

Welcome the Year of the Horse with a Feast of Traditional Culture in Taipei

This issue of Discover Taipei coincides with Chinese New Year, Taiwan's most important traditional festival. A key custom of Taipei's distinctive religious culture at this time of year is to go to a temple and ask the gods' favor in ensuring all goes smoothly during the year to come.

Our theme this issue is "Taipei's Traditional Religious Culture." We explore Taipei's religious life, its best temple architecture, and the delicious snack foods sold at its temple-mouth vendors. We also explain unique Chinese New Year customs, including what are called "sweep out the old, bring in the new" preparations and the tradition of shopping for classic New Year necessities. In our Mapping the Taipei Lifestyle section we serve as your guide and jump straight into the Taipei Lunar New Year Festival, introducing the best market areas where locals come to shop for New Year goodies, soaking in the festive New Year atmosphere. According to age-old folk custom, the holiday season is brought to a close with the Lantern Festival, and Taipei City throws a tremendous and wonderfully colorful party with the Taipei Lantern Festival, with a sea of decorative lanterns coloring the night, capping the foreign visitor's New Year experience with the perfect ending.

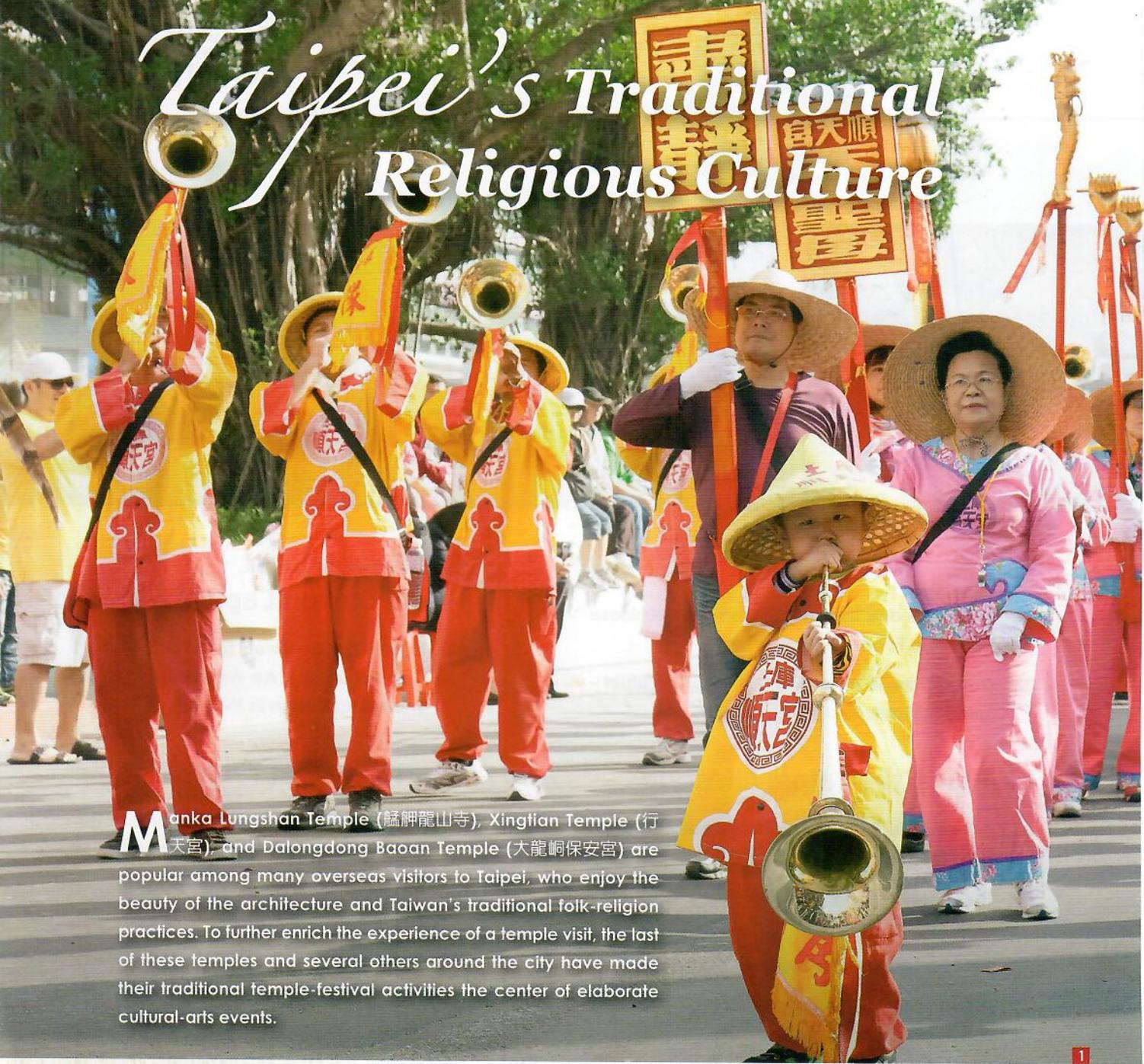
Taipei is known for the preservation of a rich traditional culture – a source of great pride as it strides onto the international stage. In our Taipei New Images section, we report on all the activities going on as part of the Taipei Zoo's centennial celebrations, and some of the outstanding entrants in the 2013 LivCom Awards (International Awards for Liveable Communities) and Old Building New Life Awards. After two years of dedicated effort, on November 19th last year the city was designated as the 2016 World Design Capital, the best of presents in the 130th year since it is founding. We report on how Taipei plans to serve as the 5th World Design Capital, giving a taste of the charisma that defines this adaptive city.

