



The island nation of Taiwan is an extraordinary combination of ancient Chinese culture and the most modern aspects of Western society.

Its 23 million inhabitants live with two calendars. Business runs on the standard Gregorian calendar used in all western nations. But family life is based on the Lunar calendar which has controlled Asia for thousands of years.

The Taiwanese have carefully preserved the traditional arts and crafts of China. Everyone still has a "chop" that is used for signing documents. A "chop" is a name stamp that dates back to the time when most people could not read or write. The document being sealed with the "chop" can be a traditional wedding license or a contract for the construction of a high-rise condominium.

Today there are mountains where tea is cultivated with the same ancient techniques that have been used for thousands of years.

And there are modern facilities that have made Taiwan a world leader in the manufacture of computer chips, chemicals and hi-tech components. Taiwan is the world's leading producer and exporter of laptop computers.

But Taiwan also exports talent and a major beneficiary of that trade has been the United States. I wanted to visit Taiwan based on the advice of people who really knew it.

People like Dr. Henry Lee, the world's leading forensic investigator. The real CSI.

DR. HENRY LEE
Forensic Scientist, Connecticut State Police



I started my career in Taiwan. I graduated from Taiwan Central Police University. Then I became a police captain. In my career, I assist Law Enforcement around the world. I've investigated

approximately seven to eight thousand major cases. A lot of people say those high profile cases are the most interesting - O.J. Simpson, John Kennedy Assassination, JonBenet Ramsey, Laci Peterson,

Elizabeth Smart, to a recent case, Phil Spector.

Taiwan also gave us Michael Tong, who brought elegance to Chinese restaurants in the U.S.

MICHAEL TONG
Owner
Shun Lee Restaurants NYC
I love to eat, I love to cook.. In 1967 I opened Shun Lee Dynasty. We were the first Chinese restaurant to be recognized by the New York Times and receive four stars.



Taiwan native Dr. David Ho is a leading authority on AIDS prevention.

DR. DAVID HO
Director and CEO
David Diamond AIDS
Research Center
I've been a researcher working on HIV/AIDS, ever since the early 1980s.



My team is focused on understanding HIV, and what HIV does inside the body of an infected person. That led us, in the mid-1990s, to develop certain strategies to treat HIV that ultimately became, quite successful, and that's the so-called combination, or cocktail therapy.

Walter Wang, an award-winning entrepreneur, also came from Taiwan.

WALTER WANG
President & CEO,
J-M Manufacturing Company
I'm in the manufacturing business. We take PVC or plastic raw material, and we convert it into building materials. The materials are used for exterior doors, patio doors, exterior moldings, almost anything you can think of related to building materials.



Fang-Yi Sheu, is an internationally famous dancer who splits her time between Taiwan and the U.S.

FANG-YI SHEU
Dancer, Martha Graham



Dance Company
Dance makes me feel alive and dance is part of my life. I can't imagine what I would do if I couldn't dance.

And Chien-Ming Wang, star pitcher for the New York Yankees, currently calls New York home.

CHIEN-MING WANG
Pitcher, NY Yankees

I am pleased and honored to be one of the players on America's best professional baseball team.



I wondered what it would be like to visit Taiwan with advice from those who knew it best. And so I asked—and then traveled to Taiwan myself.

PLAY BALL

Considering the fact that the Taiwanese have been serious about baseball for over 100 years, and that the game is played with the same rules as in the U.S., it's not surprising they're producing stars like Yankee pitcher, Chien-Ming Wang.



What is surprising are the differences in what goes on around the games. Six big league teams travel around the country but for many years none of them had a home town which meant that no matter where they were playing, each team had thousands of fans at each game.

The Taiwanese may have accepted the idea of a four based diamond, nine innings to a game and a maximum of three strikes or four balls for each at bat.

But when it comes to ballpark food they definitely have their own approach. Peanuts, popcorn and crackerjacks are out. Pork and sticky rice sausages and a lunch box with pork, rice, and vegetables are in.

And the fans are not shy



about expressing their feelings. They show up with horns... whistles... and drums...and anything else which will help them convey their opinions. And they have opinions about every play.



These massive responses are organized and coordinated by independent self-appointed cheerleaders. It's somewhat of a mad house, but the officials see it as just another expression of the nation's love of democracy and their belief in the right of self

expression.

