Your Taiwan Travel Guide: Discover Asia's Secret Gem

7-DAY TRIP AROUND THE ISLAND OF TAIWAN

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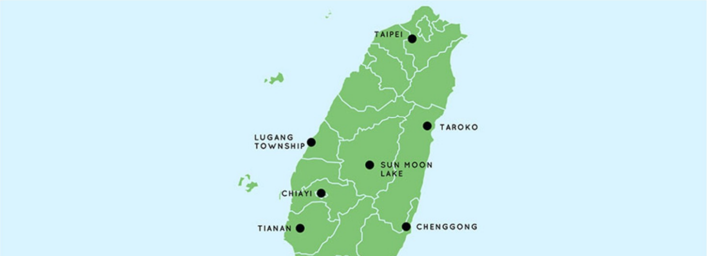
Thailand, Hong Kong and Shanghai are all popular destinations for travelers, but what you may not know is that Taiwan should be added to your bucket list, too. Yes, the island nation is usually the layover before getting to one of those popular places, but Taiwan has a magic all its own.



KAOHSIUNG
TAIWAN
TAITUNG
HENGCHUN

TAIWAN: *From the busy metropolis of Taipei to honeymoon haven Sun Moon Lake to picturesque hiking trails on the East Coast National Scenic Area, this island nation offers unforgettable travel experiences.*

It’s the bustling urban center of Taipei, the picture-perfect landscape of Sun Moon Lake, the spiritual calmness of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Monastery, the natural wonders of Taroko National Park. And we recommend it for solo travelers looking for outdoor adventure, couples looking for a romantic getaway and groups looking for an immersive cultural vacay. There’s more than one reason to go! Get ready to start your journey filled with unexpected surprises, unique experiences and memories that will last a lifetime.

AN IMMERSIVE LUXURY VACATION IN TAIWAN: 7-DAY ITINERARY

In addition to our 5 Senses interactive, **Vacation** recommends adding the following unique experiences to your list when visiting Taiwan.

DAY 1 – TAIPEI – EXPLORE THE NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM AND THE MARTYR'S SHRINE

Welcome to the Taiwan's capital city! Hit the ground running and start your day with a visit to the National Palace Museum, home to a permanent collection of almost 700,000 pieces of ancient Chinese imperial artifacts and artworks – making this museum the largest of its type in the world Allow yourself at least 2 to 3 hours to peruse more than 8,000 years of Chinese art history, including high quality antiquities, paintings, calligraphies, rare books and documents collected by China's emperors. After your immersive museum experience, visit the Martyr's Shrine to honor fallen Taiwanese soldiers. Catch the changing of the guard at noon, check out the amazing architecture, and watch the men checking the stoic soldiers on guard to ensure their stance and uniforms are impeccable. Ready for a bite to eat? Head to Taipei's Zhongshan District to taste traditional Taiwanese dishes with a modern twist at La Luna. Pork short ribs with bok choy, beef sautéed with oyster sauce, seasoned fish and a bean paste pops wrapped in sticky rice with chocolate drizzle, topped with a tomato, are just a few delicious items you should try.

> *Head to Taipei's Zhongshan District to taste traditional Taiwanese dishes with a modern twist at La Luna.*

After eating, head to the heart of old Taiwan to stay at the luxurious Palais de Chine Hotel, conveniently located two blocks from the Taipei Main Metro Station. The metro system is clean and super convenient if you want to explore other parts of the city, but the area around the hotel has some fun things to do and see, too. Go shopping at Q Square (adjacent to the hotel), which has four levels of shops and restaurants. Go for a bike ride along the wharf in the Dadaocheng District (via the local YouBike program). And take a short Uber ride east of the hotel to experience the excitement, food, and handmade arts and crafts sold at the Ningxia Night Market.

