

TAIWAN

CULTURAL TREASURES & INSPIRING LANDSCAPES

OVERVIEW

Taiwan has been off the radar for tourism since the tumult of 1949, when Chiang Kai Shek and his nationalist compatriots separated themselves from the communists on the mainland. Only now are travellers beginning to rediscover the place that 16th-century Portuguese explorers named ‘Ilha Formosa’, the beautiful island. Large sections of Taiwan retain a traditional atmosphere – traditional art and architecture still thrive, and the locals are friendly and welcoming.

Our tour begins in Taipei before heading South, with the temples, houses and streetscapes of the historic towns of Tainan and Lugang. We then head to the beautiful central mountain ranges, staying on the shores of the spectacular Sun Moon Lake and visiting monasteries and other sites. We then travel over the 3,000-metre Central Mountains and into the marble-lined Taroko Gorge, where we’ll spend a night. The last part of our itinerary takes us to Taipei, the bustling capital and home to the world-famous National Palace Museum and other interesting institutions.



TOUR LEADER

Judy Tenzing is a historian with a passion for all things South Asian – India, the Himalaya, Myanmar, Taiwan and Sri Lanka. Her deep knowledge and love for the history, music, textiles and literature of these regions adds a rich dimension to the tours she leads.

TOUR DATES

September 15-25, 2024

TOUR PRICE

\$9,860 per person, twin share
\$2,860 single supplement

TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

ITINERARY

Taipei (1 night), Tainan (1 night),
Lugang (1 night), Sun Moon Lake
(3 nights), Taroko Gorge (1 night),
Taipei (3 nights)

INCLUSIONS

10 nights’ accommodation in centrally located 4 and 5-star hotels. All breakfasts, 8 lunches and 3 dinners. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Start & Finish

The tour starts on Sunday 15 September, at Taoyuan International Airport, Taipei, with a transfer to the hotel. The tour ends on Wednesday 25 September, at Taoyuan International Airport, Taipei.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

Sunday 15 September

Arrive

Flights from Australia arrive in Taipei early in the morning. Upon arrival, check into your hotel with time to freshen up. There will be a mid-morning tour of Taipei and lunch at a local restaurant. Overnight Taipei (L)

Monday 16 September

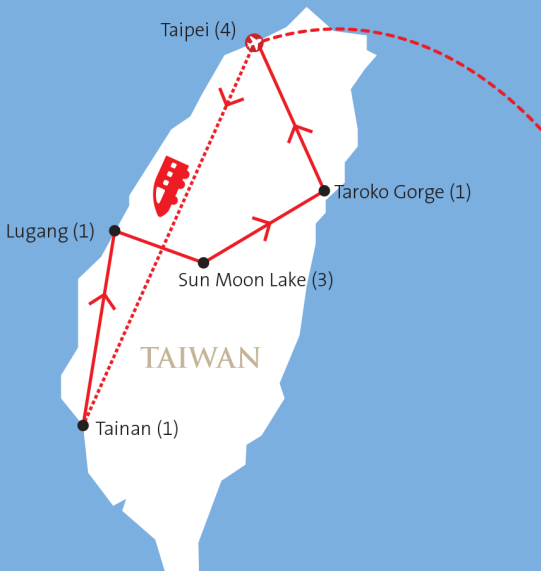
Old Tainan

This morning we take the fast train to Tainan. Upon arrival we explore some of the historic sites of Tainan, the island's first capital and site of the overthrow of the Dutch colonialists by the folk-hero Koxinga. Tainan preserves a very atmospheric city centre, with narrow laneways, traditional shop-houses and dozens of ancient temples. Our sightseeing includes the Dutch Fort Zeelandia, centuries-old Daoist temples and the city's splendid 17th-century Confucian temple, the oldest in Taiwan. After a lunch at which we sample some of Tainan's well-regarded delicacies, the afternoon is free. You might like to participate in High Tea at the Shangri-la Hotel for your first taste of Taiwan's highly regarded Oolong tea. This evening there is the option of heading out to Tainan's vibrant night markets, where traditional 'small eats' abound. Overnight Tainan (B, L)

