



WINTER 2022

## The City of Light

### COVER STORY

After 23 Years, Home at Last!  
The Taiwan Lantern Festival in Taipei

# TAI PEI 北

# TAI PEI 台北

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EDITOR'S  
INTRODUCTION

# THE CITY OF LIGHT



Winter is a busy season in Taipei, with the city's major events easily filling up people's calendars. In the spirit of these festive times, all of these happenings are imbued either with illuminated decorations or alluring lights.

We begin with our cover story, focusing on the 2023 Taiwan Lantern Festival in Taipei themed "Light Up the Future." As Taipei's first major international event in 2023, the festival's significance is undeniable as the city welcomes back tourism and international exchanges.

While the Taiwan Lantern Festival adds a luminous winter vibe, this issue also introduces six beautiful city and outdoor night scenes in Taipei as we delve further into the theme of "light."

Bald cypresses are a beautiful part of the winter scenery. We have selected the best places for bald cypress-viewing that can be reached via public transportation within Taipei City as weekend destinations.

It should also go without saying that Taipei is a creative city! Taiwanese designer Apu Jan shares with us the development and status of the fashion scene in Taipei from a cultural point of view. And two music shops that have contributed to the music renaissance movement uncover the reasons behind their preference for audio cassettes and CDs rather than digital music.

Taipei is taking big strides toward becoming green. We'll look at the city government's efforts to pursue environmental sustainability, and also introduce an innovative zero-waste shop, "San Shi Living Lab," that has been promoting packaging-free and plastics reduction for years.

We will also introduce selected restaurants from the 2022 Michelin Bib Gourmand Award list for Taipei and late-night restaurants in the districts where the Lantern Festival's main exhibitions are located.

Lastly, we invite Japanese editor/reporter Yaeko Kondo, a long-time resident of Taipei, to speak about the reasons why she loves living in this capital city.

This winter issue brings together a variety of "light" in different fields, and each article shines with its own color.

## ⚠ COVID-19 ALERT

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# TAIPEI 台北

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(Photo/Yuskay Huang)

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WINTER 2022

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# *After 23 Years, Home at Last!* The Taiwan Lantern Festival in Taipei

**Author** Rick Charette

**Photographer** Taipei City Government, Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government, Chih Wei Huang, Taiwan Scene

The nights of Taipei will be ablaze with festive light from February 5<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, with the staging of the Taiwan Lantern Festival in Taipei (台灣燈會在台北). This will be the first major international tourism event of the 2023 calendar, attracting revellers from all around Taiwan and the globe, and also one of the first international extravaganzas to hit the stage since Taiwan's easing of COVID border restrictions in October. Taipei was the venue for the Taiwan Lantern Festival from its first edition in 1990 up to 2000. Starting from 2001, it has been touring the country, and is at last returning to its birthplace.

Among Taiwan's largest Lantern Festival celebrations, the event in 2023 will be combined with the city's annual Taipei Lantern Festival (台北燈節), with hundreds of thousands of revellers expected. The central government's Taiwan Tourism Bureau (交通部觀光局) and the Taipei City Government (台北市政府) have joined forces as co-hosts, with many private sector enterprises also cooperating. The attractions will be concentrated in the posh East District (東區) and Xinyi District (信義區), and will include four major lantern display zones with over 300 lantern installation works, as well as the main theme lantern with six other major theme lanterns, spread out over a total area of 168 hectares. In addition, smaller lantern-display zones will be set up across all 12 of the city's administrative districts, making the Lantern Festival and the cityscape seamlessly integrated.

01. Xinyi Commercial District is themed "Lights of the Future" and the illumination paints Taipei 101 into a new shiny face.

01





02

**02-03.** Local residents and tourists alike can also visit the annual Taipei Lantern Festival to appreciate the traditional crafted lanterns. (Photo/Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government)

## Festival Origins and History

The annual Lantern Festival, which falls on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> lunar month, is an ancient celebration that brings the traditional Lunar New Year holidays to a close. Prior to 1990, the scale of celebrations was relatively small, primarily centered around local temples. Exceptions included the Yanshui Beehive Fireworks Festival (鹽水蜂炮) in Taiwan's south and Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival (平溪天燈節) in the north. Both of these are now the centerpieces of larger-scale festivals.

In 1990 the Taiwan Tourism Bureau decided to create a large-scale Lantern Festival party spread over many days. It was held in Taipei, with the grounds of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (中正紀念堂) as venue. There were three goals: to promote traditional folk culture domestically, to showcase Taiwan culture internationally, and to create a must-see spectacle that would revitalize the commercial energy of the chosen venue by attracting great numbers of tourists from both around the country and the globe.



03

Since the year 2001, in the hope to pass down the experiences of large-scale events across Taiwan, coupled with the aim to vitalize local economy, different host locations have been chosen each year. In the meantime, the Taipei City Government has continued with its own large-scale international event, the annual Taipei Lantern Festival.

Each edition of the Taiwan Lantern Festival features a central display and entertainment area with the large-scale main theme lantern, a number of smaller theme-lantern areas with works crafted by both local and international artists, and a rich program of live entertainment, from musical groups to traditional-culture performance troupes to buskers. The main theme lantern is based on the Chinese zodiac animal for the year, with 2023 being the Year of the Rabbit.

# “Light Up the Future” – An “Urban-Style Lantern Festival”

Whereas over the years other host cities have staged their events in a large block of open land, the 2023 party will be an “urban-style Lantern Festival” held right in the city’s busy, densely-populated heart, integrating the Eastern Shopping District (東區商圈) and Xinyi Commercial District (信義商圈) along the Taipei Metro network, incorporating such iconic tourist attractions as National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (國父紀念館), Songshan Cultural and Creative Park (松山文創園區), and Taipei 101 (台北101) into one giant party stage. The diversified artworks will be scattered amongst the high-rise buildings with light fleeting between the city’s alleys.

The official theme is “Light Up the Future.” According to the event organizers, Light(ing) Up the Future is the Taiwan Lantern Festival, which originated in Taipei. As the first full moon of the Lunar New Year is being welcomed, this full moon ride is believed to carry the hopes and dreams of our future. With Taipei and the world now emerging from the COVID darkness, the festival will light up the world with a breakthrough attitude, with innovative displays created by combining traditional lantern art with the latest in lighting technology.

The key visual for the 2023 Taiwan Lantern Festival is a super-sized moon-like orb that lights up the city. The

rounded shape of the wide Taipei Basin in which the city of Taipei is nestled, was the base inspiration for the orb design. It is engraved with a stylized Taipei City streetscape. Just as the staging of the festival brings together a massive glowing collection of lantern lights into a singular whole, every household spread through the basin contributes its own light of hope. The rising glowing sphere emits a warm, embracing radiance, symbolizing the first full moon of the newborn year, blanketing the entire city with an ethereal beauty.

The visual was designed by Kim Chen (陳青琳), founder and creative director of Taipei’s Depth Design (深度設計), who says, “The orb’s flowing radiance illuminates the land and nourishes everyone. Hope does not happen out of thin air, but is born through the joint efforts of everyone who lives on the land.”

## 2023 TAIWAN LANTERN FESTIVAL IN TAIPEI

### EVENT DATES

**Trial Operation** February 1 to February 4, 2023  
**Official Operation** February 5 to February 19, 2023 (15 days)

### EVENT TIME

**Lanterns Lit** 5:00pm - 10:00pm (Daily)  
**Monday to Thursday** 2:00pm - 10:00pm  
**Friday to Sunday** 10:00am - 10:00pm



04

04. The key visual of 2023 Taiwan Lantern Festival in Taipei.

05. The Eastern Shopping District, usually filled with lots of people and traffic, is one of the main exhibition centers of the 2023 Lantern Festival. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)





Taiwan Scene 05

## Major Display Zones

The four major display zones are the Beacons of Light Display Zone (光展區), Fount of Light Display Zone (源展區), Lights of the Future Display Zone (未來展區), and the Central Display Zone (中央展區).

The **Beacons of Light Display Zone** is in the ultra-modern Eastern Shopping District. It extends along Zhongxiao East Road (忠孝東路) between MRT Stations Zhongxiao Fuxing (捷運忠孝復興站) and Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall (捷運國父紀念館站), on the Bannan Line (板南線, Blue Line). Here, the urban grid will itself be the display stage, with creative lantern works installed

in the lanes and alleys, all around the district. Such the display stage will also be extended to many stores in this district, as businesses in the district will be adding to the visual pageantry by bringing festive art to their premises for revellers to enjoy. Some artists will be invited to tailor lighting decorations for these stores according to their types of business, space and ideas.

To echo the fact that the Eastern Shopping District leads Taipei to the forefront of innovation, the Beacons of Light in this display zone unveils the city with light and works that reinterpret the pride of Taiwan, as well as the light of Taiwan and Taipei from the past to the present that has been felt.

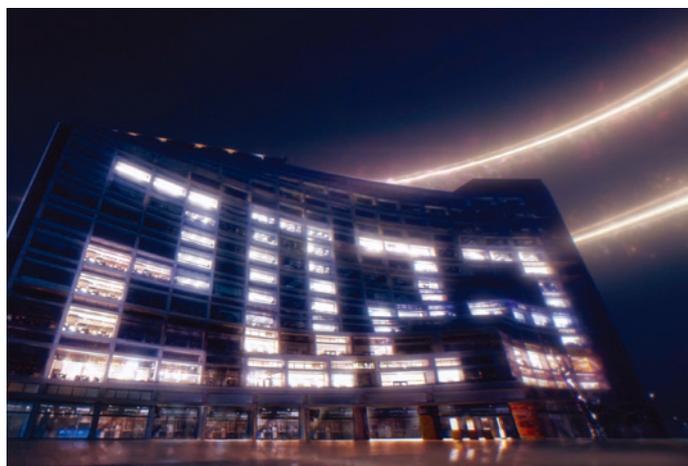


06

(Photo/Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government)

The **Fount of Light Display Zone** is located within Songshan Cultural and Creative Park. This attraction is directly across Zhongxiao East Road from National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, and is accessed using the same Taipei Metro stations. Since Songshan Cultural and Creative Park has more than a century of history and is imbued with renovated tobacco factory heritage structures which date back to the 1930s, this display zone is designed to be a fusion showcase of old and new, providing visitors with a buffet-style experience of the diverse cultures that make up the Taipei mosaic.

The city of Taipei was founded in the 1880s, with its oldest neighborhoods settled much earlier. A special focus for the Taiwan Lantern Festival organizers is how the city's people embrace diverse cultures from all over the world and how, building on this cultural collage, Taipei has become a source of cultural innovation that bring people rich stories and connotations. The Fount of Light is located in this field of fusion of the old and new, and everyone is invited to leap into this source of innovation, allowing the works to lead us to experience the diversity and harmony of Taipei.



07

**06-07.** Songshan Cultural and Creative Park is another main spot in the 2023 Lantern Festival, and there will be more must-sees than ever before, filling visitors with a sense of anticipation.



08

(Photo/Chih Wei Huang)

The **Lights of the Future Display Zone** is located within the Xinyi Commercial District. The area is served by the Taipei Metro's Taipei City Hall Station (捷運市政府站) on the Bannan Line and the Taipei 101/World Trade Center Station (捷運台北101/世貿站) on the Tamsui-Xinyi Line (淡水信義線, Red Line). A highlight of this area will be 44 South Village (四四南村). This is a former military dependents' village that was saved and has been transformed into a chic modern-facing cultural-creative hub — a quintessential “old-meets-new” city project symbolizing the Taipei City sustainable future.

The Lights of the Future Stage for live performances will be in the Xiangti Avenue Plaza (香堤大道廣場). There will be a daily program, featuring musical groups, performance troupes, and other talents.

**08.** Xiangti Avenue Plaza in Xinyi Commercial District is a place for various kinds of performances during the 2023 Lantern Festival.

