



AUTUMN 2021

A Season of Serenity

COVER STORY

Soothing Body and Mind:
Maximize Your Taipei Autumn Chillin'

TAIPEI 北

TAI PEI 台北

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EDITOR'S
INTRODUCTION

BREEZING INTO A SOOTHING SEASON



It's autumn in Taipei, and as the temperature cools and the first winds of a softer season start to blow, you can almost feel the city breathe a collective sigh of relief, knowing that the optimum time for calming, meditative activities and soothing sorties is at hand.

Apropos of this season of chilled out vibes, our cover story takes you on a tour of the capital's best places for stress-releasing exercise, body-soothing massage, and Zen-inducing meditation, as well as thoughtful guidance for relaxing at home.

To get to know Taipei's serene side, we meet the minds behind some of the city's most masterful modern architecture — buildings designed with the aim of creating warm, cozy places in which to live and work. From there, move on to the open-air oases of this tantalizingly green metropolis, its many parks and riverside trails serving as a revitalizing presence amidst the urban sprawl.

In this quarter, we delve into Taipei's bustling LGBTQIA+ scene and its unique culture as well, the heart of which beats within the walls of GinGin Store, a bookstore that does far more than selling books. We also take a look at a rather fascinating subculture, the swing dance scene, a throwback that is enjoying a booming renaissance among Taipei urbanites both young and old.

Taipei is also a pet-friendly city. With our furry friends in mind, we take you to Lang Lang Don't Cry, a café that also doubles as a halfway house for animals looking for their forever home.

No issue of *TAIPEI* would be complete without some fantastic food and drink recommendations, and this is no exception. We've got a guide to the best farm-to-table establishments in town, a primer on the many wonderful and flavorful varieties of rice on offer, and a look inside one of the trendiest spots to enjoy a cool, crisp highball on a glorious autumn evening.

Finally, we take a look at the world of artist Ling Ko, whose ink works are inspired by the countless, tiny aspects of the rarely-seen in this city that many of us might overlook, and yet bring fantastic sensations to those lucky enough to find them.

All this and more, as we usher in the cool comfort of autumn in Taipei.

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- Please wear a mask and follow the epidemic prevention regulations imposed by the government when going out during the pandemic.
- There are many private profile pictures published in this issue, hence no masks are worn by the figures present.



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

TAIPEI ^台 ^北



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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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Soothing Body and Mind: Maximize Your Taipei Autumn Chillin'

Author Rick Charette

Photographer xFrame, Taiwan Scene, Yenyi Lin, Remi Thorel, Toa Heftiba, jessiej, Yenping Yang, Liang Shuyi, Freepik

You'll probably agree that the global present is not the most relaxing of times, especially in metropolises like Taipei where the busyness of the city's living requires periodic recharging. Good ideas on how to go about refreshing body and soul are therefore invaluable under such circumstances.

TAIPEI magazine at your service! We aim to please. The hustle and bustle of modern big-city life, whether as residents or visitors, quickly saps your batteries. As summer turns into autumn in Taipei, welcome cooling air is arriving, and we present you with a soothing, soul-warming potpourri of pleasures you can immerse yourself in both inside and outside your Taipei place of abode to regenerate.

To relax your body, why not try a primer on local biking and hiking, hot-spring and at-home mineral bathing, or both professional and DIY massage? If you need a peaceful moment for your mind and soul, have a go at "spiritual consulting" — i.e., traditional Chinese fortune-telling — with helpful information on online services, art admiration, and meditation. All of these are of great comfort to both physical and mental health.

Naturally, a well-tailored personalized combination of as many as possible of the above pursuits you find most appealing is your best quick-travel path to health and bliss. What shall it be for you? Let's get started.

▲ COVID-19 ALERT

Please wear a mask and follow the epidemic prevention regulations imposed by the government when going out during the pandemic.

01. Find a moment for yourself in this busy life to recharge your body and soul. (Photo/xFrame)



01



Relaxing Your Body

Working Out

Taipei sits in the very flat, just-above-sea-level Taipei Basin, crisscrossed by rivers, with countless hours of breezy stress-releasing biking available along its riverside paths. The basin is mountain-ringed, where you can enjoy soothing views throughout Taipei's urban core, and its public-transport system is so convenient that you can be at the trailhead of most of its web of attractive mountain trails within an hour or so.

The riverside-park bike system delivers you all along the city's major waterways, in a giant easy-grade loop. If you do not have a bike at hand, don't worry, there are vetted bike-rental stations set up along the bikeways, with rentals very inexpensive to encourage healthy exercise, and you can rent a bike in one spot and drop it off at another. The riverside parks immerse you in an environment of sweeping vistas hard to find elsewhere in the city's core, save in spots such as the grounds of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (中正紀念堂) or high up in soaring buildings such as Taipei 101, and as you calmly pedal along getting healthy exercise, you'll feel a sense of peace and serenity.



02

Pleasant stress-releasing hikes also await everywhere. Among the most popular are the interconnected trails of the Four Beasts Mountains (四獸山), near Taipei 101, the trails of the Taipei Tea Promotion Center for Tieguanyin Tea and Baozhong Tea (台北市鐵觀音包種茶研發推廣中心) area, reached via the Taipei Metro and interconnected Maokong Gondola (貓空纜車), and the high-mountain trails of Yangmingshan National Park (陽明山國家公園), reached by bus in about an hour from downtown. Placing yourself in this world of green, busily rich with birds, insects and small-animal life, not only makes life's little woes fade away, but provides natural nourishment for the body and quiets the soul as well.



03

02. A trip to Yangmingshan on the weekend is one of the best ways to enjoy the fresh air.

03. There are always many cyclists who ride along the riverside paths in Taipei to release stress. (Photo/Yenyi Lin)



Salving Mineral Baths

The mighty Yangmingshan (陽明山, Mt. Yangming) massif looks down on central Taipei from the north. The massif is the result of ancient geo-volcanic activities — don't worry, all have long been quiet on the northern front — leaving behind a modern-day treasure-trove of fumaroles, sulfur pits...and hot springs!

The beloved Beitou (北投) hot-spring resort area fills up, and spills out of, a narrow valley at the massif's base in Taipei's northwest. MRT Xinbeitou Station (捷運新北投站) stands right outside the valley's mouth. During Taiwan's Japanese colonial era (1895-1945), the Japanese established this as a refined hot-spring destination. You can explore the area's history at the Beitou Hot Spring Museum (北投溫泉博物館), housed in what was Taiwan's first public bathhouse, built in 1913.

Beitou's green- and white-sulfur waters are rich with mildly radioactive Hokutolite, or Beitou Stone (北投石), the world's only mineral named after a place in Taiwan. It is extremely rare and deeply valued by soaker aficionados. Beitou's waters are particularly helpful, it's said, in relieving muscle ache, arthritis, and nerve pain, and promoting metabolism.

Though the area is rich with both public and private hot-spring bathing facilities, there is also a fine way to experience the joys of mineral-spring bathing without leaving your own abode. The bath powders produced by Beitou's Dafang White Powder Factory (大芳白粉廠), founded in 1956, are 100% all-natural, made with precious local white-sulfur hot-spring minerals.

Pampering you with an even wider array of choices is another local enterprise, Hotspring Flower (湯花作), opened in 2016. Named after the crystals of minerals found in hot spring waters, "*tanghua* (湯花, hot spring flower)," its items are sold in numerous locations in and around the Beitou hot-spring area and elsewhere in the city, including a shop at the tourist destination of Thermal Valley (地熱谷) and the open-air bazaar at the Xinbeitou Historic Station (新北投車站). Its lineup includes natural sulfur crystals, handmade mineral-bath soaps and powders, creative daily necessities, and more.



04

04. A nice hot spring bath can not only cleanse the body, but also help relieve aches and recharge the soul. (Photo/Remi Thorel)

05. Beitou Hot Spring Museum, with a history of over a hundred years, used to be a public bathhouse in the Japanese era.



05



06



07

06-07. *Shiatsu* and *gua sha* are both popular methods of massage in Taipei and help to relax the body. (Photo/Top: Toa Heftiba; Bottom: jessiej)

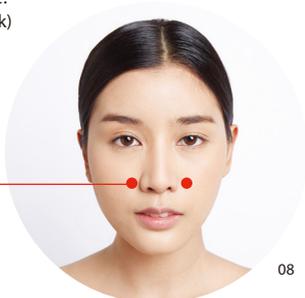
08-09. To relieve headaches, shoulder tension and soreness, try a “welcome fragrance” massage and work the “shoulder well” acupoints at home. (Photo/Left: xFrame; Right: Freepik)

Massage

The foundation of the myriad benefits of traditional massage is enhanced blood circulation. Taipei, as many would proudly say “a city that never sleeps,” takes care of the health-enhancement needs of its residents and visitors through all the sunlit and moonlit hours with its many professional licensed 24-hour massage centers, providing head-to-toe service, including hand and foot care services. In addition, practicing easy massages at home can also be a nice way to recharge yourself after a long, busy day.

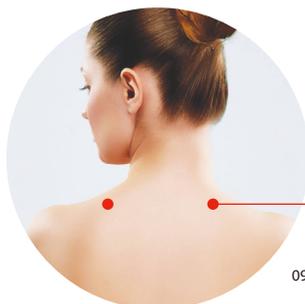
Two of the most popular massage forms are *gua sha* (刮痧) and *shiatsu*. *Gua sha*, “scraping” or “spooning,” is a traditional Chinese folk therapy which involves scraping of the skin with a smooth-edged instrument to stimulate soft-tissue circulation, increasing blood flow. *Shiatsu*, or “finger pressure,” is a massage technique from Japan. This therapeutic bodywork involves kneading, pressing, tapping, and stretching, which helps ease muscle soreness instantly.

With a little training and practice, you can find proper acupoints and relieve pain and stress in different parts of your body with self-massage. For example, to relax the muscles from your neck down along each shoulder, you can use a thumb to massage the “shoulder well” acupoint (肩井穴), located right atop your shoulder blade. If you suffer from stress headaches and nasal obstruction, try to gently massage the “welcome fragrance” points (迎香穴), just lateral to your nose wings, with your middle or index fingers for a minute each day. These all can help alleviate your physical discomfort.



Welcome fragrance point

08



Shoulder well point

09

Calming Your Mind

☯ “Spiritual Consulting” — Chinese Fortune-Telling

There are countless divination techniques practiced under the “traditional Chinese fortune-telling” umbrella. In Taipei as elsewhere in the region, fortune-tellers are generally found in and around local temples and, to a lesser degree, at night markets. Fortune-telling remains a respected and important element in local social and business culture, providing a sense of comfort for lost souls and all those seeking guidance in life.

By far the city’s most popular destination for such “spiritual consulting” is the Songjiang Road Fortunetelling Street (松江路命理街), immediately outside the large, ever-busy Xingtian Temple (行天宮), which despite the “street” in the name is in fact the brightly-lit underpass for pedestrians beneath the Songjiang Road (松江路) and Minquan East Road (民權東路), filled with fortune-teller stalls. With posted signs indicating, visitors can easily find those that provide services in English or Japanese.



10

All the main fortune-telling techniques are practiced here — horoscopy called *bazi* (八字) reading, facial reading, palm reading, and fortune stick drawing or *qiuqian* (求籤) — along with more esoteric forms such as rice divination. With *bazi* or the “eight characters,” your “four pillars of destiny” natal data (birth year/month/date/hour) are matched to a complex matrix of metaphysical knowledge. Rice divination involves you taking pinches of rice grains from a cluster, placing them on a plate, and having them interpreted by a master.

Qiuqian involves drawing fortune sticks inscribed with Chinese characters from clusters in cylinders. The fortune-teller then interprets the meaning and implications of the “god-chosen” characters for you.

An even more convenient way for either local expatriates or people visiting from overseas to experience the Taiwanese way of fortune-telling is the virtual *qiuqian* service provided by the City God Temple (台灣省城隍廟) of Taipei City. After reading your personal information piously, praying to the City God for life guidance sincerely, and explaining in detail what you would like to ask for, click the “start drawing fortune sticks” button to conduct the online *qiuqian* service. This interactive online service is no different from visiting the temple in person to seek spiritual consulting.



11

10. Palm reading is a common method of fortune-telling for people to consult about the uncertainties they may encounter. (Photo/jessiej)

11. For many people in Taipei, seeking spiritual comfort in religion provides motivation and inspiration for their daily lives.