Tuesday 17 September

Lugang

After a morning talk, we depart Tainan, and head north along the island's seaboard to the town of Lugang. Lugang is Taiwan's most interesting historic town and was the second largest settlement on the island during the 1700s. Highlights of our visit include the vibrant Tianhou temple, a Daoist place of worship, as well as the Koo family mansion. Built during the Japanese period, it contains interesting displays of furniture, art and design of the 18th and 19th centuries. We have lunch in Lugang before visiting the Longshan Buddhist temple to view the fine wood carvings that decorate its ceilings and roofs. Overnight Lugang (B, L)



TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

National Palace Museum, Taipei

Enjoy the world's most extensive collection of traditional Chinese fine and decorative arts. Stretching back over 5,000 years, the museum includes superb Song dynasty landscapes, ancient Han pottery and Ming ceramics.

Sun Moon Lake

Delight in the enchanting Sun Moon Lake, situated in the mountains rising above Taipei's western plains. Our five-star hotel, designed by Australian Kerry Hill, looks directly over the lake to the mountains and forest beyond.

Taroko Gorge

Explore this dramatic marble opening on the remote eastern side of the Central Mountains, the misty atmosphere and steep wooded cliffs of which make it into a kind of living landscape painting.

Chung Tai Chan Monastery

Tour this remarkably designed Zen Buddhist monastery, where postmodernism meets traditional Buddhist imagery. The towering building resembles a sitting Buddha, and contains prayer halls and shrines with 10,000 Buddha statues.

Tainan

Taiwan's southern city is one the site where the first Chinese fisherman landed over 500 years ago. The old city is little changed from these days.

Wednesday 18 September

To Sun Moon Lake

This morning we head to Taichung to visit the National Museum of Fine Arts. Mainly dedicated to visual arts, the museum places a large emphasis on works by upcoming and established contemporary Taiwanese artists and features an outdoor sculpture garden. The collection also includes documents for the Ming and Qing Dynasties and works from the Japanese era through to the period following the Second World War, effectively documenting Taiwan's history through its art. We continue to Sun Moon Lake, our base for the next three nights, and enjoy dinner in one of our hotel's excellent restaurants. Overnight Sun Moon Lake (B, L, D)

Thursday 19 September

Sun Moon Lake

Sun Moon Lake is some 1,000 metres above sea level and surrounded by steep mountains. Strict planning laws have preserved the natural environment of the lake. This morning we journey around the lake, visiting the Syanzuang and Syuangang temples that occupy a picturesque location on the lake shore. The temples preserve the relics of one of China's most famous Buddhists, the monk Xuan Zang. In the early 7th century Xuan Zang made pilgrimages throughout China and as far as India, collecting some 657 Sanskrit texts of Buddhism (sutras). He had an enormous influence on Chinese Buddhism. After a lunch break in a local village we visit an Assam tea farm and experience first-hand the art of Taiwanese tea making. The afternoon is free for you to wander the well-maintained lakeside walks near the hotel, enjoying the lush vegetation, bird life and architecture of the lake. Overnight Sun Moon Lake (B)

Friday 20 September

Chung Tai World Museum

Today we visit the Chung Tai World Museum, located near the town of Puli, about 40 minutes' drive from Sun Moon Lake. Opened in October 2009, this superb museum is adjacent to the main Chung Tai Chan Temple and contains an outstanding collection of Buddhist art in stone, gilded bronze and wood, beautifully displayed with comprehensive explanations in English. It easily ranks as one of the world's great collections of Buddhist art, and it is simply a matter of time before it enjoys an international reputation. After lunch in a local restaurant, we return to Sun Moon Lake with the evening at leisure. Overnight Sun Moon Lake (B, L)

