

臺灣

**The Richard U. Light  
Fellowship**

Unofficial SAC Guide

**2024**

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**PLEASE NOTE:** There are certain risks assumed when using the resources provided in this Unofficial Guidebook. The Light Fellowship Program provides this resource as a convenience, does not vet any of the suggestions, and makes no representations as to the qualifications of any of the recommendations or resources provided. Students must perform their own due diligence and use their own discretion and judgment when making decisions about housing, visas, health and safety etc. Students are also encouraged to ask their language programs directly about additional resources. Neither Yale University nor the Richard U. Light Foundation, nor any of their respective employees, is responsible for the accuracy of any of the information supplied in this Guidebook.

## SECTION 1: PLANNING YOUR TRIP

### A. What to Pack

#### Packing Tips

**Note:** *Taiwan has convenience stores at every corner. You can find almost anything you need and many more things in Taipei. Below are some of the most common essentials you should consider bringing based on the experience of past Taiwan fellows.*

- Passport
- Cash (NTD)/ ATM Cards (check fees in advance!)
  - *Taiwan is generally a cash society, so be sure to carry cash with you whenever you head out. This is slowly changing and more places are beginning to accept alternate forms of payment such as international credit/debit cards and Apple Pay, but it is a good idea to carry some cash around.*
- Bug spray/Sunblock/Deodorant
- Personal hygiene products (tampons, skincare, etc.)
  - *You may have trouble finding the same skincare products you use now in Taiwan, with Asian products placing more emphasis on skin “brightening/whitening” and not including applicators for tampons.*
- Laptop (converter to Ethernet cable in case you don’t have access to Wi-Fi)
- Sneakers and swimsuit
- Small bag for day trips
- Camera

- Electric adaptors or converters
  - *Although Taiwan has the same 110V current as the US, some older apartments have only 2-pronged outlets, so it is recommended that you bring a 2 to 3-prong converter.*
- Electronic dictionary or flashcard software (Pleco/Wenlin/Anki)
- Waterproof jacket
- Common use meds (allergy medications, pain meds, cough meds, etc).
- Band-Aids/Basic First-Aid kit components
- Cell phone
- Summer clothing
  - *Keep mind that it gets really hot in Taipei but that Taiwanese also dress more modestly than Americans. This goes for tops only: Expect to get some stares and stick out as a foreigner if you insist on wearing tank tops, but skirts are not a problem.*
- Gifts for teachers, friends, and language exchange partners
  - *Yale paraphernalia or special local items from home work well. Vitamins and beauty products are also hugely popular in Taiwan!*
- *For winter fellows: Something for 40 degree weather (Taiwan, being a tropical island, gets cold but not too cold in the wintertime)*

## B. Passport and Visa Information

### Passport

You will need a passport to go to Taiwan. For a United States citizen, this means you have to go to the post office and fill out some forms if you do not already own a passport. You will need your original birth certificate or some proof of citizenship if you were not born in the country. They will take this original from you and mail it back with your completed passport, so make sure you don't need it for a few months before you hand it over. Do this AS SOON AS POSSIBLE as it will take at least 4-6 weeks (2-3 weeks if you get it expedited) - if in doubt, get it expedited (keeping in mind that expedited fees are not part of your Light budget).

In the same vein, if you have a passport, check that it has at least one complete blank page and six months of validity (they will not issue you a visa if your passport is set to expire before then). If not, you will need to renew your passport.

*Helpful hint:* If you are getting a passport for the first time or renewing one, getting a "frequent traveler" passport with extra pages *costs the same* as getting a regular one - get

the extra pages now and save yourself the trouble and \$82 fee when you run out of pages later!

## Visas

\*\*\*U.S. passport holders are allowed to enter Taiwan without a visa for up to ninety days if your passport is valid for more than 90 days. (as of 3/18/2024)

**ICLP's website has a helpful section on Visa Applications.** You will generally need an application form from TECRO, the acceptance letter from ICLP, a bank statement (in this case a letter from the Light Fellowship stating that you will have enough funds to support yourself while in Taiwan) and your flight information. Make sure you apply for a student type visa, or it can be difficult to renew with the documents ICLP gives you.

CET Taiwan and HTA will help you through the visa process.

### Other tips:

- **Apply for a multiple-entry visa if you can.** If you plan to leave Taiwan (and go to another country, Hong Kong, or China) even for a day, you will want one, and reapplying at the border can be a hassle and will generally only get you a one-month tourist visa.
- Check the visa (visa type, expiration date, length of stay, etc.) after you get it back to make sure all information is correct. You don't want to wait until after you've already landed in the Taipei to realize these mistakes.

**Note:** *If you're trying to go to Mainland China, you cannot just apply for a visa once you're in Taiwan. You'll have to use a service that mails your passport to Hong Kong and sends it back to you before you go. These services are usually provided by travel agencies in Taiwan, and one of the common ones that other students at ICLP use is Lion Travel. They have an office near Gongguan (公館) station across the street from the main NTU gate. Their service prices range from about 100 to 300 USD depending on the length of stay and number of entries of the desired visa, as well as the speed requested for processing. Alternatively, you can fly through Hong Kong and take a day to process the paperwork. Forunosa and wikitravel have more details. (Data from pre-pandemic)*

# SECTION 2: LIVING IN TAIWAN

## A. Safety

### Emergency/Health Contacts

#### International SOS

- Health Insurance and Global Travel Assistance (e.g. emergency evacuation services) – Group Number: 11B824535
  - Policy Information: <https://ogc.yale.edu/erm/ISOS>
  - 24/7 Emergency Response Center [Taipei Number] +886 2 2523 2220

#### **Mackay Memorial Hospital (Regional Gateway)**

92 Chung Shan N. Rd., Sec. 2, Taipei City 10449, Taiwan

TEL: 02-2543-3535

#### **National Taiwan University Hospital**

No.7, Chung Shan South Road, Zhongzheng Dist., Taipei City 10002

Tel: (02)-2312-3456

Fax: (02)-2322-2431

E-Mail: [service@ntuh.gov.tw](mailto:service@ntuh.gov.tw)

Website: <http://www.ntuh.gov.tw/en/default.aspx>

**Taipei Foreign Affairs Police Station** – (02)-2381-8251; (02)-2381-7494

**Taichung Foreign Affairs Police Station** - (04) 2327-3875

**CET Taiwan will provide you with a business card containing emergency contacts.**

## B. Health and Wellness

### General

In general, Taiwan is a happy, safe place where you won't be troubled by many scary diseases or everyday health hazards. Food poisoning, though it does happen, is a rare occurrence if you don't eat sushi at the night market for dinner every day. However, you will probably get sick to some degree if you're here for a year, so it's important to know what to do when that happens.



Just like any transition to a new place, there will be different germs and living conditions in Taipei that may cause you to fall ill. If you have to miss class because you are sick, please be courteous and let the teachers know in advance.

One thing you'll see immediately after arriving is a ubiquity of face masks (口罩, kou3zhao4). I recommend wearing them if you are going to go out and do anything when you're sick. They serve as a **material manifestation of sickness**. People here expect that if you are sick, you will wear a mask. That way, they know how to deal with you, and know that you won't suddenly cough or sneeze on them. The reverse is also true - you don't normally need to worry about a Taiwanese person having a cold if they're not wearing a mask. Seen from this perspective, it's actually a convenient thing, not to mention the way to realize your long-unrequited dreams of sneezing while both hands are occupied. These face masks are common in Taiwan and other parts of East Asia, and come in all sorts of colors and patterns, including black, pink, green, and even Hello Kitty-patterned.

## Mold, Dampness, and Other Denizens of Taipei

In general, the main health-related difficulty particular to Taipei is **humidity**. Taipei is wet, wet, wet, wet, wet. This means many things, as detailed below. General tips include using the dehumidifying setting on your air conditioner (the setting is called 除濕, chu2shi1, "eliminate moistness"), if yours has such a thing. Having a light fan to circulate air also helps immensely.

More specifically, you first need to accept that if you don't live in the dorm or have an apartment with a dryer, **your clothes are going to take a while to dry**, with the hazards you would associate with wet clothes. If it's winter, get in the habit of doing the wash before all your clothes are gone.

Second, you need to **be very vigilant when it comes to mold** (受潮 shou4chao2 = to catch mold), a consequence of very humid climates. Many of my possessions grew mold simply from hanging in the closet, sitting on the floor, lying in a suitcase...if it's exposed to non-flowing air, it can grow mold. For clothes or backpacks or the like, running them through the washing machine and hanging them out in the sun (after a year in Taipei this sentence may make you laugh) will fix them right up. Non-washable items may require a dry-clean, or a search of Forumosa. To partially prevent this problem, buy little tubs that look like air freshener, called 除濕劑 (chu2shi1ji4, "dehumidifying agent") and place them liberally about your domicile. When the little spheres at the top are gone, and the bottom is full of water, it's time to replace them.

Alternatively, mold is such a common problem in Taiwan that there are many washing detergents that include antifungal chemicals in them. Washing your clothes with these is a surefire way to ensure that you can keep your clothes in good condition.

Third, **keep yourself dry**. In wet climates, infections, rashes, and other enemies of your immune system have a field day, every day. In addition to exacerbating my allergies, Taiwan gave me rashes like no other, as early as the summer. Besides buying medicine, it can't hurt to buy a cheap hair dryer to use after showers in the winter, if you think you're going to be susceptible to these sorts of things. These problems can be dealt with very easily (see the section below on Watson's) but it's best to address them quickly and correctly, or you run the risk of an infected rash.

Four, **take precautions against disease**. There is no need to bring the most heavy-duty athlete's foot medication (香港腳 xiang1gang3jiao3, "Hong Kong foot") you can find in the US, but fungi do occur. Following the steps above can help prevent many of the problems associated with fungi.

## Getting Help

Don't get intimidated or scared if, despite your preparations, you get sick in a way that you never have before, even if it's a small rash or fungus. Taiwan might have a very different climate from where some Light Fellows hail. There's no shame in getting nervous about getting sick abroad, but you are in luck: Taiwanese medical care is uniformly good, easy to access, and cheap. What follows is a rough rubric for what to do when your 免疫系統 (mian2yi4 xi4tong3, immune system) refuses to cooperate.

Keep in mind that the problems you are most likely to encounter might be sunburn, dehydration, adjusting to the responsibility of a lower drinking age--all easily preventable if you take steps beforehand.

**Note:** *ICLP's packet suggests that you first go to the 臺大(Taida) clinic when you have any problems. This is a possible way to do things, but not recommended. You often have to wait for over an hour (if not two) around tons of sick college students, before being seen for two minutes by an overworked general practitioner. Choosing this option first may lead to a waste of your time.*

*CET will provide you with instructions on how to get connected with the nearest GeoBlue (health insurance) provider during orientation. You can also easily contact one of the staff members to get help with the process if you forget how to go about it.*

*Follow the instructions from HTA for these situations - contact your RD!*

Simple Problems with Minimal Consultation: These are things you may already know how to solve, for example, a light cold, a stomach ache, or a small rash, where all you need is a pill or some random ointment. For these types of things, head to your neighborhood **Watson's**, essentially the Japanese version of Walgreen's. They really have everything you need for personal health, although you may need to bring a friend if your character reading skills aren't superb.

