

# Taiwan in brief



**Area**  
36,000 sq km

**Population**  
23 million

**Languages**  
Mandarin, Taiwanese, Hakka & Indigenous languages

**Time zone**  
GMT+8 (2.5 hours ahead of India)

**Flights**  
A number of airlines such as China Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines and Thai Airways fly directly from India, or via a stopover, to Taiwan.

**Currency**  
New Taiwan Dollar (NT\$). The exchange rate of NT\$ to INR is approximately 1 : 2.3 (Oct 2019).

**Electricity**  
Taiwan uses electric current of 110 volts at 60 cycles. Many buildings have sockets with 220 volts, especially for the use of air conditioners.

**Local climate**  
Taiwan enjoys warm weather all year round. The average temperature is 28°C in the summer and 17°C during winter.

**GETTING AROUND**

**High Speed Rail**  
Taiwan High Speed Rail running from Taipei to Zuoying, Kaohsiung, takes only 90 minutes from northern Taiwan to the island's southern tip.  
[www.thsrc.com.tw](http://www.thsrc.com.tw)

**Tourist Shuttle**  
Taiwan Tour Bus offers 36 recommended itineraries along the major scenic spots of Taiwan. There is also a travel agency list for you to select the best option for sightseeing. For those wishing to visit tourist attractions Taiwan  
Tourist Shuttle take passengers to the main tourist attractions in Taiwan.  
[taiwantourbus.com.tw](http://taiwantourbus.com.tw)  
[taiwantrip.com.tw](http://taiwantrip.com.tw)

**Taxis**  
Taxis here are well-marked yellow vehicles easily recognised by visitors. The two largest ones are **Taiwan Taxi**, often referred to as 55688, which is also their phone number or **Metro Taxi**, 55178. To make it easier, you can download **FindTaxi** app from Google Play or App Store.

**EasyCard / iPass**  
When getting around on MRT or busses the easiest way to pay is to use a EasyCard or iPass. Both cards functions as e-wallets and can also be used as a payment method in certain retail outlets.  
[easycard.com.tw/en](http://easycard.com.tw/en)  
[i-pass.com.tw/en](http://i-pass.com.tw/en)

**Mobile SIM cards**  
When travel to Taiwan, do not miss the chance of staying connected. There are several operators to chose from, the most common are: **Chunghua Telecom, Taiwan Mobile, FET Net and TSTAR**, and the easiest way to buy, is to purchase this at the airport when arriving.

**Visas**  
There are both online, electronic and paper visas available for Indian nationals to choose from when planning to visit Taiwan. Contact TECC for more information.  
[https://www.roc-taiwan.org/in\\_en/cat/11.html](https://www.roc-taiwan.org/in_en/cat/11.html)

**Round-the-Island Railway Network**  
There are three main railways and several branch railways in Taiwan, forming a complete circle of rail transportation on the island.  
[railway.gov.tw/en](http://railway.gov.tw/en)

## Soaking in the natural beauty

While outdoor events in Taiwan are not as large in scale or as well known internationally as the biggest happenings abroad – there are in fact plenty to chose from.

There is something special about being out in nature, whether it be for soaking in the scenery, watching birds soar above, looking at flowers and plants or listening to whatever music you prefer, rock, pop, choir, metal, classical, folk...

### Cherry Blossom

February-March

People visiting Taiwan don't want to miss out on the spectacular Cherry blossoms during the spring season each year. This natural wonder attracts about half a million visitors year on year and offers picturesque sceneries all around. Popular places for sighting Cherry blossoms are **Yangmingshan National Park** and **Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall** in Taipei city. The cherry trees are decorated with special lights and in the evening you can enjoy a relaxing walk in the park. The **Sun Moon Lake, Formosan Aboriginal Culture Village** and **Wuling Farm** near Taichung City are the biggest attractions with thousands of blossoming cherry trees including varieties such as Yaezakura and Oshima trees. **Alishan Mountain** in Chiayi County offers the most extravagant sight of cherry blossoms with over 19,000 blooming trees. Worth making time for this.



