



SUMMER 2023

Shimmering Summer

COVER STORY

Strolling Through the Taipei Summer Festival
in Dadaocheng

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EDITOR'S
INTRODUCTION

Taipei's Vibrant Summer Scene

Summer in Taipei may be scorching hot, but it is a season filled with an abundance of amazing activities.

This issue's cover story highlights the sensational "Taipei Summer Festival" held in the historic Dadaocheng area from July 1st to August 20th, where people can enjoy weekly themes, breathtaking fireworks, and enchanting illuminations along Dadaocheng Wharf for a romantic summer evening stroll.

In the City Scene section we also introduce a captivating destination — Maokong, suitable for a leisurely hike and a refreshing cup of tea to soothe your summer days.

Meanwhile, moving to the northern district of Tianmu, a favored spot among expatriates. We follow Dr. Ching-Chih Lee, an esteemed expert from the Department of Architecture at Shih Chien University, to unveil remarkable locales and the joyous Tianmu Beer Festival, a delight for beer enthusiasts.

Summer is also the time for the renowned Taipei Film Festival, a yearly extravaganza of the film industry's boundless creativity and remarkable achievements. To indulge in an immersive cinematic experience beyond the confines of the theater, we take you to explore shops filled with movie memorabilia and visit some iconic filming locations.

And don't miss out on the trip to the transformed Songshan Cultural and Creative Park, once the historic Songshan Tobacco Factory, to revel in its rich heritage. Additionally, our interview with Jean Chang, the visionary founder of Picupi and a passionate advocate of sustainable fashion, provides insights into environmental issues.

In Taipei, trending culinary topics always capture people's attention. We bring you three internationally recognized coffee shops, where expert baristas create exquisite brews to tantalize your taste buds. Also follow us to savor Taiwanese-Style Steak, a fusion dish that has become a local favorite and gained popularity among international visitors.

The open and welcoming city of Taipei also attracts expatriates seeking new thrills and adventures. We catch up with a Japanese curry restaurant manager/streetwear consultant who shares how Taipei offers the perfect blend of flexibility and freedom in the evolving realm of work.

Whether you're attending summer events, sampling local delicacies, or exploring different parts of Taipei, let this issue be your inspiration and guide to all that Taipei has to offer in the summer of 2023.



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ISSN 24137766

GPN 2010402342

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Tel (02) 2562-5005

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

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(Photo • Taiwan Scene)

TAIPEI Subscription Services, Postal Wire Transfer: 6 Issues
Beneficiary Account No.: 16630048
Beneficiary Name: Department of Information and Tourism,
Taipei City Government

Domestic	NT\$180	Regular Mail
Hong Kong/Macau	NT\$540	Regular Air Mail
Asia/Pacific Region	NT\$660	Regular Air Mail
Europe/US/Africa	NT\$900	Regular Air Mail



Online reading:
www.travel.taipei/en > Media > TAIPEI

Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

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中華郵政台北雜字
第 1377 號執照登記為雜誌交寄
Price: NT\$30



Strolling Through the Taipei Summer Festival in Dadaocheng

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1

Welcome to Taipei, a city that epitomizes the essence of a subtropical summer — hot, humid, and bursting with a festive atmosphere. Whether you're a local or a visitor, Taipei offers a plethora of activities and delights to suit your preferences.

Escape the scorching heat by embarking on an adventure to Maokong (貓空), where you can revel in the splendor of nature while hiking and savoring the tantalizing aroma of tea. Or immerse yourself in the captivating beauty of blooming hydrangeas at Yangmingshan (陽明山). At Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山 1914 文化創意產業園區), the juxtaposition of industrial buildings and majestic banyan trees creates a haven that seamlessly blends artistry and cool respite. Families will also find the Taipei Fine Arts

Museum Children's Art Education Center (台北市立美術館兒童藝術教育中心) to be an ideal destination.

Don't let the Taipei Summer Festival (大稻埕夏日節) slip through your fingers — it takes place from July 1st to August 20th at Yanping Riverside Park (延平河濱公園). It extends the celebration of Taipei Valentine's Day (大稻埕情人節) to an impressive 51 days. Prepare to be dazzled by high-altitude fireworks on weekends and enthralled by captivating displays and activities on Wednesday evenings, featuring low to mid-altitude aerial spectacles.

Our report not only showcases the dazzling fireworks, but also introduces the timeless attractions in Daadaocheng that cater to families, couples, and all who enjoy the thrill of exploration. Whether you yearn for cultural immersion,

historical insights, photo ops, or culinary adventures, this year's summer festival is an unmissable affair.

Dive into the Taipei Summer Festival, an unforgettable celebration that embodies the vibrant spirit of this dynamic city. Experience an extensive array of captivating events and activities spanning over an extraordinary period, ensuring a summer filled with excitement and lasting memories.

The Four Cornerstones of the Summer Festival

The Summer Festival this year is built upon four main pillars: the "8 Fireworks Shows," "Adorned Cruise Ships," "Riverside Lighting Extravaganza," and "Gastronomic Delights." These carefully curated experiences offer diverse perspectives of Taipei City, allowing attendees to witness mesmerizing fireworks against the urban night skyline, enjoy scenic views from the tranquil riverside, leisurely stroll to melodic tunes, and indulge in sumptuous authentic cuisine and delightful desserts.

Throughout the festival, a captivating fireworks display will grace the sky every Wednesday night at 8:30 pm, culminating in a grand finale on August 20th that promises to be a breathtaking spectacle. Visitors can also grasp the chance to partake in the "Taipei: Cycling Circle Trip (環騎台北)" challenge, embarking on a leisurely bike ride along the picturesque riverside, taking in the splendid vistas of Taipei. They can then make their way to the Dadaocheng Wharf Container Market (大稻埕碼頭貨櫃市集) to relish a variety of delectable cuisines, vibrant cocktails, and DJ performances, all while eagerly anticipating the weekly Wednesday night fireworks extravaganza.

You can also find here at the wharf a delightful array

of attractions, including whimsical coffee cup rides and enchanting carousels, inviting both children and adults to fully engage and enjoy a world of joy and laughter.

Moreover, the riverside will be bedecked with resplendent lighting installations, casting a romantic glow that enhances the scenic riverscape. Local businesses and travel agencies have joined forces to provide exclusive discounts and promotions, like Best



1. Splendid fireworks are set off over Dadaocheng in summer. (Photo • Ying-Rong Chen) | 2. Walking through Dihua Street, you can listen to music and drink coffee at Op.118.2 Cafe, or go to Li Ting Xiang or Lin's Wagashi to taste a variety of desserts. (Photo • Taiwan Scene)

Friends Tuesday, ensuring that the festival caters to individuals of all ages and backgrounds.

Dadaocheng — Where Taipei's Cultural Legacy Blooms

Like most major metropolitan areas, downtown Taipei is where the city finds its roots. It carries the legacy of a city's growth and development. Traces of the passage of time and a city's cultural depth can be seen in the historic downtown's street layouts, the residents' lifestyles, and architectural variations. It

is also typically a city's major tourist destination. For Taipei, Dadaocheng is the heart of the city's origin and a representation of the capital's rich cultural heritage. In Dadaocheng, visitors can find a concentration of wholesale food, Chinese medicine and fabric stores on Dihua Street (迪化街). This stretch of Taipei's historic downtown was the place for retailers and homemakers to find good bargains. Like many historic downtowns, modern cafes, trendy shops, restaurants, and bookstores have made Dihua Street their home over the past decade. The area's metamorphosis is transforming the street into a cultural and creative fusion of the old and the new, the traditional and the trendy. Today, Dihua Street is a place frequented by the younger generation and visitors. On a beautiful



summer day, the area blossoms with a youthful and energetic vibe.

Lovers' Summer Destination

“Dating” and “romance” are words often associated with Dihua Street. This is because Yue Lao (月老), the Matchmaking God of the Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple (台北霞海城隍廟) on Dihua Street, is famous for answering people’s prayers. The Matchmaking God’s reputation for fulfilling prayers for a good relationship and marriage is internationally known, especially among Japanese tourists.

Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple was founded in 1859 and has been part of the history of Dihua Street for more than 150 years. It is a historic site and the channel of hope and faith where store owners in Dadaocheng seek blessings and guidance. The temple is especially crowded on Western Valentine’s Day (February 14th), Chinese Valentine’s Day (July 7th on the lunar calendar), and the birthday of the Matchmaking God (August 15th on the lunar calendar). On these three days, believers flock to the temple to pray that the Matchmaking God will help them find the person on the other end of the “invisible red thread” with whom they are destined to be.

The Matchmaking God doesn’t just answer to singles. Couples often go to the temple to pray for a stable relationship and a healthy marriage. Traditionally, when couples get married, they bring a Chinese

3. Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple is an important historical site and also the spiritual center of Dadaocheng. (Photo • Zifilm Studio) | 4. When visiting the Dadaocheng Visitor Center, be sure to experience dressing up in retro costumes for a photo shoot. (Photo • Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government)



bride’s cake to thank the God. Every year, the City God Temple receives about 6,000 bride cakes, a reflection of how “efficiently” the Matchmaking God works.

A Vintage Photography Adventure

In recent years, a highly popular activity has emerged: embarking on an exploration of Dadaocheng while adorned in *qipao* (旗袍, cheongsam dress) or vintage suits, capturing vintage-style photos amidst the backdrop of its historic architecture. In addition to serving as a tourism information center that provides insight into the historic downtown’s history and attractions, the Dadaocheng Visitor Center (大稻埕遊客中心) also provides free *qipao* and suit rentals, a lesser-known service that visitors must take advantage of for an immersive Dadaocheng experience. On the second floor of the visitor center, a delightful

大和



稻埕



浮洲橋
12 Km

新竹站
80 Km



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特

請在河川區域停車民眾注意

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小客車	1,200元	1小時	指定區域	一、嚴禁在河川區域停車、堆積物及從事其他妨礙河道、妨礙水流通、妨礙河川景觀等行為。 二、車身及車輪沾有泥土者，禁止行駛河川區域（不得自行清理）。 三、車輛（含機車、自小客車、貨車、大貨車、拖吊車、工程車、農用車、履帶車、超大型車輛等）在河川區域停車時，應注意下列事項： （一）車輛應停放在指定之停車區域，不得隨意停放。 （二）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。 （三）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。 （四）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。
大客車	1,200元	1小時	指定區域	一、嚴禁在河川區域停車、堆積物及從事其他妨礙河道、妨礙水流通、妨礙河川景觀等行為。 二、車身及車輪沾有泥土者，禁止行駛河川區域（不得自行清理）。 三、車輛（含機車、自小客車、貨車、大貨車、拖吊車、工程車、農用車、履帶車、超大型車輛等）在河川區域停車時，應注意下列事項： （一）車輛應停放在指定之停車區域，不得隨意停放。 （二）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。 （三）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。 （四）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。
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小客車	2,400元	1小時	指定區域	一、嚴禁在河川區域停車、堆積物及從事其他妨礙河道、妨礙水流通、妨礙河川景觀等行為。 二、車身及車輪沾有泥土者，禁止行駛河川區域（不得自行清理）。 三、車輛（含機車、自小客車、貨車、大貨車、拖吊車、工程車、農用車、履帶車、超大型車輛等）在河川區域停車時，應注意下列事項： （一）車輛應停放在指定之停車區域，不得隨意停放。 （二）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。 （三）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。 （四）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。
大客車	4,800元	1小時	指定區域	一、嚴禁在河川區域停車、堆積物及從事其他妨礙河道、妨礙水流通、妨礙河川景觀等行為。 二、車身及車輪沾有泥土者，禁止行駛河川區域（不得自行清理）。 三、車輛（含機車、自小客車、貨車、大貨車、拖吊車、工程車、農用車、履帶車、超大型車輛等）在河川區域停車時，應注意下列事項： （一）車輛應停放在指定之停車區域，不得隨意停放。 （二）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。 （三）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。 （四）車輛應保持整潔，不得有泥土、油污等。

新北市政府水利局工程處編印 第九版

Visitors can enjoy the river scenery of Dadaocheng by bicycle, or by boat (Photo · Zifilm Studio)

opportunity awaits visitors with three captivating vintage sets. These sets include a clothing shop, a Chinese medicine shop, and a cozy tea shop. Stepping into these meticulously crafted scenes evokes a nostalgic glimpse into the everyday life of Dadaocheng's bygone era, and they serve as the perfect backdrop for amazing vintage photos. For this reason, the Dadaocheng Visitor Center is an attraction in its own right.

