Sustainable Farm holds experience sessions so children from the city can have a chance to learn about agriculture. (Photo/Ba Sian Sustainable Farm)

One can always find a relaxing green corner in Taipei in springtime.
@ Yanping Riverside Park



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A Handmade Tofu Shop in Taipei: Serving the Ultimate "White Platinum" Delicacy

Author Catherine Shih
Photographer Samil Kuo, Thomas Kinto

Tofu is a key ingredient in many of the local delicacies in Taiwan. It is commonly found in everything from home-cooked meals to soups and even in desserts. On a global scale, tofu has become synonymous with healthy food in recent years — solidifying its indispensable role as the "white platinum" delicacy of traditional Asian cuisine and culture.

In Taipei's bustling Zhongshan District, there is a handmade tofu shop called Oneway (萬味豆府) tucked away in a local neighborhood. As the sun rises, unlike most office workers, for the shop owners Shan Yuan (單淵) and Yu Shuru (余淑茹), the day is not just about to begin, but already half gone. To ensure the quality and smooth production process, the couple works tirelessly day in and day out to bring delicious and healthy handmade tofu to many Taipei residents and visitors.

01

The Origins of Handmade Tofu

When asking co-owner Yu how she and her husband got into this business, her reply would surprise anyone. "In fact, it all started by accident!" she says. She goes on to tell us, "At the time, a friend had a counter at the well-known department store in Taipei, Breeze Center (微風廣場), selling organic vegetables and tofu, and asked if we wanted to take over. The original tofu chef had quit and they needed some help. But since I had only worked as a salesperson in the toy industry and my husband had worked professionally in the military, we really didn't know a single thing about tofu." Little did they know how quickly that would change.

"Luckily, we've always been very proactive people. If we want to do something, we strive to do it well," she tells us. Therefore, as a way to become more knowledgeable in the field, the couple spent a whopping NT$500,000 to learn tofu-making with a renowned Japanese master. "He taught us the basic concepts, and over the years, we've gradually mastered and refined the rest on our own," Yu smiles proudly.

Later, with the onset of remodeling for the department store, the lack of counters in the new space forced the couple to venture out and open their own storefront.

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"To be honest, it's not much different from when we were in the department store," Yu shares. "Just like there, we'd have to start work early in the morning at six o'clock. The only difference being that it's our own store, so sometimes we can choose to sleep in a bit more!" she chuckles. It's not always so easy, though. "In order to maintain the quality of our tofu in the back of the kitchen, the air conditioner can't be running. But to accommodate the customers in the front, it has to be turned on! So, often, we'll find ourselves catching a cold running back and forth from hot to cold. And in the wintertime, it's particularly chilly, which is even harder when you have to cool down the tofu by sticking your hands into an ice-cold bucket of water!" she laughs.

Creating Unique Flavor with Soybeans

"Many people don't realize that the single most important element affecting the taste of tofu is actually in the beans themselves. Therefore, we put a lot of effort into picking the right beans and only use non-GMO (Genetically Modified Organism) beans imported from the U.S. In the process, we also add very little water, thereby maintaining the bean's unique richness and flavor," Yu shares with us.

"It is also this very reason that our tofu exudes a very light fragrance, since we really add nothing else in the production process. And for customers coming in for the first time, I will almost always recommend them to try tasting the original flavor first in order to experience the most natural taste of tofu!" she exclaims.

01. Handmade tofu may seem unpretentious, but it is an indispensable ingredient found often on Taiwanese dining tables.

02. The quality of soybeans directly affects the taste of tofu and soybean products, which is why Oneway insists on using high-quality non-GMO beans. (Photo/Thomas Kinto)

A Detailed Production Process

Having run their own business for many years, Yu feels delighted and honored to share the essence of making tofu: "Actually, for all types of soy products, you must start by making soy milk first," Yu tells us. "And in order to make soy milk, we first carefully select the best soybeans. The chosen beans are soaked, and then ground up, heated, and boiled the next day to make soy milk. The amount of water added during the heating process will affect the concentration, so if there's too much water, it will be very thin. And likewise, if there is too little water, the concentration will be too high. After the soy milk is ready, we then add salt brine, which acts as a coagulant, to make the tofu," she says.

"In fact, some people also just boil the beans directly into the milk after grinding, without straining them first. But I don't like that grainy texture, so we also have a filtering process before cooking," Yu tells us. She goes on to add, "But this step depends entirely on each person's own preference! If you don't mind the grainy taste, you don't need to filter at all."