Cherry blossom at Wuling Farm

### Ear-Shooting Festival

April-May

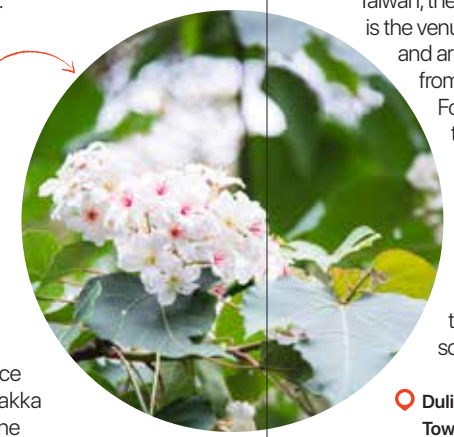
The Ear-shooting Festival is an annual event held in **Sanmin** and **Taoyu** region of Taiwan. This is the Bunun tribe's most important celebration and in the tribe's language it is called 'mala-ta-ngia'. It got its name from a historical event of hunting a deer's ear earlier by the tribesmen, as the ear was considered to be the toughest feat to hunt. It is celebrated to put on display the archery skills in which tribesmen shoot at animal ears nailed to a post.



### The Hakka Tung Blossom Festival

April-May

A floral treat awaits you when the **Tung trees'** flowers are in full blossom. The visitors get a chance to experience the culture of the Hakka people and the divine beauty of the place. The Tung



Taiwan East Coast Land Arts Festival

Trees covering the mountains and fields used to be an important cash crop for the Hakka tribe. These trees were widely planted and have been associated with economic activity as well. The Hakka tribe people express their gratitude and feelings towards the Tung tree, the mountains, and nature in general through this festival. When they blossom, the white flowers entice people for spending time with nature and witness the true culture of the Hakka tribe.

- Taipei, Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Miaoli, Taichung, Nantou, Changhua, Yunlin, Yilan, Hualien and Keelung
- [tung.hakka.gov.tw/EN/0000024](http://tung.hakka.gov.tw/EN/0000024)

### Taiwan East Coast Land Arts Festival

August-October

Located on the scenic East Coast of Taiwan, the township of **Chengggong** is the venue for this small-scale music and art festival featuring performers from local indigenous tribes. Focused on a small stage at the center of a grassy park area overlooking the ocean, the festival is an intimate affair that brings musicians, artists, and visitors close together in a celebration of indigenous music, art, and the wonderful East Coast scenery.

- Duli Visitor Center, Chengggong Township, Taitung County
- [teclandart.tw](http://teclandart.tw)

### Taroko Music Festival

October

This festival's organisers wanted to combine the visual splendor of **Taroko Gorge**, arguably Taiwan's most attractive scenic and natural wonder, with the beauty of music. Over the years, different locations have been chosen for the music performances, including the grassy area beside the Taroko National Park Visitor Center, the bed of the **Liwu River** near the **Eternal Spring Shrine**, the grassy terraces at **Buluowan**, and even a beach near the coastal **Qingshui Cliff**.

- Taroko National Park, Hualien County
- [facebook.com/tarokomusic](https://facebook.com/tarokomusic)

### Sun Moon Lake Cycling, Music & Fireworks Festival

October-November

This multi-day festival each year features a number of exciting events, including a challenging bicycle race (from the lake to **Tataka** in **Yushan National Park**), a more relaxed round-the-lake bicycle ride, a lake-circling marathon run, a cross-country orienteering run, and a tea-culture festival, among others. The music portion of the festival includes a classical concert featuring the Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, a show that is complemented by a spectacular fireworks display.

- Yuchi, Nantou County
- [sunmoonlake.gov.tw/en](http://sunmoonlake.gov.tw/en)



Taroko Music Festival

### Taiwan Hot Spring Season

October-November

The gradual arrival of winter formally announces that Taiwan's peak hot spring season has begun. Hot spring areas throughout the country hold a series of events introducing their scenic beauty. During this period, hot spring areas throughout the country hold a series of hot spring/ fine-cuisine events and pull together hundreds of county and municipal companies, introducing the scenic beauty of the springs, the local cultural landscape, and special products.



### Xinshe Flower Festival

November-December

A sea of flowers engulfs your senses when you visit the Xinshe Flower Festival. It is held at the 40-hectare Second Farm of the **Taiwan Seed Improvement and Propagation Station**. The flowers bring alive the environs with their vibrancy and thousands of tourists are attracted to this place over the four weeks when these flowers are on display. Walk along the flower beds and there's an annual theme to keep you engaged.