MARYTR'S SHRINE: *Don't miss watching the changing of the gaurd at noon before you check out the Shrine's amazing architecture and meticulously manicured green spaces.*

DAY 2 – SUN MOON LAKE – TAKE A SIGHTSEEING TOUR OF TAIWAN'S HONEYMOON HAVEN

Arrange a transport to drive you 3 hours south of Taipei to Sun Moon Lake. It's no surprise why this is a popular honeymoon destination. The postcard-perfect views of the turquoise-colored lake are worth the trip. A travel agent can book a spacious room with a balcony at the 5-star Fleur de Chine Hotel with amenities such as the coed Mountain Mist Hot Spring, the Qui Shiseido Salon & Spa and four on-site restaurants. Make this your home base while you enjoy the local attractions. Get started with a stroll on the cobblestone streets of Ito Thao Village for food, handmade souvenirs and a walk along the pier – the perfect backdrop to take a photo in front of the lake. Need a little peace in your life? Visit Xuanzang Temple dedicated to its namesake, who made a 17-year pilgrimage on foot from Chang’an, China to India in search of sacred books of Buddhism. Take a few minutes to sit on a bench in the manicured garden overlooking the picturesque Sun Moon Lake. For a better view of the lake, walk 0.4-mile from the temple to Cien-Ta Pagoda. The steep trek up Shabalan Mountain and several flights to the top of the pagoda are worth the jaw-dropping view.

> *Couples looking for an intimate spot to watch the sunset should reserve at table at the Sky Lounge on the rooftop of the Fleur de Chine Hotel.*

After you’ve caught your breath from your short, but steep jaunt, explore Wenwu Temple. Guarded by two vermillion lions, this temple pays homage to the Civil God of Wealth, the God of Literature, the God of War and the wise sage Confucius. The architecture is absolutely stunning. Join dozens of people across the street from the temple to capture the sun as it sets over the lake. Couples looking for an intimate spot to watch the sunset should reserve a table at the Sky Lounge on the rooftop of the Fleur de Chine Hotel. Toast to a wonderful day of sightseeing and end the night with an amazing dinner at Jade Luminous, where the chef adds his innovative spin on traditional Taiwanese, Cantonese and Szechuan dishes.

SUN MOON LAKE: *This picturesque lake is just one of several reasons why Sun Moon Lake is a popular honeymoon destination in Taiwan.*

DAY 3 – LUGANG TO CHIAYI – VISIT 200-TEMPLES AND CELEBRATE THE ANNUAL TAIWAN LANTERN FESTIVAL

A **Vacation** travel specialist can arrange your transport to Lugang Township, about an hour drive west of Sun Moon Lake. This 15.24 square mile township is home to 200 temples! Get a native's perspective about the Lugang's history from Benz, a local tour guide. See firsthand how some items – including Chinese lanterns, glass-blown figurines and ceramic tea pots – are made at Lugang's Handicraft Market. It's OK to negotiate for a better price here, and even though credit cards are accepted, having at least 3000 Taiwanese dollars ($100 USD) on hand will save you time trying to find an ATM or walking with the shopkeeper to find a credit card machine.

> *See firsthand how some items - including Chinese lanterns, glass-blown figurines and ceramic tea pots - are made at Lugang's Handicraft Market.*

If you're traveling to Taiwan during the first week of March, work with a travel agent to schedule your trip around the opening ceremony of the Taiwan Lantern Festival. It's *so* worth it! Just imagine the parade at Walt Disney World Parade on steroids! In 2018, Chiayi was the host of this extraordinary event, where more than a hundred beautiful lantern exhibits are on display representing the year-long, hard work of neighborhoods near and far. Hundreds of people converge on the festival's grounds to see dance troupes, singers and other artistic performances before the President of Taiwan's grand unveiling of the main lantern. This is an Instagram-worthy event you don't want to miss. It's OK to arrive a little late, the real magic doesn't happen until it gets dark and the multi-colored lanterns light up the night sky.

