

TAI 台 PEI 北

No. **38**

Winter | 2024

Bicycle Fun

in Taipei

*Riverside Routes
Bike Shops and Cafés
Cycling Tips*

TAIPEI 台北

PICK UP POINTS

台北市政府觀光傳播局

Department of Information and Tourism,
Taipei City Government

📍 4F, 1, City Hall Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2720-8889/1999 ext.7564

桃園國際機場第一航廈

Tourist Service Center at Arrival Lobby,
Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport
Terminal 1

📍 15, Hangzhan S. Rd., Taoyuan City
☎️ (03) 398-2194

桃園國際機場第二航廈

Tourist Service Center at Arrival Lobby,
Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport
Terminal 2

📍 9, Hangzhan S. Rd., Taoyuan City
☎️ (03) 398-3341

台北松山機場

Taipei Songshan Airport

📍 340-9, Dunhua N. Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 8770-3430

松山車站

Songshan Station

📍 11, Songshan Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2767-3819

南港車站

Nangang Station

📍 313, Sec. 1, Nangang Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2783-8645

美國在台協會

American Institute in Taiwan

📍 100, Jinhua Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2162-2000

遠企購物中心

Taipei Metro the Mall

📍 203, Sec. 2, Dunhua S. Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2378-6666 ext. 6666

國語日報語文中心

Mandarin Daily News (Language Center)

📍 2F, 2, Fuzhou St., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2341-8821

榕錦時光生活園區

Rongjin Gorgeous Time

📍 167, Jinhua St., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2321-8896

台北美國學校

Taipei American School

📍 800, Sec. 6, Zhongshan N. Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2873-9900

國立中正紀念堂

National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall

📍 21, Zhongshan S. Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2343-1100

台北當代藝術館

Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA), Taipei

📍 39, Changan W. Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2552-3721

市長官邸藝文沙龍

Mayor's Residence Arts Salon

📍 46, Xuzhou Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2396-8198

寶藏巖國際藝術村

Treasure Hill Artist Village

📍 2, Aly. 14, Ln. 230, Sec. 3,
Tingzhou Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2364-5313

新富町文化市場

U-mkt (Xinfu Market)

📍 70, Sansui St., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2308-1092

交通部觀光署旅遊服務中心

Travel Service Center, Tourism
Administration, MOTC

📍 240, Dunhua N. Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2717-3737

台北之家

Taipei Film House

📍 18, Sec. 2, Zhongshan N. Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2511-7786

台北市政府秘書處市民服務組

Information and Assistance Division,
Secretariat, Taipei City Government

📍 1, City Hall Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2720-8889/1999 ext.1011

士林官邸

Chiang Kai-shek Shilin Residence

📍 60, Fulin Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2883-6340

台北市孔廟

Taipei Confucius Temple

📍 275, Dalong St., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2592-3934

台北記憶倉庫

Taipei Info Hub

📍 265, Sec. 1, Zhongxiao W. Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2371-4597

松山文創園區

Songshan Cultural and Creative Park

📍 133, Guangfu S. Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2765-1388

華山 1914 文化創意產業園區

Huashan 1914 Creative Park

📍 1, Sec.1, Bade Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2358-1914

國立台灣博物館

National Taiwan Museum

📍 2, Xiangyang Rd., Taipei City
☎️ (02) 2382-2566

台北市立圖書館

Taipei Public Library (Main & Branches)

台北市旅遊服務中心

Visitor Information Centers in Taipei

台北捷運台北市各轉乘站

Transfer Stations of Taipei Metro
within Taipei City

台北捷運市政府站、北投站

Taipei City Hall and Beitou Stations
of Taipei Metro

新北捷運環狀線

All Stations on Circular Line
of New Taipei Metro

誠品書店台大店、西門店

eslite Bookstore NTU, Ximen

金石堂書店

Kingstone Bookstore



Editor's Note

In subtropical Taiwan, many international visitors and expatriate residents find the winter season the most pleasant. Temps are cool but generally short of cold, making outdoor explorations in Taipei's urban districts and natural areas especially comfy. Time to get your exercise shoes on – we're taking you out on expeditions cycling along rivers, hiking up low mountains, and going for walks in two especially tourist-popular neighborhoods.

Cycling is the theme in our *Cover Story* articles, where we introduce the breezy, tranquil rides awaiting along Taipei's extensive network of interconnected riverside bikeway. Next up is a piece on a trending new type of local venture, bicycle shops doubling as cafés, now hot gathering places for dedicated cycling enthusiasts. Bringing up the rear is a helpful file of tips and reminders that will ensure your Taipei cycling experience is both pleasant and safe.

We also have vetted two *A Day in Taipei* walking tours for you. In one, get to know Zhongshan, the "coolest neighborhood" praised by *Time Out* and a hip renaissance enclave home to ritzy department stores and iconoclastic shops, eateries, and cafés. The other tour takes us to Wanhua (Bangka), Taipei's oldest district, home to ornate temples and family-run heritage businesses dating back to imperial times.

In *Out in Nature* section, your big adventure is a hike up the "Four Beasts," a chain of four low mountains on modern Xinyi District's south side from which terrific views of Taipei 101 and across the Taipei Basin are your reward.

We also have indoor-fun recommendations in this issue. In our regular *DIY Fun* section, you will learn about crafting beautiful Japanese-style paper lanterns. In *Fine Food*, savor a taste of the iconic Taiwan hot-pot experience at two of the city's best hot-pot joints, and also find out about the new-in Michelin-starred restaurants renowned for their culinary excellence.

Enough cool things to fill up your cool-weather winter visit with warm cheer? Enjoy!



Please complete this online questionnaire to help us improve our magazine. Thank you!

TAI^台PEI^北

NO. 38 WINTER 2024

PUBLISHER

Chiutung Wang

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Chiaying Tzou

MANAGING EDITOR

Erhuan Lien

DISTRIBUTION

Kuanting Yeh, Hsinju Lin

COVER PHOTO

Ray Chang @ Gongguan Waterfront Plaza

Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

Add: 4F, 1, City Hall Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Tel: 1999 (02-2720-8889 outside Taipei City) ext.2029

Email: taipei_quarterly@gov.taipei

ISSN: 24137766

GPN: 2010402342

Vision Creative Marketing & Media Co.

Editors: Rick Charette, Johannes Twellmann, Anna Li

Contributors: Han Cheung, Rick Charette, Ami Barnes, Hollie Younger, James Baron

Design: Ian Tsai, Nina Yang

TAIPEI Subscription Services, Postal Wire Transfer: 4 Issues

Beneficiary Account No.: 16630048

Beneficiary Name: Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

Domestic	NT\$120	Regular Mail
Hong Kong/Macau	NT\$360	Regular Air Mail
Asia/Pacific Region	NT\$440	Regular Air Mail
Europe/US/Africa	NT\$600	Regular Air Mail

Online reading:

www.travel.taipei/en > Media > TAIPEI



Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

All rights reserved.

Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited.

中華郵政台北雜字

第 2372 號執照登記為雜誌交寄

Price: NT\$30



This magazine was printed with environmentally friendly soy ink. We hope you enjoy reading this issue of *TAIPEI*. If you have any suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact us.



CONTENTS

COVER STORY

BICYCLE FUN IN TAIPEI

- Riverside Rides** ----- 06
Serene Scenic Excursions Along Taipei's Rivers
- Bicycle Shops Cum Cafés** ----- 14
Trendy Businesses that Cater to the Needs of Cyclists
- Cycling in Taipei** ----- 20
Tips and Reminders for Bicyclists

A DAY IN TAIPEI

- Taipei's Zhongshan Neighborhood** ----- 22
Hangin' Out with the Crowds in One of the City's Coolest Corners
- Bangka Stories** ----- 28
Time in "Way Back When" Taipei

OUT IN NATURE

- Nature Green in Tooth, Claw ... and Trunk** ----- 34
Paying a Visit to Taipei's "Four Beasts"
- Untamed Taipei** ----- 40
Encounters with Extraordinary Wildlife in the City

DIY FUN

- Lanterns Aglow** ----- 42
DIY Handcrafting Japanese-Style Paper Lanterns

FINE FOOD

- Hot-Potfuls of Pleasure** ----- 46
Perfect Meals for Gourmand Get-Togethers
- Traveling Taipei by Palate** ----- 50
Six Elite Restaurants Included in the Latest Michelin Guide Taiwan

WHERE TO...

- Where to Have a Good Night Out** ----- 54
In a City that Never Sleeps, Options are Aplenty



Seasonal Festivals and Events

#01



Taipei New Year's Party

台北最 High 新年城

As the year draws to a close, Taipei is set to host one of the world's most spectacular New Year's Eve celebrations. Held in front of Taipei City Hall, the event attracts large crowds eager to witness exciting musical performances and a breathtaking fireworks display launched from the nearby Taipei 101 skyscraper. This year's star-studded lineup includes the iconic K-pop girl group Apink, Taiwanese favorites Energy and Cosmos People, and Golden Melody Awards winner Penny Tai from Malaysia. The party will feature a sports theme to celebrate Taiwan's athletic prowess, honoring Olympic athletes from Taiwan – including breakdancer Quake, who will perform on stage – and anticipating the upcoming World Masters Games, which Taipei is co-hosting.

📍 Taipei City Hall Square
台北市政府市民廣場

📅 December 31-January 1, 2025
🌐 2025newyear.travel.taipei

#02

Christmas Celebrations 耶誕活動



During the Christmas season, Taipei boasts a festive atmosphere and offers a delightful holiday experience. Keep an eye out for beautifully adorned Christmas trees and festive decorations scattered throughout the city, especially around major department stores in the Xinyi District, the youthful Ximending area, and along Xinsheng South Road (aka "The Road to Heaven"), which is home to several churches. December also brings a host of special Christmas events, including the Gongguan Christmas Season at Taipei Water Park and a Christmas concert at Daan Park.

📍 Daan Park, Taipei Water Park, and shopping districts around the city
大安森林公園、台北自來水園區及各大商圈
📅 December

#03

Taipei Lunar New Year Festival 台北年貨大街



Taipei's Lunar New Year market on Dihua Street has attracted visitors with its vibrant atmosphere since 1996. This bustling celebration of New Year traditions offers a delightful shopping experience. Immerse yourself in the festive spirit as you explore the market's colorful stalls, adorned with red lanterns and other auspicious decorations, and try the many traditional goods, including *niangao* (glutinous-rice cake), as well as dried fruits and nuts — all offered in free samples. As you wander along the historic street, also take a moment to admire the architectural beauty on display.

📍 Dihua Street
迪化街
📅 January 11-February 27, 2025

#04

Yangmingshan Flower Festival 陽明山花季



Every spring, Yangmingshan National Park, on the city's north side, transforms into a charming floral wonderland drawing great crowds of flower enthusiasts. The festival's heart is Yangming Park, inside the national park, where visitors can witness a stunning display of cherry blossom varieties, including Taiwanese mountain cherry, yaezakura, Showa cherry, and Yoshino cherry. The park's vibrant azaleas further enhance the colorful spectacle. To complete the floral feast, wild daffodils bloom along the Hushan Green around late-February, followed by stunning wisteria in Qianshan Park in mid-March.

📍 Yangmingshan National Park
陽明山國家公園
📅 February-March, 2025
🌐 www.flowersfestival.taipei



#05 Taipei Lantern Festival 台北燈節

Since its inception in 1997, the Taipei Lantern Festival has captivated audiences with its stunning display of colorful lanterns. In 2025, the event is held again in the vibrant Ximending area – including Beimen (North Gate) – following last year’s successful run. Visitors can expect to be mesmerized by a diverse array of featured lanterns, ranging from traditional designs to highly innovative creations. These and the festival’s iconic large-scale main lantern, set up in front of Zhongshan Hall, are illuminated by dazzling light shows and are sure to attract spectators in the hundreds of thousands.

