

巷仔內帶你遊台北

# Insider's Guide To Taipei

With its hidden speakeasies, 24-hour bookstores, vibrant LGBTQ scene, and relaxing hot springs, here's the city like you've never seen it before.

By  
MATT GROSS

Illustrations by  
JULIA YELLOW

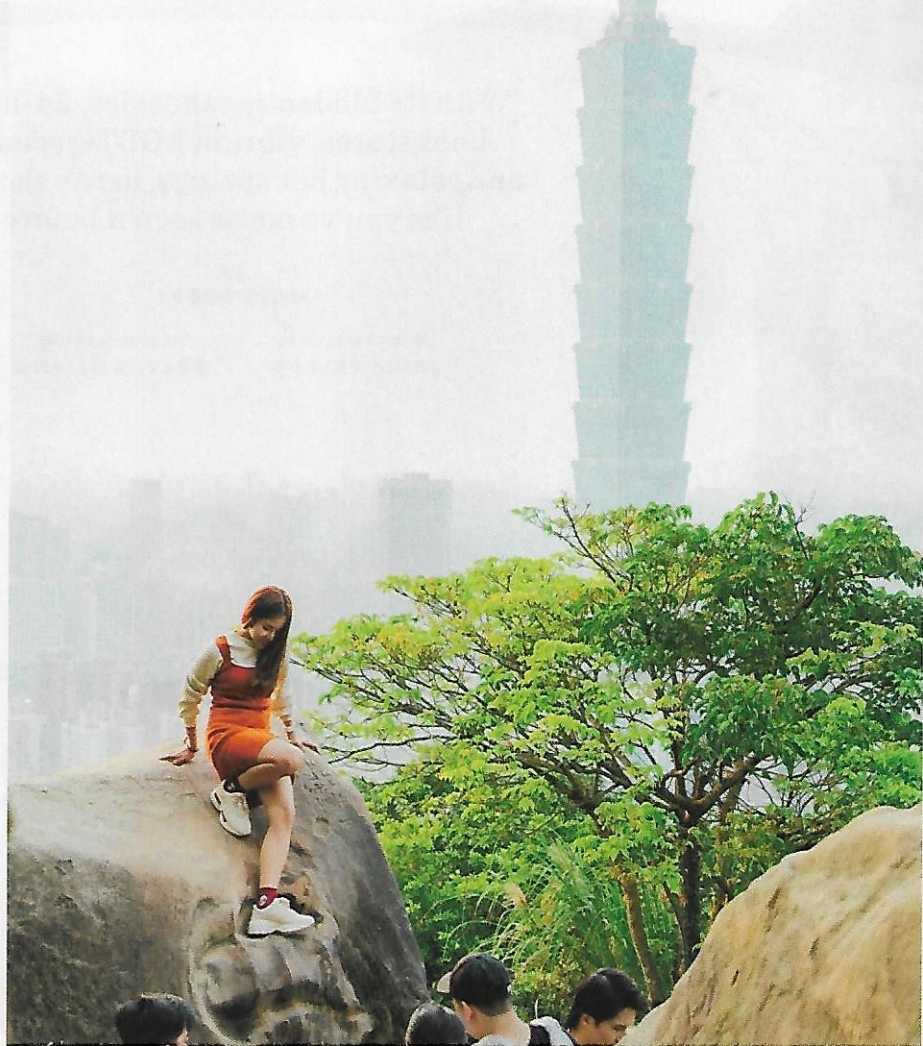
Photographs by  
ÉRIVER HIJANO



# Welcome to Town

Taipei 101 viewed from the top of Elephant Mountain

From a distance, Taipei can be imposing. Concrete buildings stretch across an ancient lake bed, the towering Taipei 101 sticks out like a pin, everything's surrounded by dramatically verdant mountains. Go closer: cars and mopeds, highways and trains, rivers, an airport—the frantic signs of life in a city of over 2.5 million. But at ground level, Taipei reveals itself. Pocket parks drip with old trees; soy-milk vendors serve morning flaneurs; elderly cyclists pause to admire waterfowl on the Tamsui River. Suddenly, the scale becomes human. “You always see the hustle and bustle,” says filmmaker **Dan Kuo**, “but in the center of it you can still find very quiet, calm, chill blocks.” His own no-name neighborhood confirms as much. It's a small, serene area where you can munch Taiwanese-style fried pork chops, sip a single-origin pour-over, browse avant-garde photo books and secondhand clothing, or just sit on a bench and listen to a kid practicing piano from some apartment down the street. Kuo's is hardly the only oasis in Taipei. Everywhere you go, micro-nabes abound, down-home honesty waiting patiently behind a frenetic, internationalist facade. Kuo calls the city “humble and sophisticated,” and it's eminently accessible to any visitor willing to wander, to accept the hospitality of strangers, and to eat noodles seven or eight times a day.



**THE HOSTS**

Seven Airbnb hosts with expertise in food, architecture, nightlife, and more guide you to their city's secrets.



