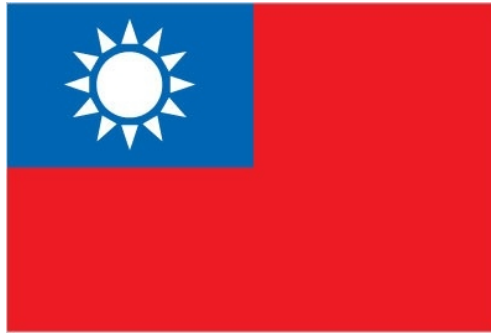


IDENTITIES ABROAD: TAIWAN



IDENTITIES ABROAD

As you prepare for your education abroad program, you may be considering how your own identities may or may not interact with the host culture in similar or different ways than they do at home. Below you will find country-specific information on potential challenges for students who are from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in education abroad programs. This information, adapted from the Diversity Network's Country Diversity Notes (via [Diversity Abroad](#)), is intended to assist you in exploring how you might be received abroad based on your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, or ability.

The information below features a country overview for Taiwan as well as information pertinent to the socio-cultural climate that U.S. students of diverse backgrounds can reasonably expect while living in the country. It also offers bulleted information noting facts that may directly relate to student experiences in the country. Links with additional information and resources on the various topics are also offered.

The below information provides a bird's-eye view of diversity matters in the country as they pertain to U.S. students. Purchase understands the below information is not exhaustive or inclusive of all possible student identities and experiences. We encourage you to conduct further research and chat with relevant points of contact including your program advisor, faculty leader, or peers who have traveled to Taiwan, to gain a greater understanding of your host country and/or city.

If you would like to speak with us about any questions pertaining to diversity and inclusivity abroad, please contact us at study.abroad@purchase.edu and we will answer your inquiry to the best of our ability and/or refer you to others with the expertise that you need. Additionally, if you are interested in discussing other geographical locations, please don't hesitate to contact us.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

FAST FACTS:

Capital: Taipei

Population: 23,572,052

Language(s): Mandarin Chinese (official), Taiwanese (Min Nan), Hakka dialects, approximately 16 indigenous languages.

Religions: Buddhist 35.3%, Taoist 33.2%, Christian 3.9%, folk (includes Confucian) approximately 10%, none or unspecified 18.2%.

Ethnic groups: Han Chinese (including Hoklo, make up about 70% of the population, Hakka, and other groups originating in mainland China) more than 95%, indigenous Malayo-Polynesian peoples 2.3%. There are 16 officially recognized

indigenous groups in Taiwan: Amis, Atayal, Bunun, Hla'alua, Kanakaravu, Kavalan, Paiwan, Puyuma, Rukai, Saisiyat, Sakizaya, Seediq, Thao, Truku, Tsou, and Yami.



Taiwan is an Eastern Asian Island off the southeastern coast of China, north of the Philippines. It is surrounded by the East China Sea, Philippine Sea, South China Sea, and Taiwan Strait. It is slightly smaller than Maryland and Delaware combined. The capital of the country is Taipei, which is located on the northern tip of the island, and the official language is Mandarin Chinese. The climate is tropical with a rainy season from June–August and persistent clouds year-round. The eastern two thirds of the island is mostly mountains, while the west is fairly flat. The country is known for its seafood and night markets.

The island of Taiwan was colonized by the Dutch in the 17th century, which was followed by the arrival of Hoklo people including Hakka immigrants from the Fujian and Guangdong areas of mainland China. The Spanish, seeing the Dutch as a threat to their colony in the Philippines, briefly settled in the north but were driven out by the Dutch in the 1640s. In 1662, a loyalist of the Ming dynasty, Koxinga, defeated the Dutch but he was later defeated by the Qing dynasty in 1683. After the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, the Qing ceded the island to the Empire of Japan. Japan maintained control over Taiwan until 1945, at the end of World War II when the nationalist government of the Republic of China, led by the Kuomintang (KMT) took control. However, KMT lost control of mainland China in the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and the government withdrew to Taiwan. The KMT ruled Taiwan until democratic reforms in the 1980's and the first direct presidential election took place in 1996. During the time after the war, Taiwan experienced a rapid industrial and economic growth known as the "Taiwan Miracle" and was known as one of the "Four Asian Tigers".

Review current travel risks for Taiwan:

U.S Department of State Travel Risks

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE) [Open Doors Report 2019](#), 1,270 students from the United States studied abroad to Taiwan.