- 📍 Zhongshan Hall, MRT Ximen Station, and Sec.1 Zhonghua Rd. 中山堂、捷運西門站及中華路一段
- 📅 February 2-16, 2025 (Festive Lights will begin on Jan 24)

WORLD MASTERS GAMES 2025

TAIPEI CITY — NEW TAIPEI CITY

Registration Benefit

Group Tour Discount:
15% Off

Advance Purchase Discount
for Fun Pass: **NTD1,220**

Accommodation Discounts
on Booking Platforms

Airfare Discount: 10% Off
Overseas Registrations only

Transportation Card
Discount for the Event
Overseas Registrations only

Official Website

Find your team or partner

臺北市政府
Taipei City Government

新北市政府
New Taipei City Government



TEXT | HAN CHEUNG
PHOTOS | CHEN CHENG-KUO, VISION

Riverside Rides



Serene Scenic Excursions Along Taipei's Rivers

With stations of the YouBike public bike-rental system seemingly on every other corner, it's beyond convenient to hop on a bike and ride along Taipei's extensive network of bike paths. Those along the city's rivers are especially popular with local bike riders. Here we take a look at two riverside routes, along the Keelung River and the Jingmei/Xindian rivers.



If you seek respite from the clamor of the metropolis, head to one of the city's breezy riverside parks, which are linked by 112km of interconnected bike paths running along the riverbanks. These verdant oases are separated from the streets by floodwalls, and it's not too hard to reach an entry point along one of the four rivers running through the Taipei Basin: Tamsui, Keelung, Xindian, and Jingmei.

The city government began building the paths in 2002, and by 2012 cyclists were able to make a roughly 50km loop along the edges of the city core, mostly using the riverside bikeways. The paths are easy to follow, well-maintained, and the terrain is generally flat, making them a breeze to traverse with a YouBike. There are also Taipei Riverside Bike Rental Centers at certain points along the rivers.

The routes offer splendid and consistent views of the respective rivers, cityscape, and mountains beyond, punctuated by picturesque bridges that are popular with photographers. One can ride for hours from one corner of the city to the next and on to the next, and also continue on to New Taipei City's historic seaport of Tamsui and other destinations.

Cyclists will pass by scores of people exercising at the numerous sports facilities along the way, as well as colorful playgrounds, flower fields, dog parks, art installations, and other intriguing sights and scenery. There are plenty of vending machines, bathroom facilities, and a few places selling food as well. Take note of the nearby urban-area attractions along the way that you feel are worth a pit stop, and then just find the right floodgate or ramp to cross through/over the floodwall.

Keelung Riverside Bikeway

The Keelung Riverside Bikeway begins in the east, close to Nanhu Bridge, and follows the right and left banks of the river all the way to the Shezi Peninsula. Note the remains of the Wufen Suspension Bridge on the Neihu side. The bridge was built in 1918, and back then porters would carry coal across the river to Nangang Railway Station, from where it would be distributed to the rest of the island.



Rainbow Bridge across the Keelung River

Encompassing a grassy hill further west is Neihu Restoration Park, a remarkable example of urban transformation. Once the site of a notorious “garbage mountain” landfill that heavily polluted the river and caught fire multiple times during the 1980s, the area has been reborn as a green space, opening in 2015 as one of the city’s most notable cleanup success stories. The 95-year-old concrete pier of the defunct Huluzhou Suspension Bridge was retrieved from the original waste site and now stands alongside the bike path.

Riders will begin seeing exercisers upon entering Chengmei Right Bank Riverside Park, where one can play tennis, basketball, and baseball, do roller skating, and work out on various fitness contraptions. The star here is the mildly S-shaped Rainbow Bridge and its bright-red supporting arch. From the bridge, you can enjoy sweeping views of the river area and beyond. The floodgate by the LOVE sculpture on the left bank leads to Raohe Street Night Market and the impressive six-story Songshan Ciyou Temple.

Dajia Riverside Park during flower season
© Hydraulic Engineering Office



Mosey along the riverbend starting just west of the bridge, now on the left bank, through Guanshan Riverside Park, which is quite scenic, with open grassland dotted with shrubs and flower fields along with towering river-leaping bridges. Watch for elderly folks playing croquet, sometimes in conical farmer's hats. An eye-catching playground with a frog theme introduces children to the three main frog species found in these parts, and a newly built Airplane Watching Platform with a colorful glass-brick arch provides a prime spot to watch planes from nearby Taipei Songshan Airport roar by.



Lin An Tai Historical House and Museum

The expansive Dajia Riverside Park plays host to numerous city events and concerts, including the annual Taipei International Dragon Boat Championships. Here you can try your hand at several watersports, such as kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding, and the playgrounds are aquatic-themed and equipped with water-play areas. Highlights of the park include 1,300m² of sunflower fields that remain in full bloom until the end of November, and the Fountain of Hope that projects a fan-shaped water curtain as high as a 25-story building.

Exit the park at Evacuation Gate 10 to visit the Lin An Tai Historical House and Museum, a charming courtyard residence in traditional southern Fujianese style, built in the 1780s. The complex was originally located about 8km away and was nearly demolished in a road-widening project during the 1970s, but scholars and experts rushed in to save it. It was taken apart and painstakingly put back together piece by piece in the current location, where it's surrounded by a landscaped garden with serene walkways and a pond. Expect to see couples clad in traditional clothing taking wedding photos.

Across the street from this complex is the Taipei Collectible Botanical Garden, which boasts specimens of more than 500 varieties of plants from different climate zones. This secluded refuge is the only botanical garden in Taiwan housed in a green building – certified diamond grade under the national EEWH system.

The well-tended garden opens with a glass-covered room with plants endemic to Taiwan, other subtropical and tropical species, as well as orchids and ferns. The succulent plant area is a visitor favorite, featuring specimens in all sorts of shapes and sizes, and the space gives off desert vibes complete with a quirky camel sculpture. The temperature drops when entering the temperate zone, which includes a collection of begonias provided by the renowned plant taxonomist Peng Ching-I. After reaching the coldest section, the alpine zone, visitors can quickly descend from the mountains back to the subtropics.

A short ride away to the west is the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan’s first public modern art museum. The minimalist gray-white building is surrounded by a spacious plaza and lit up in changing colors after sundown. The rotating exhibitions feature contemporary Taiwanese and international artists, as well as retrospectives and showcases on past modern styles. Works related to one of the institution’s main programs, the Taipei Arts Awards, are on show until February 2025. Don’t miss the art park to the south of the building, which includes renowned architect Wang Da-hong’s reconstructed residence.

Taipei Collectible Botanical Garden



Back at the bikeway, the left bank continues to Shezidao, a sandbar peninsula dotted with small settlements, factories, and farm plots. The wetlands along the banks of the river here are teeming with wildlife, including migratory birds, crabs, and mudskippers. The tip of the peninsula is where the Keelung River flows into the Tamsui River.



Taipei Fine Arts Museum





Jingmei and Xindian Riverside Bikeways

At the southern end of the city, the Jingmei Riverside Bikeway commences in the east across from the Taipei Zoo in Wenshan District. This is a quieter route with fewer attractions compared to its Keelung River counterpart, but the ever-changing interplay of the river, cityscape, and mountain views still make it alluring to traverse.

Begin at the wide, grassy Daonan Riverside Park area on the zoo side (left bank), which in addition to recreational facilities, features a coal-mining-themed playground that honors the area's past as a major coal producer. The playground is "inclusive" – meaning that it is suitable for children of all ages and abilities, even accommodating adults, the disabled, and the elderly.

Directly accessible from the paths along both banks, right after the Wanshou Bridge is Ruins Coffee Roasters (right-bank side), a whimsical space that seems to have acquired a life of its own inside a tiny old warehouse. There's a surprising amount of seating in the mishmash-yet-tasteful interior, as well as an outdoor space that almost feels like a friend's cluttered backyard in rural America. The cute ginger cats are definitely a plus.



Daonan Riverside Park
© Department of Information and Tourism

RUINS COFFEE ROASTERS

📍 242, Sec. 3, Muzha Rd., Wenshan Dist.
☎ (02) 2234-0024
📱 [instagram.com/ruinscoffeeroasters](https://www.instagram.com/ruinscoffeeroasters)
🕒 Tue-Sun 1:00pm-9:00pm

The riverside route eventually link up to the Xindian Riverside Bikeway, which continues north on either side of the Xindian River between tall lines of buildings in this densely populated area of Taipei (right bank) and New Taipei City (left bank). Along the right-bank route, Guting Riverside Park features lightly rolling terrain with flower fields carpeting the landscape in colorful hues from January to late February. Various art installations, many of them "love"-themed, provide backdrops for photo ops. Ride up the elevated platform there for some sweet vistas.



Xindian Riverside Bikeway at Yongfu Bridge

While exploring the Jingmei Riverside Bikeway, the Xianjiyan (Immortal Footprint Rock) Trail is a good reason to hop off and do some hiking. Exit at Jingmei Bridge and follow Jingxing Road north, until you see the cartoon reliefs of the legendary Eight Immortals on a wall to the right. Legend has it that one of the immortals, Lu Dongbin, left an imprint of his foot on a large boulder at the summit of the hill here while battling a monstrous toad. It's a brisk but rewarding walk up the 144m eminence, where splendid views and a shrine dedicated to Lu await.

Just west of the Jingxing Road trailhead, grab some grub at Jingmei Night Market to recharge. This is a traditional wet market during the day, but the hundreds of night-market stalls begin coming to life as early as 4pm. Shanghai pan-fried buns, four herbs soup, sesame oil chicken, goose meat and tofu pudding are among the more popular delectables, and patrons can also get a knife massage and play classic fair games such as Taiwanese pinball. Right outside the market is the exquisite Jiying Temple, which was relocated here in 1867. This is one of three Jiying Temples in Wenshan District established by a prominent local family surnamed Gao, from Fujian's Anxi County, who were among the area's earliest Han Chinese settlers.

Another option for evening sustenance is Gongguan Waterfront Plaza, right off the Xindian Riverside Bikeway

southeast of the aforementioned Guting Riverside Park. The plaza, which has a bike rental shop, is frequented by joggers and cyclists during the day, and as dusk falls it morphs into a vibrant nightlife spot with lively outdoor bars and eateries. Music festivals, craft markets, and other events are regularly held here. The adjacent Pipe Live Music, housed in a 60-year-old water-pumping station, is one of the city's premier spots to experience local live acts, whether it be rock, hip-hop, or electronic music.



WHOOSAH

- 📍 1-5, Siyuan St., Zhongzheng Dist.
- 📷 [instagram.com/whoosahaverna](https://www.instagram.com/whoosahaverna)
- 🕒 Wed-Sun 8:00pm-3:00am



Treasure Hill

The waterfront plaza allows revelers to gaze out over the river, illuminated after dark by the lights of Yongfu Bridge. This roadway-and-aqueduct bridge features three shiny red arches and thick blue pipes transporting drinking water across the river. This riverside area is where Taipei first established its modern running-water system more than 100 years ago; learn more about this intriguing history at the Museum of Drinking Water, close to the plaza.

Another music venue at the edge of the waterfront plaza is Whoosah, which bills itself as a music taverna. It offers fried small bites, light meals such as dumplings (with non-handmade and handmade options), beef bourguignon, and a variety of souped-up instant noodles. A full range of drink options is also on the menu, including coffee, beer, wine, spirits, and cocktails. The bar puts on DJ performances, music events, and themed parties, and the fun rages until 3am from Wednesday to Sunday.

While in this area, another must-visit treasure is Treasure Hill, a hilltop cluster of formerly illegal residences that has been transformed into an artist village while preserving the look of the original community. The maze-like winding alleys and stairs contain cafés, shops, galleries, and performance spaces. The community is directly accessible from the riverside bike path. 📍



Fountain of Hope | 希望之泉

Gongguan Waterfront Plaza | 公館水岸廣場

Jingmei Night Market | 景美夜市

Jingmei Riverside Bikeway | 景美溪河濱自行車道

Jiying Temple | 集應廟

Keelung Riverside Bikeway | 基隆河濱自行車道

Lin An Tai Historical House and Museum | 林安泰古厝

Museum of Drinking Water | 自來水博物館

Rainbow Bridge | 彩虹橋

Raohe Street Night Market | 饒河街觀光夜市

Songshan Ciyou Temple | 松山慈祐宮

Taipei Collectible Botanical Garden | 台北典藏植物園

Taipei Fine Arts Museum | 台北市立美術館

Treasure Hill | 寶藏巖

Xianjiyan Trail | 仙跡岩步道

Xindian Riverside Bikeway | 新店溪河濱自行車道



MAP

Please drink responsibly



Bicycle Shops Cum Cafés

Trendy Businesses that Cater to the Needs of Cyclists

TEXT | HAN CHEUNG PHOTOS | VISION

With cycling becoming increasingly popular in Taipei, businesses aim to promote the activity not just as a sport but as a lifestyle. One example is the emergence of bike café shops, which provide quality food and drink in a chic setting while also offering a selection of designer vehicles, apparel, and accessories. Following, we introduce three cool places in the city that are popular with local and international cyclists alike.