TAIWAN LANTERN FESTIVAL: *A different city hosts this must-see event every year. Neighboorhoods spend the entire year creating more than 100 lantern displays for this spectacular celebration.*

DAY 4 – TAINAN TO KAOHSIUNG – EXPERIENCE A POPULAR NIGHT MARKET BEFORE A ZEN EXPERIENCE

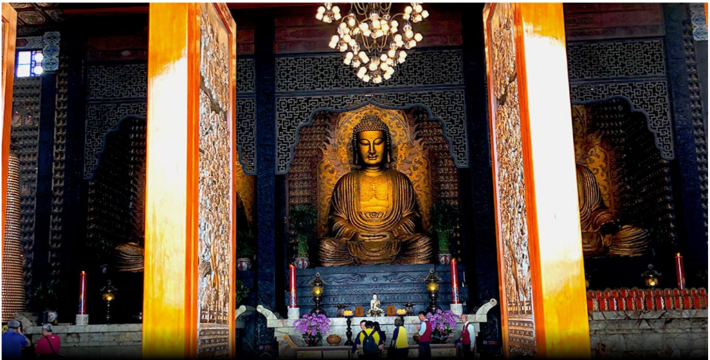
About an hour drive south of Lugang Township, visit Tainan, the capital of Taiwan from 1683 to 1885. This city is home to several popular temples, including the largest temple in the region, Tucheng Temple of Holy Mother, and Koxinga Shrine, dedicated to the national hero responsible for driving Dutch colonists out of Taiwan. In addition to its 200 years of history, Tainan is known for its famous Xiaobei Night Market – a must-do item for foodies. The market is free on Tuesdays and Fridays from 4 p.m. – 1 a.m. Pick up tasty *xiaochi* (snack food) sold at more than 200 tiny, open-air eateries. Your stomach will love you for it!

Get ready to witness one of the most amazing attractions in Taiwan! It's the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Monastery, located southeast of Tainan. Arrange for a monk to give you a guided tour of the island's largest Buddhist monastery. The calm nature of this place may have much do with where it's located… high on a hill amidst a bamboo forest. A 354-foot-tall statue of Sakyamuni Buddha sits atop the hill welcoming all visitors. For a closer look, visit the Great Buddha Land. The Buddhist Museum, Five Hundred Arhats Garden and the Museum of FGS History (and its founder, Master Hsing Yun) should be added to your to-do list while you're here. Plan to spend 2 to 4 hours for your visit.

> *Stay at the family-friendly Royal Chihpen Hotel... don't miss the traditional Tawainese bamboo*

dance performance every night at 9.

Continue your Zen state, and travel further south along the island’s beautiful coastline. Grab a bite to eat at La Maison Beach Bistro in Hengchun. Serving Asia-Euro cuisine, this popular oceanside restaurant not only attracts beachgoers and tourists driving by, but it has also received an unexpected visit from Director Ang Lee (*Sense and Sensibility, Life of Pi and Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*)! Get a tasty lychee, peach or mango smoothie to go, so you can sip on it while you check out a few attractions along the way to Taitung. Stop at the Eluanbi Lighthouse where you can see the Philippines on a clear day. Consider a trip around the island’s east coast to Taitung. Stay at the family-friendly Royal Chihpen Hotel, located in the Chihpen Forest Recreational Area. Commune with nature with amenities like the indoor and outdoor hot springs and open-air spa services. And don’t miss the traditional Taiwanese bamboo dance performance every night at 9.



MAIN SHRINE: *Feel a sense of renewal and rejuvenation after you* *step through the doors of the Main Shrine at Fo Guang Shan Monastery in Kaohsiung, Taiwan.*

