

# Living it up in trendy Taipei

From youth fashion and karaoke sessions to live street demonstrations, the Taiwanese capital offers abundant choices. **Joanne Poh** finds out

WHETHER you visit Taipei with best friends or prefer the freedom of solo wandering, the chatty, the inquisitive inhabitants of Taiwan's capital will ensure that you are never alone.

In stark contrast with the brusque, businesslike demeanour with which tourists are often met in other Chinese cities, visitors to Taiwan are likely to be taken off-guard by the open, gregarious personalities of many of its residents.

One can barely walk into a shop without being chatted up by a curious salesgirl who just cannot believe you are spending more than five days in Taipei. She will also share with you her observations on the personal style of Singaporean tourists and throws in a compliment before offering you a discount on the scarf you're eyeing.

## Teenage dream

Forget Taipei 101, Ximending — a popular shopping district — is infinitely more compelling. Walk through the area commonly referred to as the Hana-juku of Taipei to get an idea of what it's like to be a

member of Taiwan's youth brigade. Ximending is where hordes of young Taiwanese head to each evening, bathed in the warm glow of neon signboards and pulsing city lights.

Even if you don't fancy an enormous Doraemon plush toy or a Jay Chou poster, there's plenty to see and do. A multitude of shops offer youth fashion in the distinctive cutesy style that is endemic to Taiwan and these outlets are patronised by youngsters hoping to recreate the sugary ensembles of the latest star to grace Taiwan's entertainment scene.

Karaoke, or KTV as it is better known here, is hugely popular and readily available at Ximending. As any self-respecting Mandopop aficionado would know, the music industry and the karaoke industry in Taiwan are inextricably intertwined.

You'll even stand a chance of rubbing shoulders with the very singers who appear in the KTV videos. Taiwanese pop starlets such as Rainie Yang have been known to frequent KTV parlours in Taipei to hone their vocal skills.

Games centres and manga stores abound and have faithfully served as the boredom-busting saviours of

many a Taiwanese teenager. Perhaps more intriguing than these establishments are their wacky patrons. It is not uncommon to see girls in doll-like makeup comprising no less than three layers of false eyelashes. Occasionally, you may even spot one or two individuals majestically decked out in full cosplay attire.

## Whispers by the sea

Just a 30-minute ride from the city, Danshui is a river town with a rustic charm. The pace of life screeches to a halt with the arrival of the train at the Danshui station.

One of the town's main draws is undoubtedly its stunning waterfront. Set prettily against the backdrop of the mountain Guanyinshan, the riverside walk has been privy to the coy whispers of many a starry-eyed couple.

Once the skies darken, the Danshui waterfront comes alive with a cacophony of funfair games, knick-knack stalls and the gloriously pungent scent of stinky tofu.

## Fear factor

Visitors looking for cheap thrills can head to the Huaxi Street Tourist Night Market, also ominously known as Snake Alley, where the blood of snakes is packaged in various forms such as wine and sold as a delicacy believed to bring health benefits.

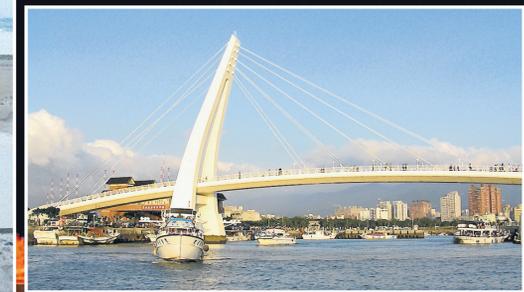
You don't have to actually imbibe this frightening beverage to get a good scare. The massive live python stretching languidly across the cold tiled floor will see to that.

Standing nonchalantly by the snake, a stallholder extols the benefits of a tasty helping of snake's blood. He gestures toward a glass tank in which another serpent is stagnantly coiled beside a smaller container of live mice. Hoisting one of the mice out by its tail, he dangles the struggling rodent over the snake in the tank as he continuously tries to cajole a horrified audience into purchasing the gruesome beverage.

The crowd stares transfixed at the wriggling mouse, almost forgetting about the python lying two metres away. This goes on for a good 10 minutes, surely the longest, and possibly last moments of the wretched mouse's life. No, there is never a dull moment in Taipei.



Are those spiders or eyelashes?