Simple Problems Requiring Consultation: Let's say you have allergies and want to pick up some antihistamine tablets, or you have a slightly more troublesome cold, or you want vitamins. For these, head to your **neighborhood pharmacy** (藥局, yao4ju2). Pharmacies in Taiwan are everywhere, and range from little humble joints run by a single, tired woman, to shiny and even colorful stores (that look like Watsons a little, actually) manned by people in lab coats. When Taiwanese people have any physical malady, they first go to a pharmacy, not a hospital, hence their ubiquity. Tell the pharmacist what you need and they'll do their best to give you cheap but effective medicine.

More Complicated Problems: For example, real sickness or injury. Past injuries include a previous Light Fellow who suffered a back injury, another who got a case of the Herpangina virus for which the Taida clinic misprescribed medicine, and an ICLP classmate who skinned himself falling off a bike. All these conditions require a **real hospital**. This is NOT an intimidating prospect.

The general procedure is always the same: bring ID, usually a passport or ARC if it's your first time, and line up to 掛號 (gua4hao4), essentially taking a number. Tell the receptionist which department (科) you want to check into, and then you'll be given your number as well as possibly a 診 (zhen4, clinic) number. Find the department, and sit down until your number is called. The doctors at the hospitals below all speak English, so don't feel pressured to remember tones, remember, you're sick.

- 台大醫院 (National Taiwan University Hospital): Yes, this is the NTU Hospital of MRT fame, so it's easy to get to. It's housed in a beautiful building, and is one of Taipei's most famous. Most doctors speak English. Though your experience here will generally be very nice, it's also often very crowded, and you'll often have to wait a while. However, if you have problems beyond just a cold (e.g. their Rehab and Physio departments are generally held to be fantastic) this is the best choice for you.

- 台安醫院 (Taiwan Adventist Hospital): One of the main “foreigner” hospitals outside of Tianmu, they speak English, they’re used to people like you, I hear you can’t go wrong here. (Never actually been. Oops.)
- 馬偕醫院 (Mackay Memorial Hospital): A little bit further away, located at Shuanglian MRT Station, this hospital is also well-equipped for foreigners (English proficiency, signage, etc.) but more importantly, also has **evening hours**. I really like this place, have been there twice for two thorny diseases. I recommend it without hesitation.

**Note:** *Many hospitals stop taking numbers at 3:30 in the afternoon. If it’s past that, go to the emergency branch or find one with evening hours, like Mackay Memorial Hospital.*

## C. Transportation

### How to get to the program

Come prepared with the address of the place you will be staying written down on a piece of paper or screenshotted on your cell phone (in English and Chinese). You will need this for customs. If you do not know where you will be staying, have the address for the office of your study abroad office.

ICLP's address:

International Chinese Language Program (ICLP)

4F., No. 170, Sec. 2, Xinhai Rd., Da-an District, Taipei City 106, Taiwan

台大國際華語研習所

台北市106 大安區辛亥路二段170號四樓

You can take a taxi from the airport directly to wherever you will be living, but it will cost in the range of 1000NT or more. Uber/Lyft is also available and will also cost somewhere in the 1200NTD range to get from the airport to NTU.

A more cost-effective and convenient way to get to [Taipei from Taoyuan is the MRT](#) or the HSR. This line connects the Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport (TPE) to Taipei, as well as several other suburbs. On the MRT, there are stops at each of the terminals, and it can take you as far as Taipei Main Station. The service, like the overall MRT (mass rapid transit - what the subway is called in Taiwan) service, stops at around 12:30 AM, so depending on your arrival time this may be a more convenient option. One-way fare is about \$160 NTD, less than \$6 USD, and the time to the city is a lot less than the bus

option. There are both a commuter line and an express line (with fewer stops on this line), so be sure to get on the express line to save time.

You can also [take a bus \(~150NT\) to Taipei Main Station \(台北車站\)](#), and then grab a cab or the subway to your final destination. There is a night bus available as well – follow the signs after arriving at the airport to the bus counters. Look for the Kuo Kuang (國光) desk and ask for a ticket to Taipei Main Station. This will, however, require a bit of Chinese-speaking, so first-years, get ready to say "我要去台大"; someone will help you find the closest stop. Taiwanese are very friendly and will be happy to help you find your way!

## Your First Couple of Nights

By far the best way to start your Taipei experience is to spend a few nights at a hostel, many of which can be found at [www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com). One recommended option is the **Eight Elephants Hostel** ([www.eehostel.com/](http://www.eehostel.com/)), located near Taiwan Normal University/ShiDa (台灣師範大學/師大) but only 2 subway stops from Gongguan (公館) and TaiDa. "EE" is reasonably priced; more importantly, it is a completely safe place with an incredibly relaxed and dorm-like feel, run by a slowly fluctuating staff made up of a young Taiwanese co-proprietor and a bunch of her friends. You can both meet a ton of interesting travelers and expats, and ask the helpful and roughly bilingual local staff any question you could possibly think up. Once you've stayed at EE (assuming you're friendly), you're a permanent part of the community if you want to be. You can always go back to visit the hostel (for game night, etc.) or to go out to a dinner/bar with people (Taiwanese and international) you meet there. That being said, the lingua franca at EE is English so if you want to improve your Chinese, be prepared to love the atmosphere, soak it up, learn about Taipei, and then move into an apartment or dorm soon after.

Another decent option which is cheaper is Taipei Hostel (<http://www.taipeihostel.com/>). It is 300 NTD (\$10 USD) and has lockers large enough to fit all of your bags. It has friendly staff, a safe environment, and strong WiFi, making it a good place to apartment hunt. It's also very centrally located, about a 3 minute walk from the Shandao Temple metro stop on the blue line (easy transfers to both the green and brown lines which go to TaiDa) and 1 subway stop (10 minute walk) away from the Taipei Main Station. The one downside is that they only turn on air-conditioning in the rooms late at night. Because you'll be arriving at the end of the hottest part of the year in Taiwan, this is definitely something to consider.

A somewhat nicer option is the **Dongmen 3 Hostel** (around 1000NTD per night), located in the Dongmen neighborhood between Chiang Kai Shek Memorial Hall and DaAn. The hostel sits upstairs a small coffee shop and is modern and clean. While there is a kitchen and lounge area, there are fewer communal spaces and less of community in this hostel—it is much more akin to a cheap hotel.

## Maps and Getting Oriented

- ICLP will provide you with a city map sometime during orientation, but this may be several weeks after you have already arrived in the city. You can also purchase a Taipei city map at 7-11s or bookstores.
- There's a great iPhone app that provides maps of the areas around every MRT stop called Explore Taipei Metro Map.
- Google maps is also fairly accurate, especially for figuring out public transportation routes, though it can get confused by street numbers.

## "EasyCard"

You can get a student "EasyCard" card at most subway (MRT) stations. These can be used to pay for MRT rides, bus rides, and can even be used to pay at some stores. You just have to put down a deposit on the card, which you can get back at the end of your stay. For CET students, you will be provided one of these upon your arrival.

## Subway

The Taipei subway system (MRT) was voted the most reliable in the world for three consecutive years. It is definitely the best and most convenient way to travel around the city. Most people look for an apartment that is close to a subway station so that they can reach the university at any time. The tickets are also very cheap. However, the subway usually closes sometime around midnight or 12:30 a.m. depending on the line, meaning that taxis or YouBikes will be your transportation mode of choice for late night escapades. NTU is located close to the Gongguan (公館) and Taipower Building (台電大樓) stations on the green line and the Technology Building station (科技大樓) on the brown line.

## Bus

The bus system will take you to more areas of the city than the subway (and costs even less), so we highly recommend putting time into figuring it out! However, you need to be able to read characters fairly well to use it, since the same stop can often be called several different things in English. Each stop has a map of all the stops the bus will arrive at, including easily marked stops at MRT stations. The best bet until you become familiar with the bus system is to look up where you're going in advance and to ask multiple locals if you are taking the right line and getting off at the right time. In general, the buses run well.

Google Maps is also a great way to figure out how to get around using the local bus system. Using the public bus navigation option, it will show you the many different bus numbers you can get on, and indicate which stop you should walk to wait for it. It even provides the time left for the next bus to arrive at the stop. There are so many lines that it's possible to get just about anywhere in and around Taipei with a combination of MRT/buses. Like many other things in Taiwan, the fare can be paid with your EasyCard.

*Caveat* As with any bus system, buses tend to run late (deviate from schedule) as the day goes on. Google Maps does not update with the new arrival times, unlike the e-signs posted at the bus stops. Please make sure to do your research and properly plan if you are planning to rely on the bus system to go far from Taipei.

## Bicycles

There are bicycles everywhere in Taipei. More bicycles than cars, and there are a lot of those. A cheap (usually used) bicycle can be obtained for about \$25 at many bicycle stores in the vicinity of the university. NTU also has periodic sales of used bikes that ICLP will advertise. Better bicycles of course cost more, and used bicycles can also be purchased, sometimes from students leaving for the summer. Bicycle problems can be fixed at the repairman on the university campus. Be sure to buy a lock to secure the bicycle as well.

In addition, Taipei has an awesome bike share program called YouBike. It is incredibly convenient: all you need is an EasyCard. There is a bike station less than a minute walk from the ICLP building and one only a 5 minute walk from the dorms. Before using a YouBike for the first time, you will have to register your EasyCard through the YouBike app (look for the logo with rainbow words on the App Store). You'll also need a phone number in order to receive a confirmation code. (You can also register on their website: <http://taipei.youbike.com.tw/en/index.php>, but you will need a phone number there

as well). It is free for the first 30 minutes and around \$10 NTD per 30 minutes after that. The program is so popular that during rush hour or late at night you may have to wait upwards of 5 minutes to get a bike. There are also several apps for the YouBike system with many features, including maps of where each station is and how many bikes are at it.

Obtaining a bicycle is no problem; braving the streets with your new mode of transportation is another matter entirely. The unofficial rules of the street will take some time to figure out, and no one wears a helmet in all of Taipei. In general, most people bike on sidewalks along major streets, as cars are not incredibly used to sharing the roads with cyclists. Luckily, the University campus is a perfect spot to bike freely without traffic. Some students only purchase their bike for campus since the daily path from subway station to ICLP building can take quite a while on foot.

Make sure to get a bicycle sticker at the ICLP building. You will have to stick it to your bicycle, otherwise it will be towed. You will be able to sign up for a bike sticker at the beginning of the program at the ICLP office.

For fun bike trips along Taipei's growing system of bike trails, you can rent a bike for several hours at YouBike stations using your Easy Card or by going to one of any number of private bike rental shops (see "Day Trips" section H).

Also, one warning. In Taiwan, you can get a DUI for riding a bike after having just one drink. Walking around late at night, you do occasionally pass traffic stops where police are checking everyone's breath. **Do not risk it and find alternative transportation home after going out to a bar.**

Taipei has an awesome network of bike paths throughout the city - get a bike and explore!

## Taxis & Uber

Taxis are a good way of getting around when you have the address of somewhere you want to go but don't have a good idea of how to get there by public transportation. Though they are fairly cheap (NT 70 base rate, NT 5 for every 300 meters or 2 minutes, and 20% more at night), costs can definitely add up if you take them frequently. That said, they are a safe and fast mode of transportation and easy to hail. Just be sure to get your tones right when saying the address, or you could end up on the opposite side of town.