In this season of happy, joyous celebration, the Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Huashan 1914 Creative Park, and the National Palace Museum are all celebrating the fresh year with all-new exhibitions, ringing in 2014 with a rich spiritual and cultural feast.

The Year of the Horse is set to come galloping in with thunder and pomp. Join the crowds of Taipei folk heading to the temples to respectfully pray for peace and good fortune, and spend the Chinese New Year in the classic Taipei way. Happy New Year to you – may fortune and success come racing your way! 🐎



Taipei's Traditional Religious Culture



Manka Lungshan Temple (艋舺龍山寺), Xingtian Temple (行天宮), and Dalongdong Baoan Temple (大龍峒保安宮) are popular among many overseas visitors to Taipei, who enjoy the beauty of the architecture and Taiwan's traditional folk-religion practices. To further enrich the experience of a temple visit, the last of these temples and several others around the city have made their traditional temple-festival activities the center of elaborate cultural-arts events.

Traditional Folk Religion Emphasizes Peace and Safety - Praying for Good Fortune

Enshrined within local temples are, commonly, Guanyin Pusa (觀音菩薩), Baosheng Dadi (保生大帝), Guansheng Dijun (關聖帝君), or Saintly Emperor Guan, Chenghuang Ye (城隍爺), and Tudi Gong (土地公), or Earth God. These deities were originally introduced to Taiwan during the close of the Ming dynasty (明朝) when the great Ming patriot Zheng Chenggong (鄭

成功), commonly called Koxinga (國姓爺) in the West, established himself on the island in 1661. Han Chinese coming to Taiwan for trade and business, and to open land, also brought their patron deities from their home areas in China. During the Qing dynasty (清朝) the guardian goddess of the sea, Mazu (媽祖), became the mostly widely worshipped deity in Taiwan, and remains at the top of the local religious pantheon to this day. The rich religious culture here also embraces Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism, but Buddhist and Daoism remain the most popular religions.

Devotees often go to a temple to pray to the enshrined deities and ask them for peace, safety, and good fortune. Temple activity is especially busy around Chinese New Year and other major festivals. At New Year many believers consider *qiang tou xiang* (搶頭香), which literally means to "compete to burn the first incense," to be a key annual rite. This happens at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, the first moment of the New Year. The doors of the temple are opened and worshippers rush inside to be the first to plunge incense sticks into censers. Those who succeed are believed to be guaranteed a year of good luck. Little wonder then that such a spectacle is created at Taiwan's places of worship each year.

All temples feature a constant lineup of sacrificial rites and ceremonies, designed to save souls, prevent disasters, etc. These manifest the spiritual power of the gods, who provide direction and guidance for adherents, help to resolve difficulties, and offer spiritual comfort. One of the most unique is *shoujing* (收驚) or "recalling a frightened soul." When a person has received a fright, their soul is believed to have left the body. It is recalled by conducting *shoujing*, after which the person will once more be at peace. *Shoujing* is conducted at a temple for the person himself, a child brought by an adult, or by a third party who has brought a piece of clothing or other personal item belonging to the sufferer. Xingtian Temple is regarded as a particularly effective place to receive *shoujing*, and each day from about noon to 9 pm a long lineup of people can be seen, awaiting help from matron volunteers waving incense and chanting scripture.



1. Last year participants from 52 temples around Taiwan took part in the prayer rites and processions for Songshan Ciyou Temple's 260th anniversary celebrations.

2. Xingtian Temple's most special service is *shoujing* or "recalling a frightened soul."

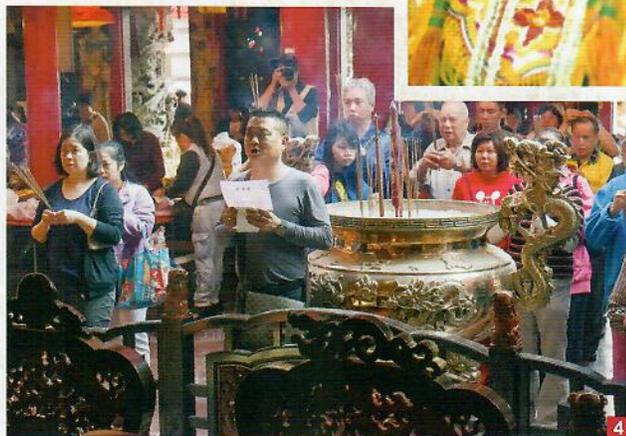
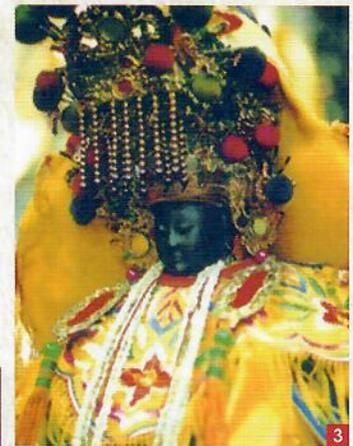
3. Mazu, the guardian goddess of the sea, is one of Taiwan's most important deities.

