



SPRING 2024

Living A Green Lifestyle

COVER STORY

Spring Days & Green Healing on Yangmingshan

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EDITOR'S
INTRODUCTION

Spring — Rejuvenate in Taipei's Verdant Charm

Spring is the perfect season to experience the vibrant and lively atmosphere of Taipei. In this issue's cover story, "Spring Days & Green Healing on Yangmingshan," we explore the lush greenery of Yangmingshan area by taking readers on a journey through its ecological habitats, top flower viewing spots, and local specialty shops. By embracing a green and sustainable approach to travel, visitors can truly rejuvenate themselves in the magic of nature.

Speaking of springtime rebirth, what better way to embrace the season's charm than with a picnic on the city's lush lawns? Whether you're spreading out a blanket for a lazy read or enjoying a picnic on a sunny afternoon with friends, it's the perfect way to soak up the refreshing ambiance of spring.

In 2023, *Time Out* hailed Zhongshan as one of the top 40 coolest neighborhoods in the world. It's a place where numerous historical buildings have withstood the test of time, and where the past seamlessly meets the present. See how this thriving district connects to Chifeng and Nanxi commercial districts, blending elements of tradition, vintage charm, and pop culture to showcase the spirit of Taipei.

Just as vibrant and electric is the art of street dance, which has become widely popular in Taipei in recent years. In this issue, we take you to the mecca of Taipei's street dance culture and guide you through its fascinating evolution from an underground subculture to a public art form across the lively city.

By contrast, paper offering is an ancient art form with a rich heritage spanning centuries. We take a look at its role in folk customs to unravel the emotions and cultural significance it encapsulates. Through the unique lens of artist Zhang Xu Zhan, we find out how he breathes new life into this almost forgotten traditional craft by offering a fresh interpretation.

In the new year, the Taipei City Government has rolled out new policies focusing on athletics, transportation, and carbon reduction, with the recently inaugurated Taipei Dome set to emerge as the primary venue for international-level events. Join us as we step inside this state-of-the-art arena to explore its world-class facilities.

Taipei's cuisine is world-class as well, and this multi-faceted city is currently experiencing a green dining revolution, where every dish is created with an eco-friendly focus on sustainability. We've curated a list of the five leading green restaurants in Taipei just for you.

Finally, we enter the daily life of Japanese floral designer Takako Mine, who has lived in Taiwan for 13 years. With her keen observations and tips for flower arrangement, readers are invited to explore the aromas and unique characteristics of Taipei's flora through the changing seasons.

In the *TAIPEI* Spring 2024 issue, we invite you to witness the thriving green healing energy blossoming throughout the city. Join us!



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and help us
improve.
Thank you!



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(Photo • Mike Sung)

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Spring Days & Green Healing on Yangmingshan

Author Rick Charette
Photographer Brown Chen, Mike Sung, Jeremy Kuahn, URAYAMA, Cloud Forest Collective

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Among the myriad precious things that make Taipei so unique as an international travel destination is the fact that this city has a large national park right within its borders. This is verdant Yangmingshan National Park (陽明山國家公園), one of the country's top attractions. It sits like a crown on the mighty Yangmingshan massif on the city's north side, with views directly down into the city center from varied vantage points.

The park is so close to the downtown core that you can get up there in approximately 60 minutes via an easy bus ride. The proximity of the park and the vast green space of the surrounding Yangmingshan area make this the perfect healing getaway for local denizens, who have fondly dubbed this tranquil idyll Taipei's "backyard garden." Its effectiveness as an oasis of



1. Yangmingshan National Park is certified in 2020 as the world's first "Urban Quiet Park." The image shows the tranquility of its Mt. Qixing area. (Photo • Brown Chen)

rejuvenation for body and spirit is at its height in spring, when the greatest concentration of its legion of pastel-hue flower types bursts into glorious bloom.

Allow us to serve as your guide on a springtime adventure to introduce the diverse blooms of the season and the bounty of other gifts of nature that make this 113-km² playground such a magical sanctuary of sustainable green tourism.

Geological Wonder

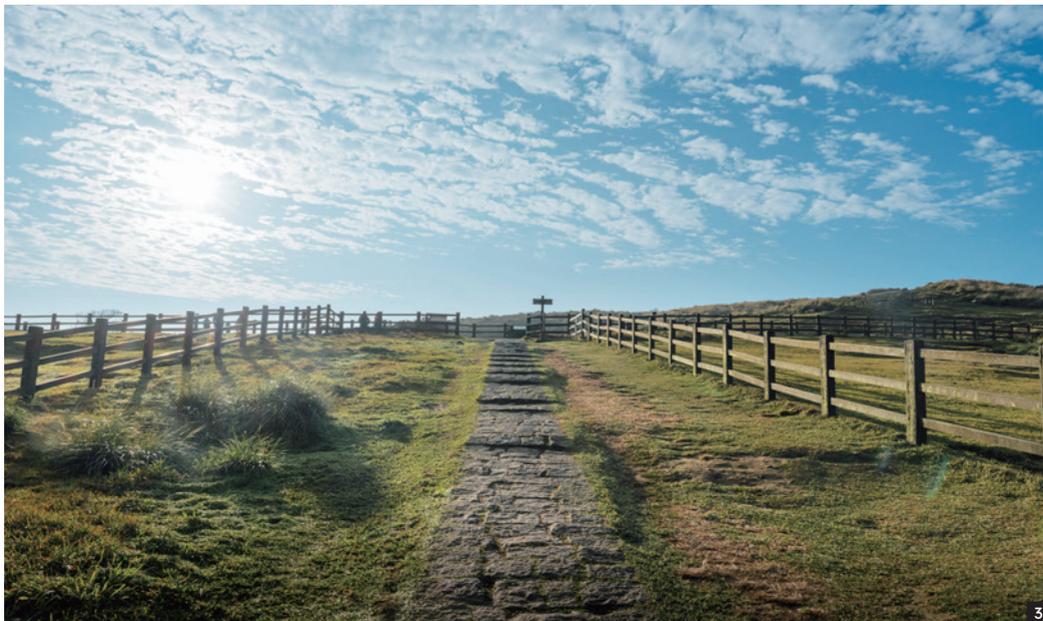
The Yangmingshan massif is a cluster of long-dormant volcanoes, known as the Datun Volcano Group, with a large magma chamber deep below and a hydrothermal reservoir above it. Look at the massif from the sky, and you'll clearly discern the rounded contours of the adjacent north coast, evidence of past massive lava flows. Look down at small Mt. Shamao (紗帽山) and you'll see a symmetric dome shape resembling a rounded "yarn hat" — i.e., the meaning

of "shamao" — the result of ancient viscous lava flows. This past has left Yangmingshan with rich earth, exuberant plant growth, and the fantastically diverse terrain.

Green Ecology

To fully engage your five senses for healing moments, you must immerse yourself in a peaceful environment where you can focus on nature, listening to, smelling, visually observing, and physically feeling its beauties. There are no better immersion locations than "silent trails," and indeed such trails have been cultivated in abundance in Yangmingshan National Park.

The park was designated a first-level noise control zone by the authorities, and subsequently became the world's first "Urban Quiet Park" certified by Quiet Parks International (QPI) in 2020. QPI standards require that noise levels not exceed 45 decibels in at least three locations and that sudden noises not



2. Spring is the perfect time for flower-viewing on Yangmingshan. (Photo • Mike Sung) | 3. Hike the peaceful trail and gaze at the distant mountain, blue sky and a sea of greenery. (Photo • Mike Sung)



4. Strolling on the peaceful trail and walking across Jingshan Suspension Bridge, you can hear the sounds of the mountains and streams. (Photo • Jeremy Kuahn)



5. The trails leading up to Qingtiangang provide amazing views of vast grasslands and the surrounding mountain range. (Photo • Mike Sung) | 6. The milky-colored water is part of what makes the scenery of Niunai Pond somewhat ethereal. (Photo • Jeremy Kuahn)

exceed 60 decibels. Approximately 45 decibels is about the volume of wind blowing through a forest, while 60 decibels represents the volume of normal conversation. Ongoing measurements in Yangmingshan have shown that the quietest areas reach only 30 decibels, resulting in the pleasant experience of the healing natural music of birds, frogs, and cicadas being almost constant companions during walks or hikes.

A Quiet Trails Outing

Our destination is the east-side base of Mt. Qixing (七星山, Seven Star Mountain), Yangmingshan's highest mountain at 1,220 meters. Though steep in sections, the trails to the top (from the east and west sides) are not considered difficult, and take just an hour or so to complete. Your reward is grand, the 360-degree view with sea to the north and city in the Taipei Basin south breathtaking.

For a much flatter and easier route, it involves interconnected trails that can be undertaken in an afternoon. Lane 101, Jingshan Road snakes along Mt. Qixing's east-side base. The Menghuan Pond Trail is a loop route, 2.2 kilometers, that begins roadside across

from the Lengshuikeng Visitor Center and takes you up-mountain a little ways to Menghuan Pond (夢幻湖), then brings you down roadside a few hundred meters north (average grade 12 degrees).

“Menghuan” means “dreamy.” This area is a wetland often shrouded in mist and fog, and is considered the heart of Yangmingshan’s Ecological Protected Area. It is also the natural habitat of the Taiwan Isoetes, an ancient and rare plant that grows nowhere else on Earth.

The Lengqing Trail, which runs from the Lengshuikeng Visitor Center east to the Qingtiangang Grassland (擎天崗草原) is 1.8 kilometers with easy grades. Lengshuikeng (冷水坑, Cold Water Pit) was formed when the volcanic lava that shaped the Qingtiangang plateau (from a mountain immediately south) dammed a sulfur stream that still pours off Mt. Qixing’s east side, providing low-temperature spring waters (the barrier lake long ago dried up). Here, visitors can enjoy the free male or female-only public bath as well as a foot-soaking pool.

Highlights on the way to Qingtiangang include white, sulfur-laden Niunai Pond (牛奶湖, Milk Pond), the pedestrian-only heritage Jingshan Suspension Bridge (菁山吊橋), and the Lengshuikeng Eco Pond (冷水坑

生態池), thick with aquatic plants along a lengthy tree-shaded trail section.

Qingtiangang is an expansive grassland-topped, saddle-shaped plateau formed by the lava build-up. The friendly-grade Qingtiangang Circular Trail is 2.4 kilometers, starting/ending at the visitor center. A renowned highlight is the grazing semi-feral water buffalo; a ranch was established here during the Japanese era but is long since abandoned.

Flower Viewing Attractions

Another Yangmingshan tourist magnet is its flower seasons. The park is a veritable flower-lover’s nirvana, festooned with the vibrant pastel colors of different varieties throughout the year. Each season blooms with a completely different canvas of landscapes.

There are five key flower seasons worth spotting in Yangmingshan: cherry blossoms from February to March, azaleas (Taipei’s official flower) also in March, calla lilies from March to April, hydrangeas in May through June, and silvergrass in October on to November.







