



SPRING 2023

Cozy City, Cozy Life

COVER STORY

Four Keys to Better Living:
Enjoying the Cozy Life in Taipei

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TAIPEI

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EDITOR'S
INTRODUCTION

LIVABLE CITY, COZY LIFE



Every city has its own unique charm, and Taipei is no exception, having long been world-famous for its gourmet cuisine as well as its friendliness, safety, and convenience. In the last decade, international media has repeatedly named Taipei one of the most livable cities in the world, as more and more people from around the globe make this place their home.

That's why the theme of this issue is "Cozy." We examine the city from four different angles — public art, transportation, food, and healthcare — and invite four Taipei residents to tell us just what makes this city such a wonderful place to live.

Taipei's architectural landscape features a fascinating mix of styles, both new and old. In this issue, we present an introduction to a few examples of Taipei's modern architectural marvels.

Modernism aside, Taipei is also a treasure trove of historical riches. Adjacent to Dadaocheng sits the Dalongdong Baoan Temple. Temple president Liao Wu-jyh takes us on an informative tour of the temple's history and unique architecture, as well as the 2023 edition of the Baosheng Cultural Festival.

A city's intellectual character is manifested in the reading habits of its inhabitants. We invite long-time editor and strategist Jenny Lee to share with us how she promotes reading in Taipei.

What's more, Taipei possesses a very diverse population. As the number of migrant workers continues to grow, the government has implemented care and counseling programs targeted at them, while the non-profit startup One-Forty offers learning opportunities to make their lives in Taiwan easier.

In the section on gourmet cuisine, we take a look at two delicious favorites: dumplings and Taiwanese pastry.

And finally, our interview with one of the many expatriates in Taipei, Tim Berge, a Taipei resident who is currently general manager of a radio station, gives us a glimpse on his observations regarding life in the city and points out why Taipei is a wonderful place to travel or live.

We hope that this issue of *TAIPEI* will instill in you what makes Taipei such a fascinating and pleasant place to live.



► Join our lucky draw to win a prize by completing *TAIPEI*'s online questionnaire!

TAI^台PEI^北



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(Photo/Taipei Performing Arts Center)

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01

Four Keys to Better Living: Enjoying the Cozy Life in Taipei

Author Tina Teng, Genie Zheng

Photographer Yuskay Huang, April Chen, Taiwan Scene, Taipei Veterans General Hospital, Dimension Endowment of Art

In its annual ranking, British magazine *Monocle* ranked Taipei as the 10th most livable city in the world for 2022. Several international media outlets, including the BBC, have also consistently ranked Taipei among the globe's most comfortable cities. What is Taipei's appeal? And what makes it a top city to live in?

We've invited four guests from different professional backgrounds who either work or live in Taipei to talk about the city's appeal in terms of arts and culture, transportation, food and healthcare.

Jun-Jieh Wang (王俊傑), Director of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM, 台北市立美術館), points out Taipei's progress in public art, which breaks away from the traditional framework. Chun-Kai Chang (張鈞凱), Division Chief of the Planning and Development Division of Taipei City's Department of Transportation (台北市交通局), shows us how the city's transportation network supports tourists and locals alike. Lifestyle journalist Kerstin Hsu (許育華), with her extensive travel and expatriate living experience, hails Taipei as the food capital of the world. Finally, Dr. Pei-Lin Lo (羅珮琳), traditional Chinese medicine practitioner, discusses Taipei's high-quality healthcare as a major attraction for overseas patients to travel to Taipei.

Art

Trendsetting Public Installations

Taipei is leading the way in its approach to public art, moving away from stereotypically large public artworks. According to Jun-Jieh Wang, the Taipei City Government (台北市政府) is integrating public art in the everyday environment of its residents by hosting a series of activities, workshops, performances, and documenting the lives of its people through documentary films. Innovative approaches also include inviting artists-in-residence to work with the public to participate in public projects, which is a perfect example of integrating local life and professional artistry.

Wang cites “The Plant Transformation Project: The Healing Effect of Gardening (植變：生態園丁的大療癒術)” initiated by Taipei City’s Department of Social Welfare (台北市社會局) in 2019, as an example. The public art project was established with a theater

workshop, enabling artists, social workers, clients, volunteers, and the broader community to engage in open dialogues by experimenting with a different approach to public art. Through the planting of flowers, the participants can not only heal body and soul, but also gain a sense of accomplishment from presenting their works, adding beauty and vitality to the neighboring communities through public art.

Furthermore, “Living Humanity (藝居：家的進行式),” a public housing public art project organized by Taipei City’s Department of Urban Development (台北市都市發展局), is the embodiment of “non-physical public art.” This first wave of public art integration projects use art to sculpt the imagination for our living space, and focus on issues such as the inheritance of historical and cultural memory, social justice and environmental sustainability. They combine participatory art project, artist residency project, and permanent installations, three forms to present the arts through methods such as documentaries and murals, and now implementing in public housing including Jiankang (健康) in Songshan District, Qingnian (青年) in Wanhua District, Xinglong (興隆) in Wenshan District and Dongming (東明) in Nangang District.



01. There are an abundance of parks in Taipei City, suitable for nearby residents to enjoy leisure time there.

02. “The Moving Museum (移動博物館)” is an interactive installation at Xinglong Public Housing, D2 zone by Wei Cheng Tu (涂維政). (Photo/Dimension Endowment of Art)

02

"The Taipower Building (台電大樓) on Roosevelt Road is another very special example," says Wang. "Above the main entrance is 'Brightly Shines the Sun (日光域)'. This fascinating piece of public art is made of recycled street lamps with new LED bulbs installed by the Taiwan Power Company (台灣電力公司). The piece expresses society's tilt toward a more environmentally-friendly approach while integrating the company's public image. It is a richly-layered art piece."

Overall, public art in Taipei does not only exhibit large-sized physical artworks. They also appear through performances such as drama and media works, and at the same time local residents are also invited to cooperate in these processes of public art creation.



Jun-Jieh Wang
王俊傑

Currently serving as the Director of TFAM, as well as an active member of the contemporary art community who has extensive leadership experience in various organizations. Wang has also served on the Advisory and Collections Committees of both TFAM and the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMF, 國立台灣美術館).



03. The Public art "Brightly Shines the Sun" above the main entrance of Taipower Building, is an artwork with concept of environmental awareness. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

03

Transportation

Taipei Goes Green

Taipei offers over 280 bus routes and five main MRT lines. The bike-share program offers 13,000 YouBike 2.0 bicycles to its citizens. Other shared transportation programs include shared motorcycles and cars. In response to global trends, Taipei's green transportation grid is one of a kind.

"In terms of YouBike, it has the highest turnover rate in the world. In Taipei, a shared bike is used, on average, 10 times a day. In addition, the city is

looking to transition to electric buses in response to the net-zero policy. The transition to 100% electric buses is expected to be completed by 2030," says Chun-Kai Chang.

To encourage the use of public transportation, one of the Department of Transportation's priorities is to make things as convenient as possible for residents. "The All-Pass Ticket is a commuter ticket that covers almost all public transportation in Greater Taipei. For NT\$1,280 per month, passengers enjoy transfer discounts and unlimited travel on the MRT, buses, and the Danhai LRT, with 30 minutes free use of a YouBike," adds Chang.



04. The MRT, bus service, and shared transportation in Taipei comprise a convenient transportation network. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

05. In recent years, the Taipei City Government has launched plans to improve pedestrian safety in alleyways.

04

05



In addition, the Department of Transportation launched the Taipei City Neighborhood Traffic Environment Improvement Program (台北市鄰里交通環境改善計畫) in 2015. The project aims to enhance pedestrian safety in alleyways by rezoning parking areas and introducing green pedestrian walkways.

By creating an accessible pedestrian environment and establishing a sustainable transportation system, the city government aims to provide a safe and convenient transportation network. This will improve the lives of its residents and also serve as a major appeal for visitors to experience convenient mobility and the city's continuous advancement.



Chun-Kai Chang

張鈞凱

Division Chief of the Planning and Development Division of Taipei City's Department of Transportation. The division is responsible for researching and formulating transportation policies, overall planning of transportation systems, reviewing and supervising the implementation of traffic plans, and collecting and analyzing transportation data.



06. The juicy *xiaolongbao* with thin skin and tender pork fillings is not only a representative dish of Taiwan, but is also widely enjoyed by foreign travelers. (Photo/April Chen)

06

Gastronomy

A Super-Sized Food Hall

To find out how “delicious” a city is, you must first look at the diversity of its food culture. In Taipei, Taiwanese, Hakka, Chinese, and Japanese cuisines have a long shared history and are ingrained in the essence of what may be called the predominant Taiwanese culture. Other international cuisines also have much to offer; French, Italian, Southeast Asian, Indian and Turkish cuisines all have their own special delicacies that have demonstrated a high level of culinary excellence. Taipei has a truly eclectic collection of flavors.

Meanwhile, the local wet markets add to the rich culinary layers of the city, such as Daan District’s Nanmen Market (南門市場) and Shilin District’s Shidong Market (士東市場). Taipei is also home to major high-end department stores and an assortment of grocery stores, with a variety of delicious cuisines and

merchandise available in the gorgeous food courts and gourmet ingredient shops. Besides, there are many kid-friendly and pet-friendly restaurants satisfying all kinds of foodies, rendering Taipei into a super-sized food hall filled with treasures.

As someone who has traveled the world, journalist Kerstin Hsu certainly has a seasoned take when it comes to food. According to Hsu, the emphasis and passion that people in Taipei have for food can be observed in everyday details. Food is the talk of the town; whether in a sit-down conversation, a netizens’ discussion, or on a TV talk show, food is always a popular topic.

“Taipei is the kind of city where you can find amazing food at any time, whether it be early in the morning or in the middle of the night. Not to mention the high quality of the food, whether you spend NT\$100 or NT\$1,000,” says Hsu.

Living in Berlin, Germany for many years as an expatriate, in addition to the constant travel required by her work, means that Hsu meets people from all over the world and she often plays cultural ambassador when these foreign friends come to Taiwan.

"If a foreigner is in Taipei for the first time, I take them to try Din Tai Fung's (鼎泰豐) *xiaolongbao* (小籠包, soup dumplings), not because of how famous it is, but because of the high quality and the type of cuisine offered; Din Tai Fung offers food that can be enjoyed by people from all cultural backgrounds," says Hsu.



07

Hsu also recommends beef noodle soup, saying that noodles are almost an "international language."

According to Hsu, the beef and broth in Taiwanese beef noodle soup represent our noodle culture and are also loved by foreigners.

For Hsu, street food (not necessarily night-market food) reflects the everyday details of a city and is the embodiment of the food culture. To help friends from abroad get to know Taiwan through street food, she recommends homey dishes such as Liang Ji Chiayi Chicken Rice (梁記嘉義雞肉飯) in Zhongshan District or Yi Noodles King Restaurant (意麵王) in Datong District. Steamed buns from Kangleyi (康樂意小吃店), steam-fried buns or shredded radish pancakes are all street food one can eat on the go. The list goes on and on.

"There's too much food and not enough time!" Hsu exclaims.