4. During the month of Mazu's birthday, the devotees go to Mazu temples to pay their respects.

Traditional Religious Practice - Concentrating Believers' Sincerity

According to an old saying, "Mazu madness in the third month, welcome Wangye (王爺) in the fourth, busy with Pudu (普渡) in the seventh" (三月瘋媽祖，四月迎王爺，七月忙普渡), which emphasizes the importance of three major events in Taiwan folk religion, and their times. Mazu, a key deity along China's southeast coast, is said to have been born a mortal named Lin Moniang (林默娘), during the Song dynasty (宋朝) in Meizhou, Fujian (福建湄洲). In one version of the Mazu legend, she died while trying to save her fisherman father and brothers from drowning after their ship was caught in a typhoon. Unable to find her remains, relatives and other villagers believed she had been transformed into an immortal and had ascended to heaven. The first Mazu temple was erected to commemorate her, and with time, her influence spread far beyond Meizhou.

Mazu's birthday is on the 23rd day of the 3rd lunar month, and devotees head to Mazu temples during this month to pay homage to the goddess. Taiwan has a great many Mazu temples, many of which are *fenling* (分靈; lit. "shared spirit/power") temples, meaning the power of their enshrined icon was originally taken from a far more powerful icon in another temple. Each year at the time of Mazu's birthday the *fenling* icons are taken to visit the original, called *yezu* (謁祖; "paying respects to the ancestors"). Pilgrims follow behind their





respective icon during an elaborate procession, gongs and drums loudly sounding the way, in a scene of grand pageantry and hubbub.

Another of the three key religious events in the above-mentioned old saying, Zhongyuan Pudu (中元普渡), is centered on what are called "lonely souls" (孤魂) – the souls of individuals who have no living descendants carrying out sacrificial rites for them. Related activities are conducted throughout the 7th lunar month, with activities on an especially grand scale staged during the Zhongyuan Festival (中元節), on the 15th day.

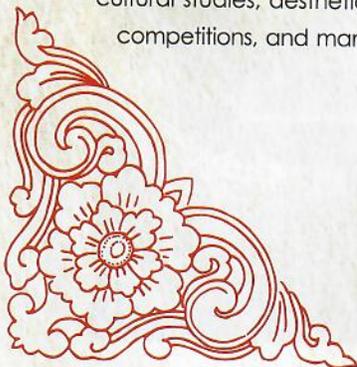
Special Religious Activities in Taipei – Culture and Faith Merged

Most Taipei temples have an active schedule of activities to serve devotees. Festive temple fairs are staged on and around the birthdays of the main enshrined deities each year, and in addition to attending the grand ceremonies involved, followers and visitors can enjoy the varied program of activities staged in temple squares to honor and thank the gods. Dalongdong Baoan Temple, Songshan Ciyou Temple (松山慈祐宮), Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple (台北霞海城隍廟), and other major temples offer a combination of traditional temple fair, guided heritage tours, cultural studies, aesthetics competitions, and many

other activities, showcasing the unique charms of Taiwanese folk beliefs and local culture.

One of the main gods at Dalongdong Baoan Temple is Baosheng Dadi, often called the God of Medicine (醫神). The temple's annual Baosheng Cultural Festival (保生文化祭) is centered around his birthday on the 15th day of the 3rd month. The festival combines modern art and cultural elements with the ceremonies and activities of a traditional temple festival, in a unique combination of religion, folk-custom, arts and culture, and tourism. Each year, in an effort to promote transnational interchange, representatives from 13 temples around the region where Baosheng Dadi is worshiped are invited to come to Taipei for the grand celebrations, with participants from Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia.

Taipei's Songshan area, originally called Xikou (錫口), was given its present name in 1920. Songshan Ciyou Temple, one of the most important Mazu temples in north Taiwan, hosts the Xikou Cultural Festival (錫口文化節) from the 15th day of the 1st lunar month to the 26th day of the 3rd month, just after Mazu's birthday. Taiwanese opera and worship rites and ceremonies are staged in the temple square, expressing birthday wishes to the goddess. Other celebratory activities





include Mazu neighborhood inspection processions and traditional folk-arts performances. There are also guided culture tours and historical-drama performances. The Mazu procession is an event of especially splendid pomp and pageantry, heading from Ciyou Temple through Raohe Street Tourist Night Market (饒河街觀光夜市)

and Minsheng Community, along the Keelung River, and past Songshan Station (松山車站). Each year a great many foreign visitors make a special trip to witness the spectacle, reveling in the experience of a grand Taipei temple-festival celebration.

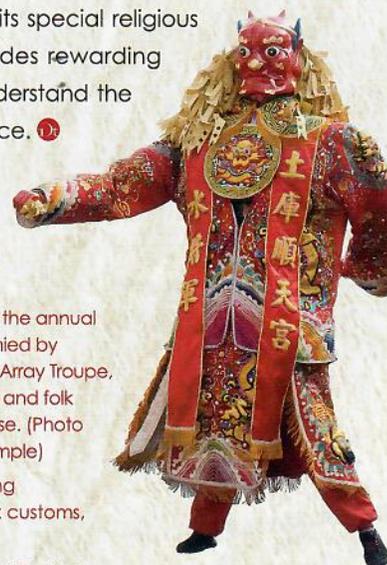
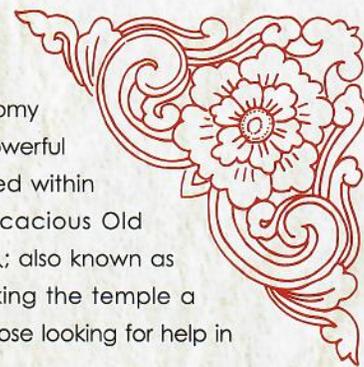
The birthday of Chenghuang Ye (城隍爺) or the City God, who is the patron saint of the city and is in charge of the spirits of the netherworld, falls on the 13th day of the 5th month. Each year Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple stages the grand City God Birthday Parade (五月十三迎城隍), in which the City God goes on an inspection procession around the temple area, protected by Song Jiang Battle Array Troupes (宋江陣團體), which combine traditional martial arts and folk arts. About 10 years ago the scale of the celebrations was expanded and named the Taipei Xia-Hai City God Cultural Festival (台北霞海城隍文化季), with a program featuring shows by Taiwanese opera and glove-puppet theater troupes, lion dance troupes performing at fixed locations, and both storytelling and artifact displays explaining the history of the event. The expansion and upgrading of the temple fair into a full cultural season of activities, in