The Old Days Photography (小時代寫真館) is a popular portrait studio located on Dihua Street. The studio's main concept is to recreate the 1920s scene in Dadaocheng where fashionable women in Taipei gathered for tea in *qipaos*, Western-style dresses and kimonos.

From the outside, visitors can see a display of a wide range of vintage goods, including *qipaos* and tang suits, but a closer look reveals that it is a vintage photography studio. The studio's services include costume rental, professional makeup and styling, indoor/outdoor portraits, and photo printing. The studio aims to create a unique one-stop destination for all photography needs. Whether it's an individual portrait or a group photo with friends or family, each "artistic portrait" is tailored to create a unique and cherished memento of their time in Dadaocheng. As women gracefully don *qipao* dresses that blend seamlessly into the everyday tapestry of Dihua Street, Dadaocheng seems to be experiencing a fashion renaissance.

Foodie Heaven

Dihua Street is full of delicious cuisine. This charming streetscape seamlessly combines the charm of Minnan-style pedestrian arcades, elegant baroque architecture and contemporary Taiwanese buildings. This vibrant street offers a variety of tantalizing delicacies that will leave your taste buds in awe.

Along the section of Dihua Street south of Minsheng West Road (民生西路) where Yongle Market (永樂市場) is located, visitors can truly immerse themselves in the local community vibe. Traditional Taiwanese snacks such as fish ball soup, rice vermicelli soup, braised pork rice, congee and side dishes can all be found here. Grabbing a quick bite at an outdoor street food stall is a remembrance of the nostalgic life in Dadaocheng.

Apart from tasting traditional Taiwanese foods, we highly recommend that overseas visitors make their way to Yao de Herb (姚德和青草號) with over 60 years of history on Minle Street (民樂街) to sample traditional tea varieties that are uniquely different





from bubble tea. Taiwanese herbal tea, bitter tea, aloe vera tea and perotis tea are all traditional summer drinks that help quench the thirst.

Tucked away in an old apartment building on Lane 14 of Dihua Street, Yanhua 《Op.118.2》 (菸花) is a hidden haven for coffee lovers. The name of the coffee shop is inspired by Johannes Brahms' Intermezzo Op. 118 No. 2, a choice made by cafe owner Zoc Kao for its easy memorization by foreign visitors. Baristas at the coffee shop prioritize the flavor and seasonal qualities of the coffee beans, ensuring they can provide customers with personalized tastes that cater to their preferences through engaging interactions. To beat the summer heat in Taipei, this year Kao concocted a refreshing drink by combining golden soda and chilled Ethiopian coffee, infused with hints of lemon candy and chocolate. Kao also shares his comprehensive collection of vinyl records with customers, who are welcome to request their favorite songs and let the turntable work its magic. There are many more unique coffee shops in the same lane, making it the “coffee street” of Dadaocheng.

Desserts are also not to be missed when visiting Dadaocheng. Lin's Wagashi (滋養和菓子), a dessert shop founded in 1953 in Taipei, specializes in exquisitely crafted traditional Japanese sweets and is renowned for its authentic flavors. It is known for its monaka (mochi wafer sandwich), dorayaki (pancake dumpling), red bean daifuku (stuffed mochi) and pineapple cakes. It's worth noting that the strawberry daifuku is by far the shop's most popular item and always draws a crowd when it's in season. Lin's Wagashi offers seating in the pedestrian arcade in front of the store. Customers can enjoy a monaka and hot tea set for only NT\$50, a simple and classic way to sample Japanese wagashi.

Established in 1895, Li Ting Xiang (李亭香) is the place

to go for Taiwanese pastries. The pastry shop is known for creating a variety of pastries from mung bean powder, red bean paste, white bean paste, sticky rice, peanut powder and more. It uses butter instead of lard in its pastries, preserving the traditional craft while creating a more refreshing flavor. Among them, the “*pingan* turtle (平安龜, literally meaning “safe turtle” in Chinese) pastry” is a customer favorite. Turtles, known for their incredibly long lifespan, are often revered in Taiwanese culture as symbols of longevity and protection. Turtle-shaped cakes, stamped with peace and safety, carry the wish for a long and prosperous life to those who enjoy them.

Leisurely Waterfront Retreat

The history of Dadaocheng's development is closely linked to the opening of Dadaocheng Wharf on the Tamsui River. The Wharf, which is located at the No. 5 water gate (intersection of Huanhe North Road 環河北路 and Minsheng West Road), although no longer a commercial wharf, is a perfect place for recreational activities. The biking trail along the riverside stretches all the way north to Guandu (關渡) and Tamsui. Bike rentals are available from a YouBike station near Yongle Market, as well as from the Taipei Riverside Bike Rental Center (台北市河濱自行車租借站) at Dadaocheng Wharf. The biking trail from Dadaocheng to Tamsui stretches about 18 kilometers, and is one of the most popular weekend activities for locals and tourists alike.

Taipei River Cruise (台北市藍色水路) is another great way to get to know Dadaocheng. A mini-trip begins with a guided tour of the neighborhood's historic sites (e.g., tea shops located near the Dadaocheng Wharf, Ku Residence 辜宅, and Lee Chun-sheng Memorial Christ Presbyterian Church 李春生教會), followed by

a three-hour guided river cruise that takes visitors past Zhongxiao Bridge (忠孝橋), Shezidao Daotou Park (社子島島頭公園), Guandu Wharf (關渡碼頭), the mangrove habitat, and finally to Tamsui Wharf (淡水碼頭).

On this tour, visitors will learn about the historical sites in the areas, the eco-habitat, the history of the river, and Taipei's cultural heritage. It is a fun and educational activity for all ages. Special cruises such as night cruises and sunset cruises are offered when weather permits, making the river cruise an excellent summer attraction.

In addition, Dadaocheng Wharf is the perfect destination to witness a mesmerizing sunset. As the

sun sets, the Tamsui River reflects its brilliant hues, casting a golden glow over the bustling cityscape. As night falls, Pier 5 Container Market transforms into a modern version of a night market. Food vendors, including beer bars, grills, coffee shops and pizza joints, are all housed in individual containers. More than a dozen shops offer an eclectic collection of international cuisines. The tops of the containers serve as outdoor seating areas where visitors can take in the breathtaking nighttime waterfront views. A relaxing night spent by the river, accompanied by the cool summer breeze, gives Dadaocheng Wharf the reputation of being the top night out destination in Taipei.

5. HOSHING1947 (合興壹玖肆柒) boasts a rich 70-year history as a beloved traditional Chinese pastry shop on Dihua Street.

(Photo • Taiwan Scene) | 6. “Old and new” is a major feature of Dadaocheng. On the streets, you can see traditional old shops, and you can also pass by coffee shops and art shops with novel decorations. (Photo • Zifilm Studio) | 7. At Dadaocheng Wharf you can drink beer, enjoy barbecue, and experience the joys of summer. (Photo • Taiwan Scene)





Sanmao: A Quick Getaway in the City

Author

Louis Zhang, Hsuan Yin Zhang

Photographer

Taipei Zoo, Wayne Wang, Kerstin Hsu, Zhinan Temple, Valerie Hung, Geotechnical Engineering Office, Public Works Department, Taipei City Government, Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government

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Sanmao, which translates to “three cats (三貓)” in Chinese, refers to three prominent attractions in Taipei’s Wenshan District: Maokong (貓空), the Maokong Gondola (貓空纜車), and *Maoxiong* (貓熊, Panda) in Taipei Zoo (台北市立動物園). These attractions play a vital role in driving tourism and enhancing the local tourism industry.

Maokong is nestled in a serene and tranquil mountainous region within the city’s inner suburbs. It is renowned for its tea plantations and charming teahouses that offer not only a variety of teas but also delectable cuisine. Knowledgeable tea experts, known as tea sommeliers, delight visitors with intriguing tales about tea, guiding them in appreciating its visual appeal, fragrance, and taste. Moreover, tourists

have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the art of brewing tea, adding an element of interactive enjoyment. This experience has become a delightful surprise for many international travelers exploring Taipei.

Today, Maokong has become synonymous with Taiwan’s rich tea culture, captivating both locals and visitors with its picturesque trails and the opportunity to indulge in the renowned Muzha Tieguanyin tea.

Perched at the mountain’s base is the Taipei Zoo, a historic institution that spans over a century. This esteemed establishment is home to a diverse array of captivating wildlife, including the treasured Formosan black bears (台灣黑熊), majestic Formosan muntjacs

(台灣山羌), and the splendid Taiwan Blue Pheasant (藍腹鵲). They are endemic to Taiwan, and seen as ecological treasures that must be protected. Of course, we cannot neglect adorable pandas invariably surrounded by zoo visitors who inevitably stop and stare. Eternally popular, the pandas are without question the zoo's rock stars.

Whether you seek solace in the breathtaking panoramic views of Taipei City from the Maokong area, immersing yourself in the serene ambiance of verdant trees, or desire to explore the fascinating tea culture while savoring a variety of tea offerings, or even if you yearn to embark on a captivating journey through the expansive zoo, gaining profound insights into the habitats and lifestyles of diverse animal species, Maokong stands as an enchanting option for a brief city getaway.

The Maokong Gondola: Connecting the Taipei Zoo, Zhinan Temple, and Maokong

The Maokong Gondola deserves a great deal of credit for making this getaway possible. A swipe of your EasyCard (悠遊卡) is all it takes to board the gondola. It runs into the night (weekdays from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, weekends and holidays from 9:00 am to 10:00 pm), providing plenty of flexibility to plan your day. Visitors can spend the morning exploring the zoo, then head up to Maokong, delight at noon with tea-infused culinary artistry. In the afternoon to enjoy an invigorating walk along its trails. When evening



1. The panda, one of the “Sanmao” attractions, is an adorable and beloved star at Taipei Zoo. (Photo • Taipei Zoo) | 2. The Taipei Zoo is the largest and most diverse zoo in Taiwan. It serves as both a popular tourist destination and an educational institution. (Photo • Taipei Zoo)

approaches, it's the perfect time to taste some tea or appreciate some artistic performances. When nightfall blankets the city, take pleasure in the starlit view of Taipei's nightscape before leisurely descending the mountain on the Maokong Gondola — there's no need to rush.

While you're on the gondola, don't forget to look down at the tea farmers at work in the verdant tea fields below — seeing it with your own eyes brings an additional richness to the taste of fine tea. Along the way you can stop at Zhinan Temple Station (指南宮站) to tour the shrines, pay your respects to Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist deities, and pray for health and happiness. Folk legend has it that Lu Dongbin (呂洞賓), the temple's main deity and one of the Eight Immortals or *Baxian* (八仙) in Taoist, had his advances spurned by He Xiangnu (何仙姑), another of the Eight. Thereafter, the sight of happy lovers inspired such jealousy in him that he would force them to separate.

