



How to explore Asia's computer kingdom

Taiwan, mostly known for its hightech industry, is now presenting itself as a hidden travel destination worth exploring. Visitors' first résumé: Having been in Formosa once means returning forever.

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Taipei 101. The 508 meters high landmark in the capital of Taiwan stands as a symbol for the Asian hightech tiger.

All over Taiwan, like in the Meinong region (right), visitors may come across local cultural activities such as the manufacturing of traditional oil paper umbrellas.



FACTS & FIGURES

Taiwan

Official name: Republic of China
Capital and largest city: Taipei
Official language: Mandarin
Ethnic groups: 95% Han (thereof 70% Hakka, 14% Hakka, 14% Waisheng)
 3,1% New immigrants
 2,4% Aborigines
Government: Unitary semi-presidential constitutional republic
 - President: Tsai Ing-wen
 - Vice President: Chen Chien-jen
 - Premier: William Lai
Area: 36,197 km²
Population: 23,560,077 (2017 estimate)
GDP: 566,757 billion \$ (2017, nominal)
GDP per capita: 24,027 \$ (2017, nominal)
Formation:
 - Xinhai Revolution: 10 October 1911
 - Republic proclaimed: 1 January 1912
 - Taiwan transferred: 25 October 1945
 - Constitution adopted: 25 December 1947
 - Government moved to Taipei: 7 December 1949

Rush hour is peaking on Bade Road in the center of Taipei, Taiwan's vibrant 2.7 million capital. A young scooter rider is descending at the sidewalk, opens a small box under the seat and pulls out the scooter battery, which is shaped like a cylinder. He walks to a touchpad mounted at the wall of the next house, clicks a couple of times and another box opens. Then he pushes his empty battery into the opening, takes out a new one, places it into his scooter and off he goes again into the dense traffic of Taipei.

The cashless recharging of the e-scooter battery just took him 30 seconds. This convenience, provided by the young e-mobility startup "Gogoro Scooter", is just one of the numerous signs of how Taiwan – or the Republic of China, as it is officially known – is trying to shape the future. The country is already famous for its reputation as one of the four Asian Tigers. And as home of such hightech giants like the multi-electronics manufacturer Foxconn, the big computer company Quanta, the semiconductor specialist TSMC or the smartphone producer HTC, it truly can be called a "computer kingdom" as it likes to coin itself.

Taiwan's strong IT industry has pushed its economy up to rank Nr. 14 in the "Global Competitiveness Report 2016" of the World Economic Forum, with an export share of some 60 percent and a current account plus of more than 13 percent of its GDP of some 570 billion dollar (nominal). Also, its decent economic growth in 2017 of some 2.3 percent resulted in a trade volume of more than one billion Euro between Taiwan and Austria last year. "Actually, Taiwan serves as one of the major hubs for doing business in one of the most dynamic regions in the world, especially China", says Christian Fuchssteiner, Austria's Commercial Counsellor in Taipei.

On the other hand, the tense political relations with its big brother do not come without economic challenges. In January 2016, the former opposition force "Democratic Progressive Party" has gained a landslide victory and its absolute majority for the first time in history has placed a woman, Tsai Ing-wen, into Taiwan's presidential office. But since she has chosen not to commit to Peking's "One China-Policy", Taipei has been confronted with economic pressure. Official talks had been temporarily suspended and tourist flows from mainland China have drastically decreased. Just in late January 2018, China Eas-

PHOTOS: TAIWAN TOURISM BUREAU, LECHUANQ, PAUL SPIERENBURG

If you visit the Shilin night market in Taipei, don't miss out the oyster omelette, the milkfish porridge, the fried rice noodles, the braised pork rice, or the beef noodles.



The Tainan Confucius Temple – one of the many preserved religious sites.