When in full bloom, the cherry blossoms on Yangmingshan form a spectacular landscape.
(Photo · Mike Sung)

Yangmingshan Flower Festival 陽明山花季

Most famous is the torrent of cherry blossoms in spring, which can be traced back to the Japanese era when the nostalgic Japanese missed their beloved sakura-viewing traditions, and planted great numbers of cherry trees in the Yangmingshan area, a move that continues to draw tourists to this day.

The prime viewing locations include Qianshan Park (前山公園) and Yangming Park (陽明公園), both within undemanding walking distance from the Yangmingshan Bus Terminal, with the latter

boasting the iconic Flower Clock (花鐘). The nearby Floriculture Experiment Center (花卉試驗中心) is also an exceptional spot flower lovers shouldn't miss.

The annual Yangmingshan Flower Festival, held for over 60 years, runs from early February until mid-March. Beyond the cherry blossoms and azaleas, camellias, peach blossoms, and plum blossoms also star (the last is Taiwan's national flower). Among the most ebullient cherry types are the Yae Sakura, Showa Sakura, Yoshino Sakura, and Taiwanese Mountain Cherry. Among the manifold special festival activities are floral-theme guided walks, a street dance competition, and outdoor musical performances.



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7. The spring of Yangmingshan boasts a pleasant climate with a profusion of cherry blossoms. (Photo • Mike Sung)



8

8. The full bloom of calla lilies in Zhuzhihu is a popular backdrop for Instagram influencers. (Photo • Mike Sung)



9

Zhuzihu Calla Lily & Hydrangea Festival 竹子湖海芋季與繡球花季

Next up in popularity is the combined Zhuzihu Calla Lily & Hydrangea Festival, which runs from mid-March through June. Zhuzihu (竹子湖), or Bamboo Lake, is a once-marshy depression drained by the Japanese for agriculture, thereafter used to grow Moso bamboo, tea, Penglai rice, and cabbage.

The depression, at the base of Mt. Qixing's west side, was formed by lava-flow buildup on its west and south (Mt. Datun is on its north). Today the basin is filled with sustainable tourism-focused farms specializing in flower cultivation. The Calla Lily Festival was first held in 2002; hydrangeas were introduced more recently, to extend the spring/early summer flower-gazing fun. Fully 80-90% of Taiwan's calla lilies are grown here.

Visitors come to walk the paths through the flower fields, pick their own flowers (for a fee), and eat healthy meals at the rustic eateries. Among the dedicated festival-period activities are guided eco-farm tours and experience activities, concerts, and displays of landscape art.

For more information on these and other floral events in Yangmingshan and throughout Taipei, visit their official website.



► 2024 Flowers in Taipei

9. The hydrangeas around Zhuzihu bloom from May to June. (Photo • Mike Sung)



10

Unique Shops in the Mountains

URAYAMA — Savoring Coffee and Aesthetics

When you arrive at Yangmingshan to admire the flowers, envision yourself seated with a cup of coffee, immersed in the picturesque colors and shadows of Yangmingshan's four seasons — how wonderful that would be!

URAYAMA(裏山) is exactly this kind of place. As Shen Ying-jen (沈映仁), founder of URAYAMA, says, “We wanted to create a mountain in the city,” and it has thus become a green sanctuary hidden in the mountains, adorned with antiques, plants, and artistic culture, making it a favorite destination for both Taipei residents and travelers to visit and relax on weekends.

Here, you'll find enchanting green gardens and landscapes worth exploring, where you can witness the blooming and fading of flowers and plants with the changing seasons, vibrant and lush. Explore Taiwanese and Japanese antiques, and unearth treasures among the ancient artifacts and traces of bygone eras that pique your interest. Enjoy the greenhouse café, where you can listen to the soft tones of wind chimes and savor the fragrance of coffee from the deep in the mountains.

The artistic space is akin to strolling into a community art museum, offering a sense of freedom as you appreciate the creativity and craftsmanship of Taiwanese artists.

URAYAMA

ADD 109-10, Pingjing St., Shilin Dist.

HOURS Sat. and Sun. 12:00pm-6:00pm

(Occasionally closed for maintenance.

Check announcements on social media.)



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Cloud Forest Collective — Pottery and Meditation in Nature

Cloud Forest Collective (雲森陶陶工作室) is highly recommended as a place for travelers to slow down and gather energy in Yangmingshan. This pottery space, beneath greenery and large glass windows, surrounded by ancient houses, combines exhibitions, classrooms, and workshops, offering creative and surprising experiences in every corner.

Founder David Pipkin, from the US, has a healing philosophy. “The process of making pottery is like meditation,” he says. “You must be very relaxed and focused on what is in your hands.” Pottery making, meditation, and handcrafting become a kind of art therapy, not only relieving stress but also injecting energy and passion into life through the creative process.

Cloud Forest Collective also offers travelers the opportunity to experience custom pottery in the

mountains. With pre-booked arrangements, visitors can test their art skills by making Raku (樂燒) pottery, a special low-temperature firing technique, under basic instruction in both Chinese and English. The artwork makes the perfect memento for such journey.

Cloud Forest Collective

ADD 4, Ln. 25, Kaixuan Rd., Shilin Dist.

HOURS Wed. to Sun. 11:00am-5:00pm

(At least one month in advance for the experiential course sign-up. Check info on social media.)

There is an inexhaustible treasure vault of natural jewels in Yangmingshan waiting for tourists to explore, and though exquisite in all seasons, Yangmingshan is most beautiful in spring. The time to go is now! 📍

10. The unique landscaping in the courtyard of URAYAMA provides tourists with a sense of tranquility. (Photo • URAYAMA) | **11-12.** Tourists engage in the fun of pottery making while surrounded by the beauty of mountain and plants. (Photo • Cloud Forest Collective)



Exploring Urban Picnic Paradises: Health-Nourishing Fun in the Sun

Author Rick Charette
Photographer Brown Chen, Tzuying Sun, Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

The happy sun of springtime has arrived, embracing Taiwan with an energizing deep hug. In Taipei the birds are busy in great numbers singing zestfully, butterflies are fluttering about proudly showing off their colors, and flowers are bursting forth and dancing together with in the warm breeze, entertaining passersby and admirers. It's the perfect time for a picnic!

In our feature article this issue we took you up into the mountains on Taipei's northern side for "spring days & green healing" in the immensely beautiful Yangmingshan. In the pages to come, we follow the same theme but stay within this bustling city's urban core, introducing nice parks where you can escape

the hubbub, sit down to a healthy picnic on a grassy expanse in an oasis of green tranquility, and rest both body and spirit.

Taipei has undergone a fundamental aesthetic transformation over the past decades. At the forefront has been Taipei City Government determined to lift the metropolis high up in global livable city rankings — with stellar success, as a quick Google search will demonstrate. Taipei has engaged in a kaleidoscopic array of "livable city" as well as "green and sustainable city" initiatives, with a key component being the creation of green spaces.

Green Getaways in the City's Heart

The result has been a metamorphosis from a place of little green space to a green-loving city with a forest of parks. A prime example is the long necklace of contiguous riverside parks that stretches almost all the way around the urban core, following the Keelung, Tamsui, Xindian, and Jingmei rivers. A looping riverside bikeway wends its way through all, with inexpensive public YouBike rentals readily available. And right at the core's heart is Taipei's "Central Park," the poetically landscaped Daan Park, a broad expanse opened in 1994, featuring vibrant greenery that offers a peaceful retreat from the bustling surrounding city.

Your own patch of soft grass with views of healthy trees and sky-climbing mountains does wonders for healing one's psyche and body. Taipei's urban parks provide this idyllic triumvirate in abundance.

In the past decade, the picnic trend has bloomed among the local populace of Taipei. Contributing to the fun has been the organization of large-scale events such as TLC Picnic Day (TLC 台北野餐日) and Vogue Taiwan Picnic Day (Vogue 風格野餐日) at multiple parks, musical performances, creative markets, and other stage activities to encourage everyone to spend more time in the greens. These join a packed schedule of other activities such as festivals and expos. Below are four of our most recommended picnic spots in this now very picnic-friendly city.



2



3

1. Taipei boasts numerous parks perfect for picnicking, where one can savor delicious food and unwind. (Photo • Brown Chen) | 2-3. A picnic can be more than just food, but a quality time with your family. (Photo • Brown Chen)

Daan Park (大安森林公園)

This sprawling park, the city's largest, is in the center-south of the urban core. Metro Taipei delivers you right to the door, at Daan Park Station, on the park's north edge; this is the city's sole metro station with a sunken garden. There are convenient YouBike rental stations here and at several other locations around the park.

The key draws for picnickers here are trees, trees, trees and birds, birds, birds — magnificent specimens in wondrous variety. The greatest picknicker volume is in the afternoons on weekends/holidays; families, especially, like to set up in the northeast area, where the largest expanse of open grass is located with a kids' play area beside.

As its Chinese name “Daan Forest Park” suggests, indeed a true forest has bloomed here since its opening in 1994, and there are still large grassy areas aplenty. Stand along the park's border at any point and you'll find it impossible to see through to the other side. A dense garden of trees, shrubs/bushes, and flowers, Daan Park has been affectionately dubbed the “lungs of Taipei.”



4. Sitting with your friends on the soft lawn of Daan Park is the greatest weekend pleasure. (Photo • Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government) | 5. Daan Park is rich in biodiversity, with its eco pond being a habitat for many species of birds. (Photo • Brown Chen)



During a springtime picnic you'll be regaled by azaleas and hydrangeas in bloom, and among the grand specimens proudly representing scores of tree species are shade-providing banyan, yellow flame, camphor, and Formosan sweet gum trees. The park is used as a venue for numerous annual festival celebrations, and this year the Taipei City Government is holding the Taipei Azalea Festival (台北杜鵑花季) all through the month of March as well as the Taipei Floral Picnic (花伴野餐) on March 16th.

For picnickers looking for post-feasting exercise, the park's northern half has far more human hubbub than the southern, sporting a wide array of recreational facilities. There are basketball courts, an inline-skating rink, a kids' playground with swings, slides, and a sand pit, and an outdoor amphitheater where music and other types of performances are offered on weekends/holidays.

You'll also much enjoy the in-park eco pond, which has two artificial islands bursting with tree growth, perfect for avian roosting and nesting, denizens including Taiwan barbets, black-crowned night herons, grey herons, ibises, moorhens, and egrets. You'll also no doubt come upon flocks of photo enthusiasts lining the pond's shore.

Xinsheng Park Area of Taipei Expo Park (花博公園新生園區)

Xinsheng Park is in the core's north sector, just south of the Keelung River (基隆河). MRT Yuanshan Station is two blocks to the west, with Zhongshan Elementary School Station three blocks south.

There are a number of YouBike stations around the park's perimeter. Nearby picnicker draws include the adjoining Taipei Expo Park's Yuanshan Park (圓山園區) and Fine Arts Park (美術園區) areas.

The biggest visual draw for picnickers at this park is flowers — specifically, its grand swath of roses of myriad pastel colors, looking like a great painter's palette. Another, unusual, enticement is the chance to watch landing planes directly overhead; the city's airport is immediately to the east.