As a result, it's said that couples should not visit Zhinan Temple together. Of course, not everyone believes this story, but it does lend Zhinan Temple an additional air of mystery.

Enhancing Tourist Experience with the Sanmao Project

In order to help both domestic and international tourists get to know Maokong and immerse themselves in its local culture, the city of Taipei has brought together Maokong itself, the Maokong Gondola, and the Taipei Zoo to create the Sanmao Project (三貓計畫). The overall plan aims to make the entire environment of the Maokong area more visitor-friendly, with a thematic highlight that encompasses the whole experience. The city is also coordinating



3-4. During the day, you can ride the Maokong Gondola up the mountain with your family and friends, appreciating a panoramic view of the verdant tea plantations. (Photo • Wayne Wang, Kerstin Hsu)



with Sanmao partners such as Zhinan Temple, Muzha Zhongshun Temple (木柵忠順廟), Taipei's internationally renowned performance art troupe U-Theatre (優人神鼓), and Performing Arts School 36



(表演 36 房) to organize joint events and stimulate local development.

Last year saw the kickoff of the Sanmao Project 2.0, aimed at improving Maokong's facilities, including building up the area around the gondola line and adding a pedestrian footbridge. Services have also been made more tourist-friendly. For instance, QR codes have been placed at each gondola station — just scan them to discover nearby sights to see. Visiting Maokong has never been more convenient.



► Taipei Zoo



► Taipei Maokong Gondola



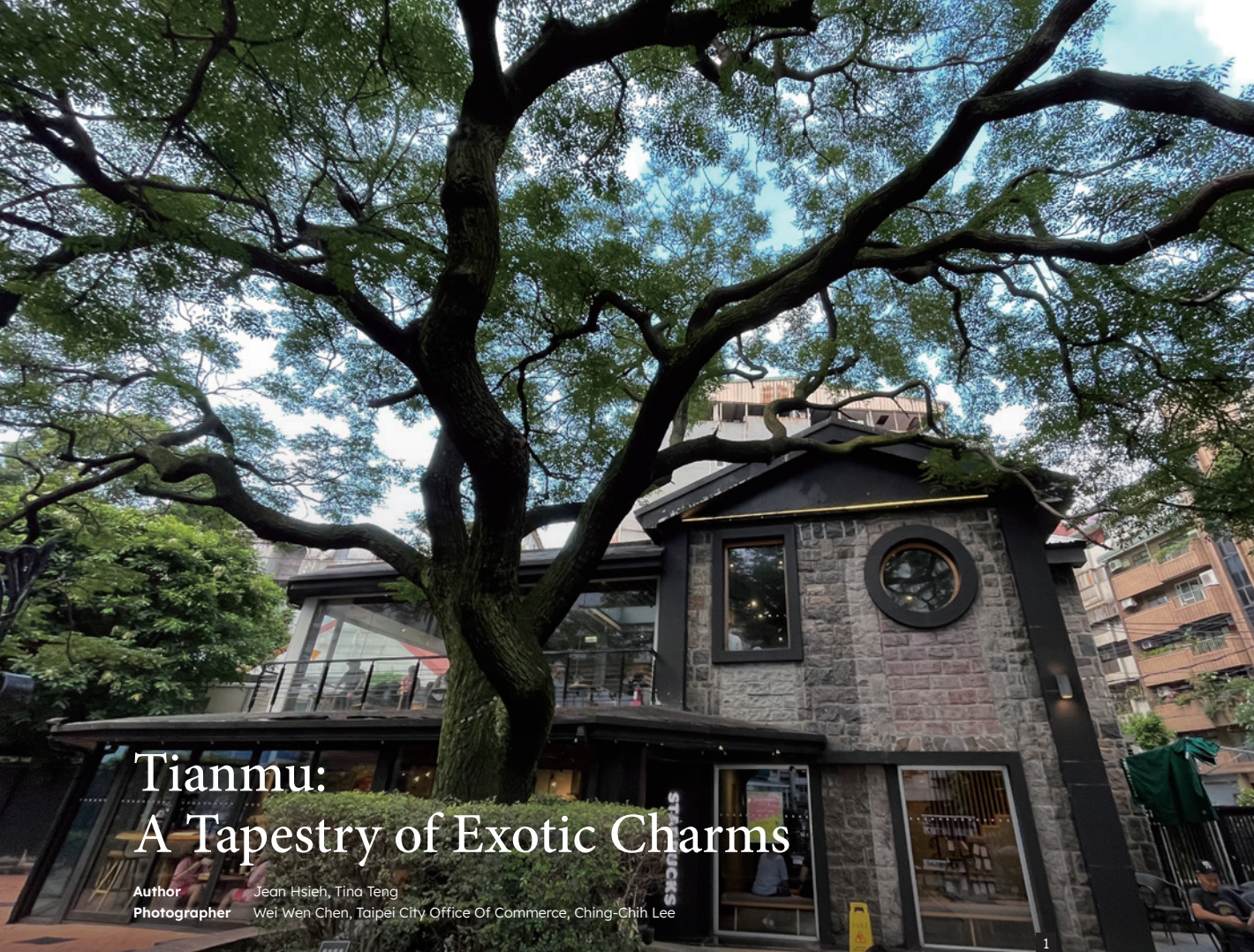
The Sanmao Project's Diverse Activities Bring Memories to Visitors

The Sanmao Project brings together Maokong's tourist attractions to provide a richer travel experience and make it easier for visitors to plan trips around a particular theme. For example, tourists interested in the environment can head to the zoo to learn more about ecology, get to know protected species and other species unique to the Sanmao area, and take their first steps toward habitat conservation.

Meanwhile, those who like flowers can visit in June, when a sea of Persian chrysanthemums bursts into full bloom; walking the Camphor Trail (樟樹步道) and viewing the flowers along the way makes for a wonderfully romantic summer experience. Furthermore, Taipei City Government (台北市政府) has integrated local characteristics, natural resources, culture and history to plan a series of events titled "Maokong Quiet Walks (走靜貓空)," such as the Taipei Maokong Tea Ceremony (台北貓空茶會) and Summer Saturday Nights (動物夏夏叫) at the Taipei Zoo. These widely varied activities make Maokong's tea-scented mountain landscape as well as the nearby zoo a destination well worth revisiting often.

5. Participants of the Maokong Tea Ceremony can taste handcrafted desserts infused with tea flavors, experiencing a tea plantation-style afternoon tea. (Photo • Department of Information and Tourism, Taipei City Government) | **6.** When you alight at the "Zhinan Temple Station" of the Maokong Gondola, you can visit the magnificent Zhinan Temple to seek the blessings of the gods. (Photo • Zhinan Temple) | **7.** The Camphor Trail has Cosmos sulphureus in full bloom in June. (Photo • Geotechnical Engineering Office, Public Works Department, Taipei City Government)





Tianmu: A Tapestry of Exotic Charms

Author Jean Hsieh, Tina Teng
Photographer Wei Wen Chen, Taipei City Office Of Commerce, Ching-Chih Lee

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Tianmu (天母), a neighborhood located in Shilin District of northern Taipei, is known as one of the city's earliest-expatriate enclaves. Home to the Taipei American School and the Taipei Japanese School, the neighborhood boasts an array of international cultures, unique shops, and exotic restaurants that contribute to its distinct community ambiance.

In this article, we have the pleasure of being accompanied by Ching-Chih Lee (李清志), a renowned author and associate professor from the Department of Architecture at Shih Chien University (實踐大學建築設計學系). As a lifelong native of Tianmu, Lee will serve as our guide, unveiling the unique lifestyle and captivating spaces that define this vibrant neighborhood.

Memories of an American Community

In his recently work, *Ojisan on the Road*, Lee recounts a remarkable tale of a road trip he embarked on with a school friend, exploring the breathtaking coastline of Taiwan. Driving an off-road Suzuki Jimny and navigating using an old-fashioned paper map, they embraced the spirit of cross-country travel reminiscent of the legendary U.S. highway network, Route 66.

The coastal road trip resonates with his long-time “American” lifestyle. Playfully referring to himself as a Tianmu “veteran”, he fondly recalls his upbringings in the neighborhood, as his father taught at Taipei

American School. In his childhood days, Tianmu exuded an unmistakable ambiance of an American town, with both the aforementioned international schools attracting a diverse community of expatriates from around the world.

Lee's family resided in a single-family home, complete with a chimney, and their yard connected with those of their neighbors. As he recalls, American Holidays were celebrated in Tianmu, with white pines adorning homes as Christmas trees. Even today, Tianmu continues to embrace Western holiday traditions. For instance, on Halloween, families still prepare rarely seen candies from abroad in preparation for the trick-or-treaters that roam the streets.

1. The building is the former residence of Tianmu, now housing a Starbucks on Tianyu Street. (photo • Ching-Chih Lee) |
2. Joe's Grill, the first beer pub in Tianmu founded by the legendary Joe, was a popular choice among Americans.

Wandering Through Tianmu

When it comes to weather, Lee says that Tianmu does not receive much rainfall. It is said that in the 1950s, when the U.S. military was choosing a location for its base and military housing, they took into account factors such as wind patterns and humidity. Based on the research conducted by the Central Weather Bureau (交通部中央氣象局), Tianmu's location on a sunny slope made it an ideal candidate that met the U.S. military's criteria.

The former U.S. military housing forms the main street of Tianmu, running along the slope of Section 7 of Zhongshan North Road (中山北路七段). This crowded street is lined with a cluster of shops, and George Shoes (喬治皮鞋), with its over 50 years of history, stands prominently as a recognizable presence. Another notable landmark on the same slope is the





Mother of God Church (天母天主堂), embodying the influence of foreign religions in Taiwan. As visitors venture into the extended alleys branching off the main road, they will encounter the charming single-family homes that contribute to Tianmu's distinctive ambiance, reminiscent of a small American town. As one ascends the slope of Section 7 of Zhongshan North Road, an elegant and tranquil atmosphere can be noticed.

To truly experience the serene seclusion of Tianmu, Lee suggests taking a leisurely walk downhill from Tianmu Park (天母公園), following the riverside promenade, and eventually reaching Donghe (東和) and Tianhe (天和) Parks. The parks' lush greenery evokes a sense of forested retreats, providing a sanctuary away from the fast-paced urban life.



Joe's Grill

Joe's Grill, a renowned beer pub and grill located on Section 7 of Zhongshan North Road, is temporarily closed. However, it's worth noting that the building that houses the beer bar was built by the legendary owner himself. The building's peculiar yet fascinating facade is worth a visit in and of itself.

In the old days, when Tianmu had a sizable expatriate community, Joe — whose full name has faded into obscurity — started an auto repair shop that specializes in American vehicles. However, his restless spirit led him to embark on a new venture: introducing Tianmu's first beer pub, aptly named Joe's Grill. The restaurant, conveniently across the street from his shop, was such a hit with American expatriates that later in the 1980s, a slew of beer pubs opened along the main street and stretched all the way to Zhongcheng Road (忠

誠路). According to Lee, during his childhood, it was common to see people waving to hitch a ride with oncoming cars on Zhongcheng Road, much like what's depicted on American television.

