



UNDISCOVERED TAIWAN

Taiwan has been moulded over the centuries by the forces of nature and waves of human settlement and on this unique journey you'll discover how. From its captivating capital, Taipei, to extraordinary national parks and tropical beaches.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



Asia, Taiwan



13 days from AU\$18,385 pp



Private

Journey Overview

Taiwan has been moulded over the centuries by the forces of nature and waves of human settlement and on this unique journey you'll discover how. From its captivating capital, Taipei, where modernity sits side by side with tradition and history, to extraordinary national parks where alpine forests and tropical beaches are the drawcard. Immerse yourself in this land of colourful festivals, age-old artisan traditions and tasty street food. Admire the natural wonders and along the way taste fine whisky, learn to handmake paper, paint sky lanterns, brew the perfect cup of tea, prepare delicious spring onion pancakes and let fortune telling birds unmask your future.

Journey Highlights

- Hike beside a rushing river through the sparkling marble Taroko Gorge
- Discover 8000 years of Chinese history and culture on a guided visit to the National Museum
- Learn to make spring onion pancakes, one of the tastiest Taiwanese snacks
- Have the world of Taiwanese street food revealed to you on a private guided tour of the Shilin Night Market
- Soar by gondola over the glittering waters of the Sun Moon Lake



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Taipei

On arrival at the airport a private transfer delivers you to your hotel.

Mandarin Oriental Taipei (Deluxe Room)

Day 2: Taipei

Begin your discovery of the capital at the National Palace Museum where your guide introduces you to the world's largest repository of Chinese art. The museum shares its origins with the Forbidden City of Beijing's Palace Museum when, in 1948, Chiang Kai-shek relocated some of its collection from the Chinese capital to Taipei. The approximately 700,000 artifacts and art works span more than 8,000 years of human history from the Neolithic to the end of the Qing dynasty (1644 - 1911).

In the afternoon, pause at the National Revolutionary Martyrs' Shrine to witness the changing of the honour guard. Built in the style of the Forbidden City's Hall of Supreme Harmony, the hall holds the spirit tablets of 390,000 people killed in military engagements. Finish your tour at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial commemorating the Chinese military leader who fled to Taiwan in 1949 and made it the bastion of his Republic of China until his death in 1975.

Tonight, delve into the culinary delights of Taiwan. Anyone with an interest in food won't want to miss a visit to the Shilin Night Market, the city's oldest and largest. Savour Taiwan's tastiest signature snacks, including local favourites such as Taiwan style chicken, oyster omelette, oyster vermicelli, Taiwan-style tempura, and the utterly unique 'stinky bean curd', a Taiwanese tradition. A private guide will walk you through the dazzling array of delicacies stopping to taste along the way.

Mandarin Oriental Taipei (Deluxe Room) | Meals: BD

Day 3: Taipei

This morning is a visit to Longshan Temple, built in 1738 by people from Fujian as a gathering place for Chinese settlers. Suffering destruction from fire and earthquakes over the centuries, it was also bombed by the Americans in World War II with many precious artifacts and artworks lost. Today it remains one of the most venerated temples in Taipei and a living place of devotion. Incense swirls beneath the ornately decorated temple rooves as worshippers stop to offer up prayers in front of the numerous altars and shrines.

Continue your experience on foot along Dihua Street which cuts its way through Dadaocheng, the oldest surviving district in Taipei, famous for its traditional medicines, textiles and tailors. It's one of the last places in Taipei which still boasts Japanese colonial architecture dating from 1895 to 1945 when Taiwan was occupied by the Japanese.

Afternoon at leisure.

Mandarin Oriental Taipei (Deluxe Room) | Meals: B

Day 4: Taipei

Venture out of the city to explore Chiufen and Shifen. Sitting some 40 kilometres northeast of Taipei, the historic town of Chiufen was built on the back of the area's rich veins of gold. Although mined since the 15th century the true gold rush reached its zenith in the 19th and early 20th centuries during Japanese colonial times. Today the town is noted for its rich legacy of restored Japanese style buildings that perch on the hillside.

In the afternoon continue the short distance to Shifen and one of the region's most popular attractions, the Shifen Waterfall. Affectionately called 'Little Niagara Falls', the cascades plunge 20 metres into a pool enclosed by cliffs and forested hills. Nearby, the town of Shifen is an eclectic jumble of ramshackle buildings, lanes and alleys lining both sides of a stretch of railway track. The town is famous for producing sky lanterns. Historically used as a signalling system they are now released to make wishes. Take part in this tradition by painting your own dreams and prayers onto a lantern and releasing them skywards in the hope of fulfilment.