Among Xinsheng Park's varied attractions are the Taipei Rose Garden (台北玫瑰園), Taipei Collectible

Botanical Garden (台北典藏植物園), and Garden Maze (迷宮花園). The rose garden offers a global rose tour, with more than 5,000 plants from over 800 varieties. Northern Taiwan's most diverse such floral oasis, it serves as the venue for the annual springtime Taipei Rose Festival (台北玫瑰展) in March. The festival's weekend fairs are extremely popular, with vendors selling such treasures as rose essential oils and jams, cut flowers, and potted plants.

Picnickers generally concentrate in the grassy areas around the octagonal Garden Maze, which has the rose garden immediately on its west and kids' playground east. The park's exercise-related recreational facilities include a baseball field, basketball courts, and indoor swimming pool. As with Daan Park, weekend/holiday afternoons are the most popular picnic-outing times.

6. Taipei Rose Garden is a top attraction inside Xinsheng Park and it can add a touch of elegance to your picnic day. (Photo • Brown Chen) | **7.** Inside Xinsheng Park, there is a large maze garden constructed with green hedge shrubs, where you can also see aircrafts flying overhead up-close. (Photo • Brown Chen)





Dajia Riverside Park (大佳河濱公園) & Meiti Riverside Park (美堤河濱公園)

The Dajia and Meiti parks lie along the Keelung River, with Dajia located on the south bank just north of Xinsheng Park and Meiti on the north bank, three blocks away from MRT Dazhi Station. Each park has a Taipei Riverside Bike Rental Center near its main entrance.

Being along a river on the urban core's north side, both parks provide picnickers with expansive far-off views. From each park the green stretch of riverside parks cross-river is in view, and each provides good mountain vistas. Dajia Riverside Park overlooks The Grand Hotel, and from Meiti Riverside Park the famed Taipei 101 tower and other soaring architectural works of Xinyi District are also in grand view. In

addition, the east-west orientation of the parks affords especially entertaining sunrises and sunsets, making these popular picnic times, though of course weekend/holiday afternoons are busiest.

Beyond their respective sections of the riverside bikeway network, each park is also choc-a-bloc with other amenities that provide good exercise opportunities after a hearty picnic repast. At Dajia are facilities for basketball, tennis, badminton, and croquet, and there are also playgrounds for youngsters with such irresistible attractions as slides, climbing equipment, and sand-play areas. Meiti provides facilities for volleyball, basketball, tennis, skateboarding, and even model go-kart racing.

The most popular picnicking area at Dajia is around the monumental Fountain of Hope (希望噴泉), close

to the river, which shoots a central column up about 75 meters. The park offers 15-minute fountain shows every one or two hours (depending on the season) from 10:00am to around nightfall. These shows feature emulated blooms resembling the petals of a flower and a kaleidoscopic 80-color underwater lighting array. At Meiti the most popular picnicking area is along the west side of a graceful inlet-like bay area busy with bird life, especially migratory birds in autumn, which is close to the kids' playground.

As with the other large parks mentioned earlier, Dajia and Meiti are both popular venues for large-scale festival celebrations. Dajia is the main venue for the annual Taipei International Dragon Boat Championships, while Meiti used to stage TLC Picnic Day for three consecutive years.



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8. After your picnic day, enjoy watching the sunset from the banks of Dajia Riverside Park. (Photo • Brown Chen) | **9-10.** Taipei Riverside Bikeway stretches along Keelung River, connecting the riverside parks and the sweeping scenery. (Left • Tzuying Sun ; Right • Brown Chen) | **11.** Residents bring kids to the park to picnic and enjoy the fresh air by the river. (Phot • Brown Chen)



11

Picnic Fun Maximized

While exploring Taipei's urban parks you'll quickly find that, especially on weekends/holidays, leisurely picnicking with family and groups of friends is a very popular activity. And though you'll have your own patch of grass and your solitude will be respected, you'll also notice that Taipei folk enjoy having others close around and easily engage with adjoining outing groups. This is especially true when you bring your kids — or your furry kids with you.

You'll also see that, as bonus fun beyond the good eating and drinking, local folks commonly bring along playing cards and board games. Other play items especially effective in breaking through the boundaries and bringing people together are kites and frisbees. Neighboring kids are sure to be checking you out if you “step out of your zone” to play with these.

The most irresistible version: frisbee frolicking with your pooch — as you can even outsource all the run.

One other conspicuous practice in these parks you'll note is the pitching of small tents, something that has caught on in Taiwan in the past few years, a bit of “urban-nature day-camping.” They're great for catnaps, short escapes from strong sunlight, changing tots, etc.

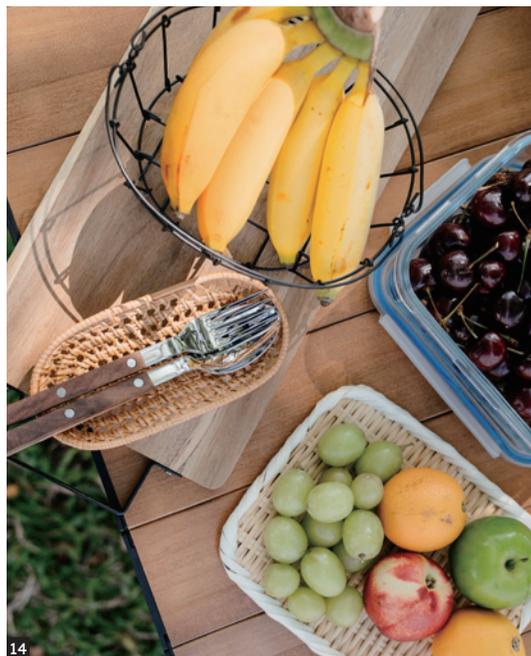
Meanwhile, in order to promote pristine picnicking, the Taipei City Government has also actively promoted the concept of “Leave No Trace,” which is the ultimate outdoor ethic that respects the natural environment by minimizing human impact and implementing green sustainability initiatives. We'd like to invite you to enjoy the charm of Taipei's greens while leaving their natural beauty undisturbed for generations to come. ♣



12. A simple board game will add to the fun of your picnic with friends and family. (Photo • Brown Chen)



13



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13. Picnicking can also become a precious time with your furry friends. (Photo • Brown Chen)

14. Fresh fruits packed with reusable containers are great for the planet and for a good shot! (Photo • Brown Chen)



RESPONSIBLE PICNICKING TIPS

- Three Meal Preparation Essentials: non-perishable, lightweight, and easy to eat.
- Oldies but Goodies: Do try some of Taiwan's unique delicacies, such as fantuan (stuffed sticky-rice rolls, 飯糰), guabao (Taiwanese pork-belly buns, 刈包), tea eggs and baked sweet potato. Not only do these dishes meet the three criteria, but they also taste fantastic.
- Reusable utensils, cutlery, and containers: Food-storage containers instead of plastic bags allow for easier packing and carrying, and are more sanitary. As well, a lightweight wooden tray is superior to towels/blankets for placing food on grass, preventing tipping/wastage, and it sure adds nice aesthetic texture to your Insta-shots.



Meet You in Zhongshan: The Ins and Outs of Taipei's Coolest Neighborhood

Author

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Photographer

Mike Sung, Jeremy Kuahn, Two Three Comedy, RVLT Taipei, Fifi Lee, Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

1

Scooters and taxis zip down Nanjing East Road (南京東路) well after midnight, after Metro Taipei has closed for the night. They make their left or right turns into the streets and alleyways of Zhongshan (中山), their destinations close at hand: a late-night bistro, an understated izakaya, a buzzing shisha lounge, or a hip speakeasy.

Across from Linsen Park (林森公園), patrons of a 24-hour dim sum restaurant sit with their backs to the windows overlooking the road, stealing glances across the room at the various tables of night-owl musicians and bar staff who frequent the place. It's one of a thousand scenes playing out every night, and one of the reasons why in November 2023, esteemed British cultural publication *Time Out* named Zhongshan as one of the "Top 40 Coolest

Neighborhoods in the World." This rare honor isn't bestowed upon any other place in Taiwan this time, making the achievement even more unique. If you're keen to learn for yourself what makes Zhongshan so hip, you'll just have to get right into it.

Urban Origins

In the late 1800s, as Taipei blossomed from a trading town into a full-fledged city, Zhongshan became the new urban center of development. Factories, schools, and residences quickly emerged in the district. Later, during the Japanese era (1895-1945), the neighborhoods were laid out in an orderly, easily-navigable grid. Members of the ruling elite settled into the area in stately homes, and around them sprang

up the residences and shops of local merchants, tradespeople, professionals, and their families.

The Japanese influence on Zhongshan is apparent to this day. Izakayas and ramen shops line the alleyways north of Changan West Road (長安西路). Street scenes look like they could have been lifted wholesale from Osaka or Tokyo. Listen attentively and you'll hear plenty of Japanese being spoken as you walk around — the area remains popular with tourists and business travelers from Japan. But Zhongshan is not Japan. It is uniquely Taiwan, with its identity forged in the crucible of history, reconfigured endlessly by the people who live and work there. The district's name itself is a tribute to the founder of the Republic of China, Sun Zhongshan, known commonly in the West as Sun Yat-sen.



1. A bustling area, Zhongshan District was selected as one of the “Top 40 Coolest Neighborhoods in the World” by *Time Out* magazine. (Photo • Mike Sung) | 2. Eye-catching graffiti on the wall of one of many unique coffee shops in Zhongshan. (Photo • Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government) | 3. Xinzhongshan Linear Park is dotted with many installation artworks. (Photo • Mike Sung)

Getting There

Setting off from MRT Zhongshan Station, you can go to Nanxi Shopping District to experience the trendy and exotic shopping environment of Taipei. Next to Nanxi is Chifeng Shopping District, which is technically located within the Datong District but often seen as an extension of Zhongshan with its intersecting alleys. Going further westward leads to another popular tourist magnet of Taipei — Dadaocheng, where you can bear witness to Taiwan's historical and cultural development.

Zhongshan is a cluster of coffee shops, restaurants, galleries, historical sites and creative markets, and is popular with young tourists for both shopping and taking pictures in the area's many stylish locations. No matter your approach, you will be met by neighborhood gems.

With its Japanese background, modern amenities, chic style, and cozy vibes, Zhongshan is an obvious destination for intrepid travelers looking for a unique experience of Taipei. Surely you will find your own favorite sights, bites, and sips, but the following recommendations should serve as a helpful starting guide to anyone eager to see what's on offer.



Daytime in Zhongshan

During the day, Zhongshan bustles with commerce, and likewise boasts numerous literary and artistic attractions. Between the historical sites and adorable shops, you'll find no shortage of places to explore.



4. Xinzhongshan Linear Park is perfect for leisurely strolls, offering an urban oasis filled with aesthetic designs. (Photo • Mike Sung)
5. Zhongshan Underground Book Street brings art into residents' daily lives. (Photo • Mike Sung)

Xinzhongshan Linear Park & Zhongshan Underground Book Street 心中山線形公園 & 中山地下書街

Running north-south along the route from MRT Shuanglian Station to Zhongshan Station, Xinzhongshan Linear Park is an oasis of aesthetic urban design. Perfect for people-watching or a casual stroll, the landscape transforms along the way, mixing greenery and architecture with views of the surrounding neighborhood. Dotted with funky urban art that changes throughout the year, the park is a hot gathering spot for young families and fashionable local youth to meet with friends and enjoy some fresh air. On weekends, there is a charming outdoor market for local crafts and fashion goods.

