



TAIPEI

HSINCHU

YILAN

TAICHUNG

CHANGHUA

HUALIEN

NANTOU

TAINAN

CHIAYI

KAOHSIUNG

TAITUNG

TAIWAN
2025-2026

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ICYE TAIWAN

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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 its 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.



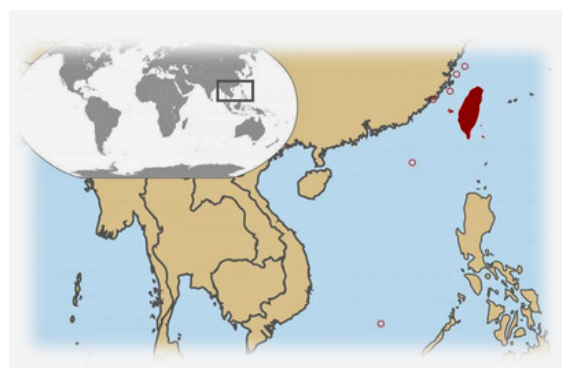
The human tide of Taipei will sweep you off your feet, but if you step outside the city limits you'll discover why Taiwan is known as Formosa, (from Portuguese *Ilha Formosa*, meaning "beautiful island"). Mountain peaks puncture a sea of clouds, slick black volcanic rock wraps the coastlines and waterfalls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

Fast Facts:

- Country name: Republic of China (Taiwan)
- Area: 36,193 sq km (13,974 sq mi)
- Population: 23.39 million (2025)
- 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.



Climate

Split in half by the Tropic of Cancer, Taiwan has a tropical climate in the southern and western plains and a 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.

Taiwan's summer lasts from May to October and is hot and humid across the island's lowlands, with monsoon rains and typhoons. The average temperature ranges from 28°C to 30°C, and in recent years, highs have exceeded 38°C.

Winter, from December to February, is mild, with an average temperature of 20°C. However, when cold air masses arrive, temperatures can drop below 10°C. Since most households in Taiwan do not have heating, please make sure to bring enough warm clothing. A windproof spring or autumn jacket is highly recommended.

History & Politics

Before recorded in the document, there had been human activities in Taiwan. During the Early Paleolithic Age, about 450,000 to 190,000 years ago, the Penghu people lived on the land bridge connecting Taiwan to mainland Asia (today's Penghu Waterway). The Changbin Culture of Taitung, which dates back 30,000 years ago, is the oldest culture in Taiwan known to archaeologists. The more recent Neolithic Age has archaeological remains of the Austronesian language group.

Taiwan is geographically located between mainland China, Japan and Southeast Asia. It can serve as a berth for ships from various countries and a transshipment station for cargo. In the 17th century, there was a Kingdom of Dadu in central Taiwan that exceeded the size of ordinary tribes, while the Dutch Empire and the Spanish Empire colonized the southwest and northwest of Taiwan respectively. Afterwards, the Dutch expelled the Spanish and ruled most of western Taiwan. In April 1661, Zheng Chenggong led an army of 25,000 and hundreds of warships to besiege the Fort of Zeelandia, The Dutch signed a surrender agreement on February 1, 1662, and Taiwan entered the Ming Zheng Dynasty. During this period, a large number of Han people immigrated to Taiwan. In 1683, Zheng Keshuang from Ming Zheng Dynasty surrendered to Qing general Shi Lang when the Qing army invaded Taiwan, and Taiwan entered the Qing rule.

In 1894, the Sino-Japanese War broke out between the Qing Dynasty and the Empire of Japan. The following year, the two sides signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki in Shimonoseki, ceding Taiwan to Japan, and Taiwan entered the period of Japanese rule.

In 1945, the Second World War and China's Anti-Japanese War ended. Japan was defeated and returned Taiwan, Penghu, and Manchuria to the Republic of China.

At the same time, a full-scale war broke out between the Republic of China led by the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist Party of China. The KMT lost the war. Nanjing, the capital of the Republic of China, was occupied in April 1949. On December 7 of the same year, the government of the Republic of China evacuated and moved to Taiwan. It moved to Taipei in December 1949. The central government lost control of other provinces in mainland China. The effective jurisdiction of the Republic of China was greatly reduced, only covering Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, Matsu, Dongsha Islands and Nansha Islands and other areas. The Communist Party of China announced the establishment of the People's Republic of China in Beijing in October of that year, creating a political status quo of long-term division across the Taiwan Strait.

Since 1996, Taiwan has implemented direct elections to elect the president of the Republic of China, and has experienced ruling party alternation through democratic elections till now. It is also the first democratic country for Han Chinese. Over the past few decades, democratic reforms have continued to deepen. According to the 2023 Global Democracy Index released by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Taiwan ranks 10th in the world this year with a score of 8.92, continuing to be the most democratic country in Asia and one of only 24 "comprehensive democracies" in the world.

Taiwan enjoys a high level of freedom under its democratic system. It has a diverse and open society and culture, advanced medical and health care, prosperous people, as well as strong economic strength and impressive achievements in science and technology, all making it highly respected by the international community.



Population & People

The population of Taiwan is around 23.39 million. The island's population density is one of the highest in the world. Taipei and Kaohsiung are the island's major metropolises. Taipei (including satellite cities) has a population of 6,550,000, while Kaohsiung (including satellite cities) has 2,730,000.