Food plays an integral role on any journey, as the flavors sampled along the way are etched in visitors' memories. When asked, as Hsu often does herself, about the best souvenirs to bring back for friends, she recommends pineapple cakes, as they are universally beloved, while preserved fruits can showcase Taiwan's amazing selection of natural wonders. One cannot go wrong with either. For friends from France or Italy who are cheese connoisseurs, fermented tofu, dubbed the "vegetarian cheese," is also an excellent choice.



08

07-08. The many mouth-watering dishes and street foods in Taipei reflect the eating habits of residents.



Kerstin Hsu

許育華

A veteran lifestyle journalist who has written for several publications, including *Marie Claire* (美麗佳人) magazine. She is a writer specializing in design, lifestyle, travel, and culture, and the author of *Wallpaper* City Guide Taipei*.

Wellness

Highly Rated Healthcare System

Taiwan has one of the most highly-regarded healthcare systems in the world, with most of the healthcare resources concentrated in the capital city of Taipei. The universal healthcare system is appropriately divided into several levels. Primary care physicians focus on non-urgent illnesses and patients can be referred to larger hospitals at a relatively low cost. Taiwan's universal healthcare system benefits locals and expats alike. Due to the high quality and reasonable cost, many foreigners choose to travel to Taipei to seek medical care.

Dr. Pei-Lin Lo, who has been practicing medicine in Taipei for many years, says, "A patient of mine who lives in Germany comes to see me every time he's in Taipei. He said that it is inconvenient to see a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) practitioner in Germany, and everything is out-of-pocket. A visit to a doctor's office takes too long and costs too much."

For many, TCM practitioners, with their extensive knowledge of meridians, acupuncture points, and natural herbs, have a different appeal than Western medicine practitioners. Western medicine is divided into different specialties, while TCM goes through four diagnostic steps of observing, listening to breathing, asking about symptoms, and taking the pulse to get a complete picture of a patient's overall health. For example, if a patient comes in for a sore wrist, the practitioner will not only take a look at the problem

09. Foreign tourists are fascinated by the concept of TCM and its effects of both health maintenance and treatment.

09





10

10. It is quite convenient to get healthcare services in Taipei. Many major hospitals are located in places that can be easily accessed by public transportation. (Photo/Taipei Veterans General Hospital)

area, but also ask about the patient's sleep habits and mood. There are various ways of TCM treatment, including prescription of medicine, acupuncture, moxibustion, and acupoint application.

Many doctors in Taipei have received training in both TCM and Western medicine. In addition, many doctors have studied abroad and are fluent in a foreign language. Some clinics even offer interpretation services. For visitors or residents who are not fluent in Chinese, seeing a doctor and receiving medical care in Taipei has never been easier. 📍



Dr. Pei-Lin Lo

羅珮琳

Director of Joy Clinic (壹悅中醫), specializing in gynecology, dermatology, and general internal medicine. She has served as a consulting physician for media programs and is a regular contributor to health and life media platforms. She is also an author of multiple TCM books.



01

01. With many unique styles of modern architecture emerging in Taipei in recent years, Taipei Performing Arts Center in Shilin certainly stands out among them. (Photo/Chris Stowers)

Exploring Taipei's Cool Modern Architecture

Author Jenna Lynn Cody

Photographer Dharma Drum Mountain Cultural and Educational Foundation, Taipei Performing Arts Center, Taipei Music Center, Yuskay Huang, Chris Stowers, Shao Bo Zhao

When describing Taipei's architectural gems, the focus usually rests on ornate temples or Japanese-era buildings. What many don't realize is that modern architecture also has a place in the city's aesthetic landscape.

In this regard, Nung Chan Monastery is a mid-century oasis steeped in minimalist clean lines. National Taiwan Normal University Art Museum challenges visitors to think about the juxtaposition of old and new in Taipei neighborhoods. The Taipei Performing Arts Center re-envisioned what theater means to both artists and the public, just as the Taipei Music Center weaves itself into the rhythm of city life through an interconnected series of structures that evoke both geological forms and futuristic spacecraft.

The construction of these architectural marvels spans the mid-twentieth century to the past two years. All, however, were built with an eye for both balance and asymmetry. They embody design principles which respect functionality while also looking beyond it to explore what it means to evoke emotion, create art, include the public and co-exist in an urban landscape. Taken together, they present opportunities to look beyond traditional design and find the contemporary heart of Taipei.



Nung Chan Monastery

農禪寺

MRT Qiyang Station

Taking the MRT to Qiyang Station (捷運奇岩站) and walking about 10 minutes, you will find a mid-century architectural treasure down a quiet lane in Beitou (北投) with a commanding view of Yangmingshan (陽明山, Yangming Mountain). The number of people strolling down an otherwise unremarkable side road is your first clue that there's something special here. Walk to the end and you'll find yourself at Nung Chan Monastery, a minimalist modern dream designed by renowned architect Kris Yao (姚仁喜).

Yao is also known for designing the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum (國立故宮博物院南部院區) and the Museum of Archaeology, Tainan Branch of the National Museum of Prehistory (國立台灣史前文化博物館南科考古館), among other well-known structures.

Nung Chan Monastery was founded as a simple farmhouse in 1975 by Venerable Master Dongchu (東初), a Buddhist monk and scholar. His successor, Venerable Master Sheng Yen (聖嚴), oversaw the expansion of the monastery to its current form, as well as founding Dharma Drum Mountain (法鼓山) in New Taipei City (新北市).

Upon entering, the arrangement of buildings between the mountains on one side and the Water-Moon Dharma Center (水月道場) on the other invites a sense of mindful calm. The edifices, with white and gray as the main tone, bring visitors peace of mind. Clean lines and thoughtfully balanced asymmetry complement the other unique features of the monastery.

The Main Buddha Hall is dotted with small crystal Buddhas on one side. On the other, the Heart Sutra is cut into the second-story wall, allowing sunlight to pour in through the sacred words.

Buddhist statuary-dotted gardens invite peaceful strolling, and the connection corridor, constructed of alternating wall slabs with blank space, is meant to evoke the contrast between the solid and empty, the bright and dark. The pools, gardens and corridor provide pared-down spaces for quiet contemplation. Although the site is near a busy highway, it feels like a world apart.



02

02. The interior looks beautiful and solemn, with the lines of the Heart Sutra shining on the floor via the sunlight. (Photo/Dharma Drum Mountain Cultural and Educational Foundation)

03. The Water-Moon Dharma Center at Nung Chan Monastery allows even non-Buddhists to experience the sense of Zen conveyed by the architecture. (Photo/Dharma Drum Mountain Cultural and Educational Foundation)

03





National Taiwan Normal University Art Museum

國立台灣師範大學美術館

MRT Gutting Station

The campus of National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU) has long been known for its architecture. The original campus on the south side of Heping East Road (和平東路) was built in the Japanese era and contains examples of Japanese Baroque and early twentieth century buildings. The more contemporary campus across the road, however, contains the most notable example of modern architecture.

Tucked away from bustling Heping East Road, the NTNU Art Museum is accessible through the campus entrance or the leafy lanes that border the university buildings. The easiest approach is via Lane 33, Lishui Street (麗水街33巷). Trees, benches, cafe-dotted streets and the quiet scholarly atmosphere of the campus add to the calm.

The museum is an agglomeration of pyramidal metal spikes, resembling a futuristic alien spaceship or perhaps an origami beehive. The façade is impressive in itself, marked by its contrast to the older architecture of the area, some of which dates back to the Japanese era. Its presence may be understood as a symbol of disruption: as modern art disrupts traditional notions of beauty, the angular titanium façade draws attention not only to its newness, but to the vintage character of the neighborhood.

There is no angle from which the entire structure can be seen. Rather, different angles and perspectives come into view as one strolls the perimeter. The museum's architect, Chen Shenzhong (陳聖中), has said he envisions architecture "Like a poem, and the city like a book. If the book is full of poems, the city will have culture." Like a poem, one might say that the museum's edifice changes depending on the angle or even perhaps the time of day, with myriad unexpected or surprising nooks and corners.

04. NTNU Art Museum is constructed of 192.8 pieces of triangle-shaped pure titanium plating, and is the first 360-degree architectural construction made of such materials in Taiwan. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

Exhibits at the museum focus on Taiwanese contemporary art, with a particular focus on collecting student and faculty works since 1947. It houses over 3,000 works encompassing oil, ink and watercolor paintings, calligraphy, prints and applied art. In this way it fills an important niche in Taiwan's art scene, providing insight into the history and evolution of contemporary art in Taiwan and encouraging civic learning and participation in Taiwan's art history. The museum's Facebook page regularly promotes courses and symposia, emphasizing its existence as a public venue for all rather than a private, rarefied art collection.

04





Taipei Performing Arts Center

台北表演藝術中心 MRT Jiantan Station

As the MRT's red line snakes northward, it heads above ground and allows passengers to enjoy Taipei's urban scenery. After passing the traditional Chinese-style architecture of the Grand Hotel (圓山大飯店), a much more contemporary building comes into view: the Taipei Performing Arts Center. The center was designed by world-famous Dutch architects Rem Koolhaas and David Gianotten of Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), known for the Seattle Central Library, De Rotterdam, and the Torre Bicentenario in Mexico City.

The Taipei Performing Arts Center was completed in 2021, and is thus the newest entry among Taipei's modern architectural offerings. It was designed with

the concepts of inclusivity and upending the "conservative internal workings" of arts venues in mind, and was featured among CNN's *Transformative Buildings Set to Shape the World in 2021*.

The center stands out from the older surrounding buildings and well-known Shilin Night Market (士林夜市), creating a strong visual impact as you approach, especially from the south. A huge globe — locally nicknamed "the pork ball" — juts out from the main building, hanging over a large outdoor public plaza and covered indoor plaza. The second floor features wave-shaped windows that provide a view of the MRT and nearby market streets, with public seating and a small reading area. The seventh floor features the

05. Taipei Performing Arts Center with a ball-shaped design has become a new landmark in Shilin. (Photo/Shao Bo Zhao)



05

popular ACME Cafe Bar & Restaurant, which serves high-end Western food, cafe standards and drinks, with an expansive view of the Shilin area.

The Taipei Performing Arts Center is indeed unique: it features three independent theaters which all connect to a common backstage area. The aptly-named Globe Playhouse (球劇場) is easily the most recognizable, as it is located within the globe-like

structure. The rectangular Grand Theatre (大劇院) juts out to one side, and the center also contains a smaller Blue Box (藍盒子) theater. The backstage itself is visible through The Public Loop, which allows visitors to see aspects of the performing arts which are typically hidden.

06. The corridor space leading to the escalator was designed with a forward technological style in mind. (Photo/Taipei Performing Arts Center)

06





07. The eye-catching Concert Hall is designed as an angular-shaped shell and can accommodate 5,000 audiences.

07



Taipei Music Center

台北流行音樂中心 MRT Nangang Station

When one thinks of modern architecture in Taipei, Nangang (南港) is typically not the first neighborhood that comes to mind. Known primarily as the site of the massive Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center (台北南港展覽館) and a small forest of office buildings, it was an unlikely site for a prominent new development project, let alone a performing arts center. That changed when Taipei City Government (台北市政府) held a design contest for several new projects,


including the Taipei Performing Arts Center in Shilin and the Taipei Music Center in Nangang.