**09.** Many artists are invited to craft light illuminations with futuristic designs during the festival.

The Xinyi area is well known as the most international and fashionable business district in Taiwan, bringing together major international brands and enterprise groups. In this area, the sleek buildings themselves will be transformed into giant works of art, showcasing Taipei's leading-edge fashionable culture and digital technology. The Lights of the Future transports us into the moment of the most luminous Taipei, and the future of Taiwan is created by Taipei.



09

The venues for the **Central Display Zone** are the park area of National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall and the nearby plaza in front of Taipei City Hall. The former is beside the MRT Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall Station, the latter a short walk from MRT Taipei City Hall Station, both on the Bannan Line.

On display here will include light stands, the main Year of the Rabbit theme lantern and three of the other major themed lantern works, and this will also be the site for a number of themed lighting display zones. The memorial hall building itself will be magically transformed into what is being called the "Ultimate Classical Lantern (最經典的燈)." The main feature of this area is to combine traditional lantern art with modern high-tech 3D mapping multimedia technology to create a coruscating, sumptuous lighting zone.

The Main Stage for live performances will be at the memorial hall. There will be a daily program, featuring singers, musical groups, and performance troupes.

**10.** National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, in the heart of Taipei City, will also be decorated with splendid illuminations. (Photo/Chih Wei Huang)

**11.** The pioneering event's lighting decoration "Future Tree" transforms the Songshou Square (松壽廣場) in Xinyi Commercial District into the entrance of future Taipei, and here is a place where people make their new year's wishes. (Photo/Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government)



► For more latest travel information, please visit "Taipei Travel Net."





11

## Wintertime Lead-In Events

A duo of large-scale Taipei annual wintertime Christmas season events have been used as lead-in celebrations to get people primed for the Taiwan Lantern Festival.

2022 #Taipei Xmas (2022 繽紛耶誕玩台北), which starts from November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 and finishes on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, is spread over the city's many large department stores and a number of major commercial areas, including the Eastern Shopping District. Shopping revellers roam the various venues following a stamp map, the venues featuring live entertainment and festooned with Christmas lighting decorations. Over 60 Christmas check-in points have been created.

The 2023 Taipei New Year's Eve Party (台北最高新年城-2023 跨年晚會), a grand countdown party ringing

in the new year, is held on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, drawing revellers in their hundreds of thousands from Taiwan and abroad. This was designed as a "once in a lifetime Asia" spectacle, with a phantasmagoria of lights put up around Taipei City Hall to transform Taipei into the "Highest New Year City," a massive six-hour party through the evening with popular local and international singers and bands performing on stage, and the tremendous Taipei 101 fireworks show at midnight.

Both of these celebrations are also major lighting-art showcases, and will set the stage for the February high-tech lighting fantasia. Note that despite the official event name, there are also follow-on party events from January 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup>. 

# *City of Light:* Six Night Scenes in Taipei

**Author** Jenna Lynn Cody

**Photographer** Yuskay Huang, Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government, Taiwan Scene

Every winter, Taipei decks itself in golden light for two separate yet equally spectacular celebrations: the Lunar New Year and the Lantern Festival. Especially during the Lantern Festival, many stunning illuminations and alluring light installations can be spotted on the streets, adding a unique and lively atmosphere to Taipei's nights.

Taipei's, famous for staying up late for food and drink, will also go out of their way to enjoy glittering night views from one of the city's many scenic spots, and there are indeed a plethora to choose from. Taipei may be in a natural basin bisected by rivers, but it's also surrounded by mountains and dotted with hills.

You don't need to climb a mountain to enjoy Taipei's nighttime views, however. Lively street scenes in the city's many shopping districts and quietly lit historic sites provide the chance to stay out late and enjoy the city after dark. Whether you want to stay downtown and shop, eat and look at beautiful architecture or head up to one of the many observation decks in the mountains around Taipei for an unparalleled night panorama, there's always a reason to stay out a little longer. As such, we've curated six of Taipei's top spots for enjoying the city at night, from urban delights to quiet semi-rural spots that can be reached after the sun goes down.

01

(Photo/Taiwan Scene)





## The City at Night

Although Paris is the original “City of Light,” Taipei has plenty of night scenes to compete for the title. You don’t need to go to the top of a building or head up a mountain road to enjoy Taipei after dark; vibrant street life and historic sites open after sunset offer plenty of opportunities to enjoy the city.



(Photo/Yuskay Huang)



(Photo/Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government)



## Xinzhongshan Linear Park

心中山線形公園

Originally the path of a railway line crossing Taipei, the long park that connects MRT Stations Zhongshan (捷運中山站) and Shuanglian (捷運雙連站) is packed with families, shoppers and cafe-goers during the day.

Xinzhongshan Linear Park is also a great choice to take a walk in the evening. There are often various kinds of lights and art installations on display that brighten the city according to the calendar, such as the shining decorations of Christmas during the holiday season that paint Taipei with a rich, eventful palette. During Christmas time, Xinzhongshan Linear Park will be decorated with a 10 meters tall Christmas tree. There will be more people than usual for it and it is a famous, winter limited check-in spot.

At night, chic shops lining the park and nestled in the alleyways that branch off shine like gems, lighting up the city nightscape and reflecting Taipei’s characteristically vibrant feel.

In sum, the lights here create the entrances that lead you to a dreamy, romantic experience while wandering between the eye-catching decorations and exquisite shops that will surely make your daily life into a fantastic fairytale.

**01-03.** There are often various kinds of light and art installations on display in Xinzhongshan Linear Park that brighten up the night sky with a dreamy, romantic vibe.

**04.** Many boutique shops and restaurants on both sides of Xinzhongshan Linear Park have alluring signboards. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

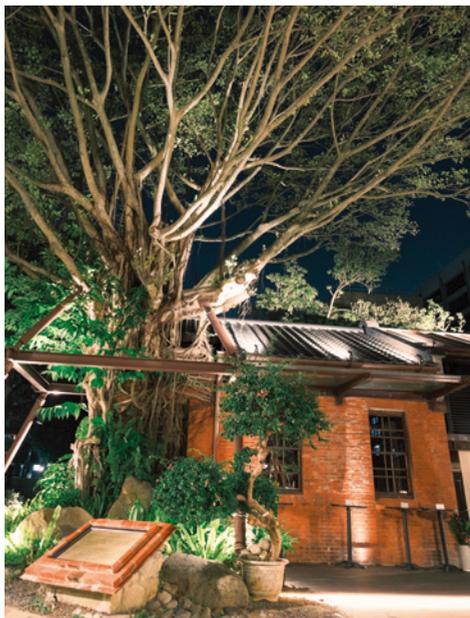
## Rongjin Gorgeous Time

榕錦時光生活園區

The neighborhoods around MRT Dongmen Station (捷運東門站) are filled with Japanese buildings once left to the elements, many of which are now undergoing renovations under the guidance of the Taipei City Government. Near the Jinshan South Road (金山南路) and Jinhua Street (金華街) intersection, a complex of buildings constructed in the Japanese colonial era (1895-1945) has been turned into a long walkway of old architecture, ancient trees and romantic lighting.

Originally built in 1905, the complex acted as a dormitory for government workers in the nearby Taipei Prison (台北刑務所). It was renovated as part of the Old House Cultural Movement Plan (老房子文化運動計畫) through the Taipei City Department of Cultural Affairs (台北市文化局), and recently opened to the public.

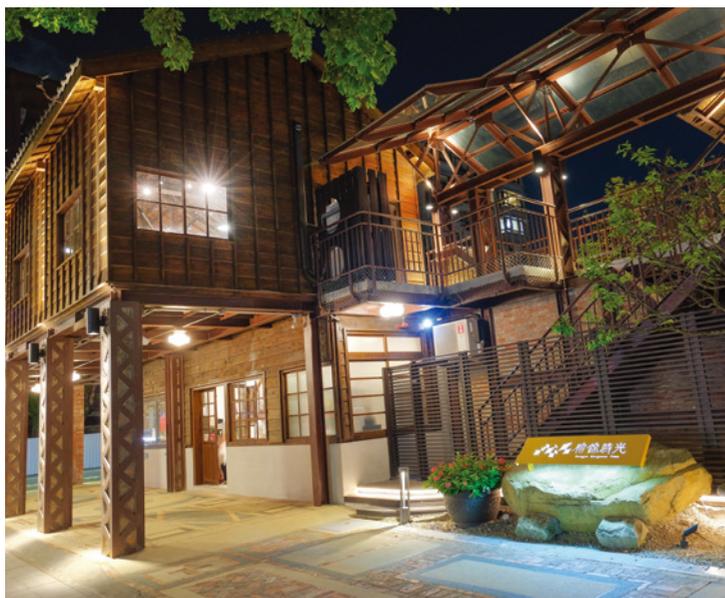
After sunset, the interplay of natural elements such as trees and stone with softly-lit traditional Japanese architecture make for a pleasant stroll to enjoy the evening air or snap photographs. The buildings themselves house cafes — one of which is pet-friendly — restaurants and shops. These include several Japanese restaurants and cafes such as Kyushu



05

Pancake's Waffle (九州鬆餅瓦芙) and Jin Jin Ding (金錦町), famous for its gold-foil topped honey cakes.

Not only is walking down the long outdoor path a bit like falling back in time, but the renovation of these buildings imbued with a history into a gorgeous leisure spot shows how far Taiwan has come in modern times.



06

**05-06.** The night view of Rongjin Gorgeous Time is absolutely fabulous, and it offers a peaceful place for people to take a stroll.



07

## Taipei Confucius Temple

台北市孔廟

In Taipei, most temples close soon after dark. Confucius Temple, however, stays open until 9:00 p.m. most nights, and takes on a very different feel at night than during the day.

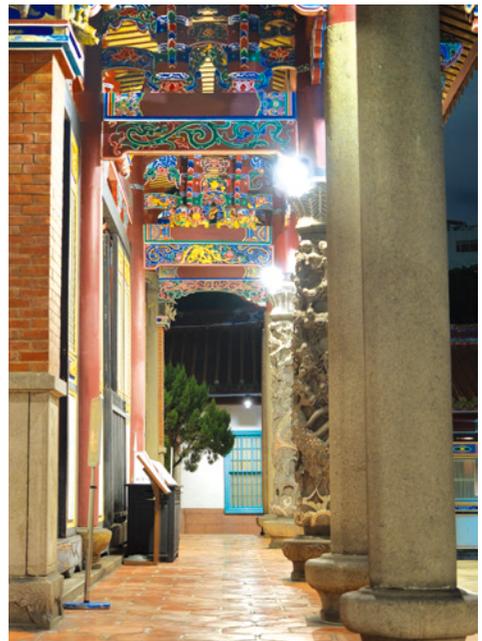
The temple was built in 1879, then destroyed and later rebuilt in 1930, although Confucian rituals were replaced by traditional Shinto ritual music until 1945. Before being restored to a fully functioning temple, it briefly housed the Examination Yuan (考試院) as well.

The temple's architecture is appropriately austere, as are most temples dedicated to Confucius. However, the Taipei temple is the only one in Taiwan festooned with ceramic decorations in the style of southern Fujian, despite being modeled after the Confucius Temple in Qufu, Shandong, China.

At night, the temple lights up so as to highlight the decor. It's said that the simple lines with fine ornamentation look more magnificent at night than by day, with the crimson, gold and cobalt blue of the temple's color scheme given a chance to shine under the spotlights and lanterns.

**07-08.** An unexpected place to enjoy at night is Taipei Confucius Temple. When the temple lights up, it exhibits a different look than it does during the day.

08



## Outdoor Light

Taipei's unique geography makes it possible to enjoy night views from any number of scenic overlooks and pavilions dotted along the hills encircling the city. From Hushan (虎山, Tiger Mountain) in the east to Beitou (北投) in the north and Maokong (貓空) in the south, there's always an option nearby. Featured here are three options that are reachable at night via public transportation, short drives or walks.