While Uber has apparently encountered some difficulties in the past due to problems with taxation with the Taiwanese government, as of summer 2023, it appears to be fully back on. Uber is a very convenient way of getting around, especially if you are worried about potentially mispronouncing your destination. A 10 minute Uber will cost around 130NTD, and a 15 minute Uber will cost around 170NTD. As with taxis, while they are inexpensive compared to major US cities, the costs can add up.

## D. General Living

### Sending / Receiving Mail and Packages

Post offices are quite easy to find in Taipei and easily recognizable. There is one on the Tai Da campus and one in the Gongguan subway station, Exit 3, near campus. Buy postage from the post office workers, who are very helpful, then glue the postage on with the provided glue sticks (and an "air mail" sticker if you are mailing overseas) and put in the correct post office box. Also, make sure you are standing in line for the post office windows and not the bank, which is often in the same room and requires you to take a number to get service.

Besides receiving letters at your apartment, you can have more important packages sent to your program's main office if necessary. Just ask them first.

### Bathrooms (Private and Public)

Bathrooms in Taiwan are mostly Western-style and will generally be what you are used to.

Private bathrooms are a little different; when in a private home or apartment you should generally throw toilet paper in the trash and not in the toilet. Showers also generally lack any kind of bathtub, curtain, or barrier between the shower area and the rest of the bathroom. Most locals invest in a bucket or two to save water and keep from flooding the entire room.

## Laundry

Most private homes lack dryers, but it's so hot that clothes dry quickly. In the winter, clothes will dry more slowly, so plan ahead, especially if you have a lot of thicker items. There are also many laundromats in the city if you need dry cleaning or specialized laundry services.

## Etiquette

Read Lonely Planet on this issue; in general, though, Taipei folks are great to foreigners, and smiling and thanking people in their own language goes a long way. Taiwanese people are generally very open and willing to help, especially when it gives them a chance to practice their English. If you look lost or troubled in a public place, someone nearby will probably try to help.

Rules on tipping / bartering: Tipping is generally not needed. Some restaurants will add a 10% surcharge to your bill. Taxi drivers also will not expect a tip, though sometimes they will keep the change if it is a small amount.

## Electronics

There are electronics stores everywhere in Taipei. One popular location is Guanhua Shang Chang (光華商場), basically a huge building with a lot of little shops that have everything from DVDs and computers to iPods and iPod knock-offs. They sell everything you could ever want and cheaply too, but be sure to research and bargain so that you get a good price. Taiwan also has a great photography district, near the main train station.

## Computers and Internet

ICLP has a computer cluster which you are free to use when it is open as well as WiFi that works most of the time. You can also print there for free. It is especially convenient for getting the audio files out of the CD's provided for the course textbooks if your computer does not have a CD drive.

Taipei also offers free WiFi in many public areas, such as the MRT stations. If you get a Taiwanese phone number, you can sign up online. Otherwise, you can sign up at a MRT station by providing an email address.

## Cell phones

Make sure your cell phone is unlocked if you want to purchase a Taiwan SIM card. There are many pay-as-you-go options for phone service. On the ground floor of Taoyuan Airport is a row of cell phone stores that can sell you a prepaid SIM card after you provide a passport and ID. Please keep in mind that people under 21 cannot legally purchase a SIM card, and you may need to enlist the help of someone in your program.

Since calling and texting tend to be expensive with prepaid services, many people prefer to use Line, a popular Asian messaging app. Taiwan Mobile (DaGeDa) and Chungwa Telecom usually offer a prepaid data package that will give you a gigabyte of data for only around 180 NTD, and any extra money you put on your prepaid account can be spent on calling or texting.

To refill your account, you can either visit a local cell phone store for your service provider or visit 7-11 and use iBon to buy a prepaid card. You won't need to provide ID or be 21 to do this. Data packages, for Chungwa at least, can be activated over the phone. There are other providers like 7-eleven and Carrefour, but from what I've heard Chungwa and DaGeDa are the largest companies and have the best service.

Chungwa also has an app that you can use to refill your account. Unfortunately, it's only in Chinese but after asking a Taiwanese friend (or teacher) to help you figure it out the first time, it should be manageable for future times. You can select the amount of data or voice usage that you want to purchase and type in your credit card information, and it will automatically be added to your account. You can also use the app to see how much data and how many minutes you have left. You can find it on the app store by searching "中華電信行動預付卡" (Chungwa Telecom Mobile Prepaid Card).

Another option is to purchase eSIM services (one app that does this is called Airalo). This was very helpful for those who were traveling to multiple countries in Asia and didn't want to continually swap SIM cards (you can purchase an eSIM that works for all of Asia); however, particularly if you intend to spend more than a summer in Taiwan, I would not recommend this. Oftentimes apps require a Taiwanese phone number, and the number you get from using an eSIM can sometimes be from other countries.

## Sanitation: Food, Water, and Trash

Food: food poisoning is a rare issue, especially when it's hot. With so many small stands and restaurants to try out, your best bet is to only try food from places that are busy - if the locals are eating there, it's probably safe (and also delicious).

Water: Taipei water is not fluoridated like U.S. water, meaning that you'll have to brush extra hard. More importantly, local wisdom has it that water should not be drunk from the faucets in significant quantities or on a regular basis. Taipei's water is actually safe to drink, but most buildings have old pipes and the water contains a lot of metals that your body isn't particularly keen on. At any rate, everyone uses a filter or boils water before drinking, so you should too. Tap water is fine for teeth brushing. Water refilling stations are ubiquitous, so we highly recommend investing in a water bottle!

Trash: Taiwan is quite environmentally conscious; after all, there's not much room for trash on this small island. You'll see in that there are several different containers in which to sort your trash. At home, you're expected to categorize your waste too. You'll need to purchase government-approved trash and recycling bags from 7-11 (ask the cashier). The garbage truck schedules will vary by location, but you'll know when they're making their rounds in the evening when you hear them play "Für Elise" or "A Maiden's Prayer" (sorry, it's not an ice cream truck!). You'll have to be ready to bring your trash, food waste, and recycling outside and hand it to the truck driver - no leaving it on the sidewalk like in the US!

## Convenience Stores (7-11)

Almost anything you will need to do can be done conveniently at one of the ubiquitous 7-11's and other convenience stores (such as 全家商店/Family Mart). Snacks, copying/faxing, sending packages, paying bills: your first stop should be "Seven" as it's referred to locally. Become familiar with the electronic **iBon** machine in every store, where you can refill your phone credit, reserve movie tickets, buy concert tickets, and more. The workers here are all really friendly and will even help you add credit to your phone or solve other issues if you can't figure it out on your own.

## E. Food

Everyone who has set foot in Taipei knows that the food is amazing—and not just street food. It seems like a new cafe or coffee shop opens in Taipei every day, and foodie culture is flourishing. Because of Taiwan's rich culture, there are influences from several Asian countries in its snacks. Because there are just so many restaurants and cafes to try,

it's helpful to bookmark spots in Google Maps so that when you are walking around in a new part of town, you'll know the best spots in the area.

For more information: <http://hungryintaipei.blogspot.com/> is a blog dedicated to food. There are many good suggestions on there, but there are many restaurants that are a little more expensive.

## Cooking for yourself

Cooking for yourself in Taiwan can be a fantastic experience. Go to the market areas early in the morning to get fresh fish, meat, nuts, vegetables, fruits, and whatever you like. A few suggestions:

- Make friends with the vendors at your local marketplace. They can teach you everything you need to know about food in Taiwan and food vocabulary.
- Since Taipei is tropical, fruit (especially mangoes, passionfruit, guava and the like) are out of this world. I ate several mangoes a day, and could not recommend it more highly.
- If you don't know how to cook with Taiwanese ingredients, make sure to get to a Western grocery store to stock up on some basics (spices, cheeses, Bisquick, flour, olive oil, etc.), and then all you will need is to pick up fruits, vegetables, and meats nearby. You can also travel to IKEA for all your Western grocery needs - it's great fun!
- Suggestions on markets: One market, in the alleys a few blocks north of the ICLP building, is open every day, dawn-dusk. Another, on the north side of Roosevelt St. by Guting Station, is open on weekends.

## Night Markets

Unless you cook for yourself, you will probably be doing most of your eating at the stands or little restaurants in one of Taipei's night markets, particularly in the Gongguan (公館) or ShiDa (師大) areas. If you have more time, definitely try other night markets around the city. Each has its own character and secret treasures: Shilin, Tonghua, and Raohe are especially worth checking out. It's cheap, greasy, at least partly bad for you, and probably delicious. You can find a regular night market meal for around 80 NTD; a more meat-filled/westernized/expensive one, for something like 200+. *Do not miss:*

- Guabao (掛包) [but 掛 is often written as simplified "挂" without the 3-sided box]: delicious snack/half-meal, both sweet and savory. Completely Taiwanese, completely delicious. There are variations in the meat, and you can get it as fatty or as lean as you want, depending on the stand. Ask around for the best local stand, you won't regret it!

- Stinky Tofu (臭豆腐): Legend has it that if you can ignore the smell for long enough to get it into your mouth, it's delicious.
- Shaved ice ("冰沙"): A pretty healthy dessert made of shaved ice (shaved cubes of frozen *milk* is the best), topped with anything from mango to the omnipresent sweetened beans (red & green). Find a date and pig out on this Taiwanese specialty.
- Papaya milk (木瓜牛奶): One of the best things about Taiwan is its delicious, fresh fruit, and this extends to its fruit-infused everything! You'll notice that there are a ton more milk options at your local 7-11 refrigerated section and local 訂好 (Wellcome) grocery store, and out of these, you **cannot** go without the papaya milk. If you ever run into a stand that sells fresh fruit juices (果汁), chances are you can also find fresh papaya milk there. Another tasty alternative: watermelon milk 西瓜牛奶. You can normally choose whether or not to add sugar or ice, but a bit of both is a good start.

## Finding Restaurants Anywhere and Everywhere

Taipei is a nexus of Japanese, mainland Chinese, and native cuisine. Basic stand-alone restaurants may be cheaper than night market fare due to location, but you can easily ratchet up the quality (and price) by walking down the street. That craving for American food is the most expensive to fulfill: think 350+ NTD for a full Italian-style pasta meal or a really solid burger with sides. *Do not miss:*

- Across the street from the Language Center is a hotspot of restaurants in an area called Lane 118, this is a great area to find food options before and after class.
- 快炒 restaurants, for cheap, greasy, and delicious seafood and beer.
- Food courts in shopping centers! If you're American, this may seem like a terrible idea, but Taiwanese food courts are not American mall food courts, the food is normally quite good and varied. Plus, everyone can eat something different.
- Yong Kang Jie is extremely famous, for good reasons. Everything is amazing, especially the shaved ice.

## Must-Try Restaurants In Taipei

1. **Din Tai Fung** 鼎泰豐 – This famous restaurant chain, which originates in Taiwan, has branches in Australia, Japan, the US, and many other countries. It is famous for its 小籠包, and was named one of the top ten restaurants in the world by *The New York Times*. It was awarded a Michelin star, and it is not very expensive.

Also, this place has **the most incredible chocolate dumplings**. The line might look long, but they have a very efficient and organized system for seating.