ONLINE VIRTUAL QIUQIAN SERVICE (CHINESE)

CITY GOD TEMPLE OF TAIPEI CITY
WEBSITE citygod.tw/take_a_draw.php



Art Admiration

You've probably often heard the expression "Music soothes even the savage beast." Well, art appreciation shall surely calm your mind and soul when you get to feeling a bit stressed and savage inside, and Taipei presents you with a wonderful world of artistic creation to set about appreciating, both inside brick-and-mortar museums/galleries and accessible through online virtual platforms where you can enjoy exhibitions from the comfort of your private accommodation.

The fabulous National Palace Museum (國立故宮博物院) is home to the world's greatest collection of priceless Chinese art treasures, most of these originally part of the Chinese imperial collection. The NPM has led the way in terms of the nation's burgeoning museum/gallery online-touring treasure vault. Walk the museum virtually, in the style of a Google Street View experience, and get up close and intimate with its most iconic gems with the ability to handle them interactively.

The private Tina Keng Gallery (耿畫廊), which nurtures Taiwanese modern and contemporary artists, provides online documentaries of its exhibitions. Also offering online videos of selected exhibitions is the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (台北市立美術館). This museum's collection is centered on modern works from around the globe, mostly paintings. Of special value is its collection of Taiwan works starting from the 19th century. The Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei (MoCA Taipei, 台北當代藝術館), Taiwan's first museum dedicated exclusively to contemporary art, showcases home-grown Taiwan talent. Most of its displays are on the themes of art, design, and architecture, with no standing exhibitions. The museum has recently launched VR online exhibitions, allowing for those who are far away or missed the exhibition period to enjoy the tour freely at the art gallery.

ONLINE VIRTUAL PLATFORMS

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WEBSITE [3D Gallery | theme.npm.edu.tw/3d/Index.aspx?l=2](http://3dGallery|theme.npm.edu.tw/3d/Index.aspx?l=2)

TINA KENG GALLERY

WEBSITE tinakenggallery.com/en/

TAIPEI FINE ARTS MUSEUM

WEBSITE tfam.museum/index.aspx?ddlLang=en-us

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART TAIPEI

WEBSITE www.mocatapei.org.tw/en



12

12. Taipei Fine Arts Museum has a variety of collections, and the calming exhibitions allow both body and mind to be soothed at the same time.

13. With many national treasures displayed, the National Palace Museum is one of the top choices to enjoy art and cultural artifacts.



13



14

14. Located on a secluded mountain in Maokong, U-Theatre holds all kinds of Zen activities for people to learn about meditation. (Photo/Liang Shuyi)

15. The well-designed Nung Chan Monastery has a vast atrium and a peaceful pond that make people feel particularly serene. (Photo/Yangping Yang)

15



Meditation

Scientific research has proven that meditation is effective in helping you clear your mind. In Taipei, there are a number of organized Chan and Zen Buddhist meditation opportunities suitable for foreign visitors and expatriates.

One is provided by Nung Chan Monastery (農禪寺) in Beitou District, easily accessible via the Taipei Metro, which has a large complex of visually dynamic aesthetics that is a tourist attraction on its own. Nung Chan Monastery offers special International Meditation Group classes for non-Chinese speakers. For attendees' convenience, these Weekly Meditation Practice sessions are held in a downtown business building by MRT Zhongxiao Dunhua Station (捷運忠孝敦化站). The sessions involve "eight-form moving meditation, sitting meditation, walking meditation and sharing," in which the participants can learn how to clear their minds and gain a moment free from disturbance.

Offering a meditative experience of an entirely different sort is Taipei's internationally renowned performance art troupe U-Theatre (優人神鼓), which

merges drumming meditation with Chinese martial arts and theatrical staging. Its Mountain Theater training and rehearsal base, home to Taiwan's only mountaintop amphitheater, overlooks Taipei Basin. It's located in Wenshan District, close to Taipei Metro's Maokong Gondola line. The troupe gives irregular shows for the public here (paid attendance). With the calming drumbeats reverberating across the mountain, the mesmerizing performances draw viewers deeply into the meditative experience. You can also sign up for their "Zen Drum Camp" (half-day, full-day) to learn about aesthetic drumming and sacred dance. The "One-Day Zen Activity," on the other hand, involves a series of meditation practices that lead pupils on a journey of self-exploration to learn the true meaning of "living in the moment." 

MEDITATION RETREATS

NUNG CHAN MONASTERY

WEBSITE dharmadrum.org/img/

U-THEATRE

WEBSITE utheatre.org.tw/u-intro/u-mount

Meet the Masters: A Tracing of Taipei's Modern Architecture

Author AYCC

Photographer Koo Chen-Fu Memorial Library, Whitestone Gallery Taipei, Taiwan Scene

Walking in Taipei, a city full of skyscrapers, have you ever stopped and looked up to admire the exquisite silhouette of the buildings? Sometimes, temporarily backing away from work and extracting inspiration from the arts is the best way to recharge our lives.

In Taipei, "art" is not as far away as you might imagine. In fact, there are many modern buildings and interior spaces with unprecedented designs in this busy metropolis, with many of these designed by world-renowned architects.

It is a great sensory experience whether you are inside or outside of these establishments. We've selected three masterpieces that are considered representatives of modern architecture in Taipei, all created by well-known architects. Follow their footprints with us to discover the stories and philosophies hidden beneath the rooftops this autumn.

01



01. Taipei is the home of many modern architectures. Even a library's design can be unique and refreshing.

02. Inspired by lotus leaves, master Ito hopes that the light between the leaves can blend into the building and become a part of the architecture.

03. With natural light shining through, Koo Chen-Fu Memorial Library offers a comfortable and quiet place to read.

02



03

“We have to base architecture on the environment.”

– Toyo Ito ”

KOO CHEN-FU MEMORIAL LIBRARY

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Koo Chen-Fu Memorial Library, by Toyo Ito

Pritzker Architecture Prize winner Toyo Ito (伊東豊雄) is one of the most famous Japanese architects, known for creating conceptual architecture, a form that seeks the expression of both the physical and virtual worlds.

While introducing an idea or a concept in his mind from the exterior, Ito often draws inspiration from natural elements, and designs it into an architecture that is connected with the ecological environment and with the local society.

One of Ito's prestigious architectural designs in Taipei is the Koo Chen-Fu Memorial Library (辜振甫先生紀念圖書館) of the College of Social Sciences at National Taiwan University (國立台灣大學社會科學院), a green building that is recognized as the first architectural work of public art in Taiwan. It is the combination of an eight-story lecture building and a glassed house-style library.

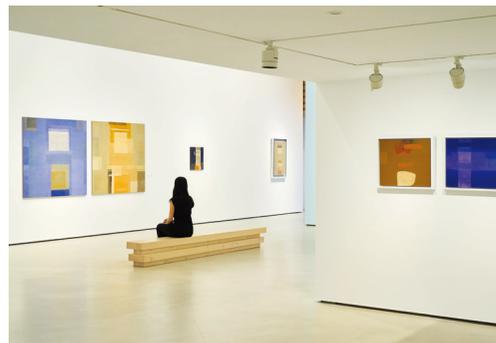
The library wing is characterized by a tree-like structure, with the first impression of the rooftop being blooming lotus flowers. The internal columns carry on with the concept of a lotus, which are developed from three geometric lotus patterns that spread from the center. Between the lotus leaf-shaped gaps, natural light diffuses softly, creating a relaxing atmosphere where young students can read under the shade. Ito believes this kind of design increases the interaction between architecture and humanity, which in turn nurtures vitality and benefits both equally.



04

04. Master Kuma stacks natural material such as wood to create a smooth flow at the entrance of Whitestone Gallery Taipei. (Photo/Whitestone Gallery Taipei)

05. “Architecture of defeat” such as Whitestone Gallery Taipei is an architectural style that is characterized by the simplest design. (Photo/Whitestone Gallery Taipei)



05

Whitestone Gallery Taipei, by Kengo Kuma

Japanese architectural master Kengo Kuma (隈研吾), whose works are known as the “architecture of defeat,” envisages a different mode of conceiving architecture. The concept is to reflect modern society’s pursuit of victory, which can be seen from the eye-catching, business-oriented model of buildings. This could be considered as little more than competitive nature manifested in physical form, but it actually overloads the environment. Instead of using exquisite design to “win” this conceptual battle, Kuma’s design is shaped by modesty, using the simplest materials to showcase the essence of the architecture itself. As a result, he shows great respect for Mother Nature. By using natural materials such as wood, mud brick, bamboo or glass, his works all cleverly take advantage of natural light and terrain to create a seemingly delicate yet shock-resistant architecture.

“Architecture forms a vital link between people and their surroundings.”

— Kengo Kuma



Whitestone Gallery Taipei (白石畫廊·台北) in Neihu (內湖) stands for exactly what Kuma believes in. As his first attempt to design a gallery, he found that it is important for a gallery to create a warm and comfortable exhibition area where visitors can enjoy a phenomenal experience of art in a neutral space. As a result, he chose the simplest material — wood — as the core component. Here at Whitestone Gallery, wood is stacked in various angles, linking the interior and exterior. Each wooden block is connected, from the storage facility, to the reception area, and on to the exhibitions. This allows visitors to walk in and follow the smooth, inviting lines of the space, and explore the gallery in depth. While people often call the gallery “White Cube,” Kuma certainly adds color to Whitestone Gallery by endowing it with such a dynamic flow.

WHITESTONE GALLERY TAIPEI

ADD 1, Jihu Rd., Neihu Dist.

HOURS 11:00am - 7:00pm (Closed on Mondays)

Wang Da Hong House Theatre, by Wang Da-hong

Chinese-born Taiwanese architect Wang Da-hong (王大閔), the “poet of architecture,” is regarded as the driving force of modern architecture in Taiwan. He studied architecture at the University of Cambridge and Harvard University from the 1930s to the 1940s, where he met with the modern concept of designing buildings. Yet his inheritance of traditional Chinese architecture still has a role to play, which later formed his architectural philosophy that blends the features of the East and the West.

Of the many structures Wang designed, his bachelor residence no doubt has an irreplaceable standing. This single-story house on Jianguo South Road (建國南路) was originally built in 1953, and was perhaps the first Western-style building blended with Chinese features to garner high acclaim in Taiwan. The transparent interior is centered by the bathroom and kitchen that are separated back-to-back by a wall, while the rest of

the space is open. Modern architectural elements such as horizontal massing and floor-to-ceiling windows are conspicuous, with the significant elements of Chinese interior design such as round window panes and red bricks are also applied.

On walking in, visitors can immediately see through the open space, where the dining room and the living room create a natural flow that leads to the garden, a layout commonly favored by homeowners even now.

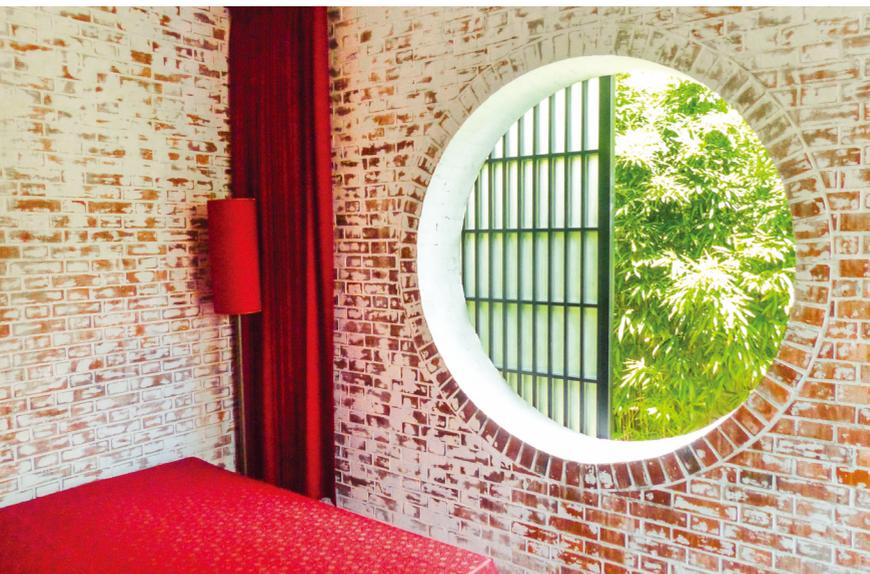
The house, however, was demolished in the 1970s due to urban renewal efforts. An exact replica — Wang Da Hong House Theatre (王大閔建築劇場) — was rebuilt in 2017. Located next to Taipei Fine Arts Museum, its design still stands unshakable nowadays, showcasing a masterpiece that is praised from generation to generation. 