TAIPEI 101

Taipei 101 is the tallest building in the world. But since some people have always believed that size mattered, I'm sure that someone, somewhere is trying to build a taller building. But the height of this building is not what really interests me.



I find the building interesting because it is a perfect example of Taiwan's constant effort to incorporate ancient Chinese principles into modern technology.

Taipei 101 is 508 meters high and is built with the most advanced construction techniques. But it's shape is like a stalk of bamboo, an ancient Chinese symbol for growth. And that's only one of many traditional symbols in the building.

STEPHEN CHI
Taipei 101

You see lots of Chinese characters around the building. For example, there is a cloud and a dragon head in the corners of the building and also what we call "ru yi" in the ancient coins. These old Chinese characters represent symbols of fortune. Which means people who live here and work here will receive lots of good fortune.

In Chinese culture the number eight is a symbol for prosperity. Accordingly, the building is divided into eight sections and there are eight floors in each section.

STEPHEN CHI
Taipei 101

And each big union contains eight small unions so in Chinese it's called "fa fa". It means brings lots of fortunes so again it means that people working this building can earn lots of money.

Taiwan, A Sense of Place

Taipei 101 also houses the first wind damper that is on public display. Suspended from the 88th floor, this 660-ton ball helps stabilize the building during typhoons and earthquakes.



STEPHEN CHI
Taipei 101

The ball's main function is to reduce the vibrations of the high buildings because high buildings would normally shake by the wind and especially in Taiwan because we have many earthquakes.

The elevators in Taipei 101 are the fastest in the world, traveling at over 1,000 meters per minute. But their location in the building was approved by a feng shui master practicing the 5,000 year old art that tells him if the construction plan is in keeping with the mythological forces of the planet. Too much feng and not enough shui and you're in deep trouble. In 39 seconds these elevators take visitors to the 89th floor where they can look over the city while waiting for their stomachs to catch up.

But if you belong to the terra firma school which believes that the more firmer the less terror, fear not, because those who stay below will be offered shopping.

The Taipei 101 Tower rests on a vast support of international shops. Electronic stores, a high-end supermarket, the largest English language book store in Taiwan and dozens of different restaurants, bars and cafes.

TAIWAN'S NATURAL BEAUTY

CHIEN-MING WANG
Pitcher, NY Yankees

I think the scenery in Taiwan's eastern rift valley, especially the Taroko National Park, is awesome.

DR. DAVID HO
Director and CEO
David Diamond AIDS Research Center

In Hualien, you can go inland into the Taroko Gorge and that scenery is very special and rather unique to Taiwan. And I think every visitor who is going to spend some time in Taiwan should go visit that spot.

DR. HENRY LEE
Forensic Scientist, Connecticut State Police

When in Taiwan, I like to see the countryside. I like to see the nature beauty. I like to see the people, how they live. I want to talk to the farmer and to learn their life, and ask them to share their life experience with me.

About four million years ago, the tectonic plate under Asia, bumped into the tectonic plate under the Philippines. One result was the Central Mountain Range that forms the backbone of Taiwan. Giant sheets of marble were forced upward and weathered by thousands of years of wind and rain.

Today the area is known as the Taroko National Park and it's the best place to see the pristine natural beauty of the island. The park is filled with mountains, valleys, gorges, fast flowing rivers and waterfalls.

The Central Cross Island Highway winds its way through the park and offers visitors some spectacular views of the landscape. A river cuts through the marble mountains creating one of the world's most interesting locations for white-water rafting.

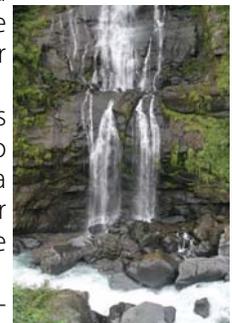
About twenty percent of Taiwan has been reserved as national park land and protected against development. It's an extraordinary opportunity to see what this part of the world was like when it was still under the control of ancient tribes.

WULAI HOT SPRINGS

An hour's drive south of Taipei, in a narrow valley surrounded by steep hills, is the small town of Wulai. Before the connecting roads were built it was not an easy place to get to which helped protect its natural beauty. The Wulai waterfalls spill down for over 260 feet.