addition to promoting the economy of the district, also serves as a powerful educational tool. Also enshrined within this temple is a famously efficacious Old Man Under the Moon (月下老人; also known as the Chinese Cupid) icon, making the temple a very popular destination with those looking for help in finding their true love.

The incense has been burning at these Taipei temples for many, many decades, while the city's unique cultural blend has in turn shaped its special religious culture. A visit to one or all provides rewarding insight for the traveler trying to understand the richness of the local living experience.

- 5. Another key religious event in Taiwan folk religion is Zhongyuan Pudu. (Photo courtesy of Xingtian Temple)
- 6-7. Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple stages the annual City God Birthday Parade, accompanied by performances from Song Jiang Battle Array Troupe, which combine traditional martial arts and folk arts, feting the gods gathered en masse. (Photo courtesy of Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple)
- 8. Dalongdong Baoan Temple's Baosheng Cultural Festival combines religion, folk customs, and tourism.
- 9. Songshan Ciyou Temple's Xikou Cultural Festival features guided culture tours and historical-drama performances.
- 10. A Songshan Ciyou Temple Mazu neighborhood inspection procession and traditional folk-art performances enable people to experience the essence of traditional cultural arts.
- 11-12. During temple inspection processions, large, elaborately dressed doll figures of generals are often seen in front, clearing the way for the gods.



Information

Dalongdong Baoan Temple 大龍峒保安宮

Add: 61, Hami St. (哈密街61號)

Tel: (02)2595-1676

Website: www.baoan.org.tw

Songshan Ciyou Temple 松山慈祐宮

Add: 761, Sec. 4, Bade Rd. (八德路4段761號)

Tel: (02)2765-9017

Website: www.facebook.com/SONGSHANCIYOU

Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple 台北霞海城隍廟

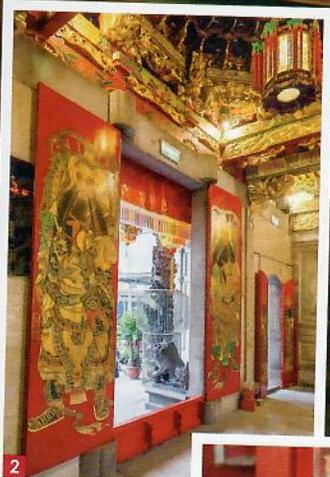
Add: 61, Sec. 1, Dihua St. (迪化街1段61號)

Tel: (02)2558-0346

Website: www.tpecitygod.org

The Beauty of Taipei's Temples

During January and February, over the Chinese New Year period, great numbers of local folk go to Taiwan's temples to ask the gods to bless and protect them in the year to come. Beyond the famous temples such as Manka Lungshan Temple, Dalongdong Baoan Temple, and Xingtian Temple, local folk love to visit many other old temples that are key centers of community worship and also architectural works of great character. Now is a great time to mingle with the crowds and visit these unique city attractions.





Bangka's Venerable Temples, Symbol of the City's Origins

The original Taiwanese name of the area known today in Mandarin as Wanhua (萬華) is Bangka. This is present-day Taipei's original place of settlement. During the Qing dynasty immigrants from China settled here, transplanting religious beliefs and icons from their home areas. Many district temples are thus centuries old, and the queen of the cluster is Manka Lungshan Temple, today still a vibrant place of worship, and a well-known international tourist attraction.

Manka Qingshan Temple (艋舺青山宮), established in 1856, is another temple in Wanhua with a pedigree that puts it in a similar league. It is said that in 1854 a plague broke out in what was then called Bangka, and local fishermen who had emigrated from China's Huian (惠安) area in Fujian province (福建省) went home and then brought back to Taiwan an icon from the Quanzhou Qingshan Temple (泉州青山宮). Local plague sufferers who prayed to the King of Qingshan (青山王) were returned to health and peace. The original Qingshan Temple was built on today's Xiyuan Road (西園路), but an ever increasing number of worshipers led to a decision to rebuild the temple on today's Guiyang Street (貴陽街); the present temple was completed in 1859. With a façade just off the busy street in front, it is laid out in

the form of a street house. The vivid, awe-inspiring door gods are in traditional Huianxi style, and the stone lions in front were carved from granite and bluestone in 1938, during the Japanese era, in classic, meticulous Japanese style.