Saturday 21 September

Across the Mountains

This morning we head inland to the highest peaks of the Central Range. We travel along sections of the Central Cross-Island Highway, opened in 1960. The winding two-lane road has views to Taiwan's highest peaks and is considered Taiwan's most scenic road. Along the way, we stop at Wushe to view the memorial to aboriginal resistance against the Japanese. Over the next few hours we pass the most spectacular part of the road, stopping for lunch, brief walks and panoramic views before descending towards the east coast and Taroko Gorge, where we stop for the night. Overnight Taroko Gorge (B, L, D)

Sunday 22 September

Taroko Gorge and the East Coast

Taroko Gorge is a narrow marble valley, 19 kilometres long, and Taiwan's most popular national park. The rugged countryside, dotted with temples and pagodas, is rather like a Chinese landscape painting come to life. Leaving early this morning to avoid the many coach groups which visit, we explore some of the sites of the valley through short walks and stops. We emerge from the gorge on Taiwan's rugged east coast. We travel north along the Chingshui cliffs, where the cornice road hugs the cliff-face high above the sea. We continue to Taipei, arriving in the late afternoon. Tonight, we enjoy dinner at the hotel. Overnight Taipei (B, L, D)

Monday 23 September

Exploring Taipei

This morning we view some of Taipei's traditional and monumental spaces. We first visit the Longshan Temple, where there is sure to be chanting and incense-burning in abundance. We then visit the Chiang Kai Shek Memorial Hall, whose monumental forecourt consciously mimics Beijing's Tiananmen Square. This gives us the opportunity to consider Taiwan's dramatic 20th century history. Our last stop is the towering Taipei 101 skyscraper, until very recently the world's tallest building. Inspired by Chinese pagodas, Taipei 101's architect was C.Y. Lee, who also designed the Chung Tai Chan monastery. This afternoon is free for shopping or relaxing. Tonight, there is the option of attending a performance (depending on schedules) at the Chiang Kai Shek Memorial hall, which has a regular program of international quality classical music concerts. Overnight Taipei (B)

HOTELS

The accommodation we have arranged is excellent, with 4 and 5-star hotels throughout.

Taipei, Regent Hotel

(1 night)

Tainan, Shangri-La Far Eastern Plaza Hotel

(1 night)

Lugang, Union House

(1 night)

Sun Moon Lake, The Lalu

(3 nights)

Taroko Gorge, Silks Place

(1 night)

Taipei, Regent Hotel

(3 nights)

WEATHER

Most of Taiwan has a beautiful warm climate all year round. The northern part is a sub-tropical zone while the south belongs to the tropical climate zone. This tour takes place in Autumn, when daily temperatures average 28-30°C, rarely dropping below 15-17°C at night. There is a chance of rain in Taipei.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Grade Two

This tour is physically demanding. To participate on this tour, you should be able to:

- keep up with the group at all times
- walk for 5-7 kilometres over the day at a moderate pace
- stand and slow walk for up to 90 minutes galleries and museums
- negotiate walking over uneven ground on dirt tracks
- walk up and down steps and slopes
- get on and off a coach with steps unassisted
- move your luggage unassisted



Tuesday 24 September

The National Palace Museum

In the late morning we visit the National Palace Museum, Taiwan's most famous cultural institution. When retreating from the communists in 1949 Chiang Kai Shek made a careful selection of over 500,000 artefacts and artworks from China's imperial collection, representing the very finest in Chinese art. After a long and sometimes dramatic journey to Taipei the pieces in the collection were stored in the hills near Taipei, awaiting their inevitable return to Beijing along with a triumphant Kuomintang government. This never happened, of course, and the Taipei Museum was born. Highlights of the collection include ancient bronzes and jade pieces, exquisite Ming porcelain and fine paintings from the Song Dynasty. Overnight Taipei (B)

Wednesday 25 September

Departure

The morning is free to relax and prepare for your homeward journey. We share a farewell lunch at a Hot Springs Resort south of Taipei, not far from the airport. We then head to Taipei's international airport for afternoon flights. (B, L)



ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Jamal Fairbrother** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

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