



TAIPEI

HSINCHU

YILAN

TAICHUNG

CHANGHUA

HUALIEN

NANTOU

TAINAN

CHIAYI

KAOHSIUNG

TAITUNG

TAIWAN  
2024-2025

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## Introduction

Shaped roughly like a sweet potato, Taiwan is home to around 23 million people and is one of the most densely populated places in the world. Besides its crowded cities and friendly people, Taiwan is also known for steep mountains and lush forests.

Taiwan is a modern industrialized megalopolis clinging to the fringes of an ancient culture; a string of teeming cities at the feet of a glorious mountain range. Here you'll find traditional noodles at the 7-Eleven, and a day of temple rituals followed by waterslide rides.

The human tide of Taipei will sweep you off your feet, but if you step outside the city limits you'll discover why Taiwan is known as Formosa, (from Portuguese *Ilha Formosa*, meaning "beautiful island"). Mountain peaks puncture a sea of clouds, slick black volcanic rock wraps the coastlines and waterfalls shroud themselves in mist: Taiwan is a computer-generated Chinese watercolor.



### Fast Facts:

Country name: Taiwan (Or Republic of China, which is different from People's Republic of China)

Area: 36,193 sq km (13,974 sq mi)

Population: 23.57 million (2020)

Capital city: Taipei City (population 2.6 million)

Language: Mandarin (Chinese), Taiwanese, Hakka, indigenous languages

Religion: Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Christianity

Government: Multiparty Democracy

## Location & Topography

The main island of Taiwan is located in East Asia 160km (99mi) off the south-east coast of mainland China, south-west to the main islands of Japan and north-west to the Philippines. The island's total area is 36,188 sq km (13,975 sq mi), around 1/10 of Germany - it's 394km (244mi) long and 144km (89mi) wide. Taiwan's spine is a ridge of steep mountains, falling away to a rocky coastline on the east and a narrow and fertile plain (where 90 per cent of the population lives) on the west. Mount Yushan is, at 3952m (12,963ft), the highest peak in East Asia. In addition to the island of Taiwan, Taiwan also governs the small islands of Pescadores (Penghu), Kinmen (Jinmen), Lanyu (Orchid), Green, Liuchiu and Matsu.

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## Climate

Split in half by the Tropic of Center, Taiwan has a tropical climate in the southern and western plains and subtropical climate in the northern and mountainous regions. The average annual temperature is 22°C in the north and 24.5°C in the south. Summer lasts from May to October and is hot and sticky all over the low parts of the island, with monsoon rain and typhoons. Winter, from December to February, is mild with average temperature of 20°C. However, sometimes it's cold when the cold air mass comes, the temperature can be under 10°C, and most families in Taiwan do not have heaters at home, therefore, please make sure you will bring warm enough clothes with you , Spring/Autumn jacket (windproof) highly recommend .

## History & Politics

Little archaeological evidence remains from Taiwan's early history. People - probably Pacific Islanders at first - may have lived here for about 10,000 years, with migration from China beginning in the 15th century. In 1517 Portuguese sailors reached Taiwan and named it Ilha Formosa, or beautiful island. The Dutch invaded in 1624 and built a capital at Tainan - two years later they lost the north to a Spanish invasion, but returned the favour by booting the Spanish out in 1641. During the 1660s the Ming and Chin (Manchu) dynasties arrived on the scene, kicking out the Dutch and wrestling one another for control of the island. The Manchurian eventually won, making Taiwan a county of Fujian Province and triggering a flood of Chinese immigration.



Japan took Taiwan from China in 1895 and held on to it until the end of the Second World War, when it was handed back to China. When Communist forces took control of China in 1949, the president, General Chiang Kai-shek, and his nationalist party, the Kuomintang, fled to Taiwan to plan their reconquest of the mainland. One and a half million Chinese also left the mainland for Taiwan when Mao took control. The leaders of both Communist mainland China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) claim to be the voice of all China, but the international community has, almost without exception, chosen the mainland. In 1971 the Kuomintang lost the Chinese United Nations seat, and in 1979 the USA withdrew its recognition of the Republic.

When Chiang Kai-shek died in 1979 and was replaced by his son Chiang Ching-kuo, Taiwanese started muttering the word 'dynasty', and criticism of the one-party system rose. In 1986, those opposed to Chiang formed the Democratic Progressive Party. Two years later Chiang died and was replaced by the first native-born president, Lee Teng-hui.