The completed complex in Nangang was designed by New York-based architects Jesse Reiser and Nanako Umemoto, also known for the Kaohsiung Port Cruise Terminal (高雄港旅運中心), and the tourist walkways on Alishan (阿里山) in Nantou County (南投縣). At first glance, it evokes a sleek space station straddling Civic

Boulevard (市民大道), with plazas and walkways connecting multiple buildings across a wide swath of land. The architects themselves describe the Taipei Music Center as inspired by “flowing crystalline geometry,” a visualization that makes immediate sense whether viewing the edifices glittering in the sunlight or lit up at night.

Although the intention was to embrace artificiality rather than imitate natural formations, one might look at the Concert Hall (表演廳) and see an almost alien-like scalloped shell, or gaze at the Creative Hub (產業區), which resembles an oblong quartz crystal, or note how the Cultural Cube (文化館) evokes naturally squared-off pyrite. As a whole, Taipei Music Center’s look is at once natural and artificial, unique and universal, not unlike the music it seeks to promote: both internationally recognizable yet with unmistakably local roots.

The purpose of the Taipei Music Center is manifold. The Concert Hall is a performance venue seating 5,000, the Cultural Cube presents exhibits on the history of music in Taiwan, and the Creative Hub acts as an incubation space for young and up-and-coming musical talent.

The center’s design is intended to be woven into the fabric of Taipei City life. Beyond its role as a music venue, it is also home to cafes and arts-focused shops, including a DJ supply store, a vinyl record shop and several purveyors of musical instruments. Its bridges and plazas are meant to be welcoming to all, positioning Taipei Music Center as not only a site for the local music scene to thrive, but to convey the distinctiveness of Taiwanese music to the world. 

08



08. The crystal-shaped Creative Hub is a multifunctional space that among other resources Taipei Music Center is providing to help new talents in music industry.

09. The square-shaped Cultural Cube is the first exhibition space that takes music as the main theme in Taiwan, showcasing the historical scenes of Taiwanese music industry.

10. The white space of the lobby of the Concert Hall has a clean and neat visual design.



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01

01. The scene of old Taipei is carved on Dadaocheng, that is also a treasury of various interesting merchandises. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)

From Snacks to Souvenirs: Four Can't-Miss Stores on Taipei's Historic Dihua Street

Author Seb Morgan

Photographer Yuskay Huang, Taiwan Scene

Dihua Street (迪化街), a narrow red-brick artery in the Dadaocheng (大稻埕) area that runs north-south through Taipei's old town, is arguably unbeaten when it comes to traditional shopping in the city. Developed first as a commercial center trading in rice, tea, and other typically Taiwanese goods, the storied thoroughfare is a window into Taipei as it once was, resplendent with Japanese-era architecture and independent retailers operated by the same families who first opened them decades ago.

There's no shortage of things to do on Dihua Street. In addition to shopping for souvenirs and traditional snacks, you can spoil yourself at one of the many independent cafes, visit local museums, thumb through vibrant fabrics at Yongle Market (永樂市場), or simply take in the atmosphere of this historic neighborhood.

Whether you're looking to pick up some unique keepsakes or just want to immerse yourself in Taipei's rich history and culture, each store on Dihua Street has its own fascinating story to tell.

Kuo's Astral Bookshop

郭怡美書店

Located just north of the Minsheng West Road (民生西路) intersection, Kuo's Astral Bookshop encapsulates Dihua Street's unique charm. Nestled in a handsome Japanese-era terrace, the storied retailer has been part of the local landscape for over 100 years, and is worth visiting just to poke around.

Like so many of its neighbors, Kuo's is a family venture. The enterprise was founded in 1922 as a general store by local entrepreneur Kuo Wu-long (郭烏隆) and later converted into a bookseller by Wu-long's grandson, Kuo Chung-hsing (郭重興). Today, Kuo's Astral Bookshop is one of Dadaocheng's biggest independent bookstores.



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02. The bookshop provides readers with a quiet space to enjoy books.

03. The staircase, one of the intricate details of the interior architecture, is yet another attraction when visiting Kuo's Astral Bookshop.

04. The original wood floor before the renovation is preserved and used as a decoration in the store.

A mix of modern and traditional elements, the store's interior is easily one of Dihua Street's prettiest.

Sleek details like glass skylight flooring contrast with the building's wooden-beamed ceilings and lattice work. One of the structure's most intriguing architectural elements is a staircase that is made of wood and burnished metal, which passes through the building's atrium between the second and third floors.



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05. The art gallery on the second floor provides a space not only for people to read, but also to have light meals.

06. The decoration of the bookshop reveals the effort put in creating a beautifully nostalgic reading atmosphere.



06

If you're there to read, explore Kuo's lower levels. The first floor of the bookshop is mostly nonfiction, with a focus on travel and culture. On the second floor, you'll find a wide selection of fiction, both by local and translated authors. It's worth noting that most of the literature at Kuo's is in Chinese, though you'll also find some bilingual editions, as well as photography books and similar coffee-table stock. Books regarding fields related to art and photography can be found on the top floor, which was built in a traditional Taiwanese house style with the wooden decoration. Here is also a showroom which is sometimes used for exhibits, adding an extra layer of interest to this already fascinating shop.

A standout piece of history on an already remarkable historic street, Kuo's Astral Bookshop is well worth a visit. Whether you're a book lover, want to enjoy the beautiful old school architecture and atmosphere in their inside-bookstore cafe, or just curious about the neighborhood, this charming nook is sure to delight.

KUO'S ASTRAL BOOKSHOP

ADD 129, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.
HOURS 2:00pm - 10:00pm (Monday to Friday)
 11:00am - 10:00pm (Saturday to Sunday)

Dachun Soap

大春煉皂

Like many Dadaocheng businesses, Dachun Soap has been in business for over 100 years. It was founded as a Japanese company and taken over by a Taiwanese family from 1950. Befitting of its location, the business derives its soap from Taiwanese plants and herbs, in particular the same stock that Dihua Street traded in during its commercial heyday, including rice, tea leaves, and medicinal herbs.

Today, one of the store's most popular products is its Classic Rice Soap (經典米萃皂) — a mild cleansing bar made from rice germ oil extract that is both moisturizing and rich in vitamin E. More invigorating is the Classic Tea Soap (經典茶萃皂), which is made from ground oolong leaves with tea extract essence that helps restore skin elasticity and has a refreshing, herbaceous scent that can relax mind and body.



07

The sheer variety of native ingredients used in Dachun's soaps is enough to overwhelm anyone but a professional botanist. But don't let that put you off. A large metal grain bin turned wash basin serves as a testing station where you can lather up with each soap and test them out before you buy them.

If soap bars aren't your thing, Dachun has plenty of other fragrant stuff to please the senses. The distinctive perfumes are well worth a spritz, coming in enticing scents like citrus, cedar, and gooseberry. The same can be said for the hand creams — try the earthy wormwood or the red quinoa that helps to moisturize your hands for soft and smooth skin.

For souvenir shoppers, Dachun offers some special mementos to take home with you. The gift boxes in particular make for marvelous gifts and come beautifully presented in paper boxes decorated with the same motifs you'll find throughout Dihua Street's elegant neo-Baroque architecture. Like everything else at Dachun, the contents are made without any unnatural additives, meaning that the fragrant keepsake you take home from Dachun is also an eco-conscious one.

DACHUN SOAP

ADD 234, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.
HOURS 9:00am - 6:00pm (Monday to Friday)
9:00am - 7:00pm (Saturday to Sunday)

07. In the store, customers can sample different kinds of soap to take in the pleasant aromas and experiences.

08. Dachun Soap sells not only soaps, but also fragrant products such as perfumes and hand creams.



08



09. Full Mountain frees itself from the image of old traditional grocery stores, attracting the young generation to visit and get some shopping done.

10. On the shelves there are a variety of dried fruits and snacks, displayed neatly and cleanly.

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Full Mountain

富自山中

Food and history are two of Dihua Street's biggest draws. Nestled among the nostalgic architecture and bustling vendors, you'll find Full Mountain — a unique store that combines both of these qualities.

Full Mountain was opened by a family from Chiayi County (嘉義縣) in southern Taiwan, and it remains a family business to this day. Adding to the charm of the store, Full Mountain's interior is designed like a Showa-era Japanese grocery store, with untreated wooden shelves, Japanese *noren* curtains, and wares heaped in wooden crates all contributing to its historic atmosphere. But this intriguing interior isn't just a pretty sight — it's also a trove of traditional Taiwanese snacks.

Specialties like dried fruit, nuts, oolong tea, and other local staples like rice and quinoa are some of the most popular stock. All of Full Mountain's produce is natural, organic, and free from additives. In addition



to local fare, the store also offers a variety of imported ingredients like Mexican chia seeds and Peruvian quinoa, making it a great destination for guilt-free grazing.

The qualities of their locally made merchandise are excellent. Don't miss their Alishan oolong tea or delicious dried pineapple, and if you're a fan of brown sugar candy, this sweet is a steal as they are all priced in a reasonable range. So, you won't need to bust your wallet to take home a little bit of everything.

FULL MOUNTAIN

ADD 220, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.
HOURS 9:00am - 6:30pm (Closed on Sundays)



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Gao Jian Bucket Shop

高建桶店

Tricolored “*qiezi-dai* (茄芷袋, retro *kagiami* bags)” are to Taiwanese people what red telephone boxes are to the British — kitschy, culturally iconic, and evocative of the good old days. Anyone and everyone you ask in Taiwan will be able to recall a grandmother or auntie hauling one of these colorful hold-alls home from the market after an intensive weekend shopping trip.

The bags can be bought all over Taipei, but you’ll find the best selection at this traditional Dihua store, whose chic, durable wares have become something of a cult favorite among Japanese tourists. *Qiezi-dai*, reed bags, and the many other traditional woven accessories the store has earned a name for, practically spill out into the street. From some angles, Gao Jian appears more bags than shop.

In a street largely known for its teas and dried snacks, Gao Jian is the place to go for a more practical souvenir. The store trades in homewares with a traditional Taiwan twist — carved wooden kitchen utensils, decorative storage boxes, and adorable rattan picnic hampers.

The best part? These beautifully crafted items are surprisingly affordable, making them an accessible option for any budget. A *qiezi-dai* or even some of the more “expensive” bags don’t fetch more than the equivalent of a couple cups of coffee. If you’re looking for something distinctive and uniquely Taiwanese to brighten up your living space, Gao Jian is the place to go. 📍

11. Gao Jian Bucket Shop sells many “good old days” merchandise, and the customers here are from all age ranges.

12-13. The *qiezi-dai* and reed bags are the “must-buy” in Gao Jian Bucket Shop.