Best menu items:

Appetizers: Wood ear mushrooms, cucumber salad

Main dishes: All of their 小籠包, chicken dumplings, all of their fried rice, Shrimp & Pork Wontons with Spicy Sauce

Dessert: Chocolate 小籠包(!), red bean buns, sesame buns

## 2. Paradise Dynasty

This place is famous for their rainbow dumplings, which are eight different dumplings of different flavors, including black truffle and foie gras. The restaurant is a bit on the expensive side, and is located inside of a fancy mall (Breeze Xinyi). It is worth it though!

Best menu items: Rainbow 小籠包, custard buns, scrambled egg white with fish and conpoy, lotus paste bun with salted egg yolk

## 3. MUME

While expensive, this is one of the best Western restaurants in Taipei and is consistently ranked as one of the top 3 best restaurants in Taipei, period. The food is beautifully presented, and incredibly delicious. The menu is constantly changing. If you want to celebrate a special occasion, this restaurant is the place to do it.

## 4. KGB Kiwi Gourmet Burgers

No matter how much you might love Taiwanese food, many people want to eat a good burger at some point in their time in Taipei. This burger spot is excellent, and offers fries or salad as sides. They also serve milkshakes and a student discount!

## 5. Hao Kung Tao Chin Chi Yuan (Da'an) (好公道金雞園)

Cheap but delicious dim sum. Won a Michelin Bib Gourmand, awarded by the famous guide to restaurants that provide great value.

## 6. Closet (衣櫥餐酒館)

A very trendy restaurant and bar with an extensive and delicious cocktail menu. Many of the drinks are very creative and involve Taiwanese ingredients like different kinds of local oolong tea.

7. Daylight Brunch Cafe

This is a great breakfast spot with towering plates that are healthy but delicious!

8. Nakedfood

This is one of the most unique restaurant experiences in Taipei (google for details).

9. Plants

Another popular vegan restaurant with an extensive menu!

*Check out the Michelin Bib Gourmand list for some of the best street food you can find in Taiwan! (Highlights include Lan Jia Gua Bao, Moon Moon Food, Wang's Broth, and more.)*

## Must-Try Dessert Shops in Taipei

**1. Tiramisu**

This is probably the best, cheapest cake/dessert store in Taipei. The cake slices are so incredibly cheap but such high quality. They have many different flavors. Everything is baked in-store and fresh. One of Taipei's treasures.

**2. Jamling cafe**

This cafe has the best Japanese fluffy pancakes in Taipei. There are so many different flavors, and each one is better than the last. The pancakes are thick and soft, and they don't skimp on the toppings, which include ice cream. Go with a group and order one of each!

**3. Quelques Patisseries**

This is an extremely cute French bakery. Their desserts are incredibly beautiful and creative.

**4. 來特冰淇淋**

This is a hidden gem of an ice cream store. It is tiny and easy to miss, but is quite a famous shop on Instagram because of its rainbow colored glutinous rice balls that



are served with the ice cream. The owner is incredibly kind and the store decoration is adorable.

### 5. **Stoppage Time**

This is very popular cafe to sit and do homework in. It is a cool and relaxing atmosphere in which movies (without sound) are projected onto the wall. The food is incredible—particularly the avocado toast.

### 6. 一之軒時尚烘焙

This bakery/dessert shop has the most incredible mochi in Taipei. There are countless flavors, as well as desserts that are creative, elegant, and classic. There is a convenient location in Shida Night Market.

### 7. **Tamed Fox**

A great cafe for doing homework. They have adorable “galaxy donuts” and other cute desserts!

### 8. 冰淇淋菠蘿麵包

One of Taipei’s most trendy desserts is pineapple buns (sweet bread topped with sugar) stuffed with ice cream. Freshly made, delicious, and novel!

### 9. **Mr. Snow**

*For shaved ice! It is by Gongguan station and has some of the best shaved ice (and nice seating) in the area. Prices range from 90 NTD - 220 NTD.*

## Bubble Tea/Boba

Zhenzhu naicha deserves its own entry. Taiwan’s gift to Asia and to the world, bubble tea is everywhere here. There is a whole lingo to ordering, involving how sweet and how warm/how much ice you want - you’ll learn fast, don’t worry. Everyone has their favorite chain, and their favorite hole-in-the-wall. For famous bubble tea, head to Gongguan, and look for the long snaking line at the beginning of the night market.

## Cafes

You’ll likely need to find several good places to study in order to get any work done. Taipei has tons of cafes, especially in the student areas: the Shida area and in the area

next to Taida campus (triangle formed by Xinsheng, Roosevelt, and Xinhai Roads). In particular, you should check out Salt Peanuts (in Shida), and Fluegel (<https://www.facebook.com/Fluegel.cafe>) The Huashan Culture Park is another quirky area worth checking out. Editor Books & Cafe was one of my favorite spots, filled with books and Go boards if you'd like to play with a friend.

Of course, there's always Starbucks. (The Starbucks across from the main gate of NTU has three floors, meaning that if you ever never to just sit inside with some air-conditioning for a minute, you do not necessarily have to buy anything to do so). Dante Cafe is cheaper and also everywhere. The food and drinks there taste exactly like what they are: cheaper, local imitations of Western food, but it's not a bad place to go if your aim is convenience. The Louisa coffee near the CLD building is an extremely reliable study spot.

## Matcha Cafes

One of the best subcategories of cafes is Taipei's matcha cafes (abundant and relevant enough to deserve their own category), which are heavily influenced by Japan, matcha's country of origin. These cafes have menu items that are exclusively matcha flavored.

Some of the best matcha cafes in Taipei include the following:

**Matcha One** is one of the most popular matcha cafes in Taipei. It is conveniently located on the popular Yongkang Street, home of the infamous Yongkang Noodle House and several other really good dessert shops.

**Myowa Japanese Sweets cafe**(和茗甘味處) is very popular and can get crowded, but there are three locations. It's one of the most unique matcha cafes in Taipei, because their menu offers desserts that other cafes simply do not (**read: matcha lava cake**).

平安京茶事 is a matcha cafe located near Taipower Station in Da'an District. It's pricier than the others, but it is one of Taipei's best matcha cafes. It deserves to be gone to over and over again, because there is so much variety and so many exciting, special desserts made with high quality matcha. It can get quite packed, so call to make a reservation, otherwise you might have to wait up to an hour to be seated at peak hours.

**Machikaka** is a lesser-talked about matcha cafe in Taipei, although it's very highly rated on Google, and the people who have been there highly recommend it. Located in the

Zhongshan area, it only has one location and serves food as well as matcha desserts. If you want to try matcha flavored waffles, this is the place for you.

### ***Breakfast***

Do not leave Taiwan without hitting up a breakfast place, like 永和豆漿 on Fuxing South Road, for greasy 油條, 燒餅, and eggs. Best at 7 a.m. before class or after a night on the town!

### **On the go**

Pick up some steamed buns (包子). Better yet, get a really filling drink at one of the "fruit bars" (水果吧) dotted throughout the city (try Roosevelt Rd near the Guting metro stop); as a subtropical island, Taiwan's fruits are fantastic and cheap, and if someone's ready to blend a pineapple or even a carrot for you and add milk or ice on your command, how can you refuse?

At TaiDa: The set of little places attached to the TaiDa post office, which include restaurants and a grocery store, is definitely worth checking out. The grocery stores on campus are heavily discounted for students.

## **F. Living in the City**

### **Neighborhoods**

You will most likely be living in the university district of Taipei (Da'An/大安). What follows is a brief introduction to the neighborhoods of Taipei:

**Da'an:** Contains Taida and Shida, many student neighborhoods and the famous Shida Night Market. It's also some of the most expensive real estate around. In some ways it can be thought of (and some locals may describe it to you) as the Manhattan of Taipei, and with its large, well-kept Da'an Forest Park, it's hard to not think of it this way.

**Xinyi:** Known to locals as East Taipei (DongQu), this is a hipper and more upscale part of town. Here you'll find the Zhongxiao Fuxing Sogo and Dunhua and its many restaurants and side streets.

**City Hall:** Full of elegant department stores, Taipei 101, movie theaters, and the Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall, this is a great place to explore in the evenings.

**Zhongshan:** The old Japanese part of town, known for big department stores and wide, elegant boulevards.

**Datong:** Old, colonial-style Taipei, with aging but elegant architecture. Includes Dihua Street, the historical medicine market, and the Dadaocheng Port. Check out the market around Chinese New Year!

**Zhongzheng:** Named for Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, you'll also find 228 Park and the Presidential Palace. Oh, and the Fine Arts Museum, among other cultural attractions.

**Wanhua:** The oldest part of Taipei, and in some places the slummiest. Home to Ximending, youth central, as well as Longshan Temple and environs.

**Songshan:** More commercial and a bit older, it's unlikely you'll spend much time here. It does have Raohe Night Market and Wufenpu (huge, cheap shopping area), though (as well as a train station).

**Beitou:** Up in the mountains, you will find hot springs, hot springs, mountains, and more hot springs.

**Shilin/Tianmu:** Noted for its Night Market, Shilin also hosts the National Palace Museum and Tianmu, an upscale neighborhood traditionally occupied by expats. Has expensive restaurants and looks nice, but feels completely different from the rest of Taipei.

**Neihu:** A big swath of Taipei along the brown line, Neihu has the Miramar entertainment center (among many others), some nice parks and lakes for hiking, as well as about half of Taiwan's IT industry.

**Wenshan:** Comprising Muzha and Jingmei, these are older areas of Taipei. Jingmei has a nice night market and affordable real estate, Muzha houses the zoo and Maokong.

**Danshui:** Technically in New Taipei City, Danshui has beaches, boardwalks, and pretty historical architecture. It makes a great afternoon excursion.

**New Taipei City:** Before December 2010, the area surrounding Taipei proper was called Taipei County. Now it has been renamed. Being administratively contiguous with Taipei City, if you take the MRT far out enough, you're probably already there.

## Safety

Taipei is very safe for a city of its size! (Though, the alarmist tendencies of local media may give you the opposite impression). Always remember that you are in a city, and that crime does occur, but keep it in perspective; pay attention to your surroundings but don't get overly worried if you lose sight of your friend for 30 seconds.

## Exercise

NTU has a huge sports center in which you can do anything from indoor swimming/outdoor swimming to Yoga and weight lifting. Student plans are cheap - you buy access to the weight room or the swimming pool, or both. Head directly to the gym for information, the people who work there are very nice. Next to the sports center is a track and some half-sized basketball courts that you can use for free.

If you enjoy playing basketball, you can play to your heart's desire in Taiwan. Every major park in each district will have a basketball court (usually multiple half courts) where you will find people playing early in the morning or in the evenings until late at night. The locals love playing against foreigners and you can even learn some basketball terminology in Mandarin. Some good places to go are NTU, Daan Park, Youth Park, and Xincheng Park, etc. (the competitiveness at each park will vary).

As an alternate option to the NTU gym, NisoroFit is a highly recommended gym in the Songshan area. Once you buy membership you can very conveniently register for unlimited classes weekly. These classes are a great way to meet more Taiwanese people. Classes include aerial yoga, ballet yoga, pilates, TRX and other core workouts.

In addition, Taipei also has many dance studios in which you can sign up for hour-long choreographed dance classes in different styles such as HRC Dance Studio 忠孝館. There are also a few martial arts venues around the city (e.g., on Xinhai Rd near Roosevelt).