Starbucks on Tianyu Street

The iconic building on Tianyu Street (天玉街) that currently houses Starbucks was once home to the famous American ice cream brand Haagen-Dazs, a beloved establishment that served as a community cornerstone for over two decades. Repurposed from a traditional Tianmu single-family home, the building now boasts breathtaking floor-to-ceiling windows and expansive outdoor seating. A few decades ago, most expatriate families in Tianmu lived in one or two-story single-family homes with large yards. Today, the neighborhood still retains its nostalgic charm through



its unique residential architecture.

The Starbucks building on Tianyu Street is a standing testament that perfectly preserves the essence of the past. As visitors turn onto Tianyu Street from the roundabout at Section 7, they are greeted by a tranquil walkway adorned with trees and western-style homes, reminiscent of the picturesque streets of San Francisco.



Mother of God Church

Constructed in the 1960s, the Mother of God Church on the main street served as a place of worship for numerous foreign parishioners. The church would ring its bell every morning at 8:00 am as a gentle reminder for the community to gather for worship. Given the significant American population in the area at the time, a multitude of stores specializing in the sale of imported everyday goods from the U.S. could be found on the main street. Today, the church's foreign architecture serves as a quiet reminder of the street's 1960s small-town vibe.

Wenism Cafe

Lee's appreciation for coffee extends beyond its taste; he embraces it as a gateway to solitude. Rather than seeking the finest brew, he views ordering a cup of coffee as a cherished moment for writing or simply relishing solitude.

As for grabbing a great cup of coffee, Lee highly recommends Wenism Cafe (走馬咖). The cafe occupies the ground floor of an intriguing building designed by Lee's architect friend, Jay Chiu. Playfully dubbed

3. A native of Tianmu, Ching-Chih Lee has spent his entire life in this culturally diverse neighborhood. | **4.** Lee's recommended walking route starts from Tianmu Park, following the riverside promenade downhill, leading to a forest retreat with abundant green trees. | **5.** Wenism Cafe in Tianmu bridges the empty lot and the park with a casual ambiance. | **6.** Until now, there are still many exotic Western houses remained in Tianmu.

“the LV of illegal constructions” by Chiu, the building embodies a fusion of unconventional elements such as pedestrian arcades, and sheet metal houses. Chiu ingeniously blends these eccentric features to create a truly distinctive space. Situated alongside a spacious open area and several nearby parks, the cafe offers

patrons the opportunity to savor their favorite brew in cozy seating areas seamlessly integrated with the natural surroundings. The serene and invigorating ambiance breathes new life into this corner of the neighborhood.

2023 TIANMU BEER FESTIVAL



(Photo • Taipei City Office Of Commerce)

As mentioned earlier Tianmu experienced a wave of beer pubs in the 1980s that swept through the neighborhood. Reflecting the community's enduring love for a good brew, the 2023 Tianmu Beer Festival (2023 天母啤酒節) serves as a vibrant continuation of this culture.

Taking place from June 21st to July 23rd in Tianmu Sports Park (天母運動公園), the festival is a collaborative effort between the Tianmu Marketplace (天母商圈), local exotic eateries, department stores, and a wide array of beer

brands. The festival reignites Tianmu's beer fever with themed marketplaces, stage performances, fun photo props, and exclusive limited-edition beers crafted specifically for the event.

Bringing new energy to the Tianmu Marketplace, the festival takes visitors back to the nostalgic days when the streets were alive with bustling beer pubs where patrons could enjoy a refreshing drink outdoors. After all, it's always five o'clock somewhere.





The Grand Hotel is an early international hotel in Taipei City, boasting a magnificent and glamorous architectural style and facilities.
(Photo • The Grand Hotel)



Finding Taipei in Film History

Author

Jenna Lynn Cody

Photographer

Taiwan Scene, Chia Chia Record, A Really Happy Film Co., Ltd., Taipei Guest House, The Grand Hotel

Held every summer since 1998, the Taipei Film Festival (台北電影節) is one of the most important such gatherings in Asia, attracting film industry professionals and enthusiasts from across Asia and the world. Although the fest has an international competition section for new filmmakers submitting their first or second feature films, its primary focus is domestic, exclusively aimed at Taiwanese filmmakers, showcasing the work of local filmmaking talent as well as nurturing Taiwanese film innovation through a series of prizes, including an NT\$1,000,000 grand prize.

The Taipei Film Festival plays a pivotal role in advancing Taiwanese cinema, fostering audience growth, and deepening public engagement with the art of film. Alongside film screenings and prestigious

awards, the festival orchestrates a diverse range of film-related activities. Its substantial contributions to the local film industry have positioned it as the first film festival in Taiwan to secure funding from the city government. In 2007, it cemented its presence by establishing a permanent office within the Taipei Culture Foundation (台北市文化基金會).

It's no exaggeration to say that for those in the know, Taipei goes "mad for films" for a few weeks in early summer every year. Beyond attending a screening or related activity, there are many ways to delve into the spirit of the Taipei Film Festival. From a poster store where just about any movie poster can be sourced to a record store with a sizable selection of unusual film soundtracks, as well as grand buildings featured

in Taiwanese films, there are numerous places for cinephiles to discover in the city of Taipei.

Treasures of Film

Super Poster Co. 色眯眯海報龍

Down a quiet lane off Anhe Road (安和路) in the centrally-located Daan District, Super Poster Co.'s unassuming storefront belies a treasure trove inside. The shop, also called "Se Mi Mi Poster Dragon," was founded in 1996 and operated in NTU-Gongguan Shopping District (台大公館商圈) near National Taiwan University (國立台灣大學) for over twenty years. The business, which moved to its current location seven years ago, is not only the most comprehensive but also the largest poster store in Taiwan.

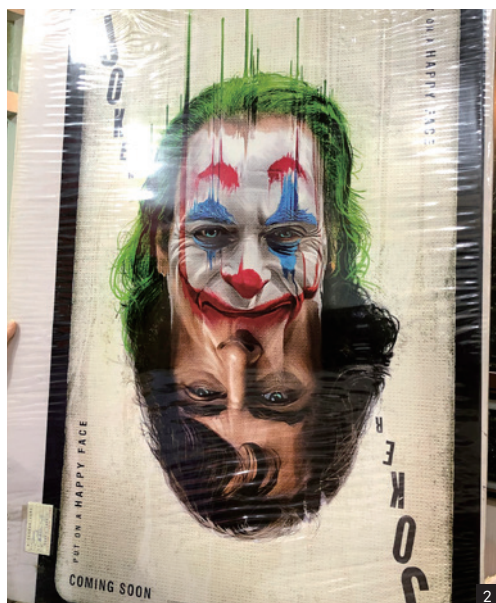
For film buffs, artwork associated with a feature matters — and that includes posters. That's where

Super Poster Co. truly shines. Movie and television posters take up the majority of their inventory by far. These include fairly recent releases, including *Avatar: The Way of Water*, *Star Wars: Andor* and just about any Marvel Cinematic Universe poster you might want. Others are more vintage, from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* to *Something's Gotta Give*. Smaller-size stills from classic Disney animated features can be found in containers by the door, along with other non-film related prints.

Other poster art on sale at Super Poster Co. includes prints from well-known painters such as Kandinsky and Chagall, botanical prints and the occasional map. Vintage postcards of '90s pop stars fill out a rotating rack in the center of the shop. They also do framing and digital printing, so film enthusiasts can have their rare or unique frames mounted there as well. As the majority of their inventory is imported, if they don't have a poster you're looking for, they can order it.



► Check the official website of Taipei Film Festival



1. This poster store, packed with posters and postcards featuring movie stills, is where you can find the merchandise you desire. (Photo • Taiwan Scene) | 2. The movie poster for *Titanic* once caused a buying frenzy, and currently, the most expensive one in the store is the poster for the movie *Joker*. (Photo • Taiwan Scene)

Super Poster Co. 色眯眯海報龍

ADD 16, Ln. 78, Sec. 1, Anhe Rd., Daan Dist.
HOURS 12:30pm - 7:00pm (Monday to Friday)
12:30pm - 6:00pm (Saturdays)
(Closed on Sundays)



Chia Chia Record 佳佳唱片行

Any film enthusiast will tell you that soundtracks are a vital part of crafting a thoughtful and successful feature. At the first mention of many well-known films, the first thing that comes to mind is the iconic theme. For others, the mood created by subtle use of the score plays a crucial role in scene-setting.

One of the best places in Taipei to shop for film soundtracks, among other music, is Chia Chia Record, a small store concealed in a nondescript building on Zhonghua Road (中華路). Founded in 1976, it is one of the oldest continuously operating record stores in Taipei, with a second branch on Hankou Street (漢口街), just a short walk away near Taipei Main Station (台北車站). The Zhonghua branch is situated at the edge of the Ximending (西門町) Pedestrian Area. You'll know you've found the right building by the music posters leading up the stairs, or keep an eye out for a small black cat that lives in the shop and regularly spends time in the stairwell or the building entrance.

Chia Chia Record is the go-to destination for music and film enthusiasts seeking a tangible experience in the digital music era. Their extensive collection focuses on film-related works, including captivating soundtracks, CDs, vinyl records, DVDs, and Blu-ray Discs (BD).

Whether you have a taste for Hollywood blockbusters, European art cinema, or the mesmerizing creations from Japan and Korea, as well as TV series and anime, Chia Chia Record caters to a diverse range of preferences. Noteworthy special editions, like the acclaimed *Director's Cut* DVD by Ang Lee (李安) and the iconic *Tokyo Story* by Yasujiro Ozu, add to their appeal. Moreover, the store's unwavering commitment to customer satisfaction ensures that if a desired item is not available in-store, their dedicated team will gladly assist in ordering it.

For enthusiasts of older films on DVD and film soundtracks, Chia Chia Record offers a delightful selection. From the Hong Kong action thriller film *Infernal Affairs* soundtrack on vinyl to classics like *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew* on DVD, the collection is both extensive and diverse. Spanning the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Zhonghua store, the soundtracks are thoughtfully spread out, allowing visitors to explore at their own pace. So take your time and immerse yourself in the vast array of options available.

Chia Chia Record - Zhonghua 佳佳中華店

ADD 2F-3F, 110, Sec. 1, Zhonghua Rd.,
Wanhua Dist.

HOURS 10:30am - 10:30pm

Chia Chia Record - Hankou 佳佳漢口店

ADD B1, 3, Sec. 1, Hankou St.,
Zhongzheng Dist.

HOURS 10:00am - 10:00pm

Two Taipei Film Scenes

Taipei Guest House

臺北賓館／*Scams giving* 《詐團圓》

Most people passing through downtown Taipei only ever see the ornate, French Mansard-style roof of the Taipei Guest House. Hidden behind high walls a short walk from the Presidential Office (總統府), the 123-year-old mansion has the reputation of a secret garden or hidden palace in Taipei. That's because it's difficult to visit. Weekend open houses are rare, with just fifteen scheduled for all of 2023.

That didn't stop director Yeh Tien-lun (葉天倫) from filming there, however. Yeh's 2023 film *Scams giving* includes lavish scenes from inside the guest house, including the kitchen, lobby and staircase. The

setting is meant to evoke the lives of a large, wealthy Taiwanese family as a young man claiming to be a long-lost grandson is brought to Taiwan to meet his supposed kin. However, as the plot unfolds, his true identity is revealed, exposing him as someone entirely different from his initial claims.



3. Chia Chia Record is an unwavering old record store in Taipei, where you can find music of any genre you desire. (Photo • Chia Chia Record) | 4. The lobby of the Taipei Guest House, one of the movie's filming locations. (Photo • A Really Happy Film Co., Ltd.) | 5. The second floor of Taipei Guest House is also one of the movie's shooting locations and appears even more magnificent in the backdrop of the night. (Photo • A Really Happy Film Co., Ltd.)