09





10

## Hushan Peak Observation Deck

### 虎山峰觀景台

The views of eastern Taipei from Xiangshan (象山, Elephant Mountain) are well-known. It can get crowded at the end of the steep hike, especially at sunset. Just a little further down the road, however, is the observation deck on Hushan, with views to rival Xiangshan day or night.

Hushan also boasts a somewhat more relaxed ascent than Xiangshan; the slopes are gentler, and the trailhead can be reached fairly quickly by bus, leaving an easier hike to fantastic panoramas of Xinyi District. It's also reachable via MRT Houshanpi Station (捷運後山埤站), albeit with a longer walk.

Whether you're after a glittering night view of Taipei 101 or a look at Taipei on a clear day, this outdoor spot offers a better chance at an uncrowded view and is easier on your knees. The Hushan Peak Observation Deck is quite easily reachable at night. While you probably won't be alone if you come up here on New Year's Eve or during other fireworks displays, you likely won't have to jostle as much for a prime view.

**09-10.** Many photography enthusiasts come to Hushan Peak Observation Deck to shoot the night views of Taipei City.

## Beitou Four Seasons Corridor Observation Deck

北投四季長廊觀景台

This scenic overlook in the north of Taipei is a treat! The Four Seasons Corridor Observation Deck is along a road and reachable by car or bicycle, or via the S6 bus from MRT Beitou Station (捷運北投站).

Although the area is home to a maze of mountain trails, the Four Seasons Pavilion is one of the best spots to enjoy the unbeatable night view. You don't have to

hike up any dark roads or trails to get here. Once here, you can feast your senses on the cooler mountain air and filtered light across Taipei Basin and the Guandu Plain (關渡平原), with views of the Tamsui River (淡水河) and the city beyond. Come at night to see Taipei glittering beneath you, or during the day in the right season to enjoy pink cherry blossoms up the mountain and at the nearby Wu Family Ancestral Hall (吳氏宗祠).

**11.** The night view from the Beitou Four Seasons Corridor Observation Deck is magnificent, and the luminous road below resembles the Milky Way.

11





12

**12.** At night, Zhangshan Temple is quiet, so you can enjoy the night view of Taipei without a single disturbance.

## Maokong Zhangshan Temple

貓空樟山寺

Near Maokong Station (貓空站), the last and uppermost station on the Maokong Gondola (貓空纜車), the Zhangshu Trail (樟樹步道) offers an easy, family-friendly hike on a stone-paved walking trail with fantastic views. Taking the trail, you'll come to Zhangshan Temple, which offers commanding views across Taipei to rival the Maokong Gondola itself. From here, you can see all the way to Dadaocheng (大稻埕) on the other side of the city, and further still along the Tamsui River to Guanyinshan (觀音山, Guanyin Mountain). On a very clear day, you might even glimpse the ocean just beyond Tamsui.

The temple itself was built in 1931, but has been renovated since. It's a Buddhist temple dedicated to Guanyin, housing a stone which is rumored to perform miracles. What many don't know is that you can also walk this trail at night — be careful as it can be a little uneven — for unbeatable night views of Taipei laid out like a carpet of light below you.

Nearby, enjoy tea and a meal at any one of the neighboring teahouses; Maokong has many to choose from. The Maokong Gondola and several bus routes run along the mountain after dark, making the night view accessible and Zhangshan Temple easy to reach. 



01

## *Six of the Best Weekend Viewing Spots:* **Wintertime Bald Cypress Artwork**

**Author** Rick Charette

**Photographer** Yuskay Huang, Parks and Street Lights Office, Geotechnical Engineering Office, Public Works Department, Metro Taipei

People in Taiwan have developed a passion for the bald cypress over the last decade or so. These elegant trees, which grow tall and comparatively thin, turn russet red, golden yellow, and tawny brown in late November/December, and sometimes can hold on to their colors into March according to weather and climate conditions. Over the pages to come we'll take you on a quick-tour of some of Taipei's prime destinations for breezy weekend outings, all easily accessed via public transportation.

In recent times local authorities, looking for a pretty decorative plant to cultivate in abundance that would add dynamic splashes of changing color to tourist landscapes, have found that the bald cypress — which hails from the southeastern United States and is also called the swamp cypress — handles Taiwan's lower-elevation heat, humidity, and oft-wet conditions superbly. It now graces parks, roadsides, tourist-railway-sides, riversides, trailsides, and other travel destinations all around this fecund land.

## Lishan Park 麗山公園

**Transport** S12 bus from MRT Kunyang Station, Bannan Line

Also called “Lishan Farmers’ Square (麗山農民廣場)”, this is in the quiet and comparatively sparsely populated Nangangshan (南港山, Mt. Nangang) area just southwest of Academia Sinica (中央研究院). The thickly forested small park is heavy with bald cypresses, found all around the roadside square and along the

meandering stream-side pathways. The roadside stone-paved square has attractive Japanese-style rest pavilions. Further inside, the most-photographed spot is two side-by-side heart-shaped stream crossings made of stones, arched bridge behind, with bald cypresses all about.

## Lengshuikeng Trail 冷水坑步道

**Transport** S15 bus from MRT Jiantan Station, Tamsui-Xinyi Line

The bald cypress can also handle low-mountain conditions, as evidenced by its stately presence along Yangmingshan National Park’s (陽明山國家公園) Lengshuikeng Trail. “Lengshuikeng (冷水坑)”, literally “cold water craters/pits,” is an area complete with natural hot springs, a free public hot-spring bathhouse, waterfalls, hiking trails, wildlife, and a visitor center. Why “cold water”? Because compared to the surrounding hot springs, these are Yangmingshan’s (Mt. Yangming) coolest hot-spring waters, about 40 degrees Centigrade.

The bald cypress can be found right next to the visitor center and spread out along both sides at the entrance of the trail. The Lengshuikeng area sits right against the base of mighty Qixingshan (七星山, Mt. Qixing), Yangmingshan’s tallest mountain. When the weather turns cold, shutterbugs love capturing the colorful bald cypresses with the swaying silvergrass of the mountain’s steep slopes as background, especially in the early mornings when there’s a frost coating.



02

**01.** The leaves of the bald cypress in Lishan Park change color from light green to reddish brown, creating a romantic atmosphere. (Photo/ Geotechnical Engineering Office, Public Works Department)

**02.** The bald cypresses on Lengshuikeng Trail have become a popular site in recent years, owing to their beautiful and Insta-worthy yellow foliage. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

## Dahu Park 大湖公園

**Transport** MRT Dahu Park Station, Wenhu Line

This large landscaped park is Neihu District's most iconic scenic attraction. A densely populated flatlands area is laid out along the base of the city's northeast-side mountains, and Dahu Park sits at the innermost end of a basin formed by a mountain spur. The trailheads of a number of popular hill-hiking trails begin just outside the park grounds.

"*Dahu* (大湖)" means "big lake," referencing the park's expansive 13-hectare mirror-like centerpiece. "*Neihu* (內湖)" means "inner lake," referencing the lake's basin-head position. Bald cypresses are found in stands along the water's edge and elsewhere around the grassy grounds. Over the water itself are the park's most camera-captured beauties, each built in ancient Chinese imperial style: a long arched bridge named Moon Bridge (錦帶橋) that crosses the lake, and a zigzag bridge that ends out in the middle at rest pavilions with bright-red pillars and golden-yellow ceramic-tile roofs. Avian beauties in abundance also add splashes of color on the still waters, notably egrets aplenty.



03

The park is always busy on weekends, with picnickers, fishermen, and folks strolling the scenic pathways for exercise or romance. If you visit here in autumn or winter, you will see the beautiful bald cypresses mainly distributed in three parts of the park such as the grassland area, the playground and in front of the Moon Bridge.

**03-04.** Dahu Park has a different look depending on the season, and colorful bald cypresses can be spotted here in winter. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

04





05

## Indigenous People's Park 原住民文化主題公園

 **Transport** 255 shuttle, 815, S18, or S19 bus from MRT Shilin Station, Tamsui-Xinyi Line

Across the street from this park in Shilin District is the Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines (順益台灣原住民博物館). Beside it is the famed National Palace Museum (國立故宮博物院). Sitting in a narrow river valley, the north-side backdrop for the park and the museum is the mighty Yangmingshan massif.

Moving from the street to mountain base, the grassy park has a long, roughly hourglass shape. A paved-pathway corridor runs the length of the grounds, bringing visitors past artworks and information signage that provide understanding of Taiwan's indigenous cultures — most dramatically, large sculptures of a warrior showing traditional headgear and facial tattoo, the antlered deer sacred to some tribes, and a line of bas-reliefs displaying figures from different tribes in traditional attire.

**05-06.** As an iconic scene of winter, the bald cypresses in Indigenous People's Park attract a rush of visitors. (Photo/Parks and Street Lights Office, Public Works Department)

In the back section is a compact, serene lake. This is where the bald cypresses are concentrated. A thin line of young cypresses runs along one side by the pathway, and at the lake's rear is a thick stand of older, taller trees in two staggered rows crowding the water's edge, with a dark-stain wooden viewing pavilion beside. This is the most photographed spot — trees and pavilion reflected in the still water, mountain base as backdrop. The scene is at its most lovely when the colored cypress needles begin to fall and dapple the lake's surface.



06



07

## Guizikeng Soil and Water Conservation Education Park

貴子坑水土保持教學園區



**Transport** 216, 218, or 602 bus from MRT Xinbeitou Station on Xinbeitou Branch Line; bus stop across from station on Zhonghe St. (中和街); 15 min slight uphill walk after disembarking

This small, verdant park is in a shallow valley at the base of the Yangmingshan massif in Taipei's northwest, in Beitou District. Long mined for sandstone and clay, the denuded valley was prone to landslides and caused flooding on the flatlands below. Since the 1980s it has been a showcase for soil and water conservation, using plant maintenance and grid-type slope protection. Educational sessions are regularly held, and there is abundant explanatory signage and demonstration facilities, with good English.

In the park's middle is the small, exceedingly pretty Valentine Lake (情人湖), busily populated with herons, egrets, turtles, and other water-loving denizens. This is where the majority of the bald cypresses are found, standing tall and thin by waterside, mixed among a compellingly pretty selection of other landscape trees. There's also a line of significantly taller and thicker cypresses at the park's rear (upper end). As you look up-valley across the lake, adding greatly to the scenic drama is a massive bare-rock cliff looming over the park. This is the Taipei region's oldest exposed geological formation. A boardwalk trail brings you right to its edge.

# Fuxinggang Bald Cypress Trail 復興崗落羽松步道

**Transport** MRT Fuxinggang Station, Tamsui-Xinyi Line

This short urban trail, just a few hundred meters long, starts immediately past the east end of this Beitou District metro station beside a YouBike (微笑單車) bike-rental station; turn right after going out Exit 1. It is in a narrow corridor between the metro line and MRT Beitou Depot (捷運北投機廠) works on one side and the tiny backyard plots of old, low-rise residential buildings on the other. The path is a mix of low-raised boardwalk and ground-level pavement. The close-planted bald cypresses line both sides in some sections, trees intersecting and forming a tunnel effect, just one side in other very narrow corridor sections. Decorative bushes and flowers planted in quantity fill out the painter's canvas.

In two long sections, parallel to the pathway, artistic faux railway tracks have been created using wooden rail sleepers overlaid lengthwise with flat metal runners, concrete blocks laid between the sleepers as filler.

Cicada-song is frequent. The setting is especially richly hued and textured at sunset, when the reddening sun is allowed long, unfettered access over the open depot yards and the cypresses are set aglow. 