GAO JIAN BUCKET SHOP

ADD 204, Sec. 1, Dihua St., Datong Dist.
HOURS 9:00am - 7:00pm (Closing time varies)



The landscape art "The Garden," in the space of the Taipei Fine Arts Museum courtyard and originally part of the exhibition entitled "The Modern Exorcist," remains as a permanent public green space.
@ Taipei Fine Arts Museum



© Wei Wen Chen



01

01. Baoan Temple, where people worship Baosheng Dadi, has stood in Dalongdong for over two centuries.

Taipei's Historic Gems: Dalongdong Baoan Temple and the Baosheng Cultural Festival

Author Jenna Lynn Cody

Photographer Samil Kuo, Dalongdong Baoan Temple

Taipei's historic temples dot the city with vibrant color, serving as both cultural hubs and historic sites. Among these places of worship, one stands above the rest: Dalongdong Baoan Temple (大龍峒保安宮). With over two centuries of history, Baoan Temple is dedicated to Baosheng Dadi (保生大帝), also known as Emperor Baosheng, the venerated god of health and medicine, and is covered with ornate woodcarvings by masters from generations past, Koji pottery, couplet-inscribed columns and large murals. To better understand the story and splendor of this cultural gem, we sat down with temple president Liao Wu-jyh (廖武治), as well as Chang Ching-wei (張靖委), a researcher of cultural property who matriculated from the Graduate Institute of Architecture and Cultural Heritage at the Taipei National University of the Arts (國立台北藝術大學).

The History of Dalongdong Baoan Temple

1742 marks the first known appearance of Baoan Temple in the Dalongdong neighborhood, founded by immigrants from Tongan (同安) in China's Fujian Province. The site of the original temple is unknown.

Baoan Temple President Liao Wu-jyh recounts the story of the Baosheng Dadi idols in the principal shrine. "The first two were carved in China, and a race was held to see which idol would reach Dalongdong first," he says. "A large idol [with distinctive glass eyes] was sent south and transported overland from Budai (布袋) in Chiayi County (嘉義縣), and a smaller one was brought by sea via Tamsui (淡水). The smaller idol arrived first, and the one from Chiayi became the secondary idol."

02



In 1805, a much larger Baosheng Dadi idol was carved in Taiwan and worshipped alongside the original two, around the time construction of the current Baoan Temple commenced. This structure spans almost 9,917 square meters.

"The location was decided by walking around with the idol until it indicated where it wanted its temple to be built," says Liao.

Many difficulties befell Baoan Temple in the 130 years that followed. In 1859, the temple was almost attacked from the north, a conflict attributed to warring factions with grudges that stretched back to Fujian Province, their place of origin. This was ward off by the actions of local people, who scared off the attackers with wooden poles. The structure was damaged by a munitions explosion in 1895 during the Japanese occupation of Taipei, and was later turned into a school. In 1949, families who fled to Taiwan from China with the retreating Nationalist Army took shelter in the temple. Renovations were conducted in 1967 and again in 1995.

02. The Baosheng Dadi idols of the grand master, second master and third master in the principal shrine.

03. Temple President Liao Wu-jyh has hosted various events at Baoan Temple in recent years, and even presides over ceremonies personally.

03



Gods Worshipped at Baoan Temple

Born in 979 A.D., Baosheng Dadi began his adult life as an imperial official. Soon, news spread of the medical miracles he was said to perform. In one story, he met a dragon posing as a mountain-dwelling woodcutter, suffering from an eye disease. Upon recognizing Baosheng Dadi, the woodcutter turned back into a dragon and begged for eye drops, which the god administered.

As time went on, other Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist gods were added alongside Baosheng Dadi. These include Confucius, Guanyin (觀音, the goddess of mercy and compassion), Zhusheng Niangniang (註生娘娘, the principal goddess of pregnancy and childbirth), Tudi Gong (土地公, the god of land), Shennong Dadi (神農大帝, the god of agriculture) and Matsu (媽祖, goddess of the sea). The highest god of the Daoist pantheon as well as the lord of heaven and earth, Yuhuang Dadi (玉皇大帝), or the Jade Emperor, is worshipped both at the incense brazier at the front of the temple and again on the top floor of the rear-most shrine.

In the main shrine also sits an idol to the Black Tiger General (黑虎將軍). "The tiger used to eat people," Liao says. "One day, he devoured a woman, but one of her

hair ornaments got stuck in his throat." The tiger asked Baosheng Dadi to remove the ornament, but he refused, saying he would not help a creature who killed humans. The tiger promised to stop, and Baosheng Dadi removed the hairpin. Afterwards, the black tiger became both servant and mount of Baosheng Dadi, as well as the god's eternal guardian in the afterlife. As a consequence, Baosheng Dadi transformed the black tiger into a deity. People worship it as Black Tiger General, paying their respects to him on the 16th of April, according to the lunar calendar.

04-05. Believers bought embroidered shoes for Zhusheng Niangniang to appreciate the answering of their prayers for conception.

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06. Baoan Temple has won the Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation, presented by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

07-08. On the inner walls of the main hall, the dragon and tiger Koji pottery pieces are exquisite and detailed, imbuing a magnificent sense of power and grandeur.



07



08

The Art and Architecture of Baoan Temple

Temples are rarely decorated simply for aesthetic reasons. “Baoan Temple is about 280 years old, so its architecture and decorative elements hold abundant historical meaning,” says Chang Ching-wei.

The detailed door paintings and unusually high three-beamed entrance hall ceiling are the first details visitors may notice. The middle gate is painted with “celestial governors” Yu Chigong (尉遲恭), with a dark complexion, and Qin Shubao (秦叔寶), with lighter skin. Each door god represents prosperity, good fortune or promotion. “To make a temple this big during the Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1636 A.D. – 1912 A.D.), with five entry doors, was not easy,” Chang continues.

Although the principal shrine may look symmetrical, a 1917 renovation included work by two different artists, Chen Ying-bin (陳應彬) and Kuo Ta (郭塔). Directly under the double-eave roof is an especially masterful woodcarving by the two masters which depicts both a feast and a battle respectively. Each added inconspicuous commentary in their work, referencing their own ability or that of the other craftsman as part of their competition. “The different sides of the hall are a dialogue between the artists,” Chang notes. “One might leave his name. The other might intentionally not do so, which expresses that the artist knows his work speaks for itself.”

The main hall, typically closed to the public, also houses masterworks of Koji pottery and carvings of the 36 Celestial Officials, carved in the early 19th century by masters from Quanzhou, China. These figures serve as guards for Baosheng Dadi.

The eastern and western wings of the temple hold further architectural details. Each wing is square rather than a traditional hexagonal shape. Above the western

wing sits the Drum Tower built by Kuo Ta. This includes delicate phoenix joints and dragon brackets. The east wing, which houses Matsu and Tudi Gong, is topped by the Bell Tower, built by Chen Ying-bin. The beams and brackets of this tower are skillfully carved. Inside the east wing, Tudi Gong's appearance is especially notable. "This Land God's cap is that of an imperial advisor, which is unusual for a Tudi Gong," Chang points out.



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09. One of the architectural features of Baoan Temple is that the craftsmen would leave messages on their works.

Worshipping at the Temple

To pray at Baoan Temple, you must begin with the incense brazier at the front, which represents the Jade Emperor. Then proceed to the main shrine to pay respect to Baosheng Dadi. After that, visitors may pay their respects at the other shrines. "There's no idol for the Jade Emperor, because we don't know what he looks like," Chang notes.

"Be sure to tell each god your name and where you live," adds Liao. "You can tell the gods what your issue is, whether it's children, or health, or work. You can also toss the fortune blocks onto the floor. When you get an affirmative answer, you can take a fortune stick. This will indicate a specific slip of paper with your fortune on it, which we can interpret for you."

Issues regarding health, medicine and careers may be directed to Baosheng Dadi. Tudi Gong should be consulted in matters regarding housing, land and business, and Matsu's domain includes smooth travels.

Praying to Zhusheng Niangniang involves special rituals. Parents hoping to conceive are likely to bring her offerings of cosmetics, flowers or embroidered shoes. "If a daughter is desired, bring a white flower and exchange it for a red one. For a son, bring a red flower and exchange it for white," Liao instructs.

"Foreigners are also welcome to worship at Baoan Temple," Liao goes on. "We're always happy to assist them if needed. We've had visitors from the Philippines who prayed here even though they were Catholic. In one case, after visiting Baoan Temple, a Filipino man's wife called to say their child's fever had broken!"

The 2023 Baosheng Cultural Festival

Every year, Baoan Temple holds the Baosheng Cultural Festival (保生文化祭) to celebrate the birthday of Baosheng Dadi. The festival usually spans several months, and includes art exhibitions, scholarship awards, lectures, opera and drama performances, free medical consultations, painting contests and other activities. In 2023, the festival will take place between April 23rd and June 19th.

“We bring in the highest-level drama troupes,” Liao says. “They’re so good that we put out about a thousand chairs for the audience, and they’re usually full. Then the troupes perform and Baosheng Dadi decides which is the best.”

Every three years, the festival includes a parade through Dalongdong and Dadaocheng which begins

at midday and loops back to Baoan Temple in the evening. The next day, a fire-walking ritual (過火儀式) is held in the park across from the temple, to purify the idols after their journey through the neighborhood. Although the parade and fire walking will not be held in 2023, visitors may enjoy the “Fire Lion Fireworks Show (放火獅)” on May 3rd, the drama and opera performances throughout the month of April, and the art exhibition from June 3rd to 6th. 10

10. One of the highlights of the Baosheng Cultural Festival is the Lion Fireworks Show, in which many fireworks are set off, creating a spectacular scene. (Photo/Dalongdong Baoan Temple)



► 2023 Baosheng Cultural Festival



10

Finding Your Way Through Reading

Author Hsuan Yin Chang, Genie Zheng

Photographer George Zhan, Yuskay Huang, Boven Magazine Library, Jenny Lee

Taipei possesses a wealth of reading resources. According to a study released by the World Cities Culture Forum in 2016, Taipei ranked second in the world in terms of bookstores per capita. The city is home to many large chains as well as distinctive indies, not to mention a world-famous bookstore open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In its prime, during 1980s and '90s, Zhongzheng District's Chongqing South Road (重慶南路) was home to more than a hundred bookstores, the highest concentration of book shops in Taipei. For many literati, intellectuals and students, it was a book lover's paradise, where tomes of any kind and purpose could be found. Nevertheless, as time went by, due to multiple factors such as the impact of online bookstores and a decrease in the number of readers, this "bookstore street" gradually disappeared. Today, independent bookstores are spread all over Taipei.

However, though Chongqing South Road is no longer what it was, this city still counts many book lovers among its residents, some of whom put on intriguing talks and other events that invite attendees to recall the pleasures of reading, especially physical books, and establish a reading habit. The Unicorn Reading Project (獨角獸計畫) is one such effort.

The Unicorn Reading Project was founded by Jenny Lee (李惠貞), an editor and strategist with more than twenty years of experience in the publishing industry. The way she tells it, the idea came to her in a flash in the morning. Though it might have seemed farfetched at the time, in fact it was the culmination of her many years of experience with editing and publishing. Afterward, she decided to focus on doing the work that would bring her happiness, namely promoting reading, and left her day job.

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Starting Out with the Establishment of Reading Habits

The Unicorn Reading Project was officially launched in 2017. At the start, Lee had no idea how much it would grow. She figured she would take that crucial first step, and leave the rest up to life in the universe. Now her project is entering its sixth year.