Taiwanese politics is divided among those who want reunification with China (the Kuomintang line), those who want Taiwanese independence and those who want the status quo preserved. In 1995 relations between Taiwan and China, always chilly, plummeted to a new low. Lee Teng-hui's high-profile visit to the United States brought mainland China out in a rash of nervous jealousy. Determined to isolate Taiwan and sway the minds of its voters, China held intense military exercises near the Taiwanese coast. In response, the United States donned its global cop hat and sent a couple of warships to monitor the situation. Despite the region's sudden high concentration of itchy trigger fingers, the first direct presidential election was held without incident, and Lee Teng-hui was returned to office.

Taiwan's fortunes took a turn for the worse in September 1999 when a massive earthquake hit the island, the largest in its history, leaving over 2000 islanders dead and piles of rubbles strewn over the city. Even in this time of crisis, however, the snippety relationship between mainland China and Taiwan continued. A defiantly sulky China demanded that any country entering Taiwan to offer earthquake relief get permission from the Chinese government first: a demand that was met with less-than-hearty agreement from humanitarian organizations and other countries around the world.

March 2000, Taiwan elected its next president Chen Shui-bian, the candidate of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party, who believes in a formal declaration of independence for the island. The upset ended 55 years of Nationalist rule and alarmed China, which regards Taiwan as a rebel province.

In 2008 Kuomintang came back to the power after 8 years of rule of Democratic Progressive Party. But recently Taiwanese politics is dominated by corruption affairs, which has been uncovered among administration officials.

Although even under constant repression and threats from China, Taiwan has become one of the most democratic countries in Asia and is still working hard to be officially recognized as a country and an active member of the world.



## Population & People

The population of Taiwan is around 23 millions. The island's population density is one of the highest in the world. Taipei and Kaohsiung are the island's major metropolises and Taipei (including satellite cities) has a population of 6,400,000 and Kaohsiung (including satellite cities) 2,690,000.

About 98% of Taiwan's population is of Han Chinese ethnicity. Of these, 86% are descendants of early Han immigrants known as "native Taiwanese". This group contains two subgroups: the "Min-nan" (70% of the total population) and the Hakka (15% of the total population). The remaining 12% of Han Chinese are known as "mainlanders" and are composed of and descend from immigrants who arrived after the Second World War. This group also includes those who fled mainland China in 1949 following the Nationalist defeat in the Chinese Civil War. The other 2% of Taiwan's population, numbering about 458,000, are listed as the Taiwanese indigenes (Taiwanese aborigines), divided into 13 major groups: Ami, Atayal, Paiwan, Bunun, Puyuma, Rukai, Tsou, Saisiyat, Tao, Thao, Kavalan, Taroko and Sakizaya. Following more intensive exchange with other countries in politics, economy, trade and culture, Taiwanese are marrying foreigners as well. The "New Immigrants", as they are

addressed, are mainly from mainland China and South-East Asian countries, say, Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia. According to a survey in 2003, every 1 out of 7.5 new-born babies were born to a mother who is originally from other countries.

## **Cultures & Languages**

Due to the fact that most Taiwanese are descendents of Chinese from mainland China, Chinese culture is dominant in Taiwan's multicultural society. The Chinese influence can easily be found in languages, arts, music, religions etc. Moreover, Taiwan also has cultures from its diverse indigenous peoples and from its colonial history. Taiwanese culture is a mixture of The East and The West and the ancient and the modern.

The official language of Taiwan is Mandarin Chinese, but most of the island's residents also speak Taiwanese, a local dialect. Hakka is also one of the major spoken dialects. Many of the older inhabitants who received Japanese education under Japanese colonization speak some Japanese. Many people can speak some English (the most widely learnt foreign language), but taxi drivers should be shown your destination in Chinese characters.



## **Religion**

Taiwan is a secular state with freedom of religion. Over 93% of Taiwanese are adherents of a combination of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism; 4.5% are adherents of Christianity, which includes Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and other non-denominational Christian groups; and 2.5% are adherents of other religions, such as Islam. One especially important goddess for Taiwanese people is Matsu, she is the guardian of sea who symbolises the seafaring spirit of Taiwan's ancestors

## Economy

The economy of Taiwan is a highly developed free-market economy. It is the 8th largest in Asia and 18th-largest in the world by purchasing power parity, allowing Taiwan to be included in the advanced economies group by the International Monetary Fund. It is gauged in the high-income economies group by the World Bank. Taiwan is the most technologically advanced computer microchip maker in the world. Presently, Taiwan's per capita GDP is US\$33,402 in 2021.