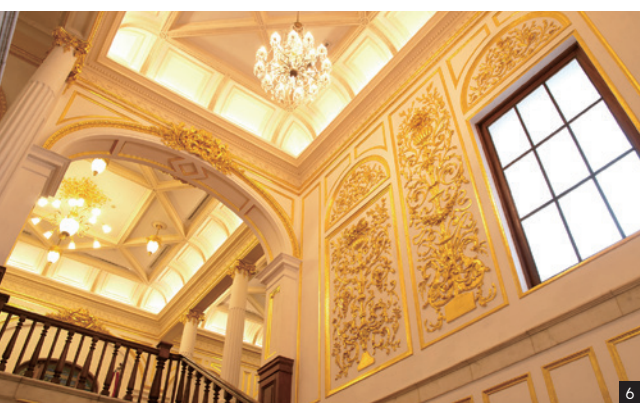
For Taiwanese cinephiles lucky enough to visit the Taipei Guest House, be sure to check out the parts of the property where filming took place. But don't stop there. There is a lot of history to experience on the grounds. Completed in 1901 and rebuilt in 1911, the historic building was designed by Japanese architects Dōgo Fukuda and Ichiro Nomura. The Treaty of Taipei was signed here in 1952. Before that, Emperor Hirohito stayed at the Taipei Guest House when he visited Taiwan.

Taipei Guest House 臺北賓館

ADD 1, Ketagalan Blvd., Zhongzheng Dist.

HOURS To obtain the specific dates of open house for the Taipei Guest House, please refer to the Open House Schedule on Weekends and Holidays section of the official website.

MUST-SEE Lobby, Staircase



6. The interior decoration of Taipei Guest House is rich and exquisite, which is why the production crew chose it as the mansion of a wealthy family in the movie. (Photo • Taipei Guest House) | 7. The lobby of the Grand Hotel served as a filming location for the movie *Yi Yi*. (Photo • The Grand Hotel)

The Grand Hotel

圓山大飯店／*Yi Yi* 《一一》

The Grand Hotel is a landmark on the Taipei skyline, perched above the city on a hill near MRT Jiantan Station (捷運劍潭站). It was built between 1952 and 1973 to accommodate visiting diplomats, as Taipei lacked high-end hotels at the time (the Taipei Guest House above was operated as more of a government building). Throughout its history, the Grand Hotel has hosted more than 2,000 dignitaries, diplomats, and celebrities from around the world. Esteemed guests have included former US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, South Korean President Park Chung-hee, Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato, and Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, among many others.

The brilliant red-pillared exterior is visible from many vantage points in Taipei, especially along the Keelung River (基隆河). The location itself is captivating, and was once the site of the Japanese-era Taiwan Grand Shrine.

As Taiwan's first five-star hotel, the Grand Hotel stands as a majestic 14-story building in the style of a Chinese palace. With its red pillars, golden roof tiles, and splendid beam columns, it exudes a sense of luxury and elegance, representing the beauty of Eastern architectural artistry. The halls and spaces are adorned with classical paintings, such as the renowned *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*, and exquisite reliefs. Naturally, the Grand Hotel has become a preferred filming location for many movies, including Ang Lee's *Eat Drink Man Woman* (《飲食男女》), where its magnificent red hall served as an iconic backdrop in the film's poster for *Yi Yi*.

Edward Yang's (楊德昌) seminal film *Yi Yi* won international acclaim when it was released in 2000.

It would also be his final cinematic creation, as the famed director's life was cut short by colon cancer in 2007. *Yi Yi* won the Best Director award at Cannes that year, making Yang become the first Taiwanese director to receive this honor. It not only garnered Yang's first American distribution deal, but is considered one of the best films of the 21st century.

The film *Yi Yi* begins with a grand wedding held at the Grand Hotel, showcasing its beautifully decorated interior in a traditional Chinese style. The vibrant colors of painted lintels and fiery red columns create a captivating setting as the characters prepare for a traditional Taiwanese reception. The story unfolds organically and contemplatively, with unexpected

appearances of both the groom and his brother-in-law's ex-girlfriends during the wedding, followed by a dramatic turn when the family matriarch suffers a stroke. This pivotal sequence at the Grand Hotel is undoubtedly an iconic moment in Taiwanese cinema.

The Grand Hotel 圓山大飯店

ADD 1, Sec. 4, Zhongshan N. Rd.,
Zhongshan Dist.

MUST-SEE Red-Pillared Exterior,
Grand Hall, Artistic Interiors





From Factory to Focal Point: Taipei's Songshan Cultural and Creative Park

Author

Kai Ping Fang

Photographer

Kai Ping Fang, Te Fan Wang

1

In the heart of Taipei lies a hidden gem of much cultural cache, the Songshan Cultural and Creative Park (松山文創園區). Once a bustling tobacco factory, this historic site has been transformed into a thriving hub for creativity, innovation, and artistic expression. The park's conversion, while preserving its industrial heritage, has attracted artists, designers, and entrepreneurs to its unique spaces, breathing new life into the historical landmark.

The Songshan Cultural and Creative Park is more than just a cultural center; it is an embodiment of Taiwan's creative spirit and dedication to preserving its rich history. The park's location is steeped in significance, surrounded by some of Taipei's most historic and culturally remarkable sites. With convenient

transportation options, visitors to the park can easily explore the nearby scenic spots and landmarks, including National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (國父紀念館), the iconic Taipei 101 skyscraper, Xiangshan (象山, Elephant Mountain) hiking trail, and Raohe Night Market (饒河夜市). This fusion of history and innovation has made Songshan Cultural and Creative Park a must-see destination for locals and tourists alike.

To embark on the journey through the story of the Songshan Cultural and Creative Park, we were accompanied by our guide for the day, Chang Cheng Bei (張正北), a retired veteran who was introduced to the world of guiding by a friend. Intrigued by the craft, Chang began researching and creating his own



presentations, which led to him developing a set of guiding principles and volunteering as a guide in multiple areas. His passion for cultural exploration has earned him numerous accolades, including the prestigious National Outstanding Cultural Volunteer Bronze Award (全國績優文化志工銅質獎) from the Ministry of Culture (文化部) and the Diamond Award for Excellent Volunteer (優良志工金鑽獎) from the Taipei City Government (台北市政府). We were fortunate to have him as our guide as he introduced us to the past and present of this momentous park.

From Tobacco Factory to Creative Hub

Chang began the tour with the history of the Songshan Cultural and Creative Park, or formerly known as the Songshan Tobacco Plant (松山菸廠). The plant, built in 1937 during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945), was the largest tobacco processing

center in Taiwan until its closure in 1998. The plant combined Western and Japanese styles, using the latest technology and focusing on worker hygiene and safety. After Taiwan's retrocession to the Republic of China, the plant became a state-run enterprise until the 1980s, when it faced financial difficulties due to changing attitudes towards smoking. The factory was eventually closed in 1998 and repurposed for cultural and creative industries, opening to the public in 2011.

The architectural style of the factory belongs to the "early Japanese modernism" school of the "secessionist movement." It features horizontal sight lines, simple and elegant forms, and specially-customized building materials such as bricks, tiles, and copper nails. The Songshan Tobacco Plant's workmanship is exquisite, and serves as a pioneer and model of modern industrial factories in Taiwan.

Despite the factory's eventual closure due to new urban planning, shifts in tobacco industry landscape,

awareness to the harmful effects of smoking, and lack of competitiveness, its historical significance remains, and it is now preserved as a cultural and creative hub for the public to enjoy.

Tobacco Leaves to Cigarettes

The processing of cigarettes at the Songshan Tobacco Plant, according to Chang, can be categorized into five departments: box-making, leaf processing, cutting, rolling, and packaging. As soon as the tobacco leaves were transported on site, they would move along the outer buildings on the north, east, and south of the plant where the departments were located.

Chang provided a detailed explanation of the cigarette production process, involving various essential steps like leaf acquisition, flue-curing, preliminary processing, and transportation to the factory. The manufacturing process varied throughout history, with the Japanese colonial period including leaf sorting, cutting, cigarette rolling, drying, packaging, and storage. In contemporary production, the tobacco leaves are initially revealed in their natural form from the raw material warehouse. They undergo conditioning, including cutting, moistening, deveining, and maturing in tobacco barrels to achieve desired qualities. Finally, fully matured leaves are transported to the cigarette.

“The economic value of the Songshan Tobacco Plant to both the Japanese and Taiwanese governments was significant,” Chang explained further. During the Japanese era, the plant supplied cigarettes to soldiers and civilians alike. After Taiwan was returned to R.O.C. control, the plant played a vital role in the economic development of Taiwan by creating jobs, providing a source of income for the Taiwanese people, and



generating revenue for the government. Despite the increasing scrutiny on the tobacco industry, the Songshan Tobacco Plant's legacy remains significant in the history of Taiwan's industrial development.

1. The former Songshan Tobacco Plant has infused a fresh creative energy and serves as a model for cultural and creative parks. | 2. Chang Cheng Bei, the tour volunteer, is well acquainted with the past and present of the Songshan Tobacco Plant. | 3. The scenery created by the light and shadows in the corridor is also one of the highlights in East Tobacco Factory (東向製菸工廠). (Photo • Te Fan Wang)

A Community Within a Factory

During its peak years, the Songshan Tobacco Plant was not just a factory, but a community. To attract and retain workers, the company provided a range of comprehensive services, including housing, childcare, medical care, a bathhouse, a canteen, and more. The plant had a large residential area on its grounds, consisting of dormitories and apartments, which were assigned to unmarried and married employees respectively. One of the most important services provided by the company was childcare, which offered not only a safe and secure environment for children, but also educational and recreational activities to stimulate their development. The company also provided a variety of medical services, including a medical clinic, which treated everything from minor illnesses and injuries to more serious conditions. In addition, the company organized cultural and

recreational activities to foster a sense of community and camaraderie among the workers.

“These comprehensive services provided by the Songshan Tobacco Plant were not only beneficial to the workers, but also to the company and the government,” Chang pointed out as we walked through the park, observing the rooms that the services were provided in. By providing housing, childcare, and healthcare, the company was able to attract and retain a stable workforce, which was essential for its continued growth and success. Moreover, these services served as a demonstration of the company's commitment to the well-being of its employees and the community, which helped to build goodwill and trust among consumers and regulators. This was particularly important in the tobacco industry, which was and still is subject to strict regulations and scrutiny.



4. The Baroque garden within the park, with its beautiful and symmetrical design, is a must-visit attraction.

The Unique Little Temple of the Earth Goddess

In Taiwan, the temples dedicated to the Earth God or Tudi Gong (土地公), a widely revered deity around the country, are an integral part of the religious and cultural landscape. Prayers to this god, who is sometimes accompanied by his consort, the Earth Goddess or Tudi Po (土地婆), are offered all across the island in the interest of ensuring safety and security. However, it is a rare occurrence to encounter a temple dedicated solely to the Earth Goddess, as is the case with the temple situated under an aged banyan tree within Songshan Cultural and Creative Park.

Despite the significance of this temple, its origins and purpose remain shrouded in mystery. “No one knows when the temple was built or why it was built. For all we know, it may have been constructed to serve the needs of the female employees, who were substantially higher than their male counterparts,” Chang speculated. “After all, it was thought that a goddess could better understand and empathize with their unique challenges and experiences.”