Yu further shares the production process of other soy products. She explains, "Dried bean curd is actually just the layer of skin that condenses on the hot soy milk upon cooling. Therefore, the thicker the soy milk is, the easier it is to form." As for tofu pudding, it needs to be salted like tofu, but with a different amount. Additionally, because of its unique texture, it is necessary to add an oil or emollient in order to give the pudding its smooth, rich taste.

Facing & Overcoming Challenges

Although tofu is such a staple ingredient in Taiwan, it certainly doesn't come without a price. Yu tells us, "Because soybeans are very sensitive products, they are particularly susceptible to changes in temperature and humidity, which can affect their overall flavor. What makes things worse is that Taiwan's weather is ever-changing! It gets very hot in the summer, and with a lot of precipitation. Therefore, the production process is very difficult to control. Often, it is necessary for us to make adjustments based on the climate and circumstances."

She goes on to share, "In fact, to be honest, most people can't really taste the subtle changes in flavor, but we always strive to maintain our universal taste and quality — we just hope to do our best!"

Yu also tells us about their past failures. "Upon moving from Breeze Center to our own store," she says, "we discovered that our entire batch of soy milk was destroyed and could not be sold at all! We later discovered that our store was not equipped in the same way as the department store was, so our production process had to be adjusted. Sometimes, these mistakes have to be experienced firsthand in order to gain the proper knowledge. It isn't easy, but we don't ever cut corners."

A Variety of Oneway's Soy Products

"Our signature item is silken tofu," says Yu, "other special flavors we have also created include sesame tofu and matcha tofu. And we also have an amazing black soybean milk and almond-flavored tofu pudding as well. More importantly, we often roll out special flavors from time to time depending on the season!" she proudly shares.

Although most of the products are made from the same ingredient, Oneway develops its featured tastes with extra thick soy milk. Yu has noticed that some of their customers even take the soy milk back home to heat up themselves just so they can create their own bean curd.

Before the vegan diet became a worldwide trend, soy products were an essential item, and were presented in different ways in Taiwanese cuisine for centuries. With their hard work in developing various products, Oneway offers a fresh take on tradition, enriching the already rich food culture in Taipei.

03

03. The most important step before making any soybean product is to cook the soybean milk to the perfect consistency.

Recommendations for Cooking Handmade Tofu

04

SILKEN TOFU

This is Oneway's signature dish. According to Yu, it is the best way to taste the original flavor of the tofu. Depending on your personal preference, you can also add a dash of salt or soy sauce. Other ways of cooking include adding it to items such as hot pot, clay pot, or having it braised or fried.

04-05. To enjoy the original flavor of silken tofu, simply drip some soy sauce and sprinkle some bonito flakes.

05

DRIED BEAN CURD

The shelf life of Oneway's tofu is only three days due to it being handmade, with no preservatives added. The dried bean curd can be frozen, however. Upon thawing, cut the bean curd, slightly pan-fry, and then simply add some soy sauce and cilantro. Celery and cucumber are also good options if cilantro is not available. For vegan customers, the scrambled eggs in Taiwan's classic tomato and scrambled eggs dish can be substituted with scrambled bean curd instead.

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06. Fried bean curd is a simple dish with a rich fragrance of soybeans.

07. Soaking tofu pudding in soybean milk is the most authentic way to enjoy the dessert.

TOFU PUDDING

Using the most natural almond flour, Oneway's almond tofu pudding is simple yet light! It is delicious when boiled with sugar in water, adding a syrupy taste. If the richness of soy milk is what you prefer, you can also just soak it in soy milk instead and enjoy!

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01. Taiwanese coffee has a fresh aroma of tea and a sweet aftertaste.

Black as Night and Sweet as Love: The Flavor of Taiwanese Coffee

Author Elisa Cohen
Photographer Samil Kuo, Taiwan Scene

It's not difficult to get a decent cup of coffee in Taipei, as globally-renowned coffee chains can be found virtually everywhere in the city. Independent cafés with a sophisticated selection of beans and on-site roasting can also be spotted in even the narrowest of alleys, luring coffee connoisseurs with the tantalizing aroma of this storied beverage.

In recent years, Taiwan's locally-grown coffee has become a popular choice for coffee lovers. To let more people know about the charm of Taiwan's coffee, *TAIPEI* speaks with the man behind San Formosan (森高砂咖啡館), which specializes in selling Taiwan's homegrown coffee beans, promoting the rich flavors the island has to offer.

