



# TAIWAN

student handbook 2023-24

# CONTENTS



01	Basic Checklist	<u>2</u>
02	Applying for a Visitor Visa	<u>4</u>
03	Extending a Visitor Visa	<u>7</u>
04	Applying for a Resident Visa	<u>9</u>
05	Applying for an Alien Residence Card (ARC)	<u>12</u>
06	Student Finance	<u>14</u>
07	Turing Scheme	<u>16</u>
08	Healthcare	<u>18</u>
09	Getting a SIM Card	<u>23</u>



10	Money	<u>26</u>
11	Guide to Main Districts of Taipei	<u>30</u>
12	Accommodation	<u>32</u>
13	Transport in Taiwan	<u>36</u>
	a) Trains	<u>40</u>
	b) High Speed Rail	<u>41</u>
14	Travel Insurance	<u>42</u>
15	Life at MTC	<u>43</u>
16	Packing List	<u>46</u>



01

# BASIC CHECKLIST

## Before you go to Taiwan...

- Check if you need to renew your passport - If your passport expires before the end of 2024, this might be worth doing as most countries require at least 6 months on your passport to travel there.
- Apply for your visa.
- Book your flight.
- Apply for the Turing Scheme
- Go to the dentist/doctor/optician as you need.
- Obtain a supply of your prescription medicines + contact lenses.
- Get as much as possible! It is expensive and hard to get medication in Taiwan.
- Get a Starling / Monzo bank account and card.
- Book somewhere to stay for your first week or so.
- Get some NTD in cash.
- Pack



## When you arrive...

- Obtain a SIM card in the airport for your first few days. Otherwise, you will have no internet. You can buy these after customs.
- Obtain an 'Easycard' + add money to it. Used for all transport. Can be bought or topped up in 7-11/familymart or MRT stations.
- Take either a Taxi or public transport to your accommodation.
- Download the Line app, for messaging landlords/estate agents when flat-hunting – this is what they all use to communicate and is an essential

## First few weeks...

- Find somewhere to live.
- Go to IKEA to get bedding etc.
- Get a long-term student SIM card.
- Register at the MTC (you will be emailed by the MTC about this)



## October

- Extend your Visitor Visa

## December

- Extend your Visitor Visa (again!)
- Get a Health Check

## January

- Apply for a Resident Visa
- Apply for an ARC (You will not be allowed to leave and re-enter Taiwan until you have your ARC.)



02

## APPLYING FOR A VISITOR'S VISA

Most useful websites:

<https://www.boca.gov.tw/mp-2.html>

[https://www.taiwanembassy.org/uk\\_en/index.html](https://www.taiwanembassy.org/uk_en/index.html)

The first bureaucratic step in the year abroad process is applying for your visa to travel to Taiwan. The visa process that we had to go through was as follows:

- Applying for and entering Taiwan on a visitor visa (<180 days) for the purpose of studying. This visa can be valid for 60 or 90 days, which from what we can tell depends on luck, we all got 60 days.
- Once in Taiwan, we had to have been attending classes for 4 months (until January) before we would be able to apply for a resident's visa and then an ARC.
  - For us this required extending our visitor's visa twice (see Extending a Visitor's Visa for more information)

- Within 15 days of receiving your resident's visa you can apply for an Alien Residency Card (ARC) which becomes your ID in Taiwan.
  - The main benefit of an ARC is the ability to leave and re-enter the country multiple times, so it is necessary if you wish to travel home or to other parts of Asia in your holidays.
- The London visa office were very fast for some people but not for all of us, and we were applying at a time when there were not many people eligible to enter Taiwan. Thus, I would still recommend you pay for the express service then your passport and visa should be back with you within two weeks.
- The Edinburgh office currently has no express service due to staff shortages.
- Do not rely on either office to be fast, try to be quick about completing admin when MTC informs you of it as it will make the process less stressful.

### List of documents for visa application:

- A printed copy of your completed online application form, signed (online application form, choose 'general visa applications')
- Two colour UK passport style photos taken within the last 6 months.
- Your passport
- A photocopy of your passport
- Intended Flight itinerary (do not book flights before receiving your visa, this does not have to be the flight you end up buying)
- A study plan
- A very short paragraph outlining when and where you are going to study, and your motives for studying Mandarin (signed and dated)
- Admission letter (will be sent to you by MTC)
- Proof of financial support (three months of bank statements or scholarship details).
  - *Note: we did not receive the Taiwanese government scholarship, the year above us did, I think this can also be random but the MTC should inform you whether you will be receiving it or not so you can plan financially.*
- Click here for the Taiwan Representative Office in the UK website which details the visa application process and how to send the application by post.
  - *Note this website is generalised for multiple different types of visas so use this page to find the requirements for the specific type of visa you are applying for (most likely "Visitor Visa for Studying Chinese Purpose")*

## Notes

- This is only the process that we have been through, which was different to the year above due to multiple factors.
  - If you are applying for a “Visitor visa for the purpose of studying Chinese”: [click here](#) for the specific page detailing all the documents needed for the application.
- If you are lucky, you might be able to apply to enter Taiwan on a resident’s visa in the first place, so make sure you follow the instructions given to you by the MTC.
  - We were told by MTC that you can only apply for resident’s visas if you have received a scholarship for a minimum of 6 months.



If you’re applying by post, send your passport and documents (Next-day Special delivery) at the post office and ask them to also include a pre-paid return envelope (with your address written on it). This way, you can track your package on its way to the visa office and the way back and can make sure it’s signed for and safe.



# EXTENDING A VISITOR'S VISA

As we were only given 60 days of validity on our visitor's visas, we had to extend our visitor's visa twice before we were able to complete the 4 months of study required to apply for a resident's visa.

## Process for Extending your Visa

- You can only extend your visa a maximum of 15 days prior to its expiration date, make sure you set a reminder so you know when your visa will expire so you don't miss this 15-day window.
- MTC should contact you in advance detailing the process.

## Documents you will need:

- Application Form (Available to be picked up at the National Immigration Agency, and can be completed there on the day of application)
  - *You do need the phone number of a friend in Taiwan, so if you go alone, ask someone first if you can put them down as your contact.*
- Passport, original and a copy
  - Both the information page and visa page must be photocopied (with the arrival stamp visible)
  - You can find photocopiers in the MTC, most convenience stores and if needed they have them in the National Immigration Agency (you will need coins, approx. 2NTD per sheet)
- Certificate of Enrolment (provided by the MTC office)
- Attendance Record (provided by the MTC office)
  - The MTC staff ask that you contact them in advance to prepare the Certificate of Enrolment and the Attendance record, they say these documents can take 7-8 working days but generally we have found they can often be ready very fast.
  - *These must be dated within 15 days of when you apply to extend your visa so do plan to go to the Immigration Agency soon after collection.*
- Current Month Attendance Form
  - This form can be picked up at any time from a pink folder in the office. However, you must take it to your teacher, and have it completed, signed, and dated on the day you are going to the National Immigration Agency. After your teacher has filled out this form you must take it back to the office to get it stamped by the staff before you take it to the National Immigration Agency.

Once you have these the process at the National Immigration Agency is very simple...



Note: the MTC asks you to attend at least 75% of classes anyway so you should not be dropping below your visa requirements

- If you are over 20 minutes late for class, it will be counted as an absence for the first hour of class.
- If you are on a scholarship, we have heard from friends they can be even more strict on attendance.
- You can check the MTC handbook here, which has more details on attendance.



# APPLYING FOR A RESIDENT VISA

Before your visitor visa runs out, and when you have studied for 4 months, you need to apply for a resident visa. Again, this is a multi-stage process that involves going to do a few different places around Taipei and dealing with a lot of bureaucracy in Chinese. You must apply for a resident visa at the Bureau of Consular Affairs (BOCA) (not the Immigration Agency where you extend visitor visas) no later than one week before the duration of the stay expires. Processing takes 7 working days.

## STEP 1 - Getting a Health Check

You need to get a health check from a Taiwanese hospital before you apply for a resident visa. This involves checking for syphilis with a blood test and checking if you have any breathing issues with a chest x-ray.

The three hospitals you can get a health check at are:

- 1. 台北市立聯合醫院-和平 \_Taipei City Hospital Heping Branch
- 2. 台北市立聯合醫院-仁愛 \_Taipei City Hospital Renai Branch
- 3. 台北市立聯合醫院-中興 \_Taipei City Hospital Zhongxing Branch

You'll need to bring around 2,000NTD (for us it was 1420NTD), your passport with a photocopy, and two passport sized photos. Most of the hospitals have a photobooth to take photos if you've run out. The results of the health check will take about a week to come out, after which you can collect a certificate from the hospital. Make sure you leave enough time for this to be done before your visitor visa runs out!