And if you're into extreme sports you can take the Wulai Cable Car to the top of the cliffs. It rises to a height of 80 meters above the river which makes it the highest cable ride in Taiwan.

But Wulai is even more well-



WHERE TO STAY

THE GRAND HOTEL

1, CHUNG SHAN NORTH ROAD
SEC. 4, TAIPEI, TAIWAN, 104 R.O.C.

T: 011 886 2 2886 8888

F: 011 886 2 2885 2885

WWW.GRAND-HOTEL.ORG



known for its hot spring waters that gush up from beneath the mountains. It comes out at 85 degrees fahrenheit. It's colorless, odorless and contains large amounts of iron. Tourists and locals bathe at the open-air spring at the banks of the river. The spring water gives your skin a very pleasant smoothness.

FANG-YI SHEU

Dancer, Martha Graham Dance Company

The water helps me a lot. I just release my back and my neck. When I have nothing to do, that's the only place I go. Some how that place makes me calm.

Thousands of years ago the springs of Taiwan attracted native tribes to the area. And today the town is a virtual hot bed of hot spring inns, each receiving a supply of warm water directly from the hot spring.

On the surface it can look like a sleepy little town. But they have balanced out the local economy with a street of shops selling souvenirs and snacks and the local rice wine.



Wulai is also home to a very special spa called Pause Landis. The spa has a series of private bathing rooms where the hot water comes directly from the hot springs. All of the rooms look out on the tranquil beauty of the valley. And each has a different

interior design.

In one room the hot spring water passes over a solid gold basin from which the water absorbs a heavy dose of good luck which is then passed into your body while you soak. Then there is the waterfall room. My favorite was the hot pot room which has three oversized cast iron pots in which the water is kept warm while you relax.

THE GRAND HOTEL

Taipei's Grand Hotel was built on a tree covered hill above the city. It opened in 1952 and quickly became a national landmark.



The architectural approach is known as the Chinese Palace Style and it's been used for hundreds of years in the construction of the strongholds in which the emperors lived.

CATHERINE FAN

The Grand Hotel

The Grand Hotel was officially established in 1952. If you look carefully at the wood streak patterns of the Grand Hotel you may find something interesting—Chinese characters.



There are six calligraphic letters on each of the main entrance doors that mean "Long Life to the Republic of China." The dragon and the phoenix are symbols for happiness, good fortune and prosperity. They are considered to be the royalty of the animal kingdom and you will find their images on the hotel's staircases, walls and ceilings. 200,000 dragons

are in the building.

The ceilings are also covered with five-petaled plum flowers which is the national flower of The Republic of China on Taiwan. The flower in the center of the entrance area has 5 dragons holding onto a dragon ball surrounded by an additional 23 dragons and 16 phoenixes---elaborate but essential for good fortune, and prosperity.

While Taiwan was under Japanese occupation, this area was part of a Japanese shrine. A series of bombings destroyed most of the shrine but the dragon now located in the hotel lobby remained --- clearly a sign of its mystic powers. So in 1987, the hotel had the dragon gilded and set back in place.

DIM SUM AT THE GRAND HOTEL



Taipei's Grand Hotel is run by a non-profit foundation dedicated to the preservation of traditional Chinese culture. The architecture is traditional. The furniture is traditional. Even the restaurants are traditional. And in Taiwan, that means Dim Sum.

DR. HENRY LEE

Forensic Scientists, Connecticut State Police

Now Cantonese Dim Sum is so famous. I like the small, steam bun with crab meat inside. That is the stuff I like.

Dim Sum means "touch your heart" and it was originally developed by chefs during the Sung Dynasty which got started in the 10th century and ran for 300 years.

Two thousand different dishes have evolved since Dim Sum was first introduced. And though it was originally designed as a snack to be served in Tea Houses, these days it has become the basis of a full meal.

CATHERINE FAN

The Grand Hotel

Here at the Grand Hotel we prepare two kinds of delicacies. One is from Northern China and the other one is from Southern China.

The Northern part includes pork fried icy dumplings, ribbon rice cake, pork bun, seafood dumplings, and shrimp and Chinese chives dumpling.