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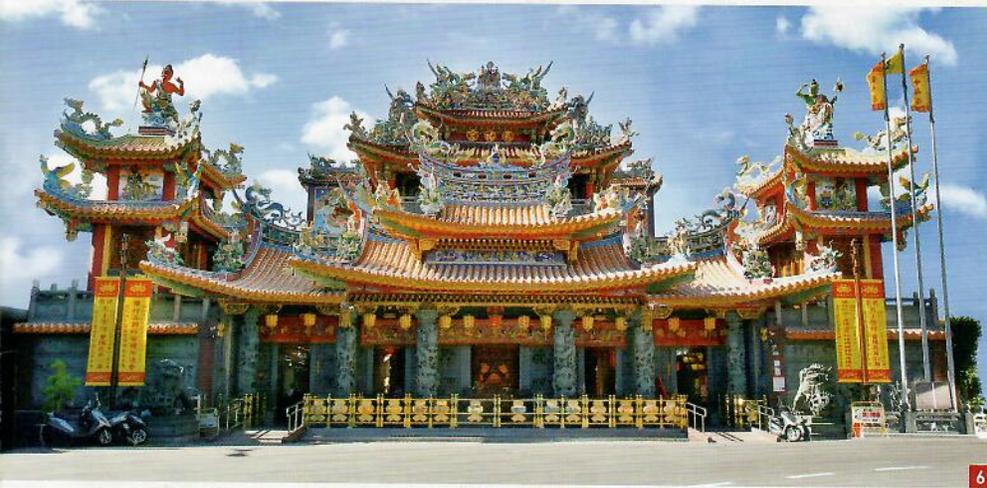


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The large-scale King of Qingshan Festival (青山王祭) is held each year from the 20th to 23rd day of the 10th lunar month, and is commonly called "Great Bangka Sacrificial Ceremony" (艋舺大拜拜). It is one of Taipei's three biggest annual temple fairs, and is a key annual event for the local community. During this year's four-day celebration, there will be a King of Qingshan night-inspection procession on each of the first two nights, one through southern and one through northern Wanhua. The procession is customarily called an *anfang* (暗訪) or "night visit." On the third day is the festival's main event, the "Greeting the King of Qingshan" (迎青山王) *raojing* (遶境) or "tour of inspection," with *zhentou* (陣頭) or "battle-array" performance troupes from all Wanhua temples, large and small, participating. The entire Wanhua district is filled with believers, and there is great noise and commotion. On the 4th day, the King of Qingshan's birthday, anniversary rites and celebrations of colorful grandeur are staged. Recognizing the temple's historical and cultural importance, the Ministry of the Interior (內政部) declared it a Historical Relic of the Third Rank in 1985, and in 2010 the Bureau of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture (文化部文化資產局), placed the *anfang* and *raojing* on the country's list of Folk Customs and Related Cultural Artifacts of official cultural heritage.

Another Wanhua temple tucked away within busy Xichang Street Night Market (西昌街夜市) is the Manka Dizang Temple (艋舺地藏庵). Built in 1760, it has recently undergone a full renovation. Though small, it has many distinctive architectural elements, such as a Qing dynasty-style single-hall layout and simple, austere carvings. Its most visually compelling element is the decorative lanterns hung from its crossbeams, and at either end of the beams are colorful, painted stories, something not often seen in temple decoration. Beside this temple is another, independent one, Zhaoxian Temple (昭顯廟), which is customarily called Dazhong Temple (大眾廟), where souls with no one to worship them are honored. Most are the souls of immigrants who came to Taiwan alone in its pioneer days to open land, but died before creating a family.

1. Manka Qingshan Temple, a Historical Relic of the Third Rank, has an exquisite octagonal plafond in its Sanchuan Hall (三川殿).
2. The traditional, colorful painted door-god art is in the Quanzhou Huianxi style.
3. The stone lions before the main portal, over a century old, are in classical Japanese style.
4. The King of Qingshan Festival night-inspection procession and *raojing*, over a century old, are important cultural assets in Taipei.
5. A special attraction at Manka Dizang Temple is the decorative lanterns hung from its roof crossbeams.



Busy, Flourishing Songshan and Xinyi Temples

The densely populated Songshan and Xinyi districts also have their own fair share of well-known temples. A prime example is Songshan Ciyou Temple (松山慈祐宮), near Raohe Street Night Market. Built in 1753, the main hall has a triple-eave roof, atop which are many auspicious figurines, such as dragons, phoenixes, and figures from historical tales, crafted using the cut-and-paste (剪黏) and cochin pottery methods. Though the temple has undergone repair and rebuilding on numerous occasions through the years, many heritage artifacts possessing historical and cultural significance have been preserved, notably a pair of carvings on either side of the central door crafted in the early 18th century, lifelike stone lions, and a carved stone censor over 200 years old.

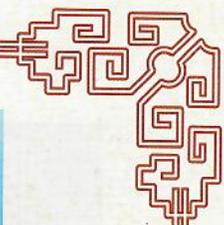
The main deity enshrined within Songshan Ciyou Temple is Mazu, guardian goddess of the sea. Each year on her birthday (on the 23rd day of the 3rd lunar month), as well as on the anniversary of the temple's establishment, believers in great number come to express their good wishes and to celebrate. Last year participants from 52 temples around Taiwan took part in the prayer rites and processions for the temple's 260th anniversary celebrations, and over 200 decorated floats and many battle-array troupes added to the magnificent scenes.

At the foot of Taipei's Sishoushan ("Four Beasts Mountain"; 四獸山), known for its popular network of hiking trails, is Songshan Cihui Temple (松山慈惠堂). Positioned at a key trailhead, it is built to resemble a mountain, with a complex of buildings staggered over five levels. Drum and bell towers are on the left and right, and the overall effect is one of majesty. The halls

are designed in traditional Chinese temple architectural style, with Ming and Qing dynasty palace-art flourishes. The visual canvas of red brick, yellow roof tiles, and green mountain forest is arresting, and an impressive cityscape panorama can be seen from the main hall's second-floor balcony, with buildings sprouting like the trees of the forest. This temple is a must-visit spot for Sishoushan hikers.