·Your health check is valid for 3 months, so can be completed up to 3 months before you plan to apply for your resident visa if you want to get ahead and save yourself some stress.

## STEP 2 - Getting your documents from the MTC

To apply for the resident visa, you'll also need several documents from the MTC showing that you're a student there. They should email you about this in good time, but if not, you can enquire at the office about the documents. This will be the same set of documents required for visitor visa extensions.

## STEP 3 - Apply online for your visa

Similar to the visitor visa, you need to apply for a new visa online and then print out the form and sign it. This time you'll want to choose a 180+ day stay. The purpose of travel is still 'studying' [https:// visawebapp.boca.gov.tw](https://visawebapp.boca.gov.tw)

## STEP 4 - Head to the bureau of consular affairs

Once that's all done, you can head to the bureau of consular affairs (note: not the Immigration Agency where you extended your visitor's visa) to finish applying for your visa. They'll then give you a date to come back on, around a week later to collect your passport with the new visa.



Bureau of Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (外交部領事事務局)  
3-5F, 2-2, Sec.1, Jinan Rd., Zhongzheng Dist., Taipei City, Taiwan

### You will need to bring:

- Your printed online application form, signed.
- Your passport, with photocopies of the photo page and visitor visa page
- Passport sized colour photos
- Health certificate from hospital, with a photocopy
- MTC Documents
- 200-word Statement of purpose (similar to your study plan but best if handwritten in Chinese)
  - Detail your purpose of studying in Taiwan and why you want to study in Taiwan.
  - Signed at the bottom.
- 3000NTD
- Recent receipt (I'd recommend using one from an ATM from when you've withdrawn money) – to show that you are able to access funds in Taiwan.

- Your debit/credit card.
- Bank statement (your bank statement needs to show that you have funds equivalent of 70,000NTD, this is close to £2,000)
  - They wanted the statement to be within the past week, which is impossible from most banks as they only provide monthly statements.
  - I recommend Starling for this as you can choose the date range for the statement, and thus can generate a statement at any time and it can include up to the day on which you're generating it.



- Different workers at BOCA sometimes want or will ask for different things. We recommend giving them all these documents even if not specifically asked for, because even if the person at the desk doesn't ask for certain documents someone later in the verification process may ask.
- Also check your emails within the 7-day period to see if they have contacted you with any issues or further documentation they require.
- Give yourself wiggle room, as in this process you may encounter issues and none of us had the exact same process.



- Don't wait for your visitor's visa to run out before you apply for your resident's visa; the process can be somewhat slow and it's best not to leave it close to the deadline.
- Due to the Lunar New Year holiday (a 10-day public holiday where no visas/ARCs are processed) applying for an ARC in mid/late January can take a while. If you plan to travel outside of Taiwan near the start of the year and need an ARC, be aware of how LNY affects your ARC application!
- You must start the application for your ARC within 15 days of receiving your resident's visa. If you receive this visa just before the LNY holiday, be aware that those 10 days count – don't leave it too late to apply for your ARC, or you will be fined.

# APPLYING FOR AN ARC (ALIEN RESIDENCE CARD)

The one final hoop to jump through is applying for an Alien Residence Card. You have to apply for this within fifteen days of receiving your residents visa, and it then becomes your ID in Taiwan.

- Visit the link below and complete the Students Online Application System- Foreign students and Overseas Chinese:  
<https://coa.immigration.gov.tw/coa-frontend/student/entry/foreign-student>
- Take photos of the passport information page and visa page, then upload the photos to the system.
- Upload a colour passport-size photo to the system.
- Take photos of the admission letter and attendance record from MTC, then upload the photos to the system.
- Take photos NTNU student card and upload to the system.
- Take photos of your flat lease in Taiwan, which must include address, commencement, and termination dates, landlord's name and signature, tenant's name, and signature.  
*Important to bear this in mind when renting your apartment, do make sure you have a lease agreement (it's not always common practice here in Taiwan). Moreover, if you are renting as a group ensure all your names are on the lease agreement otherwise it will not be accepted.*
- Pay the fee of 1,000NTD. This can be paid online with a Starling card, or you can (recommended only if necessary) pay at a convenience store, but the processing time will be longer.

- It's recommended to use a small file type such as a JPG and scale down all the photos to ensure they fit the file restrictions.
- You'll then get a digital ARC once it's approved. Which you will need to print in colour and take with you if/when you leave and re-enter the country. (The ARC is not usually an actual card; it is a document.)
- Once you have your ARC you're finally settled in Taiwan. The ARC still doesn't allow you to do any paid work, but it allows you multiple entries/exits into Taiwan and means you're officially a resident



- For the purposes of Taiwanese bureaucracy, we are NOT exchange students, when applying for the ARC you must choose "Short-term Language Learning program" as the program of study.
- This process once again can very much depend on the person handling your application some of us submitted the exact same documents but had differing levels of success.
- Processing time for an ARC is 7 working days.
- Lunar New Year is a 10-day public holiday (ARC's will not be processed during this holiday) and can slow down an ARC application a lot; if you need an ARC for travel out of Taiwan early in the year, be aware of how early you can get the ARC.



# STUDENT FINANCE

- The first important thing to remember is to register for your second year at Oxford, otherwise your regular student loan will not be released. As in first year, the money comes in three instalments at the beginning of each academic term, to the bank account you requested.
  - If you are worried about upfront costs on the year abroad you can contact Student Finance to get the whole year's worth of maintenance loan upfront or rearrange how it will be distributed to you over the year, this is a fairly simple process and doesn't require you to prove why you need the money early.
- When you are on your year abroad, Student Finance offer travel grants which are reimbursement for necessary travel and visa-related expenses: These will typically include flights, visa fees and necessary medical fees outside of your Oxford travel insurance (e.g., the health check for your resident permit) Student Finance Organisations for each country in the UK have different policies on reimbursement and on what they will cover:

## Student Finance England

- According to SFE 'The amount (of reimbursement) you get depends on your total household income. This means your income, combined with that of your parents or guardians, or spouse or partner if you live with them.'
- You must pay the first £303 of your travel costs - and your travel grant will be reduced by £1 for each £8.73 of household income over £39,796.'
- If you are eligible, you will automatically receive two forms after you have applied for Student Finance:
  - The Course Abroad Form which should be completed by the university (e.g., by Rosanna Gosi) or college to confirm the period abroad.
  - The Travel Expenses Form which you should complete. <https://www.gov.uk/travel-grants-students-england>



## Student Finance Scotland

- Scottish students are entitled to full reimbursement for flights and medical insurance (if they choose not to take Oxford's insurance).
- This is unconditional and will not be affected by their household income.
- Scottish students will not be asked to cover any of their travel expenses.
- You will receive an email containing the relevant form from SAAS to personally fill in.

<https://www.saas.gov.uk/guides/study-abroad-expenses>

## Student Finance Wales

- All Welsh students will be able to claim the 'reasonable costs' of travel.
- Welsh students will also be required to contribute the first £303 or £1000 (depending on household income) of their travel costs.

<https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-finance/full-time/welsh-student/what-s-available/extra-help-for-students-studying-abroad/>

## Student Finance Northern Ireland

- NI students have vague information about the travel grant they will receive.
- SF NI simply states it 'depends on your household income' & each student must cover the first £309 for each separate claim application themselves.
- <https://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk/types-of-finance/undergraduate/full-time/northern-ireland-student/extra-help/travel-grant/how-much-can-i-get/>



- We believe receipts can also be uploaded online but we are not sure (we haven't completed our applications yet.)
- KEEP RECEIPTS – Particularly for flights, medical bills, visa payments. The claims form lists everything you can claim for but keep receipts for anything you reckon you can claim some eligibility for—it is worth trying.
- You can start claiming at any time however: for every separate list of claims you send off, that £303/£309 excess applies, so it's best to wait until you've collated everything and submit one big claim and pay that excess once.
  - Probably easiest to do this once you return to the UK.
- The system is complicated, and you may face bureaucratic failures at several points, so keep on your toes.



07

## TURING SCHEME

The Turing Scheme is a government grant scheme established after Brexit to replace the Erasmus scheme for year abroad travel. Everybody on the year abroad is eligible for this scheme, and there is a (quite substantial) base level that is paid to everyone as well as extra based on means-testing. Extra funding is available for:

- Students with a low household income (annual household income of £27,500 or less).
- Students who are care-experienced.
- Students who have caring responsibilities.
- Students who are estranged (studying without the support and approval of their families).
- Students receiving Universal Credit or income-related benefits because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner.
- Refugees and asylum seekers; or
- Participants with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This may include a sensory or mobility impairment, a long-term illness or health condition, or mental health condition, an autism spectrum condition, or a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD.