The Fusion of Heritage and Innovation

The Songshan Cultural and Creative Park is an impressive achievement in preserving history and promoting creativity. For example, the Songyan Creative Hub (松菸創作者工廠), established on the second floor of the South Tobacco Factory (南向製菸工廠), aims to support creators and their originality in the market. The hub provides a space for creative interaction, resource chain, event curation, and international exchange to strengthen competitiveness and create a cultural creative cluster, which can be seen around the entire park.

Managing a park with such historical and cultural significance requires balancing old and new, business and culture, innovation and preservation, demanding vision, communication, and planning all together. The park's management of vacant spaces exemplifies this delicate balance, transforming these spaces into cafes, a marketplace, and exhibitions.

For example, the boiler room is now occupied by Cama Coffee Roasters (豆留文青), the examination room where employees were bodychecked prior to leaving the premise is now the dining area of Pug Pug Food Truck (巴巴餐車), and Taiwan Design Museum (台灣設計館) in the main building that holds exhibitions such as YODEX, Young Designers' Exhibition (新一代設計展).

What's worth mentioning is that the infant daycare center, originally slated for demolition and the land it occupied repurposed, has been preserved and relocated near the ecological pond in the park, safeguarding its unique traditional Japanese architecture and construction materials, in particular the wooden planks and foundational bricks.

"The daycare center took in the employees' children



More than Meets the Eye

Taipei is a city of vibrant culture and history, and the Songshan Cultural and Creative Park embodies this spirit perfectly. Once a historic site, the park has transformed into a modern creative hub, with a unique blend of the old and the new.

As we bid farewell to Chang, expressing gratitude for his captivating guidance, the century-old architecture looms proudly in the heart of one of the city's busiest districts, basking in the soft glow of the evening dusk. Surely, with the upcoming opening of the Taipei Dome (台北大巨蛋), a large multi-purpose stadium with shopping malls, movie theaters, hotels and offices, and the National Railway Museum (國家鐵道博物館) situated at the northeast of the park that is current under preparation, aiming to revitalize the out-of-use railway station as the living encyclopedia of Taiwan's railway history, the park is poised to become even more of an inspiring landmark in the city.

With proper planning and management, as well as the support of Taipei City, inspiring young entrepreneurs and the local residents, the park has the potential to become a model for other parks in the country, and an exemplar of a green and prosperous lifestyle. As Taipei continues to grow and evolve, the Songshan Cultural and Creative Park will undoubtedly play a vital role in promoting Taiwan's local consciousness, creative industries, and environmental culture.



under the age of 2, taking good care of them and feeding them while their mothers worked in the plant," Chang said. "It is fortunate that it was preserved in the way it is today. Whoever did it made the right call."

The center is currently occupied by Guang Yi Cafe (光一), serving exotic cuisines, salads and brunches made from fresh ingredients, and with its display taking full advantage of the architecture. It serves as a stellar example of the park's mindfulness when it comes to bridging preservation and innovation.

5. The little Temple of the Tudi Po, the Earth Goddess, under the tree used to safeguard the employees within the factory, and it continues to watch over the visiting tourists today. | **6-7.** The boiler room has been revitalized into a cafe, giving this building a new purpose. (Photo • 6. Te Fan Wang, 7. Kai Ping Fang)



From True Cost to Real Value: A Mother's Fashion Crusade for a Sustainable Future

Author Kai Ping Fang
Photographer Jean Chang

A significant rise in sustainable fashion has been witnessed around the globe, as consumers and industry leaders become more aware of the negative impact of the fashion industry on the environment and society at large. Initiatives by major fashion brands such as circular fashion and up-cycling have gained popularity, promoting the reuse and recycling of materials to reduce waste and pollution.

Jean Chang (張儵菱), a former fashion designer and editor-in-chief of a fashion magazine, *Bella* (儂儂), recognized this need for change years ago. After working for almost two decades in Taiwan's fashion industry, she had firsthand experience with the industry's environmental and social issues, such as sweatshops, resource waste, and pollution. As a

mother, she felt a deep sense of personal responsibility to minimize the impact on future generations. That was why, in 2016, she founded Picupi (挑品), a platform promoting sustainable fashion and circular economy in Taiwan, after resigning from her position in the fashion media.

Embracing Sustainable Fashion

Chang's realization of the negative impact of the fashion industry was triggered when she watched the 2015 documentary film *The True Cost* that focuses on fast fashion. The film highlighted the previously overlooked environmental and social consequences

of the fashion industry, including the exploitation of workers, the use of toxic chemicals, and irresponsible waste disposal, revealing the true cost of producing cheap, disposable clothing.

As a mother, Chang was already concerned about the impact of climate change on future generations. Her daughter's question, "Why should the next generation bear the burden of the mistakes made by the previous one?" struck a chord with Chang, pushing her to take action swiftly.

The decision for Chang to start her own sustainable fashion business was born out of a desire to promote the marriage of fashion and environmental sustainability. "At the time, sustainable fashion wasn't a big issue in Taiwan, and I was eager to promote it,"



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1. Chang advocates the concept of sustainable fashion through various forms, and pop-up stores are one of them. | 2. In order to create a better environment for her child, Chang passionately engages in sustainable practices within the fashion industry, becoming one of its driving forces. | 3. The sustainable fashion exhibition showcased at Taipei Fashion Week in 2020.

she says. "I figured I should start by working in my area of expertise and educating consumers about sustainability."

Circular Practices in the Fashion Industry

Chang wasted no time in introducing Picupi's first product after its inception, the "00 Panties." These environmentally-friendly underwear options are inventory-free and waste-free, with everything made-to-order. The panties are a result of a collaboration with a textile factory that utilizes surplus fabrics from international lingerie brand orders and textile factory samples. By transforming surplus fabrics into eco-friendly underwear that is fashionable and sustainable, Chang has helped reduce fabric waste in the fast fashion industry.

In 2020, Picupi also launched the "Wearing Change" project, emphasizing eco-conscious practices throughout the production cycle. The project seeks solutions for each stage of the product life cycle, from raw materials to disposal/recycling, with the goal of a self-contained circular production model that focuses on cradle-to-cradle recycling design.

Soon after, Picupi took another influential step to promote fashion sustainability. They developed a green laundry detergent made from clam shells which does not contain bleach or preservatives, to help customers clean their Picupi underwear and other clothing without causing lasting environmental damage. Chang believes that extending the lifespan of clothing is an effective approach to sustainability. Picupi also promotes their ideal through their packaging choices. They use customized square boxes that reduce the need for cushioning materials and avoid printing on the packaging to ensure it can be reused.



"We are a company that specializes in the fashion industry and drives innovation through circular economy methods," Chang says. "That's who we are. Picupi is not just another laundry detergent company," she stresses. "We relentlessly pursue what we believe is necessary, not just optional."

4. It is evident that younger people's concern for sustainability is increasing through events and talks hosted by Chang. | 5. "00 Panties", one of the products Chang advocates, exemplifies tangible efforts towards low-carbon fashion throughout the entire manufacturing and delivery process.

Taipei's Sustainable Fashion Scene

With the growing awareness of the fashion industry's negative effects on the environment and society as a whole, sustainable fashion is gaining momentum in Taipei. The Taipei Fashion Week (台北時裝週), held annually, has been instrumental in inspiring Taiwanese designers to incorporate sustainability into their brands. With a focus on sustainable fashion in recent years, including the Taipei Sustainable Collection (永續時尚主題秀) held earlier this March, the event has played a significant role in promoting sustainability in Taipei's fashion industry. While still in its infancy, the sustainable fashion movement in Taipei is growing, with many designers committed to using recycled

materials and rethinking inventory management. Even large fashion brands such as Uniqlo and NET are promoting sustainability through initiatives like clothing recycling bins.

Despite the high cost of doing business, the city has provided a platform for Chang's sustainable fashion brand, Picupi, to thrive. The brand's first pop-up store was opened at Songshan Cultural and Creative Park, attracting many young people and foreign tourists with their eco-friendly, waste-free product and green ideals, thereby facilitating the promotion of sustainable fashion.





Joining Hands with the Government to Go Green

In addition to adopting eco-friendly initiatives with her company, Chang is also actively collaborating with Taipei City in a series of workshops and forums to promote sustainable practices throughout the entire lifespan of clothing, both for consumers and businesses. She believes that relying solely on green materials and recycling is narrowing the concept and is insufficient in achieving eco-friendly goals. What's more, she maintains that even small but diverse individual steps, such as buying second-hand clothing, repairing or repurposing old clothes, or directly supporting local and sustainable fashion brands, can have a significant positive impact on the environment.

The Taiwan government recently announced new policies that will be enforced on July 1st to restrict packaging materials used in e-commerce, such as banning the use of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and requiring that more than 90% of paper packaging material must be made from recycled paper. Furthermore, plastic packaging material must contain more than 25% recycled material.

“Mandatory government regulations and comprehensive support are crucial for ensuring compliance and seeing significant benefits,” Chang stresses as she comments on these newly implemented changes. She is also looking forward to her continuing collaboration with the city of Taipei on educating consumers and business brands. “While the movement is not without its challenges, the city’s initiatives show promising steps towards a greener future for the fashion industry,” Chang says, smiling.

Driving Sustainability Forward

To drive sustainability forward in the fast-paced fashion industry, it is crucial to tackle the issue from all sides, making incremental but critical changes, and leading the industry by example. That is why Chang spent most of her time reexamining the industry inside-out for potential improvements, investing manpower and resources on costly research into production innovation and green materials, and making business decisions that profit-driven shareholders may see as risky.

Education is an essential component of Chang's green crusade. She is currently studying environmental management at National Taipei University's Institute of Natural Resources Management (國立台北大學自然資源與環境管理研究所), absorbing the latest sustainable practices and concepts from around the world. As a part-time assistant professor at the

graduate school of Fashion Design Department at Shih Chien University (實踐大學服裝設計系研究所), she is also teaching aspiring designers about sustainable fashion, instilling good habits before they can acquire detrimental ones, and working together designing green products from scratch.

Chang's motivation is clear — to create a better world for her daughter and future generations. Her unwavering determination to ensure a healthy environment for her daughter to pursue her dreams is what drives her forward. "This is a mother's selfishness," she says with a smile. Her words are simple, yet they carry a powerful message of a mother's love and dedication to securing a brighter future for the next generation and the world.

6. This year, Chang has launched an item called "Eco Cal® Laundry Detergent," which embodies her commitment to sustainability and environmental protection. | 7. Many companies are joining forces with Chang to promote sustainability and environmental conservation by launching a collaborative line of green laundry detergent.







Songshan Cultural and Creative Park offers creative sparks for people living in Taipei City, while its green environment is also a great place to spend a leisurely day.
(Photo • Kai Ping Fang)

Taipei's coffee scene is characterized by a dedication to quality
and a focus on the art and science of coffee.

Baristas in the city are known for their meticulous attention to detail.







Taipei's Star Coffee Shops Light Up the International Stage

Author Kerstin Hsu, Hsuan Yin Zhang, Mokki Hsiao
Photographer Fika Fika Cafe, Simple Kaffa, PJ Shen

1

Third-wave coffee is a movement in coffee marketing emphasizing sourcing, quality, and unique flavors. In the past, coffee culture was often focused on speed and convenience; now, this new movement is taking coffee seriously in its own right, even treating it as a high-end product like wine or whiskey. Over the last decade, third-wave coffee has become a worldwide phenomenon, with distinctive cafes offering high-quality coffee popping up everywhere — including Taipei.

Taipei is home to coffee shops in every shape and size, from low-priced chains to high-quality cafes brimming with individual personality — including more than a few focused on third-wave coffee. These cafes source their beans very carefully, roasting them with close

attention to bring out their flavor and brewing them with meticulous care at every step.