Mandarin Oriental Taipei (Deluxe Room) | Meals: B

Day 5: Taipei - Sun Moon Lake

Depart Taipei and head south to Sun Moon Lake in the heart of the island. Surrounded by lush forests, bamboo groves and mountains on all sides, it is Taiwan's only natural lake and rightfully an iconic destination. The best way to appreciate the beauty of the lake and its surrounding countryside is from the water itself so this afternoon you'll board a leisurely boat cruise. Afterwards, take time to discover some of the area's cultural highlights. Visit Wenwu Temple, built in 1938 and dedicated to the deities of literature (Wen) and of military force (Wu). Next, make a stop at the Thao Cultural Village. The lake shores are the ancestral home of the Thao people one of Taiwan's indigenous cultures who believe the east side of the lake represents the sun and the west side, the moon. Learn about their traditions, folklore and history and how their identity differs from the Chinese.

The Lalu, Sun Moon Lake (Lake View Suite) | Meals: B

Day 6: Sun Moon Lake

Today you'll appreciate the lake from above as you soar over the crystal-clear waters on the Sun Moon Lake Ropeway, a scenic gondola ride. Soak up the spectacular views as you glide along the nearly two-kilometre ride and for the ultimate experience choose a cabin with a transparent floor.

Afterwards, move along the valley to the Hugosum Black Tea Farm. The elevation and climate of the hills provide the perfect conditions for growing high quality tea and the area is particularly famous for its Assam tea based on a cultivar smuggled in from India in 1925 by the Japanese. Discover how the leaves are cultivated, processed and steeped to produce a perfect cup.

In the afternoon visit Puli, whose exceptional water quality and unique climate make it an ideal place for paper manufacturing. Built in 1969, the historic Guangxing Paper Mill is the only manufacturer in Taiwan still producing completely handmade paper. This is your opportunity to learn how to make your own paper as your hands-on experience takes you through the process from raw material to finished product.

The Lalu, Sun Moon Lake (Lake View Suite) | Meals: B

Day 7: Sun Moon Lake - Taroko

Today you'll be driven from Sun Moon Lake to Taroko in the East of the island. The road winds through the mountains and valleys offering you incredible views. The alpine scenery is at its best as you traverse the Hehuanshan National Forest with mountain peaks reaching over 3400 metres which in winter are covered in snow. On arrival at the Taroko National Park check in to your hotel and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure.

Silks Place Taroko (Garden View Room) | Meals: B

Day 8: Taroko

More natural wonders in store today when you explore Taroko Gorge, the world's deepest marble gorge. The Taroko National Park ranges from the Pacific Ocean to soaring mountains. The rugged topography, varied microclimates and relative isolation result in a rich and complex biosphere that features tropical coastal forest, high alpine pine forests and meadows. The gorge region has extensive veins of marble and, for hikers, there are waterfalls, riverside trails and an endless series of stunning lookouts to explore.

After lunch drive to Swallow Grotto. Follow the walking trail which winds along the side of the gorge interspersed with a network of tunnels. You will be rewarded with a series of spectacular views and a variety of rock formations sculpted into the marble. As the gorge thins to its narrowest point, marvel at the power of the Shikdang River as its waters are squeezed through the gap. You will also visit Tienhsiang the only settlement in the gorge before returning to your hotel.

Silks Place Taroko (Garden View Room) | Meals: B

Day 9: Taroko - Yilan - Taipei

Leave the mountains behind as you make your way back to Taipei. Stop en route in Yilan where you take part in a private cooking class. Crispy spring onion pancakes are one of the most classic savoury snacks in the Chinese culture. Get hands on as you learn how to turn out this delectable treat ensuring they are crispy on the outside, fluffy and soft on the inside. The finished pancakes are delightful as a snack on their own, often served with chilli sauce, but are also served like bread with a meal.

Following the cooking class, proceed to the Kavalan Whisky Distillery for a tasting. Established in 2005, Kavalan is Taiwan's first whisky producer and the nation's only family-owned whisky distillery. Discover how the pure mineral rich melt waters from Snow Mountain combine with the intense heat and humidity of this area of the subtropical island as well as both ocean and mountain breezes to deliver the quality, smoothness and fruity character of the whisky. From here you will continue to Taipei.

Mandarin Oriental Taipei (Deluxe Room) | Meals: B

Day 10: Taipei - Kaohsiung

Board a high-speed train this morning for the 2.5 hour trip to Kaohsiung in the south of the island. Once a predominantly industrial port city, Taiwan's second city has transformed itself into a cultural and artistic centre. Transfer privately to your hotel with the rest of the day at leisure.

Silks Club Kaohsiung (Deluxe Room) | Meals: B

Day 11: Kaohsiung

Today's exploration begins with a visit to the Spring and Autumn Pavilions, part of a Taoist complex situated on Lotus Lake. The complex was constructed in 1953 in the style of an imperial Chinese palace. Dedicated to Guangong, the deity of martial force who is often venerated as the protector of businesses, the two octagonal pavilions stand four storeys high and are linked to the Five-Mile Pavilion by the Nine-Bend Bridge. Continue to Chengching Lake whose shores have been beautifully landscaped with lush stands of bamboo, palms and many other tropical plant varieties. Here you'll also find a villa that was used by the former president, Chiang Kai Shek and the 43-metre high Jhongsing Pagoda.