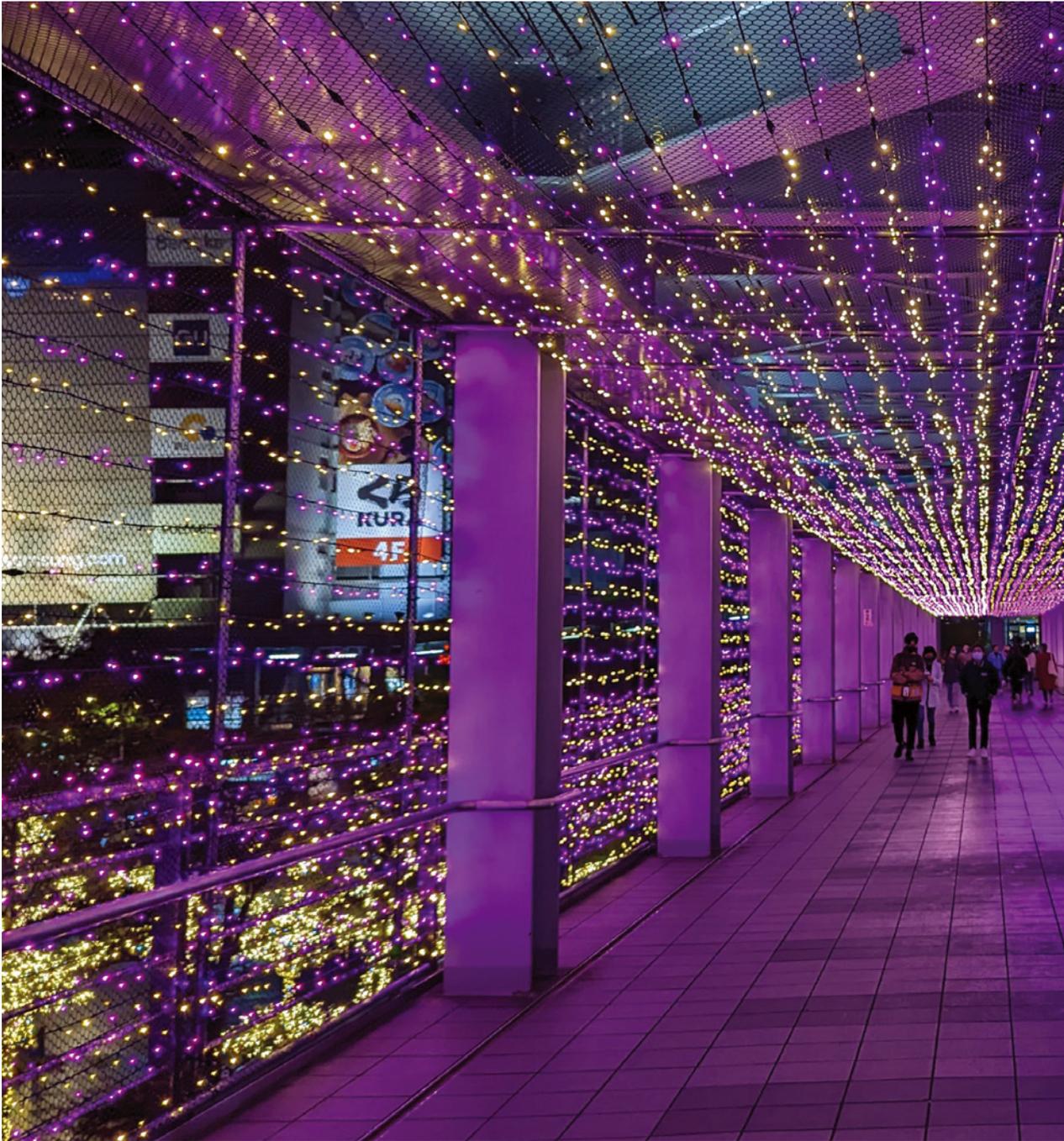
08



09

**07.** The bald cypresses which surround Valentine Lake create different moods as their color changes from season to season. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

**08-09.** The Fuxinggang Bald Cypress Trail is like a secret pathway. When the bald cypresses turn golden yellow and tawny brown, it seems to declare that winter is coming. (Photo/Metro Taipei)



During Christmas season, Xinyi Commercial District is usually decorated with illuminations imbued with a romantic, fairytale-like atmosphere.  
@ Xinyi Commercial District



© Chih Wei Huang

# Stories and Emotions Depicted Through Clothes

**Author** Tina Ting, Kerstin Hsu  
**Photographer** Wei Wen Chen, APUJAN

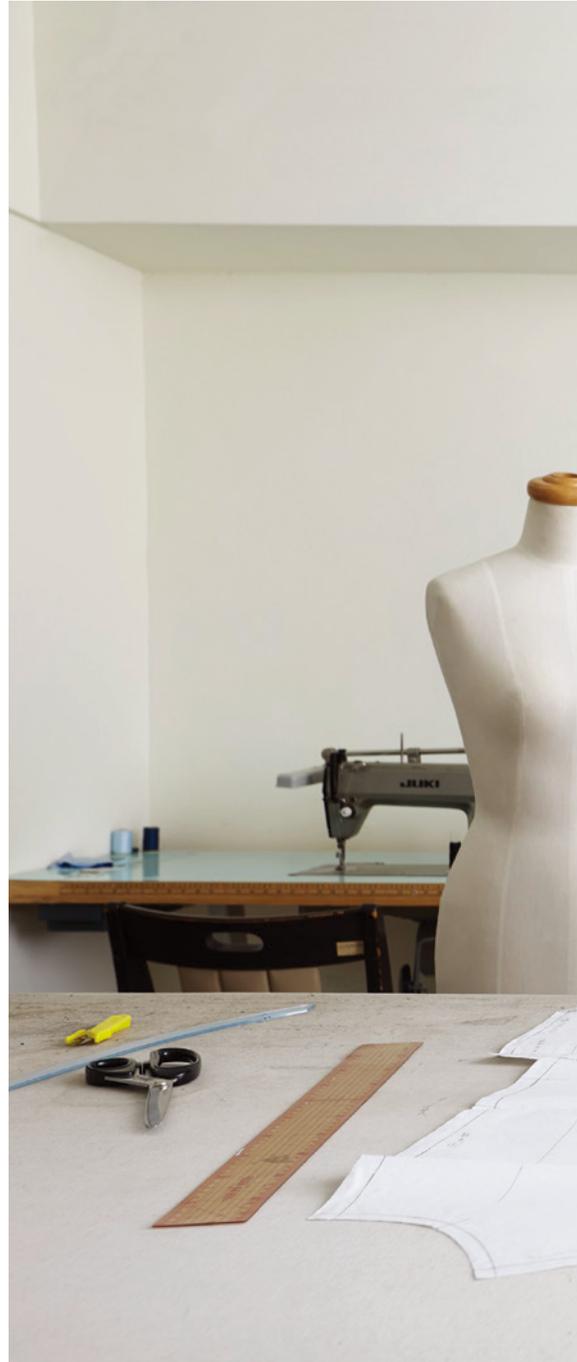
Taiwan's creative industries have been booming in the past decade or so. In 2018, Taipei launched the first "Taipei Fashion Week (台北時裝週)", which not only promotes the development of Taiwan's apparel industry and nurtures more young talent, but also forces locals to pay more attention to the profession of "fashion designer" and Taiwanese fashion brands. In recent years, Apu Jan (詹朴) has become one of the most notable names in the Taiwanese and international fashion industries.

Debuting at London Fashion Week 2013, at the age of 26, fashion designer Apu Jan has been revealing memorable collections from Taipei and London ever since. What's more, he is undoubtedly the most active and versatile designer around. In addition to his eponymous label APUJAN, Jan has also designed in-flight loungewear for the Taiwanese international airline Eva Air (長榮航空), costumes for the Taiwan-based modern dance group Cloud Gate (雲門舞集), stage outfits for the Taiwanese indie band Sodagreen (蘇打綠), and uniforms for the well-known Taiwanese bakery Wu Pao Chun (吳寶春麥方店).

In the creative process, Jan begins with crafting the story's theme. It can be fantastical or mysterious in nature, but no matter what, the story is told through the interweaving of his clothes and the external ambiance in any given industry or environment.

Which is to say that storytelling is Jan's strength. He is an avid reader with extensive literary knowledge. As such, during the design process for each collection, Jan would share a book list with his colleagues as the season's thematic inspiration.

**01.** Apu Jan is one of the most notable names in the Taiwanese fashion industry, and is also considered one of the best bespoke gown designers in Asia as per *Tatler* magazine. (Photo/Wei Wen Chen)



01



## Beyond Fashion Designs

Even the COVID-19 pandemic did not slow Jan down. Though fashion shows came to a halt during the outbreak, he used the trying times to create a digital show in the form of a micro-movie to represent the collection's concept. The digital show portrayed a world of fantasy, illusions, and textile aesthetics.

In addition, his various cross-disciplinary collaborations, including dessert packaging for Kuo Yuan Ye (郭元益), designing visual concepts for the Kaohsiung Reading Festival 2022 (高雄城市書展), food packaging for McDonald's, pet clothing, and on-going jersey designs for the Rakuten Monkeys (樂天桃猿) baseball team, all utilize fashion concepts to establish the main visual theme. Jan enjoys cross-interdisciplinary exchanges and communications between different professions, as these are all learning opportunities.



02

**02.** Apu Jan makes garments with Jacquard fabric which he designed and developed himself. (Photo/APUJAN)

**03.** This studio is a space where ideas gather. Inside there are various fabrics, design drafts and photographs. Here is also the birthplace of garments. (Photo/Wei Wen Chen)



03

## Taipei & London — A Tale of Two Cities

After completing his studies at the Department of Textiles & Clothing of Fu Jen Catholic University (輔仁大學織品服裝學系) in Taiwan, Jan went on to obtain his Master of Arts from the School of Design at the Royal College of Art in London. After years of self-exploration, he decided to build his label. Taipei and London both lay the foundation for his path to becoming a fashion designer.

Having lived in London for more than eight years and with more than 20 seasons of collections under his belt, Jan observes that in the fashion capital of London, labels of all scales are mature due to centuries of history in Europe's apparel industry. In contrast, Taiwan's fashion industry is still in its infancy.

"However, Taiwan has a very strong textile industry. Taiwan's development and production of performance textiles, for example, is top-notch. Taiwan's fashion design students have access to textile resources in the early stage of their careers. The Jacquard that I use is almost entirely developed on my own, and its type of resource is much harder to access in Europe," explains Jan.

"The wealth of textile resources means students can learn to fully utilize them while still in school. The professors in Taiwan are also very familiar with textile factories. This forms a compounding effect, and is an advantage Asia has to offer. The fashion design world in Europe highlights creative development, while technology is underscored as the foundation in Taiwan. Taipei's strength lies in fabrics and technology," Jan adds.



## Life in Taipei

Jan's day typically begins at seven or eight in the morning, because the factory he partners with opens early. He commutes between his home in Daan District and his studio in Datong District. Often, he roams to different parts of Taipei to visit factories and collaborators to gain a more in-depth look at their work. "For instance, I watched two years of rehearsal during my collaboration with Cloud Gate, in order to make my design more in line with the movements of the dancers," Jan explains.

To Jan, when journeying through the city and in performing his daily duties, one thing becomes clear: Taipei's convenience is unparalleled. For example, invitation printing can take a long time in London. Arranging for printing is usually the first step to organizing a fashion event, as it takes the longest time to be completed. What's more, an expedited printing request can cost a fortune. On the other hand, Taipei is much more efficient in this regard, and arranging for invitation printing can be the last thing on the to-do list. This difference in convenience allows for more flexibility in the work flow.

Furthermore, transportation is very affordable in Taipei, and easily accessible and comparatively affordable taxis facilitate work efficiency. In London, public transportation is the preferred mode of transportation except for transporting large items, but this significantly decreases efficiency.

This is why Jan chooses to produce his garments in Taiwan, where his team can easily and affordably commute from point A to point B. Thus, his strategy is to bring high-quality raw materials from overseas for yarn production in Taiwan's top-notch textile factories.

