The Richard U. Light Fellowship

Unofficial SAC Guide

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A. What to Pack

- Taiwan is slightly more westernized than China, and has convenience stores at every corner. You can find almost anything you need and many more things in Taipei. Keep in mind that you’ll need to visit a drugstore for certain things like sunblock or deodorant. Ladies, do consider bringing tampons, make-up, and facial moisturizer as you will find the products you are used to only with difficulty (i.e. “whitening” skin products, no applicators, etc.).
- Do bring (or buy) bug spray as mosquitoes are everywhere in Taipei!
- Your laptop; DSL is available in most of the rental apartments you choose from. I would recommend bringing a converter for an ethernet cable if your laptop doesn’t have the correct plug in case you don’t have wifi at home. ICLP has a computer lab, so computers are not strictly necessary. They are, though, extremely convenient.
- Running shoes and a swimsuit. The athletic facilities at NTU are excellent!
- Money: cash and ATM cards. Almost every ATM machine at a 7-11 store will accept American ATM cards, so there is no real need to bring traveler’s checks. (There is no American Express that will convert traveler’s checks for free, so it makes more sense just to withdrawal from an ATM card). (Do check what fees your bank will charge for withdrawals, as this can add up for yearlong fellows). Taiwan is still generally a cash society, although many stores (even smaller ones in night markets) now allow you to use a credit card. (See http://www.xe.com/ucc/ for up-to-date rates)
- Electricity adapters and converters: There should be no need to bring any adapters or converters, as the electric current is 110V, which is the same as in the US. Some older apartments have only 2-pronged outlets, so you may want to bring a three-prong to two-prong converter (though buying one in Taipei is also easy and cheap).
- Study supplies can be easily purchased once you arrive (and while you may have a great-sounding plan to bring your Chinese materials from Yale with you to review... be aware that that’s not terribly realistic). However, we do recommend purchasing an electronic dictionary:
  - Pleco (the iPhone and Android app), is great and free (but you can purchase add-ons). One really useful (and free!!) add-on points out differences between the Mandarin Chinese spoke in Taiwan and the Mainland. For students above the Thought and Society level, you can consider splurging for their premium dictionaries. Pleco can also be used for flash cards, which is great when you’re reviewing words!
  - Wenlin is a great computer program if you want to have a dictionary and flashcards handy, and they are also willing to provide a discount to interested students.
○ Anki is another great flashcard software with spaced repetition

● Cell phone: be sure your cell phone is both GSM-compatible and unlocked for use with a Taiwanese carrier. To unlock your SIM and (if necessary) network, you can call your operator in the US so they send you the unlock code(s), or you can usually buy an unlock code online.

● Summer clothing, keeping in 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.

● I very highly recommend bringing socks that dry quickly! (-Meredith)

● Winter clothing for yearlong fellows. Taiwan is a tropical island, but Taipei gets extremely cold and wet in the winter, and you will want insulating material. However, because very few apartments have dryers, be careful when bringing clothes that are too thick; they may take a long time to hang dry in the humidity. You obviously don’t need a super-warm winter jacket, but definitely have something that’s good in 40 degree weather for the short time it does get that cold.

● 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!

B. Passport and Visa Information

Passport
Most students will need a passport and a visa 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
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. 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.
- If you get the wrong kind of visa and cannot extend it or get an ARC, it is fairly common make a trip to Hong Kong to reapply for one. Also, yearlong fellows who do not want to apply for an ARC can reset their visa by leaving and reentering Taiwan if they have a multiple-entry.
- Check the visa (visa type, expiration date, length of stay, etc.) after you get it back to make sure all information is correct. Sometimes language barriers lead to typos or other forms of miscommunication... and you don't want to wait until after you've already landed in the Taipei to realize these mistakes.
- You will most likely get a 60 days visitor visa, which will not last through your entire stay in Taipei. If this is the case, you will have to go the Taiwanese Visa Office and extend your visa about one week before it expires. Do not worry about this until you get to Taipei though; ICLP will help you through the process. Do watch the date carefully - overstaying your visa can cause financial and emotional problems! You can renew this visitor visa twice, to cover a total of 180 days. After that, you will either need to apply for the ARC, or you can choose to leave Taiwan and just get a 90-day tourist visa when you re-enter.
- Also, if you're trying to go to Mainland China, you can't 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. Alternatively, you can fly through Hong Kong and take a day to process the paperwork. Forumosa and wikitravel have more details.