Rapha Clubhouse Taipei ▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶

Welcoming visitors with a picturesque elevated patio in the trendy East District, Rapha Clubhouse aims to be more than just a cycling apparel and accessory shop. As the British company's Taiwan manager Ahsien Yen says, "We hope that it is a second home for cycling enthusiasts."

The tranquil café/shop only offers limited outdoor seating. It serves coffee made with Taiwanese beans, a variety of teas, and handmade baked treats. The relaxed atmosphere makes it ideal for unwinding after a ride and chatting with other bike riders, and the striking black monochrome exterior anchored by a large, shady patio tree also makes it a popular spot for photo ops.

Now in its seventh year, Rapha provides a variety of services and activities. It organizes three group rides per week and at least two multi-day trips annually, brings fans to cheer on contestants during races in Taipei, and has watch parties for major events. Rapha Club members from any country can exclusively

rent a bike for up to three days from the shop, which is equipped with a computer that contains GPS maps of all the popular routes in Taipei.

Ahsien says cyclists have come from as far as Norway to join the group rides, and Taiwan is renowned internationally for its smooth roads, ubiquitous convenience stores, and inspiring scenery. Even just in Taipei, cyclists can easily access the mountains and continue on to the nearby coastal areas beyond for a fun full-day jaunt. Those interested in what the city has to offer can scan the QR codes on the map inside the shop.

RAPHA CLUBHOUSE TAIPEI

📍 71, Ln. 161, Sec. 1, Dunhua S. Rd., Daan Dist.

☎ (02) 2701-8006

🌐 content.rapha.cc/tw/en/clubhouses/taipei

🕒 Mon-Fri 1:00pm-9:00pm

Sun 9:00am-9:00pm



lifestyle by combining the retail shop with coffee and food; it helped that they already had experience in the industry. They aimed to make cycling more accessible to those who didn't want to plunge directly into the specialized, pricier fixed-gear or road bikes that were then all the rage. Tokyobike bicycles have since become popular with café and restaurant owners, who use them for delivery or shopping trips, some even using them as decorations for their premises, says marketing director Peggy Pan.

The shop presents a selection of biking accessories that complement the delicate Japanese aesthetics of the brand. Hot items include retro-style metal bells, leather carrying handles, and Japanese-style designer arm sleeves. "Most of our customers use the bikes for light exercise just to sweat a bit," Pan says. "They're not into buying full jerseys and shorts."

The stylish coffee shop is a rarity in its neighborhood, and attracts both foreign tourists and Tokyobike fans visiting Wanhua District. Many customers like to share photos of their own Tokyobike bicycles and compare how they've customized their rides. Also, local cyclists enjoy dropping by and relaxing after morning riverside excursions (the bike path along the Tamsui River is just a few minutes away).

The coffee shop's menu incorporates various Taiwanese ingredients, often procured straight from the adjacent

Dongsanshui Street Market. Examples include the fish ball, cuttlefish, and egg burger using morsels from the award-winning Da Fond Fishball shop, and fried dumplings with sweet chili sauce using Duo Jia She's generous, handmade delectables. The chrysanthemum tea features both white and yellow types along with goji berries purchased from the famous dry-goods street in Taipei's historic Dadaocheng neighborhood. The offerings are partly seasonal, with rotating ingredients such as pineapple in the summer, and of course include Japanese specialties such as Showa-style pudding and sparkling matcha lemonade.

TOKYOBIKE TAIWAN

- 📍 70, Sanshui St., Wanhua Dist.
- ☎ (02) 2717-0127
- 🌐 shop.tokyobike.tw
- 🕒 Tue-Sun 9:30am-6:00pm





Water bottle design is crucial, as a bottle is an essential item for riders. The store carries bottles that resemble Dunkin' Donuts and Baskin Robbins cups, and there's also a metal one that uses space technology to allow riders to drink without squeezing or sucking. Previously this function was limited to plastic bottles, which do not have insulation properties; with this product riders can enjoy hot coffee even while on steep mountain roads.

"Is it really practical in Taiwan, where there are convenience stores all over the place?" Wang asks. "We feel that there's something in it that's worth promoting." 📌

NABIIS CYCLES & COFFEE

- 📍 36, Ln. 155, Nanjing W. Rd., Datong Dist.
- ☎️ (02) 2388-4866
- 📱 [instagram.com/nabiis_cycles_coffee](https://www.instagram.com/nabiis_cycles_coffee)
- 🕒 Sun-Thu 1:00pm-7:00pm
- Fri-Sat 1:00pm-8:00pm



Dadaocheng | 大稻埕
Dongsanshui Street Market | 東三水街市場
Tamsui River | 淡水河
Ximending | 西門町
Xinfu Market | 新富町文化市場



MAP



TIPS AND REMINDERS FOR BICYCLISTS

TEXT & PHOTOS | VISION

Taipei has emerged as a cyclist's paradise over the past decade plus, thanks largely to its extensive and expanding network of dedicated bike paths and the immensely popular YouBike public bike-rental system. Before you saddle up, here are some helpful tips and reminders to ensure an enjoyable cycling experience.

CYCLING IN TAIPEI

Renting a Bike

Taipei has a convenient-to-use and incredibly popular public bike-rental system, called YouBike. Stations are plentiful throughout the city, making it easy to find a bike and explore at your own pace. YouBike offers a bilingual website (youbike.com.tw) with all the information you need to get started. You need to sign up and log in for the service, either on the website, on the YouBike app, or at a self-service kiosk. For members, the first half hour is free of charge. If you register with an IC card (e.g. Easy Card), you will automatically enjoy public bicycle insurance coverage free of charge.

There are two types of bikes available:

Regular Bikes: These are the standard yellow-white bicycles, perfect for leisurely cycling.

Electric Bikes: Easily identified by their orange color, these bikes offer a helpful electric assist to make pedaling easier, especially on inclines. However, due to their quicker acceleration, be cautious when using them for the first time. Fees for renting an electric bike are slightly higher than for a regular bike.

Riding on a riverside bikeway



Safety First

When cycling in Taipei, always prioritize safety! With high traffic volumes and complex road conditions, a relaxed pace allows for better observation and reaction time. Whenever possible, utilize sidewalks designated for pedestrians and cyclists. Remember, pedestrians always have the right of way, even on bike paths. Although helmets are less common in Taiwan than in some Western countries, wearing one is always recommended for added protection.

Riverside Bikeway

If urban street cycling isn't your cup of tea, consider exploring Taipei's riverside bikeway. From Guandu in the north to Jingmei in the south, you can leisurely bike along the Tamsui and Xindian rivers. Additional bike paths wind along the Keelung, Shuangxi, and Jingmei rivers. And if you're seeking longer rides, the riverside network extends far into New Taipei City and even Taoyuan City.

When cycling along the riverside, slow down when approaching pedestrians. As there's limited shade, remember to stay hydrated by bringing plenty of water on hot days. Food and drink options are limited, but consider stopping at the riverside container markets in Dadaocheng or Guandu for refreshments and scenic views during/after your ride.

MATHEWBIKE 馬修單車

- 📍 577, Wenlin Rd., Shilin Dist.
- ☎ (02) 2832-2238
- 🌐 mathewbike.com
- 🕒 Tue-Fri 12:00pm-9:00pm
Sat-Sun 10:00am-9:00pm

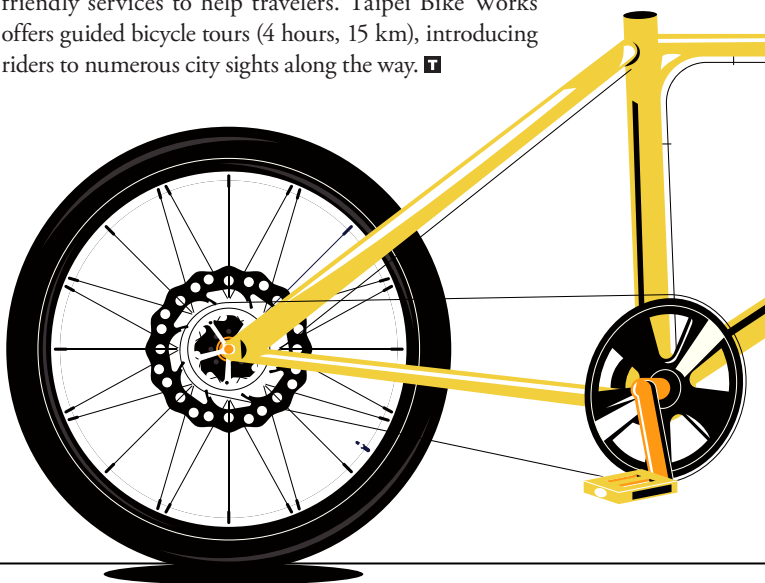
TAIPEI BIKE WORKS

- 📍 9, Ln. 70, Sec. 2, Chongqing N. Rd., Datong Dist.
- ☎ 0982-277-996
- 🌐 taipeibikeworks.com
- 🕒 Wed-Sun 1:00pm-8:00pm



Bike Service Operations

If you're thinking about serious biking in Taipei – whether you're looking to buy a bike, service one you already own, or rent a high-quality bike for more challenging adventures like mountain climbs up Yangmingshan or multi-day excursions such as a round-the-island trip – it's essential to rely on a professional service provider. Two shops well-regarded among foreigners for bike rentals are MathewBike in Shilin District and Taipei Bike Works in Datong District. Both shops can provide rental bikes tailored to your needs, and offer valuable tips and advice for exploring the city on two wheels. This year, MathewBike officially became a Taipei City Information Station, providing friendly services to help travelers. Taipei Bike Works offers guided bicycle tours (4 hours, 15 km), introducing riders to numerous city sights along the way. 📍

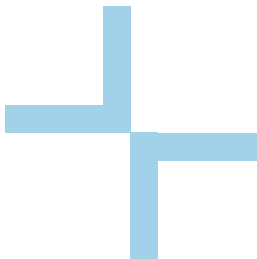


TAIPEI'S *Neighborhood* Zhongshan

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE
PHOTOS | RAY CHANG, VISION



Hangin' Out with the Crowds in One of the City's Coolest Corners



For decades, Ximending has been a mecca for the city's hip younger folk seeking food, shopping, and entertainment pleasure. Today, however, a new kid in town is giving it a real run for its money. A glorious rejuvenation has taken place over the past near-decade in the youth-and-family-friendly zone around MRT Zhongshan Station.

Our first stop for this article is the Xinzhongshan Linear Park, which runs from MRT Zhongshan Station north to Shuanglian Station.

Xinzhongshan Linear Park

For all the reasons I'll be rolling out in the following paragraphs, this area has become a must-visit hit with local visitors and travelers from abroad. One of the anchors on which the area's renaissance has been built is Xinzhongshan Linear Park. Thin and pathway-laced lengthwise, very green, dotted with a constantly changing array of whimsical art installations, and a favorite youth/family gathering spot for people-watching, it was created in 2017 along an old railway right-of-way for a line that ran to the north coast port of Tamsui and Taipei's Beitou hot-springs resort area.

During the city's annual Christmas celebrations, which start in late November, the park becomes a fairyland of light, with a giant Christmas tree check-in spot at the Nanjing West Road entrance, trees festooned with bright lights, and light-tunnel galleries. Many of the chic shops along the park's sides also join in with personalized lighting art.