**04.** As Jan explains, "Due to close interpersonal relationships, Taipei's cross-disciplinary development has been much faster than in London." (Photo/Wei Wen Chen)

## An Objective View

"Regardless of where you live, everything the city has to offer brings something to the table," says Jan.

Jan tries not to overthink a city's pros and cons, but rather objectively analyzes a city through the lenses of sensitivity, convenience, and communication.

"For example, we might think a street full of mopeds isn't exactly the prettiest cityscape, but for foreign journalists, it is a fascinating scene of the beauty of Taipei that can be captured through photojournalism. Or, sometimes intent and functionality can be inconsistent. For example, to make a sign or a poster more elegant, we may choose to decrease the font size, but lose out on the communication."

"I believe communication is critical to expanding and scaling up," says Jan.

Whether it's work, observing a city, his view on life, or collaborating with various brands, Jan remains open and rational in all regards. In many ways, Jan represents the new generation of creatives in Taipei. His prevailing mentality of open-mindedness will definitely bring more energy and creativity to the Taipei fashion scene. **↑**



04

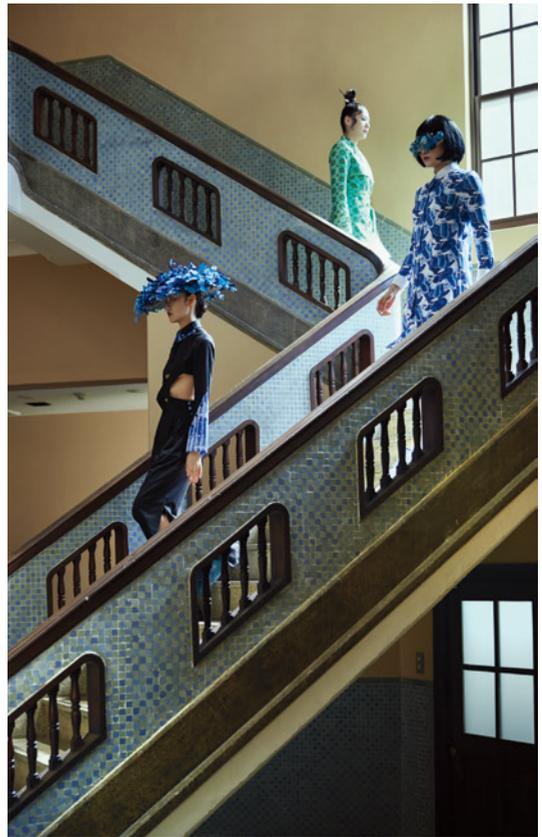
**05.** The theme of APUJAN Spring Summer 2023 collection on London Fashion Week is "Fantasy Hotel in the Sky", which is inspired by detective novels he adores.

**06.** Actress Josie Lin, a familiar face on Apu Jan fashion show, was also participating in Jan's special online presentation film in London Fashion Week.

**07.** The model is in a white dress made up of cloth envelopes, echoing her walking inside an information-filled room.



06



05



07

# *The Renaissance of Music:* A Revival of CDs and Cassettes

**Author** Catherine Shih  
**Photographer** Samil Kuo

The nostalgia behind CDs and cassette tapes in the music business is often compared to that of a classic, old-fashioned romance — both are timeless and enduring. In fact, in recent years, there has been a whole new revival of these beloved mediums among consumers. Connoisseurs love the detailed qualities of the sounds, but young people take it as trendy art collection.

We explore two record shops, BTB Music Workshop (沒有新歌的唱片行) and RK Record (駱克唱片行), both long-standing Taipei institutions that can shed light on the local music industry with their experience and observations.

**01.** Albeit having digital music as a more convenient option, many music lovers still enjoy the “treasure hunt” at old-school record stores.

01





02

**02.** BTB Music Workshop owner Odie Zhan is a huge music lover and runs this workshop with great enthusiasm.

## Being Nostalgic for Good Old Days

Although BTB Music Workshop is near Exit 4 of MRT Guting Station (捷運古亭站), it is hidden among the back alleys of Heping East Road (和平東路). If you don't look closer, you might just accidentally miss the workshop. Just like its signboard with Chinese characters implies, they mostly sell music dating back before the year 2000, with no recent music.

"Don't be fooled," store owner Odie Zhan (詹宏翔) jokingly tells us, "Just because there are no new songs, it doesn't mean they aren't brand new!" His eyes sparkle with joy.

In a small space of about 534 square feet, there are stacks and stacks of CDs, vinyl records, and even old tape cassettes. The music genres range from Western pop to Asian classics and more. Adorning the walls of the store are posters and cards of many former singers. These precious relics are all a part of Odie's personal collection.

"People who buy cassettes have different demands than those who buy CDs," he tells us. "Often, the main age group for buying CDs are those born in the late 1960s to the mid-1980s. But the main age group for cassettes are people who just simply have an obsession with listening to cassettes. Nowadays, cassettes are even regarded by young people as collectibles. It's a recent trend that has been mostly brought on by Taiwanese dramas," Odie shares. "Sometimes these young people choose to buy cassettes because they recognize the name of the singer, or they base it off the cover or packaging. Others don't know how to choose, so they'll end up buying blank cassettes instead."

Odie goes on to share with us the history of cassette tapes, from inception to revival. "Cassettes were popular in the mid-to-late 1970s to the late 1990s," he says, "mainly because Sony introduced the Walkman in the '80s, which made cassettes more accessible and widespread." He continues, "However, beginning in the 1990s, CDs became more and more popular, reducing the need for cassettes. And so began the heyday of CDs in the '90s. Not long after, the year 2000 saw the rise of digital music and MP3s, with music streaming following in 2010 up until today."

Looking back, the 1980s and '90s were the golden era of Taiwanese pop music, linking the past and inspiring the present. Odie informs us, "In the 1990s, there were many record stores in Ximending (西門町) — most noteworthy was a shop called Cross Line (交叉線唱片), which specialized in Western music and also promoted dance hall culture." In 1990, Taiwan began to produce CDs, bringing the music industry to new heights. "Even up until 2006 or 2007, CDs were still popular," Odie shares. However, around the year 2000, with the rise of MP3s and the popularity of CD burners, it became easier and easier for the public to obtain music for free. Sadly, as a result, music sales also fell sharply.

What is Odie's biggest challenge? "In fact, some of the customers who come here don't know music well at all. Many people have no concept of copyright, and they don't know much about the process behind music production or about artists' songs. In addition, there are many CDs floating around that are often fake or pirated," he shares in exasperation.

That doesn't seem enough to deter Odie, though. "Although the introduction of digital music has reduced physical sales, I don't believe that digital music will cause physical music to disappear entirely. The digital and physical realms can coexist together — just like how you might stream music on your way home from work but put on a CD when you get home. Either way, you are at home with music."

## 🎧 Recommended

### Jonathan Lee

*The Spirit of Life* Album 李宗盛《生命中的精靈》

### Tom Chang

*Duplicity* Album 張雨生《口是心非》

### Chyi Yu

*Stories* Album 齊豫《故事》

### Hibari Misora

*Kawa no Nagare no Yō ni* Single 美空雲雀《川流不息》

### BTB MUSIC WORKSHOP

**ADD** 4, Ln. 12, Sec. 1, Heping E. Rd., Daan Dist.  
**HOURS** 11:00am - 8:00pm (Monday to Friday)  
 11:00am - 7:00pm (Saturdays)  
 (Closed on Sundays)



03



04

**03-04.** Various cassettes and CDs produced between 1970s and 2000 can be found at BTB Music Workshop.

**05.** The owner of RK Record, Martin Ting, is renowned for his good eyes. He has been collecting records for nearly three decades.



05

## A Nearly 30-Year-Old Record Store

RK Record first opened its doors in July 1994, located close to MRT Stations Taipei Arena (捷運台北小巨蛋站) and Nanjing Sanmin (捷運南京三民站).

For store owner Martin Ting (丁寶萬), the motivation behind opening the store was to set up a music library. "Of course, there were practical difficulties with such an idea, so I settled for the next best thing and opened a record store with a 'personality,'" he chuckles. "I was a bit late to the game, though. The year was 1994, when the record industry had already passed its peak. And three years into our opening, we began selling used cassette tapes and CDs." He goes on, "At the time, the second-hand market only focused on exchange, not buying and selling. It was us who broke the mold and began to move second-hand products in the form of buying and selling."

In the late 1990s, record stores didn't sell many cassette tapes because the recording companies themselves didn't release many cassettes. However, instead of discarding or throwing them away, Martin

kept them in boxes and continued selling them in the store. "To my surprise, a few years later, customers would find cassettes while flipping around — and just like that, box after box of cassette tapes were sold!" he exclaims proudly. "Nowadays, cassettes are not cheap — about NT\$400-500 per tape. Some people listen to cassettes for the sound quality, while others listen for the memories. Taiwanese dramas will sometimes also feature cassettes, which makes people reminiscent of the past, so we do get repeat customers who come back because of these dramas."

RK Record's strength lies in its professionalism, abundant inventory and variety, as well as their constant updates to the music database on their website every day. "Even our storefront is a constant work in progress," Martin explains. "The record store needs space, and there are about 1,000 items to be stocked every month. In addition to new products coming in, old ones must also be replenished. And because of our lack of space, we have no choice but to place some products temporarily on the ground. But actually, this also serves a dual purpose — which is to give customers a feeling of 'treasure hunting,'" Martin smiles mischievously.

“It’s not all rosy and dandy, though,” he goes on. “We also face many challenges. Landlords are always raising the rent, which constantly forces us to move. In addition, there’s also a lot of competition in the industry. After many music CD chain stores closed, more and more independent sellers appeared, driving prices up.” However, RK Record still stands true behind their principle to sell only at reasonable prices.

“Most of the people who come here are older folks in their mid-forties to sixties. They’re the ones who usually prefer an actual physical store. However, we do also get young people, especially office workers in their

twenties or thirties, but most of them just use online ordering and then pick up in-store,” Martin tells us. “People still buy cassettes, but not necessarily to actually listen. Recently, a client came in to buy various types of cassettes in different colors and constructions to use in a design. And we also get TV and film production companies borrowing cassettes for filming. Even our old shop location was featured in a famous Taiwanese band Mayday’s (五月天) new “World Crazy (瘋狂世界)” music video and Hong Kong singer Joey Yung’s (容祖兒) “Lonely Portrait (獨照),” Martin smiles proudly. “Clearly it won’t be that easy to get rid of us anytime soon.”





07

06. Hard-core music fans will recognize this dog sculpture in RK record. As it's British record label HMV's Dog Mascot "Nipper", a symbol of the music industry.

07. An antique reel-to-reel tape machine sits in the corner of the RK Record.

08. The singles recommended by Ting are presented in a playful design as inspired by the packaging of capsules.

09. Wandering inside the shop with various records, and trying to find good music is like seeking interesting books in a library.

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## Recommended

### Tsai Chin

Opportunity Album 蔡琴《機遇》

### Jolin Tsai

Journey Swarovski Music Journey Theme Song 蔡依林〈旅程〉

### Ringo Sheena

Ze-Chyou Syuu/The Acme Collection 3-CD Set

### U2

All That You Can't Leave Behind Album

### RK RECORD

**ADD** 21, Ln. 85, Guangfu N. Rd., Songshan Dist.

**HOURS** 11:00am - 7:00pm (Monday to Friday)

1:00pm - 6:00pm (Saturdays)

(Closed on Sundays)





01

01. Environmental issues are recognized by more and more people and eco-friendly products are increasingly accessible in Taipei.