Descend beneath the linear park to the Zhongshan Underground Book Street (中山地下書街) to explore the world of books, stationery, and cultural products. Pick up a novel and ease into the climate-controlled environment at your leisure.

Back above ground, the streets and alleys that intersect the park are brimming with cute cafés, bakeries, and boutiques.





Tsai Jui-yueh Dance Research Institute 蔡瑞月舞蹈研究社

Taiwan is a nation in love with movement, and the art of dance is broadly popular. On any given weekend you can see groups of youths practicing moves across the city. Considered the mother of modern dance in Taiwan, Tsai Jui-yueh was a pioneer in her art, and the Dance Research Institute carries on her work to this day, serving as an important educational base for young talent. The wooden building was once the residence of Japanese officials, and is now open to visitors from Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm.



6-7. Once a dormitory for Japanese officials, the wooden structure of Tsai Jui-yueh Dance Research Institute now proudly stands to display Ms. Tsai's dancing records and videos. (Above • Mike Sung ; Below • Jeremy Kuahn)



Coffee Dumbo 登波咖啡

With its cool retro interior and obvious passion for coffee perfection, Coffee Dumbo is one of the best cafés in town, located south of MRT Shuanglian Station just beside the Linear Park. Settle in for a phenomenal cup and a cinnamon roll and steep in some of the best flavor and style Zhongshan has to offer.



SPOT Taipei Film House 光點台北

Screening some of Asia's greatest films in an American colonial style mansion, SPOT Taipei Film House is unique among movie theaters as it was previously the Embassy of the US. Now an elegant, intimate setting for the cinematic arts, it is an unforgettable place and well worth a visit. Check their website for viewing schedules and ticket information.



8. The style of Coffee Dumbo blends retro and modern influences. (Photo • Mike Sung) | 9. SPOT Taipei Film House, a two-story, western-style building, was once the US ambassador's residence. (Photo • Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government) | 10. MoCA Taipei exhibits a wide variety of contemporary artworks. (Photo • Mike Sung)



11



12

Dongkyo Bakery 東橋商店

This inventive bakery produces some of the city's favorite sweet buns, distinctively Taiwanese in style and flavor. The enduringly popular purple sweet potato variety, apart from looking just like an actual purple sweet potato, is an instagrammable favorite: tear it open to reveal the actual sweet potato filling. Be sure to grab a variety to power your adventures around the neighborhood.

Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei 台北當代藝術館

A short walk south of MRT Zhongshan Station, MoCA showcases artwork from Taiwan's contemporary artists in clever, illuminating, and sometimes provocative exhibitions. MoCA's architecture stands out from its surroundings, its red brick arches and wings hinting at its original purpose: an elementary school, built during the Japanese era, now continuing to serve the interests of the public. Step inside and immerse yourself in the creative visions of remarkable artists. The museum is open from Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 6pm, and admission costs NT\$100.

Chifeng Street 赤峰街

You will definitely be charmed by the shops lining Chifeng Street. Just a minute's walk from MRT Zhongshan Station, the chic shops on this sweet little street and its connecting lanes draw patrons from across Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and beyond.

Known as "Iron Street," Chifeng Street used to mainly sell automotive parts and hardware in the past. However, these scrap metal parts and auto repair shops have transformed into retro photo studios, vintage clothing shops, independent bookstores, and coffee shops. The renovation of old buildings adds an artistic ambiance and infuses Chifeng Street with a blend of retro and modern vibes. From hot coffee to cool fashion, with dessert along the way, Chifeng Street is a great place to spend a whole day.

11. Hot, fresh sweet potato bread on offer at Dongkyo Bakery. (Photo • Jeremy Kuahn)

12. Chifeng Street is a paradise for hipsters to hang out. (Photo • Mike Sung)

Zhongshan After Dark

Zhongshan takes on a different allure after the sun goes down. The urban vibe turns cool and easy, and the fragrance of marvelous cuisines drift down the breezy lanes. Jump into the buzzing atmosphere and chill charms of one of Taipei's top nightlife neighborhoods, embracing the captivating allure of diverse cultures from around the world.

Party Team Bistro

打鐵町 49 番地

Izakayas, those wonderful Japanese parallels to the “gastropub,” dot the Taipei landscape as odes to the joy of Japanese food and drink. No two are the same, but Party Team Bistro stands above the crowd for its fun, funky ambiance, at once cool but not pretentious. The food is seriously good, however, in particular the yakitori boldly advertised on the facade. Sake is the drink of choice, but cold Kirin beer is always on tap. Have fun!



13

Two Three Comedy Club

23 喜劇俱樂部

One of Taipei's best-kept secrets is its growing international comedy scene, and Two Three Comedy Club is its home base. An unassuming door on colorful Linsen North Road (林森北路) leads down to the underground club, where English and Chinese language stand-up comics take the stage to poke at the ordinary and absurd to audiences' delight. A cozy bar serves snacks, cocktails, and fine craft beer from Taiwan's 23 Brewing Company. English open mics are every Monday and Wednesday at 9:30pm, with ticketed performances frequently on Fridays. Check their Facebook page for details.

13. Party Team Bistro is an izakaya with a strong Japanese vibe. (Photo • Jeremy Kuahn)

14. Two Three Comedy Club was the first bilingual comedy club in Taiwan, pioneering the stand-up comedy industry in the city. (Photo • Two Three Comedy)



14

ⓘ Excessive drinking is hazardous to your health.



15



16



17

Luckstar Banquet Hall 吉星港式飲茶

This 24/7 dim sum joint is an oasis of flavor and timeless style. Across from the southern boundary of Linsen Park, just head up to the 2nd floor and wait to be seated. This popular spot sees all kinds of guests, from business folk in formal attire, partygoers, drunk comedians, tired taxi drivers, and curious travelers. After a night spent soaking in the culture, vibes, and revelry of Zhongshan, nothing hits quite like some hot tea and steaming shrimp shumai. Bon appétit!

RVLT Taipei 台VLT

A new branch of the wildly popular RVLT Singapore, RVLT Taipei is a blast of a wine bar. Located a short distance from central Zhongshan, it's well worth a quick Uber ride. Serving up creative and delicious takes on bar food, paired with over 150 curated bottles of the world's most delectable wines, RVLT is devoted to providing enjoyable drinking experiences, recommending drinking a bottle of wine rather than merely a glass.

Customers can enjoy the exclusive wine list with friends in a relaxing space. This nightlife spot has won over both locals and international travelers alike. Don't be surprised if the whole place spontaneously breaks out in song.

There is, of course, so much more for you to discover in Zhongshan. And really, that's the coolest part of all. From the quotidian street scenes and unexpected surprises that pop up from around the corners, to the people you meet along the way, and the flavors, art, and music of the city, the neighborhood is yours to explore. At once holding onto its heritage and eagerly embracing the future, Zhongshan, like Taipei itself, is a place in constant flux. The best thing to do, of course, is to enjoy it while you can. Ⓣ

15. Luckstar Banquet Hall is open 24/7, 365, welcoming all walks of life. (Photo • Fifi Lee)

16-17. RVLT Taipei offers customers a brand new experience of enjoying luxury, exotic delicacies. (Photo • RVLT Taipei)



Marguerite daisies bloom profusely around the Flower Clock in Yangming Park.
(Photo • Mike Sung)





Flow in the City: Street Dance Evolution in Taipei

Author
Photographer

Ellie Chueh
Mike Wang, Brown Chen, Metro Taipei

1

Spring, with its renewing touch, fills the streets of Taipei with an abundant energy, an invitation for the city to awaken. In this season of revival, the human spirit resonates with this newfound liveliness, making it an amazing time for movement and self-expression. In this same spirit of rebirth and revitalization, street dance, which has its roots as an underground subculture, has gradually evolved into a powerful and widespread cultural phenomenon in Taipei.

Think of this as the start of a cool adventure. Spring represents a fresh start and new growth, and much the same, street dance in Taipei has grown from a small group of fans to something most everyone loves. The year 2018 was a big moment because “breaking,” one of the main styles of street dance, became an official event of the Youth Olympics Games, and was

subsequently included in the 2024 Summer Olympics. Now, with everyone gearing up for Paris, street dance is no longer just an art form, but also a legitimate sport.

In the vibrant streets of Taipei, blooming cherry blossoms mirror the emergence of street dance culture as passionate dancers turn the city into their own personal dance floor. Street dance is more than just moves; it’s a language that Taipei speaks, a rhythm that echoes through its alleys and squares.

From the Street to the Stage

The evolution of street dance in Taipei is like the unfolding of an enchanting routine. What began



as a whisper in the underground scene has grown into a resounding beat across the city. No longer restricted to hidden corners, street dance has spilled onto the streets, proudly capturing the attention and admiration of the city.

As you immerse yourself in the beats, rhythms, and stories that have shaped street dance into an integral part of Taipei's cultural fabric, you'll witness not only the evolution of the dance but also the transformation of the city itself. The streets of Taipei have become a platform for artistic expression, a place where every move tells a story and every dancer contributes to the city's vitality. Now, let's delve into the roots of street dance, starting with its origins in New York City back in the 1970s.

As a mode of creative expression for African American, Hispanic, Latin American, Jamaican, and Caribbean youth, "street dance" began to take form on the

streets, and it is all about a bold and fearless attitude towards life. Over time, it has developed two main types: "Old School" and "New School," with many different styles telling unique stories.

A Diverse Tapestry

Old School street dance is energetic and rooted in basic moves. Dancers "battle" to show their skills with footwork and signature moves like a creative competition where everyone expresses themselves.

New School is more individual and modern. Dancers mix in moves from martial arts, contemporary dance, and other styles to create something unique. It's about expressing yourself freely.

Within Old School and New School, there are many styles adding a sense of diverse beauty to street dance. Breaking is one of the most famous, known for its acrobatic spins and cool freezes. Hip-hop is another, with rhythmic footwork and cool isolations. Popping and Locking have sharp and angular movements, adding a bit of complexity. Meanwhile, Jazz brings a sense of elegance to street dance.

Taipei Rides the Wave

As street dance evolves, it transcends geographical boundaries, becoming a global phenomenon. What started on the street corners of major American urban centers has now grown into an international language, spoken by dancers worldwide. The diverse subgenres

1. Dancers across the city gather together to perfect their moves and formations. (Photo • Brown Chen)
2. There are more and more dance events in Taipei for dancers to "battle" and for others to simply enjoy the shows. (Photo • Mike Wang)





3. Street dance is becoming increasingly popular in Taipei. More and more dancers participate in dance classes after work or school. (Photo • Brown Chen)

contribute to a rich and interconnected global fabric, with each region adding its unique flavor to the dance form.