Taiwan doesn't have any major outdoor pollution problems, which makes the outdoors a great option for exercising. The parks, from the massive Da'An park to the yards of the

public schools, which are open to the public during the summer when school is not in session, are also good options for walking, running, pickup games, etc. NTU also has a track that you can run. There is also an extensive network of bike paths and bike rentals in Taipei, most concentrated along the river. If you walk past Gongguan to the river, you can rent bikes by the hour for pennies.

## Weather

Taipei in the summer is hot, and incredibly humid. There are frequent afternoon rainstorms, especially in early summer. Sandals and umbrella - both of which can be bought at GongGuan (公館) on the cheap upon arrival - will be very, very useful. And if you think Taiwan is a tropical island, be warned: it gets cold in the winter, because of the humidity, lack of insulation, and no heating anywhere.

For year-long fellows: if you are living somewhere without heat, and the weather starts to get cold, it is *strongly* recommended that you invest in a small area heater.

If you are living in Taipei Paradise (more on this in the accommodations section blow), however, be warned that during the winter there are periods where turning on the A/C only results in heating, even when the thermostat is set to "cool." The air system is likely centralized and cannot be adjusted during this period. This may be something to consider when considering housing options if you're sensitive to temperature.

## Severe Weather in Taiwan

Taipei will periodically experience typhoons (i.e., hurricanes) about 2 times during a summer. Typhoons can be severe, but unlike other areas of the country, Taipei generally doesn't go through power outages.

That being said, either pay attention to the Taipei Central Weather Bureau every day or make sure your teachers realize that you don't listen to local news so that they'll apprise you when a typhoon is approaching. You may be stuck inside for a day because of heavy rains/winds and store closings, so you'll want food and some movies. And *if* the typhoon is looking bad enough, better to be prepared for a power outage than not: because of how the plumbing works in most buildings in Taipei (in short, it uses electricity), you'll want to have enough water for a day... not to mention a fan and a flashlight, with batteries for both, for your general sanity and comfort.

You may experience an earthquake or seismic event in Taiwan. The government is very transparent and sends alert style text messages to everyone with a Taiwanese phone number near affected areas when an earthquake is occurring. Sometimes you may not have even realized an earthquake happened until you hear everyone's phones ringing in class or on the street.

In case of a big one, FEMA wants to make sure you are prepared.

See: <https://www.ready.gov/earthquakes> for more information

## Accommodations

Here one can only emphasize that ICLP really treats you like an independent person. They will NOT help you sort out your life (i.e. find an apartment), although they will on occasion share advertisements for apartment rentals on your ICLP class Facebook page.

CET will assign you to an apartment with other CET students as well as one local student. However, you will not have input on the location. But, fear not, everywhere in Taipei is its own little hotspot of mom-and-pop shops, so you will not have to worry about being put in a bad location.

Students who are participating in Harvard Summer Academy in Taipei will be assigned dorm housing.

Another fantastic option is to find your own apartment, which you can work on during your first week there on your own or with the help of a language exchange partner or a friendly hostel staff member. Some people may view the necessity of finding an apartment as a burden, but it can be an extremely rewarding one.

Have someone add you to the Facebook group for apartment-hunting in Taipei, and check out tealit.com. If you're ready to look for an apartment totally in Chinese, then check out 591.com.tw! While you *can* use AirBnB, note that prices are incredibly inflated.

Finding housing in Taiwan is not as difficult as you might expect. There are many Facebook groups, such as "Taipei Rentals" and "Rental Apartments in Taiwan" that are good places to start your search. However, you do have to be careful. Stay in a hostel the first few days so that you can check out the apartment in person before signing a lease. Additionally, make sure there are no extra "finder's" fees or anything of the like upfront. Utilities and Internet are not very expensive and should not cost more than 30

USD a month. Many previous fellows have described living outside of ICLP's provided housing as an incredibly rewarding and fun part of their Light Fellowship experience.

### Things to consider when renting:

- Distance from campus/MRT (metro) station - the commute really makes a difference when you need to get to class everyday!
- Floor # (higher = more extreme temperatures, basement = bugs)
- Lease technicalities (utilities included? in-building washing machine? okay with a short-term lease?).
- Laundry facilities - is the terrace enclosed? Will you have to dry things in your room when it rains hard?
- Kitchen - do you want to cook? (given all of the cheap and delicious street food, will you actually cook?)
- Internet - much easier to figure this out before signing the lease
- Examine the apartment carefully before signing anything, and don't be afraid to say no!
- Be especially careful of mold
- Landlord - a good landlord can make your life a lot easier

***Note:** Renting your own apartment is a great way to live independently and save money on your Light Fellowship budget to spend on travel or other fun adventures while abroad as the Taipei Paradise option does require most of the money allotted for housing your budget.*

## Roommates

For ICLP, deciding whether to have roommates or not is entirely up to you. Some Fellows have decided to live with other students so as to have a cheaper living situation, but it's also easy to find a cheap studio apartment (套房) designed for only one resident. If you really want to have an authentic experience, you can even find an apartment with Chinese-speaking roommates.

If you live in Taipei Paradise, your flat-mates will all be other ICLP students, who all come from different backgrounds. Some are older and have held jobs in consulting, or other formal government positions back in their home countries. Others are undergraduates at universities doing their "study abroad" in Taiwan, while some are recent high school graduates doing a gap year before starting college.

For CET, you will be assigned an apartment with other CET students and local language partners with whom you will live for the summer. The CET students are usually other undergraduate students who are also in Taiwan studying abroad for the summer like



yourself. The cost of the apartment will be included in the tuition fee that you pay to CET.

## Local Communities

A variety of people live in Da'An, but the largest group is made up of students, young professionals, and the businesses and vendors who cater to them. There are several ways of getting involved in some sort of local community - finding a good language exchange partner, becoming a regular patron at a restaurant, meeting the staff of hostels and universities, and joining a club at NTU to name a few. Another great, informal way to stay involved with events locally is to follow the International Students & Exchange Students of Taipei page on Facebook. It's a page that connects all foreign students in Taipei and organizes semester opening parties, holiday parties, etc. These are great ways to plug yourself into the local community of foreigners and make friends from all over.

The expat community, too, is exciting and variegated; realize that you'll be missing out on some things if you never stay in a hostel or refuse to go to a bar frequented by expats and visiting foreigners. Keep in mind that there are more than just American expats living in Taipei. You're likely to meet people who live in Taiwan teaching English who come from just about everywhere. Also noteworthy is that because many of the countries that still maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan are in Africa and Latin America, there are many students from those countries who study in Taiwanese universities. These are just some of the other many communities you may run into while out and about exploring Taipei.

Another important community in Taiwan is the LGBTQ community. Taipei Pride, held in late October, is the largest Pride in Asia, which is a pretty big deal. After the Taipei supreme court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage in 2017, the government was given 2 years to reform its marriage laws to make them more equal or have same-sex marriage become legal directly due to inaction. There were many protests and public marches from people on both sides of the aisle in Taipei that ultimately led to this court decision. Overall, the LGBTQ community in East Asia became energized because of this change. As you engage with the community around you, be aware of the ways views of different communities are changing as well.

## G. Sightseeing and Culture in Taipei

Wikitravel can give you plenty of ideas, there are literally TONS of things to do in Taipei. The following are just a handful.

### Sights

**The National Palace Museum (Gugong):** A professor at Yale once said that this museum holds the "crème de la crème" of all Chinese artworks and artifacts in the world. There is such a wide array of famous and historically important artworks, all displayed in one place. The works presented there were part of the collection of ancient Chinese emperors and were moved to Taiwan by General Chiang Kai-Shek during the civil war. Visiting this museum is a must.

**Taipei 101:** You cannot miss 101 from basically anywhere in central Taipei. It's expensive to go up, but everyone has to do it once. If you decide to go up, go check out the 660-ton steel pendulum at the top - it makes 101 one of the most stable buildings in the world. Alternatively, you can just eat in the basement, their food court is great.

**Elephant Mountain (Xiangshan):** A hill on the eastern side of Taipei, it is the best spot to see the entire city. It is recommended that you visit at least twice, once during the day and once at night.

**Longshan Temple:** A historic temple that is still very active with those seeking good fortune. Be sure to visit the nearby night market for snake restaurants, turtle snack bar, birds sold by the dozen, stinky tofu, and fried tiger tail.

**Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall:** Beautiful and grand, the memorial is *the* iconic monument of Taipei. Don't miss the pagoda or the beautiful, hand-maintained grounds and a one-man guard that changes on the hour. And, if you think this is as novel as I did, definitely blow a few NTD to buy fish food for the awesome, varicolored array of fish.

**Ximen (Ximending):** This is the young, trendy, and "Japanese" part of Taipei. The streets are pedestrian friendly, clean and lit up by advertising. Go here for the shopping, nightlife, and karaoke!

**Xinsheng Park Area of Taipei Expo Park:** This is a large, scenic park featuring open recreational space & exhibition pavilions, plus a garden maze.

**Hot Springs:** Go to Beitou, or more technically the Xinbeitou station, especially in the winter, and bask in the soothing and mineral-filled hot springs. There are naked and swimsuit-required hot springs.

## Parks

Taipei has some pretty cool parks, and not just Da'an. The Botanical Gardens are beautiful, Zhishan Park is a mini-mountain filled with boardwalks and terraces, visit the 士林官邸 for KMT-style manicured villas and flowers...and of course, there's hiking in beautiful Yangmingshan.

## Teahouses

Go. To. Maokong. Ride the gondola up the mountain and drink tea. There are literally dozens of choices of tea houses, some with fish under the floor, some looking out over the entire city. Plus, you get to learn how real Chinese tea is brewed, and just relax. Alternatively, you should visit Wistaria (*sic*), the historical Japanese-era teahouse near Da'an Park, the architecture is beautiful and there are even tatami rooms.

## Religious Life

Taipei is full of Buddhist, Daoist, and/or local gods' temples, but several churches are very evident as well. Taiwanese tend to distinguish between "Christianity" and "Catholicism". One Fellow who visited a Catholic church remarked that it was conducted in a very youth-centric, "mega church" style, though there are certainly many different styles (and sizes) of churches to visit.

Don't be surprised if you're walking around Ximending (西門町) or even just around NTU and you see Mormon missionaries in their characteristic button-up shirts and bicycles either. There are also various mosques near the Da'an Forest Park (大安森林公園). Taiwan is a society that is constantly becoming more global (despite the mainland's active attempts to reintegrate it back under its umbrella through isolation tactics) and the presence of these religious groups are a great example of that.

## Shopping

- Consider the Sogo department store at Zhongxiao Fuxing Station at the nexus of the Brown and Blue lines.