## Taipei's Plastic-Free Revolution

**Author** Jenna Lynn Cody

**Photographer** Taiwan Scene, Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

Over the past two decades, Taiwan has stressed the importance of reducing the consumption of single-use plastics. These include phased-in bans on plastic bags and single-use straws at retail locations across the country, and NT\$5 or more discounts for beverage shop customers who bring their own cups. In July 2023, plastic packaging will no longer be allowed to contain PVC, and packaging materials must comply with the ratio of recycled paper (more than 90%) or recycled materials (more than or equal to 25%) regulated by the government.

These moves put Taiwan at the forefront of the international call to reduce plastic waste, and indeed having one's own drink bottle, reusable meal box and cutlery, and multi-use shopping bags has become fashionable nationwide.

# Leading the Transformation

Taipei City has led this move toward greater sustainability as the first city in Taiwan to ban single-use plastic cups. This policy will take effect in December 2022, and is estimated to reduce annual plastic cup waste by over 900 metric tons, or about 76 million cups.

Taipei residents are heading up this charge, with beverage shops approving the change and looking into alternatives such as providing reusable cup services on their own. Some residents are taking the plastic-free revolution even further by promoting a total or near-total waste-free lifestyle, turning Taipei into not just a city for change, but a city spearheading it. This lifestyle change may include bringing one's own reusable items,

**02.** Some kiosks for ReCup rental services are set up by the Taipei City Government to encourage the public to reduce plastic waste. (Photo/Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government)

**03.** Founder Wu Si-ru and assistant Kuo Zi-jia are devoted to the plastic-free movement.

recycling packaging such as glass jars and bottles, or buying packaging-free items. In fact, there are already a few “unpackaged” stores in Taipei and across Taiwan.

To better understand this trend, we sat down with Wu Si-ru (吳思儒) and Kuo Zi-jia (郭子嘉), the founder and the assistant of San Shi Living Lab (三時生活實驗室), a packaging-free cafe and shop located on Jinzhou Street (錦州街) near MRT Zhongshan Elementary School Station (捷運中山國小站).



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## Rising Choices in Eco-Friendly Living

The concept for San Shi Living Lab began in 2015, when a group of eight friends sat down to discuss how to meaningfully tackle the issue of plastic waste. "All of Taiwan was interested in this issue, so we contacted some experts and designers whom we thought could help and worked together to create the concept. At the end we came up with the idea of a 'living lab,'" Wu says.

At first, Living Lab came up with the concept of a cafe within a former warehouse space on Jinzhou Street. The cafe used no paper cups, and they worked with small farmers who didn't use synthetic fertilizer or

pesticide, and might otherwise have trouble entering the commercial market due to the higher costs involved. Later, they focused more on cooperating with farmers selling local produce by connecting those farmers with customers so that perishable items could be delivered more efficiently.

"San Shi Living Lab is the oldest of the packaging-free stores," Wu says. "We've been in business for five years now, and the response has been more and more positive. Our customers really like the concept, and it's been more successful in Taipei than other cities because there's a bigger population, even though there's more convenience in Taipei and it's easier to shop at packaging-heavy convenience stores and supermarkets than it is in smaller towns."



**04-06.** Consumers can bring their own containers to fill with beans, grains, oils or detergents.

**07.** Beeswax-coated fabric wraps can be used in place of plastic wrap.

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San Shi Living Lab has also become a locus of communication regarding environmental protection and sustainability, creating discussions centered on the importance of eco-friendliness and raising awareness about the environment. Wu and Kuo agree that although Taipei residents are becoming more aware of these issues and are open to alternatives, it comes down to personal choices.

“Losing convenience to engage in more sustainable practices is a way of life, not a question. You have a choice: you can go to the convenience store, or you can go to an ‘unpackaged’ store. It’s been difficult for the government and businesses to put these ideas together, because you do lose convenience. It’s also more expensive, and the only upside is that it’s eco-friendly...but everyone has a choice. You can spend more money if you think it’s important,” Wu says.

## Steps Toward Eco-friendliness

To promote the idea of choosing sustainability, San Shi Living Lab creates marketing events to raise awareness. They also host book and clothing exchanges, talks and small workshops. Some are simply discussions about relevant issues and what can be done. Others show participants different ways they can reduce their plastic and other packaging use.

One of these workshops involves making beeswax fabric storage wrap. Beeswax-coated fabric has been a popular reusable alternative to single-use plastic wrap for some time, and participants in this workshop not only make their own, but also learn how to add more wax as the wrapping ages.

“Instead of just buying it, if you make it yourself, then you will know how it’s done. As a result, you will know how to add more wax when your fabric’s wax coating wears out. You can maintain your own beeswax wrap,” Kuo points out.

Beyond talks, workshops and cooperative relationships with small farms, San Shi Living Lab’s day-to-day business is based on the ethos of waste reduction, especially when it comes to plastics. Non-liquid products are displayed in bulk: there are dispensers for grains, a large glass container of baking soda with a scoop, a jar of plastic-free bamboo toothbrushes, and shampoo and other body care products in larger packages, as liquids cannot legally be sold unpackaged. At the door, customers unable to bring their own bags and jars can find second hand glass containers.

Wu and Kuo say their most popular product is shampoo, made by Ping Fang Home (平方家) in Hualien (花蓮). Sodium percarbonate is also popular, as it’s found in just about every cleaning product and can be used to clean most home items without having to buy environmentally unfriendly chemicals in plastic bottles.

While customers can come to the Jinzhou Street shop, they also fulfill many orders online and ship within Taipei City, using second hand containers.



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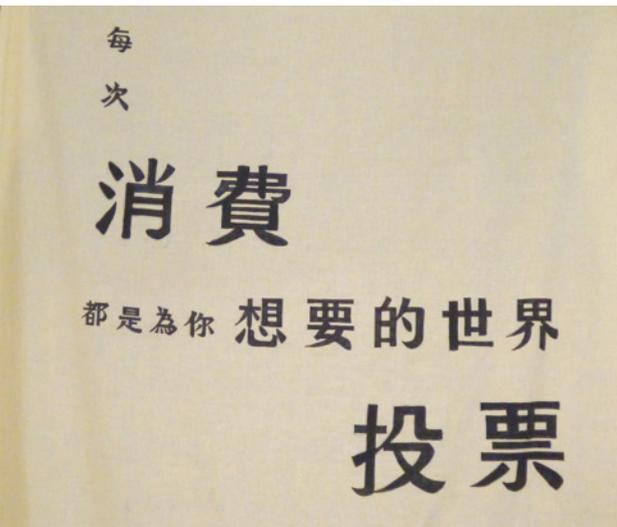
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**08.** Beans and grains stored in glass jars are also good decorations when there is no plastic packaging.

**09.** Stainless steel bottles and straws are adored by people supporting environmental protection in recent years.

**10.** Reusable glass bottles are actually good tools for reducing plastic waste.

**11.** “Every time you spend money, you’re casting a vote for the kind of world you want,” is not just a quote, but San Shi Living Lab’s faith.



11

## Reduced Plastic Living Revolution

Wu and Kuo are clear that running such a business comes with many challenges, and not all of them have been solved, but COVID brought an increase in sales as people had to stay home more and were looking for lower-waste solutions for their everyday lifestyle needs. Wu adds that, despite studying environmental science engineering and education, it's not always possible to meet one's ideal targets. Still, it's important to persist even though it's not always easy work.

"It's a process," Wu reiterates. "If we want to live in an eco-friendlier way, we have to change our actions and the culture. That process requires trying a lot of different things, and sometimes you have to spend more. Some people say they just don't understand it. However, our customers are becoming more aware and accepting."

Wu and Kuo agree that the best way to promote environmentally friendly practices is through policy. Policy, they say, helps educate people, and they tend to change their actions after it's implemented. One example of this is reusable cups: in the past, drink shops might not serve you in your own bottle or cup, but now most will. This causes attitudes to change, which leads to acceptance.

Taipei City has expanded its reusable cup program by launching the free ReCup rental services recently, with some kiosks for this service set up throughout the city. Whether beverage shop customers bring their own containers or choose to use a reusable cup from the kiosks before ordering, they can all enjoy NT\$5 or more discounts. It is hoped that through implementation, single-use plastic cups will be greatly reduced.

Wu says the biggest question people have when it comes to 'unpacked' stores is what to do if they don't or can't bring their own containers. Essentially, what's the Plan B if you want to buy something but didn't plan ahead? "The idea is to have reusable containers available, and after use, send it to a pickup point or another store to exchange it or save it for future use. In some other countries, you can get the cup you need, then pay a small fee to send it to another store. So, if we all work together to do this, we can make it successful," he adds.

Of course, people do criticize the packaging-free movement. Some say they don't earn enough money and can't spend more to buy what they need in a more sustainable way. Wu and Kuo hope for opportunities to discuss a variety of solutions, as no one solution will work for everyone. For instance, beeswax wrap can be naturally maintained, and dried loofahs are a natural product that can be used as scrubbers for an extended period. The best method, of course, is to reuse or exchange items rather than recycling them.

"There are different methods of communication to help people understand the external costs. For example, 'This is cheap because the real cost is that it hurts the environment; that is expensive because it protects the environment,'" Wu adds.

At San Shi Living Lab, the bottom line is that eco-friendliness is a choice: one can commit to more sustainable actions or choose the easiest or least expensive solutions. As Taipei leads the nation toward a plastic-free future, it seems likely that more people will see the benefits of choosing to defend the natural environment. 📍



The beauty of bald cypress makes Taipei's winter scenery a romantic poem.  
@ Dahu Park



© Yuskay Huang

# The Light of Taipei Cuisine: Michelin Bib Gourmand Award 2022

**Author** Catherine Shih, Kuan Yuan Chu

**Photographer** Taiwan Scene, Little Tree Food, Machiko Lan

Back in 1997, when Michelin inspectors were busy shuttling through high-end establishments, they were also looking for good local bang-for-your-buck restaurants. Thus, the Michelin Bib Gourmand Award was born. As a special category in the Michelin Guide, it was created to promote authentic, high-quality restaurants with dishes offered at medium price points while also respecting the uniqueness of local cuisine.

Recently, the 2022 Michelin Bib Gourmand Award list for Taipei has been released, and here are six new local restaurants throughout the city that have been featured. When you are visiting the 2023 Taiwan Lantern Festival in Taipei, we highly recommend you to visit these restaurants and try their award-winning dishes.



## Traditional Flavor

### Ah-guo Soup Noodles 阿國切仔麵

Located on a busy section of Zhongshan District on Tianxiang Road (天祥路), Ah-guo is famous for its old-fashioned *qiezai* noodles (切仔麵). The restaurant offers not only chewy noodles but also soup that is slow-cooked with pork bones for several hours a day, giving it its light yet fragrant taste. Topping all this off is a drizzle of soy sauce, bean sprouts, and a once-secret ingredient passed down by the owner's very own father — crispy homemade shallots.

In addition to their soup noodles, other famous side dishes in the store include red-yeast pork (炸紅燒肉) and fried tofu (油豆腐), both cooked to absolute perfection. This old shop has no secrets, as evidenced by its simple taste and lack of extra seasoning or additives.

**01.** Ah-guo's *qiezai* noodles is famous for its chewy noodles, broth, and homemade crispy shallots.

#### AH-GUO SOUP NOODLES

**ADD** 1, Tianxiang Rd., Zhongshan Dist.

**HOURS** 11:00am - 8:00pm (Closed on Tuesdays)

The store is covered with Michelin plaques, a fine testament to its award-winning pedigree. And like many old restaurants in Taiwan, the environment is really clean, chill and comfortable. Combined with the good food here, we advise you to be sure you check out this local favorite next time you're in Zhongshan District!



01



Worth a Try

## Chuan Mu Yuan 川畝園

Just a stone's throw away from MRT Zhongshan Station (捷運中山站) in an alley next to Chifeng Street (赤峰街) lies Chuan Mu Yuan. Don't be fooled by its exterior — although small in size, the entrance is seemingly always crowded with people!