Eslite Spectrum Nanxi

A second anchor for the station area is Eslite Spectrum Nanxi, opened in 2018, an elite high-rise shopping mall focused on crafts and design. It stands overlooking the linear park on Nanjing West Road's south side. "Eslite," a proudly homegrown Taiwanese brand, is synonymous with cultured living and interior-design comeliness. Eslite Spectrum outlets are usually built around a swank Eslite Bookstore.

On the fourth floor is Maji Treats. "Maji" is another cherished island-grown brand name – seller of artisanal Taiwanese foods, seasonal produce, and artisanal crafts (the first two categories primarily sourced from small organic-farm operations). Maji Treats also has a fine restaurant showcasing Maji ingredients in delicious Taiwanese home-cooking-style dishes.



ESLITE SPECTRUM NANXI

- 📍 14, Nanjing W. Rd., Zhongshan Dist.
- ☎ (02)2581-3358
- 🕒 Sun-Thu 11:00am-10:00pm
Fri-Sat 11:00am-10:30pm (bookstore opens until midnight)

Next, we will explore a grid of narrow lanes right beside the linear park, where intriguing stores align.

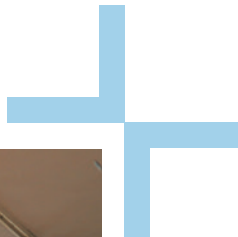
Everyday ware & co is a soigné select store on the second level of a multi-floor former residential building right beside the linear park. The theme here: every practical item in your home can be a fashion statement, enhancing the aesthetics of your life, and the owners bring in carefully curated creations from around the globe to introduce new aesthetic concepts to the Taiwan consumer. Buy fewer things, buy higher quality, buy proud craftsmanship. Items range from new products with sleek modern looks to vintage treasures with retro stories.

EVERYDAY WARE & CO

- 📍 2F, 25, Ln. 20, Sec. 2, Zhongshan N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist.
- ☎ (02) 2523-7224
- 🌐 www.everydayware.co
- 🕒 2:00pm-10:00pm



Aroma stones



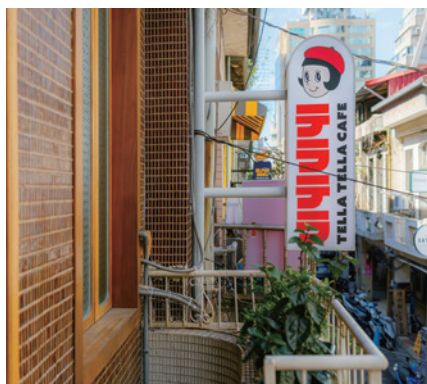
Vinyl records sold at Par Store



Chifeng Street

Slender, gently winding Chifeng Street is on the other side of the linear park. Over the past decade this and the narrow lanes shooting off it have been filling up with creative, often endearingly eccentric, select and concept shops, cafés, izakayas, eateries, dessert shops, thrift and vintage shops, and other indie ventures.

The symmetrical street/lane grid was laid out by the Japanese during their rule in Taiwan from 1895 to 1945. Many of the townhouse-style Japanese dormitory residences in which Japanese public servants lived still survive today. Post-WWII this area became known as “iron street” or “scrap dealer street,” home to a legion of shops fixing and selling imported used automotive components. A platoon is still running, providing such magnetic scenery juxtapositions as shopfront windows stacked high with car stereos beside a sleek plant-fronted café. Let’s now visit a clutch of the most popular new cultural-creative faces in the neighborhood.



TELLA TELLA CAFE

- 📍 2F, 22, Ln. 49, Chifeng St., Datong Dist.
- ☎ (02) 2550-3077
- 📱 [instagram.com/tellatellacafe](https://www.instagram.com/tellatellacafe)
- 🕒 11:30am-8:00pm



Down along one of Chifeng Street’s peaceful offshoot lanes, just a short walk from busy Nanjing West Road, Par Store is on the basement level of an old residential building. The choice of subterranean digs is deliberate, the owners considering theirs an “underground” commercial operation. This concept store’s stock: vinyl records, band merchandise, and indie magazines by Asian creators, from around East Asia. There’s also a small performance space, for use by self-sustaining bands and individual artists. “Par” is short for Petit Alp Records, a recording label founded by one of the owners, a band musician.

PAR STORE

- 📍 B1, 1, Ln. 3, Chifeng St., Datong Dist.
- 🌐 www.parstoretaipei.com
- 🕒 Mon-Thu 2:00pm-8:00pm
Fri-Sun 2:00pm-9:00pm

Tella Tella Cafe, a few doors from Xinzhongshan Linear Park down another quiet lane, is announced outside with a cute lit-up sign of a young cartoon girl wearing a bright-red beret. It’s on the second floor of another oldish low-rise residential building, reached via narrow, steep stairs. The interior is a time-travel journey to 1960s Taiwan, with Taiwanese, Japanese, and Western accoutrements. The coffees are refined, but the big patron-pulling menu items are the shakes, slushies/sodas, and meat curries with rice.



You'll invariably see a line-up of folks patiently waiting outside Mian Xian Ding, located right at the linear park's edge diagonally across from Tella Tella Cafe, non-regulars among them checking blogger must-try recommendations on mobile phones. Mian Xian Ding is a *mian xian* (rice vermicelli) specialist, and is set up mimicking a Japanese *yatai*, literally "shop stand." All operations are right along the brick-columned sidewalk arcade, diners either sitting on stools in front of the bar-like service counter or street-edge at metal drums-cum-tables painted up as monster-sized Kirin Beer cans.

The culinary focus here: *mian xian* rich with the freshest Taiwan seafood jewels. All the marine ingredients used are Taiwan-sourced, notably the famously plump and sweet oysters of the southwest coast's Dongshi Township and neritic squid from the Taiwan Strait's Penghu Islands.

MIAN XIAN DING 面線町

📍 25, Ln. 49, Chifeng St., Datong Dist.

☎ 0932-055-466

🕒 Wed-Sun 11:30am-7:30pm

Next, we will go underground, to the Zhongshan Underground Book Street. Entry can be made directly from the concourse level of MRT Zhongshan/Shuanglian stations.



Zhongshan Underground Book Street



Billed as the "longest book street in Taiwan," this most unusual of tourist attractions runs between Zhongshan and Shuanglian stations directly below the linear park and directly above the metro-line tunnel. This is another Eslite project, meaning elevated aesthetics – both inside the varied commercial operations and in the long pedestrian tunnel corridor itself. The "street" is set up like an Eslite Spectrum outlet stretched out lengthwise, with very long and thin Eslite outlets (general books and children's books) that will remind you of the interconnected carriages on metro trains, along with Eslite music (which boasts an extensive selection of vinyl records), artisanal crafts, and stationery outlets, chic cafés, and more.

Among the lengthy street's other allures are occasional special theme exhibits and a section with a long wall of mirrors along one side for teams of young folks to practice their dance moves, funky karaoke pods on the other, and direct open-portal links to the adjacent Jazz Square sunken plaza.



Finally, we head to a museum showcasing contemporary art. It is one block south of MRT Zhongshan Station. From Zhongshan Underground Book Street, you can take exit R4 for direct access to the museum.

MoCA Taipei



The prestigious Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (MoCA Taipei) landmarks the southernmost fringe of the Zhongshan neighborhood. Opened in 2001 as Taiwan's first museum dedicated to contemporary art, it concentrates on the themes of art, design, and architecture, with no permanent exhibits. The museum is housed in a two-story red-brick building built by the Japanese in 1919 that

originally served as an elementary school for Japanese children, with some Taiwanese admitted, thereafter doing service as Taipei City Hall from 1945 to 1994. The architectural style is a Victorian/Edwardian hybrid, with perhaps the most visually compelling attraction of the melodiously symmetrical design being the bell tower rising from the roof's center. **T**



Inside MoCA Taipei

MOCA TAIPEI 台北當代藝術館

- 📍 39, Changan W. Rd., Datong Dist.
- ☎ (02) 2552-3721
- 🌐 mocat Taipei.org.tw
- 🕒 Tue-Sun 10:00am-6:00pm



Chifeng Street | 赤峰街
 Eslite Spectrum Nanxi | 誠品生活南西
 Maji Treats | 神農生活
 mian xian | 麵線
 Xinzhongshan Linear Park | 心中山線形公園
 Zhongshan Underground Book Street | 中山地下書街



MAP

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE
PHOTOS | POWEI CHEN, VISION

.....
This is where it all began for the city of Taipei, the city's oldest community. Imperial-era settlers chose this swath of flat land because it was best for trade and communication in the Taipei Basin. The story of Taipei is told here, in the form of "living museum" heritage temples, markets, shops, and other attractions.
.....

Time in "Way Back When" Taipei

BANGKA STORIES



Bangka Lungshan Temple



Divination blocks

The Bangka area, known today as Wanhua District in Mandarin Chinese, was renamed "Manka" during the Japanese era. "Manka" is a Japanese word with a positive connotation of prosperity. While the official name has changed, the original name "Bangka" (or "Monga") continues to be used in the Taiwanese language and also appears in English publications.

We start our exploration of Bangka with a visit to Lungshan Temple, which is easily reached by a short walk north of MRT Lungshan Temple Station.*



— LUNGSHAN TEMPLE —

The visually loud, majestic old Lungshan (“Dragon Mountain”) Temple is both key to Taipei’s history and the key portal to Bangka’s heart and soul. Founded in 1738 – the present iteration took shape in the 1920s, with some of the most illustrious craftsmen brought in from China – this is one of the world’s greatest showcases of Chinese temple art, renowned for its exquisite stone sculptures, woodcarvings, and bronze work. Of special note are the twelve major support columns at the main hall, enveloped in writhing auspicious dragons hewn from solid stone.

More than 100 icons of myriad gods are enshrined within. Temple lore attests that the main deity, Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy, has proven unusually powerful over the centuries. In one example, when the area was devastated by an earthquake in 1815, Lungshan’s Guanyin emerged serene and unscathed. In another, during WWII Allied bombers inadvertently hit the temple, and though the explosions and ensuing fire razed the main hall, the goddess miraculously survived intact, singed but nothing more, though the protective iron railings surrounding her had melted. A common sight at the temple is the casting of divination blocks to draw divination slips. After receiving a positive answer from the deity – one flat side up and one rounded side up – you can draw a divination slip and interpret the oracle.

As well, be sure to visit Yue Lao (“Old Man Under the Moon”), the Chinese Cupid (complex rear, left corner). Young people will cast divination blocks to ask for a red thread from Yue Lao. Carrying this thread with you is believed to bring luck in finding true love.

Join a guided tour (90min) of the temple with a knowledgeable volunteer. Tours are offered in Chinese, English, and Japanese, starting at the waterfall near the temple entrance at 9:30am, 1:30 pm, and 7:00pm. Also, at around 6:00am, 8:00am and 5:00pm each day, sutras are chanted in the courtyard and you’re welcome to join.

Guanyin worshipped in the main altar



Note: “Lungshan” is also spelled “Longshan,” hence the MRT station’s name.



Turn left after leaving the temple and you come right to Herb Lane.



HERB LANE

Along the temple's east-side wall is priceless Herb Lane, a short, covered narrow alley thick with open-faced shops stacked high with teas and more than a hundred herbs. This originally was the start of the pathway-type road leading east from the temple, which wended through what is today known as the Bopiliao Historic Block, another prime Wanhua attraction.

In the old days, when doctors were a rarity, Taiwan temple worshippers suffering ailments would ask a god for a divine herbal-medicine prescription, then proceed to local sellers for the needed ingredients. In the 1980s the Taipei government prohibited temples from issuing medicinal divination slips, but aromatic Herb Lane continues to supply items for Chinese doctor-prescribed traditional medicines and tonic foods and also sells herbal ointments, teas, tea bags, and bath bags. Most of the fresh herbs used come from north Taiwan, dried and processed herbs from the center/south.

At Herb Lane's east end, on Xichang Street, you'll see several busy drink stands, selling herbal teas and other tonic drinks. The vendors will be happy to explain, which are best for summer cooling or winter warming of your metabolism.



Fruit stand in Dongsanshui Street Market

From Lungshan Temple, walk east along Guangzhou Street, turn right onto Kangding Road and you'll soon see the entrance to Dongsanshui Street Market on the left-hand side.