“A house needs to be designed, so that it can be called an architecture.”

— Wang Da-hong 

WANG DA HONG HOUSE THEATRE

ADD 181, Sec. 3, Zhongshan N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist.
HOURS 9:30am - 5:30pm (Closed on Mondays)
9:30am - 8:00pm (Saturdays)



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06. Round window panes and red bricks are the important elements of Chinese architecture that are frequently used by master Wang. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)

07. The floor-to-ceiling window connects the indoor and outdoor space of Wang Da Hong House Theatre with light flowing naturally. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)



01

Calm for Your Soul in Taipei's Japanese-Era Historic Sites

Author Jenna Lynn Cody

Photographer Taiwan Scene, Leputing

Many first impressions of Taipei are dominated by boxy concrete structures, or the taller buildings and shopping malls of Xinyi District. However, as the former capital of the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan, Taipei enjoys a rich cultural inheritance of historic sites which harken back to this era.

Although colonialism is never justified, the Japanese government did embark on ambitious development plans and built many sites which still stand today as reminders of Taiwan's complex history and heritage. Among these are many wooden buildings — often dormitories or residences for officials, but also private buildings and other structures. Many of these were either used by the incoming Republic of China government after World War II, or left to the elements as that government attempted to erase the cultural memory of the Japanese era in Taiwan. Fortunately, in

recent years, preservation efforts have brought many of these traditional architectural gems back to life for the public to enjoy.

These buildings, often constructed using traditional methods and designs, provide calming spaces to enjoy autumn in Taipei, and offer delights such as books, music, calligraphy, tea, food and art. Follow in our footsteps as we take you on a tour of three of the most popular Japanese-era sites in the city: Taiwan Literature Base (台灣文學基地), Kishu An Forest of Literature (紀州庵文學森林) and Leputing (樂埔町).

▲ COVID-19 ALERT

Opening hours may vary during the pandemic. Please double check before visiting, and follow the epidemic prevention regulations on site.

Taiwan Literature Base

Near MRT Zhongxiao Xinsheng Station (捷運忠孝新生站) and across the street from Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914文化創意產業園區), Qidong Street (齊東街) curves through a checkerboard of lanes and alleys developed during the Japanese era. Built between the 1920s and 1940s, the historic wooden houses were originally used as dormitories for Japanese officials, the remnants of which formed today's dormitory complex and became the first of the Japanese-style dormitories to be protected and renovated under the Cultural Heritage Preservation Act (文化資產保存法).

Qidong Street itself is much older, however. Since the Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1636 A.D. – 1912 A.D.), this road was considered important as it connected the historic riverside neighborhoods of Taipei to the nearby port of Keelung (基隆), and was used extensively for the transport of export goods such as rice and coal. Just a few decades later, the Japanese gridded urban

development allowed older routes such as Qidong Street to remain, creating the layered urban geography we see today. Now, it's a leafy backstreet area perfect for exploring in pleasant autumn weather.

As you enter the complex, walkways wind around a central courtyard to the buildings, which have been restored with gleaming wood floors, fresh tatami and a mix of modern and Art Deco furniture. One comfortable space provides literature in Taiwanese and Hakka, which can be perused in air-conditioned comfort. Some rooms offer small showcases of older elements of the buildings or exhibits relating to Taiwanese literature. An interactive exhibit invites you to turn to a random page in a book, choose a sentence that resonates with you and share it. Another operates as a Japanese teahouse, where Japanese Matcha and delicate cakes can be found. Outside, long wooden benches and grassy areas are ringed with tropical plants and original banyan trees, where one can relax in the shade on a warm day.

TAIWAN LITERATURE BASE

ADD 27, Sec. 2, Jinan Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.
HOURS 10:00am - 6:00pm (Closed on Mondays)



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01. Many old residences have been retained and restored from the Japanese era in Taipei, adding a touch of retro elegance to the city.

02. Taiwan Literature Base puts on varied exhibitions of Taiwanese literature and displays many modern poets' verses on site.

03. After years of work, the interior of Taiwan Literature Base has been expertly restored to its former ornate glory.



03

Kishu An Forest of Literature (Kishu An)

It's hard to imagine today, but in the Japanese era, the Xindian River (新店溪) near Guting (古亭) once thrived with riverside restaurants and banquet halls. Among the most famous of these was Kishu An, built in 1917 by the Hiramatsu family and named after the family's hometown of Kishu in the Kansai region of Japan.

The original thatch-roof restaurant was expanded and renovated in the 1920s, with bridges connecting it to the embankment, a third-floor banquet hall and proper roof tiles. This top floor was said to offer some of the finest views of the river. The family also expanded the restaurant with annexes and courtyards, allowing for gardens, outdoor banqueting and guesthouses. In the post-war era, Kishu An housed civil servants, much like the Qidong Street dormitories. Surprisingly, this is how the famed restaurant gained a connection to Taiwanese literature: novelist Wang Wen-hsing (王文興) once resided here, and many scenes in his poignant novel *Family Catastrophe* (家變) are set in the building.

Unfortunately, a 1996 fire destroyed the three-story restaurant. Despite being at the intersection of Tongan Street (同安街) and busy Shuiyuan Road (水源路), the remaining annex is quiet and calming, with

warm wooden and tatami interiors and wax-apple shaped fabric pendant lamps. Long corridors with glass windows look out onto a park lined with massive banyan trees, a popular picnic spot on pleasant autumn days. This building as well as the newer annex next door offer plenty to do, including a bookshop, restaurant and café with outdoor seating that hosts a variety of talks and exhibits.

KISHU AN FOREST OF LITERATURE

ADD 107, Tongan St., Zhongzheng Dist.
HOURS 10:00am – 6:00pm (Tuesday to Thursday, Sundays)
 10:00am – 9:00pm (Fridays & Saturdays)
 (Closed on Mondays)



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04. There is plenty of shade in Kishu An's outdoor space, which is suitable for a leisurely walk in autumn.

05. Walking into the quiet veranda of Kishu An is like returning to the Taiwan of the Japanese colonial era.



06

06. Using wood that has been carefully treated with preservatives, Leputing successfully recreates the elegance of old Japanese houses. (Photo/Leputing)

07. Leputing integrates a Japanese-style garden with modern lighting design, creating a comfortable and calming atmosphere. (Photo/Leputing)

08. Turning into a high-end restaurant after its extensive renovation, Leputing provides all kinds of exquisite cuisines. (Photo/Leputing)



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Leputing

In the shadow of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, a large Japanese-era dormitory for government officials was once left to rot. Built in the 1920s, this site was also near the historic government center, similar to the dormitories on Qidong Street. The area itself had once been mostly rice paddies and fields during the Qing Dynasty. Now called Guting, the Japanese named it Nishikicho (錦町) and targeted it for urban development.

By the 21st century, what is now a gorgeous restaurant and event space was a mess of ruins, with only an L-shaped foundation raked with weeds, some moldering green-painted wood and a few stone lanterns to speak to its former beauty.

In 2013, Lead Jade Life & Culture (立偕生活文化) was entrusted to renovate the site. The organization used

traditional building methods as much as possible to recreate the dormitory as it once was, including materials such as straw, clay and bamboo.

The result is remarkable. A minimalist, modern gate opens into a calming courtyard that beckons visitors inside. The peaceful garden relaxes the mind while the food entices the palate, and the masterfully-restored corridors induce quiet memories of Taipei's past. In addition to a Japanese-French fusion restaurant (reservations recommended), Leputing also exhibits art by Taiwanese artists, some of which may be purchased. They are especially known for their scarves, made using plant-based dyes. A perfect gift of treats for yourself this autumn! 🍁

LEPUTING

ADD 67, Sec. 2, Hangzhou S. Rd., Daan Dist.

HOURS 11:30am – 10:00pm (Closed on Tuesdays)



Green Oases in the Heart of Taipei

Author Rick Charette
Photographer Yenping Yang, Taiwan Scene

The central core of bustling Taipei City, dense with buildings and people, sits in a basin that is barely above sea level. Taipei Basin is surrounded by mountains, save for the narrow valleys through which multiple waterways flow and a single waterway flows out, headed the short distance needed to reach the freedom of the sea.

Taipei's ringing mountains mean great swathes of trail-intersected low, mid, and even high-altitude green walks within a quick jaunt from the central core. In this article, however, our destination is a trio of large, popular greenspaces right in the core itself that provide you with a breath of fresh "green" air. Each is a splendid getaway-in-the-city perfect for chilling and relaxing — in autumn and all other seasons, too. Are you ready for the visit to these oases in the heart of Taipei?

01. Walking into the oasis in the center of Taipei, the fresh air drives away any and all worries in life!

02. Strolling the wooden boardwalk in Taipei Botanical Garden, you can enjoy the cool shade beneath the lush trees. (Photo/Yenping Yang)

03. Taipei Botanical Garden is home to many creatures, making it a perfect spot for birdwatching. (Photo/Yenping Yang)

04. The Lotus Pond in Taipei Botanical Garden is often surrounded by painters, sketching the aquatic scenery. (Photo/Yenping Yang)

 **COVID-19 ALERT**

Opening hours may vary during the pandemic. Please double check before visiting, and follow the epidemic prevention regulations on site.

01

Taipei Botanical Garden

台北植物園

This pathway-interlaced landscaped garden attraction is a luxuriant eight-hectare oasis of green right in the heart of the central core. It's just a few minutes south on foot from MRT Xiaonanmen Station (捷運小南門站), along a quiet, leafy section of Boai Road (博愛路).

This space was developed by the Japanese during their 1895-1945 period of colonial rule. It first sprouted as a nursery, established in 1896, which was expanded to become a botanical research station and renamed the Taipei Botanical Garden in 1921. Today you'll find yourself immersed in a living cornucopia of specimens from some 2,000 plant species from Taiwan, Japan, China, Southeast Asia, and beyond.

The park has a wholly different look and character as it passes through each season, with each area designed to offer up changing blooms each quarter. To ensure that visitors will not miss the blooming season, the official website provides a special calendar displaying the bloom time and introduction of these different seasonal stars. The garden's most popular draw is the substantial Lotus Pond, almost always busy with photographers and painters, and the best place to enjoy a moment of quiet in this busy life.

The garden's quietness and prolificacy also make it perhaps the best insect and bird watching location within the urban core. Be on special watch for the shy, regal Malayan Night Heron. If you are lucky enough, you might spot stag beetles resting on the tree trunks or all kinds of dragonflies hovering over the surface of the pond, enjoying their unrestrained lives in the city oasis.

TAIPEI BOTANICAL GARDEN

ADD 53, Nanhai Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.

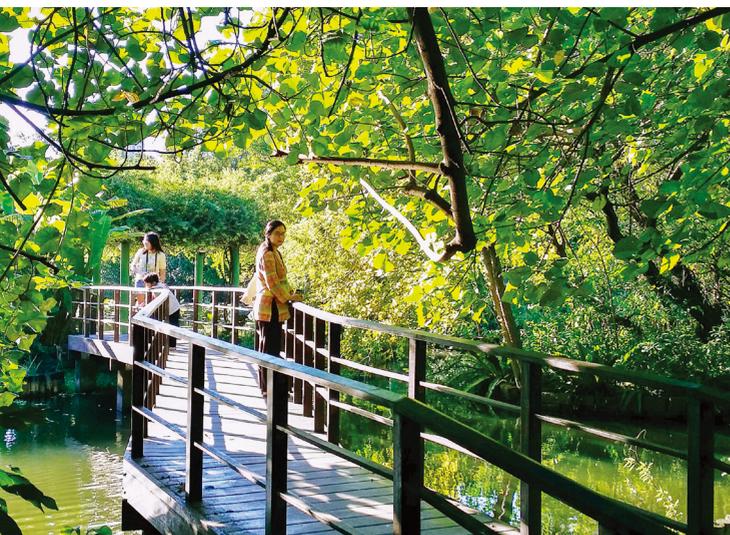
HOURS 8:00am - 6:00pm

WEBSITE tpbg.tfri.gov.tw/en/Introduction.php



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Fuyang Eco Park & Fuzhoushan Park

富陽自然生態公園與福州山公園

Fuyang Eco Park is in a compact little stream valley at the base of small, low Fuzhoushan (福州山, Fuzhou Mountain), which has an elevation of about 105 meters, on Taipei Basin's east side, the southeast edge of the city core. It's just a five-minute walk southwest from MRT Linguang Station (捷運麟光站), on the MRT Wenhua Line (捷運文湖線).