DAY 5 – CHENGGONG TO TAROKO – EXPLORE THE AWE-INSPIRING EAST COAST NATIONAL SCENIC AREA

Get an early start to enjoy the draw-dropping views and sights along the East Coast National Scenic Area, such as the Xiaoyeliu Coastal Forest and Coral Reef and Sanxiantai Island. We suggest a stop by a roadside fruit stand to pick up a couple of sugar apples for a boost of energy before the awe-inspiring trek to Sanxiantai Island, beyond the eight-arch footbridge. Wear a sturdy pair of shoes and apply sunscreen before the hike along the shore and up the epic stone staircase to the top of the island. The view is amazing! Take in the crystal blue water crashing against the rocky coastline below. After your island hike, travel further north up Taiwan’s east coast to see the white sundial marker where the Tropic of Cancer passes through the island, and visit the Caves of Eight Immortals where tourists can get a surprisingly up-close view of monkeys in the trees nearby... just don’t feed them. As you continue along the island’s coast, there are steep drop-offs as the single-lane road (both ways) hugs the side of the mountains, but your fear is calmed by the view of the Pacific Ocean, which reaches far beyond the horizon.

> *Visit the Caves of Eight Immortals where tourists can get a surprisingly up-close view of monkeys in the trees nearby... just don't feed them.*

Need a place to stay along the way? One of **Vacation**'s travel agents can book a spacious room with a balcony (mountain view) at the Silks Place Taroko, the only 5-star hotel located within Taroko National Park. The hotel staff greets its guests with a cup of refreshing oolong tea to quench their thirst after a full day of sightseeing. Rest up for your final full day of sightseeing.

SANXIANTAI ISLAND: *Wear sturdy shoes to make the trek over the eight-arch footbridge to this rocky island, where the climb to the top is worth the beautiful view of the Pacific Ocean below.*

DAY 6 – TAROKO TO TAIPEI – VISIT THE NATURAL WONDERS ALONG TAIWAN'S EAST COAST

One of nine national parks in Taiwan, Taroko National Park has moderate level hiking trails that lead to alpine lakes, Atayal tribal villages, peach and pear orchards and hiding swimming holes. The trails wind across high suspension bridges, along sheer cliffs, up and down steep switchbacks and sometimes through tunnels. Even if you don't get a chance to go hiking here, let a travel agent help plan your transport back to Taipei via the Zhongheng Highway, a famous route carved into the side of the mountains throughout the park.

One of the must-see sights traveling on the highway, includes the Taroko Gorge – a gorge of marble-laced cliffs with the Liwu River rushing by below. The best place to view the Taroko Gorge is at Swallows Cave. Grab a helmet at the checkpoint before you begin your stroll through the caves. It's the backdrop for the perfect selfie.

> *Let a travel agent help plan your transport back to Taipei via the Zhongheng Highway, a famous route carved into the side of the mountains throughout the park.*

Finally, walk through the Tunnel of Nine Turns. Once drivable, this pedestrian walkway is a twisty, crooked road of short tunnels and half tunnels through solid marble. The tunnels, caves and Zhongheng Highway are engineering marvels that unfortunately cost several men their lives. Take a moment to remember the retired servicemen who lost their lives and stop by the Eternal Spring Shrine, located about 2 miles past the visitor center at the eastern entrance of the park. Afterwards, hop on your transport and continue your 3-hour journey north to Taipei.

GENKO WATERFALL: *Go hiking in Taroko National Park to explore its natural wonders, such as this stunning waterfall and the jaw-dropping Taroko Gorge.*

DAY 7 – TAIPEI – GET READY FOR SKYLINE VIEWS, HIGH-END SHOPPING AND OPEN-AIR NIGHTLIFE

It's your last day in Taiwan! Head to the 1,671-foot-tall Taipei 101 – the second tallest building in the world – to get an incredible view of the city. For $17 USD (adult admission), you can check out the view from the indoor observation deck (88 and 89th floors), or weather permitting, the outdoor observation deck (91st floor). Grab a bite to eat with a view in the Observatory Restaurant on the (85th and 86th floors), and then shop 'til you drop! A shopping mall adjacent to the famous skyscraper houses hundreds of high-end stores, restaurants and clubs.

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restaurants and clubs.