**ELYSE CHEN**  
*Business planner*

Expertise:  
Nightlife

[abnb.co/elysetaipei](http://abnb.co/elysetaipei)



**HARVEY HUANG**  
*Entrepreneur*

Expertise:  
Architecture, design, antiques

[abnb.co/harveytaipei](http://abnb.co/harveytaipei)



**DAN KUO**  
*Filmmaker*

Expertise:  
Neighborhoods, culture

[abnb.co/dantaipei](http://abnb.co/dantaipei)



**KEVIN KUO**  
*Marketing consultant for blockchain companies*

Expertise: Tea

[abnb.co/kevintaipei](http://abnb.co/kevintaipei)



**JIA-MIN LIN**  
*Wooden jewelry maker and aspiring homesteader*

Expertise: Farming, wildlife

[abnb.co/liintaipei](http://abnb.co/liintaipei)



**ANDREW WANG**  
*Art director at digital printing company*

Expertise: Food and culture

[abnb.co/andrewtaipei](http://abnb.co/andrewtaipei)



**JULIAN WANG**  
*Committed host*

Expertise:  
Gay life

[abnb.co/juliantaipei](http://abnb.co/juliantaipei)



## TOURISTY BUT WORTH IT

*If you've never been to the city, you're going to want to hit up these places, tourists be damned. Local Andrew Wang tells you where to go and how to get the best out of each spot.*

### **Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall**

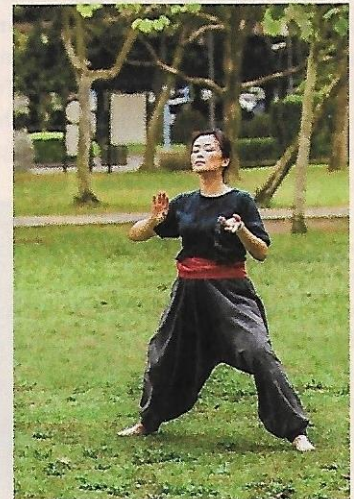
"What used to be a place where citizens stood at attention and saluted a flag is now a spot for leisure activities: playing chess and musical instruments, sports, and practicing Chinese opera, qigong, or hip-hop dancing."

**Taipei 101** "Shin Yeh, the restaurant on the 85th floor, serves real Taiwanese cuisine. The brand is old and famous, and the price is higher for a window seat, but it's worth it for the view alone."

**Longshan Temple** "People often miss the spiraling caisson ceiling of the main building. Stand closer to the main god and look up."

**Da'an Forest Park** "The big pond in the park is awesome—there are so many big birds there!"

*Clockwise from top:* Longshan Temple; Da'an Forest Park; Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall





Fuxing Hot Foot Spa

SPA DAY

# Beitou

For over a century, the neighborhood of Beitou has provided an escape from the dense urban fabric of Taipei. Just 30 minutes by MRT from Taipei Main Station, it lies at the edge of Yangmingshan National Park, whose volcanic depths fuel numerous hot springs. The often sulfurous pools, now built into resorts, form the engine of Beitou's economy—but they're only part of the attraction. "We're like a village," says Beitou native **Jia-Min Lin**. "People are close to each other. We even have a Facebook group. If today my pet bird goes missing, I just post a picture, and people will help to find it."

**LONG NICE**  
(NT\$150 per person)

"It's in a Japanese-style building renovated one year ago," says Lin. "There are two pools, and the bricks of the bathtub are Qilian stone, an important material for buildings in old Taipei. No food here, though—they only offer a good-quality hot spring and good atmosphere."

**FUXING HOT FOOT SPA**  
(Free)

Nearly every day, crowds of older locals come here to soak their feet in the natural hot springs and socialize. "The most important thing is to give elderly people cause to walk out from their house and meet new friends and *ba gua* (gossip)," says Lin.



Airbnb host Jia-Min Lin at Long Nice Hot Spring

**HOT SPRINGS,  
STEP BY STEP**



**1. "Take everything off your body, including your shame. Bring only a bottle of drinking water and a towel."**



**2. "Have a quick shower before you get into the pool. Save the scrub-and-shampoo for after."**



**3. "Soak and relax."** There are always some grandmas or aunties that will talk to me or give me little tips—it is also a social place for them."



**Tip: "Get out every five minutes if you overheat. There's fresh air and cool showers just beside the pool."**

NEIGHBORHOOD DEEP DIVE

# Dadaocheng

Chinese medicine and fabric—for decades, that was all Dadaocheng was famous for. But in the last few years, thanks to government programs and young entrepreneurs, it's become a vibrant hub of art, design, and food. "It's not like other areas—old shops gone, new shops in," says **Harvey Huang**, who operates OrigInn Space, a 1931 shop-house that now contains his Airbnb, café, and interior design store (sculptural Taiwanese pour-over stands, vintage Scandinavian ceramics). "No, we all live here together."

## 4 NEIGHBORHOOD STANDOUTS

### MUSEUM 207

"It's not big, but it concentrates on the art of traditional local life in Taiwan. Special exhibitions have included traditional handicrafts, religion, and photography of old Taipei. Besides the art, there's a great view of the old town area from the terrace."

### YONGLE FABRIC MARKET

"On the first floor is a traditional food market. (I go to the sushi bar quite often.) The second and third floors are fabric-related—once you decide on a textile, bring it to a tailor to make custom clothes. On the eighth and ninth floors is a Taiwanese traditional opera. The majority of the audience is elderly, but more and more younger people are getting interested."

### MOGU

"Their canvas bags are lightweight, durable, and well-designed, good for daily outdoor use. Mogu is also eco-friendly; all the textiles they use for making clothes are 100 percent organic cotton and with natural dyes. It's a brand that makes you feel comfortable."

### MINGE QI YU MIFEN

"Across the street from the fabric market, you'll find two food stalls sharing a fridge. In the morning there's traditional noodle soup with flaked fish and *hong shao rou* (braised pork belly). The evening shop sells *re chao*—family dishes, like ham stir-fried with garlic shoots, and poached chicken."