In Taipei, this phenomenon has found a home. The street dance culture in Taiwan began to take root in the 1980s, likely influenced by the introduction of Hip-Hop culture during that time. Although once seen as a niche subculture, street dance gradually stepped into the mainstream in Taiwan, largely due to Taipei youth's willingness to explore this new form of art. Student clubs dedicated to street dance started to spring up across high schools, where seniors taught basic moves to juniors, providing opportunities for younger generations to enjoy dancing and develop a community of dance enthusiasts.



4-5. Student dancers can be often seen at public venues like National Theater & Concert Hall with their unique choreography. (Photo • Brown Chen)



5

The turning point happened in 2007 when the *Red Bull BC One* competition came to Taipei. It was not just a contest; it brought B-Boys and B-Girls from around Taiwan together, blending the global spirit of street dance with Taipei's own vibe.

A more recent milestone was the creation of the Department of Sports Performing Arts (運動藝術學系) at the University of Taipei (台北市立大學). It was approved in 2007 and initially named as "Dynamic Performing Arts." To better align with its evolving focus, the department officially changed to its current name in 2013. This was a clear sign that Taipei wanted to support not only sports, but also the art of performance, with street dance becoming a key focus. The courses related to street dance in this department show that the city sees the cultural importance of street dance and its role in contributing Taipei's artistic scene. What was once a subcultural trend is now proudly promoted.

As Taipei embraced street dance, more groups and communities joined in local events and competitions. This change was embraced by young and old alike. With growing awareness of the physical benefits of street dance, such as enhancing strength and coordination, some parents even enroll their kids in talent classes to learn street dance. In these classes, kids learn not only dance moves but also important values like confidence, creativity, art appreciation, and teamwork. This shift has turned street dance into more than just a pastime, but an engaging art that everyone can enjoy. The streets of Taipei have become stages where both kids and adults show off their skills, adding to Taipei's lively city scape.

To put it simply, street dance in Taipei has come a long way. Today, it is not just about artistic expression; it's a living, breathing embodiment of the diverse cultural influences that shape Taipei's identity.

The City as Dance Studio

The OG spirit of street dance, which encourages dancers to practice and showcase their moves throughout the city, is still very evident in the vibrant city of Taipei. Iconic places like Taipei Expo Park (花博公園), National Theater & Concert Hall (國家兩廳院), and Taipei Performing Arts Center (台北表演藝術中心) have become favorite spots for street dancers with their large open spaces. Sun Yat-sen Memorial

Hall (國父紀念館) is also worth mentioning, as it was already historically significant and has now welcomed the contemporary rhythm of street dance, creating a fusion of the elements from both the old/new and the East/West.

These venues offer expansive spaces for street dancers to unleash their creativity while also serving as meeting grounds where they can connect, exchange ideas, and forge lasting friendships that further foster Taipei's street dance community.



6



Metro Stations — Cradle of Young Talents

In the middle of Taipei's busy transportation system, metro stations like Ximen and Shuanglian have evolved into dynamic hubs for street dance. These stations, strategically located and easily accessible, have become popular among students who find joy in practicing there. Furthermore, in certain stations such as Zhongshan and the aforementioned Shuanglian, open spaces with mirrored walls were designed for dance practice purposes. The beats of street dance mix with the sounds of the city, making these metro stations lively places where dancers of all levels come together.

The popularity of metro stations as street dance hubs gave rise to the now-iconic "Metro Street Dance

Competition (捷運盃街舞大賽)." Organized by Metro Taipei since 2005, this annual event takes place from mid-August to September, and stands as a highlight for street dancers in Taipei, injecting a dose of coolness into Taipei's already diverse cultural landscape. The competition also shows how the excitement and interest in street dance have spread to every part of Taipei, like a happy and contagious energy.

In the heart of Taipei, where the city's vibrant energy intertwines with its rich cultural heritage, lively music emanates from around the city, setting a unique tone. The streets pulse with diversity and inclusivity, each dancer's step adding to the city's captivating rhythm. In this way, Taipei dances to its own beat in a harmonious celebration of the city's spirit. ◆

6. Taipei Expo Park's expansive space provides ample room for dancers to perform their routines. (Photo • Brown Chen)

7. A b-boy is showing off remarkable moves at the Metro Street Dance Competition. (Photo • Metro Taipei)



An Ancient Blessing Culture: The Story of Paper Art

Author Jenna Lynn Cody
Photographer Hsin Hsin Paper Offering Store, Zhang Xu Zhan

Imagine an opulent mansion. Perhaps it's anachronistic in design and covered in improbably bright shades of pink, green or yellow. Perhaps, instead, it is sleekly modern, done in neutral tones — what a wealthy person living in Taiwan today might build for themselves. Add to your mansion a luxury car, a designer handbag and shoes, and all the money you could ever want.

You might see these items, rendered in uncannily realistic detail, at a Taiwanese funeral, or ceremony paying respects to those no longer with us. All of them are painstakingly rendered in paper and bamboo, and all of them will go up in flames. They're not for us; they're for the afterlife.

Paper offerings take on special meaning in early April, when Taiwanese people visit their ancestors' graves. Both paper money and more elaborate paper offerings are often burned to pay one's respects to those who have passed on. Although the art of paper offerings is thousands of years old and found in Chinese-speaking communities around the world, Taiwanese paper artists have been breaking new ground with creative paper renderings and even short films. Such art has garnered significant international attention, including multiple feature exhibitions in France, such as one that took place at Musée du Quai Branly, among others.

When learning about paper offering art, one must consider not only its history and cultural connotations, but also the ways it has transformed itself into a modern art form for contemporary audiences.

Paper Art Through Life and Death

Paper offerings, called *Zhizha* (紙紮) in Chinese, originated in ancient China. Differing accounts place their first appearance as early as the Three Kingdoms era in the 3rd century CE, or the Tang Dynasty several centuries later. The practice stemmed from archaic burial customs. As with many cultures around the world, the wealthy in ancient China would be sent to the supernatural realm with a dazzling array of material goods. Sometimes, such riches would include live humans and animals, especially horses. There are also stories of such offerings — including living beings — to various Taoist and folk gods.

Eventually, these live offerings were replaced with pottery replicas, including the famous Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huang, created in the 3rd century BCE, later discovered in Xian, China. Brightly-painted papier-mâché offerings built around thin bamboo structures then began to appear, most likely beginning as a folk custom before gaining popularity among the imperial elite.

One story of the origin of paper offering art dates back to Emperor Taizong of Tang, a famous ruler from the 7th century CE. Emperor Taizong's reign was marked by military campaigns against the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. These strengthened China but resulted in a great deal of death and destruction.

According to legend, Taizong's spirit once temporarily entered the underworld due to the mischievous actions of a deity. There he happened upon an endless sea of departed souls, many of whom died in battles he had waged. In Chinese mythology, ghosts



1. Taiwan's traditional paper offering art has been exhibited for the second time in Paris, allowing the world to see. (Photo • Hsin Hsin Paper Offering Store) | 2-3. Traditional paper effigies may seem creepy at first sight, but they are meant for blessings. (Photo • Zhang Xu Zhan)





4. Zhang Xu Zhan still believes that great effort perfects his artworks. (Photo • Zhang Xu Zhan)

require provisions just as humans do. However, these ghosts had nothing — no sustenance, no homes, no possessions. They begged Emperor Taizong for alms.

When Taizong returned to the physical realm, he had his minister create paper figures of the ghosts and chant sutras to help them cross into the next realm and seek peace. Another legend says Emperor Taizong had paper items created for the ghosts' wellbeing, burning them so that they could be sent to the afterlife.

Paper offerings did not enter common use in China until the Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE), long after Taizong's reign, as the technology of papermaking advanced a lot around the period. By the time the earliest settlers from southern Fujian brought the practice to Taiwan, it had become an art form passed down through families of skilled craftspeople. Though mass-produced paper offerings can be found online, some artisans continue the tradition of handmade offerings, including creating custom orders that reflect the desires of the recently departed, so that they may have in heaven what they coveted on earth.

These effigies might be very specific indeed. Imagine not just high-end electronics, but specifically an

iPhone, or perhaps a Chanel or Birkin bag rather than a generic handbag. When it comes to transportation, offerings may depict not just any vehicle, but a Lamborghini or a Harley-Davidson.

An Ancient Art Thrives in Taipei

The Zhangs are one such family of paper artists. They have been in the paper art business since the late 19th century, when patriarch Zhang Genqi (張根乞) founded Mao Hsing Chai (茂興齋), a paper offering store in Dadaocheng (大稻埕), Taipei. Though the store has since moved to nearby Dalongdong (大龍峒), and the founder himself has crossed over to the other side, the Zhang family is still in the paper offering business more than a century later. They're known both for a tradition of carefully handmade goods, as well as artistic explorations into the more avant-garde uses of such art.

"This is the precious spirit of traditional crafting," notes Zhang Xu Zhan (張徐展), a fourth-generation scion of the family. "We insist on handmade paper offering. We believe that the things we paint and then burn for the

deceased will be used in Elysium. Therefore, in order to show respect to the deceased, everything needs to be made with great effort. Our primary concern has always been whether the deceased can receive the offerings.”

As a relatively young person dedicated to this ancient art, Zhang Xu Zhan approaches his work with a serious yet romantic mindset.

Bridging Tradition and Modernity

Beyond traditional paper offering art, Zhang Xu Zhan has made a name for himself in the global art scene. He has represented the family business at numerous international exhibitions, especially in France, where this unique art form has found appreciation for its craftsmanship and deep ties to Taiwanese culture. In 2016, works by the Zhang family were included in

the D'Days Festival held annually by the Department of Decorative Arts at the Louvre. Entitled *Taiwan Unfolding*, the exhibit was one of many that highlighted traditional arts from Taiwan.

In 2019, the Zhangs' work was again featured in the *Palace Paradis* exhibit at the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris. According to Zhang Xu Zhan, upcoming exhibitions will be held in Japan and Malaysia later this year, as well as an art festival in Jinguashi (金瓜石) on Taiwan's northeast coast.

As an artist, Zhang puts his observations and life experience into his family's traditional craft. “Traditional paper offering art is a kind of service, because we can only follow our customers' demands instead of having our own ideas,” he says. “In contrast, I identify as an artist, and my creations can come from imagination. The traditional paper-offering industry creates for others, but artists create for themselves. I seek to connect these two opposite concepts.”



5. Combining the traditional art with modern technology, Zhang Xu Zhan aims to bring new life to the paper art his family had handed down for generations. (Photo • Zhang Xu Zhan)



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6. Zhang Xu Zhan draws much inspiration from traditional folk tales and interprets them with a brand new perspective. (Photo • Zhang Xu Zhan)

Zhang is best known for award-winning short films incorporating his paper art. In 2022, his 16-minute film *Compound Eyes of Tropical* (熱帶複眼) won the award for Best Animated Short Film at the 59th annual Golden Horse Awards (金馬獎). The traditionally-crafted paper art in *Compound Eyes of Tropical* adapts a Southeast Asian folk tale called *The Mouse-deer Crosses The River*, and was shot using a frame-by-frame stop motion technique. The most well-known version follows a mouse-deer — a small Southeast Asian deer, also called a Chevrotain — who tricks crocodiles into forming a bridge in order to cross the river to eat some fruit.

