**Taipei**

Taiwan's capital, Taipei, **is situated at** thecountry's northern tip.

The city **sits in** a basin between the Centraland Yangming Mountains and is

surrounded by the larger, but quite distinct, New Taipei City.

In recent decades, Taipei has busily **transformed itself into** one of the region’s most

livable cities and into one of Asia's premier travel destinations.

Today's Taipei has one foot striding towards a futuristic utopia and the other

respectfully rooted in ancient Chinese traditions.

It's easy to fall in love with this friendly city.

The aroma of Chinese **street food** fills the air.

Scooters and bicycles rule the streets.

And surrounded by nature, tranquility is never more than a bus ride or hike away.

**Start your day with** a slice of classic Taipei

**Situated in** the city's oldest neighborhood, Wanhua, the Longshan Temple is the

**spiritual heart** of Taipei.

**It's a place where** generations of locals have come to seek good fortune, health, and

even guidance on who to marry.

Taiwan's **political heart** is the district of Zhongshan.

Built from white marble and glass tiles to reflect the Formosan sky, the Chiang Kai-

shek Memorial Hall honors the memory of former president of the Republic of

China.

Memorial Square is also **home to** one of the city's most important cultural sites, the

National Concert Hall, a stunning example of neo-classical Chinese architecture.

**Just a short stroll away is** 228 Peace Park, a tranquil memorial to the 1949 uprisings

that sowed the seeds of Taiwan's independence.

Step even further back into Taiwan's past at the National Taiwan Museum and

discover the country's rich, natural, cultural and political history.

Hop on Taipei's excellent MRT and head to the National Palace Museum, **home to** the

world's greatest collections of Chinese art and antiquities.

Once reserved for the private pleasure of emperors, today these treasures can be

enjoyed by all.

**There are plenty of riches to be found** on Taipei's streets too.

**Enjoy** the blooms and haggle for jewelry at the flower and jade markets.

Hunt down bargains in giant department stores like SOGO, or cruise the smaller

boutiques and restaurants in Yongkang Street.

Once you've explored Taipei's streets, rocket to the heavens aboard the high-speed

elevators of Taipei 101, one of the world's tallest skyscrapers.

While some have suggested that the design resembles a stack of noodle boxes, the

tower is widely regarded as a stunning example of oriental revivalist architecture.

There are plenty of natural vantage points around the city too.

Just a fifteen-minute walk from Taipei 101 is Elephant Mountain, the most accessible

of the cities peaks.

There are no high-speed lifts here, but the 20 minute climb to the top is worth it, especially at sunset.

**For more great views**, **head to** Maokong Mountain.

The mountain's gondola service starts at the Taipei Zoo, the largest zoological

collection in Asia.

This zoo holds a special place in the hearts of locals, and the animals are treated like

members of Taipei's extended family.

From the zoo, step aboard a gondola and glide over the forest canopy to Maokong

Mountain.

With villages and temples to explore, Maokong **makes a fabulous day trip**.

As an important tea growing area, it's also the place to learn the finer points of tea

tasting and appreciation.

You'll have to walk to get to Taipei's highest peak, Mount Qixing which lies just to the north of the city in the Yangmingshan National Park.

Climb the one thousand steps, up through the subtropical forest and into the grassy

highlands that gave the area it's original name ~ Grass Mountain.

All that hiking and mountain air can build up an appetite.

So when it's time to return to the city, **head to** the Shilin Night Market.

At times it seems half the population is here, doing what Taipei locals do best,

enjoying great food, hunting down bargains and simply enjoying their incredible

city.