And the Southern part includes vegetarian dumpling, taro cake, pork chow mei, fish dumpling, and the shrimp dumpling.



There's really nothing more important in Chinese culture than food. In fact, one of the ways you ask someone how they are is "Tsa Fon La Mao" which means "Have you eaten?" The theory being that if you've eaten you're, okay.

DIN TAI FUNG DUMPLING HOUSE

My life is filled with unanswered questions, and, like George Carlin, I wonder why there is an expiration date on sour cream? Why do they call it chili if it's hot? And if money doesn't grow on trees, why do banks have branches?

And one that has stymied me for decades---the secret of the Taiwanese soup dumpling.

The Din Tai Fung dumpling shop is the world's

epicenter for dumplings. Each day thousands of dumpling lovers line up to get in and the line is particularly long on Sundays, because that is the day when they make their inscrutable soup dumplings.



WALTER WANG

President & CEO, J-M Manufacturing Company

What's so special about this small bite sized dumpling, is that when you bite into it, all the juices flow out.



How do you get soup broth into a dumpling without breaking the dough that's holding everything together? Or even more mystifying, what's the secret of keeping the dough

from getting soggy?

WHERE TO EAT

DIN TAI FUNG DUMPLING HOUSE

WWW.DINTAIFUNG.COM.TW

SHINGYI BRANCH

NO. 194 (CORNER OF YUNKANG STREET)

XINYI ROAD SEC. 2, TAIPEI, TAIWAN, R.O.C.

TEL: (886) 02.2321.8928 FAX: (886) 02.2321.5958

ZHONGXIAO BRANCH

NO. 218 (ALLEY 216)

ZHONGXIAO EAST ROAD SEC. 4,

TAIPEI, TAIWAN, R.O.C.

TEL: (886) 02.2721.7890. FAX: (886) 02.2721.7864

NEO BA-BA BEEF NOODLE SHOP

NO. 16, ALLEY 27, LANE 216

ZHONGXIAO EAST ROAD SEC. 4

TAIPEI, TAIWAN R.O.C.

TEL: 886.2.27783075 OR 886.2.87715358

WWW.688BEEFBOWL.COM

SLACK SEASON RESTAURANT

NO. 12, ALLEY 8, LANE 216

ZHONGXIAO EAST ROAD SEC. 4

TAIPEI, TAIWAN, R.O.C.

TEL: (886) 02.2773.1244

The master dumpling maker believes there is no secret. And to prove his point he allowed me to videotape him making the dumplings.

The dough is made from wheat flour. Half gets mixed with cold water—which keeps the dumpling wrapper puff up when it's steamed. The other half is made with chicken broth which keeps the wrapper from expanding too much.

The dough is kneaded into a rope. A piece is pinched off. A rolling pin is used to flatten it out and shape it into a circle. The pork filling, which has been mixed with a little gelatin, is packed into the dough. Then the sealed dumplings go into a steamer where they steam for about two minutes.

When they come out they're puffed up with soup. How did that soup get in there?

You see the soup was frozen into a gel and mixed with the pork. It was hiding in plain sight all the time.

NEO BA-BA BEEF NOODLE SOUP

WALTER WANG

President & CEO, J-M Manufacturing Company

In Taipei, you can enjoy the best beef noodle soup. There's a restaurant in Taiwan, it's my favorite, and it is called Neo Ba-Ba—"The Daddy of Beef Noodle Soup".

There's a widely accepted rule in economics that as sales increase, prices decrease. But there are some exceptions. One of the more unusual exceptions is Taipei's Neo Ba-Ba Restaurant -The Beef Bowl.

Their most famous soup is made from five different cuts of beef from five different countries: Japan, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and the U.S. And the more bowls of beef noodle soup the shop sells, the more it charges.

When Tony Wang and his wife Jan first introduced their Rolls Royce version of the noodle soup they charged 20 dollars U.S.

per bowl. After they sold 30 bowls of soup they raised the price to 30 dollars. At 50 bowls it went to 60 dollars. And today it goes for 120 dollars per bowl. And they have sold over 4,000 bowls since they opened.

JAN & TONY WANG

Owners, Neo Ba-Ba Beef Noodle Shop

When the store first opened there was only one beef soup. After a period of time a customer tired of eating the same one so we tried to make it different. That's

why it comes to 23 different kinds of noodle soup.