Lovers' bridge at Danshui.

Danshui is a picturesque delight just a 30-minute train ride away from Taipei.

# PriceBreaker

Low Fares Everywhere

## NATAS TRAVEL

Visit Us @ BOOTH 4H50

**EXCLUSIVELY FOR HSBC CREDIT CARDHOLDERS**

<b>20-INCH BAG</b> With min spend of \$2,500	<b>24-INCH BAG</b> With min spend of \$3,500	<b>28-INCH BAG</b> With min spend of \$5,500
---	---	---

Terms & Conditions: HSBC accepts no liability for the goods and services provided at participating merchants. Payment must be made with HSBC credit card from 27 Feb 2011. Free gift is limited to one per cardholder. While stocks last.

Exclusive Partner: **HSBC**

<b>Amsterdam</b> \$1276	<b>Guangzhou</b> \$468	<b>Melbourne</b> \$665	<b>Rome</b> \$1255
<b>Bali</b> \$204	<b>Ho Chi Minh</b> \$261	<b>Milan</b> \$1136	<b>Seoul</b> \$593
<b>Bangkok</b> \$278	<b>Hong Kong</b> \$382	<b>Mumbai</b> \$488	<b>Shanghai</b> \$498
<b>Beijing</b> \$638	<b>Jakarta</b> \$180	<b>New York</b> \$1459	<b>Sydney</b> \$799
<b>Chennai</b> \$497	<b>London</b> \$1232	<b>Osaka</b> \$628	<b>Taipei</b> \$558
<b>Christchurch</b> \$1061	<b>Los Angeles</b> \$1100	<b>Paris</b> \$1090	<b>Tokyo</b> \$628
<b>Frankfurt</b> \$1145	<b>Manchester</b> \$1305	<b>Perth</b> \$558	<b>Zurich</b> \$1138

Fares are subject to change without prior notice. Include fuel surcharge & taxes. Restrictions apply.

**EUROPE**

**Rail Passes**

- Eurail Select Pass (Early Bird) FREE fr \$565
- Eurostar (Early Bird) fr \$72
- Swiss Pass (FREE upgrade) fr \$410
- German Pass (20% OFF) fr \$385
- France Pass (20% OFF) fr \$286

**Free & Easy**

- 6D Switzerland fr \$2,288
- 6D London & Paris (100 OFF per couple) fr \$2,228
- 6D Italy fr \$2,048

**Coach Tours**

- 9D Amazing Spain & Portugal (20% OFF) fr \$1,458
- 10D Best of Italy fr \$2,619
- 11D European Spotlight fr \$3,212
- 12D Road to Rome fr \$3,644

**Trafalgar's** (10% OFF)

- 7D Glimpse of Europe fr \$1,865
- 9D Spanish Wonder fr \$1,767
- 10D Imperial Highlights fr \$1,999
- 10D Greek Island Hopper fr \$2,566

**Contiki** (12% OFF)

- 9D European Magic fr \$1,478
- 10D European Horizon fr \$1,224
- 12D Simply Italy fr \$1,855
- 12D Eastern Road fr \$1,996

**JAPAN**

**Rail Passes**

- Ordinary Pass fr \$440
- Hokkaido Rail Pass fr \$234
- Kansai Area Pass fr \$32
- Sanyo Area Pass fr \$311

**Free & Easy**

- 5D Tokyo (HSBC card \$100 OFF per couple) fr \$1,388
- 7D Hokkaido fr \$2,088

**SHORT GETAWAY**

- 2D Bintan fr \$128
- 3D Bangkok fr \$298
- 3D Phuket fr \$298
- 3D Koh Samui (FREE 3rd night) fr \$468
- 3D Angkor Wat fr \$428
- 4D Bali fr \$418
- 3D Hong Kong fr \$468
- 5D Seoul fr \$798
- 5D Maldives (FREE 4th night) fr \$1,398

**TAIWAN**

- 3D Taipei fr \$628
- 5D Taiwan Glamour fr \$818
- 7D Scenic Taiwan fr \$948
- 8D All Taiwan Delight fr \$1,088

**7D Norwegian Fjords Interlude Cruise** fr \$1,398  
Sailing: Jul 9, 28  
 London, Stavanger, Olden, Hellesylt, Geiranger, Bergen, London