At some point before you leave for your year abroad, you should expect to receive an email from 'UAS Study Abroad (studyabroad@admin.ox.ac.uk)' with details of the grant and how to get it. This will require getting forms signed by both Oxford and the co-ordinator at the MTC. Oxford will only approve your forms if your risk assessment and insurance has been approved. For any signatures required from Oxford, this can be done by your tutor at your college. In theory 80% of the grant is paid first before you leave for the year abroad, followed by the remaining 20% at the end of the year abroad once you've filled out a few more forms.



- For us the office at Oxford did not factor in that we were going abroad earlier than the majority of YA-students. Thus, we didn't receive the 80% until around October.
- Please bear in mind there are a lot of upfront costs at the start of the year (flights, rental deposit etc.). If this will be an issue for you, we would recommend talking to your college or see the Student Finance section for how to rearrange your maintenance loans.



## 08 - Physical Health

# HEALTHCARE IN TAIWAN

### Before you come to Taiwan...

- If you have pre-existing conditions, be proactive and try to secure sufficient supply/support before you come to Taiwan. This will help reduce your stress when you are here.
- If you have preferred brands of medication (e.g., antihistamines, cough medication), be aware that many brands/drugs here are different and it might be worth bringing some with you! This is also true for things like the pill, which can be disruptive to change brands/drugs, so it's very worth being prepared and organising things like this ahead of time.
- Some medications (painkillers and antihistamines especially) can be hard to find and expensive, so it's good to bring some with you, just be aware of restrictions.
- Be aware that some medications are illegal to bring into Taiwan (e.g., ADHD meds and MELATONIN), and others may require a permit. There is also technically a limit on how much prescription medication you can bring. Check this for your medication on the Taiwanese government website, you can also find out there the process to get a permit if needed.
- If you have a prescribed medication, it is best to bring a copy of your prescription with you, in case border control asks to see it, or if you want to get a new prescription for more here, it can help to show the doctor exactly what you usually take.

### Some helpful links:



[Rules on what to bring into Taiwan:](#)



[Required documents to bring with you](#)



[Online permit application portal](#)

## In Taiwan...

- If you need to purchase expensive medication when in Taiwan, it is worth asking the Turing Scheme, Student Finance or maybe your college to help cover some or all of this cost – they may be willing to, and it will save you money and be less bother than making an insurance claim later.
- Taiwan does have clinics, but these are mostly for very minor concerns. If you need to see an actual doctor and get a prescription, you will need to make an appointment at a hospital. It is usually easiest to do this on the hospital website. Every hospital has a slightly different system, and many have a specific international/English-speaking department if you would like – these are more expensive though.
- If you come on a visitor's visa, you will not be eligible for the National Health Insurance (NHI) that makes healthcare very cheap. This may be different if you arrive on a resident's visa. However, certain hospitals are still very affordable, so do not let this stop you from seeking healthcare when you need! You may also be able to claim back some expenses (see Student Finance section).
- If you know what you need (e.g., a non-prescription medication), you can go to a Watson's, Poya, Cosmed etc., or a pharmacy, and they stock a variety of OTC medications.
- Be aware that the Taiwanese medical/hospital system is quite different from the UK and takes quite a bit of figuring out. It might be good to take a friend with you to make it less stressful!
- Hospitals we recommend:
  - Taipei Medical University is a good, cheap hospital with some English-speaking doctors. National Taiwan University Hospital has very good English-speaking services that guide you through but is quite expensive (several thousand NTD per appointment + prescription.)
  - ESEN CLINIC 伊生診所 is basically the equivalent of a standard GP office. All the staff (doctors, receptionists, and pharmacists) speak perfect English, and are efficient and thorough. It's really easy to book an appointment on their website, and it's highly probable that you will get a same day appointment. Less expensive than the hospitals listed above, I paid 800ntd for an appointment, and then 500ntd for medication. Cannot recommend them highly enough!
- Don't forget: You may be able to get online appointments with your GP back home!

## Allergies and dietary requirements

- In general people in Taiwan are very unaware of even common allergies, food intolerances and dietary requirements. If any of these things apply to you, you will need to look out for yourself and always take the safest option.
- If you have a life-threatening or serious allergy, it may be worth carrying an allergy information card with you in Mandarin, especially if you carry an EpiPen.
- For food intolerances and dietary requirements, it is not always obvious what ingredients a food may have, and asking someone can sometimes be a bad idea. E.g., someone might say a soup is vegetarian, but they mean it has no chunks of meat in it – however the broth may actually be a chicken broth!
- It is worth knowing a common/easy-to-find food that you can rely on if needed. i.e., something you know you can eat safely. This saves taking a risk on something you're not sure about if you're in a pinch and need to find food you can have.
- In the guidebook we'll add some recommendations for vegetarian restaurants etc.!
- In general, if Taiwanese/Asian cuisine doesn't include a food that is suitable for your dietary requirements already (e.g., naturally egg/gluten free), then you won't find an allergy-friendly version of this food. There are also no allergy aisles in supermarkets. Therefore, if you think finding food you like here will be tricky (e.g., gluten-free pasta), bring it with you! Those of us this year who had allergies REALLY missed various foods, and wished we brought more with us – this is something we thought it was worth using luggage space on.



If you have any more questions about dietary requirements etc. in Taiwan, Laura is very happy to try and help!



## 08 - Mental Health

# HEALTHCARE IN TAIWAN

- A year abroad can be a difficult and challenging experience; some mental health issues are not unusual and are nothing to be ashamed of. A different culture and environment, being away from your family and friends for an extended period of time etc. mean there will be highs and lows. Preparation is key. This is especially true for anyone who has struggled with aspects of their mental health before, but also for people who don't usually. A new experience can bring new challenges, and if you are aware of this, it will be easier to deal with. A good support network is important, as well as a clear management/treatment plan if needed for a specific condition. Make sure you know how to access various resources online in case you want them at some point – for example, the NHS may refuse to provide therapy/counselling while you are not in the UK, so you may need to arrange alternatives to carry this on in Taiwan.
- Taiwan can have somewhat backward attitudes towards various mental health conditions, even if diagnosed. For this reason, prepare yourself to experience different attitudes, including possibly from medical professionals. While this is unfortunate, what you can do is prepare yourself for it and make the most of resources and support in the UK e.g., online. Your flatmates and friends here will also be valuable if you are struggling with things such as homesickness.

## *Life in Taiwan is a different experience from Oxford*

The course is spread out across the whole year, not squeezed into eight-week terms. Remember you have 10 months, and much less vacation than Oxford, so you have to manage your time and not get burnt out. You may feel like your time here is limited, but if you pace yourself, you'll be able to enjoy the whole year!

For extroverts, you will probably spend more time alone here than you would during an intense Oxford term. As the city is larger and people have very varied schedules/commitments, it can be harder to make plans than Oxford, so be proactive! Spending more time alone though is very normal and can be a great experience. Exploring or chilling by yourself is also fun, useful, and valuable, so don't worry if you don't spend 24/7 with friends.

For introverts, try to pace yourself and don't get FOMO – remember you have 10 months, and Taipei is full of people wanting to explore and do things together. You have plenty of time so don't worry about missing out, so get that recharge time by yourself that you need. #solodates #selfcare

We have found that a lot of us experienced '3-month blues' around Christmas time. Be aware this is okay and it's important to reach out to people for support if you also experience this.



# GETTING A SIM CARD

Getting a sim card is one of the first things you'll have to do in Taiwan, for obvious reasons, and will be a good way to test out your Chinese skills. You can often get good deals on sim cards at Taoyuan airport when you land and so this might be good to tide you over in the short term. These can be ordered in advance and collected at the airport, or just bought at the airport.

## Ordered in advance

- [click here](#) for the website we were given by MTC to order online.
- The website is a little confusing as it is all in Chinese.
- These SIM cards are only valid for 15 days but are free.
- After the 15 days you can go to a shop to add days to your contract (3600NTD for 120 days)
- So, you will keep the same number and SIM card from the day you arrive.

## Bought at the airport

- We paid approximately 1000NTD for a 30-day SIM card.
- We were not able to add days to these so after the 30 days had to get new SIM cards and numbers.
- You may only need to get a tourism sim card for a week or so, just to get you through the first few days until you have time to go to a shop with your NTNU student card to buy a student discounted long-term sim card.



*In the long term, this is the recommended course of action...*

## Zhonghua Telecom (中華電信)

It's highly recommended that you use Zhonghua Telecom for a SIM card. This is the company that all of us went for. Zhonghua Telecom provides great service and coverage not only in the urban areas of Taiwan but also the remote areas and the mountains. Though it's slightly more expensive than the other providers, the level of convenience it offers is worth it. The best way to enquire about the different plans they offer is to go into a physical store, as the online information is very confusing. There are many stores around Taipei, including one on the same road as the MTC:



Chunghwa Telecom Shida Service Center:  
No. 182之2號, Section 1, Heping E Rd, Da'an District, Taipei City, 10645



Chunghwa Telecom Gongguan Service Center:  
No. 76號, Section 4, Roosevelt Rd, Zhongzheng District, Taipei City, 10091

It is really worth buying a plan with unlimited data as many rentals/apartments here don't have Wifi, and landlords aren't too keen on getting it set up for you. Having unlimited ( 吃到飽) data is the most convenient and cost-effective solution.