- For groceries, there are many options. One of the most common is PX Mart, which has most of the common household necessities: cereal, milk, fruits, vegetables, detergent, etc.
- Don't consider JiaLeFu (家樂福) - go there! Find one near the Ximen stop and marvel as you wander the aisles of the Costco (actually, Carrefour) of Taiwan.
- That being said, there are actually 2 Costco stores in Taipei. One in the northern Beitou district and the other in Neihu (located more centrally - although still a bit out of the way). They will accept your American Costco membership if you have one. The only caveat is that you have to pay for what you buy in cash (NTD), so be prepared to go with all the cash you'll need!
- "The Everything Store": Too lazy to walk from one place to the next just to find a motorcycle helmet, some cute stationery, a piece of plumbing, a pack of pens, a \$1 shirt, and some nuts? Not to worry - the Everything Store (TM) has got you covered. In fact, it probably has an entire section devoted to each of those items. The Everything Store is a type of shop rather than a particular brand; you can find one in the corner of the ShiDa night market, and its big brother on Fuxing S. Rd. (復興南路), a few blocks up from the TaiDa campus (you will pass by if you walk to MRT Technology Building).
- The best place for cheap clothing is called 五分埔 - it's located at Houshanpi MRT station. Look at the maps to find the Wufenpu shopping district; it's a warren of wholesale clothing, actually where all of the night market vendors throughout the city buy their wares.
- If you like finding deals, everything you need can be found at the night market. No really, everything. Living supplies, clothes, trinkets, DVDs...The clothes are pretty cute, but careful about the quality!

## Bookstores

Do you live at your local Eslite yet? If not, what are you doing with your time? The main branch, at Dunhua Nan Lu, is open 24/7, but the City Hall branch is also worth visiting. You will also be surprised by the well selected classical music in the background, and most importantly, the large number of people sitting on the floor reading books at any hour of the day. It almost feels as if you are entering a popular mainstream clothing store during the afternoon on a Saturday of shopping, except this store only sells books and was just as popular at 1:00 in the morning. Also, think about ordering things from books.tw, they deliver to your local 7-11 the following day.

## Entertainment

- **IMAX:** Taipei has two IMAXes, one in Ximending and one in Miramar (both are stops on the metro). You'll find them very expensive compared to other purchases in Taipei, but when the new Marvel movie comes out, you'll definitely want to see it! That being said, movies can sometimes take a couple of extra weeks to be released in Taiwan compared to the United States. Be patient, and you will get to learn some cool Chinese expressions from the subtitles when you do get to see it!
- **iBon machine:** Use the iBon machine at 7-11 to book movie and concert tickets! Student prices can be really cheap. For popular artists, concert tickets can sell out fast, so be sure to know when tickets go on sale if you're set on going to a particular artist's concert. Ask the local 7-11 staff if you need help using the machine.
- **KTV:** If you can't find a place to sing KTV in Taipei, you need to get your eyes examined. This is the best way to improve your reading ability, lose all sense of shame, and often you get to eat delicious food and have drinks on the side.

## Nightlife

Taipei's nightlife is world famous! The new "in" place changes frequently so ask around to find the best place to go.

Nevertheless, while the names generally change and clubs undergo rebranding, the general locations remain the same. Generally, the most frequented clubs and pubs, with decent sized crowds even on weekdays, are located at ATT4FUN near Taipei 101. There you'll find clubs like Wave, Babe 18, etc., each with a unique vibe and crowd.

Other notable places not in this general area include a club called Triangle, which has student nights (free for students) on Wednesdays. Triangle also has themed parties every weekends, which rotate between House music nights, Latin nights, to a monthly LGBTQ party called "Werk!".

To stay up to date with the latest events going on, check out the Facebook page International & Exchange Students of Taipei. They normally host several parties per semester at some of the most "in" clubs in Taipei.

Regardless of where your night adventures take you, don't forget your ID (government-issued, not your NTU student ID) and - if you're a man - to wear long

pants (and possibly a shirt). You can be turned down at the entrance if you wear shorts and sandals.

Going out can be expensive though, so think about cover charges before you go. To save on drink costs, you'll often find a mass of expats pre- or post-gaming outside of the corner 7/11.

**Note:** *Going out CAN be a form of language-exchange practice if you make it one! Even the expat-heavy clubs will have a good amount of Taiwanese guests, and it's a great way to make local friends from all backgrounds.*

## H. Taiwan/Mainland Differences

### Useful Vocabulary (unique to Taiwan)

- **Excuse me** (i.e., "please move"): Jie4guo4; very polite: jie4guo4 yi2xia4 (借過／借過一下)
- **Sorry** (i.e., "my bad" or "sorry for the trouble"): bu4 hao3 yi4 si4 (不好意思); dui4 bu4 qi3 (對不起) is not as commonly used
- **Sure/No problem** (i.e., "you're welcome"; very colloquial and not to be used with your elders, but ubiquitous among young people): bu2 hui4 (不會)

### Taiwanese Mandarin, and Taiwanese

The most likely reason why Yale's teachers encourage students to study in Beijing without much repping of Taiwan is due to the rather pronounced differences between Mandarin as spoken on the Mainland (even setting aside the characteristics of standard Beijing Putonghua) and Mandarin as spoken in Taiwan. Some of these differences are well-known to most Chinese speakers, but a few will legitimately surprise those used to Mandarin spoken in the Mainland. Educating yourself about these differences will not only speed your acclimation to Taiwan, but will also give you some context when people tell you have a 大陸腔 (da4lu4qiang1, "a Mainland twang"). What follows is a brief introduction – Wikipedia also has some good info if you're curious.

Note that even the word for "Chinese" is different in Taiwan, not least of all because what's spoken there is not 普通話. Although 中文 is still a very common turn of phrase, it's more likely that people in Taiwan refer to Mandarin as 國語, usually in opposition to 台語. (Taiwanese. Keep reading.) Some Taiwanese find this a bit nationalistic, and will

instead say 華語, a term used more by the overseas Chinese communities. Like many things in Taiwan, these terms carry political resonance, but until you get to understand these subtleties, just know that these are all just words for Chinese.

**Note:** ICLP teachers are required to teach “standard” Mandarin, which means that most of the following characteristics apply to the real Chinese you’ll hear outside of the classroom.

## Phonetic Differences

The particularly Taiwanese approach retroflex sounds (made by rolling back the tongue), a feature called 捲舌 (juan3she2, “curling the tongue”), is the most well-known characteristic of Taiwanese Mandarin, and in general most southern varieties of Mandarin. Taiwanese people pronounce sounds like 吃 (chi1) , 知 (zhi1) , and 是 (shi4) like 疵 (ci1) , 資 (zi1) , and 四 (si4). (Some people even do the opposite and pronounce 四 more like 是. Isn’t life fun?) Besides this main difference, people rarely use 兒話 (and if so there may be politics involved) and much like on the Mainland, the further you go from Taipei, the more you’ll run into the Minnan accent, which you can read about in just a moment.

A fun note about the 兒話: Because it’s so rarely used in natural, serious speech, many of the younger Taiwanese use it comically (especially where it really doesn’t belong) to indicate their playful or friendly tone. For example, don’t be surprised if you hear your Taiwanese language exchange partner saying things like 好der(的+兒) or 超好吃der, and even spelling it like this on social media posts or hashtags.

There are also a few words that are straight up pronounced differently, like 垃圾 (le4se4) or 和 (han4). Yes, the most simple 和 will be said as han4 by the average Taiwanese person, he2 is understood but a more formal usage. Other examples include 包括 (sometimes bao1gua4) or 血液 (xie3ye4).

More importantly for the Chinese learner, however, are **tonal differences**. Yes, Taiwanese Mandarin uses different tones in certain cases from Mainland Mandarin. If your second tone needs practice, let me tell you, it’s going to get a lot of use, because a significant amount of first tones on the mainland are second tones in Taiwan. Depending on how high a level your Mandarin is before coming to Taiwan, you’ll notice this more or less in class or on the street.

A few common examples follow.

- 星期: in the mainland, it's xing1qi1. Taiwan says xing1qi2. (Applies to all occurrences of the character 期.)
- 企業: in the mainland, qi3ye4. Taiwan says qi4ye4.
- 品質: in the mainland, pin3zhi4. Taiwan says pin3zhi2.
- 危機: in the mainland, wei1ji1. Taiwan says wei2ji1.

## Grammatical Differences

Although there aren't many differences in basic grammar on both sides of the strait, there is one construction you should know about, and many 語氣詞 (yu3qi4ci2, mood particles).

有: Influenced by 台語, roughly speaking this 有 is used in a similar way to the English modal "have," in a sense that often overlaps with 過. As in, "那家餐廳我有去(過)" (I have been to that restaurant). It permeates spoken language pretty drastically, with examples as far-ranging as "老闆，你這家店有賣鞋子嗎?" (Sir, does your shop sell shoes?) to "看你一臉發呆，你有沒有在聽呢?" (You're spacing out on me, are you listening?)

The other point to know about Taiwanese Mandarin is its use of 語氣詞. Beijing Mandarin seems rather impoverished in comparison, with only 啊, its allophones 呀, 哪, etc., and 啦, to emphasize the very important things you want to say. Taiwanese fundamentally adds two new sounds, 耶 (pronounced like ei, sometimes written 欸) and 喔 (neutral tone, sometimes written 哦). It's best not to use these until you've heard them enough in context, or you'll sound unnatural. In general, 耶 expresses surprise, light indignation, or just stronger emotion, while 喔 is a softener, for lack of a better term. Both can combine with 了 to form 嘍 (lei) and 囉 (pronounced lou, not luo), although it's best not to think about these too strictly. Mainlanders think of 喔 or 囉 as quite feminine. Despite this, all younger (and many older) Taiwanese use them, though your teachers will try to avoid them as much as possible.

Examples:

Helen: 我跟你講啊，台灣的麥當勞比美國的好吃多了。(I'm telling you, McDonald's in Taiwan tastes much better than in America.)

David: (吃一口) 哇，這個味道真的不一樣耶! ([takes a bite] Wow, the taste really is different!)



7-Eleven小姐: 抹茶奶綠了，小心燙哦～ (7-Eleven Girl: Here's your Macha Green Tea Latte, watch out, it's hot~)

## Usage Differences

As you get higher up in your Chinese learning at ICLP, you'll notice that there are a lot of word usages that are just different from on the Mainland. (Download Pleco's free add-on that deals with this!) A large amount of the more noticeable differences occur in terms related to technology, because Taiwan's IT industry developed very differently from the Mainland's. For example:

- 網路 (wang3lu4): Taiwan doesn't say 网络 (wang3luo4) for internet, it says 網路. This parallels nicely with 電路 (dian4lu4, electric circuits or grid).

A lot of modern Taiwanese Mandarin, as spoken outside of ICLP, is heavily influenced by Taiwanese, Japanese and English, and a good amount of the latter usages are making their way to the mainland. The most fun of these are the crazy English ones, which you have to hang out with young people to learn.

- 白目: originally from Taiwanese, this adjective describes/belittles people who don't get social cues and are awkward.
- 歐巴桑 (ou1ba1sang1): from the Japanese "obasan," to describe middle-aged women.
- 便當 (bian4dang1): from the Japanese "bentou," a box lunch. The mainland uses 盒飯 (he2fan4, "boxed meal").
- 阿伯/阿媽: Pronounced A'-bei and a'-ma, these are the Taiwanese words for older people of both generations.
- fu: pronounced like "phew," this means "feeling." It refers to the certain je ne sais quoi that certain places, art pieces, or hairstyles evoke. E.g., 你這次的髮型很有fu. (This haircut of yours is quite dashing.)
- OS: pronounced "oh ess," this is not "operating system," but rather used to describe one's inner thoughts that often aren't spoken because they're annoyed or unsuitable to the situation.
- PK: This refers to one-on-one competition, and can be used interchangeably with the verb 比賽 (bi3sai4, to compete).