The eco-park is on the mountain's forest-covered low slope. Spread out over 3.8 hectares, this was originally a hidden military ammunition depot site, decommissioned in 1988. Thanks to long-term restricted access, the local ecology has remained intact. Much military infrastructure also remains, with dugouts and tunnels harkening back to less tranquil days.

Like Taipei Botanical Garden, this peaceful spot, rich with plants and insect food, is a natural habitat for birds, and hence great for birdwatching. Proudly proclaimed here are the "Three Musketeers of Fuyang (富陽三劍客)" — the Taiwan barbet (五色鳥), Japanese white-eye (綠繡眼), and black bulbul (紅嘴黑鶉) — which flit about the treetops.

A short, comparatively easy trail from the eco-park leads up onto forested Fuzhou Mountain, home to Fuzhoushan Park, a comfortable getaway of quick trails and great views. Rest-pavilion outlooks offer up grand photo ops of far-off Guanyinshan (觀音山, Mt. Guanyin) and the Yangmingshan massif toward the north coast, and of the skyscraping Taipei 101 building in the mid-distance. A tidbit that fascinates foreign visitors is that this park, dedicated to eco-preservation, occupies ground held until not long past by a sprawling, tree-denuded public cemetery, tombs clearly visible from the surrounding flatland, cleared as part of a slope-reclamation initiative.



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05. Military infrastructure such as this old culvert can still be spotted in Fuyang Eco Park.

06. Walking in Fuyang Eco Park is like stepping into a primitive jungle.

07. Within a short 15-minute hike, the viewing platform of Fuzhoushan Park offers a grand view of Taipei City.



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Tiaomi Historic Trail

糶米古道

This trail is south of MRT Xiangshan Station (捷運象山站). It takes you up to one of Taipei's most popular hiking attractions, low-altitude Four Beasts Mountains, which has sparkling views of nearby Taipei 101, the basin's urban buildup, and mountains to the north.

A 25-minute walk from the metro station to the trailhead, or a leisurely 10-minute ride on YouBike, the hike starts from an uphill creek under the shade of various tree species, which leads you to the trailhead. Right beside the trailhead is the entrance to the long-abandoned Dexing Coal Mine (德興煤礦), opened in 1897, its prime operating period in the 1940s. In the square before it are explanatory boards (in Chinese) and a model push-car, and you can walk right into the tunnel — a short, well-lit, well-paved way.

Surrounded by dense trees and ferns, the trail is relatively steep, with about 500 steps in total leading to the top. It was laid out in the first half of the early 1800s by local rice farmers — the two Chinese characters “*tiaomi* (糶米)” means “peddling rice” — to take their rice into the next valley southeast beyond Taipei Basin. Toward the top is the Tiaomi Temple (糶米公廟), dedicated to the Earth God. It's said that rice haulers would stop here to rest and leave a bowl of rice in gratitude for safe passage, leading through various expansions to today's temple. The trail's ridge-top end presents tremendous views of Taipei Basin before you and Jingmei River (景美溪) valley behind. ◆



09

08. Following the greenery uphill along the Tiaomi Historic Trail invites a peaceful moment into one's busy life.

09. Locals believe that Tiaomi Temple blesses the people of Taipei from the past to the present.

10. Ruins of Dexing Coal Mine have become a tourist attraction along Tiaomi Historic Trail.



10



People calm their mind and soul as they explore and admire diverse exhibitions taking place in Taipei.



© Samil Kuo

The First LGBTQIA+ Bookstore in the Chinese-Speaking World

Author Richard Williams

Photographer GinGin Store, Taiwan Scene

Behind the Rainbow

Tucked in a small alleyway in the capital of Taiwan is GinGin Store (晶晶書庫), the first LGBTQIA+ bookstore in the Chinese-speaking world. It is hard to exaggerate the impact the store, also serving as a gallery today, has had over its 22-year history. It has built itself not only as a buzzing hub for LGBTQIA+ books and culture, but as a center for activism and an integral part of Taiwan's rapid gains in equality.

As Taipei cements itself as the capital of LGBTQIA+ advancement in Asia, GinGin has become a must-visit spot for travelers, particularly when they flock to the city for the most notable LGBTQIA+ event in Asia, Taiwan LGBT Pride (台灣同志遊行).

When the GinGin team set about establishing a new space for people from across the gender and sexuality spectrum in Taipei, they hit upon Gongguan (公館), a business district just off Roosevelt Road (羅斯福路) in

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central Taipei, very close to a number of universities. During Taiwan's authoritarian era, in which free speech and pursuit of democracy were banned, this neighborhood emerged as a hotbed for dissent. Back then, professors and students in pursuit of academic freedom gathered in teahouses and coffee shops in the area's alleyways to cover their critical discussion. Many bookstores also popped up, selling banned books, making it an inclusive community and the perfect home for the LGBTQIA+ bookstore.

They chose the name GinGin for their den of liberalism. Together, the two characters "Gin Gin (晶晶)," when broken down into six individual Chinese characters, actually means six suns. The six shining suns echo the six-colored rainbow which has long been a symbol for the LGBTQIA+ community, representing diversity and inclusiveness. "Each color has a variety of meanings and represents different genders and identities," says James Yang (楊平靖), current manager of the store. "It means to be flowing freely, but when gathered together, there is unity."

"The store's rainbow flags and large windows displaying LGBTQIA+ art and culture are important to show that these people are an integral part of society," says Yang. In its early days, the store's neighbors were confused and even offended by the open displays of homosexuality, but those who ran the store were undeterred. "Now, the open courtyard decorated with art and rainbow flags continues to speak out to the



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community, letting everyone know that this is an art space and bookstore, and that the LGBTQIA+ community is a part of society, showing the diversity and different aspects of LGBTQIA+ people."

After more than 20 years serving the community, GinGin's LGBTQIA+ literature and gallery of queer art have established a strong community space for people in Taipei. "Some customers have been visiting for decades," Yang says, "and regularly drop in for a chat." Meanwhile, the alleys and streets around GinGin have over time developed into Taipei's own little Gayborhood — you'll see many LGBTQ-friendly cafés around the area proudly flying the rainbow flag of equality.

01. At GinGin Store, you can find all kinds of books, magazines, and DVDs related to gender diversity.

02. Standing in Taipei for more than 20 years, GinGin Store always welcomes clients from all over the world with its open courtyard.

03. Through diversification, the store manager James Yang hopes to present various aspects of the LGBTQIA+ community.



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Times They Are a Changin’

In its relatively short history, GinGin has seen — and been a part of — seismic changes for LGBTQIA+ people in Taiwan. While homosexual acts have never been criminalized in Taiwan, stigma and discrimination in the traditional culture persisted for many years. Fortunately, in recent years, equality campaigners have achieved a series of milestones, culminating in the country becoming the first place in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage. Taiwan's LGBTQIA+ people have slowly come out of the shadows to be loud and proud about who they are.

Store manager Yang knows for himself how far Taiwan has come in terms of acceptance. In 1997, he was a victim of the Changde Street Incident (常德街事件).

Armed police raided popular LGBT hangouts, detained about 50 people, interrogated them all night, forced them to pose for photos, and threatened to tell family members about their sexuality. The traumatic experience prompted young Yang to join GinGin, hoping to empower the LGBTQIA+ community in Taiwan.

Yang says that before the year 2000, Taiwan's LGBTQIA+ community lived very much behind closed doors, fearing harassment and discrimination. GinGin Store quickly became a space for LGBTQIA+ folks to be themselves and mingle with other queer people. Growing access to the World Wide Web also helped. “The Internet and physical activities have gradually begun to integrate, and the originally closed community has also gradually opened up,” Yang says.

In 2003, GinGin Store, along with other LGBTQIA+ activists and community members got together to launch the first Taiwan LGBT Pride parade, which would grow to become one of the oldest and largest LGBTQIA+ events in Asia. In those early years, the event aimed to show Taiwan's LGBTQIA+ community off to the rest of society. "After the parade was held every year, every participant had more of a chance to meet each other and show themselves better, and the community expanded," notes Yang.

As Taipei has emerged as the LGBTQIA+ capital of Asia, the local community has revealed the diverse styles, types, and characters of its LGBTQIA+ people. "It became easier for everyone to get to know each other, and the community was further divided into different niche groups, and the diversity and difference between LGBTQIA+ communities gradually stood out," says Yang.

04. In Taipei, LGBTQIA+ communities have become more visible and active in recent years.

05. Inside the bookstore, there is a small gallery which exhibits artworks from time to time. (Photo/GinGin Store)

06. GinGin Store often hosts scholars from Taiwan and abroad to exchange their ideas and experiences. (Photo/GinGin Store)

As such, GinGin began to provide a platform for different parts of the community. All kinds of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, and queer people have had a chance to communicate with the wider LGBTQIA+ community and society as a whole. Yang now sees the bookstore as an organic platform where all sorts of folks can exchange art, culture, and ideas. Operating an independent bookstore has its challenges, Yang says, but he maintains a calm mind and tries his best to share and spread diverse ideas and values.



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06

Queer Capital

For Yang, Taipei has quite obviously grown to be one of the LGBTQIA+ capitals of the world. Among all his travels, he's never found a place so friendly and welcoming to different people as Taipei. Yang even believes the city easily rivals global queer capitals like Amsterdam and San Francisco.

Most visitors to Taiwan are enthralled by Taipei's buzzing nightlife. The Red House (西門紅樓), a colonial building surrounded by open-air queer bars, is perhaps one of the most popular nightspots in the city. The area is host to a number of queer shops, galleries, and art

spaces, and after dark, the area is abuzz as people sipping cocktails, enjoying Drag shows, and dancing the night away. Taipei also has its own queer history walking tour and a rainbow sightseeing bus complete with drag queen hosts.

Local governments and institutions have also done their bit to make the city more LGBTQ-friendly, according to Yang. One of the examples is city hospitals like Taipei City Hospital (台北市立聯合醫院), which has trained their doctors and nurses to respect gender and sexuality diversity, and be sensitive to the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community. **1**

07. With increasing awareness of gender diversity, Taipei has become an internationally recognized LGBTQ-friendly city.

GINGIN STORE

ADD 8, Al. 8, Ln. 210, Sec. 3, Roosevelt Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.
HOURS 2:00pm - 9:30pm (Closed on Tuesdays & Wednesdays)

07



Reading List

If you are keen to know more about sexuality and gender issues in Taiwan, Yang is well placed to recommend you some of the must-reads of Taiwan's LGBTQIA+ literature:



01

Crystal Boys (孽子)

by Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇)

It is a story about a gay high school student who is ostracized because of his sexuality. It quickly became a bastion of Chinese-language LGBTQIA+ culture, and has been reimaged for cinema and stage.

02

Notes of a Crocodile (鱷魚手記)

by Qiu Miaojin (邱妙津)

It is a coming-of-age tome exploring the lives of queer misfits in martial law-era in Taipei. The book is narrated by an introspective lesbian nicknamed "Lazi (拉子)," and explores her tortuous attraction to a classmate. The novel's inward-looking self-inquiry of the counterculture main character made it an instant cult classic. In fact, it was so popular that "Lazi" became a slang term for lesbian in the country.

03

A Queer Invention in Taiwan: A History of Tongzhi Literature (同志文學史：台灣的發明)

by Ta-wei Chi (紀大偉)

The book gives a fantastic overview of the country's queer writing from the 1950s to the early 21st century. Various types of Taiwanese queer literary works can be found in this impressive book, including long and short stories, prose, poems, dramas and so on.



01

Taipei's Got Rhythm: The City's Swing Culture

Author Seb Morgan

Photographer Samil Kuo, Swing Taiwan, Walery

The piano bounces out a ragtime melody as Wade Lin (林漢威) walks us through the basics of the Charleston (查爾斯頓舞), his leather brogues twisting left and right as he steps to the lively downbeats.

"Whether they're doing the Charleston, the Lindy Hop (林迪舞), Balboa, or West Coast Swing, every swing dancer has their own personality when they start moving. That's what I love the most about it," he says.

Wade Lin, 33, is the founder of Swing Taiwan, a studio that, despite its relatively short history, has already seen over 6,000 dancers boogie through its doors, and he certainly looks the part. Smartly dressed in a plissé dress shirt, textured flat cap, and pleated trousers, he tells us about the nostalgic dance style that has Taipei on its feet.