The main deity enshrined in this temple is the Golden Mother of the Jade Pool (瑤池金母), the highest goddess in the Daoist pantheon, responsible in heaven for fêting the other gods, and in the mortal world for matters pertaining to marriage and to bearing and raising children. Her likeness, nearly four meters high, has a solemn and dignified bearing. Special activities are regularly staged in the large plaza in front, and each year in the week before Mother's Day (May 2nd to 4th in the Western calendar) "Protect the People Procession Festival" (保民遶境嘉年華) and "Maternal Love Evening Music Concert" (弘揚母愛音樂晚會) activities are held – demonstrations of the Golden Mother's closeness

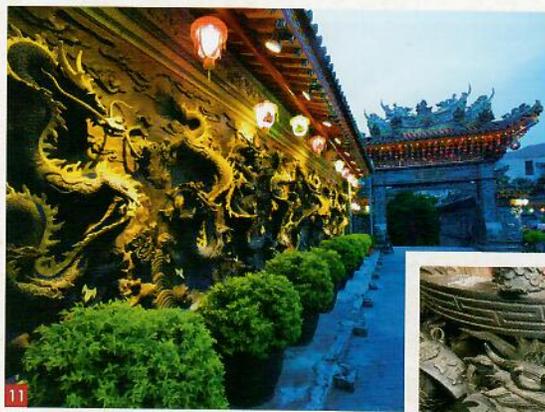




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to citizens and her close association with the spirit of maternal love.

Also located at the foot of Sishoushan is Songshan Feng-Tian Temple (松山奉天宮), where the Jade Emperor (玉皇上帝), who sits atop the Chinese pantheon, is worshipped. His birthday is on the 9th day of the 1st lunar month, and worshipers stream in from near and far, creating a grand spectacle. The temple's architecture is in the classic south China style, with a grandiose monumental archway, landscaped courtyard, a "nine-dragon wall" (九龍壁) relief carving, and countless carvings of dragons, phoenixes, and scenes from famous folktales on stone columns and wooden beams. The unusually tall principal columns in the main hall soar more than 20 meters high. Two other special elements among the many to be enjoyed on a visit are a censor cast from the type of nickel and copper normally used in coins, and a golden Eight Trigrams (八卦) pattern on the roof. Note that until February 14th you can also take in the National Palace Museum's digital-collection New Waves of NPM Songshan Feng-Tian Temple Travelling



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Exhibition (故宮潮·松山奉天宮遊), Taiwan's first ever exhibition jointly curated by a temple and national-level museum.



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Temples in Glorious Hillside Settings

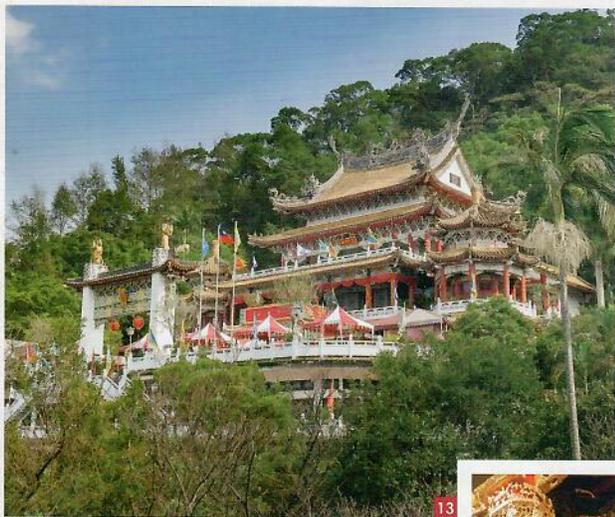
Taipei is surrounded by green mountains on its outskirts, and you'll find many temples built on the forested slopes, many commanding superb views over Taipei Basin from their viewing platforms. They're grand spots to visit when walking in the hills. Zhinan Temple (指南宮), in the hills of Wenshan District, was built in 1890. Spread over 70-plus hectares, it is dedicated to Lu Dongbin (呂洞賓), one of Daoism's Eight Immortals (八仙). Legend has it that Lu has the Midas touch, using it to change stone to gold to assist the poor, and thus was revered by Muzha-area mining folk. There are four grand halls in the complex; Confucius and his disciples are worshiped in Dacheng Hall (大成殿). A special attraction of this temple is that although it is one of Taiwan's most sacred Daoist sites, over the years it has become a mixed Daoist/Buddhist/Confucian place of worship. It is perhaps the most important religious site in Zhinan.

Bluestone, with its solid, heavy, stately appearance, has been used liberally throughout Zhinan Temple, complementing the many dragon different columns.



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- 6-7. Songshan Ciyou Temple's main hall has a traditional triple-eave roof; inside are many historical relics, including numerous century-old horizontal inscription boards.
- 8-9. Songshan Cihui Temple is built to resemble a mountain, with a complex of buildings staggered over five levels; enshrined within the soaring temple is the Golden Mother of the Jade Pool.
- 10-12. Busy, splendid Songshan Feng-Tian Temple has myriad dragons, phoenixes, and folktale scenes carved on stone columns and wooden beams; on the exterior is a "nine-dragon wall" relief carving; there is also a censor cast from the type of nickel and copper normally used in coins. (Photo courtesy of Songshan Feng-Tian Temple)