## Phoneticization

Something many people don't realize before going to Taiwan is that pinyin is not the official form of phoneticization of Mandarin taught in schools. Instead, students are

taught a series of symbols, similar to characters, officially called zhuyin fuhao (注音符號). But they're more commonly known as bopomofo because of the first few syllables in this alternative alphabet bo = ㄅ po= ㄆ mo= ㄇ fo= ㄈ. These are the symbols you'll see in many children's newspapers and at the zoo so that children can understand all the signs related to animals they may not have seen before.

There are many theories as to why this system is used and is maintained over pinyin including its relevance to character strokes, it being a source of Taiwanese pride, among others, but the important part is that it's the main way mandarin is phoneticized in Taiwan. You should study it if you have the chance, even if it's just to a level where you can understand it.

A lot of the time, Taiwanese people sometimes do not finish typing out the last few characters in their messages and instead leave them as zhuyin fuhao. To really understand what is in their messages, you should sit and review the 37 characters a couple of times!

## What about Taiwanese?

Finally, we get to Taiwanese, which is yet another colossal subject, again inextricably intertwined with Taiwanese politics. Taiwanese is considered a Southern Min (閩南, Minnan) dialect of Chinese, originally spoken in Fujian and thereabouts. Many Light Fellows won't need to pick up much if any Taiwanese while they're on the island, much less take ICLP's classes on 台語, but the more you explore Taiwanese media and popular culture, the more you'll see how Taiwanese Mandarin is influenced by Taiwanese itself. Take the time to get out of Taipei, in many ways a country unto itself (many southerners call Taipei 台北國) and you'll see that Taiwanese is the mother tongue of a majority of Taiwanese people. Due to efforts by the KMT government in the 80s to only teach 國語 in schools, many northern young people don't speak native Taiwanese. But a large amount still do, especially further south, and most of these who don't speak it understand it, or at least sing 台語歌 at KTV. You'll find it spoken more as you go farther south on the island or visit more rural areas. Once again, the interface of language and politics (especially 外省人/本省人 and 藍/綠 divisions) in modern Taiwan is a deep and interesting subject. That exploration is left up to you.

## SECTION 3: PROGRAM INFORMATION

### A. Curriculum

#### Placement

While placement tests used to be conducted in person upon arrival, as of summer 2023 these typically take place online a few weeks before the program starts. There is a listening and reading test, which takes about 2 hours, an oral test which is about 15 minutes, and an interview regarding your course interests which is about 5-10 minutes. Besides the interview, you will have an opportunity to retake these tests at the end of each semester to gauge your progress. In the interview, which is typically conducted by two head teachers, you'll be asked if you're interested in things like news, business, and living in East Asia in order to place you into classes that correspond to your interests.

#### Classes

In the summer, ICLP classes last for 4 hours per day: two classes (1 one-on-one; 1 "larger," of about 4 students) are based around a core textbook. The third and fourth classes follow different books, and are assigned as a supplement.

With such a small class size, the level of the other 1-3 students will really affect the pace of the class. By the time one adjusts well enough to make a reasonable decision on one's classes/placement level, it is officially too late to change. Frank and early discussions with the academic director can avoid the disappointment that some people felt with their placement.

ICLP teachers are by and large skilled, patient, and motivated, and class sizes are small, allowing for a lot of individual attention. ICLP's instruction style can be drastically different from Yale's. For example in some of the higher level classes, no grades are given, and the only real "tests" (aside from some written homework exercises and periodic oral presentations) are midterm exams that don't carry much weight behind them. Thus, only a self-motivated student – or one who fears his classmates'/teachers' disappointment – will prepare the lessons each day and keep on top of the material. The upshots of this are obvious; the downsides are that your classroom experience and the pace of your lessons depend a lot on your classmates' willingness to work.

CET classes in the summer last 3 hours per day, and there are three time slots from which you can pick to take class. Each class consists of 6-8 students with roughly the same Chinese level based on the placement exam. The learning experience will vary at each level and with each teacher.

### After L1/L2 (ICLP)

You will likely be placed in Modern Conversations (Xin1Bian4 Hui4Hua4) for your core class. The vocabulary was all very useful. Each lesson is structured around a dialogue about an everyday activity (going to the movies, eating out, renting an apartment, etc.), and you will not only use much of the new vocab in daily life, but also wonder how you previously got by without it. Your other class will likely be Audio-Visual Chinese 3 or Chinese Moral Tales.

One aspect about ICLP that may be difficult getting used after first year Chinese is that absolutely everything is in Chinese and the teachers speak very fast, assuming that you already understand them. It is literally a total language immersion! They want you to get into the mindset of only using Chinese and hearing it in its natural setting, all the time. It's really intense, and you're asked to read a long text and answer questions about it orally. Essays in Chinese are also required (basic Chinese at first, but you improve quickly). On average you have to expect to write two essays a week and memorize about 40 new words a night. There are also some interesting activities, where you need to go to parks and interview local people.

### After L3/L4 (ICLP)

Between Modern Conversations and Thought and Society is the Talks On Chinese Culture (TOCC) coursebook, which may be divided into two levels based on Chinese ability. This class is almost entirely speaking based, and really only required memorizing characters for the midterm exam. The teachers expect you to listen to and read aloud recordings of the text many times before class. In class, you will be expected to recall information and sentence structures from the lesson. Just reading through the content is not enough to be prepared for class!

## After L5 (ICLP)

People coming out of L5 might be placed into ICLP's L5 course, Thought and Society. This level is the last one in which your classes are chosen for you; once you're past that, everything is up for discussion, although the teachers will suggest a few core classes.

ICLP also has L6 and L7 courses. L7 is primarily for PhD candidates who need to learn vocabulary that is highly specific to their discipline. For both L6 and L7, you will be able to choose four unique classes. Unlike the lower levels, your one-on-one class will be completely separate from any of your group classes. Class options include 魯迅小說選, 聽新聞論觀點, 台語, 文言文, and 臺灣深度觀察 (a Taiwan history/society course), among others.

Feel free to explore your interests, or even conspire with classmates about which classes to hold every quarter. If you're at ICLP in the spring and if your Chinese is good enough, you can get a few classmates (usually 6) together to start a debate class (辯論課). As ICLP students you get to participate in a national debate competition with Taiwanese college students, it can be a great experience!

## The Traditional Character Option (CET and ICLP)

After a few weeks, everyone gets used to traditional characters. Don't be afraid, they really aren't that hard. Most textbooks have vocab lists in traditional and simplified to ease the transition. If you would rather write in simplified or even get a simplified version of the textbook, your teachers will be fine with that... However, we definitely recommend learning to read traditional and promise that you will soon agree that it was a good decision. Many people will choose to read traditional, but write simplified, which the teachers are fine with.

## B. Non-Academic Information

### Extracurricular Activities

ICLP arranges several field trips, which can be a good way to see parts of Taipei and get to know your classmates and teachers. They have also started hosting more language exchange programs with NTU students.

ICLP publishes an online newsletter every 2 weeks or so—students can participate by writing articles and/or taking photos. If you're at TOCC level or higher, your teachers might ask for your class's permission to automatically submit your essays for the class for consideration in the online newsletter. You can, of course, always opt out of this option. Meetings are held once every 3 weeks or so during lunchtime at school.

Additionally, ICLP hosts a lecture series every Friday—they bring in professors from different fields (law, biodiversity, music, etc.) and ICLP alumni who are doing very interesting things (a Buddhist monk, a businessman who works in China). (The lectures are mostly conducted in English). Free lunch is provided too!

Definitely, definitely check out NTU's clubs (especially if your Chinese level is TOCC or higher)! The extracurricular bazaar at the beginning of the year is even more wild than the one at Yale. If you miss the bazaar, then do some Googling to find the Facebook page of whatever club interests you. There are community service clubs, sports clubs, music clubs (hit up Meredith for endless gushing about the chorus), clubs for international students, etc.

Note that you may have to be a bit proactive about finding out when the bazaar is depending on what term you're starting at NTU. During the fall semester, it was not really announced by the program, many people did not end up attending until the Spring. There were definitely several people who felt that they missed out - so if you know that you'll want to join a local club, be sure to ask the ICLP administration or browse the NTU website for the date and time shortly after you arrive.

CET will provide a weekly newsletter with events that the staff has arranged, so you can show up and attend with other CET students.

HTA will also provide you with information about events and generally packs the schedule.

## ICLP and Taipei

One of the greatest strengths of ICLP as a program choice is the opportunity it affords to develop Chinese and cultural knowledge outside of the classroom. Because the homework is not backbreaking and you're not living in dorms creating a pseudo-Chinese creole, you'll have the opportunity – should you choose to seize it – to get out there and really use your Chinese.

## Language Pledge

Taipei itself is not conducive to any sort of strict language pledge if you're fresh out of first-year – too many people speak English and don't want you to waste their time – and ICLP's language pledge is decidedly weak and lacks a culture to support it. You have to step up to the plate: venture away from your fellow students and into the night markets, find some patient Taiwanese friends, and try your best to listen and converse. Taipei is a fantastic city, and its people are friendly to foreigners, but combined with a widely held basic knowledge of English, this can actually prove to be a detriment to your Chinese ability unless you are disciplined. We recommend that you find a language partner (or even several ones!) early on in the year to practice Chinese-English/any other language you know. Many students at TaiDa will be excited to get to know you, so ask around.

ICLP will often hold discussion sessions during the week (these will be announced) with TaiDa students majoring in political science/history/economics, and the like. These will be in language exchange groups of about 2-3 Taiwanese students and a handful of ICLP students per group, depending on the amount of people who show up on a given week. You're free to exchange contact details, and this makes for a program-organized way to meet a language exchange partner. You can always reach out and ask if they have any friends with interests more similar to yours who like to practice their English and meet language partners through a mutual contact this way.

## ICLP Support Outside of Class

Students will have to find the immigration office themselves to extend their visa, and they will also have to provide their own housing. The main support you will receive is academic.

That being said, if you really need help or don't know how to do something, ask in the main office or in class! The ICLP staff are very nice and in recent years have developed a new focus on providing support to students. Get to know the workers in the office, they are really great and will help if you ask nicely. Teachers have also been known to be extraordinarily kind-hearted, and will give advice or aid on all kinds of things (how to mail packages, where to go for dinner, etc.).

## SECTION 4: BEYOND TAIPEI

In general, the Lonely Planet is quite useful (if outdated for details). Forumosa is also a great resource. There are many worthwhile day trips that can be made out of Taipei (even in the afternoon after school), so you're highly encouraged to explore!

ICLP offers a number of trips - many are subsidized and therefore very economical. The trips vary in quality but in general can be worthwhile and a good way to get to know your teachers and classmates. If you are a yearlong student, the annual trip to Beigang is particularly recommended.