- Xinshe District, Taichung City
- [travel.taichung.gov.tw/en-us/Attractions/Intro/1125/Sea-of-Flowers-in-Xinshe](http://travel.taichung.gov.tw/en-us/Attractions/Intro/1125/Sea-of-Flowers-in-Xinshe)

# Culture Lover's GUIDE TO TAIWAN



Taiwan THE HEART OF ASIA

# Fancy some local festivities

Few countries in Asia offers such an amazingly varied array of attractions as Taiwan, with a rich assortment of sights stretching across the island.

Festivals reflect the spirit of a country and its people. Festivals bring merriment and joy, create memories and offer a reason to celebrate life in any form. Like India is a land of festivals, Taiwan is abuzz with festivals all year long and people rejoice and come together to participate in the celebrations. We bring to you the top 10 festivals of Taiwan to check out!

## 1 Chinese New Year January-February

Also known as the Spring Festival, Chinese New Year is the most important festival celebrated by the ethnic Chinese. It marks the beginning of the Lunar New Year. Celebrations revolve around family get together and lavish meals. Members of the family exchange lucky money with each other in small red envelopes and participate in fairs and public parades.

## 2 Lantern Festival February

The festival marks the end of the Chinese New Year Festivities and is spread across several days in the Taiwanese cities of Taipei and Kaohsiung. The Taiwan Lantern Festival adds a high-tech touch to this traditional custom. Another popular one that coincides with this, is the **Pingxi Lantern Festival**, where tourists can write a wish on the lantern prior to release it. These festivals celebrates the welcoming of spring.

## 3 Dragon Boat Festival June

The Dragon Boat Festival is quite popular across the Asian nations of Hong Kong, Macau, Mainland China and Taiwan. It occurs on the fifth day of the fifth month of the traditional Chinese calendar, and hence, also called the Double Fifth Festival. You can witness colourful boats, enthusiastic teams and authentic Taiwanese cuisine at the fest.

## 4 Taipei Water Festival July-August

This cultural fest focuses on providing a refreshing treat to the youngsters and their families during summer. The

Taipei Water Festival is held at **Taipei Water Park** and people can dabble in the pool and enjoy water rides and aquatic activities. To make the festival more fun for visitors, various events are planned such as the opening ceremony, song-and-dance show, performances by indigenous people and an environment educational fair.

## 5 Taiwan International Balloon Festival July-August

The international balloon festival is usually a 51-day long event. You can experience a beautiful riot of colours at this festival. Indulge in engaging activities such as balloon flying shows,

## 6 Penghu International Fireworks Festival July-September

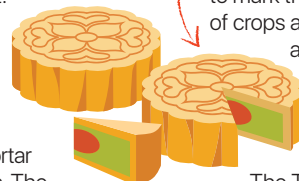
A treat for all! The Penghu International Fireworks Festival is a spectacular show for sightseers, which attracts tourists to the *Gaillardia pluchella Foug* island during the summer season. The sky is illuminated with fireworks of different kinds and it features live performances by popular Taiwanese singers and bands. People gather to enjoy the high-altitude fireworks display accompanied by soft music, vibrant lights and lanterns. The Penghu International Fireworks Festival is held throughout the summer season.

[penghu-nsa.gov.tw/English](http://penghu-nsa.gov.tw/English)

## 7 Thao Pestle Music Festival August-September

Usually held during the seventh lunar month, this festival is celebrated by the members of the Thao tribe in **Itashao**

**Village on Sun Moon Lake.** Thao group, Taiwan's smallest aboriginal group – rejoice with music, dance and food and offer prayers to the Almighty for abundant harvest. People gather at the square of the head tribesman's house to play Pestle music. The group pounds grain into a stone mortar with bamboo pestles. The ceremony is a traditional display of the culture and unique customs of the Taho tribe.



## 9 Mid-Autumn Festival October

This is a harvest festival, celebrated to mark the successful harvesting of crops and for an abundant year ahead. The ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese people participate in this fest and enjoy the mooncakes and public barbecues. The Taipei government opens up various riverside parks for the celebrations to take place.

## 8 Fulong International Sand Sculpture Art Festival August-September

The 3km stretch of golden sand at the beautiful **Fulong Beach** turns into artists' canvas with the best of sand art at display. An annual event, sand artists from all across the world participate in this festival and create splendid sand sculptures as part of international and national competitions. The festival serves as a platform for both experienced and new sand artists to give expression to their thoughts and creativity.

