

# Taiwan

## Bike Taiwan

13 days ex Taipei

Taipei – Taroko National Park – Dramatic Coastal Scenery – volcanic Green Island – hot springs – temples and monasteries – historic Tainan

Coined “La Ilha Formosa” (The Beautiful Island) by the Portuguese, Taiwan offers beautiful beaches, breathtaking gorges, picturesque peaks, serene lakes, tropical forests, aboriginal peoples, stunningly ornate temples, intact Chinese cultural legacy, neon-clad cities, and an unbelievably diverse culinary heritage. Amazingly, this is all contained in an island only 450 miles long and less than 150 miles wide.

Taiwan is ideally suited to cycling and offers a great range of rides from beautiful coastal byways to tough mountain climbs. And at journeys end the island offers yet more surprises: whether marveling at the world’s tallest building, joining in some morning *tai ji*, soaking away the stresses of life in one of the island’s numerous hot springs or just slurping down a hearty bowl of delicious noodles, Taiwan assaults your senses and leaves you yearning for more!



## Itinerary

### Day 1 | Taipei

On Day 1 people will be arriving throughout the day. We'll meet in the evening to get to know one another over dinner and have an introduction to the tour.

### Day 2 | Taipei

Today we take in some of the contrasting attractions of this modern city including the world's tallest building, the fabulous Chinese art on display at the National Palace Museum and the culinary curiosities to be found at a traditional nightmarket.

### Day 3 | Taroko Gorge

Today we drive via picturesque tea plantations and along the dramatic coastal highway to breathtaking Taroko Gorge which forges its way through the Central Mountain Range. Whether shrouded in mist or glowing in sunlight, this sheer marble gorge is a captivating sight. On arrival we take a gentle hike along a stunning tributary of the main gorge.

### Days 4-5 | East Coast Cycling

We make an early start from Taroko to begin our stunning coastal ride south. Huge cliffs drop down to the crashing blue surf of the Pacific and you could be forgiven for thinking you're in Hawaii. We cross the Tropic of Cancer as we continue further down the coast and on the evening of Day 5 we stop in a small town near to the jumping off point for the ferry to Green Island.

### Day 6 | Green Island

Today we'll take a ferry across to rugged Green Island, a tiny volcanic outcrop set in the deep blue Pacific. We'll ride around the whole island (all 17km of it ...) taking in dramatic coastal vistas, beautiful coral beaches and bathe in seawater hot springs right on the shore – one of only three places in the world you can do so.

### Days 7-8 | Southern Cross Island Highway

We'll make an early start back to the mainland to commence our ride over the Southern Cross Island Highway. The highway is one of the island's most beautiful rides and traverses the mighty Central Mountain Range, with peaks which rise up to nearly 4000m (12,000ft) all around. We'll spend the first night at a hot springs resort to soothe our aching limbs. On Day 9 we make the final ascent to the highest pass at 2772m (9000ft) and from there it's downhill all the way to our overnight stop.

### Day 9 | Foguangshan Monastery

Today we make our way down into the plains through the heart of the south's rice, banana, coconut and pineapple belt to the island's largest Buddhist Monastery where our epic ride ends. We spend a surprisingly comfortable night learning about monastic life in Taiwan.

### Day 10 | Tainan

This morning we'll have the chance to fully explore the monastery's beautiful grounds before transferring to the island's oldest city which showcases Taiwan's varied culture through its lively temples, traditional cuisine and colonial remnants.

### Day 11 | Tainan

This morning we'll take a walking tour around the old city, passing lively temples and colonial remnants. The afternoon is free to further explore the city, shop in the bustling markets or enjoy some of the tasty snacks for which Tainan is justly famous.

### Day 12 | Taipei

After a free morning we take the high speed rail back to Taipei. In the evening we have a final meal to celebrate our two-wheeled journey around "the Other China".

### Day 13 | Tour

Ends

The tour ends after breakfast.



## Tour Details

### Style

Fully supported bicycle tour

### Grasshopper Leader

Simon Foster has lived in Taiwan for 5 years and knows all the hidden gems along the way

### Inclusions

Support vehicle, tour leader, local guide, many meals, entry fees

### Group Size

Minimum 4, Maximum 14

### Accommodation

13 nights comfortable hotels

### Single Room

On Grasshopper Adventures tours single travellers do not have to pay any extra to join our trips – we will match you up with another same sex, single traveller. However, should you wish to choose to take a single room we are happy to book rooms for you for an extra charge. This single supplement is completely voluntary and only applies to hotel accommodation, on overnight train trips there are no single rooms available. We should point out that on occasion single rooms may not be available and in these instances you may need to share for a night or two – we will refund part of your single supplement in these cases. Please contact us for the price of a single room.