**12D Greek Isles Cruise** fr \$5,518  
Star, Ruby Princess  
 Sailing: Jul 15, 29 Aug 22 Sep 25  
 Venice, Dubrovnik, Corfu, Katakolon, Athens, Mykonos, Kusadasi, Rhodes, Santorini, Naples, Rome

**12D Grand Mediterranean** fr \$5,518  
Star, Ruby Princess  
 Sailing: May - Sep 2011  
 Venice, Athens, Kusadasi, Istanbul, Mykonos, Naples, Rome, Florence, Monte Carlo, Barcelona

**12D Greek Isles & Grand Mediterranean** fr \$5,518  
Star, Princess  
 Sailing: Jun 23 Jul 17 Aug 10 Sep 3  
 Rome, Monte Carlo, Florence, Naples, Santorini, Mykonos, Athens, Katakolon, Corfu, Split, Venice

**4N Cherating** fr \$1,388  
**4N Phuket** fr \$1,490  
**4N Bali** fr \$1,700  
**4N Maldives** fr \$2,450  
**6N Mauritius** fr \$2,860  
**4N Bintan** fr \$942

1st Adult fr \$1,388, 2nd Adult fr \$388, 1st Child fr \$450, 2nd Child fr \$600, 1st Adult fr \$1,050, 2nd Adult fr \$1,120, 1st Child fr \$58, 2nd Child fr \$58



The popular shopping district Ximending in all its neon glory.



Watch your step when you visit the aptly named Snake Alley.

**Insider's tips**

- Wear comfortable shoes to explore the many night markets that open late into the night.
- Taiwanese snacks such as smelly tofu, shared ice and fried chicken are enjoyed at the night markets.
- Buy an EasyCard for convenient travel on the bus and train network.
- Make time for the Taroko Gorge National Park, a breathtaking canyon surrounded by towering cliffs, and just a few hours away from Taipei by train.
- Bring an umbrella or raincoat, as Taipei has a semi-tropical climate with intermittent rain from February to April.
- Put your shyness away as Taipei's residents are friendly and chatty.

Korea Be Inspired

**Book a tour to Korea and stand a chance to win a round trip air ticket to Korea on Asiana Airlines or Korean Air!**

## FEEL YOUR BEST ANY TIME OF THE YEAR.

A unique pleasure for every mood and season.

**3 Benefits for Booking a Tour to Korea at NATAS Travel 2011\***

- Redeem a free Korean Drama DVD set and
- Redeem a free Korean Jewellery Box\*\* if your tour has a 1 night stay in Daegu City and
- Stand a chance to win round trip air ticket to Korea on Asiana Airlines or Korean Air

\*While stocks last. One item per adult/child. \*\*One item per adult. Simply head to our booth 4H62 after making your booking and produce your receipt to redeem.

**4 Exciting Korean Events Lined Up For You at NATAS Travel 2011**

- JUMP - Korea's renowned comedic martial arts non-verbal performance (2pm and 6pm daily)
- Free phototaking & photo at our Hallyu (Korean Wave) corner (whole day)
- Bibimbap-making Demonstration (12pm daily)
- Korean Food Tasting (whole day)

Log on to our official Facebook fanpage "Korea Tourism Organization (Singapore)" for more details.

**CALL YOUR TRAVEL AGENT TODAY** • **ASA Holidays** 6303 5303 (TA 1501) • **Chan Brothers Travel** 6212 9679 (TA 109) • **CTC Travel** 6532 0532 (TA 704) • **Dynasty Travel** 6532 3833 (TA 371) • **Five Stars Tours** 6533 5555 (TA 752) • **Hong Thai Travel** 6533 1788 (TA 490) • **Konsortium Express & Tours** 6392 5000 (TA 1210) • **Nam Ho Travel** 6221 8433 (TA 140) • **Newshan Travel** 6220 4924 (TA 106) • **SA Tours** 6535 8911 (TA 611) • **SingExpress Travel** 6438 2221 (TA 1797) • **S Travel** 6221 5688 (TA 2008) • **UOB Travel** 6252 6822 (TA 185)

www.pricebreaker.travel **6317 2888**

Chevron House, Raffles Place 02-25 Great World City 02-09 HarbourFront Centre 03-16 Marina Square 01-222 Parkway Parade 01-68 The CentrePoint 04-03