Before preparing the meal, Tony visits your table to find out your taste preferences. Once you've finished the meal, he takes detailed notes about your likes and dislikes and holds them for future reference. So, just in case you win the national lottery, or marry into great wealth and come back here to celebrate, Tony will be ready to cook for you.

In addition to the usual soup, Tony offers a three course meal called "Head of State Beef Noodle Soup Dinner". The first course is slowly simmered beef broth. The second course is five kinds of beef in a soup. The third course is soy braised beef over noodles. There is no set price for the meal. When you finish eating you pay whatever you think it is worth. Tony says that on average people are paying about 250 U.S. dollars per meal. So it's not an every day meal.

TAIWANESE HAND PUPPETS

Hand puppetry is one of the most authentically Taiwanese traditions. It's even performed in the Taiwanese language instead of Mandarin. And it's been around since the 1600s.

DR. DAVID HO

Director and CEO

David Diamond AIDS Research Center

The Taiwan puppets are very well-known. They are enjoyed by kids in the previous generation much more than today. I also think that's very unique to Taiwan. It's quite special.

Taiwanese puppets consist of two parts – a hollow wooden head and a hollow body made of cloth. The puppet master puts his hand inside the puppet and uses his entire hand to mimic the natural movements of people.



WALTER WANG

President & CEO, J-M Manufacturing Company

There is a kung fu puppet television series. It's like a soap opera if you will. It has a full-length story, and it has a bunch of stories, and a hero. And it's all about kung fu fighting, and it gets kids very interested and excited.

Taiwanese puppets are a little like Pinocchio meets Bruce Lee. Hand puppet shows are still a very popular form of street entertainment with puppet

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masters reciting poems, singing traditional songs and using sound effects. They've even begun using lasers, dry ice and anything else that promises to increase the size and attention span of the audience.



SHIATZY CHEN

Another area in which Taiwan is balancing ancient traditions with modern technology is fashion. Shiatzy Chen is one of Taiwan's most successful designer labels.

FANG-YI SHEU

Dancer,
Martha Graham Dance Company

I love their clothes. I mean they've got a style. And they have a lot of great designs. They can be very formal and casual too. But once you wear her clothes, you feel like "yea I've got style". I love Shiatzy.



The brand got started in 1978. And their objective was to develop a line of high quality, stylish clothing for women which they described as "neo-Chinese chic". In 1987 they introduced a line for men.

Now on some of the men's jackets you might think that the sleeves are a bit too long. But it is the Ancient Mandarin style and it tells

everybody that you are much too rich to work with your hands.

Shiatzy Chen has done a considerable amount of research on traditional Chinese dressmaking and has incorporated that knowledge into their work.

THE JADE MARKET

For over a thousand years, the Chinese have worshiped the Jade Emperor. And when they started mining jade in the 1700s it became the country's most precious stone. It's beautiful but it's also tough.

Every weekend hundreds of vendors who specialize in Jade come to Taipei and set up a market that's open to everyone. There are new pieces, antique pieces and



polished stones. There are pieces that sell for thousands of dollars and pieces that sell for just a few bucks. They say that jade can reflect the wearer's way of life, with the color becoming more intense with age and literally polished by the owner's skin.

Fang-Yi's suggestion to visit the jade market is much appreciated, especially by my grand-daughter.

THE SLACK SEASON RESTAURANT

The Slack Season Restaurant has an almost mythic place in the gastronomic history of Taiwan.

Mr. Hang Saw Hang is the fourth generation in the business. And there will probably be a Hang in this restaurant for many generations to come. His great, great, great, grandfather is credited with developing the basic recipe for Tainan Noodle Soup which is one of the most traditional of Taiwanese dishes.



The story of Tainan Noodles goes like this--- Hang's ancestor was a fisherman, but because of the typhoons that came through in August and September he didn't have very much fish. It was a slack

season. So he developed a soup made from noodles and shrimp and pork which he sold from a stand. It's kind of Taiwan's answer to Spaghetti Bolognese.

And today it's a national favorite.

THE NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM

DR. DAVID HO
Director and CEO
David Diamond AIDS
Research Center

I have visited many museums on the mainland, and in terms of the collection none will compare to that held in the National Museum in Taipei.