## FOR LOVERS

# TAIPEI XIA HAI CITY GOD TEMPLE



"The temple showcases an icon of Yue Lao, who is believed to handle love and relationships in Chinese culture. People pray there, hoping to meet their true love. At the end of the prayer ceremony, they receive

a 'red thread,' which represents the relationship. Normally people put it in their wallet and exchange it with their Mr. or Ms. Right when the time comes. One of our guests came from Beijing, went to the

temple, and prayed for love. Later that trip, she was the only customer in the café, and Willie, my business partner, invited her to sit and started chatting her up. They stayed in touch after she went back to Beijing, and when

she came back to Taipei, they started dating. They're not planning on getting married yet, but they are happy. They've exchanged their red threads and believe Yue Lao is responsible for their relationship."

# Foodie's Paradise

In Taiwan, eating is basically a sport, right up there with Tai Chi. Food abounds wherever you look—there's tea on every corner, noodle stalls squeezed into alleyways, carts laden with pineapples and guavas, steam billowing forth from bamboo baskets. The influences are dizzying, stretching from indigenous flavors to the zillion cuisines of mainland China, from Japanese colonists to the American military to globe-trotting Instagrammers—all

shaped, of course, by the unmatched bounty of the mountains and sea. No one here will ever agree on precisely who makes the best beef noodle soup or fried pork chops or shaved ice with mango, but regardless of where you find yourself, there is one consensus: In Taipei, you'll eat, you'll eat well, and you'll eat often—a challenge made feasible by the phenomenon of snack-size portions that tempt your taste buds without filling you up.

NAVIGATE LIKE A PRO

## NIGHT MARKETS

**1. A crowded night market is a good night market.** If no one's around, this might be an off night.

**2. Scan the scene:** Stroll around and see what's on offer.

If you're starving, grab a portable snack, like a bag of *yan suji*—fried chicken bits with white pepper and chili powder—or *zhu xue gao*, a peanut-dusted pork-blood-and-sticky-rice cake on a skewer that's way tastier than it sounds.

**3. Long lines are an indicator of quality.**

"Where all people go, things taste good," says **Elyse Chen**.

But not all lines are created equal. Who's in the line? If they're tourists (Western, Asian, whatever), they may not know what they're doing. Spot locals by their casual clothes and relaxed attitude—they've done this before.

**4. Pace yourself.** Order one dish at one stall, then do it again and again.

**5. Stinky tofu is often better in night markets.** To find it, just follow your nose.



Ningxia Night Market

**6. Cash only.**

**7. Fruit juice rocks.**

Orange, guava, passion fruit, star fruit, sugarcane—knock yourself out!

**8. Don't limit yourself to what's inside the market.**

Sometimes there are great things on the outskirts. The oyster omelet at Lai Ji, outside the Ningxia night market, is a remarkable blend of crispy and goopy, briny and sweet.

**9. Check out the temple.**

Some night markets grew up around local temples, so give them a postprandial look—it makes a pig-out feel like high culture.