About 96% of Taiwan's population is Han Chinese. Most of them were immigrants from Fujian and Guangdong provinces in mainland China, as well as some immigrants moved from other provinces in mainland China when the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan.

The other 2.5% of Taiwan's population, 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 Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and Cambodia. In recent years, the total population of Southeast Asian ethnic groups in Taiwan has reached more than 700,000.



Cultures & Languages

Due to the fact that most Taiwanese are descendants 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, as well as 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, which is the most widely learned foreign language, but taxi drivers should be shown their 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 the sea who symbolises the seafaring spirit of Taiwan's ancestors.

Economy

Taiwan has a highly developed free-market economy. It is classified as a developed economy, while the World Bank categorizes it as a high-income economy. Taiwan is a global leader in computer microchip manufacturing, particularly in the production of artificial intelligence (AI)-related chips. As of 2025, Taiwan's per capita GDP is US\$42,802.

CUISINE-Have You Eaten (Jia ba bui)?

A foreigner hearing someone greet them with “Have you eaten? (Jia ba bui?)” might feel confused and wonder why the speaker cares about their stomach. However, in Taiwanese culture, this phrase is a common greeting with the same basic meaning as “How are you?”

The expression dates back to early Taiwan when agriculture was the primary way of life for most people. At that time, making ends meet was a blessing, and having a full belly was something to be happy about. Today, this lively greeting not only reflects historical values but also showcases how much the Taiwanese appreciate food.

Whether you’re craving Western or Eastern cuisine, fine dining at a five-star restaurant, or street food, Taiwan offers an incredible variety of choices. One of the best places to experience this food culture is at the night markets.

Night markets can be found in every town and city across Taiwan, offering a wide variety of Taiwanese delicacies. Some all-time favorites include oyster omelets, Taiwanese deep-fried chicken, stinky tofu, fried dumplings, fried rice, glutinous rice cakes, soybean pudding, and more. Whether you prefer sweet or savory, snacks or desserts, you'll be 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

Taiwan offers a well-developed railway system, making travel across the island convenient and efficient. The High-Speed Rail (HSR, Gao-Tie) connects Taipei and Kaohsiung, reducing travel time between the two cities to just 90 minutes. In addition, a conventional railway network circles the entire island. Travelers can choose from various train types—Tzu Chiang Express, Tzu Chiang Express(3000), Puyuma Express, Taroko Express—to plan their trips based on time, destination, and budget.

- ◆ High-Speed Rail (HSR): <http://www.thsrc.com.tw/en/?lc=en>
- ◆ Taiwan Railways: <http://www.railway.gov.tw/en/>

For a more affordable option, intercity coaches operate 24/7 across Taiwan. Bus fares are usually lower than train tickets, with even greater discounts during off-peak hours. Some coaches even offer luxury massage chairs, providing a comfortable travel experience.



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 driving 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 travellers it has given rise to many traffic issues, especially in Taipei. Opened from 6 am to 12 pm 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. 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 18-30(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 EXCHANGES

All the exchanges will be involved in volunteer work on a full-time basis. Most of our work units are schools.

You may be asked to work as an English assistant or be involved in educational-relating activities. *The working hours for you will be 40 hours a week.* Some may work not so many hours. Some organizations may have more holidays. As many of you don't have any work 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 in 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 exchanges 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 to remind you, there's no perfect host family, so trying to adapt yourself to 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. You are encouraged to respect the family rules so that you can adapt to your host family smoothly. ICYE Taiwan is always willing to offer help to achieve better communication between you and the families, so please ask when you need a communication bridge.

POCKET MONEY

Exchangees coming to Taiwan will receive monthly pocket money. If you are over 18, you can open a post office account after you get your resident ID, so the money will be directly deposited to your own account in Taiwan. If you are not over 18, 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 March(for the one-year program), which includes the following:

- ◆ Application form
- ◆ Motive letter
- ◆ Copy of passport
- ◆ Health certificate
- ◆ The criminal records notarized (in English version)

The application procedure takes time, at least three 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 the permission letter from the competent authority, 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 exchange 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; Other relevant documents.
- ◆ Health Certificate



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 30 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

ICYE mainly allows independent travel in the last month / 2 weeks (for the 6-month program) of the exchange year. You cannot begin this travel before the official end of the project. It is possible to take shorter trips during the exchange year, but exchangees must get approval by the project and ICYE TAIWAN in advance. When you plan to travel, please make sure to inform your host family of where you are going and when you will be back beforehand. As we mentioned before, you are considered part of your host family, so please mention for the respect.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BRING

Some information about your own country:

- ◆ Maps and pictures, to introduce your own background in any conference or event.
- ◆ All your ICYE documents and pictures for the ARC.
- ◆ Personal medicines
- ◆ Personal necessities (you may need it in the beginning)
- ◆ You may bring a sleeping bag if you plan to travel to other places later in your travel month.

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, here are some average prices in stores and restaurants.

Exchange rate of Feb 2025 - 100 NT\$ = 3.01 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	25
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	160
Toothpaste	85



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.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact us via email icyetaiwan.hosting@gmail.com

All the best and good luck!

ICYE Taiwan