MICHAEL TONG

Owner, Shun Lee Restaurants NYC

The National Palace Museum has the world's largest collection of priceless Chinese treasures.

WALTER WANG

President & CEO, J-M Manufacturing Company

The National Museum is a place that almost all visitors in Taiwan must go. It has a lot of Chinese antiques that visitors would not be able to see in the rest of the world.

Even in China or in Mandarin Museum, you won't be able to see those exhibitions that you can see in the National Museum of Taiwan.

The National Palace Museum in Taipei opened in 1965 and holds over 700,000 works. It is the largest collection of Chinese art in the world, representing over 5,000 years of the most important arts and crafts.



When the Japanese attacked China in 1931, the greatest works of Chinese art were loaded into thousands of crates and for 16 years secretly moved around so the Japanese wouldn't find

them.

After the Japanese surrendered in 1945 and civil war broke out in China 4,800 crates of the most valuable works were shipped to Taiwan for safekeeping. And all through the following years of turmoil not a single work was ever lost or damaged.

There are 4,400 ancient bronzes, 24,000 pieces of porcelain, 13,000 paintings, 14,000 works of calligraphy, 4,600 pieces of jade and 153,000 palace records. Today, most of the collection is held in storage rooms that were dug out of a mountain behind the museum. The objects are periodically rotated but it would take 12 years of regular visits to get through all the rotations and see the entire collection.

SUN MOON LAKE

DR. HENRY LEE

Forensic Scientist, Connecticut State Police

For the tourist, if you just stay in a 5-star hotel, eating hotel meals you only see part of the country. You should go to where other people are living, eating and touring. That is how you learn and experience their culture.

Three hours south of Taipei, in the foothills of the Central Mountain Range, is Sun Moon Lake, the largest natural lake in Taiwan.



FANG-YI SHEU

Dancer, Martha Graham Dance Company

I love Sun Moon Lake because it is just an amazing

place. I feel like this whole view is so beautiful. Very classic.

It got its celestial name because of its shape. The Eastern part of the lake is round like the sun, while the Western part is shaped like a crescent moon hence the name Sun Moon Lake.

Legend has it that the lake was discovered when the ancestors of the Shao tribe stumbled upon it while they were out deer hunting. They found it so beautiful that they moved their entire clan to its shores.

These days there are only 300 people in the Shao tribe but they still live in their favorite neighborhood and they have exclusive rights to the best block—a sacred island in the center of the lake that serves as their private sanctuary.

Even though the island is accessible only to the tribe, the rest of us have plenty to do. Fishing, boating, eating, and lots of hiking. Seven different trails wind through tea farms, conifer forests, aboriginal villages and a waterfowl sanctuary.

NIGHT MARKETS

Most people in Taiwan spend their days working and end up with very little time to shop, but the merchants of Taiwan have solved that problem by opening up night markets. Each town has their own version and the larger cities have dozens of them. They open about 7 pm, close at sunset and spread out over several blocks.



Each market has a slightly different set of vendors but in general they offer clothing, shoes, local inventions and lots of street food.

Originally they were serious shopping areas designed to meet the needs of hard working families, but today they are more about atmosphere and fun.

RELIGION IN TAIWAN

Taiwan is one of the most religious tolerant nations in the world. At last count over 25 different religions were recognized by the government, which means that they met the requirements for a minimum number of local members, and have sufficient money to carry out their missions.

There are over 23,000 places of worship on the

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island, including 8,600 Taoist temples, 4,000 Buddhist temples, 3,600 Protestant churches and 1,100 Catholic churches. You will also find Jewish Synagogues, Confucian monasteries and Islamic mosques.

Almost all of the monasteries and temples are open to the public and welcome both worshipers and visitors. The most interesting are the folk temples that combine Buddhism and Taoism with an assortment of gods that specialize in specific areas.

The most popular folk deity in Taiwan is Matzu, patron saint of seafarers. Her dark blue face makes her easy to recognize. And she's always accompanied by two giant statues with huge ears and eyes. One is known as Eyes That See a Thousand Miles and the other is Ears That Hear On The Wind.