Upon arriving, the store clerk will give you a number. Without it, you cannot be seated, regardless of dining indoors or out.

Here they are known mostly for their scallion pancake beef rolls (牛肉捲餅) and steamed dumplings (蒸餃). The crust of the scallion pancake is fried to a golden crisp before being wrapped with beef tendon, scallions, and a sweet noodle sauce filling — making for a delicious combination!

Their steamed dumplings are also a favorite among locals. Available in three different fillings, including shrimp, beef, and vegetarian, their most popular is no doubt the shrimp. It has a slightly chewy texture on the outside, and as soon as it enters the mouth, you can taste the fragrance of the shrimp! A touch on the messy side, yet wholly delicious, it is definitely worth savoring every single bite!



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### CHUAN MU YUAN

**ADD** 31, Ln. 1, Sec. 2, Chengde Rd., Datong Dist.  
**HOURS** 11:00am - 2:00pm; 4:30pm - 7:30pm  
(Closed on Sundays)

**02-03.** Chuan Mu Yuan is always crowded with people, and serves a variety of flour-based foods.

03





Popular with Japanese Tourists

## Chi Chia Chuang 雞家莊

Founded in 1974, Chi Chia Chuang has two branches both near MRT Zhongshan Station — their main store on Changchun Road (長春路) and the other branch near Liutiaotong (六條通). Both locations are over 40 years old, with styles reminiscent of the 1970s, appealing to locals and tourists alike. Their authentic, retro chicken logo and chickens in the window only serve to add further charm. Most of the menu items are based on traditional Taiwanese home-cooked dishes, with prices in the medium to high range.

Their signature dish, three flavor chicken (三味雞), is made from Taitung-raised chickens cooked in a rich marinade. Consisting of three different varieties of chicken — silkie chicken, white chopped chicken, and smoked chicken — they are placed together on a combination plate and served with a side of sweet and spicy dipping sauce, ginger chicken essence, and sauerkraut.

Another famous dish, pineapple with bitter-melon chicken casserole (鳳梨苦瓜雞鍋), has a flavor best described as fresh, sweet, and not too greasy. In addition, it lacks the bitterness commonly associated with most bitter melon soups, making for a harmonious blend of ingredients.

### CHI CHIA CHUANG

#### MAIN STORE

**ADD** 55, Changchun Rd., Zhongshan Dist.  
**HOURS** 11:00am - 10:00pm

#### BRANCH

**ADD** 9, Ln. 105, Sec. 1, Zhongshan N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist.  
**HOURS** 11:30am - 9:00pm

**04.** Chi Chia Chuang has served Taiwanese dishes for over 40 years, and the look of the restaurant is also nostalgic.

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05. Netizens praise the fried rice at Yuan Wei as the best in Taipei. (Photo/Machiko Lan)



#### A Hidden Gem Around Taipei Main Station

### Yuan Wei 元味料理

Yuan Wei is located in a very inconspicuous-looking shop adjacent to Puji Temple (普濟寺) on Huayin Street (華陰街) near Taipei Main Station (台北車站). As one of the newly-selected restaurants on Taipei's Michelin Bib Gourmand Award list in 2022, they are not only praised by netizens as having "the best fried rice in Taipei," but also frequented by foodies everywhere for their secret hidden menu. Their fried rice served upside-down on a plate has a firm texture, with the aroma of soy sauce, eggs, and green onions permeating the air upon serving. The rice is fired up quickly in a wok, removed just in time before being burnt.

When it comes to seafood, customers often order their crispy stir-fried shrimp (海驢蝦) and steamed snapper (蒸石雕魚). The fresh steamed fish is naturally delicious, and the seafood here really lives up to its sterling reputation. Don't miss out on this hidden gem the next time you are wandering around Taipei Main Station!

#### YUAN WEI

**ADD** 2, Ln. 227, Huayin St., Datong Dist.  
**HOURS** 12:00pm - 5:00pm (Closed on Sundays)



Vegetable Lovers Note!

## Little Tree Food 小小樹食

Little Tree Food is a specialty restaurant known for its Instagram-worthy decor and exotic, mouth-watering vegetarian dishes. There are two locations, including the Michelin Bib Gourmand Award-winning branch on Daan Road and another on Dunhua South Road (敦化南路). However, this is still not enough to fulfill the appetites of Taipei locals!

At the Daan Road branch adjacent to MRT Zhongxiao Fuxing Station (捷運忠孝復興站), upon walking in, you are immediately greeted by an abundance of green plants near the entrance.

Their signature dish, Sichuan spicy dumplings (紅油皮蛋豆腐餃), comes with four round, plump pieces on a plate. Although the chili oil is slightly spicy, the filling is full of flavor — fooling even the most seasoned vegetarians!

Another popular item on the menu, garlic and chili pasta (蒜味辣椒義大利麵), is cooked to perfection, with the taste of garlic and olive oil coated evenly throughout. The portion of the noodles is very fulfilling, with just a tad of chili added to enhance the dish's natural flavor.

Be sure to make reservations in advance, as both locations tend to fill up rather quickly!

### LITTLE TREE FOOD

#### DAAN BRANCH

**ADD** 17, Ln. 116, Sec. 1, Daan Rd., Daan Dist.

**HOURS** 12:00pm - 3:00pm; 5:00pm - 9:00pm  
(Closed on the last Monday each month)

#### DUNNAN BRANCH

**ADD** 39-1, Sec. 2, Dunhua S. Rd., Daan Dist.

**HOURS** 11:30am - 3:00pm; 5:00pm - 9:00pm

**06.** The decoration of Little Tree Food is beautiful and comfortable with a green space full of energetic plants. (Photo/Little Tree Food)

**07-08.** The vegetarian dishes in Little Tree Food are so good that even adored by a lot of "meat-only" person. (Photo/Little Tree Food)



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Authentic Yunnan Cuisine

## Jen Ho Yuan 人和園

Jen Ho Yuan is located near MRT Minquan West Road Station (捷運民權西路站) on section two of Zhongshan North Road (中山北路二段). Many locals and tourists flock to this restaurant for its classic Yunnan specialty dishes. One of their signature items and top recommendations is the steamed pot chicken (汽鍋雞). It is light, refreshing, and not too greasy on the palate. However, because the stew takes time to prepare and cook, it is advised to book or reserve this particular dish in advance.

Another famous dish, pork slices (大薄片), is also a favorite among foodies familiar with Yunnan cuisine. Local Taiwanese black pork jowl from the cheeks is cooked briefly in boiling hot water, frozen, then served in thinly-cut slices.

Lastly, another delicacy called milk fan cake (乳扇) hails from ethnic minority groups in the northwest of Yunnan. Made from a type of cheese and rolled into white layered rolls, it can be eaten raw, dried, or deep-fried. If you are in the mood for Yunnan cuisine, don't miss out on this local favorite! 📍

### JEN HO YUAN

**ADD** 2F., 112, Sec. 2, Zhongshan N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist.  
**HOURS** 11:30am - 2:00pm; 5:30pm - 9:00pm

**09.** The exotic, while excellent taste of the Yunnan cuisine in Jen Ho Yuan is one thing you must have in Taipei.



09

# Sleepless Nights: A Night Owl's Guide to Taipei

**Author** Catherine Shih, Kuan Yuan Chu

**Photographer** Zha Nan, Taiwan Scene, ABV Bar & Kitchen

After touring the lantern festival and feasting your eyes on some colorful, splendid light displays, another feast of late-night snacks awaits! We've got four popular dining spots in Taipei that are open late to satisfy your stomach and taste buds while enjoying the sleepless vibe of Taipei's winter nights.



## Zha Nan Taiwan Bistro Xinyi

渣男 信義一渣

Wandering around the alleys of Xinyi District near Xiangshan Park (象山公園), one cannot help but notice Zha Nan Taiwan Bistro. With its glass door with a wooden frame and retro neon signs, it is certainly eye-catching. With six branches throughout Taipei, the Xinyi (信義) branch is undoubtedly the most popular, being their first location.

Interestingly enough, the idea behind the name of the restaurant "zhanan (渣男)" (or "scumbag" in basic English terms), comes from the ideology that "Every successful man, at some stage in his life, was once an out-and-out scumbag." The restaurant reflects this theme furthermore by giving its environment a very suave, low-key vibe just right for men (and women) who prefer a bit of solitude to hide out and relax.

The highlight of Zha Nan is *luwei* (滷味, Taiwanese traditional braised food) and local dishes. The bestseller is their braised platter. As a Taiwanese-style bistro, it is undoubtedly the most local plate you can find on the menu.

Some other popular dishes include cold cucumber (涼拌黃瓜), spicy tofu with duck blood (麻辣豆腐鴨血) and Taiwanese traditional plum juice (台味酸梅湯), just to name a few!

Their cold cucumber is fresh with a spicy kick and served with a side of addictive sauce — perfect for a hot summer's day. For winter nights, however, we

recommend their spicy tofu duck blood. The medium spiciness is just what the doctor ordered to warm up the body on a cool winter evening. In addition, the duck blood is moist and the tofu is soft and tender.

There are also many types of drinks such as cocktails, shots, beer and wine. But the best thing to have at Zha Nan is their Wheat Ale along with the braised platter!

### ZHA NAN TAIWAN BISTRO XINYI

**ADD** 12, Aly. 315, Ln. 150, Sec. 5, Xinyi Rd., Xinyi Dist.

**HOURS** 5:30pm - 1:30am

**01.** Bistro Zha Nan serves Taiwanese braised food and is a good place to chill.  
(Photo/Zha Nan)

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## Izakaya Santora

三虎居酒屋

Tucked in the alleys near MRT Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall Station (捷運國父紀念館站) is Izakaya Santora, the latter word of which translates to “Three Tigers” in Chinese. Here the biggest aesthetic feature is the mural of three tigers painted on the wall, said to have been contracted to a local artist from southern Taiwan. The dining area is divided into a wraparound bar and four-person booths, all of which provide ample room for good conversation and drinking. At the bar, you can view the craftsmanship of the chefs as they use hot flames to roast skewers in front of onlooking hungry customers.

Here a variety of dishes are available, including skewers, barbecue, rice, fried foods, wild vegetables, and more. Drink options are no less ample, with beer, Japanese sake, and plum wine offered.

Their yakitori combo (三虎盛和) is said to be a “must-order” for first-timers. It includes seven signature skewers, featuring chicken with onion, chicken with roe, bacon with tomatoes, miso pork belly, pork with

**02-03.** Izakaya Santora serves delicious Japanese food and is popular with young people in Taipei.



**DRINK RESPONSIBLY**



03

green onions and salt, beef ribs, and garlic beef.

Be sure to order this dish with draft beer, and you’re all set to go!

Another favorite is the local Okinawa bitter melon with salted eggs (沖繩苦瓜鹹蛋). Stir-fried using bitter melons, sliced meat, vegetables, and tofu, it also pairs well with draft beer.

Lastly, a visit to the izakaya wouldn’t be complete without ordering fish. Here the grilled salted mackerel (鯖魚塩焼) is cooked to perfection by maintaining the fish’s tenderness while keeping the skin crispy.

Moreover, fewer bones in the mackerel means more meat for your value — all of which is grilled to the optimal juiciness.

### IZAKAYA SANTORA

**ADD** 11, Ln. 131, Yanji St., Daan Dist.  
**HOURS** 6:00pm - 12:30am (Sundays; Monday to Thursday)  
 6:00pm - 1:30am (Friday to Saturday)



## Woolloomooloo

“Excuse me? What is ‘Woolloomooloo?’” you ask. Well, in an Australian aboriginal language, it refers to “the bay where you can catch a lot of fish.” But here in Taipei, it is one of the most highly-rated restaurants in the city. Interestingly enough, the restaurant is open nearly 17 hours a day. Coupled with unlimited dining time, free WiFi, and electrical sockets, it’s no wonder students and foodies alike flock here to work, study, hang out, or hold meetings.