The Sweet Aftertaste of Homegrown Coffee

In the 1940s, during the Japanese Colonial Era (1895-1945), the coffee growing industry was booming in Taiwan, with the total crop area eventually reaching up to 1,000 hectares. This made Taiwan the largest coffee producer in East Asia at the time. However, due to war and regime changes, the coffee industry gradually fell into decline. In the 2000s, many small farmers began to return to coffee farming, and now coffee beans are produced in the central, southern, and eastern mountainous regions of the country.

Unlike other coffee-producing regions, which have employed mass-production methods for ages, Taiwan's coffee beans are mainly grown by small independent farmers, who harvest, ferment, and even roast and brew their beans themselves.

"Many people say that Taiwanese coffee has a tea-like aroma during brewing, but that is actually the smell of fresh coffee beans," says Ding He Doong (董鼎禾), founder of San Formosan. Since the coffee beans come from local farmlands, they can be roasted and ground directly after picking and processing, so the taste is completely different from that of imported beans.

By working with coffee farmers all over Taiwan, San Formosan has discovered the unique flavor of coffee grown on the island. "Taiwanese coffee has a sweet aftertaste," Doong explains. With a high sucrose content and low levels of glucose, coffee from Taiwan exhibits more sweetness and less acidity. Each production area features different characteristics as well. For example, coffee from Yunlin (雲林) has a peanut-like flavor, beans from Chiayi (嘉義) have a floral aroma, and coffee from Taitung (台東) gives off an aroma of sugarcane after roasting.

02

03

02. Local farmers all around Taiwan diligently plant coffee beans, bringing unique flavors to every cup of Taiwanese coffee. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)

03. Taipei is a place where you'll find cafés providing hand-brewed coffee catering to every customer's needs.

Black Beverages Drive Greener Economy

"Taiwanese coffee is definitely beyond anything you could imagine!" Doong emphasizes. San Formosan insists on selling Taiwanese coffee only, and is committed to creating local "specialty coffee" for promoting Taiwanese brews in both the domestic and international markets.

However, as Taiwan's coffee farmers are mostly independent producers, and have to do everything on their own, the production costs are extremely high, making it hard to compete with mass-produced imported coffee beans. Furthermore, without commercial flavor correction, it is difficult to produce a standardized flavor profile. As a result, Taiwan has not been able to develop an internationally recognized brand such as Jamaica Blue Mountain or Hawaii Kona.

To tackle these issues, San Formosan brought professional baristas to the farmlands to optimize harvesting and raw bean processing. In this way, San Formosan is helping to gradually reduce costs and continuously improve the quality of raw coffee beans.

San Formosan believes that "Improving the quality is the only way forward for Taiwanese coffee," says Doong. After nearly a decade of ongoing efforts, they have led Taiwan's coffee industry to follow the recent trend of "the third wave of specialty coffee" in the international coffee market, which focuses on roasting in the right way to bring out the unique flavor of the land while emphasizing Fair Trade practices and environmental sustainability.

In addition, San Formosan encourages farmers to plant their coffee under betel nut trees for sustainable farming. Many hillsides have suffered from erosion due to the shallow roots of betel nut trees. Coffee, with denser and wider roots, can grip the soil and help maintain soil and water conservation, while the betel nut trees provide shade for the coffee. The two plants complement each other, allowing Taiwanese coffee to thrive while creating new opportunities for environmental sustainability.

04

05

04. Doong hopes to see the coffee industry in Taiwan thrive.

05. San Formosan develops various methods to present the richness of homegrown coffee.

06. San Formosan brews coffee with carefully tailored methods based on the unique features and flavors of various local beans.

06

Experiencing Taiwanese Coffee in Taipei

"Taipei is the best place to taste coffee from all over the island," highlights Doong. With a lot of cafés in Taipei, people have become quite receptive to diversified flavors, and more and more coffee shops are sourcing local coffee beans and offering different options. However, since the production of Taiwanese coffee is still small-scale and relatively expensive, San Formosan is looking forward to expanding its cooperation with coffee shops. By providing coffee beans processed with different roasting methods or from different origins, and using different brewing equipment such as hand-powered grinders, siphons, or espresso machines, San Formosan hopes to showcase the diverse aspects of the Taiwanese cup of Joe in Taipei so that enthusiasts can get more familiar with local coffee.

Interestingly, many competing cafés are happy to point those who want to sample the local product in the right direction even if they don't offer Taiwanese coffee themselves. If they meet customers who want to drink Taiwanese coffee, they will recommend them to the right cafés, says Doong. San Formosan, known for selling Taiwanese coffee only, is naturally the first choice.