### 3 NIGHT MARKETS TO KNOW

**The biggest:**

Shihlin

**The most food-focused:**

Ningxia

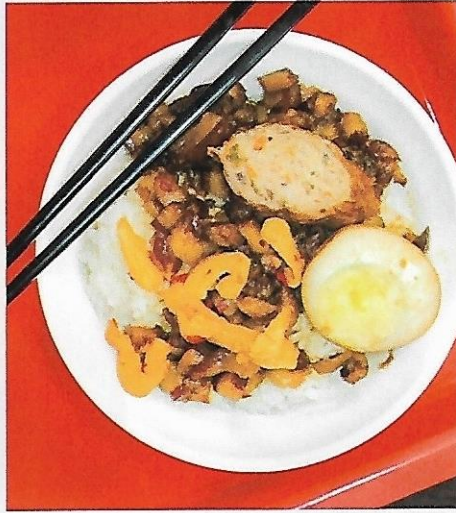
**Everyone's favorite:**

Raohe

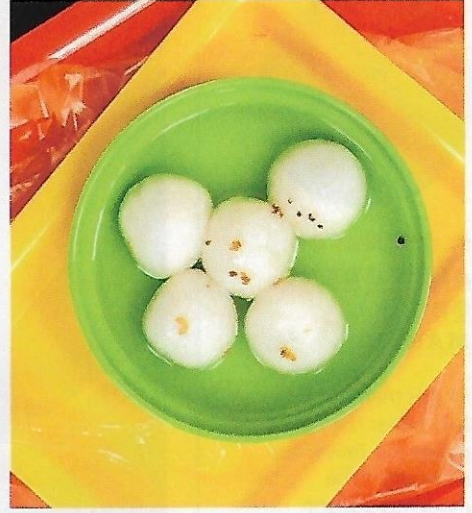
**Market-to-Mouth Must-Orders**



Pork sausage inside rice sausage



Braised pork on rice



Glutinous rice balls with black sesame filling



Fried chicken with basil



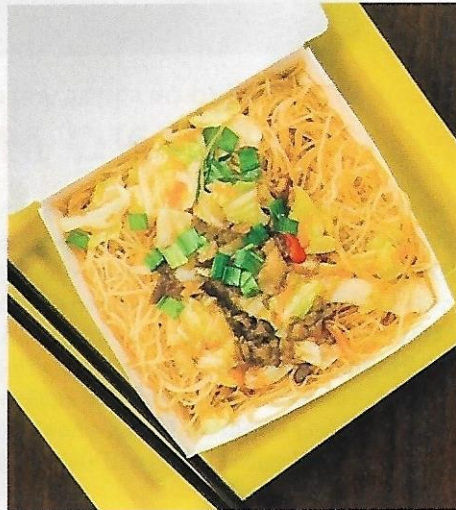
Scallion pancake



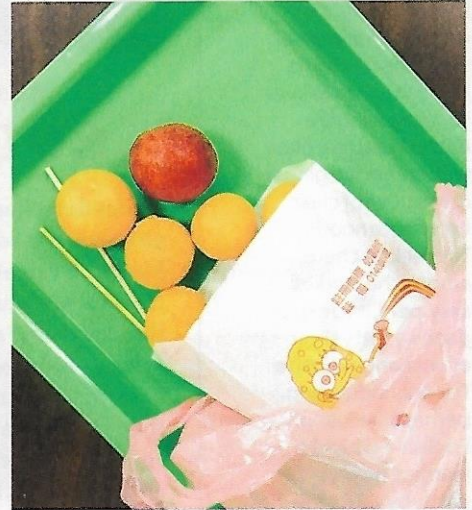
Oyster omelet



Pork ribs in medicinal herbs



Vermicelli noodles with pork



Fried sweet potato balls



**SPOTLIGHT ON:**  
**ALEX HUANG,**  
**GOOSE**  
**MASTER**

*Richer than chicken but milder than duck, goose is a Taiwanese specialty. "The meat has a slight sweetness even without sauce," says Andrew Wang.*

Alex Huang has been boiling birds outside Xining Market since 1981. The 51-year-old got into the business "because my father told me to do it," he says, laughing. Goose was a family tradition: His father cooked geese, his grandfather sold them. Huang's recipe is straightforward—he poaches the birds in salted water, then transfers them to an ice bath to tighten up the skin and gelatinize the fat. Some he flash-smokes over sugar, serving the meat sliced on a plate with shredded ginger or in a bowl of clear broth with noodles. To breakfast here, among the market shoppers, is to experience a tasty sliver of unchanging Taipei. The only innovation, perhaps, is Huang's English—which he learned, he says, partly by watching *Miami Vice*.



Soup dumplings at Din Tai Fung

FORGET PLAIN OLD STEAMED OR FRIED, WELCOME TO...  
**SOUP DUMPLING MECCA**

Among dumplings, few are more beloved than the pork-and-broth-stuffed *xiaolongbao*, also known as soup dumplings. Their global conquest is in no small part due to Din Tai Fung, the Taipei-based chain that has brought its deliciously delicate buns into more than a dozen countries—and which remains a hometown favorite. "My family loves the food there," says **Harvey Huang**, "so we go there for lunch or dinner together at least once a month." (He prefers the Tianmu branch, full of locals.) Ordering well, however, isn't just a matter of making sure everyone has enough buns. Din Tai Fung's fried rice is "the best in Taipei," says **Andrew Wang**, who also loves the week-end-morning-only miniature *xiaolongbao*. "They will also give you a bowl of soup, and you can put the tiny version in and eat it."

DUMPLING  
STATS

**1.2**

billion: How many *xiaolongbao* DTF sells worldwide each year

**18,000**

Dumplings sold each weekend day at DTF's Xinyi branch, its busiest

**18**

Number of perfect pleats in every Din Tai Fung soup dumpling

**16**

grams: Mass of the filling in each dumpling

**(FILLING + SOUP)/  
THICKNESS OF  
SKIN X 100**

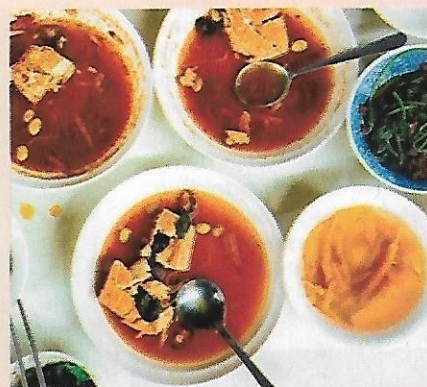
Formula for calculating the quality of *xiaolongbao*, according to the Shanghai Soup Dumpling Index



Airbnb host Andrew Wang (left) at Chou Lao Ban

GET YOUR FUNK ON

## A STINKY TOFU GUIDE



These cubes of tofu, marinated in a fermenting vegetable brine, smell like a sewer (literally!) but taste heavenly, like a funky cheese. “Get over the smell,” says **Andrew Wang**. “The taste and the texture will surprise you.” So, newbies: Fear not! And dig in.

**Level 1: Grilled.** Fried blocks of tofu are skewered, then grilled and slathered with sauce, either onion-sweet *shacha* or spicy Sichuan *mala*.

**Level 2: Fried.** The classic—cubes of fried tofu drizzled with a spicy-sweet sauce and served with a side of Taiwanese pickled cabbage. Try it at Tong Xin Intestine and Oyster Vermicelli.

**Level 3: Steamed.** The test of a true aficionado, this tofu comes braised and juicy, for maximum pungency. Get it at Chou Lao Ban, where Wang says “the stink and the spice are pretty balanced. The tofu absorbs the spicy broth.”