Note: We found that the Shida branch would not allow people under 20 to buy SIM cards without parental permission (sadly, your friend who is 20 will not be accepted as a substitute parent), the solution to this was going to the Gongguan store:

## Plans

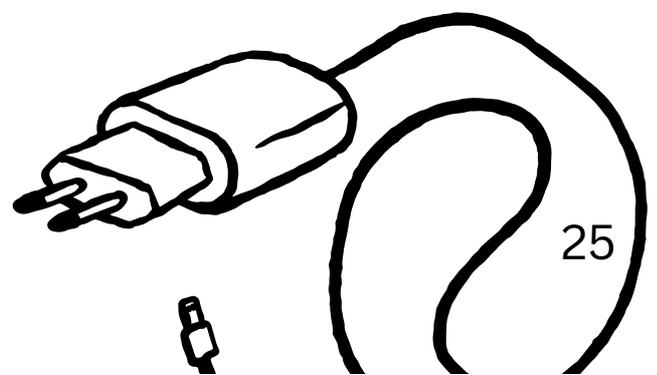
China Telecom offers several different plans for students, so make sure you bring your MTC admission letter or MTC student card along with you when you buy your SIM card. You'll also need to bring your passport, as they will ask you for two forms of valid ID (MTC card counts as one.)

180	180 Day-Pass - 3500NTD Unlimited (吃到飽) data 100NTD of SMS/Voice call credit
120	120 Day-Pass - 2300NTD Unlimited (吃到飽) data 100NTD of SMS/Voice call credit
90	90 Day-Pass - 1800 NTD Unlimited (吃到飽) data 50NTD of SMS/Voice call credit
60	60 Day-Pass - 1350NTD Unlimited (吃到飽) data 50NTD of SMS/Voice call credit

When your contract expires, you can either go into the store to add more days (加日子) or you'll be text a link to do it online.



Note: You cannot add days to your contract until the day it expires, or after it has already expired. Its best to keep a note of when this will be so that you don't get caught out with no data!



# MONEY IN TAIWAN

## Cash Culture

Taiwan is very much still a cash culture. Although there are alternatives such as LINEPay, they don't seem to work with foreign cards and not everywhere accepts them. You can pay in quite a few places with an EasyCard (see the section on transport for more details) but these still have to be topped up with cash so they just add an extra step.

## UK Bank Accounts & ATMs

Most UK bank accounts don't work too well in Taiwan and have expensive exchange rates. It's highly recommended that you get a card with Starling Bank or Monzo, maybe even both, and use it a bit before you leave - they work the best in Taiwan. With Starling, you can take out up to approximately 10,000NTD/£350 per day. With Monzo, you can take out up to approximately 7000NTD/£200 per day - the daily withdrawal limit will stay the same in Sterling but might change in Taiwanese dollar depending on exchange rates.

The best ATMs to use to take out money with a Starling/Monzo card is Cathay United ATMs, which you'll notice by the green tree logo. They don't charge you to take out money and you can choose whether to use their conversion rate or Starling's (the majority of the time Starling/Monzo's is better) These ATMs are in every metro station in Taipei and are in many convenience stores (we found family marts are best for Cathay ATMs), so you'll never be far from an ATM. Beware - other cash machines will charge around 100NTD/£3 per withdrawal which will add up!!!



國泰世華銀行  
Cathay United Bank

Bear in mind that most of us have to pay our rent in cash so do prepare in advance and ensure you have withdrawn enough before your rent deadlines.

Many of us don't have both a Monzo card and a Starling card but we would recommend you getting both especially since they are easy banks to open accounts with. There are two main reasons for this:

- 1.If you lose your bank card: you will either have to rely on a different UK bank card that you already own that may charge high fees until you are able to order a new card to the UK and have your parents send it to you in Taiwan. Or you will have to rely on a nice friend, transfer them money and have them withdraw it for you.
- 2.If you are disorganised and have forgotten to withdraw your rent in advance, between two cards you should be able to withdraw the entirety/most of your rent payment on one day.

## Receipt Lottery

At most places in Taiwan, the receipts you get with your purchases are actually lottery tickets! Every two months winning numbers will come out for the previous two-month period (eg, the winning numbers for January-February come out at the end of March) and you can check them against the numbers on your receipts to see if you've won any prize. For most of the prizes, you can take your receipt down to a convenient store to exchange it for cash and if you're lucky enough to win a large prize you can take it down to the bank.

If you don't want to have to check through all your receipts yourself, you can use an app to scan the QR codes on your receipt and then it will automatically check for you when the time comes and tell you if you've won. If you don't want to have to collect paper receipts however, the most convenient thing to do is to use the cloud receipt function on the app. These generate a personalised barcode for you which you then show to the shop assistant to scan before you pay. You won't get a paper receipt, but you'll still be entered into the lottery and if you win you can take your digital receipt record to a convenience store/bank to claim your winnings.



[Apple App](#)



[Android App](#)

## Opening a Taiwanese Bank Account (if needed)



Note: No one in our year opened a Taiwanese bank account, as we did not receive the government scholarship. If you are not receiving the Taiwanese government scholarship you can ignore this section. The information below was given to us from the year above because they had to open Taiwanese bank accounts:

Opening a bank account in Taiwan is a little frustrating to say the least, so unless you're receiving a Taiwanese government scholarship then avoid opening one as there'll be no need for it. If you are receiving a scholarship however, then you'll have to quickly open an account when you get to Taiwan in order to get your money. Here's what to do.

### Step 1 - Getting your ID Number

First you need to find out what your Taiwanese ID number is. You need to visit to the:



National Immigration Agency (內政部移民署)  
15, Guang Zhou St. Taipei (臺北市中正區廣州街15號)

You'll need to bring your physical passport, as well as photocopies of the visa page and the photo page (they have a photocopier there if you need to use it, although you'll have to bring some coins with you to pay). You'll also need to fill out a form called 'Record ID Number in the ROC (至移民署申請統一證號)' which you can find and complete there. You'll receive a form in return which has your 'UI number' written at the top.

### Step 2 - Getting your seal

To do any kind of banking in Taiwan you have to bring a seal with your Chinese name on it (yes, really). There are many different shops around Taipei that can produce a seal for you (look out for signs saying 刻印) and NTNU has two in the vicinity:



106台北市大安區泰順街3號 - No. 3, Taishun St., Da'an Dist., Taipei City  
106台北市大安區泰順街38-2號 - No. 38-2, Taishun St., Da'an Dist., Taipei City

Ask the shopkeeper if they can make a seal for you to open a bank account. You can expect to pay around 50NTD-150NTD, and you don't need to buy any ink as they have ink at the bank.

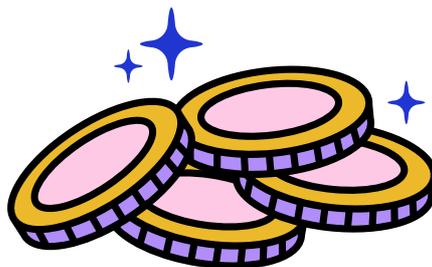
### Step 3 - Opening the bank account

Finally, you can open a bank account. The only place that will let you open a savings account without an Alien Residence Card (which you won't get until about three months into Taiwan) is the post office. There are many of these around Taipei, including two very close to NTNU. If you find the banking section and tell them you'd like to open an account, they'll be able to do it for you. However, the process takes quite a long time (around half an hour, it involves the bank clerk filling in a lot of paper forms) and the workers have been known to simply refuse to open an account for you if they can't be bothered so don't go in groups of bigger than two and avoid going at lunch time if possible. You'll have to give a 4-digit pin code and a 6-digit pin code (the 6-digit code is the one that you'll actually use) so remember to make a note!