After lunch get a feel for Kaohsiung's budding contemporary art scene at the Pier-2 Art Centre. Originally an abandoned warehouse site the area was taken over by local artists and is now home to a series of exhibitions and installations. Finish your day on the island of Chi Jin. This small, narrow strip of land acts as natural breakwater to the main harbour and was the city's original port. The island, which is lined with black sand beaches, is home to a strong fishing community that feeds the bustling seafood markets and countless restaurants. The connection to the sea can also be seen in the Tianhou temple dedicated to Mazu, the Chinese goddess of sailors.

Silks Club Kaohsiung (Deluxe Room) | Meals: B

Day 12: Kaohsiung - Kenting - Kaohsiung

Today you'll experience another side of Taiwan as you explore the Kenting National Park. This is 'tropical' Taiwan where the landscape is dominated by coconut palms and tropical monsoonal forest, vastly different to the alpine hills of the north. Rugged cliffs and sandy deserts give way to yellow-sand beaches and turquoise waters while the centre of the park was once an underwater coral reef and today an area of limestone caves, banyan trees and resident macaques. Discover what lies beneath the waters at the National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium before reaching Taiwan's most southerly point beyond the Eluanbi lighthouse. The park is also well known for its birdwatching opportunities so keep your eyes peeled for some of the 26 endemic species.

Silks Club Kaohsiung (Deluxe Room) | Meals: B

Day 13: Depart Kaohsiung

Take your private transfer to the airport for your departure flight.

Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

Mandarin Oriental, Taipei



Mandarin Oriental Taipei, located on tree-lined Dunhua North Road in the heart of the city, offers a five-star urban retreat. Built in a French style with mansard roofs, the hotel's 303 spacious rooms and suites feature walk-in closets and luxurious, classically inspired marble bathrooms with walk-in showers and separate bathtubs. Decorative details abound including floral reliefs laced with peonies (a symbol of good fortune) and nature-themed artworks.

With diverse dining opportunities you can savour timeless Chinese cuisine at Michelin-starred Ya Ge, or indulge in modern international fare at Italian-focussed Bencotto and the seasonal a la carte menus of Café Un Deux Trois. Be tempted by a sundowner in the Art Deco inspired M.O. bar, or a sweet treat from the Mandarin Cake Shop.

With a sophisticated design, exquisite restaurants, a refreshing outdoor pool and one of the largest hotel spas in Taiwan, Mandarin Oriental, is an opulent gem offering a truly unforgettable experience.

The Lalu



The Lalu offers a luxury lodge haven for your next secluded escape. Perched on a hill along Sun Moon Lake, one of Taiwan's most scenic locales. Thanks to its position right across the hilltop Xuanguang temple, it boasts one of the most breathtaking views in the area.

Relax into the minimal Zen-like aesthetic courtesy of the late Australian architect Kerry Hill, exuding timeless ambiance. Spread over three buildings that seamlessly merge into the surrounding hillside forest, The Lalu delivers bright, airy spaces with huge floor-to-ceiling windows that make the most from its dramatic lakeside setting.

With the exception of a handful of the stand-alone villas, all of the hotel's 96 rooms offer tranquil lake views. Balconies span their full length, and the snug daybeds make them perfect for lazy lakeside afternoons. The décor - everything teak, slate grey stone, and a remote-controlled fireplace - channels a sleek log cabin aesthetic. The open-plan bathrooms are done in granite and feature double vanities and large tubs.

Perfect for a rejuvenating getaway, the onsite spa offers an extensive range of massage treatments, saunas, steam rooms, a gym, and a semi-outdoor hot spring that allows you to quite literally soak up the spectacular views. The sunbed-lined infinity pool offers more ways to relax, as do the complimentary yoga classes.

Silks Place Taroko



Located within the Taroko National Park, Silks Place offers the perfect base to explore the surrounding natural landscapes. Designed in the modern Chinese style, and combining Taroko's cultural and environmental characteristics, the result is a simple, elegant and relaxing oasis.

This luxurious 160-room hotel makes liberal use of wood and stone while the rooftop infinity pool offers breathtaking views, overlooking the dramatic scenery of the Taroko Gorge. The roof also houses an expansive seating area centred around a firepit, often showcasing creative talent with performances by local artists and musicians entertaining guests.

Indoors there is an additional pool, a yoga and fitness room as well as saunas, steam room and a spa – perfect after a day hiking in the gorge.

Abercrombie & Kent

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