From the South to the Savoy: Swing's Roots

Instantly recognizable for its lively twists, slides, and turns, swing first took over dance floors in the US during the 1920s. Rooted in African-American culture, the dance first evolved from African styles in the South, and reached wider audiences after the popularization of styles such as the Charleston in 1923 and Lindy Hop in 1928. Swing ballrooms such as the Savoy in New York stood out during this time as some of the first places to encourage interracial mixing and dancing.

Swing emerged during a time when racial and economic inequality meant that African Americans had very little time to themselves, explains Lin. So, it filled an important role as a social activity that allowed them to come together and make friends. It was something for them to look forward to every Friday night to release the pressure inflicted by heavy work and society at large. In addition, during the Great Depression, enjoying jazz and moving their bodies freely to the music became a way to escape the drudgery of everyday life for many people.



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01. Featuring lively steps and jazz music, swing dancing sparks chemistry between people. (Photo/Swing Taiwan)

02. Originating in the US in the 1920s, swing began in African-American communities and became a relaxing activity for many during the Great Depression. (Photo/Walery)

03. Wade Lin, founder of Swing Taiwan, hopes to share with more people the happiness he experienced through swing. (Photo/Samil Kuo)

▲ COVID-19 ALERT

A friendly reminder from *TAIPEI* during the COVID-19 restrictions. When going out, please wear a mask and follow the epidemic prevention regulations.

Creating a Social Dance Culture in Taipei

The openness of swing was what first drew Lin to the dance while he was on exchange in the US. “I had been very lonely at that time because my English wasn’t that good and it was difficult to make friends. So, one day one of my teachers took me and my classmates along to a gallery opening where there was this social dancing event. People invited me onto the dance floor and suddenly we had this thing that connected us. I had something I could enjoy with everyone in spite of my language abilities.”

Lin was hooked, and on returning to Taipei, he searched for a way to continue dancing. “There was a professor at my school, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology (國立台灣科技大學), who taught English through swing, so I signed up immediately,” he remembers.

Regular classes were great, but Lin wanted to do more than just learn to kick and slide. “Swing isn’t just a dance; it’s a culture — a culture of social dance,” he says. “You create a social environment where you put on some swing music, pour a few drinks for everyone, and they can socialize and make new friends while also connecting through the steps of the dance.”



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Looking to bring this dynamic culture to the campus, Lin started organizing Friday night dances in his laboratory in 2011. “People would come on Friday nights and we’d have some drinks and dance to swing music,” he says.

Noticing how successful these weekly meets were, Lin saw the potential for these swinging social dance parties to become a hit with jazz lovers across Taipei. It wasn’t long before he found more suitable stomping grounds. Starting in 2012, Lin held free Friday night swing socials at Huashan 1914 Creative Park, a former Japanese sake-distillery turned culture park near MRT Zhongxiao Xincheng Station. “Before the outbreak of local COVID-19 cases in May, we used to fill dance floors with up to 200 people, 50 times a year,” he explains. “I guess that shows what a roaring success swing dancing has become in Taipei over the past few years.”



Beating the Pandemic Blues

With Taipei in semi-lockdown at the time of writing, Swing Taiwan continues to offer classes online. Luckily, Lin tells us, the vast majority of his students are learning the Charleston, a subtype of swing that can be danced solo and practiced at home.

"I show them the moves over Instagram Live and sometimes invite international teachers on as well, so we keep things interesting," he says, "It has actually helped us have a more diverse class because students from Europe and North America also join us." In addition, Lin also started offering Swing Fit classes, a retro-jazz take on zumba for those looking to work up a sweat.

More than Just a Dance

"Swing is social," says Lin. "It's all about call and response. When you dance swing, you show your personality. We get a lot of engineers, single people, people who might not otherwise go out and socialize," he adds, explaining that swing helps them bring out a side of themselves that they might not otherwise connect with.

"One of the most important things is that the Taipei scene is very welcoming. No one judges you for your dancing ability," he explains. No previous dancing experience is required to join Swing Taiwan's classes or to attend the social dance events. The company also teaches bilingually, and about 10 percent of the students are international. It's a great way for visitors to get to know local Taiwanese people.



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04. Many popular spots in Taipei have also become ballrooms for swing dancers from all over to enjoy the vitality of the city. (Photo/Swing Taiwan)

05. Once you learn the basic moves of swing, you can join the crowd and dance. (Photo/Swing Taiwan)

06. Through delightful movements, swing dancing helps urbanites to release stress while building friendships. (Photo/Swing Taiwan)

Lin also says that learning swing has been a life-changing experience for a number of his students. He's not exaggerating. "About 20 of the couples that danced at my class ended up getting married," he laughs. "Even if you don't marry your dance partner, learning swing can still be a game-changer," Lin continues. "When you learn the dance, you come into this big bubble, you connect with people, and you get confidence. With swing, you can start over."



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07. Joining swing activities is one of the best ways to meet new people in Taipei. (Photo/Swing Taiwan)

SWING TAIWAN

WEBSITE swingtaiwan.com



How to Dance Swing at Home

Lin's swing style of choice is the Charleston, an energetic dance that was popularized in the twenties with the Broadway musical *Runnin' Wild*. Here, he walks us through a couple of classic moves from this upbeat step.

The Crosswalk

A great party trick to add to your roster, the crosswalk is simple to master but impressive when you bust it out on the dance floor. Begin with your feet in a T-shape, your legs crossed slightly and right foot angled out at 90 degrees from the left.

On the next half beat, uncross your legs and open your feet, pivoting onto your toes as you do so, before pulling your right foot back behind your left and returning it to the T. Rinse and repeat for eight counts so that with each beat your feet uncross and recross again. As you catch the rhythm, you'll almost seem to glide backward as your feet twist to and fro to the music.



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08-09. The crosswalk is an iconic move in swing, following the rhythm to cross and uncross your legs repeatedly. (Photo/Samil Kuo)

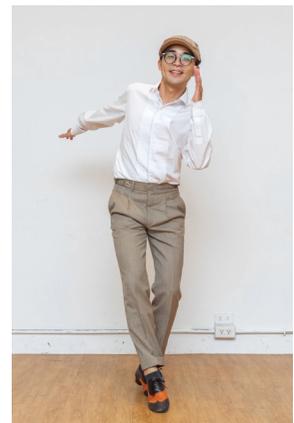
Big Kick and Slide

Big kicks punctuate the Charleston and are a handy transition between different moves. Begin with a simple Charleston step. Bring your left foot back behind your right and then step it forward in front. Then bring your right to the front before stepping it back behind your left.

The big kick is a variation of this step. When you bring your right foot out to the front, kick it across your body to 10 o'clock to achieve the swinging arc that gives the move its name. Then, using the momentum of the kick, take a big step back with your right foot and drag your left behind. This is what creates the slide effect. 📌



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10-11. Kick the right foot and step with the left one, moving one step forward with the right foot, and slide the left foot back to achieve the "Big Kick and Slide." (Photo/Samil Kuo)

“Lang Lang Don’t Cry” Pet Halfway House & Café: Finding Their Forever Home

Author Catherine Shih

Photographer Samil Kuo, Lang Lang Don’t Cry

Not Your Typical Coffee Shop

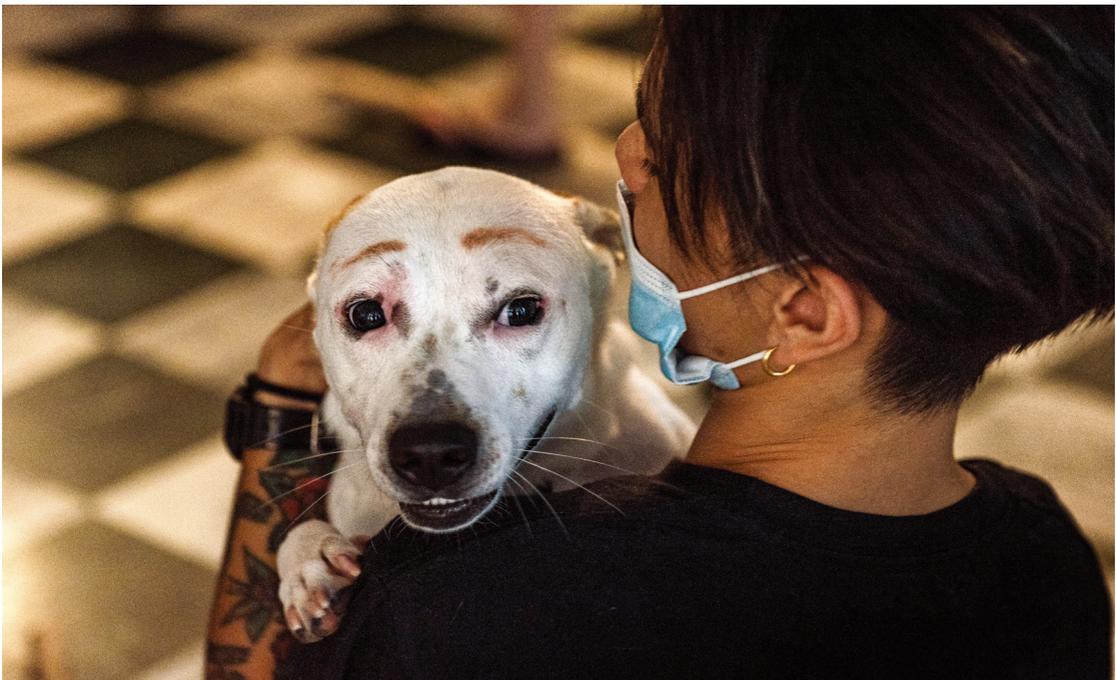
Tucked away in a quiet lane off of Linsen North Road (林森北路) near Taipei Main Station (台北車站) lies an inconspicuous café, “Lang Lang Don’t Cry (浪浪別哭) Pet Halfway House & Café.” Although it looks like your typical coffee shop, another surprising service can also be found on the menu: finding a forever home for a stray dog or cat.

Founded in 2015 in Taipei, following two branches in Taichung (台中) and Tainan (台南), the shop acts as both a halfway house for these animals while also providing an ambient atmosphere. While enjoying a cup of Joe, patrons can play with the animals on-site and get a feel for their personality and whether they’d make a good fit.

“Our goal is to provide a convenient yet relaxing location for potential adopters to get to know the animals one-on-one,” says Taipei branch shop manager Hong Shi-min (洪士珉).

“Most animal shelters are located outside of the city due to limited space and capacity, making it difficult to commute to for potential adopters, and thereby reducing the success rate of adoption,” Hong tells us. “Here patrons can get to our coffee shop easily and spend a reasonable amount of money to meet the animals, increasing the rate and likelihood of adoption,” he continues.

01





(Photo/Lang Lang Don't Cry)

02

01-02. Many dogs and cats at Lang Lang Don't Cry are waiting for their new home.

03. Photos on the wall are all stray animals that found their forever home at Lang Lang Don't Cry.



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Aside from adopting, patrons can also help the organization by making any purchase at the shop. "Three percent of all of our proceeds actually goes to the 'TNVR Project,' which stands for 'Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, and Return,'" Hong advises. The project is an effective and humane method to control and reduce the stray animal population, and is approved and accepted by worldwide animal protection organizations.

"Since no matter how high the rate of adoption is, the rate of stray animals remains high. It's important to build awareness in the community on the benefits of neutering and spaying so that we can solve this issue in the long term," Hong explains.

"At our Taipei branch, we currently have one adult dog, three puppies, and 10 cats," he goes on. "Any time one animal gets adopted, we can take in one more of that particular animal. And the fact that we offer both cats and dogs up for adoption is what sets us apart from others. Most of the halfway houses we've seen are for cats only."

When asked about restrictions in taking in stray animals, Hong informs us, "For dogs, we differentiate

based on size instead of age, since some dogs are actually quite large but young in age. For cats, it's a bit easier. We don't have any requirements on their size or age."

In addition to serving as an approachable location in the city to raise the adoption rate, Lang Lang Don't Cry also educates and trains the animals they take in. "Cats are generally easier to train since most of them inherently know how to use the litter box already," Hong says. "For dogs, on the other hand, it's generally a bit harder since we need to make sure they are domesticated to some level."

For example, some basic requirements are making sure they know their name and are responsive to it. Other more advanced training includes things like stopping them from barking too much, taking them on walks, or making sure they don't attack other animals or humans. "Some adult dogs can be difficult to train due to their upbringing or previous environment. Sadly, many of them have been living in the wild for a long time, or worse, maltreated by their previous owner," Hong notes. "Therefore, it's really important that we offer some training so they can acclimatize to their new home more quickly and easily."