## CUISINE-Have You Eaten (Jia ba bui)?

A foreigner hearing someone greet her/him by saying “Have you eaten(Jia ba bui)?” might feel a bit confused and wonder why the speaker cares if his stomach is full or not. However, “Have you eaten” is a common greeting term that carries the same basic connotation in Taiwanese as “How are you?”



The expression can be traced back to the early days in Taiwan, when agriculture was the primary means of subsistence for the majority of the population. Back then, being able to make ends meet was blessing and having a full belly was something to feel happy about. Today, however, this animated greeting also shows how much the Taiwanese appreciate food.

Taiwan has had profound gastronomic influences from both China and Japan due to its unique historical background.

Taiwan has an excellent climate and environment for cultivation, so that all kinds of ingredients are abundant and of excellent quality, especially vegetables, fruits, and of course, seafood. Little wonder, then, that this diversity and fusion of influences has given Taiwan the moniker of “Republic of Gastronomy.” Whatever you crave, Western or Eastern style, five star restaurants or food stands, you can find it easily in Taiwan. There are lots of options for people. Take our special night market for example.

Night Market: Night markets are found in every town and city all over Taiwan and provide all sorts of Taiwanese food, usually cooked and served at “lu bian tan” (food stand). All-time favorites are oyster omelets, Taiwanese deep-fried chicken, stinky tofu, fried dumplings, fried rice, noodles, glutinous rice cake, soy bean pudding and more. Sweet or salty, snack or dessert, you'll find yourself spoiled for choice!

## Travel and Transportation

When train travel, is mentioned in traditional Taiwanese folksongs, it is usually related to seeing someone off and leave-taking, but the famous folk song “Diu diu dang” is quite the opposite, because it is filled with the joy of homecoming. This beautiful Yilan folksong describes how a steam train taking a passenger back to his home in Yilan runs through a tunnel with water dripping—diu diu dang—a sound like that of coins dropping to the ground. Both the lyrics and music are very rhythmic, just like the movement of the train.

### Train

Now Taiwan has a high-speed railway (HSR, Gao-tie) linking Taipei and Kaoshiung, which has reduced the travel time between those points to 90 minutes. There is also a conventional railway around the whole island. By choosing from the various train types-Tzu Chiang Express, Fu Shing Express, Chu Kuang Express and Electric Car (EMU), you can arrange your trip according to your own time, destination and budget constraints.

The high-speed railway (HSR ) <http://www.thsrc.com.tw/en/?lc=en>

Taiwan Railways <http://www.railway.gov.tw/en/>

Intercity Coach -There are lots of coach companies running around Taiwan which provide 24 hours service. Usually, traveling by coach is cheaper than by train, and even cheaper at off-peak time. Furthermore, you can enjoy luxury massage chairs on some coaches.



### Airplane

Because Taiwan is located at the crossroads of some of Asia’s busiest air routes, travel to and from the island is easy and convenient. Taiwan is served by airlines from Asia, Europe, South Africa, and North America. The island has two international airports, at Kaohsiung in the south and at Taoyuan (near Taipei) in the north. Taoyuan International Airport is 40 kilometers (24.8 miles) southwest of Taipei.

And also, domestic airlines provide daily flights between Taipei and other major cities, as

well

as to nearby Green and Orchid Islands and the Penghu Archipelago. Taiwan has modern freeway and railway systems that make travel between major cities easy and convenient.

## Transportation in Cities

As most of the people in western countries are used to drive their car or bicycle to get to the place they want, in Taiwan it's quite different. You might see some bikes and cars on the streets but what you will notice as soon as you get here is that there is a large number of people who own a scooter.

If they are curious about your driving skills, most of them will ask "Can you ride the scooter?" instead of "Can you drive the car?".

A convenient method to explore big cities like Taipei or Kaohsiung is using the MRT. With its mission of "Providing a Safe, Reliable, Cordial, and High-Quality Transportation Service" to travelers it has given rise to many traffic issues especially in Taipei.

Opened from 6am to 12pm and 10 different lines (in Taipei) it is an easy and cheap way to go around those cities on your own.



## Education

In Taiwan, there are more than 5 million students studying in over 8,000 schools of all levels, including 1.3 million students in more than 160 institutions of higher education. Basic compulsory education consists of 6 years of elementary education and 3 years of junior high school education. Upon completion of compulsory education, students may choose an academic track or a vocational track. The access to both high school and university is controlled by a series of national exams.