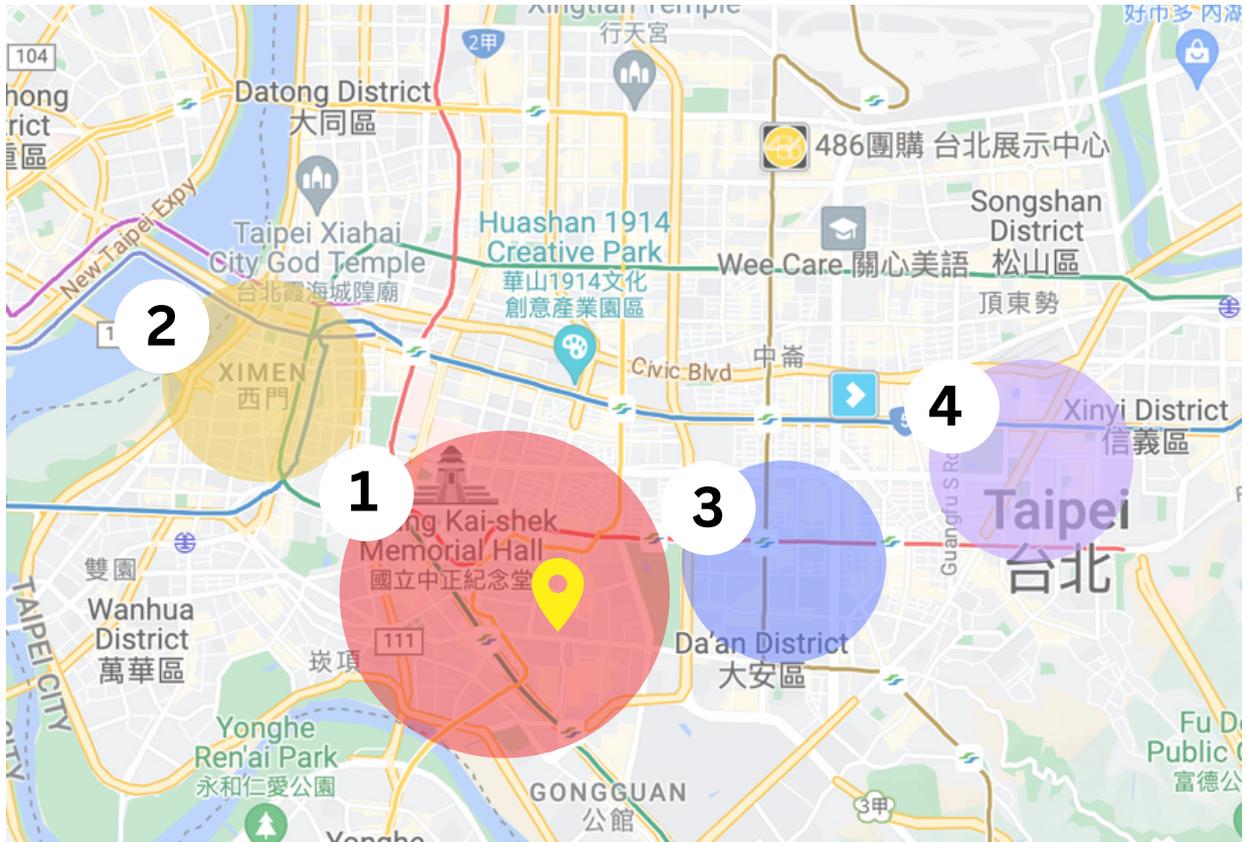
#### Things you'll need to bring:

- Passport (with photocopy)
- Student ID card
- Your address details
- A 100NTD deposit
- Your seal
- Your UI number and form (that you got from the immigration agency)
- Your UK national insurance number (if you have one)

These accounts are very limited. There's no online banking function and you can't transfer money in from the UK so if you do get scholarship money put onto it it's best just to take cash out of it, for example to pay rent.



# MAIN DISTRICTS IN TAIPEI



## 1 - Chiang Kai-Shek and Shida 中正紀念堂 & 師大

- This is where most of us lived!
- The MTC is marked on the map, all our classes are held here.
- There are lots of cafes, places to get food, and other students.
- The area directly around our university is often referred to as *Shida* 師大





## 2 - Ximen 西門

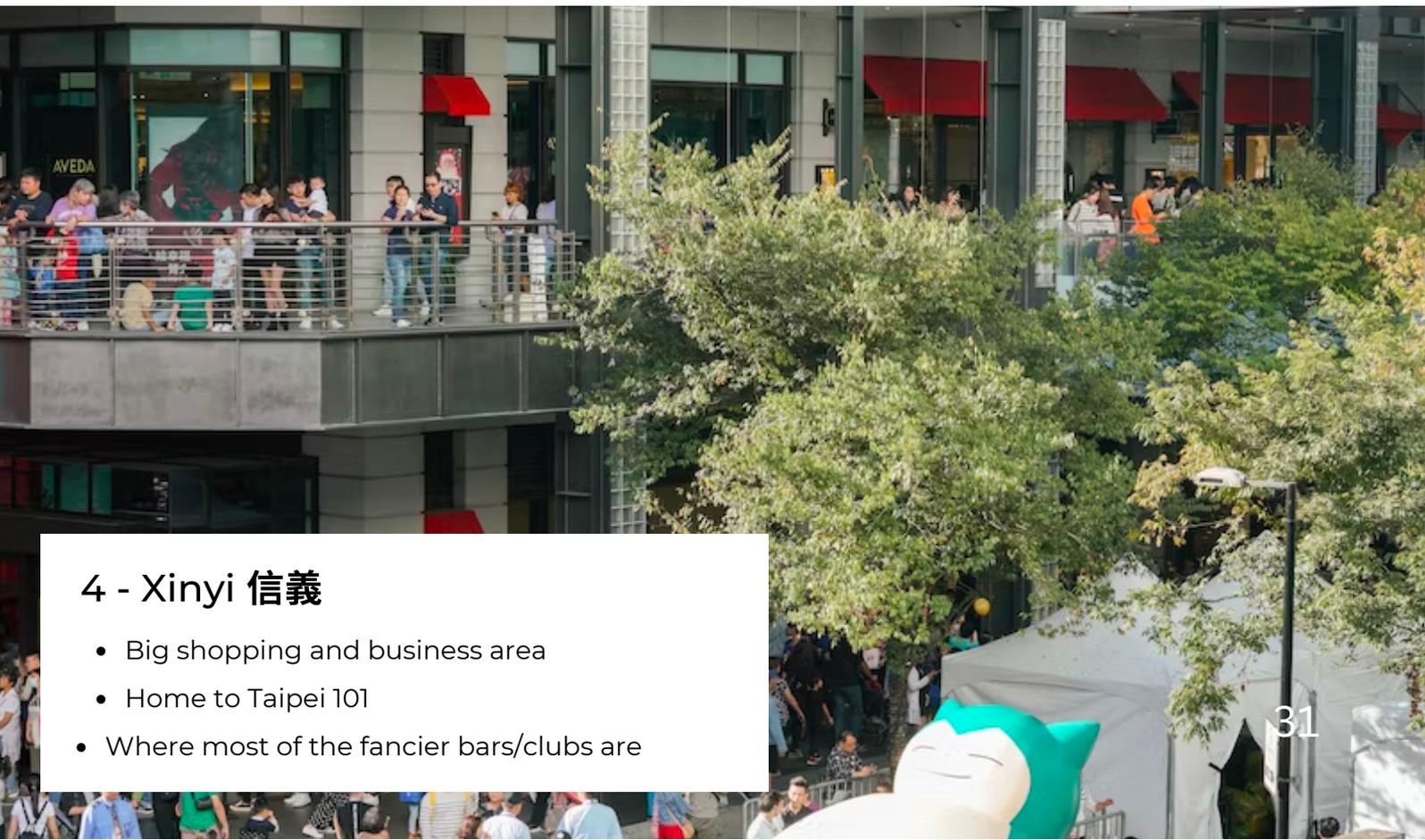
- Modern area with a Japanese feel
- Lots of bars, lights, shops etc.



## 3 - Da'an District 大安

Da'an 大安 is a huge district, and technically spreads to include the university, but when most people speak about Da'an, they are speaking about the area marked above.

Lots of food places, slightly more expensive.



## 4 - Xinyi 信義

- Big shopping and business area
- Home to Taipei 101
- Where most of the fancier bars/clubs are

# ACCOMODATION

There are a few different options, but the one option not available is the NTNU dorms – you will have to find yourself somewhere to stay. This is best done when you arrive in Taipei, so have somewhere to stay for your first week or so, and then spend your first couple of weeks finding a place! Although it might seem a bit daunting, all of us this year found somewhere within 2 weeks of arriving and have been happy with them since. However, we do not recommend trying to sign for somewhere before you arrive – it's unnecessary, it's hard to know from pictures if a property is actually suitable, and a big risk to take.

## Options:

- Private apartment (by yourself or in a group)
- Sharehouse (you rent a room in an apartment and have flatmates)
- Homestay (you rent a room in someone's house)
- Long-term Airbnb (often more expensive)

## Things to consider when looking for an apartment:

- Budget
- Location (district, distance to MTC)
- Number of roommates in a sharehouse/size of group in a private apartment
- Nearby transport
- Kitchen (do you want cooking facilities or not?)
- Building facilities (e.g., elevator, package collection/post-box, trash disposal)



## Basic Tips:



Rough price is around 15-20,000 NTD per month per person/bedroom; for a basic flatshare it's around 10-15,000 NTD per month per room.