Challenges & Struggles of a Pet Halfway House

On the topic of animal shelters, Hong chuckles, "Many people don't realize that the reason most shelters are situated far away from the city is due to the noise level of the animals." However, he laments, "This has also been one of our biggest issues with setting up a halfway house in the city. Sometimes neighbors will complain about the barking and noise level, and have even gone so far as to call the police on us. So, often we have to take the dogs back home with us at the end of the day, and then bring them back the next day." He goes on to add, "Luckily, our current situation with the animals we have now is pretty calm. And at the same time, we're still running a full-on café, so there's a delicate balance between taking care of the animals while still providing a relaxing atmosphere for patrons to enjoy coffee and such."



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04. Located in the city center, Lang Lang Don't Cry has to manage the noise level of the animals to avoid complaints from neighbors.

05-06. People who are interested in adopting animals at Lang Lang Don't Cry have to come to the café in person to meet and interact with their furry friends.

Process of Adoption

According to Taipei City Animal Protection Office (台北市動物保護處), people who are interested in taking animals back home will first meet their furry friends and submit a paper application. Then the animals will be checked and vaccinated by a vet before joining their new family. The process in Lang Lang Don't Cry follows a similar order.

Hong further notes some requirements such as that the adopter must be over 25 years of age and with a stable income. He says, "More importantly, they have to be willing to meet the animal in person for them to see if they are truly a good fit. It's not enough to just see pictures of the cat or dog online!"



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“Once they are determined to be a good fit, we will schedule an in-person visit to their home and meet all the family members living in that household to make sure that they all agree with the adopting decision,” Hong goes on. He recalls several situations where a family member wasn’t aware of the situation and didn’t agree to the adoption. “The next thing we know, the animal is back in our hands,” he says. “We want to minimize the risk of these animals getting sent back to us as much as possible.”

Hong also adds, “When we screen potential adopters, we are also getting to know their values and ideas about raising these animals. For example, if all the physical requirements are met but the adopter believes in chaining up his or her dog, or only allowing them to sleep outside on the balcony — none of these would be acceptable for us. It takes more than just providing a suitable environment for these pets.”

So far to date, Lang Lang Don’t Cry has found a home for over 1,000 dogs and cats. “Each adopter receives a ton of support as well, including an individualized online chatroom for us to keep each other updated about the animal and any issues that may arise. We’re

here to help facilitate the adoption process and make it as smooth as possible in any way,” Hong says proudly.

Most of the animals at Lang Lang Don’t Cry come from stray animal rescuers who cooperate with them. This group of caring people sometimes also help to process international adoptions for foreigners who hope to adopt dogs and cats from Taiwan. However, since the process is even more complicated, Lang Lang Don’t Cry currently only focuses on domestic adoptions.

“Besides adoption, volunteering at local shelters is also great. There has been a ‘No-kill’ policy in place, in which the government prohibits euthanasia for stray animals. Normally, we would think that this is helping the animals, but in reality, it is creating a massive burden and strain on the shelters and its workers,” Hong indicates.

The Taipei City Animal Protection Office is recruiting volunteers and providing training courses for the candidates who wish to help take care of the dogs and cats at local animal shelters. Even if you don’t take them home, there are still many ways to enhance the wellbeing of stray animals.



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07. There are several pet-friendly parks in Taipei where owners can have a good time with their companion animals. (Photo/Lang Lang Don't Cry)

Moving Towards to a Pet-Friendly City

"Taipei has the potential to be a pet-friendly haven for most animals," Hong shares with us, providing a few insights. "For example, Yingfeng Dog Run Area (迎風狗運動公園) in Songshan (松山) near the river is the best pet-friendly place in the city. It's ample enough for animals to run around and has some great facilities for dogs to jump and play, too." He also notes that there are places for people to sit and relax, which enables both animals and their owners to chill and have fun. Another essential factor is that the place has been well maintained. As dogs can be quite destructive sometimes, it is important to keep everything in good shape.

In addition, Lang Lang Don't Cry has been working with schools in Taipei on the topic of life education. "Adopt, Don't Shop!" is the core idea they are promoting. They also want to highlight that despite their different breeds, all dogs and cats are equal, since the intention to keep an animal of a certain breed is the major reason for buying them. In Lang Lang Don't Cry, most animals are mixed-breeds, which are usually healthier and easier to take care of.

"We always encourage owners to consider adoption first and foremost before buying," Hong points out. "All of us can do our part in helping these animals find their forever, lasting home." 



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08. Stray animals are trained to acclimatize to human society, and have more opportunities to meet potential adopters at Lang Lang Don't Cry.

09. Dogs and cats at Lang Lang Don't Cry are mostly mixed-breeds and have various looks, but they are all equally adorable.

LANG LANG DON'T CRY (TAIPEI)

ADD 13, Ln. 9, Linsen N. Rd., Zhongzheng Dist.

HOURS 12:00pm – 9:00pm

WEBSITE www.langlangdontcry.com.tw



Reading books in a quiet corner in autumn leads to peace of mind.



© Samil Kuo



01

A Farm-To-Table Revolution: Green Dining in Taipei

Author Elisa Cohen
Photographer Green Media

In the face of the greater environmental impact of climate change, how to maintain economic activities in a more sustainable way is a major issue for all industries around the world today. In terms of food culture, consumers' pursuit of organic and local ingredients also reflects this trend.

But how else can we consume more consciously if we can't choose our own ingredients when dining out in Taipei? The Taipei Cultural Exploration Association (台北市文化探索協會), which created the "Green Dining Guide (綠色餐飲指南)" and promotes the "Green Food Manifesto (綠食宣言)," believes that choosing "Green Restaurants (綠色餐廳)" is one such solution.

TAIPEI invited the co-founder of the Green Dining Guide, Chia-Ying Ho (何佳穎), to share the spirit and goals of green food and how green restaurants have become the first choice for many residents and expatriates when dining out in Taipei.

Creating a Sustainable Benchmark

"Our goal is simple: we want restaurants to provide consumers with good food. Through the Green Dining Guide, these restaurants that are striving for a friendly relationship with the land and environment can be linked together and gather more momentum to convey our ideas to consumers," says Ho.

The Taipei Cultural Exploration Association, which operates the Water Garden Organic Farmers' Market (水花園有機農夫市集) in Taipei, originally began visiting restaurants to promote the organic ingredients of its partner farmers and to find a more stable source of procurement, later finding that there were always restaurants around Taiwan that were committed to realizing the ideals of green food. In order to save these restaurants from fighting alone, the Taipei Cultural

Exploration Association leveraged its experience of working with organic farmers and allied with restaurants that were struggling on their own to create the Green Dining Guide based on the concept of the Michelin Guide.

Since the concept of green food is relatively new to Taiwanese consumers, Ho points out that the Green Dining Guide adopts the advocacy model of a promotional campaign, which does not require strict standards from the willing operators, but instead encourages a gradual progress, so that both consumers and restaurants can raise their own awareness of this concept at their own pace. That is the reason why the Taipei Cultural Exploration Association chose to call on like-minded partners through the concept of the Green Food Manifesto.

The six criteria of the Green Food Manifesto include: prioritizing local, seasonal ingredients, prioritizing organic ingredients, following sustainable ecological and oceanic principles, reducing the use of additives, providing vegetarian meal options, and reducing resource depletion and waste.



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Ho emphasizes that the Green Food Manifesto is not a compulsory standard or stringent set of regulations, but rather a voluntary commitment. "In writing the content, we have been thinking about how to use diverse wordings and expressions, hoping to make people feel that these are things we can do together!" she says.



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- 01.** One of the indexes of the Green Dining Guide is to purchase locally grown and seasonal ingredients.
- 02.** The Water Garden Organic Farmers' Market in Taipei gathers local farmers around Taiwan, making organic products more accessible to people.
- 03.** The Taipei Cultural Exploration Association teams up with like-minded partners to promote the Green Food Manifesto.

Taipei's Green Restaurant Scene: Opportunities and Challenges

Taipei is the starting point of the Green Dining Guide in Taiwan, as the city has a large population of people who prefer to dine out on a daily basis, as well as diverse restaurant options. Ho shares that when they first started to promote the Green Food Manifesto, they would look for suitable restaurants to visit and communicate with them to find out how they could provide support and assistance.

"In addition to our own discoveries, the restaurants themselves also referred and shared our information with each other, and even volunteered to join. There are currently about 40 green restaurants in Taipei, but we believe there must be many more that fit the concept," Ho adds.

Taipei has a wide variety of green restaurants, from Chinese and Western cuisine, to cafés, bakeries, and beverage stores. The restaurant Plants, which sells plant-based food and gluten-free vegetarian meals, is one of them.

Plants, along with Ooh Cha Cha (自然食), are known as foreigner-friendly establishments, owing to their English-language menus. Both Plants and Ooh Cha Cha are also noted for their flavorful vegan dishes using organic ingredients produced locally around Taiwan.

Another green food destination worthy of mention in the same breath is Xiao Xiao Place (小小蔬房), which is also a unique restaurant that incorporates Taiwanese ingredients like pickled pineapple into international cuisine. Moreover, all the fresh seasonal vegetables served are purchased from eco-friendly farms.

Ho observes that consumers in Taipei receive a wide variety of information and resources, and are more receptive to the concept of sustainable, organic and



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04. Featured in vegan and raw food, Plants is one of the most popular green restaurants in Taipei.

05. Ooh Cha Cha uses plant-based ingredients to cook Mexican and American-style dishes.

06. Cooked with fresh vegetables and fruits, Xiao Xiao Place brings out the natural flavors of each ingredient.

07. Green Life Guide Map provides information on green restaurants and organic farms around Taipei and Taiwan.



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local ingredients. As such, they can quickly understand the concept of green food and are more willing to choose green restaurants as their dining destinations, contributing their efforts toward environmental protection and sustainability.

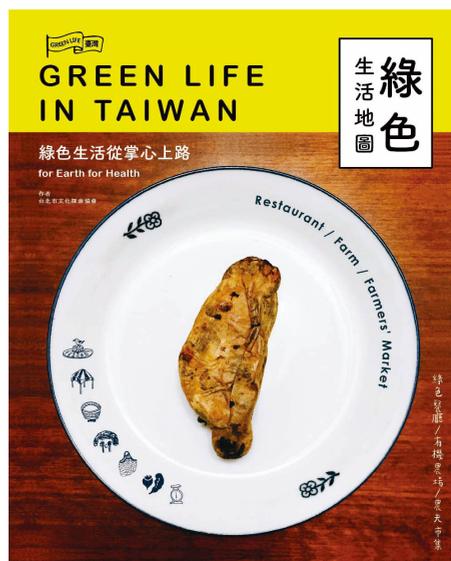
Through the Green Dining Guide link, restaurants and organizations in the city continue to explore ways to maintain operational momentum without abandoning sustainable environmental concepts, including the use of recycled lunch boxes and joint efforts with manufacturers of environmentally friendly materials.

“The most exciting thing is that the restaurants will be able to collaborate with each other on their own!” says Ho, who is pleased to see that many green restaurant partners are quick to adapt and innovate in the face of crisis, as many of them are small-scale operations and are suffering even more during the COVID-19 pandemic. By cooperating with one another, they might be able to discover more mutually-beneficial opportunities.

Gathering Strength to Promote a Healthier Ecosphere

“We play a role as a bridge between organic farmers, quality suppliers, restaurants and consumers,” Ho points out. In addition to integrating restaurants through the Green Dining Guide, they also operate a “Green Media (綠媒體)” initiative that shares articles, information, and online activities such as ingredient research and recipe sharing to engage in a dialogue between farmers, restaurant operators and consumers, and to let more people become aware of their efforts in green initiatives and environmental sustainability.

Green Media is also a platform for the general public to quickly find green restaurants. In cooperation with the Agriculture and Food Agency of the Council of Agriculture (農業委員會農糧署), they have created a “Green Life Guide Map (綠色生活地圖)” covering the whole of Taiwan, marking green restaurants, organic farms and farmers' markets in various places.



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GREEN LIFE GUIDE MAP

WEBSITE greenmedia.today/map_search.php

By clicking on pages of these green restaurants, all sources of food ingredients are displayed, helping consumers to better understand what they eat, such as where and how the foods are produced. In this way, consumers can also get to know individual farmers and manufacturers.