The three cafes below, each with its own particular strengths, form a microcosm of the unique development of third-wave coffee culture in Taiwan. Each of them is headed by the recipient of a major international award who brings their own sense of well-honed professionalism to creating the flavor and aroma of each cup of coffee. Their names and brands are renowned among the world's coffee lovers, and have unquestionably put Taiwan on the global specialty coffee map.

Fika Fika Cafe

In 2013, James Chen (陳志煌), founder of Fika Fika Cafe, headed to Northern Europe for the Nordic Roaster Competition. He returned home as champion of the espresso category as well as overall, making him the first ever competitor from outside the Nordic countries to take the grand prize. Fika Fika Cafe itself opened the same year, and soon became one of the most renowned coffee shops in Taiwan, appearing on travel website Big 7 Travel's ranking of "The 50 Best Coffee Shops In Asia" in 2019 and 2020.



"Fika" is a Swedish term that translates to a relaxing "coffee break." Chen aims to transport his customers to the Nordic world through a visual, olfactory, and gustatory feast. It's not just about a single "Fika" experience; he encourages everyone to indulge at least in multiple rounds of "Fika", hence the name "Fika Fika". The cafe is located near IT Park (伊通公園) in Zhongshan District. Though there's often a long line of customers, the atmosphere remains leisurely, while the outdoor seating area is a staple of the Taipei coffee scene.

Fika Fika particularly excels at latte-type drinks and drip filter coffee. Capulypuly (named after a place in Italy) is their signature blend, as well as their bestseller. It combines multiple kinds of coffee beans, each individually roasted to a different degree with a different roast profile. This painstaking process produces a full-bodied medium roast that remains perfectly balanced whether enjoyed with milk or taken black.

1. Coffee lovers can "fika" with friends in the cozy coffee shop. (Photo • Fika Fika Cafe) | 2. In 2013, James Chen started his coffee business, Fika Fika Cafe, after winning the grand prize at a prestigious coffee competition in Northern Europe. (Photo • Fika Fika Cafe) | 3. Fika Fika's acclaimed Cappuccino is expertly crafted from their exclusive in-house blend, Capulypuly beans. (Photo • Fika Fika Cafe)

Fika Fika Cafe 啡卡咖啡

ADD 33, Yitong St., Zhongshan Dist.
HOURS 10:30am - 7:00pm (Mondays)
8:00am - 7:00pm (Tuesday to Thursday; Sundays)
8:00am - 9:00pm (Friday to Saturday)



Simple Kaffa

Simple Kaffa was founded by Berg Wu (吳則霖), a legendary figure in Taipei's coffee world. It got its start in 2011 in a basement in Taipei's East District (東區), and has been a mecca for hardcore coffee lovers ever since.

In 2009 Berg Wu competed in the Taiwan Barista Championship (TBC) for what would be the first of seven years running, going on to take the top prize three times. He also represented Taiwan at the World Barista Championship (WBC) in Ireland and ultimately became world champion in 2016, bringing his reputation to new heights.

Meanwhile, Simple Kaffa topped Big 7 Travel's ranking of "The 50 Best Coffee Shops In Asia" in 2019 and 2020, making it the pride of the Taiwanese coffee scene and providing clear evidence that Taiwan's coffee is not to be underestimated.

Simple Kaffa's flagship store is near Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山 1914 文化創意產業園區). The industrial loft-style space is bright and open. The baristas work behind a marble counter in the center, where customers can watch them show off their brewing skills. Simple Kaffa's single-origin pour-over coffee is spectacularly good — exactly what coffee lovers crave. To satisfy the demand, a second location named Simple Kaffa The Coffee One has opened on Jinhua Street (金華街), specializing in award-winning





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coffee. The most expensive coffee served there costs more than NT\$3,000 for a single cup — a true luxury product.

This January, they expanded into the 88th floor of Taipei 101. The design of the new location is themed around forests, mountains, clouds, and sky — a gorgeous space with a spectacular view.

If you want to visit Simple Kaffa but don't know what to order, Big 7 Travel suggests that you can't go wrong with a cappuccino or dark brown sugar latte.

4. In Simple Kaffa's flagship store, customers can watch baristas show off their brewing skills in the central seating area. (Photo • Simple Kaffa) | 5. Located on Jinhua Street, Simple Kaffa The Coffee One is well-known for its award-winning and luxurious coffee products. (Photo • Simple Kaffa) | 6. A new Simple Kaffa store opened on the 88th floor of Taipei 101, featuring a unique interior design as well as a spectacular view. (Photo • Simple Kaffa)

Simple Kaffa (Huashan flagship store) 興波咖啡華山旗艦店

ADD 27, Sec. 2, Zhongxiao E. Rd.,
Zhongzheng Dist.

HOURS 10:00am – 5:00pm

Simple Kaffa The Coffee One

ADD 177, Jinhua St., Daan Dist.

HOURS 11:00am – 6:00pm

Simple Kaffa Sola 天空興波

ADD 88F, 7, Sec. 5, Xinyi Rd., Xinyi
Dist.

HOURS 10:00am – 8:00pm

VWI by CHADWANG

In 2017, Chad Wang (王策) — not yet 30 — won the World Brewers Cup (WBrC) with his deft precision, becoming the first person from Taiwan to receive that honor and instantly making a name for himself in Taipei's coffee scene. He then opened his own cafe VWI by CHADWANG in 2018.

The name VWI stands for water in its three states of matter: vapor, water, and ice. After all, most of a cup of coffee is made up of water, and likewise making a cup of pour-over coffee is the transformation of coffee beans and water into something new. Throughout the process, every tiny detail affects the resulting flavor. It's precisely this attention to detail that is the soul of Chad Wang's coffee.

The man himself is so good-looking that he's often mistaken for a celebrity. Combine that with his unquestionable skill with coffee, and it's no surprise he can draw in and win over even the most demanding, most uncompromising customers.

VWI regularly holds lectures on coffee, drawing a rapt audience of coffee aficionados. They've also created coffee filter bags that work the same way as tea bags, easing the way for everyone to make a good cup of coffee part of their daily lives. In short, VWI and its unique story are more than worthy representatives of Taiwan's specialty coffee scene.





VWI by CHADWANG

ADD 16, Aly. 4, Ln. 251, Sec. 3,
Zhongxiao E. Rd., Daan Dist.

HOURS 11:00am – 7:00pm

7. Located in Taipei's busy Eastern District, VWI by CHADWANG is a magnet for tons of coffee lovers who drop by for a cup. (Photo • PJ Shen) | 8. The craft coffee paired with desserts at VWI can bring an exquisite sense of joy and happiness to the customers. (Photo • PJ Shen) | 9. Coffee lovers may marvel at the barista's skill in making a cup of pour-over coffee while enjoying the delightful aroma. (Photo • PJ Shen)





The Sizzling Story of Taiwanese Iron-Plate Steak: A Journey Through Time and Taste

Author

Kuan Yuan Chu, Kai Ping Fang

Photographer

George Zhan, Kuan Yuan Chu

1

When it comes to finding the best steak in Taiwan, forget about fancy restaurants and five-star hotels. On the island, it's all about experiencing the true local cuisine in an unpretentious environment.

In the 1970s, Western cuisine was a luxury that few Taiwanese people could indulge in. At that time, the average salary was comparatively modest, making it challenging to afford a good meal, not to mention Western steak. It was during these trying times that a chef by the name of Sun Dong Bao (孫東寶) dared to challenge the status quo and brought proper and affordable steaks to the common people. And so, he created the iconic Taiwanese iron-plate steak on the bustling streets of Taipei. In no time, this humble roadside delicacy became the talk of the town and

ultimately, a national sensation.

Taiwanese steaks are truly special, and the reasons for this are abundant. Firstly, they are served piping hot on iron plates, which elicits a sound and aroma that is unmistakably Taiwanese. Secondly, the steak, sides, and sauce are all cooked together on the plate, ensuring each bite is a gustatory explosion of flavors. And finally, the sizzling sound of oil on a scorching iron plate is a remarkable experience in and of itself.

1. Taiwanese steaks are delicious dishes that are unique to Taiwan, and definitely worth a try! | 2. The sizzling hot steam and crackling sound that accompany the removal of the cover are distinctive features of Taiwanese steak. | 3. Frozen vegetables, noodles, and an egg have become essential components of a classic Taiwanese steak meal.

The Sizzling Sensation

When you venture into a steakhouse or a steak stall in Taiwan, you'll notice a large paper napkin waiting for you on your seat. This is to protect you from the hot oil splattering on the iron plate used to cook your steak, and can be held up somewhat like a shield when the plate first arrives, crackling and sizzling. But why all the fuss over an iron plate? Well, there's something special about sinking your teeth into a steak cooked atop a scorching hot iron plate, with all of its juice and flavor locked within. Things are different in the United States, as they may roast your steak and serve it on a porcelain plate, but it just doesn't deliver that same visceral feeling.

The iron plate steak tradition, a hallmark of Taiwanese cuisine, may actually have roots in Hong Kong, where meat and seafood are served on hot iron plates with carbs and sauces added after serving. Alternatively, it's said to have a Japanese origin, where meat is cooked on a large iron plate, sliced into bite-size pieces, and served to guests. Regardless where it came from, the tradition has undoubtedly left its mark on Taiwanese cuisine.

The Evolution of Side Dishes

Upon receiving your iron plate, you will discover an assortment of noodles, frozen vegetables, and a freshly cracked egg. In deference to Taiwanese palates, traditional mashed potatoes were deemed too foreign, and rice was considered ill-suited for knives and forks. Noodles, by contrast, were an ideal choice. The selection of frozen vegetables was primarily based on convenience, rather than nutritional value, while the addition of the fresh egg serves as a delightful accompaniment.

Taiwanese steaks always come with two loyal companions: corn soup and garlic bread. These sides have adapted in flavor to suit the taste of the general public, distancing themselves from their Western counterparts. While some establishments offer salad buffets, you can always count on finding these classics on the menu.



Same Name, Different Taste

As you take a seat in a bustling steakhouse, the menu presents you with a dilemma: black pepper or mushroom sauce? Don't let the names deceive you, though. These sauces are far from a mere Western imitation, and their flavors are infused with a uniquely Taiwanese twist, made with locally-sourced ingredients such as soy sauce and sweet potato starch instead of the butter we know and love. While they may not be as creamy as butter-based sauces, the mushroom sauce offers an umami taste and the black pepper sauce provides a savory spiciness, both of which can undoubtedly hold their own.

Now, why opt for these local ingredients over fancier, imported ones? The answer is simple: cost. Taiwan's dairy industry hasn't reached the level of development seen in other countries, so utilizing locally-sourced ingredients helps keep prices reasonable. But don't let the cost-effectiveness of these sauces fool you. They pack a punch of flavor that is on par, if not better than their Western counterparts.

Choices of Steakhouses

For those of us who hunger for the savory delights of iron-plate steak in Taiwan, the search is not a hard one. In fact, it's quite simple: almost every night market in the country offers this local delicacy. But if you're yearning for a more luxurious experience, fear not, as there are a few chains that will undoubtedly meet your expectations.

There's the Sun Dong Bao Steakhouse (孫東寶台式牛排教父), whose kitchen knows how to handle the perfect cut; the Noble Family Steak House (貴族世



家牛排), whose prime steaks would satisfy even the most discerning carnivore; and My Home Steak (我家牛排), whose aroma wafts through the air, beckoning all meat lovers to its door. So, when you feel the urge to indulge in the best steak experience, give these places a chance and satisfy your taste buds.