The academic track includes three years of senior high education, college/university education and post-graduate programs. The educational goal at these levels is to nurture high-quality professionals with a global outlook.



The vocational track includes vocational high schools, junior colleges, institutes of technology and universities of technology. Its purpose is to develop technical manpower for economic development.

Taiwan has an extensive higher education system. Each year, over 100,000 students attempt to enter higher education institutes. Over 90% of the candidates are admitted to a college or university. Opportunities for graduate education are expanding in Taiwan, but some students travel abroad for advanced education.

The Taiwan education system produces students with some of the highest test scores in the world, especially in mathematics and science. However, it has also been criticized for placing excessive pressure on students and eschewing creativity in favour of rote memorization.



# ICYE TAIWAN

## **BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF ICYE TAIWAN**

ICYE TAIWAN is a non-profit and non-governmental independent organization now. Back to the history, the International Division of Tainan YMCA had been responsible for the operation of ICYE Taiwan, which was founded right after the General Assembly of ICYE at Berlin in November 1991. For the first year, ICYE Taiwan had bilateral exchange with seven NCs. The General Assembly in Mexico in 1992 was unanimous in their support of the application of the associate membership of ICYE Taiwan, and ICYE Taiwan was accepted unanimously again as a full member in Italy in 1994. We exchanged with seven NCs in 1992, and twenty NCs in 1995.

The New National Committee of ICYE Taiwan was formally organized in September, 1998. We haven't operated under TAINAN YMCA any more. Three executive board members meet at least once every three months and the board of twelve meet at least twice a year according to the regulations of our Ministry of the Interior. Now we have three full-time workers in charge of the office administration, and lots of returnees, co-workers, and volunteers for every activity.

The construction of ICYE Taiwan is for the expansion and development of the leadership of young people through living and volunteering abroad for one year. The exposure experience will certainly benefit both the outgoing and incoming exchanges a great deal. They will make many friends and widen their horizons and thus become better Global Villagers.

## **CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING INCOMING EXCHANGEES**

Age 18-28(Exception must be negotiated beforehand)

Mature and responsible, open-minded and adaptable.

Motivating to be a volunteer, not a tourist or a student.

Willing to fulfill the responsibilities of being an ICYE exchangee in the different country.

Following the decisions taken by ICYE Taiwan.

## **WORK PLACEMENTS FOR EXCHANGEES**

All the exchangees will be involved in volunteer work on a full time basis. You will have these options to do the social work at YMCA, church organizations, centers for disabled people or elders, shelter houses for youth or children, kindergarten and children care centers, etc.

You may be asked to work as an English assistant or be involved in direct social work. The working hours for you will be 35-40 hours a week. Some may work not so many hours. Some organizations may have more holidays. As many of you don't have the working experience before, or have no idea about the work system in Taiwan, we hope you can have an open mind idea to learn from any work placement.

In work placement, you are recommended to speak Mandarin. There will be an intensive course of Mandarin at the orientation & language camp for about two weeks. You are expected to improve your language ability day after day for your own benefit and your work. Many exchangees stayed here learning Mandarin for their future after one year's program or studied Sinology at the universities in their own countries after their exchange year.



## **LIVING SITUATION**

We offer the host families or the dormitory in the workplace. Some of you will be placed with the local host families. You may eat out or at your work placements at noon. Some may live and eat at your work placements. It's all depending on the different situations which the projects can offer.

It's getting difficult to find host families in Taiwan, and most host families are not exchange families. This means that many families are open-minded enough to have you as one of their family members not as a guest. So, please try to be a part of the family. Take part in the activities of your host family and spend some time with them. If they don't have so much time to be with you, you can also arrange your entertainment by yourself (just for reminding, there's no perfect host family, so trying to adapt yourself in the family is the best

way.) The host families need to take responsibility for you because you are a part of their family members, so that they will worry about your life in Taiwan. Some rules to protect you, such as curfews (back home before 10pm.....), or mention in advance before your activity. Living with another family of different background is not easy, but the main idea is to respect in different culture.



Most of the Taiwanese families are rather conservative; hierarchy is a characteristic of the families. Therefore, you should follow the family rules so it proves that you respect the senior people and you will be able to be integrated into the family.

ICYE Taiwan is always willing to offer help to achieve better communication between you and the families, so please ask when you need communication bridge.