The decor at Woolloomooloo is done up in a light-industrial style, with dining spaces divided into two floors. It’s a restaurant that serves Australian food, and ordering a meat pie, “the national dish” of Australia, just seems like the proper thing to do. If you think it is impossible to find a good pie in Taiwan, then you will be proven wrong after tasting the pies here.

There are four kinds of pies served here and the one we recommend is the “Me’pie please (肉派，謝謝你!)” The fillings of the pie change every day since the restaurant can only decide what will be inside after they choose the best, freshest ingredients every morning. The freshly baked pie crust is worth mentioning here as well as it is crispy with a super nice and soft texture inside. Combined with the meat fillings, it is just a great, satisfying pie — a must-eat in Taipei.

When restaurants put their name on some dishes, you know they must be good. Here the Mooloo fish and chips are also highly recommended, as they are proper fish and chips like the ones you can find in London or other cities that are famous for this dish. This means fresh fish with a rich flavor, of course. Nice chips? Done! The tartar sauce is really impressive as well! It is creamy with a little sour taste courtesy of the little pickles inside; a perfect combination with the mouth-watering fish and chips.

Overall, the food at Woolloomooloo is exquisite and delicious. With the cool decor and atmosphere, it is recommendable especially when you are out wandering under the late-night sky of Taipei City.



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### WOOLLOOMOOLOO

**ADD** 379, Sec. 4, Xinyi Rd., Xinyi Dist.  
**HOURS** 7:30am - 12:00am (Sundays, Monday to Thursday)  
 7:30am - 1:00am (Friday to Saturday)

**04.** Crispy fish and chips with rich flavor are just mouth-watering with the excellent tartar sauce here.

**05.** The taste of the freshly baked “Me’pie please” with various fillings according to the finest ingredients every day are amazing.

**06.** The experience of dining at Woolloomooloo is very comfortable.



## ABV Mediterranean

地中海餐酒館 - 精釀啤酒餐廳

Near MRT Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall Station lies ABV Mediterranean. Here the “ABV” stands for “Alcohol By Volume” — a sign of their commitment to high-quality craft beer while also serving up traditional, classic Mediterranean cuisine. With the goal of becoming a leading brand in the craft beer industry, their restaurant currently offers a whopping 300 types of craft beer from all over the world. In fact, since the store’s opening, more than 3,000 kinds of craft beer have been introduced, so you don’t need to leave the comfort of the city to travel the world! There are even professional sommeliers on site to assist with beer and wine recommendations to pair with your meal.

The indoor dining area of the restaurant is decorated with wood undertones, including spacious seating to accommodate large dinner parties. Moreover, multiple TVs adorn the walls broadcasting live sports. The outdoor dining area is also a pleasant place to gather or dine, as plenty of natural light and a pleasant breeze flows through.

ABV Mediterranean offers many classic dishes from the Mediterranean region, covering the lengths of Spain, Italy, France, Greece, North Africa, Turkey, and Croatia. With an abundance of different brunch, pasta, stewed



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dishes, and snacks to choose from, there is literally something for everyone!

At ABV Mediterranean, their classic seafood paella is a must-eat. It is cooked in seafood stock and saffron and full of mussels, shrimps, calamari and clams. You cannot possibly go wrong by choosing ABV as your next dining destination! 

### ABV MEDITERRANEAN

**ADD** 39, Ln. 260, Guangfu S. Rd., Daan Dist.  
**HOURS** 12:00pm - 1:30am

**07-08.** ABV Mediterranean provides a variety of beers that suit to pair with their Mediterranean cuisine. (Photo/ABV Bar & Kitchen)

08



# A Japanese Freelancer in Taipei

**Author** Tina Teng, Genie Zheng

**Photographer** George Zhan, Taiwan Scene

Taipei has increasingly frequented Japanese media in recent years. Whether it's Dadaocheng (大稻埕) featured on the cover of a popular women's magazine, books centering on the theme of travel and culture in Taipei, or drama series and movies shot in the city, all have increased Japanese interest in our stunning capital.

Meanwhile, a large contingent of Japanese have made Taipei their home, sharing in-depth cultural observations and information about life in Taiwan with people back home. Freelance journalist Yaeko Kondo (近藤弥生子), a Fukuoka native and a former magazine editor in Tokyo, is one of the foremost facilitators of Taiwan-Japan exchanges.

**01.** Freelance journalist Yaeko Kondo lives with her family in Taipei, and uses her former working experience of being a magazine editor in Tokyo to promote Taipei and Taiwan to Japan.

01





02

02. The tree-lined boulevard of Dunhua South Road is a good place for seeking inspiration and enjoying the sunshine.

## Drawing Inspirations from Everyday Life

Kondo moved to Taipei 10 years ago, having never previously traveled to Taiwan. Back then, she knew little of the country, even thinking Taiwan and Hong Kong were similar in terms of physical location. Fast forward to today, and Kondo has become an expert on Taipei and writes extensively about Taiwan for the Japanese media. For example, Kondo writes columns for Japanese lifestyle magazines *&Premium* and *Pen* on life in Taiwan.

Kondo, who describes herself as “Taiwanized,” recalls her first impression of Taipei. “When I first moved here, I was pregnant and easily nauseated,” she says. “To me, Taipei had such a strong scent, especially when I smelled the tea eggs at the convenience stores,” she adds with a smile.

“But I’m used to it now, and I love the smell of tea eggs,” she goes on to say. “It’s interesting because now thinking back, my company in Tokyo had rules against bringing food with a strong smell, such as McDonald’s hamburgers, because the odor might bother some people. In contrast, Taipei holds so much more freedom in this aspect,” Kondo adds.

Having lived in several districts in Taipei, Kondo has settled in Daan District with her family. The tree-lined boulevards of Renai Road (仁愛路) and Dunhua South Road (敦化南路) are her personal favorite for her morning walks.

“Little walks in such an environment full of greenery bring me inspiration,” says Kondo. But she also observes that there are usually many cars and scooters on the roads of Taipei, thus the risk of car accidents is relatively higher than that in Japan. However, the great thing is that there are many more public rental systems such as YouBike set up across Taipei than before, and many bus stop signs have been changed to solar powered e-paper displays. “All of these have made Taipei more environmentally friendly,” comments Kondo.

03



“Besides, Taipei is also extremely convenient, as there are many options to choose from when it comes to shopping or getting out in nature,” she continues.

Yongchun Market (永春市場) in Xinyi District is where Kondo stocks her kitchen with enough supplies to take care of all three meals every day, and there are a lot of organic vegetable stores and noodle shops that offer freshly-made foods; even free range chickens can be bought there. Another place she loves to visit is Fuyang Eco Park (富陽自然生態公園). There are usually fewer people there, and the original ecosystem is well-preserved, so the family often walks over for a date with nature.

**03.** At Yongchun Market, you can always find fresh vegetables and fruits at a reasonable price. That's why Kondo really loves to buy food for her family here. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)

**04.** The original ecosystem of Fuyang Eco Park is well-preserved. When you step into the park, it's just like walking into a small forest. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)

04





05

05. To introduce Taipei or Taiwan, Kondo often collects information and interviews shops herself.

## Between Japan and Taipei

As a freelance editor, Kondo observes that Taiwan and Japan share close geographical proximity and are similar in terms of culture, ideas and values. Gender equality, a declining birthrate and an aging society are issues for which Taiwan and Japan share a mutual concern, so it is easy for both sides to understand each other.

As information travels fast and efficiently in the Taipei metropolitan area, being based in the city helps Kondo to quickly receive feedback from readers and viewers.

"I need to collect a lot of information for my work, but I don't like to do that via the Internet. I prefer taking the bus and walking, so I can see for myself and scout out new fantastic topics for my Japanese viewers," Kondo explains.

"Taipei's lifestyle and trends are diverse and full of creative energy. There are a lot of small-scale but absolutely wonderful activities or workshops, through which I can interact with people with different interests and backgrounds," says Kondo.

## 🕒 A DAY IN THE LIFE

For instance, Kondo performed a reading of the picture book *The Giving Tree* (おおきな木), a Japanese version translated by Haruki Murakami, at the Wordwave Festival 2020 (華文朗讀節) held at Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914文化創意產業園區). “When I was reading there, the listeners were all Taiwanese and everyone was engaged with all their heart, I was deeply moved,” she shares with us.

When comparing working cultures through the lens of an editor, Kondo believes that Taipei offers a lot of flexibility and creativity, while Japan is more conservative and slower-paced, as Japanese workers

spend a lot of time preparing their work and making the end products just as planned. She thinks these two contrasting working cultures each have their own advantages.

Kondo further shares that Japanese editors typically go to work at 8:00 a.m., hold lunch meetings at noon, and do not get off work until 11:00 p.m. Much of the time is spent on meetings, as Japanese people believe “the devil is in the details.” Japanese editors tend to confirm and reconfirm how details are executed. However, the pursuit of perfection has been adjusted down in recent years due to the decline in the publishing industry.

06





07

## A City Full of the Human Touch

Kondo, who has written three best-sellers on Taiwan's Minister of Digital Affairs (數位發展部部長) Audrey Tang (唐鳳), once asked Tang about her observations regarding her past decades of living in Taipei. "I was curious as to why Taiwanese people are willing to devote their time to political activities. Tang told me that it is because Taiwanese people have the *ke-po* (nosy and meddling) spirit. I didn't know what it meant, but as I learned more about it, I found it wonderful. It is the *ke-po* spirit that gives an international metropolis like Taipei the human touch," Kondo shares with us.

In Kondo's eyes, the Taipei people's way of life is spectacularly interesting. In Japan, the rule of thumb is to keep others at a distance, so as to not cause trouble. At times, such a distance creates alienation. In contrast, the *ke-po* spirit brings warmth and bonds the people of Taipei.

Kondo finds *ke-po* truly valuable. Inspired by this nosy and meddling spirit, Kondo is working on a book about the "*obasans*" (middle-aged women, or elderly women) that exemplify and personify the true *ke-po* spirit. She wishes for Japanese people to better understand Taiwanese people's passion and hopes that the two places can learn from each other's strengths.

"Japan actually has a lot to learn from Taiwan!" says Kondo, her eyes glimmering with passion. ◆

**06.** Kondo often talks about the difference between Taiwanese and Japanese publishing industries.

**07.** Kondo has written three best-sellers on Taiwan's Minister of Digital Affairs Audrey Tang, and has allowed Japanese to know more about Audrey and Taiwan.

# TRAVEL INFO



**Service Hours:** 6:00am - 12:00 midnight **Customer Service Hotline:** (02)218-12345

## METRO TICKETS



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**EasyCard**



**iPASS**

## TAIPEI CITY BUS

### TICKET PRICE

**Adult:** NT\$15, regardless of using cash or an EasyCard  
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**Child under 115cm or under six years old:** Free (ID required)

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Taipei eBus**  
eBus.gov.taipei

## YOUBIKE

YouBike is Taipei's public rental bike system. To rent a bike, you can use an EasyCard or a credit card. The charge per 30 minutes is listed below.



To register, please check [youbike.com.tw/region/main/signup-way/](http://youbike.com.tw/region/main/signup-way/)

## TAIPEI FUN PASS

There are three types of Taipei Fun Pass available: the Unlimited version (attractions+transportation), Exploring version (attractions+EasyCard) and Transportation version (transportation only). You can visit Taipei City, New Taipei City and Keelung City within the validity of the pass.



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## TRAVEL INFORMATION SERVICES

**Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Transportation and Communication:** 0800-011-765

**Information for Foreigners in Taiwan:** 1990

**Taipei Citizen Hotline:** 1999 (Outside Taipei City, please dial 02-2720-8889)

**Taipei Travel Net:** [travel.taipei/en](http://travel.taipei/en); presents travel information on Taipei City in Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Indonesian, Vietnamese, and Spanish



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20  
23

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