### A. Near Taipei (Northern Taiwan)

#### Must-Sees (A Brief List)

- **Maokong** (take the Gondola from the MRT system!), **Jiufen** (accessible by bus), and **Keelung Night Market** are all great destinations for tea and snacks. Maokong is a highly aesthetic tea experience in the mountains, Jiufen's old streets are the home to many delicious snacks (and were the backdrop in several famous movies), and the seafood and snacks at Keelung Night Market are unrivaled.
- **Fulong**: An hour or so away by train, Fulong is a cute little town most remarkable for its beach. The swimming area is limited, but there won't be many people (Taiwanese aren't big on beaches) so it's great for relaxing and whiling a day away. Order a "lunchbox" for lunch and try the great shaved ice.
- **Caoling Gudao** (Caoling Historical Trail): Though grueling in the heat and humidity, Caoling Gudao is also a beautiful day hike through the mountains near the northeast coast of Taiwan. There is a shorter and a longer branch of the trail; assuming you want to take the longer, it is best to start from Dali (you can get there by train), as you will end the hike at Fulong and be able to wash off all of the sweat that has accumulated on your body over the past several hours. The only caveat: this map - <http://tinyurl.com/ykt3fgh> - definitely isn't as thorough as the ones you get in Fulong, so make sure you're following it carefully.
- **Danshui**: At the end of the MRT redline, Danshui is excellent for a day trip to the beach. Taiwan gets really hot over the summer so it's quite refreshing to visit Danshui, which is an Oceanside Taipei suburb with cool colonial architecture and a very youthful college environment. There are a lot of great restaurants and shops and most importantly a nice place to go sunbathing on the beach. There is also a ferry to the other shore ("Bali") where you can rent a bike (most



importantly, you can rent a tandem) and pedal to and fro; Bali is also said to be a good place to buy papaya milk.

- **Bike trip:** Taipei has a very comprehensive network of bike trails along the river and through the mountains, along with a robust system of cheap bike rentals. One of the best excursions I took while in Taiwan was a bike ride out of the city and into the mountain suburbs southwest of Xindian - <http://kitchen.j321.com/taipei-cycling-bicycle-bike-rent-hire-path-taiwan>
- **Hiking:** there are many hiking opportunities right outside of the city! Try the Four Beasts Mountains, Yangmingshan National Park, Jiantan - though usually frequented only by elderly locals, many are hidden treasures with gorgeous views and well-marked paths. You can always look up the Taipei Hikers Google group and join their weekly expeditions, or just use their plans for inspiration.

**Everywhere:** Never forget that traversing the length island (well, almost - Taipei to Kaohsiung) involves nothing more than a three-hour train ride on the high-speed rail. The Kaohsiung area is said to be great for surfing, for example; and the mid-island counties of Nantou and Hualien are home to Ali-Shan, Taroko Gorge, and Sun-Moon Lake, all popular tourist attractions. Go to the east coast in Taiwan! It's not as crowded as the west coast, and the drive south by the sea from Yilan to Taitung through Hualien is gorgeous.

## B. Beyond the Immediate North

Traveling outside of Taipei is incredibly easy—even the furthest city is only a few hours by train. Here are some recommended sites and things to do in other parts of Taiwan.

### Spring Scream, Kending

If you're a year-long fellow, the best thing you can do for spring break is attend Spring Scream in Kending, which is the southernmost city in Taiwan. Spring Scream is an annual music festival that takes place on the beach. The bands playing are small and local, and lots of foreigners as well as Taiwanese people attend. Besides the music festival, there are also other large-scale parties that take place during the same weekend in Kending, so there is no shortage of fun things to do. Tickets for all of these events can be bought online.

Renting an Airbnb is probably the best option, as there are very nice ones right next to the festivities for not a lot of money. Also, it is highly recommended that you rent some motor scooters! With your scooters, you can drive through the beautiful Kending

National Park and drive to the southernmost tip of Taiwan! You just have to follow the signs. Kending gets very crowded on the weekend of Spring Scream, but it is one of the greatest experiences ever.

**Note:** *Kending is also popular during the hotter times of the year because it has some of the best beaches in Taiwan – consider visiting even if it isn't during Spring Scream.*

Besides Spring Scream, Kending is also a great place to finally visit a beach and soak in the sun. You can also visit the southern-most point in Taiwan.

## Tainan

Tainan, **unarguably** has the best food in Taiwan, and so many places to see. If you are going during a national holiday, make sure to check hostel and Airbnb's early, as this is a prime vacation spot for people wanting to get away for the weekend. Because everyone has the same idea, accommodation in the small city can fill up quickly! The city is very easy to navigate because of its size, and taxis are cheap. There is no Uber. There are ENDLESS places to eat in Tainan, so definitely do research, but it's also lovely to walk around and just discover new gems.

1. Hayashi Department Store- Probably the coolest building ever, and it's definitely not like any other department store. Hayashi is famous and also the first department store in Taiwan. It's historic and sells adorable local goods. Great place to find souvenirs or just to walk around .
2. 同記安平豆花 – An amazing breakfast and dessert place with tofu pudding, pearls, and custard. It's famous!
3. 阿江炒鱻魚- This is a very famous noodle shop in Tainan, and there are often long lines, but for good reason. Their main attraction is the eel noodles!
4. Anping Old Fort – This is a Dutch fortress that is worth visiting even if you do not particularly like historical landmarks. It's small, relaxing, and 500 years old!
5. Chihkan coffin – One of the classic dishes of Tainan is coffin bread, and this shop is the original coffin bread shop in Taiwan. There are also lots of other options. A classic!
6. Chih Kan Dan Zai Noodles – A great restaurant for trying all of Tainan's famous cuisine, including 擔子麵, which are noodles with minced pork. They also have so many other options!
7. Tainan Confucious Temple – The oldest Confucius Temple in Taiwan! It's such a relaxing place to walk around, and there are so many people enjoying the lovely weather and spending time with their family.

8. If you have a whole day, take the long bus ride out to the National Taiwan History Museum. This is a hidden gem and might require a whole day if you're a museum person, but it has an impressive and comprehensive history of Taiwan and is so worth the visit.

## Taroko National Park and Hualien

Taroko National Park is a must-visit destination in Taiwan, because it is so incredibly, breathtakingly beautiful. It is also easy to reach by train, and you can stop by many of the cities on the East coast on the way. These beach towns have some of the most gorgeous views on the entire island.

Hualien is an incredibly cute city around 30 minutes away from Taroko Gorge. It is easy to find cheap Airbnb's, and calling a taxi is simple. One of the most special things about Hualien is that lining every street are several mochi stores with an abundance of free samples. If you like mochi, you will be in heaven, as you can enter and sample as many flavors as you could possibly want.

## Xiao Liuqiu

This is an island just off the north of the island easily accessible by ferry. Breath-taking waters and snorkelling (turtle sightings are possible)!

## Kaohsiung & Pindong

Kaohsiung (Gaoxiong) is the third largest city in Taiwan and worth a visit if you're interested in hearing Taiwanese spoken around town. Take the short ferry ride to Cijin beach and watch the sunset and eat the delicious fresh seafood. Right across the ferry, you can eat the most delicious mango shaved ice possible! It's a great place to visit if you're into smaller cities. Pindong also has a rich history of Hakka culture and if you visit, you're certain to find pottery and local crafts classes. (P.S. - It's me, Kripa! I used to live in Kaohsiung. Come chat with me about it!)

## Taidong

Taidong is a beautiful and small city on the eastern side of the island. It is quite a trek from Taipei, but if you're interested in Taiwan's mountainous vistas and beautiful fields, it's worth checking out. It's a beautiful place to rent a bike and ride through the countryside. There's also famous night markets and special foods that are worth checking out.

## SECTION 5: MISCELLANEOUS TIPS/ADVICE

### A. Language Exchange

#### Language Exchange Partner

Do not miss the opportunity to find a language exchange partner. It is such a valuable asset to your Chinese learning experience. Go on either <http://www.tealit.com> and click on language exchange, where you can find students offering their Chinese knowledge for your English in exchange, or look at the bulletin board in the ICLP building. You can also post or look for ads in areas where local students hang out, like Shi Da cafes. Multiple Taiwan Light alumni have found language exchange to be the best piece of their Chinese experience in Taipei. Don't hesitate to meet with a couple of people (kind of like dating) and find someone you like. If you can find someone nice quickly enough, they can also help you rent an apartment, decide where to travel between the placement test and the start of the program, etc. We also recommend that you find several language exchange partners (and meet with them over meals), which will give you even more opportunities to practice your Chinese.

**Advice:** Some uncomfortable situations can develop since there are a few people out there who think of language exchange as a way to find dates - it is completely fair to specify in your ad that you would like to do language exchange with girls only, or, what worked well for some fellows, doing it as a two-on-two arrangement.

**Note:** *Sometimes the best language partners are those friends that you make organically. While abroad, anyone you meet could be a potential language partner, even if that is not their primary or described role. Meet locals while soaking yourself in the hot springs in Beitou, befriend members of the clubs you join at NTU, talk to that group of locals at the club that looks like a fun crowd. There are multiple ways to engage in language practice while abroad.*

## B. Making the Most Out of Your Experience

### Arrive early!

It's not going to break the bank by any means, and it's a great way to have a ton of fun - chilling at Fulong, hiking the Caoling GuDao (see above), and above all just putting shoe to pavement and wandering the alleys in search of hidden gems (fruit market, museum, shrine, etc.).

### News

The student lounge at ICLP has many local newspapers and we recommend watching the local news, for entertainment as well as to improve your listening abilities. If your Chinese is not advanced enough to read the news yet, one popular newspaper aimed at children contains simpler text and zhuyin phoneticization to aid your reading. There's also always the Taipei Times in English, which is highly recommended for keeping up with what's going on around the world.

For a very succinct and clearly state-owned run-down on current events (but not to the extent of hiding key news), get the 10-minute Radio Taiwan International podcast at <http://english.rti.org.tw/others/pod.aspx>. Saturdays ("Taipei News Encyclopedia") and Sundays ("The Week In Review") are the best - after leaving, you can still listen to them on iTunes - but remember that you're just getting a quick, simplistic overview of the "big news" as the state sees it.

### YouTube

While abroad, your Chinese is bound to get to a level where you can sustain it outside of a classroom setting if you do not plan on pursuing it through coursework after leaving Taiwan. A great way to keep your listening on point is to watch some Taiwanese (or Mandarin-language) YouTubers. There are many, and some helpful ones are those YouTubers whose videos are intended to teach Taiwanese people English slang or English phrases. These are useful for learning the Mandarin equivalents of common slang terms in English. One of the more popular YouTube channels of this sort is RayDu English (阿滴英文), but feel free to ask your teachers for recommendations for channels about things you're interested in.

## Yale Club of Taipei

It's a bit small but they do have events. E-mail [yaleclub.taipei@gmail.com](mailto:yaleclub.taipei@gmail.com) to get on their e-mail list. <http://alumni.yale.edu/aya/aat/clubofficers.php#Taiwan>

## Useful Websites

### Blogs

- [Food blog!](http://hungryintaipei.blogspot.com/) Aimed at expats: <http://hungryintaipei.blogspot.com/>
- [Hiking blog!](http://taiwandiscovery.wordpress.com/): <http://taiwandiscovery.wordpress.com/>
- For a no-holds-barred look at different aspects of Taiwanese culture from an expat's perspective (dating, business, ethnocentrism, etc.): the blog "The Betel Nut Equation" (<http://betelnut-equation.blogspot.com/>).

### Other

- Finding a hostel: [www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com)
- Finding an apartment in Chinese: [www.591.com.tw](http://www.591.com.tw)
- Information for expats: <http://www.tealit.com/> (great for finding an apartment or a language partner)
- Helpful discussion forums for expats: Forumosa (<http://forumosa.com/taiwan/>). **When in doubt, Forumosa has all the information you will need and more.**
- Lonely Planet: Taiwan has an online version: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/taiwan>
- Rough Guide: Taiwan too: <http://www.roughguides.com/>

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