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN TAIWAN

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Currently there are 16 officially recognized indigenous tribes in Taiwan, concentrated on the west coast of the island and the less developed inland hills. The Taiwanese Constitution requires the safeguarding of their status and political participation, 6 of the 113 seats for the members of the Taiwanese legislature are reserved for indigenous peoples. The constitution also provides assistance for education, health, economic activity, land, and indigenous culture. However, these communities still suffer after decades of assimilationist policies and land seizures and a number of indigenous peoples residing in the plains are not formally recognized, though there have been some small steps taken by the government to resolve this.

Many of the indigenous languages in Taiwan are extinct or crucially endangered as a result of being suppressed by the government after 1945. According to UNESCO, nine of the indigenous languages and dialects spoken in Taiwan are extinct (though one is revitalized), five are critically endangered, one severely endangered, and eight others are vulnerable. The government created legislation to address this issue in 2017 and 2018 (the Indigenous Language Development Act and the National Languages Development Act, respectively) which provide increased support and protections for these languages in schools, local government, and other settings. In 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen,

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grandchild of an indigenous Paiwan woman, issued an official apology to Taiwan's indigenous peoples. The text was translated into all 16 officially recognized indigenous languages, an important step to address a history of exclusion.

Taiwan does have a historic Spanish influence since it was a Spanish colony from 1616-1643. Several groups in Taiwan today are trying to strengthen the ties between Latin American and Caribbean countries and Taiwan. One of these groups, Latinos Taiwan, hosts events in different Taiwanese cities to connect Spanish-speaking Taiwanese communities and promote the culture and language.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR:

- Today, Taiwan is a racially homogenous country. There are Taiwanese who have never seen a person of color in person before. Students of color may experience staring (especially from children and elder populations), questions about their skin and hair, or requests for photos. This will likely occur more frequently in more rural areas as opposed to big cities.
- For some Taiwanese, the only information they have about people of color comes from how the media portrays them which could be good or bad.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- World Directory of Indigenous People- Taiwan, [Minority Rights Group International](#)
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Taiwan](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [History of Taiwan](#), Wikipedia
- [Black in Taiwan: My Experience](#), Nicole Cooper
- [Boosting Taiwan's Latin America Ties](#), Taipei Times

SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN TAIWAN

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Taiwan is considered to be the most progressive in Asia in terms of rights for the LGBTQ+ community. Same sex marriage has been legal in Taiwan since 2019 (the first in Asia) and there are many protections and rights for the LGBTQ+ community. Employment and education discrimination is illegal, but there are no protections against housing discrimination. Conversion therapy is banned, but gender-affirming surgery is required to change gender. Same-sex couples are currently unable to jointly adopt, unless the child is biologically related to one of the couple. There have been reports of LGBTQ+ individuals facing discrimination in accessing health services. Activists say that these instances are more frequent than suggested by the number of court cases because victims are reluctant to report and the police response is inadequate.

Tu'er Shen (or the Rabbit God) is the Taoist matchmaker for same-sex couples and a deity of homosexual love. In 2006, a temple for Tu'er Shen was founded in New Taipei City and is visited by thousands of LGBTQ+ individuals each year for prayer, particularly for a partner. Marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples are also performed at the temple. It is the world's only religious shrine for gay individuals.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER OR QUEER STUDENTS:

- Pride has been held in Taipei since 2003 and in 2019, it was attended by over 170,000 participants
- For the most part, public opinion is generally very accepting and supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. Individuals who do argue against homosexuality typically do so due to their religious beliefs, or fear that if their child is LGBTQ their family name will not be passed down which is a high priority in Taiwanese culture.
- There are few hate crimes against LGBTQ+ individuals, but you should always be aware of surroundings and try to observe the typical behavior/dress of local community members and try to match that.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [LGBT Rights in Taiwan](#), Equaldex
- [LGBT Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel

- [LGBTQ Travel Safety](#), Asher Fergusson
- [LGBT rights in Taiwan](#), Wikipedia
- [LGBTQ Movement in Taiwan](#), Of Taiwan
- [What it's like to be trans in Taiwan](#), Outrage Mag
- [Sexual Orientation Laws in the World \(December 2019\)](#), ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Taiwan](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State

DISABILITY IN TAIWAN

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Taiwan has come a long way in recent years to support citizens with disabilities. The country adopted a universal healthcare system in 1995 to better support patient care and increase access to care, especially for those with disabilities. There are laws that prohibit the discrimination against disabled candidates in the job force private companies must employ at least one individual with disability for every 67 people employed by the company. Despite this, unemployment rates among the disabled population in Taiwan (14.7%) is triple the unemployment rate for the general population (4.99%).