U-mkt building

➤ DONGSANSHUI STREET MARKET

Long, sinewy Dongshanshui Street Market, snaking an entire block, is perhaps Wanhua's most important traditional market. It is, in effect, an elongated tunnel, just wide enough for three or four people walking abreast, score upon score of small vendor stalls stretched out either side its entire length, a low roof shielding shoppers from rain and sun. The market took shape way back in the 1920s. The range of offerings is dazzlingly culture-illuminating, ranging from fresh produce and cooked foods to daily necessities, with many sellers of traditional delicacies. One of the best vendors in the market is Duo Jia She, well known for its five-colored dumpling combo. The dumplings are filled up generously with natural, high-grade ingredients that are carefully selected and hand-processed.

A short side corridor beside this stall leads to what strikes the visitor as an open-air mini "urban canyon," walls formed by the backs of buildings on all sides. Within it is a precious "hidden-away" heritage treasure, the renovated Xinfu Market, which though Japanese-built in 1935 looks spanking new. This distinctive building has a horseshoe shape and a narrow central courtyard facilitating ventilation and light entry. The exterior is Art Deco, and the radial and stair patterns that were avant-garde when it opened have been retained. Opened as Taipei's first public market to meet the city's progressive new hygiene standards, today it's rebranded as "U-mkt" after its U-shape structure and serves as host to a history display, café, and other facilities (no traditional-style vendors).

DUO JIA SHE 多餃舍

📍 70-5, Sanshui St, Wanhua Dist.
🕒 8:00am-3:00pm

U-MKT

📍 70, Sanshui St, Wanhua Dist.
🕒 Tue-Sun 10:00am-6:00pm



Dumplings by Duo Jia She

HERITAGE STORES

The Lungshan Temple neighborhood teems with long-in-place vendors, some enterprises in operation for more than a century, serving Lungshan and the corps of other community temples, devotees, and local citizens: Buddhist implements shops, embroidery shops, incense and spirit money shops, dowry shops, vendors of traditional pastries, lanterns, and much else – including, as we’ve just seen, herbs and teas.



Lao Ming Yu Incense Shop

One of those long-established businesses is the following incense shop, three blocks north of Lungshan Temple.



Taoist paper art

Lao Ming Yu Incense Shop is a venerable enterprise that has been hand-crafting incense since 1897. The entrance is a portal into a fantastic, densely crammed world of multitudinous types of incense sticks and coils along with multifarious other articles needed for religious worship. An image of the shop’s founder – the fourth generation today runs the show – is featured on a selection of the auspicious red packaging used for the incense sticks; the florid antique-style graphic design it accompanies was done by the founder himself.

A Lao Ming Yu specialty carried on since the shop’s founding is the use of Chinese-medicine fragrances in its incense offerings, using a secret house practice, which have distinctive individual delicate fragrances and, today’s proprietors stress, contain no elements harmful to health. According to the owner, foreign visitors coming to his show are especially fond of golden paper and Taoist paper art, traditionally used in offerings during festive celebrations.

LAO MING YU INCENSE SHOP 老明玉香舖

📍 155, Sec. 2, Guiyang St., Wanhua Dist.

☎ (02) 2381-5569

🕒 8:30am-9:30pm



One minute west on foot from Lao Ming Yu is FullDone Old Tea. This proud business goes back all the way to 1845. The founder opened his tea-processing/selling venture soon upon emigrating from China. Now in the hands of the sixth generation, the tried and true original technology and techniques are still faithfully followed. This includes a unique family-specialty charcoal roasting technique that “reveals and further enhances” the aromas and distinctive characteristics of the premium Taiwan leaf types used. The family also stresses sourcing of leaves for which natural cultivation and harvesting eco-protection methods are used.

FULLDONE OLD TEA 福大同茶莊

📍 196, Sec. 2, Guiyang St., Wanhua Dist.
 ☎️ (02) 2375-6527
 🌐 www.f-tea.com.tw
 🕒 10:00am-7:30pm

Our last stop on this whirlwind tour of Wanhua is a shop three blocks northeast of the aforementioned two stores.



Founded in 1965 by a Taipei local, the signature creation of Favor Tonic Soup, using a guarded family recipe honored by today's third generation, is “four herbs soup,” the Chinese name translating literally as “four gods/spirits soup.” The four starring Chinese medicinal “deities” in question: dried fox nut barley, white lotus seeds, Chinese yam, and poria cocos mushroom. It is believed to have a wide variety of health benefits, including stress relief. Most customers pair their soup with the chewy house sourdough-made *baozi* (buns with fillings). Amidst today's bright, inviting modern-look outside and inside, a mottled red tale from the founder's era has been retained as a cherished visual reminder of the shop's long history. 📺



FAVOR TONIC SOUP 惠安四神湯

📍 142, Neijiang St., Wanhua Dist.
 ☎️ (02) 2371-0898
 📘 facebook.com/4godsoup
 🕒 Mon-Fri 6:00am-7:00pm
 Sat 6:00am-5:00pm



Bangka | 艋舺
 Bopiliao Historic Block | 剝皮寮歷史街區
 Dongsanshui Street Market | 東三水街市場
 Guanyin | 觀音
 Herb Lane | 青草巷
 Lungshan Temple | 龍山寺
 Xinfu Market | 新富市場
 Yue Lao | 月老



MAP



Four herbs soup

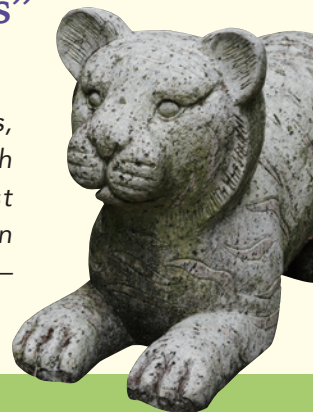


Nature Green in Tooth, Claw ... and Trunk

Paying a Visit to Taipei's "Four Beasts"

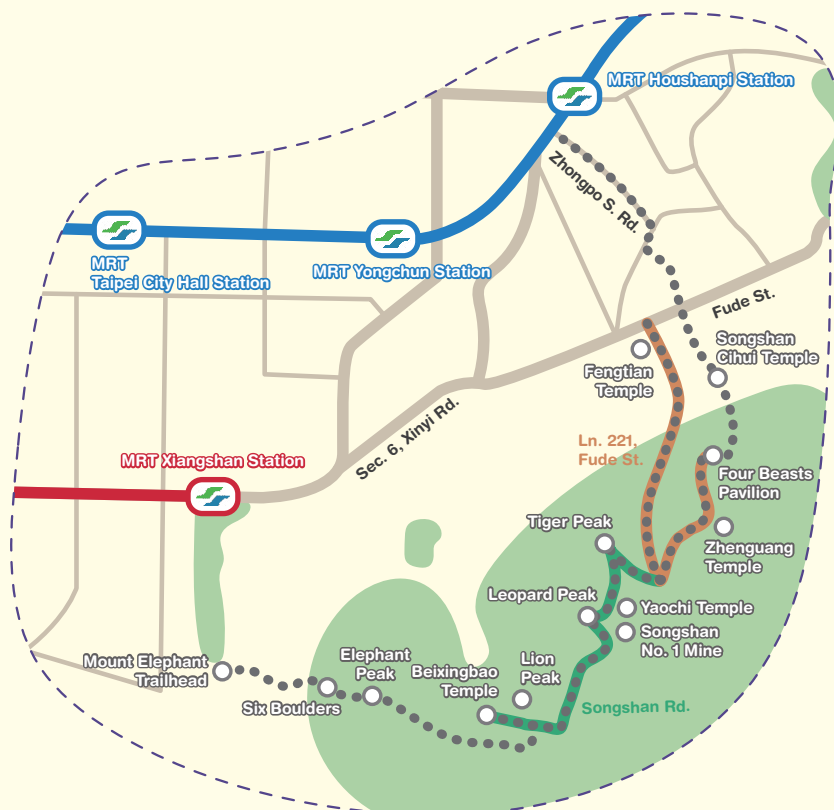
TEXT | AMI BARNES PHOTOS | RAY CHANG, VISION

Just as the margins of ancient maps teemed with monsters, so too do the green extremities of Taipei City – although thankfully, all purely toponymic in nature. The densest collection of these critters lies in the jungle-clad hilly terrain southeast of Taipei 101, where four "beasts" – low mountains – are connected by a gentle hiking trail.





Arched stone bridge along Hushan Creek Trail



So named because it takes in the Tiger, Leopard, Lion, and Elephant mountains, collectively referred to as Four Beasts Mountain (pron. Si Shou Shan), the Four Beasts Mountain Trail offers a quick escape into nature, minutes away from some of the world's most densely populated neighborhoods. It's accessible 24 hours a day, but those who hit the trail early rather than hitting snooze will be rewarded with a sneak peek at a quintessentially Taiwanese experience: the informal breakfast-exercise and social clubs that gather along many suburban hiking trails.

We first walk along the Hushan (Mount Tiger) Creek Trail, starting at Songshan Cihui Temple, to reach the Four Beasts Pavilion and then Songshan Road.

• Hushan Creek Trail

On a warm early winter morning, I found myself leaving MRT Houshanpi Station in the city's east shortly after 8am. Striking out against the flow of rush-hour traffic toward more central points, I grabbed a *fantuan* (stuffed sticky rice ball) from a retail outlet and made my way down Zhongpo South Road, over Fude Street, and under the colorful arch of Songshan Cihui Temple along a Fude Street offshoot lane. From here, a parade of red and gold lanterns snakes up the lane, leading towards the start of the walk proper.

The trailhead sits in the shade of Songshan Cihui Temple and is marked by a tigrine triumvirate and a water fountain. Stepping off the lane into the cool, loamy-scented air, the sounds of water cascading down Hushan Creek's tiered pools bring instant calm.

Within a minute or two, I found myself at a small, arched stone bridge that has become a favorite with photographers thanks to its satisfyingly circular negative space. Just upstream, there's a flat area where – on April evenings – you might spot the stuttering, fluttering sight of fireflies morse-coding their way through ferns.





The next stretch of the trail takes us to three of the four beast peaks in quick succession.

Heading onwards, a gentle ten minutes of uphill walking will bring you to the Four Beasts Pavilion. Here, I encountered a gaggle of spritely silver-haired folk listening to a prerecorded stretch routine – instructions and *erhu* music thick with the crackle of age issued forth from a portable speaker as limbs extended in synchronicity. The group's considered movements combined with the repetitive trilling of Taiwan barbets in the trees above cast a soporific spell, broken only when the stretching ended, morphing into a lung-busting chorus of *Ho! Ho! Ho!*, which I took as my cue to keep moving.

From the Four Beasts Pavilion, steps climb towards the end of Hushan Creek Trail. Then, where the steps end, continue uphill, following Lane 221 of Fude Street, to a junction marked by a small shelter and a strangler fig with draping aerial roots. A gray-robed, shaven-headed nun was sweeping the exterior of Zhenguang Temple as I bore right here. Follow the lane for another 200-300 meters before taking a left onto Songshan Road and – save for brief forays into the undergrowth to visit the summits of the first three beasts – the trail now follows Songshan Road to its terminus, a little over a kilometer and a half away.

As the air warmed, my wandering thoughts were punctuated by the sounds of others' morning activities. A fellow walker passed, solemn-faced and lost in a self-improvement lecture coming from her loudspeaker, strains of karaoke, both artful and artless, carried down from a nearby garden area, the keening screech of crested serpent eagles hung in the air, chattering groups of hikers marched by, and looping, mesmeric sounds of drums drifted out of secluded shrines.



• Tiger, Leopard, and Lion Peaks

The first of the four beasts' peaks to cross your path is the Tiger. The turn-off for the peak is marked by another stone tiger and a fingerpost. (A quick note: the trail signage mostly features romanized spellings of Mount Tiger, Leopard, Lion, and Elephant's Mandarin names, so Hushan, Baoshan, Shishan, and Xiangshan, respectively.) Steps climb to a junction with a shelter, and from here, an avenue of Chinese fan palms leads to a lookout with excellent city views. Gazing west, I caught sight of my destination, Mount Elephant, while to the north, the grand peaks of Yangmingshan National Park sulked among gray clouds. If you're observant, you may notice there's another trail leading down from the summit at this location. This is a slightly shorter alternative running up from Fengtian Temple.