Zhang's version tells the story through the perspective of a fly's compound eyes, using the word "tropical" to mean something more like "regional." The folk tale exists in many forms, and each culture understands it differently. In other words, there are "lots of eyes reading this folk tale," according to Zhang. "Different countries choose different animals to be characters,"

Zhang goes on. "For example, Japan chooses rabbits and sharks, while Taiwan chooses rats and buffalo. *Compound Eyes of Tropical* lets different animals act as the same character of the story."

Zhang continues to find inspiration in his roots. He describes his awards and accolades as not only for himself, but his family as well. "They felt honored and proud that the traditional paper art could be seen again through the new video art technology," Zhang says. "When the paper offering industry slumped, the old generation felt anxious about the future of this traditional art. However, after they saw that the old art is noticed and appreciated again with the assistance of modern technology, they feel that they are doing meaningful work."

Through Zhang's works, the paper offering art, once solely associated with the departed, is now also appreciated by the living.

Inspiration from the Old Times

Just as paper offering art is inextricably linked with Taiwanese culture, Zhang draws inspiration from his life and surroundings in Taipei. For example, his work often features mice and rats — in particular, a dead rat, which holds symbolic significance in his art.

“When seeing the dead flattened rat lying on the ground,” Zhang explains, “I always think that they reflect human life. They are just like office workers. In workplaces, workers face many problems, but they are unable to solve the problems or make changes. Therefore, they can only helplessly see the problems happen.”

Not all of Zhang’s inspiration is so dark. In Taipei, he recommends the old “secret escape tunnels” in the Grand Hotel (圓山大飯店) at Yuanshan, and the Meet Bar (覓到酒吧) there, which is linked to the east tunnel. The tunnels were once escape routes, but now they are open for tourism. “Most of the time, the only function we can think of a building is to live, yet these tunnels defy our imagination — inside the building there are routes that lead to another place. Through these tunnels, we can also discover the interesting history of old Taipei.”

In this dynamic city, Zhang’s creative energy is boundless. Acting as something of a torchbearer, the legacy of paper offering art is poised to endure for generations, flourishing in the hands of not only the Zhang family, but of whoever finds this art form as vital and captivating as they have for well over a hundred years. ◆



7. Zhang Xu Zhan’s work *Si So Mi* centers on the lowliness of animals’ life and death, winning many international awards. (Photo • Zhang Xu Zhan)



Sports City — Taipei's New Future

Author Joella Jian
Photographer Brown Chen, Mike Sung, Tzuying Sun, Hydraulic Engineering Office, Taipei City Government, Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

1

In any city, whether for local residents or visiting tourists, safety is a crucial indicator of the overall quality of life. Only in a country where personal safety is not a major concern can one fully enjoy the local customs and culture.

According to the 2023 “Safest Cities In The World” ranking by *RankingRoyals*, Taipei secured 4th place among 424 cities worldwide. Additionally, the *Numbeo* database, which evaluates the “Current Safety Index/Crime Index by City” globally, placed Taipei 3rd out of 416 cities.

Efforts to Improve

To bring Taipei City in line with international health, safety, and sustainability standards, the Taipei City

Government launched a series of campaigns and policy improvements in the past two years. In his first year in office, Mayor Chiang Wan-An (蔣萬安) declared this year to be Taipei City’s “Traffic Safety Year,” and shortened the “Taipei Traffic Safety Plan” from five to three years. The plan includes improvements to existing intersection designs, the promotion of sidewalk leveling projects, a review of pedestrian crosswalks, the installation of pedestrian refuge islands, and the addition of physical pedestrian walkways. All these efforts and more have been made in order to refute the tag of “pedestrian hell,” a label once bestowed upon Taipei City by CNN.

Moreover, Taipei has set concrete goals for carbon reduction, targeting a 40% reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050. This involves implementing

environmental policies such as “Smart and Zero-Carbon Buildings,” “Low-carbon Green Transportation,” and “Zero Waste, Full Recycling.”

Meanwhile, Mayor Chiang believes that sports and vitality are key to a city’s competitiveness, transcending gender and ethnicity. He strives for all citizens to be able to share in the joy of sports, actively promoting the completion and utilization of the Taipei Dome (台北大巨蛋). Additionally, under his leadership, Taipei successfully hosted the 2023 Asian Baseball Championship, and would host two exhibition games of the *Yomiuri Giants* in March 2024 at the Taipei Dome, demonstrating a commitment to encouraging participation across all generations in various sporting. The Taipei City Government is embarking on a new era, aiming to transform Taipei into a secure, athletic, and futuristic metropolis. The journey has already begun, and change is in progress.

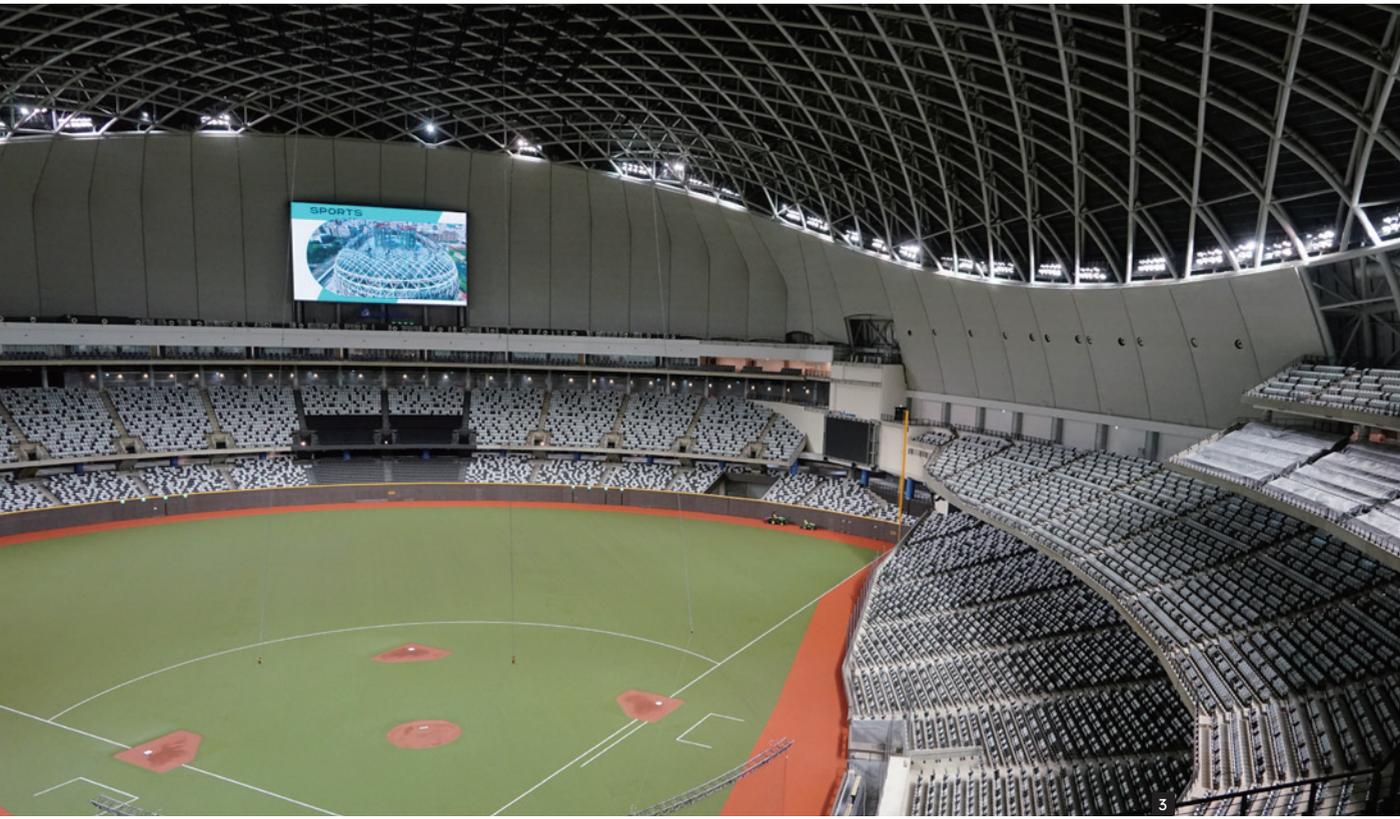
The Past and Future of Taipei Dome

Located in the bustling Xinyi District, Taipei Dome is a multifunctional indoor baseball stadium and the largest indoor sports facility in Taiwan.

Taipei Dome boasts world-class amenities, including imported red soil from the US and turf from Mizuno in Japan. The stadium’s design aligns with Major League Baseball (MLB) standards, aiming to familiarize Taiwanese players with international playing environments to enhance their performance in international-level games. The most distinctive feature is the dome’s design. With a total height from ground to roof reaching 74.5 meters, it provides a more spacious and panoramic view compared to domes in the US and Japan.



1. The completion of the Taipei Dome provides Taipei with more opportunities to participate in international competitions and exchange activities, enhancing the city’s global visibility. (Photo • Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government) | 2. Mayor Chiang Wan-An announced this year as Taipei city’s “Traffic Safety Year.” (Photo • Mike Sung)



On November 10th, 1991, during the Chinese Professional Baseball League (CPBL) championship series, an unfortunate downpour occurred, leaving over 13,000 spectators drenched. Despite being soaked, their spirit of excitement persevered. In unison, they shouted, “We want a Big Egg,” directed at the then Prime Minister Hau Pei-tsun (郝柏村), who was present.

A few days later, Hau announced the initiation of a project to build a large dome-shaped stadium in Taipei, similar to the one in Japan, specifically Tokyo Dome, whose nickname was “Tokyo Big Egg.” This marked the beginning of what would later become Taipei Dome.

However, the development and construction of Taipei Dome were far from smooth. It underwent a long and arduous journey, spanning nearly 32 years and enduring 6 mayorships. Finally, on October 20th, 2023, despite various challenges, Taipei Dome was completed and officially inaugurated on December 2nd, 2023.



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Taiwan's baseball prowess is widely recognized internationally, and baseball holds a prominent place as Taiwan's national sport. Taipei Dome, aside from being an international competition venue, will also play a role in nurturing grassroots baseball talent in Taiwan. For instance, it will offer incentives to nearby and grassroots baseball teams at the junior and senior high school levels. Additionally, charitable slots at Taipei Dome may be allocated to organize student baseball competitions, granting young players the opportunity to compete on an international standard field from an early age.

With the completion of Taipei Dome, Taipei will have more opportunities to host international events and exchange activities. In the future, efforts will be made to attract more international-level competitions, whether first or second tier, to be held in Taipei. Baseball legend Sadaharu Oh (王貞治) praised the Taipei Dome as a significant landmark for Asian

baseball. This stadium will provide Taiwanese athletes with more chances to compete on familiar ground and enhance the international visibility of Taipei City, giving tourists yet another reason to visit Taipei!