Lee chose to devote her efforts to promoting reading not just because she loves publishing, but also because she believes that books contain all the answers; as the books we read seep into the unconscious, they become a source of personal growth.

She often uses social media to share her thoughts on the books she reads, analyzing them from a variety of angles ranging from content to design. Each post ends with a list of people who worked on the book, including such figures as the cover designer, typesetter, and managing editor. It's clear to see that in addition to her keen eye as a reader, Lee has a deep respect for the unsung heroes of the publishing world.

Lee reads around fifty books a year. She says that each encounter with a book must be savored, but at the same time sees no need to finish one book before starting the next. As a result, she often has multiple books on the go at the same time. In the morning she might choose to read a relatively dense tome on science to expand her knowledge, while before going to bed she might opt for nature writing to wind down; before heading out the door, she picks a book to bring along based on how she's feeling at the moment.

As an inveterate reader, Lee finds that this way of reading is an endless source of inspiration. She delights in discovering two books that reach the same insight just as much as in finding two authors who present contradictory arguments on the same issue.

01. In Taipei, many book lovers meet in a bookstore and form a reading group so as to exchange ideas with one another.
(Photo/Jenny Lee)

02. The life of Jenny Lee cannot be without reading. In her opinion, reading brings inspiration, or even the answers to life's great questions.

The Road to Promoting Reading

The landscape of Taipei bookstores has changed much, and some people may assume the act of promoting reading is due to a decrease in reading among society at large. But as a reader and a reading promoter, Lee does not think the habit of reading in Taipei has changed significantly.

What challenges has she encountered in the process of promoting reading? "As an editor and a strategist, every new idea is a challenge," Lee says. "But that's always been our work. When a challenge appears, we find a way to overcome it. Right now, I'm creating a kind of work where I can enjoy the process without setting goals," she goes on. "As long as half the people who come to my book club buy books, or someone tells me that they've taken up reading as a result of coming to one of my events, I feel satisfied."

At the end of the first few meetings of her book club, multiple attendees asked if there was a way for them to stay in touch with fellow book lovers. In response, Lee created the Unicorn Reading Project group, which at present counts among its members nearly 700 readers from all walks of life, ranging from doctors and dancers to civil servants. When she needs help with an event, they lend her a hand. In an age where face-to-face contact is decreasing, the Unicorn Reading Project is doing more than just promoting reading — it's also doing the valuable work of bringing together people with shared interests to do something as a group, and create deep emotional bonds along the way.

The events that the Unicorn Reading Project have hosted or participated in to date include the "Reading and Thinking Party" series of lectures, co-hosted with advocacy platform 500 times (500輯) of *United Daily News* (聯合報), talking with guests and inspiring readers to think. There was also the "pre-operation warm-up event," held in cooperation with Kuo's Astral Bookshop, allowing participants to share their reading experience throughout the year.

03





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03. When talking about books, Lee always shares the ideas she harvests by reading with enthusiasm.

04. At the reading group, participants can choose their favorite books and share their thoughts with others. (Photo/Jenny Lee)

05. Jenny Lee always takes a book with her.

05

Divining the Character of a Bookstore

Lee enjoys browsing bookstores as a hobby. In fact, she and her daughter once visited 66 bookstores in Japan in just a month. As a true connoisseur of books, Lee can divine the soul of a bookstore's owner the moment she walks in based on the books on the shelves. Does the owner see books as objects for display, meant to dress up a space? Or do they select books with care, organizing them by theme? With acuity born of long experience, she grasps the character of a bookstore at a glance.

To her, two prominent bookstores in Taipei's Daan District, Maison Temps-Rêves (童里繪本洋行) and Boven Magazine Library (boven雜誌圖書館) are each unique in their own way. Maison Temps-Rêves, located on Chaozhou Street (潮州街), is home to the best picture books from all over the globe. There are various forms of binding, such as folded books or pop-up books, perfect for adults and children alike to enjoy. For those interested in visual design or strategy, picture books offer a source of inspiration and creativity.

Meanwhile, Boven Magazine Library — a rare gem — can be found in an alley off Fuxing South Road (復興南路). Asia's first magazine library, it has a collection of more than ten thousand handpicked magazines. You can find a variety of magazines from all over the world, including a wealth of Japanese lifestyle magazines that are adored by Taiwanese people. There is also space for people involved in the making of magazines to have events such as exhibitions, lectures, and sharing sessions.

“Reading begins from the moment you select a book,” Lee says. “The books you choose to read reveal what you’re thinking about — what you worry about or long for.” Through her own reading, Lee has personally experienced the strength that reading brings. That’s what gives her the motivation to tirelessly encourage others to read as a way of finding a direction in life and exploring the possibilities that lie within themselves as well as the rest of the world. **📖**

06-07. With various kinds of picture books on display, Maison Temps-Rêves offers adults and children alike different kinds of inspiration. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

08. Boven Magazine Library is a “magazine treasury” that is rare overseas, and the space here is also really cozy. (Photo/Boven Magazine Library)



06



07





Recommended

BOOKSTORES

Maison Temps-Rêves

ADD 15, Chaozhou St., Daan Dist.
HOURS 12:00pm - 6:00pm (Tuesday to Friday)
 11:00am - 6:00pm (Saturday to Sunday)
 (Closed on Mondays)

Boven Magazine Library

ADD B1, 18, Aly. 5, Ln. 107, Sec. 1, Fuxing S. Rd., Daan Dist.
HOURS 10:00am - 9:00pm

BOOKS

Finding Your Element: How to Discover Your Talents and Passions and Transform Your Life

Ken Robinson

The bestselling author of *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*, Ken Robinson gave the most-viewed TED Talk of all time and was named one of the world's "Principal Voices."

For those uncertain where their interests or passions lie, the case studies presented in this book offer encouragement and renewed confidence. The book isn't preachy, and readers are sure to find within it answers to the life questions that may be troubling them.

Pilgrimage To the Mountain of Life 《朝一座生命的山》

Jenny Lee

Suitable for all audiences. The beauty and philosophy of the International Bodhisattva Sangha, the axis around which this book turns, are immediately visible in the design of the book itself.

A small window in the seed paper jacket reveals a flyleaf made of reflective mirror paper that shows the reader their own face — a deft bit of design that promises a journey to face oneself.



09. Books recommended by Lee and the reading materials she carries on the day of the interview.

09



01

Inclusivity Leading to Win-Win Positivity: Turning Foreign Labor Into a Talent Resource

Author Rick Charette

Photographer One-Forty, Yuskay Huang, Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

“The social progress of our society is determined by how we cohabit with people from different countries, as well as from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.”

— Taiwan’s One-Forty NGO

According to the Ministry of the Interior (內政部), migrant workers currently account for more than 70% of the foreign population in Taiwan. Addressing the ever-increasing number of migrant workers here in the city, the Taipei City Government has strengthened its care and counseling measures for these temporary residents.

Complementing these initiatives is One-Forty (社團法人台灣四十分之一移工教育文化協會), a young non-governmental organization that focuses on improving the lives of Taiwan’s migrant workers by providing opportunities for Chinese/Taiwanese language learning, education on the local culture, and improvement of practical life skills, and also engages in public advocacy on their behalf. These individuals are seen not merely as workers, but as professional talent to be nurtured — lifelong “teammates” of Taiwan rather than as short-term hired help.

According to One-Forty’s founder/CEO Kevin Chen (陳凱翔), Taiwan also immediately benefits from such efforts because happy workers with broadened skills tend to stay longer, meaning deeper accumulated work experience and thus even greater value for employers. Workers returning home with positive images of the country also helps the “Taiwan brand” internationally.

Getting to Know Taiwan's Foreign Laborers

According to data from the Ministry of Labor's Labor Statistics Inquiry Network (勞動部勞動統計查詢網) and Shiu Yu-han (徐郁涵), Section Chief for the Foreign Worker Counseling Section within the Taipei City Foreign and Disabled Labor Office (台北市勞動力重建運用處), there are currently over 727,000 migrant workers in Taiwan. Approximately 506,000 work in industry (factories, construction, fishing boats), 221,000 as social welfare workers (overwhelmingly as in-home caregivers). "They account for 3.1% of Taiwan's total population," says Shiu. In other words, 1 out of every 32 people you come across is a migrant worker. The top three countries of origin are Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

At the moment, according to Shiu, "Taipei has over 39,000 migrant workers, accounting for 1.6% of the city's population, with about 2,600 workers employed in industry and 37,000 in social welfare services. In terms of nationality, Indonesians are first, followed by Filipinos and then Vietnamese. In Taipei's economy the service sector is now dominant and, concomitantly, the majority of our resident migrant workers are caregivers."

Says One-Forty founder/CEO Kevin Chen, "Almost all migrant workers come for economic opportunities not available back home. Virtually all have high-school education or less. Their stays in Taiwan are generally 8 to 10 years. Most are key economic providers for their families back home — many obliged to leave children and much missing them — sending back much of their earnings and living very frugally here."

01. Providing local language education helps migrant workers better adapt to Taipei's culture and environment, while also bringing down barriers between diverse communities.

02. Owing to Taipei's rapid industrial development, most migrant workers in Taipei work in the long-term care industry.



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03. One-Forty founder Kevin Chen introduces events and initiatives he and his colleagues have launched for migrant workers since the founding of the NGO. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

Care and Counseling Resources Provided by Taipei City

Since some 90% of Taipei's migrant workers are family caregivers, says Shiu, the city government concentrates its service provision on these individuals. These are focused on two areas: language learning and caretaker skills training.

Language lessons are provided in both Mandarin and Taiwanese. This brings "improvement in the ability to communicate in the caregiver's Taiwan home, helping to overcome obstacles and avoid misunderstandings," says Shiu, "and at the same time makes Taiwan life in general more navigable for the worker, facilitating smoother adaptation to the local culture."

The needs of care recipients vary widely, she adds, so training is provided in a diversified suite of caregiver skills. Migrant workers can apply for one-on-one support, and specialists and interpreters are dispatched to households to teach specific skills in accordance with the needs of the care recipients.

Because resources are limited, fixed quotas are necessary for the city's counseling services. "Demand is brisk," Shiu states, "and application limits are quickly filled for all service measures offered. For the Taipei City Government units involved, the implementation rate for these measures is invariably 100%."

The city government also organizes special cultural education classes and activities to give Taiwanese citizens windows into the national cultures of the city's guest workers, closing the gap between the two groups through cultural understanding. An example of this is the annual Eid al-Fitr in Taipei (臺北開齋節歡慶活動) celebrations showcasing Muslim culture, with special attractions such as a halal market, performances by Muslim singers and troupes, cultural-experience booths with such activities as oud playing, and experiencing of Arabic calligraphy.

04. The annual Eid al-Fitr in Taipei provides an activity for people to learn about Islamic culture and experience oud playing. (Photo/Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government)

05. The "Study Partner Learning Kit" developed by One-Forty provides Mandarin learning materials for migrant workers, with the contents including topics connecting to the daily life in Taiwan.