DO NOT try to look for a flat in more than a group of THREE. Some of us did and it was very difficult and stressful, as Taipei has very few flats of this size. Those that do exist are generally family apartments and almost completely unfurnished.

- Proximity to the MTC cuts down transport costs by a lot, but also adds a premium onto rent, as Da'an/Shida is a very popular area.
- Other areas such as Zhongzheng, Dongmen and Gongguan are alternative nice areas that are within a 20-minute walk to the MTC and have good transport too.
- Sharehouses can be nice to meet new people but can be a risk if you don't get on well.
- Homestays can be hard to find/organise, risky if you don't get on, but great for your Chinese! Note that none of us did a homestay this year but have heard of friends having both good and bad experiences.
- Apartments in Taipei are usually either in a 4-storey (ish) older building, or a 10 to 20-storey newer building (大樓). Larger buildings often have more services e.g., package collection, elevators, trash disposal, and so have a small additional 'management fee'.
- If you use an estate agent or a broker (i.e., probably all of you), you will need to pay a broker's fee or agency fee when you sign your contract.
- Many properties in Taipei have bedrooms without windows; this is not ideal as they are dark, damp and cold. Some sunshine goes a long way, so find a room with a view!
- Taiwanese people get food out a lot, and many kitchen facilities in flats are slightly basic, i.e., almost nowhere has an oven. Some places may not have a kitchen at all!
- Taiwanese apartments can be very variable in standard, and often lower than we are used to in the UK. If you want somewhere comparable to a UK property, it will not be the cheapest option, but may be worth it as you're here for around 10 months.

## How to look for a flat...

- Landlords and estate agents use Line to communicate, so get this app!
- 12-month contract is standard, or they may redistribute the rent over a shorter period if asked (i.e same cost as 12-months but paid over 10 months); some landlords can be persuaded to do a 10-month contract, if asked nicely.

### Places to find apartments/rooms:

- 591 is a website in Mandarin and the main way for Taiwanese people to find flats. It has a huge choice and can be filtered by location and requirements.
- Facebook (rental groups, foreigner groups) – use the Chinese language groups as prices are generally lower. Fewer properties than 591
- Estate agencies can be useful as they know the available properties well and will help with the contract but do charge a small fee.
- Others e.g., borderless house for flatshares, seeing an advert saying 租.

591  
房屋交易



- Be responsive to messages and offers, as even if you don't want/get a particular apartment, a broker may be able to show you another suitable one available!
- Knowing a native speaker who will check your contract, ask your landlord specific questions, and encourage them to give you a lower price is VERY useful.

### Flexible Pricing

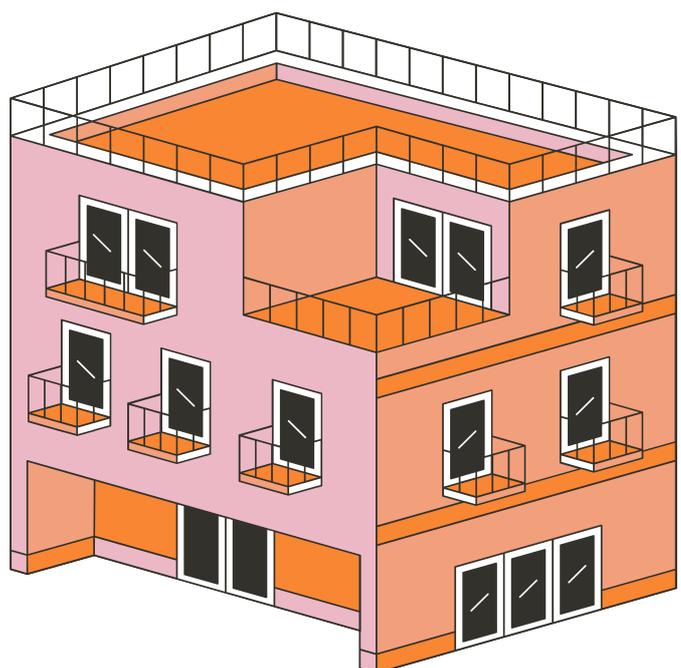
We have found that pricing here is flexible, meaning that landlords will charge more if possible! Ways to avoid this are speaking Chinese to them, using Chinese-language Facebook groups, looking presentable/trustworthy but not wealthy, having a friendly relationship with your estate agent/broker, bringing a Taiwanese friend.

## When viewing a flat:

- Check the taps, stove, shower, toilets, lights/bulbs, A/C etc. all work.
- Ask if the tap water is drinkable or they recommend buying bottled.
- Any visible mould indicates dampness and a not-ideal environment to live for a year; it develops easily and is hard to get rid of
- Some properties have fake windows – open blinds to check!

## Rental norms in Taiwan:

- Most of us pay our rent in cash. You do have to be organised to make sure you can take out the amount on time, but is actually easier than international bank transfer, as there are no hidden fees, slow transfers, or really bad exchange rates.
- If paying in cash, it may be good to get a receipt every month as proof you have paid.
- Most landlords prefer to rent out from the 1st of a month, so you may need to have somewhere to stay until then, even if you agree to sign for it before the 1st.
- Make sure you get a copy of the full contract with everyone's signatures on when you find a place, as sometimes you don't get one, but you need it for your Residents visa.
- Utilities are usually not included in private apartments but may be in sharehouses – check which system is used. Generally, this includes water, electricity and gas if your stove is gas-powered.
- A place may seem to have an expensive rent, but this may be due to bills being included.
- Flats come in varying levels of furnished, especially if it's a private apartment. We recommend somewhere as fully furnished as possible, as it's quite difficult to purchase and then get rid of large furniture/appliances.





12

## TRANSPORT IN TAIWAN

### EasyCard

Easycards (悠遊卡) are essential to life in Taiwan, and can be used to pay for almost all methods of transport around Taiwan (not just Taipei!!!), including buses, the MRT, Youbikes and local trains.



- Easycards can be bought in convenience stores (7-11, familymart) or from machines in MRT and train stations.
- Your student ID will also act as an EasyCard.
- Using your student ID as an EasyCard on the MRT gives a slight discount.
- Easycards can be topped up with cash in convenience stores and at the machines in stations.
- There is a Monthly Pass called the “All Pass Ticket,” granting the user unlimited access to Taipei’s MRT, buses, and YouBikes
  - This costs NT\$1,280 per month.
  - As most of us lived within walking distance from MTC we did not opt for the monthly pass, so it is worth working out your own transport habits to see if this would save you money.
  - Most of us probably spend around \$400-700NTD on public transport in an average month.

## YouBikes

The Youbike system is a tour de force of modern urban transportation. Youbikes are to Boris Bikes what champagne is to pigswill. Taipei's streets are packed with conveniently placed stands of cheap, rentable, surprisingly high-quality bikes.



- An hour-long ride will cost you no more than 15NTD (40p). The cheapest way to get around especially for short and midrange journeys.
- They can be rented using Easycards (your student ID)
- Before first use you will need to download the Youbike 2.0 app and set up an account using your Taiwanese phone number.
- The bikes contain locks you can use if you want to leave it for a short while without having to return the bike to a stand and get a new one (it will continue to charge you though!)
- Taipei is a relatively small city in geographic terms, so most clubs/bars/restaurants/universities are within cycling distance.
- The first cycle can be slightly daunting as you have to cycle on the pavement so you may have to wind your way through groups of pedestrians, but you will quickly get used to it.
  - Most people won't move for you if you ding your bell at them so weaving through crowds is an essential skill.

## MRT

Taipei Mass Rapid Transit (MRT), branded as Metro Taipei, is a metro system serving Taipei and New Taipei. It's pretty convenient and cheap.