For baseball enthusiasts, the Taipei Dome's journey from conception to reality is a dream come true. When visiting Taipei, don't miss the opportunity to witness this historic structure, which has become a new landmark for the city.

3. Rivaling the stadium standards of MLB, the Taipei Dome is sure to become a significant landmark for Taipei, and even for Taiwan as a whole. (Photo • Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government) | **4.** Chiang Wan-An, Mayor of Taipei, attended the closing ceremony of the Asian Baseball Championship. (Photo • Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government) | **5.** The Taipei Dome connects to Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall by an underpass, allowing audience to be easily cleared. (Photo • Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government)

Sports Culture in Taipei

In recent years, the sports culture in Taipei City has flourished. According to statistics, Taipei leads other municipalities in aspects such as the proportion of the population engaging in regular physical activities, points earned in national sports competitions, number of participants in national sports events, and the amount of sponsorship for professional sports teams.

Besides Taipei Dome, Taipei City Government has also introduced three major pillars to its sports policy, namely, “Three Steps to Promote Exercise for All Citizens,” “Three Steps to Improve Competitive Sports Talent Development,” and “Promoting Sports Culture and Economic Development Through Major Events.” These initiatives aim to transform the city into a large-scale sports hub, fostering regular physical activity among citizens and encouraging the pursuit of a fulfilling life.

This year, the Taipei City Government has also launched the “Sports Center 2.0 Project.” By creating diverse and comprehensive sports facilities, the





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6. The number of health-conscious citizens is ever on the rise, and many accompany their furry friends for a walk to maintain their physical and mental health. (Photo • Tzuying Sun) | 7-9. Taipei's parks are popular destinations for family recreational activities, where children cultivate their passion for all kinds of sports from an early age. (Below Left • Tzuying Sun ; Below Right • Hydraulic Engineering Office, Taipei City Government ; Above • Brown Chen)

project aims to boost the city's sports development. This includes assessing sports venue resources in various administrative districts, evaluating public spaces, campuses, and available locations, planning for the establishment of multifunctional sports facilities, and taking account of factors such as smart sustainability, diverse communities, international competitive sports, and local characteristics.

Building upon the foundation of one sports center per administrative district, the goal is to continually

expand sports activity spaces, enhance sports equipment, and create a city focused on sports for all ages. This approach ensures that citizens can lead healthy, sustainable, and enjoyable lives. Simultaneously, efforts continue to establish distinctive sports venues and a further sports centers as inclusive facilities for the entire community. By providing top-quality infrastructure and hosting internationally acclaimed sporting events, the aim is to showcase Taipei to the world through sports, and develop its reputation as the "City of Sports."◆



Green Living: Start with What You Eat

Author Rick Charette, Ellie Chueh
Photographer Yang Ming Spring, EMBERS, Little Tree Food, HoSu, Plants, Jeremy Kuahn

1

Nestled within the lively streets of Taipei, a culinary revolution is unfolding, moving the city towards a more sustainable and eco-conscious way of eating. This transformative approach goes beyond the mere act of serving delicious dishes; it's a mindful choice to extend kindness to the environment through sustainable dining practices.

Green dining, also known as sustainable or eco-friendly dining, refers to the practice of adopting environmentally conscious and socially responsible principles within the food and beverage industry in all areas of food production and service, from sourcing of ingredients at the front end, to such items at the back

end as minimizing food waste and use of cleaning products and packaging supplies.

The MICHELIN Green Star, highlighting a restaurant's culinary excellence with outstanding eco-friendly commitments, also plays an important role in fueling the trend of green restaurants in Taipei.

The link between fantastic cooking and environmental responsibility becomes clear as Taipei's dining establishments embrace sustainable practices. It's a change where restaurants aim not only to satisfy your taste buds but also to make a positive impact on the planet.

Every dish served in these environmentally-friendly spots tells a story of sustainability, echoing Taipei's collective effort to embrace a greener and more responsible future, one plate at a time.

As Taipei's food scene develops, the rise of green dining signals a move towards a more thoughtful and Earth-friendly way of enjoying the city's diverse food offerings. Now, let's explore some of the leading green-dining restaurants in Taipei!

Yang Ming Spring

Yang Ming Spring (陽明春天) was one of the first two restaurants in Taiwan to win a MICHELIN Green Star back in 2021, and has maintained this recognition for three consecutive years. Deeply rooted in the connection between humanity and nature, it unfolds an immersive experience encapsulated by the "art of food, art of tea, art of green, art of culture, and art of creation." Founded by Chen Chien-hung (陳健宏) along with his long-time trusted executive chef, Hsueh Yung-hung (薛永鴻), Yang Ming Spring places a primary emphasis on the art of green dining.

Chen envisions and cultivates a dining space where the inherent bond between individuals and the environment is celebrated. The restaurant champions four foundational principles: the avoidance of processed foods, the celebration of ingredient characteristics, the use of ingredients as reflections of environmental phenomena, and the promotion of healthy eating.

According to Chen, the key to crafting exceptional dishes lies in using the most natural and fresh ingredients. The restaurant has no menu; its dishes, such as Royal Premium Monkey Head Mushroom (御品綻放山伏茸), all depend on the freshest available ingredients at the time, guaranteeing both the

quality and a tantalizing element of surprise. These ideas resonate throughout the culinary philosophy of Yang Ming Spring, creating a unique gastronomic haven. The restaurant employs creative approaches, presenting fusion cuisine that transforms any dish into a vegetarian masterpiece. Regardless of the dish's origin, the fundamental goal remains unwavering — to ensure customers' delight in high-quality vegetarian food.

Chen and Hsueh's commitment mirrors a deep dedication to offering not just delicious but also environmentally conscious and healthy dining experiences. In fostering this unique blend of culinary artistry and sustainable practices, Yang Ming Spring stands as a beacon, inviting patrons to savor not only the flavors but also the ethos of a mindful and eco-friendly culinary journey.



1. Green-dining meals curated by fine-dining establishments are nothing less than artistic in their presentation, making use of natural, healthy, seasonal ingredients. (Photo • Yang Ming Spring) | 2-3. The combination of high-quality cuisine and aesthetic environment makes for a one-of-a-kind dining experience at Yang Ming Spring. (Photo • Yang Ming Spring)

EMBERS

From the ingredients to the decor, EMBERS intricately weaves itself into Taiwan's natural ecology and environment, earning itself a MICHELIN Green Star every year since 2022. The design inside might seem simple, but it shows a deep respect for the island.

Above the bar, there's a decoration shaped like a bird's nest made of Japanese cedar. This is a nod to the hunting lodges of the indigenous people and an epitome of the natural beauty of Taiwan. EMBERS steps away from the usual modes of Western cooking, getting much of their ingredients from the mountains, forests, and local tribes. Things like betel nuts, marinated fish, millet, and jujubes, all local ingredients, are stars on EMBERS' menu.

Owner-chef Wes Kuo (郭庭璋) changes their nine-course menu regularly, making sure to use the freshest

produce of each season. Dishes such as "Rice crust, Bamboo shoot," "Bottle gourd, Loofah, Clam," and "Beans, cocoa," all come highly recommended.

EMBERS isn't just a place to eat; it's like a storyteller wholeheartedly sharing Taiwan's food culture.

Whether you're from another country or a local, EMBERS takes you on a tasty journey, connecting you with memories and experiences. With its focus on using local ingredients and keeping up with the seasons, EMBERS shows the wonderful tale of Taiwanese food in a way that's easy for everyone to enjoy.



4-5. EMBERS' menu is based on solar terms, with their dishes rotating regularly. The left image shows "Umami, Carrot, Seaweed" and the right image is their signature "Teñas." (Photo • EMBERS) | 6. EMBERS' decor is made primarily from rice and sandstone, filled with serenity and warmth for customers to immerse themselves in. (Photo • EMBERS)



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7. Made from a 25-meter-tall piece of Japanese cedar, EMBERS' decoration showcases the ecological beauty of Taiwan. (Photo • EMBERS) | 8-9. Little Tree Food boasts bright and relaxing dining space along with healthy green food. The above image is their Stuffed Tomato Avocado Salad. (Photo • Little Tree Food)

Little Tree Food

Little Tree Food (小小樹食) is the only restaurant in Taiwan to have been awarded a MICHELIN Green Star and a Bib Gourmand at the same time, and it has proudly held this distinction since 2022. It staunchly upholds the use of over 90% Taiwanese ingredients in its raw materials. Simultaneously, there's a strong emphasis on the ingredient's freshness, and the restaurant adamantly avoids excessive stockpiling for sales to prevent food wastage. Some signature dishes include "Roasted Mixed Veggie Salad" made with seasonal veggies, "Truffle Mushroom Risotto" that fully utilizes Taiwan's vast selections of indigenous mushrooms, and a variety of amazing seasonal desserts that are the perfect end to any meal.

In terms of cuisine, Little Tree Food employs a fusion of Eastern and Western light cooking techniques to



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interpret vegetarianism. As head chef Tim Hsu (徐兆麟) has experience in crafting Sichuan cuisine, his menu features eclectic highlights like spicy dumplings with tofu filling. This innovative approach aligns with their promotion of “twice a week” vegetarianism, wherein founder Jeffrey Liu (劉千瑞) believes that

sustainability practices can be integrated into one’s daily routines. The flexible idea is both accessible and effective. It allows more people to try out the new eating habit without much inconvenience, ultimately encouraging full-scale green dining.

10-11. Little Tree Food promotes flexible vegetarianism with their light meal dishes such as Mexican Grilled Corn and Korean Fried Chicken. (Photo • Little Tree Food) | **12.** The decor of Little Tree Food is full of greenery, like bringing a forest into the restaurant. (Photo • Little Tree Food)





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HoSu

HoSu (好嶼) is a newcomer to the MICHELIN Green Star, earning its first recognition in 2023. The menu here revolves around four themes: mountain, sea, river, and pasture. It adapts to seasonal changes, extensively utilizing environmentally friendly ingredients, and employs a chargrilling method. Owner-chef Ian Lee (李易晏) pledges his love to his homeland by complementing this culinary experience with in-depth explanations, allowing diners to grasp the establishment's ecological spirit.

The interior design dynamically transforms with the seasons, aiming to narrate the story of this island — Taiwan, through its culinary offerings. Bread made with Taiwan's own sweet potatoes, a hot appetizer made with steamed fish fresh from the stream, and different main courses like Goose from Yunlin, Amaebi from Daxi, and Oysters from Matsu, all bring the freshest natural ingredients from around Taiwan straight to the dining table.

HoSu's commitment to eco-friendliness extends beyond the plate, creating an immersive dining experience that harmonizes with the natural rhythm of the environment. Through its emphasis on seasonality, sustainable sourcing, and culinary craftsmanship, HoSu is a testament to how gastronomy can intertwine with environmental stewardship, offering sophisticated meals flavored with the landscape's rich narrative.