Back on Songshan Road, I continued walking until I came across the remnants of the Songshan No. 1 Mine. Before World War II, coal mining was a big industry in the region, but output gradually dwindled before ceasing entirely in the 1980s. These days, the pithead, which is hidden behind Yaochi Temple and guarded by a winged deity, is all that remains. It also just so happens to stand immediately opposite the turn-off for Mount Leopard.

Like its tiger neighbor, Mount Leopard offers city views, but they're not quite as expansive. Meanwhile, Mount Lion – a further ten minutes up the road – sits in a bamboo- and rhododendron-lined clearing and is the only peak of the four with no views whatsoever.



Sundial beside the Four Beasts Pavilion



Four Beasts Pavilion



Mount Elephant trailhead



Six Boulders and the view of Taipei 101

The final stretch of the trail is the most popular with hikers and those looking to take grand photos of Taipei 101.

Songshan Road tapers to an end just as it arrives at Beixingbao Temple. Steps on the left lead upward signposted towards Mount Nangang's Jiuwu Peak (the area's highest peak at 373.9m) and Mount Elephant, but before embarking on the final extended climb of the day, I stepped through the doorway under the watchful eye of imposing door guardians to enjoy the temple's welcomingly cool interior. A woman dozed with her feet up in a side room, something dated and melodramatic gracing the TV before her, and outside, a believer fed the temple's intricately decorated burner with spirit money.

• Mount Elephant

Once I'd caught my breath, I set off again, heading up the steps. After a short distance, the trail forks and you need to take the right-hand path, then continue upwards until the trail crests a rise at a four-way junction. Taking the middle fork, I found myself at the pinnacle of the fourth and final beast within seconds. Mount Elephant is by far the busiest of the four peaks, so you might find yourself queuing to take photos here. Like the other three, there's a wooden marker bearing the peak's name, but this final and most popular summit also boasts a heart-shaped frame designed to help you snap whimsical photos of Taipei 101.

A little further along the path, you'll pass a sheltered observation deck with more cracking views of the city, and just beyond that, the trail cuts around a cluster of sandstone boulders — the Six

Boulders. The weatherworn surfaces of these large rocks bear traces of historic, hand-carved graffiti, and standing beside them for pictures is one of the obligatory "shots or it didn't happen" locations for anyone undertaking the arduous climb up Mount Elephant from the nearby trailhead close to the Pure Land Buddhism center (Jingzong Temple). Speaking of which, the descent from here to this trailhead is wicked steep and one of my favorite parts of a visit to this trail network, because I get to enjoy watching the expressions of upwards-bound hikers regress from exhaustion through irritation and apprehension to eager anticipation as I get closer to the bottom of the trail. If I'm in a mischievous mood I might throw a "nearly there" at those who seem to need the most encouragement, smug in the knowledge that it's a smooth slide down to the bottom for me.

• After the Hike

It took me a little under two hours to greet all the beasts and head back down to street level, by which time I was well overdue for my morning cup of joe. As luck would have it, rich wafts of coffee-infused air directed my feet from the final step to the simply dressed frontage of %ARABICA. The shop is one of a raft of small enterprises that have accrued around the trailhead catering to the hot and thirsty and is often crowded with hikers or soon-to-be-hikers waiting for their caffeine fix. There's limited seating (a short bench inside, another outside), so I ordered a refreshing iced Americano before heading on my way. For anyone visiting mid-afternoon, the neighboring Thirst Quenching Company might be a better bet – this outlet's cooling bowls of sweet *aiyu* jelly and fruit-infused teas are perfect for taking the edge off a long, hot walk. Also try the Taiwan butter bread, which features a cute imprint of an elephant, a reference to the nearby mountain. Other options for sitting down to a cup of coffee or a meal are YUYU Good Food and Sunshine Café, both located just a few steps from Thirst Quenching Company. 📍



% Arabica Taipei Elephant Mountain



Thirst Quenching Company

% ARABICA TAIPEI ELEPHANT MOUNTAIN

📍 65, Aly. 22, Ln. 150, Sec. 5, Xinyi Rd., Xinyi Dist.
 ☎️ (02) 27587288
 📘 facebook.com/arabicataiwan.1
 🕒 9:00am-6:30pm

THIRST QUENCHING COMPANY 解解湯有限公司

📍 65, Aly. 22, Ln. 150, Sec. 5, Xinyi Rd., Xinyi Dist.
 ☎️ (02) 27583232
 📘 facebook.com/mt.elephant
 🕒 9:00am-9:00pm



Beixingbao Temple | 北星寶宮
 Fengtian Temple | 奉天宮
 Four Beasts Pavilion | 四獸亭
 Four Beasts Mountain Trail | 四獸山步道
 Hushan Creek Trail | 虎山溪步道
 Jiuwu Peak | 九五峰
 Six Boulders | 六巨石
 Songshan Cihui Temple | 松山慈惠堂
 Songshan No. 1 Mine | 松山一坑
 Yaochi Temple | 瑤池宮
 Zhenguang Temple | 真光禪寺



MAP

UNTAMED

TAIPEI



Encounters with Extraordinary Wildlife in the City

With its subtropical climate, Taipei hosts an incredible variety of insects throughout most of the year. While butterflies might be the first to come to mind — with the Erziping Trail in Yangmingshan National Park, also known as the “Butterfly Corridor,” being a prime spot for sightings — these delicate creatures are notoriously difficult to photograph. For easier alternatives, consider focusing on dragonflies and other insects. Equipped with a macro lens and some patience, you can capture stunning close-up portraits of these tiny marvels.

TEXT & PHOTOS | VISION

Longhorn Beetle

Longhorn beetles are a diverse group of insects, with over 35,000 species worldwide. Taiwan alone is home to more than 600 species, known locally as *tianniu* (lit. “sky cows”), because of their long horn-like antennae. One notable endemic species is the *Paraglenea swinhoi*. This striking work of art boasts a vibrant arctic-blue body adorned with symmetric black dots. It is commonly found on hibiscus shrubs throughout Taiwan.

Chinese name: 黑紋蒼藍天牛

Length: 14-18mm

Host plants: Taiwan Hibiscus, Rose of Sharon

Emergence as adults: April to September

Paraglenea swinhoi, a species of longhorn beetle, seen in Yangmingshan National Park

Taiwan Red Percher,
seen near the eco pond in Fuyang Eco Park

Taiwan Red Percher

Chinese name: 善變蜻蜓
Wingspan: 56mm
Body length: 34-42mm
Emergence as adults: March to November

Dragonflies are relatively easy to capture, especially when they perch on branches near ponds or creeks. The eco pond in Fuyang Eco Park (near MRT Linguang Station) is an excellent spot to observe these graceful insects during the warmer months. The Taiwan Red Percher is particularly striking, with its distinctive wing pattern and clear wingtips accented by striking red dashes. In Chinese, the insect is called *shanbian qingting* (lit. changeable dragonfly), which refers to its colors. The females are yellow and red, while the males are yellowish-brown before maturity and turn red after maturing.

A cicada (*Mogannia hebes*), seen in Yangmingshan National Park

Cicada

Chinese name: 草蟬
Length: 13-15mm
Emergence as adults: April to August

Adult cicadas have a relatively short lifespan, and their incessant chirping denotes a desperate urgency to find a mate during their limited time. Hiking in the forests of Yangmingshan National Park during late spring or early summer, you're likely to be greeted by a deafening chorus of cicadas, their combined noise rivaling that of dozens of lawnmowers. One common cicada species in Taiwan is the *Mogannia hebes*, known in Chinese as *caochan* (lit. grass cicada). These cicadas most often molt on acacia trees, and their discarded shells can be found on and below the trees. **T**

LANTERNS AGLOW

DIY Handcrafting Japanese-Style Paper Lanterns



TEXT | **HOLLIE YOUNGER** PHOTOS | **RAY CHANG**

Celebrate the upcoming Lantern Festival by crafting a beautiful, traditional lantern! At 997 Studio you can create your own paper lantern using traditional Japanese techniques and locally sourced materials. The studio offers a rare chance to get creative while exploring the East Asian cultural heritage. Here, generations of tradition and craftsmanship have been condensed into an introductory class in lantern-making, allowing visitors to create collapsible lanterns that are one-of-a-kind souvenirs.

Tucked down along an alley just south of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Xinyi District, 997 Studio offers a range of DIY experiences, from rug-making to ring-forging. Its newest offering, traditional Japanese lantern-making, is something you likely won't find anywhere else in Taiwan.

The studio is cozy, and not just from the soft glow of a dozen hanging lanterns. The space is filled with whimsical elements, dyed yarn in all colors of the rainbow stacked along the walls, and two friendly cats who roam freely. The resident tabby often supervises the crafting process, and if you're lucky, he'll curl up beside you as you work.

Over the past decade or so, DIY classes have become increasingly popular in Taipei, and Hans Li, the owner of 997 Studio, decided to join the trend. He launched the studio three years ago, beginning with make-your-own rug workshops, after previously offering classes out of his living room.

The lantern-making experience does require a certain amount of craftsmanship skills and creative

flair, and is not available to young children. Hans is an expert craftsman, and 997 Studio introduces his teaching style as "your creative BFF – patient, friendly, and genuinely caring."

The class takes between five and six hours, depending on a group's speed. This includes a lunch break, and DIYers can bring along a coffee or a bubble tea to sip as they work. Groups are maximum five participants, and although instruction is in Chinese, Hans has step-by-step instruction manuals in English to help guide foreign visitors through the process. The class is great for couples, arty friends' gatherings, or families with older children visiting Taipei and looking to take home a unique lantern, which is collapsible into a compact, travel-friendly box.

There are three lantern shapes to choose from, ranging in difficulty from beginner-friendly to more advanced: a classic rectangular shape, a rounded oblong, and my personal favorite, the charming egg-shaped lantern.



Dyed yarn along the wall



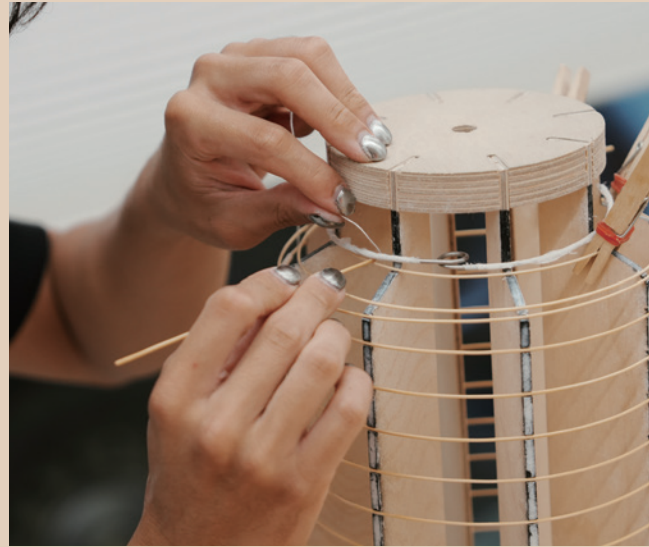
Learning lantern making



Accompanied by a friend, I attended the lantern-making class and had a great time. After settling in at the studio's large workshop table, we got started with the creative process.

The first step was assembling a wooden base, piecing together ridged segments that slot neatly into place – much like building flat-pack furniture. This temporary frame provides support while the bamboo skeleton of the lantern is constructed.

Getting the bamboo skeleton right takes between one and one-and-a-half hours. It's fiddly, and the bamboo strips snap easily. When a mistake is made, however, you can weld a fresh bamboo strip to the snapped ends using a plastic casing and melting the two ends together under a lighter flame. Hans explained that shop-bought, factory-made lanterns will have a perfectly smooth inner frame, often made from metal wire, but the mark of true craftsmanship in Japan is a ridged bump within the inner structure, signifying its handmade status. Don't be afraid of imperfections!



Assembling the wooden base



Fixing a snapped bamboo strip



Applying glue to the ribcage



Once we had the inner structure of our lantern complete, it was time to papier-mâché using semi-translucent white sheets of traditional Japanese paper (*washi*). This next process takes upwards of thirty minutes.