C. Transportation

How to get to the program
Come with ICLP’s address (or the address of another important first destination, if applicable, such as the dorms or your apartment or hostel) written down on a piece of paper, in English and Chinese.
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 ICLP (or whatever hostel you’ll be looking at, etc.), but it will cost in the range of 1000NT or more. I would recommend taking a bus from the airport (~150NT) to Taipei Main Station (台北車站), and then grabbing a cab or the subway to your final destination. 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. One recommended option is the Eight Elephants Hostel (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 (490 NTD/~15 USD per night for a bed); 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; throughout my summer, I regularly either went back to visit the hostel (for game night, etc.) or went out to a dinner/bar with people (Taiwanese and international) I had met 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 a 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.
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.

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 depending on the line, meaning that taxis will be your transportation mode of choice for late night escapades. NTU is located close to the Gongguan (公館) station 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 recommending 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.

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 at a kiosk located at major bike stations. 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 it looks like you will need a phone number there as well). It costs $10NT (~$.33) for every 30 minutes. 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. The one I used is Ubike 讓我騎。

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. My pediatrician would have a fit if I did not advise this, so even if you will most certainly stand out as a foreigner, bring your own helmet from home if you plan on being on a bicycle often and wish to protect the insides of your skull. 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. I’d recommend not risking it and finding 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**
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.

D. Living Abroad

**Emergency contacts** (also see “Health and Wellness,” section J)

**UHC Global**
- Health Insurance – provide your individual health insurance number:
  - 24/7 Emergency Response Center (call collect): +1.410.453-6330 or email assistance@uhcglobal.com
- Travel Assistance (e.g. emergency evacuation services) – provide Yale’s Group ID #: 364416
  - 24/7 Emergency Response Center (call collect): +1.410.453-6330 or email assistance@uhcglobal.com

**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
Emergency Hotline: +86(10) 6462-9100

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

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

**Safety**
Thefts and pickpocketing are uncommon in Taiwan, especially compared to the mainland. Just be a little street-smart in more crowded or touristy areas like Ximending or Shilin and you’ll be fine.

**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 ICLP’s main office if necessary. Just ask them first.

**Bathrooms (private and public)**
Unlike Mainland China, 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 Guanghua Shang Chang, 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!
● Taipei 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.
● If you frequent Starbucks and want to guaranteed reliable access, it may be worth it to purchase a WIFLY internet card, a wireless service that works in many areas in Taipei such as coffee shops and subway stations. Cards can be purchased at Starbucks or online in different increments: 90 minutes, 30 days, or 90 days.
● They also sell WIFLY cards for your smartphone or iPod touch. They’re something like 3000 NTD for a year, which is a great price. Too bad WIFLY is a bit difficult to connect to despite being ubiquitous.

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.

Sanitation
Food: food poisoning is a rare issue, but occasionally occurs at small stands 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 ICLP 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 “Fur Elise” or “A Maiden’s Prayer” (sorry, it’s not an ice cream truck!). You’ll have to be ready to bring your trash and recycling outside and hand it to the truck driver - no leaving it on the sidewalk like in the US!

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. 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.

E. Food

The food in Taiwan is amazing and eclectic! Be sure to try out treats like xiao long bao and bubble tea. There are many small shops and restaurants everywhere in the city, and the area around TaiDa especially has a lot of great food. ICLP gives out a restaurant guide during orientation and you can also ask your teachers where to go or explore on your own.

http://hungryintaipei.blogspot.com/ is a blog dedicated to food. We have normally agreed with her judgment and suggestions, but she does tend to pick restaurants that are a little more expensive.

Cooking for yourself
I cooked at least one meal every day in Taiwan, and it was a fantastic experience. I suggest going 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. I recommend travelling to the 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 “掛” without the 3-sided box]: delicious snack/half-meal, both sweet and savory. Completely Taiwanese, completely delicious.
• Stinky Tofu (臭豆腐): I’m told that if you can ignore the smell for long enough to get it into your mouth, it’s delicious. Didn’t try it while there and hugely regret it now.
• 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.
• I ate “little hot pot” nearly every night for a month and a half at a little place in the ShiDa night market, just off of ShiDa Rd. Fast, reasonably healthy, reasonably cheap, and staffed by four young to middle-aged women who work really hard but are secretly also really friendly.

Restaurants
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+ for a full Italian-style pasta meal or a really solid burger with sides.

Do not miss:
• 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!

- Walk past exit 7 of Guting until you hit 蘇杭 dumplings. Order their 絲瓜湯包 as well as the 芝麻小包. Die and go to heaven.
- Yong Kang Jie is extremely famous, for good reasons. Everything is amazing, especially the shaved ice.