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Also located in the hills of Neihu is Bishanyan Kaizhang Shengwang Temple (碧山巖開漳聖王廟). Enshrined here is Chen Yuanguang (陳元光), patron god of China's Zhangzhou (漳州), who was responsible for many of Taiwan's pioneer-era immigrants. Chen was a Tang dynasty (唐朝) general sent to suppress a revolt in Fujian province. It is said he improved the lives of the local people by teaching improved farming techniques, earning their deep esteem. The original Neihu temple was built in 1814, and originally possessed just three "god stones" (神石). Steadily expanded over the years, today visitors are presented with a much expanded and far statelier complex. Stand on the platform before the temple to soak in the magnificent view over the Taipei Basin, with Taipei 101 (台北101大樓), the Grand Hotel (圓山大飯店), Taipei Songshan Airport (臺北松山機場), and other major city landmarks looking like giant toy models laid out at your feet. The meandering Tamsui River (淡水河), Liyushan (Mt. Liyu; 鯉魚山), and other natural features complete the grand canvas. This temple is visited by great numbers of day-trippers on weekends and holidays, and is a prime site for taking in Taipei's spectacular annual New Year's Eve fireworks show.

A portion of the temple is covered with sturdy copper tiling, giving it an uncommonly elegant bearing. A series of interconnected pavilions and corridors also graces the complex, and the grounds contain over a thousand osmanthus and cherry trees. When in bloom the fragrance of their flowers floats through the air, creating the ambiance of a mountain-garden.

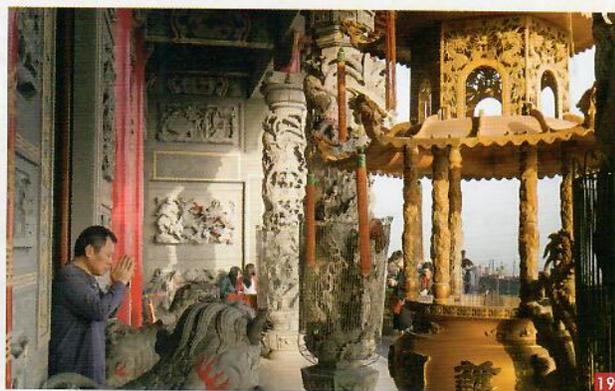
Stately Jinlong Temple (金龍禪寺), built in 1940, is located in Neihu District, beside the Zhongyongshan Trail (忠勇山步道). In his youth, the founder studied in Japan, and brought back a taste for the Japanese Buddhist temple architectural style, reflected in features such as the Japanese Buddhist ornamental figurines on the roof. The ornately decorated interior has a unique elegance. Gilded Sakyamuni Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, and Calamity-Averting Medicine Buddha icons are enshrined in the main hall, and there is a giant white statue of Guanyin (觀音) almost three stories tall – the temple's main attraction. To one side is a 20-foot-high Wall of Buddhist Scriptures (心經牆), and scattered in the woods along an adjoining pathway are the 18 Arhats. The craftsmanship of the arhats is particularly exquisite, each impressively lifelike.



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According to local folklore, the gate of heaven is opened (開天門) on the 7th day of the 6th lunar month, and the Jade Emperor leads fellow gods down to the mortal world to attend to people's sufferings. Believers can take the opportunity to ask the Jade Emperor for "extended life and replenished fortune" (延壽補運). On this date Bishanyan Kaizhang Shengwang Temple stages the "Gate of Heaven Opening" Extension of Life Ceremony, attracting devotees from near and far.

Many of Taiwan's venerable temples are not only places of spiritual sustenance for local people, but are also places of great architectural beauty and cultural character. They thus serve as centers of local activity, and precious cultural assets that you should be sure to visit when in Taiwan. ㊦

13-15. Zhinan Temple, built in a mountain setting, is one of Taiwan's most sacred Daoist sites. The central portion is large, with pavilions, terraces, and corridors connecting the halls. Throughout are dragon columns of varying countenance.

16-17. At Jinlong Temple, three large Buddha icons covered in gold foil are enthroned in the main hall. On the outside of the courtyard is a giant white statue of Guanyin almost three stories tall and a 20-foot-high Wall of Buddhist Scriptures.

18-20. Located high in the hills, Bishanyan Kaizhang Shengwang Temple has great views over the Taipei Basin; starting out as a small, simple structure, today's temple is grandiose, and has become a favorite weekend sightseeing spot with Taipei folk.

Information

Manka Qingshan Temple 艋舺青山宮

Add: 218, Sec. 2, Guiyang St. (貴陽街2段218號)
Tel: (02)2382-2296

Manka Dizang Temple 艋舺地藏庵

Add: 245, Xichang St. (西昌街245號)
Tel: (02)2306-6352

Songshan Ciyou Temple 松山慈祐宮

Add: 761, Sec. 4, Bade Rd. (八德路4段761號)
Tel: (02)2765-9017

Songshan Cihui Temple 松山慈惠堂

Add: 33, Ln. 251, Fude St. (福德街251巷33號)
Tel: (02)2726-1735

Songshan Feng-Tian Temple 松山奉天宮

Add: 12, Ln. 221, Fude St. (福德街221巷12號)
Tel: (02)2727-9765

Zhinan Temple 指南宮

Add: 115, Wanshou Rd. (萬壽路115號)
Tel: (02)2939-9922

Jinlong Temple 金龍禪寺

Add: 2, Ln. 256, Sec. 3, Neihu Rd. (內湖路3段256巷2號)
Tel: (02)2790-2604

Bishanyan Kaizhang Shengwang Temple 碧山巖開漳聖王廟

Add: 24, Bishan Rd. (碧山路24號)
Tel: (02)2790-0657

In front of many temples in Taiwan are plazas, called *miaokou* (literally “temple mouths” 廟口), which can be said to be a major source of the common people’s culture, and a center of local community life. They are gathering places for farming folk in spare time, where traditional-style battle-array artistic troupes practice and perform, traditional opera is staged, and people come to chat, play chess, discuss issues of the day, and share news. They are also the venues for important activities such as temple fairs, major ritual-prayer rites, deity processions, and deity-receiving festivals.