# Liquid Diet

*Beer and tea, sure, but what about Instagrammable Shiba Inu lattes?*

## TAIPEI'S TRENDSETTERS

**“One of the cutest drinks you’ll find in Taipei are Shiba Inu lattes at Mr. R Drinks Café.** More than just latte art, these are adorable doggy marshmallows floating on a bed of foam. They come in multiple colors and have milk tea flavors like matcha or rose.”

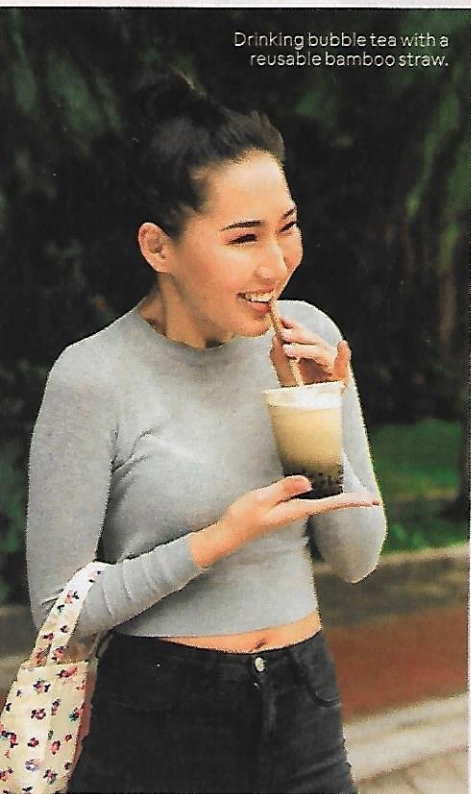
—**Joan H.**, the blogger behind *A Hungry Girl’s Guide to Taipei*

**Bubble tea may be Taiwan’s biggest worldwide contribution to youth culture,** and it’s everywhere in Taipei. If you bubble, go green—starting July 1, the nation is rolling out a ban on plastic straws. Buy bamboo straws at Eslite’s Zhongshan Station branch, and pick up a lovely floral bag by SweetThing, which can carry a single cup, at the Eslite in Songshan Cultural and Creative Park.



The Shiba Inu latte at Mr. R Drinks Café

Drinking bubble tea with a reusable bamboo straw.



## TEATIME

Tea—particularly oolong—has been a big deal since the late 19th century, when it was developed as an export commodity. Today it’s as popular as ever, and how it’s served has kept pace with the times. **Kevin Kuo**, a block-chain marketing consultant who’s also a tea educator and Airbnb host, recommends his top spots for pots.

### Old-school:

#### Taipei Lecture Hall

Owned by a famous ceramicist, the tea-house here is super-traditional, with antique furniture, Chinese musical instruments, and even calligraphy tools at some tables. “I order a tea set with all the equipment to brew the tea, and treat my friends or clients.”

### New-school: 7 Teahouse

“They provide very traditional tea

leaves, but with fashionable equipment, and classes to teach young people to make their own tea.”

### Fusion:

#### Smith&Hsu

This small chain is run by a Western-Taiwanese couple. “The atmosphere is very fashionable, and they provide teas from all over the world: Turkish, Taiwanese, Indian, British. Don’t miss their famous scones.”



Smith&Hsu



**SPOTLIGHT ON:  
MADISON  
BOLD,  
BREWER**

*She runs her own bar, the Local, works in marketing at East Drinks West, and is one of a handful of women pushing the beer revolution to its next phase.*

**How has Taiwan's beer scene changed in the last few years?**

"It went from a few craft beer bars to 40, 50. Even 7-Eleven has a summer craft beer program! Last year we put hard root beer in there."

**How are Taiwan's beers different?**

"In Taiwan, craft beers are mixed with tea and local fruits, like Taiwan Ale's tomato sour ale—kind of sour but a little sweet."

**Your ideal Taiwanese food-beer pairing?**

"Beef noodle soup and Redpoint's Long Dong Lager. Get both at You&Me Bar."

**Where's your favorite place to have a beer that's not a bar?**

"Walking along the riverside in Tamsui."



Airbnb host Elyse Chen and a friend at Le Kief Ling Jiu Tailor

**BEHIND THE CITY'S  
SPEAKEASY MANIA**

A few years ago, if you wanted a good cocktail in Taipei, your best bet was a café—not because its baristas doubled as mixologists but because, in the back, a half-hidden doorbell promised entrance to Ounce, perhaps the city's most famous speakeasy. "Suddenly," says **Elyse Chen**, "it became a thing." Today, hidden bars and restaurants abound—in butcher shops, barber shops, and haberdasheries—and are being featured in *GQ* and *Vogue* Taiwan.

How your time unfolds depends on who you go with, says Chen. For example, "with business partners or co-workers, it's a way to show off and feel superior," she says. Also: "Office workers escaping in the afternoon can take a sip and be sure not to bump into colleagues." And the hidden speakeasy concept isn't limited to bars. On Sundays, Chen uses a QR code to open a door tucked behind a café in the Taipei 101 skyscraper and goes to a hidden church!

**NOT TO MISS (IF YOU CAN FIND THEM)**

**MOZI**

"It's in a barbershop. Just push the bookshelf, and voilà—you'll find the hidden bar. The signature cocktails are Grand Pa's Tea and Chinatown Hustler."

**WODEN**

"Pull up the sword in the stone at the front door of the butcher shop and you'll find your way. Don't forget to order a steak burger!"