Tips for Cooking at Home

If you are eager for a steak but too lazy to leave the comfort of your own home, preparing the perfect steak in your own kitchen may not be as challenging as you think. Heat and precision timing are the keys to unlocking the full potential of any steak. By cooking the meat at high temperatures, you can seal in those precious juices that make for a divine experience. Keep your focus on the steak, and once the juices begin to appear in the center of the meat, that's when you know it's time to take it off the heat for a medium-rare finish.

But if you prefer well-done, no worries. Keep it cooking for a little longer, but be cautious not to overdo it, as the meat's juices will start to escape, leaving you with a dry and tough cut. With this straightforward tip, you'll have a steak that even the snobbiest of diners would rave about.

A Beloved Taiwanese Delicacy

Taiwanese iron-plate steak is a special culinary experience that should not be missed. The tradition of cooking on sizzling iron plates, the unique side dishes, and the locally-sourced sauces all contribute to the distinct flavors that make Taiwanese steak stand out. Whether you visit a night market or a high-end restaurant, you're sure to enjoy this delicious dish. And for those who want to try their hand at making it at home, just remember that heat and timing are key. So, channel your inner foodie and savor the flavors of Taiwan's iron plate steak.

Do remember, don't judge this dish by its appearance — it may look different from what you're used to, but the unique blend of flavors will transport you to another world. Trust me, your taste buds will thank you for it.



4. Taiwanese steak restaurants often offer corn soup and beverages infused with Taiwanese flavors, enhancing the dining experience. | 5. Taipei boasts a variety of Taiwanese steakhouses that can cater to different types of foodies. For example, some restaurants serve oversized meals. (Photo • Kuan Yuan Chu)

RECOMMENDATIONS

My Home Steak (Xinyi Hesan Branch) 我家牛排 (信義和三店)

ADD 363, Sec. 3, Heping E. Rd., Xinyi Dist.
HOURS 11:00am - 2:00pm, 5:00pm - 10:00pm (Monday to Friday)
11:00am - 4:30pm, 6:30pm - 10:00pm (Saturday to Sunday)
(Closed on the second and the fourth Tuesdays)

Sun Dong Bao Steakhouse (Daan Roosevelt Branch) 孫東寶台式牛排教父 (大安羅斯福店)

ADD 277, Sec. 3, Roosevelt Rd., Daan Dist.
HOURS 11:30am - 9:00pm (Monday to Friday)
11:00am - 9:00pm (Saturday to Sunday)

Niu Mo Wang (Shilin Branch) 牛魔王 (士林店)

ADD 83, Danan Rd., Shilin Dist.
HOURS 5:00pm - 12:00am (Closing time varies)



Living the “Slashie” Life in Taipei

Author

Genie Zheng, Hsuan Yin Zhang

Photographer

Samil Kuo, Curry For Peace, Taiwan Scene

Being a slashie — that is, holding two or more jobs in different industries at the same time — is a growing global trend, as well as an expression of a certain dexterous attitude toward life.

Although living the slashie life could be full of uncertainties and challenges, in Taipei, there is one such person who is always willing to try new things, brave the risks, and practice their problem-solving and self-management skills. In this issue, we chat with Shinichi Higuchi, originally from Fukuoka, Japan, a Taipei resident who has lived here over 20 years. Higuchi manages a curry shop and also works as a streetwear consultant. Let’s hear what he has to say about his life in Taipei and the differences in being a slashie in Taipei and Japan.

1. Mr. Higuchi personally cooks spiced curry every morning. | 2. As a streetwear consultant, Higuchi displays some collaborative items inside the store. | 3. The Green Curry, perfect for summer days, is one of the popular dishes in the shop. (Photo • Curry For Peace)

Q1 What brought you to Taipei?

A relative of mine said that Greater China was the future, so I came to Taipei around 2003 or 2004 and headed off to National Taiwan Normal University (國立台灣師範大學) to learn Chinese. I also made a lot of Taiwanese friends, which helped me improve my Chinese proficiency very quickly by talking with locals — in less than six months I could speak Chinese. Then I found a job in the hotel industry. My job was stable, so I just stayed in Taipei.

Q2 What do you think of Taipei?

I’m from Fukuoka, which geographically speaking is roughly the same size as Taipei, and the climate is also similar, so Taipei feels quite familiar to me. Everyone is very friendly. Back when I was new to Taipei, I had to ask for directions everywhere I went. The people I

asked would often take me straight to where I needed to go. That would never happen in Japan. There, people only tell you how to get somewhere — they would never personally show you the way. So that was a pleasant surprise for me when I first arrived.

Q3 You started out working in the hotel industry in Taipei, but now you run a curry shop and work as a streetwear consultant. Can you tell us what led you to make this switch?

Before the pandemic I worked in the hotel industry. I also ran a curry shop at the same time because it was my passion. The pandemic was a major blow to the tourism industry, so I left my hotel job to focus on my curry shop.

As for streetwear, a friend of mine returned to Taiwan from the U.S. more than a decade ago to run a streetwear apparel business. He doesn't speak Japanese, so I help him communicate with companies in Japan. Besides, I worked in the apparel industry back when I was in Japan, which is why I know a fair amount about it. So, when my friend invited me to work with him, I joined him as a consultant. I help out with his business in my spare time.



Q4 What have you observed about being a slashie in Taiwan and in Japan?

People in Taiwan are more open to different work models, so there's more freedom to be a slashie. But starting ten years ago or so, ideas about work in Japan started to change. Fewer people count on staying with a single employer until they retire. This has led a lot of young people in Japan to become slashies nowadays. For example, one friend of mine works in a restaurant during the day, then bartends at night. He doesn't do it to make more money — he does it because it's his passion.

This is a global trend. It's a lifestyle you choose when you have more than enough passion, time, and energy. When you're a slashie out of passion rather than due to economic pressure, it doesn't feel hard. You can keep it up for a long time.

Q5 What made you decide to open a curry shop in Taipei?

Curry is my passion. Almost everyone in Japan likes curry. A high school classmate told me that a lot of the small independent spiced curry shops in Fukuoka each have their own

curry recipe with a unique flavor. I love curry, so I threw myself into studying it. I learned from the most famous spiced curry chefs in Fukuoka. Then I opened my shop to introduce spiced curry to the people of Taipei.



Q6 Have you encountered any difficulties in running your curry shop?

In the past there weren't too many places you could get spiced curry in Taipei, which is why I brought in this particular type of curry. At the beginning a lot of people gave me their feedback, saying things like the spice mix was too strong or too salty, so I made adjustments. Now most of my customers like it — they tell me it's delicious. I opened my shop more than six years ago. However, the pandemic started in the fourth year, and the number of customers visiting my shop plummeted, so I started selling frozen curry to maintain the business. As soon as the pandemic ended, customers came back.

Q7 Have you observed any differences between Taipei and Japan in terms of food preferences?

In Japan, the main flavors are sweet, salty, and spicy; there aren't many bitter foods. But speaking of spiciness, in Taiwan it's divided more finely into tingling or numbing (*má*, 麻) and burning (*là*, 辣) types. People here enjoy a wider range of flavors than people in Japan.

Take curry, for example. In Japan, curry is associated with spiciness. But in Taipei, people seem to expect curry to be sweeter. Most of my customers tend to choose curries on the sweet side. They also like deep-fried foods. But in Japan, curry shops rarely sell deep-fried things.

Also, Taipei has night markets every single day, and there are plenty of roadside food stalls, all selling things that are easy to eat on the go. In Japan,

the restaurant industry is mostly made up of big companies. You only see food stalls during festivals, and they only have a fixed set of choices, like *takoyaki*, a Japanese street snack in the shape of little round balls containing pieces of octopus.

Q8 Can you tell us about your favorite places in Taipei?

I've lived in Neihu (內湖) for almost three years. It's quiet and there aren't too many cars. I only have to walk a few minutes to get to a park. It's a very pleasant place to live. Sometimes I go to the hot springs in Beitou (北投), or to Yangmingshan (陽明山, Mt. Yangming) to take in the view at night. This is how I relax on weekends. Taipei's suburbs offer hot springs and mountains, and transportation from the city center to the suburbs is very convenient. And when friends from Japan come to visit me, I take them on the Maokong Gondola (貓空纜車) because of the beautiful scenery in Maokong, and it's also a good place to taste Taiwanese teas that you can't get in Japan.

Q9 As a streetwear consultant, you no doubt have your own observations and opinions on fashion. Have you noticed any changes in Taipei's street fashion?

Ten or so years ago, men in Taipei tended to wear graphic tees. Trends were six or seven years behind Japan. But over the years, more and more people have taken an interest in fashion. They've become sensitive to trends, and have greater spending power. For instance, every time Akio Hasegawa, the famous Japanese stylist, posts a new product which he directs or collaborates with other brands on his own social media, streetwear fans from Taipei rush to buy it even

faster than those from Japan. As a result, a fair number of fashion brands have gradually shifted toward Taipei.

Q10 You've lived in Taipei for more than twenty years. What's something you like about this city?

I usually commute to work on a scooter, and getting around Taipei is incredibly convenient. It only takes about an hour's drive to reach suburbs. While the city is often bustling with cars, traffic tends to be better during vacation periods. Personally, I find the city traffic in Taipei particularly enjoyable during the holidays,

and riding a scooter feels remarkably comfortable, especially on long weekends.



4. Yangmingshan, with its vast greenery, is one of Higuchi's favorite spots in Taipei. (Photo • Taiwan Scene)

A CURRY PRO RECOMMENDS HIS FAVORITE TAIPEI EATS

Ji Pin Guang Fu Vegetarian Baozi 極品光復素食包子

"The *baozi* (包子; steamed meat-filled buns) are enormous — big enough to be a meal. *Baozi* fillings include cabbage, green beans, and many other kinds of vegetables."

ADD 95, Ln. 419, Guangfu S. Rd., Xinyi Dist.
HOURS 6:30am - 1:30pm (Closed on Mondays)

Honda Japanese Restaurant 本多日本料理

"The owner is from Fukuoka, too. When I want sushi, this is where I go."

ADD 15, Ln. 60, Dunhua N. Rd., Songshan Dist.
HOURS 11:30am - 2:00pm, 5:30pm - 9:30pm
(Closed on Sundays)

Meinongwu 美濃屋

"They mostly sell ramen, but I recommend their *chow mein* (炒麵, fried noodles) and potstickers — absolutely delicious!"

ADD 108-1, Sec. 1, Xinsheng N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist.
HOURS 5:00pm - 10:00pm (Tuesday to Friday)
12:00pm - 2:30pm, 5:00pm - 10:00pm (Saturdays)
12:00pm - 2:30pm, 5:00pm - 9:30pm (Sundays)
(Closed on Mondays)

Right Ice Cream 來特冰淇淋

"Their ice cream and desserts come in flavors you can't find in Japan. I like them a lot."

ADD 54, Ln. 36, Sec. 4, Bade Rd., Songshan Dist.
HOURS 1:30pm - 10:00pm
(Closed on Tuesdays)

TRAVEL INFO

METRO TAIPEI

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

Customer Service Hotline: (02)218-12345

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Taipei eBus
ebus.gov.taipei

YOUBIKE

YouBike is Taipei's public rental bike system. To rent a bike, you can use an EasyCard or a credit card. The charge per 30 minutes is listed below.



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

TAIPEI FUN PASS

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



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1 Day Pass/2 Day Pass/
3 Day Pass
NT\$1,500/1,900/2,200



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



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

TRAVEL INFORMATION SERVICES

Tourism 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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