We flipped our lantern on its side and began to apply glue to its ribcage. Next, we took delicate strips of paper, sprayed with water to keep the paper pliable, and carefully laid them on our frame, one by one, from top to bottom. The next step was quite satisfying: we took a coarse brush and swept the paper, cementing it to the bamboo skeleton – this was when our lantern took shape.

Once all the sides were covered in *washi*, we took hairdryers to dry the glue. Finally, we removed the inner wooden base, and happily our lantern held form. Hans then helped to insert a bulb, wire, and metal stand to complete the piece. After we had admired our handiwork, we folded it into a small disk and popped it into an easy-to-carry box, perfect for travelers to take home.

These DIY-class souvenirs make for a fantastic addition to any home. Sleek and stylish, classic East Asian décor artworks, they look perfect on a nightstand, hanging from the wall, or placed on a windowsill to give your home a warm cozy glow and bring back memories of a long, joyful, rewarding day of handiwork in Taipei. **■**

997 STUDIO

📍 11, Ln. 452, Sec. 4, Renai Rd., Xinyi Dist.

🌐 997Studio.rezio.shop

🕒 By reservation only

HOT-POTFULS OF PLEASURE

Perfect Meals for Gourmand Get-Togethers



TEXT | JAMES BARON
PHOTOS | CHEN CHENG-KUO, POWEI CHEN

For people in Taiwan, hot pot is often more than just a tasty meal – it's a social event. Typically served at home during holidays, when family and friends gather around the steaming bowl, it symbolizes togetherness through the circularity of the pot, the table, and the ring of diners. If dining out, there are countless locations all over town. Hot pots are ideal for those who love socializing while supping.

To give you a taste of the hot-pot experience, let's dive into two iconic establishments. First up, we have a restaurant serving fiery "mala" hot pot, perfect for lovers of spicy food. We'll then explore the delicate flavors of "warm beef" hot pot, featuring premium, freshly cut beef.

Chan Chi Hot Pots Lab – Ximen Great World

The Ximending area (around MRT Ximen Station) is brimful of hot-pot possibilities, and Chan Chi Hot Pots Lab is a standout. Focusing on the *mala* (spicy-numbing) variety of broth, Chan Chi began life 30 years ago in New Taipei City's Xinzhuang District. Another branch appeared on Dunhua South Road of Taipei's Daan District before the Ximen Great World branch opened in the basement of a former cinema complex.

Featuring red and blue neon signage in Chinese and English, the building's ostentatious façade contrasts with the nondescript first-floor entrance area, which could pass for an office lobby. Downstairs, however, one finds an altogether different environment. Across a long, dimly lit room, customers lean over square and round tables, tops designed with electric stoves in the center. Dangling from diners' chopsticks are tidbits that are dropped into their bubbling hot-pot broth. The stoves can be adjusted to achieve the requisite tenderness for each item.

Affixed to several walls, LED monitors shimmer with 3D images of interesting artworks. Booths with larger tables afford privacy for parties of up to 12. To guarantee a table in these facilities, book well ahead of time through its online system.

Chan Chi prides itself on the painstaking process that goes into creating the signature broth. "Our chefs start at 6am, simmering the broth with duck's blood over many hours," says the restaurant manager. For the less spice-inclined, a clear option is available, with a lighter, more delicate flavor. The restaurant uses segmented pots, one half containing clear and the other hot and spicy broth.



© Xie Xin-ye

The signature spicy broth is typically enhanced with duck blood and tofu upon arrival. Among the items available for poaching, innards are prized among local gourmands. Preparation for the intestine and tripe includes washing in boiling water to remove pungency. Another crowd-pleaser is the beef tendon, served in knobby chunks, which absorbs the broth and acquires melt-in-the-mouth succulence. A squid and shrimp paste, topped with flying fish roe, can be added to the base as well. Mix the contents thoroughly in the cauldron so the tiny eggs don't separate from the mash and float to the top.

After savoring their meal, many diners prolong the experience by adding duck blood and tofu to the flavorful broth. They then ask the waitstaff to "refill" and package the broth for a satisfying meal at home.



Segmented hot pot

CHAN CHI HOT POT LAB – XIMEN GREAT WORLD

詹記麻辣火鍋 – 西門大世界

📍 B1, 81, Chengdu Rd., Wanhua Dist.

☎ (02) 2311-1800

📘 facebook.com/ChanChiHotPots

🕒 12:00pm-1:00am

Min Sheng Hui

Thanks to its history of sugar production, Taiwan's southern city Tainan has a reputation for sweet cuisine. It is also renowned for its beef soup, with the best versions featuring *wenti niurou* (lit. warm beef) – meat that has not been frozen, fresh from the slaughter.

Tainan native Jay Wu opened this beef-based hot-pot house in Taipei in 2023. Set in a busy lane, minutes from MRT Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall Station, Min Sheng Hui is notable for its snazzy design, aromatic signature broth, and succulent slices of Tainan beef.

Because the produce is transported from Tainan daily, there are limited quantities of the premium cut, which comes in tender, marbled slices served on bamboo leaves. Don't fret if they're sold out – the cheaper, slightly leaner alternative is a worthy substitute. In addition to chunks of fatty beef, the standard broth includes tomatoes, corn, tofu, and hefty medallions of daikon radish. As the meat arrives each day just in time for dinner, the hot pot is reserved for the evening hours, with stir-fried dishes and set meals available for lunch.



Fresh, non-frozen beef





Stir-fried beef with green peppers



Ming Sheng Hui beef hot-pot restaurant

Red dominates the interior, most strongly contrasted by the numerous green columns in the large menu sections posted on one wall. Printed on the yellow paper placemats is a step-by-step breakdown of how to enjoy your meal. Pull-top chopstick dispensers containing orange and green utensils – once standard colors at old-school eateries – reinforce the retro vibe. Two suggestions on the mats include dipping the beef in the broth for three seconds and placing it in your eating bowl, before ladling in soup from the pot. For another Tainan touch, drizzle in a drop of rice wine. Finally, for your dip combine *doubanjiang* (fermented-bean paste) and *jiangyougao* (a thick sweetened soy sauce) from the well-stocked condiment counter, and sprinkle with julienned ginger.

Ming Sheng Hui is one of several arms of Wu's Fujin Tree group. Others include Fujin Tree Taiwanese Cuisine & Champagne, a Michelin-starred restaurant under the parent company's banner in Songshan District, and cafés and bakeries under different brands. Among the products displayed on shelves near the reception counter are a Jay Select range of Taiwan-made natural wines and pizza-boxed pineapple cakes. Wines from independent vineyards in Portugal, Italy, and New Zealand chill in a refrigerator. Local libations include Taiwan Gold Medal beer and Kinmen Kaoliang 38. 🍷



Dining area



Kitchen

🍷 Please drink responsibly

MIN SHENG HUI 民生輝溫體牛肉火鍋

📍 28, Ln. 137, Yanji St., Daan Dist.

☎️ (02) 2778-5898

📘 facebook.com/MinShengHui

🕒 Tue-Sun 11:30am-2:30pm, 5:30pm-10pm



Fujin Tree | 富錦樹

Jay Wu | 吳羽傑

wenti niurou | 溫體牛肉

Ximending | 西門町

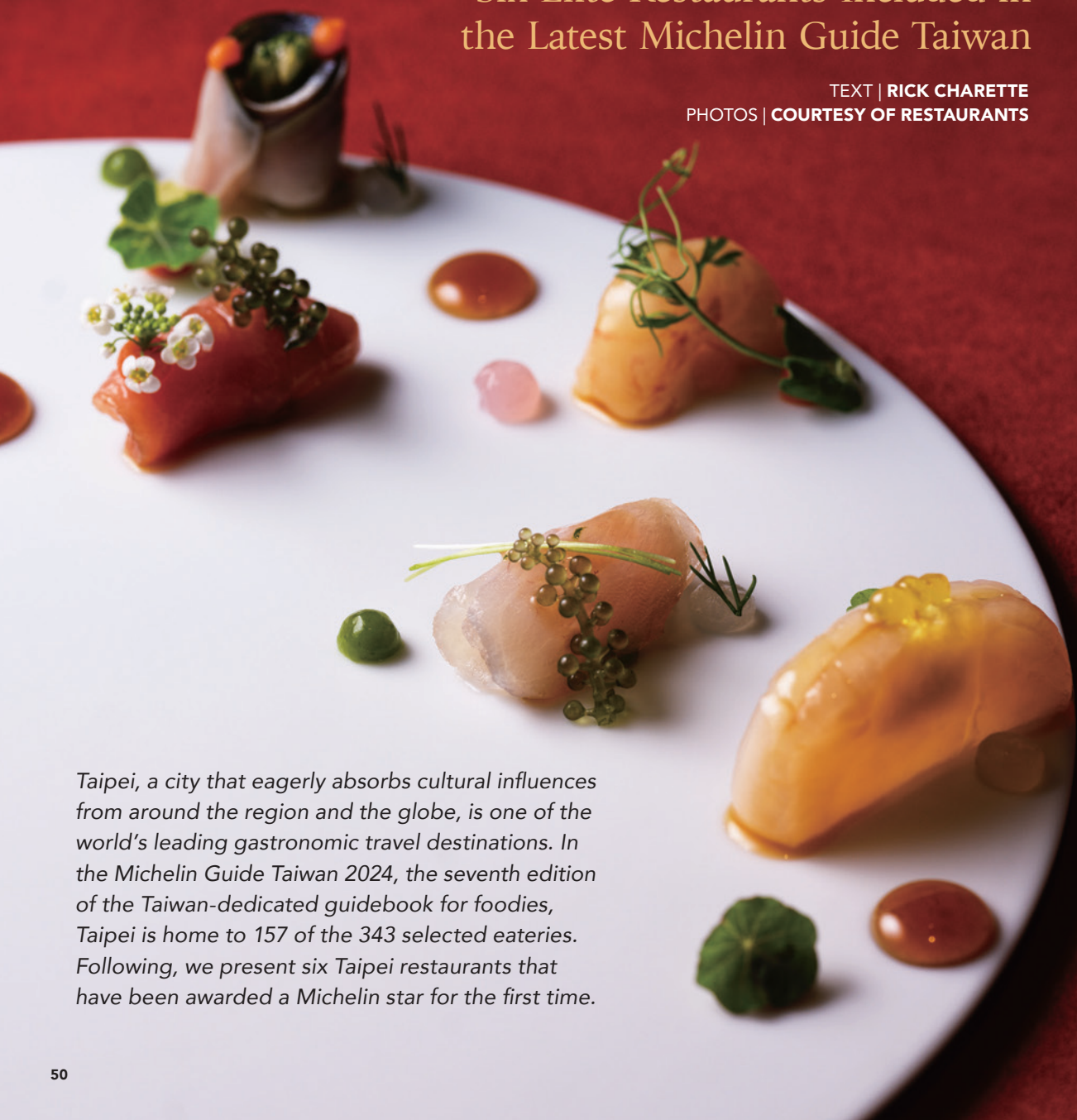


MAP

Traveling Taipei by Palate

Six Elite Restaurants Included in
the Latest Michelin Guide Taiwan

TEXT | RICK CHARETTE
PHOTOS | COURTESY OF RESTAURANTS



Taipei, a city that eagerly absorbs cultural influences from around the region and the globe, is one of the world's leading gastronomic travel destinations. In the Michelin Guide Taiwan 2024, the seventh edition of the Taiwan-dedicated guidebook for foodies, Taipei is home to 157 of the 343 selected eateries. Following, we present six Taipei restaurants that have been awarded a Michelin star for the first time.

Circum-

This large posh restaurant is located inside the elite Regent Taipei hotel, its team crafts contemporary Asian cuisine, marrying French culinary techniques with Chinese flavors, and presenting Chinese cuisine's rich regional and ingredient mosaic.

"Circum-" explained: In Chinese culture, the circle represents unity and wholeness. The name also evokes a global Chinese-diaspora map, Chinese traveling in all compass directions, absorbing new cultural elements while faithfully maintaining a gastronomic "taste of home." Circle symbolism features prominently amidst the restaurant's décor of subdued lighting and earth-tone woods, in the form of large circular ceiling lights, circular stainless-steel, trim-lit table supports, etc.