**LE KIEF LING JIU TAILOR**

"A bespoke suit shop. Find the antique phone by the entrance, then press 09 to get in the bar (*ling jiu* means 'zero-nine' in Mandarin). Reservations recommended."



**Xingtangong**

“Most of our new buildings are Western style. Only the temples retain the traditions and culture of Taiwan, even this one, built in 1967.”—*Harvey Huang*



五聖行

行跡蒼威嚴赤毛飛雷音龍護身

行義通一世忠貞志在求誠心同濟

世道壯河山一掃東風喚起春雷

生道存心志氣凌雲志在求誠心同濟

山莊大川公不測之風雲

# Architect's Corner

At first glance, Taipei isn't the most classically beautiful city. The Nationalists who came to power after World War II were planning to retake mainland China, so they had little interest in erecting gorgeous structures to last through the ages. Still, **Harvey Huang** speaks of the "uncoordinated beauty" of the city's urban architecture, if you just know where to look. Gems shine at random among the concrete expanse.

National Theater at  
Chiang Kai-shek Memorial



**SPOTLIGHT ON:**  
**JEFFREY**  
**CHIEN**

Taipei's National Palace Museum is "the best Chinese museum about history in the world," says **Kevin Kuo**. It's also a labyrinth: With almost 700,000 objects covering 8,000 years, only a small fraction of its holdings are ever on display. What lurks in the depths? That's what obsesses **Jeffrey Chien**, the 27-year-old creator of *Jade Key*, a web comic that follows a couple of museum employees who accidentally destroy priceless relics and must time-travel to retrieve the originals. It's complete with disputed ownership, obscure origins, bureaucratic infighting, and magical kung fu action. All the artifacts are real—Chien researched the museum's holdings, which are categorized by material. "I destroy one item from each category, so there's a bronze vessel with the word *history* carved into it, and it was smashed, and then there's a jade stick broken in two." His favorite section of the museum? *Zhen wan*, toys made for emperors.



## NATIONAL THEATER AND CONCERT HALL AT CHIANG KAI-SHEK MEMORIAL

"Two of the greatest works of architecture in Taiwan. The design updates the wooden structural system usually seen in ancient Chinese palaces by using modern construction materials like steel and concrete. Although the appearance is grand and solemn, you also see groups of B-boys/girls practicing dance moves outside in the evening. It's an interesting contrast!"

## TAIPEI FINE ARTS MUSEUM

"It's the first museum dedicated to contemporary arts, and one of the first minimalist concrete designs in Taiwan, from 1983. The museum's architect, influenced by Le Corbusier, once said: 'The space is to stimulate the artists to create ideas. The architect completes 70 percent, and the rest is left to the artists.' It's a milestone."

# Taipei by Night

## YOUR BEST WEE-HOURS-OF-THE-MORNING ITINERARY

Whether you're jet-lagged or energized, the city runs all night long, so there's no shortage of ways to fill the time. Here is **Jerry Lee's** ideal night out on the town.

◆  
**MIDNIGHT** "Even if they have no seats at Chuoyinshi Landmark Taproom, that won't stop you from enjoying the best craft beer around."

◆  
**1:30 A.M.** Stop in at Family Mart to refuel with rice balls—wrapped in seaweed and stuffed with egg, pickled cabbage, cruller-like fried dough, or pork floss—and a carton of iced green tea.

◆  
**2 A.M.** Ride YouBike (Taipei's inexpensive bike-sharing program) to KOR Club: "People who love pure hip-hop—definitely not trap or electro—are drawn here. They have fancy interior design, so there's also people who enjoy good cocktails as well."

◆  
**5:30 A.M.** Breakfast at Wei Mei, a classic Taiwanese greasy spoon. "They make the best *dan bing*"—scallion pancakes with fried egg.

◆  
**6:30 A.M.** Walk (or YouBike) east to Elephant Mountain and go for a hike to catch the sunrise. "You know you're still here in the middle of the city, but you feel like you're part of Mother Nature. You can see sunlight spray onto the buildings, the reflection getting more and more intense as the sun rises."



## *GAY TAIPEI*

You'd be hard-pressed to find a place in Asia as gay-friendly as Taiwan. "It's safer," says **Julian Wang**, something that's changed in the last 20 years. "There's no violence, no murder." LGBTQ bars and clubs operate in the open, and throughout Taipei, you see same-sex couples holding hands without fear. This year, same-sex marriage is expected to become a reality.



Airbnb host Julian Wang at Café Dalida

The scene, however, remains relatively small. There are two regular dance parties, **Blush** and **Werk**. "Werk is the oldest one, and nicer," says Wang. "It's hosted at Triangle, a club located in Maji Square at Taipei's International Flora Expo Park. A lot of top drag queens started from there, including me." The heart of

the drag scene, however, is **Café Dalida**, one of the gay bars clustered around the historic Red House Square in the youth-centric Ximending neighborhood. Dalida hosts drag performances—Wang performs as Fei Fain ("I use my real Chinese name cuz I can't come up with a funny one!")—and viewing parties for *RuPaul's Drag*

*Race*. Dalida's owner, says Wang, would love to bring *RuPaul's Werq the World Tour* to Taipei, but he'll have to spend big. "It'll cost him NT\$3 million." There's also less of the sex-for-money action you find in places like Bangkok or Tokyo, says Wang, who moved to Taipei 13 years ago from Taitung ("imagine a small town where every-