Transportation in Taiwan is fairly accessible, airports provide personnel to assist individuals with disabilities throughout their trip, all metro, subway, and high speed rail trains in Taiwan are accessible, and new buses in Taipei are equipped with wheelchair access. Many traffic lights also have an audible signal for visually impaired individuals. Many buildings have been retrofitted with ramps and almost all Taiwan Railways Administration stations have large elevators and well trained staff that can assist.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

- Although there are accessible public transportation options in Taiwan, keep in mind that the population is much more concentrated than in the US, cities are very crowded which could limit accessibility for students with physical disabilities.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Mobility International USA](#), Resources for Americans Traveling Abroad with Disabilities
- [Information for Students with Disabilities Traveling Abroad](#), U.S. Department of State (see section under Local Laws & Special Circumstances)
- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016](#), (see Persons with Disabilities).
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Taiwan](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Traveling with Disabilities and Medications](#), Transportation Security Administration
- [Disability in Taiwan](#), Wikipedia
- [Accessibility Remains Well Out of Reach for Taiwan's Wheelchair Users](#), The News Lens

RELIGION IN TAIWAN

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

The majority of the Taiwanese population practice a combination of Buddhism and Taoism. Confucianism is the third of the “three teachings” which make up China’s religious traditions. There are many temples, churches, and other religious buildings throughout Taiwan, an average of one per square kilometer. Taiwan is considered to be the most religious region in the Chinese-speaking world. There are also over 2,800 Christian churches in Taiwan, even though Christianity is considered a minor religion (3.9% of the population).

There are many different religious rituals that take place in Taiwan to honor different gods in different ways. Many involve parades from temple to temple to celebrate the birthday of particular gods. There is also a ritual that takes place during the Qingming festival in April to honor ancestors. Family members of the deceased gather at the graves of their ancestors and make offerings of money and incense. The

Ghost festival takes place in July to celebrate and placate the ghosts. And the mid-Autumn festival closes out the ceremonial calendar when families gather to worship the moon god and pray for protection, fortune, and unity as a family.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDENTS:

- Islam is a minority religion in Taiwan, there are about 60,000 Muslims in Taiwan. But there is a larger population (over 150,000) of foreign Muslims that work in Taiwan and come from countries including Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines.
- There is a very small but vibrant Jewish community in Taiwan, mostly residing in Taipei

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Countries and Their Cultures: Taiwan](#) (see section on Religion and Expressive Culture), Every Culture
- [Faith-Based Travel Information](#), U.S. Passports & International Travel
- [Taiwan Buddhist Directory](#)
- [2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Taiwan](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Taiwan](#) (see Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons; National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities), US Department of State
- [Mosques & Prayer Time in Taiwan](#), IslamicFinder.org
- [5 Travel Tips for Muslim Tourists in Taiwan](#), Halal trip
- [The Muslim Experience in Taipei](#), The News Lens
- [Taiwan Virtual Jewish History Tour](#), The Virtual Jewish World

WOMEN IN TAIWAN

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Women in Taiwan do work in every industry and are involved in political decision-making, but they do tend to be underemployed and underpaid in comparison to men in Taiwan. Fraternal loyalty and lineage are very high priorities of the traditionally patriarchal Taiwanese culture. However, there is a growing feminist movement promoting women's rights and there are trends of higher educational attainment among women, fewer children, and delayed marriages.

Taiwan is considered a very safe country for female travelers. Taipei is considered to be much safer in comparison with other large capital cities in other countries such as London, Paris and New York City.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FEMALE STUDENTS:

- Women in the cities such as Taipei wear pretty much anything they want. If you plan to travel to more rural and southern areas, try to dress more conservatively to draw less attention to yourself.
- Violent crime rates are not very high, but petty crime such as theft and pickpocketing are more common, especially in crowded areas like cities. Always be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye on your belongings.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016](#), (see Section 6 subheading for Women) U.S. Department of State.
- [Sexual Harassment and Prevention In College Students Studying Abroad](#)
- [Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 in Taiwan](#) (see Section 6 on Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons, subheading for Women)
- [Information for Women Travelers](#), U.S. Department of State
- [Safety for Women Travelling to Taiwan](#), World Nomads
- [Countries and Their Cultures: Taiwan](#) (see section on Gender Roles and Statuses), Every Culture
- [Is Taiwan Safe?](#) The Broke Backpacker

REFERENCES

Maps, flag, and country facts are from the [CIA World Factbook](#). Accessed online in July 2021

[IIE Open Doors Report](#) | [Lonely Planet Taiwan](#)

Please note: The content within the resources provided were last reviewed in July 2021 and as such could have changed. Views expressed in links provided or in sub-links within the document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Office for Global Education.