**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**

If you are anything like me, you’ll 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, we recommend Salt Peanuts (in Shida), and Fluegel (https://www.facebook.com/Fluegel.cafe, say hi to the owner for us!). The Huashan Culture Park is another quirky area worth checking out.

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.

**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 (my favorite) 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.
- **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, 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 very very 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. There are also a few martial arts venues around the city (e.g., on Xinhai Rd near Roosevelt). 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. 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, just invest in a small area heater! I held out on getting one until almost the end of the cold season and regretted not going for it earlier.

**Severe weather**
Taipei will periodically experience typhoons (i.e., hurricanes), probably ~2 times during a summer. Typhoons can be severe, but unlike other areas of the country, Taipei generally doesn’t even go through power outages any more. *That being said,* either pay attention to the Taipei Central Weather Bureau every day.
(http://www.cwb.gov.tw/V6e/index.htm) 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.

Taiwan hasn’t experienced a very serious earthquake in a while, but it’s in a quake-prone region and you’ll probably experience a small seismic event or two. In case of a big one, FEMA wants to make sure you don’t die: http://www.fema.gov/hazard/earthquake/eq_during.shtm.

**Accommodations**

ICLP offers a certain number of apartments in Taipei Paradise for rent each semester, which are very close to the classroom building and pretty nice - two singles with a bathroom, kitchen, and living room. You have to be pretty insistent with the ICLP staff about getting a Taipei Paradise room. They will be hesitant at first, especially if you’re only there for a semester, but if you ask enough times you might just luck out. (Note: the ICLP housing accommodations seem to be in flux)

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. I personally think it was a great learning experience, but make sure to start searching early since you only have one week between finding an apartment and the start of the program. But yes, 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).

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!

A cheap but decent apartment rented by a local should run you around 7,000 NTD, plus air (usually separate), though they will be more expensive in the area immediately adjacent to NTU.

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 yangtai 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

Roommates
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 roommates.

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, and meeting the staff of hostels and universities, to name a few. But 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.

G. Sightseeing and Culture in Taipei

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

Sights

● The National Palace Museum (Gugong): A professor at Yale once told me that this museum holds the "creme de la creme" of all Chinese artworks and artifacts in the world. After visiting, I can only agree. I have never seen 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. With a fantastic view of 101, go there if you don’t want to spend the money for 101.

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!

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. You don’t have to go to a naked one if you don’t want to.

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. My favorite tea house is called 自在天. There’s no spectacular view but the atmosphere is wonderful and there are never many people there. However, there are literally dozens of choices, 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"; the only church I visited was one that preached the former, and it was conducted in a very youth-centric, "mega church" style.

**Shopping**
- Consider the Sogo department store at Zhongxiao Fuxing Station at the nexus of the Brown and Blue lines.
- 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.
- "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 we prefer the City Hall branch. 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!
- iBon machine: Use the iBon machine at 7-11 to book movie and concert tickets! Student prices can be really cheap.
• **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. We recommend Spark (club), Myst (club), Marquee (lounge), and the. Don’t forget your 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 (generally, girls get in for free and local guys will cover drink and table costs). To save on drink costs, you’ll often find a mass of expats pre- or post-gaming outside of the corner 7/11.

Roxy is more dive-y and popular with the expat crowd. There are also local alternative bars to consider, like Underworld. Even the expat-heavy clubs will have a good amount of Taiwanese guests.

**H. Day Trips and Traveling Outside 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 we highly encourage you 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.

• **Maokong** (take the Gondola from the MRT system!), **Jiufen**, 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. (See
http://thedailybubbletea.com/2008/03/06/caoling-trail-taiwans-beautiful-northeast-coast/ for spoilers.) 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 Ocean-side 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. I highly recommend looking up the Taipei Hikers Google group and joining their weekly expeditions, or just using 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.

### I. Basic Program Information

**Placement**

When you arrive at the ICLP office, two head teachers will interview you to ask questions about your background and academic interests (i.e. Taiwanese culture or Chinese literature). If you’re fifth year or above, take a look at the electives online and go in with an idea of what classes you want to take. Then you will be given an
entrance exam, which tests both your reading and listening skills. In addition you may be asked to record your own speaking for the sake of evaluating your pronunciation. You will not be required to write characters for any of the testing! Try your best, but don’t stress (you will probably be jet-lagged anyway!).

**Classes**
In the summer, classes last for 3 hours per day: two classes (1 one-on-one; 1 “larger,” of about 4 students) are based around a core textbook. The third class follows a different book, and is assigned as a supplement. In the fall, winter or spring terms (each term lasts about 3 months), classes last for 4 hours per day: two classes (1 one-on-one; 1 of 4 students) are based around a core textbook, and the third and fourth classes follow a different book.