### Arriving in Taipei

International flights arrive at Chiang Kaishek (CKS) Airport in Taoyuan, from where there are two main options to get to the hotel:

- The airport shuttle bus runs every 30mins and costs NT\$100-150 for the hour journey .
- Meter taxis will cost NT\$1200-1400 (US\$35-40) and take around 45 minutes to get to the hotel. Ignore taxi touts who offer taxis in the arrivals hall and proceed outside to the official taxi rank.

The meeting point for this trip will be advised when you book the tour. The hotel is well-located in the heart of Taipei and the surrounding streets are full of markets, restaurants and shops.

### Additional Accommodation

Should you require additional accommodation at either end of the tour then we can offer you competitive rates at our group hotels. Please request extra nights when you book your trip. Prices are available on request.

### Meals Included

13 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 7 dinners

## Cycling Details

### Days Cycling

6

### Kilometers Cycled

Approx 450km



### Difficulty Rating

Moderate - Difficult

### Cycling Conditions

We ride on well-made roads some of which have designated cycle lanes. The terrain varies from gently undulating along the East Coast to the steep ascent and descent over the incredible Southern Cross Island Highway. Traffic is generally light although there will be stretches on busier roads.

### Bicycles

You can either bring your own bike or we have mountain bikes for hire. Please contact us for more details

### Helmets

Helmets are now compulsory on all Grasshopper Adventures bicycle tours. Failure to wear a helmet will result in not being accepted on the tour.

### Support Vehicles

Throughout the tour we will have vehicle support. The vehicles will carry all our luggage and any riders who are unable to ride at any time. We will use the same vehicles to make transfers for any sections that we do not ride.

## Travel Details

### Visas

In Taiwan, 30 day single entry visas are free on arrival for many nationalities (UK, Ireland, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa). On arrival you may need to show proof of onward travel, so make sure you have your actual ticket or the e-booking number.

### Travel Insurance

It is a condition of participating in a Grasshopper Adventure that you hold travel insurance for the duration of the trip. Insurance must include comprehensive medical and emergency evacuation. Your travel insurance details will be checked by your group leader on arrival at the starting point hotel.

If you are looking for an insurer we can recommend World Nomads. [Click to see more details.](#)

### Flights

International flights to and from Taipei are not included in the price of this tour. We can assist with the purchase of inter-Asia flights and provide advice about your route. Several airlines fly direct to Taipei ([www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com), [www.cathaypacific.com](http://www.cathaypacific.com), [www.evaair.com](http://www.evaair.com), [www.jal.com](http://www.jal.com), [www.nwa.com](http://www.nwa.com), [www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au), [www.united.com](http://www.united.com)), otherwise Hong Kong is the nearest major hub, from where there are regular flights to Taipei and Kaohsiung ([www.china-airlines.com](http://www.china-airlines.com), [www.dragonair.com](http://www.dragonair.com), [www.eva.com](http://www.eva.com)), whilst Bangkok ([www.thaiair.com](http://www.thaiair.com)) and Singapore ([www.jetstar.com](http://www.jetstar.com)) are a little further away. Coming from Europe, Oasis ([www.oasis.com](http://www.oasis.com)) flights from London to Hong Kong can offer some great deals. If you want to spend more time at the beach in Kenting at the end of the tour, we can help arrange extra accommodation and tickets from Kaohsiung back to Hong Kong, Bangkok or Singapore.

### Money

The official currency of Taiwan is the New Taiwan Dollar (NT\$) which must be used for all transactions. Taiwan has a modern banking system and there are ATMs accepting foreign cards in all major settlements. However, machines break down, eat cards or are just empty, so it's worth having some back-up (mint condition) cash or traveller's cheques, ideally in US\$.

For current exchange rates visit: [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com)



### Costs

Taiwan is certainly less expensive than Europe, North America or Australasia, but isn't as cheap as neighbouring China or the Philippines. Whilst local produce and favorites can be very cheap, imported items are far from a bargain. To give you some rough idea of prices: 1.5L bottle of water NT\$30/US\$0.90, Street vendor snack \$30/US\$1, large bottle of beer (shop NT\$50/US\$1.50, bar NT\$120/US\$5.50).

Some meals are included in this trip, but we recommend you bring around NT\$1250 /US\$40) per day as spending money, more if you plan to buy a lot of gifts.

### Tipping

Tipping isn't common in Taiwan, but is customary for guides and drivers: allow US\$100.

### Electricity

Taiwan uses a voltage of 110 and takes 2 flat prong sockets, like the USA

### Health

There are no specific health requirements for travelling to Taiwan unless you have been in Africa or South America within the last six days in which case a Yellow Fever Vaccination Certificate is required for entry. However we recommend visiting a travel medicine doctor before your trip; WHO advises vaccination against Diphtheria, Tetanus, Hepatitis A & B, Typhoid, Japanese B Encephalitis and Tuberculosis. You should carry a well-stocked First Aid Kit and any personal medication with you when you travel. All Grasshopper Adventures Group Leaders are First Aid trained, but they are not permitted to dispense any medication.