There are 6 different lines including:

- Brown Line: Wenhua line
- Red Line: Tamsui – Xinyi Line
- Green Line: Songshan -Xindian Line
- Orange Line: Zhonghe – Xinlu Line
- Blue Line: Bannan Line
- Circular Line: Dapinglin – New Taipei Industrial Park



圖例 Legend

- BR 文湖線** Wenhua Line
  - R 淡水信義線** Tamsui-Xinyi Line
  - G 松山新店線** Songshan-Xindian Line
  - O 中和新蘆線** Zhonghe-Xinlu Line
  - BL 板南線** Bannan Line
  - Y 環狀線** Circular Line
- 南港展覽館 Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center  
 動物園 Taipei Zoo  
 淡水 Tamsui  
 象山 Xiangshan  
 北投 Beitou  
 大安 Daan  
 松山 Songshan  
 新店 Xindian  
 台電大樓 Taipower Building  
 蘆洲 Luzhou  
 南勢角 Nanshijiao  
 迴龍 Huilong  
 頂埔 Dingpu  
 南港展覽館 Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center  
 亞東醫院 Far Eastern Hospital  
 新北產業園區 New Taipei Industrial Park  
 大坪林 Dapinglin
- 機場** Airport
  - 高鐵** HSR
  - 台鐵** TRA
  - 桃園機場捷運** Taoyuan Airport MRT
  - V 淡海輕軌** Danhai LRT
  - 連通道** Passage
  - 站外轉乘** Out of Station Transfer
  - 溫泉** Hot Spring
- 轉乘站** Transfer Station  
**一般車站** Regular Station  
**端點站** Terminal Station

## If you forget your EasyCard...

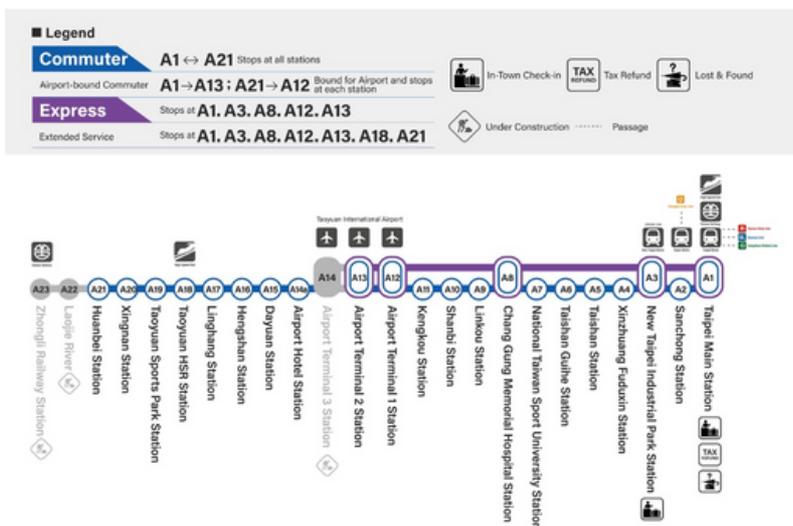
- You can buy a Single-use Token
- At the machines in the stations there are maps of the MRT, look for your destination and buy a token for the amount stated on the map (from NT\$20-NT\$65 depending on distance).
- Be sure to hold on to your token to deposit it at the gate when you exit the station.

## Train times

- The first trains leave from their respective terminal stations around 6AM
- The last trains leave from their terminal stations around 12AM midnight.
- On average a train will come every 4-5 minutes during the day and every 10 minutes at night

## Airport MRT

Taoyuan Airport is approx. 45mins drive out of the centre of Taipei, this makes taxi fares rather pricey (approx. £35 upwards). There is an airport MRT that is much better value (approx. £4 one-way) and not much slower than driving (under an hour). The airport MRT is very easy to access from Taoyuan Airport and can be reached from either Taipei Main Station or Beimen station if you're in Taipei. Trains run from approx. 6:00 until 23:30. EasyCards can be used on the Airport MRT. It's easy to transfer onto the main MRT system or get a taxi outside the station (if you have lots of luggage).



**The commuter:** stops at all stations, so slower but ever so slightly cheaper (busy in commuting hours, obviously)

**The Express:** stops at less stations, faster and with slightly more space for luggage (recommended if you have lots of luggage)

## Buses

- The bus lines will usually have a lot of stops some quite close to each other, especially towards the centre.
- The buses won't necessarily stop on every stop unless you wave them down to get on and press the stop button to get off.
- Paying for the bus is super straight forward, like the MRT you can just pay with your EasyCard.
- There are machines at the front or middle of the bus that you swipe when you get on and off the bus.
- The most useful App to check bus times is “台北等公車”:



## Taxis

Taxis are expensive in comparison to public transit but are cheap when compared to taxis in the UK.

- Taxi services in Taipei charges by meter and the minimum charge is NT\$70.
- If you are going out of town or a long-distance travel, the meter charge may not be applied. Confirm charging method before getting in taxi.
- Uber is available in certain cities (Taipei, Taichung, Kaohsiung, Taoyuan, and Hsinchu).
  - Use your Starling/Monzo card, as you can avoid extra “non-GBP transaction fees”.
- There is also Line Taxi if you prefer.
- Most of us used Uber as prices are similar across all options – there is not much difference between price for an Uber vs a yellow/Line taxi.
- Yellow Taxi drivers prefer you to pay in cash.

# Trains

Trains in Taiwan are both reliable and fairly cheap. Taiwan's train network or "TRA" for short, is the oldest and most expansive rail network, passing through every county in Taiwan albeit at a slower pace than the High-Speed network. Some trains can have a lot of intermediate stops between their origin and terminal stations, but this can vary according to which services you board.

There are 2 main types of train:

- Local trains – these stop at almost all stations, they are slower, cheaper and your EasyCard can be used to board them (great for a day out to the beach or countryside around Taipei)
- Non-local/express trains – these stop at less stations, are faster, more expensive and you need to buy tickets to board them (great for longer distances if you'd prefer to save money rather than taking the HSR).

Ticket types are divided into two:

- standard reserved seats
- non-reserved seats

Trains aren't usually packed, but it is very easy to select seats while purchasing your tickets.



In order to purchase TRA tickets, you can buy them from:

- The official TRA [website](#)
  - *note: booked tickets will need to be collected from a convenience store or train station.*
- Any convenience store (7/11, FamilyMart, OK Mart, Hi-Life) using the automated Ibon printing machines.
- Almost any rail station with ticketing machines or booths.



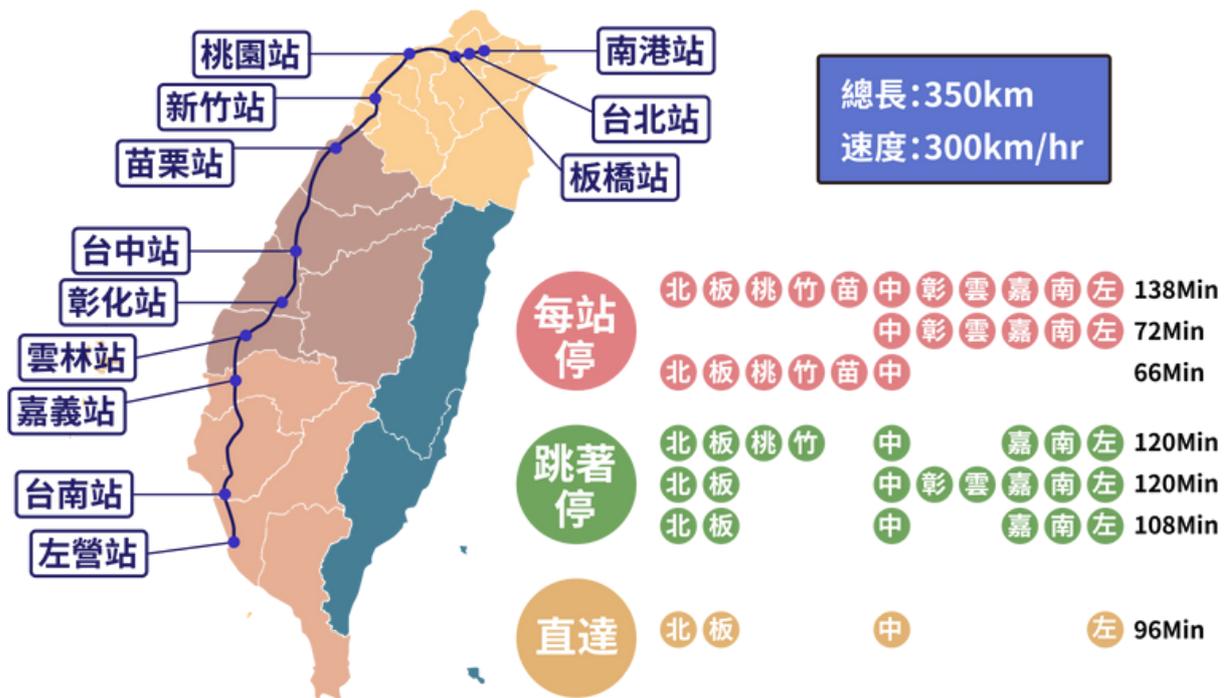
You will need to provide your passport or ARC (if you have one) number in order to buy/collect tickets, so it is advised to bring one of these just in case or commit the number to memory before going to the convenience store/station.

## HSR - High Speed Rail

Taking Taiwan's High Speed Rail (高鐵) is a great, although slightly pricier, way to get around the west coast Taiwan that cuts down travel time significantly.