“Honesty to consumers is essential to becoming a green restaurant,” Ho notes. Although the Green Food Manifesto does not have a strict selection criteria, in order to build trust with consumers, green restaurants that wish to join the Green Dining Guide are required to disclose the brands and suppliers of the ingredients they use.

Unlike previous business models that sought to maximize profits, green restaurants are usually small-scale operations that focus on the core concept of “sharing good food” and striving to maintain their livelihoods. Through the organization and mobilization of the Green Dining Guide, Ho looks forward to establishing a mutually beneficial green industry ecosystem, joining hands with partners throughout the restaurant industry to create a cycle of ethical choices, and to continue its expansion. ⬇️



01

Taipei: City of a Hundred Grains

Author Elisa Cohen

Photographer Samil Kuo, Taiwan Rice Dining Hall, changyisheng, macglee, Green Media

In Taiwan, people typically greet each other with “*Tsidh-pá-buē* (食飽未?)” meaning “Have you eaten?”, marking the importance of having a good meal in Taiwanese culture. Rice is one of the most important food crops in Taiwan. Archaeological evidence shows that rice cultivation may have first appeared in Taiwan as early as 3,500 to 5,000 years ago. Additionally, rice was also an important export product for Taiwan in the early 20th century.

Compared to the old times, when Taiwanese people usually had rice with almost every meal, today, with industrial transformation and changes in eating habits, people living in the concrete jungle appear to be losing touch with rice. These urban dwellers rarely think about where the rice that they eat comes from, let alone make time to cook a good pot of rice themselves. In an attempt to promote the myriad aspects of Taiwanese rice to people who live in urban areas, a small eatery sitting in the bustling center of Taipei has been established.

The founder Wilma Ku (顧瑋) and her team have long been investing both time and effort into discovering quality local ingredients. Through introducing locally grown food, they hope to encourage consumers to purchase and support these products. In this way, regional food diversity can be identified, appreciated and sustained. Thus, the team set up “Taiwan Rice Dining Hall (泔米食堂)” providing an opportunity for people in Taipei to taste different varieties of Taiwanese rice and produce.

TAIPEI invited Fin Liu (劉馥熒), the manager of Taiwan Rice Dining Hall as well as Ku’s teammate, to share how Taiwan’s special rice dishes are popping up all over Taipei, allowing more people to get to know Taiwanese rice and rice culture.

TAIWAN RICE DINING HALL

ADD 12, Ln. 175, Sec. 2, Heping E. Rd., Daan Dist.
HOURS 11:00am - 1:00pm, 5:00pm - 7:00pm
 (Closed on Thursdays, Saturdays & Sundays)

Understanding Taiwan Through Rice

Taiwan Rice Dining Hall is tucked away in an old brick bungalow set between high-rise buildings. Upon pushing open the quaint wooden doors, you will see a long table bathed in a warm yellow light, with home-cooked dishes offered for hungry visitors.

The eatery has selected local Taiwanese organic ingredients, including packs of rice from Yilan (宜蘭), Hualien (花蓮), Taitung (台東) and Pingtung (屏東), after visiting farms, rice mills, and farmers' associations throughout Taiwan.



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“Instead of running a restaurant, what we do is more like curating exhibitions about regional Taiwanese food culture,” states Liu. She explains that they usually focus on one region at a time, selecting a few varieties of rice grown in the region and designing its daily menu with those local ingredients. For example, one day they might have sticky-rice rolls (*fantuan*, 飯糰) with Hualien red glutinous rice, combining local pork and wild vegetables commonly used by indigenous Taiwanese. On another day, Taitung rice might be used in cooking wild vegetable porridge or aboriginal rice dumplings (*a-vai*, 阿糰) with side dishes containing hibiscus, showcasing local agricultural products and the rich culture of various areas.

“The greatest feature of Taiwanese rice is that many different flavors of rice are produced,” Liu points out, further stating that although Taiwan is small, there are huge variations in geography. There might be differences in topography, climate, and soil conditions even within a single region, resulting in the diverse taste of rice grown in a single county.



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01. With diverse geographical conditions, Taiwan nurtures a wide variety of rice grains as well as many different yet equally flavorful tastes of rice.

02-03. Located in an old brick bungalow, Taiwan Rice Dining Hall not only offers home-cooked dishes, but also sells locally grown produce from all around Taiwan.

04. With rice and ingredients from selected regions, dishes at Taiwan Rice Dining Hall demonstrate the diverse local food culture in Taiwan. (Photo/Green Media)



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05. Rice is a hidden ingredient in all kinds of Taiwanese food, and the fried radish cake made from Indica rice milk is just one of them. (Photo/macglee)

06. Thick rice noodle soup, one of the iconic street foods in Taipei, is also a form of rice. (Photo/changyisheng)

07. Sticky rice pudding made from glutinous rice has both a sweet and savory version. (Photo/Taiwan Rice Dining Hall)



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A Day's Rice Feast

"Truth be told, you don't have to leave Taipei to get a taste of special Taiwanese rice," Liu remarks, adding that rice dishes are ever-changing and closely integrated with the local lifestyle. They can be eaten throughout the day, from breakfast to a midnight snack. For example, the ubiquitous fried radish cakes (*luobo gao*, 蘿蔔糕) seen on breakfast shop menus are made from Indica rice milk, and sticky-rice rolls are a mixture of Indica and glutinous rice, combined to create a chewy texture that is not overly sticky.

From the thick rice noodle soup (*mifen tang*, 米粉湯) and salty rice pudding (碗粿), to the herbal rice cakes (草仔粿), oily glutinous rice (油飯) and Taiwanese meatballs (*rouyuan*, 肉圓) in the market, as well as rice snacks, all can be found everywhere in Taipei. In addition to their savory taste, desserts made with rice are also rich, including silver needle noodles (*mitaimu*, 米苔目) that come with shaved ice in summer and *tangyuan* (湯圓) in warm sweet soup in winter.

Listing the various rice snacks in Taipei, Liu laughs, "It is likely that foreigners have been eating rice all day, but just didn't realize it!"

Taiwan Rice Dining Hall has also developed a number of unique rice snacks, such as cakes made from red glutinous rice flour. The soft, reddish-brown cake gives off the unique aroma of Hualien red rice. Rice flour that is used also creates a moist texture.

Its signature homemade fermented rice drink, which does not contain any ingredients other than rice fermented with koji, also reveals the original flavors of different rice varieties. With the sugary taste coming purely from the starch, the sweetness of the rice drink is smooth yet delicate.

In addition, the team developed pancake powder made from brown rice and rice crackers combining different Taiwanese seasonings to provide more opportunities for ordinary people to eat quality Taiwanese rice.

How to Turn Quality Rice Grains into Quality Rice Dishes

“Rice is the major theme of our exhibition, as we hope that everyone eats more rice,” Liu points out. According to the statistics of the Council of Agriculture (行政院農委會), rice consumption in Taiwan has declined sharply in the past 40 years. Therefore, Taiwan Rice Dining Hall also encourages everyone to cook at home using rice and local ingredients.

Liu further shares tips for rice-cooking, advising that “Buying quality rice is fundamental. Then, wash and soak it well.” Liu notes that rice grains are like sponges which absorb water immediately. So, it is critical to use better quality water to quickly rinse off the dirt and impurities attached to the rice grains. Then, drain the water with a strainer or sieve.

Soaking rice ensures that the grains absorb enough water to create an even texture when cooked. Let the rice grains soak in a 1:1 ratio of water for 20 minutes to an hour before cooking. Usually, the varieties with smaller grains and softer texture require less soaking time, and vice versa. Liu suggests checking the referred soaking time on the package before cooking.

After soaking, put the rice into the rice cooker and flip the switch. When the rice cooker signals that it is done, leave it to sit for five minutes before opening the lid and loosen the rice with a spoon to distribute the water vapor evenly in the pot.

If cooking rice on the stove, first turn the stove up to medium-high heat to let the water boil, then cover the pot and let the rice cook slowly over a low heat. The amount of water used for cooking depends on the type of rice. If the rice is of the softer variety, less water can be used.

Additionally, Liu also shares several storage tips for rice grains and cooked rice. Rice grains must be stored in a sealable container and kept in the refrigerator as much as possible. Otherwise, the rice will continue to absorb moisture and impurities from the air, affecting its flavor. If you have cooked more rice than you plan to eat, freeze it in a sealed package soon after cooking, while it is still steaming hot, to maintain its freshly-cooked taste when reheating it later.

The climate, food culture, and social changes have given birth to a variety of rice dishes in Taiwan. Taiwan Rice Dining Hall in Taipei upholds tradition and relies on innovative thinking to create unique rice tastes with the hope that more people will be able to experience the hidden aspects and changes of this beloved staple. ◀



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08. Cake made with red glutinous rice flour has a soft and moist texture with the aroma of rice.

09. This rice drink made from fermented rice and koji presents the original taste of rice.

A Sip of Spirits: Taipei Bar Culture and Bartending

Author Jamie R. Wood
Photographer Samil Kuo

A small sheet metal-clad one-story shop stands beneath the bustling Jianguo Elevated Road (建國高架道路), a unique building not often seen among the countless high-rises of Taipei. We ring the doorbell and are greeted by the host, Jun-Hsien Huang (黃俊憲), better known as Little T (小T), wearing a backwards baseball cap. He steps aside, and leads us into his recently opened bar, HiBoRu (嗨啾嚕).

The contrast when walking in the door cannot be more striking. Underneath the sheet metal roof are several exposed beams hung with small signs written with various Japanese slogans. A tall, thin, red Japanese

KIRIN refrigerator stands in front of a polished glass window. Behind the window is a professional kitchen, with chefs frantically preparing dishes. On the other side of the store, a nostalgic macaron green-themed tile wall in full retro 1980s style stands out against the white and yellow tiles. Looking behind the bar, various wine bottles and glasses are sorted into different categories, quietly sleeping in two wooden cabinets.

"Have a seat." Little T brings out a cold soda and directs us to a corner of the store. We sit down and get ready to have a "highballing" conversation.

01





02

01. In Taipei, where world-class bartending flair meets colorful local culture, the unique bar scene is booming more than ever.

02. With more than 20 years of bartending experience, Little T injects fresh, new characteristics into the Taipei bar scene.

03. Large fridges and nostalgic cupboards behind the bar are both stylish and practical.

The True Meaning of Highball: Simple, Classic, and Profound

Growing up in southern Taiwan in the 1980s and 1990s, bartender Little T began his career as a teenager, joining the catering industry right after graduating from high school. At the age of 28, Little T decided to move to Taipei, seeking greater challenges in the bartending industry. After almost 15 years, Little T was inspired to start his own business, HiBoRu.

The name of his bar is derived from the Japanese pronunciation of the classic highball, and for Little T, who is the Diageo World Class champion in Taiwan, this is among the timeless classics of all alcoholic concoctions. "Any spirits with soda can be classified as a highball. It's the easiest cocktail to make yet the most profound one," he explains. The use of simple base spirits with soda water is in fact the core of HiBoRu's existence. "I wanted to open a simple restaurant, serving simple drinks and simple side dishes, just like a highball," he notes effusively.

The seemingly simple idea took more than a year of preparation and planning, and when it comes to the special retro atmosphere of the store, Little T's idea could be said to be rather "highball"-ish. "I thought that if I were to open a store in Taipei, I would like to recreate the memories of my formative years. To me, the 1980s is classic, and everything you see in the store is what was trendy then!"



03

Evolution of Bar Culture

Having worked in both the north and south of Taiwan, Little T is a witness to the development of bartending in the country. In the early days of Taiwan's modern society, there was a negative stereotype of bar culture. "When I told my family that I wanted to learn bartending, everyone thought I must have had a bad influence," Little T recalls. This stereotype has its origins. According to Little T, the first bars in Taiwan were closely related to the presence of the U.S. military. There were news stories of GIs drinking and causing trouble. "In the past, most people went to drink for entertainment rather than the taste, and the quality of the drinks was rather bad," he notes.

Little T found that there weren't too many bars for customers in southern Taiwan to choose from when he first joined the industry, hence customers were accustomed to only drinking at a few familiar establishments. Meanwhile when he arrived in Taipei, he found that the bar selection in the city was completely different. "In the past, there were a lot of business customers in Taipei who would go for a drink

along a row of bars on Anhe Road (安和路). Everyone was always bar hopping from one to the next." Such a difference, however, became more and more blurry according to Little T. After the 1990s, a lot of international bar chains moved into Taiwan, giving people more and more options when it comes to drinking. "TGI Fridays was the most important player that influenced the bartending scene in Taipei in particular...Yes, TGI Fridays!" Little T quips, seeing our doubtful expressions.