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Story and Mission of the One-Forty NGO

One-Forty was set up in 2015. While in university, Kevin Chen spent time doing volunteer work in the Philippines. He found that relatives of numerous new local friends were migrant workers in Taiwan, and upon his return established acquaintanceships with many of them. Through these two groups, “I learned of the many difficulties migrant workers face,” he says, “and determined that starting up One-Forty was my best way to help.”

And what about the name “One-Forty”? “Pretty straightforward,” he says. “At the time of our founding, the ratio of migrant workers to Taiwan citizens was about one-in-forty. Our hope was that Taiwan citizens would be curious about our unusual title, and this would give us the chance to teach everyone that our migrant workers are everywhere, are your neighbors, are an intrinsic part of everyday life and the Taiwan community.”

The One-Forty motto is “Make Every Migrant’s Journey Worthy and Inspiring.”

Providing Life-Skills Educational Resources

Apart from helping them adapt to life away from home, One-Forty’s desire is to empower Southeast Asian migrant workers by helping them acquire practical knowledge and skills through education. The NGO also seeks to give them the means for becoming financially independent when back home. “We want to help them break out of the vicious cycle of poverty, opening the door to better futures,” Chen adds.

As such, One-Forty has developed Taiwan’s largest learning community for migrant workers. Chen states proudly that, “To date over 73,000 migrant workers have participated in our learning community. We offer physical classes in our education facilities, on such topics as Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese acquisition, the local Taiwan culture and living environment, and financial planning.” Classes are held on Sundays, generally the only day off for migrant workers.

“We’ve also developed an online platform for those who cannot physically come to our facilities,” Chen goes on, “creating a YouTube channel, ‘Sekolah One-

Forty', with over 300 native-language videos to date, each five to ten minutes. Each worker can learn at his/her own pace."

One-Forty also provides a one-year distance-learning program for new arrivals in Taiwan, specially designed to help them move quickly from surviving to thriving in the local culture. The "Study Partner Learning Kit (好書伴學習包)" is an innovative resource combining physical textbooks and online supplementary learning, "that concentrates on language learning, understanding of the local culture (including practical matters like taking buses, shopping, doctor visits, etc.), and creating better communication with employers," says Chen. Workers join a dedicated online learning club — incidentally helping them find new home-country friends — which provides teaching videos and real-time live teaching in their native language.

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Engaging in Public Advocacy, Main Obstacles Faced, and Proud Achievements

The greatest obstacle that One-Forty encounters, says Chen, is lingering public stereotypes about migrant workers — dishonesty, laziness, taking jobs from locals, and so on. These have improved greatly over recent years, but much work still needs to be done, and One-Forty believes the best approach is public advocacy, bringing members of the local and migrant worker communities together as "neighbors."

"The lingering stereotypes lead to distrust on the part of employers," says Chen, "and to hindered social integration and a sense of loneliness and isolation on the part of workers." The NGO is engaged in a long-term campaign with a 10-year horizon to slowly break down these prejudices, he goes on, "telling the Taiwanese public the stories of immigrant workers in different ways, including cultural-exchange activities, exhibits, articles, and videos, showing how 'all dreams are created equal.' A key time for us each year is the popular Eid al-Fitr in Taipei celebrations, when we stage exchange activities and special exhibits."

Over 100,000 members of the public have taken part in the NGO's public advocacy campaign to date. "We've also steadily expanded our reach," Chen says, "and now have 22 cities and counties in our accumulated coverage area."

Workers returning home have set up a range of different businesses, from salons to restaurants and stores to more unusual ventures. "One returnee set up a shop specializing in pearl milk tea, and another even opened a small sheep farm. We send teams to the various Southeast Asia countries each year, with three basic goals: to find out how returnees are doing, to provide continuing life-skills help where needed, and to canvas returnees to find out how we can further improve our Taiwan services."

Chen adds that further proof of One-Forty's strong impact is the fact that more and more Taiwan

companies are “contacting us and asking us to set up special programs for their migrant-worker employees (paying a fee to cover costs). More and more of the workers have thus acquired the skills needed to receive promotions as supervisors, junior managers, etc.”

Taiwan’s government and NGO efforts at inclusivity, he states, “is directly leading to win-win positivity for all stakeholders.” 📌

06-07. One-Forty not only provides opportunities for migrant workers to further their education, but also assists them in attaining deeper understanding of local culture.

08. The team at One-Forty is comprised of young people who have a passion for migrant worker issues in Taiwan.

08



OTHER NGOS HELPING MIGRANT WORKERS

1 Taiwan International Workers’ Association

The country’s first NGO dedicated to serving migrant workers, actively campaigns for labor rights and empowers workers to establish their own organizations.



3 Rerum Novarum Center

Involved in labor organization and specialized training for migrant workers and indigenous communities.



2 Global Workers’ Organization, Taiwan

Provides functional professional training and intermediary employment matchmaking.



4 Taiwan Association for Human Rights

Involved in domestic human-rights policy monitoring and advocacy, workshops and volunteer training, and individual case support.





The historic Dalongdong Baoan Temple, standing for more than two centuries, is a prominent cultural landmark in the Dalongdong area.
@ Dalongdong Baoan Temple



© Samil Kuo

A Taipei Guide for Dumpling Lovers

Author Kuan Yuan Chu

Photographer Kungku Chen, Taiwan Scene

In Taiwanese culture, dumplings are popular dishes, traditionally believed to bring fortune and good luck, since their shapes are similar to a form of money used before the advent of modern currency — *yuanbao* (元寶). Normally, dumplings consist of pieces of dough with delicious savory fillings stuffed inside, and there are many dumpling shops in Taipei that sell this mouth-watering delicacy.

Today, Eric Hsu (徐延之), a media professional who has been the editor-in-chief at various media such as the lifestyle magazine *Sense* (Sense好感) and the food publication *Super Taste* (食尚玩家), is here to share with us the many varied dumplings of Taipei not only as an experienced media personality, but also as a citizen of Taipei that knows the city's restaurants like he does his own kitchen.

01. Tasty dumplings are commonly enjoyed among all people in Taiwan.

01





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02. Media professional Eric Hsu is an experienced fan of dumplings.

03. The filling is the key that determines the deliciousness of dumplings.

The Meaning of Dumplings to Taipeiers

“For people in Taipei, dumplings are an ordinary food in the lives of common people,” Hsu says, further elaborating on this fact by introducing the socio-political background of the dish and his own personal experiences.

From a social-historical point of view, dumplings were integrated into Taiwanese people’s history and lives after a world-changing event, the arrival of the Republic of China government and millions of immigrants following them between 1948 and 1950. Those from northern China brought their habit of eating flour-based food, including dumplings, to Taiwan.

“In Taipei, if you see dumpling restaurants, there are names that include place names in China like Shandong dumpling restaurant, Qingdao dumpling restaurant. It is because of this historical context,” Hsu says.

Consequently, dumplings are a shared experience of people in Taipei born in the 1970s. “If you ask what the most delicious dumpling is, I think everybody will say the dumpling made by their mother,” Hsu laughs as he describes how the dumplings made in each and every household have their own unique taste of home. “We would bring homemade dumplings in our lunchboxes to school,” Hsu recalls. “For our generation, sometimes it is just a memory of lunch in school, just like you will see a pickled plum in a typical Japanese lunch box.” Reliving this sweet experience, Hsu points out that he would always finish his lunch box happily.

Dumplings are not only a dish of the past, however. They are also, according to Hsu, commonly found on almost every block that satisfies stomachs and minds, always there to help people relax in this busy city. “They are just food to comfort my mind. You can have them anytime and anywhere without pressure. For me, dumplings represent this kind of existence,” Hsu says.

Dumpling Treasure-Hunting Fun

Every household has its own recipe. Thus, the flavors of dumplings that restaurants can provide in Taipei are also deliciously diverse. As Hsu points out, this highlights the city's essence, as Taipei is a city where different ethnicities from distinct areas of China have assembled and interacted for generations. "I think the city itself is a small area, but it is also a melting pot of different people and cultures," Hsu says.

As a result, the dumplings of Taipei vary widely, and almost every spot will have their own unique recipes. But for Hsu and others, the original style from their childhood is still their favorite. "Some dumpling restaurants put innovative ingredients inside the fillings. Those are not acceptable for me personally. I like old-school, conventional, authentic dumplings," Hsu laughs. "Just like Hawaiian pizza is considered a humiliation for Italian people, for me, dumplings should be filled with cabbage, Chinese cabbage or Chinese chive," Hsu chuckles again.

With the unique recipes of each dumpling restaurant spread out in Taipei, treasure hunting for good dumplings has become an entertaining activity for Hsu, and this city is certainly full of these sort of magical spots. "This kind of surprise, to find good dumplings, is an enjoyable little thing in life that is rather easy to achieve," Hsu shares.

Various Types of Dumplings

Besides the commonly seen boiled dumplings (水餃), there are various ways to cook these deliciously wrapped delicacies. Among them, steamed dumplings (蒸餃), potstickers (鍋貼) and fried dumplings (煎餃) are the most popular.

Steamed dumplings are like *xiaolongbao* (小籠包) that are cooked inside wooden steamers. Some restaurants will put pine branches under the steamers to add the fragrance of pine into the dumplings. And the wrappers of steamed dumplings are different from those of boiled dumplings. Owing to the way they are cooked, it is easy for the texture of a steamed dumpling's skin to become hard. To avoid this, the dough that comprises the wrapper should be blended with some boiling hot water so the dumplings can be perfectly soft. After steaming, the wrappers will look kind of transparent, like jelly, while tasting soft yet dense.

04. DIN TAI FUNG is renowned to the world for its consistently good quality of dumplings. Chefs handmaking dishes is a classic scene inside their restaurants. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)



Potstickers and fried dumplings are both pan-fried; thus they can be confusing for some people. But the difference is that, in terms of appearance, potstickers are usually longer than fried dumplings, while the two sides of them are opened. Besides, when cooking potstickers, less water will be added, and thus they will taste dryer.

On the other hand, fried dumplings are more like original dumplings shaped like *yuanbao*, cooked utilizing the pan-fried method with more water than potstickers.

Hsu reveals one interesting bit of history, in that fried dumplings were not common for Taiwanese people in the past. So, dishes in this form only appear as potstickers. Fried dumplings only became popular after Japanese culture and dishes, including the similar *gyoza*, showed up in Taiwan during 2000s. But the Japanese *gyoza* has a thin wrap and strong taste, and they are eaten as side dishes, while Taiwanese people eat dumplings as the main course.



Boiled dumplings



Steamed dumplings



Potstickers



Fried dumplings

What Makes for a Tasty Dumpling?

Wrappers

“For me, the first thing to mention is the wrappers,” Hsu says. The dough and dumpling wrappers directly influence the feelings when the dumplings are put into people’s mouths. The best wrappers should be freshly handmade.

The most obvious difference will be the feeling of smoothness. A nice, chewy texture can only be provided by freshly-made wrappers. A freshly handmade wrapper needs some extra flour to avoid the dumplings sticking to each other, thus endowing the dumplings with a feeling of tenderness when they touch the lips and tongue. Machine-made wrappers can be thinner, but they will easily become hard after they are dry.