Similar to the normal trains, you can book:

- online (<https://www.railway.gov.tw/tra-tip-web/tip>)
  - note: the Chinese website offers discounted tickets for students and early bird (早鳥) discounts that aren't available on the English website (<https://www.thsrc.com.tw/>)
  - You can choose to pay buy card online (Starling works fine) or at convenience store after booking.
  - There is also an app available, if you are an e-ticket lover (台灣高鐵 T Express 行動購票服務)
    - [Apple Store](#)
    - [Google Play Store](#)
- at a convenience store
- at a HSR station



# TRAVEL INSURANCE

Oxford provides insurance for your time in Taiwan for free. They will send you details of how to apply for this insurance and send you the relevant risk assessments you will have to fill out to get your insurance application approved.

Oxford insurance is good for:

- Protecting your valuables: phones, laptops, etc.
  - "£5,000 (where the value of any one article, pair or set exceeds £3,000 the Insured shall be liable for 25% of such excess amount). Personal Jewellery limited to £1,000 per item & maximum of £3,000 any one claim."
- Money
  - "£3,000 per person, to provide for travel accommodation, meals and personal spending during the insured journey."
- Medical emergencies

However, it is important to read the small print!!! Oxford insurance has stipulations around when the insurance is or isn't void. Mainly to do with where you were and what you were doing at the time of the claim and whether it was 'essential' to your year abroad activities. This means things that will not be covered by Oxford are as follows:

- Claims made in other countries if you leave Taiwan to travel.
- Claims made in other parts of Taiwan (not Taipei) if you travel around the island.
- Injuries during any extreme sports (surfing, sky diving, this can even include hiking)

See here for more details: <https://finance.admin.ox.ac.uk/policy-benefits-and-exclusions#tab-1243896>

All in all, the Oxford insurance isn't comprehensive. If you intend to do anything exciting other than attending class and being a tourist in Taipei, you may want to consider further insurance of your own.

If you do want your own private insurance, some of us used:

- <https://www.go-walkabout.co.uk/> - Longstay & Backpacker

# LIFE AT THE MTC

We have about 16 hours of classes a week at the MTC (Mandarin Training Center at NTNU university). Each lesson is 1hr 50mins, including a 10-minute break in the middle. The MTC assigns everyone a language partner/s for speaking practice. There is no pressure to make friends, but many partners go out for coffee or dinner to get to know new people and make friends in Taipei!

## Attendance

*Be careful about missing hours – you must attend at least 70% of lessons in order to pass the year.*



If you miss more than 12 hours a month your visa will be compromised when you try to extend it or apply for a resident's visa.

- You will have to leave the country before it expires (which will most likely mean leaving within a couple of days)
- Please do be careful how many classes you miss. Sickness leave also counts as absences, if you are ill for a significant enough length of time that you fear it will affect you meeting the required hours you will need to have a doctor's note.
- The 70% must be met every single month for each individual class, it is not an overall attendance, i.e., you CANNOT attend 50% one month and 100% the next.

- Sometimes even when you haven't missed the full 12 hours but are close, they will ask you to explain why you have missed so much class, I would recommend not cutting it too close to the line.
- Moreover, once you have an ARC although you won't need to report your attendance for formalities, it is still checked and possible that your ARC can be taken away as it relies on your status as a student.

- Note: the MTC asks you to attend at least 75% of classes anyway so you should not be dropping below your visa requirements
  - If you are over 20 minutes late for class, it will be counted as an absence for the first hour of class.
  - If you are on a scholarship, we have heard from friends they can be even more strict on attendance.
  - You can check the MTC handbook [here](#), which has more details on attendance.

UK university culture surrounding attendance is very relaxed and a lot of people at Oxford do not go to lots of their lectures or classes. This is very different in Taiwan and at the MTC, so it is worth trying to go to every class you can.

- This is reflected in the fact attendance does count towards your grades here, to quite a significant extent.
- If you want to go on a trip or make the most of a particular opportunity to explore, the teachers will be pretty relaxed about letting you miss a morning or two as they appreciate that one of the reasons why we are here is to get to know Taiwan. However, do ask them in advance as they will be very confused if you simply don't turn up. You will start to get concerned emails if you miss more than a day or two.
- However, if you are simply a bit hungover or tired, the teachers won't care what state you're in as long as you're there, and it is worth trying to get to class, otherwise you might find yourself panicking later in the month.



## Language Class

Language classes are every day at the same time for 1hr 50mins. Your cohort will be split up into groups (most likely in half) depending on language level. Lessons are based on the textbook series "A Coursebook in Contemporary Chinese". Homework tends to be set based on the grammar exercise in these books and the accompanying workbook with further language exercises testing vocab and grammar. You will regularly (about once a week) have low-pressure tests (小考). Language classes tend to be spoken mainly in Chinese, which seems daunting at first, but you get used to it quickly and it really helps with listening skills.

## Classical Chinese Class

One lesson a week for 1hr 50mins

Texts studied include:

- Shi Ji: Ci Ke Lie Zhuan (Assassin Retainers)
- Shi Jing (Book of songs).
- Tang poetry

## Translation Class

One lesson a week for 1hr 50mins.

No set curriculum but based around translating English into Chinese. Towards the end of the year there is a focus on news articles in preparation for the third-year newspaper course.

## Modern Literature Class

One lesson a week for 1hr 50mins.

Texts studied are the short stories:

- "Growing up" - Chu T'ien-wen (小畢的故事 – 朱天文)
- "Fin de Siècle Splendour" – Chu T'ien-wen (世紀末的華麗 – 朱天文)
- "Orphan of Asia" – Wu Chou-liu (亞細亞的孤兒 – 吳濁流)
- "The Last Hunter" – Topas Tamapima (最後的獵人 – 拓拔斯)

## Exams

On arriving in Taipei, you will have Oxford collections in modern and classical. Then, in February, you have 'mid-terms', set by MTC, testing Classical, Literature and Translation content. You may have an extra literature exam at the end of the year.

## Holidays

Holidays are one of the major differences in lifestyle, as they vary in length and are spread out haphazardly across the year. You will get:

- A day off for Mid-Autumn Festival (Moon Festival) in September
- A day off for National day, aka Double 10th (10th October)
- About a week off towards the end of November (the end of the first term)
- Two weeks off for Christmas and New Year between December and January.
- Two weeks off for Chinese New Year between January and February
- A week of holiday between February and March (the end of Term 2)
- About six days in April for Tomb Sweeping holiday (Qingming Festival)
- Three days off in early June (the end of term 3)
- You will finish for summer around mid-June.

The MTC handbook will be more specific about term dates so remember to check that.



# PACKING LIST

## Hand Luggage Essentials

- Laptop/iPad, phone, UK to Taiwan adaptors (2 or 3 pin, but 2-pin is best)
- Travel documents (passport, boarding pass, visa, hotel/Airbnb booking, MTC admission letter, insurance confirmation)
- Photocopies of important documents (e.g. visa, passport, MTC admission letter)
- Wallet with cards and preferably some NTD cash

## Clothes

- Light, loose clothing suitable for hot, humid weather

**Shoes:** Women: it can be hard to find “larger” shoes (size 5.5 upwards) if you don’t want to venture into the men’s section

**Underwear:** for some reason it’s really hard to find underwear in Taiwan, especially underwired bras, or larger sizes of any underwear - except for socks, Taiwan has lots of sock shops

### Clothes:

- Women: Taiwanese and Western body types can be very different, lots of us found it really hard to find any curvy or tall clothing sizes that are widely available in the UK; we recommend bringing some good trousers etc.
- Men: If you are extremely tall you may struggle to find trousers that are long enough, but otherwise our year had no major issues (but they didn’t do much shopping so don’t rely on loads of clothing options out here)

**Warm clothing:** Taipei can get to 10 degrees Celsius in winter, which with dampness and wind feels quite cold! Bring a few cosy jumpers and a coat, as well as something warm to wear at home, as most homes don’t have heating.

**Jacket:** a light jacket for the in-between temperatures in autumn and spring

## Other:

- Spare passport photos: around 10 would be useful, as you need 2 copies each for various visas etc. (same as your current passport + visa preferably)
- Medication: prescription, contact lenses, hard-to-find items in Taiwan e.g., antihistamines, painkillers
- Hair products: the products in Taiwan tend to cater to one hair type, so if you use products for frizzy, coarse or curly hair then bring lots with you, in case you can't find them in Taiwan.
- Home comforts: a few little things can make a big difference, especially at the start of the year to make your flat feel like home.

## What not to bring:

- Bedding: most rentals don't provide it but there are lots of homeware shops/IKEA to buy from
- Heavy or bulky items/liquids e.g., furniture, large electronics, kitchen items, most toiletries: many of these items take up space/weight in your luggage but can be bought easily/cheaply here; as long as you're not fussy about brand, it's best not to waste luggage allowance on them!
- First year materials: you won't need them at the MTC, many are online if you really want.
- Textbooks: the MTC textbook series 當代中文 is easily available when you get here online and from the MTC office, you don't need them before you come to Taiwan





The MTC class of 2023