[balloontaiwan.taitung.gov.tw/en](http://balloontaiwan.taitung.gov.tw/en)

## 10 Christmasland/ New Year's Celebrations December

Christmasland in New Taipei are full of celebrations, joy and luminescent atmosphere and the tallest open-air Christmas tree in Taiwan, to make your X-Mas memorable. Witness the world's biggest New Year's Eve countdown clock – the **Taipei 101** building light up floor by floor from the bottom up. Just as the countdown gets over, the fireworks begin and lots of activities are set off.

[tour.ntpc.gov.tw/en-us](http://tour.ntpc.gov.tw/en-us)

# Explore the spiritual side

Get immersed in the religious environment and activities in Taiwan. Here are some festivals with a more spiritual theme to provide a well needed rest for the mind.

## Baosheng Cultural Festival April-June

The **Dalongdong Bao'an Temple** is counted as one of the most popular among Taiwan's 300-odd temples dedicated to Baosheng Emperor. The temple is the centre of activity for the annual Baosheng Cultural Festival, which celebrates Taiwan's folk religious rituals, architectural heritages and revitalisation efforts. The activities span across three months of April till June, and give the visitors a chance to explore more about the historical trends, religious traditions and aesthetics of the country. The festival has its roots in the culture and is an inspiration for international as well as national tourists.



is followed by a national level "Three Consecrations" ritual along with display of dance and music. This whole procedure is based on 37 total steps in line with Confucianism. Visitors from Taiwan and other countries participate in the celebrations and take away an enriched experience. People are also offered to participate in a series of art activities revolving around the features of historic sites and festivals.

## Guanin's Birthday March

Guanin, is revered as the Goddess of Mercy in Taiwan and her birthday is celebrated with much fanfare across the various Buddhist temples in the country. The main ceremonies of this festival are held at the **Longshan Temple** in Taipei and the **Zizhu**



## Confucius Day Ceremony September

Every year the **Confucius Temple** at Taipei witnesses thousands of people thronging its premises to commemorate the birthday of the grand master Confucius. The ceremony takes place at 6am on 28 September annually. This ritual has been carried forward by the temple for the past eight decades. The well-preserved Confucian ceremony



Qingshan King Festival

**Temple** and the rituals date back to 300 years. People participate in the festivities by distributing food and offering prayers to the Goddess. Ritualised martial arts performances are also a part of this festival. It gives you a glimpse and taste of the local culture and you take back an enriched experience.

## Mazu Birthday and Pilgrimage April-May

On the occasion of the birthday of Goddess Mazu (the Goddess of the Sea and Taiwan's most popular deity), millions of enthusiastic devotees participate in Dajia Mazu Pilgrimage, and carry Mazu's statue for 300 kilometers, crossing four cities in nine days. The Dajia Mazu Pilgrimage is considered a holy journey and ranks among the world's largest religious events. Devotees from all over Taiwan and the tourists can be seen marching toward the Dajia temple with the Mazu deity crossing different streets. The



## Qingshan King Festival October

An annual affair, this festival falls on 23 October of the lunar calendar and marks the birth of the Taoist god Lin-An Chun Wang or the Qingshan King. It's a three-day fest held at the **Qingshan temple** in the Monga region with much fervour. Devotees offer prayers for continued health and safety as legend has it that years ago when plague struck Taipei, only the Qingshan temple remained unaffected and it gave shelter to many people. It involves a grand procession with the deity of the King and a parade which gets participation from thousands of people. This festival is considered amongst

## Yenshui Fireworks Festival February

It is one such festival where the crowd runs into the fireworks rather than moving away from



them. The activity takes place at the **God of War Temple** in Yanshui, Tainan City, and is one of the most popular and anticipated events of the Lantern Festival. The significance of the crowd running through the flying fireworks is that they are believed to stay happy and get rid of bad luck upon doing so. The sedan chair with the deity of the Holy Ruler Deity Guan is paraded through the streets of Yanshui, by the local people on every Lantern Festival night. A trail of fireworks follows the sedan chair and they fly everywhere.

## Zhongyuan Festival (The Ghost Festival) September

It is also known as the Ghost Festival and is celebrated for the whole of the seventh lunar month, when the ghosts are believed to haunt the island. This entire month is called the Ghost Month and everyday denotes something different. The celebrations begin on the first day of the month when the gates of a temple are opened and then the lamps are lit on the main altar on the 12th day. This is followed by a procession of lanterns on the 13th day and a parade for releasing the water lanterns on the 14th day. People offer incense and food to the spirits so they don't visit their homes and spirit paper money is also burnt.

