

# TAIPEI, TAIWAN

## *Trip Itinerary*

### OVERVIEW OF TAIPEI

Taipei is one of those cities that seems to fly under most people's radars. Its proximity to other huge tourist destination countries like South Korea, Japan, or China often make it a second choice for many travellers.

But Taiwan needs to spend some well deserved time in the spotlight! Its location relative to other Asian capitals can actually be a bonus since it's even easier to fly there (especially from Tokyo, Bangkok, or even Beijing).

Taipei is packed with some of the most deliciously different food I have yet to encounter, so if you travel to eat, this is where to begin your culinary journey. Major shoutouts to the beautiful and deeply historic attractions too and quite possibly the easiest transit system in the world.

In this itinerary, you'll see a list of some of the more "tourist-y" things that I would say are a must do, but with a **healthy dose of under the radar obscuras and curiosities** that can be hard to dig out.

Taipei is home to hearty food, beautiful nature, a gorgeous climate, an easily manageable transit system, and deep history and culture. What else could you want in a city?

### NOT TO BE MISSED TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

1. Taipei 101 (also known as Taipei Tower)
  - a. An absolute must. Just seeing it from a distance is awe-inspiring but it's worth it to take the elevator up to the observation deck.
  - b. It was officially classified as the world's tallest from its opening in 2004 until the 2010 completion of the Burj Khalifa in Dubai.
2. Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall
  - a. The monument was erected in memory of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, former President of the Republic of China.
  - b. It's surrounded by a beautiful garden and koi pond, as well as the National

Theater and National Concert Hall, which are also worth seeing just for the architecture.

3. Longshan Temple
  - a. A beautiful temple with an extraordinary history. Built in 1738 by settlers from Fujian as a gathering place for Chinese settlers. It survived a bombing raid during WW2.
4. Raohe Night Market
  - a. Accessible via the metro, this night market is home to delicious eats and adventurous tastes. The home for things on sticks!
5. Glass-Floor Gondola to Maokong
  - a. There are 2 lines at the gondolas because some carriages don't have the glass floor. Beautiful views, and worth a stop at the small dragon embossed shrine about halfway up.
6. Elephant Mountain
  - a. Quite a hike but the view is just amazing. Easy to access by metro.

## UNDER THE RADAR ATTRACTIONS

1. Taipei Tower Tuned Mass Damper
  - a. The 720-ton stabilizer ball hanging in the center, which prevents Taipei from falling during earthquakes. Take the elevator to any of the floors between 88 and 92 to see it.
2. Jingfu Temple
  - a. Do not miss the incredible detailed carvings on the walls and ceilings of the second and third floors.
3. Silver Stream Cave (Yinghe Cave and Waterfall)
  - a. More of a forest shrine than a temple, this one is hard to reach but worth it if your weather cooperates.
  - b. It is difficult to plan for, so please contact me [jillrmcarthur@gmail.com](mailto:jillrmcarthur@gmail.com) to get instructions on how to get there.
4. The Grand Hotel
  - a. It's a functioning hotel but also a perfect example of Chinese Classical architecture.
5. The Birdman of Taipei Station
  - a. Worth it to see if you're passing near the station. It's a statue/art installation artists Hé Cǎi róu 何采柔 and Guō Wén tài 郭文泰.
6. Herb Alley

- a. Adjacent to Longshan Temple, it's definitely worth a visit if you aren't claustrophobic. Hundreds of years ago, before western medicine came to Taiwan, it was common for people to visit the temple, and receive herbal prescriptions for whatever ailed them. Vendors setup shop outside the temple gates to help fill these prescriptions.
7. Da'An District
- a. I love this area with it's artsy cafes and tea houses. I recommend just walking around and getting lost in this niche area.

## MUST HAVE FOODS

1. Ding Tai Fung
  - a. The best location is at Taipei Tower on the ground level. Try the amaranth and garlic greens as a side to the many steamed dumplings you will have. Watch the chefs make the dumplings by hand!
2. Stinky tofu
  - a. There are two main varieties of stinky tofu: a stewed version, which entails large hunks of soft tofu in a soup that is usually spicy, or a crispy, deep fried version that is served with pickled vegetables. I like both!
3. Addiction Seafood Market
  - a. Japanese sushi in a very cool location. It gets busy on weekends.
4. Shaved Ice
  - a. Comes in many fruit flavours and more savory ones, like peanut. Found all over the city and in night markets.
5. Durian
  - a. Known as the "King of Fruits". Try it if you dare.
6. Pepper Bun (Found at Rahoe Night Market)
  - a. Charred and crispy on the outside, filled with peppery char siew on the inside.

## NOTABLE EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

1. Cherry blossom festivals (varies)
  - a. Usually you think of Japan when you think of cherry blossoms, but Taiwan will up the ante on festivals during cherry blossom season.
2. Peruse Jianguo Jade and Flower Markets
  - a. Every weekend, a large jade market is set up under the Jianguo Road

Overpass starting at Zhongxiao East Road. Nearby you will find the flower market.

3. Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival
  - a. On the 14th day of the Lunar New Year, the Pingxi Sky Lantern Festival lights up the sky of this tiny New Taipei City village.

## DRINKS AND BARS

1. Bubble Tea/ Milk Tea with Pearls
  - a. Rahoe and Shilin night markets are great to find these gems, but milk tea shops are abundant in the city.
2. Takemura Izakaya
  - a. The best view and photo opp of Taipei Tower served up with delicious Japanese food.
3. Soy milk
  - a. A Taiwanese breakfast wouldn't be complete without soy milk!

## OTHER NOTES

1. Taipei is the SLIPPERIEST city I've ever visited. When it rains, it rains hard, and many of the sidewalks and walkways are made of waxed stone. Watch your step and be careful entering the metro on the stairs. Even some of the hiking trails get muddy and slippery, so please be careful.
2. This is probably a controversial tip, but although Taipei has hands down some of the world's best food and markets, some food can really be disgusting. Don't judge all meals based on one bad one, and try many different dishes - it's worth the risk!
3. Some markets can have animal carcasses and butcher items for sale. Be warned if you don't like to see dead animals or blood.
4. The airport is a bit out of the way from the city. Plan ahead and either take the metro (best option), hire a driver, use your hotel shuttle service, or split a cab into the city.