Continue your shopping spree at a night market like the Ximending Night Market, open every day starting at 5 p.m. Located in Taipei's Wanhua District, it includes street vendors – selling clothes, food, jewelry and more – to stores like H&M, Uniqlo, Superdry and a Nike store where you can get a pair of customized kicks. The best places to go for unique souvenirs are the art studios that sell handcrafted items, including scarfs, jewelry, chopsticks, artwork and ceramics. And for LGBTQ travelers, you're in the right spot if you want to explore Taipei's night life. Enjoy your last night with a Taiwan Beer on the patio at The Secret Garden while people watching. And if that's not your speed, you can move on to one of the six bars next door – all with outdoor seating. Soak in the urban ambience of Taipei to top off your island adventure.

Taiwan night market NO.1 food
台湾ナンバーワンの夜市グルメ
火焰骰子牛
サイコロロースト牛

XIMENDING NIGHT MARKET: *Don't leave Taiwan without experiencing a traditional night market like this one in Taipei's Wanhua District.*

THE FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Our **Vacation** expert tips will help you start the process of planning an immersive, unforgettable trip to Taiwan. Take a look at these quick facts about the country's weather, currency, airfare and other factors you may need to consider before booking your vacation.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

- Although brief, spring (April-May) and fall (October-November) are the best times to visit and enjoy the country, when the skies are clear, nights are cool, and days are moderate. Traveling during this time, you'll avoid typhoon season, which starts mid-August and ends in early October.
- Avoid peak tourist season and travel between April and June, and September and November.

AIRFARE

- **Washington, DC (IAD)** to **Taipei (TPE)** – Average round-trip airfare ranges between $1,200 (2-stops) - $1,500 (1-stop) with the best rates found midweek vs. weekend, and better rates in the fall and winter.

- **LA (LAX)** to **Taiwan (TPE)** – Average round-trip airfare ranges between $800 (1-stop) - $1,800 (non-stop) with the lower fares ($500-$600) in the fall and winter.

AVERAGE TEMPS

Taiwan straddles the Tropic of Cancer, which means your chance for warmer weather increases when traveling from North Taiwan to South Taiwan, for example, from Taipei to Tainan City.

- Taipei: Average High: 77°F (25°C), Average Low: 68°F (20°C)
- Sun Moon Lake: High: 80°F (26°C), Average Low: 66°F (18°C)
- Taitung: Average High: 81°F (27°C), Average Low: 72°F (22°C)
- Tainan: Average High: 83°F (28°C), Average Low: 69°F (21°C)
- Hualien: Average High: 83°F (28°C), Average Low: 69°F (21°C)

CONVERSION RATE

- 1 U.S. Dollar (USD) = 29.35 New Taiwan Dollar (TWD)
  Google Currency Converter

LANGUAGE

Mandarin Chinese is spoken fluently in Taiwan, but it’s not hard to find locals who also speak some English, primarily in mid- to large-sized cities such as Taitung and Taipei. Start your trip off right and learn a couple phrase to converse with locals while traveling.

Hello = *Nĭ hăo/ Nĭn hăo* (pronunciation: nee how)

Thanks = *Xièxie* (pronunciation: hsieh hsieh)

You’re welcome = *Bú kèqì* (pronunciation: boo khe chee)

Pardon / Excuse me = *Bù hăo yì si* (pronunciation: boo ow eeh si)

How much? = *Duō-shăo-qián* (pronunciation: doo oh show chee an)

No (polite way) = *Bú yòng* (pronunciation: boo yong)

I don’t understand = *Tīng bù dŏng* (pronunciation: teeng boo dong)

Where is it located? = *Zài năli* (pronunciation: zeye nah lee)

Where is the bathroom? = *Cèsuŏ zài năli* (pronunciation: Tse sue-oh zeye nah lee)

ARE YOU READY TO TRAVEL TO TAIWAN? THEN...

BOOK YOUR TRIP TO TAIWAN NOW!

Inspired to travel to Taiwan for an immersive adventure? One of **Vacation**’s on-call travel experts can match you with an Asia specialist who will plan a vacay you will love based on this itinerary or a customized one based on your allotted vacation days, interests, budget and group size.