When talking about wraps, one crucial element of good potstickers and fried dumplings is the “wings (flour skin on the surface between the dumplings and the pot)” that add a crispy element to the meal. Hsu recommends a restaurant that was awarded with Michelin Taipei’s Bib Gourmand, Do It True (都一處) in Xinyi District. Their Da Lian Huo Shao (搭連火燒) are considered by Hsu to be among the best potstickers in Taipei. The wrappers are delightfully crispy, and they perfectly seal in the filling, making them superbly juicy.

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Fillings

Finding the perfect combination of fillings is also an important element for a good dumpling. The ingredients should perfectly match each other. For instance, fish dumplings are provided in Hsu’s recommended restaurant, San-Lao Village (三老村). The fillings of these fish dumplings strike a perfect balance, as the Chinese chive inside works well with the light-taste of the fish. Or there is the famous old-school taste of Qingdao Dumpling House (青島餃子館), which mixes a perfect percentage of ginger into their pork filling, creating a superb, refreshing taste.

The fillings of potstickers at Zhangji Potstickers and Beef Noodles (張記鍋貼牛肉麵) are also mentioned by Hsu, as instead of the common Chinese chive, Zhangji’s fillings are added together with hotbed chives, distinguish themselves from other restaurants’ potstickers.

Sauces

The sauces are such a crucial element that sometimes Hsu will simply ask a restaurant owner, “How is your spicy sauce?” to decide if it is worthy or not. As the homemade spicy sauce is such an important factor for him, like the sauce at Dragon Inn Dumplings (龍門客棧餃子館), he will also seek recommendations from the owner, trying to conjure up the best experience the restaurant wishes to provide. Commonly, the classic trio of sauces is soy, sesame oil and vinegar.

Besides these three elements, Hsu thinks a great meal of dumplings in Taipei is an integrated experience, including side dishes and braised food. Under this lens, the Linsen branch (林森店) of Dragon Inn Dumplings is highly rated by Hsu, as all of these actors play their roles well in the symphony of a dumpling feast there. ❶

05. There are various ways of eating dumplings. The popular and classic ones are putting boiled dumplings into beef soup or hot and sour soup.

Recommendations

BOILED DUMPLINGS

Dragon Inn Dumplings (Linsen Branch)

龍門客棧餃子館 (林森店)

ADD 19, Ln. 61, Linsen S. Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.

HOURS 5:00pm - 10:45pm (Closed on Mondays)

Qingdao Dumpling House

青島餃子館

ADD 199, Longjiang Rd., Zhongshan Dist.

HOURS 11:00am - 2:00pm, 5:00pm - 9:00pm
(Monday to Friday)
(Closed on Saturdays and Sundays)

San-Lao Village

三老村

ADD 5, Sec. 3, Muzha Rd., Wenshan Dist.

HOURS 11:30am - 2:30pm, 5:00pm - 8:30pm
(Monday to Saturday)
(Closed on Sundays)

POTSTICKERS

Do It True (Renai Branch)

都一處 (仁愛店)

ADD 506, Sec. 4, Renai Rd., Xinyi Dist.

HOURS 11:00am - 2:00pm, 5:00pm - 9:00pm

Zhangji Potstickers and Beef Noodles

張記鍋貼牛肉麵

ADD 6, Ln. 101, Yanping S. Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.

HOURS 11:00am - 2:00pm, 4:30pm - 7:30pm
(Closed on Saturdays and Sundays)

STEAMED DUMPLINGS

DIN TAI FUNG (Xinsheng Branch)

鼎泰豐 (新生店)

ADD 277, Sec. 2, Xinyi Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.

HOURS 11:00am - 8:30pm (Monday to Friday)
10:00am - 8:30pm (Saturday to Sunday)

FRIED DUMPLINGS

TAIHU Dumpling House

臺虎居餃屋

ADD 155, Jinhua St., Daan Dist.

HOURS 4:00pm - 11:30pm (Monday to Thursday)
11:00am - 12:30am (Friday to Saturday)
11:00am - 11:30pm (Sundays)



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06. Inspired by the Japanese izakaya and stand-up meal, fried dumplings with beer is the classic match in TAIHU Dumpling House. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)

07. Side dishes are necessities in any impeccable dumpling feast.

Historic Landmark Bakeries in Taipei

Author Tina Teng, Yu-Wen Lin

Photographer Yuskay Huang, Taipei Leechi, Florida Bakery

Traditional pastries are an essential part of Taiwanese culture, as exhibited by their ceremonial functions in the Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋節), weddings, anniversaries, ceremonies, places of worship, and more. These pastries are made from simple ingredients such as flour, sugar, and hand-made filling. In Taipei, Japanese confectioneries became popular during Japanese colonial era (1895-1945), while Western-style bread gained popularity during the post-war globalization period, becoming a signature product across all modern-day convenience stores.

As time goes by, the fragrant aroma emitting from the landmark bakeries has become ingrained in the collective memory of their regular customers. While the bakeries take advantage of the island's rich fruit offerings to incorporate them into their products, they also need to take up the challenge of creating ever more decadent desserts.

Taipei Leechi (台北犁記) — specializing in traditional *han bing* (漢餅, Chinese pastry) since the 19th century, Meigetsudo (明月堂) — a Japanese *wagashi* (traditional sweets) shop established in the early 20th century, and Florida Bakery (福利麵包) — a landmark bakery that introduced western bread and pastries to Taiwan during the postwar era — are true hidden gems tucked away in the busy streets of Taipei. Each shop's uncompromising flavor and embracement of timelessness form a part of the city's wonderful sense of nostalgia.

01. The pineapple cakes bring about a sense of nostalgia for many overseas Taiwanese, and they are also a good gift choice as they are adored by local residents.

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Taipei Leechi **Master of Han Bing**

If you stop by Section 2 of Chang'an East Road (長安東路二段) in Zhongshan District around Lunar New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival, you will see a long queue of loyal customers in front of Taipei Leechi waiting to make their holiday purchases. The bakery offers freshly-baked classic Chinese pastries, including pineapple cakes, mini mung bean mooncakes, and sun cakes, each with a shelf life of one to two weeks. The pastries are nicely packaged for easy carriage, making them a top gourmet souvenir for visitors.

The main ingredient in Taiwanese-style *han bing* is a dense and soft filling made from green mung beans. The hulled beans are steamed for at least an hour before being mixed with sugar, walnuts, and other seasonings that will later be stir-fried. Stewed pork is added to the filling to create a sweet and savory flavor. No egg is added to the white outer layer pastry, giving it a delicate, soft texture.

Taipei Leechi took off in the early days with its signature green mung bean pastry. As such, one of their signature pastries is the mung bean mooncake with egg yolk; a slice down the middle reveals the savory egg yolk wrapped in golden mung bean paste. Red bean mooncakes with egg yolk and date mooncakes with egg yolk are also popular items on the menu. The date mooncake with egg yolk is a favorite among long-time staff. With a subtle sweetness, this signature *han bing*'s filling is made with pitted and peeled red dates and lotus seeds, boiled with sugar, and mashed into a caramel-like paste.

The bakery also offers pineapple cakes, which are an all-time favorite among Japanese and Korean visitors. The traditional pineapple cake filling is made from a mixture of winter melon sauce and pineapple. In recent years, filling made from Taiwan native pineapples has gained popularity with its signature tart flavor, tropical fruit aroma, and an obvious pineapple pulp texture.

In addition, Leechi offers the less commonly-seen date mooncake with pine nuts, as well as the recently-launched red bean mooncake with egg yolk enveloped in semi-puff pastry that melts in your mouth. If you can't decide on which flavor to try, the Well Being Gift Box (平安禮盒) with an assortment of flavors is conveniently available.

As the pandemic drove up online orders in the past three years, Leechi's products can now be shipped to Hong Kong and Macau. However, most visitors still prefer purchasing at the store, as more products are readily available at the physical location.

02. The filling of mini mung bean mooncakes is sweet with a soft texture.

03. The date mooncake with pine nuts has been a popular bestseller recently.

04. Mung bean mooncake with egg yolk is another of Taipei Leechi's signature products.



Meigetsudo

Artistry Depicted Through Rice and Red Beans

Founded during the Japanese period, Meigetsudo is a maker of authentic Japanese *wagashi*. The confectionery shop is known for its subtly sweet ingredients and delicate red bean paste. The products vary in appearance to express seasonal themes, and are paired with various types of tea.

During Japanese era, there were many Japanese *wagashi* stores in Sakaemachi-Dori (柴町通), close to the former Governor-General's Office (currently the Presidential Office). Established in 1935, today's Meigetsudo is one of a handful of authentic *wagashi* shops in Taiwan. Under the guidance of second-generation owner Yi-wen Zhou (周宜文), who is almost 90 years of age, Meigetsudo has been the designated *wagashi* store for Japanese organizations, confectionery lovers, and tea connoisseurs in Taiwan for more than 80 years.



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05. The small confectionery shop is always full of customers who love the flavors on offer. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

06. The appearance or pattern of these *wagashis* are interestingly related to the charm of the seasons or various sceneries. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

07. The taste of the limited edition spring strawberry *daifuku* is a perfect combination of sweet and sour. (Photo/Yuskay Huang)

Anko (red bean paste) is the soul of *wagashi*. The complex process begins with picking out impurities from the raw red bean batch. The beans are then boiled, simmered, filtered, and repeatedly passed through a sieve to reduce the astringent taste. The paste can be made into different textures, including *tsubuan*, which has a chunky texture with the beans still intact, *koshian*, with a fine smooth texture, *mitsumame* (sweetened red beans), *yokan* paste (red bean jelly), and *monaka* paste (*azuki* bean jam filling sandwiched between thin mochi wafers). Meigetsudo offers at least six types of red bean products. Note that seasonal *wagashi* and *daifuku* (stuffed mochi) are best consumed within a day. There are two Meigetsudo locations in Taipei.

Strawberry *daifuku* are only available in spring and are extremely popular. Be sure to order in advance as availability is limited. The *daifuku* skin is made from glutinous rice into a sticky paste through grinding, soaking, dehydrating, steaming, and pounding, highlighting the earthy aroma of rice and creating an unparalleled texture. Meigetsudo also offers chestnut *daifuku* and bean *daifuku* as the season changes.



08. Florida Bakery sells various products including bread, cookies and cakes. Light meals are available as well. (Photo/Florida Bakery)

09. Florida Bakery, operating for over 70 years, offers bread that appears similar to Western bread but boasts an authentic Taiwanese texture and flavor. (Photo/Florida Bakery)

10. Garlic French bread always sells out quickly, often not long after it is out of the oven. (Photo/Florida Bakery)

08




Florida Bakery

Offering Eclectic Global Flavors

Florida Bakery stands at the forefront of the first wave of western bakeries in Taipei. It was initially established in 1949 as a supplier for the Military Assistance Advisory Group. Today, hailed as “the United Nations of Bread”, Florida Bakery offers the classic French baguette, nostalgic Taiwanese sweet and savory snacks, exotic pita bread that goes well with everything, and classic hand-made cookies.