Inspired by rotating banquet dishes, Circum- presents small delicacies in Tangram-inspired tableware. This grand gesture showcases the unique generosity of Chinese hospitality. While the small dishes pay homage to the wisdom of traditional food preservation, they also incorporate contemporary culinary techniques such as confit, sous vide, terrine, and gelatin to reinterpret familiar flavors.

Circum-

📍 B2, 3, Ln. 39, Sec. 2, Zhongshan N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist.

📱 [instagram.com/circum1005](https://www.instagram.com/circum1005)

🕒 By reservation only



© Circum-



© A

A

A is in the gleaming Diamond Towers at the prime upscale East District. French contemporary cuisine is prepared using Asian techniques and influences. This is the first solo venture by chef Alain Huang, who rose to fame at another Michelin-starred restaurant.

The "A" is from "Alain," and is at the same time a grade-A gastronomic experience promise. There are two tasting menus – changed each season – each with ten-plus courses and wine/non-alcoholic drink pairings. The creations resemble little art creations – such as the Caviar Aubergine, which features grilled longtail snapper paired with chickpea puree, eggplant puree, cucumber salad, and French caviar.

Bright white, blonde, and light beige are the comforting interior-décor colors, the space resembling a well-appointed art gallery, with pure, clean lines and contemporary furnishings utilized.

A

📍 4F, 282, Sec. 3, Zhongxiao E. Rd., Daan Dist.

📱 (02) 2721-8088

🌐 restaurant-a.com

🕒 By reservation only

Sens

This cozy 20-seater is in a quiet narrow-lane residential neighborhood before a compact community park. Selected by Michelin before, the French restaurant has been elevated to one-star status.

“Sens” is French for “sense/sensation.” The concept is to provide diners with a multi-sensory experience stimulating all five senses, from décor, with flourishes of elegance in every corner, to your event at the table.

A single tasting menu is provided, seasonally changing. Ingredients used are Taiwan-sourced, seasonal and of the highest quality, cultivated naturally and sustainably. To these are brought the essence of traditional French cuisine. The Michelin inspectors had especially high praise for the chef’s sauces and use of fresh herbs, wielded in perfect ratio. Note that the deliciously popular *pâté en croûte* is served through all seasons, and following traditional French custom, tiny-morsel cheese selections follow the main course.

SENS

📍 12, Ln. 127, Sec. 3, Minsheng E. Rd., Songshan Dist.

☎ (02) 2718-6388

🌐 www.sensstw.com

🕒 By reservation only



© Sens

NOBUO

This is a venture buried deep within a notably leafy quiet grid of residential buildings. The heavy use of plants and long, dark stained-wood planking on the façade of the street-level establishment, lends it a Zen feel. The interior is Nordic in look, with soft browns toward the base of one’s view and soft whites higher up.

The restaurant is named after the chef-proprietor, who hails from Taiwan, but was raised in Japan. The cuisine is Japanese-French built on ingredients sourced in Taiwan, and a single tasting menu is presented. The “Simplicity/Purity/Honesty” house concept is reflected in the minimalist use of pure-white tableware and the minimalism of dish preparation and presentation. Perhaps the most emblematic dish of NOBUO’s concept is Scallop, a minimalist masterpiece featuring a single scallop surrounded by a delicate scallop mousse and a creamy scallop soup.

NOBUO

📍 8, Taian St., Zhongzheng Dist.

🌐 nobuo.tw

🕒 By reservation only



© NOBUO

Eika



© Eika

WOK by OBOND

This epicurean destination is in a mixed residential/commercial neighborhood with a hodge-podge of low- and high-rises – itself on the ground level of a senescent two-story structure.

The fare is highly eclectic – “familiar yet unfamiliar” – forged with Taiwanese and broader Asian flavors to which French preparation techniques and presentation are fused. The themed single-tasting menu changes with the seasons and the restaurant’s Michelin-team visitors were especially taken with the imaginative Taiwanese tea and herb-infused cocktails.

The décor is sultry, fabricated with rich-red walls, bare-concrete walls, and deep-shade green velvet, the subdued accent lighting creating spotlight oases amidst surrounding sensual shadow. 📍

WOK BY OBOND

📍 18, Longjiang Rd., Zhongshan Dist.

☎ (02) 2778-4503

📱 [instagram.com/wokbyobond](https://www.instagram.com/wokbyobond)

🕒 By reservation only

Ensnoced within an old, renovated market building within Taipei’s historic Dadaocheng neighborhood, the culinary theme at Eika is creative Japanese contemporary. The décor theme is a Zen Japanese/Scandinavian mix, centered around simplicity, natural elements, and comfort.

In the first-floor waiting area, which has a tearoom mien, patrons are provided welcome drinks. On the second level, an open kitchen faces the intimate 16-chair dining space. A single tasting menu is presented, and the Michelin inspectors reserved especially fulsome praise for the kitchen team’s deft introduction of Taiwanese fermented syrups and pickles to Japanese-dish hosts. To ensure maximum freshness, a preponderance of ingredients is brought in daily from Japan.

EIKA 盈科

📍 58, Minle St., Datong Dist.

☎ (02) 2550-6863

🌐 eika.tw

🕒 By reservation only



© WOK by OBOND



Michelin Star



Green Star



Bib Gourmand

Where to Have a ✨ Good Night Out

In a City that Never Sleeps, Options Are Aplenty

TEXT & PHOTOS | VISION

Night owls will find many things to do in Taipei, the second-best city for nightlife in Asia, according to a 2024 ranking by Time Out. Beyond the usual bars and pubs, this city offers unique nighttime experiences. From exploring vibrant night markets to belting out tunes in a karaoke parlor, or even trying your hand at shrimp fishing and taking in sparkling city views from sky-high perches, Taipei has something for everyone.

==== Night Markets ====

Taipei City is home to over a dozen vibrant night markets, each with unique charm and specialties. Among the most renowned are Shilin, Raohe Street, and Ningxia. Common snacks found at most, if not all, of these markets include oyster omelets, stinky tofu, deep-fried chicken, grilled squid, and shaved ice with various toppings. If you are a more adventurous eater, consider trying medicinal pork rib soup, pig blood cake, Dongshan duck head, small sausage wrapped in big sausage, and “frog’s eggs” (a sweet soup with black tapioca balls). For a comprehensive overview of the city’s night markets, visit travel.taipei/en/attraction/all-regions/night-markets.

==== Shrimp Fishing ====

A more uniquely Taiwanese activity you can try until late into the night is shrimp fishing. The facilities are usually very basic. You sit on stools around a small pool with murky water and use a short fishing rod to reel in the shrimp, which are then grilled on-site before you enjoy them with a cold beer. Shrimp fishing places usually also offer stir-fry dishes, making them perfect for having a simple late-night meal.

==== Night Scenery ====

Taipei lights up at night. For a bird’s-eye view, consider visiting Taipei 101 (with restaurants and an observatory on the top floors) or the neighboring Breeze Nan Shan building (restaurants on floors 46-48). Alternatively, embark on a night hike up Mount Elephant and admire the city skyline, including those two prominent skyscrapers, from various lookout points along the trail (see pages 34-39 for hike details). Further afield, the teahouses of the Maokong tea-plantation area offer a serene escape during which you can savor locally grown tea while taking in the distant twinkling lights of the city (for info on Maokong, read the article in the Summer 2024 issue of TAIPEI: bit.ly/MaokongHike). You can also enjoy the nighttime scenery from the comfort of a semi-open-air bus of the Taipei Sightseeing Bus service (taipeisightseeing.com.tw/en).



Bookstores and Cafés

Among businesses that stay open until late, or don't close at all, are the bookstores of the Eslite chain (www.eslite.com). After the 24h Dūnnan and Xinyi branches were closed in recent years, the group opened the renovated Eslite Spectrum Songyan branch in early 2024, now its largest branch in Taipei. More than just a place for buying books, the facility has a vast children's section, a music store, a stationery shop, and a cooking studio. It also houses three cafés, perfect for leisurely reading and coffee breaks. If you're a fan of late-night coffee, you will also find numerous other options for good brews in Taipei's vibrant café scene (find info on two such cafés here: bit.ly/latenightcafe).

Karaoke

Karaoke has long been a beloved pastime in Taiwan. While group karaoke sessions at large KTV parlors are the usual way to enjoy this activity, solo singers can now indulge in private karaoke experiences as well. Numerous small telephone-booth-style karaoke rooms, usually with space for two singers, are available throughout the city, offering affordable singing sessions till late into the night. For just NT\$30-50 per song, you can belt out your favorite tunes whenever you feel like it.

Beyond the above suggestions, Taipei offers other splendid diversity in its nightlife scene, catering to wide-ranging tastes. From bustling rooftop bars and cozy pubs to 24h eateries and live-music venues, there's something for everyone. If you prefer a more leisurely evening, Taipei with its well-lit streets and iconic illuminated landmarks is one of the safest cities in the world for nighttime strolls. During the Christmas season, when the city is adorned with colorful decorations, there is an especially enchanting festive atmosphere. On December 31, you certainly want to stay up late and join the Taipei New Year's Party, the countdown to the new year ending with the world-famous Taipei 101 fireworks show. Another eagerly anticipated nighttime event is the Taipei Lantern Festival happening in the first two weeks of February. 📌

TRAVEL INFO

METRO TAIPEI

Service Hours: 6:00am - 12:00 midnight

Customer Service Hotline: (02)218-12345

METRO TICKETS



ONE-WAY TRIP TICKET
NT\$20 - NT\$65



DAY PASS
NT\$150



24HR PASS
NT\$180



48HR PASS
NT\$280



72HR PASS
NT\$380

IC CARDS

EasyCard (left) and iPASS (right) are available at MRT stations and convenience stores. Just add value before entering the system; the fare for each journey will be deducted appropriately. These cards also have an e-purse function for use at convenience stores and other authorized businesses, and for YouBike rentals.



EasyCard



iPASS

TAIPEI CITY BUS

TICKET PRICE

Adult: NT\$15, regardless of using cash or an EasyCard

Student: NT\$15 when paying cash; NT\$12 when using an EasyCard (Student ID required)

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.

Within 30 minutes	30 minutes to 4 hours	4 hours to 8 hours	Over 8 hours
NT\$0 with member-only subsidy	NT\$10 per 30 minutes	NT\$20 per 30 minutes	NT\$40 per 30 minutes

To register as a member, please check youbike.com.tw/region/taipei/register/

TAIPEI FUN PASS

There are four types of Taipei Fun Pass available: the Unlimited version (attractions+transportation), the Exploring version (attractions +EasyCard), the Classic version (2 attractions+EasyCard) and Transportation version (transportation only). You can visit Taipei City, New Taipei City, Keelung City, and Taoyuan City within the validity.



Unlimited
1 Day Pass/
2 Day Pass/
3 Day Pass
NT\$1,200/1,600/1,900



Exploring
2 Day Pass/
3 Day Pass/
4 Day Pass
NT\$650/850/1,050



Classic
Taipei 101 +
National Palace Museum
14-Day Valid
NT\$950



Transportation
1 Day Pass/2 Day Pass/
3 Day Pass/5 Day Pass/
Maokong Gondola
1 Day Pass
NT\$180/310/440/700/350

TRAVEL INFORMATION SERVICES

Tourism Administration, 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; presents travel information on Taipei City in Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Indonesian, Vietnamese, and Spanish



Taipei Sightseeing Bus
(02)8791-6557 ext.30

2025 TAIPEI NEW YEAR'S PARTY

12.01 → 01.01
Pre-Event Activities

12.31 → 01.01
New Year's Party



Organizer  觀光傳播局
Department of Information and Tourism

Executive Organizer  TVBS

Sponsors  Jealousness
CLASSIC
婕洛妮絲

 Panasonic

 PP石墨烯
PPStone



蛇來運轉



2.2 SUN — 2.16 SUN

Taipei Zhongshan Hall, MRT Ximen,
Sec.1, Zhonghua Rd.