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.

**After L1/L2**
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 I found myself not only using much of the new vocab in my daily life, but also wondering at how I 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 us to get into the mindset of only using Chinese and hearing it in its natural setting, all the time. The funny thing is though, when we got our sheet for this week’s homework, I couldn't read anything and thought we had almost no
homework... Until of course the next day I realized we had to write a report and prepare an oral report. It’s really intense, as we have to read a long text and answer questions about it orally. We also have to write essays in Chinese (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**

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.

**Higher levels**

People coming out of 4th year or Su Wei’s classes will probably be placed into 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. 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). We got to participate in a national debate competition with Taiwanese college students, it was a great experience!

**The traditional character option**

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.

**Extracurricular Activities:**

ICLP arranges several fieldtrips, 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. 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 wilder 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.

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 support outside of class
There is very little support outside of class, as ICLP treats you as an adult. The administration at ICLP can sometimes seem inefficient and shouldn’t necessarily be relied on for information. 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.

On the other hand, 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.).

J. Health and Wellness

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.

This is especially true because ICLP, like any school with a small campus, is a hotbed of colds and sickness. If you have to miss class because you are sick, please be courteous and let the teachers know in advance.

Note: One thing you’ll see immediately after arriving is a ubiquity of SARS-style face masks (口罩, kou3zhao4). Maybe this will look quaint or funny at first, and the first time you get a cold, you’ll probably resist, not least of all because ICLP students rarely wear them. That being said, I recommend wearing them if you are going to go out and do anything outside of ICLP when you’re sick. These masks aren’t there to necessarily stop pathogens - see the extensive literature on how much口罩 really don’t work. Rather, 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. And yes, they do sell Hello Kitty口罩, though I won’t tell you where.

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除湿, chu2shi1, “eliminate moistness”), if yours has such a thing. Having a light fan to circulate air also helps immensely. Now, for specifics.

First, you need to accept that if you don’t live in the dorm or have an apartment with a dryer (unlikely at this budget level), your clothes are going to take a while, if ever, 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 will 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.

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 ot-
her, 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. Try not to store your socks, which can be
full of diseases, in the same place as your other clothes. A friend of mine brought
from America the most heavy-duty athlete’s foot (香港腳 xiang1gang3jiao3, “Hong
Kong foot.” Awkward name) spray he could find. This isn’t necessary (again, see
below) but funguses do occur, and this little step can help prevent a lot of them.

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 is a very
different climate from where most 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 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. My opinion?
Don’t waste your time.
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 anti-histamine 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. A fellow Light Fellow messed up her back, a classmate skinned himself falling off a bike. I personally happened to catch a case of the Herpangina virus, which sounds funny but really isn’t, especially when the Taida clinic misprescribed medicine. All these 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. 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.

● 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 Shuangliu 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.

K. Taiwan/Mainland Differences:

Some useful vocabulary (unique to Taiwan):
- Excuse me (i.e., "please move"): Jie4guo4; very polite: jie4guo4 yi2xia4 (借過／借過一下)
- 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.

The 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 疑 (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.

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 bao1kua4) or 血液 (xie3yi4).

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. (Ask 徐振峰老師 about this if you’re interested from a linguistic perspective.) 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.)
- 品質: in the mainland, pin3zhi4. Taiwan says pin3zhi2.
- 危機: in the mainland, wei1ji1. Taiwan says wei2ji1.

The Grammar 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 敛) 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 喔 (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.
- 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).

What about Taiwanese?
Finally, we get to Taiwanese, which is yet another colossal subject, again inextricably intertwined with Taiwanese politics. Taiwanese is 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. 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.

L. Miscellaneous Tips, Advice

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 (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 to women: Some uncomfortable situations can develop since there 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 me, doing it as a two-on-two arrangement.
Arrive early!
It’s not going to break the bank by any means, and I had a ton of fun my first week - 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 we highly recommend for keeping up with what’s going on.

Or, 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 - 6 months after leaving, I 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.

Yale Club of Taipei
It’s a bit small but they do have events. E-mail yaleclub.taipei@gmail.com to get on their e-mail list. http://alumni.yale.edu/aya/aat/clubofficers.php#Taiwan

摩托車
Make friends with someone on a motor scooter, and ride with him or her at least once. Wear a helmet, and don't die.

M. Useful Websites

Blogs
- Food blog! Aimed at expats: http://hungryintaipei.blogspot.com/
- Hiking blog!: 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
- 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/

N. Credits

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