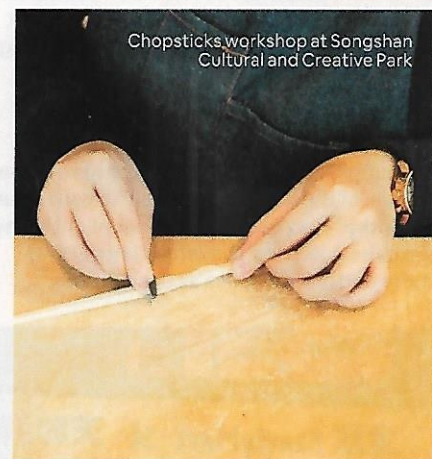
one knows each other"). You find that, he says, even at **Commander D.**, "one of the most popular BDSM bars in Taipei," which is not just for LGBTQ but for fetishists of all stripes. "There is nothing too extreme. People can keep at a safe distance to watch and feel safe." In other words, it's as open and friendly as Taipei itself.



## DIY Before You Buy

“Made in Taiwan” became a cliché during the island’s manufacturing boom of the 1950s–1990s, but it’s taken on new meaning with a crop of stores that help you actually make the products they sell, from whittling chopsticks to stitching leather goods to welding desk lamps. The trend most likely began at Taipei’s “cultural and creative parks,” old industrial areas repurposed into artsy, outdoorsy malls—“Songshan creative park definitely helped a lot,” says **Harvey Huang**—but it’s spread far and wide. Some florists offer flower-arranging workshops; candle shops teach waxwork.

For **Jia-Min Lin**, one reason DIY shops may exist is because people are disillusioned with Taiwan’s current weak economy and its education system’s rigidity. While some take classes to earn skills they might put to use on the open market, “people don’t chase money like in the past,” she says. “We focus on inspiring our spirits or minds.”



Chopsticks workshop at Songshan Cultural and Creative Park

### WHERE TO LEARN

#### CRAFTS

Songshan Cultural and Creative Park has outlets for glassblowing, woodworking, and building cute steampunk desk lamps.

#### FLOWER ARRANGING

Arrange flowers and mold candles at the charming Plenty Petals.

#### CARTOONING

Bring kids to Hands Tailung, where they’ll shape cartoon characters out of clay.

#### PAINTING

The Escape Artist teaches you how to paint and outfits you with canvas and oils to take home.

## A BOOKWORM'S UTOPIA

Taiwan has a reputation as a place that reads—more than 30,000 titles are published here each year. To add to your home collection, or simply while away an afternoon—or 3 a.m. stint—browsing, be sure to hit up these one-of-a-kind shops.

### Eslite

Eslite's 24-hour Dunnan branch is a late-night destination so popular that **Kevin Kuo** warns, "It's easy to run into your ex while with your current girl."

### Moom

Photography books of famous artists sit alongside lesser-knowns. "The clientele"—mostly young people—"is amazing," says **Dan Kuo**.

### Fembooks

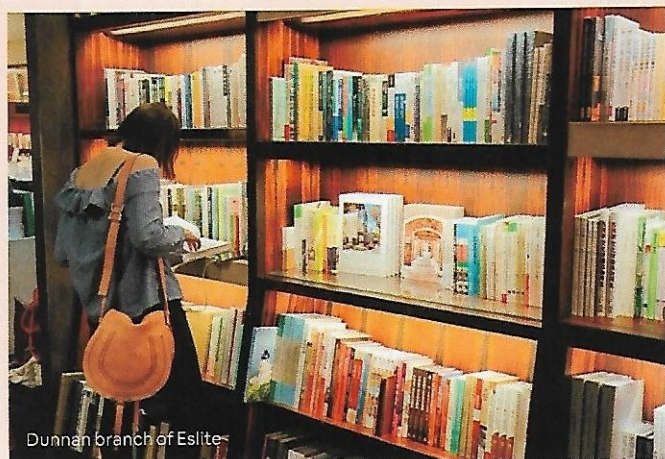
The first feminist bookstore in Taipei is upstairs. Downstairs is Witch House, a café with live music. "It's more artsy," says Dan Kuo.

### Kishu An Literature Forest

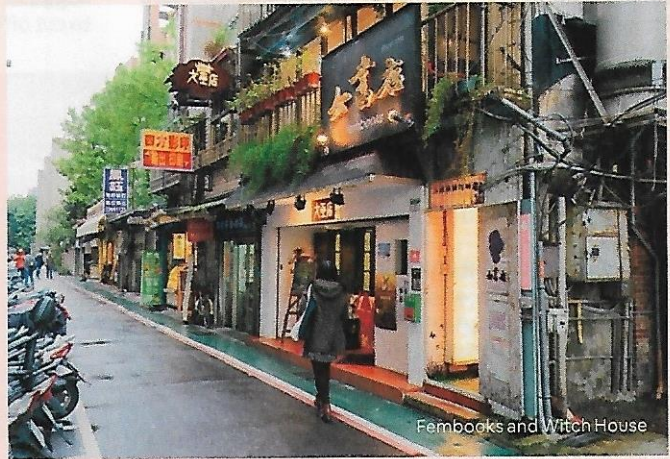
This small store of Chinese and local literature boasts a restaurant with meals recommended by famous writers.



Kishu An Literature Forest



Dunnan branch of Eslite



Fembooks and Witch House

# Taipei Tip Sheet

Key pointers—e.g., umbrella etiquette is a thing—to help you pass as a Taiwanese local.