When one thinks of TGI Fridays today, most people would not relate it to cocktails but rather dining. However, Little T assures us repeatedly that in the past, the availability of alcohol at TGI Fridays produced the first bartenders in Taipei who really understood bartending in the nascent bartending scene. "The TGI Fridays system laid down many of the rules of the bartending industry in Taipei, such as bartending ratios, bartending terminology, and even bar cleaning and glass washing, using a strict SOP training and mentorship system. My mentor also came from the TGI Fridays system, and I am still cultivating newcomers in this method!"

04. As the times have changed, Little T believes that Taipei's bartenders are paying more and more attention to the details and steps of bartending.

05. "Black Cat Kayako" (right) and "Red Suspense" (left) are both original cocktails at HiBoRu favored by regular customers.





05

Taiwanese Bartending on the World Stage

With continued internationalization, Little T won the championship of Diageo World Class in 2011 and became well known in the Taiwanese bartending scene. He believes that the arrival of this type of international competition in Taiwan has contributed to the professionalization of the bartending industry in Taipei. "What Diageo has been promoting is to bring back the understanding of what 'classic bartending' is. For example, where does Long Island Iced Tea come from? What are the key ingredients? What should it taste like? This has led bartenders to seriously study the origins and methods of preparing various drinks," he says matter-of-factly.

For those who attempt to represent Taiwan on the international stage, besides learning the classic flavors, there is another aspect to consider. "When I say I'm from Taiwan at international bartending competitions, not many people really recognize me. Therefore,

bringing Taiwanese flavors into bartending is the best way to make the world recognize us, which is also a kind of a holy mission for Taiwanese bartenders," Little T suggests.

The bartending scene in Taipei today is awash with the practice of infusing drinks with special ingredients. This sets the perfect stage for Little T's imagination to truly flourish. For example, one of HiBoRu's signature drinks, the "Black Cat Kayako (黑貓伽椰子)," is based on the floral scent of the classic brandy Remy Martin, mixed with the slightly bitter coffee roasted and brewed by the famous store Black Gui Cafe (鬼咖啡) in Tainan. With a touch of absinthe and kumquat juice to add a layer of bitterness, the alcohol and caffeine calm your nerves. Another drink, "Red Suspense (赤色懸疑)," incorporates the indispensable fruit elements of Taiwan, using hand-boiled roselle fruit to make syrup, with the aroma of beet juice and the freshness of mulberry vinegar. Based with Campari liqueur from Italy, which is famous for its bright red liquid and bitterness, the pronounced taste is especially suitable for a laid-back evening.



06



07

06. Using Taiwanese street snacks as side dishes along with their special cocktails, HiBoRu hopes to create a special and tipsy time for their customers.

07. Soy-stewed pork rice at HiBoRu is cooked with bourbon, bringing a tender texture to the meat and the unmistakable aroma of whiskey.

COVID-19 ALERT

Opening hours may vary during the pandemic. Please double check before visiting, and follow the epidemic prevention regulations on site.

Traditional Side Dishes to Elevate the Flavor of Cocktails

Some bars in modern Taipei use special décor to win the attention of customers, while others use flashy cocktails. What makes HiBoRu stand out, in addition to cocktails, are the side dishes that are usually not given much attention in general bars.

Little T's parents hail from Tainan, known as the culinary capital of Taiwan, and raised him on traditional southern-style soy-stewed pork rice and other braised dishes. This naturally inspired Little T to develop side dishes that go well with his drinks. "I don't want people to think of my place as just a bar, but if they pass by and want to sit down, they can also have a relaxing meal," he notes.

Unlike conventional soy-stewed pork rice, which is traditionally cooked with rice wine, HiBoRu uses bourbon. Little T first jokes that whiskey was more plentiful than rice wine in his store, and then explains, "The biggest function of rice wine is to remove fishy smells. But with whiskey, in addition to removing that smell, it can also bring out the full aromas of the fatty pork."

Another popular braised dish platter at HiBoRu includes quail eggs, beef tripe, beef brisket, chicken gizzards, peanuts, etc., each of which can exude the fragrance of the unique marinade. According to Little T, because the braised ingredients have different characteristics, the required stewing time also varies, so each ingredient is cooked separately with extra effort to ensure a consistent level of flavor.

Nowadays, bars are springing up all over Taipei. From the food to the décor, and to the most important element — bartending — HiBoRu pairs complexity with simplicity and embraces innovation and the classics equally. Like Little T's simple yet classic Highball drink, only soda water is needed to add a little excitement, which when paired with spirits to create a timeless classic, continues to move the heart. 

HIBORU

ADD 2, Ln. 20, Sec. 1, Jianguo N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist.
HOURS 6:00pm - 2:00am (Closed on Sundays)



Making Taiwanese Flavored Cocktails with Little T

Want to enjoy a glass of distinct Taiwanese flavors at home? Try plum wine with asparagus juice, which is commonly found in convenience stores in Taipei. The two beverages come together in an unforgettable combination of sweet and sour, creating an unexpected burst of flavors that is perfect for a lazy early autumn day.



INGREDIENTS:

Plum wine - 40ml (any brand is fine, pick your favorite!)
Asparagus juice - 40ml
Soda water - 100ml
Ice cubes - several
Dried orange - optional



OTHER KIT:

Glass - 200ml~300ml
Measuring cup - 1pc
Mixing stick or spoon - 1 pc



DIRECTIONS:

- ❶ (Optional) Chill the empty glass in the freezer for 2 to 3 hours before making the drink to get a better taste.
- ❷ Place a few ice cubes in the chilled glass, the amount can be adjusted according to your preference.
- ❸ Measure 40ml of plum wine and pour into the glass.
- ❹ Measure 40ml of asparagus juice and add to the glass.
- ❺ Measure 100ml of soda water, add in plum wine and asparagus juice.
- ❻ Stir the mixture carefully with a stirring stick or spoon.
- ❼ (Optional) Garnish the floating ice cubes with a few slices of dried orange for an extra touch of flavor, both visually and in taste!

Tips!

It doesn't matter if you don't have a measuring cup at home. You can easily create the best flavor by visually measuring plum wine, asparagus juice, and soda water in another container and grasp the ratio of 1:1:2.5.



Splashing Ink and Watercolor Throughout Taipei

Author Catherine Shih

Photographer Ling Ko, Taiwan Scene, Yenping Yang



01

01. Creating and admiring artworks enables people to make a short getaway from their busy lives and discover their inner self.

02. Having been through many ups and downs, Ko now lives a peaceful and unrestrained life in Taipei.

03. The vigorous watercolor and ink splashing represents the artist's philosophy towards life.



02

Art as Therapy for Psychological Well-Being

During difficult times like the experience of stress, anxiety and depression, art and painting can provide a soothing retreat or even a creative outlet for people living in a busy city. Taipei, a metropolis rich in natural, cultural, and landscape resources, is a cradle for nurturing artistic talents.

One such creative Taiwanese based in Taipei, Ling Ko (柯淑玲), an ink artist, finds her inspiration throughout small pockets of the city. Unbeknownst to many, she originally came from a family of little means, but that never stopped her from pursuing art.

“I was really into Chinese calligraphy, even from as young as elementary school. My teacher took note of this, and as a way to encourage my passion, gifted me with a set of Lam Sam Yick (林三益) brushes,” Ko says. “It was the first time in my life that I felt loved and recognized, and it was undoubtedly the key to my journey in discovering art.”

Later, as a teenager, Ko worked various jobs to support herself, including working at a ceramics gallery, where she would often admire art pieces while on the job. Ko later married the boss’s younger brother, which allowed her even further resources to venture into the art industry. However, after immigrating with her family to the US, she was later diagnosed with cancer at the age of 29.

Of this, she remarks, “From this challenge, I grew closer to Buddhism and experienced the power of life and death through my faith, and as such, have been able to turn these personal struggles into art.”

Having fought against cancer successfully, she now lives her life as freely as possible. “After everything that has happened, I don’t want to feel restrained anymore. I enjoy the freedom of nature and creative innovation. And splashing ink and watercolor is just that — a natural expression for my deepest, innermost feelings.”



03

Inspiring and Relaxing in Taipei

Currently back in Taiwan and residing in Shipai (石牌) in Taipei City, Ko feels thankful she has another shot at life. "Every day when I get up, I look at myself in the mirror and count my blessings," she says with immense gratitude. "I normally recite a few sutras and do some meditation to calm my mind," she further tells us. "And after I've had some rest, I usually take a short 10-minute walk to the studio near my house to work on my art. Every day, I set aside time to talk with myself and practice calligraphy, copying the scriptures with a brush and improving upon the quality of my work."

Ko firmly believes that it is only through years and years of cultivation and practice that one can become a master and professional of the trade. "I fully pursue art and religion throughout my life. And as such, I consider myself an expert in these fields," she smiles proudly.

Ko shares with us her way of enjoying the city life in Taipei. "I often visit different museums and art galleries in Taipei for inspiration, including the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, National Palace Museum, National Museum of History (國立歷史博物館), National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall (國立國父紀念館) and other various exhibitions." She enjoys seeing the different ways artists express themselves and finds inspiration when viewing their works.



04

At the same time, she also appreciates the vastness of natural art that can be found within Mother Nature. "Every week, I venture up to Yangmingshan. It is truly relaxing and still my favorite place to really be one with nature in Taipei. Whether it's climbing mountains or riding bicycles, I can feel the buzz and energy of nature," she says with joy. "There I can fully appreciate the trees, relax on the grass, listen to the chirps of insects, and feel the changes in the breeze," she says with her eyes gleaming, further pointing out that all of these natural elements inspire her creativity.

05



Art as a Part of Life

Ko creates her art with brushes, ink, and colors, and shares with us her favorite shop in Taipei. "I'm a bit biased. Since I was gifted with a set of Lam Sam Yick brushes by my teacher, it has always been the top choice of mine. The brush set that I currently use was also purchased from the Lam Sam Yick store," Ko tells us.

Art also trickles down into design for Ko. As a natural artist who enjoys dressing up and feeling beautiful, she often purchases clothes from local Taipei designers such as Huang Shu-chi (黃淑琦), Fu Zi-jing (傅子菁), and many others. "I once collaborated with Fu Zi-jing at the Taipei International Flora Exposition (台北國際花卉博覽會) in 2011 to combine ink-splashing art with fashion and clothing design," she says. "I fully believe art can be intertwined with anything in life, which just serves as more motivation to keep on creating and innovating. And the city of Taipei really provides an avenue for artists such as me to find inspiration anywhere and everywhere!"



Discovering Love in Art

Although Ko has never undergone any professional training in the field, she has received influence from various other masters in Asian art such as Yang Shan-shen (楊善深), Zao Wou-Ki (趙無極), and Chu Teh-Chun (朱德群). These artists have successfully combined Asian ink painting with Western-style art. "They are always encouraging me to listen to my heart and to be my best self," she says. "More importantly, they remind me to pay less heed to criticism from others and just keep making original art," she remarks proudly.

With their support, Ko continues to discover her own way of creating art. "Art is about discovering your inner self, of finding humanity and love," she shares. Ko also spends a lot of time volunteering at local hospitals and motivating other cancer fighters with her personal story. She hopes that by doing so, she can encourage others to live their best lives and experience things more fully. She notes, "For me, art is about sharing love and seeing the real value of life."

For Ko herself, she has never stopped exploring her own life. "I have a bucket list that serves as a constant reminder to try new things, and Taipei is just the perfect place to discover these new activities," she says. She enjoys the energy of the city, which ultimately has become her never-ending source of creative innovation and self-expression. ◆

04. Ko visits Yangmingshan almost every week, immersing herself in Mother Nature. (Photo/Taiwan Scene)

05. Ko often visits museums and galleries in Taipei to relax as well as search for inspiration. (Photo/Yenping Yang)

06. Cooperating with a fashion designer, Ko printed her art on dresses.

06

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



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3 Day Pass/5 Day Pass/
Maokong Gondola
1 Day Pass
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Taipei Citizen Hotline: 1999 (Outside Taipei City, please dial 02-2720-8889)

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



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2021 Color Taipei

In the Name of Love



10/16 (Sat) ~ 11/6 (Sat)

Rainbow Bus Tour Voyage of Love

10/28 (Thur) ~ 11/6 (Sat)

Rainbow Light Show & Rainbow Market

(18:00 ~ 21:00) Taipei City Hall Square