The legend of Matzu tells of the daughter of a fisherman who was born about a thousand years ago. One night she had a dream that her father's boat was caught in a typhoon

and sinking. In the dream she tried to save her father and her brothers who were on board. When she woke up she found out that there had been a typhoon and that by some miracle her brothers were saved, but not her father. She spent the rest of her life using her special powers to save people. Over the years her benevolence has extended to all in need and her followers are in the millions.

THE LANTERN FESTIVAL

Most of our celebrations have their origins in something that is happening in nature. It may be happening on earth, like the beginning of the season for planting. Or it may be happening in the heavens, like the night of the biggest moon.

In Chinese communities all over the world, the most important celebration of the year takes place on the first day of the first lunar month---it's Chinese New Year and it usually falls around the beginning of February. But unlike the New Year celebration in the west, which lasts for twenty-four hours, the Chinese New Year celebration lasts for two weeks. It ends with the ritual of the Lantern Festival, which



has been part of Chinese New Year for over 2,000 years.

The Taiwanese believe that the world is filled with invisible spirits who are roaming around. They also

believe that the first full moon of the year casts a magical light that will allow you to see these spirits.

In the past, believers would walk around with torches which made the job easier. Eventually those torches became lanterns and the Lantern Festival was born.

Over the years, the Lantern Festival turned into a special event for children. Probably because the date of the first full moon of each year often occurs when children are going back to school after their New Year's break.

Parents build elaborate lanterns for their children to take to school. And teachers help the children light them. The bright light rising to the heavens expresses a symbolic wish that the children turn out to be bright students and rise to the top of their class.



On these special evenings, the streets of Taiwan are filled with thousands of people marching along with their lanterns. Fireworks are often set off to attract the attention

of the gods. There is even a traditional food for the Lantern Festival. It's a round sticky rice cake.

The round shape of the cake is symbolic of the moon and of family unity. And some people believe if you eat this cake at the right moment in the New Year festivities, it will prevent you from aging during the next year. Now, I've been doing that for ten years and clearly my timing is seriously off.

NIGHT LIFE

There is a lot of nightlife in Taipei, but for me the most interesting spots are the giant Karaoke Clubs like Party World.



FANG-YI SHEU

Dancer, Martha Graham Dance Company

KTV (Karaoke) is a great place to scream. When you

ing and the words come out, and the melody comes out it's like people are telling their own stories.

The lobbies are decorated in a style intended to convey a lavish sense of wealth. You have arrived. Your ship has come in. The world awaits your talent.



For speakers of Mandarin, Taiwan is the pop music capital of the world, with its own set of superstars turning out an endless selection of hits. And millions of fans who feel compelled to sing along.

Karaoke in Taiwan is called KTV and it's somewhat like a karaoke bar on steroids.



As you get off the elevator you are welcomed by the staff and taken on a tour of the buffet.

The building consists of ten stories of private karaoke rooms. Some are huge and can hold over 2,000 people. The smallest are designed for no more than a dozen. And they have just about every size in between. You book your space, assemble at the

appointed hour, and sing your heart out. The place is open 24 hours a day and there is always a party going on.

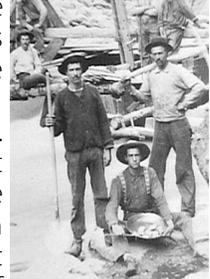
From the very beginning of our history, America has been populated by people who came here from somewhere else. We tend to focus on the immigrants who came here from Europe during the late 1800s and early 1900s, but even the Native Americans who were here when the first Europeans showed up had originally immigrated to America from Asia.



During the 1800s mainland China was in total chaos. Thousands of Chinese left their homeland in search of their golden opportunity which they believed was buried in the mountains just outside of San Francisco.

The earliest Chinese workers to arrive at the time of the California Gold Rush, did the toughest jobs for the least money. When the Gold Rush came to an end the Silver Rush started and they were back in the mines again. And when the silver petered out

they went to work building the railroads. And when the railroads were finished they built the California vineyards.



Asian immigration has continued. And today some of the most interesting people coming to the United States are coming from Taiwan. I have been a frequent visitor to their homeland of Taiwan and I truly enjoyed their suggestions.

TO LEARN MORE . . .

TAIWAN'S GOVERNMENT INFORMATION OFFICE
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