## **POCKET MONEY**

Exchangeers coming to Taiwan will receive monthly pocket money. If you are over 20, you can open a bank account after you get your resident ID, so the money will be directly deposited to your own bank account in Taiwan. If you are not over 20, then the money will be sent by cash post or through your host family or project. The amount is not much so that you have to prepare some living expenses before you come.

## **OBTAINING VISAS**

ICYE Taiwan will be responsible for applying for the Certificate of Eligibility for you to apply for a Resident Visa. You have to send us the application form before the 15th of April (for one-year program), which includes the following:

- name,
- gender,
- date of birth,
- copy of passport
- the criminal records notarized (in English version)

The application procedure takes time, at least two months (due to the official system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). If you cannot get the resident visa on time because of the delay in sending the application form to us, you are responsible for the delay of entry. When you receive a copy of the permission from the Taiwanese Interior Affairs, please apply for the resident visa at the nearest Taiwanese embassy or visa office. Please note that it is very important that you only apply for *RESIDENT VISA*. Due to the regulation of our government, if you did not apply for a Visa to Taiwan, you need to apply for a resident visa abroad to get back to Taiwan. If such a case happens, the exchanges will have to pay for the flight ticket board and lodging by him/herself while staying aboard. Also, the resident visa will cost you around US\$132. If you hold a Visitor's Visa, you need to apply for a resident visa here in Taiwan also costs NT\$4400. In case you face any difficulties while you are applying for the resident visa, please contact ICYE TAIWAN immediately.

The type of visa you are granted makes it illegal for you to have a paying job. Therefore, you are not allowed to have a paying job during the exchange year. Taiwan has strict regulations for foreign labourers, who have to get a working visa before coming to Taiwan. Violation of the regulations leads to immediate deportation.

Resident visas Requirements:

A passport valid for at least six months;

A duly completed application form with two 2x2 inch color photos taken within the past six months.

Supporting documents or official letters of approval from a competent authority of the ROC; and Other relevant documents.

Health Certificate if applicable ( please find the attachment- the health Certificate - Taiwan)



# TAIWAN

## RESIDENT CERTIFICATE

In order to stay in Taiwan legally, you have to apply and pay for an Alien Resident Certificate (ARC) (NT\$ 1000) within 14 days after you arrive Taiwan. ICYE TAIWAN will provide necessary documents and help you to obtain it. *Please bring 5 passport-size photographs with you* or you may develop it in Taiwan. (The picture should be used for the ID, with the white background)

## TRAVELLING

Exchangees may travel inside/outside the country ONLY during the *weekends, official holidays, or in the free time*. If you do, please make sure to inform your host family of where you are going and when you will be back beforehand. As we mentioned before, the host family needs to take responsibility for you, so please mention for the respect. For ICYE one year program, the travel month will be allowed in the last 4 weeks (July) at the end of your exchange year ONLY.

## MENTOR SYSTEM

You will have one mentor, who you can contact for help, information or just a talk.

A mentor should be the first person to be contacted if anything goes wrong or well. We will arrange a mentor who lives near your city. Somehow, you will face culture shock and without friends in the first few months, a mentor can help you with it.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD BRING

Some information about your own country: maps, pictures, to introduce your own background in any conference or event.

All your ICYE-paper and pictures for the ARC.

International driving license.

Personal necessities (you may need it in the beginning)

You may bring sleeping bag if you plan to travel in some other countries later in your travel month or visit some friends during your exchange year.

## WHAT ARE THE PRICES IN TAIWAN?

Prices in Taiwan are very reasonable. To give you an idea of what you may spend your pocket money on, here are some average prices in stores and restaurants.

Exchange rate of November 2023 - 100 NT\$ = 3.61 US\$

Product / service	Price in NT\$
Cold tea in teashop	25-75
Rice or Noodle meal	45-80
Lunchbox	75-120
Coffee in 7-eleven	45
Bottle of water in 7-eleven	20
Snacks in the night market	40 - 120
Bottle of Taiwan Beer in 7-eleven	50
Train ticket Taipei – Kaoshiung (5h)	843
Ticket for high-speed railway Taipei – Kaoshiung (1,5 h)	1490
Shampoo	100
Toothpaste	80



Now that you have this information, we hope that you are as excited to visit Taiwan as an ICYE exchange with ICYE Taiwan! We look forward to hearing from you and welcome any comments or questions you may have.

All the best and good luck!

ICYE Taiwan Team