## STREET SMARTS

Here's Kathy Cheng, the author of *trickytaipei.com*, a blog about life in the city, on her must-dos.



**Taiwanese people love a massage** that's borderline painful. Get a foot massage, or go for a full-body massage for an hour, usually less than NT\$1,000. Check out the Dancing Finger chain.

**The food carts** outside Xin Wei Market on Da'an Road, Section 2, are a super popular place to grab a quick weekday lunch of noodles and dumplings alongside local office workers.

**Taiwan is serious about orchids.** You can spend a couple of hours browsing orchids and other local plants at the Jianguo Flower Market on the weekends.

**If you simply must buy kitschy souvenirs,** like soap shaped like pork sausage and garlic, head to Lai Hao in Yongkang Street.

**Taiwan is famous for its fresh fruit**—lychee, longan, watermelon, and mango—and the most authentic way to shop for it is at the morning wet market alongside locals stocking up for the week. Markets typically wrap up around midday and are closed Mondays.

## THE CITY'S NITTY-GRITTY

Transportation, in-the-know apps, and more

**EASYCARD, EASY LIFE**  
Buy an EasyCard at any subway station, and using Taipei's subways and buses is a cinch. But the Yo-Yo Card (as everyone calls it) can do so much more—use it in taxis, convenience stores, and vending machines. Jia-Min Lin has even used it to pay her water bill.

**MRT ETIQUETTE**  
Taipei's subway system is fast, efficient, clean, and quiet, and everyone would like it to stay that way. Keep your voice down, don't eat or drink, and don't take the priority seats reserved for pregnant women, the elderly, and the handicapped.

**REACH OUT AND STICKER SOMEONE**  
In Taiwan, everyone and their *Ah-Mah* (grandmother) uses LINE, which is like

WhatsApp but way cuter, with a zillion adorable "stickers"—think emojis on steroids. "Stickers sometimes speak more than words," says Andrew Wang.

**UMBRELLA KNOW-HOW**  
When it rains in Taipei, man does it rain! Umbrellas are essential during the June-to-October rainy season, and while you can always pick one up for NT\$100 at a convenience store, that's not the only option. "If you're rich," says Wang, "you could buy a Jiayun umbrella, which is used by many American and European celebrities." (Hi, Prince William!) Just don't give an umbrella as a gift, says Lin, "because *umbrella* sounds the same as *separate*," suggesting you want to cut off ties.

## THE AESTHETE'S CORNER

**Buy stylish, affordable eyeglasses.** "From picking frames to optometry, you can get it done in an hour or less, depending on how choosy you are!" says Dan Kuo. **Get your hair washed** professionally. It's cheap and luxurious. **B-Wu-tify yourself.** People in Taipei pay careful attention to the latest cosmetics trends out of Japan and especially Korea. The current hot items are Dr. Wu masks and serums with squalane, a shark extract that helps repair damaged skin.

## LINGO

The day-to-day language of Taipei is Mandarin, but it also involves lots of the local Taiwanese and Hakka dialects, plus internet-derived slang from memes and YouTube.

**Zao!** Good morning! Way more local than saying *ni hao*; only works before noon.

**Buhaoyisi.** I'm very sorry, or excuse me—used to preface all kinds of interactions.

**Chao diao de!** Superb!

**Hen kiang:** drunk, wasted

**Hen chao:** very fashionable

**Hen ku:** good, cool (used by people in their 40s)

**Hen diao:** good, cool (used by people in their 30s)

**6 or 666:** good, cool (used by anyone young enough to watch the YouTuber who popularized the term)

**Hen hang:** very popular

**Jiche:** Literally, scooter. Figuratively, very mean (in response to a rude request).

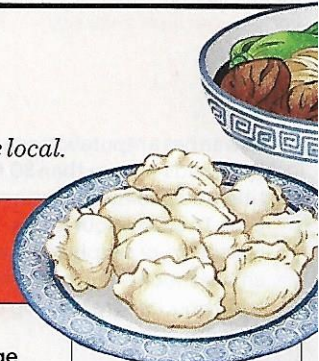
**Shayan maomi:** I'm surprised!, a reference to a cat meme.

**Kao bei:** A funny or crude way to criticize someone for overreacting or being falsely emotional—depends on the context.

**Chao Q:** Bouncy toothsome-ness in food, like boba or fish balls—a highly prized quality. When it's really good, it's QQ.

**Laoban!** Boss! How to call over the owner of a small food stall.

**Ho jia!** Delicious! In Taiwanese, not Mandarin.



## TEENSY TIMELINE

**MILLENNIA AGO**  
Taiwan settled by Malayo-Polynesian peoples, who would go on to settle the Fiji islands

**1542**  
Portuguese sailors dub the island "Ilha Formosa"

**1624**  
The Dutch set up a base in southern Taiwan

**1626–42**  
Spaniards occupy northern Taiwan until they're kicked out by the Dutch

**SEVENTEENTH CENTURY**  
Chinese migrants start arriving from the coastal mainland

**1662**  
Fleeing China's new Qing Dynasty, Ming Dynasty loyalists kick out the Dutch

**1683**  
The Qing Dynasty takes control

**1895**  
Japan wins Taiwan from China, develops it as a colony

**1945**  
After World War II, Japan hands Taiwan back to the Republic of China

**1949**  
Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists lose the Chinese civil war, retreat to Taiwan with 1 million people, institute martial law

**1987**  
Martial law lifted, democratic elections held