13. Crafted with locally sourced ingredients, the cuisine of HoSu exudes the flavor of Taiwan. (Photo • HoSu)

14. The interior design of HoSu adapts to the seasonal menu changes, creating a unique atmosphere. (Photo • HoSu)

Plants

The dietary philosophy at Plants revolves around a plant-based, gluten-free, and whole-food approach. The use of locally sourced organic ingredients is considered a fundamental requirement. The restaurant places a strong emphasis on buying local produce and supporting small-scale farmers, actively promoting ongoing education in green dining. This commitment is evident not only in the meticulous preparation of

dishes but also in a comprehensive dedication to sustainable dining practices. As such, unprocessed foods are prioritized.

The menu presents energy bowls, wraps/salads, rice, noodles, and pea/bean mains, along with delectable raw desserts. Among the bestsellers is the colorful Papaya Party Bowl, featuring silky papaya and banana puree topped with seasonal fruits, signature rawnola, maple chia pudding, and chocolate sauce.

The whimsically named Beet Tartare sharing treats are presented on raw toast, which is bread made with pulp remains from the house mylk-making process. Meanwhile, the hearty Lentil Falafel entrée comes with mung-bean hummus, sunflower seed tahini, and other house-crafted goodies.



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15. Missing having good falafel in Vancouver, co-founder Lily created her own version, which has since become a staple at Plants. (Photo • Plants) | 16. Flamingo Bowl is an all raw, plant-based, gluten-free, and refined sugar-free dish. (Photo • Plants) | 17. Committed to paying long-term attention to sustainability, Plants offers a dining environment that is relaxing and comfortable. (Photo • Plants)



18. Raw Papaya Wrap at Plants is prepared under 45°C to retain the most nutrients and enzymes. (Photo • Plants)



19. Indulge in green dining that not only satisfies the taste buds, but also has a positive impact on the environment. (Photo • Jeremy Kuahn)
20. The MICHELIN Green Star often guarantees a delightful green dining experience; this image shows a delicate dish at Yang Ming Spring. (Photo • Jeremy Kuahn)

Taipei's Green Dining Revolution

Taipei has launched itself with full enthusiasm and resources toward becoming one of the world's leading smart and sustainable cities, and works hand in hand with myriad organizations to create green living momentum in the private sector. In this green dining revolution, restaurants are showcasing how we can savor fantastic food while also taking responsibility for the planet.



As consumers, each and every consumption decision we make has an impact, leading us incrementally and immediately either toward or further away from achievement of a sustainable future. The innovative eateries introduced here are just a few of the fast-growing forest of places in Taipei where you can be sure you are eating right. ◆



A flower arrangement class can be a great idea for a fresh start in spring and to achieve a peaceful state of mind.
(Photo • Salon Flowers)



A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, is focused on arranging flowers in a large, clear glass vase. She is holding a pair of black floral shears. The vase is filled with green foliage and small purple flowers. In the background, other people are visible, suggesting a workshop or event setting.

A Japanese Floral Artist Cultivating Roots in Taiwan

Author Joella Jian
Photographer Salon Flowers, Mike Sung

1

Takako Mine (嶺貴子), a resident of Taipei for 13 years, has witnessed much beautiful scenery during her time here. The catastrophic Tohoku Earthquake in 2011 frightened Takako and her family, so Takako's husband determined to immigrate to Taiwan with his wife and child, if only for a short while.

Giving up the newly established floral business in Japan, Takako took her three-year-old daughter to embark on an adventure in an unfamiliar land. From knowing virtually nothing about Taiwan to setting down roots in Taipei, she has become something of an expert on the capital's most beautiful spots.

When asked about the most attractive aspect of Taiwan, to Takako it remains simply the people. In contrast to the tension, pressure, and fast pace of Tokyo, where she was born, and New York, where she attended art school, Taiwan is notably calmer, as people consistently respond with a smile, saying, "It's okay, take it easy," demonstrating uncommon consideration for each other. This relatively relaxed atmosphere makes her feel warm and cozy.

In Takako's childhood, there was a flower shop across the street from her home. After school she would gather leftover floral materials to play with at home.

When visiting the park, she would casually pick flowers and leaves as part of her daily routine. The natural forms of flowers greatly influenced her later creations.

As Takako grew up, lifting her head to see flowers, plants, and trees around her dispelled any anxiety or fear of unfamiliar environments. Naturally blessed and healed by the plants, she felt calm, relaxed, and comfortable. This is how she heals herself, and it's a blessing we'd like to share with you today.

Salon Flowers

When living in New York, Takako found that its floral industry was thriving. Fresh flowers were available in various places such as grocery stores and organic markets. In Japan, buying flowers is convenient and the Japanese constantly purchase flowers for themselves, family, and friends, as one of the simple ways to invite joy in life. Thus, Takako hopes to bring this beautiful custom to Taiwan, highlighting the power of flowers to bring aesthetic delights to our daily lives.

It was with this cultural difference in mind that Takako established Salon Flowers in Taipei, aiming to introduce the practice of flower giving into Taiwan. The emphasis here is not on buying a large quantity of flowers; rather, individuals can select a few favorites, creating personalized therapeutic items and adding a touch of vibrant color to their busy lives. Takako hopes that Salon Flowers will become a platform where friends who share a love for flowers and plants can gather, learn, and exchange ideas.

For example, gladiolus and goldenrod are seen as the flowers of worshipping in Taiwan, but they are actually quite popular and can be used for various occasions in many other countries, including Japan. Takako hopes her students can view flowers from a fresh aspect.



1. The last name Mine, pronounced as “mi-ne,” means “the mountain” in Japanese. This is a funny coincidence since the floral artist particularly likes mountain plants. (Photo • Salon Flowers) | **2-3.** A nice flower arrangement is a great home decor to add a sense of freshness. (Photo • Salon Flowers)

Making Masterpieces with Native Plants

People may have the misunderstanding that there are only various varieties of tropical plants in Taiwan, but Takako highly appreciates the diverse selection of flowers Taiwan has to offer, from low-altitude plants to alpine vegetation. “Since Taiwan is surrounded by the sea and dominated by the mountains, it is easy to obtain mountain and coastal plants,” says the floral artist. “An array of flowers and plants can be seen in different seasons.”

Due to the changing climate and a wide range of altitude, Taiwan produces a lot of unique indigenous plants like golden rain trees and paper-bark trees. “They are all my top choices!” Takako says. “I prefer using them for flower arrangement to the imported ones.” She even incorporates Taiwanese indigenous weeds and wildflowers into her floral design.

For this reason, Takako enjoys treasure-hunting in Taipei’s large flower markets, such as the Taipei Flower Market (台北花市) in Neihu and Jianguo Holiday Flower Market (建國假日花市), right in the city’s heart. Jianguo Holiday Flower Market showcases many locally grown indigenous plants, along with myriad potted plants, cut flowers, wildflowers, orchids, and a wide variety of flower arrangement materials.

As for her trade secret, Takako points out that seasonal flowers are the freshest and most long-lasting. “When selecting flowers, you can choose the one in response to different solar terms of the four seasons,” she says. “For example, Lemmon Marigold and Sweet Pea are great home decorations in spring, and it is just delightful to see them blossom in their seasons!”

Spring Walk in Taipei

Springtime in Taipei manifests in colorful blossoms and greens. “The blossom of Sweet Peas by the





4. Takako is especially fond of Taiwanese indigenous plants, and often incorporates her Japanese arrangement style with them. (Photo • Salon Flowers)

5. Brimming with all kinds of flowers, spring is a lovely season in Taipei, during which Takako likes to stroll. (Photo • Mike Sung)

6. Flower arrangement works as a self-healing session for Takako and many flower lovers. (Photo • Salon Flowers)

roadside will remind you that spring is in the air,” says Takako. She loves the vibrant flowers of the season, including cherry blossoms, mountain marigolds, Thunberg’s meadowsweet, and more, as the dazzling colors bring vitality to the city.

When the weather is nice, Takako enjoys strolling through various botanical corners of Taipei. In particular, Taipei Botanical Garden (台北植物園) features a variety of exotic flowers and plants, including a lotus pond and areas dedicated to succulents, ferns, palms, poetry, and folklore. The landscape and scents in the garden change with the seasons. The garden was also an important research site during the Japanese era, preserving experimental plants from Taiwan, Japan, China, and Southeast Asia — totaling around 2,000 species.

A Healing Lifestyle

Takako also recommends that our readers visit their neighborhood flower shops and give them a go. During your leisure time, select your favorite flowers and plants to bring home, and place them in suitable locations. Additionally, consider cultivating some



herbal plants on the balcony. When you return home from work, you’ll be greeted by the lovely greenery and simultaneously embraced by their delightful fragrance, as if they silently comfort and accompany you in releasing the day’s fatigue. Finally, you can peacefully drift into sleep amid the sweet aroma.

“You can always carve out a little time to care for your favorite flowers and plants,” Takako says. “Pruning leaves, cleaning pots, changing the water, and rearranging them are simple actions, yet they help refocus our minds, pulling us out of the hustle and bustle of life.” Takako sees this as a form of self-care, and a healing moment created exclusively for oneself.

This spring in Taipei, let’s follow in Takako’s footsteps and bring a little beauty into our lives, bit by bit! 

TRAVEL INFO



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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

台北花伴野餐

2024 Taipei Floral Picnic



Daan Park

2024/3/16 (SAT) 10:00 — 17:00

2024
花 IN 台北
FLOWERS
IN TAIPEI

Organizer  觀光傳播局

Co-organizer 臺北市政府文化局、臺北市立動物園、臺北市動物保護處、臺北市稅捐稽徵處
臺北市大安區公所及里辦公處、臺北市中正區公所及里辦公處、臺北市永康商團、臺北市臺大公園商團

Official Partner  國立國史館

Co-sponsor 



Official Website Advertisement

 **Taipei Camellias Show**
Jan 5 – 14

 **Taipei Rose Festival**
Mar 1 – 31

 **LOHAS Cherry Blossom Festival**
Jan 26 – Feb 29

 **Taipei Azalea Festival X Floral Picnic**
Mar 1 – 31

 **The Camphor Trail Flower Carnival**
 Lupine Feb – Mid-Mar
 Cosmos Mid-May – Mid-Jun
 Sunflower Sep – Mid-Oct

 **Zhuzihu Calla Lily & Hydrangea Festival**
 Calla Lilies Mar 14 – Apr 28
 Hydrangeas May 17 – Jun 23

 **Shan-Tseng-Chi Flower Festival**
Feb 1 – Mar 31

 **Taipei Riverside Flower Carnival**
 Jan – Feb Guting Riverside Park
 Jun – Mid-Jul Hesuang No. 21 Riverside Park
 Oct – Mid-Nov Dajia Riverside Park
 Nov – Dec Yanping Riverside Park

 **Yangmingshan Flower Festival**
Feb 7 – Mar 17

 **Guandu Flower Carnival**
Nov

 **Shilin Residence Tulip Festival**
Feb 22 – Mar 3

 **Shilin Residence Chrysanthemum Festival**
Nov 29 – Dec 15

LET'S GO
FLOWER
VIEWING

2024
花 IN 台北
FLOWERS
IN TAIPEI