The most popular item on the menu is French garlic bread. The garlic spread is made from locally-sourced fresh garlic from Yunlin County (雲林縣) in central Taiwan and butter from New Zealand, giving it an aromatically-spiced flavor with a good dose of calories. For a lighter, no-sugar-added alternative, go with the Formosa multigrain sourdough loaf. Every bite into the dense loaf is filled with healthy, earthy nuts.

Gourmet tortilla chips with cinnamon sugar also come highly recommended. The chips have more than two weeks of shelf life. The corn tortilla chips are baked with all-natural vegetable oil sprinkled with cinnamon powder and sugar, making them an excellent vegetarian option. 



09



10



01

01. Tim Berge, General Manager of ICRT, has witnessed the development and transformation of Taipei City and its media industry over the past three decades.

Taipei Through a Radio Man's Eyes

Author Kuan Yuan Chu

Photographer Samil Kuo, Yi Wen Tsao, Taiwan Scene, Tim Berge

In 2022, Taipei was listed as the 10th most livable city by lifestyle magazine *Monocle*. This may help to explain the fact that there are now around 70,000 foreign residents from all over the world living in Taipei City, according to the most recent statistics from the National Immigration Agency (內政部移民署). Among these tens of thousands, Tim Berge (白健文), General Manager of International Community Radio Taipei (ICRT), is an outstanding example of people from overseas rooting themselves permanently in Taipei.

Berge strikes an air of elegance and chic style, with a tall and slim figure, wearing a black blazer and a handsome tie from Paul Smith, a brand he says he would wear every day if he could. However, when the interaction begins, people may be surprised by how Taiwanese he is, with his warm, friendly attitude and native-like Mandarin, which perfectly reveals the fact that he has spent more than 30 years in Taiwan.

First Impressions of Taiwan

Although Berge grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota, a state far from the blue waters of the Pacific, he still had the chance to hear a lot of fascinating facts about East Asia from the traveling missionaries who spread the word of their faith worldwide. As a result, Berge began to be aware that there was a small island called Taiwan somewhere out there in the vast sea.

This contributed to Berge growing an interest in East Asian culture, which in turn gave rise to his future decision to settle in Taipei. Indeed, he even chose Mandarin and Russian as his foreign languages to learn at university. "At that time, other people asked me, 'Are you a Communist?'" Berge recalls, laughing.

To improve his Chinese, Berge joined a study abroad program at university, which brought him to Hong Kong for a year. During the summer break, Berge decided to travel to Taiwan to visit the missionaries who had previously brought him many stories from foreign shores, to really experience the life that he could once only imagine. In 1979, Berge took a flight to Taipei and set foot on Taiwanese soil for the first time.

When asked about his first impression when he arrived in Taiwan, as compared to his experience in Hong Kong, Berge says, "I felt that Taiwan is really good; the feeling Taiwan brought to me is more real."

Berge further points out one problem of Hong Kong, in his mind, is that people overemphasize the idea of the pecking order, as well as the social and economical status of others. According to Berge, the genuine connection between people makes Taiwan a more interesting place to stay.



02



03

02. Berge talked with Joan Mondale, wife of former U.S. Vice President Walter F. Mondale, in the Howard Plaza Hotel (福華大飯店) while her visit to facilitate cultural exchanges in Taipei. (Photo/Tim Berge)

03. From bilingual traffic reporter to general manager, Berge has always enjoyed his work and facing new challenges.

Getting Involved in Taiwanese Culture

And so, with a good first impression and the hope of finding a better Mandarin learning environment, Berge came to Taipei, joining the Mandarin program at National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU) in 1981. Afterward, he decided to work in Taiwan, starting in 1988.

Still, Berge endured forms of cultural and environmental shock when he first settled in Taiwan. “What am I doing?” was the thought running through his mind, he recalls, when he traveled from the airport in Taoyuan (桃園) to Taipei. At that time, Taiwan was a place with dangerous traffic, and the weather was such an affront to his body that for a time he had health issues every single day. Furthermore, martial law was in effect. Berge still remembers the closed feeling in local society, owing to the presence of fear in people’s everyday lives. “Young Taiwanese people my age would not dare to go to the places where they can dance and drink,” Berge says.

After starting work in Taiwan, the office culture was actually annoying for Berge, as he quickly found that everybody is somewhat obsequious to their superiors. “I think it is OK to say nice words,” he says, but when it comes to over-flattering, he shares with us a pearl of wisdom from his mother. “If you do not have nice words to say, do not say anything; you just *tiam-tiam* (be quiet in Taiwanese),” Berge says, uttering a word that many Taiwanese will be surprised to hear from the mouth of a foreigner.

Another thing Berge found somewhat strange is the fact that Taiwanese workers often take a nap during their lunch break. “For us American dudes, we will think, ‘Are you really that tired? Have you slept at night?’” Berge laughs. “In the U.S., you just continue your work after you grab something to eat!”

But for Berge, these issues passed with time. He joined ICRT, and began his career in the broadcasting industry in 1991.

Traffic Reporter’s Close Observation

When he started working in radio, Berge was responsible for doing bilingual traffic reports (using his fluent English and Mandarin) in the evenings, and was given a cute nickname — Captain Tim. When asked about the traffic in Taipei in years past, he says frankly, “It was really terrible. Sometimes the traffic would be stuck for a really long time.”

According to Berge, traffic in Taipei was awful compared to nowadays, which is described by him as “much better,” with the improvement owing to the MRT. However, one good thing was that the awful traffic, bad as it was, was predictable. Sometimes, if he could not get the current information in time for his spot, with methods that look old-school nowadays, such as making calls to traffic divisions of police departments and government traffic bureaus, or even listening to other radio stations, he would just go with what he knew. “At the end of the day, the place that always has a traffic jam will have a traffic jam. I just said the things in my mind, but I was always right.”

This was a time when there was no Google and the cellphone was not invented yet. The only thing people could rely on for setting a meeting was to show up at the agreed place and time, and hope their counterpart would do the same. “An hour late was actually really reasonable,” Berge remembers.

Tackling a Shifting Media Ecology

“I know who you are,” is a phrase Berge heard a lot after he spoke at social occasions when he was younger. It was the time when people had only a few options when it came to consuming media, and ICRT was the only choice for Western music, thus making Berge’s voice instantly recognizable.

Nowadays, with many more radio stations and other mediums to choose from, ICRT is not as dominant as it once was. Berge often goes to schools to give talks,



04

04. Besides broadcasting radio programs, Berge extends his job outside the studio such as holding music events *ICRT Battle of the Bands*, and broadcasting the winner's music on their station. (Photo/Tim Berge)

and university students in the audience rarely know what a radio is. If some of them do listen to the radio, they listen passively in places like their parents' car instead of turning on the radio themselves. "There are two trends of broadcasting audiences," Berge points out. "One is that the audiences have become fewer, the other is that the listeners are becoming older and older."

In this context, how to increase the exposure of the station and its content has become the issue Berge has had to tackle. With him at the helm, ICRT is always transforming according to new media trends. They now put their effort into extending the content of ICRT to other mediums such as apps, Podcasts, or even social media like Facebook and Instagram.

"Cross-platform, cross-promotions, cross-media," Berge indicates. Instead of seeing broadcasting as only one medium, he thinks people should see it as any kind of audio content, and they can penetrate into and circulate among all media fields. As such, work at the station goes way beyond simply recording the programs, extending to finding ways to promote content on other mediums or even holding live events outside the studio. Seeing this trend, Berge laughs, "Sometimes I think technology is not here to save us. Instead, people are serving these technologies. It is very scary."



05. Berge adores the green environment of Beitou, where he has long settled and enjoyed his life in Taipei. (Photo/Yi Wen Tsao)

05

Building Bridges with Language and Culture

Berge believes that the English-speaking station he is working for helps the audience become more connected to the world. Firstly, in Berge's opinion, listening to English radio is a really good way to improve one's English skills. "The words spoken on radio stations are really useful in real life," he says. Compared with other forms of media such as movies and TV series, not only are the issues discussed on the radio more connected to real life, but the words coming from the radio will be the ones that can be commonly applied to most daily occasions properly.

Secondly, Berge and his team create their content based on a decidedly Taiwanese angle, and they choose content that is related to Taiwanese people so that not only is the programming closer to the listeners' lives, but Taiwanese listeners can also be equipped with the ability to talk about Taiwanese issues in English.

Embracing an Ordinary but Healthy Lifestyle in Taipei

Since his first day working in Taipei, the green of Yangmingshan and Beitou captured Berge's heart, and he has lived in the area ever since, although the station he works at moved to another area more than two decades ago. "I really like Beitou, since it is close to the mountain, with a really good environment. The air is really clean. I can hear the birds singing beautifully and wake up surrounded by all the green plants outside every morning. These make me feel very comfortable," Berge explains.

Regarding gastronomy in Taipei, Berge's favorites are the small restaurants spread throughout the city, especially the ones he has visited for years and developed emotional links with. "Like if I want to eat beef noodles, I will go to Zhongzheng District's Taoyuan Street (桃源街) or Daan District's Yongkang Street (永康街), because there are good beef noodle restaurants to choose from. Or eat dumplings at Zhongzheng District's Dragon Inn Dumplings (龍門客棧)

餃子館)." He also expresses his sadness, as some of the old restaurants have closed in recent years. "I always feel it is a shame, since there are really a lot of delicious foods in Taiwan," Berge says.

About his typical day in Taipei, Berge smiles and says, "I am boring. I do the same thing every day." Every morning he drinks coffee and reads the news, then goes out jogging and exercising for around an hour before he goes to the radio station. It may look repetitive, but this healthy lifestyle is reflected in his energetic, youthful look. Upon seeing the surprised face of the interviewer when he reveals he is more than 60 years old, Berge laughs and shares his simple secret: "exercise."

Favorite Features of Taipei

The variety of cultures and the distinct but charming weather of the four seasons are the reasons why Berge continues to make Taipei his home. Compared with his cold hometown of Minneapolis and the year-round warmth of southern Taiwan, Taipei is preferable in this aspect, Berge finds. "It is super hot to wear a suit in southern Taiwan. I cannot stand it, but I like to wear a suit."

After living in Taipei for more than three decades and enjoying the local food, sometimes Berge still likes to treat himself to a wonderful Western meal or enjoy cooking at home. Fortunately, Taipei is convenient for both. As a media personality, Berge also enjoys watching movies or other performances, and Taipei is a city where a variety of art events, both local and international, are held. "Taipei is a more international city," he adds of how things have changed since he first arrived.

One unique point of Taipei compared to other cities, in Berge's mind, is that Taipei is an approachable city, friendly and welcoming to all kinds of visitors. "I think in cities such as Hong Kong, New York and London, if you have money it is a great place to live, but if you are poor then it is a totally different story. But the good thing about Taipei is that if you are not rich, you can still find a good, proper place to stay," Berge says. He believes Taiwan is a place that is more suitable for people to live, compared with other cosmopolitan centers mentioned earlier. No matter which social class people may belong to, they can all have a decent quality of life. ㊦

06. One of the Taiwanese foods that Berge likes to eat in Taipei is beef noodles. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)



06

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TRAVEL INFORMATION SERVICES

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

Information for Foreigners in Taiwan: 1990

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

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



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