### Packing

You will be required to carry your own luggage at times, so we recommend packing lightly and bringing a backpack. What clothes you decide to pack depends on the season (see Climate, below) and your personal tastes, however a hat and waterproof jacket can come in useful any time of year and the following might be of help as a basic checklist:

<b>Personal Items</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Backpack</li><li>• Long trousers</li><li>• Shorts</li><li>• Shirts</li><li>• Light sweater clothes for evenings</li><li>• Hat</li><li>• Sandals/Light Shoes</li><li>• Sunglasses</li><li>• Light Rain Coat</li><li>• Toiletries</li><li>• Small Towel</li><li>• Sunscreen</li><li>• First Aid Kit</li><li>• Mosquito Repellent</li><li>• Camera and Film/Memory</li><li>• Alarm Clock</li></ul>	<b>Bicycle</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Something to carry your personal belongings in while cycling, eg. day pack</li><li>• Helmet</li><li>• Cycling gloves</li><li>• Bike shorts</li></ul> <b>Travel Items</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Passport with 6 months validity and 2 spare pages</li><li>• Travel insurance details</li><li>• Flight tickets</li><li>• Money - cash/credit cards/travellers cheques</li><li>• Phrase book</li></ul>
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### Climate

The belt of mountains which runs along the centre of Taiwan lends a diverse climate to such a small island. Throughout the summer (April to October) the entire country experiences high temperatures and humidity, although cool escapes are offered by mountains, the ocean, regular rainstorms and the occasional typhoon.

### Typhoons



Typhoons (from *taifeng*, meaning strong wind, known elsewhere as tropical cyclones or hurricanes) regularly hit Taiwan between May and September and can occasionally arrive as late as November. Although they can be tracked, their exact course cannot be forecast and during such times itineraries may need to be adjusted. Likewise, after a typhoon roads may be closed and we may have to alter our route accordingly.

Winters can be cool and wet in the north, but south of the Tropic of Cancer, Taiwan rarely sees temperatures lower than 15°C/60°F, and in the height of winter, Kenting can still enjoy sunny days peaking in the high twenties °C (mid eighties °F). Taiwan experiences a rainy season which tends to arrive in May or June and finish in August. Whilst the north continues to get some rain throughout the winter, this is the south's driest time, with clear, sunny warm days.

Overall, Spring (March-April) and Autumn (October-December) are the best times to visit Taiwan, when temperatures and humidity are more comfortable and there is little rainfall (especially in Autumn). This said, hot spring pools are best appreciated in the middle of winter, whilst the beaches are at their most appealing mid-summer – Taiwan is a year-round destination.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Taipei</b>												
max (°c)	19	19	22	26	29	32	34	34	31	28	24	21
min (°c)	13	14	15	19	22	24	26	26	24	22	19	15
rainfall (mm)	87	166	180	183	259	319	248	305	275	139	86	79
<b>Tainan</b>												
max (°c)	23	24	27	28	30	32	32	32	31	30	27	25
min (°c)	15	16	19	22	24	26	26	26	25	24	20	17
rainfall (mm)	20	24	39	73	177	398	371	426	187	46	13	12

## Positive Impact

### Dress

Taiwan is a hot and relaxed country and in the cities you'll see similar styles of dress as you might in a European, North American or Australasian city.

### Etiquette

Taiwan's melded history, so removed from Western civilization has left a minefield of different social customs which can initially be baffling to foreign visitors. Fortunately the Taiwanese view foreigners as very different from themselves and in most situations cultural *faux pas* will be ignored. However, that isn't to say you shouldn't try to conform whilst here – if you do your actions will be both noticed and appreciated. Your group leader will fill you in on "do's and don'ts" in Taiwan. As well as the items mentioned under donations and packing, it's worth bringing your business cards, which are highly prized items in the Chinese world.

### Language

One of the highlights of a visit to Taiwan is her people and whilst English is increasingly spoken, away from the cities, Chinese, Taiwanese, regional and ethnic dialects rule. We'll teach you some of the basics of *gwoyu* (National Language), the most widely-spoken version of Chinese, but it's also worth bringing a phrasebook along with you.

### Donations

Whilst Taiwan isn't completely free from poverty, it is certainly far wealthier than many other Asian countries. Whilst you won't be drawn into the dubious activity of giving away sweets or pens in Taiwan, it's certainly worth bringing some things from your home country (postcards, photographs) to give as gifts to people you meet along our journey.



**Important**

All information in these tour notes is researched with care and provided in good faith. The information subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Grasshopper Adventures