San Formosan uses its three stores in Taipei to promote local coffee from different angles. The shop located in an historic building in Dadaocheng (大稻埕), one of Taipei's oldest neighborhoods, is the home of the brand's hand-brewed coffee. Here, San Formosan hand brews and fine-tunes the steps according to customers' needs, just like making personalized cocktails.

In an old red-brick house in Huashan 1914 Creative Park, there is a "coffee lab" that uses the steeping method to brew coffee that anyone can easily learn. In this way, customers can learn how to brew coffee directly, and are encouraged to buy Taiwanese coffee beans to take home to create their own unique flavors.

The flagship store on Zhongshan North Road (中山北路) provides Italian-style coffee and all kinds of specialty coffee, presented in different ways such as hand-pouring and wine steaming, as well as freshly-made and specially-seasoned meals and desserts that pair well with the dark, rich beverage of choice. In this café, San Formosan hopes to demonstrate the diversity of Taiwanese coffee in many aspects, and let customers know the myriad possibilities of the homegrown coffee.

Ways to Taste Taiwanese Coffee with San Formosan

①

HAND-BREWED COFFEE ❶

Drinking San Formosan's hand-brewed coffee is like a small coffee tasting ceremony. The iced coffee tasting tubes and the hot coffee pots are designed to let customers feel the aroma and layers of coffee at different temperatures. Take a sip of iced coffee for its true flavor, then slowly pour the hot coffee into a white porcelain cup and savor the changes in flavor brought about by the temperature.

②

ITALIAN-STYLE COFFEE ❷

Espresso beans are blended with the best beans from different regions of Taiwan to showcase the sweet aftertaste of Taiwanese coffee. If you order a latte, there will be an extra-small cup of espresso for the customers to feel the thick and sweet aroma of the Taiwanese coffee beans. Moreover, San Formosan has also developed flavored coffees which allow customers to enjoy the aroma of roses or osmanthus.

WINE-STEAMED COFFEE ❸

Wine-steamed coffee is an exclusive product of San Formosan. The coffee beans are steamed with whiskey, rice wine, millet wine, Shaoxing wine (紹興酒), and vodka to replace the water in the beans with alcohol, imbuing the coffee beans with a special wine flavor. The coffee is then roasted at a high temperature to allow the alcohol to evaporate naturally, so the brewed coffee has the aroma of the wine but without any alcohol.

SAN FORMOSAN DADAOCHENG

ADD 1, Sec. 2, Yanping N. Rd., Datong Dist.
HOURS 12:00pm - 8:00pm

SAN FORMOSAN HUASHAN LAB

ADD 1, Sec. 1, Bade Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.
HOURS 11:00am - 5:00pm

SAN FORMOSAN FLAGSHIP STORE

ADD 133, Sec.1, Zhongshan N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist.
HOURS 11:00am - 8:00pm

07

07. Dishes provided in San Formosan are specially designed to match its coffee beverages.

A Carpenter's Love of Heritage Houses in Taipei

Author Elisa Cohen
Photographer Yenyi Lin, Smooth Worksite

Taipei is a city of many professions, where craftsmen and women from all walks of life work tirelessly to keep the city running. In the concrete jungle of Taipei lives a designer who actually started his career as a carpenter. In an old brick house that he personally remodeled, he promotes the warmth and romance of carpentry, while also encapsulating the handmade spirit of the many old houses tucked away in various corners of Taipei, which in turn embody local history and culture.

01

01. Though he might look tough on the outside, Chiang shows his true gentle nature when talking about his beloved old houses and carpentry.

02-03. Smooth Worksite is not only a carpentry classroom, but also an old house renovation project carried out by Chiang.

02

03

Opening a Dialogue Between White-Collar and Blue-Collar

Ming-chien Chiang (江鳴謙), dressed to the nines, leads us into the small paradise he has created. Smooth Worksite (什木工地) is a carpentry classroom located in an old red brick house on Zhongnan Street (中南街) in Nangang District, where various machines, wood and semi-finished products are neatly arranged. "I grew up watching carpenters go about their work and idolized them, so I always wanted to try it when I grew up!" recalls Chiang.

With his desire to work as a carpenter, Chiang decided to start as an apprentice and follow the traditional path of training as a craftsman, moving step by step to become a master, a general contractor, and finally a designer.