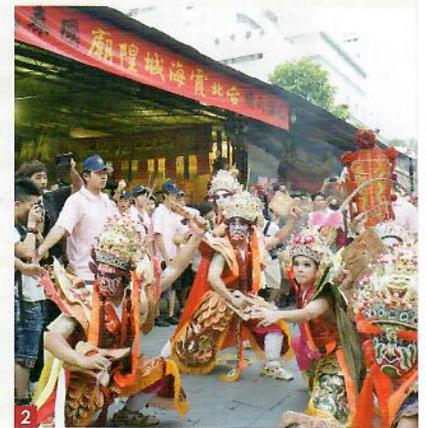


The “Temple Mouth” – A Gathering Place for Popular Culture and Food Treats

Dedicated public places of entertainment were uncommon in early Taiwan, and so *miaokou*, where many people could gather, became a key center for recreation and performances such as traditional opera, singing, storytelling, juggling, and acrobatics. At was in the *miaokou* that traditional folk arts and customs such as the entertainment by Songjiang Battle Array and the Eight Generals (八家將) during deity processions and worship rites, and Taiwanese glove-puppet theater and opera, among others, were cultivated and flourished.

The *miaokou* is not just a stage for cultural-arts performances. Due to the great numbers of people who congregate at them, they are also hubs of

economic activity. Due to the pervasive belief in popular folk religion, it was the norm in the old days to begin one’s day at the temple praying for peace and security before moving on to the rest of the day’s activities. Vendors set up around the temple, selling incense and all the other necessities for worship, as well as food to the streams of devotees as well, laying the foundation for the food bazaar and snack-food culture so intimately interwoven into the lives of everyday folk today. Over the years the areas surrounding many *miaokou* have evolved into specialty



commercial districts – notable examples in Taipei are Herb Alley (青草巷) off Xichang Street (西昌街) on one side of Manka Lungshan Temple and Buddhist Implement Street (佛具街) along Xiyuan Road (西園路) on the other, as well as the concentration of shops selling fabrics and worship-related items around Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple on Dihua Street (迪化街). All are well-known symbols of the popular culture of the common people.

The food sellers before a temple are representatives of the local style of living. Many stay in business for decades, selling traditional snacks, and become essential snack-treat spots for pilgrims and tourists alike. Well-known names around Wanhua's Lungshan Temple are Zhou's Meat Congee (周記肉粥), Fuzhou Yuanzu Crispy Pepper Pastry Cake (福州元祖胡椒餅), San Liu Dessert Shop (三六圓仔店), and the Longdu Ice Dessert Parlor (龍都冰菓專業家), which has been going since 1920. Near Taipei Wenchang Temple (台北市文昌宮) on Shuanglian Street (雙連街) are meat-congee sellers, Shuanglian Pan-fried Glutinous Rice Sausage (雙連大腸煎), and Yanshan Tangyuan (燕山湯圓). Beside Cisheng Temple (慈聖宮) in Dadaocheng is Ye's Meat Congee (葉家肉粥), an original-flavor pork-rib soup shop and a seller of four-tonics soup (四神湯). Near Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple is Yongle Swordfish Rice-Noodle Soup (永樂旗魚米粉

湯), Jiaxing Fish Balls (佳興魚丸店), and Lin He Fa Oil Rice and Rice Cakes (林合發油飯糕店). In the alleys by Dalongdong Baoan Temple are Chongqing Soybean Milk (重慶豆漿) and



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- 1-2. The "temple mouth," or temple plaza, is a key local gathering spot, often used as a stage for such activities as Songjiang battle-array and Eight Generals performances for deity processions, Taiwanese glove-puppet theater and opera, etc.
- 3-5. Herb Alley and Buddhist Implement Street, on either side of Manka Lungshan Temple, and shops selling religious-worship items by Taipei Xia-Hai City God Temple.
- 6-7. San Liu Dessert Shop, by Manka Lungshan Temple, specializes in confections used in worship.
- 8-10. Yanshan Tangyuan, near Taipei Wenchang Temple, and a shop selling original-flavor pork-rib soup by Cisheng Temple in Dalongdong, are great examples of temple-mouth shops selling snacks beloved by local folk.



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Black Tea House (紅茶屋). All of these beloved purveyors of the local popular-food culture offer great value.

As society has changed, so have many of the economic activities of temple-plaza areas, and both morning and night markets have developed there. Examples include Xichang Street Night Market by Manka Lungshan Temple, Raohe Street Night Market by Songshan Ciyou Temple, Dalong Market (大龍市場) and Dalongdong Night Market (大龍峒夜市) by Dalongdong Baoan Temple, Yongle Market (永樂市場) by Taipei Xiahai City God Temple, as well as nearby Ningxia Night Market (寧夏夜市), and Shilin Night Market (士林夜市) by Shilin Cixian Temple (士林慈誠宮). All have become popular tourist attractions with travelers from China and other foreign lands.

To this day, the temple plaza remains a site where the simple and honest ways of the common people are preserved and cultivated. Spend a little time around local miaokou and the surrounding shops, and soak up Taiwan's rich tradition of warm hospitality. 🍵



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