Later on, Chiang worked as a freelance designer, and occasionally brought interested customers to join him in his work. Inadvertently discovering he was good at teaching, he was encouraged to open a carpentry classroom. While interacting with the public, he realized that many people had no idea about the profession and skills of craftsmen, creating a gap between them.

"I wanted to bridge the gap between the 'people who do the work' and the 'people who commission the work!'" Chiang recollects, so he invited a variety of frontline craftsmen, including cement makers, ironworkers, and fragmented ceramic artisans, to give lectures, share their work, and exchange knowledge about craftsmanship.

Chiang notes that "Artisans rarely have a voice, and are often overlooked, so I wanted to provide a stage to stimulate more dialogue." As such, Smooth Worksite has become the place where craftsmen can express themselves and the public can ask questions to learn more about them.

The Work Behind the Workmanship

"Working in this field is actually very romantic," says Chiang. He reminisces that the life of a craftsman is always very regular, especially in Taipei, where all workers in the renovation and construction industry are scheduled to leave around 7:00 a.m. every day, arrive at the day's worksite, and start work at 8:00 a.m. sharp. At 4:30 p.m. on the dot, they start to finish the work at hand, and leave at 5:00 p.m. Afterward they go home and spend time with their families; an ordinary yet fulfilling daily routine.

As carpenters are usually the lead unit on a construction site, they need to integrate other types of work such as masonry and ironwork, which is why Chiang has become a designer. He explains that "The project site is like a kitchen; just as one would have different processes for pan-frying, deep-frying, and plating, there are different procedures for masonry, plumbing, and electrical work, each of which is a very involved process and occasionally collaborative. The designer is the one who integrates all the elements and optimizes the process to improve efficiency."

In addition to running his craftsman masterclasses, Chiang is a part-time teacher at Beitou Junior High School (北投國中) where he provides professional carpentry guidance once a week. Smooth Worksite has also become an off-campus classroom for many schools around Taipei, where pupils come to learn how to operate woodworking machines properly and safely, and learn about the many professional skills of carpentry.

04

05

The Appeal of Old Houses in Taipei

Thanks to his profession, Chiang has participated in many of Taipei's old residential renovation projects, by which he could appreciate the city from a historical and cultural perspective.

He introduces Zhongnan Street, where Smooth Worksite is located. "It is one of the first streets developed in Nangang," he says, "which used to be a track for handcars to pass through." In earlier times, coal and *Baozhong* tea (包種茶) from the mountains were transported along this track. The building of Smooth Worksite itself previously housed a tea shop for over 80 years.

Other old houses also tell the history of the street. Nearby, there are the old family residences of the Que (闕家古厝) and Zhou (周家古厝) clans. Moving toward Civic Boulevard (市民大道), the arched verandas of the shophouses appear.

POPOP Taipei, near Nangang Station (南港車站), is also a notable recent example of the renovation and reuse of old buildings, now serving as a venue for the Taipei Flea Market and Funtasty Bazaar. Even though Chiang did not take part in the construction, Smooth Worksite has been invited to move and expand the craftsman experience there.

Meanwhile, Chiang himself has joined the renovation of Feng Jen Pharmacy (豐仁藥局) on Ningbo West Street (寧波西街) in Zhongzheng District. He used wooden-framed glass windows and retro tabletop cabinets to create a nostalgic ambiance, evoking the warm human touch of an old community pharmacy. The project subsequently won the Silver Prize of the Taipei Old House Regeneration Awards (台北老屋新生大獎) in 2018.

"I've always loved old houses, and I like to use existing resources and materials to add my own style and endow a new value," notes Chiang, with unbridled enthusiasm about his love for old houses. He continues to participate in related renovation projects, including an old Southern Fujian-style house in Datong District, and the Tangbu Cultural Park (糖廍文化園區) in Wanhua District.

"I'm observing old houses every day when I go out!" says Chiang, who hopes to be more involved in promoting Taipei's old house culture, introducing local stories that seem to live within the old bricks and tiles. He also hopes to link up with master craftsmen who have professional skills in their respective fields, thus allowing more people to learn about the wisdom of craftsmanship and the warmth of old houses, and of course, to explore the old-school soul of Taipei.

06

04. Chiang demonstrates some basic carpentry skills, telling how the profession requires attention to every little detail.

05. Smooth Worksite sometimes turns into an off-campus classroom, providing classes on the basic knowledge of carpentry. (Photo/Smooth Worksite)

06. Feng Jen Pharmacy encapsulates the charming rusticity of an old Taipei building. (Photo/Smooth Worksite)

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